

ACADEMY A.R.T.S. NEWS

The Academy of Movement and Music

605 Lake Street

Oak Park, Illinois

(708) 848-2329

DECEMBER 2008

VOL. 13, NO. 3

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

December 22-January 4: Winter Break

Academy Closed

January 5, 2009: Classes Resume

January 13: 2009-2010 A.R.T.S. Registration begins

Special Thanks to ...

All the parents who have read to the Upstairs children this fall. If you want to sign up, the sign-up sheet is in the classroom or send a note to Donna.

John Falkenholm, Madeleine's dad, for donating a case of stickers to the preschool.

Upstairs A.R.T.S.

December



In December, our "Fire" unit will continue by examining the fire made by stars as well as our own star and its planets.

Stories about stars will be acted out, such as Tanabata from Japan and the Christmas Star. We will be making stars from the Japanese and Swedish traditions.

We'll study the fire of the candle by celebrating the Jewish festival of Chanukah and the festival of Diwali from India. The children will also be "nimble" as they jump over the candlesticks.

Don't forget to check the A.R.T.S. calendar for the Smiley Faces on the third Wednesday and Thursday of the month. The Smiley Faces mean "Sharing Day." Please remember to have your child bring their sharing item in a labeled opaque bag.

~ Donna Pries

Thank you to . . .

Henry Madden for the book and CD *Philadelphia Chickens* and the *Magnetic Dinosaurs* to celebrate his 5th birthday. The children will certainly enjoy this book and CD during their music class. Who doesn't love to explore dinosaurs? This project is sure to become a favorite activity.



Tate Sherman for the Bee Puzzle to honor his 5th birthday. This cute puzzle will bring the children lots of fun.

Downstairs A.R.T.S.

Celebrations of Light



The weeks of school between our Thanksgiving break and our winter break will find the Downstairs A.R.T.S. exploring our "Celebration of Light" unit. We will direct our focus toward Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, and Christmas and the important role light, especially candlelight, plays in each. The theme of our books, music and art will change each week as we change our attention from one celebration to the next.

We will study Kwanzaa, the African-American harvest festival celebrated December 26 until the New Year begins. Our vocabulary will increase as we learn such Swahili words as *mkeka* (woven mat) and *kinara* (candleholder). The second week we will focus on Hanukkah and its customs and symbols. There will be opportunities to spin dreidels of various sizes and learn some new words that go along with the dreidel game. Our final week will find us discussing Christmas and its traditions before we break for our winter vacation.

Hopefully, each child will come away from this unit having learned something about another's traditions as well as having experienced the joy of sharing one of their own. Happy Holidays!

~ Niki Merrick

Special Thanks to ...

All of our Downstairs A.R.T.S. parents who have come and read to us. Thanks for being a part of our day!



Kristen Alfonsi, Tyler's mom, for donating a case of tissues to the Academy.

The PTO for providing coffee and some delicious treats for parents, children and staff during the conferences.

Phone List Changes

Add to phone list:

Kate Coakley

Downstairs A.R.T.S.

Monday/ Wednesday PM (yellow group)

273 Shenstone, Riverside, IL 60546

(312) 498-9864

parents ~ Mon & Sean

Phone number correction:

Talia Sigismondi

(708) 386-0299



Reminder ~ Emergency Closings

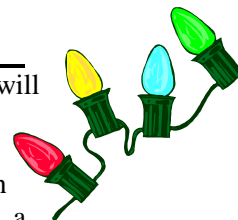
We are registered for school closings due to inclement weather at www.emergencyclosings.com. Enter "Academy of Movement and Music" to check our status. A.R.T.S. Preschool families will be contacted via a "Phone Calling Tree" as well.

HoliDAZED?!?!?

The month of December will undoubtedly hold a flurry of holiday celebrations in many of your homes. As parents, you may be interested in knowing to what extent we, as a preschool, join in the holiday frenzy.

The A.R.T.S. staff works very purposefully to avoid becoming "holidazed". In our classrooms, we want to educate the children, not entertain them. We try to focus on a few simple things found in the various holiday celebrations that are meaningful to our preschoolers. We work to help the children make sense of all the hustle and bustle rather than add more stress and busy-ness to the season. School is often the one constant for our preschoolers during the coming weeks. Our primary goal is to teach the children to be respectful of each family's special celebrations, rather than to trivialize or send mixed messages about what these holidays are all about.

As adults, we need to be mindful of the fact that the most meaningful parts of the season (the things the children can see, hear, touch, smell, explore) can get lost. December brings snow and evergreens, darkness and light, hats, mittens and boots. For children, December brings the simple wonder in the changes of the seasons – something in and of itself to celebrate!



Valentine Sock Hop Raffle



There is still time to donate items for the Raffle, which will be held during the Valentine Sock Hop on Saturday, February 7. Examples of prizes we are looking for:

- Children's items (basket of toys, books)
- Gift certificates for merchandise
- Gift certificates for services (salon, spa, home improvements, etc.)
- Tickets to movies, theater or sporting events
- Trips or hotel getaways
- Restaurant dinners
- Family admission to museums or other attractions
- Airline miles

If you or someone you know would like to provide a raffle prize, please contact PTO Raffle Committee chairpersons: Marisa Green at [708-488-8035](tel:708-488-8035)/marisagreen@sbcglobal.net or Paula Maggio at [708-358-0037](tel:708-358-0037)/maggio@mc.net. The deadline for donations to be secured and listed on the raffle package information sheet is Friday, December 12th, but donations will be accepted up until the raffle date. Thanks for your support!

Feeling Lucky?

The Academy A.R.T.S. PTO will be holding a raffle at the annual Valentine Sock Hop in February. Funds raised will go directly to the Downstairs and Upstairs A.R.T.S. program plus to help us put a sidewalk around the East End of the building. Tickets will go on sale in January.

The Top-Rated Toys For The 2008 Holiday Season

Play is the "work" of early childhood; it is essential for a child's ability to learn and grow. Through play, children figure out how things work, develop vocabulary, pick up new ideas, build and gain control over both large and small muscle groups, use their imaginations, solve problems, and learn how to cooperate with others.

In their play children need good toys, just as we need good tools to do our work well. Good toys are not necessarily expensive, and children do not need very many. In fact, many favorite activities involve what seem not to be toys at all – Tupperware, cardboard boxes, kitchen utensils, water, to name a few. Some good toys, such as blocks (wooden ones and Legos/Duplos) and books are fairly expensive – but these usually appeal to a child for many years and will last for generations. Other toys are so perfect for



children that they are still good investments, even if they get used up or only appeal to a child for a brief period. Art materials, stacking toys, and simple puzzles are some examples.

Since the toys you choose affect what your child learns and how he or she feels about him/herself and about others, it is important to select different types of toys so that your child can become a well-rounded person. The basic categories which should be represented in any family's toy collection are:

HANDS ON TOYS (puzzles, shape and size sorters, pegboards) – build hand-eye coordination, encourage ideas about how things work, foster cooperation and problem solving.

BOOKS AND RECORDINGS – a source of shared experiences for children and adults; they foster appreciation of literature and music and develop language skills.

ART MATERIALS – foster creativity and build skills that lead to reading, writing, and simply seeing the beauty in life.

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS (blocks, building sets) – develop science and number concepts, contribute to muscle strength and coordination.

EXPERIMENTAL MATERIALS (sand, water, clay, musical instruments) – are ideal because children have so much control over them; they engage the tactile and auditory channels for learning.

ACTIVE PLAY EQUIPMENT – builds strong muscles and instills confidence to meet physical challenges.

PRETEND PLAY OBJECTS (dolls, stuffed animals, dramatic figures, dress-ups) – provide a chance to try new behaviors and use imaginations and foster an understanding of the world and how we can work together.

With these categories in mind, the A.R.T.S. staff has compiled the following list of toys that we, as early childhood educators and parents, consider to be “winners” in any holiday season:

- Big cardboard blocks
- Large chalkboard
- Baby doll and buggy
- Play kitchen
- Any Fisher Price play food sets
- Tea set and/or dishes
- Duplo or Lego sets
- Playmobil or Playmobil 123 toys
- Play workbench and/or tools
- Big dump trucks, fire trucks, etc.
- Brio train sets
- Balls
- Hats, big square scarves, vests, sashes, etc. for dress-up
- Wooden and Lauri puzzles
- Lap harp
- Books and more books!

The Magic Tree bookstore offers hours of enjoyment as well as great assistance in exploring

through its numerous shelves of books. Some of our favorites include What's in Fox's Sack? Chicka Boom Boom, Go Away, Big Green Monster, This Is Our House, all the Miss Spider books, and One Duck Stuck.

Dear Academy Families . . .

Years ago, some of our families began a tradition of holiday contributions to the Academy A.R.T.S. PTO. Many of us who teach here have been doing this for so many years that our cupboards are full of teacher mugs and our homes are overflowing with holiday decorations. We love having original drawings and cards made by our students, and we really enjoy the family photos that you send with holiday cards. However it is the holiday contributions that make possible improvements in the classroom that all of us enjoy and use for many years to come. Past generosity from the A.R.T.S. PTO, along with contributions from two other Academy organizations, **MOMENTA** and Tidmarsh Arts Foundation, have made the Academy accessible for persons with disabilities; gifts have allowed us to install a beautiful sprung dance floor upstairs, a new stage curtain (with a motor!), wonderful cabinets for the preschool program, new mats, CPR/First Aid training for teachers, and many, many things we use daily year after year. Thank you!

This year the Preschool PTO is hoping to help us put a sidewalk around the East End of the building. Your gift to this organization is a gift to all the teachers and students here.

Thank you all so much for being a part of the Academy family!

The Academy A.R.T.S. Faculty and Staff

