

Home Day Care
Joyce Gallardo, Hillsdale, New York

(In the last issue of the Newsletter we published a letter from Joyce on home day care and after care programs. To give a fuller picture, she has written the following for us.)

It is important that home day care and after care teachers have a collegial relationship with the kindergarten teachers of their local Waldorf School, as well as with other home care teachers in their area who are working out of Anthroposophy. One can feel rather isolated at home if this relationship does not exist. It can be developed and fostered through a weekly meeting where a study of one of Rudolf Steiner's lectures is taken up, and a time could also be allotted for child study, discussions and support around a difficult child, or a sharing of ideas on celebrating festivals, sharing seasonal songs, puppet shows and stories.

One of the high points of my week was just such a meeting with the kindergarten teachers of Hawthorne Valley School and playgroup teachers in the community. It always brought a fullness and a sense of continuity to my work with the children, since so many of the children from the home play groups go on to the kindergarten when they are old enough. They came to us in their tender young years, just three or four, sometimes even at two and a half, so the pictures we could give of these children were helpful to the kindergarten teachers as they prepared to receive the children into the kindergarten.

A teacher once told me how much she looked forward to our weekly meeting and the anecdotes we would bring from our home play groups. She said it was "so refreshing" to share this time with us. Another teacher told me it was a delight to have the children from my play group in the kindergarten and how easily they could enter into imaginative play. Their kind words of encouragement were much appreciated and helped to sustain me in my daily work with the children.

Lastly, a visit from one of the kindergarten teachers to the home group can be very helpful. If one could arrange for a kindergarten teacher to visit, one would benefit from any helpful suggestions the teacher might bring, and the relationship as colleagues would be strengthened as one is observed in one's work. Also, later when the children have gone home there can be a sharing of thoughts together. One's work and the environment of the home care group become clear pictures in the consciousness of the kindergarten teacher.

For those of us doing home care, mostly alone in our homes and without the support of a faculty as one would have in a Waldorf school, encouragement and support of each other as we work together at sustaining a collegial relationship is an important component of the work. In the words of Rudolf Steiner, "When human beings meet together seeking the spirit with unity of purpose, then they will also find their way to each other - they will find the path from soul to soul."
