



May/June 2026

# Child Development Today



**Mark your calendars for Playdate in the Park!**

Playdate in the Park is a free event celebrating children and families!

**June 3rd, 4-7pm**  
**Stewart Park**  
**Ithaca, NY**




## May and June Observances

**"To the world you may be one person, but to a child, you are the world"**  
- Unknown

May 8th is National Child Care Appreciation Day; a special time to recognize the dedication, compassion, and hard work of child care providers. On behalf of the Child Development Council, thank you for the meaningful work you do every day and for the positive impact you make in the lives of children and families.

**Playdate in the Park is back!** Mark your calendars for June 3 for our annual celebration of children and families. This event is our gift of appreciation to our incredible community. Join us at Stewart Park in Ithaca for free carousel rides all day, and family-focused activities and tasty snacks from 4-7pm!!

June is National Dairy Month, an annual celebration established in 1937, to promote dairy products and their nutritional benefits. To celebrate, the Child Development Council will be participating in the Cortland and Dryden Dairy Parades. Be sure to check out the Hometown Happenings section for dates and times.

June closes out with International Mud Day celebrated each year on the 29th. Although mud play shouldn't be relegated to one day a year, it is still fun to have an annual celebration of one of nature's finest and most open-ended materials.

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# Mud Play



## Mud

by Polly Chase Boyden

Mud is very nice to feel  
All squishy-squash between the toes!  
I'd rather wade in wiggly mud  
Than smell a yellow rose.  
Nobody else but the rosebush knows  
How nice mud feels  
Between the toes.

Mud play isn't just delightful—it supports sensory development, STEM thinking, language growth, and cooperative dramatic play. As children mix mud pies, dig trenches, and feel the squish between their fingers, they explore their senses, use creativity, and build important skills like problem-solving, cooperation, and scientific thinking while deepening their connection with the outdoors. Consider celebrating by creating a designated mud play area or planning simple outdoor activities that invite children to explore, imagine, and get a little messy!

Here is a list of some items to get your mud play area started. You might have extra of these items in your kitchen. If not, most of them can be purchased inexpensively: mixing bowls, various baking pans, wooden spoons, measuring cups, rolling pins, pourers, shaker, sifters, pails, and a storage bin with a lid to store items.

One great activity to do with mud is mud painting. If you can't find a natural source (aka a mud puddle), simply make your own mud paint by mixing dirt with water until it's nice and smooth. You can start with thick paint brushes, but they might switch to their hands, as the children might soon discover that mud is a glorious form of finger paint. If you start with thick paper, the children might decide to switch to tree trunks, rocks, legs, and faces!

## Mud Dough

To make mud dough, invite children to help mix the following: 1 Cup of dirt, 1 Cup of flour, and  $\frac{3}{4}$  Cup of vegetable oil

Let the children stir the dry ingredients together first, then slowly add oil as the children help stir and squeeze the mixture until desired consistency is reached. Mud dough keeps in an airtight container for 7 to 10 days.



"The world is mud-lucious  
and puddle wonderful"  
-E.E. Cummings

# Spotlight On... Week of the Young Child

During the Week of the Young Child, staff from the Child Development Council went to five different libraries in Cortland and Tompkins Counties.

Tasty Monday was celebrated at the Groton Public library making flat bread with middle schoolers.



Music Tuesday was celebrated with finger play and songs during family story time at the Newfield Public Library. Plastic eggs filled with rice were used as shakers and everyone joined together for 'freeze dancing'.



Work Together Wednesday celebrated at story time at Phillips Free Library in Homer. Families enjoyed a read-a-loud of *The Boy with Big, Big Feelings* and *I Love Us: A Book About Family* along with parachute play and tower building.

Artsy Thursday was celebrated with families during pre-school story time at the Cortland Free Library. Families enjoyed a read-a-loud of *The Artist who Painted a Blue Horse* and *Monsters Love Colors* along with no mess smush painting and making animal sun catchers.



Closing out the week, Family Friday was celebrated at Lamont Memorial Free Library in McGraw. Families enjoyed a read-a-loud of *Curious Me!* Families and *The Family Book* along family jam band and family book stretches.

A BIG thank you to the librarians! It was definitely a fun-filled week!

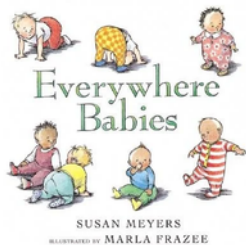
# Provider Corner

Child care providers play a vital role in shaping children, families, and communities. Through patience, creativity, and dedication, you create safe, nurturing spaces where children grow, learn, and build confidence. Your work supports families and strengthens communities every day. While Provider Appreciation Day highlights your impact, your contributions are valued year-round and truly make a difference.

On Zonta's Rose Day, the Zonta Club of Cortland honored Nancy West, a local Family Day Care provider. Zonta's Rose Day is a way of celebrating International Women's Day by recognizing local women who work hard and make a difference in people's lives.

Nancy was celebrated for providing care for children in her licensed home daycare for 35 years. She created a safe, loving, and creative environment for generations of children, while supporting countless families by giving parents the confidence to return to work knowing their children are in trusted, caring hands. Congratulations Nancy! Thank you for all you've done for children and families.

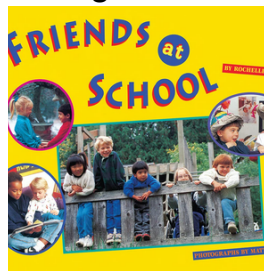
For Ages 0-2



**Everywhere Babies** by Susan Meyers, illustrated by Marla Frazee

Everyone should have this book! Wonderful babies of all kinds doing baby things, alone, with families, and in groups. A fun, loving, celebration of babies. Babies and everyone else will love this book.

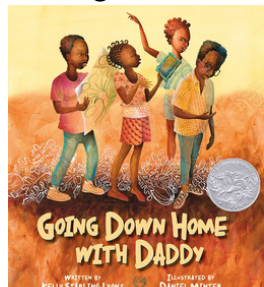
For Ages 3-5



**Friends at School** by Rochell Bunnett, Photographer, Matt Brown

Children with disabilities are included in a natural way without calling attention to their disabilities. Wonderful clear photographs with simple captions show children with and without disabilities playing together at preschool. They feed class pets, read together, play pretend grocery store, make mud pies, scoop pumpkins and much more.

For Ages 5-8



**Calling the Doves/El Canto de las Palomas** by Juan Felipe Herrera, Illustrated by Elly Simmons

Bilingual English/Spanish. This is a beautiful story of the author's childhood as he travelled with his migrant farmworker parents in California. He tells how his mother healed fevers and recited poetry. When his father builds them a home on top of an abandoned car, he tells us the house was "a short loaf of bread on wheels. Inside it was a warm cave of conversations."

# Solution Kit: Classroom Edition

## Visual Schedules

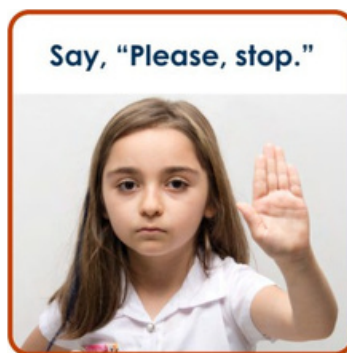
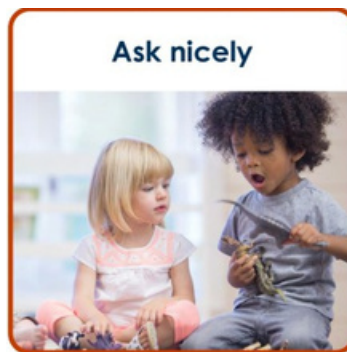
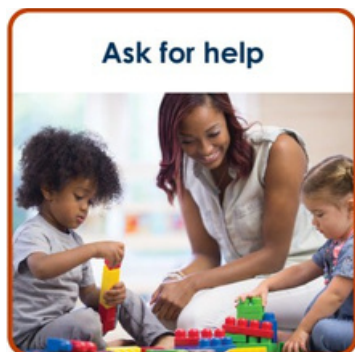
- Print and cut the Solution Kit pictures or save to your computer to resize and print. You can make the cards sturdy by laminating, gluing the cards to cardboard, or covering them with clear contact paper.
- Read the We Can Be Problem Solvers! story with the children to teach the problem solving steps.
- Introduce the Solution Kit with a few solutions at a time.
- Place the solutions in a place where children will see and use them (e.g., hanging on the wall or in a basket).
- Remind children to use the Solution Kit when solving problems in class.
- Offer lots of encouragement when a child tries to use the Solution Kit.
- Comment positively when a child uses the Solution Kit (e.g., “Look at you. You are using the Solution Kit to solve your problem”).



## Example of Solution Kit Cards

For more Solution Kit Cards visit

[https://www.challengingbehavior.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Solution\\_kit\\_cards\\_school\\_EN.pdf](https://www.challengingbehavior.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Solution_kit_cards_school_EN.pdf)



# CACFP Updates: Updates and Incorporating Produce into the CACFP



## Upcoming Updates to the Dietary Guidelines & CACFP

The 2025–2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans have been finalized, and updates to child nutrition programs—including CACFP—are expected to follow.

While detailed CACFP guidance has not yet been released, it is anticipated in the coming months (potentially as early as May). These updates will help clarify how the new dietary recommendations may be reflected in CACFP meal patterns and requirements.

Early discussions indicate a continued focus on:

- Encouraging a variety of nutrient-dense foods
- Emphasizing quality protein sources
- Limiting added sugars and highly processed foods

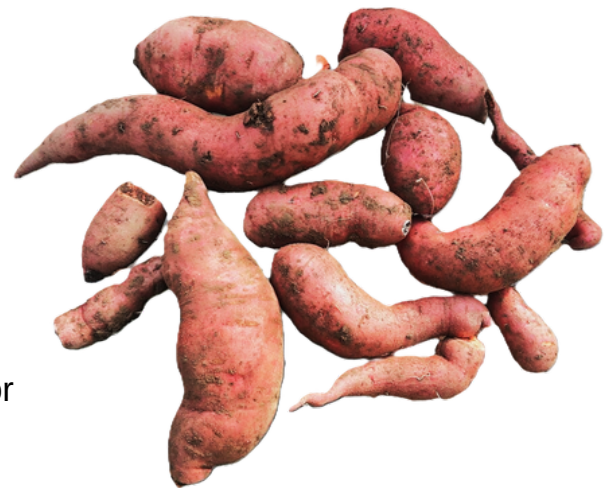
At this time, no immediate changes to CACFP requirements have been announced. Providers should continue to follow current guidelines until official updates are issued.

We will share more information when updates are released.

**Incorporating Local Foods and Gardens** Did you know that fresh, local produce and home or community garden items can be included in CACFP meals and snacks? Using fruits, vegetables, or herbs from local farms or your own garden supports healthy eating and teaches children about where food comes from.

To stay compliant, remember to:

- **Document the source:** Note if the item is from a garden, local farm, or farmers' market.
- **Track number of servings and/or cups/pounds:** Include local items in your daily menu record.
- **Maintain records:** Keep any receipts, donation forms, or garden logs to show compliance during program reviews or state audits.



In New York State, local foods are encouraged as long as meal pattern requirements are met and produce is safely washed. Incorporating seasonal produce can be a fun, educational, and nutritious addition to your program!

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*

# Agency Calendar

## Closings:

May 25<sup>th</sup>- Memorial Day

June 19<sup>th</sup>- Juneteenth

## Meetings:

**May 5<sup>th</sup>**- Center Directors -10:00am-11:00am  
(Google Meet)

**May 5<sup>th</sup>**- SACC Directors -10:00am-11:30am  
(In person- Ithaca Office)

**June 2<sup>nd</sup>**- Center Directors 10:00am-11:00am  
(In person- Ithaca Office)

**June 2<sup>nd</sup>**- SACC Directors- 10:00am-11:30am  
(In person Ithaca office - last one until  
September)

# Resources

## National Dairy Month

<https://www.americandairy.com/dairy-diary/national-dairy-month/>

## International Mud Day

<https://nationaltoday.com/international-mud-day/>

## More mud resources

<https://www.communityplaythings.com/resources/topics/outdoor-learning?keyword=mud>

## Finger Lakes Library System

<https://www.flls.org/>

## Provider Appreciation Day

<https://nafcc.org/fcc-appreciation/>

**Child Development Council's Warm Line (607) 273-0259**

# Hometown Happenings

Here's your round-up of free, fun, and family friendly events happening across Tompkins and Cortland Counties.

Mark your calendars and share with families!

## Ithaca Festival

This year's theme is Downtown Disco! The parade kicks off Thursday the celebration on Thursday, May 28<sup>th</sup> at 6pm, followed by a "kick-off celebration" with live music at the Bernie Milton Pavilion. From Friday through Sunday, enjoy a craft fair, food vendors, exhibits, and live performances.

<https://ithacafestival.org/>

May 28<sup>th</sup>- May 31<sup>st</sup>

Location: Downtown Ithaca

## Cortland Dairy Parade

The parade starts at Arthur St. and N. Main St. in Cortland, heads north toward the hospital, and ends at the Fairgrounds. Arrive early for a good spot—free and open to all.

Tuesday, June 2<sup>nd</sup> 6:30pm

## Dryden Dairy Day Parade

This year's theme is Red, White & Moo in honor of the country's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Based on previous years, the parade will march down Main Street at 9:30am, with live music, food, and family-friendly activities to follow at Montgomery Park.

Saturday, June 13<sup>th</sup>

Location: Main Street & Montgomery Park

## International Mud Day

This globally recognized event is a perfect opportunity for kids and families to immerse themselves in the joy of connecting with nature through mud! Admission is free, with donations gratefully accepted to support ICG's community-focused initiatives.

Saturday, June 20<sup>th</sup> 10:00am-1:00pm

Location: 121 Turtle Lane, Ithaca

# Training Calendar May- June 2026

Date	Time	Location	Title	Description	Instructor	OCFS Categories
5/14	6:30-8:30pm	Cortland Office	<b>Playing Outdoors with Young Children</b>	In this training participants will discuss the challenges and positive strategies we can use to take our young children outdoors.	Lisa Potter	1,3,4
6/17	6:30-8:30pm	Zoom	<b>Building Infant and Toddler Communication Skills</b>	In this training participants will discuss strategies to develop communication skills in infants and toddlers. We will be recognizing the importance of conversations with children, developing a plan to create a print-rich environment, and discussing how to make time for singing in our programs.	Lisa Potter	1, 3

The Child Development Council is happy to offer convenient on-site training for child care programs. Our Team is available to travel to your program, or provide a Zoom link, and teach one of our many training workshops to your staff. Email or call for a training catalog and applicable fees.

To register for training: call (607) 273-0259 or email [training@childdevelopmentcouncil.org](mailto:training@childdevelopmentcouncil.org)

## Current Child Development Council Team

### Child Care Services:

Allison VanGalder  
Ann Turcsik  
Barb Mechalke  
Hannah Behrens  
Lisa Potter  
Ruth Williams  
Sara Sandritter  
Sue Sopp  
Vickie Mundy- Hebert

### Community Services:

Amy Riotto  
Cassandra Carlton  
Jessi Soto-Moyer  
Malinda Rees

### Family Services:

Ashaneé Brooks  
Elizabeth Wolff  
Ken Cassano  
Lisa Bowman  
Lisa Drake  
Michael Hoit

### Administration:

Diane Feldman  
Margaret Tinker  
Melissa Perry  
Michelle Wright

## HOW TO CONTACT US

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-  [Child Development Council](https://www.facebook.com/ChildDevelopmentCouncil)
-  [@child.development.council.cny](https://www.instagram.com/child.development.council.cny)