



From the Garden

AHWS

Alan Howard Waldorf School

Supplement to
Allen Howard Waldorf School
V O I C E

Welcome to the first issue of the AHWS newsletter celebrating the special time of early childhood. In this issue, we hear from a past Kindergarten teacher on the value of establishing dependable rhythms in the home, and get to take a peek into the path that brought one of our teachers to AHWS. Also included, are things that just might prove to be useful, like Breakfast made the night before, and a seasonal craft that many of us know and love (and might like to replicate at home for gifts for loved ones).

On a personal note, I am eager to share the unique vision that Waldorf education brings forth for the young child. This year marks my families seventh year with a child enrolled in an ECE program. I have not tired of walking into the part of the school that smells of cinnamon and bread baking. Through my children, I get to take refuge in the gentler rhythms of seasonal songs learned at school, and the deeply imaginative play that springs from a rich day spent around stories and wonderful toys. Mostly though, I love sending my child to school knowing that he has been seen for who he is and well loved.

There is a team behind every initiative here at AHWS, and this is no exception. Please forward any comments or thoughts on this newsletter to Katherine Fulford.

Warmly,

Julia Wyncoll,
Parent volunteer



Book Review:

by Jennifer Deathe
Childhood's Garden:
Shaping Everyday Life around the needs of Young
Children by Helle Heckman.

This is a book and companion DVD that I really wish someone had given me 5 years ago when my children were wee, but still, it has made a huge impact on me even now. It is full of practical advice and wonderful wisdom regarding the raising of children, the purpose of childhood, and the roles of parents and caregivers. Childhood's Garden is a very simple book and DVD. It chronicles one day in the life of a kindergarten in Copenhagen. It is a mixed age Waldorf kindergarten with little ones as young as a year. The kindergarten is mostly outdoors and begins sharp at 8:30 a.m. and ends at 2:30 p.m.. Her hours stem from the belief that a child is awake 12 hours; so she will take care of them for 6 and the family the other 6. My favourite line is in her introduction, "It takes guts for parents this day and age to go against the stream and follow their intuition that childhood takes time and life itself is educational for the child." My copy has been left in the community room for others to enjoy.

Faculty Interview:

On a blustery Fall day, Bozena Ciepielewski, lead teacher of Sungarden Kindergarten, sat down to share some of her personal history with parent Julia Wyncoll. Bozena is also the Faculty Chair of Early Childhood Education (ECE) at AHWS, and has a child in Grade 4.

J: Bozena, how did you make your way from Poland to Canada?

B: I was 25 when I left Poland, during communism in 1989. My husband, Bogdan, and I went to Italy for 2 years. We were refugees there with many other Polish people. We waited there for a visa to Canada. My parents had the officials coming by many times asking where we had gone. Finally, our visa came and we went to London, Ontario because we knew some people there.

J: What had you been doing in Poland before you left?

B: I had been working as a kindergarten teacher in a state orphanage for 4 years prior to my leaving. It was a difficult time and a difficult place to be. It was heartbreaking. Even after I was in Canada, I was grieving the loss of those children. Both my husband and I were working there and we had to leave the children without telling them, and it was like leaving your foster children without telling them where you were going.

J: And how was your transition to Canada?

B: When we came to Canada, we went to school for 6 months to learn English as a Second Language. When that program expired we still had not enough language nor a way to support ourselves, so we went into another program. I was given a placement working in a health food restaurant at the farmer's market in London. One day I began talking to two parents from the London Waldorf School. When I found out that there was an opening for a kindergarten assistant, these parents got me an interview. I sat before the whole faculty of the London school for my interview. I was so nervous I think my chair was jumping. I got the job and became the assistant to a wonderful teacher, Connie White.

J: How was it to be in the London Waldorf School?

B: Bogdan and I became like adopted children to the faculty. The whole community brought us in for the holiday celebrations and took us in. In a new country without family, we felt we now had someone. I worked there for 4 years and then moved to their satellite location, on a farm called "Jeremiah's Field". In the meantime my husband, who I am very proud of, earned his a MBA at the University of Western Ontario. I was doing night school at the same time, getting ECE credits from Fanshaw College. It felt very good to have my certification. Then, my husband got a job in Toronto.

J: So, you moved to Toronto and came to AHWS?

B: No, I took the year to get my teacher training at the Rudolf Steiner Centre. I had been continually taking every workshop I could, and traveling to Maine to study at the Rudolf Steiner Institute there. After the training, the Toronto Waldorf School needed an afternoon teacher, so I stepped into that role. In the hallways of TWS, I met Maureen Rose Everatt. She asked if I would be interested in applying for a position in the kindergarten at AHWS. Again, I sat before the faculty, but this time I was more confident of myself in the interview. I was hired as a lead teacher to the kindergarten.

J: Sometime in there you had your daughter Emily.....

B; Yes, it happened the same year, a lovely surprise. Eventually, after Emily was older, I took a position running the then satellite Parent and Child program at St. Alban's Boys and Girls' Club. I have been working at AHWS ever since and have been a lead teacher since 2004.

J: It is an amazing journey from Poland to Canada to Waldorf teaching. Looking back, what in your life prepared you for your attraction to Waldorf education?

B: I had a very wholesome childhood. It was a simple life, in a little town in the mountains. I also spent a lot of time at my Grandparents farm, feeding ducks, chicken, geese, harvesting potatoes, wheat, at night collecting clover to have fresh for the morning. I baked bread with my Grandma and churned butter. When I met the Waldorf people at the market in London, the connection felt natural.

J: What does it mean to you to be a kindergarten teacher?

I rejoice in the children's company. 20 years have passed since I have been working with children. Children remember their kindergarten teacher, and so I feel it is really fulfilling and a gift to be with them. I hope to make a positive impression on a child's life. It is a big responsibility. I feel energized by this work. The children bring the joy and I feel nourished by it.

J: Is it ever hard, tiring, drudgery?

B: There are some obstacles, yes, but the challenges are necessary for my growth. I have had to adapt to life here and it is different (than Poland), but then I go into the work as a teacher and I just try to be worthy of imitation. That is really my checking point.

J: You seem genuinely happy to be where you are in your life. Is that how you feel?

B: Working with children is the best job ever. I believe the children see the truth of us and I strive to be worthy of that. I am not perfect, but I try and strive. I am very happy where I am. This community at AHWS is my home. Five years ago, I would not have believed how strongly I would feel connected here. And now, I am also feeling a new confidence that I can express myself and begin to give back from that place within myself.

As our interview closed, Bozena noticed a publication on the table from the Toronto Waldorf School. Stealing off to the other room in the building, she took 20 minutes to read an interesting article that had caught her eye. I get the sense that Bozena will always be a student hungry for knowledge, and always a teacher eager to give.

In the Kitchen:

We all know that a healthy Breakfast provides great fuel and a good start to the day. It can also be a really busy time in family life: getting up, getting dressed, eating and then dressing for outdoors. So here are two ways to make the food portion of the morning something you can feel good about without stress. The first is a very nourishing whole grains hot cereal, and the next a healthier take on the traditional porridge. Both are begun the night before so the morning is less hectic. Bon Appetit!

Overnight Cereal

or “as you sleep breakfast cereal” adapted from “Rebar Modern Food Cookbook.”

Mix together: 2 C of your favourite whole grains (example: 1 C oat groats with 1 C barley groats and 1 C wheat berries)
1 C of your favourite nuts or seeds (sunflower, pumpkin, almonds)

For a family of 4, take out 1 C of the mix and put into a small casserole dish with a lid. Mix in 4 C of water. Cover and before going to bed, put in a 180 degree oven. In the morning, you will wake to a nourishing and delicious breakfast. You may need to skim off some of the water (drink it for the minerals!), add a pinch of salt and maple syrup and some milk or milk substitute if you like. It is great base for loading on more good things like walnuts, ground flax or whole flax seeds, cut up fruit, etc.

Healthier Oatmeal

adapted from handouts from Susan Johnson at Gateways Conference 2005

Put 1 C of old fashioned rolled oats in a pan (not quick oats).

Add 3 C water and 2 Tablespoons of whey (the liquid that separates from your good quality plain yogurt and is sitting conveniently on top for you to use) or if allergic to dairy, 1 T fresh squeezed lemon juice.

Cover the pan and let soak through the night.

In the morning, add 1 tsp salt. Bring to a boil, then simmer for 3-5 minutes until ready.

1 to 2 Tablespoons of ground flax is a great addition at this point, and of course, add in any of your other oatmeal fix-ins. Adding in some fat is recommended to help absorb the minerals and vitamins.

The Advent Spiral

Deep mid-winter drawing near,
Darkness in our Garden here-
One small flame yet bravely burns
To show a path which ever turns.

Earth please bear us as we go,
Seeking Light to send a glow;
Branches green and moss and fern,
Mark a path to trace each turn.
Brother animals, teach us too
To serve with patience as you do.

We walk with candle toward the Light
While Earth awaits with hope so bright;
In the Light which finds new birth
Love may spread over all the Earth.

