

Mushroom Family Learning Center

Individual Growth in a Shared Environment



An independent, secular, nonprofit preschool since 1973

1240 Washington Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15228

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mushroomfamily.org

News & Notes

APRIL 2015

Mushroom on the Move...



TUITION DUE APR. 1, along with second-half fundraising fee.

SPRING BREAK IS NOW!

Classes resume *Tuesday, April 7*

PARENT-TEACHER-BOARD MUSHROOM ON THE MOVE MEETING

Look for information, date and time to be announced soon.

DINE & DONATE RESTAURANT NIGHT TUES., APRIL 28

TASTE OF LEBO: LEBO SUBS and BETSY'S ICE CREAM

20% of sales will benefit Mushroom on the Move expenses.

UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES IN MAY

May 6: Ice Cream Social 6:00-

7:30pm (Rain Date May 13)

May 19: Last Day of School

May 20: Family Picnic at Mt.

Lebanon Park 11:00am-1:00pm

(No rain date.)

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.

WAYS TO HELP MUSHROOM

- United Way agency # is 885339.
- Giant Eagle Apples for the Students program # is 5245.
- Save Labels for Education and Tyson frozen product labels (bin in the stairwell).
- Donate to the MFLC Scholarship Fund.

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!*

From the director...

In December our families were notified that Mushroom Family Learning Center would be closing the big red door on 1240 Washington Road. The members of our Board of Directors did not waste a minute trying to find our new home. The mantra "There will always be a Mushroom!" emerged and the Mushroom on the Move Committee was formed.

I would again like to thank board president Diane Rattay, every board member, and the teachers who attended numerous meetings, made phone calls, and toured facilities in the dead of winter. Here we are now, four months later, very proud and excited to call 1900 Cochran Road our new home!

But there is still one more piece to the puzzle, **YOU**, our amazing, dedicated, and very proud parents. I am so grateful to all of you who registered for our next school year. We could not continue to succeed if not for our families joining in the journey. Thank you for your faith in us; it has been overwhelming. For the families unable to join us, please know that you will always be a Mushroom Family and always in our hearts.

So... our new home has been found, the lease has been signed, and we have registered for the school year. We are almost there. The last item to check off is actually moving! We will be reviewing our committee volunteer list. Anything you can do to help with our move would be appreciated. Some initial things to keep in mind:

- **Boxes, Boxes, Boxes!** If you could, please save boxes—we will be asking for those in May.
- Donations of packing tape, moving materials, thick markers, etc. will be needed.
- We will be contacting all who had volunteered to help during our January meeting.

Over the past 41 years, we have taken pride in making a difference in the lives of our students and families. Please be assured that we will continue to provide the same kind of environment in our new home, with your help of course — this school belongs to you!

Welcome Future Mushroomers!

Mason Martin, born March 14
Proud big sister *Lilly Wissler* (4s)
and parents Amy and Ric

Sofia Hall, born March 20
Proud big sister *Olivia DeBisschop*
(PreK pm) and parents Julie and David

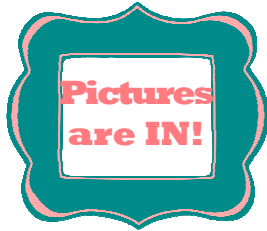
Wyatt Mural, born March 21
Proud big brother *Paxon* (3/4s)
and parents Mary and Clayton

And special congrats to new proud grandmother Ms. Marlene, EL and 3/4s teacher... Kylie Belle, born March 10!

A few weeks ago our classes combined to celebrate Chinese New Year. One treat was fortune cookies. How appropriate my fortune was... ***"Never fear! The end of something marks the start of something new."*** How true. I feel that we can use the ups and downs of this past school year as a foundation to become a greater school in the future.

Thank you for sharing your children with us. As I hold all the memories of 1240 Washington Road always in my heart, I look forward to making new memories at MFLC, 1900 Cochran Road.

Joan



For 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.

Return portraits and payment no later than April 17

Due to the need to move our school during the summer, there will be no Slice of Summer summer camp at Mushroom this year.



From the president of the board...

Happy April!
When the old adage "April showers bring May flowers" was first used, I highly doubt they were talking about snow showers. Unfortunately, we've been inundated with cold temperatures and more than a few frozen flakes flying through the air during the last month. While the next week or so looks to have some improvements in the forecast, I'm not going to hold my breath, quite yet! I'm sure I'm not the only one looking forward to warmer weather!

March was a busy month here at MFLC. After several months of negotiations, the lease with Beth El was finalized! Conferences have come and gone, and we are now in the midst of our spring break! Most importantly, we were able to hold registration, and we were so pleased with the turnout! It says a lot about our families that we have been able to retain so many of you after the uncertainty of the last few months. We thank you, from the bottoms of our hearts, for sticking with us. Next year is going to be amazing in our new home!

We will be holding a special SPIRIT NIGHT at the end of April. The kind people at Lebo Subs and at Betsy's Ice Cream have agreed to hold a "Taste of Lebo Night" fundraiser for us! Both venues will be donating 20% of our sales that evening to go toward our moving expenses. I can't think of anything better than spending an evening in Uptown Mt. Lebanon with our Mushroom friends, eating hoagies and getting ice cream. It's sure to be a fun evening. Watch for details to be sent out soon.

Have a safe and happy spring break!

Diane

Diane Rattay

News from the Early Learners classes from Amy, Sheila, Marlene and Jamie...

We are hopeful that the official arrival of spring will bring blossoms outside of our wonderful school, but we know for certain that the real story is about the blossoming of your children! We have watched them grow physically, mentally

and emotionally these last six months. Now we get to watch them blossom socially. There are toys being shared as well as imaginative play, and little snippets of conversation being heard in the classroom and outside. It is so endearing to watch your children as they begin to make friendships.



April will find us looking for bird nests, as well as growing grass and flowers from seeds. We will also be preparing our classroom for an Open House evening so the children can show off their school to their families, and all can see what the daily routine is like for our early learners. **Amy's class will have their Open House on April 29 from 6:30 - 7:30. Sheila's morning class will have theirs on April 30 from 5:30 - 6:30. The afternoon class will be from 6:30 - 7:30.** We sure hope everyone can attend.

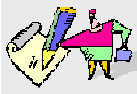
As we enter our final months of school, we would like to thank all of you for becoming part of our family. You and your children are what makes Mushroom such a special place. The friendships that we all have made truly emphasize our name "Mushroom Family Learning Center." It is because of you and your wonderful children that we have such a great school.

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

My 12-year-old son announced the other morning he was going for a run in our neighborhood. As we discussed my concerns about him going by himself, he said, "Don't worry, Mom!" The idea that "Mom" and "Don't worry" could even be in the same sentence made me laugh out loud. Is it really possible for a mother or father not to worry about their children?

Sending a child off to preschool can be a scary thing...for the parents. They are trusting a stranger to provide the love, care and encouragement that has been their job for so long. The relationship that is developed between a parent and a preschool teacher is extremely important. I am very grateful for the parents in my classroom this year. They have supported our program, suggestions and ideas with kind words and thoughtful actions.

I was able to share the progress each child has made this year with the parents during conferences in March. There are four goals I establish for the students in my classroom. I think it is



Have you registered for the 2015-2016 school year?

See Joan if you still need to register for next year at MFLC. Your fee will be credited back to you when you pay your first month's tuition.

And the very best compliment you can pay us is to recommend our school to a friend or neighbor. We thank you for your continued commitment and support!



Mushroom on the Move...

Look for information soon on a parent-teacher-board "Mushroom on the Move"

meeting!



important for a child to transition into the classroom with ease. He/she should be able to follow directions and communicate effectively with teachers and peers. The children should also be able

to play cooperatively with other children. If these four goals are established then the foundation for learning is created. The students are now able to learn, grow and flourish.

The students in my classroom have established a strong foundation and have been learning like crazy. In March we finished our Make Believe unit with a fabulous dress-up party. We learned about musical instruments and used our magical voices to sing songs and read stories. We cheered for the fine motor progress that each child had made in his/her writing and picture drawings. We encouraged more social interactions and reinforced positive communication. The biggest news this month was we got to go outside and play!

In April we will be celebrating spring and exploring the outdoors. We will adopt a pet and invite our families to a Pet Show. We will continue to become more independent, confident and secure little people. I can hear them saying to their parents as they leave our classroom, "Don't worry, Mommy and Daddy, I got this." And they do!

News from the 3/4s class from Liz, Marlene, and Melissa...

We celebrated the beginning of the month with Open House. We had a great turnout! The children enjoyed performing the fairy tale plays we had been practicing all through February. We tried to make sure that everyone had a chance to play every part, and siblings joined in as well. As a result, the families got to see many, many versions of the fairy tales. We could have been there all night!

During the second week of the month, we dove into our theme of "The People in Your Neighborhood." We focused on the concept of community. We looked at how groups of people (towns, families, classrooms, etc.) work together to help each other meet their needs. We learned that all people, even children, do important work to help their communities. We

learned about a variety of jobs through books, play experiences, and visits from special guests. Students and parents also worked together on a Job in a Bag homework assignment. The children brought in tools their parents use at work, whether in the home or out, and shared them with the class. Many thanks for all the great contributions!

Thanks also to the parents who shared their time by giving presentations to the class. Noel's mom taught us how to make pizza. It was delicious! She also provided props for us to continue exploring the pizza theme through dramatic play. As our classroom transformed into a pizzeria, we had fun reading menus, taking orders, and cooking pizza. Emma's dad told us all about hotels. We had a great time using the room keys he provided to imagine we had our very own hotel, too. We also explored other roles through books and play, including doctor, letter carrier, and zookeeper.

We added a new activity to our daily routine in March. Each day, we divide into small groups for a more structured, teacher-led activity. Each teacher leads a different activity, and the children rotate so that each child visits each teacher's station once a week. Activities target different skills, such as pre-writing, alphabet recognition, social skills, math concepts, and cutting.



While all of these skills can be practiced during our free choice time, we felt that the children were ready to benefit from setting aside a small amount of time each day to practice skills they might not be likely to choose on their own. For now, we are keeping the groups consistent so that the children have the opportunity to develop a closer working relationship with a small group of friends. We try to make the activities as fun as possible, and so far the children are really enjoying it! Some activities we tried this month include cutting on different types of lines, creating letters for a friend, constructing our names with letter tiles, and playing counting games with gold coins.

Our theme for April will be "Over in the Meadow." We will explore the many ways spring brings new life to the world around us.

Dine & Donate

Taste of Lebo:

LEBO SUBS and **BETSY'S ICE CREAM**

TUESDAY, APRIL 28

**20% of our sales will benefit
"Mushroom on the Move" expenses.**



Does Your Child Want More Mushroom Time? Sign up for enrichment!

In enrichment class, the children have fun making crafts, cooking, learning Spanish and reading new stories. Classes are available for those 4 and older on Mondays and/or Fridays each month; \$14 per class. Sign-up happens at the beginning of each month or you can check for space whenever; choose however many to attend! Contact Ms. Jamie for more info at jamie_geisler@comcast.net.

News from the 4s class from Liz and Marilyn...

According to a traditional saying, March roars in like a lion. In our case, it was a dragon! Although our theme for the month was "Our Town: Community and Careers," we started by wrapping up some unfinished business, including a spectacular, school-wide dragon parade in honor of Chinese New Year. We extended our fairy tale unit through the first week of the month. We enjoyed reading different versions of our favorite stories, such as *The Three Little Aliens* and *The Big, Bad Robot* and *The Three Billy Goats Fluff*. We compared and contrasted the different versions as we learned about story elements such as character, setting, and plot. We continued practicing our fairy tale plays. After a dress rehearsal for Miss Jamie's class, we put on a wonderful show for our families at Open House.



As we moved on to our new theme, we learned about a variety of jobs people do through books and play based activities. 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. The children were all very proud to share something about their parents' jobs. It was clear that the families had spent some time helping their children understand their work. We were amazed at their level of understanding of some very abstract concepts! While all the tools were interesting, the highlight may have been the voltage detector. Teachers and children alike were fascinated as we checked the wires in our classroom!

Liam's dad joined us one day to tell us about plastics engineering. His presentation proved timely, as we had been considering properties of different building materials during our engineering projects in February. He created a slimy plastic mixture right before our eyes by mixing a powder with water.

We spent one week focusing on maps and the mail. We contemplated how packages and letters get from one place to another. We sent a letter to Miss Amy and Miss Marlene. In the process, the children discovered for themselves, albeit in their own words, that we must indicate the recipient, sender, and address for the letter to be delivered to the right place. 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 enjoyed looking at a map of Pittsburgh and trying to figure out what all the different lines and marks meant. We used what we had learned to create giant maps of our own. An added benefit of this activity is that working on a vertical surface and making large, cross-body movements helps to develop fine motor strength and pre-reading skills.

Throughout the month, social skills related to friendship continued to take center stage. We observed new pairings and groupings among the children. As new friendships emerge, the children have the opportunity to learn more about how they fit into the group as a whole. We have been busy reassuring the children that it is okay to have more than one friend, and that making a new friend does not mean you have abandoned an old friend. We continue to encourage the children to play inclusively, while respecting their friends' needs to explore other relationships. These skills are not easy to learn, and they take time and lots of practice. Some days, the children seem more tired from navigating their social world than they are from any physical or mental activity! While they may struggle, we strive to assure them we have complete confidence that they will master these skills and emerge as the kind, caring friends and community members we know they are.

In April, we will focus on life cycles. The whole school will be involved with a chick hatching project for a wonderful, hands-on learning experience. We will also learn about the amazing transformations of tadpoles, caterpillars and seeds as we move into spring.

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

There is the saying, "March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb." Well, in the PreK classroom it would probably be changed to something like, "March came in like a dragon and went out like a rocket!"

Our month began with a magical Chinese New Year dragon parade, which was a culmination of a wonderful collaboration between all of the classes. The children exuberantly declared, "Gung Hay Fat Choy!" (Happy New Year!) at the end of the

Arbor Day and Earth Day

Julius Sterling Morton, a Nebraska newspaper editor who later served as acting governor of the state and the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, proposed Arbor Day in 1872 for tree planting and for recognizing the importance of trees.

Gaylord Nelson, who served as a United States senator and governor of Wisconsin, founded Earth Day, April 22, 1970, as a demonstration to raise awareness of environmental issues and pollution.

Arbor Day is April 24 this year (the last Friday in April) and Earth Day is always April 22.



parade. The children had learned that the Chinese New Year is also called the Lunar New Year and it begins on the evening of a full moon and lasts for 15 days. So, it was a natural progression for us to then turn our attention to learning more about the moon phases.



We began our investigation by first spending time learning more about our solar system. We created water color versions of our interpretation of the Solar System, which may have included planets with rings, planets of differing sizes or asteroid belts and stars. The

children are fascinated with learning about the universe! We then spent time learning more specifically about the moon and its phases. The children learned about the Earth's rotation; the moon orbits the Earth every month and the Earth orbits the sun every year, causing the seasons. This concept was introduced through story, song and movement and activities offered during centers. The children will be able to tell you that the moon does not make its own light and it is light reflected from the sun. They are awesome scientists!

As part of our exploration of the moon phases, we are keeping a classroom Moon Journal. Each child has the opportunity to take the "Moon Bag" home with them for the evening. With their family, they are to view the evening sky and then draw what the moon looked like that evening. They can also add more information about what they experienced while viewing the moon. The next day during gathering, the child then shares the moon journal entry with the class as well as draws a picture of the moon phase to add to our large calendar. This allows the whole class to see the pattern of the phases. It's always amazing how the children really absorb this concept and how they begin to apply their own naming which moon phase it was such as waxing and waning crescent. So fun!

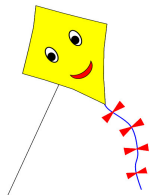
We then turned our attention to the sun! In April we will look more closely at stars and constellations, so it was wonderful to first begin with the biggest star that we are familiar with. The children are already expressing an interest and knowledge of the constellations so we can't wait to get back from spring break to start investigating those in greater depth! Also in April, we will expand our investigation of the stars to include exploring one of Van Gogh's most famous paintings, "Starry, Starry Night." Our heads may be looking up into the sky, but our feet will keep grounded as we will also learn about the life

cycle of a chick. We are excited that the children will have the opportunity to witness this firsthand in the classroom as well!!

As always, thank you, families, for sharing with us your wonderful children! It is truly hard to believe that we are moving into April and the last few months of class. There is still so much for us to continue to explore together!

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

March was electric! We learned about the myriad 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.! 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 home-made 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. Everyone learned Piper's joke: "Why should you never trust an atom? Because they make up everything!" 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 of the 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 on the interests of each class.

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