

# *From the Editor*

Stephen Spitalny

For this issue of *Gateways* we had the good fortune of receiving more articles than we could include. Thank you to all who have submitted articles, and our apologies to all those whose work we were not able to include this time.

There are two themes that I would like you, the potential writers, to consider as something to offer to our readers in future issues. This issue of *Gateways* has an excerpt from a book on the older child in the kindergarten, written by Tim Bennett from Seattle. It can be the first in an ongoing series of articles about different rhythms-of-the-day in our early childhood programs. This will give a sense of the various approaches people take, and why they made their particular choices. And it will give the readers new ideas that they might choose to incorporate into their work. So start thinking about why your day is arranged the way it is, and then write up your thoughts and send them to me.

The second theme I would like to see addressed in upcoming issues of *Gateways* is nutrition. We know how important the early years are as a foundation for the rest of life in various ways, including the physical body. Nutrition could be thought of as the substances the body has available for body-building, the substances the etheric formative forces are provided to work with. Recently I attended a talk by Dr. Steve Blake on vitamins and minerals in food and was so interested by what I heard that I bought his book, *Vitamins and Minerals Demystified*. His presentation and his book both look at what substances the human body needs for healthy functioning, and what foods are sources for those important ingredients. How can we understand essential nutrition for the young child, and help to educate the parents as well? I offer the following snippet as an enticement towards future articles because the world of nutrition deserves deepening in our movement.

Dr. Blake's thoughts about calcium, a key ingredient for building bones and teeth, and keeping them strong, are well worth consideration. Calcium level is kept to a tight range in the blood, and when there is not enough intake of usable

calcium, the body takes it from its own bones through the action of the parathyroid gland. There are two ingested food items that particularly impact calcium levels in the body, sodium (in salt) and proteins. Sodium flushes calcium out of the body through the kidneys, so sodium intake needs to be balanced with sufficient dietary calcium to prevent bone loss. Calcium is also used to neutralize the acids in our blood that result from burning protein. The more protein that goes in, the more calcium is then needed to keep the blood pH balanced. The gist is, eat salt or proteins, and make sure there is enough calcium coming in to prevent the body taking it from the bones. When we think about children it is even more significant because they are in a phase of building up bones that they will have their whole life. So give the children plenty of greens, whole sesame seeds, and many nuts, seeds and legumes, all healthy sources of calcium.

We have many wonderful articles included in this issue of *Gateways*. I am especially excited to present observations and experiences from colleagues visiting several programs around the globe and some photos as well. We are also fortunate to be able to include several articles that articulate the research of some of our colleagues that can help us deepen our own thinking about the children. I received four separate articles, all well written and informative, authored by Renate Long-Breipohl of Australia. We have only included one of hers, and it was very hard to choose. Perhaps future issues will contain more of her work.

Please send us your comments. I received several positive responses to my article about the Sistine Madonna, and we may revisit her in upcoming issues. It is so good to know that people actually read our newsletter. Send your questions for colleagues to consider, your wishes for specific topics to be covered in future issues – and, of course, your articles articulating your thinking and experiences, your circle time activities and stories we may not all have heard. Take out your pen and paper, or your laptop, and get the words down on the pages. Writing is a great practice to more fully articulate one's own ideas.

Finally, I want to share a recent heart-warming experience. Some key qualities that I try to embody as an early childhood educator are persistence and

patience. Our main tool is imitation. It is hard work to develop patience and be consistent, and every once in a while there is a validation of those efforts. Jimmy turned six in January in kindergarten this year. He began the year with a strong dislike of spiders, and would try and step on them or squash them in various other creative ways. While helping a spider outside, each time I would say; "We leave the spiders in peace. Spiders help us. They eat other bugs." I said it many times for many months to this boy, over and over and over. Last week, another child was about to step on a spider, and Jimmy said; "Don't squish it. Spiders help us. They eat other bugs."

I will close with an excerpt from Rudolf Steiner:

*The supersensible world impresses parts of our body differently. The ether body penetrates/impresses our breast and upper leg more than it does our hands. Straight from our fingers go mighty beams of the ether body. Because this is what happens in our hands, we can see that our hands develop a wonderful, intimate relationship to the outer life. People who wash their hands often are in a finer relationship to their environment, they are more open to their environment . . . The human being is organized in such a way that he can have this intimate relationship to the outer world through the hands. (St. Gallen, February 26, 1911)*

