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November / December 2011



**Message from Michele**

This time of year we think about things that we are thankful for. At SAMS there is a special community that works together and volunteers their time, talents, and skills. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for all the things you do to make SAMS so wonderful.

Thank you to everyone on the Hospitality Committee. Your attention to details to make sure the events are flawless is appreciated. The welcoming feeling at every event is invaluable. I want to especially thank Erin and Sarah for heading up this committee and for their incredible ability to organize.

Thank you to everyone on the Site Committee. Whether it is picking up trash, earthquake proofing, or changing light bulbs, the facility could not be safer or cleaner without your help. Your helpfulness and skill level is what keeps SAMS looking so amazing.

Thank you to everyone on the Fundraising Committee. This committee is working hard to raise funds in a variety of ways, from signing up parents for scrip to soliciting businesses for donations for our Spring Auction. Efforts in the past made it possible to purchase the SAMS playground equipment and greenhouse.

Thank you to the Board of Directors for all their expertise and knowledge. They work on such things as making sure the school policies and the budget are on track. Their commitment and support keeps the school functioning at a high level.

Thank you to all of the cookie bakers and field trip drivers. Without your help, well the children would be sugarless and stranded! No, really, the children love eating those special cookies at the holiday times and in order for our kindergarteners to expand their knowledge outside of the classroom, drivers for the field trips are crucial.

Thank you to Megan and Amy for making the art portfolios this year for our Classroom Enrichment Drive. These one of a kind treasures are keepsakes that will bring joy for years to come.

Thank you to the incredible staff. Your dedication, knowledge, and passion for working with children are the foundation to a strong school.

And lastly thank you all for the referrals of new families. The SAMS community is "one of a kind" and by referring friends it continues to be a wonderful and engaged parent body.

Many thanks,  
Michele

musicians dancers storytellers artists

**CLASSROOM  
ENRICHMENT FUND**

**We are off to a great  
start!**

As of October 31 we have  
received \$4,050  
and we're scheduling  
guests!

*last year's total was  
\$9,407.*

musicians dancers storytellers artists

**DATES TO REMEMBER**

November 2	Author Visit
November 3	Introduction to Montessori Kindergarten
November 11	Veterans' Day – SCHOOL CLOSED
November 14-18	Winter Coat Drive
November 23	Half Day – SCHOOL CLOSES at 11:45
November 24-25	Thanksgiving Recess – SCHOOL CLOSED
December 15	Holiday Celebration
December 19-January 2	Winter Recess – SCHOOL CLOSED
January 3	School resumes



## EVENT INFORMATION

### Author Visit – November 2

Once again Ashley Wolff will visit the classroom, this time presenting *Compost Stew* which she illustrated. Rachel Saslow of The Washington Post had this to say: Ashley Wolff's collage-style illustrations, made from newspaper, tea bags and other recycled materials, echo writer Mary McKenna Siddals's message of reducing waste.

### Kindergarten Night – November 3

Introduction to Montessori Kindergarten Night is an informative presentation that will focus on Montessori materials used in kindergarten. The kindergarten year is often called the “crowning year” and is the culmination of the three year cycle of development, during which children learn best by concrete, hands-on learning.

The Montessori kindergarten year is a time when children put together all that they have absorbed and learned in the primary class, and for many it is a time when they will explode into reading, writing and math.

This night will definitely assure you that SAMS's kindergarten is the place to be. Everyone is invited to attend, no matter the age of your child.

The things kids say –

*Alea commented ... "When it rains,  
we go into the yellowhouse."*

### Winter Coat Drive – November 14-18

Please bring in your gently used men's, women's and/or children's winter clothes for Image For Success. Image for Success is a non-profit organization providing free wardrobes to men, women and children in Marin County who are making a transition back to independence and self-sufficiency. See attached flyer.

### Holiday Family Celebration with Tim Cain – December 15

Parents, grandparents, siblings .... Please join us from 11:00-11:45 for songs of Hanukah and Christmas. This is a sweet time at SAMS and a great opportunity to share in a special holiday celebration. Please remember this is a NORMAL school day with drop off from 9:00-9:15. Early Care and After Care are available. Families should arrive between 10:50-11:00 for the celebration. We will begin promptly at 11:00.



### Classroom Observations for 2012-13 Enrollment:

We have begun our Classroom observations for parents who are interested in enrolling their child for the 2012-13 school year. If you have friends who are interested in applying to SAMS or finding out more about our school, please encourage them to call for an appointment today! Observations are held now through December 15, 2011.

## Greetings from the Classroom!

September and October have flown by. It has been a very busy and exciting time in the classroom. There has been so much growth and accomplishments from each child in the last eight weeks.

As we mentioned in the last newsletter, we always begin the new school year with two circle times. This is to help acquaint the children to one another, the teachers, grace and courtesy lessons and the classroom environment. Once they seem comfortable and settled in we feel that they only need to meet once in the morning which also allows for a longer work period during the morning session. We began having only one circle time around October 3<sup>rd</sup>.

It seems that it usually takes between four to six weeks at the beginning of the year for the “Montessori Hum” to become established. Once this begins there is a beautiful sense to the ears as well as an amazing sight to our eyes watching and listening to the children become self directed, curious of their prepared environment and most of all feeling safe and loved in their home away from home.

The fall season also has brought the classroom alive with the celebration of autumn and the excitement of Halloween. We have many fun works related to this season in the classroom as well as songs and discussions about this time of year.

The next two months will bring us more holidays to enjoy and celebrate. We will also begin our monthly continent studies and discussions. We love to open the world up to all of our students here at SAMS, so each month beginning in November we will learn and explore one of the seven continents, beginning with North America.

The teachers in the classroom have really enjoyed all that we have experienced these last two months. We feel so fortunate to be able to spend our days teaching, discovering and experiencing all that we do with each of the children. They bring so much joy, love and laughter into our lives and classroom environment. Thank you for sharing them with us and for all the support you give to our school community.

Denise

## Fun Time in Aftercare!

Halloo.....from After Care! Now that we are approaching the holiday seasons (Halloween, Thanksgiving and all of the December celebrations) and getting into the groove, After Care is beginning to find its groove with welcomed newcomers and activities.

Since school began back in late August, the After Care children have created many crafts such as birdhouses, picture frames, leaf wreaths, spiders and more. Along with helping to plant a winter garden, the children have enjoyed making some yummy foods like homemade applesauce, rice salad, honey turkey rolls, and mini pizzas!

Several weeks ago, Denise gave the children their first movement lesson, and they had a wonderful time stretching, rolling, jumping and using their “big” muscles. Denise will work with the children on the last Friday of each month for the school year, so mark your calendars!

As promised, we hope to begin our first unit of study by the start of November, so look for updates about it in the next newsletter and if you're curious about what's going on in After Care, take a look at the pictures we post periodically, or have your child stay and join us for the afternoon fun.

Witching you the best,  
Debra and the After Care Staff



## The Buzz..zz..z from the Garden....

In the Garden or the Greenhouse? That has been the “question of the day” for the entire month of October! Early seasonal rains quickly ushered us inside only to be followed the next week by glorious 90’ autumn days! So why not enjoy both - for the past few weeks the children have been enjoying harvesting and planting, watering, feeding the birds, and observing the onset of fall from the SAMS garden whilst also exploring and becoming familiar with new materials and the new environment (to some) in the Greenhouse. Questions have been asked...“Why is it called a Green house? It’s not green!” “It’s white - it should be called a White house!” “No, it’s made of glass - it’s a Glass house!” Hmmm...tough to reason why!

Our SAMS pumpkin patch (new this year) has brought big smiles and much laughter to the children and our scarecrow has been a collaborative, constructive effort - using harvested vegetables from the garden we worked together to decide how best to “create” a face for our “little straw man“. An eggplant for his mouth? A couple of slices of zucchini for eyes, a carrot nose...? Please come and meet the newest member of our SAMS family behind the Greenhouse in the SAMS garden...! We are looking forward to November and December - exciting “holiday” months for the children (and a busy time for parents). We will be exploring ways to bring the outdoors indoors by stocking up our Nature Table - if any of your children have natural “treasures” to share please encourage them to bring them in. Anything they might find in the backyard, on hikes up Mt Tam, or day trips to the beach - if they would like to share a small rock, a feather or a vegetable from their garden then we will find a home for it on the Nature Table. Last year the children really enjoyed displaying their treasures and it is a wonderful learning opportunity for ALL of the children. Children LOVE to share their “discoveries” and it opens up all kinds of group discussions and opportunities for tactile learning.

We will also be learning more about our workbench and the safe handling of the tools we use for wood working. We have been sanding small blocks of wood to make “name tags” which allow the children to identify their unfinished work in the greenhouse; we finished hammering buttons onto our “button bench”; and in the next couple of months will be learning how to use the hand drill and the vise. If any parents have access to small off-cuts of unfinished wood I would be very interested in talking to them...it is hard to keep up with demand!

Please feel free to stop by the garden with your child and enjoy viewing our late fall harvest (if you can please refrain from picking it would be very much appreciated as the children have plans on what they would like to make from their limited harvest).

Enjoy the beauty of the season through the eyes of your child ....

© Karen



### ON RAINY DAYS HERE IS WHAT WE DO .....

The weather is changing so please make sure your children are dressed appropriately.

On rainy days we have different drop-off and pick-up routines. The following is our procedure for rainy days:

**If it is raining and we are not outside at drop off between 9:00 - 9:15:**

- The sign-in board will be inside the classroom on the counter. Please sign in and quickly say your goodbyes. In order to keep the classroom running smoothly it is important for the parents to leave promptly. If you need help, please ask a teacher.

**If it is raining at 11:45 pick-up:**

- Please wait outside until 11:45 when we will promptly dismiss the children from the classroom door. Please make sure you sign out on the bulletin board located in the classroom on the counter or possibly outside directly by the door.

**If it is raining at 12:40 - 1:00 pick-up:**

- In order not to disturb the circle, please go directly to the aftercare room, sign out on the bulletin board in the aftercare room on the counter and grab your child’s lunch box.
- Walk out the aftercare door and walk to the classroom door, and pick up your child who will be waiting for you with rain coat on, ready to go.

**If it is raining at 2:30 pick up:**

- Pick up your child in After Care and sign out.

**Things to remember:**

- If it is sprinkling, we will go outside. Please make sure your child has a raincoat with hood and rain boots.
- It is very important to be on time for pick-up.

Please understand that this is what works best for the rhythm of the school. If you have any questions feel free to call the office at 457-3428.

## Adventures in Kindergarten!

The Kindergartner's first big field trip was to Kule Loklo Miwok Village at Bear Valley. It was very exciting as it gave children a glimpse of what life might have been like for the Miwoks a long time ago. The authentically rebuilt Miwok village consists of a round house, teepees, acorn granaries, a sweat lodge and a traditional Miwok kitchen. It's definitely worth a visit if you're ever out that way.

A very special treat was the ranger led tour of the roundhouse. The biggest surprise for the kids turned out to be the Miwok kitchen as it consisted only of a big flat rock with several holes in it from grinding. So different from the kitchens we're used to! :)

At Halloween, when skeletons abound, traditionally the Kindergarteners begin a new unit of study about the human body. We all have one after all, and kids are very curious about how theirs work! For example, kids enjoy learning what happens to a hamburger after it's been eaten!!! We will also take a closer look at the muscular system, digestive system, skeleton, germs, and much more. There will be spine-tingling, hands-on activities.

When we investigate the five major senses, a very popular and delicious activity that combines the sense of sight, touch, smell and especially taste is the making of homemade truffles. It's easy and super fun to do. Here's the recipe if you feel inspired to make some!

### Making Truffles

Ingredients:

8 ounces of chocolate chips (milk or dark chocolate),

2/3 cup of heavy cream, cocoa powder,

Optional:

Finely chopped nuts of your choice.

### Directions:

- Bring the heavy cream slowly to a short boil. Place the chocolate chips into a bowl and pour the boiled cream over the chocolate chips.
- Using a whisk, gently stir the chocolate and the cream together, working your way from the center out.
- Mix together, the chocolate and cream will form a ganache, or chocolate syrup. Chill the mixture in the refrigerator for about one hour until the ganache is firm but still workable.
- When chilled, use a tea spoon the scoop out a portion of the chocolate mixture and begin rolling it between the palm of your hands into a ball. Continue in this manner.
- Pour some cocoa powder into a small plastic bag, and add a truffle. Gently shake the bag until the truffle is covered with cocoa. Continue in this manner with the rest of the truffles.
- Other possibilities are to roll the truffles in finely chopped nuts.

Arrange on a plate and chill again or simply start eating your handmade truffles.

Enjoy!

Britta

grinding corn



collecting soap root



using a Native American drill

