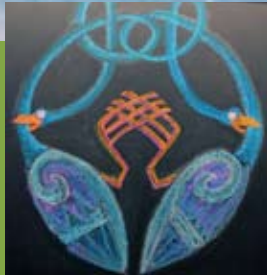


CALYX

PLEASANT RIDGE
WALDORF SCHOOL
Waldorf Education since 1980
Volume 34, Issue 3
Spring 2013



Carrie Treviranus, Aaron Schmidt, & Ron Schirmer, Class Teachers



 PLEASANT RIDGE

 WALDORF SCHOOL

 431 East Court Street, Viroqua

COMING EVENTS

APRIL

- 19 Kindergarten Morning Celebration of the Arts
- 22-23 Sixth Grade Play

MAY

- 2-4 Eighth Grade Play
- 3 May Day Celebration Kindergarten Morning
- 4 First Grade Readiness Meeting
- 9 Pentathlon
- 14-17 Seventh Grade Play
- 24 Last Day of School Eighth Grade Graduation
- 30-31 Teacher In-service



SPRING

When out of world-wide spaces
 The sun speaks to the human mind,
 And gladness from the depths of soul
 Becomes, in seeing, one with light,
 Then rising from the sheath of self,
 Thoughts soar to distances of space
 And dimly bind
 The human being to the spirit's life.

Calendar of the Soul
 First week (April 7-13)

SCHOOL NEWS

Dramatic Changes in PRWS Administration!

You may not think that theater performance and Waldorf administration have much in common, but then you haven't met Marianne Fieber, the new Administrative Chair at Pleasant Ridge.

Both roles figure prominently in her biography and seem to have prepared her superbly for her new position here at PRWS. Marianne Fieber was recently hired after a two-year search to replace Diane Mamroe, who has moved into a more focused role in the school, taking care of finances and bookkeeping. Marianne has been a breath of fresh air for those of us who carried the administrative work in the interim, as well as for the faculty and the rest of the staff. We are happy to have her bright and positive leadership. Marianne has revamped and organized the administrative office and the door is open for business. She has given the community an open invitation to stop in and say hi or set up a time to have coffee and tea. I heartily recommend setting an appointment to meet with Marianne—you will have a wonderful time. I recently had just such an opportunity.

Maureen: *Marianne, can you tell us a little about your background?*

Marianne: I was born and grew up in South Milwaukee, on the other side of Wisconsin. I am a Midwest gal. I went to the University of Minnesota-Duluth, receiving a BFA in Theater Performance. After that, I spent many years in Chicago, working odd administrative jobs while working in theater. In the early 1990s I was hired as an administrative assistant at the Anthroposophical Society in America's Chicago office. This was my first introduction to anthroposophy and Waldorf education. After three years, the Society moved its offices to Ann Arbor, Michigan, and I headed to Emerson College in Forest Row, England, for a year of Foundation Studies in Anthroposophy.

Maureen: *How did you enjoy your time at Emerson College?*

Marianne: It was a wonderful year, filled with interesting studies, as well as eurythmy, spatial dynamics, and painting. Emerson attracts students from all over the world so I was studying with people from Africa, India, South Korea, Iceland, Japan, Australia, and Taiwan, among others. It was a window into the world. From there, I joined and toured with the Moving Word Theater Company, based in England. I spent 18 months, first rehearsing and then touring with the group all over Europe and the United States.

After the tour, I returned to Chicago and took a job as the administrative assistant/coordinator with the Chicago Waldorf High School. During that time I began working on my master's degree in Waldorf Administration and Community Development from Sunbridge College in New York. During the third year of studies, I left the Chicago Waldorf School and focused on finishing my degree. After that I took a position as a Waldorf teacher at Four Winds Waldorf School in suburban Chicago. I had been teaching classes at the Arcturus Rudolf Steiner Education Program in

Chicago for a number of years, and then began taking classes as well to complete my Waldorf teaching certification. Sometimes I would go from taking a class to teaching a class!

Maureen: *How did you enjoy class teaching?*

Marianne: It was a rich experience. I was able to draw upon my performance and music background daily as I developed lessons and experiences for my students. It gave me a whole new perspective on and relationship to Waldorf education. While teaching, I was on the faculty Leadership Council (*Ed note: similar to our Faculty Council*) and also was the faculty chair for a year. After three years with my class, the [enrollment] numbers were low and it was combined with another class. I was asked to take on the role of administrator, a position I gladly accepted. After three years as administrator, the position was eliminated due to financial challenges the school was facing. So last summer I returned to my work at the Anthroposophical Society and moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Maureen: *How did you find your way to Viroqua and Pleasant Ridge?*

Marianne: I had heard of Pleasant Ridge over the years but first visited Viroqua in 2010, when the Midwest Fund Sharing Group met here. I met Mary Christenson, who is also a member of Group. Over the past few years, I continued working with Mary on creating a collaborative event between the Fund Sharing Group, Great Lakes Region of AWSNA, and the Central Regional Council of the Anthroposophical Society. That conference was held February 2012 in Minnesota, and from that time Mary and I have been working together on a conversation and resource guide on the themes from that event. I came to Viroqua in June last summer to work with Mary and got another taste of this lovely place, not realizing that my path was leading me here.

When I came to interview in January for the Administrative Chair position, I was impressed by the dedication of the faculty and staff, the community of parents I had the opportunity to meet, and the beauty of the land. There were so many reasons why this opportunity felt like the next right step for me in my career. I was more than pleased to accept the offer. I have a passion for Waldorf education and feel quite honored to be working again with colleagues who are also deeply committed to providing the best education for the children in their care.

Maureen: *Any last thoughts?*

Marianne: Well, since you asked... I would love to talk about Songtrails, a singing and walking project I created.

Maureen: I'm eager to learn all about it. I will be back to find out more for the next edition of the Calyx! Thank you so much for sharing your biography.



CALYX Volume 34, Issue 3
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Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School is a not-for-profit, 501(c)3 corporation supported through tuition, gifts to the school, and fundraising events.

Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School does not discriminate on the basis of gender, ethnic origin, economic ability, or sexual orientation.

In our efforts to reduce paper use, you may request an electronic copy by emailing cynthia@pleasantrydwaldorf.org.

Design by Geri Thompson Shonka
 Printed at Dairyland Printing, Viroqua, Wisconsin
dairylandprint.com

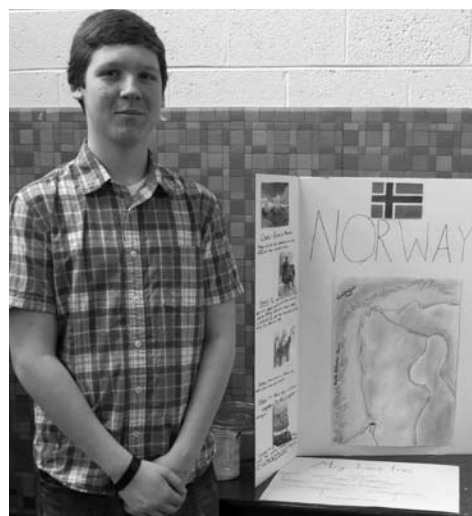
SCHOOL NEWS

Seventh Grade Eurythmy Performance

On Thursday evening, March 14, and Friday morning, March 15, the seventh grade offered to the community a eurythmy performance of the story of Joan of Arc. The performance was beautiful and the students were a joy to watch.

Eighth Grade History Displays

After the Eurythmy performance on Friday morning, the eighth graders invited community members into the gym to view their European country displays and taste the delicious treats they had created to represent the country they had chosen to research. The displays were beautiful, and the students were eager to talk about their work. Treats included many wonderful dishes, including Scottish shortbread and German sausage.



Albert Linderman Workshop

On Saturday, March 9, in the Old Main Building, Albert Linderman presented a morning workshop entitled "The Origins of Waldorf Education: A Presentation and Interactive Conversation." Albert presented a clear explanation of the worldview behind Waldorf education. An engaging and accessible presenter, he guided the participants to an understanding of the limits of Western education and the knowledge stream from which Waldorf education emerged. It was an opportunity for participants to learn more about themselves and their habits of thought.

His presentation was taken from the principles in his book, *Why the World Around You Isn't as it Appears: A Study of Owen Barfield*. Albert demonstrated how 17th century thinking dominates our culture and language. Owen Barfield (1898–1997) wrote extensively and comprehensively about the narrow focus of Western knowledge and how Westerners can rediscover and integrate indigenous forms of knowledge to improve the course of world history. Barfield influenced many people, most notably his close friends C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, along with T. S. Eliot and Saul Bellow.

Linderman also is involved in Sekem, a sustainable community in Egypt that has a biodynamic farm, a Waldorf school, pharmaceutical and wellness companies, and is designing the new Heliopolis University to teach about sustainability. Sekem's greatest accomplishment may be that they inspired the shift in Egypt's cotton farming away from pesticide-reliant Bt cotton to organically grown cotton.

The presentation provided a perfect introduction for Waldorf parents, scientifically-minded skeptics, and those wishing to learn more about the living ideas permeating Waldorf education (as well as anthroposophy, biodynamics, and eurythmy). Albert Linderman was also interviewed on the WDRT *Heart of Wellness* program, and the interview is posted on the WDRT Facebook page. Many thanks to the Parent Council for organizing this event!

Specialty Workshop



On March 19, parents and community members were invited to a daylong workshop that focused on the specialty subjects. The workshop participants were treated to a full and inspiring event. Each specialty teacher presented activities that are an integral part of their curriculum. They also talked about the work they do and how it develops capacities in the children. They focused on social capacities and gave the participants much food for thought. In Spanish class the participants helped to prepare a delicious salsa made from zanahorias (carrots). It was a part of the delicious vegetarian meal served at lunchtime. All in all, it was a very rewarding day. The specialty teachers provided a wonderful workshop, and the parents who took the time to attend added their own enthusiasm. It's no small task for teachers and parents to make room for an all-day event on the weekend. We are grateful to have such dedicated faculty and parents!

The specialty classes are integral to the overall success of Waldorf education. They are not "extras" but are fundamental to the curriculum. Together with the work of the class teacher, the specialty subject teachers work to help the children develop capacities that will allow them to know and fulfill their life purpose as adults. To read more about the specialty subjects and their importance in developing social capacities, please see the article "Social Capacities and Specialty Subjects" on page 6 of this issue of the Calyx.

Spring Concert

On Friday evening, March 22, grades five through eight brought a dulcet mix of orchestra and choral pieces to the community (with help from the third and fourth grades on the opening song).

Monika Sutherland, music teacher extraordinaire, expressed her deep gratitude to the many parents who helped behind the scene with the details of the spring concert. Cathy Brummer, Sarah Kamin, and Geri Shonka masterfully managed the stage logistics as well as coordinating all the following volunteers: Arthur Bernstein, Beth and Con Blake, David Boyer, Lyle Brummer, Apple Corbin, Daniel Kouba, Dan Krings, Dan Krumenauer, Bernhard Kuhn, Marc LeMaire, Joe Lenarz, Eric Meyer, Ambra, Robert and Eli Perry, Drew Shonka, Cori Skolaski, and Diane and Gregory Splinter. Many thanks also to musicians Kate Bergan, Kristina Gullion, Pam Hughes, Allison Sandbeck, Dodie Whitaker, and Wyatt and Tatiana Sutherland, who contributed their musical support. We as a school are deeply grateful for the masterful and heartfelt leadership that Monika brings to the music program. The children are truly blessed to have her inspiration and direction.



Book Sale

From March 18 to 28, our dedicated librarian, Miss Tip, organized her annual amazing book sale. All proceeds from the sale will go toward the purchase of new books for our wonderful and well-appointed library. Many thanks to Miss Tip for her tireless devotion to our library and to making sure that good books find good homes!

Raffle Party

The annual Raffle Party was held at the ARK on Saturday, March 19. The doors opened at 6 PM, the musical program began at 6:30, and the winning tickets were pulled at 7:30. Emma Nicholes and Matt Shortridge provided beautiful music. The food included delicious pizzas by Lars Bergan and Luke Zahm, along with luscious chocolate fondue and fresh fruit. Beverages included Kickapoo Coffee, compliments of Caleb Nicholes and TJ Semanchin, and Wisco Pop, compliments of Austin Ashley.

Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's raffle. This fundraiser is an essential part of maintaining the high quality of our education and at the same time allowing us to work with all families who wish to send their children here.



I look into
the world...

Raffle Winners

GRAND PRIZE—KIM KINGSLEY
Trip for two to Belize or \$4,000

SECOND PRIZE—DAVID BANNER
Two plane tickets within the continental U.S. or \$1000

THIRD PRIZE—JULIE CLARK
Two nights at Nature Nooks retreat

FOURTH PRIZE—JOHN NUUTINEN
Nick Wroblewski signed original woodcut print

FIFTH PRIZE—ELIZABETH ROBERTS
A quilt, a book, and a tree to plant

CURRICULUM

Watch Out! A Wild Beast Is Hiding in the Forest!

Playing is the very heart of our kindergarten. That is uninterrupted, self-directed play with no adult instructions, directions, or imposed rules other than what the children themselves create in the moment.

What is it that the children experience in their play? When Gibson and Finn are stealing through the forest with sticks as bow and arrows in search of wild beasts? When Zephyr is trying to sneak after them without being noticed? When Addelaide and Lily are enthusiastically telling Elmar, the puppet, what it is like to lose a tooth? When Avery and August are sharing crystals from the crystal cave? When Molly and Miriam are following the foot prints of little elves into unknown lands? When Zelda, Helen, and Lucy are making mud pies for a secret surprise party? When Margo and Reid are sitting quietly by themselves carving, observing Serenity and Zora as cheetahs hunting for food?

Through play the children are forming their very lives and laying the foundation for becoming healthy human beings later in life. One interesting aspect of free, imaginative play is that children are presented with opportunities to learn and try out for themselves different qualities of human life. They get to experience both the beautiful and the darker, not so beautiful sides. These experiences deepen their appreciation that there are indeed others in the world—other people, animals, and nature—and that to be together requires consideration, listening, negotiation, patience, and compassion. If these aspects are not allowed to be played out when the children are young, then the natural self-centeredness that is a part of healthy child development continues into adult life and shows itself as entitlement, bullying, ignorance, arrogance, and the like.

Imagination in the free, uninterrupted play of the child is different than the imagination or fantasy that we create as everyday escapism. Imaginative playing of a child is facing the other, the “holy other” that is beyond direct comprehension. Later in life these played-out experiences can ripen into ideals that are lived consciously. Courage, nobility, honor, encouragement, gentleness, pride, compassion, self-sacrifice, passion, affection, authenticity, happiness, faith, decency, hope, responsibility, community, liberty, friendship, prudence, tact... Are these not qualities that belong to a healthy human being, qualities that are almost lost in our culture today? These qualities can never be taught through academic

schooling and intellectually “knowing” about them, but must first be experienced through play early in one’s life.

The seriousness and concentration that the children bring into their play is an indication itself that play is important. Finn and Gibson do not have to fight over getting a sword to protect themselves, because there are endless swords (sticks) in the forest and their imagination is the only limitation. The sticks are at one moment swords; the next, horses. Searching for the beast develops courage, following elf prints encourages interest in the environment, negotiating crystals fosters sharing, creating mud cakes fosters giving, sitting quietly by oneself awakens observation and confidence, and telling about your hurts and happenings to a puppet unravels emotional frustrations. Reality transforms into imagination, imagination transforms into reality.

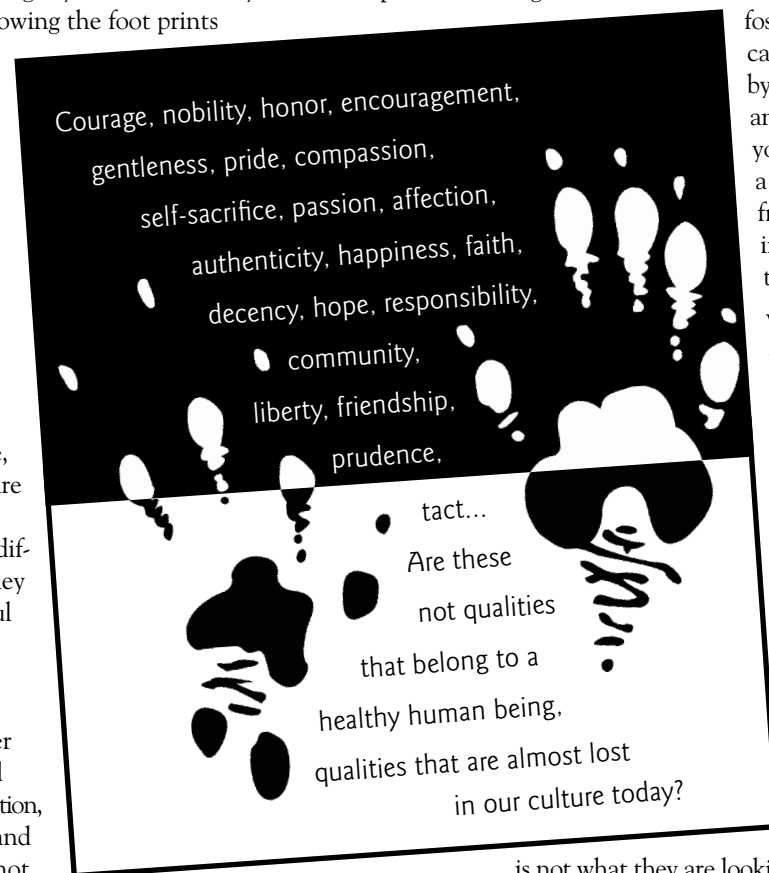
When the children notice prints in the snow, they investigate them, changing reality into a lived story. If I were to say, “No, these are squirrel’s prints,” I would destroy the mood and the experience. I am not denying that the prints are from a squirrel—I do not lie. When they show me the elf prints, I enrich the experience by saying something that goes along with the imagination of the children. Of course, most of the children know that it is not elf prints that they see. However, that fact

is not what they are looking for. They want to see if I am able to meet them and allow them their experiences, enter their imagination, enrich it, give it life, and share in their enthusiasm, instead of bringing a commonsense, scientific explanation that destroys the moment and their experience.

To understand and honor the play of the child is a very serious matter indeed. Through play the child grasps life. Through play, children imitate the life of the adults and situations around them. If children have no possibilities to imitate basic life functions, they have no possibility for understanding life and each other.

It is a child’s birthright to have a childhood in which there is plenty of time for uninterrupted, free, self-directed play and to have adults around them who are worthy of imitation. It is a huge responsibility for all of us to respect and protect this right for our own children, and all the children of the world.

—Anne-Marie Fryer, *Class and Kindergarten Teacher*



A Developmental Science Curriculum—Kindergarten through Eighth Grade

The science curriculum in Waldorf schools formally comes about in the middle school years, yet what often goes unnoticed is how the early childhood experience is setting the stage for the work we will be doing six to eight years down the road. The approach we take to teaching science is different from what is found in most modern schools, and warrants some attention and thought.

In the early childhood years, we strive to allow the children to live in a world of complete wonder and reverence, and to marvel at their surroundings and their relation to them. We facilitate this experience in many ways, including allowing plenty of unstructured play outdoors, contact with natural objects for play, and telling stories that are rich with imaginative pictures.

Another way we attempt to facilitate this experience in the early years is by being conscious of how we speak to the children. We strive to speak only as needed, avoiding the excessive small talk that is common parlance in the adult world. When the children ask us questions about the world around us, we find ways to answer without going into abstract ideas and explanations. Not unlike the approach of the Jedi and Zen masters of old, it is often a returned question that leads to deeper insight in the student. Rather than doing your best to explain what you know of light when asked why the sky is turning pink, a simple and sufficient reply could be, “Well, what do you think?” or better, “Let’s watch for a while and see if the sky will tell us,” or even “I wonder...” Not for the sake of being cryptic nor keeping them in the dark, these responses return the attention to the phenomena at hand, and without a defining idea to put an end to the search, the child is left to continue wondering, paying attention, and being curious. This wonder and curiosity, mingled with awe and human contact, are at the heart of the science curriculum in the Waldorf school.

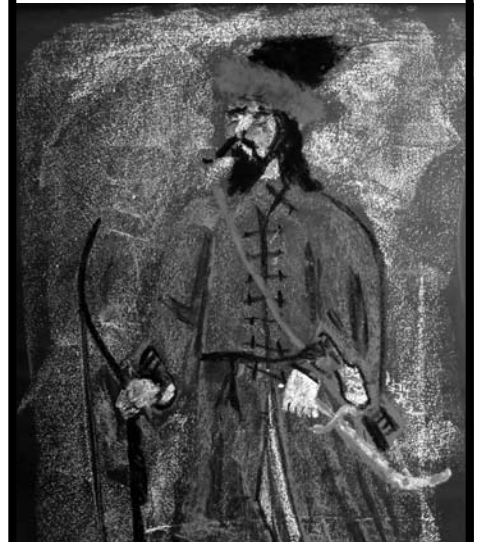
Often the knowledge we have acquired from our own learning is brought to us through books and models. Though I can tell you all I know about atoms and molecules, having

never seen one, my understanding of them is strictly abstract—different in nature from what I know of starting a campfire, the behavior of waves in different kinds of weather, or the moon’s relation to the sun during its phases, demonstrated over years of watching. Our goal in teaching the sciences is to provide the students with experiences that call on their most alert attention, and to have them observe carefully through their senses—hearing, touch, sight, smell, and taste—and then be able to reflect carefully on what they recall. The information that arises from direct experiences of observation will live with the student in a different way than something they read about in a book. Sitting in a dark room watching a candle being lit, lying in a bathtub at home and listening with your ears submerged, or building a teeter-totter with a log, a board, and the help of eight friends, provide encounters with combustion, acoustics, and mechanics that involve our senses and our active participation to understand.

The middle school science teacher is meticulous in asking the students to recall what they saw, heard, felt, and so on, and encouraging them to distinguish between what they think happened and what they actually witnessed with their senses. This is remarkably difficult to do! Often what we think we know usurps our ability to see what is really happening. Yet, as we keep curiosity and wonder alive by not simply providing answers in the form of information or models, amazing discoveries begin to take place!

This is the spirit of our science curriculum: keeping wonder alive, honing the senses and refining our powers of observation, and striving to create opportunities for learning experiences. In order to do this we need to consider ways to respond to our children’s questions that lead them to attend closer to what they see, or to help them sit with a question longer and see what comes up. Within this patient space, our own intuition often leads us to insight. Does this mean we must never give them a solid answer about anything? Heavens, no! But if we carry the above themes with us as we

Celebration of the Arts EVENT



Friday, April 19, 7 PM
Old Main Building

Suggested Donation: \$10

The faculty has been preparing performance pieces and artwork showcasing their many talents.

Proceeds from admission and the silent auction of faculty artwork will help fund faculty professional development.

This adult only event promises to be entertaining and inspiring.

journey with our children, perhaps it will help inform our decisions about when is the right time for them to know something, when they must look deeper themselves, and when they can afford to wait awhile to know.

—Ronald Schirmer is a co-teacher of the combined third and fourth grade class. He encourages anyone who cares to discuss these ideas further or who has questions about the Waldorf science curriculum to write, call, or drop by the classroom after school!

CURRICULUM

Social Capacities and Specialty Classes

Parents and teachers recently spent a day together exploring and experiencing the specialty subject curriculum. Parents were curious to see what their children do all day, and teachers were eager to talk about their subjects. Each specialty subject teacher led the group in a typical class activity for one hour.

Monika Sutherland directed us in singing and movement as part of the music curriculum, where we were challenged to listen to each other in order to ensure all four parts of our song fit together. Annette Conlon led us in eurhythmy movement. We moved forward and backward, left and right, passing wooden balls to our neighbors—all at the same time! Kate Bergan told a story in Spanish, which we then acted out. We also made salsa for lunch, learning the Spanish vocabulary for all of the ingredients and tools used. In our handwork class, Nannette Tuttle showed us how to make Ukrainian dyed eggs using beeswax and colored dyes. Lerie Alstad Van Ells, the movement and games teacher, taught us Bothmer gymnastic exercises that explored space in all directions. We also played Red Rover, a tag game that is suitable for all ages.

The experiential part of the day gave us a feeling for what the students do. While the movement and handwork were will activities, our panel discussion was a thinking activity. During the discussion, the teachers spoke about how social capacities are developed in each of these subjects. Waldorf education is often spoken of as a social education. What does this mean? Here is a summary of what it means to these teachers, in their particular subject.

Handwork, Nannette Tuttle

Handwork class is primarily about developing the will to work. Students come together, week after week, to do their work. They see the progression of the whole process of a project and then the completion of that project. Over the years, students develop the habit, and then the capacity, to bring their work from conception to completion. There is great satisfaction and joy in the process and completion of this work and we all experience this as a powerful, creative experience. This ability to bring an idea into realization is a tremendous social contribution.

Although work comes first, a strong second task in handwork is in our conversations and practicing our social interactions. The art of conversation is alive during handwork class and it's important for students to have this opportunity for conversation. We work with tolerance and respect for each other because we need to work together and share the space. When conflict arises, students are guided in how to communicate to reach a shared understanding. How can we listen to others? When can we just drop something? What can we offer to another to help a situation? Handwork is a place where these social skills can develop.

Generosity and altruism find fertile ground in handwork class. Students enjoy making things for others. They begin with making gifts for family and friends and then expand to sewing for the larger community. Students have sewn mittens, hats, quilts, and

bears for community service projects. Collaboration is another way of sharing with others. During class, students freely share their time, knowledge, and ideas; often something new is created out of that sharing. Handwork is a collaborative learning environment where we all learn from each other and look for how we can be of service to others.

Eurhythmy, Annette Conlon

The human being is a social being and at the same time a unique, individual personality. This makeup is both a challenge and a potential, and our task in becoming more and more fully human is to find a harmonious balance between these two. I would like to take a look at an essential element we are working with in eurhythmy, one that happens even without our being consciously aware of it, and yet is deeply significant for the social process.

When we are born, we take our first breath. We enter into an intimate exchange with the world through our breathing. And in direct connection with the breathing is the speaking, the word. In many of the myths of creation we find the word, the sound, the breath as the forces that brought the world into being. In eurhythmy this creative power of the word becomes alive and visible. When the students practice eurhythmy they come into a deep relationship to the world, to other human beings, and to themselves.

Speaking requires listening. As we speak eurhythmically, through our gestures, these gestures have a listening, receptive quality, building sensitivity toward and awareness of the other, as well as an awakening sense of self. As the students move together, each one is being challenged to stay conscious of their own movement and space, as well as integrating themselves in the movement of the whole in a meaningful manner.

The choreography, the gestures, and the forms need to be known. They need to be imbued with feeling and intent, and they need to be executed—thus thinking, feeling, and willing are all being developed and integrated. This strengthening of the individual as well as feeling oneself part of a larger context is an essential aspect of the student's learning experience in eurhythmy classes.

Movement and Games, Lerie Alstad Van Ells

In Movement and Games class throughout the grades, the Bothmer gymnastic exercises pedagogically build upon the foundation of human uprightness and movement freedom. Each student grows in awareness of "feeling and strength of will" in their body as it experiences the heights, widths, and depths in living space. Levity and gravity; expansion and contraction as polar opposite forces, also reveals the balance between these streams by moving with grace, truth, and beauty, creating harmonious movement.

This feeling awareness of respect of one's personal space is also extended to each other. As the students move through these exercises in oneness, social order and harmony are experienced.

This social awareness accounts for everyone's feelings in skill development and all games played, where each person is respected as a valuable player integral to the whole class. Values of self-discipline, self-confidence, integrity, and cooperation are fostered among all.

Music, Monika Sutherland

In music class we are developing a wide range of skills and capacities. Participating in a musical ensemble requires the individual to be very present to their own part, vocal or instrumental, as well as being aware of other parts and of the whole. While playing or singing, one is also listening to the other parts, following music, and following the conductor. The head, heart, and hands are all engaged and working together.

The ability and sensitivity required to manage at the same time these various aspects of music-making takes practice and builds capacities, many of which have a direct social correlation. The activity of making music in a group is very social. While much of the skill building happens in the individual practice, the most inspiring musical experiences happen when groups play together. Each individual player and each individual part in the ensemble is important but what the group creates is something larger than any one individual player. The sum is greater than the parts and all participants are lifted up by this experience.

Some of the important capacities that are developed through participation in music are inner discipline, sensitivity to others, teamwork, and leadership. The dialog of music resembles a conversation where participants need to be sensitive to when others are speaking, know when it is time for them to speak, and be conscious of the space in between. Inner discipline is developed through consistent home practice and through being completely present to the work of the ensemble. Each individual part must be made to fit with the whole through the discipline of the player. Teamwork is essential to creating music in an ensemble as it is only through the working together that something beautiful can be created. In music class, leadership opportunities are extended to all students. With their instrument or in singing I have seen time and again how even the shy student can take the lead in a musical activity.

Spanish, Kate Bergan

In Spanish class, students are immersed in a setting that requires focused listening, patience, and working together. When operating in one's native tongue, it is easy enough to listen "with one ear," but one must be fully listening when engaging with a second language. Students must listen closely not just for meaning, but for the "music"—that is, the pronunciation and the intonation particular to a language. Learning a second language cultivates patience because of the repetition required for the language to truly take root. In Spanish class, we often do activities and play games

in which the students work in groups composed of children with widely different capabilities and life experiences. In this setting, we focus on supporting and respecting one another, and maintaining an atmosphere of good will and enthusiasm for learning.

The students carry the skills developed in Spanish class into the much larger world. In class we not only are working on language, but we are learning about many cultures, both past and present: we hear stories that provide a window into the "folk soul" of a people; we explore how different holidays and festivals are celebrated; we experience the music and art of varied cultures. All of this fosters an openness to and an appreciation of other peoples and cultures. The experience of being in an environment of language and culture opens the heart and the mind to different ways of living and thinking, thus cultivating flexibility in the children.

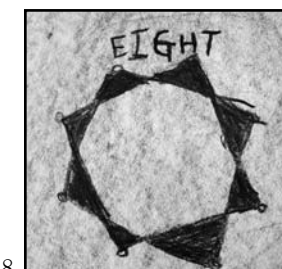
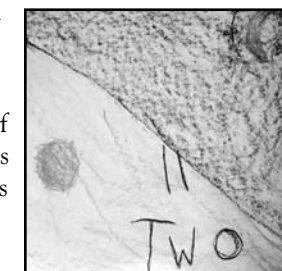
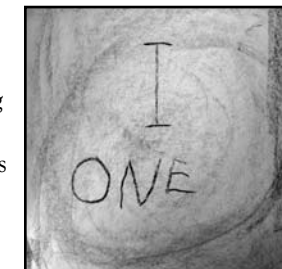
Waldorf education seeks to engender in children a strong sense of community and a genuine interest and concern for fellow human beings. The foreign language classroom is an ideal place for these capacities to take root and blossom.

Imagining the World through Stories

The Importance of Imagination in Teaching Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic

I have always enjoyed numbers and math, and I think it is because I learned about the beautiful underlying meaning and pattern in number at an early age. I also think that many adults struggle with math because they were never given this imaginative picture. Understanding the living qualities of the numbers provides a firm foundation through which math operations and algorithms can be easily understood.

Many parents are happy with the Waldorf approach to arithmetic because it seems to be more advanced in the early grades when compared to the public schools. All four operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division) are introduced in first grade with stories that characterize each of the operations. Addition may be a young boy who loves to collect things. Subtraction may be a young girl who loves to give things away. Together, they may find a way to work together and help



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Imagining the World through Stories *continued*

each other. Stories such as these help the children to use their natural ability to create imaginative inner pictures as a way to understand abstract mathematical concepts. Also, much work is done through movement, verse and song to help the children begin to understand the patterns in the addition and times tables. The children can easily grasp complicated mathematical concepts when presented in this kind of imaginative and hands-on way.

The Waldorf approach to reading, on the other hand, even though it is presented in a way very similar to the approach to arithmetic, tends to bring out more consternation and anxiety in parents. Waldorf children in the early grades do not necessarily compare well to their public school counterparts, especially when it comes to decoding the written word. The Waldorf approach can appear to be backward and unnecessarily slow. It is important to understand that the approach used in Waldorf schools is based on close observation of children and is tied to a keen understanding of child development, and a desire to bring content in developmentally appropriate ways.

In kindergarten, the children are engaged in self-directed play for much of the day, and the foundations for reading that are being laid are not so readily apparent. But the foundations that are laid in kindergarten are crucial to the natural unfolding of a child's capacity to make sense of the written word. Language is a full and powerful communication tool. Children begin life with a rich oral environment. The language they hear becomes embedded in them. The sounds and stories they hear become an integral part of who they are.

So when children come to the Waldorf kindergarten, teachers begin by building on what the children already know and have

ALUMNI

Hanna Agar

Hanna was the featured artist at VIVA Gallery in Viroqua, Wisconsin, for the month of March 2013. She displayed a series of her theatrical, fantastical, surreal, absurd photo illustrations. She is now working in New York City. Her art journey was fostered while she attended Pleasant Ridge, where her love of nature and creativity were nurtured. This enabled her to progress to her surreal photography with her own unique style. She uses personal memories and thoughts as starting points for her photographic expressions. Other PRWS alumni, including Hanna's brother Cole, are featured in her photography. Hanna was in town for the closing reception on March 31.



experienced. The children hear many wonderful stories, and over time their own inner imaginings become more and more complex. Then they start to tell their own stories. It is not uncommon for six-year-olds in the kindergarten to spend more time talking about the story of their play ("you be the mom and I'll be the baby and we'll go to the park for lunch...") than actually playing! This is one of benchmarks that kindergarten teachers look for in determining whether a child is ready for first grade—how rich is the child's inner life? The children hear stories and, in response, create their own imaginative inner pictures. There is no need to simplify the language that they hear the way we would have to limit language if we were teaching them to decode written symbols.

This foundation will serve them well when they begin the process of decoding in first grade. Decoding is the act of deciphering the connection between the spoken and written word. When decoding is not filled with meaning, its abstract nature can be a hindrance so that even when children learn to do it, they miss the bigger picture of what reading is all about—creating meaningful stories! If children learn to decode without meaning they will be functionally illiterate.

The Waldorf approach takes more time because it works with the children where they are developmentally and strives to imbue the reading process with a deep understanding of the beauty and meaning inherent in the written word. Reading is a much more abstract process than basic arithmetic, so it takes longer to convey it in developmentally appropriate ways. What a gift it is to give children the space to come to reading in their own time and in a meaningful way.

The foundation of story and imagination for reading, writing, and arithmetic is also the foundation for all of the academic content brought to the children. Stories that engage the inner imaginations of the children are the beginnings of each main lesson, whether it is the story of numbers in first grade or the biography of Abraham Lincoln in eighth grade. When we take the time to tell stories, we provide children with a way to learn about the world that actively engages them and provides the context for lifelong learning.

—Maureen Karlstad has taken two classes from first grade through eighth grade. She is currently the Enrollment Coordinator at Pleasant Ridge.

DEVELOPMENT

When families join Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School it is the beginning of a multiyear journey for both children and adults. As parents journey with their children through the grades, there are tasks at every level to enhance their partnership with the teachers in providing the education. One of the many beautiful opportunities for parents is the variety of volunteer needs in our school. Volunteerism encourages personal development as we learn, grow, and develop new capacities through our community work. And many parents eventually step into roles that involve governance, planning, and care for the building and grounds, sustaining and improving the vitality of the school organism through service.

At the beginning of this journey as a parent, one easy and fun way to get involved and meet other parents is through work days that are hosted by the facilities committee. These work projects begin in August as we prepare for the opening day and continue throughout the year with activities both outside and inside.

The first week of December we host our annual Holiday Faire. This event truly is a school-wide volunteer effort. Each class has a specific responsibility for an element of the event, and all the parents are asked to sign up to help. Eventually, some parents take on a role of coordinating the Faire and in this way we sustain the organization of the event.

Another fun and easy way to volunteer is to offer to help in the hot lunch program a few times during the year. This is a two-hour commitment at midday. One parent serves as coordinator and

calls people who have indicated an interest in helping on lunches, to make sure each day is covered. People say that it is a joy to see all the children go through the line and to get to know the school through this lens.

As parents "outgrow" these activities, they may choose to bring their energy to a particular committee or area of the school that interests them. There are many such committees which tend to meet monthly and are quite focused. After a year or two on a committee, some parents may wish to join the board of directors. This is a realm of administration of the school that is essential for our day-to-day operations and financial stability, working together with the support of administrative staff and teachers.

There are also classroom volunteer activities all through the grades. Helping to make costumes, do laundry, feed chickens, bring sauerkraut, organize communications, assist at the Pentathlon, chauffeur class trips—that's just a sampling of the variety of parent input available.

Many people come to Pleasant Ridge looking for "community." Volunteerism is perhaps the greatest way to create community. We are knit together in a community of service to our children. They are witness to our involvement and can relax in the arms of community and learn with joy. Thank you to all our volunteers!

—Mary Christenson, Development Director
mary@pleasantrydwaldorf.org
(608) 637-8504

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Many thanks to those who have supported our school
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2013 Raffle

We celebrate all of the hard work of our school community as together our parents raised almost \$86,000 for our school. Thank you to the Raffle Committee of Lars Bergan, Hallie Ashley, Michelle Pedretti, and Mary Christenson for their leadership.

Congratulations to our winners (listed online at pleasantrydwaldorf.org/raffle, as well as in this issue's School News). Although our Grand Prize winner decided to take the cash option, we appreciated working with Parrot Cove Lodge of Belize on the Grand Prize trip.

Thank you to Tom Lukens for two nights lodging at Nature Nooks Retreat, and to Lars Bergan for the Driftless Café gift certificate (Third Prize); thank you to Nick Wroblewski for the wonderful owl graphic and signed woodcut print (Fourth Prize); and thank you to Missy Hughes for the beautiful handmade quilt and to Lars Bergan for the tree (Fifth Prize).

Finally, thanks to Michelle Pedretti and the kitchen crew—Lars Bergan, Luke Zahm, Angie Bernstein, and Adrian Ugo—for the wonderful Raffle Drawing Party at The Ark.



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EVENTS KINDERGARTEN & FIRST GRADE



Kindergarten Mornings

Fridays, April 19 and May 3, 9:30 am to 12:30 noon

An opportunity for parents and young children to participate in kindergarten activities, meet the kindergarten teachers, and experience the wonderful atmosphere of the Pleasant Ridge kindergarten. Space is limited and advance registration is required. Call the school at 637-7828 to sign up.

First Grade Readiness Morning

Saturday, May 4, 10:00-11:30 am

A presentation about Pleasant Ridge and its educational approach, focusing on the skills and capabilities needed for first grade success. Advance registration is requested. Parents of kindergarteners who will be going into first grade in the fall are strongly encouraged to attend.

Visit us online at
pleasantridgewaldorf.org

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