

*October Newsletter  
2009*



*Jane in the garden with a small group of children  
October 2009*

*The following Froebelian Principles guide our practice:*

- ❖ Recognition of the uniqueness of each child's capacity and potential*
  - ❖ A holistic view of each child's development*
- ❖ An ecological view of mankind in the natural world*
- ❖ A recognition of integrity of childhood in it's own right*
- ❖ A recognition of the child as part of the community*

*Dear Parents and Friends of Cowgate,*

*This newsletter brings...results of the awards; homemade soup update; thanks to our wonderful, generous parents; link Romania shoebox appeal information on play; information on our curriculum evening (October 30<sup>th</sup>); Information on Raindrops; information on our first aiders; Donna has begun her Forest School training...she is absolutely enthused about the experience, so my chosen chapter at the end of the newsletter this month comes from 'Sharing Nature with Children' by Joseph Cornell. I always add this to the end of the newsletter, so that you can choose to / or not to read it. My beautiful daughter Mischa helped me put this newsletter together on Saturday...thank you Meesh ☺*

### *The London Award Ceremony*

*You will be delighted to know, but not surprised, to hear that both Lian and June did extremely well in the awards. June can now claim that the sequence books are an award winning resource. We are already taking in orders for the booklets. Well done indeed to Lian and June...two outstanding key practitioners in the field of education...we are all so very proud of you both.*

*We would also like to thank Maureen for her outstanding organisational skills. Maureen handled all the booking*

*and travel arrangements...when Maureen does this, you can be sure of a wonderful trip. Thank you Maureen.*

*We would also like to thank all the staff for making the trip possible and all your support. You are an outstanding team.*

### *Soup Friday*

*Thank you everyone who responded to our 'soup survey' 99% of you would like your child to have home made soup on Friday. For those of you who have said they would like your child to have soup, the wonderfully talented Lorraine will begin making soup with the children on the first Friday in November (we call Lorraine the domestic goddess...there is nothing she cannot do!)*

### *Thank you to all our parent supporters*

*Every month we always have so many people to thank for their support in the centre.*

*Thank you to:*

*Feliks's daddy for erecting the fire pit (and for agreeing to be on the design team on the work bench)*

*Miro's daddy, Ollie's daddy and Catherine's daddy – all for your willingness to participate in the tool bench design.*

*Alfie's mummy for the book demonstration*

*James's mummy and daddy for the lovely apples*

*Robert and Rhona's mummy for the paper*

*Kaya's daddy for the paper. .and I am sure I forgotten someone...please forgive me. You are all so generous. Thank you, Cowgate's success is due to having such a wonderful community of parents.*

*Link Romania Shoebox Appeal.*

*Fiona (Sala Infantil) has invited the centre community to participate in the Romania Shoebox Appeal.*

*As a staff team we are keen to be involved. If you would like o participate please inform Fiona, she will be very grateful for your support in this very worthy cause. Here is a little information on the shoebox appeal. The website has also been added for your reference.*

*Link Romania is a Christian charity who supports people and communities regardless of religious background etc. The people they deliver too are all in Eastern Europe.*

*Fiona will start to collect boxes on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November and finish later that month.*

The website address for Link Romania is:  
[www.linkromania.co.uk](http://www.linkromania.co.uk)

### The Wisdom of Play

Our dear friends from Community Play (where all our furniture comes from), sent us a wonderful little booklet titled 'The Wisdom of Play...Why children at play are their own best teachers.' I have asked their permission to share the following two extracts, for many different reasons, perhaps the main one is because our curriculum evening is quickly approaching and it sets the scene as we share the same value of the importance of play.

#### Imagination

'Play is an act of imagining. When children go outside to play – running, skipping, jumping – what is activated is a different form of knowing. It is a way of believing that allows children, if they wish, to run as fast as the wind or jump as high as the clouds, becoming, in an instant, a part of the exuberance and playfulness of nature itself.

In more solitary forms of play – be it a child playing in a sandbox, dressing up, or having a conversation with a doll – the imagination is now, through its own resources, at play. It is creating, pretending, performing and bringing

*children into a space of their unique knowing and understanding.*


*Even our own adult imagining is a form of play. Haven't we all noticed that when we imagine, dream and reality, time and space, feeling and thought begin to intertwine, blending components that reflect who we are and how we interpret the wondrously complex world around us?*

*For the child, both play and imagining and instinctive capacities. They are not only crucial to a child's sense of well-being, but also, if encouraged and supported, the path to envisioning possibilities, discovering new ideas, enlarging experience, and questioning and expressing the delicate boundaries of the known and the unknown.*

*Perhaps it is part of the genius of childhood to integrate play and imagining into one seamless activity. A way in which the life of our minds and our bodies are in dialogue with each other...' (Richard Lewis)*

### *Nature*

*Think back to when you were a child. Did you crave the outdoors? Did you have a favourite spot to play – a tree, a stream, a rocky crevice or vacant lot? Did you have a special place to hide, where you could watch without being seen and let your imagination run free? Did you resist being called back inside, wanting to swing one more minute with your face tilted up to the darkening sky or to finish a last exhilarating game on the street?*



*Because of our own experiences, many of us already know and feel the benefits of play in the natural settings. Research corroborating our firsthand perceptions comes as no surprise, but it helps us understand why outdoor play is so essential. One reason is that nature offers unparalleled opportunities for exploration and experimentation. As landscape architect Samuel Nicholson put it, "In any environment, both the degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery, are directly proportional to the number and kind of variables in it."*

*The number and kinds of "variables: outdoors and endless: plants, animals, insects, water, sand, dirt, dust, hills, holes – all of these are fascinating, and many change over time, constantly revitalised as material for children's play. Nature is the very best place for children to find "loose parts: - that is, material for play that can be moved around and used in many ways. Pieces of wood can make a fort or a miniature world; rocks can serve equally well as pretend people or pretend food in an imaginary game; dirt can be sculpted into a palace for ants or dug to create a hole for buried treasure. The open-ended characteristics of the natural world excite play far richer than what children will ever find in manufactured toys that require them only to push buttons or follow pre-set rules.*

*In addition, the gross motor play children need to become physically adept emerges spontaneously and joyfully in the outdoors. The natural world offers room to run, irresistible opportunities to climb, uneven terrain to be negotiated.*

*Most children need no coaxing or coaching to burn calories outside – all they need is time, playmates, and permission from adults to explore what their bodies can do. As a landscape architect Robin Moore writes, “The indeterminacy of rough ground allows it to become a play-partner, like other forms of creative partnership: actress-audience, potter-clay, photographer-subject, painter-canvas. The exploring / creating child is...using the landscape as a medium for understanding the world by continually destructing / reconstructing it.”*

*Nature offers children not just physical room to play, but mental and emotional room as well. The “secret spaces” young children need for private reflection and growth can be found in abundance, and children will use their time outdoors to nurture contemplative as well as active forms of playfulness. Their ability to relate creatively and peacefully with others expands in nature too; researchers have found decreased incidents of aggression and increased imaginative play and creative social interactions in environments converted from asphalt to an “environmental yard” with ponds, gardens, a meadow, and trees.*

*“Features of the natural world children explore with their senses by day, they play with in their dreams at night, and turn into poetry when they awake.” (William C. Crain)*

*Rachel Grob*

*Curriculum Evening*

*The Curriculum Evening will follow on from our afternoon event. It is an informal curriculum evening.*

*0-3's*

*La Camera dei Bambini and Salle de Jeux have invited a representative from Book start at 6pm to discuss the importance of sharing rhymes with young children.*

*3-5 year old*

*The Sala Infantil will present an everyday experience on offer to the children and link it to the Curriculum for Excellence. This will be an informal event, where parents will have the opportunity to explore the resources and discuss their relevance with the team. The team will emphasise how children are learning through play.*

*Additionally we will have written information available for you, including a summary of our Standard Quality Improvement Plan.*

*There will be ample opportunity for you to discuss the 0-3 curriculum and the 3-5 curriculums with appropriate staff.*

*We hope you can make it: ☺*

*Raindrops*

*Jane and I met 'Nikki' from 'raindrops' at the Scottish Learning Festival. Raindrops are stockists of outdoor clothing from Scandinavia. We have placed some brochures in the vestibule, please help yourself. If you are interested in any of the items, let us know we have negotiated a 20% deduction for you. We have asked for samples of the clothing...when it arrives it will be displayed at reception for your 'inspection.' We (Jane and I) were very impressed so much so Jane has already identified some items for our children for forest school.*

*Raindrops claim...*

*"At Raindrops we are passionate about outdoor play. Having seen our clothes worn by children in hundreds of schools, nurseries and forest schools all over Scandinavia and the UK – we are 100% confident that we can provide you with the very best outdoor clothes of the highest quality at competitive trade prices to guarantee your children will stay warm and dry in their outdoor classroom."*

*First Aid*

*Many of the staff are embarking on their first aid training, Donna and Caroline have recently completed their training. For your reference we will pop a green dot beside their photograph.*

*Dates for your diary*

*Half-term holiday 19<sup>th</sup> October (this affects children who attend term-time only)*

*Our in-service day Monday 26<sup>th</sup> October (We will be enjoying Froebelian Training)*

*Celebration gathering 4.30 -6.30pm Friday 30<sup>th</sup> October*

*Curriculum evening Friday 30<sup>th</sup> October*

*The following chapter is for your reference only and will be of particular interest to inform parents about how staff work outdoors with children:*

*Sharing Nature with Children, by Joseph Cornell.*

*How to be an effective nature guide...*

*Before we begin exploring nature with children, let's think for a moment about our role as teacher / guides. What are the basic rules for giving children – and ourselves – a joyous, rewarding good time?*

*I would like to share with you five tenets of outdoor teaching that have helped me work with children's lively energies – channelling them away from mischief, and*

*toward more constructive, and ultimately satisfying pursuits. Underlying these principles are basic qualities of respect for children and reverence for nature – attitudes to which they will surely respond.*

- 1. Teach less, and share more. Besides telling children the bare facts of nature (“This is a mountain hemlock tree.”), I like to tell them about my inner feelings in the presence of that hemlock tree. I tell them about my awe and respect for the way a hemlock can survive in sub-alpine conditions – where water is scarce in summer, and mostly frozen in winter, where harsh winter winds twist and bend and scour its branches. And I tell them I always wonder how the roots of the hemlock ever manage to find enough nutrients to survive, in these solid-crevices.*

*Children respond to my observations much more freely than they respond to textbook explanations. Take the case of a hemlock tree that grew near a camp where I worked. This particular hemlock sits between two huge boulders, so it has had to send its roots down twenty-five feet to reach the rocky soil below. At the time, it was at least two hundred years old, and only eight feet tall. The children would frequently make a detour on their hikes just to empty their canteens by its roots. Several of them returned to the camp year after year, watching the tree’s stubborn struggle for life in its harsh environment. In fact, as soon as they arrived at camp, they would run out to see how it had fared through the dry autumn and cold winter. Their*

*loving concern awakened in me an even deeper respect for the mountain hemlock.*

*I believe it is important for an adult to share his inner self with the child. Only by sharing our deeper thoughts and feelings do we communicate to, and inspire in others, a love and respect for the Earth. When we share our own ideas and feelings, it encourages a child to explore, respectfully, his own feelings and perceptions. A wonderful mutual trust and friendship develops between the adult and the child.*

- 2. Be receptive. Receptivity means listening and being aware. It is one of the most richly rewarding attitudes you can cultivate while working with children. The outdoors brings out a spontaneous enthusiasm in the child that you can skilfully direct towards learning.*

*Be sensitive: every question, every comment, every joyful exclamation is an opportunity to communicate. Respond to the child's present mood and feelings. Expand your child's interests by teaching along the grain of his curiosity. When you respect his thoughts, you'll find your time with him flowing easily and happily.*

*Be alert also to what nature is doing around you at the present moment. Something exciting or interesting is almost always happening. Your lesson*

*plan will be written for you minute by minute if you tune with sensitive attention.*

- 3. Focus the child's attention without delay. Set the tone of the outing from the start. Involve everyone as much as you can, by asking questions and pointing out interesting sights and sounds. Some children are not used to watching nature closely, so find things that interest them, and lead them bit by bit into the spirit of keen observation. Let them feel that their findings are interesting to you, too.*
- 4. Look and experience first; talk later. At times nature's spectacles will seize the child in rapt attention: a newly-emerged dragonfly pumping blood into tender unfolding wings, a lone deer grazing in a forest clearing. But even if those special sights are lacking, the child can have an experience of wonder by just watching quiet ordinary things with close attention. Children have a marvellous capacity for absorbing themselves in whatever they're looking at. They will gain a far better understanding of things outside themselves by becoming one with them than second-hand talk. Children seldom forget a direct experience.*

*Don't feel badly about not knowing names. The names of plants and animals are only superficial labels for what those things really are. Just as your own essence isn't captured by your name, or even your physical and personality traits, there is also much*

*more to an oak tree, for example, than a name and a list of facts about it. You can gain a deeper appreciation of an oak tree by watching how the tree's mood shifts with changes in lighting at different times of day. Observe a tree from unusual perspectives. Feel and smell its bark and leaves. Quietly sit on or under its branches, and be aware of all the forms of life that live in and around the tree and depend on it.*

*Look. Ask questions. Guess. Have fun! As your children begin to develop an attunement with nature, your relationship with them will evolve from one of teacher and fellow student to one of fellow-adventurer.*

- 5. A sense of joy should permeate the experience, whether in the form of gaiety or calm attentiveness. Children are naturally drawn to learning if you can keep the spirit of the occasion happy and enthusiastic. Remember that your own enthusiasm is contagious, and that it is perhaps your greatest asset as a teacher.*

*Wonderful don't you think? Lots to think about...*

*Until next month*

*Warm wishes*

*Lynn and the Cowgate Team.*

