

November 2009

# TCS Times

*The Children's School/ 208-343-6840  
Nicole Shaddock—editor*

## From The Director

By Cindy Finch

*My article this month is based on the Annual Report that I gave at our Board of Director's Annual Meeting on October 12, 2009 at The Discovery Center. About 35 board members, school faculty, and current parents were in attendance.*

I am happy to be able to talk with you about The Children's School during my 9<sup>th</sup> year as director. Thank you, first of all, for being here—faculty, staff, parents, and board members. Your presence shows a deep interest in and commitment to the school.

I want to start my remarks this year with a quote from 1980, the year The Children's School was founded. In a letter written to introduce the idea of the school, Mary Clagett Smith said:

"I want to build an education program which is founded on those human values which will best shape people who can thrive in our democratic society on a shrinking planet. I want to develop goals and aims for children to fit those values; to attract teachers dedicated to meeting children's needs, to keep the program vital and their growth moving; to carefully structure an educational environment which reflects our values and current research about how children best learn; and, ultimately, to design a school building and grounds which say to children and parents that children deserve an optimal environment for the best growth and learning."

For me these words, a reflection of a hope and a dream from long ago, paint an intriguingly accurate picture of where we are today. They continue to speak to me about where I see us headed tomorrow as a school community. And with that, I want to welcome you to The Children's School's 30<sup>th</sup> year!

At this point in the school's life I want to shape my comments around these topics: enrollment, teachers, curriculum, special topics, tuition assistance, accreditation, challenges, and, of course, I want to say thanks, as we look to the future.

*Enrollment:* Last year we had 117 children enrolled, a number that actually was 2.5% over enrolled. At the same point this year, we have 108 children in

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*We welcome Anne C. to The Children's School. She is working on two projects with us.*

*1) Anne is the photographer for Parents for TCS. Soon you will be provided opportunities to see and to purchase photos of your children engaged in typical TCS activities. Those of us who have gotten a glimpse into what she has done already are impressed by the way she has been able to photograph busy children in beautiful and meaningful ways. Look for more information from P-TCS soon about this project.*

*2) Anne is also working with teachers to find new ways to make learning visible. This is primarily a professional development experience for teachers, but holds promise of influencing how we communicate about the school and children's experiences in our classrooms. We look forward to sharing our work with you as the year goes on.*

the school, which is about 8.5% under enrolled. We continue to take phone calls and enroll children, as we are able, with the hope that the inquiries fit with the openings that we have. Ultimately, we may not meet our ideal enrollment goal this year, but as our school treasurer mentioned in his report, we are starting this fiscal year in a strong financial position from a successful year. However, our work toward continuing enrollment will never overshadow our primary goal—of creating great educational experiences that benefit the children and families that are here this school year.

*Teachers:* It is time to celebrate the strength and stability of our school faculty and staff. We welcome back these teachers who have worked here just under 5 years: Ruthee Fuentes, David Rodenstein, Taira Guerrero, and Sarah O'Dell; teachers who have worked here between 5 and 10 years: Mary Griffin, Sherri Lauer, Lynn Hanson, Tonya Palsulich, Patty Head, and Lisa Wirtanen; teachers and administrative staff who have worked here between 10 and 15 years: Julie Gill, Susan Gardner, Mary Helen May, Betsy Robinson, Nicole Shadduck, and Andrea Laird; the administrative staff who has worked here over 15 years: Cindy Finch; and the teacher who has worked here over 20 years: Mark Zimmermann. The experience that the faculty and staff have with this school environment creates great stability and consistency for children, families, and our entire school community.

And, as teachers have stuck with the school, we've worked to make this the place that teachers want to and can be through improved benefits. We have stayed with Regence Blue Shield as our health insurance provider, but switched our dental insurance to Delta Dental. We serve the largest number of teachers as ever before through these benefit offerings, which continue to include a flexible benefit plan, as well.

*Curriculum and Special Topics:* Part of the way that an experienced faculty and staff make a difference in a school is two-fold. First of all, it shows in how curriculum is developed and implemented. Our stable, philosophy-driven curriculum is opened-ended enough to encourage, thinking, feeling, and creativity by teachers and children, and that creates rich experiences for children in our classrooms. I know a lot about what is going on in schools in Boise and I am convinced that our teachers have mastered the balance of meeting curriculum standards in a responsive way. A responsive curriculum means that we have a police officer visiting one week, an astronaut another, and in between there is a class at the nature center looking for bugs. That's a curriculum built by teachers and children working together, and it is happening in classrooms throughout the school.

Second, our stable staff means that we are able to work together as adults in advanced ways that benefit children. Our work on the National Science Foundation study, Ramps and Pathways, is an example of a project that a less experienced faculty could not have pulled off successfully. This year we are working with a consultant on a project that makes the learning that is happening in every classroom more visible. Stay tuned on that unfolding professional development project.

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*Accreditation:* We are coming to our second anniversary of NAEYC accreditation in January. Although we have maintained our accreditation status since 1989, we are particularly pleased to be one of a smaller group of local early childhood programs that has continued under the more rigorous standards implemented in 2007. We will proudly be turning in a second annual report on our continuing improvements in the next few months.

*Tuition Assistance:* Our school community came together last spring—as we have since the 1980s—to raise money for tuition assistance at the Spring Auction. It was fun—and it was among one of our most successful. Last school year we enrolled 14 children who attended school with tuition assistance awards; this current school year we have been able to enroll 10 children with tuition assistance awards. We anticipate a continuing need in this area in future years and, I am thankful to be a part of a school community that makes this fundraising a priority.

*Challenges:* You can call this section Cindy's anxiety list. All of us concerned with the well-being of The Children's School join me in being watchful of: 1) financial needs of families with young children during these tougher economic times; 2) families from the waiting list who decline to enroll children when offered an opening because of a need to defer early childhood education for another year; 3) families who find themselves in the tough position of needing to withdraw after signing a contract; 4) families for whom a tuition assistance award still does not mean enrollment can happen, despite what parents want for their children; 5) increased competition in the community in early childhood education; and, 6) H1N1 virus creating concern for children's well-being in groups. Know that, although these concerns do not crop up in the school halls often, there are those of us who are tracking, discussing, and planning with these challenges in mind.

*Looking to the future:* We really should think of ways to celebrate these 30 years! There is much to celebrate: children thriving in classrooms, teachers committed to the school, excited about the work we are doing and the experiences that children are having; a curriculum that is unfolding and rich, and that invites active exploration of materials and ideas; families who share with us an appreciation of childhood, who join us in our goals and invite us to be a part of their child's earliest years--we take that very seriously; AND, volunteers—parent fundraisers, board members, building committee members, and capital campaign leaders. Thank you for all you do to further the goals of the school and help us to realize the vision of the school that Mary Smith articulated 30 years ago!

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*Thank you Parents for TCS for raising money for our school library through the sale of T-shirts.*

*Lynn Hanson, our school librarian, has been shopping this fall using the \$428 that we have received to date.*

*Her shopping priorities are: 1) Caldecott Award Books 2) Replacing worn books 3) Additional copies of "much loved" books and 4) Additional chapter books.*

*Thanks again for this gift—it benefits children throughout the school in very direct ways.*

## Thinking about Next Year\*

By Cindy Finch

For the next three months, we will be including articles in TCS Times that look to the future—enrollment options and processes, as well as shared experiences from parents who have made the same sort of decisions that we will be asking you to make in February 2010 about the next school year. This month we want to talk about independent toileting.

If you are the parent of one of our youngest children at The Children's School, we hope you will be here for many years. In preparation for enrolling your child in a preschool class (from the toddler or 2-3 class), we would like to help you prepare for the toileting expectations that will face your child as he/she moves to a class for older children. Here is a highlight of the parent handbook concerning toilet learning:

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*We encourage parents to observe in next year's classes prior to making an enrollment decision. Please arrange to observe a class through Andrea at your convenience over the next three months. Thanks.*

### ***TOILET LEARNING AND YOUNG CHILDREN***

*Toilet learning is anticipated to be in-progress during the year children participate in the Parent-Toddler and 2-3s programs, with some children just beginning the process and some moving to independence.*

*However, when children begin to participate in our part-time or full-day preschool programs, we assume that children are able to manage toileting independently. We understand that accidents happen and that some children need adult support in a group setting; however, our classroom arrangements and staffing patterns for preschool children do not accommodate as much emphasis on toilet learning as we are able to provide in the parent-toddler and 2-3s programs.*

*When a child approaches preschool enrollment without having mastered age appropriate toileting skills, planning and problem solving meetings between school personnel and families will occur. At times enrollment may be deferred when we are unable to accommodate the toileting needs of the child.*

*Readiness signs may be subtle in some children. Many parents approach this task with much thought and concern for the child's and the family's well-being, and find resources helpful. The Children's School is able to offer opportunities for families to: talk with a parent-toddler or 2-3s teacher, consult a resource in our parent education library, or plan to attend our annual toilet learning workshop. Please consider that supporting your children in toilet learning is part of your planning for preschool. Helping children master this important self-help skill is well worth the time and energy—for you and your child.*

To support you in your parenting around toilet learning, we will be offering a parent education/support session after the new year.

There is much that is still happening, and we do not spend our time only

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looking ahead! We appreciate and enjoy your children in so many ways—for who they are and for what they bring to the classroom experience. It is our experience, however, that the transition to older classrooms works best for children and families when there is time to prepare, consult resources, and consider options in a thoughtful and relaxed way.

We look forward to welcoming you back next year!

***\*Remember that if you are a current family we will offer you an opportunity to enroll (first current students, then siblings) for the 2010-2011 school year before we go to alumni families or the waiting list.***

## I Am Thankful For...

By The All Days Class and Nicole Shadduck

*The following list was written following a class discussion about the upcoming Thanksgiving and what things make you feel happy or thankful.*

*First we came up with a description of Thanksgiving. It is a holiday when you spend time with your family. Some people may take a trip, like to a desert. It is a time when you are happy and smile. Families share foods. Some foods that could be eaten are turkey, potatoes, and pumpkin pie. Some foods that people eat are the same and some are different.*

*The second description was about the feeling of thankful. It means you are thanking, like when you get a present you are happy.*

*Some of the teacher comments that lead the discussion were: What makes you happy or thankful? It could be something you have or can touch or it could be something in your family. Your idea could be about this time of the year or another time.*

*After asking all the children to contribute an idea, the list was read and children were each asked if they wanted to add something or if their part was okay.*

*Please enjoy this glimpse into your children's thoughts about this holiday and a snapshot of their classroom community.*

*Happy Thanksgiving. One of the things we are thankful for is the opportunity to spend some of our time with your children. Thank you!*

### ***In case you need even more reasons to have your child in an early childhood classroom:***

*Adults need to take a more active role in many ways, than in the past, in helping children to learn how to be friends and what you do to be friends, because they're having less spontaneous opportunities to interact with peers in positive give-and-take ways. ...*

*There's less neighborhood play where children would spontaneously play with other children outside. So we're often left with a situation where children don't have as many places in which to learn the positive things they should be learning that help them feel powerful and effective...*

*from **Connecting: Friendship in the Lives of Young Children and Their Teachers**, a chapter by Nancy Carlsson-Page and Diane Levin called "Children's Friendships in Contemporary Society," quoted in Exchange Everyday, November 17, 2009*

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*A gentle reminder:*

*We've notice that some families are beginning to pick up children from class late.*

*We discourage late pick because of the impact it has on teachers and the school (and consequently we have late fees). Even more importantly, it matters for children that we and they know what to expect at pick-up time.*

*Please always let us know what the pick up plan is for your family so that we may support your child in this important transition.*

*Thank you.*

I'm Thankful For...

Christmas, Valentine's Day, Easter, Thanksgiving, all the holidays, my brother and my cat, Lucky.—L.

Trees and that me and my dad share a birthday.—C.

Thanksgiving, my Mom, Christmas, Hanukkah, flowers and all the holidays.—Z.

Easter, new toys and Christmas, too.—S.

Easter, my birthday, my sister and my cat, Roswell.—K.

My birthday, toys, a new forklift and that we went to the fire station.—A.

Valentine's Day, Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas and my favorite toys.—L.

Thanksgiving.—N.

Thanksgiving, my birthday, Easter, my brother, Daddy, and Mommy.—A.

Canyon coming to my house.—G.

My Papa is having his birthday on Thanksgiving.—L.

Thanksgiving, bugs and *Cars*, the movie.—B.

People being nice, having friends, and throwing balls.—J.

Flowers.—R.

Photo removed to protect children's privacy.

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## Charity and Young Children

By Andrea Laird

On December 1<sup>st</sup>, we will kick off our Annual Food drive to benefit the Idaho Food Bank. Each year as the holiday season approaches I am faced once again with this question: how to best explain to children about charity and why some children do not have what others have.

I have thought a lot about this over the years, talked with a lot of parents, and have come to this conclusion. Charity begins at home. Each family must decide how to explain and act on what they want to do in the realm of charity. Some may tithe to the church, have children place money in a collection plate at church, or help out at a community event. These acts may be absorbed into the family culture and explanations of why may come much later as children grow. Children may have no idea that parents donate to a specific charity of choice.

Now comes the part that was difficult for me – not the acts of charity but the explanations and answers to children’s questions. These were the hardest to answer and fraught with pit falls that could set off a way of thinking I definitely wanted to avoid. For example, if you take a toy to the Toys for Tots or put it under the tree at the mall some questions could be, “Why can’t Santa give them toys?” “If only good children get toys from Santa then children who are in need must be bad?” Ouch! Another conversation could be, “Their parents don’t have enough money to buy presents.” “Why?” “They don’t have jobs that pay enough.” “Why?” “They don’t have a home.” “Why?” “The children don’t have parents to buy things for them.” “Why?” And most importantly, “Can that happen to our family? To me?”

Keeping children psychologically safe while still trying to instill charitable family values can feel like a tightrope act. When children are older it can provide opportunities for discussion. Checking in with children to try to learn what they understand about giving is always a good idea. Simple explanations for the very young child are usually best.

A case in point: When I gave money to a Vietnam Vet on the street in San Francisco my son (3 years old) asked, “Why did you give him money, Mummy?” I started to launch into an explanation about the government not taking care of him. (He heard, ‘Blah, blah, blah...’) “Huh?” A more reasonable explanation, “Because he’s hungry and needs to buy some food”. My son’s response, “Oh, okay, can we ride the streetcar now?” This one instance was just the beginning of teaching my son about our family’s values regarding charity. Since then I have talked with him and participated in many acts of charity. Fifteen years later, my son can understand my political views and make decisions about whether or not he chooses to act accordingly. One thing I am sure of is, in our family, we agree that small acts of charity have value as do larger ones.

Your family culture and value systems will dictate how you deal with the concept of charity, the questions that it generates and the answers you will give. Saving the more in-depth explanations for the older years when understanding of the world is more developed may serve your child best.

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*Do you have ideas about how to explain charity to young children?*

*What questions come up in your family?*

*What answers work best for your children?*

*You are encouraged to share your ideas and experiences about talking charity with your family.*

*Please see Andrea if you are interested in sharing your thoughts.*

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## The Feast

By Andrea Laird

The Holiday Season has arrived! TCS celebrates Thanksgiving with our traditional “Staff and Children Feast” at school. We serve roasted turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn pudding, pumpkin pie with whipped cream, etc. The 2-3s celebrate in their own way in their classroom. The 3-4-5s and All Days have their Feast in the All Day room with the 3-4s joining them for dessert and singing. The 4-5s, 4-5-6s and Primes gather in the Primes room for their Feast. We have traditional songs that we sing (you’ve probably heard some of them at home). Cindy goes to each class on the days before the Feast and sings these special songs with the children. Each class prepares part of the meal to share with the other classes. A fresh turkey is bought on Monday so that children can see it before we cook it: potatoes are peeled, pies baked, corn pudding mixed, cranberry salad created, and stuffing made by children. This is one of the few times that staff and children get to gather as a group. It often remains as one of the best memories of TCS for children. Ask your child to sing, “I heard Mr. Turkey Say”. It’s a classic (at least at TCS)!

## Meet our Capital Campaign Manager, Liz Edrich

Liz is thrilled to be a part of The Children's School community and to work with TCS on the Capital Campaign. Liz is currently the Development Director at Trey McIntyre Project, a contemporary ballet company. Prior to joining TMP, Liz was the Development Director at Idaho Conservation League and worked at museums in Washington, DC, and California, including the Smithsonian's Freer and Sackler Galleries and the California State Railroad Museum. Liz is on the board of the Boise Contemporary Theater and serves on Boise's Historic Preservation Commission. She provides fundraising advice and support to non-profits throughout the community. Liz is married to Steve B., an electrical engineer, and they have two children.

The Children's School's Capital Campaign is going strong and moving toward our \$1,000,000 goal. With the school year nearly 3 months old, more than 50% of current families have pledged their support to the Campaign. In the coming weeks, you will see signs of the Campaign in the halls, in your mailbox and in lots of communications. With strong support from the TCS community, we will reach our goal and create a facility that matches the excellence of the faculty, the superior quality of our learning program, and the dreams of our children.

We can't do this alone. If you would like to get involved in the Capital Campaign, please call Liz Edrich at 284-7842.

Liz and the boys

Photo removed to  
protect children's  
privacy

The Children's  
School

1015 N. 8th St.  
Boise, ID 83702

PHONE:  
208-343-6840

FAX:  
208-429-8153

E-MAIL:  
info@tcsboise.org

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

**www.tcsboise.org**

## CAMPAIGN UPDATE:

55% CURRENT FAMILY SUPPORT: More than half of current families have already pledged their support.

100% of our Board of Directors and our Faculty/Staff have pledged!

NOW, we need 100% FAMILY SUPPORT: TCS needs strong support from our current families before we can ask alumni and foundations for donations! More than 1/2 of current families have already pledged their support.

MANY WAYS TO GIVE: Spread your gift over 1, 2 or 3 years; Pay by credit card, check or stock transfers. TCS can bill you monthly, quarterly, yearly – you decide!

EVERY DOLLAR HELPS: You choose the amount! Please give whatever amount is appropriate and meaningful for you.

As of September 1, 2009 TCS has raised more than \$400,000 toward the Capital Campaign's \$1,000,000 goal. If this fundraising effort succeeds, construction will begin in the Spring

### *Important Dates and Holiday Closures*

\*Wednesday, November 25<sup>th</sup>, Thanksgiving Feast, for TCS Children and Staff

3-4s class meets 9:00-10:00

3-4-5s class meets 8:45-10:00

4-5s and 4-5-6s meet 10:30-12:00

Class ends for All Days and Primes at 12:00

**EARLY RELEASE - SCHOOL CLOSED AT NOON**

\*Thursday-Friday, November 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>, Thanksgiving Holidays, SCHOOL CLOSED

\*Monday, November 30<sup>th</sup>, Parents for TCS meeting, See Friday Update for details.

\*Tuesday, December 1<sup>st</sup>, Annual School Food Drive begins, Donations taken until noon Dec.10th

\*Tuesday-Friday, December 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>, 3-4-5s and 4-5s Lunch Programs ends. (Separate registration required for spring program)

\*Wednesday- Thursday, December 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>, P-TCS Annual Bake Sale

\*Thursday, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2-3s Class Holiday Party, Families Invited

\*Friday, December 18<sup>th</sup>, Classroom Holiday Parties, Families Invited

3-4s (class meets 9:00-10:00)

3-4-5s (class meets 8:45-10:00)

4-5s, 4-5-6s (classes meet 10:30-12:00)

All Days/Primes close at noon

**EARLY RELEASE – SCHOOL CLOSED AT NOON**

\*Monday, December 21<sup>st</sup>, Parents for TCS meeting. More information soon.

\*Monday-Wednesday, December 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>, WINTER HOLIDAY, All Days & Prearranged Primes Childcare Open

\*\*December 24<sup>th</sup>-January 1<sup>st</sup> WINTER HOLIDAY, SCHOOL CLOSED

\*Monday, January 4<sup>th</sup>, All Classes resume