



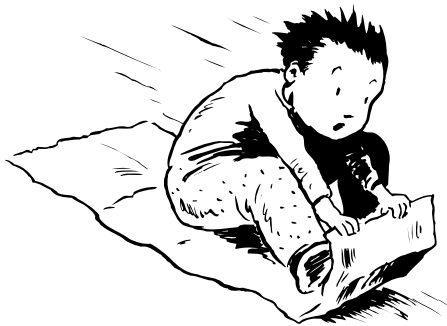
The Observatory

Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School ☽ Issue 2, October 2002

Autumn Arrives

by Dianne O'Neil, Board President

Even though autumn is about harvests and falling leaves, I always think of it as starting over with a clean slate! When September and October roll around, I look forward to the change in the weather, and the start of another year of activities – craving the structure of a schedule after the laid back weeks of Summer. As the days get cooler and shorter though, it seems we do get busier. Observations are compiling, cooking projects are assembling, circles are meeting, friendships are forming, playdates are planning, holidays are coming and things are happening at Mountain School!



"As the days get cooler and shorter though, it seems we do get busier."

In just a few more weeks we will be moving inside, and heading back up Black Road to the little Red Schoolhouse. Many people have been at work! The bathroom has a new look, thanks to the efficient Padgett and Von Luehrte families, our facilities team! The teachers' room is on the slate next: it is receiving a much-needed reorganization. Other school activities are in progress: fundraising information will be forthcoming at October circle meetings, the Fall picnic is upon us, and you can request an all-school roster online, by contacting Steve Cox, our web master *extraordinaire* at steve@lgsons.com. Check out other materials on-line, including our calendar and past newsletters at www.lgsons.com.

Have a wonderful Fall! ☽

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

Letter from Marie

by Marie Imai, LGSONS Director

Dear families,

Now that we have completed our first month of school I hope that each one of you is beginning to feel comfortable with the routines and rhythms of your class. And I hope that your children look forward as happily to each new day of school as do the teachers. All of us seem to function better when we know what to expect from each day and I think this is doubly important for children. A few minutes spent at bedtime talking about the next day's plans can really help your child adapt more easily when morning arrives. Talking specifically about each aspect of the morning is useful – getting dressed, eating breakfast, brushing teeth, driving to school, who will be there and what the children's names are – all help to smooth out the many transitions a child has to make every day. I'm sure you hear the teachers announcing, "ten more minutes until clean-up time" or "soon it will be cooking time" which are other ways to help make transitions easier. The more knowledge a child has of what is happening next the easier it will be to comply.

I'm sure that many of you have experienced your child falling

(Continued on page 2)

CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE

Autumn Arrives

Page 1

.....

Letter from Marie

Page 1

.....

LGSONS T-shirts

Page 3

.....

Real Education from Leaves

Page 3

.....

Newsletter Contributions

Page 4

.....

Fun with Froggy

Page 4

.....

Facilities Update

Page 5

.....

E-mail News

Page 5

.....

Upcoming Events

Page 5

.....

Reflections on Mortality

Page 6

.....

eScrip and Schoolpop

Page 6

.....

Sneak Peek at Mini Courses

Page 7

.....

Stay-at-Home Mt. School Dad

Page 8

.....

(Letter from Marie, continued)

asleep on the way home from school. While we're quick to understand how tired they get from all the physical activity we may forget that each new social interaction with another child or with a teacher also takes its toll on a young child's stamina. So when your child is having a hard time coping you might want to simplify his/her daily schedule in whatever way you can to one which is more child centered. We adults often complain about the fast pace of our lives so imagine what that may feel like to our children.

After only four weeks of school, I am very excited to see how quickly the children in my class have adapted to new teachers, new activities (hiking here and hiking there and hiking everywhere) and a mix of new and familiar friends. As they become secure in the routines of their class they are more willing to risk new challenges, to try something they haven't



done before, to play with someone new. And in order to grow we all must be willing to take risks. And speaking of growing up, today is my 60th birthday which seems quite hard to believe. I also can't believe that I've procrastinated once again and put off writing until today. It seems some lessons take a whole life to learn.

I first attended LGSONS as a parent with my son, Stefan, in the fall of 1969 which means that I have been involved with Mountain School in some way for over half my life. I guess that it's much easier to talk about taking risks than actually doing so if it means changing careers from one that has meant so much to me. Each year I feel more appreciative of this special community of families and teachers who are willing to support each other, meeting the many challenges and joys in raising children and raising ourselves to become caring and compassionate human beings. Though I don't feel "old" yet my husband reminded me of the poem by Jenny Joseph that begins

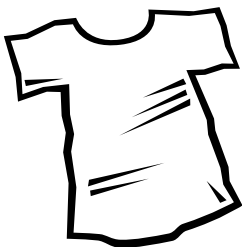
"When I am an old woman I shall wear purple with a red hat that doesn't go and doesn't suit me, ... I shall go out in my slippers in the rain and pick the flowers in other people's gardens and learn to spit. But now we must have clothes that keep us dry and pay our rent and not swear in the street and set a good example for the children. We must have friends to dinner and read the papers ... But maybe I ought to practise a little now? So people who know me are not too shocked and surprised when suddenly I am old and start to wear purple and to spit."

So I'll see you all at the family picnic where you might find me in a new purple shirt.

Love, Marie ☺

LGSONS Sweatshirts and T-Shirts

by Lani Takano
T-Shirt Sales Coordinator



The LGSONS sweatshirts and T-shirts are now on sale. Don't miss out! The children's garments will be available with a full chest LGSONS logo on the front. The adult garments will be available with a smaller LGSONS logo on the left breast. These garments will be available in red and royal blue.

Sample sizes will be made available at the Red Schoolhouse parent room.

Place your completed order form and check into the appropriately marked envelopes at school by *Thursday, October 31, 2002*. Orders will be delivered to your class by the end of November.

If you have any questions, please call Lani Takano 650.966.1962. ☺

FOUND

Ladies Watch found at Family Camp (May, 2002).

Phone: 408.858.7767. ☺

Real Education from Leaves

by Betty Peck

The following letter was written by our school's founder, Betty Peck, while she was a kindergarten teacher. The letter was written to the school's custodian, Henry, on one fateful autumn day ...

Henry!

Give us back our leaves! Henry, do you know this is the same as saying give us back our *childhood!* What do you think education is? Certainly not sitting with paper and pencil. It's leaves!

We play in the leaves.
We walk in the leaves.
We sing about the leaves.
We tell stories about leaves.
We sleep in the leaves, hoping to be kissed by a leaf.
We cover ourselves with leaves.
We tell stories about leaves.
We dance and fall like the leaves.
We trace them.
We draw them.
We press them.
We design with them.
We rake them into piles.
We have conversations about leaves.

Henry, what do you think Fall is about ...

We count the leaves.
We weigh the leaves.
We play games with the leaves.
We line them up in order of size.
We were waiting for the first rains to carry them down to us.
We have waited and counted the days for them to fall.
We've watched them turn the magic color of our floor.
We love the sound our five-year-old feet make as we move in them.
We explore them to see how quiet they are when the rain comes.
We learn the letter "l" first, which is found in the lifeline of every leaf.

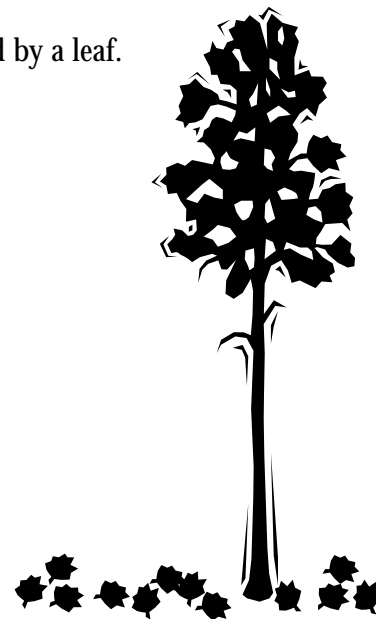
We love leaves.

We gather them up in our arms.

We take them home in our pockets.

To have the Catalpa tree and Sycamore trees is a child's paradise. It's what childhood is all about. To be in leaves, to feel them, to know you can count on them to know how to change and fall, to feel needed in

(Continued on page 4)



(Leaves, continued)



their effort to return to the earth is pure joy. How important we feel to rescue them from the blacktop and tuck them in the beautiful compost bin. It is here in the compost that all the promiscuous insects and creatures too hard to see work all winter turning them in to new earth. Then we watch this new earth alive with life become a part of our vegetable beds where we will grow our seeds. It is here we will gather our vegetables to eat on celebration days, having discovered that all things are all things.

Henry, leaves are our life. These leaves have been giving us our oxygen the three hours we have been at school each day. We have been exchanging our breath with them. They have needed us and we have needed them. We are now putting them to rest in our

garden. We carry them with great effort in the wheelbarrow parading after one another with our rakes, brooms and shovels. This is the way we show our gratitude for the days we spent in their shade and the days we watched them with joy dancing in the wind. This is how we show our gratitude for the days spent feeling their life and beauty through our school room window.

And now we will be waiting for the last leaf to fall. This is a moment of awe. It is always carefully recorded. And then there is a long wait to see if the tree will live again. Has it died or will there be new leaves again? When you're five years old, new life of Spring is a celebration. Then we watch them grow until they welcome summer with their cascades of white blossoms. At this very moment all summer-born children celebrate their birthdays.



A truck and a trailer and someone's adult time stole all this from our lives. As we arrived back from our trip to the community garden, all our leaves were being taken off and we stood there in shock not able to believe it was true.

The celebrations of the seasons is man's birthright. Henry, this is what we are all about, and each year I have to scream, protecting the rights of the five-year-old to real education. ~



Fun ideas and projects that I have done with my granddaughter, Emily.

Sandwich Art

by "Froggy" (Carol-Lyn Davis)
Teacher in Saturday 3/4/5s

This activity gives a whole new twist to the term "starving artist." Using slices of white bread as a palette, your child can create masterpieces that are good enough to eat.

Materials needed:

- Food coloring
- paper cups, each filled with a few tablespoons of milk
- new paintbrushes
- white bread

Add a few drops of food coloring to each cup of milk. Using the colored milk and new paintbrushes, have kids paint pictures and designs on the bread. Toast lightly and use the slices to make their favorite sandwich.

Look for more Fun with Froggy projects in the next issue of the Observatory. ~

Newsletter Contributions

by Nicole Frees,
Newsletter Chair

We'd love to hear from you! If you have a story, recipe, thought, poem, kids' project, or some other message that would be appropriate for the school newsletter, then send it my way.

The deadline for the next issue of "The Observatory" is: Friday, November 22. 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. ~

Facilities Update

by Missy Von Luehrte,
Facilities Co-Chair

Wow! What a great workday we had on September 29TH! Thanks to everyone for all their hard work! The replaced cedar shingles on the Schoolhouse were painted, the deck sanded and stained, shelves and toys cleaned, and the Teachers Room improvement project is under way. Thanks to Lisa Bailey and the garden crew for a major overhaul in the garden and compost area.



For those of you who have not been to the schoolhouse yet this year, you will see the new and improved bathroom! Thanks so much to Joe Padgett for all his hard work this summer, Missy and Kevin Von Luehrte on the sidelines coordinating and pitching in, and Darla Padgett for her stencilling skills... what an accomplishment.

If you missed the September workday or are unable to attend your scheduled workday you have three options:

1. Attend a different workday (November 17, 2002 or February 2, 2003);

2. Contact the workday coordinator to check on a potential at-home project or schoolhouse project that could be done at a separate time; or

(Continued on page 8)

E-Mail News

by Steve Cox,
LGSONS Web Master

The 2002-2003 roster is completed and you all should have received it via email. Please send any changes to me at steve@lgsons.com and I will make sure we keep the roster updated. If you do not have e-mail, I can have the roster faxed to you; just call me 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.

Another note on the school email lists. We have built a system to enable easy communications amongst members of the school. To use it, simply send an email to one of the addresses below and the email will automatically be sent to the appropriate group.

- 2f@lgsons.com 2-year-old class on Friday
- 2s@lgsons.com 2-year-old class on Saturday
- 2w@lgsons.com 2-year-old class on Wednesday
- 345mtt@lgsons.com 3/4/5 class on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday
- 345s@lgsons.com 3/4/5 class on Saturday
- 3tt@lgsons.com 3-year-old class on Tuesday, Thursday
- 45mwf@lgsons.com 4/5 class on Monday, Wednesday, Friday
- board@lgsons.com school board and staff
- everyone@lgsons.com the whole school

All class groups include the parents and teachers in that class. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to ask! ☺

Upcoming Events

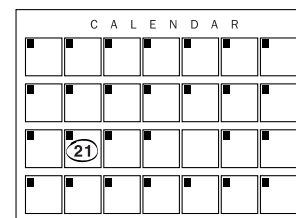
Move Indoors to Schoolhouse
Monday, October 21

Board Meeting
November 5, 2002

Veterans Day Holiday
November 11, 2002

Workday for Both 3/4/5s Classes
November 17, 2002

The date of our big fundraiser, the annual auction, has just been set. Mark your calendars!



Auction
Saturday, March 22, 2003

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

Reflections on Mortality

by Jill Hyman

Assistant Teacher Wed 2s, Sat 3/4/5s

At her first circle meeting, Jane introduced me as the one with road kill in her freezer. Until recently, I housed, in frozen form: one California mountain king snake, one ring neck snake one mole, one squirrel, one acorn woodpecker, one robin and one western screech owl.

“Why?” you might find yourself asking. Before why, I should tell you how. Each of these animals was found near my home in the Santa Cruz Mountains, where I hike, run, and bicycle the roads and trails. I just seem to find injured or dead animals, not always the result of road kill. The



“why” is that finding the animal stimulates my curiosity and leads to investigation. First I identify it in a field guide, and then learn about its habitat, diet, and life cycle. I like to bring them to school or to Big Basin or Henry Cowell (where I docent) to share with the children. There is tremendous curiosity about the animals that live with us, seen or unseen, and dead animals stay in one place. They provide an opportunity to get close to the animal and close to death. Children are not afraid to look closely, to touch, to hold, to smell, to ask, “Why he dead?” Even with a well-meaning, adult, logical explanation, there is great struggle to understand death. “He

can't fly? Maybe in a 'lil while he fly!” “He can't move anymore, he's dead” is close, but not quite comprehensible.

Death is a mystery, hard for us to understand too. Maybe that's why we don't talk about it easily; we avoid it. My father died last February. He was a vital, active

“Bruce ... wasn't excited about the dead animals, lying silently, frozen next to the homemade bread ...”

man of 84, who still worked and exercised every day. He became ill and died within four weeks. Both of his parents died at 93, so it was an earlier than expected demise, though who of us can know when or how? I spent precious time with him in the hospital, sitting quietly by his side, telling him I loved him. He had time to say his good-byes to children and grandchildren, a gift to all.

At his memorial, I scanned the crowded room, a sea of faces, mostly older friends. I had heard so many stories of deaths of spouses, bouts with serious illness. Each had his or her story of loss. I wondered why we don't (or can't) speak more openly of death, our common, binding experience – one that makes us open and vulnerable, connected to each other in a direct and authentic way. I guess we're all afraid, some primordial fear, that speaking it makes it happen. But of course it will happen, we just can't predict when or how. Each day becomes so precious when we see how fragile life is.

My son, Bruce, wasn't excited about the dead animals, lying

silently, frozen next to the homemade bread, tomato sauce, preserves, and chutneys (even though they were bagged in double ziplocs and stuffed inside a heavy cardboard box). In a moment of delirium I announced, “I'm going to get rid of the dead ani-



mals.” It was a hot summer afternoon. I removed the box and carried it down the road. I flung each one far into the canyon, finally giving each its deserved place in the cycle of life. Secretly, I kept one, and I'm sure if I find another being, dead or alive, I'll start another collection. Maybe three ziplocs this time. ☺

eScrip and Schoolpop

UPDATE ON THE NUMBERS

by Erika Heckscher, eScrip and Schoolpop Programs Coordinator

Escrip: 58 Supporters. Contributions to the school approximately \$200 per month.

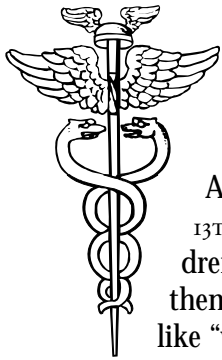
Schoolpop: 36 supporters enrolled, up from 21 in April. Average quarterly rebates for the last few quarters was about \$33, compared to an average \$200 per quarter one year ago.

In summary, enrollment looks promising, but no financial results yet. Please remember to logon to Schoolpop before doing your online shopping. ☺

Sneak Peek at Mini Courses

by Marina Barnes and Jutta Braken-Guelke,
Programs Co-Chairs

Our Fall series of mini courses is just a few weeks away! Here is a preview of the mini courses that you can expect to see in November. Please keep in mind that while we have already scheduled four of them we are still working on the other two (or three); as a result, there may be some changes. More information and details will be posted at the end of October or the beginning of November.



We hope that you will find at least one mini course that appeals to you and that you will find enjoyable and helpful at the same time.

We have scheduled a *CPR class* with Holly Brondos for November 12th.

Andrew Osterlund will do a lecture on *Self-Awareness as a Self Defense* for us on November 13th. Andrew will teach parents skills on how to keep themselves, their children and other children in their care safe. Participants will also learn how to teach children skills on how to keep themselves safe and what to do in case of an emergency. Andrew will touch on important topics like “who is a stranger,” “good strangers and bad strangers,” “how do you describe a stranger and who do you tell,” “what is an emergency and how do you report it,” “parental password,” “what do you do in case of a fire or other major emergency,” “how do get away,” etc. He will also help participants develop a family safety plan, if time allows.

On November 19th Richard Dorsay will give an overview about the psychological system called *The Enneagram*. This system describes nine distinct and different patterns of thinking, feeling and acting. Each of the nine patterns (peacemaker, challenger, enthusiast, loyalist, investigator, individualist, achiever, helper, reformer) is based on an explicit perceptual filter, which determines what people pay attention to and how they direct their energy. It is useful in helping the individual become a better self observer so that he or she can change some patterns of activity that are no longer working. Also it is a powerful tool in helping people understand why others see the world differently. The presentation involves a videotape that has examples of the nine different types. Richard will explain the system and answer questions.

Kathy Wilcox will discuss the subject *Parenting: Reflections on Our Journey* on November 20th. Participants will share their experiences of parenthood; how it has changed them; how their relationships with others in and outside their family have changed. Have they grown from it, and if yes, how? Have they felt diminished by it, and if yes, in what ways? What factors have affected, positively and negatively, their experience of parenting? What have other parents who have written about parenting had to say about what it has really been like?

We are still working out the details for a *cooking class* that we would like to offer. We would like to present and prepare (and hopefully get to taste!) healthy, quick, nutritious, yet interesting and kid-friendly recipes.



Jeanne Dominguez will teach a mini course on how to make *cuddle quilts*. The quilts may be, if participants choose to, donated to a local charity. (The date for this class will still have to be confirmed.)

Have fun! ~

Stay-at-Home Mountain School Dad Finds a Way to Have it All!

Many of you have already met Joe Padgett. He is one of the co-chairs on our school board for maintenance. He will be the first to tell you that our school is just one of the many changes he has experienced in the last four years.

During that period he has been married, laid-off, become a dad, built his home, begun volunteering for our Mountain School and now, founded his own on-line shopping site.

He was managing a machine shop that specialized in parts for the aeronautics industry when he met his soon-to-be wife Darla.

In no time, they were making plans to marry, build their home in Monte Sereno and then begin a family. No sooner did they begin construction than Joe found himself being laid-off. He and Darla decided he should stay at home and ensure the quality of the job being done on the construction of their home while Darla continued to work on the road.

Almost nine months to the day after their honeymoon, Colton Padgett was welcomed to a half-finished home and a life in flux. Luckily in-laws were close by to assist with living and babysitting needs.

Once they finally moved into their home and started settling into family life, Joe found that being a stay at home dad, while a wonderful experience, left him

unfulfilled. He and his wife took inventory of his talents, interests and desire to continue being home for Colton and any future children.

That served as the motivation for what is now "mylittleshopper.com". Joe has now been able to use his business management skills, his photography skills and his wife's creative side to create an on-line shopping site that he can run from home. Furthermore, they have found a way to give back to the community.

They have chosen the Mountain School, Half the Sky and the Rotary as the charities that they will use for donations through the site. Anyone doing their shopping on the site can select one of the charities and 5% of the profits from their purchase will be donated to that foundation.

A husband, a dad, a photographer, a manager, a volunteer and a philanthropist. In times that are challenging spiritually, socially, and economically, there are still answers and ways to make it all work out. Joe and Darla are proud to be a part of the Mountain School family and want to remind you all that if you are going to shop on-line for the holidays, remember to go to mylittleshopper.com and select the Mountain School as the recipient of your donation. ☺

(Facilities Update, cont.)

3. Alternatively, elect to do a buy out for \$150.

All workday requirements must be complete by the last scheduled workday for the year!

Per the Parent Handbook: Four hours of maintenance (or two hours each if both parents participate) are required each year. This is for upkeep and improvement of the schoolhouse. A family may elect to buy out of the maintenance requirement for \$150. If you fail to notify the Facilities Chair

at least seven days in advance of your inability to attend your workday, you will be required to pay an additional \$15.

The parent participation, enthusiasm, and love for the school is what makes everything happen at Mountain School! Thank you all for your time and energy.



Facilities Co-chairs:

Joe Padgett, 408.395.8070,
joep@kepnet.com

Missy Von Luehrte, 408.353.4239,
missy@dsldesigns.net

Workday Coordinator:

Julie Mercik, 408.358.7955,
jmercik@aol.com ☺