

Introduction

Joan Almon and Stephen Spitalny, Co-editors

A Farewell...

In a dusty little cabinet in my office, there is a folder of back issues of *Gateways* and the *Waldorf Kindergarten Newsletter*, as it was previously named. The first is dated Fall 1981.

This first issue set the tone for what has developed over the past nineteen years. There is an article translated from German, and news about developing a kindergarten association (The association was formed in July 1983.) There is a report about the international Waldorf kindergarten conference in Hannover and information on how to join the international association. We were happy to announce Bronja Zahlingen's forthcoming book on puppetry, and we were delighted that Margret Meyerkort was going to reissue her six books with music. We listed sources of silk and other kindergarten materials. These back issues contain much of our history.

For most of these issues I served as editor or coeditor. Now a moon node has passed since the newsletter began, and it is time for a change. For me there is regret but also great pleasure in turning over the editor's work to Stephen Spitalny. We have worked together on this issue and the last, and I greatly appreciate Steve's editorial judgments. I am also impressed with his deep commitment to the Waldorf kindergarten work, both its past forms as well as its continuing evolution.

Steve teaches kindergarten at the Santa Cruz Waldorf School. When I think of him there, I see him in his work apron, standing at the counter that separates the kitchen from the play area. I see his children on both sides, working with him and playing around him. When I think of him in regard to this newsletter, I think of the articles he has written for it in the past and his thoughtful comments over the years. Steve is continually studying and growing, thinking and considering new possibilities. He has worked closely with Margret Meyerkort for many years, and he is very interested in the work of Helle Heckmann. He plumbs the esoteric depths of our work, and he seeks ways to integrate new ideas, such as how to do circle time in the light of new insights from spatial dynamics and therapeutic education.

I wish Steve well and know that he brings great dedication to this work as to all else that he does. For myself, I will continue to submit articles to *Gateways* - but now I'll run the risk that they won't be accepted, just like everyone else! - J.A.

... and a Welcome.'

I would like to begin this issue with an expression of gratitude to Joan Almon for her efforts in giving birth to and nurturing the development of this newsletter. She was editor when the *Waldorf Kindergarten Newsletter* was first published in 1981 and she has carried out that work with *Gateways* until now. Her task has not been easy. As editor, she has had to inspire, request, and cajole people to write articles for the newsletter. Then she has had to edit contributions and make the often difficult choices about what will be included and what not. Joan has also written a number of important articles herself. Joan wears many other hats as well. One hat that deserves particular recognition is that of coordinator for the Alliance for Childhood, which has recently released a significant study on computer use in grade schools. The report is entitled "Fool's Gold: A Critical Look at Computers in Childhood." To see the study in its entirety, go to www.allianceforchildhood.net.

This report has received a lot of press coverage, mostly positive. In order to devote more of her time to the work of the Alliance for Childhood, Joan has given away her newsletter editor hat. Thank you, Joan, for all your fine work, past and present.

Now, one of my first tasks as editor is to ask you, the readers of *Gateways*, to consider sharing your research with us all. There are many in North America who have been working with young children out of the intentions of Rudolf Steiner for many years. I encourage you to put your research into writing. What burning questions have you lived with? Who are the young children of today? What do these particular children need? What can we observe that is unique to children growing up in North America today? What stands behind particular fairy tales? What types of human movement are connected with which planetary motions, and how do these movements help the developing child? *Gateways* can become a venue for sharing insights in the realm of early childhood education and caregiving. It is up to us all. This particular issue has a number of articles about Waldorf early childhood programs around the world but not much in the area of research. We need submissions from individuals who have thought deeply about this work so that their research can help enliven the work for us all.

If writing is not your strong suit, you may want to find an alternative to working alone. Perhaps a friend or colleague, who has a skill in writing, would be willing to help. Maybe you could have someone interview you and type up the conversation. Be creative. There are many possibilities. The most direct way to send us your text would be to email it to us at patti.regan@worldnet.att.net as Microsoft Word attachment.

To conclude, I offer an anecdote. This past summer I worked with a small group of adults interested in a Waldorf approach to early childhood. My intention was to help them *experience* the young child so that they would be able to know out of themselves how to meet the young child without my telling them what to do. It was challenging for me to bring them to an experience instead of explaining. At one of the last sessions, one of the participants was struggling to understand. She had had a "mainstream" training in early childhood education and had been taught to help children to process their own feelings, to feel what it would be like in another's shoes. As she was beginning to see that a young child does not have the capacity or physiology for that sort of abstract thinking yet, all of a sudden she said, "I get it now. It's about consciousness. My other training didn't even think about the child's consciousness. Waldorf is interested in consciousness, mine and the child's." Her discovery of this central characteristic of the Waldorf approach to early childhood has in turn helped me in my understanding of the human being. - S.S.