



# The Observatory

Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School  Issue 6, April 2004

## Reflecting on the Past Year

by Marie Imai, LGSONS Director

Dear Families,

Can you believe that our year is almost over? The children have grown so much during these eight months that if you haven't taken pictures lately be sure to bring your camera to school this week, especially as we head outdoors again. Of course much of their growth can't be measured with a camera so reread your observations from last Fall and then look afresh at your child today. Record the changes you see socially – does she/he have a wider group of friends? Or has she become really best friends with one other child or two? Cognitively: what kinds of questions fascinate him now? Emotionally: where is your child on the spiral of equilibrium and disequilibrium – easy going and relatively calm or just the opposite? What growth have you seen in his/her physical skills lately? In the 4/5s class many children are mastering the horizontal bars, swinging across like monkeys, while others seem braver in climbing rocks and walking narrow trails. What challenges are your child working on now? A summary of your child's growth from last Fall to this Spring would be an easy and valuable culmination report.

Today, April 19th, is not only the deadline for submitting articles for the newsletter but is also my 40th wedding anniversary. While I marvel at how fast this school year has gone by, I'm utterly amazed to realize how long I've been married to my wonderful college sweetheart, Kent. His ability to overlook the small things (a lack of reverence for cleanliness, mediocre cooking skills, etc.) has endeared him to me forever. His willingness to share my love of the outdoors through 18 years of family backpacking trips is a true act of devotion for someone who really doesn't like camping all that much. His sense of humor, his friendliness to all kinds of people and his dependable partnership in parenting our 3 children are all special qualities that I truly appreciate.

*(Continued on page 3)*



## End-of-Year Thoughts, Thanks

by Angie Davidson, Board Chair

Somehow another year at Mountain School has flown by already! The Spring Picnic is almost here, and everyone is working hard on culmination projects, or at least thinking about them. How to record all the wonderful changes in our children and the differences this school year has made in our lives? Parents do the most amazing things for culminations and I always come away so moved, and wishing a little that I were more artistic and creative. But our projects always represent us, our unique family, and for me the process of reflecting on the year and our children is an end in itself, even apart from the final product. It seems we spend so much time looking ahead, as Teacher Jane points out (page 7 article), and it is rare that we take time to look at this moment...where we are and from where we've come.

For some families it is their last year at Mountain School. What a special time that must be! Culmination time for them must be especially moving, as they're remembering all Mountain School has been for them and trying to record that. We will miss those graduating families and look forward to hearing of their new adventures when we see them next year as alumni!

*(Continued on page 4)*

## CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE

Reflecting on the Past Year

Page 1

.....

End-of-Year Thoughts, Thanks

Page 1

.....

Field Trips and Outings

Page 2

.....

News from Namibia

Page 4

.....

Enjoy Summer Boredom

Page 5

.....

Healthy Boredom?

Page 5

.....

Upcoming Events

Page 6

.....

Good-bye Hairly

Page 6

.....

How About Now?

Page 7

.....

Future Enrollment Secured

Page 7

.....

Thank you, Everyone!

Page 7

.....

Island Sanity

Page 8

.....

Philadelphia Ice Cream

Page 8

Thank you to the parents and teachers who gave their time, creativity and writing to this year's newsletters. Thank you to my husband, Greg, for staying awake and proofing each issue! ☺ Nicole

## Field Trips and Outings

by Marie Imai, LGSONS Director

*Ano Nuevo Reserve* – home of the Elephant Seals. 20 miles North of Santa Cruz on Highway 1; It's a lovely place at any time of the year and there are usually some seals. Winter is the busiest time. It's a 3 mile round trip hike.

*The Beaver Dam Area of Lexington Reservoir* – those cagey beavers change the location of their dam from time to time but it's a great place to play in the creek and look for evidence of the beavers.

*Hakone Japanese Gardens* – located on Highway 9 just outside of downtown Saratoga. It has a lovely koi pond and lots of little trails.

*La Rinconada Park in Los Gatos* – there's an open, steep hillside on the left of the trail which is great to climb up and slide down. Try using a piece of cardboard for your older kids to slide on. Lots of room to run.

*Lexington Reservoir* – Take the Alma Bridge Road off Highway 17 (can be accessed only from the north direction between Bear Creek Road exit and Los Gatos); cross the dam and park in the parking lot on the right side. Explore the lake and/or cross the road and hike down to Los Gatos on the popular running trail which starts below the freeway overpass on Main Street in Los Gatos.

*Seymour Marine Discovery Center* (part of UCSC Marine Center) and *Natural Bridges Park* in Santa Cruz. There are great tide pools just north of the beach, check for low tide days. Long's Drug stores in the Santa Cruz area have free tide table booklets.

*Picchetti Ranch Open Space* – a wonderful pond, trails and great peacocks. Wine tasting for adults as well.

*Rancho San Antonio and Deer Hollow Farm* – There is an unbelievably large oak on the top of the ridge and a lovely farm down below with trails winding all about. There are several entrances to this area.

*Sanborn Park Hike to Lake Forest* – the trail is found at the end of Sanborn Road about 1/2 mile beyond Sanborn Park. It is an uphill hike of less than a mile to a lovely small lake which can also be reached from Black Road but that trail is about 1 3/4 miles.

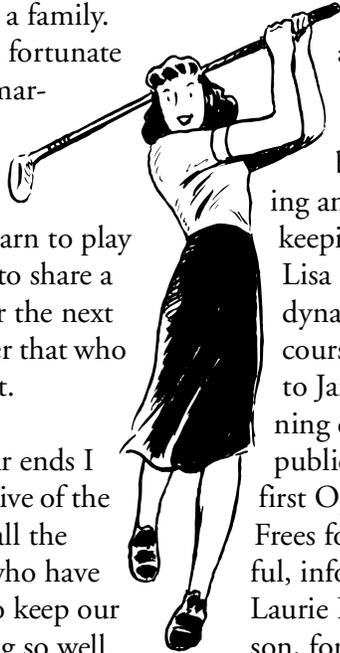
*Russian Ridge Open Space* – a fantastic hiking area located at the intersection of Alpine Road and Skyline Boulevard with other trails beginning along Skyline at various places before and after Alpine Road. There are lots of wild flowers in the Spring.

*Fall Creek section of Henry Cowell Park in Felton* – It is a separate area from the main park but idyllic on hot summer days. There is a sparkling creek which glitters with mica and lime kilns to visit as well. Take Mount Hermon Road off Highway 17 to Felton. Cross Highway 9 and go up the hill on Felton Empire Road a little more than a mile; watch for the small brown sign and entrance on the right. ☺

*(Reflecting on the Past Year, continued)*

We have many very different interests: he loves opera and choral singing, I've been known to doze off in some of his concerts; he loves movies, I can't even remember which movies I've seen; I love hiking, he'd really rather play golf. But during the span of our marriage we did play on a coed soccer team together for 20 years and enjoyed many winters skiing together as a family. Today I really feel fortunate to be so happily married to this very interesting and special man. I'm hoping to soon learn to play golf well enough to share a monthly game for the next 15 years. And after that who knows what's next.

As this school year ends I am very appreciative of the contributions of all the board members who have worked so hard to keep our school functioning so well. Mountain School is much more than just a preschool thanks to all these board members and other parents who donate extra time and talent to help us become a strong and supportive family community. Thanks from the bottom of my heart to Angie Davidson, our enthusiastic and energetic chair; to Dan Shaw, our treasurer who not only keeps track of our money but also allows us to use his office copy machine as often as necessary; to Jeanne Dominguez and Sonia Casper who each served half the year as information chair and spent countless hours on the phone explaining and promoting our school; to Sue Bozzini who



handled the registration process and filled our classes for next year; to Jutta Braken-Guelke, our secretary and nominating committee chair who has also streamlined and updated the school's operating policies; to Jodi Myers, our social chair and animal caretaker; to Mary Matlack, fundraiser extraordinaire, who master-minded our most successful auction ever and also initiated our first annual Turkey Trot; to Lori Lux and her husband, Frank, for maintaining and repairing our school, keeping it in tiptop shape; to Lisa Bailey, for arranging such dynamic and educational mini-courses and general meetings; to Jan Murray, long range planning chair who so successfully publicized our school and our first Open House; to Nicole Frees for another year of wonderful, informative newsletters; to Laurie Hastings, the forms person, for not only handling all the registration forms but also for shepherding us successfully through an audit by the county health department; to Jackie Anthony for handling the purchasing of our school supplies and giving birth to a new daughter at the same time. Many of these people have volunteered to return to the board next year for which I am thankful because of the continuity that is provided for the school. Thanks also to the following non-voting board members who helped out in such a variety of ways: to Cris Imai, our Community Service Liaison, for providing us all with an opportunity to help provide families with food and toys during the holidays; to

Jane Johnson, who signed up so many of us with the eScrip program which brings in \$250 to \$400 for our school every month; to Pam Henderson, for help with our school garden; to Janet Stimson, for organizing and promoting a very successful giftwrap fundraiser in the Fall; to Ellen Mapes, for coordinating the Scholastic Book sales of inexpensive books for all our families; to Michele Kwong, for organizing the family and class photo sessions; to Lani Takano, for organizing the T-shirt sales, to Rod Crawford and Jonathan Grant-Richards for serving so ably as webmasters for the school website this year; and to Julie Mercik for coordinating and keeping track of your participation in the school workdays. When you see any of these special volunteers in your classes please express your personal appreciation for their help in making our school the very special place it is today. I look forward to seeing you all at the Spring Picnic on Sunday, May 2 at the schoolhouse from 12 to 4 pm.

Have a wonderful summer with lots of simple days spent outdoors discovering the wonders of our earth. For ideas of interesting places to go, check the list of our school's field trips and hikes found on page 2 of this newsletter. Directions to most locations will be available on the bulletin board or sign-in table at Saratoga Springs. Also, please e-mail me ([imai@sbcglobal.net](mailto:imai@sbcglobal.net)) about other places your family enjoys so we can compile a master list for everyone.

## News from Namibia

by Teacher Jan Eby, 3's Class

Parents and children in the Three's classes, years 2001-2003, generously donated books to an African family. I had met Festus, a young father of two boys, when traveling in Namibia. He was devoted to his young family and expressed the desire for his sons to succeed in their studies. My promise to send his family books was made possible by the enthusiastic contributions from the classes those two years. Two shipments, from fifty to seventy five books total, were sent to Namibia. Last year, however, there was no verification that the books ever arrived. For that reason the project was not done this year. That may not be the case next year... for a wonderful letter from Festus has arrived!

Here are a few portions of his letter:

"The children are well and doing very well in school, much better than previously, especially in Language Studies."

"The books are at the moment quite enough for my kids and neighbors. What we are doing now is, we give a book for a week to the teachers of the respective schools to use. Then bring it back and give another one and so on. So that the teachers can use it and also other kids at the same school. It works well."

"As long as I am alive, I will contact you, no matter how long the time passing in between. Because what you have done for us is big to comprehend. It shall always remain with me and my family as opportunity."

"My warm and deepest regards to you and the rest of your family. In the same breath, please send regards to your personnel at school, those who have donated books and materials to my children, Roger and Ronald – as well as their parents, please. The children send regards too!"

"Yours sincerely, Festus Zeenaro MBinga Namibia"

Needless to say... I hope this will be a Three's class project next year. Thanks to all who helped with this rewarding project. ☺



Some of us have a graduating child. Our daughter Julia will go on to Kindergarten next year, and I'm sure it will be a culture shock for all of us! But she is so ready, telling everyone how excited she is and asking about it all the time. She has a November birthday and could have gone on to kindergarten this year, but we are so glad we waited. This year has made a huge difference for all of us and I am very thankful for that. It's amazing to look at her now and remember our first day in the 2's class; how much we've all learned and grown!

And some of us get to continue on. Our daughter Sophie will be in the 3/4's. We have had a terrific year in the 2's, splashing and playing, changing and growing as we've learned more about ourselves and each other in this wonderful environment. Next year will bring more Mountain School joy.

I am so grateful to all the teachers for guiding us on our journey, helping us to be better parents and helping our children and our families grow. It takes truly special people to teach the parent as well as the child, and to be equally patient with both! How do they manage it? They lead us with a gentle hand in class and kind words in the margins of our observations. They are truly committed to our school community, giving countless hours above and beyond class time for the many seldom-visible demands of teaching. Thank you, teachers, for teaching us as much by your example as through your words, and for all you do for our families and our school!

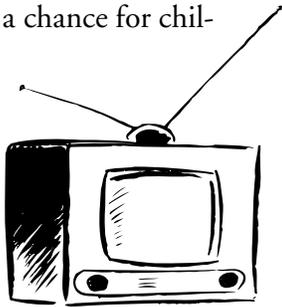
Happy May, everyone, and have a wonderful summer! ☺

# Enjoy Summer Boredom

by Jane Krecji, Teacher Friday 2's

Summer can... and should be... a down time away from the busy schedules most of us keep during the school year. This is especially important for children. Summertime is a chance for children to develop their skills in a free, unhurried, and nonscheduled environment. Instead of planning their summer, turn off the TV and try letting your children discover what really interests them. In order to do this they need time to daydream, do "nothing" – even become bored (avoid the temptation to rush in and rescue them by entertaining them). Children need time to reflect and wonder, instead of work and accomplish. Many great thinkers like Albert Einstein and Buckminster Fuller said they had lots of time to daydream. Instead of worrying about giving your children endless opportunities for organized activities, lessons, and camps (the list is endless), try giving them the gift of uninterrupted time. They will learn to just "be", pursue their own interests, make choices and thus learn the important developmental skill: self direction.

"I have no time to be in a hurry."  
– Henry David Thoreau ☺



# Healthy Boredom?

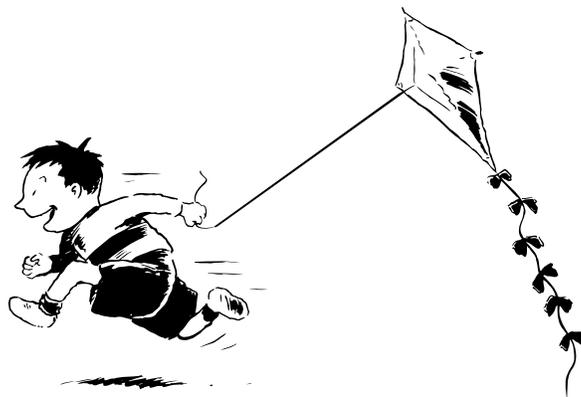
by Nicole Frees, Newsletter Editor

Teacher Jane isn't the only one promoting time away from the TV and time to just be "bored". "Some boredom is healthy" and can promote problem-solving skills, according to the article, "There are Benefits to Boredom" by Barbara F. Meltz, published in the Boston Globe on January 22, 2004.

The article tells of a Quaker school practice whereby elementary school children sit quietly for a half hour... each day! Meltz quotes Mary Newsmann of the Cambridge Friends School, "If you want to raise children who can think critically, who can solve problems of all kinds – and we do, that's our mission – they need the chance to think uninterrupted."

The article goes on to discuss the value of deferring instant gratification for children. Examples of instant gratification used in the article include the immediate and passive entertainment offered by TV and computer games. As parents, we feel good when we run to soothe a crying baby by turning on a music box or mobile. However, the article continues, "Literally, the fussy baby who is left alone long enough to find his toes (not more than a few minutes, after all) is making the first step in a long journey. 'He's figuring out that he can entertain and distract himself,' [early-childhood educator Diane] Levin says. 'He's also learning something profound: that he has the capacity to solve his own problem.' ... In terms of human development, that's an "Aha!" moment. The infant whose parent pushes the button to turn on the mobile may also be comforted and distracted, but he learns nothing about his capacity to solve his own problem, says Levin."

Thank you to 4/5's mom, Jeanne Dominguez, for bringing this article to my attention. To read the article in its entirety (for a fee), check out the Globe archives at [www.boston.com](http://www.boston.com). ☺



## Upcoming Events

### SPRING PICNIC



Our annual Spring picnic is upon us!

We welcome all current and alumni families to join us at the schoolhouse for a shared meal and a jaunt around the maypole. Magic the Clown and our own Ben Goldman, on guitar, will provide entertainment.

In the spirit of all Mountain School picnics, please bring a potluck dish to share (there will be no barbecuing), beverages, plates and utensils. Please also be sure to bring a ground cover to sit on, as we'll be picnicking on the lawn!

Sunday, May 2, 12 pm to 4 pm,  
at the Schoolhouse on Black Road.

### SUMMER SCHOOL

It's not too late to get signed up for a Mountain School's summer session. Tell your friends! We are offering two sessions this year:

June 21 to 25,  
(Monday through Friday), and

July 12 to 23,  
Mondays, Wed's, and Fridays

Summer school is for children ages 2 through 5. Registration forms are available at the Los Gatos recreation department and online at [www.lgsons.com](http://www.lgsons.com). The deadline is June 1st. You may contact Laura Snyder with questions (408-866-1879 or [ljsnyder@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ljsnyder@sbcglobal.net)). ☺

## Goodbye Hairy

by Teacher Jan Eby, 3's Class

The 3's class recently gave their farewell tributes to the remains of "Hairy" the pumpkin. Hairy was a Halloween Jack O'Lantern that had been stuffed with wet papers and dirt and liberally sprinkled with wheat berries. He has resided in a round plot in the garden since early November.

He has been tended by many children in the Mountain School, especially those in the 3's class. The children watched as he sprouted grass, slumped to the earth and eventually lost his pumpkin identity. As the months passed the class recorded his changes through drawings and comments.

Tulips and primroses thrive around his grassy ring. The children decided that "Hairy" had given all of himself to our garden, helping the flowers grow.

Here are some of their comments:

"Hairy grew grass in the flowers." (Alexandra Anthony)

"Hairy has lots of hair." (Hannah Engel)

"He is growing in the garden." (Megan Casper)

"Don't get near the ghost creature." (Thomas Moore)

"This is how Hairy looks (grassy picture)." (Ronan Shaw)

"Hairy is big." (Meghan MacDonald)

"Hairy has two eyes. He grew grass and we took him to the garden. He squished into little orange pieces. There is only green left of Hairy. He was sad to be gone." (Nicole Liddle)

"He will grow again." (Jack Johnson)

"He is not around now." (Grace O'Neil)

"We should say thank you. He is down in my garden." (Clara Matlack)

Where, oh where, is our friend Hairy?

Where, oh where, is our friend Hairy?

Down in the garden helping flowers grow! ☺



## How About Now?

by Teacher, Jane Krejci, Friday 2's

Do you remember when you were dating and people asked, "When are you going to get engaged?" When you did, they asked, "When are you going to get married?" When you did, they asked, "When are you going to have children?" When you did, they asked, "When are you going to have another child?" And so it went. I was reminded of this scenario when the question of Junior High (or Middle School) came up at the General Meeting in February. Think back. You were delighted when your infant first rolled over – you didn't ask why he wasn't crawling. You were excited when your baby did start to crawl – you didn't ask why he wasn't walking. And when your toddler took his first steps you shared it with everyone – you didn't ask why he wasn't running. So what happens when it comes to schooling? Why don't we focus on the *now* and what is developmentally appropriate for our child at the time? Looking ahead, making plans and setting goals have

their place; but understanding where your child is at a given time and what she needs *now* is more important. And things change – you, your child, schools. Which elementary school you choose for your child should be the best fit for her in those years. You can always change course – change schools – if you determine there would be a better fit. Change is part of life; hopefully, the flexibility to do so will be part of your life, too.

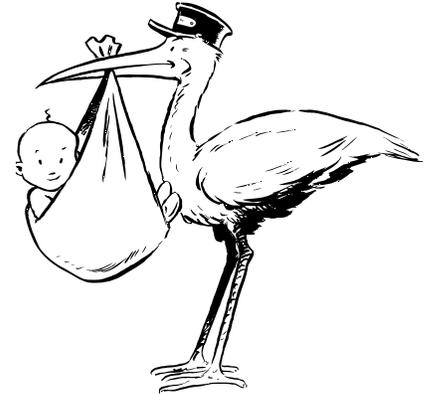
One of the joys of parenting is observing the unique growth pattern of your child. Every child has his/her own special style and rate of development. (You can't make a 5 year old out of a 3 year old!) I am reminded of the poem:

*Boring, boring, boring  
That's what my world would be  
If everyone looked and talked  
And acted just like me. (J. Lalli)*

We all need to put aside impatience (and anxiety) and enjoy the *now* – especially the 'present' which is the gift of our children.

## Future School Enrollment Secured

by Teacher, Jane Eby, 3's Class



Talk about supporting your school! By mid-July, nine babies will have been born to families in the Three's class. Certainly this ensures student enrollment for the future!

Here is the baby line-up in order of birth:

Grace Marcus ..... June '03  
Jannika Johnson .... June '03  
Jacob Casper..... August '03  
Beth Casey ..... Nov '03  
Avani Young ..... Nov '03  
Max MacDonald ... Feb '04  
Natalie Anthony ... March '04  
baby Engel..... expected July  
baby Stubbs ..... expected July

Congratulations to all! ☺

## Thank you, Everyone!

by Jane Johnson,  
eScrip Coordinator

Thanks, everyone, for helping our school reach our fundraising goals this year! So much happens behind the scenes with our eScrip and SchoolPop fundraising that we often forget what a valuable resource these two fundraising sources can be.

Over this year, we've contributed almost \$3,000 to our fundraising through eScrip and almost \$200 through SchoolPop. And, our behind-the-scenes support can continue during the summer. Just make sure you and your credit/debit cards are registered and updated with both organizations.

Thanks again and enjoy your summer! ☺

## Island Sanity

by Mary Matlack, Fundraising Chair

If you ever want to make a year go by in a hurry... volunteer to be the Fundraising Chairperson. I can hardly believe 2004 is nearly half way over and the auction has come and gone. What a time we had!

Thank you to all of the very generous and supportive Mountain School families out there. Such an event would not have been possible if it weren't for the tremendous emotional support that was shared amongst all members of the school. I was amazed and pleased with the effort that so many of you put into the event. Thank you to everyone for doing your best to make the event such a success.

A special thank you to all of the very generous Mountain School alumni who either attended the event or made a donation. You are the proof that what we are doing here with our children

really makes a difference in all of our lives.

On the financial side, the support was amazing. Our net profit on the event was over \$40,000. Thank you so much for making the event such a tremendous financial success – that money goes towards maintaining the amazing nursery school that we know and love.

I loved getting to know so many of you and look forward to working and playing together in the years to come.

See you at the Turkey Trot! ☺



## Philadelphia Ice Cream

by Nicole Frees, Newsletter Editor

In keeping with Mountain School tradition, many cooking moms and dads will be making home-made ice cream on the last day of school. With this in mind, I thought I would share my favorite ice cream recipe. If you don't get to make it for school, be sure to enjoy it some warm afternoon this summer.

Makes 4 quarts.

Mix together in large pot and scald\*:

3 quarts half and half  
1 quart whipping cream  
3 cups sugar

Cool mixture. Then blend in:

6 Tablespoons vanilla  
½ teaspoon salt  
3 butterfinger candy bars,  
crushed

Freeze in ice cream freezer using 5 parts ice to 1 part salt.

*\*scald: warm slowly on stove until film coats back of metal spoon. ☺*