

# Alphabet Soup

April, 2010

*Nourishing ways to fill children's days.*



## April is the Month of the Young Child

### See inside for:

- \* April Rhymes
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- \* And More!!

April has been designated as the **Month of the Young Child**, a time to recognize that children's opportunities are our responsibilities, and to recommit ourselves to ensuring that each and every child experiences the type of early environment-at home, at child care, at school, and in the community-that will promote their early learning. This month, we honor the more than 35 million children from birth through age eight in America, and the families, teachers and other adults who help children make the most of the opportunities of their early years.



Research and experience clearly show that children's earliest years are crucial learning years. Month of the Young Child is a chance to celebrate the learning opportunities of young children, and to recognize the responsibilities we share for helping them make the most of the early years. If we value our children, our families, our schools, and our community, we must make accessible, affordable, high-quality early childhood education a priority.

Here are some activities that you can do with your child to celebrate the month, and throughout the year.

- Get a library card for yourself and your children.
- Volunteer in your child's childcare center or school.
- Read to your child every day.
- Attend a parenting workshop.
- Write a thank you note to a political leader who supports children and families, to your child's teacher, to your child's daycare provider, to your child's pediatrician, and other individuals who provide a positive influence on your child.
- Listen to your child.
- Give your child a HUG!

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## An April Rhyme to Share



### Kites Go Up

*Young preschoolers can act out the words of this simple rhyme. Or better yet: make or buy a kite and get out and enjoy the magic!*

The kites go up, the kites go down,  
In and around, all over the town  
The children run and jump and play,  
Because they love a windy day.

## Nutrition Corner: Dinner in a Flash

### Pasta with Meatballs & Spinach

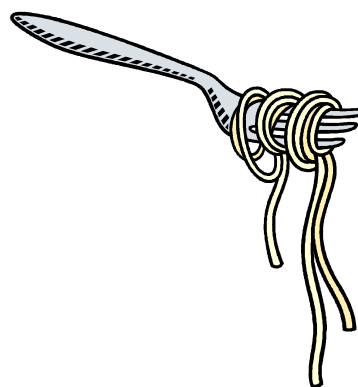
*delicious and nutritious and quick!*

#### Ingredients

- 1-2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 bag turkey meatballs, frozen (smaller are best)
- 3-4 cloves garlic, diced (pre-chopped or powder is also fine)
- 1 pound pasta (choose your child's favorite shape!)
- 1 can chicken broth (Fat-free, low-sodium is best)
- 1 package frozen spinach
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- Salt and pepper

#### Directions

1. Set a pot of water to boil.
2. In a skillet, heat the olive oil and brown the frozen meatballs. Add garlic.
3. When water is boiling, cook the pasta while the meat is browning. Drain pasta and return to the pot it was cooked in. Add the cooked meatballs.
4. Break up and heat frozen spinach in the skillet; add to the pot.
5. Glaze meat bits from skillet with broth. Pour into the pasta mixture.
6. Add the Parmesan, combine well. Season to taste.



## REDUCING TV TIME IMPROVES LITERACY AND HEALTH

### THE FACTS:

- \* American children watch nearly three hours of television everyday.
- \* Children spend more time in front of the TV each year than they do in school.
- \* Children who watch a lot of television do more poorly in school and score significantly lower on reading tests.
- \* One in five children in America is overweight; one in ten is obese.

### Some tips for cutting down on screen time:

- \* Take the TV out of your child's bedroom.
- \* Always make books available to your child. Take trips to the library and give books as gifts.
- \* Read with your children. Set aside time each day to read together.
- \* Keep the TV off during mealtimes.
- \* The easiest way to reduce inactivity is to turn off the TV set.
- \* Exercise as a family by taking walks, riding bikes, learning a sport.
- \* Designate certain days of the week as TV-free days.
- \* Do not use the television as a reward.
- \* Children are influenced by what their parents do, so by all means make a commitment to yourself to exercise more, watch less TV and eat better yourself.
- \* Consider participating in national **TV Turn-Off Week, April 19-25, 2010**



## The Building Blocks for Literacy: Letter Knowledge

Parents and caregivers play a special role in helping preschoolers to develop the skills they will need in order to become successful readers. **Phonemic awareness** is the ability to hear and recognize different sound units in words and to understand that words are made from smaller sound units.



### Letter Knowledge

Letter knowledge includes understanding that letters are different from each other and that each letter has a name and its own sound. Letter knowledge can be developed by involving your child in a variety of reading or writing activities like pointing out and naming letters in alphabet books or on signs and labels. Play games using the alphabet; ask your child to find letters in books, magazines, newspapers and other print.

Teach your child the traditional alphabet song and learn new ones such as, "Chicka Chicka Boom Boom." You also can help your child write his or her name and other familiar words with magnetic letters, marker and paper or on the computer. Help your child learn to recognize her name in print. Encourage her to spell and write her name and display her name in special places in your home.

## April 2010 Spotlight On You!!

Hilary Flagg began as a Program Manager in our Youthlinks Program in Rockland on September 2, 2008. Right away she fit in with the other Youthlinks staff. They immediately recognized Hilary as a hard worker and a joy to have around. They state that "It's always a thrill to see Hilary walk through the front door in the morning as her approach to everything she does is positive and uplifting". Her naturally happy approach to life permeates the work environment and co-workers say it becomes infectious.



Her supervisor describes Hilary as an extremely dependable employee whose attention to detail is phenomenal and her follow through never wavers. "She has the uncanny ability to connect with the middle and high school youth and manages to earn their respect yet makes them feel comfortable and excited about everything they do" says Amie Hutchison. In fact, in Hilary's short time with Youthlinks, she has been promoted to Program Manager II, a position that carries much more supervisory responsibility. Just as in her old position, Hilary tackles her new job's challenges with exhilaration, enthusiasm and skill.

On a personal note, Hilary possesses a litany of hobbies. She's an avid reader, enjoys watching movies with her husband, enjoys eating out at new restaurants, and LOVES dancing.

Recently, Hilary has developed a love for candlepin bowling and can often be seen with her husband at the local bowling alley. But, she hasn't been there recently! Why?? Because Hilary is about (and possibly has by the time this newsletter is published!) to give birth to her first baby!!! In fact, on March 18<sup>th</sup> (Her due date!!), Hilary left Youthlinks and headed home to prepare for the birth of her new little baby girl. She will return to work in mid-June just in time for summer camp.

We are all so excited for Hilary and her husband as they prepare for the excitement of expanding their family. And we know that, just as in everything that Hilary attempts, she will tackle motherhood with her usual zest, passion, and love. Her life will be so much richer and more exciting. Thanks to Hilary Flagg for being such an integral part of our Broadreach family. And thanks for helping to see that the youth in the Rockland area have someone who watches out for them so lovingly and adeptly. We wish her well over the next 12 weeks and look forward to the day she comes back to Youthlinks as she continues her role as a highly respected employee. And we're equally anxious to listen as she shares with us her stories of her new role...that of a Mommy. Thanks, Hilary, for all you do! This month, the spotlight is on YOU!!