



M o s a i c

Newsletter of the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School

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photo by Christina Lane

Handwriting May Deepen Learning, New Studies Say

by Trice Atchison

In Waldorf schools, an emphasis on writing by hand is evident in the beautifully written and illustrated lesson books the children create each year. New research supports this practice, suggesting that children's cognition, expression and ability to carry ideas to completion, among other skills, are enhanced by the act of handwriting. In contrast, typing on a keyboard, cutting and pasting may somehow bypass important pathways to learning.

In the October 5, 2010 issue of *The Wall Street Journal*, Gwendolyn Bounds describes recent research that used advanced tools to measure the effects of handwriting on children's brain development and mastery of skills.

Researchers from the University of Wisconsin and Indiana University, in separate studies, noted that writing by hand appeared to aid children in various ways, from developing fine motor skills and learning letters and shapes, to composing and conveying their ideas with greater facility and clarity. As recapped in the online publication, *The Week*: "University of Wisconsin psychologist Virginia Berninger tested students in grades 2, 4, and 6, and found that they not only wrote faster by hand than by keyboard—but also generated more ideas when composing essays in longhand. In other research, Berninger shows that the sequential finger movements required to write by hand activate brain regions involved with thought, language and short-term memory."

Novelist Robert Stone knows, too, that handwriting has its own rewards. In an October 5 article on the new research in *The Atlantic Wire*, Heather Horn refers to a 1985 interview in *The Paris Review* in which Stone says that he reverts to handwriting whenever “something becomes elusive. Then I write in longhand in order to be precise. On a typewriter or word processor you ... can lose nuance, richness, lucidity. The pen compels lucidity.” But many children today never develop the handwriting skills that may enable access to these layers of thought. Raised on keyboards and touch screens—and with schools generally devoting only about an hour a week to handwriting skills—it’s difficult for many children to persevere with the comparatively challenging task of forming letters by hand.

Developing the child’s will and focus, as well as fostering a sense for spatial relations, balance and aesthetics, are important aspects of a Waldorf education, all of which are reinforced in the grades through the act of handwriting. In early childhood, these same qualities are fostered first through storytelling, song, movement, rhythm, work and play (see *Play, It’s Fundamental*, page 8), setting a strong and deeply felt foundation for later academic learning.

Form drawing, unique to Waldorf schools, similarly emphasizes qualities important to learning. These exercises, developed by Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf education, involve the freehand drawing of geometric shapes that increase in complexity throughout the grades. Form drawing—a combination of straight and curved shapes and flowing lines—helps develop concentration, hand-eye coordination, a sense of placement (up-down, left-right), and an understanding of how the parts relate to the whole. It also helps the children develop their handwriting and later understanding of geometry.

The WSJ article proposes that touch-screen phones and tablets may be the answer to the drawbacks of keyboarding, even touting an iPhone “app” for children that involves cheering pencils as rewards for correct movements. However, the concrete and quiet tools of pencil and paper may well have



photo by Christina Lane

Class teacher Mark Eurich helps a fourth-grade student with his handwriting.

greater benefits in the end, allowing for more direct and lasting results that require no screen or printer, and for a sense of accomplishment that doesn’t depend on electronic cheering. Besides, the humble pencil and paper are more affordable and available to all, and need no batteries.

Perhaps the “scientists are finally beginning to explore what writers have long suspected,” Heather Horn says in her *Atlantic Monthly* article. It looks as though Rudolf Steiner may have been on to something, too.

Mosaic

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35 West Plain Road, Great Barrington, MA 01230
T 413.528.4015 F 413.528.6410 www.gbrss.org

Co-Editors
Trice Atchison
Sally Michael Keyes
Graphic Designer
Monica Cleveland

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More Circus Smirkus Fun in 2012

Circus Smirkus, the award-winning youth circus that entertained us on the GBRSS campus last summer, will be back in 2012. Sponsorship opportunities are available now. Call 413-528-4015, ext. 104, or e-mail development@gbrss.org.

Meet Michelle Marks, Our New First-Grade Teacher

by Tracy Thornton Fernbacher

GBRSS welcomes Michelle Marks as our new grades teacher for the incoming class of 2020. She brings with her a broad range of educational, professional and artistic experiences that will serve her and her students well on their journey through the grades.

Ms. Marks and her family—Carmen, seventh grade, and Valentino, fifth grade—moved to the Berkshires last summer. “I was looking for a strong Waldorf community, a beautiful place to raise my children, and a place that has a Waldorf high school,” says Ms. Marks.

Ms. Marks earned both her master’s degree in education and certification in Waldorf education from Antioch University New England. Additionally, she is certified in natural health and alternative medicine and has a BFA in performing arts from Radford University.

An experienced painter and actress, Ms. Marks was first introduced to Waldorf education while playing the lead role in “The Snow Queen” by Hans Christian Andersen at Vineyard Playhouse on Martha’s Vineyard, where she also served as lead educator for the playhouse’s children’s theatre program. Certain qualities about the student who played the part of Gerda deeply struck Ms. Marks. As she describes it, “She was a beautiful child—intelligent and well-spoken. I had just had Carmen and was thinking about schools. I asked her mom why she was so wonderful.” The mother attributed much of what Ms. Marks was observing to the fact that the child was attending a Waldorf school. “I wanted that for my child,” remembers Ms. Marks.



photo by Gregory Chernin

Michelle Marks will greet our new first-grade class this fall.

Out of this desire, Ms. Marks went on to found the Plum Hill Preschool on Martha’s Vineyard. She served as a board member, leading the school to full accreditation with the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America (WECAN), and later returned to lead her own kindergarten class. Additionally she took a class through the seventh and eighth grades at the Taos Country Day School, New Mexico, a developing member of the Association of Waldorf Schools in North America (AWSNA). During her time in Great Barrington, she has served as a trusted substitute teacher for GBRSS. Please join us in welcoming Ms. Marks to her new role in shepherding the incoming class through the grades.



VOICE VIII, an afternoon of A Cappella

Get your seats for VOICE VIII, an afternoon of a cappella! The concert is Sunday, April 10, 3pm, at the Mahaiwe Theatre, featuring the Tufts Amalgamates (in photo at left), the UConn ConnMen, Completely Different Note, and Strike-A-Chord. Tickets are available through the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center box office, 413-528-0100, and at www.mahaiwe.org. Proceeds benefit Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School. Adults: \$22; Children & Students \$7.

A Window on Waldorf

by Marilyn D. Ruppert, Faculty Administrator



Whenever I bring families on a tour of our school, I am filled with new appreciation for all that a Waldorf education has to offer. Each aspect of the curriculum has been carefully conceived to create a woven tapestry of learning that grows richer and more intricate through the years. From the language arts, math and science, to woodworking,

handwork and all of the other special subjects, there is an underlying continuity of thought and expression that helps ground children and allows them to deeply take hold of what they learn. I am always struck, too, by the beauty of our school, the enthusiasm of the children, and the dedication of our teachers and staff.

It's heartening when the mainstream media focuses on aspects of education and child development that reflect what we do. This issue of Mosaic highlights some of the practices and principles of Waldorf education relevant to recent media stories that support its approach. The article, "Handwriting May Deepen Learning, New Studies Say" (page 1), for example, talks about recent research that relates in some ways to how handwriting is emphasized in Waldorf schools. More and more researchers and reporters also are beginning to get the word out about the tremendous and irreplaceable benefits of play (see "Play: It's Fundamental," page 8). The importance of play is something we have long recognized, and the reason that our early childhood days here are filled with storytelling, song, work and plenty of play, paving the way for later academic learning. Other articles and pictures throughout this issue illustrate how we integrate the arts, academics, movement, and lessons from the natural world—from the young children's discovery of where maple syrup comes from (see "A Springtime Gift of Maple," page 5), to a student's poem about fire written as part of a chemistry block, to another's lively report on our basketball teams. Highlighted here, too, is our Middle School Circus in March, where students exhibited amazing feats of agility, teamwork, endurance and performance. And there's so much more.

Kim Payne, the counselor, educator and author who spoke to our school community about "Simplicity Parenting" in February and March, is receiving considerable media coverage himself these days. It appears that the media, as well as families in every

kind of educational setting, are opening to the idea of simplifying children's lives in order to ease the pressures and burdens many families feel today (see "Simple Steps to Family Calm," page 6). Kim Payne's message not only dovetails beautifully with Waldorf education, it applies to all families everywhere.

If you, or a family you know, is interested in learning more about our school, I would be delighted to lead you on a tour that provides a "window on Waldorf." Please call GBRSS at (413) 528-4015 to arrange a visit.

Integrated Learning

Shawn Green, Math and Science Teacher, began the seventh-grade students' first block in chemistry with a study of fire. The students learned that approximately 125,000 years ago humans learned to control fire, a milestone for humanity that some consider the beginning of chemistry. They also learned that the ancient Greeks considered fire to be one of the four elements. Integrating science with the arts, Mr. Green asked each student to compose a poem based on his or her observations and knowledge of fire. Here is an example of the students' poetry:



Fire

by Evan Seitz, Seventh-grade Student

Fire, you create and rend
Your light tamed wolf,
made him friend.

Your dancing sparks kept foes at bay
With your great heat,
humans hardened clay.

Through you we make weapons,
tools of strife,
But your flames give us shelter,
needed for life.

Springtime Gift of Maple

by Christine Inglis, Rainbow Room Kindergarten Teacher

Every spring the nursery and kindergarten children at the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School brim with excitement when it's time to make maple syrup. Our first kindergarten teacher, Betty Krainis—for whom our Betty Krainis Early Childhood Building is named—would tap the maple trees and boil down the sap. Without exception, the children today love tapping as much as those who ventured out forty years ago with Betty in those early days of our school.

What an experience it is for the children to cross the road and tap the maple trees by the “big school” where the older children spend their days! The young ones know it is time when, during our morning walk, they hear the chickadees calling “chick-a-dee-dee.” It is always momentous when we drill a hole, hammer in the tap, and then listen for the first drip of sap into our buckets! The children go each day to check the buckets and empty the sap. They know firsthand that cold nights and warm days give the best yield. And when we gather firewood in the forest, and build a fire in a rock pit to boil down the sap into syrup, the children receive a real experience of the elements. That is when, if Brother Wind is blowing, we find out how the smoke stings if it gets into our eyes! After being boiled down on our campfire, the maple syrup can have a delicious smoky flavor.

Sometimes we go to visit the sugar shack where the grade-school children boil their sap. Mark Eurich's previous class of 2006 started the project when they were in third grade, and Andrew Sansone's class of 2009 continued it. They fixed the brick work, and helped to frame and put up the roof so that the boiling apparatus would be under cover. Mrs. Brennan's

current seventh-grade class helped with the siding as part of their third-grade building project, and they've continued to help with tapping and collecting the sap. Parent Suzi Baum has been instrumental in helping with our gardening program and maple syruping activities. Other parents help our facilities manager, Hartmuth Sommer, with collecting wood and stoking the fire. This genuine community effort yields up to five gallons of syrup each year—and since it takes 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup, you know how much work is involved!

In our nursery and kindergarten

classes we usually receive a small (and very precious) jar of syrup for each class. It is a highlight when we pour a little on our mid-morning snack of porridge and sing:

“Drip, drip, drip goes the sap, in the winter's silence.

Soon will come springtime sun, earth is waking up now.

Water sweet, special treat, springtime gift of maple...”

Thank you, maple trees, for your sweet gift, and for all of you in our community who help to bring this seasonal delight to our children!



Sun Room kindergarten teacher Michelle Kuzia helps the children drill a hole for the tap.

photo by Eleanor Peterson

Simple Steps to Family Calm

by Trice Atchison

“Less is more” is the core of Kim Payne’s timely message to parents. Payne—who spoke in Sheffield, MA, in February on behalf of GBRSS and who also gave a day-long workshop for parents in March—is an internationally acclaimed psychologist, speaker, teacher and, with Lisa M. Ross, co-author of the book *Simplicity Parenting: Using the Extraordinary Power of Less to Raise Calmer, Happier and More Secure Kids*. “Many of today’s behavioral issues and family challenges come from children having too much stuff and living a life that is too fast,” he says. “I’ve seen that when parents simplify their routines and lives, their child’s behavior often improves within days.” Over time substantial gains can be achieved in terms of the child’s and family’s overall sense of well-being—all by doing less.

Payne arrived at his insights through decades of working with families and children in diverse settings all over the world. In war-torn and impoverished areas of Asia and Africa, he was not surprised to see children struggling with the effects of extreme stress and negative sensory overwhelm—too little of what’s essential to health and well-being. What puzzled him, though, was why comparatively privileged children he worked with in London and the US were also gripped by stress-related behaviors. He began to recognize that these children, too, were trying to cope with unprecedented levels of stress in their lives, but for the opposite reason—what he calls the undeclared war on childhood. Its seductive battle cry is “the more, the sooner, the better”—from toys, activities, choices and achievements, to adult information and media influence. The pace and weight of it all can lead to cumulative stress issues in children, challenging coping behaviors, and frenzied families.

All children are quirky, Payne says—



photo by Christina Lane

that’s what makes them loveable. In overwhelming circumstances, however, quirks can develop into disorders or challenges. In a calmer environment, those same quirks not only tend to remain harmless and loveable, they point to a child’s unique gifts or genius. And with a slower pace, children are less anxious and cranky, tend to sleep better, and generally become happier participants in their family’s life together.

Payne suggests that instead of viewing childhood as an enrichment opportunity, we see it as an unfolding experience. “If it’s all about ‘enrichment,’ then we can find ourselves in an arms race, trying to get the most for, and out of, our child. This is fundamentally a con, and not healthy,” he says. It’s not that Payne is opposed to children engaging in some carefully chosen activities, but that too many defeat any potential gain, contribute to families feeling harried, lead to burn-out, and deny children the gift of boredom. The same goes for too many toys and other distractions. “Remember, they’re not being neurologically damaged

by being bored a little bit,” he says. To the contrary, that ‘down time’ gives children a chance to digest all that they learn and experience, and to find portals into their own creativity, resourcefulness and ingenuity. And without some down time to balance the busier times, the child struggles to find a sense of inner equilibrium. Families also benefit from time every day to reconnect with each other, something an over-packed schedule can diminish.

Rather than dictating a list of shoulds and should-nots to parents, Payne provides thought-provoking scenarios, inspiration, and a blueprint for anyone seeking positive change. He offers a series of practical, doable steps that can lead a family toward increased warmth, connection and peace (see sidebar for a few ideas). “You choose whatever fits naturally into your family life,” he says. “When a family simplifies, the kids love it. It’s not a battle. We think they’ll put up resistance, but they don’t; kids like it.” Parents, too, similarly find relief and rich rewards in simplifying.

Kim Payne's Four Pathways to Simplicity

1. Simplifying the child's

environment. This includes cycling out noisy, annoying toys, toys with many little parts that break and merchandizing impulse buys. Keep open-ended toys that can transform and adapt with the child's imagination, setting the stage for them to be creative, resourceful, innovative and able to adapt to change when they're older. Try reducing the number of books in the child's bedroom, and quieting everything down—bedding, colors, lighting, stuff. The clearing process has a positive effect on children, due more to the centered decision of the parent to declutter than anything else. Parents can declare inwardly, "I'm not going to be pushed around by marketers anymore."

2. Creating balance and rhythm.

Balance what's spontaneous and fun with a sense of what to expect from day to day, and within segments of the day. Children like to know, "We do this, then we do this," because a child doesn't have self-governance until the age of about 12. When they are given endless choices or there is no sense of what might be happening when, it makes the child feel unsafe because nobody appears to be in charge. They conclude that they have to be in

charge—and that produces anxiety and other challenges. Be child-centered (creating life rhythms and expectations that support the child), rather than child-led.

3. Simplifying the schedule.

Resist the societal push to allow numerous adult-led activities to overtake your family's life. Give your child the gift of boredom. "You have to become more boring than the boredom," Kim Payne says. Then in that down time they'll have the chance to, though their own, self-initiated, deep and creative play—or just by stopping to rest—digest what they learn and do.

4. Filtering out the adult world.

Before speaking in front of a child, ask, "Is what I'm about to say true, necessary and kind?" Resist blurting things out, turn off NPR in the car. Avoid burdening children with the woes of the world, or by the time they're teenagers they'll be blasé. Let your home be a place where children are not prey to marketers adept at generating "pester-power." Counter common media messages—"You are not good enough without this product, solve your problems through aggression, and don't listen to your parents"—by shutting down the screens. Enjoy the peace.

Many families from the school and greater community attended Kim Payne's Feb 17 lecture at Dewey Hall in Sheffield and March 12 hands-on workshop in Great Barrington. Both events were presented by GBRSS and sponsored by Community Health Programs (CHP). The book, Simplicity Parenting: Using the Extraordinary Power of Less to Raise Calmer, Happier and More Secure Kids, can be found locally at Matrushka Toys and Gifts and The Bookloft. Kim Payne's CD collection on Simplicity Parenting is available to GBRSS parents through the lending libraries in the elementary school and in early childhood. To find out about additional Simplicity Parenting offerings, visit the website, www.simplicityparenting.com.



Summer@Steiner Provides the Best Berkshire Fun!

Our Waldorf-inspired summer day program, Summer@Steiner, offers a wide variety of activities and adventures. **Players** (kindergarten) enjoy outdoor play time, trips to Green River and food and craft creations. **Discoverers** (grades 1-3) have swim lessons and free play in a pool, horseback riding, lake days and outdoor games and activities. **Adventurers** (grades 4-5) have the same activities as Discoverers plus a weekly field trip. **Explorers** (grades 6-8) take part in an active outdoor program that includes hiking, biking, swimming, kayaking, sports, games and day trips.

The program, for children entering kindergarten through eighth grade, runs from June 27 to August 12, Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and costs \$225 per week. Reserve your week of fun now! Call Program Director Mark Eurich at (413) 528-4015, ext. 151, for more information, or e-mail info@gbsss.org for a registration form.

Childhood Play Captures Media Interest

Child's play has been receiving serious attention in the mainstream media lately. While time for children to engage in real, self-directed play has increasingly diminished in recent decades, researchers and reporters are rediscovering how crucial play is to childhood development, learning and well-being. Far from being a form of "wasting time," as it has sometimes been viewed, play is once again being understood as the primary way in which children absorb, integrate and make sense of what they see, do and learn every day.

The benefits of play have long been recognized and appreciated within Waldorf schools. That's why creative, open-ended play times, both indoors and out, are part of an early childhood curriculum also rich in storytelling, song, rhythm and real-life work. Similarly, games, movement activities and recess are all valued "breathers" in a lively grade-school day, providing much-needed balance to highly focused time spent engaging in academics and the arts.

The January 6, 2011 issue of *New York Times*, for example, featured an article by Hilary Stout, "The Movement to Restore Children's Play Gains Momentum." She

comments that "[t]oo little playtime may seem to rank far down on the list of society's worries, but the scientists, psychologists, educators and others who are part of the play movement say that most of the social and intellectual skills one needs to succeed in life and work are first developed through childhood play." Last fall, the *Harvard Education Letter* questioned the trend toward too-early academics with an article by Laura Pappano called, "Kids Haven't Changed; Kindergarten Has," a subject addressed again by Betsy Yagla, *New Haven Advocate*, who asked, "Does Teaching Kids Earlier and Earlier Really Work?" And in late December, CNN correspondents Erika Christakis and Nicholas Christakis appealed to parents, saying, "Want to Get Your Kids into College? Let them Play."

This kind of media coverage is a promising trend according to the Alliance for Childhood, a nonprofit advocacy group that, for more than a decade, has been compiling extensive research about the importance of play and other subjects relevant to a healthy childhood. The Alliance article below succinctly and compellingly outlines just why active, imaginative play for all children needs to be honored and supported in our culture today.

Play: It's Fundamental

by the Alliance for Childhood, allianceforchildhood.com, reprinted with permission

There was a time when children played from morning 'til night. They ran, jumped, played dress-up, and created endless stories out of their active imaginations. Now, many scarcely play this way at all. What happened?

- Over four and a half hours per day watching TV, video game, and computer screens;¹
- Academic pressure and testing, beginning with three-year-olds;
- Overscheduled lives full of adult-organized activities;
- Loss of school recess and safe green space for outdoor play.

Decades of research clearly demonstrate that play—active and full of imagination—is more than just fun and games. It boosts healthy development across a broad spectrum of critical areas: intellectual, social, emotional, and physical.

The benefits of play

Child-initiated play lays a foundation for learning and academic success. Through play, children learn to interact with others, develop language skills, recognize and solve

problems, and discover their human potential. In short, play helps children make sense of and find their place in the world.

- **Physical development:** The rough and tumble of active play facilitates children's sensorimotor development. It is a natural preventive for the current epidemic of childhood obesity. Research suggests that recess also boosts schoolchildren's academic performance.²
- **Academics:** There is a close link between play and healthy cognitive growth. It lays the foundation for later academic success in reading and writing. It provides hands-on experiences with real-life materials that help children develop abstract scientific and mathematical concepts. Play is critical for the development of imagination and creative problem-solving skills.³
- **Social and emotional learning:** Research suggests that social make-believe play is related to increases in cooperation, empathy, and impulse control, reduced aggression, and better overall emotional and social health.⁴
- **Sheer joy:** The evidence is clear—healthy children of all

ages love to play. Experts in child development say that plenty of time for childhood play is one of the key factors leading to happiness in adulthood.⁵

What you can do to help your child play

- **Reduce or eliminate screen time:** Give your children a chance to flex their own imaginative muscles. They may be bored at first. Be prepared with simple playthings and suggestions for make-believe play to inspire their inner creativity.
- **Curtail time spent in adult-organized activities:** Children need time for self-initiated play. Overscheduled lives leave little time for play.
- **Choose simple toys:** A good toy is 10 percent toy and 90 percent child. The child's imagination is the engine of healthy play. Simple toys and natural materials, like wood, boxes, balls, dolls, sand, and clay invite children to create their own scenes—and then knock them down and start over.
- **Encourage outdoor adventures:** Reserve time every day for outdoor play where children can run, climb, find secret hiding places, and dream up dramas. Natural materials—sticks, mud, water, rocks—are the raw materials of play.
- **Bring back the art of real work:** Believe it or not, adult activity—cooking, raking, cleaning, washing the car—actually inspires children to play. Children like to help for short periods and then engage in their own play.

Footnotes

¹Emory Woodard, "Media in the Home 2000," Annenberg Public Policy Center, U. of Penn., 2000.

²Anthony D. Pellegrini and P.K. Smith, "Physical Activity Play: The Nature and Function of a Neglected Aspect of Play," *Child Development* 69(3), June 1998; Susan J. Oliver and Edgar Klugman, "What We Know About Play," Child Care Information Exchange, Sept. 2002.

³Doris Bergen, "The Role of Pretend Play in Children's Cognitive Development," *Early Childhood Research and Practice*, 4(1), Spring 2002; Jerome L. Singer, "Cognitive and Affective Implications of Imaginative Play in Childhood," in *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry: A Comprehensive Textbook*, Melvin Lewis, ed., 2002; Oliver and Klugman, op. cit.; Edgar Klugman and Sara Smilansky, *Children's Play and Learning: Perspectives and Policy Implications*, New York: Teachers College Press, 1990; Pellegrini and Smith, op. cit.

⁴Robert J. Coplan and K.H. Rubin, "Social Play," *Play from Birth to Twelve and Beyond*, Garland Press, 1998; Klugman and Smilansky, op.cit.; Singer, op. cit.

⁵Edward Hallowell, *The Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness*, New York: Ballantine, 2002.



Come Play With Us!

Early childhood enrollment

We are now accepting enrollment applications for our nursery through kindergarten classes. Full-day, half-day and partial week options are available. A sliding scale tuition applies to early childhood programs—ask for details. Call Marilyn Ruppert, (413) 528-4015, ext. 105, to arrange a personal tour and interview.

Resources for Reviving Play

International Association for the Child's Right to Play (Play Day kits): 914-323-5327; www.ipausa.org

Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment (Annual Toy Guide): 617-879-2167; www.truceteachers.org

TV Turnoff Network (Take Action page for limiting TV time): 202-333-9220; www.tvturnoff.org

Playing for Keeps (Play ideas and resources for parents and educators): 877-755-5347; www.playingforkeeps.org

All Work and No Play: How Educational Reforms are Harming Our Preschoolers, Sharna Olfman, Ph.D., ed.

Children at Play: Using Waldorf Principles to Foster Child Development, by Heidi Britz-Creclius

Earthways: Simple Environmental Activities for Young Children, by Carol Petrash

Reclaiming Childhood: Letting Children Be Children in Our Achievement-Oriented Society, by William Crain, Ph.D.

The House of Make Believe, by Dorothy G. Singer, Ph.D. and Jerome L. Singer, Ph.D.

Consuming Kids: The Hostile Takeover of Childhood, by Susan Linn

Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder, by Richard Louv

The Gnome Report

by Joey LaBrasca, Seventh-grade Student

Welcome to the Gnome Report, brought to you by your Steiner sports commentator, Joey LaBrasca. I report here on two games played this January by the Steiner Gnomes, one with the girls' team and one with the boys'. Both games resulted in wins for Steiner. Here is what happened:

The girls got off to a great start in their game against Indian Mountain with quick points from Kiana Estime, Erica Wainwright, and Alexa Dannis, and ended the first half on a 12-2 run! During the second half, Indian Mountain began to show signs of fight, but it was no match for the onslaught by Carmen Major and Alexa Dannis. In fact, you would've thought they had won all of their games that season with the type of confidence they showed.

The Steiner boys had a breakout year. In their seasonal game against Housatonic, the Steiner boys faced one of their largest obstacles yet. Without their star guard Rowan Myers, the guys seemed like a puzzle missing a piece. Some incredible

fast-break defense by Ethan Case and strong offense by Sam Plishtin, Trevor McFarland, and the rest of the eighth grade led the boys to an important 47-39 win. (*Note: In the boys' following game against BCD, Steiner almost lost control, but was saved by a game-winning "buzzer beater" by Trevor McFarland.*)



Spring Sports Opportunities for Middle School

by Krista Palmer, Athletics Director and Games Teacher

After such a long, snowy winter, it's hard to imagine that we will soon be starting baseball season. Boys in the sixth through eighth grades have an opportunity to play on the GBRSS team, coached by Mike Bissaillon and Scott McFarland. Please be on the look-out for the game schedule this spring. Most games are played in late April and May. This spring also brings the reintroduction of a girls' lacrosse team. Girls in the sixth through eighth grades will have an opportunity to learn this fun game and compete against other schools. More details will follow.

Pro-Golfer Duffy Waldorf to Play at GBRSS Golf Tournament

by Cathy Fracasse, Board Member



When GBRSS parent Gary Casarsa first proposed adding a golf tournament to the school's roster of fund-raising events, he was met with a combination of blank stares and outright laughter. Golfers at a Waldorf school? Steiner community members

swinging clubs and wearing brightly colored pants? It seemed an unlikely combination.

But the idea proved to be a wonderful way for parents, staff, faculty, alumni and friends to have some high-spirited fun with each other while adding to our tuition assistance fund. Over the past seven years, the tournament has taken place in a stunning variety of weather conditions, from hot to cold, rain to hail, and thunderous displays to deep blue skies—sometimes all in a single afternoon. And the participants have been as varied as the weather, from seasoned scratch players with state-of-the-art equipment to first time golfers wielding borrowed clubs.

This year—for our eighth annual tournament and in honor of the school's 40th anniversary year—we have the privilege of a very special guest: PGA pro golfer James Joseph "Duffy" Waldorf, Jr., who will be joining us for the day.

For an entry fee of \$125, you can spend Monday, June 13 at the Copake Country Club in Copake, NY, golfing with a pro. Fee includes a shotgun scramble, lunch, cocktails and dinner, and time at an early golf clinic with Duffy Waldorf, who has been an American professional golfer since 1985, when he joined the PGA Tour. He has featured in the top 50 of the Official World Golf Rankings.

To sign up or for more information, or to sponsor a hole at the tournament, please contact Janie LaBrasca at (413) 528-4015, ext. 104 (development@gbrss.org), or register online at GBRSS.org.

Middle School Circus a Coast-to-Coast Success!

Students wowed the crowd at “Circus, Coast to Coast,” a biannual circus arts event held in March during which GBRSS middle-schoolers perform feats of daring and skill. The performers stretched their limits to perfect their juggling, tumbling, dancing, clowning, hula hooping, stilt-walking and unicycling. Some students reached well beyond their comfort zones to tackle skills they had once thought impossible. A fifth-grade recorder ensemble serenaded the audience, and GBRSS alumnus Ariel Shrum added to the fun with his mesmerizing magic tricks. Congratulations to all for a superb show!

A heartfelt thanks goes to Krista Palmer, Games Teacher and Director of Physical Education, and Laura Geilen,



photos by Christina Lane



master clown and movement teacher, for organizing the circus and bringing out the very best in our children. Special thanks, too, to the teachers, parents and staff whose invaluable contributions made the whole event possible—from helping to teach circus skills, designing costumes and sets, providing musical accompaniment, directing traffic, selling tickets, baking and selling concessions, and photographing the performers.





35 WEST PLAIN ROAD
GREAT BARRINGTON, MA 01230
TEL (413) 528-4015 • FAX (413) 528-6410

Celebrate May Day, Sunday, May 1!

All are Welcome—Alumni, Grandparents and Friends



Nowhere in the Berkshires is May welcomed more joyfully than at GBRSS! We ring in May Day with a festival of music, blossoms, ribbons and dancing around the maypole. And for our 40th anniversary year, the May Day celebrations will be heightened with the presence of grandparents, special friends and, of course, alumni.

The fun starts Sunday morning at 10:30, when early childhood teachers present a spring puppet show from our fanciful “puppet wagon,” followed by festivities on the school lawn at 11:00. Bring a blanket to sit on (seating for grandparents provided). Afterwards, join us for the eighth grade’s cook-out and fundraiser. Lunch is complimentary for grandparents; reservations suggested. Other attendees pay \$5 for the cook-out, or feel free to bring your own picnic lunch. Tour GBRSS on May Day, or on Monday morning. For more information, call Janie LaBrasca at (413) 528-4015, ext. 104.