1900 Cochran Road Pittsburgh, PA 15220 mushroomfamily.org mflcdirector@hotmail.com 412-531-1225



MARCH 2018

Important Dates/Info

APRIL TUITION DUE NOW

Tea Clothing Sale going on now through March 5 Teaschooldays.com – use code SDS18MUSHROOM for 15% off and free shipping! (See flier at end of newsletter.)

School Pictures – March 5-7 (See flier at end of newsletter.)

'Slice of Summer' Mushroom Summer Camp – Registration is open!

(See flier at end of newsletter.)

Free Vision Screening in class – March 19-20

MFLC Board Meeting – Mar. 21

Parent/Teacher Conferences – March 21-23 Look for sign-up soon! (See flier at end of newsletter.)

Spring Break – March 26-April 2; Classes resume April 3.

Pittsburgh Pirates Ticket Package and Others – Ticket sales will be April 3-6.

MFLC Open House & Musical – May 3

Enrichment Classes and Lunch Bunch Contact Miss Melissa at melissa.oprison@gmail.com.

Proper Shoes – Please be sure your child has proper play shoes (closed toe with a back), especially on movement day.

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

"Deep within us - no matter who we are - there lives a feeling of wanting to be lovable, of wanting to be the kind of person that others like to be with. And the greatest thing we can do is let people know that they are loved and capable of loving."

- Fred Rogers

You will probably be hearing a lot about Fred Rogers this month, and this year. It marks the 50th anniversary of the first national PBS broadcast of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood." When Mr. Rogers opened each program with his song "Won't you be my neighbor," it was an invitation to everyone—no matter who we are, what we look like, or what we can or cannot do.

He created the show with an intentionally slow and deliberate pace so that children had time to look and listen carefully. There were many long close-ups, and lots of silence.

Mr. Rogers was especially known for his focus on emotional development. On the program he often talked, sang and created make-believe puppet stories about feelings. Feeling jealous, sad, angry, proud or joyful...he was helping children know that feelings are natural and normal, and what matters most is what we do with those feelings. In those discussions he offered so many core life lessons:

- Accept people as they are.
- Look and listen carefully.

Have you

checked your

child's cubby

lately?

Please be sure to

- We all have feelings.
- Be yourself.



Mr. Rogers wanted children to know that life is not about being perfect – it is about doing the best we can.

Maybe Mr. Rogers' most important life lesson was: You don't have to be perfect to be loved. What a gift for all of us, no matter how young or old we are!

Don't miss "Mr. Rogers: It's You I Like", a heartfelt tribute to the Neighborhood. It will be on PBS March 6 at 8:00 p.m. Thanks for being my neighbor!

- Joan

And, to always be *in the know,* read the Mushroom Constant Contact emails that are sent out on Sundays.

Big THANKS to...

Gina Lipkin (Charlotte, KToo; Henry, 2sM/W) and **Abby Parker** (Frida, 4sAM; Yarrow, 2sTThAM) for coordinating the Foster Love project.

Erin Betler (Sylvie, 4sAM) for coordinating the Panera spirit night.

Kate Gigliotti-Gordon (Laszlo, 4sAM) for coordinating the Flower Power fundraiser.

Miss Lara and **Miles Sponsler** (KToo) for the donation of "wheelies" for the playground.

Kelly Lotter who puts together this newsletter each month.

All our homeroom parents and families who helped with our fun and festive Valentine's parties!

To all our families who donated or provided assistance to help Loretta Somerville. Your generosity and love is much appreciated.

From the Board President ~ Kate Gigliotti-Gordon

Happy March! It looks like March may not be too mean of a lion this year and hopefully the Luck o' the Irish will be with us weather-wise this spring.

March is such an exciting month. It's the great Spring Awakening of flowers, plants, trees and creatures alike. The early days of spring are filled with such optimism and joy! I hope that you can take a few evening strolls this month and enjoy more time outside. I hope that everyone is able to open up every window in their house this month and air-out the last of winter's germs. I hope that we can all stow away the hats, gloves and heavy coats soon – think of how much faster we will be able to get out the door!

So many fun things will be happening at Mushroom this month. We will start the month off with Picture Day. Say "Cheese!" I love seeing my son's smiling face in his class picture, but I have to say, what I love even more is a terrible class picture! There's something so honest about that, and it's certainly memorable! Hopefully there will be plenty of time on the playground this month and numerous chances to see the sun shining brightly and nature smiling, as children spend more time outdoors.

I wanted to extend a big "Thank You" to everyone who participated in our Flower Power fundraiser; sales totaled over \$2,000! New flowers are the best way to welcome spring. Do your kids need a spring wardrobe refresh? Then please check out the amazing "School Days" online fundraising event that one of my favorite children's clothing and accessory brands, Tea Collection, is hosting for Mushroom! These clothes are extremely durable, stylish and comfortable. When you visit TeaSchoolDays.com through this Monday, March 5, enter Promo Code SDS18MUSHROOM at

With Heartfelt Thanks to the MFLC Family

The tragedy I experienced January 18th when I lost my home and treasured possessions to a house fire has changed me forever. I am so humbled by the sincere concern, love, and extremely generous donations gifted to me by the Mushroom family of students, parents, teachers and Board of Directors.

Vivi, the picture you drew for me brought a huge smile to my face and I am having it framed!

I feel honored and blessed that you consider me a member of the Mushroom family. You have made a better person out of me.

Sincerely, Loretta Somerville [Grandmother to Frida and Yarrow Parker / mom of Abby Parker]

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To my Mushroom Family,

Words can't express the gratitude and warmth my family and I feel from you all. Your generous and compassionate contributions were overwhelming. I always felt that the people who make up this school were like a family to us in so many ways, and now, after the darkest of times, your willingness to help has shown us that this place is made of so much love. I know it sounds corny, but the Bill Withers song "Lean on Me" plays over and over for me:

> Lean on me, when you're not strong And I'll be your friend I'll help you carry on For it won't be long 'Til I'm gonna need Somebody to lean on

> > Sincerely, Abby and Dell Parker

checkout to get 15% off your purchase price + Free Shipping, and Mushroom will receive 15% of all sales!

Wishing you and your family shamrocks, rainbows, and silly leprechauns o' plenty this month, as we turn the clocks ahead an hour and revel in the First Day of Spring.

Twos Class Amy, Sheila & Marlene

At the beginning of the year, we talk to families about the "3 S's:" separation, socialization, and safety. Here's a little update on where we are...

Most of the children have separated from their parents or caregiver by now. It''s completely normal to have a few bumps in the road, like returning to school after vacation, break, or illness; being tired; a parent being out of town; or even just having "one of those days." The important thing is that your child is able to participate in the activities of the

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.

class without distress. Generally some hugs and an extraspecial activity (like getting out a favorite toy or the fancy paper!) are all it takes to get back on track. If you feel like your child is having a hard time for any reason, please mention it to one of us.

Our little classroom is just bursting with socialization right now! These three groups are really moving from parallel play, where they do the same activity next to another child, toward cooperative play. One example is at the sand table, which every student visits at least once a day. We often observe two children using scoops or spoons to fill up their own bowls or pots. Lately, we have seen children working together to fill up a "coffee" cup and say, "Coffee for my mommy!" "Coffee for my mommy!"

It's really exciting to watch the children use language to communicate with each other. In the past, they might tell one of us that they want a toy that another child is using. Now it's becoming more common for them to say that to the other child. They are also working together to bake playdough cookies and muffins in the kitchen and having little conversations while they do it.

Finally, we continue to work hard to keep everyone safe. Now that the children are familiar with us and our classroom, every now and then one of them tries to test the limits by running or crossing the red line without a teacher. Sitting while eating and never opening the door are also very important. We gently remind the children of the rules we have and why they keep us safe. It's helpful to us if you can reinforce them, too! We appreciate your support.

Threes Class Jamie, Debbie, April, Melanie & Kelsey

Did you ever wish you could be a fly on the wall in your child's classroom? I know that I would love to see how my children interact with their friends, how they listen and behave and just their general overall happiness in school. There are many days in my own classroom that I wish the parents could see what exciting things are happening, especially this time of the year when they are showing so much confidence in their learning and interactions with their peers. Student-directed creativity is a joy to observe. I think the children could actually run the classroom, without teacher assistance. I imagine their day would consist of lots of paint, scissors and cars, opening up the closet of toys and playing outside. I think they could even end their day with Nursery Rhymes since they know them by heart.

If you entered our classroom during the month of February you may have felt like you were in a bear's hideaway. We turned part of the classroom into a cozy bear cave where we could read and explore non-fiction books about grizzly bears, black bears and polar bears. The cave also became a special spot to tell scary stories. We learned about the types of food bears eat and thought it was funny bears eat fish while they are still alive. We discovered the meaning of hibernation and even practiced hibernating in our pajamas and sleeping bags. We invited our favorite teddy bears and other stuffed animal friends to our Teddy Bear Picnic. Our friends spent the day with us listening to stories, making crafts, riding in the parachute and eating on a picnic blanket in the gathering area.

We celebrated Valentine's Day by making mini pizzas and exchanging cards with our friends. We painted with pink and red paint, and put together Valentine cupcake crafts and beautiful bracelets. We invited our family and friends to dance with us as a final celebration on Valentine's Day.

The warm weather teased us a bit in February, which we took full advantage of. The children loved learning new games like tag and Red Rover. The expressions on their faces were priceless as they ran as fast as they could to tag their friends. They were determined to break through the Red Rover lines and anticipated their names being called.

Playing with the children reminded me of long ago playing the same games with the six children in my neighborhood. I feel with the age of Xbox and iPhones, children are missing out on special, outside moments with their neighborhood gang. The teachers in the Threes classroom are determined to create our own special moments playing outside, learning how to be a positive participant in a game and laughing as much as we can!

Description of Saturday, March 10!

Fours Class Liz, Melissa, Jane & Lara

Our emotions are a precious gift. It may not always seem that way, especially when we are in the throes of our own or our children's intense feelings! But when we learn to identify,

Say "Cheese"! School pictures will be taken March 5 – 7.

understand, and respond to our emotions in healthy ways, we discover their ability to guide us, keep us safe, and enrich our lives. Our complicated, modern world makes this no easy task.

In a play-based preschool, emotional and social literacy take center stage in our curriculum. Children need help understanding their emotions, big and small, and we work with them on these skills daily. In February, we took an explicit approach to teaching about feelings.

We began the month by introducing a daily practice of meditation. Each day, we attempt to sit quietly and pay attention to our breathing. We look for the peaceful place inside us. Some days we find it, and some days we do not. I have tried to emphasize to the children that however they experience this activity is OK. It is the practice of regularly making time to look inside ourselves that is important.

We explored feelings through books, play activities, discussions, games, and art. During Gathering, we read books related to emotions. We discussed what different emotions feel like in our bodies and healthy ways we could express those feelings. We stressed that all feelings are OK, but some actions must be limited. It is OK to be angry, for instance, but not to hit, hurt, or damage. Did you know that simply labeling a negative emotion immediately reduces its impact? Each day, we passed Hugging Heart and took turns sharing a memory of a time we experienced the feeling we were focusing on that day. Some memories were shared privately, but mostly the children were eager to share and have their experiences acknowledged. They enjoyed identifying with



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 is open now for current families; open to the public on Apr. 9. If you have any questions please ask Joan!

Snack Reminders

We appreciate the contribution our families make by providing snacks and we are all interested in providing healthy, nutritious ones. Please keep in mind when it is your snack day: foods must be in original packaging with ingredient list and expiration date, be kosher (look for any of the symbols below), and nut-free (plus any other restrictions your particular class may have). Fruits and vegetables are great & will be cut at school.



others' experiences and empathizing with them, too. At times, it felt like a group therapy session!

Teaching children about emotions is tricky. So many of us received messages in our own childhoods and from society at large that run counter to healthy emotional functioning. I'd like to share a few of the major points we stressed in our exploration.

- 1. All emotions are acceptable! You have a right to your own feelings, whatever they are. This point may sound obvious, but a closer look will show that children and adults often receive contrary messages. When we praise children for being happy and push them to shove aside unhappy feelings before they are ready, we are subtly telling them that happiness is the only acceptable feeling. When we struggle to contain our anger and tell them, "I'm not mad!" while our faces tell a different story, we send the message that anger is unacceptable. We also teach them not to trust what they see and feel. Often, gender bias is revealed in these subtle messages. Girls may get the message that it is OK to be sad or frightened, but not OK to be angry. Boys may be taught that, for them, anger is acceptable, but fear and sadness are not.
- 2. Emotions come and go, but love remains. Young children may fear their own strong emotions because they fear they will be stuck in that state forever. We tried to teach them helpful ways to move through feelings, but also stressed that all feelings pass with time, no matter how strong. They also may fear their parents' feelings, no matter how appropriately expressed, because they fear those feelings indicate a loss of love. It is important to distinguish between emotional states (joy, anger, sadness, fear, and disgust) and enduring states such as love. Emotions are fleeting while love is constant. Love encompasses, surpasses, and withstands all our emotions.
- Your emotions exist to guide you and keep you safe.
 While some feelings may be uncomfortable, each has an important job. Fear alerts us to possible danger and

March 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 to register!**

Days and Themes This Month...

MONDAYS with Miss Sheila

March 5: Totally Amazing MAZES! March 12: 'The Happy Lion" by Louise Fatio and make some roaring lion art! March 19: Bubble Painting!

FRIDAYS with Miss Marilyn

March 9: (with Miss Amy) Celebrate Dr. Seuss' birthday with a book and craft! **March 16:** Make wind chimes to harness those crazy March winds and do some wind science together!

prepares our bodies to mobilize a quick response to a threat. Anger shows us that something might need to change and gives us the courage to stand up for ourselves. Sadness connects us deeply to others, prompts us to seek comfort, and gives us focus to understand our losses. Disgust prevents us from approaching potentially harmful foods, substances, and situations. I find it interesting that, of these five basic emotions, only one really feels good. A simple feeling, joy is the true north of our emotional compass. When our compass points to joy, it shouts, "Do this again!" Recognizing emotions in others can also guide you to have more satisfying interactions and relationships.

- 4. We can express emotions in safe ways and take helpful rather than harmful actions to address our feelings. The more aware we are of our emotions and the more tools we have for expressing them safely, the less likely we are to be overtaken by them. If I become aware that I am getting angry when the feeling is still small, I can use my thinking skills to assess the situation and take appropriate action. If I ignore the feeling and take no action, the feeling may become so intense that I can ignore it no longer. When that happens, I am more likely to commit harmful actions impulsively.
- 5. Our bodies send us important messages, and it pays to listen closely. Discomfort can be interpreted in many ways. Does that feeling in my stomach mean that I am hungry, excited, or anxious? The more we trust our bodies to give us useful information, the freer we are to experience life with confidence. If we see our feelings as helpful, even uncomfortable sensations are welcome to give us their message and then move on, rather than staying to torment us.
- 6. Happiness and joy are not the same. Sonja Lyubomirsky, author of the best-selling "How of Happiness," defines happiness as "the experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with a sense that one's life is good, meaningful, and worthwhile." True happiness is found when we experience a rich array of emotions and integrate them into an understanding of our lives. Striving to be joyful

at all times leads only to disappointment. However, we can "prioritize positivity," making time in our lives for the people and activities we enjoy. One of the reasons we embrace a play-based curriculum is that play leads to joy, and joy leads to learning. As we mature, we begin to modulate our emotional expressions. Generally speaking, this is a good thing. I can't imagine what a day would be like if we all went around jumping up and down and screaming like toddlers every time we faced frustration. However, I am grateful to spend my days with young children who have not yet begun to modulate their joy! I feel privileged to share in their delight as they touch slime for the first time, swing "up to the moon," hold hands with their first friends, discover that two triangles make a square, or finally get that block tower to balance without falling. They remind me every day to look for joy in my own life.

In March, we will focus on fairy tales and storytelling. We also look forward to meeting with each of you for conferences to celebrate your children's growth.

See the end of the newsletter for more details on programs and events, and also be sure to check out the bulletin board by the bench in the hallway for important school info and upcoming events!

Fives Class Cara & Melanie

If our classroom could only have two materials, Melanie and I would choose boxes and tape. These two materials have provided hours of self-initiated and inspired play. In January, we ran out of the six rolls of colorful tape in the classroom. But, we are not fazed...we now just use several rolls of basic masking tape. Each day we are asked for tape. :)

In January, we brought in several boxes covered with white paper to use for play in constructing igloos/forts. Then as we moved into exploring the solar system, we deconstructed the boxes and the children created a most magnificent rocket ship. Their structure has provided weeks of play scenarios for the children. They learned spatial awareness through this type of exploration, enjoying comfort and security in creating their own small space, and feeling empowered as they made the cardboard manipulate into what they were imagining.

They worked together to decorate it, name it, write messages on it, fix it and reimagine parts of it. They developed complex play scenarios with each other and most importantly found joy in the process of their learning. The rocket ship was finally dismantled toward the end of the month, but the tape was requested the next day and a new adventure begins! This is our ultimate joy to see the children thoroughly engaged in the classroom. As W.B. Yeats said, "Education is not the filling of a pot, but the lighting of a fire." We are looking forward to "lighting their fire" this coming month as we read the chapter book, "My Father's Dragon." They were very excited that we were going to be reading a chapter book!

March is National Reading Month Take the time to read to your children, or have them read to you!

K-Too Class Cara & Christine

In January we learned about the Apollo 11 mission, which they loved. At the end of the month, we introduced the graphic novel, "Catstronauts: Mission to the Moon." This fun chapter book is loosely based on the Apollo 11 mission, but the Catstronauts are asked to go to the moon to save Earth from an energy crisis! Their mission is to put solar panels on the moon to capture the sun's rays and then send the energy back to Earth through microwave rays. Of course, the Catstronauts were able to complete their mission and save the Earth from an energy crisis! It took us several weeks to finish reading this chapter book and the best part of it all was that the children LOVE this book. It is music to our ears when we would either hear... "Are we reading the cat book today?" or at the end of the chapter, "Please, can we read another chapter?" But alas, we did finish the book.

We are now moving into a storytelling theme and are using the Chinese New Year as a jumping-off point. We introduced an interactive storytelling activity, which uses the story of a young girl whose voice is stolen by a dragon. I introduced the idea to the group that we could maybe present this story as a play to the other classes, to gauge their interest, and it was a resounding YES! We are excited that they are excited. :) They are also excited to start reading our next chapter book, "Where the Mountain Meets the Moon."

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

Visit **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.

Thank You to Coaches Nick and Stu from the Kids of STEEL Program for visiting Mushroom to talk about healthy food and get the kiddos movin'!



If interested in joining KOS, visit kidsofsteel.org/join-kids-of-steel.





Shop TeaSchoolDays.com with code at 15% off + Free Shipping & we get 15% of sales. BE SURE TO ENTER promo code: SDS18MUSHROOM at checkout (Hooray!)



At Tea, we believe in connection. In curiosity, In conversation. We believe that travel makes the world small enough to respect and celebrate. That's why each season we pack our bags and go exploring—and then bring the world home in easy, modern styles for little citizens of the world.

BLOBALLY INSPIRED STYLE BIRL I BOY I BART SUPER S-IN



Registration Deadline: March 31

WHAT IS THE KIDS OF STEEL PROGRAM?



PR

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 marsthon 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
- 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 or 412-596-0536.

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



Thursday, March 22 and Friday, March 23, 2018

Due to State Representative Dan Miller's 5th Annual Children & Youth Disability and Mental Health Summit being held at Beth El on March 22 and March 23, MFLC will be holding our Spring 2018 Parent-Teacher Conferences off site.

The MFLC Spring 2018 Parent-Teacher Conferences will be held at:

Panera at The Galleria of Mt. Lebanon* 1500 Washington Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15228

*When you arrive at the Galleria, please locate Joan near the open area tables (Upper Level 2) between Panera and Mitchell's Fish Market, to be directed to your assigned meeting location.

> Thursday, March 22, 2018 T/Th 2s (AM & PM), 3s PM, 4s PM, & K-Too

> > Friday, March 24, 2017 3s AM, 4s AM, 5s

Please see your child's teacher to sign up for a conference time slot and any questions.

HROOM RNING CENTER A SIGG nmmer Day Camp 2018

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 4th and ending June 29th Monday - Friday

9:15am - 11:45am

\$ **75 per week** + Camp Registration Fee: \$ 15 per child or \$ 25 per family All payments are non-refundable

For children ages 3 - 6 ##includes class for incoming 1st graders

For more information contact us at 412-531-1225

shroom Family Learning Center ochran Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15220



Spring's greatest joy beyond a doubt is when it brings the children out. - Edgar Guest -

Spring begins March 20!