

Mushroom Family Learning Center

Individual Growth in a Shared Environment



An independent, secular, nonprofit preschool since 1973

1240 Washington Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15228

(412) 531-1225

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mushroomfamily.org

News & Notes

DECEMBER 2014

TUITION DUE DEC. 1

And the first-half fundraising fee due Dec. 15.

CLASSES RESUME DEC. 1

MFLC BOARD MEETING DEC. 17, 8:00PM

WINTER BREAK DATES

Last day of classes: Dec. 19;
return date: January 5.

IN-HOUSE REGISTRATION FOR 2015-16 BEGINS JAN. 26

PGH. PENGUINS PACKAGE RAFFLE TICKET SALE DEC. 9-11

See p. 6 for details. 100% goes
to your fundraising fee.

MFLC ENRICHMENT CLASSES, MONDAYS AND/OR FRIDAYS

Spots available! See p. 4.
jamie_geisler@comcast.net

WAYS TO HELP MFLC

- United Way agency # is 885339.
- Giant Eagle's 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.

Welcome Future Mushroomer!

Brady Nicholas Fusco,
born November 8. Congrats to
big brother Levi (3s) and parents
Nicole and David!

From the director...

After weeks of smelling the aromas of breads baking and stone soup simmering, I could not wait for the festivities to begin! The Thanksgiving feasts were fantastic. This is a time when our families can really enjoy the wonderful foods, songs and artwork the children worked so hard to prepare for this special occasion. Their enthusiasm was delightful to see. Each feast was a perfect way to begin the holiday season. It was wonderful to see so many of you sharing this event with your children. I loved seeing the smiles of the parents, the proud faces of the grandparents, and the joy in the students to share this special day with you.

MFLC has thrived for over 40 years due to the efforts of our parents. Our families are the owners of this wonderful and unique school. I greatly appreciate your interest and support, whether in the classroom or part of the various fundraisers that generate income to keep our school financially sound. While there are activities that are designed strictly for families to spend time together, fundraising is critical to the future of our amazing school. I invite each of you to become involved and actively participate in your child's experience at Mushroom Family Learning Center.

Hellos and Goodbyes...

~ Welcome ~

Bertie Greenwalt to the 3/4s class. Parents Jordan Seymour and Toby Greenwalt.
Pranish Tamang and family also to the 3/4s class.

~ Farewell ~

Telesco family (Annabel—PreK-AM, Reed—EL-T/Th-AM), relocating to Erie, Pa., and the **Malec family** (Ada—EL-T/Th-PM), relocating to Houston, Tex.

A Big Thank-You to:

- ◆ Connor (Pre-K PM), Peyton (Early Learners PM) and the Hunt family for their donation of toys.
- ◆ Hollie DeLuca who coordinated the Artisan Pizza days, and to all who participated. Our school netted \$269!
- ◆ Abigail Detar (PreK-PM) and family for their donation of art supplies.
- ◆ Henry Mitchell (K-Too-AM) and family for their donation of a castle tent.
- ◆ Amy Dembosky for coordinating the Barnes & Noble day.
- ◆ Diane Rattay for her help in the office, and Kelly Lotter for publication of the newsletter.
- ◆ All the parent helpers who made our feasts so delightful.
- ◆ All of our teachers who worked so hard with the students to prepare those feasts.

We at MFLC would like to join in the spirit of the season and thank you not only for choosing our program, but also for the trust, support, and the love that is shared with all of us.

On behalf of the entire staff, and myself we want to wish all of our families a joyful holiday season. We look forward to our time off during the holidays, however we will return with a warm heart and ready to look forward to a new year.

Happy 2015!

Joan

Joan Harrison

School delay/cancellation

MFLC will follow Mt. Lebanon School District decisions during inclement weather. **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.



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.

From the president of the board...



Happy December! This is a month that is full of holiday traditions. No matter which religion you practice, which holiday you celebrate, or which belief system you hold dear... at this time of year, they all have one thing in common: The Sparkle.

The sparkle of a snowflake falling as its fractals hit the light in just the right way. The sparkle in a child's eye as he or she is opening a gift. The sparkle of candlelight. The sparkle of a fire in the fireplace on a cold night. The light shows and decorations all sparkle as you drive by. Of course, we can't forget that no art project at MFLC is complete without a bit of sparkle. December is full of sparkle.

December is also a month of giving. Many of us are making lists of gifts to be given. Take advantage of the raffle ticket fundraiser we will be holding next week. The package has Penguins tickets, theater tickets, a dinner out and a hotel stay... a definite sparkle-in-the-eye-inducing gift to give to friends and family.

We are about to be inundated with the chaos that is inevitable at this time of year. There never seems to be enough time to get everything done. No matter which holiday you celebrate this time of year, don't forget to take time to enjoy the Sparkle!

Diane

Diane Rattay

News from the Early Learners classes from Amy, Sheila, Marlene and Jamie...

The Early Learners were gobbling and wobbling in November! We were very busy decorating our classroom with fall wreaths, corn, and leaves.

One really fun project we did went with the book *Fall is Not Easy* by Marty Kelley. The book tells the story of a tree who coasts through spring and summer, but just can't get its leaves right in the fall. It tries but ends up with red, white, and blue leaves, smiley-face leaves, and even peace-symbol leaves! We

loved looking at all of the different designs in the book. Then we used feathers, eyes, foamies, sequins, jewels, and anything else we could find to decorate our own confused trees! They were beautiful, and we enjoyed each one. We hope they're decorating a spot in your house right now.

Our feasts were all delightful! Thanks to everyone who brought in something to share. We hope you had as much fun as we did. It was great to have some time to talk and get to know everyone better. The children loved having you come in and stay for a while! Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to join us.

Please remember that we will continue to go outside if the temperature is above 28 degrees. The children love the playground! Pack a hat, mittens (better than gloves!), and boots in your child's bag. It will take us a while to get ready to go out, but it's worth it when we see the children's happy expressions. Regarding snow pants: they may not be necessary until we have actual snow on the ground because we're not outside for very long. It is up to you; we will dress your child in whatever is in the bag!



December can be a hectic month for a lot of reasons. We will do our best to keep things very calm and low-key in our classroom. We will follow our same general pattern for each day, too. Children find this comfortable, and we do too!

There are sometimes extra opportunities for visiting with family and friends in December, and these can lead to missed naps and bedtimes. We understand and are prepared for your child to show us different sides to his/her personality. One other consideration is that after the Thanksgiving break and the longer winter break, your child may have trouble separating from you again. This is perfectly normal, and we will be prepared to help your child through it. We love each day that we get to spend with your children! Thank you for sharing them with us!

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

Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays. I enjoy the food, of course, but the best part of the season is spending time with my family and friends. My children have time off from school and their busy schedules. I get to see my parents and other relatives that I do not see enough. It is a time to reflect on the most important things in my life. It is a time to give and

----- Parking Lot Safety

- ⇒ **The lot is ONE WAY**, entering from Washington Road and exiting to Sunnyhill Drive. Please drive slowly and carefully, especially when backing out. Look all around you.
- ⇒ Parking is not permitted in front of the school or along the left side of the exit driveway (by order of the fire department), and please observe the handicapped spots.
- ⇒ Please never leave a sleeping or sick child (or a healthy child!) in the car or lot alone. If you need help, call, and someone can bring your preschooler out to you or into school.
- ⇒ Please hold your children's hands in the lot to keep them safe.
- ⇒ If you arrive early, please wait in the foyer until 8:55am for morning classes; 12:25pm for afternoon classes.



receive a lot of love! Debbie, Melissa and I feel this same type of thankfulness each time our 18 students walk through the door. Each different personality brings something special to the table. Our students and their parents have become part of our extended family and for that we are very thankful.

November was a very busy month for the 3-year-olds at Mushroom. We started our two month project of completing Random Acts of Kindness. Our goal is 10 different activities. We started the process by writing thank you letters to our heroes, the veterans. These letters were sent to Walter Reed Hospital.

The students also wrote thank you letters to their parents. Our final activity for the month was collecting loose change for a local family in need. We are learning that no matter how old you are, it is never too young or old to help others. We will finish our project next month. Stay tuned to hear what other wonderful kindness acts our students complete.

In November we focused on learning about the first Thanksgiving. We discussed how hard it would have been to be a Pilgrim child. We discussed how Native Americans lived and how they gathered together with the Pilgrims for a feast. We even had our own feast where family and friends were invited to observe a little show and share some great snacks. I love having families come together in our tiny classroom, sitting on tiny chairs. There was so much love coming from the families and students that I think I never stopped smiling.

We are doing a great job learning the routine of our classroom and recognizing that there are rules that have to be followed for a safe classroom. The students worked on their fine motor skills along with their communication skills. We started working on our communication circle where the students sit in a circle and ask each other the question of the day. This activity teaches patience, language skills and encourages confidence with speaking in a crowd. Debbie, Melissa and I love this activity. We see improvement each time.

In December we will discuss different holidays that are celebrated. We will complete our list of Random Acts of Kindness. We are having such a wonderful time with our students. They make us laugh and love everyday. We are very thankful for the opportunity to teach these 18 amazing children.

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

We hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving! Our theme for November was "We Gather Together." We focused on food, friendship, family and fun! It was a quick month that seemed to fly by in the blink of an eye, but we packed in as much fun and learning as we could manage.

We discovered this month that our group is passionate about cooking. We made pumpkin no-bake cookies and frozen fruit salad. We delighted in the rich sensory experiences, marveled at the amazing state changes, and enjoyed feelings of accomplishment. The children were thrilled to be able to cut fruit, mix ingredients, and shape dough all by themselves.

This month we saw more and more interaction and cooperative play. Sometimes the simplest games are the best way to share a warm moment with a friend. Whether we were sharing books on the couch, riding in our big box fishing boat, or driving together in our giant Batmobile, we found ways to smile and laugh together. We welcomed a new friend to our Mushroom Family this month. Pranish is a wonderful addition to the class!



November is a great time to focus on being thankful for what we have. We endeavored to be mindful throughout the month of the many wonderful people, things, and experiences that enrich our lives. Although "thankful" may be a new word for an abstract concept, it is really just putting a name on what the children naturally feel. In that spirit, we set about planning our biggest sharing project of the month: a feast to share with our families. The food we prepared, the decorations we made, and the entertainment we provided were the children's gifts to you, offered in the spirit of generosity and gratitude. We hope you enjoyed our little feast!

Next month we will try to make our classroom a low-key respite from the excitement of the holiday season. Our theme will be "Colors, Lights and Shapes of the Season."

DECEMBER ENRICHMENT CLASSES Contact Ms. Jamie for more info at jamie_geisler@comcast.net

MONDAYS ...

Dec. 1: Calling all the Royals! After receiving the key to your kingdom, tell us what you'd do if you were king or queen for the day!

Dec. 8: We are going to get wacky today with Tacky the Penguin!

Dec. 15: Today we will make a gigantic batch of play dough, and everyone can take some home. But first you can make it any color you like, and even add glitter!



FRIDAYS ...

Dec. 5: Make a winter holiday wreath (or two!). Don't face the cold weather without a cheery decoration for your front door.

Dec. 12: Make a winter bird feeder. Children love to show they care about wildlife with this biodegradable feeder.

Dec. 19: Decorate a holiday cookie and make some hot cocoa to celebrate the season.

News from the 4s class from Liz and Marilyn...

We hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving! Our theme for November was "We Gather Together." We explored ideas such as healthy food, manners, celebration, sharing, cooperation, and gratitude. Much of this brief month was spent combining those concepts to create a feast for our families. We baked cookies, sliced fruit for fruit salad, practiced songs, created decorations, and contemplated what we are thankful for. We were touched by the children's earnest desire to create a wonderful feast experience for their families. We hope you enjoyed the results!

We enjoyed making books this month. We had fun using the binding machine to create our own spooky stories in October, and in November we used the machine to create two collaborative books. Our first book was based on *The Hungry Thing*, the story of a monster who speaks in rhymes. After the story, the Hungry Thing made a personal appearance in our classroom. We enjoyed figuring out what he wanted to eat when he asked for schmancakes, tickles, or pamburgers. We were inspired to create our own class book of silly food rhymes. We also wrote and illustrated a book about the things we are thankful for. Some children were inspired to make even more books of their own, so we showed them how to make books using a few sheets of paper and a stapler.

The Parrot Tico Tango taught us a lesson about sharing. When everyone shared a little of what they had, we created beautiful and delicious fruit salads, both real and pretend. Of course, this provided a great opportunity to practice polite phrases such as "Yes, please," "No, thank you," and "Would you like some raspberries?" It was clear from the children's responses that the pleasure of giving nearly equaled the pleasure of getting!

In addition to cutting real and pretend fruit, we found other opportunities this month to work on cutting skills. Often we will cut and decorate the letter of the day, paying close attention to the geometric aspects of the letter. Symmetrical letters are especially fun. When paper is folded along the line of symmetry, a few cuts can make the letter appear. We also cut pictures of food from magazines to create collages of dinner

plates and smaller dessert plates. We thought about what foods we enjoy, noticing that everyone is different. We also thought about what foods should be enjoyed freely, and which should be enjoyed in moderation.

Our daily journal time has developed into a pleasant social routine for most of the children. We have noticed that they enjoy sharing ideas with each other during this activity. Those children who were already interested in exploring writing and drawing have helped pass that interest along to their peers. We love seeing how much they are learning from each other! Many of the children have filled the first volume of their journals, so we used the binding machine once again to make new journals.



Imaginative play continues to be the main focus during center time. We are seeing advances in the group's play in terms of complexity, coordination, and cooperation. It has been exciting to see two or three groups of children working on different play scenarios, but interacting with each other. When one group builds a castle, they might need supplies for a party they are planning. They might then visit another group's grocery store to buy food. This group has many wonderful ideas of their own. We are happy to take the role of facilitators, helping them advance their own play.

Our theme for December will be "Colors, Lights and Shapes of the Season." We hope that December will be a peaceful and joyous month for all of you.

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

We began this month by asking the question, "Where does our food come from?" We had several wonderful ideas that ranged from the grocery store, to farms, to the gardens in our backyard. We read stories about farms and how they produce our food, be it fruits, vegetables, protein or dairy products. We made it real in our classroom by turning the dramatic play area into a farmers market, as we first explored fruits and vegetables.

Help Your Kids Dress for Success!



Please ensure that your children have appropriate outdoor clothing for school: 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 28 degrees or higher. Please be sure your kids also have **proper "play shoes"** (especially on movement day). Thank you!



Mushroom Wish List

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

- Clothes: underwear, socks, pants, tops
- Dress-up clothes/costumes your child may have outgrown
- Helmets for playground
- Riding toys for the playground, especially a fire truck

We then turned our attention to how food is important to celebrations and specifically to our Harvest Feast. First, we decided we needed to make sure to create an invitation for our family and friends. After our invitation went home, we moved right into making placemats for the feast, necklaces to wear and learning songs to sing as part of our celebration. The dramatic play area then morphed into a restaurant while we were in the midst of preparing for our feast.

We read the book *Pilgrim Cat* and were introduced to a Pilgrim girl named Faith, her cat named Pounce and an important Native American named Squanto. The children learned that Squanto showed the Pilgrims how to plant corn since this was not a crop they were familiar with and it allowed them to have a bounty of food at the next harvest. We discussed how there were not grocery stores at that time to purchase food, which made it even more important that they learn how to grow bountiful crops.



This important crop of corn became a focal point for our food we prepared for the Harvest Feast. We made cornbread in the classroom and explored the ingredients of the "Three Sisters" soup. It is part of Native American teachings to grow the three crops of corn, beans and squash together. Each crop has its function and they work together to create a rich soil and the right conditions to grow and flourish. It sounds a lot like our children as they flourish in the soil of "individual growth in a shared environment."

We had a wonderful Harvest Feast with our families, and enjoyed coming together for the special songs we learned in music and to share a meal. Together we "filled up our bucket!"

In December, we will extend our exploration of Native Americans as we learn about dream catchers. This leads into our investigation of day and night. Time to get out the telescopes!

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

In November the K-Too children created their own map of Pittsburgh with PNC Park, Heinz Field, Consol Energy Center, the Pittsburgh Zoo, Phipps Conservatory, Kennywood, Carnegie Science Center, the Fort Pitt and Liberty Tunnels, and their street in Mt. Lebanon or Upper St. Clair marked with symbols. The maps also included a numbered key. The children loved them and now can help parents find their way on family trips!

In November we also prepared homemade bread and vegetable soup for our feast, learned to write and conceptualize fractions through hands-on cooking with measuring cups/spoons, created a play with set and costumes from Esphyr Slobodkina's book *The Wonderful Feast*, learned the origins and history of Thanksgiving, and wrote what we are thankful for.



Our feast was a great success. The children loved performing a play for their families, took pride in the food they made, and savored healthy competition during rhyming bingo. Everyone had a wonderful time. Thank you to all of the parents who volunteered to make this event a success: Toni Sorsdal and Amy Spector for assisting with soup preparation; Renee Gebben and Mandy Mitchell for setup and pictures in the AM; Amy Garces and Judit Andrews for setup and pictures in the PM.

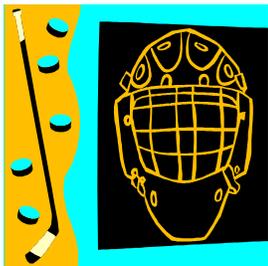
In December and January we will explore various cultures' holidays: Ramadan, Diwali, Chinese New Year, Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa. Each holiday includes light and caring which we will experience through mock classroom "celebrations" and discussion. The religious details of the holidays will be referenced, but not elaborated on. The children will make a special holiday gift this month and talk about giving. Also, if there is enough snow, we'll study the water cycle and volumetric/weight principles. In January we will begin our electric house project.

Nothing in My Bag Today Author Unknown

Today I did math and science; I toasted bread, I halved and quartered; I counted, measured, used my eyes, and ears, and head. I added and subtracted on the way; I used a magnet, blocks, and memory tray. I learned about a rainbow and how to weigh.
So please don't say, "Anything in your bag today?"

You see, I am sharing as I play. I learned to listen and speak clearly when I talk, to wait my turn; and when inside to walk, to put my thoughts into a phrase, to guide a crayon through a maze. To find my name and write it down, to do it with a smile and not a frown, to put my painting brush away.
So please don't say, "What, nothing in your bag today?"

I've learned about a snail and worm, Remembered how to take my turn. I helped a friend when he was stuck, learned that water rolls off a duck. I looked at words from left to right, agreed to differ, not to fight.
So please don't say, "Did you only play today?"



MFLC Penguins Package Ticket Fundraiser!

\$ 10/ticket

(Includes 3 chances to win based on PA Lottery)

Sales at MFLC Dec. 9-11

A package you can enjoy with both friends and family:

Have an awesome time at the hockey game, take your sweetheart out for a great dinner and a luxurious hotel stay, and enjoy a family night at a children's symphony concert.

PACKAGE INCLUDES:

4 PENGUINS TICKETS with access to the Lexus Club

Saturday, March 14, 2015 @1:00 – Pittsburgh Penguins vs. Boston Bruins
(Section 109, Row T, Seats 19-22)

One-night stay at the OMNI WILLIAM PENN HOTEL

Gift certificate of \$50 to BUTCHER AND THE RYE restaurant

4 FIDDLESTICKS FAMILY CONCERT Tickets (*Winter Dreams, Pittsburgh Symphony*)

Saturday, February 21, 2015 @11:15 a.m.



A total of 333 tickets will be available for sale **December 9-11** on a first-come, first-served basis. Each ticket is preprinted with three randomly generated lottery numbers. The tickets will be sold at random. The winning number is taken from the Pennsylvania Daily Lottery 3-digit number drawn at 7:00 p.m. Tuesday, January 6, 2015. If an unsold number is drawn (or number 000), MFLC will pull a purchased ticket stub at random on Wednesday, January 7, 2015.

Ticket price \$10 **100% of the ticket price goes to your fundraising fee.**

*(If you will be re-selling the tickets you purchased, make sure you **return the ticket stub to MFLC by Tuesday, January 6, 2015**, so the winner can be contacted. Any ticket stubs not received by Tuesday, January 6, 2015, forfeit their right to win if a drawing on Wednesday, January 7, 2015, is necessary.)*

Great holiday or stocking stuffer idea! Buy for yourself or purchase and re-sell to friends, family and co-workers.

A big thank-you to Timothy Stock and Rachel Stock (Luca Stock's grandfather and aunt), Patrick and Jennifer FitzGerald (Callum FitzGerald's parents) and George Halter (Emma Halter's father) for providing or facilitating these donations!

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>