

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

JANUARY 2015

TUITION DUE JAN. 1

CLASSES RESUME JAN. 5

PENGUINS RAFFLE: PA LOTTERY DRAWING JAN. 6, 7:00PM

All stubs must be in by Jan. 6 in case of a drawing by hand.

MFLC PARENTS MEETING JAN. 7, 6:30PM, IN THE "BIG ROOM" AT MFLC

MFLC BOARD MEETING JAN. 14, 8:00PM

NO CLASSES JANUARY 19 (MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY)

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.

CHANGE IN CONTACT INFO?

Please let Joan know if any of your contact info has changed (phone, address, email).

MFLC LUNCH BUNCH AND ENRICHMENT CLASSES

Spots available! Email jamie_geisler@comcast.net

WAYS TO HELP MFLC

- United Way agency # is 885339.
- Giant Eagle's 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.

mixed bag designs
Eco chic reusable bags!
www.mixedbagdesigns.com

Sale coming soon!!

From the director...

"Changes can be tough sometimes, but with the right perspective changes can bring blessings. Ironically, one of life's consistencies is change."

I have had this quote on a Post-it note in my office for a few years. How appropriate it is for our Mushroom family at this time. By now, you have received notification by email and/or U.S. mail of the upcoming change for our school. The Unitarian Universalist Church where we have called home for 37 years will not be renewing our lease for the upcoming 2015-2016 school year.

Reflecting on my years at MFLC, I first walked into this building with my daughter Marikate 20 years ago. A lot has happened since. I quickly became a substitute teacher, board member, graduated to lunch mom, assistant teacher, lead teacher, enrichment director, Slice of Summer teacher, and, finally, director of this very special school. Marikate, who started in the 3s program, is now an assistant teacher in the Pre-K PM class. My other daughter Elizabeth, who also attended MFLC, is a substitute teacher on her school breaks. Both have worked as camp counselors in our summer program since they were 10 years old. For the past 20 years, Mushroom has been a major part of the Harrisons' lives.

And not only my life, but the lives of our current staff as well. One of the fun facts I always share when I give a tour to a prospective family is that most of our teachers were Mushroom mothers first. As parents we believed in the philosophy of our school. As teachers, we are sharing the philosophy with families. We are a staff of 19 members. Fourteen of our current teachers started as Mushroom mothers; 31 of our children attended Mushroom. Now that's some history!

We have had the honor to meet hundreds and hundreds of children and families, all of whom became family to us. 1240 Washington Road is a unique building that we have called home for 37 of the 41 years MFLC has been in existence. Now it is time to find a new home. No matter where that will be, the love and philosophy of Mushroom will go with us.

A parent shared very eloquently that our building serves many important functions, but in the end it is just walls and a roof. What makes the school special is the teachers, staff, curriculum, and families. MFLC is owned by our families. Our school belongs to you. I would personally like to invite you to a very important meeting, a parents meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 7, at 6:30 p.m. in the Big Room. We hope to answer many of your concerns and questions, as we navigate our future.

I would like to end with a quote from Tom Hopkins:

"Look at your past. Your past has determined where you are at this moment. What you do today will determine where you are tomorrow. Are you moving forward or standing still?"

I invite you all to move forward with Mushroom into the future.

Joan

Joan Harrison

Thank You

- Thank you to all our families who donated to our "adopted" family. With your kindness we were able to give our family \$1,300.00 to cover pressing needs.
- Thank you to Amy Cornelius Dembosky who coordinated our Barnes & Noble fundraiser, and to all our families who participated. Our school netted a profit just over \$187.
- Thank you to Carrie Stock who coordinated our Penguins Raffle fundraiser. And a very big "Thanks!" to Carrie's in-laws who donated the tickets, George Halter (Emma [3/4s]) who donated the overnight package, and the FitzGerald family (Callum [3s]) for the donation of the Fiddlesticks concert tickets.
- Thank you to Keller Peet (K-Too PM) and family for their donation of dress-up clothes.
- Thank you to Abram Hipolito (Pre-K PM) and family for their donation of toys.
- Thank you to Jake Belczyk (Max [3/4s] & Mike [E.L.-PM]) for his help with the playground sandbox.

for the upcoming 2015-2016 school year.

Help Your Kids Dress for Success!



Please ensure that your children have appropriate outdoor clothing for school: 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!

From the president of the board...

Happy January! I hope everyone has enjoyed their Winter Break! For those who know me, or for those who read my article in the December newsletter, you know I'm big on the Sparkle of the Season. While I personally had a few moments where the Sparkle wasn't as strong as I would have liked, the Mushroom Family has shown me an amazing amount of support and helped me to find my Sparkle, again.



This is a New Year. A time for new beginnings. A time for change. A time for positivity. As board president, I would like to thank those of you who sent messages of support to me, to Joan and to the board. Your suggestions, encouragement and offers of assistance were greatly appreciated during an uncertain time. As a fellow parent and friend to so many of you, I can't express how much your kindness has meant to me. I truly love our Mushroom Family.

The board has been busy with our "Mushroom on the Move" committee over the last couple of weeks, and we have made excellent strides in finding a new home. We are very excited about the options that have been afforded to MFLC. I urge everyone to join us on Wednesday, January 7, to hear what we have found, and to offer suggestions. As always, you are free to email the board at MFLCboard@gmail.com to offer ideas of your own.

I look forward to sharing a positively bright and amazing future with all of you! Happy New Year!

Diane

Diane Rattay

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

Happy New Year and welcome back! We hope everyone had a wonderful holiday break. We would like to thank all our families again for the very thoughtful gifts. We truly appreciate your kindness and generosity.

This month we will be talking about what animals do during the cold winter weather. We will make bird feeders and flap



Class Snacks

We appreciate the contribution our families make by providing snacks and we are all interested in providing healthy, nutritious ones. Please keep in mind: have nut-free snacks; be attentive to your class's restrictions and read food labels; try to avoid extremely colorful processed foods with lots of food dye; have snacks in original packaging with complete ingredient list and expiration date; and consider fruits, vegetables and foods low in sugar (no cutting the fruits/veggies at home). *Simple is great!*

our wings to keep warm as the birds do. We will climb big icebergs and splash into cold water like the penguins do. We will practice hibernating in a big cave, just as the bears do. We will be counting bears, sorting bears, and giving a try to sequencing bears by size. We'll even have a bear picnic!

We will continue working with all the children as they engage in imaginary play, helping them to set up scenarios that we see they are interested in and inviting other children to join in their activity. This helps stimulate conversation and is the forerunner to cooperative play and interaction. The children will keep us busy thinking of new and exciting ways to foster all the unique talents they have to offer. It is so much fun to observe your children as communication skills grow and friendships begin to blossom!

Don't be surprised if separation becomes an issue again. This is normal after a long break. Just let us know, and we will help you and your child deal with this just as we did in the beginning of the year.



Thank you for all your contributions with snack. The children are always delighted to know there is something good to munch on. Snack time is a great time for the children to practice table manners and they are doing a wonderful job. Everyone can open their napkin to 4 squares and politely ask for "more juice, please." They especially love it when we say "thank you" to them for bringing snack.

We look forward to seeing your children again after this long break. Each one is truly delightful and it is a pleasure and a privilege to be your child's teacher.

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

When I think of the holidays, I think of love. It doesn't matter how you celebrate; it just matters that you are spending time with the people you love the most in the world. I truly enjoy seeing my parents, brother and other relatives. I enjoy spending quality time with my children without the distraction of sports, homework or other social events. I hope that everyone has focused on these special moments over the break and will cherish the memories for a very long time.

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.

One thing I do look forward to in the New Year is seeing my 18 favorite three-year-olds enter our classroom with their beautiful smiles. This is the time of the year when we really know the individuals who have become an important part of our lives. They feel comfortable with their peers, routine and teachers. In fact most of the students could run the class without teacher support. I look forward to the rest of the school year and the many amazing learning moments to come.

In December we enjoyed listening to the story "The Gingerbread Man." We created many different types of gingerbread art projects that utilized crayons, markers, glue, shaving cream and a lot of random supplies. This class is very good at taking an art project and making it their own. We focused on positive communications skills by using good sentences to answer and ask questions. We started the communication circle which allows the students to ask their peers the question of the day. We practiced using our loud voices, looking at our friends in the eye and patience, when it is not our turn. This simple activity creates confident speakers and strong language skills that will continue to develop as they grow older.



We worked hard on our holiday gifts for our parents. Each student made a handprint wreath with a special poem attached. The children even selected the wrapping paper and bow for the festive look. We were able to go outside in the cold weather. This class especially likes playing in the ice and water with sticks and shovels. In December we also turned the kitchen into a toy store and filled the sandbox with wrapping paper and scissors. Lastly, the students really started to work together during learning center time and creative play. It is amazing to watch these students mature and interact with their peers.

In January we will be learning about water, snow and ice. We will create all different types of snowmen and hopefully play in the snow. Remember to send in snow clothes and boots during the winter months. We will be going outside if the temperature is about 28 degrees.

I look forward to exploring and learning with everyone during the second half of the year.

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.

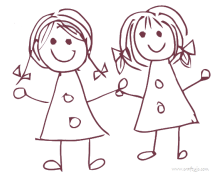
News from the 3/4s class from Liz, Marlene, Meghan and Melissa...

Happy New Year! We hope you thoroughly enjoyed the holiday break.

December was a quick month. We tried to keep things low key in the classroom, as this time of year already brings so much excitement! Our theme was "Colors, Lights and Shapes of the Season." As we move through the darkest part of the year, we especially appreciate the gift of light. Whatever holidays we celebrate, and however our traditions may differ, color and light are all around us this time of year.

Our classroom was invaded by mice in December, courtesy of Ellen Stoll Walsh. We loved reading her Mouse Paint, Mouse Shapes and Mouse Count books, and playing with our little stuffed mice. We created colorful houses for them with the light blocks and constructed original pictures using paper shapes. We took the mice on color hunts and shape hunts, looking for examples in our classroom of different shapes and colors.

We found many opportunities for partnering games throughout the month. While some of the children have formed special friendships, others are just beginning to make overtures to their classmates. Whatever their stage of social development, they all benefited from the opportunity to share a fun activity with a variety of friends. In some cases, we have seen evidence that these cooperative ice-breaker games have inspired new friendships!



We welcomed a new student this month. Bertie is a wonderful addition! We also prepared to say goodbye to our dear Miss Meghan, who began her maternity leave at the end of the month. She is expecting a baby boy at the end of January. We wish Meghan and her family much joy and happiness! Miss Melissa began transitioning into the classroom during December. We are thrilled that she will be with us full time beginning in January.

Generosity is a tradition we all share. While children certainly enjoy receiving holiday gifts, they enjoy giving just as much. They really enjoyed creating something special for you! Thank

JANUARY ENRICHMENT CLASSES Contact Ms. Jamie for more info at jamie_geisler@comcast.net.

MONDAYS Jan. 5 – Miss Sheila - Let's Build a Snowman! Come dressed for snow and cold weather to build a snowman. If the weather does not cooperate we will be sure to make snowmen inside. Hot chocolate included!

Jan. 12 – Miss Marilyn - *Where The Wild Things Are*, Maurice Sendak and make our own wild thing from recycled materials.

Jan. 26 – Miss Sheila - We will read *There's a Wocket in my Pocket* and create wonderful wockets of our own!



FRIDAYS January 9 – Miss Marilyn - *Snowy, Blowy Winter* by Bob Raczka is our inspiration for making marshmallow snowmen. We will also make and drink our own hot chocolate for story time in front of a pretend fireplace. Hoping for snow outside too!

January 16 – Miss Marilyn - Make your own mouse from pompoms and act out the book *Three Pebbles and a Song*, S.D. Schindler.

January 23 – Miss Marilyn - Winter Sleepers: make a winter-hibernating animal with a stuffed sock and a little bed for it to sleep in.

Book: *Peter and the Winter Sleepers*, Rick de Haas.

January 30 – Miss Marilyn - *Katy and the Big Snow* by Virginia Lee Burton illustrates the lesson of pride in a job well done, especially when it isn't easy: "...the harder and tougher the job, the better Katy liked it!" The group will have a surprise "tough" job to do and we'll talk about how the accomplishment makes them feel. They will make their own Katy the snowplow and take home a map of Geopolis, the city in the book.

you for your generosity as well. Your gifts were truly appreciated! Thanks, too, to all the parents who helped create a fun and festive winter party.


In January our theme will be "Animals in Winter." We will explore the different ways animals in the wild cope with the elements during the cold winter months. If we are lucky, we may have some snow to play in, too.

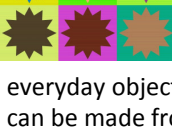
News from the 4s class from Liz and Marilyn...

Happy New Year! We hope you had a wonderful time over the holiday break.

In December our theme was "Colors, Lights and Shapes of the Season." Although our families may celebrate different holidays and keep different traditions, our celebrations have common elements. Everywhere we turn this time of year, we are bombarded with a visual feast of color, light and shape.

Our group was particularly interested in color. We started by learning about the primary colors, and exploring what happens when we mixed them. We wondered what would happen if we added a little black or white, or if we changed the proportions. The children created dozens of custom colors, and we enjoyed observing the gradations in our rainbow. We considered that colors often have names that relate to the objects, moods and themes they evoke. We delved particularly deeply into the

 color green, creating our own custom paint pots with names such as Jungle Green, Happy Green, and Ben Roethlisberger Green.

 We also explored the world of shapes around us. When we looked closely, we noticed that everyday objects are made up of shapes. A house, for instance, can be made from a square with a triangle for a roof and a rectangle for a door. We especially enjoyed using Magna-tiles to explore relationships among shapes. Marilyn and I were astounded at some engineering discoveries the children made!

Finally, we contemplated the concept of light itself—where does it come from and how does it behave? We learned the

basics of human history with light, from days when we had only the sun and moon to light our way, through our mastery of fire, and finally to the harnessing of electricity. The best part, of course, was using flashlights and mirrors to learn about light firsthand!

December was a brief and busy month. We made special gifts for our families, had a visit from the librarian, cooked play dough in the kitchen, and took a field trip to Miss Jamie's class. We enjoyed a festive holiday party, brilliantly planned and executed by our parent volunteers. With all the festivities, we were reminded of the importance of slowing down and enjoying each other's company. While we may not have gotten through every activity we had planned for December, we strove to allow the children adequate time to explore each activity fully. This group likes to go deep!



We also said goodbye to Lilly, who is moving to a new home and will no longer be with us at Mushroom. We wish Lilly and her family much happiness and love in their new home. We will miss you!

We would like to thank you for your generosity this holiday season. Your gifts were truly appreciated! The most wonderful part for us was seeing the happiness and pride on your children's faces as they gave us our gifts. Nothing is more precious than a young child experiencing the joy of giving!

In January, our theme will be "Animals in Winter." We will learn how different animals cope with colder temperatures and limited food supplies.

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

It seemed liked we spent the whole month of December coming to school in our pajamas! OK, not really. ☺ But, each week we had fun celebrating that we'd "filled our classroom bucket." The first week we just enjoyed wearing our jammies to school. The next week we enjoyed wearing our jammies and

SHARE THE GOOD NEWS!

MFLC families and staff collected **\$1,300** in December to help a local family in need! What a wonderful way to show the spirit of the season. Thanks to all who coordinated and participated.

In November, MFLC was recognized at the **Goodwill Power of Work Awards** for hosting a student who shadowed the teachers in some of our classes. The event highlights employers that positively affect those with barriers to employment.

also having pancakes with extra fun toppings at snack. And then our final week we enjoyed wearing our jammies and making pizza to enjoy at snack time. It was a perfect complement as we explored the concept of daylight and nightlight.

“Harold and the Purple Crayon” provided a wonderful collection of stories to read as we completed our dreamcatchers. The children were so excited to take them home at the end of the month! They are beautiful masterpieces.



We then tried to answer the question “What makes light?” The children had many wonderful ideas, observations and information. As we talked about sunlight and moonlight, we began to discuss the concept that the moon doesn’t produce its own light, but it reflects light from the sun. We also talked about what it means to “light up someone’s life.” As a way to help this phrase become a little more concrete, we asked families to complete a take-home project writing about how their child “lights up their life.” These were read during our gathering, and it was wonderful to see the children light up as they listened.

We enjoyed working with the light table, creating so many imaginative play constructs as well as strategic games. For instance, as one child worked with glass gems on the light table, a pathway made became a game. I was told that I would need “strategies” to complete the game, otherwise I would be “teleported.” The hallways were dark often as we worked with the Light-Brites or played with flashlights and shadow puppets. In the dramatic play room, the children created a fireplace and adorned the tree with lights. We loved watching how they made each of these additions to the area their own. We only provided the materials.

Several decided to create decorations for the tree. We love to see self-directed play! They would create something and then ask for the hole punch and yarn to hang their decorations. The children know the resources available and really use them creatively! Several thought of watching a movie while sitting around the fireplace, so they created a TV and hung it on the wall. They also then decided that each needed their own remote controls so out came the scissors and markers. This “family” then finally sat down together to watch a movie. We aren’t sure what it was since they all had remotes!

We ended the month looking at the different celebrations of light this time of year and also shared with the class how we use light to celebrate in our homes. The children also created a wonderful gift of light for their families! The decorated mason

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.



jar was filled with a candle and topped with the phrase “You light up my life!” January will find us looking at moon phases and learning more about our class mascot, Snowy the Owl!

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

We filled the month of December with the study of two world holidays: Hanukkah and Christmas. We discussed and read about the traditions, symbols, and stories behind them. For Hanukkah the children put together free-form natural wood menorahs and honed their cooperation and math skills playing dreidel. For Christmas we pretended to be little elves in Santa’s workshop making gifts for our families. Both holidays emphasize giving, which tied in perfectly with the school-wide collection for a family in need. Children are naturally empathetic and were so serious about bringing in a donation from their family to help another. It was hands-on experience of how giving a gift is more rewarding than receiving one.




Our little K-Too elves each made a snow globe with a Sculpy clay figure that was baked and glued inside a jar. We filled it with glycerin, water, and glitter before sealing it with hot glue. They chose colorful felt to cover the bottom (and protect furniture at home) as well as festive ribbon for a final touch. The globes were so darling and entranced the children and teachers who saw them! Each child made a hand-painted card and wrote a message of love inside. We decorated cookies, sang Christmas carols, and had class parties to celebrate the season. The children learned that holidays are celebrated everywhere on the globe, although they originated in specific countries. Each celebration has a connection with light, caring, community, and specific traditions and symbols.

In January we will finish our study of world holidays with Kwanzaa (African American holiday), Ramadan (Middle Eastern holiday), Diwali (India’s holiday), and Chinese New Year. We will refocus on our journals, playing, exploring, and learning “Mushroom-style.” We have been so busy with holiday projects that I think the kids miss the relaxed flow of the day. We will be science oriented for the remainder of the month: winter, snow, the water cycle, and beginning our study of electricity (unless they show greater interest in another subject).

I hope you had a wonderful and relaxing holiday and break. Thank you for the wonderful gifts. I truly appreciate your generosity! Thank you also for sharing your children. They are delightful and we enjoy our time together. Happy New Year!

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