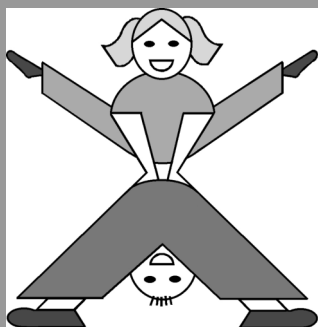


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Playgroup Programme

March/April Newsletter

Changes afoot on the PGP Board

Springtime will see several changes on the PGP Board as we say goodbye to some familiar faces and welcome a number of new volunteers.

Trish Clements will be moving away from the Geneva area and will be replaced in her Communications role by Olivia Colghan. Trish has also helped in the role of Playgroup Leader Trainer for more years than any of us can remember, and it's thanks to her that we now have such a co-ordinated approach throughout our sessions with developed themes, songs and structure. She has been a great asset to PGP.

To contact Rachael Reilly, our Special Events Coordinator, please use specialevents@playgroupprogramme.org not the incorrect email address which was published in the last newsletter.

Tammy, our Craft Coordinator, is also on the move and will be replaced by Kerry McCance.

Simone Valencio has stepped up to take over Kerry's role of Newsletter Editor.

Sonia Sanchez has replaced Louise Merifield as our Snack Buyer, and Eva Contell will be replacing Dorothy Dillard as Special Events Assistant. Eva will be responsible in particular for

helping with the organisation of evening training events and workshops for PGP parents, but you will also see her around at all the other PGP special events.

We'd like to thank all the outgoing volunteers for their hard work and dedication to PGP and wish them luck wherever they are headed.

And to our new volunteers, thank you for stepping up to help and all the best in your new posts.

Registration for the Playgroup Programme year 2011-2012 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 (literacy@playgroupprogramme.org) or Micala Duvoux (playgroup@playgroupprogramme.org) to find out what Literacy and Playgroup volunteer opportunities are available, respectively.

A New Look For PGP

The PGP Board are currently planning a website revamp and are also looking at the possibility of rebranding our organisation. As an organisation, we've moved on so much from PGP's initial days as a mother and toddler group.

Do you have any ideas for a new name for PGP that's more in keeping with the services we currently provide? Can you think of a name that reflects the fun aspects of playgroup, our well-regarded literacy programme, but which also touches on the social

aspects of the programme? If so, please email your ideas to Olivia, our Communications Coordinator communications@playgroupprogramme.org. Get those thinking caps on and keep your eyes peeled for news of our website launch!

Three Month Calendar

Mon 21 Mar	Board Meeting	22 - 29 Apr	PGP Holidays	Mon 16 May	Board Meeting
Sun 27 Mar	Summer Time (Daylight Saving Time)	23 Apr - 09 May	French School Break	Sun 29 May	Mother's Day in France
Mon 11 Apr	<i>Read For Me Read For You Ends</i>	Sun 24 Apr	Easter Sunday	Thu 02 Jun	Ascension
Mon 18 Apr	May/June Newsletter Deadline	Sun 01 May	May Day/Labor Day	Sat 11 Jun	Summer Picnic and Sports Day
18 - 29 Apr	Vaud School Break	Sun 08 May	VE Day	Sun 12 Jun	Pentecost
21 - 29 Apr	Geneva School Break	Sun 08 May	Mother's Day in Switzerland	Thu 16 Jun	Volunteer Dinner

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Read For Me Read For You 14 February to 11 April 2011

PGP's Sponsored Read is in full swing. All the information from the packs is on the PGP website, including details of the charities *Kids With a Cause* and *Moptomistes*, the sponsor forms and the money-box instructions.

www.playgroupprogramme.org

Special Events

By Rachael Reilly
Finnian and Esther's Mum

A Review of some of our Special Events

The Christmas Party at *Espace Junior* on Saturday 11 December was a great success with over 200 children attending. Santa made it back from Guinea to deliver the presents, and although he was initially a bit grumpy, he was cheered up by the lovely Christmas singing! The children (and parents) all had a great time!

The first PGP Christmas Cake Sale was held on Wednesday 8 December to raise money for StandProud, an organisation which provides orthopaedic assistance and rehabilitation to children suffering from polio and other conditions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (www.standproud.org). Children in Lit 2 – 5 on Wednesday morning brought delicious cakes and biscuits to sell and raised almost 300 CHF for StandProud.

PGP held its first family outing on Sunday 13 February. What was supposed to be a snow-shoe and sledging outing at La Givrine was actually a snow-less outing but still great fun! 10 families came along and we walked from La Givrine to a nearby refuge for a fondue lunch in the sun. More family outings are planned for the spring, so get out your hiking boots and come along too!

PGP supports local and international charities

PGP would like to continue raising money for local and international charities through its special events activities (e.g. cake sales; sponsored

events etc.). We have already helped support **StandProud** which helps children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, through the Christmas Cake Sale. The upcoming Readathon, *Read For Me Read For You*, will raise money for the Swiss charity **Kids with a Cause** and help support the Mali charity **Moptimistes** build a community centre for after-school activities for children and teenagers in the town of Mopti in Mali. The money raised from the Valentine's Day Cake Sale (641.25 CHF), held on February 16 and wonderfully stocked by children from all Wednesday Literacy classes, will also be supporting this cause.

Our next Cake Sale will be Easter themed and will be held in April. This time money raised will benefit local charity, **Eclat**. More information on this charity is available on page 3 of this newsletter.

Other charities PGP hopes to support include local charity ASK. More information on this charity will follow soon.

If you have any suggestions of other local or international charities that PGP can raise money for through its activities, please get in touch with our Special Events Coordinator, Rachael Reilly, at specialevents@playgroupprogramme.org.

Our Valentine's Day Cake Sale, held in aid of Kids With a Cause to raise money to build an education centre in Mopti, Mali, raised 641 CHF - so that's already 641 bricks in the wall of the Mopti education centre! Thanks to all who helped by baking, selling and buying!

SAVE THESE DATES! Up-Coming PGP Special Events

April: Family Picnic and Easter Egg Hunt
Date and venue to be announced.

April: Easter Egg and Cake Sale
To raise money for local Gex charity, **Eclat** (see page 3 for more details of this charity).
Date and details to be announced.

May: Family Hike
Venue and details to be announced.

Saturday 11 June: End of year event – Summer Picnic and Sports Day
12.00 – 17.00 at Versoix sports centre, La Becassiere, Route de l'Etraz.
Family picnic and sports day for all the family!
More details to follow.

Thursday 16 June: Volunteer dinner
Venue and details to be announced.

Volunteers Needed!
We will need volunteers to help organise the Easter Egg Hunt and the Summer Picnic and Sports Day. Please contact Special Events Organiser, Rachael Reilly, at specialevents@playgroupprogramme.org if you are able to help with either of these events.

Favourite Family Recipes

Typical French Quiche (with loads of cream and cheese!)

By Aurélie Branchereau

My kids love this quiche but it's also easy to make and my friends who come over for a last minute dinner always ask me for the recipe (so I take it that it's good!)

shortcrust pastry (*pâte brisée* ready-made from the supermarket makes life easier!)
2 courgettes, peeled and sliced
2 portions of mozzarella, sliced
4 eggs
1 small pot of cream (*crème fraîche*)
100 g of grated cheese
3 tablespoons of tomato sauce (any ready-made pasta sauce is good, *Barilla*, *Sacla*, etc.)
Salami or mild chorizo (in thin slices) – I personally prefer chorizo!

Lay pastry in a quiche/pie tin (leave the paper sheet on, it saves you having to grease your tin). Prick pastry all over with a fork. Cook at 210°C for 10 mins. Spread tomato sauce over the pastry, then cover it with the meat. Layer the courgette and mozzarella on top of the tomato sauce. In

another bowl, mix the eggs, cream and grated cheese. Season the mixture and pour it over the cheese and courgettes. Cook for 35 minutes.

I like to serve this with a rocket salad with balsamic vinegar.

Bonne appétit!

Pumpkin Scones

By Zoe Parks

N.B A cup is the size of one of those plastic coloured IKEA cups that most of us seem to have for the kids!

2oz soft butter
½ cup sugar
1 egg
1 cup cold mashed pumpkin
2 cups self raising flour

Cream the butter and sugar, add egg, pumpkin and sifted flour and mix well.

Put tablespoonfuls of the mixture on a greased tray and bake in a hot oven (200-220°C) for 15 mins.

Chicken, Broccoli and Sun-dried Tomatoes

By Sharon Jones

All my kids love this. It's really quick and I regularly make it at lunchtime when time is short as I know they will wolf it down.

2 tbsp olive oil
3 medium chicken breasts, chopped into bite-size pieces
1 medium red onion, peeled and finely chopped
175g broccoli florets
1 chicken stock cube dissolved in 300 ml water
60g sun dried tomatoes, chopped
4 tbsp *crème fraîche*
25g Parmesan cheese, grated
Heat the oil in a large pan and sauté the chicken pieces until sealed. Remove the chicken from the pan. Add the onion and sauté over a low heat until soft. Add the broccoli, stock and sun dried tomatoes and chicken pieces. Reduce the heat, cover and simmer for about 10 mins, stirring occasionally. Add the *crème fraîche* and Parmesan and season with salt and pepper.

I like to serve this with pasta or some boiled rice.

A Brief History of the Association, Eclat

By Lynn Gaillard

Eclat, Association des Personnes Handicapées du Pays de Gex, leurs parents et amis, was founded in 1991 by a group of parents who wanted to create a place where their handicapped children could participate in some of the activities experienced by children who do not have a handicap. The parents wanted to help their children have as "ordinary" a life as possible. The word "handicap" included all physical and mental handicaps, without segregation. The first activities were mostly related to leisure time – day camp, camping trips, Saturday program for adolescents and adults. The emphasis on leisure was, in part, because at that time it was possible for some of the handicapped children living in the Pays de Gex to attend school in Geneva. In order to help those handicapped children who were not going to school in Geneva remain in French public schools, Eclat began a service of individual accompaniment of the children at school. The people who accompany the children are called AVS, *Auxiliaire de Vie Scolaire*. This system is now widely used by the national public educational system in the Pays de Gex for providing schooling for children who would not otherwise be able to remain in a public classroom. At that time, the use of AVS was not a common practice. Those employed by Eclat were often young men doing their alternative military service. For almost 10 years, Eclat was an association founded and run by parents, at a minimal cost.

In 2000 Eclat had a history of providing useful service. At the same time, it was becoming more evident that children and adults with handicaps in the Pays de Gex had unmet needs. For political and economic reasons, the possibility for children to attend school in Geneva was becoming more difficult. A director, Jacqueline Steib, was hired, and the process of transforming Eclat from an association run by volunteers, mostly parents, to a professional institution began. The funding for this non-profit organisation (established according to

the French law 1901) comes primarily from the *Communauté des Communes*, a local government agency.

In the years following the hiring of the director several programs were started:

2001: Opening of the *Service d'Accompagnement et de Soutien*, which provides individual and group social services for adults who are in need of help with some aspect of their daily lives and social activities. The opening also of the *Pôle d'Activités*, a day program for seriously handicapped adults, who are not in a position to adapt to a work situation, however sheltered. The activities are geared towards learning to be more autonomous, and self-expression (dance, music, crafts, sewing, painting, theatre).

2002: Beginning of the "*Groupe Rencontre*" an encounter group meeting twice weekly for adults, in particular those who are coping with a degenerative disease. The emphasis of the group is on conviviality and cultural activities.

2004: Opening of the Residence, *Sous les Vignes*, for 7 adults in St. Genis. The residents each have a studio, and there are also common areas, including a large, welcoming kitchen. The residents, with the help of the "*maîtres de maison*", make their own meals. During the day, some of the residents participate in the *Pôle d'Activités*, others work in a sheltered environment.

2009: Given the absence of specific school structures for handicapped children in the Pays de Gex, and the limited number of special education classes, the main way in which handicapped children are provided schooling is to be accompanied by an AVS. Eclat noted that for children who have autistic troubles or other serious developmental problems, this system often did not work. The AVS were often people hired without any training for the job; many children were removed from school. Eclat decided to begin

a program for the training and supervising of the AVS working with seriously troubled children, in order to ensure that each child has the best possible chance of integrating into the classroom and learning.

2009: Opening of a second Residence, *Pré Joumans*, for 10 adults, several of whom are poly-handicapped. As with the first residence, great care is taken to ensure that the physical environment be pleasant, warm and personal. The residents also have a common kitchen, where they make meals, with the help of the staff.

The sector for children continues to develop. In 2010 it was divided into two parts. The *Centre de Loisirs*, the first program started by Eclat when it was an association run by parents, continues to develop its diverse programs: activities on Wednesdays when children are not in school, day camp during vacations, Saturday club for adolescents and adults, overnight camp during vacations. In addition, now there is a sector whose mission is to develop the area of school activities: the expansion of the AVS program, including the work in the classroom and training; individual and small group weekly activities. It is to be noted that Eclat is now the only institution providing learning activities for a certain number of children for whom there is no place anywhere else.

This year Eclat will commemorate its 20th birthday, and there is much to celebrate. The orientation of the association is to create the conditions that meet the singular needs of each participant. It keeps its eye on the future, seeking to create programs where there is a lack. It has been able to keep its independence as a small but varied and growing institution, firmly anchored in the values of the parents who founded it. The government (*Communauté des Communes*) has been very supportive. However, we are now in a belt-tightening period, and Eclat, is feeling the pinch. Any contribution to our funding would help to provide the best service possible.

StandProud

By Nancy Bolan

StandProud, registered as a charity in the US and UK, supports the work of a local charity situated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), an extremely poor country the size of Western Europe. The charity is called "*Debout et Fier*" (*Standing and Proud*). Our work is to make leg braces for children who have been paralysed by polio or other conditions and to provide rehabilitation to get them up and walking.

We run six brace-making centres in DRC and are the only large provider of free braces in the DRC. The brace shops and the rehab are carried out by an all volunteer, ex-beneficiary Congolese

staff and all materials are purchased second-hand, at local markets. Kids who have never walked before learn how to run and play soccer!

StandProud also pays school fees for all beneficiaries for at least one term in regular schools – and through secondary school where funding is available. This provides the children the opportunity to have equal access to education. It also serves to educate the general public that handicapped children should not be stigmatised, as often in Congo handicapped children are not considered eligible for regular school and worse, are often rejected by their families completely. As there is no free public education in DRC, it is necessary to support the education of the children.

Thank you so much to everyone who participated by baking, selling or buying cakes from the Christmas Cake Sale. The 300 CHF raised will be enough to pay for 3 paralysed children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to have braces custom-made for them so that they will be able to walk.

Please check out our websites for further information: www.standproud.org and www.standproud.org.uk



A Guide to Becoming a Literacy Volunteer in 2011-2012

By Jane del Pozo, Literacy Coordinator

The arrival of spring means that we already start to plan for the next literacy year. Volunteering is a worthwhile, enjoyable, sociable, team building, learn-a-lot activity for you, as well as guaranteeing a place for your child or children next year. If you would like to join the team of literacy volunteers here's a brief guide to what it involves. You can let us know you want to help out even if you don't know your schedule for next year.

DO I NEED TEACHING EXPERIENCE?

No. You already teach your child/ren every day and this qualifies you ably... all that patience, all that thinking around problems and... teaching. We aim to provide all the support and materials you will need.

WHAT DO I TEACH?

We have a teaching framework. Each level works with a Support Group Coordinator – someone who has experience of this level and regularly helps in a hands-on way. There are yearly planners for each level with aims so that we have something to work towards, and so you know what the children are working towards. We also have weekly lesson plans.

WHAT RESOURCES DO I NEED?

We provide everything you need, 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. There are also stationery boxes for each level – with reward stickers and triangular pencils and white board pens!

HOW MANY CHILDREN DO I TEACH?

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

HOW DO I BEGIN?

If you would like to join the team as a teacher and are perhaps hesitating you can contact Leisa (see right) to take part in the teacher training introduction session in May.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Once you have volunteered there is a very informal

volunteers get-together in June (hopefully involving a warm summer's evening and a glass of wine!) Teachers get all their materials well in advance of September and everyone gets a chance to meet, so they can keep in touch. There is a pre-teaching meeting with Support Group Coordinators the week before classes start in September, and a review meeting in January.

Our goal in the past few years has been to make sure volunteers have everything they need to feel confident in what they do, feel that they are part of a team that is supported, and have everything they need on hand to concentrate on teaching.

If you think you'd like to become a literacy volunteer please contact Jane del Pozo by email: literacy@playgroupprogramme.org.

For the first time this year, Leisa Campbell-Lendrum (Literacy Co-ordinator Assistant, Lit 2 Support Group Coordinator and Lit 1 teacher) is offering a teacher training introduction session in May. If you would like to volunteer as a teacher and feel this would help you make your decision please contact Leisa as soon as possible (leisacampbell@hotmail.com). The session will be planned based on demand.

What the volunteers say!

I am so grateful to PGP for giving me the chance to volunteer. Through volunteering, I have become part of a community that works together for the common good. I have made friends and am able to get a little bit of 'me' time; so precious when as a non-working expat you can easily become known as a spouse or parent but not as a person with skills and experiences of their own. I look forward to my teaching sessions, not only as a professional exercise, but also as a sociable and enjoyable one. I hope to be able to volunteer for a long time to come and continue to reap the huge benefits that I receive from my small amount of effort.

Kate Wilkinson, Teacher Lit 3&4

I joined PGP in September 2003 with my 4-year old son. Four months later, the leader and assistant left PGP, so I stepped in with another mother in order that the group could continue. I continued later to assist/lead in a PGP group and then later to assist in literacy classes. It has been a great experience to work with the children and also to work with the other volunteers. Being in class shows you the various levels of the children which helps you put things in perspective about your own kids. I learnt different approaches to teaching. When you are in class, you see it first hand and then you can apply it at home. And when you are in Lit 5 and 6, you get to improve your vocabulary with the Folen's books!

Clarisse Mason, Assistant Lit 2

I've been a volunteer in PGP for years, assisting or leading in the playgroup sessions. This year, I'm assisting in Lit 1 with Leisa, our teacher and Lisa, my co-assistant.

I value the time I spend in Lit 1. Leisa is a really great teacher and it is hugely motivating to work with her. I like being part of the process of teaching children to read. We work hard but are careful to keep it amusing and challenging. I also enjoy the time we take after each lesson to talk it over.

By volunteering, I use and develop my skills. What's more, I'm useful and helpful. I also meet really interesting and fun people and share special time with them; I meet super kids, speak English and have a good time!

Rebecca Pedretti, Assistant Lit 1

I have been involved with PGP since Sept '98, first as a Playgroup leader, then as my children got older, in the Literacy Program. I can't actually remember what literacy group I was first involved with but have been either a leader or assistant in Pre-Lit, Lit 1, 2, 4 and 5&6! As our family has been and plans to be here until...?!, being able to maintain a certain level of English is important. Volunteering just seems the logical step to help your child realise that English is an important part of your family.

Being a Literacy teacher definitely involves a higher commitment than a PGP leader and being organised plays an invaluable role to the successful functioning of the group. However, with the

various support people the Literacy Programme has in place, you are never on your own. An assistant role is a good way to become acquainted with the Literacy Programme, hopefully giving you the confidence to take on a teacher position the following year! I have always enjoyed watching the children develop their English skills over the course of the year. It may only be an hour and half in class each week but it's amazing to see what can happen and how you can be part of it.

Carys Quennec, Assistant Lit. 4

I wanted my three children to start the Literacy Programme last September and decided to volunteer too. Currently working at Gymboree and previously being a nurse and midwife it was all quite new to me to be teaching 5 year olds! But I can honestly say that I absolutely love it! There is constant support available if needed and the lesson plans and resources are very easy to use. It's also nice to be able to adapt each lesson based on what works best with the children in my class. The classes are small and with the help of two great assistants we can do group work and help children individually. I would thoroughly recommend teaching as part of the Literacy Programme to anyone who is interested and loves working with children. The improvement in the children's reading since September is amazing - the result of following the Jolly Phonics scheme and hard work in class and at home. Volunteering is a thoroughly rewarding experience that I am definitely going to continue!

Hannah McFarlane, Teacher Lit 1

Volunteering for Playgroup

By Micala Duvoux, Leader Trainer and Rep

According to the timetable handed to me when I took over this role in September, it's now the season of Official Grovelling for Playgroup Volunteers. As I'm a newbie at this, I'm really hoping you'll make it easy for me by sticking up your hand and saying "Go on then, I'll do it".

But just in case you need a gentle nudge, here is a list of excuses not to be a volunteer and of course my hopefully winning arguments as to why you should!

Excuse no. 1: But I've only just arrived!

We provide full training and a handbook to get you up and running. We had two volunteers this year who had never stepped foot in playgroup and the kids in their group are having a whale of a time. It's also a great way to get to meet people as we have a couple of social evenings per year, hopefully more next year, and also a dinner at the end of the year. New people coming in bring fresh ideas

I volunteer because...I love it!

By Zoe Parks, Ella and Dan's Mum

Before I moved to Cessy in May last year I'd worked for seven years in organisational development for a UK charity. The charity relied heavily on nearly 2000 volunteers working across England. I often wondered how could my charity sustain their commitment? How could we develop their skills? How could we enrich their experiences? Why did they volunteer their precious time, often on a daily basis?

Of course the answers were not as complicated as training sessions, developing shared organisational objectives, hosting networking events and all the other actions we took nationally. The reason they volunteered is that they were passionate about the mission of the charity, they wanted to volunteer and they enjoyed what they did because they were making a difference.

So when I was asked if I would volunteer as a leader for one of the 18m-3yrs playgroups, how could I say no? These days I'm a stay at home mum, I was new to the area and looking to meet other playmates for my two year old son. This opportunity was just what we both needed and I've always enjoyed working with children.

I had no idea how well organised, structured and supported the playgroup programme would be. We hadn't even been to a playgroup session so I wasn't sure what to expect.

Before the term started I was invited to two training and networking sessions where all the leaders and assistants were told all about the playgroup

which is highly refreshing for us long-timers who are suffering from Sleeping Bunnies burn out.

Excuse no. 2: But I don't have the time!

We have two meetings in the evening per year lasting two hours. You'll need to prepare for your session (ten minutes weekly) and come in about half an hour earlier every week to set up for your group. Once your group is up and running (after about the first month) it gets a lot easier.

Excuse no. 3: But I can't sing!

Someone in your group will be able to and if your singing is really that bad they will gladly take over the job! Personally and sadly I am no singer but everyone joins in and the kids don't cry.

Excuse no. 4: But I don't know how to put the big toys away!

It's a bit daunting in the beginning but practice makes perfect. We have a couple of expert put-

programme from how the sessions are structured to ideas for activities to repacking the big toy cupboard (I'm not sure I'll ever master this particular skill). We were made to feel welcome, made to feel important and most of all made to feel like we were making a difference!

On the first day I was pretty nervous. Gillian, our playgroup assistant, and I set up the big toy room, made the coffee and worried about the songs we had planned whilst our children ran riot around the room. But then we relaxed and enjoyed welcoming the children and their mums to our group. We were so lucky because the mums from our playgroup are now our good friends and the children play together at least twice a week, so they too have formed important friendships.

We start each session with a chance for the children to climb, jump (a recurring health and safety nightmare theme in our group!), shout, crawl, drive, roll, dance and simply have a great time using up some morning energy. This is also a chance for the mums to catch up and grab a much needed coffee. One of us always brings in a special treat snack for the mums, which usually gets shared with hungry little children.

After play we sit together and sing songs and play games. Dan and I have loved learning new songs and games from the other families and the children all have some firm favourites. We sing the *Tick Tock* song to welcome everyone and I think we were all surprised to see the children singing this song at home after a couple of weeks. If we are ever stuck for songs or games there are loads of ideas on the extra helpful Playgroup Programme Internet Forum but we've found that there are

aways in our group and again, over time it does get easier. And hey, you're the leader, you can delegate!

Excuse no. 5: But I have no inspiration!

There are a number of themes throughout the year, linked to the craft which helps you structure your session. We have an online forum on which you can find songs, games and activities for each theme. With just a little amount of preparation the kids in your group will have a fun packed time.

But....! No more buts? Winning argument no. 6: As a volunteer you will have a free place for your child in your session plus priority placement in the literacy groups.

So go on, contact me by email at playgroup@playgroupprogramme.org. I will be so happy to hear from you!

Congratulations to Nadia Belatrache and family, and a big welcome to Sarah, who was born on March 7.



always ideas in the group.

We then move to the small playroom for a snack and story. We get out the boxes of library books, although we are all notoriously bad at remembering to bring our books back.

After story its time for the craft session. Every week an innovative craft idea creates much joviality and chatter. The materials and instructions are provided in the weekly craft basket, so we just have to enjoy, and try hard as mums not to take over! When the masterpieces are complete, the children play with small toys and play dough until it is time to finish the session with another song.

All the mums pitch in together, reading stories, serving up snacks and drinks, preparing the craft, managing the library and tidying up. It's a group effort making the roll of leader easy and very enjoyable.

The Playgroup Programme is a very impressive organisation and an extremely important one. It's easy to feel passionate about it and great fun to volunteer for it. I hope to do more next year.

The Watkins Family's Favourite Books:

A Thousand Miles in the Saddle
by Major Bumsore

Rusty Bedsprings by I P Knightly

The Long Walk Home by Miss D. Bus

The Colour of Eggs by Summer Brown

Jokes Galore

Thanks to everyone who submitted jokes, but the biggest thanks goes to our resident jokester Jo Watkins. Is Jo short for Joke by any chance?

What's green and sings? *Elvis Parsley.*

Knock knock, Who's there? Justin. Justin Who? Justin Time.

What do you call a dinosaur with one eye? *A doyouthinkhesaurus.*

Why did the dinosaur cross the road? *Because there weren't any chickens in those days.*

Why did the vampire cross the road? *To get to the blood bank.*

It's raining cats and dogs - I know, I nearly stepped in a poodle.

What's brown and sticky? *A stick.*

What's brown and sounds like a bell? *Dung.*

Did you hear about the cross-eyed teacher? *He couldn't control his pupils.*

What do you call a fairy who hasn't had a bath for a while? *Stinkerbell.*

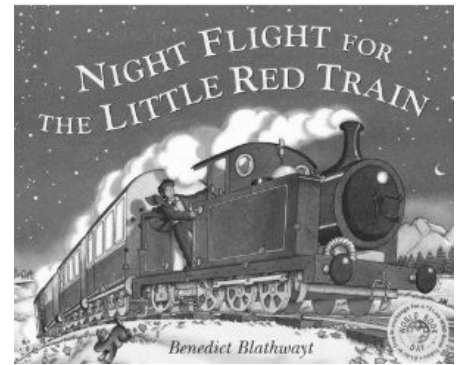
Library Corner

By Juliette Chisholm, Library Assistant
Bron and Wilf's Mum

Many of you may already be familiar with the *Adventures of the Little Red Train* series of books by Benedict Blathwayt, but if you aren't, and you would like a break from *Thomas the Tank Engine and Friends*, then this series provides a delightful alternative.

These are beautiful, intricate picture books, telling gentle and somewhat old-fashioned stories which are brilliantly soothing at bed-time and a great way to calm down your little ones after the rigours of the day. Each book recounts an adventure for the Little Red Train, Duffy Driver and Jack the Guard as they come to the rescue, race to the finish, have a busy day, steam through the night and take an unexpected journey across Europe.

Benedict Blathwayt is an incredibly talented artist and tells his stories as much through his illustrations as through his words. Every page is jam packed full of the most amazingly detailed pictures and I can guarantee that once you start asking your children to spot things in the pictures (sheep poo on the line – I kid you not!), you can find yourself there for hours having the greatest fun whilst the Little Red Train chuffs through the countryside. 'Go pop your rivets!' or 'Bust my buffers!' are now



two of my son's favourite phrases and his Dad's train impressions are becoming alarmingly realistic!

These books are my younger son's current obsession and he never tires of hearing how the Little Red Train saves the day with a 'Huffity-puffity, huffity-puffity, huffity-puffity chuff!' *The Little Red Train Storybook* comprising four of the adventures and *Night Flight for the Little Red Train* are currently in the Library, so I highly recommend that you full steam ahead and climb aboard!

Happy Reading!

Lucy and Juliette can be contacted by email at lucy.brown@sfr.fr or julesdan@orange.fr. They are always keen to hear of your suggestions to add to the PGP Library shelves.

An Interview with...Christy Broome, PGP Treasurer

Tell us a little about yourself, i.e. where you were born, where you live, how many children you have (their playgroup/literacy class), your work etc.

When people ask where I'm from, I'm always a bit stumped as to what to say. I was born in Maryland but moved to Maine before my second birthday, then went off to Washington State, California, back to Maryland, spent a few years in Japan (Misawa), then Virginia, Grad School in Louisiana then worked in North Carolina before moving here. Ah, the life of a Navy brat! I guess the best answer is that I am from America.

My current situation is much simpler! I live with my husband and two sons in Versoix, Switzerland. I've been in Switzerland since 1997 so I guess that makes me one of the "oldies". This is our 4th year at PGP – Jack is in Lit 2 with me and Owen has started pre-lit with Katrina. I'm currently working at home – work being cooking, cleaning, ironing, child care, bill paying, etc.

Where you like to do your grocery shopping? Why?

Living in Versoix with its high Swiss prices, it is no wonder that I have become a rebel border crosser. Yes, I admit that I have come over the border on more than one occasion well over my limit of wine, beer, meat and milk! I can't resist the lure of those Carrefour prices – not to mention all that variety!

What's your favourite restaurant in the region?

I love to cook so we don't eat out much but my favourite places would have to be the Rajasthan and Shalimar in Ferney! Awesome Indian food!

What's your favourite summer holiday destination?

Our favourite family holiday would have to have been our trip in 2009 to Orlando. We rented a villa with a pool and my whole family came down to go to Disney World with us. Magic! We're already planning a return trip for next summer. A trip we won't be repeating (though we are proud to have done it) was our cycle holiday last summer. We rented bikes (with the children's bikes attached) and cycled from St. Moritz to Innsbruck, Austria. Yes it was very, very hard work but we made it!

And your favourite winter holiday destination?

This is the second season that we've rented a small apartment in la Clusaz, France. It is a great resort for families – very child friendly with lots of easy pistes. Shame that there is not more snow this year, though!

What's your favourite place in Geneva or surrounding France?

My favourite place in Geneva would have to be the lake. We try and do as much sailing on the lake as possible in the summer months. Nothing beats sipping some lovely wine and watching the sunset from the deck of a boat.

What's your favourite sport/activity?

I don't consider myself terribly sporty but I guess I would have to say my favourite sport is skiing followed closely by walking...is that a sport?

Do you have a favourite book?

Hmmm, tricky. The books I've read most often are *A Brave New World* by A Huxley, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, by E Remarque and *Into Thin Air* by J Krakauer. Sorry, all of these are rather depressing books!

What's your favourite movie?

Anything by Pixar!

And your favourite music?

In my youth I was a bit of a head banger...Led Zeppelin, Soundgarden, Pearl Jam, Cream. I've mellowed somewhat and now enjoy Arctic Monkeys, Hard-Fi, Elbow, Black Eyed Peas and Orson.

Dad's Corner - Sweet Memories

By Chris Lockwood, Elizabeth's Dad

As a primary school kid, my weekly pocket money was the old sixpence coin (decimalised to 2½ pence) – what does a 7 year old boy do with such a fortune? Well, he makes his Mum stop at Clegg's Sweet Shop on the way back from school where row upon row of jars filled the walls with brightly coloured offerings and at head height were counters packed with all sorts of chocolates wrapped in foil.... And the weekly question was what do I buy?

I would nearly always go for the 'Pick 'n' Mix' option (you got more that way) or the bar of Fry's Chocolate Crème if I had saved some money from the week before. Normally these sweets would be consumed on the way home in the car but sometimes I saved some to trade with my brother. After the joy of consumption came the disappointment of the empty paper bag with some sugar remnants in, knowing that you had to wait for another week for that visit to Clegg's again. Let me share some of my favourite Sweet Shop memories with you...

Spangles

Spangles were fruity boiled sweets, with a very slight fizz about them. You could suck them thinner and thinner until you felt like you could cut your tongue on them, but upon trying they would always snap in your mouth. Lots of people did not like them but I loved them, especially in the Christmas selection box.

Refresher Chews

A lovely zingy tasting, yellow rectangle of hard chewy candy, containing a dusting of sherbet, all wrapped up in a wax paper of yellow and blue... I could get 5 for 2½ p which was always the default purchase if I could not decide in time.

Sherbet Pips

These were small pip shaped sweets with a hard candy exterior and a sherbet centre. I always had the lemon flavour. I used to cram as many of these into my mouth as I could stand and try to resist the urge to chomp them up to get to the sherbet interior. I cannot remember my behaviour after this but it must have been a tad manic!

Black Jacks & Fruit Salads

Black Jacks were about an inch wide and made from that really hard chewy stuff that you have to suck for a while before it actually becomes soft enough to chew. They had an aniseed flavour and as the name suggests were black in colour. The best thing about them was that they turned your tongue black.

Fruit Salads were always the sister sweet to Black Jacks. They were the same shape and consistency as their brethren, but were a peachy pink colour and were raspberry and pineapple flavoured, a very tasty mix indeed! Obviously you could mix them with Black Jacks for a 'taste sensation'!

Flying Saucers

Flying saucers were little UFO shaped pastel coloured rice paper parcels filled with sherbet in a range of colours such as pink, green, yellow and blue. The rice paper became bland and soggy after you'd sucked it for a while but inside was a sherbet taste explosion!

Cigarette Sweets

These were chalky, sweet, and mint or bubble-gum flavoured, and came in a cardboard box that was meant to look like a real cigarette pack. The ends were painted red to look lit so you could pretend to smoke them. Ah, the joys of the 70s!

Cola Bottles & Cola Cubes

Gummy Cola Bottles, fizzy or plain, were one of

my favourites, probably because I could get most for my money. They had a sharp tangy taste of Coca-Cola which I was not allowed so that might have added to the allure. Cola Cubes had the same taste but were hard and square and were normally found in mixed bags.

Real Liquorice

Real twigs – I used to gnaw on the liquorice flavoured sticks for ages until the wood became completely mushy, then with one last suck of the liquorice flavour, I'd plant them in the garden in the vain hope a liquorice tree would grow.

Opal Fruits

Opal Fruits! Made to make your mouth water! - that was the advertising line and they certainly did! Square shaped fruit-flavored soft candy, with the tang of orange, lemon, lime or strawberry – again the best way to consume these was to cram as many as possible into your mouth and savour the fantastic flavour.

Mixed Bags

A lot of thought went into the mixed bag, Clegg's used to have all sorts in theirs and they were priced to accommodate varying amounts of pocket money. Delights such as chocolate nuts and raisins, liquorice aniseed balls, white mice, gob stoppers, bazooka Joes, bonbons of all flavours, shrimps and if you were lucky, pure sugar from the bottom of all the empty sweet jars - just wet your finger and dip away. All this in a flimsy paper bag that normally broke in your pocket was by far the best purchase I could make.

So a few memories jogged there I suspect and I have barely scratched the surface! What I have found out though is that there are now loads of internet sites that sell these and many more sweets if you fancy reviving your childhood taste buds. I know I will be ordering some soon!



What's On In and Around Geneva

(Continued from page 8)

delirium. They revisit the Gipsy Kings, The Bee Gees, Strauss and Bizet ... and finally the climax of the show, a cover of "Walk on the Wild Side" by Lou Reed acoustic rap version. It works! Spectacles Onésiens, Salle communale d'Onex at 20:00. From ages 8 and up. Spectacles Onésiens

14 Apr - MUSIC: "La Nuit Brésilienne" by le Concert Impromptu. For all ages. Esplanade du Lac, Divonne. Bookings, tel. 04 50 99 00 75. www.esplanadedulac.fr

Apr to Sep - EXHIBITION: "Supervolcano". Understand the mystery of volcanoes and phenomena such as lava tubes and mud volcanoes. Open Tuesday to Sunday, 10:00 - 17:00. Musée d'histoire naturelle, 1 Route de Malagnou, Geneva. Tel +41 (0)22 418 63 00.

15 to 16 Apr - HORSE SHOW: "Le Cadre Noir de Saumur 2011" is a spectacular show by all the faculty members of the Ecole Nationale d'Equitation. They are experts in their field. Tickets at Ticket Corner. Geneva Palexpo, Hall 6 at 20:30. www.improd.ch

20 Apr - PUPPET THEATRE: "Soupe au caillou" (Stone Soup) presented by La troupe Stella Rossa. Pierrot does not eat his soup. Even before he has tasted it, he knows it's not good. So he leaves home and goes on an adventure...From 3 years old. Esplanade du Lac, Divonne. Bookings Tel. 04 50 99 00 75. www.esplanadedulac.fr

29 Apr to 3 May - FAIR: The 25th International Fair for Books, Press and Arts. From books, periodicals to graphic art and art print, all and much more. The Fair also presents several interesting exhibitions in

particular, "100 years of Gallimard" and "Etienne Delessert", with 80 original drawings. At Geneva Palexpo. www.salondulivre.ch

Knock! Knock!

Who's there?

Doctor.

Doctor Who?

You've already said it!

from Wilf Chisholm (7)

What's purple and wears sunglasses?

A grape going on holiday!

from Bron Chisholm (4)

Why do dogs like trees?

Because of their bark.

Anna and David del Pozo's Favourite Joke

What's On In and Around Geneva

By Bérénice Fitzpatrick, Newsletter Assistant
Romain's Mum

MARCH

Until Jun – EXHIBITION: "From Renoir to Sam Szafran, the journey of an art collector" at the Foundation Pierre Gianadda in Martigny. www.gianadda.ch

ENGLISH STORY HOUR. Story hour for children ages 3 to 7. Held every Wednesday afternoon from 15:00-16:00 at the Library in English, 3 Rue de Monthoux, Geneva. Tel +41 (0)22 732 80 97. www.thelibrary.ch

16 Mar to 3 Apr - THEATRE: "Tistou les Pouces Verts". Tistou always falls asleep at school, which drives Mr Father, a successful arms merchant, very mad! So one day, Mr Father decides to send him to the school of life, that is to say ... into the garden, where Tistou discovers he has a gift, he can grow flowers from anything he touches: the hospital, the prison and even the gun factory of Mr. Father! A little man who, through the magic of his "green fingers", reminds us that happiness should be a simple matter ... like a flower. Ages 7 and up. Presented by Le Théâtre Extrapol. Le Petit Théâtre, 12 place de la Cathédrale, Lausanne. Tel. +41 (0) 21 323 62 13. www.lepetittheatre.ch

19 Mar to 10 Apr - PUPPET SHOW: "Feu fait le fou". One morning, the fire suddenly disappears from the fire place. The stove is in despair, the cook starts to feel hungry... Everything has become shadows and ghosts. Fire, just like an impossible child puts the city upside down. All the symbolism of fire is artfully deployed here with a range of personifications of this incendiary material that are in turn poetic and dangerous. Starting age 4. Théâtre des Marionnettes de Genève. Bookings, tel. +41 (0)22 418 47 77. www.marionnettes.ch

19 Mar to 3 Apr - CHOCOLATE THEATRE: "Mamies boum!" is a witty play. Where did the good old grannies go? You know, the ones that were always there to spoil us... My granny has no time, too busy having fun at work, following tai chi courses, when she is not coming back exhausted from her tango class.... For ages 5 and up. Children will enjoy the distribution of bread and chocolate before or after the show. Shows on Wed, Sat and Sun. Check website for details. Limited seats, bookings are required! Le Théâtre Am Stram Gram, 56 route de Frontenex, Geneva. Tel. +41 (0) 22 735 79 24. www.amstramgram.ch

19 to 20 Mar - THEATRE (in English): Simply Theatre Academy presents: "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe", by C S Lewis. Embark on this epic adventure in the world of Narnia. This is a timeless classic cherished by children and adults alike. Sat. at 14:30pm and 19:30pm, Sun at 11.00 and 15:00. The Casino Theatre, 42 Rue de Carouge, Geneva. To book your tickets, call +41 (0) 22 860 05 18 or visit www.simplytheatre.com

22 Mar - STAND-UP COMEDY (in English): Funny Laundry presents Arthur Smith and the Provocateurs. Tickets available at the door or in advance from www.starticket.ch. At Uptown Geneva. www.funnylaundry.com

23 Mar to 3 Apr – CIRCUS: "Cirque Plume" is a colourful and dynamic circus show where acrobats, musicians and clowns come together for adventure, laughter and dream. Geneva Arena 3 route des Batailleux, Grand Saconnex. Tel. + 41 (0)22 710 90 90. info@geneva-arena.com

24 Mar - MIME: "Cocorico" is the encounter between a multi-instrumentalist musician, Philippe Leygnac and a mischievous comedian, Patrice Thibaud. In their world without words, images and sounds tell the stories. Mime, sound effects and shadows suggest rather than show, in order to appeal to the viewer's imagination. For ages 8 and up. At 20:00, Salle Communale d'Onex. www.spectaclesonesiens.ch

27 Mar - TALK: "What's on your mind?" Q&A with adolescent and child psychotherapist Rachel Melville Thomas. ASK office. 12:00 - 13:00. Bring your lunch and join the discussion. <http://www.allspecialkids.org/ask.php>

27 Mar – THEATRE: "C'est pas pareil" (it's not the same!), a theatre performance for little ones from 3 years old, presented by la Compagnie Clandestine. At 14:00, L'usine à Gaz in Nyon. Tel: +41 (0)22 361 44 04. www.usineagaz.ch

27 Mar - MUSICAL SHOW: "Le mercredi a disparu" is a musical show presented by Les Musiciens de l'Atelier. A beautiful tale illustrated with classical music, composed of known works by Mozart, Debussy, Weil, Kosma. Wednesday has been stolen by two elves. A little girl Luna, is in charge of finding Wednesday or the fairytale forest will be destroyed. Along the way, she discovers that music allows her to recreate time and with it the possibility to save the forest and to write all the stories to come. At 15:00. For all ages. L'Esplanade du Lac, Divonne. Tel. 04 50 99 00 75. www.esplanadedulac.fr

30 Mar - SCIENCE WORKSHOPS: Science Wednesdays at the Museum of history of science are for children from 7 to 12 years old. "Courant, pile, électricité ..qu'est-ce que cela veut dire au juste ?", (Power, battery, electricity.. what does it all mean?) is the theme of this next workshop. Participants will be encouraged to experiment, tinker and understand various phenomena. 14:00 - 16:00. Musée d'histoire des sciences, 128 rue de Lausanne, Geneva. Tel. +41 (0)22 418 50 60. <http://www.ville-ge.ch/mhs/animations.php>

APRIL

1 to 3 Apr – CARNIVAL: The traditional Orbe Carnival (North of Lausanne). This year's theme is "Cro-Magnon". Possibility to dress-up and take part

in the procession – Lots of ideas for masks provided on the website: www.carnaval-orbe.ch

2 Apr - FESTIVAL: The 7th Chocolate Festival of Versoix. The festival brings chocolate-makers from all over Switzerland and neighbouring France. This year's festival will take place on the Place de la Gare. 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 (0)22 775 66 08. www.festivalduchocolat.ch

2 Apr to 5 Apr - THEATRE: "Terres!" (lands). "This land is mine, I bought it!", "This land is mine, I was expropriated!" So who does it really belong to?...The subject of property is treated here with depth and humor. For ages 9 and up. Le Théâtre Am Stram Gram, 56 route de Frontenex, Geneva. Tel. +41 (0)22 735 79 24. www.amstramgram.ch

6 to 10 Apr - FAIR: "Inventions Geneva". The 39th 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 many different countries will be on show! Hall 7, Geneva Palexpo. www.inventions-geneva.ch

6 to 10 Apr - THEATRE: "Souffle d'Ange". The quartet has been working together for over 6 years to present these delicate comedies, based on classical, modern and poetic clown acts. From 7 years old. Le Petit Théâtre, 12 place de la Cathédrale, Lausanne. Tel. +41 (0)21 323 62 13. www.lepetittheatre.ch

8 to 10 Apr - HOT-AIR BALLOON FESTIVAL: 5th edition of Hot-Air Ballooning in Geneva. Friday, take-off from the Centre Sportif de Vessy. Saturday and Sunday, take-off from various parks around the city (in the morning). www.montgolfiades.ch

9 to 13 Apr - THEATRE: "Mamie Ouate en Papoâsie". For ages 6 and up. Le Théâtre Am Stram Gram, 56 route de Frontenex, Geneva. Tel. +41 (0)22 735 79 24. www.amstramgram.ch

13 to 17 Apr - PUPPET SHOW: "Hand Stories". After travelling the roads for 25 years with his solo "Scenes from the Beijing Opera" Yeung Fai, a virtuoso of the Chinese puppetry, convenes us to the fantastic tale of his own life. It's all about hands. His, those of his father and those of his brothers. "Hand Stories" invites us to dive in an extraordinary family chronicle. Composed of skits without words, the stories are poignant, intimate and universal. Starting age 8. Théâtre des Marionnettes de Genève. Tel. +41 (0)22 418 47 77. www.marionnettes.ch

14 Apr - CONCERT: "Duel Opus 2". Two crazy musicians engage in a duel with blows of notes. Sitting, standing, lying or in the air, they play string, wire, the saw or the didgeridoo. Everything becomes an excuse to embark on a new musical

(Continued on page 7)

www.playgroupprogramme.com