



December 17, 2009

## Fall/Winter 2009

Dear Friends,

Season's Greetings! We wish you and your family peace, joy, warmth and love this winter season!

### Kindergarten News

Our school year got off to a healthy start in September as we welcomed several new families into our Kindergarten group. The children are getting to know each other, and they love their daily routine. All of the Kindergartners are pursuing sewing projects and are enjoying watercolor painting and bread baking! With the rainy weather, the children explore all opportunities to play with mud and jump into puddles. They are having a grand time!

### Halloween Time

We hope you and your family are enjoying this fall and winter season! One of the fall traditions that passed not too long ago is Halloween. The children get so excited about their costumes and the sweets! On the one hand Halloween is a fun holiday that can be enjoyed by the whole family, but often it becomes too commercial, and does not have anything to do with what Halloween was originally meant to be. Waldorf communities tend to try to protect and shield their children from these commercialized holidays, but avoiding Halloween completely does not seem right either.

Some of the parents of the children at Shining Star Kindergarten discussed how they deal with one aspect – the many sweets collected during a trick-or-treat outing. The consensus was that the parents don't want their children to eat all those sweets filled with sugar, artificial colors, and who knows what other chemicals. Some parents started the tradition of telling their child to put the basket of sweets in front of their bedroom door before going to bed on Halloween night. That night the pumpkin or candy fairy comes and exchanges the candy with a small present for the child. The children love the fairy idea and excitedly look for their present in the morning!

"If you've had the experience of binding a book, knitting a sock, playing a recorder, you feel that you can build a rocket ship, or learn a software program you have never touched. It's not pravad, just quiet confidence. There is nothing you can't do. Why couldn't you? Why couldn't anybody?"

- Peter Nitze,  
Waldorf and Harvard graduate,  
and director of an aerospace  
company.

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#### Calendar

Visitor Mornings  
Thursday, Jan. 21st, 2010  
Thursday, Feb. 18th, 2010  
9:30am - 11:30am

## Craft Time

Some kindergartener moms are getting together on Thursday mornings to chat and work on craft projects after dropping off their children. We meet at approximately 8:45am until 11am at the Blue Planet Café in the clock-tower mall at the corner of Wirt Road and Westview. The owner is very happy to host us. We usually meet in the couch area at the back of the café. You are welcome to join us! Jennifer (Claire's Mom) might inspire you to knit socks!

"

## School Business

We are working on advertising the school more on the Internet as well as at various markets in town. We have now a Facebook page for the school! You can become the school's friend on [Facebook](#) and check out recent school pictures as we post them! We'll also list news, articles and upcoming events there. On October 11<sup>th</sup> we had a successful booth at the Green Market at Discovery Green for the first time. Our booth location right next to the playground was ideal! On Halloween our booth with a corn sifting pool for the children at the Bayou City Farmer's market generated a lot of interest. It was a pleasure to meet our visitors, and we look forward to further dialogue with them.

We are investigating our options for moving the school to a different location. We need a place where we have space to expand. We'll keep you posted as we progress with this endeavor.

We are exploring the possibility of starting a first/second grade this next fall. Several families in the Kindergarten are interested in a grades program. We would like to hear from you if you are interested in a Waldorf grades program within the next two years.

## More Waldorf Schools for Texas!

There has been a lot of media coverage of the idea that Texas needs more top-tier universities in order to remain nationally competitive in research, academics and economic development. I was thinking about that while reading the article "Back To The Future"

Craft Time:  
Thursday Mornings  
(when school in session)  
8:45am - 11am  
Blue Planet Cafe  
1330 Wirt Rd.

### In the Bews

On October 24<sup>th</sup> the New York Times reported that Disney is offering a refund to buyers of its ubiquitous "Baby Einstein" videos, which did not, as promised, turn Babies into geniuses. Apparently, all those puppets, bright colors, and songs were what we had feared all along – a mind-numbing way to occupy infants. The full article can be found [here](#)

The refund came in response to a threat of a class-action lawsuit for "deceptive advertising" from the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (CCFC). Public health lawyers hired by CCFC cited a study, which found a link between early television exposure and later problems with attention span. This might be a surprise for some parents, but it is consistent with the American Academy of Pediatrics' recommendation of no screen time at all for children under 2.

Waldorf educators have long talked about the detrimental effects of electronic media on children. There are no TVs or computers in Waldorf early childhood and elementary classrooms. In addition, a lot of Waldorf schools, including Shining Star School, have a media policy, asking parents to limit their children's exposure to screen media since it negatively affects children's ability to develop their creative capacities as well as other learning in the classroom.

in the Spring/Summer 2009 issue of *Renewal Magazine*. Jack Petrash, a Waldorf teacher, writer and radio host, comments in this article on his classroom, which, some might say, looks very old-fashioned since it doesn't contain any smart boards, nor a CD or DVD player or computers. He notes:

“My classroom is a low-tech environment – one seemingly behind the times.... And yet, when I read what is being written today about education, brain development, and the dramatically changed world that awaits our children, I am absolutely convinced that my Waldorf classroom is leading my students back to the future.”

Petrash goes on to quote the New York Times columnist and Pulitzer Prize winner Thomas Friedman, who told students at a highly respected prep school that their education primarily developed the left side of their brains and that if they wanted to be prepared for the future they needed to develop the right side of their brains as well. He told them “to think art, to think green, to think connectedness”. Thomas Friedman was apparently influenced by the book *A Whole New Mind* by Daniel Pink. Pink makes it very clear that if we educate only the cognitive capacities of children, only capacities that can be tested, we are going to make them economically obsolete: someone in the developing world or a computer is going to do what they are trained to do more cheaply and more quickly. Pink then proposes that if we truly wish to prepare our students for the future, we need to help them to develop new capacities in art, storytelling, empathy, finding meaning, and symphonic thinking. It is reassuring that these are the very capacities that are being developed in children at a Waldorf school. Art and storytelling are essential parts of the Waldorf experience right from the start of school!

Maybe what Texas needs in order to remain competitive is more Waldorf Schools! We are excited to work on this worthwhile endeavor and hope you will join us!

## Note from a Board Member on Staying Healthy This Winter

With the fall and winter season comes the flu, which is of greater concern these days because of the somewhat more dangerous swine flu virus. I read with great interest the recent article “[Shots in the Dark](#)” in the magazine *The Atlantic*, which talks about the fact that the double-blind studies needed to determine whether the flu vaccine really works have never been done.

An article with helpful tips on how to prepare for the flu season (besides getting vaccinated) was recently published in the Houston edition of the *Natural Awakening* magazine. Cindy Griffin from the Homeopathy Center of Houston suggests the following to support the immune system:

- -Increase water intake: children should drink 24-48oz of water per day, adults should drink 48-64oz per day – this is pure water – juices and soft drinks don't count.

- Avoid sugar, artificial additives, preservatives such as MSG and junk food – it stresses the immune system and acidifies the body.
- Take a good probiotic daily.
- Increase your vitamin A, C, D3 (20 minutes sunshine per day or supplements) and E intake.
- Take homeopathic Influenzinum 200c to increase your resistance to colds and flu.
- If you do get sick, take the homeopathic Oscillocochinum dissolved in water hourly or for prevention take it weekly. (It was good to see that the Kroger's across the street from Shining Star School carries Oscillocochinum!)

May your winter be a healthy one!

-Dagmar Truckses, board member, stay-at-home Mom, Ph.D. biochemist

### Comments from Recent Visitors to Shining Star Kindergarten

“I was very touched by the children’s happiness, creativity, and their sense of reverence.”  
- A.P., Houston

“A beautiful community for the children and the whole family.”  
- K.L., Houston

