

## FEBRUARY 2018

### Important Dates/Info

#### MARCH TUITION DUE FEB. 1

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**Foster Love Project bag drive** –  
voluntary contributions accepted  
through Feb. 28

#### Flower Power fundraiser sale dates Feb. 5-20

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**Panera (Galleria) Spirit Night,**  
Feb. 15 – 4-8pm

#### No Classes Monday, Feb. 19 – Presidents Day

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**MFLC Board Meeting**  
– Feb. 21

#### Kids of STEEL Coach Visit – March 1

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**School Pictures** – March 5-7  
Look for details soon!

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**Conferences – March 21-23**  
Look for details  
and sign-up soon!

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**Spring Break** – March 26-April 3

#### MFLC Open House & Musical – May 3

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**Enrichment Classes**  
Contact Miss Melissa at  
melissa.oprison@gmail.com.

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**Outside Play** – We go outside  
if it's 25+ degrees & no rain.  
Kids should be prepared with  
labeled cold-weather gear.

#### ..... **Ways to Help Mushroom!**

- Youcaring.com/mushroom-family-learning-center
- **smile.amazon.com:** Choose Mushroom as your charity.
- *United Way:* Agency #885339.
- *Giant Eagle Apples for the Students program:* School code #5245.
- MFLC Scholarship Fund

### From the Director ~ Joan Harrison

This is the time of year where many parents' thoughts turn to the next school year: "What's best for my child?" "Is he ready to move on?" Lately I've been asked many questions... "Where do you see my child fitting in?" "What will she be learning?" "Will he be ready for kindergarten?" "When will my child learn to read?"

My response has been that all children do not learn the same things at the same time. All children do not magically reach a certain maturity at a particular age. This is the beauty of young children—each one is truly an individual. They reach these milestones in their own timeframe and space.

I know elementary schools have had changing expectations. The elementary curriculum has intensified since most of us were kids. Schools are teaching reading and math concepts at earlier ages, making it seem more likely that a late bloomer, or even a gloriously average one, will be struggling as early as kindergarten. Going to school, learning to read, and doing math used to be stuff kids just did. Nowadays the stakes seem quite high.

Peer pressure to jump on the academic bandwagon is everywhere, but pushing a preschooler to "hit the books" generates its own anxiety. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Is my kid getting enough time to just be a kid?
- Are phonics more valuable than dress-up and Legos?

Sometimes it is difficult for parents to resist programs that promise to produce academic performance during the early years. If a child has the opportunity to experience the world around him, it will result in academic performance when the time is right.

Doing things like splashing water, digging in the sandbox, playing house, or banging on instruments in a parade all affect the child's later experiences. When a child builds a fort or castle, he's actually doing physics because it involves balance. When a child tells stories, she's forming the foundation for effective use of language. And understanding of math doesn't necessarily come from learning that  $1+1=2$ ; that is merely memorizing a fact. Preschoolers learn concepts in real life: "Hey, why did he get two scoops and I only got one?"

For some children, a straightforward academic program before they start school might just be the boost they need and the kind of structured learning they love. But for the vast majority, it may be the solution for a problem they don't have.

I would like to pass on some advice from someone much wiser... Socrates, the philosopher and teacher, once said, "**Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel.**"

Always keep in mind that throughout life, and especially during the early years, educational development is sparked by excitement, enthusiasm and enjoyment. These sparks can be fanned into a roaring fire when a child participates in activities that offer freedom, flexibility, fascination and fun.

- Joan

#### **Foster Love Project ♥**

Many children arrive at a foster home with no belongings or very few in a trash bag. This project provides kids with a nice bag of personal items to help them feel more comfortable in their placement home. **Mushroom is currently holding a Foster Love bag drive.** Each classroom has a sign-up sheet listing items needed for one child's bag (all items must be new with tags). The drive runs through Feb. 28 and participation is optional. Contact Gina Lipkin at [gmlipkin@gmail.com](mailto:gmlipkin@gmail.com) or Abby Parker at [abby.somerville@gmail.com](mailto:abby.somerville@gmail.com) with any questions.

## Big THANKS to...

**Board President Kate Gigliotti-Gordon** and husband Rob Gordon (Laszlo, 4sAM) for their work on winterizing the trolley.

**Lauren Jacobs** (Simon, 4sAM) and family for the donation to our "extra" winter gear.

**Emilie Staryak** (Katya, 3sPM) and family for the donation of crafting supplies.

**Miss Jamie and Kate Gigliotti-Gordon** (Laszlo, 4sAM) for their assistance with registration.

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## From the Board President ~ Kate Gigliotti-Gordon

It may not be very diplomatic of me to say, but truthfully, February is usually my least favorite month of the year. Sorry, February! Even though it's the shortest month, by the time it rolls around, I'm ready to leave the cold, gray winter behind and move on to spring. I love gardening, and the promise of spring flowers makes me count down the days until March and the arrival of spring crocus, daffodils, and tulips.

This year, though, is shaping up to be different! We have two Mushroom events this month that will help drive the February doldrums away. We are pleased to announce that Mushroom is once again participating in the Foster Love Project. Each classroom will create a bag for use by a foster child when he/she is placed in a foster home. Many foster children arrive at their new home with few to no possessions of their own. Having their own bag full of useful items really helps ease their transition. It's a wonderful way to help spread the Mushroom family love through our greater community and a great introduction to community service for our students.

The second event is our first fundraiser of 2018. We will be working with Flower Power Fundraising to sell flowers and garden items. I can't wait to go through the catalog and pick out new items for my gardens! 50% of your sales will go toward your fundraising fee, and items will ship right to your door! Please keep an eye on your child's cubby for more information about the Foster Love Project and our Flower Power Fundraiser.

Many thanks to all our Mushroom families for making our "in-house" 2018-2019 school year registration process a smooth one. Several classes are already full! That is a true testament to what a wonderful school we have. If you haven't already turned in your registration forms, please get them in as soon as you can. Registration went "public" on January 29. The biggest compliment you can give our school is to tell others about it. I know I came to Mushroom on a recommendation from another Mushroom parent, so, please, spread the word!

I hope that you and your family stay safe and warm throughout the remainder of the winter season, and that

## ➡ Before I was a Teacher, I was a Mushroom Mom... **MISS JAMIE**

It is well-known that many of the Mushroom Family Learning Center teachers were first parents of Mushroom students. Several of the teachers have described their experiences in past newsletters. They talk of feeling all warm and fuzzy from the moment they entered the door. They felt confident the teachers would meet the needs of their children with love and respect. Well, my story is a bit different!

My son was signed up for a different preschool close to our home. He was put on a waiting list because we were first-time families and didn't have seniority. At the time, I was a guidance counselor at an elementary school an hour away from my home. I had a 3-year-old, a 1-year-old and a baby on the way. Maybe it was the crazy, wonderful life I was living or my pregnant brain that allowed me to give my sister-in-law's babysitter permission to visit Mushroom Family Learning Center and sign my 3-year-old up for school. I never toured the school, met the director or observed the teachers who would be taking care of the most precious thing in my life. I never felt the warm fuzzy feelings or knew it was the right place because I never saw it!

My first real experience was the 3-year-olds parent meeting. I was worried about making a good impression on the teacher. I wanted her to know I was a good mother, that I did everything a good mother should. I read to him, practiced kindness and worked on fine motor skills. My first impression ended up being me, walking in 10 minutes late to her parent meeting. She glanced at me for a moment and then continued her conversation without a smile. I was doomed! She didn't like me! There went my good first impression!

As a teacher, this whole scenario makes me laugh. I never judge parents if they are late or if their child isn't reading chapter books by 3. I sometimes think I am over the top with excitement when getting to know my parents.

My three children ended up having wonderful experiences at Mushroom. They were inspired and loved by Jane, Joan, Melanie, Marlene and Marilyn. I enjoyed reading stories to the class, making quesadillas for Q day, dancing at the Thanksgiving Feast and organizing Halloween parties. I loved watching them grow confident each day with skills they acquired. I finally knew I was in the right place and that somehow destiny had brought me to this special school.

I am forever thankful to have Mushroom in my life. I have cherished the 12 years of teaching 3-year-olds and am glad I took a chance on this amazing school.

your Valentines aren't too full of glitter. That stuff gets everywhere! Please remember to check your email, the Mushroom website, and local television station broadcasts for notices of weather delays and cancellations.

## Twos Class **Amy, Sheila & Marlene**

February brings Valentine's Day and of course that makes everyone think of love. We LOVE having your children in our classes! And here (in no particular order) are seven more things we love about teaching the 2s classes:

1. The interactions that we are seeing between the children as they play. Much of the play is still parallel, meaning that the children are playing the same thing next to each other, but not really together. However, we're starting to

see children give each other cups of “coffee” at the sand table, or work to fill up the muffin tin at the playdough table and then walk over to the oven together.

2. All of the yummy, healthy snacks that you send in. Our snack cupboard has never been bare this year and we are grateful.
3. The love that your children have for YOU. They don't always say goodbye or look up when you leave, but you can be sure that your child is thinking of you during class! They may express it through drawing or painting or writing, or they may make a snack for you in the kitchen—you are always on their minds.
4. Your children's enthusiasm! When it's time to sing “the froggie song” at the end of circle time, everyone is up and moving. They love the freeze dance, too, and they're generally pretty happy about whatever we have planned! Putting lids on markers may not seem thrilling, but to your children, everything holds a bit of excitement.
5. The way that you dress your children for active, creative, and sometimes messy play. Some days children want to wear a smock and some days they don't. Some days our art will be messier than others. Thank you for keeping your children's fancy clothes at home. We know they exist; we just don't want to paint them red!
6. The wonderful language we're hearing from the children! They have all made progress since the beginning of the year. Whether they're moving from chattering to pointing or from labeling to short sentences, we love hearing those little voices!
7. Your commitment to bringing your child to school through rain, sleet, snow, and 10 a.m. starts! We know it can be tough, but we LOVE seeing your children each day for as much time as possible. Thank you!



## "Slice of Summer"

Mushroom Summer Camp 2018

**June 4 - June 29**

**Four-week summer program  
for ages 3 to 6!**

*Arts and crafts, games, science, nature, music,  
movement and, of course, playing outside!*

**9:15 – 11:45 a.m. every day,  
Monday through Friday, \$75 per week**

Non-refundable registration fee of \$15 per child/\$25 per family. Registration forms will be in cubbies at the beginning of March. If you have any questions please ask Joan!

### School delay/cancellation



MFLC will follow Mt. Lebanon School District decisions during inclement weather: When MTLSD is delayed, MFLC will be delayed; when MTLSD is canceled, MFLC will be canceled. Delayed start time will be 10 a.m. for morning classes which will dismiss at regular time; afternoon classes will begin on schedule. Please check local TV and cable stations, email blasts and the school answering machine when in doubt.

## Threes Class *Jamie, Debbie, April, Melanie & Kelsey*

Three-year-olds are emotional little beings. Their happiness levels can go from zero to 60 in a matter of moments. Sometimes, your head is left spinning, wondering, “What just happened?” They express their joy, sadness and amazement on a completely different level than adults. We are actually fortunate as teachers to be able to observe this emotional journey the students encounter during a day at preschool.

When I looked at this topic a little deeper, I started to think of actual differences between how adults experience situations compared to the perspective of a child.

If you consider the simple act of eating a cookie, an adult may enjoy the cookie but worry about the calories being consumed. A child will look at the cookie and say, “I JUST CAN'T STOP EATING THIS COOKIE BECAUSE IT IS SO GOOD!” Adults see the first snowflake of the season and worry about how it will affect their morning commute. A child will stare out the window, with excitement you can actually see as her body dances from side to side. An adult may understand he can't have everything he wants, where a child will actually be heartbroken if he can't have the blue car with the white stripes. And finally, when was the last time you jumped up and down, hugged your neighbor and screamed, “I love music class!”

In January, we focused on anything related to snow. We had ice cube races, seeing which one would melt the fastest. We were actually cheering, “Go salt, go salt!” during the race. I created a snowstorm in a plastic container and you would have thought I was the greatest scientist that ever lived. We turned our kitchen into a restaurant. The simple act of asking a friend what they wanted for dinner brought the biggest smiles to their faces. When I froze plastic animals into ice cubes, one would have thought it was gold being discovered.

We were fortunate enough one snowy day to go outside and be one of the first classes to walk through the deep snow. We barely made it outside the door when one student plopped down in the snow and made a snow angel. We walked through the deep piles instead of the sidewalks and couldn't stop laughing as we ran through the snow. It was magical!

Yes, 3-year-olds can be very emotional. They cry at the drop of a hat, become frustrated just because you didn't let them wear a blue sock and do not always understand that the world does not revolve around them. But, they greet their teachers each day with joy in their eyes, and they run to their parents at the end of the day with the utmost love in their hearts. They experience life to the fullest. What a great way to live!

## Fours Class *Liz, Melissa, Jane & Lara*

When Miss Cara offered to let us use her telescopes to continue her tradition of studying the moon and its phases, I was both excited and daunted. We would be traveling into new curricular territory. As much as I love revisiting topics and books which have been engaging for me and for past groups of children, there is nothing like hunting down and discovering an entirely new set of books, activities, and explorations. Researching and planning a new topic always lights my teacher fire. Would that fire be kindled in the children as well?

Sometimes I see our role as teachers as bringing our fire—our passion—to the children and nurturing their passion in turn. We construct piles of wood, kindling, and tinder in the environment. Then we light a spark. We watch to see what happens, blowing on the emerging fire, moving sticks around as needed, hoping for the larger logs to catch. It is an exciting and sometimes unpredictable process. We use our knowledge of children and past experiences to set the conditions, but we never know which fires will catch hold with a particular group of children. I am never more aware of this process than when I venture into uncharted territory. I really enjoyed making this journey with the children to see which sparks would catch fire.

We began with the beloved classic "Harold and the Purple Crayon." The moon is a constant in the book, providing comfort and stability throughout the imaginary adventures Harold creates with his crayon. Harold uses his wits and his crayon to draw his way out of any problem. We created stories of our own following this model. We really enjoyed

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"Play is the work of children. It is very serious stuff."

— Bob Keeshan ("Captain Kangaroo" of the longtime children's TV series of the same name)

## Congratulations to the winning MFLC Fall Raffle ticket sellers/buyers!

### PACKAGES:

For the Kids – **Beasley Family (3s AM)**

With the Family – **Beasley Family (3s AM)**

Going Out – **Nakshathra Family (2s PM)**  
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exploring coding with a simple grid game. Using left, right, and straight arrows as commands, we constructed pathways for Harold to get to his window (and the moon) while avoiding obstacles along the way.

We learned about the phases of the moon. We explored how the moon revolves around the Earth, the Earth rotates on its axis, and the Earth revolves around the sun. We learned that what we all see in the sky, no matter where we are and no matter what shape it appears to us, is the same moon. We learned that the moon is a rock which has low gravity and no atmosphere. We learned that the sun shines its light on the moon, and we can only see the part of the moon that is lit by the sun.

Each night, a different friend took home the telescope and moon journal so that we could observe changes in the moon's appearance over time. The children really enjoyed creating this home-school connection and sharing their findings with the group. January 2018 turned out to be a special month for studying the moon, with two Super Moons, a Blue Moon, and a lunar eclipse!

In our centers, we explored different aspects of the moon. We turned our dramatic play center into a moon mission with a rocket and mission control station. We collected "moon rock" samples using a robot grabber and designed flight plans to get us safely to the moon and beyond. We played with shadows using flashlights and a large shadow screen. We created "moon rocks" using baking soda and a few other ingredients. After our rocks hardened, we experimented with putting vinegar on them. It was exciting to watch them explode! Perhaps the most popular activity was our baking soda and vinegar rocket launch. The whole school joined in the fun!

As this moon bonfire burned at the center of our curriculum, we watched for smaller fires to emerge. We began to notice a recurring theme of creating pathways in the children's play. The story played out in many ways throughout the classroom, whether in coding a path to the moon for Harold, constructing a straight or curved pathway across the room with rocks, tracing spiral and zigzag paths with gems on the light table, constructing marble mazes, or building elevated pathways for the toy animals with wooden planks.

Another interest that emerged was three-dimensional art construction with recyclable materials. Both groups love constructing in our Creation Station! A connection arose between this process and learning about three-dimensional shapes. It felt like a natural outgrowth of our study of straight and curved lines, then two-dimensional shapes. We focused on spheres, cylinders, and cones, all of which are based on circles and all of which tie in with our moon/space study. We began to notice that you could combine a cone with a cylinder to create a rocket to travel to the spherical moon.

As the moon fire began to die down, another large fire began to burn in its place, this time fueled by rocks! I suspect our moon rocks and rock pathways fueled this interest. We created a large classroom rock collection to explore. We encouraged students to use their inquiry skills. My heart sang every time I heard someone say, "I wonder what would happen if we....?" We subjected our rocks to experiments involving water, gravity, vinegar, and magnets. We weighed, measured, drew, compared, and classified our rocks. We made our own sedimentary rocks using sand, pebbles, shells, and glue. As I write, we have another week left in the month. I could tell you what fires I plan to set or stoke, but I am happy to report that I cannot tell you what will actually catch fire. I can't wait to find out.

Thank you, Miss Cara, for making our exciting January explorations possible. Using real scientific equipment is a wonderful way to stoke children's interest in science. We thoroughly enjoyed our trip to the moon and beyond!

## February Enrichment Days

Enrichment classes are available for those 4 and older on Mondays and/or Fridays each month, 11:30am-2:00pm. Please pack your child a healthy, meat-free lunch. \$15 per class. **Email Miss Melissa at [melissa.oprison@gmail.com](mailto:melissa.oprison@gmail.com) to register!**

### Days and Themes This Month...

#### MONDAYS with Miss Sheila

**Feb 5:** We're Going on a Bear Hunt! **Feb 12:** Make beautiful Valentines for family members! **Feb 26:** Have you ever painted with rubber bands? Give it a try and make unique colorful paintings!

#### FRIDAYS with Miss Marilyn

**Feb 9:** Make honey cookies and learn about bees and honey! **Feb 16:** We will do some snake science experiments, make a spiral paper snake, and learn about these slithering creatures. **Feb 23:** Children will solve a classic mystery in Ed Young's "Seven Blind Mice."

## Fives Class *Cara & Melanie*

At Mushroom, we are a play-based preschool that uses themes and emergent topics to steer our curriculum and learning environment. We really believe in protecting your child's right to a grow in a developmentally appropriate environment.

There are times when I read another educator's perspective on this philosophy that strikes me to the core, and I feel the need to share it with everyone. ☺ The following article, "Allowing Children to Bloom in Season," is one that fits the bill.

### **Allowing Children to Bloom in Season**

SEPTEMBER 15, 2015, by NOTJUSTCUTE

**My grandmother had a very green thumb.** As my grandfather toiled away at getting alfalfa fields to grow and cows to give milk in a high desert climate, she turned their front yard into an explosion of color and scent. There were bright California poppies, delicate bleeding heart bushes, a huge swath of daisies, roses that were fuller and brighter than anything at the store, fascinating four o'clocks, little purple pansies (which she loved to sing about), and my favorites: the lilac and snowball bushes.

*Being in Grandma's garden was amazing. In her constant dress-plus-apron uniform, surrounded by sagebrush and dust, she made a blooming oasis. It obviously took a lot of work, and that is why we knew as children that you absolutely had to ask Grandma first before cutting flowers in her garden. It was a heady privilege to walk through Grandma's garden, scissors in hand, trusted to go out on your own to create a bouquet from her treasure trove. I loved it! I would cut my favorite blooms and slip them into a mason jar full of water, ready to present to my mom or a favorite teacher.*

*As I wandered through Grandma's garden, I couldn't help but notice the juxtaposition of tiny buds next to gigantic blooms. Childhood curiosity usually got the better of me, and I almost always plucked one or two (or three or four...) buds to gently peel, layer by layer, trying to force open the flower.*

*The results of this experiment were always the same. One withered, wrinkly, and severely damaged flower after another. **Grandma eventually noticed my habit, and pointed out that the buds I forced open would never become the blooms they were destined to become. I had interrupted them in their season of growth, and stopped them from doing what they were meant to do, in the season they were meant to do it.***

*It was a lesson in flowers as a child, but as you can probably guess, it means much more to me now.*

*It's interesting to me that Friedrich Froebel landed on the term "kindergarten," or literally "child's garden," as the name for his vision of early education. If we imagine the early learning period in the context of a garden metaphor, some key understandings become very apparent.*

*Just as Grandma's flowers grew in a predictable order (roots, stems, leaves, buds, blooms), so too children's development and learning happen in a predictable pattern. The bloom of reading is preceded by phonological awareness, language*

development, print awareness, and many other important pre-reading skills. The bloom of independent toileting skill is preceded by self-awareness, motor skills, autonomy, and procedural understanding. **Every major skill is preceded by the development of smaller, foundational skills.**

But just because there is a predictable pattern to growth, and a predictable season for blooming, doesn't mean that every flower on the plant will bloom on the same day. Each flower opens at its own rate within the growing season. For a flower, the season for blooming may be a matter of weeks or months. In child development, some seasons may even last a few years.

Reading, for example, has a natural blooming season between approximately 4 years old and 7 years old. Like a long-blooming plant, some children bloom slightly earlier and some slightly later and many at every point in between. As perplexing as it might be to some, this multi-year span is very much normal.

But imagine forcing every bud open on the exact same date because of a somewhat arbitrary decision that all flowers should bloom exactly then. We're left with more harm than help. It's the defeated child equivalent of a withered, wrinkly, forced bloom. **We interrupted them in their season of growth, and stopped them from doing what they were meant to do, when they were meant to do it. Anxiety, comparison, and competition encouraged us to force open the bloom rather than nourish the roots and stems, building the critical, foundational skills when they were needed.**

Children need to be allowed to bloom in season, just as flowers are. This doesn't mean we do nothing however. There's a big difference between feeding the plant and forcing the bloom.

Just as my grandmother carved out a piece of the desert landscape and filled it with rich soil, adequate water, and favorable nutrients, we must give children supportive "nutrient-dense" environments where they can flourish as well. **Environments rich in print, conversation, experience, play, nature, healthy relationships, and opportunities for connection help children thrive and bloom in season.**

If a plant is given the right environment, and shows progression adequate to the season, there's no need for the anxiety that plagues the stewards of young children. Certainly there are times for extra care: additional nourishment, shelter from an early frost, staking for support. Likewise, children may need specialized support and attention while building skills, but we must always be aware of the appropriate order and season and not force or cut back beyond where they are supported.

**It can be hard to trust in these long windows of normal development, to not get caught up in the rush and the pressure that is prevalent today. But when we trust the**

**growing season, and nourish the process, the blooms are magnificent, even in—no, especially in—all their variety.**

I've seen it for myself, very much close to home. I watched, surprised, as one of my sons begin reading rather spontaneously at about 4 years of age. He went into kindergarten as a fluent reader. I hadn't "done" anything, I insisted to friends. He was just a product of his genes and his environment. His brother, however, with the same pool of genes and (for the most part) the same environment, became fluent closer to 7, pushing 8.

Go Online to Vote for Mushroom to Win a Visit from Children's Author Jan Brett Next Year!

Visit [janbrett.com](http://janbrett.com) for info and click on "Enter Here" to put in your name and email address and Mushroom's info. One vote per email address. *Tell your family and friends!*  
Contest ends April 2.

I'd be lying if I said I never worried. It was so different from our first experience. Thankfully, he was never labeled as slow or behind and was showing all the appropriate signs of progressing through the skills in order and in season (roots-solid, stems-check, leaves-good, buds-visible). And so I held on to what I knew to be true about development and just kept giving the same nutrient-dense environment.

When the switch flipped for him, it flipped hard. This little guy went from labored reading to voracious reading. I have literally caught him with his reading lamp on at 3 a.m., tearing through the irresistible chapters of his latest book. I've listened to my husband on the other end of the phone while I'm away on a speaking assignment say, "Come talk to your mom. Put down your book for a second. Just for a second. Come talk to your mom. PUT DOWN YOUR BOOK AND COME TALK TO YOUR MOTHER!" And while I could perhaps feel slighted by the fact that "Origami Yoda" is more appealing than his own mom, I can't help but be thrilled that he's completely engrossed in reading.

These two readers now pass chapter books back and forth, both very bright, very good readers. Each having bloomed in his own season. Their younger brother has now bumped our tally up to three, blooming in season in his own way, right between the two outliers.

We have to pester them about picking up the books in their rooms. Some nights we beg them to put down the books and turn out the lights. And a few of our biggest melt-downs have erupted when it was announced that the late bedtime did not leave enough time for my husband to read aloud from Harry Potter.

*I hate to think about what their attitudes toward reading might have been in a different growing environment. One where blooms were forced open. Where comparison caused them to wither. Where meaningful literacy experiences were traded for arbitrary drills and high-pressure benchmarks. Where normal progress was deemed insufficient because of an artificially shortened growing season.*

***I am so grateful for teachers and parents who carefully tend their "Child's Garden," and allow each of our children to bloom in season.***

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We are committed to ensuring that your child is allowed to bloom in season. Thank you for entrusting us with this important task in your child's early childhood development.

## **K-Too Class *Cara & Christine***

The K-Too class has been thoroughly enjoying an emergent curriculum based on their interests as well as our theme of the Earth's atmosphere and then moving into outer space. We listened and watched carefully to what the children were interested in and the type of experiences they were gravitating toward.

As a group, they collectively really enjoy creating and constructing. So, we are trying to provide materials, books and inspiring activities to meet those needs. For example, one child was interested in creating a musical instrument. I found a book from the library about how to make instruments out of recycled materials. He landed on wanting to make a ukulele and once we collected all of our materials it was created. This inspired most of the class to also want to create their own ukulele or guitar. We have put a bug in their ear

that maybe we could be the class that creates musical instruments for the Mushroom musical later this spring. : )

Also, we have been commissioned by our own Miss Jamie to help develop the story for the musical. Along with all of this, there are mazes being made and very intricate play scenes created in our sand table with the outer space small world materials that we added. We are reading books about the Apollo 11 mission, which has really ignited some amazing conversations at gathering.

Several of our children plan on making a rocket soon and traveling to the moon in their near future. Their enthusiasm is contagious! We read the story "Margaret and the Moon: How Margaret Hamilton Saved the First Lunar Landing," which has inspired us to do some coding activities. We ended the month with a fun and creative graphic novel "CatStronauts: Mission Moon" as an opportunity to explore another literary style and also inspire storytelling activities.

This is a special time for our kindergarten students. We echo the same sentiments as stated in an article written by kindergarten teacher Michelle Brightwater...

*"This is a time of great beauty, expansion, growth, sensitivity and change. The best way to guide your child through this stage is by meeting them with deep compassion, loving firmness and a strong daily rhythm. Our love and attention will continue to see them through. Let them work, venture out to seek new challenges and be there to enfold them in your arms when they need it. They will vacillate between going boldly out into the world with a new vision and regressing into clinging and insecurity. They need to be held between form and freedom, just as they will experience in adolescence! And know that you are not alone. We are the village. We hold each other and all of our children together."*

## **FEBRUARY IS AMERICAN HEART MONTH!**

**Encourage healthy eating habits. Small changes can lead to a recipe for success...**

- ♥ Provide plenty of vegetables, fruits and whole-grain products.
- ♥ Include low-fat or non-fat milk or dairy products.
- ♥ Choose lean meats, poultry, fish, lentils and beans for protein.
- ♥ Serve reasonably sized portions.
- ♥ Encourage your family to drink lots of water.
- ♥ Limit sugar-sweetened beverages, sugar, sodium and saturated fat.

**Help kids stay active.** Children should participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity most days of the week, and every day if possible. You can set a great example! Start adding physical activity to your own daily routine and encourage your child to join you. Some examples of moderate-intensity physical activity include:

- ♥ Brisk walking
- ♥ Playing tag
- ♥ Jumping rope
- ♥ Playing soccer
- ♥ Swimming
- ♥ Dancing



Are in *Bloom* for the  
**MFLC 2018 Spring Flower Fundraiser!**

**Sale Dates: February 5-20**

Order forms and money due to MFLC by **February 20**.  
 Make checks payable to **MFLC**.

For a \$6 shipping fee, orders will ship to customers at their optimal planting time in late April/early May.

*50% of your sales go toward your fundraising fee!*

For more information, contact Kate Gigliotti-Gordon at [kgiglgordon@gmail.com](mailto:kgiglgordon@gmail.com).



**Panera FUNDRAISING™**

HELP SUPPORT

**MUSHROOM FAMILY LEARNING CENTER, INC.**

**WHERE** 1500 Washington Road, Mount Lebanon, PA

**WHEN** Thursday, February 15th **FROM** 4:00PM - 8:00PM

Bring this flyer or show an electronic version to the cashier when you place your order and we'll donate a portion of the proceeds from your purchase. Gift card purchases and catering are not counted towards the event.

Learn more at [PaneraBread.com/Fundraiser](http://PaneraBread.com/Fundraiser)

**Ordering Online? Try Rapid Pick-Up or Delivery.**  
 Enter "FUND" at checkout to have a portion of your proceeds donated to your organization.

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**Join the MUSHROOM FAMILY LEARNING CENTER Kids of STEEL Team!**

**Registration Deadline: March 31**



**WHAT IS THE KIDS OF STEEL PROGRAM?**

Kids of STEEL (KOS) is an award-winning, free youth physical activity and nutrition program designed to instill lifelong healthy habits in children. Mushroom Family Learning Center is a participating KOS program site.



"Training" plans are geared toward age-appropriate exercise and healthy eating habits. Children track their activity and nutrition on a provided log and turn it in for a finisher prize by the May 5 marathon day.

They are encouraged, but not required, to complete the KOS program by participating in a Pittsburgh Marathon event the morning of **Saturday, May 5:**

- **UPMC Health Plan/UPMC Sports Medicine Pittsburgh 5K Run** (North Shore and around North Side then Downtown)
- **Toyota Pittsburgh Kids Marathon** - 1-Mile Run, appropriate for ages 5-12 with parent/guardian (North Shore to Downtown)
- **Sheetz Pittsburgh Toddler Trot** - 100-Yard Run, recommended for ages 2-4, with parent/guardian (in Point State Park)



**TO REGISTER FOR KIDS OF STEEL:**

- Go online to [kidsofsteel.org/join-kids-of-steel](http://kidsofsteel.org/join-kids-of-steel)

There is a link to the *Family Program Guide* where you can find the training plans and logs, or contact Kelly Lotter below for assistance.

- There are separate links to either register and complete a race, or register for the program only/not completing a race. Click on the appropriate link, which takes you to the marathon's runsignup.com site, then follow the instructions. Please be sure to select that you are participating in the Kids of STEEL program and choose *Mushroom Family Learning Center* as your Kids of STEEL site from the list.

For more information or assistance in registering, contact Mushroom parent Kelly Lotter at [kelly.lotter@gmail.com](mailto:kelly.lotter@gmail.com) or 412-596-0536.

**A nutrition/fitness coach from Kids of STEEL will visit Mushroom on March 1!**