



The Observatory

Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School Issue 3 December 2003

Finding New Ways to Scatter

by Marie Imai, LGSONS Director

I loved our Turkey Trot day because:

- ☞ it was an event for the whole family to enjoy;
- ☞ it revolved around fun, physical exercise - walking, running, biking, strollers, skates;
- ☞ there was a special map and stamp exploration game for the younger kids (this is where I got my exercise);
- ☞ there was good food and great juice... but not too much!
- ☞ a number of alumni families participated with their children and gave crucial support in several areas;
- ☞ a wonderful amount of money was raised to support our school's programs;
- ☞ the event was held in spite of the intermittent rainy weather which reminded us that it's great to be outdoors on days like that, and that our skin is really waterproof!
- ☞ the rain provided a wonderful giant puddle, perfect for stomping with or without boots;
- ☞ there was music and there was time to visit and time to play. Our mountain school "village" was raising the children within the bonds of a strong, loving community.

Many thanks to all the parents, board members and sponsors who made this event such a success the very first time around. I really appreciate Mary Matlack, our fundraising chair this year who not only came up with the idea but carried it out on her anniversary as well. Congratulations Ed and Mary!

Thank you also to all who participated in our school's drive to help needy families with food donations to the Second Harvest Food Bank. I hope we can make a habit of sharing and keep the barrel at school all year, not just for the holidays.

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A Season to be Thankful

by Angie Davidson, Board President

This afternoon we danced the Nutcracker. Not the real Nutcracker on a stage in front of an audience, of course, but it was as close as I'll get. We were here at home and danced to a tape in our kitchen.

We have two "Clara"s in our family, so that leaves Todd and me to be the attendant characters. We were mostly the Nutcracker prince or the Sugar Plum Fairies and thankfully didn't have to die as the Mouse King. We all spun and twirled, hummed and la-la-la-ed, leaped and pirouetted, mostly at the right times. (We were definitely corrected the times we got it wrong: "Pwince! Wake up!" "No, fairies! You're supposed to sing now!") The "Clara"s danced gracefully, energetically and very intently. They leaped into our arms and we caught them, then ran with them around the kitchen, their arms outstretched but legs hanging. And we laughed.

I love this time of year. It's possibly the most fun time of all to be a parent. The magic is palpable, and the children's excitement barely contained. They



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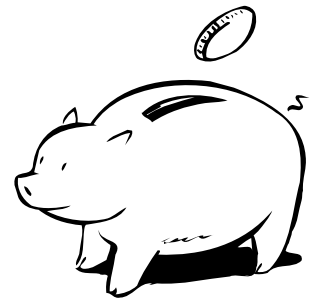
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Thank you to all for your contributions to this issue. The next deadline is January 9, 2004. Submissions may be e-mailed to Nicole Frees at: nfrees@sbcglobal.net.

Schoolpop and eScrip Updates

by Jane Johnson,
eScrip and Schoolpop Coordinator



With only 14 people shopping, we have year-to-date \$112 in rebates from Schoolpop. Just think how much more we could save from our fundraising efforts if more were signed up, linking through Schoolpop to our online shopping and therefore crediting our school! Reduced Auction pressure – Weehoo!

I know from personal experience remembering to start my online purchasing with www.schoolpop.com is sometimes hard to do. But, now there's an easy way not to forget: The Schoolpop Shopping Buddy. The Shopping Buddy software simply ensures that every online purchase you make with Schoolpop merchants this holiday season automatically generates up to 18% cash back to your school, even when you forget to start shopping at www.schoolpop.com. To install the Shopping Buddy, simply go online to www.schoolpop.com/buddy and download Schoolpop's Shopping Buddy. Once the download is complete, each supporter is automatically entered for a chance to win a \$10,000 online shopping spree with Schoolpop merchants in the Shopping Buddy Holiday Sweepstakes. Furthermore, if we have the most school supporters who have downloaded the Shopping Buddy by December 31, 2003, Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School will win \$5,000 in our choice of free Office Depot supplies.

On another note, the Learn & Earn program was not very successful. My take is that the product offerings were not well matched to our community. If there are any other thoughts/suggestions, please let me know. I want to provide this to Schoolpop so they can hopefully meet our needs better in the future.

eScrip Update: Thank you all for signing up your grocery cards, and credit and debit cards through eScrip. The merchants that contribute the largest rebates through eScrip are Whole Foods, Safeway and Lunnardi's. And, with everyone needing to purchase food, our fundraising efforts here are really paying off: We've brought in \$241 in just this past August alone. (August is the most recent report available.) Thank you! If you haven't yet signed up with eScrip, please look to either the website to do so online or print out and mail in their registration form. Or, if you'd like help stepping through the process, contact me directly at either jcwjohns@yahoo.com or 408-425-8723.

Pumpkin Bars



Submitted by Mercedes Jones
Mother of Megan, 3/4s Class

What you need:

2 cups flour
2 cups sugar
1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
2 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon nutmeg
½ teaspoon ground cloves
15 oz. pumpkin puree
4 large eggs,
¾ cup vegetable oil
1 cup dried cranberries

Frosting:

6 oz cream cheese at room temp.
1 cup powdered sugar
⅓ cup butter at room temp.

1. preheat oven to 350 degrees and grease 9 x 13-inch baking pan
2. mix first eight ingredients in large bowl. Add the pumpkin, eggs, and oil and beat until well blended. Spread the butter in your pan. Bake until done, about 35 minutes.
3. While the cake is baking, beat cream cheese, powdered sugar and butter in medium bowl. When the cake is cool, spread frosting over it in a thin layer. Press raisins into the frosting in whatever pattern you like. Cut the cake into bars and serve. (recipe from "Your Big Backyard", Nov. 2003 Issue). ∞

(A Season to be Thankful, continued)

love everything about it: the stories, baking, singing carols, getting together with all the family, the tree, the lights and Santa (of course, Santa!). This year they are really into the gifts we make for people. We've started planning, and when we think of a good one the girls start jumping around and saying, "Oh! Oh! Gramma's really gonna like that!" It's just so fun.

We're being propelled down this path a little earlier than usual this year since the merchants put up their holiday displays right after Halloween. At first I was grouchy about the blatant commercialism of it all, especially when they openly admit that they're doing it because they're worried about "a bad retail season." But the kids know nothing about those words, yet. Julia asked again today as we shopped for food to put in the food drive bins, "Mom, some people don't have money for food, do they?" So we talked about that. I don't know how well I'm doing at mediating the consumerism of our culture with them, but we talk about how very fortunate we are and focus on the spirit of the holiday: gathering together, kindness and generosity.

How wonderful and appropriate that Thanksgiving comes first, that we stop and are actively thankful. Thank you to Cris Imai for setting up the food drive so we can practice generosity with our children and talk about the many gifts that we have and can share with others. Thank you to all the teachers and parents for teaching us something wonderful about parenting, our children and ourselves every time we are together. Thank you to everyone at Mountain School for being such a wonderful community and modeling for our children what community means and how by giving of your time and yourself you can receive so much in return. Thank you for the many gifts Mountain School bestows upon our families.

I wish all of you the many blessings and joys of the season. ∞

The Return of Hairy the Pumpkin

by Teacher Jan Eby

Hairy the Pumpkin has returned to the garden for the third year. He was a glowing Jack O' Lantern for the cooking project in the 3's class before Halloween. After Halloween the children filled him with wet newspaper strips and sprinkled wheat berries on his top, and in his eyes, ears, nose and mouth. They carried him to the garden and found a special place for him to rest. Every week the children in the 3's class check the garden to see how Hairy is doing. They water him very well each day – and he is growing! He is sprouting "hair" from his top, eyes, ears, nose and mouth. The class plans to check on his growth often and report his progress. Take a look and see Hairy for yourself. ∞





The Holiday Project

COLD WEATHER, WARM HEARTS

by Cris Imai, Community Service Liaison

Although a new member of Mountain School, I have already come to appreciate the strong spirit of community that exists here. In this season of giving, we again have an opportunity to share that spirit with our children and those less fortunate.

Mountain School will be collecting unwrapped gifts to be given to the children of Watsonville's migrant farm workers. Through an organization called "The Christmas Project," volunteers work to match donated items to these children's wish lists, then wrap and distribute the gifts.

All gifts are welcomed and appreciated, new or gently used. If you'd like some ideas, here are a few requested items:

- ☞ backpacks
- ☞ school supplies
- ☞ food certificates for the families
- ☞ movies (VHS tapes; gently used OK, great idea if you've upgraded to DVD)
- ☞ remote-controlled cars/trucks
- ☞ dolls – barbie dolls, playhouses and accessories (gently used OK)
- ☞ anything for teenaged kids

They also have a request for a play kitchen, so if you or someone you know has one that is usable but no longer in use, it would be very welcomed.

Let the children do the shopping...

Gladys Anderson, of The Christmas Project, suggests that you involve your children and let them pick out something they think would make a good gift. Most preschool-age kids love to make people happy, and this is a nice way to nurture that desire. It is also a fun way to remind them that this is a Season of Giving rather than getting.

Mommy, we need more tape!

If my daughter is at all typical, small children love to wrap things big and small. Here's a further opportunity to involve your children in a wonderful community-building event: Volunteer to wrap and/or distribute gifts. The wrapping festivities are on December 20th, and the gifts will be distributed on December 24th.

Gifts needed by December 19th Please bring your unwrapped gifts to the schoolhouse by December 19. Designated boxes will be at the schoolhouse beginning December 1st.

Contact Cris Imai at 831-423-4377, imai@pacbell.net, with any questions or to volunteer to wrap or deliver gifts.

May your family enjoy the true blessings this and every season have to offer. ∞

Los Gatos Holiday Parade

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2003

by Jodi Myers, Social Chair

Please join us for the Holiday Parade on Saturday, December 6, 2003. The parade will begin promptly at 11 am. Several of us need to be there by 9 am to hold our place in the parade line. I suggest that all who plan on walking in the parade be at the designated place no later than 10 am.

Location: Parade begins at the corner of Alameda Ave. and North Santa Cruz Ave., proceeding south along North Santa Cruz Ave. to Main St., east on Main Street, ending at Church St.

Clothing: Wear your LGSONS logo sweatshirts or T-shirts, Santa hats, reindeer ears, etc.

Special Instructions: This is a Parade in motion! There is no stopping once the parade has begun. This means that all entries must keep up with the entry ahead of them. If you start to lag, we are being told that a Parade Route Marshal will ask you to keep up or exit the parade. So with all that in mind... I am recommending the following: 1) Place children in wagons or strollers/backpacks. 2) Carefully evaluate whether your child will be willing to stay in the wagon/stroller the entire length of the parade. 3) If you're not sure if your child is up to the walk/ride, consider enjoying the parade as an observer. 4) Whether you're in the parade or observing come prepared to have a great time! Questions? Call me at 354-1611 or email jodi@jodimyrs.net. See you there! ∞

(Ways to Scatter, continued)

There will also be an opportunity to donate clothing and toys for migrant workers in Watsonville later this month. Details are in Cris's Article "The Holiday Project: Cold Weather, Warm Hearts" on page 4 of this issue.

Last year I posted a quote on my refrigerator from the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu, "On generosity – He who obtains has little, he who scatters has much." Today I decided that it is time to really take it personally so please join me in finding new ways to scatter profusely.

Love,
Marie ∞

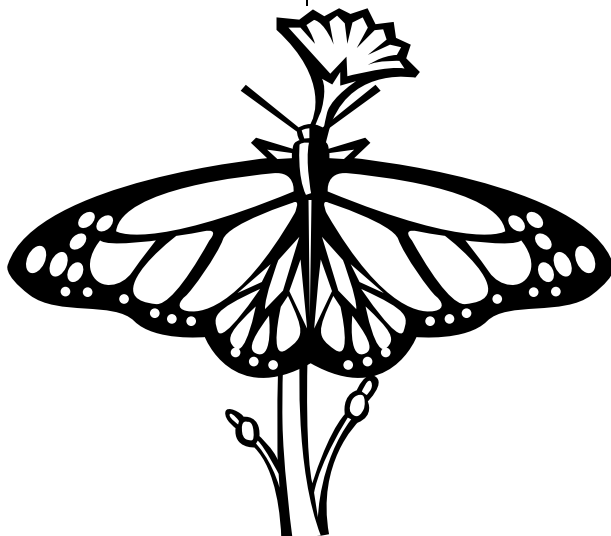
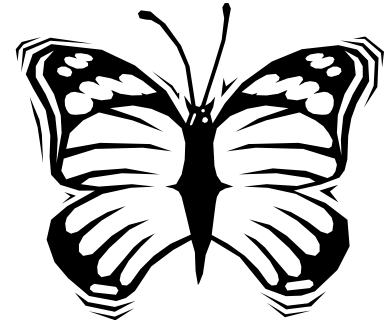
Monarch Butterflies

by Jan Murray
James' Mom, Friday 2s Class

What do Monarch butterflies and an 87-foot-long Blue Whale skeleton have in common? You can see both of them during a short day trip to Santa Cruz.

From November through March, Natural Bridges State Beach is home to over 100,000 migrating Monarch's escaping the cold of Canada. The natural preserve area is a eucalyptus grove where Monarch's cluster along the branches forming a "city in the trees". The visitor center has a living display that shows the stages of development of a monarch from caterpillar, through chrysalis, to butterfly. For more information, go to www.parks.ca.gov.

All year long, the whale skeleton lies just a mile or so north of Natural Bridges along Delaware Avenue at the UCSC Seymour Marine Discovery Center. This wonderful two-room facility is home to local marine species presented in beautiful tank environments. In the "What's in the bay today?" tank you will see animals found in Monterey Bay seasonally or rarely seen in an aquarium. This tank houses squid eggs, juvenile rockfish, sea hares, or other remarkable animals. See up-close each animal's specialized characteristics in the aquarium tanks. Visit the seawater table and hold an assortment of sea creatures in your hand – you can hold sea stars, sea urchins, hermit crabs, sea anemones, and different kelp. During summer school, teachers Laura and Amy took our class to the center for a field trip. Our visit was planned to last about an hour, but the children (ages 2 to 5) were so intrigued that we stayed over 2 ½ hours. To find out more about Seymour Marine Discovery Center, go to www2.ucsc.edu/seymourcenter. ∞



Turkey Trot Results

by Mary Matlack
Fundraising Chair

The first annual Turkey Trot was a success! Mother Nature showered us all morning and then parted the clouds and cheered the trotters on with blue skies and a light mist.

Thank you to all who made it out on Sunday. It was great to see so many people having such a fun day together.

The break down in terms of official registration was as follows:
Friends and Family of LGSONS parents: 19

PR (newspaper, sign at DD's and forms around town): 26

LGSONS Alumni: 12 (plus many more that volunteered that day)

Current LGSONS parents and kids 6 and older: 114

Our preliminary number crunching says that we made approximately \$4000 on the event! Thank you Trotters!

I welcome any feedback about the event. Please don't hesitate to pass on any thoughts you have so that we can make next year's event successful!

Finally, thank you to all of the parents and teachers who put together such great class projects. It seemed to me that the kids had a blast, and the projects were all so unique. Thank you! ☺

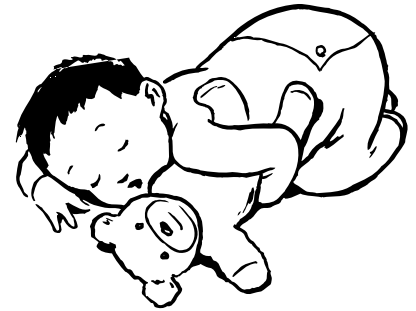
Unconditional Love

Abby Chen,
Holly's mom, Friday 2s

The children and I had a no good, terrible, rotten and hopeless afternoon the other day. The morning started out fine, like any other day, but turned sour by lunchtime for no particular reason, insofar as the little ones are concerned. The fact is that their mother (or I, the only grown-up in this picture) seemed to make up the problem, kept the drama rolling, and eventually drove herself into a corner of despair (figuratively and literally) by being extremely irritable, over-reactive, even tyrannical toward the kids' none-out-of-the-norm sidesteps and idiosyncrasies from around midday until after supper. It is the kind of day when, after work, the dad would engage the children in play out of the mom's sight; at supper, everyone's stomach tends to work harder to ensure proper digestion; and, in spite of their trouble, the children end up hugging and kissing lovingly the one who gives them good grief.

At the new family orientation, Teacher Kathy said that the parent is the sun, the moon and the stars in the eyes of the child.

I realized that even in moments when I am nothing more than a rotten star with a barely detectable flickering or fading light, my children will not fail to identify me. And for always, they will gaze at me adoringly. So what am I to do at the end of a hopeless day when there is absolutely no logic at my disposal to write off the fault and guilt? I get back on track after hugs and kisses, always, because my children love me unconditionally. ☺



Read All About It!

Did you see the write up of our school in the Los Gatos Weekly Times? Check out the November 26 issue at: www.lgwt.com.

New Teacher Wish List

by Teacher Laura Snyder, 3/4s Class

Dear Parents,
Some of you may have noticed the Wish List for the school that is posted in the parent's room. This list has been amended with a few specific items that the school needs in order to upgrade our materials. You may notice that we request "non commercial" materials. This is because we wish to be completely neutral to allow total freedom with creative, dramatic play.

This year, the teachers' wish is that gifts may be given to the school in lieu of personal presents for teachers at holiday time. The children will have fun selecting the item, wrapping it and sharing it with the class. The additional bonus is that they will also be able to play with it at school. You are all so wonderfully thoughtful and generous; we truly appreciate all that you contribute in time as well as money. It is people like you who keep our school beautiful.

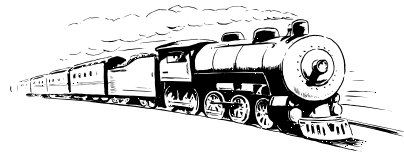
If you see an item on the Wish List that you wish to give to the school, please write your name next to the item. If more than one of a given item is requested, please indicate how many you will provide. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you very much.

Love,
Your Teachers

The Wish List

☞ wooden Marble Run, similar to Teacher Jan's

☞ wooden Brio trains (not Thomas)



☞ face paints (Caron Dache, available at the Wooden Horse)

☞ fat crayons (several boxes)

☞ fat pencils and fat colored pencils

☞ flannel board (portable size, about 18 x 24, and lightweight)



☞ 3-4 Capes for dress-up, non-commercial, in red, purple, blue, black

☞ 2-3 prairie style aprons

☞ boy's cowboy boots, size 9-12

☞ fancy party dresses, sizes 4-7, think about 2 and 3's wearing them when looking at length

☞ fancy party style shoes, not pretend dress up kinds, sizes 7, 8, 9 (some without buckles)

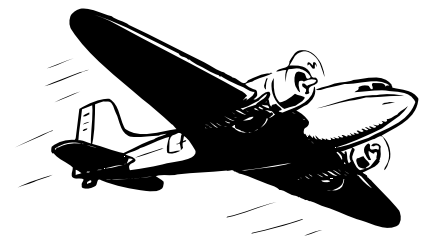
☞ matte board, precut into smaller pieces (8x10 or so) and small wooden frame pieces from a framing shop the right size for collage

☞ a Spin Art Machine

☞ hot air popcorn popper

☞ 8-10 flashlights and batteries

☞ small airplanes (hot wheel size)



☞ butterfly nets with wooden handles

☞ large mortar and pestle

☞ updated wooden Puzzles (non commercial), medium to challenging skill level (we have enough floor puzzles)

☞ baskets for storing materials, especially large wicker baskets designed to fit on bookshelves (12 x 18)

☞ canopy Awning, 12-foot square, easy to assemble, for rainy days and fundraiser activities

☞ book: Tom's Rainbow Walk

☞ book: The Feel Good Book

☞ book: Owl Babies

December Activities for Families

by Mercedes Jones
Megan's Mom, 3/4s Class



Walk-in Craft Activity
at Lakeshore Learning Center
(1099 S Bascom Avenue,
408-998-0794) Saturdays, 11 to
3, for children ages 3 and up,
with parent.

We have made frames, sun catchers, bookmarkers, and sand art. Megan really enjoys the outing and seeing other children with their moms or dads.

*Star Party Halls Valley
Astronomical Group*
Saturday, December 20, 5:30 to
10 pm Star Gazers and Future
Astronomers, join park staff &
volunteers from the Halls Valley
Astronomical Group for a look
into the night sky at Grant
County Park. Telescopes are pro-
vided, but you are welcome to
bring your own. Programs are free
& offered once each month. \$4
vehicle fee to enter the park,
entrance gates close at 6:30. Call
(408) 274-6121 for more infor-
mation.

Christmas Celebration
at Grant Ranch Saturday, Decem-
ber 13, 12-4pm Come celebrate

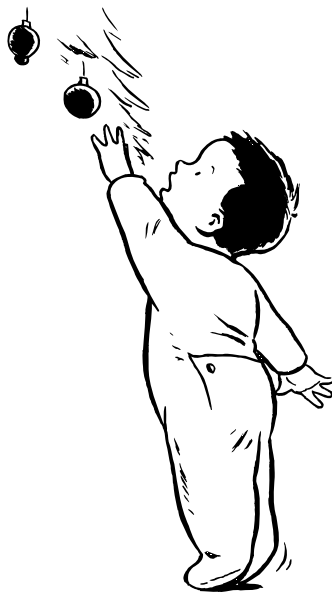
the holiday season at Grant
County Park with an array of
activities for the whole family.
There will be tours of the historic
Ranch House, Victorian holiday
crafts, entertainment & goodies
for kids. There is a \$4 vehicle fee
to enter the park. Call (408) 274-
6121 for more information.

*Santa Cruz Holiday Lights Train
Roaring Camp Railroads*
December 7, 8, 14, 15, 20, 21,
22. Ride a beautiful lit train
through Victorian Santa Cruz.
Ride begins at 6:15 pm.
Advanced Reservations Required.

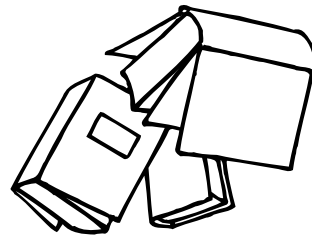
Directions: 6 Miles North of
Santa Cruz in Felton. Exit High-
way 17 at Mt. Hermon Road
(831-335-4484 or visit
www.roaringcamp.com).

Fantasy of Lights Vasona Park
November 27 to December 31

The "Fantasy of Lights" drive-
through light spectacular is open
from 6 pm to 10 pm and costs
\$9/per vehicle (up to 9 passen-
gers). ☺



Favorite Children's Books



Pumpkin Soup by Helen Cooper
(recommended by Jan Murray,
Friday 2s) A silly, somewhat dark
romp about little animal friends
working together, taking turns,
getting angry and cooperating.
Contains wonderful, conversa-
tion-provoking illustrations.
From Amazon, "This enchanting
story explores the ups and downs
of close-knit camaraderie." My
2 1/2-year-old son loves to hear
and talk about this story.

How Will We Get to the Beach? by
Brigitte Luciani (recommended
by Cris Imai, Friday 2s) This sim-
ple story about the problems a lit-
tle girl encounters trying to get to
the beach is a fun backdrop for a
guessing game, handling frustra-
tion, and problem solving.

Alumni Group Address

The school board has set up a new
group e-mail address for contact-
ing mountain school alumni. The
group address will be used prima-
rily by the board and the board's
alumni liaison, Claudia Bowen
Campbell, to inform alumni of
events and information that may
be of interest. Alumni who wish
to be on this list, and have not yet
joined up, can send their request
to webmaster@lgsons.com. ☺