

## CELEBRATE OUR LEVEL I COMPLETING STUDENTS

FROM WISCONSIN TO KENTUCKY, from New York to Massachusetts, our 2014-2015 group has finished its Level I studies. These students have devoted themselves to the future of humanity by devoting themselves to the future of childhood and families. They are now offering their gifts and new capacities in Waldorf schools, as well as in independent early childhood programs. This summer they shared their deepening musical gifts and work in creative speech, their research into the field of early childhood, their sensitivity in supporting family life. They built a rich community and welcomed the new students who began their Level I and Level II work in July. A new group of seven students has begun our second cycle of Level II studies, focusing on the older child from age four to seven.



## WELCOME SARAH!

Our board of directors warmly welcomes **SARAH FRANKEL**, our newest member. Sarah is an attorney with the Ward Legal Group in Keene. Her career illustrates her deep

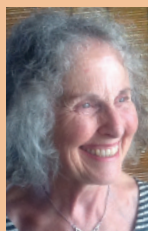


interest in the well-being of young children and families through her work in training volunteer *guardians ad litem*, appointed to represent the best

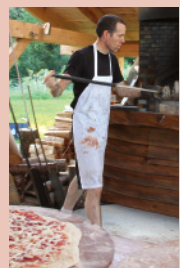
interests of children in child abuse or neglect cases, and her provision of legal assistance to clients who are survivors of domestic violence. Sarah's son Noah comes to Sophia's Hearth for our early education program while she works outside the home.

## RENEWAL MAGAZINE TO FEATURE SOPHIA'S HEARTH

Sophia's Hearth will be featured in a forthcoming issue of *Renewal* magazine, a publication of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America. Written by **SUSAN WEBER**, the article will share the work of Sophia's Hearth in relationship to our insights drawn from the research of twentieth century Hungarian pediatrician, Emmi Pikler. Her systematic investigations and practical experience with the natural development of infants and toddlers underpins much of the training and expertise here at Sophia's Hearth.



## PIZZA AND OUR DAILY BREAD



What would we do without **ORCHARD HILL BREADWORKS**? Our children eat their bread every day—naturally leavened black Russian rye and whole wheat. Our teacher education students eat Orchard Hill bread all summer long. And if this isn't enough, Sophia's Hearth was the beneficiary of a special August Orchard Hill Pizza Night, earning \$1,200 for our programs! Many thanks to all our volunteers, coordinated by **BUNNY BALLANTINE**, and to **KEN HAMSHAW** and his musician friends who enlivened the balmy evening. And the biggest thanks of all to **NOAH ELBERS**, our devoted baker!

## LAUREN HAKALA JOINS



A long-time Keene resident, **LAUREN HAKALA** joins us to guide our year-round early education program for infants and young children. She has been engaged in early childhood education for her entire career in a variety of settings ranging from her work with hearing impaired children in Brattleboro, VT, to holistic farm-based programs at the Orchard School in Alstead, NH. She is part of our Level I Teacher Education program group.

## Sophia's Hearth Family Center

[sophiashearth.org](http://sophiashearth.org) 700 Court St., Keene, New Hampshire 03431  
603.357.3755

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## The Early Childhood Teacher Education Center at Sophia's Hearth

### Sneak Preview, Summer 2016

#### Week One: June 27 – July 1

##### Spiritual Embryology

A 5-day course designed especially for early childhood teachers. With *Jaap van der Waal*

##### Dancing Hands and Joyful Voices

a 2-day, 3-day, or 5-day course on singing and moving with infants, toddlers, and young children, including nursery rhymes and materials by Wilma Ellersiek. With *Susan Weber, Jane Swain, Nancy Macalaster, Lynn St. Pierre, and speech artist Kim Snyder-Vine*

#### Week Three: July 11-15

##### Working with Parents

Deepen your relationship with the parents of the children in your care. A 3-day course with *Louise de Forest*.

### 400-hour Teacher Education Course in Waldorf Early Childhood Education A Full Birth-to-Seven Training

Level I begins July, 2016  
Recognized by WECAN and IASWECE



For details and on-line registration, please visit [sophiashearth.org](http://sophiashearth.org)

Or call us: 603.357.3755

# fall 2015 at S H F C childhood

a newsletter for friends and family of Sophia's Hearth Family Center



Cynthia Core

## Experiential Creativity ▲

What is experiential education? It is, in fact, often our deepest learning—when our senses are fully engaged, when our will is active, and when our intuitive capacities offer their deepest insights and truth. As parents and teachers, this is a daily experience!

## In This Issue

- Sophia's Hearth as an Experiential Education Center
- A full, internationally recognized birth-to-seven Waldorf early childhood teacher education program

You are invited to share your thoughts and questions! Please email us at [info@sophiashearth.org](mailto:info@sophiashearth.org)



# Sophia's Hearth: An Experiential Education Center



Cynthia Core

*Sunflower seeds become an artistic medium (above and on cover).*

By SUSAN WEBER

THROUGHOUT THE FIRST seven years of life, a child's learning arises from her direct experiences. Touching, seeing, moving, balancing are all part of trying out life. Children learn how to learn—they learn tenacity, they learn that diverse strategies may be needed for success, they learn that trial and error are a good method. Many of the youngest child's learnings cannot be taught, but it is possible to get in the way of the child's learning through our interruption, our distraction of his meaningful activity. All through the day, children are active in their self-initiated learning, skillfully guided by the adults around them. At Sophia's Hearth, we are deeply grateful for the research and insights of Hungarian pediatrician and researcher Emmi Pikler, which strengthen our ability to provide deep, experiential learning for both children and adults.

## Teacher Education and Experiential Learning

Our teacher education students learn this way as well. Peering through a classroom window in our Waldorf birth-

to-seven early childhood teacher education program, you might observe students wearing blindfolds, endeavoring to explore the world through the senses without the power of sight. Or they might be experimenting with natural dyes, learning what happens when one color is layered on another; or role playing to learn what the other might be experiencing.

They are learning in the way the children they educate learn—through experiences. The distinction for the adult student is that the experience is brought into a continual conscious reflective process. Through journal writing and group discussion, they explore crucial questions: "What moved me in this experience? What have I learned about myself that informs my work with children and families? What insights have I gained that can be applied to my teaching vocation?"

These experiences, and the many conversations they stimulate, are an essential aspect of our approach to teacher education.

# A Full Birth-to-Seven Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Education Program

INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED for many years for our pioneering work with children in the first three years of life, Sophia's Hearth decided to extend our teacher education program to embrace the full first seven years of children's development. From our perspective, nothing could be more natural than to grow our teacher education program upwards from these earliest years.

What led our teacher education faculty to the decision to extend our teacher education program to embrace the full first seven years of children's development? Susan Weber, Sophia's Hearth director, and Janene Ping, core faculty member, discuss this question.

**Susan Weber:** Our long-standing Level I teacher education program was created out of our pioneering work with children and their families in the first three years of life. As many students completed these studies, their natural question was whether they could complete their preparation in Waldorf early childhood education at Sophia's Hearth.



*The power and alchemy of indigo dyeing.*

*What is the importance of studying the years from birth to three for the teacher working with ages four to seven?*

**Susan Weber:** All of a child's development arises from the time between birth and three. Early childhood teachers with a firm understanding of the earliest months and years gain invaluable insights that bring a unique understanding of the older child's whole learning journey. Thus, our Level I graduates were beautifully prepared to take up study of the further years of the child's development. Our program leads the early childhood teacher to develop invaluable capacities for child observation and empathetic discernment so needed in working with children, families and parents of the twenty-first century.

**Janene Ping:** When a teacher studies the foundations of movement, of speech and language, of social behavior of the growing child in an organic way beginning with birth, all unfolds in natural sequence.



*Balance, rhythm, partnership.*

*How have you approached the curriculum for the Level II program?*

**Janene Ping:** Movement specialist Jane Swain and myself, together with other members of the faculty are working with inspired vision in the evolution of this second level. Innovative in embracing how contemporary research is confirming aspects of three-fold learning (cognitive, social/emotional and practical), our training is highly experiential and grounded in the arts. How does Waldorf early childhood education work with unfolding intelligences so important at the threshold of the awakening intellect? Together we are on a path to explore this question as we explore a fresh approach to the themes of learning.



*Handcrafted silk fish puppets.*

*How do the faculty's individual professional activities influence the program?*

**Susan Weber:** Our teacher education arises, in part, out of the insights and experiences gleaned from the experience in our on-site early education program for twenty-five infants and young children. This makes it possible to explore every principle, every practical insight in daily life here at Sophia's Hearth. The engagement of all our faculty in their individual fields bring our program to life.

“ Our program leads the early childhood teacher to develop invaluable capacities for child observation and empathetic discernment. ”

*What is the faculty's vision for the Early Childhood Teacher Education Program at Sophia's Hearth?*

**Susan Weber:** We envision Sophia's Hearth as a teacher education center that welcomes professional students into an innovatively structured, multi-level program that meets the needs of the twenty-first century. Our offering in creative speech empowers every teacher to bring a rich language environment to the children in his or her care. Our foundation in Emmi Pikler's carefully researched insights into children's physical development and sensory needs grounds every child in rich physical capacities and a healthy will, and we prepare our teachers to guide this development.



*Moving pictures, crafted by the teacher, meet the imagination of the growing child.*