

 UNI-PRES

# Kindercottage

Home of the Busy Bees!

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564 Veronica Avenue, East St. Louis, IL 62205, [www.unipreskindercottage.org](http://www.unipreskindercottage.org)

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## Mission Statement:

Uni-Pres Kindercottage is a quality early childhood program in East St. Louis serving low-income families with at-risk infants and preschool children six months to five years old.

## Reflections

By Brenda Crisp, Executive Director

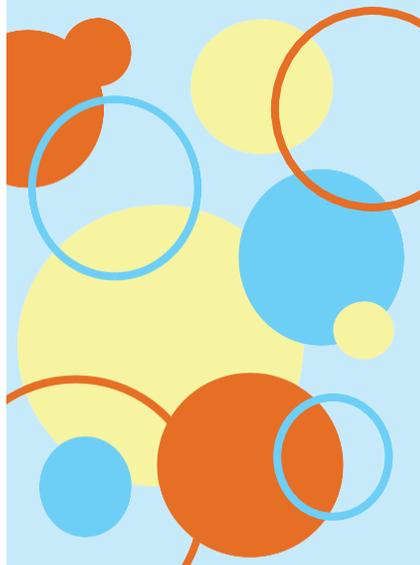
As I sat in my big chair at the window, I began to reflect on the year 2014. I remembered the many days and nights of anxiety, frustration, tears and prayers. I remember the good and the bad times of the year. I remembered mostly the days of our little ones entering the "Big School", the parents getting a job and those who made grades above their expectations. I remember those who came into my life for many reasons, who had gone on to eternal rest, those parents, friends, neighbors and community people who also had gone to rest. I remembered the break-in and destruction of the HVAC units, the pain and words of "hate" I felt because of this. I remember the many words of encouragement and comfort and prayers to help me get pass this feeling. I remember the news of destruction and injustice in Ferguson and my own feelings about the tragic events happening. I remember being asked my opinion of the events and also being there to listen and pray with the people affected by all of this. Throughout this tragic situation, I have prayed that people stop and remember that God answers all prayers, that to begin to heal us, we must all stop, hear and listen to one another as we begin the conversation on race.

Then suddenly, I felt a touch on my shoulder and the words, "Mom, I have been calling you for a long time and you scared me. What on earth were you thinking about so hard, that you didn't respond?"

I shared my thoughts with her, which led to a very long conversation. For those who know me, you know that I can talk for a long time if you are listening. Today, I want to share that conversation with you. It will take some time, so grab a cup of coffee or water, sit down, relax and read, please.

This helps me to heal myself too. Throughout 2014, I prayed for many and for many reasons. If you have visited my office, (junky as it may be), on one of my walls is a picture containing these words, "Rest, God is in control. Fear not, I am with you, be not dismayed; I am your God. I will strengthen you and uphold you with my right hand of justice." Isaiah 41:10. There have been many times in my office, where I sat and just looked at this wall, reminding myself of His words to us, crying and praying for answers, guidance and strength to carry on. He has sent answers many times. Some I don't always hear because although I asked for help, I tried to remedy the situation myself. As you know, this doesn't work but because I am who I am, I try it my way until He stops me and says, "You are not hearing me again."

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You know that I am stubborn and bull-headed, on top of other things I have been called, but when I fall to my knees, pray and most importantly, listen and obey, I am answered by God. I have those needs met whether it is with a person showing up to talk to me or a gift from some of you. He answers my prayers.

I believe injustice is wrong regardless of race, weight, shape, education, sexual orientation. I am against injustice of all types and have voiced my opinion to many. The Ferguson event was about race but also about injustice and police brutality and if we don't talk to each other, work with each other, help each other to correct these things; our world will never be the same. God created His children in all colors, shapes, and sizes and gave up His only Son for our sins and we haven't learned anything yet. Jesus said, "Let the children come" and he didn't put any stipulations on the color of their skin. Don't get me wrong, I am not perfect in any way and I do get frustrated and want to take sides without looking at the facts. Sometimes, I do feel like it is "us" against "them". Sometimes, I am as prejudiced as the people I point fingers at and I know that's not right. How can I look at another and make assumptions but not want assumptions made about me? That's WRONG!

The world is very different now and yet, the same revolutionary beliefs that our forefathers fought for are still around today. Man holds in his hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty, injustice and human life- the belief that rights of man come not from the generosity of the State but from the hand of God. Let us remember these words, "I am the Lord your God, who took you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." What God wants from us most of all is to treat all of His children decently: to be good to their fellow human beings. God is the one who took us out of slavery, not man.

We have arrived in another year, blessed by God. It is my hope that as God's children awaken, we begin to not only talk but to hear and listen to each other, receive His blessings and work closely together to improve our world together.

To each and every one of you, I thank you for reading this lengthy article, answering many of my prayers, listening and praying for UPKC, sharing your gifts with our children and helping me to help our children, staff and families of East St Louis. Enjoy a wonderful and blessed New Year.

Amen, Amen, Amen



## Joyful Thanks

By Brenda Crisp, Executive Director

I hope that each of you have received by now, a thank you note from all here at UPKC. This year many of you had TOO MUCH fun shopping and selecting just the right gifts to make for the children.

With the large number of gifts you shared, we were able to provide gifts to siblings, moms, community children and an adopted family. We were all truly blessed by your thoughtfulness and generosity. As some arrived bearing gifts, we heard of the fun times you had, how you looked for just that right gift for the children. There was so much excitement in the voices of our Youth groups as they arrived, played and told their stories, too. As we gathered everything together to begin the "wrapping party", I saw faces with mouths wide open but heard no words, only gasping; tears streaming down faces that wouldn't stop; many praises and "thanks to God" hugs, oh my. hugs-so many and so tight; and these words rang out loud and clear-"Please

make sure you all thank these wonderful people for what they have done, I have never seen anything like this before!"

So, again, from everyone here and in our community- THANK YOU ALL for making Christmas joyful for everyone.



## Circle of Quality

By Brenda Crisp

The Circle of Quality is the State of Illinois' Department of Children and Family Services program for licensing standards of childcare facilities.

The levels of quality are based on teaching and learning, family and community engagement, leadership and management, qualifications and continuing education.

There are four levels: The Licensed Circle of Quality, The Bronze Circle of Quality, The Silver Circle of Quality and the Gold Circle of Quality.

The benefits of this system are many. It details a process for making quality an ongoing process and sets a consistent set of standards. It helps providers focus on whole child development while also focusing on individual standards. It rewards providers who provide quality childcare while also encouraging them to stay current with emerging research and best practices. It connects providers with expert consultants and assessment professionals.

Uni-Pres Kindercottage is currently preparing for a visit to raise our Circle of Quality from a Provisional Silver Star to a full Silver Star, which will increase our rate of childcare reimbursement from the State by 10%. This is a lot of work and requires a dedicated staff to accomplish this task. We were the very first in the city to obtain a Star rating under the old system (QRS- Quality Rating System) and are now one of only 4 centers out of 14 holding a rating at all. We will not know when this visit will occur so every day, we do what we do best--provide quality care to all of our children every day.

On a related note- The Licensing Representative for DCFS visited us and approved our site to be opened Monday through Friday, 6 am until midnight!!! We are excited because we get a number of parents calling for evening care as many are working temp jobs on 3-11 shifts. Currently we have only one center in East St. Louis that can accommodate them. We are carefully planning this extension because it requires hiring staff and you know – we barely get by now. So let us all say our prayers.



### **Uni-Pres Kindercottage**

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**564 Veronica Avenue  
East St Louis, IL 62205**

PHONE:  
**618.874.6505**

FAX:  
**618.874.6535**

E-MAIL:  
**unipres@sbcglobal.net**



## **Uni-Pres Capital Campaign** By Brenda Crisp, Executive Director

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to our "FIRST CAPITAL CAMPAIGN ". The first year ended December 2014 but I am looking forward to its continuation and completion. This has really been an experience for me!! Before beginning this and talking to many, it all sounded very easy and I could raise \$555,000.00 in no time at all. Well my friends let me say, "THIS AIN'T EASY!"

Yes, it was good that we were able to replace our age old appliances, add a security system, (which everyone loves, even the police), make some very needed replacements to other items and make a very substantial payment on reducing the mortgage but I want to finish everything. There's still much to be done and Money to be Raised. As you look at your budgets, not only support us with your monthly gifts, but include extra to help meet the goals of the Campaign. PLEASE. I really want to pay off the mortgage and build a new playground.

Do you need an update of our goals and how you can help make this happen? If so, please email or call me and I will gladly provide you information.

**Remember to add Uni-Pres Kindercottage to your will or trust!**