



# M o s a i c

Newsletter of the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School

rudolfsteinerschool.org November/December 2007

## Seventh Graders Reached New Heights with Adventure Learning

The Class of 2009 began this school year with the traditional seventh-grade adventure trip to Camp Glen Brook in New Hampshire. Through a series of activities during the week-long trip—from high ropes courses, to challenging walls and impossible ladders—students faced personal fears and found creative ways to work together to overcome obstacles. Below are students' personal accounts of how they pushed beyond their supposed limits to achieve feats they'd never dreamed of. Through these exciting and adventurous activities, students were challenged physically, mentally, emotionally and even spiritually. They arrived back at school with a stronger sense of connectedness and ownership, and an expanded idea of what is possible to achieve, both alone and together.

**Ariela Greenberg-Nielsen:** My brain registers my fast breathing and shaking limbs, but my mind wanders. I look down, wide-eyed, at the ground far below me. The ropes swing precariously beneath my legs. But I'm determined to make it to the top where Mrs. Palmer is waiting with a big smile. I start to lose my confidence as I climb higher. It seems like with each new step more certainty slips from my back and falls to the ground. The rational part of my brain, which can still think clearly, knows that there is a rope holding me up in case I fall, but my subconscious mind keeps drumming, "Hold on tight or you will end up down there, flat as a pancake." I look up and am surprised to see Mrs. Palmer grinning at me from the platform, just inches above me. I finally make it to the top and take a well-deserved break (for now). Next I have to jump off the edge of the platform onto the Zipline!

**Emily Richner:** At Camp Glen Brook there were ropes challenges with names like Zipline, Pirate's Crossing, Burma Loops and Giant's Ladder. When I was on the tree where the Zipline began, I felt like I was on top of the world, and when I jumped from the platform thirty feet high up in the trees onto Zipline, I felt like I was flying. I think each of us overcame some kind of fear during the week. I know I overcame my fear of heights.

**Jeremiah Leffler:** Not long after breakfast, we went over to the high ropes course. First we had to climb some ropes that looked

like rigging on an old sailing ship. At the top, there was a balance beam 40 or 50 feet off the ground. I decided not to do that and went straight across the Zipline. I then repelled myself down from the trees in time for the macaroni Chef Ash had prepared for lunch.

After lunch we could climb a rope ladder, some staples in a tree, or the Giant's Ladder, which was huge and had rungs that were sometimes five feet apart! I took staples up the tree and went across the Postman's Walk, a small tightwire up in the trees. Then I crossed the Burma Loops and took the Zipline down from the trees and across a field to safety.



**Iolani Sommer-deRis:** “Iolani, first you must climb that tree on those staples. When you get to the top, stop and I will tell you what to do next.” That’s Mr. Bullard, our high ropes teacher, speaking. I begin to climb up the tree by stepping on the staples, steel loops that protrude about two inches from the tree. When I reach the top I call, “Mr. Bullard, what do I do now?” He answers, “OK, now choose your direction.”

“I think I would first like to try the Pirate’s Crossing,” I say. The Pirate’s Crossing is just two ropes, which, at both ends, are about five and a half feet apart and which cross in the middle.

“OK, first you must attach the carabeener to your life loop and then show me that it is screwed on properly.” So I hook the carabeener to my life loop and screw it tight. I am attached to a rope by a strong wire that means, if I fall, I will only fall about two feet. So I begin.

“Iolani, you need to push the ropes apart as far as possible,” says Mr. Bullard.

I push the ropes apart, look down, and scream. I am so high above the ground. I begin to shake. I am coming to the actual crossing and the ropes are now about two feet apart. I sit down, turn around and start scooching further. Finally, I am unable to stand so I use my opportunity to begin slowly inching my way to the other side. I reach it! I jump off the platform and feel like I am flying! This experience was amazing. It helped me to overcome my fears and trust my friends.

**Seth Waag-Swift:** Ben and I decided to give the Giant’s Ladder a go. Oh, and did I mention that the whole thing swings, and that the rungs roll and twist a bit? We started out simply. Ben would jump up onto his stomach on the first rung and I would help him up to a sitting position. Then he would pull me up and we’d carefully stand up. Using this method, we made it up the first couple of rungs, but as they became farther apart, it became more and more difficult. Every so often one of us would fall back a couple of rungs (no wor-

ries, we had harnesses and were roped in) and the other would come back to help. But finally we came to the last rung—a square, sturdy beam—and easily pulled ourselves up; we had made it! Climbing the Giant’s Ladder showed how when we work together we can accomplish much more than we can on our own.

**Ben Baum:** Seth and I are about to climb the Giant’s Ladder. The first rung—which is six to eight inches in diameter—is close to the ground and we easily accomplish that. The rules are that, as you climb, you can’t use the cables on the sides. We can both reach the next rung. Chin-ups are out of the question because the logs are so thick. Seth kneels so I can stand on his knee and swing my leg over the next rung. Between falling, groaning, pulling and pushing, we make it up! Finally we reach the cross beam and descend rapidly on a zipline. We were the only team to make it to the top of the Giant’s Ladder!

**Robin Graney:** Some people say climbing a ladder is easy, but let me tell you, when the rungs are four or more feet apart and you can’t use the sides, it is extremely difficult. Fay-Lee and I climbed up to the second-to-last rung of the Giant’s Ladder with no less than ten new bruises each.

**Fay-Lee Thung:** The seventh grade faced many challenges at Camp Glen Brook, whether it was working as a class, or working individually. One challenge we all had to face was The Wall. The Wall was 13 feet tall with no handholds. How were we to get up? By trusting each other and working as a team. After we hoisted the first six people up, it became much more simple. At the end, it was hard to believe we did it.

**Eli Shalen:** We are not even on belay! I look up at The Wall and think, How are we going to get our whole class over this? After Mr. Bullard, the counselor, tells us the rules, we begin to discuss how we can achieve this feat. Finally we decide we are going to try a human pyramid. Sadly, the pyramid idea fails. We think more and realize we have to get Emily (one of our taller classmates) up first. We manage to



hoist her up with a little help from Mr. Bullard. The rest of the class makes it over, including me, but we still have Robin at the bottom. We think we might be able to hoist Seth down by his wrists and Robin could jump and grab his ankles. Robin makes it, and with all of our effort we pull up Seth and then grab Robin. We rejoice. We did it!

**Fauve Blaska:** At Camp Glen Brook, we had many challenges as a class, but the wall was the hardest. The challenge was to get everyone up over the 13-foot wall. From our shoulders we pushed people up to the top where from above they could pull others up. Every time a third person went up, the first had to go down, leaving only two people to help at the top. We did it! It was a wonderful experience.

**Logan Malik:** The most intense and extreme high ropes experience was the Balance Beam. The beam was a log about five inches wide and 40 feet high in the air, secured to two trees. As I got on the beam, I held onto a tree and took my first

steps. As I slowly walked along the beam, I felt my legs shaking violently. When I finally got to the other tree, I felt excited, but then I realized I had to walk back. Luckily the way back was much easier.

**Ezra Marcus:** We had a lot of fun at Camp Glen Brook, but like everything else, good things must come to an end. So on the last day, one of the counselors took us to a 13 foot wall in the middle of the woods. It seemed like Mission Impossible that we could get everyone over this block of rectangular, completely flat, wall. Finally, with a lot pushing, pulling standing on backs, standing on shoulders and hanging in very painful positions, we made it over!



## Our Scrip Contest Winners: Sun Room and Seventh Grade

*by Kim Gershon, Development Director*

Thank you to all who participated in the Second Annual Scrip Contest! Congratulations to the Sun Room and the Seventh Grade who are this year's official winners. What is remarkable about this year's contest winners is that, for each winning class, a notably high percentage of the families participated in the contest, particularly in the seventh grade, where 75 percent, including Mr. Sansone, participated! This is a true testament to the community we create here at the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School, and to

how each member's involvement makes a difference. Whether for the Scrip contest, the Handcraft Fair, the Annual Appeal, or a class project, when we all work together we can accomplish so much.

During the contest period, approximately \$29,000 of Scrip was purchased, with a profit of \$1,800 for our school. Each winning class will receive a check for \$500 to be used by their class.

Barrington Outfitters on Main Street in Great Barrington is becoming part of

our Scrip program. Earn 10 percent for our school when you shop at Barrington Outfitters for shoes, boots, outerwear and more—and for a limited time only, receive a free pair of Smart Wool socks when you use \$50 of Barrington Outfitters Scrip.

A special thank you to the following Scrip vendors who make this program possible: Berkshire Co-op Market, Guido's Market, Body & Soul Salon and Day Spa, Big Y, Hawthorne Valley Farm Store and BerkShares.

### Mosaic

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### *Pre-Assembly Gathering on November 21*

Parents of kindergarten children who are considering sending their child to first grade at the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School next September are invited to a pre-Thanksgiving Assembly gathering in our library on Wednesday, November 21, at 10:00 a.m. Join us for a continental breakfast and a short presentation. Following the gathering, we will attend the Thanksgiving Assembly, during which each grade will make a presentation that gives parents and friends a window on the children's school experience.

# Hands-On Science

by Rick Shrum, Eighth Grade Class Teacher



photo by Greg Cherin

Seventh grade students gather together in the newly created science laboratory to carry out a lively, hands-on experiment.

*Tell me, and I'll forget; show me, and I'll remember; involve me and I'll understand.* This old Chinese proverb reflects our new approach to science in the middle

school at the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School. Our new science room now makes it possible for students to get more involved in their learning and

do the experiments and investigations, rather than simply watching the teacher demonstrate in front of them. They now are able to handle test tubes, beakers, lenses, balances, motor parts and tuning forks, learn how to use them properly, and become active young scientists.

The new science room was transformed from the old sixth-grade classroom with modern lab tables, cabinetry for lab glassware and other equipment, and a new entry from the room into the science storeroom, where chemicals and more sensitive equipment are housed. Our gratitude goes out to the people who donated time, energy, and essential funding for this project over the summer. We couldn't have done it without Michael Thomas, Hartmuth Sommer-de Ris, Simeon Joffe, Andrew Sansone, and the carpentry skills of Max Dannis. We received financial contributions from several generous donors as well as a sizable gift from last year's eighth-grade class. Thank you to all of you!

Now that the students are doing the experiments themselves, we need more equipment and supplies so that teams of students can explore and discover together using their own lab set-ups. We are also involving the students with envisioning ways to make the room an active, lively environment for learning. There are several projects that students have been asked to help us develop and we have encouraged them to generate their own ideas for additional ways in which the room can best serve them. We are looking forward to an active time of discovery in the lab this year and on into the future.

## True Discovery

In Waldorf education, the teaching of science begins with direct experience. Students observe a scientific phenomenon closely and from their own detailed observations begin to grasp concepts related to it—for example, the transformation of limestone into quicklime, slaked lime, and ultimately back to limestone through the processes of fire, water, and air. This approach, consistent with the methodology of basic science, trains students in scientific observation, thinking and discovery.

Students are encouraged to experience and reflect on the natural world and its processes, rather than merely take in, undigested, remote theories and formulas. Once the student has experienced a phenomenon firsthand, the possibility for a deeper understanding of the related scientific theories and formulas is greatly enhanced and the student develops an awareness of the scientific concept underlying the phenomenon. This lively methodology sparks in the student the desire to discover, through personal scientific observation and reflective thinking, more and more about the world in which we live and for which we are all responsible.

# A Fair Filled with Handcrafted Beauty

by Kathi Weinstein

When people hear about the success of our annual Holiday Handcraft Fair, they marvel and ask how we are able to raise so much money for our school. But those of us who work on the fair—this year held on Saturday, November 10, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.—know well the incredible commitment and hours tallied to make this event happen.

Besides the tremendous outpouring of parent support and creativity, and the generosity of our larger community, the success is largely attributed to a single concept: handcrafted. We are one of the few Waldorf school fairs that does not include outside vendors; instead, we as a school community spend months creating handcrafted items to sell at the annual Holiday Handcraft Fair.

Various craft workshops take place in preparation for the fair every year to create items that are truly one-of-a-kind, never mass-produced. Even if several individuals are busy making the same item, each one will be unique in some way. Every handcrafted product bears a human touch and is an expression of life. This can especially be said of the dolls, felted gnomes and animals that seem to spring to life before our eyes. Each little being is an expression of the creator's heart and soul. Those who value handcrafted items appreciate the skill, passion and time that go into such creations. It can certainly be said that each item is not only of a very high quality, but also is lovingly made by someone who has a tie to our school, whether as faculty, staff, parent, grandparent, alum, student or friend.

The school directly benefits from the sale of every handcrafted item. Buyers are also supporting the local economy instead of shopping on the internet or in the mall for mass-produced products made outside of the Berkshires or, most likely, outside of the U.S. Those with

an ecological conscience can rest easy knowing that the environment, too, benefits from these handcrafted items made mostly of natural fibers, wood or recycled materials.

The handcrafted items created each fall also echo essential elements of Waldorf education. Our handwork and woodwork programs for students cultivate an appreciation for natural and authentic handmade objects. Teaching our students to knit, crochet, embroider and sew practical and attractive items—from potholders to wearable clothes and cozy socks—helps them develop patience and persistence, as well as eye-hand coordination and manual dexterity. Through our woodwork program we awaken awareness and appreciation of

the qualities of substances and help our students gain mastery with simple tools so that they may come to respect and reveal these qualities in beautiful and useful forms. Responsibility is fostered through care and respect for the materials used, and an appreciation for the gifts of nature arises from knowing where things come from and what goes into the finished product.

Whether in the Handcraft Room, Silent Auction or Country Store at the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School's Holiday Handcraft Fair, shoppers find unique handmade treasures that can be admired for their craftsmanship and beauty. What a wonderful way to acknowledge support for Waldorf education!



photos by Greg Cherin

## Light Conquers Darkness

The autumn season began with gusto at GBRSS, when in late September all the children from grades one through eight headed off to Mount Everett with their teachers for the first-ever school-wide Michaelmas hike. Rain threatened that morning like a troublesome dragon, but sunlight prevailed. To the children's surprise and delight, the infamous dragon—inhabited by the entire fifth-grade class—emerged from the woods, only to be subdued by Archangel Michael, who—poised magnificently on a lean-to roof with starry sword in hand—subdued the beast.

This celebration of light conquering the darkness occurs during the season of harvest, not only of the earth's bounty, but also of our inner strength as we once again turn inward in preparation for the colder, darker months.

# Strengthening our School with Changing Our World

by Marilyn Ruppert, Faculty Administrator



I am pleased to report in this issue of *Mosaic* that the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School has contracted with an organization known as

Changing Our World, Inc., to work with us on institutional development. GBRSS is at a pivotal point in its growth. At this juncture what is called for is a comprehensive plan for institutional development with professional guidance toward achieving our goals. Scott Williams of Changing Our World is ready to support our school through this process.

Scott Williams is exceedingly capable in his field, and also deeply values Waldorf education. Beginning in November, he will begin a three-month assessment of our larger community in regard to financial, organizational and human potential, followed by nine additional months of continued work with us in developing and implementing a plan

based on this input. The plan will include specific ways to tap the financial resources in our broader community and to build the overall fiscal health and vitality of GBRSS. During the contractual year, Scott Williams and support staff will work with us to develop internal systems and materials, as well as train and coach us in carrying out the development plan. This essential foundational work sets the stage for future fundraising efforts and should also enable us to increase funding for important goals such as tuition assistance, facilities upgrades and program improvements.

In the process of this work, Scott Williams will be meeting with people from every sector of the school—faculty, staff, parent and alumni. Kim Gershon, Development Director, has been hired on a half-time basis to work with Scott on this process, as well as to carry forward development projects already begun.

A number of us in the GBRSS community have encountered Scott Williams in other settings and have been impressed by his capabilities and

integrity. I remember the Williams family from my days at the Waldorf School of Garden City, NY—which Scott and his sisters attended—as a caring and dedicated family. Scott went on to Trinity University, then to a career in fundraising and development. After serving as a development officer at St. John's University, he became Director of Development back at his alma mater, The Waldorf School of Garden City. There he built a development office which now raises four times the funds raised before he joined the staff. He subsequently became a Managing Director at Changing our World, Inc. and has chosen to dedicate much of his time to supporting the financial health of Waldorf schools. Scott also serves on the Board of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America.

I appreciate the foresight and commitment to growth demonstrated by our board of trustees, faculty and staff in undertaking this work. As you learn more, I think you will share my excitement about this next phase of the school's development.

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## Update from the Great Barrington Waldorf High School

by Stephen Sagarin, High School Faculty Chair

Let's say you are applying to college, and you have taken honors-level courses in all subjects. You've read Dante, Shakespeare and Emerson, and you've also read Susskind, Allende, Cisneros and Achebe. You studied organic chemistry, atomic physics and, on Hermit Island in Maine,

zoology. You had roles in three or four plays. You've been to Munich or Lima once or twice, perhaps even spending a semester there as an exchange student. You have traveled each year to New York and Boston, and possibly even to Montreal. You can present a portfolio

of not only writing and academic work, but also glassblowing, blacksmithing, pottery, woodwork and basketry. You've learned to bind books. You have spent at least a week or two on a farm, learning to work, get dirty and match the rhythms of farm life. You have also interned at, for

example, a New York City newspaper or law firm. When you sit down for a college interview and the interviewer asks, so, how big is your high school class? And you answer, “six,” you have the officer’s attention. Colleges pay attention to our graduates, and middle school families looking toward high school should, as well. Our school is small, even tiny, but our students are competent, confident citizens of the world.

This year we have 18 students in grades nine through 11; next year, when we also have a senior class, our enrollment will grow. We never want to have more than about 60 students; if each class can fit in a van, we can go where we like and the numbers are in our favor. With more than roughly 60 students, a school has to provide facilities and resources that strain a school budget until enrollment is well over 100.

We are, as many of you know, independent of the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School, but linked to it by



State House in Boston

the same serious regard for the value of Rudolf Steiner’s ideas about teaching and learning. We emphasize that these are radically different in high school from what they are in the lower school. No more dreamy paintings, no more class teacher, no more “good books.” Now it’s time for wireless internet and intellectual

development. With a strong heart, developed in grades one through eight, students in high school can develop a strong and ethical head, one that can help them work to make the world a better place: more whole and less fragmented; more thoughtful and less dogmatic; more resourceful and less exploitative.

By being legally and financially independent, each school, lower school and high school, can pursue its own course as it sees fit. We do hope, however, that GBRSS parents who want to preserve educational choice in the Berkshires, who value what we are and what we offer, will support us. Our faculty and trustees support the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School—most of us had or have children there. We know the value of the place.

You could say that the unofficial motto of the Great Barrington Waldorf High School is, “You can have it all.” Our official motto is, “Seek truth. Develop imagination. Foster responsibility.”

The Great Barrington Waldorf High School has three open houses scheduled this year, but you are welcome to visit us any time at 454 Main Street, Great Barrington, or seek us on the web at [www.waldorfhigh.org](http://www.waldorfhigh.org). Call us at (413) 528-8833.



## GREAT BARRINGTON WALDORF HIGH SCHOOL

Seeking Truth, Developing Imagination, and Fostering Responsibility

# Open House

Tuesday, November 27, 2007

7:30 pm

454 Main Street, Great Barrington

(413) 528-8833

Come and learn more about all we have to offer!

The Great Barrington Waldorf High School seeks to provide an education for adolescents that inspires love of learning, develops freedom of thought, and fosters self-confidence in an atmosphere of academic rigor, artistic fulfillment, openness and mutual respect. This work stems from the pedagogical philosophy of Rudolf Steiner and strives to meet the educational, artistic, and social needs of students, that they may engage in life with intelligence, wisdom and moral commitment.



Student hiking in Peru

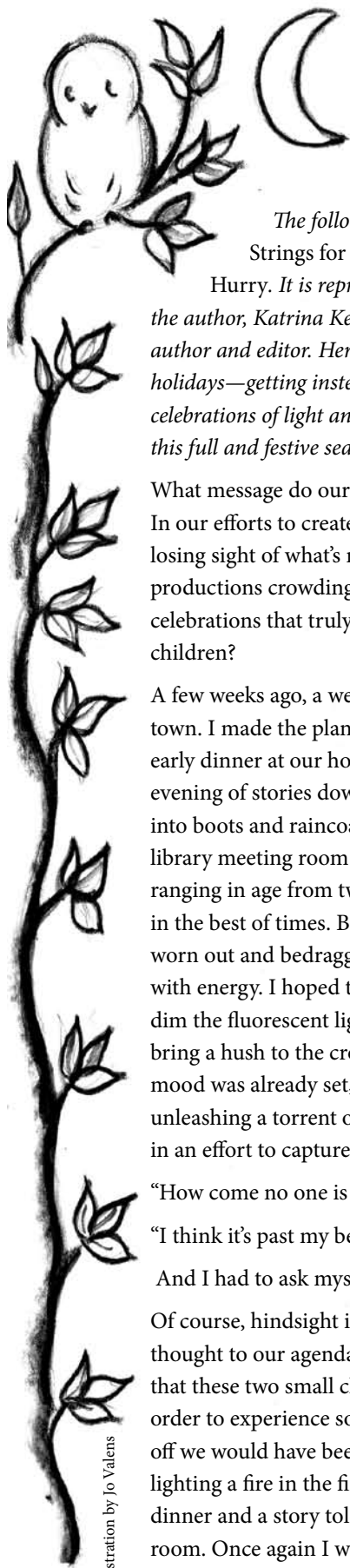


illustration by Jo Valens

# Simplicity

by Katrina Kenison

*The following article is from the book, Mitten Strings for God: Reflections for Mothers in a Hurry. It is reprinted here with kind permission from the author, Katrina Kenison, a longtime Waldorf parent, author and editor. Her words of wisdom for simplifying the holidays—getting instead to the heart of what the various celebrations of light and love are about—are well-timed for this full and festive season.*

What message do our own excesses send to our children? In our efforts to create special occasions for them, are we losing sight of what's really important? Are these elaborate productions crowding out the kind of simple, heartfelt celebrations that truly enrich our lives and delight our children?

A few weeks ago, a well-known storyteller came to our town. I made the plans: Jack and a friend would have an early dinner at our house, and then we would enjoy an evening of stories downtown. We ate at five-thirty, bundled into boots and raincoats, and set out in a downpour. The library meeting room was full of wet, boisterous children, ranging in age from two to thirteen—a tough audience in the best of times. But this was six-thirty. Mothers were worn out and bedraggled, and the children were rollicking with energy. I hoped that our storytelling celebrity would dim the fluorescent lights, gather the children into a circle, bring a hush to the crowded room. But, it seemed, the mood was already set, and that was what he played to, unleashing a torrent of voices, antics, and impersonations in an effort to capture the attention of this scattered group.

“How come no one is listening?” whispered Jack.

“I think it's past my bedtime,” confided four-year-old Nick.

And I had to ask myself, what on earth are we doing here?

Of course, hindsight is easy. But had I brought a little more thought to our agenda that evening, I would have realized that these two small children did not require an outing in order to experience something special. How much better off we would have been staying home on that stormy night, lighting a fire in the fireplace, and inviting Jack's friend for dinner and a story told by the firelight in our own living room. Once again I was reminded: If I pause long enough to listen to my own inner voice, rather than heeding some external call to go, see, and do, I make better choices for us all.

It takes conviction to say, “This is enough”—whether it be enough holiday events, enough guests at a party, enough

presents, or simply enough activities for next Saturday. And it is hard to feel confidence in our own choices, in our own sense of limits, when everyone around us seems convinced that more is bigger and better.

But I am learning. When I find myself worrying, Can I pull this whole thing off? instead of looking forward to a special day, I know it's because I have allowed an event to become more extravagant and ambitious than it needs to be. There is another way. We don't have to make everything into such a big deal. We can choose simplicity over complication. And what relief there is in simplicity. Here's a start:

- Downscale holiday celebrations. Keep the focus on family, meaningful rituals and traditions, and on simple activities. Give fewer gifts and take more time to enjoy them. One year we bought Christmas presents for a needy family and agreed that we would pay for those gifts by scaling down our own giving to one gift per person. No one felt deprived; in fact, I think we all felt relieved. When I ask my children what they love most about our Christmas, their answers remind me that simple really is best: reading our Christmas books, the advent calendar, our annual carol sing with the family next door, lighting the ting-a-ling on Christmas Eve....
- Set a limit on holiday activities.
- Don't feel guilty about skipping events that everyone else attends. Your children need you and your attention, not more activities...As I remind my children when birthday party invitations begin to pile up, “You don't have to go to



photo by Greg Cherin

everything.” Watching us manage our own lives sensibly, our children will learn to set limits, too.

- Celebrate birthdays in a way that honors the qualities you love in your child. They don't have to be big productions; make them expressions of love instead: a special meal, an outing with a friend, a birthday ritual carried on year after year. My sons each have a birthday candle waiting for them on the breakfast table; at dinnertime, each family member offers a birthday wish for the coming year.
- Whether you're decorating the Christmas tree, making latkes, or coloring Easter eggs, remember that the process is more important for your child than the outcome. Keep the process simple, and your child will enjoy it more.
- Set limits and stick to them. In our house, no one is allowed to wear Halloween costumes until Halloween. Although it's hard for the kids to wait, it's worth it. The anticipation builds, and Halloween lasts for a few hours instead of a whole week.

- You don't have to prove anything to anybody. Christmas is not a competition, a Seder is not a cooking contest, a birthday doesn't need to be a blowout...

- Celebrate small blessings and offbeat occasions. Once we take the pressure off ourselves to do things in a big way, we find more reasons to celebrate life's little moments.... Hot summer days suggest impromptu lemonade parties. For children, every day holds potential for celebration and ceremony—the first day of spring, the first snowfall, the harvest moon. A song, a poem read aloud, a ritual or a special snack—it doesn't take much to create a celebration that affirms life and connects us to the natural order of things: animals, wind, sky and earth.

*In simplicity there is freedom—freedom to do less and to enjoy more.*



## Child's Play is No Commodity

by Trice Atchison, Parent-Toddler Teacher

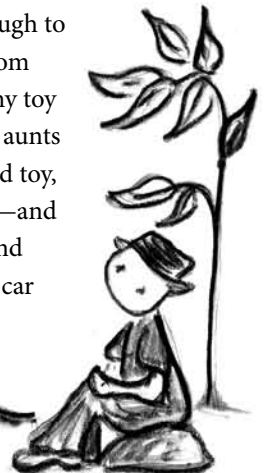
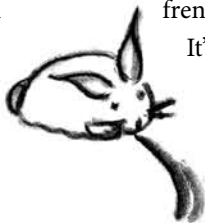
A *New York Times* editorial, *Child's Play*, from August 20, 2007, commented on the anxiety that erupted in response to news about lead paint and dangerous magnets from China, “toymaker of the world” and predominant supplier of every toy store chain in the US. In response to this news, many parents lamented, What about Christmas?

The editorial asks, “Could it really be that something as abstract and elemental as fun—child's play!—has been so commodified and consumerized that a handful of cutthroat manufacturers...could cast serious doubt on whether our children will have any?...Parents are in distress, but there may be an answer that is better than despair and less expensive than a wholesale conversion to an American-made inventory. It requires a leap of faith, a basic trust in our children's rubbery and hungry minds. Might it not be possible, for a young child...to fend off her inevitable molding into a loyal consumerist?...Maybe she doesn't need a talking dump truck or Barbie with the Malibu beach house. Let her flail on a saucepan with a wooden spoon. Give her paper and crayons. Let her play to her own narrative...”

Wise words, indeed, during a season that, too often, can be filled with frenzied purchasing, giving and receiving. It's all the more reason to keep it simple, and to

reconnect with the essence of the “festivals of Light”—from Hanukkah and Advent, to the Winter Solstice and Christmas—that brighten and give meaning to this darkening time of year. Even as Waldorf parents, who so deeply value the imagination and self-determination our children bring to their play, we struggle with the onslaught of stuff that seeps into our lives, and theirs. Sometimes in an effort to be “less materialistic,” we break the bank on too many high-quality, ecologically sound and aesthetically pleasing toys from “Waldorf approved” catalogs. Less is more, even in this category, giving our children a chance to really notice and appreciate—to love—the wonderful playthings that enter their lives. And as Rudolf Steiner once said, the best toys are 10 percent toy and 90 percent imagination.

The editorial ends with more sage advice, easy enough to carry out without much protest (or even notice) from children once the quicksilver novelty of a new flashy toy has faded: “And if kindly grandparents, uncles and aunts insist on bestowing the latest and shiniest processed toy, smile and be grateful—it's the thought that counts—and put it out later with the recyclables: the warranty and instruction booklet with the paper, and the doll or car with the plastic. But save the cardboard box.”



# The Christmas Doll

*by Somer Serpe, Nursery Teacher*

*One way to create more meaning and magic in our children's lives is to weave a story around their special gifts and beloved holidays. Last year, I created and told this story to my two girls every day during the week leading up to Christmas. To their great delight, two special Christmas dolls were waiting for them under the tree that year!*

There was once a child who lived with his mother in a little village in a far away land. The mother and child were very poor and had not much to eat and very little clothing, for the mother was unable to find work that would allow her to provide for her child. So she went out into the village streets each day and begged for enough food to put on the table. In this village, there were many other mothers with children who could not find a way to make a living. Much time passed and when it looked as if there were no hope, an angel came down to the village and started a school for the children. The poor children were happy in this school for they learned to work and play together. They baked bread, sang songs and listened to wonderful stories about far off places.

While the children were in school, the angel gave the mothers in the village soft cloth and wool and showed them how to make beautiful dolls for children. The mothers learned how to sew and

knit so they could make colorful clothes for the dolls. Soon there were many wonderful dolls with beautiful dresses, handsome trousers and soft sweaters, slippers and hats. The children were proud of their mothers' fine work and would often come after school to help dress the dolls and put them to bed when they were done. Each doll was special and no two were alike. When many dolls had been made, the angel told the children about a far away land where there were children just like them who would take care of the special dolls and give them homes. This made the children happy and they helped the angel carefully wrap up the dolls so that they could be taken to the waiting children. The mothers were given money for their hard work and they continued to make beautiful dolls while their children happily played at school.



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## Giving Thanks for our School Community

*By Kathi Weinstein, Enrollment Director*

The holiday season evokes many thoughts. In this rushed world of ours, these thoughts often relate to the “to do” list of all the preparations we call upon ourselves to accomplish. Whether it is baking, cooking, attending holiday parties, shopping for the perfect gift, decorating our home or planning a trip during the school break, we tend not to spend enough time contemplating the joy, thanks and abundance we have in our lives. The same is true here at school. We become so lost in the myriad activities that mark the school year that we often do not take the time to acknowledge how it all happens.

Last year, with my arms full of boxes and bags I was carrying into a classroom, I came upon the classroom door only to discover that I had no hand available to open it. At the nearby water fountain, a student, Logan Malik—without missing a beat—paused from his drink to open the door for me. I thanked him for his courtesy and later interrupted Mr. Sansone's lesson to acknowledge Logan for the wonderful manners I had just witnessed. I said to his class and teacher, “I caught Logan doing something good!”

During the first few months of school, I have caught many parents doing something good for our school, and wish to acknowledge as many of you as possible in these pages. I know all too well that these first few months of school are a succession of never-ending requests to donate time, talent and treasures. The Holiday Handcraft Fair presents numerous opportunities to get involved; throughout the year the school also seeks volunteers to help in the gardens, make soup, bake for an event, join a committee, buy Scrip, donate to the annual appeal, chaperone a class event, or lead the school as a trustee. And the list continues. The contribution of so many people's experience and skills helps the school to grow and flourish. The participation and practical expertise of parents in business, finance, real estate, publicity, management, administration, architecture, construction, fundraising, and so much more help to make our school a success.

The Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School is blessed when it comes to the participation and display of generosity of our parents. I hesitate to name any of you since, no doubt, I will forget someone, so please forgive me in advance if I left you out (but do let me know!). Your work is indeed neither unnoticed nor

unappreciated. In acknowledging the many feats of volunteerism I've witnessed, it is hard to think of anything during this time of year not associated with our annual Holiday Handcraft Fair. Too numerous to acknowledge individually are the hosts of parents who bake, knit, craft, decorate, sew, solicit, organize, recruit, cook, create and donate to our fair. Under the leadership of fair chair Maria Black, the fair representatives have once again performed their magic in organizing the school's major fun- and fund-raising event. Thank you to fair reps Kate Banks, Valerie Maynard, Susan Cooper, Gabrielle Senza, Tyler Malik, Alison Abrams, Janie LaBrasca, Margo Davis-Hollander, Liz Greene, Anna Stanton, Andy Goldman, Paul Pitman and Toby Stanton.

I also acknowledge the parents and alumni parents who have taken on leadership and fiduciary responsibilities for the school as trustees, serving in this capacity for the sustenance and growth of our school. Thank you, Erik Bruun, president, Max Dannis, vice-president, Cathy Fracasse, treasurer, Jonathan Baum, secretary, Ron Banks, Beth Caldwell, Mary Campbell, Gary Casarsa, Bernie Plishtin and Michael Thomas for your unwavering support.

Committees are the lifeblood of our community as they provide the ideas, hands and hearts to support the mission of our school. Thank you to the parents who have joined forces with our trustees and faculty to serve on various committees: Leslie Bissaillon, Gary Shalan, Faye DiVecchio, Simeon Joffe, Curtis Jones and Daniel Seitz.

The Parent Association, which takes on the task of parent leadership, nudges, encourages and communicates with our parents. This group consists of some of the busiest parents in our school community who also manage to accomplish tasks, both small and large, that benefit our school. Thank you to all: Lou Serpe, Christine Casarsa, Tori and

Hurish Pajeski, Laurie Harrison, Amy Taylor, Carla Blades, Judith Blak, Sarah Flynn, Valerie Maynard, Heather Bellow, Brooke Redpath, Tyler Malik, Gabrielle Senza, Abbey Rogers-McKee, Sheila Silver-Feldman, Scott McFarland, Jennifer Van Sant, Diane Rossman, Anna Stanton, Laurel Graney, Fiona Sommer-deRis, Karen Hennessy and Kate Hixon.

Some of you support us through individual acts of service. An example of this is Helen Schiller, who diligently and creatively manages our school website. By the way, take a look at the new picture slideshow on the home page—[www.rudolfsteinerschool.org](http://www.rudolfsteinerschool.org)—and take the time to thank Helen.

Last but certainly not least is the spectacular group of individuals who contribute to this fine publication you are reading: *Mosaic*. Trice Atchison, editor, Monica Cleveland, designer, Greg Cherin, photographer, and Somer Serpe, liaison, combine expertise and numerous busy hours to create this publication that showcases our school, communicates our happenings and archives the best of our moments to share with family and friends.

This year as we celebrate Thanksgiving, please join me in giving thanks for this wonderful school community made up of dedicated teachers and staff, loving and helpful parents and joyful students!



photo by Greg Cherin

## Special Thanks to Greg Cherin, Photographer Par Excellence

Often hovering in the background or foreground of nearly every school event is Greg Cherin, father of Elinor Cherin in grade three. When *Mosaic* first began in 2005, Greg volunteered to become the official newsletter photographer, taking pictures at school events to use in *Mosaic* and on our website. Greg has a knack for capturing the true spirit of our children and school community. He is a master at finding just the right moment to record a child's smile, look of determination or artistic flourish. Even with his busy schedule as a professional photographer for illustrious publications and projects, Greg manages to attend as many school events as possible in order to archive these moments. He has donated hundreds of hours of his time, talent and funds to allow us a peek into a classroom so that we, too, can witness the awe and joy our students experience. Greg's efforts exemplify the dedication and support that sustains our efforts as a school. Thank you, Greg, for your hours of talented commitment.

# School Lunchbox Ideas

by Michelle DiSimone, parent

Lunch is a very important part of a child's day, giving them the fuel that they need to get through the rest of the day. In some cultures, lunch is a meal equivalent to our dinner, not only for the energy it provides, but also for digestive health (for proper digestion, it's best not to eat for three hours before you go to sleep). Here are just a few ideas to help give your child a nice healthy lunch, as well as suggestions for different type of eaters. I have included a few links to websites that sell different types of reusable lunch boxes, so you can also be environmental friendly when you

pack your child's lunch.

For my children, I often do my best to cook a nice big dinner in the evening and put some of it aside for their lunches for the next day. Recently, one of my son's friends said to him, "You always have the best lunch," to which Eli replied, "Just have your mom save some dinner from the night before and put it in your lunch." Sure enough, the next day, the classmate showed up with leftover dinner and was bursting to share his excitement with my son. I felt touched that my child helped influence a

healthier way of eating for his friend.

As you can tell by the lunch ideas I have suggested below, my children don't eat meat (they refuse, actually), but feel free to incorporate meat however it works for your child. Also, my children eat mostly organic foods, but I did not specify that here. I don't give them juice boxes because they can drink water at their school, and also because I don't want them to fill up on juice. These are just some of the things I give my kids when I don't have a chance to pack them leftovers from the night before.

## Lunches:

- Hard-boiled eggs
- Pasta with broccoli and tofu (or chicken, etc.) tossed in olive oil or butter
- Cream cheese and jam sandwiches (cut with cookie cutters for fun)
- Rice, beans, corn and cheese with corn chips (you can add sour cream and/or salsa)
- Bagel sandwich with cream cheese and cucumbers
- Wraps filled with your child's favorite cheese, veggies or meat
- Sliced cucumbers and carrots with a dip of choice (hummus or goddess dressing are a few ideas)
- Peanut butter (or almond butter), banana and honey sandwiches
- Maki rolls with assorted veggies: cucumbers, carrots, pickles, tofu, sprouts, and/or sesame seeds with tamari or ume (vinegar or plum paste—go light with this because it is strong)

## Snacks:

- Nori (torn or purchased in small strips)
- Crackers and cheese
- Yogurt and applesauce cups—buy a reusable dressing type container (to help reduce waste) and buy the large containers of yogurt and applesauce. Maybe you even make your own! For yogurt, you can mix in different flavors on different days—maple syrup, honey, jam, etc.
- Nuts
- Granola bars
- Organic string cheese
- Apple slices and almond butter
- Celery and peanut butter with raisins on top
- Waffle sandwich with nut butter and jam (you can use toasted frozen waffles or make your own and freeze)
- Mini muffins with fruit, nuts and/or oats
- Popcorn

Bon appetite!

*A version of this article originally appeared in the fall 2007 issue of the Berkshire Co-Op Market newsletter.*

## *Color Play: A Winter Mood*

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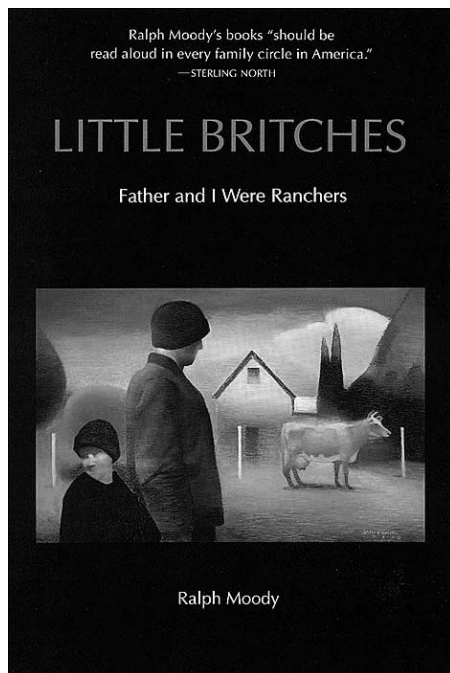
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Senta Reis is an accomplished artist with a BA in fine art, an MEd in creative arts in learning, and a certificate in anthroposophic painting, as well as extensive training in artistic therapy. She has also been a longtime Waldorf nursery and kindergarten teacher, a certified special education teacher, and has taught painting and artistic therapy at GBRSS, Sunbridge College, NY, and through studio classes and workshops for both children and adults. Don't miss this opportunity to enter into a world of creative expression with Senta.

# The Life and Times of the Moody Family: A Children's Book Review

by Alison Abrams, Bookkeeper and Educational Support Coordinator



Hardly a month goes by that someone in our family doesn't refer to a scene from the Ralph Moody children's book series we have been reading aloud for two years. Similar to the *Little House* series, these autobiographical books set in the early 1900's are filled with adventurous stories

of Ralph and his family as they homestead on a ranch in Colorado, adjust to city life outside of Boston, and eventually settle back out West.

Moody writes as he speaks in the colloquialism of the time, creating a sense that you are right there in the conversation as the characters speak. Our family relished the details of training horses, building rabbit hutches and devising strategies for maximizing one's profit when picking strawberries for work.

As Moody told an interviewer, "My goal in writing is to leave a record of the rural way of life in this country during the early part of the twentieth century, and to point up the values of that era which I feel that we, as a people, are letting slip away from us."

*Little Britches* starts the series with Ralph at age eight, and continues with *Man of the Family*, where Ralph wrestles with becoming the head of the family after his father passes. The way the family works

together is an inspiration and also gives context for some great discussions about moral choices and the sticky dilemma of the whether the means always justify the end.

All eight books in the series are worthy models of excellent writing with well-developed resourceful characters, vivid language and inspiration. If your family likes to "live" in a book series and return to them again and again, stop by Matrushka and pick up *Little Britches* to start a wonderful journey.

The books tell the story of Ralph Moody's life chronologically:

1. *Little Britches*
2. *Man of the Family*
3. *The Home Ranch*
4. *Mary Emma & Company*
5. *The Fields of Home*
6. *Shaking the Nickel Bush*
7. *The Dry Divide*
8. *Horse of a Different Color*

Happy reading to all!

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## Way to Go, GBRSS!

by Krista Palmer, Athletics Director

Our 2007 girls' soccer team at the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School had an exciting season. We were happy to have Kaylee Bellamy from ninth grade at the Great Barrington Waldorf High School join us and, at times, girls from our sixth grade class. This team experienced a tremendous change in their play, shifting dramatically from holding back to "taking charge." The season highlight was the Berkshire Country Day School tournament, where we played in double overtime for third place. At the end of a very well-played game, the score was still

one-to-one against Salisbury Central. Although third place went to Salisbury because they had won GBRSS one-to-zero earlier in the day, everyone at the tournament—referees, the other teams, and coaches—congratulated our players and commended them on a strong finish that left their "hearts on the field." Their greatest achievement was in working together. Well done, girls!

The boys' team faced a challenging season as a younger group—seven sixth-graders, five seventh-graders and three eighth-graders—began the important task of

pulling together as a team. I was always impressed with the boys' ability to bounce back no matter what and to let their love of soccer pull them back into play. With each game, they became more confident, skilled and team-oriented and are sure to finish the season stronger—not only as a soccer team, but as classmates. I trust that they will play with all their heart and skill at their upcoming Berkshire Country Day tournament!

Thank you to all of our fans for supporting the players this fall!

# The Image of the Human Being

by Paul Margulies

*The following article was adapted from: At Home in the Universe: The Afterword, Anthroposophic Press, Inc., 2000. It previously appeared in the Spring 2007 issue of the Anthroposophical Prison Outreach Newsletter. Paul Margulies' article gives hope to us all that we have within our power the ability to transform ourselves through diligent striving toward a higher sense of what it means to be a human being.*

How we view ourselves determines, to a great extent, how we behave. The psychiatrist C.J. Jung once said, "We are all slaves of our own self-image." How often do we excuse our actions with the thought, "oh well, it is just human nature"... [Yet] human nature is incredibly complex with many opposing forces coming into play. Human beings are capable of infinite transformation. And it is just this that distinguishes us from animals. Human beings can change, animals can't.

What does it mean to be fully human if not that we create our own worth? If I am driven to a conscientious act by some biological imperative, why should I care? Unless we adopt values on a conscious level, what possible meaning can my life have?...[In Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy there are] indications for a path of development of consciousness that would recover for us the sources of meaning that can bring us to the reality, the experience, of Jung's archetype. This developed consciousness lifts itself from ordinary objective self-consciousness to...higher levels called...imagination, inspiration and intuition...

In anthroposophy, Rudolf Steiner teaches us that the human being is composed of body, soul and spirit. The distinction between soul and spirit is one of the main contributions of anthroposophy to an understanding of the human being...[In AD 869,] the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople decreed that the human being was essentially body and soul, the soul having some attributes of the spirit, thus banishing the spirit from the human being. Today the tendency is to deny the existence of the soul all together, limiting the human being to "body." With this view, our entire life of consciousness and feeling is seen as epiphenomena of the body,

electrical nerve impulses responding to stimuli in the environment.

Anthroposophy understands body, soul and spirit as interdependent. . . . and also interpenetrating. . . . It helps to see the body as providing the sense organs for the consciousness of the soul, and the limbs to carry out the intentions of the spirit. The soul mediates between body and spirit, bringing information about the physical world to the spirit through its experiences. The soul is the place of our feeling life, essentially sympathy and antipathy. Think of longing and you come close to pure soul. Follow this longing thoughtfully and you will experience it poised between body and spirit. Through instinct and sense perception, the soul works through body. Through thinking, the soul expresses the spirit. The soul is individual, particular, personal. The spirit is universal, ideal, eternal. The spirit is expressed primarily in thinking, especially the kind of thinking that is capable of giving direction to the soul and body toward that which it recognizes as ideal: truth, goodness, and beauty, for example, if we can get past the clichés or mere abstractions. Real thinking, pure thinking, the spirit, has a transformative effect. Insofar as the soul is immersed in sense perception and unexamined impulses, it lives in the transient world. It is concerned only with itself. When the soul turns to thinking and ideals, it touches the eternal. Real thinking is universal. The will in our thinking is our own. It is true that when the soul is concerned with the mundane and utilitarian, the thoughts about these things seem cold and abstract compared to the rich life of feelings. But the opposite is true of thoughts that lead to higher levels of existence.

[Rudolf Steiner said,] . . . Our loftiest feelings are not the ones that happen by themselves, but the ones achieved through strenuous and energetic thinking. . . . Through thinking, we are led beyond our own personal lives; we acquire something that extends beyond our own souls. . . . We seek the truth in our soul. . . .

Real thinking is imbued with both will and feeling. Real thinking is the starting point for anthroposophy ("a path of cognition") and this distinguishes it from most other paths to the spirit.



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### CONTACT

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# SCHOOL CALENDAR

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## November

- Nov 1 Thurs. 6th Grade Co-ed Soccer & Boys Soccer (Away)  
Nov 2 Fri. Day of the Dead (5th grade)  
Nov 5 Mon. Deadline for Ski Forms Due  
5th Grade Class Night, 7:30 p.m.  
Nov 7 Wed. 8th Grade Class Night, 7:30 p.m.  
Nov 8 Thur. Thursday Parent-Toddler Autumn Session Ends  
Early Childhood Lantern Walk, 5 p.m.  
Nov 9 Fri. Fair Set-up, No School  
Nov 10 Sat. Holiday Handcraft Fair, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Nov 12 Mon. After-school Basketball Program Begins  
Nov 13 Tues. Paul Margulies Study Group, 7:30 p.m.  
6th Grade Class Night, 7:30 p.m.  
Nov 14 Wed. Parent Association (PA) Meeting, 7 p.m.  
Nov 15 Thur. Tea and Tour for Prospective Families, 9 a.m.  
1st Grade Class Night, 7:30 p.m.  
Nov 16 Fri. Friday Parent-Toddler Autumn session ends  
Nov 18 Sun. All School Fall Recital\*, 4:00 p.m.  
Nov 21 Wed. Thanksgiving Assembly\*, 11 a.m. (Parents Invited)  
Thanksgiving Vacation Begins, 12 noon  
(No Aftercare Program)  
Nov 26 Mon. Classes Resume

- Nov 27 Tues. Paul Margulies Study Group, 7:30 p.m.  
GBWHS Open House at the High School, 7:30 p.m.  
Nov 28 Wed. Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.  
4th Grade Class Night, 7 p.m.

## December

- Dec 2 Sun. Early Childhood/Nursery Advent Garden, 3:30 p.m.  
Early Childhood Kindergarten Advent Garden,  
4:30 p.m.  
Dec 5 Wed. "Conversations With..." Morning Talk, 8:30 a.m.  
Dec. 7 Fri. Parent Education Lecture, 7:30 p.m.  
Dec 11 Tues. Paul Margulies Study Group, 7:30 p.m.  
Dec 12 Wed. Parent Association (PA) Meeting, 7 p.m.  
Dec 21 Fri. Holiday Assembly,\* 11 a.m. (Parents Invited)  
Holiday Vacation Begins, 12 noon

\*Assembly dress

*Next Issue of MOSAIC  
Deadline for submissions:  
November 30, 2007*



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