

THE OBSERVATORY

'Tis the Season

Calendar Highlights

- JAN 19** Winter Raffle Begins
- JAN 22** Prospective Student Open House
- JAN 23** "Emotional Intelligence," Janis Keyser at Van Meter 7pm
- JAN 25** "Unlocking Creativity," Dr. Scott Barry Kaufman at Yavneh Day School 9am (Common Ground Speaker Series \$20 at the door)
- APR 30** May Faire

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Simple Gifts

"My memories of Christmas as a child are of stress. My mother wanted everything to be perfect and got so worked up trying to do it all that it made the rest of the family crazy. I remember my dad comforting me when I was about 8 years old, I was crying and said 'I hate Christmas' and he said 'I do, too, honey. We just have to get through it.'"

- Amy (From Aha! Parenting's newsletter)

"Scented acres of holiday trees, prickly-leaved holly. Red berries shiny as Chinese bells: black crows swoop upon them screaming. Having stuffed our burlap sacks with enough greenery and crimson to garland a dozen windows, we set about choosing a tree."

- Truman Capote, A Christmas Memory

Which quotation comes closer to describing your holiday memories? Luckily, as parents, we get to choose what kinds of memories we aspire to create for our children. What children really want is time with you; time when you are relaxed and open to play. Maybe we can all support each other in the simple goal of taking care of ourselves so we can be present for the children in our lives.

One way to do this is to set realistic expectations for ourselves and our children. Choose a few activities or traditions that really matter to you and enjoy them fully. Resist overscheduling as that just creates stress for everyone. Think of what creates "wonder" for a child and focus on these things: it's more likely to involve a walk through the woods than a trip to the mall! Spend time together making a fairy house or a place for a banana slug to take a nap. Collect beautiful leaves and acorns. Bake cookies with your child and invite a few playmates over to decorate them. Take a night walk to admire all the lights in your neighborhood. Make chains together from scraps of beautiful paper. Focus on time with family and friends.

Try to keep the gifts simple too. I came across this quote from Joan Almm, a former director of Alliance for Childhood "A good toy is really only 10% toy and 90% child". A good thing to keep in mind if you are shopping for presents!

Whatever form your holiday takes, I wish you joy, beauty, warm company, and a respite from your busy lives for at least a few days.

Love, Teacher Leslie



Gingerbread Play Dough

1 cup Flour
 1/4 cup Salt
 2 tsp Cream of Tartar
 1 cup Water
 2 TBSP Vegetable Oil
 1 - 2 tsp ground Cinnamon
 1 - 2 tsp ground Ginger
 1 tsp ground Nutmeg
 1 tsp ground Cloves

Mix all ingredients in a sauce pan - I like to mix the dry ingredients and add the wet ingredients separately.

Stir until your mixture resembles cake batter. It may still have a few lumps in it at this point.

Cook slowly over medium heat, stirring constantly.

It shouldn't take too long for the mixture to thicken...continue stirring.

Once the mixture forms into a large ball, remove the dough from the heat, and knead by hand until smooth.

Caution...let cool before you let little fingers touch it. It will be very hot at this point.

This recipe makes about 2 cups of Gingerbread Play Dough.



Our School Library

Courtney Boitano, Librarian

Happy December Mountain School Families. What a perfect time to curl up by the fire and dive into a book from our Mountain School Parent Library.



Our newest donated book is Touchpoints Birth to Three by Dr. Brazelton. Touchpoints provides a thorough overview of child development including topics of toilet learning, lying, make believe, loss and grief, and daily habits for your child.

We are so lucky to have access to so many great books. Please remember to take a look and check out a book! Happy reading!



Prospective Families Open House

Invite your friends to meet teachers and families, tour the school, and see what makes Mountain School a unique educational experience for children and their parents.

Saturday, January 22, 11am-1pm

19601 Black Road, Los Gatos, 95033

www.lgsons.com and info@lgsons.com

Parent Observation: Washing Mountain School Clothes

Jen Hom, Parent 4/5s - Observation Submitted by Teacher Marie

I do it three times a week. I often procrastinate, letting the wet bag of boots and jeans fester making the job even more undesirable and disgusting. As I agitate and wring out the muddy socks and jeans, smelling of creek algae, the same thoughts go through my head as the time before. I AM CRAZY! Is this worth it? Why do I make so much work for myself? My mind starts racing. I become sad and nostalgic. One day, I won't have the little muddy pants to clean. Be grateful! My boys will grow up and I will only have this memory of cleaning their dirty clothes. Then I wonder, will they ever know how much work went into this childhood experience, the carpooling, the willingness and trust of parents to work together, the laundry, the teachers' carefully planned itineraries? All of us so closely intertwined, relying on mutual cooperation and flexibility of each other. They probably won't, and I wouldn't want to burden them with how much work went into it.

What is it then that I want them to get out of Mountain School? I love that they get to be outside and are genuinely enchanted by nature's wonders...far far away from the seduction of technology. I love that they become fearless, adventurous and so comfortable to push through their comfort zones. I love that the teachers give me a sense of peace, understanding and patience and kindness to myself.

There is more though. This goes deeper. The election result has been gut-wrenching and emotional for me. I am in a contemplative place with my thoughts for my children and their future. I know now that Mountain School is much much more than time in nature and self-confidence. It gives them dignity, integrity, love for one another, courage and hope. They are witnessing us parents working together in a community, cooperating, compromising, making friendships, taking care of each others' children. We treat every child with the same respect as our own child. We encourage the children to work together to find a solution, especially when they disagree or feel challenged. We tell them to use their words, no violence. We value our differences and relish in sharing foods and traditions from our own cultures. We are teaching them that the unknown is not to be feared, but to be understood and explored with an open mind.

Perhaps they do this at other preschools, which is wonderful, but Mountain School is still unique to me. We are not in a classroom. The children are on a journey together, exploring the unknown, or they are working very hard on a task that they have deemed important to them. We are taking risks, both the parents and the children, with the hope that what we have to gain outweighs what we have to lose. This is so much of what real life is. Although we have planted the seeds, I am scared for them. I know the world is going to be tough and challenge these very core values. I know we won't get to hold their hands as they leave home, but somehow, deep in my heart, I know they will do good.



So as I wring out the socks and let the boots drip dry, I tell myself, "Yes it is so worth it."

Butternut-Apple Soup

- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 medium-sized onion, diced small
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 2 teaspoons dried rosemary
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 3 pounds butternut squash, peeled, seeded and cut into ¾-inch chunks
- 1 pound red apples, peeled, cored and cut into ¾-inch chunks
- 2 cups apple cider
- 2 cups vegetable broth
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lime juice

Directions:

Preheat a 4-quart pot over medium heat. Sauté the onions in the oil for 5 to 7 minutes, until translucent.

Add the ginger and garlic, red pepper flakes, rosemary and salt, and sauté for a minute more. Add the squash, apples, apple cider and broth. Cover and bring to a boil. Once boiling, lower the heat just a bit and simmer briskly for about 20 more minutes, or until the squash is tender.

Puree the soup using either an immersion blender or by transferring half the soup at a time to a food processor or blender in batches. If you prefer, you can leave the soup a little chunky by only pureeing half or so. If using a blender, be sure to let the steam escape so that it doesn't build up in the blender.

Add the lime juice and season to taste. Serves 6.

Recipe by Isa Chandra Moskowitz.

Contributed by Jen Rosenthal, Mom to Walden 3s.

Employer Gift & Volunteer Matching

Increase your charitable giving by asking your company to match your contributions of money or volunteer time to organizations such as LGSONS.



Many companies will match your volunteer time and monetary donations.

Looking for something new to do with the family? The New Museum Los Gatos's Studio/ MakerSpace is open every weekend from 12-4 and offers an instructor-led art project for kids of all ages. There's a \$5 materials fee and admission is free for folks 18 and under. The museum is located at 106 E. Main Street in Los Gatos.

<http://www.numulosgatos.org/studio>

New Museum Los Gatos is bringing art, innovation, history and Bay Area Stories to the wide audience of Silicon Valley.

