

From The Director's Desk

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May 17, 2010

Field Trips--Picture perfect weather, a ride in a big bus, planting flowers, walking through a beautiful garden and a picnic lunch--what could be better than that? All of these phrases describe the multi-age/kindergarten field trip to the Frelinghuysen Arboretum on May 4th. The following day the Stepping Stones class had their family farm trip which was also a success. Our yearly field trips not only prove to be enjoyable occasions but also extend the learning experience of the classroom.

Music Appreciation Week--This week, May 17 to 21, we are highlighting the enjoyment of music by children and adults alike. Relatives and friends of our students are invited to school to share their musical talents. The children also are asked to perform, if they have been taking instrument lessons. In the classrooms, the teachers read stories about famous composers and the children are encouraged to make their own music by using the many percussion instruments that are made available. Also, this Thursday the children will be visiting Paragon Village to entertain our neighbors with the sweet sound of their voices.

Ellen Van Glahn--As most of you know, Ellen is one of our toddler teachers. Last week I informed the parents of the toddlers that Ellen will be taking a leave of absence for the remainder of the school year, starting today, May 17th. Ellen will be having surgery to correct a problem she has with her knee. Although she has had difficulty walking since the beginning of the school year, she waited until now out of consideration for the children and her fellow staff members. Heather Sharo will be taking over Ellen's responsibilities along with the help of the members of the toddler team. We wish Ellen a speedy recovery and look forward to her return in September.

Parent Forum--A few months ago Mary, Kristina and I decided to invite parents of returning children to a series of meetings that would allow them to express their concerns as well as ask questions and make comments. The purpose of these meetings would be to help us plan for the future of Deer Path. We decided to call these meetings parent forums because we hoped to encourage open discussion and sent invitations for a morning and evening session. On April 21st and May 11th a total of 16 parents joined us for these discussions. We thank everyone who attended and appreciate all of the valuable input. The following is a synopsis of topics discussed:

New location--there was a general interest at both meetings in regard to our plans to re-locate after June 2011. I updated the group on our progress in searching for a new location and informed them that we are attempting to stay in close proximity to our present location. The parent advisory board and our professional financial advisors have urged us to find a new home for Deer Path due to the expense and problems we have with this building.

Effective communication with the school community--this topic created a lively and lengthy discussion at both meetings. It was generally agreed that three methods of communicating should be used in order to reach all of the parents: e-mail, paper and phone calls. A suggestion was made to have weekly folders go home with the children that would contain all of the messages for the week. The folders would

have a signature page and would be returned to the school once the papers were removed. This is a process that is used in the public schools and we decided to incorporate it for next year. Also, parents wanted the ability to speak to all of the head teachers, who work with their child, at conferences. We plan to make this possible during next year's November conferences. We also discussed the needs of the dual income families which are now the majority of the families that we service. Discussion about ways to make our website more informative and interactive dominated most of the evening session and we plan to investigate some of the suggestions.

Building community--there was a general feeling that we do not do enough to make new families feel welcomed and a part of the community. Many suggestions were made to improve our outreach to these families and we are planning to incorporate some of them next year.

Parent involvement and service commitment--suggestions were made to modify our service commitment, our buyout option and our tuition offerings. All of these suggestions are presently being taken into consideration for next year.

Enrollment--we announced that at this point, enrollment is significantly low for next year. We encourage everyone to invite neighbors and friends to visit Deer Path and find out about our program. Visits can be made by appointment or on the second Tuesday of the month. Our next open house will be on June 8 from 4 to 6.

If you have any questions in regard to these topics, please call me at 908 498 0502.

Kindergarten News--It is hard to believe that we have only five weeks left for school. With this in mind, the kindergarten class has begun to practice for their big day--graduation on June 17th. Although the ceremony is relatively short in time, a large amount of time must be spent on practicing in order to coordinate the actions of 18 six year olds. It is a challenging time for Mrs. Sendira and Mrs. Wichowski because these future graduates are suffering from what we fondly call "senioritis". Just like high school seniors, they are exerting themselves and enjoying their last days together at Deer Path. Helping them to concentrate and focus on the task at hand can be difficult. In the end, the celebration always turns out to be beautiful as we tearfully say good-bye to these wonderful boys and girls. This year the class is larger than previous years so we will have to limit the number of guests to 3. We have considered moving the location of the graduation in order to be able to accommodate more guests but each venue will create difficulties for the children's preparation and participation in the ceremony. We are sorry if this limitation causes you any difficulty and hope that you will take many pictures to share with family members as well as plan a family gathering afterwards.

Summer Camp--Deborah Blasdel and Roberta Wichowski will once again lead a summer camp program. They will be assisted by Sarah Johnson and Michele Francisco. The camp will run from June 28th until August 27th. The camp will specialize in offering activities that are developmentally appropriate for the young child, ages 2 1/2 to 6. Each day the children will enjoy indoor and outdoor activities including nature exploration, arts and crafts, water play and story time. This nine week program will be planned around the following themes: **Patriotic, Dinosaurs, 19th century life, Insects and Mexican Fiesta**. Camp hours are 7AM to 6PM; program options are half day, full day or camp with care. You will be able to sign up for just one week, so if there is a free week in your summer schedule, think about summer camp at Deer Path. If you are interested, please contact the office.

Thanks to everyone who gave to the Annual Fund!

Thirty Five Families have contributed.

Our goal is 100% participation.

If you haven't contributed, please consider doing so by May 31st.

Deer Path is a not for profit corporation--we are dependent on donations to supplement tuition income.