

Annual Survey Report

By Debra Dimancesco
Members Representative
Jennifer and Amanda-Chris' Mom

Thank you very much to all of you who took the time to complete the PGP survey. This year we did not receive as much input as the last 2 years. We received in total 38 responses compared to 73 responses last year. Next year the Board plans to ask for participation of the survey at an earlier date in order to get more response.

Most of the respondents were very pleased with the **Library** stating that there was a great selection of books. A few suggestions for more variety of books.

The majority of the respondents rated the **Newsletter** excellent or very good.

The **Member Directory** was rated highly by members.

Although again there was an appeal to receive it earlier in the PGP year. Unfortunately, we are not able to provide it any earlier as it depends upon our member's personal information being verified and corrected if necessary. This usually takes about two months to complete after the beginning of the PGP school year.

The email information is appreciated by members.

The **Christmas Party** was rated highly by those who attended. In particular, members stated that it was well organized and LOTS of fun.

We are very pleased to confirm that the **Playgroups** and **Literacy** groups continue to be highly regarded and that the groups Teachers, Leaders and Assistants are well respected overall. In summary, the PGP experience for most members is excellent.

For the **Pre-literacy** groups, crafts and singing were rated as the most popular activities.

Crafts received very high ratings.

The **Literacy Information Evening** was a success. Interestingly many parents again wrote that their children enjoyed doing their homework!

In response to our request for volunteers for next year we received offers from over 20 members—thank you, we need your support. Some of you, however, marked you would volunteer as an Assistant, a Leader or in another role, but did not provide us with your name and contact details. Could you please confirm which position you would be interested in and your details.

Again thank you for your participation and please note that suggestions and comments are always welcome!

Registration for the Playgroup Programme year 2010-2011 will open for existing members in May. As always, priority is given to the children of volunteers, and then on a first come, first serve basis. The registration form will be available on the PGP website (www.playgroupprogramme.org) and at Crossroads in early May. Further details of the registration process will be published in the May edition of the newsletter. In the meantime contact Jane Kwiatkowska-del Pozo (kwiatkowska@libertysurf.fr) or Trish Clements (pgp_leadertrainer@yahoo.co.uk) to find out what Literacy and Playgroup volunteer opportunities are available, respectively.

Three Month Calendar

Tue 16 and Wed 17 Mar	Second-hand Book Sale	Thu 1 to Sun 11 Apr	School Break in Geneva	Sat 1 May	May Day (Labor Day)
Wed 17 Mar	Saint Patrick's Day	Thu 1 to Thu 8 Apr	Playgroup Break	Sat 8 May	WWII Victory Day
Mon 22 Mar	Board Meeting	Sun 4 Apr	Easter	Thu 13 May	Ascension Thursday
Wed 24 Mar	Usborne Book Sale	Sat 10 to Sun 25 Apr	School Break in France	Sun 16 May	Literacy Show
Sat 27 Mar	Start of School Break in Vaud	Sun 11 Apr	End of School Break in Vaud	Mon 17 May	Board Meeting
Sun 28 Mar	Summer Time (Daylight Saving Time)	Fri 17 Apr	May/June Newsletter Deadline	Mon 24 May	Pentecost

Inside this issue:

Messages from the Disney Princesses	2
Library Update	2
Dad's Corner by Gavin McCance	3
A Winter's Day by Literacy 4 Students	3
PGP Volunteerism	4 & 5
What to Do with Artwork?	6
An Interview with Tania McMahon	7

The May/June Newsletter Deadline is Friday, April 16. Please send your submissions AND PHOTOS to newsletter_pgp@yahoo.com.

www.playgroupprogramme.org

Messages from the Disney Princesses

By Denise Nickerson
Mia and Livia's Mommy

On January 24th, with half of Geneva, I took my four-year-old to see the Disney Princesses on Ice "Princess Dreams" show at the Arena.

There were hundreds of little girls experiencing their royal selves even before the show began. They had shiny satin and organza skirts poking out from under winter coats. The usual hats were replaced by crowns, tiaras, and veils. The Petite Princesses de Genève were carrying purses and magic wands and walking taller than they might normally. These kids know that they are treasures, precious and beloved. They came to hear all about the power of their most important dreams and to be reminded of how the Disney ladies achieved theirs. Some even brought their brothers; I wonder what the boys thought of it all.

Of course I was trying to reconcile being a culturally confused deconstructivist post-modern feminist with a dash of political correctness with the sparkly princess in me who was having a blast. Oh, and I'm not sure I remember exactly what a deconstructivist post-modern feminist is. Being culturally confused was easy as all of the Disney songs were played in French. Imagine something like an Aretha Franklin medley in Spanish for the effect. And what were the French thinking when they named Goofy "Dingo"? It makes me think of Ayers Rock or tropical diseases.

We paid good money for slippery symbolism (with glitter on top) and we got it. There she was, zipping around with a spiky blond hairdo, silver wings, magic wand, and womanly curves, Tinkerbell! I know, I know, they are promoting the new movie and all the gear that goes with it – but she is just so energetic and cute.

Library Update

By Lucy Brown
Librarian
Ben and Thomas' Mum

We would like to extend a huge Thank you to all those who have donated books since September. We have received many wonderful titles many of which have been in excellent condition. Here are some of the highlights...

Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler have produced many wonderful stories. Their most recognizable character *The Gruffalo* is one of the most read books on our shelves. We now have more of their books with witty pictures and glorious rhyme. Look out for the *Gruffalo's Child*, *Stick Man*, *A Squash and a Squeeze*, *The Smartest Giant in Town* and a new Giant paperback copy of *Room on the Broom*.

We have over 20 new titles from the Rainbow Magic series by Daisy Meadows. (Daisy Meadows is a pseudonym for the four writers). The titles include eight books about the Rainbow Magic

Tinkerbell ended up being the only woman in the show who didn't couple up. Could she be whole unto herself? She set stories in motion and kept the plot going with light and fairy dust. She mastered ice and fire, water and wishes.

Then they came out onto the ice, flowing, dancing, swirling, flying, and swimming. The Disney Princesses and their Queen Minnie. Stylized Folklore Icons in Wonderbras, wigs, sequins, and sharp shiny skates. Mia and I were mesmerized and yes, I admit it, moved.

Here is what I hope they told our daughters, and what it felt like they were telling all of us.

Minnie Mouse – she was the Mama and mistress of ceremonies, going so far as to reassure the kids in audience who didn't dress up like Princesses that it's feeling like a Princess on the inside that counts, not whether or not you have the get-up. She carried forth the Disney motto of when you wish upon a star your dreams come true. Believe in your dreams. Believe in yourself.

Jasmine (Aladdin's love interest) – Sneaking out, wearing disguises, bartering in the souk, taming a tiger, and going on a magic carpet ride with a strange man – yes, yes, and more yes. And keep your abs toned too.

Snow White – Believe in love, and as they say in the American south "stay sweet". Though I am troubled by Snow White's modern message - I was reminded of her original story in which she was DEAD (in a golden coffin, remember?) before her prince finally came. I think her lesson is a hidden one that I haven't deciphered yet. Perhaps it is "Keep yourself surrounded with a team of endearing heart-of-gold friends, even if they are messy and funny-looking."

Weather Fairies. Fairyland is home to the seven Weather Fairies. They use magical feathers to bring all of the weather to Fairyland. But when the feathers disappear, the weather turns wacky. The Weather Fairies must fix it - fast! Look out for: *Abigail the Breeze Fairy*, *Crystal the Snow Fairy*, *Evie the Mist Fairy*, *Goldie the Sunshine Fairy*, *Hayley the Rain Fairy*, *Pearl the Cloud Fairy*, *Storm the Lightning Fairy*. We hope these stories will enable fairy fans to enjoy a magical reading time! For further information and activity pages: www.rainbowmagiconline.com/uk/books/index.html

Ian Whybrow is a bestselling author of the hugely successful *Harry and the Bucketful of Dinosaurs*. Adrian Reynolds is a talented illustrator who has worked on many picture books, including the wonderful *Harry* stories. The books are about a little boy who takes his dinosaurs with him everywhere in a bucket. In *Harry and the Dinosaurs Go Wild*, Harry goes to a safari park and discovers some animals are in danger of becoming extinct, he wants to save them!

Mulan (a Chinese Warrior Princess) – Be strong. Fight when you have to. You are still feminine and sweet when you're tough. Don't submit. Exercise!

Belle - (from *Beauty & the Beast* – it was a dinner party number) – Light candles and get out the silver and crystal sometimes. Honor your inner princess with some luxury in life. Meals are meant to be shared with those you love.

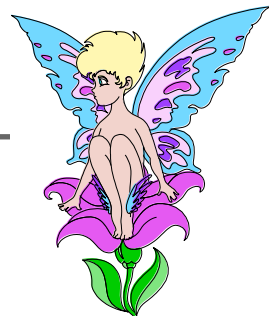
Ariel (from the *Little Mermaid*) – Don't only explore your world, but explore other worlds too. Do your research. If you don't have any, get some "legs" to stand on (Confidence? Language? Knowledge? A car? A skill? Experience? A plane ticket?).

At first, Ariel thinks she has to sacrifice her voice to gain the freedom she desires. Isn't that horrifying? And familiar? She then teaches us to fight to the death to get our voices back and to use them in the lives we create.

Sleeping Beauty (Princess Aurora) – Wake up sister! Life is waiting. The longer you sleep the more your rose garden becomes a mess of overgrown thorns infested with fire-breathing dragons. Get up and get moving.

Cinderella – Don't let the b&%\$#@s (evil stepsisters, evil stepmother) get you down. Not all women are in your tribe or happy for you to succeed. So what? Be your fabulous self anyway. Indulge in impractical shoes sometimes.

Tinkerbell – For the grand finale, she was raised high above all the princesses and their accessory princes on the ice beaming her smile around the Arena and shooting off sparks. That was when I heard it - she said ... Sparkle! I think my kid heard her too.



Harry soon finds out that, however small you are, you can still make a big difference! Other titles now on our shelves include: *Harry and the Robots*, *Harry and the Dinosaurs at the Museum*, *Romp in the Swamp*, and *Harry and the Dinosaurs say 'Raahh!'*.

Coming soon! **Second-hand book sale!**
Tuesday, March 16 during PGP sessions.
Wednesday, March 17 during PGP sessions.

We would welcome donations of children's books and parenting/childcare books only for the PGP Library or for the book sale. Please place any donations in the donations box on top of the library cupboard or contact Lucy Brown (lucy.brown@sfr.fr). Thank you again.

Dad's Corner

By Gavin McCance
Kim, Angus and Ruth's Dad

First steps in training the new geek generation

As a self-confessed computer geek, I vividly remember the pleasure of bamboozling my parents with computers and technology. Things definitely seemed simpler in those days (remember Horace Goes Skiing on the ZX Spectrum anyone?). Being a bit of an expert at the old Horace and Manic Miner, I remember saying to myself with conviction that there was No Way that I would ever end up being beaten at computers and computer games by any children I may have in the future.

Things seem to have a way of coming round though and already our eldest (Kim, 4) is giving me a run for my money. I thought I would mention a few things that started Kim on her quest for parental technological superiority.

I think the trickiest thing for kids to master initially is the mouse which is pretty crucial if you want to do anything with a modern PC (in my day it was the tape recorder and jack-leads). Most mice are now adorned with various buttons, wheels and rockers all of which will conspire to switch the machine away from what the kids are trying to do.

For getting used to the mouse Kim made a lot of use of a free paint program called Tux Paint (www.tuxpaint.org) available for Windows, Mac and Linux. It has various configuration settings that allow you to simplify the program for younger ones (e.g. grabbing the mouse so it can't move off the screen, making all the mouse buttons do the same thing, disabling the wheel). It also allows you to simplify other aspects such as disabling some of the more advanced tools and (my favourite) letting them print out their masterpieces – but only once every 10 minutes (or time of your choice).

There are some tools out there to restrict the mouse buttons in general programs (e.g. the shareware www.basicmouse.com or KillRightClick <http://tinyurl.com/y9fujed>) useful for playing games on the CBeebies website for example - although generally I just switch off the more fiddly mouse buttons in the control panel.

Kim then moved onto another set of simple educational games called Gcompris (<http://gcompris.net/>) which cater for quite a wide range and come with an admin tool to let you restrict the available games to certain age ranges. It's free for Mac and Linux, although owing to the authors' curious definition of *free*, Windows users only get a subset of games and have to *donate* to get more.

The graphics aren't great, but if it's graphics you're after, I heartily recommend World of Goo (<http://2dboy.com/games.php>) for all-family, cute fun. Again it's *shareware* – the demo (a quarter of the game) is free and it's USD20 for more. At first glance it looks fabulously hard for children – it certainly was for me. But the interface is simple (drag *gooballs* into ever higher and more complex tower shapes) and Kim at 3 and a half was doing the easy ones quickly – the key is fast and accurate mouse movements and I credit this game for the fact that Kim can now use a mouse with ease in other programs.

For those of you that do play it, the final level on the demo represents my technological nemesis – Kim can now routinely complete this whereas I have yet to have the pleasure. But rest assured that I will keep on trying in the wee hours of the morning...



Funny Things Kids Say
www.davesdaily.com/funpages/funny-kids.htm
Ryan stepped onto the bathroom scale and asked: "How much do I cost?"

A Winter's Day

By Gillian Bell-Williams
Literacy 4 Teacher Wed am
Lewis and Sam's Mum

When I woke up very early, my window was covered in frost and through it I could see everything was covered in snow. Today I was...

Happy! For all Summer and Spring and Autumn I was waiting for frost, snow and ice. I was so happy that I jumped out of bed and put on my snow clothes and went outside to play. It felt so good. The snow was all soft and fluffy. When it started to melt I said "Oh no! The Global Warming!"

And that's why you should not pollute!
Jeremy Dunant

Smiling! Today I was excited. I could go outside and play in the snow. School was out! My friends were having a snowball challenge. My sister's friend was already making a snowman for me to destroy. Snowy days are fun. I hope we have more!
Eleanor Munt

Happy because there was no school today. I would stay inside and play with my trains. My mummy baked cakes and the aroma of vanilla made me smile.

Later we went for a walk with our snowshoes. It was dark and the snow glowed silvery under the winter moon.

Lewis Williams

Very very happy because it was snowing and in the morning we drank hot chocolate. Then I dressed up with warm clothes, I put on my gloves, my scarf and my hat. My sister and I go to play in the garden with the snow, we make a snowman and we throw snowballs to the snowman. At night we go to bed after eating turkey. In bed we are very warm. I dream I am in a chocolate factory.
Eileen Dennett

Usborne Children's Book Sale! Shop Early for Easter!

DATE: Wednesday, March 24
TIME: 9:30am to 2:00pm
WHERE: Crossroads Church

Flyers will be in the Big and Small Toy Rooms the week of March 15. Orders can be placed with full payment in cash in the safe in the Big Toy Room closet or paid directly on the day of the sale. All book orders should be received by the date of the sale. If anyone cannot make the sale on the day, you can contact Vicki Beney directly by email at vicki.beney@wanadoo.fr.

In honor of World Book Day (March 4), £1 (CHF/€ equivalent) will be deducted from all orders. And thanks to the generosity of National Book Tokens Ltd, PGP children are entitled to receive 1 World Book Day Token to use towards a book of their choice on the day of the book sale. World Book Day was designated by UNESCO as a worldwide celebration of books and reading, and is marked in over 100 countries around the globe. The origins of the day we now celebrate in the UK and Ireland come from Catalonia, where roses and books were given as gifts to loved ones on St. George's Day – a tradition started over 80 years ago. World Book Day is a partnership of publishers, booksellers and interested parties who work together to promote books and reading for the personal enrichment and enjoyment of all. A main aim of World Book Day is to encourage children to explore the pleasures of books and reading by providing them with the opportunity to have a book of their own. Use the Google search engine to learn more about World Book Day.



New Volunteers For A New Year....Do You Think You Can Help?

By Audrey Stirling
PGP Director
Ruri, Harris and Caelan's Mum

We may only be midway through the PGP year but we are already planning for next year.

Did you know there are over 70 volunteer positions within PGP which need to be filled each year to ensure its smooth running. Positions range from Teaching or Assisting in the Literacy Programme, Leading or Assisting in the Playgroup Programme, to a number of essential support positions such as the Librarian, Snack Buyer and many more.

This year we are also looking to fill several Board positions including Treasurer, Members Representative and Newsletter Editor, and a couple of new support positions such as Webmaster and Fundraiser.

Fortunately many of our members continue to volunteer year after year, some in as many as 2 or 3 roles, for which we are all extremely grateful. PGP would not be as strong an association as it is today without the support of our volunteering members.

In the coming months vacant volunteer positions will need to be filled for 2010-2011.

If you would like to find out more about any of the positions available, please contact the following Board members who will be happy to provide you with more information.

Remember volunteers are entitled to priority enrolment and free child places within the programme.

For more information about Volunteering in the Literacy Programme, contact
Jane del Pozo, Literacy Coordinator
Tel: +33 (0)9 54 84 26 80
Email: kwiatkowska@libertysurf.fr

For more information about Volunteering in the Playgroup Programme, contact
Trish Clements, Leader Trainer and Representative
Tel: +33 (0)4 50 20 67 75
Email: pgp_leadertrainer@yahoo.co.uk

For other Volunteer Positions, please contact
Debra Dimancesco, Members Representative
Tel: +41 (0)22 798 98 13
Email: pgp-membersrep@hotmail.com

Thank you all again for your continued support of PGP and I look forward to welcoming new volunteers into the programme for next year.

The Playgroup Programme Board is currently recruiting for the following volunteer opportunities.

TREASURER

Administer PGP's income, expenses and bank accounts. Contact Colette Foort at foort@wanadoo.fr.

MEMBERS REPRESENTATIVE

Serve as a liaison between members and the Board, encourage participation, manage communications, and conduct the annual PGP Member Survey. Contact Debra Dimancesco at pgpmembersrep@hotmail.com.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Produce 5 bi-monthly newsletters and the Member Directory as well as assist with other publishing tasks required by the PGP organisation. Contact Liz Haefliger at newsletter_pgp@yahoo.com.

TEACHERS/ASSISTANTS

Teach or assist weekly English reading and writing lessons to a group of children. Contact Jane del Pozo at kwiatkowska@libertysurf.fr.

LEADERS/ASSISTANTS

Lead or assist weekly Playgroups for children and adults. Contact Trish Clements at pgp_leadertrainer@yahoo.co.uk.

Literacy Works For Us, Therefore I Work For Literacy

By Jane Kwiatkowska-del Pozo
Literacy Coordinator
Anna and David's Mum
and
Leisa Campbell-Lendrum
Assistant Literacy Coordinator
Ellen, Owen and Matthew's Mum

A Guide to Volunteering in the Literacy Programme

One normal day in Spring a PGP parent thinks to themselves: "Volunteering seems like the best thing to do, I like the idea of it and it is a very worthwhile programme; I don't know much about teaching my child to read and write and I don't think I have much time but I can offer my parenting skills, my work life skills and my enthusiasm.

I'll call or talk to Jane or Leisa, they'll understand the dilemma because they've volunteered and have children and don't have a lot of time. I wonder what the set up is and how it all works?"

Do I need teaching experience?

No, because you already teach your child(ren) everyday and this qualifies you ably... all that patience, all that thinking around problems and teaching.

Do I want to help my child and in doing so help others?

YES!! Of course, I'm a parent.

How big are the classes?

There are 12 children per class – a perfect size to give lots of attention to each child, get lots of answers and participation and have 3 or 4 children per group. PGP children are unique in their home and school situation and they tend to be intelligent and willing to learn – a joy to teach.

Is there a teaching framework?

Yes, there are yearly, weekly and lesson by lesson plans. There are aims too so that we have something to work towards, so you know what the children are working towards.

Are there lots of resources?

Yes, and we have been buying more; to limit the amount of planning and photocopying teachers have to do. It isn't just workbooks and books either, there are games, flashcards, CDs, white boards, letters and cards to build words, library books and reading books. Oh and stationery boxes for each level – with reward stickers and triangular pencils and white board pens!

Will I get any help?

Yes, there are 2 assistants per class and each level works with a Support Group Coordinator – someone who has experience at this level and helps in a hands-on way regularly.

Are there any planned meetings?

Yes, there is a teachers and assistants hand-over meeting in June, a pre-teaching meeting in September and a review meeting in January. There is a Parents' Information Evening in June. All with food and drink and one with a guest speaker.

Will I learn a lot too?

We think so, we have.

Will I have the time?

Volunteering is a big commitment, we cannot lie, but after the first few weeks the classes settle into a pattern and things become easier. There is the class itself and preparation time and this depends on what you want to do and how much time you have to plan and prepare things. It can be minimal, it can be lots. But the benefits of seeing your own child's progress, understanding how to help them and seeing the progress of the others in the class is the life-long reward of a few hours each week and a few evenings.

It sounds really worthwhile, very enjoyable and sociable: who do I contact to volunteer as a teacher or assistant?

Jane (kwiatkowska@libertysurf.fr)
and Leisa (leisacampbell@hotmail.com)

I Volunteer for Playgroup Because...

By Sanna Hill
Juliana and Leo's Mum

I joined Playgroup three years ago with my daughter Juliana and immediately felt at home. We had left our dearly-loved post-natal group in the UK, and although we had been to other mother and child groups in the Geneva area, only PGP had a similar warmth. We joined an 18 months to 3 years group. I loved the comfortable atmosphere at PGP and the fact that the organisation was run so seriously. We came along for two years before I felt ready to volunteer. When my son Leo was born, I thought it might be nice to be involved as an Assistant in his Sitting to 17 months group. I sampled a session before committing, it seemed comparatively calm at that age, and in truth it has been very pleasant.

On a typical day, we arrive with Leo 15 minutes before the session starts to help our leader Sharon set up. For my part, this usually involves getting out the book boxes, and on the days when Sharon has not already beaten me to it, I also put out the foamy mats and the small toys. I try to sing up at song time and then help with tidying the small toys away. On the Big Toy Room side, Sharon and I share many tasks including things like setting up the big toys, preparing the children's snack and the adult teas & coffees, reading the story, entertaining the little ones during tidy up time, brushing up crumbs, and putting away cups and plates.

Sharon and I leave about five minutes after the session ends. Rarely, I have run a session in Sharon's absence and that has been very exciting too.

There has been more than enough support from PGP with how to be a Leader or an Assistant. At the start of the year, we are briefed and meet the other Assistants and Leaders, and at mid-year, we meet again to compare notes and swap winning ideas, raise concerns, get advice and so forth. We receive a thorough booklet outlining in great detail how to run a session, we get access to an online forum, and visits from the PGP Leader Trainer & Representative. Sharon has been a great help, as have been the ladies in the group which runs in parallel with us.

I have enjoyed more than anything being a part of the PGP community, and it's true that the more you give, the more you get out. Before volunteering, I used to like turning up to our sessions as a mummy with a child and chat with the other adults, but for me it has been more rewarding to get more involved. I have been a full-time stay-at-home mum for four and a half years now, and as much as I really do not miss my old job, which was working as a senior account manager in a London marketing agency, my role at PGP allows me to be part of a team. I find myself enjoying the multi-tasking and interdependence elsewhere other than just at home.

By volunteering at Leo's group, I also earn Juliana's place in her Pre-literacy class. PGP helped us to settle into the area quickly and volunteering has helped me to make good friends within a like-minded community

Top Twelve Reasons to Volunteer for PGP

1. Fun, fun and more fun. If we had a single job requirement, it would be a *great sense of humour*.
2. Meet new people and build friendships.
3. Volunteer opportunities at PGP are flexible and unlimited.
4. Volunteering in any capacity is a very rewarding experience - excellent feel good factor!
5. Acquire new skills, brush up on old skills and gain work experience.
6. Work as part of a team with common objectives.
7. Find a welcoming and appreciative environment for your gift of time.
8. Contribute directly to the successful existence of the Playgroup Programme.
9. Provide an essential and fairly unique service to the English-speaking community in the Geneva region.
10. Set a good example for your child(ren).
11. Your family is given priority in the Playgroup and Literacy registration process.
12. At least one child's tuition fees are waived (depends on the role).

I Volunteer for Literacy Because...

I volunteer for the Literacy Programme because I have seen from experience with my two older children how vital the Literacy Programme is to their English fluency. It works, and therefore...I work for it! I am so grateful to Playgroup for so many things. What a wonderful organization.
Lisa McCarthy
Volunteer - 7 years and counting
Aidan's Mum

I joined the Literacy Programme as a volunteer Teacher in August '09 having just returned to the area after 5 years in the USA. My children, Eleanor 8 and Sophie 6, had been attending a bilingual French School and I wanted them to continue improving their English skills on our return here. Eleanor is dyslexic and over the past few years I've been her literacy Teacher so I felt I had some useful skills I could offer the programme. Having worked with Eleanor I'm also very aware of how vitally important literacy is in a child's education and on their overall self-confidence. Although I'm qualified as a teacher in the UK, initially I felt very nervous when I was asked to be a Lit 1 Teacher since I'd normally worked with teenagers and had only arrived back in the area a week or two before. Despite my initial fears, I soon settled in and found my feet. I've really enjoyed working with the children and their parents over the last few months as well as working with Janet and Noelle, the other Lit 1 Teachers and my Assistants Gill and Graham.

It's been such a pleasure to see how much confidence the children have gained in their reading since September and a real privilege to help them achieve this. You feel so proud each time one of the children takes another step forward and grows in confidence. Working on the Lit 1 team with Janet and Noelle has been very helpful as we're able to support each other, swap ideas and work jointly on lesson planning which ultimately benefits the children and their learning. Each week, Gill and Graham, provide invaluable support and assistance with the day to day running of a busy classroom, so I never feel I'm working alone. Volunteering on the programme has been a very rewarding experience for me and a really worthwhile use of my time. It's especially rewarding to know that the children in my class have taken their first steps towards being lifelong readers and booklovers.
Maria Lavelle-Munt
Literacy 1 Teacher Wed am
Eleanor and Sophie's Mum

I volunteer for the Literacy Program because I like to have a regular contact with my grandchild and I love brushing up my English. The first years I participated in the class of Jeremy. His class is rather small this year, so I chose to help out with a bigger class of Pre-literacy children - quite an adventure. As long as my ears, knees, ankles and nerves allow it I am happy to continue.

I really enjoy the contact with children and appreciate the excellent organisation of this group.
Marie-Antoinette Dunant
Pre-literacy Assistant Wed am
Jeremy's grand-maman

.....I wanted to learn about phonics!!!
Nancy Bolan
Literacy 2 Assistant Wed am
LilyClaire, Julia and Sophie's Mom

I volunteer for the Literacy Programme because it is a great programme for our children, I get some ideas of how to best teach English to my child, and the programme keeps me in touch and involved with other English-speaking mums. It's also rewarding when you see the progress the children make in their reading.
Muriel Archer-Galibourg
Pre-literacy Support Group Coordinator
Michael's Mum

I used to argue with my colleague about whether or not a school was only as good as its students or its teachers. It is something to think about; but the obvious answer is both. Therefore, PGP needs both too.
Leisa Campbell-Lendrum
Literacy 2 Teacher Wed pm

Satie & Upekkha

YOGA

Yoga for Children from 6 to 10 years old Classes in French and English

Wednesdays from 10 to 11 am

Art-Thera - 23 rue de la Serviette

Contact: Mathieu
satie.upekkha.yoga@gmail.com
tel. 078 625 02 02

Large ears to listen better.

A large stomach to digest peacefully all the good and bad of life.

A big head to be broad-minded.

Small eyes to concentrate better.

Just one task to remember to smile even when times are tough.

The little mouse represents the fears, The elephant has tamed it.

The lotus is blossoming from the darkness to the light.

A small mouth to talk less and tell the truth.

The candy bowl symbolizes the reward for the efforts.

Spring Brocante Sale

L'Ancienne Ferme
485 rue de l'Etraz, Gex

Lots of lovely things waiting to be snapped up. Small items of furniture, mirrors, pictures, china, trunks, rugs and antique gifts. English, French, Swiss and Scandinavian influences. Bring a friend and come for chat, coffee and cake. Stock up on greeting cards from Karen Darbyshire.

Friday, March 19 from 9am to 8pm
Saturday, March 20 from 9am to 5pm

For directions contact Sian Sibley on +33 4 50 41 92 30 or email: s.sibley@orange.fr

Funny Things Kids Say

www.davesdaily.com/funpages/funny-kids.htm
Liam watched his Mom breastfeed his new baby sister. After a while he asked: "Mom why have you got two? Is one for hot and one for cold milk?"

www.city-data.com/forum/parenting/72361-funny-things-kids-say.html

A young boy says to his father, "Why do I have to go to school when I'm never leaving home anyway?"

Erica Hawk, www.hawkscoop.com, October 2009
A Literacy Volunteer for 1st and 2nd Graders

We start off each session by sitting together in a circle on the carpet and one adult reads a story aloud to the whole group. At the first session, when I moved from my chair to the floor, I did so a bit awkwardly and must have grunted or something because a young, observant boy asked me if something was wrong. "No," I said, "It's just that my jeans are a little tight." "Oh," he replied, eyeing my lower half suspiciously. "When my mom buys ME pants, she gets the right size."

www.davesdaily.com/funpages/funny-kids.htm

Emily asked her Gran how old she was. Gran replied she was so old she didn't remember any more. Said Emily, "If you don't remember you must look in the back of your panties. Mine say five to six."

What to Do with Artwork?

By Kerry McCance

Craft Coordinator
Kim, Angus and Ruth's Mum

I'm sure all parents will be familiar with the protests we experience in our house when I try to recycle artwork. I love looking at my children's (somewhat prolific) outpourings of artistic expression, but there are only so many spaces on our refrigerator. Many is the time, before the end of a week, I am knee deep in their pictures. And I'm sure the eldest is becoming suspicious when I tell her that her father didn't realize again that the paper in the recycling box was one of her artistic offerings. So what to do? Here are some ideas I hope you like.

On the walls

Picture Wall

I noticed this was one of the tips in the last newsletter. Have a dedicated picture wall in the house, tack the pictures up as they are produced and when the wall is full, take a picture of it with the children standing in front. Then clear the wall and start the process again, keeping only the most special of pieces. We print out the photos and file them in a special album. It's nice to be able to see the changing art work and the changing ages of the kids too.

Special Picture Display Area

We're a clumsy family and we have quickly amassed an array of glassless picture frames in varying sizes. I painted them red, then hung them on the wall. When a particularly brilliant picture appears, judged that way by either myself or the artists, we tack them in the frame and admire them. I like it because we have a permanent, but ever changing art display.

On the computer

Screensavers

Last summer my husband started scanning ALL the artwork done at school into the computer. He saves it in a tray, then blitzes through it at the weekend. He saves it in a special folder and it appears on our computer randomly in the form of a screensaver. We get to enjoy the artwork, but it takes no room on the wall. He is truly brilliant!

Blog It

Pop the best of the pictures on your blog and share them instantly with friends and relatives.

Online Album

Various online companies can turn digital photos of your children's pictures into photo albums, scrap books or poster collages. Or splash out and have some original artwork reproduced on canvas.

Table Centre Pieces

Laminate some special pieces and use them as placemats! Or cut strips in the centre of one of the pictures and slip it over a glass bottle to create a beautiful and unique vase. See <http://mushandmade.blogspot.com/2010/01/kunstig-vaatwerk.html> for an outstanding example.

Special Gifts

Grandparents seem to love receiving pictures or cards that kids make. We usually try and incorporate some artwork into calendars. I save particularly relevant pieces – heart themed pictures for February, Christmassy ones for December – then buy a blank calendar from one of the supermarkets near the end of the year. If you are feeling particularly generous Totally Out of Hand is a company that will transform your child's drawings into silver jewellery (www.totallyoutofhand.com). It's expensive, but really lovely.

Re-use and Recycle

Use some of the "patterns" – much loved by my daughter – as wrapping paper or gift tags. Cut a birthday cake shape out of a card with a craft knife, then stick a piece of artwork cut to size behind it for a gorgeous personalised birthday card. Cut artwork up to use for other crafty projects. We've made paper chains and collages and I'm hoping to try a mobile soon.

An Interview with Tania McMahon

Editor's Note: Tania became Registrar this past year after serving a long time as Assistant Registrar.

Tell us a little about yourself

I was born and brought up in the south of England. I studied physics at Oxford, then did a PhD in High Energy Particle Physics at Liverpool University. This took me to Hamburg, Germany for a couple of years, where I met my husband, Steve, also a particle physicist. After another brief spell in the UK, we moved to Mountain View, California, to work on an experiment at Stanford. Then, pregnant with our first child, we decided to move back to the UK, to Oxfordshire, and stay there. I got a job as a lecturer working for the University of London. However, four years and two more children later, an opportunity too good to be missed turned up at CERN, so we moved here for 1 year only. Four and a half years on (and one more child) we are still here. I am now on a career break looking after Amy (8), Lauren (6 - Lit 2), Matthew (4 - Pre-lit) and Zoe (2 - 18months to 3 years).

Where you like to do your grocery shopping

I hate shopping but I always seem to be doing it. I tend to stock up in bulk on all the basics at Ed in St. Genis-Pouilly because it is the cheapest supermarket around. Then I buy fresh meat and vegetables/fruit at either Carrefour in Segny, Migros at Val Thoiry or Le Clerc in Ferney. I buy any English food necessities (marmite, tea bags, etc) from the Intermarche in Saint Genis which has a reasonable selection. We also like to buy seasonal fruit and vegetables from the Sunday market in Thoiry.

Your favourite restaurant in Geneva

My husband was a student at CERN some 20 years ago and many of the restaurants we go to are ones he went to then (and they haven't changed much). We always take the kids with us, so we choose restaurants with paper tablecloths that they can draw on.

And without too much glassware on the tables! Our two favourites are the Café de Mategnin, right by the Mategnin border into Meyrin (decent fondue, steak and pizza) and the Restaurant l'Aviation, 18, ch. des Coquelicots, Vernier (steak with a trademark sauce, nice garden in the summer). The kids recently discovered Indian food at the Rajpoute in Villard-Tacon (Ornex) and have repeatedly asked to go back.

Your favourite summer holiday destination

A place we have visited many times in the last 20 years is Collioure in the Langedoc-Roussillon, half an hour from Perpignan and 10 minutes from the Spanish border. A nice, characterful town on the med, it has pretty much everything - good weather, a pleasant car-free old town, a few beaches (albeit small and mostly stony), a large castle and the Pyrenees just half an hour away. The children love it, especially the carousel on the sea front.

Your favourite winter holiday destination

We don't tend to go away in the winter, except maybe a weekend in Germany for the Christmas markets. We do, however, make full use of the Col de la Faucille and the Ecole de Ski Internationale there. We get up early on a Sunday morning, drop the three older kids for their lesson, put the little one in her sledge and go for a walk. We have done this every winter, even with a very small baby in tow. It is nice to find a resort where you can do something other than ski. All that and we can be back home for lunch with 4 tired kids, ready for a quiet afternoon! Our favourite Easter holiday destination is Europapark, near Freiburg, Germany, only a 3 hour drive away. As good as (and remarkably similar to) Euro Disney, Paris, but much better value.

Your favourite sport/activity

I am not a very sporty person. I like to go for a nice long walk, but my kids do not share the enthusiasm.

Similarly, I like to swim, but nowadays trips to the pool involve such intensive surveillance to make sure the kids don't drown that swimming doesn't get a look in. However, with 4 small children and living in a 3 storey house, I certainly feel like I have been at the gym by the end of each day...

Your favourite place in Geneva or surrounding France

In the summer, we enjoy going to Signal de Bougy or Bois de la Batie. They are perfect places for a picnic and to keep the kids amused, and they are free! We enjoy a day trip to Lyon every now and again, mostly for the shopping. And we enjoy driving out to Aix-Les-Bains for a picnic by the lake. The children particularly like the "Restaurant of 100 desserts" which we sometimes stop at on the way - yes, it really does have 100 desserts, two of which are only for kids and consist of sculptures in ice cream and meringue, covered in sweets!

Your favourite book

I like a good whodunit, but as long as there is no blood and gore. In my opinion, you cannot beat John Mortimer and his "Rumpole of the Bailey" books. The humour and character development more than makes up for any plot weaknesses. I also like to read popular non-fiction. I have recently enjoyed reading "A Short History of Nearly Everything" and "Mother Tongue" by Bill Bryson. In fact they are so packed full of interesting facts and anecdotes that I read both of them twice in succession.

Your favourite movie

I like a good thriller, but without any graphic violence. My favourite film of all time is the Hitchcock classic "North by Northwest". And I like to watch the Walt Disney classics with the children.

Your favourite music

No comment. My husband says I have no taste in music and he is probably right!

What's On In and Around Geneva

Continued from page 8

16 to 17 Apr - **CIRCUS**: "Insect Circus"(UK) presented at the "Printemps Carougeois" Festival 2010. With its spectacular combination of magical world, physical theatre, circus skills and extraordinary costumes the Insect Circus is a variety show without parallel. Ten performers, including aerialists, a contortionist, a knife thrower and a magician are featured in a show of ten unique acts linked by a ringmaster. www.insectcircus.co.uk. From 6 years old. Halles de la Fonderie, Carouge. www.worldcircus.org

23 to 25 Apr - **CIRCUS**: Cirque Magnifique Sol (Netherlands). Starting age 6. Halles de la Fonderie, Carouge. www.worldcircus.org

14 Apr - **THEATRE**: "Les contes de la petite fille moche" (The tales of the ugly little girl).

Far from the fairy tales and idealized worlds, Océane, Kévin, Géraldine along with others, will speak about their complexes. A show that takes us with humour and emotion, in the bittersweet world of childhood. The show is coproduced by l'Atelier d'en Face et la Compagnie La Traverscène. Esplanade du Lac, Divonne. Bookings Tel. 04 50 99 00 75. www.esplanadedulac.fr

16 to 21 Apr - **OPERA FOR CHILDREN**: "L'Enfant et les Sortilèges". A new production from the Opéra de Lausanne. This lyric fantasy was composed by Maurice Ravel, and was first performed at the Monte Carlo Opéra House in March 1925. Salle Metropole, Place Bel-Air 1, Lausanne. Tel. +41/ 21 310 16 00. www.sallemetropole.ch, www.opera-lausanne.ch

17 Apr to 2 May - **SHADOW THEATRE**: Mon Pinocchio (My Pinocchio). From 6 years old.

Théâtre des Marionnettes de Genève. Bookings: Tel. +41/ 22 418 47 77. www.marionnettes.ch

21 to 25 Apr - **FAIR**: "Inventions Geneva". The 38th International Exhibition of Inventions of Geneva will amaze you with a display of more than a thousand new inventions and products. Inventions from institutional and private researchers from 45 different countries will be on show! Hall 7, Geneva Palexpo. www.inventions-geneva.ch

28 Apr to 5 May - **FAIR**: The 24th International Fair for books and press. From books, periodicals to graphic art and art print all and much more. The Fair also presents several interesting exhibitions, in particular, exhibitions on the work of the Giacomettis, Boris Vian, the placard - French style, a retrospective of Jean Pache, Geneva - my city, etc. Geneva Palexpo. www.salondulivre.ch

What's On In and Around Geneva

By Bérénice Fitzpatrick (Newsletter Assistant)
Romain's Mum

MARCH

2 to 3 Mar - **THEATRE**: "Pacamambo". Wadji Mouawad, a Lebanese-born writer living in Quebec, was recently associated with the 2009 Avignon Festival. He is widely acknowledged as one of the leading writers in French theatre today. With Pacamambo, Wadji Mouawad has created a story for children and adults on the mystery of death. Starting age 8. Théâtre Forum Meyrin, 1 place des Cinq-Continents, Meyrin. Tel. +41/ 22 989 34 00. www.forum-meyrin.ch

Until 7 Mar - **PUPPET SHOW**: "Marietta chez les clowns". This is the story of a new Pinocchio (a girl this time!), who comes to life in a family of clowns and decides to become one as well. This show meets halfway between theatre and circus. From 7 years old. A co-production by Le Petit Théâtre and la Cie Naphtaline. Le Petit Théâtre, 12 place de la Cathédrale, Lausanne. Tel. +41/ 21 323 62 13. www.lepetittheatre.ch

4 to 13 Mar - **FAIR**: The 80th Geneva International Motor Show at Geneva Palexpo. Free entrance for children under 6. For children aged 6-16, CHF 8. www.salon-auto.ch/en

6 to 31 Mar - **PUPPET SHOW**: "Le zoo de Mr Jean" (Mr John's Zoo). The magical menagerie of Lafontaine is the size of our planet ... Starting age 7. Théâtre des Marionnettes de Genève. Bookings, Tel. +41/ 22 418 47 77. www.marionnettes.ch

Until 25 Apr - **EXHIBITION**: "Swiss Army knife, a cult object". On the 7th of March only, FREE entry to the museum and activities, from 13:30 - 17:00, except for the "Make your own knife!" workshop. Musée National Suisse, Château de Prangins, Prangins. Tel. +41/ 22 994 88 90. www.chateaudoprangins.ch
www.expocouteausuisse.ch

7 to 21 Mar - **CHOCOLATE THEATRE**: "Un pied devant l'autre" (one foot in front of the other), a play presented by le Théâtre AmStramGram de Genève. These are tales of pumpkins, hamburgers and moons, and they bring shivers, delights and some strange ideas. For ages 5 and up. Children will enjoy the distribution of bread and chocolate before or after the show. Bookings are required! Théâtre AmStramGram. 56 route de Frontenex, Geneva. Tel. +41/ 22 735 79 24. www.amstramgram.ch

9 Mar - **STAND-UP COMEDY**: Funny Laundry presents more great comedy acts in Geneva. Dan Antopolski (England) has won the BBC New Comedy Award in 1998 as well as a Perrier Award nomination in 2001. Dan Brown (England) is a rapper who turned to stand-up comedy in 2007, and was a finalist in the "So You Think You're Funny" new act competition the following year. Tickets available at the door or in advance from www.starticket.ch. At Le P'tit Music 'Hohl, 54 ave Louis-Casai, 1216 Cointrin (between the airport and Balexert). www.funnylaundry.com

12 Mar - **THEATRE**: "20 000 lieues sous les mers" (20000 leagues under the sea) presented by Le Kraken, Cité des Augustes. 1868: "A monster threatens the ships on all the world's seas", cry the headlines of the world's press about an unexplainable phenomenon. When alerted, America sends a frigate with, Pierre Aronnax, Professor of Natural History in Paris. A few weeks later, the frigate is attacked! Inside the theatre, you'll feel as though you're on a voyage in the Nautilus. A remarkable adaptation of one of Jules Verne's most amazing novels! L'Esplanade du Lac, Divonne. Starting age 7. Tel. 04 50 99 00 75. www.esplanadedulac.fr

13 Mar - **FIRST AID COURSE**: Child Resuscitation - CPR and Cardiac Massage. Given by Dr. Alessandro Diana. From 9:00 - 12:15 in English or 14:00 - 17:15 in French. The course is based on the ABC method used in all emergency rooms world-wide. Learn how to assess an unconscious child. Understand the principles of child CPR. Use manikins to practice the skills of opening an airway, giving rescue breaths and performing chest compressions. www.kiddieclub.ch

20 Mar - **FESTIVAL**: The 6th Chocolate Festival of Versoix. The Chocolate Festival brings chocolate-makers from all over Switzerland and neighbouring France. As part of the World Year of Circus, artists will exhibit works created in chocolate on the theme of the Circus. Admission to the festival is free. It is strongly advised to use public transport to get to Versoix. For more information, call the Versoix City Hall. Tel. +41/ 22 775 66 08. www.festivalduchocolat.ch

20 Mar - **FIRST AID COURSE**: The Unwell Child. Given by Dr Penny Fraser, in English from 9:00 - 12:15. Learn about the danger of fevers and what to do. How painkillers work and when to use them. Recognise the warning signs of meningitis. What to do if your child is having a severe allergic reaction. Diarrhoea, coughs, chicken pox and other common illnesses. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (cot death) – how to reduce the risk. www.kiddieclub.ch

20 Mar - **FIRST AID COURSE**: Child Accidents and Injuries. Given by Dr Penny Fraser, in English from 14:00 - 17:15. Learn how to deal with burns, scalds and electrocution. Practice how to save a choking child or baby. Understand the importance of head injuries and what to do. What you should have in your first aid kit – and how to use it. How to deal with major bleeding, bites, broken bones. www.kiddieclub.ch

26 to 30 Mar - **THEATRE**: "L'hiver, quatre chiens mordent mes pieds et mes mains" (In winter, four dogs bite my feet and hands) presented by le Théâtre AmStramGram de Genève. A man and a woman meet and fall in love. In the time of a meal, they get married, with no other fortune than a table, two chairs, and wild dreams of music and adventures. Come two children, and their whole life capsizes into a fantasy world... The play received the "Molière" theatre award for Young Audiences in 2008. Starting age 8.

Théâtre AmStramGram. 56 route de Frontenex, Geneva. Tel. +41/ 22 735 79 24. www.amstramgram.ch

APRIL

1 to 6 Apr - **CIRCUS**: "Cirque starlight". Swiss Circus at Vernets. Geneva, International Capital of World Circus Year 2010. www.worldcircus.org

6 Apr - **STAND-UP COMEDY**: Funny Laundry presents more great comedy acts in Geneva. Stephen Grant (England) and Colin Cole (Australia). Tickets available at the door or in advance from www.starticket.ch. Le P'tit Music 'Hohl, 54 ave Louis-Casai, 1216 Cointrin (between the airport and Balexert). www.funnylaundry.com

8 Apr - **BALLET**: Le Ballet Junior de Genève (Modern Dance). The Junior Ballet celebrates its thirtieth anniversary. Over the past thirty years, the Company has brilliantly established itself on the international scene, both as a young dynamic company and a serious professional dance institute. Bookings, Tel. 04 50 99 00 75 www.esplanadedulac.fr

13 Apr to 2 May - **THEATRE**: "Petit Robert et le mystère du Frigidaire" (Little Rob and the mystery of the refrigerator). We discover the secret lives of Rob's neighbours. From the 1st to the 6th floor of the building, residents who look innocuous turn out to be vampires, witches, or aspiring Santa's ... Along come a cleaner and a small glass girl. There is much to be afraid of, and it's so thrilling! ... A rock concert, poetic and crazy, with full theatrical fantasy. For ages 8 and up. Théâtre AmStramGram. 56 route de Frontenex, Geneva. Tel. +41/ 22 735 79 24. www.amstramgram.ch

14 to 16 Apr - **MUSICAL COMEDY**: "Corps à Cordes", Le Quatuor (The Quartet). For more than 20 years now and strong of three "Molières" for the Best Musical Show, The Quartet has been a reference in musical humour. Funny, creative and perfectly orchestrated, who, better than The Quartet, can symbolize the meeting of all the talents? As clowns, they know how to do everything! Play in virtuoso of their instrument while making a human scaffold, but also juggle, sing, play the comedy, dance, and not to forget the art of making us laugh or moving us. Every picture is adjusted to the millimetre as a big symphony of laughter. Les Spectacles Onésiens, Salle Communale d'Onex, Onex. www.spectaclesonesiens.ch

14 to 18 Apr - **HORSE SHOW**: Le Concours Hippique International de Genève (The Geneva International Horse Show) will stage two World Cup Finals, The Rolex FEI World Cup Final and the FEI World Cup Driving Final. The Rolex FEI World Cup finals, jumping and driving, are an exceptional event, which gathers the best horses, riders and drivers in the world. This is the only Swiss stage of the World Cup Circuit and it is held in the biggest indoor arena in the world. Geneva Palexpo Hall 4, 5 and 6.

Continued on page 7