

READING EAGLE

Preschoolers get hands dirty celebrating International Mud Day

Sunday July 2, 2017 12:01 AM, By [Matt Nanci](#) MUHLENBERG TOWNSHIP, PA

The Albright Learning Center in Muhlenberg Township had a monster on its playground Thursday.

It stood just a few feet tall with a white face, sharp teeth and black eyes with white pupils.

But it wasn't there to terrorize the children. All it wanted to do was eat.

About 40 children between 3 and 5 years old at the center got their hands dirty to satisfy its appetite with mud pies to celebrate International Mud Day.

International Mud Day is observed June 29 each year by playing in the mud to celebrate humans' connections with each other and with the Earth.

The idea of getting dirty and playing in the mud fits in with the center's mission to promote education through experiential and hands-on learning.

"Everything is discovery-based here at our center," said Laura Heckart, director.

That's why the center created a digging pit in its playground about five years ago, and celebrates International Mud Day each year, Heckart said.

The kids made their mud pies by taking a scoop of dirt from the pit and placing it into a foil pan.

Then they added water and mixed in grass and mulch to the mud.

"It looks awful, but delicious to the monster," remarked Declan Heckart, 5, of Wyomissing.

Laura Heckart, Declan's mother, and her staff set up a makeshift kitchen in the center's playground out of some small tables.

After mixing the mud pies, each child placed his or hers into a cardboard oven and let it sit for a minute or two.

Fresh out of the oven, the children would deliver the mud pies into the mouth of the monster, foil pans included.

That was 4-year-old Emma Strunk's favorite part.

"I liked when I fed the monster," said Emma of Wernersville.

Even though Emma didn't like getting her hands dirty, she said she still had fun.

Declan said he liked feeding the monster, too. He also learned a little bit about its taste preferences.

"His favorite mud pie is lime," Declan said.

Reading Eagle: Ben Hasty | [Below] Emma Strunk, 4, of Wernersville and Declan Heckart, 5, of Wyomissing bake their mud pies in a pretend oven Thursday at the Albright Learning Center in Muhlenberg Township. The preschool was celebrating International Mud Day. The pies were fed, pan and all, to the monster below.



Reading Eagle: Ben Hasty [Above] | The mud-pie-eating monster.



Reading Eagle: Ben Hasty | [Left] Declan Heckart feeds his creation to the mud-pie-eating monster. [Right] Emma Strunk, 4, of Wernersville, a preschooler at the Albright Learning Center in Muhlenberg Township, feeds her creation to the mud-pie-eating monster for International Mud Day.



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