

September 2016

This month's edition of the *Eco-Healthy Child Care® Spotlight* is on *My Second Home* family child care, located in Bradford, Vermont.

My Second Home has been an Eco-Healthy Child Care® (EHCC) endorsed facility for 5 years. Director Meri Saladino cares for toddlers and preschoolers and has always been committed to making her child care program as eco-friendly as possible. Wanting to provide the best care possible, Meri is motivated to “always improve and go beyond state requirements”. It is very apparent that Meri goes the extra mile to benefit the health and well-being of the children in her care.

When *My Second Home* began filling out the Eco-Healthy Child Care® Checklist, Meri and her staff realized that they were already complying with many of the best practices listed! One of the checklist standards that they weren't yet meeting, was being a “carpet free” facility. As such, they have been removing as much carpet as possible, and replacing it with bamboo flooring along the way. Using the Checklist as a guide and the informational resources provided by EHCC, Meri has spearheaded the implementation of many new eco-friendly practices. *My Second Home* now uses only no- or low-VOC paint for art supplies and construction projects. Additionally, she and her staff created a mercury spill kit, which came in handy when they needed to safely clean up a broken compact fluorescent light bulb.

What really makes this facility stand out, is their commitment to drafting and maintaining program policies that further protect children. A “No Idling” policy has been adopted, and parents are made aware of how car idling directly affects the health of children. Even more, *My Second Home* is currently building a greenhouse that will be used to grow 100% organic fruits and vegetables. Beyond providing opportunities for children to learn about gardening and healthy eating, this will also cut down on their costs to buy and serve organic produce!

In addition to fostering a healthy environment at her facility, Meri also writes eco-friendly articles for the [Vermont Child Care Providers Association's](#) quarterly newsletter, which reaches over 300 child care providers. Below is an excerpt from one of Meri's publications:

Happy Spring Fellow Child Care Providers,

Whether you have space for a large garden plot or only room for a container you can make the experience happen. One of the easiest, kid friendly, plants to grow is beans. Not only are they nutritious and delicious and many kids love them right off the vine, they give back to the earth rich nutrients...They will happily grow up a fence or trellis or you can train them to wrap around. I am going to try training my beans to wrap up and over an old cloth tunnel. Once they're set I can remove the tunnel and have a magical space to crawl through.

Meri has also been advocating for Vermont's Quality Rating Improvement System - STARS (Step Ahead Recognition System) - to adopt Eco-Healthy Child Care® checklist standards for their state-wide child care recognition requirements. Meri is providing an impressive example of how to take her facility above and beyond EHCC best practices recommendations - by finishing the greenhouse to provide 100% organic produce! We're pleased to spotlight *My Second Home* for all that they are doing to keep children healthy.

