



"Simon Says"

The Official Newsletter of the
Robert E. Simon, Jr. Children's Center, Inc.
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Established 1990




simoncenter.org

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DIRECTOR

Director:

In December at the Simon Center, we enjoyed our...

- annual Winterfest with Mr. Jon performing holiday songs  to start the holiday season
- our monthly dress up day in boots  to kick off winter
- and our newest tradition- the *Rockin'* New Year's Eve dance party 

Fun, fun, and more fun!!!

Also last month, we collected new, unwrapped toys, and the donation boxes were overflowing! Thank you to all our parents who donated. I am sure we made some local children very happy 😊.

I hope you all enjoyed the 2024 winter holiday season, but it now time to say...
"Good-bye 2024, and hello to 2025!"

- Leila





Assistant Director:

We had a busy December, as always!

The highlight of December was seeing all the families at our annual "Winterfest!" It brought us much joy to see all the children laughing and dancing together, and families mingling with each other, too. 😊

We even got to see some snow fall! In January, I am hoping to see more snow.

I look forward to another wonderful year with my Simon Center family and friends.

Reminder: It will be getting very cold, so please remember to bring gloves/mittens, hats, and all other winter accessories, labeled with your child's name or initials. Thanks, and... Happy 2025!

- Jessica

Did you know... ?

- Refer a child & get \$250 off a month's tuition. See Robin or Leila for more details. 😊
- We have an official (and private) Parent Group Facebook page. 
Please "join us" at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/902695849810695/>



Board of Directors:

Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season with friends and family! We started a new holiday season tradition at the Center this year by collecting toys for Fairfax Family Services. The collection was a success, and we were able to donate three overflowing boxes of new toys. Thank you all for your generous contributions. 😊

I've never been one to make resolutions for the New Year, but I do often reflect on the past year. As we head into January, I've been thinking about how grateful I am that Simon Center has been part of our village for nearly eight years! Our son joined the Penguin class in March 2017 as a tiny infant. Now our daughter is a big kid in the Star class, and this means our time at the Center is nearing the end.

Through many changes, the Center has been a constant for our family, with no situation better exemplifying that as when it reopened following the Covid lockdown in 2020. In a time of incredible uncertainty and with a brand-new baby at home, it was so comforting to our son that he was able to return to school and see the familiar faces of his friends and beloved teachers.

I hope you all find the same comfort in the Center that my family has over the years!

- Jessica A. (Mom of "Star" Norah & "Alumni" Gavin)



Nursery 1 Penguin class:

Happy New Year! We hope everyone had a safe and wonderful holiday season. 😊 It's incredible how fast the time has flown by these past four months! The children have grown and made amazing progress... from crawling to standing up and from eating solids to trying table foods from the catering menu at school.

Isabelle is working to sit up with support. She enjoys rolling around during floor time and likes to play with the soft & plastic books. Isabelle will be starting solids soon, too! James is rolling over from both sides, and is working on sitting up. He enjoys eating all purees and trying different flavors. James loves to play with the rattles and soft books. Charlotte is working on standing up with support from the furniture (and will soon be standing on her own!). She is trying different purees and enjoys mealtimes. Charlie loves rolling balls to chase them, and she also likes to play with the bottle shakers.

Livia is crawling... everywhere! She is standing with support from the furniture and loves to walk side to side along the divider. Livia enjoys soft animals and spinning toys. Clara is crawling and standing now. She eats solids and enjoys trying all flavors of food. Clara enjoys playtime with the little fish and nesting cups.

Nico is working on free standing. He loves to explore the room and watch over the door for any new arrivals. Nico enjoys our animal farm, pop-up toys, and reading books.

Naomi is the oldest and will be moving next door to the Monkey room this month. She is eating food from the catering menu and taking one nap a day. Naomi loves to play in the gym and with cups and dishes.

Jack is eating solids, snacks, and some breakfast foods from the school menu. He loves to play with balls and cars. When we sing songs, Jack enjoys clapping his hands.

Henry enjoys eating the food from the catering company and using a sippy cup. He loves to play with cars and balls. He also enjoys turning the pages when reading books.

Ethan is eating solids. He enjoys playing in the tunnel and the small house. Ethan likes to play with the safari animals and cars.

In January, we will welcome Greta to our class. We are excited to have her in our room and to welcome her family back to the Penguins. 😊

We hope all your resolutions come true in 2025!

- Luz, Arline, and Rosanete





Nursery 2 Monkey class:

Happy New Year everyone!

Our little Monkeys kept busy learning and exploring in December.

We learned about winter animals, like polar bears and penguins. We made an ornament with paper plates.

We also made holiday trees with the children's footprint and a reindeer with the children's handprint. Another arts & craft project was making a Chanukah candle with a paper roll.

The children enjoyed our pretend play, "Holiday Shopping" & "Spending Money".

We also read books about different holidays around the world, like Christmas, Chanukah, and Kwanzaa.

Our little Monkey Franklin has moved up to the Dolphin class. We know he was ready for the transition and wish him all the best in his new room.

In January, our themes will be New Year, 2025; Winter Clothing; Birds in Winter; and Ice & Icicles.

Thank you to our supportive and generous parents for the holiday presents and bonus.

We are so appreciative!

- Reena, Alicia, and Fettouma



UPCOMING EVENTS:

January 1	CLOSED for New Year's Day
January 15	Dress up "Silly Socks" day; Librarian visits SR's in AM
January 20	CLOSED for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
January 22	Chipotle fundraiser, 4-8 PM, South Lakes Drive location
TBD	"Kindergarten Know-How" meeting for SR 3 parents at 6:15 PM



Junior 1 Dolphin class:

During the month of December, we learned about different winter holidays. We had fun at the annual Winterfest singing and dancing with Mr. Jon, and the Dolphins each took a picture with the big snowman in the front lobby.

First, we learned about **Diwali** by exploring some clothing and bracelets that are worn during this holiday. We read books about Diwali and made a Diya for this festival of lights. During art, the children painted fireworks with cut paper towel rolls.

Next, we learned about **Kwanzaa**. We painted with the colors from the Kwanzaa flag... red, black, and green. We used corn kernels and made our very own shakers (and the toddlers enjoyed making noise with their shakers!).

Mid-month, we began our discussion on the **Christmas** holiday by reading books about reindeer and looking at Christmas holiday pictures. We sang *Jingle Bells*, and we painted paper plates to make a pine tree and painted ornaments.

Our last unit for December was **Chanukah**. We read some Chanukah stories and learned about the dreidel and menorah. We also explored Chanukah puzzles and a menorah. The children had fun painting with a dreidel and creating holiday placemats. Other favorite December activities include movement and dance. The Dolphins enjoyed dancing to *Walking, Walking, Baby Shark, Wheels on the Bus*, and *If You're Happy and You Know It*. We learned a new version of the song *Five Little Monkeys* called *Five Little Dolphins* (aka our new classroom theme song!).

Adeline, Rio, and Uma are enjoying their new room in JR 2. In December, we sent these friends next door to the Goldfish and welcomed one friend from the Monkeys. Franklin joined us late in the month, but he is already fitting in with our "tods".

In January, our themes will be **Numbers, Snow, Polar Pals, Winter Clothing, and Ice**.

- Shirin, Fara, and Ellaine



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS:



Ms. Fara

Ms. Alicia

Ethan

Henry

Jack

Naomi

Max

Gaby

Lewis



Junior 2 Goldfish class:

We got a head start for our holidays as soon as December knocked on our fishbowl glass. All month we were busy decorating. We made decorations for the classroom, lit our trees, and made handprints to form a Christmas tree collage for our board. The children enjoyed being silly and taking holiday pictures with antlers, wreaths, & holiday lights or dressed up as Elves and as Santa, too.

We began by being **Secret Pals** and making ornaments and crafts for our friends. We worked together as a team and talked about how we were making crafts as gifts for our friends and how good it would feel to give to others.

The following week, we took part in **Hanukkah** celebrations early in the month. We worked as a team as we made a big menorah from long tubes. Our job was to decorate our own tube, “light” them, and put them together. We placed them by the window. We made dreidels and the Star of David. We talked about the holiday and books, such as The Light Within You, Light the Menorah, The Night Before Hanukkah.

The following weeks, we combined **Christmas & Kwanzaa** celebrations. We made a Christmas tree out of cork which we painted green and assembled. We took our creativity to the *next level* by painting a Christmas tree on a cardboard box and then poked holes to add Q-Tips as ornaments. We even invested in some reindeer moss for sensory play. We all wanted to grow food for the reindeer to eat. 😊 We finished December by painting lights for Kwanzaa!

Our holiday song playlist was nonstop as we *jingled* our way through the holiday month! We had disco lights and a dancing party with our friends in our room, and we also joined in the center dance party to end 2024. We even had a holiday parade and sang in the halls as we visited classes to wish them a “Happy Holiday!”

We welcomed Adeline, Rio and Uma from the Dolphin classroom as we said see you soon to Aidan who moved up. We can’t wait to have Elijah and Max join us soon too! Our themes for January will start off with the **New Year Celebration; Snow; Arctic Animals; and Winter Fun/Ice Activities**. Welcome, 2025!

- Mayi, Anjali, and Warda





Junior 3 Panda class:

During the month of December we learned about different holidays, like Las Posadas, Hanukkah 🕯️, Kwanzaa, Christmas 🎄, Lohri, St. Lucia's Day, and Yule. Many thanks to all the parents for their generous holiday gifts 📺... we really appreciated them! Next, we focused on winter clothing. During winter, we wear long pants, winter hats, warm jackets 🧥, mittens/gloves and a scarf. Our Pandas now tell us that it "is not a good idea to wear shorts during winter". 😊

During our discussion on winter animals, the children learned about animals that love the cold weather and the names of some of them, like the Snowy Owl, Arctic Fox, penguins 🐧, and others.

In January, we will say "Goodbye" and "Good luck" to Alani as she graduates to the Bear 🐻 class. She will be missed, but we are more than confident that she is ready. Also in January, we will welcome David and his parents. He will be joining our class and the Simon Center for the 1st time... Welcome!! We are glad that our class has a strong sense of community and are kind to new students. It's very sweet to see them walking around the center and classroom, holding hands and singing together. 😊

Since we are a potty-training room, please have your child wear elastic pants.

Independently pulling pants up and down is an important part of potty training to get your child ready for the next room. Also, make sure to fill your child's extra clothes box, just in case they have any accidents. Thanks!

Our themes for the month of January will be **Hibernation; Lunar New Year; Space; Nursery Rhymes; and Groundhog Day.**

We are excited to start another wonderful year with the Panda 🐼 class.

- Sarai and Mary



Did you know... ?

- Our telephone number when we call you will look a bit different. To call us, please use 703-834-5880. To be sure you know when we are calling you, please also save the following numbers to your phone: 571-375-7671 and 571-375-7673.



Senior 1 Bear class:

In December, we began by exploring the concept of **Opposites**. We sang songs, did music and movement activities, and created art all about opposites, like up/down, over/under, in/out, fast/slow, etc. We also studied the letter *O* and the number *15*. Next, we ventured into **Outer Space**! The children enjoyed singing space-themed songs, creating space-inspired art, and working with our outer space pretend play props. This time we focused on the letter *P* and the number *16*. We ended this 2nd week with a wonderful, center-wide “Winterfest” celebration.

Mid-month, our theme was on **Winter** while practicing the letter *Q* and exploring the number *17*. Then, we concluded the month with a unit on **Holidays Around the World**. We studied the letter “R,” the number *18*.

In December we said bye to Eddie while welcoming Luke into our class.

Looking ahead to January, Dax and Luca will transition to the Giraffe's class, and Alani will join us from the Pandas.

This month, we will explore the following themes: **New Year, Patterns, Land Transportation, and Arctic Animals**. Our focus will also turn to the letters *S, T, U, & V* and the numbers *19, 20, 21, & 22*.

Happy New Year!

- Rozita and Maryam



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You are our best advertisement!



Senior 2 Giraffe class:

In December, the children celebrated the holiday season with many fun and festive activities throughout the month.

During the “Festival of Lights” week, the class made colorful candles out of paper plates by adding tissue paper squares and flame shaped cut-outs.

For our “Holiday Customs” week, the Giraffes read books about holiday customs from different cultures, like giving gifts, singing carols, decorating, and meals with family.

We were delightfully surprised with an actual snowy day during “It’s Winter” week, and the Giraffes had fun playing on the playground while the big snowflakes fell. Indoors, they made coffee filter snowflakes by cutting out small holes and those snowflakes were added to our window winter display. We also talked about winter clothing and the children had fun counting different clothing items. (Some children mentioned that their hands were cold while outside, please be sure to send in mittens or gloves this month.)

During the “Christmas” week, we enjoyed a nice, relaxing time with a smaller number of children. We had fun reading books, like How the Grinch Stole Christmas and The Perfect Present, and talking about how it wasn’t the presents but all the love that we share with our families and friends that makes the season of giving special.

There will be some changes in our class roster early this month as we say goodbye to Troy who is moving up to Pre-k and say hello to Luca and Dax who are joining us from the Bears. We are going to miss Troy, but we wish him all the best and look forward to meeting him on the playground! Luca and Dax have already had some transition visits and they both showed us that they will fit in very well as our newest Giraffes. We are excited to officially welcome them to our room!

In January, we will explore the following themes:

“Earth & Space”, “Dinosaurs”, “Martin Luther King, Jr.”, “Tools & Machines”, and “Railroad & Transportation”.

Hope this year brings lots of joy and happiness to everyone. Let’s have a great new year together!

- Julia





Senior 3 Star class:

The Stars had a fantastic month in December!

We started the month by exploring the **weather**. The children were excited to conduct a science experiment to create tornadoes in a bottle. Once completed, the students took their very own tornado home as a fun keepsake.

Next, we focused on **manners**. The Stars enjoyed reading entertaining books about good manners, such as Grover's Guide to Good Manners. They also practiced using good manners at the lunch table with their peers.

Following that, we celebrated **Hanukkah** with various arts & crafts and other festive activities, including creating handprint menorahs and making delicious latkes.

We then learned about **Christmas** around the world, during which the students were busy making special surprise gifts for their parents.

To end the month, we celebrated **New Year's** around the world. The class welcomed the new year by playing games and practicing counting down to midnight. We also enjoyed a fun dance party on New Year's Eve.

For FCPS's winter break, we were excited to welcome back Nico for "kindergarten camp" with us at the Simon Center in the Star class. We hope to see Nico again (and maybe some other alumni) for "kindergarten camp" during FCPS's spring break, too.

Next month's topics will include **numbers**, **Arctic animals**, **snow & ice**, and **winter clothing**. The letters we'll focus on in January will be D, I, K, and Q.

See you next month!

- Roselle, Shatara, and Sameey



Did you know... ?

- As a non-profit, we have an Amazon "wish list" for various classroom wants & needs, as well as for much needed Center supplies. <https://a.co/4WoEviD>