



## MONTECITO CONNECTION

### November/December, 2009



*From Erin's Desk:* The Halloween Sings and the Harvest Festival were both great fun! ☺ At the Harvest Festival, we had a blast while we danced around to the music and the fun lighting on campus, ate lots of yummy and hearty food, painted the children's faces, made crafts, jumped for hours in the jump house, admired the fun balloon animals, and enjoyed spending time together. At the Sings, we enjoyed all of your children's wonderful costumes, not to mention some of the parents' costumes too! The children weren't so sure about their goofy Director, but most of them had a good laugh at my expense! I was pleased because we had very few tearful faces, as sometimes the costumes and seeing all those adult faces can be a little intimidating! Your children's songs, the parade after the Sing, and all the classroom parties were great. Fun was had by all, and I want to thank you for coming and celebrating with us!

During the month of November, we take the time to think about how thankful we are, about what sharing really means and why we believe it is important. Discuss your ideas with your child when you are relaxed and when sharing is not an issue. Oftentimes, children are quick to understand when someone takes the time to explain.

Thanksgiving is here, along with all of the extra pressures and stress of the holiday season. Even with this stress, this is a time of year when we are particularly grateful for our friends, our loved ones and all of life's blessings. There are many ways to express our gratitude, through gift-giving, get-togethers with family and friends, sending cards and Christmas letters, and by special acts of kindness. It is also a time to reach out to those more in need in our community and our nation, through charitable donations or volunteer work.



Montecito will be hosting our annual Toys for Tots program in December. We will also be holding a Winter Donation Drive to benefit animals at the Humane Society this winter. Last year these programs were both huge successes, and many needy children and animals were taken care of! Look for more information on both of these programs coming soon.

**PARENTS NIGHT OUT** Our next Parents Night Out is Saturday, December 5<sup>th</sup>. Please RSVP to the Office by December 3<sup>rd</sup>. Remember, fees collected go directly to our Playground Improvement Fund.

**PLAYGROUND IMPROVEMENT FUND** - We would like to extend a warm "THANK YOU" to all our families who have donated to our Playground Improvement Fund and remind everyone else to make your donation now, before the end of the calendar year. Together, we can continue to make Montecito the highest quality preschool experience for your children!



# Montecito's Nature Corner

## SHARING YOUR STORIES ABOUT NATURE

### **Hannah's Journey through Best Friends to her Forever Home**

By Ginny Ross Quackenbush, Montecito Teacher & ECE Consultant

Hannah, once known as Cricket, is a big, loveable bear of a dog. She is a Saint Bernard and she had a very rough start. Born in Michigan, the product of an irresponsible breeder, she was bought by a family who consigned her to their basement because, they said, she could not be house trained. After six months they surrendered her to a rescue group. It was then determined that her inability to be house trained was due to a serious bladder infection. When this medical problem was resolved she was taken in as a foster dog by a loving family. But, while waiting to find her forever home it appeared that she suffered from severe hip problems. The shelter in her hometown could not afford what they assumed would be very costly surgery on both her hips. They appealed to Best Friends Animal Sanctuary (in Kanab, Utah) to take up Hannah's case.

Best Friends Animal Society, located at Angel Canyon in the beautiful red-rock country of Utah, runs the nation's largest sanctuary for abused and abandoned animals, and is also home to a host of wildlife who find refuge there. It is situated on 3,000 acres that Best Friends purchased plus 30,000 more leased from the Bureau of Land Management. It was established in the early 90's by a group of like-minded people who cared deeply for animals and wanted to create not only a sanctuary for homeless, abandoned and abused animals, but also to start a movement in which the killing of millions of homeless pets in shelters every year is one day ended. At any given time there are approximately 2,000 animals at the sanctuary, cared for by 400 or so employees and 6,000 volunteers who visit every year.

On site, in addition to housing for all the animals, the facility includes a first class veterinarian clinic and employs animal behaviorists, trainers, vet techs, and managers for the many buildings that house the animals. Best Friends has made a difference in the lives of distressed animals not only in this country but all over the world. In addition to rescuing and rehabilitating over 20 of the Michael Vik dogs, they sent staff and volunteers into New Orleans to rescue pets during the horrible aftermath of Katrina, and have sent staff to Lebanon to rescue animals displaced by the bombing there. These are just a few examples of Best Friends dedication to serving animals and their belief that we can make "a better world through kindness to animals."

As it has been for many other animals, Best Friends was Hannah's last resort and they agreed to accept her at the sanctuary where she underwent extensive medical tests. It was determined that, although she had a mild problem in one hip, the other was completely healthy. At this point she was considered ready for adoption.

It was at this time that my sister, my daughter, and I arrived at Best Friends, enthusiastically ready to assume our volunteer chores with the dogs, cats and pot bellied pigs. We were staying in one of the lovely cottages that volunteers can rent while they are on site. On the first day, after settling into our new digs and attending the orientation meeting provided to all volunteers, we set off for Dog Town. Our tasks were to play with the dogs, using toys that they all had, petting them, taking them for walks, grooming them and generally giving them a lot of affection. Not a hard thing to do!

When we all met to have lunch at the magnificent vegetarian cafeteria operated by Best Friends staff, my daughter excitedly told us about this wonderful Saint Bernard (Best Friends had named her Cricket) that she had been playing with. She was delighted by the fact that Cricket loved to chase balls and seemed to be tireless in her pursuit of them. At the end of the day, we returned to the office in Dog Town and volunteered to take a dog for an overnight (volunteers are allowed to take dogs, cats, and even pot bellied pigs for overnight stays and there are several hotels in the town of Kanab who welcome the Best Friend Animals). However, since we were staying in that delightful cottage on site, we did not have far to travel. My daughter wanted to bring Cricket to our cottage. The staff checked Cricket out, gave us a bag of supplies, her water bowl, her blanket, her leash and some snacks.

Our cottage had a wonderful deck that overlooked the beautiful red mountains and the horse corral. That evening, Joyce spent a lot of time on the deck grooming Cricket. Cricket did her part to disrupt the

serenity of the moment by barking loudly at the horses in the corral when she thought they were getting too frisky. The next morning we returned Cricket to her quarters at Dog Town, as is the policy, and Joyce, who by now was quite smitten, put a hold on her, which meant that she was considering her for adoption.

Between performing our duties at Cat Village the next day, Joyce text messaged her husband several times telling him about Cricket and asking how he felt about adopting her. In mid-afternoon we arrived back at the cottage where Joyce found taped to the door a note from someone who had taken a message from her husband which said simply, "Make it happen." Joyce burst into tears of joy! We immediately returned to Dog Town headquarters where the paper work for the adoption was begun.

As it happened, a photographer for National Geographic was there preparing to film another dog for National Geographic's cable station which is doing a series on Best Friends called Dog Town. They had already done quite a bit of filming on Cricket because she had such a poignant story. She had become something of a Dog Town celebrity! Much excitement ensued. The photographer asked if he could come to the cottage that evening to interview Joyce and film her and Cricket. They wanted to bring the story of Cricket to a happy conclusion.

Two days later, we left Best Friends for home and sadly left Cricket behind until all the adoption arrangements could be completed. It was two weeks before Cricket, now being called Hannah, was flown to Portland, Oregon. There she was greeted at the airport by her new family (Joyce said she had a kiss for everybody) and taken to her forever home. And National Geographic was there to film the happy ending! As we understand it, Cricket (aka Hannah) will be featured on the 4th season of Dog Town (to begin in January) on the 8th show of the season. I hope you check it out!

A visit to Best Friends is a beautiful experience. It truly is a happy place. We met people from all over the country who came to walk, play and groom the dogs; who changed litter boxes, scrubbed down hard surfaces and brushed cat beds, toys and pillows in the cat village; who came to dig mud holes, put down fresh hay and feed the pigs; and who did it with such enthusiasm. As one visitor wrote in the guest journal at our cottage, "I am in one of the most beautiful places I've ever been, surrounded by these beautiful animals. Being here is like living in the world as it should be. The people here are friendly and have huge hearts. Thanks to everyone at Best Friends for creating a people sanctuary as well as an animal sanctuary."

Best Friend's outreach includes young children. They now accept children as young as six (6) years as volunteers, if they are accompanied by an adult. What a wonderful experience that would be for a child. If you consider going, you will be interested to know that Best Friends at Angel's Canyon is just 5 miles from Kanab, Utah, where many hotels and motels are pet friendly. Also, Angel's Canyon is surrounded by three of our most stunning National Parks - Zion, Bryce Canyon, and Grand Canyon. It would make for a wonderful family vacation! Spend a day or two realizing the joy and satisfaction of caring for animals and then explore some of the most astonishing landscapes in the world.



**PHONE CONFERENCES** – If you haven't already, you will receive a phone call from your child's teacher very soon. The purpose of this call is to give you an update on your child's progress in his/her class. We encourage you to take this opportunity to ask any questions or express any concerns you might have. Teachers will make a concerted effort to contact you; however, if they have left two messages and you have not responded, then it will be up to you to follow up and call back for your conference. The following are some tips to help you prepare for your phone conference:

- ✓ Be willing and ready to share information about your child and family.
- ✓ Listen with an open mind. Voice your concerns, and be open to suggestions.
- ✓ Be prepared. Think about or write down one or two questions to ask the teacher.
- ✓ Keep the conversation focused on what can be done for your child. If there are questions or concerns, parents and teachers need to work together as a team for your child's best interest.



**PRE-ENROLLMENT:** We will begin our pre-enrolling current, waiting list and alumni families for the 2010-2011 school year after Thanksgiving. **This year, we have a few new offerings** in response to your requests, including reduced application fees. Feel free to ask the office if you don't understand our new class offerings or our pre-enrollment process. It may seem early, but Open Enrollment begins on January 25<sup>th</sup>, and we want to give our current families 8 weeks to have priority enrollment with **no lines and no waiting!** We look forward to your continued enrollment and your feedback.



**HOLIDAY SINGS** - This year our Holiday Sings will be held on December 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. You will drop off your child at the regular time and return at either 10:00 a.m. or 2:00 p.m. for our special program. Children and staff will gather on the steps outside of the Blue Room and entertain you with a variety of holiday songs and finger plays. The Afternoon Enrichment classes will also perform a short play during the Sings! After the Sing, you will go into your child's classroom for a holiday party. During the parties, Santa Claus will be making a surprise visit to the school. You will find him on the porch outside of the Blue Room. If you want, you may bring your child there to sit on his lap and tell him what he/she wants for the holidays. Have your cameras ready! We are going to do one class at a time so that the line doesn't get too long. After the parties, you may either take your children home with you or drop them off for Afternoon Enrichment. **We will be offering all drop-in programs on these days including Early Morning Care, Lunch Bunch, Afternoon Enrichment, After School Care and Kids Klub.** We hope you enjoy the celebrations!

**SPECIAL CLASSES!** Beginning in January, we will be offering a series of specialty classes. Last year our offerings included language classes (Spanish and Mandarin) and Little Hoopers. This year, we would like to offer more special classes, and we welcome your ideas. If you have any opinions or ideas about what you would like to see offered, please let us know. These are wonderful and varied developmental experiences for our children at these important ages and stages of development. Classes will be held once per week for 8-week sessions from about 12:30 to 1:15 pm. More information and details about these programs will be sent home to you in December and January, so that you can sign up and learn more about the various educational backgrounds of the teachers who will be teaching them. Of course, we will continue our wonderful Sports Sampler, After School Hoops and Little Hoopers classes for the next 10 week session as well. Please sign up for any of these fantastic adventures!

**HOLIDAY DESTINATIONS & ACTIVITIES** - The holiday season offers us an excellent opportunity to spend quality time with our families. To learn about many fabulous destinations and family events this time of year, take a look at the December issue of Bay Area Parent magazine that we will send home soon.

**FAMILY READING CHALLENGE & BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS:** We're off to a good start with the reading challenge - 1886 books so far! Please continue to read to your children & turn in your reading lists. We hope that our emailed seasonal reading recommendations are helpful or at least inspirational ☺ Please also check our website for a reading list & book recommendations.



### Out of the Mouths of Babes

“Mom, when you were a little girl, did people think the world was flat?”  
A Kindergartner asked his mother on Columbus Day.

Please visit our website at [www.montecitopreschool.com](http://www.montecitopreschool.com) for updated calendar events and special programs!