



September/October Newsletter

Welcome from the PGP Director

By Audrey Stirling
Ruri and Harris' Mum

I would like to say a huge welcome to all our new and returning PGP members and volunteers. I hope you all had a nice relaxing summer and that your children are now ready to start the fun, games and learning associated with PGP.

Thank you to everyone who has volunteered to take up a position in PGP, to assist, lead, and teach or in a Board Member capacity. With your ongoing support and commitment the Playgroup Programme will continue to have the opportunity to develop, expand and succeed, thus ensuring our children learn the skills associated with both play and education building confidence and happiness.

We have introduced a few new sessions this year to both the Playgroup and Literacy programmes, including an additional Sitting to 18 months group, and Literacy 4 and 6 classes.

To manage our programme we have over 50 assistants, leaders and teachers helping over 200 children to have fun and learn, and 20 Board Members managing various aspects of PGP.

What a great achievement for a totally volunteer-based organisation. As well as retaining a tremendous amount of skills and knowledge from continuing volunteers. This year brings a lot of new faces into PGP particularly in Literacy. We are confident our new teachers will bring with them a host of new ideas and skills to the programme.

As a voluntary organisation we always invite and encourage parents to help whenever they can. We are extremely grateful for the continued support of all our volunteers which ensures the success of this wonderful and extremely important community provision.

Board Members

Last year saw a big change to the PGP Board with several new members joining. This year we have only a couple of changes. Tania McMahon has taken up the role as Registrar from Deborah Luisier and Denise Nickerson-Cauderan as the new Assistant Registrar.

We are also pleased to welcome the following new volunteers Lucy Brown – Librarian, Margaret McSherry and Louise Merfield - Snack and Supplies Buyers, Berenice Fitzpatrick – Newsletter Assistant.

PGP Events

We will be running our favourite events again this year which include group nights out, our Christmas party and Literacy Show, volunteers dinner and English book fairs.

This year we would like to introduce a few more PGP social and fundraising events into our programme, and not just for the children! We will be looking for an Events Assistant to help us put the programme together. So if you are interested in helping us think of fun events don't hesitate to contact me.

We Need Your Approval

In order for the PGP Board to operate this year we would like you to approve the Board and the annual 2009-2010 budget. To do this we NEED YOU to attend our Annual General Meeting on TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13. This is an important meeting and it is essential that we have the full support of our membership, so PLEASE come and VOTE. To entice you, we will have a bit of social evening after the formalities with food and drink available.

Thank you all again and have a great year.

pgp-director@hotmail.com or
audreystirling@yahoo.co.uk

Three Month Calendar

| | | | | | |
|------------|-------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|
| Mon 31 Aug | Board Meeting | 10 to 25 Oct | School Break in Vaud | Thu 05 Nov | Guy Fawkes Day |
| Mon 07 Sep | Leader Training Meeting | Tue 13 Oct | Annual General Meeting | Thu 05 Nov | Back to School in France |
| Thu 10 Sep | Jeûne Genevois | Fri 16 Oct | Nov/Dec Newsletter Deadline | Mon 09 Nov | Board Meeting |
| Mon 14 Sep | Start of PGP | 17 to 25 Oct | School Break in Geneva | Wed 11 Nov | Armistice Day (Veteran's Day) |
| Mon 21 Sep | Jeûne Fédéral | Sat 24 Oct | Start of School Break in France | Mon 23 Nov | Literacy Parent Information Meeting |
| | | Sat 31 Oct | Halloween | Thu 26 Nov | Thanksgiving Day |

Inside this issue:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Plane-spotting | 2 |
| Dad's Corner | 3 |
| Welcome to Playgroup | 4 |
| Welcome to the Literacy Programme | 5 |
| Adults Only - Scrumptious Snacks | 6 |
| Influenza A (H1 N1) | 6 |
| What's On In and Around Geneva | 8 |

Playgroup Programme

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France

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Email: pgp-director@hotmail.com

We are a registered non-profit organization.

Grape Escapes

By Alexandra Robak
Isabelle and Nina's Mum

Champagne

"I drink champagne when I am happy, and when I am sad. Sometimes I drink it when I'm alone. When I have company, I consider it obligatory. I trifle with it if I am not hungry and drink it when I am. Otherwise I never touch it – unless I'm thirsty" – Lily Bollinger.

Now there's a girl after my own heart! Let's face it; the world would be a happier place if we all drank more champagne. And by far the best place to try and buy the stuff is, of course, the Champagne region. A five hour drive from Geneva, it's perhaps a little far for a weekend break, but it's very handily placed if you're driving to or from Paris or one of the Channel ports. So go on, visit Champagne and put some fizz back into your life!

A bluffer's guide to the wines

Everyone knows champagne when they see it – those bubbles are a bit of a giveaway; but there's a bit more to champagne than just the fizz. Up to three grape varieties can be used, two black and one white. Pinot Noir (the grape behind red Burgundy) provides body; Pinot Meunier adds fruitiness; and Chardonnay (the white grape of Burgundy) is known for its delicacy and aroma. Many champagnes blend all three varieties, but a *Blanc de Blancs* is 100% Chardonnay (think light, crisp and delicate with flavours of green apples and citrus), while a *Blanc de Noirs* is made exclusively from black grapes (typically soft, rich and creamy with flavours of stone fruits and strawberries). *Rosé* champagnes can be made by mixing red and white wine, or by macerating the juice just long enough to extract a pretty pink colour from the black grape skins.

A champagne label also reveals the level of sweetness.

Extra brut/ultra brut/brut zero/brut nature or brut sauvage all indicate that there is no added sugar, which in this northern climate is not necessarily a good thing. *Brut*, the most common style, is dry. *Extra dry, sec, demi-sec* and *doux* become progressively sweeter. I normally stick with *brut* unless I want something to go with pudding or cake, in which case I'll likely choose a *demi-sec* (a Canard-Duchêne *demi-sec* slipped down very easily at cost centre #2's recent birthday party!).

Visiting the wineries

Champagne producers fall into two camps. At one end of the scale are the giant champagne houses – Moët et Chandon, Veuve Clicquot, Mumm etc – famous brands that exude confidence and wealth. They dominate the market, producing 70% of all champagne and 90% of exports. At the other end of the scale are 2,000 grower producers. Both are worth visiting, but for different reasons.

The big champagne houses are found in Reims and Epernay. Well set up for tourists, most houses welcome paying visitors for a tour of their cellars and a glass of fizz. These tours can be formulaic, but it's worth doing one to get a handle on the champagne-making process and to witness some of the most successful brand marketing machines in the world. Veuve Clicquot (www.veuve-clicquot.com) offers one of the better tours, with a slick presentation on Veuve's history, a chance to walk around some of their 24km of underground cellars and a glass of their ubiquitous yellow label champagne. While at Mercier (www.champagnemercier.fr), visitors board an electric train to tour the galleried cellars. These tours all end in the gift shop – by all means buy the t-shirt or baseball cap, but be warned, the champagne is often cheaper elsewhere.

Once you've enjoyed the glitz of big-brand champagne, head out into the surrounding countryside to sample and buy some "farmer fizz". You can meander through villages and vineyards following your nose, or take one of the five "Routes Touristiques du Champagne".

Stopping, tasting and buying along the way. Quality will vary, but you may strike gold. Alternatively, do some homework. The best grower producers offer some of the most exciting and individual wines around. These producers have neither the time, money or inclination to compete with the heavy marketing of the big brands. What they do have is a desire to make the very best champagne they can. As Jancis Robinson, the UK's best known wine writer, points out "*there is absolutely no doubt in my mind that the best value in champagne is to be found chez the individual growers, rather than the most familiar names*". Among the growers to look out for are: Varnier-Fannièrre in Avize (www.varnier-fanniere.com), R & L Legras in Chouilly (www.en-champagne-legras.fr), Diebolt Vallois in Cramant (www.diebolt-vallois.com), Guy Charlemagne (www.champagne-guy-charlemagne.com) and Launois (www.champagne-launois.fr) in Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, and Vilmart & Cie in Rilly-la-Montagne (www.champagnevilmart.com). You'll probably need an appointment, but it's worth it.

Other attractions ... if you really must

Apart from champagne, Reims is best known for the gothic cathedral of Notre Dame. Built in 1211, it was where many kings of France were crowned. Apparently, European nobility developed a taste for the local wine while attending coronation festivities, so champagne quickly became known as the "king of wines".

For the children, there are a couple of activity parks (www.nigloland.fr and www.zigzagparc.fr), and Reims is only about 100km from Disneyland Paris.

To be honest though, the Champagne region is all about the bubbly stuff. Visiting the area allows you to taste and buy champagne that you will never see in the local shops and, in these credit-crunched times, the price/quality ratio of grower champagnes is particularly attractive. So take a trip, enjoy the fizz and load up the car.

Plane-spotting

By Kerry McCance
Kim, Angus and Ruth's Mum

When we first came to Geneva, before the children, I never thought I'd be writing an article for the newsletter highlighting my favourite plane-spotting hangout! But my days of long, lingered-over meals and nights in cosy pubs are mostly behind me and so I share two of our favourite family outings with you.

Our first favourite place is the Aéro Bistro Thai restaurant in Meyrin. Where else can you find a play park, great plane-spotting opportunities and a hot chocolate or beer and a wee sit down for an exhausted mum and dad? Located at Route H.C. Forestier 36, CH 1217, Meyrin.

It can be reached by following Route H.C. Forestier past the pick-your-own farm on the right, past the cemetery on the left until you reach a 90° bend. The restaurant is straight in front of you before you go round the bend. There is ample parking in the car park there.

I personally think this is one of Geneva's best kept secrets. The restaurant itself is situated on the Meyrin side of the airport and has a terrasse overlooking the main airport terminal. High wire fences separate you from the planes, but that's all. It can feel as though you are right on the runway itself. My two year old will happily pull up a chair and amuse himself for an hour or so by shouting "Bee!" every time a plane goes past.

And given that you are right beside the aerodrome which houses the small planes and also the hangers for the private jets, and given the frequency with which Easyjet seem to fly to and from Geneva, planes go past quite often! We usually have the good fortune of spotting a "ro-ro" – his name for the helicopter which has been known to buzz right over our heads.

The restaurant also boasts a play park of sorts. There are slides and swings and a little house for the children to hide in. It's not too big an area to supervise from a seat. My four year old loves it as much as the other parks we've visited in the area. The surroundings aren't the nicest I've ever experienced. It is not a posh restaurant and it doesn't pretend to be so. (continued on page 3)

Update from the Librarian

By Lucy Brown
Ben and Thomas' Mum

Over the last five years or so Cate Esson has worked tremendously hard to ensure that PGP has well-stocked shelves and that the library system works well. As Cate is standing down from the librarian position, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Cate for all the hard work she has put in. Yasmine Kuhnen, assistant for the last year, and I hope to continue to improve the library. To help the library run smoothly here are a few pointers.

How to borrow books

We would like everyone to benefit from the PGP Library. To make sure that books are not taken home without being checked out, we remind you of the check in/check out process. The Library volunteer within the group should provide a time period during the session where you can browse the boxes with your child. The Library volunteer should be the only person who checks in and out books for all group members. Only two books may be borrowed at a time. Books have to be returned within 2 weeks.

Books are colour coded

All our library books are colour coded for suitability for different age groups.

Each book has a coloured sticker indicating the age group and should be stored in a box of the same colour. Green boxes contain books for 18 months to 3 years old, yellow boxes for 3 to 4 years, red boxes for 5 to 6 years and blue boxes for 7 years plus.

Top shelf

The top shelf of the Library has many lovely books that are just too big for the boxes and also titles for parents to borrow e.g. on parenting or first aid. Please feel free to borrow these books remembering to check these out in the same way as for books from the boxes.

Themes throughout the year

We have open book shelves in the Craft Room so that children can browse books once their handiwork is done. These books are rotated regularly and are often based on seasonal themes. This year, playgroup sessions are going to have themes that run for a three to four week period and we plan to coordinate some of the books available on the open shelves with the current theme.

Some new titles

Plenty of new and donated books have arrived on our shelves this year.

Some brief highlights are the first two books from the Dinosaur Cove series written by Rex Stone. Firstly *Attack of the Lizard King* and secondly *Charge of the Three-horned Monster*.

When two young boys discover the secret of Dinosaur Cove a whole world of adventure awaits them. They find dinosaurs of all shapes and sizes. Some are friendly, like the Wannanosaurus, but some are positively ferocious! To find out more about this series of books take a look at www.dinosaurcove.co.uk.

We also have four additional titles from well-known author Jez Alborough; *Yes; Tall; Some Dogs Do and Duck in the Truck*. These are fun books for younger children all wonderfully illustrated by the author himself. If you are familiar with some of Jez Alborough's books, a fun and interesting Website is www.jezalborough.com. Here you can find out about the author and his inspiration, there are question and answer pages which are a great encouragement for children who enjoy writing stories and additional pages with hints on how to draw illustrations. There are also colouring pages from some of his stories.

If you have any questions or comments about the Library then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Usborne Book Sale Coming Soon in November!

Plane-spotting

(continued from page 2)

I've never felt inclined to sample the food, but I've had a lovely hot chocolate in the winter to warm me up, and you can't beat an ice lolly in the summer months. The staff, although efficient, never come back to bother you, so you can linger over the dregs of your coffee without feeling guilty, making it a very cheap morning's entertainment! Be prepared for the fact that because it is right on the runway, it is often very windy.

If you fancy a plane-spotting picnic, I recommend the park in Ferney that can be reached from the Lidl (located on the Rue de Genève) car park. Go through the gap in the fence at the far corner of the car park, climb the hill and you will be rewarded with a great view of the end of the runway. When planes are taking off and landing in the right direction, you will see them queuing for a place on the runway and touching down right in front of you.

If you get bored of plane spotting, there is a little pond in a wooded area which you can easily walk round with a toddler. The park itself has a few wooden benches and a few small trees for shade.

Maybe next time my children are plane-spotting, I'll spot some of you sharing your favourite places!

Overheard by a Playgroup Member

A child says to his mommy "Is today the last day of school?" (meaning before summer vacation) Wishful thinking kid – it is only the end of the first day!

Dad's Corner

By Eddy Hill
Leo and Juliana's Dad

Balancing kids and business

I started my own brand design business, Eddy Hill Design (www.eddyhilldesign.com), about 20 months ago, partly in order to choose my clients (in the humanitarian, environmental and innovation sectors), partly to escape office politics, but also to spend more time with my family. My daughter Juliana is in the Pre-Literacy group, and wants to be a superhero when she grows up; Leo is in the Sitting group, fast approaching his first steps and full words.

It's going well. I work from a home office and we eat most breakfasts, lunches and dinners together.

I help out at bath time when the splashing gets tough, and at bedtime. I am usually around for top priorities such as doctor's appointments and pushing swings. Having said that, I make up that special time by working at night. Childhood is so magical that it was important for me to find a way of sharing it with Juliana and Leo.

What I had not anticipated is that my work would also get a boost from the extra contact with my family. Something of the children's energy and freshness feeds into my creativity, which in turn benefits my work. There's nothing like children to give you a break when clients get too stressful or to remind you that you are actually better off shut away in the office!

I have always been a keen cyclist and need to find more time for outdoor sports, preferably without a kid strapped to the back of my bike, telling me "we're slowing down, Papa, go faster!" If I could be anybody? Lance Armstrong with a carbon child seat.

My favourite all time vacation? My wife Sanna and I went travelling years ago and spent a while in the Galapagos Islands. My strongest memory is of playing "fetch" with a sea lion pup underwater. I'd like to go back there one day, maybe with the children and my laptop.

Words to Live By

Have fun, work hard and be kind.

Welcome to Playgroup from the Leader Trainer and Representative

By Trish Clements
Hugh and Ronan's Mom

On behalf of the Playgroup Leaders and Assistants, I would like to welcome you to the 2009 - 2010 Playgroup year.

Our playgroups are going to be **even** more fun-filled this year. I write this, fresh from meeting with our team of volunteers at the 2 training events, held recently in advance of the new term. Many have since arranged to meet a third time for final group preparations! So, everyone is very committed and eager to run fun groups. Having such infectious, positive energy is always a great start.

Also, new this year we are introducing sessions that are based around themes. The themes will be linked to the craft – have a look at the Craft Curriculum in the Parent Handbook to see what is coming up. Kerry McCance, our Craft Coordinator, has done a great job of ensuring plenty of different materials and techniques within the Craft Curriculum. Leaders will incorporate, as they see fit, songs, games and activities suitable to the age and dynamic of the group.

This should ensure variety and interest in the sessions all year long.

As a fully-volunteer run organisation, we are very fortunate to have such wonderful members who step forward to lead and assist in the Playgroup Programme. It requires no small commitment to be there and run a group week after week. So please support your leaders fully.

Here are a few ideas of how you can make a difference to your group:

- Arrive on time!
- Contribute to an Adult Snack rota.
- Ensure that your and your children's hands are squeaky clean when arriving to playgroup and practice good hygiene at all times.
- Become the Library Assistant for your group - ask your Leader what this entails.
- Continue chatting with a friend while doing the washing-up, sweeping the floor, tidying – it can be never ending here too just like at home!
- Become the Big Toy specialist with another adult, knowing how to store the equipment safely in the Big Toy Cupboard.

- Help prepare cut-outs before craft time and ensure lids are put back on markers and glue after craft time.
- If attending with a newborn and/or are unable to help with lifting, take on a lightweight task above.
- Ask your Leader how you can help, and offer to take on a task for a few weeks at a time. As the weeks go by, please remember to continue to help out.
- If you have any ideas or suggestions to share, your Leader will be delighted to hear them.

As you can see, none of the above tasks are a chore in itself, but altogether they can be quite time consuming. Your help in these areas will allow your Leaders to dedicate more of their time and energy to animating the sessions, so even more fun is had by all.

Thank you as always for your support and wishing you and your child(ren) many happy times in your playgroups over the course of the year ahead.

Welcome from the Craft Coordinator

By Kerry McCance

After writing this year's Craft Curriculum over the holidays, my mind is buzzing with craft ideas. Thirty-six weeks just isn't enough to share them all with you, so I jumped at the opportunity to write an article in the newsletter focussing on a different craft-related theme each issue. For example, in researching some ideas for this year's curriculum I've come across some brilliant Websites I never knew existed and some fantastic books and resources. I'm looking forward to sharing these with you in future issues. When kids wield paintbrushes, it's never easy to know what to expect, but this article will hopefully give you some ideas of what the Arts and Crafts time at Playgroup is about.

The purposes of this part of a session are for the youngsters to have fun working with new materials, to develop confidence and to explore their creativity. I strongly believe that the process of crafting is much more important than the finished product. Children's ideas should be fostered where possible. Their finished item will probably turn out way better than the example I've made – I've seen this happen time and time again with my own children!

It is always difficult when designing craft activities to satisfy the needs of all children from the ages of 18 months to 5 years. The majority of the crafts have been tried out on my older children (aged 2 and 4) and they have managed them with varying degrees of help and input.

I am as aware as anyone that children vary hugely in both their interest and ability, so I always try to keep the activities as simple as possible, but, on most, an easier option is suggested. It will follow the theme and general idea of the craft in question, but may be more achievable for the younger members of the programme, thus helping to increase their confidence.

For those of you new to crafts, I hope you find our system simple to use. A craft basket is located in the bottom of the Supplies Cupboard in the Small Toy Room which contains all the materials needed to carry out the week's craft activity. The instructions for the craft are pinned to the notice board in the Craft Room, along with an example of the craft and a sheet for comments. Please feel free to tell me if a craft didn't work, if you have a suggestion for an improvement or if you loved it. You can also get in touch with me by e-mail: kerry.mccance@gmail.com.

When you take a look at the year's Craft Curriculum, you'll probably recognise some old favourites from years gone by, but also hopefully find it full of new and exciting art and craft projects for our kids to get stuck into. Some crafts are highlighted. These are the messy ones and you should ensure that both adults and children attending playgroups that week come appropriately dressed. Aprons are available for children, but it can be difficult for them to control a paintbrush when they are enjoying themselves!

For most of the crafts, some preparation will be required, be this pouring paint onto paper plates, or cutting out pieces required to make an item.

Helping your leader and assistant by volunteering for these tasks will make the craft time run more smoothly and hopefully retain the interest of the children for longer.

This year we've tried to group the crafts into themes, so that your groups can try out some related songs and activities and develop them over a few weeks. Sometimes familiarity helps with the success of an activity, particularly in the younger groups. Our themes are varied and include things such as Weather, Dinosaurs and Space.

As with all other elements of Playgroup, the Arts and Crafts section runs to a budget. Eleven groups of up to ten children take part each week in the craft section of playgroup. Supplies are bought with the number of participants in mind, so please make sure that these are used carefully. When cutting things out, for example, please try to minimise waste. If limits on materials are set, please ensure that you respect them so that groups later in the week have enough to carry out their crafts with success.

One of the big craft trends at the minute is recycled crafts and, in this respect, playgroup is no different. We are always in need of cereal boxes, toilet rolls and old newspapers and magazines, but this year we also need empty wide necked jam jars (the Bonne Maman kind), packing peanuts and matchboxes. There is a basket at the back of the Big Toy Cupboard in which you can leave donations of *anything* we may find useful. I hope you all enjoy this year's crafts and that they don't prove too traumatic for you! Happy crafting!

Welcome to the Literacy Programme from the Literacy Coordinator

By Jane del Pozo
Anna and David's Mom

Welcome to the start of another Literacy year! For those of you new to Literacy, this is my second year as Literacy Coordinator, and the second year the Literacy Coordinator has also an assistant. Leisa Campbell-Lendrum will continue with me providing advice on curriculum and teaching. Our goal is to give volunteers the support and materials they need so they can concentrate their valuable time on preparing time spent with the children.

This year the Literacy Team comprises 14 Teachers, 24 Assistants and 4 Support Group Coordinators. We have also added two new classes. Thank you to Gillian Bell-Williams who offered to run a second Literacy 4 session on Wednesday mornings for children from Literacy 3 who would not have been able to continue in the programme otherwise.

Literacy 5 has now become Literacy 5 & 6 thanks to a group of children who did not want to leave the programme and Kathy Dunand who volunteered to run the groups together.

Our Support Group Coordinators have given an outline of our aims for the year (see below). Of course, our time with the children is short, and support at home in continuing the work done in class is an invaluable part of the programme. How you can support your child at home will be part of the Literacy Evening on Monday, November 23. This evening is also an opportunity to see examples of materials and work from all levels, as well as meet Teachers and Assistants, and is the next important date in the Literacy year.

As usual, I would just like to remind you of a few things to ensure that classes run as smoothly as possible:

- Please respect class start and finish times (and have your child go to the toilet before class!).
 - According to PGP rules there must be a parent or guardian present at all times in the church while the child is attending the literacy session.
 - You must sign your child in at the start of the session (sign-up sheets are by the door of all the classes) and indicate where you will be waiting.
 - Children must be picked up from the classroom at the end of the session.
- Lastly, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or comments throughout the year.

Overheard by a Literacy Teacher

A little story to bring a smile and highlight the gender gap: My son and daughter were playing Pocahontas. My daughter said "I am in love with you and want to marry you." My son replied "Yes, just a minute I have to shoot my gun."

Literacy Programme - What We Will Be Doing This Year

Pre-Literacy

In Pre-Literacy we introduce your child to the letters of the alphabet. Our aims are to help your child to recognise the letters, to form the letters with their fingers and a pencil, and to know the sounds those letters make when learning to read. We will be using Jolly Phonics and Letterland resources so that you and your child can see their progress in workbooks. The letters will be taught in a sequence that will enable your child to "sound out" the letters and then words for themselves. The Literacy session is just 20 minutes but throughout the class the children will be learning the letters in a fun and multi-sensory way, through games, songs and stories. You can help your child at home by finding lots of objects beginning with the week's letter, practising the letter sounds and actions; and, of course, practising the correct pencil hold and forming the letters. The best way to help your child is to do little but often.

Literacy 1

In Literacy 1 we begin the first part of the year by revising all of the initial letter sounds using a combination of several schemes and resources. We follow on by introducing the blends, i.e. sh, ch, bl, tr, etc once again using the phonetic approach, mainly using the fun Letterland explanations. Alongside the introduction of blends we will work on the long and short sounds of vowels within words. High frequency words will also be introduced throughout the term.

In the early stages of the year we place strong emphasis on letter formation and correct pencil control, hence using triangular pencils and the Letterland letter formation rhymes.

Each session includes story time, reader and library book selection and game time to close the session. Literacy class provides a rare and welcome opportunity for your child to speak English with their friends in a class setting. It might help you to break down homework into two or three segments throughout the week.

Literacy 2

In Literacy 2 this year we aim to develop your child's ability to read, write, speak and listen. For those children who are not reading we aim to improve their ability to identify and "sound out" words phonetically independently. For those already reading, we aim to develop their phonic knowledge and therefore their reading skills.

We will continue the work covered in Literacy 1 on correct pencil hold and correct letter formation so that your child's reading and writing develops at the same rate. Your child will also be taught basic sentence structure and basic parts of speech and punctuation. We hope to read a variety of different stories, non-fiction and poetry and have a lot of fun with flash cards and literacy games. You can help your child by developing their speaking and listening skills at home - asking questions that require them to think and use different words, giving them new words when you speak, asking them to spell words in their head and on paper, reading non-fiction and poetry at home as well as bedtime stories. Finally, you can test your child's and your own phonics by knowledgeably asking them to teach you the phonic sounds - they love knowing more!

Literacy 3, 4, 5 and 6

These later stages of the Literacy Programme ensure that the children have the opportunity to consolidate the basic skills that they have learnt before.

In Literacy 3 they will be becoming more independent in their reading and writing skills. They will now use these to work on comprehensions and writing their own stories and poems. The children will be encouraged to use these skills to learn how to record their ideas in a variety of ways.

In Literacy 4 the children will be working on more complex comprehensions that will enable them to add their own ideas and thoughts in more detail. They will be more in charge of their own work and complete a range of special writing projects.

In Literacy 5 and 6 the children will continue to work on the whole range of Literacy ideas. They will be required to work in a much more independent way and will be set work which they will have to prepare their responses and decide on the best ways to present these.

In all of these Literacy years the children will be using the Folens programme which ensures that there is continuity and progression in their learning. The teacher will be moving the children forward and encouraging them to check their work in a more detailed way. They will be required to build on their reading skill using the extensive selection of reading books we have to offer them. It is essential that the children complete the work that they are set for homework as this will ensure that they are prepared for each lesson.

Please verify your contact information with your Teacher, Leader or Assistant as soon as possible. Your details will appear in the Member Directory. The Directory is confidential and cannot be used for any other purpose. Finally, please share your photos in the montage to be published in the May/June Newsletter.

Overheard by Trish Clements

Two kids in Playgroup were hiding amongst the big toys, when one said to the other, "Your mummy is CRAZY!" It was with sighs of relief that the child had not prefaced his observation with "My mummy said your mummy was CRAZY!" as this might have been a bit awkward.

Adults Only - Scrumptious Snacks

By Kerry McCance

Chocolate Cherry Cupcakes

from Nigella Lawson's *How To Be A Domestic Goddess*
(makes 12 muffin sized cakes)

For the cupcakes:

125g soft unsalted butter
100g dark chocolate, broken into pieces
300g cherry jam
150g caster sugar
pinch of salt
2 large eggs, beaten
150g self raising flour

For the icing:

100g dark chocolate
100ml double cream
12 glace cherries

Preheat oven to 180°C.

Put the butter in a heavy bottomed saucepan and melt it. When nearly completely melted, stir in the chocolate. Leave for a moment until the chocolate begins to soften, then take off the heat and stir until the butter and chocolate are smooth and melted. Add cherry jam, sugar, salt and eggs. Stir with a wooden spoon and when pretty much mixed together add the flour.

Scrape into muffin papers in their tin and bake for 25 minutes. Leave to cool in the tins for 10 minutes before turning out onto a wire cooling rack.

When completely cool, break the chocolate for the icing into a saucepan and add the cream. Bring to the boil, remove from heat and beat until smooth. Ice the cakes, smoothing the icing with the back of a spoon, and stick a cherry in the middle of each.

Anta Bars

Makes 20-24 bars

140g butter, melted
350g digestive biscuits, crumbed
400g tin of condensed milk
200g dark chocolate, coarsely chopped
175g desiccated coconut

Preheat the oven to 180°C and lightly butter a 23 x 33cm Swiss roll tin. Mix the butter and biscuits together and press firmly into the prepared tin. Slowly pour over the condensed milk, trying to leave a tiny margin around the edges so that it does not stick to the sides. Scatter over the chocolate chunks. Finally top with the desiccated coconut and pat down with the palms of your hands to ensure it is compact.

Bake for 20 minutes or until the coconut is golden brown. Cool before cutting into bars. I cannot usually wait that long.

Influenza A (H1 N1)

There is already a lot of information available about pandemic flu for the upcoming cold seasons. However the Board feels it is necessary to bring it to your attention in the context of PGP. The main items we wish to highlight relate to travel, hygiene and symptoms.

PGP takes a proactive approach towards preventing the spread of the flu and other infectious diseases. Members are strongly encouraged to methodically apply the **hand sanitizer** provided at the beginning of each session (and especially before handling food or after using the bathroom facilities). We now require children to wash hands before snack. In addition, tissues and paper towels are readily available on the premises. So be sure to regularly wipe those snotty noses!

Travel

We are aware that the nature of work for some of the PGP parents means that international travel is a regular occurrence. We advise if any family member suffers flu-like symptoms following international travel (e.g. fever, sore throat, cough, stuffy nose, chills, headaches, body aches, fatigue, diarrhoea, vomiting) that they should not come to PGP and should seek medical attention immediately.

Personal Hygiene

One of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of being infected by the influenza virus is to practice good personal hygiene and to avoid close contact with ill people. If you do get ill with flu-like symptoms, you should **STAY HOME**, limit contact with others to keep from infecting them, and contact your physician.

Influenza is ultimately thought to spread from person-to-person through the coughing or sneezing of infected people. This is why you should cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and dispose of the tissue in the trash immediately after use. You can also prevent the spread of germs by not touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

Clinical Symptoms of Seasonal Influenza

- Sudden onset of fever over 38°C (100.4°F).
- Headache, aching muscles.
- Exhaustion and feeling weak.
- Loss of appetite.
- Sore throat.
- Runny or stuffy nose.
- Dry cough.

Additional Clinical Symptoms of Pandemic Influenza

These signs may help you decide if you need to seek medical help:

- Shortness of breath while resting or doing very little work.
- Persistent fever for 4 or 5 days.
- Painful or difficult breathing.
- Coughing up a lot of phlegm or bloody sputum.
- Wheezing.
- You are feeling better and then you develop a new fever or worsening cough with sputum.
- You feel very drowsy and others have difficulty waking you up or note you seem confused or disoriented.
- You are pregnant or have an underlying medical condition.

Further Information

Members can also review the following Websites for the latest news:

www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/
www.pandemia.ch/en-us/home.html
www.cdc.gov/flu/

Emergency Contacts

Members can contact these numbers for further advice and information:

For Switzerland: hot line (Office fédéral de la santé publique) +41 (0)31 322 21 00.
For France: dial 0 825 302 302 or +33 1 53 56 73 23.

Funny Laundry Is Back

Bringing the best English-speaking comedians to Geneva, on a new night and at a new venue. Every 3 weeks starting Tuesday, September 22, at the P'tit Music'Hohl, 54 Avenue Louis-Casai, Cointrin, Geneva. Show starts at 8pm in a non-smoking theatre. Tickets sold at the door for 35CHF.

22 September Paul Sinha and Henning Wehn
13 October Tom Rhodes - One man show
3 November Adam Bloom and Keith Farnon
24 November Tim Clark and Nick Doody
15 December Brendon Burns and Barry Castagnola

Funny Laundry also presents its BIG show on Thursday, October 29 at the Grande Salle du Palladium, Geneva. Ardal O'Hanlon, Nina Conti, Tom Rhodes, DJ Brandon Block, Trio From Hell. Tickets: 65 CHF. Show: 8.30pm. Doors Open: 7.30pm.

Tickets on sale through www.starticket.ch.

Go to www.funnylaundry.com for more information.

Words to Live By *A laugh a day keeps the doctor away.*

Miscellaneous

By Trish Clements

How to be Gracious

Jennifer's wedding day was fast approaching. Nothing could dampen her excitement – not even her parent's nasty divorce. Her mother had found the PERFECT dress to wear and would be the best-dressed mother-of-the-bride ever! A week later, Jennifer was horrified to learn that her father's new young wife had bought the exact same dress as her mother! Jennifer asked her father's new young wife to exchange it, but she refused.

"Absolutely not, I look like a million bucks in this dress, and I'm Wearing it," she replied. Jennifer told her mother who graciously said, "Never mind sweetheart. I'll get another dress. After all, it's your special day." A few days later, they went shopping and did find another gorgeous dress. When they stopped for lunch, Jennifer asked her mother, "Aren't you going to return the other dress? You really don't have another occasion where you could wear it." Her mother just smiled and replied, "Of course I do, dear.....I'm wearing it to the rehearsal dinner the night before the wedding."

By Alexandra Robak

Tip

Have an older sibling pick out a few toys that are too babyish or are no longer the objects of affection. Wrap them up prettily. The older sibling then gives them to a younger sibling for Christmas or a birthday. Voila – you recycle some toys, don't have to spend time or money buying new toys and you increase the love factor between your children.

For information or to register for **KINDERMUSIK**, email tpearce@kindermusikeurope.com.

Letter from the Editor

By Liz Stevenson Haefliger
Henry and Paul's Mom

I am always amazed at the wealth of knowledge I garner from PGP. All the groups we have ever been in were non-stop exchanges of valuable information (not to mention the good times and laughs). So why not share your tidbits for the benefit of the membership at large? Please take five minutes to send me your thoughts. The Newsletter Needs You, here is how you can help! Some points of interest:

- Digital Photos: Taken throughout the year, reflecting the specialness of PGP. Members can forward them to me at newsletter_pgp@yahoo.com whenever is convenient (i.e. a few pictures each month or a large batch in April). They will be used in the montage in the May/June 2010 issue.

- Tips: These can relate to parenting or whatever.
- Funny Things Kids Say: All parents have a few, well-loved quotes.
- Dads: Fathers who would be willing to contribute a one-time article to the newsletter. It is a completely free space, so he can write about whatever he wants to.
- Adult Snacks: Have you ever had a sensational food experience at PGP? Now is your chance to either submit your best-loved recipes or get another great chef's secrets.
- Favorite PGP Nights Out Restaurants: The Pirate, Fondue at the Bains des Pacquis, etc.
- Favorite Chocolatiers: Referring to places like Tristan's or Blondel's where you have to queue up. Only the best chocolate that the region has to offer.

- Birthday Parties: Cake suppliers, venues, party goods, games, etc. Any information is helpful even if items are imported from the US or the UK.

**The November/December
Newsletter Deadline is
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16.
Send contributions to
newsletter_pgp@yahoo.com**

What's On In and Around Geneva

(continued from page 8)

The cattle descent to the valley, a colourful and loud parade of cows magnificently decorated with crowns and sonnailles, is a great moment of emotion!
www.swissisland.ch/FABSO09/

22 to 25 Oct - Mountain Cheese Olympics

The "Olympiades des Fromages de Montagne" is a huge event with over 30,000 visitors expected. Visitors can taste and buy cheeses from around the world. Excursions in the region will also be organised as well as entertainment for kids. Events take place in the region of Saignelégier-Tramelan-Bellelay. www.caseusmontanus.ch

28 Oct to 15 Nov - **PUPPET SHOW:** Le Théâtre des Marionnettes de Genève presents "**Ne m'appellez plus jamais mon petit lapin**" (**Do not call me your little bunny ever again**). Jean Carotte is small little rabbit with amazingly long ears. Hard to be a dwarf rabbit... Ignoring his grandpa's advice, he runs away and commits a holdup. In prison, he makes friends with Lapinou, an even smaller rabbit than him. Together, they try to escape to disappear in the heart of the earth. With hectic car chases and fabulous ski descents, the author illustrator, Grégoire Solotareff paints a reality not without poetry, of a truth lived by children.

Who as a child, did not feel set apart, by his/her physical appearance, and did not admit a solitude without true friends? How to accept our differences without wanting to be just like everybody else? A beautiful adaptation of a classic children's tale by Solotareff. From 4 years old. www.marionnettes.ch. Tel: +41 22 418 4777

Oct - **FILM FESTIVAL: P'tits Yeux, Grand Ecran (Little Eyes, Big Screen)**. Gex's 6th annual children's film festival will take place during the French autumn break school holidays. Check out details of this year's festival programme at: www.ville-gex.fr Tel: 04 50 42 36 00

25 Oct - Celebrate **Halloween** at the **Parc Pré-Vert at Signal de Bougy** (Aubonne exit). A special Halloween lunch is available at the restaurant from 11:00. Activities will start at 13:30 with the children's parade (weather permitting) followed by a show at 14:00 (free entry). www.signaldebougy.ch

27 Oct to 1 Nov - **THEATRE: Les Soeurs Bonbon**. The candy store of Mister Bonbon and his two daughters, Marshmallow and Liquorice, is famous for one thing: The sugar tear – a small syrupy and transparent candy, with a cylindrical rare shape and very expensive. Its recipe is completely secret...

When the queen discovers that this candy has the virtue to heal her son affected by a severe disease, she keeps ordering more and more to a point where Mister Bonbon can not fulfill her demands any more. But Liquorice and Marshmallow have in mind a devilish plan to help their dad... A musical show for the whole family. A 1h10 show (no intermission). From 7 years old. A play by Am Stram Gram of children theatre in Geneva. Reservations required. www.amstramgram.ch

31 Oct – **First Aid Course 2: Child Injuries and Illnesses**. Dr Penny Fraser will cover the broad topic of emergencies at home: Choking, fevers... what to do, what medications to give? How ill is my child? When to call the doctor? Burns and scalds, nosebleeds, broken bones, head injuries - when is a bump more than a lump? ...All those questions you never quite get round to asking your doctor. Course in English, at the Kiddie Club. www.kiddieclub.ch/courses_adult.htm Tel: +41 22 736 43 92

Don't forget to turn your
clocks back one hour on
Sunday, October 25.

What's On In and Around Geneva

By Bérénice Fitzpatrick (Newsletter Assistant)
Romain's Mom

SEPTEMBER

SCIENCE SHOWS - Fun with Physics. Science shows at CERN for children under 14, every Wednesday and Saturday. At 09:00 and 15:00 on Wednesdays, reservations required, at 15:00 on Saturdays, no reservation needed. At Microcosm, CERN CH-1211, Geneva, Building 33 (Reception), Entrance A. Tel: + 41 22 767 8484. <http://microcosm.web.cern.ch/microcosm/Content/Animations/Animations-en.html>

25 to 27 Sep – **Geneva Classics** is a yearly exhibition that brings together rare classic cars and other vehicles, historic aircrafts, boats and motorcycles, all superbly displayed in Hall 7 of Geneva Palexpo and on the tarmac of the Geneva International Airport (AIG). Check the Website for opening hours and admission prices (free entry for children under 16). <http://www.geneva-classics.ch/en/>

25 to 27 Sep – **Equid'Espaces (Equestrian fair)** in La Roche-sur-Foron will hold its fifth event this year building on its past success: trials, a great variety of horses of different breeds and origins, competitions for all categories, demonstrations... and something for all horse-lovers. www.rochexpo.com

Until 25 Oct – **ART EXHIBITION: "Passions partagées" (shared passions)**, an exhibition of 20th century masterpieces from private Swiss collections at La Fondation de L'Hermitage in Lausanne. Braque, Cézanne, Dali, Dubuffet, Ernst, Gauguin, Giacometti, Matisse, Miró, Monet, Picasso, Renoir, Warhol... All these artists and many more, will be present in this "coup de coeur" exhibition, which will take visitors on a voyage along the crests trail of modern art, from Impressionism to abstract Expressionism. Building around this exciting exhibition, the museum proposes several interesting activities for children: The "Fun tour" activity brochures give children the opportunity of discovering the exhibition from an amusing and instructive angle. Two brochures are available, specially designed for 6 to 8 year olds and 8 to 12 year olds (in French only). Workshops for 6 to 12 year olds – these include a discovery tour of the exhibition (in French), followed by a painting workshop with a qualified activity leader, inspired by the masterpieces presented in the exhibition. Check Website for dates. Bookings required. <http://en.fondation-hermitage.ch> Tel: +41 21 320 50 01

23, 30 Sep and 7 Oct – **CHILDREN'S WORKSHOPS: The Little Inventors' Club** (Le Club des Petits Inventeurs) proposes regular workshops for children between 7 and 12 years old to discover, learn and make their own little inventions, which they will be able to take home afterwards. The programme for the next three sessions consists in building an amazing machine with a savant little monkey who can multiply.

Tools, materials and snacks are provided at these fun, hands-on workshops organized by L'Espace des Inventions de Lausanne. For bookings, visit www.espace-des-inventions.ch

25 Sep to 25 Oct - **THEATRE: Les chevaliers Jedi ont-ils un bouton sur le nez? (Do Jedi knights have pimples on their nose?)** co-presented by Am Stram Gram children's theatre (Geneva), Le Petit Théâtre (Lausanne) and Acmosercie (Lausanne). Kiral is a 9 years old girl. Like children of her age, she vacillates between two worlds. One foot in the world of "Hello Kitty" or "Barbapapa" and the other one in the "virtual reality" - surfing on Wikipedia, playing Wii and listening to funky music with her friends. Suddenly, just like a modern Alice, she disappears in an imaginary world. In her journey underwater or in the air, she meets some imaginary creatures along the way: a super gleaming worm, an octopus in search of a purpose in life, a crying shark, a small mermaid, a naked angel, a pink elephant and, especially, a child-ball, who helps her along the journey, to dare, finally, invent her own life. A colourful show, performed by five hair-raising comedians of whim! From 7 years old. A 1h15 performance, in French (no intermission). Limited spaces - reservation required: www.amstramgram.ch

26 Sep - **Night of the Museums** - From 14:00 to 2:00. Like the movie, here comes your chance to experience a night at the museum! Embark for a cultural night odyssey through 23 participating museums in and around Lausanne. www.lanuitdesmusees.ch

26 Sep - **Night of the Museums** at Lausanne's **Espace des Inventions**. 14:00 to 22:00. Participate in a series of workshops for all ages, where you will build a water rocket and launch pad in the park, send a glittery lunar postcard to a friend, create your very own moon creature and watch the moon up close guided by a team of fervent astronomers (if weather permits). The programme will end with a conference by Olivier Sauzereau at 21:00 who will present his latest pictures of solar eclipses, taken in Siberia and Sumatra. <http://www.espace-des-inventions.ch>. Tel: +41 21 315 68 80

26 Sep to 11 Oct - **PUPPET SHOW:** Le Théâtre des Marionnettes de Genève presents "**Till L'Espiegle**", the story of a joker who fights against the world's stupidity. A hero against all odds, Till, returns to life to become the joyful center of inexhaustible and weird adventures, where he proves himself to be very resourceful. A spectacular performance with no less than 80 puppets magnificently manipulated by the comedians. A one hour performance for children ages 7 and up. www.marionnettes.ch. Tel: +41 22 418 47 77

27 Sep - "**Desalpe**" (the annual alpine cattle descent) in Saint-Cergue. To the drone of alphorns, the crack of whips, the beat of folk music and the dexterity of flag throwers, herdsmen and about ten herds of costumed cows return to the village for the winter from their summer in the alpine meadows.

Arrive early to watch the spectacular cow parade. There will also be a large selection of traditional and local foods as well as artisans' stands. www.st-cergue.ch. Tel. +41 22 360 13 14

From 30 Sep – **CHILDREN'S WORKSHOPS: The Conservatory and Botanical Gardens** have recently released the programme of their 13th annual series of green workshops for children. The 2009 - 2010 programme is now available for early booking. Workshops are held Wednesday afternoons, for children between 8 and 11 years old. Check the Website www.ville-ge.ch/cjb/ateliers_verts.php, or call + 41 22 379 70 68 on Tuesdays and Fridays (morning only) for bookings.

OCTOBER

3 to 11 Oct – **FILM FESTIVAL:** The 4th edition of the **Geneva International Animated Film Festival**. 100 short animated films, representing 22 countries, took part in the competition this year. A vast array of quality children's and general audience films will be shown again at this year's festival. For more info and a look at the program: www.cinematou.ch

7 Oct - **ENGLISH LANGUAGE THEATRE - ONE NIGHT ONLY: Someone Who'll Watch Over Me**, by Frank McGuinness. Three men are held hostage in the Middle East. To keep their spirits alive their chief weapon becomes their imagination. 'Hilariously funny as well as moving...a wise and wonderful play' - The Guardian. Salle Ausone, Esplanade du Lac, Divonne-les-Bains. 20:00. Tickets at the door. Contact: Sue Humphreys. Tel: 04 50 20 12 32.

11 Oct - The 4th **Expat-Expo**, Geneva. A fair with more than 500 exhibitors focused on the English-speaking community. A fun and informative outing for the whole family. Palexpo, Hall 7. 11:00 to 17:00. Free admission! www.expat-expo.ch

13 to 21 Oct - **PUPPET SHOW:** Le Théâtre des Marionnettes de Genève presents "**Bonhomme Tiroirs**" (**The Drawer Chap**). The drawer chap is a strange red elf, who waddles in a dress dotted with drawers. From his drawers, he pulls soft small circles, prickly triangles and white squares in white dough. The story is inspired by the universe of Paul Klee, a painter who liked working on simple and purified forms. This 22 minute show is just perfect for the little ones, ages 1 to 3. www.marionnettes.ch. Tel: +41 22 418 4777

16 to 18 Oct – **La Foire d'Automne & Bourse aux Sonnaillies**, Romainmôtier, VD. More than 80 exhibitors will be present at the twelfth edition of the Autumn & Cowbells Exchange Fair on the site of Champbaillard, amidst the forests. Exhibitors demonstrate the modern and dynamic face of agriculture as well as strong regional traditions. A fantastic occasion to discover the beautiful middle-aged Abbaye of Romainmôtier, to taste authentic products from a region rich in gastronomy, traditions, not to mention...its wines. Serious collectors of cowbells and sonnaillies (large size (bells) now know Romainmôtier for its exchange fair. (continued on page 7)