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JANUARY 2016

IMPORTANT DATES & INFO

Tuition Due - January 1

Please note: All balances need to be paid in full to be able to register for next year (registration begins Jan. 25).

Classes Resume January 4

Penguins Package Raffle –

Lottery drawing Jan. 5, 7pm
All ticket stubs must be in by Jan. 5 in case a drawing by hand would be needed.

No Classes Jan. 18 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

MFLC Board Meeting – Jan. 20

In-House Registration for the 2016-17 School Year –
January 25-29

Outside Play

We will go outside if it's 28+ degrees and no rain. Please be sure your kids are prepared with labeled cold-weather gear.

Enrichment Classes and Munchin Lunchin

There are some spots available –
jamie_geisler@comcast.net

Change in your contact info?

Please let Joan know if your email, phone or address has changed.

mixedbag designs

Eco-chic reusable bags and accessories!

SALE COMING SOON...

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.

smile.amazon.com

www.gofundme.com/mflc2015

shopping.escrip.com

From the Director ~ Joan Harrison

Dear Families and Friends,

Welcome to 2016! I hope you enjoyed our holidays with your family and friends. We are looking forward to a great second half of the school year with you and your wonderful children.

As we begin January, please remember that this could be a whole new adjustment at school for your child...just when you thought you had this separation thing solved!

Separation is a normal, healthy growth and development stage that continues throughout our lives. Please understand that having difficulty separating shows the love and comfort children feel being with their parents and familiar surroundings. Isn't it wonderful that our children feel most comfortable with their parents? That's what we want. Patience, understanding, tolerance, love and time all produce the reward we are looking for...healthy, happy separations. (Remember, even college-age children get homesick!)

It's Registration Time Again!

It seems sort of strange to be thinking ahead to the 2016-2017 school year. It seems hard to believe we are halfway through our current school year. We are having a blast, but now we need to leap forward to get ready for next year. I am pleased to announce that **we will be adding a one-day Mom & Tots class, and adding an extra day to our K-Too class.**

You will also notice a slight increase in the tuition and the fundraising fee. This is our first increase in three years. Our new tuition rates will be Early Learners: \$125.00; 3s, 3/4s, 4s, K-Too: \$165.00; PreK: \$210. The fundraising fee increase will be \$5 per student.

Registration will be held January 25-29. Everyone will receive registration forms in their cubbies on January 19. Completed registrations forms will NOT be accepted until January 25. In order to be registered, the following MUST be complete:

- Form must be filled out completely.
- Non-refundable registration fee must be attached.
- Families must be current with tuition payments (including first-half fundraising fee).

Please be aware that classes fill up quickly!

Registration will be open to the public on Tuesday, February 2. If you have any questions, please contact me. Scholarships are available; please come to my office for a confidential scholarship application.

The very best compliment you can pay us is to recommend Mushroom school to a friend or neighbor. If you know of a family who may be interested in our school, please have the parents or guardians call to schedule a tour.

We thank you for your continued commitment and support.

Welcome to our new MFLC families!

Will Marshall (3/4s), parents John and Nicole
Meadow Pluebell (3/4s), parents Alicia and Michael
Charlotte Lipkin (3/4s), parents Brian and Gina
Etta Ewing (3/4s), parents Stacy and William

A BIG Thank-You to...

- **All our families who have donated** to our scholarship fund through the United Way and other means and to our GoFundMe campaign and Giving Tuesday for replenishing relocation funds. We are grateful for your generosity.
- **Alaina Stockhausen**, who coordinated our Barnes & Noble spirit day and all the families who participated.
- **Miss Jamie** for your storytime at B&N. It was a treat!
- **Carrie Stock**, who coordinated our Penguins Package Raffle. And big, big thanks to the prize donors: Carrie's in-laws, George Halter, and the FitzGerald family. And to **Luca Stock** (PreK-AM) and family for their donation of manipulatives for the classroom.
- **Callahan Klaphake** [PreK-PM] for his donation of books.
- **All our homeroom parents and families** for coordinating and taking part in the classroom holiday celebrations.
- **Miss Cara** for hosting the teacher holiday party.
- **Danika Lagorio**, who has been coordinating marketing materials for MFLC – business cards, car magnets and yard signs – to help spread the good word!
- **Erin Betler**, board president, for being MFLC's biggest cheerleader. We are all grateful for your dedication to the future of our school, continuing and building on 42 years of history.

From the Board President ~ Erin Betler

Happy January!

I hope everyone enjoyed the holiday break. This month always has a way of making me feel refreshed for so many reasons: There's a lovely feeling of 2016 being a clean slate, like anything and everything is possible. The shortest day of the year is officially behind us. From here on in, the mornings will slowly but surely get lighter and evenings longer. Indoor spaces look a little bigger now that the holiday decorations are packed away. Who feels a DIY project coming on?

The supermarket aisles (where, alas, you do have to return) are back to their normal calm selves. Your evenings and weekends are your own again. No more to-do lists, shopping, decorating, or wrapping. You can unearth those books you never quite got a chance to finish. You can even experiment with a new recipe or two. January is your oyster.

As much as falling off the wagon of healthy (hmmm...ish) eating for a few solid weeks was fun, it's relieving to officially say "Enough" (and possibly sign up to "Run for a Reason" with Mushroom?). Within just a few days of normalcy, you can feel more focused and energetic.

Even the preschool classrooms look a little different come January. All of the holiday artwork has gone home and teachers have a fresh stack of books to read to the children. The children are rested after a nice break from school. Parents and teachers may or may not feel the same way!

I hope this month brings a big snowman to my yard and yours. Even ol' Frosty can teach us a thing or two this new year...

What we can learn about life from a snowman:

- * Hold your ground, even when the heat is on.
- * The key to life is to be a jolly, happy soul.
- * There's no stopping you once you're on a roll.
- * It's fun to hang out in your backyard!

Happy New Year wishes to my Mushroom family! I wish you all happiness, health and prosperity in 2016.

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.

Early Learners – Amy, Sheila, and Marlene

Happy New Year! We hope that you had a wonderful winter break and got to do lots of fun things with friends and family. It seemed odd to have such warm weather for at least the beginning of break, but hopefully it enabled you to spend some extra time outside.

Speaking of outside, we'd like to remind you that we will generally go out to the playground every day that the temperature is above 28 degrees. We aren't out for very long, but we do try to get the children into their hats, mittens, boots, and whatever you send in their bags. It's harder to get them to keep them on!

Going outside is a great way for children to work on their gross motor skills. "Gross motor" is a term that sounds odd but just refers to the big muscles that we all have, including the ones in our arms, legs, and torsos. Running, climbing, and kicking a ball all help to develop these muscles. Having strong muscles enables good balance and stamina, too. Balance and coordination are really helpful when the children are walking around inside between the train tracks, the parking garage, and the play farm!

The children's social interactions change outside, too. When we're inside, the children have their favorite things to do, whether it's art, dressing up, or driving the Matchbox cars. Things change when we go out. The children still have their favorite activities, but they're more similar to each other's choices. For example, we often have all three lawn mowers going at the same time. The children see each other, maybe

run in the same direction, and (although we try to avoid it) may crash the mowers into each other. Even though they aren't necessarily cooperating and planning their interactions together, this is more involved parallel play than just being on the carpet with trains at the same moment as someone else.

The stages of play are on a continuum just like everything else your child will learn. These interactions outside are just more examples of individual growth in a shared environment!

We'd like to thank you all for your nutritious and generous snack contributions so far this year. The children love it when we all thank them together for bringing snack. It's also fun to see what the children choose if you let them decide what to bring. Some of them have a wide range of foods that they enjoy!

A Friendly Reminder About School Respect...

If parents would like to chat a bit after classes while the children play, we highly encourage you to do so. If playing in the front of the school, please be respectful of Beth El's memorial garden and keep the children from playing inside the flowerbed. Children may also play within the fenced playground and, of course, even on the playground area and on the equipment.

Regardless of the location, *parental supervision is absolutely a must.*

Please respect our playground and leave the equipment as you found it when you are ready to leave. We work hard to encourage children to put away their materials properly when they are done, so please help us to continue this practice. Thank you for your cooperation.

Threes – Jamie, Debbie, and Julie

When I was a child I distinctly remember the feeling I had around this time of the year. We would decorate our house with candles and lights. I loved turning all of the regular lights off and sitting with my family in the glow of the holiday lights and candles. It gave me such a warm feeling, even to this day. I have tried to create new traditions with my own children as well as keeping some of my childhood traditions and stories alive. I cherish the quiet times where we are present in the moment... a time when we do not have to worry about homework or practices to attend. It is a time of pure joy,

taking everything in that I can from my children. I love this time of the year.

I tried to capture these same warm moments in our classroom in December. I felt it was about truly focusing on the children's conversations, actions and questions. We wore our pajamas to school one morning and made a delicious eggs and pancake breakfast. It was a magical day. It is the small moments like cracking an egg or trying to eat a pancake whole that the students will remember. The students wrote stories about what happened when they wore their pajamas to school. We discussed family traditions and celebrated Hanukkah and Christmas. We created dreidels out of chocolate and marshmallows, beautiful blue stars with tons of glitter and candy canes out of beads. During this time, we made new friends, interacted more with our classmates and created wonderful dramatic play ideas. This month was more about enjoying the company of our classmates instead of completing everything listed on the lesson plan.

I think my favorite day in December was our last day before break. The students spent the morning making sugar cookies with lots of sprinkles. This class gets so involved in the cooking process. We read a funny story entitled "I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Bell." We then took the whole class up to the stage for an amazing performance. Sixteen of our students found their confident voice and sang solos for the entire class. The songs ranged from ABC's to Rudolph to a few original creations. They were so proud of themselves especially when their friends cheered loudly for them. We all joined in with bells for a special rendition of "Jingle Bells." We ended the day with a special pizza party where once again we just enjoyed the time together laughing, singing and telling great stories.

JANUARY 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 Ms. Jamie for more info at jamie_geisler@comcast.net.

Days and Themes This Month...

Mondays

January 4 – (*Why There Was An Old Lady Who Swallowed Some Snow*), 11 (*Red Light, Green Light activities and fun!*), 25 (*Puffy Paint Creations!*)

Fridays

January 8 (*Winter Sky: Northern Lights exploration*), 15 (*Storytelling workshop/puppets*), 22 (*Winter Trees by Carol Gerber*), 29 (*winter birds/make a feeder*).

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

As I write this, I am 38,000 feet in the air. My husband and my two sons are with me, traveling to Los Angeles to spend Christmas with the rest of our family. This will be the first time we've been back to LA for Christmas in 11 years, since we moved to Pittsburgh, and it will be the largest gathering of Nagys and Auers since Brian and I got married 18 years ago on December 27.

This may seem like an odd time for me to be thinking of you, dear Mushroom families, but I can't help thinking about your sweet, little children as I head into the holidays with mine, who are not so little any more. I am the youngest in my family, and my son, Duncan, who will turn 13 in a few days, is the youngest cousin. My nephews and niece are all young adults now. The last time we were all together, Duncan was just turning 2. It's such a cliché, but I can't begin to tell you how quickly those years pass.

I have always been terrible at organizing photographs. Even though I love nothing more than looking through family pictures, I have boxes of pre-digital prints and gigabytes of unprinted digitals. I finally began tackling this jumble of images this Christmas, when my sisters and I decided to collaborate on a photo book for our ailing father. It was daunting, but once I got going, I just couldn't stop. I even managed to retrieve hundreds of pictures, believed lost, from a defunct computer.

As I looked at these images, so many memories came flooding back. I saw the year Brian and I got married, when our two families came together as something new. I saw my son, Julian, at 18 months, all gussied up in his Christmas finery, displaying a love of dressing up that remains to this day. I saw a three-year-old Julian, clad in jammies and cowboy hat, astride his new tricycle, and I remembered him exclaiming, "That was so nice of Santa!" Then there was the year Duncan was born, when I spent Christmas Eve having contractions and watching Julian's beloved goldfish periodically float to the top of the tank, struggling to survive the feast (half a can of fish food) Julian had given him. I remembered the gratitude I felt when a small Christmas miracle kept my labor at bay and spared the fish so that my four-year-old could wake up on Christmas morning with both his Mommy and his fish.

I saw Great Uncle Bruce's grinning face the year he got the boys giant, remote-control trucks that played the most obnoxious, loud music. We couldn't stop dancing to it despite

*Have You Noticed Our New
Sign at the Entrance by
Cochran Road???*

our annoyance. Then there was the Christmas when Bruce died three years later, leaving us the unexpected gift of his dog Annie, who has become the love of our kids' lives.

I remember how challenging life can be with young children. I know you face struggles daily, some large and some small, and you are often exhausted. When I look at those pictures, I wish I could go back and tell my younger self, "Don't sweat the small stuff!" When these beautiful little people grow up, none of those struggles will seem important. You will remember the touch of their tiny hands on your face, the lilt of their little voices, the sweet smiles on their faces on Christmas morning, the taste of the cookies you baked together, and the smell of their hair after a bath. Breathe deeply now and savor those moments. And take lots of pictures.

On behalf of April, Marlene, Melissa, and myself, I wish you a joyous holiday season and a wondrous new year. Early childhood is a fleeting yet magical time. We are eternally grateful to you for allowing us to dwell in that magic with your children.

Illness: When to Keep Your Child Home . . .

While fever is a good indication of sickness, it is not the only one. If your child is "not himself," has vomited or had diarrhea within the last 24 hours, has a green nasal discharge, or is tired and irritable, something more than a cold is likely to blame. In addition to potentially infecting others, children are also less resistant to other germs when ill. If you have any doubts, it's best to have the child stay home. Of course, a big way to help prevent illness is to make sure children wash their hands upon entering the classroom every day.

Pre-K – Cara, Jane, and Melanie

We began our month by extending our exploration of Native Americans with making our own dreamcatchers. This naturally leads into reading "Harold and the Purple Crayon" and we thoroughly enjoy reading his adventures. The story always begins with Harold going to bed and not being ready for sleep yet, so he picks up his purple crayon and begins to draw himself an adventure. He always ends his story by drawing a window around the moon, which brings him back to his room as he then drifts off to sleep. This story really engages the children and lends itself to using your imagination. We had a wonderful time then creating our own adventure stories similar to Harold. What amazingly creative pieces each child created.

We will begin learning more about the moon and moon phases next month so I wanted us to spend December exploring what causes day and night in preparation. We first discussed what is light. They had wonderful ideas of what light is and what are sources of light. We then explored with

light by using Light Brites, flashlights and our light table. We read a book about what causes day and night and this spurred amazing conversations with the children. Also, it ignited new questions from the children for us to answer such as "How does the Earth rotate?" One day we used a flashlight that represented the sun and the children were the Earth. As they rotated in a circle, they were able to experience how day and night occurs as we discussed each time of day (sunrise, daytime, sunset and nighttime).

We also spent the last week of school sharing with each other a Holiday Tradition booklet that each child completed. Each family may choose any holiday that they celebrate throughout the year. We do this project because we think it is important for children to see their family traditions reflected in their school environment. This again reinforces the school-home connection along with the idea that school reflects who they are. This project also gives the children a wonderful opportunity to learn about other children's traditions and their world perspective begins to open. They will see the commonalities as well as the differences between all of the traditions and know that they are all important to our shared experience. It is a wonderful piece to share with their peers, and thank you families for supporting this project.

We ended the month with a wonderful celebration... our "Fill a Bucket" party! Each day the children put a piece of colored styrofoam in our classroom bucket and said something they are thankful for that day. The children knew that once the bucket was filled that we would have a party to celebrate. So, we donned our pajamas, put up a tent in the classroom, brought out the flashlights and ended the day with pancakes with all of the fixings! So much fun!!!

It is hard to believe that it is already 2016! We can't wait to begin the new year with the children!



Dress for Success!

Now that the weather is getting colder we request that you send your children in appropriate outdoor clothing: warm coat, hat, mittens, snow pants, and boots when necessary. **Items should be**

labeled and placed in the child's bag. The children go outside every day, weather permitting — no rain and a temperature of 28 degrees or higher. *Please be sure your kids also have proper "play shoes," especially on movement day.* Thank you!

Show Your Mushroom Love!



Buy an MFLC car magnet for only \$5 – see Joan to purchase!

K-Too – Marilyn

Hello Families,

I hope you all cozied down and enjoyed uninterrupted family time over the winter break. Most people dread winter, but I associate the season with savory meals, snow play, long hot baths, and soft sweaters. Make sure to get your children outside every day during the winter months to keep them healthy and happy. My son's Boy Scout leader always said, "There's no such thing as bad weather, just bad gear!"

As many of you know, I am traveling to New Zealand over the holidays to commemorate my 30th wedding anniversary. I showed the children my flight path to the southern hemisphere on our globe. Their eyes were wide with wonder. Everyone was relieved that Miss Amy will be my substitute in January and I told them how much I would miss them while I'm gone.

My sister and her husband live in Kerikeri, New Zealand. I look forward to spending our first Christmas together after our father passed away over the summer. All holidays are about coming together with those you love to celebrate life. I hope your celebrations were full of light, love, gratitude, shared memories, and future plans. May peace and joy fill our world this season and always.

Happy 2016!

Another fresh new year is here...

Another year to live!

To banish worry, doubt and fear,

To love and laugh and give!

This bright new year is given me

To live each day with zest...

To daily grow and try to be

My highest and my best!

I have the opportunity

Once more to right some wrongs,

To pray for peace, to plant a tree,

And sing more joyful songs!

-- William Arthur Ward

(allgreatquotes.com)