



The Leaflette

Tree of Life Montessori
Charter School

June 2009

Completing a Decade

By Celeste Beck, Lead Teacher/Principal

It's hard to believe that Tree of Life has been in existence for almost ten years! After much planning, many meetings, and lots of grant and plan writing, the school was granted its charter in December 1999, and it opened for instruction in August of 2000. We breezed through our charter renewal in 2005, and we expect to do the same in 2010.

You'll read in other sections of this newsletter unsolicited testimonies from staff and students about their experiences at this school. Over the years I've talked with families whose students have continued their higher education at other schools, and I hear about how the Montessori educational start their children had helped them through the challenges

of high school and adolescence.

Each year the Staff and Board do their best to try to improve the school. This year we saw beneficial changes to the organization of the volunteer teams and how they function. Our school was beautified with additional garden boxes through the efforts of Tarney and her friends at the Ukiah Garden Club. The adolescents had their first year of the Heroic Journey program and hands-on work at the Landlab. Each project and every effort by all of the individuals that make up the school contribute to the good of the whole.

Perhaps more than you realize, what families do with their children at home and how they are treated makes a big impact on how they do

at school and how they treat others. Spending that quality time every day with your child, treating your child with attention and respect, and giving your child opportunities to do meaningful work independent of your help instill a sense of self-worth that is projected in their words and actions.

So what makes our school a beneficial place for children is a unique mix of Montessori education, family participation at school, family nurturing at home, dedicated and caring staff, small size where we all get to know each other, and all of us working in the spirit of doing the best things possible for our children and for their home, the Earth. May the summer renew our determination!

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Calendar

- June 2-5—Guide-led Conferences; 1:30 dismissal
- June 3—Hot Tamales field trip meeting, 5:30 PM
- June 7—End of Year Bridging, Performances, Potluck BBQ, 5 PM, Low Gap Park
- June 3-5—Starstruck class Landlab
- June 8-9—Starstruck class conferences
- June 10-11—Hot Tamales class field trip
- June 11—Water Day; last day of school, 1:30 dismissal
- June 19—Board meeting 5:30, Conference Room
- August 11-14—Prep week, Beginning of Year Conferences
- August 15—possible Volunteer Work day
- August 17—First instructional day of Fall 2009 Semester

Parent Council News: Update

By Jim Clark, Parent Board Representative

As the school year nears an end, I would like to say thank you to all of the parent volunteers who contribute their time and energy to make our school a success. The list of accomplishments of parent volunteers is long, ranging from the very successful annual fundraising event, landscaping, school cleaning, school maintenance, yearbook, participation in school field trips, and help and support of all of the classrooms in general. Special thanks go to those parents who took on the

additional responsibility of coordinating fundraising, maintenance, and cleaning, and to those parents who worked with Guides to coordinate events by contacting other parents.

I would also like to thank the Guides and Assistants who put so much time and energy into making Tree of Life successful. I know that they put countless hours outside of time spent teaching to provide our children with an exceptional learning environment.

I am currently seeking

parent volunteers who are willing to coordinate the maintenance and cleaning teams. If you are interested in fulfilling your volunteer hours through coordination of maintenance or cleaning, please let me know.

Save the date of June 7 for our annual End of Year Bridging, Performances, and Potluck BBQ at Low Gap Park. The event begins at 5 PM, but we encourage people to arrive early as we want to start performances at 5 o'clock sharp.

Have a great summer!



Starstruck Class: Short and Sweet

By Anthony Esserman Melville, Guide

The journey is at an end and the initiation is beginning. Parents and Guardians of the Starstruck Class, remember your part for the Council of Elders on Wednesday morning, June 3rd. Be sure to confirm with each other concerning your roles and responsibilities for this week. June 4th is the Ropes Course. Make sure you have all of the forms I sent out last week filled out and returned by Tuesday, June 2nd. Also remember that you need to send in \$7.50 for the Landlab and \$10 for the rent of the social hall by Tuesday as well. TOL and the Beginning Project are covering the cost of the Ropes Course. Friday is the ceremony at 7:00pm at the Methodist Social Hall. Remember that “Devil’s Advocate” brings hors d’oeuvres, “Nubclub” brings drinks, and “Anonymous” brings desserts. But that isn’t

the end! Don’t forget about the picnic at 5 at Low Gap Park on Sunday the 7th, and then the 8th and 9th are conferences for the Starstruck Class. If you haven’t signed up for your conference do so ASAP. It’s been a great year – Have a great summer, everyone!

From Minty to You

By Minty Ryan, Instructional Assistant

Wow. And it’s the end of the school year.

First I want to say that I’m so happy to be joining you all for yet another school year. This has been the very best “job” I have had – the most meaningful to me, the most nourishing, and without a doubt the most fun. I remember when I first started I would start feeling teary-eyed at the all school meetings, because I felt so touched by the wholesomeness of all the students getting together to make things work, and the innocent voices of the children singing their songs at the end of the meeting, or acting out little plays. I felt really happy, and still do. I always wished I could get paid to philosophize with people all day, and though that’s not what I do, I find working with kids to be quite “philosophical.” If I could only take a certain category of memory with me, it would

have to be all the hilarious, curious, and insightful little things that come out of these kids’ mouths.

So, I hope that you all have an amazing summer. It was lovely to get to know all of you whom I did, and if you are returning next year, see ya soon!

But I must especially address my Starstruck Class – I genuinely can easily name a few things, at the least, which I admire about each and every one of you, but I will do that individually to save space here, and so you guys don’t get embarrassed...

And then, to Tony, I have to say I think we made quite an excellent team in the classroom! I really couldn’t have ended up with a better teacher to assist—now, just like the students I find myself not wanting to embarrass you with some of my favorite moments. All I’ll say is – Bring the Gold! The heart of this school sure does...

Waterbugs Class: Greeks and Romans

By Celeste Beck, Guide

It’s hard for me to believe it’s already the end of the school year. But wait, there is still so much more to do! Where did all the time go for those extra projects we wanted to do? Well, there’s always next year.

Looking back over the year, we did soooo much. Just spending a year exploring ancient civilizations is a lot, but we added to that a recap of the beginning of the universe, the beginning of life, and the beginning of humans! Our timeline of the universe lines our ceiling, and students’ timelines of life adorn our eastern wall. We explored

literature as a group with *The Jungle Book*, *Pippi Longstocking*, *Maia of Thebes*, *Between the Dragon and the Eagle*, *The Iliad*, and *The Odyssey*...not to mention the myths and legends of the many cultures we studied through the year. On top of that, we learned about the Kingdoms of Life, bacteria, protists, fungi, animals, and plants. At the end of May, we had hors d’oeuvres of the shiitake mushrooms we grew in class. With music, art, and drama woven in to the various subjects, and the field trips that reinforced

everything—thanks so much again to all of our family volunteers who helped chaperone and transport!

The Waterbugs will be busy right up until the last day, squeezing in some more learning about the Romans and the Kingdom Animalia. As promised, we will have a Greek and Roman Toga Day, with Olympic games and Mediterranean lunch. Students will choose ingredients we will need for our lunch preparations, so be on the lookout for that food item request, which will need to arrive at school by Tuesday, June 9th. Our Toga Day will be

Wednesday, June 10th. Everyone in our class will be wearing Greek or Roman style clothing, based on the character they choose to play for the day. We have some simple tunics and togas available at school for borrowing. Long white sheets work great for togas. We’ll have lessons on how to wrap them properly.

Shoe box book report floats should be finished and turned in so we can have our parade of books for the other classes to see. And *Imaginary Island* presentations will be held June 2-5 for those intending to bridge this year.

The summer will be short—make the most of it!



Hot Tamales Class: June Update

By Tarney Sheldon, Guide

As we look to the last weeks of school and towards the summer, there are a few things to remember. First, our big, fun campout at Lake Mendocino is scheduled for June 10th, returning to school on June 11th. There will be a MANDATORY parent meeting on Wednesday, June 3rd at 5:30. Please join us to go over the details, costs, rules, waivers, and any questions you may have.

The next date to remember is the bridging, performances, and potluck on June 7th at 5:00 at Low Gap Park. The Hot Tamales will be performing "Two Bear Cubs," which is

a Miwok story about the Yosemite Valley. It is important that all of our students arrive on time as they all have important roles in the play.

Finally, please remember that your child needs to continue to use his/her brain during the summer. Please visit the bookstore or library to get interesting books for them. Do some math fact practice and problem solving work every week. Involve them in discussions and projects that will expand their horizons. Get a practice workbook at their level so that they can maintain the skills they have acquired this year. Encourage them

to record events and creative stories in a journal throughout the summer. Basically, don't let their brains turn to mush!

In closing, we would like to share a few of our favorite things from this past school year. List of favorites: Andrew – the progressive feast at Thanksgiving, Annabelle – visiting the Exploratorium, Caryssa – passing math "mad minutes," Crysta – looking forward to camping at Lake Mendocino, Donatella – seeing "The Ant and the Elephant" play, Dylan – doing long division, Gabriel – studying electricity and magnetism, Isabella – making mosaics, Jackson – visiting the Exploratorium, Joeseeph B. – doing long division, Joseph D. – studying the Middle

Ages, Kyah – watching the performance of "Footloose," Mariah – making mosaics, Maureen – playing Octopus Tag, Michael – doing art with pastels, Miya – visiting the Exploratorium, Sage – enjoying reading, Sebastian – playing Germs and Doctors, Rainbow Tag, and Submarine Tag, Tabbie – making it to the final "mad minute" test, Tess – playing in the sandbox, Paulette – watching the performance of "Footloose," Alana – learning so much on the field trip to the Solar Living Institute, Tarney – watching kids' excitement when learning new things, Stacy – the kids' enthusiasm for selling lemonade to raise money to adopt the rainforest.

Flower Power Class: Closing the Loop

By Christopher Melville, Guide

First of all, thank you, thank you, thank you to all the parents and adults involved in the Flower Power class for making this year so phenomenal. It is truly a masterful class, with skills they are only just realizing they can bring to bear. These children have attained this level of mastery because of the "loving and intelligent defense" (Maria Montessori) given to them by you.

We completed our last full unit, in May, discussing life in various parts of South America, bringing the Biomes works back, to much excitement. The maps have been prolific, with many students completing South America and several other continental maps in detail. We reconnected the unit

with Astronomy by discussing the equator of the Earth and the effect of seasons in a rain forest. Celeste came into our class and did a series of presentations on her travels in South America to make the experience more real. New flags of South and Central America have become a popular choice for students matching the countries' names and forms.

We also had our final field trip this last month, camping at Lake Mendocino at the Ky-en Campground, as the Bushay was closed due to budget cuts. We had a wonderful time hiking, studying plants and animals, writing, singing, and just plain hanging out, something many of our children are getting less and less time to

do. We cooked meals on open flames, told stories, and the students prepared a nutritious and delicious breakfast for the whole class. Once again, a huge thank you to all the parents, grandparents, and friends, who helped to make this fieldtrip so smooth and stress free.

This last month is short and sweet. We have conferences, which I am looking forward to. We also have our final performance and potluck at Low Gap Park on June 7th at 5pm. The class is very excited about our last Spirit Day on June 11th which is Water Day! We will be playing in the sprinklers, playing water balloon games and kicking off the summer.

Make sure your child brings a change of clothes and a bathing suit.

I will leave you with something that happened in my class this last week. We were discussing how Montessori understood that children are all geniuses. I explained how as you get older people start to make you think you aren't brilliant, beautiful, and amazing. I asked the class how they were going to keep that from happening to them. I was unprepared for overwhelming response. Almost as one they looked back at me with smiles and said, "We have to believe!" Believe. They have the answers. They really do!



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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

The school year is nearly over! This has been a wonderful year - full of challenges and blessings. There are some changes we will face as we head into the new school year, but I feel confident that the whole school community - staff, parents, and students will handle them beautifully.

Once again, the yearbook will be made available FREE to each student due to the success of fundraisers and ad sponsors! Thank you for supporting this yearbook effort; and special thanks to Holly Cochran for coordinating the yearbook and to all those who have helped her for their hard work. We really appreciate this special treat!

This year, summer break will feel short as we start school a

week earlier than in the past on August 17. I will be contacting everyone in August to set up the Beginning of the Year Conferences. These will take place on Thursday, August 13 and Friday, August 14 throughout the day. I know that’s a long time from now to be thinking about it, but I hope families will be able to schedule vacations in order to be back in time.

I hope that everyone has a great summer and returns next year refreshed and excited for the new year.

Bridging Ceremony, End of Year Performances, and Potluck Picnic

It’s time to celebrate the end of the school year with our annual Bridging Ceremony and End of Year Picnic. Join us at Low Gap Park at the covered picnic area near the stage for the bridging and end of year performances, which will begin at 5 PM. Please make sure your student attends, as they each have parts in their class performances and it’s difficult to substitute last minute!

After the ceremonies and performances, join us for a potluck picnic and barbecue. There is a large barbecue pit at the picnic area.

EACH FAMILY needs to provide their own PLATES, UTENSILS, BEVERAGES, and MAIN DISH. We recommend not using disposable products to model taking care of our environment for our children. Also please bring a side dish or dessert to share with others on the potluck table.

This year we will be honoring 7 students from the Senior Elementary who are ready to bridge. In order to be eligible, they had to demonstrate competency in all academic areas, complete an Imaginary Island project, and show the social and emotional maturity necessary for the next level. They have worked very hard to do this!

Congratulations to all!

Tutoring Services

Stacy is offering tutoring services after school and over the summer. The fee is \$20 per session. Please call 467-9036 for questions or to set up an appointment.

Student Council News

By Majken Rasmussen

Twin Day was a lot of fun. There were a whole bunch of different twins. They had assorted matching outfits, hairstyles, and even freckles.

The next and last Spirit Day is Water Day. It takes place on the last day of school, June 11th. For Water Day you need to bring a towel and a change of clothes. If you want, you may bring a small squirt gun and water shoes or flip-flops.

We will be having squirt gun tag, water balloon toss, water balloon relays, and water in the sandbox. We will try out some water musical instruments, like water bottle pipes, water glass chimes, and crystal rim vibraphones. It will take place from 10:30 to noon. We hope you enjoy it.