



## Mushroom Family Learning Center

1240 Washington Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15228  
(412) 531-1225

mflcdirector@hotmail.com  
mushroomfamily.org

MAY 2013

### A Big Thank-You to...

- ◇ Hannah Walker and family for their donation of puzzles.
- ◇ Elise Stock and family for their donation of a game.
- ◇ Eva Donahey and family for taking care of our upstairs fish, Little Red.
- ◇ Ms. Theresa for keeping our fish room fish healthy and happy.

### TUITION FOR SEPT. 2013 DUE MAY 1

This will secure your child's space in next year's class, along with the payment of any outstanding balances. Also please turn in your directory listing. Thank you!

### HAVE YOU TURNED IN YOUR SCHOOL SURVEY? ☺

**STUDENTS, FAMILY AND  
STAFF ICE CREAM SOCIAL  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 8, 6PM,  
Mushroom Playground**

**LAST DAY OF SCHOOL  
TUESDAY, MAY 21**

**MUSHROOM FAMILY PICNIC  
WED., MAY 22, 11AM, Mt.  
Lebanon Park Playground**  
Bring your blankets and lunches as we say goodbye to the 2012-2013 school year. (No rain date.)  
**(Teachers' in-service 9-11am 5/22, also 9am-3pm 5/23.)**

**TEACHER APPRECIATION  
DINNER MAY 22.** Teachers enjoy an evening together after parents drop off the goodies for them to feast on.

### WELCOME HOME!

Abe Freeman, father of Kailee in the 3/4s class, from a six-week military tour in Qatar. Thank you for your service.

### WAYS TO HELP MUSHROOM

- 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.

## From the director...

So much to do...so little time...The school year is quickly coming to a close, and there is lots to do before we say goodbye for the summer. As we end the school year, I would like to take a moment to thank each of you for the part you played in making this a great year at MFLC. To the many parents who volunteered in the classroom, donated snacks and supported our school in so many ways, *thank you.*

Thank you also to our wonderful board of directors, Erin Bignell, Julie Connolly, Amy Dembosky, Amy Garces, Jamie Geisler, Melanie Johnston, Kelly Lotter, Cindy Nairn, Diane Rattay, Sheri Reddy, Susan Sarkis, Joelle Schultz, and Carrie Stock, for the time they spend each month making wonderful and wise decisions on behalf of our school.

After serving as president of the board for two years, Erin Bignell will step down at the end of May. I would like to express the appreciation of the staff, board and parents for her leadership and support. She has truly gone above and beyond in her efforts on behalf of our school. Please join me in thanking her for giving so willingly of her time these past two years. I would also like to thank Kelly Lotter who will be stepping down as vice president. Not only has she been the VP, she is the editor of our fabulous newsletter.

Most of all, I would like to recognize our teachers for their dedication to your children and their commitment to excellence. Their incredible creativity, enthusiasm and energy is what makes MFLC such a special place for learning, and enables each child to experience "individual growth in a shared environment." To each of our staff members, THANK YOU for bringing your unique talents to our school and keeping the fun in learning.

It is with a heavy heart that we say goodbye to Mr. Brian and Ms. Christine. They will both be moving on to new chapters of their lives. Christine and Brian, we will all miss you and wish you the very best with your future endeavors.

This is always a bittersweet time. The thought of a relaxing summer full of fun and special times with family and friends brings a smile to my face. However, the realization that many families have completed their years at MFLC saddens me. We have watched your children grow and have come to consider you part of our preschool "family."

We wish our oldest students much success as they journey on to kindergarten and first grade. And parents, you have entrusted our staff with your most precious possessions and have touched our lives with your help and support over the years. Thank you.

To the students and families returning in the fall, have a great summer and we look forward to seeing you in the upcoming school year. Please look for your 2013-2014 beginning-of-the-school-year information the first week of August. The first day of school (**of MFLC's 40th year!**) is Sept. 9.

*Joan*

Joan Harrison

Dear Mushroom families,

Thank you so much for your kind and generous donations for my trip to Malawi! I am so grateful for all the items that were collected for the children. They will greatly benefit these children and truly impact and change their lives. I cannot thank you enough!

Sincerely,  
Marikate Harrison



***We welcome new Mushroomers!***



**There are still openings in some of our classes for next year.**

Please tell your family, friends, acquaintances and others looking for a preschool. Thank you!! You are Mushroom's BEST advertisement.

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

So this is my last newsletter article as president of MFLC's Board of Directors. I must admit that as an engineering major, I don't usually look forward to this part of my "job." However, this month, I am worried that I won't be able to get all of what I want to say into my article.

First and foremost, I must thank my wonderful board for all of the hard work they have put in during my two years as president. I must say that the years went a lot smoother than I anticipated. There were a few bumps along the way, but together we smoothed it out and got through it as a stronger and more unified group. I think we have made some very positive changes in these two years, and have plans to continue with more positive changes for our school for the future.

I must extend an extra-special THANK YOU to our wonderful director, Joan Harrison. Thank you for believing that I could do justice in this role, and for supporting me along the way. I am not sure how I will survive without our daily phone calls (sometimes numerous times a day), whether to discuss something going on with the school, or something going on in our lives. I hope everyone realizes what a wonderful person she truly is and how much she cares for each and every child in this school. She has often been faced with a fork in the road, a decision to be made, and she ALWAYS chooses the road that will be best for the school/children, even if it is the one that provides the most difficult obstacles. She is willing to do anything for our kids and I love her for that, and so should you!



I can also say that I feel very confident in turning over the reins to the new president who will be...Susan Sarkis! She is a current board member, has had two sons already go through Mushroom, currently has a son in the 3s class, and will be giving birth to her first little GIRL over the summer! So she is very familiar with the school and will do a great job! The new vice president will be Sheri Reddy. She also has three sons, two who are currently going to MFLC and a little one who will be starting soon enough! Our other officer position that will be changing is treasurer, which will be filled by Carrie Stock whose daughter is currently in the PreK-AM class and son will be starting in the fall. Next year will have a board with a lot of heart and a lot of talent!

I must also add that even though I will no longer have a child at Mushroom, nor be president of the board, Mushroom still is and always will be part of my family. The devastating news this week about the loss of Marlene's son, Kyle, and seeing how the families at Mushroom react, has only made this feeling more evident. We truly are a family. When one of us hurts or is in need, we all gather to help. It is such a wonderful feeling knowing that you have that type of support and role models for our children.

Thanks again to everyone for your support and kindness over the past two years! I am so sad to be leaving, sad for my boys to be growing up and moving on to "big kid" school, but it's a part of the journey and I know I am leaving it all in very capable hands. Have a wonderful summer and make lots of memories to share with us next year!

*Erin*

Erin Bignell

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

Is it May already? Where did the time go? It has been an exciting year for everyone. All of us have made new friends and accomplished new things. As we close out the school year, we would like to reflect back on some of those accomplishments. We remember the little ones who clung to Mom during the first weeks of school. Now they are independent preschoolers, confident and secure in their environment. We watch with pride as the children use the correct words (or at least try to) when they want a turn with a toy, and we jump with joy as we observe how the children have come together as a group while still maintaining their own individuality. It has been a wonderful year of growth for all of us.

As we spring into our final month, we will do our favorite things. We'll paint and glue and glitter with our favorite colors. We'll sing and dance to our favorite songs and bring back our favorite experiments. And most important, we'll enjoy the conversations that have blossomed between the children and enjoy their laughter and giggles that fill the room. Of course, we will not forget that special gift planned for "you know who!"

Marlene, Debbie and I would like to take this time to thank all



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*A few fender-benders have occurred recently—  
please be careful and keep our kids safe!*

- Drive slowly and carefully, especially when backing out, and be observant of the cars and people around you.
- Stay alert and keep kids close to you when walking in the lot.
- Parking is not permitted in front of the school or along the left side of the exit driveway. This is a requirement of the fire department.
- Please observe the handicapped parking spots.
- Don't leave other children unattended in your vehicle or in the lot.

of you for your support throughout the year and most especially for your wonderful children. They have been an absolute delight! Each one has captured our hearts, opening up and sharing with us their sweet personalities. Being able to have that little piece of time each week with your children allowed us to remember and enjoy that magical time of childhood.

I often compare our room to the cocoon of a butterfly. Inside our warm nurturing chrysalis, your children have been changing, developing and growing their wings. It will be hard for us to watch as your little butterflies spread their wings and take flight. They have provided us with many warm and funny memories! We will miss them but, just like the butterfly, they are ready to visit new places. We have enjoyed your children immensely!! And we thank you for entrusting them to us.



Have a great summer and hopefully we will see you at Slice of Summer summer camp!

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

**H**ave you ever read a good book that included laugh-out-loud laughter, tear-jerking emotion and characters so interesting that their dialogue kept you thoroughly entertained? You become so invested in this story that a feeling of sadness overcomes you as you reach the final chapter. This scenario completely describes our feelings about our 18 students and our experiences this school year.

I recall the first day of school. The students entered the classroom with excitement on their faces but uncertainty in their hearts. Their teachers were strangers to them and most of their peers were just children sharing the same space. When I observe the children now, their expressions and actions have completely changed. They continue to be excited about school but have confidence in their hearts. They can't wait to share a story with their teachers and are concerned if one of us is absent. They like to snuggle with us, hug us, sit on our laps or just gently grab our hands. They are comfortable with us and know we care deeply for them. Those peers who were viewed as just sharing space have now turned into true friends...friends who like to play, share stories and just have fun with each other.

This year we used our five senses to experience the wonders of fall. We learned about magnets, magnifying glasses, buildings and animals in our Science Center. We read more books than I can even count. We discovered the pure joy in searching for a million worms in a huge mud puddle. The children became princesses, knights, firefighters and dragons. We used our imaginations to create stories and listened attentively to the interesting fairy tales. We love that the good guys always win and have learned to be assertive and look the troll in the eye.



We know that at the end of the day the most important thing is to be kind to others. We showed this over and over again by collecting supplies for the soldiers, collecting coins for Children's Hospital, baking cookies for the teachers, drawing pictures for a cancer ward, collecting school supplies for children in Africa and gathering cans of food for the homeless.

The kindness shown by our families was overwhelming. We are grateful for the support we received from our parents this school year. We will miss you as much as your children!

Like all good books our final chapter is coming to an end. We will never forget the 18 students who have touched our hearts forever. We will continue to watch them grow and hope that in some way we have made a positive impact on their lives, if in no other way than igniting the love of learning that will continue to grow for many years.

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

**D**uring April we focused on the concept of "community." We looked at how groups of people (towns, families, classrooms) work together to meet each other's needs. We enjoyed excellent participation from our students' families in this exploration. We learned that everyone in a community, including children and animals, can make a contribution.

We learned about some interesting tools people use with our "Job in a Bag" assignment. With the help of a parent, each child selected a tool to bring in and share with the class. This was a great chance for the children to learn about what their



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own parents do, as well as to learn about what others do.

We also had several parents join us as special guests in April. These brave volunteers each gave a presentation to the class about their work.

Chef Luke joined us for a fabulous cooking project. He also taught us about the important contribution our local farmers make. Medical Laboratory Technician Erika taught us about red and white blood cells. She presented a surprisingly exciting video that showed a white blood cell chasing down and gobbling up a bacterium. She gave us a lab coat and some test tubes to keep for dramatic play. Lieutenant Abe came in uniform to teach us about flying air-to-air refueling missions. We learned the lingo (“Roger,” “Affirmative,” “Negative”), created our own call signs, and saw video of actual refueling missions. We had fun pretending to fly a jet with the poster Abe provided, which shows the cockpit controls. Abe also left us with pilot wings, pencils, and air-planes for each child, too.



Front Desk Manager George taught us how things work at a hotel. We learned that in a hotel you can get ice cream delivered right to your door! We learned how to make reservations on the computer, and we learned that each room has a number to identify it. Each child received an official training certificate and an adventure pack, and George also provided key cards and maps for our dramatic play.

Throughout the month we continued to explore these and other jobs through dramatic play. We transformed the lower loft into an office, with keyboards, phone, clipboards, and pens. This office evolved through many functions. It became a doctor’s office, plumber’s office, police department, detective agency, fire department, and hotel front desk. We used the keyboard to type out our names and other important information. We encouraged the children to stretch their writing and representation skills to create signs and other props for the office. When the upper loft functioned as our hotel, the children made room number signs so that the customers would know which room to go to.

Toward the end of the month we learned about letter carriers and the post office. We posed the question, “How does the letter carrier figure out where the mail should go?” We wrote a letter to Miss Theresa and figured out that it would need a

## Summer Fun!

*Make your own bubbles ~*

- ½ gallon water
- ½ cup of Dawn/Joy dishwashing liquid
- ¼ cup of glycerin



Mix the ingredients together in a wide container. Be careful that the solution does not become too foamy, wait a few minutes to let the solution settle, store in a sealed container.

stamp, a name, and an address to be delivered. She joined us and read her letter, and we discovered that she knew just what we said because of the words we wrote! With some envelopes, a mailbox, and a mail bag, the children took this concept and ran with it. They wrote and delivered letters to each other and to their families. We wrote postcards to each child and our student letter carriers delivered them. If they did not recognize a classmate’s name, we encouraged them to use the attendance board to match the name and picture.

I have been putting off the inevitable so far in this article, but can do so no longer. This really is the final newsletter of the year, which means that soon our time together will be finished. We have all come to love your wonderful children so, and we will miss them! It has been a privilege to watch them grow and to share their days. It is fitting to speak of community now, as we have watched this special group of children form their own supportive community. In addition to forming special friendships, they truly include everyone and help each other. We are so proud of them!

We would also like to thank you, the parents, for all your support this year. Thank you for the honor of entrusting us with your children. It has been a wonderful year.

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

*“Won’t you take me to...Pizza Town!”*

In April our fours class explored the concept of “community” by planning and creating our very own town. During this month-long project we learned about the people and places that make a town a nice place to live.

We mapped out the town’s roads, grassy areas, and rivers and painted them on canvas. After that, we brainstormed the places our town should include. We used boxes, craft sticks, and cast-off recyclables to construct our town’s buildings. We had toy stores, grocery stores, car washes, Target, a post office, a hot dog stand, and many other important establishments. We were overflowing with creativity and student-initiated writing!

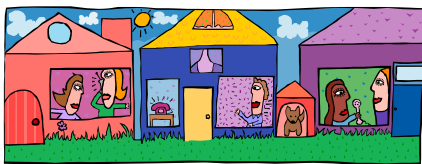
Throughout the month we explored the concept of mapping. We looked at Google Maps’ overhead views of Mt. Lebanon and Pittsburgh and plotted out our roads on canvas. Once they



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were laid out, we posed the question of how we might be able to give directions from one place to another. We came around to the idea that each street would need a name, and each building on a street would need a number. We voted on street names for "Pizza Town" and created street signs. We also spent some time learning our own addresses. We had a lot of fun with a labeler, copying our addresses and watching as they magically printed onto labels for the houses we decorated.

Once we had our places set, we turned our attention toward people and their homes. Each child created a map of his/her home and used a variety of prints to illustrate the function and style of each room. We painted wooden houses to represent our homes and included them in our 3-D town display. We also



talked about the important people who work to make a community function. Each child chose a job in the context of Pizza Town

to serve an important purpose. Although we may not grow up to be garbage collectors, we recognize that it is an important function within the community. Besides, you get to drive a really cool truck! It is wonderful to me that young children do not judge the importance of a job by its salary or prestige, but rather by its importance (says the preschool teacher!).

We were thrilled to show off our learning and our creations at Open House. We love sharing our work with our families!

I have had the rare privilege of sharing two years with most of the children in this class. As we draw to a close I am struck by how much they have grown, and by the indelible mark they have made on my heart. I will miss them! Thank you for all your support throughout the year, and for the honor of working with your children.

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

"There is no place like home, there is no place like home, there is no place like home."

This month was inspired by these words from one of the first American fairy tales, *The Wizard of Oz*. Our adventure began when our class received a letter and a beautifully

*I scream, you scream,  
we all scream for ice cream!*



Wednesday, May 8, 6:00pm

Please join us for our annual Ice Cream Social held in the playground area.



Family Picnic Wednesday, May 22,  
Mt. Lebanon Park, 11:00am

Bring your blankets and lunches to celebrate the 2012-2013 school year. (No rain date.)

wrapped package. It was from Dorothy Gale, a young girl from Kansas, who wrote that she had landed in a strange land. She asked us to use the gift in the package she sent as a way to please help figure out how she could get home again. We unwrapped the gift and included was a beautiful pop-up version of the book. We were entranced! It took us a little over a week, but we couldn't wait each day to hear the story to learn how to help Dorothy get home. We finally learned that the silver shoes she received from Glinda the Good held the answer. All Dorothy had to do was click them three times and wish for her home in Kansas. [In the book her shoes are silver, unlike the movie.]



We spent time learning more about tornadoes, and created a "tornado machine" out of plastic liter bottles, water, glitter and duct tape. It was fun to see how the funnel was created as we shook the bottle.

One of the most adorable characters of Oz, Toto, was brought to life as well. We turned the dramatic play room into a veterinarian's office and several of our favorite stuffed animals came from home to be "seen" by the vet. The children created a very realistic vet's office, which included a waiting room and home-made leashes for the pets. We also brought in a picture of our pet, or a picture of a pet we would like to have, to create the "This is my Toto" pictures that are gracing the hallway.

The Tin Man also provided inspiration for our learning as we learned more about our heart and the circulatory system. The vet's office became the doctor's office, complete with real stethoscopes. We listened to our heartbeats and learned about where to find our pulse. We created a DIY heart with plastic tubing, turkey basters and "Angry Birds" duct tape. :) I was so impressed because they suggested that I use blue-colored water as well as red-colored water to denote the difference between the veins and the arteries! We also took some time to look at the emotive side of the heart and talked about how our words and actions can hurt each other's hearts/feelings. We discussed the ways in which we could make sure to take care of our friends' hearts/feelings.

Throughout the whole month, we worked on creating our own puppet stage as well as different scenery backdrops along with our "Wizard of Oz" stick puppets. Our first installment was to draw a tornado similar to the one that swept up Dorothy's house. We also used bubble wrap to create the most beautiful



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picture of poppies similar to the field of poppies Dorothy, Scarecrow, Tin Man and the Lion walked through on their way to the Emerald City. We brought this together for Open House and shared our journey through Oz with our families!

It is hard to believe that it is already May and this is my last newsletter article for the year! I'm so excited for our children as they get ready to move on to their next adventure of kindergarten. But boy-oh-boy, we are going to miss seeing their faces in the morning and hearing about their everyday life.

In our last weeks of school, we will be enjoying the great outdoors as a backdrop for learning. I'm calling this month "We are Blooming" because we are truly blossoming every day!

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

**T**he end of the year...can you believe your "Little Kiddos" are headed off to kindergarten???!?!!

We had a very busy April, working on our letters of the week, our number chart — unbelievable that on April 8 we had our 100th day of school. We had a great time counting things up to 100 and making our own ice cream. We also had our FAVORITE field trip to the SpringHouse, a working dairy farm. We had a PERFECT weather day and the children and families enjoyed being dairy farmers for a morning.

The month of May we will be finishing up the alphabet and preparing for our moms' special day. We will have our annual Mother's Day Tea. The children will prepare all the foods and sing a song or two, recite some poems we learned and present our moms with a special gift lovingly made just for them.



This group of children is such a great, happy, fun group. They are kind, inclusive and creative. I know that each one has great gifts to offer and that they will all succeed in kindergarten. Most of them have been together for several years and hopefully will continue their friendships in years to come.

I'm ending with the lyrics from a song that describes how we all (as parents) feel when time passes by and our children are grown. Just a few years ago you had to do almost everything for your children but now they are becoming more and more independent. This is GOOD but time does slip by so quickly.



**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)

*You're gonna miss this, you're gonna want this back, you're gonna wish these days hadn't gone by so fast. These are some good times so take a good look around. You may not know it now, but you're gonna miss this.*

Have a wonderful summer and remember to come back to Mushroom to visit next year!

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

I can't believe this is the last newsletter of the year. The children have had a wonderful year of exploration and have formed warm friendships. K-Too was meant to foster the enjoyment of learning in a social environment, and I think it succeeded. All three classes were always ready and willing to learn new things and worked well together. I will miss your children. Please come back for a visit this summer and fall.

The children really got their creative juices going in April as we put together electric houses. The wiring was a significant small-motor challenge, but they soldiered through and were delighted by the bright results. We painted, glued, and constructed furniture, all from materials the children collected from home, recyclables, and some Mushroom art supplies. The final touch was a creature to live in our house: of course it had to be a "Mushroom Mouse," a colorful cat toy.




This project allowed the children to be creative, solve problems, observe cause and effect, and participate in a long-term effort that required patience and planning. They were extremely proud of their results. We concluded our electricity unit by following the path of electricity into Mushroom school. Outside, we found the school's wire, meter box, and transformer topping the telephone pole.

In May, we will talk about mothers, fathers, and the many combinations that make up "a family." We will read a newer book called *Mama Talks Too Much*, and a non-fiction story of a boy who raises a baby duck, called *The Little Duck*. We also will work diligently on our Mother's Day presents which require thoughtful, and sometimes humorous, writing about mommies. The children were inspired by Ben Franklin's kite escapades and want to make their own kite that really flies. We will study the physics of flight in conjunction with kite-making. Enjoy your summer!

# Business Directory



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	<p><b>Your ad here!</b> <b>\$10/issue</b></p>