



# River Valley Current

June 6, 2017 No. 483

"Spring won't let me stay in this house any longer! I must get out and breathe the air deeply again."  
--Gustav Mahler

## School Calendar

### This Week

#### Friday-Friday, June 2-9

8<sup>th</sup> Grade Class Trip to Kroka

#### Tuesday, June 6

7<sup>th</sup> Grade to Philadelphia Art Museum

#### Wednesday, June 7

School Tour 9:00 am  
Parent Council Meeting 2:00 pm

#### Thursday, June 6

Diversity Committee Meeting 6:30-8:00 pm

### Looking Ahead

#### Monday-Wednesday, June 12-14

6<sup>th</sup> Grade Camping Trip to Rickett's Glen

#### Wednesday, June 14

Last Day of School for Early Childhood

#### Thursday, June 15

Rose Ceremony 9:00 am  
Amanda Blanco Library Dedication 10:30 am  
Grade School Ends 1:00 pm

#### Saturday, June 17

Graduation 10:00 am

### How to Contact Us

info@rivervalleyschool.org  
lc@rivervalleyschool.org  
bot@rivervalleyschool.org  
pc@rivervalleyschool.org

## The Last Day of School

For Early Childhood the last day of school is on Wednesday, June 14<sup>th</sup>. Parents are invited to a potluck picnic from noon to 1 pm to celebrate the year together.

The Grade School ends on Thursday, June 15<sup>th</sup>. The day will begin with the Rose Ceremony at 9 am where each class will honor our graduating 8<sup>th</sup> graders with a short presentation. All RVWS families are invited to attend.

Following the ceremony will be the dedication of the Amanda Blanco Memorial Library at 10:30 am. Grade school children will take a short break for snack and a change of clothing and will then participate in Field Day games on the back playground.

Parents are welcome to take their children home after Field Day. Some classes will be having picnics and school ends officially at 1 pm.

**There will be no buses and no Aftercare on that day.**

## Dedication of the Amanda Blanco Memorial Library

After the year-end Rose Ceremony on June 15<sup>th</sup>, we hope you will join us on the back playground at 10:30 am for the dedication of the Amanda Blanco Memorial Library; a tribute to our colleague, fellow RVWS parent and friend who passed away last summer.

This library cabinet is being built by dear friends of Amanda's and we hope to fill it with some of her favorite books for young children and parenting books. This cabinet will also house River Valley's diversity-themed lending library. These books will be available to be borrowed by RVWS faculty and parents.

As part of the dedication, we welcome book donations from the list of Amanda's favorites which were passed along to us from her husband, Mac Parker. The list can be found inside the Current in the From the Faculty section.

**The last Parent Council meeting will be this Wednesday, June 7<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 pm at the Homestead.  
New members welcome!**

**Our final Diversity Committee meeting of the school year will be this Thursday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 6:30-8:00 pm. at the Ship Inn in Milford.**

**The Class of 2017 invites you  
to their Graduation Ceremony  
Saturday, June 18<sup>th</sup> at 10 am.  
All are welcome.**



## From Administration

### Thank yous

Thank you to everyone who supported the 8<sup>th</sup> grade trip by buying Indian food in the fall, hoagies in the spring and/or attending their community dance at Ottsville Traditional Arts. The 8<sup>th</sup> graders are currently on their trip in the Green Mountain National Forest in Southern Vermont organized by Kroka Expeditions and will return on Friday.

As we reported in last week's Current, grades 7 & 8 participated in a 5K run in Hellertown benefiting the American Cancer Society. Their large and vocal group ran the race in memory of Amanda Blanco and they received a \$100.00 prize which they donated to the RVWS scholarship fund. Thank you, 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade for representing our school so gloriously and for your generous donation.

Thank you, Jennifer Zosa, for orchestrating our Box Tops collection for the past two years and enabling us to receive donations from that organization. Thank you, Erica Nichols, for placing all of our Act 195 orders for the State of Pennsylvania and making it possible for us to receive thousands of dollars worth of books and materials from that fund. Thank you, Rebecca DiCandia, for your tireless work on behalf of the Current every week. The commitment from all of you is most appreciated by all of us at RVWS.

## From the Faculty

### What the Children are Learning:

First Grade – Drama

Second Grade – Language Arts – Saints & Fables

Third Grade – Building Project

Fourth Grade – Local Geography

Fifth Grade – Botany/Review

Sixth Grade – Review

Seventh Grade – History – Renaissance/Reformation

Eighth Grade – Class Trip

### Teacher Looking for Housing

Hi! This is Eve Sheldon, next year's music teacher. Starting this summer, I am looking for a place to live that is closer to school than my current one hour commute. I am not familiar with housing in the area, so I am putting out the word and looking for any leads anyone might have. I'm also on a tight budget, so it needs to be cheap! A small apartment or similar would be fine...in-town in Milford or Frenchtown would be a plus, but not required. If you have any ideas or leads, please contact me at my school email: [esheldon@rivervalley.school.org](mailto:esheldon@rivervalley.school.org). Thank you...I appreciate any help you could give me.

## **News and Thank You's from the Garden**

Even though our school year is ending, the garden is continuing to grow! The first grade started and planted sunflowers. The second grade started planting their Three Sisters Garden (corn, beans and squash) and will finish by planting broomcorn to harvest for their very own brooms! The third grade started and planted luffa. The fourth grade started and planted annuals for classroom bouquets (calendula, cosmos and 2 types of zinnias). Finally, the fifth grade created an art piece that will hang on the shed for all of next year, honoring their contribution to our beautiful space. All of the children have worked very hard and it shows! I can't wait to see it all in its full expression when we return in September!

I would like to thank Charlie Kelly and David Goldstein for installing a bunny fence to help keep the critters out. I would like to thank Rod Schilling and Nestor Candelo for repairing the deck of the platform and restructuring the storage bins for ease and safety! David Goldstein (my assistant that helps with EVERYTHING and ANYTHING) Thank You! Isaiah Bader, thank you for your gentle spirit and loving nature. You have made this half of the year a delight! Finally, Tara Bowers, who's sage advice and kind support have guided most of the decisions that I have made in the garden. Thank you for playing with me. You will be missed more than words can say.

All Blessings,  
Melissa Goldstein

## **Amanda's List of books for the Amanda Blanco Memorial Library**

### **Books for Little Ones:**

Wait Till the Moon is Full by Margaret Wise Brown and Garth Williams

The Little Boy and The Big Fish by Max Velthuis

Apricot ABC by Miska Miles

The Funny Little Woman by Arlene Mosel

The Mitten by Alvin Tresselt

Journey Cake, Ho! by Ruth Sawyer and Robert McCloskey

Pop! Goes the Turnip by Harold Berson

Little Fur Family by Margaret Wise Brown and Garth Williams

Runaway Bunny by Margaret Wise Brown and Clement Hurd

Amos and Boris, Sylvester and the Magic Pebble by William Steig

The Story of Jumping Mouse by John Steptoe

Haystack by Bonnie and Arthur Geisert

Unabridged Winnie the Pooh

Beatrix Potter books

The Little House, Choo Choo, Katy and the Big Snow, Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel by Virginia Lee Burton

Grasshopper on the Road by Arnold Lobel (read without the 'stupid' parts, of course)

Little Bear books by Else Holmelund Minarik and Maurice Sendak

### **Books on Parenting:**

Simplicity Parenting by Kim John Payne

You Are Your Child's First Teacher by Rahima Baldwin Dancy

Your Self-Confident Baby by Allison Johnson and Magda Gerber

Please include a sticky note or slip of paper with each book to identify the donor, and any short message suitable for a bookplate that you would like attached to the book. Please also include your contact information so that we may properly express our thanks for your gift.

## **Looking for a Microwave**

We are in need of a microwave for the Faculty Room. If anyone has one that they are not using please let Maria Workman know. Thank you.

## From the Community

### Items for Sale

Yard Sale is over but some really good furniture, kitchen items, garden equipment etc. are still available. Please contact Carol Diven at (530) 209-2711 (correct 'phone number this week!) to come and look, name your lowest price, and take away some great deals.

### From Yoga Loka

#### Baby and Me Yoga

Bring your littlest ones for some serious bonding and stretching.  
Friday 7/11 and 7/21, 11:00-11:45 am

#### Family Yoga

Bring the whole family for this fun filled 45 minutes. Introduce the kids to the benefits of yoga early!  
Fridays 7/28-8/11

Early morning yoga classes begin in July! 6:00 am on Thursdays with Bonnie. Class will be outdoors weather permitting. Meet at the studio.

Yoga Loka, 23 Race Street in Frenchtown [www.Yoga-Loka.com](http://www.Yoga-Loka.com)

### Summer German Club in Frenchtown

We are continuing German Club this summer for kids in grades 3 and up who want to keep up with the German they have learned at River Valley or elsewhere. As always, there will be songs, stories, games, Schuhplattler dancing, and activities focused on the German language and European culture in general. Thanks to a suggestion from our German Club families, classes will be held at the Frenchtown Borough Park on Wednesdays, 10:00-11:00am. The cost is \$150 for the ten-week session. If you are interested in having your child join German Club this summer, contact Peter Ray, [peter.ray@comcast.net](mailto:peter.ray@comcast.net).

### Home for Sale - Location, Location, Location!

Ever thought of moving closer to the school? Less than five minutes to RVWS, right next door to another RVWS family, and in an actual neighborhood with no through traffic, but also walking distance to all that downtown Milford has to offer!

I'm not receiving a commission — just want some great neighbors! Feel free to call me if you want to chat...  
Kathy Betz 908-892-4670, mom of Scarlett (grade 6) and Sawyer (grade 4).

### MUSIC for your Child

RVWS alumnus and currently Berklee College of Music student, Kris Ramakrishna, is offering Guitar lessons (beginners to advanced, all styles), Music theory and music history, Introduction to composition, Song writing with professional software. From mid-May to mid-August at your house or ours in Riegelsville. Reasonable rates! For more information please email [stramak@aol.com](mailto:stramak@aol.com) or call 610 749 2690.

### Quilting Help Needed

If you're a seamstress or quilter with time on your hands, I need your help to build a simple quilt. Too many ideas, not enough time. We'll discuss terms. Chellie Bader [michelle@smorgasb.org](mailto:michelle@smorgasb.org) or 617-501-7517.

### House for Sale in Milford

Waldorf family is selling their 3 bedroom, 1.5 bath home in Milford. If you know anyone looking please share the link. Thank you!

[https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/23-Walnut-St-Milford-NJ-08848/38852406\\_zpid](https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/23-Walnut-St-Milford-NJ-08848/38852406_zpid)

### Erwinna 1 BR Country Apartment for Rent

Available July 15<sup>th</sup>. 1 BR, private drive, private entrance and parking. Includes all utilities, washer/dryer, internet access, full attic storage. 1 month security - Rent \$1250 (negotiable) – 1 year lease. Prior tenant references available. Call 908-268-2122 or email [4rent.in.erwinna@gmail.com](mailto:4rent.in.erwinna@gmail.com)

If you are interested, speak with Tara Bowers (Alice's mom in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade) 908-674-2772.

### Gardening Help Needed

Chellie & David Bader (Noa, G8 & Faye, G4) are looking for maintenance help with vegetable and ornamental gardens this year. Some design work might be called for. We're in Erwinna. Please contact Chellie: [michelle@smorgasb.org](mailto:michelle@smorgasb.org) or 617-501-7517.

## **Nourishment for the Soul of the Child**

Bringing the Waldorf Impulse into the Home

By Penelope Youngfeather

During childhood the foundation is formed for one's creativity and sensitivity in adulthood. Children are deeply sensitive and extremely vulnerable to all they encounter, absorbing stimuli with their whole beings.

If a child has to deal with too much stimulus, he or she will, in defense, shut down the more sensitive parts of his or her being. This leads to the development of a hardened adult, cut off from the springs of sensitivity, compassion, imagination, and inspiration—a condition all too prevalent in today's world and increasing tremendously as our culture rushes headlong into advanced technology.

We can offer our children a great gift by extending the Waldorf sensitivity into our homes; by surrounding the children with warmth, rhythm, and simplicity, they are allowed to develop a sensitive center from which to meet the onrushing times.

### **Warmth**

Physical warmth is vital to the healthy development of the organism. If a child is cold, she must draw heat and energy away from her developing organs to warm other parts of the body, thus weakening the vital organs. It is especially critical for the infant to be dressed warmly, in natural fibers that breathe. The baby does not have the ability to adjust its body temperature; the "modern" impulse to toughen the baby does just that: makes the baby TOUGH, losing much precious sensitivity that could be carried into adulthood. The infant needs to wear a hat, indoors and out, especially as long as the fontanelle is open, to protect this most sensitive area from over-exposure to heat, wind, and cold.

The child flourishes when he feels surrounded by an inner warmth, a soul warmth which arises from heart connections with other human beings and from a shared reverence for nature. "What a difference if I sing songs to my child or whether I place him in front of the television set. The gift of warmth that a child receives from a single song will foster what is living and growing in him which the television is barren in its coldness." (Dr. Herbert Kaufmann.)

### **Simplicity and Beauty**

The realm of toys has grown exceedingly complex, often at the expense of the child's imagination. As toys become increasingly "sophisticated," some developed through "modern scientific and psychological methods to increase your baby's intelligence" or to keep the child "busy," the imagination suffers from atrophy, to wilt rather than flourish. The more simple and natural a toy is, the more a child will work with inner feelings and imagination to enliven the toy and game, thus strengthening the child's own faculties. Toys made from wood or wool absorb warmth and moisture from the child's hands and in that way too they become "enlivened." Toys, pictures, even colors, are food for the soul; and like the food we eat we continually need to choose between what is junk and what truly nourishes.

If we extend the Waldorf sensitivity into our homes, we support the child's developing his or her center from which to go out and meet the world. A visit to the Waldorf classrooms and the kindergarten can provide one with inspirations of beauty and simplicity in environment and playthings.

### **Rhythm**

Rhythm is essential to all things which have life. Adults have learned to partially withdraw from natural rhythms, but the child is utterly bound up with organic rhythms. A consistency in the day to day timing of work and play, eating and sleeping leads to a healthy will development. "Nothing makes a child so wild and nervous as capriciousness on the part of grown-ups. Children are full of a deep trust and when they can rely on a wholesome ordering of their daily life the basis is provided upon which the moral life as an adult can freely and quietly unfold." (Caroline von Heydebrand)

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In these times of meetings, classes, workshops, etc., it often seems next to impossible to create a rhythmical calm ordering of the day. Bringing candlelight and a verse or prayer to mealtime and bedtime can change these times from being chaotic and draining to being calm, healing and nourishing.

*Earth who gives to us this food,  
Sun who makes it ripe and good,  
Dear earth, dear sun, by you we live,  
Our loving thanks to you we give.  
Blessings.*

**Penelope Youngfeather** raised three sons, taught Waldorf Kindergarten, earned a Master's degree in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education, taught college level child development classes and worked for 20 years as an Optometric Vision Therapist. She is currently retired.

From [Waldorftoday.com](http://Waldorftoday.com)

## **The Disease of Being Busy**

by Omid Safi

I saw a dear friend a few days ago. I stopped by to ask her how she was doing, how her family was. She looked up, voice lowered, and just whimpered: "I'm so busy... I am so busy... have so much going on."

Almost immediately after, I ran into another friend and asked him how he was. Again, same tone, same response: "I'm just so busy... got so much to do."

The tone was exacerbated, tired, even overwhelmed. And it's not just adults. When we moved to North Carolina about ten years ago, we were thrilled to be moving to a city with a great school system. We found a diverse neighborhood, filled with families. Everything felt good, felt right.

After we settled in, we went to one of the friendly neighbors, asking if their daughter and our daughter could get together and play. The mother, a really lovely person, reached for her phone and pulled out the calendar function. She scrolled... and scrolled... and scrolled. She finally said: "She has a 45-minute opening two and half weeks from now. The rest of the time it's gymnastics, piano, and voice lessons. She's just.... so busy."

Horribly destructive habits start early, really early. How did we end up living like this? Why do we do this to ourselves? Why do we do this to our children? When did we forget that we are human beings, not human doings? Whatever happened to a world in which kids get muddy, get dirty, get messy, and heavens, get bored? Do we have to love our children so much that we overschedule them, making them stressed and busy — just like us?

What happened to a world in which we can sit with the people we love so much and have slow conversations about the state of our heart and soul, conversations that slowly unfold, conversations with pregnant pauses and silences that we are in no rush to fill? How did we create a world in which we have more and more and more to do with less time for leisure, less time for reflection, less time for community, less time to just... be?

Somewhere we read, "The unexamined life is not worth living... for a human." How are we supposed to live, to examine, to be, to become, to be fully human when we are so busy?

This disease of being "busy" (and let's call it what it is, the dis-ease of being busy, when we are never at ease) is spiritually destructive to our health and wellbeing. It saps our ability to be fully present with those we love the most in our families, and keeps us from forming the kind of community that we all so desperately crave.

Since the 1950s, we have had so many new technological innovations that we thought (or were promised) would make our lives easier, faster, simpler. Yet, we have no more "free" or leisurely time today than we did decades ago. For some of us, the "privileged" ones, the lines between work and home have become blurred. We are on our devices. All. The. Freaking. Time.

Smart phones and laptops mean that there is no division between the office and home. When the kids are in bed, we are back online.

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One of my own daily struggles is the avalanche of email. I often refer to it as my jihad against email. I am constantly buried under hundreds and hundreds of emails, and I have absolutely no idea how to make it stop. I've tried different techniques: only responding in the evenings, not responding over weekends, asking people to schedule more face-to-face time. They keep on coming, in volumes that are unfathomable: personal emails, business emails, hybrid emails. And people expect a response — right now. I, too, it turns out... am so busy.

The reality looks very different for others. For many, working two jobs in low-paying sectors is the only way to keep the family afloat. Twenty percent of our children are living in poverty, and too many of our parents are working minimum wage jobs just to put a roof over their head and something resembling food on the table. We are so busy.

The old models, including that of a nuclear family with one parent working outside the home (if it ever existed), have passed away for most of us. We now have a majority of families being single families, or where both parents are working outside the home. It is not working. It doesn't have to be this way.

In many Muslim cultures, when you want to ask them how they're doing, you ask: in Arabic, Kayf haal-ik? or, in Persian, Haal-e shomaa chetoreh? How is your haal? What is this haal that you inquire about? It is the transient state of one's heart. In reality, we ask, "How is your heart doing at this very moment, at this breath?" When I ask, "How are you?" that is really what I want to know.

I am not asking how many items are on your to-do list, nor asking how many items are in your inbox. I want to know how your heart is doing, at this very moment. Tell me. Tell me your heart is joyous, tell me your heart is aching, tell me your heart is sad, tell me your heart craves a human touch. Examine your own heart, explore your soul, and then tell me something about your heart and your soul.

Tell me you remember you are still a human being, not just a human doing. Tell me you're more than just a machine, checking off items from your to-do list. Have that conversation, that glance, that touch. Be a healing conversation, one filled with grace and presence.

Put your hand on my arm, look me in the eye, and connect with me for one second. Tell me something about your heart, and awaken my heart. Help me remember that I too am a full and complete human being, a human being who also craves a human touch.

I teach at a university where many students pride themselves on the "study hard, party hard" lifestyle. This might be a reflection of many of our lifestyles and our busy-ness — that even our means of relaxation is itself a reflection of that same world of overstimulation. Our relaxation often takes the form of action-filled (yet mindless) films, or violent and face-paced sports.

I don't have any magical solutions. All I know is that we are losing the ability to live a truly human life. We need a different relationship to work, to technology. We know what we want: a meaningful life, a sense of community, a balanced existence. It's not just about "leaning in" or faster iPhones. We want to be truly human.

W. B. Yeats once wrote:

"It takes more courage to examine the dark corners of your own soul than it does for a soldier to fight on a battlefield."

How exactly are we supposed to examine the dark corners of our soul when we are so busy? How are we supposed to live the examined life?

I am always a prisoner of hope, but I wonder if we are willing to have the structural conversation necessary about how to do that, how to live like that. Somehow we need a different model of organizing our lives, our societies, our families, our communities.

I want my kids to be dirty, messy, even bored — learning to become human. I want us to have a kind of existence where we can pause, look each other in the eye, touch one another, and inquire together: Here is how my heart is doing? I am taking the time to reflect on my own existence; I am in touch enough with my own heart and soul to know how I fare, and I know how to express the state of my heart.

How is the state of your heart today? Let us insist on a type of human-to-human connection where when one of us responds by saying, "I am just so busy," we can follow up by saying, "I know, love. We all are. But I want to know how your heart is doing."

Omid Safi is Director of Duke University's Islamic Studies Center.