

# CHILDREN AS CITIZENS

*Through the acknowledgement and respect of each child, teacher and family member, we model and teach each other how to listen, build relationships and create a sense of belonging in each studio, the school, and the context of the deCordova community. The studio is an extension of the home, the neighborhood, and the world. We strive for our school to be a place that embraces our diversity. With this sense of well-being and connection, we become aware of our effect on the environment and responsibility to each other and a greater whole. (LNS Family Handbook, pg 7)*



## Places to Experience in the Sculpture Park

Jarrett Mellenbruch, "Haven", 2014

*"Mellenbruch's sculpture creates a gateway for fine art to intersect with environmental concerns in order to benefit not only an animal species but human agriculture as well, (one third of our food is pollinated by honeybees)." - thetrustees.org*



### Teachers:

Last year we integrated a Food Drive into the studios, as a concrete way for children to become aware of our "responsibility to each other and a greater whole." It was a positive experience and the faculty decided to repeat the Food Drive annually in March.

Evident in the Storypark posts are the teachers' use of books to support children's developing understanding of a food pantry and how a food pantry might organize its goods. The message that "everyone needs help sometimes," is pervasive. Teachers have posed questions at studio gatherings to encourage children's thinking around the meaning of a Food Drive. Families have taught children about generosity by contributing to the drive! A strong home-school connection supports children's sense of belonging.

### Books:

*Kevin and the Food Drive*

*Enough to Go Around*

*Saturday at the Food Pantry*

*Sidewalk Pantry*



## Children:



Children are the recipients of care from birth. Through this care, they develop healthy attachments with their primary caregivers. These are secure attachments and the quality of these lay the foundation for empathy and compassion. This foundation is being built upon already existing hardwiring in the brain which allows infants to chart the experiences of others!

As children grow and develop, their cognition of empathy begins to complement the emotional foundation that is in existence. They create schemas to increase this understanding. Experiences, both on the receiving and giving end, translate to a deeper sense of empathy. Not only do children feel the need to care, they understand the importance of this care. They can even begin to distinguish the type of care different beings need. It's not a "one size fits all" package.



So how do we support empathetic growth in young children? First and foremost, we work on relationships - building ones based on respect, trust, and care. We model empathy for children (people, animals, insects, plants - all living things!). We share stories; communicate and narrate/scaffold. And we offer play as a way in which children can serve and return. This month, our LNS children have been given agency to care for others through our school-wide food drive. They will help propel the collection and management of food, and think of contributions they can make to their community. They get to show others *how they care*.



## Families:

Our school based community service project presents a provocation for families to slow down and involve their child(ren) in the process of gathering items for the food pantry. The children had agency in selecting the food to donate and contribute to a group effort. There is excitement as the food stock builds and children see how their family, joined with other families, have accomplished so much!

This project seeds topics for conversations with your child, perhaps reflecting on the reality that "everyone needs help sometime." Families modeling how to help others impacts children's moral development. It can be simple things such as: checking in on a neighbor, picking up litter on a walk or making a card for someone who might need some cheer. It is by doing, we learn.

If you are unable to go to the Food Pantry on Wednesday and would like to bring your child another time, please let us know and we can help you organize a visit.

