

Hilltop Children's Center Newsletter

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Upcoming Events

- ◆ Early Closure at 1pm -December 24th
- ◆ School Closed December 25 - January 3
- ◆ School Closed January 15th - January 19th
- ◆ Community Sing Along and Potluck - January 29th

Dear Families

Welcome to the first installment of our regular newsletter! Your inboxes can get filled very easily with daily emails from Hilltop. We aim to have a predictable and consistent form of communication to all of the families to keep you apprised of school events and projects that classrooms or that the whole organization is taking on. This newsletter will not replace the current communications that each room provides about happenings or sharing sweet stories. There is a lot of information here and we thank you for taking the time to read through our first edition.

The newsletter will be sent via email. Some hard copies will be available on the parent table; in an effort to stay green and conserve resources, the online version will be accessible on our website for your ongoing reference.

There are two new initiatives that we are most excited about and are taking lots of energy to get off the ground.

Administration Changes

As some of you are aware, our HR/Registrar position had been vacated by Sarah Felstiner who is now serving as the Curriculum Specialist. Over the summer and fall, Ellie Mansfield was working in the office to fill-in until a permanent HR/Registrar could be hired. Hilltop owes a huge thank you to Ellie who has been classroom sub here for over five years. Ellie is continuing her education in Olympia and we suspect that she will back with the sunshine this summer.

While we are sad to see Ellie go, the Administrative Team is thrilled to announce that **Kathryn Heller** will be Hilltop's new HR/Registrar. Kathryn is an HR veteran and has a lifelong commitment to children and education.

First, we will be offering **Spanish** starting in January in the afternoon here. Thank you for your feedback, as it helped us design class schedules and staffing patterns. At this time, we are not adding another language but may consider it in the future. Registration and FAQs with more information will be available in the front lobby.

Second, an initial plan to re-design the outdoor **play yard** has begun to provide the kids with diverse gross motor opportunities!! Hilltop has partnered with three volunteers who have various expertise in designing spaces for children. They have started the design process have initiated a work plan including potential funders. This project needs many hands to make it a beautiful and engaging place for children. You can help us by sitting on the committee or by making a tax-deductible gift, specifically for this project. Stay tuned!

Thank you for all that you for Hilltop!

Please find a personal note from Kathryn on Page 4.

Kathryn will be a point of contact for things such as permanent changes to children's schedule, enrollment paperwork including immunizations, managing class lists.

A brief overview of the other members of administration:

Meg - Executive Director- budgeting, public relations, board development, organizational mission and vision

Julie - Program Coordinator - recruitment and supervising teachers, schedule, parent relations

Peter - Operations Director - accounting, technology, facilities

Sarah - Curriculum Specialist - professional development, teacher support, curriculum implementation

SNOW POLICY:

Please remember that we use Seattle Public School (SPS) as a guide for closures but we do not follow SPS exactly. Should we have a delayed opening or full closure, a message is left on our voice mail by 6:30 am and we make every effort to email the entire school in the morning of a snow event. Please remember that some of our teachers do not live locally and we must consider coverage and safety issues when making the decision to open or close in major weather events.

“A rich environment for kids should include mud, livestock, relatives, cardboard boxes, Mom’s old clothes, and lots of blocks.

*~Alison Gopnik,
author of*

Philosophical Baby

Happy 2010

On behalf of the Board and Staff at Hilltop, we wish everyone a happy and healthy holiday season and may this **New Year** bring you **peace, good health, giggles with your children, fulfilling work, and well deserved rest.**

Thank you for your support this year, a year when we needed a whole community to endure our floods. If you would like to include Hilltop Children's Center in your annual giving to support our scholarship and play yard initiatives, please contact Meg or Peter. As a non-profit, your gift to Hilltop is tax-deductible.

Thank You Parents!!

We are so lucky for so many reasons, and one of them is you! Our families are a tremendous resource to this organization and we have so many of you to thank for going above and beyond - and helping us out this fall in so many ways! Please pardon us if we've missed your name, there are so many of you to thank!

Raindrop Room - To Carey, Elizah's mom for leading the kids in yoga. To Sarah, Braden's mom for pretzel-making. Scobie, Brayden's dad, for making the indoor sandbox; to Brayden's grandmom, Catherine, for making nap sheets; to Helen, Freddy's mom for making a doorstopper; to Helen bringing in provocations from nature; to Bonnie and Julia, Celia's moms for bringing in beads; to Rosa and Rosario, Federico's parents, for providing boxes.

Rainbow Room - To Peter, dad to Sarah who built a beautiful platform; to Tanea, Isabella's mom for cleaning the

Baking in Sunlight

Sunlight Room welcomed Sydney's mom, Sam, to bake fresh bread. The kids had been interested in the book Stone Soup, so they made some as a group (Yum!). It "kneaded" some bread to go with it and Sam graciously volunteered. The Sunlight kids learned what happens when you put too much yeast in. Thanks Sam for sharing your recipe and your time with Sunlight!

classroom; to Connor's dad, John for playing the guitar with the kids.

To Mountain Room parents, Paul, Madeline's dad, and Sandra, Eleanor's mom, for chaperoning field trips; to Sandra for providing disposable cameras for the kids' use on field trips and to Beth, Jonathan's mom for developing the photos from the Day of the Dead trip; to Craig, dad to Sean Kelly, for hanging shelves in the classroom; to Lisa, Ellie's mom, for explaining and playing dreidel games; to Meg, Sam's mom for showing the kids how to make latkes.

To Sunlight Room families, Paul, Isaac's dad and Zoe's grandmom for chaperoning field trips. To all Sunlight Room parents who continually provide morning snack!!

To River Room parents, Eva's dad, Dan and Celina, Cinda's mom for chaperoning field trips. To all River Room parents who continually provide morning snack!!

To Beach room dad, David, Cora's dad for playing the banjo at the Sing Along.



Please welcome:

River - Caiden and Elise

Rainbow - Connor and Oliver

Beach - Leo

We have openings in the half-day (Beach) program. There may be openings in the Full-Day program. If you know someone who may be interested in Hilltop, please have them contact the front office by phone or email:

kathryn.heller@hilltopcc.org

Sharing Expertise

Many families have asked how they can pitch in at Hilltop. Thanks!! If you have a few hours a month, we currently have the need for the below specialties. Please let Meg or Julie know if you can help.

- **Event Planner Extraordinaire** - Our annual auction is coming up in late April. Join the fun, meet fellow parents, and help Hilltop hold another successful Experience Project.
- **Website** - Hilltop's website is usually the first exposure new families have to our work

and we want to better reflect our values and practices. Specifically, we need help in three areas: 1) updating content 2) developing a new design 3) assist with social marketing efforts.

- **Carpenter** - Hilltop has long wished for a Reggio-Mirror, and they're exceptionally costly to order and have shipped to us from Italy. You may have seen these at other Reggio centers, and we're hoping we can get volunteers to build one for the kids in all the rooms to share! Any interest in this fun project?!

Parent Discussion Nights

In our annual survey, families indicated an interest in having regular parent education/support meetings. For example, last winter, we hosted a evening with an Education Specialist who helped parents choose a Kindergarten to meet the specific needs of their child(ren). Hilltop will be offering similar classes starting in January. The first topic is "*Hilltop at Home: How the practices and values at*

school can translate to the home environment." Whether you want to use the same language as teachers do or simply hear how teachers handle situations, please join us.

We hope to have these Discussion Nights for adults only at 5 pm, while the kids are here in care. Please let us know if you'd be interested, preferences of time, or have topic ideas by completing a card in the lobby or by emailing Meg.



Big Kids explore wax and clay.

Question and Answer

Questions or comments that families pose to Hilltop staff have the option of being featured in the newsletter. Please feel free to write questions or feedback on a card in the foyer. We will write your anonymous comment or question and respond in the newsletter. If you need a reply in short order, please indicate as much.

Why do you send out the Parent Map?
It kind of feels like marketing to me.

A: Good question. Parent Map is a local non-profit and mostly provides updates

on community events and happenings specifically for kids and families. We are encouraged by our accreditors to share community news with families on a regular basis. Some people have come to rely on it to plan weekend outings.

What's the best way to celebrate my child's birthday?

A: Check with your teachers. Most rooms have traditions and practices that shine the light on the birthday child's growth, especially involving families. If you are using the stand-ups for card invitations to off-site parties, please include all children in the room. If you are not able to, or do not wish to invite the entire class, the class lists have the email addresses for parents. Some families go this route and use E-vite to send invitations.

Have you ever looked at a fellow parent and wondered how you know them? Have you supported a local business to later learn that they are a Hilltop parent too? Do you need your property surveyed? We happen to have a parent who is in the industry so let's explore what resources are out there.

Our upcoming Parent Directory will be an ongoing resource. Our Hilltop parents represent a diverse set of talents and skills and we would like to connect you when possible or when needed. Would you be interested in including your business or profession in our parent directory? If so, please email Meg or complete the form on the parent table in the school lobby.



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Hello Everyone,

I am delighted to join you in the powerful work you do nurturing and supporting the healthy development of so many cherished children. I love to learn and am endlessly curious about how groups organize and perpetuate their values in daily operations.

My BA is in Secondary Education. I mainly taught in an alternative high school with emotionally disturbed juveniles before moving into co-directing and founding group homes. I later translated those skills and experiences into supporting my human resources work, specifically the communications and team enhancement work I've done for both non-profit and for-profit organizations.

Joining Hilltop will let me learn first-hand about early childhood development and how such a first-class operation is managed. This will prepare me for grandchildren when my son, Brent, is ready for kids. Life-long learning has always been supported by my working in a variety of businesses, so this is a great new venture for me. I hope to contribute my love of diversity, my broad curiosity, my playfulness and my reverence for that "ah ha" moment of realization or learning.

Warmly (aloha nui loa - perpetual, mutual loving kindness),
Kathryn

Teaching Staff Changes

After two years here, Raindrop teacher, Lindsay Johnson is leaving Hilltop. Lindsay made the decision to follow her dream and relocate to Austin, Texas. Lindsay was a teacher in both Raindrop and Rainbow rooms. Those of us who are lucky to know Lindsay, are sure to agree that she is full of life; she can usually be found dancing with the kids or exposing them to the wonders of

nature. Hilltop will not be the same without her. As sad as we are to lose Lindsay, we know that Austin is a lucky place and wish her all the best. Lindsay's last day will be December 23rd. The administration and Carey DiMartini (Elizah's mom) worked hard to screen our best candidates and have her replacement, Brad Belvo, in place at the start of the New Year. Welcome Brad!!