



Los Gatos-Saratoga  
Observation Nursery School

# The Observatory

Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School ~ Issue 1 ~ October 2010

## Welcome to the 2010-2011 School Year

*by Jill Hansen, Board Chair*

I wanted to give a big welcome to our new families and welcome back to school to our alumni and teachers. I also wanted to extend a thank you to our board members. Our board of directors is made up of volunteer parents who are willing to dedicate their time and energy to help make the school run smoothly. By volunteering, we stay connected to our school and we get a better understanding of the enormous effort it takes to keep our school running. Without our volunteers, our school would not be the exceptional Mountain School that it is today. Volunteering allows us to be a part of something that sets the foundation for our children's future. I, for one, can't thank all of you enough. The pleasure and joy our children express each time they attend class is a reminder of just how special our school is.

One of my favorite things about our school is the sense I have of belonging in a community. Each of my children feels that they belong, but Erik and I also feel we belong. The Mountain School embraces each and every one of us through the love of the teachers, the unconditional curiosity our children have and the reliance we as parents develop with each other as the bonds of trust and friendship are strengthened. Teachers Jill, Bruce and Marie very eloquently reminded us in our 4/5's circle meeting that the Mountain School community is not only a preschool for our children, it is a school for parents. I sometimes forget this as I get caught up with the busy schedule of a 1st grader, a 4-year-old in the 4/5s and a 2-year-old in the Wednesday 2's. We as parents learn from each other, we learn from the children in our classes or in our carpools, we learn from the teachers, we learn from the interactions between teachers and the children and we learn from the mini-courses we attend.

I think we sometimes forget that we are the role models for our children and that as we form bonds in our community with others, our children learn how to form bonds with each other and with other adults. They learn how to rely on others for help changing clothes, for help with their lunches, or for help dealing with a difficult circumstance. Difficult things for them may be sharing with another 2-year-old or helping a friend over a log on a long hike, they may emulate our behavior by finding and rescuing a ladybug in another friend's hair. (Well, a 2-year-old may not be rescuing the ladybug as much as exchanging one prison for another, but they will still enthusiastically try.) As our children are forming some of their first friendships, we also are forming friendships that have the opportunity to last a lifetime. The love we all have for our children is reflected in what a tremendous experience it is for all of us at the Mountain School. I am looking forward to see what some 2-year-olds, 4-year-olds, veteran teachers and parents have to share with me and my family this year.

Thank you, and welcome back to what will be another terrific Mountain School experience.



### What's Inside:

- Thank You from Teacher Jan
- Turkey Trot Details & Helpful Training Info
- Going Green Tips

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## It's Turkey Trot Time!



by *The Turkey Trot Team* 21<sup>st</sup> so sign up today!

Mark your calendar for everyone's favorite annual fall event, the Turkey Trot! There will be food, music and fun for everyone. Great prizes will be awarded to the top male, female and child finishers!

This year's Turkey Trot 5K Race & Family Fun Run will take place on Sunday, Nov. 14<sup>th</sup> at Vasona Park in Los Gatos.

### **Sponsors Needed!**

Want to advertise your business at this event? Sponsors will have their name/ logo placed on runners' t-shirts. Please contact Katja Wick for more information (408)480-2862 or [katjawick@gmail.com](mailto:katjawick@gmail.com). Deadline for sponsorship has been extended to October 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **Volunteers Needed!**

Interested in working with a great group of people on Race Day? If you know a high school student, this is a great way for them to earn community service credit! We are still searching for the following:

- Race day registration volunteers
- Volunteers to staff course
- Volunteers to maintain list of runners' times
- Volunteers to set up & distribute food & drink on race day

If interested in any of these volunteer positions, please contact Tania Vong as soon as possible at (408) 568-2514 or [chiomi@gmail.com](mailto:chiomi@gmail.com).

Dust off your sneakers and get running...we can't wait to see you there!

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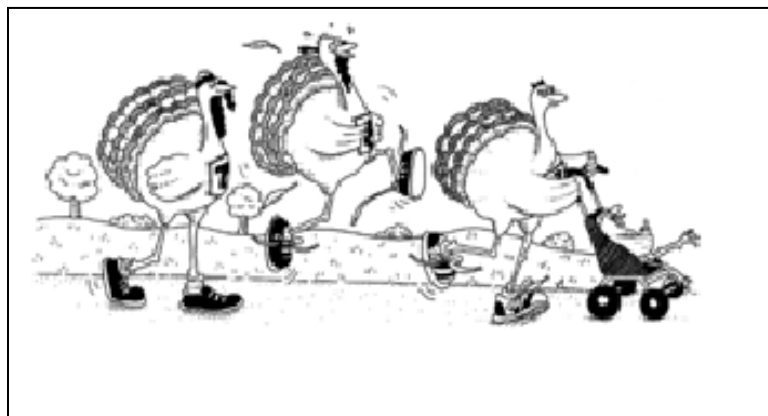
### **RACE DAY SCHEDULE:**

**9 AM:  
REGISTRATION  
BEGINS**

**11 AM:  
5K BEGINS**

**12-2 PM:  
FOOD & FUN  
AT GATEWAY  
PAVILION**

You can pre-register at [www.active.com](http://www.active.com), by downloading a registration form at [www.LGSONS.com](http://www.LGSONS.com), or by contacting Kimberlee Biagini at [kimberlee.biagini@gmail.com](mailto:kimberlee.biagini@gmail.com). Price for registration increases after October



*New to running? Here is an eight-week training plan that will get you ready by Nov. 14<sup>th</sup>: <http://running.about.com/od/racetraining/a/first5K.htm>*

## A New Mountain School Cookbook!

We are very excited to be putting together a new Mountain School cookbook this year. Inspired by a willing parent volunteer, Anne-Michelle Frances (mother of Maleah and Brody), and helped along by the support of the board, we began work on the cookbook over the summer. One distinctive characteristic of Mountain School is that we have always thought it important to have "cooking time" rather than "snack time," that is, we have focused on involving the children in the preparation of the food and understanding where the food comes from rather than just sitting them down and serving juice and crackers. We hope to make our cooking program even more engaging for children and more rewarding for parents by incorporating all our knowledge and experience into a new cookbook.

We hope the cookbook will be a great resource for cooking parents to use at school, for parents to enjoy with their children at home, and for teachers to use in planning their curriculum. The cookbook will help teachers and parents be aware of the skills that children can develop while participating in each cooking project as well as how to work with the children to develop these skills. It will include substitutions for common allergens (dairy, wheat, eggs, etc.) in order to accommodate the needs of as many children as possible at school. It will also help teachers and parents enrich the day with science experiments, art projects,

dramatic activities, songs, finger plays, stories and conversation related to what we are cooking.

Cooking has the potential to bring both adults and children enormous pleasure as well as a real sense of confidence in our skills and knowledge of the world. Children are naturally interested in the food they eat and in the food their parents prepare. We might as well embrace the experience of cooking together and make it as meaningful, healthy and fun as we can!

We truly need your help to create a useful, beautiful cookbook. We would like to use this year to:

- Finalize the list of recipes to be included
- Get down on paper ways to involve the children in the cooking projects and to help them develop particular skills
- Test the recipes and procedures at school
- Compile suggestions of fun and interesting conversations, songs, stories, finger plays, science experiments, drama and art projects that relate to the recipes
- Do the necessary word processing, layout and addition of photos or graphics
- Discover the best way to publish the cookbook to maximize its fundraising potential for our school.

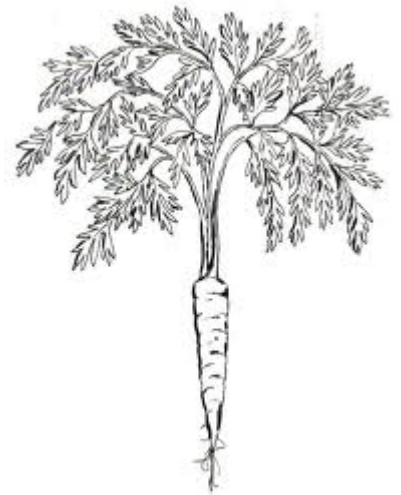
We would like an end product that looks beautiful and that includes recipes that:

- Taste good!
- Are relatively simple to prepare

- Develop skills appropriate to the age of the children in each class
- Are relatively healthy both for the children and the earth, using locally grown ingredients in season when possible, whole grains, and not too much saturated fat and sugar – with a few exceptions!
- Include suggested substitutions for common allergens that will still result in a recipe that tastes good.

Thanks to many teachers and parents in previous years, we already have a number of recipes that work very well with children. As soon as possible, we will make these recipes available to you when you are the cooking parent this year in the format we are planning to use in the cookbook. This will include the purpose of each recipe (skills to develop, fun to be had), equipment and ingredients required (including allergy substitutions), how to set up the materials and involve the children, how to serve the food, table decorations that will help the children learn where the food comes from, and so on. After you try a recipe out at school, we really want your feedback about the recipe itself and all the procedural tips that come with it. Were they helpful to you? Was there more you needed to know? What would you change?

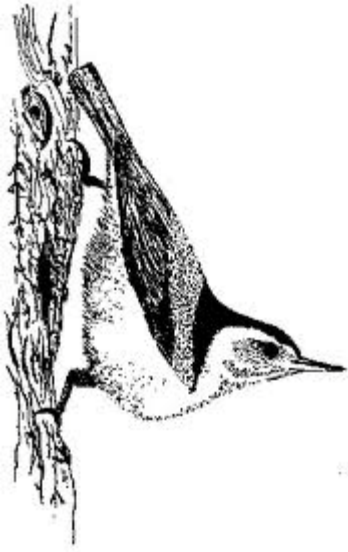
Please communicate any thoughts, feedback, and/or ways you can help to Kathy Wilcox, our Friday 2's teacher, at [wilfo2@aol.com](mailto:wilfo2@aol.com).




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*"Pulling carrots out of the ground is like unearthing treasure. It is probably the most direct experience one can have of where food comes from, i.e., directly from the soil."*

- Farmer Tom



## A Special Thank You from Teacher Jan

*Thank you, thank you  
thank you---thank you  
very much!*

I want to thank this school community from the bottom of my heart for the kind words, pictures and notes presented to me at the picnic May 2<sup>nd</sup> on the occasion of retiring from many years as a

head teacher. I was deeply touched.

It was wonderful to see presently involved and graduate families and chat about fond memories.

I am delighted by the thought of a permanent representation of Hairy the Pumpkin in the

garden.

How could I be so lucky? My "work" was play; my learning came through the children and their devoted parents; and treasured friendships through the staff.

Love,  
Teacher Jan

## New Books for You & Mountain School!

*by Teacher Jane*

Have you noticed a number of new children's books at school this year? We get "points" to buy books whenever parents and teachers spend

money at Hicklebee's.

So, remember to **mention LGSONS / Mountain School** whenever you buy books at Hicklebee's and help us keep adding to our library.

Hicklebee's also sells books for adults, hosts regular events for children, and can be found online at [www.hicklebees.com](http://www.hicklebees.com). The store is located at 1378 Lincoln Ave., San Jose, CA 95125.

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*"As children observe, reflect, record, and share nature's patterns and rhythms, they are participating in a process that promotes scientific and ecological awareness, problem solving, and creativity."*

- Deb Matthews  
Hensley

**WOOD WANTED**  
Soft wood scraps for our carpentry area. Small, leftover pieces of wood from frame shops. Let Teacher Jane know [janekrejci1@verizon.net](mailto:janekrejci1@verizon.net) or bring them to the schoolhouse. Thanks!

### Are Your Children Interested in Horses?

On Saturday, October 16<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 PM, Bear Creek Stables, located near the Lexington Reservoir in Los Gatos, will be hosting an informational meeting for parents to learn more about how to get their children involved with horses and to meet Nichole Fisher, the Joint District Commissioner and primary instructor of the Santa Cruz County Pony Club (SCCPC).

Nichole teaches lessons for adults and children at Bear Creek Stables focusing on riding fundamentals and establishing a basic balanced position. Nichole would love to share her love of horses and riding with others. Safety and fun is always a top priority.

If you are interested in attending please RSVP for directions to Jenny Whitman at [jenny\\_whitman@comcast.net](mailto:jenny_whitman@comcast.net).

Refreshments will be served.

## CULMINATION PROJECTS: *It's about memories.*

At the final Circle Meeting of the year each family shares their memories of the school year. It is your "Culmination Project."

*For you*, it is an opportunity to reflect and summarize what the year has meant to you and your child.

*For your child*, it is a tangible memory of one of their early school experiences. It will be something your child will cherish over the years.

You may design your project in any way you wish. Here are some examples of projects families have done over the years.

- ~ a letter to your child with your thoughts on the year
- ~ a photo album with captions and notes about the year
- ~ a photo collage or a framed picture with quotes/ notes
- ~ a photo calendar capturing the year

~ a poem or song about your child and the class  
~ a story or book about the year

~ a pillow, or quilt, or towel or wall hanging  
OR

~ an original presentation that reflects your unique interests/ talents

*Remember*, this is for you and your child. Make it meaningful for you. (There should be no pressure / stress involved – it is not a performance!)



## LGSONS Board of Directors – The Inside Scoop...

*In each issue*, The Observatory will highlight one of the board positions that will be vacant next academic year. If you are interested in learning more about any of the positions, please contact our Board Chair Jill Hansen at [jhansen@apple.com](mailto:jhansen@apple.com). This interview is with Jane Dodge, Information Chair, 2009-2011. Information Chair is an executive voting board position.

**The Observatory: This is your second year being the Information Chair. What can you tell us about your role?**

I learned from the best! Nicole Engel and then Karen Paculba held the position when I first found Mountain School, and they were both so helpful and patient with all my questions about registration, the waitlist, the school and carpool that I was pleased to take on the role myself years later. I'm also a librarian by training, so answering questions is something I like to do. In my role

I'm in charge of giving information to potential families about our program. If they're interested enough to apply, I direct them to the application, and then the Registration Chair takes over from there. I also put on the Open House, but I get a lot of help with that.

**TO: What's an executive voting board position?**

The board is broken into two categories, voting and non-voting positions. Both have perks, but voting have a few more, as the workload tends to be heavier. Voting board members are expected to attend the monthly board meetings. Executive board members -- which are the Chair, Treasurer, Registration, Information, and Secretary -- can pass votes when we don't have time to wait until the next scheduled board meeting.

**TO: What's the hardest part of your job?**

People obviously want a tour of the school, but since we have no office, we're not really set up for that. Instead I schedule observations, but it's hard to explain to parents that they can't bring their children along. I've had to find polite ways to say "Your children would be too distracting." But I love setting up observations because the parents fall in love with the school and apply as soon as they can.

**TO: What's the best part?**

When some families hear about our program, with the focus on nature and playing, they just know it's the one for them: something resonates with them, usually having to do with their own childhoods. I love being able to say, "Yes, it's as wonderful as it sounds -- even more so."

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*May the memories  
wrap their arms  
around you,  
May your  
childhood take you  
by the hand.  
May what you  
remember find  
healing when it  
hurts,  
So the memories  
will protect you  
when they can.*

- Tom Hunter

## LGSONS 2010-2011 Fall Programs

Hello Mountain School families! Hopefully you are enjoying this special and unique time outdoors with your child. Now is your chance to shed that heavy backpack, leave the creek boots at home and escape from the house to spend some quality time...without the kids! The fall semester General Meeting and mini-courses are just around the corner. Parents are required to attend the General Meeting and at least one mini-course per semester. We hope you will find a program that is of interest to you from the list below:

### FALL GENERAL MEETING:

*"Positive Guidance with Children"* with Jean Gallagher-Heil, MA

**Thursday, November 4 at 7:00 PM**

Location: TBD

One of the greatest challenges of parenting is coming to understand children's (sometimes difficult) behavior. Learn to create a guidance strategy that works for both the adult and the child and explore the opportunities for learning that emerge in every interaction we have with our children.

### MINI-COURSES:

*"Nature Hike"* with Teacher Jill Hyman

**Thursday, October 7 at 3:30-5:30 PM**

Savannah Chanelle Winery at The Grove

\*\*The number of participants is limited to 12-14 people. Please RSVP to Sherri Ingrassia ([singraffia@hotmail.com](mailto:singraffia@hotmail.com))\*\*

Here's your chance to experience the outdoors with the heart of a child and eyes (ears, nose, taste, and touch) of an adult. We'll discover plants, learn about some of their native uses, hear some local history, and walk through creek and grounds.

*"Resilience and Parallel Parenting"* with Dr. Frederic Luskin, PhD, author of *Forgive for Good*

**Wednesday, October 27 at 7:00 PM**

Almaden Country School Auditorium \*\*Please RSVP to Yumi Hiroshima ([yumi.hiroshima@gmail.com](mailto:yumi.hiroshima@gmail.com))\*\*

Dr. Luskin will discuss strategies for raising resilient and emotionally healthy children while promoting individual growth through the concept of parallel parenting, i.e., being the best you can be while allowing your children to be the best they can be.

\*\*For more information on LGSONS Programs please visit our website at: [www.lgsons.com](http://www.lgsons.com)\*\*

*"You're Driving Me Crazy: Exploring Parental Anger"* with Sue Dinwiddie, MA

**Monday, November 15 at 7:00 PM**

Location: TBD \*\*Please RSVP to Yumi Hiroshima ([yumi.hiroshima@gmail.com](mailto:yumi.hiroshima@gmail.com))\*\*

Look at anger triggers and various responses. Investigate what works and what does not.

*"Sock Stick Horse Creation"* with Teachers Karyn Cline and Jan Eby

**Tuesday, November 16 at 7:00 PM**

School House \*\*Please RSVP to Sherri Ingrassia ([singraffia@hotmail.com](mailto:singraffia@hotmail.com))

Come share in a Mountain School tradition! Create a beloved stick sock horse to give to your child.

*"Build Your Own Toolbox"* with Sean Headrick

**Wednesday, November 17 at 7:00 PM**

School House \*\*Space is limited to 20 participants\*\* To RSVP please email Yumi Hiroshima ([yumi.hiroshima@gmail.com](mailto:yumi.hiroshima@gmail.com))

Cost: \$10

Construct a child's toolbox using basic woodworking skills. No experience required!

*"The Happiness Advantage"* with Shawn Achor

**Thursday, November 18 at 7:00 PM**

Hillbrook School

Cost: \$20 \*\*Please RSVP to Sherri Ingrassia ([singraffia@hotmail.com](mailto:singraffia@hotmail.com))

A new method to unlocking your child's potential

### SPRING GENERAL MEETING:

*"Raising Your Child to Love Learning"* with Deborah Stipek, PhD, Dean of the School of Education at Stanford University and co-author of *Motivated Minds: Raising Children to Love Learning*

**Thursday, February 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM**

Location: TBD

## SUPPORT LGSONS WITH SCRIP, IT ONLY TAKES A FEW MINUTES...

Scrip is a wonderful way to support LGSONS. 10% of your purchases at Safeway or with any credit cards you enter will benefit Mountain School. Go to [www.escrip.com](http://www.escrip.com) and follow the directions -- Mountain School's number is 3593396. If you've forgotten your Safeway card number, call 1-877-SAFEWAY and the nice people on the phone will ask you a few questions & give you the number over the phone. Anyone who signs up by November 1st will receive a free raffle ticket for the raffle at the Turkey Trot!

## Going green on a budget!

By Karen McVay

In the past it may have been considered more expensive to “go green” instead of continuing old habits. That is not the case anymore, here are five basic tips to practice having a positive impact in our environment while also helping your budget.

1. **Buy a reusable water bottle** - 50 billion bottles of water are bought each year; sadly around 80% of them end up in a landfill. Did you know drinking 2 liters of tap water only cost about 50 cents a year? Go ahead and compare it to the cost of bottled water.
2. **Freecycle and fight consumerism** - during these times when many families have been hit hard by the economic downturn, we can rise to the challenge and fight consumerism. We are deceived by many campaigns into believing purchasing goods will lead us to happiness, but what it is doing is leaving our wallets empty, our houses cluttered and our families busier with items instead of being in nature or spending time as a family. Join your local freecycle group; you will keep from buying new items when you might be able to find them at no cost.
3. **Buy locally grown foods** - visit your farmers market, when at the store choose

locally grown foods. At times they seem to be a bit more expensive but I ask you this, which food will you consider fresher the one from your local farmers or the one that has traveled up to 3,000 miles? Will fresher foods help a bit on keeping you from the expensive health bills? It is an indirect savings.

4. **Cut your grocery bill by stopping the waste** - the average household spends about ¼ of their monthly food budget on foods that will not be consumed. By doing this we are not only hurting our budget but also producing more trash for the landfills. Perhaps those berries that won't get eaten on time can be frozen fruit for a smoothie later, perhaps having too many veggies in the fridge can become a delicious stir fry, what about those leftovers? Can they be a delicious meal for next day's lunch instead of the store-bought food?
5. **Going back to basic with toys** - with the holidays arriving we head towards the “shopping season” it is time to think about our options. Do we truly need to buy a mountain of toys or can

we prepare to give a mountain of memories? Mountain schools has given us many samples of what kind of toys we can give this season without breaking our wallets or consuming more plastic. Would you consider giving your child a certificate for an adventure day with you – having your undivided attention? How about gift certificates for lessons they would like to take? Have you checked out Wild-zone? I bet your children would enjoy time in there. And don't forget there are always others in need that would enjoy receiving a loved toy. Find your local charity center to donate today.

Stay tuned for more tips to follow in the next *Observatory* issue. If you are thirsty for more information, I personally recommend reading *The New Good Life: Living Better Than Ever in an Age of Less* by John Robbins. You can always reach me for any questions or more tips [mcvay\\_karen@yahoo.com](mailto:mcvay_karen@yahoo.com).



Get your LGSONS logo 18oz. Klean Kanteen stainless steel water bottle with a loop-top lid. The bottles have a red school logo and schoolhouse image printed on them, and they cost \$18 each.

For more information please contact Karen McVay at 408-608-4316 or [mcvay\\_karen@yahoo.com](mailto:mcvay_karen@yahoo.com). Please include your name, class and quantity.

## How Does Our Garden Grow?

Please remember when you are in the garden to close the gate securely after yourself to keep the deer out. We encourage the children (or the parents) to snack in the garden or pick items for cooking projects while at school, but please leave any extra produce on the vines. The gardening crew that spends their weekends maintaining the garden at the school has uses for that produce.

# What is Your Definition of Teamwork? The 2011 LGSONS Auction

by Sheila Della Ratta

At different stages in life, we've all heard the term "teamwork" reiterated many times over with disparate applications. In grade school "teamwork" inferred cooperation with peers transitioning into participation in sports later in high school. In college it may have referenced working as a team in a study group or on a specific project. As working adults, the term "teamwork" has nuanced to denote groups of people working in specific departments, also oftentimes project based. Somehow all these "teamwork" experiences have left a void in what I have come to believe is the true meaning of the term so I look to nature for a clearer picture.

Pollinators and flowers are the epitome of teamwork. Butterflies, bees, beetles, and birds, to name a few, work in symbiosis with

flowers in a cycle founded upon growth and renewal. Each has a role, each has a design, and one benefits from the other's efforts with what they created together. There is a perpetual cycle that ensures each entity receives what it needs.

Our Mountain School community parallels the harmony of pollinators in nature. Each family contributes what they can in the form of time, donations, and resources to achieve a goal. It matters not who did what amount or type of work or spent however much money – it is about what we can and do accomplish as a collective. The fruit of our labors as a whole benefit our community, our children with programs that emphasize emotional and social development just as the dance between pollinator and plant ensure the next generation of fruit.

Our annual fundraising

auction is, in my opinion, one of the greatest examples of teamwork I have ever experienced. And this year with organizational enhancements, we will further leverage our collective efforts as follows: 1) We will all share the load of soliciting for business donations, as each family will receive up to five vendors to contact and manage; 2) We will have three procurement Leads, as opposed to one, to manage families and donations; 3) Class reps will fulfill their auction work committee requirement by managing the family donations and class projects for their respective classes.

Last year our auction raised \$55,000 dollars for our beloved school amidst a faltering economy. Success can only be attributed to the great number of dedicated families, businesses, and alumni that perpetually support our school. This year our auction will take place on

March 12<sup>th</sup> at Redwood Estates Pavilion and its theme is "The Three Mountain Hens". We are actively recruiting for Lead persons on this year's auction team. To be a success, we need four more persons to step up and fill very important roles in procurement and event planning. If you can participate more fully by donating your time it would be greatly appreciated! Look out in early October for a fundraising email and more importantly, a link to an online survey for auction committee assignments...this your chance to tell us where your interests lie and the first step to determining who will be a bee, butterfly, beetle or bird! Contact Sheila Della Ratta for questions or more information: [sadr@mac.com](mailto:sadr@mac.com), 408.605.9039.



## Mountain School Open House!

Want to Introduce Your Friends to Mountain School?

Invite them to our Open House, where they can:

- Meet the teachers
- Tour the grounds
- Say hello to the chickens
- Talk with currently enrolled parents

Sunday, January 23rd, 2011

11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

More information on [www.lgsons.com](http://www.lgsons.com)

## Schoolhouse Now Booking Parties

Looking for the perfect venue for your child's next birthday party or that family reunion?

The Mountain School is renting out the little red schoolhouse for parties and family gatherings most Sundays during the year. For only \$300, you and up to 50 guests can enjoy a day at Mountain School and will have access to most everything the schoolhouse has to offer -- both inside and out.

For more information and to check availability, please contact Amy Attard at (408) 391-6369 or via email at [amy3614@aol.com](mailto:amy3614@aol.com).