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412-531-1225



OCTOBER 2016

Important Dates & Info

Tuition Due Oct. 1

NO CLASSES OCT. 3, 4, 12
(Beth El is closed for Jewish holidays.)

Staff Meeting – Oct. 20
11:00am-1:00pm (No “Munchin’ Lunchin’” this day.)

MFLC Board Meeting – Oct. 20

Chick-fil-A Spirit Night – Oct. 26
4:30 – 7:00pm (See pg. 7!)

Conferences – Nov. 10-11
Details to come from teachers.

Enrichment Classes and “Munchin’ Lunchin’”
Some spots available – contact Ms. Melissa at melissa.oprison@gmail.com.

OUTSIDE PLAY

Classes go outside if it is not raining and at least 25 degrees F. Please be sure kids are prepared with labeled outerwear including proper play shoes (closed-toe).

Our preschool directory will be out soon!

We are compiling contact info from the directory forms. Please check to be sure we have your current information, and keep in mind that the directory and class email lists are for school use, play dates, and birthday party invitations, not for solicitation. Thank you!

Ways to Help MFLC

- Youcaring.com/mushroom-family-learning-center
- smile.amazon.com
- United Way agency # is 885339.
- Giant Eagle Apples for the Students program # is 5245.
- Save Tyson Project A+ labels.

From the Director ~ Joan Harrison

What a busy start to the school year we have had! The children are settling into their classroom routines, they are happy and making new friendships. We at Mushroom Family Learning Center are happy and excited to be with your children. It is our desire to provide an environment rich in possibilities to explore, think, deduce, and discover. We also strive to provide an environment that encourages respect and courtesy for ourselves and others.

We are thrilled to be starting our 43rd year of preschool and our second year in this location. It is funny but I don't think of this location as new any longer. It truly has become our home. Someone asked me if I was sad our former location is in the process of being torn down. My answer was no. Home is where your heart is. Your home is a place where you love the most, with all of your heart. It does not necessarily mean your house. Your home is a place that is filled with your family and friends. It is a place where you feel loved and most comfortable.

I will never ever forget what Jeff Shellenberger, one of our parents, said as we were leaving our previous location – A building is made of walls, brick, mortar, stone, wood, or concrete. A home is made with love.

I hope that all of you feel the same. I hope that you feel love, happiness, and a part of our Mushroom Family in this home.

Speaking of our home, I hope you have had a chance to see the new swingset and sandbox on our playground. Over the summer a group of dedicated board members weeded, mulched, sanded, painted, and power-washed our equipment so our children would have a wonderful playground to enjoy. (Pic below!)

We also have some new additions on the inside: curtains in the Little Sprouts, Early Learners and K-Too rooms, blinds in the 3s, 3/4s, and 4s classroom, and a new bench and bookcase in the hallway for our families to enjoy.

This year we have included a new addition in our newsletter called “Parents’ Corner.” Please take the time to read what the Sullivan family would like to share with all of you. If you would like to be a guest writer in our parents’ corner, please contact your classroom teacher or myself.

Welcome Future Mushroomers!

Benjamin Marshall, born June 2, little brother of Will (4s), son of Nicole and John

Ryder Hester, born June 17, son of our favorite nanny, Allye Karabosz (Maya, 3s), and cousin of Chase



BIG Thanks to...

- **Sarah Staffilino**, who coordinated the first-week parent coffees and to the board members who assisted.
- **Ray and Joneen Betler**, for the donation of our new swingset, sandbox and hallway bench.
- **Danika Lagorio and the board**, for coordinating and assisting with our fall family picnic. It was fabulous!
- **All who helped with our playground this summer** including Brandon Yetter, Patrick FitzGerald, Michael Alexander, Tim and Erin Betler, Martha Jurczak, Todd Vernon, Danika Lagorio, Melanie Johnston, Kate Gigliotti-Gordon, Alaina Stockhausen, Ben Silvis, Sarah Staffilino, Patrick Furey, and Kelly Lotter.
- **Gabe Detar and family**, for their donation of climbing toys for our Early Learners playground.
- **Nancy Lotter**, "Grammy" to Evan (4s), for sewing the curtains that look amazing in the EL and KToo rooms.
- **Melanie Johnston**, for all her assistance in the office over the summer.
- **Kitty Lagorio**, grandmother of CeCe (KToo), for the donation of toys.
- **All our families who donate to our scholarship fund** through United Way and other means.
- Thank you to the **Betler, FitzGerald and Lotter families** who made a donation on the Day of Giving.

And a SUPER-BIG thank-you to our dedicated teachers and board of directors, along with the parents and children who make this school so awesome!

From the Board President ~ Erin Betler

Welcome back to the 43rd year of Mushroom! Our little family has made it through the first month of school... Congratulations! There were a few tears shed on the first days, by children and parents alike, but everyone survived, and we will do our best to ensure that you all have an unforgettable year.

It was wonderful meeting so many of you at the First-Week Coffees. There are so many new faces in the Mushroom Family; I'm in the building often so feel free to stop and introduce yourself if we haven't met yet. A big "thank you" to Sarah Staffilino for organizing the coffees. I'd also like to acknowledge and thank Danika Lagorio for coordinating the Fall Family Picnic! She did a great job! And thanks to everyone who assisted in the planning, set-up and clean-up! We had an amazing turnout, beautiful weather and everyone looked like they were enjoying themselves. Most of the dishes were empty by the time we started cleaning up, which is a sure sign of a good time. Thank you to everyone who contributed!

Many thanks also to Patrick FitzGerald, who organized this year's kickoff fundraiser with the Pittsburgh Popcorn Company popcorn! And thanks to some very generous Mushroom families, we will be holding two raffles again this year, with 100% of the proceeds going toward your fundraising fee. Our 2016 - 2017 fundraisers: Pittsburgh Popcorn, Penguins Ticket Package Raffle, an earth-friendly product sale, and a Pirates Ticket Package Raffle. Details will be distributed as soon as they are confirmed.

[Parents' Corner] Sean and Susan Sullivan

(Samantha, 4s)

Hi, everyone!

Thank you for the warm welcome to the Mushroom Family! We are new to the school, and we wanted to share a bit about our family. Our daughter, Samantha, is in the 4s class. Samantha has two older siblings, Luke and Lorna, who are both in elementary school. Fortunately, all three are happy and healthy kids!

A few years ago, life was quite different. Three years ago, when she was just 3 years old, Lorna was diagnosed with leukemia, a type of blood cancer. After two and a half years of treatment, she achieved full remission. We are incredibly grateful for the wonderful care that she received and the tremendous outpouring of support our family received during this time. The experience has forever shaped our lives.

One way it shaped us was by demonstrating the innate good in our community. Many, many people (doctors, nurses, family members, friends, neighbors, and perfect strangers) came together to care for Lorna and our family. The experience also allowed us to refocus on our family and to celebrate life amongst an otherwise hectic lifestyle.

There are other ways that the experience has left a lasting impression. Because the treatments left Lorna with a compromised immune system, we became hyper-focused on reducing our family's exposure to germs. Fortunately, the most effective way to reduce the spread of germs is also one of the simplest – hand washing. Hand washing was not only important to allow Lorna to get healthy, it helped the rest of us to stay healthy too!

Good health is a great thing to celebrate – especially as the weather cools and the cold and flu season begins. Please keep in mind that proper hand washing is the simplest and the most effective way to stop illnesses from spreading. Additionally, as noted in Mushroom's Health Policy, it is important that those who are sick be kept home from school – to both comfort the ill child and to prevent him/her from spreading illness to others. These simple steps will help keep all of us happy and healthy!

We look forward to meeting everyone!

I keep mentioning "Family." We have always considered ourselves a family. We have had parents who have become teachers. We have had teachers enroll their children. We have had a student who came back to be a teacher. We have had parents who were once students enroll their own children here. We truly are a family. MFLC is run by the families. It is governed by a board of directors made up of parents and staff. Everything we do relies on the participation of parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and even nannies and babysitters. We can't do it without the families! If you haven't done so already, take a minute to fill out your

Volunteer Signup Sheet you received in your packets at the "Meet the Teachers" night. We need assistance in many areas, with varying amounts of time commitments, including slots for homeroom parents and upcoming positions on the board. There truly is something for everyone. Whether it is interest in joining the board, or if you have even just an hour or two to contribute to this amazing little family we have here at Mushroom, feel free to contact me. I'd be happy to discuss any time you are willing to give.

I'm excited to see what this school year holds for everyone. Here's to our Mushroom Family... may we have a happy, healthy and successful school year!



Little Sprouts – Kelsey

"It's not about what it is; it's about what it can become."
- *The Lorax*

The sprouts are getting a taste of what Mushroom has to offer, with the comfort of Mom/Dad/grandparents joining in on the fun. All nine sprouts have come into the classroom with little or no hesitation and have felt right at home pulling toys from the shelves, jumping right into play and interaction. We LOVE music and dancing in this class. Painting and threading Cheerios are still a bit challenging but munching on yummy Goldfish crackers while listening to a good book has proven to be a great recipe. Our ultimate goal is to set a happy and healthy foundation for learning and interacting with others during their time at Mushroom. I'd say we are off to a great start!

Early Learners – Amy, Sheila, and Marlene

We would like to welcome all of our new families to the Early Learners classes! It's wonderful to have you with us. Welcome back to our returning families, too! We can't wait to watch your younger children grow and change this year.

Our focus at the beginning of the year is to help the children feel comfortable in the classroom, with us, and with each other. The shortened schedule for the first two weeks is designed to ease them into class and separating from you. Even if your child let you go easily this month, s/he may struggle with it later in the year. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask. We're happy to help!

HALLOWEEN CELEBRATIONS

Halloween at preschool is generally mellow and we ask your help to keep it that way. While costumes are allowed (over top of clothes), please leave masks at home to avoid frightening other children. And, as always, no weapons are allowed in the school. Please refer to your weekly teacher email for the particulars for your child's class. Thanks for your understanding. *And remember a camera!*

Snack Tips

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.



Thanks to everyone who helped to get our new playground ready! Since it's grass, it may be wet when we go out. If it has rained, there may be mud. Since the children love to go out, we will try to go as often as possible. If your child has old shoes or boots, please send those in the bag. It would be helpful if they were slip-ons or Velcro, too. We will be figuring out the best procedures for going out and trying not to bring in mud and dirt over the next few weeks. We will keep you updated as to what works best!

In September, our focus was apples. We painted them, ate them, and even turned them into applesauce! This month, we will move on to fall (autumn), pumpkins, and maybe even squirrels.

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to bring in a snack. The children really love it when they get to share with the class. We appreciate the healthy choices, too!

Threes – Jamie, Debbie, and April

The first day of school is always an emotional time for parents. Whether your child is starting preschool for the first time, entering kindergarten or taking his final steps toward his senior year, it is important to everyone. I still take pictures of my three children the first day of school. In these pictures, I notice the changes in their physical appearance and well as their attitudes about school. In kindergarten, my children would run to the bus with excitement. Now, they run to the bus because they are late. Even though the priorities change, the importance of every school year never waivers.

Each year, the students learn important lessons that will hopefully benefit them in the future. I may be a little biased in which year is the most important, but I would definitely vote for the first year of preschool. It is in a preschool class where life skills are established and a strong foundation for learning is created. A child learns to be kind and to share with his new classmates. Problem-solving skills are developed and

finding one's voice is discovered. The goal of a preschool class is to mold a little person into a kind, caring, accepting thinker who can solve problems and walk through life with confidence. It may seem like a tall order, but with the support of our wonderful parents and the dedication of your Mushroom teachers, it is an attainable goal.

The three-year-olds class is definitely on the path to perfecting these skills. From the first day of school, the children practiced sharing toys and speaking kindly. This is a difficult task considering three-year-olds think the world revolves around them! We practiced learning our routine and developing a sense of security within the new classroom. We are starting to become a family away from home. Debbie, April and I have fallen, once again, in love with 18 little children. We are very lucky and can't wait to dance our way through the new year.

Finally, we are looking forward to a wonderful school year where we not only teach your children but we learn from them. Here are a few things we have learned so far this year:

1. Give words of encouragement to your friends because it makes them smile.
2. Hold your partner's hand to keep him/her safe.
3. It is OK to make mistakes.
4. Dance, just because!

Three/Fours – Liz, Melissa and Jamie

Welcome to the Mushroom Family! Whether you have been with us for several years and several children, or you are joining us for the first time, we are so glad you have placed your trust in us to help your children grow. When you and your child walk through our door, we are here as an extension of your family. Our first goal is for each child to feel safe and loved. Those are the main ingredients that make learning possible.

Our activities this month centered on helping the children feel comfortable and find their unique place in the group. Our slow pace at the beginning allowed us to form bonds and introduce rules and routines without overwhelming the children. We are learning how to care for each other, and how to share the environment and materials in a way that allows everyone to get what they need. As a family, we value each other. We approach limits on behavior as matters of safety and respect for others. We can see a sense of community developing already!

The beginning of the year brings so many new experiences. For some, this may be their first time separating from their parents for school. They are learning that school can be fun and that they can rely on their teachers for comfort when they miss Mom or Dad. However, even our "veterans" need time to adjust to a new classroom, new teachers, and new

IMPORTANT PARKING AND ARRIVAL NOTES

⇒ There is a lot of traffic — please hold your children's hands in the lot to keep them safe.

⇒ Please never leave a sleeping or sick child (or a healthy child!) in the car alone. If you need help, call the office, and someone can bring your preschooler in or out.

⇒ If you arrive early, please wait in the hallway until 8:55am for morning classes; 12:25pm for afternoon classes. The teachers are busy preparing until that time.

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding. Together we can make sure that every child has a rewarding and safe experience at Mushroom.

classmates. We placed extra focus this month on teaching routines and rules. Children feel safe, comfortable and confident when they know what to expect. Transitions can be especially hard for young children. With predictable signals, the process becomes easier. By now, the children know the songs, rhymes and visual signals we use to move through the day with confidence. We also display our visual schedule (school clock) so that the children always have a reminder about what is coming next. They have learned to refer to the clock when they are missing their parents. It is so gratifying to see a little one soothe herself by walking over to the clock independently and reviewing the activities that will lead to a happy reunion.

Another important goal is for the children to make independent choices. We have thoroughly enjoyed watching the children discover the experiences that await them in each of our learning centers. Our reading center provides a cozy, quiet spot for looking at books, telling stories with puppets, or just chatting with a friend. The block area has been a lively hub of activity, whether building zoos for the animals, laying railroad track, or racing the cars. This area also doubles as our Gathering area. The children have been busy in the dramatic play area preparing food and caring for the babies. The math table is home to puzzles, games, and manipulatives of all sorts. Sensory play has been popular as the children explored the sand table and play dough. Here, the children use their creativity, develop their fine motor skills, and build conversational skills as they play alongside their peers. This group seems to love art! We have experimented with different types of paint and other media at the art table. The writing table and easels have also seen plenty of use.

As we move into October, we will explore fall. Pumpkins, apples, leaves, and Halloween will provide us with plenty of ideas to let our creativity soar. One big highlight this month will be our field trip to Simmons Farm, tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, Oct. 19. I hope you will all be able to join us. We will also have a Halloween party on Thursday, Oct. 27.

Thank you for sharing your precious children with us. We look forward to a wonderful year of learning and growing together.

Gentle Reminders...

- ☑ Tuition is due the first of each month. Please help us by paying on time or speaking with us if special arrangements may be needed. Or, use your bank's online bill-pay program... and it's done!
- ☑ Please notify the office of any phone, address or email changes – also any changes in who has permission to pick up your child.
- ☑ Please be sure your child's hands are washed at the start of the school day.

Fours – Liz and Melissa

Our Fours are off to a great start! We have a really nice little group. Our days have been busy and harmonious. This year's class is a mix of students from last year's Threes and Three/Fours classes, as well as several students who are new to Mushroom. It has been amazingly gratifying to see them coming together as a group and forming friendships.

During our first month of school we focused on getting to know each other, learning the class routines, and discovering how to use the classroom materials. Our goal is to create a learning environment in which each child feels safe, loved, and empowered. To that end, we introduced three simple rules: be safe, be kind, and be helpful. These guiding principles create the loving boundaries inside which the children are free to explore and express themselves. Although a preschooler must learn many skills, all important classroom expectations fall under one of these three rules. It is respect for ourselves, each other, and our environment that guides our actions at school. As we teach the children specific actions, our guiding principles remind them why those actions are important.

We explored our names and the names of our friends in many ways. Forming letters is tricky for little fingers. While those skills are still developing, we have many ways to become familiar with the parts of our names. We worked on learning the sequence of letters in our names, completed our own name puzzles, traced our names, counted the letters in our names, embellished our names with art materials, and clapped out the number of syllables in each other's names.

We also devoted a week to one of my favorite topics: books! I am passionate about quality children's literature, and this group seems to share my love of good stories. The best way to grow readers is to feed them a steady diet of engaging stories, both in print and otherwise. In addition to reading some terrific books about books (I highly recommend *The Book With No Pictures*), we also encouraged the children to get in touch with their inner authors and illustrators in multiple ways. We created books using stickers and stapled

paper, transcribed the children's imaginative play, and built our own class book. With the help of their parents, each child created a page with pictures of their families and favorite things. We bound their pages together to create the story of our class. We shared the book during Gathering as another way to get to know our friends.

We also introduced the children to their journals this month. At this point, our goal is simply for them to get interested in having their very own book to record their pictures and thoughts. We hope that feeling the pride and joy that come with authorship will encourage them to keep improving their fine motor skills, not as an assignment, but rather as a natural outgrowth of their own expression. As the year progresses, they will find more surprises from us in their journals in the form of prompts.

As we move into October, we will explore fall. We will have a field trip to Simmons Farm for a hayride, tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, Oct. 19. I hope you will all be able to join us. We will also have a Halloween Party on Monday, Oct. 31.

Thank you for sharing your precious children with us. We look forward to a fantastic year of playing, growing, and learning together.

OCTOBER ENRICHMENT CLASSES

Enrichment classes are available for those 4+ on Mondays and/or Fridays each month; \$15 per class. Contact Ms. Melissa for more info at melissa.oprison@gmail.com.

Days and Themes This Month...

Mondays October: 10 – Read “I Ain’t Gonna Paint No More” and mix and explore colors; 17 – Read “If You Give a Cat a Cupcake” and make cupcakes; 24 – Make Ghost Slime!; 31 – Experiments on how to make old pennies shiny again.

Fridays October: 7 – Read “If the Dinosaurs Came Back” and paint a dinosaur; 14: Read “The Apple Pie Tree” and bake apple turnovers; 21 – Read “I Fall Down” and do simple gravity experiments and a painting; 28: Read “Ghost in the House” and make a haunted house!

Pre-K – Cara, Jane, Marlene and Melanie

A new school year has begun! We are so excited to have the children getting to know us, each other and our classroom routines. A large piece of the beginning of the year is creating our classroom community. We are all special individuals who come together each September, and we bring those wonderful, special individual qualities together to create our classroom community.

-- Fall Family Picnic 2016! --

As a means to begin to get to know each other and create community, each of the children has filled their "All About Me" bags with pictures of their family and special things to share about themselves. As each child shares his/her bag, we then add the family picture to our classroom "family tree" in our gathering area.

The children have also met several of our classroom puppet friends: Snowy the Owl, who sings goodbye to us at the end of the day, and Kanga and her baby, Roo, who help us learn how to keep our bodies and hearts safe while at school. We were introduced to the book "Have You Filled a Bucket Today?" which discusses the concept that each of us has an invisible bucket. You can fill up your bucket and someone's else bucket with kind words and actions, and we can also dip into someone's bucket with our words and actions. This gives an abstract concept and a very practical application. If you join our classroom before snack you will hear us singing our song: "Fill a bucket, fill a bucket; Everyday, everyday I can fill a bucket, I can fill a bucket; You can too, you can too."

As always, thank you to our families for sharing your children with us to learn and grow together. It has been a wonderful beginning of the school year!

K-Too – Marilyn

The beginning of the school year is a time for children to find their comfort zone. K-Too children have acclimated to kindergarten and are relieved by K-Too's intimate, less formal and exploratory style. The children walk through the door each day confident and excited to see their friends and learn something new.

K-Too gives children a chance to explore subjects that can't be covered in kindergarten. This fall we'll make a "birthday cake" astronomical calendar, do apple science, diagram the digestive system, and make life-size self-portraits. These enriching activities also develop the reading, writing, and math skills children are learning in kindergarten. I am fortunate to have such a creative and satisfying role in this exciting time in children's development.

– Volunteering at Mushroom – Getting Clearances

MFLC welcomes and values volunteer participation. State laws regarding child protection require all school volunteers having direct contact with children to obtain background clearances. Please visit our web site for details:

mushroomfamily.org/volunteer-info.html





Chick-fil-A

Spirit Night

Mushroom Family Learning Center
Wednesday, October 26th
4:30-7:00PM

Join us at Chick-fil-A at
South Hills for a Spirit Night!

Mushroom Family Learning Center
earns 15% of the sales.

Come eat dinner at this Chick-fil-A,
tell your cashier that you support
Mushroom Family Learning Center
and help us raise funds!



1620 Washington Rd.
(412) 833-1165

www.chick-fil-a.com/southhills

