

Messenger

Summerfield | WALDORF SCHOOL AND FARM

March 17, 2016

Volume 27, Issue 7

OUR ANNUAL FUNDRAISER ~ SATURDAY, MAY 21, 2016, 4-11PM

~ 2016 DINNER & AUCTION ON THE FARM ~

Farm to Feast A COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

By Cyndi Yoxall, Development Director



When I started working here six years ago, Farm to Feast was a very different event than it is today. Instead of 350 guests, there were 120 guests, who paid \$250 a plate to enjoy an exclusive meal at intimate round tables on the farm. We had the same spectacular chefs and wine makers, but with formal plated dinner service. Volunteers were expected to stay out of sight as much as possible, and could not attend any portion of the event. Music was minimal if at all and the event ended after dessert—late night music and dancing was not a consideration. It was beautiful and exclusive, but many parents could not afford to attend or felt it was designed only for major donors. The concept was brilliant, the bones had been built, but there was room for improvement.

Five years ago we decided to change the format to include as many members of our community as possible, at an affordable price,

as well as invite businesses from the local community to participate. We invited our faculty for free and opened our minds and hearts to include everyone—major donors, friends, family, businesses, musicians, teachers, staff... all of us. With our dedicated team of chefs, vintners, lead volunteers and community, we re-visioned the event, took a chance and had faith. It was a bit scary for our Development team—would we still reach our goal and raise what we needed? Could we pull off an event this big?

And now here we are, raising more each year with a sold-out event that enables us to gather, celebrate and fundraise together. We honor our teachers, partner with local businesses, taste food from local farmers and our own farm here on campus, enjoy local music, and share stories from our students, founders or current parents. We laugh, we sip, we taste, we talk, we listen, we dance, we pitch in, we stand together, we sit together, we enjoy together and make it happen together. Farm to Feast brings us together, lifts us up and gives us room to feel our community.

We look forward to working with you and being with you on May 21, 2016. We hope you will continue to participate and appreciate this gift that we share.

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Important Dates:

Circus Waldissima

YOUTH: CHARLIE & THE CHOCOLATE STATUE
Saturday, March 19 at 2pm

ADVANCED: ETHOS: THE HEART OF COMMUNITY
Saturday, March 19 at 7pm
Sunday, March 20 at 2pm

Morning on the Farm: for 3 to 5-year-olds

Saturday, April 16, 10-11:30am

Annual May Faire Celebration

Friday, May 6, 1:30-5:30pm, SWSF campus

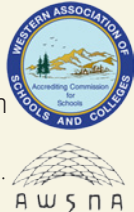
Farm to Feast Dinner & Auction

Saturday, May 21, 4-11pm, SWSF Farm

Accreditation Update!

We are delighted to report that Summerfield's fall accreditation visit has resulted in full accreditations from both WASC and AWSNA.

WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) awarded our school a six-year term with a one-day revisit in year three, through 2022. AWSNA (Association of Waldorf Schools, North America) has given a full seven-year term with a revisit, through 2023.



The process of dual accreditation is complicated, but one we have great appreciation for—feedback from our colleagues, from both Waldorf and traditional schools, allows us to be our best, share ideas, and improve upon our offerings. These accreditations are essential for continued acceptance of our high school curriculum by colleges and universities worldwide, giving our students, families, and our greater community a model of education striving for excellence.

~ Heather Concoff, on behalf of the Accreditation Leadership Team

A Note from Governance Council

The Governance Council would like to acknowledge the diligent work undertaken by the Summerfield faculty and staff who guided our accreditation renewal. In particular, our gratitude is extended to Heather Concoff, Jamie Lloyd, Cathy Torres, Andrea Trinei, Beth Weisburn, and Sarah Whitmore. Your hard work has resulted in stellar accreditation reports from both WASC and AWSNA. Thank you!

~ Catherine Schlager, for the Governance Council

Cleaning Up Our Creek

By Kai Hensley, Class Eight

The eighth grade just finished a four-week community service project cleaning up the creek next to Summerfield. When Mrs. MacKinnon announced we would be doing creek clean-up, I felt excited because it was different from anything we had done before and we were going to get to be in nature.

Every Wednesday for four weeks, our class put on their rain boots and walked over to the creek to meet Stephanie Lennox, Environmental Educator from the Creek Stewardship Program, Santa Rosa Water Agency. We split up into pairs and Stephanie gave each pair a clipboard with a list of trash, a trash bag and a grabber. She directed us to the part of the creek we would focus on each time and we started collecting trash, marking off items on the list as we collected them.

I was surprised at how much garbage was in the creek—the most common items were related to food consumption: food and candy wrappers, drink cans and plastic bottles, plastic and paper grocery

bags. The largest item we found was part of a couch! There were flotillas of garbage and I felt badly for the animals that live in the creek. During our clean-up my partner, Aidan Kelly, and I found a western pond turtle and a fresh water eel living amongst the trash.



We weighed the amount of trash collected at the end of each day and by the end of the four weeks, our class collected 160 pounds of trash from the creek! Aidan and I, having picked up the heavier items and enjoying the friendly competition, collected 120 pounds.

We learned that most of the trash in the creek actually comes from the street and flows into the creek through storm drains. It's important that people realize littering on the street will eventually find its way into our creeks. Our class was able to accomplish a lot in a short amount of time. It felt good to help nature and was extremely fun at the same time. I hope this will inspire others to participate in creek clean-ups and not to litter.

May Faire Planning to Begin!

by Andrea Jolicoeur, LS Secretary

Summerfield's annual May Faire will be held on Friday, May 6. The festivities start during the school day with 1st-12th graders decorating head wreaths followed by dancing around the May Pole. After the school day is over, we will have a Faire on the track field with games, activities, crafts, food, treats and more.

We are soliciting your creative energy! **Faire planning meetings will be held every Tuesday at 8:30am in the Music/Aftercare Room** starting on March 22 and continuing up to the Faire (with 2 weeks off for Spring Break). First and second grades are assigned to organize the Faire and will work to plan and coordinate the Faire, but anyone and everyone interested in May Faire is invited to attend the meetings! Grades 1-11 will all organize some kind offering for the Faire, and a representative for each class is asked to attend some of the planning meetings.

Past festivals have included flower garland-making, live music, games, races, crafts, animals, a meal, and strawberry shortcake. Besides your class's activity, parents will be needed to donate flowers and greenery for décor and garlands, and to assist with parking, decorating, and clean-up, etc. Look for more details in upcoming weekly Minis and the next Messenger, and please contact me if you have any questions or can offer a helping hand. *~andrea@summerfieldwaldorf.org 575-7194 ext.101*



PHOTO BY MIGUEL SALMERÓN

On Board the Balclutha

At the end of January, Class Seven set off to San Francisco in a state of high anticipation—we were soon to walk up the gang plank of the “Balclutha” as green crew to be quickly trained to sail a three-masted schooner up to Oregon! That was the story that wove throughout our short but intense experience on board. The staff on this ship are enlightened educators as well as sailors, and guided the children through a rigorous, well-designed program intended to wake them up their ability to learn both independently and to work cooperatively in groups. Many were the “Parzival” moments when they hesitated to ask the question that would help them, and thankfully, many the times when they gathered the courage to face up to the unknown. Everyone came away with a feeling of deep accomplishment, satisfaction and exhaustion!

~ Laura Sternik, Class Seven Teacher



Ms. Sternik’s seventh grade class went back in time to 1906 aboard the Balclutha, a large historical sailing vessel docked at Hyde Street Pier in San Francisco.

After arriving at the dock, we met Melvin Foster, the ship’s goofy but friendly second mate. He was looking to hire new sailors, because the previous crew were helping to put the fires in the city out left from the devastating earthquake.

After we all signed up for the job and came aboard, we met the first mate, Mr. Hershel, who was strict and orderly, unlike Melvin. Mr. Hershel was very upset to see so many “green hands”—new and inexperienced sailors. Because of this, we got a quick lesson on how to be a sailor. We learned how to report in, acknowledge orders, and basic safety rules, as well as sailor vocabulary. For example, ‘Avast!’ meant stop, and ‘Aye’ meant yes.

Then it was time to meet the captain. Mr. Hershel had us line up in our various crews—the Deckhand, Boat, Bo’sun, Rigger, and Galley crews. Each of the five crews would be responsible for certain tasks aboard the Balclutha.

The captain was strict like Mr. Hershel but not as loud. Instead of getting angry at Melvin for hiring us, he pointed out that we had signed a contract saying that we would work for him for one year, and it was too late to turn back. Shortly after, we split up and got to work.

The Deckhand crew swabbed the deck. They also raised the ensign flag. The Boat crew hoisted a boat in and out of the water. The Bo’sun crew measured the depth of the water. The Rigger crew hauled ropes, and the Galley crew made us dinner, which was called “lobscouse stew.”

We worked until supper, and after that we had dogwatch. Dogwatch was when we went below decks and told stories to each other. Then the crazy cook, Pepper,

came and delivered some mail from home. The captain told her to “collect the money and burn the rest,” but we all realized

it was from our parents and we stopped him. Then it was time for bed and nightwatch.

Nightwatch lasted two hours per shift. During nightwatch, each crew was expected to write in a journal about the experience so far.

We were all woken up at 5:30am by the Galley crew banging pots in our faces. Breakfast was oatmeal with raisins. After that, the Deckhand crew raised the ensign and everyone else sang a sea shanty. Then we packed up our things and prepared to leave.

Although it was tiring, this trip taught us what life might have been like aboard a ship in 1906, how to work on a ship, and cooperation.

~ Madison Yeary, Class Seven



The Majestic Balclutha — a poem by Lola Myers, Class Seven

The light became fiery red settling over the majestic boat as it rocked lightly in the waves.
I taste the salty spray of the midnight-blue water lapping on the side of the swaying boat.
Imagine the smell of food wafting out of the galley...
You hear the clanging of pots and pans as the hearty meal of stew is being prepared.



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL YEARY

Clowning into Authenticity

By Ben Mew, High School Teacher

As a new High School teacher at Summerfield, I've been exposed to a diversity of mentors, ideas, questions, and perspectives that truly inspire my life and my work. One of the most unusual was an all-too-short weekend at a Clown Character Development Workshop in San Francisco that I attended with two other students from the Center for Educational Renewal. I was amazed at how applicable clowning was to teaching!

The workshop was small and intimate. A white floor and black-and-white wall of curtains formed the stage. Bird sounds wafted in through large windows behind the chairs in the audience. Christina Lewis, a spry grey-haired clown-teacher of fifteen years, and director of the Clown School of San Francisco, warmly welcomed us into the space. She began with an invitation to play, turning on some French accordion music, throwing colorful scarves into the air and gesturing.

Clowning is an incredibly physical experience. Most clowns don't talk, or if they do, it's in gibberish, so all manner of feelings and ideas are transmitted via body language. As Christina put it, "My friends all ask me, 'Do you work out?' and I say, 'No... I clown.'" We played together, huffing and puffing, sweating and

taking water breaks as we explored our environment and ourselves, learning to embody our unique clown characters.

Clowns, of course, are funny! They express those truthful things

that we think we can't say or do publicly. Bringing humor into the classroom when things go wrong, or when the students are being clowns themselves, or whenever it feels right, keeps the learning alive. Of course, teaching is serious work. It's a lot of responsibility being in charge of a young person's education, but, if we get too serious, learning becomes a deadening chore. Our lives are too darn amazing to let learning die from unhelpful notions of "importance!" Using humor to engage with students not only builds relationships, but also keeps the material living and breathing. Humor keeps the content light and digestible.

A clown is constantly improvising, always observing and responding in the present moment. As a teacher, being able to "go with the flow" is essential. You never know what the students will be up to next and you have to be able to respond with open engagement. We want a certain liveliness in class to help create a learning environment that encourages students' questions and thoughts. Sometimes that means unplanned digressions from the curriculum (*gasp)! Improvisation is necessary to maintain a balance between student-lead inquiry and the teacher's agenda.

It's truly amazing the kinds of ideas and feelings that can be communicated through body language, and even gibberish. Similar to a kindergartener's play, physically acting out an imagination can be useful in the classroom. Embodying ideas can help crystalize concepts for the students. Hand gestures, strutting through the class, and generally moving through space can help kinesthetic learners

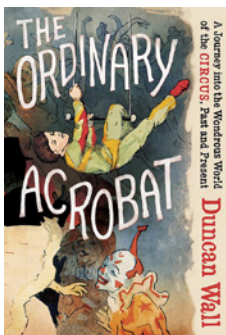


BEN (FRONT ROW, CENTRE) & FELLOW WORKSHOP CLOWNS

engage and absorb the material. Also, when you can't take the time to have individual conversations, reading body language becomes useful in keeping a class engaged. Gibberish, when done well, can be truly moving. It is basic, primal, universal emotive sound. Clear word choice in combination with this emotive sound can truly enrich a teacher's speech.

But, what most excited me about clowning, and what made it seem like a sustainable art form, was that the humor, improvisation, physical engagement, and gibberish all stem from a place of profound authenticity. The Way of the Clown is, fundamentally, about being vulnerable, honest, and present, which lies at the heart of a Waldorf education and at the heart of a healthy culture. We want our children, and, ideally, all human beings, to know and to love themselves, and to have the courage to wholeheartedly share their truth. Using authentic absurdity, sharing our selves through exaggerated physicality, clowning cultivates a culture of fearlessness, enabling free and truthful expression, as well as deep listening.

The clown-like way of "agenda-less-ness," which has everything to do with "being present," is an ideal practice for growing relationships because without an underlying agenda, there is no judgment, and thus it is easier for students to open up. If I approach a student with an "I know better than you" attitude, usually students shut down and an honest exchange is not



IN THE COURSE OF RESEARCH FOR THIS ARTICLE, BOTH THE AUTHOR AND EDITOR VERY MUCH ENJOYED THIS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED BOOK ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE CIRCUS, DUNCAN WALL'S *THE ORDINARY ACROBAT*

achieved. Living into the present moment, a clown gives honest feedback, which is sometimes positive and reinforcing, and other times discerning and critical. As teachers, we are cultivating warmth and openness with students on one hand, and discipline on the other. These are not mutually exclusive activities! But it is not always easy. In the long run, students learn to create their own structure, their own habits and disciplines, which facilitate their own authentic expression in the world.

As teachers, we are constantly giving students feedback, be it in the form of grades, conversations, written feedback, or even just a look or a gesture. We must be able to see the student clearly and respond honestly with our own reflections. This is exactly what a clown does. Clowns see someone or something with open, non-judgmental eyes and respond with their own truth, albeit exaggerated. And the beautiful thing is: clowns are not afraid of how they might respond. All feelings are available to express and they fearlessly express them. This openness to emotions and ideas allows clowns (and teachers) to observe more clearly, to really hear the students. When unafraid of feelings or ideas, there is no impulse to shy away or to ignore. A true clown can remain present through even the most painful or uncomfortable feelings. Being empathic creatures, when we confront a student about anything that might make them feel uncomfortable, like missing work or their attitude in class, we feel that discomfort as well. It's necessary to engage even if the situation is uncomfortable.

Central to the Way of the Clown is the art of listening. Teachers and clowns alike must be able to listen and observe openly, without judgment. This practice of clear-seeing is truly at the heart of a Waldorf education. If the teachers can cultivate this cultural practice, students will not only have role models to emulate, they will be seen for who

they really are. The feedback loop is powerful when students, teachers, and parents practice in this way. We all have neural networks in the brain that mimic what we observe in other humans, and even animals. These mirror neurons correlate with empathic connection. When an entire community practices the art of fearless listening and honest feedback, we cultivate empathy and our collective trust grows. Our school's culture grows stronger and more loving.

Summerfield, as an educational institution and a collection of thoughtful individuals, is working to continue the cultural evolution of our interrelated, human community. Being present and

honest with others and with oneself is, I believe, a practice that lies at the heart of any healthy culture or holistic education. It opens the doors to relationship and to deepening connections, which are the life-sustaining threads holding us all together. As a teacher, I hold this work at the center, no matter the subject, and do my best to clown my way into an authentic culture within the classroom and beyond.

A former Farm apprentice, Ben is currently enrolled in the Center for Educational Renewal teacher-training program held at Summerfield. He teaches Algebra, and Earth Sciences (Geology and Geography) in the High School.

The Value of Clowning

The Messenger spoke with veteran Waldorf educator Don Basmajian to get his perspective on how the art of clowning might help a Waldorf teacher...

Don: I see its value most clearly in dealing with the temperaments. Teachers all know that working with the temperaments is very important and most frequently manifests in how they treat Stories. But it needs to go further. Important soul-work for a teacher is to embody the different temperaments. Steiner even spoke about the danger that, if a teacher is too one-sided in the temperament they exhibit in the classroom, it manifests as an illness for the child in later life.

And I see this too in observations I've done in many schools: I'll ask a teacher afterwards what temperament were you exhibiting in that lesson, and every time the eventual answer will be, "I'm phlegmatic in the classroom."

But, if we play with the temperaments, the classroom is much lighter and there's a different feeling. Temperaments are in the etheric, but if we play with the temperament in a lesson, we create a breathing of the soul. And clowning, or even just the concept of clowning, can really help with bringing levity as a balance to gravity.

An example from the younger grades... a student returns from a bathroom break and accidentally lets the door slam as he re-enters the classroom. Rather than admonish the child for the loud interruption, a teacher might ask aloud, "What about the door? He's very upset. He's crying... Who can help the door?" [The teacher might go up to the door, and pet it, for instance] Instantly, the class, in this case first graders, are living right into this new moment of imagination. There's a lightness and warmth in a place where there might have been reproach and guilt.

As teachers, we're very good about being serious. The harder challenge is to keep lightness in the classroom. Rudolf Steiner spoke of twelve senses rather than the well-accepted five. I think there are two additional senses which are the most important ones—common sense and a sense of humor!



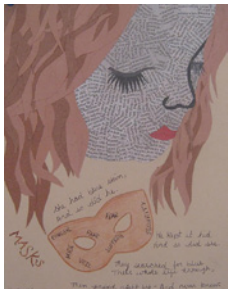
PHOTO BY MIGUEL SALMERÓN

Mirror, Mirror, Off the Wall

HIGH SCHOOLERS ENGAGE WITH QUESTIONS OF EMPOWERMENT

Interview with Molly Sierra, HS Humanities and Spanish Teacher

Born out of a realization in last year's Civics class that students had a burning desire to discuss many issues that didn't fall easily into the curriculum, the High School faculty tried a new experiment this year, offering an elective with an intended goal of educating students about topics such as body image, gender profiling and media literacy. The aim was to help foster better communication skills, respect for other viewpoints, and greater self-awareness, while tackling questions such as "How can we explore a healthy sense of identity within a media-led culture?", "What does a healthy relationship look like?", "How can we imagine who we want to be as adults?" and "What are the Masks we wear as we live our lives?" Further, it was intended that the course be very much student-led, with class content determined by whatever was most 'alive' for the participants. The class was called Empowerment, and just ended last week. Messenger editor Adam MacKinnon spoke with Molly Sierra about how it went and what was learned.



What framework did you have going into the class?

As a faculty, we had been looking at the question of how infused are our lessons with our own intentions,

motives and personality? And, how can we create a classroom environment in which students can make clear their own questions?

The idea for this specific class came from a student who saw a need for high schoolers to look at self-empowerment: what it means to be a young person in the world in the midst of pressures felt from the surrounding media culture. And, our intent was to hold a space for the students and allow them to determine what they wanted to examine.

The elective attracted a large amount of students: we had a class of twenty-five, the majority of whom were eleventh graders. A very kind donation was made by Summerfield parents Jessica Congdon and Eric Holland, editors and composers of the films, *Miss Representation* and *The Mask You Live In*. These films became the starting points for what became very wide-ranging discussions.

This sounds like a deeply personal type of experience to share with a class.

We began by making a joint promise that the space we were trying to create would be one where students could be vulnerable

with each other, with the goal of learning and growing. The students worked within an agreement that what happened in class would be held and shared only within that group.

How did the students respond to the films?

They prompted an enormous amount of discussion. The *Mask* film, which deals with the ways we use masks as a means of self protection, was very moving and eye-opening for the boys in particular. Several approached me afterwards to express the way in which they were moved by the film with reflections such as, "I never knew other guys felt that way."

Both films examined language—words that are commonly used, and how they have different meanings in different contexts. This led to some frank discussions, and set parameters for the class of walking on the edge a little bit. Students came up with a number of questions as the basis for individuals to bring projects to the group.

Can you share an example?

One student wanted to ask "What does privilege really mean?" She brought an exercise called a Privilege Walk: we went out to the basketball court and each took one step either forward or backward in answer to various questions, for example, "Take a step forward if you can walk in Sebastopol at night without feeling afraid?" or "If members of your gender are portrayed on TV in degrading roles, take one step backward."



By the end, with the initially straight line-up now so distorted, the students saw each other in contrast. They saw how even close friends could be split up, and it led to a rich discussion that lasted several weeks around what privilege really means and even to the degree in which the questions themselves can be seen as manipulative. It gave them a real sense of the effect of external constructs.

The class raised the question of whether all of those external constructs that we find ourselves navigating dictate what privilege is. Privilege is being able to be free in our choices of how we go through life. One eleventh grader suggested that even if one is imprisoned for life, one has freedom of thought. This brought forth a question for the whole class: is the highest privilege of all a human being's ability to think freely?

Through this discussion, the students came (on their own) to a strong awareness that the content of the technology around us is a conflicting force against our freedoms, so a grasp of media literacy was a recurring theme. And some in the class really recognized the effect of their habitual use of their own devices: How can I be a truly free living thing if I live habitually in relationship to technology? That was one big thread.

What about the artwork on the walls—was there artistic expression as well?

We invited a guest artist to show her performance art with a mask piece that was based on stereotypes women have to live with. This was a springboard for the students to respond creatively to themes and ideas raised in class.

A theme that many students explored in creative presentations was the idea that a person can gain a sense of self-awareness



by looking at the “masks” we might wear as a sense of self-protection within a greater community. They asked the question, “Who is the person beneath the mask?” One student created a dance piece that responded to the idea of what it means to be an empowered woman. Two students experimented with the idea that they would remove a mask and become vulnerable in front of the group by improvising a dance and piano piece together spontaneously. Students shared with the group in many ways, through poetry, visual art, and interviews with the greater community.

Another student wanted to address something deeply meaningful to him that had happened when he was younger, but because of the societal pressure to “man up” and not show emotions, he’d never been able to explore this with his classmates. His final project was to create a situation in which he was vulnerable in front of his classmates, and to that end, he made a short film with footage of him as a child. His intention: “I want to take off my mask in front of the group.”

What were the challenges of having such an open structure?

It certainly took a little warming up, until the students began to have an understanding of the space. At times, it felt risky for me as a teacher to leave such an open space, and I imagine risky for the students to express themselves in that space. Yet it was remarkable to see the way that they came forth and brought the things they wanted to discuss. Throughout the elective, I got feedback from the students, for example: “I’m really questioning ideas that I previously had”; “It’s uncomfortable, but I know change is uncomfortable.”

And do you think the elective was a success?

I’d say so. Students got to engage with the question of what empowerment is, and raised their self-awareness of what it means for them to be themselves despite the “masks” one can wear in school and in life.

Within the class there was definitely a sense of growth and transformation, practice taking initiative and experiencing freedom in self-expression: if we’re going to “send them forth in freedom,” then they need some practice!

Alumni News

An Interview with Christina Mallie by Cyndi Yoxall, Development Director

Christina Mallie (class of 2001) attended Summerfield from pre-school all through high school. She is the co-founder of Colors of Connection, a humanitarian organization that works on healing projects with youth worldwide, especially in war-torn areas, through the medium of community-created art. Her work has taken her to Liberia, Burkina Faso & the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



How did your Summerfield education prepare you for your work in the world?

Summerfield gave me a strong arts background that fostered my creativity. The curriculum also allowed me to explore my individual skills and interests which I think differs from the public school approach that treats students in a more uniform manner. I think this helped me to develop a career path I was truly interested in. I’ve noticed that other alumni have also taken less conventional paths in their careers and have created their own organizations and projects.

What inspired you to found Colors of Connection?

In 2011 I worked with a friend in post-war Liberia after college on what was supposed to be a 3-month project, but basically I left New York where I was living at the time and didn’t go back. Seeing the transformational possibilities of this project inspired us to start Colors of Connection. In Liberia in the remote town where I was working, arts training, including arts curriculum in schools, was almost non-existent. It further motivated us to facilitate art and art classes in areas of the world where youth and community can benefit from connecting and working together in meaningful ways.

Our organization has worked in refugee camps in Liberia, and Burkina Faso with refugees from the Ivory Coast and Mali. One challenge for refugees is that they are essentially starting off with nothing and the camps are run by people outside of their own culture. Although basic food and resources are provided, the camps lack history and expression of the identity of the refugees, elements that bond those in need and give a sense of hope and community. That’s where art comes in. The refugee camps are interesting areas for us as an arts organization to work in—to help to build community and establish and sense of identity for the refugees.

Are you able to measure the impact that is made through Colors of Connection?

The impact is hard to measure and is not on most people’s list of essential needs! Yet the impact feels huge in many ways: we see that our projects bring communities together; they create interesting and invaluable interactions; and they build resilience and give hope. With evaluation tools we just started using in our current project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we hope to contribute to growing research in the field of community arts and its contribution to the well-being of communities and individuals.

Are there ways interested students can help or be in touch?

I came to teach a class in the high school this year and am interested in returning



in the future to teach more Summerfield students. Any interested students are very welcome to get in touch as there are many ways to help our organization. Of course, traveling to Africa is not realistic given safety and supervision factors, but there are always other ways to help, even just spreading the word on our work and mission. My email is christina@colorsofconnection.org if you’d like to get in touch!

LEARN MORE AT COLORSOFCONNECTION.ORG

Marching into Spring on Summerfield Farm

By Farmer Dan

Have you ever known anyone looking back over their life from their deathbed to say, “I wish I would have spent more time on my computer” or “I sure wish I would have spent more time commuting to work” or “Gosh, I wish I could have spent more time at my office?” More likely they may have said “I wish I would have spent more time in my garden”... or with the love of my life, or at the beach, or with my children or grandchildren, or with my dogs or cats or horses. Or perhaps spent more time on Summerfield Farm, or any organic or biodynamic farm for that matter.

Not so very long ago, huge trucks rolled through the farmyard spewing diesel and kicking up dust as they brought in load after load of topsoil to construct the huge mounds for our new septic system, and the soil was compacted like rock as it hadn't rained for months. It was getting harder and harder to imagine cool rains falling and the garden pathways lush with fresh green grass and students breathing in the sweet breezes coming over across the



ocean to the farm from the west as the greenhouse hummed with seed-sowing activity. Then, almost magically, the winter *El Niño* rains swept over Sonoma County and the dry soil softened, and the landscape turned green again. Out on Point Reyes, the cattle were grazing alongside the deer on pastures enlivened with new growth. Fruit trees once again exploded into full bloom, kindergardeners were joyfully getting stuck in the mud on Summerfield farm, and the natural world once again seemed reinvigorated.

It happens over and over again and it is so healthy and essential and wonderful that our children can actually experience such magical transformations that they will savor for the rest of their lives. While they might not remember a given math lesson or science experiment, they will surely remember holding newborn lambs, brushing angora bunnies, drinking hot apple cider from apples they helped grow, pick and press, and gathering warm eggs from under free-range laying hens. The children may indeed forget what has been said during any given farming class, and they perhaps forget what may have been done in any given class, but children never seem to forget how an experience on the farm in springtime made them feel.

After a couple of months of light pasture growth and time spent in the barns, our three cows are also delighted to be back out on fresh pasture. A special treat has been wheelbarrows full of huge, bright

red fodder beets that the children have been digging out of the muddy fields, loading onto carts, and ferrying to the farm kitchen area to be topped and scrubbed in large tubs, often in the early morning misty rain, to be portioned out into the barnyard feeder at the morning and evening feeding times. While the beets are typically grown for fodder, or feed for cattle and sheep, when sliced they look amazingly similar to large lozenges of peppermint candy and when cut and diced into child-friendly, bite-sized portions it is not surprising how the little farmers are so quick to gobble them up almost as eagerly as the cows.



Another annual task taken up by the fourth graders has been the pruning of the roses that run along the farm field that borders the soccer field. The students have the monumental task of weeding, composting, and mulching the entire row of plants after a thorough pruning and removal of any blackberries that may have taken root inbetween the roses throughout last year's growing season. It is really quite amazing and inspiring how some of these younger students are so capable of finding just the right nodes at the right height to prune things back properly and to cut cleanly and efficiently. While their attention span is good for 20 or 30 minutes,

they then are happy to trade off to take up the weeding, raking, and hauling of compost and mulch. Their gift of hard and attentive work pays off later in the spring when there are fresh roses for the Kindergardeners to cut for bouquets for their classroom nature tables, as well as for Farm to Feast and end-of-the-year graduation celebrations, not to mention a colorful border for the vegetable field.

Competence is built up through a balance of freedom (sense of autonomy) and compliance. Students are often more capable than we might think they are, given the opportunity to experiment with different tools and expectations balanced with pedagogical understanding. Steiner understood “flexibility of soul” as a radical departure from habitual polarized views of life. Dynamic paths of knowing through flexibility of soul leads to trust in life. Striving to transform fixed unconscious beliefs into a dynamic path of knowing engenders this “flexibility of soul.” And trust in life is the prerequisite for building a personal relationship to an inspiring spiritual being. Now let’s see if you can apply these six sentences to pruning roses.

There is real joy and beauty within the gifts and challenges of working with kindergardeners through eighth graders on the farm. At times some students remind me of pewter with its lovely reluctance to shine, and other times they work in their chattering little clusters like butterflies that keep the air alive. Sometimes they overwhelm you with their love, and other times you have to love them for free. Each class on the farm never ceases to amaze me—the children have so many different ways of being beautiful.

A closing meditation from Rudolf Steiner for teachers (or anyone) to work towards:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. Clarity of thought | 4. Positivity |
| 2. Mastery of will | 5. Openness |
| 3. Equanimity of feeling | 6. Establishment of harmony among these five |

Warmly, from the rain-washed farmyard,
Farmer Dan

Welcome to Chelsey Kolbeck

Our newest addition to the Farm just took up residence. We asked farm apprentice Chelsey Kolbeck to introduce herself...

Coming from a small beach town in Southern California, I grew up surfing before class and coaching



swim at the YMCA. After high school, I spent a few years exploring Utah and Colorado, climbing, hiking, biking, snowboarding.

I fell in love with Sonoma county about five years ago, finding adventure, inspiration, community, and home here. While working as an advocate, paralegal, and case manager for foster youth, I found SRJC Shone Farm and worked for their CSA. I am part of their Tiny House Club too and am currently collaborating to develop an interdisciplinary Ag Mech program. I’m also involved in FEED Sonoma on stewarding and marketing projects.

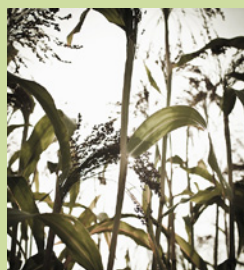
Two years ago, after a very mucky ranch hand day (with a wide smile on my face), I realized my home was always meant to be on a farm with a pair of muddy boots, my hands in the dirt, picking cherry tomatoes and wildflowers!

I am truly excited to be here with the animals and kids at Summerfield—it’s a magical place! Charlotte and the farm family have welcomed me so warmly, and I am eager to spend my days learning, playing, and exploring. Thank you for having me.

~Chelsey Kolbeck

Farm Guild Starts Again in 2016

Join Farmer Dana and other parent volunteers for morning work on the farm. Throughout the year you will learn a variety of skills such as seeding, transplanting, compost making, planning a garden and irrigation. The Farm Guild is also a great place to learn an introduction to Biodynamics.



Join us Tuesday mornings from 8:30am to 1pm—note we break for a potluck snack at 11am accompanied by make iced (or hot) tea. It’s OK to arrive late and/or leave early. Our first Guild day will be Tuesday, March 22. Please RSVP to Farmer Dana at dana@summerfieldwaldorf.org.

The Teaching of Foreign Languages Through the Grades

PART ONE

By Sra Marcela, Lower School Spanish Teacher

Traditionally in Waldorf schools, the teaching of two contrasting foreign languages starts in first grade. At Summerfield we have chosen to offer only Spanish as a foreign language in grades first to eighth, as we have a robust schedule, including all the wonderful activities that the children get to do at the farm.

When Rudolf Steiner was training the first group of teachers, he clearly stated that the goal of teaching foreign languages was not a utilitarian goal. The intention was to expand the children's experiences and understanding of humanity by familiarizing them with other cultures, and other ways of people moving through daily life. When reviewing his lectures, one can also see how he gave special emphasis to the fact that by penetrating a language different from their mother's tongue, the children's growth, development, and thinking get enhanced in many ways.

Goethe, the German writer and nature philosopher whom Steiner often quoted, said that approaching the studying of another language helps an individual to understand his/her own language. The studying of another language is "a process that raises one's social conscience and fosters an important objective of Waldorf education: to cultivate an interest in

others, which will inspire students to share their knowledge, abilities, and experiences. Those who are touched by such an interest will contribute

to global understanding and to the progress of humanity."¹ With two periods per week in almost all the grades (fourth and fifth grades get three periods per week in our school), it would be impossible to offer a program whose goal is to graduate bilingual children. Yet, as with all the subjects in the Waldorf approach to education, the foreign language teacher plants seeds that often bloom beautifully later in life.

During the first years of the learning of a second language, the Waldorf approach relies on movement, songs, poetry, storytelling, and games. The main goals are to immerse the children in the mood and musicality of the language, and work harmoniously with their imitative forces and group consciousness. "The lessons are to be given in such a way that the children learn the new language through speaking it... one must not mind if the children learn a verse or a poem entirely through the sounds, and if they only have a rough idea of its exact meaning..."²

A foreign language teacher during these early experiences, one could say, offers the students the opportunity to live in the "genius" of the language. An uninformed spectator could easily say, "Wow, this is so much fun. It seems that the children are being caressed with sounds, it is like being sung lullabies." Although it is true that sometimes I may "rock them" as in a lullaby, the reality is that there is a great deal of work going on for all of us. In order for the second language to penetrate as a whole without pedantic translations (especially in our time of 2016, a time of humanity where the imitative forces are often diminished by early exposure to media, lots of sensory stimulation and frequent chatter) the



child has to "quiet" his/her soul, and let go of what is familiar for him/her—the mother tongue. The foreign language teacher has to form his/her students' habits of listening actively and speaking in a group. We also have to train them to let the English language rest during class, and to be focused. All of these aspects of learning have to be woven in while also presenting well-balanced and artistic lessons.

In third grade the students begin to feel separate from the world. In their native tongue, the children become quite aware of many nuances of their language, and consequently many students who may have been happily "rocked" the first two years get concerned about the exact meaning of the foreign language, often wanting to understand what has been said, word for word. Imitative forces lessen, the gesture acquires new importance, and the children need to get more individual-expression opportunities. The material brought to the foreign language class requires more concentration of them, and now they are asked to listen attentively to each other. The children also start to push boundaries, this being a normal part of their development stage. The language teacher now has to bring repertory and activities that meet their need for individual expression, rather than relying on the joy of imitation. "During this year it is extremely important to present educational challenges that will motivate the children as well as establish respect and authority toward the teacher."³ The children develop a greater sense of self and reality in



PHOTOS: MIGUEL SALMERÓN

Spanish by reciting verses focusing on “yo” (I), doing lots of actions representing practical activities, and starting to describe themselves and others. Often by the spring season, the Spanish vowels, followed by the full alphabet, get introduced, and if the class shows readiness the teacher guides them to begin spelling phonetically and writing short, simple words in Spanish.

Fourth grade is the great bridge where writing and reading are presented, and grammar is introduced in a more formal way. At this level, there is “a need to find one’s place, and there is a growing awareness of others and the world. The children are trying to establish their individuality and at this time grammar can help them to find solidity and stability.”⁴ Through the activities during foreign language class, they are asked now to form first mental pictures that they then write and recapitulate in detail. Emphasis is

also put on pronunciation exercises. Students begin to record and illustrate in Spanish lesson books the verses and songs learned in previous years, as well as new repertoire. This material often serves as the basis for grammar discovery and study. Individual work is now combined with exercises done with a partner or work in small groups.

The teacher aspires to bring these experiences in a humorous way while maintaining the order and continuing to train them in the art of listening to each other. Through examples and questions, we must lead the children to discover patterns and deduct basic grammar rules. Structures include word gender and number (singular/plural), noun-adjective agreement (i.e. *el perro negro*), and the basic present tense verb conjugation of select verbs. While students continue to describe themselves and others, they also begin to describe the world



around them in greater detail, studying their community, the state and the animal kingdom. The foreign language teacher often chooses alliterative material as it reflects in its expression the human will.

Part Two of this article, covering fifth through eighth grade, can be read in the next print edition of The Messenger, and is also linked here.

Footnotes:

1, 3, 4. *Senders, Teaching Spanish in Waldorf Schools*, by Elena Forrer, Claudio Salussa, Enid Silvestry, Inés Camano, Barbara Flynn, Carmina Luce, Diamela Wetzl.

2. *Language Teaching In Steiner Waldorf Schools* by Johannes Kiersch.



Summer Farm Camp

Farm Camp at Summerfield Waldorf School and Farm is an opportunity for children to connect with the natural world while living into the rhythms and experiences of a working farm. The day is designed to inspire a connection with and a love of nature and the outdoors. Summerfield offers six one-week sessions for children ages 4–10, June 20 through July 29, 8:30am–1pm, Monday through Friday. Children may register for just one week or up to six weeks.

Our program for 4 to 5-year-olds makes its home in the Kindergarten village. The children journey to the Farm several times during the week to visit with the animals, pick berries, gather eggs and harvest vegetables. Within our magical Kindergarten village, children do crafts, sing, play games, hear stories, and enjoy much outdoor play time.

The program for 6 to 10-year-olds meets at the Farm every day and begins with circle time on hay bales. Then farm chores begin: gathering eggs, planting in the garden, drying herbs or picking berries and harvesting vegetables. Some children assist the Farmer with field work or help cook delicious organic snacks in the outdoor kitchen. Crafting and games are in the afternoon, and the day ends with a story and lunch.

Earth Ecology Camp

FOR 11- TO 15-YEAR-OLDS June 11–15, 8:30am–3pm, Monday through Friday

This camp is specifically designed for youth ages 11 to 15. We will have fun learning life skills in ecology that can be applied in our edible food forest permaculture garden. Our day begins with plant observation in the garden and writing on the theme of the day. We will go fruit- and berry-picking and prepare our own afternoon snack in the Farm Kitchen. Themes of fire, earth, and water guide our curriculum and artistic activities. This includes gardening and composting, herbal crafting, paper-making, cooking, solar energy, having fun and building community!

REGISTRATION DEADLINE APRIL 15

Registration is now open for all camps. Families come from all over California, as well as other states, for our Farm Camp program; therefore, we encourage you to register now to secure your child’s place.

Forms for both camps are available in the Summerfield Main Office or on our website at summerfieldwaldorf.org.

After Care: available from 1–3:30pm by advance registration.

Questions: Call Lisa Hensley, Farm Camp Registrar, at 575-7194, ext. 103 or email farmcamp@summerfieldwaldorf.org.

We look forward to another great year!

~ Ronni Sands & Farmer Dana Revallo, for Farm Camp

Who Taught You to Give?

By Cyndi Yoxall, Development Director

I distinctly remember the first time I donated to my college. I had graduated, was living on my own, working full time, paying all of my own bills and finally feeling like an adult or at least on my way. I had been received their annual mailing for the past couple of years, but I'm not sure what inspired me that day. I even remember the amount. As I wrote that first donation check for \$25, I felt elated—very proud and grown up. I was 23 years old. It felt like a lot to give.

I also remember clearly the day I was able to write that check for \$100. It even hurt a little, as I was saving every extra penny for the house I wanted to buy, but I had received a small bonus and wanted to give back to the place that gave me the education that enabled me to support myself. At that time I was 25. Within the next year I would get married, we would buy our first home and continue to donate, now in other small ways—through the Human Race, to my high school, and to the college student who came to our door to sell magazines so she could travel abroad on a community service trip. We gave in very small amounts, but the pay-back felt huge.

Looking back, I now realize that we also received what we needed, sometimes randomly and unexpectedly. Like after staying home to care for our babies, I thought there was no way we could continue to make it—and we received an unexpected gift

that gave me more time at home to raise Cole and Hudson. I cried. I also realized there really is something to it. When you give, you receive.

Once the children started school, we were giving annually there too. Starting out in the public school system, our school donations meant keeping the art and music program alive. We never thought twice about participating and never missed attending the annual fundraising event, even if it was a stretch to pay.

To my surprise, I also learned that my older brother, who established a successful career straight out of high school without a college education, has been giving back to the elementary school we attended for many years. He gives monthly. He never seemed to appreciate school when we were there. I never would have expected it.

It's only recently that I started thinking about why it comes naturally and without a thought to some people, to give back, even when we have very little. I can't recall anyone ever telling me to do it, and I've never been extremely rich, at least not financially. Was it my degree in business? Did I watch movies and read books about giving away one's money?

And then my parents popped into my mind: my mom and dad, who married in high school and built successful careers, bought houses, raised us and

worked harder than anyone I've ever met. My dad was a first generation immigrant, who married my mom when he was 18 and she was 16. I'm not sure I ever saw them write a check to my school, but I know I saw them give vegetables from our garden to our neighbors, lend money to friends in need, and help pay for their younger siblings to finish school or buy a house. For my entire childhood, I saw my parents give to others when we had very little ourselves. And they saved and saved so they could pay for my college education. Now they write that donation check for their grandchildren's education.

I also thought of my job here at Summerfield and some of the students and alumni who have touched me deeply with their contributions. I thought of Mercedes, who brings in her saved dollar bills each year. Now a recent graduate, she still came in to personally make her contribution. And it's no wonder, as I think of her mom's continual emphasis on giving back. I think of my boys, who suggested donating our change jars for the victims of the Lake County fires—an immediate reaction to help, knowing every bit counts. There are many examples of students giving back in our community.

What I've realized is that giving is learned. It is taught to others by our actions, and the energy that it creates gives back to us ten-fold. We feel good, we help others, we teach by example, we grow our community, we invest in our world, we feed our soul and lift our spirits.



(Continued from Page One)

How can you help? We are in need of volunteers and auction items. If you are interested in being part of our awesome (and fun) Farm to Feast team, let us know. We are looking for positive, energetic people who can help in all areas of the event. We have also started our item collection for both the online and silent auctions. We can use volunteers for procurement help! And for those of you who are class reps, now is the time to work with your teachers on class projects for the auction.

Farm to Feast tickets went on sale March 10. They will be sold online through BiddingforGood—this is our preferred method—or also available in the Main Office. This is an adult-only event, 21+ years of age.

To volunteer or donate auction items, contact farmtofeast@farmtofeast.org or call Cyndi Yoxall at 575-7194 ext. 105 or Caryn Shapiro-Stone at ext. 106.

HELP! A Call for Construction and Shelving Materials!

Do you have any left-over construction or shelving materials kicking around the house?



Help the **Costume Guild** create a new, secure, weather-tight place for costumes, and save parents and the school time, money, and volunteer hours to boot!

We need the following materials to complete the new **Costume Cottage** (formerly the Music Storage Shed next to After Care):

- Insulation (R19 or greater for ceiling and walls)
- Sheetrock for ceiling and walls
- Plaster and wall tape
- Paint
- Wiring and electrical boxes for two ceiling lights and 2-4 outlets
- 2 ceiling lights
- 1 light switch
- 2-4 outlets
- 2 hanging rods running the length of the shed
- 2 shelves running the length of the shed

For donations, leads, or questions please call or email Colleen Wimmer at (510) 684-5143, pomegranatetrail@hotmail.com.

PARKING REMINDER

Please remember that the handicapped parking spaces in our upper parking lots are reserved for handicapped-use only. Thank you!



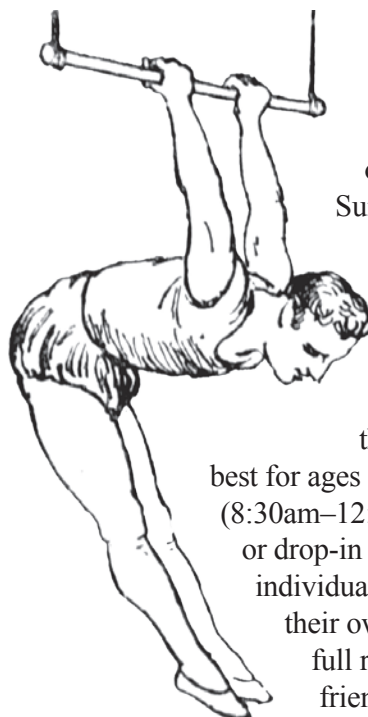
Want to Run Away With the Circus This Summer?

Summerfield Waldorf School & Farm and Circus Waldissima are pleased to offer their popular Summer Circus Camps again in 2016! For children ages 6 to 8 years, there are 3 one-week sessions (June 13–17; June 20–24; June 27–July 1). For children and adults ages 9 to 99, there is 1 two-week long session (June 20–July 1). All skill levels are welcome.

Our days will be filled with learning new skills in circus arts, including clowning, juggling, tightrope, trapeze, and acrobatics, to name a few. We will then bring it all together at the end of each session in a wonderful free performance for friends and relatives to enjoy. This is the 18th year of Circus Camp, led by experienced circus arts instructor, Sieglinde Basmajian. Camp hours are 8:30am to 1pm, Monday through Friday, in our big blue and red circus tent. After Care is available from 1–3:30pm daily with advanced sign up.



Fly into Summer with Flying Trapeze Camp!



Summerfield Waldorf School and Farm and Circus Waldissima are once again excited to offer two one-week sessions of Flying Trapeze Summer Camp courtesy of *Trapeze Arts*. Fulfill your dreams of flying through the air on a full size trapeze set up on Summerfield's back lawn.

Session One is Monday through Friday, June 13–17 and Session Two is Monday through Friday, June 20–24. This camp is best for ages 8 and up. Choose either the morning session (8:30am–12:30pm) or the afternoon session (1:30–3:30pm), or drop-in to any afternoon session for \$40. Lessons are individualized for each student and students progress at their own pace. By week's-end, students will have a full repertoire of skills and will perform them for friends and family!

Please visit the Summerfield website at www.summerfieldwaldorf.org/summerprograms for more information and to download registration forms for all Circus Camps or pick them up in the Main Office.

Questions: Call Lisa Hensley, Circus Camp Registrar at 575-7194, ext. 103 or email lisa@summerfieldwaldorf.org.

See you this summer! ~ Sieglinde Basmajian, Circus Director

The Messenger Marketplace

Summerfield Waldorf School and Farm is not affiliated with, and does not endorse, any of the individual initiatives or services advertised in this classified section. Advertisements are screened for appropriateness and made available to community members to use at their own discretion

Classes/Camps/Events

Classes at Circle of Hands

Panoramic Sugar Egg Workshop: with Emma Mann & Rose MacDonald. Sat., March 26, 12-3pm. \$20 fee includes instruction & materials to create your diorama of a tiny springtime world—you will decorate one large sugar egg w/ royal icing, inserting a glass animal figurine, 3 crystals and, if you wish, your own found personal treasures for the scene—making a true family heirloom! Ages 15+, or 8+ accompanied by an adult. Reserve your space w/ a \$10 deposit.

Woodland House Workshop: with Sharon Eisley. Sat. April 2, 10am-2pm. Back by popular demand! This exciting class gives you all the materials & instruction to make an exotic wooden home for fairies or elves to inhabit. \$95 fee. All ages welcome but children below the age of 10 must be with an adult. Advance registration needed with a \$40 deposit.

To register, go to www.circleofhandswaldorfschool.com or call Circle of Hands at 634-6140 or stop by the store.

The Christian Community

Fri., March 18 - 3:30 pm *Study Group* on the John's Gospel at Anne Cook's house (595-3103) & 7:30 p.m. - talk by Sanford Miller on *'The Mystery of the Son: Islam and Christianity'* • Sat., March 19 - 9:15 am *Children's story and song* (1st - 6th grades) • Sat., March 19 - 10 am children's service, 10:30 am adults' service, *The Act of Consecration of Man* (childcare available) followed by a potluck lunch afterwards.

All events are in the Eurythmy Barn except the Fri. afternoon meeting. For confirmation classes for children 7th grade and up or for baptisms, call Rev. Sanford Miller at (916) 965-9112. For further information or to be put on our mailing list, contact Elinor Biller at 542-5744 or biller@sonic.net. All are welcome.



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ADVERTISE IN THE MESSENGER

Summerfield's *Messenger* newsletter is published once a month during the school year, and has a distribution list of 1,000 people! If you are interested in advertising please email messenger@summerfieldwaldorf.org or visit our website.

Camp Tamarack: Camp Tamarack has been offering a quality wilderness experience for children ages 9-14 years old since 1971. This camp is sponsored by The Christian Community. For more information: www.camptamccsummercamp.com or call Hans Walser at (650)995-3414

Services

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I am an experienced teacher, a Summerfield Waldorf founding parent and original creator of the school's instrument music program. My studio is located in Santa Rosa. Please visit my website marybeardmusicstudio.com. Contact me at marymezzo@sonic.net or 707-546-8782.

Now Accepting New Clients in Sebastopol!

Allie A. McCann, MFT, ATR-BC (mccannmft@gmail.com, 707.219.8484). Allie is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and Art Therapist. She is a Waldorf-inspired mother of two and is sympathetic and supportive of Waldorf-inspired values and lifestyle choices. She supports children, adolescents, parents and adults, specializing in anxiety, mood, behavioral and relational issues, life transitions, and grief and loss. Allie has a holistic view of health, tending to mind, body, and spirit. She incorporates both art and a connection with the natural world into her healing practices.

Farmer Dan available for Spring Break or Summer Projects

Do you need a chicken coop, fencing, a new or repaired deck, deck refinished, painting, shelving, sheet rock repairs, book cases, inside wall removal or added, garage shelving, etc.?

Many favorable SWS references, child-safe and friendly, reasonable rates. Call Farmer Dan at 707-526-3917 to inquire or schedule a visit and/or a Spring Break or summer work date. Thanks.

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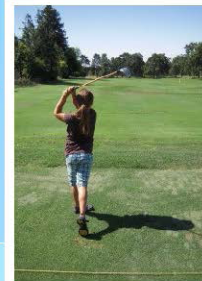
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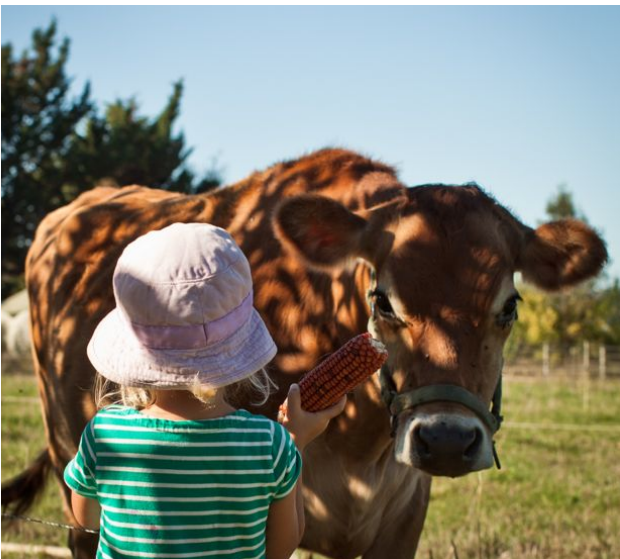
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Early Childhood Outreach Event



Join us for a Morning on the Farm

Saturday, April 16th, 10 - 11:30 am

Children 3 to 5 years of age and their parents are invited to spend a spring morning on our Biodynamic farm. Visit the animals, hear a story, and make new friends.

The Early Childhood teachers look forward to meeting you!

This outreach event is free of charge and open to all families who are not currently enrolled in SWSF but wish to learn more about the school's Early Childhood program.

RSVP: sallie@summerfieldwaldorf.org or 707-575-7194 ext. 102



The Teaching of Foreign Languages Through the Grades

PART TWO

By Sra Marcela, Lower School Spanish Teacher

[Editor's note: This is Part Two of Sra Marcela's article.

For Part One, see the March issue of The Messenger online at www.summerfieldws.org/quicklinks/messenger]

In fifth grade, students are for the most part physically and mentally well balanced. The conjugation of regular verbs in present tense and the differentiation of the uses of the two forms of the verb To Be (*Ser* and *Estar*) are practiced. We begin traveling from the classroom to the Spanish-speaking world, starting with the parts of a city, money and simple transactions, and moving to a Spanish-speaking country. From modern day life and geography, we later plunge back in time to the ancient Aztec, Mayan, and Inca societies. These themes provide the context not only for the study of Latin American geography, but also the introduction of the present tense conjugation of a wider range of verbs, including some of irregular conjugation patterns, as well as other structures used in talking about daily routines and lifestyles.

During sixth grade, “the feeling forces, which have been gradually cultivated through the will in previous years, are going to begin penetrating the thinking of the student.”⁵

The language lesson undergoes a considerable change to meet the needs of the thinking capacities that are being awakened now. The students practice how to start a conversation by themselves, how to form simple dialogues, how to form negative statements, and how to ask questions to gather needed information. They are also guided to become conscious of the different intonations that these structures require. Grammar studies become increasingly complex (though remain in the present tense),

studying primarily irregular forms, and practicing how to change the order in a sentence while conserving the agreement between the subject and the verb. Reading and listening to passages in the foreign language are now done searching for specific information. As the students expand their abilities to describe their family, friends, activities, and spaces around them, they are also asked to reflect about who is doing the action, what is changing, cause and effect, what if..., what would be another possibility, etc. The students learn how to order and take orders in a restaurant, and prepare to “cross the Atlantic” to “travel” around Spain or “to travel south” to visit other Latin American countries. The ballads, epic, and romance style of Spanish poetry meet the medieval studies that they carry during the morning lesson well, and they get to expand their knowledge of the rest of the Spanish-speaking world and customs by writing and presenting short reports about a Latin or South American country. Steiner explains that at this age “it is necessary to discuss with joy a country’s literature, customs, states of mind, and geography.”⁶ The language teacher also tries to present the Roman and Arabic influences on Spain’s culture (language structures and vocabulary, architecture, and art).

Seventh graders learn about the rules that make nature and the human body change, and how thinking depends entirely on the human being. The foreign language lesson encourages them to enter now into the grammar

of their own language by starting to compare the structures of both the foreign language and their own. The imaginative travels started in early years pick up with Spanish history, though this time with a focus on the years of exploration. They compare Spaniards and peoples they encountered in their explorations, as well as other cultural customs related to food, celebrations, and clothing. Students practice their descriptive abilities and hone the grammatical skills acquired in previous grades in Spanish before making the jump to past tenses (there are two). Comparisons are then made between students’ present and past hobbies, tastes in clothing and food, etc. The fact that not all the students have taken Spanish through their early years and that they are now so self-conscious brings a challenge to the foreign language class. Often the group gets divided by skill level at this time, or the teacher tries to bring challenges for all the different levels on the same theme. As you can imagine, this multi-level setting and the natural inner turmoil that the seventh graders are experiencing can create a difficult situation. The teacher has to cultivate lightness and an extra sense of humor, while steering the students, at the same time, to accomplish work that is not the same for all participants. The



students have to work really hard to stay on task, and to listen to each other. If these work ethics get developed, the shared joy is immense. Nothing compares to the moment when one witnesses a student who has had the benefit of years of exposure trying to help a novice, or a when a good laugh is shared by all when they correct each other's mistakes!

In eighth grade, the students return 'home,' and thematic units are reviewed in more rigorous ways. As much as possible, the teacher has to step back from his/her leadership role and create opportunities for the students to do most of the talking. They are asked to write short essays, longer, more elaborated dialogues, interviews, reports, pamphlets, to do presentations in front of their peers, and offer objective criticism to each other. When possible, the students are visited by native Spanish-speakers. Stories and anecdotes about immigration bring humor to the class and help the students see

differences among cultures. The students are also asked to state their opinions and preferences about crucial current themes and about the historical events of Latin American countries such as revolutions and extreme social conditions. The use of the two basic forms of the past tense is practiced as they share events of their own lives. The themes of food and nutrition are very helpful to encourage self-reflection and for them to think about their habits regarding health, prevention, and self-care. They are also asked to identify and compare distinctive cultural features (i.e. typical greetings) and talk about past experiences and emotions, comparing these experiences with their classmates' and those who are interviewed by the students. Grammar includes review of the present and past tenses, as well as an introduction to more specific structures designed to help them polish their language use. If the group is ready, the future tense is also introduced.



PHOTOS: MIGUEL SALMERÓN

Through the grades, the students are "carried" into the soul of the target language, met in new ways, and asked to do work that often sparks resistance, or what Rudolf Steiner calls "antipathy." This antipathy is usually the spark to develop their will capacities further, which serves them well in all aspects of life. During the foreign language lessons, both the students and the teacher get trained in practicing flexibility, while the students are building a solid foundation on which to go forward into high school.

Footnotes:

5 & 6. *Senderos, Teaching Spanish in Waldorf Schools*, by Elena Forrer, Claudio Salussa, Enid Silvestry, Inés Camano, Barbara Flynn, Carmina Luce, Diamela Wetzl.