

April 1, 2011

Dear Parents,

This month has been one of the busiest yet! Along with our regularly scheduled learning we have had many fun and educational experiences. We began the month by having a visitor from the Warren County Farm Bureau for a special presentation for the extended-day students. Our students have such great experiences that they wowed our visitor with their accumulated knowledge. We had just finished reading *Farmer Boy* from the Laura Ingalls Wilder series, had visited the apple orchard and Waterpenny Farm this past fall, not to mention we were in charge of vegetable cutting when we sent Stone Soup to Mr. Smith when he wasn't feeling well. Two of the students also recalled having a lamb visit our class last school year when Flora's mom brought theirs to visit and the day the Farm School girls came to spin wool!

The extended-day students also visited Blandy Experimental Farm in Boyce, Virginia. One Dad asked his daughter what kind of animals she saw at "the farm". She replied that she had only seen a snake. He laughed, thinking she must be mistaken, that a farm would have many more animals. We did indeed see garter snakes, but no other animals except for birds at this farm. It is actually a tree arboretum! We learned about the process of a flower growing and the many jobs of the flower parts. We planted kidney beans and some other seeds, too and a few children have reported some growth. It was a lovely trip and we thank all the adults who came along for driving and chaperoning. We couldn't do it without you. Remember these trips are annual occurrences and the oldest children look forward to them every year.

Most recently we had Rachel Bynum (from Waterpenny Farm) and Christina Looch come to assist the children to make two stepping-stone walkways for auction at our annual auction. The auction is scheduled for April 9th and we are very excited about our contribution. The ladies mixed cement with the children, greased the molds with vaseline and poured the cement into the molds. The children placed sparkly gems into the wet cement and they were left to harden. Every child had a part in this process and now we are using our glass polish cloths to shine the stones in order to get them packaged up for auction. They are beautiful and have caught the eye of many. Please come to the auction and/or volunteer in any capacity you can. The PTO and many staff members have countless hours put into the planning of this event and, take it from me, it is a great time. Last year's event was a lot of fun. A special thanks to Rachel and Christina for assisting with this project.

Sandy Gray-Murray has provided us with activities to learn about another artist. Marc Chagall has sparked some interest in Surrealism. After learning a bit of information about the artist himself the follow-up activity was designed to analyze contrasting colors. The children were able to match color schemes to certain parts of Chagall's paintings. They also took time to examine the real objects in an unreal background or doing unusual things. (The goat playing the fiddle was the favorite). The last production activity allowed the children to color a real object with pastel crayons, glue it on a blank paper and then create a surreal background. It was amazing to observe the children's imaginations at work and also to see that some were not ready to have their own object do anything that was unusual or unreal - reality only! Thank you to Sandy for providing yet another wonderful activity for the children.

Along with many tasty baking treats we also enjoyed Challah bread this month. Our baking tradition is such a nice activity. The children love it when it is their opportunity to bake and each child gets the opportunity to eat the yummy treats. Elena Kunkel has offered her services to tell the children about the traditions of Passover and has promised some traditional treats, too. We will also be coloring some eggs prior to spring break to celebrate the tradition of Easter. Who knows, perhaps we'll have an Easter Egg roll. If anyone would like to volunteer to dye eggs with small groups of children (or decorate in a different way), please contact me.

We currently have the pleasure of hosting a student who recently came to stay with his grandparents in Bentonville. Hiro is five and has lived in America, Thailand and Tokyo. He has also visited Korea where his maternal grandparents are originally from. Hiro, his brother Haro, and his Mom are here for the interim while safety from radiation is evaluated in Tokyo following the recent disasters in Japan. Hiro's father is a U.S. diplomat working currently in Japan. Hiro's Umma shared with me that the other families who were evacuated from Tokyo with her have been unable to find short term accommodations for their children in surrounding areas. We are so pleased to be the school that is welcoming. It is a great learning experience for us. Please make a point to welcome Heidi Son and her boys, Hiro and Haro, if you get the opportunity.

Tomorrow we start a study of Hawaii. Wesley Forest's aunt and grandmother have put together books, language cards, lava rocks, and the beginnings of a beautiful Hawaiian quilt we will begin stitching tomorrow. Cathy Bovey just returned from Hawaii from visiting her daughter, Carter who is a primary Montessori teacher there. My good fortune with volunteers this school year is amazing! Many, many thanks to these ladies for getting us started.

Parent/Teacher Conferences are April 11th. If at all possible, please utilize that time to meet with me. My after-school schedule is very busy and we set that day aside specifically for conferencing. If you haven't scheduled your conference yet, please call the office and schedule a time. If you cannot possibly meet with me that day you may certainly contact me for an alternate time.

VIP morning follows on Wednesday, April 13th. This is a day where children have the opportunity to interact with their special person and show them some of the lessons they may love. Children arrive at regular time and their VIP joins them at 10:00. At 11:00 we will break for songs and then have a pot-luck lunch together. Once finished with lunch your child may go home with their VIP or resume their regularly-scheduled school activities. Wendy Wilson is coordinating volunteers from both classes to set up, manage food and drinks, and clean up. Please volunteer if you are able.

Primary Conversations has been very successful. Our last talk titled *Freedom and Discipline* sparked many to want to learn more. We decided we would follow up that meeting with *Parenting Tips regarding Freedom and Discipline*. (I named the session, basically parents requested an open forum to question and seek answers for the myriad of parenting questions we all have.) This meeting date is April 25th at 9:00 a.m., the day we return from Spring Break. Put it on your calendars now....

In the meantime enjoy the onset of spring. The children have been singing and performing the movements of the Pussy Willow song.... a sure sign for me that spring is here. Enjoy!

Sincerely,
Carrie Irre