

April 2013

INSIDE THE WOODS

Things are moving and shaking in April

With the end of school rapidly approaching, there are many dates on our calendar to take note of.

Perhaps the biggest event on our horizon is the School of the Woods Annual Spring Picnic, sponsored by the Parents' Organization. It's on April 21 from 1 to 4 PM.

It's "Spring Splash" day and anyone may come along wearing their beachwear, the better to get wet, muddy and skuzzy.

All the giant blow-up creatures and structures, crafts, games, outrageously fantastic food, more than just a few very desirable raffle items, will be available for enjoyment.

Be sure to refer to the "broadside" (that's a publicity sheet handout) for all the details.

Advance Notice About Early May events

Very important meetings happen early in May and we thought you should have an April shout-out about them.

We refer to the "Bridge" meetings scheduled for the lunch hour of May 8. These meetings are designed to give a heads-up to parents whose children will be moving up to a new classroom level.

During the meeting you can ask questions of teachers about classroom basics such as daily schedule, homework, field trips, etc. You will also learn a bit about expected behaviors and norms for the age groupings, and how the class structure will support your child.

More detailed information will be sent to current Kindergarten, third, sixth and eighth grade parents.

This school year's Parent Education Initiative is declared a winner

This year's highly active array of programs aimed to immerse parents in Montessori philosophy proved to be popular, well-attended and very informative. The programs officially end with Coffee Breaks with Dr. Betsy Coe and the Bridge Meetings on May 8. Our semi-annual magazine, *View From the Woods*, which has recently been mailed, has all the news about these events and some excellent photos to make the point. Be sure to read all about it.

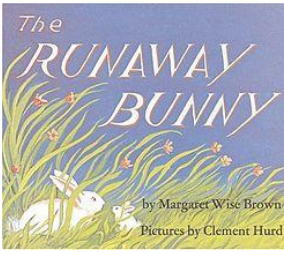
In this issue . . .

Annual Spring Picnic.....	1
Next Level Bridge Meetings.....	1
Review of Parent Education Events.....	1
Recommended Books	2
Suggestion for a great Weekend trip.....	3
The Ecological Child by Elizabeth Stepankiw.....	4-5
Two Essays by Maren Schmidt.....	6-7
Calendar	8

Edited by Eloise Rochelle

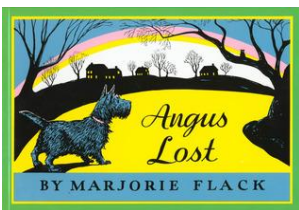
Recommended Reading:

Books About Being Lost, Separated and/or Alone



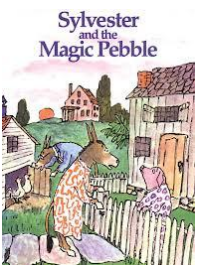
The Runaway Bunny, by Margaret Wise Brown. First published in 1942 and never out of print. A little bunny keeps running away from his mother in an imaginative and imaginary game of verbal hide-and-seek. Children will be profoundly comforted by this lovingly steadfast mother who finds

her child every time. Generations of readers have fallen in love with the gentle magic of its reassuring words and loving pictures. 48 pages.



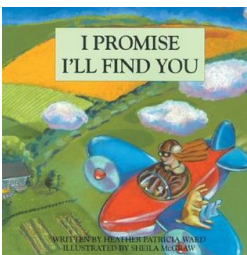
Angus Lost, by Marjorie Flack. Part of a trilogy, Angus, a Scottie, chases another dog and finds himself far from home. At night he realizes he is lost and finds shelter in a cave. Next morning he meets a familiar milkman and manages to make his way

home. First published in 1932, this edition in 1997. 32 pages.



Sylvester and the Magic Pebble, by William Steig. On a rainy day, Sylvester finds a magic pebble that can make wishes come true. But when a lion frightens him on his way home, Sylvester makes a wish that brings unexpected results. How Sylvester is eventually reunited with his loving family and restored to his true self makes a story that is beautifully tender and filled with magic. Illustrated with William Steig's

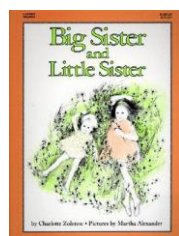
glowing pictures. Selected as one of the 100 Best Books of the Century by the NEA. Originally published 1969, 32 pages.



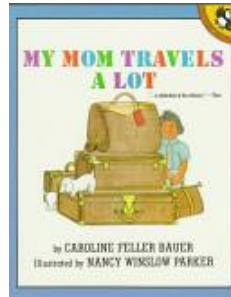
I Promise I'll Find You, by Heather P. Ward. A moving story that parents will love reading to and sharing with their children again and again. The fear of being separated from loved ones is a universal emotion. Consider a child who feels lost -- wandering away from home, becoming separated in a crowd, or

feeling frightened in a new and strange place? In eleven warm and simple verses, Heather Patricia Ward delivers a timeless message of reassurance. 2005, 26 pages.

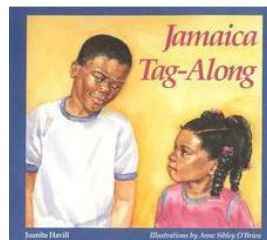
Big Sister and Little Sister, by Charlotte Zolotow. Once there was a big sister and a little sister. Big sister always took care of little sister and always knew what to do. But one day little sister wanted to be alone. She was tired of being told "Do it this way," or "Sit there." So little sister slipped away,



and big sister couldn't find her anywhere. It took something very special to make the sisters realize the both could take care of each other. 1966 (1990), 32 pages.



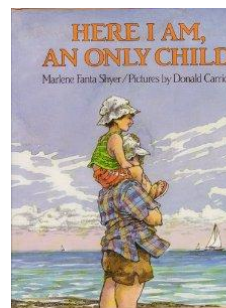
My Mom Travels A Lot, by Caroline Bauer. There are good things about a mom who travels a lot, and there are bad things, too. but the best thing that happens when Mom takes a trip is that she always comes home! Well-chosen, familiar situations that a child can identify with and attractive, amusing drawings that capitalize on the humor and spirit in each situation. 1985, 43 pages



Jamaica Tag-Along, by Juanita Havill.

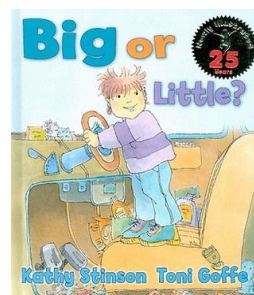
Jamaica doesn't understand why her older brother, Ossie, won't let her shoot baskets with him and his friends. So Jamaica goes off to build a sandcastle by herself. When a toddler comes over and tries to help her, she tells him not to; he's just in the way. She then realizes

being alone is the same as her brother and invites the little guy to help with her sandcastle. 1989, 32 pages.



Here I Am, An Only Child, by Marlene Syster. A young boy deliberates the fairness of being an only child -- first, the possible advantages of having siblings; then the fact that chores and responsibilities are his alone. Then he considers the advantages of being an only child, emphasizing such things as not having to share goodies or his parents' attention. Being an only child can

be a little lonely sometimes, but there are some wonderful advantages. 1985, 30 pages.



Big or Little?, by Kathy Stinson. It can be tough to figure out if you're a little kid or a big kid. Mom and Dad make Toby feel more grown up when they let him help wash the car, but when his older brother says to go away he feels little again. Sharing toys with his younger sister makes Toby feel big. What about wearing bunny-feet pajamas? All in all, Toby decides that he wants to be a big kid, but sometimes he likes being little

also. Still in demand after 30 years (1983), the new 2009 edition has new illustrations. 32 pages.

Let's return to the World's Fair . . .

LOTS OF HISTORY TO GET ACQUAINTED WITH

HemisFair'68 was the first officially designated world's fair held in the southwestern United States. San Antonio hosted the fair from April 6 through October 6, 1968. The official World's Fair sanctioning body, the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) accredited HemisFair '68 on November 17, 1965. The fair was held in conjunction with the 250th anniversary of the



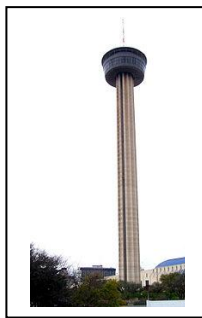
founding of San Antonio. Its theme was "The Confluence of Civilizations in the Americas."

The fair was built on a 96.2 acre site on the southeastern edge of Downtown San Antonio. Its theme structure is the 750-foot-tall Tower of the Americas, which remains today as the Alamo City's tallest

skyscraper. The top of the tower houses a revolving restaurant, lounge, and outdoor observation deck. It was designed by architect O'Neil Ford.

More than thirty nations hosted pavilions at the fair. Pavilions were also built by dozens of major corporate sponsors (i.e., Eastman Kodak, Ford Motor, GE, General Motors, IBM, etc.). The fair's largest pavilion belonged to the State of Texas (naturally). From the very beginning, the building was intended to be permanent and after the fair closed, it became the Institute of Texan Cultures. It is now operated as a museum under the aegis of the University of Texas at San Antonio.

The Institute of Texan Cultures, through its research, collections, exhibits and programs, serves as the forum for the understanding and appreciation of Texas and Texans. The 182,000-sq.ft. complex has 65,000-sq.ft. of interactive exhibits and displays. Its intent was to plan exhibits related to the history of Texas, its development, resources, and contributions, and to study the many ethnic groups that settled in Texas.



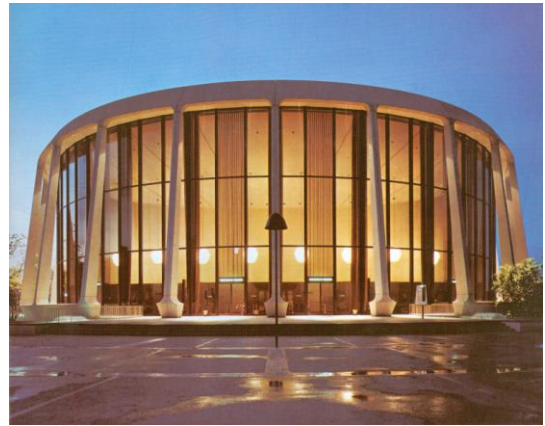
The Tower of the Americas

It has done that with relics, artifacts and personal memorabilia having a direct connection to the story of each ethnic group. The library on the third floor contains manuscripts, rare books, personal papers, over three million historical photos and over 700 oral histories.

There are displays in the museum representing the following cultures and their impact on the history and development of

Texas: African-American, Belgian, Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Jewish, Lebanese, Native American, Norwegian, Polish, Swedish, Swiss, Tejano, and Wendish (what? You never heard of them?).

In early 2010, ITC became an affiliate in the Smithsonian Affiliates program. Affiliate status grants the institute access to the Smithsonian's artifacts, education, and performing arts programs, expert speakers, teacher workshops, and resources to complement and broaden exhibitions.



The Institute of Texan Cultures

While it's true that many secondary schools include class trips to this facility, a week-end trip for the whole family would certainly be worthwhile and more informative, especially if any of them are history buffs. Information about programs, activities and special events is on the Internet.

Bet you didn't know. . . .

One: Anglo and other European families were invited to settle and colonize the area of Texas between 1821 and 1835, when it was still, first, a territory of Spain, then after Mexico gained independence from Spain, by the Mexican government. If Gen. Sam Houston had not defeated Gen. Santa Anna in 1836, we'd all be citizens of Mexico today.

Two: General Sam Houston had the unusual distinction of having been governor of two states – first, Tennessee and then Texas.

The Ecological Child -- Recommendations from David Sobel: Preparing Children for the Environment in Which They Will Live

By Elizabeth Stepankiw

In "Look, Don't Touch," in the July/August 2012 issue of *Orion* magazine, David Sobel poses the question: "What's the most effective way to parent and educate children so that they will grow up to behave in environmentally responsible ways?" In his discussion of this question, I believe he comes to conclusions that would be very much approved of by the children, as well as Dr. Montessori herself.



Sobel warns that giving too much technical information before the child has the opportunity to explore the natural world is part of a "museum mentality" that pervades many nature education programs today. Too often the schedule of events at the nature center begins by asking children to sit still for what amounts to a lecture. Then, when allowed outside, they are told don't touch, don't walk off the trail, and definitely don't pick the flowers. Tree climbing would be strictly verboten because it would be dangerous for the child or the tree. All these rules often end up giving children the impression that

nature is boring, fragile, and dangerous.

It is clear that environmental education programs could have the unintended consequence of alienating children from nature if they are too instructive and dull, restrictive and rule bound, with too much focus on learning taking the place of the delight of being outside. And, in our nature studies programs, Sobel tells us we should not be recruiting "developmentally unsuspecting young children" to fix all the problems of the Earth. This would only lead to children who are "fearful of the death of the planet at the hands of uncaring humans."

Too often children are not allowed spontaneous activities such as building forts because they might be unsightly and touching the animals and plants because they might be dirty. Climbing trees is seen as too dangerous, while ironically, we are willing to tolerate the risks of injury from playing organized sports. Instead, we should be allowing children to encounter nature on their own terms. Children need time to clamber and risk some damage, for unadulterated play in the natural world.

Environmental education in this country started out originally with

summer camp programs that give children experience with "vigorous outdoor life." Dr. Eugene Swan became a pioneer in the camping and scouting movements. He believed that the "heeding of Nature's ever-calling voice, and an adaptation of our lives to her laws, is going to become a salvation of the American race."

Boy and Girl Scouts started with this idea of teaching primitive living skills. David Sobel points out that, "these movements honored the deep inner desire in middle childhood to be self-sufficient, to learn how to survive with nothing but a jackknife and some strands of rawhide." Such instincts still persist in children today.

An emerging body of research is beginning to elucidate the connections between childhood experiences and adult stewardship behavior. Louise Chawla of the University of Colorado reviewed the studies of researcher's surveys of environmentalists. She found the recurring patterns in their lives that could be attributed to their environmental commitment were "many hours spent outdoors in a keenly remembered wild or semi-wild place in childhood or adolescence and an adult who taught respect for nature." These environmentalists talk about "free play and exploration in

nature, family members who focused their attention on plants or animal behavior, and they do not talk much about formal education." Rather than reducing nature to a set of facts to be mastered and taking all the joy out of environmental education, we should take advantage of that childhood yearning that compels children to "connect with their wild selves."

What activities do children spontaneously engage in when outdoors? Picking flowers, making a dandelion tiara, searching for frogs, walking off the nature path, just playing together in the meadow. "Between the ages of 6 to 12, children have an innate desire to explore the woods, build forts, make potions from wild berries, dig to China, and each of these activities is an organic, natural way for them to develop environmental values and behaviors."

John Muir, American naturalist, author, and early advocate of preservation of wilderness in the United States, remembers climbing up a tree with his brother to observe a blue jay's nest, exploring the creeks and springs, looking for frogs and snakes and turtles. He rejoiced in the pure wildness of nature, leaves, flowers, animals, wind, and sparkling water of the lake at his family's first American homestead in Fountain Lake, Wisconsin.

E. O. Wilson, Harvard entomologist and biodiversity

advocate, relates some of his early experiences in nature. He became skilled at hunting reptiles and catching lizards. He didn't "just look at butterflies, he collected them." He caught ants and put them in jars to observe them. It is better to be an "untutored savage" for a while rather than learning all the names of the anatomical parts.

Hands-on experience builds the naturalist. Children's interest in gaining systematic knowledge will come from the hands-on experience. "Nature programs should invite children to make mud pies, climb trees, catch frogs, paint their faces with charcoal, get their hands dirty and their feet wet" and to "go off the trail and have fun." Most of our great naturalists did these things in their childhoods.

For those who expect to live their lives in a responsible manner towards the environment, a study conducted by Kristi Lekies from Cornell University surveyed ordinary citizens from many walks of life, both rural and urban. Her conclusions are: *"Childhood participation in 'wild nature,' such as hiking or playing in the woods, camping, and hunting or fishing, as well as participation with 'domesticated' nature such as picking flowers or produce, planting trees or seeds, and caring for plants in childhood have a positive relationship to adult environmental values."*

Good programs encourage children to "observe, wonder, see patterns,

and make sense of things." Environmental values and behaviors rest on a foundation that begins with children's innate play tendencies in nature, allows wild nature play and hunting, gathering, collecting, and, when appropriate, consuming, as well as adults who model attention and respect as they explore nature with children.

Sobel ends his article by quoting the American essayist and naturalist John Burroughs, who was another early advocate for the American conservation movement: "Knowledge without love will not stick. But if love comes first, knowledge is sure to follow." We can support our children's educational growth, self-confidence, and love for the natural world by giving them time to explore and draw on the environment in a way that respects their own inborn desire to learn through play.



Two Essays on Leadership

By Maren Schmidt, M.Ed.

The Best Test of Leadership

Increasingly as the norm, and especially in years featuring elections, we will be deluged with daily details about various candidates for a variety of offices and other political figures. Our minds may turn to the idea of leadership, or the lack of it, as the case may be.

The reality of leadership is that it begins within the individual, and that means you. And me. Yes, you-the person in the mirror. That's where the buck truly stops, and leadership truly begins. This could be a discomfoting thought, or it could be a first step towards personal freedom and more.

Leadership lies not in the heart of any particular organization or political persuasion, but instead emerges from the core of each individual. Leadership corresponds to personal passion and empowering others to find their own purpose.

Thankfully, leadership is not dependent on a body of elected officials or other organizations. Leadership resides in the individual

choosing and endeavoring to follow a path that aligns principles, values, and the needs of others.

Leadership is not a contained global vision. Leaders use their individuality and imaginations to envision a common goal and find a path for others to follow.

Leadership cannot be found in a pep rally. It emerges not from frenzied hurrahs but from an individual conscience desiring to model a life well-lived with self-respect and respect for others.

There are many definitions of leadership. Stephen Covey says, "Leadership is communicating to people their worth and potential so clearly that they come to see it in themselves." Peter Drucker said, "The only definition of a leader is someone who has followers." John Maxwell says, "Leadership is influence- nothing more, nothing less." It all begins by leading yourself, seeing your own worth and potential, following your own directives, and influencing your behavior.

Too often the terms leadership and management are used interchangeably. Leadership is about doing the right things. Management is about doing things right. Leadership is about dealing with change. Management is about changing the deal. Leadership chooses where we are going. Management plans when and how we will arrive.

To be effective leaders we must know how to effectively lead and manage. Without leadership, we manage the wrong things. Without management we never move our vision ahead.

As parents and teachers-the leaders of our children-we must instill a vision into our families of each member's worth and potential. As leaders we must be disciplined and willing to sacrifice for that vision. When times get tough we must take our passion, our discipline and our commitment to see our vision through.

Building family is the best test of leadership. If we fail our children through lack of leadership, even if we accomplish our goals in other parts of our life, we may find that those achievements never fulfill us in the joyful way that building family does.

Making small adjustments to our daily lives in terms of our vision, passion, discipline and conscience can have payback in ways that will appear amazing in a generation. Building family builds a better world.

"Be the change you wish to see in the world."

Leaders Innovate

Making small adjustments in our lives in terms of vision, discipline, passion and conscience provide big payback on our leadership growth and abilities. Vision requires our mental skills of using imagination and curiosity. Discipline in turn uses our mind to control our physical challenges.

Leaders innovate. They try new ideas. Passion arrives when we find purpose in our lives. Conscience deals with matters of reason and free will.

They listen to others' points of view. If something doesn't work, they try something else. Leaders don't have to be geniuses, but they put into action Einstein's advice of "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."

As leaders of our families-the best test of leadership-we must have a compelling vision of what and how we want our family to be. If something is not working for our family, we don't have to follow patterns established by our parents, our jobs, our schools, our churches or our communities. We can innovate.

Our big question around which our vision, discipline, passion and conscience will converge is this: What do we really want for our family and our children?

Get a group of 20 parents together, ask this question, and you will discover that what parents really want for their children is this: Parents want their children to have certain time-tested aspects of character that will help children be resilient to whatever circumstances they find themselves, at any time in their lives.

What are these character traits we want for our children?

To have the ability to enjoy life; to value themselves; to be risk takers; to be self reliant; to be free from stress and anxiety; to have loving, peaceful lives; to celebrate their present moments; to experience a lifetime of wellness; to be creative; and to fulfill their higher needs and to feel a sense of purpose.

To get what we really want, sometimes we have to think differently.

For Rebecca in her growing up years, Saturday mornings had been family house-cleaning and chore time followed by a family outing. With fondness, Rebecca had continued this tradition with her own children. Resentment, though, was running high because her twin ten-year-old boys wanted to be on swim team, which required Saturday morning practices and meets, as well as money. Rebecca's answer to the boys' request was a flat out, "No." Her husband, John, didn't want to discuss the situation with her.

When the tension in the family became too high because of Rebecca's resistance to the boys' continued insistence to join swim team, Rebecca luckily had a leadership realization. Rebecca saw that she was trying to manage her sons, instead of leading them to see their worth and potential.

Rebecca and John called a family meeting to discuss the swim team problem. Rebecca started, "Your dad and I see that you really want to be on swim team, but we are not willing to give up important family time. We'd like to see what ideas we can come up with as a family so that we can have all our needs met." After a discussion of several solutions, the family chose to do a two-month trial of changing the Saturday morning chores to Thursday night in order for Saturdays to be free for swimming. Family outing time was scheduled for Saturday afternoons.

When Rebecca made the decision to be open to new ideas from her sons, and not focus as much on controlling the schedule and managing details, a win-win solution emerged.

Rebecca and her family found that discussing and making small adjustments helped create the family they envisioned-each member helping each other discover their worth and potential.