



# Nursery School News

A Monthly Newsletter of St. Paul's Episcopal Nursery School

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## From Jane

As I'm sure most of you know by now my first grandchild arrived on October 21<sup>st</sup>. Of course my entire family and all of the in-laws are busily trying to figure out whom she looks like, whose temperament she has, and giving the new parents all kinds of unsolicited advice. I have to remind myself, in my state of euphoria, to cut it out! I also have to remind myself that she is her own separate person, no matter whose nose or eyes she has.

It is so easy to forget that our children are totally separate individuals when they start out so helpless and dependent upon us. But, sooner than we can imagine, they will develop their own separate minds, desires, and agendas in life. When I look at this perfect little human being, I am reminded how quickly we often take far too much credit for things in our children's lives when they go well (that is, the way *we* want them to go). And of course at the same time, we also tend to blame ourselves and feel so much pain when things do not go well, even the little things in their lives.

In fact in our society today, with all of the advice books and experts, many parents feel an unbelievable burden about their role in how their children turn out. I was recently reading an article about tutoring agencies finding a whole new niche in the market for "tutoring tots" in early academics in order to give them a competitive edge in preschool and kindergarten - how awful! Not only does this kind of situation fly in the face of all that we know about how young children learn, it doesn't even begin to consider that our children all have separate and different, interests, temperaments, abilities, and time frames for many areas of development. A child is not a project for us to assemble, complete with detailed instructions included from the manufacturer.

At any rate all of this reflection made me think about an old article from the New York Times by Anna Quindlen that I thought I'd share with you all. She reminds us so beautifully that as well-meaning parents we too often believe that we should make ALL of our children's life choices. We often have the misguided belief that we somehow know our children better than they know themselves, and we therefore should and can make better choices about their lives than they can make for themselves.

### *My Child Belongs Only to Himself*

*Just eight weeks ago the cat found a dark place and gave birth to her first litter: Three pathetic miniatures of herself, their eyes sealed shut, their voices weak falsettos. For two weeks the new mother was manic; moving them from place to place because of imagined dangers. For two weeks more she was solicitous, slipping out for a meal and returning immediately to the writhing pile of fur and blunt faces, grooming them even when they were clean.*

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## From Jane (Continued)

Then she was ruthless. One morning she led them into the light, calling peremptorily as she marched down the hill to the dish of dry food, signaling that their use of their body was at an end. When two of them were placed in a cardboard box and driven away to new homes, she didn't even look up. She did nurse the remaining one, his paws kneading her slack underbelly, for all that afternoon, but I was sure that I was reading more into that than was there. It seemed that in a month she would scarcely recognize her own offspring.

Just five years ago I gave birth to my first child, his head as lumpy as an overripe cantaloupe with our twin exertions to thrust him out into a world too bright for his watery infant eyes. I was not meant to emulate the cat, casual in her ability to give life over and over again. I have always stalled at the solicitude stage, trying, always failing, to get tough and push him away.

In my case, it is the child who finds the strength to turn tail and walk: into the dentist's office, off to a friend's, to kindergarten, to life. This is because he intuitively understands what the cat knows about her young and what human beings can never quite accept about their own. That is, he belongs to himself.

I am proud of this, believe me, for he wears the weight of his own self as though he were standing atop an Olympic podium with a gold medal around his neck, listening to his own anthem: "Oh say can you see/How stupendous is me!" It is not that he is deeply attached or even deeply dependent, upon the love and approbation of his parents; clearly he is, in that way eldest children have of turning their lives into one big report card.

But every day of the last five years he has made a mockery of my initial, egocentric impulses occasioned by his birth. I can remember looking at him one day, about four weeks after he arrived, and being terrified by the possessive pronoun, repeating to myself, "This is my child."

I remember agonizing over the most predictable small decisions, over whether to wake him if he fell asleep at the breast, whether to arrange the stroller so that he faced me or the world. Always my subconscious was haunted by the role of the mother in literature and life, a felon, a despot, a nether-do-well; "Mr. Smith, who was not picked up as an infant when he cried..."

This is the way we proceed. All our lives we look for a universe to be at the center of, and finally we believe we have found it. We scan little faces, featureless as beach balls, for any resemblance to our own. We swear that a grip on a rattle bears the genetic trace of our mean tennis serve. And all else follows: the father who cannot bear the boy who reminds him of himself, the mother who wants the daughter to follow in her footsteps, the children who kick at the traces of being just like someone else.

Because they never are. My son is, at 5, a plateau person, the kind of human being who likes to do things only when he is sure he can do them well. He is scrupulously honest and very considerate. He is a little bit of a nudge and occasionally hypersensitive. In all these ways he is different from me, and in most of them he is different from his father.

In a hundred ways, too. When we start out, having a baby sounds like undertaking a personal project. But this is not a paint by number kit, a sampler, a bit of wood working on the lathe in the basement. We can treat it as accessorizing, with color-coordinated clothes and crib sheets and matching bumpers, and for a time we do.

The failure is if we continue to do so, for then we will miss the miracle of the whole process, which has nothing to do with us personally. We act as conduit for a totally distinct person here. Not a junior or a Daddy's little girl or a chip off the old block, but a whole new person.

Before I knew him, when he was small, I used to congratulate myself on the fact that I planned to love my son unconditionally, no matter how he turned out, no matter what his character was like. But that is because I really expected him to be a piece of me. Now the truth is that I love him quite conditionally, I love him based on who and what he is, and that has made loving him as easy as knowing him has sometimes been hard.

Like the mother cat, I have passed through some stages, and so has he, but in the end it turns out that it was only in the beginning that I did not recognize him anywhere. He is no hybrid of his father and me, even in the face, which we have to squint at to conjure the resemblance of which we humans are so pathetically fond.

I did think, in some sense, he would be a miniature me. But the reality is so much more splendid. He has turned out to be no more, no less, than Him. It is a great temptation, not a sacrilege but a pride, to use the capital letter H.



## NAEYC Conference

This year the National Association for the Education of Young Children Conference is being held in Washington DC. Because it is close to Pittsburgh, driving distance, a number of our staff members will be attending. Going to national conferences is a wonderful way for the St. Paul's staff to stay

on top of the latest information and research about early childhood education through attending the key note addresses and attending a wide variety of workshops presented by experts in the field. We learn a lot that we bring back with us to use in the classroom with your children, and it is also an excellent way to network with our colleagues in the field. Because so many of our staff will be attending we will not have school on Thursday, December 8<sup>th</sup> and Friday, December 9<sup>th</sup>.



## Halloween without Costumes at St. Paul's



I know – I know – if it were up to the parents the children would all still come to school dressed in costume! In fact, I walked into Mindy's class today (she was the last hold out last year to allow the children to bring costumes into school) and she commented to me what a nice day the kids had; and what a contrast to last year. Mindy and I both commented to each other that if it had been left up to us, we probably would still have the kids dressing up. I let them when I taught, and felt like teachers who wouldn't allow it were being whimps. But folks, having seen a Halloween day with costumes versus one without, I can assure you, it was a good decision to end it. The children were still very excited and "wound up" but it wasn't a day of total debauchery. So... I am sure your children will all enjoy their day of dressing up and "trick or treating" with you present with them. And I do hope you can all get over them not dressing up at preschool (many did dress up in the costumes we provide here), but for the children who are uncomfortable dressing up away from their parents it was a good day. And even for those who are comfortable dressing up, they had a better day. I've seen many Halloweens come and go here at St. Paul's and this one was the best! Once again folks, it's not about you – it's about the children and what's best for them.

## Santa Breakfast



Believe it or not, the Santa Breakfast will be here before we now it! It will take place from 9:00 am – 11:00 am. **Saturday, December 17<sup>th</sup>**. We'll have a Christmas sing along with Margaret, a puppet show, and of course Santa himself.

Save the date and plan to come for a breakfast of bagels, Starbucks coffee, fresh fruit, and muffins (all nut free). Look for your invitation in your mailbox in early December.



## *The Fall Fundraiser is coming!* *The Fall Fundraiser is coming!*

The St. Paul's Fall Fundraiser on November 19<sup>th</sup> is only two weeks away, and plans are progressing smoothly for an incredible and memorable evening.

By now you've received an invitation to this event in your school mailbox, and we encourage you to respond quickly since space is limited—and especially if you are interested in participating in one of the wine tasting discussions at 6:45 or 8:30 p.m. (we are limited to only 35 people at each of these presentations).

The side door of the Church will be open to our guests on Saturday evening, and you will be welcomed to a room filled with delicious hors d'oeuvres, wines for tasting, beautiful baskets to be raffled off, and items to be won if your bidding is the highest!

The Decorations Committee has been crafting lighted topiaries covered with ivy, hydrangea, and ruby beads that can be purchased during the evening for your holiday table at home. The Basket Raffle Committee soon will create baskets stuffed with all of your favorite goodies that have been collected from donations made by St. Paul's parents. *If you have an item for a basket but have not had the opportunity to turn it in, please give it to Jane before Tuesday, November 8<sup>th</sup>, so that it can be included.* And thank you for so generously donating an item to your class basket!

The baskets will be on display in the Big Room and raffle tickets will be available through Kathi Workman, Office Manager, beginning Monday, November 14<sup>th</sup>. *You might want to consider purchasing your raffle tickets early—they are discounted the week prior to the fundraiser...4 tickets for \$10!* During the event, the raffle tickets will be 3 tickets for \$10 or 1 ticket for \$4.

The Fall Fundraiser program will be distributed prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> so that you can review the items that will be in the silent and live auctions. Some items that you can expect to see include a Key West vacation, a Seven Springs getaway weekend, photography packages, dinner by Chef Fetty, Steelers tickets, World Wrestling Entertainment goodies, a tree covered with Christopher Radko ornaments, designer handbags, a Science Center birthday party, and much, much more. There will be something for everyone, so put your holiday list together and come "shopping" at St. Paul's!

We look forward to seeing you at the St. Paul's Fall Fundraiser—

Julie Jackovic and Lauren Bloch  
Co-Chairs, 2005 Fall Fundraiser






# Mark Your Calendar For St. Paul's Activities and Events



## November 2005



Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8 Election Day. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9 Parent Partnership Meeting 11:30	10	11 Veteran's Day. 	12	13
14 Baskets on display all week.  Raffle Tickets for sale.	15	16	17	18	19 Fall Fundraiser Event 	20
21	22 Last Day of School before Thanksgiving Vacation.	23	24  Thanksgiving	25 Family Sing-Along with Margaret at the Library. 2 P.M.	26	27
28 First Day back to school after Thanksgiving Vacation.	29	30	<p><b>Dates to note in December:</b>  <b>NAEYC Conference</b> – No school, Thursday, December 8 &amp; Friday, December 9  <b>Santa Breakfast</b> – Saturday, November 17<sup>th</sup>  <b>Christmas Break</b> – Last day of school, Wednesday, December 21, First day back, Wednesday, January 4<sup>th</sup></p>			