

Hope Montessori ~ Creve Coeur

December 2011 News

December Events:

December	13	Hanukkah Celebration - 10:00 a.m.
December	15	Christmas Assembly - 10:00 a.m.
December	26	Christmas Day Observed – School Closed
December	23 – 30	Winter Holiday – No Montessori Classes - Child Care Provided Sign-Up Sheet at the end of the Email or Last Page of the Newsletter
January	2	New Year’s Day Observed - School Closed
January	3	Classes Resume
January	16	Martin Luther King Day Observed – School Open
February	14	Valentine’s Day Classroom Celebrations
February	17	Staff Training Day – School Closed

Dear Parents,

One of the most wonderful things about our Hope families is their generosity. Parents give on every level to Hope and their children. You give time, resources, gifts, and more. On behalf of all the teachers and staff, I simply want to say thank you. Not only do we truly appreciate YOU, but you are also modeling for your child. And, I believe, that is how the world becomes a better place. Last year our daughter, Kelsey, gave me a book titled “29 Gifts in 29 Days” by Cami Walker. The story is true and the essence of the story is that a very, very sick woman makes a decision to focusing on giving 29 gifts in 29 days rather than her own illness. Every day she works on being present and aware. Sometimes the gifts are a compliment, sometimes something more tangible. Often we imagine that giving gifts will make the other person happy, and hopefully, this is true. But the reverse is also true. It is our awareness and simple acts of kindness that also restore our human spirit. So, once again, I want to extend a big, warm thank you to each of you.

Each holiday Hope reaches out to those less fortunate. In the past, we have sent a donation to the foundation for Pennies for Peace, donated cases of shoes to the Shoe Man, donated hundreds of books to children in the St. Louis Public Schools, and most recently donated a remarkable amount of food to the Circle of Concern. For our Christmas project this year, we would like to sponsor a coat, mitten, and hat drive. The donations would go to **The Little Bit Foundation**. It is a unique organization that serves the poor children of St. Louis. They serve approximately 3,000 students in twelve St. Louis City Schools. Their mission is to build strong partnerships with the schools in order to provide the essential support to disadvantaged children, which will help break down the barriers that inhibit personal growth to create a more focused learning environment. It is hard for any of us to imagine a child not having a coat or gloves to wear to school. What better way for our Hope children to learn that charity begins in your own backyard. If you would like to donate a new coat (children sizes 4 through 16/18 or

adult small), mittens, or hat, we will be collecting items from December 5-21. Again, thank you for your generosity.

Lastly, I know some parents are not sure where to begin as they think about gifts for their children. My sage advice is “less is truly more” and enjoy gifts that by their simplicity encourage imagination and creativity. Below is a list of toy companies and their web sites. We have purchased many things from these companies over the years, and we have been very satisfied. I hope you find the list helpful.

Websites for Toys, Books & Art Supplies:

Rhythm Instruments & Other Instruments

Suzuki: www.suzukimusic.com

Games & Toys & Puzzles

Mind Ware: www.mindwareonline.com

Bradburn School Supply: www.schoolspeciality.com

Books

The Book Vine: www.bookvine.com

Chinaberry Books: www.Chinaberry.com

Amazon: www.amazon.com

Art Supplies

Discount School Supply: www.DiscountSchoolSupply.com

Dress Up Clothing, Dollhouses, Barns & Wooden Toys

Magic Cabin: www.magiccabin.com

Hearthsong: www.hearthsong.com

TAG: Think & Grow: www.tagtoys.com

Wooden Blocks, Cars, Trucks and Climbing Structures

Community Playthings: www.communityplaythings.com

Local Toy Stores:

Imagination Toys: www.imagination-toys.com

Circle of Knowledge: www.circleofknowledge.com

Lagoonamagoo Toys: 5555 St. Louis Mills Blvd. #566, (314) 227-5335

Over the years, I have heard many parents say how disappointed their child was with toys purchased from a television ad. When children see toys on TV, they seem so appealing. However, what looks so glamorous on TV doesn't always turn out to be that way in real life. As Picasso said, “Less is More”.

I hope these suggestions are helpful to you. I hope you and your family have a joyful holiday season.

**Happy Holidays,
Susie**

Holiday Celebrations

Our Hanukkah celebration is scheduled for December 13th at 10:00 a.m. and our Christmas Assembly is on December 15th at 10:00 a.m. These celebrations are done primarily by and for the children in our Hope community. Unfortunately, we cannot provide seating for our entire school, but we have a few seats available if you would like to join us. Each program lasts approximately 30 - 45 minutes. During December, we welcome volunteers to make potato lakes and/or help decorate Christmas cookies in your child's classroom. We have also had parents volunteer to make a special craft with their child's class. If you are interested, please speak with your child's teacher.

With Thanks from "The Circle of Concern"

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your donation of seven turkeys and other food items on November 17, 2011 to Circle of Concern's pantry! Gifts from people like you keep our shelves full so that we are able to help needy families and individuals when they come to our door.

Since 1967, the Circle has fed hungry children, parents and seniors; helped families stay warm and get the medicine they needed; provided scholarships and school supplies to students; and, in many other ways, assisted the working poor as they struggle to survive.

We are the first place that needs west county families go to for help. We know that we can continue to face new challenges and reach out to our neighbors because of the love and support we receive from people like you, the 'links' in the Circle of Concern.

*With Best Wishes,
Glen, Koenen,
Executive Director, Circle of Concern*

Library Update

The Library at Hope contains over 4000 titles of amazing children's literature. There is never a shortage of works of fiction to interest our children, as well as comprehensive science facts, poetry, books on mammals, geography, dinosaurs, yoga and international holidays (just to name a few)!

Hands down, the most popular book this month was *Rumpelstiltskin* (Author: Zilensky); please ask your child about it! Other favorites were *The Great Gracie Chase* (Rylant), *Cowboy Small* (Lenski), *Oh No* (Scarffe), *Potato Joe* (Baker), *Big Hungry Bear* (Wood), *Frog & Toad* (Lobel) and *The Yawn That Wouldn't Stop* (Gormley).

During Open Library, the children are learning to sit at the library table to read, lie on their tummies upon a carpet square or sit in the rocking chair and relax with a good book! They quiet themselves and whisper their own version of the story while enjoying the peacefulness of the library. They are learning how to identify letters, remember the story read to them in the classroom, and use their imaginations to make it their own.

Knowing how to turn a page from the corner is important so the book does not rip in the middle. Even with great care, some of these favorite books become worn and the children earnestly worry when they find a torn page and come up to me, "Gayle this book needs a repair!"

I love working with your children and hope you enjoy a wonderful holiday season with loved ones. Perhaps a visit to the county library would be a fun outing as a family, and finding some of the titles we have read in classroom would be a thrill for them.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with your children.

Gayle Dorshow
Children's Librarian

HONEYWELL ALERT SYSTEM

With the colder temperatures recently, our thoughts turn to winter and the weather conditions that accompany the season. We utilize the Honeywell Alert System to keep our staff and Hope families informed of any emergency at Hope, but primarily to alert you about any changes in our opening or closing schedule due to inclement weather. We would encourage everyone to verify their profile emergency information in the system. On Monday, December 12th, we will run a test alert. If you have any questions regarding the alert system or do not receive the test message on December 12, please see Patti or Terri in the office.

Tax ID Number

As parents begin working on taxes, they frequently request our tax ID number. Our Tax ID Number is: **23-7240338**. Also, a yearly statement for each family will be available by mid-January. Please stop by the office to pick up your copy.

Thank you,
Patti Salley

PS.....Many thanks to all the families who write their child's name in the memo section on their monthly tuition check. It helps tremendously with the bookkeeping!

Book Review - by Theresa Callahan, Administrative Director

Guess Who's Coming to Santa's for Dinner, by Tomie dePaola

Tomi DePaola is one of my favorite children's authors. I think I enjoy the stories so much because they always relate to a little something from his childhood. We both share an Irish/Italian background and we both have big, noisy families with lots of relatives. He has written/illustrated over 250 books. A few of his classic books include: *Strega Nona; Now One Foot, Now the Other; Big Anthony: His Story; and The Art Lesson.*

The story *Guess Who's coming to Santa's for Dinner* is a favorite of the children, but thoroughly enjoyed by the teachers as well. I think most of us can relate to having company over the holidays. And possibly even the "fun" that goes along with it when your visitors arrive.

No one ever thinks about Santa's extended family, but Santa in this story has an Aunt Astrid, Grumpy Cousin Ulla, and Brother Boris. One year right before Santa leaves to deliver the presents, he asks Mrs. C to invite everyone for Christmas dinner at the North Pole. Her response ... "everyone?" Santa arrives back home just in time to greet all the relatives, including kids who complain about what Santa forgot to bring them, and his dear friend Lars, who brings his pet polar bear named Oscar. As it turns out, Santa's holiday is like many people's holiday...utter chaos! There are arguments about everything from the television set to new ways of making mashed potatoes (which fly faster than Santa's sleigh). Cousin James decides he is going to make his famous "Fiery Plum Pudding" which lives up to its name, almost setting the house on fire. Of course, by the next morning everyone is happy again (except for Cousin Ella who steals the Christmas wreath). All is forgiven and forgotten. What an important message for children to learn! Unfortunately, Santa and Mrs. C. have lots of cleaning to do.

So as this delightful story turns out, Santa's Holiday is like many of our holidays - filled with love, extended family, and many happy memories!

Here is a list of some of our other favorite holiday books:

The Polar Express, by Chris Van Allsburg

Who's That knocking on Christmas Eve and *The Night Before Christmas*, by Jan Brett

The Legend of the Poinsettia, by Tomie dePaola

Hanukkah, by Roni Schotter

Once Candle, by Eve Bunting

My First Chanukah, by Tomie dePaola

Thank you to...

To our Hope staff and families who supported our Thanksgiving food drive for the Circle of Concern.

To everyone who was able to join us for "Thanks a Latte". What a wonderful way to start our day!

**Happy Holidays,
Susie & Theresa**

Winter Break Sign Up

During Winter Break *nearly all* of our year-round staff will be taking time off to spend time with their families. We remain open and staffed with Summer Camp Staff to provide care for working families.

If your child will be attending the week between Christmas and New Year, please fill out the Sign Up form.

Name/Room: _____

_____ My child will be home for winter break.

_____ My child will be attending Hope during Winter Break on the following days:

Monday, December 26, Hope Closed for Christmas Holiday

_____ Tuesday, December 27

_____ Wednesday, December 28

_____ Thursday, December 29

_____ Friday, December 30

Monday, January 2, Hope Closed for New Year's Day Holiday

Classes resume on Tuesday, January 3, 2012.

Please return this form before December 16, 2011.