

# The Calvin Hilltop

CALVIN HILL DAY CARE AND  
KITTY LUSTMAN-FINDLING KINDERGARTEN



## Carla's Corner

It's hard to believe that this Calvin Hill year is coming to a close. There has been such amazing growth, development, and progress for children, families, teachers, and the Calvin Hill community itself! We are excited about all we have accomplished, though endings are always bittersweet as we prepare to say goodbye to some of you, or at least prepare children, teachers, and parents for the inevitable next steps – passing children along to the next level within Calvin Hill. They are ready. We may find we aren't, not quite yet, but of course we will be.

Children in the "Young" **Threes** Program are no longer so "young." They are full-fledged preschoolers with so many accomplishments and skills! They have learned the routines and expectations of their teachers and the way to communicate with and play cooperatively (mostly) with their peers. They've made friends, built buildings, engaged in scientific observation (those tadpoles were well watched), drawn and painted and exercised, listened to many, many stories and learned so many songs. They've truly become members of a classroom community, ready for the next developmental leap. We are very proud of them and know you are as well.

The **Preschool** has accomplished so much this year! Children have been busily engaged in collage and painting, wood sculpture, constructing extraordinary block buildings and marble tracks and ramps, creating puppet shows and

acting out stories, scientific observation and representation of rocks, gourds, flowers, plants, worms, tadpoles, birds and more, and beginning rudimentary writing activities. Their self-portraits (puppets, drawings, and clay) are charming and show the real development in their ability to really see and represent themselves and their experiences – all great preparation for their approaching developmental step into kindergarten. They are ready!!

The explosion of learning and skills in the **Kindergarten** has been a privilege and pleasure to witness. From tentative preschoolers, the Kindergarten children have become confident learners, (mostly) readers, writers, and researchers, competent and inventive builders, theorists, and scientists, empathic collaborators, and fast friends. It is clear that the curriculum – whether it be finding evidence of rainbows in a jar, observing and recording the growth of tadpoles and the sprouting of plants, discovering the balance required for sophisticated and complex block structures, or creating beautiful collages, paintings, drawings or constructions to represent their studies – has captured their imaginations and furthered their intellectual, social and physical growth. Their interests, ideas, and wonderings have been exciting to witness and have made for a rewarding and joyful year.



Block Workshop

You, the wonderful Calvin Hill parents, have been supportive and engaged this year in ways that have made our work both interesting and satisfying. You have shared your children and their unfolding development with us; trusted us to nurture, care for, and educate them; participated in the social life and work of the Center (calendar, pot lucks, and work days); generously contributed to book, food, and diaper drives, as well as to gifts for teachers and classrooms; and come in to share your expertise or to cook or read with children. And you have become a cohesive community in your own right. The Calvin Hill families are always part of the pleasure for me of being Director. I think I enjoy working with the adults as much as with the children, and I appreciate and value all that you do. Calvin Hill is greatly enriched by your presence and willing participation.

Calvin Hill as an institution has grown this year as the staff continues to reflect and improve upon our own teaching and learning. On each classroom team, as well as throughout the whole school, the teachers have been engaged in developing new planning strategies and documentation to add to our already thoughtful curriculum development. We have revised and continue to refine our assessment methods and have worked hard to meet the needs of individual children as well as to create classroom communities in which children care for each other and love to learn.

We have also been actively involved in giving back to the larger community. More than fifty Yale students did a practicum at Calvin Hill as part of their coursework for three of my child development classes this year. We have had many visitors from other schools and countries (most recently China) as well as other interested professional groups. The Calvin Hill staff, who are, as you know, experienced and knowledgeable about block building, just conducted a workshop for New Haven teachers that was very well received. Attendees were excited not only by the content of the workshop, but by the Center's space and by the materials that make our philosophy, curriculum, and vision visible. We have been collaborators in New Haven's Early Childhood Council and a voice in demonstrating what high-quality, nurturing early childhood education should and must be.



Visitors from China

So, as we come to the close of this year, I want to thank all of you – children, teachers, parents, board, and friends of Calvin Hill for a wonderful, exciting, intense, and meaningful year.

*Best, Carla*

# THREES ROOM UPDATE

This spring has been all about birds in the Threes room. On April 18, we had three very special visitors: Madelyn Ventola and her dad, Noah, shared three of their brand new baby chickens with us. We got to observe and even gently touch a Rhode Island Red, an Americana, and a Buff Orphington. They were busy chirping, eating crushed corn, and drinking water. Madelyn answered our many questions, which included: Where do they sleep? (In a box in the laundry room.) What do they like to eat? (Crushed corn, with their little beaks.) Why is there a red light near their house? (To keep the chicks warm – they are still babies!) We have been reading books about chickens ever since. Noah also shared eggs with us from the older chickens they already have raised, each one having a slightly different color. We are so incredibly lucky to have had the opportunity to meet these wonderful birds!



Oscar bird watching

We have also been busy identifying and observing birds in our Calvin Hill neighborhood. We have a new bird feeder (mostly enjoyed, unfortunately, by the neighborhood squirrels) and two new bird houses (custom made and donated by Noah Ventola). We have been visited by robins, sparrows, pigeons, and a cardinal! We made our own miniature bird feeders, for home use, out of orange skins and seeds. Drawing, collage, and clay have provided opportunities to create bird and nest representations. We constructed our own binoculars to enhance our bird-watching nature walks. We enjoy pretending that we are birds, and singing songs about birds, too!

Of course, birds aren't the only animals that have been providing us with entertainment and education. We have been observing and caring for our classroom toad tadpoles, lovingly provided by the Rinehart family. Each day we notice tiny changes as they swim around the aquarium. They eat boiled lettuce and we very carefully change their water every day. When they are ready, Cade and Braden, along with their family, will release them back into a pond in their backyard. The tadpoles grew very quickly, just like us!

Looking for a way to practice our growing physical skills in a healthy, non-competitive manner, this spring we participated in our first ever Calvin Hill Threes Step-a-thon! It takes 288 steps to walk/run twice around the perimeter of our playground. We trained for the event for a week and even designed our own water bottles – because it's important to stay hydrated! We also decorated the grounds around the perimeter of the playground with flags. On the day of the race excitement grew as we cheered each other on. Everyone completed the Step-a-thon and received a certificate of participation (provided by Mary Smith, Gerry's mom) as well as a medal (provided by Nancy Cammisa, Christina's mom). This event may well become a new spring tradition in the Threes class!



Penelope, Oscar, Hudson, Cade, and Derin with the chicks



Step-a-thon medals ceremony



# PRESCHOOL UPDATE



Ethan, Lev, Silas, Zara, and Miriam planting lettuce

Spring in the Preschool has been a flurry of activity, as the children have been exploring every facet of their personalities and abilities in as many ways as we can think of. They have come a long way in their construction techniques, perfecting ramps and tracks for marbles in block corner – and using their collective problem-solving skills to create some pretty elaborate ones! On a smaller scale, the children have been working very creatively with craft sticks to make puppets, as well as with paper and tape to make more abstract constructions. They have been particularly imaginative and skillful at using a manipulative toy called K’nex – so much so that we bought two more sets to add to our collection, so that the children can make larger constructions.

We’ve had lots of great opportunities to observe nature, even right in our own classroom. Dwyer’s mother, Alison, was kind enough to bring us a special tank for ants, and we’ve been watching them tunnel around. We’ve also been watching our



Lev, Ethan, Dwyer, and Farrin building a marble track

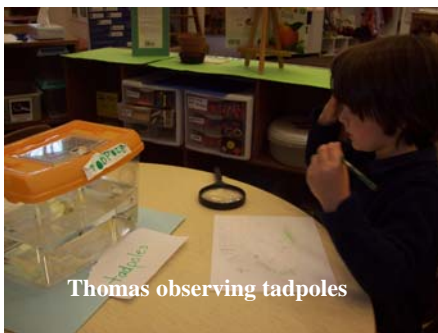
tadpoles, who are eating large quantities of lettuce and growing very large – a few of them even have their back legs already. Outside, we have enjoyed digging for worms, and putting them in the garden beds to help

the soil. Speaking of the garden, we’ve been doing a lot of planting. We are starting some seeds indoors, and some directly in the garden box. So far we have planted lettuce, peas, radishes, and nasturtiums. As if that weren’t enough, we have also placed a new ladybug house in the garden, hoping to attract these garden-friendly insects, and a special frame to encourage spiders to make webs and eat unwanted intruders.

Having enjoyed looking at pictures of ourselves as babies in the winter, this spring we have begun to draw self-portraits. The children have enjoyed peering into the mirror to look closely at the shape of their own faces and determine skin, eye, and hair color. The results have been remarkable!

As the children’s reading skills have steadily improved, we have started to set up a library in the dramatic play area. We have been busy making signs and library cards, and deciding what needs to be in a library, what people do there, and how those people can help us.

From the beginning of the day until the end, the Preschool is full of fun and learning – and the two are basically indistinguishable.



Thomas observing tadpoles



Will, Juliet, Levi, Ella, and Ethan in library dramatic play



Jason and his self-portrait with Stefanie

# KINDERGARTEN UPDATE

This spring, many children have begun to notice the early return of some birds. This development has encouraged us to study the birds more closely. As we have started to watch birds, both from inside and outside, we began to think especially about bird nests. If the birds can do it, why not us? Many children have been making nests out of natural materials during our outside time, and some materials were brought inside so that we could continue making our nests during our choice time. This study of nests and nest-making evolved, quite naturally, into weaving. The children have been weaving and sewing together yarn to make a beautiful rainbow of scarves and blankets.

In the block corner, building has really exploded – in the good way. Asher went to St. Louis and brought back a replica of the St. Louis Arch, which has sparked all sorts of new kinds of building with arches. We've also been challenging ourselves, building houses out of only paper and tape. Following up on this interest, we're really excited that soon we'll be taking a class trip to downtown New Haven to the offices of architect Cesar Pelli—the designer of the famous Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur, which inspired much building in our classroom in the fall.



Emma, Will, and Brennen making birds nests



Kellen and William making nests

Bringing everything together, we have begun to write poetry in the classroom, inspired by birds and tadpoles, painting, and block-building. The Kindergarten is a wonderfully creative and exciting place right now.

The classroom acquired tadpoles, and we closely observed them every day to see how they changed. They have legs now and they were brought back to the pond that they came from.



Emma, Will, Brennen, Clare, and Luca weaving



# Food Section

**Threes:** The Threes Room recently had a classroom discussion about healthy food options to eat at lunch. The children decided to prepare a salad, and chose an assortment of vegetables to include in their salad. Maeve, Gerry, Braden, Jacob, and Leah carefully sliced baby tomatoes, cucumbers, and bell peppers, and also grated carrots to sprinkle on top. It was enjoyed by all!



Braden, David, Maeve, Gerry, Jacob, and Leah enjoying salad

**Preschool:** The Preschool has been busy with many food activities this spring. Leah's parents, Michael and Kaho Terry, recently came in to make sushi with the class, which was a big hit. The Preschool also recently dissected and created observational drawings of a pineapple. Rebecca Puhl, Cameron's mom, visited to talk about vegetables – how they grow, what they look like, and how they taste. Turns out they taste great!



Zara, Magdalena, Dwyer and Leah making cucumber rolls



Saidan, Leah, Dwyer, and Diego dissecting pineapple with Linda

**Kindergarten:** The Kindergarten has been busy getting our garden box ready. Isa's mother, Shel, has guided our gardening each step of the way. We had planted garlic in the fall, and more in the spring, and we also have planted pumpkins, sunflowers, peas, beets, radishes, morning glories, watermelon, edamame, and nasturtiums! We will be eagerly watching our garden grow. We recently harvested some of our garlic to make salsa for everybody to enjoy at lunch one day, as an alternative to the typical store-bought salsa we usually enjoy at lunch. Much better.



Diego, Daneielle, and Isa making Salsa

**Potluck:** We enjoyed yet another great potluck this spring, with thirty-nine families represented. It was wonderful to see everyone there!



Potluck

## Parent Evaluation

Every year, as school comes to a close, there is an opportunity for parents to help Calvin Hill more thoroughly evaluate its progress. We welcome comments about the program overall, as well as its specific strengths and weaknesses. This is your chance to really let us know what you think in your own words and beyond a simple “yes” or “no” on a questionnaire. Please email Carla, or place a written response in the pocket labeled “Carla and Susan” outside the Preschool floor office door (or on Carla’s desk) by the last day of school, June 6. Comments and recommendations are taken seriously, and have a significant impact on the school from year to year.

## Work Day

The Work Day on May 12th was a great success. A wonderful crew (everyone scheduled came!) painted, fixed, built, swept, raked, and cleaned. It's amazing how much can get accomplished in a morning (if the advance planning is meticulous), and John Bianchi, the chair, is terrific at having everything prepared and ready to go the morning of the work day. He is returning next year when his daughter Camilla starts in the Threes. We’re looking forward to having him come in every day for those little incidental things that he's so good at fixing right on the spot!

## End-of-the-Year Party

The end-of-the-year party will be held on June 6th, from 4–5 pm. This is an event not to be missed – it’s our chance to say goodbye for the summer, and to show our appreciation for the teachers and staff, and the entire Calvin Hill community that we love so well.

## From the Parent Committee Chair, Shel Swanson

I have very much enjoyed being the Parent Committee Chair this year, and I will miss Calvin Hill next year. It was very rewarding to watch the community grow over the school year, and feel that the level of parent participation was outstanding. I would like to thank everyone who gave back in one way or another to the Calvin Hill Community, whether with the holiday gift fund or the willingness to help with the various events.

## Plant Sale

We are proud to announce that we raised \$1,475 through the plant sale! This money will go directly toward supporting the tuition sliding scale. Many thanks to Rebecca Butman for expertly coordinating the plant sale. Thanks also to the parents who helped out on pick-up day, and to Susan Taddei for all of her help.

## Diaper and Book Drives

Thank you to everyone who donated, and a special thank you to Camille Koff and Mary Smith for coordinating these drives. Our totals were great:

Diapers donated to The Diaper Bank:

Size 1: 120; Size 2: 84; Size 3: 36; Size 4: 156; Size 5: 19; Pull-ups: 95

Plus two boxes of wipes and twelve swimmers.

Books donated to the Clifford W. Beers Guidance Clinic, Inc.:

Threes: 41

Preschool: 124

Kindergarten: 172

That’s a total of 337 books, with (as of the time this was written) one week still to go!

## Week of the Young Child Celebration

The Week of the Young Child is a national week of recognition of young children and their teachers and caregivers. New Haven celebrates by scheduling many literacy activities throughout the city for children and families. This year we gave out bilingual copies of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, and had the Earth Day-themed puppet show at the potluck, performed by Betty Baisden (Roxy Puppets). Both the books and the puppet show were big hits, as you know!

## Traffic Tip

When picking up and dropping off children at Calvin Hill, please try to park in the drop-off zone (between the two cones on the school side of the street) whenever possible, especially now that the usual traffic on Highland St. has been combined with the construction vehicles coming in and out of the Foote School site next door.

### **Bring Calvin Hill Home!**

Calvin Hill t-shirts, baseball caps, and note cards are a great way to show your support of the Center. Place your orders with Randi today!

Children's t-shirt: \$8

Adult t-shirt: \$10

Children's hat: \$10

Adult hat: \$10

Note cards: \$10

### **Box Tops for Education**

Calvin Hill participates in the Box Tops for Education program. For every box top we collect from participating General Mills products, Calvin Hill receives ten cents. It may not seem like a lot, but it adds up. Please trim your box tops and place them inside the green collection canisters found in each classroom in Calvin Hill.

### **Newsletter Team**

The newsletter could not be produced without the assistance of the Calvin Hill teachers and staff, who generously collect stories and pictures. The newsletter is edited by Gillian Eversman and Joel Baden. Layout and design are by Kaho Terry.