



# The Leaflette

Tree of Life Montessori  
Charter School

February 2010

## Green Week—Waste-Free Snacks and Lunches

By Celeste Beck, Guide/Principal

This will be the second year Tree of Life Charter School has participated in the National Green Week challenge from February 1-5 to reduce our snack and lunch waste. Our school will be taking part in a very exciting environmental educational opportunity. The goal of this program is for students to learn firsthand how they can make a difference in saving our planet's valuable resources, no matter how small. Our school will be joining thousands of others from across the nation to achieve the sustainability objective of eliminating a 1/2 million lbs of trash!

**Waste-Free Snack/Lunch Overview:** Prior to National Green Week 2010 the students will weigh all

snack and lunch trash collected in their classrooms to determine the amount of trash accumulated from leftovers. During our Green Week we are encouraging (but not requiring) the students to use reusable snack and drink containers to carry snacks and drinks to school. Students will weigh daily snack trash. *Note: fruit waste such as apple cores and banana peels will not be counted towards the snack weight totals, as these are added to our compost.*

Our schools totals will be sent in to be added to the nationwide numbers. Nationwide totals will be posted on the National Green Week website. Parent Tip: Please shop ahead to purchase snacks and drinks in bulk (or fresh fruit). Please take a moment to read through lessons and activities in the

curriculum section under National Green Week at: [www.GreenEducationFoundation.org](http://www.GreenEducationFoundation.org).

### Some things you can do to support our efforts:

- Buy drinks in bulk, bottles, concentrate instead of individual juice boxes/bottles. Pour into reusable bottles to take to school.
- Buy snacks in bulk, or make your own snacks instead of buying individual applesauce, granola bars, etc. Fruit is a great snack!
- Send sandwiches, crackers, etc. In reusable containers instead of plastic baggies.

Thanks for supporting our eco-challenge. We'll post the results in the next newsletter.

### Inside this issue:

Green Week	1
Parent Council News	1
Primary Class News	2
Jr. Elementary News	2
Sr. Elementary News	3
Student Council News	3
Office News	4
Cerebral Gymnastics	4
Thank You, Sandra	4
Montessori Quote	4

### Calendar

- February 1-5—Green Week—reduce, reuse, recycle
- February 2—Thrillers Field Trip to WFC for "A Year with Frog and Toad", leave 8 AM
- February 4—Thrillers Field Trip to Ukiah Waste Solutions
- February 10—Crazy Day Spirit Day
- February 10—Parent Council Meeting/Parenting Education, 5:15 pm
- February 12-15—Presidents' Day Weekend Break, no school
- February 19—Board Cabinet Meeting, 4:30 pm
- February 25—Blades of Grass Field Trip to Point Arena/Mendocino Coast
- March 10-12—Student-Led Conferences, 2:30 dismissal
- March 15-19—Spring Break, no school

## Parent Council News

By Mary Jaques, Parent Board Representative

Hello, Everyone! January's Parent Council meeting was held on 1/13. Thanks to all who attended and participated in the discussions. One topic discussed was the potholes that are in the drive when entering the school grounds. They have been filled several times by parents and seem to return each rainy season. Tree of Life is responsible for maintaining this issue, and

once this wet weather passes we hope to have a few volunteers to fill in the holes. The fairgrounds have provided some fill in the past but may not always be able to do so. If you have access to some gravel that the school may be able to use please contact me. We also had a brief discussion about the upcoming Spring Fundraiser; keep an eye out for upcoming announcements.

The Guide-led discussion was amazing, as usual! The

topic this month was about the partnership between school and home. I always find the Guides' topics to be insightful and have often walked away from them having learned a new skill or technique that I can apply at home.

The next Parent Council meeting will be held on February 10<sup>th</sup> @ 5:15 in the multi-purpose room. I encourage all parents/guardians to attend these meetings; they are a great way to stay connected to your child's school!



## Dark Stars: Semester's End—New Roads Ahead

By Christopher Melville, Guide

Our end of semester portfolios and conferences were excellent and insightful. The process of the teacher and student comes back to the beginning as we begin again the journey of deepening and broadening student learning. Thank you to all the parents of the Dark Star Class, who brought their presence of mind and compassion of spirit to the Guide-led conferences. Our discussions were meaningful, and I was impressed with the attention and insight everyone brought to our discussion, as we celebrated the amazing growth, and planned for the next steps.

Our exploration of Asia has brought us back to the study of biomes and the realization that they exist on

every continent. We have been studying the myths and legends of Asia, from India, to Russia, and China. Ask any child in the Dark Star Class about Monkey King, and you are sure to get a long, animated, and detailed response. This ancient story has been the focal point of our classroom for weeks now and has captured the imagination of students in a way few other stories can. Students are making Asia maps as well as many others, and the busy focus on the classroom has deepened and grown. Still deep in our study of Forms of Matter, we did our fabric of space/time lesson this month, exploring such exciting topics as the speed of light, subspace, worm-holes, and tessering.

This is once again an amazingly exciting unit that prompts more questions than it answers, like most good lessons do. Zoë has been very active in supplying follow up questions such as, "I know what the speed of light is, but what is the speed of dark?" and "Is there a top and a bottom to the universe?" and "How is matter formed?" These wonderfully insightful children are proof of Montessori's vision and observation, that children have a great deal to teach adults.

Next month we will begin a science unit on the five classes of vertebrates. Following the path of evolution we will explore fish, amphibians, reptiles, and then birds, and mammals. Always

an exciting unit, we will be using our new digital microscope to follow the development of frog spawn that Calvin has brought in, as well as many other animals we encounter.

As we move forward into the next steps for our class, children are pushing themselves to meet ever greater challenges in their own personal development. Let's remember to support our children in this process by encouraging them, and setting the limits they need to attain the mastery they seek. These children are setting out to develop a new aspect of themselves, and we as parents and guides must remember our part of that process and help keep them on the course they have set.

## Thrillers News

By Stacy Strauss, Guide

Thanks to the rain that January brought, our class has had many opportunities to play board games during indoor recess. Although, it would be nice to have a break from the rain, I have enjoyed playing indoor games and puzzles with them. I hope that you all are doing lots of that at home as well. Most games build skills while having fun at the same time. Playing dice games helps with math facts. Monopoly is great for money skills and "mental math." There are many junior level games if the adult versions are too challenging.

### Green Week

By the time you get this, our class probably will have

already gone on our field trip to Ukiah Waste Solutions on February 4. They will learn where some of our waste ends up and what is done with it. As a part of Green Week, we are going to look at our lunch boxes and see what we can do to reduce the amount of waste — both recycled and non-recycled — in them. We want to encourage the students to pack their lunches using reusable containers. I have noticed that most of them use reusable water bottles, which makes a big difference on our carbon footprint. Now, we want to take it a step further. Remember, our children are the future of our planet.

Anytime we can show them how small things make a difference, it will make a big difference on our future.

### Conference Week

I enjoyed meeting with all of you for conferences last week. These meetings are so important for your child's Montessori education to be complete. Also, it helps me to recognize anything "missing" from your child's curriculum. Although, we do meet 5 times a year, please don't hesitate to contact me by phone or email in between our meetings if you feel the need.

### Overnight

Anyone have any special talent in astronomy? Or have a powerful telescope? Please let me know. I have an idea for an overnight in May. Our planned field trip

to Emandal Farm in Willits will not work out because they cannot fit us in, so I am planning another type of overnight — probably right here at school.

### Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day falls on a Sunday this year, so we are planning to celebrate on Thursday, February 11. The students may bring Valentines to pass out. They must have one for each student. I will send out a class list next week. I need a volunteer or two to bring a snack. Anyone? Let me know so I can plan a party for that day. Thank you!



## Blades of Grass News

By Anthony Esserman Melville and Celeste Beck, Guides

Blades of Grass students returning from Winter Break seemed to have a lot of extra energy this month! Nonetheless, we had several very productive work days with concentration and collaboration happening. Portfolio preparation and conferences helped the students to see where they had made progress, and where they had slacked off a bit and need to focus for the next semester. Students bridging from the elementary level at the end of this year are anxious to get their bridging folders so they can check off requirements and get started on their Imaginary Island projects. So we're off to a busy start!

This month in science we will be studying geology, land forms and the dawn of multi-cellular organisms with science group 1, and science group 2 will continue their biology studies with a review of fungi, invertebrate experiments,

and botany lessons. Last month they got to make cheese with bacteria, and they used the whey to make some delicious yeast bread.

All students at this level are required to do science fair projects to be displayed at our school science fair on Wednesday March 24<sup>th</sup>, which is being held in conjunction with our Open House this year. Those who receive high scores in our school science fair will be invited to participate in the Mendocino County Science Fair on April 24<sup>th</sup>. In January, students were asked to brainstorm ideas for their project and submit a written proposal to the Guides. This month, after getting their project plan fine-tuned, students should begin their projects. It is good scientific practice to do a project more than once, and it really helps to plan that way in case an accident happens to the first project! Our school

store will have science fair project boards available for purchase, and these will be a cheaper price than you would be able to buy them at most stores.

Our next fieldtrip (so long as it isn't raining) is on Thursday, February 25<sup>th</sup> to Point Arena. We will be visiting the San Andreas Fault, see stratification at the harbor, and witness a geologic marvel of concretions at Bowling Ball Beach. As a major plus, we will get the chance to explore the tide pools there to take advantage of the -0.68 tide! Students will need a bag lunch and snacks, a warm coat, a hat, rain boots (or an extra pair of shoes), a change of clothes (in case of slips or change in the weather), and a bag for these things. We, of course, need drivers/chaperones. Please contact Rhonda in the office or write a note in your child's goal book to let us know if you can participate. A reminder and information about

our departure and return times will be sent out a week before the trip.

Our class is concerned about the earthquake survivors in Haiti, and they have put a change collection jar in our classroom to collect funds to help. When we heard about a Montessori school in Port-au-Prince that had three classrooms collapse and is missing six of their nine teachers, and the orphanage for 350 children that is right next door that completely collapsed and now all the children are living in the street, we decided to send our funds directly to help those causes. In our first week, we collected and sent \$65. If you would like to help, please save your loose change for our "Change for Haiti" jar.

Valentines are optional. If brought (Feb. 11), there must be one for each member of the class. No candy/sugar foods. Handmade are nice!

## Student Council News

By Grace Denbo and Majken Rasmussen

Last Spirit Day, Toy Day, went very well. There were many different kinds of toys, such as iPods, Littlest Pet Shops, BopIt, and lots of stuffed animals.

Our next Spirit Day, Crazy Day, will be held on Wednesday, February 10th. On Crazy Day students come to school with crazy hair and crazy outfits. We encourage you to participate. Students will have an opportunity to model their outfits at All School Meeting.

The Spring Semester Student Council has been elected. The officers are: Majken as President, Sage as Vice-President, Joe as Secretary, Michael as Treasurer, Jossen as Advertiser, and Sasha as Historian. Grace Denbo was re-elected as Student Board Representative.

Congratulations to all of our Student Council members.



## Tree of Life Montessori Charter School

241 Ford Rd.  
PO Box 966  
Ukiah, CA 95482

Phone: 707-462-0913  
Fax: 707-462-0914

Email: [treeoflifeschool@sbcglobal.net](mailto:treeoflifeschool@sbcglobal.net)  
Website: [www.treeoflifeschool.net](http://www.treeoflifeschool.net)

### ***Education for Life!***

“Like parents everywhere, we care about our children, want what’s best for them, and know that their experience in school can have a great impact on the quality of their life. We want them to have an education that is worthy of their beauty and potential. We want them in a place where they are known, not as faces in a crowd, but individually and personally. We want them in a school where they receive direct, high-quality attention, where their actual needs are met, where their potential is being realized.”

## Office News and Reminders

By Rhonda Hurlbut, Business Manager/Secretary

### **Holiday Schedule**

This year we have a different schedule for holidays than we have in past years. We have a four day weekend in February and the Spring Break is in March.

**February 12 - 15: NO School**  
Presidents’ Weekend

**March 15 - 19: NO School**  
Spring Break

### **Annual Roots and Shoots Dinner and Auction Fundraiser**

This year the annual fundraiser is set for **Saturday, April 10**. It will be held in the Fine Arts building here at the Fairgrounds. We will have a great dinner and auction again, but this year we will also have live music and dancing provided by The Funky Dozen, a band which includes Anthony Esserman Melville. This will

be a great event and the major fundraiser for our school. We hope many of you will attend.

In mid-January, a notice was sent out to the families looking for event sponsors. Sponsors help to underwrite the costs, such as the building rental & the caterer, so that more money will go to the school to purchase equipment, materials, and supplies. Please ask your friends and family to help us to have a successful event. Please see me in the office for more information about sponsors or the fundraiser in general.

At the beginning of March, packets will go out to all families with more information about the fundraiser.

## Cerebral Gymnastics Award

By Anthony Esserman-Melville

Most of us know that sacrifice and hard work are what keep our school going. We help clean classrooms, we organize and give at fundraisers, and help set up or break down at special events. As a Guide (teacher) of Tree of Life, I also get to see how much our staff gives. All of our staff offer so much, and I am grateful to be among such giving creative, steadfast, and flexible colleagues.

Some of you may know that our charter is in the process of renewal. This year many changes were asked to be made to our charter document by our district. Not only that, but we have been given a very limited amount of time to comply with these demands. For instance, over the winter break Stacy, Christopher, Celeste and I had to painstakingly link each of the state content standards with our school bench marks. This example is but one piece in a large *quilt* that is our school’s charter, which needed to be

patched and re-stitched to the district’s specifications. Unbeknownst to many of us, Celeste Beck was behind scenes making the necessary technical changes and doing the extensive research to comply with district requirements and to challenge the district on areas that needed to be defended. She spent many late night hours, on top of all the work she does in the classroom, securing the renewal of our school’s charter. I know the work she has put into this because I co-teach with her and see how she has persevered. Granted she is our principal, but Celeste has gone way over the pail on this one. I wanted to bring this to the attention of our school because Celeste is so modest no one would know about all the work she has done for us if someone didn’t point it out. And so, for this technically challenging and brain wracking work, Celeste, I wish to present to you the Tree of Life “Cerebral Gymnastics Award!”

## Thank You, Sandra

Sandra Marcel, Charles’ mother, arranged and paid for the gravel that was dumped and spread on our driveway at the end of January. **Thank you, Sandra, for your generosity and for taking action to help our school community.**

## Montessori Quote

“We especially need imagination in science. It is not all mathematics, nor all logic, but it is somewhat beauty and poetry”

—Maria Montessori