



# Early Childhood Newsletter

Winter 2010: Parent Program Update

Volume 38

## Family Nights at A.C.T.

There were great family turnouts for our October *Meet the Teacher* and December *Winter Solstices Potluck* suppers. Children play while adults socialize. We look forward to more of these events so mark your calendar: February 24 and April 22, from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.

## Play Station News

Come in out of the bitter cold and let your child play in our gym. We are opened from noon to 3 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Current participants in 2 & 3 day nursery will receive a reduced rate of \$4.00 per visit.



### ACT Closed

**January 18, 2010**  
**Martin Luther King Jr. Day**  
**February 16-19**  
**Mid-Winter Break**  
**March 29-April 2**  
**Spring Break**

## From Director of Programs Marie Del Tejo



The preschoolers and nursery class visited the Big Apple Circus in November 2009, thanks to a generous donation from a Cathedral Church board member. Forty-eight children, parents and teachers watched Grandma the clown's dry humor, saw horses perform astounding tricks with their trainers, and watched in amazement as acrobats performed high in the air. The following day, the children worked on thank you cards that included their favorite part of the trip, to the Cathedral board member. Many children enjoyed riding their first trip on the school bus. For others, the acrobats were the highlight. (Please see the photos on the last page.)

Fall was a bountiful season. Wonderful contributions from A.C.T. families and friends have made possible a much-needed renovation of our kitchen. Design work is underway and construction dates will soon be set. This is very exciting for all of us!

Nursery and preschool families have given generously of their time to the programs. Articles on the following relate how this involvement enriches class lessons. Please speak to teachers if you are interested in participating in a class lesson.

Happy New Year to all.



## FOR ALL CLASSES DRESS IN LAYERS

It has been a cold winter. Please dress your child in layers beginning with a short sleeve tee shirt followed by a pullover sweater or long sleeve shirt. We plan to explore the outdoors on snowy cold days. Hats and gloves are essential as temperatures dip.

Summer camp information in the ACT office. Camp is offered for children over the age of 3.5 years as of July 1st.



## Birthday Parties

Why invite everyone to your apartment for your child's birthday party? Let us do all the work to us! Visit our website to learn more about our Divine Parties at ACT. We provide gym space, activities, staff and we take care of the set up and clean up! You can't beat that in NYC!



## One-To-One Toddler News

We welcome back many families for Winter term. For the first several weeks of school, our curriculum will be based on Ellen Stoll Walsh's book *Mouse Paint*, which introduces children to the three primary colors as well as colors created when two primary colors are mixed. We will sing songs about colors like, "Johnny's wearing red socks, red socks, red socks. Johnny's wearing red socks all day long." Children will be invited to create a red collage using different types of materials. We will even enjoy a colorful snack where children will be asked to identify the color of the food: red peppers, blue berries and yellow bananas. Staff will put together the children's art works at the end of this color curriculum, and children will take home their own "Mouse Paint" story!

## 2-Day Nursery News



We had six school days to work on our December holiday unit. Since all the children in our 2's class celebrated either Christmas or Hanukkah or both, class activities focused on those holidays. Our library book collection included different holiday stories. Group meeting discussions focused on giving to others since children remembered that these were the holidays when they receive gifts. It's a difficult concept for children who are still egocentric at this age. We decorated paper to use as wrapping paper and made holiday cards along with decorations for our homes.

One day we took a walk outside and compared a tree that had no leaves with evergreens trees that had leaves. Many children recalled that they would have a tree at home to decorate for the holidays so we decorated ornaments for their trees. While outside, we took a look at the bare tree tops and noticed bird nests as well as squirrels busy scurrying in the trees. The teachers said that winter was coming and like people, animals prepare for the cold days ahead.

Since it snowed over the winter break, we will focus on Winter for January school days. Using storybooks, poems and songs, art project helps children familiarize themselves with properties of winter. For young children to connect with the concept of winter, we will compare what we wear on summer beach days with what we wear on a snowy day in the park. We will connect their answers to upcoming art, literacy, science and math activities. Here are examples of how theme related words could lead to many learning opportunities:

### **Word: SNOW**

**Story:** *A Snowy Day* by Melvin and Gilda Berger (which has a page about snowflakes).

**Art:** Snowflakes (no two are alike, children decorate with materials of different textures).

**Discussions:** Is snow cold or hot? Can it snow inside your house? Why not?

**Story:** *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats

**Science:** Bring snow home in a bucket. (Paint with it and watch it melt.)

### **Word: MITTEN**

**Story:** *One Mitten* by Kistine O'Connell George (which has pictures of mittens)

**Art:** Decorate your mitten using different yard pieces.

**Math:** Compare and graph how many children brought mittens, gloves or neither.

## 3-Day Nursery News

December brought many holidays. Children were eager to share their holiday traditions with teachers and classmates. We learned several holiday songs and then performed them at class parties. Talented dads who are musicians accompanied the class. Lily and Luca's dad, David Mann, played the sax, Ariane's dad, Andy Hadel, played the guitar, and Alicia's dad, Andres Veranes, played the drums. We listened to various CD holiday music and asked children to identify the musical instruments being played



Children helped create a "storefront" to display the many holiday cookies baked in class. With the assistance of teachers, they followed recipes and helped measure, mix and bake delicious treats. Children were introduced to spices like cinnamon and nutmeg. We compared the taste of each spice and asked children to express their likes and dislikes. Where did these spices come from? This question opened the door to discussions on spice grown in gardens to add to our food. Preschool class was invited to make purchases at our storefront and enjoy their cookies with our class. During January and February we will be investigating how the world works around us using our five senses as well as expanding our experiences using the "storefront" the children made. Children will taste food they may not be familiar with. Families have been invited to sign up to cook a favorite dish with small groups of children during cooking time. Our plan is to create a *Food We Made* booklet as an end of year handout.

## Part-Time Preschool News

November's theme was rich in the history of how Thanksgiving really began. Children were intrigued by the life style of pilgrims and Native Americans. We created a large Mayflower ship from a cardboard box and then "sailed" around A.C.T. to familiarize us with the pilgrim's journey. Along the way we incorporated basic math, literacy, science and music. We painted abstract art using corn, made cornmeal bread for snack, and tried to count all the kernels in our corn before selecting some to plant. In December, we continued to explore coming together as a community by learning about and embracing different and fascinating cultural celebrations of other countries. We discussed, read, and integrated art, science, math and literacy into holidays such as Las Posadas from Mexico, Santa Lucia from Sweden, Kwanza from African-Americans, Bodhi Day from Buddhism and compared them to the more familiar holidays of Christmas and Hanukah. All these are a continuation of our previous theme of Thanksgiving, as it instills a sense of community, compassion and tolerance of people in different cultures. Children performed songs from different holidays for their parents at the Cathedral School's assembly room, accompanied on the piano by Dovie's mother, Rachel Currin. It was an unforgettable experience.



As winter weather sets in, January's focus in class will be animals of the Arctic; how they live and survive in such harsh conditions. This is also an excellent way to learn science concepts: why and how icebergs form and what occurs at different altitudes? Children have shown an interest in some of these cold weather animals and we will use this opportunity to compare animals of the Arctic with animals found on the Cathedral grounds.



## Full Time Preschool News

Here is a class poem we would like to share with you. It is one of many the preschoolers are learning:

### *Zippers*

Three little zippers on my  
snowsuit,  
Fasten up as snug as snug  
can be  
Just zip, zip, zip!  
I work the zippers on my  
snowsuit,  
I can fasten them myself  
with a one, two, three.  
Just zip, zip, zip!

### **PARKING POLICY**

Parking at the Cathedral has changed and we strongly discourage families from driving onto the grounds. Cars may only enter from Morningside Avenue and exit on the North driveway that leads on to Amsterdam Avenue. Currently, the South driveway is impassable due to steam pipe reconstruction. Security staff will direct visitors to a drop-off area as cars can not park anywhere on the Close. Vehicles may not be left unattended. We strongly suggest you use mass transit.



As the holidays approached in December, it was a perfect time to explore a unit on families. Here, children developed an understanding of various family patterns. They understood the role of each member as well as activities that family members participate in together. We graphed the number of family members in each child's family. Then we used pictures of families clipped from magazines and placed them in order, smallest to largest. For our science unit, we placed objects pertaining to family into a "feely box."

These included a baby rattle, brush and bottle. Children learned many poems including "Grandma's and Grandpa's Glasses." Throughout the month we explore the similarities and differences of the season's holidays. We conducted a "candle race" and charted how long it took for a birthday, taper, and Hanukkah candle to burn down to the bottom. During this experiment, we review the scientific method of guess and check. We sorted Hanukkah candles by color and reinforced one to one correspondence using menorah candles. For Christmas, we made glittery pinecones to adorn our homes as well as candy cane marble painting. In science, we placed pine needles, branches and pinecones on our science table and observed them with magnify glasses. Children explored red, green and white materials of varying textures. We ended the unit with a family breakfast and displayed our work, and enjoyed many traditional holiday snacks including hot cocoa, latkes, and sugar cookies. In January, we will learn about winter. Children will explore the color *white* and hopefully we will have a snowy day during school hours. We will compare winter to the other three seasons. Why do some animals hibernate in the winter and others do not? Why does rain turn to ice when it is very cold outside? And many more scientific areas of study.

### **Photos: School trip to the Big Apple Circus**

