

Winter Harbor Children's House Autumn Newsletter

Dear Parents and Friends,

We would like to thank each of you for helping your child to make the transition from home and family to school as smooth as possible. Establishing your own routine with your child is so important and the consistency of that routine helps each child develop trust. Expecting them to follow rules of safety, caring and respect is also important. Our core rule at Winter Harbor is that, "We take care of each other's bodies, feelings, and all living things."

The children have definitely settled in and now we would like to work on increasing their independence. With your assistance our goals are to have children walk into the room alone, follow simple safety rules, begin to use the bathroom on their own, hang up their own coat, take off their own boots, put on their slippers, plan their first activity of the day, etc. The children are also learning how we communicate with each other, and take care of each other. Our focus is on observing not only each individual, but also how the group dynamics are being formed. Each child is discovering his/her own unique way to make friends, spend their time, learn, and have fun.

Many of the children are busy at work in the Practical Life area, as they strengthen their fingers and hand muscles by pouring, scooping, polishing, twisting, squeezing, lacing, sorting, transferring objects with tools and cleaning. The snack table offers a place for children to serve themselves, enjoy eating with a friend, and cleaning up after snack, while also practicing etiquette with their peers. The social skills goals include responding to greetings, responding appropriately with "Please, Thank You, Excuse me, I'm sorry, etc.

The Sensorial area is busy as well, as children work with the Red Rods, build with the Brown Stairs and Pink Tower, or compare heights and widths with the Cylinder Blocks. They are naming, matching and grading colors. Other materials allow them to explore color mixing, sound and smell. The children will also experience taste when we experiment with different kinds of apples.

The Math, Language, Geography and Cultural areas offer a wide range of materials to interest the youngest to oldest child. We will continue to study the European culture and then move into studying the culture and

continent of North America with an emphasis on Native Americans as well as highlighting the State of Maine.

Once a month we have a long time and current Winter Harbor parent, Karen Fox coming into the classroom. Karen has volunteered to read to us, sing with us and lead us in creative movement activities. Thank you Karen!

Each Friday Anne Marie joins us for the entire morning sharing French with all of us. Through lessons with materials we learn the French for colors, numbers, farm animals, weather, etc. Singing, dancing, movement activities, cooking, playing games, and practicing yoga poses are some of the other ways in which we learn French words and phrases. Anne Marie teaches the names of body parts, the words for positions, as well as many other animal names, when we do Yoga in French. Anne Marie will be visiting her family in France from Oct. 21st – Nov. 9th, so she will be out of the classroom during this time.

The first Friday of each month we allow 30 extra minutes for 'lunch at school' day. Each child is expected to bring a lunch and a drink. Thank you parents for putting food in containers that your child can manage alone. We are there to help out, but your child will delight in the fact that he/she can manage opening and closing their food/drink containers all by themselves. Our goal is to always move a child toward independence. The children look forward to this very special time and sometimes the food is a low priority. Do not be concerned if your child eats very little. We appreciate healthy, low sugar, balanced foods because we also take this opportunity to discuss nutrition and of course, manners.

During the beginning of September we began our fall tradition of teaching fire safety. The children practice fire drills at school. We will be discussing many aspects of this all-important topic. We will meet at the Biddeford Fire Station and there will be a permission sheet posted at least a week before our visit. The program begins promptly and the firefighters begin right away. We will meet families in the grassy area and all go in together. There will be no class time before or after. In the past there have been times when the visit was cut short because of a real fire/emergency and the firefighters do need to leave. Let's hope that doesn't happen. Please join us for this highly educational and enjoyable field trip.

We appreciate your awareness of our safety concerns at pick-up and drop-off times. Each child knows to wait for an adult to open or close the school door or play yard gate, and that holding an adult's hand to and

from cars, helps to protect them from traffic. We encourage children to wash their hands often and never put anything in their mouths except food from our snack cupboard. You may hear your child sing our "Healthy Hands" song when they wash, rinse and dry their hands. The children are also taught how to cough or sneeze into their sleeve at the elbow, which keeps germs further away from hands that pass germs on to children and materials.

On Friday, October 15th Amy and I will be attending an all day training/workshop at Kennebec Montessori School in Fairfield, Maine.

On Monday, October 26th Shooting Stars Photography will be upstairs at school to take this year's class photo and if you give us permission, individual photos of each child as well. They have done a fabulous job for so many years! You are not required to purchase anything. About two weeks later they bring all of the beautiful photos for you to preview. . . And then decide if you would like any or all of them. The photographer likes to know ahead of time if you have any personal requests, so a form will be made available for that purpose.

We have started our year with Winslow Homer in our Art History Area. Winslow Homer is one of America's greatest artists and since the Saco Museum is highlighting him I had hoped that we could take advantage of a small and quaint museum. When I previewed the exhibit I was pleasantly surprised to see that they are also featuring a display of other local—Saco-Biddeford historical artifacts. Much to my surprise there was a wonderful section about Winter Harbor and Biddeford Pool. I was so happy to see this I couldn't decide which would be better to highlight—the Winter Harbor/Biddeford Pool or Winslow Homer!! Luckily this is the beauty of a small museum and I think as the field trip gets closer we will highlight a little of both. I thought it would be really neat for the children to learn a little of the history of Winter Harbor and Biddeford Pool as well as introduce them to Winslow Homer who spent a lot of his time right here on the Maine Coast in his Prout's Neck Studio.

This year's Fall Conferences will be offered on Monday, November 1st and Tuesday, November 2nd. School for the children will be closed both days. We truly appreciate when parents are able to meet with us without siblings, so all of us can really focus on one child at a time. During these meetings we look forward to the time to sit and chat with you about your child's unique way of finding their level of comfort socially, and adapting to our classroom routines. We enjoy sharing the things we are beginning to learn about each of your children. It is also very important that we hear the wealth of information you are willing to share about your child. Your

insights are invaluable to us as we continue to make plans throughout the school year. Although conferences are at the beginning of November you can always send us an email or call us if you have questions or concerns about your child before then, so that we may have the opportunity to speak privately and not in front of the children or other adults. Amy, Anne Marie, and I are in partnership with each of you, working toward the same goal; assisting each child to reach his or her own maximum potential.

Dates to remember:

Oct. 1st Lunch at School Pick up time is 12:00
Oct. 13th Field Trip to Biddeford Fire Station
Oct. 11th Columbus Day—No School
Oct. 15th Tobee and Amy at Training—No School
Oct. 26th Shooting Stars Photography
Nov. 1st and 2nd Fall Conferences—No School
Nov. 4th Field Trip to Saco Museum

Tobee, Amy, and Anne Marie