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APRIL 2016



Important Dates & Info

Tuition Due - April 1 Fundraising fee due as well.

Slice of Summer Mushroom Camp Public Registration Opens
Apr. 4 so get yours in ASAP!

CLASS IS IN SESSION April 12!

Pirates Package Drawing – April 13

Dine and Donate Spirit Day – April 14 *Taste of Lebo!* Lebo Subs and Piccadilly Frozen Yogurt – all day!

MFLC Board Meeting – April 20

MFLC Open House/Musical – April 21, 6:30 pm

Schoola Clothing Drive collection
- April 25-29

Kids Marathon and Toddler Trot

- April 30 (Pgh. Marathon - May 1)

Ice Cream Social – May 19, 6:00- 7:30pm, Mt. Lebanon Park (No rain date.)

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Last Day of School – May 24

Family Picnic at Mt. Lebanon Park – May 25, 11am-1pm (No rain date.)

Ways to Help MFLC

- United Way agency # is 885339.
- Giant Eagle Apples for the Students program # is 5245.
- Save *Labels for Education* and Tyson *Project A+* labels.

WWW.GOFUNDME.COM/MFLC2015

smile.amazon.com shopping.escrip.com

We would like to know how well we are doing as a preschool. Parent questionnaires will be in the children's cubbies and online near the end of the month. Please take a few minutes to fill one out!

From the Director ~ Joan Harrison

Spring has sprung! This has been the mildest winter I can remember in a long time...thank you, Mother Nature! So now that the days are longer and the weather is nicer, it is a perfect time for outside play. Put away the iPad and computers; turn off the televisions and iPhones. Outside is where you want to be.

The outdoors is the very best place for preschoolers to practice and master emerging physical skills. It is the outdoors where children can fully and freely experience motor skills like running, leaping, and jumping. The outside is the perfect place for ball playing. Practicing, throwing, catching, hitting, and kicking. Children can also practice other skills such as swinging on a swing, pushing a swing, pulling a wagon, and riding a bike. And, it could even help preserve vision...

"Children who spend more time outdoors during the day may have a reduced rate of nearsightedness, also known as myopia," according to an American Medical Association study reported in Science World Report.

Other benefits of outside play are burning calories, which can prevent childhood obesity. Playing in the sunshine is vital to the immune system and makes us feel happier. Who ever saw a sad child playing in the outdoors? The outdoors also offers ways to increase social and emotional development. The outside is where the best games are played and invented. "Hide and seek" is a great example of this. Although children are only playing for fun, they are learning communication skills as they play together. Number relationships are built as they keep and count. Last, but not least, cooperation is learned in taking turns and playing together.

Preschoolers learn much through their senses. Outside there are many wonderful things to see (animals, birds, flowers), to hear (birds singing, wind blowing), to smell (fragrant flowers, and the air after a rainstorm), to touch (caterpillars, butterflies, or the bark of the tree), and to taste (raindrops falling on their tongue). What a wonderful way to experience all five senses.

Think about it: playing on an iPad, computer, or phone only limits you to two senses. Outside is the appropriate place where children can run, jump, yell, be messy, and use all the energy that they have inside. So think back to your own childhoods, think about your fondest memories of being outside. Maybe it was feeling the sun, or the first day you went outside to play in shorts, climbing a tree, learning to jump rope, playing tag, riding your bike, or having a picnic in the park.

Welcome to spring and taking advantage of all the wonderful opportunities the outside has to offer.

Speaking of outdoor play... coming soon to our playground, a new swing set and sandbox generously donated by Ray and Joneen Betler!

REMINDER: Classes WILL be held

Tuesday, Apr. 12 (a change from the original school calendar) as a makeup day from the March 3 cancellation due to the Disability Summit held at Beth El.

Be sure to check out the bulletin board by the bench in the hallway for important school info and upcoming events!

A BIG Thank-You to...

- All our parents who adjusted their schedules during the Disabilities Summit held at Beth El.
- Hollie DeLuca for coordinating our Bruegger's Tuesdays in March fundraiser.
- Lydia and Dominic DeLuca for donating puzzles.
- Melanie Johnston for coordinating the Mixed Bags fundraiser.
- All the raffle ticket sellers and Carrie Stock and Erin Betler for coordinating the raffle and volunteers.
- Our raffle donors: Wabtec (Betler family), Omni William Penn (George Halter), Enrico Biscotti Company (Umbras family), Arpino Trattoria and Snapology.
- Our staff who participated in the "teacher time" raffle.
- All the parents who assisted with picture days.



Summer" Mushroom Summer Camp 2016!

This is a four-week summer program for children ages 3-6 that will be offered at Mushroom Family Learning Center June 6 to July 1. Forms were in your cubbies last month; public registration will begin April 4. If you have any questions please ask Joan! (See last page.)

From the Board President ~ Erin Betler

Happy April! Spring break has come and gone, but the month of April will be filled with family fun from beginning to end. What's not to love about a month that begins with a day dedicated to fun pranks and jokes?! Colorfully frosted meatloaf-filled cupcakes, anyone?

Is your spring fever making your want to eat al fresco? I have good news for you then! The kind people at Lebo Subs and Piccadilly Artisan Yogurt have agreed to hold a "TASTE OF LEBO SPIRIT DAY" fundraiser for us on Thursday, April 14! Both venues will be donating a percentage of their sales that day to our school. Please head to Uptown Mt. Lebanon with our Mushroom friends, eat some delicious hoagies, and create your very own frozen yogurt masterpiece. It's sure to be a fun time!

Ever wonder what a day at Mushroom looks like through your child's eyes? Then mark your calendars for **Thursday, April 21. The MFLC OPEN HOUSE and MUSICAL** will be held that evening and it will be a great time to allow your child to be your Mushroom tour guide and put on a very special performance for you and all your family and friends!

Doing a little spring cleaning? As you are cleaning out closets this spring, please gather any unwanted or unneeded children's, women's, and maternity clothing and shoes in a garbage bag and set it aside for MFLC's SCHOOLA CLOTHING DRIVE that we will be holding APRIL 25-29! Your clothing will be resold by Schoola and Mushroom will receive 40% of the profit!

Curious about what the Kids of STEEL communications this year were all about? Then please wear red and come downtown to cheer on all our awesome Mushroom runners on Saturday, April 30! The Kids Marathon begins at 9:30AM on the North Shore, runs across the Andy Warhol Bridge, and finishes at the official finish line downtown. The Toddler Trot will begin at 11:30AM and run in Point State Park. We have over 20 Mushroom students entered in these races, please come support our very own Kids of STEEL!

Here's hoping that April showers don't just bring May flowers, but also colorful umbrellas and raincoats and plenty of puddles to have a great time splashing around in!

Early Learners - Amy, Sheila, and Marlene

Even though it's April, our focus here will be "giving thanks!" First, thank you for your flexibility with the schedule changes due to the conference that was held at Beth El on March 3 and 4. Since this was our first time with a major event, we weren't really sure how everything would work out with drop-off and pick-up. We can see now that changing our days was the right thing to do, so thank you for your help with that! We know that rearranging your schedule with little ones (and the big ones you have, too!) can be challenging.

Our next thank-you also encompasses a schedule change, and that is conference day. Thank you all for coming! We love to talk to you and hear your thoughts about and goals for your children. It's wonderful to have an opportunity to talk longer than we do at pick-up and drop-off. If you have any questions regarding what we discussed at conferences, or new thoughts have come to you since then, please let us know. Although this was our last conference day, we are always happy to make time for you!

We appreciate the coordination that many of you did so that you could keep an eye on the children, too. It's a great way to get to know your child's classmates, especially since hopefully they will be together for the next few years! The relationships that they begin here often continue into their elementary and middle school years. It's great when they can enter a new grade with some already familiar faces.

Next, thank you for filling our cupboards and fridge with yummy snacks and beautiful seasonal paper products. We

have had such a nice selection of fresh fruit, and cheese, and healthy munchies. And it's amazing how a pretty napkin or plate just makes everything fancier! We are working on taking small bites and saying "please" when we want more of something. Over the years, you will see how snack progresses to a social time for the children, when they share conversation as well as food.

Finally, and most importantly, thank you for sharing your children with us! We really mean it when we say that they bring smiles to our faces, or how fun it is to see them interacting with each other, or even how hearing them say, "No way!" when it's clean-up time is amusing. We could not teach preschool if it wasn't fun, and your children make it so. <3

School Pictures Are In!

For your child's portraits,

please:

- 1. Choose the portraits you want to purchase. Return to your child's teacher any you do not want.
- 2. Pay online at mylifetouch.com (still must return envelope with payment code on it) or submit check or money order.

Return portraits and payment no later than April 15.

Threes - Jamie, Debbie, and Julie

If you ask a preschool teacher what makes a successful student, her answer may differ from that of a high school teacher or collage professor. I am sure those in higher education would equate success with how smart a person is or what type of scores they receive on an academic assessment. Although working hard and doing well in school can help one achieve success, there are other factors that contribute, in my opinion, even more.

In preschool a child is taught how to cooperate with other children. They begin to realize the importance of sharing, taking turns and treating others with kindness. A sense of empathy is developed and is practiced over and over again. A child also learns that it is acceptable to be assertive in situations where he is in the right. It is important to give children a strong sense of importance and confidence when making the right decisions.

In preschool a child is taught how to follow directions and be a working part of a large group. For some children, attending a preschool is the first time they learn how to follow a specific routine. They learn to be patient while others are speaking. A child learns to understand he/she has to share the attention of a teacher with other classmates.

In preschool a child learns how to separate from a parent. Attending school may be the first time a child is bonding with a non-family member. The child learns to trust other adults and become more independent, away from the support of a loving parent. If a child cannot learn how to separate at an early age, going to school or attending collage may be difficult.

In preschool a child learns how to communicate effectively with adults and peers. They begin to learn how to initiate conversations, which in turn leads to cooperative play and creative imaginations. Children learn how to ask for what they need and answer important questions.

In preschool a child learns how to solve problems. Young children will often solve problems by taking what they want, becoming physical with others or just lying on the floor and crying. It is important for children to learn how to solve problems by using the words they have learned instead of reacting strictly from emotions.

If you take a child who has learned all of the above skills in preschool then you have an adult who will be able to separate from his parents, cooperate with other adults, communicate positively in a work environment, solve problems effectively and be able to function in an organized environment. Then, and only then, will you have a successful person.

The students in our 3s classroom have developed these skills and have created a strong foundation for learning. I am so excited to watch this group as they become successful students and, in the future, amazing adults.

Three/Fours – Liz, Marlene and Melissa & Fours – Liz, April and Melissa

I love being part of a team. I love having a common purpose and sharing ideas. I love supporting others and feeling their support. I love being better than any of us can be by ourselves. One of the things I love most about teaching at Mushroom is that I get to work as part of a team. Truly, this is the best team I have ever had the honor to be part of.

This year, especially, I marvel at the strength of all components of our team and the way we work together. Mushroom would not be what it is today without Joan, the talented and committed lead and assistant teachers, the board, our hosts at Beth El, the maintenance guys, the parents, and, of course, the amazing children. I could write a whole article about each of these parts of the team! For now, I would like to focus on my teaching team. I am so grateful for

my co-teachers in the Fours and Three/Fours. They are all extremely competent, caring, fun, creative, and supportive. Although they are all genuinely terrific at every aspect of their jobs, each also brings special, unique gifts to our team.

Marlene and I have been together since my first day at Mushroom. Before that, she was my son's teacher for two years. Marlene has a special gift for helping children realize their creative visions. I am always amazed at how she can take my lesson plan, combine it with a three- or four-year-old, and elevate it to true art. She never takes over the process, but always facilitates. There is no limit to the amount of materials she is willing to provide and the amount of mess she is willing to clean up in pursuit of children's art. One day recently, I told her something like, "I thought it would be fun to use the plastercraft with the popsicle sticks. We have been looking at building houses and the story of the 'Three Pigs,' and I wonder how these materials can be used together."

When I checked in later, there was Marlene, surrounded by plastercraft, sticks, jewels, pompoms, sequins, tacky glue, buttons, pipe cleaners, yarn, markers, and two beaming, fully engaged children. "We're making lollipop forests!" they announced proudly. Wow. While she is working with the children at the art table, Marlene chats with the children and listens closely and respectfully to everything they have to say. In the safety of this creative space, they share their hopes, dreams, fears, and experiences. She remembers everything, too. She can recall stories and conversations she had with children 10 years ago as if they happened yesterday. Maybe it's because she relates to the children so fully and so respectfully as her young friends.

APRIL ENRICHMENT CLASSES

Enrichment classes are available for those 4+ on Mondays and/or 3+ on Fridays each month; \$14 per class. Sign up for whichever you would like! Contact Miss Jamie for more info at jamie_geisler@comcast.net.

Days and Themes This Month...

Mondays

April 4 – Calling all scientists! We will try to make gummy worms dance!; 11 – "Trashy Town": make garbage trucks!; 18 – Create fabulous salad spinner art!; 25 – "Little Blue Truck" by Alice Schertle

Fridays

April 1 – Spring eggs!; 8 – Get Jumping with our hopping friends frogs and toads!; 15 – Explore Symmetry!; 22 - Make a Bug Catcher!; 29 – Cook Black-Bean Quesadillas!

April is the newest member of our crew. We are so happy to have her with us! April brings a special playfulness to the job. One day recently, when our dramatic play area was transformed into a doctor's office, April reported that she'd broken her arm, had surgery, and delivered a baby, all in one day! Like Marlene, she never takes over the play, but helps the children to develop their own ideas. When we lined up the chairs and pretended to have a bus, she listened to the children debating about where they wanted the bus to stop. She brought out the markers and made signs with the children for each of the stops they might need along the way.

In doing so, she not only helped the children develop more elaborate and sustained role-based play, but she also helped them develop pre-literacy and symbolic representation skills. April is also an accomplished baker who gamely takes on kitchen projects with a lot less mess and a lot more composure than I can manage. And waiting in line is so much more fun with Miss April leading the group in a litany of absurdities! Contemplating washing your feet, elbows, and knees suddenly becomes more interesting than pushing the person in front of you.

I am blessed to have Melissa with me in both classes. She brings us amazing calmness, patience, and compassion. She is especially adept at encouraging children when they are struggling, when they are having a bad day. She has a gift for talking to children about their feelings, and for helping them to see what's possible. She observes children carefully, and she lovingly points out their small successes. I have seen her beam with pride as she gives a child the message, "I see what you can do today that you could not do yesterday!" She helps them remember their best selves when they might see only their own failings. Melissa also possesses a quality anyone might want in a teammate (or spouse, for that matter!): she is a mind reader. She can anticipate where I am going with an activity even when I am developing an idea on the fly. Although I'd like to credit her with magical abilities, I think the key to Melissa's mind-reading prowess is that she always pays close attention and thinks ahead.

In addition to being co-workers, we are all friends. We truly enjoy each other's company! In those hectic moments before and after class and during lunch, we swap stories and catch up on what's going on in each other's lives. To me, this is a vital part of being able to do our jobs. In connecting and unloading, we are able to set aside the concerns of our daily lives outside of school so that we can be fully present with your children. This would not be possible without the deep respect and trust we feel for each other.

I think my love of being a team member dates back to my brief and undistinguished career on my high school gymnastics team. In my sophomore year, my dance teacher, who was also the gymnastics coach, approached me about joining the team. With only a modest background in dance and no formal training in gymnastics, I was skeptical. But the

squad needed a few warm bodies and my best friend was on the team, so I decided to take a chance. It was terrifying, humbling, grueling, and embarrassing. It was also one of the best experiences of my life.

My assigned event was the balance beam. The learning curve was steep as I struggled to learn a few basic tricks and choreograph a routine with the required elements. In most meets, my role was to complete a routine so that we would have a low score to throw away. If I did not complete the entire 90-second routine, we would have to throw out another (probably higher) score. I learned a few things from this experience. I learned that a minute and a half can be an eternity. I learned that it is possible, on a bad day, to fall off the beam a seemingly infinite number of times during that minute and a half. And I learned that, with the support of your teammates and the knowledge that they need your contribution, it is possible to keep getting back on the beam each and every time you fall.

I also learned there are many ways to make a valuable contribution to the team. We had a few highly skilled gymnasts on the squad, including an Olympic hopeful. We learned valuable skills from them, and their scores helped us to qualify for the state finals. To my amazement, I seemed to be a valued member of the team as well. The girls said they admired my determination, and they appreciated my encouragement.

I hope your children feel like valued members of our team, too. They will have plenty of opportunities for competition and comparison in their futures, but for now, I hope they are learning contribution and cooperation. I hope they are learning to share ideas, to support each other, and to appreciate being better together than they are alone. With our modeling and encouragement, I hope that they, too, will learn to get up each time they fall.

I love teaching young children. I strive to create interesting lesson plans, address each child's individual needs, and bring my "A game" every single day. I take my responsibility to your children, my teammates, and my profession very seriously, and most days I am happy with the result. The truth is, though, it is not always easy. Sometimes the best I can manage is to show up and complete my routine. On those days, I am especially grateful for my teammates. I can count on them to be there to make sure we have a successful day even if my personal performance is lacking. After that, I know we will have a laugh, figure out what went wrong, and try to do better the next day.

In April, we will have fun with fairy tales in preparation for our school-wide musical and Open House on April 21. I hope you all can join us! There are still openings in some of our classes for next year. Please tell your family, friends and acquaintances and others looking for a preschool. Thank you – You are Mushroom's BEST advertisement!

Pre-K - Cara, Jane, and Melanie

In the PreK classroom we thoroughly enjoyed the several days that it took us to read "The Snow Queen" by Hans Christian Andersen. Now we are excitedly enjoying reading the classic "Wizard of Oz" by L. Frank Baum.

Each day during our gathering, the children often also tell wonderful stories from their imagination. We spend time creating books that the children illustrate and then they are able to use their illustrations to tell their story.

On one occasion, I was asked by a student to help him spell his title page for his book. As I gave him each letter, he wrote it on the front cover of his homemade book. He then proudly told me he created a picture book, which didn't need the written words. Another instance, a student asked us how to spell the word "chapter" because he was writing a chapter book. Another child was so proud and worked so hard to tell her "scary" story as another brought into school a book she created at home to share with the class. The richness of storytelling in our classroom has been magical to witness. The following article written by Jessica McColly speaks to why it is so important for us to be storytellers, especially in our classroom...

The Importance of Storytelling

"Miss McColly, will you tell us a fairytale again?" Carl asked. His question buoyed my heart. I had always enjoyed listening to others tell stories, whether the storytellers were professionals or just old friends around the campfire.

As I learn more about storytelling, I find that many teachers and other professionals have long known the importance of storytelling with young children. Children's reactions to stories intuit their importance, and research endorses their value for any skeptics.

In a climate where children spend more and more time in front of televisions, computers, and video games, storytelling's educational impact is augmented as never before. Rather than passively receiving images, children must actively engage in making images themselves. When they listen to stories, children's imaginations are enriched and stimulated. Furthermore, the ability to make mental images is an important skill for reading because it links the reader to the text in more personal and memorable ways. As Debbie Miller puts it, "images come from the emotions and all five senses, enhancing understanding and immersing the reader in rich detail."

Young children are developmentally wired to love language, and using storytelling in the classroom cashes in on that "expansive" love of words and the desire to "try out" such language. According to the

National Council of Teachers of English, "listeners encounter both familiar and new language patterns" through story. Hearing stories regularly allows pre-readers to become familiar with narrative patterns, speech rhythms, and the flow of language. Telling stories to young children also increases their vocabulary.

The language and literary elements of storytelling are not its only merits, however. Through stories, children learn about the cultural values of their society. Young ones begin to appreciate the goodness, "humor, bravery, and beauty" of the characters in the stories before they really know these qualities themselves.

Not only do children learn about their own culture through stories, but they gain an appreciation of other cultures as well. Storytelling emphasizes the ties that bind and helps children see the commonalities of people and communities around the world. As our world grows smaller, telling stories from around the globe fosters understanding of other people and places. The folk stories and fairy tales of other cultures teach children to embrace the uniqueness of different societies. At the same time, the commonalities among the different stories highlight the deep connections all cultures share.

Many of the types of stories we choose to tell can help young children deal with their own fears, challenges, and difficulties. Fairy tales especially reach children on a very deep level and help them bridge the confusing dimensions of the world. "Good and evil, fear and courage, wisdom and folly, fortune and misfortune, cruelty and kindness" are personified. Through fairy tales, children can integrate these elements of our world into their own, and may be better able to deal with such trials and tribulations themselves.

Regardless of the content, giving young children the opportunity to do their own storytelling is a rich experience itself. Vivian Gussin Paley, a well-known educator of young children, has done much amazing work incorporating storytelling into every aspect of her classroom. Viewing her students as storytellers has drawn her "into deeper concerns and more vivid visions of their world" (Paley, 19). Aside from the wealth of information a teacher can gain from her student's stories are the numerous educational benefits to the children. Storytelling makes children comfortable with oral communication and speaking in front of an audience. Students who practice storytelling also gain experience watching their audience for cues and altering their story accordingly. This sets the groundwork for later skills needed in writing.

All this research is important and relevant, of course. Storytelling is beneficial to young children in so many ways. Knowing that so much research substantiates the storyteller should be encouragement enough to continue storytelling in my future classrooms. I am glad to know I will be doing something enriching for my students. However, it is not the research that sustains me. It is the students' unwavering attention and their abiding love for stories that urges on my attempts to become a storyteller.

This coming month we will continue to explore the richness of being storytellers by creating a musical with the other classes using the classic fairytale "Goldilocks and the Three Bears." This experience of bringing a story to life on the stage for our family and friends will provide such a fantastic experience for each child in their own way. We look forward to being storytellers for you on the evening of April 21!

K-Too – Marilyn

Spring is a time of growth and optimism, an apt description of the kindergarten frame of reference!

K-Too dedicated March to the intensive study of electricity. To tap into that kindergarten optimism we studied Benjamin Franklin, a man who approached politics, science, and society with endless energy and a generous spirit. The children loved exploring antiques I brought from home from the low-tech American past: candles, ladies' hand-held fans, whisks, oil lamps, cow bell, etc. As we read about the great inventor, the children marveled at his library chair, grabber, glass armonica, bifocal glasses, Franklin stove, the lightning rod, mapping of the gulf stream, mail delivery to people's homes, and of course, that lightning is electricity.

To give children a taste of what drove Ben to fly that kite into a thunder cloud, we did experiments with static electricity. But Ben only knew that lightning behaved like electricity. To get the modern understanding of electricity we explored its workings on the atomic level. The children giggled as we became atoms passing electrons (tennis balls) along in a current! We also took apart a printer and CD player with screwdrivers to reveal the circuits inside. To close our study, the children put together their own circuits with light bulbs inside boxes to make an "electric house." They decorated the inside with furniture from our recycle art center and were charmed by the little toy mouse I gave each of them to live in their house!

The children in K-Too were very interested in kites and flight after our Ben Franklin unit so we will make our own kites in April. We will also study folk tales as part of our school-wide musical: "Goldilocks and the Three Bears." Happy Spring!

Arbor Day & Earth Day

Julius Sterling Morton, a Nebraska newspaper editor who later served as acting governor of the state and the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, proposed Arbor Day in 1872 for tree planting and for recognizing the importance of trees.

Gaylord Nelson, who served as a United States senator and governor of Wisconsin, founded Earth Day, April 22, 1970, as a demonstration to raise awareness of environmental issues and pollution.

Arbor Day is April 29 this year (the last Friday in April) and Earth Day is always April 22.



TASTE OF LEBO SPIRIT DAY

Thursday, April 14, 2016

FOOD + FRIENDS = FUN!







10:00am - 9:00pm

632 Washington Road

695 Washington Road

When you mention Mushroom Family Learning Center, a percentage of your sales proceeds that day will be donated to MFLC!

Tell your friends! Tell your family! Tell your neighbors!



