



Mushroom Family Learning Center
*An independent, secular,
 nonprofit preschool since 1973*

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A Big Thank-You to...

- Susan Sarkis for coordinating the Silver Graphics fundraiser.
- Diane Rattay for her help with all the office work.
- The MFLC teachers who work tirelessly to make this the wonderful school that it is!
- The MFLC parents, for the gift of your time volunteering for classroom activities/events.

News & Notes

TUITION DUE APRIL 1

Second-half fundraising fee due as well.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES APRIL 3-4

Look for sign-up info in your classroom.

SPRING BREAK BEGINS MON., APRIL 14; RETURN TO CLASS TUES., APRIL 22

DINE & DONATE RESTAURANT NIGHTS APR. 14 AND 28

Apr. 14 - Bravo (Galleria)
 Apr. 28 - Chipotle (Cochran Rd.)

PROPER PLAY SHOES FOR OUTDOOR PLAY

As the weather gets nicer, please remember proper play shoes for school. It is still best to wear gym shoes or closed-toe shoes.

UPCOMING DATES IN MAY

- 7 Ice Cream Social/40th Anniv. Celebration 6-8pm
- 20 Last day of school for children
- 21 Teachers' in-service and meeting (9am-3pm)
- 22 Teachers' in-service (9-11am)
 Family picnic at Mt. Lebanon Park 11:00-1:00 (No rain date.)



We would like to know how well we are doing as a preschool!

Parent questionnaires will be in the children's cubbies and online near the end of the month. *Please take a few minutes to fill one out.*
Thank you for your help!

From the director...

It is hard to believe but this is the next-to-last newsletter of the school year! This month I have decided to move out of my comfort zone (go out of the box) and write about something I think a lot about...today's technology.



These days, we are all trying to manage the constant digital media in every corner of our lives. The digital world has a powerful appeal. There's always something new going on, whether it's your favorite celebrity sending out a tweet or your cousin sending you a link to another cute kitty video. Given the multitude of screens—computers, smartphones, tablets, etc.—most of us are never far from a device that plugs us in.

As a mother of two college-age children who are constantly "plugged in," I ask myself, "Is all this technology really necessary?" Before I go on, I will admit I do not have an iPad or smartphone. I have never texted or tweeted. I do not have the capability on my phone to send or receive photos, check email or have the luxury of whatever else these devices can do.

Sometimes the "good old days" were really good. Visits to the library, picking out a book with pages you can actually turn with your hands, having a family meal where the family focused 100 percent on each other...a meal where a beep, bong or bell from cyberspace didn't take away from family time.

The next time you are at a stop light, take a look at the cars next to you. Most likely there will be someone on the phone; if not a driver, certainly a passenger.

Are we missing out on life by viewing life through the phone? There is something about human connection — actually connecting with a person in person rather than digitally.



Have you ever stopped your child in the middle of a story he/she was telling to reply to a text? If you have, I offer you a challenge: **Turn off your phones, iPads, computers and spend a 100-percent technology-free morning, afternoon, evening or whole day.**

I will end this by something I am constantly saying to my own children – When you want to "go-on-Facebook," how about just go read-a-book?! Just some food for thought...

I look forward to an awesome April at MFLC!

Happy spring,

Joan

Joan Harrison

Welcome Future Mushroomers!
 Twins **Mila and Mikayla Lawrence** born March 16. Proud brother Isaac is in the 3s class. *Congrats to parents Deena and Stuart!*



News & Notes

From the president of the board...

Forty years ago, 39 cents is what you would pay for a gallon of gas, all of the kids wanted a Slinky for their birthday, and Tyra Banks was a newborn baby. It's also when Mushroom Family Learning Center was a brand-new preschool opening its doors for the very first time. Since then, we know how things have changed. *Need I say \$3.70 per gallon?!*



But, some things stay the same. Walk through the big red door at school today...an encouraging, friendly teacher's face is still welcoming preschoolers, fresh paint still sits ready for the next creation, and a friend is still there to turn that frown upside-down. For four decades it has proven

to be the best start for children in our community. Now is the time to celebrate!

I hope you'll mark your calendars for **Wednesday, May 7**, to join us on the Mushroom playground as our parent committee transforms our annual ice cream social into a 40th Anniversary Celebration. Come to the playground from 6:00-8:00pm for Betsy's Ice Cream (a new Mt. Lebanon favorite), balloon artists, face painting, music and games. Community businesses are helping us mark this milestone too. We have fabulous donations to raffle like spa treatments and dinner out at some of the best area restaurants, plus much more. Thank you to all of our community partners who have donated money to make this event such a celebration. If your business (or you) would like to donate please let me know.

There's a lot we've learned over the past 40 years. A lot of things have gotten better. Some things have stayed the same...thank goodness. *Happy 40th Mushroom!* You haven't aged a bit.

Susan

Susan Sarkis

News from the Early Learners classes from Theresa, Marlene, and Debbie...

My goodness, March just flew right by. We kept looking for spring, but it hasn't come— YET.

We packed our bags and took a trip to Ireland and brought back our friend, Patrick the leprechaun. Oh boy, was he full of

Pictures are in!



You should already have received your child's portraits. Please:

1. Choose the portraits you want to purchase. Return to your child's teacher any you do not want.
2. Pay online at mylifetouch.com (still must return envelope with payment code on it) or submit check or money order.
3. Return payment within 7 days.

✦ **Return portraits and payment no later than April 11** ✦

mischief. Each day the children would search the room looking for some of Patrick's tricks. One day they discovered that he had turned the sand green, another day they spotted a mustache on Clifford, but what really surprised everyone was how many times Patrick had turned Harry Heart upside down. Now those are some great observational skills!

Harry Heart and Cynthia Circle had some new friends join them in school. There now are Sammy Square, Roger Rectangle and Dina Diamond. We put our heads together and made "BOT" the robot out of all our different shapes. We used square and rectangle boxes and scoured the room for other shapes to add to BOT. We welcomed Dina Diamond to our family and made her favorite thing – kites. Now we are all just hoping the weather will break so we can go out and fly them.

There may not be any warm weather outside but we have lots of it inside our room. So much conversation is being shared between friends and that is music to our ears. We'll use all that warmth and love to start our own spring garden. Keep your eyes open for our Little Drips.



As we enter into the final months of school we would like to thank all of you for entrusting your children to us. We see the friendships the children have made and watch the special interaction they have with each other and with us and the only word to describe it is "Family."

We are truly grateful that we have had this wonderful opportunity to share in the growth and development of your Early Learners.

News from the 3s class from Jamie, Debbie, and Tori...

It started snowing again during our Friday morning class. The accumulation total was about two inches. The children in our class acted as if it was the first snowfall they had ever seen. We decided to experience the beautiful snowflakes by stepping outside our door without our coats or hats. It was all about the experience. As I watched them open their mouths to catch a few snowflakes, and laugh with excitement, I just absorbed the moment. It reminded me how important it is to enjoy the world from a three-year-old's perspective.

We enjoyed every moment this month as we focused on one



News & Notes

of my favorite themes, our Pet Show. The children were able to adopt a stuffed animal of their very own. The children gave the animal a name, created a home, and dictated stories about their pet. We compared the animals and classified them into groups. Our favorite pet story was *Bark George*. The students were able to read this story independently from memory and we reinforced comprehension by using the felt board. The children presented their pets in front of their families during



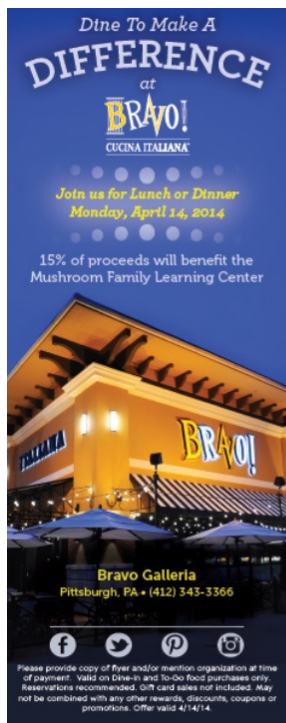
Open House where the students received blue ribbon awards for their dedication and ability to take good care of their pets throughout the month. Thanks to all of the families who were able to attend that evening.

I am looking forward to our conferences on April 3. The amount of growth that takes place over a year's time is amazing. I enjoy sharing this growth with our parents. Also in April we will be celebrating spring by making observations about the plants and animals around us. We will dig deep for worms and explore the world of spiders. We will even adopt a real pet for our classroom.

As the year is winding down we will take in every moment with this class of students. We have fallen in love and although it will be hard to see them go, we look forward to the new education adventures that will follow.

News from the 3/4s class from Liz and Sheila...

We were busy workers in March! In our study of the jobs people do, we were inspired to take on a variety of pretend roles. It was exciting to see the group venture beyond their familiar comfort zones of the train and house-keeping themes. As we learned about construction workers, road builders, letter carriers, doctors, zookeepers, and restaurant workers, the children began incorporating these themes into their play, especially when we provided a few props and suggestions. The play of this group is becoming more social and coordinated. They are such a tight-knit group that it is not unusual to find nearly every member of the class involved in the same scenario!



Munchin' Mondays!

*Make Dinner an Easy Choice
& Support MFLC at the Same Time*



Monday, April 14: Bravo! Restaurant at the Galleria

Monday, April 28: CHIPOTLE on Cochran Road

In learning about construction work, we were introduced to a variety of tools. We learned their names and functions, and used toy tools and blocks to build our own creations. We explored measurement, using tape measures to compare our structures. We honed our fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination when we hammered golf tees into Styrofoam.

Learning about how the mail works inspired us to work on writing letters. Already, this loving group enjoys creating drawings for their friends. This month, with the addition of a mailbox, mailbag, envelopes and "stamp" stickers, they took it to the next level and worked hard to write each other's names. We encouraged them to use their friends' namecards to copy.

Doctor play led to some of the most mature group play we've seen from this group. With some help, they were able to organize themselves into several roles, including doctor, co-doctor (you can never have just one!), nurse, receptionist and patient. We consulted kid-designed checklists on our clipboards to make sure the doctors conducted a thorough exam. Patients waiting in the waiting room dutifully filled out all the necessary paperwork.

We also observed coordinated group play with the trucks and doll house. The fire department responded to multiple calls for assistance and rescued many people from the rooftop. In the meantime, busloads of little people visited places around town. We created our own paper farm stand and sold corn, tomatoes and carrots to the people on the bus. We naturally used one to one correspondence to figure out how many vegetables would be needed for all the people on the bus.

Zoo play found us sorting the animals and lining them up by size. We practiced our memory skills by hiding an animal and trying to figure out which one was missing.

Restaurant play also involved figuring out the functions of several roles. We practiced being waiters who took orders and brought food, cashiers who took money, cooks who cooked what was ordered, and customers who read the menu and enjoyed a meal.



We also learned a little about what people do through our "Job in a Bag" assignment. The children brought in tools or objects their parents use in the course of their jobs and shared them with the class. I hope this activity helped the children not only to learn about the variety of jobs people do, but also to relate personally to the jobs of their own parents.



Parking Lot Reminders — *Please be careful and keep our kids safe!*

- The lot is ONE WAY, entering from Washington and exiting to Sunnyhill.
- Parking is not permitted in front of the school or along the left side of the exit driveway. This is a requirement of the fire department.
- Drive slowly and carefully, especially when backing out, and be observant of the cars and people around you.
- Stay alert and keep kids close to you when walking in the lot.
- Don't leave other children unattended in your vehicle or in the lot.
- Please turn off your vehicle — do not let it idle during drop-off time.

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In April our theme will be "Over in the Meadow." We will explore plant and animal life in the context of spring.

ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS THIS MONTH!

If your child is 4 years or older, then he/she can participate in our enrichment programs on Monday and/or Friday, 11:30am to 2:00pm (the children bring a lunch). The cost is \$14 per class. Contact teacher Ms. Jamie at jamie_geisler@comcast.net.

- April 7 with Ms. Marilyn - **Dino Day** at Mushroom
- April 11 with Ms. Marilyn - **Let's Have a Picnic**
- April 25 with Ms. Jamie - **Let's Get Down and Dirty**
- April 28 with Ms. Sheila - Do you like to blow bubbles? Do you like to paint? **What happens when you mix the two?**

News from the 4s class from Liz, Kim, and Amy...

Community Helpers is a popular theme in preschool. Often preschoolers learn about firefighters, police officers, doctors and the like. While those jobs are undoubtedly extremely important to communities, we took a more inclusive view of all the ways people can help their communities.

One definition of community offered by Merriam-Webster is "a group of people with a common characteristic or interest living together within a larger society." Viewed in this light, we are all part of several communities: our families, our classes, our schools, our neighborhoods, our towns, and more. What, then, does it mean to be a community helper? Members of a community work together and help each other to make sure members have what they need and want. Community helpers, then, can include children doing chores at home, students performing classroom jobs, parents caring for children and homes, volunteers, and workers of every type.

In March our Fours class explored the concept of community by planning and creating our very own town. During this month-long project we learned about the places and people that make a town a nice place to live. First, we brainstormed the places our town should include. We were guided by the question, "What will the people of our town want or need?" We used boxes, craft sticks, and cast-off recyclables to construct our town's buildings. We had grocery stores, hair salons, pet stores, Target stores, skyscrapers, princess towers and many other important establishments. We even had a salt barge, to carry salt for the roads. We were overflowing with creativity and student-initiated writing!

Throughout the month we explored the concept of mapping. We looked at GoogleMaps overhead views and road maps of Mt. Lebanon and Pittsburgh. We mapped out the town's roads, grassy areas, and rivers and painted them on canvas. We learned the concept of an address as a way of finding a particular location. Each street has a name, and each building has a number. We worked on learning our own addresses. Our classroom post office inspired us to write letters to each other and our families, too.

We learned about a variety of jobs people do through books and play-based activities. We learned about doctors, construction workers, letter carriers, zookeepers, restaurant workers, train engineers, and many other jobs. The children also had the opportunity to share a little about what their own parents do. For our Job in a Bag homework assignment, students each brought in a tool used by their parents. They showed the tool to the class and explained its purpose and who uses it. We had a wonderful range of tools including stethoscopes, calculators, construction tools, cooking utensils, and a MedEvac pilot's helmet, just to name a few.



Several brave parents volunteered to speak to the class about their jobs, too. Maya's mom, an obstetrician, shared her experience caring for newborn babies. Gabi's mom, a physical therapist, showed us some exercises. And Michaela's mom, an emergency medicine physician, showed us how she deals with emergencies. We are so grateful to them!

We also added two new classroom jobs this month. Our waiters pass the cups and napkins before snack. Everyone is eager to have a turn with this job, which has given us a chance to work on some literacy and math skills. We remind the children that all jobs rotate, and we go in alphabetical order. They can look ahead by reading the name of today's waiter, finding it on the posted list of names, and counting down to their own name.

We were thrilled to show off our learning and our creations at Open House at the end of the month. We love sharing our work with our families!

After the winter we've had, we are eager to welcome spring. It will come eventually, right? Next month we will look at life cycles and spring growth.



News & Notes

News from the Pre-K classes from Cara, Jane, and Melanie...

This month I started out by asking the children, "What do you see in the sky?" I had a multitude of answers ranging from the sun, birds, aliens, clouds, stars, airplanes, jets, rainbows, the moon and asteroids. They were excited to share their ideas! We then spent the month exploring several of the ideas the children mentioned.

We first started with clouds. We used all of our senses this month during our exploration as listened to stories about clouds, touched shaving cream as we created pretend clouds, smelled the baby oil that was an ingredient in our cloud dough, looked outside at the clouds and then created a picture of



what we saw, and also tasted our clouds (mini marshmallows) as part of a delicious snack.

As we learned about and celebrated St. Patrick's Day, the rainbow became the focus of our investigation. Each holiday uses the colors of the rainbow as part of the celebration, and we had a great time creating rainbows, eating rainbows made of fruit and vegetables and trying to create our own rainbows with water, a mirror and a flashlight. We also began our number book where we are practicing writing our numbers 0 - 9 using a rainbow of colors.

We have become experts on the phases of the moon and if you ask us we could probably tell you that it takes 27 days for the moon to orbit Earth. With a piece of yarn, a globe and a small yellow ball, we created an orbit path (oval not circle) around our planet Earth, and each child had a chance to physically move the ball (the moon) in its orbit path around Earth as we called out which moon phase they were in.

Throughout the month of April, each of the children will have the opportunity to be our scientist for the evening and use our classroom telescope to see the moon and then draw what they saw in our classroom journal. They will then share this with the class the next day. We are ending the month by learning more about our classroom mascot, Snowy the Owl. This will truly be a hands-on exploration as each child will have the opportunity to dissect an owl pellet as part of our investigation. I love watching the children as they use their hands, heart and mind every day in the classroom!



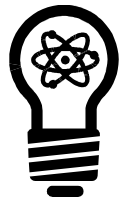
As we move into April, we might create a small version of a hot-air balloon to usher in our next exploration of the literary classic, *The Wizard of Oz!* Lions and tiger and bears.....oh my!

News from the K-Too classes from Marilyn...

March was electric! We learned about the myriad of discoveries and inventions made by Benjamin Franklin: lightning is electricity, mail delivery to homes, illuminated and paved streets, public libraries, the Franklin stove (which used less wood and heated more efficiently), the lightning rod, the Gulf Stream, limes as a cure for scurvy, bifocal glasses, etc. My favorite comment came from little Margaret who said of Ben: "He was so cool!"

We performed simple static electricity experiments using balloons, wool sweaters, combs, and tissue paper to experience the properties of what Ben knew as "electricity" at the time. We also tried to use his wisdom as we went through our day: "No pain, no gain," "Haste makes waste," "An apple a day keeps the doctor away," "Waste not, want not," etc. We decorated our room with homemade kites after learning how Ben discovered and proved that lightning was electricity.

We moved on to learning the anatomy of atoms and molecules which will be a necessary foundation for understanding how electricity works on the atomic level. We spent much of the month disassembling broken electrical items: 35-millimeter cameras, remote controls, binoculars, and CD players. The children increased their patience, spatial problem solving, and fine motor skills with screwdrivers. Some screws were very small! They also had to figure out how the components were connected in order to get them apart.




Once opened, the children saw how incredibly complex these outwardly simple boxes were. There were mother boards, transistors, speakers with magnetic backs, transducers, LED screens, and lasers. The mother boards enabled the children to trace the myriad metal pathways for the electric current.

April will be full of spring nature projects, a field trip, Mother's Day preparation, and a unit designed from the interests of each class.

Business Directory



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