

May 2005 Newsletter



Nature's Classroom Montessori

Dear Parents,

We will be sending out our First Day of School and School Calendar Information in our early-August mailing. Our returning primary students and all of our elementary students will begin school on Tuesday, September 6th. Our new primary students will arrive throughout the week beginning on September 7th. New primary students will receive their scheduled starting-date in the early-August mailing packet.

An Introduction to Ms. Kelsey Hills

We would like to take this opportunity to introduce Kelsey Hills and welcome her to our community. Kelsey will be joining Nature's Classroom Montessori as the Primary Program Coordinator. She will serve as a mentor and resource for the 3 - 6 year staff, assist with enrollment and parent education, and lay the foundation for Infant-Toddler programs at Nature's Classroom.

Kelsey comes to us with 10 years of experience as a Montessori educator. She has worked at schools in the Chicago area and Winona, MN. Kelsey is a second generation Montessorian and attended her mother's Montessori preschool!

As the parent of a 5 year old, Kelsey understands the unique needs of the young child and their parents. She wants parents to know that she is always available to them. They are always welcome to come to her with any questions or concerns.

A Word From Ms. Erin

I find it astonishing that we are approaching the end of the school year. It is a pleasure for me to think of the growth that has occurred within our class throughout that time. In celebration of the new season, we are thankfully welcoming the return of spring. The children have been diligently watching the progression of the seeds we have nurtured and cared for in hopes of eventually observing the sprouting of a new plant. It is a practice in patience to say the least.

All of this is a bit of a metaphor for what I experience daily while at Nature's Classroom. Just as the seed requires sun, soil, water, time, and care in hopes of eventually growing into a healthy plant, the children entering into my room each day likewise come with specific care instructions. Each of them is their own seed with their independent needs. I can tell when they have received "too much sun" or "not enough water." The most magnificent part about this analogy is that it is a mystery as to what might blossom from this tiny seed.

Differing from a seed packet you may pick up from the store, there is no ending description or picture for how these children might develop. They get to choose what kind of flower or plant they will become. Each day I watch the children grow and change and find it so exciting to anticipate the person they are emerging into. I am lucky enough to be a witness to this growth.

Just as a cactus would not be expected to survive in the marsh, nor a cattail prosper in the desert, these children need an environment that is fitting to each of them as individuals. Although we are a community that works to benefit the whole, our community is comprised of individual little persons just beginning their journey to self -- a journey that will last a lifetime.

As I watch these children be challenged, develop, and change, I am humbled by all that they accomplish and practice each day. Although I am considered the Directress and Guide within our environment, I can't say enough about how much my little friends have directed and guided me to what is right or what is necessary. When we slow ourselves and take the opportunity to truly listen to and watch these incredible little people,

they can teach us so much about living -- things that as adults we often can forget. Saying that, I will miss my mentors throughout the summer. I look forward to becoming reacquainted with my friends at the beginning of the new school year. I am eagerly anticipating the changes and renewed sense of discovery that they will have found during their time away from school.

As parents, thank you for investing so much into these children. They are fortunate to have such caring eyes looking out for their souls.

--- Ms. Erin

Afternoon Kindergarten Enrichment for 2005 - 2006

The structure of our 2005 - 2006 afternoon Kindergarten Enrichment program will be identical to our current system. We will divide the full-day students from the kindergarteners to allow the older children to fully explore our enrichment materials.

Our primary teachers and our Primary Program Coordinator are committed to continually enhancing this enrichment program. This portion of the day allows for advanced work in all academic areas. It also serves as an important transition to the elementary classroom.



Elementary News

It's mid-May, time has flown, the children have grown, and the end is near. It's been a wonderful, exciting year full of new experiences from the classroom to Ecolab. Over the course of the year, we have become a very close community and the end of the year is coming too fast. During the last few weeks of school we will be focusing on a review of the major concepts of the year's curriculum and a year-end field trip that will be paid for with our earning from Coffee 'n Scram.

Recently, each child has had the opportunity, or will have the opportunity, to plan an Ecolab where they design the activities and decide where we go. As you could guess, we had another experience with our fish study (fishing) on Rice Lake, we've been pulling weeds (Honeysuckle and Buckthorn) in the Enchanted Forest, been birding with some quiet reflective time, ventured back to Beulah Bog for a scavenger hunt, simulated a wolf-pack in the prairie, and spent several sessions with our green thumbs in the garden.

As this year winds down, we keep our eyes on the horizon as we look forward to the Kindergarteners and new students that will be joining our community. It will be a new and exciting time as we grow and change.

On the last day of school, Friday, June 3rd, the 6 - 12 students will be helping the 3 - 6 with the Peace Parade and then they will display their year-end projects for everyone to enjoy. They've put a lot of effort into these projects, so come with smiles and many questions. All families are welcome!

-- Mr. David

An Additional Note:

If you've had a favorite Coffee 'n Scram treat throughout the year, mention it and we might bake it again!

A Word from Ms. Anne

Dear Parents,

I have had a fantastic year this year and feel so blessed to have met all of you and your children. I came to the Montessori program with no experience with three to six year olds. Your children have taught me so much everyday. They have taught me to stop and examine each insect, twig, and tree because there may be an exciting secret discovery missed with a first glance. They have taught me that there is a story behind every experience, and everything in life is an exciting new adventure.

My adventure this year is coming to an end and I am going to miss all of you so much, but I am going to pursue new adventures with older children. I have decided to look into teaching middle school or high school age students. Although I have learned so much and loved all I have done this year, my true passion is teaching older students. When your children get older and our program grows, I may well come back to a Nature's Classroom Montessori Middle School program. For now, however, I am applying at local middle and high schools. Scott and I will still be living at Nature's Classroom, so I will see you all from time to time. Thanks for your daily smiles, anecdotes, and friendships, but most especially for your children who make me laugh and smile each day.

Sincerely,

Anne Fowler



A Message from Ms. Stacey

I am finding it hard to believe that this is the last newsletter article of the year. I am not sure exactly where the time has gone. I am glad to see that the weather is starting to warm up. The growing world around us is intoxicating and the children have been having a wonderful time romping around the property ... and I do literally mean romping!

Exuberant smiles have not only infiltrated our busy outdoors, but indoors as well. A mystical hush has fallen upon our room. Children are finding peace in their work and an inner joy in their daily discoveries. This time of year is always a wonderful time to observe the children during their work cycle because the world quite literally disappears around them, as by now, their sitting concentration is so strong.

In the weeks to come, we will be taking our exploration to the skies. Working with the planets is always a very special time and opens up worlds of conversation. All of our puzzle maps are also out and we are focusing on Australia... or, as the kids kind-heartedly will remind each other, "where Mr. Geoffrey is from." As our outdoor gardens grow, we will begin some of our own planting experiments indoors as well as some flower arranging.

Our older children have been having a very exciting experience with their rock-climbing. They have had to push themselves beyond their comfort-zones and, by doing so, they have gained a world of confidence. I would like to invite all the "Kinder" parents to come and watch their children climb for the last time this year on Wednesday, June 1st at 2 pm. They will climb the large indoor rock wall. We will be meeting in the gym. The children are very excited to show off their new-found rock-climbing skills! Feel free to bring siblings and other relatives if you like.

I would like to end on a personal note. Thank you, parents, for all of your help in making your child's year enjoyable. With a tear in my eye and a bittersweet smile on my face, I not only say good-bye to a wonderful year full of laughs, but good-bye (for now) to my time here at Nature's Classroom. I have decided to take a job at a very small, one-classroom Montessori school in Charlevoix, Michigan. The school is looking to expand and will provide me with some new and challenging opportunities. I feel that because I am young, I want to take advantage of such opportunities in order to grow and become a better directress.

I have appreciated working with your children more than you will ever know. What an outstanding group of personalities! You, as parents and volunteers, have helped build such a strong community of support for one another and the school. I will hold all of the special memories of your children's discoveries close to my heart always. Watching them blossom over the last two years has been absolutely magical.

The children do not yet know that I will not be returning to Nature's Classroom. I, as well as Erin, would like the opportunity to have a discussion with them at line time on Monday, May 16th. They may come home with questions, or you may want to talk about this with them at home. We want them to understand that just because I won't physically be here does not mean that they are not in my thoughts and in my heart always. I will make sure to keep in touch. Thank you a million times over and please have a spectacular summer!

--- With Love,

Ms. Stacey



End of Year Celebration

We are planning some very special events for 2004 - 2005 school term "End of Year Celebration!" We invite friends and family to join us in a fun-filled morning that acknowledges our students' efforts and accomplishments over the last year.

After morning drop-off, we are asking all visitors to find a good spot to watch our Children's House Peace Parade. Our students will be following a marked parade route from the Bisno Classroom (Ms. Erin's) to the Sycamores Building (Ms. Stacey's). Feel free to bring lawn chairs or blankets to sit on! After the parade, the primary students will lead visitors to the farm to meet their animal friends and take a stroll through the garden.

While the younger students head to the farm, the elementary students will present their project exhibits. The students each selected their own research project and then created their presentations as a cumulating work encompassing all classroom academic areas. The students will be displaying and presenting their work in the Shakespeare Building.

The morning will conclude with a cold-lunch potluck picnic. We strive to promote environmental-awareness in our students and ask that visitors please refrain from bringing disposable, single-use plates or utensils. We will have a washing-up station set-up for cleaning normal dishware, silverware, and cups. The day will end at approximately 11:30 a.m.

