



News & Notes

Mushroom Family Learning Center

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Pittsburgh, PA 15228
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mflcdirector@hotmail.com
mushroomfamily.org

A Big Thank-You to...

- Auggie Umbras and family for the donation of dress-up clothes.
- Enzo Scalise and family for the donation of toys.
- Iris Marchetti and family for the donation of play tents.
- John Armstrong, grandfather of Madison Senneway, for being our MFLC "fix-it guy."
- Barbara Keener, nanny for Michael and Ellie McDonald, for her donation of helmets.
- Diane Rattay for her help with open registration.

TUITION DUE MARCH 1

SCHOOL PICTURES MARCH 5, 6, 7

The form was in the cubbies.
Your teacher will provide date.

SPRING MIXED BAGS SALE MARCH 6 - 21

STAFF MEETING WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13

Early dismissal at 11 a.m.; late arrival at 1 p.m. No lunch.

SPRING BREAK MARCH 25- APRIL 1

Classes resume April 2.

FREE VISION SCREENINGS BY BLIND AND VISION REHAB SVS. APRIL 8-9

Check with your teacher or Joan for details!

SPEECH AND HEARING SCREENINGS BY EASTER SEALS APRIL 25

Cost is \$20. If interested for your child, please see Joan.

OUTSIDE PLAY

Please be sure your kids are prepared for 28+ degree days (and include proper play shoes, especially on movement day).

ENRICHMENT CLASSES AND "MUNCHIN' LUNCHIN'"

Contact Jamie Geisler at
jamie_geisler@comcast.net.

Help Mushroom Families Through the Scholarship Fund

Initiated by Mushroom's founders Margaret Lee and Fred Doscher in 1995, it helps support families faced with trying circumstances. Many have been in need during these difficult economic times. Please consider giving. Checks to "Doscher Scholarship Fund."

From the director...

March is National Reading Month

Fall in love with reading all over again in the month of March! Enjoy reading a book with your child on a daily basis. One way to do this is to visit your local library. This one simple act will help your children to become better readers.

Visiting the library will help develop your child's curiosity and desire to discover. By providing children with a variety of materials and creative programs that allow them to use their imagination, they will become excited about the ability to discover the world around them.

It will also naturally instill a love for learning. In addition to their desire to learn, it will help them love the learning experience. Family activities, storytelling, children's reading incentive programs, and many other perks the library offers will guide children in discovering the joy that comes with education.

Visits to the library will help develop better reading skills. These skills begin even in infancy when children are learning oral language. By introducing them to printed materials, reading together, and allowing them to spend time reading, you will promote the language skills and vocabulary that will push them forward in their education. You may also help spark a love for reading within them that will continue throughout their lives.

Visiting the library once a week with your children is beneficial not only for them but for you as well. So if you are not a member of your local library, turn off your Kindles, iPads, computers and phones and enjoy what the library has to offer.

Joan

Joan Harrison

A Big Mushroom Welcome to:

New student Quinn Duffy, with parents Tiffany and Josh!

...And Future Mushroomers:

Brendan Patrick Holliday born Feb. 20!

Proud big brother Wyatt is in the 3s and sister Tamsin is an incoming Early Learner; parents: Courtney and David Holliday.

Sylvie Aileen Betler born Feb. 28!

Proud big sister Aubrey is a T/Th Early Learner; parents: Erin and Tim Betler.



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Would you like to advertise your business to Mushroom families while supporting MFLC's scholarship fund?

See the new **Business Directory** on the last page!
Each business-card-size ad is \$10 per month.
See Joan if interested.

From the president of the board...

Many of you may not know this but in our next school year, Mushroom Family Learning Center will hit a big milestone....**40 years!** Obviously we are doing something right, and I want to finish out my term as board president making sure that we continue to do so! I am asking for your help. There are many ways you can help us celebrate this accomplishment and I am issuing a "call to action" to you all.

There will be special things throughout the school year but we are also planning to hold a celebration party next summer (2014). We have a few ideas up our sleeves, but if each of you could find some way to put your touch on the plans, we would love it! It's all about keeping it in our "family," right?

So how can you help? We are looking for ideas, venue options (with indoor/outdoor areas and a playground), donations in the monetary form or of your time, help making/distributing printed materials promoting the event, ways to reach out to past families (old directories perhaps), your particular craft or talent that would be of use (face painting/balloon artist, etc.) or ways to solicit public donations....*the list is endless!*

We have some time, but hope to be proactive in planning our event to make it a success. So put your thinking caps on and if you come up with anything, feel free to email me at bignellfam@yahoo.com and let's brainstorm! And if you have the name/address of anyone you know who used to attend or work at MFLC, please send me their information. Thanks!

Erin

Erin Bignell

**MFLC's Spring Break
is March 25 - April 1!**
Back to class Tuesday, April 2



SAY CHEESE!

School pictures will be taken
March 5, 6 and 7. Check with
the class teacher for your exact date.

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

February was an action-packed month. The children were busy making the color pink and painting some hearts their favorite shades. We discovered that not everyone likes red or pink hearts. Hallmark should take a lesson from us and add some blue and orange ones too!

The children had their first experience with a Valentine's Day party and we are pretty certain they can't wait until that kind of day comes around again! Sharing valentines with your friends is fun and one can even get a special treat. We even learned a Valentine song and game, "A Tiskit, a Tasket, a Green and Yellow Basket." So many skills were practiced in one fun activity—waiting your turn, recognizing who did not get a letter, finding out how to get things into your pocket and where to put something if you don't have a pocket.



The children found our sensory table had changed. The pretend snow "melted" and left behind a lot of water. This was a favorite play area where we explored many things such as: a little water is not heavy but a big bucket of water is; some things float and some things don't; even though the water looks black it can really be the color blue; and most important, don't drink the water you play in!

February also found us welcoming our shape friends. Harry Heart came just in time for us to make love bugs. Cynthia Circle joined us and we made her two circle caterpillar friends, Clarence and Chloe. Roger Rectangle and Sammy Square soon followed with even more shape activities to explore.

Finding the different shapes in our world has been our concentration this month. We also found that the letters in our names have shapes too. The children have been working on discovering the letters in their names and we have been matching them with those on our cubbies.

The most wonderful activity that happened in February, however, was the explosion of language and communication with friends. This never ceases to amaze us! The children are doing more than just parallel play now. They are choosing to play with a friend. They are using their words to resolve conflicts



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SNACK TIME!

We appreciate the contribution our families make by providing snacks and we are all interested in providing healthy, nutritious ones. Please keep in mind: they need to be nut free; remain attentive to your class's restrictions and read food labels; try to avoid extremely colorful processed foods with lots of food dye; snacks must be in original packaging with a 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!**



(these attempts can be quite comical)—and thinking up ways to enjoy getting crazy with a friend. They help each other with their coats and other personal needs and truly care about each other. February is our most magical month!

March will find us marching of course! Patrick, our leprechaun, arrives and does his mischief making. He is a little prankster and we never know just what he will do. A parade is always a favorite in March so we will have our annual McMushroom Day parade with all our little leprechauns and celebrate the “wearing o’the green” and the coming of spring. Please keep sending mittens as the swing chains are very cold and, if you can, send boots or old shoes. It stays muddy until May!

Our pantry of snack supplies is running low so if you have a chance and are able, please sign up for snack. The children are so very proud and excited when we thank them for their contribution. We would like to also thank all of you—our wonderful parents—for sharing your delightful children with us!

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

If you walked in our classroom during the month of February you would have noticed a world of make-believe created by our very own imaginations. We boarded the MFLC trolley and traveled to faraway castles, roaring oceans with the pirates and to fairy tale land where the good guys always win.

We read several stories about princesses, knights and dragons. We learned how to become a pirate. We also listened to classic fairy tales such as “Goldilocks and the Three Bears” and “Little Red Riding Hood.” The students then wrote their own make-believe stories by drawing pictures and dictating the stories to us. They have such great imaginations. We enjoyed selecting our main characters and usually added a bad guy to make it interesting. We even shared our stories with our classmates.



We celebrated Valentine’s Day with a special party organized by our parents. We made marbleized hearts, delicious rice krispie treats and listened to a Valentine’s story. One of our favorite activities was sharing our valentines with our friends. The students couldn’t wait to take their bags home to see what was inside.

We started learning our letters this month by discussing a new letter each day. We used the dry erase boards to practice writing them. The students were asked to look for specific letters in their names which they did with great interest. We also focused on writing names.

This year is flying by so quickly. It is always amazing during this time of the school year to see the growth in each individual child. They have become such a big part in Debbie’s, Christine’s and my lives. We enjoy the simple moments like a huge smile when they walk in the door, the excitement in their eyes when they tell us a story, the concern they have when one of us is absent, and the many times they sit in our laps, grab our hands or give us a hug. They have touched our hearts and we can’t wait to spend the rest of the school year with them.



COMING SOON:

Slice of Summer summer camp!

This is a six-week summer camp program offered at Mushroom school. Dates are **June 10 through July 19** (except July 4-5). Our day runs from 9:30am to 12:00pm. **A packed lunch is required as the children will eat lunch at camp.**

The cost is \$14.00 a day. It is best to register early (registration fee is \$15). Classes will fill quickly, especially the young 3s and K-Too. Fill out all the forms—one per child—and include your registration fee. There will be a box in Joan’s office for the completed forms.

You will be given a notice of your child’s camp registration and total cost before the school year is out. You may pay in two installments: one before June 1 and the other by July 1. **Registration for the public will begin in April.**

Don’t forget to mention Slice of Summer to your friends! If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to stop down and see Theresa. She’s ready for some sunshine — how about you?



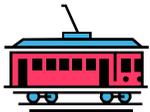
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Time to change the clocks!
Daylight Saving Time begins
Sunday, March 10. Have your
clocks "spring forward" one hour
the night of March 9.

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

In the dead of winter, when we are often confined indoors, our imaginations have the power to transport us. This month we let our imaginations soar with the theme of "Make-Believe." We pretended to be brave princesses, gallant knights, fierce dragons, and adventurous pirates. We also tested our acting chops by revisiting and retelling some classic fairy tales. We were inspired by Mr. Rogers' trolley which, like our playground trolley, has magical powers to transport us to the land of make-believe.



Our first stop was the realm of castles, knights and princesses. We learned about different roles in this setting. We transformed the loft into our very own castle, complete with a working drawbridge. Mushroom Mouse visited us again and we met a new friend, Scorch the Dragon. Scorch and Mushroom Mouse really wanted to play together but Scorch was too rough and loud, while Mushroom Mouse was not able to speak up and be heard. The children were so helpful to our puppet friends! Together we helped them learn about negotiating the parameters for play and respecting each other's boundaries.

Our next destination was the Seven Seas. We learned pirate songs, dug for treasure in the sand, made our own pirate hats, and created treasure maps with "X marks the spot." We used our treasure chest full of loot in many different ways. We followed the "pirate code" to divvy up the loot, rolling a die to determine each pirate's "fair share." Anyone who cheated and took more than their share had to "walk the plank." Some pirates thought it was even more fun to walk the plank!



We finished with an exploration of classic fairy tales such as "The Three Pigs," "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," and "The Three Billy Goats Gruff." These traditional tales have so much power. There is a reason they have endured! We enjoyed retelling the stories in various ways, including felt board, puppets, and acting.

We also had a wonderful Valentine's Day celebration. The children were thrilled to give and to receive tokens of affection. This is a really loving bunch!

We welcomed a new friend, Quinn, this month. She is a terrific addition to the class, and the children have done a beautiful job of welcoming her into the community.

In March our theme will be "Let's Build." We plan to approach this broad topic as openly as possible, allowing the direction to emerge from the children's interests. We can't wait to see where they take us!

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

Our February theme was "Make-Believe." It is no surprise that we had a ball pretending to be princesses, knights, pirates, and fairy-tale characters. What might be surprising is how much we learned and how inspired to create we became in the process!

Our imaginary trip to the land of castles found us in a virtual tornado of construction paper as we created costumes and props for our play. Sometimes it is amazing what happens when you do not provide fancy, pre-made toys. We could scarcely keep up with the demand as the children's ideas led them to create knight helmets, armor, magic wands, crowns, castles, and capes. In realizing their creative visions, they exercised many skills, including initiative, planning, fine motor, problem solving, creativity, conceptualization, understanding roles, and symbolic representation.

Pirate week was all about treasure: creating it, hiding it, finding it, counting it, and dividing it. We explored the meaning of maps by creating our own treasure maps. We also played a game in which we took turns hiding the treasure. The hiders would place an X on the appropriate spot on a map of our classroom, and the finders would use it to locate the treasure.

We had some fun this month with fractured fairy tales. We read different versions of familiar stories and compared them to the original. This group has really enjoyed exploring the concepts of perspective-taking and point of view. They were inspired to create their own fairy tales, too! Our study of "The Three Billy Goats *Fluff*" inspired us to learn how to weave teeny-tiny blankets for teeny-tiny trolls, and we experimented



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with creating suspension bridges.

We added a new element to our daily routine. This group loves to go outside. Each day, they ask whether we will be able to do it. Winter in western Pennsylvania often means a “no” answer. We decided to use the children’s interest to launch a study of weather and temperature measurement.

Each day, the weather reporter checks the outside temperature on the thermometer and reports to the class. We have a giant thermometer mock-up with a bold line at 28 degrees, our minimum temperature for outside play. When the weather reporter arranges the big thermometer to show the current temperature, everyone is instantly elated or dejected depending on whether it is above or below the cut-off. Of course, we have to consider other factors, so the reporter tells us whether it is rainy, icy, or very windy. Because conditions can change, we discuss the forecast and assign a green, yellow, or red light to outside play. The children love taking over this responsibility. It seems to lessen their disappointment when they can’t go outside if they themselves have figured out the empirical basis for the decision.



We explored the concept of measurement in other ways as well. We used a barrel of monkeys to measure how many monkeys tall we are; we “measured the treasure” and compared how many big scoops vs. small scoops our treasure held; and we used balancing scales to weigh objects.

In March our theme will be “Let’s Build.” We are excited to see how this broad topic inspires the children!

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

We began our month concluding our exploration of “Let’s Take Flight” by learning more about our backyard bird friends that stay with us during the winter months. We spent a whole week creating our own unique picture of a cardinal flying through the birch trees. The children used all of their fine motor skills with the scissors, paint, stapler and glue, but most important, they used their imagination. Their beautiful pictures have been gracing our hallway all month long.

DOES YOUR CHILD LOVE BEING AT MUSHROOM?

Could you use a little more time for errands or work?

Then sign him/her up for enrichment and/or “Munchin’ Lunchin’!”

Supervised lunchtime is \$6 per day for kids 3+. In enrichment, the children have fun making crafts, cooking, learning Spanish and reading new stories. Classes are available for those 4+ on Mondays and/or Fridays each month; \$14 per class. Sign up for however many you like! Contact Jamie for more info at jamie_geisler@comcast.net.

We also took a turn at using our engineering skills to create our own Angry Birds game. With an exercise band, a couple of Angry Bird round stuffed animals, two chairs, a piece of cardboard, foam block pieces and Angry Bird numbers to attach to the foam, they were on a mission! They first had to put it together and figure out how it might work. Then once it was set up, they had to determine how to launch the projectiles. We also started to use different weighted projectiles to see if that made a difference in how far and high they would go.

We spent the rest of the month exploring the theme “Nourish Yourself: Staying Healthy.” We got ready for our new theme by first ushering in the Chinese New Year. We swept the rooms, made new nametags for our “cushies” and played a fun game of Chinese New Year charades. The Chinese New Year is also called the Lunar New Year since its timing is based on the lunar calendar. We introduced our moon journal at this time. Each child will take the moon journal home for the night, and with an adult he/she will view the moon and draw what is seen. It is an opportunity for the children to observe and record changes in different objects.



During Valentine’s Day week, we looked at friendship as the first component to help us stay healthy. We explored what it means to be a good friend through stories, conversations and a Friendship Go Fish game. We enjoyed decorating our bags to hold all of our Valentine cards and treats. We had a wonderful time in the “Queen of Hearts” bakery creating all kinds of delicious confections with our red playdough! We made cards for our family and friends, and we thoroughly enjoyed our Valentine’s Day party. There is nothing better than celebrating with family and friends!

We also spent time exploring why sleep is important for us to stay healthy. A librarian also paid us a visit, which was a wonderful tie-in for our bedtime theme.



We extended the learning from her visit by turning our dramatic play area into a library. Oh my, how much fun this was! We also have a few entrepreneurs in the class so the library then became a bookstore! We ended our study of sleep by having a pajama party. Several books were “being checked out” from the library, which led to many impromptu storytime readings throughout



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the morning! It was so sweet to see several of the children all curled up in their blankets listening to a story. Or, you might have come into the "library" and heard a story being read as we sat on our pretend couch made of blocks.

We are finishing off our theme by exploring why food is important to keep us healthy. We will have a field trip to the Shop-n-Save in Bridgeville to see firsthand the inner workings of the grocery store. We will extend this field trip into our classroom by looking more closely at where our food comes from and what are healthy food choices. We will also do some taste-testing as we make our bread and drink (orange juice) for snack and compare it to the bread/orange juice bought at the store during our field trip.

As we move into March, we will be delving into our new theme, "All Things Water: Ponds, Rivers, Lakes and Oceans!"

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

March, so the ol' groundhog predicts, will bring a close to the end of winter but not until halfway through. This means keeping those warm clothes handy for the chilly days. Seems to me that most of February we had up-and-down



weather, and we are still trying to master zippering our coats. This is an **IMPORTANT** self-help skill for the children to master and a **BIG** help to you too.

As we step into March we will be catching up on the things we love to do: painting, stories and silly songs. Of course we will continue with our letter of the week (Q, R, S). March 5 is picture day, so make sure the kids wear their party clothes! Also our good friend Verna will be coming this month to talk about hibernation and show many of the animals that she has in her home. (I am not sure I would like to live in that house!)

Thursday, March 21, 7pm-8pm, will be our annual open house. This is a great time for all those younger siblings to finally stay and play at Mushroom. It's fun for older siblings too so please put it on your calendar.

The month of March is my favorite time because a very shy leprechaun lives in my pocket; he may pop his head out every



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), especially for girls
- Dress-up clothes (especially for boys)
- Snow pants/snow suits, boots

once in a while and he will definitely give us some gold coin candy even without discovering his pot of gold.

We have a short March because of spring break but will fill it with projects, Irish soda bread baking, and new hall art. We have discovered that sounding out letters is lots of fun and our vocabularies are growing. We really enjoy this class. They are kind, sweet, and inclusive—good friends to have.

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

February was all too short, and therefore a busy month. We ended January making our dreams into laws in "Washington, D.C." [our classroom] and segued to presidents and the money featuring their pictures. We learned a poem to help remember each coin's value, made a money book including a page for each coin and the dollar, and learned about the presidents and meanings of the symbols on our money.

We also used money in our "Mushroom Restaurant" center. Children made up a restaurant with waiters, hosts, busboys/girls, chefs, and cashiers. They had to create and realistically price a menu, conduct themselves in a "professional, adult" manner, set a table, share and stick to roles, add up a bill, and make change.



We also celebrated Valentine's Day with homemade valentine bags, made pop-up Valentine cards, and wrote about what love is. The children had answers that varied from "building a home for me" to "cooking with my dad."

We concluded February with a study of Benjamin Franklin and his discovery of electricity. March will be a continuation of our electricity unit: the sub-atomic world, the physics of electricity, electricity experiments, dismantling electric appliances, and the construction of a low-voltage (1.5v) home for a little Mushroom mouse. The children will do the wiring themselves and are very excited. Look for our houses to be on display at the end of the month!

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