



# The Observatory



Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School ~ Issue 2 September 2005

## Flexibility and Willingness

by Marie Imai, LGSONS Director

Dear Families,

I hope you're all feeling the same excitement I am as I get to know the children and families in my class better each time our class meets. The setting of the redwood grove and creek at Savannah Channele Winery is such a wondrous, peaceful place that I feel like I've been given a present each day upon my arrival. The children are so eager to explore and on the first few days Teachers Amy and Charlotte helped them find some immature newts with vestiges of gills still circling their necks. How excited they were to carry them about in buckets and share with everyone. They are quickly learning to recognize and avoid the stinging nettles that grow near the creek and now we're working on identifying the poison oak that hides among the blackberry vines so cleverly or climbs up the trees as well. After Teacher Jill taught the children to find small still-green cones bitten off the redwoods by the squirrels and drop them in a bottle of water their scientific curiosity hasn't stopped yet. Do you know what happens when you shake that cone in the water for several minutes? It certainly doesn't turn to butter. And how the children can climb and hike so well even as the year is just beginning! Do a detailed observation of your child's physical abilities now and then again next spring and see how much more skilled he or she becomes in such a short time. It always amazes me how quickly the children begin to feel at home in our wonderful, bumpy root-filled woods.

I am aware that the older classes had a difficult time setting up their carpools this year but my husband, Kent, wasn't at all surprised. After hearing about my classes and meetings for at least 25 years he has come to expect these difficulties every fall and usually replies "When are you going to try my solution?" He recommends a militaristic approach - making carpools compulsory and assigning them geographically. To which I always reply "But it's much more complex than that." The secret ingredients to a successful carpool and to a happy life are really not very secret. They are flexibility and a willingness to help others whenever possible. So remember

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## The Relationships We Build

by Lori Lux, Board Chair

This past weekend I had time to reflect upon what Mtn. School means to me as I spent a couple days with some Mtn. School moms -- away from the rush of our everyday lives, away from the kids, our homes, and our husbands....thanks to the dads for holding down the fort while we were away!

To me, a big part of Mtn. School is the relationships we (children, parents and teachers) build with our surroundings, and like any relationship, you get back what you put into it. What's the lovely song we sing, "Love is like a magic penny, hold on tight and you won't have any...." From the relationships that we build with our children through mutual exploration and development, to the bonds with the teachers, carpool partners, nature, and special friends whose names endure the tests of time, Mtn. School is about relationships.

Our oldest daughter, who now reads, will probably scream when she sees this, but it's just too poignant to keep to myself. For our culmination movie one year, we used a really special song by Everclear. It's a very sweet song with crickets and a banjo and a very different sound for this "rock" band. The singer lays out a scenario in which he's sitting on the back porch on a warm summer night, and can hear his daughter laughing through an open window. She doesn't know he's there and he feels that the only thing that makes sense in life is the sound

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he hears at that moment. We used this music as we showed a slo-mo of Lauren and her special friend Bennett holding hands and laughing as they jumped off the big rock in the sand area of Saratoga Springs. It was very touching at the time, but what amazes me is the reaction we get whenever she hears that song now. She begins to cry and becomes incredibly sentimental regarding her years at Mtn. School, her favorite teachers, and the friends she made. What an incredible relationship she has built with our school, one that has endured the journey to her new “big kid” school.

I encourage all the new families, and existing families of course, to become involved with the school and to really open yourself up to all that it has to offer, not only to our children in the form of an amazing atmosphere during the week, but for ourselves and our families as well. I believe you can do this by becoming involved, with the families in your class, with the events at the school, and by contributing your time and talent to our incredible volunteer organization. We can't do it without the help of people like you, but what is not as tangible is what you get back from volunteering and becoming involved. As our magic penny song concludes, “Lend it and spend it, and you'll have so many, they'll roll all over the floor.” ☞

## Fall Picnic

by Kristin Mitchell  
Social Chair

What: Mountain School Fall Picnic

Where: Saratoga Springs

When: October 16, 2005

Time: 12:00pm - 4:00pm



Join us for a day of family fun!

Splash in the creek, create some art, and take a hike with Teacher Marie.

The grill will be cooking, so bring an entree to grill and a side dish to share. You should bring anything you need for the picnic, such as plates, drinks, utensils, etc.

End the day with singing around the campfire and roasting smores

Are there any talented or even not-so-talented musicians that would love to lead some campfire songs? Volunteers are also needed for set-up, manning the grill, and clean-up. Please contact Kristin Mitchell with any questions or to volunteer (408-379-6673 or [ckmitch@pacbell.net](mailto:ckmitch@pacbell.net)) ☞

(Flexibility and Willingness, continued)

that these are traits we all need to practice and to model for our children as well as each other. Even though the following letter about carpooling was written a number of years ago it captures so well our philosophy and the benefits to the children of this extra-curricular activity which is really an extension of each school day. Some of you in our 2s and Sat 3/4s classes now might consider driving with another child and parent this year so you won't have to wait so long to experience the advantages of being in a carpool as well as saving some gasoline.

I look forward to seeing everyone at our fall picnic at Saratoga Springs on Oct. 16.

Love, Marie ☞

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## Why Carpooling Is A Good Idea

by Kristy Cole, Registration Chair, 1997-98

The most obvious benefit of carpooling is that it does not require a parent to go up to school two or three days per week. Most of us could use this small break for errands and a little time for ourselves. However, there is tremendous benefit for your child also. This really offers your child a special opportunity to meet other children and build a special relationship. Being in a smaller group such as a carpool helps children get to know each other better.

If you don't need some free time for yourself, please consider your child – maybe he/she does. Letting your child go with another adult helps to build her confidence. It lets her know that you think she can do it. Conversely, not letting her do it may give her the message that she is not able, that she needs Mommy. I think it is especially hard on the child when she can see that all of the other children are doing it and she is being left out. Part of what is involved here is the parent letting go and being able to let your child grow.

For various reasons, my own daughter changed car pools several times last year. At first, I really worried about this, because she was often quiet at school, remaining by my side or even on my lap. To my surprise, just carpooling with another child made her feel more at ease with that

child at school and them with her, too. Soon she was the center of attention at school. She had so many new friends! I also think, in retrospect, that I worried too much about things said and done in the car. Sometimes children say and do hurtful things, but they can learn by it and become tougher for the next go around.

This year my daughter carpoled with three boys. I initially thought, "Oh Oh!" While at first she acted a bit tentative (she even screamed her way to school on her first day carpooling with my partner, who was wonderful), she is now in charge. She chooses to sit between the boys, even though they like to tease her. She usually laughs, but is not afraid to scream "No!" when it gets to be too much. She has learned so much independence from these carpool experiences that I could not have foreseen.

Some suggestions I have to help you with a smoother ride to school are:

- 1) If children are having trouble in the car, arrange a play date. Then help them resolve their differences when they play together. The contact will help them to feel more familiar with each other and will also allow you to work on problems when you're not in a moving vehicle.
- 2) Keep an open line of communication with your carpool partners. Be honest about problems and try to work them out. Try to see how the other person feels, too. If you really don't feel a particular fondness for a car pool partner, just try to get along to make it work – remember, we set an example for our children!
- 3) Be flexible! People get sick and go on vacations. Sometimes you may have to find another ride for your child or keep him/her home. Also, consider trading sometimes, if possible, or having two moms go on a field day. Make sure your carpool partners are aware of any schedule restrictions you may have at the outset.

Adele Faber, a well-known author on parenting, once wrote something that stuck in my mind: "Accidents are God-given opportunities" because we learn from them. We learn from problems and mistakes, too. And besides, you may even make some nice friends for yourself. Some of my fondest memories are of coffee and tea after school with my carpool partners. ☞

# Potluck Pondering

by Mary Matlack, Administrative Director

I love a good potluck! And come to think of it, I've never been to a bad one! Everyone shows up with something wonderful they just whipped up, or happened to be standing next to in the checkout line or some have come to share a masterpiece they have been crafting for days. As a Mtn. School parent, you either know or will soon figure out that potlucks are a part of our school culture. Sure, there are lots of practical reasons for potluck evenings, but I like to think that the most important reason for a pot luck is because we are all hungry. Yes, as busy parents we often go without nourishment on a busy day but for the most part, I believe we are hungry to share a bit of ourselves with each other and we are also hungry to hear about other people and what they are eating these days!

In my family, we're pretty crazy about food. My sister is a caterer and a food writer, one brother is an expert on Thai cooking, another brother raises chickens, cultivates heirloom tomatoes and is known for his homemade apple butter that he lovingly puts up every fall. Yet another brother is known for his perfect homemade ice cream, Texas corn bread and his willingness to drive for hours in search of the perfect Texas BBQ...in California! When we are all together, you can bet there is some plan for our next meal and generally we are all in the kitchen together chopping, chatting and sharing our lives.

When I was a kid, my parents always hosted a big party at our house on Christmas Eve. It was not a potluck, but somehow my mother managed to get a fabulous feast on the table and still surface on Christmas morning ready for another day of eating and celebrating. I tried to recreate this tradition after college and did so successfully for several years, but soon it became clear that I just wasn't up for the task. Each Christmas morning was harder to manage as I looked at a kitchen full of dirty dishes and stale eggnog. So finally, just about the time Clara was born, I decided to let go of "their" tradition and start our own. The next year, I invited friends over for a "Holiday Potluck" a week or so before Christmas. The calls started to come in, "what shall I bring?" I always assured them that I was just fine with whatever they'd like to bring. Didn't I need something specific,

they'd ask? No, just whatever you feel like. So, we arranged the drinks, prepared a beautiful, empty table that had a huge bowl of eggnog on one end and a tiny bowl of pistachios on the other end. Then, we waited and worried just a bit.

Soon the guests arrived and within a few minutes, my table began to fill with the most interesting things I could never have imagined. There was a pot of "secret recipe" chili with cheese and onions, Christmas cookies, hand made chocolates, a vegetable platter, spinach dip, cold cuts, handmade philo turnovers stuffed with mushrooms and cheese, gourmet cheeses and olives and two platters of steaming, hot egg rolls... it was too good to be true! The spread was fabulous and friends were so excited to share their offerings with each other. A new tradition was created, one that still involves friends and family, giving and receiving – a nourishing tradition any time of year.

This holiday season we will host our fourth annual Holiday Potluck, and I wonder already what will arrive on our table. Next week, I will attend my first Mtn. School potluck of the year, and I look forward to that night with anticipation. What if we all bring chocolate? What if we end up with ten different versions of lasagna or 25 loaves of bread? Imagine if everyone showed up with a box of crackers and a bottle of wine! We surely wouldn't starve and we would have quite a story to tell!

But, I know that our evening will be filled with fabulous smells, great stories, recipes to trade, new bakeries to learn about, the latest, greatest at Trader Joe's, family traditions to share, the name of a favorite cheese, or the latest "can't believe they have this at Costco" story. We will marvel at how someone with three kids had time to make such an incredible dish and commiserate with the friend who only had a moment to buy a bag of cookies. And we will eat, laugh, listen and discover – just as our children do at cooking time every school day. We encourage them to share and try new things – the very heart of "potluck". So, enjoy the cooler evenings, the coming season of sharing, and please accept my invitation to share a part of yourself "potluck" style.

P.S. Our first "All-School Potluck" will be at the Fall Picnic – October 16th! 🍷

# Ten Things You Can Do To Make The World Better For All Families

by Janis Keyser (taken from her web site [www.becomingtheparent.com](http://www.becomingtheparent.com))

As anthropologist Margaret Mead once put it, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”

- 1 - Broaden your concern from your immediate family
- 2 - Greet the kids in your neighborhood
- 3 - Encourage and support the parents you know
- 4 - Volunteer at your child’s school
- 5 - Advocate in your workplace
- 6 - Support parent education in your community
- 7 - Speak Out
- 8 - Join an Advocacy Group
- 9 - Open up your home
- 10 - Vote

Janis Keyser is the co-author of “Becoming The Parent You Want To Be” and will be the guest lecturer at our General Meeting on October 26th. For more information on Janis Keyser, her book or more specific information regarding these suggestions and more go to [www.becomingtheparent.com](http://www.becomingtheparent.com). ☞

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## LET’S HEAR FROM YOU!

*Do you have something you need to communicate to the entire school, a story, recipe, poem to share or a book or destination to recommend? I’d love to hear from you! The deadline for the next newsletter is Thursday, November 3rd. Please e-mail submissions to [mtnmama@garlic.com](mailto:mtnmama@garlic.com).*

*Thank you.*

*Sonia Casper* ☞

# Nutty Oatmeal-Chocolate Bars

from Jane Krejki, Fri. 2’s teacher

Here’s a treat you don’t have to feel guilty about. Oats have a calming effect, and chocolate contains magnesium, believed to help ease anxiety. To make cookies instead of bars, drop tablespoons of dough onto a prepared cookie sheet and bake for about 10 minutes. (Makes 24)

- 1/3 cup pure maple syrup
- 1/2 cup natural cane sugar
- 1/4 cup butter, softened
- 1/2 cup unsweetened applesauce
- 2 medium eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 3 cups rolled oats
- 1 cup whole wheat pastry flour
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
- 1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips or raisins

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Lightly coat a 9x13-inch pan with cooking spray or line with parchment paper.

In a large bowl, cream together syrup, sugar, butter, applesauce, eggs, and vanilla. In a medium bowl, mix together cinnamon, baking soda, baking powder, salt, oats, flour and walnuts. Gradually add dry ingredients to wet ingredients, stirring until just moistened. Add chocolate chips or raisins and stir again until evenly distributed. Do not over mix.

Spread mixture evenly in pan. Bake on center rack for about 20 minutes. Allow to cool at least 10 minutes on a wire rack before slicing.

Per Serving: 158 cal, 30% fat cal, 5g fat, 2 g sat fat, 21 mg chol, 5 g protein, 24 g carb, 3 g fiber, 104 mg sodium.

*Sources: James Rouse, ND and Debra Rouse, ND* ☞

# The Importance Of Bedtime Rituals in Family Life

by Lucinda Herring of the Festival Guild  
(reprinted from the April 1998 Observatory)

Once upon a time, long ago, people understood the importance of bedtime rituals. Each evening, after the cows were milked and the supper was cleared away, families would gather 'round a roaring fire to tell stories, sing songs and simply be together. This time of letting go was a doorway, a threshold necessary to cross over into sleep, and to the other side of evening...

We have forgotten the importance of the other side of evening in this day and age...Finding bargains at the grocery store or reorganizing the office is far more important than the fragmented dreams we wake with each morning.

Bedtime rituals give us back the beauties of the night. Instead of tumbling our children into bed, reading a hurried story and switching off the lights as soon as possible, we take time to relax and wind down together. A hard day on the playground or a trembling lip may be easily overlooked if we are not taking the time to truly see and listen.

Today I am a single mother, raising a daughter on my own. Eliza is now twelve. From the time she was a tiny baby, I have made bedtime rituals an invaluable way for us to connect and weave together the fabric of our days and nights.

*Creating a cozy and nurturing environment.* Spend time making your childrens' rooms lovely and cozy. If they are tiny, make sure there are covered corners and hideaway places to creep into for comfort and contentment. Eliza and I built a canopy of silks which hung down from the ceiling above her bed, and draped in folds on either side, wrapping her in a little house she could feel safe and secure in as she slept. Of course, as the children grow and change, making the room cozy and secure takes many differnt forms. Turning down the (bed) covers does not work anymore, because Eliza often now does not make up her bed in the morning. Still, I remember most nights to light a candle, or burn the little lamp by her bed. The intention to create soft, sacred space as the shadows fall remains the same.

*The importance of bedtime stories.* Bedtime stories are also companions for our children to cross into the world of the imagination and dreams. It is important to consciously choose stories which can soothe and nourish the young child before sleep. There is a lot to be said for telling stories rather than reading them. Telling a story creates a strong link between you and your children, because you can look into their eyes and connect with them through gesture and movement, gifts not really possible if you are reading a book. In some ways, the book and the written word stand between you and the child while reading.



*Singing and poetry.* Singing to children at bedtime is a powerful way to use one's voice to help a child drop into sleep. It is a rhythmic, heart to heart exchange which will stay with them always.

*Prayers and quiet time.* The subject of prayers before bedtime is a sensitive one. I had to work for many years to find my own way to pray. Yet even when I was struggling with the form, I never questioned the need to communicate in some way with a power and protection I knew I needed as I slept. When I was a child, we read Bible verses aloud and knelt beside our beds to pray. The verses never meant much to me, nor did the words my father might be saying over my head. Yet the tone of his voice, asking, reaching out to something mysterious, and his strong belief that a power he called God was truly listening, remains with me...

*Letting go of the day.* Eliza and I learned early on to try and resolve any traumas or misunderstandings between us before going to bed. we also learned how valuable it was to go back over the day, and pick out something we loved to share, and something we needed to grumble about.

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# Mountain School Pride

by Anne Veis

Coming Soon!



LGSONS Sweatshirt  
and T-Shirt Sales

Keep your eye out for order forms during the month of October. Orders are due November 3 so you will be able to sport your LGSONS wear at the annual holiday parade!

For questions, send e-mail to [anneveis@aol.com](mailto:anneveis@aol.com). ☞

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(The Importance of Bedtime Rituals, continued)

*Celebrating the wonders of the night.* Going outside with your children before they get ready for bed can be a lovely adventure for all. Perhaps you could all pull up rocking chairs on the porch, and wrap up in blankets to watch the shadows steal over the treetops. Or you could walk every evening to the corner stop sign and observe the nightly rituals of other households.

Remember when you are creating bedtime rituals for your family that the most alive and meaningful experiences will come from who you are, and what suits you and your children. The important thing to remember is how fun and special rituals can be, and how nourishing and alive such activities are for the entire family. Bedtime rituals create homes where daily life can once again be sacred, and where love and true intimacy can live and flourish. ☞

# Calendar

## BOARD MEETING

*Tuesday, October 4th*

*7:00pm at Sue Bozzini's home (14314 Old Wood Road, Saratoga)*

A Special Potluck Board Meeting including all staff! For directions call or e-mail Sue at 408-364-1187 or [sbozzini@aol.com](mailto:sbozzini@aol.com).

## TUITION REMINDER

The second tuition installment is due October 14th.

## ANNUAL FALL PICNIC

*Sunday, October 16th*

*Saratoga Springs, 12:00pm - 4:00pm*

*(See page 2 for more information.)*



MOVE INDOORS - October 24th

## GENERAL MEETING

*Wednesday, October 26th*

*Fisher Middle School - Refreshments at 6:45pm/ meeting starts at 7:00pm*

Presenting Janis Keyser, co-author of "Becoming The Parent You Want To Be". Janis Keyser is a teacher, parent educator, program director and speaker who specializes in Early Childhood Development. She teaches full time in the Early Childhood Education Department at Cabrillo College and has been conducting parenting workshops for over 20 years.

## TURKEY TROT

*Sunday, November 13th*

For questions, or to volunteer, contact Troy Hastings at [troy.hastings@philips.com](mailto:troy.hastings@philips.com) or 408-309-3034

## MINI COURSES

Mini-Courses are currently being scheduled for November. Sign-ups will begin in October and will be posted at the schoolhouse.

# Support Our School

by Shilpa Garg

Dear Mountain School Families

We ask that every family help us meet our fund-raising goal. We need the support of all of our families in raising funds that help our school in so many different ways. This task will not cost anything extra or require hours of work, but just a few minutes of your time and your grocery club card from participating merchants like Safeway, PW Markets to name a few.

Registration is simple. Log onto [www.eScrip.com](http://www.eScrip.com). Enter the School name or Group ID (3593396). You can also register your debit/credit cards

Once you have registered, every time you shop starting with your sign up date, you will be automatically earning money for your school. When you use any of the registered club/debit/credit cards with a participating merchant, the merchant makes a contribution that goes to the designated school. Just remember to use your cards for every purchase.

Schoolpop has a new incentive where we can earn an additional \$1000 bonus! All we need is for a minimum of 20 families to open one of their Schoolpop Visa card accounts & use it and a minimum of 20 families to shop online even just once. If you can do either or both, please do as even that one book, pair of thermals or dinner out could really help us all out!

Remember:

- 20 Supporters to sign up for (and use) the Schoolpop Visa card.
- 20 Supporters to shop online at least once at [www.schoolpop.com](http://www.schoolpop.com)

Great questions from the circle meetings! Here are some answers to share:

1. Q: Can relatives participate in these fund-raising opportunities?

A: Yes! Just have them sign up via the internet or give you the info to sign up for them.

2. Q: Does Schoolpop have something to do with selling soda pop in schools?

A: To the best of our knowledge, no.

3. Q: If I order something online, will Schoolpop be able to count it toward our fund-raising efforts?

A: Only if you begin your transaction by going through [www.schoolpop.com](http://www.schoolpop.com) and then click on the merchant from which you wish to purchase. If you go directly to the merchant, it will not count.

On the schoolpop web site, go to "Extra Credit" tab & choose the merchant(s) from which you wish to purchase now. One example: Netflix is offering a \$17.00 contribution! Also, Gap, Target, Land's End and Nordstrom are featured, as many more....! ☞

## Turkey Alert!!!

*Beware!!*

*Trotting Turkeys are  
headed your way  
on November 13th!*

Mark your calendars and get your trotting shoes ready for the 3rd annual Turkey Trot at Vasona Park. This is a fun filled event for the entire family and a great opportunity to spend quality time with family and friends.

For questions, or to volunteer, contact Troy Hastings at [troy.hastings@philips.com](mailto:troy.hastings@philips.com) or 408-309-3034

Gobble! Gobble! ☞

