

CO-OP CAPERS

The Newsletter of the Williamsburg Parent Cooperative Preschool

From Our Teachers

Molly Gareis' 1-Day 2's

We have had a wonderful start to the school year in the 1-Day AM 2's! The children are adjusting nicely to our routines and learning that it is okay to be away from Mom for a short while. It is such a wonderful and powerful lesson to learn that Mom ALWAYS comes back! I can see their confidence growing already.

Farm animals, apples, spiders, and pumpkins have been lots of fun! We have painted muddy pigs, made cotton ball sheep that stand on clothespin legs, printed with apples and pumpkins, made handprint spiders, created paper plate Jack-O-Lanterns, and we will make festive, feathery Halloween masks. We have read stories, sung songs, woven a spider web out of yarn onto a corkboard, sorted colors and shapes, and baked many a batch of play dough muffins. And of course, we've been painting at the easel! I have to smile when I think of all the paintings your children have done. The end of each class time finds our room filled to overflowing with beautiful paintings and artwork. I love watching your children create and to see the joy on their faces as they express themselves through their art. We love all of our songs and finger plays, but "Sticky Bubblegum" would have to be our favorite. It is sung by our two year olds with such happiness that anyone watching couldn't help but feel the children's joy.

As we peer into the coming weeks, we will be busily preparing for the holidays. After Halloween, we will be looking towards



Thanksgiving time filled turkeys, thanks, and lots of colorful fall leaves. Then, as we make our way into the winter holidays, we will take time to make special gifts for our families. Please plan to join us for our Holiday Open House on Friday, December 17.

It has been a true pleasure getting to know all of you and your children. You are a wonderful group of parents to work with and you make my job so enjoyable and rewarding. You have precious children and I look forward to our Friday mornings together. Thanks for a great start and the promise of a creative and fun-filled year!

Heather Seltzer's 2-Day 2's

We are off to a wonderful start in the 2 Day 2's class! The children are exploring the Co-Op environment, making new friends, and adjusting to the change of being away from Mommy and Daddy for a short time. It is a hard transition for many children to make, but I can see so much progress in just these first few weeks of school. Everyone should feel proud of the progress their child is making! In class we are focusing on learning names and recognizing the faces of our classmates. During free play we are learning to share and include others in our play. The children seem to really enjoy the new songs and finger plays that they are learning. Most children are participating in art and trying out the easel activities. We will see the interest in these activities grow as we progress through our year. We have been learning about farm animals, apples, spiders and pumpkins. Some of our favorite crafts have been painting muddy pigs, cotton ball sheep, stamping animal foot prints,



printing with apples, marble rolling and hand-print spiders. Sometimes you may notice that your child does not have an art project to bring home. I have been collecting work every other week and hanging it in the classroom. Check out the wall space below the clock in our room. I'm sure you will be impressed by your little artists! After being on display for a while, I will make sure to return all work. Hanging the children's work gives them a sense of ownership and pride in our classroom.

The class also loves being read too. Story time is a favorite of mine, as well as the children's. Our goal is to have your child sit and listen to a short story together as a group. If we have a child try to leave the carpet during story time we direct them back by telling them that the "toys are closed". You may find that your child likes having the same stories read at home during your family reading times. I try to write the titles of the books we are reading in my weekly update emails. We have also enjoyed crawling through a tunnel pretending to be worm, driving cars through wrapping paper tubes and making apple-sauce. We have been working on counting objects and using our fingers to represent numbers too. As we look to the weeks ahead, we will be busy celebrating fall and preparing for the holidays.

It has truly been a pleasure getting to know you and your children. They are all precious and so loving, and you are a wonderful group of parents. Thank you for a great start and for sharing your child with me on Tuesday's and Thursday's!

Martie Severin's 2-Day 3's

The children have become familiar with the daily class routine and are adjusting to school. It is a big step to go from home to school and a group of children. Thank you to all the families for your efforts in helping your children take this big step. While having fun, and making friends, the children will be learning to be together in a group, sitting and fo-

cusings attention during group time, and solving problems-usually about sharing of toys. Counting skills and language will be enhanced using finger-plays, nursery rhymes and songs. We sing and do finger-plays every day. Favorites will be repeated so everyone can learn them and bring them home to share. I will try to put one or two in the weekly news so you can sing along.

The children are getting to experience the fall season and all the changes and beauty through art projects, songs, stories, and sensory experiences. This is a great time of year to take a walk in a park or the woods. Waller Mill or York River State Park are great places to see wild life and the change of seasons. If your child sees something interesting in nature, bring it in to share with the class. The sensory table in the playroom changes weekly with leaves and lizards, beans, and one of the favorites-multicolored pom-poms, cups and salad tongs for picking up the pompoms. The children have also dug for acorns, fished for spiders and a real favorite- hammered nails into pumpkins. These experiences are fun and great for eye-hand co-ordination.

November will bring themes of leaves, Indians, turkeys and Thanksgiving. Thursday Nov. 11th will be our Fall conferences. There will be no school that day. Plan to get a baby sitter or ask another Coop parent to exchange babysitting with you. The playground will be available or the playroom if the weather is rainy for babysitting. I will post a conference signup on the playroom door after Halloween.

November and December will bring holidays that are exciting and busy for children and their families. Co-op will be filled with the smell of baking gingerbread. Sasha Ryan's grandmother will share Hanukkah with the children. Art projects will include decorations that will remain special keepsakes in your family for many years. Don't forget to mark Dec. 16th on your calendars which is the date of our Holiday Open House.



During the hustle and bustle of the holidays, take time to enjoy special moments with your preschoolers. Create traditions with your children. The memories will last long after they are grown and the toys have disappeared. Best wishes for safe and happy holidays!



Sue Barton's 2-Day 3's

It's hard to believe November is here already. With the excitement of Halloween behind us, Thanksgiving and Winter Break are just around the corner. As we begin this new month, the class is settling in nicely to our afternoon routines. They are a great group of children! They are far better at walking in a line from the playground than they were just a few short weeks ago, and more often than not, they head directly to their sit-upons when we enter the classroom. During free play they are learning how to solve conflicts and develop friendships. Most are even willing to create a craft or two each day. Finger plays and songs seem to be a particular favorite of all, and these activities are a perfect "hook" for wandering attention spans. It's impossible not to smile when you see their faces, hear them sing and watch them as they mimic hand and finger movements to whatever finger play we're practicing. I've even heard a few of them singing the songs at other times throughout the day.

On Thursday, Nov. 11, we will have Parent-Teacher conferences. I look forward to meeting with each of you. Please remember that this is a time for us to discuss your child. It's best, therefore, to make arrangements for a friend or family member to watch your child while we meet. To make it easier, parents with back-to-back conferences oftentimes swap childcare in the playroom or on the playground.

Don't forget to line up your babysitter for November 6th. The Co-op Auction will be an

evening of adult fun and camaraderie. Come get a head start on holiday shopping. There should be things for every person on your list.

We are just about ready to put the finishing touches on our class craft, and I'm sure it's a treasure you and your child will want to own. Bring those checkbooks and credit cards, and join in the bidding fun!

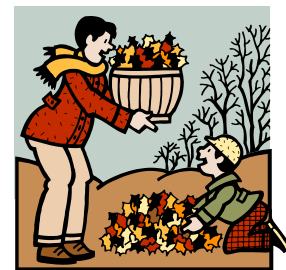
Thank you for sharing your children with me on Tuesdays and Thursdays and for your willingness to be a part of your child's education. In this very busy world, I know it's not always easy to work in the classroom. In the end though, I believe you'll find that the benefits of being involved far outweigh the negatives. I look forward to working with you and watching the continued growth of your children in the months ahead.

Love from Mrs. Barton

Diane Lee's 3-Day 3's

What a busy group of creative, intelligent, and loving children we have in our classroom! It has been such a pleasure to work with this group! We have settled into a comfortable morning routine, and I love it when the kids actually can tell me what we do next and remind me when I have forgotten something... "Mrs. Lee, it's my turn to ring the bell!" Friendships are forming, and children are really playing together now instead of just playing side by side. We are learning how to solve those naturally arising conflicts by using our words, and it's heartening to see the progress we have made in just a few short months.

Our circle times are lots of fun and in the weeks that we have been together I have been able to extend our time in circle and try more activities. I love to watch the



children's faces light up when they see the crafts of the day, or listen to a story! Our movement time for songs or finger plays is also very exciting. "Johnny Works" continues to be a favorite, but our many Halloween songs are also very popular! I'm amazed at how quickly we are picking up new songs!

In the 3's class, we build children's awareness of their surroundings by focusing on our seasons and holidays. We have explored and learned all about apples, autumn, spiders and pumpkins. It is a pleasure to see and marvel at the world's natural beauty through the eyes of a 3 year old. The excitement in our class was palatable, the day we turned our apples into applesauce, the day we painted with sticks, the day we made fall arrangements, the day we acted out "Little Miss Muffet", and the day we paraded together in our Halloween costumes!

In November, we will continue to observe the seasons and holidays with themes such as leaves, Native Americans, turkeys, and Thanksgiving. Our holiday open house will be December 17, so be sure to mark your calendar for this special event!

Thank you for sharing your precious children with me. I appreciate your patience and sense of humor in the classroom. I have so enjoyed working along side each of you.

Lisa Olds and Lori Wright's **3-Day 4's**

Greetings families!

First, we would like to say thank you to the families of the 3-day afternoon 4s classes for being open to combining our classes. With two teachers and two parent helpers, the opportunities to get to know each child on a more individual basis and to play with everyone daily have been priceless! The children seem to be enjoying the extra attention as well.



So far, our year has been a busy one. The children have already demonstrated their unique interests inside the classroom, with large groups splitting their time between the blocks and cars as well as the dress-up and housekeeping areas. We've also seen some interesting art expressions at the easel and play-dough table.

September was a busy and productive month.

We learned about the ocean, construction and transportation, capping off the month with a great field trip to the Williamsburg airport. We were also very lucky to be able to climb aboard a small airplane for a great photo opportunity.



October had the students setting their sights on the changing weather, with autumn and Halloween setting the stage for some interesting activities. Bats, pumpkins, cats and owls found their way into our art projects as well. Our trip to Pumpkinville was a lot of fun for everyone as the students bounced along on two hay rides, roamed through the corn field maze, and chose a pumpkin and gourd to take home. Finally, the Halloween costume parade to the Fresh Market shopping area is sure to be a great success. Thank you to all the family members who will join us on the parade or hand out goodies along our route. We couldn't have such a successful parade without you!

As we head into November, we will begin to think about how early Americans lived, including Native American Indians and the early colonists. Of course, we will put these themes into practice when we enjoy a field trip to Jamestown Settlement.

We have had so much fun getting to know each child and watching new friendships blossom. We would also like to thank the parents for their wonderful contributions in the classroom--we feel very blessed to have so many wonderful families in our combined class!

Best wishes, Lisa Old and Lori Wright



Emma McMillan's 4-Day 4's and 5's

The four-day fours and fives and their parents have adjusted nicely to a new schedule, new room, new songs, new rules, and new teacher! The friendships, old and new, developed quickly and the four days made it easy to become very comfortable at Co-op! September was spent talking about ourselves and our families, including our pets! Our well-behaved pets visited Co-op and we visited the Vet to see how our pets are taken care of.

October brought a great week of C-O-N-S-T-R-U-C-T-I-O-N! We built with boxes, Popsicle sticks, sugar cubes, and wood. We visited a house "under construction" that was being built by Madison Walk's daddy! We had lots of fun, pounding nails into wood, fitting PVC pipes together and painting! We also received a construction hat to wear at the site and take home! A BIG THANKS to the Walk family for letting us visit. We jumped into fall with talk of apples, leaves, popcorn, and pumpkins! Our trip to Pumpkinville was lots of fun!

November brings an election for moms and dads, as well as the favorite care bear election in our class. The kids will listen to campaign speeches and talk to the two candidates: GRUMPY and FUNSHINE bear! Who will win this year? We will be going to Jamestown and we will visit our friend Max at the spinners and weavers in Colonial Williamsburg. We will share our snack with the three day threes class, which will be a highlight of the month and will begin the anticipated holiday season.

December finds us using our senses for all the exciting experiences of the holiday season! We will celebrate Hanukkah and end with our annual "FIESTA" on December 16.

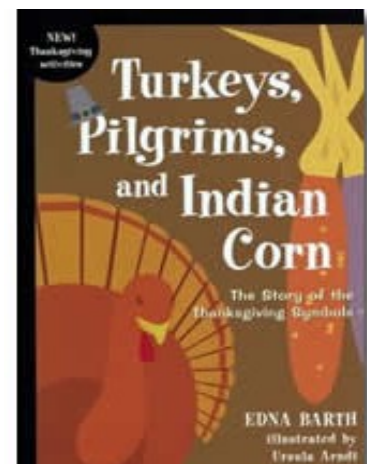
Thanks to all you wonderful parents for sharing your children with me and for making us the CO-OP!

FOUR DAY FOURS AND FIVES ARE FANTASTIC!!!

Looking for a book to help your child(ren) learn more about Thanksgiving? Try **Turkeys, Pilgrims, and Indian Corn : The Story of the Thanksgiving Symbols** by Edna Barth, Ursula Arndt (Illustrator) which is the story of the American holiday and the development of its symbols and legends.

Each of our holidays has its own familiar traditions: Trick-or-treating on Halloween, eating turkey on Thanksgiving, waiting for Santa Claus on Christmas, exchanging cards on Valentine's Day. But where do these customs come from, when did they begin, and why do we continue to observe them?

In the engaging blend of careful research and lively prose that has earned her books a lasting place on the holiday bookshelf, Edna Barth explores the multicultural origins and evolution of the familiar and not-so-familiar symbols and legends associated with our favorite holidays. Full of fascinating historical details and little-known stories, these books are both informative and engaging. Festively illustrated by Ursula Arndt, they are now available again in hardcover as well as paperback editions, featuring new, eye-catching jacket designs, and fun holiday activities inside the paperback covers. Each book includes an annotated list of holiday stories and poems and an index.



CO-OP CALENDAR



11/1 (M)	November Tuition payment due
11/6 (Sa)	CO-OP AUCTION at St. Martins, 6:00 p.m.
11/11-12 (R-F)	NO SCHOOL/Parent-Teacher Conferences; AM 2's will meet
11/16 (T)	Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
11/24-26 (W-F)	NO SCHOOL/Thanksgiving Vacation
12/1 (W)	December Tuition payment due
12/16 (R)	Holiday Open House: 4-Day 4's, 2-Day AM 3's, 2-Day PM 2's, and PM 2's
12/17 (F)	Holiday Open House: 1-Day 2's, 3-Day 3's, both 3-Day 4's
12/20-1/2 (M-Su)	NO SCHOOL/Winter Vacation

The Board Meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday of every month (except for December), 7:30 p.m. at Co-op and are approximately an hour long. Anyone interested in coming is welcome.

Deadlines for submissions to Co-op Capers are the 25th of each month, except January which is December 15th. Please contact Lorelee Clark at 258-3254 for further information. We welcome news of local opportunities for family activities and/or any parent- or child-related materials. Submissions via e-mail: loralee13@verizon.net

Parent Chats

Parent Chats are a new addition to Co-op this year. These monthly chats will be a chance for par-

ents to talk to each other and learn new ideas and parenting techniques. The chats start with a 15 minute talk related to parenting preschoolers, followed by a round table discussion facilitated by Molly Gareis, Director. Please bring your questions and concerns about any aspect of parenting to our round table discussion. We are all here to support and learn from each other, and the more participation we have, the richer our discussions will be. All Co-op parents and their friends are welcome to any of the meetings!

Monday,
November 15,
1:00p.m.-2:00 p.m.



Tuition Lock Box

There is now a tuition lock box that hangs near the office at Co-op. You may save a stamp and leave your tuition checks here instead of mailing them to our P.O. Box. The lock box will be emptied daily. Please ask where it is if you can't find it!



www.williamsburgfamilies.com

- . Looking for something fun to do with the kids?
- . Need a babysitter?
- . Looking for baby gear?
- . Wanting to get rid of baby gear?

Visit www.williamsburgfamilies.com—an online one stop shop for active families to find out what's going on in and around town. Featuring activities, an events calendar, classifieds, articles, community resources and more.

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Parenting Preschoolers: A Starting Place for Social Graces

MAY 2010 Amanda Morgan simplekids.net

From the moment I got this assignment to write about supporting social skills in preschoolers, every time my own preschool-aged boys threw a fit or tackled a playmate, I had to laugh at myself. “*And I’m supposed to be an expert on this?*” The truth is the task of teaching our children social skills is a huge job. It’s not something any parent does perfectly, and it’s certainly not something that can be covered in its entirety in one neat and tidy blog post. Beyond meeting our children’s basic needs, we as parents tend to worry most about their social development. *Will they be polite when they play at their friends’ houses? Will they behave appropriately at school? Will they ever stop fighting?* There are a few things to keep in mind as we consider the social development of our children. They are reminders to help us to take a deep breath and respond with a proper perspective.

Consider Normal Development

Just because your 2 year-old bites doesn’t mean he’ll become the next Hannibal Lecter. Many challenging behaviors are absolutely normal parts of development. This doesn’t mean you shouldn’t correct the behaviors, but their appearance doesn’t mean you’ve done a lousy job of parenting or that you have an inherently “*bad*” kid. For example, selfishness is not necessarily a personality flaw for preschoolers. It’s the way their brains are wired; they are egocentric beings. To them, if they are happy with the toy they just snatched from another child everyone else should be happy too! Experiences in preschool or playgroup require a group of egocentric children to consider one another, helping to move them along the developmental pathway. Additionally, young children are still learning to control their impulses.

Consider a new baby whose arms flail wildly until, over time, the baby develops enough control to generate purposeful movements. Similarly, it takes time for preschoolers to develop the ability to

move from acting on impulses to making controlled, thoughtful choices.

Social Skills Are Learned Skills

Children are not born knowing how to share or why they should say “*please*.” As with any learned behavior, there will be mistakes along the way. But with continued practice children become more proficient. When a child struggles to learn to tie her shoes, we take some extra time to clarify the process and coach her through. We teach social skills in the same way: give extra support and extra practice, clarifying and coaching until that skill becomes second-nature. It will take time and multiple failed attempts for a child to independently tie her shoes. Likewise, it will take time and multiple failed attempts for a child to master the world of social graces.

Conflict Is a Necessary Evil

As parents, we often try to free our homes of all conflict. We dream of days with no fights over toys, no arguments about who gets to be first, and everyone says “*thank you*” for the delicious dinner we’ve prepared. A nice dream, but an unlikely reality. Conflict should be managed, but should not (and realistically can not) be eliminated. It is through social conflict that children learn to move beyond egocentrism and learn to adapt and problem-solve. So when the next shouting match or toy tug-of-war occurs, take a deep breath and recognize those conflicts as teaching opportunities. Once we have those precepts in mind, there are a few good places to start building social skills in preschoolers.

Verbalize Emotions

Young children have the capacity to feel all the turbulent emotions we feel as adults, but a limited ability to verbalize it. When they can’t adequately communicate with words, they turn to behaviors. Then comes the kicking, the tantrums, the biting, etc. We see it as a failure to behave properly, when often it is a failure to communicate properly.

While this belief does not exonerate them, our first step is to validate and verbalize those emotions. We need to give them the words for what they

are feeling, and help them to know that those feelings are OK, the behavior is not. This process gives them the tools to express their emotions verbally in the future. It also helps them to know that they've been understood, which is often all they were looking for in the first place.

Be a Super Model

Because social skills are learned, it is important that we be very aware and deliberate in modeling positive social skills. We do this first of all by building a positive relationship with our children. They will learn to treat others by the way they are treated. Take note of your own behavior. Is it being reflected in your children? Model the behavior you would like to see.

For example, if your child is having tantrums, model calmness – especially during the tantrum. If you want your child to look at people when he speaks, don't talk to him over your shoulder as you multi-task. If you have a shouter, reply with a soft voice. Find opportunities to teach through modeling, both explicitly (as in role playing) and implicitly in your everyday encounters with your children.

Plan and Practice

Discuss and practice social situations separate from confrontations, free from the stronger emotions of a volatile circumstance. Thirty minutes into your daughter's tantrum is probably not her most receptive moment. Be proactive. Read and discuss books with social situations. Experiment with social roles and dilemmas in dramatic play. Use puppets to act out a social problem your child can solve. Give children a script for specific social situations.

Play is a Child's Work

Children need time and opportunities to practice their social skills in the real world. Remember that adults and older siblings often compensate for a younger child's lack of social skills. Playing with peers is where the true tests come!

Solve Problems Together

Parents of young children are notoriously good problem-solvers. When discontent arises, we

swoop in, assess the situation, then set timers, create turn-taking lists, or grab another item for sharing. We are so adept at problem solving because we get so much practice!

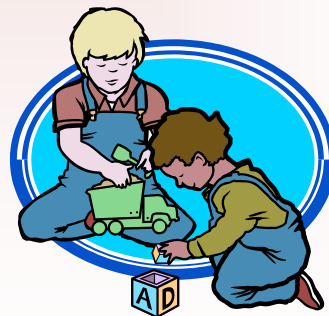
To truly benefit children for the long run, involve them in the problem solving process. It may slow things down a bit, but eventually you will find that you are "swooping in" less and less as the children become more independent in their social problem-solving skills.

Choose discipline over punishment

Now, I'm not trying to instigate a war of words here, just a shift in perspective. When the focus is on punishment as a reaction to improper behavior, we are only teaching the child not to "get caught" being "bad."

When we choose proactive discipline, we teach moral decision-making. Instead of trying to control our children, we teach them to control themselves. Rather than governing out of anger, we guide out of love. Instead of punishing mistakes, we use those mistakes to teach awareness and accountability. The bad news is kids don't come to us with a complete set of social skills. The good news is they do come to us.

And with our help, they will learn to be polite when they play at their friends' houses, they will behave appropriately at school, and yes, one day, they may actually stop fighting.



Earth Corner

Being aware of nature around you and how they change during the seasons is a great way to raise an environmentally aware child—after this fall holiday, take a walk outside and see what you can find together.

FamilyFun

THANKSGIVING DAY NEIGHBORHOOD SCAVENGER HUNT

Walk off that turkey dinner while finding all of the items on our list.

- A family playing football
- A turkey hung on a window or door
- A Thanksgiving-themed yard decoration
- 6 or more cars parked in front of one house
- A pile of leaves
- Something with a pilgrim on it
- An ear of dried corn
- A pumpkin or squash
- A pet waiting to be let in
- Smoke rising from a chimney
- Another family on a walk
- A black bird
- Chrysanthemums
- An acorn, pine cone, or other nuts, seeds, or cones
- Early Christmas decorations

Add your own items here:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Crafty Kids



Looking for something more creative than writing down what you are thankful for? Try something a little more active — **Gratitude Activity Jars**. Ask your little one(s) to name some of the things s/he is thankful for, and together come up with a coordinating activity to go along with it. Write each item onto a card and put them in a jar. The idea is to pick one card from the jar every day between now and Thanksgiving and do the activity on the card. Don't forget to let your child(ren) decorate the cards! For example: I am thankful for.....

—www.frugalfamilyfunblog.com

Dad — Do something nice for Daddy.
Friends — Make 1 new friend today.
Hugs — Hug 3 people today.
Books — Visit the library today.
Home — Clean the guest bedroom, and invite a guest over to stay.
Play Time — Invite a friend over to play.
Toys — Donate a toy to Goodwill.

Clara — Spend some time playing with your sister today.
Good Food — Donate canned goods to the food pantry.
Pies — Bake a pie for a neighbor.
Flowers — Surprise someone with a special flower delivery.
Nature — Play a fun game outside today.

PAPER BAG TURKEY



Here is a cute little turkey you can make from things you already have around the house: Small brown paper bag, newspaper, scissors, construction paper, glue, stapler and wiggly eyes.

1. Stuff half the paper bag with newspaper and twist.
2. Stuff second half with newspaper and staple shut.
3. You may need to tape the center to keep it tight.
4. Cut out feathers.
5. Decorate face with eyes (black circles with wiggly eyes glued on), beak and gobbler.
6. Glue on feathers and wings.

—jennwa.blogspot.com

ACORN WREATH

If your kids are like mine, I don't have to encourage them to pick up acorns when they are outside. Grab a thick piece of cardboard or a foam wreath shape and go to town with white glue, wood glue, gorilla glue, or the hot glue gun and see what beautiful autumn decorations you all can come up with!



We Like Plants!

All of these animals like to eat plants. Use the clues below to figure out each animal's name.



1. Ernie and Gina are eating leaves.
2. Jenny is eating grass.
3. Rex does not have stripes.
4. Gina does not have a trunk.

10

Answers: Rex - Rhinoceros; Jenny - Zebra;
Gina - Giraffe; Ernie - Elephant

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID SHELDON