



## **Dragonfly Nature Preschool and Day Camp**

8166 Hwy 57

Baileys Harbor, WI 54242

920-839-2802

License Director, Sheryl Honig 920-839-2802 x110; [Sheryl@ridgessanctuary.org](mailto:Sheryl@ridgessanctuary.org)

**This Parent Handbook will be visible near the posted License in the Classroom**

### **Mission Statement**

The Ridges Dragonfly Nature Preschool and Day Camp is dedicated to providing a high-quality early childhood experience that meets young children's developmental needs while initiating them into a life-long, meaningful relationship with the natural world. The program is nature-based, play-based, and child-centered.

### **Statement of Educational Philosophy**

We believe that children are intrinsically motivated to learn. Adults promote learning by:

- Appreciating the individuality of children and celebrating their uniqueness
- Providing a supportive learning environment in which children feel safe to make decisions, try new things, and become resilient to challenges
- Supporting children in their social interactions as they play together, problem-solve together, and resolve conflicts in a positive way
- Providing a rich natural setting that supports nature awareness and aesthetic connection to the natural world
- Planning experiences based on children's interests and abilities that promote developmental growth (social, emotional, cognitive, physical)
- Providing time for uninterrupted, unstructured play that supports creativity, focus, and attention

## **Our Early Childhood Programs**

Our early childhood programs are licensed by the State of Wisconsin, Department of Children and Families ([www.dcf.wisconsin.gov](http://www.dcf.wisconsin.gov)). We are inspected regularly to ensure that we meet licensing standards. We do not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, creed, sexual orientation, national origin or ancestry. We are not staffed to accept children with disabilities that require significant one-on-one time with a teacher. All children must be toilet trained to attend. Toilet trained means: able to pee and poop on the toilet as well as wipe themselves after. Pull-ups are not allowed.

### **Summer Backpack Adventure Camp**

Summer, one- or two-week sessions  
Mornings 9:00 – 12:00  
Ages 4-6  
Class size 15; Two Teachers

### **Dragonfly Nature Preschool**

Fall, Winter, Spring sessions  
Mornings 9:00 – 11:30  
Ages 3-6  
Class size up to 15; Two Teachers

**The Ridges Sanctuary is covered by liability insurance on all premises.**

### **Registration**

To Register, please visit our Website or call (920) 839-2802.

The following items must be completed and returned to the center by the first day of attendance:

- *Child Care Enrollment Form* that includes *Health History and Emergency Care Plan*
- *State of Wisconsin Immunization Form*

To protect each family's confidentiality, we will not disclose personal information regarding a child or a child's family to anyone who is not authorized to receive this information.

### **Payments and Refunds**

Fees are to be paid at time of registration unless another arrangement is made. Scholarships may be available. There will be no reductions for additional children from one family. No refunds will be given for days when children do not attend due to illness or other reasons.

## Curriculum

In a "Nature-Based Preschool," nature is at the heart of the curriculum. Our child development goals are the same as any high quality early childhood program, and we achieve these goals through nature-based experiences. Our practices reflect best practices in early childhood (as set out by the *National Association of the Education of Young Children* and *Wisconsin Models of Early Learning Standards*) as well as best practices in Environmental Education (as outlined by *North American Association of Environmental Education, Natural Start Alliance*).

We find nature to be very hands-on, REAL, and sensory, and therefore perfect for inspiring young children's engagement and play. This kind of play supports collaboration, language development, natural knowledge, balance and strength, problem-solving, creativity, risk-taking and resiliency, independence, and contentment.

We teach Emergent Curriculum. This means we plan activities based on seasonal cycles in nature, and based on children's interests. For example, if the group sees and is interested in milkweed pods, we plan hikes to find them, we read books about them, we compare pods for ripeness, we count them, we measure them, we experiment with seed dispersion, we do art with them, we learn about their connections to other living things in their habitat.

### What is a day like?

- We begin the day independently taking care of belongings, by putting water bottle and hat in our hiking packs, to be ready for the day
- We ease into the day with unstructured play that allows children to engage at their own pace
- We gather as a community circle and sing group nature songs and create rhythms that we share with each other – we sound so good when we do this together!
- We listen to a story and share ideas about it. We use our language to communicate our own responses. Sometimes teachers record these ideas in print.
- We take a bathroom/warming break, practicing our independence with our clothes
- We head off on a hike with our hiking packs on our backs, and our eyes and ears and nose open for noticing
- We stop at a Meadow or Sand dunes or Forest or Stream or Pine Grove for long, unstructured play. We climb, run, jump, roll, and explore! We use the nature tools and art tools and journal that are in our hiking packs and we put them away when we are finished.
- We take pictures of things we do and make, we use language to tell about it, and teachers may record those ideas in print
- We have opportunities for counting, measuring, comparing, patterning, experimenting
- We put back on our hiking packs and head for the Red Pine Grove where we each nestle into our pine-needle-soft Sit Spots, alone, where we rest, observe, listen, draw, cut, connect with nature
- We come together to use our language to describe what we noticed during our Sit Spots
- We put back on our hiking packs and hike back singing about what "we had fun" doing in the forest
- We take care of our belongings by removing our hats and water bottles from our hiking packs so we can take them home – we are so independent and responsible!
- Throughout the day, teachers document student learning and interests, in order to plan for the next session.

## Nature is our Classroom

We will be outside for most or all of the morning. We will move indoors in these conditions:

- Heavy rain
- Lightning
- Wind Advisory (forest can be dangerous with falling limbs)
- Temperatures above 90 degrees F
- Wind chills of 0 degrees F or below

***In the event that Gibraltar Schools close due to severe weather, our preschool will close. Parents will be contacted to pick up their children within the hour.***

### What is the difference between a risk and a hazard?

A risk is a situation that provides a challenge, in which the child has some control. A hazard is a situation in which there is no control.

#### **Hazards**

Dangerous Weather  
Unstable Ice  
Poison Ivy

#### **Risks**

Climbing a Log  
Handling Sticks  
Boot skating on solid ice

At Dragonfly Nature Preschool and Backpack Adventure Camp we strive to eliminate hazards. However, we do believe in the value of age-appropriate risk. Learning to take appropriate risks can help children develop confidence and can even improve executive function as children learn to consider and assess different situations. Different children will often study the same scenario – such as walking across a long – and reach different conclusions. We feel that learning to make these kinds of decisions is a valuable skill. We also believe taking sensible risks and being safe can exist side by side.

### **Staff**

Staff carefully observe and guide children's learning and plan mornings that reflect children's interests and needs. Each group of 15 children will have 2 educators. One or both educators has credentials and experience in early childhood education; one or both educators has credentials and experience in environmental education; one or both educators has certification in Nature-Based Early Childhood Education. Staff (including substitute teachers) are trained in First Aid, CPR, Traumatic Head Injury, child abuse and neglect laws, health and safety procedures, and school policies. A background check is required of all staff members. Staff are mandated by law to report to Door County Department of Social Services any suspected child abuse or neglect.

### **How to dress**

Most of our time is spent outside. We believe that there is no such thing as bad weather, just people dressed poorly for the weather! As long as your child is dressed appropriately, they will enjoy playing outside in every season!

Please bring a seasonally appropriate labeled change of clothes to store in your child's classroom bin. This should include shirt, pants, underpants, and several pairs of socks.

Please wear outdoor appropriate shoes with **closed toes** and no heels that your child can get dirty and wet and that they can put on and take off themselves. Bring a **second pair of shoes to wear indoors**. If a child gets water inside their outdoor shoes, they will want a dry pair. Please avoid Crocs or Flip Flops, as children are prone to tripping or stubbing toes when wearing them.

Teachers will provide a handout with helpful hints for dress during changing seasons.

### **Drop-Off and Pick-Up Procedure**

We are required to maintain a current, accurate written record of daily attendance for all of the children. Please assist us in meeting this requirement by signing your child in and out of the center on the required Daily Attendance Record.

Children will only be released to persons listed on the enrollment form. If anyone other than the child's parent or someone who is listed on the enrollment form is to pick up a child, we need to be notified in **writing or by a telephone call in advance**. The person picking up the child may need to show a driver's license or other picture ID. Parents may use the form "Alternate Arrival / Release Agreement – Child Care Centers" to provide this information to the center.

Personal pets are not allowed on the premises of Ridges Sanctuary.

We highly value communication between teachers and parents. If there are issues that need to be discussed, please work with us to arrange a convenient time to talk between 12:15 and 4:00 so we can give the issue the attention it deserves.

### **Absences**

**Child Absence:** If your child will not attend a regularly scheduled day, please let us know 30 minutes before your child's scheduled arrival time (leave message for Director at 920-839-2802). If a child who is scheduled to arrive at The Ridges does not arrive within 90 minutes after the specified time on the written agreement signed by the parent, and we have not been notified in advance of the child's absence, we will attempt to contact the parent or guardian to determine the child's whereabouts. All attempts, whether successful or unsuccessful, will be documented.

**Teacher Absence:** In the event that a staff member is absent, a substitute teacher will assist the remaining staff. Before the substitute or any other provider required to meet the staff-to-child ratios begins to work with the children, we will provide them with an orientation. Completion of the orientation will be documented and placed in the employee file.

## Snacks

We will provide a simple healthy snack (e.g., crackers and/or cheese, fruit, vegetables). We are a nut-free program. Menus will be posted for parents in the classroom. **Parents will provide a full water bottle.** We also have drinking water on the premises. Parents are expected to notify staff of any food allergies or restrictions. Parents may be asked to provide their own snack should allergies be severe.

Children can have **life-threatening allergic reactions** to food products that have been brought to school to share on special occasions, which is **why we do not allow outside treats.**

## Communication

You are the expert on your child! We value your input! Please keep us notified of any significant events or changes at home since they can have an impact on school behavior. We will be sure to let you know of any changes in behavior we see.

The best way to stay informed about what is happening at our program is through email. In addition, we will be using a password-protected site for photos and newsletters using Shutterfly. Teacher will post photos from class and a newsletter. You have the option of downloading and printing any photos you may want to keep.

Conference will be scheduled with parents of Dragonfly Nature Preschool students after school hours in November and March/April. Parents are welcome to request a conference at any other time.

## Health

### Child Illness / Injuries

Children who are ill are not to be brought to The Ridges. The following are examples of children who are ill:

- **A temperature of 100 degrees F or higher when un-medicated**
- **Vomiting or diarrhea has occurred in the past 24 hours**
- **A contagious disease such as chicken pox, strep throat, or pink eye**
- **An unidentified rash**
- **Continues to have symptoms of illness**
- **Has a constant, thick, colored nasal discharge**

If a child should become ill while at the center, parents will be contacted immediately. Sick children will be isolated within sight or hearing of a teacher or substitute and made as comfortable as possible. Children should be picked up within one hour. If the child is not picked up within one hour, the emergency contact person on the child's enrollment form will be called.

Children may return to The Ridges when they are **symptom free for 24 hours**, have been appropriately treated or have been given medical approval to return.

We will report all communicable diseases, when required, to the regional licensing office of the Department of Children and Families, to the local health department and to parents of all enrolled children. Parents of all enrolled children will be notified when their child has been exposed to an illness other than a communicable disease.

Staff members have received training in first aid. We will follow standard emergency medical procedures for treating injuries. A head injury, allergic reaction to food, or bee sting will be treated as a serious injury, and parents will be notified as soon as possible. We each hold a current certification in first aid, infant and child CPR and AED (automated external defibrillator).

Superficial injuries will be washed with soap and water and covered with a bandage or treated with ice. Parents will be told about the minor injury when the child is picked up. Any incident involving blood will be recorded in the medical journal.

If there is a need for emergency medical treatment, 911 will be called and the child will be taken to Door County Memorial Hospital. Should an ambulance be needed, parents will be responsible for any costs. Parents will be contacted as soon as possible after contacting 911.

All medication administered, accidents or injuries occurring during the time the child is in our care, marked changes in behavior or appearance and any observation of injuries to a child's body received outside of our care will be entered into the center's medical logbook.

We have not been authorized by the licensing agency to provide care for mildly ill children.

#### Medications

In general, we will not administer medications. Exceptions for EpiPen, and inhalers will be made on a case-by-case determination. Please indicate such need on the Enrollment Form and speak with staff about this need. Parents should provide a Dr's note and an Authorization form for any prescribed medication and provide specific written information about a child's use of an inhaler. Parents are responsible for transporting medications back and forth to The Ridges on a daily basis unless arrangements are made for extended storage.

#### Sunscreen & Bug Spray

If you wish your child to have sunscreen or bug spray, the parent or caregiver **should apply it before class, outdoors, or even at home before coming to school.** The teachers do not apply these products to the children.

## **Child Guidance**

Children's behavior will be guided by setting clear limits or rules for children. We will talk with children about expected behaviors and model those behaviors consistently for them. We will state positively what children can do, using specific terms (e.g., "you need to walk" rather than "don't run"). Undesirable behavior will be addressed by redirecting children to another activity. Children will be given a wide variety of age-appropriate activities to choose from and will be given the attention they need before they demand it. Behavior management will be for the purpose of helping children develop self-control, self-esteem, and respect for the rights of others.

We understand that there will be times when a child will become distraught, fussy, or will not quit crying. Our first action in these situations will be an attempt to determine the cause of distress. We understand that crying is normal. At these times, staff will stay calm and will do whatever we can to soothe your child. Sometimes this may mean just allowing the child to cry for a few minutes and then trying again. However, there also may be times when staff needs your advice or assistance, and we won't hesitate to call you if we feel that it is necessary.

We recognize that no single technique will work with children every time. If a child exhibits unacceptable behavior, staff will request a conference with parents to develop a plan to deal with the behavior. If the behavior continues, the next steps may include referrals to appropriate community resources and/or discharge of the child from the program.

In accordance with DCF 250 Licensing Rules for Family Child Care Centers, actions that may be psychologically, emotionally or physically painful, discomforting, dangerous or potentially injurious are prohibited. Prohibited actions include spanking, hitting, pinching, shaking, slapping, twisting, throwing or inflicting any other form of corporal punishment on the child; verbal abuse, threats or derogatory remarks about the child or the child's family; physical restraint, binding or tying the child to restrict the child's movement; enclosing the child in a confined space such as a closet; withholding or forcing meals, snacks, or naps; actions that are cruel, aversive, humiliating or frightening to the child, or punishing a child for lapses in toilet training.

## **Discharge or Dismissal**

A child may be discharged from the program for reasons such as, but not limited to:

- Failure to pay fees on times (grounds for immediate termination, without advance notice)
- Lack of parental cooperation
- Inability of our program to meet the needs of the child. We will meet with parents to attempt to resolve any issues before ending the enrollment. The parent may be referred to other community resources
- Repeated failure to pick up the child at the scheduled time
- Failure to complete and return required forms.

We will give a two-day written notice of intent to discharge a child, except when the discharge is due to parent's failure to keep current with fees owed. If discharge occurs, fees will not be charged for the remaining unused days.



## Emergency Procedures

Classroom teachers and camp counselors are required to have attendance sheets, emergency information for each child, bottled water, and a first aid kit with them always.

Please make sure your emergency phone numbers are up to date. You MUST have an alternative adult who can pick up your child if you cannot be reached. Sick or injured children must be picked up within half an hour.

Source of emergency medical care: Door County Memorial Hospital: 323 S. 18<sup>th</sup> Ave. Sturgeon Bay, WI

During an emergency we will make sure that parents know children are safe, the nature of the emergency, and any changes in our location. Rely only on official communication from The Ridges Sanctuary or public safety officials. Your child's safety is our priority.

Fire drills shall be practiced with the children monthly. In addition, tornado drills shall be practiced with the children monthly from April through October. Completion of drills will be documented.

In the event of a lost child, we will check all areas of the center. If the child cannot be found, the child's parents and/or emergency contact and the police will be notified immediately. We will notify the Department within 24 hours after the occurrence.

In the event of a tornado warning, the children will be taken to an interior room of the Nature Center (if on south campus) or to the Range Light basement (if on north campus).

In the case of an emergency that would require an evacuation, children will be evacuated through the nearest safe exit. The attendance form and list of phone numbers for parents and emergency contact will be taken along. Children will be assembled at a safe distance from the building.

If this occurs at the Nature Center, and if we are unable to re-enter the building after a necessary evacuation, we will take the children to the Baileys Harbor Town Hall and contact The Ridges Sanctuary Executive Director. If this occurs at the Kaye Cabin, we will move to the Upper Range Light building for shelter if necessary.

In the case of an emergency that requires a lockdown, such as a bomb threat or a threat of bodily injury, children and staff will be directed to a classroom or work area that can be locked and then we will immediately notify the Executive Director of The Ridges and the police department. We will have a cell phone or landline and our emergency folder. The doors will be locked in the room.

If we lose the use of heat, water or electricity while children are in attendance, we will contact parents to pick up their children.

In the event that Gibraltar Schools close due to severe weather, the center will close. Parents will be contacted to pick up their children within the hour.

## **Waterfront Procedures**

Parents will indicate child's swimming ability on the Enrollment Form.

All lifeguards must be certified by a nationally recognized certifying body. There must be at least one person at each waterfront activity certified in Standard First Aid and age appropriate CPR and a stocked first-aid kit.

Lifeguard Rules:

- A minimum ratio of guards to participants is established for each waterfront activity.
- Guards must be certified and demonstrate a thorough knowledge of safety practices, equipment use, and technique.
- A minimum of two staff must be with campers in the Swimming Area at all times.
- Lifeguards must NOT: read, sunbathe, take part in long conversations, write letters, or participate in other activities that distract from camper supervision.
- All guards must be out of the water, on the docks or in the canoes, continuously surveying the water and located in positions to quickly assist any swimmer.

If severe weather approaches (thunder and lightning), all waterfront areas will be closed, and children must leave the area immediately. Other weather conditions (fog, beach advisory, high winds) which may close the waterfront areas will be up to the discretion of the Camp Director.

Children and staff must follow all safety rules as posted for all waterfront activities. Staff accompanying children are expected to assist in enforcing rules.

## **Photos and Social Media**

Please note that on the Enrollment Form, if you signed a release granting The Ridges Sanctuary, its representatives and employees, the right to take photos of your child in connection with Dragonfly Nature Preschool or Backpack Adventure Camp, you authorized the Ridges Sanctuary to use and publish the photos in print and/or electronically, with or without child's name, for any lawful purpose, such as publicity, illustration, advertising, and Web content.

Please remember that online posts and social media conversations are not private. We expect our entire preschool community to abide by the following rules regarding social media.

- Do not share confidential information, internal school discussion, or personal and specific information about students, parents, teachers, or staff on social media sites.
- Do not post photos that identify any of our preschool children by name, or that show individual child faces, without prior permission from that child's parents or guardians.

**We will post for you to see:**

- License Certificate
- Any stipulation, condition, exemption or exception that affects the license
- Results of the latest monitoring visit (Noncompliance's Statement and Correction Plan OR Compliance Statement)
- Any enforcement action—order, forfeiture, temporary suspension, denial or revocation—issued by the Department as soon as it is received. These items will remain posted until the violations have been verified as corrected and the action is closed.
- Policies (this handbook)