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## Bright Beginnings Newsletter Fall 2023



Dear Friend of BBI,

I just returned from an invitation to present about BBI's Alumni Network Program at the National Center for Families Learning conference in Omaha, Nebraska. It was exciting and inspiring to hear all of the innovative ideas that organizations are doing to support families across the country. I mentioned in my last letter the launch of BBI's Alumni Network to provide wraparound services and a continuity of care to our children and parents throughout K-12 schooling, and I'm pleased to announce that BBI has hired Ngeri Azuewah, J.D., M.P.P.L., to manage this program. Ngeri brings to BBI fifteen years of experience in early childhood education ranging from educational consulting to family advocacy. She is also completing her Ph.D. in Language, Literacy and Culture at the University of Maryland-Baltimore County with her focus on Black girls within the school-to-confinement pathway. Ngeri will be managing both the Alumni Network and BBI's advocacy work. We are thrilled she has joined us!



Over the last few years, BBI has provided core services and supports that families rely on, bringing

steadiness and security during a time of uncertainty. One of the effects of the pandemic that continues to greatly impact our families is inflation. As our 2023/2024 school year has gotten underway, a large number of families have asked BBI for help with basic necessities like diapers, wipes, strollers, and car seats. The giving season is just around the corner, and BBI will be sending out its annual appeal, but if you have the ability to send any items on our [Essentials List](#), our families will be extremely appreciative.

We've started a new social media project this year called, "[A Day in the Life.](#)" Each month, we will feature a child's daily activities at BBI. We've done two so far, and we now have children asking to be featured! It's a great way to see our programs in action and the incredible work our teachers do with our students every day. Be sure to follow us on social media to keep up with all the action happening at BBI.

With the start of a new fiscal year on October 1st comes the transition of several individuals on our board of directors. Along with our newly elected Board Chair Karen Howard, I am pleased to introduce and welcome Surayyah Colbert, Kevin Diaz, Mike Jeffers, Ebony Johnson, Linda Schakel, Maria Moussa, and Khadijah Williams to our board. Each brings passion, expertise, and a unique perspective to our work.

We are thrilled to continue to innovate and improve upon the work we are doing to support children and families and we can't wait to see what results come from our latest projects.

Sincerely,



Erin Fisher  
Chief Executive Officer

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## 2-Gen In Action

Our programming supports both children and their families. This creates a long-lasting impact and helps the family unit as a whole move along a spectrum that could range from crisis to self sufficiency.

## Healthy Co-Parenting



On September 20th BBI's home-based program held a workshop on the topic of healthy co-parenting. Led by BBI's own home-based support coordinator, Ms. Krystal, the workshop covered the importance of strategizing for healthy co-parenting and centering a co-parenting journey around the children while not losing a sense of self. Guidance was offered on how to detach throughout the process and give oneself the time and self-compassion to do so. Activities were shared that parents were encouraged to do while they each have their children separately. Lastly, the importance of extending grace to the other parent when the load becomes overwhelming was talked about. Parents who attended shared openly about their co-parenting challenges and strengths, and all felt they gained additional strategies for co-parenting success.

## Indoor Adventures

Have you ever wondered what's a program like BBI do when the weather makes it impossible for our children to get outdoor playtime? We get adventurous with indoor playtime! Over this past year, we enhanced our multipurpose room by purchasing several large items that add to the fine and gross motor play opportunities for students. Students challenge themselves on a rock-climbing wall, climbing and sliding down a slide on a foldable gym box while engaging their imagination to create stories of resiliency. These items have transformed the space to be more engaging, meet the needs of sensory seeking students, and challenge their physical development in enriching ways. Our teachers also facilitate games and group play in the multipurpose room. While getting fresh air and outdoor play time is a priority at BBI, our indoor play area is a fine back up!



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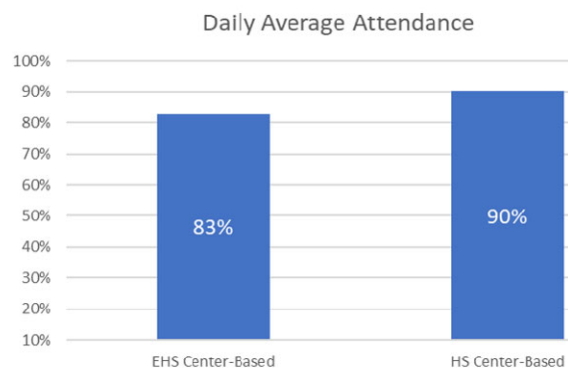
## BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT



BBI held its annual Back to School Night on September 13. This year's theme was "Welcome to the Carnival" and our classrooms and outdoor area were decked out. In addition to shaved ice and healthy snacks, there were book giveaways and arts and craft tables to keep students entertained. Parents were able to tour the outdoor grounds and indoor classrooms, as well as meet with their child's teachers. Back to School Night is a great way to build the BBI community and set a positive tone for the rest of the school year.

## DATA STORYTELLING

Head Start's Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) office implemented Strive for 85, an initiative to promote student attendance at 85% or better each month. Studies show that missing just 18 school days per year, or being absent 10% of the time, negatively impacts student performance. During the month of September, 8 classrooms out of 13 met or exceeded the 85% requirement. Thirty three students achieved 100% attendance rate. By program, Head Start achieved 90.2% attendance and Early Head Start achieved 83%.



## CELEBRATING HISPANIC HERITAGE



Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated annually from September 15 - October 15. While the majority of children enrolled at BBI are Black, the efforts to support a healthy ethnic identity apply to all children at our center. We offer and create multi-racial materials and experiences that help children identify and relate to their own, and others, cultural heritage. This year our 3-4 year old classroom turned everyday items like rice, beans, eggs, and plastic spoons into maracas. Ms. Linda shared with her students the rich history of maracas in Hispanic culture and created musical beats and rhythms with them.

## FITNESS FOR HEALTH

As part of BBI's health and wellness programming, and with partial funding from the Sun Life Foundation, we are now offering physical education classes. Older students have class 20 minutes a day, five days a week, while younger students have it 15 minutes, twice per week. Physical activity can play a key role in developing brain function in young people due to increased oxygen and neurotransmitters, which in turn leads to improved language and literacy skills. Additional benefits include better focus and stress management. Plus, it's tons of fun! BBI's phys ed instructor, Chris Wright, works on our children's strength, fine and gross motor skills, and reflexes by using BBI's rock climbing wall, games like "Red Light Green Light", and even bowling!



Our annual field trip to Cox Farms is always a favorite! Students got to pick a pumpkin from their patch and ride down a giant slide made of hay bales.



Our Farmers Market featured healthy seasonal vegetables like kale, Brussels sprouts, and butternut squash.



The Junior League of Washington held a literacy night on October 25 and distributed books to all our students. Thank you!

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