

Entering Our
40th Year!



News & Notes

Mushroom Family Learning Center

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APRIL 2013

A Big Thank-You to...

- All the moms who assisted during picture days: Denise Furey, Joscelyn Freund, Jessica Freedman, Sheri Reddy, Stacy Chandran, and Diane Rattay.
- Diane Rattay for her help with office work.
- Julie Connelly for coordinating the Auntie Anne's fundraiser.
- Joelle Schultz and Erin Bignell for coordinating the Mixed Bag fundraiser.
- Mushroom parents, for the gift of your time volunteering for classroom events.

TUITION DUE APRIL 1

Second-half fundraising fee due as well.

CLASSES RESUME APRIL 2

FREE VISION SCREENINGS BY BLIND AND VISION REHAB SVS. APRIL 8-9

Check with your teacher or Joan for details!

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES APRIL 18-19

Check your classroom for your date and sign-up sheet.

SPEECH AND HEARING SCREENINGS BY EASTER SEALS APRIL 25

Cost is \$20. If interested for your child, please see Joan.

PROPER PLAY SHOES FOR OUTDOOR PLAY

As the weather gets nicer, please remember proper play shoes for school. It is still best to wear gym shoes or closed-toe shoes.

UPCOMING DATES IN MAY

- 1 Ice Cream Social 6-7:30pm
- 8 Ice Cream Social Rain Date
- 21 Last day of school for children
- 22 Teachers' in-service (9-11am)
Family picnic at Mt. Lebanon Park 11:00-1:00 (No rain date.)
- 23 Teachers' in-service and meeting (9am-3pm)

We would like to know how well we are doing as a preschool!



Parent questionnaires will be in the children's cubbies and online the week of April 22. Please take a few minutes to fill one out by May 1. Thank you for your help!

From the director...

Head Lice Information

All Mushroom families were informed a few weeks ago that a case of lice was discovered at our school. Please know that currently there are no cases here.

MFLC took the steps to check each child in our school the week of March 11 and again the week of March 18. Another check will be done the week of April 1. All dress-up clothing has been washed and all surfaces and rugs have been cleaned as well.

We have done all we can in an effort to prevent an infection at school. Now we must ask you, the parents, to do your part. Please *carefully* read the informational letter about head lice from Mt. Lebanon School District that was linked from the newsletter email.

Joan

Joan Harrison

P.S.

You should have received a letter, coupon book, directory listing, and immunization form for the 2013-2014 school year. Please note that first month's tuition for September 2013 is due by May 1. This will secure your child's space in the class. Also, all previous balances must be paid to hold your child's space in next year's class.

Please return the directory listing also by May 1. This will help us to get a head start. If you have any questions please let me know.

From Mushroom to Malawi...



Collection April 15-19

Hi! For those of you who do not know me, I am Marikate Harrison, Director Joan's oldest daughter. I attended Mushroom 16 years ago and seem to go back every year for summer camp! I am a junior Human Development major at Virginia Tech and this summer I will be making a journey to Malawi, Africa. My ultimate goal is to become a teacher and help as many children and others as possible.

During my stay in Malawi, I will be teaching in one of the government schools, *Domasi*. I have learned a great amount about the people and life in Malawi, which is known as the heart of Africa. There I will be teaching the children English along with many basic lessons. These children have nothing and most of them have never even seen a pencil.

I know the Mushroom community is so giving and willing to help others in need. I am asking for some donations to take to these children which may ultimately change their lives! If you are willing to donate, here are some suggested items...

small packs of crayons **nametags**
string **beads**
gummies (treats for the kids) **pencils**
markers **notecards**
toothbrushes

Any teaching supplies such as classroom posters, resources, rulers, glue (sticks), stickers, tape...
Anything you think would help enrich their learning!

I know this is a lot to ask and I greatly appreciate your donations! This experience will be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that will allow me to step back and appreciate every little thing in my life. It will give me the chance to be a part of something bigger than myself. *I would love for the wonderful Mushroomers to help make a difference in a child's life across the world.* Thank you!!

Welcome Future Mushroomer!

Connor Edward Duffy born March 13.

Proud big sister Quinn is in the 3/4s class; parents are Tiffany & Josh.

PICTURES ARE IN!

You should already have received your child's portraits. Please:

1. Choose the portraits you want to purchase. Return to your child's teacher any you do not want.
2. Pay online at mylifetouch.com or submit check or money order.
3. Return payment within 7 days.



**** Return portraits and payment no later than April 10 ****

News from the Early Learners class from Theresa, Marlene, and Debbie...

March just flew right by! It was a busy and exciting month.

Did you know that we could take a field trip and never even leave the building? Well, we did and thanks to our leprechaun, Paddy, we had a wonderful trip to Ireland. Paddy introduced us to his best friends Magic and Mystic, the unicorns. He also had us searching around the room for his favorite color, green, and his favorite flower, the shamrock. We had a lot of fun with Paddy and his mischief-making ways. How surprised we were when he turned our sand green and made our hands turn green too. Paddy introduced us to his favorite treat – the Shamrock Shake and it was delicious. Getting rid of a leprechaun is not easy, so I'm sure that mischief maker will be surprising us even more!

We were hoping that March would be a little more "lammy" with the weather. But as we filled up our calendar it was just what we thought—more lion days than "lammy" ones. Well, we are not waiting 'til spring comes. We are **SPRINGING** into action now.

We'll get our room ready and have it bursting with colors! We'll get busy growing our own Lil' Drops and searching outside for any new little buds and flowertops peeking out of the ground. We will also see what the birds are up to now that they are back in town. Keep your heads low when you enter the room. They could be flying around the room preparing their nests for their new arrivals. With the arrival of the warmer weather, our thoughts tend to wander to vacations on the beach. S-o-o-o we will have to bring the beach to Mushroom! Get out your bathing suits and beach towels, we're going surfin'!



As we enter into our final months of school, we would like to thank all of you for becoming a part of our family. You and your children are what make Mushroom such a special place. The friendships we all have made truly emphasize our middle name: "Family!" It is because of you, the wonderful children and families we have here at Mushroom school, that each day is so very enjoyable. We would like to thank all of you for becoming a part of our family. You and your children are what



Would you like to advertise to Mushroom families while supporting MFLC's scholarship fund?

See the new **Business Directory** on the last page! Each business-card-size ad is \$10 per month. Please see Joan if you're interested.

From the president of the board...

Spring is here...even though it doesn't quite feel like it yet. However, there are some GREAT things that this season brings to our school.

Registration! We already have as many children registered for next year as we currently have enrolled for the current year. Thank you for spreading the word, and having more babies, to keep our enrollment going!



NO MORE FUNDRAISERS!!! Woohoo! We did great this year, and are working to make every year even better than the one before with our fundraiser offerings. We have already started planning for next year, and hope to provide good fundraising options then as well.

Home Depot staff will be working with us to make improvements to our school this spring/early summer. We are meeting with them the first week in April to discuss what projects we will be tackling. The work will be scheduled around the end of the school year and the Slice of Summer program. We may need volunteers for this project, so stay tuned!

Parent Questionnaires will be coming soon. This is where we get an opportunity to hear your praises and criticisms and it can be done anonymously! Please, please, PLEASE try to take the time to fill these out and return them. We got more back last year than in years past, but we want MORE!!! We tried to make changes this year based on your thoughts and suggestions, and hope you noticed! Please don't hold back and if you have an idea, let us know.

I hope that the warm weather comes soon and we are able to get out and enjoy it! I just washed a load of six pairs of muddy tennis shoes and my washer and I are not looking forward to doing that again anytime soon!

Erin

Erin Bignell



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SNACK TIME!

We appreciate the contribution our families make by providing snacks and we are all interested in providing healthy, nutritious ones. Please keep in mind: they need to be nut free; remain attentive to your class's restrictions and read food labels; try to avoid extremely colorful processed foods with lots of food dye; snacks must be in original packaging with a complete ingredient list and expiration date; and consider fruits, vegetables and foods low in sugar (no cutting the fruits/veggies at home). **Simple is great!**



make Mushroom such a special place.

News from the 3s class from Jamie, Debbie, and Christine...

March 21 signifies the changing of the seasons from winter to spring. As I am writing this article, the weather forecast is calling for a snow storm which will leave us with several inches of snow. The weather this time of the year is very unpredictable. The growth of a three-year-old, however, is very predictable this time of the year. I enjoy seeing the friendships blossoming, the confidence growing and the knowledge expanding. It is one of my favorite things to see as a teacher of three-year-olds.

During the month of March our class focused on the theme "Let's Build." We used different types of materials to build our creations. We used pieces of wood, Popsicle sticks, construction paper and marshmallows. We also looked at real blueprints and created our own blueprints using rulers and markers. It was fun to pretend we were builders as we used the tools to improve our classroom, fix the loft and make sure all of the tables and chairs were safe for us to use.



There are so many amazing things that happen during creative play. The students learn to cooperate when sharing toys. They develop playgroups and take on specific roles. Sometimes we just sit back and listen to the conversations that develop during play. They are growing right before our eyes.

The last week of March we spent studying music. We had several guest musicians play instruments for our classroom which included two guitars, a ukulele and flute. We also sang our stories, played the piano and created musical instruments out of paper plates and construction paper. One of our favorite parts of this unit was when we danced. We danced with scarves, musical instruments and on top of mats with glow-in-the-dark bracelets. The students started making requests for their favorite songs. Dancing was a great way to burn off some energy during the cold days of March.

The students have been practicing writing their names and writing stories. We talk a lot about characters and the setting

of stories. This class loves to be read to. The more stories the better! In March we enjoyed many stories, which included *A Frog in the Kitchen Sink*, *Llama, Llama, Red Pajama* and *Suddenly*. We also notice how the students will read stories to themselves or act as the teacher and read to their classmates.

In April we will be focusing on our "Pet Show" theme. I look forward to conferences on April 18 and sharing the progress all of the students have made in our class.

We are having such a wonderful time with the students this year. They are extremely focused, interested in learning and enjoy having fun. We enjoy that too.

News from the 3/4s class from Liz, Marlene, and Brian...

5...4...3...2...1...*Blast off!*

This month we ventured to outer space to learn about planets, stars, constellations, galaxies, and possibly even aliens. This topic proved especially inspiring for the group, which made for a lively and creative time. We began the month with a giant piece of black paper hanging on our bulletin board. The emptiness of space just begged for our creations. We spent the month adding planets, moons, rockets, stars, and galaxies. Each day, the children thought of more objects to create for our space display.



We learned that the sun is our own personal star, and it is very hot and far away. We had fun constructing and decorating a shadow box which we used to explore how the sun's light is reflected off the moon. We learned the names of the planets in our solar system, and we learned that they spin on their axes and orbit around the sun. We even pretended to be the planets and the sun to understand how they move.

Our journey did not end at the edge of our solar system, though. We continued on into the stars, where we learned about constellations and galaxies. We learned the names of some constellations and created our own using star stickers and white crayons. We had a bunny constellation, a bear, a dragon, a ladder, and many more.



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Dramatic play was an important part of our learning, as always. We created a giant space shuttle using cardboard and teamed up to fly it to distant locations throughout the galaxy. The children created controls for the shuttle so that it would be able to perform its important functions. In addition to "go" and "stop" we had buttons that provided cookies and drinkable yogurt. Apparently space exploration can make you really hungry!

We made a new friend in Aiken Drum, the man in the moon. We had a lot of fun singing his song and thinking about how silly he would look with hair made of spaghetti and eyes made of meatballs. We also enjoyed a large collection of space-related books, courtesy of the Mt. Lebanon Public Library and Miss Cara. I went a little crazy with the books, but it was hard not to with some of the amazing space photography available now. We thought the nebulae were especially beautiful.



Our month was also packed with special guests. We had a special lesson about volcanoes with Jenny Kochhar. She used play dough, baking soda and vinegar to help us learn how volcanic eruptions build up islands over time as the lava cools. The children were enchanted! We also had a visit from Verna, our local wildlife expert. We learned about hibernation and met several of her rescued animals, including snakes, lizards, toads, and turtles. Miss Chrissy also came to see us for a special art project. Noodle painting was messy and fun!

We had a wonderful evening together at our Open House on March 21. We had a great turnout! We decked out our space shuttle with glow sticks and enjoyed the chance to enjoy the darkness for a change. It was wonderful to see everyone.

Congratulations to the Duffy family! Quinn became a big sister to baby brother Connor this month.

In April we will learn about community helpers. If you would like to visit our class and share some information about your job with us, please let me know!

News from the 4s class from Liz, Kim, and Melanie...

March flew by at light speed! We spent it learning about outer space. We learned a little something about each

Parking Lot and Dropoff/Pickup Reminders



Thank you for keeping our school families safe!

- Our lot is ONE WAY, entering from Washington, exiting to Sunnyhill.
- Parking is not permitted in front of the school or along the left side of the exit driveway. This is a requirement of the fire department.
- Please observe the handicapped parking spots.
- Drive slowly and carefully, especially when backing out, and be observant of the cars and people around you.
- Don't leave other children unattended in the vehicle during dropoff or pickup. Stay alert and keep kids close to you when walking in the lot.

If you arrive early, please wait in the foyer until 8:55am/12:25pm.

of the planets in our solar system and created take-home books about what we'd learned. We had fun exploring how day and night happen, using a globe, flashlight, and our bodies.

We also explored planetary motion. After moving our bodies to spin and orbit the "sun" at the same time, we created models using practice golf balls and pipe cleaner rings to demonstrate the two types of motion. This topic provided many questions for us, including "Why don't we feel the Earth spinning?" We exercised our thinking muscles to come up with several interesting theories about that.

We had plenty of sensory fun in March. First we made space dough. This new recipe had a different consistency from our regular play dough, and we made it extra galactic by adding Kool-Aid for color and smell and glitter for eye-catching sparkle. We used the astronaut figurines and rockets to imagine being on the surface of another planet. We also made moon sand. It was fun to explore how our alien green sand could be molded into different shapes. We also tried out the astronaut experiment box. The children put their hands inside gloves attached to holes in the box and attempted to manipulate the materials inside. This was a fun challenge! Miss Chrissy visited us for a special art lesson. Painting with noodles was another interesting sensory experience, and lots of messy fun.

We continue to practice writing our names. I have yet to find anything that motivates this crew to practice more than writing their names on the sign-up sheet for popular activities.



Everyone is making progress with this important skill. We still have some mix-ups related to the order of the letters as well as their orientation. We tried another way of increasing awareness of these elements this month. The children searched through a pile of letters to find the letters in their names. They glued the letters in a line to make rockets.

We also learned about constellations and galaxies. We discovered that the constellations called to mind different images for each of us. Depending how you look at it, the constellation of Leo might resemble a lion, a rat, a hanger or a vacuum cleaner. We created our own constellations by poking holes in black paper. We put these over flashlights and project our constellations on the ceiling and in our shadow box.

Our NASA recruits suited up for a special mission that took us to the moon, the asteroid belt, and Mars. As we carried out



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the directives of our mission, we learned about different types of gravity and tried moving as if we were experiencing low and high gravity. We didn't really think about the gross motor skills we were practicing as we avoided asteroids, jumped in craters, collected samples, and drove the Mars rover. And nothing makes learning to count backwards from 10 more fun than blasting off to outer space!



Next month we will build our very own town as part of a study of building and community helpers. We can't wait to see what this creative bunch will imagine and create!

News from the Pre-K morning class from Cara, Jane, and Brian...

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." – Dr. Seuss

We began our month celebrating Dr. Seuss's birthday, which is March 2, as part of "Read Across America," the nation's largest reading celebration to highlight the importance of developing a love for reading at an early age. We brought his books *The Cat in the Hat*, *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*, *Wacky Wednesday* and *Bartholomew and the Oobleck* to life by making our own "Cat in the Hat" hats and puppets, experimenting with wacky weaving and making oobleck. I think one of our favorite activities was the wacky weaving! You can't imagine the amount of fun and giggling that can be created when you simply turn a table over, put out a basket of yarn and let them weave around the legs of the table. I loved seeing them work together as a group while they were having such fun!

After our fun with Dr. Seuss, we turned our attention to rainbows since it was March and all. ROY G. BIV came to life as we created our own ROY G. BIV character whose hair is the color of the rainbow. We learned how a rainbow is created and performed our own experiment to create a rainbow with a flashlight, jar of water and a mirror. Being the week before St. Patrick's Day, we enjoyed talking about leprechauns and their pot of gold. The children created a beautiful rainbow mural and a pot of gold that is gracing the hallway. It really brightens up your day! We were master builders with the magnetiles and blocks and our play has become so much more sophisticated.

DOES YOUR CHILD LOVE BEING AT MUSHROOM?



Could you use a little more time for errands or work?

Then sign up for enrichment and/or "Munchin' Lunchin'!"

Supervised lunchtime is \$6 per day for kids 3+. In enrichment, the children have fun making crafts, cooking, learning Spanish and reading new stories. Classes are available for those 4+ on Mondays and/or Fridays each month; \$14 per class. Sign up for however many you like! Contact Jamie for more info at jamie_geisler@comcast.net.

One of the favorite activities of the week was a "write the room" alphabet search. This is a cross between I Spy! and a treasure hunt. All 26 letters were posted throughout all three rooms and the hallway. With a clipboard and a recording sheet, the kids had to find each letter and then write the lowercase corresponding letter. They had such a great time with this kinesthetic activity. They initiated their own teams to work with and would give support to each other throughout the activity. One team of children would squeal in delight whenever they found the next letter.



We rounded out the month with exploring our next season of spring and creating the signs of the season since they are still a little hidden. :) We added beautiful flowers and grass to our mural in the hallway. They are masterpieces of color and texture with the beautiful addition of the kids' first and last names that they printed. The flower shop was open in the dramatic play room with several bouquets being purchased. The flowers were a coveted commodity and created a wonderful opportunity for negotiation between the children.

I made a DIY light table for our classroom and the children explored with it. We started with using the magnetiles as a medium, which they enjoyed. I will continue to introduce new materials for the children to explore on the light table. As one last activity to herald in the season, we had an egg hunt! Each child was given a number and they were then able to find three eggs hidden in the room with that number. Oh, what fun we had!

Throughout the whole month, each child had the opportunity to take the moon journal home. With an adult, the child was to look in the night sky and draw what was seen. Several nights the children were not able to see anything in the sky, but that did not stop them. They had the initiative to look up the information on the internet with an adult and would then record this in the moon journal as well. We have really enjoyed this project, and the children have really captured the idea that an object, such as the moon, changes over time. The children now ask what phase the moon is in each day. So, we have added a moon phase calendar to the room and will continue to expand on their interest.

We have really become quite a tight-knit group, and we are so enjoying being a part of their school family! I keep having the



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song by Sister Sledge running through my head as I think of our class, "We are fam-i-ly..."

Next month, we will begin our study of weather while using the "Wizard of Oz" as the context. I'm calling it, "Will You Weather the Weather—From Dorothy to Dinosaurs."

News from the Pre-K afternoon class from Cathy and Melanie...

We had such a busy month of March. Seamus the Leprechaun hid in my pocket, played little tricks and left us some gold pieces, even though we never found his treasure!!!

We continue with our letter-of-the-week projects and most of us are REALLY trying to sound out words so that we are beginning to read!! We prepared to have our families come visit our school for an Open House. Thanks to all who were able to come. If you weren't able to make it, we have decorated our walls with our personal "interviews" and pictures of our families which will be up for a little while.

In April we will make a giant "flower tree" with everyone's help. After spring break we will settle down and really start to work on number recognition. There are many skills that your child should know before heading off to kindergarten. Numbers 1 through 20 are included.



Just around the corner is our 100th day of school!!!!!! We will count objects up to 100 and make ICE CREAM! **Our BEST field trip is coming up on April 9.** We will go to the SpringHouse, a family-owned, working dairy farm. We will learn what cows like to eat, how they are milked, milk a cow, feed the calves a bottle and finish the tour with a look at the bottling room and then have ice cream! This is a terrific trip but there is just one catch... we have to go in the morning—that's when the calves are fed, so please mark this date!

Our conferences will be on Thursday, April 18; a sign-up sheet will be in our room. These are 20-minute conferences without your child so, as we did in the fall, ask a friend to watch your child during your conference time and then return the favor.

Looking forward to watching your WONDERFUL kiddos grow!



Mushroom Wish List ~ If you or someone you know may be able to contribute, please let Joan know!

- Little Tykes ride-on fire truck
- Clothes (underwear, socks, pants, tops), especially for girls
- Dress-up clothes (especially for boys)

News from the K-Too class from Marilyn...

March was electric! We learned about the myriad of discoveries and inventions made by Benjamin Franklin: lightning is electricity, mail delivery to homes, illuminated and paved streets, public libraries, the Franklin stove (which used less wood and heated more efficiently), the lightning rod, the Gulf Stream, limes as a cure for scurvy, bifocal glasses, etc.

My favorite comment came from little Ryder who said of Ben: "Wow, I'm impressed!"



We performed simple static electricity experiments using balloons, wool sweaters, combs, and tissue paper to experience the properties of what Ben knew as "electricity" at the time. We also tried to use his wisdom as we went through our day: "No pain, no gain," "Haste makes waste," "An apple a day keeps the doctor away," "Waste not, want not," etc. We decorated our room with homemade kites after learning how Ben discovered and proved that lightning was electricity.

We also put together some leprechaun traps using recycle art materials. We didn't catch any of those tricky guys, but they left us some leprechaun dust and chocolate gold coins!

We moved on to learning the anatomy of atoms and molecules which will be a necessary foundation for understanding how electricity works on the atomic level.

We spent much of the month disassembling broken electrical items: 35-millimeter cameras, remote controls, binoculars, and CD players. The children increased their patience, spatial problem solving, and fine motor skills with screwdrivers. Some of the screws were very small! They also had to figure out how the components were connected in order to get them apart. Once opened, the children saw how incredibly complex these outwardly simple boxes were. There were mother boards, transistors, speakers with magnetic backs, transducers, LED screens, and lasers. The mother boards enabled the children to trace the myriad metal pathways for the electric current.

April will be full of spring nature projects, a field trip, Mother's Day preparation, and a unit designed on the interests of each class.

Business Directory



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