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JANUARY 2017

Important Dates & Info

FEB. TUITION DUE NOW - JAN. 1
Please note: All balances need to be paid in full to be able to register for next year.

Classes resume Jan. 3!

MFLC ticket fundraiser drawing dates: Jan. 3, 4, 5

Equal Exchange Fundraising Sale Jan. 9-20

Fair-trade chocolate, coffee, cocoa, tea and more! See pg. 7.

No Classes Jan. 16
Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Board meeting - Jan. 18

In-house registration for 2017-18 school year - Jan. 23-27

Outside Play – We will go outside if it's 25+ degrees and no rain. Please be sure your kids are prepared with labeled cold-weather gear.

Proper Shoes – Please be sure your child has proper play shoes (closed toe with a back), especially on movement day.

Enrichment Classes and "Munchin' Lunchin'"
Contact Ms. Melissa at melissa.oprison@gmail.com.

Change in your contact info?
Please let Joan know if your email, phone or address has changed.

Ways to Help MFLC

- Youcaring.com/mushroom-family-learning-center
- smile.amazon.com
- United Way agency # is 885339.
- Giant Eagle Apples for the Students program # is 5245.
- Save Tyson Project A+ labels.

From the Director ~ Joan Harrison

Dear Families and Friends, welcome to 2017! I hope you enjoyed your holidays with family and friends. We are looking forward to a great second half of the year with you and your wonderful children.

As we begin a new year, many of us are making our New Year's resolutions. This means change, and change – though needed – can be difficult. I recently had this experience... my beloved flip phone made its last call. Those of you who know me know I only used my phone for phone calls. That was it. When my husband and I went to purchase a new phone I went straight to the only flip phone in the store. To my horror I heard my husband tell the salesperson, "We will take this iPhone." I could not believe my ears. The one thing I fought against for years was becoming a reality. Well I left the store in a depression. What was I going to do with this phone? Why couldn't things be the same? Why couldn't I just have the thing that made me feel comfortable – a flip phone?!

I am happy to report that I have come out of my comfort zone. I like my new phone. I am learning that being connected by way of my phone is pretty nice. My daughter graduated from college a few weeks ago and I was able to send the video of her graduation to family and friends. My best friend went to Rome and sent me a picture of my favorite painting. I "FaceTimed" with my family out of town during the holidays, and now I text – and I like it!!!!

Change can be difficult. Once you give change a chance, you may ask yourself why you never did it before.

Registration for the 2017-2018 school year will be here soon. You will find that we as a school have made some changes. Some of the class names and days have changed as well as age guidelines. The teachers, board and I have spent considerable time and effort making changes for the best interest of our students and school. Everyone will be receiving the registration forms with the above changes on January 9. Though the changes are not dramatic, I ask you to review them and please contact your classroom teacher or me with any questions.

In-house registration for current families will be held January 23-27, 2017. It will begin at 9 a.m. Sign-in will begin at 8:45 a.m. and each registrant will be given a number in the order they sign up. It is highly suggested that you register on the first day if you have a class preference. Completed registration forms will NOT be accepted until January 23. In order to register, the following MUST be met:

- Form filled out completely.
- Non-refundable registration fee attached.
- Current with tuition payments (including first-half fundraising fee).

Please be aware that classes fill up quickly!

Registration opens to the public on January 30 so please make sure you register before this date. If you have any questions please contact me. Please note that scholarships are available; please come to my office for a confidential scholarship application.

The very best compliment you can pay us is to recommend Mushroom school to a friend or neighbor. If you know of a family who may be interested, please have the parents or guardians call to schedule a tour. We thank you for your continued commitment and support.

BIG Thanks to...

- **Michele Napierkowski** who coordinated our Barnes & Noble fundraiser. The school yielded a profit of nearly \$100.
- **Miss Jamie** for your storytime at B&N. It truly was a treat!
- **Martha Jurczak** who coordinated our Penguins Raffle package. And a big thank-you to our prize donor families: **Betler, FitzGerald, Sabourin, Comer-Romeo, and Staryak.**
- **Kelly Homitsky** who coordinated the Foster Love project.
- **Erin Betler** who coordinated the Stuff-the-Truck event
- **To all our wonderful families who participated in the above events** benefiting our school and the greater community. Thank you!!!!
- **All our homeroom parents and families for coordinating and taking part in our holiday celebrations.** Special thanks to our homeroom coordinator, **Kim Yetter!**
- **Miss Cara** for hosting the teacher party.
- **Sarah Staffilino** for hosting the board holiday party.
- **Erin Betler, board president**, for being MFLC's biggest cheerleader. We are all grateful for your dedication to the future of our school, continuing and building on 43 years!

From the Board President ~ Erin Betler

Happy January! I hope everyone enjoyed their holiday break. This month always has a way of making me feel refreshed for so many reasons: There's a lovely feeling of 2017 being a clean slate, like anything and everything is possible. The shortest day of the year is officially behind us. From here on in, the mornings will slowly but surely get lighter and evenings longer. Indoor spaces look a little bit bigger now that the holiday decorations are packed away. Who feels a DIY project coming on? The supermarket aisles (where, alas, you do have to return) are back to their normal calm selves. Your evenings and weekends are your own again. No more to-do lists, shopping, decorating, or wrapping. You can unearth those books you never quite got a chance to finish. You can even experiment with a new recipe or two. January is your oyster. Much as falling off the wagon of healthy (hmmm...ish) eating for a few solid weeks was fun, it's relieving to officially say "Enough" (and possibly sign-up your child and yourself for Mushroom's "Kids of STEEL" team?).

Within just a few days of normality, you can feel more focused and energetic. Even the preschool classrooms look a little different come January. All the holiday artwork has gone home and teachers have a fresh stack of books to read to the kids. The children are rested after a nice break from school. Parents and teachers may or may not feel the same way!

When you return to Mushroom, please check your child's cubby for an "Equal Exchange" catalog, which we will be using for our upcoming fair-trade product fundraiser (Jan. 9-20). This fundraiser is new to Mushroom and we are very excited about the opportunity to offer delicious, organic, and fairly traded chocolate, coffee, cocoa, tea and more, while supporting small farmers around the world, all at very reasonable prices. I bet you can finish any winter and spring holiday gift shopping list just by flipping through the Equal Exchange catalog. Give yourself or someone special a sweet

[Parents' Corner]

Parker family
(Frida, 3s; alumna Selah)

The night before the first day of kindergarten, after all the kids were in bed, I had this flashback sequence run through my mind of the last five years. I wondered if I spent enough time with Selah. I wondered if I made enough eye contact, if I did my best. I realized that nothing would be the same, and suddenly everything I ever taught her was now hers to go out and use. I had to trust that she was ready to leave our home every day and go to a new school with new kids and new teachers and even a new bus driver. I had to trust all those people, too. I had to trust that she could use everything she has ever learned in her little life and go out into the world to be herself without me holding her hand.

And then she did it! She did all the new things that we were asking her to do. I realized, then, that the three years she spent at Mushroom had prepared her so very well for this. Each year, each class and each teacher, who I consider extra grandmas, played a unique role in shaping her for this moment. And because Selah was my first and the one who paves the way for all things, I had no idea what was actually happening during those fun and easy years at Mushroom. I get it now.

Now I know exactly what these teachers are doing every day and why they love it so much. It is much more than the sum of its parts. They prepare our children to be responsible and thinking citizens of a classroom, which translates eventually to being responsible and thinking citizens of the world.

The mother-child relationship is paradoxical and, in a sense, tragic. It requires the most intense love on the mother's side, yet this very love must help the child grow away from the mother, and to become fully independent. ~ Erich Fromm

Miss Joan, Miss Theresa, Miss Debbie, Miss Liz, Miss Marlene, Miss Melissa, Miss Cara, Miss Jane, Miss Melanie, Miss Sheila, Miss Jamie & Miss April: you are like gold to me.
-- Abby Somerville

gift with a lot of love behind it! As always, Mushroom will receive 40% profit from the sales (which will be deducted from your spring fundraising fee, if needed). Bring in your order form by Friday, Jan. 20, with checks made out to MFLC.

I hope this month brings a big, fat snowman to my yard and yours. Even ol' Frosty can teach us a thing or two...

What we can learn about life from a snowman:

- ☺ *Hold your ground, even when the heat is on.*
- ☺ *The key to life is to be a jolly, happy soul.*
- ☺ *There's no stopping you once you're on a roll.*
- ☺ *It's fun to hang out in your backyard.*

Happy New Year's wishes to my Mushroom family. I wish you all happiness, health and prosperity in 2017.

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.



Little Sprouts – Kelsey

The holidays are full of music and fun. December flew by in the Sprouts class as we sang and danced *The Winter Pokey*, counted the *10 Elves on the Shelf*, and got ready for Santa's sleigh as we shook those Jingle Bells.

We created our own miniature playland out of soft and silky flour. When the Sprouts added in some of their favorite little animals, it reminded us how much fun it is to simply play in the snow. In our painting activities, we recreated the beauty of a star with glitter and glue. Snack time is still a favorite among the Sprouts and the scented playdough was an absolute hit. It smelled like peppermint candy canes in the classroom.

I'm looking forward to the new year and all the adventures and milestones yet to come!

Early Learners – Amy, Sheila, and Marlene

Happy New Year! We hope that you had a wonderful winter break and got to do lots of fun things with friends and family.

Speaking of outside, we'd like to remind you that we will generally go out to the playground every day that the temperature is above 25 degrees. We aren't out for very long, and we do try to get the children into their hats, mittens, boots, and whatever you send in their bags. It's harder to get them to **keep** them on!

Going outside is a great way for children to work on their gross motor skills. "Gross motor" is a term that sounds odd but just refers to the big muscles that we all have, including the ones in our arms, legs, and torsos. Running, climbing, and kicking a ball all help to develop these muscles. Having strong muscles enables good balance and stamina, too. Balance and coordination are really helpful when the children are walking around inside between the train tracks, the parking garage, and the play farm!

The children's social interactions change outside, too. When we're inside, the children have their favorite things to do, whether it's art, dressing up, or driving the Matchbox cars. Things change when we go out. The children still have their favorite activities, but they're more similar to each other's choices. For example, we often have all three lawn mowers going at the same time. The children see each other, maybe run in the same direction, and (although we try to avoid it) may crash the mowers into each other. Even though they aren't necessarily cooperating and planning their interactions together, this is more involved parallel play than just being on the carpet with trains at the same moment as someone else.

The stages of play are on a continuum just like everything else your child will learn. These interactions outside are just more examples of individual growth in a shared environment!

We'd like to thank you all for your nutritious and generous snack contributions so far this year. The children love it when we all thank them together for bringing snack. It's also fun to see what the children choose if you let them decide what to bring. Some of them have a wide range of foods that they enjoy!

Illness: When to Keep Your Child Home . . .

While fever is a good indication of sickness, it is not the only one. If your child is "not himself," has vomited or had diarrhea within the last 24 hours, has a green nasal discharge, or is tired and irritable, something more than a cold is likely to blame. In addition to potentially infecting others, children are also less resistant to other germs when ill. If you have any doubts, it's best to have the child stay home. Of course, a big way to help prevent illness is to make sure children wash their hands upon entering the classroom every day.

Threes – Jamie, Debbie, and April

The holiday season is one of my favorite times of the year. As a child, I remember the holiday lights, Christmas trees, delicious cookies and the overwhelming feeling of excitement when waking up on Christmas morning. My brother and I would wake up very early and run to the tree. We would then wait for what seemed like forever for my parents to meet us in the living room. My grandparents would join us and we would spend the entire day together laughing and loving. It was pure magic from a child's perspective.

As a mother, I made sure I created the same glorious feeling during the holiday season for my children. I would select the perfect gifts, bake our favorite cookies, decorate the house with multi-colored lights and spend a lot of time with numerous family members and friends. I couldn't wait to see my children's excited little faces by my bedside yelling for me to wake up. It was pure magic from a mother's perspective.

As a teacher, we learn there are many different traditions celebrated by our wonderful school. The common thread that brings all of the holidays together is the sense of excitement and the love of family. In discussing different holiday traditions, we learned that most of our class celebrates Christmas while a few also celebrate Hanukkah. We created a holiday show, inviting our family and friends. Every student had a family member cheering them on. The look in the child's eye when he/she first spotted a loved one made our hearts fill with joy. It was pure magic from a teacher's perspective.

As a student in our classroom, the focus is a little different. They are excited by the number of trees they have in their house, if they light candles, and how many toys they want under their tree during the holiday. They take pride in making a handmade gift for their parents. They enjoy hunting for candy canes during a scavenger hunt, listening to a holiday story about a lady swallowing a bell and dancing to the Whip/NeNe on the stage. In a little one's eyes, it IS the little things that mean the most. It is pure magic from a student's perspective.

Debbie, April and I hope you had a wonderful winter break. Take time to remember that the magic is in the small moments. Many years from now, your child will not remember what gift they received this year or if everything was perfect. They will remember spending time with you. They will remember how much you loved them. And, the love shared between a parent and a child is always pure magic.

Three/Fours – Liz, Melissa and Jamie

Happy New Year! We hope you thoroughly enjoyed the holiday break.

December was a quick month. We tried to keep things low-key in the classroom, as this time of year already brings so much excitement! Our theme was "Colors, Lights and Shapes of the Season." As we move through the darkest part of the year, we especially appreciate the gift of light. Whatever holidays we celebrate, and however our traditions may differ, color and light are all around us this time of year.

Our classroom was invaded by mice in December, courtesy of Ellen Stoll Walsh. We loved reading her *Mouse Paint*, *Mouse Shapes* and *Mouse Count* books, and playing with our little stuffed mice. We created colorful houses for them with the light blocks and constructed original pictures using paper shapes. We took the mice on color hunts and shape hunts, looking for examples in our classroom of different shapes and colors. We counted them into a jar and enjoyed tricking our snake puppet and "un-counting" them again and again!

We had fun playing with light, too. We are so grateful to have inherited a light table from our predecessors at Beth El

Nursery School. I had longed for years to have one in my classroom. We explored color mixing by layering translucent materials on the table and we created beautiful designs. We also played with flashlights to discover properties of light. We dipped our toes lightly into the concept of holiday traditions. It is difficult for three-year-old children to relate to holidays outside their own experience. Usually, they have little or no memory of even their own celebrations from the previous year. However, it is important to acknowledge their current experiences. We discovered that while we may celebrate different holidays or even celebrate the same holidays in different ways, we all have special days and family traditions. The children enjoyed sharing with the group some of their favorite holidays and traditions.

Generosity is a tradition we all share. While children certainly enjoy receiving holiday gifts, they enjoy giving just as much. They really enjoyed creating something special for you! Thank you for your generosity as well. Your gifts were truly appreciated! Thanks, too, to all the parents who helped create a fun and festive winter party.

In January, our theme will be "Animals in Winter." We will explore the different ways animals in the wild cope with the elements during the cold winter months. If we are lucky, we may have some snow to play in, too.



Does your child want to have more fun at Mushroom??!

Sign up for enrichment and/or "Munchin' Lunchin"! Supervised lunchtime is \$8 per day for students 3+. Enrichment classes are \$15 per class for students 4+ available on Mondays and Fridays. Contact Ms. Melissa at melissa.oprison@gmail.com!

Fours – Liz and Melissa

Happy New Year to all of you! We hope you had a wonderful holiday season.

Our theme for December was "Colors, Lights, and Shapes of the Season." Although our families may celebrate different holidays and keep different traditions, our celebrations have common elements. Everywhere we turn this time of year, we are bombarded with a visual feast of color, light and shape.

We explored color mixing in depth. We created a color mixing station with a focus on a different color each day. We learned that adding just a little yellow to blue makes a lovely teal color, while adding a lot creates green. We also learned that we could lighten or darken our colors by adding white or black. We had a lot of fun creating our own custom colors and using them to create a collaborative, multi-layered painting on a large artist's canvas.



Dress for Success! Now that the weather is getting colder, we request that you send your children in appropriate outdoor clothing: **warm coat, hat, mittens, snow pants, and boots** when necessary. Items should be labeled and placed in the child's bag. The children go outside every day, weather permitting – no rain and a temperature of 25 degrees or above. Please be sure your kids also have proper play shoes, *especially on movement day*. Thank you!

We also studied the world of shapes around us. When we looked closely, we noticed that everyday objects are made up of shapes. A house, for instance, can be made from a square with a triangle for a roof and a rectangle for a door. By playing with flashlights we were able to learn about concepts such as transparency, translucence and opacity; reflection and refraction; and color mixing. We discovered that light can pass through some objects but not through others. We observed that shiny things, such as mirrors, reflect light back.

We added a little wrinkle to our Good Morning song this month. Instead of our usual “knees-clap” rhythm pattern, we tried alternating tapping our knees with the opposite hand. This gave us lots of practice in crossing the midline, an important skill that affects reading, writing, self-care, and physical coordination. At the beginning of the month, we found this activity very challenging! We focused on accepting where we are now, making an effort even if it's hard, and noticing incremental progress. It was great to hear a few friends declare near the end of the month, “This is easy now! I'm really good at it!” We will find a new midline challenge to practice next month.

We also added a new activity to practice listening and speaking. Miss Cara shared a very inspiring article about School 21 in London. This school explicitly teaches “oracy” as a core skill along with literacy, math, and other subjects. You can read the article here: <https://ww2.kqed.org/mindshift/2016/10/03/why-the-art-of-speaking-should-be-taught-alongside-math-and-literacy/>.

The article really got me thinking about our little group of communicators! Something we have noticed is that they really, really like to talk. We have some great discussions during Gathering, but we often struggle to find a balance. How can everyone have the chance to be heard without exhausting the listening capacity of the whole group? This month, we started playing a listening game on most days. The children pair up with a partner. In each pair, one person has a card with lips and is called the speaker. The other partner has a card with an ear and is called the listener. They sit “knees to knees” and are encouraged to look into each other's eyes.

Given a topic, the speaker shares some information with the listener, who then shares the information with the group. It can be very surprising for the speaker to discover that the listener might not have understood what was said! We have found so many points to remember through this exercise. For instance, the listener needs to remember not just to wait quietly for their turn to speak. We encourage them to listen with their eyes, ears, brains, and hearts. If they don't understand something, we encourage them to ask questions. The speaker learns to focus on sending his or her message effectively to the listener. It helps to be concise and focused and to watch the listener's face for signs of confusion. We have seen improvements over the course of the month, and we have also been able to call upon these lessons during everyday situations that arise between friends.

The children created gifts for their families. We hope you enjoyed them!

We would like to thank you for your generosity this holiday season. Your gifts were truly appreciated! The most wonderful part for us was seeing the happiness and pride on your children's faces as they gave us our gifts. Nothing is more precious than a young child experiencing the joy of giving! Thanks, also, to Mel and Natalie for creating a really fun party for the children!

In January, our theme will be “Animals in Winter.” We will learn how different animals cope with colder temperatures and limited food supplies.

JANUARY ENRICHMENT CLASSES

Enrichment classes are available for those 4 and older on Mondays and/or Fridays each month; \$15 per class. Contact Ms. Melissa at melissa.oprison@gmail.com.

Days and Themes This Month...

MONDAYS with Ms. Sheila

Jan. 9 – Make a winter scene with recycled materials! * Jan. 23 – Are you as good as the Cat in the Hat at balancing objects?! * Jan. 30 – Brrr, It's cold but not to Tacky the Penguin. Wear your favorite Hawaiian shirt!

FRIDAYS with Ms. Marilyn

Jan. 13 – Read Maurice Sendak's “Where the Wild Things Are” and make your own wild thing! * Jan. 27 – Winter Window. We will read “One Mitten” by Kristine O'Connell George and make our own snowy winter scene.

Pre-K – Cara, Jane, Marlene and Melanie

This month my family spent a week in Iceland. My sister came in from Colorado, my parents came in from Wisconsin, and along with my family (the hubby and two daughters), we all headed out together for an experience of a lifetime. First and foremost, it was wonderful to be together as a family for an extended period of time, which hadn't happened in several years. What a gift.

Then, what a gift to experience a new adventure together. I absolutely love culture and learning about others' culture and customs. We immersed ourselves in learning about the history of Iceland, the customs and language and enjoying all of the food. In our family, our love language is sharing a meal together so we thoroughly enjoyed dining together every day and taking in all there was to offer.

When we returned, we were also able to spend a day in New York City together as well. My children were a little overwhelmed with the crowds, garbage on the streets and the smells coming from the sewers. I listened to their observations and commented that what they were feeling was natural as it was pushing them "out of their comfort zone." I encouraged them to sit with the feeling because, within their discomfort, they would also experience the beauty, energy and vibrancy of the city. As I reflected on our trip, I connected the importance of these experiences to continuing to give the girls opportunities to be open to the world and how much I value these experiences.

An article written by 52 Brand New offers *10 Ways to Expand Your Child's Comfort Zone...*

"There is a common expression in which people say you should 'get out of your comfort zone.' At 52 Brand New, we are trying new experiences all the time, but we don't go out of our comfort zone. No, that would imply we are uncomfortable with the new things we are trying. We want to have fun and enjoy our experiences, not be uncomfortable. So, I like to say we are expanding our comfort zones. Every time we try a new activity, our comfort zone grows a bit. An experience that was once unfamiliar is now something we are comfortable doing. The larger a person's comfort zone, the more confident and adventurous the person will feel.

So, here are a few great ways to expand your child's comfort zone. Why not try one today?

1. Try a new food. Children's menus are filled with chicken nuggets and french fries. Why not treat your child to something he has never tried before? It could be a dish from your heritage or something you may have read about in a book. You could also look at pictures of recipes you find on Pinterest or in your favorite cookbook. You and your child might decide on something to cook together.

2. Sleep in a new place. You don't have to stay at a 5-star hotel or travel out of state to sleep in a new place. Visit a family member and stay overnight. My children love sleepovers with their cousins. You can even sleep in a new place without leaving the house. My kids received sleeping bags for their birthdays this year and like to sleep in each other's rooms for a night. Sleeping in a new place is more about changing routines than about where you actually go.

3. Befriend a creepy crawly. I teach my children that we may think snakes, insects, or spiders are ugly, but they are living creatures and should be respected. I've found that the more we learn about creepy crawlies, the less frightening they seem. This year we have touched bugs and snakes and are trying to lose our fear of them. If touching a tarantula is way too far outside your comfort zone, try raising a butterfly or just catching some backyard bugs in a jar to observe.

4. Go to a cultural event. It is human nature to stay with people who are similar to ourselves, but we can learn so much from

everyone. Listening to music and stories from South America was one of my children's favorite new experiences this year. Other events I look forward to taking my children to this year are a Native American dance show and an Italian food festival. You can find out what countries interest your children and look for cultural events centered around that country.

5. Break out of gender stereotypes. My daughter loves tea parties and princesses. My son loves baseball and 'Star Wars.' They both seem to be very comfortable with activities that are typical for their own gender. But, my daughter once went to a Monster Truck show and loved it. Luke was practically dragged into Princesses on Ice, but once we were there, he enjoyed the show. Why not have a tea party with your son? Why not play hockey with your daughter? Chances are, if they are spending time with you, they will have fun no matter what you do.

6. Talk to a stranger. We are so careful to teach our children not to talk to strangers that many children become uncomfortable around any adult they meet. When your children are with you, be careful not to speak for them. The next time you are in a restaurant, let them tell the waiter what they would like to eat. Have them buy a trinket at the dollar store all on their own. Talking to strangers (under your supervision) can teach children manners and self-reliance.

7. Try an unfamiliar sport. Most kids love to be active, so trying a new sport can be lots of fun. There are numerous possibilities and all involve exercise and spending time as a family. What could be better?

8. Get your feet off the ground. A fear of heights is one of the most common phobias among adults. Children seem to be less fearful of heights, so climbing and jumping off tall objects can be fun to them. Many indoor rock climbing facilities allow children as young as 5 to climb their walls. A cheaper alternative is letting your children climb a backyard tree or jump off a diving board.

9. Get dirty. I used to think that all kids like to get dirty. Boy, was I wrong. My daughter gets upset if she gets a stain on her clothing. My son doesn't like the feel of finger paint or mud on his fingers. But when I let them paint like Jackson Pollock and splatter paint all over large pieces of paper, they had a blast. It doesn't have to be a big project. Just find an activity that your kids will enjoy as they get messy. Bake mud pies, splash in puddles, finger paint... whatever you think will be novel to your children. If you don't like messy activities, this will be an activity that helps you expand your comfort zone, too!

10. Be bored. Sometimes as parents we feel like we have to constantly entertain our children. However, I think we actually do them a disservice if we keep them entertained all day long. Children today don't need more TV time, more computer time, or more afterschool activities. Children today just need time to play without any adult intervention at all. More imaginative play will take place in your home if you allow your children to become bored."

I thought the article gave great little nuggets to reaffirm what we might already be doing and expand what we could also be doing as parents. I hope you appreciated it as much as I did.

We know you have enjoyed the winter break with your children and family. We can't wait to see you in the new year and have the children tell us about their time with family and friends! In Iceland, the way to express thanks is to say **takk**. So, as always, takk to your children and your family for being a part of our classroom community. ☺

K-Too – Marilyn

I hope you all cozied down and enjoyed uninterrupted family time over the winter break. Most people dread winter, but I associate the season with savory meals, snow play, long hot baths, and soft sweaters. Make sure to get your children outside every day during the winter months to keep them healthy and happy. My son's Boy Scout leader always said, "There's no such thing as bad weather, just bad gear!"

We will be learning about the major world holidays in January based on the commonalities all human beings share when they celebrate: fire, dancing/music, gathering together, eating/drinking, and decorating. The world grows smaller all the time, and the more we know about one another the more peaceful the planet will be.

I hope your celebrations were full of light, love, gratitude, shared memories, and future plans. May peace and joy fill our world this season and always.



We're Brewin' Up Some Love with the MFLC 2017 Equal Exchange Fair Trade Fundraiser!

We will be selling delicious, organic, and fairly traded chocolate, coffee, cocoa, tea and more, while supporting small farmers around the world.



Orders will be delivered in time for Valentine's Day. Give yourself or your valentine a sweet gift with a lot of love behind it!



Sale Dates:
January 9 – January 20

Order Forms and Money Due to MFLC by
Friday, January 20.



Please make checks payable to:
Mushroom Family Learning Center



Order Pick-Up:
February 6 – 10 @ MFLC



40% of your sales go towards your fundraising fee!



For more information contact:
sarah.staffilino@gmail.com



CALLING ALL MUSHROOM "KIDS OF STEEL"



Mushroom Family Learning Center's Board of Directors is proud to announce that MFLC is once again participating in the 2017 Kids of STEEL Program through P3R, a nonprofit organization that promotes the love of running and access to health & fitness education and activities.

Kids of STEEL (KOS) is an award-winning, free youth physical activity and nutrition program designed to instill lifelong, healthy habits in children. Each training plan is geared towards age-appropriate exercise and healthy eating habits. This program is open to all children ages 2 and up, family members, and friends regardless of athletic ability. You need not be a track superstar to enroll. It's all about having fun and being healthy! Kids of STEEL participants can complete their program in one of three optional running races (held the Saturday of marathon weekend - Saturday, May 6, 2017).

TRAINING PROGRAMS

The 2016 Kids of STEEL Program Guide for parents includes 3 training plans for the Toddler Trot, Kids Marathon and 5K. All plans have corresponding training logs that can be turned in for a KOS finisher prize (not required).

Children can participate in the free Kids of STEEL training plan and not register for a race. ALL PARTICIPANTS MUST REGISTER FOR THE KIDS OF STEEL PROGRAM AND COMPLETE A LIABILITY WAIVER, EVEN IF THEY WILL NOT ATTEND A RACE.

Program Choices	Cost	Benefits	Online Registration Info
Kids of STEEL (NO RACE)	FREE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training log KOS finisher prize 	Deadline: February 1, 2017. Contact Erin Betler for registration link.
Kids of STEEL and Pittsburgh Toddler Trot (100 meter run recommended for ages 2-5)	\$10 per child Adult is free	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training log KOS finisher prize Toddler Trot race number, shirt & finisher medal 	Deadline: March 31, 2017 thepittsburghmarathon.com/kidsofsteel
Kids of STEEL & Toyota Pittsburgh Kids Marathon (non-timed 1 mile fun run for children to run with family and friends)	\$20 per child 1 adult runs free; additional adults \$10 each	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training log KOS finisher prize KM race number, shirt, goody bag & finisher medal 	Deadline: March 31, 2017 thepittsburghmarathon.com/kidsofsteel

RACE WEEKEND

The Kids of STEEL races will be held on Saturday, May 6, 2017 (5K race, Kids Marathon & Toddler Trot).

Team Mushroom plans to offer plenty of support for these programs including:

- Training Mentors, Training Runs and Training Logs
- Fun and exciting presentations and activities with the Kids of STEEL trainers and dietitian
- Big smiles and encouraging words!
- Cheerleaders along the race routes and a Mushroom Family Reunion at the finish line



REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN - thepittsburghmarathon.com/kidsofsteel

When registering your child, please make sure to select "YES" that they are participating in a Kids of STEEL Program and select Mushroom Family Learning Center from the drop-down list, to be included on our team. When we pick up Kids Marathon race items prior to race day and your child isn't listed with our school, his/her items will not be boxed up.

QUESTIONS

For more information or to sign up, contact Erin Betler with any questions at erinbetler@gmail.com or 703-201-2602.