



confluence

news of Three Rivers Waldorf School

volume 13 number 1

Fall 2008

MIXES AGE CLASSES

On June 5th, another class of eighth graders moved on from Three Rivers Waldorf School, but they left children from their classroom behind. This may seem like a riddle; how can an entire class graduate yet leave members behind when no one flunked? If you have a passing familiarity with our school, you will know an answer. The graduates were part of a mixed grade class which included nine students in the grade behind them. If you are an “old timer” like me, you know another answer.

The Class of 2008 was once a “stand alone” class; shortly after beginning second grade, they learned they would stand alone no more. Mid-year of second grade, nine first graders joined their class with Heather Müsch at their helm. Hence, another combined class was launched, carrying forth all the inherent benefits and challenges.

Recently, I spoke with Ms. Müsch about her experience teaching a combined class. From her perspective, much of the benefit of a combined class came from enlarging the social group. A bigger class allowed more choices for developing friendships and the opportunity to be a part of a group. “Going into puberty, they found a certain contentment in being part of a group rather than being a lone individual,” she described. Among the strengths of that combined class was a diversity not found previously in the separate classes. One of the individual classes had been predominantly male; by blending two grades together, a better mix of genders provided contemporaries for the girls and removed a potential barrier for prospective students. Additionally, the mix of ages allowed older students to develop patience and



In May, the seventh and eighth grade class canoed and camped along a 40-mile stretch of the Buffalo River in northern Arkansas.

Laurie Logan, MD, parent & board president learn to help others, while giving younger students the opportunity to look ahead and see what was coming next. Ms. Müsch quickly discovered the challenges of teaching a combined class, and worked to create solutions. Main lesson was taught to both grades simultaneously, but with different expectations for the different grades. A greater level of depth and detail in main lesson book work was expected of the upper grade. Ms. Müsch states, “Having clear expectations

for where each grade should be academically was really important.” She found separating the grades for specific skills classes in language arts and mathematics, provided a place where each student had more focused instruction and expectations.

Starting this fall, two of our previously separate grades will be combining to form one larger class under the direction of Christina Hotchkiss.

Like her predecessor, Ms.

Hotchkiss sees benefits from having a larger class. She looks forward to the children having a wider social circle and thinks this will allow healthy social development. And like her predecessor, she has a clear understanding of the challenge: “The hard part will be making sure the Fourth Graders get what they need and making sure the Fifth Graders get what they need.” As with prior combined classes, she has ideas about times to separate the classes, ensuring each student gets the individualized instruction they need. And with the recognition the children need to come together as one group, an early fall camping trip will be an opportunity to work and play together before blending in the classroom. *continued, page 5*



EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

PARENT-CHILD CLASSES

PARENT-INFANT CLASSES

Find your support and your voice as a conscious parent with us. At Three Rivers Waldorf School, we seek to support parents in “the toughest job you’ll ever love”. Our Waldorf community wants conscious parents, like you, to join us. Come experience an environment of trust and acceptance. Come to a weekly gathering where discussion, learning and sharing take place. Come be nurtured by our experienced parent educators, who are also, themselves conscious parents. Take off your shoes and have a cup of hot tea. In our spaces, natural materials and soothing colors will surround you and your child. We will draw you into a calm, nurturing rhythm. Get ideas for bringing healthy foods, habits and materials into your home. Talk about the latest research or the latest challenge in your life. Celebrate achievements with people who really value the significance of your success.

The children, from birth through age four, play and interact with wooden, cotton, shell, stone, woolen and metal toys in a safe, interesting play space. The adults use a variety of natural materials and learn to make beautiful and useful things with their own hands, to enrich their lives and the lives of their children.

Three Rivers School offers nine-week sessions of Parent-Infant and Parent-Child classes in the Autumn, Winter and Spring. Contact the school office for enrollment information, 608-782-8774, threeriversschool@charter.net

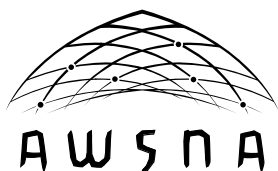
Are you a conscious parent? Do you wish to be one? Come Join Us!

Fall Session begins week of September 15 and ends week of November 10.

Winter Session begins week of January 5 and ends week of March 6.

Spring Session begins week of March 23 and ends with the June 3 Boat Regatta.

Grandparents Day is on April 24, 2009.



ASSOCIATION OF WALDORF
SCHOOLS OF NORTH AMERICASM

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

Enrollment application

My child and I are interested in enrolling in the... Fall Winter Spring
 Parent-Infant class Parent-Child class

My best day of the week to attend class is... Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday
2nd choice... Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday
3rd choice... Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday

Child's name _____

Age _____ Birthdate ___/___/___ Boy ___ Girl ___

Siblings & ages _____

Parent name(s) _____

Address _____

Adult attending class _____

Home phone _____ work/cell _____

Email address _____ Any food allergies? _____

How did you hear about the program? _____

Some families choose to enroll in more than one class per week.

TUITION

Parent-Child class \$180 for 9-class session.

1st sibling: 25% discount.

2nd & consecutive siblings: 50% discount.

Additional supply fee for 2nd adult attending class.

* **Enroll for all three sessions (fall, winter, spring): \$500**
\$40 discount

Parent-Infant class \$100 for 9-class session.

Additional supply fee for 2nd adult attending class.

* **Enroll for all three sessions (fall, winter, spring): \$275**
\$25 discount

My friend would like to receive information about Three Rivers Waldorf School:

Name _____

Address _____

Amount enclosed \$ _____

We cannot hold slots without pre-payment.
Please return this form along with payment to:

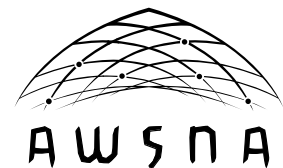
Three Rivers Waldorf School
**901 Caledonia Street
La Crosse, WI 54603**

Enrollment is limited. We reserve the right to cancel a class.

We may ask families to attend an alternate class to balance enrollment. No refunds will be made after the first class. If two or more classes are canceled, make-up class(es) and/or refunds will be offered.

For more information call *Three Rivers Waldorf School* at 608-782-8774. Email: ThreeRiversSchool@charter.net
Visit the school's website: www.ThreeRiversSchool.com

Three Rivers Waldorf School does not discriminate on any basis, including race, color, sex, national or ethnic origin, age, religion, sexual orientation, family status, disability or income level in enrollment or hiring.



ASSOCIATION OF WALDORF
SCHOOLS OF NORTH AMERICA™

We appreciate the generosity of these Friends of Three Rivers School

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Vivian Webster
Ann Kramer
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Mary Kay Vacek in honor of Saijal & Aislin Vacek
Jennifer Vaughan Jones in honor of Cathy VanMaren & Avery VanGard
Delores Nuttleman
James & Mildred Ross

Don & Cheryl Brenengen in honor of Tony & Reese Brenengen
Sara Sullivan in honor of Zoë Fay
Peg Ross
Dr. & Mrs. Richard Wagner in memory of Dennis Ellis
Nancy Pohlman
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Curtis & Marieta Scherer
Jennifer Levendoski
Tony & Reese Brenengen
Alma Noll & Melani Fay
Kenneth & Mary Alice Halverson
Luke Garrott & Jen Grodon
Vivian Webster
Nancy Hartje in memory of Helen Hartje
Wil & Anne Marie Fryer
David & Brenda Rundahl
Giselle Cadle
Mary Kay Vacek in honor of Sajal & Aislin Vacek
Scott & Jessica Ferrier
Jason & Jodi Beyer
Bridget & Tom Jones
Valorie Roh
Sam Haik & Linda White
Virginia & Peter Seielstad in honor of Jason Field
Edward & Kay Clutter in honor of Jasper Clutter
Marvin Bunnell
Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Steinback
Barbara Hammes in honor of No Hard Feelings Band
Wells Fargo
David Reinders & Shelly Wolter-Reinders
Francis X. Rienzo in memory of Joan T. Rienzo
Elizabeth Hutcheson
Chris Saudek
Greater Milwaukee Foundation – Shapiro
William & Mary VanMaren
The McGinnis Family
Brian Wright



Kindergarten teachers Marinella Pro and Mary Ellyn Mattison-Doerr present a puppet play to the children of the Sunny Meadow and Fairy Glen preK-Kindergarten classes.

*Have we failed to acknowledge your contribution?
We apologize! Please alert us so that we may
include you in the next issue.*

Confluence is published by Three Rivers
Waldorf School in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

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Mixed Ages, continued from page 1

The strengths and challenges of combined grades are not unique to our school. In the broader education community, the benefits of a multi-age classroom experience are being increasingly recognized. According to educator and author Chip Wood, in his book *Yardsticks*, the benefits change as children develop. Regarding teaching ten and eleven year olds together, he writes “The tens are more settled and school-compliant and can help provide a calmer, more reasonable transition into the adolescent years for the older children.” On the other hand, he also finds that “Eighth graders provide highly effective role models for the seventh graders who are generally less mature in their behavior.” Not surprising to anyone spending much time with seventh and eighth graders! Further recommendations from Wood mirror the insights of our own teachers, stating “The maximum age range for even the most talented teachers is about a three-year chronological and a two-year grade spread.”

Both teachers highlighted in our conversations, every child and every class is different as to their specific needs and strengths. Neither too large of an age range, nor too small of a class are ideal, but as Ms. Müsch pointed out “You don’t always have the choice of what is perfect, but it’s not about being perfect, it’s about striving to do the best with what you have.” From the looks of the graduating classes of 2008 and 2009, their teachers have done very well indeed.



Congratulations to the graduating eighth grade of 2008. Pictured from left are Ian Dougherty-Harris, Kai Garrott, Maia Noll and Mr. Judson Steinback.



Electromagnetic physics project in grades seven and eight.

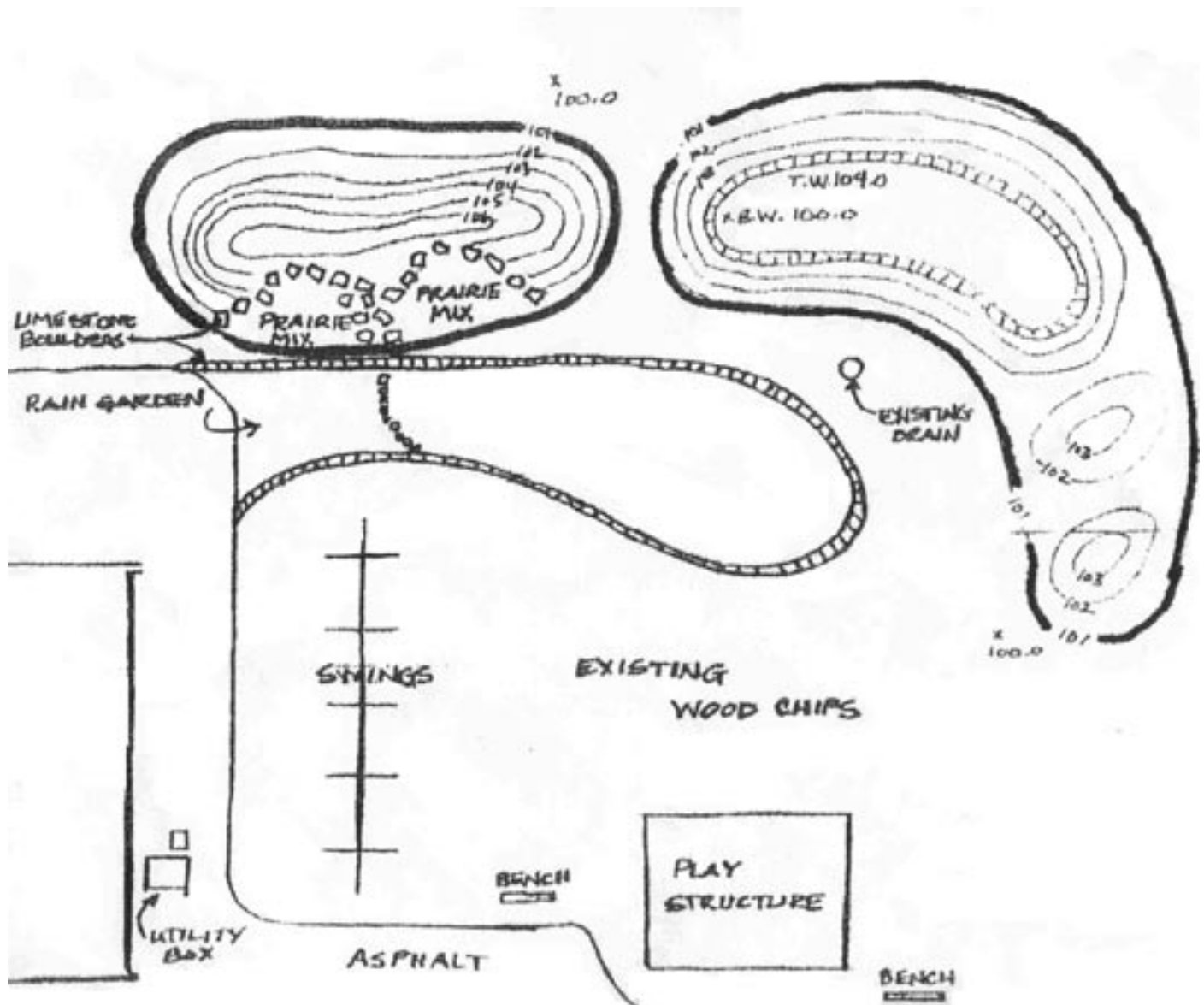
Spring Fair & 2nd annual Fun Run held

The cyclical nature of time is an acknowledged and celebrated trait of the Waldorf perspective on human development. In the classroom, our children flourish with a rhythmic daily schedule beginning and ending with a handshake with the teacher. The monthly rhythm is marked by the Main Lesson block structure where specific areas of study are targeted for approximately four weeks. The seasonal cycle of the year is celebrated in the form of festivals, where participation extends beyond the classroom to include the extended school community. Lead by a faculty member, much work is involved in the planning, execution and after event efforts; this labor of love originates from faculty and family volunteers. A cool damp breeze and a peek-a-boo sun marked the most recent festival celebrated, our annual Spring Fair on Saturday, May tenth. The early risers amongst us started off the day’s activities with the Second Annual TRWS 5K Fun Run/Walk. The celebration continued with a Shadow Play in the school library, followed by our traditional Maypole dancing with live music and the larger-than-life marsh puppet parade. The afternoon was highlighted by a raffle of unusual items, children activities and craft booths, as well as visiting baby animals from Rainbow Ridge Bed and Breakfast. This year we welcomed a number of new elements to the celebration including a dedication of newly planted trees, a school store booth, seedling sales, a Chicken Q, and a bake sale. The day of merriment ended with clean up efforts and dancing.

The Second Annual Garden Party

In 2007, a Garden Party was organized to create an event where adult friends and families of TRWS could gather to learn about a specific garden project and combine resources enabling the completion of that project. The funds collected from last year's gathering helped to build the rain garden which has been enable the playground to be usable despite the deluge of rain we have experienced.

This year's Garden Party was held on 27 June. Once again Michael Ross and Allan Beatty opened their home to an evening of classical and Celtic music, sweet and savory hor d'oeuvres , and glorious garden blooms. With the ambitious goals of funding a Welcome Garden at the corners of St. James and Rose Streets and completing the third Phase of the Early Childhood Playground Rejuvenation with the creation of a second berm and a sand garden, many conversations ensued about the benefits of outdoor play and the role of TRWS in the larger La Crosse community. Optimism and a sense of purpose was the mood of the night. The financial goals of the evening were achieved through voluntary donations and we can anticipate more changes on the playground as this school year.



*Move your creative & spiritual life forward...
Take 3 workshops this fall at Three Rivers School*

Prayer Flags

Monday, October 6 6:00–8:15 p.m.

Add your unique messages or images to high-quality paper and hand-dyed fabrics to create Tibetan-style prayer flags to hang indoors or out. \$25 class fee + \$12 materials fee.

Prayer Bead Bracelet / Malas

Monday, October 20 6:00–8:15 p.m.

Learn about the long history & practice of meditating with beads. You can choose semi-precious stones, Bali silver and special wooden beads to string your own; meditation instruction provided. \$25 class fee + \$12 materials fee.

Your Mini Traveling Altar

Mondays, November 3 & 11, 6:00–8:15 p.m.

Using small lidded containers, which I will provide, along with found objects, stitch or glue your own intention into a small shrine. Bring your own small images, quotes, special fabrics, beads, etc, if you like. \$40 class fee + \$10 materials fee.

Grandparents “Play” at Three Rivers Waldorf School

Rhonda M. Rabbitt, *Parent*

On Friday, April 25th, over 30 grandparents joined us for the annual Grandparent’s Day event at Three Rivers School. Grandparents had the opportunity to become part of a portion of the school day or participate in an all-day experience. They were challenged to observe and reflect on children “learning through play.” As a large group, grandparents and parent leaders processed what was observed, questions developed, and insights gained. Grandparents were able to sit in classrooms, enjoy snack and recess, indulge in a hot lunch with students, shop the school store, learn from drawing with Mr. Rabbitt, and witness a Grades Assembly. Fitting with the Waldorf philosophy, grandparents learned first-hand how our children experience life and learning through all senses and faculties. Through this event, we are grateful to have family members better understand Waldorf education— they, too, engaged head, heart, and hands for learning. Thank you to parents, faculty, and children for your leadership and cooperation. Thank you to grandparents for your dedication, interest, and support.

Magic Cupboard

Magic Cupboard offers high quality wooden toys, games, craft supplies, books, cards, and unique handmade items. The store is run by volunteers of Three Rivers School and proceeds go toward the tuition adjustment program, helping to make Waldorf Education affordable and accessible to all. The store offers a play area for children to entertain themselves while adults shop. See more photos of the inventory on the school’s website.

*Magic Cupboard is
available for shopping*
Call the school for store hours



El sabio buho
En un viejo roble habitaba
y entra más oía
más callaba,
más sabía.
Aprended del sabio buho
que en un viejo roble habitaba.

Calendar

September 15-19 Parent-Child, Parent-Infant classes begin
9:00 a.m. 9-week FALL Session

October 2 **Oktoberfest Torchlight Parade**
Thursday passes by the school on Caledonia Street
TRS Chicken-Que 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

October 3 **Inservice Day NO SCHOOL**

October 29 **Grades Student Assembly**
2:00 p.m. welcome family and friends

October 30 **Parent-Teacher Conferences NO SCHOOL**

November 25 **Grades Student Assembly**
2:00 p.m. welcome family and friends

November 26-28 **Thanksgiving Break NO SCHOOL**

December 13 **Holiday Giftmaking & Craft Fair**
10 a.m. - 4 p.m. handcrafts for all ages, food, music, elf cottage

Dec. 20 - Jan. 4 **Winter Break NO SCHOOL**

January 5-9 **Parent-Child, Parent-Infant classes begin**
9:00 a.m. 9-week WINTER Session

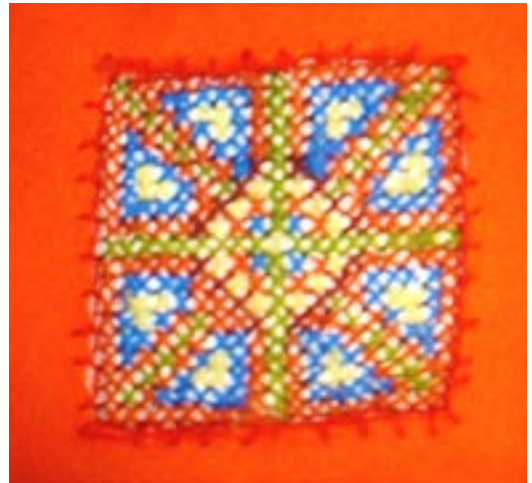
January 24 **Windows into Waldorf Education Conference**

January 28 **Grades Student Assembly**
welcome family and friends

January 29-30 **Parent-Teacher Conferences NO SCHOOL**

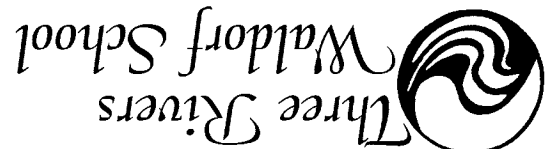
February 19-20 **Inservice Days NO SCHOOL**

www.threeriversschool.com
your resource for online calendar & school info



Cross-stitched pillow from fourth grade handwork class.

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