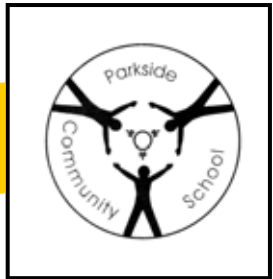




March 2009 Newsletter



# Parkside Community School

## Parkside Annual Fundraiser



Our annual fundraiser and music festival is right around the corner! We're still making some exciting last minute additions to the event, which you will be notified of as we get closer to the event.

**WHEN:** May 1st, start time TBA

**WHERE:** Mexican American Cultural Center, 600 River Street

Seating is limited to 200 and tickets are sure to go fast! Shannon will be pre-selling tickets soon in the front office. Tickets are \$50.

\*\*\*This is an **adult only** event and snacks and drinks will be provided. We are still in need of underwriters for this event. Please contact Harper Ferguson if you or your company is interested: [harper@bellafloracreative.com](mailto:harper@bellafloracreative.com)

### The entertainment...

The evening will be filled with multiple musical acts. Event attendees will see an amazing live performance by one of Austin's most unique voices, **Suzanna Choffel**. She "combines her poetic lyrics and sweet smoky voice with funky urban rhythms to create a fresh and unique sound. She uses her guitar to create staccato rhythms underneath her dazzling soulful vocal melodies, all backed by a pulsing band with unique instrumentation. Her music has been described as 'indie pop with urban beats', and 'jazz-infused soul pop' with comparisons ranging from Feist to Nelly Furtado to Norah Jones to Erykah Badu." To hear Suzanna, please go to [www.suzannachoffel.com](http://www.suzannachoffel.com).

Austin teen band, **Edison Chair** will also be performing. This 3-piece teen rock band combines vocal harmonies and Brit-pop melodies to make for an exciting live performance. To hear some of their music, please visit [www.myspace.com/edisonchair](http://www.myspace.com/edisonchair).



Along with Suzanna Choffel and Edison Chair, we will also see a very special performance by some of our own "Parkside Players"!

## Parkside Spring Campout - April 17th & 18th

The Parkside Spring campout is coming up in mid-April and we're already starting to get excited about it. The Fall and Spring campouts are a great time for families, children, staff and friends to come together and enjoy the fantastic weather and beautiful outdoors. More information about the specifics of the campout will come as the date approaches.

Heather Kuhlken has written a wonderful and informational letter to the Parkside community about how we can keep the campground area the way we keep our community: free of trash and waste.

Please go to page 4 to read Heather's letter!



### Inside this issue:

*Goodbye letters- Laura & Molly	2
*Goodbye letter- Amanda	3
*Nutritional Deficit Disorder	
*Maintaining a clean campsite, by Heather Kuhlken	4
*Welcome Nicholas Arthur	5
*Calling all Parkside Alumni!	
*Parkside Rewards Program	
*Parkside thanks...	
*Aviary news	6
*Science Fair	
*Marathon Kids	7
*Staff highlight - Tom Echols	8
*Class News - PI	9
*Class News - PI I	10
*Class News - LEI	11
*Class News - LEI I	12
*Class News - UPE	13
*April Calendar	14
*May Calendar	15

## Some Changes at Parkside

Dear Parkside Families,

We want to share with you the information we have at this time concerning our Staffing for each of our classrooms for the 2009-2010 School Year. We are fortunate to have the majority of our Staff returning. We will mostly be feeling a shift in our support roles.

**Primary I** - Melanie Moss - Returning. Amanda Riemondi is moving to Pennsylvania with her husband.

**Primary II** - Toni Norton and Lisa Miele - Returning

**Lower Elementary I** - Laura Agnew is retiring from teaching - We love you Laura! Erica Burkham has spent this year preparing to take the lead.

**Lower Elementary II** - Camille Latour - Returning. Molly Manewal will be traveling to Bali to share her loving gifts with the world!

**Upper Elementary** - Catherine Sherwood and Melvin Blackburn - Returning

**Technology** - Dave Heath - Robo Dave, as we know him, is considering retirement. We love him too much to let him go!

**Afterschool** - Alyssa Kirwan and Nick Arthur are undecided at this time.

Administration

**Shannon Stephens** - Front Desk Manager - Returning

**Harmoni Kelley** - Administrative Assistant - Returning

**Linda Eagan** - Administrator - Returning

Joe and I continue to be committed to our Parkside community. We have put our hearts and souls into creating a healthy, wholesome learning environment for the whole family. We strive to find Staff members who are gifted with children, whose hearts are healthy and whose minds are bright and creative. We've been fortunate to attract individuals who are great role models, heroes and heroines for the children to admire. Our commitment to you is that we will continue this tradition of excellence. We will find the Staff that will assist us with our mission: Montessori From The Heart.

Most Sincerely,

Joe and Claire

Please see the letters from our dear Staff...



### From Laura in LEI:

Dear beloved Parkside families,

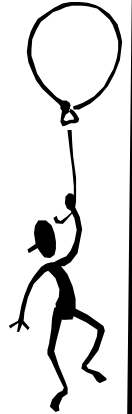
After much soul searching, I have decided to retire from teaching at the end of the 2009 school year. As I approach my 51st birthday there is much I still long to do. I miss playing music and dancing, I would like to travel more, my parents are ageing and need more support, personal relationships outside Parkside need some TLC and most importantly as I navigate this transition in my life my own spiritual and creative life require and deserve more space. All of this is not possible within the context of being a full time, dedicated guide.

I treasure and hold dear the relationships I have developed at Parkside with faculty and staff, with the parents and especially the children. Thank you for your trust and the opportunity to grow and learn with your precious children.

Future involvement with Parkside in some new iteration remains a possibility; in the meantime, I will do my best to ensure a smooth transition. I have every faith in Erica's ability to take over as lead guide. She is a natural with the children and is establishing bonds with them as she gets to know their academic and emotional needs this year.

Love,

Laura



**From Molly in LEII:**

To the Dear Parkside Community-

During these last many weeks of cold weather my mind has drifted to the tropics. Two years ago I spent some time in Bali and was struck by the beauty of the place and its people. During a stream of consciousness websurfing episode recently, I stumbled upon a new school in Bali that struck me to my core. Along with a stellar holistic curriculum, they are exposing the children to permaculture ideas and teaching stewardship of the planet. As a new school, they are upping their enrollment and adding new faculty members. I feel I must pursue this amazing opportunity. I have always wanted to live and work overseas. Even though I will not know for several weeks or even months if I will be hired there, I must give adequate notice to Parkside so that Joe and Claire are able to find the truly incredible person that will be Camille's next partner.

Thank you to the families for making me feel so welcome in their children's lives. It is such a joy to be with them every day. I have been so blessed to experience this community and will take with me the commitment to interdependence and learning that Parkside has rekindled in me. Maybe I can spread Simple Gifts around to the other side of the world!

Much love and light,

Molly



**...And from Amanda in Primary 1:**

Dear Parkside Friends and Family,

Sometimes opportunities arise in life that you just can't pass up. My husband and I have always wanted to try out Pennsylvania life. Our families both come from the area, and we both still have numerous friends and family members nearby. Recently the opportunity has arisen for us to move into the home my husband's family built in 1915, in the borough of Fleetwood, Berks County, Pennsylvania. My husband now works from home and is no longer required to be in Austin for his work. So, we've decided to be adventurous, put our house on the market, and move!

Sadly, though, this means I will not be assisting in Primary 1 next year. I love and cherish all of your children and will miss them dearly. I'll have memories and photos of their beautiful faces to remind me of my Parkside family while I'm away.

Thank you all for your support and patience through this difficult decision. The life lessons and friendships I've made here will carry me through to the next stage of my life. Don't worry though, I plan to be back in Austin within a year or two. Parkside will always be my family and Austin will always be my home!

Love you all!

Amanda



**More information on the link between nutrition and ADHD in children**

In our November 2008 newsletter, we included an article about the effect of food additives on children and links to hyperactivity. Toni shared another article from *Tomorrow's Child Magazine* with us about **Nutritional Deficit Disorder (NDD)**. The article is based on an interview with Dr. Bill Sears, an Associate Clinical Professor of Pediatrics at the University of CA, Irvine. It's so important for all of us to understand that the food that we are feeding our children is having an effect on their health, temperament, ability to concentrate, etc...

In the article, Dr. Sears outlines points such as:

- The importance of a high protein breakfast
- Supplements: what is essential?
- Exercise
- Smart foods for children: fish, smart carbs, "blue foods", etc...

More information on this topic from Dr. Sears can be found on his website:

[www.askdrsears.com](http://www.askdrsears.com)

## Maintaining a waste-free campsite - A note from Heather Kuhlken

Dear Parkside Campers,

Here at Parkside, we have made it one of our missions to teach our children to be good citizens of the world. One of the ways we have done that is by giving our kids no-trash lunches. Everyone has been doing such a great job reducing our footprint on the planet while at school. Now it is time for us to try to reduce our footprint while we are camping. There is a program called "Leave No Trace" which teaches people how to camp and enjoy the outdoors while making as little impact as possible. In general, the rule is that if you bring it, you leave with it, or "pack it in, pack it out." On our last couple of campouts, our family was one of the last to leave Pedernales Falls. There was a substantial amount of trash, dishes, food, and clothing left behind (we filled more than two big black trash bags). I have been thinking about it and I have come up with a few ideas of how we can "Leave No Trace" this April.

The first is that after we finish our potluck dinner, everyone could pick up all of their dishes, food, plates and trash and put it away before the singing begins. The second part of the plan is that everyone make a sweep of their camping area in addition to the table area and the river area before they leave Pedernales Falls to go home. If every family does this, we should be able to leave the campsite cleaner than it was when we arrived. As a science teacher, I played a game with my students called "Plastic Jellyfish" where the kids did a beach cleanup and then looked at the trash they picked up and tried to imagine what marine animal would eat it thinking it is food. Most stranded marine mammals, turtles, etc... have bellies full of plastic because when it is floating in the ocean, it looks just like jellyfish (plastic grocery sacks) or reflects light like fish scales do (six pack rings and plastic bottles), so they eat it. Since we are camping directly on the river, our trash washes down the river and straight into the ocean. We need to be especially careful to leave a clean campsite and river's edge so that we do not feed plastic (or socks, T-shirts and sand toys) to marine life.

When cleaning up last spring and fall, the most common items I picked up were glow sticks and glow necklaces. Not only are they plastic, the active ingredient in glow things is BPA - which we have all read is harmful not only to your health, but also to the environment. I have found an alternative which uses LED light and replaceable batteries in a necklace/headband that can be cinched around your child so that they can still be visible at night. They are not quite as fun as making designs with the necklaces and bracelets, but they are equally visible in the dark and they are re-useable, so they do not create very environmentally damaging trash. Not to mention, when they break, they do not cover your child in BPA. I am going to try to place a bulk order of these for the school next week. They are \$4.80 each and come in red or green. There are also disco color-changing ones, and they are \$6.00 each. If you are interested in purchasing one or several for your family, please email Shannon at [frontoffice@parkcs.com](mailto:frontoffice@parkcs.com).

The website for the lights is: [www.niteize.com](http://www.niteize.com) and the product is called "tail lights." Also, if you have found a different product that accomplishes the same goal, I would be interested in hearing about it.



## Welcome Nicholas Arthur!

For those of you who haven't met him yet, Nicholas Arthur is Parkside's newest staff member. He is currently in charge of the

after-school program with Alyssa. If you haven't done so yet, stop in and introduce yourself. The children seem to really be taking a shine to him!



## Help us contact Parkside Alumni!

We are currently in the process of revamping our Parkside website and would like to include stories and quotes from previous Parkside students. If you are in contact with any Parkside Alumni, have them contact us! We'd love for them share their stories with current students and families!



## Parkside Reward's Program

Every year, Parkside receives donations through a shopping rewards program. If you shop at any of the stores below, you could be sending Parkside a percentage of what you spend. Simply go to the store's online sign-up page (listed) to get started.

**Target RedCard** - enroll in their "Take Charge of Education" program at [www.target.com](http://www.target.com). ID # is 110553

**Office Depot** - sign up for their "Back to Schools" program at [www.officedepot.com](http://www.officedepot.com). ID # is 2006118273

**Randall's** - Go to <http://www.randalls.com/corporate/app.pdf> to sign up for a Remarkable Card. Then go to [http://www.randalls.com/corporate/GN\\_HOUSTON\\_AUSTIN.pdf](http://www.randalls.com/corporate/GN_HOUSTON_AUSTIN.pdf) to designate Parkside as a Good Neighbor. ID # is 396

## Thanks for Everything!!!

Parkside would like to thank Casa de Luz for providing us with healthy, organic lunches at generously discounted rates for students and staff members. Thanks for keeping us healthy!



We would also like to extend a thank you to Bicycle Sport Shop for their ongoing scholarship donations. You have given so many families the opportunity to join the Parkside Community.

## Parkside Aviary News

Spring is here and the Parkside parakeets are ready to nest. You may notice there are new nest boxes installed and fewer birds in the aviary. Eight birds have been removed to temporary foster homes. This is necessary for several reasons - 1) we don't want to be overloaded with babies; 2) we must adjust to the appropriate gender ratio; 3) prevention of breeding between the Standard and the English parakeets; and 4) age/temperament/health of the parakeets.

As the birds begin to think about nesting there is always plenty of drama in mate selection. Eventually, some of the birds will bond which is evident when you see the male "kissing" the female. He's really feeding her in anticipation of the time when she will not leave her nestbox and rely completely on the male for her food and food for the hatchlings. In the parakeet world, survival of offspring is dependent on *both* parents. There is an additional battle for choice nestboxes which seems to have no rhyme or reason.

The Lower Elementary I and Primary II classrooms have taken on the responsibility of fostering some of the parakeets who will not nest. Leah Himmel, past Parkside parent and aviary assistant visited both classrooms to introduce the parakeets and discuss appropriate care. The students learned some fun facts about how to tell a boy from a girl (the color of the *cere* - see if your child remembers the answer - the patch above the beak with the nostrils is blue for boys and brown for girls) and the Aboriginal word for parakeet - *Budgerigar*.

The Upper EI Aviary Team is doing an excellent job of observing the parakeets and there have been two eggs so far. Usually the first few eggs are infertile, so we can't say for sure if we'll really see babies before the end of the school year. Since we do not allow nesting year-round we're keeping our fingers crossed for some new Parkside parakeet offspring! Special acknowledgements are given to Anais Rose-Carter and Beau Kalbacher for their diligence and knowledge of parakeets.

We're keeping our fingers crossed for at least a few offspring so the students can experience the wonders of Mother Nature firsthand as well as expand their knowledge base of avian anatomy and physiology.

Happy chirping!

~ Leah Himmel



## SAVE THE DATE!!!!!!

Our **Science Fair** presentations are on **Friday, April 17th from 12:30 - 1:30 pm**  
in our classrooms.

We look forward to seeing you!

The children will soon be choosing a science concept to be exhibited by an experiment, model, or collection.



## Marathon Kids - A note from Tara Thompson



This year, Marathon Kids was coordinated by myself and Simon Studd with the support and help of Rosanne Nikolaidis and Rachel Jacobson. Although, with all the parents showing up and providing lots of support and help it was hard to tell who was organizing the program, which was so awesome! Since this was my first time with Marathon Kids, it was so great to get to know other students and parents. It made me feel more connected to the



Parkside community.

We had about 55 students from Primary to Upper Elementary sign up to participate in the program – yeah! There were 20 students representing the Primary I and II classrooms, 27 students representing the Lower Elementary I and II classrooms and 8 students representing the Upper Elementary. The kids



were so great; showing up, leading warm-ups, running with enthusiasm, maintaining trail etiquette and managing to socialize with each other along the way and get to know one another better.



At the end, there were 38 students who ran the required 26.2 miles and earned a t-shirt and medal! Way to go everyone! Many thanks to Simon who planned the routes, made sure we ran a half mile every Tuesday and Thursday, and kept up with the fast students even when he was injured and sick. Thank you!

All the students who completed their mileage deserve their medal and t-shirts and if they had ones for the parents – they would all deserve them too. However, I want to acknowledge one person from the class. She deserves the “best dressed for running” award. Phillip Sansone’s grandmother showed up dressed for work – suit and nice boots with heels and she actu-



**Way to go  
Parkside!!!!**

*Trans-Siberian Orchestra*

Parkside would like to send a gracious thank you to The Trans-Siberian Orchestra for another generous donation to our Music Program. Joe attended the concert at the Erwin Center and went up on stage to receive the check for \$7,216. This is our 3rd year to receive a donation from the TSO! These donations help us share the joy of music with our community here at Parkside and teach our students of the important role that music has in our world. Thank you to the Trans-Siberian Orchestra for making this possible!

## Staff Highlight - Tom Echols

**Tell us about where you grew up. Are you from Austin or did you move here recently?** I grew up in Fort Smith, Arkansas, which is in the southern tip of the Ozark Mountains. Originally, I moved to Austin in 1999 to study with my teacher, Adam Holzman, at UT, where I earned my Master of music degree. In 2003, I moved to LA for 5 years for my Doctorate at USC, and, while LA is a wonderful town, I'm very happy to be back! I moved back last July after finishing my degree

**What was your experience at the University of Texas like and what exactly did you study?** It was a wonderful experience. The Classical Guitar Program is very challenging, and Adam is one of the finest pedagogues that there are. In addition to practicing around 35 hours every week, attending my lessons and coachings, studying music history, theory, aesthetics, and pedagogy, I was lucky to be Adam's assistant, which allowed me to learn through mentorship how to teach the classical guitar very effectively.

**Is teaching music to children something that you had thought about doing as you were getting your education at UT?** Of course. Teaching and performing are two sides of the same coin for me, and teaching is a wonderful way to directly share my love of music with other people. Working with children is a very rewarding experience, and I always thought it would be a fun thing to do.

**What types of things do you enjoy doing when you're not playing or teaching music?** Seeing friends. Reading. Riding my bike. I love to travel, too.

**Tell us about one of your favorite things to do or places to go or foods to eat in Austin.** Barton Springs pool is one of my faves. I'm a big fan of Casa de Luz as well.

**Have you traveled outside of the US? Where have you been and was there a place or an event that stuck out most in your mind from those travels?** I've been to Europe several times. I studied for three summers at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena Italy. For anyone that has seen the most recent Bond film, Siena takes up the first 15 minutes or so of the movie. Siena is a preserved medieval town in the hills of Tuscany. They have horse races in the summer that are full of lots of 14<sup>th</sup> century stylings, and they have a music festival that is incredible. Walking through the labyrinthian streets of Siena leaves you feeling like you just stepped out of a time machine. Tuscany is definitely my favorite place that I've been.

**Since many of us might not know yet, could you tell us more about your "ping pong ball piece as thumbnail" philosophy?** It's actually a well-kept secret among classical guitarists. It turns out that a piece of a certain brand of ping-pong ball (secrets of the trade) sounds really good when glued underneath your normal nail. Some people use ping pong balls for all of their nails. I use one for my thumb only, because I like the sound it gets, and I tend to do some techniques borrowed from the *flamenco* tradition that are a bit rough on a normal thumb nail. Weird, huh? Classical guitarists use nails in the right hand technique to get a good tone and a wider palette of colors. Once children reach a certain age, I discuss this sort of thing with them and their parents, in case they want to move in this direction.

**When you're at home or driving in your car, what's your favorite type of music or an artist that you always seem to gravitate to? Do you have any guilty pleasures?** That's a big one. I love great music in any genre. I listen to a lot of classical music of all time periods and genres. Monteverdi, Bach, Brahms, and Messiaen are some of my favorites. I'm a big fan of lots of bands. Charlie Parker is one of my heroes. I'm also a big fan of Tom Waits. This is a hard question to answer in a small space. A guilty pleasure is Prince. I love Prince.

**Do you have any pets?** A cat named ziggy

**Is there a person in your life, either recently or when you were younger, who really made a big impression on you or changed your life in some way?** Oscar Ghiglia, who I studied with in Italy.

**Have you seen any live music shows in Austin that you have really enjoyed or that you frequent?** The other night I saw a show with Mike Nicolai backed by Grand Champeen that was great.

**What's your favorite book?** Ulysses by James Joyce

**What do you love most about living in Austin?** The people!

## Class News - PI

Top of the Mornin' to you Parkside! Spring has sprung at last! The birds are nesting in the aviary and the children have been busy with turning the soil and planting beautiful flowers and seedlings in the central courtyard. This exciting time naturally flows into scientific explorations like parts of a plant, parts of a flower and botanical shapes and leaf hunts. We will begin our traditional spring project of sprouting winter rye seeds in soil which is placed inside a festive spring basket. The process takes about 10 days; the children beam with joy at the sight of their living centerpiece for any springtime occasion.

Our work periods have grown longer and more productive. All of our work as a community is finally paying off in a big way. Excitement for learning is high and explosions into language, reading and math are happening daily. We'll be motivated to keep up the pace for the final nine weeks of the school year, so rest well and eat breakfast whenever possible.

We will begin planning and practicing for Spring Cultural Challenge in the next weeks. Each primary child will be included in some group performances; yet no child will be asked to perform if the strong desire to do so is not voiced. We believe that at the primary level this is a chance to have fun and enjoy time on stage with out undo stress pressure. Everyone ends up feeling enjoyment and a sense of pride for whatever they do. Cultural Challenge is scheduled for May 18-22<sup>nd</sup>. Primary One will perform on May 18<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 AM. We'll be excited to see you all there.

The time is growing near for Spring Conferences. We will post a conference sign-up sheet outside our door and will do one conference per afternoon until all 24 are achieved. We look forward to sharing all of our new developments and milestones which have occurred over the last few months.

Please mark you calendars for the Tuesday before the last day of school for the traditional "Gates of Life" ceremony held inside the classroom. This special event is for graduates and children who are moving to new school experiences. We honor each child's time with us and acknowledge their individual passing from this beautiful nest onto exciting new adventures and experiences. Parents of the graduates and grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, are all welcome for this heartfelt tear jerking event.

Summer birthdays will all be celebrated on one special day before the end of the year (soon to be announced). We'll have a festive pizza party with decorations on the courtyard tables and honor each child with their story of life provided by the parents ahead of time.



It is an honor to be trusted and supported by each of you in our joint effort to make every day of these children's lives productive, exciting and even magical. They have all succeeded in building themselves into happy capable children with a joy of learning and curiosity and thirst for knowledge about all things. Thank you for sharing your children and your lives with us throughout the seasons of the year.

**Melanie and Amanda**

## Class News - PII

In Primary II we've been sowing the seeds to germinate concepts and ideas in a myriad of areas since the new year. Current topics of discussion range from the following:

- **Being a "peacekeeper"**- practicing peaceful conflict resolution, expressing one's feelings and standing up for self or others to initiate resolution for positive change!
- **"Please be kind and safe"** - using real life examples from the playground, work period, lunch or departure to bring our daily mantra to life.
- **Friendly vs. unfriendly actions** - pushing, rushing, interrupting; how to be more graceful and respectful of one another.
- **"Making new friends"** - creating understanding that you can have as many friends as your heart can hold. Discussions about all the places we can make new friends!
- **Excluded vs. included** - encouraging others to join in rather than being threatened by their participation and how it feels when we are left out.
- **Leadership** - those willing to give of themselves to help others and lead the way!
- **Passion vs. Restraint**- resisting personal impulses and striking a balance in behavior bringing grace, reverence and order to our community.

The children of the extended day have created peace puppets which we have used to dramatize cause and effects of these concepts. We will keep them at school and use them from time to time as the need arises.

Thank you to all of our supportive parent volunteers for giving of their time, energy and resources to our class. Ran Willmann has been pivotal in her assistance in putting together our 1st annual Primary II calendar. There are still some available in the office should you just want one for a keepsake! Numerous others have contributed to our wish list fulfilling necessary, unusual or perhaps a little extravagant requests. Thanks to Will McBurnett for the lovely new picture frame, the Pugh family for the red gems, the Reid's for the egg shells, the Clarks for the flowers, the Cobb family for the hotel soaps and all of you others we might be forgetting. Special thanks to the Cohagen family for caring for our birds during the recent Spring Break! Your concerted interest in the needs and well being of our class help us to thrive.

The Spring season marks new beginnings for many. We have recognized the change in seasons by pulling, raking, weeding and planting in our courtyard. The children have taken great pride in beautifying our corner of the courtyard. This has sparked renewed interest in leaf shapes, flowers and insects.

We are honored to be fostering two beautiful parakeets, leaving necessary privacy for the mating of others pairs in the aviary. Thanks to Leah Himmel our resident "bird lady", who provided a most interesting and exciting presentation regarding the birds. The children suggested various names but the final vote found Sky for the blue colored parakeet and Sun for the greenish-yellow the most popular. The children were given the responsibility to observe, and care for the birds for the community and they are thrilled to have the chance. Each week a different child feeds, waters and helps clean the cage. If all goes as planned we will have eggs in the aviary and baby birds before schools end!

Our annual Spring Egg Hunt is just around the corner. We plan to seed our baskets and watch for growth in the coming days. Seasonal arts and crafts will soon color the children's artistic themes and dying eggs is always a fun outdoor activity. Thank you parents for responding by sending in your baskets on short notice!

The children are always eager to assert what they know about their world and their classroom. We invite you again, to come in for a visit when possible. Shannon can schedule observation appointments for M-Th for about a 45 minute visit. It is said that we work, and sleep in cycles, 45 minute cycles. Therefore we try to get in 2 1/2 cycles, per morning as the process of self discovery in context to the group is most time consuming. Please come in and catch part of our morning work cycle. Parents whose children are approaching 4 1/2 yrs. should come in to observe the afternoon to get a glimpse of the difference between the two programs.

Please note our upcoming Parent Gathering on April 7, 2009. We look forward to mixing, sharing and learning more about the child's mysterious powers of early development in context to the primary 3-year cycle. Please RSVP at your earliest convenience to let us know your intentions, so that we can make adequate provisions.

Our Best Always,

**Toni and Lisa**



## Class News - LEI

It is hard to believe Spring break is already over! The children have been fully immersed in the wonder of springtime. We've been learning and exploring so much about seeds, roots, leaves and the natural miracle of photosynthesis. Everyone has had a chance to get their hands in some dirt and see the fruits of their labor, as the seedlings peak out of the ground. There is something magical about sharing the wonders of nature with children and observing their delight when a seed grows or a strawberry emerges from a flower. We have also been dissecting flowers and exploring methods of seed dispersal.

Alongside our gardening, and botany lessons we've been reading The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett. It coincides with the change in springtime, but also Mary's ability to make changes in her own character to better her relationship with others.

All of this garden work would not be possible without aid from our garden coordinator Elizabeth Kalbacher! Also, thanks to these individuals for helping the children work in the garden: Reese Duck, Michelle Adams and Blanca Buentipo. Thank you for bringing in herbs Jackie Moreno. Also thanks for those who signed up to check with the watering of the plants: Delia Castillo, Steve Sanderson, Rosanne Nikolaidis, Anita Lane, Katherine Patton, and Deb Lewis. Thank you also, Maria Jose and Dina Nassour for the gardening tools and to Tom Wissemann for getting the plants. The combined effort of all of these parents has been so helpful in the success of our community garden.

We had quite a lively Mother's and Father's nights this year. We both received a lot of positive feedback from parents who got lessons from their children. The preparation for these nights included all the children teaching each other as they practiced and created some vibrant work periods.

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

The last two months of the school year fly by. Make note of upcoming events:

**Parent/Teacher conferences:** Friday, May 1<sup>st</sup> (student holiday)

Many afternoon slots are available between March 24<sup>th</sup> and May 14<sup>th</sup> (After school care is available for free during your conference.)

**Science Fair: Friday April 17<sup>th</sup>** Open house for parents from 12:30 - 1:30. More details to follow.

**Cultural Challenge:** Wednesday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

### Summer Birthday Celebrations:

Austin Engelhardt, India Patton - Monday, June 1<sup>st</sup>

Ben McCord, Ashna Bhansali - Tuesday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>

**Graduation/ Last day of school:** Wednesday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>.



Peace and blessings,  
**Erica and Laura**

## Class News - LEII

Spring has sprung and we are in full swing in LE 2!

We have been exploring lots of science this semester beginning with mixtures, suspensions and solutions. We have been observing how different particles react to each other. Some are attracted to each other, some are not, and some seem to “play well” together for a while and then “fall out”, forming a sediment. We have also studied saturation, super-saturation, and crystallization.

We had an especially fascinating discussion on vaporization and condensation as we considered the process of the water cycle and how that relates to our class terrarium (that always stays moist even though we never water it!).

We have been exploring the “work of air” (what makes wind, sea breeze and land breeze, the different temperature zones on earth, orographic rain, etc.), and have begun the “work of water”. We are looking forward to the Science Fair in April!

Our Montessori curriculum offers such wonderful opportunities to find connections between subjects. For instance, we were studying the collaboration of leaves and roots in working together to help plants get water. Similarly, the human body has many systems that work together for the survival of the individual. We recently began the exploration of the body systems. The story we began with was called “The Great River”, and it illustrated for the children how our brain is like the government, or the President of the body. Our immune system is the body’s “department of defense”, always on guard for problems like sickness or injury. The Great River, itself, is our circulatory system—responsible for transporting oxygen and nutrients throughout the body. We then discussed similarities and differences between veins in a plant and veins in a human. We also compared and contrasted a human sweating to moisture evaporating from the leaves of a plant.

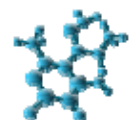
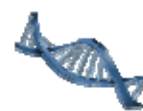
We have also enjoyed an exploration of timelines and cultures in History. We have studied the ancient Chinese, the ancient Egyptians, The Zulus, and the Masai. Recently the U.S. History Timeline has sparked specific interest in explorers who ventured to “The New World”. Our community has heard and discussed the colorful stories and travels of Magellan, Columbus, Sir Francis Drake, Amerigo Vespucci, and Cortes (and the severe effects of the latter’s presence and actions on the Aztec civilization). The story of Sir Francis Drake led to a discussion on how different cultures perceived the same man quite differently. Drake was considered a hero to the English, but a pirate to the Spanish. The Spanish people even nicknamed him, “The Dragon” because of all of the destroying and stealing he did.

There is always an opportunity for gratitude to be had, as we found when we delved into the “Columbian Exchange”. We learned what favorite foods and goods we (in the New World) enjoy because people from Europe (The Old World) brought them over seas.

Speaking of gratitude, a big thanks goes to Nia Bonds (Gyasi’s mom), who presented an exciting lesson in February on important black leaders and inventors (such as: Carter G. Woodson, Benjamin Banneker, Elijah McCoy).

We look forward to a dynamic and wonderful semester full of lots of great adventures and joy!!! See you soon!

**Camille & Molly**



## Class News - UPE

### Geography and Social Studies:

Our big project at the beginning of this semester was an exploration of Carbon Footprints of human beings from different cultures. We took our inspiration from the books, *Material World* and *Hungry Planet*. The students worked in small groups to invent a family from a country of their choice and build a diorama of their home, including furniture, appliances, cars, or whatever else the family might use in their daily life. It was fascinating, and the models and presentations were stunning. We learned about families from Zimbabwe to Saudi Arabia, Iceland to Paris. The children used an online carbon footprint calculator to compare the energy use of families around the world. The earth's lithosphere has been our geography focus the past few weeks, and as the school year flies toward summer we will continue investigating rivers, oceans, rocks and minerals, and biomes.

### Science:

We have also studied simple machines, and properties of rocketry. (more about that from Melvin later). We continued our botany studies and planted a winter garden, with peas, greens, radishes, herbs and strawberries. Competition with the squirrels was fierce, but we enjoyed our harvest, and the fresh food we are able to provide the aviary. The worms continue to quietly make compost. We will be looking for adoptive families by the end of the year. If you think you might be interested in vermiculture please contact Catherine. It's easy and fun for the whole family.

### Writing:

Essays, fiction, and poetry will be a big part of our curriculum for the rest of the year. We have an ongoing essay assignment that we began just after Christmas in which the children respond to a quote from a famous person. The last one just before Spring Break was "If I have seen farther than others it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants." Sir Isaac Newton. The assignment is to research and write a paragraph about the author, then rewrite the quote in the students' own words and describe how the advice or sentiment of the quote is valuable. The theme for our essay this week is what object would we want to put in a time capsule for the year 2075. I'm anticipating some very creative suggestions.

### Robotics and Claymation:

The team of Beau, Chase, James and Jonathon built the Monster NXT Machine that taught them many lessons in perseverance. "Not everything goes as planned". Dave will be guiding a new team of NXT developers beginning this week. Sita, Miki and Joy built a fantastic robotic reindeer. The UPE Claymation production company rolls along with two new films this semester; *Saving the Day* by Miles, Anais, Chase, and Jendayi, and *A Day at the Beach* by Yago, Konstantin, Jonathon, and Brendan.

We were also treated to our own classroom newsletter, The Upper El Post, conceived and beautifully organized by Jendayi with her contributing editors Miki, Sita and Joy.

### A note from Melvin...

We are moving along full steam with the Saxon math program. We have had a lot of focus on fractions, decimals, and percents. To keep our skills sharp with math facts, we've been drilling with those a few times a week.

The two sixth years, Beau and Christian and I are looking forward to our annual 6th year trip in April to Historic Prude Ranch in the Davis Mountains. Highlights of our trip include horseback rides on the ranch, a star party and tour at McDonald Observatory, a high ropes challenge course, classes on reptiles and orienteering, and a trip to Marfa to see the mysterious Marfa lights.

We have started our rocketry program in Upper Elementary. I started by teaching four students about Newton's Laws of Motion and how they apply to rockets. Together, we came up with ways to demonstrate and teach the concepts to the other students. The four students then became the teachers and gave small group lessons to the other students and involved them in hands on demonstrations of the concepts. The Upper El. students are now building rockets in preparation for our annual rocket launch that will happen when we find a good field and the wind calms down.

As some folks may have seen in Simple Gifts, we are working with a few students at a time to write, rehearse, and perform short skits that demonstrate important life skills. The students are learning about the life skills and some basics of theater and performance while having fun.

### Catherine, Melvin and Dave

