



The Observatory

Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School ~ Issue 6 May 2005

Keep the Spirit Alive

by Marie Imai, LGSONS Director

Dear Families,

It seems unbelievable that our school year will soon be over. Yet thanks to your very own observations many of the experiences and activities that you and your child enjoyed this year can be relived. Some parents so enjoy having this precious record of their child's growth that they continue to write an observation each year on their child's birthday. As time passes it is fascinating to see that your child's personality and style remain so similar to that you wrote about so often at nursery school.

To keep your child's Mountain School experience alive even though the school year is officially over you might try some of these ideas used by other families over the years.

- Put together a small scrapbook just for your child of school photos and add a story about some of his or her favorite activities. This may quickly become a special bedtime story.

- Make a summer schedule of optional playdates for your class – a beach day, a hike, a picnic at Sanborn Park, etc. Decide on one person to host each day and then whoever is available can attend. These regular opportunities to get together help the children to maintain their school relationships but even more important allow you to keep your support group of friends alive and well.

- Don't over schedule your child's time. Being "bored" without being rescued by your 100 or so suggestions allows children to develop their own creativity and learn how to entertain themselves. This is an important life skill.

- Spend at least one day every week outside where your children can play freely in nature with sand and mud and water and dirt. Most children leave our school very comfortable in the out of doors, able to climb hills and scramble over rocks. But they need continued opportunities for experiences in the wild, especially as they grow older, in order to keep alive this grounding in our natural world.

(continued on page 2)

Parents and Children

by Angie Davidson, Board Chair

In this newsletter is a reprint of an article written by the founder of our school, Betty Peck, and her daughter, Anna Rainville, then a parent at Mountain School herself. It is part of a packet about kindergarten readiness that Teacher Laura gave to parents in our 3/4s class. At first glance it is about a child's readiness for kindergarten and elementary school, but it seems to me to be really about childhood and parenting in a more general way, about children and parents living a joyful, rich, connected and sustaining life.

When I came across this (late one night when I should have been in bed; see "Do you get enough sleep?") and started reading, I couldn't help smiling. I love the questions they ask, those on the "checklist for parents" as well as those for children. They use words like "delight", "richness", "sustain", "renew", "spirit" and "gratitude," concepts that I realized I hadn't thought about in a while in terms of my life with children. I was trying to solve problems that arose, juggle schedules, get that carpool home in a reasonable amount of time instead of feeling like we'd never arrive, but I hadn't thought for a while about the bigger picture: the kind of life I wanted us to have together, the kind of attitude I wanted us to have as we face the everyday issues life presents.

(continued on page 3)

CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE

Keep the Spirit Alive
page 1

Parents and Children
page 1

Suggested Summer Outings
page 3

We Welcome the New Board...
page 4

Betty Peck Wisdom
page 4

Give It A Try!
page 5

Where Do Those Dollars Go?
page 6

Note From the Editor
page 7

Sweet Dreams and Restful Sleep
page 8

EScript and Schoolpop
page 9

Recipes
page 9

Aunt Labels
page 10

Calendar
page 10

Paint Dancing
page 11

Our Mountain School Family
page 11

Is Your Child Ready...
page 12

(Keep the Spirit Alive, continued)

- Relax your own standards of housekeeping, examine your priorities and make a little, sacred time each week for yourself to play. Only then can you happily be a good mother or father and spouse.

- Think back to your own childhood and make sure that your children get to experience some of the summertime activities that you loved best.

In conclusion I want to thank the following board members for contributing so much extra time throughout the year to keep our school functioning well and make life easier for the teachers. Angie Davidson, chair, Dan Shaw, treasurer, Sue Bozzini, registration, Jutta Braken-Guelke, secretary, Nicole Frees, purchasing, Mary Matlack, information, Lori Lux, marketing, Jan Murray, programs, have all served on the board for at least two years. Claudia and Tom Yore, facilities, Sonia Casper, newsletter, and Amoreena Lucero, forms and correspondence, have all agreed to return next year and Heidi Thomas and Elissa Cheney, fundraising chairs, who did such a fabulous job of raising money and making the auction such a fun and exciting evening. There is also a whole group of people who contribute to our school in important ways but do not attend the monthly board meetings. These are the non voting board members for this school year: Katherine Wooley, garden coordinator; Jane Johnson, escript and schoolpop fundraising for 2 years; Heidi Casey, giftwrap sales; Bill Skeet, Webmaster (he has agreed to lend us his expertise for another year); Michele Kwong and Shelley Molenda, school photos; Lisa Liddle, T-shirt sales; Susi Steiner; Community service liason; Julie Mercik, workday coordinator and Ellen Mapes, scholastic books coordinator, both for 2 years; Mercedes Jones; animals; Jody McCalmont, historian; Krisitin Mitchell, carpool facilitator; Jennifer Mateus and Jennifer Castro, planning and recruiting help. I am overwhelmed by the amount of support and help all these parents have contributed to Mountain School this year. It would not be the school it is without them.

In addition, I want to thank all our wonderful teachers for the love, time and energy that they have devoted to make Mountain School such a special place for children and families. Cici Teter, beloved assistant teacher in the 3/4s class who has taught for five years is leaving us to have more time for her editing and writing work in Spanish and French for McGraw & Hill publishers. We will miss her immensely and hope that someday she will return again. Thank you so much, Cici, for all your love and patience and teaching of so many children for so many years.

Have a wonderful summer.

Love, Marie ☺.

(Parents and Children, continued)

We certainly can't keep conflict and difficulty from entering our lives. But we can give our children—and ourselves—a wealth of experience, tools to help them face whatever life brings. We can approach life with creativity, honesty, wonder, humor and a sense of play. We can foster simplicity, try to get enough sleep, practice setting reasonable limits with our children and ourselves, and ask for help when we need it. We can take walks, sing, get wet and dirty, play and celebrate. To me this sounds like a marvelous life. That's why I was smiling as I read. There is so much I can't control (really, is there much I can control?), but I can work on my spirit and my tools, and I can have a lot of fun in the process. What a gift for a child, and what a fun childhood!

I think the time spent at Mountain School helps me do this. Sitting beside the creek at Savannah-Chanelle or Saratoga Springs, it's easy. We're dedicated while we're there to doing exactly these things: playing, getting dirty, keeping it simple, sharing food, singing and hiking and reveling in nature. Since my tape deck broke, I'm even singing more in the car. The challenge for me is carrying it over to my time away from school. How can I keep the Mountain School spirit the other 6 ½ days a week?

I heard a story about 10 years ago about a group of children who were on a field trip with their teacher and got stuck in an elevator. I'm fuzzy on some details. They were very young, in preschool or kindergarten, and there were, say, 10 of them. They were in that elevator for a long time, several hours I think. It must have been scary. Everyone outside was freaking out, worrying about how they must be doing in there. But when the doors opened, they all marched out smiling, happy as can be. They'd all held hands and sung Barney songs the whole time. The teacher said it had been the kids' idea: they got creative and they pulled out a tool, a song. I don't even like Barney, but I remember thinking, well, if it's giving them something to get them through, that's awesome. I think it's nearly impossible to overestimate the power of creativity, connectedness, humor and song.

Sometimes when we're tired, hungry, melting down and wanting to get home, being in the car feels like being stuck in an elevator. Sometimes doing the finances feels like that. Costco can definitely feel like that. And those

are really, really minor in terms of what life can throw at you. At times like those, I need a deep toolbox and I need to remember to reach inside.

But the actual process of stocking the toolbox is perhaps the biggest gift. All those things that Anna and Betty's questions encourage us to do are just rich and fun. And I think they slowly build in one not just a box of tools but a really wonderful way of looking at the world and approaching life, build in fact a way of life. If my family and I can live in tune with the rhythms of life, giving everything its own place, with humor, joy and friends, how wonderful that would be. We'd be ready for anything.

Enjoy your summer, practice having fun and keep that sense of joy alive!

Love, Angie ☺

Suggested Summer Outings

- ☺ Long Marine Lab in Santa Cruz: for info visit: www2.ucsc.edu/seymourcenter... or call: 831-459-3799 (note: Closed Mondays)
- ☺ Take a hike: visit one of the many fabulous county parks in the Bay Area. For information regarding Santa Clara County Parks locations, trail information and more visit: www.parkhere.org
- ☺ Take a trip to the beach, for information on beaches in the Santa Cruz County area visit: www.virtualcities.com/ons/ca/c/as/cac37a27.htm
- ☺ Take a trip to the Monterey Bay Aquarium for info visit: www.mbayaq.org
- ☺ Visit your local Public Library.
Los Gatos Public Library info: library.town.los-gatos.ca.us

Saratoga Library info: www.santaclaracountylib.org/saratoga/ ☺

We Welcome the New Board for the 2005-2006 School Year!

by: Angie Davidson, Board Chair

Voting Board Members:

Board Chair: Lori Lux
Registration Chair: Tracy Halgren
Information Chair: Nicole Engel
Treasurer: Amoreena Lucero
Secretary: Jane Johnson
Marketing Relations: Sue Bozzini
Fundraising Co-Chairs: Gillian Claus
and Elizabeth Montgomery-Eder
Facilities Chair: Claudia Yore
Programs Co-Chairs: Jan Murray
and Annemarie Gustafsson
Newsletter: Sonia Casper
Forms/Correspondence: Sandy and Mel Hatzis
Purchasing Chair: Nigel Cockcroft
Social Chair: Kristin Mitchell

Non-voting Board Members:

Planning Co-Chairs: Jennifer Mateus and Jennifer Castro

Garden: Therese Voelker
Webmaster: Bill Skeet
School Photos: Shelley Molenda
T-shirt/Sweatshirt Sales: Ann Veis
Community Service: Linda Aggarwal
Workday Coordinator: Rick Juncker
Scholastic Book Sales: Ellen Mapes
Carpool Facilitator: Wendy Grant-Richards

We are still looking to fill some positions! If you are interested in coordinating our eScrip/Schoolpop registration in the fall or in taking care of our school animals, or in heading up our Turkey Trot for fall, please contact Lori Lux (lori@luxpr.com; 244-9605). These are non-voting positions and therefore do not require attendance at the monthly board meetings. Thank you to everyone for giving so generously of their time to our school!!

And a tremendous thank you to the outgoing board for all the time, work and dedication you've provided this year! Most of them are returning to the board for the coming year, which is wonderful. They are a remarkable group of people, talented, generous, kind and fun, and they even manage to make those monthly meetings fun. It has been a great honor working with you. Thank you all so much! ☺

Betty Peck Wisdom

by Sonia Casper, Editor

Recently the 4/5's class and the board had the opportunity to hold their meetings at the home of Betty Peck, the founder of Mountain School. During the 4/5's circle meeting the topic was Kindergarden readiness. Among many of the things she recommended was reading to you child and telling them stories filled with fantasy and beautiful language. She reminisced about when her daughter was young and how they would sit on the porch and swing and she would always recite this poem, and when Betty recites it, the words come alive:



The Swing

How do you like to go up in a swing,
Up in the air so blue?
Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing
Ever a child can do!

Up in the air and over the wall,
Till I can see so wide,
Rivers and trees and cattle and all
Over the countryside-

Till I look down on the garden green,
Down on the roof so brown-
Up in the air I go flying again,
Up in the air and down!

Stevenson, Robert Louis (1850-1894)
A Child's Garden of Verses and
Underwoods. 1913. ☺

Give It A Try!

by Fred Rogers
(reprinted from “Ladybug” for Parents)

“A scaredy-cat! That was me growing up,” a friend told us the other day. “There was so much I didn’t dare try. I can remember even back in first grade wanting to be able to kick a ball as well as some of the other children, but I didn’t think I’d be able to, so I found something else to do instead.

“I avoided anything I thought I wouldn’t do right or well, and I’d choose weird things to do because no one else would be doing them...and so no one would be better than I. When everyone was collecting stamps, I collected coins. I wonder what I was so afraid of.”

Listening to our friend talk, we could tell he had plenty of curiosity, so that wasn’t the problem. We wondered whether he’d been afraid of competing - afraid of losing the love of the people he loved by losing out in competition. He didn’t think so; he remembered his parents always being supportive of his efforts to do the best he could, win or lose or draw.

“No,” he said, “I think it was something else. I just never learned that making mistakes was a natural part of being human and a natural part of the way human beings learn.”

What an important conclusion to come to at any time of life, but certainly the earlier the better. We all do make mistakes as we learn, and not only is there nothing wrong with that, there’s everything right about it. But if we fear mistakes in our early years, we may become afraid to learn or try new things.

In our earliest years, of course, just about everything is a new challenge as we learn to control all the parts of our bodies and the many things our bodies can do. During these early months and years, a child is going to pick up from his or her closest caregivers an attitude toward taking on all these new challenges.

Most of us would probably agree that by showing outright disapproval of mistakes and accidents during this busy learning time, parents could dampen a child’s

willingness to try. But I believe there’s another pitfall, too, one that may be less obvious, and it’s this: As children strive to master the tasks ahead of them, parents can easily lavish praise and approval more on successful outcomes than on the trying itself.

It may be that the most important mastery a child achieves early on is not the mastery of a particular skill or particular piece of knowledge, but rather the mastery of the patience and persistence that learning requires, along with the ability to expect and accept mistakes and the feelings of disappointment they may bring.

In other words, the pleasure and pride a parent shows when a child tries may be more helpful in the long run than parental expression of pleasure and pride when a child succeeds.

Our friend’s reflections about his own growing up reminded me of the story of the young apprentice who applied to a master carpenter for a job.

“Do you know your trade?” the older man asked.

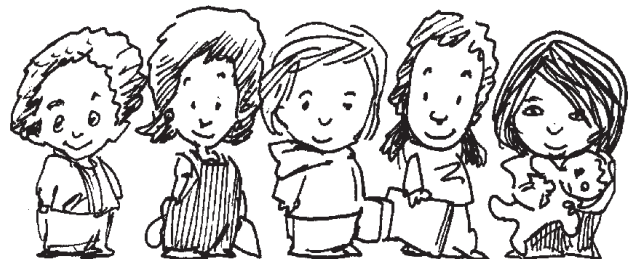
“Yes sir!” the young man replied proudly.

“Have you ever made a mistake?” the older man inquired.

“No sir!” the young man answered, feeling certain he would get the job.

“Then there’s no way I’m going to hire you,” said the master carpenter, turning back to his work, “because when you make one, you won’t know how to fix it.”

Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood is seen daily on public television stations. ☞

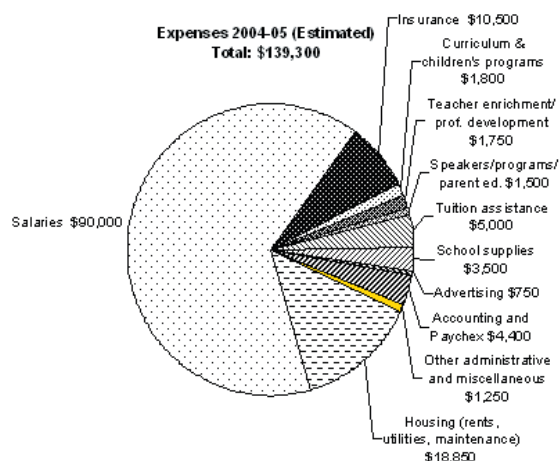
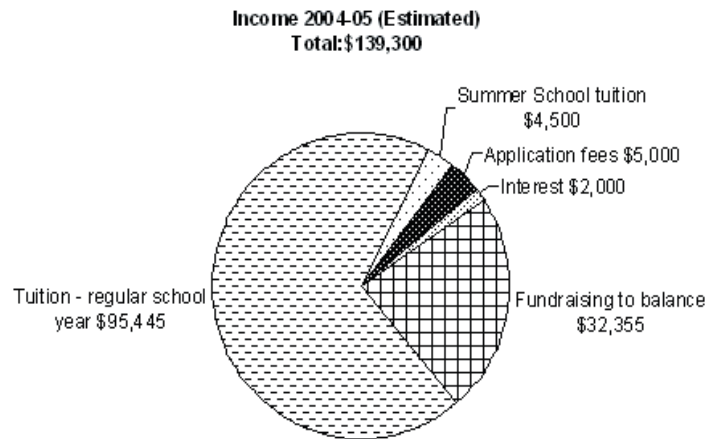


Where Do Those Dollars Go?

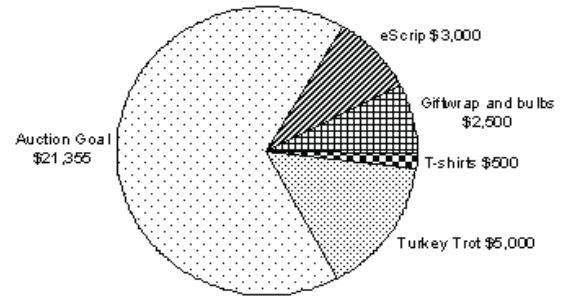
by Angie Davidson, Board Chair

When I first joined the board I was surprised to discover a few things about our school budget and fundraising. Before that I did not know, for example, that tuition monies did not cover our basic operating expenses. I'd heard something about auction money going to teacher bonuses, but did it all go there? It wasn't clear. And while I knew we weren't extravagant, I never realized what a tight ship the teachers, director and board run. So of course the fundraising efforts were sort of a mystery to me. Why were we fundraising? How much did we need? Teacher Marie and the board thought we'd clear up some of the mystery.

Following are 3 graphs showing figures for the current school year. Since we don't have all the figures in yet for the entire year, we show our estimated budget, but still the figures give a very accurate picture.



Fundraising Detail 2004-05 (Estimated)
Total necessary to meet budget: \$32,355



Our expenditures were budgeted at \$139,300. Teacher salaries account for the bulk of our budget, followed by housing expenses for our sites, insurance, and accounting expenses. We have budgets for tuition assistance and for the school supplies, for children's curriculum and for parent education and speakers. There is money budgeted for teacher enrichment and professional development. The remainder is a very small budget for other administrative expenses and miscellaneous (postage, copies, etc.). There are no frills, as you can see. The teachers reuse and recycle and economize everywhere they can.

To meet that budget, tuition (from the regular school year and summer school), application fees and interest only covered \$106,945, which meant that we had to turn to fundraisers for the remaining \$32,355. We try to earn that money as painlessly as possible, through such easy means as eScrip and Schoolpop and our giftwrap and T-shirt sales. This year we also sold bulbs, which were a big success. And our Turkey Trot is great way to earn money for our school while having fun and being healthy. Still, though, the auction would have to bring in more than \$21,000 for us to simply meet our budget.

And we did more than that! Although a bill here and there still trickles in, it seems that everyone's outstanding efforts really paid off: Gross proceeds from the auction were nearly \$60,000, with net proceeds to the school in excess of \$40,000. Some of this money did indeed go to teacher bonuses, as in past years. Some will go into a rainy-day fund. And some will go toward a raise for head teachers.

The salary calculation is somewhat complex. A lot of the money for head teachers' salary comes from Adult Ed, our sponsoring agency, but only the hours spent in

(continued on page 7)

(Where Do Those Dollars Go?, continued)

direct teaching time. The school itself pays further for preparation and administrative time in order to offer something more competitive. The board approved a raise of \$1/hour for head teachers' prep and administrative time and a supplement of \$2-6/hour to the salaries they are paid by Adult Ed for their teaching time, bringing their pay to \$26 per hour. (For comparison purposes, this is at the low end of the range for adult education in the area. The low is around \$20/hour; Gilroy pays \$40/hour.)

The board made several other notable changes for 2005-06. First, we have increased the teacher enrichment/professional development budget by two-thirds. We have fantastic teachers at Mountain School and want them to be able to attend conferences and classes, observe each other teaching, gather new ideas and be re-energized about their work. Our fundraising efforts in past years have brought in over and above their goals, and the board feels that one of the best possible uses for this money is to dedicate it to the ongoing excellence of our amazing teaching staff.

Second, we have pledged to cover the expenditures for the speakers and mini-courses from the budget. These general meetings and mini-courses are a chance for parents to gather new ideas and get rejuvenated about our parenting and family life, and the board is committed to continuing to offer high-quality programs. In the past we have set a smaller budget for this and then asked parents to donate voluntarily to help cover these costs. But again, our fundraisers have continued to exceed goals, and the board would prefer to use funds raised to pay for speakers at required meetings rather than ask families to pay each time. Participants in crafting mini-courses will still need to pay for materials, but we're sure you'll agree that those sock horses are well worth it!

Finally, we are focusing on making fundraising for the coming year something that is fun and, of course, effective, but also recognizes the busy lives we all lead and the time we want to spend with our families. The fact is that we do not live in a time or place where excellent children's education happens without fundraising, even at the preschool level. Having to raise money for schools is simply a reality. We all can—and should—work and

lobby and vote for a better system, but in the meantime we must raise considerable funds in order to offer an excellent, affordable education to children and their parents. Hopefully we can achieve a good balance and make it successful, build community and have fun in the process!

Thank you, Heidi Thomas and Elissa Cheney, for organizing Picnic in Paris, and thanks to the entire Mountain School community for working together to make it such a great success! Thank you as well to Gillian Claus and Elizabeth Montgomery-Eder, who have volunteered to be our fundraising co-chairs for 2005-06! Should you have any questions, feel free to call or email me (978-4702; angie_davidson@sbcglobal.net).

Thank you! ☺

Note From the Editor

As we end another wonderful year at Mountain School I would like to wish good luck to all the families who's children are moving on to Kindergarden or another program. I know that sometimes our children are more ready to move on than the parents are, but just because you will not be attending MS next year does not mean you have to lose touch with the MS community.

Are you interested in recieving emails about future MS events (e.g. next years Turkey Trot, the Fall and Spring Picnics, etc.)? If so, drop our new Social Chair, Kristin Mitchell, an email to request to be added to our alumni email list.

Do you look forward to the next issue of the newsletter? Would you like to be added to a list of families that recieve the newsletter via email? Send me an email with your contact info and I would be happy to add you to the list. (mtnmama@garlic.com)

Thank you to everyone for all your help and support this year.

Sincerely,

Sonia Casper ☺.

Sweet Dreams and Restful Sleep

by Jeanne Dominquez, mother of Mara (2000-2004) and former MS teacher

“Mama, are you awake?” Shake, nudge. A little louder, closer, more urgently, “Mama, are you awake?!” I feel her hand on my shoulder, her warm breath on my cheek as I drag myself from deep sleep and into semi-consciousness. I open my eyes and see her sweet face silhouetted against the window. I look at the clock. 4:23 AM. “What’s up, honey?” I whisper, trying to sound reassuring. “I had a bad dream. I can’t go back to sleep,” she replies. [OK, so I’m going to pause right here and say what really leapt to mind at the time. I myself was having NO TROUBLE sleeping, honey. None at all. But, I didn’t say that (at least, not out loud), and I did haul myself out of bed and pad down the hallway back to her bedroom to tuck her in again.]

Mara doesn’t usually have too much trouble sleeping, but once in a while there are issues. Like a startling or scary dream, or an urgent need to use the bathroom, or a nightlight that has burned out or what I suspect after all these many years (that would be 6 1/2) of being a mother, is boredom. “Hmmm, it’s the middle of the night, I can’t go back to sleep – I know, I’ll wake Mama up!” I digress...

This particular night I tucked her back into bed and we talked about the scary thoughts that just wouldn’t be quiet in her head. I told her what my mother used to tell me – the things that are most intimidating, most horrifying to those scary thoughts are joyful, happy ones. Because if you can fill you head with those joyful, happy, comforting thoughts there is no room for the creepy ones and they are chased away. And this works, with a little help from her Mountain School quilt.

This is a quilt I made as a culmination project for her 3,4,5’s class, and it has photos of each child, each teacher, each location and field trip all jumbled together in a crazy quilt of soft flannel and warm cotton batting. “Get my quilt, Mama. Not the red-hot-hearts one you made me when I was little. Not the log cabin one Tia Susan made from scraps of dresses. Not the one I made in Teacher Marie’s class. The one with the friends.”

So I pulled the quilt off the top bunk where it lives, spread it out and tucked it up to her chin. Sammy the Lamby and Curly the Bear were tucked in under the quilt she made with Teacher Marie. A little prayer, a kiss and hug. And we began, touching each image as we talked. Here is our friend Michael the day he finally found his footing and climbed the tree in the Redwood grove, remember how proud and excited he was? Remember how difficult it was for him to leave his mama behind when we first started carpooling, and how confidently he bounded out to the car after a while? Here is the old wagon full of vegetables and pumpkins from our trip to the pumpkin patch in Santa Cruz. Remember the corn stalks and all the different kinds of pumpkins – a Cinderella pumpkin, for heaven’s sake? And brussel sprouts, still on the stalk, who ever saw such a thing? Here is our beautiful teacher Jill, standing by the climbing structure at the Springs, smiling up at you, watching you, encouraging you, helping you find the balance and confidence to climb to the top. Oh, how much you could see from up there! (You can’t see mama hyperventilating over by the picnic tables, but that’s a good thing.) Here is Teacher Laura reading a story, and all the friends tucked into the crooks and gnarls of the big circle of redwood trees. Here are you and Kelly naked except for grass hula skirts and flower head bands, rolling out dough for cheesy biscuits at cooking time. And on and on, until Poof! Scary thoughts are gone and the sleepy smile has returned. She rolls over, pats me on the hand and says with a yawn, “OK mama, you can go now.” Yeah, she’s safe under that quilt, with all her friends. Sweet dreams and restful sleep, mija.

Quilting – as long as we’re on the subject...

So, I’ll bet you’re wondering why I’m telling you all this. Well, I belong to a quilt guild in Morgan Hill (Silicon Valley Quilt Association), dedicated to contributing to the community’s knowledge and enjoyment of the art and history of quilting. We are putting on our second annual quilt show on September 24th and 25th, 2005, during the Taste of Morgan Hill festivities. “The Taste” is sort of a street faire, with food, games, art, jewelry, music, wine and did I mention food? There will be a special section for children at the quilt show, featuring a space set aside for quilt related activities for all ages – even the little ones (uh, guess who’s going to be setting

(continued on page 9)

(Sweet Dreams and Restful Sleep, continued)

that up?). We are also hoping to feature more quilts made by the children themselves this year, and I'm thrilled to invite any of the children who have lovingly made a quilt of their own in Teacher Marie's class, or with their grandma or mama or friend, to come and have their quilt displayed in the show. It is not a contest, (the children's category is not a judged portion of the show), just a place to see yours or your child's quilt displayed and enjoyed. You can also submit your own (made by an adult) quilts for display or for the judged portion of the quilt show. Plus there are SO many cool, hand-made things to buy if you want. Last year I got some handmade quilted tooth-fairy pillows (very big as birthday presents for the kindergarten gals), princess purses, pincushions and cuddle quilts.

I'd like to invite you to visit the Silicon Valley Quilt Association website to learn more about our guild and what we hope to accomplish (<http://www.svqa.org>). There you can get the forms and loads of other good things, including resources for teachers (and parents). I'd also like to invite you to contact me personally if you have any questions, or if you're interested in meeting this summer to work on our quilts together. Have a wonderful summer, friends, and I hope I hear from you soon!

Jeanne Dominguez jazzfam2000@yahoo.com
(408) 269-8130 ☞

EScript and Schoolpop

by Jane Johnson

What a great year you've all made it with your behind-the-scenes contributions! Thank you, thank you, thank you very much for all you're doing – just with regular grocery, gift and gas needs. Remember to check your credit card and shopping card numbers at both www.escrip.com or www.schoolpop.com to make sure your shopping continues to benefit our beloved Mountain School over the summer. Happy Summer! ☞

Recipes

from Debra Brender via Nicole Frees

Hummus

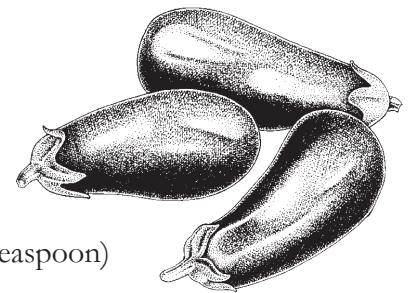


1 cup tahini
juice from 1/2 lemon
1 tsp Kosher Salt (to start)
1 tsp cumin
salt and pepper to taste
garlic (cook's choice as to how much!)
handful of fresh cilantro
2 cups dried garbanzo beans, soaked overnight then simmered until soft (about 1/2 hour) Drain and reserve liquid. Or you can use canned garbanzos, but it's not as smooth.

2/3 cup of water (use reserved liquid from cooking garbanzo beans).

Add first 7 ingredients to blender and mix well. Alternate ladles of cooked garbanzos and reserved liquid until you get the consistency you like. Mine is usually the consistency of a thick milk shake. The hummus will thicken a bit as it rests.

Baba Ganoush



1 eggplant
1/2 cup tahini
juice of 1/2 lemon
cumin (start with 1/2 teaspoon)
garlic (to taste)
reserved cooking liquid
salt and pepper to taste

Quarter and steam the eggplant until soft. Reserve cooking liquid. Place eggplant in a bowl and scrap away from skin (OK to leave the seeds). Discard skin. Add eggplant, tahini, lemon, cumin, garlic and salt and pepper to blender and blend until smooth. Add reserved cooking liquid to get the thickness you like. ☞

Aunt Labels

by Leslie Gall

I'm going to school today with my nephew, Cole, and my sister. He usually goes to school at a little red school house outside of town. Today, turning into the winery and then driving through redwoods, I can only imagine where my nephew, Cole, is going to school today. The trees open up to a smooth, gently rolling area near a small, meandering creek. Cole, in his bright red and yellow shirt, jumped out of the car to join his friends while I stuck to the shadows, watching. I teach at an environment education center, but have never been a chaperone before. I'm smiling thinking about the variety of chaperones we have had at our center and hope Cole's teacher's think I'm one of the easy, pleasant ones. I follow him and some other students with their teacher around one pebbly loop of the creek. They decide to cross a downed tree. I want to help and protect, but I take my cue from the teacher and give them some space. Of course they're fine, continuing to bop along from one pool to another.

As we explore the next loop, the pebbles become rocks, then boulders. The pools get deeper with shallow trickling areas or waterfalls connecting each. My gut says "stay a little closer," while my head says "don't crowd." We come upon a group of larger boulders where a taller waterfall spills over into a deep pool. These three-foot people must think they're standing at the edge of Niagra Falls.

I turn to see it, but I didn't see it, but I did. Only the red and yellow underneath me, blurring into the water. I'm moving over the falls, over the blur, toward the water, maneuvering my body away from the boy. Underwater I go, after the boy I know is Cole. Thrashing arms are easy to grab, but standing is difficult. He's clutching hard, seeing me as a way to get out. I move us to the waterfall, climbing up much slower than we came down. I can't bear to let him go, to hand him up to the teacher. He's mine; it's my job to keep him safe! I see his mother on the bank and know he'll get to her. So I give him to the teacher, and then his mother is there to comfort and dry him.

Later, Cole and I hike up to an old homestead with an overgrown garden, away from the creek. Cole hasn't let go of my hand, much less left my side since lunch. He is quiet and subdued. My only thoughts are of the strong pull of my heart and soul toward this little boy who I didn't know four years ago. As an aunt, I had considered myself as the "give loud presents," "buy ice cream at 4:00 pm," or "give him back to my sister after the meltdown," kind. But after this morning, I will officially add "protector" and not second guess any actions I take under that label. I will always know that my main role for Cole and my other nephews and nieces is to be there for them, whenever they need me. I like that, it makes me smile. ☺

Calendar

BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, June 7th

7:30pm at Dan Shaw's house

For directions call Amber at 408-374-6211

LAST DAY OF SCHOOL

Thursday, May 26th

Have a wonderful, funfilled summer!!!

MOUNTAIN SCHOOL SUMMER SESSIONS

June Session: June 20th to July 1st

July Session: July 5th to August 4th

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL 2005/2006

September 8th or 9th (TBD)

Our Mountain School Family

by Susi Steiner, Community Liaison and head teacher for next year's Saturday's 3/4/5's class

As our year comes to an end, it is time to remember the gifts received as Mountain School families. Throughout the year we have given from our hearts in many ways and now it is time to cherish what we have received. As the School's Community Liaison, I speak from my personal perspective. Let me share what our family cherishes about Mountain School. The treasures are simple and yet so meaningful. Perhaps your family has been touched in similar ways.

Most importantly, we have developed genuine friendships. We found others at Mountain School who live by important values essential to building a family. We arrive each class day, knowing we will interact with people who respect and value community. Through Mtn School, our children have come to know many kind and caring adults. They understand what it means to respect and like adults other than their parents. It carries over when we spend time with neighbors and cousins and other friends. Our children feel less shy and more inclined to be comfortable with others.

Our children have also learned to trust their own abili

ties. When approaching new situations, with new people, animals or a play environments, our daughters are not too shy. They know they can meet new people, challenge new play structures and address new situations. They can tell stories, sing songs, ask questions and genuinely feel free to be themselves.

Lastly, our whole family has learned that we can enjoy ourselves in many different environments. With the rainy springtime we have experienced, our ability to enjoy a wet outdoors has grown. Regardless, whether it is fall, winter or spring, we wake up on Mountain School days, knowing that wherever class is held, we want to attend. My daughters are always excited to for class to begin. Therefore, I am glad that we are a Mountain School family.

As we all attend our final Spring 2005 classes, on behalf on my husband and children, let me say good bye to our cherished classmates. For those of you returning next year, have a great summer and we'll see you in September. For everyone else, good luck and take care.

Sincerely,

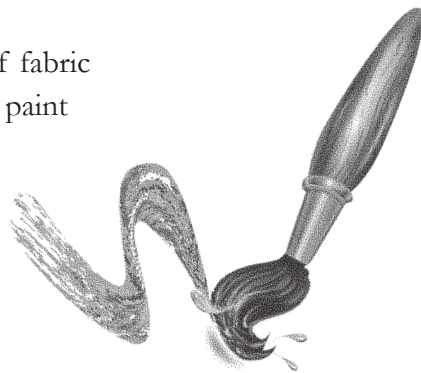
Susi M. Steiner, M.Ed. ✎

Paint Dancing

by Sonia Casper, Editor, taken from "The Toddler's Busy Book" by Trish Kuffner

Supplies:

Large sheet or piece of fabric
Baking pan or tray for paint
Liquid tempera paint
Warm, soapy water
Towels
Music



Tape a large sheet or preece of fabric securely to the floor or lay it on the ground outside. Fill a baking pan or tray with paint. Add a little liquid soap or dish detergent to make cleanup easier. Put on some music and roll up your shild's pant legs, or dress her in only a diaper or shorts. Have her step into the tray of paint, then onto the bedsheet. Then have her dance to the music! Have a pan of warm, soapy water and a towel on hand for when she tires of this activity (or if she refuses to stay on the sheet.) ✎

Is Your Child Ready For Life As Well As School?

by Anna Rainville , Kindergarten teacher and former Mountain School parent, and Betty Peck, her mom and founder of Mountain School

Reprinted from the March/April 1993 issue of The Observatory.

There is a certain lawfulness of a child's development. Skills may be practiced, yes, but there is also a ripeness that allows the child to master them. However maddening it may seem to the anxious parent, there are certain things that just come naturally at a particular stage of development. For instance, in drawing a circle, the young child will start from the top to bottom either which way. A concerned adult can model the correct way (clockwise) until they themselves go in circles, but until a certain developmental age, that topsy-turvy way is how a young child will continue to make a circle. The same can be said for sitting still, a mysterious criteria in the minds of parents for school readiness. We encourage you, however, to question a program that has sitting as a priority.

It is recommended that parents ask if their child is ready for life in contrast to looking strictly at school readiness. Four areas of readiness can be considered: gratitude, awe and wonder; self-esteem and risk-taking; creativity and play; and finally, responsibility to themselves and others.

Here is a checklist for your child:
- Does your child say please, thank you and you are welcome, with ease?
· Can she/he say a firm "no" and a

decided "yes"?

- Does your child know the joy of giving?
- Has your child looked into the heart of a flower?
- Has she/he been allowed to be dirty?
- Has your child been thoroughly acquainted with the best of all possible playthings: rocks, water, sand and dirt?
- Has your child had the exquisite pleasure of a best friend or a small play group?
- Has your child known the loving authority of a grandparent, neighbor, family friend or teacher?
- Does your child know the nursery rhymes?
- Can your child turn sticks into trains?
- Is your child read to several times a day while seeing you enjoy reading?
- Has your child discovered the joys of visiting the local library?
- Does your child sing and dance to his/her own inner music?
- Does your child know how to give everything its own place?
- Has your child's sense of fantasy been nourished?
- Does your child have paper on which to use her crayons, paint and colored pencils?
- Is your child encouraged in his birthright: creativity?
- Is your child gathering up the wisdom of the garden?
- Does your child help prepare the family's healthy food?
- Is your child exposed to the richness of nature in every season?
- Does your child delight in family celebrations?

A checklist for the parent:

- Have you had the opportunity to observe your child at play and in

learning situations?

- Do you know how to renew yourself in order to keep your playful spirit?
- Do you take time to wonder?
- Do you have a firm "no" and a resounding "yes"?
- Does your child sense your own gratitude and reverence for life?
- Do you get enough sleep?
- Do you know how and where to ask for help?
- Do you know the value of setting limits?
- Do you believe in yourself?
- Do you have mentors?
- Are you polishing your sense of humor every day?
- Does your child see you engaged in honest communications?
- Is your own creative spirit being kept alive?
- Are you involved in creative conflict resolutions?
- Are your celebrations enriched by storytellers, musicians and artists?
- Have you experienced the power of story telling?
- Do you sing in the car?
- Is your television turned off?
- Do you take family walks?
- Does your child see you enjoying the outdoors and nature's beauty?
- Do you know the value of a rhythmic day, week, month and year?
- Are you getting and giving enough hugs?
- Do you know the art of gift giving?
- Do you practice the art of simplicity?
- Does your diet sustain you?
- Do you play with your child?
- Do you know how to have fun?
- Are you able to create moods to enhance bedtime, story time, etc.?
- Do you know how to create moments of love in your family? ☞