

For the Classroom

Willow's Invisible Bucket: A CARE Mission Statement and Story

~ Melody Birdsong-Shubert

Melody Birdsong-Shubert, class teacher for Hidden Hollow at River Valley Waldorf School, developed a CARE mission statement and a story that pictorially communicates the building of class culture to the Hidden Hollow students. The mission statement is shared with families in their Welcome Letter and referenced throughout the school year. The story that follows is told in the first days of school and also when welcoming newly enrolled students at other points of the year.

CARE Mission Statement

Hidden Hollow kindergarten is a CARE building community. We welcome all and include all.

We CARE for ourselves, we CARE for others and we CARE for the environment.

We show interest in our similarities and differences.

We are unique, beautiful, and worthy of CARE!

Compassion: We “tune in” and help make it better.

Affirm: We accept and support ourselves and others.

Respect: We consider all people and environments to be deserving of CARE.

Encourage: We inspire hope!

Willow's Invisible Bucket

by Melody Birdsong-Shubert

Inspired by *Fill a Bucket: A Guide to Daily Happiness for Young Children*

by Carol McCloud and Katherine Martin

High above in the great blue sky, Henrietta Hawk's wings were spread wide as she circled the clouds and floated on the fresh waves of the breeze. Down below were the high grasses of the meadow dancing as they leaned to hear the soft murmurs inside the small and old house.

And, inside the small and old house it was a happy day, for a special gift had just arrived: a wee little one. And, just like you, this wee little one received a gift, too: a name so special...Willow.

Everyone was so happy to see Willow, and hold Willow and offer lots of love with a tender hold in warm arms and a gentle kiss to one pudgy cheek and then to the other. *But, there was one part of Willow they could not see.* Willow's invisible bucket. And with every gentle kiss, tender hold, a loving smile that crinkled the sides of eyes, and tickles to toes, Willow's invisible bucket filled to an overflow of shimmering treasure that blanketed Willow with joy and content.

And as the days and months passed by, Willow's cries for warmth, a full belly, and a good night sleep were met. And, the giggles, the tickles, and the love filled the floating bucket and the buckets of all those who cared for Willow, *for everyone has a bucket, you know.*

And as some years passed, Willow learned the magic of these buckets that not-a-one could see. One could only feel the magic. Upon waking each morning, Willow gently hugged the family puppy, Whimpical, petted her soft, curly, shiny black fur, and scooped breakfast into her bowl before sitting down to the breakfast Dad had prepared for Poppy and Willow. And, oh, if the sound of the magic buckets could be heard as they filled from these acts of love and kindness! But Willow felt it. And, Dad, Poppy, and Whimpical felt it, too.

They sat together enjoying the golden pancakes topped with a melted square of butter and swirls of bronzy maple syrup and canned slices of summer's last juicy peaches.

Poppy was the first to speak. “Thank you for a delicious breakfast once again. I sure will miss it when you are out helping the Flanigans with the tree that fell onto their barn in the big storm. I'm so glad you are able to help them and I'm sure they are, too!”

Willow stopped chewing and the sweet buttery goodness was now unnoticed. Willow had forgotten that Dad would be helping with the big mulberry tree that had been uprooted in the big storm. Poppy's dinners were right tasty, but his breakfast dishes *were not so*.

Willow fretted about Dad's absence the whole way to school; and, by the time they arrived, was in a terribly awful pickle of a mood. Mr. Malik, one of the kindergarten teachers, noticed this mood did not match Willow's generally chipper self. He offered an extra warm smile and love from the deepest swells of his heart as Willow's fingers lightly brushed the water surface to receive the fairy's scent as it slowly rippled across the water bowl and rose for a gift of calm. And, oh, if the sound of the magic buckets could be heard as they filled from these acts of love and kindness! But Willow felt it. And Mr. Malik felt it, too.

As the morning continued, Willow felt more and more punchy, and so sat to the table to draw a most favorite Dad breakfast: waffles as round as a crater-y full moon with a mound of fresh sliced strawberries, a dollop of whipped cream and a dash of cinna-meg. Cinna-meg was what Poppy called Dad's shaker mix of cinnamon and nutmeg. This all made Willow smile as the red crayon swept across the caramel-colored waffle to shape the largest mound of strawberries.

"You must really like strawberries!" Imani joyfully proclaimed as she sat beside Willow.

Willow hunched a shoulder and arm around the drawing, and with very scrunched-up brows, eyes and nose, said "That's not what this means!"

And, oh, if the sound of the magic buckets could be heard as some of the joyous treasure emptied to the ground from the hurt Willow was feeling and the harsh words spoken! But Willow felt it. And Imani and Mr. Malik felt it, too. Oh, how Willow needed to have the floating buckets abound with shimmering treasure, to blanket them with joy and content.

Imani knew that her friend was sad about something and so she began to refill their buckets. She drew a brightly colored rainbow with a field of flowers below. And resting peacefully in the bed of flowers lay Imani and Willow looking up at the beautiful rainbow. Willow told Imani all about Dad's special breakfasts and the Flanigans' mulberry tree, and the two went to the play kitchen to serve up Cinna-meg and Strawberry Waffles to all the customers who came to their restaurant.



Photo courtesy of Heike Adamsberger

And what a surprise the next morning when Poppy, who had received word from Mr. Malik about Willow's wonky morning, proclaimed it to be an Upside-Down Day and served up one of his right tasty dinners for breakfast and they had Dad's delicious breakfast for dinner. And, oh, if the sound of the magic buckets could be heard as they filled from these acts of love and kindness! But Willow felt it. And Dad, Poppy and even Whimpical felt it, too. ♦

Melody Birdsong-Shubert is part of the River Valley Waldorf School community in PA, which sits upon the unceded land of Lenni Lenape people. She combines an anti-bias and anti-racist (ABAR) practice with Waldorf education to serve early childhood groups within the ages of three to seven years old. Melody fosters an environment where compassion and being an affirming and contributing community member are continually developed. She is eager to deepen her understanding of therapeutic movement in relation to one's capacity to thrive.