



News & Notes

Mushroom Family Learning Center

1240 Washington Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15228
(412) 531-1225

mflcdirector@hotmail.com
mushroomfamily.org

A Big Thank-You to...

- Ms. Theresa for the excellent job preparing our students for the musical portion of the family feasts, and also for the love and care she gives to our fish to keep them happy and healthy.
- Our teachers for their hard work preparing for the feasts.
- David Donnelly (Ms. Sheila's husband) for being our staff's "fix-it-guy"
- Madison Senneway and grandparents for the donation of a picnic table.
- Jacklyn Pham and family for the donation of an alphabet train.
- Enzo Scalise and family for the donation of a motorcycle and bike.

Important Dates / Info

TUITION DUE DECEMBER 1
Fundraising fee is also due.

**SCHOLASTIC BOOK FAIR
DEC. 4-6**

**WINTER BREAK STARTS
DEC. 20**

Last day of classes: Dec. 19;
classes resume Jan. 3.
(Teachers' in-service day Jan. 2.)

**NO CLASSES JAN. 21 -
MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY**

**IN-HOUSE REGISTRATION
FOR 2013-14 BEGINS JAN. 23**

**ENRICHMENT CLASSES
AND LUNCH SPOTS ARE
AVAILABLE**

Contact Jamie Geisler at
jamie_geisler@comcast.net.

WAYS TO HELP MUSHROOM

- United Way agency # is 885339.
- Giant Eagle's Apples for the Students program # is 5245.
- Save Labels for Education (bin in the stairwell).
- Help other families by donating to the MFLC Scholarship Fund.

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## Welcome Home!!

**Dean Scalise**, father of Enzo. He returned home from a tour of duty in southwest Asia. *Thank you for your service.*

## Welcome Future Mushroomer!

**Zakiy Sayed**, little brother of Salaah, on November 15. Parents: Noorsaba and Asif. *Congrats!*

Congrats also to **Madison Senneway**, recognized by the Veterans Leadership Program for holding a lemonade sale and donating the proceeds to help veterans.

## From the director...

Dear Families and Friends,

**A**s we end these first months of the new school year, I would like to thank each family for accepting our invitation offered last September to participate in the life of our preschool.

Attending our Welcome Back Coffees, the Family Picnic, Meet the Teachers Nights, and Parent Conferences, being involved in the classroom celebrations, serving as a board member or a room parent, and participating in our fundraisers...all represent your overwhelming contribution to the MFLC community. Thank you for your commitment to making our children's preschool experience the best it can be.

I am enjoying getting to know each new family in our program and pleased to sustain relationships with families who started in recent years or returned to MFLC this year with a younger child. I'm certain all the teachers share my enthusiasm and appreciation.

We at MFLC would like to join in the spirit of the season and thank you not only for choosing our program, but also for the trust, support, and the love that is shared with all of us.

On behalf of myself and the entire staff, we want to wish all of our families a wonderful holiday season. We look forward to our time off during the holidays, however we will return with a warm heart, ready to welcome a new year with the children.

Happy 2013, and take time to play!

*Joan*

Joan Harrison

## Nothing in My Bag Today

*Author Unknown*

Today I did math and science, I toasted bread.  
I halved and quartered.  
I counted, measured,  
used my eyes,  
and ears, and head.



I added and subtracted on the way,  
I used a magnet, blocks, and memory tray.  
I learned about a rainbow and how to weigh.  
So please don't say, "Anything in your bag today?"

You see I am sharing as I play.

I learned to listen and speak clearly  
when I talk,  
To wait my turn, and when inside to walk,  
To put my thoughts into a phrase,  
To guide a crayon through a maze.  
To find my name and write it down,  
To do it with a smile and not a frown.  
To put my painting brush away,  
So please don't say, "What, nothing in your bag today?"

I've learned about a snail and worm,  
Remembered how to take my turn.  
I helped a friend when he was stuck,  
Learned that water rolls off a duck.  
I looked at words from left to right,  
Agreed to differ not to fight.  
So please don't say,  
"Did you only play today?"

## Scholastic Book Fair December 4 - 6!

We are gearing up for reading with a Scholastic Book Fair to be held on Tuesday, Dec. 4, through Thursday, Dec. 6, in the dining room from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. *Do a bit of holiday shopping while your child is in class!*



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**BRRRRR!!!** Now that the weather is getting colder we would like to request that you send your children in appropriate outdoor clothing: warm jackets, hats, gloves, and boots. The children go outside every day, weather permitting — no rain and a temperature of 28 degrees or higher. Please be sure your kids are well prepared (with labeled items), **including proper “play shoes”** (especially on movement day). Preferred shoes for school are closed toe and have a back. Thank you!

## Make a Monetary Gift to MFLC, Receive Tax Write-Off!



If you are considering making a special monetary gift before the end of the year, you might want to consider making a donation to the **MFLC Scholarship Fund**. Thank you so much for your consideration.

## From the president of the board...

Last year, I wrote a little story about pew bows, weddings, and the holidays which seems appropriate again this year (and likely every year!).

So what do the holidays have in common with pew bows and weddings, you ask?! Well, a lot actually! When I was planning my wedding, my mom asked, “What are we going to do for pew bows?” My response was to ask what my older sister had done at her wedding (I had a point for asking). My mom couldn’t remember!! I said, “Exactly. If you can’t even remember what your own stepdaughter had at her wedding for which you were an integral part of planning less than five years ago, then I most certainly am not going to spend (your) money on a detail I can’t describe from a single wedding I’ve ever attended!”

And so it is with the holidays. When going through the season with children and families, we should put our hearts and souls into details that 5 or 10 years from now they WILL remember.

No one will remember whether you cleaned your baseboards or had fancy napkins, a designer dress or got the “hot” toy of the year. But they will remember the traditions, the excitement, the warmth and love that they felt, the meal you made that included their favorites, and special gifts that you remembered they wanted but hadn’t thought to ask for. **THOSE** are the things that make occasions special.

I hope you all have a wonderful holiday season. It is an awesome time of the year to live through the eyes of a child. We thank you for sharing your children with us and sharing in the different ways that people celebrate, enabling us to see it all anew through their eyes.

Happy Holidays!

*Erin*

Erin Bignell

## News from the Early Learners class from Theresa, Marlene, and Debbie...

November was a wonderful month indeed. The children had a great time preparing for their first Mushroom Feast— decorating the room, making turkey hats, and creating a new recipe for non-edible muffins!

We have some very imaginative cooks in our room. Any one of our early learners could easily try out for the “Iron Chef” competition and probably secure a spot! During our preparations, we learned a few things too: turkeys are birds and birds have feathers so let’s put lots of feathers on our turkeys; and there are 12 muffins in our muffin tins, both big and small. The children were just thrilled to have their moms and dads and grandparents attend their feast. Thank you all for scheduling this special time into your very busy days. Having you all there made it a very special occasion.

The glitter month has finally arrived! December is here with all its sparkle and we will add even more. This month will find us playing in moon sand, counting snowmen, and making snowmen that do not melt. With all the whirlwind of activity and excitement around us, we will try to keep everything very low key. The children will work on wrapping up a special gift for their families and we will enjoy the colors, music and treats of the season.



The holiday season is such a wonderful time to be surrounded by family and friends. We thank all of you for sharing your wonderful children with us. There is no better place we would rather be than in our little room creating a few hours of excitement and learning with our early learners. Their laughter is truly music to our ears.

Have a wonderful and joyous holiday season!

## News from the 3s class from Jamie, Debbie, and Christine...

We started the month of November meeting with all of our wonderful parents during conference time. I always enjoy sitting down with our mothers and fathers to discuss

## School delay/cancellation



MFLC will follow Mt. Lebanon School District decisions during inclement weather: When MTLSD is delayed, MFLC will be delayed; when MTLSD is canceled, MFLC will be canceled. Delayed start time will be 10 a.m. for morning classes which will dismiss at regular time; afternoon classes will begin on schedule. Please check local TV and cable stations, email blasts and the school answering machine when in doubt.

their child's progress. We focused on social and emotional growth, gross and fine motor skills, communication and cognitive skills. I can't wait to meet again in the spring to see what progress each child has made.

Our theme for the month of November was "We Gather Together." Our bulletin board was decorated with a festive table, delicious 3-D thanksgiving meals, and many Native Americans and Pilgrims seated around the table. The children loved adding their own special touches to our ever-changing wall.

We spent some time talking about the Pilgrims and how they had to live off the land. We discussed how difficult it was for a child back in that time to keep up with daily chores. We also compared the Pilgrims to the Native Americans and looked at the role each contributed to that first Thanksgiving Day.

The students were busy preparing food for our annual feast.



They read the recipes to make pumpkin muffins from scratch and corn bread. At one point we had all but three students sitting around the table helping to make the food just right. We also made many thematic crafts which included the Pilgrims, Native American teepees, turkey hands and Thanksgiving plates. We really enjoyed the story *I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Pie*. We like to make predictions about a story and review the details that occurred.

The best part of the month was our Thanksgiving Feast. We had so many family members attend which we loved! The children made Thanksgiving hats, shared our gathering songs and discussed what they were thankful for. Thanks to all of our parents who donated food, decorations and their time to make our feast a success. We then took our theme to heart by collecting food to be delivered to the homeless.

Next month we will focus on different celebrations, make a holiday gift and continue to strengthen our communication and socialization skills. We are having such a great time with this class. It is going to be an exciting month for all!

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

**W**e hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving!

November was a quick but busy month for us. Our theme was "We Gather Together." We focused on food, manners, generosity and gratitude—essential components of any gathering! We contemplated the difference between "anytime foods" and "sometimes foods." This was a tough one for me because I still think chocolate should be an anytime food!

We made our own food, both real and pretend. It's hard to say which was more fun: cutting paper "vegetables" and putting them in a big pot for "soup," or squishing ingredients together with our hands to make real pumpkin-oat cookies.

We learned about manners and played some games to practice our "magic words." The children are learning to be respectful of each other, waiting for their turn to speak each time Talking Turtle is passed around the circle. It truly seems that they are coming to appreciate hearing each other's responses to the question as much as they enjoy sharing their own answers.

Mushroom Mouse visited us and the children helped him learn to use his manners. Whenever Mushroom Mouse visits us, he always seems to have a lot to learn about managing his emotions and dealing effectively with others. It's a good thing the children are there to help him! They love him anyway, even though he makes so many mistakes, and they feel helpful and powerful when they can help him through another crisis.



November is a great time to focus on being thankful for what we have. We endeavored to be mindful throughout the month of the many wonderful people, things, and experiences that enrich our lives. Although "thankful" may be a new word for an abstract concept, it is really just putting a name on what the children naturally feel. In that spirit, we set about planning a feast to share with our families.

The children came up with a list of the things they would need to make the party a success. They thought of everything: food,



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### **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.

decorations, entertainment, music, etc. We made a giant list and checked things off as our preparations progressed. We hope you enjoyed our little feast. The food we prepared, the decorations we made, and the entertainment we provided were the children's gifts to you, offered in the spirit of generosity and gratitude.

Next month we will try to make our classroom a low-key respite from the excitement of the holiday season. Our theme will be "Colors, Lights and Shapes of the Season."

### **News from the 4s class from Liz, Kim, and Melanie...**

**N**ovember flew by for us! We were busy preparing for our feast during this short month. We made cookies, practiced songs and created decorations in anticipation of this fun event. The children were so proud of their efforts, and their performance was as sweet as pumpkin pie!

Our theme was "We Gather Together." We focused on food, gratitude, generosity, manners, and kindness. Our own daily "gathering" provides us a chance to connect with each other in an atmosphere of respect and acceptance. This group really enjoys discussions! We have started working our way through activities from *The Peaceful Classroom*, a great resource designed to teach compassion and cooperation through fun games for the group.

The children have really been enjoying bringing in items that start with the letter of the week for sharing. This month we highlighted F (Food), T (Turkey/Thanksgiving) and M (Manners). Using our thinking skills we are able to find something to share even when we forget to bring something from home. After all, we always have our fingers, toes, and mouths with us! It is a fun challenge to think of as many words as we can that start with our letter of the week.



We have also been busy practicing our fine motor skills in as many ways as we can. We squeezed Mr. Mouth to feed him bingo chips, sorted pompom "candy" using tweezers, built

with Legos, practiced copying our names, strung beads, and tore paper to make a cornucopia collage. Some children are very interested in drawing pictures at this age, but for those who may not be, there are plenty of creative ways to build the skills and strength.

As ever, our favorite part of the day is play time. Their favorite dramatic play theme is "family." We are always looking to expand the children's imaginative play to include a variety of themes and roles, with increasingly elaborate scenarios. This month we introduced the idea of a restaurant.

Our theme for December will be "Colors, Shapes, and Lights of the Season." We hope that December will be a peaceful and joyous month for all of you.

### **News from the Pre-K morning class from Cara, Jane, and Brian...**

**E**very day in November you would hear this sweet tune being sung by the children, "Fill a Bucket. Fill a Bucket. Every day. Every day. I can fill a bucket. I can fill a bucket. You can too. You can too." Each child would then take a turn, say something he/she was thankful for that day and then fill our classroom bucket with a piece of colorful Styrofoam. I am thankful that we have a classroom of bucket fillers!

Along with practicing being grateful, we spent this month looking at maps, using maps to solve a problem and creating compasses to learn about direction. We asked our parents to tell us their children's heritage so we could then create a world map that would show where our ancestors originally traveled from.



That visual provided a context for our discussion of the Native Americans and Pilgrims, and we were able to see that the Pilgrims traveled across the ocean to the Americas. We spent time learning about the important crop of corn as well as her two sister crops, beans and squash. We took these three crops and made several dishes to enjoy at our Family Feast, which included Three Sister Soup and cornbread. The sugar cookies we made were just the icing on the cake. : )





**Mushroom Wish List** ~ If you or someone you know may be able to contribute, please let Joan know!

- Little Tykes ride-on fire truck
- Clothes: underwear, socks, pants, tops, gloves and hats
- Helmets
- Costumes that your children may have outgrown — great additions to our dress-up collection!

The children were very involved with every piece of the feast from making the invitations, creating the table centerpieces, and making their necklaces to be worn, to the decorations, the food and of course, the songs to be sung. Our feast was truly a celebration of family and friends with laughter, hugs and smiles. So, all I can say is...."Have you filled a bucket today?"

We have done a lot of work looking at maps as it connects to our family heritage. This month we will expand on this by moving to our planet and solar system, and then looking at the question of the season, "Why do the days get shorter?"

## News from the Pre-K afternoon class from Cathy and Melanie...

**H**ope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving break. We now head into "the most wonderful time of the year." This is a very exciting time and we will try to be low-key as we explore



the MANY traditions of families as they celebrate their holidays. We will emphasize the importance of kindness and giving.

There will be many songs sung, glitter-bedazzled projects, a special gift for you and maybe some cookies to be made.

We will continue the letter of the week with G-H-I & J, as well as keep adding to our word list and our number chart. On December 12 we will ALL be Rudolfs with red noses and make some reindeer food.

December 19 is our last day before the holiday break. More than likely our wonderful homeroom moms will be there to help us celebrate. Most importantly, at this time of year it's really best to simply spend time together as a family and enjoy each other. Before you know it, your children will be grown... as mine are. We still have terrific holidays but little children are special.

Happy Holidays!

## News from the K-Too class from Marilyn...

**I**n November K-Too students learned how blood and organs work inside their bodies, cooked homemade bread and vegetable soup for our feast, learned to write and conceptualize fractions through experiential use of balance scale and measuring cups/spoons, created a play with set and costumes from Esphyr Slobodkina's book *The Wonderful Feast*, learned the origins and history of Thanksgiving, and wrote what we are thankful for.

Our feast was a great success. The children loved performing the play for their families, took pride in the soup and bread they made, and savored some healthy competition during rhyming bingo. Everyone had a wonderful time.



In December and January we will explore various cultures' holidays: Ramadan, Diwali, Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa. Each holiday includes light and caring which we will experience through mock classroom "celebrations" and discussion.

The religious details of the holidays will be referenced, but not elaborated on. The children will make a special holiday gift this month as well, and talk about giving.

Also in December, if there is enough snow, we will study the water cycle and volumetric/weight principles. In January we will begin our electric house project.

**When the bold branches  
Bid farewell to rainbow leaves  
Welcome wool sweaters.**

~~~  
B. Cybrill

The winter solstice is on December 21, marking the first day of winter. It will be the shortest day, with the sun appearing at its lowest point in the sky, and the longest night of the year.