



Mushroom Family Learning Center
*An independent, secular,
nonprofit preschool since 1973*

1240 Washington Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15228
(412) 531-1225
mflcdirector@hotmail.com
mushroomfamily.org

MAY 2014

A Big Thank-You to...

- Ms. Theresa for keeping our fish happy and healthy.
- Kelly Lotter, editor of our fabulous newsletter.
- Jane Birris for cutting all the pennants for our 40th celebration decorations.
- The 40th Anniversary Ice Cream Social Committee: Jemma Premus (chair), Judit Andrews, Chang Chu, Rachna Jain, Melanie Johnston, Joan Harrison, Susan Sarkis, Megan Millman, and Christina Unitas.

News & Notes

SEPT. 2014 TUITION DUE MAY 1

This will secure your child's spot in next year's class (along with the payment of any outstanding balances). Also please turn in your directory listing form and Global Connect contact info form.

MFLC 40TH ANNIVERSARY ICE CREAM SOCIAL MAY 7

On the playground from 6-8pm!

MAY 20 IS THE LAST DAY OF SCHOOL FOR THE CHILDREN

TEACHERS' IN-SERVICE AND MEETING MAY 21 (9am-3pm) & **MAY 22** (9am-11am)

MFLC FAMILY PICNIC THURS., MAY 22, AT MT. LEBANON MAIN PARK

11am-1pm (No rain date.) Bring your blankets and lunches as we say goodbye to the school year!

TEACHER APPRECIATION DINNER MAY 22

An evening for the teachers to get together after hours to close out the school year, courtesy of the parents who contribute food/drink. Sign-up sheet will be in the lobby.

REMEMBER PROPER PLAY SHOES FOR OUTDOOR PLAY

Gym shoes or closed-toe shoes are best.

HAVE YOU TURNED IN YOUR FAMILY QUESTIONNAIRE? 😊

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.

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. 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, Susan Sarkis, Sheri Reddy, Diane Rattay, Jennifer Fitzgerald, Amy Garces, Carrie Stock, Jamie Geisler, Melanie Johnston, Erin Bignell and Amy Cornelius-Dembosky for the time they spend each month making wonderful and wise decisions on behalf of our school.

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 Ms. Tori, who will be moving into a new chapter of her life. Tori, 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.

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 2014-2015 beginning-of-the-school-year information the first week of August. **The first day of school of MFLC's 41st year will be Sept. 8.**

Joan

Joan Harrison

Welcome Future Mushroomers!

Isla Margaret Bannon born April 10. Proud brothers Tyler and Jakob are in the 4s and Early Learners classes. *Congrats to parents Natalie and Chris!*

Oliver Oleynik born April 17. Proud sister Peyton Carder is in the 3/4s class. *Congrats to parents Juliet and Alexander!*

Henry Justin Gremba born April 25. Proud big brother Kristian is in the Early Learners class. *Congrats to parents Sara and Michael!*



News & Notes

From the president of the board...



We are just days away from our 40th Anniversary Celebration — **Come to the Mushroom playground Wednesday, May 7, from 6:00pm-8:00pm for two hours packed with fun!** Balloon makers, face painters, music, games, and Mt. Lebanon’s own Betsy’s ice cream will help transform our annual ice cream social into an event fit to celebrate four decades. You’ll even have a chance to look back over the years in our video picture album and maybe even meet some of the people who walked Mushroom’s halls way back when. Now, let’s just hope for sunshine!

Here are some of the things you’ll need to know about the evening:



- ✧ Parking is available at the MFLC parking lot and also at the Beverly Heights Church parking lot across the street. There is a crosswalk there to help you and your family across the street.
- ✧ Please come with some change in your pocket so your preschooler can play some of the carnival games our parents are setting up. Every cent will benefit the MFLC Doscher Scholarship Fund.
- ✧ Ice cream will be fresh scooped on the spot from Betsy’s Ice Cream. We ordered just enough for everyone. Please enjoy one serving on the house!
- ✧ Most importantly, **wear your red MFLC 40th anniversary t-shirt** and a smile!

Thank you, thank you to our parent planning committee who has worked tirelessly over many months to make this very special celebration possible. Jemma Premus, Nina Unitas, Rachna Jain, Judit Andrews, Chang Shu and Megan Millman—we couldn’t have done this without you.

Thank you also to Joan Harrison and Melanie Johnston for your dedication to this planning process and to the other members of the Mushroom Board of Directors (Sheri Reddy, Amy Garces, Carrie Stock, Jennifer Fitzgerald, Diane Rattay, Erin Bignell, Jamie Geisler, Amy Cornelius-Dembosky) for your input and ideas. Thank you teachers, for all of your extra help as well.

Most of all, thank YOU for making Mushroom Family Learning Center such a perfect place to be. I am proud that my children have grown up in this warm and nurturing place over the past

SUMMER FUN!

Make your own bubbles:

- 1/2 gallon water
- 1/2 cup of Dawn/Joy dishwashing liquid
- 1/4 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.

nine years. I am also honored to have served as president of the board during this landmark year in its history. I love this school! On the stepping stones of life, this one is a gem.

Susan

Susan Sarkis

News from the Early Learners classes 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 and Dad 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. We jump with joy as we observe how the children have come together as a group and yet maintain their own individuality.

It has been a year of growth and discovery for everyone. It is easy to see how much the children have grown in the physical sense but we can also see the growth in their confidence. We see this confidence as they begin exploring and trying more difficult challenges; we see it as we observe them trying to problem solve and as they begin working toward cooperative play with their peers, and we see it and laugh out loud as their creative and imaginative play takes off to a new level.

With all this going on, the children made another discovery too—that school is a fun and interesting place to go. Hopefully, this love of learning and this good feeling will follow them throughout their education.



As we spring into our final month, we will move slowly. We’ll paint and glue and get messy too and we’ll sing and dance to our favorite songs. Of course, we do have a special gift planned for that someone special in your house this month.

Marlene, Debbie and I would like to take this time to thank all of you for your support throughout the year but especially for



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your wonderful children. They have been an absolute delight. Our little room this year has resembled the cocoon of a butterfly. Inside it, the children have been changing and growing and spreading their wings. It will be hard for us to watch as our little butterflies take flight and leave us. But as all beautiful things do, they leave us with a lasting memory. It is the memory of a year well spent enjoying the wonderful moments of their childhood.

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

I am truly amazed this school year has gone by so quickly. I look at the students now, compared to when they first walked into my classroom and there is such a difference. I feel like I really know each student. They have grown in size and confidence. They are now addressing their classmates by name, when in September most of them were strangers. They consider each other friends and their play confirms this. Our classroom has become a well-oiled machine and now it is time to say goodbye. I felt it was only fitting to write down...



The TOP TEN Reasons Why I Have the Best Job Ever!

1. There is always someone, under the age of 4, who believes I could have become a professional rock star.
2. When I empty my pockets at the end of the day I find special items which often include rocks, barrettes, jewels, one glove, pretzels and flowers.
3. I receive a ton of hugs everyday with several "I love you Miss Jamie" outbursts thrown in there.
4. Where else can you sing as loud as you like and dance as much as you want?
5. I get to build strong relationships with parents since I see them almost every class.
6. A child's day can be made by turning the lights off, building a fort and using flashlights.

7. Mud pies, finger painting, play-dough making, baking, glitter and anything else messy are included in the daily plan.
8. Working with wonderful friends, like Miss Debbie and Miss Tori, who make me laugh just as much as the students.
9. There are not many jobs where you really love the "clients" you are working for.
10. That the mere mention of the last day of school brings tears to my eyes. This is a good reason because it means I truly do have the best job ever!

Here is wishing you a summer filled with special days and quiet moments.

News from the 3/4s class from Liz and Sheila...

In April, we welcomed spring and the new life it brings. We observed some of the many examples of transformation in the natural world and learned a little about the unique role each living thing plays in its ecosystem. We used the traditional counting song "Over in the Meadow" to set the stage.



Our final month will be packed with fun activities, including Open House, the Ice Cream Social and our field trip to Bird Park. I look forward to building a few more lasting memories of this wonderful group and our special time together.

Although the children have not undergone changes as dramatic as those made by a caterpillar, tadpole or seed, their transformation over the course of the year has been exciting for us to behold. They have made friends, gained independence and learned new skills. We are so proud of them!

As the year draws to a close, I would like to thank all of you for your support, and for the privilege of working with your marvelous children. We love them all!



MFLC Family Picnic
Thursday, May 22
Mt. Lebanon Main Park
11:00am



⇒ Bring your blankets and lunches to celebrate the 2013-2014 school year. (No rain date.)

News & Notes

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

We were busy in April celebrating spring and learning about life cycles. "Over in the Meadow," we witnessed new life all around us: animals, insects, flowers, trees, and children ready to explore new territory. We were so ready to get outside again and spread our wings after the long, cold winter!



In May we will continue to learn about insects and plants, but mostly we will take the time to enjoy each other's company and our favorite activities at school. We will revisit some of our favorite stories, songs, games and art experiences. We also have some fun activities planned, including a trip to Bird Park, the Ice Cream Social and the school picnic.

As the end of school approaches each year, I find myself reflecting on what a magical time of life this is. Preschoolers are filled with joy, love, enthusiasm, wonder, silliness and creativity. I feel so incredibly fortunate to dwell in this space with them for a time and watch them grow. We love each of them and will treasure our time together. Saying goodbye is the hard part, but we are excited for them, too. They have grown in every way and are ready to take on new challenges.

We have a terrific group of kids and families! It has been a pleasure getting to know all of you, and we are deeply thankful for your support.

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

I love to read. I love to be inspired. Oftentimes, I am inspired by what I read and love to share it with others. I am always inspired when I read the book "Teaching Four-Year-Olds—A Personal Journey" by Carol B. Hillman.

At the beginning of the school year I shared with my students' families a passage from her book about the "hidden curriculum" I hoped to share with the children. As we end our school year, I offer this passage again as a point of reflection and inspiration for what we hope was achieved with the hidden curriculum:

"When someone asks me what I do, and I answer that I am a teacher of four-year-olds, I sometimes get the response: 'What on earth can you teach them?' Many years ago I would have answered by describing some of the science projects or work with art materials I did with the children. Now it is different: I feel more secure in my own position; I tell them what I really do. I teach children about the world they live in, about themselves, and their peers. And I teach children about adults, trust and love. I work with attitudes. I hope to inspire a love of learning. This is what I teach.

I want to know each child like I know the back of my hand. I want to recognize their voices from across the room so if I'm busy tying Sara's shoes, I can answer without looking up. I want to know their wardrobes so I can recognize a new pair of shoelaces or a new barrette when it is worn for the first time. I want to know what gives them pleasure and makes them smile. I want to know what really irritates them or makes them sad. I want to know what books they like to look at and what they like to eat. I want to know their favorite colors and their favorite stuffed animals. I want to know what scares them and what tickles their funny bones. I want to know the full range of their capabilities. I want to be able to read their eyes so I can tell if their day has not started well. I want to know a lot of things. And I want them to know that I know.

I want children to know themselves and feel good about what they know. I want children to recognize that there are areas in which they need to grow. I want children to learn to express themselves, but I accept the fact that some are not able to do that yet and are still fighting the world with their fists. I want children to come to terms with themselves, whatever those terms may be. I want to help each child accomplish these things through my caring.

I want children to respect each other for who they are. I want children to know that, although there are differences among them, these differences are what make each of them unique. I want them to know that people can change and that they all can help to make positive changes happen. I want them to know that we all have feelings and that each of us can feel hurt. And I want them to know how it feels to help another person.



I want children to know their teacher, to know him or her as a friend. I want children to know that adults are there to help



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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.

them grow, to set limits and to protect them. I want children to know that when they are sad or troubled, there is always a lap for them to climb on and receive comfort.

I want children to know that school is now a big part of their world and that they are an important part of this world. I want children to know that is where they are supposed to be and that their parents want them to be here. I want children to know that next year they will be in a different place and that they will be ready to leave here and move on to kindergarten. This is what I teach. This is the hidden curriculum."

Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your child's childhood and sharing your family with us. We are continually honored, humbled and filled with inspiration when we're with the children in the classroom.

News from the K-Too classes 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. Both 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 in the fall.

The children really got their creative juices going in April as we put together their 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 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 also will work diligently on our Mother's Day presents which require thoughtful, and sometimes humorous, writing about mommies. We will end May with a unit on time and money, good math skills for first grade readiness.

Enjoy your summer!



From its humble beginnings in 1973 led by Margaret and Fred Doscher through this, the 40th year, Mushroom Family Learning Center has been all about play.

We believe that each child is a unique individual who deserves a warm, secure environment that promotes a sense of wonder and discovery in learning. By providing a trusting and inclusive atmosphere with mutual respect between teachers and children, each child is free to grow socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually and creatively. This enables the children to discover the special gifts that lie within them.

Turn the page to learn more about the power of play!





The Power of Play

- Liz Auer -

**“Tell me and I’ll forget; show me and I may understand;
involve me and I’ll understand.”**

This Chinese proverb illustrates the importance of direct experience in children’s learning. This month I had the privilege of attending a seminar at the Ellis School on “The Power of Play,” presented by Dr. Roberta Schomburg, director of graduate studies in early childhood education at Carlow University and NAEYC vice president.

Dr. Schomburg specifically addressed the role of play in developing “21st century skills” that children will need to develop to be successful in today’s world. She identified some of these skills as flexibility, risk-taking, innovation, creativity, persistence, problem-solving and collaboration. I found her talk inspiring and informative, and I am excited to share some of her ideas with you. Especially as we approach the long, hot summer, which can seem interminable with little ones, I’m sure you will be looking for things to do.

Dr. Schomburg began by asking us to recall our childhood memories of play and to share them with our tablemates. I ask you to take a moment to do the same. Many of us recalled building forts, exploring woods and creating fantasy worlds. No one mentioned activities constructed and directed by adults. Often, the most cherished memories involved a level of risk-taking few parents would be comfortable with today.



First and foremost, Dr. Schomburg stressed the importance of abundant, unstructured play time for children. We use the term “play” liberally, but what do early childhood educators really mean? In order to be considered true play, an activity must be spontaneous, pleasurable, freely chosen, unconstrained by time limits, and controlled by the child. I am willing to bet that much of what we call play does not meet all these criteria! I think the last two conditions are the most challenging for adults who are trying to support children’s play. Children today spend an increasing amount of time, and at earlier ages, in structured, adult-led activities. While these activities may have some value, they are not necessary for your preschooler’s optimal development. And, when they take the place of unstructured play, they can be detrimental. We sometimes worry that our children will be bored. But, as Dr. Schomburg observed, innovation and creativity grow out of boredom. Boredom provides the motivation to take action and make something happen yourself!

Another point Dr. Schomburg noted is that play is an important part of work, even for adults. How many times have you said something like, “I’m playing around with some ideas”? What feelings do such thoughts evoke in you? In claiming your thoughts and actions as play, you are releasing yourself from pressure and expectation, opening yourself to possibilities. Play leads to innovation and creativity. In play, we are unafraid to take risks. We cannot fail; we can only try something, see what happens, then try something else. This freedom to take risks is essential to success in school and in life. Scientific inquiry in particular is rooted in exploration. Unfortunately, play has been devalued in our society. We often hear, “Stop playing around and get to work” or, in a phrase that makes an educator dedicated to play-based learning cringe, “But all they are doing is playing.” Play vs. work is a false dichotomy.

Children engage in several different types of play. These include functional/sensory play, constructive play, make-believe, and games with rules. Although the different types emerge in a developmental sequence, they are all important, and all continue at every phase of development. In order to progress to each successive level, a child needs plenty of time to play. When play is frequently interrupted or controlled by adults, it tends to remain at more basic levels. It takes time to reach deeper levels of understanding.

First to emerge is functional/sensory play. All humans employ this type of play, particularly poke it, bang it, shake it, smell it and, especially through these explorations, we learn about an object’s properties and are scientists collecting data. Examples include a baby mouthing a toy, a child manipulating play dough or sand, and an adult clicking a pen during a meeting. These observations connect later to science, creativity and mechanical understanding.



play, which involves physical exploration of the world in the face of something new. We are driven to observe it, for infants, put it in our mouths. Through these explorations, and we develop our own physical skills. We

According to Dr. Schomburg, we are often too quick to shut this type of activity down. Indeed, this type of play can be messy, destructive, unsanitary and annoying! It often involves objects we do not consider to be toys. To support your child's sensory play, provide plenty of real life materials to explore freely, without an agenda. Outdoor play in a natural setting is especially important. And the next time you are tempted to say, "Stop fiddling with that," force yourself to think twice about whether the benefits of your child's exploration outweigh the risks.



Sensory play sometimes leads to the next stage, constructive play. Given enough time to explore objects with their senses, children begin to ask, "What can I do with these materials?" We look at materials and combine them in new ways. Constructive play involves assembling, sorting, building and creating. It contains the roots of engineering, architecture and art. Dr. Schomburg noted the value in not cleaning up constructions at the end of a play session whenever possible. Having to start over each day stunts the potential for this type of play to reach deeper levels and progress to more sophisticated play. Loose parts are often more valuable than elaborate play sets with prescribed instructions. To support your child's constructive play, provide blocks, art materials, buckets, stones, fabric, tubes, and other odds and ends. Lego sets are fantastic, but remember to emulate Wyldstyle rather than Lord Business!

Next to emerge is make-believe play. Often this type of play emerges from constructive play. However, if children don't have adequate time for play, they may never progress to the pretend phase. Pretend play marks the emergence of symbols and is vital to the development of literacy and mathematics. Eventually, as children's fantasy stories become more elaborate, they develop a beginning, middle and end. This also sets the stage for literacy. As they mature, children begin to use language-mediated play, where words represent actions, things and places. You might hear children say things like, "Let's pretend we went to the grocery store."

Progressing to this stage is a good indicator of school readiness. Children need to possess this skill before they are ready for true literacy. Without it, they have trouble connecting to the sequence of a story. To support your child's pretend play, provide plenty of real-life experiences to draw from. Activities as simple as accompanying you as you run errands can provide fodder for hours of imaginative play. Reading informational texts helps build a knowledge base and vocabulary that can be used in pretend play. Providing props can also invite make-believe. The younger the child, the more they need realistic props. While a toddler may need actual household objects, a three- or four-year-old may be more creative with simple props that can be used in multiple ways. Boxes and scarves can be turned into just about anything!




The final stage of play to emerge is games with rules. We see the roots of this stage in infancy with games such as peekaboo and drop/fetch. Around age six, children show increasing interest in this type of play. Board games, hide and seek, hopscotch and jacks are examples of rule-based play. Even more important are games children create themselves. These games build social interaction and negotiation skills. At this stage, children are both looking for and creating order in the world. This type of play supports math, literacy and cognitive skills. For example, think of a three- or four-year-old's early efforts to write. Letters may appear anywhere on the page, in any orientation. As their understanding of rules increases, their letters begin to follow rules and conventions. To support your child's rule-based play, provide plenty of opportunities to interact with other children.

Dr. Schomburg's most important message is to value play. Provide time, space and appealing materials. Don't allow structured activities to crowd out unstructured play. Allow your children to select the idea and materials and control the process. If you join in, do so without taking control. Allow your children to observe you behaving playfully in your own activities. Encourage your children to take reasonable risks. Let them know that it's OK to try something, even if they don't think they know what to do. Celebrate their questions and encourage them to discover their own answers.

**Mushroom is a proudly play-based preschool.
We love learning through play!
To extend your child's learning this summer,
I encourage you to commit to letting your glorious children play.**

Business Directory



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