

## Reflections

by Cynthia Aldinger, Director, LifeWays North America

LifeWays North America is devoted to developing healthy childcare, parent-infant and parent-child programs, and training programs for caregivers, parents and parent educators. These activities are inspired by the works of Rudolf Steiner and the experience of Waldorf education and are supported by contemporary early childhood research as well as common sense and wisdom of many generations of parents.

Welcome to the second edition of our LifeWays newsletter. We received such a warm response to our first one, and we hope you will be just as pleased with this one. We are sending it to all of our graduates and both former and current LifeWays members. If you wish to continue to receive it, please be sure to update your membership as soon as possible. While our website has been under reconstruction, we have done our best to update the contact information of our Affiliates and Representatives. Thank you for your patience with this process. As you already know, we are a grassroots, non-profit which means that a few already very busy people (most of them full-time employed) are trying to do it all! Here is the good news – we are very close to having the website ready, so sometime in the next couple of weeks, check us out!

You will notice on the enclosed membership form that the annual suggested donation for our Trained Affiliate members has been lowered to \$100. We have increased our number of Affiliate members, and we hope this makes it possible for more of you to join. Please do not let the suggested fee stop you. We encourage you to send in the Membership Form and write in what you can donate. While we need the income to support the infrastructure of LifeWays North America, we also need to show that we are having a positive influence on how children and families are living their lives. A substantial membership list is one way to measure this.

To our Friends of LifeWays, we also express our gratitude to you for your continued support and belief in our efforts to strengthen families and care for children. Please continue to spread the word about us, and please send us contact information of others who might be interested in receiving information from us.

Soon we will have eight LifeWays trainings in North America! You can see the list and contact information in another part of this newsletter. This is testament to the growing need for this kind of support for early childhood professionals and for parents. Thank you so much for telling others about these trainings. I am sure it is your good words that keep bringing students forward.

We are coming along on the writing of the LifeWays “how-to” book. Mary O’Connell’s experience as a director of two LifeWays Centers and formerly a LifeWays home program provide a really grounded and YOU CAN DO THIS feeling to her chapters on the nitty gritty of creating LifeWays care. With her support and the support of Lori Barian, who procured a small grant to help us move forward, I hope we can have a first edition available within a year. Now if I can just finish getting my chapters written . . . hmmm?

Now for the fun part! Here is what I have been waiting to tell you since October - I am a Grandma! Little Benjamin Joseph Aldinger joined our

## Reflections... continued

family on October 22, 2008, and my husband and I had the privilege of meeting him when he was only thirty minutes old. He is our first grandchild, son of our son Nathan and his wife Sara. We were visiting them again in early February and I had the amazing experience of catching my reflection while holding little Benjamin in my arms. Sometimes he looks so much like his daddy did as an infant, and I did a double-take of this silver-haired grandma in the mirror holding what appeared to be the child of her own youth. Admittedly, I felt a lump in my throat as I reflected on the cycles and seasons of life. We are truly blessed. One more joy bubble in our family, my son Tim proposed to his beloved Becky on January 3rd, and we are grateful to be welcoming another “daughter” into our family.

I hope you, too, are experiencing the blessings of life, both small and large. Perhaps in times of “hardship,” as these current times are being characterized, being aware of daily blessings or miracles is more important than ever. Outer circumstances can be crazy and chaotic and challenging, yet we can surprisingly be at peace in our inner core. We can experience as “grace” those moments when, in the midst of the sway and swing, we can find balance. Here is a verse by Dr. Rudolf Steiner that can support finding this gentle force of inner stillness.

Quiet I bear within me.  
I bear within myself  
Forces to make me strong.  
Now will I be imbued  
With their glowing warmth.  
Now will I fill myself  
With my own will's resolve  
And I will feel the quiet  
Pouring through all my being  
When, by my steadfast striving,  
I become strong  
To find within myself  
The source of strength  
The strength of inner quiet.

May you be filled with the blessings of Spring and new the sense of new life. As for me, well I am heading to Chicago as soon as I can to see little Benjamin again. And I also look forward to encountering one or another of you on my many travels.

In gratitude,  
Cynthia



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Photos courtesy of Susan Silverio, Marianne Alsop, Simone Demarzi and Cynthia Aldinger

# Our Trainings and Workshops

by Cynthia Aldinger

Wowie Zowie!  
That's how I feel about what is happening with the LifeWays trainings. We started in Wisconsin as an enrichment course in 1998 that ran basically two Saturdays a month from September to May and then turned it into a more professional training format in 2000. Now, not quite a decade later, we have expanded to multiple training sites throughout North America. Look for us in Milwaukee, Freeport, Sacramento, San Francisco, Boulder, Seattle, and soon Vancouver.



Eurythmy in the LifeWays Rudolf Steiner College training

It's satisfying to know that many people are finding encouragement for their parenting and/or caregiving while at the same time filling their personal cup of wonder, new skills, and "yes" to life. One thing I have learned repeatedly is that students enhance each other's learning at least as much as the teachers.

Every LifeWays graduation seems beautiful to me, and the words spoken by the students stand as a testament to their experience. In August 2008, the graduates of the LifeWays training at Rudolf Steiner College put together a presentation called "What Lifeways Means to Me." Here are some of their quotes:

## What LifeWays Means to Me:

"To me, LifeWays is embracing our journey into life's uncertainties with courage, faith, and trust; it is bringing magic in the mundane and blessing our children with our presence, our love, our laughter, and our joy."

— Kahlil Apuzen-Ito

"It is authentic, natural living and keeping childhood kindled with magic and mystery." — Rebecca Fenton

"It means to stimulate my mind, to nurture my heart and to nourish my soul, and to bring joy and purpose to the children that I meet." — Serena Syn

"a warming of the heart  
a strengthening of the soul  
building of the community  
and, a promise for the future"

— Kelly Stewart

"I was wrapped in a cocoon and LifeWays taught me to swaddle the child in my butterfly wings." — Pat Hughes

"An opportunity for families to know what love is... Love is Real.. Love is Kind... Love is Beautiful".

— Karie Aubin

"Discovering the gardener, painter, eurythmist, crocheter, singer and healer within"

— Melinda Kerst

"Bringing Beauty to the lives and families of young children." — Elisa Rios

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# Trainings and Workshops

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“LifeWays means to me an antidote to the excesses of the modern world. It is a source of love for children, and the hope, that through this love, the children will grow and flourish as strong individuals, that then, would dare to change the world.” — Celia Rothenberg

“An abundance of love; an awakening to purpose; a rebirth of mind, heart, and soul.” —Wendy Werner

A question that keeps coming up with every graduating group is “What’s next?” Well, we are working on that – and we hope our graduates are working on that also. One Colorado group of graduates from various LifeWays trainings has formed their own support group and are starting to meet at different times throughout the year. The LifeWays organization is trying to put together a roster of workshops for the further enrichment of our students and others in their communities. Upcoming workshops include:

**Understanding Children’s Drawings** with Bente Goldstein, LifeWays training instructor and Waldorf elementary teacher for many years, April 17-18 in Milwaukee.

**Making and Embellishing Beeswax Candles** with Jan Schubert, LifeWays training instructor, Waldorf early childhood educator of 25 years, a candlemaker, puppeteer and textile artist, May 9, Winters, California (near Davis). Great gift to give for Mother’s Day.

**Diaper Free Toddlers Potty Training Support** with Rebecca Fenton, recent LifeWays graduate, mother of two, yoga and pilates instructor, and teacher at Earthlings Outdoor Play School, Date TBA, Napa, CA.

Others in development stage:

**Games to Play with Your Toddler** with Faith Baldwin, LifeWays graduate, LifeWays child care director and caregiver, storyteller and master crafter, Date TBA, Boulder, CO.

**Early Childhood Education Principles and Methods in Relationship to Brain Research** with Michelle Fransden, LifeWays graduate, mother and business woman, Date TBA, Salt Lake City, UT.

Several others have responded positively but are waiting for a slightly later date (possibly 2010-2011) and/or the time to work out their topics.

In the meantime, there was a most amazing conference being offered in April through LifeWays Society in Vancouver, B.C. at UBC Student Union Building, Vancouver, BC, April 18-19, 2009. Called Healthy Families: Creating Community at Home and in School with the following speakers: Peggy O’Mara, the editor/publisher of Mothering Magazine; Shea Darien, sacred arts enthusiast and author of many parenting books; Suzanne Down, Master Puppeteer of Juniper Tree Puppets and LifeWays instructor; Anna Rainville, Waldorf teacher for both children and teachers and author of book on community singing games, and me,

## New LifeWays Trainings

### Rocky Mountain States LifeWays Training in Boulder, CO

contact Rahima Baldwin - 303-546-0070 or [info@informedfamilylife.org](mailto:info@informedfamilylife.org) beginning May 2009

### California Coast LifeWays Training in San Francisco and Big Sur, CA.

contact Marianne Alsop, [alsop@sbcglobal.net](mailto:alsop@sbcglobal.net) and Heather Lanier, starting Fall 09

### Sound Circle LifeWays Training in Seattle, WA

contact Holly Soule, 206-925-9199, starting Summer 09

The **Wisconsin Training** begins a new group in June and **Rudolf Steiner College** a new group in September.

# LifeWays en Español 2009

by Rosario Villasana-Ruiz

The second Spanish language training grew to vigorous participation after several attempts during the spring and summer of 2008. A lesson learned is the importance of outreach and events to publicize upcoming trainings. After the success of the first training and a growing interest list there was an assumption that full enrollment was waiting to start up. However, there were not enough people to begin the training until October of 2008.

A small group of interested caregivers were eager to begin and after a year of planning and gathering support a group was formed with four caregivers from San Francisco & the bay area and 23 students from a public school in San Jose. Escuela Popular, housed in an office building in downtown San Jose, focuses on providing the mostly Mexican students with English language skills and academic subjects for high school completion. Approximately 1000 students are enrolled with a number of them identified as teen or young parents. Their children are cared for on site to facilitate their completion of high school. The caregivers provide childcare for approximately 100-



150 children while their parents are taking classes. The training has flourished with strong support and mentoring and a core of teachers who work with the group at our home base in the San Francisco Waldorf School. The school continues to partner with Rudolf Steiner College in support of this largely grant funded program.

It has been rewarding to see caregivers grapple with a new way of doing things and slowly transforming their practice and environment to support the rich LifeWays approach. Students are inspired, enthusiastic and earnest in deepening their work and finding authentic ways to connect Steiner based childcare with their rich cultural heritage. In San Francisco three teachers from a family childcare home program called “Las Mañanitas” have taken up the work in a very conscious way and have made significant changes to their program showing a special ability with the handwork. This second training has been a very intensive program with sessions programmed during long holiday weekends and on Saturday and Sunday many weekends.

Graduation is scheduled for Sunday April 26 in San Jose. With continued mentoring and workshops planned for next year Escuela Popular could well become a model site, the wish for this is very clear. Thanks to the LifeWays training children and families in San Jose and San Francisco are experiencing a beautifully prepared environment and relationship-based care with caregivers who are reconnecting to the artist within.

Blessings and Spring greetings,  
Rosario Villasana-Ruiz, Director of the  
LifeWays en Español program



# LifeWays Child Development Center, Milwaukee

by Mary O'Connell

The theme of our winter newsletter is “How do children benefit from being at LifeWays?” I have asked each staff member to share her own insights and experiences with regard to that question. For me, the New Year always inspires goal setting. As parents, I think it's a worthwhile exercise to do some goal setting with regard to our children now and then, just as we do for our finances or our careers. We can't really determine if any childcare program or school benefits our child until we identify what it is that we want for them. If you ask a parent what his or her long-term goal is for their child, often the parent will say, “I want my child to grow up to be happy.” We all want that for our children, but realistically, we can't really ensure our children's happiness. Happiness is a very individual thing...I'm sure we can all think of some adult we know who seemingly has it all, but is very unhappy, and vice versa. Whether or not our children grow up to be happy people isn't really within our control.

So I challenged myself to identify three goals for our children that are attainable, that will impact their lives in a positive way, and that might actually improve their chances at happiness.

Here's my list:

## **Let's raise children who are able to love.**

Looking back on your life to this point, I'm sure the things that mean the most to you are your relationships with people, not the grade point average you got in high school or the job promotions you've gotten. So while preparing children for school and careers are important, giving them experiences at forming real relationships is crucial. The only way to help children learn to love others is to provide them with long-lasting relationships with people who love them. To give them the opportunity to be angry with a friend and learn how to work through that tough spot to restore the relationship. To let them experience frustration with someone they don't always see eye-to-eye with, and learn effective strategies for compromising. To help them through the separation sadness they feel when their parent leaves with the comforting



arms of a caregiver that really knows them.

Relationships aren't always easy. Allowing children to encounter these challenges when they are young while in the presence of a consistent loving caregiver and suite “siblings” allows them to build relationship skills that they will use for a lifetime. I often wonder how these skills are honed in a childcare or preschool environment where numerous staff members come and go frequently and children are moved from room to room as they age. At LifeWays, I see growth in the children's capacity for love everyday. I am amazed at how these children love their caregivers and each other, how tenderly they care for the babies, and learn to use their words with each other instead of their fists.

## **Let's raise children who are free.**

Rudolf Steiner, founder of Waldorf education, said, “Receive the child in reverence, Educate the child in love, Let the child go in freedom.” It's our American birthright to be free, right? And yet so many children grow up “un-free” in their thinking. They sit by passively while their heads are crammed with facts and figures in school, learning what they need to know just to get through the next test, not really taking charge of their own learning.

These children often become teens and adults who follow their peers in an unquestioning way, not asking themselves if the behavior they are choosing is

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really in line with the values they want to live by. They don't seem "free" to choose a different path.

Michaela Glockler, M.D., in her book, *A Guide to Child Health* says,

"Raising a child to be free means taking appropriate timing into account. Anything we introduce too early catches a child unprepared, unready, and unable to handle the new element independently. In this case, we "train" the child instead of empowering her. Conversely, any skill or subject that we introduce too late no longer catches her interest; as a result, she cannot fully appreciate its value. The consequences are dependency in the first instance and indifference in the second –two different ways of being "un-free".

How do we raise children who are independent, engaged, and who think for themselves? At LifeWays, we take Glockler's advice about *timing* seriously. Everything has its season, and the season of early childhood belongs to learning how the world works, where our food comes from, exploring movement and language, learning how to dress yourself, how to take care of your belongings, how to treat your friends, how to respectfully ask for what you need...I could go on and on with the lessons learned every minute at LifeWays.

Of course, young children can be "trained" to do academic drills with flashcards, but at what cost to the child?

### **Let's raise children who are ready to learn.**

The child psychologists call this "executive function". Good executive function is a better predictor of success in school than a child's IQ. While it has

a number of different elements, a big part of executive function is a child's ability to self-regulate. Children with self-regulation skills are able to control their emotions and behavior, resist impulses, and exert self-control and discipline.

Researchers have identified a single, powerful tool for children to develop self regulation ... unstructured play... a LOT of it. In fact, according to a recent study, sustained imaginative play that lasts for hours is best. Why? During make-believe children engage in what's called private speech: They talk to themselves about what they are going to do and how they are going to do it. They evaluate what worked well and what didn't. When researchers compared preschoolers' activities, they found that this self-regulating language was highest during make-believe play.

Conversely, they found that the more structured the play, the more children's private speech declined. Today's children spend much of their time doing things that do nothing to improve self-regulation: watching TV, playing video or computer games, and taking part in structured activities. This change in how children spend their time over the years has actually had an impact on their ability to self-regulate. A recent study compared the self-regulation

skills of children today to those studied in the 1940's – today's 5-year olds are acting at the level of 3-year olds 60 years ago with regard to self-regulation!

At LifeWays, the children do have hours devoted to unstructured imaginative play, both indoors and out. We have heard from parents and grade school teachers of LifeWays "alumni" that these children were well prepared for school as a result.

I hope you enjoy this winter newsletter, and that it helps paint a picture of how your child's time at LifeWays is preparing him or her for life.



# Thoughts on Early Learning

by Jaimmie Stugar d

From the Newsletter of LifeWays Lake County, Milwaukee, WI.

*"I know from my own experiences as a parent and now as a grandparent, I have two grandsons and I watch them and I see their spontaneity, their curiosity, let me even call it their delving spirit. They're probing. They want to know. Almost physically they poke around and explore and touch things. They want to know. They want to understand. They're yearning. This is just part of their being. And if they lose that at home and school, this, of course, and in the neighborhood, this can be a tragedy."*

-Robert Coles, author and child psychologist

Children learn through exploration, imitation and relationships. A very young infant has no sense of himself as an individual. To him, there is no boundary between his own body, his parents and the world around. Gradually, he becomes aware of his ability to impact the world. He learns that he can manipulate objects by swatting and eventually grasping. He learns by his loved ones' response to his coos and cries that he can affect another and indeed that his beloved is another. What begins as observing a parent's response gradually develops into deeper social understanding. A toddler continues to play this call and response exercise to enhance his social skills. For example, when he hits another person, there is a negative

response (the other child cries, he is scolded, etc). Each time a child "calls", he is seeking a predictable response to teach him how to properly interact with his world. This is why we strive to be both patient and consistent when helping our little ones develop socially. For a child questions with action and finds his answer in reaction.

When children are permitted to actively engage in their world, they are able to truly learn. Experiential learning leads to an understanding that regurgitating facts cannot provide. Day after day, I observe children exploring nature in the forest, finding slugs and snails and worms. Here I see them identifying and sorting without any overt instruction from myself. They are keenly aware of which sticks are big, bigger and biggest without ever cracking open a workbook. Nor do they need flashcards to teach them that the sun is round. Which is not to say that books and worksheets are necessarily bad. As a child, I loved to fill out the workbooks that my father brought home from the print shop. It was fun to play school and feel accomplished for correctly matching the dog to his bone. Looking back, I think I especially responded to these books because I knew that my father made them. But, I am certain that I would not have enjoyed them nearly as much if they had been homework rather than playwork.

Occasionally I am asked how I teach children their colors, days of the week, numbers and letters. To some, the days of the traditional play-based kindergarten and preschool seem like a fond memory. While parents look back on their own kindergarten fondly, they worry that it is not "enough" for their own child to get ahead in this day and age. Learning through doing is always my answer. Rather than asking a child to count objects in a book, I ask her to help me set the table for snack. We always begin by

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## Thoughts. . . continued

counting together how many people we will have in attendance that day. As the child sets out 7 chairs, place mats, cups, spoons and bowls she is able to have a real and tangible experience of the number 7. The days of the week are “taught” through living in the rhythm of the week: Monday is set-up day. On Tuesdays we eat granola. Wednesday is soup day and we all savor the aroma of Miss Jane’s Delicious rolls. Thursday is the first preschool day of the week and Friday is clean-up day. Then comes everyone’s favorite days, Saturday and Sunday - Family Days.

A child’s interest in letters can be nurtured by helping them identify letters that have meaning to them, like their name or the letters on a stop sign. Oftentimes, a child will ask me to spell out “Happy Birthday” while coloring. While I am always happy to answer, I am careful not to drill a child or put pressure on him to read. Rather, I strive to foster their early literacy skills through storytelling, puppetry, and clear, articulate speech.

Since young children learn through imitation, it is crucial that the adults closest to them are striving to be worthy of imitation. When a child is learning to speak, he needs to imitate right speech. A child who is struggling to control his impulses or anger needs to see the adults around him displaying this self control.

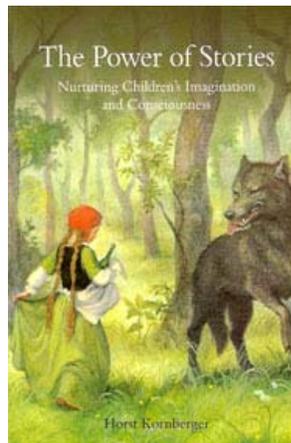
Child rearing can be an emotional experience because our children are our reflections. They are like little mirrors that shine back our beauty and our blemishes. Rather than shrinking from the challenge or allowing ourselves to be racked with parental guilt, let us stand upright and demonstrate our striving, compassionate, curious, humorous and loving humanness.

Jaimmie Stugard has been a Primary Caregiver at LifeWays in Milwaukee for over 6 years. She and her husband Shawn have a beautiful little boy, Elliot, who comes with mom to LifeWays every day.

### **LifeWays Yahoo Group**

The 2008 LifeWays graduating class at Rudolf Steiner College has successfully started a LifeWays chat group ([Lifeways19@yahoogroups.com](mailto:Lifeways19@yahoogroups.com)). Bianca Zachary, who facilitates the group is willing to open it to all LifeWays graduates if you are interested. Or she can start a new group with a new name. Perhaps you could contact the group and let them know of your interests.

## Good Reading



### ***The Power of Stories*** by Horst Kornberger

Published by Floris Books,  
UK, 2008

Available through  
[www.steinerbooks.org](http://www.steinerbooks.org)  
Written by a Waldorf teacher, this is a wonderful book for anyone who loves stories and storytelling...the author has a special focus on

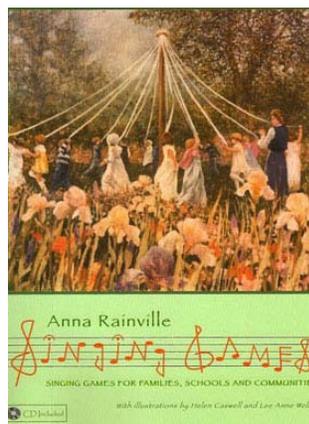
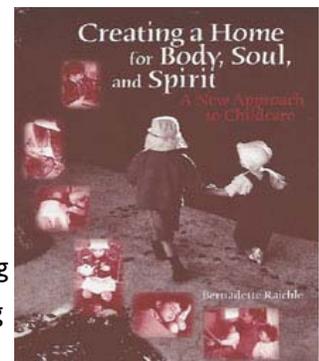
traditional stories and their use and how to create your own stories to help children with particular needs or who are fearful.

### ***Creating a Home for Body, Soul and Spirit- A New Approach to Childcare***

by Bernadette Raichle

Published by WECAN, 2008  
[www.waldorfearlychildhood.org](http://www.waldorfearlychildhood.org)

This will be familiar reading to anyone who has taken the LifeWays training, and it provides an excellent resource for those new to the LifeWays approach. The author has had 25 years of experience in providing anthroposophically based support for parents and children in New Zealand.



### ***Singing Games for Families, Schools and Communities***

by Anna Rainville

Published by Rudolf Steiner College Press, 2005

[www.steinercollege.edu](http://www.steinercollege.edu)

A delightful compilation of songs and games...CD included!

# Little Teachers

by Kathy Miller

From the Newsletter of LifeWays Lake County, Milwaukee, WI.

*Life's journey has always connected me with the lives of many young children. Most of the time spent with children has been through childcare settings, early childhood classes and most recently, as a mother. The little people I've connected with throughout the years have been my greatest teachers.*

So why do I believe so strongly in our LifeWays program? After the birth of my second daughter, I started to question what childcare really had to offer young children in today's society. Being a Lead Teacher in a well established and recognized childcare center, I needed to be comfortable with my response. Today, families have two working parents, so the need for childcare is in high demand. I often pondered how childcare establishments have gone beyond what was first intended for our young children. As early as the preschool years, childcare centers are producing academic environments to emulate what is perceived to be high quality care. Our culture has become convinced that early academics will ensure a bright future for their child. But does it really?

Our program offers relationship - based care opposed to the highly academic settings. Relationship – based care provides opportunity for our children to master life skills with the intent of developing self-confidence. Our children mature in a home like environment. Consistency of care and the mixed age group provides opportunity to develop meaningful relationships and a secure base for healthy life rhythms/ routines. Dr. T. Berry Brazelton states, "Emotional learning comes first, and it happens through interactions. Curriculum comes after you have the warm, encouraging relationships. It's less effective without them". This parallels our philosophy closely. The development of social relations, with caregivers and suite mates is important. Security and trust amongst caregivers and peers allow a

child to freely explore his or her environment.

The curriculum is based on the happenings of daily life, natural but purposeful. With *intention* the caregiver establishes a play environment that gives form to the young imaginative mind. Our suites invite the young child to share in homelike practical and domestic life. Baking, washing and gardening are some of the fundamentals of our program.

Literacy is fostered through storytelling, puppetry and individual lap time. Caregivers are conscious of their own clear and pronounced speech. Children learn from imitation and it is significant in fostering language. Math and cognitive skills naturally occur when preparing foods, cooking, and washing dishes. You may ask how? The simple measurement of ingredients while making baked oatmeal for morning snack introduces the child to numbers. Washing dishes after a meal not only gives a child the opportunity to take care of oneself, but often indulges the child in water play. Washing bibs after a messy meal provides the young child an introduction to weight! (Wet knitted cotton bibs are very heavy!)

What does a child learn by simply getting dressed? As Susan Gray states in her article, "The persistence in trying to manage the sock, and then the shoe, shows us a picture of learning how to learn. Trying again, and again, sometimes making progress, sometimes making no progress that we can see, young



# Little Teachers

continued

children are learning to be active in their lives, taking ownership, taking risks, and caring for their basic needs of warmth and perception of clothing themselves". Are these not the skills we would want our children to grasp and hang onto as young adults?

For children to grasp the world around them they *live* through their play. They indulge, create and imitate the world around them. Children work hard to establish their play environment. Such good use of cognitive energy is shown through creative play. A favorite example that comes to mind is a recent puppet play spontaneously created by some of our preschoolers one day in the suite. The play gained the attention of our younger suite members and Miss Stacy, Miss Mary and myself were invited to attend. The majority of the morning consisted of the three older children making tickets (of course one couldn't attend if one did not have a ticket) and setting the stage and seating for the puppet play. The play was long and repetitive, but the whole process from beginning to end was wonderful to observe. The social interactions amongst them showed abilities of self-control and negotiation as each child decided what he or she should do to prepare. Isaiah (4 yrs) was the ticket writer since he had the ability to print guest names, Gaby (5 yrs) and Jackson (4 yrs) were the stage managers. They created the stage, prepared the silks for the landscape and staged the puppets for the play. Everyone helped prepare the seating for the audience. Meryl, JJ and Jack (our toddler team) loved rearranging the chairs numerous times to prepare for the audience to arrive. Everyone was very excited to be seated for the puppet play, especially Lucy (1 yr) who got to sit in her own grown up chair. The entire production was completely orchestrated by our children.

Relationship based care gives *time* for such play to naturally unfold. Rarely did I intervene during this



precious time, (a child's creative play becomes so much deeper when they think an adult is not watching). The only time I intervened was during a social mishap to help guide and re-direct appropriate social behaviors. This is what play-based childcare advocates. Rahima Baldwin states in her article, [Learning Through Play](#), "Such imaginative play, which is an expression of the child's inner nature, has long been recognized as being important for healthy development. In fact it can result in a wellspring of creativity that continues into adulthood and is found in artists, inventors, musicians and adults who still know how to play. Creative free play is an expression of the magical world of early childhood: it is not the same as the experience provided by 'educational toys' designed to teach concepts like triangle or 'heavier and lighter'". Consequently, free play becomes crucial for the young and developing child.

Kathy Miller has been with LifeWays for two years. She came to LifeWays Lake Country after having worked in a more traditional childcare setting, and began to question whether it was the healthiest environment for her two daughters, Gabrielle and Jordan. She is a Primary Caregiver.

## A Word from the LifeWays Kitchen . . . by Stacy Rhoads

From the Newsletter of LifeWays Lake County, Milwaukee, WI.



*“Human beings are creatures of action and it is through action that we reveal ourselves and come to know our deepest nature.”*

As parents and caregivers, we are fortunate to have little souls mimicking these actions and illustrating our deepest nature to us; some of these “habits” we are aware of and some we are not. Some life ways can only be taught through example. One could philosophize gratitude and contemplate its meaning through years of academic study and still never understand. Or one can illustrate that understanding in a singular moment of gratitude. My intention is to express gratitude constantly through my actions and model a love for healthy food and gardening to help our children grow throughout their lives.

How? Simple solutions are often of the greatest impact. Always be mindful when cooking and gardening. Know that what you are doing extends far beyond the kitchen or garden. “Before the first carrot has been peeled or onion sauteed, your sensations and experiences form the first ingredient of your cooking. And throughout the process of preparing and serving a meal, the quality of mind you bring to what you are doing has as much influence as the herbs and seasonings you use.”

I remember being on the reservation and asking a Lakota grandmother for a written recipe for something that she was teaching me how to make. She sat down and watched me cook, writing down each emotion I felt and conversation I had. Then, when I was finished, she handed me my “recipe.” To be a good cook, one must have an undivided mind, leaving nothing out and bringing nothing extra in. The magic is in the simplicity. When I ask a grandmother, professional chef, etc. their recipe for something, I’m usually amazed at the simplicity. “Oh, it’s just a little of this with a little of that” and voila...! The secret ingredient in all cooking is the spirit you bring to it. So relax. Cook **WITH** your children. Don’t worry about following recipes verbatim or “screwing things up.” Those muffins you make will be magical enough to taste delicious. Besides, cooking is much more of an art than it is a science. And what better way to stimulate your child! They can crack eggs, stir, add fractions to double or triple recipes, measure,.....!

Similar to cooking, ANY amount of gardening you can do with your children is great. Organic, garden-fresh veggies are some of the most nutrient-dense foods on earth and children are far more inclined to eat them when they understand what they are and where they came from. The spinach comes from those little seeds they poked into the ground and tucked in with the dirt. It’s the plant they gave drinks to every day until it was just big enough to pick with their friends. Then they get to help wash it in the sink and cut it up for lunch. Now picture that child sitting next to one without these experiences. Who will be more inclined to eat it and who to see it as a gross, green leaf?

**HAPPY COOKING AND GARDENING!!**

Stacy Rhoads is the cook at LifeWays Lake Country. She has been with LifeWays for over two years, and her son, Isaiah, comes with her every day. Besides being a fantastic cook, she has become our Master Gardener, exploring the many ways children can be involved in cultivating their own food.

Quotes from [ATaste of Heaven and Earth](#), by Bettina Vitell.

# My LifeWays Journey

by Lynda Johnson

My LifeWays journey began at the very moment that I learned of the program. I immediately knew it was something that I wanted to pursue. There was no question~it was for me. It appealed to me on so many levels; as a mother, as a woman, and as an aspiring Waldorf Early Childhood teacher. With the support of my husband and family, I applied and immediately

started in on the reading list. As I collected the books, and began the reading, the excitement grew, as did the anticipation of what it would be like to be part of what seemed like the perfect course for me. I wondered who all else felt the same way, and wondered who I would be sharing this journey with. As our first meeting grew closer, the anticipation grew...as did our packing list.

My husband and I decided that the trips to Maine for my training would be our family vacations, so in addition to planning for what I anticipated to be a life-changing experience, we started planning for all that we needed to make this a fun adventure-filled experience for our 3 year old twins. I'm fairly sure that we must have looked like the Beverly Hillbillies when we arrived, as we had so much gear with us. As we are a rather 'outdoorsy' family, and it was after all summertime in Maine, we knew that camping would be the best housing option for us, and boy were we right!

I think it's safe to say that we had one of the prettiest and most perfect places to camp ever, as we camped right in the Merriconeag Waldorf School's Early Childhood's playground! We had our own gazebo (which we turned into the kitchen), a sandbox, a playhouse, two swing sets and 5 chickens to care for. We called our site our own 'little piece of heaven'. I

only had to walk across the street to get to our meeting place. When I left the children and my husband for our first session, I looked back at the beautiful setting upon which we would be living, and thought how truly blessed I felt to be there in that playground, and in LifeWays itself.

Upon meeting my fellow students, I felt that we surely must have been the most diverse group of women our instructor had ever encountered. I truly wondered how this group of women with such varying backgrounds would ever bond and become 'one'. Yet, in thinking about it further, I think that that is the beauty of LifeWays. It was our destiny to be together, after all. I thoroughly enjoyed listening to everyone's introductions. These were fascinating women I



was sitting with, and I looked forward to getting to know each and every one of them throughout our year together. What struck me in listening to everyone's reasons for being there, was that they were all so different. The journeys we were all beginning were as diverse as we were, yet LifeWays had something to offer each and everyone of us.

Susan Silverio, our instructor, and the Director of Northeast chapter of LifeWays, in my opinion, is truly one of the warmest women on the planet. Any anxieties that anyone might have had were immediately released upon meeting her. She has so much to offer anyone who comes in contact with her, not just the children she works with, but the adults she works with as well. She put together an amazing program for us, but I was impressed more with how she held us as

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# My LifeWays Journey

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a group. Yes, we did become 'one'. And so became the second class of LifeWays Northeast...

Our summer session was a memorable one with Eurythmy, music, singing, wonderful lectures on human growth & development, the nurturing & social arts, and handwork each day. We enjoyed festival planning, an RIE video presentation, as well as a couple of field trips. One beautiful day we spent dying silks at Susan's lovely kindergarten. Spindlewood has got to be the sweetest kindergarten on earth! I truly wanted to be six years old again. After an inspiring session, we said our goodbyes to one another and vowed we'd keep in touch (which we did).

We returned back to Maine for our fall session in October. The weather was perfect...crisp, cool and sunny, and the foliage, exquisite! It was so wonderful to see everyone again. It was clear that friendships had formed over the summer, and it was fun to be together again. We enjoyed more music, singing, and inspiring lectures. We were treated to Puppetry and Storytelling with Suzanne Down and one memorable day was spent throwing javelins in our Spatial Dynamics training.

So, in a sense, we're half way there. Journaling is ongoing, observations are being scheduled and research papers are beginning. It's a busy time. We'll return to Maine for a weekend in April and another summer session. We will graduate on August 1st, and everyone's lives will have been changed by the journey we shared. I look forward to our future sessions together and to maintaining the connections that have already been established.

I'm excited to speak about LifeWays and was honored to join Susan at the LifeWays table at the recent WECAN conference at Sunbridge College. Apparently, my enthusiasm has become a bit contagious as two more teachers from the school where I substitute have joined. My LifeWays journey just got a bit more fun!

Lynda Johnson is a stay-at-home-mom and lives on Cape Cod with her husband Eric and their 3 1/2 year old boy/girl twins. She also has a 23 year old son. Her passions include her family, anything outdoors, and all things fiber. She formerly worked as a Naturalist, a Marine Mammal Trainer, and taught in a children's rock-climbing program. She, together with her husband and their twins, participate in the Parent/Child program at the Waldorf School of Cape Cod. She also is a substitute teacher in the Parent/Child and Early Childhood programs at the school. She is currently enrolled in the Lifeways Northeast training which takes place in Maine.

# Winter in the Woods

by Lori Barian  
Forest Kindergarten Teacher

Little Odessa trundled out into the snow, her little legs working so very hard to get through all 12 inches of it, and she complained, "I hate Forest Kindergarten. I don't want to be outside. I want to be inside." And then she began to cry.

Was I torturing her?  
Was I torturing all these three-, four- and five-year-olds by taking them down to the river on this wintry day?

After much encouragement, we all eventually reached the hill leading down to the river: I suggested to the children that they sit and slide down the hill on their bottoms. Odessa sat down and slid and started giggling, and then she giggled with delight all the way down the hill! How could I ever dream of withholding this joy from her, from all these children?

Winter *can* be especially challenging in Forest Kindergarten. The cold can be so cold, the snow so deep, our toes cold and sore, our snack time rushed. But the snow boulders and maple syrup flavored snow cones, the icy walks and slides, the mouse and deer tracks, and the landscape transformed into a wonderland are the reward.

What about the harshness? For these children who brave the weather, who trudge through the deep snow, I can only imagine them getting stronger, each deep breath of cold air invigorating their growing bodies. When they play hard for a while despite their discomfort, I think of them also being able to work hard one day, regardless of the challenges. You see, not only is it the cold wind or the deep snow that they overcome, but also their own fragility and their own self-doubt.

So, when the Forest Kindergarten children head through the door on another wintry day wondering what they will see or hear outside, we can all think of them seeing themselves as heroes conquering the foe and hearing each other giggle down the hill.



# Warmth: A Hidden Element in a Child's Healthy Development

by Amanda Knight

I was once dining in a restaurant in Dresden, Germany and I witnessed something that I will never forget. While we were there, we noticed another American couple and their son, David who was a six-year old student at the International School where I was teaching for the year. David and his parents came over to our table to chat on their way out. When our food arrived, they said goodbye and headed toward the door. Just as they were about to leave, an elderly couple called out to them. We did not understand much German at the time, but it was clear that they were addressing the American family.

A young waiter at the restaurant spoke English and he came over to help them to communicate with the couple. As it turns out, the couple had been concerned about David's warmth and they felt that it would be inappropriate for him to go outside without a coat on the chilly evening. It was October and although the day had been quite warm, the air was now cool and a chill could be felt when the door was opened to the outside. David's parents were not accustomed to receiving parenting advice from strangers, but they politely thanked the couple and it was related that they were planning to run out to the car where they would turn on the heat. This was not satisfactory to the couple and others in the restaurant were beginning to join their cause. They were calm and loving, but also firm. David was not to run out to the car without a coat. It was cold and children should be kept warm. So David's parents ran to the car and the couple stayed with David until the car was heated and pulled up to the front entrance. Then, a man who appeared to be the restaurant owner or manager presented David with a coat. He put it on and the elderly couple walked him out to the car.



Children at the Spindlewood LifeWays Center in Maine enjoy a warm lavender foot bath after being outside in the cold.

David was not the only one who felt warmth on that evening, for I too felt a sensation of warmth. I was surrounded by a community that was concerned about the well-being of others and this was refreshing. While living in Germany, I experienced firsthand how the ethos of a cultural environment can act as a sheath that provides children with the protection and support that is necessary for healthy development.

I remember the harvest festivals, Martinmas celebrations and holiday villages that marked the seasonal changes throughout the year. Young children, bundled snugly in their buggies, were regularly left resting outside of a market while their parents popped in to pick up items for the evening meal. Relationships were created in daily interactions with local shopkeepers and value was placed on maintaining balance in one's life. Mainstream grocers offered only naturally prepared foods free from the dyes, preservatives, and high fructose corn syrup that have become commonplace elsewhere. Media was present yet it didn't seem to dominate the child's environment, wardrobe, and toy collections.

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# Warmth...

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Children played outside in rain and snow, dressing appropriately for the outdoor conditions and then changing into their warm slippers and dry clothes once inside. When I returned to the United States at the end of that year, I felt that I had suffered a great loss and at the time, I was not sure what it was exactly that I was missing. Several months after my return, I attended a lecture at our local Waldorf School titled "Warmth: A Hidden Element in Child Development". I was captivated. I listened intently, scribbling notes and nodding my head in agreement. It was one of those "Aha" moments for me. Finally, I had words for what I had been feeling since my return. I was missing the envelope of warmth that radiated throughout the European community where I had lived. Warmth does not permeate modern American society in the way that I had experienced it in Germany. We carry out our daily lives in relative isolation and strangers are not inclined to offer help to one another for fear that danger will arise. In this cold society, it is crucial that we, as parents and caregivers, make a concerted effort to provide young children with the warmth that is so essential to their healthy development.

Indeed, warmth is considered to be one of the greatest gifts that we can give to our children (Johnson). It is particularly important to nourish the physical warmth of young children as they are developing their bodies in the first seven years. Wrapped up in our fast pace lives, it is easy to find oneself rushing out to the car with a young child in our arms without taking the time to put on a coat and hat. The child might even feel warm to the touch and we justify the action as David's parents did in the story above, thinking that it is only a short distance that they will

be exposed to the cold.

Young children, though, have an accelerated metabolic rate to support the development of their rapidly growing bodies and they will feel warm to the touch unless they are on the verge of hypothermia (Johnson). When we choose not to insulate their bodies with appropriate layers of natural fibers, we are forcing them to expend energy on warming their bodies that could otherwise contribute to supporting the healthy development of their organs (Johnson). A

lack of physical warmth is also thought to reduce a child's immunity. When children have to use energy to heat their bodies, they have less energy available to fight off infection and they become more susceptible to germs and viruses (Johnson). As warm-blooded mammals, we perform comfortably within a narrow range of internal body temperatures. It is only within this narrow range that our "I" can interact properly with the external world. The organization of warmth within our physical body becomes the vehicle through which the will penetrates the body and only then is it possible for us to control our body

and emotions (Darcy p.32). Physical body warmth is critical to the developing child and it is important that we take the time to protect them from the cold, both indoors and outside. In doing so, we are laying the foundation for healthy physical development.

In discussing warmth, or the temperature sense, it is important to recognize its two-fold nature. The sense of warmth refers not only to the warming of the physical body, but also to the soul gesture that we experience in our interactions with our environment. Cold temperatures make our bodies contract and in warm temperatures our bodies are able to relax. We

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Dolls are warmly tucked in while their caregivers hang out the wash at Spindlewood LifeWays Center.

# Warmth...

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react similarly to the soul warmth or coldness that we experience from other human beings in our environment (Patterson and Bradley p.90). A soul response that is cold has a chilling effect and a young child may react by withdrawing into himself. Warmth, on the other hand, has a stimulating effect. A child met with warmth is interested and engaged (Soesman p.95). Rudolf Steiner believed the sense of warmth to be critical to the development of a child's healthy sense development. Indeed, he believed the temperature sense to be the first sense of man (Soesman p.96). A young child meets the word with interest and this is the essence of the temperature sense. It is the sense that lays the foundation for the development of all the other senses. We have to want to observe something or to hear something and it is the temperature sense that drives this interest that then engages the

other senses (Soesman pgs.96-97). When we open ourselves up to the external world, we either get something back or we get nothing back. When we get something back from the experience, we experience of sense of warmth and we feel a connection to the world (Soesman p.102). It is certainly important that we foster a secure environment in which a child is motivated to radiate and receive warmth.

In a lecture describing the twelve senses that Rudolf Steiner has identified, Douglas Gerwin offered a visual diagram that organized the senses into three categories: lower, middle, and higher senses. Warmth is one of the middle senses and it is this group that, according to Gerwin, "give us aesthetic order and let us know that the world is beautiful". We must surround the children with beauty so that this is the

message that they come to know as truth. A LifeWays inspired household or childcare program provides an environment that offers the beauty and security that nurture the senses in a child. Parents and caregivers in this setting radiate a soul gesture of warmth as they carry out their daily tasks with love and attention. Children are nourished with song and tender touch. An environment is fostered in which children are invited to participate in meaningful work and also offered the freedom to engage in uninhibited imaginative play. The atmosphere is one of care and intention and time is



Everyone helps knead bread for lunch!

taken to enjoy all tasks, from folding silks to diapering. The children's connection to the natural world is nurtured with time spent outdoors and developing children are nourished with snacks and meals that are prepared with whole grains and organic products. Immersed in such care, children are embraced in an environment of

warmth that supports their healthy development.

It has been several years since I have returned from Germany and I now realize that it is possible to create an ethos of warmth within the American society. In thinking about starting a family of my own, I hope to create a household that fosters the development of my child's sense of warmth. Further, it is my intention to make an effort to maintain a sheath of warmth for my children in outings that take the family outside of the home. For example, rather than steer my children into crowds of people and open them up to the possibility of a chilling soul gesture, I plan to use a stroller that faces the child toward his caregiver.

I believe that it is important to establish a community that is ready to meet and embrace my child. In

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## Warmth... continued from previous page

a society that has become increasingly technological, it may seem difficult to create connections in the community. It is clear, however, that support of a child's sense of warmth is essential and I believe that parents and caregivers should make an effort to form relationships with members of their community. One could do so by choosing to go shopping at the same time each week, selecting the same cashier even if this means a wait. The routine offers security to the child and a relationship will soon be established with regular interactions. When banking, one could make an effort to go inside and work with a teller rather than utilize the cold automatic machines outside. Families can join co-ops and regularly take advantage of the local farmer's market. In all



outings, it is important to take the time to make positive connections with the people. In forming relationships within the community, we can widen the envelope of warmth that surrounds the child in the home.

In conclusion, it is vital that we pay close attention to the healthy development of the sense of warmth in children, particularly in this modern life where children are susceptible to damaging sensory overload. A young child is sensitive to the soul responses that are around him. We must all strive to surround our children with what is beautiful, what is good, and what is true. How a child experiences the world has a tremendous influence on how the child perceives the world later as a teenager and as an adult (Johnson 1999). Warmth is an essential component to the healthy development of today's children.

Amanda is a graduate of the Maine Lifeways training program and currently teaches 8-10 year old children at Carolina Friends School in Durham, North Carolina.

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## LifeWays Helpful Hints!

The LifeWays graduates of the Front Range area of Colorado gathered on a Saturday afternoon in early December to socialize and talk about our programs. We brainstormed on activities to do with the children while we are 'trapped' inside during the winter months, and we came up with a plethora of ideas. We hope some of them may be an inspiration to you as well!

Lotti brings out a **Bean Tub** when the children in her care start going stir-crazy. She took a large wash-tub and filled it with dried kidney beans, about a foot deep. Within the beans are hidden many treasures such as shells, rocks and small toys. One by one, the children get to plunge their hands down into the beans and see what

treasure they can find. After each child has found something, he gets to plunge it back into the beans again. *Tips: with older children, try having them guess what they've grasped before they bring it to the light. Or, let them try to find treasures with their toes instead of their fingers.*

**Hand games.** Melinda in Ft. Collins will distract wild play with hand games. One example: hide a raisin in one hand, but make both hands into fists. Putting one fist on top of the other then switching them back and forth, sing a little song or say a verse such as, "Knick-a knock-a knock-a noo, dear little raisin where are you?" The child gets to guess, and if she finds the raisin, she can eat it.



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### **Friend of LifeWays \$35.**

Thank you for your interest and concern for furthering healthy child care and parent support through LifeWays. Your annual contribution will help us to continue with our training courses, workshops, and public outreach. We will send you our bi-annual newsletter to keep you abreast of our work. Please tell your friends, colleagues and acquaintances about our organization and encourage them to contact us so that they may become a Friend of LifeWays or an organizational member.

### **LifeWays Trained Affiliate \$100.**

For affiliate members who have completed the LifeWays training and support and align their work with the LifeWays organization. You have the opportunity to be featured on the LifeWays website via a link to your website or contact information. You will receive the bi-annual newsletter and we welcome your attendance at LifeWays sponsored workshops and conferences at a fifty-percent reduced fee.

### **LifeWays Self-Affiliate \$100.**

For individuals or organizations who consider their work or parenting to be in close alignment with LifeWays principles and practices, we welcome your affiliation and support. Your name and contact information will be listed on the LifeWays website as a self-affiliating member. You will also receive the bi-annual newsletter and we encourage your attendance at LifeWays gatherings.

**I have included a check for the following level of membership, new \_\_\_\_\_ renewal \_\_\_\_\_**

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**Affiliate members, please enclose a copy of your brochure or flyer.**

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Where training was completed: \_\_\_\_\_ Graduation date: \_\_\_\_\_

**LifeWays North America is a 501 (c) 3 non profit organization, your donation is tax-deductible, if you would like to make a donation, thank-you for indicating the amount enclosed:**

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