

Mushroom Family Learning Center

Individual Growth in a Shared Environment



An independent, secular, nonprofit preschool since 1973

News & Notes

OCTOBER 2014

1240 Washington Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15228

(412) 531-1225

mflcdirector@hotmail.com

mushroomfamily.org

TUITION DUE OCT. 1

YANKEE CANDLE FUNDRAISER GOING ON NOW THROUGH OCT. 10

Catalogs/forms were provided in the cubbies.

MFLC BOARD MEETING OCT. 15, 8:00PM

CHICK-FIL-A SPIRIT NIGHT MONDAY, OCT. 20

Come out and support MFLC!
(Washington Road location)

STAFF MEETING OCT. 22

Early dismissal at 11am; late arrival at 1pm. No lunch.

NOV. 4 IN-SERVICE DAY — NO CLASSES

CONFERENCES NOV. 13-14

Details to come from each class.

ENRICHMENT CLASSES

There are some spots available. See p. 4. Contact Jamie Geisler at jamie_geisler@comcast.net.

OUTSIDE PLAY

Classes go outside if it's not raining and the temp is at least 28 degrees. Please be sure your kids are well prepared (including proper play shoes, closed toe is best). And mark all outerwear.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

If you have not yet, please return the volunteers form from your parent folder, or talk to Joan.

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.

From the director...

What a busy start to the school year we have had! The children are settling into their classroom routines, they are happy and making new friendships. We at Mushroom Family Learning Center are excited and happy to be with your children and it is our desire to provide an environment rich in possibilities to explore, think, deduce and discover. We also strive to provide an environment that encourages respect and courtesy for ourselves and others.

I hope you, as parents, are feeling that this is your "family" school and getting used to our school routines. The beginning of the school year is a good time to review our educational philosophy about how young children learn. As our parent handbook states, we provide our students with opportunities for "individual growth within a shared environment." Your children will be learning by doing. There's a lot of learning going on in our classrooms and the children are also learning that school can be fun!

It was great to see so many of you at our "welcome back" coffees! I hope you had the chance to get to know some of the other parents from your child's class. Many parents form lasting friendships at Mushroom. I would like to thank Diane Rattay and Erin Betler for coordinating this wonderful event and our board members who helped.

Our family picnic was a great kickoff to the new school year. I loved seeing all the smiling faces. Thank you to Erin Betler for chairing this terrific evening and to all our board members and teachers who helped with this successful event. I hope everyone enjoyed the great food and wonderful weather, as well as connecting with "old" and new friends. Thank you for your donations to Mushroom's scholarship fund; your generosity netted \$44.

Thank you for sharing your children with us — we are all so excited and energized for a terrific year ahead.

Joan

Joan Harrison

A Big Thank-You to:

- Erin Betler and Diane Rattay who coordinated our parent coffees and to our board members, Hollie DeLuca, Jennifer FitzGerald, Kelly Lotter, Carrie Stock and others, who assisted.
- Erin Betler and the board for coordinating and assisting with the family picnic.
- Diane Rattay for her assistance over the summer in the office and also implementing our safety program.
- Ms. Amy and the Dembosky family for the donation of a kitchen set for the EL classroom.
- To David Donnelly, husband of Ms. Sheila, for being our most trusted and dependable "fix-it guy."
- To Kelly Lotter, who edits and produces this newsletter.
- To all our families who donate to our scholarship fund through United Way and other means.
- To all our families and staff who donated to Ms. Theresa and her family.
- **Super-big thank-you to our dedicated teachers, board of directors, parents, and children who make this school so amazing!**

Welcome Future Mushroomers!

Clara Grace Gasperini, born May 1
(Big sister Marie, EL W/F)

Lucinda Jay Ivey, born June 19
(Big sister Addie, EL W/F)

IMPORTANT PARKING AND ARRIVAL NOTES

- ✧ There is a lot of traffic — please hold your children's hands in the lot to keep them safe.
- ✧ The lot is ONE WAY, entering from Washington Road and exiting to Sunnyhill Drive. Please drive slowly and carefully.
- ✧ Please never leave a sleeping or sick child (or a healthy child!) in the car alone. If you need help, call and someone can bring your preschooler out to you.
- ✧ If you arrive early, please wait in the foyer until 8:55am for morning classes; 12:25pm for afternoon classes. The teachers are busy preparing until that time.

*Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.
Together we can make sure that every child has a rewarding
and safe experience at Mushroom.*

From the president of the board...

Welcome back to the 41st year of Mushroom! Our little family made it through the first month of school... Congratulations! There were a few tears shed on the first days, by children and parents, alike, but everyone survived, and we will do our best to ensure that you all have an unforgettable year. It was wonderful meeting so many of you at the First Week Coffees! There are so many new faces in the Mushroom Family, and while I was able to meet many of you, I wasn't able to chat with everyone. I'm in the building often; feel free to stop and introduce yourself if we haven't met, yet!

I'd like to acknowledge and thank Erin Betler for coordinating the Family Picnic! She did a great job! Also, I'd like to thank everyone who assisted in the planning, set-up and clean-up! It's a big job, and I'm thankful for everyone who pitched in to help. We had an amazing turnout, beautiful weather and everyone looked like they were enjoying themselves. Most of the dishes were empty by the time we started cleaning up, which is a sure sign of a good time. Thank you to everyone who contributed!

It's fundraiser time! This year we will be kicking off with a "new-to-us" campaign, with Yankee Candles! Thanks to some very generous families, we will be holding two raffles again this year, with 100% of the proceeds going toward your Fundraising Fee. Our 2014 - 2015 Fundraisers: Yankee Candles, Penguins Ticket Package Raffle, a Mixed Bags sale and a Pirates Ticket Package Raffle. Details will be distributed as soon as we have things confirmed.

I keep mentioning "Family." We have always considered ourselves a family. We have had parents who have become teachers. We have had teachers enroll their children. We have had a student who came back to be a teacher. We have had parents, who were once students, enroll their own children here. We truly are a family. MFLC is run by the families. We are governed by a board of directors, made up of parents and family members. Everything we do relies on the participation of parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and even nannies and babysitters. We can't do it without the families! If you haven't done so already, take a minute to fill out your Volunteer Sign-up Sheet you received in your packets at the Meet the Teachers Nights. We need assistance in many areas, with various

SCHOOL HALLOWEEN CELEBRATIONS

Halloween at preschool is generally mellow and we ask your help to keep it that way. While costumes are allowed (over top of clothes), please leave masks at home to avoid frightening other children. And, as always, no weapons are allowed in the school. Please refer to your weekly class email for the particulars for your child. Thanks for your understanding. *And remember a camera!*



amounts of time commitments... including slots for homeroom parents and positions on the board. There truly is something for everyone. Whether it is interest in joining the board, or if you have even just an hour or two to contribute to this amazing little family we have here at Mushroom, feel free to contact me. I'd be happy to discuss any time you are willing to give.

I'm excited to see what this school year holds for everyone. Here's to our Mushroom Family... may we have a happy, healthy and successful school year!

Diane

Diane Rattay

SUPPORT OUR MUSHROOM ALUMNI!



Kelly Bareford and Christine Mains Announce the Oct. 4 Grand Opening of Their New Business, *Life is Sweet Bakery Cafe!*

Saturday, October 4, 1105 Bower Hill Road, Mt. Lebanon. Doors open at 8:00am.

***THEY CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU,
AND MAKE YOUR LIFE A LITTLE SWEETER!***

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

We have had a wonderful start to the school year! We are all so impressed with how the children are adjusting and learning our routines. Most of them are separating easily and everyone else is coming along. We are now in school for the full two hours, and sometimes it's still not enough time for all of the fun things we want to do! Everyone is busy getting to know each other and learning the boundaries of the room: what is OK to do, and what is not.

In September we talked about apples. We painted some beautiful apples for our trees with red, yellow, and green. We learned how to use glue and glitter to decorate some green leaves for our trees, too. Did you know that you can paint with apples? We discovered this and the resulting projects were lovely. Many of the children worked slowly and carefully, and their apple prints showed the star inside the apple and even a

Gentle Reminders ☺

- Tuition is due the first of each month. Please help us by paying on time or speaking with us if special arrangements may be needed.
- Please notify the office of any phone, address or email changes. Also any changes in who has permission to pick up your child.
- Please be sure your child's hands are washed before the start of the school day.

Welcome to MFLC, assistant teachers
Marikate Harrison (PreK-PM),
Meghan Hartman (3/4s class) and
Melissa Oprison (3s class)!

seed or two. We are practicing staying in our seats while everyone finishes so that we can all go and wash our messy hands together. The amount of glue and paint used on our projects always requires extra drying time, but once they are ready to go home, they are a great addition to every wall or refrigerator!



Soon our focus will turn to autumn and our leaves will change as well. We will learn a song about pumpkins and even hear a story about our furry friends, the squirrels. At gathering we will sing our morning songs and work on learning each other's names. It is wonderful to see the children becoming aware that they are sharing their play space with other children, and figuring out the best ways to interact with each other.

The four of us are delighted to be working with your children this year. Each and every one of them is unique and special, and we are having a lot of fun getting to know them. They definitely brighten our day!

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

I love the second day of school when it comes to teaching three-year-olds. Don't get me wrong, the first day is pretty great too but the second day is my favorite. The first day of school is filled with excitement yet uncertainty about the teachers, classroom and expectations. This mix of emotions is felt by both the parents and students alike. During the first day many parents are concerned about the transition period between leaving a loved one and being left with someone unfamiliar; trusting and hoping that when they return their child will be happy. The second day the students are already familiar with their teachers, they walk into the classroom with a huge smile or even a giving hug, and the parents know this is going to be OK!

This year 18 brand-new faces walked into our lives and I can say without a doubt that it didn't take long for Debbie, Melissa and I to fall in love. We eased into our classroom routine by starting with the basics. We worked with the markers, scissors and glue. We practiced putting on lids, holding the utensils in the correct position and learning how to be independent. We used our fingers, brushes and water colors to paint magnificent pictures. The students are learning that when they walk into our classroom they need to find their name and answer

the question of the day. They are then allowed to participate in our learning centers which include math, writing, reading, blocks, imaginative play and art. The students are learning how to make independent choices and find their place in a group of 18 students.

We added clean-up time and gathering activities the second week of school. The gathering song is our cue to head to the carpet for songs. We love to listen to stories. One of our favorite times of the day is snack. The children have their own snack chair. We use our good manners by saying please and thank you. Eventually we will encourage the students to pour their own water and pass the snacks. Our snack calendar is always full thanks to our supportive parents. When the students are finished with snack they are allowed to listen to a story read by one of the teachers or read independently. We love going outside and the weather has been perfect. We love exploring the sand box for treasures, swinging up into the clouds on the swings and strengthening our gross motor skills by riding the bikes. We hope that the nice weather lasts all year. We finish each day by listening to Nursery Rhymes. This is a great way to end each of our days.



I am so excited about the class I have this year. We are following a great routine, learning how to interact with our peers and understanding the rules of the classroom. We are off to a great start. Let the fun and learning begin!

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

Welcome to the Mushroom Family! Whether you have been with us for several years and several children, or you are joining us for the first time, we are so glad you have placed your trust in us to help your children grow. When you and your child walk through the red door, we are here as an extension of your family. Our first goal is for each child to feel safe and loved. Those are the main ingredients that make learning possible.

During the first week of school, we told the children that they now have a school family in addition to their home families. Each member is important! Our activities this month centered on helping the children feel comfortable and find their unique place in the group. We are learning how to care for each other,

Is your child asking to stay longer at Mushroom? SIGN UP FOR ENRICHMENT!

In enrichment classes, 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! See the list to the right, and contact Ms. Jamie for more info at jamie_geisler@comcast.net.

OCTOBER ENRICHMENT CLASSES

Mondays

- Oct. 6 (Sheila) - Join us for hilarious fun as we read Mo Willems' classic "The Pigeon finds a Hot Dog" and make hot dogs galore.
- Oct. 13 (Marilyn) - Fall Science Theme: Make a "catcher" for things that travel in the fall wind.
- Oct. 20 (Sheila) - Which color is your favorite? Rojo? Verde? Azul? The class will learn colors in Spanish.
- Oct. 27 (Amy) - Spiders do not always have to be creepy. Join this class and learn how to "Be Kind to Spiders." Special spider crafts to complement a story.

Fridays

- Oct. 3 (Marilyn) - Fall Theme - Blow-Paint a Fall Tree
- Oct. 10 (Marilyn) - Fall Theme - Wood and Leaf People Puppets
- Oct. 17 (Marilyn) - Fall Science Theme - Time to turn on the heat inside. Discuss why heat rises and make a mobile that spins when hung over a heater.
- Oct. 24 (Marilyn) - Happy Halloween! Make a Halloween "candy catcher."
- Oct. 31 (Marilyn) - Happy Surprise!

and how to share the environment and materials in a way that allows everyone to get what they need. As a family, we value each other. We approach limits on behavior as matters of safety and respect for others. We can see a sense of community developing already!

The beginning of the year brings so many new experiences. For some, this may be their first time separating from their parents for school. They are learning that school can be fun, and that they can rely on their teachers for comfort when they miss Mom or Dad. However, even our "veterans" need time to adjust to a new classroom, new teachers, and new classmates. Our slow pace at the beginning allowed us to introduce routines and rules without overwhelming the children. Children feel safe, comfortable and confident when they know what to expect. Transitions can be especially hard for young children. With predictable signals, the process becomes easier. By now, the children know the songs, rhymes and visual signals we use to move through the day with confidence. We also display our visual schedule (school clock) so that the children always have a reminder about what is coming next. They have learned to refer to the clock when they are missing their parents. It is so gratifying to see a little one soothe herself by walking over to the clock independently and reviewing the activities that will lead to a happy reunion.



I first walked through the big red door at Mushroom a little over nine years ago. We had just moved from Los Angeles and I was looking for a loving place for my 2½-year-old son to grow, learn and make friends. I also hoped to meet some grown-ups in my new town. I got much more than I bargained for. My son used to refer to his school as "Mushroom Family," which produced a few chuckles from people he met. He was more right than he knew. I have been a part of the Mushroom Family for nine years now, seven as a teacher. I am grateful for the presence of all of you: fellow teachers, children, families, and of course Joan, our fearless leader. We have been together through sadness and joy, struggle and success, and many deliciously ordinary days spent enjoying each other's company.

The beauty of this family is that it just keeps growing and getting stronger. Events of this past year have led me to reflect on how the old and the new mix together to keep our Mushroom Family strong. Last spring we had the pleasure of meeting Fred and Margaret Doscher, who founded Mushroom

40 years ago. We learned that the concept of family was not just something they put in the name casually; it was central to their original vision for the school. This year, I have students who are the youngest siblings of students I taught my first year at Mushroom. I treasure those long ties, and I treasure new relationships with families who are finding us for the first time. While some of the teachers have been at Mushroom much longer than I, we also have several new teachers this year. What a wonderful blend of wisdom, experience, energy and enthusiasm they all bring! Our teaching team is also a mix of old and new. Marlene and I have been partners since my first day here, and Meghan is a terrific addition. At Mushroom, teachers may move on to other ventures and children grow into new schools, but our bonds endure and memories linger.

I have heard that the world's largest living organism is a giant mushroom in Oregon, so perhaps our unique name fits. Welcome, again, to the family. Thank you for bringing your amazing children to our school. We look forward to a wonderful year of growing together!

As we move into October, we will explore fall. Pumpkins, apples, leaves, and Halloween will provide us with plenty of ideas to let our creativity soar. **One big highlight this month will be our field trip to Simmons Farm on Wednesday, October 8.** I hope you will all be able to join us.

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

Our Fours are off to a great start! Marilyn and I are so happy to be working together, and we have a really nice little group. Our days have been busy and harmonious. This year's class is a mix of students from last year's 3s and 3/4s classes, as well as several students who are new to Mushroom. It has been amazingly gratifying to see them coming together as a group and forming friendships.



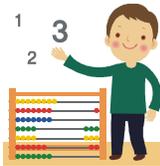
Our preschool directory will be out soon!

We are correcting names, email addresses and phone numbers.

Please check to be sure we have your current information, and remember that the directory and email lists are for school use, play dates, and birthday party invitations, but not for solicitation. *Thank you!*

During our first month of school we focused on getting to know each other and learning the class routines. We explored our names and the names of our friends in many ways. Because the group can already recognize their names in print, we took things to the next level. Forming letters is tricky for little fingers. While those skills are developing, we still have many ways to become familiar with the parts of our names. We worked on learning the sequence of letters in our names, completed our own name puzzles, traced our names, counted the letters in our names, embellished our names with art materials, and clapped out the number of syllables in each other's names.

The group has informed us that they are especially interested in learning all about math. In September we graphed the number of letters in our names. We also used addition and subtraction when friends arrived after we had tallied the results of the Question of the Day. We noticed the children exploring mathematical concepts in many ways during their free play activities. We had block roads that stretched from Pittsburgh to Colorado, with relative distances to other locations represented. We counted how many beads we were able to string on our necklaces. We measured Wedgit towers that were as tall as our noses. We can see that this is going to be a fun year of counting, graphing, patterning, sequencing, measuring, comparing, sorting, classifying, predicting, problem solving, and exploring spatial relationships!



Each day during our Good Morning activity, we take turns sharing our news. The children are eager to tell their friends and teachers about what is happening in their lives. We pass Talking Turtle as a reminder that each person gets a turn to speak while everyone else listens. We are also practicing self-regulation and social awareness with our "One Voice" game. In this game, we take turns speaking with the goal of only one voice speaking at a time, without an obvious cue. For now, we are passing a single word around the circle, or calling each other's names in turn. We are building awareness of other speakers and pauses in the conversation so that everyone can be heard without interruption. Our goal is to have lively, respectful discussions without having to resort to the formality of hand raising. We are already having some great discussions! We also introduced the children to their journals this month. At this point, our goal is simply for them to get interested in having their very own book to record their pictures and thoughts. We hope that feeling the pride and joy that come



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

- Dress-up clothes (especially for boys)
- Helmets for playground
- Little Tykes riding bikes or cars

with authorship will encourage them to keep improving their fine motor skills, not as an assignment, but rather as a natural outgrowth of their own expression. As the year progresses, they will find more surprises from us in their journals in the form of prompts.

As we move into October, we will explore fall. **We will have a field trip to Simmons Farm for a hayride on October 8.** I hope you will all be able to join us. We will introduce the calendar so that we have a tool for anticipating the arrival of nearly everyone's favorite fall holiday: Halloween!

Thank you for sharing your precious children with us. We look forward to a fantastic year of playing, growing, and learning together.

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

It is always so exciting to start a new school year and meet all of our new children and families. A large piece of the beginning of the year is creating our classroom community. We are all special individuals that come together each September and we bring those wonderful, special individual qualities together to create our classroom. So, one of the first things we did as a class was to create a piece of artwork using our fingerprints to create a beautiful classroom tree. This is our visual reminder of the Mushroom vision, "individual growth in a shared environment." The children have also met several of our classroom puppet friends, Snowy the Owl who sings goodbye to us at the end of the day, Mushroom Mousie who helps us with our clean-up routine, and Kinderoo and her baby Rose who help us learn how to keep our bodies and hearts safe while at school.

We were introduced to the book "Have You Filled a Bucket Today?" which discusses the concept that each of us has an invisible bucket. You can fill up your bucket and someone's else bucket with kind words and actions and we can also dip into someone's bucket with our words and actions. This gives an abstract concept and a very practical application, and I love hearing the children using it as a tool when they speak with each other. If you join our classroom before snack you will hear us singing our song: "Fill a bucket, fill a bucket; Everyday, everyday I can fill a bucket, I can fill a bucket; You can too, you can too."



Child Health Day is Monday, October 6.

It is a United States Federal Observance Day annually observed on the first Monday in October. Child welfare agencies and organizations unite in various programs and activities on Child Health Day to increase awareness of the need to protect and develop the health of children. Visit the website of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development at www.nichd.nih.gov/Pages/index.aspx and others at USA.gov to learn more!

We have really enjoyed using our names as a basis for exploration this month by playing name games, creating name necklaces and pieces of art collages with our names. Please come into our hallways so that you might meet a paper doll version of each child. They are exquisite! Each child worked with their family to create the "shirt" and decorate with their personal style and facts/pictures of themselves to share with the classroom. After these have graced the hallway for the next week, we will begin to take each down one at a time to share daily during gathering their "All About Me" person.

It is hard to believe that we are already moving into October! We can't wait to delve into our exploration of apples! We will then visit Simmons Farm to pick apples and learn more from Farmer Dave. Then we will have a great time with our other fall favorite, the pumpkin! We will explore all facets of the pumpkin and finish with learning/watching a pumpkin decompose. The month will be rounded out with our fall celebration in the classroom where the children will be able to wear the costumes to school that we have been hearing about since the beginning of school. So much fun!

Thank you to our families for sharing your children with us to learn and grow together. Thank you to our families for sharing of yourselves with our classroom community. We greatly appreciate you!

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

All About Me was the theme for September. We played a series of games and practiced memorizing and writing our names, birthdays, phone numbers, and addresses. We measured ourselves and had a center for measuring parts of our body, our weight, and time (stop watches, calendars, and a model of the sun, moon, and earth). We made a portfolio about ourselves for our journal complete with family photographs.



The unit culminated in 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 class periods to complete and requires patience and perseverance. The result is complex and impressive. The children labeled and painted their houses, moms, dads, pets, and siblings in the backgrounds of their portraits.

In October we will extend the "All About Me" theme to what is happening inside our bodies. We will study the digestive, circulatory, and skeletal systems just in time for Halloween.

YANKEE CANDLE

America's best *loved* candle

MFLC Fundraiser Sale Going on Now!

Catalogs were in the cubbies.

Orders and money Due OCTOBER 10

Checks payable to MFLC, or order online at:

Yankeecandlefundraising.com
(Enter Group #990065782)



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!</p> <p>\$10/issue</p>