

River Valley Current

December 1, 2015 No. 426

Thought is the blossom; language the bud; action the fruit behind it.
-Ralph Waldo Emerson

School Calendar

This Week

Friday, December 4

Spiral of Light – in-school celebration

Monday, December 7

Tea & Play at Morning Glory 10-11:30 am

Looking Ahead

Friday, December 11

Early Dismissal – Winter Fair Set-up 1:00 pm

Saturday, December 12

Winter Fair 11:00 am-4:00 pm

Tuesday, December 15

Holiday Music Concert 6:30 pm

Thursday, December 17

School Tour 9-11:00 am

Shepherd's Play 7:00 pm

Friday, December 18

Shepherd's Play 1:30 pm

Monday, December 21-Friday, January 1 No School – Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

How to Contact Us

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

Pierogi Order Forms can be found at the end of the Current. Orders are due by Friday, Dec. 11th Look for Pizza Forms next week.

Urgent News

The PA state budget impasse is poised to cost River Valley over \$6000 in scheduled EITC donations this year. This money was granted by the state last year and is included in our 2015-16 budget but is now in jeopardy. If you live in PA, please contact your state representative TODAY as there is still enough time to allow participating businesses to make their donations before the Dec. 31st deadline.

Link to find your State Rep/Senator: http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/ home/findyourlegislator/index.cfm

Spiral of Light This Friday

With quiet anticipation we mark the darkest days of the year and the approaching holiday season with a candle-lit journey inward at the Spiral of Light. The Spiral is a peaceful, meditative experience for children (and adults). The elements of this festival and the theme of light growing and expanding within darkness, speak to us on many levels and are found in most cultures around the world.

The Spiral of Light is a simple, yet reverent tradition at
River Valley Waldorf School. We will be celebrating it this year as an
in-school festival on Friday, December 4th with time for the
kindergartens and all eight grades to participate.
Families are welcome to attend their child's session.

The sessions of the classes are as follows:

9:00 am: 6th/7th/8th grades

9:55 am: Star Room
10:35 am Moon Room
11:10 am Second Grade
11:40 am Fifth Grade
1:10 pm Third Grade

1:40 pm First Grade 2:20 pm Fourth Grade

(Please see top of page 2 for more about the Spiral of Light.)

Winter Fair

Winter Fair preparations are in full swing! In three short weeks the children will be filled with excitement as the snowflakes begin to appear magically throughout the halls. Parents are critical for making Winter Fair happen. The Winter Fair committee would like to invite you to sign up for your class Winter Fair task.

By now, your class coordinators should have notified all parents of the responsibility assigned to your class. Please note that each parent is to sign up for two shifts: (1) either a Set Up OR Clean Up shift, as well as (2) a working shift for your class's assigned Winter Fair task. The sign up board is located in the foyer. You can also contact your classroom coordinator for signup if you can't make it to the school. Thank you in advance for making Winter Fair a magical event!

Need a fresh cut tree for the holidays?

We will be using trees to decorate for King Winter and they will be available for sale. Twenty 6 foot evergreens will be here so reserve yours today! Trees may be picked up after the festival is over. To reserve your tree please write a check for \$25 to RVWS (Winter Fair in the memo) and place in the folder on the office door. Please include your name and phone number. Contact Clare Brunell with any questions. Clare.28@live.com or (908) 713-1030.

The Spiral of Light

At River Valley and many other Waldorf schools the Spiral of Light is a beautiful seasonal event celebrated in a quiet and meditative mood. A spiral of evergreen boughs adorned with sparkling crystals, shells and large pinecones is laid upon the floor of the All Purpose Room. At the center a single white candle burns as a symbol of life amidst the dead of winter. One by one, accompanied by the music of the harp the children slowly walk to the center of the spiral, light their candles and then place them along the path. The beautiful illumination reminds us all of our own internal flame constantly glowing.

For those who experience or watch this deeply meaningful journey from darkness to light hope glows brightly that soon the darkest night of the year will herald the joyful return of light.

Please help us to create a quiet mood beginning at drop off and throughout the day. Signage in the lobby area will serve as a reminder that silence must be observed throughout the day beginning at 8:30 a.m. when the grades students are participating in Advent Assembly. Quiet should continue at pick up and into after school hours. Hallway traffic will be re-routed away from the All Purpose Room all day.

No photography by any means or recording of any kind will be permitted during the Spiral of Light. For safety near the candles children with long hair must wear their hair tied back while participating in the spiral.

Spiral of Light Crystals

If you have large beautiful crystals you would lend us to make the Spiral of Light sparkle, please label them and leave them in the faculty room by Thursday, December 3rd. They will be there available for pick-up again on Monday, December 7th. Thank you!

From Administration

Boundary Issues

Our neighbors to the east of us along Bridgeton Hill Road have let us know that some RVWS children have been gathering board scraps from their property and using it to build things. Incidences have occurred both during school hours and after. In light of this, we are planning to weave a rope through the trees near the property line to make a clear boundary for the children. In the meantime, please be aware that the rock wall in the woods next to our front playground is fully on the neighbor's property. To help ensure no further trespassing, please keep your children in sight when playing after school.

Teachers will monitor the children during recess and make them aware of the boundary, but we need your help to make sure we are good neighbors even after class has been dismissed. Thank you.

DIRECTORY REMINDER

The most up-to-date School Directory is always as close as your computer or smart phone! Visit the Parent Resources section of the RVWS website. Parent Resources can be found under the Life at RVWS tab. If you need the password, please email info@rivervalleyschool.org or speak with Robbie or Cindy in the office.

Thank you

A huge thank you to Tony Stuart for all of the time and effort you spent putting together three old-fashioned shaving horses for our woodworking studio.

Amazon.com and RVWS

Right now, RVWS is part of the Amazon Smile program – you can designate RVWS as your beneficiary of choice.

Tis the season for online holiday shopping...If you shop through Amazon you may designate River Valley Waldorf School to receive .5% from your purchase. There is no extra cost to you on your purchase. Simply place your Amazon orders through Amazon Smile, and designate RVWS as your chosen charity. The site will remember your preference, so you only need to do this once. In order to register for this program, please follow these instructions: Sign in to http://smile.amazon.com on your desktop or mobile browser.

From your desktop, go to Your Account from the navigation at the top of any page, and then select the option to Change your Charity.

From your mobile browser, select Change your Charity from the options at the bottom of the page.

Type in River Valley Waldorf School and our name should appear for you to select.

We are also in the process of becoming an Amazon Associate – which will mean a much larger percentage of everyone's shopping will be paid to RVWS. That part is a bit more complicated and we are in the process of getting the proper links set up on our website and arranging the necessary routing. Stay tuned for this part!

Outdoor Morning Recess

Dear Parents,

As the weather turns colder, some of the students have been avoiding the outdoor morning recess and have been unsupervised in the hallways before 8:20 am. Unless your child has permission from his or her teacher to be in the classroom before this time, they must either stay with an adult or join the other students and the recess teacher on the back playground. Likewise, children being dropped off from the car should be left off at the back play yard with the recess teacher. Please read below for the full Before School Policy.

Before School Policy:

In the past, children walked to school and so arrived having exercised in the morning air. Since their bodies had been vigorously engaged, their minds were fresher and ready to work when the school day began. As this is not possible for our students, we offer all grade school students supervised before school care on the back playground at no additional charge.

Children may be dropped off at the cul-de-sac between 8:00 – 8:20. Cars may not park here for any length of time as the buses use this drop off area as well. Musical instruments will be placed inside the hallway by the teacher as protection against the weather. In cases of extreme weather, the teacher will hold before school care in the All Purpose Room.

All children inside the school building before 8:20 must be accompanied by an adult until handed over to the teacher. We encourage you to see them to the back playground for a healthy dose of fresh air and exercise before their day begins.

From the Faculty

What the Children are Learning:

First Grade – Language Arts/Vowels Second Grade – Math Third Grade – Arithmetic Fourth Grade - Language Arts Fifth Grade – North American Geography
Sixth Grade – Central & South American Geography
Seventh Grade – Central & South American Geography
Eighth Grade – History/American Colonization & Revolution

A New Opportunity

Every child works at his or her own pace in Handwork and sometimes a project does not get completed by the end of the year. Miss Till is offering after-school opportunities (free of charge) for help with current or past handwork projects. She will be offering these most Tuesdays 3:30 - 4:30. Please get in touch with her to let her know to expect your child. mtill@rivervalleyschool.org

From the Leadership Council

What we are working on?

What are we working on?

Working with EC on next year's programs.

Working with TDC on teacher mentoring and evaluation.

The LC has open hours every Tuesday from 3:30-4 for anyone who would like to meet with us. If you have a question or a concern, please stop by. All are welcome.

Building & Grounds

School Work Days

Below is the calendar of the upcoming workdays. Please note that some changes have been made from the school calendar. Please RSVP to Mary K. Till (mtill@rivervalleyschool.org), to let us know if you will attend. This way we can plan what projects can be undertaken. Mary K. Till and Lynne Allbaugh - Building and Grounds

2015-2016 Work Days

TBD - 5th grade January 23 - 4th grade February 27 - 3rd grade March 12 - 2nd grade April 23 - 1st grade May 14 - Early Childhood

Class Fundraisers

RVWS Hats

The first order of RVWS hats sold in a flash. 8th grade parents would be happy to order more, but there is a minimum required for the order. If you would like to buy a hat (or hats) please email Josh Holtz at: josh@cecassociates.biz and let him know. If he receives requests for 48 hats, the order will be placed. Please respond to Josh immediately if you are interested.

Last Week for Poinsettas

The 8th Grade has lovely red and white poinsettias for sale. We are taking orders for plants that will be delivered to the school in early December. All proceeds support the 8th grade class trip!

Planning your child's birthday party?

Let the energetic, fun-loving eighth graders help — and help them raise the funds they need for their class trip! We'll make your child's party one they won't soon forget! Now booking dates for October, November, and December—Limited dates available so email Renell Carpenter (renell@rcn.com) or Kira Willey (kira@kira.net) to reserve your party now!

From the Community

Join us for a Holiday Make and Take! SuperNatural Salon and Spa

121 Delaware Rd, Riegelsville, PA Sunday, December 6th at 1:00 pm We will be making gifts from essential oils that you can give away or keep for yourself. All materials will be provided including wrapping supplies. \$5 per item, cash or check accepted. We will be making detox bath salts, wellness rollers, sleepy time spray, Thieves household cleaner and customized hair treatments.

Please RSVP to Tracey Price at takerootoils@gmail.com by Dec. 3. Hope to see you there!

Roxey Ballet Presents The Nutcracker

Roxey Ballet is presenting The Nutcracker, November 28-December 7 at The College of NJ Kendall Theater, 2000 Pennington Road, Ewing, NJ.

Roxey Ballet will donate 20% of every ticket purchased by River Valley families to our school. Go to www.roxeyballet.org and used the fundraising code: RVWSCHOOL when buying your tickets.

FALL FESTIVAL @ OTAC

Fun Fall Events at the Ottsville Traditional Arts Center. Concerts, dances, lessons and jams Oh My! All family friendly. Stay tuned for special student jam and pot luck evenings as well as some off campus RVWS school community events. Check us out!

Ottsville Traditional Arts Center Events

DECEMBER

Wednesday, Dec. 9

Jam Workshop with Daniel Hawkins 6 - 8 pm - \$10 suggested donation

Friday, Dec. 18

The Elftones in Concert – Timing and pricing TBA!

Every Wednesday
Open Jam with Richard Finch

6:00-8:00 pm • \$5 suggested donation

More at ottsvilletradarts.weebly.com • 250 Durham Rd. Ottsville Pa.

8th Graders visited Pearl S. Buck's house in Perkasie, PA after having read "The Good Earth."





From Psychology Today

Gray Matters: Too Much Screen Time Damages the Brain

Neuroimaging research shows excessive screen time damages the brain. Victoria L. Dunckley M.D.

"Taken together, studies show internet addiction is associated with structural and functional changes in brain regions involving emotional processing, executive attention, decision making, and cognitive control." --research authors summarizing neuro-imaging findings in internet and gaming addiction (Lin & Zhou et al, 2012)

But what about kids who aren't "addicted" per se? Addiction aside, a much broader concern that begs awareness is the risk that screen time is creating subtle damage even in children with "regular" exposure, considering that the average child clocks in more than seven hours a day. As a practitioner, I observe that many of the children I see suffer from sensory overload, lack of restorative sleep, and a hyperaroused nervous system, regardless of diagnosis—what I call electronic screen syndrome. These children are impulsive, moody, and can't pay attention—much like the description in the quote above describing damage seen in scans.

Although many parents have a nagging sense that they should do more to limit screen-time, they often question whether there's enough evidence to justify yanking coveted devices, rationalize that it's "part of our kids' culture," or worry that others—such as a spouse—will undermine their efforts. Digest the information below, even though it might feel uncomfortable, and arm yourself with the truth about the potential damage screen time is capable of imparting—particularly in a young, still-developing brain.

Brain scan research findings in screen addiction:

Gray matter atrophy: Multiple studies have shown atrophy (shrinkage or loss of tissue volume) in gray matter areas (where "processing" occurs) in internet/gaming addiction. Areas affected included the important frontal lobe, which governs executive functions, such as planning, planning, prioritizing, organizing, and impulse control ("getting stuff done"). Volume loss was also seen in the striatum, which is involved in reward pathways and the suppression of socially unacceptable impulses. A finding of particular concern was damage to an area known is the insula, which is involved in our capacity to develop empathy and compassion for others and our ability to integrate physical signals with emotion. Aside from the obvious link to violent behavior, these skills dictate the depth and quality of personal relationships.

Compromised white matter integrity: Research has also demonstrated loss of integrity to the brain's white matter. "Spotty" white matter translates into loss of communication within the brain, including connections to and from various lobes of the same hemisphere, links between the right and left hemispheres, and paths between higher (cognitive) and lower (emotional and survival) brain centers. White matter also connects networks from the brain to the body and vice versa. Interrupted connections may slow down signals, "short-circuit" them, or cause them to be erratic ("misfire").

Reduced cortical thickness: Hong and colleagues found reduced cortical (the outermost part of the brain) thickness in internet-addicted teen boys, and Yuan et al found reduced cortical thickness in the frontal lobe of online gaming addicts (late adolescent males and females) correlated with impairment of a cognitive task.

Impaired cognitive functioning: Imaging studies have found less efficient information processing and reduced impulse inhibition, increased sensitivity to rewards and insensitivity to loss, and abnormal spontaneous brain activity associated with poor task performance.

Cravings and impaired dopamine function: Research on video games have shown dopamine (implicated in reward processing and addiction) is released during gaming and that craving or urges for gaming produces brain changes that are similar to drug cravings. Other findings in internet addiction include reduced numbers of dopamine receptors and transporters.

In short, excessive screen-time appears to impair brain structure and function. Much of the damage occurs in the brain's frontal lobe, which undergoes massive changes from puberty until the mid-twenties. Frontal lobe development, in turn, largely determines success in every area of life—from sense of well-being to academic or career success to relationship skills. Use this research to strengthen your own parental position on screen management, and to convince others to do the same.

For more help on managing screen-time, visit www.drdunckley.com/videogames/. For more information on how the physiological effects of electronics translate into symptoms and dysfunction--as well as how to reverse such changes--see my new book, Reset Your Child's Brain.

Pierogi Family Order Form

Thank you to the RVWS community for your generous support of Thursday Pierogi Day!

We are now also offering monthly "stock the freezer" options for enjoying the delicious taste of Maria's Homemade Pierogies at home. The pierogies will be delivered uncooked once a month on Wednesday at pick-up in aluminum containers. These containers can be refrigerated for three days or frozen for three months. We will provide detailed preparation instructions. The pierogies offered on Thursdays for lunch are potato and onion. You can order this variety or any of the flavors below at a discounted rate once a month.

Family order forms may be placed in the folder labeled "Pierogies" on the office door. Please return them by Friday, December 11^{th} along with payment for checks made payable to RVWS, "8th grade pierogies" in the memo.

Delivery Date: Wednesday, December 16th, 3:00 PM

All profits are used to support the 8^{th} Grade Class Trip at the end of the year. Thank you for supporting our class! Sincerely, The students of the 8^{th} Grade
Family Name: Email Address:
Prices are per 10 pierogies :
Potato and Onion Number of orders X \$10 Total \$
Sauerkraut and Onion Number of orders X \$10 Total \$
Potato and Farmers Cheese Number of orders X \$20 Total \$
Mushroom and Onion Number of orders X \$20 Total \$
Sweet Potato and Carrot Number of orders X \$20 Total \$
Goat Cheese Garlic Parsley Number of orders X \$30 Total \$
Total Order Amount: \$

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Additional care is available until 5:30pm at \$7.00 per hour. Sign up is outside the Aftercare classroom..