



Hawthorne Family Playschool

Fall Review 2011 • Volume 8, Issue 1

A cooperative preschool located in southeast Portland

Making Change: Raising Dollars that Make Sense

SUSAN EISMAN
HFP Teacher

Co-op preschool teachers and parents are in a unique position to make change to an unjust system. We live in a system that disregards the needs of young children and belittles parents and early childhood teachers by expecting us to do this crucial work of raising young children with little or no money. Over the past six years, I've worked closely with HFP families to improve the financial situation of our program and to improve the teacher's contract. I'm pleased with the progress we have made and am hopeful that it may inspire other Portland co-ops to follow suit.

In an effort to improve the teacher/parent educator's salary, while keeping tuition rates affordable for families according to their means, HFP instituted a sliding fee tuition scale, simultaneously raising tuition a year and a half ago. This enabled the board to offer me an annual salary of \$35,000. This may not seem like an impressive salary for a full-time teacher with twenty-one years of teaching experience and a Master's level education, but it's about double what I earned when I started at HFP six years ago. I've worked with a rotating group of board members over the past six years to make significant improvements to my contract. I'm quite thankful to the multiple parents who partnered with me, wrestling with the constraints of limited finances. We participated in multiple conversations, emails and meetings to get to the place we are today.

Since HFP raised tuition via the sliding fee scale, many other co-op teachers and

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"In a cooperative preschool like HFP, children and their parents learn and grow together."

Co-op Life: Why I Love It

SHANNON RHOADS
(Truman and Holland)

Wow ... it's year #4 for our family here at HFP, and I can't believe I'm in the final stretch of our cooperative preschool experience. It's been a really rewarding journey that will stick with me forever. Maybe this seems obvious to others, but I only recently began to see our co-op as a kind of social experiment. The phrase "it takes a village to raise a child" is something many of us pay lip service to, but we rarely if ever have the opportunity to test it in any real way.

At HFP, 28 families elect every year to run a school together. I'm not sure everyone sees it quite that way when they enroll, but that's really what it boils down to. It's true we have a framework and culture already in place from previous years

and we have an indispensable visionary and leader in our teacher, Susan Eisman. That said, I believe our program's success lies less in following certain routines or a formula, and more in truly connecting with each other around a common goal — in this case, raising our children.

I've been thinking a lot lately about how the things that I love most about HFP, the things that make it really special and rewarding, didn't come right away. At times I have felt challenged more than I expected to be or even thought I wanted to be. But, like all of my best life experiences, the stuff that felt challenging at first turned out to be the stuff that taught me, shaped me as a person and led me to the deepest connections.

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Hawthorne Family Playschool is a play-based cooperative preschool that nurtures and supports the individual development of each child with enriching and empowering experiences.

The ChatterBOX



"Teacher Susan: This is you dressed up like a flower 'cause you're funny when I see you in the morning and it's a wacky day."

- Charlotte

"Phew! My legs are sour!"

- Arrow



Frankenstein is like a football because it is sewn and he is sewn.

Why does he have those things sticking out of his neck?

Is he alive?

- Poem by Dean

Alumni & Friends Harvest Picnic

JARRETT ALTMAN (*Justine, HFP Alumni*)

It was a dark and cold night with small children scattered everywhere. There was a man, a tall man, running around in a neon green jacket with a wild pack of 4, 5, and 6 year olds giving chase. A playground riot? No, it was the HFP Alumni & Friends Picnic at Grant Park! For those of you who attended HFP last year, this sight was probably a common one to you since Bob was our family's dedicated parent helper in the class. For the rest of you, you probably wondered why that man didn't just sit down and eat and talk like the rest of us! That's the beauty of HFP — we get to be ourselves. HFP, and Teacher Susan in particular, provided such a comfortable and nurturing environment for everyone that we — kids and parents alike — could

learn, play, and socialize the best way for each of us.

Of course, as much as the picnic was a great reminder of how we individually benefited from HFP, it also was a typical cooperative experience starting with the inspiration from Rachel Petke and her activities for every age child including the great glow bands that allowed us to keep track of our children as they chased Bob around the park ... to the corn on the cob grilled up by Chris Landis.

We laughed, we played, we waited for our children to drop with exhaustion and we got to relax among people who have seen us with pinstripe aprons on and making human chains at monthly meetings!

It reminded us how much we miss HFP and how much of an impression it made on us — and Justine.



Community Tree Planting

FRANCESCA MONGA (*Sofia*)

Church members, Friends of Trees volunteers and a few hardy HFP members gathered to plant nine trees in the parking strips off Stephens Street and 28th Avenue on December 3rd. Pastor Linda selected eight different varieties: Elizabeth Magnolia, Chinese Dogwood, American Hornbeam, Persian Ironwood, Black Tupelo, Crimson Spire Oak, Greenspire Linden, and Tricolor Beech. Dane, Miles, and Dominic helped dig holes, stamp down dirt, rake leaves, and water the newly-planted trees. After all nine were planted, the group headed to a neighbor's house to finish the morning by planting three more trees.

Letter from the President

ERIN BLACK-MITCHEL
HFP President

It is hard to believe it was only five months ago that I was meeting our new students and families at one of the many park play dates. I remember seeing many of the kids, and thinking to myself, "they seem so young!" Now I see them in class or at HFP events, and there they are mixing it up with the "big kids" and acting as if they have been "preschoolers" for years. I think in many ways, the transition to preschool is more difficult on us caregivers than it is on our youngsters. What they see is a fun and inviting place, with new friends to play with, and new activities to try. What do we see, but our babies growing up and taking a step closer to growing up.

It takes courage to let your child go out into the world, so my hat is off to our new and returning families, for choosing

HFP as a place to let your little one grow and start a new adventure. Of course, this adventure is not just for them. As a member of a co-op preschool, you and your family are offering up your services and time to help not only in the classroom, but also on fieldtrips, community events and fundraising. This is a big commitment, but one that has so many rewards. I feel very honored that I am able to take part in my daughter's education and get to work with a lot of very cool little kids. I like that when I am just there for drop off, students will ask why I have to go; it's a neat feeling to know that you are making an impact on someone else's life too.

When we first joined HFP back in February of this year, I thought we were just joining a preschool, not a very caring and compassionate community. This was my first experience in a preschool, so I had expected it to be more like our former



daycare; where you saw other families, but didn't really know them. I love that we are more than that! I think that is what really makes HFP so very special, the community aspect. I see it in the way we interact with not only the children, but with other adults.

What has surprised you about your time with HFP?

Drop me an e-mail, I would love to hear from your experience.
blackerinm@gmail.com

Co-op Life

FROM PAGE 1

Take for example our role as parent helpers. In a traditional school, teacher's assistants or parent helpers are there to support the teacher and rarely play a leadership role in the classroom. At HFP, our teacher excels at setting the stage for creativity and learning, but she intentionally allows parents and children to take center stage in many situations. Her role is more of guide and mentor than director. She is a consistent and grounding force throughout our day, but she encourages our parents to be fully engaged and trusts that they too have good instincts and vision.

For many, being in charge of more than one or two preschoolers can feel new and overwhelming at first. What's wonderful about our program is that we have so many opportunities to learn from each other. Through observation and brainstorming with our teacher and other parent helpers, as well as plenty of trial and error, I have learned a ton. I still have plenty of questions and learning to do, but I can honestly say that I feel more confident in my role as a parent today because of this co-op experience. And as an added bonus, being in charge of a group of energetic children

is something I feel quite comfortable with now and even look forward to.

If I think back to when I first enrolled my daughter at HFP, I didn't choose the program because I wanted to improve my skills or personally get something out of it. My decision at that time was focused on what my daughter needed and whether the program felt like a good fit for her. In joining a co-op, I knew I was agreeing to several new roles and responsibilities, but I just thought about them as a valuable investment in my child.

Over time, I have come to realize that a co-op like ours helps parents learn and grow, not just children. Beyond parenting skills, my jobs for the school have helped remind me of the things I'm good at besides being a mom and helped me to connect with other parts of my identity again. It's easy to lose sight of oneself during these parenting years, particular as a stay at home mom. Helping to run a school has given me a sense of purpose outside of my family, which I think is good for them and for me.

Being a part of a tight-knit community like ours is also an incredible opportunity to build something bigger than just a school program. Families in a co-op tend to get very close because we really do play together. We get to know (and love!) each

other's children through parent-helping. There is also a greater level of trust between us because we all work so closely together. It's a wonderful feeling watching my children deepen relationships with people that I feel connected to as well. I also have a much greater ability to help them navigate these relationships when I have some personal insight to offer.

As a community, we can give each other friendship and support, both emotional and material. I would encourage our families to reach out for playdates, arrange childcare swaps, share ideas and resources, and generally just tap into the positive energy that comes from connecting with each other around the children we love.

The rewards of being in a strong cooperative like ours are great, but, like most good things, require patience and active participation. Our program evolves over the year to reflect the spirit and efforts of its members. It takes time for 28 families to find their rhythm with each other and to build the kind of tight-knit community that makes HFP work. The great news is that year after year our members do make it work and, for that matter, make it work really well.

I am so grateful to have been a part of such a deeply rewarding experience.

Fun at the PUMPKIN PATCH

Field trip to Kruger Farm
October 19 & 20



It was a cool, cloudy day at Kruger Farm as the class awaited Farmer Don. Kids balanced on the enormous tractor tire that was planted in the ground, and some of the little siblings ran after the chickens.



After Farmer Don arrived and played a round of "Name That Vegetable" (only the chard proved tricky), parents and children trotted off to view Matilda the pig.

Farmer Don explained how ecological it is to keep a pig, or as he called her, a "four-legged compost bin." After a few children ventured tentative pats on Matilda's head, everyone clambered on the tractor-trailer for a hay ride to the pumpkin patch.



It was a cozy, bumpy ride, amidst many squeals of delight.



Then it was back to the corn maze, where everyone ran, skipped, and jumped their way to the lookout tower at the center and back again.



As each child picked out a pumpkin, many were surprised, but not deterred, by the spines on the stems.



After a deliciously seasonal snack of apples, pumpkin seeds and cheese, it was time to say good-bye. We'll be back in strawberry season!



Align your Energy for Cooperative Kids

CARA LEE
Former HFP Parent and Board President

As human beings, we are constantly sending and receiving signals that communicate our emotions and state of being. Our little ones are tuned into these signals for information about their relationships and environment. Adults often focus on language, but young children tend to be more fluent in energy, so it is especially important that we are aware of the messages we are sending as parents, caregivers and teachers.

Part of the signal we send is based on the amount of alignment we have in our being. You have probably experienced the feeling of being "in the flow," or connected to your intuition or higher self. Whatever you choose to call it, this alignment indicates that all is well, like the green light on a traffic signal. When a child is receiving a green signal, everything is okay. When an adult is out of alignment and sending a yellow or red signal the child may be on edge, wondering what will come next. This can manifest in unwanted behavior.

Is your energy on red, yellow or green?

ALIGN YOUR ENERGY BEFORE ADDRESSING BEHAVIOR

Sometimes it seems unfair that when I'm feeling off, my 7-year-old, Zane, gets more challenging. That's the time when he is more likely to be clingy, hyper, or uncooperative. And, of course, that's when I'm the least equipped to handle it. Maybe you've experienced this too.

It's not a coincidence, though, because he is reacting to my energy. When my energy is out of alignment he instinctively knows that something isn't right. It could be that I'm frustrated, worried or tired, but if he doesn't understand the cause he is more likely to react.

That's also the time when I am more likely to become fixated on the unwanted behavior, and trying to correct behavior from a place of misalignment usually makes things worse. When I take the time to shift my energy first, the behavior either takes care of itself or I am able to use my

parenting skills, humor and play to handle it much more effectively.

HOW TO MODEL ENERGETIC ALIGNMENT WITH YOUR KIDS

Being in the flow is a constant practice and you know how you're doing by how you feel. The better you feel, the closer to green you are. It's a process and you just want to aim for a bit more alignment than you have right now. Sometimes I feel selfish to take the time for myself but this is one of the most important skills that I want to model for Zane. And he feels better and is more in tune with himself when I model it. So here are 3 things you can play with:

1. Make a list of things that help you shift your energy such as breathing, meditation, walking, yoga, or music. You can even have different lists for things you can do with kids, at work, in the grocery store, etc. The list is important because when you're on red you can't always remember how to get back to yellow or green.

2. Check in with your energy throughout the day and notice where you are. Just observe without judgment. You can write notes to yourself or set a reminder on your phone.

3. When you want a tune-up, choose a fun activity from your list. Tell your kids something like, "I feel out of alignment. I'm going to (meditate, stretch, etc.) for (3) minutes." You can set the timer for an age-appropriate time. Even if you are interrupted after 15 seconds you are role modeling this important self care behavior. As the kids get older you will be able to go longer or they can join in.

For me, long periods of parenting are the most challenging and rewarding times to stay in alignment. So have fun playing with your energy, be gentle and patient with yourself, and enjoy the ride! As you are more and more consistently in the flow, everything else will follow.

Cara is a teacher of subtle energy tools for work, parenting and life. You can find more articles and resources at www.caraklee.com.

Written by Francesca Monga (Sofia)

Meeting

FROM PAGE 1

board members have grown curious about how we accomplished this. The families at HFP made a bold move with the hope of inspiring other Portland co-ops to consider how they might shift toward a more equitable model as well.

In October, we got to share our process with about twenty interested teachers and parents at a PCPO (Parent Child Preschools of Oregon) meeting.

It's satisfying to gather in a room full of parents and teachers who care deeply for young children; caregivers who want to do what's in the best interest of the children we love. And it's invigorating to share the process of a small community of families who grappled with the limitations of its budget and opted to valiantly raise tuition and institute a sliding fee tuition scale. In doing so we were able to generate more income for our experienced teacher, parent educator and school's leader, without compromising the quality of the program by increasing class size.

At October's early childhood advocacy meeting, we acknowledged that there is a broader early childhood crisis leaving most families meeting their children's needs on their own, and that the lack of early childhood funding translates to under-compensated teachers — child care teachers and preschool teachers have low salaries and often do without medical and retirement benefits. And we touched on the potential advantages (financial relief) and challenges (dictating what we teach) we might face if government funded early childhood education.

As co-op preschools consider the possibility of raising compensation packages for teachers three main points stand out:

1. Participation in a cooperative preschool is a benefit to families. Many children thrive in co-ops as it's a natural continuation of home, given their family is an integral part of their school. In a co-op, parents get to see their own child's growth and get to see a broader range of development as they support (and come to adore) the rest of the children in the class. In the best of co-ops, families get to know and lean on each other, forming deep bonds and mutual respect. In an age of increased busyness and isolation, this



community building is invaluable. Further, children aren't the only ones to benefit from "hands on" learning. Parents also learn by doing as they partner with teachers in the classroom and get to observe teachers in action. Parenting skills improve thanks to co-op involvement. While parent cooperatives may have once been billed as a less expensive preschool option, I believe it's time we start charging higher tuition rates for those who can afford it. Let's focus on the extensive values a co-op offers and let go the notion that a co-op's purpose is as a cost-saving measure.

2. Co-op teachers are more than children's teachers. In many cases, we hold the vision and the institutional memory in our schools. As the volunteer parents move on each year, we are privy to information ranging from enrollment, fundraising, emergency preparedness, marketing, budgeting and community building.

We maintain this information and relay it on to the parent volunteers taking on these various roles year after year. In this way, we are more like a director of a school than solely the children's teacher.

3. We need to talk openly about finances if we are to make change. We need to break through teacher isolation and break through the notion that talking about money is taboo. There is value to



open, honest sharing about what teachers earn (salary, benefits and working conditions) and how each program balances their budgets.

It's not fair to expect teachers to subsidize the actual cost of care through low wages with no or little benefits. I'm grateful that this sentiment is understood and shared among the families at HFP. HFP made a bold move in raising tuition via the sliding fee tuition scale.

I am hopeful that other co-op teachers will talk openly with the families in their programs and seriously consider how they can stretch to better compensate their child's teacher. It seems to me Portland's ripe for change. Portland's a progressive town that prides itself in being family-friendly. Let's lead the way to a more equitable early childhood system here and now.

Fostering a Love for Healthy Food

RACHEL PETKE
(Ezra and Clara)

Parenting has definitely changed the way I think about eating.

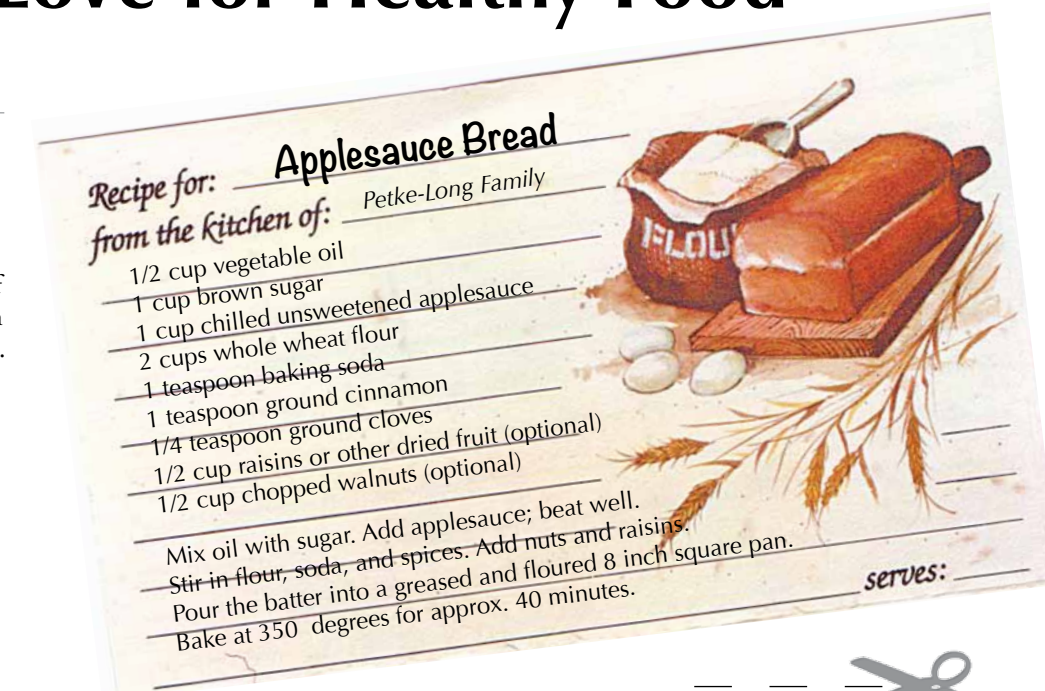
Beginning with pregnancy and the enormity of having sole responsibility for nourishing a tiny being ... the struggle of trying to nurse a newborn who was much more interested in sleeping than eating ... the excitement of introducing solids at 8 months only to be met with refusal to eat anything but avocado for the next 3 months ... the anguish over whether or not refined sugar should go into the first birthday cake ...

And my journey continues, with 5-year-old Ezra (T/Th/F) and 8-year-old Clara (HFP '09), who have very different tastes and eating habits, and are still learning to appreciate the importance of healthy eating. I regularly tell them that my job is to teach them how to be healthy and strong, that their bodies need lots of different kinds of foods to grow, and that their job is to learn to try new things.

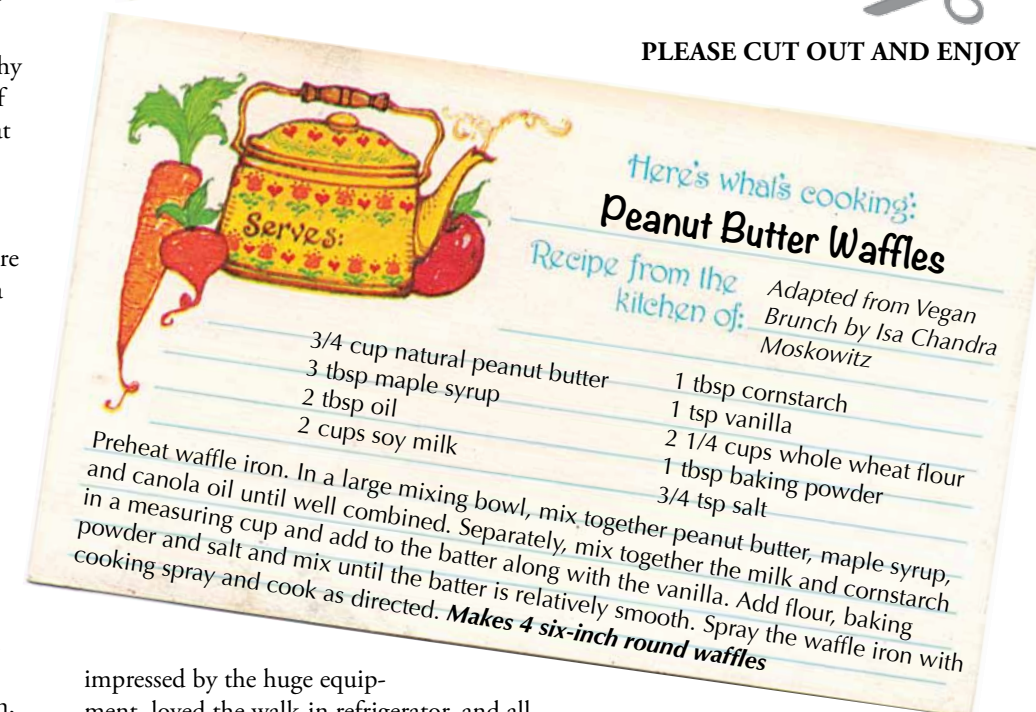
Research shows that it takes children time and repeated neutral exposure to learn to like a new food. Neutral exposure is defined as matter-of-factly including a new food in family meals and enjoying it yourselves without applying outside pressure of any kind. It is found that children may have to see, watch others eat, touch or taste a food 15 or 20 (or even more) times before learning to enjoy it. Even then, a child may not eat a food they have learned to like every time it is offered.

One could easily argue that exposure doesn't just include presenting food to your child to eat. It includes teaching your child how different foods are grown, harvested, prepared, etc. Gardening with kids is a classic example. Including kids in food shopping and other food prep for cooking and baking are natural ways to provide exposure as well.

The HFP curriculum presents so many great opportunities for kids to understand more about the food they eat. Farm field trips are a thrill, and in a recent field trip to New Cascadia Traditional Bakery, our kids had a chance to get a behind the scenes look at food production. Many were



PLEASE CUT OUT AND ENJOY



impressed by the huge equipment, loved the walk-in refrigerator, and all were thrilled with a sweet treat at the end.

In the classroom, kids are regularly involved in snack preparation, from cutting up fruits and veggies, mixing ingredients for banana bread, to whirring garbanzo beans around in a food processor for hummus. Cutting up produce is particularly satisfying — kids feel so proud of themselves and are much more likely to eat what they have helped create. It is also an opportunity to talk about how amazing it is that a seed planted in the ground grew

into something wonderful (that likely has the same kinds of seed in the middle of it), that a stem which we can be so quick to discard has such an important job of holding this thing onto the plant from which it grows, that the skin of something can look and taste so different than the flesh and has it's own special job ... I could go on, but the kids are hovering — I think it's time to eat.

Mark your Calendars & Join Us For Hoopla!

A Costume Party Benefit for Hawthorne Family Playschool

Do Jump! • Greasy Kid Stuff with Belinda and Hova
School of Rock • Dancing • Activities for Kids • Scrumptious Food

March 10, 2012 • 4:00pm -7:00pm • Oaks Park Pavilion

Great deals on lots of local goods! Costumes encouraged!

¡Thank You, Thank You, Gracias!

Thank you **Teacher Susan!**

You have set the tone at HFP so that the expectation when you walk in that door is to be kind, caring, thoughtful, patient and playful. The high quality of parenting that happens in that environment is the parenting that we strive for all the time. It definitely carries over into our home to some extent, but we are definitely not projecting the HFP standard around the clock! But, at HFP, we embrace it. And that is what makes HFP such a special place — a place that feels so safe and warm, a place where we can leave our children without even a sliver of doubt or worry.

With love and gratitude,
Jenny & Corey Lawrence
(Rayley, alumni & Arrow, T/Th/F)

Thanks **Shannon (Truman)** for organizing all of our membership materials and doing an outstanding job of welcoming and orientating new families to HFP.

Thanks to **Emily (Etta)** for coordinating classroom coverage as new shifts opened up. And thanks to the T/Th families who have taken on additional shifts.

Thanks to all who have provided us with scrumptious spreads of food and those of you who enthusiastically share snacks that follow our color days and P.J. day themes. A special thanks to all of you have involved children with snack preparation projects including muffins, guacamole, pizzas, smoothies and such: **Rachel (Ezra), Elise (Maple), Catherine (Caitlin), Suzanne (Arthur/Charlotte), Kay (Dane), Jenny (Arrow).**

Well done, **Erin (India)**! Thanks for your organization and humor running board meetings, and for getting us all off to a great start this year.

A giant thanks to **Francesca (Sofia)** for your time coordinating HFP jobs and facilitating our relationship with the church.

Thanks **Elise (Maple)** and **Jenny (Arrow)** for all the help you have done with fundraising. Awesome work!

Thanks to each of you who tend to the myriad details that make our program thrive!

Thanks to Alumni **Kathleen Krushas, To the Point Publications** for printing our Hoopla flyers at no cost.

WINTER CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 7: BOARD MEETING, 6:30-8:30PM

FEBRUARY 11: HFP OPEN HOUSE, 10-1:00PM

FEBRUARY 20: NO SCHOOL / PRESIDENT'S DAY

FEBRUARY 21: COMMUNITY MEETING, 6:30-8:30PM

MARCH 6: BOARD MEETING, 6:30-8:30PM

MARCH 10: HOOPLA! A COSTUME PARTY BENEFIT FOR HFP
AT OAKS PARK, 4:00-7:00PM

MARCH 26-30: NO SCHOOL/SPRING BREAK



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Hawthorne Family Playschool is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and donations (which are tax deductible) are gratefully accepted.

PLEASE SHARE THIS NEWSLETTER!

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