

Spring 2006

*Come wander quietly and listen to the wind
 Come here and listen to the sky
 Come walking high above the rolling of the sea
 And watch the swallows as they fly*

*There is a secret in the murmur of their wings
 There is a choir in their song
 There is a power in the freedom of their flight
 When the swallows soar along*

In Honor of Our 2006 Graduates:

As this school year draws to a close, we honor and celebrate Lili Weinstein, Max Khoshabo, Burleigh Prah and William Mann! These are the children who we proudly send out from our Apple Blossom family and onto grade school. While some seem to only have just arrived—and others have been with us for many happy years—we are so grateful for the time spent together. That time cannot be measured, but only understood as echoes of hearty, healthy, happy childhood. As their teachers, we are humbled and blessed to have been a part of that process. Not only for the teachers, but also for the younger schoolmates and parent body, these children have meant so much, taught such important lessons and offered such tremendous love.

During the time that we have been privileged to know Lili, Max, Burleigh and William, we have all watched dreams unfold, bodies grow strong, social life awaken, and most importantly the very essence of childhood manifested. These children are not only very dear to us, they are exceptional people, and I know that as they go forward into first grade their exceptional qualities will continue to shine and bless the new classmates and teachers they encounter. We are also very happy to share that each of our 2006 graduates will be entering first grade classes in Waldorf schools next year! What a gift their parents offer them with this opportunity to continue in the tradition of Beauty, Truth and Goodness! - *Erika Laker*



May the road rise up to meet you.
 May the wind be always at your back;
 May the sun shine warm upon your face;
 The rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again,
 May God hold you in the palm of His hand.
-traditional gaelic blessing

A Transforming Visit to the Parent/Toddler Class

by Brenner Brown

One Friday morning last September, my son Ian and I drove 30 minutes through the rush-hour traffic on the Merritt Parkway to see why our friend Jen was so gaga for Apple Blossom. I wasn't at all prepared for the transforming experience I was about to have as Ian and I followed the angelic voices softly singing "this is the way we roll our dough, roll our dough, roll our dough ..." to find our way to Ms. Khoshabo's parent-toddler classroom.

As we entered the classroom, several children were seated around the table with Ms. Khoshabo peacefully rolling, kneading, and pounding bread dough for our snack, some with a parent, some without. I was very apprehensive about how Ian would behave in this situation and certain that he would soon disrupt the peace—Ian, a toe-head, had earned the nick-name White Lightning from his grandfather for his energy level and tendency to dart about. But while we sat at the table, I watched as Ian observed the other children making bread and, like everything that surrounded him at that moment, he was calm. At the same time, I realized that I was relaxing. My senses were being soothed by the repetitive singing, the soft light filtering in through the pink curtains on the windows, the other parents' hushed voices, and the overall simplicity of the room and the objects contained in it.

Ian was of course himself during our visit, flying through the curtain at the door and racing in and

out of Ms. Loker's and Ms. Marquis's classrooms before I could catch him. But the important lesson for me was that toddlers, including Ian, could be calm, and that their environment and the behavior of those around them could have a tremendous impact on their energy and activity levels.

This is common sense, of course, but it wasn't instinctive for me. And until we visited Apple Blossom, I believed that I had created a calm environment in my home. But the parent-toddler classroom was such a stark contrast to our home environment, where we began each day with a wrestling match to change a diaper, sometimes with me raising my voice in frustration. Then we ate breakfast with National Public Radio droning in the background. As Ian's noise level rose to compete with the news anchors, I would raise the volume on the radio. Ian in turn would increase his energy level and volume. We would repeat the same routine at lunch, dinner, and bath times. If I could, I would save any house work until Ian was sleeping, because I felt I was depriving him of much-needed attention and I felt guilty if I wasn't constantly engaged in what he was doing. I felt I was just getting us both through each day—trying to keep Ian happy and fed, and trying to keep my brain stimulated any way I could. It was difficult for me to find more meaning or purpose in my everyday life.

But in just two hours one fall day, I learned that the atmosphere I create in my home, every interaction I have with Ian, and everything he observes me do, leave an indelible impression on him. And being constantly aware of these things and deliberate in everything I do is challenging and stimulating work. Finally, I was seeing how full of meaning and purpose every mundane thing I do—whether washing a dish or making a sandwich—can be. Every moment with Ian is a learning opportunity for him, and for me. I realized that most of all, I needed Apple Blossom for me, as a guide to becoming the best parent I can be for Ian.

Our home life has changed significantly since first visiting Apple Blossom and joining Ms. Khoshabo's parent-toddler class. We begin our day with song. The radio is off. Our meal-times are peaceful, magical



A Transforming Visit to the Parent/Toddler Class (continued)

by Brenner Brown

moments when we take time to bless our food and thank the fire fairies for their light. Housework doesn't seem so dreadful because I know that when Ian observes me doing it, he sees me caring for our home and that supports his healthy development. We have a predictable routine that helps us get through our days smoothly. We still have rough spots, but from observing Ms. Khoshabo

and other parents, I have acquired tools for coping with them effectively so that I am less likely to raise my voice in frustration. And when I am particularly challenged and struggling, I know that it is okay for Ian to watch me strive to be a creative and disciplined parent. Thank you Ms. Khoshabo and Apple Blossom!



May Day

by Jennifer Ferrante

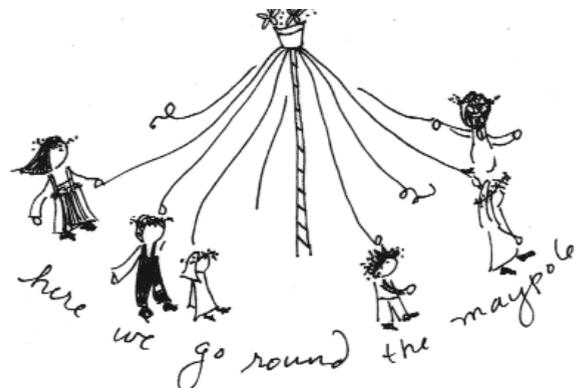
The May Day festival at Apple Blossom has become like other special holidays our family celebrates throughout the year. Our children joyfully anticipate its arrival for weeks in advance, making preparations—seeking out which flower beds and blossoming bushes in our yard they may wish to pick from on May Day morning, setting aside a special May Day dress that will swish and swirl as we dance around the May Pole, helping to prepare a dish for the potluck feast When the day arrives, they quickly wake without any prompting, nearly leaping from their beds, and begin getting ready for the journey to school.

This year, May Day was an especially moving celebration for us. Since attending parent toddler classes when she was just two, Cecilia, now almost five, has pre-

ferred observing other children dancing with the “snowy branch of May” and holding on to our or her teacher’s hands while dancing around the May Pole. This time, after a full year of “blossoming” within the gentle yet secure embrace of the Kindergarten, she held the branch with pride, joy and excitement. She skipped gleefully around the May Pole with her friends and teachers holding just her May Pole ribbon!

Not only was May Day a moving day for us as a family, it was a moving day for us as part of the Apple Blossom community. Seeing how large our May circle has grown in just a year was quite powerful.

The images of all of our children – laughing and singing, joining the May dance, running up and down the hill, frolicking with the baby goats—will stay with us, and warm our hearts, throughout the year.





Alison Riordan's OATMEAL PANCAKES (with Walnuts) (Dairy-Free if you like!)

I thought I'd miss our weekly indulgence of homemade buttermilk pancakes, until I revised the recipe I had for oatmeal pancakes. This is a versatile recipe and SO easy. There is no reason pancakes should come from a box! They are now a weekly (at least) treat and unbelievably delicious and nutritious:

- 1 1/4 cups of oatmeal (I use the McCann's quick cooking Irish oatmeal, not instant)
- 1 cup of plain or vanilla yogurt (cow, goat, whatever you like)
- 1 cup of milk (cow, soy, etc.)
- 1 teaspoon of honey or maple syrup
- 1/4 cup of wheat flour
- 1/4 cup of white flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- 1/4 cup chopped walnuts

Combine oats, yogurt, milk, and honey in bowl. Stir in flour, baking soda, salt. Add beaten eggs and mix well. Add walnuts (or whatever else suits your fancy: like bananas, chocolate chips, etc.) Spoon onto non-stick griddle over medium heat as you would pancakes.

Colleen O'Brien's CREAMY LEMON CHICKEN AND SPINACH CREPES (Perfect for a summer day)

- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, divided
- 1 tablespoon thinly sliced green onions
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon freshly grated lemon rind
- Dash of salt
- 1 pound skinned, boned chicken breasts, cut into 1/4 inch strips
- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil, divided
- 1/8 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup julienne-cut red bell pepper (optional)
- 1 ounce ham, minced
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 6 cups tightly packed fresh baby spinach leaves, chopped
- 1/4 cup sour cream or sour cream alternative (I use Tofutti Sour Supreme)
- 2 tablespoon mayonnaise or soy mayonnaise (I use Nayonnaise)

Crepes :

Combine 2 tablespoons lemon juice and next four ingredients in a medium bowl; stir with a wire whisk until blended. Add the chicken and toss to coat. Cover and marinate in the

refrigerator for one hour. Heat 1 teaspoon oil in a large non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the chicken mixture; sauté 4 minutes or until chicken is done. Spoon mixture into a bowl; sprinkle with remaining tablespoon lemon juice and pepper. Set aside. Heat remaining teaspoon oil in skillet over medium-high heat. Add bell pepper, minced ham and garlic, and sauté 1 minute. Add chopped spinach, and toss well. Cover, reduce heat to medium, and cook 2 minutes or until spinach wilts; add to chicken mixture. Stir in sour cream and mayonnaise. Spoon 1/3 cup chicken mixture into center of each crepe; fold each crepe in half, then in quarters. Serve warm. Yield: 4 servings of 2 filled crepes each

Crepes:

- 3/4 cup skim milk or rice milk
- 2/3 cup all-purpose flour
- Dash of salt
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons thinly sliced green onions
- Vegetable cooking spray

Combine first four ingredients in container of an electric blender; cover and process until smooth, scraping sides of container occasionally with a rubber spatula. Pour batter into a bowl; stir in green onions. Cover and chill 30 minutes. Coat an 8-inch crepe pan or non-stick skillet with cooking spray, and place over medium heat until hot. Remove pan from heat, and spoon three tablespoons batter into pan; quickly tilt pan in all directions so batter covers pan with a thin film. Cook about 1 1/2 minutes. Carefully lift edges of crepe to test for doneness. Crepe is ready to turn when it can be shaken loose from pan. Turn crepe, and cook 1 minute on other side. Place crepe on a towel, and allow to cool. Repeat procedure until all of the batter is used. Stack crepes between single layers of wax paper or parchment paper to prevent sticking. Yield: 8 crepes



A FLOWER GARDEN

-Jessica Khoshaba, Nursery

With the workday as a communal effort just behind us, it strikes me again and again what a wonderful community Apple Blossom is, and how much power and strength lies in that. Just thinking back one year, it is hard to imagine how different our space looked then. With our combined efforts we have built a wonderful school in so little time! What a gift to our children to see their parents working together in creating something so beautiful! But not only is the physical space beautiful, even more beautiful are the people in our school with all their differences.

For me the Apple Blossom community is like a beautiful flower garden, with many different types of flowers and colors, each one bringing its own beauty, strength and imperfections. Through the support of the whole, everyone can feel welcome and find their place to make their “blossoms shine.”

Just recently it became very clear to me how conflict and struggle are necessities in our lives; both can inspire great learning. The struggle begins with the infant, who sometimes struggles to learn how to nurse. Through conflict and struggle, however,



very soon the infant will perfect nursing. For every great learning experience that makes us better people, I believe we have to go through some conflict and struggle. There are many hurdles to overcome in childhood (and big goals are achieved, like walking, speaking, and thinking). As adults, parenting and interacting with other adults are the most challenging tasks, but I think they can also be the most rewarding, helping us in our striving for openness to receive and being able to give to others.

This task of inner striving is a big part of the work of the Waldorf teacher. We recognize that our schools and classrooms are not finished products, but more like workshops where we learn and grow as we teach and interact with each other and community. At the Apple Blossom School, we four teachers focus in weekly meetings on supporting each other in our striving, because it is the striving that is directly reflected in the classroom. Although we are only four teachers, there are differences between all of us and the way we do things, and sometimes it takes time and openness to find a common ground. It is through the differences, however, that we learn, and can support each other; the beauty of a flower meadow is made through the magnitude of its different flowers and colors.

NURSERY NEWS: *An Observation*

This year the Rose Nursery was blessed with the arrival of three new younger siblings (and one on the way!). This has inspired wonderful doll play and caring for the “babies.”

Birth and the beginning of a new life truly is a miracle and it is wonderful to observe how the older sibling takes part in it. It was quite special this year to be able to see, three times, how the older sibling takes part in the arrival of his or her new brother or sister. In the beginning, when the news is shared with the class, the child mirrors the excitement of the parents, knowing that something special will happen, but not really grasping it because for now everything is still the same. Then for a while there will be hardly any talk about it and one could almost forget that a new baby is arriving. This changes at about three to four weeks before the birth. It has been fascinating for me to observe this change in the older child every time. Now the soon-to-be older brother or sister becomes restless and unsettled, behaving in a very different way from his or her usual self. It is almost like a contraction that climaxes with the birth of the new baby. And the first day back at school after the new baby is born is truly a special day. The child who had behaved so differently for the previous month, now again comes in as a changed child. This time the

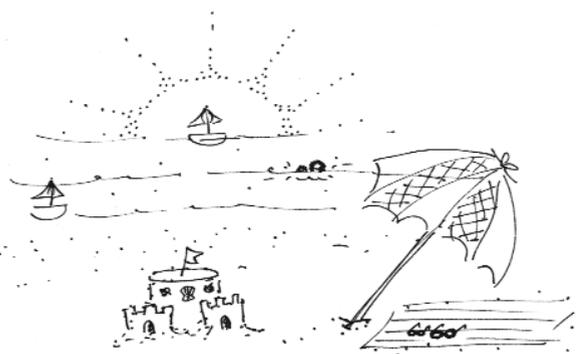
change becomes visible through calmness and the miracle and wonder of birth shines through his or her eyes. A new child enters the class room having changed into an older brother or sister and taking this role very seriously.

-Jessica Khoshaba, Nursery

PARENT/TODDLER NEWS

Our Parent/ Toddler program has been in such popular demand that this Spring we offered an extra session on Mondays with visiting teacher Claudine Colett. In the Fall we plan to go back to our former schedule of only offering class on Mondays and Fridays 9:30 until 11:30.





CREATING A SUMMER RHYTHM

Reflections from the Merry Bells Class

To plan your day with a consciousness of rhythm for your child is a gift to your child and yourself. It is rhythm that offers children the discipline they need. It is rhythm that makes them feel safe and supports them, as well as the clear boundaries that are created for them. It is rhythm that is best friend to parent, teacher and child.

Think of it this way:

Breathe in. Breathe out ...

Breathe in. Breathe out ...

Breathe in. Breathe out ...

The rhythm of breathing.

The rhythm of the waves.

Contraction ... Expansion ...

Activities initiated by children such as free play indoors or out are an outward breath (expansion). Activities led by the parent or teacher are an inward breath (contraction). Children need freedom to play and explore on their own without adult interference, unless their safety is at stake, and they need form for self-discipline. Rhythm helps to create a form for them to feel secure and held and cared for.

How to create a summer rhythm that supports your children, yourself and the Waldorf system of education you have chosen to be a part of? Here are some examples: As summer can be more leisurely because many families don't have to rush out the door, think about setting the breakfast table with fresh garden flowers and a candle to greet the children as they come down the stairs. It is good for children to walk into an environment that has already been warmed by the presence of a parent. Perhaps a lit candle and a verse before breakfast? There are many beautiful poems about summer. An in breath.

Then, the children will go off to play while you pack up for the beach or for a morning in the garden. An out breath.

Then the car ride to wherever the morning takes you. An in breath.

And then, your children playing on the beach or in the garden. An out breath.

During the time that you are at the beach you can still create a rhythm. Every hour or so you can gather

your children on the blanket, give them their favorite nutritious snack and drink, put on extra sun screen and make sure that they still have their sun hats on. Read a story. An in breath.

And off they go to return to play. An out breath.

Perhaps lunch will be a picnic or perhaps the children will be gathered up to go home. After lunch, a long quiet time with a fan on and the curtains closed to the summer heat, a story told or read. The whole house resting is a beautiful picture, including a rest for Mom or Dad. An in breath.

And then, back outside to explore the back yard. An out breath.

Imagine the evening hours as a long in breath preparing for the long journey into sleep. How far away we travel in sleep!

A few reminders for the summer:

Limit choices, set boundaries, limit adult conversation, encourage self-directed play for your child by engaging in healthy activity yourself and fully enjoying the process (gardening, handwork, woodwork, cooking, cleaning), have a media-free summer, nurture your children's senses, create rhythms, respect transitions, slow down, take your shoes off, walk in the sand, look at the stars ...

Breathe in. Breathe out. -*Marcia Marquis, Kindergarten*

CRAP! CORNER

In the spirit of spring and blossoming blooms, we believe a little flower pressing is in order! Pressed flowers are great for greeting cards, potpourri, bookmarks, decoupage, and decorations for picture frames, candles and scrapbooks. You will need: flowers, herbs and leaves, a heavy book, newspaper, tissue (or blotting) paper, cardboard (each the same size as your book), and a heavy item like a brick or a rock.

Method: Layer cardboard, newspaper and tissue paper, then place your flowers on the tissue paper, making sure none of them touch each other or hang over the side of the tissue paper. Sandwich the flowers with another piece of tissue paper, newspaper, and cardboard. You can keep stacking these layers for all of your flowers. Top it off with your heavy book and the brick or stone. Leave for about 2 - 4 weeks before removing the pressed flowers. You can store your dried flowers in an opaque, airtight container, which will protect them from light and humidity.

Tips: It is recommended to pick or cut the flowers on a dry day, preferably in the morning, as soon as any dew has dried. Thin out the petals of thicker flowers or cut in half before pressing. Always use flowers of the same thickness in each layer so they press evenly.

Please send craft questions for publication in our next newsletter to LianeBernard@optonline.net.

Music and Merriment: An Evening to Remember

by Joanna Simpson

On May 7th, we were excited to celebrate the second anniversary of Apple Blossom School and Family Center with an evening of good friends, food, and entertainment at the Fat Cat Cafe in Norwalk. The food, wine and venue were generously donated by the Ancona family (thank you so much Mark and Jacinta), so all of our proceeds went directly to Apple Blossom. We raised \$4,400!

Early in the morning, Apple Blossom parents adorned the walls with pictures of our lovely children photographed at our May Day Festival. Sweet faces seemed to dance off the mats lovingly lazured by Eileen Curry and Aline Ricardo in pink hues. Hours and several rolls of duct tape later, they were still attempting to jump off the brick walls with every vibration! Then came the flowers. Aline Ricardo and Tracy Tomas set out votives and lovely floral arrangements.

At six o'clock, the evening commenced with amazing jazz music by Robert Aries as guests sampled hors d'oeuvres and a selection of cheeses. Small production wines and organic pizzas and salads were next, followed by Deb Curran's amazing black bean brownies and my own five-layer cookie bars (which undid all of the health gains of Deb's brownies).

The piece-de-resistance came when Laura Whyte sang "All the Things You Are," "Can't Help Loving That Man," and "The Man I Love," accompanied by Robert. I don't think there was a dry eye in the room. Everyone burst into song when Laura sang "Climb Every Mountain," a tribute to our teachers and the journey of creating Apple Blossom.

In honor of Tom Storrier's birthday, Laura sang "Edelweiss" and he blew out a candle on a celebratory cupcake. Anecdotally, when the candle was lit, I was standing next to Tom (whom I had not met before) and whispered to him frantically, "Where is he?" (the birthday man). "It's me!" he said. It was very funny!

A parent who had recently organized another successful fundraiser that really took off the third year, offered a horticulturist's quote about the growth of trees that she thought fitting: "The first year a tree sleeps, the second year it creeps and third year it leaps." With our own fundraiser, I think we were lucky enough to jump to the second stage, and are confident that when word spreads about how lovely a time "Music and Merriment" was this year, we will be able to double our turnout next year and be even more successful. Thanks to everyone who made the evening so special!

Committee Update

Outreach and Enrollment: Apple Blossom opened its doors to the business community this spring, giving local businesses a chance to "meet and greet" and allowing us to further raise awareness of our school. We are also happy to report that we are at full enrollment for the 2006-07 year! Thanks as always for spreading the word. -*Tracy Castelli Tomas*

Grounds: What a wonderful day our May spring cleaning day turned out to be! Even the sun came out, and it was just the right weather for outdoor work. Once again the Apple Blossom School had a very successful workday. A lot of digging went on outside, and a sand box, garden beds and a new pathway were created. Meanwhile, our cubby room received its finishing touches and a clear path to the play yard was prepared. It is always amazing how much can be achieved with the help of many hands, especially those little ones of the chil-

dren. One of our famously delicious Apple Blossom potlucks rounded off this beautiful day! It was truly a wonderful communal event. Thank you all for your hard work and for the donations of fencing and sand! Your contributions have helped to create a wonderful outside play area for the children! -*Jessica Khoshabo*

Fundraising: Our "Music and Merriment" fundraiser raised \$4400. Three quarters of our families were able to attend and many who were unable to come still made generous contributions! In addition, we sold \$700 in tickets to families outside our community and made \$300 in photograph sales. Thanks to everyone who helped make this such a success!

In addition, Apple Blossom was the grateful recipient of more than \$400 in profits from Aline Ricardo's lovely spring bazaar, as well as proceeds from our ever-growing school store. -*Joanna Simpson*

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.

Apple Blossom Events and Announcements

Monday, June 5 and Tuesday, June 6. School photos.

Friday, June 9. Last Day of School. Please join us rain or shine for an **all school closing ceremony at noon**, followed by a picnic. Grandparents are welcome. Please bring a blanket and lunch for your family.

*There are still a few spots open in our **Summer Programs**. "Stepping-Stone" (ages 2 ½ to 3 ½ runs from **July 24 to August 4**. "Little Larks" (ages 3 to 6 1/2) runs from **July 24 to August 4**, and again from **August 7 to August 18**. Please contact Deb Curran if you wish to enroll.

*As in the last two years, the Handworks Group will continue meeting during the summer. We will return to Wednesdays from 9:30 am until lunchtime. It is a wonderful opportunity for the children to play as well as for the parents to gather and catch up. Locations rotate among our homes or nearby parks. If you are interested in meeting during the coming months, please let Carolyn Storrier know via e-mail (thschs@optonline.net) or by phone (834-2493). The first gathering will take place at the Storrier home on **Wednesday, June 14th**. See you there!

*The school store will soon be offering WELEDA Products. WELEDA Personal Care products and Baby Care has pioneered the development of organic body care

since 1921. WELEDA's purest ingredients, all-natural, organic or biodynamic come directly from nature. The store will be introducing a few products at a 25% discount from manufacturer's retail price. If anyone has a favorite product from the line, please let Eileen Curry know and she can include it in the next order. All profits help our school.

*Congratulations to the McCann family on the arrival of Roisin, Conor's new baby sister!

*We want to thank the Apple Blossom community for helping to make our first year in our new home so wonderful! How is it possible that it has only been a year and so much has been accomplished? It is testimony to the power of will and support of the angels. Thank you most of all for giving your children the gift of Waldorf education.
- *Marcia Marquis, Erika Loker, Jessica Khoshaba*

As we prepare to celebrate the end of our second year at Apple Blossom, we wish to thank Ms. Marquis, Ms. Loker, Ms. Khoshabo, Ms. Clements, Ms. Kelly and Ms. Colett for their continued dedication to our children and school, and for the beautiful gifts they give to our little ones each and every day. - *Apple Blossom Parents*

Newsletter edited by Jennifer Ferrante and Joanna Simpson. Illustrations by Erika Loker.

Waldorf Community Events

Fri.-Sat., June 2-3. Organic Beekeeping workshop at Sunbridge College.

Sat., June 10. Breadbaking workshop at Sunbridge College.

Wed., June 28, 7:30 pm. Storytelling with Susan Strauss at Sunbridge College.

Aug. 13-18, Summer Eurhythmy Week at Sunbridge College.

Workshops and Lectures

Apple Blossom School and Family Center plays two roles, as an early childhood school grounded in Waldorf philosophy and as a family center serving local families through adult education on parenting and related topics, including nutrition and crafts. In the latter role, this school year we hosted Nancy Foster (early childhood Waldorf teacher and author) twice with discussions on "Creating a Family Culture" and "Creative Play," as well as Louise DeForest (visiting faculty at Sunbridge College, early childhood Waldorf teacher and author) on "Discipline: Working with the Will of the Young Child."

In the fall, parents made fall pocket children, which sold beautifully at our school store, and in the winter, made tooth fairy pillows.

Apple Blossom's goal is consistently to offer discussion topics of interest, and provide creative outlets for

our community that will allow all of us to learn and grow as parents and individuals. We hope you will support the school by attending future discussions and bringing a family member or friend. Keep an eye out for some amazing speakers who will share their wisdom and expertise in the Fall of 2006!

- *Carolyn Storrier*

