



Mushroom Family
Learning Center
1240 Washington Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15228
(412) 531-1225
mflcdirector@hotmail.com
mushroomfamily.org

DECEMBER 2013

News & Notes

TUITION DUE DECEMBER 1
(First-half fundraising fee due.)

CLASSES RESUME DEC. 2

WINTER BREAK DATES

Last day of classes: December 20. Classes resume January 6.

NO CLASSES JANUARY 20

Martin Luther King Day

**IN HOUSE REGISTRATION
FOR 2013-2014 BEGINS
JANUARY 23**

**DATE NIGHT RAFFLE
TICKET SALES: DEC. 17 & 18**
See next page for details.

**MFLC ENRICHMENT
CLASSES AVAILABLE**
For info, contact Jamie Geisler,
jamie_geisler@comcast.net.

PLAY SHOES

Please make sure your child is wearing or brings proper play shoes to school, especially on movement day.

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).
- Help other families by donating to the MFLC Scholarship Fund.

**Welcome Future
Mushroomer!**

Jonathan Lushko, born Oct. 20:
brother of Alyson (K-TOO
PM); parents: Wendy and
Jonathan Lushko.

A Big Thank-You to...

- Ms. Theresa for the excellent job preparing our students for the musical part of the feasts.
- All of our teachers for the hard work preparing for the feasts.
- Amy Dembosky who coordinated our Barnes & Noble fundraiser.
- Erin Bignell who coordinated our Mixed Bag fundraiser.
- Luca Stock and family for their donation of clothes.
- Charleigh Nightway and family for their donation of costumes.
- Diane Rattay for her help in the office.
- Kelly Lotter for the publication of this wonderful newsletter.

From the director...

Warm wishes to you as we start December together. Our Thanksgiving feasts were the perfect way to start the holiday season. It was so wonderful to see so many family members sharing this event with the children. We loved seeing the smiles of the parents, the proud faces of the grandparents, and the joy of the students in sharing this special day with you.

December is a month that we at MFLC happily look forward to. In this busy month, we enjoy talking about all of the holidays that our children celebrate. We talk about families, friends, love, giving, and sharing. We are lucky to have families from a variety of different cultures/religions who celebrate different holidays. It is so wonderful for us to be able to share our holiday traditions and to learn and appreciate our likenesses and differences. This is what makes our school so special.

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

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

Happy 2014 and take the time to play!

Joan



Mushroom Wish List

If you or someone you know may be able to contribute, please let Joan know!

- Clothes: underwear, socks, pants, tops for both boys and girls
- Costumes your child may have outgrown — they are great for our dress-up collection
- Helmets for playground

HAVE YOU SEEN??

Mt. Lebanon Magazine: Take a look at the article celebrating MFLC's 40th Anniversary. You can find this article in the December issue on page 51. If you do not receive MTL magazine you can go online to read it at www.lebomag.com.



— *It's a Date Night in Pittsburgh!* —



Ticket Fundraiser

Winner can enjoy a weekend of fun and relaxation in Pittsburgh, split the winnings up into two fabulous date nights, or can use the winnings however he/she sees fit!

Total Prize Includes:

+ 4 Penguins Tickets with access to the Lexus Club

Friday, February 7, 2014 @ 7:00pm – **Pittsburgh Penguins vs. New York Rangers**
(Section 109, Row T, Seats 19-22)

Thank you to Luca Stock's grandfather, Tim Stock of Sherrard, German & Kelly, P.C., Attorneys at Law.

+ Overnight stay at Cambria Suites-Pittsburgh at CONSOL Energy Center

+ Dinner for Two at Isabela on Grandview

Pittsburgh's ultimate dining experience. A diverse menu, delicate wine list, and impeccable service blends perfectly into the stunning panoramic view of Pittsburgh's famous skyline from high atop Mt. Washington.

Thank you to Keller Peet's dad, Chef Alan Peet.

+ Omni William Penn Hotel - Bed and Breakfast Package

Deluxe room and breakfast for two served in The Terrace.
(Late checkout at 5pm based on availability.)

There will be **500 tickets** available for sale at MFLC on **December 17 and 18** on a first-come, first-served basis. Each ticket is preprinted with two randomly generated lottery numbers. The tickets will be sold at random and must be paid for upfront. The winning number is taken from the Pennsylvania Lottery's daily three-digit number first drawn at 7:00 p.m. Tuesday, January 7, 2014. If an unsold number is drawn, MFLC will pull a purchased ticket stub at random on Wednesday, January 8, 2014.

TICKET PRICE: \$10.00

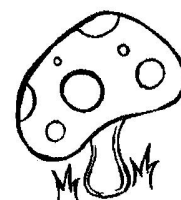
MFLC parents: 100% of the ticket price goes to your second-half fundraising fee. *You MUST be up to date on tuition and first-half fundraising fee in order to purchase tickets on Dec. 17 & 18.*

Buy for yourself or purchase and re-sell to friends, family and co-workers!

** Great holiday or stocking stuffer idea! **

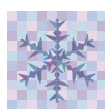
*(If you will be re-selling the tickets you purchased, make sure you **return the ticket stub to MFLC before Tuesday, January 7, 2014**, so the winner can be contacted. Any ticket stubs not received by Tuesday, January 7, 2014, forfeit the right to win if a drawing on Wednesday, January 8, 2014, has to be made.)*

**MUSHROOM FAMILY
LEARNING CENTER**





News & Notes



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.

From the president of the board...

I love glitter. I love the way it sparkles in the bottle on the store shelf or even on the floor after a craft project at school. Being the mother of three boys, there has not been much glitter in my life. As a matter of fact, my four-year-old never puts quite enough glitter on the cut-out snowflake he makes at school. But this year, I have a daughter. She's only four months old, but I have high hopes of a glittery red tutu for her holiday pictures and maybe even a glittery silver bow for her hair.



As you add your own sparkle to your home and start the countdown to gift giving, I have a great stocking stuffer idea. MFLC has organized a raffle ticket fundraiser called "It's a Date Night in Pittsburgh." Ticket sales will take place on December 17th and 18th only. Look for prize details in this newsletter. Give tickets to your significant other, grandparents, or a friend. (a gift to you: 100% of the ticket price goes to the second half of your fundraising fee).

I hope you enjoy the sparkle of the season. Preschool is the place where glitter happens on a daily basis this time of year. Hang those glittery snowflakes and sparkling ornaments (with your child's smiling little face) with a warm heart. And...wait until the new year to vacuum your car!

Susan

Susan Sarkis

News from the Early Learners classes 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 centerpieces 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 families and friends. We thank all of you for sharing your wonderful children with us. There is no other place we would rather be than in our little room creating a few hours of excitement and learning with your 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 Tori...

As I am writing this newsletter, I am looking out the window and observing the beautiful winter weather. I began to think how differently a child and parent may observe the same wintry scene. A child looks at the snow as something amazing and fun to play in. A parent may be concerned about the roads and how the road conditions might affect the day ahead.

One of the benefits of teaching three-year-olds is the wonder they see in everyday occurrences. We were fortunate enough one morning to play outside in the snow. The children were so excited to make snow balls and snow angels. They tried to catch snowflakes on their tongues, laughing as they caught each snowflake. Looking through the eyes of a three-year-old is a wonderful way to experience each and every day.



News & Notes

PARKING LOT SAFETY REMINDERS



- 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.
- 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.
- Please observe the handicapped parking spots.
- Don't leave other children unattended in your vehicle or in the lot.

We spent the month of November focusing on Family, Feast and Me. We decorated our bulletin board by making faces out of paper plates. We looked into the mirror to determine what color of eyes and hair we had. We then placed the faces around a huge Thanksgiving table. The students were also



given the opportunity to draw pictures of their family and discuss each member. We counted the number of family members who live in our houses. We also shared with our classmates what type of activities we like to do with our families.

Communication skills were our small group focus for the month. The children practiced asking and answering questions using complete sentences. They were also encouraged to bring in a special item from home to share with the class. They enjoyed talking about their item and learning more about what their friends were sharing.

We spent a lot of time baking for our feast. The goal this year was to make as many different types of muffins as possible. Of course, we had to sample each and every kind. The children shared ideas of what they were thankful for. They also listened to several books on Thanksgiving, Native Americans and Pilgrims.

We ended November with a fabulous feast shared by family and friends. The children put on a musical performance that brought the house down. It was a great month.

As we enter into the month of December, we will be focusing on kindness. Our goal will be to conduct *10 Random Acts of Kindness* in three weeks. Can we do it? Stay tuned for next month's newsletter to find out.

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

We hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving!

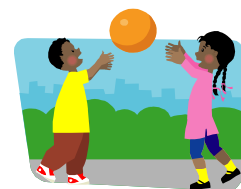
In November our theme was "We Gather Together." We explored the many ways people come together to help each other and to celebrate. This group especially loves our daily

Gathering ritual. With Thanksgiving on the horizon, November was the perfect time for us to extend the concept!

We began with a look at family, a child's first group experience. We learned a little bit about each other—who has a brother, who has a sister, etc.—and shared what makes our own families special. The children already have a sense of their family identity, and were able to share what they like to do together. We observed that there are many ways to be a family, but all families love each other and help each other. We have extended the family concept to school, and we talk about the "Mushroom Family" we share. They are really starting to care for each other and help each other!

Food is an important part of many gatherings, especially at Thanksgiving. We learned the importance of choosing a variety of fruits and vegetables to "eat a rainbow." We enjoyed working together to prepare corn muffins, pumpkin no-bake cookies, and frozen fruit salad for our families.

Sharing is an important part of any gathering, and we reinforced the concept in many ways throughout the month. For many children, starting preschool marks the first time they are confronted with the need to share. This new concept includes several components which can be tricky to master. Children may initially feel that "You need to share" means, "Give up the thing you want." While sharing does mean that you can't always have everything you want right this minute, we stress that sharing is a positive way to respect the rights of all and to make sure everyone gets what they need.



Unlike the home environment, at school the materials belong to everyone. If someone is using a toy, we must ask for a turn rather than grabbing. We tell the children that grabbing hurts, and grabbing makes someone want to hold on even tighter. Often a polite request is met with success. Even when children ask, they may not get what they want right away. We model for the children "When I'm finished, you can have a turn" as a respectful way to defer a request.

Another challenging principle of sharing is that monopolizing a resource is generally unfair. With a giant mound of play dough



News & Notes

DECEMBER 2013

Page 5



Dress for Success! Now that the weather is getting colder we would like to request that you send your children in appropriate outdoor clothing: warm coat, hat, mittens, snow pants, and boots when necessary. **Items should be labeled and placed in the child's bag.** The children go outside every day, weather permitting — no rain and a temperature of 28 degrees or higher. Please be sure your kids also have **proper "play shoes"** (especially on movement day). Thank you!

on the table, there should be enough for several children to play at the same time. On the other hand, sometimes a child has a particular vision which requires the temporary use of all of a certain material. In that case, we might help explain the child's important plan to the other children. This sometimes leads to several children or even the entire group supporting their friend's idea and helping to make the plan a reality. Cooperative effort can be very satisfying! Although there is no "one size fits all" procedure to cover every situation, we remain focused on teaching the children to interact in ways that respect others while getting their own needs met. Through repeated experiences, children learn that, rather than threatening them, sharing protects their interests overall.



We found many ways this month for the children to experience the positive, pleasurable, additive aspects of sharing. For instance, we played a game in which each child had a bowlful of one type of paper fruit. We encouraged the children to share some of their fruit with others. They were thrilled both to give and to receive, and discovered that when everyone gave a little, we all had more. We made beautiful fruit salads!

Sharing enriches children's lives in many ways. When we share a ball, we can play catch. When we share the train tracks, we can build a really big track to enjoy together. When we all help cut the paper vegetables, we can enjoy a heaping pot of soup. When we trade markers, we get to use more colors. Waiting for your turn to hold Talking Turtle and share your news means that everyone listens to you, too. A child who creates a drawing and decides to give it to a friend experiences the warm feelings of generosity along with her friend's gratitude.

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 our biggest sharing project of the month: a feast to share with our families. 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. We hope you enjoyed our little feast!

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 Amy...

We hope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving!

Our theme for November was "We Gather Together." We focused on food, gratitude, generosity, manners, and kindness. Our own daily Gathering gives us a chance to connect with each other in an atmosphere of respect and acceptance. Everyone has something to say! Throughout the month we prepared for a very special gathering: a feast for our families. We began by figuring out what we would need to do to make a terrific party. After making our plan we set about inviting, cooking, decorating, and rehearsing. Our projects provided plenty of opportunities to enjoy the pleasures of cooperative effort. We hope you enjoyed the results!

We also continued to highlight a different letter each week. During F week, we included a fire safety lesson. Through dramatic play, we practiced what to do in an emergency situation. After getting to a safe location, we called 911 to report the emergency. We learned that firefighters can figure out where you are if you give them your address. We had plenty of volunteers for our fire department! We also had a real fire drill and practiced going to our safe place outside Mushroom. F week also brought activities related to family and feast preparations.



During V week everyone brought in vegetables and we created a delicious vegetable soup. The children did a great job cutting up the vegetables and working together. We met *The Hungry Thing*, a monster who speaks in rhymes. We enjoyed figuring out what he wanted to eat when he asked for schmancakes, tickles, or pamburgers. We were inspired to create our own class book of silly food rhymes.

T week was all about turkeys. We created original handprint turkey stories fashioned after *Setting the Turkeys Free*. The Parrot Tico Tango, a different type of T bird, taught us a lesson about sharing. When everyone shared a little of what they had,



News & Notes

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.



we created beautiful and delicious fruit salads, both real and pretend. Of course, this provided a great opportunity to practice polite phrases such as "Yes, please," "No, thank you," and "Would you like some raspberries?" It was clear from the children's responses that the pleasure of giving nearly equaled the pleasure of getting!

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 classes from Cara, Jane, and Melanie...

The traditions we hold for our families are so important for our children as they give them a sense of security, a way to mark the rhythm of time passing and bring about a sense of joy. I find that when there is a certain smell in the air, it can trigger a vivid memory from my childhood, which instantly gives me a sense of peace and happiness.

In the classroom, I find it equally important to have traditions and rituals to provide that sense of security, a rhythm to the day and a way to celebrate with each other. These can be from our goodbye ritual of having Snowy the Owl say goodbye to us, the song we dance to before gathering and the way we celebrate each other's birthdays. We have our own sense of community and culture within our classroom. The children's sense of being attached to something outside of our classroom rests as well in the traditions we hold as a school.



The feast we hold every November in each class is a wonderful example of a tradition that adds to the richness of our children's experience at Mushroom. It may look different in each class, but it marks a passage of time and connects us to the larger community of the school. As we prepared for the feast, we discussed what ways they prepare for a celebration. Even though many of us might celebrate different holidays (or even differently within the same holiday), we all have similar things we do to prepare for the celebration such as preparing food, preparing our house with decorations and dressing up for these special occasions, etc.

These discussions begin to expand the children's worlds, helping them realize that they are the same as their classmates and also there are differences, which are all acceptable! We had the pleasure of learning more about Diwali this month as well as the Native American culture. The feast soup we prepared was called Three Sisters soup, which we learned is made from the important crops of corn, beans and squash that grow together. Each crop has its function and works together to create a rich soil and the right conditions to grow and flourish. It sounds a lot like our children as they flourish in the soil of "individual growth in a shared environment."

As we move into December and the days grow shorter, we will now concentrate on answering the question of why this seasonal change happens, and learn more about our nocturnal animal friends.

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

In November, K-Too prepared 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 a 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 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.

Business Directory

.....

Reasonable Rates

Pre-K to 8th Grade
Reading & Math

(412) 221-4174

Private Tutoring
In My Home

Jane Birris
Experienced Teacher & Tutor



Your ad here!
\$10/issue