

AUGUST 2008

# NURSERY SCHOOL

## NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL NURSERY SCHOOL



**September 8**  
First day of school

**September 15**  
Parent Orientation  
7:00 p

September 2008						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

October 2008						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

**October 13 – Open House 7 – 8:00p**  
Pam Countouris & Marianne DeVito's  
4 day am class  
Diane Sweeney & Dottie Lust's  
MWF am/pm classes  
Joan Easton & Martha Hudak's  
MWF am/pm classes

**October 20 - Open House 7 – 8:00p**  
Marianne DeVito & Mary Grace Bruni's  
T-Th pm class  
Joan Easton's T-Th am & pm class  
Rita Neher and Erin Egal's  
T-F am & pm class  
Eileen Sharbaugh's T-Th am & pm class

**October 28 & October 29**  
No School  
Fall parent teacher conferences.

**October 31 - Halloween**

### ✕ Director's Dialogue ✕

by Jane Adams

"...She has learned how to be more self-directed, self reliant, and to amuse herself with slower paced activities. For the first time in her life she has had the opportunity to learn the beauty of uninterrupted free time, something that she had not had much opportunity to experience during her childhood here in the U.S."

### THERE ARE BENEFITS TO BOREDOM

My youngest daughter just completed her first year of living in Japan as an English teacher. She lives in the small town of Ikeda, on the island of Shikoku, Japan. There is not a lot there other than rice paddies, mandarin orange trees, and farmers. During the week she travels to six different schools to teach, and one of the schools is a one-room school with only 11 children between the ages of 5 and 9. She has discovered that the overall culture and pace of life in the Japanese countryside is quite different and much slower than life in the States.

As a recent college graduate from the U.S., she arrived in Japan having lived the typical fast paced American childhood of constant organized activities with lots of friends, constant over-stimulation of cell phone calls, text messages, lap top computer – MySpace, Facebook – and all of that crazy stuff. After the initial novelty of living in a foreign country wore off and she realized that her free time now consisted of reading a book, watching a couple of very basic TV channels in Japanese, or maybe going for a quiet run in the countryside, she really didn't know what to do with herself! I began to hear the word "bored" quite often as she described her daily life. There was no doubt a bit of homesickness thrown into the mix. But now that summer in Japan has arrived and she has been there for almost a year, I am getting e-mails about finding enjoyment in simple activities such as going out to a farm to pick pears (to make Japanese pear wine), or tranquil day hikes with new found friends, literally from all around the world. She has learned how to be more self-directed, self reliant, and to amuse herself with slower paced activities. For the first time in her life she has had the opportunity to learn the beauty of uninterrupted free time, something that she had not had much opportunity to experience during her childhood here in the U.S.

Many children and young people today simply do not know how to cope without the immediate gratification and stimulation of adult directed and organized activities in their lives. And there is a cost for that in terms of young people figuring out for themselves what they want to do with their life, how to do their own problem solving, and the ability to be proactive in forging their own independence; no doubt, one of the many reasons that so many adult children end up boomeranging back home – ugh!

*continued pg 2.*

# Director's Dialogue

*continued from pg 1.*

Our tendency to over-stimulate and over program our children starts as early as infancy and continues throughout their childhood in our culture today. Many child development researchers are seeing the results of our children's over stimulated, fast paced, adult organized/adult directed life style, and have **major** concerns about what they are seeing. In a recent article in The Boston Globe Barbara F. Meltz writes about the importance and benefits for children of learning to cope with down time, and finding time to just be with themselves. I thought that I would share the article with you all.

## Benefits to Boredom

*Every Tuesday morning at 8:30, the 268 students in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade at the Cambridge Friends School sit silently in a circle on the floor for half an hour. Really silently, as in you can't even whisper. Oh, the 5 year olds are allowed to draw if they need to - even second graders can do that - and if a student is really fidgety, a teacher might put a supportive arm around him. But that mostly happens at the beginning of the year.*

*This is a Quaker school. Sharing silence is part of the tradition of the faith, a way to enter one's self within the community and to seek personal truth. These days, though, school head Mary Newmann sees even more value in it.*

*"If you want to raise children who can think critically, who can solve problems of all kinds - and we do - that's our mission - they need the chance to think uninterrupted," she says.*

*That's rare these days.*

*Beginning in infancy, children are bombarded with noise, stimulation, and instant gratification, from crib mobiles with flashing lights and music to DVD entertainment systems for the car. Quiet time? It's virtually programmed into children never to have it. Certainly there are advantages to children from modern technology. Increasingly, though, educators like Newmann are wondering if it comes at a cost. "The gadgetry may distract a baby from crying, but does he ever discover his toes?" wonders Wheelock College early-educator Diane Levin. She means that on two levels. Literally, the fussy baby who is left alone long enough to find his toes (not more than a few minutes, after all) is making the first step in a long journey.*

*"He's figuring out that he can entertain and distract himself," Levin says. "He's also learning something profound: that he has the capacity to solve his own problem. In terms of human development, that's an "aha!" moment. The infant whose parent pushes the button to turn on the mobile may also be comforted and distracted, but he learns nothing about his capacity to solve his own problem," says Levin. This may seem like too much credit to give to 10 toes, but for Levin, Newmann, and others, toes are a metaphor for what they see as an erosion of opportunities for children to develop critical-thinking skills. "It's been happening ever since children started watching more TV, about 20 years ago," says Levin. "As the process for interacting with the world becomes more passive, children are robbed of the process of being an active agent in their own lives."*

*There are no statistics or studies on this yet; it's something that will play out as time passes. Researchers and educators do know, however, that children learn best by initiating, manipulating, and observing cause and effect.*

*Levin has coined a term: problem-solving deficit disorder. Minneapolis psychologist and author David Walsh, founder and president of the National Institute on Media and the Family has one, too: mental operating software.*

*"It's as if this soft ware is wired into them in the crib that sets an expectation for entertainment and instant gratification," he says. "As a result, when things get tough, children are more likely to throw up their hands and throw in the towel than figure out what to do.*

*Beth Dimock sees this play out in her pre-kindergarten class at Cambridge Friends School. "Children today are easily frustrated. They don't know how to carry through with a project-any project-on their own," she says. "Why do two playmates at your house end up in front of a video? Because they are bored. They can't even solve the problem of what to play."*

*Researchers say time in front of screens is a big source of the problem. "We think we are giving our kids an edge when we use software to introduce them to art, language, nature, you name it," says Pittsburgh psychologist Sharna Olfman. If she had her way, children under 7 would spend no more than an hour a day in front of any screen, educational software included. All it does is teach them to be dependent on the screen for instant gratification," she says. "They are not developing the capacity to use their own creative intelligence."*

*Indeed, Levin says problem-solving is a cumulative skill that gives a child a sense of inner power. "The more you do it the better you are at it and the more you feel good about yourself as a learner, a social being, and a thinker," she says. "A problem-solver is someone who says, "I can affect the world. I can figure out how to build this tower so it won't fall. I can tell the teacher there's a problem on the playground."*

*Even seemingly benign conveniences may undermine a child's ability to solve problems. Consider Velcro, or the digital*

## Director's Dialogue continued from pg 2

So folks, the next time your child has a problem don't jump in and solve it instantly for them – perhaps just sit with them quietly for a while and encourage them to think about it until they can come up with a solution of their own. Make a concerted effort to turn off the TV and computer for a little while. Instead, encourage them to spend time playing on their own or with a playmate. I know it is hard, when I baby sit for my granddaughter the fact that I can just slip the Cinderella DVD into the TV and have over an hour of totally uninterrupted time is extremely hard to resist! But in the long run our children need more quiet time to think on their own. Only then will they be empowered enough to figure out how to amuse themselves, problem solve on their own, and ultimately understand who they are and what they want for themselves out of life. Admittedly in the short run it is tough, but in the long run the benefits to your children will far outweigh the momentary drudgery, whining, and complaining!



## Summer Program

Summer program was enjoyed by all. As a staff, summer program always reminds us that children thrive and learn best in a relaxed, low stress environment with lots of free choice and enriched child directed activities. It also reminds us that 3 and 4 year olds are still very young, and even though we feel a responsibility and do our best to address the increased academic expectations of our public school system, we must always be sure not to push to the point of too much stress. When children become too stressed, anxious emotions simply take over and they are unable to learn, so as is true for so many things in life, we need to find a balance that offers an appropriate and comfortable challenge for each individual child.

Many thanks to our fantastic staff that included Dottie Lust, Pat Hurd, Stephanie Woodruff, Martha Hudak, Marianne DeVito, and Eileen Sharbaugh. Also, thank's to our high school staff and volunteers that included Riley Workman, Beth DeVito, Colleen Carlos, and Sissy Woodyard.

I'm off to Canada once again for the better part of August to spend time relaxing on the Rideau, a beautiful lake in Perth, Ontario where my husband and I vacation every summer. In the mean time, I hope everyone enjoys the rest of the summer and has a safe and relaxing time. See you all in September!

### SAVE THE DATE – SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8<sup>TH</sup> - FALL FUNDRAISER – 7:30PM

This year we will have an Oktoberfest theme – with beer, wine, delicious food, live and silent auctions, 50/50 raffle, basket raffle, music, slide show of the children, and fun for all! The children are the primary reason for the event - that raises funds in order to maintain the high quality of teachers, equipment and supplies necessary to make St. Paul's an exceptional educational experience for all of your children. It is also a fun and well deserved time for parents to socialize and enjoy an evening out with friends. **So find a baby sitter and save the date!**

# Fall Opening Reminders

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I can now turn my thoughts to September and the changes that will occur as new groups of children are formed and new friendships are made. The staff and I look forward to welcoming the new children who will be coming in September, and of course we look forward to seeing the children and parents who will be returning.

You will be getting a call from your child's teacher to arrange for a home visit in late August. The purpose of the home visit is for the teacher to begin to make her first connection with your child in order to help them make a more comfortable transition to a new situation. It is also a time for the teacher to speak with you on a one to one basis to hear what your expectations are for the year, to begin to educate you about what we do here with the children during their day, and to hear any concerns that you may have about your child in school.

Don't forget to download all necessary information forms from the web site and fill them out prior to your child's first day of school. **No child may be left at school without a completed emergency card.**

If you would prefer a hard copy of the forms you may either stop by the school and pick them up or we would be glad to mail you copies if you call the school at 412-531-2644 or e-mail Kathi Workman at [kworkman@stpaulspgh.org](mailto:kworkman@stpaulspgh.org). Thanks in advance for your cooperation in getting all of the paper work done that we are required by our NAEYC Accreditation to have on file.

The first day of school will be Monday, September 8<sup>th</sup>. This will be a visiting day for everyone in a MWF class or Pam's 4 day class. Tuesday, September 9<sup>th</sup> will be a visiting day for anyone in a T/Th class or Rita's 4 day class. A visiting day permits parents to stay with their children and makes the separation easier. Parent Toddler classes will begin on their regularly scheduled day, either Monday, September 8<sup>th</sup> or Friday, September 12<sup>th</sup>.

## Visiting Days

### Monday, September 8<sup>th</sup>

Monday, Wednesday Friday classes  
Monday – Thursday 4 day class

### Tuesday, September 9<sup>th</sup>

Tuesday, Thursday classes  
Tuesday – Friday 4 day classes

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## LUNCH BUNCH

We will continue to offer this popular program. Lunch Bunch is offered Monday – Friday. Morning session children should be picked up at 12:30 pm and afternoon session children should be dropped off at 11:40 am. Kathi Workman will distribute sign up sheets with complete instructions sometime after the first week of school.

## UNITED WAY OPTION

Again this year, St. Paul's will participate in the United Way Donor Plan. In the past we have received many generous donations from this plan as a non-profit human service agency. We use these donations to supplement our operating budget and tuition assistance program, which helps us to continue to provide the high quality early childhood experience that is distinctly ours. At this time, many corporations are beginning their 2007 United Way Campaign. We ask that you consider choosing St. Paul's Episcopal Nursery School to receive part of our annual donation. We have been designated the code name of **St. Paul's Episcopal Nursery Sc** and our code number is **2774**. These designations are important to be included on your pledge form to ensure that St. Paul's Episcopal Nursery School receives your contribution.

If you have any questions or would like a pledge form, please call the school.

# Save Your Junk!

We use a lot of recyclables for our art program. The children use these materials for projects in order to encourage hands on exploration, learning, and creativity as they choose their own materials to create many different kinds of representations. This type of child directed self-expression encourages a solid self-concept for young children. Young children immensely enjoy representing the “culture of childhood” by creating models of all sorts of things that are universally fascinating, from vehicles to dinosaurs, through the use of interesting materials that they can choose on their own. With that in mind, please save any of the following items for the school and place them in the large recyclable box in the Big Room:

Fruit and vegetable Styrofoam trays (NO MEAT TRAYS)

Card board paper towel and toilet paper rolls.

Tissue boxes

Large and small oat meal boxes

Plastic an metal jar lids – all sizes

Interesting and unusual packing materials

Excelsior

Twine, cord, yarn (all grades and colors)

Blue berry and strawberry baskets

Wooden materials such as dowel rods Plastic film containers

Parmesan cheese containers

Plastic band aid boxes

Used wrapping paper and ribbons

Spools

Beads of any type

Buttons

Or anything else that you can think of that can safely be recycled for children’s art projects – use your imagination.



Parents often ask me about volunteer opportunities when they first come to look at the school. A few of our most needed volunteer opportunities are listed here.

#### Homeroom Parent Volunteers

Homeroom parents are needed for each class. Homeroom parents play an important role in the school especially in terms of communication between class parents and teachers about many important events such as field trips, Fall Fundraiser, snow days, class parties, and other things that your child's teacher may need to let parents know about throughout the year. It is also a great way to get to know other parents in your child's class and to get to know your child's teacher. This year Mel Woods, our nursery school board vice-president is going to work with me to help co-ordinate and organize the homeroom parents. If you would be interested in being a homeroom parent you can let your child's teacher know at the home visit, or contact the school and let me know.

#### Fall Fundraiser Volunteers

As far as the Fall Fundraiser goes there are many different types of opportunities, large and small, for you to share your time, interests, and abilities. It takes help on many levels and from lots of parents to put this fun event together! We will need people to help organize the food and decorations for the evening, and to help collect raffle items for the baskets.

We also need lots of help in getting auction items. In the past we have gotten fantastic tickets to sports and cultural events, signed sports memorabilia, use of vacation homes at nearby locations such as Hidden Valley or Seven Springs, unique jewelry items, photography, restaurant dining, activity passes to museums and the zoo – just to name a few. If you have ideas, contacts, and/or would like to serve on the auction committee please let me know!

#### Santa Breakfast

We will need a couple of people to chair the Santa Breakfast. This volunteer opportunity primarily consists getting out the invitations and organizing the food (bagels and fruit) and coffee for the breakfast. Both Santa and Margaret Hooton, our music teacher, are already set to go!

#### Board Member

Each year in the spring parents are encouraged to send in a resume if they would be interested in serving on the Nursery School Board. The Board is primarily responsible for overall school governance, including overseeing school policies and finances. If you would be interested in serving on our board or have questions about what it would entail please stop by the office and I would be glad to talk with you and answer any questions that you might have about it.

If you would be interested in lending your help to the school for any of these volunteer opportunities, please call me at the school (412-531-2644) or e-mail me at [jadams@stpaulspgh.org](mailto:jadams@stpaulspgh.org). and let me know what you would be interested in doing.



## ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL NURSERY SCHOOL

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