

"The healthy social life is found when in the mirror of each human soul the whole community finds its reflection, and when in the community the virtue of each one is living."

The Apple Blossom Community Room is nestled between the kitchen on one side and the administrative office on the other. It is above the Apple Blossom classrooms and its window looks over the entrance of our school. It has been cared for by a few very loving souls within our community that have diligently scraped the floor, painted it and lazured the walls. It now has a few donated pieces of comfortable furniture and a small play area for children awaiting a mural to be painted by one of our nursery grandmothers. If you want to meet your Apple Blossom friends after drop off and before pick up, if you want to show a friend a new knitting stitch or felting project, or if you need a moment to stop and contemplate, walk around the back of the Apple Blossom building and climb the back steps (not the fire escape) to our lovely little community room. Please care for it lovingly by cleaning it when it needs cleaning and practice conscious speaking and listening when you are within.



NURSERY NEWS: *Work and Play in the Rose Nursery*

Returning to school after the holidays, I noticed that our dolls had gotten a little dusty. So, one morning during free play, I started taking them out of their beds and carefully tending to the dolls and their beds. Soon after, one of the children came over, very interested in what I was doing. Together we started washing the beds and baskets. Now another child joined us while the rocking horse was polished and the toys were taken off the shelves to be washed.

Before long, four children were eagerly cleaning every table, cup and block in the room. With shining eyes and busy fingers, they polished

and shined everything they could find. At this point, I did not need to instruct them anymore on how or what to clean, but rather make sure that enough toys were left for those children who were still playing. While the "cleaners" were organizing a cleaning chain (two children were getting the things off the shelves while the two others washed them in the bucket), the other children were happily engaged in their play, sometimes looking over to see what we were doing, helping a bit and than going back to their play.

This morning turned out to be a deeply satisfying morning for everyone present. Not only did the chil-

dren practice their fine motor skills by washing every little thing in the classroom, and their social skills by trying to work out who was playing or cleaning what and where, but most importantly, they cared for their environment and the result was a shiny room that they could pride themselves with. What a gift of self-confidence a sponge and a little bit of water can give!

With my own children at home, I have noticed that if I can find the same joy in cleaning that the children do, cleaning creates a wonderful environment and mood in the home. Sometimes my two will help for a little while, and then the most beautiful play will be inspired.

-Jessica Khoshabo, Nursery



OUTDOOR PLAY

Reflections from the Merry Bells Class

At 8:30 in the morning the first Kindergarten children arrive and enter the play yard. Some come bounding in as if they had been anticipating this moment in their sleep at night. Others cling reluctantly to those who brought them as if not quite ready to shrug off the coziness of home. Behind the gate their teachers are there to greet them and warm chamomile or mint tea with a spoonful of honey sits at the ready. The children are well fortified against the weather. Parents at the Apple Blossom School take heed to dress their children warmly and many have layers of wool or silk underwear beneath turtle-necks, snowsuits, scarves, waterproof mittens, woolen socks and insulated boots. It is a task to dress children appropriately each day, not something regarded lightly by the teachers.

This winter has been an ever-changing weather winter and what an experience for the children! When the ground froze for the first time, the children felt it throughout their bodies. The metal shovels were grabbed from the shed and taken to the sand pit. When the metal blade hit the hard surface of the frozen ground, the movement of the children was frozen and their eyes widened. They then raised the shovel and slammed it against the hardened surface as if to verify that the ground was truly impenetrable. The impact of the shovel on the frozen ground sent vibrations throughout their bodies. Winter had arrived! The younger children experienced this in their own way. Tin cups and pails were taken from the shed as the children got prepared to make birthday cakes in the sand pit. They plopped themselves down in the sand expecting it to yield beneath them, but no, the surface beneath them was hard and cold. Still unable to fully comprehend the extent of nature's trickery, they picked up their cups to dig for a cupful of sand - - lo and behold, the surface was as hard as rock. Off they went with a shrug to climb a tree trunk to sail across the seas, leaving the frozen ground behind.

The snowy days were a delight as the older boys used their prowess to tie up all of the snow tubes in a row behind the wooden sled. There were four snow tubes, each one holding at least two children with the wooden sled on runners at the lead, also holding two children and being pulled by a rope tugged on by the three oldest boys. All around the edge of the play yard they journeyed over the hills and down in the valleys, around and around all morning long only stopping for a sip of tea and to catch their breaths while the younger ones squealed with glee and then sat back in splendor to enjoy the ride.

And then a few days later, the snow melted and pools and mud puddles formed and children invented mud sliding games, running and sliding to the other side of

the play yard. Our good natured Apple Blossom parents simply smiled as they picked up their children with boots caked with mud and bags of dirty clothes to take home to wash. The children's happy faces and red cheeks are enough for them to overlook the inconvenience of an extra load of wash.

On the windiest day, the clouds made us dizzy as they moved so fast across the sky; the children ran like the wind and collected evergreen branches that fell in the storm to bring into the play yard for an eagle's nest. It took all the children in the play yard, two teachers and two visitors to move a tree branch inside the gate. The oldest children chopped the branch with their shovels as the youngest ones looked on.

Sometimes when visitors first come to the school they ask when we will be getting our play structures. It is hard to explain about the open-ended play that occurs in an environment such as ours. One must really experience it for oneself by observing the children at play. The stumps, trunks, branches, boards, rocks, sand and tools create an environment for play which is rich in imagination and physical challenges. I have never witnessed such healthy outdoor play as in our lovely Apple Blossom play yard. I wonder what surprises the rest of this winter will bring.

-Marcia Marquis, Kindergarten

PARENT/TODDLER NEWS

We happily welcome Claudine Collet, our new Parent/ Toddler teacher! Claudine has two daughters, Isabelle, who is eight, and Anna, who is almost one. She has been involved in Waldorf education for the past nine years and has taught Parent/Toddler classes in CT for the past five years. She was most recently with the Housatonic Valley Waldorf School in Newtown, where she taught for two years. Claudine will be teaching our newly added Monday class at 10:30 a.m. We believe that Claudine's experience and love for her work will be enriching for all of us at Apple Blossom.

WHAT IS ...

Apple Blossom School and Family Center

A developing Member of WECAN (Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North American).

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

We were incorporated on June 24th, 2005 and have applied for our 501c3 nonprofit status. Contributions made to the Apple Blossom School and Family Center prior to receiving our nonprofit status will be tax deductible retroactively. Donations can be made to: Apple Blossom School and Family Center, 440 Danbury Road, Wilton, CT 06897. Call 203-834-0344 or visit us at www.appleblossomschool.org.

PAINTING DAY

Reflections from the Morning Glory Class

Our painting activity begins during free-play time as we wipe down the painting boards that we used the week before. They often have dried frames of color from the brushes that grazed them last. The children help me with spray bottles and sponges to clean them off and then they position the boards on the work/snack table so that each board lies between two chairs. The children sharing one board will face each other during the activity. The pairs shift every week, and normally a child ends up sharing a board with the teacher too!

The paper is soaked in room temperature water ahead of time and the paint is mixed earlier in the day and poured into individual jars. The children place a painting smock on each chair so that they and their classmates may find them when they are called to the table. Once we have cleaned up from play and all our cherished toys are in their places, we begin singing a song of sunlight giving us the colors when it shines on our paintings. The children flock to the table and dress in their smocks. I place a sheet of paper on the boards in front of each child, and in front of my seat. Each of us has a small jar of paint, and the pairs share water to clean brushes in between colors.

The teacher paints first, modeling the care of the art supplies and the relationship of the person to his/her artistic work. The brush gives "fairy kisses" to the paper as it glides across the glistening surface making an impression of color and aliveness. The wet paint on the wet paper is full of motion as it swirls and merges with its surrounding space. We begin with only one color and often add a second -- rarely a third. This dynamic gives the children an experience of the moral character of each color, and sometimes, an experience of the relationship between two such "characters."

The wide brushes and wet-on-wet technique allow the child to experience the pure color. As the children know, our goal is not to make a picture but to "fill the whole page with color." This emphasis frees the children from thinking and carries them to an experience of fields of color, where the soul qualities within can emerge. With minds at rest, painting becomes a soul experience for the child. Quiet, peaceful and divine.

-Erika Loker, Kindergarten

A warm welcome to Katie Chan, Elli's new baby sister, and Spencer Humes, Katherine's new baby brother! Many congratulations to the Chan and Humes families.

A Visit From Saint Nicholas

The Kindergarten children began to notice him when he was across the field. One by one they looked up from their active outside play to see him. He was walking ever so slowly as if the journey had been a long one, supported by his golden staff, yet he also seemed to float as if he was a dream. His proud bishop's hat was perched high above his head and his long deep red cape scraped the snowy ground. His white beard glistened in the distance.

It was a quiet acknowledgement of his presence by the children. They pointed rather than shouting at each other. Some ran to the fence closest to him, some were frozen where they were. St. Nicholas greeted them with a regal wave as he drew closer. In one hand he held a golden basket which he placed deliberately on the ground in a gesture of invitation and welcome to the children. As they became aware that he was leaving, making his way slowly yet gracefully around the front of the Apple Blossom School building, they became bolder and called to him, "Thank you, St. Nicholas! Where are you going?" When he had left, the magic of his presence lingered; we paused before Ms. Loker went to get the golden basket. All the children gathered around staring at the golden walnuts and clementines as if not quite realizing that these gifts could be touched and the sweet clementines could be eaten.

That morning the Nursery children also were busy playing when suddenly a loud knock on the door made everyone look up from their activity. There, looking through the door window was St. Nicholas smiling a dreamy smile and waving gently. He did not stop to come in, and slowly made his way back towards the train station. The children in the class had been quietly looking at him, frozen in what they were doing. After he started to leave, everyone gathered by the window, following his steps in magical silence. The gift that St. Nicholas left was almost forgotten, for this moment was such a special gift of heaven touching the earth. When we could not see St. Nicholas anymore, we found his gift of golden nuts and clementines in front of the door and the children received them with open eyes, still enchanted by the magic that had just happened.

We have Wes Loker, Erika's father, to thank for making St. Nicholas' visit possible as he helped him on his journey to the Apple Blossom School.



FAMILY TO FAMILY

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

Transitioning from Kindergarten to the Grades

by Carolyn Storrer

Our oldest daughter, Paige, was always quite outgoing and extremely strong-willed at home. In fact, when she began nursery school four years ago we thought we would become one of those parents receiving calls from the school stating, "Come pick up your child."

Prior to nursery, Paige had only been home, but her transition to nursery went smoothly just as we had hoped. She was delighted in her new environment, and she would come home and share her stories about how she played with her new friends. The big surprise was during our parent/teacher conference when she was referred to as "easy" and we discovered she wasn't playing with other children but only observing everyone else play. My husband and I did not think they were talking about the same child. We were thrilled on one hand and worried on the other. Thanks to our teachers, they quelled our concerns and told us "she'll come around".

The following year, she began to integrate herself in play but only after observing for over 30 minutes (not the usual hour). However, after a half hour, the children had their mom, dad, and siblings selected for their game. This only led to Paige complaining to her teacher that they wouldn't let her play. Again, the teachers helped her by being clear with everyone that "now Paige will be your aunt" and so on. We would echo the same words and style when she would be at a birthday party or any new environment. And, so it went.

Four years later, Paige was in her last year of early childhood and she was not only initiating play but laying out the rules. Most Apple Blossom parents who had met her that year could not believe our story of how



Paige used to be. She was now a confident six-year old and certainly ready for first grade.

Paige was enrolling at the Housatonic Valley Waldorf School in Newtown. She would be one of fifteen first-graders. Almost a dozen of those children had been together since nursery. They were literally crossing the road from the early childhood building to the grades building, but Paige was not. She was one of three new students. We hoped she would find comfort knowing she at least knew the other two boys from her Apple Blossom School.

It was May when all parents and children were being introduced to the new Fall teacher. After a few minutes, the new teacher left with her future first grade class to a different room while parents stayed to hear an eighth grade teacher answer questions. The whole time she spoke, I regressed to those days of early childhood when Paige would only observe. All I could do was wonder how she was doing in the next room and pray that all was going well.

An hour later, we rejoined our children at the playground. There was Paige playing tag with new friends and enjoying her new space. My face had a huge grin, my eyes filled up with tears of joy, and all I could do was think how far she had come. It spoke

volumes of both the openness of the HVS children as well as the care and insightfulness of our Apple Blossom teachers.

Paige is ready to move forward.



The Snow Man

Wallace Stevens (1879-1955)

*One must have a mind of winter
To regard the frost and the boughs
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;*

*And have been cold a long time
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
The spruces rough in the distant glitter*

*Of the January sun; and not to think
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,
In the sound of a few leaves,*

*Which is the sound of the land
Full of the same wind
That is blowing in the same bare place*

*For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing to himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and nothing
that is.*



Allison Reznik's QUINOA MUFFINS....

1 cup cooked or ½ cup raw quinoa
 1 cup whole-wheat pastry flour
 1 cup quinoa flour
 ¼ tsp salt
 1 tsp baking soda
 ½ cup packed light brown sugar or honey
 1 egg
 ¼ cup butter, melted, or oil
 1 ¼ cups buttermilk or yogurt
 1 tsp vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Spray or oil muffin tins. If cooking quinoa, rinse it well, put it in a small saucepan with 1 cup water, and bring to a boil. Simmer, covered, until the water is absorbed, about 15 minutes, then drain. Meanwhile, combine the flours, salt, soda and sugar in a mixing bowl. Beat the egg with the oil, buttermilk, and vanilla. Stir the wet ingredients into the dry, add the quinoa, and mix with a spatula, scraping up from the bottom so that the flour is mixed thoroughly. Scoop the batter into the muffin cups and bake until firm and light brown on top, 25 to 30 minutes.

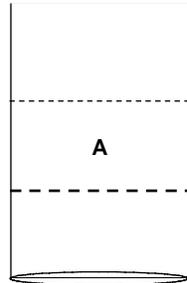
Brenner Brown's GINGERED CARROT SOUP....

2 lbs carrots
 4 cups water
 1 Tbs. butter or oil
 1 ½ cups chopped onion
 2 medium cloves garlic, minced
 2 Tbs. freshly grated ginger
 1 ½ tsp. salt
 ¼ tsp. each cumin, ground fennel, cinnamon, allspice, dried mint
 3 to 4 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
 1 cup lightly toasted cashews

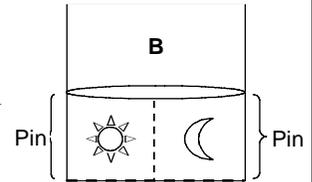
Peel and trim carrots and cut into 1-inch chunks. Place in med-lg saucepan with the water, cover, and bring to a boil. Lower heat and simmer until tender (about 10-15 min.) Meanwhile, heat butter or oil in small skillet. Add onions, and sauté over medium heat for 5 minutes. Add garlic, ginger, salt and spices. Turn heat to low, and continue to sauté for another 8-10 minutes, or until everything is well-mingled and onions are soft. Stir in lemon juice. Puree everything together (including cashews). Transfer to kettle and heat gently just before serving.

CRAFT CORNER. Welcome to Craft Corner. Here we will publish craft ideas and answers to questions about how to accomplish certain projects. In this issue, we have described a simple idea to make use of your old pillowcases, thanks to Carolyn Storrier who has made these for her daughters.

Convert a Pillowcase into a Bedside Pocket! To begin, lay a pillowcase down with the opening at the bottom and divide into three sections as shown in A. Optionally, you can sew the opening closed or leave it open to make 4 pockets.



Fold the end up at the lower dotted line and pin on both sides as shown in B. Sew together at pinned sides and at vertical dotted line to make two pockets. Decorate the front if you wish with embroidery or appliqués. Tuck the top section of the pockets between the mattress and box spring of the bed. Be careful



not to put heavy items into the pockets.

Craft Question: Are there any mosaic artists who can give some tips for a first-time attempt at a mosaic project?

If you have any craft questions that you would like to ask the readers or answers to questions already posed, please submit them to Liane Bernard and we'll be sure they are published or directed to the craft aficionados and inquirers.

Committee Update

From Outreach and Enrollment: I want to begin by thanking everyone for their commitment to and support for our school. Although our committee puts much effort into reaching the community to spread the word about Waldorf Education, it ultimately comes down to you all. When we look at the potential new families who will be joining us next year, most have been introduced to us by a parent who is already involved with our school.

Last Saturday, our school hummed with questions and enthusiasm as our school filled with new faces. Needless to say, our January Open House was a great success. I was pleased to meet so many families seeking a wonderful opportunity for their children.

As Spring approaches, we are planning to open our doors once again, this time to local businesses. For the first time, we will host an Open House specifically for professionals in our areas that may be interested in Waldorf Education or linked to young families. If there is a professional or business you would like to add to our guest list, please forward their name and address to tracycast@aol.com. Our thanks to you all, for creating and maintaining a magical place for our children to flourish and grow. -Tracy Castelli Tomas

The Grounds Committee is pleased to report that construction has been completed, enabling us to connect with Wilton town water. -Jessica Khoshabo

From Fundraising: We are excited to kick-off our fundraising efforts. Look for details in your mailboxes over the next few days! Through our plan, we hope to strengthen the financial foundation of our family center and live up to our mission statement of providing lectures and workshops to our community and families with young children. -John Riordan

WISH LIST: Copy machine, Adult size Picnic Table, Adult size Gardening Tools (i.e. rake, shovel, hoe), Adult size Ironing Board

Apple Blossom Events and Announcements

Tues., Feb. 7. Orientation Tea for Nursery and Parent/Toddler parents, 11 am - noon.

Wed., Feb. 8. Nancy Foster lecture, 7 - 9 pm.

Sat., Mar. 11. Apple Blossom Open House, 10 am-12 pm

Mon., Mar. 13. 2006-07 re-admission applications due.

Thurs. & Fri., March 16-17. Parent/teacher conferences; no aftercare March 17.

Wed., April 12. Apple Blossom Spring Bakesale, noon. Please bring your goodies to sell that morning. Proceeds will go toward refurbishment of the community room.

*A friendly reminder that **aftercare** is available Monday through Friday from noon to 3 pm. It is a wonderful alternative for your children on those errand or appointment days. A little window into a typical afternoon from one observer: "Today the children who took a nap were amazing. It is like something truly heavenly is going on when they all sleep in there together - you can hear their sweet breathing and see their rosy cheeks and their hair is messy - and it is so still! You can feel that they are so united with the spiritual world. I have seen few such magical times."

*The **Handworks Group** is comprised of Apple Blossom parents and friends wishing to learn a new skill, be it knitting, felting, basic sewing (machine or by hand), and so on. Skill levels vary widely. The group is now meeting in the community room (2nd floor of Apple Blossom) on

Tuesday mornings anytime after drop-off until noon. We work on individual and group projects and will soon be making Spring items to donate to the school and bring home. Little ones are always welcome. Come one, come all.

*On April 3rd, from 4 to 9 pm, Aline Ricardo will host a Spring Bazar at her home. 10% of profits will be donated to our school. To participate, please contact Aline.

*Please look for several new items in our **school store** at competitive prices: Waldorf dolls, wooden cars and trucks and more. We will also be offering Dr. Hauschka skin care products at a 25% discount. Inspired by the work of Rudolf Steiner, Dr. Hauschka created a way to capture and preserve the healing vitality of plants. This unique holistic skin care line opposes animal testing and uses plant ingredients that are grown biodynamically and organically and have been ethically wild-harvested. This will be a wonderful fundraiser for our school.

*If you wish to learn laturing, join us during mid-winter break as we add a layer of paint to the kindergarden rooms.

*Outreach and Enrollment is putting together a photo album and scrapbook. If you have any school photos that you would like to contribute, please contact Eileen Curry.

***FRESH EGGS!** To benefit our school, Tracy Castelli Tomas will be selling fresh eggs from her chickens on Fridays, as available. Please bring in empty egg cartons.

Waldorf Community Events

Fri.-Sun., Feb. 10-12. WECAN Early Childhood Conference at Sunbridge.

Fri., Feb. 10, 4:30 pm. *The Goosegirl and the Well* at Sunbridge. Silk marionettes portray this German fairytale.

March 8, 7:00 pm. From Playing to Thinking: The

Waldorf Method, a lecture by Eugene Schwartz at Housatonic Valley Waldorf School, Newtown, CT.

Sun., March 12, 4:00 pm. *Princess Furball* at Sunbridge.

Sat., March 18, 8:00 pm. *Momotara - Peach Boy*, a eurythmy performance at Sunbridge.

Workshops and Lectures - Nancy Foster February 8th

We will welcome Nancy Foster to Apple Blossom on **February 8.** Nancy has been a Waldorf kindergarden teacher since 1973 at Acorn Hill Waldorf Kindergarden and Nursery in Silver Spring, MD. She is on the visiting faculty of Sunbridge College, and is the author/editor of two collections of seasonal music and verse, Let Us Form a Ring and Dancing as We Sing, as well as the new book In a Nutshell. Dialogues with Parents at Acorn Hill, A Waldorf Kindergarden. Nancy regularly lectures on various parenting topics. On the subject of "striving" as parents she says, "It seems to me the very idea of 'perfection' can convey a sense of coldness, of rigidity, of fixedness. Striving, however, brings warmth and movement, which can encourage our children and provide a wonderful example of the essence of what it is to be a human being: the capacity to grow and

change, to learn, to exert ourselves for the sake of others. Such honest, consistent striving is, I believe, one of the greatest gifts we can offer our children. Of course our children, too, are constantly growing and learning--so it seems we will never catch up! May you enjoy the journey. Nothing can be more worthwhile." We hope that you will all be able to attend Nancy's lecture next Wednesday evening. We may request a \$5 donation to cover our costs.

Earlier this winter, we all enjoyed putting our heads, hearts and hands into two wonderful workshops: wreathmaking and creating tooth fairy pillows.

We are also happy to announce that Louise DeForest will be coming to Apple Blossom in May for an evening lecture on discipline. More details coming soon!

- Carolyn Storrier and Erika Loker