

# The Observatory

LOS GATOS-SARATOGA OBSERVATION NURSERY SCHOOL

NOVEMBER  
2011



## Letting Go

For the first time during my time at Mountain School, I have the ability to go to school each class day with my child. In the past, I had a child or children to take care of at home so going to school three days a week did not work for our family. My son Charlie is in the 3's class, which meets two mornings each week, and with my other two children in elementary school, it would be easy enough and sometimes more convenient for me to attend Mountain School with Charlie each time. And now that I am back to having one child with me for half of the day, there is also the temptation to want to spend as much time with him as possible. Already having an 8 year old and a 6 year old, I am keenly aware of how fast time can seem to pass, and I can easily remember when my oldest was at the same stage as Charlie.

However, from the beginning of this school year, I have chosen to fully embrace Mountain School's family partnerships model, sending Charlie to school with our partner family on the day when I am not scheduled to attend. Letting go does not come easily to me, but out of necessity I have had the experience of seeing my other two sons carpool and attend school without me, and I have seen firsthand the benefits for the children. Going out in the world into a trusted environment of caring teachers and a supportive partner family one or two days each week without mommy or daddy is one step in the inevitable transition to independence. The children learn that others outside their family can care for them and that they are capable of taking care of themselves in many ways. A sense of confidence and resilience emerge in the children. Also, getting close to a partner family has given my children

a glimpse of a different family culture and a sense of the diversity that exists between each of us.

When I hear that voice inside me say, "Maybe I should go today," and it has come up regularly since the beginning of school, I have realized that sometimes the challenge for me in letting go is the now obvious change in our family

## Water

The water at the Schoolhouse is safe to drink. It comes from a well and is tested regularly. Testing results are posted at Lakeside school.

Half of bottled water in the U.S. comes from the tap. We can save money and the environment (plastic and transportation costs) by not buying bottled water.

## Party! Party! Party!

Looking for the perfect unique venue for your child's next birthday party or that family reunion? 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 Margaret Pettit at (408) 888-2518 or via email at [parties@lgsons.com](mailto:parties@lgsons.com).

A big THANK YOU to Pet People at 514 North Santa Cruz Avenue, Los Gatos for providing food for our guinea pigs and chickens.

Cindy Harwin of Pet People is grandma to Teagan in the 4/5s. We really appreciate their generous donation. Stop in if you have pets!

## Nut Policy

We ask all families to avoid nuts and nut products in all cooking projects and in any snacks or lunches they bring to school.

This is in deference to the children with extreme (and life-threatening) nut allergies. Thank you.

situation. For over 8 years, my everyday life has been consumed by taking care of children. For the first time since I brought home my first newborn, I can have about 3-1/2 hours during the middle of a weekday to do something else. I have made it a priority to spend a significant portion of that time taking care of myself – taking a brisk 2 mile walk followed by an hour of yoga and then having a simple, quiet lunch with a cup of tea. These are my ways of nurturing myself so that when I arrive to pick up each of my children, I am replenished and more capable to give to them fully. I have also missed them dearly.

This past summer, our family had the life-altering experience of supporting my father-in-law in the dying process. Death is the ultimate experience each of us will have in letting go. He joined Hospice care in early June and slowly declined until his peaceful passing early in the morning on August 11. The thing that struck me most about watching him slowly let go of his declining body was how strong and brave he was to the very end. It was a process of birthing himself out of this world. It takes a lot of courage for each of us to let go during the many opportunities, big and small, that life presents us with – the need for things to stay the same, the need to be right, the need to be everything to our spouse and children, the need for an orderly house. The list of unrealistic expectations we hold on to can go on and on. Yet letting go during the simple practice of sending my child to school one day a week without me can become a practice for the other areas in my life where I want to hold on tightly.

-Priscilla Amend

## The Importance of Fundraising

Just a quick reminder about the importance of fundraising to the financial success and stability of Mountain School. Each year the Board sets a budget that has a gap between known income and known expenses. To help keep tuition costs at current levels, fundraising must bridge that gap. The gap that fundraising must cover this school year is \$49,000, which is over 20% of our operating budget.

And so the goals are set for the Turkey Trot/Raffle in the fall and the Auction in the spring. There are Board committees dedicated to putting on these events, but it takes the entire community's support to make them a success. Right now, you can help make these fundraising events as successful as possible by:

1. Selling the 25 raffle tickets that have been given to you. For example, that's 5 people buying 5 tickets for \$20.
2. Registering for the Turkey Trot to participate in the 5k Family Fun Run.
3. When Auction committee assignments are communicated soon, participating in your committee role as fully as possible and following through with the overall deadlines set by the Auction Chairs.

We are all the parents of young children and selling raffle tickets can become the last priority when our children or ourselves are sick, sleep deprived, or in disequilibrium. Yet each and every one of our efforts is important and can make a big difference. Please make an honest effort to participate in the fundraising efforts of our school as fully as possible. All of our efforts help keep our beloved Mountain School running smoothly for the children.

# Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School

## Dear Dads,

*(This is a letter I wrote to two dads who responded very strongly and differently to a conflict in which their sons were engaged.) -Jane Krejci*

I am responding to the incident between your 4 year old sons that you wrote about in your notes. I did not see what happened, so I cannot make a judgment call (and try not to anyway!). However, here are some thoughts.

Socialization is one of the most important tasks for children at this age; and it is closely tied to their emotions. Differences and conflicts are a normal part of this process. It is how children learn, so it is important that we give them a chance to negotiate and problem solve. We adults (Teachers and parents alike) need to resist jumping in too soon and 'fixing' it for the children. This is really difficult to do and uncomfortable to watch. Loud (even harsh) words and tears may be part of figuring things out. We want to acknowledge feelings - talk about possible solutions - and then see what will work.

We train our Teachers to do the same. (Standard problem solving technique: calm down, identify problem, brainstorm ideas, evaluate, try). In the heat of the moment, we cannot always be so structured or formal; but we try to give them the words and lead them through the process. It is often messy and uncomfortable; but we must keep the bigger goal in mind. They will not always have us around; we want them to be competent and confident problem solvers. What we do not tolerate is hurting - outside or inside. We step in if there is physical hurt - and we talk about emotional hurt (sometimes immediately; sometimes later).

So in light of this - your role is one of observer and scribe. This means refraining from giving directions, making comments or suggestions (no matter how "helpful") and engaging in their play. Safety is the only exception. Sometimes it is clear - sometimes it is our anxiety or perceived threat we react to. By following these guidelines we are able to:

- hear the children's conversation
- follow their lead as they create their own play
- help them negotiate, problem solve
- notice our own level of comfort and our urge to intervene and fix things

It is natural to have different perspectives as to what is safe and what is not; what is tolerable and what is not; and what is appropriate and what is not. In the spirit of Mountain School, I trust you two can acknowledge your differences and refrain from judging each other or yourself too harshly. We Teachers struggle with many of the same issues. We all have good intentions or we would be somewhere else. It is wonderful to have dads like you who are so thoughtful about parenting. I commend you both.

-Teacher Jane

## Turkey Trot Time!

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. 6th at Vasona Park in Los Gatos. You can pre-register at [active.com](http://active.com), or by downloading a registration form from the school website [LGSONS.org](http://LGSONS.org), or contact Tracy Pingree at [tracypingree@yahoo.com](mailto:tracypingree@yahoo.com).

### Race Day Schedule:

9am: Registration begins  
11am: 5K begins  
12-2pm: Food & fun at Gateway Pavilion

### Volunteers Needed!

Interested in working with a great group of people on Race Day (if you have a high school student it's a great way for them to earn community service credit!)? We are still searching for several volunteers! If interested in any of these volunteer positions, please contact Tania Vong as soon as possible at [chiomi@gmail.com](mailto:chiomi@gmail.com).

## Death

'All living things have a beginning and an ending with living in between' is the message of a beautiful children's book called Lifetimes by Mellonie and Ingpen.)

*Birth* - the beginning! It is usually a joyous occasion as family and friends anticipate a long and wonderful life of the newborn.

*Living* - what an adventure with its ups and downs and everything in between!

*Death* - the ending! This is often the most difficult for us to understand and accept. Many of our families have lost loved ones this past year. For children it might have been a grandparent or another relative or a friend. And some have lost beloved pets. As adults, we are not always comfortable talking with our children about our loss; yet they see and feel and 'know' we are upset.

We talk about death here at Mountain School in an honest and open way.

It usually involves animals. We give the children a chance to observe, touch, say good-bye and bury an animal that has been part of our school or that we have found. As in all things, a child's concept of death evolves. The youngest amongst us don't grasp the permanence of death; they think it is temporary or reversible. Some years ago, one of our rabbits died. Months later, a 3 year old noticed a rabbit at the Clubhouse down the hill and said, "Oh, Snowball is back!" This summer one of our guinea pigs died. Mom Ashleigh related this story to me.

*I told Teagan that Coco Puff died and he was silent for about 15*

*seconds with a sad look and then looked up and said, "Mom, well I can take some of my life out and give it to Coco Puff and then she can live again." Ah, to be 4!*

Sometimes parents question why the teachers seem so fascinated with dead animals and why they allow the children to see and touch them? Our teachers realize that it is only in death that an animal is still enough for us to observe them closely and investigate their feathers or skin or fur or eyes or teeth or tails. The children's curiosity is so all encompassing, and they are not yet bothered by death as we adults sometimes are. A more natural learning experience is hard to find. And we always wash our hands immediately afterwards!

Two new baby guinea pigs will be at the schoolhouse when we return in November.

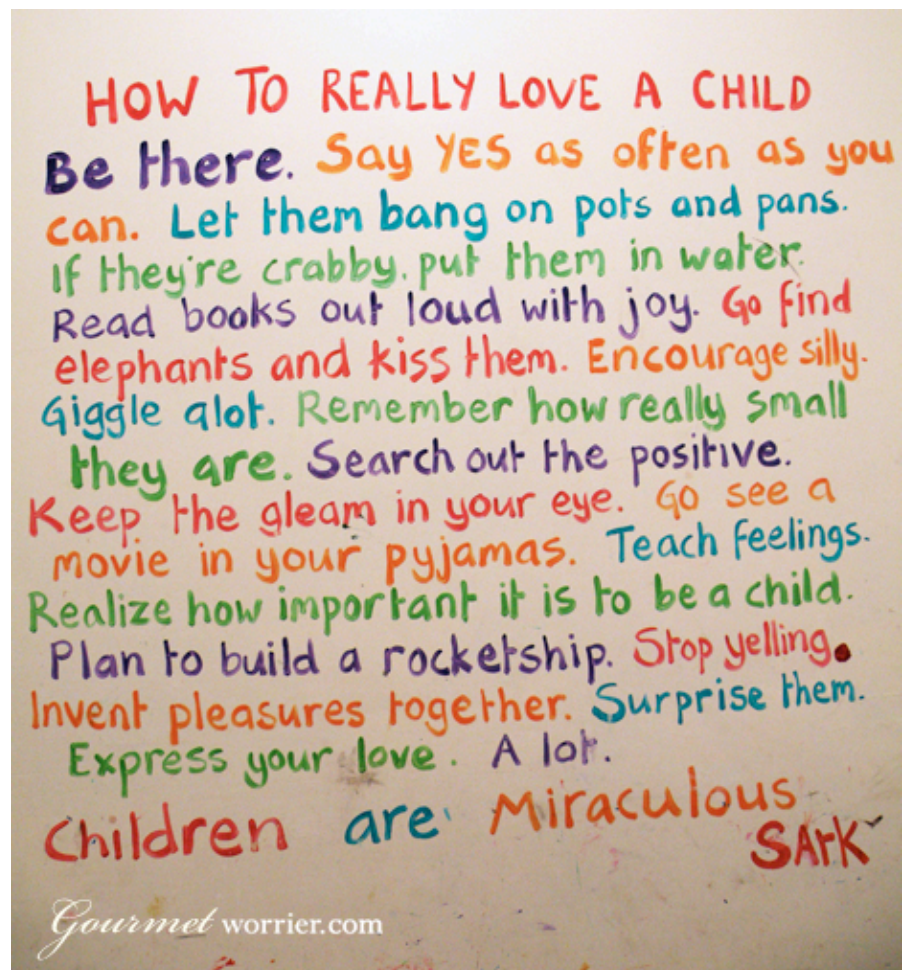
The children will name them.

We will have some new chickens, lovingly raised by Cathy Spears.

Chickens Tallulah and Marie are enjoying 'retirement;' our beloved Poppy died this summer. Guinea pig Dusty has also been retired.

So even though children may not understand everything about death (do we?!), we want to help them to appreciate that it is a normal part of life - beginnings, endings, and living in-between!

-Teacher Jane and Marie



# Thoughts on Celebrating Holidays...

1. We want to give holidays meaning that is developmentally appropriate for young children. Many holidays are based on abstract concepts that are beyond their comprehension.
2. We want to be inclusive. We welcome the diversity in families and cultures in our membership. We want to both respect and celebrate this richness.
3. We want to minimize the emphasis on materialism and consumerism that surrounds so many holidays.

4. We want to be true to our philosophy as articulated in our Handbook.

We do believe that celebrating (verb, not noun) is important. We can recognize milestones, build community, create excitement and have fun. We, therefore, try to distill ideas and activities with common threads that are relevant to preschoolers.

Here are a few examples.

### Let's celebrate the seasons!

Fall - changes in nature, in the garden. What fruits and vegetables are plentiful? What colors do we see? Can we use pumpkins, for example, in cooking, art projects, for sharing (e.g. seed gifts to the chickens)?

### Let's celebrate transitions!

Saying good-bye to Saratoga Springs; saying hello to the Schoolhouse. Turning three, or four, or five. Burying a dead squirrel.

### Let's celebrate families!

A new baby. Grandparents. Where did our families come from? Sharing family traditions; sharing cultural traditions. Let's celebrate friends! What does it mean to be a friend? How can we be a good friend and tell others we like them. How about preparing 'friendship soup,' or making a car or wrapping a gift made at school.

We know that repetition and rituals offer comfort and security. Celebrations help us do this.

-Teacher Jane

## Giving Drive

Recently, my daughter, Anja, and I have been noticing so many more homeless people. It's something we discuss with regularity, as she's come of an age where she now notices and wonders about the man or woman "on the corner with the sign." She wants to know what their signs say, and she wants to give them food. In the current economy there are more people finding themselves homeless. It makes me sad, and also immensely grateful for a comfortable home and good food. Let's join together as a school to offer support to those less fortunate than ourselves.

This fall and winter we will do two collections; one for basic necessities and gently-used items from your home, the other for fulfilling a child or family's holiday wish. Do one or both (or neither), whatever works best for your family. We will do a food drive for Second Harvest Food Bank this Spring.

Children learn best by doing; involve your child in the process of giving by allowing them to participate with you in buying the items. Take this drive as an opportunity to model compassion to your children and to discuss how important it is that we are thankful for what we have. Thank you for your kindness!

-Mira Albert-Bullis, Community Service Chair

## 1st Collection: Necessities

This November, we'll collect gently-used items for EHC LifeBuilders. See their wish list and learn more about the organization at [EHCILifeBuilders.org](http://EHCILifeBuilders.org). There will be a box in the parents room from November 1-18. You can also drop items at my house: 1434 Hauck Drive, 95118. Note: Lifebuilders only accepts items that are new or in good condition.

White socks- only new  
Gently used/new  
twin blankets  
twin sheets  
towels  
t-shirts (men/large/xlarge sizes)  
rain ponchos

## 2nd Collection: Christmas

This organization provides holiday wishes to local migrant labor camps in the Watsonville area. You may collect a Holiday Angel with a wish from the board located in the schoolhouse, and bring the unwrapped gift to the collection box. Attach the holiday angel securely to the gift! Many of the wishes include, shoes, backpacks, blankets, and toys.

## Blending Family Food Traditions

At our latest Circle Meeting, the parents brought some food, pot-luck style, to share some family food traditions with each other. This topic gave me a lot to think about which I enjoyed sharing so much with my class that I thought I'd write it down.

During my childhood, my family blended two cultural food traditions, vaguely mid-western cuisine from my father's side, and Japanese from my mother's side. My husband is from Northern Italy, and so we're blending food traditions again, and different foods & meals are finding their place in our holiday eating line-up. Thanksgiving is always turkey, stuffing, pumpkin pie, jello deserts and the like. If we have a gathering, the special dish the day after Thanksgiving is my husband's lasagna. Actually, any post-holiday meal for my side of the family is good for my husband's lasagna - they really like it, and I find it to be very different from any lasagna I'd had before here in the States.

Japanese & American was easy to blend because Christmas is American & New Year's is Japanese, but getting an Italian-style Christmas meal into the mix might have been more challenging except for a lucky break: my sister married a man born on Dec. 25th, and wants to reserve that day for his birthday as much as possible. This means that we had already shifted our Christmas meal to the 26th or later, whenever is convenient to meet, leaving the 24th and 25th wide-open for Italian-style meals if we like. It's been a treat to have those with Italian-side family members or friends, especially since

I usually don't know what I'm doing so I get to just eat and enjoy myself.

Blending food traditions also means accommodating differences in food tastes. My father hated fishy foods, and there are some great fishy dishes in Japanese cooking. I just never ate them until I was living in Japan after college, and I was shocked when my mom came to visit me and made one, oden. I had never had it growing up, and it turns out oden and other Japanese dishes that had what my dad thought was a fishy smell due to the fish or seaweed-based broths were nixed early on in their marriage. I learned to love oden when I was living in Japan, but it had never occurred to me that my mom might know how to make it since she never had while I was growing up. Luckily, my husband likes these types of dishes, so when the weather gets colder, I can make them.

More challenging is having those dishes that you love but some members of your family don't. My husband is not fond of pumpkin pie, or cinnamon, both of which I absolutely need for Thanksgiving. He, in turn, introduced to me my Italian food nemesis, Panettone. It's a sweet desert bread with raisins or dried fruit in it, managing to somehow blend two foods I don't like into one dish. We started dating in an October, and as his friends very nicely invited me over for dinner, making me some really great meals, I was puzzled because every single meal was ended by the almost reverent presentation of a slice of Panettone. When I finally confessed to my future husband how much I

disliked it because of the raisins, he fixed the problem, "Ah! You should have told me! We have a no-raisin version called Pandoro!"

Now, after each meal, out came the Pandoro. It was okay, but not really deserving of the fond treatment it was getting from everyone. I mean, tiramisu is much better, I thought! It all came to a head when he brought a Pandoro to my family's post-Christmas meal, and while my father loved it, about half was left after the meal was done. I stuck it in the freezer, and then on New Year's Eve I threw it out. I mentioned this in passing at brunch with some Italian friends soon after, and a dead



silence settled on the table. They were shocked. No, they said, they would never throw it out. It's excellent in coffee, especially when it gets hard. Why, I would eat every bit...etc....etc.... On the drive home, my husband finally explained that it was a special dessert that only comes out during the holidays. That I had thrown out the Italian equivalent of pumpkin pie.

So, even though I don't like Panettone or Pandoro very much, it makes an appearance at our house during the holidays. As does pumpkin pie!

-Rusti Icenogle

# Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School

Fall Semester Programs	September	November	December
<p>We are excited to introduce the line-up of our fall semester programs. This is a preliminary list meant to give you an idea of what is being planned. Be sure to check <a href="http://LGSONS.org">LGSONS.org</a> for updates and additions.</p> <p>Please remember that all enrolled families are required to attend the General Meeting and one Mini-Course per semester. Attendance at evening meetings is just as important as your participation at the daytime classes. This will benefit not only your child, but YOU as well!</p> <p>Thank you! Liz Basallaje and Yumi Hiroshima programs co-chairs</p>	<p><b>27</b> Mini Course: LAUMC Children's Center Preschool presents Heather Hansen, LCSW "Behavior 101: Separation anxiety, avoiding the power struggle and understanding your preschooler's behavior in the first few months of school" 9:00-10:30am, The Redwood Room, Los Altos Methodist Church, 655 Magdalena Avenue, Los Altos Free child care is provided. To attend please RSVP to Jenny Morgan: <a href="mailto:jennifermorgan@laumc.org">jennifermorgan@laumc.org</a></p>	<p><b>3</b> Mini Course: Martina Kocianova Taking a holistic approach towards nutrition 7pm, Van Meter Elementary School</p> <p><b>9</b> General Meeting: Janis Keyser, MA Author of "Becoming the Parent You Want To Be"</p>	<p><b>13</b> Mini Course: Juliana Scalise "Oxygen Mask Parenting: Integrating the Power of Self-Care Into Your Life as a Parent" 7pm, Van Meter Elementary School</p>
	<p><b>October</b></p>		
	<p><b>4</b> Mini Course: Common Ground seminar with Paul G. Stoltz, PhD "True Grit: Inspiring Resilience &amp; Optimism" 7pm, Harker Upper School, 500 Saratoga Avenue, San Jose</p> <p><b>17</b> Mini Course: Dr. Jerrold Shapiro "What Boys Need" 7pm, Van Meter Elementary School</p>	<p><b>14</b> Mini Course: CPR &amp; First Aid course An informational presentation of CPR &amp; First Aid for infants, children and adults 7pm, Van Meter Elementary School</p> <p><b>30</b> Mini Course: Mother Nature's Child A film that explores nature's powerful role in children's health and development. 7pm, Van Meter Elementary School</p>	

# The 2012 Auction: Magical Mountain School Moments

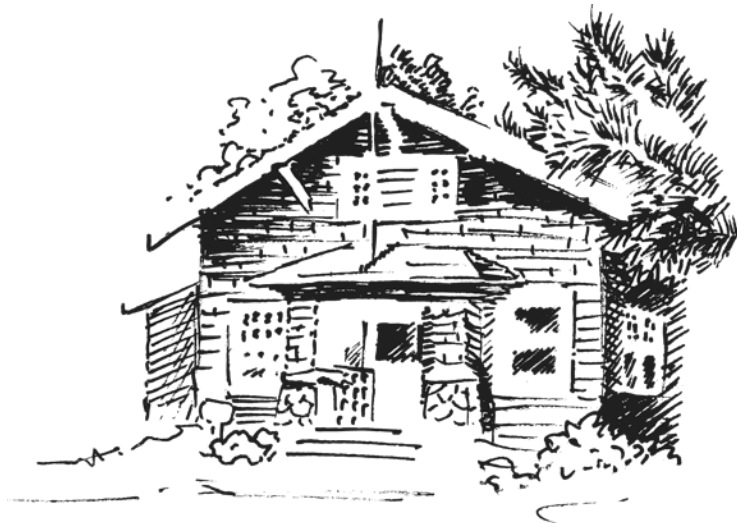
The annual auction has been a Mountain School tradition for over 20 years. This year's auction will take place on March 24, 2012 and will celebrate the "Magical Mountain School Moments" we all share by being part of our very special school. The evening's festivities will include wonderful items up for bid, great food, home-brewed spirits, decorations capturing all the little things that make a day at Mountain School so unique and of course the chance to visit with new friends and old.

For more information, please visit the recently posted Frequently Asked Questions document now online at: [LGSONS.org](http://LGSONS.org).

This document was created to help families understand the scope of the event, clarify auction responsibilities and highlight changes being made this year. Stay tuned for more information about this key fundraising event in the coming weeks.

We look forward to sharing this exciting event with the Mountain School community and sincerely appreciate your support in making this another successful auction.

Amy Attard (3s)  
Ramanan Radharamanan (3/4s)  
Rusti Icenogle (F2s)  
Karen McVay (3/4s)  
2011-2012 Auction Co-Chairs



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