



**Mushroom Family Learning Center**  
*An independent, secular,  
nonprofit preschool*

1240 Washington Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15228  
(412) 531-1225  
mflcdirector@hotmail.com  
mushroomfamily.org

**FEBRUARY 2014**

## **A Big Thank-You to...**

- Roan Premus and family for their donation of clothes and toys.
- Diane Rattay for her help with the 2014-2015 registration.
- All who purchased Date Night in Pgh. raffle tickets, and congrats to the winners — the Marchetti family (Iris, Pre-K AM class)!

# News & Notes

## **TUITION DUE FEBRUARY 1**

**PUBLIC REGISTRATION FOR  
2014-15 BEGINS FEB. 3**  
Tell your family and friends!

**CHICK-FIL-A SPIRIT NIGHT  
FEBRUARY 5**  
Tell your family and friends!

**STAFF MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12**  
Early dismissal at 11:00am. Late  
arrival - 1:00pm; no lunch.

**NO SCHOOL MONDAY,  
FEBRUARY 17**  
Presidents Day

**VISION SCREENING  
FEBRUARY 25 & 26**  
Look for details from your  
classroom teacher.

**SCHOOL PICTURES WILL BE  
TAKEN MARCH 4-6**

**OUTSIDE PLAY**  
Please be sure your kids are  
prepared for 28+ degree winter  
days (and include proper play  
shoes, especially on movement  
day) and mark all outerwear.

**ILLNESS POLICY**  
Many "bugs" are going around.  
Children need to be fever-free or  
vomit/diarrhea-free for 24 hours  
and able to benefit fully from  
being at school in order to attend.

**MFLC ENRICHMENT  
CLASSES AVAILABLE**  
For info, contact Ms. Jamie,  
jamie\_geisler@comcast.net.

**WAYS TO HELP MUSHROOM**  
- United Way agency # is 885339.  
- Giant Eagle Apples for the  
Students program # is 5245.  
- Save Labels for Education and  
Tyson frozen product labels (bin  
in the stairwell).  
- Help other families by donating  
to the MFLC Scholarship Fund.

## **From the director...**

**W**ow! We are already into the second month of 2014. Happy Valentine's Day to you and your family.

Through my job as director I have had the wonderful opportunity to know so many new families and children. Each child who walks through the door every day is such a blessing. Every family that is enrolled at our school is part of the Mushroom Family. It is that time of year when our family will be growing.



I want to take this opportunity to encourage you to be ambassadors for our preschool program. Please take the time to share your experiences in our program with a friend. We hope to have a large amount of new families join our Mushroom Family. You can help us by spreading the word, or encouraging a new family to visit our preschool. Thank you for sharing our wonderful school with others.

I am not sure what the fox says... but I hope the groundhog says that spring is right around the corner! It has been a difficult winter so far. Thank you for your patience with the school delays and closures.

I have listed a few ideas for you and your children when the weather is not cooperating:

- ⇒ **Bring outdoor games in...** Play basketball with a soft foam or sponge ball or just wad up some newspaper. The hoop can be any receptacle hung on the wall or resting on the floor.
- ⇒ **Make a sand-free sand box...** Use a large plastic bin, dishpan or aluminum foil roasting pan as your box. Fill with rice or oatmeal stock with scoops, funnels, spoons or whatever your child's interests are.
- ⇒ **Set up a snowy day construction site...** Break out the couch cushions, blankets and cardboard boxes. The kids can build a fort, clubhouse, or an obstacle course.
- ⇒ **Put on a show...** Give your children a theme, a few characters or let them pick the theme. See where their imaginations will go.
- ⇒ **Play treasure hunters...** Stash clues or items around the house. Children love to play hide and seek. Be explorers looking for the hidden treasure.

**Think Spring!**

*Joan*

Joan Harrison



Have you registered for the 2014-2015 school year?

If not, please stop by the office and talk to Joan. Registration is open to the public as of February 3. The very best compliment you can pay us is to recommend Mushroom Family Learning Center to a friend or neighbor. We thank you for your continued commitment and support!

# News & Notes

## From the president of the board...

Even though it's cold and gray outside, February is a month that warms the heart. It's full of love, cards, and those cute little candies called conversation hearts. In a bowl-ful, you'll find hearts stamped with words like "dream," "love" and "hug me." They're simple words, but ones that you'll hear all of the time if you walk into any classroom at Mushroom Family Learning Center. Near the coat hooks one day, I heard a four-year-old telling my son how much he loves snakes. Over in the fish room, another little boy was talking about a dream that he was a Pittsburgh Penguin. And...just ask the teachers about hugs!



I want to tell you about the perfect way to preserve these innocent little imaginations that we cherish. It's a special school fundraiser that takes a piece of your child's artwork and makes it into notecards or a coffee mug or even a tote bag



(plus about 25 more options!). The children will paint their artwork at school in the next few weeks. You'll get to see what they create and then place your order. *The good news is... this unique gift will be ready before Mother's Day.* We thought it was a great idea! As

always, the school will receive 40% profit from the sales (and you can use your sales to pay off your spring fundraising fee, if needed). Watch your child's cubby for detailed information.

We are also working hard on plans for our **40th Anniversary Celebration** coming up on **Wednesday, May 7. Save the date!**

Our parent planning committee is transforming our annual ice cream social into a spectacular event complete with a special treat, face painters, and maybe even a performance or two! As you can see, the second half of this school year is really on a roll...

I hope you'll send and receive a few valentines this month and enjoy the conversations that are just as sweet as the ones found on a candy heart. Since you know a preschooler or two, I'm sure you'll have enough dreams, love, and hugs to last until the flowers come up in the spring.

Susan

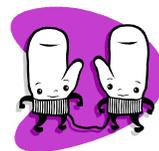
Susan Sarkis

## News from the Early Learners classes from Theresa, Marlene, and Debbie...

The weather has been crazy and we have been too... With the big freeze settling in on us it certainly would have been easy to hibernate in our room. That's OK for the bears but not for us! We've been too busy to just sleep. We made our own caves and went on a bear sighting with our flashlights. When we found the bears we gave them a sweet ride in our mobile bear caves. We discovered that even bears have to wear seat belts. Best of all we had Papa Bear, Momma Bear and Baby Bear join us for snack. We even invited Goldilocks for snack and shared some instant porridge with her. It was just right!

We also brought out the scissors and began practicing how to use them. Some children are already so good at cutting that we could use them as our pattern cutters. Others are using every muscle they have to get their scissors to work. Their faces contort in every direction and their tongues move from side to side as they concentrate on making a successful cut.

We began working on matching and making pairs. "Who has a mitten like I do, who has a mitten like me? Wave it in the air. We'll make a pair. Who has a mitten like me?" The children love to match and make a pair of mittens and stick them to our felt board. Matching and making pairs has been in many of our lessons. The children put on their thinking caps as they paired puzzle pieces of things that go together such as shoes and socks or mailbox and letters. We've also matched numbers to the correct group of objects too.



We've been doing a lot of sorting as well. We sorted our Care Bears onto their rainbow, our polar bears onto their icebergs and our brown bears into their caves. It has been a beary, beary busy month!

We have also enjoyed just getting to know each other better. Now that the children are more talkative, they have begun socializing more with their classmates. There is a lot of hot air in the room to keep us warm!

February will be exciting when our "shape friends" come to class. When they visit, we begin talking about all the shapes around us. Harry Heart will be our first shape. We'll make a lot of things with the heart shape and the color red. Also during



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this month we will continue with nursery rhymes and fairy tales. As the year progresses, we like to work on having the children focus longer on specific activities. Putting on plays and listening to stories allows us to provide the children with more experience in this area which then aids in increasing their attention span.

A big "Thank You" goes out to all our parents for bringing us so many great snacks. Your donations make our snack time wonderfully delicious and we truly appreciate it. We are having a great time with all your children and truly enjoy their emerging personalities!

## News from the 3s class from Jamie, Debbie, and Tori...

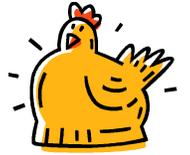
With the start of the new year came a slightly new routine for our classroom. The kids have become so confident in their role as students. They can make independent choices and communicate with friends. They continue to learn how to be peacemakers and creative thinkers. We decided to take these basic skills and step it up a notch.



We continued to start our day answering specific questions but now the students are learning to recognize their last names. We are learning to listen for a musical cue to begin our gathering activities instead of listening to a teacher's commands. One of my favorite activities in January was our communication circles. The students learned to ask each classmate a specific question focusing on eye contact and complete sentences. They were then encouraged to answer the questions using complete sentences. We would often use the question of the day like "Do you know how to swim?" An example of a response would be, "Yes, I like to swim." We are becoming great communicators.

Since the snow was falling and the temperatures were dropping, we focused on wintertime activities. We conducted an ice cube race observing what variable would make the ice cube melt the fastest. Salt was the winner in our race. We made different types of snowmen using shaving cream, colorful paper and writing utensils. We worked together as a

## Chick-fil-A Spirit Night! Wednesday, February 5 5:00-8:00pm



Come eat dinner at the Chick-fil-A at 1620 Washington Road and be sure to tell the cashier that you're there for Mushroom Family Learning Center. The school will earn 15% of the sales. *Thank you for supporting MFLC!*

class to create our snowman bulletin board. The students created their own snowman stories. I think our class has some future writers. The sand table transformed into a winter scene which included winter animals, cotton-like snow and a mirror as ice. One morning we surprised the children by replacing the winter scene with snow. The students made snow jumps, buried animals and discussed why the snow was disappearing. We continued to be creative thinkers.



The winter animal theme brought us to the end of the month. We created penguin pictures with our feet and hibernating caves for our bears. We made bear muffins and topped them off with edible snow, which happened to be powdered sugar. We invited our favorite teddy bears to our Teddy Bear Picnic. We invited the bears to participate in our activities, which included listening to a story, sitting down for a snack and jumping on the parachute. We also took some time to compare the similarities and differences in our bears. We ended the month with a hibernation party where we dressed in our favorite pajamas and found the perfect cave to sleep in. We continued to enjoy celebrating with our classmates.

The specific skill we focused on was letters. We learned the alphabet song, identified letters in our names and reviewed the letters of the day. The children played letter games and even fed the penguin letter fish. We understand that letter learning is a developmental skill. The small group activities were developed to encourage learning at each individual's pace. We continued to strengthen our letter learning skills.

All of our students have become such an important part of our daily lives. We enjoy watching them grow each day. We enjoy their funny stories, contagious laughter and warm hugs. Debbie, Tori and I have the best jobs in the world.

## Does Your Child Want More Mushroom Time? Sign him/her up for enrichment!

The children will have fun making crafts, cooking, learning Spanish and reading new stories. Classes are available for those 4 and older on Mondays and/or Fridays each month; \$14 per class.

Sign-up happens at the beginning of each month. Contact Ms. Jamie for more info at [jamie\\_geisler@comcast.net](mailto:jamie_geisler@comcast.net).



# News & Notes

## News from the 3/4s class from Liz and Sheila...

This month we explored the theme of "Animals in Winter." The frigid weather we had for much of the month made it easy to imagine the trials woodland animals face during this season. We focused on the two main challenges animals face in cold winter climates: staying warm and finding food. Your children should by now be familiar with the idea that some animals stay, some go to a warmer place, and others hibernate.

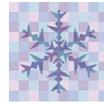
Throughout the month, as we added to our knowledge, we also added to our interactive bulletin board. We experimented with different art techniques and materials to create a representation of the children's concept of the woods in winter. We encouraged the children to keep adding to the display, both through teacher-initiated art projects and through the children's original ideas.

We enjoyed some truly wonderful children's literature this month. We read stories about bunnies, owls, hedgehogs, birds and other animals, and carried the stories into our play with puppets. Our stories and play allowed us to learn about concepts such as prepositions, similarities and differences, separation anxiety, generosity and problem solving. Our favorites included *Owl Babies*, *No Two Alike*, *Over and Under the Snow*, *One Winter's Day*, and *Tippy, Tippy, Hide!*



We learned that some birds stay "in Pittsburgh" during the winter, while others fly south to look for food in warmer climates. We learned a rhyme about two little birdies who fly away and come back. In addition to the traditional Jack and Jill, we added a pair named Soft and Loud, and another named Fast and Slow. Although all young children thrive on predictable routines, this particular group absolutely loves them! Each month, they seem to latch onto a new activity or song and want to make it a daily ritual. Such was the case with our two little birdies. We had fun playing with rhyming patterns and opposites as the children thought of new places for the birds to be found.

## School delay/cancellation



MFLC will follow Mt. Lebanon School District decisions during inclement weather: When MTLSD is delayed, MFLC will be delayed; when MTLSD is canceled, MFLC will be canceled. Delayed start time will be 10 a.m. for morning classes which will dismiss at regular time; afternoon classes will begin on schedule. Please check local TV and cable stations, email blasts and the school answering machine when in doubt.

We spent a week having fun with mittens. We adapted our beloved partners game to include mittens. We each selected a mitten, put it on (great practice!), and found our partner with the matching mitten. We especially enjoyed the story of the three little kittens who lost their mittens. We painted using real mittens ("soiling" them like the kittens), then washed them and hung them up to dry. The room was filled with squeals of delight during this activity! Young children really do love the opportunity to do real work with an observable outcome.



We finished the month with a study of bears and hibernation. We enjoyed a fun day cozing up together in our pajamas as we pretended to hibernate through the long winter.

The social bonds within the group continue to strengthen. This month we noticed some special friendships emerging. Along with this development, we observed some exciting changes in the children's dramatic play. They are beginning to create scenarios and negotiate roles, and they are carrying the games over from day to day. We are very excited to see more sophisticated, social play developing!

Next month we will travel to the world of make-believe and fairy tales. Maybe it will be warmer there than in our current reality! We will also have a valentine exchange on Thursday, February 13.

## News from the 4s class from Liz, Kim, and Amy...

Winter is upon us! We learned firsthand about the challenges of cold weather as we faced several weather delays in January. Flexibility has been the key as we have adapted to changes in routine. This winter has definitely been the most challenging yet in my eight years in Pittsburgh.

Our extreme temperatures provided the perfect backdrop for our study of "Animals in Winter." We learned that animals must find a way to keep warm and stay fed when the temperature drops. Some animals migrate, others hibernate, some animals gather and store food, and still others continue to forage or hunt for food. We enjoyed pretending to be different



# News & Notes



## Smile for the Camera!

School pictures will be taken March 4-6. Look for information in your child's cubby.

animals and doing what they do. As bears and hedgehogs we hibernated; as birds and butterflies we migrated (well, some of us); as squirrels we stored food; and as foxes we continued to hunt for food.

We also learned about different ways that animals keep warm. We learned about the subnivean world, where small animals keep relatively warm and safe from predators under the snow. We tried a hands-on experiment to see how fat (shortening) acts as an insulator. We touched snow with our bare hands, with a layer of fat, with fur, with feathers, and with trapped air. Along with discovering that all the methods provided some protection, we also discovered that we could make some pretty interesting snow sculptures with our materials.



We finished the month with a hibernation party. What fun it is to come to school in your jammies and cozy up with a friend! Our letters this month were S, W, I and B. We continue to enjoy finding items to share with the group that start with the letter of the week. During S week we explored snow. During W week we learned to weave and made sculptures with wire. I week could have been named for indoors; with a holiday on Monday and frigid temperatures causing delays both Wednesday and Friday, we hardly had time to explore ice as planned. B week was all about the beloved bear.

Our dramatic play area was transformed into first a store and then an office in January. The children picked up the store concept and came up with their own idea to open a jewelry store. We see such growth in their play! They were busy assigning roles, creating signs, crafting jewelry, and negotiating situations. They returned to the scenario over the course of several days.

Next month we will travel to the land of make-believe and fairy tales. We can't wait to see where these wonderful imaginations will take us!

## News from the Pre-K classes from Cara, Jane, and Melanie...

Anna...Elsa...Kristoff...Hans...and a snowman named Olaf. These are the characters I've been hearing about from the children in class who have seen the movie "Frozen." As they enthusiastically retold the story to me, I realized that this story needed to be part of our exploration of the season, specifically ice and snow. This winter season is giving us a true taste of itself so we might as well dive in head-first.

We first looked closer at the elusive snowflake. The book *The Science of the Snowflake* provided wonderful information about how snowflakes are created and showed amazing real pictures of magnified snowflakes. They are truly beautiful pieces of artwork. We then created our own "snowstorm in a jar" science experiment. The children were fascinated and used their observation skills to note how the pretend snowstorm would act like a true snowstorm.

Planning to read the book *Frozen* to the class, we enjoyed another science experiment working with ice cubes, water and salt. They again made astute observations through their hands-on exploration about what made the ice melt. They came up with other experiments for us to try to see what would melt faster 1) ice cube by itself 2) ice cube in tap water or 3) ice cube in salt water. They deduced that the ice cube in salt water melted the quickest. This brought up a discussion about water in the ocean compared to water in a freshwater lake. We then read *Frozen* to a very rapt audience! Part of the story is about how one sister has power to turn things into ice and snow, and that power inadvertently hit her sister's heart, which caused her to freeze into ice. It was her sister's tears that ended up melting the ice and she thawed.



I explained that tears have salt in them, and they were able to connect the two ideas that the salt in her tears melted the ice quicker. So exciting! Through my research, I learned that the movie is based on a classic fairytale, *The Snow Queen*, written by Hans Christian Andersen. We are reading a wonderful adaptation of the story, and it is a beautiful pop-up book. Again, the children are invested in listening to the story over several days



Disability Awareness Program for Preschoolers

Joan G. Charlson, LSW, will be visiting our classrooms Feb.18 &19.



Joan, with the help of her puppets, encourages children to be welcoming and comfortable with persons who have special needs.

# News & Notes

and we are noting the similarities to *Frozen*. We have several different props from the story so that children can use those to retell the story with each other to develop that richness in their literacy experience.

We also took time to learn why we didn't have school on Monday, January 20, as we celebrated Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. As part of our celebration, we created dream clouds



which state "I wish..." and are gracing our hallways. The new year has also brought new things to our classroom. When we arrive in the morning, we answer the "Question of the Day" with our nameplates that include our first and last names, and then the children are "signing in" to let us know they are here and ready to play! We've also been working hard on creating our own calendar for the classroom by making our own numbers 1-31. We ended the month learning about the Chinese New Year holiday, marked by the Chinese lunar calendar.

February will continue our exploration of the lunar calendar as we study the moon phases, and continue to build upon the ideas and interests the children bring to the classroom everyday. We are so thankful to be a part of your children's early childhood experience. I came across this quote the other day and it hits home as we support your children at school:

"All children have stories to tell; try to listen.  
All children have fears; try to ease them.

All children have abilities; try to nurture them."  
— Carol Gerhart Mooney

## News from the K-Too classes from Marilyn...

In January we wrote about the holiday break. We learned and wrote about three more world holidays: Kwanzaa (U.S.), Diwali (India), and Ramadan (Islam). We made kinaras (menorah-like candle holders) and learned the history of African Americans for Kwanzaa.

We heard the legend of Prince Rama's triumph over the evil nine-headed demon, the lights, fireworks, oil lamps (diyas), and rangoli decorations of Diwali. We learned about the lunar

calendar and that Ramadan occurs on the ninth lunar month. We had a pajama day and pretended to get up before the sun came up to look for the new crescent moon for our pretend day of Ramadan. We ate a big "breakfast" in our darkened classroom, pretended to fast during the school day with the lights on, and finished pretending to have a feast when the sun went down.

To help children conceptualize celestial relationships, we set up the earth's orbit around the sun and the moon's orbit around the earth with grooved rings. The sun was the camping light, the earth a globe, and the moon a golf ball which circled the globe beautifully on the grooved ring. We could see the light change across the earth's surface as it revolved and how the seasons changed as the earth circled the sun. We also could see the different phases of the moon on the illuminated golf ball as it passed around the earth.



In February we will end our study of world holidays with Chinese New Year. We will talk and write about "love" as well as our founding fathers. Also we will begin a unit on electricity: What is it? Who discovered it, and how? How can we be safe with it? What work can it do? We will construct an electrically powered house and write about what we learn.

## K-Too!

For families not familiar with K-Too, it is a kindergarten enrichment class. Children often need an activity beyond their day at kindergarten. We meet either Monday/Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday. Morning sessions meet 9:00-11:30 and afternoons meet 12:30-3:00. Classes are available based on enrollment.

The class combines fun, creativity, and academics in the warm environment of Mushroom Family Learning Center. K-Too students also participate in exercise resource. K-Too is an extension of their learning and social time in a smaller, more intimate setting. Please feel free to stop in and observe the class any time. Families can register with Joan.

# Business Directory

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| <p>Reasonable Rates</p> <p>Pre-K to 8th Grade<br/>Reading &amp; Math</p> <p>(412) 221-4174</p>  <p><b>Private Tutoring</b><br/>In My Home</p> <p><b>Jane Birris</b><br/>Experienced Teacher &amp; Tutor</p> |   |
|  | <p><b>Your ad here!</b><br/><b>\$10/issue</b></p> |
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