

# 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

MARCH 2015

### TUITION DUE MAR. 1

### REGISTRATION WILL BEGIN SOON!

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

### SCHOOL PICTURES

MARCH 3, 4, 5

### STAFF MEETING

WEDNESDAY, MAR. 11

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

### VISION SCREENING

MARCH 17-18

See page 7 for detailed info!

### MFLC BOARD MEETING

MAR. 18, 8:00PM

### CONFERENCES WILL BE HELD

MARCH 19-20

Look for the sign-up in your class!

### Pirates Package! Raffle

March 23-26

Based on PA Lottery evening drawing Apr. 15 — see details on page 6!

### SPRING BREAK MARCH 30 - APRIL 6

Classes resume Tuesday, Apr. 7.

### ILLNESS POLICY

Many "bugs" are going around. Children need to be fever-free or vomit/diarrhea-free for 24 hours and able to benefit fully from being at school in order to attend.

### 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).

### Welcome Future Mushroomer!

Nolan Thomas Yetter, born Feb. 24 (Big brother **Everett, 3s class**; congrats to parents Kim and Brandon Yetter!)

### Hello Mushroom Families!

Thank you so much for your patience over the last several months! We really appreciate it! We wanted to give everyone an update on where we stand with "Mushroom on the Move."



We have been working diligently on finalizing the lease details with Beth El. Unfortunately, it's taking longer than we had hoped. Registration will begin for next year as soon as everything is signed and official. In an effort to have a smooth transition, we can't in good faith begin the process without everything being finalized. Registration announcements will hopefully be made soon.

Again, we appreciate your understanding and patience.

*Diane Rattay, President*

**Mushroom Family Learning Center Board of Directors**

(This letter was emailed to all families 2/26/15.)

### From the president of the board...

Happy March!

It looks like March is coming in like a lion this year. I'm sure I'm not the only one who is anxiously awaiting warmer temperatures. Hopefully, the Luck o' the Irish will be with us weather-wise this year. I wonder which leprechaun I have to call to put in an order for a few sunny and warm days.

March is one of my favorite months. We have St. Patrick's Day, we turn the clocks ahead an hour, and we have the First Day of Spring. This month we are surrounded by green,



rainbows, shamrocks, and the beginnings of new growth. Everything is fresh and new. New beginnings are exciting! As we finalize the details of our new home, I am amazed by the possibility of growth we have sitting before us. The staff and board are excited to start our next steps in moving to our new home.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Mixed Bags fundraiser! Our last fundraiser of the year will be held in the coming weeks. We will be holding another raffle, this time featuring Pirates tickets and more!

*Diane*

Diane Rattay

## Smile for the Camera!



School pictures will be taken  
March 3 - 5. Talk to your child's  
teacher if you missed the info!



## TIME TO CHANGE THE CLOCKS!

Daylight Saving Time begins  
Sunday, March 8. Have your  
clocks "spring forward" one hour  
**Saturday night, March 7.**

## 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.

### Thank You to...

- Tyler Yoos (Pre-K PM) and family  
for their donation of toys.
- All our parent volunteers who  
helped with Valentine's Day parties.
- Ms. Theresa for keeping our fish  
healthy and their home sparkling.
- Kelly Lotter, for putting together  
this newsletter.
- The Board of Directors for their  
dedication to our school.

Visiting the library will help develop your child's curiosity and  
desire to discover. By providing children with a variety of ma-  
terials and creative programs that allow them to use their im-  
agination, they will become excited about the ability to discov-  
er 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 experi-  
ence. 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 pro-  
mote 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. So turn off your Kindles, iPads,  
computers and phones, and enjoy what the library has to offer.

*Joan*

Joan Harrison

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

**G**reat things are happening in our Early Learners classes!  
We are all so excited to be working with your children and

seeing how they've grown and changed so much already. The  
students are really developing their interpersonal skills: shar-  
ing, asking each other questions, and even taking care of each  
other's needs, like finding a favorite toy or getting a tissue  
when necessary. It's wonderful to see all of this growth!

In February, we started talking about shapes  
and were visited by our friends Harry Heart and  
Susie Square. We will continue to talk about  
shapes in March and have some new friends  
join us! Once all of our shape friends have  
come, we will begin talking about spring and  
growing and hatching and all of the other ex-  
citing things that go along with it.



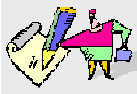
We are also hopeful that spring itself will find us soon! Winter  
has been hard for all of us since there have been very few days  
when it has been warm enough for us to go outside. We have  
also avoided going outside on the few days it has been warm  
enough because of icy playground conditions. We don't want  
anyone to fall and suffer the same fate as Humpty Dumpty!  
Once spring is here, please remember that when we do get to  
go outside, it may be muddy. Bring boots and save those fancy  
pants for another day!

Speaking of fancy clothes, school pictures will be taken on  
Tuesday, March 3, for Sheila's classes and on Wednesday,  
March 4, for Amy's class. Don't worry, we won't plan any  
messy projects for those days, so your child can wear some-  
thing special. The photographer will take an individual picture  
of your child and then take a group picture of each class. The  
pictures come back in a few weeks, and you can choose which  
ones, if any, you'd like to buy. The photographer can also do  
sibling pictures if your children will cooperate for that.

Thank you all so much for your generous donations of snacks.  
The children love it when it's their turn to bring it in. We al-  
ways make a point of thanking the person who brought it,  
which is one more way we practice our "restaurant manners."

Conferences are coming up again! Sheila's classes will be hav-  
ing their conferences on Thursday, March 19. Due to a prior  
commitment, Amy's conferences will NOT be held on Friday,  
March 20, as other Friday classes will. Amy's students will have  
class on the 20th and conferences on Friday, March 27. If any  
of these dates are inconvenient, please let us know so that we  
can schedule a special time for your child's conference.

Don't forget that we will have spring break from March 30 up



## 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!



## March is NATIONAL READING MONTH...

*Take the opportunity to read to your child today — and every day!*

through and including April 6. To any of you who may be traveling, we hope you have a wonderful and safe trip, and we will see you all back in class starting on April 7!

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

Once upon a time there was an enchanted Mushroom school that was filled with 18 good guys and gals. They battled the Big Bad Wolf on numerous occasions and were brave enough to protect our school. This group included smart princesses, brave knights and fire-breathing dragons. We won our battles through kindness and cooperation. We all lived happily ever after!

One of my favorite themes we discuss is Fairy Tales and Make-Believe. The children have wonderful expressions on their faces listening to these stories. They realize that fairy tales always have good guys and bad guys. We cheered on the good guys and hoped for the happy ending. The students learned how to identify specific characters. We made predictions on how the story would end. We answered comprehension questions to strengthen our reading skills.

We even created our own fairy tales by writing stories.

The students strengthened their writing skills by working in small groups on drawing shapes and writing numbers and letters. They practiced writing the letters in their name and even spelled additional words. The students also strengthened their skills by playing with the play dough, using the lacing cards, picking up small objects and beading necklaces.

Social skills were strengthened this month by participating in partner activities. The students are now creating their own imaginary play and including their classmates. I enjoyed listening to them take on roles such as a plumber, doctor, mommy, daddy or cooker.

We spent several weeks in February learning about the Chinese New Year. We were able to create a dragon with the students in the entire school. We participated in co-teaching activities with the Pre-K class. The students enjoyed going upstairs because they have "fabulous stuff." The grand finale of this learning will be a parade for the parents on March 5 at

11:10. Everyone is invited.

Valentine's Day was filled with making heart crafts, beaded necklaces, love letters and beautiful art. We learned a valentine song and had a wonderful red snack which included decorative napkins and cups. Our class loves to party!

This is a great time of the school year. The students know the routine of the classroom, they are familiar with their peers and they know they belong to something amazing. There are days when the students just take over with amazing ideas and creative play. Debbie, Melissa and I are so fortunate to have these children in our lives. I am looking forward to meeting with everyone on March 19 for our conferences. This group is something special!

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

Albert Einstein once said, "If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales."

In February, we honed our language skills, imagination, critical thinking, math concepts, dramatic skills, and more through classic fairy tales. We also had tons of fun! Some of our favorites included *The Three Pigs*, *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Even though it is not technically a fairy tale, we also included *Caps for Sale*.

The best part of our fairy tale unit had to be retelling and acting out the stories. We did this through flannel boards, small world playscapes, and puppet theater. Our favorite way, of course, was acting them out! Little by little, we added to our collection of child-made props, costumes, and sets. We turned our bulletin board area into a stage and prepared to entertain our families at an Open House production in March. It has been such a joy to see the children's confidence soar as they take the stage as pigs, goats, trolls and wolves.



We also tried our hands at creating original fairy tales. Fairy tales are great vehicles to gain understanding of narrative structure and story elements such as character, setting, conflict and resolution. The children had a chance to show their

## **MARCH ENRICHMENT CLASSES** Contact Ms. Jamie at [jamie\\_geisler@comcast.net](mailto:jamie_geisler@comcast.net).

### **MONDAYS ....** Miss Sheila

March 2 – Have you ever **painted with golf balls** or marbles? Come on and give it a try!

March 9 – Today we will sing a new song, “**I Have a Little House**,” in **Spanish**. (Yo tengo una casita)

March 16 – We will be making **Shiny Shamrocks** for you to decorate your home just in time for the leprechauns on St Patrick’s Day!

March 23 – Did you ever search for a buried treasure? We will read **Russell and the Lost Treasure** and make treasure maps. We might even find a treasure somewhere in our school!

### **FRIDAYS ...** Miss Marilyn

March 6 – Children will make art like the masters and can choose between two classic styles to make their own masterpiece. Book: **Hands On! Art Projects** (Sue Lacey).

March 13 – St. Patrick’s Day fun. We’ll read **The Luckiest St. Patrick’s Day Ever** (Teddy Slater) and make our own shamrocks.

March 27 – Spring winds are blowing and we’ll make a simple kite that really flies! Book: **Kite Day, A Bear and Mole Story** (Will Hillenbrand).



emerging understanding of these concepts through their own stories of three.

Our little group has turned into a wonderfully supportive group of friends. We have enjoyed seeing friendships blossom and group play activities take shape. We had a chance in February to broaden our idea of community to include the other classes at Mushroom. We made new friends as we combined with Miss Cara’s pre-K class for stories, snacks, and play on a few occasions. We also joined with the entire school community to work on a Chinese New Year project. We are looking forward to the dragon parade in March!

The children have really settled in to our new journal routine. It has been a thrill to see even our reluctant writers eagerly sit down with Miss Melissa to trace the letter of the day and think about the sound it makes. We have noticed increased interest in all the children in letters and their sounds.

We also enjoyed a wonderful Valentine’s Day celebration, thanks to our parent volunteers.

March will be a busy month for us. Our **Open House will be Monday, March 2**. We look forward to seeing everyone there! Our school-wide dragon parade will be on Thursday, March 5. Conferences will be March 19. Our theme for March will be “The People in Your Neighborhood.” We will learn about the jobs people do to help their community.

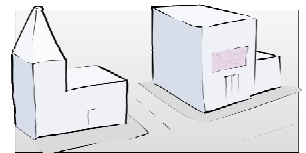
## **News from the 4s class from Liz and Marilyn...**

**W**hat do fairy tales and engineering have in common? Quite a lot, we discovered this month! We carried the children’s interest in building and engineering into our Fairy Tales and Make-Believe theme in February. We built houses like the three pigs, explored different kinds of bridges that the billy goats might have crossed, and designed new chairs for Baby Bear. We learned a lot about how the properties of building materials and the shapes we used affected a structure’s strength and function.

We also read many different versions of these familiar tales. In

one fractured fairy tale, three javelinas outsmart a wily coyote. We imagined what houses made of tumbleweeds, saguaro sticks, and adobe bricks would be like. We designed houses using unconventional materials and described what they might be like. We imagined sticky candy houses, bouncy marshmallow houses, and soft cotton ball houses.

Our junk collection continued to provide inspiration for our many building projects. We tried constructing bridges that would support the weight of even the biggest plastic billy goat. We have noticed



that as the children gain more experience with these types of projects, they are able to look at their constructions critically and come up with potential solutions more readily. They are learning, too, that each step in the building process teaches us something. Rather than getting upset when a structure fails, they begin thinking about why it failed, and what might fix it.

We also had fun acting out the classic fairy tales and coming up with our own, original fairy tales.

We had a chance to join with Miss Jamie’s and Miss Cara’s classes this month. It was great to see our class not only take a nurturing role with the slightly younger children, but also learn from the older children. We are looking forward to our dragon parade in March!

March will be a busy month for us. We will have a dragon parade for Chinese New Year on March 2. **Open House will be March 6**. Conferences are March 20. Since February’s weather delays and cancellations left us a little behind, we will continue our Fairy Tale theme through the first week of March. After that, our theme will be “Our Town.” We will explore the various jobs people do to keep a community running.

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

**W**e began this month in the midst of finishing reading the story *The Snow Queen*. Since her world is made of ice, we spent the week exploring ice. We did science experiments





## Just a Reminder...

STAFF MEETING **WED., MARCH 11**  
11am dismissal, no lunch, 1pm dropoff.

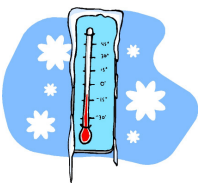
CONFERENCES **THURS./FRI., MARCH 19-20**  
March 19 — no school for all classes.  
March 20 — school only for 3s and W/F Early Learners.  
(W/F Early Learners conferences on 3/27.)



## 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 or you can check for space whenever; choose however many to attend! Contact Ms. Jamie for more info at [jamie\\_geisler@comcast.net](mailto:jamie_geisler@comcast.net). **See p. 4 for this month's activities!**

with salt, ice and warm water to see what caused the ice to melt. The best part of doing these science experiments is letting the children take ownership of the process. I love seeing them choose how to explore the materials and coming up with



their own observations. We decided that next year it would be important to add a thermometer so be able to observe the temperature changes. We worked collaboratively with Miss Jamie's class creating "Frozen" paintings with the colors of blue, white, purple and silver. The children were excited to

learn that at the end of *The Snow Queen* story, the ice in Kai's heart was melted by his friend Gerda's tears. They were able to connect that the salt and warmth from her tears would have caused the ice to melt!

We began to explore the heart more in depth as we neared our holiday of love – Valentine's Day. We spent time looking at the emotive side of the heart as well the physical side. We learned that the heart is a muscle and pumps blood to the rest of our body. We turned the dramatic play area into a doctor's office, which has been a hub bub of activity. This dramatic play has really created a wonderful magic in the classroom and engaged the children with all of their senses. When we asked the children what they knew about the heart at the beginning of our discoveries, many of the children spoke of how to show love with their heart. : ) So, we also talked a lot about how we experience love. As preparation for our Valentine's Day celebration we read a poem:

*The Queen of Hearts, she made some tarts  
on a winter's day;  
The Knight of Hearts, he stole the tarts  
and took them clean away.  
The King of Hearts called for the tarts  
and scolded the Knight full sore.  
The Knight of Hearts brought back the tarts  
and vowed he'd steal no more.*

We then celebrated with a Queen and King of Hearts tea party. The children made their own red capes and crowns, and were treated to a delicious tea party of pink lemonade, cherry tarts, fairy bread and fruit cups. They had a grand time exchanging their valentines with each other in their decorated bags!

So, what does one do with several large boxes and some imagination? Well, our class worked with all of the classes to make a dragon for all of Mushroom children to dance with to celebrate the Chinese New Year! The Chinese New Year begins with the New Moon on the first day of the new year and ends

on the full moon 15 days later. The 15th day is called the Lantern Festival, which is celebrated at night with lantern displays and children carrying lanterns in a parade. The highlight of the festival is also the dragon dance. While we didn't dance at nighttime, our class made red paper lanterns and drums to along with our dragon. We joined with all of our Mushroom classes to parade our dragon for families, and at the end exclaimed to all "Gung hai fat choy!" This means "Happy new year!" in Chinese.

We will kick off the month of March by celebrating Dr. Seuss's birthday and Read Across America on March 2. We will then move into our investigation of the moon and outer space. We find inspiration for our exploration by learning more about Vincent Van Gogh and his wonderful painting *Starry Night*.

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

February was all too short, and therefore a busy month. We ended our world holiday studies with Ramadan. The children wrote about their favorite world holiday: either Diwali, Ramadan, Hanukkah, Chinese New Year, or Kwanzaa.

The children were very interested in how many of the holidays we studied were celebrated according to the lunar calendar rather than the solar calendar. We investigated and learned about the history of time measurement and prediction starting with the Egyptians. Each child made a solar calendar diagram with the Earth orbiting the sun in 12 numbered positions with month names. Months were labeled with the number of days in each. The lunar orbit was added with days as well. Of course, to make it "Mushroomie," we added glitter and a little paint!



We also celebrated Valentine's Day with homemade valentine bags decorated with hearts of different sizes to make animals, wrote about what love is in our journals, composed a poem in a pop-up Valentine for our families, and had class Valentine parties. We concluded February with a study of Benjamin Franklin and his discovery of electricity.

March will be a continuation of our electricity unit: the subatomic 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!



**Raise  
the  
Jolly  
Roger!**

# ***MFLC Pirates Package Ticket Fundraiser!***

**\$ 10/ticket**

**(Includes 2 chances to win based on PA Lottery)**

**Sales at MFLC March 23 - 26**

***Have an awesome time at the game, enjoy a luxurious hotel stay, and give an American Girl doll to someone special!***

## **PACKAGE INCLUDES:**

### **4 PITTSBURGH PIRATES TICKETS with access to the Lexus Club**

**Front row, home-plate section, Lexus Club dining access, parking pass – Gold Lot**

**Saturday, May 9, 7:05pm, vs. St. Louis Cardinals, FIREWORKS NIGHT!**

**Section 19, Row A, Seats 1-4**

*(Dinner reservations will start at 6 in the Lexus Club.)*

### **One-night stay at the OMNI WILLIAM PENN HOTEL, Bed and Breakfast package**

**Deluxe room and breakfast for two served in The Terrace**

### **AMERICAN GIRL DOLL — Addy Walker-1864 BeForever**

**18-in. historical character doll re-marketed in 2014 with a deep blue dress, white pantalettes and stockings, black boot and two blue hair ribbons.**

***THANK YOU TO WABTEC (BETLER FAMILY), THE OMNI WILLIAM PENN (GEORGE HALTER),  
AND AMERICAN GIRL FOR THESE DONATIONS!***

A total of 500 tickets will be available for sale **March 23-26** on a first-come, first-served basis. Each ticket is preprinted with two randomly generated lottery numbers. The tickets will be sold at random. The winning number is taken from the Pennsylvania Daily Lottery 3-digit number drawn at **7:00 p.m. Wednesday, April 15, 2015**. If an unsold number is drawn, MFLC will pull a purchased ticket stub at random on Thursday, April 16, 2015.

**Ticket price \$10    100% of the ticket price goes to your fundraising fee.**

***(If you will be re-selling the tickets you purchased, make sure you return the ticket stub to MFLC by Wednesday, April 15, 2015, so the winner can be contacted. Any ticket stubs not received by that day forfeit their right to win if a drawing on Thursday, April 16, 2015, is necessary.)***



**Blind & Vision Rehabilitation  
Services of Pittsburgh**

## **Children's Vision Screening**

**To The Parents:**

During the screening, the technician will stand about three feet away from the child while holding the PlusOptix photo-screener. The camera will take a dozen sets of pictures and immediately calculate results. PlusOptix camera is testing for *visual acuity* and *muscle balance*, and another separate test will detect *color discrimination*.



As the technician will know the results immediately, your child will be sent home the day of the screening with a Parent Letter notifying you of your child's vision. If your child is referred, you will receive a follow-up packet of information within the ten days after the screening.

.....  
We vision screen because:

- ~ 1 in every 20 children have an undetected vision problem.
- ~ Amblyopia (lazy eye) affects 1 in 50 children. With early detection and treatment by the age of 3, a child can expect a 95% correction rate; however, if left untreated until the age of 7, the correction rate drops to a mere 5%.
- ~ Correcting a child's vision within early years of school can improve behavior, grades, and performance in general life.

.....  
Watch for signs that your child might have a vision problem:

- ~ eyes that cross, turn in or out, or move independently of one another—all of the time, part of the time, or when the child is tired.
- ~ closing an eye or covering it, squinting, frowning, blinking, rubbing, or squeezing the eyes trying to see, or even turning the head to use one eye.
- ~ holding reading or writing materials in unusual positions, or tripping and stumbling excessively.
- ~ complaining of eye pain, headaches, nausea, blurriness or inability to see, or words that 'move' or 'jump.'

**If you notice any of these symptoms in your child, or anything else that makes you suspicious of your child's vision, do not delay in calling your eye care professional to make an appointment.**

# Business Directory

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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**