

Autumn 2006



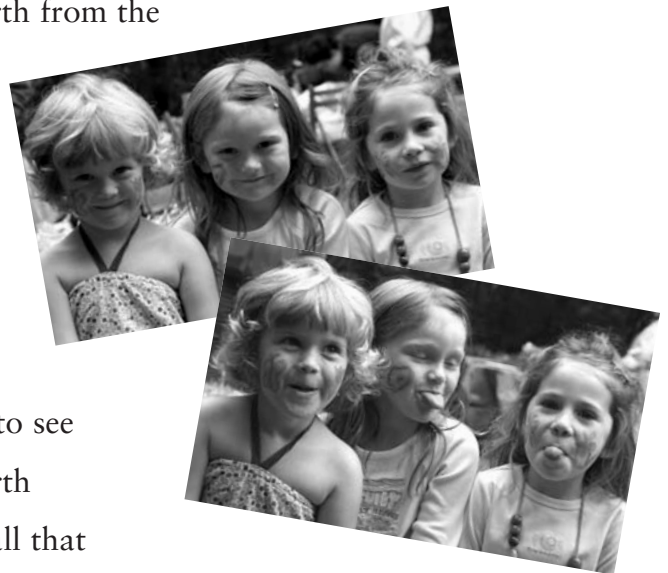
*'come little
leaves
said the wind
one day*



A True Story...

Once upon a time two teachers had a conversation about the parents at their school. The teachers agreed that they always choose to focus on the beautiful work, tremendous efforts and loving care that these special people expend and offer to their children and the school. The teachers reflected on the breathtaking idea that the children of these people had chosen them as they looked to earth from the

spiritual world. The teachers knew that these families were matches made in heaven. The teachers reflected further and agreed that always, with no exception, their utmost goal is to think of the parents' striving and to see the heavenly light that streams forth from them and encircles them in all that they do. For example, the teachers thought, if they were to happen to run into a parent in the market, they would be grateful and humbled to know that person. The teachers agreed that even in that chance meeting they would remember the person's striving and most sincere desire to be good and true and live a beautiful life. And at this thought, the teachers would be ever more grateful and humbled.



October gave a party;
The leaves by hundreds came.
The Chestnuts, Oaks, and Maples,
And leaves of every name.
The Sunshine spread a carpet,
And everything was grand,
Miss Weather led the dancing,
Professor Wind the band.

-George Cooper

School and Family Partnership

Reflections from the Merry Bell Kindergarten Class

It is essential in Waldorf education that school and family form a partnership and support each other in disciplining the children.

Rhythm is an essential part of school life; the daily rhythm, the weekly rhythm, and the seasonal rhythm support the child and help in the discipline of that child. Creating a rhythmic home life is possible by examining such things as daily mealtimes (perhaps meals could be at the same time every day, with a candle and a blessing), wake-up rhythm, bedtime rhythm and keeping in mind the idea of contraction and expansion in daily activities (see Spring 2006 Newsletter). A weekly rhythm might be created by setting up an activity for each day of the week. For instance, Monday might be wash day and soup day, Tuesday might be gardening and stew day, etc. The seasonal rhythms can be emphasized by the celebration of family festivals and holidays and creating customs that are repeated from year to year.

It is important to the discipline of the child that clear boundaries are set; in order to set these boundaries the adults need to be clear within themselves. Children have a keen sense of inner conviction and mostly they respect the authority that comes with this conviction. Follow-through is essential in this process. If we have asked a child to stop doing something and he or she continues, we must follow through by taking them by the hand and leading them to more productive work. This must be done each and every time, as consistency is key.

In this imitative stage of life it is important that children are surrounded by adults striving for inner discipline. We ask ourselves as teachers—how are we doing our work—in an orderly fashion and in a loving manner? If we begin a task, do we always finish it? Are we surrounding the children with healthy work that supports their play? At home this might be handwork, doing laundry, ironing, baking bread by hand rather than a bread

machine, gardening, raking leaves or shoveling snow (use the leaf and snow blower when the children are not around). Parents who are woodworkers should take their children to their shop and use hand tools while they are there. Always have child-size tools for the child who wishes to join in an activity. Take your children to farms, shoemakers and tailors. Let them watch the electrician or the plumber at work. Adults should not be their children's playmates (although engaging in playful activities from time to time is important), but should instead surround their children with the healthy work of life. Save the computer work and all the phone calls until the children are in bed.

A media-free early childhood assures that a child will get the most out of the education that the parent has chosen and assures that the parent and teacher are working together to support the child in the healthiest way possible. If a child is exposed to media or early intellectualization, the benefits of Waldorf education are lessened. The child is less likely to absorb the benefits of oral storytelling, free play and Eurythmy. The play often becomes unproductive and

disjointed, concentration weakens and the child is likely to imitate movement doing circle time or Eurythmy. A child who listens to rock music may begin to imitate the sound in jerky movements and vocal sounds.

It is important, after all this, to recognize that the striving is the essential component. Children have inherent respect for the striving of adults around them. As I tell the Merry Bell children when they ask why a particular child has misbehaved, "We are all naughty sometimes; the important thing is that we try to do better." Every day is a new day with new opportunities to reach our personal goals.

-Marcia Marquis, Merry Bells



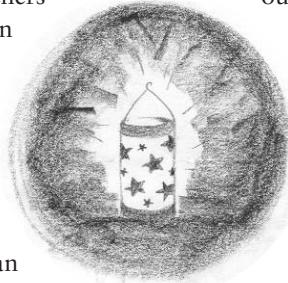
*hurry, hurry,
we must all get
bat and burry*



Playgroup: The Observation of the Young Child

As the world around us changes, we as human beings must change with it. What are some ways that we as parents and teachers can better understand our children and the world around us? Observation is one of our most powerful tools. We as adults have the ability to say "I am," while our young children are just at the beginning of this journey into their bodies. Through observation, we can ask ourselves, "Who are these little beings before us and who are they becoming? How can I step out of their way and let them do their work or how can I help?"

Our parent-toddler classroom principles state: Observe the children while working at your task. Observe the movements of the children, how they are in their bodies. Observe their language. Observe their social interactions. As we began our year in the playgroup, I asked parents collectively to observe the children for short periods of time. In this quiet sacred space we create, the children are free to explore and play. Within the in-breath and out-breath of the young children's play, we observed moments when they would be close to their parents, then back out again they would go into the room to engage with the world. After our quiet time, I asked the parents if they noticed a difference in the children or in themselves. One parent shared her observation of how when we as parents are present, there is less aggression and conflict among the children. I myself notice less falling among the children, less nervousness among the adults and a less stimulated environment overall.



*The sunlight fast
is dwindling...
my little lamp
needs kindling*

There is also a difference between observation and evaluation, as Marshall Rosenberg points out in his book *Non-Violent*

Communication. Being able to verbalize what we clearly see, not what we think we see, is essential.

The latter can easily turn into a judgment or evaluation, which is not the intent of observation. With open eyes and open hearts, our intuitions can grow stronger with our children. Waldorf Kindergarten teacher Lourdes Callen says, "Building a close relationship can enable us to sense what is needed in each situation, and allow the space where children will show us their needs. We might not have any idea about children; but we can find our

way by practicing observation and listening skills, by nourishing relationships and developing the ability to put ourselves in the place of the other-in this case, the child."

As we begin to see the benefits of being present with our children, it can also have a healing effect on us as adults. In a hurried world, it takes a strong will to go against the norm and in Waldorf Education, this is what we strive to do. It is in this the hope that childhood may be preserved through an understanding of what the young child's basic needs are: an unhurried rhythm, which includes regular meal and bed-times, healthy whole foods, time for playing and exploring the world on their own, warmth including natural fibers as well as our own soul warmth (love) and nurturing care in feeding, bathing and sleep. Happy Observing!

—Claudine Collet, Playgroup

Births

Our warmest wishes and congratulations to...

The Castelli family on the arrival of Amelia...

The Condon family on the arrival of Lauren...

The Nesto family on the arrival of Caroline...

The Sperry family on the arrival of Lillianal

Parent/Toddler News

Once again this fall our Parent/Toddler program is flourishing and we welcome Claudine Collet back, who is teaching our third class.

We now have a class Monday 9:30-11:30am and Friday 8:30-10:30am taught by Jessica Khoshabo and Claudine Collet's class on Friday 10:30am-12:30pm.

Please spread the word as there is still some room in Ms. Collet's class for children 12 months - 3 years and their parents!



Learning How to Be on This Earth: Eurythmy at Apple Blossom

Each Wednesday morning, Apple Blossom's students and teachers welcome a very special visitor, Yuko Hara, a eurythmist. On a recent visit, 19 Merry Bells and Morning Glory students gathered together for their meeting with Ms. Hara. With slow, gentle arm gestures and soft vocal tones, she began a greeting in Japanese. Over the next 20 minutes, the children would imitate her movements to become fairies, elephants, and farm animals planting and harvesting wheat to make bread. The meeting ended as the children settled to the floor, their eyes hidden, as Ms. Hara slipped away, quietly singing a good-bye.



Welcome

Please help us welcome Yuko Hara as our new Eurythmist at the Apple Blossom School. The children have enjoyed her movement and stories tremendously so far. Ms. Hara grew up in Japan. She completed her BA in linguistics in Canada before starting her Eurythmy training in Spring Valley, NY. After graduating from the Eurythmy School Spring Valley in 2001, she began teaching at the River Valley Waldorf School and various Waldorf Schools in NJ and CT. She is also a member of the Eurythmy Spring Valley Ensemble.

When asked to describe eurythmy to a layperson, Ms. Hara explained that it is an art of movement “which embodies the cry of the soul.” Each gesture is based on the sounds and the tones of the poetry or music it accompanies. “In a pedagogical setting, we use gestures to help children grow into a balanced way of moving their body,” said Ms. Hara. “Eurythmy helps balance their head, heart, and hands.”

Rudolf Steiner developed eurythmy in 1912 in his search for an art of movement that “would make the language of the spiritual world visible.” He relied on the sounds of human speaking and singing to create gestures that he believed embodied these sounds.

For example, in Ms. Hara's meeting with the kindergarteners, she and the children “warm up” with vowel sounds and their accompanying gestures—what Ms. Hara described as “movements for our soul mood.”

“These sounds express more of the children's soul quality,” she said. The sound “ah” is a very open sound, accompanied by arms lifting, palms up, out and in front of the body. This a very welcoming gesture and reflects children's wonder in and openness to the world. “The emotion of that sound,” said Ms. Hara, “is one of sympathy to the world.”

The children imitate Ms. Hara's gestures as she speaks (now in English). She does not stop to explain the gestures, their execution, or their meaning, as you might see a dance instructor do. After the children become more comfortable with moving their bodies, Ms. Hara begins a story, which takes up most of her time with the children.

With kindergarteners, she uses a story that reflects daily life—growing and harvesting wheat and grinding it to flour to make bread. Her story involves a lot of repeated patterns of sounds and movements. This repetition allows the children to “live the characteristics of the sounds through the story and movement,” she explained. “At this age, they have the ability to really live in the story.”

When the red hen, the main character of the story, begins to cut the wheat, the consonant sound “ka” in “cut” is accompanied by sharp, slicing arm gestures. Ms. Hara does not use music, but uses her voice in a rhythmic manner, though she is not really singing.

Eurythmy means beautiful rhythm in Greek, according to Ms. Hara. “Rhythm is quite important in eurythmy, especially in a pedagogical setting. It is healthy for children—like breathing. Rhythm is like inhaling and exhaling if children can get a good pattern in their bodies.”

During the story, Ms. Hara does not use dramatic speech. “I try to remain very calm. A dramatized tone of voice is not helpful for children because it doesn't give them room for their own imagination.”

When the red hen has made her bread and the story of her barnyard friends (including a duck, a cat, and a dog) is over, Ms. Hara begins quieting down with the children. She said rest is very important because in eurythmy, children's energy is used in a very different way than in their usual activities. She recommends that children rest for at least five minutes before engaging in their next activity.

“Eurythmy helps children connect their body and soul in a proper, balanced way,” said Ms. Hara. “If that [connection] doesn't happen in a healthy way, children cannot function effectively. The whole purpose of eurythmy, especially through age seven, is to help them to be on this earth.”

—Brenner Brown, Parent-Toddler Parent

For more information about eurythmy, visit Eurythmy Spring Valley's web site: www.eurythmy.org.

Many thanks to Ms. Hara for sharing her expertise with me and with Apple Blossom and to Ms. Marquis and Ms. Loker for allowing me to observe Ms. Hara practice her beautiful art!



Fruit Tart

From the kitchen of: Deb Curran (from my Mom)

Ingredients

1-³/₄ c flour (Spelt flour can be substituted)
1-¹/₂ sticks unsalted butter (if using spelt flour, use 1 stick butter)
¹/₂ tsp sea salt
2 Tbsp sugar (optional)
4-6 Tbsp ice water
Wax paper
7-8 apples, pears, peaches or plums
2 Tbsp potato starch
¹/₂-¹/₃ c sugar
* *I use beet sugar
(¹/₂ c sugar if using spelt flour)
Cinnamon

- Preheat oven to 350°F
- Place flour, butter, salt and sugar in a food processor and blend until dough is crumbly and resembles cornmeal.
- Add just enough ice water (start with 4 Tbsp) to bring the dough together.
- Roll out dough between two layers of wax paper, 1" larger than your pan. Gently peel one layer of wax paper off the dough, turn over and place back on dough, sticky side up.

Glimmer, lantern, glimmer;

Little stars a-shimmer;

Over rock and stock
and stone;

Wander tripping
little gnome;

Peewit, Peewit,
ticka, ticka, tick,
roo-coo, roo-coo.

—Martinmas

Lantern Walk Song



Fall Harvest Soup

From the kitchen of: The Waldorf Kindergarten Snack Book

Ingredients

Olive oil
Chopped Onions
Water
Harvested Vegetables
Salt

- Sauté the chopped onions in olive oil.
- With your children's help, chop the vegetables.
*"Chip, chop, chippety-chop.
Cut off the bottom and cut off the top.
The rest goes in the pot."*
- Add water to cover the vegetables and bring to a boil.
- Add salt and simmer over medium heat for about 30 minutes or until tender.



(on the flip side)

Fruit Tart continued

- Flip entire dough/wax paper and gently peel off the second layer of wax paper and throw away.
- Place tart pan next to your dough and quickly flip dough into your pan. Peel off the wax paper. Gently press the dough down into the pan and along the sides. Use a fork to poke holes into the dough on the bottom of the pan. *Can be made ahead and placed in freezer. Place pan into the oven and bake for 10 minutes. Remove and set aside.
- Peel fruit, remove seeds/pit and slice into a mixing bowl. (Apple/pear is a nice combination)
- In a separate bowl, mix together potato starch and sugar, then pour over fruit and turn until well combined.
- Spoon fruit into the dough pan. Press down fruit, sprinkle with a little bit of cinnamon and dot with butter. One Tbsp sugar may be sprinkled over the top.
- Bake in a 425°F oven for 40 minutes. Cool completely and enjoy!

CRAFT CORNER ►

Welcome to Craft Corner! Here we offer instructions for craft projects. We are close to Halloween, so here's an idea to make a simple mask with your child.

Please send craft questions for publication in our next newsletter to Liane.Bernard@Babson.edu.



Create Your Own Mask

Materials

Picture (or hand drawing) large enough to cover most of child's face
(*suggestions: butterfly, flower or animal face*)

Pipe cleaners (usually two are needed)

Crayons, felt, tissue paper, yarn, ribbon, beads, or buttons to decorate masks

Scissors

Cardboard (a cereal box or a paper plate works well)

Glue

- Allow your child to decorate the picture with crayons or other craft materials.
- Glue the decorated mask to the cardboard and allow it to dry.
- Cut out the shape of the picture with the cardboard glued to the back of it and cut out eye holes for your child.
- Punch holes in the side of the mask and feed pipe cleaners through the holes to make a strap to hold the mask onto your child's face.

Give your creations as gifts or donate them to the Apple Blossom School store!

Committee Updates

Non-profit Status Achieved!

We launched our "Fun Raising" plan with a meeting over coffee and scones. Our goal is to raise \$20,000 for our school to cover the gap between tuition and expenses and pay off part of the expense incurred moving to our permanent home. With a tag sale and bulb sale that raised a combined \$1800 under our belts, we were excited to get everyone's ideas and make our yearly plan. Our next event will be a toy/gift sale in which parents can order from Nova Natural and Magic Cabin for delivery in time for the holidays. This will be followed by our annual calendar and wreath sale.

Music and Merriment was such a success last year that we intend to make it our big event this Spring. We plan to increase the excitement this year with a silent auction. Also to come is a plant sale for Mother's Day featuring perennials and shrubs.

This week we received the very exciting news that we have obtained our 501c3 nonprofit status thanks to the hard work of our finance committee and our school lawyer, Stephan Grozinger. What timely news! Having our non-profit status will make it possible for us to apply for grants, and to send an "Annual Giving" letter to local businesses and friends of the school. Many corporations are willing to match donations made to non-profit businesses made by their employees. Some of our parents were able to take advantage of this last year, so if you are considering making a donation and work for a large company this may be a possibility for you.

We have a wonderful team so far and have already made some money for the school. Thanks so much to everyone for your donations for the tag sale and working hard despite the rain and windy weather. (I'm still eating the leftover chocolate chip cookies). We are very excited for the year ahead!

-Joanna Simpson

Workshops and Lectures

The Apple Blossom School & Family Center is privileged to have as a guest speaker, Ms. Helle Heckmann, currently on a USA tour from Copenhagen, Denmark. Ms. Heckmann began one of the first Waldorf kindergartens in the world over 20 years ago for very young children. Her mixed-age kindergarten "Nøkken" has a group of 30 children from one to seven years old.

On play, "the fundamental ingredient" in her kindergarten, Ms. Heckmann writes: "Playing is the springboard toward social life. Through play, all the drama of becoming a human being can unfold. Both the beautiful and the ugly sides are tried out here, which deepens the understanding that there are other people in life, that in a social setting one must show consideration and listen to others." As well as being a certified teacher, Ms. Heckmann holds a B.S. in Geography. She is a member of the Danish Steiner/Waldorf Kindergarten Association and serves on the board of the International Early Childhood Association. She is active in teacher education throughout the world, visiting classrooms and supporting teachers for the past 15 years in North and South America, Canada and Europe. Her book, "Nøkken: A Garden for Children" has inspired many early childhood teachers. Copies are available at our school store. Please join us on Monday, November 20, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm when Ms. Heckmann will be speaking to our parent community. This is sure to be a memorable evening you won't want to miss!

-Carolyn Storrer

Building and Grounds

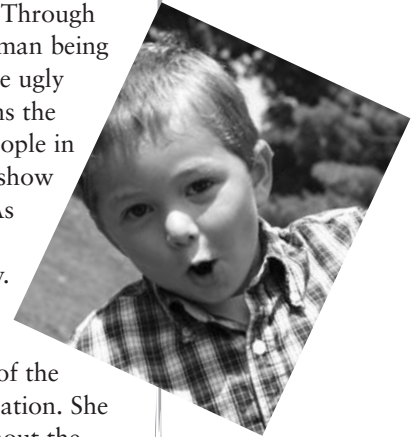
The Building and Grounds committee cares for our precious school building and its grounds. We make sure everything is up to code, repair what needs to be repaired, and organize our All-School Workdays. The committee works mostly on an "as needed" basis and will only have a few meetings through out the year. Please contact Jessica Khoshabo via school mailbox if you would like to join this committee or have special skills that may be needed! Helping hands are always welcome!

-Jessica Khoshabo

Outreach and Enrollment

The Outreach and Enrollment committee will have its first meeting in November. We will plan our annual open houses and develop a plan to further raise awareness about our school through press releases, newspapers articles and advertisements. The committee wishes to again thank Apple Blossom parents for spreading the word about our school. This year, the majority of our new families have joined our community after learning about Apple Blossom from one of you!

-Tracy Castelli Tomas



Enrollment Note

It is the vision of the Apple Blossom faculty that the children remain in our Early Childhood program through the age of five. We ask that parents consider using the guidelines of the Housatonic Valley Waldorf School (children must be six in the spring to enter first grade) no matter what type of schooling the child will have in the future. It is at this point that we feel that the children have fully completed their early childhood experience and will be fully prepared to begin first grade. Please leave a note in Marcia Marquis's mailbox if you wish to discuss this further. As an early childhood center for Waldorf education, The Apple Blossom School supports Waldorf education. Our hope is that the children leaving Apple Blossom will continue to flourish in a Waldorf grade school wherever that may be.

Apple Blossom Events and Announcements

Monday, November 13 | 7:00-9:00 pm

A Walk Through Waldorf Grades 1-8

If you like Waldorf Kindergarten, you are going to LOVE Waldorf Grade School! Come meet Marleen DeGrande who taught Housatonic Valley Waldorf School's graduating class of 2005 from grades 1 through 8 and is the current 2nd grade teacher. She will walk us through the rich Waldorf curriculum that meets your child developmentally every step of the way. Please join us for this uplifting and informative experience. Please RSVP to the Housatonic Valley Waldorf School at (203) 364-1113.

Monday, November 20 | 7:00-9:00 pm

Helle Heckmann visits Apple Blossom

Tuesday, November 21

Parent/teacher conferences

Thursdays | 8:45-10:00 am

Parent & Infant Support Group

We are pleased to announce the formation of "a parent and infant support group, which will meet Thursdays, 8:45-10:00 am (to follow the school calendar), beginning the first Thursday in November in the Apple Blossom Community Room. This will be an informal gathering of parents and little ones to share the joys and to discuss the challenges of this amazing journey. For questions, please call Amy Humes (203-454-5665) or Deirdre McCann (203-894-1411.)

Wednesdays | 9:00 am

The Handworks Group

The Handworks Group will be joining again starting on Wednesday, November 1 after drop-off. The group meets informally to learn new skills and keep an old-tradition of creating handmade items alive. It is creative, fun and rewarding. Please join us every Wednesday after 9:00 am in the Community Room. Little ones are always welcome.

Wish List

A flat-screen computer monitor and copy machine for the office

Kitchen Help

If any parent would like to volunteer in the kitchen with Ms. Clements during the week, please contact her at (203) 247-1297.

Waldorf Community Events

Saturday, November 18 | 8:00 p.m.

Tides Turning

Eurythmy performance at Sunbridge College.

Saturday, December 9

Sunbridge College

Felting Gnomes and Crystal Caves for Puppetry and Play Workshop; Holiday Sale at the Craft Studio, Sunbridge College.

Thank You...

The Apple Blossom School wishes to thank Deb Curran for her role as administrator and sends blessings to Amelia. Goodbye from the entire school to the Curran family!

To Carolyn Storrier and Eileen Curry for taking the measurements for the new kitchen shelves and purchasing the supplies...

To Ian McCann for fastening new hooks in the cubby room and building kitchen shelves...

To Halfdan Prah for supplying the wood for the cubbies...

To Tracy Tomas for beautifying our planters...

To the Fundraising Committee for the Huge Tag Sale...

To Sandi O'Reilly and Joanna Simpson for baking...

To the Converse's from Linden Hill for the play kitchen and play stands...

To the Nathanson's from Linden Hill for our playhouse and trains.

Newsletter edited by Jennifer Ferrante and Sandi O'Reilly. Illustrations by Erika Loker.