



## Meeting Up

March 12, 2021

Our first day back into an outdoor program brought with it not only the beauty of the morning but a crowd of excited families, ready to see faces that our eyes have not touched upon face-to-face, in many months. The excitement of connecting to one another emanating from the adults brought bright smiles all around, and the children were no exception. Their eyes hungrily darted around the field and hilly slopes of grass, seeing one another as well as noting the plentiful sticks and twigs to be investigated. Within mere minutes, a gathering of sticks were laid on the slope at Ms. Daniela's feet. She must have been the unspoken designated stick keeper.



Alder, sitting in his stroller eagerly watched Max run around looking for and bringing back interesting sticks, occasionally stopping to show his mom and Alder his treasures. Eventually, he was given a stick and in turn he tried to offer the stick back. Perhaps he was offering it to be a part of the collection or offering it to Max as he continued to search for more sticks.



Released from the seat for a leisurely stroll, Alder was stopped by Juliette (Ju-Ju) as she offered him the treasure she found. He hunkered down to accept her gift and on the way, he discovered the grass and leaves his hand happened to graze.



His grasping and searching fingers started collecting leaves and stems. While he was making these discoveries, his otherwise unoccupied hand was being monopolized as Max and Ju-Ju tried to give him the rocks they found and desperately wanted to share. I wondered if they (Max and Ju-Ju) recognized that Alder couldn't move around freely and quickly and decided to bring

nature's offerings to him. I've been fortunate enough to be on the receiving end of thoughtful gifts and I noticed that we gift things we love or find interesting to others we care about and I wondered if this was no different.



Not to be deterred from giving, Ju-Ju picked up a stem that was found and proffered. With a determined set to her jaw, she extended her gift and tried to make it enticing by softly running the twig across Alder's head the same gentle way she witnessed from Ms. Daniela. As Alder looked around for more to discover, Ju-Ju again tried to engage him by smoothing his wispy hair with a gloved hand and then offered to put her sunglasses on him. *How else was Ju-Ju trying to anticipate Alder's needs?*



She must have missed him greatly over the last few months because she leaned over and pulled him to her to give him a little snuggle and to stroke his cheek.

*With all the busy-ness around of collecting sticks and twigs, and saying hello to friends it occurred to me that Ju-Ju really missed Alder. She stayed for quite a long time and I wondered if in trying to anticipate his needs and trying to figure out what to give him, she was trying to satisfy something within herself too. Ju-Ju implemented the natural elements as tools for showing us what she was thinking by displaying physical affection, playing out the thoughtfulness of finding and providing gifts and shielding him from the brightness of the sun. I wondered if this was her way of showing him how she cared deeply for him or maybe she recognized that he wasn't as mobile as the other surefooted children and wanted to ensure his comfort.*

*How do we like to show friends we appreciate them? How do we show them we care deeply and that we missed their physical presence?*