



NOVEMBER 2011 NEWSLETTER

MARYLHURST

Early Childhood Center



Step Out of the Race

I want to thank all of you who joined us in our theater on October 20th for the viewing of *Race to Nowhere*. For those of you who could not attend that evening, this documentary film examines the pressures faced by young people, teachers and parents in our high-stakes, high-pressure public and private education system and culture. The movie features the heartbreaking stories of young people across the country who have been pushed to the brink, educators who are burned out and worried that kids aren't developing the skills they need, and parents who are trying to do what's best for their kids.

The film was followed by an engaging conversation led by an experienced panel of educators, a psychologist, and a representative of education-advocacy organization Stand for Children. Many questions and concerns were raised during the discussion, and ideas were explored to help parents understand how they can and should advocate for their own children and families. It was inspiring to see our preschool parents asking questions and making comments with as much interest, passion, and concern as the parents with older, school-aged children.

When you enrolled your child at Marylhurst you asked one of the most important questions for her or his development: "What do I want for my child in early childhood education"?

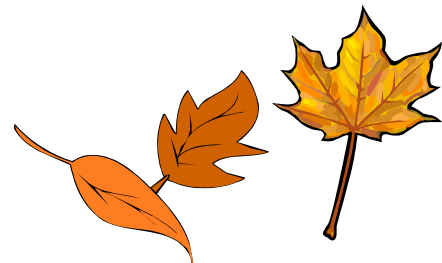
Young children are active learners who construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world. Marylhurst believes play is central to the network of learning, not merely recreation. Play integrates the child's learning, making it deep, broad, relevant, thorough, and imaginative. Play and firsthand experiences enable the child to struggle, manipulate, explore, discover and practice, thereby becoming highly competent in many ways. Through play, children understand and express their thoughts and feelings about the world cognitively and affectively.

Preschool achievement anxiety seems to be affecting even the most laid-back parents in the same way it affects the parents of high school kids. As educators, we are finding that many parents view academic rigor as a primary consideration when choosing a preschool. As top colleges have become more competitive, the pressure to excel has trickled down from high schools to homework-intensive middle and elementary schools. We are seeing those demands making their way to preschool. This would be fine if it meant we were raising smarter, more well-adjusted children who thrive in school, but it doesn't. A wide range of research shows that kids do best, not just in kindergarten but throughout later grades, when they're allowed to learn in age-appropriate ways. Some parents, if they don't see worksheets or flashcards in preschool, get scared that their children will fall behind. As a community we are spending time together discussing why we very strongly believe in the natural curiosity of children about the world around them. Children are capable learners, especially when they are allowed to investigate, question, think, and inquire. These learning experiences are central to our curriculum.

What happens to our children today affects all of us tomorrow. Only through transparent dialogue and meaningful conversation with all parties concerned are we able to truly get at the heart of an issue. Thank you for joining us in this important conversation. Let's continue the dialogue for the sake of all our children.

Sheila Walker

Director



NOVEMBER:

- 23-25: Thanksgiving Break

DECEMBER:

- 1: Tuition Payment Due
- 5-8: Marylhurst Book Fair, featuring Scholastic Book Selection
- 12: Board Meeting
- 15: Tuition payment must be at MECC to avoid tuition late fee.
- 16: Marylhurst Celebration of Giving, 10:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m. All families invited to join us at the school.
- 19 - Jan. 2: Winter Break; No School

JANUARY:

- 2: Teacher Work Day-No School
- 3: All Classes Resume



CELEBRATION OF GIVING

Please mark your calendars for our annual Celebration of Giving. This will be held on December 16 from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. here at our school. This will be the second year that we will partner with the **Children's Center**, just up the hill from us in Oregon City. The **Children's Center** is a medical assessment center for children suspected to be victims of abuse or neglect. Upon entering the Center each child receives a new blanket and stuffed animal. Last year our school donated several hundred blankets and bears to the Center. This meant a great deal to so many children that Marylhurst would like to donate again this year during our Celebration of Giving. Please bring a new blanket, stuffed animal, or both before or during our celebration on December 16. You may also drop off donations in the office prior to that date.

Our gathering on December 16 is a time to celebrate our school community before we take our winter break. We hope to see you all!

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I am the luckiest teacher in the building!
All the cool kids come down to the Hive.

The Hive is buzzing as the year progresses and a community has formed. It's fun to see children reconnect with friends from last year and new relationships blossoming as they greet one another from different classes. These connections carry through our school building as children see one another in the hallways and out on the playground. This is just another wonderful example of how our school builds and supports community.

There has been some confusion about our nut-free environment. Please refer to the MECC handbook for the guidelines on nut and seed spreads. Thank you!

If your child hasn't had the opportunity to join us or your looking for a chance to get some extra errands done, especially around the holidays, we have drop off forms in the Hive and Office, or call and reserve your spot today. Again, this is a wonderful way for your child to connect with children of all ages in our school community. Plus, I get to hang out with them! I really am the luckiest teacher!

--Kim Gilliam

DECEMBER 5 through 8

SCHOLASTIC BOOKS CHOSEN BY MECC TEACHERS

The week of December 5, Monday through Thursday, is our fall book fair on the Barclay stage. Please stop by during drop-off, 8:30-10:00, or at pick-up time, 11:30-2:30. These books were hand picked by Marylhurst teachers, and all the proceeds go directly to the school!

**Great gifts for the holidays and
birthday parties!!!**



HUNGER AND HOMELESSNESS SOCK AND SNACK DRIVE

In observance of National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week (11/12-20/11), please help our Clackamas neighbors who do not have homes.

Socks for Homeless Adults

Homeless people are on their feet all day and rarely own more than one pair of socks. Start collecting new warm socks for adult men and women.

Snacks for Hungry and Homeless Children

There are many hungry children in Clackamas County. We know that there are 1542 homeless children in our community who frequently do not have enough to eat on the weekends.

Please bring one of the following food items to give to these children through the Back Pack Buddy Program that provides food on the weekends. Donations can include healthy granola bars or cans of protein-type meals. They are also collecting Cheerios for healthy preschool snacks.





When I volunteered to be the new scrip guy, I didn't even fully understand what scrip was. Was it script? No. Was it scraps? No. "Scrip" is "alternate currency", or IOUs, usually created by employers when they do not have access to traditional currency, as when a business in remote location is cut off from the outside world temporarily by bad weather. So really, what we do at MECC is not scrip, though I suppose gift cards are alternate currencies, because we are not your employer (unless we are). And I don't think you'd want your paycheck in Krispy Kreme doughnuts anyway, though my daughter might.

What we do at MECC is sell gift cards to businesses who promise donations to us in exchange. And you may be surprised to learn that as recently as Monday, November 7, I met two MECC parents who did not know what I was doing sitting at a table in the lobby or why. Hence this article!

What shocked me the most after I started doing this was something I learned a few weeks ago. You may have seen the sign my daughter Claire (Mice class) and I made together recently on this very topic. Marylhurst has 163 families. Here is what we can do over the course of one school year:

**10 families times \$60 of scrip
per week = \$24,000 after ten
months**

25 x \$60 = \$60,000

50 x \$60 = \$122,000

100 x \$60 = \$244,000

163 x \$60 = \$391,200

This is an *average* of what we can do, depending on the business-contribution percentages. It is also **FREE MONEY**. Do you want our school to enjoy roughly **\$400,000 in free money**? Of course you do. Are you able to buy scrip every week? If you buy \$60 of groceries (or practically anything else) every week, you are able. Please do not forget to visit me at the scrip table in the lobby at Monday dropoff or Thursday pickup each week. This is terribly important for our school. You can meet my senior manager and all-around Brains of the Outfit, my one-year-old son, Lucas. In recent weeks he has drawn on the backs of some scrip order forms, rendering them priceless collector's items.

And that raises another issue. Yes, filling out scrip forms is time-consuming. Despite the payoff, we don't always feel like being bothered. That is why we have select cards on hand for immediate purchase (Albertson's, Fred Meyer, New Seasons, and Safeway). You write a check, you get the same things you were going to get. The difference is that the school gets a donation. Your money works for your child's school twice! Is there any reason not to do this as much as you can?

I'm just a parent volunteer who wants to help the school. Sometimes I see parents trying to sneak past me, avoiding eye contact, as if I want to trick them. The School and I do not want to trick you--we want to tell you how **your** child can benefit **doubly** from the expenditures you're going to make **anyway**. Make sense?

I am trying to get us as close to that \$391,200 as possible, and I need **your** help.

If you're already doing scrip, you already know all this, and everyone at MECC (starting with the students) thanks you for your support. If you're not, please start, and thanks in advance.



The Squirrel Class



In September, the Squirrel Class of four-to-five year olds began with the joyful reunion of old friends and the cautious curiosity of new friends. As a way to enhance home to school transition, build excitement, and create a common thread of experience, we asked families to do two things as the summer came to a close. Each child received a special collection bag in the mail to “squirrel away” special and interesting artifacts that would introduce her or him to the class. We also asked each to read *Scaredy Squirrel*, a book about a squirrel who worries about everything but in the end overcomes his fears and makes a friend. With this common thread of experience we began the building of a classroom community. In the first days of school we played lots of name games and partnered children up for snack and special projects. We encouraged children to really look at each other and recognize each other as members of the same team. At this point, most children know most of their classmates’ names, but work remains. In a few months almost all will know everyone’s name and be able to recognize it in writing, as if by osmosis.

In the early weeks of school our class also brainstormed some class guidelines. We talked about how we would take care of class materials and each other. Teachers introduced the concept that at our school, everyone gets to play--there is always a way

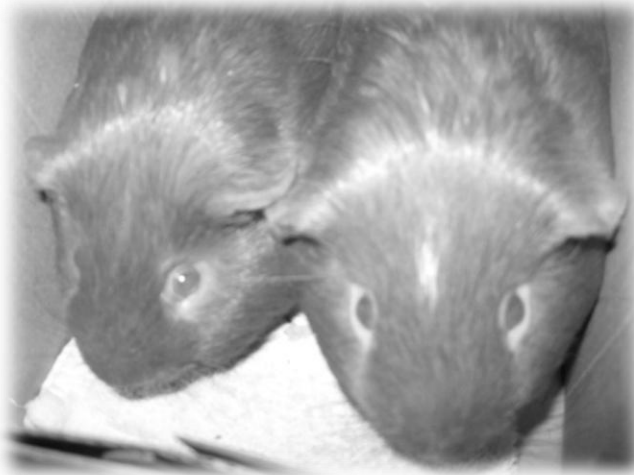


to include more in the play. After much discussion, every child signed our guideline poster. A few weeks later, we added another idea. Three girls had a sad experience one day on the playground. They came to the conclusion that secrets can hurt people's feelings. That guideline has been referred to several times by the girls themselves since we added it to our poster.

We love that a child this age is still open to magic, fairies and trap-building to catch a magical creature named Snuffkin, who inhabits our classroom. Shy by nature, Snuffkin moves around our room mysteriously. We never

know where he or she will appear. The children have suggested the teachers spend the night so we can spy and see what *really* happens. We have other creatures in our classroom as well. Our Society Finch couple have at least two eggs in their nest. They don't seem fazed by the commotion all around them, and we hope to meet babies soon. Our two

guinea-pig brothers, Rex and Nibbles, are cared for daily by a class helper, and they are much loved by all. They travel to the homes of Squirrel families for weekend getaways. These pigs are very tolerant and forgiving of child wranglers, while also providing an opportunity to be gentle, kind, and responsible



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for a small, living organism. For a time, we hosted a tank of woolly-bear caterpillars who were great fun to hold and watch crawling up an arm. They have moved on to becoming moths.

In an effort to make the thrill of sharing a more cohesive experience, each child has a turn hosting "Sammy Squirrel" for an evening and documenting that experience. The



following day they sit in the Very Important chair and relate their adventures. This is a wonderful chance to speak in front of a group, be an expert, and learn to use personal power appropriately. After the presentation, the speaker gets to call on quiet hands for questions or compliments regarding the presentation.

Wednesday Walks have been lovely additions to our schedule this year. Social Studies in the finest sense, each Wednesday we begin our day with a short, thorough walk around a city block near our school. Many things of interest can be seen when we slow



down and take a closer look. Beautiful leaves, a rock wall, mossy steps, cracks in walls, cats, chickens, a big boat . . . we have learned how

to walk as partners, to travel as a group, and to delight in a simple, shared experience. Thursday cooking sessions allow for opportunities to grate, chop, peel, measure, and mix as we concoct a dish to share together and with others in our school. Cracking an egg for the first time is a wondrous event. With the assistance of generous parents, we have already taken two field trips this year. We had a memorable walk to Atkinson Park to take a closer look at trees. We hope to revisit the Park many times to watch the cycle of the seasons unfold in this special place.

We began our year with a tree constructed in our classroom, as trees are symbolic of the interdependence of living organisms. We will look to the role a tree plays in making healthy communities for insects, animals,



and people as we shape our explorations of math, science, art, and storytelling through the year. Currently, the class vibrates with energy and good will as children build with LEGOs; shop at the General Store; experiment with magnets, ramps, and marbles; and build fantastic structures with big blocks. Recently, a group of note-writers has been creating and delivering mail to other classes, as we began to think of the larger community outside our door.

We in the Squirrels Class have been blessed with a group of thinkers, builders, designers, artists, storytellers, dancers, and actors. We have a very kind and caring group of children and parents. We are sitting in the cat bird seat.



I 'M Okay, You're Weird.

By Ann Brown

I had the opportunity to do some serious field research last month. Not like my usual field research, which I do, casually, in the parking lot of Target on Saturday mornings. You may have seen me there, pretending to have dropped my keys but actually listening in on parents and kids as they fight, getting ideas for this column. Sometimes I even pose as a Target shopper, so I can get an eye/ear witness account of the spontaneous interactions in the toy aisle. And sometimes, just to further ensure my secret identity, I buy a few things from the bed-and-bath aisle, some Eddie Bauer matching luggage, and a couple of Isaac Mizrahi sweaters. You know, for research. This reminds me: I have to give Sheila my reimbursement receipts for, um, classroom expenses. Fieldwork does not come free. And it's exactly this kind of in-depth professional development in the faculty that makes MECC the top-notch school that it is. For myself I ask nothing, of course, but if the noble quest of professional development demands a designer-label, wool/Lycra blend cowl-neck pullover, then so be it. I do it for the children. *Your* children. You're welcome.

So here's what I learned from my *serious* research last month:

Human beings are weird. Every single one of us. We make odd faces, we mutter to ourselves, we trip over our own feet and blame anything around us, we move slowly when others need us to move quickly, we lose our tempers and we laugh at seemingly random and inappropriate moments. We also say stupid things, wear clothes that are alarmingly unbecoming on us and believe we look hot; we pick our noses when we think no one is looking, react irrationally, demand to be noticed, and buy crap we do not need but tell ourselves we absolutely cannot live without.

I have as empirical evidence of this theory the new Isaac Mizrahi for Target sweater into which I have stuffed my NOT size-6 body. I should have bought, like, four of them and sewed them together. And if someone had told me not to buy the sweater, that it was too tight and made me look like an overstuffed Kosher *kielbasa*, I would have fought to my death for my right to choose my own outfits.

And yet, despite our own flaws, which we insist are part of our adorable quirkiness, we do not accept that kind of weird and impulsive behavior from our kids. In fact, we are on our kids like Christmas decorations at Halloween when they dare act in ways that do not portray an image found largely in Victorian literature and *Nineteen Kids And Counting* on TLC.

If you (read: "me") are an adult prone to snarky comments, eyeball-rolling, and radical contrarianism--traits that you believe to be desirable in a person--you (read: "me") will have to accept that your (read: "my") kids might pick up some of your (read: "my") mannerisms. And while you (read: "I") believe you ("I") charm the pants off complete strangers with your (read: "my") use of the f-word . . . seeing my neurotic need to have someone say, "Happy landings on a chocolate bar," to me three times before a plane takes off; my penchant for slothfulness; my alarming dearth of ambition; my out-of-control germophobia; and my unregulated trash talk coming from my children was not a thrill.

I am not suggesting, mind you, that we raise disrespectful children who bring "magic" brownies to the PTA meeting and scribble naughty Haiku about their bosses on the bathroom walls. I am, however, suggesting that our children may be well served if we can accept and even honor their gentle quirky and curious impulsive behavior.



I followed a four-year-old boy at Target last month who sniffed every hand towel in the store. He insisted, when his mortified mother tried to stop him, that each color had its own smell and he wanted to find out which smell matched his room. Odd? To be sure. Wrong? Who's to say? Plus, if you don't wash the new towels before you use them, you are pretty much just asking for a kid's boogers to be on them. I'm just saying.

I watched a little girl walking sideways through the store even though it was bugging her parents. "I am a crab," was her simple explanation. This began a long argument about whether or not she was indeed a crab.

I could share a million more stories, but they all come back to this: we are all weird and

quirky in some way. And if all the years and money I've spent on the analyst's couch have taught me anything, it's that kids deserve the same self-accepting "I'm Okay, You're Okay" messages that we all want for ourselves

.
So, let's let our freak flags fly, walk sideways through Target, and smell the colors.

Ann Brown is available for private parenting consultation. Please contact the office for her schedule and fees.

THE MARYLHURST DAD

LEGOs are My Nemesis!

by Mark Evertz, Turtle Class dad to Owen

My little Tortuga is becoming a human parrot. It is truly an amazing metamorphosis to behold for a parent of someone who just three short years ago operated in simple sounds instead of complex sentences.

It's provided gems like these: "Dad, I really like you, but you're kind of a dillweed." "Dad, can you play some bad [i.e., "guns and womanizing"] Johnny Cash?" [*I'm now watching this more carefully, parents and teachers.*--M. E.] "Whatchu talkin' 'bout, Willis?" And it recently took on a life of its own with Owen's favorite new word: "nemesis". Now, anything he doesn't like is his nemesis--be it food, people, toys, things, characters on TV, all things living, inanimate, or dead. He has nemeses, plural.

I can't remember the last time I uttered the word "nemesis" or thought seriously about whether I had one. In fact, I always felt a true nemesis was reserved for people with super powers or at least super bank accounts. Sadly, I have neither.

I'll blame my child's new "nemesis neurosis" on television and a fascination of late with super heroics . . . and the trifecta: 1) superheroes in the form of 2) cartoons and 3) dinosaurs. Hello, *Kung Fu Dino Posse!* Those of you who know my son know how huge this discovery is and probably will always be to him. If he could marry *KFDP* and LEGOs, he could very well be self-sustaining at the ripe old age of 4.95 years.

This brings me to MY nemesis, if I may claim one: L-E-G-O-Freaking-S! What sadistic mad scientist thought it would be a good contribution to society to have these feet-puncturing blockules



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littering households and frustrating parents from 1949 to the present day? I ask you--even those of you able to build the LEGO Star Wars Death Star in less time than it takes to build a multi-family home: how do you feel when that effort suffers a quick and excruciating death at the hands of your child who either simply plays with it or tries to participate? Cognitive, tactile, and motor-skills development be damned!

LEGOs must be gathered *en masse* and melted into a rainbow-colored--and, ultimately, black--goo. Consider the bubbling filler residue for a new tar-pit attraction somewhere with a big hole to fill ("Dinosaurs, Owen! Dinosaurs!"). Say somewhere in Denmark, where these blocks of human suffering were born.

Come on! Who's with me? Say it loud. Say it proud. "LEGOs are my nemesis!"

NEW EDITOR

This year the MECC newsletter has a new editor, Marketing Trustee Robert Peate (a.k.a. "the Scrip Guy"). Robert is a high-school English teacher, a writer, and a photographer. He loves the English language, and he has been having a debate over comma placement with a former boss for ten years. This year he is a stay-at-home daddy, and he is happy to lend another pair of eyes to everyone's great articles.

WISHES AND HOPES



Wishes:

- ☆ We wish everyone a wonderful Thanksgiving! Take time and enjoy your wonderful families!

Hopes:



- ☆ We hope for a wonderful turnout at our Book Sale in the beginning of December.
- ☆ We hope all our families know how much we appreciate you and your children. We are so thankful!



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Starry Starry Night...

April 14, 2012
The Oregon Golf Club

The 24th Annual Auction is Coming...

All families are respectfully asked to provide one donation item for the largest annual fundraiser of the year!

Consider something that will enhance the auction and hopefully create very fond memories to follow. Remember, your family, your friends, your coworkers, and others can all donate!

Ideas and suggestions might include:

- * Airline tickets (Grab some other parents to help)
- * Autographed sports memorabilia
- * Massages, facials, any beauty treatments
- * Tickets to sporting events/concerts or theatre
- * Gym memberships, aerobic classes, personal training
- * Wine, Wine, Wine (Did I mention Wine?) All Kinds!!
- * Gift Cards (like scrip!) to restaurants, family outings, golf

Your support is GREATLY appreciated!

These are just a few examples of what can be donated--the sky is the limit! Any and ALL donations are accepted.

Congratulations to Darin Ingram for winning the \$100 Fred Meyer gift card! A BIG thank you to all who participated and brought in items.

Do you have any silent or oral auction ideas? If so, please send them to me at mrslo24@gmail.com, or call me at 503-593-8427. I would be happy to speak with you!

Thank you Marylhurst parents, and I look forward to seeing you all at the auction.

Stacey Lowry
Auction Chair

