

## Children + Mud = Fun

Celebrating International Mud Day at The Children's Place

By Will Broadus [wbroadus@andovertownsmen.com](mailto:wbroadus@andovertownsmen.com), July 6, 2017



[Left]Santino Mohammed, 2, plays in the mud kitchen, set up specially for mud pie and mud soup. [Right] Isobel

Macaux, 2, drops a mud ball into her mixture at the mud kitchen. 9Kenneth Yuszkus)

There were mud pies on the menu Thursday at The Children's Place at Phillips Academy, along with mud muffins and mud soup.

That's because the daycare center was celebrating International Mud Day with a range of activities that encourage children to do what comes naturally to them, which is wallow in mud.

"International Mud Day is celebrated on June 29 each year to help connect kids back to nature," said Carol Landry of Haverhill, the director of the Children's Place. "I remember, when we were little, making mud pies in my grandfather's garden and playing in mud holes. We as a society have gotten away from that. This is allowing kids to reconnect with nature."

There are eight classes at The Children's Place, ranging in age from three months to six years, and they all found something muddy to do.

"There's a mud pool so they can sit and squash," Landry said. "There's an easel where they can do mud prints. They have a cascading mud table here, then they have some mud tray exploration with a variety of natural materials — pine cones and sticks and

pine branches. There's a mud slide, a mud kitchen where they have a water pump and dirt where they can mix and cook, and then our reading area over there, with mud books."

There are about 100 students at The Children's Place, which is operated for Phillips Academy by Bright Horizons. They give preference on their waiting list to families affiliated with the academy, and currently number around 30 children in that category. The staff used plain topsoil from Home Depot to make their mud, which has none of the chemicals that can sometimes be found in garden soil.

The kitchen and book room were adapted from play stations that are already in use at the center's playground, while the other features were invented specially for International Mud Day.

"We were just thinking of ways, if kids didn't want to get totally messed up, that they could use either their fingers or their toes," Landry said.

However dirty the children became, they were each hosed off at the end of their adventures in the mud.

"We promised the parents we would hose them down as best as possible, we just couldn't promise all the creases and crevices" would be clean, Landry said.

She said they invited parents to join their children in muddy activities, but most of them were dressed for work, and demurred. One exception was Andrea Bailey, who recently started teaching biology at Phillips Academy and was wearing casual clothes.

"It's summer so I'm not really teaching, I'm just working in the dorms here," she said.

Bailey said International Mud Day seemed like something that her son, Calum Saints Bailey Pierce, would enjoy.

"He likes to sit in the shower and splash, he also likes to stick his hand in his food, so I figured he would like this, and so far so good," she said.

Kristen Murphy of Lawrence, who has been teaching at The Children's Place for 19 years, said she had no trouble relating to mud.

"We have a lot of marshes behind where we live, and we enjoy it with the children," she said.

Murphy said that, while International Mud Day only comes once a year, this was the kind of activity they typically encourage at The Children's Place.

"We do a lot of mud activities in our sensory table all through spring, putting bugs in there and other parts of nature," she said.

[http://www.andovertownsmen.com/news/lifestyles/children-mud-fun/article\\_491f6dda-db53-5bf5-97db-5536d1ef36c9.html](http://www.andovertownsmen.com/news/lifestyles/children-mud-fun/article_491f6dda-db53-5bf5-97db-5536d1ef36c9.html)



[Left] Iggy Gleich, 15 months, is splattered with mud during the celebration of International Mud Day last week at Phillips Academy. [Right] Caroline Tietjen, 2, stomps in the mud during the celebration of International Mud Day.



Ken Yuzkus/Staff photos [Top] Iggy Gleich, 15 months, has the mud washed off during the celebration of International Mud Day at The Children's Place at Phillips Academy last Thursday.

Ken Yuzkus/Staff photo Calum Saint Bailey Pierce, 8 months, left, and Lily Ing, 1, play in the mud pool during the celebration of international mud day at The Children's Place at Phillips Academy. 6/29/17