

Mushroom Family Learning Center

Individual Growth in a Shared Environment



An independent, secular, nonprofit preschool since 1973

1240 Washington Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15228

(412) 531-1225

mflcdirector@hotmail.com

mushroomfamily.org

News & Notes

FEBRUARY 2015

TUITION DUE FEB. 1

REGISTRATION WILL BEGIN SOON!

Invite your family and friends to make our new "house" a home.

STAFF MEETING TUESDAY, FEB. 10

Early dismissal at 11:00am. Late arrival at 1:00pm; no lunch.

NO SCHOOL PRESIDENTS DAY, MONDAY, FEB. 16

MFLC BOARD MEETING FEB. 18, 8:00PM

FUNDRAISERS COMING SOON: *Pirates Package!*

Four tix vs. St. Louis, Sat., May 9, a Fireworks Night!

Mixed Bag Designs

Check out what's available at mixedbagdesigns.com!

VISION SCREENING IN MARCH

Look for info in your class soon!

SCHOOL PICS MARCH 3 - 5

Look for info in your class soon!

OUTSIDE PLAY

Classes go outside if it's not raining and 28 degrees or above. Please be sure your kids are well prepared and mark all outerwear.

MFLC LUNCH BUNCH AND ENRICHMENT CLASSES

Spots available! See page 4. Email jamie_geisler@comcast.net.

Welcome Future Mushroomer!

Gideon Quentin, born Jan. 15 (Big sister **Agnes**, 3s class; parents: Dovey & Michael Alexander)

And congrats to our own **Ms. Meghan** and family who welcomed **Reese Michael** on Jan. 12!

Mushroom on the Move...

Dear Mushroom Families:

We know you have been anxiously awaiting word of our progress of relocation. The board and staff have been working hard, and as quickly as possible, to finalize a new home for Mushroom.



After beginning with five location options at the beginning of the month, the choice has been narrowed down to two:

- ✧ Mt. Lebanon Community Christian Church on Cedar Blvd. (367 Cedar Blvd., 15228)
- ✧ Beth El Congregation off of Cochran Rd. (Roessler Road at 1900 Cochran Rd., 15220)

While we had hoped to have a final decision on January 30, the important thing is we have two locations that want to welcome our school, and they both have a long list of positive attributes. Many factors are being taken into consideration, and we are actively negotiating with each. One has already submitted a firm proposal, and the other is expected on Monday. At that point, a final decision will be made as to which facility will be the best fit for Mushroom.

We, the board, feel that we cannot begin registration in good faith until a lease has been signed. The goal for having that lease completed is next Friday, February 6. Registration will begin as soon as possible, after a lease is signed. In conjunction with that, both facilities are aware of our urgency and are prepared to accommodate us in arranging tours for our families. Again, we will begin making those arrangements as soon as a lease is signed.

As compensation for your understanding and continued support during this difficult time, we are offering a flat-rate registration fee for all current families, regardless of the number of children enrolled in your family. As a further sign of our appreciation, this \$50 fee will be credited back to you when you pay your first month's tuition, due May 1, for September.

Again, we thank you for your commitment and patience through this process. The board, Joan, and staff are very excited about the new possibilities, and look forward to continuing on this journey with you and your children!

Diane Rattay, President

Mushroom Family Learning Center Board of Directors

(This letter was emailed to all families 1/30/15.)

Help Mushroom Families Through the MFLC Scholarship Fund

Initiated by the founders of Mushroom Family Learning Center, Margaret Lee and Fred Doscher, in 1995, the scholarship fund helps support families faced with trying circumstances. Please consider giving a tax-deductible contribution today. Checks should be made payable to MFLC.

A Friendly Reminder About School RESPECT...

If parents would like to chat a bit while the children play on the grass (or in the snow) on a beautiful day, we highly encourage you to do so. But please make it within the fenced playground and away from moving traffic. And of course, even on the playground area and on the equipment, **your supervision is ABSOLUTELY A MUST.** Please **RESPECT** our playground and leave the equipment neatly stored away when you are finished. We work hard to encourage children to put away their materials properly when they are done. Also please **RESPECT** the church's "Big Room" — this room is not available for play. *Thank you for your cooperation.*

From the president of the board...

Happy February! We're starting to come out of hibernation, and love is in the air at Mushroom. With Valentine's Day around the corner, we've seen the increase of pink and purple hearts, as well as the ever-present glitter, in the classroom projects. Love abounds.

Over the course of the last six weeks, however, the board was busy contacting over 50 possible locations within a three-mile radius, including but not limited to: churches, synagogues, assisted living facilities, and commercial property management companies. We were thinking out of the box. We've contacted former MFLC families, local and state politicians, and anyone else we could think of, to help us find a new home. Most of those replied with a "Sorry, we're not interested." Their reasons included already having a daycare or preschool in place, not having enough space available, or they just simply were not interested in housing a preschool. It was frustrating to say the least. We definitely weren't feeling the love.

Then we had one interested facility that invited us to tour. Then another... and another... and the next thing I knew, there were five. We had options! Things were looking up! We were hearing back from everyone, and even if they didn't have an option for us, they were willing to help us find one. MFLC has made a great name for itself in its 41 years of operation. There was one local minister who was so impressed with Mushroom and our mission that while his particular church wasn't able to accommodate our needs, he started contacting other facilities to recommend us. We were feeling the love, again.



Now we sit at the beginning of February with two very solid options. Both facilities are willing to help us fulfill our mission: to provide children with opportunities for individual growth within a shared environment. As I walked into these two particular facilities, I almost instantly knew we could make it work... and they want to help us do that. To have that understanding and support from them is unique, and an amazing thing for us. We're almost overwhelmed with the love.

The next couple of weeks are going to have an even greater sense of urgency, but I know we will all make it through. I want to personally express my gratitude to everyone for their

Smile for the Camera!



School pictures will be taken
March 3 - 5. Look for information
in your child's cubby soon.

support on this rocky road we've been traveling. It's been an enlightening experience, to say the least. On behalf of the board, I'd like to say "Thank you"... and we feel the love.

Diane

Diane Rattay

From the director...

Just six weeks ago I know we all felt like the "man without a country." Six weeks later here we are with two countries. It is truly amazing!

I want to thank the board and teachers for working together to make this happen.

I want to take this opportunity to especially thank the Mushroom on the Move chairpersons Diane Rattay and Amy Dembosky. These two Mushroom warriors sprang into action seconds after this committee was formed. There hasn't been a day or an hour that they have not dedicated to this mission. Probably between the two of them they have slept a combined 24 hours. They truly did not leave any stone unturned during this journey.

Diane and Amy, we are so grateful to you for your dedication to finding us a new home. Job well done!

To the board, I thank each of you for your assistance in this mission. Thank you for the phone calls made, emails sent, numerous tours and meetings you attended to help in the pursuit of finding our new home. I want to thank you especially for the sacrifices you made which took away from your own families many evenings. I know at times this was difficult to do. I would also like to thank Patrick Furey for being brave enough to join this group of women. He has not only been a voice of reason but our very own board comedian!

Now to the very heart and soul of Mushroom...the most amazing, dedicated group of professionals. I truly have the best job in the world working with these women every day. Starting from day one they did not lose faith that Mushroom would go

Thank You

Omitted in Error from January...

- Thank you to all our homeroom parents and families who coordinated the classroom holiday celebrations.
- Thank you Ms. Marilyn for hosting the teacher holiday party.
- Thank you to our Mushroom on the Move committee for their dedication to finding a new home for our school.
- Thank you to our staff and board members who are dedicated to continuing in the future what began 41 years ago.

This Month...

- Thank you to all who purchased Penguins Package raffle tickets and congratulations to the winner, the Premus family (Roan, Pre-K AM)!



Have you registered for the 2015-2016 school year?!

Hopefully you haven't! But fear not if you have.

After registering to stay at Mushroom, 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 Mushroom Family Learning Center to a friend or neighbor. We thank you for your continued commitment and support!

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 and you can choose however many to attend! Contact Ms. Jamie for more info at jamie_geisler@comcast.net. See next page for details!

on. Now that we know we will have a home it excites me to see their excitement. It has been said before: Mushroom is not about the walls and roof — it is about what goes on. You are the group that makes Mushroom magical. Because of you, the magic moves on!!!

Last but not least I would like to thank all the families. I know that it has been difficult to wait to find out where your new home will be. Thank you for the patience and the support you have given to me, our teachers and board members.

The statement "It takes a village" has certainly been proven these past six weeks. I want to thank each and every one of you for your part in building our new village. I am so grateful for all of you.

Joan

Joan Harrison

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

We had a wonderful time with our January Winter Wonderland. And there is still snow falling in our room! But don't worry—we are as toasty as hibernating bears. Our big bear cave was warm and cozy inside. Using our flashlights, we searched for bears and other small animals that sneaked in the cave to stay warm as well. We hope your child's birdfeeder is providing snacks for your neighborhood birds. We have a birdfeeder right outside our window and are happy that we are helping the feathered friends at Mushroom school!

February will be exciting when our "Shape Friends" come to school. When they visit, we will begin talking about all the shapes around us. Harry Heart will be our first shape. We will make a lot of things with the heart shape and the color red. Cynthia Circle and Sammy Square will make an appearance as well. We will also work on matching and naming colors. Most children match colors well.

Some children have a little difficulty recalling the correct name, and this is very typical for a child this age. We will also be using scissors and working on cutting skills.



Weather Bear is a new friend at school. He helps us know what the weather is and how to dress for it. Weather Bear knows that since it is so cold outside he has to wear his winter gear when he wants to play outside, just like we do. A big thank-you to all of you for sending your child with the appropriate winter attire for outdoor play. It takes a while to get everyone dressed to go outside, but it is certainly worth the effort. The children love it! The school policy is that we will go outside to play if it is 28 degrees Fahrenheit and above, and if it is not raining.



The children are quite comfortable in their school setting now. Many are becoming more talkative with their peers and us. It is really heartwarming when they use their friends' names when they play together or talk to each other during the school day. They are such a wonderful bunch of children and we all really enjoy them!

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

With the start of the new year came a slightly new routine for our classroom. The children have become so confident in their role as students. They can make independent choices and communicate with friends. They continue to learn how to be peacemakers and creative thinkers. We decided to take these basic skills and step it up a notch. We continued to start our day answering specific questions but now the students are learning to recognize their first names without pictures. We are learning to listen for a musical cue to begin our gathering activities instead of listening to a teacher's commands. We dance with scarves, ribbons, wooden sticks and musical instruments. When the song is over, the students know to put the item away and get ready for small groups. We now use visual cues to let the children know which group they are going to start with.

Since the snow was falling and the temperatures dropping, we focused on wintertime activities. We conducted an ice cube race observing what variable would make the ice cube melt the fastest. Salt was the winner in our race. We made different types of snowmen using shaving cream, colorful paper and

FEBRUARY ENRICHMENT CLASSES Contact Ms. Jamie for more info and sign-up at jamie_geisler@comcast.net.

MONDAYS

Feb 2 - Ms. Sheila - Join us for a silly **Monster Mash!** What will your monster look like? What will it eat? How will it move? Bring your great ideas and create your very own fun monster!

Feb 9 - Ms. Marilyn - **The Solar System**

Feb 23 - Ms. Sheila - We will read "**We're Going on a Lion Hunt**" by Margery Cuyler and have a lion hunt of our own through Mushroom school!

FRIDAYS ...

Feb 6 - Ms. Marilyn - **Experiments with Ice and Snow**

Feb 13 - Ms. Marilyn - **Valentine's Day**

Feb 20 - Ms. Marilyn - **Explore Solids, Liquids, and Gases**

Feb 27 - Ms. Marilyn - **Snowman Cooking, Songs, and Games**



writing utensils. We worked together as a class to create our snowman bulletin board. The students created their own snowman stories. I think our class has some future writers. The sand table transformed into a winter scene which included winter animals and cotton like snow. One morning we surprised the children by putting ice cubes in the sandbox.

The winter animal theme brought us to the end of the month. We created penguin pictures and hibernating caves for our bears. We invited our favorite teddy bears to our Teddy Bear Picnic. We invited the bears to participate in our activities which included listening to a story, sitting down for a snack and jumping on the parachute. We also took some time to compare the similarities and differences in our bears. We ended the month with a hibernation party where we dressed in our favorite pajamas and found the perfect cave to sleep in.



All of our students have become such an important part of our daily lives. We enjoy watching them grow each day. We enjoy their funny stories, contagious laughter and warm hugs. Debbie, Melissa and I have the best jobs in the world.

Next month we will be turning on our imaginations while exploring the world of castles, knights and princesses. We will set off to sail the seven seas and may even spot some pirates. It is going to be a wonderful adventure.

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

This month we explored the theme of "Animals in Winter." We focused on the two main challenges animals face in cold winter climates: staying warm and finding food. Your children should by now be familiar with the idea that some animals stay, some go to a warmer place, and others hibernate.

Throughout the month, we continued to add to our interactive bulletin board, which depicted a snowy woodland scene. The children enjoyed creating animals and trees and putting them on the board themselves, exactly where they wanted them.

The addition of our new art cart made creating even more fun. Now that the children have learned to use and care for the materials, we are able to make more choices available on a daily basis for open-ended creation. The paper crimpers and hole punch have been especially popular.

We enjoyed dramatizing with puppets and stuffed animals this month. A big, white sheet doubled for a snowy landscape. We built homes for the animals with giant bricks, Tinker Toys and other building materials. We also enjoyed playing with small animals in the real snow, which came in abundance toward the end of the month.

We finished the month with a study of bears and hibernation. On hibernation day we wore our pajamas and cozied up together in our dens.

A new part of our routine we added toward the end of the month is Letter of the Day. Each day, we will highlight a different letter of the alphabet. We will review its form and sound, and connect it to a special word related to our daily activities. We also introduced the children to their journals. These books will be available daily to draw, practice letters, and record their ideas.



I am happy to report that Miss Meghan and her husband welcomed baby Reese Michael Hartmann on Jan. 12. Congratulations to the happy family! With Miss Meghan on maternity leave, Miss Melissa joined us as part of our regular team. We are very happy to have her with us.

Next month we will focus on make-believe and fairy tales. We will also have a Valentine exchange on February 12.

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

Our theme for January was "Animals in Winter." We explored the ways that animals cope with cold days and scarce food supplies. We learned that animals must find a way

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.

to keep warm and stay fed when the temperature drops. Some animals migrate, others hibernate, some animals gather and store food, and still others continue to forage or hunt for food.

We also learned about different ways that animals keep warm. We learned about the subnivean world, where small animals keep relatively warm and safe from predators under the snow. We tried a hands-on experiment to see how fat (shortening)



acts as an insulator. We touched snow with our bare hands, with a layer of fat, with fur, with feathers, and with trapped air. Along with discovering that all the methods provided some protection, we also discovered that we could make some pretty interesting snow

sculptures with our materials. We finished the month with a study of hibernation, culminating with a hibernation party. It was so much fun to cozy up in our jammies together!

This month we introduced the "junk collection." We had a wonderful time making creations out of this collection of loose parts, such as paper rolls, straws, clothespins, coated wire, and craft sticks. We found inspiration in several books about animals and people solving problems by designing and building contraptions out of odds and ends. We even took a stab at a team engineering challenge and made our own flying machines!

With so much interest in engineering, it is no surprise that we saw some amazing cooperative play this month. The children enjoyed collaborating to help each other solve design dilemmas, such as how to keep a roof from caving in or how to connect a blanket to some chairs to make a fort. Marilyn and I were happy to provide materials, help with execution of ideas, and make observations, but we were especially excited to see the children sharing their own ideas about how to solve problems. They are learning to listen to each person's ideas respectfully, and as a result, they have come up with some pretty amazing creations.

We also added a new job to our rotation this month. The weather helper checks conditions to see if outside play is possible by determining if the playground is free from ice, it is above 28 degrees, and it is not raining. We were fortunate to have several days when all criteria were met.

Next month we will travel to the land of make-believe and fairy tales. We can't wait to see where these wonderful imaginations will take us!

School delay/cancellation

MFLC will follow Mt. Lebanon School District decisions during inclement weather. **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.



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

It is amazing that we have rung in the new year! It was the first order of business in our class to trace "2015" and make sure we added a lot of glitter to mark the beginning of the new year! Children at this stage of development typically do not yet have a concept of time, but the rhythm of the day and the celebrations within each of the seasons give the children a sense of time passing as well as a sense of security.

We think it so important to be a part of that sense of rhythm to your child's day as he/she spends time with us at school. One part of our routine that adds to the rhythm of our day is the goodbye ritual. Each knows that Snowy the Owl (a puppet) comes out as we sing goodbye and then Snowy gives either a nuzzle to each child and/or high five. Each child has a routine of what to do with Snowy, and this puppet knows what each child needs.

So, this month it was fun to explore our favorite mascot in depth. We began our exploration by reading a very wonderful book, *The Little White Owl*. This little white owl decides he needs to explore the world and in his explorations meets several different owls who are very colorful. The colorful owls tell the little white owl he doesn't belong because he isn't colorful. The little white owl exclaims that he is colorful...his heart is filled with colors, which come out as wonderful stories. After sharing his wonderful stories with the other owls, they realize that they have made a mistake. They befriend the little white owl and value his friendship.



The blue owl says at the end of the story that every time she sees a white cloud it will make her think of the little white owl's friendship. So, the children created their own little white owl made of torn paper and shapes. They have wonderful artistic expression! The children then cut out a cloud and on their cloud is written how they can be a good friend.

We then read several books about the snowy owl so we learned about its habitat, family life and what type of food it eats. Learning about the food chain was very important for our investigation because the children dissected an owl pellet. They first learned what owls typically eat and that they swallow their prey whole. They learned that the indigestible parts

February is American Heart Month! Tips to help make fast-food trips a little healthier...



- * Skip the sides, or choose fruits and vegetables over fries. (If you do have fries, split the size. Splitting is good idea for sandwiches too.)
- * Buy a baked potato instead of a burger. (But be mindful of the toppings.)
- * Go for the grilled, and ask for a wheat bun. (Some places offer. It never hurts to ask.)
- * Skip the “kids meal.” (If you’d like the toy, just buy it if the restaurant offers the option to do so.)
- * Pass on the “value size.” (When you supersize, the size of your fries and drink isn’t the only thing that gets bigger.)
- * Drink water, 100-percent juice or low-fat milk.

Source: American Heart Association

of the prey, the fur and bones, are then coughed up by the owl. So, when the children dissected their owl pellet they were able to find the bones and then use a chart provided to identify the type of bone and the animal. They were wonderful scientists!

The week of Martin Luther King’s birthday was spent learning about him and other peacekeepers such as Gandhi and Mother Teresa. Each was a model of how to resolve conflict peacefully through words, peace and good deeds. We read the book *Franklin’s Secret Club* at the end of that week. This story was a wonderful way to discuss how making a club for only a few friends makes others feel excluded. We decided that we would have a Peace Club that everyone is able to join. The Peace Club will continue to meet as a way to provide the children with tools of how to resolve conflict.



We ended the month discussing snow and ice. In February, we are beginning to discuss the science of snow and explore this very beautiful piece of the season. This then leads up to our reading of *The Snow Queen* by Hans Christian Anderson, the story on which the film “Frozen” is based. So, we will have a great time exploring ice as we delve into this wonderful fairytale. Part of the story is that a shard from a mirror gets into the character Kai’s heart. This turns his heart cold and devoid of emotion. We will also use our literary exploration as an opportunity to investigate with mirrors and then learn more about the heart. We will learn about the function of the heart and, as we begin to celebrate Valentine’s Day, also the emotion of the heart.

Our hearts overflow all the time with your children. Thank you as always for sharing part of your heart with us. We cherish them.

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

In January we wrote about the holiday break. We learned and wrote about four more world holidays: Kwanzaa (U.S.), Diwali (India), Chinese New Year (China), and Ramadan (Middle East).

We made kinaras (menorah-like candleholders) and learned the history of African Americans for Kwanzaa. We heard the legend of Prince Rama’s triumph over the evil nine-headed demon, the lights, fireworks, oil lamps (diyas), and rangoli decorations of Diwali. We learned about the lunar calendar

and that Ramadan occurs on the ninth lunar month. We had a pajama day and pretended to get up before the sun came up to look for the new crescent moon for our pretend day of Ramadan. We made pancakes from scratch and ate them for “breakfast” in our darkened classroom before “sunrise,” pretended to fast during the school day with the lights on, and ended our pretend day at “sunset” with a pretend feast.



In February we will talk and write about “love” as well as our founding fathers. This month we will begin a unit on electricity. What is it? Who discovered it, and how? How can we be safe with it? What work can it do? We will construct an electrically powered house and write about what we learn.

For families not familiar with K-Too, it is a kindergarten enrichment class. We meet Tuesdays and Thursdays. Morning sessions meet 9:00-11:30 and afternoons meet 12:30-3:00. Classes are available based on enrollment. The class combines fun, creativity, and academics in the warm environment of Mushroom Family Learning Center. K-Too students also participate in exercise resource. Children often need an activity beyond their day at kindergarten and K-Too is an extension of their learning and social time in a smaller, more intimate setting. Please feel free to stop in and observe the class any time. You can register for K-Too with Joan in February.



9 am - Noon
Saturday
February 7th
\$10 per child

Bower Hill
Community Church
70 Moffett Street
Pittsburgh 15243





Once upon an
ADVENTURE!

Grab your fairy tale & superhero gear and join us for games, crafts, prizes, snacks, and other exciting activities for the whole family! Ideal for kids 10 and under... costumes encouraged!

Tickets available at the door or purchased/reserved in advance at mljwc.yapsody.com. For questions contact Heidi Grogan at heidi.grogan@mljwc.com!

Sponsored by the Mt. Lebanon Junior Women's Club.
A portion of proceeds to benefit The Education Partnership.




Business Directory



<p>Reasonable Rates</p> <p>Pre-K to 8th Grade Reading & Math</p> <p>(412) 221-4174</p>  <p>Private Tutoring In My Home</p> <p>Jane Birris Experienced Teacher & Tutor</p>	
	<p>Your ad here! \$10/issue</p>