



# ROCKING HORSE RANCH NEWS

## November Newsletter

Well, it's happening again! The year is just flying by! Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday, so I just love November! And, now in our family we have not only one of our daughter's birthday to celebrate, but also my grandson's! Can't believe he'll be one year old! He got to get his feet wet in his first puddle today! He was stoked! He pointed out to the yard, and walked (with me holding his hands) out there and started laughing when his bare feet touched the wet ground...then he spotted a puddle! Game on...he headed right for it, like he was being urged on by some invisible biological imperative!!! He's not even one yet...how does he know what a puddle is, or that it's going to be awesome? Well, he bolted over there, as fast as his little legs, and mine could go...and when his toes hit the water, he screamed with delight! Then for the next ten minutes it was all about going in and out and up the muddy slope around that puddle. I looked at him and said, "You're gonna fit right in here little man!"

Marguerite was telling me that just today she's seen a plethora of "pregnant preschoolers"; kids walking around with baby dolls under their shirts....boys and girls alike! One "mother to be" was obviously overcome with her burden and was just lounging on the couch! One boy came up to me last week in this condition saying, "I've got a baby in my tummy!" Then, like a masterful magician, reaches under his shirt, and pulls out the baby announcing, "Here he is!" Then this leads to further care-taking...feeding, holding, and burping. It is so cute! We've had several families who have just added a new baby to their households, and we are all still awaiting the arrival of Megan's baby...due in a week! So it's very natural that kids are going to want to act this out. We hear about dramatic play being the way that children process new experiences and information, but it's so interesting to see it happening before our eyes each day. It's also quite natural for children who are welcoming a new sibling, to have mixed feelings about this new arrival. It's important that we help them acknowledge that it's alright to sometimes be mad about the baby, but it's still not okay to hurt him/her. It's a time when children obviously need extra reassuring that they are still loved and valued and will also be taken care of. Sometimes it helps to show the big brother or sister pictures of when they were babies, so they can see that they got that same kind of care that is now being given to brother or sister.

I used to read to my oldest while I nursed the new baby, so that she felt included during a time that was obviously an intimate time for me and her sister, and that she could not directly be a part of. I saw one little boy who is a new big brother to go from wanting to

hit one of the baby dolls to wanting to nurture another one, when I told him that one was "Baby Gavin (him)". He looked up at me, first surprised, then, immediately delighted! "Oh, my!", I said, "Look, baby Gavin is crying!" Looking quite distressed Gavin jumps in with, "He's hungry!" "Oh, you're right, he's hungry, would you feed him?" I asked, handing him the baby doll. He proudly, and carefully took little "Gavin" in his arms and pretended to feed him, looking down on him so fondly! It was adorable! I remember my middle daughter, who was two and a half when her brother was born, trying to lie across his face as he lay on the floor, hoping, it looked like, to extinguish this new nuisance. I was shocked and appalled! But in just a few weeks, she became his biggest ally; calling out to me when he woke up from his nap in his crib, "Mommy, the baby needs you!" and if I didn't go quickly enough, she would run into his room herself to let him know that help was on the way!

Speaking of adorable, that's what I witnessed the other day, when one of our younger girls, climbed on the swing shouting to me, "Nancy, push me". "Sorry", I hollered back, "I can't, I'm working!" But right away, a slightly older boy standing near her chimed in, "I'll push you!" Not only did he do a great job, cause often "pushing" means holding on to the chains of the swing and running back and forth with the swing, but he periodically would check in with her, "Is this okay?" What a great guy!

Reminds me of something else that happened recently when I suggested some kids try our balance beam out. A lined formed immediately, with kids and a wide range of balancing abilities. One by one they'd walk up the ramp and onto the beam and slowly make their way across. If a child looked tentative, I would offer my finger for balance as I walked along beside them. One boy really wanted to make it across unattended, but just wasn't there yet, so he would ask for my finger each time. After a couple of times, along came a girl younger than himself, who started to go up the ramp, then hesitated on the beam, so this little boy jumps out of line and goes in front of me saying to the girl, "I'll help you!", and, reaching up to her, offers her his finger. I watched with my heart swelling with pride as this little guy walked ever so slowly, matching her pace perfectly, being careful not to hurry her. When she reached the end, she jumped down triumphantly, and they both walked back to the end of the line looking quite satisfied with themselves!

And there was also in that line, a young boy who needed my finger for the first several tries across the beam, but I could see that he wasn't satisfied with that. I told him, "I could just walk next to you and you could not hold on, if you want to." He smiled, took a deep breath, and slowly, ever so slowly, made his way all the way to the end. As soon as he jumped down, he gave himself just a second to be stoked, then got right back in line to see if he could duplicate that amazing feat. And he did! As you might imagine, he kept that up for the next 25 mins. till his mom arrived, and he was so proud to show her his newest accomplishment.

That kind of risk-taking is what this program is all about! That kind of confidence building is what allows kids to take on more and more challenges; and not just in the physical realm. As I've said before, there's a direct link between reasonable risk-taking and literacy. Also when children feel competent, I think they're kinder. And it's really what life's about. How willing or unwilling we are to face challenges can determine our success and happiness. So congratulations to all us brave souls out there. I just read a great quote, "Fear is just the feeling.....brave is the doing!"

Now, let's back track a little....First of all, great Family Picnic a few weeks ago! Perfect day, great crowd, good food, and nobody got hurt! That's a successful picnic in my book. Seriously, we've really got a great group of families and teachers here, and together we are creating a special, caring community. I know that the kids loved having their families here and I know that more than one parent connected with an old friend whose child also goes here! Happens every year! Anyway, thanks to everyone who was able to come for making it such a fun party!

In the thanks department, thank you to Ellie's family who restored one of our custom made wooden wagons!! It has never looked so beautiful!

And thank you to all of you parents who participated in our annual Trick or Treat extravaganza! It was a smashing success...and I don't mean pumpkins! The kids all looked so cute, and I know they had fun and their feelings were undoubtedly shared by the one little boy who I asked what he thought of that day. He didn't miss a beat before looking up at me with the most sincere expression saying, "It was the very best day.....EVER!!!"

Okay then, I guess we'll do it again next year! Now on to November. We're going to be closed for three days this month. The first one is Veteran's day, Wednesday, Nov. 11<sup>th</sup>. And, the reason this holiday is not one of those where you just move the day to some convenient Monday or Friday, is that Veteran's day began when the peace treaty of World War I was signed, and so it must always be commemorated likewise, on the eleventh day, of the eleventh month, at the eleventh hour. So, that's why we're closed on Wednesday. Then of course we are closed on Thursday and Friday the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> for Thanksgiving.

This month we will be talking about things we are grateful for, even though that is a hard concept for young children to fully grasp. They sure know that they don't like not having what they want, but that is not the same thing as being grateful for it. But this first week, Nov. 2-6 we will be talking about "House and Shelters". Young children assume that everyone lives the way that they do, so it's really eye-opening to talk about all the different ways that people create shelters and houses for themselves and their families all around the world. Even here in Santa Cruz, we have people living in houses made from all kinds of materials, and in all kinds of shapes. Some people live in apartments, some in trailers, some on boats, some in shelters. We'll talk about how lucky we all are to have a place to be warm and dry, and safe.

The next week, Nov. 9-13, we'll talk about "Food". We'll learn about all the different food groups, and why we need to eat as many different, natural colored food each day as possible. We'll also learn about food that people eat in other parts of the world. We'll replant our winter garden too!

The following week, 11/16-20, we'll talk about something else that we are all keenly aware of needing, and that is "Water". We've talked about this topic before, but now that it's maybe really starting to rain, it's a good time to talk about it again, especially since one child told me, recently, "It hasn't rained at my house in my whole life!"

We'll remind the children about all the different ways that we use and need water every day, for ourselves, our pets, and our plants! And we'll also remind them that, even though it might be raining, we still need to use our water wisely and not waste it!

Then Thanksgiving week, we'll talk about the story of our country's first Thanksgiving. Even though some of this may be embellished, it's a great story about people helping

people. And people really do, do that! We won't talk about the price the Native Americans ended up paying for that relationship. I think that young children, who need help often times themselves, find this story very comforting. Also countries all around the world have different "harvest celebrations", and we will also talk about those!

So, that's the story! Happy Fall and Happy Holidays to you all!