



Winter 2005

Just a few months ago, when the Outreach/Enrollment committee was formed we looked at how we could best suit the schools needs. Our goal as a committee was to give our school exposure. With Marcia's assistance we decided to host activities open to the larger community, consisting of Open House information days, puppet plays and assist with contacting families who showed an interest in our school. Through local papers we shared photos of our events, "The Naughty Little Hobgoblin", "The Elves and the Shoemaker" and most recently an Open House. We distributed pamphlets to local real-estate professionals, which we will continue to do, and like all of you shared this wonderful place with those who would listen.

A few weeks ago we were notified our school is at full enrollment, pretty impressive for a school with such new beginnings.

Outreach will continue its efforts and would like to help build a newsletter committee. We have assisted in getting this one off the ground and would like others to follow. The newsletter will act as a tool to first share information which makes our school unique and second communicate updates, events and dates to keep our community connected. If anyone has an interest let us know. Please also continue to share contributions with us so we can continue.

Community Involvement

Apple Blossom has four active committees:

- **Outreach/Enrollment**, chaired by Tracy Tomas (daughter Madison in P/T)
- **Fundraising**, chaired by John Riordan (son Jack in Nursery)
- **Finance**, chaired by John Knuff (son Brady in Nursery)
- **Site Committee**, chaired by Seth Ginsberg (father of Lucy in P/T and Jessica Khoshabo (teacher & son Max in Kindergarten)

These committees would welcome a greater involvement from more Apple Blossom families. Please consider volunteering some time. It is a wonderful way to meet other parents and to have a direct effect on your children's school. The best way to contact the chairs is through email (see committee updates section) or school mailboxes.

The Board of Apple Blossom School is comprised of three founding teachers- Jessica Khoshabo, Erika Loker and Marcia Marquis. We thank you founding parents for all you have done in support of the Apple Blossom School and Family Center! Thank you as well for keeping our school clean and shiny.

KINDERGARTEN CORNER

A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY *Reflections from the Merry Bell Class*

All of us, teachers and parents alike, have a golden opportunity daily to help strengthen the will forces of our children, which will benefit them through a lifetime. By strengthening their will, we build motivation for action. The children become not only thinkers but doers. Each year I understand this a little more and give this "transition" greater importance in the daily rhythm. This opportunity comes at the time when the children are taking off and putting on their outside clothes. Of course the best challenge comes in the winter when the children must struggle with boots, snow pants, coats, hats, and mittens.

Each of these tasks are wonderful challenges for developing fine and gross motor skills. There are the small finger movements of zipping zippers and pulling boots on and off, and the larger movements of reaching back for the sleeve on the coat and putting legs into snow pants. In the mixed age Kindergarten class oftentimes the ones who are ready first will help the ones that are having a difficult time. I sit nearby refraining from helping until a child comes to me with a mittened hand to zip the zipper or until an effort has been made but the challenge is too great. I will then offer to help just enough to allow the child to finish the task, offering much encouragement when the task has been accomplished.

It is easier on the adult and child if the child has been given the opportunity at the youngest age to complete these tasks independently. Babies on changing tables have

been known to reach out an arm to help in getting dressed. As the child gets older she/he often will become more dependent again and if these tasks have become routine, children are less likely to become reliant on the adult. It is important, at any age, for this not to become a point of struggle but to offer encouragement along the way at the small steps a child makes toward independence in this area.

In order to make use of this golden opportunity the time must be built into our daily rhythm, both at school and at home. It takes planning to allow ample time for this and so each year I seem to carve out a little more time for this most important activity in the Kindergarten class.

-Marcia Marquis

Notes from the Kindergarten

-Reminder: Soup is made on Thursday and eaten on Friday. Please send one vegetable with your child on Thursday.

-Thank you for dressing your children so warmly. Please check their classroom bags on a regular basis to replenish.

Interested in Handwork??

Every week, the Handworks group meets to do any number of handworks activity – knitting, felting, sewing, needlepoint and so on. The skills vary from beginner to very skilled (with the latter guiding the former). It is a very casual gathering with parents and little siblings of Apple Blossom School. Please feel free to drop by and give a new (or old) skill a try. Wednesdays, 11am-12pm (or arrive earlier if you wish), Back room of Office area at Apple Blossom School.

Reflections from the Morning Glory Class

One cheerful afternoon, I sat knitting in my rocking chair as the children crowded together in a big bunch on the floor looking at our most treasured and lovely storybook. Normally this is the book I read in aftercare during rest time, but on this particular day, the children had found it and begged to look at the pictures. When I consented, the entire group cuddled up on the sheepskin to see the beautiful illustrations.

They began a guessing game immediately: After seeing the pictures for a story, the first to remember the title would shout it out. “The Frog Prince!!” the page turned, “Hmmm... A beautiful girl. A witch – Snow White!” Next, I heard, “No, no, see how dirty she is? It must be

Cinderella, because remember? She cleans the fireplace!” And the lovely conversation and guessing continued on for a long while. I knitted and listened. When they asked me to tell them, I insisted that they guess themselves.

Observing the sense of accomplishment upon a child’s correct guess was much too special to give away the answers myself. “What’s this one Miss Loker?” three children asked at the same moment. “You can guess it, you know this one, I’m sure.” I said. With a look of determination they turned back to face the book, “well, oh! I know! It’s the one about the little elf.” But in disagreement, someone else said: “It’s a gnomey!” They continued: “See here? He’s dancing by the fire! He’s the naughty elf.” “Oh – oh – oh! *Rumplemilkskin!* Is that it?” And the chorus began: “*Bumblestilkskin!*” “*Rumplesilkskin!*” “*No, no, it’s Rumblemilkskin!*” “*Rumpletilksin!*” Yes, children, you’ve guessed it, I told them, and I watched content smiles spread across their faces as they turned the page.

Like all curiosities we encounter they each bring a distinct perspective – special, lovely and unique. And what freedom is found in each being different and correct! They have plenty of time to learn the real way to say *Rumplestiltskin*’s name. In the meantime, I’ll let them stay in the pictures and in their imaginations, turning the pages at their own pace.

-Erika Loker

Workshops

We have successfully had four workshops this school year. We gathered to can organically grown tomatoes, which were delicious and quite a treat this snowy winter. We also made wreaths out of mixed greens and nature’s bounty. Many of you had the pleasure of creating a wonderful Millet baby to share with your children. Most recently we fantasized of blossoms and spring as we learned about forcing bulbs. The workshops are a great time to learn and take a break from the daily routine. If you have a special talent, or a specific interest please share them with Erika Loker.

Advent in the Rose Nursery

The word “Advent” derives from the Latin word *ad venire*-coming or arriving, is a time of preparation for the returning light that comes at the darkest time of year, at mid- winter. For the adult, advent can be a time of inner preparation where we find our inner light and kindle it during

the busy and dark time of year. For the child, this preparation can be made visible through active and physical work and preparation.

In the Rose Nursery we started advent with a week of cleaning. Every dish and plate and cloth was washed, shelves and cubbies were dusted and our table and wood stumps were shined. Some of us also enjoyed a very special advent spiral! Now that the classroom was ready, we spent the second week preparing dried apples for our last day of school celebration and started making the presents for the parents. On Tuesday of that week we had a very special visitor that left apples and nuts by the door. The children were able to pull chairs to the window and see St. Nicolas walk by. It was very magical!! During the third week we finished making our gifts. Candles were decorated and wooden candleholders were sanded, colored and polished.

The last day of school was quite exciting! We baked cookies in the morning, wrapped our gifts and had a special snack with cookies and apples. At the end of the day we saw the puppet show of "The Elves and the Shoemaker" and many gifts were exchanged!!

-Jessica Khoshabo

A Home for Apple Blossom

After much hard work on behalf of Seth Ginsberg, Jessica Khoshabo and Rob Sanders (an architect recommended by Carolyn Storrier) we are ready to begin work on our home in Cannondale. The site/ buildings and grounds committee has begun to organize the work effort and a work day for the whole community will be scheduled. We are hoping to move into our new home soon and ask once again for your support and patience. We are excited about our new home and feel that it will be a wonderful nurturing environment for all of our children.

FAMILY TO FAMILY

This section of the newsletter is a place for families to share their perspectives.

Four years ago, our family was looking for a nursery school for Paige while we were expecting our second child. I was at bed rest and friends would kindly bring crossword puzzles and books to read. One book that was lent by a dear friend was "Mitten Strings for God, Reflections for Mothers in a Hurry" by Katrina Kenison. It was the latter part of the title that truly caught my eye for I knew we were about to embark on a

completely different pace with a second child on the way.

I read this book after having Bayley. Instantly, I knew it would change our life for it not only spoke volumes to our family about how to simplify our life (a goal of many years); it also contained a paragraph in the back that spoke about what inspired the author to write this book. She had wanted to apply Waldorf principles in her home, since her children attended a Waldorf school in Massachusetts. The curiosity for this "Waldorf" schooling led us to calling and asking for a brochure. Four years later, this book set the tone for our life and the many lectures, workshops and teacher conversations Tom and I have had at our children's school have brought to the surface so many parenting skills that our family lacked. We were informed on the importance of not giving young children choices for they're too young to know what's appropriate; the need for a rhythm/schedule to their day; keeping parties and holidays simple, really simple. And, the big topic, discipline in this case, not the child, but the adult. The big "ahhh" came when I had just spoken harshly to Paige and she in turn did it to her baby sister 10 minutes later. I was crushed for she was imitating me. It is this constant self-discipline that sounds simple but has been the hardest to do. As parents we are being watched and mimicked by our children all day. Our children hear our tone when we speak to them or to strangers; they watch us when we fold clothes and make beds; they mimic our habits, how fast we eat, even our way of walking. This self-discipline has indeed been the most challenging. When we're rested, we're even tempered so our responses to the children match our temperament and their responses match ours (or at least tantrums don't last as long) - one would say it was a "good" day. It is when we're tired, or sick, or something has gone wrong, or we've overscheduled our day that our reactions are not ones to be proud of and their reactions mirror ours and so it goes.

At night, reflecting on the day (a teacher's advice) has been extremely helpful - why the day went so well or not so well. This has helped us to truly see what was not so apparent in the heat of the moment. Then it becomes "oh, if we only had done one errand and not three" or "if I had just taken a breath in another room while counting to 10". We reflect, then a new day begins and we strive again. As one teacher once told us, "striving is essential for the parents but also for our children to see that we are human,

and when we trip, we get back up and try to do better". We thank the teachers and the many speakers we've been privileged to have throughout the years for bringing this level of parenting awareness to our family. Little did we know four years ago that this education which began for our children has in turn become the greatest education for us - the parents? And like any great education, there's something new to learn everyday.

GREAT BOOKS FOR READING:

Mitten Strings for God by Katrina Kenison.

You are Your Child's First Teacher by Rakima Baldwin

Beyond the Rainbow Bridge by Barbara J. Patterson & Pamela Bradley

Busy but Balanced by Mimi Doe

SCHOOL CLEANING

Thank you for your effort and enthusiasm in keeping our school clean. The new schedule will be posted in April. As always, your donations of green cleaning products are much appreciated. Please look for a note in your box for specific requests. Thank you, Ashley duPont

Parent/Teacher Reflections

PLEASE USE THIS AS A VALUABLE RESOURCE. Leave questions to be answered in the newsletter box.

Question: There are times when my child steps over the line and needs to be held accountable for his actions. What are your suggestions?

Answer: Unfortunately, there is not an easy answer to this question. Each child is different and therefore what I would use for one child would not work for another. The first thing we look at in our Early Childhood classes is the environment. Is the room ordered, toys put away and silks folded? Are the dolls off the floor and tucked into their homes. Is the child's hair tidy and away from her/his face? If all of this is in place and a child continues to engage in disruptive activity they are redirected to a task. A teacher may take the child by the hand and lead them to an activity such as cleaning the table, sweeping the floor, polishing the toys, etc.

When the child seems centered again they are allowed to join their peers. When I encounter a child that will not be redirected in this way I will ask them to sit on a chair for a few minutes and rest. Usually, simply pulling them out of their disruptive activity will help to center them again. If a child is using her/his hands

incorrectly (for hitting or pushing) she/he should be shown how to use them in the "right" way such as for pushing a wagon or pounding dough for bread.

It is important also to look at the expectations put on a child. Are these expectations age appropriate? For instance, to expect children to pick up by themselves is an unrealistic expectation. If the adults around them engage in this activity joyfully and with care, oftentimes this will motivate the child.

Inward conviction is also very important. A strong thought of "yes, you will put on your jacket when we go outside" as well as a verbal statement of the same will often produce the desired result. One must also be prepared to follow through by saying, "I am sorry that we cannot go outside since you will not put your coat on. "Perhaps tomorrow." A child feels safe and secure when clear boundaries are set with authority that is firm but loving. As Waldorf educators, we are constantly asking ourselves questions, why is this child acting out? Am I doing everything I can to support this child? Is the rhythm supporting them? Do I have too much breathing-in moments and not enough breathing-out activity? Is everything in order around them? The questions are as important as the answers.

Careful observation of the child keeps us open to answers that may surface before our eyes. Before going to bed at night we will visualize the best of a child who is having difficulties and we carry this image to sleep with us asking the spiritual world for support. Sometimes a shift will have taken place overnight. For this, we are most grateful.

WHAT IS ...

Apple Blossom School and Family Center

A developing Member of WECAN (Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North American) AWSNA is the equivalent association for Waldorf Grade Schools.

Considering a donation to the Apple Blossom School and Family Center?

We were incorporated on June 24th, and are in the process of readying our application for 501c3 nonprofit status. Contributions made to the Apple Blossom School and Family Center prior to our receiving our nonprofit status will be tax deductible retroactively.