

1900 Cochran Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15220
mushroomfamily.org
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412-531-1225



MAY 2016

Important Dates & Info

Sept. 2016 Tuition Due May 1
Needed to secure your child's spot in next year's class. Any outstanding balances must be paid as well. Please turn in your directory listing form also.

MFLC Board Meeting – May 18

Mushroom Year-End Ice Cream Social at Mt. Lebanon Main Park – **May 19** 6:00- 7:30pm
Pavilion #2 (No rain date.)

Last Day of School – May 24

Mushroom Family Picnic at Mt. Lebanon Main Park – **May 25**
11:00am-1:00pm
Pavilion #1 (No rain date.)

Mushroom Teachers Appreciation Dinner – May 25
Please watch for the sign-up sheet to contribute food/drinks for our teachers to enjoy!

Mushroom Teachers' In-Service and Meeting – May 25, 9am-1pm, and May 26, 9am-3pm

First Day of School 2016-17 – Sept. 12

Remember proper play shoes for outdoor play!
Gym shoes or closed-toe type of shoes are best.

Ways to Help MFLC

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

WWW.GOFUNDME.COM/MFLC2015
smile.amazon.com
shopping.escrip.com

Please complete the Mushroom Parent Questionnaire!
Your feedback helps us to keep making our school better and better.

From the Director ~ Joan Harrison

So much to do so little time... This most amazing school year is quickly coming to a close, and there are lots of things to do before we say goodbye for the summer. I would like to take a moment to thank each of you for the part you played in making this a great year at MFLC.

To the many parents who volunteered in the classroom, donated snacks and supported our school in so many ways, thank you. Thank you also to our wonderful Board of Directors: Erin Betler, Hollie DeLuca, Patrick Furey, Jennifer FitzGerald, Jamie Geisler, Melanie Johnston, Danika Lagorio, Kelly Lotter, Michele Napierkowski, Diane Rattay, Carrie Stock, Alaina Stockhausen and Kim Yetter for the time they have spent each month making decisions and leading various efforts on behalf of our school.

Most of all, I would like to recognize our teachers for their dedication to your children and their commitment to excellence. Their incredible creativity, enthusiasm and energy are what make MFLC such a special place for learning, and enable each child to experience "individual growth in a shared environment." To each staff member, thank you for bringing your unique talents to our school and keeping the fun in learning.

This is always a bittersweet time. The thought of a relaxing summer full of fun and special times with family and friends brings a smile to my face. However, the realization that some families have completed their final year of MFLC saddens me. We have watched your children grow and have come to consider you part of our preschool "family."

We wish our oldest students much success as they journey on to kindergarten and first grade. And parents, you have entrusted our staff with your most precious possessions and have touched our lives with your help and support over the years.

To the students and families returning in the fall, have a great summer and we look forward to seeing you in the upcoming school year. Please look for your 2016-17 new school year information the first week of August. The first day of school for Mushroom's 43rd year will be September 12.

There are still openings in some of our classes next year.

Please tell your family, friends, neighbors and others looking for a preschool.

Thank you – you are Mushroom's best advertisement!



Have you signed up for Mushroom's summer camp yet?!

The camp runs **June 6 to July 1**, Monday-Friday, 9:15-11:45am

Arts, Crafts, Movement, Music, Nature, Outside Play and More!

A BIG Thank-You to...

- Miss Jamie for coordinating our Mushroom musical!
- To all our teachers who worked so hard on the musical/Open House.
- Our ice cream social/picnic in the park/teacher appreciation dinner volunteers
- Betler grandparents for their donation of a new swing set and sandbox
- Hollie DeLuca for coordinating the Taste of Lebo fundraiser and the families who participated
- Kim Yetter for coordinating our Schoola Clothing Drive fundraiser and all the parents who donated clothes and boxes
- All the parents/families/staff/friends who participated in various marathon events and supported runners both in person and in monetary donations
- All who contributed through the GoFundMe and other campaigns/programs this year
- Lisa Michel for her donation of the headboards for our "Goldilocks" musical
- Board President Erin Betler and the rest of the board for their dedication to our school
- Parents who gave the gift of their time in volunteering this year
- Kelly Lotter, editor of our fabulous newsletter
- The most wonderful group of teachers ever!

From the Board President ~ Erin Betler

Spring has sprung at Mushroom! Brightly colored artwork is blooming on all the classroom walls, and the windowsills are home to pots of budding grass and flowers. The weather has warmed up and the students (and the staff!) have been thrilled to be able to go outside on a regular basis. With less than a month to go, we have a few special events planned. I hope to see you all at the Ice Cream Social and the end-of-year picnic in Mt. Lebanon Park. But before the school year comes to end, I want to take a moment to offer my sincere thanks to some very special people.

I must extend an extra-special THANK YOU to our wonderful director, Miss Joan. I'm not sure if you all realize how lucky we are to have this wonderful woman as the leader of our school! She has the kindest heart of anyone I know. She truly always has your children at the top of her priority list. She has often been faced with a fork in the road, a decision to be made, and she ALWAYS chooses the road that will be best for the school/children, even if it is the one that provides the most difficult obstacles. She is willing to do anything for our kids and I love her for that, and so should you! She is fair, considerate, gracious, generous, and so much more. Just know that your children could not possibly be loved any more than they are at Mushroom.

Second, our wonderful staff! From the lead teachers, to assists, substitutes, specialty class teachers...all of you! Each and every one of you brings a special quality to the classroom that makes you so exceptional. I am excited to tell prospective families about our classes and the teachers who make them what they are. You are all so patient, creative, compassionate, imaginative people. It takes a special person to be a preschool teacher and you were all born for this job! Thank you for being you and for the dedication you bring to the school.

Next, my wonderful Board of Directors! My first year as president went a lot smoother than I anticipated and the

number-one reason is because of all of YOU! I have never had to beg, plead or grovel to get volunteers for the various fundraisers or events. A couple of honorable mentions I would like to add:

Diane: Thank you for your guidance this year. You helped build my confidence, and your support was essential to getting me through the year.

Hollie: Our Bruegger's, Chick-fil-A, and Taste of Lebo fundraisers all went so smoothly because of the hard work you put into to organizing these special events that raised over \$500 for our school.

Kelly: You have been such a wonderful secretary! I can always count on you to be there when I need you, bring new ideas and I've never ONCE had to ask twice for anything. And our newsletters have been INCREDIBLE!

Carrie: The Penguins and Pirates raffles were both a huge success because of all your hard work. You are leaving us with big shoes to fill next year. Thank you for all your years of dedication to the Board.

Melanie: You are the woman behind the numbers...alllll the numbers! From fundraisers to tuition, budgeting, etc. I don't know how you do it all, but you do a fantastic job!

I also need to express my sincere gratitude for the generosity of Mushroom's community of family and friends. The GoFundMe Relocation Assistance Fund and CrowdRise Marathon Fund have raised over \$7,900 for our school, ensuring that Mushroom will have the backing it needs to grow and thrive for years to come.

And lastly, and most importantly...the parents at our wonderful school. Thank you for trusting Mushroom with your children. I really don't believe you could have chosen a better place for your children.

Thank you again for such a wonderful year at Mushroom! My oldest daughter will officially be a Mushroom graduate at the end of this month (other than for Slice of Summer) and I'm not sure who is more sad...her or me?! Fortunately we still have three more years at Mushroom until both my girls are officially "alumni."

Have a happy and safe summer and make lots of memories to share with us this fall. You make my job as president an absolute joy and I thank you for that!

Congrats to the Melville family
(Rory, 3s class), winners of the
Pirates Package raffle!

Early Learners – Amy, Sheila, and Marlene

Hooray, it's time for May flowers! We had a great time in April painting raindrops and creating our umbrellas, but we're definitely ready to turn them in for some pretty posies.

Our room is full of bird nests and flowers, and spring has really sprung. Thank you to everyone who came to our open house. We hope that you and your visitors had a lot of fun!

It's hard to find the right words to express how much we have enjoyed working with you and your children this year. Being in a new location meant that even though we were familiar with our curriculum, there were rules and procedures that needed to be created, figured out, changed, or just forgotten about. Thank you so much for your understanding throughout all of these transitions! Our new space is just fabulous and really gives us the flexibility to do things we haven't been able to in the past.

Seeing your children each morning really made each day brighter. They have grown so much and watching them change and open up has been so rewarding. It's amazing to see how children who are not using many words at the beginning of the year end the year saying things like, "Come play trains with me?"

We are so thankful for your help and support this year, whether it was with bringing in snack or taking home a child covered in paint...or glue...or glitter! To those of you who came with us from "old Mushroom," thank you for coming along on our journey. We hope that it has been as rewarding for you as it has been for us. To those of you who joined us this year, we are so glad that our paths crossed and thrilled to have your families with us. To all of you, we can't wait to watch as your wonderful children continue to grow and develop in the coming years!

Have a safe and happy summer! Xoxo from all of us!

Threes – Jamie, Debbie, and Julie

It is hard to believe I am writing the last newsletter of the school year. Although I am excited for summer to come so I can spend time with my children, there is always a sadness in my heart realizing another amazing school year is coming to an end. It is hard to truly describe the relationship between a teacher and a three-year-old child. The true sense of what a wonderful experience it is cannot be written down in words; it can only be felt within one's heart.

I wish everyone could participate in a job where pure joy is witnessed every day. The incredible growth a child makes within one year is fascinating. Debbie, Julie and I are constantly verbalizing to each other about specific incidents where a child has shown improvement in a beautiful moment. We laugh, we cry and we are so proud of the students accomplishments. It doesn't take us very long to fall in love with 18 new faces. They will always have a special place in our hearts!

Here are the top 10 things we have learned in preschool this year...

1. It is OK to talk about bad guys but you should always strive to be a good guy.
2. Never talk to a big, bad wolf or a tricky fox because they will always get you into trouble.
3. Run as fast as you can and as much as you like.
4. Being chased by a witch is actually really fun.
5. Make sure you always take good care of your partners.
6. All preschool problems can be solved easily if you just ask for help.
7. Singing and dancing makes you happy.
8. Tell lots of "knock, knock" jokes.
9. Mommies, grandmas and babysitters always come back.
10. You can help a friend by giving a hug or saying a kind word.

It has been a wonderful journey. Thanks to all of our parents and grandparents for making it a smooth ride. Your love for your children, your support of our program and your never-ending kind words will stay with us for a long time.

Come to Mushroom's Year-End Celebrations!

Ice Cream Social – Mt. Lebanon Main Park
Thurs., May 19, 6:00-7:30pm
Pavilion #2 (No rain date.)

Pack a Lunch - Family Picnic – Mt. Lebanon Main Park
Wed., May 25, 11:00am-1:00pm
Pavilion #1 (No rain date.)

Three/Fours – Liz, Marlene and Melissa

In April, we focused on fairy tales. We read such classic tales as “Goldilocks and the Three Bears,” “The Three Little Pigs,” “The Three Billy Goats Gruff,” “Little Red Riding Hood,” “The Three Little Kittens,” “Jack and the Beanstalk,” and “The Little Red Hen.” We explored the many ways that a story can be told: books, flannel stories, recordings, pictures, and—our favorite—acting! The children had so much fun taking on the roles in the stories and extending them in their dramatic play. One highlight this month was the miraculous growth of our magic beanstalk. We planted some magic beans one day. Lo and behold, the next day a tiny shoot had sprouted. We checked our beanstalk’s growth each day until it grew all the way up to a castle in the clouds. We had so much fun imagining what might be at the top!

Preparing for our schoolwide musical production of “Goldilocks and the Three Bears” kept us very busy during April. We painted sets, practiced songs, and rehearsed with the other classes. We hope you enjoyed the show. I admit that I had chills when I saw our whole student body on stage and heard 100 or so sweet little voices singing together. I can’t think of a better way to celebrate our school community!

During our final month together, we hope to slow down and take the time to simply enjoy each other’s company. Rather than focusing on one theme, we will explore several mini-themes we think the children will especially enjoy. I can tell you that dinosaurs are definitely on the agenda!

As our time together winds down, I find myself reflecting on the tremendous growth we have seen over the course of the year. At the beginning of the year, these children were already wonderful people. However, when I look back to those early days, I realize how little they were. Many of our students were separating from their parents for the first time. Some were having their first experiences with peers. Just getting through the school day was a success, and required lots of hugs and encouragement (not that we minded the hugs!). It has been a privilege to watch them blossom into independent, secure preschoolers. They have made friends, learned new skills, and discovered more about themselves. We are so proud of them!

Marlene, Melissa and I have thoroughly enjoyed working with this special group. We are grateful to you for entrusting us with your treasures. We have been blessed to know them and to know you. Thank you for your support. Have a wonderful summer!

Fours – Liz, April and Melissa

What a wonderful year we have had! We have thoroughly enjoyed working with your children. It has been a pleasure to

MAY 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

May: 2nd – Create a flower arrangement! 9th – Sharks Galore! 16th – The Sandcastle Contest book and sand art! 23rd – BINGO games and prizes for all!

Fridays

May: 6th – Build houses like the Three Little Pigs! 13th – Make a Mother's Day decoration! 20th – What's the weather? Make an outdoor thermometer!

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see the friendships they have made, the skills they have mastered, and the confidence they have gained. We will miss this lively, loving group.

In April, we dwelt in the land of fairy tales. Through traditional tales like “Goldilocks and the Three Bears,” “The Three Little Pigs,” and “The Three Billy Goats Gruff,” we learned about the elements of a story, such as character, setting, and plot. In each story, a character or characters face a problem they needed to solve. The children loved predicting what might happen and coming up with ideas of their own to solve the problem. The highly patterned language of fairy tales makes them especially ripe for retelling. Through retelling these stories, children develop their memories and their understanding of narrative structure. The fantastical animal characters also lend themselves to dramatic interpretation. As we acted out the stories, we loved hearing the voices the children came up with for the characters.

We also had fun with some fractured fairy tales and different versions of the story, such as “Somebody and the Three Blairs,” “The Three Little Aliens” and “The Big, Bad Robot,” “The Three Billy Goats Fluff,” “Goldilocks and the Three Dinosaurs,” and “The Three Little Wolves and the Big, Bad Pig.” We had a great time comparing, contrasting, and predicting with these stories. We also got to take a different perspective on the characters in some of the stories. Reading these different versions inspired us to create our own fairy tales. Each child created an original story, choosing characters and setting and thinking up a plot. We also made fantasy houses for our own fairy tale characters using shoeboxes, paint, craft materials, and spare parts. The creativity they showed was amazing! The children carefully considered what



features to include in their houses to make them attractive, functional, and safe.

Much of our time in April was spent preparing for the schoolwide musical production of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears." We hope you enjoyed the show!

In May, we will spend our remaining days together enjoying each other's company and following where the children's interests lead us. Rather than focusing on one theme, we will revisit some favorite activities and explore some mini-themes we think this group will especially enjoy.

As the end of school approaches each year, I find myself reflecting on what a magical time of life this is. Preschoolers are filled with joy, love, enthusiasm, wonder, silliness and creativity. I feel so incredibly fortunate to dwell in this space with them for a time and watch them grow. We love each of them and will treasure our time together. Saying goodbye is the hard part, but we are excited for them, too. They have grown in every way and are ready to take on new challenges. We have a terrific group of kids and families! It has been a pleasure getting to know all of you, and we are deeply thankful for your support.



### **Pre-K – Cara, Jane, and Melanie**

Eight months ago we welcomed your children into their new classroom for the school year. It is amazing to think of how we have all grown together and truly feel like a tight-knit community. It is a magical window of time that Melanie, Jane and I are able to be a part of and we are honored. I reflect back to one of my favorite books, "Teaching Four-Year-Olds: A Personal Journey" by Carol B. Hillman. In particular a passage about the "hidden curriculum" we hoped to share with the children this school year. I have shared this passage before and will again because it always eloquently describes what our hearts are feeling as we end our school year...

*When someone asks me what I do, and I answer that I am a teacher of four-year-olds, I sometimes get the response: "What on Earth can you teach them?" Many years ago I would have answered by describing some of the science projects or work with art materials I did with the children. Now it is different: I feel more secure in my own position; I tell them what I really do. I teach children about the world they*

*live in, about themselves, and their peers. And I teach children about adults, trust and love. I work with attitudes. I hope to inspire a love of learning. This is what I teach.*

*I want to know each child like I know the back of my hand. I want to recognize their voices from across the room so if I'm busy tying Sara's shoes, I can answer without looking up. I want to know their wardrobes so I can recognize a new pair of shoelaces or a new barrette when it is worn for the first time. I want to know what gives them pleasure and makes them smile. I want to know what really irritates them or makes them sad. I want to know what books they like to look at and what they like to eat. I want to know their favorite colors and their favorite stuffed animals. I want to know what scares them and what tickles their funny bones. I want to know the full range of their capabilities. I want to be able to read their eyes so I can tell if their day has not started well. I want to know a lot of things. And I want them to know that I know.*

*I want children to know themselves and feel good about what they know. I want children to recognize that there are areas in which they need to grow. I want children to learn to express themselves, but I accept the fact that some are not able to do that yet and are still fighting the world with their fists. I want children to come to terms with themselves, whatever those terms may be. I want to help each child accomplish these things through my caring.*

*I want children to respect each other for who they are. I want children to know that, although there are differences among them, these differences are what make each of them unique. I want them to know that people can change and that they all can help to make positive changes happen. I want them to know that we all have feelings and that each of us can feel hurt. And I want them to know how it feels to help another person.*

*I want children to know their teacher, to know him or her as a friend. I want children to know that adults are there to help them grow, to set limits and to protect them. I want children to know that when they are sad or troubled, there is always a lap for them to climb on and receive comfort.*

*I want children to know that school is now a big part of their world and that they are an important part of this world. I want children to know that is where they are supposed to be and that Mommy and Daddy want them to be here. I want children to know that next year they will be in a different place and that they will be ready to leave here and move on to kindergarten. This is what I teach. This is the hidden curriculum.*

Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your child's childhood and sharing your family with us. We are continually honored, humbled and filled with inspiration as we share this magical time in your child's childhood. You have all touched our hearts and will ALWAYS be a part of our PreK family.

## K-Too – Marilyn

I can't believe this is the last newsletter of the year. The children have had a wonderful year of exploration and have formed warm friendships. K-Too was meant to foster the enjoyment of learning in a social environment, and I think it succeeded. Both classes were always ready and willing to learn new things and worked well together. I will miss your children. Please come back for a visit this summer and in the fall.

The "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" musical was a great success. K-Too played a leading role as narrators for the production, which highlighted their reading skill. The fancy bear beds were created by our classes and had a big visual impact on the stage. K-Too enjoyed painting the background set panels for the woods and the interior of the bears' house. We practiced the songs for the musical for weeks and the children tell me now that they can't get the songs out of their heads!

In May, we will talk about mothers, fathers, and the many combinations that make up "a family." We also will work diligently on our Mother's Day presents, which will draw on the children's math skills. We will also do some thoughtful and humorous writing about our mommies. We will end May with a unit on time and money, good math skills for first-grade readiness.

Enjoy your summer! Lots of love, Marilyn



19

Ice Cream Social  
Thursday, May 19<sup>th</sup> (no rain date)  
6:00 PM – 7:30PM  
Mt. Lebanon Main Park, Pavilion #2  
Come and join us for an evening of Ice Cream and Fun!



24

Last Day of Classes for the 2015-2016 School Year  
Tuesday, May 24<sup>th</sup>  
Have a great summer!



25

End of Year Picnic  
Wednesday, May 25<sup>th</sup> (no rain date)  
11:00 AM – 1:00PM  
Mt. Lebanon Main Park, Pavilion #1  
Bring your blankets, pack a lunch and have a fun afternoon at the park with our Mushroom Family!



25

Teacher Appreciation Dinner  
Wednesday, May 25<sup>th</sup>  
Every year, in appreciation of our wonderful teachers, the Board of Directors hosts a dinner in their honor. Please watch for the Sign-Up Sheet at Mushroom to donate food and beverages to make their dinner a success!



Please deliver your food/ drink donations to the  
End of Year Picnic OR to the home of Jen and Patrick FitzGerald,  
(336 Parkway Drive, Mt. Lebanon, PA 15228) by 5:00pm on Weds. 5/25.



**MUSHROOM**  
FAMILY LEARNING CENTER

# A Slice of Summer

## Day Camp 2016

**Arts and Crafts, Games, Science, Nature, Music, Movement, Stories, Outdoor Fun and So Much More!**

**Camp will be conducted in (4) week-long sessions:  
Starting June 6<sup>th</sup> and ending July 1<sup>st</sup>**

**Monday - Friday  
9:15am - 11:45am  
\$ 75 per week  
\$ 15 Camp Registration Fee  
All payments are non-refundable**

**For children ages 3 - 6  
\*\*includes class for incoming 1<sup>st</sup> graders**

**For more information contact us at 412-531-1225**

**Mushroom Family Learning Center  
1000 Cochran Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15220  
www.mushroomfamily.org**