

Fall At Playschool



The mission of Charlestown Playhouse, Inc. is to provide an accessible, safe and nurturing play-based early-childhood program. Our goal is to support both children and their families through their participation in our diverse community

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Stay informed about Playschool events and Playschool volunteer opportunities-sign up to be on our email list-just send your email to charlestownplayhouse@verizon.net



Hello friends! The falling leaves and chill in the air remind us that it's almost time for the famous **Playschool Thanksgiving Feast** — a highlight of autumn for the staff and children. The children have a delightful time bringing in their contributions to Miss Polly in the kitchen and sharing a feast with their friends. We are so thankful for this continuing tradition and the joy at Playschool every day!

Autumn is also a busy time of year for our dedicated sale committee and parent volunteers who run the famous **Charlestown Sale**. We have a new website devoted exclusively to the sale: www.cphsale.com. Please visit for all the details. The spring Sale will be here before you know it! Think about consigning and share with your friends and family.

A lovely warm autumn in Playschool finds the children enjoying our outside space more than ever. The spring and summer work parties helped add some new natural play spaces in the woods, a path, a teepee, all kinds of fun! Did you know that by providing food, water, cover and a place for wildlife to raise their young we not only help wildlife, we are certified as a natural wildlife habitat by the National Wildlife Federation?

Miss Betty's Jeep

Sadly, we had to say farewell to Miss Betty's jeep in the play yard this year. It had become un-repairable and dangerous for the children, so it had to be removed. The good news is that we were able to purchase a new play structure with money from our fund-a-cause at the auction, and as a fitting tribute the new play structure

is..... a jeep! Miss Faith and her husband Al generously gave of their time to break down the old jeep. The new jeep is a favorite, but nothing will be the same as Miss Betty's jeep!



Run — or Walk!

A New Local Race Will Benefit Playschool

Great news! Charlestown Township Parks and Recreation has invited the Playschool community to partner with them on the 2014 Charlestown Community Day and the inaugural **Charlestown 5k** will be held October 4th, 2014 at Charlestown Park. The day will kick-off with a 5k race around beautiful Charlestown Township, and will also include a Family Fun Run and Kids' Dash at the park. The Community Day will be a harvest festival of fun with plenty of entertainment for all ages. All proceeds from the Charlestown 5k — as well as other Community Day activities-- will go to Playschool.

If you would like to learn more about this exciting opportunity and how you can be involved, please contact Amy Kokas (amygkokas@yahoo.com) or Erika Benowitz (e_benowitz@yahoo.com).

Professional Development

On October 22, a team from Playschool, the Directors and several teachers and parents, presented “The Playschool Approach: Engaging Parents in a Cooperative Classroom” at the Pennsylvania Early Childhood Education Summit held in State College. Early childhood professionals throughout the state had the opportunity to learn best practices from ours and others’ presentations over the three-day conference. This same team presented the workshop at the Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children (DVAEYC) in May 2012, reaching an audience of early childhood professionals across the region. Kathleen and Carrie also presented a literacy workshop entitled “Bringing Stories to Life”.

The Nature Explore program for educators was held at Playschool on May 4 and was a great success. This was an adult education/professional development event which Amy coordinated and organized in collaboration with DVAEYC (Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children). The all-day event had 51 participants from 5 counties (Chester, Montgomery, Delaware, Bucks, & Philadelphia) and was well received by all in attendance. Nature Explore classrooms are dynamic, nature-based play and learning spaces.

Miss Kathleen won another \$500 grant! This one was from the Association of American Educators and was for a raised garden bed and accompanying materials. The Blue Room had a great time with their garden last spring, with more fun sure to follow this year.

Congratulations to Miss Carrie! Miss Carrie took advantage of tuition reimbursement through Playschool and got her teaching certification this spring! We are so lucky to have her at Playschool caring for and teaching our children every day



New Parking Lot

Each year at the Open House Miss Betty would address the driveway Drop-Off & Pick-Up and why parents couldn't park across the street or along the road and walk their children in by telling the group that “many years ago, when Playschool first started, every once in awhile a car would drive down this road...” Everyone would laugh because they immediately knew where she was headed, and why it was dangerous to park across the street or along the road, and it certainly fits the climate now that the slip ramp has increased the traffic by so much.

While the Charlestown Playhouse has existed for over seventy-five years, the urgency of a paved Child Safety Drop Off Area (CSDOA) emerged as a necessity only in the last couple of years. Several factors came together to create this need.

Our school community has shifted dramatically like the community around it in the last two decades. The new demographic of our families is that they travel, sometimes a significant distance, to attend



Playschool thereby increasing the sheer number of cars parked in our lot during the course of a school day. With changing weather patterns across the region, increases in wet conditions overall have led to heavily muddled areas, cars getting stuck, and scarily, cars sliding out of control in the upper area. During periods of snow, the area is difficult to plow and icing becomes a safety issue in being able to maintain. This is particularly true with a heavily graded area without paving. Three years ago two parents worked together to design and install a drain for storm water. Even with these measures, icing remains an issue on both the upper and lower lot.

The most dramatic factor has been in the increase in commuter traffic on this state road. The December 2012 opening of the Pennsylvania slip ramp off Route 76, only 2.5 miles from our school, exacerbated the problem, with an estimated increase of 40-100% of our current traffic. Because there is no setback of the school from the road, as well as a foreshortened line of sight, there is an increasing sense of danger regarding the potential of a speeding commuter to the injuring of a child, parent or staff.

As these two emerging problems defined themselves – the lack of an adequate parking area and the lack of a safe drop-off area – four volunteers worked on looking into other viable solutions. These volunteers were Playschool parents and a staff’s husband (two engineers, an architect and landscape designer respectively) – using their professional expertise to research what would be the most practical and financially conservative option to solve both issues.

The best possibility involves the reworking of the current parking area to incorporate both functions – a paved parking area and a new area for parents to drop off and pick up. With the help of our parent volunteers and a paid engineer, a design was developed to (1) maximize the amount of the available parking area, (2) to create a school entrance that would have the largest line of sight for traffic in both directions and (3) simultaneously create a drop off area that would safely move traffic through this relatively small area. A new pavilion area was also designed to ensure that staff and preschool children would have a safe staging area to wait and be supervised.

The Charlestown Playschool Board as a whole has been working parallel to these volunteers over the past couple of years – creating a strategic plan, identifying funding sources, creating a timeline of intent, and identifying steps to the process. This year, the CSDOA is the sole focus of our strategic planning efforts. For more information or ways you can help, email charlestownplayhouse@verizon.net.



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Playing for 75 Years

Marilou Hyson and A. Saia
from *Teaching Young Children* Vol. 5

Here at Charlestown Playhouse in Phoenixville, PA, we have been playing for 75 years. Educational trends come and go, but the lasting values of “Playschool” were established by founding director Elizabeth Stonorov-known as Miss Betty-who inspired and guided their implementation until her death at age 97 in 2013.

Miss Betty knew and was influenced by child development leaders such as Lawrence Fink and Erik Erikson who visited Playschool in its early years to observe the children’s complex block-building and pretend play. Today our staff and children’s families continue to support the children’s playful investigation of the indoor and outdoor Playschool world. Our values and practices remain essentially the same, although they have been enriched by recent studies of playful learning, self-regulation, scaffolding, and examples of play-focused approaches such as Reggio Emilia and Tools of the Mind.

Every day, we see how play supports children’s development and learning. This happens in many ways, but we especially notice two benefits. One is that, through play, each child learns how to build caring relationships with other children (“We’re friends, right?” Let’s take a trip together”), becoming an essential member of the Playschool community. Another is that, through play, children can take learning risks and push their understanding forward within a safe environment (“Hmmm...how does this old typewriter work anyway?”).

Betty Stonorov was convinced that play is children’s work and that the activities at Playschool “help the child understand himself and the world a little better”. That process, begun in 1936, continues today. A few months ago, we observed a little boy finally connecting with another child through play. Abe has disabilities that have created many difficulties for him. He finds it hard to connect with other children, and they are sometimes afraid of him because of his behavior when he’s frustrated.

But every day Abe has been supported and encouraged by the Playschool environment and the warm, patient concern of his teachers and parents helpers. On this day, we noticed that Abe had initiated pretend play with his classmate Kaylen-Kaylen was Abe’s puppy. For half an hour she happily followed Abe around the classroom, gently led by Abe’s leash and even sitting patiently like a good puppy when Abe went to the bathroom. The adults watched with tears in their eyes as Abe’s new relationship unfolded.

Here at Playschool, we have faith in children’s abilities. Like their teachers and parents, children are not perfect, but we believe that they have an essential goodness and are able to do remarkable things (“this is going to be the biggest hole ever!”). We know that sometimes children just need time and space; at other times, they need loving limits and well-planned supports to help them grow up to be responsible citizens.



"No Effort" Ways To Support Playschool

Charlestown Playhouse is registered with **Giant's A+ Rewards Program**. Last year we made over \$1000 with this program. We are currently collecting Bonuscard numbers for registration. Please email Karen Dogra at kski1414@yahoo.com to submit your Bonuscard number; or you can go online and register your Bonuscard at <https://www.giantfoodstores.com/aplus/> with Playschool ID# 05601. Tell your friends! Tell your neighbors!

In the 2012/2013 School Year we earned \$279 from **Boxtops for Education**. How does it work? For every box top you clip Charlestown Playhouse receives \$.10. If you can — drop these in the mail to **2478 Charlestown Rd. Phoenixville, PA 19460**

Do you have a **Target REDcard Credit, Debit or Visa**? If not, you can sign up for either card as another way for Playschool to earn money. Here's how it works: Visit <http://www.target.com/tcoe> or call 1-800-316-6142 to designate our school (School ID: 153106), then use your REDcard whenever you shop. When you use your REDcard (Target Credit Card, Target Debit Card or Target Visa Credit Card) to save 5% on your purchases everyday and Target will donate up to 1% of your purchases to our school! We welcome and encourage participation from grandparents, alumni, friends and neighbors.

Volunteer!

We would love to have friends join us at Bazaar, Sale, or many other fun Playschool events-email charlestownplayhouse@verizon.net for more information.

Save the Date!

December 7th — Holiday Bazaar

Please join us at Playschool for one of our favorite events of the year! Old friends and new gather for this sentimental favorite, this year's theme is "Super Sweet Holiday Bazaar" and there will be something for everyone.

Friday May 7th — Auction

The highlight of the spring and a great chance to meet new friends, catch up with old friends and support Playschool!

June 7th — June Party

Please join us in the play yard from 1pm-5pm for fun and good times, a ride on the 'roller coaster', a trip through the box maze, and maybe some reminiscing!

