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# Little River News

## Graduation Celebration for Three Seniors

Little River has three graduating seniors this year, making it our largest graduating class ever. Seniors Gwen Smith, Nora Bradford, and Ellie Siegfried will be joined by their families, friends, and the Little River community at the graduation celebration on May 9.

Gwen is our first student to have completed grades K-12 here at Little River. Ellie has been with us from grades 1-12 and Nora has been here since fifth grade.

In addition to completing the normal high school course load and requirements, seniors must complete an internship, senior circle, senior portfolio, and senior project.

All three of our seniors were accepted into the col-

leges of their choice. Ellie, who has done her senior year at the Clarkson School, will be attending Bucknell College in Pennsylvania doing a liberal arts program with a special emphasis in math and science. Gwen will be attending Kingswood University in New Brunswick, Canada, to go into ministry. And Nora, who has been accepted at several schools is in the throws of deciding between a physical therapy program and a liberal arts program.

This fall each of our seniors held their senior circle, where they gathered their parents, teachers, and friends for a support system to look at their accomplishments and their plans after high school. The seniors are currently working on their

senior portfolio which includes an essay on what they have learned at Little River, their hopes and dreams, their transcript, and a portfolio of photographs, art, and academic work they are especially proud of. In the spring each senior will be doing a special project to give back to their school.

We are proud of our seniors and look forward to their graduation ceremony to send them off into the next phase of life. We wish them well.

*by Steve Molnar*



Gwen, Ellie & Nora sledding at Birdsfoot Farm

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# Exploring History Through Lyrics & Literature

In Rainbow Room, the Youngers began their study of American History by learning a poem called *The Twelve Jewels*, which reveals life's simple equation:

*Knowledge, Wisdom, Understanding*  
+ *Food, Clothing, Shelter*  
+ *Freedom, Justice, Equality*  
= *Love, Peace and Happiness.*

They presented the poem to Little River students and staff at a morning meeting and to Little River families at an all-school potluck. One Younger, Aurora Casserly, explained that "Freedom is when you can do whatever you want as long as you don't hurt other people." Another Younger, Oz Zuker, said that equality is "when people are treated the same and not treated bad because of the way they look, like the color of their skin."

Our unit of study, The African-American Experience: From Slavery to Civil War to Civil Rights, was created to explore the Youngers' questions about the racial inequalities and injustices that we discussed when processing the tragic events that took place in Ferguson, MO and NYC. In order to better understand present-day US race relations, we needed to go back in time, all the way back to when Europeans started expanding their empires by colonizing other

cultures.

Jane Yolen's phenomenal children's book, *Encounter*, brought us back to the roots of racism in the Caribbean and Dolores Johnson, author of *Now Let Me Fly*, carried us through the life of an African forced into a life of servitude.

In January, we embraced the opportunity to work with four students from the Crane School of Music, who designed a parallel unit of the music that accompanied the African-American experience. Twice a week the Youngers eagerly participated in lessons that tied together history and music. They played new instruments, learned new vocabulary, practiced new songs, and had even begun writing their own! Work songs, spirituals, and code songs have enriched our read alouds about escaped slaves like Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass.

One of the Youngers, Madeline Hansen-Schrieber, was so inspired by our unit that she proposed we create a play to "teach everyone about slavery!" The idea took hold and the Youngers took control. They designed a realistic plot with colorful characters, turning the play into a musical by incorporating the songs they learned from the Crane students. All that is left is the scenery, cos-

tumes, and a few dress rehearsals before we perform at the next all-school potluck on Tuesday March 24th at 6:00 pm. We hope to see you there!

by Carrie Chandler



Youngers read aloud time

## Physics is Phun!

Our four-year cycle of science continues this year with the study of physics. From the Youngers in Rainbow Room to the Olders we are taking a close look at the laws that govern our universe. Each group has examined physical phenomena through age-appropriate problems and activities.

Our playground needed a see-saw, so last fall the Youngers built one as part of our unit on simple machines. They dug the hole, assembled the see-saw using the cordless drill, carried all of the pieces outside and set it up. They learned about simple machines, forces, and the joy of working together to build a useful project.

The Middles built Rube Goldberg

machines to finish their unit on motion. The task for each machine was to ring a call bell. The students used matchbox cars, marbles, blocks, scissors, pulleys, string, lots of tape, tennis balls, and other items in various combinations to make that bell ring. The classroom rattled with falling marbles and hummed with energy as the students built, tested, and then rebuilt their machines. In addition to the physics, the students learned that sometimes you start with a plan and then make adjustments as you discover flaws in the original plan. Sounds a little like life, doesn't it?

All three age groups spent January working with magnetism and electric-

ity. The Olders used prototyping boards, LEDs, and resistors to build various circuits. Then they used multimeters to learn the differences between parallel and series circuits. They also learned to apply Ohm's law in the analysis of circuit diagrams. Olders and Middles are currently turning their attention to alternative energy projects for a science fair in April.

Next year we return to biology, the course I was first hired to teach 4 years ago. I would like to thank Steve and the entire Little River community for the opportunity to teach such interesting kids in such a fascinating place.

by Leon Sawyko

# Little Lotus Yoga for Kids

Why yoga? Why should we do yoga with children? The term yoga comes from the Sanskrit word “yogah,” meaning union or joining. In yoga, we unite our minds with our bodies, working toward a holistic life. An early yoga program encourages children to be integrated, while giving them the skills to access their emotions and energies.

Yoga in a school setting has many physical, mental, and emotional benefits for the students. According to [yoga4classrooms.com](http://yoga4classrooms.com), some of the benefits include enhanced motor skills, balance, and listening skills; improved confidence, self-esteem, focus, and concentration; reduced anxiety and tension, improved mind/body awareness, and an outlet to express and balance emotions. In our class experience, the students often leave yoga class more centered, focused, and in-control of their bodies, their self-awareness piqued.

Little Lotus Yoga for Kids is a class for the Youngers, integrating music, art, storytelling, games, imagination, and yoga. Because of their physical developmental stage, children under the age of eight should focus on play and fun during their yoga practice. Each class includes a number of elements and is typically thematic. Some of the themes we have incorporated into the class include

hands, mandalas, the ocean, and animals.

The first element of our Youngers’ Yoga class is a warm-up. We have a song that we use to kick off our class each week. We sit in a circle, sing, and move to the lyrics. The students love the song and count on the continuity of beginning class in the same way each week. After our warm-up, we talk about the theme of the week or review a previous class. We move into a breathing exercise, using our breath to either relax our bodies or to focus our attention. Pranayama, or breathing exercises, is a weekly favorite, as we explore using our breath to move origami boats, paint with straws, or become imaginary balloons.

The asana practice or postures are the next segment of our class. Most of our postures were created by the Youngers in our early classes, drawing upon nature and animals for inspiration. For instance, our “elephant pose” is a spin-off of the traditional forward fold with an elephant trunk added. We move from pose to pose using a variety of techniques including stories and/or music. When we have finished a series of poses, we move into our art activity. The craft project ties into the weekly theme, often emphasizing a key point of the class.

Another important aspect of our yoga class is that it is noncompetitive and focused on fun. While we begin class with a plan, we often employ our flexibility and

abandon the plan, following the impromptu imaginings of the Youngers. We often have a child bring a new posture idea to class or come with an idea that needs exploring. Allowing the students the freedom to explore movement, breathing, creativity, and their feelings makes Little Lotus Yoga for Kids class a favorite time of the week.

*by Kelly N. Burnham*



Youngers warming up with deep breathing...  
Namaste.

## Thirteen Years at Little River

Thirteen years ago, we sought options for our child’s education. We explored public schools, private schools, and home school options until we settled on what we felt would best meet Gwendalyn’s needs. Little River offered Gwen the option of a personalized education as well as varied opportunities. Over the years, Gwen has attended Little River as a full-time student and as a satellite student depending on our family’s needs. She has found the ability to be herself and express herself through the school’s program.

As a Younger, Gwen flourished in an environment of play and exploration that encouraged her eager mind to learn. She was blessed by two teachers who en-

couraged her to be who she was whether dressed as a fairy princess or romping in the mud at Birdsfoot.

As a Middle student, Gwen enjoyed the varied age groups that interact at Little River. She learned the importance of spending time with all age groups and still considers the daily interactions between Youngers, Middles, and Olders to be one of the school’s greatest strengths.

As an Older, Gwen has continued to be encouraged to be an individual and has been blessed to create a personalized program that served her learning style, goals, and interests. She has learned to be herself and to find her own path for the future.

I have been blessed with the privilege

of raising Gwendalyn Jae Smith for almost 18 years now. She has grown to be independent, intelligent, and kind. Little River has played an important role in who she has become. Many young people are stilted by a system that requires them to be and think like those around them, while Gwen has bloomed in her ability to discover who she wants to be along the way. We are proud to know her and look forward to what her future holds.

*by Nancy Smith*

*Note: Nancy Smith is the mother of graduating senior Gwen Smith, who is the first student to attend Little River from kindergarten through 12th grade.*



# A Magical Day of Harry Potter

# Thank You!

Little River Middles students recently organized a *Harry Potter Day* for the entire school. With our book clubs focusing on the *Harry Potter* series, we are delving into the magical world created by J. K. Rowling.

Many activities were planned to simulate Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry. One of the activities of the day was a Marauders' Map making activity. Using a map of LRCS made by Older Jake Schechter, students created their own secret passages around the school. Students also played a chess tournament, though we did not have life-sized chess pieces as the wizards do at Hogwarts. Tea leaf readings were performed by Carrie, dressed as Professor Trelawney. Leon conducted a magical experiment involving the iodine clock reaction. Students surprised themselves by changing clear liquid to colored while reciting an incantation. We also shared foods from the series, such as butter-beer (a butterscotch milkshake-type drink), chocolate frogs, and peppermint toads. Everyone is looking forward to our next *Harry Potter Day*!

by Kelly N. Burnham



Elwood making his magical potion

We would like to give our appreciation to: **Chuck Bolesh**, Middles Adventures in Learning class; **Cathy Giglio**, Middles tutor; **Annie Gibbons**, Youngers volunteer; **Sue Powers**, energy workshop; **Dan Kuelgen**, Middles woodworking class; **Kimbre Petrie**, Olders stained glass class; **Desiree Holmes**, Olders ceramics class; **Andrea Malik**, self-defense workshop; **Valarie Dana**, Renewal House; **Emily Price**, SLU lifeguard; Online Auction Committee: **Rich Stevens**, **Eric Williams-Bergen**, **Jean Williams-Bergen**, **Shannon Ralston**; **Matthew Morris**, Director of Center for the Performing Arts in Potsdam; **Mike Kissinger**, our Professor Snape for *Harry Potter Day*; Crane School of Music volunteers in the Youngers room **April Beard**, **Joe Connors**, **Andrew Hochler**, **Alec Sisco**, and **Dr. Peter McCoy**.

Have your child come home happy!



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