

Duck Class

Newsletter for December, 2011

During the month of November we had many opportunities to talk about what it means to be thankful as we discussed the many things that make us happy. Special thanks to each of you for helping your child decorate their special turkey feather. When placed with the others, it made the most beautiful turkey ever!

The children helped to make and then enjoyed eating pumpkin pudding. Some of them couldn't get enough! We thought that we would share the recipe:



Pumpkin Pudding

1 cup pumpkin (canned)
2/3 cup milk
1 package vanilla instant pudding
1 teaspoon nutmeg
1 tablespoon cinnamon
2 cups Cool Whip
graham crackers (to crumble on top)

Combine pumpkin, milk, vanilla, and instant pudding together in a bowl. Add the nutmeg, cinnamon, and fold in the Cool Whip. Sprinkle the crumbled graham crackers on top.

Looking ahead: It's already time to welcome the month of Decembrrr! As the colder weather arrives, and the anticipation of rain, sleet, snow -o.k., I know enough already! Anyway, please remember that we do try and get outside on a daily basis. Remembering to send your child with complete winter gear is most helpful, and allows the children to make the most of their outside experiences. During this time of dressing for winter, we continue to work with each of the children to learn to become independent with their dressing skills. We've learned that it is helpful for the children to first have their mittens on (or socks if you choose.) Then when putting his/her jacket on, lay the jacket flat on the floor and have your child stand near the hood. Then have him/her reach directly into each of the sleeves and "flip" the jacket over their head. Many of the children take pride in the fact that they are already able to do this! When time allows, giving your child opportunities to dress themselves at home, will help encourage their independence.



As we journey outside and feel the wind blowing at our cheeks, we will also continue to look for other signs of winter. From the new coats on many of the animals, as well as how their homes are now protected from the brisk winter winds, to the squirrels who scurry to find food to store for the long winter days. Recently, we spent a lot of time watching as a squirrel rolled a pumpkin onto the side walk, then proceeded to eat its way through to the inside. Many

of us were amazed at how diligently he worked. One thing for sure is that Country Day squirrels, just like all the other animals, will be well taken care of this winter season!

During the month of December, with the help of our families, we will spend some time talking about the upcoming winter holidays and the ways in which different families celebrate. If you have a special book, activity or recipe that you would like to share with the class, please contact either of us. We would love to have you come and visit.

Welcome: We are excited to announce the addition of 2 teachers to the toddler environment; Melinda Gonzales and Lisa McCulloch. They will job share a position helping in both the Chick and Duck classrooms, interacting with your children and providing assistance to the teachers. Melinda will be working Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings while Lisa will work on Mondays and Fridays. Both have education backgrounds and are each the parent of a child in the Ponies classroom. We look forward to the additional help and support they will be providing.

In closing please remember: So often we get "wrapped up" in all that we have left to do, take the time to enjoy the simple pleasures - cuddling together, reading a book, or just sitting quietly... marveling at the gift which is your beautiful child (children). We would both like to thank you for sharing your special child with us. And, we would like to send best wishes for a happy, healthy holiday season.

-Angela and Nancy

**Class
Pictures**

**Nature
News**

**Music and
Sign Language**

Getting Ready for Winter: This month in Nature we focused on learning how animals survive the cold and harsh winter. In Pre-2 we learned about migration and the benefits of moving to a warmer climate for the winter. We focused on the Arctic Tern, which migrates from the North to South pole and back every year. We talked about the obstacles that animals face as they travel back and forth and built our own obstacle course to practice migrating. Students practiced making mental maps of the nature room just as animals do when they migrate. We even learned some basic compass skills and the directions.

We talked about how animals use hiding as a way to survive winter. We learned how animals hide in homes, in groups, and by camouflaging. We talked about how birds hide in groups and may join noisier birds like chickadees to avoid predation. The kids played a game of a tag to demonstrate the benefits of hiding in a group. We also learned about how some animals are able to change color to avoid predation. They played a camouflage game by hiding animals around the school and searched them out.

Pre-1 students also played the camouflage game. They also tried on different colored furs to see which would be better for camouflaging in winter or summer. The toddlers tried to find animals camouflaged in winter scenes. We looked at pictures of animals changing colors and tried on different fabrics to pretend to be winter or summer arctic hares.

Pre-2 students learned the difference between hibernation and dormancy. We talked about which types of animals hibernate and why they choose to. Students pretended to be bears and went to the woods to find the best hibernating spots. Later in the week, we also focused on the woodchuck and the legends behind Groundhog Day. Students listened to a poem about the groundhog and illustrated the story with their own pictures. Pre-1 students and toddlers both looked at pictures of a number of hibernating animals. Pre-1 students also looked for places around school to hibernate.

Pre-2 students learned about insulation and how animals use fur, fat, feathers, and winter coats to help them survive the extreme temperatures. We conducted an experiment where students insulated a small container of gelatin. If the gelatin stayed in liquid form, they kept enough heat in; if the gelatin turned solid than it became too cold. We also talked about snow's ability to insulate small animals.

Animal Homes:

Later in the week, we started our transition into learning about homes for animals. We learned about how bees and wasps make nests using hexagons and use their homes to protect themselves in winter. We acted out how honey bees find a new home.

As always we love having parent visitors and artifacts sent from home. We will be learning about animal homes in December and then water in January.



-Emily

Sign Language and Music with Sylvia

Music

In **Music**, we've been learning a variety of dances. Dancing to music comes natural for all ages and a wonderful way for children to express themselves. A few favorites have been "Bow to Your Partner" and "I'm your Friend". They love dancing with partners and it's been fun to see how quickly they've learned the actions for each dance. I also brought in my violin and we had a great time playing a game where the children listened for the contrast between a quiet classical lullaby and the lively fiddle music. They'd pretend they were sleeping to the lullaby and then quickly jump up and dance when they heard the fiddle music. It's been a fun month!

Sign Language

In **Sign Language** we've been learning to sign numbers. Sign Language is a great visual for the children to help in learning number quantity and recognition. They especially enjoy signing with my puppets as we read books, play games and sign songs. We also continue to sign our colors and animals. One of their favorite stories is my flannel board story "Little, Mouse". I have 10 houses, each a different color, where one house has a little mouse hiding behind it. They always love to guess which house the mouse is hiding in. Not only is it a fun story, but it also gives the children the opportunity to use their sign language to communicate a full story, not relying on any voice. Next month we'll begin signing the alphabet.



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-Sylvia