

The Calvin Hilltop



Calvin Hill Day Care and Kitty Lustman-Findling Kindergarten

Winter 2010

NEW FEATURE! Carla's Corner NEW FEATURE!

Have you ever wanted to ask a question about Calvin Hill, but haven't had the opportunity? Do you have questions about your child's education, the Calvin Hill curriculum, parenting or child development? In each edition of the Hilltop, we'll feature a Q&A with Carla Horwitz, Director of the Calvin Hill Day Care Center and Kitty Lustman-Findling Kindergarten. Send your questions to Kate Ott at Kathryn.Ott@gmail.com.

Haiti Emergency Response



I am sure you are all aware of the events in Haiti in mid-January, which have been horrific and sad. In the spirit of the caring that defines

Calvin Hill, I would like to respond to the tragedy as a community and we are therefore organizing a drive to collect contributions (money, not things, as that is what is most needed at this time) from families and board members who would be willing to participate in this effort.

One of our Calvin Hill Kindergarten parents, Nazorine Paglia, is from Haiti, and she has let us know of a group that could receive the Calvin Hill gift. It is called Friends of Haiti and is a reputable and well-established organization. It supports AMURA, the Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team. Those of you who shop at Edge of the Woods may have seen materials about this group as the store

collects contributions and has had a relationship with this organization for quite a few years.

I am sure that many of you already have responded or plan to respond to the Haitian earthquake with your own personal contribution to other aid groups. I am hoping, however, that you may also want to participate in the Calvin Hill effort. Our community, as I am constantly reminded, is always extremely generous. Of course, if or what you contribute is entirely up to you, and there is no pressure from Calvin Hill to give in this way.

If you do decide to give, please make checks out to Calvin Hill and leave them in the tuition envelope in your child's classroom (cash is also fine). I will take it from there. I hope contributions will be made by January 30, 2010. Board members may mail checks to Calvin Hill. The Center will send one check to Friends of Haiti to fund their efforts there. Already they have delivered one truck full of supplies which was loaded in Dominica and driven by volunteers to Port-au-Prince.

Carla's Corner

More shipments are already being planned, and there are already Haitians and Americans on the ground that can make sure this happens.

Many thanks, in advance, for your care and generosity. If you have questions or other suggestions about how we may offer to help in this emergency, please let me know.

New Partnerships

Calvin Hill forged an alliance with Southern Connecticut State University through Dr. Julie Harris, a two-time CH parent, who teaches there. During the Fall '09 semester, four students did an internship as participant observers in the classrooms. This semester three of them will return to be joined by three new SCSU students. These students are in Julie's class, and spend about 7 hours a week at Calvin Hill. They are great, and this is the first time in a long time we have had students from SCSU.

Calvin Hill has also served as a site for observation for six New Haven Head Start teachers from the Zigler Head Start Program. I am consulting to their consultant who has brought teachers over for visits over the past two months. The teachers have been excited and inspired by our model. They have already begun to make significant changes in their classrooms and the structure of their day and their curriculum based on conversations they have had with me and what they have seen in our three rooms. Our teachers have been warm and welcoming and, of course, very good examples. It's great to be able to have this influence beyond our own program and to do something important for the good of other children as well as our own.

Enrollment for Next Year

While this year is not even half over, we are currently in the thick of enrollment for the next. Many of you have seen children arriving for visits each morning, and we will be seeing all applicants for spaces at Calvin Hill during January (I'm sure many of you remember this process). As ever, we have many, many applicants. My aim is to be welcoming, have a productive visit, and not disrupt the ongoing program or current children and teachers too much. This is a challenge, but having done enrollment this way for many years, we have a pretty seamless system in place. Our own children are quite flexible and generous about sharing their space briefly, and I thank you for being patient and supportive. The best way to make a good match is to have this kind of informal visit -- we see the child and family and they see first hand (as they never can at a weekend Open House) what we do and are all about. I appreciate the open and friendly way many of you have greeted prospective families if you happen to be here when they come. Our own families are always our best ambassadors. We aim to have this process mostly completed by February. (The Kindergarten visit is on a Saturday, January 30). We always do seem to end up with a wonderful group of children and parents, and this year is no exception!

Carla's Corner



THREES ROOM UPDATE

Prior to vacation, the Threes began light experiments by noticing shadows outside and with the overhead projector in a dark block room. After vacation, Nicholas Huber brought in a story book about shadows. The Threes have become aware of the shadows that buildings and fences make, as well as the shadows that their own bodies create. They have discovered that the world is full of shadows!

Before the break, Oliver Butman's grandmother shared her and Oliver's love for pomegranates. She led the Threes to pomegranate observations, in which the students drew pictures of pomegranates provided by Oliver's grandmother! They opened them up, looked at the seeds, and tasted the fruit. The Threes also recorded their comments about the pomegranates, along with watercolor pictures. One pomegranate was left to dry to see the changes over break. From this activity, the class has decided to think more about the different, unusual fruits that people eat, such as kiwis and mangos.

After the holiday hiatus, the Threes produced vacation stories to remember what happened during the break. They shared their stories in an expanding level of detail. At Thanksgiving, the vacation stories were recorded along with each child's picture, but this time the children had to find their story by reading only their name. The children also began to "read" their friends' stories by recognizing others' names in an organic approach to literacy. Talk about "upping the ante" and drawing on the students' progress!



Not to worry, the Threes measure up. They have been doing math through measuring experiments using terms like "inches", "tool you use to measure", and "feet." The class has measured their own feet, the furniture, and table tops. Next, the children will measure each other, and their heights will be posted for all to see. Some of the classroom items, however, seem to melt before they can be measured. The Threes scientists have been intrigued by icicles, and have noticed how the icicles change when they come indoors! Soon, they will fill containers of water, place them outside, and check on their progress throughout the week.



Like all of Calvin Hill, the Threes haven't missed being influenced by the construction across the way. From construction in dramatic play to using recycled boxes to make sculptures, they explore how to make and work with three dimensional sculptures. The class has also been introduced to potter's clay recently, a bit more challenging to use than play-dough, but a great new medium to keep their creativity budding into Spring.

PRE-SCHOOL UPDATE



The Foote School demolition across the street has sparked the building blocks of imagination in the Preschool floor. Skyscraper buildings and drawings cover the walls, tables, and take up most of the studio space. At meeting time, the Preschoolers have gotten a stronger foundation through observing pictures of buildings from around New Haven as models and discussing structure like doors, roofs, and windows as well as materials such as wood, brick and glass. Preschool construction contracts have called for use of wood scraps, cardboard boxes, paper for windows, and other necessary embellishments. Multiple crews have worked to construct two life-size (from preschool eyes) buildings, sharing the work of interior and exterior construction including painting. One building is an exterior façade while the other shows an internal cross-section of a building.



With all the building blocks of learning stacking up around the Preschool room, it's no surprise that the children have become part of the structure! The children made 'block props' by affixing a photo of each child on a block of wood. The Preschoolers have had fun making buildings for these models of themselves. They also come in handy for doing survey and sorting games in meeting.



As the building blocks of "children" create community in the buildings and house constructed inside the classroom, the learning community of the classroom is growing too. During the winter holidays, parents and Preschoolers shared some of their holiday traditions with the class. Charlie Wortman's parents sent in the ingredients for Latkes during Hannukah. Many children had fun playing dreidel and counting up the number of buttons and shiny marbles during the game. Isaac Ott Hill's mom brought in their creche to share part of their family's Christmas tradition.



The Preschool continues to mix construction, community, and creativity producing mostly fun! And, fun is what you will hear as the description of the newest preschool invention -- scooping and piling snow to make a slippery snow covered slide! If the new Foote fields are going to include a playground, the preschoolers should consider submitting an architectural design bid – they have a trained crew ready to build!

KINDERGARTEN UPDATE



The season of pants and boots, hats and gloves is here, but the Kindergarten remains a lively and warm place to be. Even though the colder winds have been blowing, the children have kept investigating how things grow – just inside. Potatoes planted in late fall have come to life as a large plant (see picture). The children have observed that potato stems are fuzzy. Various bulbs have sprouted green stalks: amaryllis, garlic, and mystery bulbs Djassi brought in to the classroom. We can't wait to see what they will be! Alex brought in acorns to plant and a baby oak tree has taken up residence.



Maybe it is the cold weather that has enticed the children to take up weaving with yarns and ribbon – many of their weavings are destined to become scarves. As newly minted textile experts, the children have also been dyeing their own yarns. An extract of leaves makes a brownish black yarn, while soaking in pomegranate juice led to a beautiful pink yarn color.



The Kindergarteners continue to focus on studying rocks, crystals and minerals. In addition to studying various specimens, an ongoing experiment tests if salt crystals will form when sea water (brought in by Winnie from the beach) is allowed to evaporate. Stalactites and stalagmites have really captured the imagination as well. The children took this interest all the way to the Peabody Museum to see the collection of rocks and minerals. A highlight of the trip was getting to touch a real dinosaur footprint fossil.



Parent Pocket

Sweet, sweet sounds

The sing-a-long on December 18 was an enormous success!

Much appreciated

Parent contributions were generous and astounding for the Teacher gifts. With over \$3,000 contributed, teachers got individual gifts (gift certificates for restaurants or gift cards); the classrooms each got a sizable amount in the form of gift cards for purchasing many different things -- especially books, additions to our bicycle collection for outdoors (we've purchased another wagon and another two wheeler) a cd player, some new interesting manipulatives, etc. Teachers are having a wonderful time making their wishes come true!



The Newsletter team includes parents from each floor who generously collect stories and pictures from the teachers and students. They are Nancy Bianchi, Ashley Griffin, Brian Hill, Megan King, and Kate Ott. Layout and design by Dan Cogan-Drew.



Reminders

Can we fix it? Yes, we can!

Please check your work day schedule and make sure to come if you're on for Sunday, February 7th.



Want the newest winter fashions?

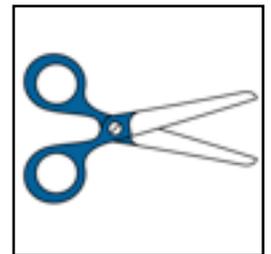
Calvin Hill T-shirts, sweatshirts, tote bags, or baseball caps are all the rage! And if you want to send a fashionable statement from a distance, use a Calvin Hill notecard (available in packs of eight with four different designs for \$10).



Children's T-shirts: \$8
Adult T-shirt: \$10
Children's Hat: \$10
Adult Hat: \$10
Canvas Tote Bag: \$10

Snip...snip...

Remember to keep your box tops coming, every little bit helps. Calvin Hill participates in the Boxtops for Education program. For every boxtop we collect we receive ten cents. May not seem like a lot, but they do add up. Put your carefully trimmed boxtop in the green collection canisters located in each Calvin Hill classroom.



Signing-up to serve

The next Parent Committee meeting will be held on February 4, 2010 at 7:30pm.

