

May 2004

Philomath Montessori School Newsletter



For the Families and Friends of the Philomath Montessori School

Classroom News

I wish I knew how to write the traditional Sri Lankan greeting that we have learned, but unfortunately, I learned it phonetically. It's pronounced "Ah you bowan" and you clasp your hands together as if in prayer and bow slightly. It means long life. We have really enjoyed learning about Sri Lanka so far. We have been blessed to have many wonderful artifacts provided by the Jayawickramas and their friends (and mine) the Hindagollas. The most memorable to me are a 100-year-old basket used to pack rice and curries wrapped in plantain leaves, a wooden copy of a temple carving, a coconut pod that has been fashioned into an ice bucket and the coconut reamer. This reamer is like a toothed metal version of a lemon reamer. You clamp it to a table and turn the handle and it scrapes out half a coconut in no time. We strapped it to our wood-working bench, split a fresh coconut and reamed it out quite nicely. With the pile of grated coconut, we first all had a taste (well, almost all), then we soaked it in hot water and Meaghan Alba squeezed and squished for a good long while until it was very milky-looking. During our afternoon class, we strained it, poured it into cups and

drank a toast to Sri Lanka. Michelle Jayawickrama really enjoyed hers and everyone else just had a wee sip of theirs. But I told them I was proud of them for trying something new. Now we will use the "spent" shreds of coconut as a scouring agent just as is done in the Sri Lankan countryside. We will wash underlays with it.

Our study of Sri Lanka has lead us to wrap our tongues around a few Sinhalese words like those for blouse, skirt and jug.



Keenan and Ronan show off the coconut and multiple tools used to crack it open...

As Judith was teaching me to say them she would smile and say, "Yes, very close." She is so kind. We have also learned what a diverse island nation Sri Lanka is with 3 major ethnic groups and a variety of biomes represented.

The children's fascination with all animals great and small has led us to study the classes to which these animals belong. Children get a great deal of clarity by categorizing things and this fits right in with the way zoologists study animals. First we determine if it is a vertebrate or invertebrate by asking if it has bones or not. Then we put it into its class of reptile, mammal, mollusk, insect, etc. In Montessori, our tradition is to start with the whole of a concept and then to break it down into parts, so we also study the parts of the animal's body. Maybe we'll just learn the names. We may go on to write them or read labels of the parts, draw a picture or write an original story about the animal. Lately we have had a lot of activity with the "parts of" cards including those for ants, butterflies, grasshoppers, rabbits, horses and birds.

The full-day students, who all write to one degree or another, have been learning about how letters are placed on the line, which are contained between the base and waist lines and which have ascenders and descenders with rise above the waist line or descend below the base line. We hope this will lead to better legibility when we write.

For a few days, several of the full-day children were embroiled in discussions of who might marry whom one day. It got heated. This one wanted to marry that one and that one wanted to marry another. This girl wanted only to marry another girl and this boy declared that would not stand! A very reasonable child encouraged them not to fight about it for they may not even know each other when they were old enough to marry. This issue of same-sex marriage has been on the minds of children of a certain age for as long as I've been teaching so that's nothing new, but the heated discussions were getting

a bit intense and unceasing. So Pauline and I gave a Grace and Courtesy lesson on how to agree to disagree. We role-played, bickering back and forth about the color of the sky or sandals versus sneakers or the beach versus the mountains, then one of us would say, "You and I don't agree about this and that's okay. Let's stop arguing and go do something else." The children loved this and they did some wonderful role-playing as well. Additional Grace and Courtesies shown lately were how to accept a compliment (which is to say, "Thank you", not "I know" as some children previously thought) and how to go around, rather than through a group of people.

It has certainly been an exciting school year here. We have all learned so much and come so far. As wonderful as it is to see a child read or write beautifully, tell me the name of their favorite breed of horse or count by 3's, what is most satisfying to me is the way the personalities of the children have developed. A little boy who refused to speak or participate now tells us a story at group. A girl who could not meet your eye now smiles shyly at me. Living and working in this microcosm of the world allows us to create our own being and then to share the best of ourselves with others. It is really a privilege to be a part of this each day. I thank all of you for the tremendous sacrifices you make to provide your children with this unmatched educational experience and for the many hours and talents you contribute to make it possible not only for your children, but for future children as well. It is a legacy we can all be proud of.

After - School Play

Last week we invited families back into our schoolyard for after-school play. Most everyone seems enthusiastic about the new option. Last Thursday I found there were many things that I could discuss with parents in an unhurried and casual way that we normally don't get around to without a special call or e-mail.

Here are a couple of items that I realize should have been added to the Play Yard Rules. These will help make this work for everyone involved.

There **must** be a parent monitor who is **focused on the children** whenever there are children in the yard. If a parent monitor leaves, he (she) will need to ask another parent to take his (her) place. Before leaving, the monitor will need to make sure all equipment is put away and locked up in the shed.

- Consistently applying the rules is really important. Especially in the beginning, the children will be trying to find out how much flexibility there is in the rules and who will or won't be enforcing them. **For everyone's safety and ease, be consistent.** If everyone consistently applies the rules, it will become gradually easier to monitor the children.
- Please make sure the children have water bottles when they are in the backyard playing. **We want to limit entry into the classroom to bathroom visits.**



Could this be a soccer game in the back?

Love of Learning Walk/Run

It's spring and time for our third annual Love of Learning 5K and 10K walk/run. This year the run is scheduled for this coming Saturday, May 22 at 9:00. We are down to the final week and hoping that those last-minute registrations will come pouring in. Our goal this year is 125 participants so please encourage friends and family to run or walk this Saturday at the Philomath City Park. There will be a raffle after the race with a grand prize of a two-night stay at a Sunriver house that sleeps up to 10 plus a free car rental! And more prizes! After the 5K and 10K races, there will be two races for the children grouped by ages. Everybody gets a prize here!

If you are not planning to walk or run, we will need plenty of help on race day - registering, timing, setting up refreshments, and monitoring the course. So come and join us! There's plenty of fun for everyone!

Thank You's

It stays pretty busy around here, so we are so grateful for all the help and donations. Many thanks to **Kathy** for cutting out felt animal shapes for sewing, **Sarah** for preparing our burlap sewing, **Kelly** for muslin sewing, **Jessica Neebe** for trimming laminated cards, **Glo** for bringing in juice lids for an art project, **Keith and Sarah** both took meeting minutes and got them out right away (Thanks!), **Sherri** for watering our seedlings and plants during spring break and **Debbie** for pruning our trees and shrubs. **Debbie** will be maintaining tasting bottles until the end of the year, **Melissa** will be cutting paper for new art folders and weeding and planting geraniums below our school sign and **Denis** will be trimming edges around the schoolyard.

Back in January we had a geography workshop and work party in the classroom where we cut, trimmed, glued, talked, joked, and laughed a lot. Thank you **Sherri, Shaun, Judith, Barbara, Sarah, and Kris** for joining us. It was great fun and we got a lot done!

We had two open houses and we want to thank everyone involved for their help and support: **Nancy and Steven** for creating a beautiful new flyer, **Jessica Neebe, Nancy, Glo, and Kris** for posting flyers everywhere, **Kristi** for photocopying brochures, **Sha and Melissa** for cleaning our shelves and materials, **Melissa and Jessica Neebe** for weeding our garden beds, **Dave** for mowing the lawn and trimming the borders, **Kris, Jessica Neebe, Jessica Bonds, Kelly, Nancy and Steven, Sarah, Judith, and Kay** for being parent

hosts during our open house -- **Kris and Jessica Neebe** came to both open houses! Thank you!

We also put up a table and display for the Alternative Education Fair. **Jessica Bonds** came in at 8:00 to help set up tables, the **Bomber** family baked and delivered wonderful oatmeal cookies, **Jessica Neebe** was there to help me set up our display and stayed to be a parent host and **Judith** also came in later to talk to families about our school. **Kelly** came in help us put back tables and chairs. Thank you all!

During January and February we focused on the country of Mexico. Thanks to **Sarah, Melissa, and Kathy** for sending in lots of traditional craft pieces (really beautiful things!), stamps, and currency, **Mara** for bringing in Spanish word book, and **Nancy** for a CD with great Mexican music! For our current study, **Judith** sent in two boxes full of very interesting and lovely items from Sri Lanka. Thank you very much.

Our class has received many great gifts in recent months: **Clare** gave the class the book "Feel the Wind", **Michelle**, the puzzle sets "Mothers and Babies", **Meaghan** "The Carrot Seed" and **Jordan**, "Construction Machines". We are enjoying them all. Thank you!

A special thank you to **Debbie** for again doing the Vision and Hearing screening for all our students -- it's such a valuable service to our families.

I hope I didn't forget anyone -- it seems like I am! Oh, well. Know that we deeply appreciate all your work and effort.

Gifts for the Classroom

Here is what is left of our gift selection for the classroom.

Sherry Mortensen (Jordan's mom) has been taking care of these gifts and they are available to anyone who would like to purchase one for the school. For a child's birthday, it takes the emphasis off of "receiving" for the child and a way of giving to her (his) friends. If you were planning to give gifts to the teachers at the end of the year, we would like to invite families to purchase one of these items for the classroom instead. For the more expensive items, perhaps a group of families could get together. If it is a book, inside the cover of the book will be a bookplate with the child's picture and name, the occasion and the date. On the bottom of puzzles we will also put a bookplate and picture as well. .

If you decide to purchase one of these gifts for our school, please sign your name next to the title of the book or gift of your choice on the wall sign up. Please also have a photo of your child available for Sherry so that she can put it into the book before she turns it over to you. OR since we have a digital camera at school, we can also provide the picture, especially if a group picture is needed.

THE GIFTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN PURCHASED!



Joanna Bomber pumping up a ball for the crowd

Gifts to Choose From

Because Brian Hugged His Mother **\$8.00**
Brian hugged his mom one morning for no special reason and set in motion a series of unselfish acts that reached more people -- and even animals -- than he could have imagined.

All by Myself **\$16.00**
This wonderful book speaks to every child at this age of growing independence. It shows a young boy exuberantly celebrating the joy of mastering dressing, undressing, buttoning, zipping, scrubbing, and so on.

Corn is Maize **\$5.00**
The history of corn couldn't be better presented for children than in this picture book by Alike. It is scientifically and historically correct and still reads like an interesting story.

Who's in a Family? **\$7.00**
For many sociological and economic reasons the traditional "nuclear" family -- with both biological parents and full brothers and sister living together -- is in the minority today. Whatever the situation, every child is entitled to feel good about his or her family. In this charming picture book, children see a positive reflection of themselves, their friends, and the people they care about. Who is in a family? The people who love you most!

Puzzles

CUBES EN BOIS (CUBES IN A BOX) **\$39.50**
Made in Switzerland, each set of wooden painted cubes comes in a pinewood box. The animal cube puzzle can be put together to create six different animals -- pictures of a dog, duck, owl, parrot, fish, and a cat... silk-screened onto a wooden block.

48-PIECE JIGSAW FRAME PUZZLE

This puzzle has 48 wooden jigsaw pieces, which fits onto a wooden frame. This is the final step in the transition from easy to advanced jigsaw puzzles. The picture is in full color, and laminated to the wood before being cut. The dinosaur puzzle shows a prehistoric scene with 13 prehistoric animals.

Dinosaurs **\$11.00**

Huey, Dewey and Lucy Fry their Circuits Watching TV

By Peter Ames Carlin, Oregonian Columnist

I know three children, let's call them Huey, Dewey and Lucy. Let's also say they're 2, 6 and 9 years old and have a wide range of interests. They play soccer and baseball. They study martial arts. They read the Harry Potter books. They ride scooters and bikes, collect Yu-Gi-Oh cards, scribble on the walls (that's 2-year-old Huey) and engage in spirited intramural conflicts over the rights to certain toys, the morning comics page and the last waffle.

Until the television comes on, that is. At that point all activity ceases and the three children sit silently, staring at the glowing screen. "Sesame Street." "Blue's Clues." "Cyberchase." "Pokemon." "Jimmy Neutron." "Teen Titans." On and on and on. Unchecked, they would watch for hours. Probably all day.

That isn't going to happen. But some children do watch TV for hours and hours every day. Most American kids watch at least an hour every day, while a significant percentage sit in front of the tube for a jaw-dropping seven hours. This is a problem, and not just because so many shows are dumb and he ads a sinister matrix of caustic products and worse cultural values.

Pediatricians worry that TV, and the physical inactivity it demands, may be behind the skyrocketing obesity among American kids. Some psychiatrists suspect that regular doses of TV may lead children to be more aggressive and less able to concentrate than children who watch less or no TV. And for young children, from birth to age 2, watching too much TV may actually alter the brain's fragile wiring.

A study published in the April issue of the journal *Pediatrics* also claims that children who watch too much TV, particularly before they turn 2, are much more likely to develop attention deficit disorder.

In fact, the study of 1,345 grade-school kids asserts, each hour of TV a child watches every day raises the likelihood he or she will develop ADD by an additional 10 percent.

That seems extraordinary, and possibly extraordinarily terrifying to parents contemplating the hours they have allowed their own Hueys, Deweys and Lucys to sit enraptured by the TV light.

It's reasonable to question the causes and effects reflected in the study, not to mention a methodology that depended largely on parents' years-old recollections. Dr. Fred Zimmerman, one of the authors of the study at the University of Washington, admitted that its findings are far from conclusive.

"There is some sense that watching TV might enhance academic performance," he said. "It's possible that the effects of TV are multiple and sometimes conflicting."

Still, the study seems to confirm suspicions voiced months earlier by Dr. Michael Rich. A pediatrician and professor at the Harvard Medical School who once worked as a filmmaker, Rich directs the Center on Media and Child Health, a new organization he intends to serve as a nexus for knowledge on how media affect children. While hardly a Luddite when it comes to the media, Rich said it seems clear that TV can pose a danger to young children.

"The brain is still embryonic" at that age, he said. "It's in the process of determining the brain's architecture. And its last stage of development is {affected} by environmental stimuli."

Even educational TV can compromise a young child's ability to process information, Rich said.

"There's no question that kids who watch 'Sesame Street' will recognize letters before kids who don't. But our concern is that TV, being a relatively passive receptive environment with clear rights and wrongs, isn't a good analog for the real world. Much less is demanded of a brain to watch 'Barney' than it is to interact with Mom over a picture book."

And while older kids don't risk the same neurological side-effects as their younger siblings, Rich said TV can make a distinct physiological impact on them, too.

"It's eye and brain candy, in every sense of the word. It's seductive," he said. "You get going on it, and you want more of it. You can develop a psychological dependence on it."

And, some research seems to indicate, a physical addiction. This courtesy of the endorphins the glowing screen teases out of the brain.

And its not just in children, either.

"What you see in a 2-year-old is the same as in a 32-year-old, minus social controls and inhibitions," Rich said. "You get grouchy about having to miss the game to take out the garbage, even if you're not going to hit your head on the floor."

Happily, not even Huey, Dewey and Lucy do that. So far. Maybe a few more hours of "Pokemon" will change that.

This article provided by Nancy Davis



Cassidy dutifully circling the group with the globe as part of her birthday celebration.

First Alternative Coop and Fred Meyer Scrip

The First Alternative Coop has greatly simplified their scrip program. Now you can participate by giving the cashier our school number -- 79931 (or the school name) instead of giving your number. One percent of your purchase amount will be credited to the school. It does, however, mean that you are forfeiting your patronage refund which is usually equal to $\frac{1}{2}\%$ per year.

So far, for the Fred Meyer scrip signup, we have \$2200 committed which is quite a bit less than what we need in order to purchase a minimum order. What we really need are commitments of at least \$400 and \$500 to make it to our goal! So please, if you can, increase your amount by the end of the month. We can earn \$160 from a \$4000 scrip purchase and \$250 from a \$5000 scrip purchase -- that could buy us a lot of new materials and books!



Kapriel and Shannan pursuing very different activities side-by-side.

Newsline

- The Third Annual Love of Leaning Road Race will be on Saturday, May 22 starting at 9:00 at the Philomath Park. Spread the word and join us!
- Tuesday, June 1 is the deadline for tuition deposit updates, registration fees, and tuition.
- Our End-of-Year Potluck will be on Saturday, June 5 from 5:00 - 6:30 in our school backyard or in the classroom, if the weather is inclement. Hope you can make it!
- If you would like to keep your current year-round job for the 2004-05 school year, please let us know.
- The last day of school will be Thursday, June 10. There will be no extended day.

Would you like more information about Philomath Montessori School?

You can always call the school at 929-2672. We'll be glad to send you a brochure about our pre-school and kindergarten program.



Got Milk!