



The Observatory

Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation/Nursery School Issue 3, December 2002

Coming Home to the Schoolhouse

by Marie Imai, LGSONS Director

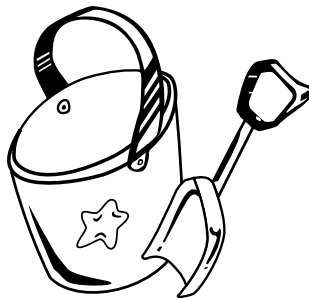
Dear families,

Our return to the little red schoolhouse in the mountains last month felt like such a warm homecoming to me. The children in my class could hardly wait to “come home” as one child put it. I am so thankful for all the people who have contributed their time and effort to care for our old school building and make it so welcoming to all of us. With the newly refurbished bathroom and teachers’ room and all the recent playground improvements our 85-year-old schoolhouse feels almost new again. So I send a big hug to all the maintenance board members – Joe Padgett, Missy Von Luehrte and Julie Mercik; to Ken Chambers who built the new shelves, to Dean Pryce who saw the need and organized the building of our new sandbox; to Dan Shaw who contributed carpet for the teachers’ room; and to all the parents who repaired, cleaned and sorted all our valuable junk on our recent workday. Just last Wednesday a group of girls in the 4/5s built a fort out of old boards that they dragged up from the garden to the new sandbox. With all that soft sand and inviting big space they dug a hole, made a roof of sorts and then began organizing their family. Up until now the I had not seen the girls using this area at all. What a joy it was to see them trying something new. I was reminded of a wonderful picture book “Roxen Boxen” about children who create their own town on a vacant hillside and how their memories of that time lasted until adulthood.

I am also immensely grateful to all the other board members who work to keep our school functioning in other less obvious ways. Registration, finances, fundraising, planning, educational programming,

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Thankful for Grandparents

by Dianne O’Neil, Board President

*They must have magnets in them, set
For certain persons only; set
For those that came – hear the high
Voices – suddenly in summer
Up the leafy road, exclaiming
Who knows what till they arrive
In silence at the door – surprise,
Surprise – then in, familiarly,
As if they now were where the pull
Of dark invisible iron had brought
them:
Children once removed, magic
Offspring with the eyes of others
Most at home here of all places.*

(Grandparents’ Houses, by Mark Van Doren)

Every November, Grandma and Grandpa arrive at our door – heavy suitcases filled with projects and books and activities, loads of energy and lots of smiles. My kids like grandparent visits better than Christmas. The anticipation starts weeks away, usually as soon as the dates and flights are hammered down. Calendars are marked, days are crossed off, welcome posters are crayoned out and hung on the door. This time usually signals a mini-trip for my husband and I; a few nights away together, alone – while the kids and grandma and grandpa party it up at home! My kids’ grandparents like to be

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board organization and management, newsletters, forms, purchasing, e-scrip, the garden, T-shirts, gift wrap, photos, community service, Scholastic books, and animal care are all different areas where parents serving as board members really keep our school alive and well. After I take care of my 1 1/2-year-old granddaughter for a day I am amazed that so many of you are able to care for your families, your homes, your jobs, yourselves and still volunteer to help at mountain school. In addition I truly appreciate our many, wonderful teachers who give themselves so joyously and unselfishly to the children and to you, the parents. Their dedication to mountain school is a very special gift. Fortunately (speaking for myself) because we teachers receive so much more love and support than we can ever give back it feels like a special blessing to be able to work at LGSONS. If any of you have an interest in teaching sometime in the future please give me a call and we can talk. Most all of our teachers were once parents here themselves.

I think that the true spirit of mountain school which touches all of us in some way comes from the connectedness of all the families and teachers who are part of this community. Just as children's personalities are influenced by all those who love and nourish them through childhood we adults are also unfinished human beings nurtured and encouraged by those with whom we share life's experiences. By extending ourselves in friendship to others we are blessed in more ways than we can imagine. Two of my oldest friends in this area share mountain school roots. I met Tomina Hutters in my daughter Mieko's two's class in 1975. In fact, Tomina offered to take Mieko home at noon so that I could stay and work as an assistant teacher in the afternoon. Now her daughter Nicole is in the W2s with her daughter, Hannah, as they carry on our tradition of school in the woods to another generation. Jill Hyman and I met in San Jose in 1969 when her husband, Bruce, and my husband were interns together at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center. And then our paths soon crossed again in nursery school where she became my mentor in the flora and fauna of the Santa Cruz mountains and a very special lifelong friend. I am so delighted that our mountain school community continues to provide the support and human connections that we all need to become compassionate human beings in today's challenging world.

Love, Marie ∞



Happy Winter!

(Thankful for Grandparents, continued)

involved in the routine of their grandchildren's lives: walking them to school, (or driving up Black Creek Road), taking them to swimming or soccer, meeting their friends and classmates, reading to them as they fall asleep at night. They take them mini-golfing, out for lunch, to the park, bake pink cupcakes – or just throw a ball around in the back yard, or muck about in the sandbox.

Grandparents bring so much to our family – we are unbelievably lucky to have both sets, plus one set of great-grandparents – although, unfortunately they all live very far away. Grandma and Grandpa bring wisdom, heritage, experience, understanding and loads of time to spend with their children and grandchildren, even if sometimes that connection is over a telephone or a computer.

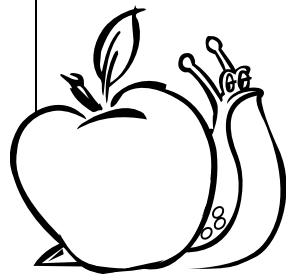
Welcome to all the grandparents who so wholeheartedly embrace our school (directly and indirectly). Thank you! ∞

Kids Say the Cutest Things!

Submitted by Jan Eby
Teacher, 3's Class

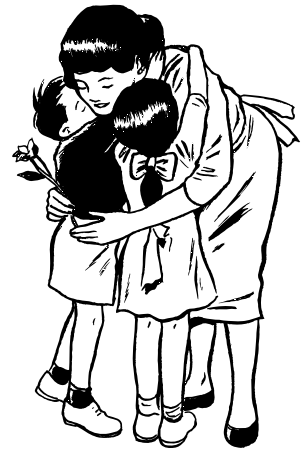
After experiencing all the excitement of banana slugs at our outdoor locations this Fall, Claire Tolhurst asked her mom, "Are there grape slugs?"

Imagine it ... apple slugs, orange slugs, ... could there be kiwi slugs? ∞



A Grateful Grandmother

by Deirdre O'Neil
Grandma of Grace, Friday 2's



What would a grandmother wish for in a pre-school for her precious granddaughter?

- ☞ A beautiful setting nestled in the mountains with trees and nature all around.
- ☞ Two gentle, attentive, loving, challenging, interesting teachers who make her feel safe to try new things.
- ☞ A rabbit, some chickens, worms and other living things to learn about.
- ☞ Many activities and centers which challenge imagination and independence.
- ☞ A chance for her to watch seeds grow and a chance for mom and dad to watch her grow.
- ☞ A chance to freely explore, and discover about things in her world.
- ☞ A chance to make decisions.
- ☞ A way to share good snacks quietly and politely with her friends.
- ☞ Good stories and a little quiet time when she is part of a group.
- ☞ Being in the midst of a number of moms and dads who all love her and protect her and are interested in her.
- ☞ A chance for her mom and dad to watch and observe her and become more aware of her as an individual, and see what makes her tick.
- ☞ A perfect beginning for her educational life.

I would wish all of these things for my two year old granddaughter and *I found them* last Friday at Mountain School when Grace's grandfather and I had the privilege to spend the morning at the school.

I am a very grateful grandmother. ∞

(Continued on page 4)



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

Popsicle Stick Puzzles

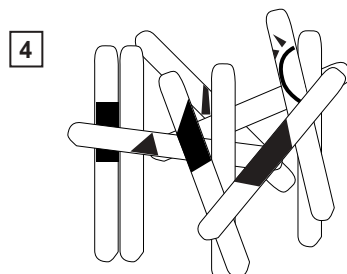
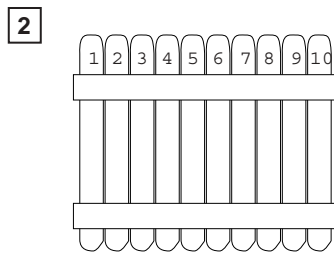
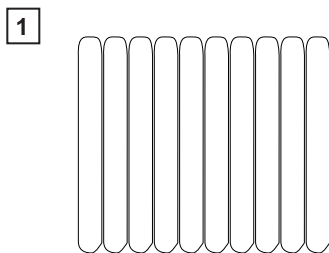
by "Froggy" (Carol-Lyn Davis)
Teacher in Saturday 3/4/5s Class

What you need:

- 3 to 12 popsicle sticks
- tape
- crayons or felt-tip markers
- a rubber band

What you do:

1. Line up the popsicle sticks evenly so that they are touching and straight like a picket fence.



2. Put two strips of tape across the sticks to hold them together, then number them from left to right.

3. Turn over the sticks and draw a simple picture with crayons or markers, being sure that each stick has part of the design on it. Shapes, letters, and numbers are easy to work with."

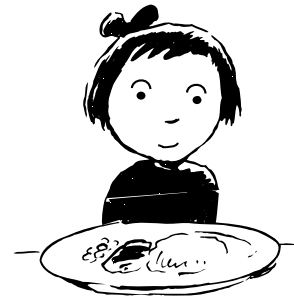
4. Then remove the tape, mix up the sticks, and put your puzzle back together. (Don't peek at the numbers unless you really need to.)

5. Put the rubber band around the sticks so you won't lose them. How about trading puzzles with each other?

Another idea: You can also glue a magazine picture onto the sticks; then cut the picture apart between the sticks when the glue is dry.

Look for more Fun with Froggy projects in the future issues of the Observatory. ∞

Who's Mom is the Cooking Mom?



HOMEMADE MAC N' CHEESE

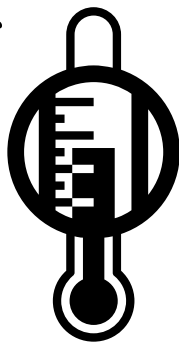
by Claudia Bowen-Campbell
Former Mountain School Mom

Cheese Sauce:

- 1 Tablespoon butter
- 3 Tablespoons flour
- 2 ½ cups 1% milk
- 2 cups shredded cheddar
- dash of salt and pepper

Melt butter over medium heat. Add flour and blend with a whisk, then add milk. Constantly stir while cooking until thick (about ten minutes). Remove from heat. Add cheese and stir. Pour over cooked macaroni and serve. ∞

A Thermometer that Children Can Read



by Jan Eby,
Teacher 3's Class

Have you noticed the Weather Stick attached to the school house near the front steps? It reflects the weather by pointing up on warmer, sunny days and down on colder rainy days. Some think it is a bit magical!

The three's class has made up a song about it (to the tune of Itsy Bitsy Spider).

Weather stick, weather stick, what is the weather today?

We need to know because we want to go out and play.

When you're pointing down, it's cold and wet you say.

But when you're pointing up, it's sunny, and we shout hurray! ∞

Newsletter Contributions

by Nicole Frees,
Newsletter Chair

Thank you to all the wonderful writers, parents, grandparents and teachers that contributed to this issue. If you have material for the next issue of "The Observatory," please e-mail your submissions to me at

nfrees@sbcglobal.net. If you do not have e-mail, then you may reach me at 650-961-4016. The deadline for the next issue is: Friday, January 7. ∞

Everyone Has a Circle

by Jane Krecji,
Teacher in Saturday 3/4/5s and Friday 2's Classes

I volunteer each week with Green Circle – a program that deals with similarities and differences, feelings and problem solving for school-age children.

Our intent is to help develop positive social skills through appreciation of and respect for differences. In four consecutive sessions, our trained volunteers work in every class in a given elementary school. (Green Circle has been serving Santa Clara County elementary schools since 1981.)

I believe the Green Circle concepts and language are also useful for preschoolers and have been using them in my Saturday afternoon class; and with Marie's 4–5 class. The children "get it"; and it gives teachers and parents a simple and succinct language. Here are some of the key concepts and language used by Green Circle. I find it is an effective way for the children to be aware of and sensitive to others; and figure out ways to include others in their "circle."

The Green Circle represents your child's world of people; it is a Circle of caring and sharing and respect. It expands as your child grows and develops.

Unique Every child (person) is unique.

Differences We acknowledge and appreciate differences in people (we look different, act different, have different interests...).

Similarities We recognize that we have feelings in common (happy, sad, scared, mad, proud...).

Inside/Outside Being inside the Circle feels good – warm, accepted, supported. Being outside the Circle feels bad – lonely, rejected, sad.

Outside hurts (like a skinned knee) are visible. Inside hurts (feelings) are not so visible, but just as painful.

Responsibility Your children (each one of us) decides who is in their circle. ∞

If You Give a Mom a Muffin

submitted by Kathy McKinney
Teacher in 3/4/5s Class

*Written by Kathy Fictorie, based on
"If You Give a Mouse a Cookie" by
Laura Numeroff.*

If you give a Mom a muffin,
She'll want a cup of coffee to go
with it.
She'll pour herself some.
The coffee will get spilled by her
three year old.
She'll wipe it up.

Wiping the floor, she will find
some dirty socks.
She'll remember she has to do
some laundry.
When she puts the laundry in the
washer,
She'll trip over some snow boots
and bump into the freezer.
Bumping into the freezer will
remind her she has to plan dinner
for tonight.

She will get out a pound of ham-
burger.

She will look for her cookbook
(*101 Things to Make With a
Pound of Hamburger*).

The cookbook is sitting under a
pile of mail.
She will see the phone bill which
is due tomorrow.
She will look for her checkbook.

The checkbook is in her purse
that is being dumped out by her
two year old.
She'll smell something funny.
She'll change the two year old.
While she is changing the two
year old the phone will ring.
Her four year old will answer it
and hang up.
She remembers that she wants to
phone a friend to come for
coffee on Friday.
Thinking of coffee will remind
her that she was going to have a
cup.
She will pour herself some.
And chances are...

If she has a cup of coffee...

Her kids will have eaten the muf-
fin that went with it. ☺

Sally Foster Fundraiser "Wraps Up"

by Anne J. Morton
Giftwrap Sales



Hearty thanks to all the Moun-
tain School families who partici-
pated in the Sally Foster
fundraiser and supported our
school! We raised over \$5,700, and
our school will pocket half of this
amount. Please check your gift-
wrap orders and let me know
right away if you have any con-
cerns. Thank you to Julie Mercik,
Dianne O'Neil, Susan Cox,
Molly Rizol, Gail Fox and Amber
Shaw for helping out with the
fundraiser in their children's
classes.

And the winner who receives free
babysitting for an evening and
two tickets to see a movie is
...*Lisa Bailey*. She is Ryan's mom
in the 3's class and the mom of a
newborn, Mia. She brought in
close to \$700 in orders. Lisa is a
two-time winner for this fund-
raiser. Finishing in second place is
Susan Cox (Brennan's mom,
Wed. 2's) and in third place is
Ellen Mapes (Hannah's mom,
3's). Special thanks to all for par-
ticipating in this fundraiser and
making a difference! ☺

Thank You, ... Thank You Very Much

by Jane Krecji
Teacher in Friday 2's and Saturday
3/4/5's

To locate something was always
a guess,

Because the Teachers' Room was
such a mess.

But now the room has a brand
new face.

Everything has its very own
place.

New shelves, carpet, boxes and
carts,

Room for books, supplies and
big charts.

Our thanks to the Board – and
parents all!

You responded promptly to our
call.

It's great – take a look! ☺

A Reflection on the Mountain School Experience

by Anne Maloney
Former Mountain School Parent

Recently, my mom reminded me of one her favorite sayings: “Find the treasure where you fall.” As I reflected on these words, I came to realize that they really capture

they are, so that we can better savor the joys and mysteries and challenges of parenting.

Serendipitously, on our last day at Saratoga Springs, the notion of trying to find the treasure where you fall was so clearly manifest as I watched my daughter, Clare, on the arch bridge. She was trying to master a new way to slip down through the bars. Despite some bangs and thumps, she continued to climb the arch and try again –

At that point, the rich pattern of this kaleidoscope of a preschool experience became clearer to me: All these days at the schoolhouse and by the springs and in the woods have been generously strewn with brightly colored beads, with opportunities to uncover the little treasures – even in the most rough spots. Each opportunity to make a mistake, to try something new, to explore the unfamiliar, to extend a favorite activity – all of these moments

“... the woods have been generously strewn with brightly colored beads, with opportunities to uncover the little treasures ...”

what I believe to be at the heart of the Mountain School experience. Here, the children get to play and grow, and we the parents learn how to better see and understand and appreciate the treasures that abound in our children’s growth and learning. Even when a moment or a day or a phase is new or challenging – perhaps even hard to deal with – we are encouraged to look deeper, to be more accepting, to try harder, and ultimately to embrace and even celebrate all the lessons learned with growth and change. When we fall into the Mountain School community, we are really landing in a place that says, “Keep looking for the treasures – they are everywhere.” The philosophy is here to guide you, the teachers are here to help lead you, the community is here to support you. Class time is our chance to sit still, to observe and listen to our children so that we can know them better, so that we are more likely to notice and celebrate who

sometimes wanting my helping hand, sometimes wanting me to stand close by, and sometimes just asking me to watch. Finally, she was trying the technique totally on her own, when she fell hard to the ground. Slightly sprawled out on the sand and lying rather still, I could see that she was discouraged. Soon, two tears rolled onto her cheek – it seemed like one was for the frustration and one was for the pain. Before any more could follow, though, Clare turned her head to the left. Miraculously, one of the miniscule beads that bespeckle the sand at the springs had caught her eye. It was little and pink and just barely showed itself, but it was all she needed. Upon spotting the bead, Clare jumped up. She quickly dug it up, then ran over and handed it to me to hold for her. As I carefully tucked it into my pocket, a renewed Clare ran to the arch bridge and ascended the rungs again.

have been accompanied by teeny-tiny flashes of rainbow-bright colors that have given the days their delightful hue and have so often offered a touch of encouragement, a bit of distraction, or a hearty dose of fun that ultimately made the joys seem boundless, the hard moments seem rewarding, and the imperfect moments seem perfect. ∞





Los Gatos Annual Children's Holiday Parade

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7th

by Alex Cortes
Social Co-Coordinator

The first Los Gatos Children's Holiday Parade was in 1957. It consisted of one police car, 27 children and the director of recreation. Today, the parade has grown to include more than 10,000 participants, making it, quite possibly, one of the largest children's parades in California. About 30,000 people annually cheer on the marchers.

Because the Los Gatos Recreation Department, which oversees our school, sponsors the parade, we will be one of the lucky groups to be at the beginning of the parade. (With this privilege comes a request from the Recreation Department that we keep moving so that the pace of the parade is maintained.)

Our Mountain School families will meet between 10:00 am and 10:30 am at the corner of Santa Cruz and Alameda Avenues. The parade begins promptly at 11:00 am. Be sure to plan time to park!

Decorate your bikes, trikes, strollers and wagons with holiday cheer – it's a long walk for the little ones!

Wear holiday attire. Red LGSONS sweatshirts and a holiday hat are perfect! And, be sure to BYOB – bring your own bells to ring in the holidays! ∞

General Meeting

by Jutta Braken-Guelke
Programs Co-Coordinator

Our next General Meeting will be on Tuesday, January 14th, from 7 pm to 9 pm. Barbara Porro will speak about "Family Conflict Resolution." ∞

We Wish You "Enough"

submitted by Bonnie Ward
Teacher in 4/5's Class

What does it mean when we wish someone well on the phone or in a letter? What do we wish for our loved ones or our children? We wish for them "enough". As I saw it put so eloquently in an article recently ...

I wish you enough sun to keep
your attitude bright.
I wish you enough rain to appreciate
the sun more.
I wish you enough happiness to
keep your spirit alive.
I wish you enough pain so that
the smallest joys in life appear
much bigger.
I wish you enough gain to satisfy
your wanting.
I wish you enough loss to appreciate
all that you possess.
I wish enough "Hellos" to get you
through the final "Good-bye."

∞

Upcoming Events

CALENDAR						
		7				

Holiday Parade
Saturday, December 7

Vacation – No School
December 23 to January 3

General Meeting
Tuesday, January 14
Martin Luther King Holiday
Monday, January 20
Annual School Auction
Saturday, March 22

If you've misplaced your
calendar, you may obtain
another copy on
www.lgsons.com . Just click on
the Calendar link. ∞