



MONTECITO CONNECTION

January/February, 2010



Notes from Erin: Welcome back to Montecito and HAPPY NEW YEAR! We hope everyone's holidays were filled with family, blessings and joy! Before the break, we celebrated with you and your children for the annual Holiday Sing. As usual, the children stole our hearts with their wonderful voices and cute antics during all four (4) Holiday Sings. For the fourth year, we were treated to 2 special performances of The Mitten (by Jan Brett) from the Afternoon Enrichment children and staff. The children were natural performers and the cast was HUGE this year, especially on Friday morning! We were also treated to a special poem the children recited about a chubby little snowman - it was adorable! Santa Claus was as jolly as ever! Some children kept a "safe distance," while others sat on his lap many times over. ☺

In 2010, we are offering lots of fun activities, Parents Night Out, and extra-curricular classes here at Montecito! So please take a look at all the fun we're going to have in 2010. We're staying strong through this tough economy, and we're all sticking together. We are so happy to have you all here with us and we're looking forward to educating and playing with your children in 2010!

A SPECIAL THANK YOU — I would like to thank you most sincerely for your generous response to my request for book donations for the Herbert Allen Ross Memorial Fund for Early Literacy. The 175 books you donated were distributed to organizations and classrooms where the need for children's books is great. One classroom of "at risk" three- to five-year-olds and their parents were astonished that each student could have one book to keep. Sometime after the books were distributed, I was invited to return and was greeted very warmly by the children and parents who wanted to express their gratitude in a touching way. Many of the children had drawn pictures about the books they had chosen and dictated to their teachers what they wanted to say about the stories. When I was asked to join the class at circle time, much to my delight, I was presented with these pictures while the teacher read aloud what each child had said about his or her book. One child wrote "I will read this book five times. I liked this book a lot." Another wrote "I am going to read this book with my parents and grandparents. Thank you for the book." And yet another "I liked the cover because the mouse is going to eat cookies. I will read this book with my mom and dad. I will read this book lots of times. Thank you." And finally "I liked Curious George because he likes to run. I am going to read this book with my mom. Thank you for giving me this book."



Your gifts were very significant in the lives of these families. The collection box will remain on the Blue Room Steps. Any time you feel ready to give again, we will be ready to receive.

Ginny Ross Quackenbush on behalf of the Herbert Allen Ross Memorial Fund for Early Literacy



Montecito's Nature Corner

SHARING YOUR STORIES ABOUT NATURE

When Words Become Endangered



Noted Washington naturalist Robert Pyle once asked, "What is the extinction of a condor to a child who has never seen a wren?" In other words, if children can't recognize the common wildlife in their neighborhoods, why would they care about endangered animals that live miles away?

Ironically, the word "wren" was removed not long ago from the Oxford Junior Dictionary. In fact, the newest edition of this prominent children's learning tool no longer defines more than 30 nature words, including "dandelion," "otter," "acorn," and "beaver." In their place, a child will now find definitions for such terms as "MP3 player," "blog," and "cut and paste."

Though the latest edition was published in 2007, no one seemed to notice the changes until late last year when an outraged woman told a reporter about the additions and omissions. According to the British newspaper *The Daily Telegraph*, Lisa Saunders, a mother of four in Northern Ireland, was helping her son with his homework when she realized that words such as "moss" and "fern" were not in his dictionary. Certain Christian terms, including "chapel" and "saint" also were gone.

When it was published online last December, the *Telegraph* article drew hundreds of vitriolic comments from readers. Bloggers took it from there, and outrage spread across the Atlantic. Which leads us to another irony: The Internet had become a tool for protesting the saturation of digital technology into all aspects of modern life - especially children's education.

In response to the criticism, Oxford University Press released an official statement: The dictionary "is not designed for children to use as they progress higher up the school years, and should be regarded as an introduction to language and the practice of using dictionaries." The words included in it, the statement continues, are selected based on the "language children will commonly come across at home and at school." The books also must include words "covering the main religious faiths" and must now pay special attention to computer-related words. These concerns, says the company, must be balanced with keeping the book small enough to be accessible for children between the ages of 8 and 11.

For many naturalists and educators, however, the omissions raise a different set of concerns. "Making" room in the junior dictionary for a new lexicon of technology and communications may be a good thing for children, provided they are not also denied definitions as basic as that of the flower growing on their own lawn," says Kevin Coyle, NWF vice president for education and training. "Several of the words removed to facilitate participation in the virtual world were cut at the expense of some creatures such as the otter that have been struggling for survival in the real world."

The revised book could be viewed as another example of adults contributing to the growing disconnection between children and the natural world - a trend that was identified by a study conducted a few years ago by two zoologists at Cambridge University. Reporting in the journal *Science*, the researchers revealed that a typical 8-year-old could name 78 percent of the 150 characters in the popular video game *Pokemon*, but could identify less than half of the common British plants and animals in pictures.

Which brings us to one final irony: The concept of the *Pokemon* universe stems from the hobby of insect collecting, a popular pastime of the game's inventor when he was a child in Japan.

Article by Anne Keisman from National Wildlife (Anne is an NWF education media coordinator)



READING CHALLENGE UPDATE – 5770 BOOKS READ! You read 2,260 books in December, which is fantastic - and keeps us on track to reach our goal of 15,000 books this year. We still need to read 2,000 books per month, so please keep reading and **turning in your reading lists.**

READING RECOMMENDATIONS - Please check our website for a fabulous list of recommended winter books from our Reading Challenge. We currently have a list of books about Winter/Snow and books about Polar Animals. Also, look for our February Book Recommendations about Black History Month and the Asian New Year (including books from China, Korea, Japan and more). You will love what you find. And your children will enjoy reading all of these rich seasonal and themed favorites!



FIELD TRIP TO DE ANZA PLANETARIUM — On Thursday, February 4th we will be visiting the stars at the Planetarium! This is an optional activity offered to children who have already celebrated their 4th birthday. Look for details and permission slips being sent home this week.

SPECIAL CLASSES AT MONTECITO! — This year we are offering many fun classes, as follows: Little Hoopers (for preschoolers) and After School Sports Sampler (for K-5 age) on Mondays and Wednesdays starting in January; Mandarin language classes on Fridays starting in February; and music/movement classes on Thursdays starting in March. Every year, many children enjoy these classes. These are wonderful and varied developmental experiences for our children and it will be fun to see them blossom and learn with all the hands-on activities provided by the California Learning Connection in Mandarin, the musical activities by Ashleigh Gage, and the physical challenges and fun provided by 1-on-1 Basketball for our sports classes. As we did last year, these classes will be held once per week for the first 10-week session and then offered for another session based on your interest. Of course, more information will be sent home soon and will be available on our website. So sign your child up to learn a language, learn about music and an instrument, or to learn a new athletic skill and team play. Your children will have a blast!



PARENT ED NIGHT: KINDERGARTEN READINESS Our most popular Parent Education Night will be held on Wednesday, January 13th from 4:45 to 6:15 pm in the Blue Room. **We will have Extended Care available during this time in the Green Room for those of you who don't have child care while you attend the Parent Ed**

Night. The speaker will be Stephanie Agnew, a Parent Educator and Preschool Consultant who has been giving this talk for Montecito for many years. Please look for a flyer coming home and RSVP to the office. We hope to see you there!

ASSESSMENTS/CONFERENCES: On February 22nd and 23rd, we are holding our annual in-person parent/teacher conferences with all of our parents so that you can meet with your teachers one-on-one without your child there. Montecito will be closed these two (2) days for the conferences, which is immediately following our February Winter Break. The purpose of these conferences is to give you an update on your child's progress in his/her class. As with the fall telephone conferences, we encourage you to take this opportunity to ask any questions or express any concerns you might have. For the four-year-olds, prior to your conference the teachers will be conducting a developmental assessment of your child so that they can give you



feedback about his/her strengths and weaknesses and readiness for Kindergarten. In addition to the Parent Ed Night on Kindergarten Readiness, these assessments can be very helpful in answering your questions and helping you to make the decision about when to send your child to Kindergarten. Sign up information will be sent home so that you can schedule your conference time slot. We are looking forward to seeing you at your conference in February! ☺

FEBRUARY HOLIDAY CARE: We will offer Holiday Care during the February Break & parent/teacher conferences from February 15th through the 23rd. More information will be sent home. Thank you for your ongoing support which has helped us make this program a great success!



WINTER HSSV DONATION DRIVE: Montecito is proud to support the Humane Society of Silicon Valley! We are hosting a Winter Animal Donation Drive again this year, January through February. ☺ We have already received some wonderful donations from our families. Donations may be placed in the box on the Blue Room Steps, or checks made payable to HSSV may be left in the office. For more information, please go to our website. The animals will appreciate your generosity.

ENROLLMENT UPDATE: Our pre-enrollment process is going well this year for our current, waiting list and alumni families. Everyone who pre-enrolled has been confirmed in their first class choice for 2010-2011. If you didn't pre-enroll, you still have time to **enroll before New Family Enrollment begins on January 26th, 2010**. We still have openings for next fall, so enroll now!



Montecito's second Future Families Open House is coming up and will be held on Sunday, January 24th from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Our last open house in November was a big success and many new families found us! Please invite your friends! Remember, you get a \$100 tuition credit for every new family you refer to Montecito. ☺

Please visit our website at www.montecitoschool.com for updated calendar events and special programs!