

December 2016

The Leaflette

Tree of Life Charter School

Public Montessori Education



Nature

by Celeste Beck, Principal

"When children come into contact with nature, they reveal their strength."—Maria Montessori

Some of my happiest childhood memories involve digging in the sand, looking for insects and worms, camping trips, and nature walks. I remember creating structures with sticks, making jewelry with leaves, stems, and flowers, and weaving natural items into macramé.

It was my parents who made these opportunities possible...even right in our own front and back yards

in Los Angeles. You don't have to live out in the country to connect with nature!

I was chagrined to read recently about children these days spending relatively little time in nature and large amounts of time in front of screens...TV, computer, cell phones...and its impact. The nature of that screen viewing, due to the way it moves quickly from one thing to the next or facilitates multi-tasking, actually causes the brain to develop differently. As a result, it has less capacity to focus and concentrate deeply and for long periods of time.

Our responsibility to our children's development includes preparing for them a suitable environment for their growth. That may include limiting screen time opportunities and providing for activities that encourage concentration that promotes true creativity and learning.

As you consider what to give your child in this coming season of giving, here are some ideas: real books, microscope, binoculars, garden area and tools, sewing kit, crochet or knitting sets, weaving loom, construction blocks, wood and woodworking tools, and time with you to share and learn how!

Inside this issue:

Primary Class News	2
Junior Elementary 1 Class News	3
Junior Elementary 2 Class News	4
Junior Elementary 3 Class News	5
Senior Elementary Class News	6
Office/Community News	7

Brief Reminders:

- Dec 8: Board Cabinet Meeting 4:30
- Dec 13: Fundraising Meeting 4:30
- Dec 20: Winter Party, Fine Arts Bldg; 5:30 potluck begins; 6:30 performances begin
- Dec 22-Jan 8: Winter Break, no school
- Jan 16: No school; MLK Jr Day
- Jan 17-20: Semester Conferences; school dismissal at 1:30 all days

Parent Council News

By Autumn Johns, Parent Representative

Hello Tree of Life parents and Happy December! It's so hard to believe that the school year is almost half way over. I hope that you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving break, and are ready for the upcoming holidays.

I just wanted to give you a few reminders about some important dates coming up. December 20 will be our Winter Party and Talent Show in the Fairgrounds Fine Arts Building. Finger food potluck begins at 5:30 pm and the show will begin at 6:30 pm. Please bring a finger food

dish to share, and get ready for some great entertainment! Winter break begins December 22 and the children return to school on Monday, January 9. The following week, on January 11, we will be hosting our first Family Game Night from 5:30-7:00 at the school. This will be a great opportunity to share some food, play some games, and have a chance to socialize with other student and parents of Tree of Life. You're not going to want to miss out on the fun, so mark your calendars now.

I would also like to take this opportunity to show appreciation for one of the school's most important representatives, Celeste! Not only does she somehow manage the day-to-day operations of our school, she is also first to volunteer when projects need to get completed around campus. She does so much behind the scenes that most of us don't even know about, and I just want her to know how much we appreciate everything she does. Thank you Celeste!

I look forward to seeing you all at the Winter Party and wish you all a Happy Holidays.

Primary Class News

By Molly Johnson, Guide



Hello from Molly and David! We hope you had a wonderful break! November was fast and fantastic.

In November our class

worked on learning about elements of design, math and reading. We have been talking about kindness and empathy and appreciation of



strengths others and we have. We have learned some new songs many students have been drawn to geography and have completed several maps. Many students can identify places where our guests have come from or can tell us about the types of climate or clothing we might find in certain areas and why.

I am really excited to share our travels to Barcelona and London with our students upon my return. Emily and I have collected brochures, souvenirs, photos and maps of interesting art and vistas to show students first hand, some of the wonders on this planet! (Thanks for those who made this possible.)



Winter Party and Talent Show 12/20

We hope you'll all join us for one of our most fun school social events: the annual Winter Party and Talent Show. This year's event will be held at the Fine Arts Building on the Fairground on Tuesday, December 20.

We start with a potluck of "finger foods" and beverages from 5:30 to 6:30 PM. Items like hand-held appetizers, pizza, fruit kabobs, and mulled apple cider have been popular in the past. For this event we will provide cups, napkins, and small plates, but we still encourage you to bring your own reusable dinner ware if you can.

At 6:30, the food area will be closed so that the audience will focus their attention on the performances. We strongly encourage you to model proper audience manners for your children and to talk with them about

appropriate behavior. At these after school social events, we expect that parents/guardians, not staff, will be in charge of monitoring their children. Please make sure that children do not run in the building at ANY time, and that they stay off the stage area until it is their turn to perform.

Performances begin with TALENT SHOW at 6:30 PM. Any student may perform solo or with friends or family. Each student may be in ONLY one performance act (not counting their performances with their whole class and school). Performance is limited to 5 minutes, including set-up and clean-up, so we recommended just 3 minutes of actual performing time. Experience has taught us that we must have performers fill out an information and permission sheet. Staff will volunteer to audition/coach performers during lunch break or after school, and we STRONGLY urge that students make use of this.

Speaking of fine art, Primary has an exciting outing coming up in December on the 15th! We will be visiting the glass blowing studio of world renowned artist Scott Hegan (where Lila's mom Cat works) and the Grace Hudson Museum. Please sign up to drive so we can make this outing a success! We will be leaving school at 9:00. Make sure to leave a car seat for your child if you are unable to drive (but do yourself a favor and try to make it...we will have a wonderful, educational, inspirational time!

Remember, no refined sugar, yes napkin, placemat, water bottle. Thanks!

Make sure to send your child's book every day so we can use it at school as well as at home.

It is really important for your family to attend the winter party! It is one of the most fun events all year and your children have been working really hard to prepare their show. Doors open at 5:30, performances start promptly at 6:30.

After the Talent Show, we will conclude with class performances and an all-school performance, so please make sure students stay until the end so they can participate in the grand finale!

Talent Show Permission form is attached to this newsletter. Please make sure they are turned in no later than DECEMBER 16th so we can make our performance schedule. Please turn them in as soon as you know what the performance will be, so we can check in with students about how their rehearsals are going. We'd like to do auditions/coaching December 14-16! This gives us a chance to give the students some performance pointers.

PLEASE NOTE: Prospective performers who turn in permission slips after December 16th will not be allowed to perform...NO EXCEPTIONS.

We look forward to a fun evening together before the Winter Break!

Jr. Elementary 1 Class News

By Mary Anne Kenealy, Guide

"We consider that in its best condition, the class should have between 28-35 children..." - Maria Montessori.

Soon our classroom will be the TOL Arts Center and pre/after school care trailer, and the Mighty Lions will be joining the Golden Dragons and Fire Fox classrooms. This will be a wonderful arrangement for the TOL community. Many of our students were new to TOL last August, and they are now secure enough with the Montessori method and the TOL community to transition.

The Mighty Lions had bountiful Progressive Feast parent donations. Our class offered a delicious cornucopia of vegetables, fruit, crackers and dips. The favorites were the peanut butter yogurt dip, and



the spinach/carrot/mozzarella wraps the Mighty Lion Wrap Team prepped



and assembled. Many, many thanks to parent volunteer Coreena Christensen for her help with the Progressive Feast and our "Hot Lunch" every Thursday.

In November the class explored the layers of the earth, the Timeline of Life and fossils, and I hope the Clock of Eras and more geology before the class closes. The children

learned songs from the musical *Oliver*. (The DVD is rated G but we did not watch Act II as they are a bit young for the tragic scenes.) Everyone has been busy with reading/spelling and math.



It was a joy and a privilege to guide the Mighty Lions, and I am grateful for the experience. Thanks and Happy Holidays to everyone.



Progressive Feast



Gratitude



Jr. Elementary 2 Class News

By Stacy Strauss, Guide

Thanksgiving is over and on to the winter holidays! I hope everyone has had a week full of being grateful, food, and family. We had a successful Progressive Feast on the last day before our Thanksgiving break. Our class served pumpkin porridge, and it was liked by almost everyone. **Thank you to Debbie Hupp for coming in to cook with the students!** I am always so grateful for parent helpers on cooking days!

Field trips:

Friday, December 9 "Posada Navideña" at the Luther Burbank Center for the Arts in Santa Rosa. We will meet at 8:00am and return around 12:00pm. Drivers: Mary, Courtney, and Debbie

I have room for one more driver. Students are paid for with our burrito fundraiser, but the cost for adults is \$8.

Tuesday, January 24 Lake Sonoma Fish Hatchery

We will leave at 9:00, but I need drivers to be at the school ready to drive by 8:45. Our tour is at 10:00 and is 90 minutes. If the weather is nice, we will stay for a picnic lunch and some play time, but if it is rainy we will return right after the tour. There is no cost for this trip. Let me know if you would like to drive on this trip. It should be a fun one!

Welcome to our new students!

I want to welcome our 2 new students from the Junior Elementary I class. Blake and Trent Christensen, who were students in the recently closed Junior Elementary I class, have been transitioning into our class. Our students have been very welcoming and we all look forward to getting to know them better!

Thank you!

1. Miranda Aguilar and Autumn Johns for cleaning the classroom over the break!
2. Hope Moroni for continuing to

do the shopping for burritos!

3. The Specials family for doing the laundry each week!

In the classroom

I am giving the 3rd Great Lesson soon: The Coming of Humans. This is the story of humans and our special gifts: our brains with which we imagine (I wrote about our imagination in the last newsletter), our hearts to love, and our hands to create. We will discuss these things that make our species so different from other species and look at how our earth was populated throughout history. This is the jumping off point to study the Fundamental Human Needs of different ancient civilizations, with our special focus this year on the Americas. In science, we will be talking about the scientific method in preparation for the science fair. This year's Tree of Life Science Fair is in February, so I want to get a head start. In math, we are learning about money and practicing word problems. We



are also going to be practicing explaining to each other how we came to finding our answers. In music, we have had

several lessons on the precorders and will be preparing for our Winter Talent Show performance. **Be sure to mark your calendars (if you already haven't) for December 20th for our annual Winter Party and Talent Show!**

Remember to slow down and enjoy every moment during this holiday season! I look forward to hearing from you with any feedback!



Fundraising Reminders & News

Our next Fundraising Meeting will be on Tuesday, December 13th at 4:30. We need to start planning and organizing for our big fundraiser of the year, Roots & Shoots. This dinner and auction event will be held April 1st at the Saturday Afternoon Club. Remember those raffle tickets you were given to sell at the beginning of the year? NOW is the time to turn those in. You're always welcome to pick up more to sell. These advance sales, as well as sponsorships, will help us pay for the fundraiser's expenses.

Thanks to everyone who placed orders from Original Works and Equal Exchange. We expect to receive your orders before the Winter Break.

Social-Emotional Learning

By Sara Esserman Melville, Teacher

The MindUp curriculum asks students to be mindful with all of their senses. It is very important for us to be mindful of our hearing, to make sure we are actively listening and that we are being heard. We talked about being mindful with our eyes by being aware of our surroundings and mindfully looking for missing materials. One way to be mindful with our sense of smell is to show respect at a friend's house when we don't like the smell of what is being cooked. Throughout our day we can be mindful with our senses.

Jr. Elementary 3 Class News

By Anthony Esserman Melville Guide

Thank you to everyone who donated to the progressive feast! As you know, we made 2 curry dishes adapted from South India and Thailand. A special thanks to Shannon and Vanessa, who came in to help out. Caitlin and I couldn't have done it without you.



As you likely know now, the Junior Elementary 1 class is being absorbed into the Junior Elementary 2 and 3 classes. Welcome to Dakota, Forest, Macy, Violet, River, Halo, Jaden, and Jake, as well as Brandon who joined us last month. Those students who have been working with Sara in Mary Anne's class will continue to work with her in our class.

The Golden Dragons will also be getting Joaquin as another (extra) assistant in the class full time. This means that our adult to student ratio in the Golden Dragon class just went DOWN to 1:8 instead of a potential 1:10. Another benefit for our school from this change is we will

now have a room for the after and before school care to reside in. This means that our room won't be used for before care and Molly's class won't be used for aftercare.



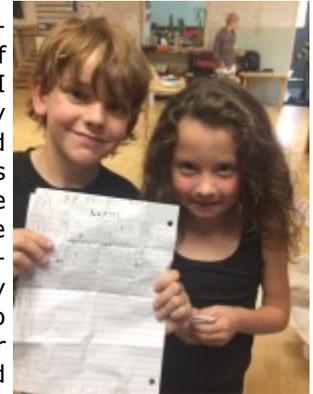
In class we will be reviewing Montessori's 4th and 5th great lessons, the story of Language and the story of Numbers. We will be exploring the development of languages and mathematics in the continent of Asia (specifically Iraq, India, and China). If you have any writing or numbers displayed in a language from Asia please have your child bring it in to share.

There will be no fieldtrips this month. In January we have two big trips instead. January 18th is our trip to see the Peking Acrobats. As we now have 5 more students in the class than was anticipated at the beginning of the year I will do my best to find them seats at this late date. The adult chaperones may have to give up our seats and stand in the back of the auditorium if necessary. As you know we are also going to San Francisco on January 30-31st. A letter was sent out on Monday 11/28 and returned 11/29 to the class in regards to this trip. I will be doing my very best to get spaces at the youth Hostel and at our visits in SF for our new students.



Our next big project coming up is the Winter Party and Talent Show on Tuesday, December 20th. Everyone is encouraged to attend. If you and your child are not attending, please let me know ASAP. Also, please be sure to read the section in the newsletter about the Talent Show. If your child is planning on participating outside of our class performance, they need to follow a few procedures listed in this section of the newsletter. This is one of the highlights of the year, and I look forward to celebrating with you all.

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Attitude of Gratitude

by Dr. Charles Fay, Love & Logic Institute

"You should be thankful for the things you have! There are children all over the world that don't have enough to eat. When I was a kid..."

If you're like me, you've probably heard yourself saying something like this to your kids. All of us experience "skill slip-page" from time to time: Yes! We, Love and Logic guys, also have our not-so-great parenting moments.

Do our kids really learn life's most important lessons by being lectured? Thankfulness... like just about everything else... is learned via the Three E's of Love and Logic.

Example

Do we show our kids how thankful we are for what we have, or do they see us grumbling and complaining? Kids need to witness us being sincerely thankful for the air we breathe, our health, making it home from work without having a car accident, the food we have, the water we drink, our family...

Experience

When the Pilgrims received assistance from their Native American friends and enjoyed their first successful crop, they experienced heartfelt thankfulness. Why? They'd first experienced the prospect of drowning at sea, severe hunger, illness, and the deaths of many of their

colony. While we certainly don't advocate children facing this sort of pain, will they ever experience true thankfulness if they are given everything they want without having to wait or work for it?

Empathy

Parents who use anger, lectures, threats, or punishment to coerce their children into being thankful, create resentment and rebellion instead. Parents who demonstrate their genuine empathy and love... as they allow their children to learn sometimes uncomfortable lessons about humility and thankfulness... are far more likely to raise kids with an attitude of gratitude.

Enjoy your kids!

Sr. Elementary News

by Angela Reglin, Guide

A Spirit of Thankfulness...

In a country of bounty, it is easy to come to expect to have simple daily comforts like flushing toilets, hot water, a variety and plethora of nourishment, and warm clothing. In the month of November, I can say that Da Milkshakes appreciated the loving support of all parents and the school community at large for an unforgettable trip to Fort Ross. Many students, parents, and other volunteers donated time, supplies, and food to make the trip happen.

This past month, our class has been working on the spirit of Thankfulness in our community. We are learning how to find something to appreciate in people that we struggle to befriend. Changing our perspective on how others might view circumstances challenges us to set aside a desire to be right, first, or



special. We do this in order to exemplify kindness. This month we have strategically worked on friendship, community, and creating a positive learning space. We had an outside writing activity in which students created a personal action plan of service dedicated toward a peer that we did not particularly know well or interact with regularly.

I am thankful for all the learning that has been happening, the excitement around action math baseball, short story writing, and ancient civilizations. We are getting into the groove where students are enjoying the content and comfortable with expectations.



I am slightly bewildered and looking for support from parents at home with being able to assess student's progress in time for their progress reports. I have 19 Universe reports incomplete, several language and math assignments left undone. I am grateful for the support I have had in recovering some late work, but in order to assess student's progress, it is important to receive work throughout the semester, not all at the end. Please ask your child about incomplete work and expect them to work on it at home in order to complete it.

Looking toward the month of December, we will be working with the elements of short stories. Students are heavily encouraged to begin brainstorming projects and questions for the science fair. This year's school science fair is in February, and it's good to get a head start on experiments so there is enough time to do many trials. Also, it is much more comfortable for some families to be able to get supplies and materials over break than in chaos of daily routines and extra curricular activities.



T-Shirt/Sweatshirt

School t-shirts and sweatshirts will be available for sale at our Winter Party on December 16. Sweatshirt hoodies are purple and in both child and adult sizes. T-shirts are available in green or purple and also in both child and adult sizes. You can also ask about purchasing a t-shirt or hoodie in the office. T-shirts are \$15 and hoodies are \$25.

Student Council

Our last spirit day was Game Day in November. People went to different classrooms to play card games and board games. Some people brought games to school to share. We had a fun time and some people learned new games.

The Progressive Feast was fun and there was some good food made by all the classes. We went in groups and ate different courses of lunch in different classrooms. Thank you to all the parents who helped with the cooking and sent ingredients or money for the food.

In December we will have a movie day for spirit day on December 16. Teachers will pick out educational movies and we will talk about them afterwards.

Finally, before Winter Break we will be having a Winter Party and Talent Show. People can sing, dance, play a musical instrument, juggle, etc. to show their talent. Remember to turn in your permission slip for Talent Show by December 16, and to do your audition before then. After the Talent Show portion, each class will do a performance too, and then the whole school will perform a song.

Tree of Life Charter School

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Education for Life!

Regular School Hours:
M, T, Th, F—8:30 AM-3:15 PM
W—8:30 AM-1:30 PM
Before School Care 7:30-8:30 AM
After School Care until 5:30 PM
Student-Led Conference 2:30 PM Dismissal
Guide-Led Conference 1:30 PM Dismissal

From our charter:

“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

by JanLaree De Julius, Business Mgr

Hello Tree of Life families. Hope you all had a nice, restful Thanksgiving break.

Attendance: Please call the office before 9:00 a.m. if your child is going to be tardy or absent. Remember that if your child is tardy, you or the adult bringing your child to school must come into the office and sign her/him in. Please remember that if you write in “late” or “tardy” as the reason, that is not an excusable reason for being late to school and your child will be reported to the State as unexcused tardy. An accumulation of three or more unexcused tardies is a truancy.

Independent Study Packets: Please turn them in as soon as possible and definitely before Winter Break. My final deadline for State reporting is coming up mid-December.

Child Care: If you received an invoice earlier this month, PLEASE drop your payment off as soon as possible. October and November Invoices/Statements will be coming out within a week. If you have an outstanding balance due we may have to enforce our option to ask that you seek alternative child care options for your child after our return from Winter Break. Please refer to your Agreement and Fee sched-

ule; if you need another copy let me know. We can no longer facilitate families that are not paying, and it is not fair to those who do. Please come to the office if you have any questions or need to discuss payment options.

Roots and Shoots: Please be sure to turn in your raffle ticket money and unsold tickets (hopefully you won't have any of those) into the office, and please come in and pick up more. We are starting to gather some really wonderful items for our raffle and our live/silent auctions. We want this event to be the best and most successful ever!!!! All proceeds directly support our school. The event will take place April 1st at the Saturday Afternoon Club.

Lost and Found (not clothes): A few items have been turned in: a drop earring, sunglasses, and a necklace that appears to have a “baby” ring attached. Please come in and claim.

The office hours are 7:30am - 4:00pm, phone 462-0913, fax 462-0914. As always, should you have any questions or need any assistance please do not hesitate to contact me. I am here to assist in any way possible.

Wishing you all a very Happy Holiday Season !!!

Ways to Help

Smile.amazon.com will donate a percentage of your online purchases if you select Beginning Project dba Tree of Life Charter School as the organization to receive the benefit.

Raley's will donate a percentage of your store purchases when you use your Something Extra card. Go online to raleys.com/www/scrip_home to designate Tree of Life Charter School as the recipient in the Extra Credit program.

Sign up for the e-scrip program at escrip.com for donations from other businesses whenever you use your debit or credit cards.

Volunteer to help with gardening after school or with students during the school day. We have a list of activities for your gardening enthusiasts.

Volunteer to help with lunch fundraisers in your child's classroom.

Volunteer to do classroom “deep cleaning” over Winter Break.

Do you know how to prune fruit trees? Volunteer to help with fruit tree, grape, and other pruning. Teaching students how to do it and having them help is fun.

Volunteer to sponsor and after school club once a month. Examples: sewing, gymnastics, chess, drawing, etc.

Tree of Life Charter School

A Montessori Public Charter School

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November 16, 2016

Dear School Families,

Due to low enrollment in the Jr. Elementary 1 classroom, the Board Cabinet has decided to close that classroom and transition the students into the other two Junior Elementary classrooms. The reasons are both financial as well as what works best with students. Since the other classrooms of this level are not quite full, they can easily assimilate the additional students. In addition, Joaquin will join Tony and Caitlin in working with the Jr. Elementary 3 classroom, which will have 24 students. This makes a nice student:staff ratio of 8:1.

Many traditional Montessori classrooms have 30 to 40 students per class as a way of having an environment that encourages students to work independently and collaboratively with their peers. In classrooms with small numbers of students, such as we had in the Jr. Elementary 1 class, students tend to become too dependent on adult direction. Students will begin the transition over the next couple weeks with visits to their new classroom to get to know their new staff and peers, and to learn the routines in their new classroom. The final day of the transition will be December 2, with students working full time in their newly assigned classrooms beginning December 5.

We thank Mary Anne for her work with her students and their families, and we wish her our best for her future. If you have any questions or concerns you'd like to discuss with me, please feel free to call or stop in to see me.

Sincerely,

Celeste R. Beck
Principal

2016

December Tree of Life

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
27	28	29	30	01	02	03
04	05	06	07	08 Board Cabinet Mtg 4:30 PM	09 Jr. El. 2 Fieldtrip	10
11	12	13 Fundraising Mtg 4:30 PM	14	15 Primary Fieldtrip	16 Movie Day in PM	17
18	19	20 Winter Party & Talent Show 5:30 Fine Arts Bldg.	21	22 Winter Break through Jan. 8	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
01	02	Notes: Lunch fundraiser cost is \$3 Menu: Monday-pasta; Tuesday-burrito; Wednesday-chili/soup/stew; Friday-casserole Bank Day is every Wednesday at 9 AM Winter Break ends Jan. 8; school resumes Jan. 9				

Tree of Life Winter Party Talent Show Dec. 20, 5:30 PM

Permission Slip (due no later than Dec. 16)

Performer's Name: _____

Performance Title: _____

Description: _____

Will you bring music? _____ If yes, what is the title? _____

In what format is the music (CD, MP3, etc.)? _____

What equipment will you bring? _____

Parent/Guardian Permission and Certification:

I do hereby certify that I have seen the above-mentioned child's full talent show act, that it takes under 3 minutes to perform it, and that it is appropriate for viewing and listening by all ages. I understand that adults in the child's family are also welcome to participate in the talent show portion and should also make sure their acts conform to the stated parameters. Each child may participate in only one talent show act, other than their class performance and the whole school grand finale. I will remind my child that this permission slip needs to be turned in to the office by December 16th, or this talent show act will not be allowed to perform. Performers will not be allowed to perform a different act than the one stated on their permission slips.

Student's Signature: _____

Parent's/Guardian's Signature: _____

Auditions will be held December 14-16 at lunch recess and after school. The purpose of the audition is to coach the students in performance and to ensure that their act is appropriate and within the time limit.

Audition date and time: _____