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# The Observatory

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Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School ~ Issue 5 March 2007

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## The Value of Digging

by Marie Imai, Lead Teacher

Dear Families,

I just loved our auction evening and I want to extend my deep appreciation to the chairs, Sherry McNamara and Ann DuBois, and to Jennifer Mateus, the solicitation committee chair, for their leadership and willingness to spend so many hours away from their families to make it such a spectacular success. In addition to the wonderful things to bid on I truly enjoyed the time to socialize with so many friends and acquaintances from our school as well as the numerous alumni who attended. Our auction and family picnics are a real celebration of the Mountain School community and of your ability to work together to support our school. Thank you to all who put together such lovely class projects and interesting family donations, to the Ingraffia family for the fine food, to those who manned the computers, who set up and decorated and cleaned up afterwards, to those who solicited so many wonderful donations and to everyone else who worked behind the scenes making it all possible. I know that all the teachers appreciate your ability to raise these funds to support our salaries as well as all the other needs of the school such as maintenance, supplies, curriculum development, insurance, rent, etc, etc.

Your generosity also makes it possible for the teachers to participate in some special professional development opportunities. Last week teachers Amy, Kathy and I attended the annual conference given by CAEYC (California Association for the Education of Young Children) which was held in San Jose for the first time. Earlier in the year teachers Amy and Angie attended a two day workshop at Bev Bos' preschool in Roseville. She is an author, teacher and speaker extraordinaire who has spoken to our school many times over the years and will be back again soon we hope. We return from these events inspired by what we've learned and excited to share some new ideas with the other teachers and the children of course. At the state conference there were great speakers from colleges and preschools all over the state. And there were many workshops on outdoor play and on the value of having a play

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## Spring Picnic is Just Around the Corner

by Tracy Halgren, Chair

It's hard to believe the auction has come and gone already. What a wonderful event for such a worthwhile cause. Thank you again to our terrific auction co-chairs Ann and Sherry. They did a fabulous job making this event truly Mountain School. Over the next couple of weeks they will be crunching the numbers, sending thank yous to those businesses that donated and tying up any loose ends. As soon as they have the data complete Ann and Sherry will send you an email to share the good news and detail out the numbers.

Now that the auction is over its time to move our attention to the next school wide function, our spring picnic on May 6. This picnic is held at the school house and both alumni and current families get together to share their memories of Mountain School, dance around the maypole, share good food and play at the schoolhouse. For the first time we will be inviting those new families entering the school for the 07/08 school year. The board decided that it was important to include these new families in our school sooner rather than later so they felt like they were a part of our community before the first day. We are looking for volunteers to be "buddies" with these new families. Our thought is to have buddy families assigned to all the new families so they have someone to look for, someone to answer questions and someone to introduce them to other members of the school. If

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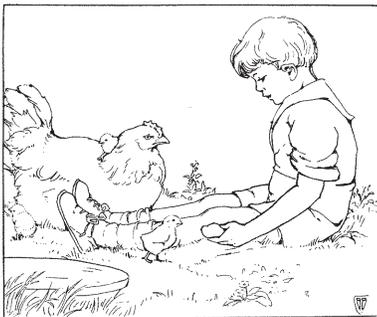
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## Mountain School Spring Picnic

*Where: The Little Red Schoolhouse*  
*When: Sunday, May 6th*  
*11:00am til 2:00pm*



A fun event for the whole family.  
Enjoy our beloved May Pole Dance,  
crafts, music and fun!

Please bring your picnic supplies, a  
potluck dish to share and a blanket  
to spread on the lawn.

We need your help to run this event! To volunteer, please contact Clau-  
dia Yore at 408/354-5150 ☞

(The Value of Digging, continued)

based curriculum which is the philosophy of our school and always has been. One of the presenters, Sharon Krull, had a colorful way of describing how young children learn best. She said that when learning is combined with music and movement stuff sticks in the brain like Velcro, without it, knowledge slides off like from Teflon. If you want to really understand and remember something, sing it or dance it and then you'll have it forever.

The teachers' greatest joy, however, is to return to our special school where the children are free to play for long periods, to be outside, to explore and follow their own interests, to learn to socialize and to begin to solve their own problems. In my 4/5s class these days the children are busy digging canals in the sandbox, making treasure maps and guinea pig medicine with colored water, sewing and working on their journals. They have become so independent and don't need the teachers in the same way that they did last fall. I'm sure you've noticed the same amazing growth in your children's class. I'm also impressed with how few props and toys are needed by the children when they're busy playing outdoors. Yesterday I took my almost-three year old granddaughter, Kaitlin, to the beach and she was absolutely content with 1 bucket and 1 small shovel. The sticks and stones and feathers and seaweed were all she wanted to create her castle. So, quickly go the beach or the woods and let the children exercise both their bodies and their creative minds. Take only a shovel, a snack and a friend and let the magic of the out of doors restore your spirits and calm your kids.

Love, Marie ☞

## “Sweets Under the Stars”

### Was a Huge Success!!!

Our “Sweets Under the Stars” Silent and Live Auction took place on 3/3/07 and we are happy to report that it was a tremendous success! This important school event brought in some wonderful funds for the school and was a lively and fun social event.

We enjoyed delicious food, great company, live Brazilian Jazz music and fabulous silent and live auction items. About 200 people came, including current Mountain School families, alumni, friends and family members. Thanks to everyone who was able to attend. Your generous bidding was greatly appreciated!

We want to thank everyone for their involvement. Putting this event together was certainly a team effort. Everyone pitched in with generous donations, committee work and general support. Thank you to everyone!!

There will still be some great upcoming chances to get some additional prizes and benefit our beloved Mountain School in the process. Stay tuned for details about our upcoming raffle. Raffle reps from each class will have raffle tickets available by 4/1 for all of us to buy and sell. Please consider supporting our raffle. We'll have some great raffle prizes available.

Our raffle winners will be announced at our Mountain School Spring Picnic on Sunday 5/6/07. Other special items will be for sale during the picnic to benefit our school- including a few special Mountain School items for sale.

Thanks again to everyone for supporting Sweets Under the Stars 2007!

-LGSONS 2007 Auction Co-Chairs Sherry McNamara & Ann Du Bois



(Spring Picnic is Just Around the Corner, continued)

you are interested in being a buddy family please let our Social Chair, Claudia Yore, know and she can give you more information.

At the picnic board members for the 06/07 and 07/08 school year will be on hand to answer questions about their position and describe ways in which you can help throughout the school year. Hopefully this will allow you to become familiar with the board members so next year if you have any questions or concerns you know who to turn to for answers. Stay tuned for more regarding this part of the picnic; it's rumored to be evolving into a board scavenger hunt!

One other event that will be happening the day of the spring picnic is our annual raffle drawing. Normally this event would have been held at the auction but Sherry, Ann and the raffle committee decided to try something new and offer it at the spring picnic this year. Raffle tickets will be handed out to each family within the next two weeks. Tickets will also be available the day of the picnic so alumni and new families can also try their luck for the incredible prizes. The raffle has an exciting twist this year. There are three grand prizes, not a 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize. And you get to pick which one you want. Will you try for the weekend at Seascape, or will it be a weekend getaway to one of 28 destinations across the country or perhaps a dinner for 8 in your home by Chef Victor (the wonderful Mountain School professional chef dad who made those delicious appetizers at the auction) or will you try for all three? I encourage you all to sell lots of tickets and help make this the most successful auction ever!

Thanks!  
Tracy

Thank again for all your support at the auction. On behalf of your board of directors we look forward to seeing you on May 6.

-Tracy Halgren



# A Note from Bev Bos

originally printed in Bov Bos newsletter

Dear friends,

*“To dig and delve in nice, clean dirt  
Can do a mortal little hurt.”*

*- John Kendrick Bangs*

A nice sentiment don't you think? I found this in a small book of poems and phrases that sings the praises of gardening. But as educators we know there is a lot more to the story here. The reality for most children is that they would rather be outside than inside and seem most content when they can dig into things, take things apart or to construct and create real stuff. We understand that the more a kid can roll something around in his or her hands, the more they take in all that thing has to give. It's natural for children to be in this constant state of exploration -- it's how they make sense of their world -- it's how they learn. And the very best kind of learning is what happens between the hands and the brain.

I love how Dr. Frank Wilson talks and writes about the human hand (in fact, he has written a book titled, “The Hand”):

“We've been sold a bill of goods -- especially parents -- about how valuable computer-based experience is. We are creatures identified by what we do with our hands.” As Wilson sees it, we are cutting off our hands to spite our brains. Instructors in medical schools are finding it increasingly difficult to teach how the heart works as a pump, he says “because these students have so little real world experience; they've never

siphoned anything, never fixed a car, never worked on a fuel pump, may not even have hooked up a garden hose. For a whole generation of kids, direct experiences in the backyard, in the tool shed, in the fields and woods, has been replaced by indirect learning, through machines. These young people are smart, they grew up with computers, they were supposed to be superior -- but now we know something's missing.” (excerpt from Last Child in the Woods, Richard Louv, 2005).

Another example of nature's coordination between the hands and the brain can be found in the work of psychologist Jean Ayres that links touch-sensitivity with learning disorders. In recent years, I have witnessed in the classroom -- as I'm sure some of you have, too -- that a growing number of children coming to preschool are repulsed at the thought of thrusting their hands into all kinds of stuff, or they don't like to get dirty or messy. Some colleagues have told me about kids that are even troubled by putting their hands in water!

To compound the problem it has become a tough sell to convince some parents that the more time spent in “hands-on” discovery the better it is for their child's growth and well-being. When talking to parents I love to paraphrase something I heard Dr. Jane M. Healy say about kids -- the child's brain has the innate wisdom to tell the child what it needs to be doing during sensitive periods of the child's development.

One of the best things teachers and parents can do for children is to have faith in them. When you think about it, there isn't a parent in the

world that wouldn't give a kidney, or liver, or jump in front of a speeding locomotive for their kid, but why is it so hard to give them our trust or maybe just a little more time?

Finding ways to encourage children to explore with their hands has long been a compulsion of mine. If you have ever visited our school then you have seen that there are many, many things for kids to “do” rather than watch or listen to. It's what I have referred to over the years as “loose parts.” The more you have, the better it's gonna be for the children. I sat in on a session presented by a couple Occupational Therapists this last weekend in Abilene, TX where I was asked to give a keynote. They got to see the slides of our preschool during my session and afterward they remarked, “Your environment is an OT's dream!” It was nice to hear and I do know that I've worked real hard to make it so.

There is one new thing we have at the school that is particularly successful in this regard. It is a center that is always occupied by children and it seems that they never really tire of it. There are some things in the environment that have their run and then the kids tire or move on but this new stuff seems to be in a different category. I'm referring to the new play Sand we've introduced.

In our preschool we have lots of sand, dirt and clay -- and I mean real, red clay, and lots of it, too -- 200 lbs. on a table in the art area at present. And, of course, we have Jurassic sand. But this new stuff is somewhere in between these two. It comes from foundry sand but unlike

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# Potato-Based Pizza or Focaccia Dough

by Kathleen Graham, William's mom 3's class

## INGREDIENTS:

Enough for 2 - 9" pizzas or focaccias

8 ounces potatoes, preferably yellow Finnish  
1 1/4 teaspoons active dry yeast  
1 1/2 cups plus 2 tablespoons warm water (105 -115°F)  
3 3/4 cups durum flour or unbleached all-purpose flour  
(If using unbleached flour, reduce water by 2 table-  
spoons).  
2 teaspoons sea salt

## DIRECTIONS:

About 20 minutes before you are ready to make the dough, peel the potatoes and boil them until tender, drain, and mash or press them, through a ricer. Use the potatoes while they are still warm but not so hot as to kill the yeast; they should be about the same temperature as the yeast water.

Stir the yeast into the warm water in a large mixing bowl. Add the flour, mashed potatoes, and salt in two additions and mix until the dough comes together. If you are making this by hand, knead the dough for 10 minutes until the dough is velvety, firm and slightly sticky. You may want to spread 1 to 2 tablespoons of flour on the board to reduce the stickiness.

## FIRST RISE

Place the dough in a lightly oiled bowl, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and leave to rise until doubled, about 1 1/2 hours.

## SHAPING AND SECOND RISE

Divide the dough in half on a lightly floured surface, and shape each into a ball. Place each ball into a well-oiled 9-inch round baking pan, and stretch the dough toward the edges. Cover with a damp towel, let sit for ten minutes, and then stretch a bit farther to the edges. Cover again and leave until doubled, about 45 minutes.

## BAKING

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Just before you are ready to bake, dimple the dough with your fingertips. Add toppings of your choice. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes until golden. Remove from pans and let cool on racks.

(A Note From Bev Bos. continued)

regular sand, it has a slightly doughy consistency. So, the children can squeeze and roll and fashion things out of the sand. They use biscuit cutters and wooden bread dough cutters to shape and mold the sand. Although I haven't tried it, the manufacturer says it can be baked in an oven to retain its shape. Maybe some day I'll get around to trying that but for now I am just so pleased that I have found something that these kids brains are innately drawn to.

We (Turn the Page Press) have also arrived at (what we hope is) the final configuration of a new Play Sand Set. After much discussion, research and trial and error we now have available a couple products built around this Play Sand. We have the Play Sand available in a 5 lb. bag or you can get it as part of a set that comes with the sand, a 18" square wooden tray w/ lid, two wooden biscuit cutters, a wooden dough cutter, and a wooden olive spoon. These are the things we noticed the kids using most of the time -- beside their hands, of course. All of these things can be purchased separately, too.

I am really satisfied with how Andrew and Michael worked to put this together the way I want it -- using real materials and tools. It's all wood -- no plastic like the other sand trays available -- and the price of our sand is unmatched by any one else's. Some of the "moon sand" on the market goes for as much as \$20 per pound! We are offering 5 lbs. of our Play Sand for that price.

What is most satisfying to me is to be involved in making something that is going to last and that I also know is so right for kids.

Love, Bev

*Here is a link to our website for the whole PlaySand Set or the individual components.*

[www.turnthepage.com/products.php?id=product](http://www.turnthepage.com/products.php?id=product) 



# Did somebody say SPRING?

by Stevie Caceras, Community Service Liason

I was a bit shocked to come home from vacation to see all our bulbs had bloomed and it was time to move up the clocks. It feels as if we are just now settling in to the school routine, getting to know the kids in our class and building new friendships. It sure seems like it has all gone quick this year.

Personally, this year was a bit different. I loved watching my daughter move through her first mountain school days with such ease. I loved meeting so many new families and making new friends. I really loved being back in Teacher Karyn's class. It \*almost\* makes me want to have another so I can come back again. I loved helping out a bit more by being on the board and setting up a few drives for our school to participate in. In addition, all of your incredible generosity and giving hearts inspired me.

We delivered two mini-vans full to the women and children's homeless shelter in downtown San Jose. We donated over 70 gift wishes, 50 gift cards, 300+ books and countless toy donations to the Watsonville farm workers. The PJ drive brought in 34 pairs of pajamas and 28 books donated to various shelters caring for youth. These kids come to these shelters from very tough situations. Your bright new, warm pajamas and books help comfort them.

I would have liked to run one more drive before the end of the year, but it seems everyone's plate is full with end of the year activities. I am hoping we can focus our efforts a little more on the raffle to bring in much-needed funds for our school. I want to thank all of you for your generosity and support. I am looking forward to working with you next year.

Wishing you all a peaceful, relaxing and fun-filled summer,

Stevie ☞



# Things to Note...

## *Raffle Ticket Sales*

by Nicole Engel

Keep on the lookout in the next couple of weeks for raffle ticket packets to be distributed in your classes. We have three very fun prizes, and you will be able to put your tickets towards whichever prize most appeals to you. The winning tickets will be drawn at the Spring Picnic.

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## *Sand!*

by Rebecca Curran, Facilities Chair

I am sure you have noticed that the new sand box has slowly been filling up. Thank you so much to those of you that have brought a bag or two. The children have really been enjoying the new area. If you would still like to participate it's not too late. Play sand can be found at any hardware store or Toys 'r' Us for about \$5 a bag.

Thank you,

Rebecca Curran

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## *Scrip Order Due April 1st*

by Shilpa Young

Thanks to all of you who purchased Scrip cards in January. The March Scrip order is currently underway. The forms and check envelope are located in the parents room. Please take a moment to look over the form and support our school by purchasing Scrip.

Please turn in your order form and check by April 1st.

Thank you for supporting our school!

Shilpa Young ☞

## A Few Good People

The search is on for a few people to fill the remaining Board positions for next year. If you are interested, or know of someone that you think would be good for one of the following positions please contact either, Nicole Engel (408/354-4117), Mel Hatzis (lgsons@wattes.org) or Sonia Casper (408/353-9728). We'd love to talk with you/them about the possibilities still open.

**GARDEN** - This is a non-voting position. Person is responsible for planning, caring for and tending the garden. What would MS be without our garden?

**GO GREEN** - This is a NEW non-voting position. This person will help to develop and implement a program to get our school down the GREEN path, including arranging an electronic recycling drive that will be financially benefit the school.

**SCHOOL PHOTOS COORDINATOR** - This is a non-voting position. If you are interested please call for more info.

*Note: Non-voting Board members are not required to attend Board Meetings and receive a credit for one day or night meeting per year. ☞*

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### *From the Editor*

*The next newsletter will be the last one for the year. The deadline for the next newsletter is Friday, April 20th. Please send all submissions for consideration to [mtnmama@garlic.com](mailto:mtnmama@garlic.com).*

*Warmly,*

*Sonia Casper*  
*Editor* ☞

## Calendar

### WALK-IN REGISTRATION

*Sunday, April 1st*  
*10:00am to 1:00pm*  
*at the Schoolhouse*

Remember, all forms and registration must be postmarked by Thursday, March 29th, or hand delivered at Walk-In Registration. Failure to do so will result in a loss of your spot.

### SCRIP ORDERS DUE

*Sunday, April 1st*

For more info see page 6.

### BOARD MEETING

*Tuesday, April 3rd*  
*7:00pm at Van Meter Elementary*  
*in the Clubhouse Portable*

### MOVE OUTDOORS

*Monday, April 2nd*  
*Check with your teacher for location.*



### SPRING BREAK - NO SCHOOL

*Monday, April 9th - Saturday, April 14th*

### HAND-OVER BOARD MEETING

*Tuesday, May 1st*  
*Location TBD*

### SPRING PICNIC

*Sunday, May 6th*

See page 2 for more details.

All incoming Board Members are requested to attend.

### LAST DAY OF SCHOOL

*Friday, May 25th*

# Cast Iron Cookery,

*originally in a Whole Foods Market e-mail newsletter*

What's new and hip on the cooking scene? Something old and heavy: cast iron. As it turns out our great-grandmother's cookware, the original non-stick cookware, is making a come back as a natural non-stick alternative to the cookware surfaces cooked up by chemists in laboratories.

Properly seasoned cast iron cookware will outperform modern non-stick pans in several ways:

More even heat distribution – iron's weight and density is ideal for heat distribution and retention, which can add immeasurably to the flavor, texture and proper cooking of food.

Natural and non-toxic – iron is a natural element necessary to human health and, even at high temperatures, cast iron will not release toxic gases like some modern non-stick coatings.

Versatility – will perform equally well on a burner, in an oven, on a grill, even over an open fire.

Durability – it will last for several generations if seasoned and cared for properly. There are cooks out there who actually are using their great-grandmother's cookware.

Flavor – food simply tastes better, with no chemical residues or after-taste.

Environmentally friendly – discarded pans can be 100% recycled at some recycling centers and even if they do end up in a landfill, they do no harm to the environment.

Economical — cast iron cookware is among the most reasonably priced cookware available and its durability makes it an even better value.

A Healthy Choice - Cooking with cast iron actually adds iron to your diet, as much as 3 milligrams for every 3 ounces of food cooked. The more acidic the food you cook, the more iron is leached from the pan. Iron is critical to human health, especially that of women and infants. And, as with modern non-stick pans, you need less oil to cook food properly, reducing the use of fats, which can contribute to heart disease and other problems if used excessively.

## Other Considerations

The only negative qualities of cast iron cookware are its weight and the initial seasoning of new pieces along with a modicum of care over time. Some cookware manufacturers now offer “pre-seasoned” pieces so the latter point is no longer an issue. However, even pre-seasoned pieces may have to be seasoned anew occasionally.

Cast iron pans that are roughly finished or have ridges on the bottom may not be suitable for use on ceramic cooktops, which require nearly seamless contact with the cooking surface to conduct heat.

Enameled cast iron does not require seasoning or special care, but neither does it offer the unique characteristics of unadorned cast iron, characteristics that can bestow flavor, texture and ease of use.

## How to Season Cast Iron Cookware

Thoroughly clean in hot, soapy water (if properly used and maintained, this is the last time soap will touch it), then rinse and dry completely with an old towel or paper towels. Cast iron will leave dark stains on the towel. (If you are re-seasoning a used pan picked up at a garage sale

or inherited from your grandmother, a more thorough scrubbing with steel wool or an abrasive cleaner may be required.)

Using your fingers or a paper towel, apply a thin coat of expeller-pressed cooking oil on all surfaces, inside and out, including the lid.

Place aluminum foil or a large baking sheet on the bottom rack to catch drips and preheat the oven to 350°F.

Place the pan, and the lid if it has one, upside down on the upper rack and bake for at least one hour. Be prepared to use the exhaust fan, since the combination of heat, oil and metal can give off smoke and odors. Turn off the heat and allow the pan to cool in the oven for several hours or overnight.

## How To Maintain Cast Iron Cookware

After this initial seasoning, the pan is ready to use for cooking but it is not yet fully seasoned. Full seasoning is actually an ongoing process that continues for the life of the pan. Regular use for several months will produce a black, shiny patina that will withstand nearly any cooking challenge. Here are some tips on how to keep your cast iron pan in tip top shape:

- For the first few weeks (or months if used infrequently), use the pan to cook high fat foods such as bacon or dishes with a high oil content in order to accelerate the seasoning process.

- During this “breaking-in” period, avoid cooking acidic dishes such as tomato-based stews or bean dishes,

(continued on page 9)

(Cast Iron Cookery, continued)

because the acid will damage the protective coating. Frequent cooking of acidic foods, even in a fully seasoned pan, will eventually degrade the protective coating and necessitate a re-seasoning.

- Heat cast iron gradually - never place a cold pan on a hot burner.
- Wash immediately after each use, preferably while the pan is still warm, using these do and don'ts as a guide:
  - Hot water and a dishcloth is all you should need.
  - Do not use soap of any kind or highly abrasive scrubbers or steel wool because they will break down the protective non-stick layer.
  - If necessary, use a nylon or plastic scrubber for the occasional food stain. If food sticks to the pan stubbornly or repeatedly, it means the pan is not properly seasoned.
  - Alternatively, use a tablespoon of kosher salt or other coarse salt in a small amount of olive oil to scrub the pan, then polish with an old cotton towel or paper towel. This should be done while the pan is warm. Rinse in cold water.
  - Never put cast iron cookware in the dishwasher. Doing so will remove the seasoning and rust the pan.
  - After washing, dry thoroughly, apply a very thin coat of oil (coconut, olive or all-natural vegetable shortening are the best choices) and wipe dry with a paper towel.
- Store cookware in a cool dry place. Cast iron requires air circulation so do not store with the lids on.
- Do not store food in cast iron; always transfer cooked food to an appropriate storage container.

### The Ultimate Pan

While all these guidelines may seem onerous, they're really just common sense things that quickly become second nature. The reward is a seasoned and well maintained cast iron pan that is a cook's wonder and well worth the small effort required. Delicate omelets cook evenly and slide out gracefully; cornbread is incomparable, whether on the stovetop or in the oven; and fried chicken and blackened fish achieve their true nature at last - without the worry attending modern nonstick coatings or the dismay at having to scrub endlessly away at stubborn food stains. ☞

## Parent Library Update

by Sonia Casper, Newsletter/Librarian

Recently I added a series of Ronald Mah DVDs to the Parent Library. They cover some fabulously pertinent topics and I'd like to encourage everyone to check one out.

Once again thank you to Teacher Kathy for taking the time to not only watch each of these DVDs, but also to write up a wonderful description of each one. The description can be found on the cover of each DVD as well as in the back of the blue folder that contains a list of each article in the Parent's Library.

Soon we'll be heading outdoors. However these resources can still be available for you to use. Soon I will be emailing a list of the items in the library to the entire school. We also hope to have the list posted on the LGSONS website. If you would like to check out anything from the library please contact me by email: [mtnmama@garlic.com](mailto:mtnmama@garlic.com) or phone: 408/353-9728. ☞

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## Program Events At Mountain School: Upcoming Events

by Marina Rush, Programs Co-Chair

Mini-Course: Raising Children in an Affluent Society  
Speaker: Sheila Dubin MS, of the Parents Place, Palo Alto

*Thursday, March 29th, 7-9pm*

*Location District Office of Los Gatos Saratoga Joint*

*Union High School District.*

*17421 Farley Rd West*

*Los Gatos, CA 95030*

Our children are lucky to be living in a community that is rich in resources. There are a myriad of activities, a wealth of classes, and an abundance of experiences that await our children. As parents we want to provide our kids with all that life offers, and protect them from life's problems. But does this abundance and protection deprive them of the opportunity to learn important coping skills? How do we put balance in our lives and those of our children, so that opportunity does not turn into indulgence? ☞

# Tips for Creating a Child's Garden

by Marina Rush, Programs Co-Chair

*As from the house your mother sees  
You playing around the garden trees  
So you may see, if you will look  
Through the windows of this book  
Another child, far, far away  
And in another garden, play  
But do not think you can at all  
By knocking on the window, call  
That child to hear you. He intent  
Is all on his play-business bent  
He does not hear; he will not look  
Nor yet be lured out of his book  
For, long ago, the truth to say  
He has grown up and gone away,  
And it is but a child of air  
That lingers in the garden there.*

- Robert Louis Stevenson  
"A Child's Garden of Verses"

## GETTING STARTED

- Begin by drawing your garden plot on paper. Create a sample plan which includes choice and placement of plants.
- When choosing a site, consider size of garden, access to water, amount of sun and shade, type of soil, protection from wind, natural predators.
- When choosing plants, consider estimated size when grown, water requirements, sun/shade requirements, toxicity, native plants that attract butterflies/other beneficial insects.

## THEME GARDENS

Theme gardens establish creative connections between the garden and the classroom curriculum. Examples of theme gardens include:

*Pizza garden* – garlic, basil, oregano, tomatoes  
*Rainbow garden* – plant rows of different colored flowers  
*Smell garden* – herbs, lavender, scented geraniums, lemon verbena  
*Tea garden* – peppermint, chamomile, lemon grass

*Three sisters garden* – corn, beans, and squash  
*Touch garden* – lamb's ears, baby tears, succulents  
*Salsa garden* – tomatoes, garlic, peppers, cilantro

## GARDENING WEBSITES

[www.kidsgardening.com](http://www.kidsgardening.com)  
[www.acornnaturalists.com](http://www.acornnaturalists.com)  
<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/kindergarden/index.html>  
[www.cityfarmer.org/schgard15.html](http://www.cityfarmer.org/schgard15.html)  
<http://doityourself.com/wildlife/butterflygarden.htm>  
<http://4hgarden.msu.edu/tour/overview.html>  
<http://childrensgarden.ucdavis.edu>  
<http://www.gardens.com/resource/children>  
[www.edibleschoolyard.org](http://www.edibleschoolyard.org)  
[www.lifelab.org](http://www.lifelab.org)  
[www.nationalgardening.com](http://www.nationalgardening.com)  
[www.kidsrecycle.org](http://www.kidsrecycle.org) (information on recycling and worm composting)  
[www.crsceience.org](http://www.crsceience.org) (good resource for science standards)

## GARDENING BOOKS AND GUIDES

- "Hollyhocks and Honeybees: Garden Projects for Young Children" by Sara Starbuck, Maria Olthof, Karen Midden
- "The Children's Kitchen Garden", by G. and E. Brennan
- "Steps to a Bountiful Kids' Garden" by National Gardening Association
- "Roots, Shoots, Buckets and Boots" by Sharon Lovejoy
- "Gardening Wizardry for Kids" by L. Patricia Kite
- "Sunset Western Garden Book" by Kathleen Norris Brenzel, editor
- "Accessible Gardening for People With Disabilities" by Janeen R. Adil
- "A Child's Garden: Enchanting Outdoor Spaces for Children and Parent's" by Molly Dannenmaier

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