

# ***LifeWays North America***

## ***NEWSLETTER***

### ***Summer 2022***

## ***Making Space: Environments that Nurture the Soul***

### ***Greetings from Cynthia!***



Hello, Dear Friend,

*"If war has an opposite, gardens might  
sometimes be it."*

*Rebecca Solnit, American Writer*

How are you? It feels like such a very long time since our last newsletter even though time continues to fly. Have you had similar dualistic experiences – that time has sped up mercilessly, yet past events can seem like forever ago?! I am happy to be connecting with you again. My life has been full of sweet delights and unexpected challenges, and I sense this is true for many of you as well. Perhaps that is one reason I am thrilled with this edition of our newsletter on environments that nurture the soul.

In our full LifeWays Certificate training, we try to have three classes on environments – one is on indoor environments, another on outdoor, and, perhaps my favorite, is on the human environment (that's us)! How do I care for myself in body, soul and spirit so that the children have the experience of the striving of the adult? Do they see me rest when I need to? Am I dressed in clothing that is inviting to the children and that make me comfortable and pleasant? Do I speak with integrity? How is my posture? How do I handle the unexpected or challenging moment? How do I receive others – parents, colleagues, an unruly child, people who look and act differently than me? How do I pick myself up, forgive myself and move forward in those times when I did not rise to my highest and best?

I bring up the "human environment" partly because I am aware of the

integrity, intention and inspiring nature of each of the individuals who have offered articles in this newsletter. I also have had the privilege of experiencing their wonder and whimsy, so needed in these times. I want to deeply thank them for these delicious offerings and encourage you to read this newsletter from top to bottom even if it takes a few days! Each article is uniquely different from the others. I would love to say something about each of them, however, I am really eager for you to begin immersing yourself in their stories. A number of them, of course, do speak of the gift and glory of nature; thus, the quote I chose at the top of my letter. Whether your garden provides food for the family or community, is a flower bed, or a lovely planter that sits in your windowsill, may you bless and be blessed by it every day and allow it to offer you peace in return.

Speaking of blessings, do you want to align your life work with one of our stellar Representative sites? You will see below there are positions available both at Rose Rock and The Playgarden! Woohoo!

In closing, I offer this quote from Rudolf Steiner that I just encountered last week. May it encourage us all to offer, interest, understanding and love to one another:

*"In one region of the human soul every human being has a natural aptitude which in all other areas it would need considerable effort to gain supersensible knowledge about. And this one area is when a loving relationship is entered into between human beings. People must learn to develop this skill in relation to other contacts and approach them in a similar loving way with understanding and instinctive interest and a genuine desire to get to know their inner being better. In those instances that we approach other human beings with inner participation, with deep understanding, with true interest, in those instances we become, if I may put it this way, clairvoyant in everyday life."*

Wishing you refreshment and joy,  
**Cynthia**



*"By creating a calm and quiet physical space and by holding a reverential heart space for naps, adults can gift the children in our lives with the immeasurable benefits of a midday sleep."* Shanah Ahmadi, Administrator & Director of LifeWays Representative Program, [Rose Rock School](#), in Norman, Oklahoma

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## ***Contributions from the LifeWays Community***

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### ***Creating a Play Garden (originally printed in the Summer 2022 edition of [LILIPOH](#) and shared here with permission)***

by, Faith Collins



Some passions can lie dormant for years, sleepily lifting their heads from time to time until they finally get the chance to explore, and be explored, more deeply. For me, gardening is one such passion. I'd had occasional veggie boxes, and planted flower bulbs here and there, but it wasn't until I started working in early childhood and creating nature-based play spaces that my passion really blossomed.

As a Waldorf child growing up in an urban-rural interface in the Midwest, I spent endless hours interacting with the natural world: pressing flowers, making crowns from leaves or dandelions, catching fireflies, crawdads and sunfish, creating caterpillar

habitats, building miniature dams and canals in the creek.

Now, living in Colorado, the attitude towards nature seems very different. Here, there is a distinct doctrine of "look, but don't touch." Nature is portrayed as something fragile, something that can be ruined if we touch it, handle it, walk on it. Indeed, we are told that we are ruining nature every time we turn on the news. But how are today's children to develop a deep, abiding love for the natural world if they don't get to be immersed in it?

After years of creating children's play spaces at the margins, I was finally able to...[READ MORE](#)

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### ***"Field of Dreams" - a virtual walk down a gnome trail***

by, Susan Johnson, MD

Dear Lifeways Community, I wanted to share my own contribution for creating space in nature for both myself and the children and their families, who now come to my home-based clinical practice. It was healing for me to find the gnomes (many were gifts from my patients), paint the gnomes, make and then line the trail with quartz-containing rocks (found near my home during long walks), and now envision the next steps with creating the magic castle:)

I recently filmed the trail, myself, when all the wildflowers were blooming, so other children and their parents, living in other States, could still experience it, even though they cannot travel here, yet, for their follow-up appointment. I have a lot of wildlife here, though the squirrels and deer disappeared as soon as I used my iPad for filming!



It is my "Field of Dreams" (i.e. build it and the children and families will come for a visit!). Have fun taking this 19 minute virtual walk down the gnome trail (see link below)...[READ MORE](#)



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## ***Nuturing Care with Transitions***

by, Veronica Oliva-Clour



At Little House Preschool I strive to create an environment that is both welcoming and nurturing. The beauty of natural settings with simple toys and materials have always filled me with reverence.

Early on in my teaching career as a Waldorf early childhood educator, I realized that while these settings are indeed lovely, my classroom management skills were just as important. I recognized that transitions, and the ability to gently lead children from one activity to another seamlessly was an art that required insight and patience.

Recognizing the child's will and guiding them towards sitting together at circle time can be challenging at times or trying to help a small group of children wash their hands before a meal can be chaotic.

I began to study and reflect about transition periods and considered them to be an important period within the daily rhythm. From those early days of using songs and fingerplays, to movement and imitation in transitioning children, I now also consider the mood and the intention towards what activity is coming towards us. Creating and implementing transition periods takes...[READ MORE](#)

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## ***In the Garden, Again!***



garden.

Our garden is a little bright spot in the deep Virginia woods. It is laid out in...[READ MORE](#)

Now the children and I have returned to the garden playground! Last autumn, after the Harvest Festival, the children and their parents came to school for a Saturday picnic, to “put the garden to bed”. We raked out the leaves, took the scarecrow apart, and spread her straw into the flower beds for winter mulch, pulled out the old flower stalks, and laid everything to rest for the winter. Through the very long and cold winter, from time to time, a child would ask, “But when do we get to go back to the garden?”

Today was the day, and everyone was thrilled! The five-year-olds were discussing the exact place they had left off playing their “garden games” and the little ones were trying to remember which path we take to get to the

## ***Summer Tales: The Honeysuckle Cafe***

by, Suzanne Down



My brothers and I played outside most of our childhood, and were lucky to have an old huge honeysuckle bush along our fence. My dad showed us how to carefully suck the sweet honey nectar from the flowers, and we spent hours playing amongst the roots and leaves and flowers of that magical bush. I am sure this story is a true tale.

### ***The Honeysuckle Cafe***

*It is summer in the meadow, wildflowers grow and bloom along the edge of a softly flowing creek. Where the waters bubble up and sing you will find a giant honeysuckle bush with the sweetest smelling flowers you will ever smell. If you look under the honeysuckle leaves you will be surprised to find ...*[READ MORE](#)

## ***Born Grievors, Born Healers: Creating Healing Environments for the Grieving Child***

by, Shea Darian

Grief. It's as much a part of us as blood and bones. We humans are grievors to the core. We love and cherish, and we lose what we love and cherish - through death, divorce, conflict, illness, injury, trauma, financial woes, loss of home or homeland... Even so, few of us make it to adulthood with more than a vague idea about how to heal our grief-related pain or help our children to heal theirs.

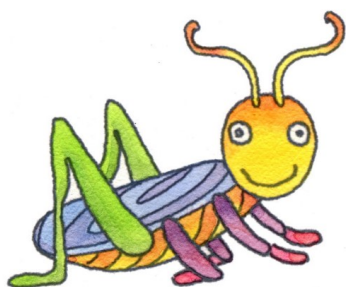


Myths and misunderstandings about grief abound. We often attempt to organize grief to control the chaos of our pain. We prescribe stages or phases of grief (that don't exist), and limit the grieving period to 3 months, 6 months, a year... We say that time heals grief, and sometimes it may. But a grief-striking loss may be so disruptive to life as we know it that we carry grief within us for the rest of our days. Even in good times, grief may simmer just beneath the surface of our consciousness.

Fortunately, from birth to death, we humans gain monumental capacities for healing grief. Babies, toddlers, and children have massive potential as healers of their own grief-related pain. Grief isn't something we can protect children from, nor can we heal the grief that ails them. Healing grief is something a child learns to do for themselves. So, as intimate caregivers, the best we can do is to... [READ MORE](#)

## ***Finding Encouragement in a Most Unlikely Environment***

by Cynthia Aldinger



Hi Friends, I just wanted to briefly share a recent story from my life. In July I had surgery, my first time in my whole life in fact! Quite the experience, and I am happy to say it went well.

If you have been in a hospital environment before, you probably noticed that it is not the most beautiful, although many do make the effort to have plants and nicely colored walls. Once you get into the belly of it all, though, like the emergency room or the pre-surgery cubicles or the surgery theaters, it's pretty sterile. So you can imagine my surprise when, in the bathroom on the pre-surgery floor, I had an encounter with a critter that totally increased my courage and delight! I was already hooked up to the IV through which they would administer the "go-to-sleep" stuff, so I was supposed to pull the call button to have someone walk me back to my cubicle once I was done. Just before pulling the string, however, I looked across the bathroom floor – and there it was! A cricket!

A cricket, friends! And I wondered to myself, how did you get in here in this sterilized environment on the third floor of a hospital! And that is when it struck me – this is my totem! I had always heard that a cricket in the home is good luck – and here it was in my hospital bathroom! Truthfully I was already very calm and centered as I knew I was bathed in prayer and feeling full trust in my life's story no matter what happened in the surgery. Admittedly, though, this little friend was an extra boost.



Recently, my good friend Laura Cassidy sent me this delightful endorsement of cricket magic: "Cricket magic is considered good luck by most Native American tribes. Cricket wisdom is said to represent joy, intuition and power of belief. A cricket's ability to jump is said to offer the power to leap over a difficult situation." The sweet nurse who came to fetch me from the bathroom was quite surprised to see my new little friend in the bathroom, yet when he saw how enthusiastic I was about it, he carefully swooped it up in a paper towel and told me he would release it outside! What a dear heart!

And so it was, dear friends, that I took the leap. They wheeled me onto the elevator and then down the long row of surgical theaters (the rooms where they perform surgery) – in fact, all the way to the very last one – Number Seven! Yep, you guessed it – my favorite number – it symbolizes completion or perfection! I wonder how many surgical patients they encounter who drift off to la-la land with a giggle and big grin on their face!

Thanks for letting me share this story. It just goes to show that beauty and delight can be found in the most unexpected environments. Just keep your eyes and heart open!



Are you enjoying this newsletter? If so, please share it with a colleague, friend or your school community!

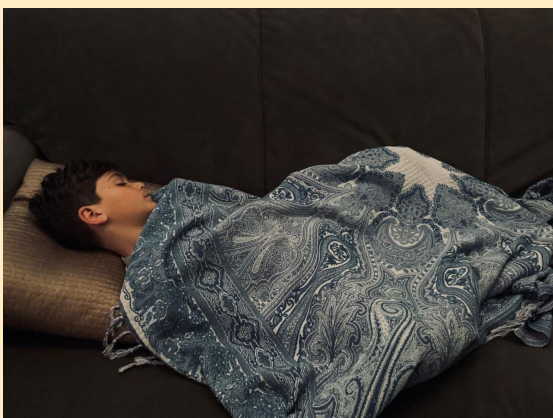
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## *Featured LifeWays Representative*

*Rose Rock School  
in Norman, OK*



Over the years as a caregiver and teacher, a common phrase for me to hear from parents has been "My child has outgrown their nap." Ten years ago this phrase was spoken primarily about 5-year-olds. A few years ago, I noticed this statement being applied to 3 and 4-year-olds. This year, two families noted that their toddlers, merely 2 years old, were "difficult to get to nap," deducing that they probably had outgrown their nap. This trend in devaluing nap time raises significant questions for me.

Does any person of any age really outgrow the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of sleep? At which point do our bodies—our nervous system, our digestion, our heart and lungs— not benefit from deep relaxation and restoration? Is there a time in our lifespan when the activities of the day stop drawing our feelings in so many directions, and a blissful sleep isn't helpful in bringing us back to center? Could something pivotal be lost if we no longer consider it valuable to allow our individual consciousness to loosen and mingle with...the larger Consciousness, our Spirit guides, God?

These are the questions that I have asked myself over the years, and, recently, I have begun asking the parents these same questions when the idea of removing nap from a child's life is posed. These questions also serve to iterate that nap is considered an important part of the daily curriculum for all children ages 2-6. Nap will not be skipped at our program; instead, nap will be revered as a healer—for every person, of any age.



Imagine that you have begun...[READ MORE](#)



## Rose Rock School

Learning Through Play • Inspired by Nature • Growing in Community

Rose Rock School is a LifeWays Representative program and grade school in Norman, Oklahoma. Our multi-age program is housed in a 5,000 square foot home located on 4 acres in the center of town. Our grounds offer refuge for wild animals like foxes and herons, and we have created habitats for bees and goats. Gardens, woods, and an orchard provide spaces for exploration and wonder. Family provides the model for how our programs grow and function. Our intention is to support each person in their journey toward their robust and evolving human potential--children, teachers, and parents.

We have a long waiting list, and *we warmly welcome caregivers with the LifeWays certification to join our community.* Our hope is to establish satellite home programs in Norman. Please contact Shanah Ahmadi at [roserockschool@gmail.com](mailto:roserockschool@gmail.com) if you are interested in starting a LifeWays home program in Norman.



Recently, the parents and teachers at Rose Rock School decided that slides would be a wonderful addition to our play yard. Who doesn't remember tirelessly climbing to the top of a slide and then gliding to the earth with a soft thud? We discussed various slide options, and we were thrilled to discover the slide of our dreams with the help of a

local non-profit organization--[Engage Learning](#). The president of our school's board is also the executive director of Engage Learning, so our visions for growth, innovation, and aesthetics are closely aligned. We are grateful for the design and building skills brought by the Engage team, and the children thoroughly enjoyed their sociability as they chatted about the construction...and about life in general. Three cheers for collaboration, fulfilling a vision, and matches made in heaven!

### ***Shanah Ahmadi, Administrator & Director, Rose Rock School***

Shanah completed her LifeWays training in 2007, the same year she began a home-based program named The Purple House. In 2010, The Purple House became a non-profit organization, which was renamed Rose Rock School.

Rose Rock School became a LifeWays childcare center in 2015, when it relocated, outside of Shanah's home, to a much larger property. Currently, Shanah is a lead caregiver and the administrator at Rose Rock.



Shanah loves getting to know the individual spirits of the people with which she works--children, parents, and colleagues. She cannot begin to count the ways that the many people she has worked with over the years have shaped her character and helped her to be a more loving, authentic, and dedicated human being.

When Shanah is not at work, she enjoys biking, sewing, gardening, and having fun with friends and family.

Shanah Ahmadi  
Administrator & Director, Rose Rock School

[roserock-school.org](http://roserock-school.org)

Representative Programs Director, LifeWays North America

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

(405) 412-3583

## *News from the LifeWays Community*



**EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY** at [The Playgarden](http://ThePlaygarden.org), Jacksonville, FL

Dedicated to early childhood learning in a loving environment?

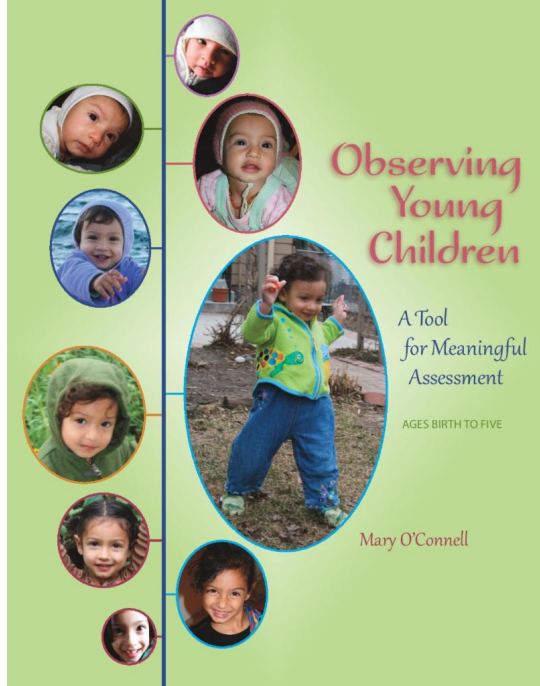
The Playgarden offers play and nature-based care in two little cottages two blocks from Jacksonville Beach. We are a LifeWays Representative Site following a gentle Waldorf inspired curriculum with ample time to PLAY. Bread baking, watercolor painting, beach and forest field trips, organic snacks and small class sizes make working at The Playgarden not just a place to work but a home to grow in. Please send resumes to [admin@theplaygarden.org](mailto:admin@theplaygarden.org).

### *State of Minnesota joins Wisconsin and APPROVES Observing Young Children for Accreditation!*

LifeWays offers a big THANK YOU to Veronica Oliva-Clour who helped get **Observing Young Children** by Mary O'Connell approved by the state of Minnesota.

Veronica wrote to us to share the good news, and said, 'I am so very pleased and excited that Waldorf methods can be part our MN state Parent Aware accreditation system. Having the choices we need, as educators, to follow our philosophy and curricula based on genuine child





*directed play and open ended activities filled with heart, patience and wisdom is so necessary in this ever increasing hardened world for little ones.'*

Do you work in an early childhood program in Minnesota? Using *Observing Young Children* as a tool for observation and assessment meets the criteria for Parent Aware Accreditation!

Do you work in an early childhood program in Wisconsin? *Observing Young Children* has been approved by YoungStar accreditation for use at LifeWays Milwaukee, and you can petition for your program to use it as well!

Do you work in an early childhood program elsewhere in the U.S.? **Submit *Observing Young Children* to your state's rating system for approval!** Be sure to let them know it has already been approved in two states. Let us know how we can support you in getting it approved in your state.

Do you want to know more about how to use this tool effectively? Watch for "**Learning to Observe Children**" online course -- returning soon!



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***North America*** keeps Certification Training, Continuing Education Hours and Parenting Enrichment available for students worldwide. Your past generosity helps us keep resources like our Living Arts Weekly blog posts and our newsletters free for thousands of people. You help us continue to develop new avenues of support, and you help us provide a living wage for our staff.

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## ***Welcome: NEW LifeWays Representative Programs***

Join us in a warm welcome to  
**Mountain Bluebells Preschool & Nursery Center ~  
LifeWays Representative Program**  
can be found in Red Lodge, MT and online at [mtbluebells.org](http://mtbluebells.org)



Would you like to see your program in this WELCOME section of our next newsletter? Learn more [HERE](#)

Looking for details on upcoming LifeWays trainings,  
workshops and courses?

Now you can plan your education and enrichment opportunities with the new **LIFEWAYS PLANNER**, published every two months. Catch up on the latest issue, [JULY/AUGUST 2022](#). By signing up on our website [HERE](#) you'll get the bi-monthly Planner, our weekly Blog and more!

Questions? Ideas? Comments?

Share them with your editor:

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LifeWays graduate, Class of 2000



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