



In the Center

From the Office

It has been a busy fall at Mary Johnson Children's Center—it's hard to believe that we are already in November! It's been a joy welcoming new families and staff to Mary Johnson this fall. This is our first issue of the newsletter, and you can look for it quarterly.

This time of year, the classrooms spend a lot of time outdoors, both on and off the playground. They love exploring, taking long walks, and filling their "collection bags". We see the outdoors as a wonderful extension of the classrooms and we are fortunate to have so many lovely places to investigate. We are now getting into the cooler weather and we want to remind everyone to send your child with weather appropriate outerwear.

Our big annual fundraiser is coming up on December 7th at the Town Hall Theatre, 10am-6pm. We will be asking for volunteers to help us with set-up, greeting guests that day, and clean-up. If you have a pick-up truck and can help before or after with taking things to and from the Center, we would be most appreciative. Look for more information about the FOW coming soon! And thanks to all who helped with our recent Innisbrook Fund-raiser. It was a great success again this year!

Our third Strengthening Families session began in September. This session is currently full, but we are starting a list for the next session. Dates have not yet been set but it will probably begin in the spring. If you haven't seen the fliers, it's an evening program for families including dinner and group activities for adults and children. It promises to be a good time, a great learning experience, and there are great incentives included in each of the 14 weekly sessions. Stop by the office for more information.

Mary Johnson students were very excited to have a visit from the Fire Department this fall!



Mary Johnson
Children's Center

November 2013

Special Points of Interest

- **MJCC will be closed November 28 & 29 for Thanksgiving**
- **Our 21st Annual Festival of Wreaths fundraiser is coming up! December 7, 10am-6pm, Town Hall Theater**

NARNIA ~ Darcy, Christin & Angela

What a great start to a new year!! The Narnians have spent time getting themselves adjusted to a new environment and new people. They have also spent time getting to know and interacting with one another. They are excited and happy to see each other everyday and there are a lot of greetings and excitement during everyone's arrival. Over the past month we have spent time and continue to teach the children the routine and expectations within the room (up the stairs down the slide; carrying their plates to the garbage after mealtime; washing hands before every meal time; going to the book area after lunch for books; just to name a few). They have learned and responded well to these.



The Narnians continue to explore both in and out of the classroom. Water (Agua) has been a huge interest. The toddlers regularly climb the stool to turn on the faucet and play with running water. They are learning about cause and effect (turning the handle turns on the water and will release different amounts, although full blast is a favorite), how to fill and dump, how it feels, and much more. We have been using large tubs that we fill slightly with water and allow the children to explore it with their whole body. There has been a lot of delight with this!

We get out into the greater community on a weekly basis. The buggy and strollers are very popular and give them the opportunity to explore and become more familiar with Middlebury. We have been to various places at the college, the green, the toddler park, the "big woods", Shaw's, the Farmers Market, the Marble Works and the library.

Music has been of particular interest. The children love banging on the drums outside and the small drums we have in here. Other small instruments like bells and tambourines are popular, too. Darcy's son Zach brought in his saxophone one afternoon and that got the attention of many. The next day Cyrus's dad Zubin brought in his didgeridoo, which caused great excitement! Zubin has kept it here and the children continue to revisit it and have also discovered that paper towel tubes and a long cardboard tube that was brought in are very similar to the didgeridoo. We can also be found dancing to a variety of music throughout the day.



While we love being part of a large group, we also break up into smaller groups during the week. During this time, the studio is used; cooking projects have begun to take place; there is more water play; and a variety of art experiences are enjoyed.

Books are very popular within the classroom, especially if you can sing the book! Some of our very favorites: "5 Little Monkeys Jumping On the Bed", "We Went Walking" (we even created our own, be sure to check it out), "Dora", "Thomas", various versions of "Wheels on the Bus", "Pete the Cat" and "Va-va Vroom!"



Language, language, language!!!! The Narnians are exploding with new words, phrases and sentences! We are sooo excited to hear everything that they are saying and they are excited for themselves. Not only is the language exploding, but the general development. The Narnians are sponges and they are sponging everything up and squeezing it back out! It is a very exciting time right now and we can't wait for more!

THUNDERDRAGONS ~ Kristen, Sue & Amanda

Happy fall Thunderdragon families! We have had a fantastic and busy three months, and are all settled into our new classroom and routine. We especially enjoyed meeting with each of you and reflecting on all of the children's preferences, personalities, strengths, goals, and growth! Here are a few highlights of our time together since September:



Friendships are increasingly complex and important! The children are playing more cooperatively, and deepening their friendships. We see the children organizing play with each other and returning to their play themes day after day!

Much of their time together is spent pretending, showing flexible and creative thought. They are often animals, family members, travelers, and firefighters. We have recently noticed lots of doctor play and introduced props and X-rays to extend on this interest.

Monsters are another huge interest. Our favorite stories include monsters, and we are often hiding and running from them as we pretend outside. The children have also been representing monsters in their drawings and Model Magic creations. This topic has endless possibilities!

The children continue to love to paint each day! We have also been introducing some new techniques like gluing, cutting, and collage. We are looking forward to creating with wood and found materials, in response to the children's buildings and continued interests in representing animals and monsters.



We have had a blast exploring in the community, in small groups and as a whole group on picnic days. The children have especially enjoyed exploring by the waterfront and at the town green.



We play lots of catch! The children have been practicing throwing, rolling, catching, kicking, and batting at balls. The joy and giggles during these experiences are contagious!

The teachers are thinking about how to add more songs into our daily transitions. Let us know if you have any fun songs that you use in your routines!

CASPIA ~ Marcie, Matt & Yari

As winter approaches, the Caspians have begun to notice the temperature getting cooler. This has challenged Matt, Marcie and Yari to start planning for lengthier indoor projects that will sustain the children's interests, such as baking, natural material exploration, studio visits, beautiful stuff creations, etc. We will continue going outdoors and eagerly await the first snowfall so that we can kick off our sledding season. We also look forward to other outdoor activities such as skating at the Rec Rink, dropping off wreaths for the Festival of Wreaths (which will be held December 7th at the Town Hall Theater), and continued outdoor explorations such as animal tracks in Little Woods, etc.



As drawing challenge has been established, we see the children applying this newfound knowledge in the community around them and they can often be heard and observed pointing out patterns, shapes and lines on the signs, roads, etc. Over the next few weeks, we intend to bridge past drawing challenge concepts (shapes, lines) with a strong focus on letters and numbers. We look forward to watching the children in action as they have really come to look forward to this time.

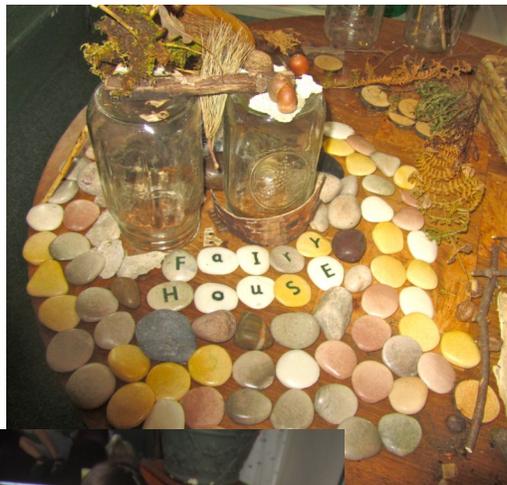
Thanks so much to everyone who was able to attend parent conferences; it was fantastic to catch up and talk about the Caspians. Please make sure that you have read all the notices sent home, so that your child has the necessities here to continue to explore comfortably and safely.

Until Next Time...





It seems that time is flying by as fall is already giving way to winter! We have been extremely busy getting out into the community and exploring favorite spaces. We couldn't have asked for more since fairies continue to be a main theme in our room and the children have been building fairy houses out of natural materials. On several occasions, we have gone to the "Big Woods" to make fairy houses as well as a monster house. The second trip showed that the houses had been disturbed, and several hypotheses were made about what had happened to them, including foxes and the fairies.



The children have taken full advantage of the desk to work on writing, as well as other creations since interest in letters, letter sounds, and words is huge right now in our room. They are asking teachers how to write words, creating their own words, and using other print in the room to help support them in their learning. Along these lines, several friends have asked to make story books and it's our hope to help move that process along during the cold winter



As the weather is getting colder, we have been doing a few more indoor activities. Cooking has become a ritual one or two times a week, making something to share with everyone for snack. The children have also become interested in sewing again. Many are working on puppets or dolls, as well as finishing up a few old projects. They are really motivated to get to the end product in order to "decorate" with buttons, pipe cleaners, string, ribbon, and wire.

We have also been going on many "trashy walks" to collect garbage alongside the road, as well as the high school. The children first noticed the garbage in the "Big Woods" and one child wanted to go on a "trashy walk" to clean it up. Since then the other children have become excited about helping to keep our environment clean. To go along with that, we read *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss and it has led to many discussions about animals, cutting down trees, and the Once-ler himself.

Please remember that since we are moving into winter you should replace summer clothes with winter clothes in their cubby basket, as well as a warm coat, hat, mittens, and footwear.

