

ShortSubjectsShortSubjectsShortSubjectsShortSubjectsShortSubjects

## TRICE, VIRGINIA AND HEARTH & SOUL



IN FEBRUARY, we were honored to host the talents of teacher and jazz vocalist **TRICE ATCHISON**, along with distinguished pianist **VIRGINIA ESKIN**, at our inaugural *Hearth & Soul* jazz concert. This toe-tapping musical event brought many new community members together to share some warm jazz and company on a cold snowy day. Funds raised will be used to assist early childhood teachers to access training opportunities through our teacher education scholarship fund.

*Talented jazz vocalist and Sophia's Hearth graduate Trice Atchison kept the toes tapping at our spring concert.*

## SUSAN WEBER SPEAKS AT GOETHEANUM

**SUSAN WEBER** was a keynote speaker at the April, 2015, international conference on *Transitions in Childhood From Birth to 14 years: Significance, Challenges and Consequences—Tasks for Educators and Teachers*. Sponsored by the Pedagogical Section at the center for the work of Rudolf Steiner; the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, the conference brought together 600 early childhood and elementary teachers for a week of lectures, discussions, workshops and artistic events. It was a time of reunion with colleagues worldwide, as well as an opportunity to share Susan's years of experience with the young child.

## JANE SWAIN PRESENTS ON SPACIAL DYNAMICS®

This winter, Sophia's Hearth associate director **JANE SWAIN** gave presentations on the topic of Spacial Dynamics®. Talks were in Denver, Colorado, at the WECAN Rocky Mountain Regional Conference and Viroqua, Wisconsin, at the Camphill Triform.

## SPRING FESTIVAL DANCERS AND DAFODILS!



## BIRTHDAY FUND THANKS!

Susan would like to thank the 70 contributors to her 70th birthday fund. She was deeply touched by your warmth and generosity. The gifts will be used for tuition assistance for the teacher education program.



## NEWS FROM THE BOARD



We are delighted to welcome a new member to our board of directors. **KATHERINE RICHARDSON** is currently the Donor Relations Coordinator for Monadnock United Way and has previously worked in marketing and admissions positions for Antioch University New England in Keene, NH. Katherine and her husband, Patrick, live in Surry.

*We are seeking additional board members! Please contact Cynthia Cote to share your interest in joining us.*

## Sophia's Hearth Family Center

sophiashearth.org 700 Court St., Keene, New Hampshire 03431

### Board of Directors

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

### Summer Institute Programs

#### June 29 - July 1

**Puppetry Arts** WITH JANENE PING  
**Dancing Hands, Frolicking Voices**  
WITH LYNN ST. PIERRE, NANCY MACALASTER,  
JANE SWAIN

#### June 29 - July 3

**Gardening with Young Children: Spiritual Foundations, Practical Activities**  
WITH CORDELIA LANE, LISA MAHAR,  
KATIE SCHWERIN

#### June 29 - July 10

**Advanced Studies in Child Development**

#### July 6 - 10

**Child Development I**

#### July 13 - 17

**Child Development II**

#### July 13 - 17

**Festivals With Young Children**  
WITH BETSI MCGUIGAN, JULIANE WEEKS

### 400-hour Teacher Education Course in Waldorf Early Childhood Education

Level I and Level II begin July 2015  
visit [sophiashearth.org](http://sophiashearth.org) for more info



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

## Sophia's Hearth Family Center

sophiashearth.org 603.357.3755  
700 Court St., Keene, NH 03431

# spring 2015 at S H F C childhood

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



## Playing With Joy ▲

Imaginative play is the work of the young child. Play provides young children the opportunity to develop creative thinking skills and other foundational capacities that are critical for the abstract learning that comes later in school. This is the philosophy behind the Sophia's Hearth early education program. The elaborate obstacle course pictured above was discussed with Jude's friends while being planned and carefully constructed—an imaginative idea that required the use of problem solving skills and team work to be realized.

## In This Issue

- Success in school after Sophia's Hearth
- A teacher education student at work in Mexico City
- Childhood: today and always

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



## Does Play-Based Education Prepare Children?



Cynthia Core

By SUSAN WEBER

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED how the later journey unfolds for children in a play-based early education program? Have you wondered if play-based early education can truly prepare children for life?

Sitting down to speak with parents whose children spent their earliest years—infancy, toddlerhood, and pre-school—at Sophia's Hearth to hear about their children's later experiences, I wondered what was gleaned in a play-based program. What do they observe as a foundation for their children's future?

First was the sense of self that they witnessed unfolding within their two children. Their appreciation for nature, enjoyment in spending tremendous amounts of time outdoors, and knowing *how* to be in the natural world stood out.

Their children are creative problem solvers. They see that their children can play without toys, solving problems as they arise and transforming what is available into what is needed. Imagination in play permeates daily life: a hockey stick becomes

a lever that raises and lowers a truck; a rolled up piece of paper becomes a telescope. The children's motor skills support all their activity and give them the freedom to express who they are.

The seven-year-old daughter, now a public school first grader, was never bombarded with letters or pre-reading experiences at home. However, she is now one of the best readers in her class; she began to read as a natural event "of her own wanting." She decodes words easily, rereading a sentence to alter her inflection when she grasps its further meaning. Her mother sees this ability to recognize and decode print as a problem-solving capacity that was developed through play. The strong oral language experience of her early childhood years—verses, games, stories, puppetry and singing—was complemented by a rich story-filled life within the family.

Validation for play as a foundation for a healthy future is all around us, we need only look.

## Childhood Today ~and Always

THOMAS BERRY WRITES that, "It Takes a Universe" to welcome a child to her life. As early childhood specialists, we would add that all the adults around that child are the first and foremost welcomers.

We, above all, create a world for the child that invites her to reach out, to be a part of that world and find joy in each day. We reinforce her confidence and competence through our human relationship with her.

And while this picture of the growing child may sound self evident, with research grounded and amply demonstrated over decades, there is a contrasting and vocally held position that does not see the unfolding child as a developing individual human being, but rather as:

- an investment in the future of society (read here *economics*);
- one to be educated to a general standard of pre-determined outcomes focused on purely measureable cognitive skills (read here *a machine-like picture of a living human being*).



### It Takes a Universe

by Thomas Berry

The child awakens to a universe. The mind of the child to a world of wonder. Imagination to a world of beauty. Emotions to a world of intimacy. It takes a universe to make a child both in outer form and inner spirit. It takes a universe to educate a child. A universe to fulfill a child.

Each generation presides over the meeting of these two in the succeeding generation. So that the universe is fulfilled in the child, and the child is fulfilled in the Universe. While the stars ring out in the heavens!

This avenue—or dead-end—lays aside self-determination as a human quality and a true picture of human development. We must be careful not to equate education with formal instructional learning. Its singular focus on 'knowledge transfer' does not engender the human capacities so urgently needed today: joy for life, creativity, autonomy, capacities of problem solving and persistence; the gift of finding meaning in life and ability to find help for one's struggles when it is needed.

How can we not advocate for a vision of childhood that is filled with potential, in a future that cannot be seen or known? How can we not have confidence in our children to unfold in a developmentally appropriate environment? How can we not trust that they will educate themselves out of their own initiative with our clear and thoughtful guidance?

This is the hope and work of all at Sophia's Hearth—a vision that defends the inalienable rights of children for childhood.



## Bringing the Sophia's Hearth Experience to Mexico

### IN PRACTICE



Paloma Munoz-Seca Ariza tends the garden.

THE PATH THAT LEADS PEOPLE to Sophia's Hearth is as individual as they are, and Paloma Munoz-Seca Ariza is no exception. Fluent in three languages, she earned a bachelor's degree in international relations and a masters in museography and exhibition management. It was while working in a museum education program that she discovered her passion for working with children.

A few years later, with encouragement from a mentor, Paloma opened La Petite Prince Kindergarten in her family home in Mexico City. The kindergarten was named after her favorite book, read to her by her father in that very home. Her mentor then encouraged her to seek additional instruction in early childhood education. Sophia's Hearth is clearly not the closest option for education to her home, but Paloma decided to enroll in Sophia's Hearth Teacher Education Program to challenge herself.

Paloma Munoz-Seca Ariza brings her Sophia's Hearth experiences to La Petite Prince Kindergarten in Mexico City. She works with a mixed age group, from four to seven years.

She is so glad she did. "When I first started the program, it was like a door being thrown open to the possibilities of what I could become, what I could bring to my work," she says. Currently Paloma is mid-way through the level I training and grateful for all that the program offers her. "It isn't notes

*“When I first started the program, it was like a door being thrown open to the possibilities of what I could become.”*

to refer to. It's tools I have been given: the support and confidence that it is alright to make mistakes, take two steps back and one forward." She has learned to take time to give to herself so she can give to the children. "I want to be at my best because I want to be someone they can imitate—because they do imitate me!"

Paloma takes their imitation of her actions seriously. She is motivated by Ghandi's statement, to "be the change you wish to see in the world." She sees herself doing this by becoming her best self and by working with the children. Sophia's Hearth is helping her learn how to be someone the children will benefit from imitating.

