



News & Notes

Mushroom Family Learning Center

1240 Washington Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15228
(412) 531-1225
mflcdirector@hotmail.com
mushroomfamily.org

A Big Thank-You to...

- Evan Sirota and family for their donation of a paper trimmer and laminator pouches.
- Melanie Johnston for coordinating the KidStuff fundraiser.
- Erin Bignell and Diane Rattay for organizing and publishing our directory this year.
- Kelly Lotter for publishing our monthly newsletter.
- Hannah Walker and family for their donation of a book shelf.

IMPORTANT DATES / INFO

TUITION DUE NOVEMBER 1

First half of fundraising fee is due as well.

JOE CORBI ORDERS DUE NOVEMBER 1

Pick-up date is Nov. 15, 11am-1pm

CONFERENCES NOV. 3 & 4

Parents only, and there is no class on the day of your conference.

ENRICHMENT CLASSES AND LUNCH

Spaces still available! Email Jamie at jamie_geisler@comcast.net.

OUTSIDE PLAY

We're outside every day if it's not raining and it's 28 degrees or above. Please be sure your kids are well prepared with coats, hats, boots, gloves, snow pants, etc.!

CLASS OPENINGS

There are still openings in some classes. Please share your experiences (and this newsletter) with your friends and neighbors who may be looking for an excellent preschool program.

THE PRESCHOOL DIRECTORY IS OUT!

The class info is for school use, play dates, birthday invites, etc. but please no solicitation. Thank you!

(Addition to 3/4s class info: Email addresses for Maryam Kashif — tahirasarwer@gmail.com and kashifbhatti@gmail.com.)

THANKSGIVING AND WINTER BREAKS

Check your classroom for feast dates! Thanksgiving break will be Nov. 23 to 28; classes resume Nov. 29. For winter break, Dec. 21 is the last day of classes, with classes resuming January 4.

From the director...

We are quickly approaching conference time at Mushroom Family Learning Center. Please plan to come to the conference with questions and 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. However, please remember that teachers are available to meet with you at any time if you have a question or concern. We strive to provide the best quality preschool experience for all the children in our care. It is through communication and collaboration with families that we are able to accomplish this goal. We value your input.

Note: There is no class the day of the conferences. Check your child's classroom for the posted date and schedule. Parents may be able to arrange to take turns watching each other's children during conference times.

Please remember to mark your calendar for your child's classroom feast. This is a very special event for all. The children love preparing treats for you!

Last but not least, I would like to personally wish each family a very festive and safe Thanksgiving.

- Joan

Joan Harrison



When I Play I Learn...

When I play with blocks, cars and trucks, I learn...

- concepts of shape, size, length and location.
- to create and repeat patterns -- a math skill.
- to exercise imagination.
- to express ideas.
- to cooperate with others, to solve problems.
- to see myself from a different perspective — a giant!



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SNACK TIME REMINDERS



We appreciate the contribution our families make by providing snacks. As a parent community, we are all concerned about providing nutritious ones. A few things to keep in mind: snacks need to be nut free; please be attentive to your individual class's restrictions and read food labels; try to avoid extremely colorful processed foods with lots of food dye; snacks must be in their original packaging with a complete ingredient list and expiration date; and consider fruits, vegetables and foods low in sugar. *Simple is great!*

From the president of the board...

My word of this month...OVERWHELMED!! Now a lot of times, this word is used negatively — overwhelmed with things at home, things at work, family, your “to do” or “honey do” list, or just things in daily life. And don't get me wrong, I have some (ahem...MANY) of those same things in my daily life too. But I am talking about being overwhelmed in a GOOD WAY! I am overwhelmed by the generosity and commitment that our families and teachers are showing to our school every day. I am SO proud to call Mushroom Family Learning Center my choice of school for my children and I hope you are too!

I cannot tell you how many days parents have seen some of us (staff, board, etc.) doing something or talking about something and have stepped up and said “Do you need some help with that?” Parents have brought in articles that I might find interesting, donated items they no longer are “playing” with at home, come up with possible fundraiser or event options to explore for the future, offered to help other parents with their children during conferences or with transportation to/from school during a time of need...anything they see that someone may need help with! I am just blown away and want you all to be aware that WE NOTICE, and we appreciate it so much!

As we enter into the holiday season, I hope that we can all take some time out to help someone else, and allow our children to join in this task, and talk about how it makes someone feel to do something nice for a person for no reason at all. Make sure to also count the blessings in your life and say “thank you.” I know that these things will be incorporated into the classroom activities this coming month, but I think we as adults need to be role models in how to treat others. Even small things like letting someone go in front of you in line if you are in no particular hurry, or buying an extra cup of coffee to give to someone who looks like he/she may need it. Not only will it make the other person feel good, but it has a “pay it forward” effect and the person is more likely to be nice to other people encountered throughout the day as well.

Thank you all for trusting your little “blessings” to our wonderful school! We are truly thankful for YOU!

– Erin

Erin Bignell

News from the 2s class from Theresa, Debbie and Marlene...

Our month of October was filled with exciting fall activities. We watched and counted our pumpkins and we helped them roll out of sight. Last time we saw them there were still five. The color orange was everywhere and easily recalled by everyone. It helps when the entire classroom is turned into a fall fantasy of orange. Pat the cat, who is sassy and fat, started showing up at our door and changing his colors with a “snap.”

But the most spectacular were the magic experiments. Our budding scientists were amazed with our first science class, changing water from one color to the next. It's easy to guess what our final color was—orange! Experiments are definitely a part of our agenda. The children are doing a great job of taking turns and sharing. Music has also become a big part of our day! We tapped rhythm sticks fast and slow, loud and soft, and followed our drum leader in a chorus of “BOOTIFUL MOOOSAK.”



Next month we'll be talking turkey...gobble, gobble, gobble. Look out for turkeys crossing! We may even catch a few feathers when we make and count those silly birds. Our baking hats will come out too as we prepare for our mini-feasts.

The children are having a wonderful time making new friends and the teachers are too. We want to take this time to wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving. Your wonderful children give us all a lot to be thankful for.

News from the 3s class from Jamie, Betsy and Liz...

At the end of each school year I meet with Joan to discuss the possibilities of moving on to the next age level with my class. I mention how looping with them would be a benefit because I know them so well. I talk about the relationships I have built with the parents and how I should continue them. The truth is, I get very attached to my students and I don't want them to leave. I don't even want to think about when my own children go to college! Well it has happened again. I am head over heels for my new class. I enjoy their smiles and wonderful hugs. I am amazed by their growth, energy and excitement. Looks like I will be meeting with Joan again in May!



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School delay/cancellation info

As winter approaches and the snow begins to fall, please watch KDKA, WTAE or the Mt. Lebanon cable station for any school closings or delays. There will also be a message on the Mushroom phone answering system and an email sent if possible.



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

We started our month of October with a new part of the routine: structured small group activities. As the year goes on, we'll do a mixture of structured and flexible small group activities. Also new were the starts of music and movement classes with Theresa and Debbie, respectively.

Starting off our fall season activities were all kinds of apple things! Apple stories, apple prints, apple trees...and the kids even got to be "apple scientists" by taste-testing and charting their favorites.



The following week brought us our trip to Simmons Farm and a focus on another fall favorite: pumpkins! We couldn't have asked for a better day at the farm—it was wonderful to see so many parents there. We also began work on a class book, did pumpkin related songs and games in music class, made jack o'lanterns, and explored pumpkins from the outside in!

Of course, how can we celebrate fall without leaves?! We went on a leaf hunt of our own after reading the story Going on a Leaf Hunt and enjoyed another favorite, The Leaf Man, followed by the making of our own leaf creatures. The kids were also introduced to some yoga poses on our imaginary trip to the farm in movement class.

After some Halloween crafts and stories, discussions about costumes, and some more "me" activities, we finished the month with a wonderful Halloween party. Thanks to Julie DeBisschop, Lori Bower and Stacy Serenari for taking the lead. There were fun activities and great snacks including clementines decorated like jack o'lanterns. The kids had a blast!

At the beginning of November, we are looking forward to our pizza party, courtesy of Mr. Dan, and are happy to get the chance to talk with parents at the conferences. Our theme this month is "Feast! Food, Family, Friends and Fun" which culminates with—what else?—a Thanksgiving feast on Tuesday, November 22. We look forward to seeing all of the families to taste the children's creations and enjoy a special performance.

The month of October flew by as we had fun with our theme, Fall into the Senses. We tasted apples, baked apple muffins and discussed which apples we liked best. We explored our five senses. We used our eyes, nose, and fingers to learn more about how a pumpkin grows and what is on the inside. We decided we couldn't hear a pumpkin and didn't think it would taste very good. The students had a wonderful time as we traveled to Simmons Farm on the most beautiful day of the year. The slide was really fast and the longest we had ever seen. The maze was super tricky while the fire truck was super cool.



We thought it was amazing how leaves turn different colors in the fall and tumble to the ground. We compared the similarities and differences between a summer tree and a fall tree. We made crazy leaf people, decorated leaves for our wall and even read a few stories about fabulous trees. There are so many things to learn about in the fall.

I think our favorite topic was Halloween. As soon as we put the new Halloween books out, the children spent a lot of time in the reading center. One book in particular that we became familiar with was I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Bat. We read, or should I say sang, that story practically every day. No matter where a child was playing, upon hearing the story, he/she would come and join us. We ended the month with a Halloween party where we dressed up in our favorite costumes. Since dress-up is one of our favorite centers, this was extra special. On any given day, you will see fire fighters, race car drivers, princesses and dancers taking over our classroom. We even combine a few costumes to make them extra unique. I guess you could say it is like Halloween every day in our class.

The children are becoming familiar with each other and our routine. They are now welcoming classmates by name at the start of school. Friendships are starting to develop and creative minds are starting to explode with ideas. I love seeing growth in all of our students even though we have only been together for one month.

In November we will be talking about past and present families and will identify things we are thankful for. We will learn more about the first Thanksgiving and have our very own feast on November 22. Thanks to all of our parents for sharing your wonderful children with us. Your continued support makes our classroom such a special place.



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Is your child asking to spend more time at Mushroom?



If so, sign him/her up for enrichment and/or "Munchin' Lunchin!"
The supervised lunchtime is \$6 per day for kids 3 and up. In enrichment, the children are having a lot of fun making crafts, cooking, learning Spanish and reading new stories. Classes are available for those 4 and up on Mondays and/or Fridays each month; cost is \$14 per class. Sign up for however many you like! Contact Jamie for more info on both programs at jamie_geisler@comcast.net.

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

Finishing up our "Me and My Amazing Body" segment, we talked about how we are all different, how we are similar and what makes us special. It also included learning about our emotions as well as healthy foods to eat, like the fruit salad we made together. We started into "Changing Seasons" as well as the alphabet with painting in fall colors and sharing — one of our favorite times of the week.

The following week opened with music with Theresa and "The Conversation Corner" where the children answered the question "What do we see in the fall?" Their responses were impressive and they are constantly improving their communication skills, turn taking and name writing. The Big Beach Bag made its first appearance, bearing items beginning with the letter of the week. "A" week, and the season of course, brought lots of apple activities in addition to a jack o'lantern craft and songs.



It was a great "B" week too, with banana bread baking, a trip to Trax Farms, and our first movement class with Debbie. We finger-painted, decorated and cut out pumpkins; learned about veggies and fruits at the farm; and got through an obstacle course. The kids were even complimented on their behavior by the folks at Trax.

The last two weeks of the month found us singing the "Purple People Eater" song, leaf painting, learning some yoga poses, making a candy corn person and a dazzling diamond door hanger, and many other activities. Of course our Halloween party ended the month on a happy note. A big thank-you to homeroom parent Rose Blatz for organizing, and thanks to all the parents for such great healthy snacks!

After conferences, this month we'll be continuing one letter of the alphabet per week (E through G). We will be very busy making delicious things for the Thanksgiving feast on Monday, November 21, and look forward to seeing all the families.

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



We have had SO much fun with our October theme "Fall into Nature: Apples, Trees, Scarecrows, & Halloween!" The apple unit kept the children really engaged. They learned the different parts of the apple (stem, leaf, skin, seeds & flesh) and we learned that they really like to eat apples! We made one giant apple tree that was a cooperative effort and are still in the process of making our individual trees.

Our highlight this past month was our field trip to Simmons Farm, our culminating activity for our nature theme. As another group project, we made our number pumpkin mural. We had a few Halloween projects up our sleeves, spent lots of time completing worksheets and evaluating each child for conferences, and really looked forward to our Halloween party. (Thank you Elizabeth, Duncan's mom, and Alison, Amelia's mom, for organizing this fantastic event!) We were so busy that we will extend our nature unit so that we can complete our scarecrows after Halloween.

November's theme is "Families, Feasting, and Nutrition." We will spend lots of time preparing for our Family Feast, to be held on Thursday, November 17. (Children and parents should arrive together at 10:00am that morning.) We will cook, talk about healthy versus "junk" food, and learn about Thanksgivings of long ago as well as current family traditions.

We use our fine motor cutting, counting, gluing, and printing skills on our teacher-directed activities each day, while allowing each child the opportunity to play, share, socialize, and choose manipulatives to complete with/without a friend. Having choices and giving each child the responsibility to make good use of his/her time at school are a few of the things that make Mushroom so unique. This atmosphere helps to make our curriculum child- (and not just teacher-) directed!

We look forward to connecting with each of you during conferences, to be held on November 3. (No class that day.) We are as interested to hear what you have to say about your child as we are in sharing our thoughts with you.



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

- Scooter board
- Costumes that your children may have outgrown — they make great additions to our class dress-up collection!
- Website update/design help

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

October started out with a trip to the kitchen to make some new playdough for our room, a great math lesson and color experiment. Another food activity involved making a fruit salad (part of our healthy bodies theme) which everyone loved doing, but not all loved eating!

Into the changing seasons theme and the beginning of the alphabet, I think the whole school was doing something related to apples! We had our first music class with Theresa, did an apple tree project and sponge painting, read some Halloween books the kids loved, and also read the book *How Apples Grow* — an introduction to pollination that continued with our trip to Trax Farms.



Although it rained, everyone had a good time on the farm tour and learned about apple washing and storing, as well as different kinds of gourds and vegetables. That week brought our first movement class with Debbie which took the kids hopping, skipping, jumping and crawling through a big obstacle course. We're also now well into our letters of the week, with everyone really using their "noodles" in bringing and talking about their sharing items.

We finished up our "All About Me" posters; made some paper bag jack o'lanterns; counted the number of days we've been in school; created a robot; put together a marching band; did Halloween puzzles, costumes and necklaces; made "purple people eaters"; participated in musical theater; and more. We've been busy, busy, busy. We welcomed Debbie's yoga in movement class to help balance it all out!

Thank you to Amanda King and Heather Visnesky for leading the charge on our fabulous Halloween party, and thanks to all the parents for the healthy snacks. In November, look for E, F and G for our letters of the week. We will be very busy making some wonderful food for our Thanksgiving feast on Tuesday, November 22. We look forward to seeing all the families there!

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

October was a busy month. We finished our self-portraits which involved cutting, coloring, painting, and adding three-dimensional details to a life size cut-out of each child. Those

take several weeks to complete, which engages the children in a multi-step process culminating in something complex and impressive. They labeled and painted their houses, moms, dads, pets, and siblings in the backgrounds. Try to put the portraits away in a few years. Children may become critical of their kindergarten work and try to make changes. (Bring it out for high school/college graduation or their wedding!) We also wrote in our journals about ourselves, families, and homes.

Children were studying trees in kindergarten this year so we learned about the inside of our bodies, choosing the circulatory system which loosely segued into Halloween. We studied blood's different cell types and their function, the role of blood in nutrient/waste/oxygen transport and germ fighting. To make the concepts more concrete, we listened to each other's hearts, looked at the branching blue veins visible below our skin, and felt our pulses. We filled quart jars with red colored water and figured out how much blood was in a baby (1), a child (3), and an adult (5). Each child made a labeled diagram of the body's organs complete with arteries and veins, which was sized to fit over each self-portrait demonstrating the position of the organs in the body.



We counted by 5s and 10s, learned to sequence a scrambled calendar, and played math games by bowling and doing subtraction songs. Both classes ended the month in costume with a little Halloween party with snack.

November will be a month of pumpkins and giving thanks. Talk to your child about being thankful for the very basics of life: 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 — check bulletin boards for the date. 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!

We also will learn about the cultural traditions and foods of Ramadan and Diwali. In December and January we will talk about the traditions associated with Hanukkah, Christmas, and Kwanzaa. If your family has a special tradition associated with any of these holidays, please consider sharing them with our class. While we will not touch on the religious aspects, exposure to these celebrations gives the children a glimpse into the cultural experiences of different people all over the world.