

On the Wire

WILLOW WOOD WALDORF S

The Middle School

Willow Wood has been working to fashion a curriculum to better meet the needs of middle school students (6th, 7th and 8th) who, we believe, face particular challenges in today's society. In a time when they are working to define their identity and values, young people are increasingly faced with peer pressure to get involved in drugs, sex, and violence; are also particularly susceptible to the dangers of apathy and cynicism.

Traditional Waldorf education has proven to be exceptionally effective in teaching academics, and its recognition of the need to reach the whole child — head, hands and heart — has now been integrated into mainstream educational programs trying to enliven their curriculum with a more holistic and creative approach.

But any type of education must adapt and evolve in response to the tremendous changes which have occurred in our world during the last two-thirds of the 20th Century — changes which traditional values are in question and in need of renewal. Wars, violence, economic failure, environmental disasters, and deadly diseases such as AIDS, and even of the future itself — takes a promise to the world of the developing adolescent. Educational programs which fail to truthfully address these concerns therefore do not offer the adolescent the opportunity to meet these concerns and craft a healthy adulthood.

Beholding the Jewel in the Community

by Melinda Misuraca

As I might begin a painting by layering shades of color until the work resonates with form and soul, so have I worked to convey how I began to paint my true color at Willow Wood — how I as a parent took root in the community. I have begun to realize that my subtle brushstrokes within the community of our school reflect the yearning to have to create beauty in the context of daily life, to alchemize the diurnal into the sacred. I believe this is the essence of Rudolf Steiner's vision.

Although my daughters Viv and Laurel came to Willow Wood a year ago, the path I took to fully arrive was of a serpentine nature. I, a parent who haunted the periphery, sensed a lack of diversity within the school — of ethnicity, class, religious beliefs, culture, and freedom of artistic expression and thought. I imagined the Willow Wood community as a group of Waldorf cultists who spoke a peculiar language, a sort of "Willowspeak," reflecting a disturbing commonality of thought. I felt I had to choose between willingly dissolving into a gelatinous lump that refused to mix in and was ultimately spat out.

But don't misunderstand me. While my children were still in diapers, Steiner's transformative written works had found their way into the leaning tower of books on my bedside table; they were among the few that glowed in the dark long after the lights were out. I was sure I wanted a Waldorf education for my children.

themselves
 supply
 on the
 Insti
 or tr
 apa
 fai
 w
 ?

- Tuition as a
- Beholding the Community
- Willow Wood on "Seeing I

community's future clear in light of this. In the child's forces are involved in development of the permanent teeth at seven, through the age

Filling a cup with cider at the Harvest

whatever could moment with v
 It was in j
 meaning of ce
 a year later, r

Willow Song

Journal of Willow Wood Waldorf School

Beauty, Form and Freedom at Willow Wood

by Jeannette Milholland

The middle years of childhood from ages seven through fourteen are the golden years — a time when the active will of the very young child and the sharp intellect of the adolescent find a harmonious union and interweaving in the middle realm of the "feeling" life.

Just as the child who has reached the seventh year of growth is completing this first developmental stage, so Willow Wood is now in its seventh year and is preparing to enter a new stage as well.

By the end of the seven to ten year cycle we may also understand the direction of the school as it follows with its own development.

Beauty, Form & Freedom

continued from page one

emergence of a strong, increasingly professional board of directors, to the evolution of a larger faculty with many years of teaching and life experience. As this first seven-year cycle is ending, something new is being born: the birth of the etheric body.

In a child, a teacher might recognize the etheric forces in the degree of the warmth of the hands, the rosy color of the cheeks, the vibrancy or lethargy of the posture, or the ability of the child to live in the realm of the imagination — to form images similar to the archetypal pictorial imagery found in myths and legends worldwide. This pictorial thinking tended with care will metamorphose into the rational clear thinking of the adult someday.

The "feeling" life is encouraged in the classroom through the artistic.

...Just as the child, the school itself is finding its way to an increased emphasis on artistic expression, seeking more depth in the feeling realm...

realm. Interest and warmth are important aspects of every lesson. Through storytelling, painting, music, drawing, sculpture, speech, drama, and eurythmy, the curriculum develops the muscles of feeling. Bringing the arts to the highest form is the essential task of Waldorf education.

So, the school itself is beginning to find its way to an increased emphasis on artistic expression, seeking more depth in the feeling realm. This year sees an expansion into the realm of drama with the first play staged by the faculty for the community, as well as the articulation of a goal of developing a real drama department. The Willow Wood Community Choir has formed as well.

fourteen, the child births the "etheric" or life force body. Rudolf Steiner, founder of Waldorf education, describes the etheric body as those life forces which keep the physical body from deteriorating. Once they are gone, the body will disintegrate, as it does upon death when the etheric forces separate from the body. The etheric body maintains the shape, form and function of the



GOT ONE! Bobbing for apples at the Harvest Festival this Fall.

The Beautification Committee has been revitalized with new members who can be seen weekly landscaping and planting, laying beauty and artistic expression over the physical foundation which has been built.

In the classroom during these years, the teacher strives for a balance and breathing between the forces of form and freedom: the Apollonian and Dionysian forces. Apollo wants to bring everything to form. Artistic areas which strengthen this impulse in the curriculum are sculpture, painting, drawing, form drawing, music or stringed instruments, mathematics, and epic poetry. Apollo brings law and order and wants to stick to the rules.

Dionysius, on the other extreme, wants to break all forms and bring chaos. The Dionysian forces are closely connected with nature, creativity and the personal. The arts that strengthen these forces are the performing arts, the social arts, listening, dance, percussion, air instruments, and an interplay with the audience. A Waldorf teacher works to harmonize the Apollonian and Dionysian forces in all lessons.

These same conflicting forces are now visible in the school as well. Our current board president has often characterized Willow Wood as the "cart before the horse" school, as we have grown so quickly that we are working double time to create the form

and structure without which a school cannot function. Yet, while we focus on creating policies and procedures in areas ranging from student discipline to administrative decisions, we also must honor the freedom of choice and expression which was one of the guiding principles in the school's original founding.

The members of a recently created task force to track and recommend policies and procedures are aware of the need to walk the razor's edge between creating appropriate Apollonian form while still allowing Dionysian expression. Our new tuition program (see *Tuition as a Gift* on page six) is also a sign of this dichotomy: how to carry the

continued on page 7

Willow Song

is the semi-annual journal of Willow Wood Waldorf School produced by the Communications Committee

Special thanks for contributing to this issue:
 Katharine Willens, Patti Trimble, Melinda Misuraca, Kathy Tresch, Photography
 Stanley Bartlett, Judith Ashley, Faculty Advisors
 Shelley Hoose, editing, design & typesetting

Willow Song
 Willow Wood Waldorf School
 495 Waterrough Road
 Sebastopol, CA 95472
 (707) 829-1330
 FAX (829-6880)

Willow Wood Waldorf School, a federated member of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, is an association of teachers, parents and friends dedicated to creating a healthy and creative educational environment for children.