

“The wind rustles through the wood,
Through rushes and through reeds.
Who is that rider of radiant light,
On his shining white, silvery steed?
In garments of gold he rides along,
His face like the sun so bright.
Oh Michael, bring us your starry sword,
Let the darkness of Earth turn to light.”

Dear Parents,

The children have been playing and growing in the warm autumn air. The leaves have fallen and outdoors the children rake, bake, run, build, and play horses. In the forest, we have not yet had a need for a fire, as it has been so warm, but, the children continue to enjoy building one to eat apples by, as they take breaks from fort building, playing house, moving wood, and many other games. We explored two new places in the forest this month. One spot is at the top of a giant glacial erratic, a tall island in the midst of the forest. There, the children played house in a cluster of boulders, and cooked their meals using pots and pans left by former campers. The second we visited yesterday. The children have been asking what is “around the bend” of the railroad tracks, so, we went to see. We found the beaver pond, with mountains in the distance. The wind was so strong yesterday, and we watched as it whooshed across the surface of the otherwise calm pond, turning the black shining water silver here and there, as if someone was blowing ripples across a bowl of soup, from one spot to the next. We settled to play along the shore of the pond. The children began building a new fort, playing Christmas by decorating young white pines with ferns and leaves, and playing as woodpeckers, pecking away at decaying red pine stumps.

Indoors, the children continue to build houses and play family, as people, puppies, and cats. They build shops, and make stories at the nature table. The children are working on the finishing stitches of their leaf baby craft. What able sewers we have in our class! For our next craft we will make our lanterns for the lantern walk.

This month, we began with our Michaelmas Circle. We said autumnal rhymes, then moved through the story of Michael, who brings the people courage as the days shorten and (in theory) become cold. The dragon is overcome, and the people go forth into the “night” of wintertime with courage and strength. The children were very engrossed in this Circle, and played games during play that related to protecting people from a dragon. Our Circle we are doing now is a combination of autumn and pumpkin songs and rhymes.

The children found humor in the story The Giant Carrot, as Grandfather, then Grandmother, then Grandson and donkey, then duck, all worked to pull the giant carrot from its bed. Finally, Sister

Spider lends her silvery thread, and it is with the help of spider that the carrot is finally released from the earth!

The children heard Little Boy Knight, a tale about a boy who longed to be a knight. One day, he rode off on his pony, and was appointed by the King to find the dragon's cave, to help the princess, who was taken by the dragon. Little Boy Knight calls for help to Michael, the great archangel who helps people do brave and strong things. Michael sends the boy a sword of light, which the dragon surrenders to, seeing the might and courage the boy carries with it. The dragon promises to protect people from harm in the Kingdom, and the princess returns home.

In Sylvie and the Pumpkin, Sylvie is finally old enough to harvest her pumpkin from the pumpkin patch, on the top of a steep hill at their farm, on her own. She chooses the one that is big and plump and round, but, it is too big to carry. She rolls it along, but, it gets away from her on the hill, and she has no choice but to watch it "bumpity-bump" down the hill. Along its descent, the pumpkin knocks over goat, then pig, then rooster, then Grandfather, who is out for a walk. The pumpkin then rounded a bed, and Sylvie wondered if it was broken, but, she knew she had to check in with all of the creatures before she checked on her pumpkin. She helped each creature up, one by one, gave them some love, and apologized for the pumpkin having knocked them down. Then, she finally found her pumpkin at rest in a soft pile of leaves, unblemished! I felt the children could use the reminder embedded in this story to stop and check in with a friend if an action has caused someone to fall, even if it is just a little bump!

The Green Button is about an old man who found a green button in his yard as he raked leaves. The man replaced a missing button on his jacket with it, and was happy, but, then, a small man dressed all in green came in the night demanding, "Give me back my button!" The old man asked the man in green to come back another time. When he does, the demand is a little less harsh, but, the man dressed in green tries to pass off a bag of poisonous mushrooms in exchange for his button. The old man explains he could not give the button back on those terms. The third time the man dressed in green came by, he described how he was missing his button, and the wind was blowing into his jacket. He said he would appreciate his button back, please. The old man smiled, and, after being asked so politely, cut the green button from his jacket and gave it back to the man dressed in green. This story carries the lesson of how to ask kindly when we hope for something.

Before I wrap this letter up, I would like to describe this month how we help the children to say "no." It is a skill that takes time and practice to learn for some, and comes easily to others. Even when some children are able to say "no" at certain times, it often becomes harder to express discomfort or distaste with what is happening around them in social situations. This is such an important skill for the children to learn, for, when they can speak up and say "no," and describe to a friend why they feel uncomfortable, the children will grow to have the power to stay safe, feel heard, and feel cared for and understood by those around them.

There is learning to say "no" when necessary, and, being able, as a friend, to hear "no," then stop. This is an equally important and difficult skill which we also help the children to develop, so they can grow into respectful, good listeners, who help those around them feel safe and understood.

In our school, we help the children learn to say no in many ways. If we see that a child's face has a look of discomfort or unhappiness on it, we visit the children. We ask, "are you ok?" to the child who looks uncomfortable. If the answer is "no," then, we ask, "why?" We make sure that the peer who was causing the discomfort hears the reason. Then, we ask that child, "did you see the look on your friend's face?" Sometimes the answer is yes, sometimes, no, but, we describe how we could tell the friend was unhappy by the way her face looked. We then let the unhappy child know that it is important to tell a friend when he or she is uncomfortable with something, and, if the friend does not stop when "no" is brought up, to come find a teacher for help.

In this scenario, I have described how we help a child who needs to say "no," but, does not, as well as how we help the children to begin to notice how different facial expressions can mean "no," just as much as a verbal statement. Sometimes, a child is saying, "Stop, stop, stop!" but no action is taken by friends to stop. Here, we visit the children and ask, do you hear your friend saying "stop?" Often, the answer is yes, but, the friend did not know what to stop doing. We describe that even if a child is unsure of what action to stop, it is best to pause and ask the friend what to stop doing. We also describe to the friend wishing for something to stop that it is helpful to describe what they want. For example, "Stop pulling on the rope!" That way, the children around the child have a better idea of what is needed.

These lessons come up many times a day for us to visit, and the children are often so very understanding as we work through helping them to communicate better with one another, for the benefit of everyone. When each child is happy, the group as a whole is happier. This, of course, does not end in childhood, for, when more people have their needs heard and met, the greater community can exist in greater harmony. If you ever have questions about how we help the children develop these kinds of skills at school, please let me know!

Here are some important upcoming events to mark on your calendars!

- **November 6, 6:00 pm--- Helping Our Children In a Fast-Paced World**

Visiting speaker Connie Helms will share a workshop with us- please come,

and invite

your friends from the wider community- all are welcome. Free babysitting.

- **November 15, 4:45 pm--- Lantern Walk**

Meet in the Aldi parking lot- I will bring your child's lantern. We will walk as

a group

up to Will Rogers to bring light to the residents with our lanterns, songs,

bread,

and company.

Thank you for all you do to support our class and school!

Be well,

Miss Cassie