



The Observatory

Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School  Issue 1, September 2002

Dear Families

by Marie Imai, LGSONS Director

Dear Families,

Welcome to this brand new year of mountain school and all the wonderful adventures ahead for you and your child to enjoy together this fall. The teachers are excited to put on their big black boots once again and go exploring with the children up the hills, down the creeks and in and around the chicken coop.

Who will be the first to find a caddis fly larvae, a banana slug, a millipede, two brown eggs or ten maple spinners? Which class can collect a big bucket of acorns or find the special ones still stuck fast to their fuzzy hats? How quickly will you learn to beware the stinging nettle and poison oak? And how long can you be still to hear the wind rustle in the treetops or the stellar jay shout out his song? Learning in these circumstances is truly a magical experience for all of us.

I think that the time you spend with your child outdoors should be viewed as an antidote to the materialism, the crowdedness and the complexity of the rest of our lives. By keeping in touch with the earth, its natural rhythms, changing seasons, its beauty and mystery, we strengthen and renew ourselves to better handle the daily routines and struggles of life.

When you get to school and the children are finally settled, take a few quiet moments beneath a tree to open all of your own senses and recharge yourself. In order to give back to our families we need to nourish ourselves as well. These wonderful woods of the Santa Cruz mountains have so much peace and beauty to offer to those who take the time. I strongly encourage working spouses to arrange a morning or afternoon off to come to school with your child. This may be your only chance to make a school visit by going to the woods.



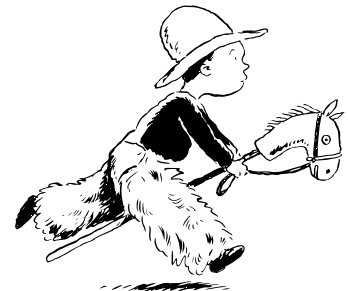
It has been my experience that the places we treasure as a young child become part of our soul and

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Welcome Back from the Board

by Dianne O'Neil, Board President

Once upon a time there was a little red schoolhouse. It lived in the mountains, surrounded by trees, chickens and a small garden. Every morning and afternoon, it welcomed little people, to come into its old, cozy rooms, or to tumble about on the monkey bars and slides outside of its red walls. These



children liked to play house, or scramble around in the shade of the trees; often finger painting, or hammering, or building – with their imaginations. The fragrant smell of simmering soup or baking bread danced out the door, as did songs, stories and laughter. Inside, the children played dress-up, or punched play-doh, or marched animals, two-by-two. Moms and dads and teachers were around (somewhere?) – quietly observing from the other side of the room; listening, understanding, questioning, wondering all at once.

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will always bring comfort to us. A child who learns to climb on rocks and scramble up hillsides on her hands and knees becomes rooted in our earth and will work harder as an adult to protect the environment that she loves. Our mountain school family welcomes all of you to a joyous year as together we face the challenge of raising young children to become compassionate people who truly love our earth. So let this year begin quickly as I can hardly wait to meet each one of you.

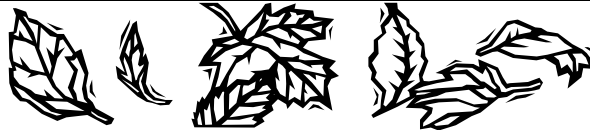
Love, Marie ☺

(Welcome from Board, continued)

It seems an eternity almost, since last year's class finished up at Mountain School, and the long, hot days of summer and vacation filled our days. For those of you returning to our school, after an absence of a summer, or a year or two, I'm sure you can remember the wonderful times you had, watching the little ones running up the hill with their backpacks swinging behind them, greeted by a smiling teacher. If you are new to the school this year, you will soon be forming your own stories and memories of Mountain School, shaping another community of caring parents, making new friends, watching the children grow.

Welcome to a new year at our extraordinary school! ☺

Fall Picnic



by Alexandra Cortes, Social Co-chair

Hi all and welcome back!

It's time again for the LGSONS Fall Family Picnic. Bring the whole family and join us for this annual potluck event. This year's picnic will take place on:

Sunday, October 20

2:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Location to be announced in early October

The Picnic is a potluck, so bring something to barbecue along with your favorite side dish to share – don't forget plates, utensils and drinks!

The Fall Picnic is a great opportunity to join the Mountain School community for a fall celebration. There will be crafts for the children, hikes, a campfire and plenty of fun for the entire family.

Look for flyers as the date gets closer. ☺

Recommended Reading

by Kathy Wilcox

As you've probably heard or read by now, we are adding a new component to our parent education program this year. We are asking all families to acquire three books which we will be reading and discussing in our circle meetings: *Becoming the Parent You Want to Be* by Janis Keyser and Laura Davis, *Positive Discipline A-Z* by Jane Nelsen, and *Kids, Parents and Power Struggles* by Mary Sheehy Kurcinka. To make life easier, you will be able to order these books at a substantially discounted price at your first circle meeting, and we will also place a few copies in the school library. (This list is slightly different than the one you received in the summer letter. We apologize for the confusion – this is the final list.)

All parents are terribly short on time, and we also are bombarded with highly conflicting “expert” advice about how to handle everything from aggressive behavior to whining. We teachers do not wish to introduce additional pressure into your lives or add to your confusion. However, we have been thinking that it would enrich our circle meetings to have a common, up-to-date body of information upon which we all can draw in our discussions; that it will help everyone to have access to a more in-depth perspective than can be gained from one mini-course, one general meeting, or one circle meeting; and that these books will serve as a useful reference to you at home

during (or more likely after) those moments when you are scratching your head/pulling out your hair/wondering what on earth to try next.



Why these particular books? Each of them is written by someone who has worked in a very hands-on way with thousands of parents over many, many years. The authors are all pretty practical people who are trying to help parents solve problems that come up over and over again in daily life. The books are full of true stories of the difficult moments we parents face and of strategies parents have used to make lemonade out of lemons. The authors are people who have thought deeply, are familiar with recent research, and who share an approach similar to our school's in that they are working to teach the whole child skills for a lifetime. The first book is written specifically for parents of children from zero to five, while the other two deal with all ages up through teenagers; those of you in the older classes will be able to draw on these books for many years to come.

We teachers will be very interested in what you think of these books as you go through the year. We want to know if you think they are good, bad or indifferent; if you have suggestions of other books; and if you think reading a

common body of material should become a permanent part of our program. We will be asking for your feedback later in the year. In the meantime, we hope you will experience a sense of camaraderie with the parents you meet in these books, who, like you, have lived the joys and difficulties of raising children. We hope you will pick and choose as you read and as you talk, finding suggestions that are useful to you as well as others that you will decide to pass on by. Ultimately, we all have to rely on our sense of what feels right for us and our families. But it can be a privilege to have access to other people's thoughts and experience as we sort this out for ourselves.

On a more practical note, your first reading assignment (!) is *Positive Discipline A - Z*, pages 3 to 40, by Jane Nelsen. The topic of our General Meeting on Sept. 19 is Positive Discipline, and our speaker is a colleague of Jane Nelsen's. The first section of the book outlines the positive discipline approach, so it should complement the material presented at this meeting. At our circle meetings in early October, we will be able to follow up in smaller groups on the topic of positive discipline.

In addition, we will be talking early in the year about where our children are developmentally and about how we develop as parents. *Becoming the Parent You Want to Be*, pages 1 to 30, relates directly to both of these topics, and it contains a lot of food for thought. Happy reading! ☺

Fall Fundraiser



by Anne J. Morton
Giftwrap Sales Coordinator

It's the start of our Sally Foster giftwrap fundraiser. All Mountain School families will receive a catalog and order form at their first circle meetings. Items include top-quality gift-wraps, totes, ribbons, stationery and gifts. Please invite family, friends and co-workers to order from you in the next few weeks. They may share your catalog or browse the catalog online at SallyFoster.com. Most importantly, *our school receives 50% of the purchase price on every item purchased.*

Please return your completed order form and money by *October 5, 2002*. If you're the family to bring in the most money, receive *free babysitting for an evening and two tickets to see a movie of your choice*. The products will arrive at the red schoolhouse before Thanksgiving. If you need another order form (one for work and one for home) or if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. Thank you for participating in this fundraiser. Everyone benefits!

Anne J. Morton
(Clara's mom, 4/5s)
phone: (408) 354-4243 ☺

Out of Africa

by Teacher Jan Eby

I received some extremely exciting mail this summer. It was a letter from Festus MBinga, of Namibia, Africa. Festus was working as a guide at a desert camp when I met him on my travels to that country. He had expressed a desire to help his young sons, Roger age nine, and Ronald age five, learn strong English skills. I promised to send children's books, as they are difficult to obtain in Namibia.

After hearing this family's story last school year, the 3's class gathered many books to send to them. In addition, a book of photos of each child and the book they selected was included in the mailing. Then the wait began ... months went by with no word from Festus. I worried about the unpredictable mail service, a change of address or any number of things that could have prevented the books from reaching the correct people. Finally, a letter arrived from Africa – a happy day! I would like to share with you just a few quotes from that letter of gratitude:



“... the huge bag with books did finally arrive here ...”

“Roger and Ronald have divided the books between the two of them.”

“On some days we give them the books to take to school, and every time the teachers ask to borrow the books so that they can use them and copy their methods.”

“My wife's house is like a kindergarten. Since the books arrived neighbor's children come and join Roger and Ronald with writing or reading the books.”

“There is no day passing without them touching the books.”

“Thank you very, very much to everyone who donated the books.”

I have written back to Festus asking if more books could be used. Perhaps the 3's class has a great project for this coming school year! ☺

Family Photography Days

by Anne Veis,
School Photos Coordinator



Get a jump start on those holiday cards! Have professional pictures taken of your kids or your whole family on the mornings of:

Saturday, September 28 or
Sunday, October 6
at Oak Meadow Park.

Appointments may be made by calling our school photographer, Susan Weiland, at 408-996-1933 after September 9.

The photo shoot costs \$10 per family – truly a bargain for professional pictures taken in a natural setting! Look for more information in your school folder shortly. ☺

Where's the School Roster?

The school roster will be reviewed at first circle meetings over the next couple weeks. Steve Cox is working diligently to add e-mail addresses and make any necessary corrections. As soon as the roster is finalized, you will receive it via e-mail.

If you did not provide your current e-mail address at your first circle meeting, you may send it via e-mail to steve@lgsons.com. If you do not have e-mail, Steve can also have the roster faxed to you; just call him to make this request (408-264-8311). If you don't have e-mail or fax, then let your teacher know and a printed roster will be made available to you. ☺

Read This Online

THE "OBSERVATORY" ON THE WEB

by Nicole Frees, Newsletter Chair

We are pleased to announce that our school newsletter is now available in PDF (Acrobat format) on our website, www.lgsons.com. Please spread the word to mountain school alumni and friends.

If you would like to be notified by e-mail when the next newsletter is available, you may send an e-mail to steve@lgsons.com and request that your address be added to the newsletter distribution list.

Thank you to Steve Cox for setting this up. ☺

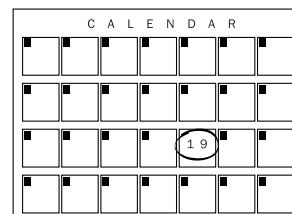
Upcoming Events

General Meeting
Thursday, September 19

Workday for 3's and 4/5's
Sunday, September 29

Fall Picnic
Sunday, October 20
See article on page 2 for details.

Move Indoors to Schoolhouse
Monday, October 21



If you've misplaced your school calendar, you can print out another copy from the [lgsons](http://lgsons.com) website. Connect to www.lgsons.com and click on the Calendar link. ☺

eScrip and Schoolpop

TOP TEN QUESTIONS, PLUS ONE!

by Erika Heckscher, eScrip and Schoolpop Programs Coordinator

1. What is eScrip anyway?

eScrip is a fundraising program where our school receives a small amount of what you spend at certain stores, using your grocery loyalty cards, debit/ATM card, gas card, or credit cards.

2. Then what is Schoolpop?

Schoolpop is also a fundraising program where our school receives a small amount of what you spend online, through catalogs, and at certain stores, using your credit cards.

3. What will it cost me?

Nothing. Schoolpop does not charge any fee. The eScrip fee of \$10 (per school) is paid by our school. This makes it easier to ask families and friends to sign up too!

4. Why should I do this?

If we had all our families signed up for eScrip, the school would receive over \$13,000 a year! Of roughly 100 families in our school, we have only 30 families signed up for eScrip and 19 families signed up for Schoolpop.

5. What stores does this work with?

eScrip works with Safeway, Whole Foods, Vons, Andronico's, Lunardi's, Chevron, Gap, Payless

Shoes, Petsmart, Round Table Pizza, plus many more.

Schoolpop works with BarnesandNoble.com, Lands End, LL Bean, amazon.com, Pets.com and Sharper Image, plus many more.

6. How do I sign-up?

Online: go to the website at www.escrip.com and www.schoolpop.com and follow the sign-up instructions.

By Mail: Registration forms are in the parents' room at the schoolhouse. If you have any questions: call Erika at 408-378-9738, or email me at erika.heckscher@att.net

7. What do I do after I sign-up?

Use your grocery cards, debit/ATM cards, gas cards, credit cards every time you shop in a store or through a catalog. To shop online, sign-in first at www.schoolpop.com, then link to the online website you want. No other sign-up or paperwork is needed, except to update your card numbers or expiration dates that change (do this online).

8. Can the same card be registered with eScrip and Schoolpop?

Yes.

9. I'm already registered for another school, or church – what do I do?

Both programs will split your proceeds between multiple



schools or organizations. Go online to www.escrip.com and www.schoolpop.com to add our school – Los Gatos Saratoga Observation Nursery School, (eScrip id# 3593396)

10. How do I know how much my purchases have helped our school?

Both websites, www.escrip.com and www.schoolpop.com have reports to show how much you've contributed to our school.

11. Will my card numbers be safe?

Yes. I've been signed-up for three years, with credit cards, and *no problems.* If this concerns you, please sign-up your grocery cards which can generate substantial money to our school. Also, I have *not* received any junk email from being signed up at these websites. ∞

Newsletter Contributions

by Nicole Frees, Newsletter Chair

If you have some important, interesting or entertaining information to extend to your fellow parents and teachers, we want to here from you. Please consider sharing with us some of your favorite healthy recipes for children, fun family outings, or a list of well-loved children's books.

The deadline for the next school newsletter is: Friday, October 4. Please e-mail your submissions to me at nfrees@att.net. If you do not have e-mail, then you may reach me at 650-961-4016. ☺

Shop for Mountain School

by Darla Padgett, Fundraising



Raise money for our Mountain School while doing your holiday shopping. Beginning this October, www.mylittleshopper.com will be featuring The Mountain School logo on the check-out page. Click on it and 5% of the profits from your order will go to our Mountain School Fundraising account. With beautiful gifts for her, him, kids, babies, corporate gifts, special events, sports and jewelry, you can gift and give to our cause at the same time. Happy holidays! ☺

Work Weekend at Sequoia Lake

Many of our mountain school families have enjoyed our annual family camp weekend at the Sequoia Lake YMCA. Later this month, we have an opportunity to give back to the Central Valley YMCA community by participating in the upcoming Work Weekend, September 28 and 29, 2002. Please consider coming and lending a helping hand and enjoying the community of working along side other mountain school moms and dads.



Projects will include general clean up and repair; porch and deck building, plumbing, electrical and general building repair; winter preparation work, including wood splitting and stacking.

The weekend will also include fun, food, fellowship and the beauty of Sequoia Lake.

If you can participate please RSVP to Steve Buck at 559-335-2382 or e-mail sbuck@cvymca.org.

Your generous, tax deductible gifts of tools, lumber, and excellent used furniture are always welcome as well.

If you need more information, you may also talk to mountain school teacher, Debra Brender 408-356-7984. ☺

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Reading Aloud to Your Children

by Sally McElravey

*The following are edited excerpts from an article by Sally McElravey, former director and teacher at Mountain school, first published in January, 1984. Sally writes about attending a talk by Jim Trelease, author of *The Read Aloud Handbook*.*

Jim created a thirst to get to a library or bookstore to select the picture book he read, *Ira Sleeps Over*; or one of the other titles he brought to our attention; and he touched off a burst of enthusiasm to read aloud to children. Leaving such stimulating company, I couldn't help but feel grateful for my parenthood, and renewed with fresh goals and ideas to enliven my role as a strong and caring parent.

Here are some tidbits from my notes:

82% of elementary school age children had not read a book in recent months but had logged 100 hours of TV per month. Limit TV time in your house. Compare the number of shopping trips you and your child make to the number of trips to the library.



We need to instill a desire to read in our children. Reading aloud to a child constitutes a commercial for instilling that desire.

Reading aloud increases: listening skills, reading skills, writing skills, and attention span, and builds an emotional and intellectual bridge between parent and child.

Buy your child a bedside lamp. Let them stay up a little late at night to read.

If you buy his book, *The Read Aloud Handbook*, you will have a terrific source for good books. ∞

This publication paid for by:
Los Gatos Saratoga Joint Union High School District
Adult Education Division

Who's Mmm is the Cooking Mmm?



CARROT ZUCCHINI MUFFINS

by Dianne O'Neil

Dry Mixture:

- 1 ¼ cups flour
- ½ tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- ⅛ tsp nutmeg
- ½ cup raisins

Moist Mixture:

- 2 large eggs
- ⅓ cup vegetable oil
- ¾ cup packed brown sugar
- ¼ cup buttermilk
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ cup finely shredded zucchini
- ½ cup finely shredded carrot

Preheat oven to 350° F. Grease 12 muffin cups. Combine dry mixture in a large bowl. Mix moist ingredients in a medium bowl. Add moist mixture to dry mixture and stir until moistened. Fill muffin cups completely full.

Bake 30 minutes. Voila!
Enjoy! ∞