



Odyssey News



Volume 1, Issue 2

Date December 2005

Holiday Break

Odyssey Learning Center would like to wish everyone Happy Holidays. Odyssey's School program will be closed from December 19, 2005 through January 2, 2006. This calendar year an extra vacation day was added following New Years to give everyone a rest/travel day. We will see everyone back at school on Tuesday, January 3rd.



Micah works the hose. Marcus got a badge!



Jacob shakes hands with the fireman.

Odyssey Welcomes the Sacramento Fire Department!

On November 10, the Sacramento Fire Department visited the school program. They gave a presentation to the students and talked about the tools a fire fighter uses, their special clothing, the truck and how they help others. Everyone shook hands with the firemen and they also got to

spray the water hose! A special thanks goes out to Tara Delgado, who set up the visit.

Thank You For All of Your Support!

Everyone at Odyssey would like to say thank you for all of the donations and support you have given to both the school and the residential programs. Many of you read the "Every Little Bit Helps" section of September's Newsletter and sent in many of the things we needed.

Don't forget about the other fundraising effort you can do anytime throughout the year. Odyssey Learning Center participates in **eScrip**, a hassle-free way to raise funds through your everyday purchases made at participating **eScrip** merchants. To participate, all you have to do is register your credit, debit and grocery cards on-line at www.eScrip.com and go to "sign up." Once you have registered, a percentage of your purchases made at **eScrip** merchants will be given back to Odyssey. If you have any questions, please contact Doug L. Nordby at (916) 988-0258 Ext. 222.

Again, thank you for all of your support!

Odyssey Updates

Classroom 1



Stacey helps Amy decorate a pumpkin.

Stacey would like to welcome Jordan, a new addition to her classroom. She would also like to announce the addition of two new classroom aides, Ken and Amanda.

Stacey's monthly theme for December is Holidays Around the World. They will be reading stories, listening to music and trying new foods from various cultures. They will also play multicultural games and create traditional holiday and seasonal arts and crafts. Their winter break party is scheduled for December 16. Stacey will be sending home a classroom newsletter with more details. Happy Holidays!

Classroom 2



Shadee is ready for a prize!



Trish and Steven on Halloween.

Michelle says that classroom 2 has been busy preparing for the holiday season. The students continue to work hard. They plan to decorate the classroom with fun Christmas art

projects. The students will also be making Christmas cards and picture frames. Everyone is looking forward to the holiday break and the beginning of the New Year!

Michelle and everyone in classroom 2 would like to wish a Happy Holidays to All!

Classroom 3



Zack, Nick & Charles wait their turn to go to the candy store near High Hill.

Ricky helped the fireman spray the hose.

Liz's classroom has been very busy with all of the seasonal activities. Everyone had a blast during spirit week. The best day was Halloween; everyone played games and got prizes at the mini-carnival.

Just before Thanksgiving, Liz's class went to Apple Hill and visited High Hill and Abel's. Everyone made purchases at the candy shop using the one-up dollar method. Most of the student's favorite pick was the giant cookie! Liz and Geoffrey visited High Hill's store and purchased a few items to have later for snack (apple-pumpkin butter, apple jelly, apple cake mix, kettle corn and a pie). After walking around High Hill and taking pictures, everyone went to Abel's where they enjoyed apple doughnuts.

Liz also wanted to mention the recent additions to morning meeting. On Mondays and Fridays the students utilize the on-line newspaper, News-2-You by learning

about new vocabulary words, listening to the articles and answering questions. On the other days, the students are working on Social Skills Stories. So far the students have worked on social space, using a tissue, saying thank you and giving gifts.

Happy Holidays from everyone in classroom 3!

Classroom 4



Chris helps Carina decorate her cookie.

Kelly's classroom is off and running and keeping themselves busy during the holiday hustle. The class is active in the community and they are pursuing two new jobs at this very moment (Keep your fingers crossed!) It's Kelly's hope that while you are out shopping, you will see their bright smiling faces.

They have had an exciting couple of months visiting Apple Hill, learning about community safety with our local Fire Dept. and participating in our school activities. Kelly's class is looking forward to our school recess and celebrating the break with their friends and family.

Also, Kelly's students each have a calendar in their workspaces, so please feel free to help them fill in dates with special events. Kelly wants to send out a special thank you to all of the parents and care facilities; you are the best and everyone appreciates all that you do.

Classroom 5



E'lois helps Matthew and Michele with their cookies! Shelly helps Nathan with a sticker.

Shelley says that her class is busy making preparations for their classroom Christmas Party on December 16th. These include holiday art projects, making decorations and wrapping presents for their classroom gift exchange. They will also be going on a special outing to buy supplies for the upcoming holiday cookie baking and decorating activity, yum! Shelly would like to give a special thank you to Michelle Davis for donating the Boardmaker CD-ROM. Class 5 hopes that everyone has a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Classroom 6



Samantha shows off her fire truck cookie! Raeven and Lauren blow paint to make it look like fire.

Tara said that her students enjoyed the presentation from the Firefighters at Station #22. Every student in classroom 6 gave their full attention during the Firefighter's presentation. The students made fire hats, fire truck cookies, fire with paint (using straws and paint) and colored a drawing of a firefighter. They will continue learning about safety by taking a field trip to Safetyville USA in January.

Safetyville USA teaches safety skills to children, like crossing the street and how and when to dial 911. The students will have the chance to demonstrate how to cross the street safely in the miniature city located in Safetyville USA. This month, the students will be doing a variety of art activities for the holidays. They will be celebrating Marcus's 12th birthday and saying good-bye to Brennen. Brennen is beloved by all students and staff; he will be moving out of state and everyone will miss him.

Residential Facilities



Nick looks scary in his Halloween costume.

Kristie reports that all the boys and girls really enjoyed Spirit Week; the staff did a really great job making sure they were all dressed up and full of spirit all week long. The best day by far was Halloween! Everyone picked out their costumes and wore them proudly all day long at school. In the evening everyone got together for a party and there was even some trick o' treating.

Both houses recently visited Apple Hill. They went to High Hill and Abel's. Everyone ate some yummy treats from High Hill and they watched the fish jumping in the pond. Then they went to Abel's where they were able to take a tour of the kitchen. They got to see how they make the yummy pies and apple doughnuts. Kristie thought it was great to see all of the kids so involved in the tour and they all really seemed to enjoy it.

Everyone's favorite part was the apple doughnut they got on their way out of the kitchen!

Executive Director's Update

Hello, everyone. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in the creation of the Odyssey newsletter, especially Liz Gomes. Most of the work in pulling everything together for the newsletter is done after hours and in addition to her responsibilities as a Teacher. The newsletter is also available on our website at www.odysseylearningcenter.com. Thank you to Frank Ritchie who volunteers his time maintaining our website.

As many of you know, Odyssey Learning Center has had many changes during the past several years. But the biggest is yet to come. Assuming all goes as planned, in the spring of 2006, we expect to begin construction on the expansion of the school program. When completed, we will have a total of ten classrooms. The new classrooms will be located toward the back portion of our five acres. The portables currently in use will be gone. Future projects we hope to address include: remodel the barn building, enclose the pool for year around use, add administrative offices, and remodel the current office area for training and therapy rooms adjacent to pool area. We also would like to create additional programs for children with autism. But the first project is the classrooms. Keep watching our progress!

If you have any ideas, questions or concerns, please contact me any time at (916) 988-0258 x226 or cheryldaly@odysseylearningcenter.org. Send me your email address so I can update my list. My computer crashed last year and I lost everyone's email addresses.

Cheryl Daly
Executive Director

Notes From Cindee's Desk

I would like to thank everyone for the generous donations of needed items and equipment. Your continued support of Odyssey is much appreciated.

We had a wonderful Thanksgiving Feast with turkey, stuffing and all of the fixings! Although we were not able to gather as a group, I look forward to the future expansion and increased space so we can once again continue on with our holiday tradition of gathering and celebrating together.

In a continued effort to improve the school program, new curriculum materials have been purchased to meet the growing needs of our students.

I would like to commend all of the staff for their continued hard work and commitment. Our staff is the heart and soul of Odyssey and they make our school what it is today.

Here's wishing you a Happy Holiday and a wonderful New Year.

Cindee Shapton
Principal/Educational Administrator

Notes From Doug's Desk

The residential programs start this busy time of year with some significant changes. After 6 years of service to Odyssey, Isabel has left to further her education. Isabel wants to become a nurse and though we will miss her greatly, we applaud her contributions to us, and wish her well in her pursuit.

We have begun to restructure the two residential programs in a continued effort to provide quality services. Beginning December 5th 2005, Kristie Rikalo will be supervising both of the residential programs. We have created two new lead positions that will function to assist the supervisor while monitoring household operations. Heather Odell will be our lead for the girl's facility and Medina Akers for the boy's.

Brandy Pembroke and Raquel Dominguez are also part of this restructuring, and they will continue to keep shifts running smoothly as shift-leaders.

We are excited about this change and look forward to seeing the quality of care enhanced by all of our talented staff.

We look forward to providing education and care for your children in the up-coming year and hope that you can reflect on the accomplishments of your children and our staff from 2005. Happy Holidays to you all!

Doug L. Nordby
Facility Operations Manager

Holiday Wishes From the Vice Principal

I hope that all of your celebrations during this winter break will be joyous and restful. We all are truly grateful for the lessons learned this year and look ahead with anticipation and eagerness as we push forward into a new year.

Your thoughts input and willingness to be a part of the Odyssey Family has made our journey an exciting one. Thank you for your continued support and may your New Years be all that you hoped for.

Kelly Monteiro
Vice Principal

Holiday Behavior Tips!

The holiday season can be a trying time for our students. Disruptions to the regular school schedule, such as vacations and disruptions to the regular household routine, such as visiting relatives, can lead to anxiety and an increase in inappropriate behaviors in even the most well-behaved children. Here are some tips for addressing inappropriate behaviors during the holiday seasons:

- Be understanding. Remember how hard change can be for our children and do not take their inappropriate behaviors personally.
- Provide an escape place. Make sure there is some place where your child can go to calm themselves (possibly with some help from you) if the pressures of the holidays become too great. Be sure this place is apart from other people and not too stimulating.

- Think about the purpose of the inappropriate behavior. Is it to get something? To get away from something? To relieve anxiety? For sensory stimulation?
- Once you've identified the purpose of the behavior, think about how to help. Can you change the environment? Change your expectations? Use rewards to encourage appropriate behavior? Can your child use sign language or PECS to request? Ask for a break away from stimulation? Use sensory tools such as a trampoline to calm down?

Here are some specific behavioral techniques you can use to help your children maintain appropriate behavior during the holidays:

- Rewards-catch your child being good and offer praise, hugs and access to preferred activities such as going for a walk when they are showing appropriate behavior.
- Breaks-if you see your child getting overwhelmed, remind them that they can take a break if they need to. You may help them sign or say "break."
- First/Then Contingencies-remind your child that fun activities are available, but first they have to do something less fun, such as helping clean up. To remind them of this, say "First (unpreferred task), then (preferred activity)."
- Planned Ignoring-use this if your child engages in tantrum behavior. Sometimes during the holidays the presents and food treats can overwhelm a child's self-regulation abilities, and they may throw tantrums to get just one more piece of fudge. Ignore tantrums and withhold verbal interactions until your child

regains control. Remember though, never ignore injurious or dangerous behavior.

The holiday season can be a very challenging time for our students, but with good behavior management strategies and lots of love and attention your holidays can also be a positive and rewarding experience for both you and your child.

Lindsey Passmore
Behavior Specialist



Cheryl, Mary Ann, Doug and Cindee

Special Announcement

Unfortunately, this years school pictures were delayed. We know that many of you send these pictures along with your holiday cards. We are sorry about the delay. The proofs just arrived and the order packets have been sent out. Although the pictures will not be ready before Christmas, we hope that you will still be able to enjoy and share your child's pictures with family and friends at a later date.

**Happy
Holidays
From
Everyone At**
Odyssey LEARNING CENTER

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