



# LifeWays

**The Newsletter of LifeWays, North America**

[www.lifeways-center.org](http://www.lifeways-center.org)

LifeWays North America is devoted to developing healthy childcare, parent-infant and parent-child programs, and training programs for caregivers, parents and parent educators. These activities are inspired by the works of Rudolf Steiner and the experience of Waldorf education and are supported by contemporary early childhood research as well as common sense and wisdom of many generations of parents.

Spring/Summer 2008  
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**“THANK YOU”** to all who have joined us as Friends, Affiliates and Representatives! You are helping us to make a difference in child care and parenting practices. We hope that all you read in this newsletter will be encouraging and has helped to make visible our grassroots work in the world! Through your continued donations, positive thoughts and prayers, and joyful commitment to children and families, we will continue to grow.

Recently I remembered how determined I was, while in teacher training in England many years ago, that any school I helped to start would not be a member of any organization. We would be independent! Well you can guess what happened. When I moved back to the States and participated in founding a school, a budding young organization was there to help us. It was called the Waldorf Kindergarten Association, and they sent us interesting articles, supported us over the phone, and generally encouraged us along the way. Within a short time, we had joined the WKA and the Association of Waldorf Schools. Twenty-one years later, that little school has become a sturdy, accredited Full Member of AWSNA and the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America.

It did not take very long for me to learn that joining with others is not an act of giving up independence. It is an act of fellowship, of becoming more than is possible when standing alone. But the other thing I learned is that, while we are blessed by and need the support offered by like-minded people and organizations, they need our support as well. Becoming a member is not just a matter of paying dues. It is a way of standing in the world in support of ideals and principles that reflect personal values. Our organizations are doing all they can to further our shared ideals and principles.

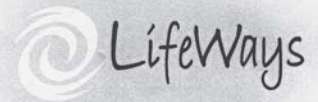
Here we are in 2008 (how can that be possible!?), taking a stand for families and children, doing what we can to strengthen and protect natural childhood, and supporting those who have decided to offer their lives to the service of caring for young children and parents. Up until now LifeWays has focused primarily on the development of adult education and consulting. Now we would like to further develop our organization:

- to better support the individuals and groups who have established LifeWays child care homes and centers and parent support programs
- to develop deepening seminars and workshops for LifeWays graduates and other experienced early childhood professionals and parents
- to develop more regional trainings so people will not need to travel so far
- to offer financial aid to any student who wants to attend one of our trainings
- to pay a salary to the Executive Director and a part-time support person and offer a higher stipend to those individuals who direct our LifeWays trainings
- to create LifeWays camp experiences for families where the adults can attend enrichment classes while the children are provided camping and caring experiences
- to recreate our website to better represent our vision and purpose and to highlight the activities and work of our members
- to create publications, a LifeWays DVD and other materials that can be used for promotional purposes and for our training directors and students
- to do more public outreach like having a booth at the National Association for the Education of Young Children annual conference (these booths are very expensive) to expose more child care providers to LifeWays' innovative approach to care
- to develop a research tool to do a longitudinal study on children and families who attend our LifeWays child care sites

Increased membership will help us to grow in all those ways, and we hope it will help you in your continued growth and development. As mentioned in our first membership letter, we also use part of our membership fees to make annual donations to our big sister organization the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America and to the Alliance for Childhood. Many of you, we know, personally support these organizations as well.

Currently we have almost fifty members at the various levels. It's a great start! A few of you have applied for the Representative status, and we have been slow at processing those as it

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Newsletter inquiries and contributions should be sent to LifeWays North America at 403 Piney Oak Drive, Norman, OK 73072.

### LifeWays North America

is a 501 c3, non-profit organization. Tax-deductible contributions can be sent to: LifeWays North America at 403 Piney Oak Drive, Norman, OK 73072

Photos in this newsletter courtesy of Simone Demarzi and Cynthia Aldinger.

# Reflections

by Cynthia Aldinger

“Who are these people?” This is the question that kept coming to me as the LifeWays trainings kept growing - for what started out of a necessity to find caregivers for the first LifeWays Center had become a content that attracted people from all over. It amazed me that year after year new people would inquire and enroll. But as I have gotten to know the individuals who have come, I understand more. This training is a conduit for people to be inspired, yes, but also to find their colleagues.

While there are a number of wonderful trainings and professional development classes for individuals working in preschools and kindergartens, there were not many venues for parents, child care providers, parent-child teachers, after school caregivers, home-based preschool teachers, grandparents, and nannies to sit together and find common ground. Over and over again I hear from students, “I learned so much from my fellow students in this training.” As with most nourishing adult development courses, it is about community.

The hard part is that it is such a short time together. People engaged in the life activities listed above often feel that they cannot commit to years of frequently leaving their families in order to attend a training. Each time I have asked a group of students about expanding the training to two years, I have received a resounding ‘no please’. And so we have these intense times together wrapped by wonderful mentors and home-based study requirements intended to deepen the coursework and create a foundation for healthy lifestyles. Whew! It is hard and joyous work!

It is our hope that this newsletter, and eventually LifeWays gatherings like conferences and workshops and family camps, will serve as continued support to our graduates and further inspiration to our other LifeWays members.

Since 2000, we have served close to 150 students in our LifeWays trainings. From the first ones that graduated seven to eight students each, the classes now average from 14-20, and we have had to close two classes at 24. From our beginnings in rural Wisconsin, there are now trainings

in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Freeport, Maine; and Fair Oaks, California; as well as a Spanish training in San Francisco. We are in planning stages for other sites as well.

Here are brief reports from each of the trainings:

## Midwest LifeWays Training, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Director, Cynthia Aldinger

It has been fun to watch this training evolve. The basic template was set in 1998-99 when a group of colleagues came together to offer enrichment classes twice a month to fourteen people. Some were parents at the brand new LifeWays Center. Others were aspiring caregivers. Others were just interested participants. Even though it was not a training (no mentors or independent study requirements), it had many of the components we still offer today – child development classes, music, speech, movement and hand-work. Woven in were the Living Arts upon which LifeWays is built, but we didn’t have that name for them at the time.

With it meeting so frequently, we served a primarily local group, but soon we were receiving requests from people in other states. With the Pioneer Class of 2001, we became the LifeWays Child Care and Human Development Training and that year had students from five states. We

changed our schedule to meet for ten days for two summers with long weekends in between in the autumn and spring.

The current Wisconsin group comes from seven states and is halfway through their training. With this group I experienced my first ever St. John’s Festival on the shores of a lake – not just any lake, but Lake Michigan which just happens to be part of one of our student’s back yard! We experienced not only fire but all the

elements! This same group chose to have a BlessingWay for their autumn festival celebrating the pregnant ones in their midst and one getting married.

Created totally by them, it was a moving ceremony that incorporated many of the Nurturing Arts they are learning about in their course. continued on following page



# Reflections continued from previous page

## Maine LifeWays Training,

Director, Susan Silverio

One glorious day in August of 2007, families and friends of 17 LifeWays students gathered in the Community Hall of Merriconeag Waldorf School in Freeport, Maine. They

in-town day care home into a long-standing intentional community in the country, where she has opened the nonprofit organization Village Productions that includes Parent-Child gatherings, parent and community education as well as dance classes and events.

Another who has worked as assistant in her Waldorf school for many years has since been given the position of lead teacher now that the former kindergarten teacher has gone on to found the school's LifeWays Center "in the city".

Several graduates have deepened and strengthened their care of children and families in their home nursery programs or in a Waldorf school as Parent/Child teachers or Extended Day Teachers.

Another has cultivated the Living Arts in her own extended family (including college campus life!) and has introduced nature walks and observation into the curriculum of the Friends school where she is a grade teacher.

These Northeast LifeWays graduates traveled four times during the year from areas ranging from North Carolina to

Quebec, and west to Pittsburgh and Athens, Ohio. Not every day was as glorious as that one in August. They had also weathered the storms and floods of Maine in April!

During the course of the training, each student worked with a mentor. One mentor, Mary O'Connell, founder of the Milwaukee LifeWays Center worked with two students from northern Maine who in this one year have founded The Village, a LifeWays Center now caring for children from three months to six years, and offering community festivals for families. The following excerpts from The Village newsletter seem to sum up the principles and practices of LifeWays:

"Much of my day at the center is spent singing. It brings me such joy to be able to share the gift of song with the little ones! The beautiful, simple songs that we sing are used to teach and delight as well as to create a sense of warmth and caring around the child."

- from Ms. Debbie



witnessed these strong and loving women whom they knew well as mothers, teachers and caregivers give a powerful graduation presentation of spatial dynamics, eurythmy, and choral singing.

They also heard one of the graduates speak eloquently about the transformative experience of this Early Childhood and Human Development Training. She related how she had made the decision to do the training to improve her parenting and to prepare for her "Waldorf in the Home, Family Child Care". To her surprise, she found that the training was about herself, and to her amazement, she discovered that she experienced a healing in her relationship with her own mother in the process. This graduate opened her home program that summer, offering outdoor nature adventures to young children enrolled in the Waldorf kindergartens. During the school year, she now cares for children in her home, their ages ranging from several months to four years until they are ready to join the Waldorf kindergarten.

Another graduate has moved with her family from her

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“Working with young children is a privilege that I am grateful for every day. There is endless joy in the daily occurrences of guiding and observing the children as they grow physically, learn to communicate, develop loving relationships, and learn to care for their environment. My work to guide this process is to protect childhood, to be a loving and caring adult, and to create meaningful and practical experiences that meet the children in an environment that is as home-like as possible. This is the visible work that I do as a caregiver. But, children are complete sense organs and learn through imitation. So, I must also be aware that who I am in gesture, speech, actions, thoughts, and feelings model human qualities that the children will imitate. My role as caregiver is to also work on my own self to become worthy of imitation. How do I do this? When I am with the children, I can really listen and notice what they are imitating and communicating. Children live in the present moment and can help me be in the present moment. They communicate truth, so if I listen, I know what I need to do. Sometimes, it might be that I need to laugh more, or when on a walk to stop and notice the flowers, or to say less, or to be more patient or confident with myself. When I am not with the children, I need to take time to reflect, to have fun, to take care of my health, to learn and grow, to be creative, and to engage in meaningful relationships. Of course this is a lifelong process, but my striving is what the children know intuitively and this is most important. It is a privilege to take this daily journey shared between caregiver and child. I am grateful to all the parents who bring their children to be in my care....”

Miss Marie

The LifeWays training brought together caregivers ranging in age from young twenties to mid-sixties, some were single, others grandmothers. Together we cultivated the art of living. Friendships flourished. Now each graduate is going on to create community, radiating from their own hearts and from their embrace of early childhood.

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## Rudolf Steiner College LifeWays Training in Fair Oaks, California, Director, Cynthia Aldinger

Not too long after the LifeWays project was underway in Wisconsin, a decision was made to start a pilot child care venture on the campus of Rudolf Steiner College along with a LifeWays training. California, with its own unique flavor, attracted students from various states as well as international students.

One image indelibly imprinted on my mind was the graduation party where the students decided to practice their well-honed skills on their teachers. The party ended with a half-hour “spa” treatment with each teacher being tended by three or four students offering footbaths, hand and facial massages, neck massages, sweet aromas and a student playing her Native American flute followed by her aboriginal didgeridoo – all this after other musical offerings and comedy skits! We were tempted to flunk everyone so they would have to come back the following year; however, they had clearly learned the *living arts!*

The current students represent four states and Canada, but they are primarily from California. Very focused and dedicated, their questions are quite thought-provoking. They have also blessed us with the presence of babies. This is becoming a common phenomenon in our LifeWays trainings everywhere, and I often find when I am teaching that one of the babies will be doing just what we are talking about. Our classroom community soon turns into a “It Takes A Village” community, respectfully acknowledging the presence of these little ones fresh from the spiritual world.

Each California group has been endearing (as with the students in the other regions). Their graduation ceremonies have been beautiful (also as is true of the other regions).

I have learned, through the blessing of directing both



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California and Wisconsin trainings and the first East Coast training, that adult education expands one's heart. I was familiar with this experience from years of teaching kindergarten. Those little ones are always tucked into your heart and soul. It has been a gift to realize that adults can occupy that space as well! I am ever grateful for all that I have learned and continue to learn from LifeWays' students.

Again, I find myself with the question – "Who are these people?" But now I know the answer. They are representatives of the finest and best of human beings who have chosen to serve the needs of young children and families with integrity and have found, in each other, a support network to help strengthen their visions. They join a growing group of sisters (and now brothers!) across the country who share a similar focus.

## West Coast Training – San Francisco LifeWays en Español

Director, Rosario Villasana-Ruiz,

Last fall in October a group of 15 women ages 25 to 55 years of age became the first graduate class of the San Francisco LifeWays in Español sponsored by Rudolf Steiner College. The first ever LifeWays training in Spanish had been in the making for over 3 years. Inspired by their participation in Rahima Baldwin Dancey's Magical Years conference several years ago they persevered until a full training could be birthed. Students were enthusiastic and receptive to learn the practices and principles

LifeWays promotes focused on relationship based care that truly nurtures and support infants and young children.

The group in San Francisco is a dedicated array of Latina caregivers who strive to provide what children and families need. They immediately sensed an affinity for the LifeWays training that supported an intuitive understanding of the primary needs of children. Many have had numerous college level courses and participated in professional development through resource and referral agencies and professional organizations...still, there was a deep question about how theory translates to practice. As well, some felt that the theory was abstract and perhaps too heady, lacking a common sense approach to life sustaining practices that support security and a homelike, intimate relationship with a minimum number of caregivers. In short, some felt the care promoted was too institutional for precious new life. Their previous training left a deep longing for the wisdom of the ages, for the simple needs of children for warm

nurturing environments that are safe to learn to crawl and walk in and that protect the newly developing senses. Some felt that the kind of warm caring relationship they intuitively felt was right for the young child was downplayed in mainstream educational settings, or seen as too "homey" and not "professional" enough, all of which went contrary to their understanding of what young children need.

The LifeWays course began in January 2007 at the San Francisco Waldorf School, as an extension of Rudolf Steiner College. The school co-sponsored the training providing class space and much needed moral support. The course met on Saturdays all day and during intensives over holiday weekends. The women are caregivers working out of their home day care, preschool or infant/toddler center teachers and parents interested in providing the best education they can for children. These day care providers serve primarily low-income Latino families for whom Rudolf Steiner's work was an unknown. Their own lives closely match the lives of the families they serve; they are a monolingual, low-income group of which some are single mothers. All are struggling to improve their quality of life and the child care services

they provide families and their children.

When they learned about Waldorf and Steiner's approach to education each found a special connection to what they heard. They knew they wanted to learn more, some elements reminded them of values and practices from their homeland. These practices were in affinity with what they intuitively felt should be the childhood experience for little ones. LifeWays approach to childcare held a ring of truth

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True community was experienced as warm relationships were developed. Students stay connected, they meet often and call each other and want to continue taking workshops. They support each other as they strive to incorporate the important transformative aspect of the work.

I recently visited the home of one of the family childcare providers. It was nap time and the children were sleeping or almost asleep, during our discussion the provider mentioned she had used a glockenspiel to set the tone for nap for the first time that day. After hearing the music one child said quietly, "son los rayos del sol (it is the rays of the sun)" another said, "es el viento bailando (it is the wind dancing!)" This response touched her and she felt a deep reverence from the children as they recognized the

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beauty of the tones. I pointed out how wonderful it was that the children's creative imagination had been sparked. We finished our meeting by discussing the importance of providing arts, music and activities that allow for creative, poetic interpretations by children and a respectful response from the caregiver that encourages children to freely express their ideas.

At the end of the year right after graduation I was invited to give a talk to the parents of children in the care of another one of the LifeWays students. This childcare is provided in an apartment in a very low income neighborhood in a public subsidized housing project. She asked me to present on the topic of play and environment as parents had noticed the changes she was making. One in particular, a Head Start teacher, was concerned not enough "learning activities and materials" were offered to the children. After the discussion I could see she was widening her definition of "learning" and had a new respect for her childcare provider. The childcare provider talked with parents about her intention to provide organic meals for the children while in her care. This was also a very enlightening conversation with parents raising the concern that since they could not afford to buy organic foods there would be little benefit for the children and a wider gap between practices at home and day care. Most of the children in this day care home are subsidized as parents are unable to pay for childcare. I suggested they start with one thing, perhaps buying organic milk, or an item of their choice to test the waters so to speak. The child care provider suggested that even if the only organic meals the children ate were during childcare that was already a move towards healthier nutrition practices. Organic snacks were served during the meeting and support for the provider's efforts was evident as the evening wrapped up.

It is rewarding to see important progress has been made, childcare environments are slowly changing as attention is paid to nurturing and protecting the senses, and caregiver/child interactions are changing as a deeper understanding of the developmental needs of the child is integrated into daily routines. The powerful impact the training has had thus far for the caregivers, children and families in their care is in the beginning stages: the seeds have been sown.



## A Word from the LifeWays Kitchen . . .

by Jane Sustar  
LifeWays, Milwaukee

In Michael Palon's book, *In Defense of Food, An Eater's Manifesto*, he poses the obvious question: Why does food need to be defended? He then goes on to answer that provocative question with the even more provocative statement that very little of what we eat in the United States is, in fact, food. It is an interesting idea in a country so profoundly overweight. His recommendation? Eat plants...lots of plants.

Mary and I were recently talking about a workshop she hosted for WCTC (Waukesha County Technical College). When she began to speak about nutrition she was shocked to hear how adamant the caregivers were about what their charges would or would not eat. What was the first food to go out of the children's menus? Vegetables. Children it seems, are incapable of eating vegetables. Of course, these are not LifeWays children. The children at LifeWays cheer when salad is brought out to the table for lunch. They announce proudly at clean up, "Miss Jane, I ate all my stir fry!" This was corn, peas green beans, carrots, onion, bean sprouts and waterchestnuts. Or, "Miss Jane, I tried one little bite of tomato but I still don't like it." Or "I had three helpings of pasta Miss Jane!" Lifting their shirts to show me their round little bellies. This is not mac n' cheese, mind you. This is pasta with shredded carrots and zucchini.

When Addy's daddy came to pick her up he asked her, "So, Addy, what was for lunch today?" "Soup" she exclaimed. "And did you eat your soup, Addy?" "Yes, I ate it all up." Mushroom barley with lentils. I'm not saying that the children fall in love with vegetables the minute they walk in the door. I am sure Rana watched his friends eat vegetables for a week before he was brave enough to try one for himself. However, sitting between Owen and Harry with their passionate persistence when it comes to food was probably more peer pressure than he could bear!

Getting the children to like everything is impossible but Miss Abbey and Miss Jaimmie and Miss Rabbit have such a lovely way of presenting the food as an adventure of "just one bite" that the children do try just about everything set before them. I can't think of a better place to introduce children to the wonderful world of dining than LifeWays and that can't happen if we always serve them food they "like". Sometimes we have to step out of the box and serve them something I know they won't like, like Ratatouille, for instance and then we are all pleasantly surprised. Imagine that! Children asking for seconds of eggplant!



# Forest Kindergarten: Children in the Woods

by Lori Barian

Even in Milwaukee, WI, a city with a vibrant downtown, a variety of popular and depressed neighborhoods, and a lot of pavement, children can be found in the woods.

For our LifeWays Forest Kindergarten program, “the woods” are in a nature preserve along the Milwaukee River, behind the Quaker Friends Meeting House in which LifeWays Child Development Center has three suites of children and their caregivers.

No more than eight children, age 3 ½ - 6, most being the older children from the suites, join me, their teacher, two mornings a week, 9-11:30 a.m.

There is a threshold to cross. In order to participate at all, the children need to be old enough and potty trained. And on each particular morning, the children must use the bathroom and then dress for the weather, wearing their own backpacks that hold their water bottles.

When they are ready, they line up, with me standing between them and the door that leads outside. Together we sing:

“What shall we see there? What shall we hear there? Into the forest. Into the forest...”

And then the door opens. The sky, the ground, the air impress themselves upon our senses. Each opening is different. Our “classroom” has metamorphosed through time and the weather. What will it be like today?

On one of our last mornings together, I could hardly open the door; the snow was so deep. Will the snow still be there this time?

The children eagerly make their way down a hill to “The Clearing,” a plateau between LifeWays and the river below. It is in The Clearing that we have circle time together.

Then, with my own backpack on and picnic basket in hand, I with the children head down to the river. Will there be a place to stand along the bank to crack the ice with sticks or pretend to fish? Or is the water too deep, the river rushing and swollen from heavy rains and melting snows? Has it been frozen for weeks so that now it is strong enough to walk upon?



We acknowledge this morning’s river and greet it in person or not, depending upon its welcome to us.

Next we follow a trail one direction or other and find a place to stay a while, a place to play and climb, have snack and perhaps do a project.

When it’s time, I sing to the children to put on their backpacks again and we head back to a special boulder where we’ll have story and say goodbye.

Can one really keep children outside for two and a half hours? What about inclement weather? How can you do projects and have snack? Can three-year-olds manage?

Before I answer these practical questions, I would like to share a bit of what I

observe the children learning and why I have come to feel Forest Kindergarten is worth the challenges such a program presents.

## Developing the Powers of Observation

It begins with our threshold song calling attention to the sights and sounds we will encounter. We approach the doorway leading to the outdoors with wonder already opening us, leading us outside.

When out of doors, I guide the children to notice as much as possible. In our circle time, we begin by greeting

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the earth and sun. How firm does the earth feel today? Is it frozen hard? Covered with soft fluffy snow? Wet and muddy? What do our hands look like after we touch it? Where is the sun? Do we have to stretch extra high to touch it through the clouds? Can we soak it up with our arms as it shines brightly?

Since we hike the same paths each day, we seek what is new that we can find along our way. Footprints in the snow or mud? Mushrooms sprouting up? The first green shoots from the bulbs we planted in the fall?

Can we hear the wind rushing through the trees, chickadees singing, a woodpecker tapping, Canadian geese calling to each other as they fly over the river?

We attend to the details, to the changes from our last visit, and to growth and decay.

I watch the children developing true powers of observation, the ability to objectively notice what presents itself to their senses. They are coming to an experiential knowledge that if they take time and take notice, something beautiful or surprising or interesting may reveal itself.

## Healthy Sense Development

However, there are twelve senses, not only the senses of sight and sound. How does the air feel? Cold? Wet? Dry? Warm? How hard is it to walk through the snow? How can I climb this fallen-down tree without falling down myself? Where are my friends and teacher – have I walked too far ahead or can I still see them and they see me? What does the world look like from on top of this pile of logs? Can I peel the bark? What's moving underneath? How do my legs feel while climbing the big hill at the end of the morning? What is the mood of the sky today? How do I feel after playing "Jack Be Nimble" or while standing still when the wind is blowing cold?

Without going into details, I think it may be quite an obvious reality that the outdoors offers multifaceted sensory experiences for a growing child. Nature's learning environment demands full participation. To walk on the rocks along the river's edge, to slip and get a soaked foot, to hike and climb and crawl and slide, a child exercises his or her whole being.

A child also begins to discern beauty in red berries against the snow or something disturbing in the smell of a rotting fish. What is this sensitivity that they are developing? Can we imagine how it may help them in later years to

notice when something "smells fishy" and should be avoided?

The mood of each season communicates itself through all the elements of nature. Snow, with its crystalline lightness, sparkles like diamonds. Mud is squishy and brings out the smell of the earth. Buzzing insects in the summer say something of the hubbub of this time of year. Falling leaves say so much about autumn's mood, encouraging us to let go of the physical world and turn inward. The processes of transformation are witnessed. Metamorphosis in the evolving classroom can deeply impress the children with its wisdom.



## Healthy Physical Development

There, it seems to me, to be no doubt about the way the natural world invites the full engagement of the child. Large motor challenges and small motor skills are practiced and exercised. But, in contrast to gymnastics classes, soccer, or video games, the physical movements come in response to nature's terrain and obstacle course and to what is of interest within the natural world.

Why does it make a difference? I've had a child in Forest Kindergarten who, at age three and a half, had already been working on his soccer skills for a while. That boy could run! Anywhere and everywhere, beauty or no beauty, interesting sights or no interesting sights, that boy could and did run. He

had been trained to run. His body had become accustomed to running. Regardless of whether the environment called forth such a response, that was the behavior most forthcoming.

Is it apparent that there is superior value in acquiring physical skills and abilities that are sensitive to the environment? Can one see that movement in response to what the world presents has wisdom in it and that this wisdom can be beneficial in the myriad of life situations a child will grow to meet. This wise physical development contrasts with physical training that does not easily adapt itself to new situations, but instead causes a child to be out-of-sync with his or her environment, responding in inappropriate ways.

## Practical Considerations

Now, it's time to answer the more practical questions. The weather does not always allow for a full two and a half

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hours outside, but it usually does, and the children and I are happiest when we can be outside the whole time. Learning about the ways the world changes depending upon the weather is fundamental in Forest Kindergarten. Consequently, even when the weather is quite inclement, we try to experience the outdoors for as long as we can. Though, sometimes, even in good weather, we will go inside before our morning together is over in order to work on a project for 15-20 minutes. No matter what the weather, however, only children whose parents provide them with all of the appropriate clothing can truly enjoy themselves.

Through these past three years teaching Forest Kindergarten, I have learned that projects aren't as essential as finding ways to enable the children to interact meaningfully with the natural world. Even so, I have found many projects that can be done out of doors or that incorporate items from nature. There are many wonderful books on the market these days offering suggestions for nature-oriented crafts. But even turning a stick into a pretend fishing rod or hammer can be of value.

Having a picnic every day is one of the joys of Forest Kindergarten. Snow cones in winter, fresh-picked raspberries in the early autumn, and hot apple cider on a cold, damp day add to the fun. We are certainly quick to eat on a very cold day. We may picnic on top of the "troll bridge" when the ground is very wet. But a picnic on the ice of the frozen river has been delightful. Laying down a picnic blanket or cloth, lighting a candle, and singing our blessing create the right mood.

There is a significant difference between a 3 ½-year-old child's experience of nature and that of a five-year-old. So much growth and development happens monthly, weekly, even daily in very young children. For the youngest Forest Kindergarten children, the forest can sometimes feel too big, the snow too deep, the wind too cold. They need more sheltering than the older children. They need to take smaller steps, both figuratively and literally, in their exploration of the woods. Returning to same place again and again can give great comfort to the very young, while the older children are more able to rise to the challenges of a new fallen-down tree to climb. A mixed-age grouping is ideal because the older, stronger children lead the younger ones, setting an example with their self-confidence and endurance.

What could be offered where you live and work? Is there a park with wild space to which you could regularly lead a group? Is there even one fallen-down tree nearby, one old tree that has laid itself down so that children can climb amongst its branches? Even that could enable more young children to be found "in the woods."

Lori Barian is Waldorf and LifeWays trained and has a master's degree in English with an emphasis in writing. Her professional work has been primarily in nonprofit administration and development, including helping to establish the first LifeWays center in East Troy, WI. She has two children at Tamarack Waldorf School, Milwaukee, WI.

## LifeWays Notes....

### Training "pays off"

LifeWays Graduate Brigid Fitzgibbon from California has written to tell us that her employers are so pleased with her work that they are recommending the LifeWays training as a foundational training for their early childhood teachers. In fact, right after Brigid completed her training, she was given a raise. Here is a photo of Brigid with her two children, Claire and Evan, wading in the Big Sur River while on a trip during Spring Break.



### Upcoming LifeWays Publications

Mary O'Connell, director of two LifeWays Centers in Wisconsin, is working on a "Tools of the Trade" booklet with many practical tips and real life scenarios having to do with establishing LifeWays centers and homes. We hope this will be the first in a series of books being published to help further your work and to support children, families and caregivers.

### Parents' Corner

In future editions of our LifeWays newsletter, it would be nice to have a column written by those of you who are primarily parenting right now. Most of what has been submitted this time has to do with child care homes and centers. However, a growing number of LifeWays students are parents. Tell us your stories, trials and triumphs.

### LifeWays Conference

Margo Running, LifeWays Childcare Society in Vancouver, British Columbia, is working on the plans for the LifeWays Vancouver conference, April, 2009. Contact Margo for full details: [lifeways@gmail.com](mailto:lifeways@gmail.com)

If you can imagine helping to organize a conference in your geographic region for 2010, please contact us.

To submit your LifeWays Notes contact Cynthia Aldinger at [ck.aldinger@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ck.aldinger@sbcglobal.net)

# Tribute to Mary Schunemann

It is fitting that in our first LifeWays newsletter we acknowledge the love and devotion that our colleague and good friend Mary Schunemann held for our work in the world. Mary loved LifeWays, and the LifeWays students loved Mary. She was the music teacher to many LifeWays graduates, and several have told us that they are still singing and playing the lyre today because of Mary.

Mary's final two CD's *I Still Have Joy*, finished only days before she crossed the threshold, are a real testament to her love of life and devotion to the spiritual world that upholds and strengthens us. And her voice never sounded more beautiful! If you do not already own these CD's, give yourself this gift. Mary's website is [www.naturallyyoucansing.com](http://www.naturallyyoucansing.com).

Within the context of our work with children and families, I think the memory I most want to share with you is that of Mary as a mother to Aurora and Allegra, who were 5 and 7 when she passed. These two precious girls came to Mary when she was close to forty years old. She was young-at-heart, and having these girls kept her that way. They could almost always make her laugh, and she learned to use humor as a great tool for turning around a difficult moment with them. Mary also loved jokes, and I remember her delight when each of the girls reached an age where they could actually tell a joke. In Mary's final year, which entailed many visits to the hospital, she left a trail of smiling faces as she told her latest joke or broke into song with the nurses and doctors.

Of course, music was a constant in their household, and the girls provided much inspiration for Mary's children's songbook series. They can also be heard singing in a couple of the songs on *I Still Have Joy*. A memory I have indelibly imprinted on my mind is that of Mary working diligently on her songbooks while the girls "wrote music" on their papers. Of course, they also imitated their mommy, the business woman, as they walked around the house taking orders on their pretend phones and setting up an office in their bedroom to better serve their customers.

But I especially remember Mary and her husband and the girls in the kitchen. Cooking was a family event, with every surface covered with something being chopped or flour strewn about or eggs being cracked into a bowl.

Those girls could properly use a sharp knife long before most children were even allowed to touch one! And on those occasions when I was privileged to be with them in the kitchen, we often broke into spontaneous song.

Spontaneity is a good word for describing Mary. I sometimes referred to her as my gypsy friend. Indeed they held gypsy parties in their home – everyone dressed in their finest sparkling regalia, twinkling lights strewn throughout the house, lots of laughter, lots of music. Yet, there were also poignant festivals marking the movement of the seasons. How Mary loved everything to do with the Christmas season. At the first dawning of Advent the nature nook in their home began to reflect the anticipation of things to come. On the four Sundays of Advent, one

would find the Schunemanns gathered around the nature corner singing. In fact, every season, every holiday was an "event" in their home – a tradition still being carried by Mary's husband and the girls. I fondly remember a St. Patrick's Day when I was visiting and awoke to find green things on my head and all the family's green clothing strewn throughout the house – even on the ceiling fan. Those

leprechauns had their way once again!

Mary and I would often sing on the phone together – when we weren't exchanging jokes or talking about the girls or about the songbooks or LifeWays. In her final year, whenever I was visiting, I would sometimes hear her upstairs playing the piano late at night or in the wee hours of the morning. I resisted the urge to go to her. Somehow I felt that she was already with one of her closest friends.

One of the songs on Mary's last CD is called *Music Alone Shall Live*, and the words are:

All things shall perish under the sky  
Music alone shall live, music alone shall live,  
Music alone shall live, never to die.

Two days after Mary passed, the famous opera singer Lucaino Pavarotti passed. Several people have commented that the heavenly choirs have never been so blessed! While we know that Mary is having amazing reunions and new unions, we are ever so grateful for the legacy she has left to her family and friends and to LifeWays. Vive la musica!



# Scenes from LifeWays, Milwaukee

King Winter continues to show us that, he does, indeed, reign supreme and, for now least, he shows no signs of giving up his reign. Having said that, I must say that, the children and myself are enjoying all of the snow that he has sent our way. The snow provides for lots of great play experiences. The children love climbing on the big snow mounds created by the snowplow. One preschool day, Tenzin and Isaiah were scaling the Himalayas (Tenzin's own words). Our toddler boys, Jack, Joshua and Will, have been provided with plenty of opportunities to learn to pick themselves back up after falling down on the ice and snow. This has been no small feat. In the beginning of our winter season, if once they had fallen, they weren't quite certain how to get back up. Thus, they just sat on the ground and cried. However, with a bit of guidance and sheer determination, they figured out what to do to help themselves, and it was amazing to watch their efforts. Thank you for sending along each day the snow pants, coats, hats, mittens and boots that the children need to truly enjoy all the weather winter has to offer.

We are a month into our New Year, and our center is humming with activity. We warmly welcome the Werchowski family, Krista, Jason and Baby Lucy (5 months old) into our fold. Something magical seems to take place when a baby enters the space. Feelings of warmth, tenderness, awe, and wonder emanate forth from each little being from the oldest on down to the youngest. Whatever she does, drinking a bottle, eating her food, lying on the floor, getting her diaper changed, provides a source of endless fascination for the other children. When she's put down for a nap, they ask where she is. When she cries they either let us know, 'Lucy's crying!' or they cover their ears, or a couple of the toddlers will join in with her. I myself had a profound moment last week. The children and I have been used to the same daily rhythm for the past 15 months, morning snack between 9:00 and 9:45 a.m., outside play between 10:00 and 11:30 a.m., lunch at noon, nap at 1 p.m., etc. We have certain chores that the children and I need to get done each day, and I've been used to getting most of them done in the early morning hours. Well, as we all know, babies have their own unique rhythms that need to be tended to and what happened to me was that in responding to Lucy's needs, it gave me the permission to slow down and live in the moment. Instead of rushing around to get things done, I allowed myself to let go and relax in meeting the baby's needs. I reminded myself that all of these chores could wait. I knew that eventually they would all get done, and what was most important at that moment was my being there. And you know what? In letting myself go and embracing the moment, I am finding the time to get it all done. I obviously needed the reminder!

On that note, I would like to share with you some things that the children are doing. We here at LifeWays consider ourselves a "household", a kind of home away from home. Thus, we liken ourselves to a family. And as a family, we need to work together for the good of all. It is so soul gratifying to see how capable each and every child of contributing to the welfare of "the family", and also to see how much they enjoy doing things for themselves and how eager they are to help out. E

Enjoy the following stories:

- On Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, Lily, Lucy and I arrive at the center at 6:30 a.m. As I take Lucy out of her car seat and settle her into the suite, Lily is busy laying out Lucy's blanket and then lays out the sheepskin on top of the blanket for her to lie on.
- Last Thursday morning while I was busy in the kitchen making the bread dough that the preschoolers would knead into rolls for lunch, Jack was quietly busy in back of me taking water pitchers and covers out of the cupboard and putting them back in ... over and over again.
- This past Tuesday morning as I relaxed in the rocking chair to feed Lucy her bottle, Jack helped by getting me a pillow to prop up my arm. He also straightened out the sheepskin for her to lie on.
- This past Monday, right after nap time, I observed Ethan, Jackson and Jack, all with smiles on their faces, transporting a cot out of the suite and putting it away for the next day. Ethan was holding up one end, Jackson the other, and Jack held up the middle.
- Jakob has been a big help at the lunch table reminding some of his friends that it is "time to eat" and not to play around during the meal. He also made the decision on his own to give up his beloved Nuk. His mama, Heidi, told me that he had bitten a hole in it and after that it has no longer held the same allure. He didn't like the feeling of the hole and that was that! By the way, Jakob will celebrate his 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday this March.
- This past Tuesday, as I led the preschoolers to the snack table, Lucy happened to be enjoying some floor time with Miss Emily. Well, it became a struggle to get them to the table because they all sat down around the blanket just gazing at her, and she at them,
- Adia (age 4) plays big sister to Jack and Will each Friday. She's my right-hand gal on those days, helping keep those two boys in check. They love her!

That's all for now. Thank you for the opportunity to care for your beautiful children, and I honor the job you're doing raising them. I am also grateful to our awesome staff, Mary, Stacy, Ramona and Emily. I thank God for each and every one of them because we support one another in this work. It is truly a joy to come to work each morning.

In Service, Belinda

# Things You Can Make Yourself

by Simone Demarzi

I developed the LifeWays program 5 years ago on the Rudolf Steiner College Campus on a shoe string budget. There are many things you can make for your suites that are very affordable and easy as well. Here are some ideas that make your space home-like, yet very functional.

Here are a couple of projects that parents can do on a sewing night:

## Bibs

You can use cloth napkins, or small towels. This depends on how long you want your bib to be. The younger the child, the longer the better!

For the towel, cut a slit down about 4 inches in the middle of the short side; for the napkin, cut down 4 inches or so in the middle of one side. Use a crochet hook, the absolute smallest you can find so that it can pierce the fabric like a needle, and single stitch all around the napkin or towel with a light cotton yarn. Be sure to do a few stitches in place when you get to the bottom of your cut!! These bibs will then be held in place on the child with a clothes pin behind their head.



## Baking aprons or painting aprons

You will need two small hand towels for each apron. Lay them on top of each other, and pin the shoulders together along the short sides of the towels, leaving a hole big enough for the head to fit through. Next you will need strips of one inch wide elastic about three inches long. Sew the elastic pieces between the front and back about half way down the long sides connecting the front and back. These aprons pull over their heads and their arms through the arm spaces made by the elastic. They are very washable and keep the flour off their clothes at baking time!

## Nap blanket/sleeping bags

Using a throw sized blanket is best, but a twin blanket can be cut in half as well. These get washed a lot, so finding heavy weight cotton or blended fabric is best. I like the blanket to feel nice and heavy. These are hard to find! I

found some perfect sized ones at the beach in Santa Monica from Mexico. They are nice and heavy, blended cotton poly and washable with a very cheerful weave pattern. They also come in many different colors, and were only \$8-\$10 each! You will line the blankets with cotton flannel sheets!

Cut the flannel to fit the same size as the blanket. Pin the flannel to the inside of the blanket and sew around the blanket. Then fold the blanket in half the short way, and sew the bottom shut and about  $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{2}{3}$  up the side that is open. The folded side does not need sewing! These make lovely sleeping bags for the children and are a good weight for a

sensory experience and give them a good boundary which helps them fall asleep. The children are contained in these bags, but can get out if they need to in case of fire. (Licensing requirement). These bags fit very nicely on cots for preschoolers, or on mats on the floor. Using a fitted crib sheet on the cot or mat makes this a very comfy bed.

## Pillows

Some children like pillows, some do not need them. We made pillows out of buckwheat mixed with lavender and sewed little covers for them that could be washed (do not wash the pillows!) Buckwheat can be found very cheaply at your local feed store. Be sure to use heavy fabric for the pillows, as the buckwheat can be kind of pokey and lumpy if the fabric is too thin. I cut up a large flannel sheet to make the pillow covers.

## Nap dividers

I wanted the children not to be so distracted by their neighbors, as quarters were rather close in the nap room, so I used a friends design for play stands to make these dividers.

Have the local lumber yard cut 4X8 sheets of particle board (the dark brown,  $\frac{1}{8}$  or  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch thickness) into 8 pieces. That will give you 8, 2x2 feet boards. For each divider you will need three 2x2 pieces of wood. You will also need lengths of fabric that are 50 inches wide and 76 inches long. Using a strong fabric like denim or corduroy is

best, but a sturdy bed sheet is good as well. Fold the fabric in half the long way making sure it is inside out and sew the short ends shut one inch from each edge. Turn this right side out now, and lay it on the floor. Lay the three pieces of wood on top of the fabric one beside the other, and leave an inch between each piece of wood. Put pins to mark a line between each piece of wood. You will now sew along those pin lines on the right side of the fabric making seams running the short way about 1/3 and 2/3 along the long strip of fabric. Trim the threads, and now slip the wood boards into the pockets you have just made. Fold over the bottom openings to look nice and hand sew them shut. These three sided frames make GREAT play stands, house building walls, and best of all, put around the head ends of the cots, make a cozy sleeping nook for each child. You can drape silks over the top to make a little tent! You can extend these play stands with up to five or six pieces of wood for excellent play frames!



To join LifeWays go to  
<http://lifeways-center.org/files/network.htm>  
 for information and forms

### LifeWays Yahoo Group

The 2008 LifeWays graduating class at Rudolf Steiner College has successfully started a LifeWays chat group ([Lifeways19@yahoogroups.com](mailto:Lifeways19@yahoogroups.com)). Bianca Zachary, who facilitates the group is willing to open it to all LifeWays graduates if you are interested. Or she can start a new group with a new name. Perhaps you could contact the group and let them know of your interests.



## From the LifeWays Kitchen

### Granola Bars

- 2 cups honey, maple syrup or combination
- 2/3 cup vegetable oil or butter
- 2 cups oats
- 1 cup finely shredded coconut
- 1 cup chopped dried fruit (apples, dates, apricots, etc)
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 cup finely toasted wheat germ
- 1/2 cup oat bran
- 1/2 cup oat flour
- 1 cup raw almonds or nuts of your choice
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

Melt honey and oil or butter together, set aside. Mix rest of ingredients and pour honey/oil mixture over it and stir until well coated. Press the mixture densely into oiled cake pans, 1" high. Bake in 300 degree oven for 45 minutes. Cool slightly and slice into squares before completely cool. Enjoy!

From Stacy at LifeWays, Milwaukee

### Best-ever Apple Crisp

- 1 stick butter, melted
- 1/4 cup maple syrup
- 4 cups steel cut organic oats
- 4 or 5 apples, diced - peel apples if not organic
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- 1/2 cup apple juice, optional

Melt butter, add maple syrup and oats, mix well and set aside. Place apple juice and diced apples in the bottom of an 8 x 12 pan, add raisins and mix well. Pour oat mixture on top of apples, sprinkle with cinnamon. Bake in 400 degree oven for 10 minutes, then lower the oven temperature to 350 degrees and bake for 20 minutes. Cool and serve. To reheat, cover with foil and warm in 150 degree oven for 30 minutes.

From Marianne Alsop, LifeWays Board member and teacher in the San Francisco Waldorf School Parenting Program

# The Wonders of Nature

## Nurturing the Twelve Senses through Gardening

by Aiyah Rebecca Geier

The plant's bright blessings spring forth  
From Earth's gentle being.  
And human children rise up  
With grateful hearts  
To join the spirits of the world.  
-Rudolf Steiner

There is always a sense of wonder when I surround myself in nature- from the profound quietness to the brilliant colors of spring blossoms to the taste of fresh picked herbs. Oh! the wonder of nature. It never seems to stop amazing both children and adults. Just stepping outside can cause an instant change in attitude, for there is so much to behold in nature; it reminds us of our greater connection to all things in the web of life. In our daily lives, keeping a garden is a great way to expose children to the ongoing cycles of nature while being involved in real work.

Helle Heckmann declares in *Nokken*, "Having a garden is almost a basic right for a child!"<sup>1</sup> A garden can bring ample opportunities for free play, while at the same time, a plethora of real work is at hand. The adult can go on with their gardening duties of preparing beds, seeding, transplanting, turning compost, while the child can choose to be an active part of this process. Children love the feel of a small seed in their hands. Seeds have so many different textures and sizes and hold so much potential and energy in such a small package. Laying a seed to rest in its garden bed and putting on it's soil covers helps the child to play an active role in bringing to fruition the potential of a seed. Daily watering and attentiveness to the growing seeds helps to foster a sense of responsibility and care for the plants that are to come.

Gardening can be a rewarding experience for both children and adults on many levels; this is not to say that there are not also challenges involved. But this is all a part of our growth process. Setting up a garden space that is child friendly may only mean planting a few extra seeds to allow for the beets that get picked too early or the lettuce that gets unearthed. Another idea would be to have one area that is more enticing to the child. Planting an area or garden with "grazing zones" where children can freely pick and eat, such as strawberries, peas, cherry tomatoes, and fresh herbs such as fennel and mint, as well as planting "smelling gardens" with lots of different flowers and herbs to smell and pick for sun teas, can be very exciting for the young child. It is also important to have open play zones and hiding or hidden areas where the child can feel the sense of freedom and seperateness from the adults. In the garden, children are learning care and nurture of the plants,



and also learning about touch and control of their powerful hands.

The care of a compost pile can help complete the circle of life force in the garden. This link can connect our leftover cooking scraps from the kitchen and table directly to the birth of new seeds in our amended garden. Sifted compost can be the medium for planting wheatgrass in our new spring baskets, or sunflower sprouts to grow into flowers for the children to take home. Children can be a big help in digging out the finished compost and shaking the sifter to make nice, fluffy planting medium or amendment to our garden beds. And connection with all of those worms wiggling around in there is an amazing sensory experience in itself! Through exposure with the life forces that we can observe and feel so easily in the garden, a child's twelve senses, as indicated by Rudolf Steiner are nurtured in so many ways.

The "will" senses are the physical senses directed primarily at one's own body. These will senses are touch, life, movement and balance. We have learned in our Lifeways training that through a healthy sense of these four senses, a child learns trust, harmony, freedom and security. In

contrast, a child that is lacking in a healthy balance of these senses can become an at-risk child.<sup>2</sup> “The healthy development of these four senses in the young child provides the foundation for all the higher-level skills - cognitive, social, spiritual - in childhood and throughout life. When the foundational senses are functioning well, the child has pleasure and joy in being in the physical body.”<sup>3</sup> The garden can help to nurture these will senses.

There are so many things to touch in the garden! The sense of touch is both a separation and connection from what we are making contact with. What a wonderful place to explore the pleasure of touch. From playing in the dirt and water, to feeling the different textures

of seeds and plants, worms and ladybugs, the child has a wealth of opportunity to begin to understand their likenesses and differences with the world around them. Digging in the soil is a great lesson in connection and separation. While as one entity it encompasses the earth that we walk on, it can also just as easily be dug into, moved, used to create holes and mounds, and when water is added, a new, wonderful, muddy world has been made with a whole new feel and texture.

The sense of life is our sense of well being. Predictable rhythm in daily life can help to support the life sense. “Rhythms are manifest, too, in the living cycles of the natural world. The very fabric of our cosmos is rhythmical and its influence finds a way down to the minutest events in nature. Life processes embody this quality of rhythm so innately that we experience them as inseparable. Life is manifest rhythm, and as such is a microcosm mirroring the macrocosm.<sup>4</sup> The garden is a cyclical being in itself. Here, we observe how a seed sprouts into a plant, a plant flowers, and then often, the flower becomes the fruit, or vegetable that we eat. To feel and see these gentle rhythms gives us a fundamental feeling of wholeness, of well being and trust in the universe that everything has its season. Each season has its own rhythm as well in the garden. Springtime brings preparing garden beds and planting. Summer brings lots of fresh fruit and vegetables to eat, tending to and watering. Autumn is time for more harvest and the preserving of extra fruits and vegetables from the garden. Autumn is also a time of settling down, raking leaves, preparing the garden for winter by mulching the beds. Winter is a time of rest.



The children witness this natural cycle, and feel it within themselves. The life sense can also be nurtured through the eating of whole foods. The garden or orchard can give us this connection to our food that can open children to trying new foods, when they, themselves have a direct

relationship with the food, whether they helped plant the seed, watered, watched the plant grow, or simply helped to harvest or prepare the food.

There are many movement opportunities in the garden. Just being in the open air can inspire wild, free movements, or quiet, still moments to watch a bee gathering nectar, or ants busy at work. Children love to

use their shovels and rakes to dig and move soil. In our garden, we first pull the weeds from the bed we are going to plant in. The soil needs to be forked, and then the sifted compost, manure and other amendments are added. We then rake the soil and remove all of the rocks and break up the hard clumps of dirt with our hands. This can be a job that takes a short time, hours or even days depending on how much the child wants to be involved. This can take many trips to the compost pile and the potting shed to get all of the materials we need, and this movement becomes the activity, itself. Having a good tree for shade, fruit, or climbing is a great addition to the garden space. We have a bird feeder hanging from a tree in our garden. We sometimes spend long, quiet moments watching the many hungry visitors that come!

“The sense of balance tells us where we are in relation to our surroundings and keeps us in balance, upright in space.”<sup>5</sup> Healthy balance can lead to a sense of security. “The importance of the sense of balance cannot be overemphasized. It is a unifying element in the whole system and seems to prime the entire nervous system to function properly.”<sup>6</sup> When a child is ready, she will approach new opportunities for balance. In the garden, it is good to provide such areas where a child can practice cultivating this sense. Climbing a tree, balancing on a fallen log, or running up and down a hill will be accomplished when it is appropriate for her development. Through this, she finds coordination and security in her own ability.

“Young children...have an intimate connection to their surroundings, and everything they encounter makes a

deep impression on them. Because they are so sensitive and receptive, one might conceive of young children as sense organs that perceive the world with their whole being.<sup>7</sup> The feeling senses: smell, taste, sight and warmth are the experience of the relationship of man to the world.

Keeping children surrounded by natural things, that is, things that come from nature helps to protect the child's senses from becoming overburdened.

Smells surround us all the time. It is an almost instantaneous knowing of what odors smell good to us, and which repulse us. In the warmer months, there is always a new flower in bloom, some can be smelled from far away, others require a close up sniff. Discovering the smells in the garden can be a very full experience. The smells of turning compost are

quite different from that of a rose in full bloom. Even the leaves of the plants, themselves have a quite distinct smell. The smell of a tomato plant is all its own, and an accidental brush up against a mint plant can scent the whole garden. It is great to cultivate aromatic plants in the garden that the children can explore and experience in a gentle way. The smells of the garden also move inside with fresh picked produce that when cooked or prepared bring a whole new sense of comfort. Having the children to pick fresh herbs in the garden to make sun tea is a great way to introduce them to many edible flowers and herbs in the garden. Some of our favorite sun tea herbs are calendula, lemon balm, mint, fennel and pineapple sage flowers.

The sense of taste is an obvious one when talking about the garden. Many of us grow a garden for this purpose alone. The taste of a fresh picked tomato, warm from the afternoon sun is a treat that cannot be duplicated by a store bought tomato. As I mentioned earlier, grazing gardens with fresh peas, strawberries, cherry tomatoes and herbs can be a delicious way for children to be in contact with how their food is grown, and gain new appreciation for foods they may have not tried before. Barbara Patterson says "Our sense of taste should teach us what is good for us to eat."<sup>8</sup> This comes from a well rounded diet of a variety of whole foods. And when children have a hand in growing their food, they are more likely to take an interest in eating something that was once unfamiliar.

"Through the sense of sight, we experience light, darkness and colors."<sup>9</sup> Nature shows us a palate of colors

that is hard to duplicate. Everything in nature reflects light differently, and so our experience can be quite varied in what we see. We can gain an appreciation for thick, bold colors such as the bright yellow of a sunflower, or the soft white of a pea flower, the intensity of the noonday sun, and

the softness of twilight. The colors of the garden can foster a rich inner impression of the possibilities of nature.

The sense of warmth is twofold: warmth of body, as in temperature, and soul warmth from other human beings. Of course, when out of doors, it is good to be appropriately dressed, and in the garden is no exception. Layers are always good, and as the sun makes its way further up into the sky, these layers can be peeled off.

"Contact with nature

is renewing for adults, but its importance for children should not be underestimated."<sup>10</sup> As adults, the garden can help us come back to our child like wonder and connect with the children in this state of the present moment. This connection brings warmth in this shared experience. "A young child is much more sensitive than we adults are to the soul responses from those around him."<sup>11</sup> So it is good to cultivate the warmth we feel with our children or children in our care, and also to cultivate ourselves so that we can really provide the quality of warmth with our children that they deserve.

The cognitive senses are those senses that are directed toward the inner experience of both self and others.<sup>12</sup> The sense of hearing is one that we cannot turn off. Many children are inundated with noises all day long. Electronic noises from radio and tv can over stimulate the senses and rob children of their ability to focus. Being outside and in nature can soothe and stimulate the senses through nature's nurturing sounds. From birds' calls to the whispering of the wind in the trees to the silent moments in between, the sense of sound can help us get a deeper understanding of objects in nature than by sight alone.

The sense of speech "allows us to grasp the way language works, how its words and sentences are formed, how meaning derives from their sounds and placement, and how we can use words to express our deepest thoughts and feelings."<sup>13</sup> In the garden, songs and rhymes come easily and spontaneously as new things come into our view. A wiggling worm can create a plethora of images in the child.



Songs and nursery rhymes cultivate an intimacy with language and the world of words.<sup>14</sup> The intricacies in nature that we witness can also be taken indoors and incorporated into songs and movements during circle time.

“Children live in a world surrounded by the thoughts of grown-ups long before they are able to understand those thoughts. As their sense of another’s thought develops, they gradually gain the ability to understand, comprehend, and picture what those thoughts convey.”<sup>15</sup> A caregiver or parent can help to nourish the sense of another’s thought by providing a cohesive thread through circle time and stories.<sup>16</sup> When we go into the garden, with intention, the child can sense this. If we first prepare the children, through circle time with ideas of what activity will be happening in the garden, for example, turning the compost or planting corn, or seasonal activities such as collecting branches for a holiday wreath, they can get a sense of the caregiver’s thought, and the pictures and ideas presented in story time can come to life for them. Some of the children will then want to act this out in their own way or participate in the work that is being done in the garden.

The sense of another’s “I” is the connection and understanding of the separation with another human. Through this, children learn to trust others, or adversely, to distrust their feelings of others. We, as adults, can help to positively influence this sense through actively working on ourselves to become positive role models.<sup>17</sup> Gardening can be extremely renewing for adults, and is a great place to be present in nature. This practice in mindfulness can help us to retain our sense of clarity and peace when working with children.

“Children are sense beings and nature enlivens them, allows them to gain experience.”<sup>18</sup> Children’s senses are so open when they are young, it is good to take care and protect them, to nurture them. Gardening can help to develop a healthy balance in their mind, body and soul through integration of the senses. Through gardening with children, their senses are stimulated naturally, therefore providing good building blocks for future development.

#### Footnotes

- 1 Heckman, Helle, Nokken, p.33.
- 2 Aldinger, Cynthia, lecture on the 12 senses.
- 3 Clark, Laurie, and Blanning, Nancy, “Strengthening the Foundational Senses of the Young Child,” *Renewal magazine* p.5.
- 4 Wilkes, John, *Flowforms*.
- 5 same as above, p.6
- 6 same as above, p.6
- 7 Trostli, Roberto, *Rhythms of Learning, Selected Lectures by Rudolf Steiner*, p.91.
- 8 Patterson, Barbara J., and Bradley, Pamela, *Beyond the Rainbow Bridge*, p.87.
- 9 same as above, p.87.
- 10 Baldwin Dancy, Rahima, *You Are Your Child’s First Teacher*, p.168.
- 11 Patterson, Barbara J., and Bradley, Pamela, p. 90.
- 12 same as above, p.76.
- 13 same as above, p.93.
- 14 Rudolf Steiner School website, Steiner,edu/educate/three.htm.
- 15 Patterson, Barbara J., and Bradley, Pamela, p.96.

16 same as above, p.97-8.

17 same as above, p.98.

18 Heckman, Helle, p.47.



#### Flower

The sweetest little flowers grow  
In a secret place I know.  
Fairies come there every morning  
With their wands the flowers adorning,  
Bringing sunshine to each flower  
Every day and every hour.

To each sunflower bowing down  
The fairies give a golden crown.  
Then every daisy near and far  
Shines like a lovely morning star.  
And when the fairies touch a rose,  
A warm, red heart their wands disclose.

From my pretty, secret garden  
Flowers I bring to all dear children  
That each one may have a part  
From the garden of my heart.

Dorothy Harrer  
from *Nature Ways*

# Thank-you

continued from inside front cover

involves a visit to see you. I personally apologize for the delay. This points to another need – more LifeWays consultants to conduct visits and offer seminars and workshops. We hope to see more of our graduates take up such work in the future.

I was delighted to visit five sites this year that are now Representative LifeWays sites. These evaluation visits have been both affirming and challenging for me. They have affirmed that the principles and practices that LifeWays stands upon truly serve children, families and caregivers in a healthy, loving way. The challenge comes in knowing that a good evaluation process involves suggestions for improvement. How can I have the audacity to suggest to these outstanding individuals who are devoted in their beautiful work that some things could improve? What has helped me through this is remembering my own growth points in life. Often they have come when a colleague cared enough to say “have you thought about this?” or “would you consider trying that?” or “something needs to change in this area.” Still, I send my deep gratitude to those of you willing to go through this process and stand in the world for care based upon depth of relationship and the *Living Arts*.

And I must share some little anecdotes that come as a result of these visits. When I was a student many years ago, one of our teachers mentioned that the best archetype for a kindergarten teacher would be “the grandmother”. Friends, I have arrived!! Everywhere I visit now, the children, without hesitation, call me *grandma*. Being taken by the hand of a little angel who has taken it upon himself or herself to be my personal tour guide of his *home away from home* and then chooses to curl up in my lap for a story – these are sweet moments. Or having a sassy four-year-old say “I don’t like you” on my first day to visit (perceiving me to be an intrusion on his predictable surroundings) and then asking me to please sit beside him at lunch the next day. It was equally heartwarming when, several times, I observed a baby’s eyes light up with a squeal of delight upon seeing his beloved caregiver and then again, at the end of the day, when his parent came to pick him up. These love triangles – parent, child, caregiver – make my heart sing!

If you have not yet joined as a Friend of LifeWays, please consider doing that now. If all of our former and current students join as *Friends*, that will contribute around \$5,000 annually. And as more sites become Affiliates and Representatives, it will not only support the financial stability of our organization, but it will also make it possible for more people to observe and be inspired by our principles and practices.

If you did not receive the membership forms that went out April 2007, please let us know. We can either email them to you or send you hard copy. You can also

download all the membership forms from our website, [www.lifeways-center.org](http://www.lifeways-center.org).

We need your support, and we want to grow our capacities to support you. Please let us hear from you.

What makes your heart sing?

In gratitude to you all,

Cynthia

**Cynthia Aldinger, Executive Director**

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## Out of the Mouths of Babes...



We have had some serious cabin fever going on with all this cold weather, and so the running inside of the house has gotten really

out of hand, and we’ve had a few injuries, so I’ve had to really crack down on “no running in the house”, which has been very difficult.

Well, just when I thought none of the distracting, nice words and such were sinking in, one of the little girls says “I need a tissue my nose is standing”. I say “your nose is standing, do you mean running?” She says “no, we’re not allowed to run in the house, my nose is standing!” SO, SO sweet!

From Becky Hollman who has a Family Daycare Center in Milwaukee, WI. She took the LifeWay’s Training and graduated in June of 2006

“I know all about life because I go to LifeWays.”

Anika, age 3

From Margo Running at the LifeWays Center in Vancouver!

## Representative Centers and Homes

### California

LifeWays Child Care  
Rudolf Steiner College  
9200 Fair Oaks Blvd.  
Fair Oaks, CA 95628  
Contact: Lauren Hickman  
916-961-2307  
[earlychildhood@steinercollege.edu](mailto:earlychildhood@steinercollege.edu)

### Colorado

Rainbow Bridge LifeWays Program  
3640 Buckeye Court  
Boulder, CO 80304  
Contact: Faith Baldwin & Rahima Baldwin Dancy  
303-546-0070  
[www.waldorfinthehome.com](http://www.waldorfinthehome.com)  
[info@informedfamilylife.org](mailto:info@informedfamilylife.org)

### Maine

Spindlewood Waldorf  
Kindergarten and LifeWays Center  
105 Proctor Road  
Lincolntonville, ME 04849  
Contact: Susan Silverio  
207-763-4652  
[silverio@tidewater.net](mailto:silverio@tidewater.net)

Little Acorns LifeWays Nursery-Kindergarten  
85 Echo Road  
Brunswick, ME 04011  
Contact: Clare Murphy  
207-729-6189  
[murphlaw@suscom-maine.net](mailto:murphlaw@suscom-maine.net)

### Canada, British Columbia

LifeWays Child Care Society  
532 E 4th St., North  
Vancouver, BC V7L 1J6  
CANADA  
Contact: Margo Running  
604-904-4198  
[margoinvancouver@gmail.com](mailto:margoinvancouver@gmail.com)

### Wisconsin

LifeWays Early Childhood Center  
3224 N. Gordon Place  
Milwaukee, WI 53212  
Contact: Mary O'Connell  
414-562-0818  
[mocon74190@aol.com](mailto:mocon74190@aol.com)

LifeWays Child Development Center  
W299N5595 Grace Drive  
Hartland, WI 53029  
Contact: Mary O'Connell  
262-369-0044  
[mocon74190@aol.com](mailto:mocon74190@aol.com)

LifeWays House Childcare  
309 East Howard Ave.  
Milwaukee, WI 53207  
Contact: Ginger Georger  
414-719-2904  
[ginger\\_georger@hotmail.com](mailto:ginger_georger@hotmail.com)

## Self-Affiliated Centers and Homes



### California

Dandelion Playgarden  
575 Harrison St.  
Sebastopol, CA 95472  
Contact: Victoria Lester  
707-823-9646  
[dandelionplaygarden@hotmail.com](mailto:dandelionplaygarden@hotmail.com)

Friends of Potrero Hill  
1215 Carolina St. #100  
San Francisco, CA 94107  
Contact: Monica Leicht  
415-864-5464  
[mo7003@aol.com](mailto:mo7003@aol.com)

Neighborhood Playgarden  
49 Grand View Ave.  
San Francisco, CA 94114  
Contact: Julie Fellom  
415-971-4963  
[waldorfplaygarden@yahoo.com](mailto:waldorfplaygarden@yahoo.com)

A Mother's Care  
749 Albemarle St.  
El Cerrito CA 94530  
Contact: Colene Turr ell  
510-525-1370

Heart and Hands Preschool and Daycare  
611 Mountain View Avenue  
Petaluma, CA 94952  
Contact Donyu Catino  
707-763-5018  
[fairwinds4all@sbcglobal.net](mailto:fairwinds4all@sbcglobal.net)

### Illinois

Sunflower Children's Garden  
4945 S. Dorchester  
Chicago, IL 60660  
Contact Elisabeth Swisher  
773-973-7416  
[eswisher@rcn.com](mailto:eswisher@rcn.com)

### Massachusetts

KayKay's Preschool/Child Care  
15 Phaneuf St.  
Middleton, MA 01949  
Contact Katharine Brown  
978-777-4584  
[katherine.brown@comcast.net](mailto:katherine.brown@comcast.net)

### Michigan

Joyful Noise  
Christine Bazzett  
926 E. State Street  
Traverse City, MI 49686  
231-946-0414  
[cbazzett@gmail.com](mailto:cbazzett@gmail.com)

### Minnesota

Oak Hill Family Child Care  
2388 1st Ave. E  
North St. Paul, MN 55109  
Contact Jane Hibscher  
651-770-3633  
[jane\\_hibscher@yahoo.com](mailto:jane_hibscher@yahoo.com)

### New Hampshire

Pine Hill Child Care Center  
Conval High School  
184 Hancock Road  
Peterborough, NH 03458  
Contact Peggy Waterhouse  
603-924-6620  
[phccc@pinehill.org](mailto:phccc@pinehill.org)

### New York

Joyce Gallardo  
Las Casa Amigitas  
25 Birch Hill Lane  
Hillsdale, NY 12529  
518-672-4909

### Oregon

Rowanberry School  
6846 NE Mallory Avenue  
Portland, OR 97211  
Contact: Angela Molloy Murphy  
503-750-7607  
[angelamolloymurphy@rowanberryschool.com](mailto:angelamolloymurphy@rowanberryschool.com)

Yvonne de Maat  
Heart In Hand Preschool  
5609 NE 33rd Avenue  
Portland, OR 97211  
503-287-4465

### Wisconsin

Jennifer Grimes  
4162 N. Lake Dr.  
Shorewood, WI 53211  
parenting own children

Rainbow Bridge  
3434 N. Weil St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53212  
Contact: Becky Hollman-Krajewski  
414-961-9863

**To join LifeWays go to  
[http://lifeways-center.org/files/  
network.htm](http://lifeways-center.org/files/network.htm)  
for information and forms**