

Messenger

Summerfield | WALDORF SCHOOL AND FARM

April 21, 2016

Volume 28, Issue 8

Hot Lunch Program Set to Expand!

*By Ronni Sands, HS Gardening
Teacher & Lunch Program Coordinator*

Feeding all of our students a healthy, hot lunch has always been a long-term goal for the faculty, staff and parents at Summerfield. Despite numerous set-backs along the way, the hard work of many people and the advent of our upgraded septic system has made this program possible at last!

A commercial, code-compliant kitchen has been ordered and will be custom-built just for Summerfield in order for us to finally realize our goal of extending the hot lunch program to the Lower School.

This new mobile kitchen is being built by Carlin Mobile Kitchens, and will include all of the necessary commercial cooking equipment we will need to expand our lunch program and be “permit-legal” with the County of Sonoma. The kitchen, which is the size of a shipping container, will be placed on the high school hill where the bell now stands, and will include a patio space and canopy in front.

If all goes well, we will start the next school year with our new kitchen on the campus. We hope to be able to expand the hot lunch program in the fall by adding sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. If all goes smoothly third, fourth and fifth grades will be added soon after,



CHEFS BILL DATOR AND TOM VAN GORDEN
ON THE SITE OF THE FUTURE MOBILE KITCHEN

potentially followed by first and second grades.

In addition to the hot lunch program, we are hoping that the new kitchen and adjoining patio will become a place where parents can purchase brunchy items, coffee and tea, and can socialize. Perhaps even a knitting class or parent-ed opportunity may be held there—it’s exciting to think of the possibilities that this new kitchen will afford our community!

Our main chef, Bill Dator, will be leading us in this endeavor. Tom Van Gorden will continue to cook snack for the high school and serve coffee and pastries for parents and staff.

The all-school lunch program is a dream that many of us have carried for a long, long time. I personally want to thank Ignacio Garat for his never-ending work and attention to the details of this lunch program and for helping to bring to reality the “on-campus commercial kitchen.” Let the feast begin!

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Important Dates:

Grade Six, Seven, Eight Music Concert
Friday, April 22 at 1:30pm, Sophia Hall

Senior Project Presentations
*Tuesday, April 26 & Saturday, April 30,
6:30-10pm, Sophia Hall*

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*

WHAT HAS THE BOARD BEEN UP TO LATELY?

“Oh you know... the usual.”

By Jefferson Buller, on behalf of the Board of Directors



Someone recently asked me in passing what the Board of Directors was working on, and happened to catch me while I was

walking from picking up my daughter back to our car. I simply didn't have the time to tell them all of the exciting things that have been on the agenda lately. I think I may have answered with a rather generic “Oh, you know, the usual...” kind of response as I hustled off. To that person, I apologize. I was probably off to viola lessons, or basketball practice, or piano, or any number of other places I always seem to need to be in a hurry. The Board is working on A LOT, actually, and I owe it to you to take the time and tell you a little more. I'll try to do that now. (For the rest of you, you are welcome to listen in, so to speak. I'm happy to share with you too!)

Let's start with some of the more visible items that the Board has been working on recently. As you may have read in recent Messenger articles, the new septic system is now installed and is truly a huge step forward for the school. For the last ten or so years, our ability to grow campus facilities was hampered by the limitations of our old septic system, in the form of use-permit restrictions placed on building by the County's planning department. With the new system, not only do we have a



sparkling new, state of the art, ecological and highly functional system, our facilities expansion limitations have been

reduced, allowing us to build some much needed classroom space in the form of our exciting new ArtTech building.

You may have already noticed that construction has begun in the former location of our woodworking and blacksmithing tents. This project will involve three new classrooms, with over 5800 square feet of new workspace dedicated to practical and fine arts (3,700sf interior space plus covered porch work area of 2,100sf). The primary purposes will be to house ceramics, woodworking and blacksmithing, although there is also intent to retain some flexibility for classroom uses as necessary. This will be our first new building since 1999! We are hoping to complete ArtTech in early fall 2016, and are asking for your participation in the fundraising efforts to pay for this fantastic addition to our campus.

As a complement to the ArtTech project, we have also begun work on highly necessary accessibility upgrades. We'll be upgrading several pathways accessing the humanities buildings, the high school, and the new ArtTech building to be ADA compliant, as well as renovating the existing ADA parking stalls to be compliant with current regulations.

Another exciting development, which you will see elsewhere in this issue of the Messenger, I believe, is the addition of a compact commercial kitchen to the campus which will allow for a school-wide food program and coffee café for parents. This will be another great step forward for the school, allowing us to showcase our farm's produce and provide healthy, nourishing meals for our students and faculty. Much more information to come!

The Board has also been working on many other, less visible projects.



We have re-energized a formal Development committee, adding new members and energetic ideas to support our Development office in their efforts to augment the school's fundraising. We have also added a Communications Committee, whose focus has been on developing new ways for the school to engage in dialogue with its community, both here on campus as well as regionally, to share our message and bring positive attention to the great work we do here. As always, we continue to refine our budget and closely monitor enrollment projections, actively balancing income and spending, and planning for the tuition assistance needs of the community. We are entering the elections cycle for the Board again and have several interested and exceptionally qualified candidates who may be joining us in the fall, bringing fresh perspectives, new ideas, and renewed energy to our ranks. You will see their names soon on the parent-elected ballot, if you are a member of the corporation, and we will welcome our new members formally with further communications via this newsletter in the fall.

As always, on behalf of the Board, I thank you for the investment you have made in our ranks to maintain the long-term sustainability of the school. We are honored as a whole to humbly serve, and take the trust you've placed in us very seriously.

And, if you happen to see me on campus in transit from my truck to a classroom or vice versa—please feel free to ask me what's going on with the Board, if you're interested. I'm always happy to share, but if I happen to say something like “Oh, you know... the usual,” forgive me and watch the following month's Messenger for the most recent news!

AWSNA SURVEY

AWSNA are requesting your participation in a new marketing survey for the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America.



Results will be used to help inform schools' use of marketing dollars, build brand awareness and increased digital presence, and create a marketing tool kit so Waldorf schools can strengthen the visibility of our message.

The survey should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete, and responder information will, of course, remain anonymous. The research is quantitative, and collecting of data will take place from now until May 2, 2016.

Participants will be eligible to win a one-year subscription to *Renewal: Journal for Waldorf Education*.

Thank you for supporting this important work! Survey link: surveymonkey.com/r/7BJWCG9

SENIOR PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

**Tuesday 26 & Saturday 30,
6:30–10pm in Sophia Hall**

On behalf of this year's seniors, I would like to invite you to our Senior Project Presentations next week!

Every year seniors prepare senior projects to share with the school. These projects encompass all that we have learned these past four years. Senior Project nights are nights where we share our journey with you, our community.

We would be so pleased if you would all come and celebrate the art of education with Summerfield's Class of 2016. These nights will do nothing short of impressing you all.

Sincerely, Olivia Ramirez, for the Summerfield Class of 2016

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Grandma Wonka Writes ...

It was such fun for Circus Waldissima to invite Willy Wonka and me, his Grandma, to the Big Top this year. Even though some people have no manners, and think they can just BUY a Golden Goose, I had such fun seeing all your young people rolling about and lifting each other up. I especially liked the jumping and that trampolining thing. I'm thinking of getting one for myself, in fact, if Willy doesn't stop me first. And weren't those eighth graders quite fine young folks, looking after their friends when they ate too much chocolate, and organizing all the little ones back stage?



PHOTO BY MIGUEL SALMERÓN

Willy was a bit tired after the show, but I insisted we come back in the evening for the advanced circus. I consider myself rather advanced, and not just in years, and after being given the golden egg (quite by accident, I'm sure, but don't look a gift egg ...) I was quite rejuvenated. And what a show it was! It started out quite strangely, with the people onstage moving together but seemingly in pain; something was wrong, almost like they were part machine, part human. Life seemed very difficult, arduous. At the beginning they all had masks on, and we couldn't tell who they were. Bit by bit as the show went on, the masks fell away. At one point three lovely young girls enveloped the stage wearing giant butterfly wings, shimmering as they unfurled and proudly became something new and strong. There were so many different wonders to behold: juggling from that clever German boy, and enough unicycles zipping around to command their own traffic lane, and a boy on the flying trapeze and, everywhere you looked, such strong, generous young people working to support and balance each other, and also making us gasp and laugh. But it was the ending that really took my breath away.

Four terribly long silk cloths were suspended from the top of the tent, and held by four ordinary looking folk: one of them was that Mr. B, who is almost as advanced as I am! But then they started to move around each other and wove those long strands together, and soon those individuals weren't just ordinary anymore, they were essential! They were the foundation of a new world! As the four 'bases' wrapped the silks around themselves and each other, they allowed other performers to climb up into the strands, first one, then another, and another... and each person had to stretch and hold those silks apart with all their strength, creating their own area of form until a new geometric structure—could it be a heart?—was created and held just for us, the audience that was lucky enough to be there. This form was made solely out of striving human beings hanging by a thread, using all their forces, pulling their weight and holding their own, full of courage, and I saw, with

tears streaming down my withered old cheeks, how we are all tied together, and how terrifying, and how beautiful it is. I found this revelation to be profoundly healing in this unimaginably difficult year, and I was so grateful to receive this gift.

Thank you, Circus Waldissima, from the bottom of my heart, for your courage and vision.

Grandma Wonka



PHOTO: BEN ROSALES PHOTOGRAPHY

The December Initiative

By Adam MacKinnon, Editor, with contributions from HS faculty, especially Molly Sierra, Jason Gross & Leslie Loy

Waldorf teachers are charged with the task of constantly renewing themselves, perpetually involved in a process of ‘becoming’ ... a striving for being human. And they also have a responsibility to constantly examine their teaching, to revise what and how they teach to best suit the students they have at any given time.

In this way, teaching in an independent Waldorf school stands apart from that of the mainstream, and even the charters who have to teach to a particular curriculum and standardized testing.

So renewal and a spirit of innovation are central to the culture of a school like Summerfield. The Messenger was curious to learn more about an initiative in the High School this year that embodied these principles. For want of a better name, it was termed the December Initiative... because it took place in December! The following article stems from conversations with many staff on the impetus, structure and results of the initiative.

A New Kind of Student

Conferences and faculty discussions in recent years, in particular the *Breaking the Mold* conference hosted here in February last year, centered on the challenge of how to best meet a new breed of student, one that is subject to the pressures of overload in a rapidly-changing and heavily stimulated world. Teachers everywhere have

been reporting students having a harder time maintaining focus and attention in the classroom — they are not the same children they were ten years ago. And then there is the challenge of lives that are simply too full: children rushed from one activity to the next: soccer practice, music lesson, swim team, etc, etc.

So one part of the December experiment was to slow things down, to combine classes in a way that would reduce the stop-start nature of the school day in a month that was already fragmented by holiday events. Faculty came up with a longer main lesson, normally from 8–9:45am, but now extended to three hours, a block of time that enabled students to really expand their scope of understanding of a subject whilst not being rooted in a singular kind of presentation or activity. Furthermore, the morning activities (studied within their own class: ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth) were distinct from those in the afternoon, which were mixed grade, more practical and hands-on, and chosen (sometimes even created) by students.

Faculty member Jason Gross said, “The students are so used to continuous partial attention in the modern world, that to

actually sink into something for a long period was valuable—but it was hard for them, they’re not used to it—we see it as a muscle that needs training.”

Creating the Right Space

The faculty decided to open



INNER AND OUTER BY CHLOE MCCORMICK

each day with a communal singing experience, partly as daily rehearsal for the weekly Festival of Light, but also as a way to bring all the grades together before separating into each class. A master vocal teacher, Sharon McCabe, formerly at Kimberton Waldorf School, brought wonderful warmth and joy in leading singing for thirty minutes every morning. And the seventh & eighth grade classes were also invited in to join the singing and get a taste of high school culture in the process.

This proved to be a lovely way to set the tone for the whole day, and it sent students off energized into the long class to follow.

Interdisciplinary Approach

As a school, we are privileged to offer a wide range of subjects, through all the track classes and many, many specialty classes. But the faculty was curious to see what synergies might result if classes were combined. They saw it as an opportunity to expand on what was working, and to allow the students to deepen into something... and allow them to see ways in which what seem to be different experiences in the curriculum actually have connections.

Thus a key part of the experiment was to integrate classes. So, in Ninth Grade American Literature, Humanities teacher Molly Sierra brought a novel about a boy who reconnects with nature through Native lore, but this was augmented by Gardening Teacher Ronni Sands bringing crafting and plant work connected with the story.



INNER AND OUTER BY FIONA MCKENZIE



MASKS BY JESSIE BRANDT

The Tenth Grade had what would have been a normal biology block on Embryology. But while Kyle Collins brought the biology component, students also got to move the forms of the developing embryo in Eurythmy with Renate Lundberg, and sculpt them in clay with Isabel Wundsam.

The Eleventh Grade had a Projective Geometry Math block taught by George Herschkowitz that was enhanced by exploring negative space in nature: students did water work with parent Chris Tebbutt and new teacher Ben Mew to try and understand the geometrical forms apparent in the movement of water.

Finally, the Twelfth Grade tackled Faust and Modern World History in combination; Students studied the literature with Jason Gross and the history with Bob Flagg, both HS Humanities Teachers. And this exploration of Faustian questions as they apply to modern dictatorships was complemented by the healing gestures of Requiem singing with Skeydrit Bahr, and mask-making with Kathinka Kiep.

The result was that students could live into both what was looked at in the 'main lesson' and the other class. They could experience the second class through the first class and vice versa.

Faculty member Konstantin Gortinsky commented, "Everything for students now is that they press *this*, and they get *that*. So this experience showed that the path to knowledge is much more complex than that. The single biggest difficulty we face is when we get into things with fixed views. Many students (even adults) struggle to hold conflicting

thoughts even within themselves. Different perspectives are important!"

Collaboration

The Summerfield High School faculty realized they wanted to try and meet the students by working as teams of teachers with different skill sets to suit different learning styles, and to help students develop their own capacities to tackle new projects.

For the faculty, it opened up new ways of working together: teachers valued the chance for collaborative preparation time, which they reported deepened their understanding of their own subject as they could see it through a new lens. They got to be learners too, as well as teachers, and by so doing, developed new appreciations for their colleagues. And students got to observe the faculty working in this new way, getting a positive example of how to co-create something.

Faculty member Ronni Sands said, "It was a work-in-progress that forced us as faculty to communicate, to dig deeper into what we do, how we do it, and how the students respond." When it worked well—which all agreed it did (after some initial challenges) with the movement, art and science collaboration in tenth grade—it was wonderful to see how three separate areas of study could illuminate a common theme under different lights.

For the afternoon classes, described as 'thematic open studios,' faculty acted more as coaches, facilitating the students in their own choices. These included artistic offerings, for instance classes in Pottery, and Acrylic Painting (where students explored the theme of an inner and outer experience), as

well as a MakerSpace class, where students created their own engineering projects. There was also a Building Bridges class on understanding cross-cultural differences (developed from a PeaceCorps curriculum).

Conclusions

Overall, the experiment has been deemed a success. In general the students responded positively, enjoying the chance to dive deeper into a subject from multiple perspectives, and appreciating the chance to develop their own initiatives in the more open afternoon sessions.

And what about the future? The faculty is very interested in continuing to develop this experiment. And, in particular for next year, they will look at the structure with a goal of including more breathing and more deepening of overlapping curriculum.

Said Leslie Loy, "At Summerfield, our goal is to cultivate passions and interests while learning to overcome challenges—and this means tapping into the interests of students and faculty alike so that new possibilities can emerge in how we teach and how we learn, so that we can further grow free human beings who will take up the tasks of the future in the world with courage, imagination, and strength. It is critical for us to continue to explore the edge of what is needed and to ask what will best serve our students, our faculty, and the future of education."

The December Initiative was yet more proof of the advantages of an education where faculty has the freedom to respond in a creative and thoughtful way to the questions the students are bringing.



PHOTOS: MIGUEL SALMERÓN

May Faire: Celebrating Spring & Community

By Andrea Jolicoeur for the May Faire Committee

REMEMBER TO BRING FLOWERS ON THE MORNING OF MAY 6!

Spring is coming and our beautiful campus has sprung to life with green grass and blossoming flowers, birds and bees and critters, and energetic children... it must be almost time for May Faire! Please join us for this wonderful community event on Friday, May 6.

The activities start during school hours, after lunch, with students adorning their head garlands with flowers in class. Dressed in whites and pastels, we will then all gather around the Maypole at 1:30pm, presided over by the Queen and Jack. The seniors and their first grade buddies will begin the May Pole dancing, followed by each grade in turn until around 2:45pm. Afterwards, the children go back to their classrooms and are gathered up by parents at 3pm as usual. Then, let the festivities begin! The Faire will have crafts, races, activities, food, music and more. Costs for children's

unlimited activities will be \$10 for one child, \$15 for two siblings, and \$20 for three siblings. Eighth grade students will be offering a meal and beverages for sale, and eleventh grade will have strawberry shortcake for sale. The first through tenth grades are organizing to host simple carnival games and activities from 3 to 5pm.

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Please wear white or pastel clothing—especially students—and bring blankets for seating, utensils and plates for eating, and hats and sunscreen for protection.



As always, please refrain from taking pictures during the event, especially during the May Pole dancing. **We will have one photographer taking pictures and are happy to share them with you!**

We will need VOLUMINOUS donations of flowers and greenery for the head-garlands and general Faire decorations—please bring these on the morning of the event.

We need VOLUNTEERS! The May Faire volunteer sign-up sheet is now on the Main Office door! Decorating, clean-up and parking assistance, as well as the filling of various May Faire roles (pocket ladies, ticket-sellers) are being sought, so PLEASE volunteer by signing up on the main office door as well as for your own class activity or offering.

New this year—sign up online at VolunteerSpot: <http://vols.pt/oZErEJ>. Thank you so very much... and DO come with your bells on!



CLIPART COURTESY FCIT

6, 7, 8 Grade Music Concert

**Friday, April 22, at 1:30pm
in Sophia Hall**

Family and friends are warmly invited to a music concert offered by the sixth, seventh and eighth grades during the afternoon on Friday, April 22.

The eighth grade will also perform their final Eurythmy performance of *How the Loon Lost Her Voice* which was previously planned for the Festival of the Arts.

Welcome to Cimon Selhorst NEW HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR FOR 2016-2017

Cimon has over four years of experience as a high school guidance counselor with Petaluma High School and in the San Rafael School District. She has more recently been a program manager for Dovetail Learning where she trained and supported schools and districts in the implementation of a mindfulness-based social emotional learning program that teaches self-awareness and self-regulation skills to children. Cimon has been an Independent College Counselor and worked with Credo High School to help them build their College Counseling Program.



She earned her Waldorf teaching certificate from the Center for Educational Renewal and had a Waldorf methods home preschool for several years before earning her MA in School Counseling at Sonoma State University. She has a BA in Computer Science from UC Santa Cruz and was a systems analyst for many years before moving into the field of education. She particularly enjoys working with high school students in their process of self-discovery as they explore their post high school options.

10TH ANNUAL DINNER AND AUCTION ON THE FARM

Farm to Feast SATURDAY, MAY 21, 2016, 4-11PM

PHOTOS: MIGUEL SALMERÓN



Each year I find myself spending countless Spring Break hours, both awake and asleep, thinking and dreaming about all the details that make Farm to Feast fabulous. With an emotional mixture of excitement and worry, energy and pressure, I obsess about how to make it all come together perfectly.

Recently, I have been thinking about how this is our 10th Annual Farm to Feast...10 years of planning and heartfelt volunteer work, celebrating and fundraising, gathering as a community with gratitude and

commitment. And there's a very important piece of Farm to Feast that touches me the most—the dedicated Summerfield chef team and winemaking families. Without this group of volunteers, the event could not happen.

For the past 10 years, our meal has been created by our dedicated lead chefs, Traci Des Jardins of *Jardinière* and Duskie Estes and John Stewart of *zazu kitchen + farm*. These three talented and hardworking chefs continue to amaze us, as they step out of their busy restaurants to donate their time, service and ingredients on behalf of the school, leading the chef team in creating the Summerfield-sourced, biodynamic farm-to-table dinner that makes Farm to Feast so special.

Generous key volunteers who have joined along the way to create our meal are Lowell Sheldon and Natalie Goble of *Peter Lowell's*, Jorge Saldana of *Cancún* and Summerfield's own Farmer Dana Revallo. This year we are excited to welcome Ari Rosen of *Scopa* to help lead, and Summerfield Chef Bill Dator. Bryan Myers formerly of *zazu* and Nick Peyton of *Cyrus* and *HBG* also spend countless volunteer hours planning and orchestrating the dinner for all. Dessert has been offered each year by volunteer chefs from *Farmhouse Inn*, *Galaxy Desserts* and *Worth our Weight*.

And we are blessed by our extraordinary team of Summerfield winemakers, who make the event possible by donating their time and exclusive wines for the entire event: *Claypool Cellars*, *Coturri Winery*, *Davis Family Vineyards*, *Littorai*, *Martinelli Winery*, *Porter-Bass*, *Small Vines*, *Truett Hurst Winery* and *VML*.

Let's not forget our community partners who step up each year to add to the festivities: *Revive Drinks*, *Taylor Maid Farms*, *Lagunitas Brewing Co.* and *Redwood Hill Farm*. We count on these generous businesses annually to donate and serve at Farm to Feast. This year we look forward to also including *Brew Coffee and Beer*!

Lastly, I want to acknowledge all of the volunteers who make Farm to Feast a success, working with us and supporting our efforts on behalf of the school. We rely on your time, energy, ideas, talents, auction donations and loving support. You inspire us!

Please join us on May 21st & support our largest fundraising event of the year. Space is limited, buy your tickets today! \$90/person, 21+ yrs of age only.

farmtofeast.org • Tickets & online auction: biddingforgood.com/farmtofeast

~ Cyndi Yoxall, Development Director



CHEF DANA REVALLO



CHEF TRACI DES JARDINS



CHEF LOWELL SHELTON



CHEFS JOHN STEWART AND DUSKIE ESTES



HOSTS BRYAN AND LYZA MYERS AND NICK PEYTON

On Swords and Spiders

HELPING OUR STUDENTS MAKE DECISIONS

By America Worden, MFT., alumna & former LS/HS Counselor

When I am at a loss for understanding or inspiration, I often go in search of the underground parts of words: the seeds and roots that sprouted and spread into networks nourishing the meanings and uses of today. The word ‘decide’ has the same root as ‘fratricide’ ‘incisor’ and ‘precise’. *Caedere* from Latin means to cut, kill, slay, chop, tear and a host of other violent actions. Combined with the prefix *de* meaning from, out, away from or out of, the image created is one of separating something out by force.

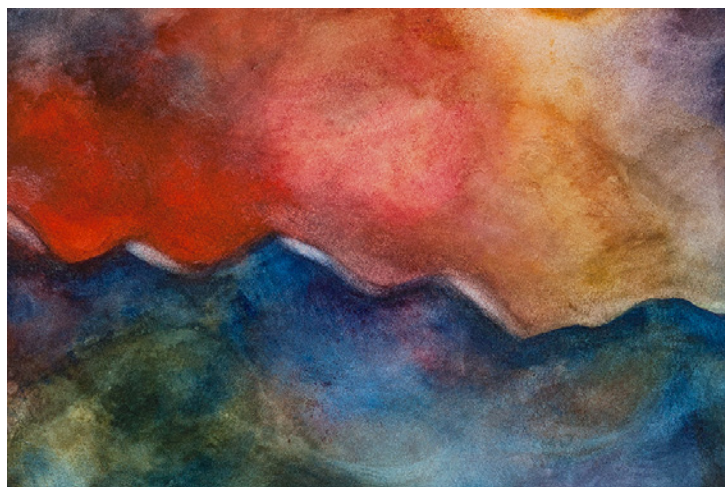
The aggression stored up in ‘decide’ was a surprise when I first went in search of it a few years ago, at a loss for understanding a repeating pattern in our high school students. I had begun to hear in their different struggles a similar sense of disorientation, longing and urgency. Regardless of whether the circumstances were friendships, senior project questions, college decisions, after-school activities, or starting or finishing papers, students seemed suspended, spinning in their thoughts and feelings in a no-place between possible but never-taken actions. No amount of longing to get their feet on the ground or encouragement to begin seemed to help. I wondered why making *decisions* seemed so hard, which led down into the dirt of meanings: where did that word come from anyway?

Tracing ‘decide’ back to the picture it makes brought to mind Michelangelo’s understanding of sculpture as a force that raises forms from out of stones: each leaf

and grain of rock chiseled off a decision, a precision, revealing the life within both the artist and the stone. What is this force within the action of deciding that cuts from the world our one path?

Whatever it was, the students were struggling to harness it and, as is often (always?) the case, I recognized in their struggle an experience familiar to me. The infinite soup of possibilities we are swimming in is difficult to steer through. The root of *decide* gives a clue that this has always been a challenge, that to choose our lives has always required a slicing away of what did not serve. But in our moment of time, the task seems especially daunting: for one thing the sheer volume of information, stories, images and options constantly available to us is paralyzing. Where do we even start? How will we ever get through?

Add to this the speed at which information, stories, images and options appear, change, disappear, rearrange... and a special quality of crazy emerges. Linda Stone coined the useful term ‘continuous partial attention’ to describe the state of mind we often find ourselves in while navigating this vast sea of moving parts. Rather than focusing our attention on one or a few things, we spread it out incessantly at a shallow level across our lives. We partially listen, notice, wonder, care, make connections, ask questions, all the time never really arriving before some new door opens or message arrives and our focus branches off again. The emphasis is on being constantly available and alert to possibilities, but actually we never attend to anything completely. This creates a strange, hyper-alert un-



WATERCOLOR BY ALEXANDRA LANGLEY

belonging—and inaction.

At a time when decisive actions are profoundly needed in the world, we are instead suspended, stunned, our focus fractured. How do we muster the force to do what must be done? And how do we foster this force in young people?

The Waldorf curriculum, with its emphasis on meaningful work as a form of knowledge and door to thought, begins to answer these questions. A task such as carving a stone, creating a painting, or cooking soup requires both inspiration and drive. Working with our hands, we perceive within ourselves/ the world what can be and act decisively to both follow and guide our vision into being. When we learn and practice skills of making and movement, the will force is strengthened and encouraged. Waldorf students are intentionally and uniquely prepared in this way to bring their gifts into the world. This is something I did not fully understand as a Waldorf student until I started college, and experienced my own and other peoples’ awe and gratitude for the layered ways I was trained to think and respond creatively.

Perhaps because of the privilege and responsibility we have to use what we’ve been given, it is particularly disconcerting to experience fractured attention and indecision in Waldorf students. It indicates that our distracted and distracting culture permeates even schools and communities actively working to create another way.



WATERCOLOR BY ALLISON BOSHELL

After ‘*decision*’ I looked up the word ‘*attention*’, from Latin again, *tendere* meaning ‘to stretch’, the prefix *a-* adding ‘to/toward’’: to stretch toward. *Tendere* belongs to a family of cousins from various old European and Middle Eastern languages that conjure the image of both stretching and holding, a thin thread stretched or reaching. (The thinness of this thread also spun a root of meaning that gives us the words *temuous* and *tender*.) This time, the word-picture called to mind two different stories: Ariadne gifting Theseus with both a sword and the thread that would lead him back out of the labyrinth after slaying the minotaur; and the ancient Chickasaw story of Spider succeeding where other animals had failed by spinning a bridge and a gossamer bowl to bring a spark of fire across the water to humans.

Embroidered in the word ‘*attention*’ is a gesture: stretching toward. This seems to me to be a guide in the labyrinth of endlessly multiplying distractions. Steiner knew this when he spoke of our destiny coming to meet us from

the world, and it seems—particularly now—that we must offer our students something to stretch toward. Encountering the real world strengthens and protects the shining filament of attention by giving it something to reach, something that will hold the other end of the thread and connect us to our own true life. In the face of distraction and indecision, Waldorf already offers much, but in answer to our students’ struggles, parents and teachers can ask ourselves to practice the same qualities we are nurturing in them. We need to practice cutting away what does not serve so that what is true is called forth and stretching toward this truth, to be held and guided by it.

There are many questions we can ask when we see students struggling, poised but not entering their relationship with the world. Some of the braver ones are... What truly motivates our students and ourselves? What do grades really accomplish (could we abolish them)? Does college today actually prepare young people for the future they are facing? Does a schedule divided by

subjects into small chunks of time serve the treasure of their attentiveness? Is it time to draw out the more radical possibilities of a Waldorf school? How can we listen, and teach them to listen for what guides them into what Mary Oliver calls their “one wild and precious life”?* On a more practical and immediate level we can ask: what can we do (or not do!) today, this week, to create more time and space for the sense-able world to lean toward us and guide our decisions? What questions do we need to keep asking to hone our attentiveness so that it stretches across rivers and into stones and draws out the sparks and forms that we need at this time?

I have not found the solution since looking up these word roots. Instead, I share the words—envelopes containing story maps—with students struggling to take up the sword-chisel of *decision* and the thread of *attention* and bring their gifts to the world that holds them. And now I share them with you.

** From Mary Oliver’s poem ‘The Summer Day’*

SPECIAL SHOWING: *Screenagers*

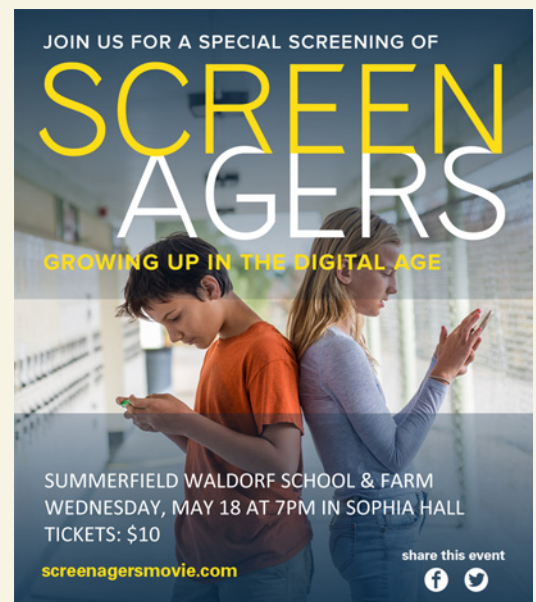
Summerfield is pleased to announce a community screening of the documentary *Screenagers* on **Wednesday, May 18 at 7pm in Sophia Hall.**

Screenagers is a thought-provoking, engaging documentary which makes us re-examine the role of screen-time in our lives and families.

The movie will be followed by a panel discussion. This event is open to all parents, as well as students from Grade 7–12 only. Tickets are \$10, available through [eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com).

Are you watching kids scroll through life, with their rapid-fire thumbs and a six-second attention span? Physician and filmmaker Delaney Ruston saw that happening with her own kids which started her on a question to delve into how it might effect their development. She learned that on average youth spend 6.5 hours a day looking at screens. She wondered about the impact of all this time and worried about the friction occurring in homes and schools when kids’ screen time was limited— she knew that friction all too well.

*As with her other two award-winning documentaries on mental health, Ruston takes a deeply personal approach as she probes into the vulnerable corners of family life, including her own, to explore struggles over social media, video games, academics and internet addiction. Through poignant and unexpectedly funny stories, along with surprising insights from authors, psychologists, and brain scientists, *SCREENAGERS* reveals how tech time impacts kids’ development and also offers solutions on how adults can empower their kids to best navigate the digital world to find balance.*



Pieces of April From Summerfield Farm

By Farmer Dan

Earlier last week while the school was on spring break, someone had forgotten to let one of our Mama sheep know, so her business went on as usual and she gave birth to a beautiful little boy lamb and, four days later, out popped his sister. We assume they are twins, both very healthy and unusually lovely with mixes of light and dark brown and white coats, with here a brown leg, then a couple white ones, then a very dark brown one. They have the most benign personalities and immediately stole the hearts of the students, first the Red Rose Kindergardeners and then the six graders who all took turns holding them. One of the six grade girls quietly said that she had never held a baby lamb before as it nuzzled under her chin and, since I often ask visiting adults to the farm how many of them have ever milked a cow or goat in their lives, my sixth grader's comment made me wonder what percentage of adults have ever held a newborn lamb?

After bushwhacking back the verdant spring growth in the farmyard and finally re-establishing the perimeters of the student gardens, we are now on our way to turning over the garden beds to plant for the fast approaching Farm to Feast celebration.

Even the sheep were freshly shorn this morning

under the watchful eyes of the third grade farmers. We learned that sheep have lots of blood vessels close to their skin so if the shearer is not careful and the clippers nick the skin it bleeds freely and is a very bright red. But with a little dose of antibiotic spray, it heals very quickly, not unlike our fathers' faces when they nick themselves shaving. This year's fleeces were unusually plush and, when thrown out on the skirting tarps, were white and beautiful in the midday sun. And after the new lamb's mama was shorn, there was that moment of confusion and hesitation when the lambs were let out to run to mama (after their traumatic separation) and they were not quite sure who the new, white, skinny sheep was without her woolly coat until they smelled the warm milk waiting for them just a short hop, skip and jump away. Soon their little tails were spinning around like corkscrews as they drank their fill of the warm milk and as they were licked back to feeling safe and secure.

Just before the spring break, two areas in the farmyard also got major makeovers. First was the area known as the Memorial Garden planted in honor of deceased community members as well as family of faculty members. In the heart of the garden, there is

a graceful flow form which in its unique way celebrates water

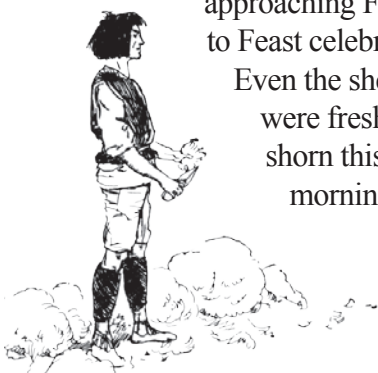
especially well. Over a



series of three workdays, a hearty band of high school students ripped up the old weed barrier, pruned things way back, turned over the rich soil, then covered the soil with a layer of cardboard over compost, and then replanted with a fresh mix of perennials. This was a high school project days' venture that truly was a gift of beauty to the farmyard.

Meanwhile, down closer to the farm kitchen, the sixth graders did the same to the raspberry patch, thoroughly weeding it, replacing plants that had died, laying down a rich layer of compost followed by cardboard, and then a rich, fragrant layer of wood chips. Some of the work was done in torrential rain showers, but the students persevered, wet hair slicked back with cool, fresh rainwater—a magnificent, living testament to what a group of hard-working, cooperative and exuberant sixth graders can accomplish if given the opportunity to dig into a hearty project.

Cecil Williams, the renowned pastor



of Glide Memorial church in poorer inner city San Francisco, sermonizes a lot about working and learning in community and what exactly that means. In some ways, Summerfield has undergone a challenging school year and yet we are still here and I like to think, as strong and united as ever, in spite of, and possibly because of, the challenges we face and how we face them. As students and parents climb the hill each morning to the classrooms, I see lots of healthy, smiling, capable, idealistic families striving to raise children who will have the strength to further the evolution of consciousness as they go forth to not just enrich themselves but to change the world.

Here is how Cecil William's defines what his community strives to be because, as I read it, I was not reminded of the current political travesty dominating the headlines, but rather of many of the values we are striving to bring about through our work together in faculty meetings for our students and parents in our beloved community. Here is how, as a pastor, he tells others who they are, the community of Glide Memorial:

We are :

Radically Inclusive~ We welcome everyone. We value our differences. We respect everyone.

Truth Telling~ We each tell our story. We each speak our truth. We listen.

Loving and Hopeful~ We are all in recovery. We are a healing community. We love unconditionally.

For the People~ We break through barriers. We serve each other. We change the world.

Celebration~ We sing. We dance. We laugh together. We celebrate festivals and life. Together.

Perhaps there is some encouragement to be found and a few reminders to our community in Cecil's wise words. Meanwhile the natural world is busy reminding us that it is certainly time to enjoy some pieces of April as the world is reborn before our very eyes.

Warmly, Farmer Dan

SUMMER CAMPS!

Come play at Summerfield this summer with many different summer camps to choose from!

Farm Camp (ages 4–5 and 6–10):

Farm work and animal care, herb and berry picking, cooking and baking, harvesting and gardening, stories and games, music and singing, crafting and more!

Earth Ecology Camp (ages 11–15):

Learn life skills in ecology where themes of fire, earth and water guide a curriculum full of gardening, composting, herbal crafting, fruit and berry picking, papermaking, cooking, solar energy, having fun and building community!

Circus Camp (ages 6-8 and 9+):

Clowning, juggling, trapeze, acrobatics, tightrope, stilts, unicycles, rolling globe, costumes, make-up, mask-making, performance and more!

Trapeze Camp (ages 8+):

Swing through the air on a full-size flying trapeze set up on Summerfield's back lawn. Classes taught by professional trapeze artists.

To register, and for more information, please visit summerfieldws.org/summerprograms.

Registration deadline for all camps has been extended to May 13.

~ Lisa Hensley

Clown Character Development Intensive!

Led by Christina Lewis of the Clown School of San Francisco, this intensive offers the opportunity to create a personal clown character based on your natural inclinations of movement, voice, gestures and inner feelings. Explore through improvisation, theater games, and physical comedy techniques. Pay special attention to playfulness and spontaneity. Inside of everyone lives a ridiculous character just "dying" to get out.

When: Saturday, April 30, 2pm-6pm & Sunday, May 1, 10am-2pm

Where: The Circus Waldissima Tent at Summerfield Waldorf School and Farm, 655 Willowside Rd., Santa Rosa, CA 95401

Cost: \$150 To enroll, or if you have questions, please email: benjamin.j.mew@gmail.com



Parzival England Quest

LAND OF THE ANCIENT DANCING STONES

Article and Sketches by Jessie Brandt, Twelfth Grade Student



THE DANCING STONES AND I

At Summerfield each junior studies the story of Parzival and his intense quest in life. As one year ticks by since last spring break, I look back with nostalgia to a particular 10 days in England. We traveled

together, a group of students from Summerfield, Marin Waldorf, Credo, and Drake. Our wonderful guides and trip creators Megan Neale, Adam Neale and Ken Smith formed a beautiful itinerary, their knowledge allowing us to dive into the story of each place, gathering our own thoughts and expression.

Our first stop, Emerson College, was infused with Anthroposophical energy. During our stay we shared cups of tea and wonderful meals. After a day of howling wind and the the Seven Sister Cliffs, we heard world-renowned storyteller Ashley Ramsey in the Storytelling Hut on the college grounds. The next morning was filled with English history and creative writing exercises with a very wise man, Paul Mathews. Later that day we visited the tallest spire in the world on the Salisbury Cathedral, incredible from the outside and the inside. The third day, sleepy and bundled up in rain clothes, we experienced the Avebury stones and cycle of monuments. The next morning we drove to Stonehenge for our special 6 am early entrance reservation, the day heavy with mist. I can't possibly describe the experience of standing among those giant dancing stones, a massive temple silencing me with their wonder. Ken guided us through and explained that it brought a sense of orientation to the people who built it. The world was just waking up as our group entered Stonehenge how the ancient

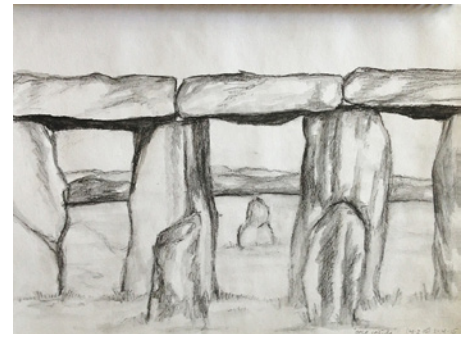
ones would have. As we trudged across the English countryside, the stone circle appeared, disappeared, and reappeared again over the hills. I voiced the connection to Parzival and his labyrinth of a life journey.

We made a stop in Glastonbury the next day at the Abbey, Tor, and gardens where the Chalice well lies. We drank from the holy water supposedly rusted with the blood of Christ said to rejuvenate you, and looked into the depths of the well, imagining the supposed Grail buried deep within. Onward to Cornwall we drove to a tiny harbor town, evenings spent laughing the night away in the common room of our hostel. Visiting the Tintagel ruins, we were greeted first by miniature horses who were interested in eating our art supplies. A classmate and I found a spot under a cliff overhang and napped for what felt like hours. The sun warmed us, balanced with a cool wind blowing. Later on, Ken told us that in the past people would go to overwhelming monuments and rest—an experience that is special to the presence of that place. I wrote:

"Held by power of Tintagel. She lay by me in this haven. Our sense of time broken."

On our last day in this area, we took a cliff-edge hike up and down across countryside, a clear day with a spectacular view of the Atlantic. The English landscape paired with the powerful ocean was breathtaking. For an afternoon snack we gobbled down cream tea: biscuits with jam and clotted cream, served with coffee or tea.

Barely anyone was up early the next morning except the creek through the town, active with the light of the rising sun. This day our group visited the Chalk Horse and bathed in the beauty of the surrounding hills. Our vans ventured "home" to Emerson, where I watched the sunset over the hill, alone, listening to the



'ONCE INSIDE' — STONEHENGE



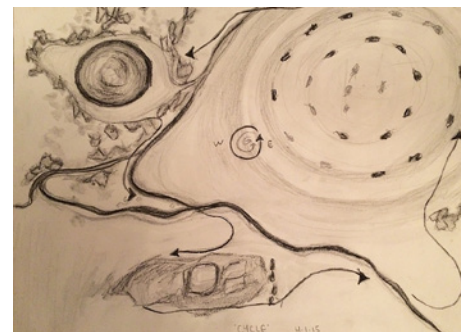
ENGLAND HILLS NEAR THE CHALK HORSE



INSPIRED BY A NIGHT HIKE



COUNTRYSIDE SKETCHED WHILE SITTING IN THE HOWLING WIND



'CYCLE OF SACRED MONUMENTS' — MY IMAGINATION OF OUR LIFE CYCLE IN RELATIONSHIP, CROSSING THE STREAM FROM LIFE TO DEATH (ENTERING THE BURIAL GROUND)

multitudes of bird calls living with the college. I was asked to create an evening program for our final gathering together: writing exercise, sharing, appreciation bit, music, looking forward. Ken read to us about travel: don't go away from yourself when around the globe, but travel to your own soul.

Here is a sample of a writing exercise:

Postcard addressed to:
Wind of England.

Dear Wind, The last couple of years I have hated you. I would insult you every time you visited me. Over this trip, a new relationship has grown. I love the way you touch the ocean, and make the trees sway. I love that you are strong enough to hold me or push me over. Most of all, dear wind of England, I love the way you play through the ancient monuments, making them come alive and dance.

Sincerely,
Jessie

P.S. See you back in CA

In closing, I want to emphasize journeys. An odyssey is a maze with walls so you cannot see—you must explore and make mistakes to move forward. A quest, on the other hand, I believe, is a labyrinth. There are no walls and you can, at times, see your destination. Your path is created by choice from an awareness of where you are.

Looking back at our England trip, with just weeks until I graduate from high school, light is shed on those moments before stepping into senior year. Now I begin making many decisions on my own, with a destination playing in and out of sight. Now I begin creating my own path in life.



LEAPING IN FRONT OF SALISBURY CATHEDRAL

Reflections one year later

Parzival is studied in Waldorf High Schools worldwide in eleventh grade. It deals with the evolution of consciousness and its story of the main character's search search for self meets the student's desire to find his/her own place in the world.

The Messenger asked Ken Smith, co-leader of the Parzival England Quest, to say something about the importance of journeys for Waldorf high school students.



PARZIVAL BY DAVID NEWBATT, FROM HIS BOOK PARZIVAL: THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL, REPRODUCED BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE ARTIST

It is absolutely possible today with our wonderful, convenient and efficient transportation technology to travel all around the world and to visit amazing places without having any meaningful inner experiences. An interesting side effect of the smart phone technology is that we are never out of reach, out of touch and have no need to rely upon our own resources or tap into our innate connectivity to the world around, to pay close attention, to listen to the sites, events and fellow travelers that we meet.

In contrast to this, in the past, people of every culture and around the globe made efforts to connect outer journeys in the world with inner life experiences. Whether a medieval pilgrimage, a knightly quest, a vision journey, a dreamtime walkabout. These outer journeys took the person through landscapes and architecture and meetings with others that evoked inner development and transformation.

To embark on such a journey today builds an important antidote to modern life—an appreciation for the value that the outer world has for our inner life. The world as a necessary place for inner growth. The world as place that has inner meaning for us—that can help as individuals to progress upon our unique journey.

When we visit ancient sites such as Glastonbury, Tintagel and Stonehenge, we have the possibility to be inwardly moved and changed when we connect to the transformative processes that are 'built into them'. This is one of the ways that as modern people we can characterize a 'sacred site'. We may no longer feel, as the ancients did that it's a place inhabited by the 'Gods' but we can sense and study the universal and timeless 'striving to become human' that it served.

A special feature of the 'Quest' to the UK was to connect to the special qualities that lived in the northern European peoples and that in some way still subconsciously work on in us. Certain aspects of human development took root and flourished in the English soil and came to expression in the semi-mystical figures of Arthur and Parsifal, their awakening to a new consciousness assisted by the ancient and wise figures Merlin and Trevrisent. The struggles they faced interwove the ancient elemental spirit world, the willful, aggressive energy of the knights, and the tender painful birth pangs of a new awareness. The places and events of these tales are part of our outer and inner heritage that characterize a step in our development towards modern western consciousness. Revisiting this ancient 'Quest' is a useful exercise in becoming aware of our current 'Quest' to find meaning purpose and direction in life and to find ways to heal the damaging 'side effects' of being a modern human being.

~ Ken Smith is the Director of the Bay Area Center for Waldorf Teacher Training, and father of Rowan (Class Five) and Josselyn (Class Seven).

Project Days

HIGH SCHOOLERS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES

This year's project days in the High School were a two-day window between two storms. We were able to engage in three on-campus projects and seven off-campus projects.

On campus we replanted and weeded the Memorial Garden, the High School Bio-garden and the Farm flow-form garden. Off campus, we worked at the Seed Bank, Food Bank, Olivet School, Shepherd School, Primrose for the elderly, Santa Rosa Creek, and Beach clean-up. We had a lot of thanks and appreciation from our project leaders, as our students have built relationships with these projects and take ownership and even leadership. The outer physical work builds an inner awareness for others, young and old, and for earth, seed and plant.

~ Ronni Sands, HS Gardening Teacher

In the morning, all the students at Summerfield gather for two days of work, to beautify their campus and their community. I, Oliver Simmons, am one of those students, and I will be telling you of my experience of the Summerfield work day.

It started after Main Lesson, and the day was such that we could still see our breath in the air, even in the late morning. We responded to roll call and gathered in groups respective of what we were going to be doing that day and the next. My group was in charge of converting a weed-filled dilapidated garden into something that would be nice to look at in the coming spring, most of all for Farm to Feast.

We arrived at the garden at the entrance to the farm, and I was immediately aware of how forgotten this garden had become, people becoming too busy to look after it all year. Our wonderful instructor, Dana, refused to let us become disheartened, and we promptly began to weed. Despite my misgivings and doubts, Dana had a vision of a beautiful garden in mind and, as we worked, I slowly began to imagine what the garden would look like. Soon my imagination blurred with my vision, as we began to transform the garden.

The weeds were the first to go, and we attacked them without mercy. The Bermuda grass posed a problem until someone took out the shovels, and it was removed within

the hour. The next obstacle was the weed cloth, a cloth-like material that was put under the garden to prevent weeds from sprouting. We removed this for the rest of the day, and when it came time to leave, I gazed at the garden with disbelief. We had removed every last weed, and the dilapidated patch of weedy soil was now only a dark brown color, waiting for plants. I walked away, satisfied and looking forward to tomorrow.

The next day, we rolled a giant roll of cardboard across the whole garden, obscuring the dirt from view. This would keep the weed population at bay until the flowers we were going to plant sprouted up. Then we shoveled woodchips. Wheelbarrow after wheelbarrow we filled, dumping the chips on the freshly laid cardboard. Races were common, two or more people trying to fill a wheelbarrow faster than the other, until chips were flying so thick and fast it looked like a swarm of angry black bugs. Yet still, Dana outshoveled us all.

We did that for most of the day, and when the pile of wood chips had gone from my chest to my toes, we stopped and planted flowers, placing gopher cages around each bulb.

At the end, I was flabbergasted. We had transformed the garden from a weed-filled disaster to a beautiful pre-garden. I can't wait to see how it looks in the spring.

—Oliver Simmons, Ninth Grade



I had an eye-opening experience at Olivet School during our last project days. Being in a special education classroom for two days exposed me to a new community and taught me about the power of connection between high school students and younger kids. Being a catalyst and watching a young boy overcome his fear of dirt through following my example, after only one day together, showed me that connection with others is powerful. It showed me that children will imitate those they look up to, and we need to lead by example. I have a new view of disabilities and people's capacities.

In the photo (above), this boy is holding dirt in his bare hands, something he had not done before. He did it by choice with me while making a Spring basket. We had met the day before.

—Mariah Lanphar, Tenth Grade



And from the perspective of a recipient...

Dear Ronni,

I just wanted to extend a HUGE thank you to you and your students from Summerfield Waldorf School for helping to repackage food. It is thanks to volunteers, like you, that we are able to serve over 82,000 of our neighbors in need every month.

Together, your group helped to provide over 8,000 meals for our neighbors! I have also attached a picture of our volunteer group.

Again, thank you for your hard work and dedication to ending hunger in our community. We hope to see you all back soon!

With gratitude,

Helen Myers
Volunteer Services Coordinator
Redwood Empire Food Bank



Dear Ronni and High School students,
Thank you for cleaning up and putting flowers in the garden.
Love, 3rd Grade



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), focusing

primarily on 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 well the medieval studies that they carry during the morning lesson, 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 quite 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 ...

(Continued on Page Seventeen)



PHOTOS: MIGUEL SALMERÓN

The Twelve Senses

BUILDING THE PHYSICAL AND SOUL FORCES IN PREPARATION FOR THINKING

By Debra Gambrell, D.O. and former SWSF parent

Dr. Susan Johnson, M.D. recently gave a lecture entitled, *Building the Physical and Soul Forces in Preparation for Thinking* at the SunRidge Charter School in Sebastopol. She explained her background as a developmental and behavioral pediatrician and her journey with both her brother and her own son with their developmental struggles. It was a wonderful two-hour lecture in which she brought the audience through the development of a child from birth to adulthood, with the ultimate goal of Thinking, Feeling and Willing from a place of higher soul consciousness, acting out of a truly free will.

Dr. Johnson spoke mostly about the development of the proprioceptive system, part of the ‘functional neurological pathway’ as it relates to the thinking of a child and beyond. She also talked about how to develop through the will forces the ‘functional neurological pathway’ senses and how they relate to the four thinking forces of ‘higher learning capacity’ senses.

Dr. Steiner spoke of the Twelve Senses of the physical body, divided into the Thinking, Feeling, and Willing Senses. The development of the proprioceptive system from ages 0-7 involves working with the four ‘willing’ senses, which are foundational neurological pathways (the *inner* senses), in order to access the ‘thinking’ senses, which are the ‘higher capacities’ (the *outer* senses). It is through the senses that we access cosmic thought.

These twelve senses are not to be developed simultaneously, for example the child is to develop their *inner* senses before their *outer* senses. In fact, developing the

Thinking senses before the Willing senses can result in a child that is pale, weak, and has poor memory. “The four senses of ego, thought, speech, and hearing are mainly concerned with cognitive ability... They are mainly directed towards the outer world and concerned more particularly with understanding it, with comprehension and the acquisition of knowledge.” (from: Childs, G. *Steiner Education in Theory & Practice*)

Note in the diagram below how the senses in the Willing category, which are foundational neurological pathways, correspond to the senses in the Thinking category, which are the ‘higher learning capacities.’

Strong Sense of Balance: Hearing Sense

The 8th cranial nerve is responsible for both balance and hearing. If a child has not learned how to balance in a “mind-free” way, that pathway is not available for hearing. There is only one road, and that road needs to have the proper foundational support before it can hold the bigger load of hearing. You cannot truly listen until the body is not thinking about not falling over.

Sense of Balance in a Waldorf education creates a strong, focused pathway for keeping the mind free for incoming information.

Strong Sense of Movement: Word Sense

The job of the second grade teacher by looking at how the physical body is developing, and indirectly through the person-house-tree drawing, is to know when the child is ready to develop the Sense of Word. The child should be able to be comfortable moving in three-dimensional space by age 7 or 8 (and be able to draw



RUDOLF STEINER

a three-dimensional person). The goal of the proprioceptive development in the first seven years is so the child can become “mind-free” in their movements, allowing the mind to be free to develop pictures for real learning. Dr. Johnson gave the example of being able to sit in a chair without falling over, being able to walk through a room without bumping into another child, to get the brain and body connection so secure that then the thinking goes free. This allows proper expression of the ‘higher capacities of being’ (the Thinking attributes).

In a related idea, Dr. Johnson then described how dyslexia can develop. Before the proprioceptive system is fully developed, the brain is not fully able to create a three-dimensional picture. And, the way in which proprioception develops also affects the picture created. For this very reason alone, trying to teach a child to read before they have a solid ability to create a three dimensional image in the mind, forces the child to put the letter or word in their right pre-frontal lobe of the brain, instead of where the letter or word belongs—in the left pre-frontal lobe. This sets up the child for dyslexia, dyscalcula, letter reversal, and poor spelling skills. By waiting until the child has three-dimensional awareness, reading can then be taught, and taken up naturally into the left brain by being able to use phonetic learning instead of visual learning. Just like with the cranial nerve 8 in the brain, there is only one initial track, it’s an express lane for one simple process. The right lobe of the brain needs to remain *open* and *clean* for the creation of images by the child.

As an aside, the consumption of images through media actually weakens the ability to form an image in the mind, and hijacks the necessary time needed to discharge between thoughts.) If this right lobe is filled up with an image of the word “fox” instead of an image of the *fox*, there is no room left for the child to create their own image. Ironically, teaching a child to read early can be *worse* than media viewing,

DIAGRAM OF THE TWELVE SENSES

THINKING	Ego sense, sense of the “I” Thought sense Word sense Sense of Hearing	OUTER senses
FEELING	Warmth sense Sense of Sight Sense of Taste Sense of Smell	INNER and OUTER senses
WILLING	Sense of Balance Sense of Movement Sense of Life Sense of Touch	(Hearing Sense) (Word Sense) (Thought Sense) (Sense of the “I”, the other) INNER senses

not including content of the media. The idea of getting a child to read early is romanticized—it is the goal of every parent that their child becomes a fluent reader. As a culture we do not pay attention to how that goal is reached, whether phonetically or by sight. But the very fact that we all want our children to read fluently, and actually comprehend, should give us reason to slow down and wait until the child is really ready.

Incidentally, this is one reason the preschool and kindergarten teacher will give an answer of “Possibly” or “I wonder...” Those open-ended answers encourage the child to consider many different answers to the question he has. This is, in essence, three-dimensional question answering. In this way, the teaching of a child, even at home with the parents, is that of creating more imagery space in the child’s mind, not filling the mind with facts.

Sense of Movement in Waldorf education creates space in the mind and body for three-dimensional thinking.

Strong Sense of Life: Thought Sense

A ‘strong sense of life’ means having the child live in their “buddha state.” This is a balanced autonomic nervous system with appropriate alternating states of sympathetic (fight or flight) and parasympathetic (rest and digest) periods. Our culture, however, is sympathetic dominant so it is our job as parents to provide a restful atmosphere where our child can have time to incorporate any learning that happens throughout the day. A ‘strong sense of life’ allows one to put meaning to things. When a child is in a relaxed state, they will be able to think about things, to assimilate data, new or old, into new ideas that put those ideas into context. The example Dr. Johnson gave was of being able to understand that birds share common characteristics; even if only a few birds have ever been seen, the child can surmise that a bird he’s never seen has feathers and a beak.

Sense of Life in a Waldorf education teaches the body how to rest, be still, and incorporate new information during that time of rest.

Strong Sense of Touch: Ego sense/Sense of other

Just as in the Steiner passage above, one must learn what oneself is before one has any idea what another is. Just like the other lower senses, touch is a sense that is learned while the child is asleep, in the first seven years. This is why we give the young child easy-to-digest foods that the body does not have to “awaken” to digest. When the appropriate ‘sense of touch’ is developed, the child can then easily recognize when something is not self, and how to appropriately react to that other, not under- or over-reacting.

Sense of Touch in a Waldorf education is to teach the child the boundary between self and other; with the final goal of putting oneself in another’s shoes.

For almost every child who does not progress on track, it is due to a proprioceptive disorder. Proprioception is the sense of childhood. This is the time in life when proprioception develops. This pathway is not complete at birth, it must develop slowly over the first seven years.

(Continued from Page Fifteen)

... 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 elaborate dialogues, interviews, reports, pamphlets, to do presentations in front of their peers, and to 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 from 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.



PHOTO BY 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.

The Messenger Marketplace

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Classes/Camps



Classes at Circle of Hands

Spring Fairy Doll Workshop: Make a 12"-14" magical creature in a light-hearted craft group led by experienced local "Waldorf doll" teacher, Truth Almond. Sat., May 14th, 10am-4pm. Cost of \$85 includes all supplies. Skin/hair/eye color options. Class is for adults, but kids can attend with accompanying grown-up.

Woodland House Workshop: Make a one-of-a-kind fairy or elf house out of nature's bounty of bark, burls and branches, led by master crafter Sharon Easley. Sat., May 28, 10am-2pm. All creatures 5 to 500 years old are welcome. Creatures aged 5-10 must attend with one adult (at no extra charge). Space limited. Cost of \$95 p/house includes all supplies.

Circle of Hands' Waldorf Shop. 6780 McKinley St. #120, Sebastopol—in the Barlow, 707-634-6140. circleofhands@sonic.net. Reserve your class spot with a deposit or by paying in full at the store or on our website: www.circleofhandswaldorfshop.com.

Engaging Art Camp

@ Summerfield for children ages 6-12. Walks in nature, exploring and creating with a variety of art forms: drawing, painting, sculpting an print-making. Dates: weekly 06/20; 06/27; 07/04. Register at artcampkuprian.weebly.com or call (707) 495-7543.

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.

Summer Preschool with Ms. Catherine is now enrolling!

Join Miss Catherine in the Rosebud classroom and play yard for a summer of verses and song, gardening, play time, seasonal tales, crafts and puppetry. Each weekly session runs Mon. through Thurs., 9am until 12:30pm. A hearty organic meal is provided. Cost is \$175/session. Registration forms can be found in the Main Office. Any questions? Please contact Miss Catherine at 575-7194, x322.

Services

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.

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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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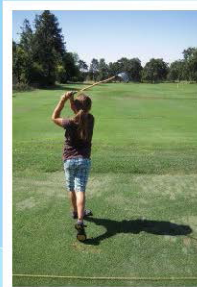
Help the MacKinnon family give a graceful retirement to what they now less-than-fondly call The Wreck, their 12-yr-old solo burley that's ... frankly ... falling apart. If you have a Burley (or equivalent narrow bike trailer) lying around your garage that might fit through our 27" door and gate to the bike trail, please let MacKinnon papa know. Thank you! Call Adam on 526.3972 or adammackinnon@gmail.com.

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