

CALYX

PLEASANT RIDGE
WALDORF SCHOOL

Waldorf Education since 1980

Volume 45, Issue 2
Summer 2024



COMING EVENTS

AUGUST

- 13-15 Faculty In-Service
- 17 All-School Workday
- 28 First Day, Grades
Cubby Day, Kindergarten
- 29 First Day, Kindergarten

SEPTEMBER

- 2 Labor Day, No School
- 13 Faculty In-Service, No School
- 27 Michaelmas

OCTOBER

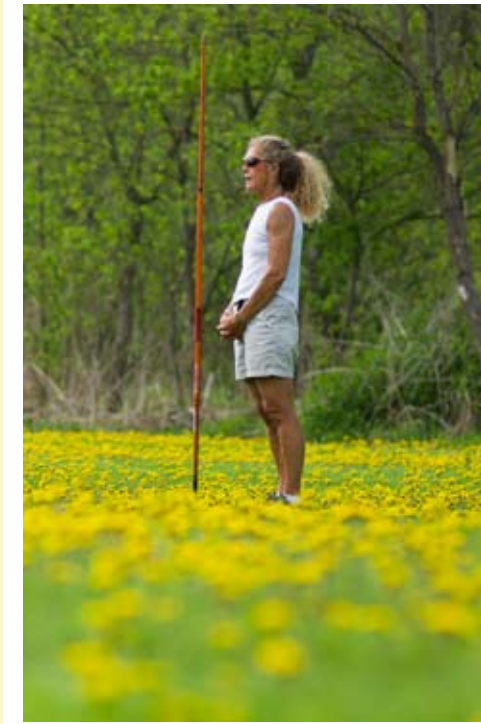
- 4 Kindergarten Faculty In-Service,
No School Kindergarten
- 18 Grandparents/Special Friends Day
- 30 Faculty In-Service, No School
- 31 Parent Teacher Conferences,
No School

NOVEMBER

- 1 Parent Teacher Conferences,
No School
- 2 All-School Workday
- 8 Martinmas
- 27-29 Thanksgiving, No School

DECEMBER

- 6-7 Holiday Faire
- 9-10 Advent Spiral
- 13 Santa Lucia
- 20 Kindergarten Dismissal at 10:30
Festival of Light, Early Dismissal
- 23-31 Holiday Break, No School



In loving memory of Lerie Alstad who passed on March 18, 2024. As the PRWS movement teacher for 40 years, she was known as Miss Lerie to the students she loved so dearly. Her light illuminates the world for eternity, living on through her five children, five grandchildren, and through the countless students that she taught. May we all continue to move with integrity, to raise our voices in harmonious peace, joy, and compassion, and to strive for both humanity's upliftment and the evolution of our own spirits as we endeavor always to "know thyself" with greater clarity and love.

SCHOOL NEWS

In Memory of Miss Lerie

We have so much gratitude for the outpouring of love and support that has come from the Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School community as we navigate the loss of our beloved mother and grandmother, Miss Lerie. Miss Lerie had such an abundance of love for her family, her students, and for her community, and having that love returned so generously has given us all immeasurable comfort. Thank you to all of you, for everything.

Miss Lerie was born in Wisconsin as the youngest of 11 children and raised in a home full of faith and generosity. Even from a young age, wherever there was a hand in need, our mother was ready to take it and help however she could. She was active in the church as a teenager and her interest in equality took her to Chicago, where she joined an inner city ministry and worked together with the congregation to bring more justice and peace to the world.

Following high school, she traveled solo around Europe and Israel, where she worked picking lemons on a kibbutz and furthered what would become a lifelong study of world religions and a devotion to spirituality.

After returning to Wisconsin and beginning her family, she began to study midwifery and went on to deliver hundreds of babies within both the greater Waldorf and Amish communities.

Her love of health and movement brought her to teaching, and she became one of the founding teachers at Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School, where she would bring the love of games and movement through Bothmer Gymnastics to her beloved students and parents alike for the next 40 years. Her love of nature and the outdoors inspired her daily and she delighted in bringing hundreds of students over the years out into the sunshine, even in the coldest of weather. She taught all of us to stand in our upright, move with grace, and to play every game (including the game of life) with fairness and compassion.

Her life was full of children, nature, gardening and outdoor adventures. She

helped bring all of her grandchildren into the world and nurtured within them a love of play and a connection to spirit.

She was unafraid to live life on her terms, wherever she found herself, and her shining beacon of light and love lives on through each and every one of us.

*With love, from the family
of Miss Lerie Alstad*

Animal Dioramas

Grade 4 animal dioramas and reports are a fun spring project. Each student chooses an animal, researches and writes a report. They also create an illustration and diorama. These reports and dioramas are then presented to their class and are finally displayed in the hallway for the whole school to enjoy. This long project is a cherished and much anticipated milestone that always brings out the best in each student.



Lunar New Year

Our Lunar New Year celebration this February was a great success. Grade 7 shared a traditional dragon dance to welcome in the Year of the Dragon, both at our Friday assembly and during the Saturday community celebration. Grade 3 teacher Ms. Chou, along with parent helpers, led two dumpling-making sessions. Ms. Sumi Huh prepared Korean rice cake soup for all to enjoy. Lunar New Year crafts and games rounded out Saturday's celebration and added to the merriment!



Solo and Ensemble

Congratulations to our grade 6-8 students who participated in the 2024 Solo and Ensemble Festival!

Also, a special congratulations to Anna Lena Derocher, who was selected to perform at the State Solo and Ensemble!

GRADUATION

Reflections

Graduation speech by TJ Semanchin, parent and board president

Hello, everyone. I want to congratulate the graduating class of 2024!

As the outgoing board president, I had the honor of offering my reflections at the recent 8th grade graduation, having already tearfully watched my daughter Amara cross over the Rainbow Bridge and skip out of the school gym. Below are excerpts of my address to the class, Ms. Carrie, and the friends and family in the crowd.

I want to begin this ceremony by asking that we first open ourselves to a deeper relationship with this land and acknowledge all those who have inhabited it. And as we prepare this space and our hearts to honor these graduating 8th graders, I ask that we all welcome in the spirits, guardian angels, and ancestors that have been at the side of this class from the beginning.

I want to also acknowledge those who are graduating out of the school parent community tonight, along with their last or only child to attend the school. There are countless decades of collective school engagement represented by these wonderful people.

- Jason Cole & Monica DeClercq (Eleanor)
- Christina Derocher (Anna Lena)
- Jonel Kiesau (Elsa)
- Alex & Jennifer Wade (Noelle)
- Melissa Madura & John Madura (Leo)
- Mandy & Mike Palen (Finley)
- Ronald Schirmer (Iylaka)
- Denise & TJ Semanchin (Amara)
- Kristina Gullion & Tom Gullion (Satya)

When Denise and I were looking to move here, before these 8th grade students were born, I clearly remember meeting recent graduates of Pleasant Ridge. I was so impressed with these teenagers, who were self-aware and confident, and they were a large reason we were drawn to the school. A theme I have held for all these years is the proof is in the pudding, or more accurately, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Well, the proof of Pleasant Ridge is in its graduates. To spend time with these graduates is to see how well this school cares for and cultivates the whole person of each student.

I just spent a week with this class in Colorado.... They really feel like a family. You can see that in how they collectively live out their joys and challenges, their conflict and kinship. Kinship really sums it up for me. And how they have matured as a close-knit community directly reflects how they carry themselves with such grace, kindness, and confidence into the world.

Carrie, you have used the metaphor of concentric circles holding these children, from the classroom to the school, to the community and those who have passed on. I want to expand that with another analogy. This school is like a galaxy, holding what

I see is a solar system within this class, and you are their sun, a bright, warming, nourishing light while maintaining this invisible gravitational pull, holding all these beings together in a constellation that has orbited you and moved through these eight years. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for sharing your light with our children



CURRICULUM

The PRWS Kindergarten: Nourishing the Development of the Young Child

I have been working as an assistant teacher in the Pleasant Ridge kindergarten since the beginning of the 2023–2024 school year. My only previous exposure to Waldorf education was one year as a parent—my daughter Hazel is in her second year of kindergarten. Until this year, I had found the kindergarten to be magical but a bit mysterious. What is it like being a kindergarten teacher here? We get a glimpse on birthdays, hearing the rainbow bridge story that always brings me to tears. We learn a little bit at parent night: what eurythmy is like, how the children paint. But the picture still seemed incomplete. My friends, parents of children attending other schools, would ask Hazel, “What are you learning at school?” It was hard to explain. She wasn’t studying numbers or letters or days of the week—but she was playing and singing and listening to stories! Explaining the value of these activities was tricky for me.

Now, after nine months of diving in as an assistant teacher, I am happy to say I have a much deeper understanding of the value behind everything we do in the Pleasant Ridge kindergarten. Every activity throughout the day and every material found in the classroom is carefully curated to nurture the young child’s development.

Waldorf education views humans as having twelve interrelated senses. The teachers focus on nurturing and developing all twelve senses in the young child. Beyond the traditional five (vision, touch, hearing, taste, smell), we also consider the senses of movement, balance, warmth, language, thought, ego, and life. These twelve senses are meant to better help us understand the complete picture of the developing child. Of the twelve, four are “lower” senses that directly contribute to the development of four “higher” senses: movement is linked to language, balance to hearing, touch to the ego sense, and the life sense to thought.¹

The kindergarteners start their day with a walk and playtime outside and return to the outdoors after lunch. Unfortunately, in society in general, children are spending less and less time moving their bodies and being outside as more screens and electronic devices enter our lives. Not only do kids need time for free play and movement, they need a lot of it to support their development, specifically their movement development, which is the foundation for language—speaking, reading, and writing.² The kindergarten teachers design each day and the entire week to offer a variety of movement. The destination of their morning walk varies day to day: the Wooded Acre, with ample opportunity for climbing; the Growing for Good meadow with its swales, ditches and bridges; the Court Street playground; and the cemetery. In the play yard after lunch, there are also various movement activities waiting for them: sawing, building teeter-totters, pulling each other in tuk-tuks, raking, and digging in the snow!

Closely related to the sense of movement is the sense of balance. Balance is a perception of position. The primary sense organ of balance is the three semicircular canals of the ear. Not surprisingly, developing balance helps to develop listening skills. Furthermore, these ear canals are a central piece of the vestibular



system, which integrates all our sense systems. An underdeveloped vestibular system makes it difficult for the child to process movement, gravity, and space effectively. The lack of vestibular development could mean trouble moving eyes from left to right.³ This can even lead to various difficulties including reading challenges, for example. In addition to the natural balancing activities that come with free play, the teachers intentionally introduce activities such as jumping rope, rolling down hills, and walking a balance beam inside the classroom.

Touch is another sense we focus on in kindergarten, which in turn helps the child to develop their sense of ego. Through touch, we come to learn where our self begins and ends—our boundaries—helping us find both our distinction from and our connection to others. Healthy touch gives the growing child a sense of security and builds self-esteem.⁴ In the Waldorf kindergarten, we teach the children how to touch appropriately through activities such as circle games, feet washing, clay molding, and even moderate roughhousing outdoors. We also provide a wide range of tactile experiences throughout the day to allow them to explore and deepen this sense of touch. All toys in the classroom are made from natural materials such as wood, silks, and wool, and the sandbox is a very popular destination during outdoor play!

Other key activities to nurture movement, balance, and touch include circle time and eurythmy. Circle time is led daily by the teacher, where the children act out verses and songs, often familiar nursery rhymes such as “Hickory Dickory Dock.” The teacher gives the children opportunities to do specific movements, such as crossing the midline, zig-zagging, and lifting hands, alternating between controlled movement and large gross motor movement. Children participate to the extent that they can, based on their own development—for example, some may be ready to walk on tiptoe, others not yet. The teachers will observe them and adapt future circle times based on what they feel the children need more opportunity to practice. It’s an exercise in imitation and focus as well as vocabulary and phonetics as the children hear new words and try out making new sounds.

The PRWS Kindergarten *(continued)*

Ms. Erin visits the kindergarten weekly to lead the class in Eurythmy. Eurythmy is a creative movement art specific to Waldorf education. Through the gestures and movements of Eurythmy, which are directly connected to the sounds of speech, children enact the spoken word. Ms. Erin takes the children on a story adventure and they silently imitate the motions of the story with her as she speaks. This year the story contained a baker, and all the sounds for making bread were expressed: the baker (B) made (M) the dough (D) and kneaded (N) it just so. The musical elements of sound are also explored in Eurythmy. In this story, when the baker asked for flour from the mill, the children formed a windmill while the flour was ground. A song accompanying the movement of the windmill allowed them to step the beat as they turned round, holding hands. Eurythmy in the kindergarten is an effective tool for stimulating the faculties of speech, memory, thinking, and social skills.⁵

Finally, the teachers ensure they are nurturing the children's life sense throughout the day. The life sense is the inner sense of one's own health and condition.⁶ It includes the ability to recognize when you are tired, thirsty, or hungry. The best way to boost this sense is to maintain a daily rhythm. The teachers plan the schedule carefully to provide a regular, predictable rhythm. When a new activity is introduced in the school year, such as painting, it is done carefully and intentionally so as not to cause too much disruption. The schedule is also designed in such a way that we alternate between out-breaths and in-breaths. Quietly listening at story time is an in-breath, creative play is an out-breath, and circle time contains both in-breaths and out-breaths. This rhythm creates a sense of well-being in the child, since it follows a natural process and does not keep the child too long at either end of the spectrum.⁷ The life sense is the foundation for developing the thought sense, the thinking ability. A lack of life sense may result in a child's feeling anxious or having difficulty paying attention. This is a vital sense to develop in preparation for work in the grades.

I hope this has given you a better picture of and appreciation for our kindergarten. There's much more to be said about what goes on in the kindergarten and why. The teachers carefully choose toys, stories, activities, and even the colors of the classroom to nourish the children's inner and outer development. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me for more information!

Sources:

1. Tunkey, Jeff. 2011, "Working with the 12 senses".
2. Haughey, Sally. 2011, "Saturday Senses - The Sense of Movement", <https://fairydustteaching.com/2011/02/saturday-senses-sense-of-movement/>
3. Haughey, Sally. 2011, "Saturday Senses - The Sense of Balance", <https://fairydustteaching.com/2011/02/saturday-senses-sense-of-balance/>
4. Haughey, Sally. 2011, "Saturday Senses - The Sense of Touch", <https://fairydustteaching.com/2011/02/saturday-senses-the-sense-of-touch/>

5. 2022, "Eurythmy—A Healing Movement Art Unique to Waldorf Education" <https://www.sanderlingwaldorf.org/sanderlingblogs/2022/3/11/eurythmya-healing-movement-art-unique-to-waldorf-education>
6. Haughey, Sally. 2011, "Saturday Senses - The Sense of Life", <https://fairydustteaching.com/2011/01/saturday-senses-the-sense-of-life/>
7. Foster, Nancy. 2005, "In a Nutshell: Dialogues with Parents at Acorn Hill, A Waldorf Kindergarten".

Article written with help from Marinella Pro, Shannon Landis, and Erin Erkelens.

Kelly Slentz, Development Director

The Gift of Participatory Grant-Making

I had the honor of representing PRWS this spring at the Shared Gifting Circle, hosted by the Waldorf School of DuPage.

Once every two years, a portion of Elise Ott Casper's endowment* is granted to Waldorf schools in the Mid-States region, who then work with it among themselves using associative economics principles—in this case, participatory grant-making. Without knowing what the amount of the grant will be, each of the seven to twelve participating schools submits a proposal to the group. At the meeting, the ever-changing fund is divided equally among participants before we spend the day exchanging currency in the form of gifts.

PRWS received gifts from schools who wanted our garden improvement project to succeed so that they could have a model for it at their school; we also received gifts from those who appreciate our school's commitment to integrated community garden space. We gave gifts to schools that will provide low-cost teacher training and pilot programs for neurodiversity-affirming classrooms. Every exchange adds layers of social value to currency.

As the gifting proceeded with words of encouragement and empowerment, I could feel myself settling into the trust of collaborative responsibility. It was a softening and spiritually strengthening shift from the world-standard competitive model of currency exchange. How right it feels when currency is used to bring ideas from ignition to realization, and to strengthen communities!

We left this year's meeting with many gifts: deeper connections to our sister schools' meaningful work, ideas for navigating changing times, and a fully funded community garden fence at Growing for Good. Next year we will gather for a study year, aimed at deepening our understanding of associative economics.

**This donor-advised fund is managed by the Mid-States Shared Gifting Program at RSF Social Finance in San Francisco. Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School has participated since the fund's inception in 1988.*

Sarah Dvorsak, parent and board member



DEVELOPMENT



Hello, PRWS community! I am very excited and grateful to continue working at Pleasant Ridge in the role of development director. My family has been a part of the PRWS community since my daughter Hazel started kindergarten in the fall of 2022. We live in Viroqua—my husband Christian (aka Gordo) and I, Hazel, and two-year-old Javier—and we have another little one joining us in July!

This past school year, I worked as a part-time development assistant with the admin team and as afternoon kindergarten assistant in the Cherry Blossom room. The kindergarten work has given me a better understanding of and deep appreciation for Waldorf education. My development assistant position has introduced me to many aspects of the workings of the school, from Holiday Faire to the annual raffle. Through this, my interest in becoming more involved has grown greatly.

My past career experience has been focused in marketing and sales in the food industry. Most recently, I worked in brand management at Organic Valley, focusing on project management, profit improvement, and strategic planning. I'm excited to bring my experience and skills to this new role and increase my contribution toward the health and growth of the school.

With a degree in environmental studies, I'm passionate about conservation, organic agriculture, and good food! I enjoy being active and getting outside for a good hike or bike ride. Always interested in education, I've become particularly passionate about the value of Waldorf education, supporting our school's mission and the holistic approach of educating head, heart and hands. I can't wait to dive deeper via this role into understanding the bigger picture and accomplishing our long-term goals of the school. I especially look forward to getting to know our school community—families, students, faculty, and board members—even better! I truly appreciate the knowledge and training

our previous development director, Robin Kottke, shared with me this past year. I also greatly value the guidance and leadership of our administrator, Jordan Brudos, and look forward to continuing to work closely with our awesome admin team!

Kelly Slentz, Development Director

Advertise in the PRWS Community Directory — Ads due by August 10

The Directory in our Parent Handbook is a treasure trove of information used by all members of our school community—families with students, faculty, staff, and members of our school board.

It features ads and listings from businesses and organizations that offer products and services of interest to our community because we understand the value of keeping our dollars local, shopping small, and supporting businesses that support our school.

Email kelly.slentz@pleasantrydewaldorf.org for more information and to purchase your ad.

Pre-Order Kwik Trip Gas/Grocery Cards Today & Generate a 10% Donation to PRWS for each card ordered!

You receive the full value of what you pay for each card, and Kwik Trip donates 10% back to PRWS—all at no extra cost to you!

Gift Cards are available in the following denominations: \$20, \$50, \$100, \$200, and \$500. **Questions?** Contact us for more information at 608-637-7828 or email Sofya Hundt at sofya.hundt@pleasantrydewaldorf.org.

DONORS

Many thanks to all who have supported the work of our school January 1 – May 15, 2024.

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PRWS Class of 2023
Nathaniel Stephens & Dagmar
Truckses

SCRIP

Kwik Trip



Congratulations to Ms. Carrie and the Class of 2024!— Front row (left to right): Colette Max Funovits, Mae Krieger-Fritsch, Noelle Wade, Millie Voz, Iyla Schirmer, Anna Lena Derocher. Middle row: Elsa Kiesau Gorrill, Amara Semanchin, Weda WazeeGale, Helena Thomas, Mari Kottke, Eleanor DeClercq, Satya Gullion, Carrie Treviramus. Back row: Finley Palen, Leo Madura, Huxley Brown, Maitreya Mueller, Max Moon, Henry Severson.

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