



# The Observatory

Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School ~ Issue 4, January 2005

## Time Well Spent

by Marie Imai, LGSONS Director

Dear Families,

I didn't really make any New Year's resolutions because my record for even trying to keep them has been pretty dismal over the years. But..... if I had it would be to take my grandchildren for a walk in the woods - or on the beach - one day every week. Perhaps it would happen more regularly if I picked a specific day and made it a predictable part of our routine.

A few days ago, Megan, now 3 ½, and I took the "long way" through the redwoods above our house, down the zigzag trail to the old orchard and past Rebel's corral. It's about a 1 ½ mile circle. And what a day of discovery we had thanks to Megan and her young and watchful eyes. As we meandered up a steep curve she suddenly exclaimed "Grandma, I see a snake." And as we looked closely among the sprawling blackberry bushes we determined it was an alligator lizard with a long snake-like tail. We watched it there motionless for a few moments as I recounted my unsuccessful attempts to catch them without getting bitten and then poof! – it disappeared in a flash. The steepest part of this walk is at the beginning when everyone is fresh but we do walk slowly and find more treasures than when skipping downhill at the end.

Only five minutes later Megan called out "I see a mouse. I think it's dead." And fortunately it was, giving us unlimited time to examine it carefully, especially its remarkably big ears. Then Megan informed me that she wanted to bury it and so we dug a small hole with a stick and covered it with dirt and pretty leaves and berries. We made up a song to sing and shared our questions about its death. At first she wanted to bring it home to bury beside our dog, Bear, and the shrew mole that Teacher Jill brought to school one day but she was also OK with making a grave near where it was found. Megan is well on her way to an understanding of the cycles of life and death through her own concrete experiences.

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## Meeting Their Needs

by Angie Davidson, Board Chair

As I listened to Christopher Glover's talk, "Raising Resilient Children," I couldn't help but think about how the goals and philosophy of Mountain School line up with his four main points about children: all children need adults, need to feel competent, need to have positive experiences in meaningful activities, and need to be able to think.

Without a doubt, Mountain School helps a child develop a feeling of competence. I have watched my own daughters expand their comfort zones physically and socially. They've grown much more willing to take risks in climbing or splashing around in the creek, and more comfortable in the outdoors and in less than perfect weather. They hammer with gusto, go up and down the bunny hill, take quite long hikes and walks, and climb and slide happily; all a long way from where we were when we started. And they continue to attempt to cross the monkey bars even though they haven't mastered it yet. The fact that they keep trying is even more impressive than the eventual mastery will be, I think. Socially they've grown more at ease making new friends and speaking up for themselves. Where a carpool might have been daunting at first, they now leap in. And they seem to flow in and out of social interactions with their peers in a relatively easy way, confident in themselves. Thanks to Mountain School, they were able to practice these skills over

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Next we encountered an area where mushrooms were pushing up the soil through layers of wet leaves and even in the middle of the packed path. My naturalist friend, Bob, said they can even come up through asphalt! As we investigated we saw an unusual fungus that looked like sea coral and once again I hear Megan's excited voice, "Grandma, I see something special." And right next to one of the mushrooms was a tiny one inch long black salamander. Its body and legs were about the diameter of a toothpick or two. After researching it later we determined that it is called a slender salamander. I was astonished at Megan's ability to find all these creatures and decided that children really do have the advantage of being closer to the ground and are not burdened by an agenda of how far the walk is "supposed" to go.

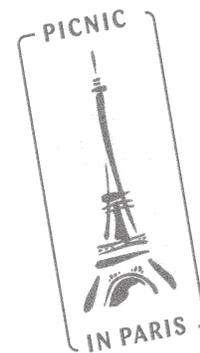
After several stops for snacks and drinks it was time to head home. Yet our walk would not have satisfied Megan without collecting and delivering some old apples to Rebel, our neighbor's old horse. She is not quite brave enough yet to feed him herself but she is fascinated with his mighty chomps and subsequent slobbering. Those two hours spent meandering around the woods were truly a gift for both of us. So don't wait – gather some children, some snacks, your boots and be gone. The sour grass is blooming and adventures await. Just ask your teacher if you need an idea of somewhere to go.

Love, Marie ☺

## Auction News!!!

*Theme: Picnic in Paris*

*Saturday, March 19th*



Save the date , Sat. March 19, 2005 for an evening under the Parisian stars! Please mark your calendars for a "Picnic in Paris". Make an evening of it, and invite some friends to join in the fun, tickets to be mailed out at the end of January!

*For more information call Heidi 408-264-2604 or Elissa 408-269-6988.*

(Meeting Their Needs, continued)

and over in a warm, supportive atmosphere, with Mom, Dad or another caring adult alongside.

Certainly Mountain School provides a wide variety of meaningful experiences. Exploring the outdoors (and themselves in the process), solving issues in the close confines of a carpool, creating art, exploring dramatic play, learning how to listen to teachers and other adults, and figuring out how to share during class: all are broad opportunities for growth. And I can't imagine anyone more positive than our teachers. Listening to them talk with my daughters in class and reading what they have to say in the margins of observations all teach me so much about who my daughters are and how they are unique. I love the mini-observations for this reason too: I read what all the parents in class have observed about my child and I smile for hours afterward. And then I go home and share them with my husband. There is my little girl, shining at something, seen through the eyes of someone who didn't have to struggle to get them dressed and out the door that morning. It is often hard, for me at least, to keep the inevitable frustrations from being my lens. The frictions between parent and child (or any two people living together, really) are there daily. But Mountain School really helps me allow those difficult moments to fall away and see my children for who they are, individuals with their own marvelous personalities and abilities. All of you, teachers and parents, help me focus on the positive, each and every day.

Mr. Glover said all children need to be able to think. Mountain School definitely helps us practice that. Each time a parent or teacher asks, "What do you think you could do?" or encourages our children to solve the problem with her friend, we are helping them learn to think. And this does not happen everywhere. When my older daughter started kindergarten, I was shocked at how many children, when faced with a difficulty with a classmate, said, "I'm telling!" and went straight to the teacher. How powerful we make our children by giving them the tools to think and encouraging them to do it for themselves. And it feeds yet again into their own sense of competence.

And as Mr. Glover vividly demonstrated, all children need adults. As he pointed out, a child's circle of adults

in the 21st century is very different from when many of us grew up, and it is difficult to try to replace that. For me growing up, the circle of adults looked very much like his first illustration: I lived within walking distance of one grandmother and a 10-minute drive of the other; more than a few of my teachers had taught my parents as well (although I'm not sure that was a good thing in many cases!), and most of the others were members of our church community; we knew the neighbors and coaches and their children. The web was tight. But although my children's circle doesn't look like exactly like that, our Mountain School community offers them a different one, also powerful. We regularly trade childcare with Mountain School friends. All our carpools through our preschool years have communicated frequently and worked to develop a common approach to difficulties that arise so we're all sending the same message, and we work hard to be flexible and help each other out when needed. Our teachers are wonderful, caring, involved people who truly love our children. They have come from within the school community; sometimes they were even our beloved classmates and now play a new role. All the parents in class contribute at school and help out anytime they see a child in need. The adults my children are surrounded with may not live in the same 5-block radius, but they are caring, active and deeply committed.

We have to be there for our children, Chris Glover reminded us. It's vital that we are and remain involved in all our child's activities, and it becomes increasingly important as our children grow older. And we practice that too at Mountain School, laying the foundation. We are there in class and driving the carpool and at play dates with our Mountain School friends. And in the process, we become an even more integral part of the circle of adults for all the children in our school. Because we are active and involved with our own children, we help create a stronger community for all our kids. It's not always easy. Juggling carpools, work and school schedules, childcare for siblings, night meetings, classes and committee time is work. But doing what it takes, creating those ties and working to keep them strong, pays off in this wonderful community, there for both kids and their parents. What a blessing for all of us. ☞

# Aloha!

by Debra Brender, 4/5's Assistant Teacher

Once again, I took Teacher Jill's advice (from a long ago newsletter) and planned our family vacation around water: The Hawaiian Islands. Unless you're in the crater of a volcano you can always see the ocean. A guaranteed recipe for success while vacationing with children.

Thanks again to Teacher Jill and also Teacher Sally, we were inspired to start our adventure on the Big Island of Hawaii. Wow! Lots to see and do, but most profoundly we returned from our hike up the Waipio Valley (a 25% grade) with our kids saying, "That was fun!" As a Mountain School teacher myself, I suppose I shouldn't be in shock. Of course my kids like to hike, right? Well, from that moment on Meier and I realized we have to plan our travels with our stamina in mind and not the kids'!

Hot lava: There is a reason why the Hawaiian word for lava is "aa", pronounced "Ah-ah." That's what it feels like, even through your hiking shoes after 4 miles of hiking to go see the live stuff. Again, our kids had a great time (therefore so did we). I'm convinced that their Mountain School days of hiking (especially with Teacher Marie) prepared them well for our current explorations.

Ohana: The Hawaiian word for family. We were truly treated to a Royal Hawaiian Ohana Experience from the Fox family (Mountain School Alumni) that now reside in Oahu. From the moment Gail stepped out of her white minivan (imported from San Jose) her smiles, embraces, and new cooler on wheels were always open for us. A big "mahalo" to Gail, Sean, and her beautiful girls: Kira, Kyla and Zoey. They were the most generous hosts any friends could possibly dream of. We reminisced about our Mountain School days while sipping drinks on their lanai overlooking the Pacific Ocean, Israel Kamakawiwo'ole crooning in the background. Shaka! (Hang-loose, well done.)

Hauoli Makahiki hou (Happy New Year) to all and enjoy your Mountain School adventures and friendships!

Debra, Meier, Teva and Aviv Brender 🌀

# Thank You, Thank You, Thank You...

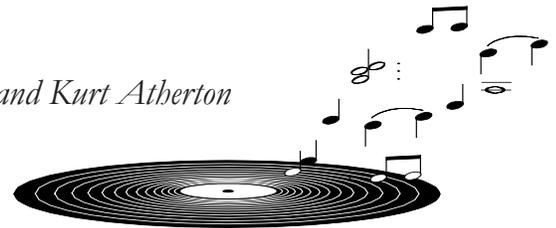
*Dave and Rebecca Curran*

Next time you're at school check out our new tables in the big room which were made by Dave and Rebecca Curran (Ben's parents) of the 3/4s class. The teachers and children really love them and appreciate the time and talent that was involved in making them.

*Annemarie Gustavson*

If you haven't been to the garden lately, take a walk down there and look at how wonderful it looks. Thank you to Annemarie (mother of William, 3's class) who donated plants for the garden.

*Danielle and Kurt Atherton*



What would Mountain School be without our all of our favorite songs. Thank you to Danielle and Kurt (Devin's parents, Wednesday 2's class) who donated an amp for the turntable at the schoolhouse and brought music back in our lives.

These are just a few of the many, many people that go above and beyond the call of duty to keep our school running smoothly. If you know of someone who we should acknowledge in the newsletter please let us know.

With sincere thanks,

LGSONS Board Members and Staff. 🌀

# Powerhouse Hot Chocolate Mix

compliments of Amber Shaw  
(Previously published in the U.C. Berkeley  
Wellness Kitchen)

Need a boost? This mix goes way beyond regular cocoa, with extra calcium and protein. It is rich and satisfying, and not too sweet (you can always add more sugar if you want it sweeter).



3/4 cup nonfat dry milk powder  
1/2 cup unflavored soy protein powder  
1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder  
1/3 cup sugar

Combine ingredients in a jar with a tight-fitting lid. Stir or shake well. Store in the refrigerator. Makes 2 cups mix. For one serving, spoon about 1/4 cup of mix into a mug. Add one cup of hot nonfat milk and stir well. Per 1/4 cup mix: 103 calories, 0.7g total fat, 0mg cholesterol, 2g dietary fiber, 17g carbohydrate, 12g protein, 114mg sodium. Also a good source of calcium, magnesium, potassium, riboflavin, vitamin B12 and vitamin E. ☞

## Calendar

### APPLICATION FOR THE 2005-2006 SCHOOL YEAR

*Priority Registration ends Saturday, Feb. 5th.*

Applications must be postmarked by February 5th. For more information call Sue Bozzini at 408-364-1187.

### UPCOMING WORKDAYS

*\*\*Saturday, January 22nd: Wednesday 2's and 3/4's classes\*\**

*Sunday, February 27th: Saturday 2's and 3's classes*

Please note the day and date change for the Wednesday 2's and 3/4's classes. If you are unable to attend your scheduled workday please contact Julie Mercik at (408) 358-7955 to notify her and make other arrangements.

### OPEN HOUSE

*Sunday, January 23rd, 11am-2pm*

If you have family, friends or neighbors that you think might be interested in joining the Mountain School community, please share this information with them. This is a wonderful opportunity for them to tour the school, meet teachers and Mountain School families, participate in a cooking project as well as other traditional Mountain School activities. For more info: 408-395-2892 or [www.lgsons.com](http://www.lgsons.com).

### BOARD MEETING

*Tuesday, February 1st*

*7:30pm at Nicole Frees' house (for directions call Nicole at 650-961-4016)*

### WINTER BREAK

*Sunday, February 13th to*

*Monday, February 21nd*

Classes will not meeting during this time, including Monday the 21st due to the observance of President's Day.

# Teacher Spotlight:

## Kathy Wilcox

by Mary Matlack, Information Chairperson

*Where did you live as a child and was your early childhood at all like Mountain School?*

I grew up in San Diego. I lived in two different houses as a child, both at the edge of relatively new subdivisions, across the street from the wilderness! Many of my early memories are of playing in the great outdoors. Initially we faced a eucalyptus forest (or so it seemed to me as a young child), while our second house backed on a large flat mesa surrounded by deep canyons. Both sites held real magic for me, a sense of mystery and expansiveness, and provided great opportunities to explore. I remember ranging widely outside, playing with friends and poking around. I did go to a preschool, but all I remember about it, truly, is the walk I took to get there and home again. I remember the vegetation along the way and I remember such wonders as a low bushy weed (whose proper name I still do not know) with soft spiky parts that you could carefully fit together to make scissors. I still want to make scissors when I see a plant like that.

*How old are your children now and what do they remember most about Mountain School? What do you remember most about your days as a parent at the school?*

My children are now 21 and 18. I asked them this question recently and was amazed at their responses. They claimed that they remember “everything” about Mountain School: the creek, the bunnyhill, the schoolhouse, the tire swing, the teachers, etc. etc. They remember being able to do whatever they wanted to do; they remember it as full of activity and fun. My son mentioned the creek right away, getting drenched in the creek, falling down and getting back up, and being active, active, active! My daughter remembers, among other things, many specific conversations with specific teachers (she spent a lot of time at the special materials tables talking with one teacher or another), as well as the chance to do lots of creative things. I remember the peace and beauty of Saratoga Springs with the leaves drifting down in the fall, the fun of getting boots at the surplus store and actually using them to walk in the creek, the fun of finding other

creeks to walk in as a family, marveling at the skills of the teachers, learning from the projects they put out for the kids, and experiencing a rollercoaster ride of emotions over the years. Joy, sorrow, shame, fear, excitement, community, isolation, you name it – all closely tied to the behavior of my children and what I made of it. What was important about this was that it got me started on a process of observing and reflecting and learning that has been invaluable for me and for them.

*Tell us about your career as a teacher before coming to Mountain School.*

I began by teaching human development at the college level. This turned out not to be my dream job – it felt overly academic and rather dry, and besides, as I look back on it, I knew nothing about human development, really, because I was not yet a parent! Also, it was a very demanding, time-consuming job. I stopped teaching a couple of years before my first child was born, experimented with something more practical and less academic (working as a legislative aide), tried doing this part time after my daughter was born (which turned out to be a very frustrating endeavor), and stopped altogether after my son was born. I went back to work when my son was in kindergarten, this time teaching at Mountain School. I loved the other teachers at Mountain School (much more than I had liked my former colleagues, I must report) and I had found a group of students who were really hungry for an education – other parents like myself. It was a part time job, which was just what I wanted, and it was a chance to try to give back some of what I had gotten as a parent in the school, which I had found to be incredibly important.

*What do you like the most about teaching two year olds?*

I love that they are absolutely without pretense – they are fully themselves. They are thoroughly in touch with the wonder and the joy of life, as well as its traumas! They are eager to do things even if they don’t know how to do them very well yet. They approach everything in such a fresh way – they think of things to do with the materials we teachers put out that I would never think of. I love that there is not much of a gender divide yet in their play, or any cliqueishness. They are eager to become your friend. They bring their wonderful parents to

school with them and as a result I get to know their parents!

*What are your interests and hobbies outside of Mountain School?*

My children are my greatest interest, and at this point they are old enough that you could call them a hobby! As they keep growing and changing, I have so many new things to learn about – for instance, the world of high school and college today, the world of football (which is so important to my son now and which, until he started playing, I had absolutely no interest in and knew nothing about), the world of present-day Germany and the way in which it has confronted the legacy of World War II (my daughter lived with a family in Berlin for three months recently and studied this topic while she was there), what it's like when your son has his first really serious girlfriend etc. etc. I also have lots of other interests, especially politics and current events (I am an avid newspaper reader) and motherhood (I love to read what other mothers have written about what motherhood has really been like for them.) I also like to go the gym, do step aerobics and lift weights, and hike and cross country ski.

*What is one thing you'd like us parents to remember while our kids are so young?*

That what you are doing is so important, even if it seems like most of what you do is tedious and repetitive and burdensome and unappreciated by society at large. These years when your young children are at home with you are as important, if not more so, than the years when they go to college. In college they will be learning what they need to know to make a living, but now they are learning what they need to know to make a life. It is so important! It is so good that you are committed to them and to making a life with them! I truly appreciate what you are doing, and wish that I could offer massages, hot baths, candlelight, soft music and endless appreciation at our circle meetings. You are working so hard, and we benefit so much from what you do. Appreciate all your efforts and take some breaks to refresh yourself - this is my best advice! ☺

## Across the Ocean

by Susi Steiner

Perhaps your family has already found a way to reach “across the ocean” and offer help in some way to survivors of the Tsunami disaster. Or, perhaps you have been meaning to find a way, but the right one hasn't shown up. I'd like to propose that each of us find a meaningful giving option and encourage each other to donate.

The devastation which occurred on December 26th in the Indian Ocean is incomprehensible. Finding a way to offer help the hurt nations and people at this critical time seems like the best way we can participate in the next phase of the Mountain School Giving Campaign. In the first newsletter, we addressed the idea of each of us being part of 3 families, our immediate family, our community family and the family of man. Today, we truly have an opportunity to contribute to the family of man.

Write a note, say a prayer, take a period of silence... whatever feels natural to your heart. And, if you can manage it, please make a financial donation. Let's consider focusing our donations on education related causes. Because we are a group of people connected by our children's school, the idea of giving to “Schools in Need” seemed especially meaningful. There are so many organizations offering giving opportunities...yet, because we are a school and we value the role of LGSONS in our lives, we have identified an organization focused on the rebuilding and re-supplying of damaged and destroyed schools in South Asia. Over 96% of the funds donated go to those in need. The remaining amount is used for administration. Naturally, donating to UNICEF, the Red Cross and other such organizations would be great too....

Please visit the web site for an organization called “Do Something - Young People Changing Their World”. The site address is: <http://www.dosomething.org/challenges/emergency/tsunami/index.php>. ☺

# Harry Potter and Hickelbee's

by Angie Davidson

Harry Potter and Hickelbee's earn money for Mountain School

As you may have heard, Harry Potter volume 6, Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, is scheduled for release on July 16th. If you have older children who are eagerly awaiting this installment (or if, like me, you're hooked!) and you plan to buy the book, Hickelbee's Books in Willow Glen is offering a pre-order discount that also benefits Mountain School. Here's how it works:

If you pre-order before the release date, Hickelbee's will give you a 20% discount off the cover price. And if you ask them to credit our school, we will earn either 20% in cash or 25% toward books. With the last Harry Potter book, 50 copies were pre-ordered and earned a school nearly \$300 in cash or \$375 in books for the library, money that could certainly be put to good use.

You can tell friends and family members who are also Harry Potter fans to mention LGSONS at Hickelbee's and we will get credit. And, as always, whenever you purchase anything at Hickelbee's and mention LGSONS, they will credit the school 10% in cash or 15% toward books.

Reading really does pay!

Angie ☞.

*Note From the Editor*

*Do you have an article, calendar item or recipe you would like to submit for consideration?*

*The deadline for the next newsletter is Friday, February 25th. Please e-mail submission to [mtnmama@garlic.com](mailto:mtnmama@garlic.com) or call 408-353-9728.*

*Thank you.*

*Sonia Casper*

# Kale-Avocado Salad

complements of Jane Krejci

1 head of Kale, shredded  
1 cup of tomatos, diced  
1 avocado, chopped  
2 1/2 Tbsp. olive oil or flax oil  
1 1/2 tsp. lemon juice  
celtic sea salt  
cayenne pepper

Toss all ingredients together; squeeze with your hands as you mix to wilt the kale and cream the avocado.

Serve.

\*You can substitute chard or spinach for the kale. Wrap in Nori for a roll. ☞



## Can We Drink It?

The schoolhouse water quality: it's a subject that's come up many times in my three years at Mountain School. Is the water ok to drink? Some of us chose to bring water because either they don't know or feel that they're supposed to because they've seen others bring water. However, teacher Marie wanted to let everyone know that the water is ok to drink. Our water comes from the same well that the Lakeside School water comes from and it is tested every day. ☞