

## *The International Working Group for the Child from Birth to Three*

Susan Gray Weber

As part of its work on behalf of children in the first seven years, the International Waldorf Kindergarten Association created a working group to take up the initiative for the family and the child in its first three years of life. The most visible outer work of this group has been the planning for the two international conferences, titled "The Dignity of the Young Child." A third conference will be offered in July 2004, in Jarna, Sweden.

During the early years of its work, the group was comprised solely of European Waldorf early childhood teachers, and arose out of their collegiality and caring for the work with very young children. At that time, there was little support for such work, and many questions lived – as they continue to do – with regard to what Waldorf education could offer to such work. What insights and practical experiences could be developed and shared, so that care for these tiny children, so vulnerable and in such need in our times, could find devoted and capable care givers as well as support for their loving, striving parents?

During the first international conference in 1999, which I attended as a working group presenter together with Rena Osmer, there was an invitation for new members to gather around this core group. At that time, I offered my participation as a representative of the work with very young children in North America. Since then, I have participated in two meetings, first in England and this February in Driebergen, Holland. We had three days for our work and all found it stimulating, affirming, and inspiring. The work with the very young child everywhere has strong elements of isolation, pioneering, and pedagogical questioning. One sees so clearly the very strong ways in which this work mirrors the social situation in the world. The possibility to share with others has been very important for each group member.

The group's representation at this meeting included Germany, Austria, Denmark, Great Britain, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and North America. Our time together included both review and preview

of the international conferences, intensive work with financial questions, development of a preliminary organizational structure for the group, and substantive work with the situation of the work in Holland – adult education, child care, 'play groups' (the formal name for early childhood groups with children under four), social and political issues in Holland.

Our substantive work included visits to two programs in the local area: a play group for three and four year olds, and a child care center, de Kroost, as well as conversations with those leading various adult education impulses for kindergarten, small child, and social pedagogical therapy trainings. It is good to have a feeling for the questions, challenges, and new impulses coming forward in Holland in the context of the social, political, and economic challenges of that particular place. The spiritual impulse for the young child is strong, despite the many forces that seek to impede the work.

It was an excellent working week. We arrived at greatly appreciated clarity about our next steps as a group. We are creating a rich, collegial community with many strong and articulate members each of whom is doing pioneer work with very young children. I am extremely grateful to serve as a part of the group, and hope to hear from those of you who would like to offer your questions and ideas through my participation.

You imagine the work of our group as a streaming together of impulses, insights, and new initiatives coming toward the group and then radiating outward again an annual pulse from the group's meetings and woven into the rhythm of conference work, individual initiatives, and working relationships of the participants in other settings.

Another focus for us now is the development of adult education work: practicing, sharing, and developing experiential exercises for groups, looking at the needs we encounter in work with adults.

We will meet next year at der Hof in Frankfurt where for many years, a mantle of protection has been woven around the family and young child, and where a wide range of programs are already in place: parent infant classes incorporating the work of Emmi Pikler, three Waldorf kindergartens, parent seminars and courses, therapeutic work with children in the first seven years offered by physicians and educational/curative therapists, and new impulses that are being developed through the possibilities created through the purchase of a new building. Childcare is among these new impulses.

The 2004 conference in Jarna will be in July to make the conference as accessible as possible to those actually working directly with the little child. I will serve as a member of the planning group. Many generous organizational and financial offerings have come toward this conference from the Waldorf education community in Jarna and from the Swedish anthroposophical community. It is also our hope that the impulse for the very young child be embraced and included at other international conferences both before and following this conference - for instance, in Prague in 2003.

## *Announcements*

### Sophia's Hearth Family Center Receives Grant

Sophia's Hearth Family Center in Keene, NH has been awarded a grant of \$5,000 from the Rudolf Steiner Foundation to create a professional development course for child care providers, parents and expectant parents, parent-infant program teachers, and other early childhood professionals.

Our first two week course, to be offered this August, will offer an in-depth exploration of the gifts of both Waldorf education and RIE™ (Resources for Infant Educators) to the young child and her family. The insights of Rudolf Steiner, Emmi Pikler, and Magda Gerber will live at the center of our work.

The course content will include a focus on the physical, emotional, and spiritual growth of the child; RIE's special insights into the opportunities inherent in the care giving times of diapering, feeding, bathing, and dressing; complemented by artistic and hand craft activity. We will explore program models for child care and parent infant classes. The course will be highly grounded in experiential activity.

The two week course may be taken in its entirety, and either week may be taken alone. This course will build on our first collaboration with RIE last June, when Carol Pinto came from Los Angeles to share her many years of work with Magda Gerber and RIE. The 2001 course brought together Waldorf early childhood teachers with local child care providers from the Keene area, through gifts of substitution and tuition assistance supported through a grant from our

local Monadnock Community Foundation. It was a rich week of sharing and work, and we look forward to the coming August with tremendous enthusiasm for this further step.

### "Thank you!" from Sophia Project

Thanks and gratitude to everyone at the February East Coast Kindergarten Conference from Sophia Project. Over \$3,000 was collected for Sophia Project from participants at the conference! The money will be used for long-awaited outdoor equipment and toys. We are all looking forward to a wonderful spring and summer outdoors and there will be an article about our successes and struggles in the Fall/Winter Gateways. In the meantime we send our heartfelt thanks for your care and best wishes from everyone at Sophia Project.



# *Lifeways Child Care*

Stories from Home

Cynthia Aldinger

One of the hallmarks of LifeWays Child Care is the family-style approach. By caring for children in small groups of varying ages, the child's daily experience is much more natural and home-like than the institutionalized and program-oriented care that is prevalent today. Through the inspiration of Rudolf Steiner's research in child development and current research on brain development and the importance of bonding, we recognize that this model of care supports the healthy development of the child. Here are two stories from students in the LifeWays Child Care and Human Development training in Wisconsin. They each offer childcare in their homes, and one is preparing to open a LifeWays Center in Milwaukee next year.

## *From Ursula Wald of Tucson, Arizona*

*I have a three-year-old girl who had recently been expressing occasional aggressive behavior. She had taken to beating up the dolls and saying she was going to smash the babies (dolls). Occasionally she was striking out at the other children seemingly unprovoked. Things were changing in her family that could have played a role in her behavior. Recently, I added an infant to her childcare group, and I noticed that all of the children have changed somewhat since the baby came. They all, including the three-year-old girl, love the baby. Specifically, now when this little girl arrives she immediately goes to the baby dolls, gathers them all up, and begins to wrap them and care for them.*

## *From Mary O'Connell in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin*

*It's Wednesday, and in my home day care that means it's 'Twos-day'; not by design, mind you, but the way the schedule worked out, I have all two-year-olds this day.*

*Monroe spends his day as the child development textbooks tell you. He enjoys being with the other toddlers, but he engages mostly in 'parallel play', looking to the caregiver for ideas and inspiration. He has trouble sharing toys, and a bit of intervention is required to make sure everyone is taking turns. His speech is emerging, but he doesn't talk very much with the other twos; mostly just three or four word sentences to the adult.*

*At circle time the caregiver sings, and Monroe and the other children mostly watch, imitating a few gestures and contributing a word here or there.*

*It's Friday, and Monroe is here again, but today with a mixed-age group, from infant to five years old. Monroe enters the house grinning from ear to ear and approaches James, age three. "Hi, James! Want to play cars? Mary get out the cars? I be fire truck, you be dump truck, okay James?"*

*Monroe's day continues with exuberant chattering and true imaginative play (inspired by the older playmates.) He eagerly shares toys with the baby, and engages fully in circle time. His whole demeanor has changed! He is confident, interactive, playful, and so proud of himself.*

*I often think of this contrast between the two-year-old room and the mixed-age, family-style care and wish all children could experience this blend of ages, which allows them to learn from the older children and care for the younger ones. If only every caregiver could experience the joy of watching children grow in a multi-age environment!*

In the past year, a solid working group, LifeWays North America, has formed to foster the growth and development of the LifeWays work. Our organizational home is at Rudolf Steiner College in the future Caldwell Early Life Center. The core group is comprised of Cynthia Aldinger, Rahima Baldwin-Dancy, Rena Osmer, Rosario Villasana-Ruiz, and Neil Weinberg. Working on the periphery, specifically with the Caldwell application, are Janet Kellman and Arline Monks of Rudolf Steiner College.

Our current focus is on developing materials and consulting services for individuals and groups that are establishing home-based or center-based childcare and support for those engaged in parent-infant and parent-child programs. We hope to have our website up sometime this spring. We also offer a LifeWays training program in Wisconsin and a Care Provider's Course Series at Rudolf Steiner College.

If you are interested in being a part of this working group, we would like to hear from you. We meet once or twice a year. Please contact Cynthia Aldinger (405-447-2365; [caldinger669@cs.com](mailto:caldinger669@cs.com)) or Rena Osmer (916-961-2307; [rena@steinercollege.edu](mailto:rena@steinercollege.edu)).

## For Your Calendar

Rudolf Steiner College  
Fair Oaks, California

**Opening a Childcare Program: The Practicalities.**

June 27–July 2, with Cynthia Aldinger, Rena Osmer, and Margit Ilgen, at Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA. This workshop will focus on the practicalities of establishing childcare centers of homes including: licensing questions, community and social skills building; developing parent and employee handbooks; public outreach; developing a board and acquiring non-profit status. Storytelling and handwork are offered in the afternoon. Fee: \$400. Begins with 8:00am registration on Thursday and ends at 12:30on Tuesday. For more info contact Rena Osmer at 916–961–2307

**Use of the Lyre in the Waldorf Classroom.** June 29 with Andrea Pronto at Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA. Workshop on the basic technique for lyre and pentatonic children's harp. These instruments, which bring joy and confidence, can become your best helpers in creating a musical mood. Previous experience with a stringed instrument is not necessary. Fee: \$50. Please bring a lyre if possible. Registration begins at 11:15pm with class from 2:00–5:30pm. For more info contact Janet Kellman at 916–961–3919.

**The Healing Art of Dollmaking.** July 8–19 with Mary Bowen at Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA. Dollmaker Mary Bowen will lead this two-week morning workshop, guiding the group to handsew a large Waldorf doll made of natural materials. Woven into each morning will be discussions and exercises relating to the growth and development of children B–7 years. Discussion themes will include play, imagination, toys, and imitation. Questions to be considered: Who is the young child and why dolls? Why is it so important for adults to work with their hands and develop the will forces that this activity brings? Fee: \$175, including materials; limited enrollment; registration at 8:00am on Monday; classes Mon–Fri from 9:00am–12:30pm. Contact Janet Kellman at 916–961–3919.

**Fundamentals of the Waldorf Kindergarten.** June

30–July 5 with Stephen Spitalny, Elvira Rychlak and Helga Michaels at Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA. Beginning with an exploration of early childhood development, we will look at the basic ideas and activities of the Waldorf kindergarten. Main themes will include the teacher's inner preparation, the practical work of the teacher, storytelling, and creating circle times. Healthy kindergarten rhythm and mood, and the imitative nature of the young child will also be explored. Fee: \$400. Registration and opening lecture at 5:30pm and first session on Sunday at 7:30–9:00pm. Classes daily from 8:30am–9:00pm. Course ends Friday at 12:30pm. For more info contact Janet Kellman at 916–961–3919.

Sunbridge College  
Spring Valley, New York

**First session of the Part-time Early Childhood Training (formerly Associate Early Childhood Training)**

June 17– July 5, 2002. Applications currently being accepted. For further information contact Marjorie Blair at Sunbridge College, 845-425-0055 ext 11.

**Introduction to the Waldorf Kindergarten.** August 5–9, 2002. with Patricia Rubano, Celia Riahi and Connie Manson. For further information contact Marjorie Blair at Sunbridge College, 845-425-0055 ext 11.

Rudolf Steiner Institute  
Waterville, Maine

**The Rudolf Steiner Institute.** July 7–28, 2001, in Maine's beautiful Belgrade Lakes country. The Institute offers a wide range of 1, 2, and 3 week courses. This summer our one week course offerings will include: *Welcoming Children Into the World: The Child From Birth to Three* with Rena Osmer, *The Puppet Pocket Story Apron* with Suzanne Down, and *Elements of Child Observation* with Bruno Callegaro, MD. Contact the Registrar, Carol Petrash, at 1-800-RSI-5191. Email: [steinerinstitute@erols.com](mailto:steinerinstitute@erols.com), [www.steinerinstitute.org](http://www.steinerinstitute.org)

The Waldorf Institute of Southern California  
Northridge, California

**Caregiving for the Infant and Toddler** July 15-19, 9 am-5 pm with Rena Osmer and Hari Grebler. Take a close look at infant and toddler development and the loving, respectful caregiving practices found in RIE and in Waldorf education. Learn through presentations and observations, viewing videos, and discussions. Learn ways to work with toddlers and conflict, sing lullabies, and much more.

Stories and Language in the Early Childhood Classroom. July 22-26, 9 am-5 pm with Charlotte Dukich and Phyllis Gilmer. Nursery and fairy tales awaken many soul experiences in the child, working beneficially right into the body. Background study and puppetry are included in this week. This course is designed primarily for teachers and assistants in Waldorf and other early childhood classrooms. Contact the Waldorf Institute of Southern California (WISC), 17100 Superior St., Northridge, CA 91325 Phone: (818) 349-6272 wisc01@hotmail.com

Sophia Project  
Oakland, California

**Internships beginning August, 2002.** Sophia Project offers early childhood education, parent education, after school program, respite care and weekend activities for at risk children. The intern program is meant for those wishing to work with children through the application of Steiner education in a low-income environment as well as participate in and contribute to the life-sharing component of Sophia House. Interns and staff live at Sophia House. Attributes needed are a love of children and a commitment to self-development through engagement with work and people. Internships are for 6 months or 11 months, 11 months is preferred.

PAAM

Introduction to Anthroposophical Medicine for Medical Doctors and Medical Students. October 23-27, 2002 with Ross Rentea MD and Andrea Rentea MD, Alicia Landman-Reiner MD, and others in East Troy, Wisconsin. This course is part of a two-year, six-week-end training in anthroposophical medicine for MD's and DO's. The entire course will repeat in 2003-2004. Contact: Diana Clark at Physicians' Association for Anthroposophical Medicine (PAAM) 734-930-9462 or paam@anthroposophy.org

Sophia's Hearth Family Center  
Keene, New Hampshire

**Infants and Toddlers: How They Do Grow!** March 22 and 23: Friday evening, 7-9 p.m., Saturday, 9-4:30 p.m. with Susan Weber and Jane Swain Cost: \$65, includes snacks. As parents and teachers, we are continuously amazed at the growth and development, the many changes of infants and toddlers. How does the human hand develop its miraculous abilities? What experiences that we provide for the child will enhance these potential gifts? What important experiences precede the child's learning to walk?

This weekend conference will focus on the very young child's physical development in the first two years and the ways in which it is the foundation for all of life: how our intellectual capacities and social relationships unfold out of these first experiences. This conference is for every parent who wants to help her child grow in the healthiest way, and for teachers who want to gain more insight into their work with very young children.

**Waldorf Remedial Insights for Early Childhood Teachers** April 2-6, Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., and Saturday, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. with presenters Connie Helms, Kristina Färm Morrill, and Jane Swain. Cost: \$375. Designed for our Waldorf Early Childhood teacher training students, this five-day course welcomes practicing early childhood teachers. The course explores the foundations for remedial insights through a study of the body's relationship to space and how the child develops these relationships. In addition, the course focuses on the ways in which the child's spatial relationships form the foundation for all social and cognitive learning. Participants will study both teacher-directed and free movement in play, circle time, and outdoors. Case study and practical examples will be part of each day

**Festivals of the Spring and Summer: Weaving a Thread through the Season.** July 1-3, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. with Helle Heckmann. Cost: \$200 including two snacks each day. The young child lives fully in the rhythms of the natural world: spring's freshness and autumn's harvest, the light and dark of sun and moon. Through the celebration of the festivals of the year, we weave a thread of light that brings joy to the child and her family, building community as we do so. In this three-day conference, we will work in large and small groups to explore the spring and summer festival season. Lecture, slides, song and crafts for four

festivals: Carnival, Spring, Whitsun, and St. John's Day will enrich our understanding of the cycle of the year and create beauty around us. Helle will share her rich study and experience of festival celebration with families and young children. At the weekend's conclusion, we will each have a new awareness of how festivals lead one to the next, both inwardly and outwardly.

**Music and Story—Delight for the Young Child.** July 12–14, Friday evening, 7–9 p.m., Saturday, 9–4 p.m., Sunday, 9–1 at the Monadnock Waldorf School Nursery Kindergarten in Keene, with Connie Manson. Cost: \$125, including two daily snacks. Music and story are the stepping-stones into literacy for the very young child: the sounds and pictures of language, the rhythms of speech and song create the foundation for all language development. Every parent and early childhood teacher can bring song and story into daily life, and can initiate the life long love of language that underlies all communication. Working with seasonal themes, this weekend workshop will develop storytelling and puppetry skills, and participants will create music with voice and simple instruments. Puppetry demonstrations, watercolor painting, creation of a scarf marionette and handkerchief puppet will be included.

**An Introduction to Waldorf Early Childhood Education.** July 29–August 2, Monday through Friday 9–4 p.m. at the Monadnock Waldorf School Nursery Kindergarten in Keene, with Betsi McGuigan and James Hillier. Cost: \$375, including two snacks each day. This is a week of exploration into Waldorf early childhood education, focusing on the child from four to seven years of age. Waldorf early childhood education is a developmentally based approach that places a strong emphasis on the value of play in the development of the child's cognitive and emotional capacities. This week will explore the integration of practical work, language arts, play, movement, music, puppetry, and environmental education to create a rich, joyful experience for young children. Each day includes morning talks, practical and artistic experiences for use with children, and generous time for discussion and questions. This course will be of interest to parents, grandparents, prospective teachers, and early childhood professionals.

**The First Three Yearsof Life.** August 12 - 16 and 19 - 23 with Carol Pinto of RIE, Connie Manson, Jane Swain, and Susan Weber at Wilson Pond, Swanzey,

NH. Cost is \$375 per week, or \$700 for two weeks. Sophia's Hearth Family Center will offer an in depth professional development course for child care providers, parents and expectant parents, parent-infant program facilitators, and other early childhood professionals. The course content will include a focus on the physical, emotional, and spiritual growth of the child; RIE's special insights into the opportunities inherent in the care giving times of diapering, feeding, bathing, and dressing; complemented by artistic and hand craft activity. We will explore program models for child care and parent infant classes. The course will be highly grounded in experiential activity. The lovely Wilson Pond setting will offer swimming and canoeing in our free time!

## Puppetry

**NAARPA Presents: "A Festival of Puppetry".** November 8-10 with Suzanne Down, Jennifer Aguirre, Connie Manson, Janene Ping, Deborah Bogart, Pamela Dalton, Renate Hiller, Anna Vargas, and others. in Harlemlville, NY. "A Festival of Puppetry" will encompass the four major aspects of the puppetry arts: Pedagogical, Artistic, Therapeutic and Social puppetry. The weekend includes puppetry presentations, workshops, and performances. Media featured in presentations and performances will include table and handkerchief puppetry, silk marionettes, shadow puppets, apron puppetry, felted puppets on harnesses, Sicilian rod puppetry, and hand puppets inspired by the work of Gisela Biddleston. Contact Anna Vargas at 845-356-3028.

**Felting Extravaganza 2002** June 8,9, 2002 with Suzanne Down in Boulder CO. This immersion in wet wool felting crafts includes wool dyeing, creating several magical felted treasures, leading up to creating a detailed fairy tale tapestry. - Contact. Suzanne Down 303-776-0937

<junipertreepuppets@hotmail.com>

**Therapeutic Puppetry Conference.** June 21,22,23, 2002 with Adola McWilliam Master Curative Education Trainer and Suzanne Down in Boulder Colorado. Adola will lead us in the study of the archetypal 12-fold 'curative clock' of human conditions. Out of this understanding we will explore working with puppetry in a healing way. Contact. Suzanne Down 303-776-0937 <junipertreepuppets@hotmail.com>

**Heart and Hands Therapeutic Storytelling and Puppetry Intensive.** July 18,19,20,21, 2002 with Nancy Mellon founder The School of Therapeutic Storytelling and Suzanne Down Director Juniper Tree School of Story and Puppetry Arts in New England (exact location to be determined.) We will explore how working with these creative arts builds up healing and empowering forces within the immune system for ourselves and the children we work with. Contact. Nancy Mellon 603-654-2982 and Suzanne Down 303-776-0937

Northwest Early Childhood Puppetry Workshop Tour. August 15-30, 2002 with Suzanne Down in Northern Washington, Vancouver and Vancouver Island. An offering of early childhood puppetry workshops in numerous communities in the northwest coastal area. These welcome teachers, parents, counselors, librarians, anyone in your communities who work with children. Contact. Suzanne Down for information and bookings. 303-776-0937 <junipertreepuppets@hotmail.com>

**Puppetry Conference on Silk Marionette Theater.** October 11,12,13, 2002 with Suzanne Down, Jennifer Aquirre, and others at the Sierra Waldorf School, Jamestown California. An exploration and deepening of the silk marionette theater work including performances, hands-on exercises on gesture, movement, staging and choreography, puppet making. Contact. Suzanne Down 303-776-0937 and Jennifer Aquirre 209-532-5098

**The Felting Needle Wool Crafts Festival 2002.** Oct. 26,27, 2002 with Suzanne Down and other wool fiber artists in Boulder CO. A weekend immersion in delightful, seasonal felting needle wool crafts to make for young children, and how to bring them to life with poem and song. Contact. Suzanne Down 303-776-0937

**Puppet Theater Training applications** are now being taken for the next series beginning June/July 2003 Contact Suzanne Down Director Juniper Tree School of Story and Puppetry Arts 303-776-0937 <junipertreepuppets@hotmail.com>

