

The Calvin Hilltop

“I see spring when I touch the air.” - Sage, Threes



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Spring 2008

Ben and Jerry Watch Out!



Scoops of Ice Cream
Created by the
Threes, Ready to be
Served!

The children in the Threes classroom have set up their own dramatic play ice cream parlor. A child initiated activity, they initially set up shop on the playground. The ice cream parlor is complete with “scoops” of ice cream (painted

Styrofoam balls w/paper “sprinkles”) and cones made from rolled paper plates. The prices may set you back a bit--the Threes priced their cups at \$3 and cones \$8--sprinkles and cherries of course are extra. But where else can you find homemade eggplant ice cream on the menu?

Following up their fall acorn parade, this spring the Threes marched into the Preschool with their homemade drums. They’ve been very busy with the message center and were very excited to make the trip to the mailbox to mail Mother’s Day letters.

Spring in the Threes means boats, sprouts, ice cream and the Reading Buddies! As they have every spring, The Foote School’s fourth graders having been making weekly visits to the Threes to share the joy of reading and good books. At meeting Helen asked the question, “What do you think of our new reading buddies?” Avery answered, “First the reading buddy was reading then me.” Arnon spoke for the whole

group when he added, “Next week I’m going to be happy because they are coming back.”

Salutations from the Kindergarten

Inspired by their trip to Southern Connecticut’s Theater Works, the Kindergarteners wrote and staged their own production of E.B. White’s *Charlotte’s Web*. The children adapted the text and created beautiful costumes. There were two separate casts, one group performed for the Preschool, one for the Threes. Calvin Hill’s oldest children were careful to keep their audience in mind. During a dress rehearsal a concerned Eva wondered, “I hope the Threes won’t get too tired...” Patrick provided inspired direction. The production concentrated on the heart of the story which emphasizes a sense of wonder and the love between the characters. In this version, even Fern gets to speak with the prolific Charlotte. A wonderful addition was the inclusion of “Tender Shepherd” a Kindergarten favorite Sam C noted they chose it because “It’s very gentle.” “It’s like a lullaby,” Claire added.



Sabrina as Charlotte in the Kindergarten’s production of *Charlotte’s Web*

Ornithology

If you're the parent of a Preschooler chances are you've had a rockin' robin around your house this spring. Donna and Matt taught the song, and it continues to top the Preschool charts this May. The Preschool transformed into an aviary this spring with spectacular art to rival even a peacock's plumage, creative bird movement, and delicious for-the-birds seed treats. Much of the activity was child initiated, and the teachers responded by creating a curriculum which explored nature from both an



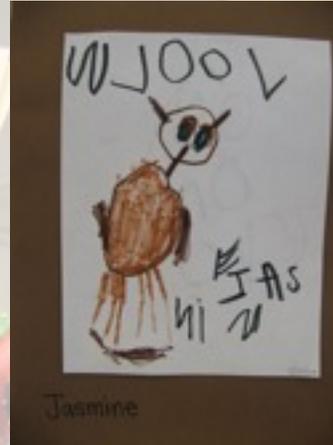
Clay Bird, by Caroline

artistic and scientific viewpoint, often the close

relationship between the two. The Preschoolers carefully noted their observations on "the bird chart." Visitors to the playground included cardinals, sparrows, seagulls, and chickadees. Even a hawk! Michael's genuine stuffed owl kept perch in the book corner, and a Rhode Island School of Design professor brought in several preserved birds for observation. There were several expeditions



Ian the hawk and Rowan the bald eagle



Owl, by Jasmine

including neighborhood bird walks, a small group trip to the Peabody's Bird Room, and the West Rock Nature Center.

Linda helped the children create simple bird costumes. They

staged a bird parade for friends with impressive wing flapping! Rowan marched beside Ian, noting they were friends because "A hawk is a relative to an eagle." Joining the parade owls Lily and Gonzalo, cardinal Sophie, hummingbirds Caroline and Greta.

Early Birds, Then Worms

Check out the deluxe worm farm in the Preschool, designed to sustain the worms through the summer.

The children layered soil, sand, and corn meal. Kit, Gonzalo, Daniel, Jack, and Connor collected 119 worms! Apparently the patch behind the front climber is particularly fertile for worms. Some of the worms relocated to the worm farm, others to the garden box. The Preschool is seeking night crawlers!



Sophie the cardinal

*Every little swallow, every chickadee, every little bird in the tall oak tree
The wise old owl, the big black crow,
flapping their wings, saying, "Go bird go!"*

Meg Myers

“She has many talents, not the least of which is wearing many hats and doing it all so gracefully.” In reflecting on the gifts and contributions of beloved Associate Director and Preschool Senior Teacher Meg Myers, Carla’s quote echoes the sentiment of the staff. All of Meg’s colleagues praised her skills in both the office and the classroom and the fluidity with which she moves between the two. For twenty-five years Meg has enriched our classrooms and tackled administrative responsibilities.

“She sings a lot of songs for us. That’s what is special about her.” Greta offered this observation, and all the children seemed to agree. Meg and her guitar make music central and

special in the Preschool, at Calvin Hill.

Meg and Mary lead the Preschool in singing



When asked how Calvin Hill had changed over the years, Meg observed “It’s more the same than different.” Noting the essential joy, vibrancy, and curiosity that the children bring to school each day. Although Meg did note the office had a

manual typewriter when she first started, and she had to convince Carla to invest in an electric one! And eventually to a computer!

Meg expressed tremendous love and devotion for her fellow teachers. “We’re like family. Our kids grew up together.” She remembered Donna’s new daughter (now a NYU freshman!) was the first baby her own daughter Amanda (now a lawyer) ever held. The first thing John mentioned about Meg was they never had a disagreement in the twenty-five years they’ve taught together.

Meg will be able to devote more time to her music. She is going to resume lessons and continue to play her cello in two orchestras---The Civic Orchestra of New Haven and The American Choral Orchestra. We will miss her musical talents and the calm, supportive presence she brings to every situation. Her warmth, empathy, and good humor have touched all of us---children, parents, and colleagues. Dear Meg, we wish you well!

Donna DaCosta

“When I first walked into Calvin Hill over twenty-five years ago I knew it was a magical place.” For over twenty-five years Preschool teacher Donna DaCosta has contributed her own magic to Calvin Hill. Donna is leaving us to become Director of the Preschool at Cold Spring School. *“She has brought us a great deal over the years and her presence and perspective will be missed.”* Carla’s words were echoed by both teachers and students who stressed Donna’s vibrancy, warmth, and good humor. John, Meg, Linda and

Donna have been teaching together for over twenty years.

Heather, the newest teacher of the team, spoke

movingly of the leadership and

warmth Donna has

shown her. Heather recalled both her excitement and her

nervousness on her first day at

Calvin Hill. *“Specifically at lunch time, I recall not knowing*

where the right place was to sit or what exactly I was supposed to

be saying. All of a sudden Donna was next to me inviting me to her

table with a gentle hand on her back and a warm smile on her

face. I instantly felt calmer and fell even more in love with Calvin Hill. After working with Donna for the last five years, I realize that Donna was being Donna. Her warmth, humor, guidance, and nurturing have been a huge part in helping me become the teacher I have grown into She is part of my Calvin Hill that I love so much, and always will be, no matter where she goes.”

Donna and friends



All of Donna’s colleagues and, indeed, many parents spoke of Donna’s three beautiful, accomplished children. And everyone spoke of Donna’s tremendous devotion and love for them. Timmy, Nicole, and Diona are all Calvin Hill alumni. Nicole has even helped out at Calvin Hill! We are so fortunate Donna has shown our children the same guidance and love she has shown her own. Perhaps Alizeh said it best, *“Donna is my favorite teacher. She always rubs my back at naptime.”* We know Donna will be a great success in her new position. Donna, we will miss you and wish you well!



Red Sox fan Annabelle at 5 months

Welcome Baby Annabelle

A new member of the Calvin Hill family joined us on December 1: Annabelle Pasacreta, weighing 7 lbs, 3 ½ oz. Congratulations to Nancy and Matt! The Threes missed Nancy but it was wonderful to have Threes teacher Amy (out on maternity leave with Julia who turned 1 yr in Feb and mom of Preschooler Jack) in the classroom during those months. The Threes were very excited to welcome baby Annabelle. Leo had the perfect words “Happy Birthday!” The Threes were thinking a lot about babies early this spring. Annabelle inspired a lot of dramatic play and art work! The children (and teachers!) brought in baby pictures. There are wonderful “Me as a Baby” portraits on display in the Threes classroom.



Springologists Lucy, Eliza, and Wolf

Explorers & Travelers

In addition to staging theatrical productions, the Kindergarteners have been on the go this spring! They’ve traveled by foot, by car, and by Yale shuttle bus. Some of their destinations have included the Peabody Museum of Natural History,



Eliana points to a landmark on the map made by her father Michael

Edgerton Park, and the State Agricultural Center. (Weevil update: Sadly the weevils did not make it through the long winter. However, the kindergartners were assured this is often the case.) They traveled by shuttle bus to Trumbull College. Hosted by Selma’s mom Jasmina Besinevic-Regan, the Dean of Trumbull College, they even dined in the dining hall. They visited the Beinecke and Alexander Calder sculpture. The Kindergarteners have been so busy Michael Ross made a map for them to track their travels and make note of important landmarks.

The Kindergarteners continue to be focused and thorough observers of the natural world. They are busy with an amaryllis journal, pomegranate seeds, crystals and rocks, and shadow boxes. The classroom is blooming with gorgeous and varied interpretations of spring flowers, tulips, weeping cherry and pussy willows.



Shed Update

Michael Ross and crew
move the shed

Unfortunately, the Preschool's new bike shed arrived much too large for the allotted space. The replacement should arrive in the next few weeks.

A special thanks to Eliana's dad Michael Ross, all of the parents, and Carla's students from the Yale hockey team. The old shed was relocated to the Threes playground.

Thank you!

And also a special thank you to Patrick Kearns (Kindergarten teacher), Matt Curry (Preschool Fellow), Kristen Pallonetti (Threes Fellow), and Amanda Kaplan (Kindergarten Seedlings Fellow), who have contributed so much to Calvin Hill in their short tenure. Patrick is leaving to live with his partner and teach in California. Amanda and Kristen will be pursuing a degree at Harvard's Graduate School of Education, and Matt is still working on the next step. Best of luck. We will miss you!

Plant Sale

Super Petunias, Martha Washington Geraniums, Blue Lobelia, and more
.....The plants will be arriving on May 21.

Special thanks to Caroline's Mom Andie Asnes for two years of hard work chairing the the plant sale!

Kindergartners Efrat and
Sophie create labels for
the plant sale



Future Kindergartners
Jaddus, Greta, Josie,
Malachai, and Alizeh

And on to summer!

What a wonderful year it's been at Calvin Hill! The final day of school and good-bye party is June 11. The summer program begins June 16. To our good friends moving on we will miss you. And we look forward to another magical year with returning children, families, staff, and teachers!