



# Co-op Community News

From the North Seattle Cooperative Preschool Parent Advisory Council

December 2002

## Let Rituals Find You

by Becky Callahan, parent educator

(Reprint from Nov. 2000)

Last summer I was reminded of the importance of rituals and traditions when our 18- year-old daughter called from her summer work in a fish cannery and asked if she could bring home two friends. She said they would only stay for a few days and ended with "Will you make our blueberry pancakes for them?" The meaning of "our blueberry pancakes" grew as our family activities changed over the years. First dad made them for weekend pancakes, then they became part of the family camping trips and as the girls got older we picked them as a seasonal event. This reflection reinforced for me the importance of rituals and traditions in the family and how they give a shared and necessary sense of belonging and identity.

Rituals and traditions are a big part of many family celebrations. The dictionary defines a ritual as an established or prescribed procedure, and a tradition as the handing down of statements, beliefs, legends, customs, etc., from generation to generation, especially by word of mouth or by practice. I like the definition from a reading that said rituals are "the glue that holds the family together." I believe this applies to both terms as a ritual, if enjoyed and practiced often

*(Please see page 2)*

## Roslyn Ann Duffy, 'Positive Discipline' co-author, to Speak at N.S.C.C.

'Parenting with a Full Deck' is Roslyn Ann Duffy's proven formula for helping children and families learn to achieve cooperation; meet the needs of all family members; and encourage one another (or at least achieve an occasional cease-fire!). Roslyn has written numerous books, including Positive Discipline: The First Three Years; Positive Discipline for Preschoolers; Positive Discipline: A Teacher's A-Z Guide, all co-authored with Jane Nelsen and others (Random House).

Mark your calendars for **February 6th, 2003**. The program is free, and the time is 7:00 pm-8:30 pm in the Concert Hall at NSCC.

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### Event Calendar

( )=Seattle Public Schools Only.



**Dec. 23 -Jan.3— Winter Break**

**Jan 11 – Parent Coordinator Meeting**

**Jan. 20-Martin Luther King Day**

(Jan. 27-break btw. Semesters. )

(Feb 5 Two-Hour Early Dismissal)

**Feb. 6 Speaker Roslyn Duffy (Positive Discipline) at NSCC**

**Feb. 10 PAC meeting. Raffle tickets due.**

**Feb 17 Presidents Day Holiday**

**Feb 18-21 Mid-Winter Break (no classes)**

(Feb 26 Two-Hour Early Dismissal for Students)

**Mar 7 -Scholarship apps due**

**Mar 10 –PAC meeting and Raffle drawing.**

**March 15 - Open Registrations**

**Get your young artist published! We need children's art work for the next issues. Black & white digital or hard copy is best. —Editors**



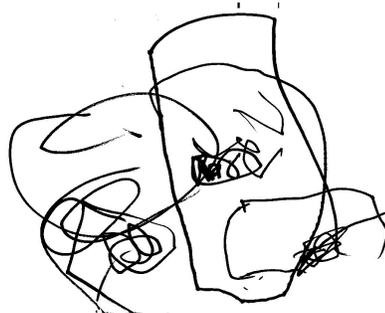
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enough becomes a tradition, as it is passed down to another generation and incorporated into a family celebration.

As the winter holiday season gets nearer, we stand even now in the grocery check-out line and get barraged by headlines which advertise gift giving ideas, rituals to create joy in our family, and ways to de-stress our life. It makes me wonder if all this is necessary to our health and well-being. Most of the time I'd like to say "NO" as it just adds more stress to a highly stimulating time of the year for children, but alas, there does seem to be some lasting values in rituals and celebrations for families. The approaching holiday season can also be balanced with the strength of rituals in our everyday lives. This is reflected in the statement from 60 One-Minute Family Builders: "Too often we wait for special events to come along like birthdays and official holidays and then we're rushed. No wonder so many celebrations feel more like obligations."

Rituals give families a sense of security, a shared identity, benchmarks in the week, a sense of mastery, and protection. Security is represented in the moment you change the words to a book and your child says "that is not the way it goes." Children love certainty as it makes a child feel safe when they know what to expect. My teenagers even gave me a hard time when we had to change from a pediatric dentist to a family dentist. My oldest said that it was not the same because it did not have the big bear sitting in the window and they were not offered a balloon. Even teenagers liked the balloons because it was a way to relate to the staff and as they got older



*"Thomas, Percy, Terence and Harvey" by Emmett Huggins, Age 2-1/2*

they were allowed to put the air in it.

Young children develop their identity in numerous ways and one of them is by feeling that they belong, that they are a part of something bigger and that it surrounds them with comfort, fun and warm, fuzzy feelings. Children feel they belong when they do things like go to grandparents every Sunday, participate in family pictures, make the name cards for each plate at the family gathering, bring the same cornbread to dinners because everyone likes it "so much." etc. We are given something to look forward to when a ritual is a part of every day or week. In our house it was chicken dinner on Sunday evening, the familiar knock on the door when a parent came home from work, and asking "What did you like about your day?" at dinner or bedtime. When a child masters a part of a ritual it gives them a feeling of power and we know how much children like power! Blowing out their candles "all by themselves", being allowed to take pictures with the camera, calling on the phone in the a.m. to tell a parent "good morning, etc. And finally rituals can help to protect children and parents from feeling helpless by giving them something they can participate in together, or alone, and it is still the same: it is clear, has

meaning, familiar parts; you can look forward to it. It leaves you feeling connected to something bigger and stronger than just yourself.

Rituals are found in every day events, a special month, a season, in relationship to food, your religion and spirituality, and in sudden creations that emerge from just being together and spending time on a familiar activity. Some that I can remember from my past and present are listed below:

- pictures of the children on the front porch for the first and last day of school
- planting bulbs each fall
- candle light dinners on the "first day" of each season
- a special plate for the birthday person
- the job of decorating the cake being

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### Newsletter Editors

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### Parent Education Program

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## PAC: What and Why

by Tom Hobson, 3-5's Woodland Park Teacher

As we step into high gear with another annual raffle, we thought it might be a good time to take a look at the bigger picture of our North Seattle Community College-affiliated co-op system's Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and its activities. For most of us, our contact with PAC is this newsletter and the raffle - PAC activities, indeed, but only two of the many benefits we receive through the work of this body.

### *Scholarships*

The societal and individual benefits of preschool can hardly be overstated. Study after study demonstrate that quality early childhood education is a strong indicator of a child's future academic success. Many of these studies show that even as early as kindergarten, there is a marked difference between those who have had preschool experience and those who haven't. Unfortunately, our public schools don't provide this important opportunity, leaving many lower income children without access to preschool education, forcing individual families to do without. One of the primary functions of your Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is to make the cooperative preschool experience available to those not otherwise able to afford it. Nearly 90 percent of PAC's annual budget is distributed to needy families in the form of scholarships. Our Scholarship Committee has a difficult job determining who qualifies for financial aid. At some level everyone feels like they deserve assistance, but our committee, working with NSCC staff and members of the community, make sure that only those who would not otherwise be able to attend a co-op receive assistance. Qualifying families may receive scholarships equaling up to 50 percent of tuition costs. Annually, around 75 families, or 10 percent of our co-op population, are assisted in this way.

### *Parent Education and Enrollment Support*

With the other 10 percent of its budget, PAC provides a number of other important benefits to its member co-ops, including quarterly parent education seminars and lectures, featuring some of our area's leading experts on children and education. Past events have included such important topics as sibling rivalry, emotional intelligence, and the effects of television on our children's developing brains. Watch these pages for dates and subjects. PAC also supports co-ops by orchestrating the open registration to enroll new children, monitoring openings at individual co-ops and assisting those who need help to fill up those empty slots.

### *Kindergarten Preparation*

As your child approaches the end to his or her preschool years, attention turns to the often complex and confusing world of kindergarten. PAC's Kindergarten Readiness Committee is responsible for producing comprehensive "Kindergarten Readiness" folders as well as generating kindergarten-related information for this newsletter. This information saves co-op parents incredible amount of time and energy by providing data and advice about their options for kindergarten.

### *Politics and Communication*

The pressures and demands of work and parenting often leave us time for little else, especially when it comes to keeping track of what those sneaky elected officials and policy-makers are up to. PAC's Political Action Committee keeps us informed of relevant political and social issues regarding children and education, letting us know about developments that will improve our kid's educational opportunities and calling us to action when the best interests of our children are threatened.

The most elementary purpose of PAC, however, is to increase the quality of communication between all the NSCC co-ops. To that end, this newsletter and our web site (<http://northonline.sccd.ctc.edu/parented/>) exist to inform you about important dates (e.g., scholarship deadlines, upcoming seminars and lectures, raffle information), disseminate the reports for the various PAC committees, and serve as a clearing house for ideas, solutions and techniques from other preschools.





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the job of the sibling

- making tissue wrapping paper made at the holiday time and used all year long
- grinding cranberry relish with a new family each Thanksgiving holiday
- our house was one of the host houses for the blocks progressive holiday dinner
- candles were used when we were saddened by a death
- making wishes when we turned out the tree lights each evening during Christmas
- participating in the neighborhood garage sale each year
- putting door decorations on our front door for holidays
- giving orange slices to a special person's birthday
- using the same decorating bow each year on the birthday package
- going out to dinner with the same family on the last day of school
- a trip to the ice cream store after Friday preschool
- planting tomatoes each summer
- going to the same resort while the children were young
- turning the porch light on and off during the Apple Cup for any Cougar points

These and many more rituals developed in our family over a long period of time. They were ones that were combined from our separate pasts, researched in holiday books, borrowed from other families, or even just created because of the fun in a certain moment. As they say "let your rituals find you". If a ritual is a good one, it will be endorsed by each participant and not carried out with resentment or anger. Good rituals also accomplish something worthwhile or necessary and provide that sense of security and continuity.

They pass along our beliefs, values and the identity of our family. So happy hunting and gluing!

**Resources:**

*Festivals Family and Food* by Diana Carey and Judy Large

*New Traditions-Redefining Celebrations For Today's Families* by Susan Lieberman

We're still looking for a sponsor for the printing costs of this newsletter. Please contact Lauren Howell Fleisher at [laure-nandjake@yahoo.com](mailto:laure-nandjake@yahoo.com) or 729-7308.

Also please send comments, suggestions, useful information, upcoming events worth knowing about, parent articles, children's art, and a copy of your co-op newsletter (if you're the editor) for inclusion in this newsletter. Email is best, but we can scan art, and type, if that works best for you.

Thank you, Bert Bradley, 731 N. 96th St, Seattle, WA 98103 \*\* [orcaaland@attbi.com](mailto:orcaaland@attbi.com)

## Co-op Openings



Current Openings in 3 to 5s Only

For the most current listing of co-op openings please visit our website:

<http://northonline.sccd.ctc.edu/parented/openings.html>

Co-op	# of Openings	Contact	
Broadview	(2)	Michelle Meyerdierks	367-2506
Ingraham	(4)	Michelle Beaumont	522-7495
Victory Heights PM	(2)	Rae Keyes	522-1326
Wallingford - AM	(1)	Marie Coffland	547-8648
Wallingford - PM	( 2)	Sara Harmon	547-6315
Woodland Park	(1)	Stephanie Cogan	985-2054

### NEW TODDLER REGISTRATION POLICY

Toddlers from any coop within the NSCC parent education program may apply to any pre3 coop within the NSCC system during the in-house window. Pre3 coops shall accept all these applications during the in house window and shall enroll families in accordance with the priorities specified in their coop's bylaws. Pre3 coops shall review their bylaws to ensure they reflect this policy.

## I d a T a t t o o



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(editor's note: There were no sponsors at press time, so this is what you get. Agus is our son's favorite uncle, and a great babysitter. He's also a heck of a