



# River Valley Current

January 6, 2015 No. 398

*"What good is the warmth of summer, without the cold of winter to give it sweetness?"  
— John Steinbeck*

## School Calendar

### This Week

**Saturday, Jan. 10**  
4<sup>th</sup> Grade Workday

### Looking Ahead

**Thursday, Jan. 15**  
School Tour 9:00 am  
1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> grade Parent Evening 7:00 pm

**Monday, Jan. 19**  
MLK Day In-School Celebration

**Wednesday, Jan. 21**  
4<sup>th</sup> grade Parent Evening

**Thursday, Jan. 29**  
EC Parent Evening 7:00-8:30 pm

**Friday, Jan. 30**  
4<sup>th</sup> grade Play

**Saturday, Jan. 31**  
EC Open House 10:00-11:30 am

**Thursday, Feb. 5**  
School Tour 9:00 am  
8<sup>th</sup> grade project presentations 6:30 pm  
3<sup>rd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> grade Parent Evenings 7:00 pm

**Friday, Feb. 6**  
EC In-service – No School for Early Childhood

### How to Contact Us

info@rivervalleysschool.org  
lc@rivervalleysschool.org  
bot@rivervalleysschool.org  
pc@rivervalleysschool.org

### Next Parent Council Meeting

Wednesday 1/21 at 2:00 pm at  
Homestead General Store. All are  
welcome.

### Save the Date

#### Wednesday, February 11<sup>th</sup>

Please mark your calendars for our  
grade school Winter Assembly.  
Early Childhood families are welcome  
to come get a taste for what is  
happening in the grades.

**Deadline for ordering samosas on  
Fridays for the rest of the year  
is January 16<sup>th</sup>.**

See "Class Fundraisers" for more details.

## New! 3-day Early Childhood Class begins April 15, 2015

This 8-week program is designed especially for children  
2 years, 9 months to 4 years who are ready  
to come to school independently.

8-10 children will enjoy a morning of interactive play, both  
indoors and out, as well as special activities such as simple  
crafts, painting, circle activities, singing and story time in  
the thoughtfully simple classroom environment.

Large and small motor skills, oral and receptive language  
skills, social awareness, love for the natural world and the  
beginnings of self-care abilities are some of what is  
developed as the children play and work with one  
another under the respectful guidance of their teacher.  
Children are expected to be reliably toilet trained.

Class hours are from 8:30 am until 1:00 pm; children 3 and  
older can opt for a 3:15 pm dismissal time.

This class is the perfect way to transition easily into a full  
school year program in September of 2015!

Please contact Cindy Schretlen with any questions, or to  
receive an application. Time is of the essence if you or  
someone you know would like to reserve  
a place in this terrific little class.

### EARLY CHILDHOOD OPEN HOUSE

#### Saturday, January 31 from 10:00 - 11:30am

Please help to spread the word about River Valley's  
amazing early childhood programs!

From the gentle, nurturing Garden Gate classes,  
the soon-to-launch nursery (April 15, 2015),  
the sweet Morning Glory class located in Doylestown,  
to our engaging mixed-age kindergarten classrooms,  
the Waldorf early childhood experience brooks no comparison!

This Open House is the perfect way to introduce parent and  
child alike to our school – or deepen the connection for  
someone who may be already considering RVWS. Participants  
will be able to meet our teachers and learn about our  
programs while enjoying quintessential Waldorf EC experiences  
with their children: free play, bread baking and a puppet story.  
Suitable for prospective parents, together with their children 6  
and under. Current RVWS folks are welcome when they bring a  
friend who is considering RVWS! Registration is required

## From Administration

### SEPTEMBER 2015 INTENTIONS

In some ways, it feels to me like this school year has really just gotten rolling, but surprisingly enough it is time to begin planning for the 2015-2016 school year. The Finance Committee is working on the budget – and the largest piece of that is tuition income. Meaningful enrollment projections are needed for them to set tuition and in turn to develop the working budget. So, please watch your in-boxes and your mail pockets for re-enrollment intention forms, fill them out and return them as soon as you're able. Details and deadlines will be included in that document. In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns feel free to speak with me. If I am not the best person to help, I'm happy to put you in touch with the person who can! Cindy: [cschretlen@rivervalleyschool.org](mailto:cschretlen@rivervalleyschool.org) 610-982-5606 x203

### Spring Garden Gate begins February 2, 2015

For those of you who may not be familiar with River Valley's programs for very young children, Garden Gate is a lovely class for a parent, grandparent or caregiver to attend with their little one from birth to 3 years of age. It meets one morning per week, from 9:00 am until 11:30 am.

A good portion of the morning is devoted to Watch, Wait, Wonder. Watch - observe what your child is doing with openness. Wait - give your child (whenever it is safe) time and space to work through the situation on his or her own. Wonder – at the experience of your child interacting in the world - without feeling you need to have the answers. During class, we will consciously observe and discuss the children, sharing the joys and challenges of caring for young children. We will also engage in crafts, or other purposeful activities while the children play and learn to be together as a group. We may share an article or chapter from a book about a relevant aspect of child development. There will also be time for songs and verses with gestures, snack, as well as story time and outside play. It is a rich, full morning well spent by adult and child alike! A registration form is attached to the CURRENT. Each class is limited to 6 participants. There is currently space available in the Wednesday and Thursday classes. Please see Cindy Schretlen for more information or to register.

### The Photos Are Here

This year's photographs of our wonderful children are hanging in the hallway opposite the All Purpose Room. Attached to the Current you will find an order form for the school pictures taken by Mr. Santiago. The deadline for orders is January 16<sup>th</sup>. Please fill out the form and leave it in the folder on the office door with a check made out to Euclides Santiago.

### SIMPLIFYING LIFE WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Friends, you will want to mark your calendars for this evening talk with Louise deForest!

It will be held at our Doylestown location. We are still finalizing a few details (like which building on the property we will use, and that will help determine the final date). However, we do know that this talk will begin at 7 pm on either 2/23, 24 or 25. The street address for River Valley's Morning Glory Preschool is 320 Edison-Furlong Road, Doylestown, PA 18972

We will let you know the specifics as soon as they're settled, but wanted you to be aware that this is coming up. Bring your thoughtful questions and insights to share – Louise brings such wisdom and her great love and respect for parents and children alike is a true gift.

Here is a little more about her:

After co-founding a Waldorf School in Vermont, Louise spent many years as a kindergarten teacher and started the Farm Kindergarten at the Fellowship Community in Spring Valley, NY. After leaving full-time teaching, she worked part-time as the Early Childhood Pedagogical Director at the Rudolf Steiner School, in Manhattan. Presently, as a freelance Educational Consultant, she travels extensively throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, Central America and Europe, teaching in teacher training programs, mentoring, evaluating or as a guest speaker.

Louise is a member of the WECAN Board (Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America) and is one of two North American representatives to IASWECE (the International Association of Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education). She is the happy mother of four grown children and lives when home, in western MA.

### Thank you

Thank you Carl Brunell for repairing and re-installing our school bell. The teachers and students were lost without it.

## Immediate Opening for Development Coordinator (Part-time)

River Valley Waldorf School is accepting applications to fill a part-time Development Coordinator position. Responsibilities include leading and managing all fundraising activities, including the annual appeal and the yearly auction event. This person will work closely with the Board and Administrator to develop both short and long term organizational fundraising strategies for the school. This person will coordinate all efforts of the Development Committee and report to the Board on a monthly basis. The Development Coordinator manages the tracking of all contributions, sending of thank you letters and creating a simple annual report. This position will be approximately 10 hours per week.

### Qualifications:

- A good understanding of the benefits of Waldorf education
- Bachelor's degree and three years' experience in annual fundraising and some experience in raising major gifts or high-end annual appeal gifts
- Solid communication skills, including writing, editing and proofreading
- Ability to manage multiple projects, priorities and deadlines
- Ability to work collaboratively and creatively with parent volunteers
- Proficiency with eTapestry or other fundraising software is desirable

Interested applicants should submit cover letter, resume and three references to: [bwolff@rivervalleyschool.org](mailto:bwolff@rivervalleyschool.org)

## From the Faculty

### WHAT ARE THE CHILDREN LEARNING?

First Grade: Language Arts

Second Grade: Language Arts

Third Grade: Cursive Writing

Fourth Grade: Language Arts/Kalevala

Fifth Grade: Geometry

Sixth Grade: Business Math

Seventh Grade: Wish, Wonder & Surprise

Eighth Grade: Physics

### Circus Club is Coming Back

The RVWS Circus Club will meet again beginning on Saturday, January 17<sup>th</sup> at 10:30-12. All skill levels are welcome. Fee: by donation. Call Mr. Friedman (610-847-8749) with questions or to let him know you will be there.

## From the Leadership Council

### What LC is Working On

Teacher evaluations with TDC

Faculty hiring for next year with the faculty

Site Planning with the Board

Program development with EC

This weekend, two LC members will be attending a Conflict Resolution conference at Sunbridge Institute along with Will Carpenter from the Board of Trustees

Remember, we have open hours every Friday from 3:30-4. Please stop by if you have any questions or concerns.

## Class Fundraisers

### **Samosa Orders for the Rest of the Year**

Please use the form attached to the Current to sign-up for 13 Fridays in the 2nd semester (Jan 23, 30, Feb 6, 27, Mar 6, 13, Apr 17, 24, May 1, 15, 22, 29, Jun 5). Orders are due by Friday Jan 16. 8th Grade thanks you for your support!!!  
*Reminder: First Semester Samosas will be still be served this Friday 1/9 and next Friday 1/16 from orders that we carried over from December dates that had to be postponed due to Spiral of Light and Winter Fair conflicts. 2nd Semester Samosas will begin Friday 1/23.*

### **There is still time to get your RVWS sweatshirt!**

The 8th grade is continuing their sweatshirt sales in the lobby on Wednesday afternoons, and they have many children's sizes available for immediate purchase. Orders for zipper sweatshirts or pullover adult sizes will be collected through January 21st for delivery by January 30th. This will be the last and final due date for all orders, so get them in now while you can! Please contact Pat Warner-Proctor with any questions. Thank you for supporting the 8th grade class trip fundraiser!

## From the Community

### **Start the New Year Clearer**

Dr. Renee Sexton, Network Chiropractor will be seeing clients on Monday, January 19th, 2015, 5-7:30 PM at the Brick House , 8826 Easton Rd, Revere//Ottsville, PA \$50 Adults \$25. Children

RSVP by email, text, or phone 610-570-7408,  
[rgraham21@verizon.net](mailto:rgraham21@verizon.net)

Then join us at Nellie Rae's for Open Mic, the same night, beginning at 7:30!

### **Introducing A New Program To Get Young Bowlers Rolling!!**

West Hunterdon Lanes (1089 State Rte. 12, Frenchtown, NJ) is offering a weekly bowling program for all boys and girls in the Palisades School District ages 5 thru 14. BUMPERS AVAILABLE FOR YOUNGER BOWLERS NO GUTTERBALLS!!

Register by Thursday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015.  
If you have questions please call West Hunterdon Lanes at 908-996-2248. PARENT/ADULT SUPERVISION REQUIRED.

This 12 Week Program Will Begin Friday, January 16th, 2015, at 4:30 PM. The Weekly Cost Of \$7.00, Payable At The Bowling Center, Includes: Two Games Of Bowling Each Week, Use Of Rental Shoes & Lightweight Balls Each Week, 5 Free Game Passes at Season's End, A Trophy For Every Participant, A Back Pack For Everyone. (Trophy Award Requires Completion of 12 Week Season)

### **LifeWays Training Starting in Kimberton, PA**

LifeWays North America is bringing its year-long training course for parents and early childhood professionals to the Mid-Atlantic states in 2015. LifeWays Early Childhood Training and Certification is based on the work of Rudolf Steiner. With its emphasis on "The Living Arts" the training is ideal for parents, childcare providers, and early childhood teachers and their assistants.

The training will be held at Kimberton Waldorf School in Pennsylvania starting March 28-April 3, 2015. The three other sessions will take place over the course of a year, supplemented by guided study with a mentor in between the sessions. There is a discount for early registration by January 31.

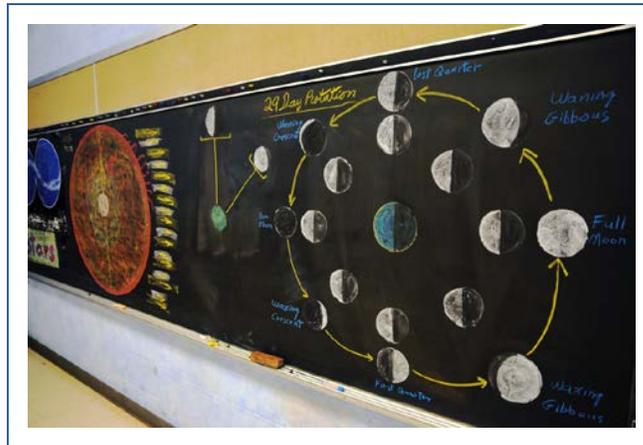
To learn more, visit [www.lifewaysnorthamerica.org](http://www.lifewaysnorthamerica.org) and click on the Pennsylvania listing or request an information packet from Chinyelu Kunz at 610-933-3635 X109 or [ChinyeluK@LifeWaysNorthAmerica.org](mailto:ChinyeluK@LifeWaysNorthAmerica.org).

### **Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania**

You know that feeling when you just can't wait? At Girl Scouts, each day is a new adventure! With friends at your side, you'll decide what you want to do—build a robot, design your own fashions, plant a garden, go on trips, or maybe even spend the night in a museum -- Let's get started today!

New to Girl Scouts or looking for a troop?  
Please contact: Kimberly Antonioli, Membership Manager at 610-791-2411 ext. 1514 or [kantonioli@gsep.org](mailto:kantonioli@gsep.org)

## 8th Grade Astronomy



8th Grade Astronomy  
(Blackboard drawing and photos by Euclides Santiago)

Waldorf News from [Waldorftoday.com](http://Waldorftoday.com)

### Parenting Lessons I Learned From a Waldorf Kindergarten

By Victoria Fedden

#### It was my dream job and I didn't get it.

All I wanted was to work in that beautiful, quaint school with the wooden toys and the sheer silks where everything smelled of lavender. The Waldorf School looked like the calmest, coolest place on earth and when I set foot in the spare, yet homey kindergarten classroom where I was interviewing for a kindergarten aide position, I felt like I'd found the place where I was meant to be. A few days later, the teacher called and told me the position had been given to someone else and I was crestfallen.

A week after that when she called me again to tell me that the person they'd hired had changed his mind about the job after all, I knew that fate had intervened on my behalf. Waldorf education was founded by Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner in Germany just after World War I and is based on the principles of Anthroposophy. Waldorf pedagogy believes that the human being is threefold: made up of mind, body and spirit and that all three must be educated. The schools promote creativity, hands-on learning, problem solving, art, music, spiritual growth and service as well as the appreciation of beauty.

I spent a year working in the Waldorf Kindergarten and the lessons I learned have stayed firmly with me ever since. When I became a mother almost four years ago, these lessons and the wisdom imparted to me at the Waldorf school, took on a whole new value and continue to positively influence my parenting. Parents don't need to believe in Steiner's philosophies (yes, some of his beliefs are pretty out there) or even send their child to a Waldorf school to reap the benefits of the core beliefs of Waldorf education. These are simple, good habits that any parent can practice regardless of how they choose to educate their kids or what their family believes.

#### Kids Need Lots and Lots of Unstructured Play.

If you do nothing else on this list, let your children play freely. Today's young people live harried, rushed and over-structured lives where they are shuttled back and forth from school, activities, camps, sports and lessons of all kinds and they have very little free time in which to roam, rest, imagine and learn to entertain themselves. Stop over-scheduling and let your kids find ways in which to fill their own time. Stop with the hovering and helicopter parenting. When children are immersed in their play, let them be and only interfere if someone is in danger. If children need redirection, do so subtly and gently.

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### **Turn Off the TV.**

I agree largely with the Waldorf anti-TV philosophy, but not wholly. Spending too much time in front of a screen creates individuals who cannot envision pictures in their minds, which is fatal to the growth of the imagination and can seriously hamper reading comprehension later in life. It makes kids lazy mentally and physically. Turn off the TV and get the kids engaged in dramatic play (aka playing pretend).

### **Fairy Tales and Telling Stories is Important.**

We're talking the gory Grimm's versions here, too, which I absolutely loved as a child. I get that some of these original tales can be a bit horrifying to us grown-ups, especially when we are used to the whitewashed Disney versions. Cinderella's sisters cut their feet to fit in the slipper? Babies get kidnapped by witches? Abusive stepmothers abound, cannibalism is fairly common and all sorts of double crossers commit scores of wicked deeds in fairy tales, but children perceive these stories quite differently than adults. Don't worry. Your kids won't get scared. In fact, these fairy tales actually help children work through their fears and subconscious insecurities about the world.

In addition to reading or reciting fairy tales to your little ones, tell them stories from their lives, your own life and their grandparents' lives. Make stories up, too. Children love listening to their parents telling stories and speaking directly to them.

### **Your Kid Doesn't Need to Read and Write at Three Years Old, Calm Down.**

Today's parents mistakenly believe that the earlier a child learns to read and write the better, but this is a dire mistake. The thinking is that children need a head start in order to excel in school, but the best head start they can get is by becoming creative and socialized. How do they do that? Through lots and lots of playing, of course. Encourage the imagination first and academics will follow. Trust me, there are plenty of Harvard students who couldn't read and write until they were six. There's plenty of time.

### **Spend as Much Time Outside as Humanly Possible.**

Nature is enormously restorative and Waldorf schools understand this. Some even have classes which are held entirely outdoors all year round, regardless of weather. Human beings have lived largely outdoors for thousands of years. Our bodies are durable and made to be outside in the elements so don't be frightened of nature. It's the healthiest thing for everyone, kids and grown-ups alike. Deepen your children's connection to the natural world by hiking, picking fruit, collecting shells, gardening, rolling in the grass, climbing trees, visiting a farm, playing in the sand at the beach, splashing in a natural body of water—the possibilities for outdoor fun are endless.

### **You Can Trust Your Children With Knives and Fire, Seriously.**

Supervised, of course, but still. It's safe and reasonable to let your children learn to use real tools, real knives and matches. Teach them how to use these things with caution and care and let your five year old use a butter knife to cut bread, spread almond butter on his crackers or slice cucumbers for dinner.

Beginning in the Waldorf Kindergarten (where some kids are barely four) children regularly use knives and real tools for their intended purposes. Lit candles decorate the classroom tables and shelves and surprisingly, everything is just fine. Children can do more than we think—you should see the way the five and six year olds can knit and hammer nails, it's astonishing and enlightening.

### **Instill a Strong Sense of Rhythm and Routine.**

Children thrive in routine. They feel safe with consistency and when they know what's coming next. Try to create a sense of daily, monthly, yearly and seasonal routines for your children. It grounds them in space and time and provides a strong sense of security.

### **It is Perfectly Normal, Healthy Even, For Kids to Get Filthy on a Regular Basis.**

I've noticed that most of today's parents are hyper-vigilant about dirt and bacteria and are terrified of their kids getting messy. Look, just breathe and go with it. Kids need to play in the dirt. Yes, actual soil and sand. They need to splash in puddles, squish berries, feel dough ooze between their tiny fingers. They need to experience their worlds through all of their senses and often this means a full body immersion in things we consider totally filthy. It's healthy!

*(Continued on next page.)*

Many recent studies blame the explosion of childhood allergies and autoimmune conditions on a “too clean” environment for kids. Getting dirty nourishes the human microbiome with healthy bacteria and strengthens our immune systems. You can always give them a bath later.

### **Fill Up the Whole Page.**

This was an odd thing I noticed when I worked in the Waldorf school. When the children created art they had little to no direction but they were strongly urged toward filling the entire sheet of paper with layers of color.

This lesson really stuck with me. Waldorf students create magnificent works of art from very young ages and I think that much of that has to do with their being taught to fill the whole page before moving on to a new project. This teaches children to focus and to finish what they start and it creates an appreciation for an aesthetic that doesn't involve a hapless crayon scribble on a scrap of paper. Their creations are taken very seriously.

### **Every Moment is a Learning Opportunity.**

I like to say that all parents are homeschoolers, regardless of where they do or do not send their children to school. Children learn from our example so it's important for adults to comport themselves calmly, assertively and compassionately. Children are in a constant state of learning. They learn through our example, so be mindful of that, and they learn through the experiences we bring to them.

Everything we do with our children is a chance to teach them something. Show them exotic fruits in the grocery store. Let them weigh lentils in bulk. Explain to them the movement of the tides at the beach. Tell them how the sun moves across the sky each day. Let them stay up to see a meteor shower. Build something with their help.

### **Practicing Art, Dance, Singing and Handwork Builds the Brain.**

Waldorf students and teachers are extremely well rounded. Everyone works on art, music, dance and handwork (knitting, sewing, building, weaving, etc.) regardless of age, gender or inherent talent. These activities are seen as purposeful work and created a balance human being with an integrated body, mind and spirit. One of the greatest tragedies of our public education system is the removal of the arts from the curriculum in favor of rote memorization and test prep. This kind of “zombie” education creates students who are empty and unfulfilled and who lack passion for learning and living.

### **Teach your Children Abstract Skills Like Math Through Practical, Hands-On Activities.**

People, especially little ones, learn best when they can see how abstract concepts like math and science are applied in the real world. Learn about measuring through building and cooking. Observe science at work in the natural world. When taught this way, children attain a deeper understanding of abstract subjects, plus they learn a lot of useful skills!

### **Your Children Are On Their Own Path—Respect Their Autonomy and Individuality.**

Celebrate your children's unique spirits no matter how different from you they are or how unexpected they may be. Our children come to the world through us and we must keep them safe and well until adulthood, but they don't belong to us. They are their own and their individuality should always be respected and encouraged. This often means letting them find their own way, their own passions, interests, joys and diversions without parental pressure to conform to any set standard.

The goal is to raise children into balanced, well rounded, confident people who are innovators and free thinkers, not anxious followers desperate to fit in.

*Victoria Fedden lives in Fort Lauderdale, Florida with her husband, daughter and cat. She is the author of the recently published memoir “Amateur Night at the Bubblegum Kittikat” and the upcoming sequel “Sun Shower.” Victoria received her MFA in Creative Writing from Florida Atlantic University, where she also taught writing. Her work has appeared in Real Simple, Chicken Soup for the Soul and several other publications.*

*This article appeared in Elephant Journal. Photos by Jen Zahorchak and are from the [Lakeside School at Black Kettle Farm](#) in upstate New York.*