



November 2025

Dear Friend,

When you decided to send your child to ITC, you relied on our teachers to know your child deeply. **You trusted your child's teacher to know when to help and when to pause**, allowing your child to work through challenges and achieve success. We invite you to support ITC to ensure all children have this chance to succeed.

Imagine this: You're standing in the woods, watching your child struggle, tears brimming in her eyes, stuck at the base of a tall tree. Her classmates are climbing above her, but she can't find her footing, the branches seeming impossibly far away.

Every fiber of your being compels you: ***Rush in. Help her up. Solve the problem.*** You know you could wipe those tears away instantly, and it would take just seconds.

But what if the greatest gift you can give this girl is not doing it for her, but providing her with confidence, she can do it herself?

Vivian Ricketts, whose quiet dedication as a teacher at ITC spans an incredible 43 years, understands this truth perfectly. Viv recalled this scene unfolding at the base of a V-shaped tree in the Big Woods. She knew she could have lifted the child, but instead, she watched and said gently:

"I can't lift you up, because you need to be able to safely get down. I'm going to be here to make sure that you're safe. But it really is your job to get yourself up into the tree."



ITC teacher, Viv, watches as a young girl finds her inner strength.

While the child struggled through her tears, Viv calmly offered verbal support and emotional encouragement, not hands. As this little girl continued to climb through her fears, Viv simply placed her own foot on the tree trunk; just a single foothold, nothing more. **And just like that, the young girl stepped up and pulled herself into the branches.**

This moment of triumph was so powerful that she cried again - this time with pride!

At ITC, we resist the urge to rescue. **We offer roots strong enough to hold children as they discover their own wings.** According to Viv, this is all based on building trusting relationships:

“It all centers around connections and relationships...It’s the way to get children to feel safe, to explore, to play, to learn. It’s the way they feel respected, known, and valued.”

For nearly 45 years, it has been our commitment to nurturing young children’s growth through **nature-based play, small group experiences, and dedicated early childhood educators, like Viv.**

Childhood lives here is our philosophy. It is our daily practice, witnessed in small, wondrous ITC moments: an infant crawling away from a teacher to retrieve a toy out of reach, a toddler discovering ice crystals in the mud or seeing their reflections in a puddle; a young boy finding his quiet spot in the book corner to regroup; **a preschooler who once needed a hand to walk down the hill, now climbing trees on her own.**

Please contribute today to help sustain this exceptional learning environment. Your gift will empower our devoted, long-tenured teachers, leverage our nature-based environment, and draw new professionals to ITC. Viv’s memory of the young girl, along with the time and freedom the woods provide, allows children to be children. Your gift helps us protect this irreplaceable treasure for generations to come.

Your gift allows young children to discover their own strength, thanks to a trusted teacher who offers a foothold and believes they can do hard things!

Thank you for believing in children’s freedom to explore and their connection to nature. Your generosity ensures they can grow strong wings at ITC.

With deep gratitude,



Barbara Carlson
Executive Director
Infant Toddler Children’s Center



James Walter
Board Chair

P.S. Please send your best gift today to give children the best chance to grow strong roots and wings. Go to bit.ly/itcacton to make a donation in honor of your favorite ITC teacher or memory!