

November 2013

INSIDE THE WOODS

Our fabulous Chili Cook-Off

Better than ever? You bet! There were four categories our contestants were hoping to win in: Traditional, Unique and Vegetarian chili, plus an extra honor for Best Display. The lineup of cooks included Adriane & Gordon Arnold, Cynthia Clark, Ray Coe, George Froming, Dave & Jennifer Hofman, Kevin Jordan, Mark Martin, Sharon Pastor, Alexandra Rabie, Angela Speer, Tara Zaafran, Shelly deZevallos, and Mark Walz. For Traditional -- winners were (1st) Kevin Jordan, (2nd) George Froming, (3rd) Ray Coe. For Unique – the Hofmans, Tara Zaafran, Angela Speer. For Vegetarian – Shelly deZevallos, Cynthia Clark, Sharon Pastor, Alexandra Rabie and Cynthia Clark took 1st and 2nd for Best Display, with Angela Speer and Sharon Pastor splitting 3rd. But wait! There was another prize, too – for Most Popular Chili. That honor went to George Froming.

Three cash prizes went to the classrooms that provided the most chili cooks. \$100 went to Mrs. Lustig’s classroom for providing the most cooks; \$75 to the Upper El classroom; and \$50 split between Middle School and the High School.

We had an excellent selection of raffle items. The Radio Flyer Classic Bumper Cars were carried off by Diane Koonce; My First Circus & Circus Transport went to Sarah Collins; Chimo Legos and Stuffed Red Dragon, won by Aidan Jordan; the American Girl doll was won by the Syna family; the iPad mini 16gb went home with the Getz family; the Monkey Pillow was won by Pasha Biocca; and wireless headphones (Beats by dr. dre) are now the property of Quinn Gleason.

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Edited by Eloise Rochelle

We thank food providers James Coney Island for their iconic doggers, the Goode Co. for its house chili, and Sweet Tomatoes for vegetarian chili. Other foods available were Frito pies, roasted corn, pumpkin and apple pies, slushies and water (thanks to Kroger).

Raz Thomson and Patty Keys were chili judge coordinators; Kendra Pecci, cook coordinator; Kristen Wright and Katherine Bodron, raffle coordinators; Viula Torgerson and Kim Lopez, outdoor decorations and prizes. Raz Thomson and Diane Koonce prepared the baked potatoes.

Thanks to all volunteers – parents, staff and faculty for their help, as well as our underwriters: Scott & Barbara Bends; Don & Denise Biotta; Louis & Madelyn Bossé; Horatio Bouzas & Cynthia Clark; Chris & Shelly DeZevallos; Hoang & Tracy Dinh; Federico & Alejandra Gonzalez; Edward & Daniela Group; Azia & Salimah Hussain; Jon Incerpi & Kerry Yonushonis; Kevin & Marquel Jordan; the Kyler Knight family, Rabiab Labnongsang & Ekaterina Morzheva; Leyla Levitsky & family; Patrick & Sharon Pastor; Santi Randazzo & Daniela Smoleanu; Mark Feferman & Melissa Schepps; Angela Speer; Kevin & Christine Taylor; Candace Watson; James & Mary Womack; Rajesh & Srigrouri Yalamanchili; Neshat Yazdi & Shoa Abedi; Usamah Zagaar & Carol Etzel; and Cheryl & John Zatopek.

Parent Education events continue

Check out the calendar on page 8 for all the dates for Parent Education in November. In addition, refer to the chart on page 2 for information pertaining to our yearly slate of “Open House” programs, for each level of classes at School of the Woods.

The first two are in November – Middle School on the 11th and High School on the 12th. These Open House “Programs” start at 7 PM and are structured for the whole evening. Other information can be seen on the School’s website.

Gala 2014 Co-Chairs announced

School of the Woods bi-annual gala celebration has been set for March 7, 2014. Find your biggest calendar and mark that date.

We have two terrific parents to co-chair the event – Madelyn Mauritz-Bossé and Denise Welling. Planning for the event is well-underway.

The Grand Salon in the Omni/Galleria Hotel at 4 Riverway will be the site for our event. More details to come.

MONTESSORI EDUCATION

SCHOOL OF THE WOODS

OPEN HOUSE PROGRAMS

OUR 51ST YEAR 1962 - 2013

WOODS MIDDLE SCHOOL . . . MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11 – 7 PM . . . The faculty of Woods Middle School will present a program to discuss and demonstrate the ways that Montessori philosophy impacts and promotes love of learning in 7th and 8th grade

WOODS HIGH SCHOOL . . . TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12 – 7 PM . . . Learn about College Prep curriculum in the Montessori environment. The Woods High School faculty and students discuss how Montessori education tenets and fundamentals apply to the older student.

UPPER ELEMENTARY . . . TUESDAY, JANUARY 14 – 7 PM . . . In this evening event, the focus is on the Woods Upper Elementary Class. Faculty will discuss Montessori principles and educational materials for grades 4, 5, 6.

LOWER ELEMENTARY . . . TUESDAY, JANUARY 21 – 7 PM . . . See Montessori cross-age and interactive instruction in action in the classrooms for grades 1, 2 and 3.

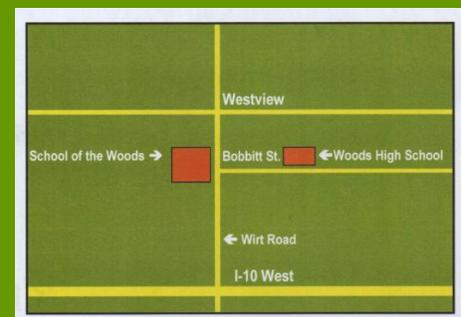
EARLY CHILDHOOD & KINDERGARTEN . . . TUESDAY, JANUARY 28 – 7 PM . . . The very foundation of Montessori education: you will observe how the fundamentals and specific materials of the Montessori system begin to develop a child's intellect from the

Call for information and to let us know
you'll be there! – 713.686.8811

WOODS LOWER SCHOOL
WOODS MIDDLE SCHOOL
WOODS HIGH SCHOOL

1321 Wirt Road, Houston TX 77055
Non-Profit – Non-Sectarian

AMS Full Member School; SACS & TAAPS Accredited



10,000 Steps

10,000 steps. A step is approximately one-third to one-half an adult or child's height. For example, a person six feet tall would cover 20,000 to 30,000 feet or approximately 4 to 5 miles with 10,000 steps. In contrast, a child three-feet tall would cover two to three miles with 10,000 steps.

The idea of 10,000 steps began as a marketing slogan in the 1960's for cardiovascular fitness using a pedometer. 10,000 steps is a catchy phrase to help us remember that we need a minimum amount of daily activity in order to maintain a basic level of health.

Recent research shows that children ages six to twelve probably need 12,000 to 15,000 steps per day to maintain fitness and avoid weight gain. This translates to the equivalent of two to two-and-a-half hours of walking per day. Those of us who exercise less than 5,000 steps per day are at risk for diabetes and obesity.

Walking, running, bicycling and swimming promote important aspects of cardiovascular, aerobic, mental and brain development. As oxygen levels increase through activity, the work of the body and the mind becomes more efficient and effective.

Our children's activity level affects not just their physical health but also their brain development. Exercises that incorporate bilateral movements, where the left arm moves with the right leg and the right arm moves with the left leg, aid in the development of the neuron connections in the corpus callosum between the hemispheres of the brain. These connections in the

corpus callosum are created more easily in the child before the age of six. Movement and brain development are intricately interwoven for all of our lives.

The right hemisphere of the brain is thought to control visual and spatial function as well as emotion and musical abilities. The right brain is often referred to as the creative side of the brain. The left hemisphere is involved with the use of logic, language and reasoning. The corpus callosum acts as the communication device between the hemispheres, in essence, allowing us to use our whole brain. 10,000 steps (read also as basic activity level) help the brain and body to interconnect.

By lengthening the school day and reducing recess times, in our quest to increase our children's tests scores, we are giving our children fewer opportunities to build and maintain a basic fitness level. Electronic devices at home vie for our children's attention and reduce the time that could be used to take 10,000 steps.

We need to realize that physical activity is more than time taken away from other learning. Physical activity aids learning. A minimum level of activity is critical to our children's long-term health and development, both physically and mentally.

Let's remember that the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. A lifetime of health begins with 10,000 steps.

Maren E. Schmidt, M.Ed.
www.KidsTalk.com

TOYS AND GAMES

by Elizabeth Stepankiw

Studies show that what we often think of as leisure activities end up being boring and mildly depressing. Montessori observed that the natural state of the child is to be engaged in work. "Play is the work of the child." She emphasized the word work to persuade adults to take the activities of children much more seriously. "People do not understand that work is natural to man...that man builds himself up through work." (Standing p 345).

Montessori believed the work of the child should be voluntary, enjoyable, purposeful, and spontaneous. The choices she recommended placing in the classroom are appropriate to the developmental needs of the child. She believed the child is naturally drawn to the work that builds language, physical, problem solving, and social skills. She saw engaging work as a way to prevent emotional problems.

Jane McGonigal, Ph.D., author of Reality is Broken, identifies the four characteristics of games that we are naturally drawn to. A good game engages us in activity that involves a goal; it includes a set of rules, has a feedback system, and requires voluntary participation. She argues that the very characteristics of a good game give us clues about our own nature, what it is that truly makes us happy. These characteristics tap into our natural desire to be creative, master challenges, and push the limits of our abilities.

In her studies of gaming, McGonigal has found that "almost nothing makes us happier than good, hard work" (pg 28). All of the neurological and physiological systems that underlie happiness--our attention systems, our reward center, our motivation systems, our emotion and memory centers--are fully activated by gameplay."

McGonigal points out that "the opposite of play isn't work; it's depression." Studies reveal that 30 minutes of gaming worked better than drugs to ease depression and anxiety. A good game is hard work that we choose for ourselves, "an invitation to tackle an unnecessary obstacle... When we're in a concentrated state of optimistic engagement, it suddenly becomes biologically possible for us to think more positive thoughts, to make social connections, and to build

personal strengths. We are actively conditioning our minds and bodies to be happier" (pg 27-28).

So, "there is nothing trivial about playing a good game. The game matters" (pg 27). Classic games like checkers or kickball include these elements as well as children's free play games, activities in the house, and toys and video games. Through these games, children can learn about the world they live in, themselves, and how to work with others.

Some of the best game-playing activities require nothing other than some quiet time outdoors or a group of children. Children's free play often involves created games that give children the opportunity to make up their own rules.

Unstructured play time is important because it helps children develop the skills of self-regulation, the ability to control emotions and behavior. The self-talk often used during free play time has been shown to help us learn to surmount obstacles. Researchers tell us that free play games are important in that they help children to learn cooperation and exercise their abilities for self-regulation and concentration.

Toys can teach children to use their imaginations, figure out how things work, solve problems, and cooperate with others. They open the chance to try out new ideas and build muscle control and strength. The best toys for children are those that leave them open to their thoughts. Building materials, stuffed animals, dress-up clothes, a wagon, and balls give opportunities for children to use their imaginations in creative play and hone their coordination.

Art supplies, including modeling clay, and musical instruments can provide an opportunity for children to create their own masterpieces. Children love to mimic adults; child-size housekeeping supplies encourage children to follow their desire to learn how to do what we do. Many children enjoy the serious work of preparing a garden, planting, and then preparing and eating what they have grown.

Although video games are often thought of as being an escape from reality or a waste of time, they do impact our real lives. The vast majority of young people play

computer and video games. By monitoring the amount of time and making good choices, it is possible to use them to be a positive influence on our children.

A good video game actually has the same components that make good work satisfying. The games that keep us playing require anything but passivity. Engaging completely in something requires us to participate willingly; we are self-motivated and self-directed. As a result, we become deeply interested and genuinely enthusiastic.

While much research on the negative effects of violent games had been done, some researchers realized that little had been done to explore the effects of cooperative games. When they looked into this side of pro-social gaming, they found that playing cooperative games can change our behavior in the real world. In a game such as Super Mario Sunshine, where the players are asked to do something helpful, 30 minutes of playing increased the amount of time kids spent helping others in the real world by three-fold according to McGonigal.

Research on the music video games Rock Band and Guitar Hero demonstrated that music video games resulted in an increase in time spent practicing an instrument in the real world, rather than replacing a person's desire to learn to play music.

Games can provide the impetus and the opportunity to give to something bigger than ourselves. They can bring out the best in us. A game called Chore Wars allows the player to design the game for whatever chore needs to be done, including household chores. The worst chores get the biggest rewards, and they can be traded for real world favors. If the players are willing participants, it can be an opportunity to get some enthusiasm for accomplishing what needs to be done in the house.

Playing video games with your kids strengthens parental relationships. Most video games include social and cooperative aspects, especially when played with other people. Children who play games with their parents feel closer to them.

Playing a game with an idealized avatar makes us work harder in real life to be our idealized self. Alternate reality games created to solve real life problems are part of the ambitions and new projects that are being explored by responsible game designers.

Jane McGonigal works with a specific group of game designers to harness the power of the aspects of games

that engage us to benefit ourselves, our community, and/or the world. You can check out some game recommendations and their availability on her book's website: www.realityisbroken.org.

In her practical advice for gamers, McGonigal recommends putting time limits on video game play, playing games with friends and family rather than with strangers, and playing games face-to-face more than online. She recommends cooperative games over competitive games. Games that encourage or require players to design and create build up the player's sense of "creative agency." She notes that games with violence are better avoided and that any game that results in negative feelings is not good to play.

The following quote by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, whose studies on happiness and creativity produced the idea of "flow," the feeling we get when we are fully immersed in an activity, expresses well McGonigal's viewpoint: "One way or another, if human evolution is to go on, we shall have to learn to enjoy life more thoroughly."

Play can help children to be active, learn to make choices, and experience the joy of mastery. Toys and games should cover the gamut of possibilities because each is important for the development of a multifaceted and integrated brain. Play provides an ideal setting for healthy development.

We can enjoy playing games and at the same time exercise the key elements that lead to a happy, meaningful life: satisfying work, expectations for success, strong social relationships, and the chance to be a part of something larger than ourselves.

Sources for this article:

Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World, by Jane McGonigal

Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work, by E. M. Standing

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=19212514>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jane-mcgonigal/videogames_b_823208.html

<http://childdevelopmentinfo.com>

Reasons to include elementary through high school students in the parent/teacher conference

The parent, teacher and student conference is an important opportunity to establish trust and cooperative relationships and benefits the student in multiple ways.

- Because students are part of the conversation, rather than the ones being talked about, they gain a sense of ownership and responsibility for their education.
- The conference is an opportunity for parents to see the work of their student and note areas of growth, identify strengths and emphasize the value of working hard.
- The mutual goal-setting orients the students toward learning goals.
- Conferences give parents and teachers a time to mutually convey their support for the student's success and future plans.
- Students obtain experience in their ability to plan, organize, and lead the conference.
- The conference gives students a chance to reflect on what they have learned.
- The conference gives students a time to voice their own ideas and concerns.
- If there are problems to be solved, it gives all those concerned a time to brainstorm possible solutions.
- Conferences in which students participate allow students to play an active role in all aspects of their school experience.

What do you know about Veterans Day?

Veterans Day has a very long history. It began life as Armistice Day. In November 1919, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed November 11 as the first commemoration of Armistice Day – armistice meaning an agreement to cease warfare.⁽¹⁾ Such a document had been signed a year before by the German military officials, November 11, 1918.

A Congressional Act approved May 13, 1938 made November 11 each year a legal holiday—a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace with parades, public meetings and even a brief suspension of business.

In 1954, after the huge effort of World War II and after the Korean involvement, the 83rd Congress amended the Act of 1938 by renaming it Veterans Day, to honor all war veterans. It was signed by President Eisenhower.

The wearing of poppies to honor veterans originated from the poem *In Flanders Fields*, written in 1915 by Lt. Col. John McCrae. He was a Canadian doctor, surgeon and poet who served in France and Belgium. The poem was composed at the battlefront on May 3, 1915 during the second battle of Ypres, Belgium.

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place: and in the sky
The larks still bravely singing fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*



*We are the dead: Short days ago,
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved: and now we lie
In Flanders fields!*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe
To you, from failing hands, we throw
The torch: be yours to hold it high
If ye break faith with us who die,
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*



⁽¹⁾ Some 50-60 nations allied with the U.S., British Empire and France in this conflict.

⁽²⁾ On January 28, 1918, while still commanding No. 3 Canadian General Hospital (McGill) at Boulogne, McCrae died of pneumonia with "extensive pneumococcus meningitis". He was buried in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission section of Wimereux Cemetery, just a couple of kilometres up the coast from Boulogne, with full military honors.

Some Mighty Fine Art Exhibits at Hand Now

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston: The MFAH is currently showing 50 prints by the Mexican artist José Guadalupe Posada (1852-1913). His drawings are called “Calaveras” – in this context meaning skeletons, fully clothed and taking part in everyday activities. His work usually was meant as social and political satire. Skeleton art (unclothed) dates from at least the Medieval period and was popular in France at one point. The German painter Hans Holbein (1497-1543) made a series of such engravings, which he called the Dance of Death. Posada’s works are highly interesting. The exhibit runs through December 15. It was organized by MFAH to honor the 100th anniversary of Posada’s death. Call 713.639.7550 for tickets, free days, and times.



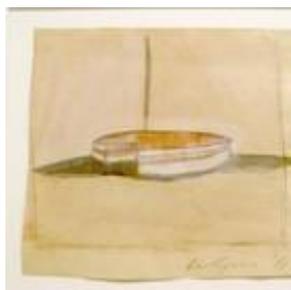
Houston Museum of Natural History, 5555 Hermann Park Dr., 713.639.4629. Hooray for Nefertiti! The HMNS recently opened its permanent exhibit Hall of Egyptology, with 10,000 sq. ft. More than 500 items are displayed, including three mummies and a dozen mummy containers. But the Museum is placing the exhibit’s emphasis on the many objects which convey the spirit of life in this ancient kingdom. One unusual item is a pottery jar which dates from the pre-dynastic period about 4000 BC. It shows the jar to have been damaged and the method of repair used by the ancients. Call for admission information.



The Menil Collection, 1533 Sul Ross, 713.525.9400. Two exhibits of fine contemporary works from contiguous generations are now on view. The older: the German artist Wols (A.O. Wolfgang Schulze; 1913-1951). He was one of the most ingenious and influential artists after WW II, and a leading figure in Tachisme, the European equivalent of American Abstract Expressionism. Tachisme was an outgrowth of the larger Art Informel or “art without form” Movement. This exhibit ends January 14.



Works by Belgian painter Luc Tuymans (b. 1985) is the second exhibit at the Menil, and will be on view through January 5. Tuymans is one of the most influential painters working today. He is well-known for his distinctive painting style, and his historically and emotionally-charged subject matter. Tuymans derives his images from pre-existing sources -- photographs, film stills, mirror images, anything he finds interesting.. He uses a deliberately spare palette.



MIXT PIX



Here are a couple of snaps from the Parent Social. The event was held September 7 at the home of parents Stephanie and Dustin Smith.



Formula:
(good food) + (good fun) = (happy parents)



On September 20, the entire student body gathered in the gymnasium to celebrate the International Day of Peace. The event began with the African Drummers leading the group in a traditional African peace song. The group then viewed the classic video *The Pale Blue Dot* by Carl Sagan. Three high school students spoke about a peaceful world

Fog

*The fog comes
on little cat feet.*

*It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.*

Carl Sandburg