



# February 2007 Newsletter

The 2 weekly lunch menus alternate every week. As always, Soy Nut Butter sandwiches and fruit are available every day.

- **Menu for weeks beginning March 4, March 18 & April 2 will be...**

**Monday:** Spaghetti Marinara with Garlic Bread

**Tuesday:** Tacos with all the fixings

**Wednesday:** Hot Dog on a Bun with Pickles and Chips

**Thursday:** Grilled Cheese with Tomato Soup

**Friday:** Cheese Pizza and Salad

- **Menu for weeks beginning March 11 & March 25 will be...**

**Monday:** Spaghetti Marinara with Garlic Bread

**Tuesday:** Lasagna, Bread Sticks and Salad

**Wednesday:** Cold Cuts on a Bun with Pickles and Chips

**Thursday:** Macaroni & Cheese with Buns and Pickles

**Friday:** Cheese Pizza and Salad

## ***Building Community***

***By Iman L. Khan***

It is hard to believe that March is already upon us. And although the recent weather may not indicate it as yet, the calendar gently reminds us that spring is just around the corner. It is in my reflections upon the approaching end of the 2006-2007 school year that I felt compelled to explore the idea of "*community*." What does it mean to be a part of a community, what does it take to build and maintain a strong one, and where do we stand as a community here at Nature's Classroom Montessori? I humbly request you ponder on your own reflections as I present my exploration and research on the meaning of community and what we can do as a school to become a more positive manifestation of the beautiful philosophies our children practice daily within their classrooms.

Webster's dictionary defines "*Community*" as a unified body of individuals; an interacting population of various kinds of people in a common location; living together within a larger

society. The word “unified” stood out most to me in that it implies a sense of support and strength. Studies have proven the benefits of a strong community and having support from others, not only on a child’s learning and emotional development, but also on the parent/family as a whole (Uhlendorff, 2000). And while parents may not often turn to others for help or advice, there are many reasons why seeking this support is beneficial:

- \* Parents who have access to and seek the support of others tend to be more warm and affectionate toward their children.
- \* Parents with large social networks tend to be more involved in their children’s education, which results in better school performance among the children.
- \* Parents who have large social networks tend to have children with larger social networks.

Our children’s classrooms are wonderful examples of how community evolves and functions. It is lovely to observe the respect they display not only for each other, but for themselves and for their environment. They begin to learn very quickly in their “connected” space how the actions of one can have a tremendous effect on the whole. But a community can not exist with participation from only a few individuals. It is through the collaboration of all, striving to understand one another, sharing knowledge and insights that allow for a community to grow and to flourish. It is no secret that our community outside of the classrooms may be lacking or may not have always been perceived as “welcoming,” as it could be. Perhaps there are some who feel they have made an effort and are now comfortable in their own groups, or maybe there are some whom have given up entirely or whom have chosen not to make any effort for fear of being rejected. Whatever the reasons may be, it is important to remember that we have all chosen to be a part of Nature’s Classroom Montessori and all of our efforts are needed to create a healthy community that surrounds, supports and secures our children. Promoting an inclusive environment contributes to the whole; the practice of exclusion disrupts the balance and creates separations. It is extremely sad to think of the families we may have lost, or families that are considering leaving due to the perception that there is a lack of community at NCM.

So, where do we go from here? It is my thought to solicit some proactive and creative strategies by the establishment of **“Project PABC” (Parents Actively Building Community)**. I envision as many participants as willing, to discuss via email or by meeting once a month, activities or strategies for building and supporting each other as a school community. Perhaps we have a family who has suffered a loss, or has had a new baby; it would be *Project PABC* who would coordinate the sending of flowers or delivering a meal or two. Or maybe *Project PABC* could coordinate another Chili-Cook Off night or something similar, as that seemed to be an event that was enjoyed earlier in the school year. Everyone would be welcome to participate in whatever capacity they were able to; ultimately creating a strong support network and a solid community that we can all benefit from; including our children.

My first contribution to *Project PABC* is the creation of a 5-6 year old weekly summer playgroup. I will be emailing those families whose children will be considered Children’s House Extended Day for next year. The idea is simply to establish a regular weekly play date at a park, or maybe one week it is at the zoo or planetarium; in an effort to promote continued social development and perhaps ease the often bumpy transitioning period of starting back at school. It would be great to have volunteers to initiate a 3-4 year

old playgroup, and elementary age playgroups as well. Please if you are interested in volunteering to initiate a playgroup, email myself: [iman@nciw.org](mailto:iman@nciw.org) or sherry: [sherry@nciw.org](mailto:sherry@nciw.org) and we can get you the list of children for specific age groups.

If you are interested in contributing to *Project PABC*, please let me know. I am acting only as an initiator and will need the help of all of us together to create new ideas and insights into how we can actively build our community. You may email me with your ideas, volunteer to create a function or activity, propose a meeting schedule, etc... Everyone has a voice; with the past behind us we can now move forward to a new day. A day filled with numerous possibilities to create a more collective community that we can all feel a part of.



## **Greetings from Ms. Shannon & Ms. Wilma**

February flew by in our classroom! We began the month discussing Phil the Groundhog, and lucky for us he did not see his shadow! The children had a blast singing a little ditty about groundhogs and talking about their own shadows. The children also had a lovely Valentine's celebration. They shared their special Valentine's notes, frosted heart shaped cookies and had a lively conversation about who 'Valentine' was.

With the weather cooperating we have actually been able to head back outside! With all the snow melting the children are likely to get quite muddy. Please be sure to send boots and always keep an extra set of clothes at school.

### **Classroom Needs:**

- Magazines – National Geographic, etc.
- Random objects to count and sort- buttons, beads, etc.
- Old craft supplies for our collage table

### **Songs**

Here's a little groundhog, furry and brown,  
He's popping up to look around.  
If he sees his shadow, down he'll go.  
Then six more weeks of winter - Oh No!!  
(Sung to the tune of I'm a Little Teapot)

There's Sunday and there's Monday  
There's Tuesday and there's Wednesday  
There's Thursday and there's Friday  
And then there's Saturday!  
Days of the week (snap, snap)  
Days of the week (snap, snap)  
Days of the week, days of the week, days of the week (snap, snap)  
(Sung to the "Addams Family" tune)

## **New! From Extended Day**

The children have been making great use of our fantastic Montessori materials. We have spent a great deal of time learning about the decimal system and practicing four digit addition with the Golden Bead materials. The children are also practicing single digit addition independently with fun addition wheels.

We have started a handwriting curriculum with the Extended Day Program that is focused on creating letters using correct form. They each have their own workbook with lessons on each letter. The children are doing great with these lessons!



I recently began using the new Friday communication form. I will be sending this home every other Friday. If you have any questions please let me know.

## **Greetings from Ms. Mary Sue and Ms. Deepa**

The children have enjoyed, thanks to Deepa, experiencing various stories, tastes, smells, music and other arts from different regions of India. These experiences have opened the door to World Maps that outline not only the names of the continents, but the people and animals who live there as well. Our next continent of study will be North America with a focus on Central America. If you have traveled to this area, please feel free to share photos and/or objects of interest.

Though the students spent some of their gross motor time indoors this past month, due to the extreme cold, we have enjoyed learning and practicing many essential skills indoors. We have utilized a variety of songs and dances that practice several skills i.e., running, walking, crawling, trotting, galloping, sliding, skipping, twirling, crab-walking, and hopping. Here are some of the benefits:

**balance** – the ability to maintain equilibrium

**body awareness** – for improved posture and control

**laterality** – awareness of the left and right sides of the body

**major muscle co-ordination**

**spatial orientation** – awareness of the body position in space and in relation to other objects or people

**Here are a few ideas for you at home:**

1. Play with a ball. Encourage your child to kick the ball, using one foot and then the other. Then throw and catch it too.
2. Encourage your child to ride a bike, a push bike or pedal bike with or without side-wheels, according to your child's ability.
3. Play "Simon says - do this." Say those words and do an action that your child must copy. When you say "Simon says do **that**" she must NOT do the action.
4. To teach your child spatial relations, ask her to stand in front of a chair, behind a chair, next to the chair, on top of the chair and crouch under the chair. This too can be made into a game.
5. To develop her sense of laterality, let your child kneel on the floor, then instruct her in turn to lift her left hand, lift her right leg etc. This can be done together as parent/child exercises.
6. Tell your child that she must be your shadow and mimic all your actions as your walk about and perform simple actions.
7. Learn action songs and perform the actions as you sing them.
8. Ask your child to imitate the movement of different animals: creep like a snake, waddle like a duck, hop like a rabbit etc.
9. Encourage her to balance first on one leg, then on the other for as long as possible.
10. Ask your child to gallop like a horse.



Please continue to send boots, hats and snow pants everyday!

It affects the entire community when friends cannot participate in the hikes and other fun, outdoor activities.

## Song

**I'M GLAD I'M ME** (Words and Music by Hap Palmer)  
*Hap Palmers, **Getting to Know Myself** cd is great for both sunny and rainy days!*

*This is a story 'bout Sammy  
His father sent him out to buy bread  
But Sammy didn't fee like walkin'  
He wished he could fly instead, and he said,*

*"If I were a bird I would fly to the store,  
Fly to the store, fly to the store  
If I were a bird I would fly to the store  
Fly to the store for my father."*

*This is a story 'bout Sammy  
His father sent him out to buy bread  
But Sammy didn't feel like walkin'  
He wished he could gallop instead, and he said,*

*"If I were a pony I would gallop to the store,  
Gallop to the store, gallop to the store  
If I were a pony I would gallop to the store  
Gallop to the store for my father."*

*This is a story 'bout Sammy  
His father sent him out to buy bread  
But Sammy didn't feel like walkin'  
He wished they could jump instead, and he said*

*"If I were a kangaroo I would jump to the store,  
Jump to the store, jump to the store  
If I were a kangaroo I would jump to the store  
Jump to the store for my father."*

*Then Sammy remembered about the loaf of bread  
And he knew he better move along  
And as he walked, he had a smile  
And made up a brand new song,*

*I'm glad I'm me and I'm walking to the store  
Walking to the store, walking to the store  
I'm glad I'm me and I'm walking to the store  
Walking to the store for my father.*

## Greetings from Elementary!

Spring is coming! We are looking forward to signs of spring gracing us soon, along with all of the studies that accompany this change of season. The Vernal Equinox is a day of balance, with days and nights roughly equal in length... Stay tuned for more!

### Gratitude

We extend our gratitude to all of the members of our community that have reached out to contribute to the Nature's Classroom learning environment. Many of you have donated time, money and energy to our classroom this year – please know your efforts and contributions are appreciated. We would like to give a special thanks to Renae Robran for her continuous efforts in helping us create materials, Shelly Schilling for aiding in the Scholastic Book orders, Tammy Weber for helping with the book fair setup and her continuous help with Coffee and Scram, Missy Cleary and Colleen Bertschinger for organizing Spring Fling, and Tim Griffin for assisting with the wood burning we are doing to prepare for Spring Fling. Many families purchased books from the Book Fair and purchased books for the classroom – this is helping us grow our classroom library and get some multiple copies to use for literature circles. Thanks also for the many contributions to the travel basket... it's loaded!

### Conferences

We enjoyed meeting with our student's families for conferences this past week. Thank you for all of your insights and support. If you have any further questions as the year continues to unfold, do not hesitate to leave us a voice mail. We will do our best to get back with you and set up a time to meet. As always, it is a pleasure working with your children and communication is important to your child's success.

### Spring Fling

We look forward to seeing you at the Spring Fling this Saturday. Our class has put together a Travel Basket, as you probably know, that is loaded with games and activities that are fun to do while traveling. Ms. Shella and Ms. Cathy combined efforts and donated a child's size Adirondack chair set that the children are now wood burning. Not only are these items treasures, they are a reflection of the good that comes from team work. We look forward to seeing all of you Saturday for this special



event.

## Nature's Classroom Institute

Ms. Shella is looking forward to sharing the NCI experience with the lower elementary students in April. Please go to the Nature's Classroom website and complete the forms located in the Parent Packet information. We would like to have these forms by next Monday, March 12<sup>th</sup>.

### Math

Ms. Shella will be procuring a math review with students in 3rd-6<sup>th</sup> grades on Mondays. The students will work on the even problems of the review during the week. If it is not finished by Friday, it will come home to be completed at home. Please return this assignment on Monday, if it needs to be completed. The completed review will then be sent home. If you feel that your child needs more reinforcement on the concepts, he or she may complete the odd problems at home. Thank you!

### Unity

I dreamed I stood in a studio  
And watched two sculptors there.  
The clay they used was a young child's mind  
And they fashioned it with care.

One was the teacher—the tools he used  
Were books, music and art.  
The other, a parent worked with a guiding hand  
And a gentle, loving heart.

Day after day, the teacher toiled with touch  
That was careful, deft and sure.  
While the parent labored by his side  
And polished and smoothed it o'er.

And when, at last, their task was done,  
They were proud of what they had wrought.  
For the things they had molded into the child  
Could neither be sold or bought.

And each agreed they would have failed  
If each had worked alone.  
For behind the parent stood the school,  
And behind the teacher, the home.

(author unknown)