



Mushroom Family Learning Center
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 Pittsburgh, PA 15228
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 mflcdirector@hotmail.com
 mushroomfamily.org

A Big Thank-You to...

- Sheri Reddy who coordinated our successful Chipotle Spirit Night. **The school made \$1,967! A big thank-you to all who participated!**
- Diane Rattay for producing our school directory.
- Colin Jacobs (4s) and family, and another family, for donating helmets.
- Melanie Johnston for coordinating our KidStuff book fundraiser.
- Christina Evans (4s) and her grandma for the donation of a Little Tykes car.

News & Notes

TUITION DUE NOVEMBER 1
(Fundraising fee due Dec. 1)

Please note that tuition is paid one month in advance, on the first of the month (thus Nov. 1 is the due date for December's tuition). *Try your bank's online bill-pay service, and it's done!*

MINI PHOTO SESSION AT MUSHROOM (NELLIE PHOTOGRAPHY, \$125) NOV. 24, 724-263-6423

IN-SERVICE DAY NOV. 5 — NO SCHOOL

MIXED BAG FUNDRAISER ORDERS DUE NOV. 8

NEXT MFLC BOARD MEETING NOV. 13

CONFERENCES NOV. 14-15
 Details to come from each class.

BARNES & NOBLE SPIRIT NIGHT NOV. 19
 Look for details soon!

THANKSGIVING BREAK
 Check your class for info on the feasts, taking place just before Thanksgiving. The holiday break will start Nov. 27 with classes resuming Dec. 2.

SCHOOL DIRECTORY IS OUT
 You should have received one in the cubby. Info is for school use, play dates, invites, etc. but please no solicitation.

ENRICHMENT CLASSES
 For info, contact Jamie Geisler, jamie_geisler@comcast.net.

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

From the director...

We are quickly approaching conference time at Mushroom Family Learning Center. This is an opportunity for you and your child's teachers to take a few minutes, without your child present, to focus on his/her school experience thus far and continuing into the spring. Please plan to come to the conferences with questions as well as answers!

Some of the things your children's teachers like to know are: What does your child talk most about at home? What are your child's specific interests? What are your goals for your child at Mushroom? Feel free to discuss any concerns you may have at this time.

Please note that there is no school on the conferences day (check your classroom's board or teacher's email), so you will need to make arrangements for your child. Many class parents simply talk to others on the schedule about staying with their children in another room at Mushroom during the brief conference time.

Please also remember to mark your calendar for your child's classroom feast this month. This is a very special event for all. The children love preparing treats for you and it is a great way to reinforce the appreciation we have for family, friends, and all the necessities of life. In that spirit, be sure to check out Marikate's note and pictures below. I would like to personally wish each family a very festive and safe Thanksgiving.

Joan

Joan Harrison

Hi Mushroom Family!

I am Marikate, Director Joan's daughter, and you might remember me from last school year. I traveled to Malawi in Africa this past summer to teach English to the children at the Domasi Government School.

Without all of your generous help, I would have not been able to provide the children with all of the school supplies they needed!

And...surprise! The money, which Miss Cara's class raised, was able to purchase all-new windows for the school!!! I cannot thank you enough! The entire school, faculty, and children were SO grateful and excited! If only you could have seen their faces! Thank you again for not only helping the children, and me, but also truly making a difference in numerous individuals' lives.





News & Notes

Welcome, Future Mushroomer!!!

Samuel James Freund, born Oct. 8, brother of Eli (4s);
parents: Joscelyn and Paul Freund.

From the president of the board...

My oldest son is a worrier. The worries are those of a 9-year-old, like not having enough time to finish lunch at school or having too much homework on a sunny afternoon. Admittedly, he gets it from me. As Thanksgiving approaches, the pressure rises. I worry that I won't have enough time in a day to find and display the pinecone turkeys and pilgrim statues that my sons love to see this time of year. And of course there's the worry that the mashed potatoes won't be creamy enough or the turkey moist enough on the big day. This year, I'm going to take the advice I give to my son. As the lyrics go from one of my favorite songs, "When you're worried and you can't sleep, count your blessings instead of sheep."

Preschool is the perfect place to start counting. Whether it's seeing the leaf turtle that my four-year-old brought home last week (which now serves as a Thanksgiving decoration in my kitchen) or hearing the squeals of delight from a playground full of fallen leaves, the blessings are easy to find. You can start counting when you walk into school in the morning and see friendly and familiar faces, starting with Joan in the lobby!

I am also thankful for all of you...the parents and teachers who make MFLC the perfect place that it is. Thank you for volunteering to help at class parties and bringing in healthy snacks for the children to share. Thank you for coming to our Spirit Night at Chipotle and keeping our school humming by making our fundraising a success. Watch for more opportunities to do that this month with a Barnes & Noble fundraiser on **Tuesday, November 19 (MFLC teachers will host story times at the store!)** and Mixed Bag going on now.



This month, I'm going to smile more and worry less. I'm going to sit down with my 9-year-old worrywart (and his brothers) and talk about nothing but the falling leaves, the chilly air, and the delicious smell of the Thanksgiving turkey in the oven. Check the top of this page for an easy and fun way to count the blessings of the season. Enjoy!

Susan

Susan Sarkis

THANKSGIVING SNACK MIX WITH A MESSAGE

This is great to serve as a snack or to tie up in a baggie with raffia and a note explaining the symbolism of the ingredients. If you're going to put this out in a bowl for children or guests to munch on, write the symbolic ingredients on a card and place it near the treat for all to see!



Ingredients: 2 cups Bugles corn snacks (**horn of plenty**); 1 cup candy corn (**corn that pilgrims ate at the first Thanksgiving**); 1 cup dried fruit (**a sweet harvest**); 2 cups pretzels (**arms folded in thanks**); 1 cup nuts or sunflower seeds (**a bountiful harvest**)

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

October was a busy month for us. The weeks just flew by. We took advantage of all the wonderful weather and used the playground as much as possible. The children explored all the climbing devices and created many traffic jams with the bikes and cars. We are delighted to see the children becoming more comfortable with us, their surroundings and the routines. They are interacting and conversing more and sharing little tidbits of conversations with us.

October kept us busy painting with the color orange, making and carving pumpkins, and decorating our wall with our jack-o-lantern mural. We made lots and lots of decorations for our houses too. Our Open Houses were bubbling with excitement and the children were just thrilled to share a little bit of their typical day at Mushroom school with their families.

Pumpkins were all around us and we discovered a lot about them. We took out their "pumpkin hair" and washed and dried their seeds to prepare them for roasting. Our chefs jumped right in and made the most delicious pumpkin seeds ever! We kept our eyes on the leaves outside too as they changed their beautiful colors. We even had one special tree turn its leaves the color of the month— orange.



"Pat, the cat" came to school and showed us how he could change his colors in a snap. We can tell that many of the children are able to recall the names of colors already. The children love coming and doing the felt board activity and are now excited about dressing our Weather Bear each day.

November will find us talking turkey! The children will be struttin' their turkey feathers and doing the turkey dance. We'll talk about Thanksgiving and things for which we are thankful. We are always amused with what your two-year-olds tell us! At the end of this month, we will have our Thanksgiving mini-feast and it really is a mini one. The children will make the appetizers from their own recipes. We are never really certain what the ingredients will be but we can guarantee the health department would definitely never let us serve them! For us, the process is more important than the end product. Parents,



News & Notes

... 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.

grandparents and siblings are invited back to join us during our snack time and we promise we will serve edible appetizers. The date of your feast will be sent out to you.

With the cooler weather coming, please send warm hats and mittens. We do like to go out even if it is for a short period of time. We want to thank all of you for the wonderful snacks. The children love it when we all say "thank you" for the snack they have brought. They are truly appreciated.

We are enjoying your children immensely! Their little personalities are shining through. Already they have made little friendships and delight in each other's company. They are confident and happy and that is a tribute to you and your wonderful parenting. We are so very thankful that you are sharing them with us.

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

I am glad I live in an area where we can experience the changes in seasons. The fall is such a beautiful time where we witness the changing of the leaves and the changing of outerwear. Shorts and t-shirts are exchanged for jackets and boots. Green leaves turn into fabulous yellows, reds and oranges. A class of three-year-olds can be compared to the changing of the season. They enter the classroom looking one way and continue to change throughout the year. They are amazing little creatures to observe and we are fortunate enough to see this first hand.

Our focus in October was fall. We started our month by attending a field trip to Simmons Farm on a perfect day. We enjoyed riding down the long slide and climbing over the gigantic tires. We searched for the perfect pumpkin and even wandered into the cornstalk maze to find Indian corn. We spent classroom time tasting apples, baking with pumpkins and creating unique art projects using jewels, stencils, stampers and colorful paper. This class becomes really focused when tearing paper off of stickers or finding the perfect jewel to place on a project. They enjoy sharing their papers with their teachers and can't wait to show them off to their parents. Art is an important part of our day.

The students are also beginning to socialize more with each other. Students are initiating conversations as well as ideas for creative play. They take on the roles of Mommy, Daddy, dragons, princesses, super heroes and firefighters. It is fascinating to observe their perceptions of these specific roles. We walk a little taller and become elegant when we have the princess costumes on while our voices become deeper when we take on the role of the dragon. Super heroes are definitely stronger and firefighters save our school on a regular basis. We love to just sit back and listen to these wonderful conversations. They have changed so much in just a short amount of time.



In October we also focused on fine motor skills. We did a lot of strengthening activities which included beading, tweezer use, writing and coloring. We realized that we could make many different shapes and strokes. We practiced cutting with scissors and using a writing utensil with correct position. These activities were so much fun that we didn't even realize we were getting our fingers ready to write.

We ended the month with a wonderful Halloween party. Thanks to all of our parents who supported, planned and assisted in this event. It was a great day!

In November we will be focusing on family, friends and food. We will have our **Thanksgiving Feast on November 26** at 10:30. I look forward to meeting with my parents on **conference day which is November 14**. I enjoy sharing the progress each student has made in school.

We have a wonderful class and an amazing group of parents. Thanks for a great year so far!

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

In October we enjoyed the abundant beauty of fall in western Pennsylvania! The changes an eastern U.S. fall brings are especially inspiring for children's scientific and artistic development. We used our senses to learn about apples, leaves, and pumpkins. We collected a rainbow of leaves and compared



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.

News & Notes

their characteristics. We learned to make leaf rubbings and marveled at the images that appeared, as if by magic.

Our field trip to Simmons Farm provided the perfect opportunity to experience the sights, sounds, textures, smells, and tastes of fall first hand. Many of us conquered the giant hay slide and some even ventured into the corn maze. We saw pumpkins growing on the vine, rode the bumpy hayride, and tasted some delicious cider and apples.

At this point, the children have settled into the routine of our school day. They are making their own choices and showing more independence in the classroom. With those important tasks accomplished, they are increasingly turning their attention to each other. We are seeing the first tentative steps toward friendship, and we are learning that there are many ways to connect with a friend. We are working to create a gentle, accepting environment so that even children who do not yet feel confident speaking up have plenty of opportunities to experience warm moments together during shared activities. We are learning that when we work together, we can accomplish more. Every day during cleanup time, the children work together to lift the heavy container filled with wooden trains. We love seeing their smiles and hearing their giggles as they enjoy this spontaneously developed ritual of cooperation.



We also added two new weekly activities this month. On Wednesdays we have music with Theresa, and on Thursdays we have movement class with Debbie. It is a thrill to go to a new room, get to know a new teacher, and learn some new skills. We enjoy singing the songs and practicing the gross motor skills we've learned during our regular class time, too.

Next month our theme will be "We Gather Together." We will explore the ways people come together to help each other and celebrate. Our topics will include preparing healthy food, being helpful, and using manners. We will prepare a fabulous feast for friends and family on November 26. We also look forward to meeting with each of you during conferences on November 14. We are excited to share your children's progress with you!

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

In October we were inspired by the changing season and the beautiful gifts of fall. Our theme provided plenty of opportunities for hands-on learning. We hunted for colorful leaves and created our own leaf people. We learned a new way to tell a story as a folded piece of paper was magically transformed into a house for a mouse, which then became a jack-o-lantern, with just a pair of scissors. We enjoyed a beautiful day at Simmons Farm. We picked pumpkins, slid down the giant hay slide, climbed on the fire truck, rode the hayride, and enjoyed some delicious cider and apples.

We honed our scientific skills by examining, comparing, and tasting apples. We used all our senses to observe and describe them. Children can be told many interesting facts about a topic such as apples. For instance, apples grow on trees, they have a star of seeds on the inside, and they are fruits. While these facts are important to know, only a child's own observation can tell her that "the crust is hard and the inside is slippery," or "this one is smooshy, too soft, and gross," or "it tastes grapey." If the children are not trying to arrive at a "correct" answer, in time they may discover that an apple sounds "drummy" when you tap it with a stick. As they get caught up in being scientists, one who claims to hate the peel might discover "the green skin is actually kind of good!" We charted everyone's favorites and discovered that, as a group, we liked the tart Granny Smith apples best.



We added a few new features to our daily routine. At the beginning of the month, we introduced the children to our linear calendar. Instead of a traditional calendar, which has a grid of seven columns and four or five rows, our calendar goes in a straight line from left to right. This progression is easier for the children to comprehend. They could see that we were going somewhere in time as we moved in a line from October to November. October seemed liked the perfect month to begin, because we were also moving from this moment in time to HALLOWEEN! As we placed a new number on the line each day, the children could see how we were moving closer and closer to this special day.

THERE ARE A FEW AFTERNOON CLASS OPENINGS — EARLY LEARNERS AND PREK — TELL YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS!!



News & Notes

A Reminder About Class Snacks

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



We also began highlighting a different letter each week. The letter of the week will correspond to some aspect of our theme (A for apples, L for leaves, etc.). The letter is introduced at the beginning of the week. We learn the name of the letter and demonstrate how to form the upper- and lowercase versions, and we learn the sound(s) it makes. During the week, we do several activities relating to the letter and things that start with that letter. On Wednesdays everyone brings an object from home that starts with the letter of the week and we take turns showing the class. The children are excited to share and to see what the others have brought. We make a list of the words and we practice showing respect to our friends as they have their turn to share.

Although our theme was "Fall" for the majority of October, we started the month by celebrating Ducky Day in honor of the giant rubber duck that visited Pittsburgh. We sang duck songs, read duck books, played in the water with rubber ducks, and made duck hats. We even performed a duck science experiment. We put a special duck in water and observed what happened to it over several days. Amazingly, it grew! This simple activity launched some fantastic and sustained scientific interest. The children made predictions, observed the duck over time, and came up with theories to explain what they saw. They were inspired to try to write their wonderfully descriptive words (squishy, bendy, slimy, sticky, bubbly, etc.). The children wondered what would happen if we took the duck out of the water. They eagerly continued to observe the changes in our duck throughout the month.

We finished the month with a fabulous celebration of Halloween. Many thanks to room parents Tatiana and Joyce for organizing a fun party!



Next month our theme will be "We Gather Together." We will explore the many ways people come together to help each other and celebrate. Some of our topics will include preparing healthy food, being helpful, celebrating with family and friends, and using manners. We will prepare a fabulous **feast for our friends and family on November 25.**

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

This month we dug a little deeper, literally, into the world of dirt and decomposition. Our field trip to the Outdoor Classroom set the stage for us as we used all of our senses to experience what decomposition looks like and met a few of nature's recyclers.

Back in the classroom, we first needed to explore the change in season as our first layer of investigation. We already knew many wonderful things that occur during the season of fall which include the leaves falling and changing color, raking the leaves, playing in the leaves, the weather becoming cooler and the celebrations one might have during the season. With this knowledge, we then dug into our second layer and looked closer at the pumpkin. We learned about the life cycle of a pumpkin as it begins as a seed, sprouts a plant, grows into a vine, blooms a flower, grows a green pumpkin that then turns into a larger pumpkin, decomposes and then in the spring sprouts a new plant from the seed that was inside.

We had hands-on experience in carving our pumpkin and creating a jack o' lantern as in the story we read, *Pumpkin Jack*. The children have two science experiments started from the pumpkin. The first one is taking a pumpkin seed home to see if it will germinate in a plastic baggie placed between two wet cotton balls and taped to the window. The second one involves the jack o' lantern we carved. It's now in a large plastic bin with dirt on the bottom and a few of the seeds placed in.

We have made our first observation of our pumpkin and will continue to watch for changes and signs of decomposition in the following weeks...maybe months. :) We then dug one layer deeper and also have been learning more about dirt and what the components of dirt are. Nothing says fun like painting with dirt! We also all brought in a sample of dirt from our own backyards to observe the layers in the soil. We took time to observe, explore and create with two other components of dirt, sand and rocks. We combined all of our collective dirt samples to make a new home for the worms we studied as the last part of our exploration of decomposition.



News & Notes

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

- Clothes: underwear, socks, pants, tops for both boys and girls
- Costumes your child may have outgrown — they are great for our dress-up collection
- Helmets for playground

While we have been working hard as scientists, we have also made time to create a fruit stand, pumpkin patch and a costume shop in the dramatic play room. The cash register is getting a workout and these children know how to scan some produce! If you see a pumpkin in our classroom with a colorful piece of tape attached please understand that it is a bar code so that it can be scanned at the register. Ingenious!

If you are in need of some medical assistance, we have a paramedic who will happily escort you to the doctor's office. Please remember though the paramedic does not do any medical procedures, just takes you to the doctor in the ambulance. Or, if you have always had the dream of being a racecar driver you might want to visit our classroom. The pit crew will make a car out of blocks, including a number, and outfit you appropriately for your stint around the track.

When you come to our classroom and you see pictures in 10 frames or letters hanging up all over the walls please don't be alarmed. Please join a team as we hunt for these as part of our "write the room" activities. We are very friendly and love to help other teams if they can't find a particular picture/letter. Alas the month of October has come to an end, and we are completing the month with our Fall Fun day to celebrate Halloween with a class party!

As we start into November, our class will begin to look more at culture, traditions and friendship while we prepare for our family feast, which is a Mushroom tradition!

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

In October the children made their own felt board story book: "Little Green Worm Finds a Home." We drew a story board and talked about the elements of a good story: beginning and the introduction of characters, middle and solving a problem, and end with a solution to a problem. The children practiced telling their stories to each other and were so proud to show and tell their homemade stories to Jamie's 3s class, Liz's 3/4s class, and Cara's Pre-K PM class. We did some math songs and charts with apples too.

We also started our "All About Me" unit with a life-size self-portrait. It involved cutting, coloring, painting, and adding three-dimensional details to a life-size cut-out of each child. It takes several weeks to complete which engages the children in

a multi-step process culminating in something complex and impressive. The children labeled and painted their houses, moms, dads, pets, and siblings in the backgrounds of their portraits. Try to put these away in a few years. As the children get older they tend to be too critical of their kindergarten work and try to make changes. (You can bring it out again for high school/college graduation or their wedding!)



We also wrote in our journals about ourselves, families, and homes. We studied the skeletal system of the body with real x-rays in our pretend doctor's office. The children made and labeled their own class skeletons with pasta and popsicle sticks. We also put together our class pumpkin patch, learned Halloween songs, and had fun showing off our costumes at our party.

In November we will finish our self-portraits, study the circulatory system, the senses, emotions, and talk about giving thanks. Discuss being thankful for the very basics of life with your child: food, clothing, shelter, and a loving family. We will talk about those less fortunate than ourselves and compassion for others. We will prepare and have a **feast at school on November 21**. Prior to our feast we will be cooking and writing about what we cook daily. Remember, cooking is always a science and math lesson disguised as fun. **Conferences for K-Too will be held during class time Thursday, November 14.**

In December and January we will learn some world geography, and about the cultural traditions and foods of Ramadan, Diwali, Hanukkah, Christmas, and Kwanzaa (not religious aspects). Exposure to these holidays gives the children a glimpse into the cultural experiences and geographical origins of different people all over the world.

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