

*"There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle."*  
 — Albert Einstein

## School Calendar

### This Week

**Mon., June 1-Wed., June 3**

6<sup>th</sup> grade class trip

**Thursday, June 4**

2<sup>nd</sup> grade planting trip

### Looking Ahead

**Mon., June 8-Wed., June 10**

4<sup>th</sup> grade class trip

**Wednesday, June 10**

Last Day of Early Childhood

**Friday, June 12**

Last Day of Grade School

Rose Ceremony followed by picnic/games 11:00 am

**Saturday, June 13**

Graduation

10:30 am -12:30 pm

All are Welcome.

### How to Contact Us

info@rivervalleyschool.org

lc@rivervalleyschool.org

bot@rivervalleyschool.org

pc@rivervalleyschool.org

## The Last Day of School!

Believe it or not, the last day of school is almost here.

**Early Childhood** will be celebrating their last day on Wednesday, June 10<sup>th</sup> with a picnic at 11:30 for all of the EC classes including Morning Glory families who will be coming up from Doylestown.

The last day of school in the **Grades** is Friday, June 12<sup>th</sup>. There will be a **Rose Ceremony at 11 am** where all of the classes will say goodbye to our beloved 8<sup>th</sup> graders. First graders will present each graduate with a rose in a ceremony similar to the one that took place on the first day of school when they received a rose from the 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

Following the Rose Ceremony there will be a picnic for all of the grades students and any parents who would like to come. Please bring a picnic lunch for your family or send a lunch to school with your child if you cannot attend. Games will be played; fun will be had and the festivities will end around 1:30.

Parents may take their children home at that time or the children may stay for packing and classroom moving activities in the afternoon until 3:15. Please join us if you can for any or all of the activities.



## Pizza Day Reminder

Pizza will be served this Thursday as scheduled. Pizza will also be served on Thursday June 11 as a make up for a missed snow day.

## Beware of Ticks

It's that time of year – ticks are everywhere.

When you come in from outside at school or at home, check yourself and your children carefully. There seems to be a bumper crop this year so please, take precautions.

## RVWS Summer Camp

**The deadline to sign up for ALL RVWS camps is June 10<sup>th</sup>.**

If we do not meet our minimum requirement per week to run the camps, we will have to cancel them. Please send an email to info@rivervalleyschool.org and fill out the registration form attached to the Current. You can also find forms in the office.

Here are the camps we are offering:

Parent/Child Summer Camp: July 20-22, July 27-29 or August 3-5

Early Childhood Camp at RVWS: July 20, July 27 & August 3

Morning Glory Summer Camp: July 27 & August 3

Old Fashioned Camp: July 20 & July 27

Circus Camp: August 3

## From Administration

### CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!

Congratulations to RVWS' class of 2011 who are graduating from high school this May/June and many of our first graduates who are graduating from college. How quickly time flies!

#### RVWS Class of 2011

Sarah Gombold – Palisades High School  
Austin Goodman – Palisades High School  
Will Holbrook – Phillipsburg High School  
Sarah Killough – Tincum Art and Science  
Erin McCleery – Southern Lehigh High School  
Kris Ramakrishna – Lehigh Valley Charter Arts High School  
Toby Riffle – Palisades High School  
Zoe Rotz – Palisades High School  
Lucas Santiago – Solebury School  
Trevor Schretten – George School  
Nicole Shulman – Palisades High School

#### RVWS Class of 2007

Tashina Khabbaz - pursuing studies at Penn State Lehigh Valley and doing her practicum here at River Valley  
Lucinda Warchol - graduating from Pratt Institute  
Carley Zarzeka - graduating from Dickinson College

See Alumni News for College Graduation Photos

### Yearbook Deadline Tomorrow

The final day to order a yearbook is tomorrow. The cost is \$36. If you would like to order, please put the form (attached to this week's Current) with payment in the folder on the office door.

### Something you Might Not Know about Charlene Chapman

Charlene Chapman, whom most of you know as our bookkeeper, is also a documentary filmmaker along with her husband, Jeffrey. One of their documentaries has been accepted and will screen at the New Hope Film Festival on July 25 @ 4:30. A synopsis of the film is below. For more information, contact Charlene, [ginnymacjack@comcast.net](mailto:ginnymacjack@comcast.net), 267.994.1125

### I Once Was Blind Synopsis for Program Guide – New Hope Film Festival 2015

I Once Was Blind documents the transformation of a young woman as she battles for her life and independence. With humor and faith, she wrestles blindness, kidney failure, and the discovery of her new husband's addiction. After surgeries to save her kidneys fail, her brother, YouTube sensation Ed Bassmaster, is tested as a possible donor.

### The Practice of Parenting

Lecture, Q & A, and Booksigning featuring author, Judith Frizlen

At Pear Blossom Early Childhood Center, 25 N. 16<sup>th</sup> Street, Easton, PA 18042

Join the friends and families of Pear Blossom for a free 45-minute lecture, question and answer session and book signing with esteemed Waldorf and LifeWays educator, Judith Frizlen.

The event is open to the public and space is limited. RSVP is strongly encouraged. Email [info@pearblossomcare.com](mailto:info@pearblossomcare.com) or visit [pearblossomcare.com/rsvp](http://pearblossomcare.com/rsvp)

Judith Frizlen is a teacher, mother of Waldorf graduates and founder/director of Rose Garden Early Childhood Center in Buffalo, NY, a Lifeways representative site that serves about 60 families. Judith is the author of *Words for Parents in Small Doses* and is working on her next book.

### Job Postings

We are looking for two part-time teachers for next year. If you or anyone you know is interested, please let Robbie or Brian know.

#### Seeking Part-Time Movement Teacher

River Valley Waldorf School is seeking a part-time Movement/ Games Teacher for the 2015-16 school year. The position begins in September, 2015 and teaches games and developmental movement specific to the Waldorf curriculum. The position is for teaching ten periods per week and is flexible as to lower or upper grade school classes. The ideal candidate will have enthusiasm for the importance of movement in education, have teaching experience in the field, and have begun or completed a training program in Spatial Dynamics and/or Waldorf Education.

#### Part-time Gardener, Starting August 2015

Duties include, but are not limited to, maintenance and upkeep of garden, annual vegetable growing, caring for perennial edibles, and managing the gardening program with River Valley Waldorf School faculty.

An understanding of Waldorf Education and curriculum required, teaching experience needed, knowledge of Biodynamic gardening and permaculture a plus.

Interested applicants should submit resume and references by email: [info@rivervalleyschool.org](mailto:info@rivervalleyschool.org)

## Thank You from the Auction Team

Dear Friends- Thanks to an amazing outpouring of generosity from the guests at Saturday's Auction Gala, the event was both highly successful and immensely enjoyable.

We still have many great items available along the display case wall outside of the All-Purpose Room. To make your donation and "win" an item before this Friday:

1. Sign your name to the ticket associated with the item
2. Bring a check for the amount of the item to the office, with "Auction" written in the memo.
3. Take your item home and enjoy!

Also available:

Scotch Tasting with Randy Weis, Jef Betz, Lysette Tynann (\$100/person, 2 left)

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn with Ron Ferguson (\$75/person, No Limit)

Parent Communication Workshop with Pete Ryan (\$150/couple, 4 left)

Farm to Table Cooking Challenge with Jen and Paul Kovach (\$150/couple, 3 left)

The Amazing Race (\$125/family, 3 left)

Many thanks to so many great people: Tracy Fly, Kristyn Lederer, Zachary Wander, Bonnie Pariser, the Kroths, Kira Willey, Hilary Murphy, Andy Wander, Eileen Kelly, Catherine Lent, Autumn Saunders, Clare Wargaski, Barry Brown, the Tynans, John Wesp, Tiffany Robinson, Kevin O'Hara, the Jarretts, Linda Thompson, the Kovachs, Kathy Betz, Lisa George, Stephanie Spencer, the Nichols, Robbie Miller, Carl Brunell, Renee Goodyear, Tony Stewart, Christine Boston, Mary Beth Healy, Tripp Haenn, Patrick Janssen, Nellie Rae's, Cat Miles, Scott Freeman, Paul Smith, Will Carpenter, Cindy Schretlen, Ron Ferguson... we're sorry if we've missed someone... you're all appreciated!

We really do appreciate you all helping to close out this year's auction season with a resounding bang!

With great appreciation,

The Auction Team

## From the Faculty

### WHAT ARE THE CHILDREN LEARNING?

First Grade: Language Arts

Second Grade: Arithmetic

Third Grade: Math Review and Building

Fourth Grade: Review of the Year

Fifth Grade: Botany

Sixth Grade: Geometry

Seventh Grade: Puppet Show

Eighth Grade: Review

## From the Leadership Council

### What we are working on:

Faculty Hiring for next year along with the Hiring Committee, TDC, and Faculty.

EC programs for next year with TDC and EC faculty.

Planning and review of the Community Board meeting with the BOT.

LC Self-evaluation.

## From the Development Coordinator

### Annual Appeal Update

We are so pleased to announce that the community has shown generous support for the Annual Appeal. In the past two weeks, pledges have been received in the amount of \$7,000. Although this is an impressive number, it still leaves us short of our goal. Please join our success and make your contribution today. Donations may be dropped off in the office or mailed to the attention of the Development Committee. Please indicate that the gift is for the Annual Appeal. Thank you again for your generous support!

Stephanie Spencer,  
Development Coordinator

## Alumni News

### Our First College Graduates!



Lucinda Warchol graduated with high honors from Pratt Institute. She is pictured here on graduation day with her brother, Leo.

Carley Zarzeka graduated from Dickinson College with a degree in Studio Art – this photo was taken at the presentation of her Senior Thesis with one of her pieces. She studied abroad during her junior year in Norway and France. This coming year Carley will remain at Dickinson as a post-Baccalaureate continuing to work in the Art Department. In addition, she will be serving as the personal assistant to the President of the College.



## From the Community

### FOR SALE

14' "Pure Fun" Trampoline; Like New!; Features: Vinyl; Made with strong, rust-resistant galvanized iron steel tubing using patented T-Section construction; Snug, secure fit of T-Section assembly ensures extra stability and prevents shifting over time; W-shaped legs offer eight balanced contact points which add stability and prevent wobbling or tipping; 14-foot, 88-spring trampoline is easy to assemble and requires no tools or extra drilling; High-performance steel springs provide deeper, more exciting bounce; Includes double-spring set and all-weather cover; (does not include sides) \$150.00; Free delivery and installation (optional); Call or text Mike at 609-672-3304, or Karen at 609-851-6539

### **Purely Farm is back again this Friday, June 5th offering pork, turkey and eggs!**

Joanna and Marc Michini of Purely Farm, parents of Clover in the Star Room, have a long history of providing the best meats in the area. Their farm critters thrive on life out on pasture and a diet supplemented by mineral rich, organic grains that are locally grown and GMO free.

Purely Farm has the perfect foods to fire up your grill. Spare ribs, sausage, pork chops, ham slices are just a few delicious candidates to cook outdoors. Please take time to review the attached price list and stop by Friday morning to purchase your meat and eggs! Joanna always has tons of cooking options for quick weekday meals or slowing it down for a family feast on Sunday. Please be aware that this will be Purely Farm's last sales day at RVWS for the school season! Contact Marc or Joanna with any questions at [purelyfarm@gmail.com](mailto:purelyfarm@gmail.com) or 215-317-0889.

### **Summer Crafting**

Every Wednesday at Frenchtown Park families will gather for children to play while parents join in making crafts for the school festivals ahead of time. The crafting is just suggested, not a must-do. Begins the week after school ends. Come between 10 am and 3 pm. Contact Kymm Phibbs with questions, [kymmphibbs@yahoo.com](mailto:kymmphibbs@yahoo.com)

### **Pennsylvania House for Sale!**

Fifteen minutes from school, 4 Bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths, center hall Colonial on 3+ acres. Field, woods and fairies! Taxes \$5000, price mid \$400,000's. Will be sold through realtor but not listed yet. Please contact Amy Clemons or Chuck Yax for more information. [Afclemons@icloud.com](mailto:Afclemons@icloud.com)

### **Small Adult or Kid's Kayak For Sale**

Perception Prodigy (orange/yellow) 10' kayak for smaller paddlers up to 150 lbs. I found this boat perfect for self-paddling adventurous kids ages 6 and up, but the boat got to be too short around 5'4". Younger children could give paddling a go, then ride along with a tow rope. This kayak would be \$400 new. I am selling the kayak, paddle and life vest (for 35-95 lbs.) for \$175. No commitment test drives on Lake Nockamixon! Melanie (215) 280-3154.

### **Elecampane Looking for a Good Home**

I just dug out a large, mature elecampane from my garden. If you are interested in planting it, contact me, Lois Dribin-Flood (grandmother of Isaiah in the Moon Room) [lois.dribin@gmail.com](mailto:lois.dribin@gmail.com).

### **Ottsville Traditional Arts Center**

Come join us for Wednesday Night Jam Session

We host jam sessions most Wednesday evenings at 6 pm; you can view the full calendar at our website: [ottsvilletradarts.weebly.com](http://ottsvilletradarts.weebly.com).

Many of the songs we sing and tunes we play are posted here before each session so anyone who wants can come already knowing a tune or two! \$5 suggested donation!

Ottsville Traditional Arts Center, 250 Durham Road, Ottsville, PA 18942

### **At Yoga Loka**

#### **Informational meeting for Yoga Immersion and Trainings**

June 6th, 10:30-11:30 am

#### **Singing Bowls with Peter Olsen**

June 6th, 6-7:00 pm

For more information see the website at [www.Yoga-Loka.com](http://www.Yoga-Loka.com)

### **Ticks bugging You?**

The safest, most effective, and cost efficient way to keep these parasites off ourselves and our children is to make your own bug spray with the highest quality essential oils. As a doTerra wellness advocate I'm passionate about giving my children the outside time that is so essential to their development, yet keeping them safe from tick-borne illness. Visit <http://www.mydoterra.com/bridgetbrier> to purchase Certified Therapeutic Grade essential oils from your fellow River Valley Waldorf family! In addition, for the months of May and June, 5% of all proceeds will be donated to the Lyme Research Alliance in honor of Lyme Disease Awareness Month.

## Art Classes in Riegelsville

The Riegelsville Library's Art in the Library program continues to run through the year, offering many wonderful art classes and workshops over the summer, for children and adults. Anyone interested in knowing about upcoming classes while River Valley Waldorf School is on summer break is welcome to contact the library and ask to be included for notices via email. You can reach the library by phone 610-749-2357 or email [Riegelsville.Library@gmail.com](mailto:Riegelsville.Library@gmail.com).

## WHENNA?

All-natural mehndi by Catherine Lent Design

June-July 2015 Schedule 908-996-7325

Check Facebook or Instagram for updates/additions/cancellations

### JUNE:

wed. 3rd	pulp 11:15-4 by appointment **
fri. 5th	lovin' oven 11:30 - 6ish*
thurs. 11th	river gypsy 10 - 6ish*
wed. 17th	pulp 11:15-4 by appointment **
thurs. 25th	river gypsy 10 - 6ish*
fri. 26th	lovin' oven 11:30 - 6ish*
sat. 27th	WRIGHTSTOWN, PA farm market 9-1*

### JULY:

wed. 1st	pulp 11:15-4 by appointment **
fri. 3th	lovin' oven 11:30 - 6ish*
fri. 10th	pulp 11:15-4 by appointment **
sat. 11th	BASTILLE DAY river gypsy 10 to 6ish*
wed. 15th	pulp 11:15-4 by appointment **
sat. 18th	lovin' oven 10:30 - 6ish*
thurs. 23th	river gypsy 10 - 6ish*
fri. 24th	pulp 11:15-4 by appointment **
thurs. 30th	pulp 10-4 by appointment **
fri. 31st	river gypsy 11:30 to 6ish*

## Housesitter Needed

The Carpenters are looking for someone to barter house/pet sitting for a rent-free place to live in Bethlehem for part of the summer. Please let us know if you can recommend someone — [renell@rcn.com](mailto:renell@rcn.com) / 610-997-0650.

## Free cat to a good home:

We recently moved into a space that is too small for our outdoor loving cat. She is only 2 years old and is up to date on all shots and is spayed. She would make an excellent cat for a barn as she loves to hunt! If interested please call Chris at 215-859-0610.

## Free Kitten

After a visit to the Moon Room on Friday for "show and tell" there is only one kitten left. It was raised since birth by MaryKate Sandt, a friend of Sam Rhine. If you are interested, call or email MaryKate at: 908-423-9058, [msandt5287@gmail.com](mailto:msandt5287@gmail.com).

## Volunteers for Peace

Working with individuals, groups and families to plan volunteer experiences in Haiti this summer, Volunteers for Peace is a non-profit organization based in Vermont that organizes service projects all over the world. Go to their website: [www.vfp.org](http://www.vfp.org) for a full listing of projects or call 802-540-3060 for more information about the work they are doing in Haiti.

## Looking for a Room to Rent

I am a former Waldorf teacher from Canada. My son and I would like to travel to Doylestown for two months of summer. We are looking for a place to rent July and August. My son is taking a shoe making course in Doylestown and we would appreciate anyone who could provide accommodation. My phone number is: 1-250-764-9095.

## **Core Principles of Waldorf Education Summer Adult Course Offering - Waldorf School of Princeton Foundation Studies Program**

July 15 & 17 and July 20 & 22 - 8:30 a.m. 1:00 p.m. (2nd camp session, same hours. Cost \$450)

What are intrinsic qualities and methods of Waldorf Education?

The course will focus on the seven Core Principles of Waldorf Education., developed by The Pedagogical Section Council of North America. As Waldorf education moves around the world, it becomes imperative that schools and individual teachers develop their curriculum out of these principles rather than seeing the curriculum as a recipe for imitation. The artistic work in this course will give participants a view into how these experiences speak to children in their phases of child development.

Created as:

- A continuing education for Waldorf teachers of all disciplines.
- An opportunity for teachers in other schools to incorporate Waldorf methodology.
- An opportunity for parents to gain a greater understanding of Waldorf education
- Personal development for adults in relationship with children

*Elan Leibner will lecture on the Core Principles. Mr. Leibner was a teacher at the Waldorf School of Princeton for 18 years. He is presently the chair of the Pedagogical Section of North America and travels nationally as a mentor and evaluator of Waldorf teachers and faculties. He has been the Pedagogical Director the Foundation Studies Program in Princeton for 13 years.*

*Tertia Gale will offer Eurythmy. Ms Gale taught Eurythmy at the Waldorf School of Princeton for 20 years and was one of the founding teachers of the school. She has continued to teach in the Foundation Studies Program for the past 13 years.*

*Pamela Shafer will offer artistic work in painting, drawing, and sculpture. Ms. Shafer is the Sculpture and Fine Arts teacher at the Waldorf School of Princeton and facilitates the Foundation Studies Program.*

## **Reduced Rate HANDLE® Assessments**

Elverson, PA, June 19-25, 2015

HANDLE: Holistic Approach to Neuro-Development and Learning Efficiency

HANDLE is a multiple award winning approach that has helped thousands of people worldwide to enhance human capability from infants to senior citizens.

For the first time in the United States HANDLE Assessments are being offered at a reduced rate in a clinical Practicum. These Assessments are being offered to members of the public as part of the final Module of A HANDLE Practitioner Course. The students will do assessments and an experienced supervisor is involved in every step of the process.

Who might benefit: Individuals with the following labels, syndromes and conditions have benefited from HANDLE programs: Academic differences, Dyspraxia, Learning Difficulties, Autism, Selective Mutism, Behavioral Issues, Brain Injury, Stroke, Cerebral Palsy, Speech/Language difficulties, Regulation Difficulties, ADD/ADHD, Down Syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Tourette Syndrome, and much more.

Package cost: \$995. (customarily cost is upwards of \$1500.) Chief Supervisor & Practitioner Course Instructor: Cathy Stingley, HANDLE, Instructor & Education Coordinator of the Americas (ECA) for The HANDLE Institute. For further information please contact, Rose Litschauer 610-570-7408 rgraham21@verizon.net, or Cathy Stingley. To apply for a Practicum Assessment please contact Instructor at 907-235-6226 or handleofhomer@yahoo.com

## **The Art of Equitation**

Jen Diedrich (mom of Addison, 3rd grade) is offering a riding lesson program individually designed for each rider's expectations, goals & dreams with the attention needed to be safe and have fun. Safety is always the first priority. Jen is a lifelong equestrian with a passion for teaching that brings out the best in beginning and developing young riders. Students focused on the show arena as well as those who simply love riding and understanding horses are very welcome. Lessons both in and out of the arena, horse shows and camp offered. Reach Jen anytime (215) 603-9999 or catch her at pickup.

## Editor's Note:

Once again, we have two articles this week to take advantage of all of the wonderful information that is coming our way.

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

## Kindergarten and the Big Divide

It is 1984. I'm six-years-old. I'm immersed in a bout of pretend play with my friends, Cheryl and Robin. I'm the princess and Robin is the queen. Poor Cheryl has to play the boy. She is the King. Our play area backs up to wooded lot and we are allowed in them as long as we can still see the teachers. We play for a full hour before it is time to go back inside. In the classroom again, we are fully energized and excited to sing, "Little Bunny Foo Foo" in chorus with our teacher. Next, we'll listen to a story and maybe learn a letter of the alphabet.

This memory comes from the past -- just over 30 years ago. When I think of Kindergarten, this is what I recall: plenty of storytelling, hours of playtime, cooking in the classroom, singing songs, and learning my alphabet - all of them happy memories. Fast-forward 30 years, and my oldest daughter is entering kindergarten. Only she is five-years-old, one year younger than I was when I had these memorable experiences. And kindergarten has drastically changed.

I still remember open house night for my daughter's kindergarten. The seasoned teacher sat right in the middle of all the parents. She had us circling her, which I remember thinking was brave. She didn't look as excited as I had anticipated she would be to meet the new parents. She scanned the room, looking each of us in the eye and said, "What we are doing to your children is a disservice." She frowned. "This really isn't kindergarten anymore." She took a deep breath and laid out the facts for us, "We are going to treat your children more like first graders. We will focus mainly on arithmetic, reading, and writing. We won't have time to develop the little fingers of the hands for skills like cutting or handwriting like we did in the past, or help them learn how to tie their shoes. You'll have to do that now." It felt like she was not only trying to prepare us, but that she was warning us.

As a pediatric occupational therapist that spent years learning the value of independence and developing healthy fine and gross motor skills in children – I shuddered. This can't be good. This is wrong. I kept thinking, over and over. It only got worse from that day on.

They started off with a five-minute snack and a twenty-minute recess session, which already felt like they were rushing the children. When the snow fell, (which if you live in New England - you'll know there is snow on the ground for about four straight months) they took away their recess completely. "No time to get all of those kids dressed," reasoned the teachers. Then shortly after they got rid of recess, they got rid of their snack time. They also started pushing reading so much that my child started coming home saying, "I hate school. I hate reading." My heart broke and I finally had enough. I pulled my daughter out of kindergarten.

We have a big problem here. Children are expected to do more than ever before at a very young age. What we recall as the precious skill-building and playful days of kindergarten are gone. Creating a heavy academic environment early in life with little time to play is already developmentally inappropriate and most likely damaging. On top of this, more and more children are not spending nearly enough time playing outdoors as years past. Therefore, a lot of children are lacking the sensory and motor experiences they need from hours of outdoor play to develop into strong and capable children. Instead, many children are having difficulties with balance, attention, coordination, and strength before they even enter kindergarten.

This is creating a big divide – we are expecting more from children at an earlier age, yet children are less prepared to learn than ever before. Hence, one of the many reasons why there has been a huge rise in the need for occupational therapy services over the past decade. This mismatch has many consequences. When children are expected to do things that they are not ready for, they can become labeled as a "problem child" or as having a learning disability even when they don't. They may also be pulled out of the classroom for special intervention (i.e., reading) if they aren't keeping up. They can think they are a failure even before they begin their school careers. They can be turned off of learning from the start – setting them up for years of frustrations and disengagement. Nothing good comes from providing curriculum that is not developmentally appropriate.

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What should Kindergarten be about? Kindergarten is not a time to memorize facts and figures. It is not a time to figure out who needs intervention – it is too early for that. It is not a time to “buckle down” and dive deep into academic concepts. NO. It is a time to develop the senses, refine the motor skills, learn some important life lessons, and even get children thinking in new ways. It is a time of preparation and laying a strong foundation for future learning and academics.

In order to do these things, we need to allow for more play at school and home, longer recess sessions, time to eat snack and lunch without being rushed, time to cut and paste, time to test their creativity, time to explore and ponder, and time to learn things deeply before moving quickly to the next subject. What's all the rush for? Let's give our children plenty of time to grow into the capable children they were meant to be.

Just like plants need sunshine, time, and space to grow. Our children need and deserve the same thing!

From the San Jose Mercury News

## Why we need to separate kids from tech — now

By Martha Ross

It doesn't seem that long ago that many parents felt guilty for using even the highly acclaimed "Sesame Street" to baby-sit their kids while they cooked dinner.

But a not-so-funny thing happened on our way to our high-tech-enamored world of 2015: Children's recreational use of screens, phones and entertainment media has exploded. "It's up considerably from years past," says Richard Freed, a Walnut Creek child and adolescent psychologist, in his new book, "Wired Child: Debunking Popular Technology Myths." Digital entertainment is now the "dominant activity in their lives," says Freed, who is also the father of two daughters, 11 and 7.

And that's not a recipe for a balanced, well-adjusted life, he and other media and educational experts say. Emerging research shows that kids' overuse of TV, computers, video games, tablets and smartphones hinders their physical, intellectual, social and emotional development. Nonetheless, achievement-oriented parents, who a decade ago would have strictly limited their children's TV viewing, seem eager to equip their kids with the latest laptops, tablets and smartphones. Freed and others blame an industry spin that says that early, regular and, in some cases, unlimited use of technology is essential for kids to be technically proficient and academically competitive in the 21st century.

Sharael Kolberg admits she was one of those parents. The former Silicon Valley web producer and author of "A Year Unplugged: A Family's Life Without Technology," recalls how she salivated over the latest laptops at the Apple store when she bought her young daughter an iMac. Several years after her family's tech-free experiment, Kolberg agrees with Freed that there is nothing wrong with kids watching limited amounts of age-appropriate entertainment, going online to do school research or having cellphones to reach their parents.

"Technology isn't the problem," says Freed, whose daughters don't have smartphones and use computers for schoolwork. The problem comes when screen time is overused and displaces family, school and other experiences that Freed says are "fundamental to a strong mind and a happy, successful life."

This overuse is documented in a study by the Kaiser Family Foundation. It showed that 8- to 18-year-olds spend up to six total hours a day watching TV, playing computer games or immersed in social media, YouTube videos and movies on their iPads and phones. This daily habit rises to 7 ½ hours if kids are multitasking -- posting on Instagram while watching TV, for example. Teenagers may spend an additional 2 ½ hours a day texting or talking on the phone. Meanwhile, kids spend only about 16 minutes a day using a computer at home for homework.

When Kolberg's daughter Katelyn was 5, she used her iMac and her mother's iPhone to play games. She also watched TV an hour a day and movies after dinner. But Katelyn wasn't the only tech-dependent member of the family. One day, it dawned on Kolberg that she and her husband had issues, too. "We had gotten into the habit of spending our evenings with the TV on while simultaneously checking email or seeing what our Facebook friends were up to," she says. So in late 2009, Kolberg and her family started their tech-free year. They removed TVs, computers, smartphones, the Internet, email and social media from their home. They kept a cellphone for emergencies. Still, Kolberg felt worried that sticking her daughter's iMac in the garage would somehow make her fall behind. "As a child growing up in Silicon Valley, it just (didn't) seem right to take her computer away."

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Like Kolberg, Freed challenges the idea that technology brings families together. In his book, he says this myth is perpetuated by such ads as a TV commercial for an Apple iPhone. As the ad starts, a teen's focus on his phone is revealed to be him actually videotaping family moments; the ad ends with the family together, watching his creation. "The message is ... buy your kids iPhones, and they will be closer to you, even if it looks like they're ignoring you in favor of their phones," Freed says.

In fact, kids' top uses for smartphones have nothing to do with interacting with family or doing research for school. Instead, they're playing games, texting and watching TV -- a lot of TV, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation study. Americans have long had a reverence for technology, which Freed believes has been exploited by tech and gaming companies to market their products as essential educational tools or cool, engaging -- and benign -- entertainment, he says.

As parents hear education pundits pushing for more STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) programs in American schools, they are exhorted by app developers telling them their products can help their babies and preschoolers get a head start on math and reading. Never mind that many of the educational claims made by app developers "don't hold up," says Caroline Knorr, the parenting editor at the San Francisco-based nonprofit Common Sense Media.

"A lot of products marketed to parents overpromise what they can do and are not age-appropriate," she says, adding that it's the rare preschooler who is developmentally ready to start reading or doing math. The real concern is kids' constant exposure to entertainment media, Freed says. In his more than 20 years of practice, he has seen hundreds of young patients who struggle academically and tested a number of them for ADHD. He says their symptoms, failing grades and difficulty completing homework often are caused by too much screen time.

In fact, technology overuse could be rewiring kids' developing brains in ways that could explain the growing number of kids diagnosed with anxiety and other psychiatric disorders. Brain imaging techniques also show that video gaming stimulates the same pleasure pathways as drugs and alcohol. Video or Internet game addiction, which is gaining recognition by mental health professionals, can be devastating. One of Freed's patients, 15, threatened suicide when his parents announced he couldn't play his video games until his grades improved.

For both Freed and Kolberg, the strongest statements about limiting kids' technology use come from industry leaders like Bill Gates and Steve Jobs. Gates reportedly set strict time limits for his son and daughters' video gaming and screen time. And in 2010, Jobs revealed to a journalist that his children had not used his company's recently released first-generation iPad. "We limit how much technology our kids use at home," Jobs said, according to a 2014 New York Times article.

In fact, low-tech learning definitely appeals to a small number of Silicon Valley executives who send their children to the Waldorf School of the Peninsula, where kids don't use computers in the classroom until seventh grade, says Lisa Babinet, the dean of students for the school's high school and chair of the math department.

In the Waldorf program, learning is hands-on in the purest sense. Kids garden, sew, make music, do lots of imaginative play, and use pencil and paper to master their handwriting. These methods are designed to teach students to concentrate deeply, master human interaction and think creatively, Babinet explains. The school's tech-savvy parents understand that gadgets should have a limited place in a well-balanced life, Babinet says. "In a (media) interview, one parent said 'power tools are amazing, but I wouldn't give a power tool to a kindergartner.' "

When Kolberg's family went tech-free, Katelyn complained almost daily. On Day 365, Kolberg, whose family has since relocated from Los Gatos to Southern California, contemplated slowly reintegrating devices back into their lives. While relieved to resume technology use for convenience, she was, however, "disappointed to no longer live a life of simplistic communication and family bonding."

The sabbatical definitely benefited Katelyn, Kolberg says. Without tech, the youngster spent time reading, painting, drawing and gardening. And somehow, removing the TV "dramatically" reduced the anxiety she had exhibited since she was a toddler. Katelyn also became more adventurous about leaving the safe cocoon of her home. Instead of watching cartoons on Sunday mornings and resisting pleas to go out for a hike, she became "a confident, adventure-seeking nature lover in a matter of months."

Now 11, Katelyn has a smartphone but rarely uses it and generally has a healthy perspective on technology, her mother says. More than anything, Kolberg says, the no-tech approach taught her daughter to appreciate life's "simple pleasures."