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Little River News

Board of Regents Votes “Yes” on Little River

The New York State Board of Regents voted at their May 19th meeting to fully 'Register' Little River's high school program. We had on several occasions renewed the application to the state for recognition, but needed the official visit from State Ed to become fully registered. In April of this year, Shelly Drazen, from the Office of Nonpublic Schools, came to visit. She spent several hours with the high

school students, quizzing them on the details of their program while sharing coffee cake the students had prepared. She also reviewed the school's class offerings, administrative policies and procedures. She later wrote, "It was a pleasure visiting your school, and good luck to you and your students in the future!"

The application to the state described our K-8, high school, and Satellite pro-

grams, our facilities, and our staff. Registration in New York is voluntary, but having it allows Little River to grant diplomas that are recognized by New York State. We currently have three seniors, making up our largest graduating class to date. Each of the seniors is in the process of applying to college for next year.

By Steve Molnar

A Day in the Youngers' “Rainbow Room”

“Do you know why today is a going to be a great day in school?” Youngers in the Rainbow Room can't help but smile when they answer, “Because I am here!” While soft music plays in the background, Youngers begin their day with a free choice activity. Some students grab a bite to eat while drawing in their art notebooks, while others enjoy looking at books. Not only is our room filled with colorful furniture, art, and bins of books, but we've got some fabulous, colorful personalities, too.

Around 8:15 we clean up and meet on the number rug for calendar. Students take turns facilitating our calendar time, which includes sharing, discussing the days of the week, leading a song, identifying the date, coming to consensus about the current weather, acting out the poem

of the week, and kicking off math class with a game of Count 10 - occasionally played in Spanish!

Our math block is filled with music, memorization, and manipulatives. We sing our facts to help us remember them and we have our hands busy building numbers with physical objects in order to take what is abstract (What does the number 4

mean anyway?) and make it concrete (Ahhh! 4 represents the number of blocks I have in my hand!).

At 9:30 the Youngers put on their science tool belts and prepare to become physicists. Our current tool belt consists of six powerful words: Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How?

continued on page 3



Leon and the Youngers making their see-saw.

Inside this issue:

Board of Regents Vote on Little River	1
A Day in the Youngers' Rainbow Room	1
Latin Dance Party Success	2
Little River's Satellite Program on Firm Footing	2
NCACS Closes Its Doors After 36 Years (...kind of)	3
Capture the Flag	3
Geodome	4

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Latin Dance Party Success

We did it! This event was the culmination of over a year of planning and brainstorming. The idea for a dance party came to us from the Brooklyn Free School, who hosts a gala event annually to raise money for their school. Our planning committee took this idea and morphed it into our own unique event.

Calling on local colleges and businesses, we decided to hold a Latin dance with the Crane Latin Ensemble twenty piece band playing live music. The band is led by director Marsha Baxter, and is comprised of Crane music majors. As the event was held on November 1st, the band arrived in Halloween costumes, adding to the festive feel of the evening.

Jeanna Matthews provided her dancing expertise with an hour of dance lessons before the ensemble

performed. Jeanna is a Clarkson professor, and teaches salsa lessons in Canton and Potsdam.

Between the Buns in Potsdam was a generous venue, donating their upstairs space to us at no cost. The ambiance of the room made the evening a true celebration and a beautiful event.

The event is the first of its kind for LRCS. With a turn-out of over 350 people, the dance was a huge success. We grossed approximately \$2800, surpassing our goal of \$2000. We have hopes of repeating our Latin Dance Party, and are considering making it an annual affair. Please see our thank you list (on page 4) for a complete list of our donors, sponsors, and volunteers.

By Kelly N. Burnham



Jeanna Matthews, Salsa dance instructor

Little River's Satellite Program on Firm Footing

Little River has offered a Satellite program since the school opened in 1999. The program meets the needs of families that would like to do part of their program at home with the support of a school. Satellite students are integrated into school activities, classes and field trips. The option includes attending Little River from 1-4 days a week, while studying at home on the other days. Families studying at home receive support with curriculum development, and resources and assessments from a consulting teacher.

Our Satellite program is recognized by the New York State Board of Regents through its approval of our char-

ter and more recently, the registration of our high school program. In the late 1980s the State Education Department (SED) and the Office of Counsel affirmed that, "because of the close connection between the parent and the school and the supervisory function of the school, students enrolled in this type of component have been considered to be enrolled in the nonpublic school and not home instruction." The SED's Office of Counsel reaffirmed this again in 2005. We also consulted with a lawyer and he too pointed to the Regents statements and the fact that we have conducted the program for almost 15 years as putting us on firm footing.

Little River is one of only several nonpublic schools in the state operating a Satellite program. This year local interest in the program jumped. We are now serving seventeen students from thirteen families in our Satellite program, up from seven students last year. In an effort to maintain a balance between our five-day-a-week students and those in the Satellite program, we capped the enrollment there and several families have been put on a waiting list.

By Steve Molnar



The Youngers and Middles on a day hike at Lampson Falls.

The Middles class has studied poetry this fall in their Writing Workshop. The Quatrain (/ˈkwɑːtræn/) is a stanza of four lines, often having a rhyming pattern.

Shooting Star

by Dharma Crabtree

I saw a shooting star so high
As it traveled through the sky
I made a wish, closing my eyes
And through the night I saw it rise.

It was getting dark as I stood outside
But I kept standing by the mountainside
As it soared by it was shining bright
Then it disappeared into the night.

NCACS Closes Its Doors After 36 Years (...kind of)

The National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools (NCACS) was founded in 1978, amidst the free school movement of the late 60s and 70s. It closed its doors this year after four years of not being able to hold its annual conference. Its members were, and still are, committed to the principles:

- empowering youngsters and adults to actively and collectively direct their own lives;
- placing the control of education in the hands of the learners—students, parents, teachers; and
- developing tools and skills to work for social justice.

The coalition was particularly noted for its annual conferences, which brought together community schools and homeschoolers, and were held in a different locations around the country each year.

Last month, many of the key members and founders of the organization gathered together in Seattle to celebrate its accomplishments and put the coalition to rest. The gathering had many of the shakers and movers of the alternative education movement including those that founded free schools in the late 60s (some of which continue to this day), and people that had an instrumental hand in starting the home-school movement in the 1980s. The Seattle meeting was so powerful that members still plan to gather annually and stay in touch!

Little River had attended NCACS conferences in Colorado, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Tennessee as well as regional gatherings. The conferences brought together students from dozens of schools around the country.

Today several other organizations fill in the gaps that NCACS left behind. Little River is a member of the Northeast Democratic Education Conference (NEDEC) and has attended conferences in Puerto Rico, Brewster, NY, and Brooklyn. We are also members of the Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO) that networks with and supports alternative schools. We mourn the passing of the NCACS and celebrate its accomplishments.

By Steve Molnar

Capture the Flag

Beginning last year and gaining popularity this semester, many Little River students have been playing Capture the Flag during the lunch break. At the beginning of last fall a few of the Middles and Olders organized a small game as a way of releasing their energy before going back to class. Although this game was small, the subsequent games slowly began to attract more students, especially during this fall semester.

Every day a large percentage of each class (Youngers, Middles and Olders) go outside to play Capture the Flag. Team captains are agreed upon and teams are

chosen in the same manner as any other game. The game is played by dividing the school yard into two sides with a border between, one team per side. Two flags, one for each team, are then placed in a predetermined location. The object of the game is to get the flag from the opponent's side and bring it back to yours. When on the opponent's side, you are at risk of being tagged (you are safe on your own side). When you are tagged, you go to a designated spot on your opponent's side called jail. In order to get out of jail, another member of your team must cross the boundary and make it to their own side without being tagged.

Once they do, both of you are safe to go back to their own side assuming they stay in contact (holding hands the whole way back). To win the game, you must play both offensively, attempting to get the flag, and defensively, protecting your own flag.

The game has become increasingly popular to the point where most of the students, ages 5-17, play on a daily basis. It is incredibly fun and provides both a physical and strategic challenge during the lunch break.

By Jake Schechter

Rainbow Room (continued)

Most recently we added some simple machines to our tool belts after they helped us build our very own see-saw for the playground. It turns out levers and screws are everywhere and they help us use less force to do more work.

After science comes snack break until 10:30 when we are back to work for relax and read time. Students gather on the reading rug and enjoy listening to fiction and non-fiction books. We preview. We predict. We infer. We make connections. We visualize. We summarize. We take the time to appreciate the myriad styles of talented illustrators and we work hard to create our own books, taking inspiration

from the elements of the authors' craft we observe together - alliteration, personification, repetition, and onomatopoeia. An hour flies by and then it's lunch time.

The last third of our day is a mix of art, writing, music, movement, and structured language. While 2-4 students receive direct phonics instruction in a small group, others independently work on art projects such as making books, collages, or paintings. Finally, we pack up our bags and come together to play Capoeira, a Brazilian martial art mixed with music and dance. Students exercise their bodies by practicing movements that require balance and agility and they exercise their minds by learning Afro-

Brazilian rhythms and songs in Portuguese!

Rainbow room is a colorful, fun, nurturing place to create what you want to create and to be who you want to be. Youngers work hard, solve all kinds of problems, and spread the "good vibes" to everyone around us because we care about our community and we want you to care, too.

By Carrie Chandler



Geodome

In our dome class this semester, we are building a 19 foot geodesic dome. We are using metal pipes to make the dome, and we are building it outside of our school. We were hoping to be finished before the first snowfall, but now we are not sure if it will be done this semester or not.

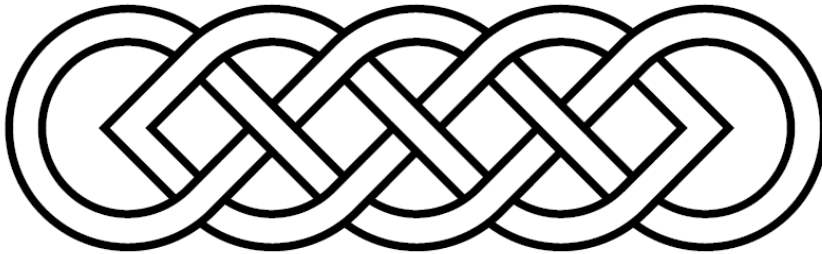
The first step in construction of the dome was cutting the pipes to size using the electric hack saw. Then we put the pieces in the “pipe squisher” Leon made out of wood and a car jack, flattening the end of the pipes. Next, we drilled holes in the end of the pipes with the drill press. We have people hammering the ends of the pipes to make it go faster. There are 250 pipes

to be done in all, and we’ve done 190, so there are 60 left to do. When they are all cut and prepared, we can start bolting them together.

We have all divided up the work so far. Jake and Arianna used the electric hack saw. We all took turns with the “pipe squisher,” and AJ, Sam and Eli used the drill press. Nicholas, Eli, and I hammered the pipes. We each chose which steps we wanted to work on.

I think this project is very interesting. I prefer doing hands-on learning projects rather than book work. I am so glad we are able to do projects like this.

By Myra Stevens



Have your child come home happy!

Thank You!

We would like to give our appreciation to: **The Crane Latin Ensemble; Marsha Baxter**, Ensemble Director; Our Latin Dance Party Co-Sponsors **Five Elements Living, SUNY Potsdam International Organization, La Casa Latina (SLU), Clarkson Spanish Club, Commons College (SLU)**, and **The UPS Store; Jeanna Matthews**, salsa dance instructor; Our Dance Party ticket sales centers **Nature’s Storehouse** and **Northern Music; Shelby Connelly** and **Rainbow Crabtree**, food donations for ensemble; **Joe Longshore**, Wilderness Survival class; **Chuck Bolesh**, Middles class Adventures in Learning; SLU Volunteers **Abbey McRae, Quinn Trainer**, and **Annie Gibbons; Efrat Ezra**, Youngers class Rosh Hashanah lesson; **Rob Klein**, copy machine; **Jean Williams-Bergen**, Equal Exchange fundraiser organizer; **Lisa Reynolds**, Middles knitting classes; **Linda Casserly**, organizing Olders history interviews; **Kay Denesha Tooney Pegs, Charlie Alexander, Edwin Pierce**, and **Eleanor Rosenthal**, Olders interviews; **Dulli Tengeler**, farm work; **Dave Bradford**, physics help; **Brian Ladd**, programming class; **Sheriff Detective Tom Caringi**, Internet safety class; **The McCuin Family & Uncle John**, for their generous gifts to our teachers; **Robin Einbinder, Margaret Bass, Eddie Goldstein**, teacher workshops.

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