



**NSCC PARENT
ADVISORY
COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITY
NEWS**

**NOVEMBER
2012**



BEYOND THE SEASON OF GRATITUDE by Becky Callahan, NSCC Parent Education

I often go to Half-Priced Books and travel a path around the store. I start by browsing in quilting books, then parenting books and young children’s books, and finally thank-you notes. Yes, thank-you notes. I have long kept a stockpile of thank you notes in my house. When our daughters were young, my husband and I would give them a box of thank-you notes as an extra gift for special occasions like birthdays and the holidays. This was our way of intentionally prompting them about the importance of expressing gratitude and appreciation.

After a recent baby shower for our new grandson in late August, I was at a dinner with a longtime friend, a past preschool co-op friend in fact (33 years later!). At dinner she said to me “It was so nice to get a thank-you note from your daughter and her partner on our gift and the words were so thoughtful.” This was a parenting reward, albeit many years later, for the efforts that went into helping my children learn to express their gratitude.

As we enter the season of expressing thankfulness, I am often asked by parents of young children how they can balance the commercialism in the upcoming months that engulfs our children in the aisles and in the media. Parents frequently wonder about what

they can do to teach their children about the importance of being grateful not just at Thanksgiving, but also year round. A simple answer may be to help our children learn to write thank-you notes. This is a simple act, but in the bigger picture it is really about intentionally integrating gratitude into the framework of our families on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis.

RESEARCH

Recently gratitude has been the focus of social, psychological and scientific research and has actually proven to have an impact on your wellbeing. Following are a variety of resources with comments on findings about gratitude:

From Dr. Carol Caron B. Goode, founder of the Academy for Coaching Parents International:

“Gratitude is more than an attitude and that recent studies show that grateful people are happier, more resilient , and less depressed. They also have higher self-esteem and better relationships. These results prove that gratitude is more than polite manners and positive thinking. It is a way of life, and a wonderful legacy to leave our children.”

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“Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues but the parent of all others.”
- Cicero

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!

Stay connected with NSCC and help us get the word out about co-op preschools, free parent lectures and more.



www.facebook.com/coops.northseattle

DONATIONS NEEDED FOR PAC SCHOLARSHIPS

PAC anticipates being short on funds this year as the need continues to be high for scholarship assistance. Please mail your **tax deductible** donation before the end of the year to PAC, memo line – for Scholarship Fund:

NSCC Parent Education Program
PAC Treasurer
9600 College Way North
Seattle, WA 98103

DONATE USED CHILDREN’S BOOKS & TOYS

Please gather your new or gently used children's books and small good-condition toys to sell at our PAC Lectures. Give your donations to your coop’s Fundraising Chair at our monthly meetings or bring directly to the lectures.

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Calendar

November

22 Thanksgiving Day (No School
22nd or 23rd)

December

7 PAC Scholarship Deadline
10 PAC Meeting
10-16 UW Book Store Fundraiser

2013 PAC Meetings

14 January
11 February
11 March
8 April
20 May

CO-OP Openings!

Infants

North Seattle (Wed & Thu)

Toddlers

Northgate (Sat)
Olympic

Pre 3's

Broadview
Latona
Meadowbrook
Northwest
Sandhurst
University-Ravenna
Victory Heights
Wedgwood

3-5's

Broadview
Crown Hill
Latona
Meadowbrook
University-Ravenna
Victory Heights
Wallingford (3-4's only)
Wedgwood (4's only)

Multi-Age & 5's

Meadowbrook 5's
Northgate 2-5's

Help spread the word about
our NSCC Co-ops!

Northgate Toddlers and Multi-Age Co-ops

A unique addition to the NSCC Co-op system

We are excited that so many families are able to participate in our family of Co-ops here at NSCC. But did you know there are two alternatives for families, or family members of weekday co-op participants, who cannot make a daytime or weekday schedule? Our Northgate Toddlers class is on Saturday mornings (9:30-11:30am) and our Multi-Age class is on Wednesday evenings (6:30-8:30pm), both at NSCC. These classes are ideal for parents who work during the daytime hours. Our Toddler class accepts children from ages 1-3, and our Multi-Age class consists of children ages 2-5.

We have two wonderful teachers. Monica Harris works in the classroom and Andrea Baumgarten is our Parent Educator. Teacher Monica has an extensive background in music and has been teaching for over 20 years, the last 4 in co-op. She follows an Emergent curriculum in class, one that invites each child to explore the space, try new things, get dirty and dance around! Teacher Andrea has been a Parent Educator for 4 years, as well as a Pre-3s classroom teacher herself. She is currently completing a Master's in Teaching from Seattle University.

In addition to serving the unique needs of the working family, both classes are also open to parents who have a child registered in a daytime co-op. This gives the spouse or secondary caregiver a chance to have their own unique co-op experience. Our classes are a big hit with dads!

So the next time someone you know is disappointed with their daytime schedule and is unable to attend co-op with their child, tell them about our classes. We have a tremendous amount of fun and can't wait for you to join us as we sing, play, explore and learn!

Make Your Online Purchases Count. Register for iGive!

Register for iGive and participating online retailers will donate a percentage of their profits towards PAC scholarships. Sign up at www.igive.com and search for NSCC Parent Advisory Council of Cooperative Preschools. You'll be guided through the steps to add an iGive button to your browser. More than 1,000 online retailers participate, including Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, Home Depot, JCPenney, Orbitz and Expedia.

For each person who registers, PAC will receive \$5—even if you don't make any purchases.

You can also donate directly to the PAC Scholarship Fund—see page 1 for details.

Holiday Shopping for a Good Cause!

Between December 10 - 16 the **University of Washington Book Store** will donate 15% of all purchases either in store or online to PAC scholarships. Be sure to mention North Seattle Co-op Preschools to ensure we get credit for your purchase.

Contact Us

NSCC Co-operative Preschool Program
206-934-3783 (NSCC Parent Ed Office)

www.northseattlecoops.org

Email newsletter submissions to:

coop@cyclopgames.com

Tributes to the Suzanne McLaughlin Memorial Benefit PAC Scholarship Fund

Suzanne McLaughlin was a Co-op Preschool Teacher and NSCC Early Childhood Education Program Graduate. She cared for many children and supported many families in her career with our NSCC Parent Education Program. Since she died on Oct. 6 (<http://funerals.coop/suzanne-r-mclaughlin/>) several donations have been received for the PAC Scholarship Fund in her honor. Much thanks to her husband, Dr. Jeff McLaughlin, and family, for remembering our program during their time of grief. Our thoughts and love are with you. We gratefully acknowledge the donations from Linda & Ed Marcuse, Susan Stone and Gretchen Siemmons .



BEYOND THE SEASON OF GRATITUDE

Continued from Page 1....

From Christine Carter, Ph.D., author of *Raising Happiness* and director of UC Berkeley's Greater Good Parenting program: "Studies of adults and college students show positive outcomes from consciously practicing gratitude."

From Geoffrey James and his article in *Inc. Magazine* ("True Secret of Success (It's Not What You Think)."):

"I'm utterly convinced that the key to lifelong success is the regular exercise of a single emotional muscle: gratitude. And, "What you're doing is "programming your brain" to view your day more positively. You're throwing mental focus on what worked well, and shrugging off what didn't. As a result, you'll sleep better, and you'll wake up more refreshed."

DEVELOPMENT

It is natural for young children to be preoccupied with the present. While it may be unrealistic to expect gestures of gratitude they can still learn to grasp the concept by observation and participation on their level within their family and community. As they move into the early elementary years they will be able to have more of an understanding of the ideas around being thankful, appreciation, and the impact of actions and emotions on others. Gratitude is not something that develops overnight as it comes gradually with reinforcement by patient parents who take the long view.

STRATEGIES

When we want to add or change something in our parenting, we will have to intentionally work at it. Having a plan of action is important. Some strategies may include:

- Model for the Child
- Daily Practice
- Give Children Responsibility
- Work on Helping Projects
- Donations
- Thank-you Notes

MODEL FOR THE CHILD

Modeling with our children is a common strategy and can be easily paired with others. Gratitude starts in the home and with the parents as children will, for the most part, copy what their parents do. Letting your children see that you are grateful will be an encouragement for them. This may be as simple as comments to your family members and neighbors or discussions with our children about the things we want our children to value in the everyday environment.

A variety of examples are:

- "Thanks. Your hugs make me feel great"
- "Thanks for holding that door open for me"
- "I appreciate that you took time to drive me to the appointment today."
- "Thanks for changing my daughter's wet clothes today at school"
- "Hey honey, it really helped to have you make the salad for dinner tonight"
- "What a beautiful fall day with all these colored leaves."
- "I appreciate it when you put the water pitcher on the table."

DAILY PRACTICE

It takes practice to incorporate gratitude into our normal thoughts and the pattern of activities in our family but the end result will contribute to helping us focus on less materialistic things. Here are a few ways to take time each day:

Work the word "gratitude" into your daily conversation (try once a day) by phrases like:

- "When I see that, I feel grateful to have....."
- "I'm grateful when you"
- "It is really makes me feel grateful when"
- Establish a ritual by picking a "thanking" part of the day which will encourage your child to express gratitude. This could be making an entry in a family journal, or simply talking about what they are grateful for at specific times of the day like in a beginning dinnertime conversation or as a part of your nightly routine. Some families may ask what made them happy that day, or what did we appreciate today and in our family we each talked about what did you like about your day.
- Have a bulletin board in your home that will be the location to display sentiments, art work, a photo of a seasonal scene you appreciate or even a person who did something nice for your family or community. Change this at the first of each month so there is a ritual on review of those chosen items.
- Fill a container with an object for each gratitude (beans, rocks, chocolate kisses, etc.) done over a period of time and when it is full then plan a family event that is fun and special for all the members.

Common question: How can I get my child to say thank-you?

It is not going to come instantly so we need to be ok with being the broken record reminder for them with our comments of "be sure and say thank-you" or "what do you say?" as it is not something we can expect them to do at the preschool age. Some families feel it will come sooner for the child if we walk them through the experience each time so it will become a habit and others do not want to prompt their child all the time. This is up to each family.

BEYOND THE SEASON OF GRATITUDE

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GIVE CHILDREN RESPONSIBILITY

Household chores are a simple way to help children learn to be grateful for the actions and efforts of others. Children learn about being in a family by doing chores and some age appropriate activities may include things like:

- Putting their cup on the counter
- Washing and/or tearing the lettuce for a salad
- Pouring the pancake batter
- Feeding the dog
- Putting clean socks in the drawer
- Washing the toes of the baby

WORK ON HELPING OTHERS

Find a way your child can actively help someone else. This could be close to home, like taking cornbread to the next door family which just had a new baby. There are always numerous community programs and some may be appropriate activities for the preschool age child at this time of year like collecting food for the food bank or making a delivery to a nursing home. Through these actions, you are helping them learn to help others and they are seeing us helping others. Don't forget to talk about what you are doing with you child, it is the perfect lead into a bigger conversation about gratitude.

DONATIONS

Having a designated donation bag /box in the house is a way to make it a part of your routine. Families often share with me that before a birthday or holiday event where gifts will be given the child is asked to pick 5 things to place in the donation bag. This way they can make room for the new items and the children will learn about giving to less fortunate children or families. With winter coming it is an easy way to seasonally schedule this into a cleaning pattern and gather the old winter coats that do not fit family members and donate them to a charity.

There are numerous second hand shops and organizations in our community and with the coming holiday season there are "giving tree" or "adopt a family" programs in many community centers and businesses. When my children were in elementary school our family would pick a family from such a program. We would have a family day, go downtown and purchase our "giving items". Then, we would go to the Westin's lobby and have a round of Shirley Temples and listen to the holiday music. We did this for several years and my now adult daughters often reflect on this as one of their most prominent memories of our family holidays.

An alternative option for some special events is to have the family donate to an organization in the child or adult's honor and this could accompany a gift or be in place of gift depending on the occasion. Some organizations that may give you an idea of where to start exploring what would represent your family's values may be:

- www.heifer.org
- www.alternativegifts.org
- www.defenders.org/Wildlife-Adoption
- www.childfund.org
- www.habitat.org

This Thanksgiving our family will contribute to the local food bank in honor of our new grandchild. We will include a little note about this in the Thanksgiving card to our daughter and her partner.

THANK-YOU NOTES

The thank-you note has been compromised by the electronic medium. Writing these notes is an activity that can grow with the child's awareness of literacy. It may be as simple as a scribble on the parent's note and as the children get older they can write the letters in their name and then move to writing words on the note or postcard. By the age of 7 or 8, they should be able to write the entire notes themselves. The fun is in the hands-on doing of the note, putting in an envelope, placing the stamp in the corner and putting in the mail box. Create a thank-you note box or location in your home (drawer in a desk) for your family that has stationery, white paper, postcards, commercial thank-you notes papers, envelopes, pens, pens, crayons and other writing items specifically for writing thank-you notes. If you can only manage thank-you emails then insist that there are pictures of child with item or even one of the whole family holding a thank-you sign for the recipient. This is a way to still get active involvement even if it is by email.

BEYOND

As we get close to Thanksgiving and into the winter holidays, it is important to remember that your example is the most powerful teacher. Now I get to go buy more thank-you notes to express my gratitude to those that gave me ideas for this article. I also wanted to share the many languages of thank-you and then a few children's books (see sidebar).

Thank you. Gracias. Danke. Toda. Merci. Grazie. Arigato. Salamut. Spasibo. Dank u. Dankie. These are simple words in almost any language (English, Spanish, German, Hebrew, French, Italian, Japanese, Tagalog, Russian, and Dutch respectively).

Books for Children:

- Andy and the Lion by James Henry Daugherty
- Bear Says Thanks by Karma Wilson
- Grateful: A Song of Giving Thanks (Julie Andrews Collection) by John Bucchino and Anna-Liisa Hakkarainen
- How Full Is Your Bucket? For Kids by Tom Rath
- Gratitude Soup by Olivia Rosewood
- The Secret of Saying Thanks by Douglas Wood
- The Berenstain Bears: Kindness Counts by Jan Berenstain
- The Important Book by Margaret Wise Brown