

# GOOD NEWS!



## WFNS TRADITION... Still Alive and Well!

THIS SEPTEMBER, I begin my fifteenth year as a teacher at Wrightstown Friends Nursery School. My affiliation with the school goes back a bit further to 1983 when my daughter was a student. Over the years, I have been struck by how passionately families believe in our school mission and in our traditions. This is as true now as it was when I first arrived. Tradition is still alive and well at WFNS!

It is a pleasure to meet people who were once a part of our school community. They always ask about the school. Their inquiry often includes, "Do you still have a boat on your playground? Do you still have a workbench? Do you still make applesauce and vegetable soup? Do you still make a family quilt? Do you still go fishing?" If you remember your time at WFNS, I am sure that you can think of a few questions of your own. How wonderful and reassuring it is to know that some things stay the same. There is a certain timelessness to our schoolhouse and our everyday activities.

Over time, we have strengthened our program and added new traditions. The Morning Friends now have a Book Club and a Kindergarten Day. There is the addition of a wonderful music program with Cathy Block and even a Facebook page. This year, our students had the opportunity for soccer and karate as an extracurricular activity at school. Other new activities are added as interests and opportunities emerge. Be assured that this is done with careful consideration as to how any new activity fits into our Quaker mission. We believe in providing activities that are developmentally appropriate. In our school, children come first. WFNS is still a place where childhood is preserved and children learn to love school.

Many of our traditions involve people. They are our richest resources. We are thankful to all who have welcomed us and provided us with wonderful opportunities throughout the years. Most especially, we are grateful to have taught so many delightful children and to have had the opportunity to know their families. Each year, we greet siblings, children of our alums, nieces, nephews and friends. Thank you for recommending our school and know that all of you will always be a part of the WFNS family. This is a tradition that we hold dear!

~Jean Dinneen



## FROM THE CLASS OF 1997-1998...

**Skyler Berry**—graduated from Council Rock North. He will begin a five year MBA Honors program at the University of Pittsburgh this fall.

**Sam Bryk**—graduated as valedictorian from Council Rock North. He will attend the University of Maryland where he will study aerospace engineering in the Honors program.

**Jordan Caffè**—graduated from Barrington High School in Barrington, IL. He will be attending Northwestern University where he will major in biomedical engineering.

**Kate Dillione**—graduated from Council Rock North. She will attend Brown University where she will be a member of the swim team.

**Jonathan Dobisch**—graduated from Council Rock North and plans to study business at Bucks County Community College.

**Julian Hartwell**—graduated from Central Bucks East. He will study finance and economics at Wake Forest University.

**Emily Honer**—graduated from George School. She will attend the Tisch School of the Arts at NYU for dramatic writing.

**John Iezzatti**—graduated from Council Rock North and the Middle Bucks Institute of Technology where he will continue his studies in welding this fall.

**Nora McDonnell**—graduated from The Lawrenceville School and she will attend Brown University.

**Hannah McGrath**—graduated from Gwynedd Mercy Academy. She plans to major in psychology at St. Bonaventure University.

**Bizzy Millen**—graduated from Council Rock North. She will be swimming and studying economics at the University of Chicago.

**Chris Millen** graduated from University of Pittsburgh Law School.

**Michael Mirande**—graduated from George School. He will study neurobiology in Toronto.

**Hannah Putnam**—graduated from The Hun School of Princeton. She will study engineering in the Schreyer Honors College at Penn State University.

**Andrew Sheriff**—graduated from Brehm Preparatory School in Illinois. He will attend the Antonelli Institute of Art and Photography in Chestnut Hill.

**Will Sweetland**—graduated from the Hun School of Princeton where he was class president. He will attend Lafayette College in the fall.

*We are most grateful to Karen Bryk for locating our graduates and for sharing their good news. Congratulations to all!*

## & NEW ARRIVALS...

*These families have welcomed a new baby into their families!*

**Gianna** ('10-'11, AM) and **Adelina Calvanese** ('10-'11, PM) have a new sister, **Franca**, born February 2011 to parents Jennifer and Vincent.

**Joe** ('09-'10, AM) and **Brian Dowd** ('10-'11, PM) have a new brother, **Timothy**, born April 2011 to parents Heather and Joe.

**Katie** ('07-'08, AM) and **Megan McKendry** ('09-'10, AM) have a new brother, **Kevin**, born December 2010 to parents Terri and Brian.



**WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU!** Please send us your family's good news. Write to [dinn10@comcast.net](mailto:dinn10@comcast.net) or find us on FACEBOOK!



**Anna and Gianna play a duet on our new Clavinova.**

## Greetings from the WFNS Committee Clerk

WHEN CHARLOTTE PATTERSON approached Wrightstown Monthly Meeting with the idea of a nursery school more than thirty years ago, none of us could have imagined what a wonderful little school it would be for all these years. More than 600 children have gotten their start at WFNS. They've played with the blocks, learned how to play with each other, developed friendships, and gotten off to a good start for their school careers. They've learned songs, used scissors, painted, nailed and learned how to sit quietly. Classes have trekked across the field to get a Christmas tree, fished for sunnies and learned confidence that prepared them for their school journey. The alphabet, numbers, stories all became a part of the daily structure woven into each school day. Our daughter, Ana, was in Charlotte's first class. Her son, Axton, graduated from the morning class this year, so Karen and I have seen many years of this wonderful school, both as parents, teacher and now, grandparents.

The School Committee would like to thank the teachers, Jean Dinneen, Karen Bryk, Claranne Merlo, Karen Pearson, Cathy Block and for part of the year, Janie Scurti. What a team! Each day they brought whole new worlds to explore.

We'd also like to thank the parents who brought their children to the Wrightstown Friends Nursery School. We loved having your children at WFNS. And the Auction Committee, wow! The auction committee worked tirelessly to produce a fantastic evening for the school. Our new Clavinova is just one of the tangible results of their hard work. It was a good year. Many thanks!

*~Peter Pearson, Committee Clerk*

## Devereux Video Finds Good Friends at WFNS

THE DEVEREUX CENTER for Resilient Children invited the teachers at Wrightstown Friends Nursery School to participate in a video project to capture footage of positive teaching practices through meaningful activities. Jean Dinneen and Karen Bryk agreed to participate in the project, each selecting an activity from the book *Socially Strong and Emotionally Secure*, a 2011 Devereux publication. Wrightstown morning and afternoon friends were invited to join the filming session, which turned out to be a lively and fun event!

Jean conducted "Give Me a Hand" where the children drew happy and sad faces on each other's hands with washable markers, and then participated in a variety of activities where they talked about and identified feelings. Karen conducted "Friendship Fruit Salad" where the children helped prepare various types of fruit, and then combined their cut up fruit and mixed it into a yummy treat for all to enjoy. During each



(Above) Jean Dinneen explains the lesson. (At left,) the children explore the subject in circle.



of the activities, the teachers modeled and talked about social and emotional skills they wanted the children to learn, such as: cooperation, taking turns, sharing, recognizing each other's feelings, and using kind words and voices.

Footage from the shoot was used at the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Professional Development Institute in Providence, Rhode Island this June. You can take a sneak peek online by visiting: [www.devereuxearlychildhood.org](http://www.devereuxearlychildhood.org).

A special thank you to the teachers, families, and children for their enthusiastic participation in this event. The video footage will help show teachers across the country how to promote healthy social and emotional development through fun and simple activities for the classroom and home environments.

~Karen Cairone

**Karen Cairone is the Author of the book *Socially Strong and Emotionally Secure* and the mother of former and present WFNS students, Anna, Ella and Mia.**

## Conversations

OVER THE course of our history, word-of-mouth and reputation have served as our best referral sources for new students.

Wrightstown Friends' grassroots efforts are now augmented by newer tools such as Facebook and our website. If you know of a prospective family, or a fellow alumnus who would be interested in learning more about Wrightstown Friends, please share with them your own experiences. And, have them find us on Facebook or visit us on the web!

There is no better marketing tool than our successful students and satisfied parents.

[wrightstownfriends.org](http://wrightstownfriends.org)



(Above from left) Adelina and her mom, Jen, enjoy the great outdoors. Dad Marc and son Hank celebrate Father's Day. (Left) Grandmother Sherry, Anna (center), and her mom, Alison, (right) help us celebrate Hannukah.

## Ode to November

AS A FORMER Wrightstown Friends Nursery School teacher and a parent of two former WFNS students, I'd be hard-pressed to name my most favorite WFNS tradition. From picking fresh vegetables in September to fishing for sunnies in May (and everything else in between!), I cherish the school's many traditional activities, each one unique, lasting and integral to the "WFNS experience."

If I had to pick a favorite month at school however, I would not hesitate a moment: November is definitely number one! It is a very busy, yet precious time during the school year.

As many of you may recall, late autumn days at WFNS are especially tradition-filled. Throughout November, Morning and Afternoon Friends delight in well-loved topics, songs and lessons that originated during the early days of the nursery school and continue to be both relevant and meaningful so many years later! Sewing a quilt, "cooking" in the Pilgrim Kitchen and gathering for circle in the Meetinghouse are just some of the activities that the children always enjoy at this time of year. All involve fun and all contribute to the process of becoming a "school family."

This past November was no exception. After we tucked away all of the Halloween hoopla, the children settled in and we all got to know each other even better! Friends loved chit chatting about their families and their homes. As in years gone by, the children learned to sing that old WFNS favorite:

*Little house, little house,  
With a strong roof above,  
Little house, little house,  
Filled with sunshine and love.*

Making a colorful quilt together with Mrs. Bryk was terrific! Every Morning and Afternoon Friend drew the likeness of his or her own family on a quilt square with special fabric crayons. Both quilts featured a "School Family" square which included each classmate's and teacher's happy face. The children sewed each of their drawings onto a

quilt using a real sewing machine! As always, we were blessed with the assistance and sewing expertise of our dear nursery school friends, Karen Pearson and Wendy Kane!

After the quilts were displayed in the Meetinghouse, the children took turns taking the quilt home for a cozy night's sleep. It was hard work to wait for a turn! At first, friends felt sad when their name was not pulled out of the "Smiley Pot" (a WFNS staple!).

As time went by, the children learned to be patient and say "Have a good sleep!" to that day's "keeper of the quilt."



Then one dreary day last November, something quite unusual happened at WFNS.

Mrs. Dinneen told us all about the Pilgrims who came to America from England long, long ago. It was a time when there were no airplanes or cars or even bicycles! She said that the Pilgrim families had no electricity and no lights! With that, she lit a candle and led us into the block room.

It had been magically transformed!

Standing before the children was a "real" Pilgrim Kitchen. Mrs. Dinneen showed us the great big hearth and all of the cooking utensils and tools that the Pilgrims used to bake their bread, make their soup and care for their families. All of the regular dress up clothes had vanished and in their place were Pilgrim hats, bonnets, aprons and vests. And

nearby, Friends found their very own Mayflower (our trusty yellow box!) in which to sail the Atlantic. How exciting!

As the month progressed, the children learned that the life of a Pilgrim was not an easy one. Friends tried drying string beans, dipping candles and tasting warm cornbread with butter. And just like so many children before them, this year's crop of young "Pilgrims" loved singing that catchy song with lots and lots of verses!

*This is the story of a ship,  
Sailing on a long, long trip  
A-hum, A-hum, A-hum.*

Before we knew it, it was time to walk together to the Meetinghouse to have our annual Thanksgiving gathering with our nursery school families. This year, the tradition was varied just slightly; Morning Friends joined

Afternoon Friends to form one giant circle; it was nearly "standing room only" inside of the Meetinghouse! We had the best silence together, thought about our loved ones and sang to our heart's content.

In keeping with WFNS custom, everybody adjourned afterwards to the social hall where pumpkin pie provided by our wonderful school committee, was served. Mrs. Dinneen rang the "big bell" (nothing sounds quite like Charlotte Patterson's school bell!) and we all sang those traditional, timeless words together:

*When I'm very happy,  
This is what I sing.  
Thank you, God, I thank you,  
Just for everything.*

I am especially nostalgic about every moment during last November because when it ended, I had to say "good bye" to this extraordinary school in order to move with my family to Southern California. I cherish all of my WFNS memories and all of those individuals— young and not so young—who I came to know and love in the schoolhouse and on the playground. I love and miss you all! And so,

*I thank you, friends, I thank you,  
Just for everything!*

~Janie Scurti

## Even More Important Than a Friendly Meeting is a Friendly Parting

THE WFNS Morning Friend Closing Day Picnic is, traditionally, an emotionally charged day for the children, teachers and parents. The children are looking forward to their summer break and the new adventures to come in the Fall. I think it's safe to say they don't fully understand that their precious time at WFNS has come to an end. In fact, my son thinks that next year he will be going to Kindergarten *and* WFNS (yes, we're talking him through the harsh reality). In any event, the children run and play with their trusted friends like they have all the time in the world to be together. It's the same for us adults.

OK, so maybe we are not exactly running and playing but, instead, are sitting around the picnic table eating goodies and chatting with OUR friends. We talk about how the children have grown over the last few years. We reminisce over the school trips we've taken, the holiday parties and teas, and the Spring Auction, which we've all enjoyed. It is clear that the students, parents and teachers alike have made friendships with each other that will extend far beyond the WFNS playground and our time at this special school.

I truly believe these friendships are one of the most important legacies of WFNS. The philosophy of making friends, and being a *good* friend, is not only encouraged at WFNS, it is intentionally nurtured. In particular, one of my favorites is when each child is partnered for a day with a particular classmate who is not usually in his or her daily routine. It gives the children a chance to make a new connection, and very likely a new friendship, that might not happen otherwise.

This sense of friendship extends to the parents, as well. We find ourselves getting to know each other on the path between the parking lot and the school, on fieldtrips, in the



classrooms and, of course, on the playground. The Spring Auction efforts bring parents together in the spirit of community and selfless generosity. It's in these places and during these events that new friendships are forged and old friendships are strengthened.

I have had the pleasure of seeing my two children blossom during their collective four years at WFNS. However, I'm not sure who will miss the school the most—my kids or me. I do know that we all leave this happy place with many more friends—lifelong friends—than when we started. I thank you for that.

~Kathy Butler, WFNS Parent

## Extend a Hand

WHEN WE HAVE VISITORS, we are often complimented that our children are very friendly and that they have good manners. This makes us beam with pride! From the first day of school, we encourage courtesy. The simplest form of greeting is a handshake and we teach this traditional skill from the very beginning.

At the end of each day, our little ones are encouraged to find a teacher, look into her eyes and extend a farewell handshake. When you are three or four years old, this can be difficult, but we offer assistance and encouragement. Before long, each child happily gives it a try. It is a simple way to end a day. It is the start of learning good manners.

This sincere sign of respect is also extended to anyone who helps us. Whether you have lent us a hand in the classroom or invited us to your home, we will extend this sign of gratitude. As the year progresses, you can see the confidence grow as each child shakes. We have had lots of practice! Our last trip of the year is fishing at Mr. Redante's pond. His gregarious manner emboldens us and we each happily offer our little hand with both self-assurance and as a token of appreciation.

~Jean Dinneen



**Even siblings can show respect to each other! Extending a hand are (left), sisters Sammy & Natty; and (above right), sisters Ella & Mia.**



## Working Out The Winter Wiggles

WHEN THE WINTER winds start howling and the thought of going out to our beloved playground becomes a distant memory, our physical exercise takes on a whole new form. This year, we had so much fun “working out” our “winter wiggles” by using our bodies and minds in creative and fun ways.

With the help of The Laurie Berkner Band, SteveSongs, Greg & Steve, Hap Palmer and other musicians, we transformed our classroom into a performing arts studio. Friends and teachers danced and sang our way through many chilly mornings and afternoons.

There isn't a “Freeze Dance” out there that our Friends don't absolutely love! Another very popular request was a song called “The Weekly Rap” by Hap Palmer. In this song we reach and run on Monday, touch our shoes on Tuesday, etc. I think you get the picture! Our Friends had smiles from ear to ear as they acted out the movements while learning their days of the week at the same time!

Saint Saens' “Carnival of the Animals” transformed Friends into fish, lions, elephants, birds and more. Just by listening to the different instruments and rhythms of each movement the children were able to figure out what melody belonged with each animal. Oh, the fun we had discovering our favorite animals and dances!

I would love to go into my bag of tricks (i.e. my cd case) and find something new and exciting for us to perform each day. We had so much fun keeping the beat to a John Philip Sousa march played by the Boston Pops or shoveling our way through a snow storm to a favorite Tom Chapin song aptly called “Shoveling.” Music, no matter what the genre, has a way of releasing all our inhibitions and allowing us to be in the moment and just have fun. Music not only touches our souls, it shapes growing minds. What better way to connect with our students!

A favorite song that truly sings out the special messages we try to reinforce at Wrightstown Friends is Tom Chapin's “Family Tree.” Not only did we learn the beautiful words to this song that emphasize the importance of everyone being kind to each other because we are all connected... “*We're a family and we're a tree...our roots grow deep down in history*”, but we also learned the sign language to go with the chorus! What



**Morning Friends teach their moms how to do The Twist!**



***The more we are together, the happier we are!***

these little minds and hands can do amazes us all every day!

Creative Movement is a joyful way for children to explore movement through music, develop physical skills, channel energy, stimulate imagination and promote creativity. Creative movement helps children learn many concepts such as balance, coordination, rhythm, and is also an important tool for developing self-esteem and body awareness. It is a joyful experience for everyone involved. What a wonderful way to let the sunshine into our winter classroom! Next winter... Zumba!

*~Claranne Merlo*

## Auction 2011—Camp WFNS

ALL THOSE in attendance were wowed by the decorations and the offerings at this year's spring auction.

Thank you, Kathy Butler, for taking the helm. We are most grateful for the community members, families and friends who joined together in a school wide effort to make this event possible.

Camp WFNS was a rousing success!



## Mrs. Merlo Is Here!

“MRS. MERLO is here!” So rang out the chorus of Morning Friends’ voices every morning when Mrs. Merlo arrived, smile in place, just in time to help us get ready for snack and to hear all about that morning’s adventures. The end of November found us shy one teacher as we headed into one of the busiest times of year at WFNS—those precious few weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas. You can imagine our relief and excitement when Claranne Merlo answered a resounding “yes” when Jean asked her to join our teaching staff.

Born in Phillipsburg, NJ, Claranne comes from a family of teachers. Her mother was an elementary teacher for thirty-five years eventually becoming a principal. Many aunts and uncles were also teachers. After earning a BA in Communications from Loyola University in Maryland, Claranne worked as a Human Resource Manager for a pharmaceutical company in NJ followed by a similar job with GMAC in PA. It was during this time that she met her husband Tom, a controller, and they moved to Bucks County, eventually settling in



*Claranne Merlo shares a cool Cape Cod beach walk with sons Matthew and Tommy.*

Doylestown. When Tommy, age eleven, and Matthew, age eight, were born, Claranne became a stay at home mom.

Volunteering at Jamison Elementary as a homeroom mom and Home and School Board committee chairperson, instructing young swimmers at the YMCA, and teaching vacation bible school and religious education classes, Claranne soon came to realize that teaching was a perfect fit for her! Already working part-time as a music and physical movement teacher at Holy Nativity, Claranne’s schedule allowed her to join us after she finished her classes there.

Music has always played a big part in Claranne’s life. She plays flute in the Doylestown Community Band and is

excited that Tommy will be joining her this year playing his saxophone. She enjoys helping both boys with their piano instruction and being a “stage mom” to Matthew who is involved in musical theater at the Theater Arts Center. Lucky for us, she always had her CD collection ready when some music and movement were just what we needed during those long snow-filled winter months!

In her spare time, Claranne can be found cheerleading for Tommy and Matthew’s baseball teams with Tom as their coach. Running and taking Zumba classes are also favorite pastimes. She has proudly completed five 5K runs in the last year and a half. Spending summers on Cape Cod since she was a teenager, Claranne has continued that tradition with her family. Summer for them means whale watching, nature hikes, and attending Cape Cod League Baseball games.

The Merlos joined the WFNS family four years ago when Matthew was a Morning Friend. “As soon as I found this school, I fell in love with it,” Claranne reminisced. “I instantly knew it was someplace I wanted to stay!” Yea, Mrs. Merlo is here!

*~Karen Bryk*

## Hi Friends!

YOU MIGHT EXPECT me to write about music. It’s true, I’m always inclined to write or talk about my passion, but today I have something else I want to share:

I am now the mother of two seniors—one in college, one in high school—and a sophomore in high school! Amazing! Especially since I still feel like I’ve been the same age for, well, decades. But this also means that I have been the mother of three teens.

So, why am I writing about this? Because I am here to, hopefully, dispel the dreadful myth about “living through the teen years with your children.” I can recall being the mother of very young children and hearing the ominous warnings from slightly older, “more experienced,” moms, telling me “just wait until they’re teenagers!” To tell you the truth, I was never too worried and time has proven to me that I indeed had no need to worry. What I discovered about being a mom years ago still holds true as we move through teen years. It’s just fun seeing the world through youthful eyes. That was true when my kids were wee little ones, and it’s true in the teens and beyond.

Sure, we are needed differently now than when they were tiny—they don’t need to be tucked in or sung to sleep. But they do care greatly that we’re interested in their live and are there to talk to and sometimes just hang with. And you know what else? It’s fun to teach your kid to drive. It’s scary as all get out but fun because it’s a great opportunity to talk and

spend time together, while teaching them something very important.

Rebellion? I don’t buy it. And I don’t think it’s a given. Here’s my take on it—you start at the beginning by always communicating and being honest with each other.

You establish a trust and mutual respect. I’ve always thought that if you have those things, chances are, there won’t be much to rebel against.

Besides my own children, I also have the pleasure of teaching middle and high school students, and I thoroughly enjoy them and their company. I love the way teens have such hope for the world, the way that they dream, their overall gusto for fun and for life.

Teenagers are different, yes, they are a great species! So, while I know you won’t rush to get here, because every step is precious, just know that when you do get here, the beauty and fun of loving and having children isn’t spooky or over. It’s alive and well, and very wonderful!

Now, you want to talk music? Love to! Call me!

Have a great summer & see you in the Fall!

Musically, always,

*~Cathy Block*



*Cathy Block and one of her many instruments.*

Wrightstown Friends Nursery School  
Box 293 ■ Penns Park, PA 18943



# GOOD NEWS!

*...see inside!*



**“Mighty oaks from little acorns grow.”**

*~Old English Proverb*



Visit WFNS at  
[www.wrightstownfriends.org](http://www.wrightstownfriends.org)