Theatre Arts Festival a Huge Hit!!

The weather cooperated with our plans to host our Annual Family Festival on Thursday, February 25th, so our children were able to share their excitement about enacting favorite stories with their friends and families. Everyone had opportunities to play "Kids on Stage", become stage performers in costume or with faces painted, invent finger puppets for original tales, and watch recordings of the children’s classroom productions. Jennifer Legler from Ten Thousand Villages helped us create shadow puppets for use telling stories at the shadow screen. Christine Farrell engaged families in an interactive “Little Barnyard Opera” to help us explore the musical side of theatre.

Thanks to all of the children, staff, families, and friends whose enthusiastic preparation and participation made this year’s festival a huge hit! We look forward to continuing to explore dramatic expression as we begin our new units of study after Spring Break. The preschoolers will be studying dinosaurs, so perhaps they will create dinosaur dramas. The kindergartners will discover the life and culture of Italy, where neoclassical ways of presenting drama stressed reality and moral lessons, with staging emphasizing perspective architecture and painting.

Update on Enrollment for 2010-2011

At the end of our first round of registrations, we have 18 deposits for the two morning 3’s classes and 6 deposits for the afternoon 3’s class. We have 31 of our current Preschool 3’s friends returning for the three morning 4’s classes and 7 for the afternoon 4’s class. We have 16 of our current Preschool 4’s friends returning for the kindergarten class. The Extended Morning program is full, and we are planning to expand it to include an additional 10 children. The Extended Afternoon program has 4 children enrolled and 2 spaces remaining. This week, we sent acceptance packets to 9 additional applicants for our 3’s program, 7 for the 4’s program, and 8 for the kindergarten. We are still accepting applications for the 2010-2011 school year, so please encourage those seeking high quality early childhood programs for their children to contact us!

March Dates

- Monday, March 8th to Friday, March 12th - SPRING BREAK (No School)
- Sunday, March 14th – Daylight Savings Time Ends so set your clocks one hour ahead
- Friday, March 26th – Conference Preparation Day for Staff (No School for Children)
Summer Camp: Exploring Plants & Dirt

Enclosed with this newsletter is a brochure about the Children’s School Summer Camp, which is a mixed-age, four-week program that runs weekdays from 9am to 1pm with as much outdoor time as weather permits. This year, Mrs. Armbruster, Mrs. Flynn, Miss Furman, Miss Mangan, Ms. McMichael, Mrs. Solomon, and Mrs. Tomer will engage the children in a study of dirt and plants to learn about natural processes that enrich the soil, help plants grow, and preserve the earth’s resources. We anticipate investigating the plants growing on Carnegie Mellon’s campus and in Schenley Park, as well as exploring the living roof on Hamerschlag Hall (http://www.carnegiemellontoday.com/article.asp?Aid=260). We will be doing our own indoor and outdoor gardening, with an emphasis on utilizing the garden boxes on our playground and developing the hillside by our parking lot. We will read a variety of fiction and non-fiction books to enhance the thematic study, as well as offer related art, cooking, sensory, and manipulative activities. In addition to the thematic emphasis, children attending camp will enjoy water time with access to wading pools, water slides on our climbing structure, and sprinklers in the playhouse.

Last Chance for Giant Eagle’s Apples for Students

The Giant Eagle Apples for Students program makes it easy to support your favorite schools. School supporters like you can donate their spending electronically through the Giant Eagle Advantage Card®. Each time your card is scanned between now and Wednesday, March 17, 2009, your purchase will count toward FREE equipment for our school. The Children’s School has been able to purchase at least 2 items for each age group for as long as we have been part of the Apples for Students program!

It’s easy to register! Here’s how:
1. Register at 1-800-474-4777 or www.gianteagle.com
2. Enter our School ID # 0151
3. Shop with your Giant Eagle Advantage Card®.

If you have children at more than one school, you no longer have to choose only one to support. When you register, you will be given the option to enter up to five school ID’s and your purchases will be divided among the schools you choose.

Thank You for Book Donations

Bridgett McNally-Javid (mother of Jordana in the Kindergarten) expressed thanks to all of the Children’s School families who donated books for the Juvenile Court Play Room. Feel free to bring additional book donations to the school at any time. Board books for infants and toddlers are especially needed.
Parent Spotlight: Cranors on Campus

Nina Cranor is enjoying her first year at the Children’s School in the purple room, but her parents Lorrie and Chuck Cranor are on their sixth year at CMU. Nina’s siblings Maya and Shane went to the Children’s School and are now in the first and third grade at Colfax in Squirrel Hill. Both Lorrie and Chuck work at CMU and have offices in the Collaborative Innovation Center (CIC) building on campus.

Chuck is a research scientist in the Parallel Data Lab (PDL) at CMU where he builds storage system software and helps run the PDL data center in the CIC building. The data center is especially fun for the kids to visit -- it has clusters of racks of computers that are enclosed with a roof and doors to form a "giant computer" that you can walk through. Chuck has invited the morning 3’s classes to come for a tour this spring.

Lorrie is an associate professor of computer science and of engineering & public policy and director of the CyLab Usable Privacy and Security Laboratory (http://cups.cs.cmu.edu/). Lorrie teaches courses on privacy and on usable security, and she does research in these areas. She supervises about half a dozen PhD students, which is almost as exhausting as parenting 3 kids! In one of her research projects, she studied why people fall for online scams and how to teach them to protect themselves. She co-founded a company, Wombat Security Technologies (http://wombatsecurity.com), to commercialize anti-phishing tools developed in her lab. She has also developed a search engine called Privacy Finder that provides information about website privacy policies (http://privacyfinder.org/).

We live on Northumberland Street in Squirrel Hill and usually walk to work. Our kids attending the Children’s School walk to campus with us almost every morning, regardless of weather. They also enjoy walking to our offices to visit friendly graduate students and play with white board markers. Besides walking to school, we also enjoy hiking in the mountains. Last summer we hiked around Keystone, Colorado.

One of Lorrie's hobbies is quilting. She created the Children’s School 40th Anniversary Quilt that hangs in the hallway. You can see more of her quilts on her web site (http://lorrie.cranor.org/quilts/).
What’s New at the Theatre?

**Pittsburgh International Children’s Theater presents Henry and Mudge**
Sunday, March 7-14, 2010 ~ 2:00pm and 7:00pm at locations throughout the region. Visit [www.pgharts.org](http://www.pgharts.org) for more information.
Tickets: $9.50 in advance, $11 at the door

Henry discovers that having a pet takes a lot of responsibility, but all the hard work is worth it because Mudge is his best friend. In this musical based on Cynthia Rylant's award-winning books, Henry and Mudge embark on adventures together and discover that they will always be there for each other.

**Peanut Butter and Jam Sessions present May I have this Dance?**
Saturday, March 13, 2010 ~ 10:00am and 11:30am McClintic Hall of the Calvary Episcopal Church 315 Shady Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15206
For tickets call 412-394 3353 or visit the website at [www.chathambaroque.org](http://www.chathambaroque.org).
Tickets are $5 per child and $8 per adult.

**Cohen & Grigsby Trust Presents Golden Dragon Acrobats**
Saturday, March 13, 2010 ~ 2:00pm & 8:00pm Byham Theater
Ticket prices vary: Visit [www.pgharts.org](http://www.pgharts.org) for more information.

Golden Dragon Acrobats represent the best of a time honored Chinese tradition that began more than two thousand years ago. Direct from Hebei, China, Golden Dragon Acrobats have thrilled audiences all over the world. The troupe’s amazing artistry, beautiful costumes and props provide a visual feast for the entire family to enjoy.

**Trust Education & Community Engagement presents Kids Day in the Cultural District**
Saturday, March 13, 2010 ~ Lobby Activities 12:30-1:30 Byham Theater
Prior to the performance of the Golden Dragon Acrobats, the Byham Theater is a festive carnival for children and families. Kids Day features jugglers, clowns, puppeteers, face painters and airbrush tattoo artists.

**PNC Broadway Across America-Pittsburgh Special presents The Wizard of Oz**
Tuesday, March 30 – Sunday, April 4, 2010 Heinz Hall
Ticket prices vary from $21 to $59. Visit [www.pgharts.org](http://www.pgharts.org) for more information.

There’s no place like home as the greatest family musical of all time twists its way across the country. The entire family will be captivated as they travel the Yellow Brick Road with Dorothy, Toto, the Cowardly Lion, Tin Man and Scarecrow in this lavish production, featuring breathtaking special effects, dazzling choreography and classic songs. A celebration of the iconic 1939 MGM film, The Wizard of Oz transports you to an art deco Oz, complete with munchkins and flying monkeys. Don’t miss the chance to travel “Over the Rainbow” to experience this national treasure on stage.

**Upcoming 2010 Performances**

- Fred Garbo’s Inflatable Theater Co. April 10 and 11
- Pittsburgh International Children’s Festival May 12-16

Stayed tuned for more theater experiences!
Actress Meggie Booth, Children’s School Alum, on Theater

I always loved performing for people, whether it was singing for my family, or doing a dance number with my cousin or sister. Performing has always been an enjoyable hobby to me. I guess what really got me going was my parents. They realized my love for performing and enrolled me in Pittsburgh Musical Theater (PMT). That is where my acting “career” started. I love acting because when you are really “in the moment” as actors call it, you feel like you are in a different world. An actor has the privilege to travel on different journeys with the characters they play. This sensational feeling is what inspires me to pursue my love for performing.

Like other shows, “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” had an audition process. Five girls chosen by the Public Theater came to audition for the part of Titania’s fairy. This selection was based on finalists or winners of the Shakespeare Scene and Monologue Contest held at the Public Theater annually.

The Public Theater sent me a paragraph of the Fairy’s lines ahead of time to get a feel of what was expected during the audition. Ted Pappas, the director, also informed me that he would like me to have a song ready to sing. The audition was very professional, and nerve racking! Ted Pappas had me act out the scene, and then I sang a little bit of my song. That was it. Then came the hard part - waiting for the results.

I did get the part, and I was thrilled. Rehearsals were great, and always packed with much to learn, and so many talented people to meet. Every day of rehearsal, the play got greater and greater. It was so fun to see the transition from the first day of reading the script to the performances.

During the performances, I had to be attentive and on my toes awaiting my next cue. No one was there to tell me when to enter, or what props to take. Being treated like a professional really builds your responsibility. I also met some amazing people in the cast, and in the crew. Everyone there really worked like an ensemble, even though some people had bigger parts than others.

I am so glad I got to have such a great experience with such a great cast. A fellow actor in “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” told me, “Go for it, don’t let anyone tell you not to.” I will continue to carry on my life with that saying in my head. I have a passion for acting, and I’ll keep that passion forever.

[Meggie Booth is now a 7th grader at Pittsburgh Creative and Performing Arts.]

Web Artists

| Kindergarten Friends: | Minjune K., Rose I., Grayson H., Miyu Y., Jackson H. |
| 4’s Friends: | Wesley D., Julia G., Max L., Amelia D., Tristan M. |
| 3’s Friends: | Kasim J., Carter L., Oscar O., Arjun V., Simon M. |
Research Spotlight

The Cleanup Time Game
When given a mix of objects, even very young children can successfully group them into distinct categories such as balls, blocks, animals, or vehicles. What are the foundations of this skill? Graduate student Yevdokiya Yermolayeva is working with Dr. David Rakison to investigate how changing the features of objects, such as the kind of parts they have or the structure of those parts, can influence how children group those objects. If parts are not very salient (small and the same color as the body, for example), will children rely on structure to categorize objects? If the objects all have the same type of body, will that make categorization easier or more difficult? As part of the study, children were asked to help Scribbles, the monkey, to separate sets of eight toys (represented by novel shapes) into two groups. We examined whether children chose to group objects based on parts or structure. Children played the sorting game with four sets of toys that varied with respect to the parts they had and the structure of those parts. This study will help us to understand what features children use to sort objects in different contexts.

The Numbers Game
Sara Haas, a senior psychology major, is working with Dr. Robert Siegler to observe the differences in math learning and problem solving among typically developing children and children with autism. Efficient strategy selection is not only important when learning math, but it is also an essential skill for all types of problem solving. The researcher will present kindergartners with simple addition and subtraction problems to complete and then ask how they solved the problems. In addition, the researcher will show each child number lines and ask for estimates of where a particular number falls on the number line. Studying typically developing children at the Children’s School and then comparing them with children on the autism spectrum will help the researchers learn more about strategy use and serve as a basis for further studies designed to enhance mathematics curricula and help individuals with autism better develop proper mathematical strategy utilization.

Undergraduate Research

Dr. Anna Fisher’s Developmental Research Methods students are preparing their final projects for the semester. Though the research procedures are still being finalized, the topics are listed below. Families whose children participate will receive fuller parent descriptions via the child’s backpack. Everyone can read the study descriptions on the Research Bulletin Board outside the Children’s School Office. Notice the interesting range of important topics in early childhood development!

Influence of Popularity on the Development of Prosocial Behavior – Exploring the impact of describing potential playmates as preferring group activities vs. individual activities on children’s choice of a sharing partner. (The Share-Bear Game)
The Effects of Reinforcement on Motivation and Task Performance – Comparing 3s’ and Kindergartners’ ability to find hidden pictures, find differences between pictures, and match images to their shadows, in conditions with verbal praise vs. tangible rewards. (The Puzzle Game)

The Effect of Emotional Labels on Recognition – Comparing children’s memory of emotions described in stories when the emotions are consistent vs. discrepant with expectations. (The Memory Game)

The Development of Gender Stereotypes – Exploring the impact of gender neutral, stereotyped or counter-stereotyped prompts on children’s choices of what activities best fit in stories about young animal characters. (The Story Game)

Undergraduate Spotlight: Getting to Know You

We have some new faces at the Children’s School this semester. Some students are part of Dr. Carver’s Child Development class and were excited to hear about volunteer opportunities at the Children’s School. We also have volunteers from the Theater Department on campus. They had seen us touring the Purnell Center and were excited to see how they could get involved.

Devin Beahm is new to the Children’s School this semester. Devin will be working with our afternoon three-year-old group. Devin is a Psychology Major and is part of many community groups. She takes part in the Women’s Leadership Program, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and the UPMC volunteer core. She enjoys writing and taking pictures for the Tartan Newspaper on campus.

Joe Maddox, Amanda Thorp and Paige Killiany are theater majors who were part of our theater tours at the Purnell Center on campus. They were excited to see our children visiting the theater and also to hear of the volunteer opportunities at the Children’s School. We are going to take advantage of all their theater and acting knowledge!

Emily Lambert is working in our preschool and extended morning programs this semester. Emily has returned to the Children’s School after taking a few semesters off to concentrate on school and community activities. Emily is a senior and will be graduating this spring with a degree in Decision Sciences and Hispanic Studies. After graduation, she will be teaching English in Spain. Emily participates in community and campus groups such as Strong Women, Strong Girls and AmeriCorps Scholars in Service. Emily has been a great asset to the Children’s School and we wish her all the luck in future plans!

“Working at the Children's School has been an invaluable experience for me. It has affirmed my love for teaching and working with children as well as given me the opportunity to observe incredibly talented and effective teachers. I have learned so much about teaching and about myself during my time at the Children's School; my experiences there have directly influenced my post-graduation plans.” Emily Lambert
Director’s Corner: Neighborliness

At the Children’s School, we introduce and address each other as “friends” because that is the image of ourselves that we want to promote each and every day. We explicitly discuss ways to “be a kind friend”, and we intentionally model and acknowledge both adult and child instances that occur at school.

Many Pittsburghers and early childhood educators everywhere seek to honor the life and work of Fred Rogers by promoting a similar concept, called “neighborliness”. “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” Day is an annual event to celebrate Fred Rogers and his legacy of neighborliness on his birthday, March 20th. Neighbors everywhere are encouraged to wear a favorite sweater and promote neighborliness throughout America.

But what IS neighborliness, particularly from the young child’s point of view?

According to Mr. Rogers, neighborliness begins with the basics of kindness. He said, “Imagine what our real neighborhoods would be like if each of us offered as a matter of course, just one kind word to another person. One kind word has a wonderful way of turning into many.” Encourage your children to follow your example of flashing a smile, saying “thank you”, sharing a hug, or offering a compliment as you meet people on the street, in the grocery store, etc. We can all take these simple gestures one step further by taking the time to really listen to each other, to offer help when someone is tackling a challenge, and to give the “gift of laughter” by sharing funny stories. My father is known in my extended family for clipping cartoons and enclosing them with brief notes or letters, just to share a laugh across the miles. I also vividly recall the day during high school when I discovered a small, handwritten scrap of paper taped on the bookshelf above his desk at home; the message read, “When I die, I want to leave a piece of ground better than I found it.” That helped me to understand why he was always picking up trash that others left behind and doing small repair jobs for family, friends, and even in hotels or rental properties we visited. We all have abilities that we can offer to others in such a neighborly way.

Family Communications, the non-profit organization founded in 1971 by Fred Rogers as the production company for Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood, is distributing a “Caring Neighbor Checklist” to encourage neighbors of all ages to regularly participate in neighborly actions. They suggest planting a tree, recycling, shopping with reusable bags, volunteering, visiting, making donations, etc. Given our current conditions, we could add helping neighbors deal with piles of snow and fallen tree branches to the list! Whatever the situation, neighborliness really means looking beyond ourselves to offer our time, talents, and resources to others. Focusing on others is especially challenging for young children, so they need consistent models to demonstrate neighborliness and to coach their initial offers of help. We invite you to join us in doing something neighborly on Saturday, March 20th, and every day!
Creative Family Theatre Arts Festival !!
Images of Dramatic Expression & Appreciation