



THE MEHER SCHOOLS



Wednesday Messages

March 4, 2020 • Parent Resource Center: www.MeherSchoolsParents.org

Returning to School After an Illness: Symptom-Free for 24 Hours

County health department guidelines state that a child should not be returned to school following an illness until they've had a full day of normal health (including normal temperature) and normal activity at home. This means 24 hours free of fever, vomiting, diarrhea, and other symptoms listed for specific illnesses beginning on page 22 of your *Parent Handbook*. **If you bring your child back to school before the prescribed time, you'll be called to pick them up and take them home.** Please refer to the *Parent Handbook* (available in the Parent Resource Center) for more information.

Coronavirus

We're consulting with physicians about ways to keep our school community safe in the event of a coronavirus outbreak in the area. See next week's *Wednesday Messages*.



WELCOME! Many elementary classrooms decorated their front door for Founders Day. This is Room 9 (first grade).



FAMILY BAND The Liedstrand Family Band set a happy tone for Founders Day with mini-concerts of traditional American fiddle music around campus at lunchtime. They played a set in each preschool yard, then one in the kindergarten yard, and then one on the playground. The woman second from left is Farrin McCue (née Liedstrand), a Meher Schools alumna and the mother of one of our preschoolers. To her right are her dad, Harry, and mom, Cindy. To her left is family friend Anton Allen. The group has played here every Founders Day since 1986.

See photos of the
Saturday night event
on pages 3 and 4

A Compassionate Response

WHEN WE CALL PARENTS to say that another student has hurt their child, their response is often to ask if the other person was punished. This very human reaction stems from our protective instinct. We don't want an incident like it to happen again. Teachers feel the same way. They are extremely vigilant supervisors. They believe in consequences and put their whole hearts and minds into keeping their students safe and teaching them social skills that supplant the need for physical aggression.

Recently, when getting a call that his kindergarten daughter had been knocked down by another child in anger, the girl's father immediately offered a different kind of comment, saying, "I hope the other child is alright. He must be going through a hard time and need a lot of love right now." His statement provides important learning for us all about compassion.

We want children to stand up for themselves and to tell a teacher if anyone hurts them. However, we also want them to understand that other people often get angry because they're having a hard day or have some big challenge happening in their lives. The purpose of this learning isn't to excuse unacceptable behavior in others or to suppress their feelings of anger or hurt. We want their thinking to go a step further. As part of their life learning, we want them to begin to see the way moods and stress affect people. Those insights help them to predict others' reactions and understand their own upsets.

When children have a confrontation with someone else, they are likely to describe the person as being mean or unfair. It is important to validate children's feelings, but if we as adults agree with their assessment and demonize the other child, we hinder their learning.

We ask parents to extend compassion and care toward all the children in a class or in the school community, and this father's simple questions and concern exemplify that value.



LESSON FROM A DRAGON

Students saw a Founders Day musical play written and performed by Andie Patterson's special Explorations class. The play is the story of two friends who get into a 19-year argument over a magical dragon egg. When the dragon hatches, it shows the children how their lives can be better when they work together.

FOUNDERS DAY 2020: *Evening Symposium on Compassion*

'Compassion Is a Form of Love'

Compassion was the subject of a welcoming talk Saturday night by Dr. Carol Weyland Conner. Dr. Conner is founder of White Pony Express. In January she received AARP California's highest honor for service, the Andrus Award, for organizing WPE's aid to victims of the Camp Fire, which they provided for 10 months. The award was a recognition not only of the food, clothing, and other material goods WPE volunteers delivered but, more importantly, of the compassion they showed toward the survivors.

"Compassion," Dr. Conner said, "is silent. It is action, not words."

Noting that "Meher" means compassion, she continued, "Compassion seeks a sense of oneness, of unity, of total community." Compassion, she added, "is a form of love. And no arena is too small to merit our love."



Dr. Conner: "Action, not words"

The photo on the easel is of Ivy O. Duce, the founder of our school, whose birthday we celebrate on Founders Day, along with the school's.



After a short concert by the White Horse Youth Chorale and Dr. Conner's talk, participants in Saturday's symposium shared their meal in an elementary classroom, where they engaged in a facilitated discussion about compassion at our school. Here parents Heather and Todd Roman talk with elementary school Co-Principal Vince d'Assis (in glasses).

Words of Thanks for Those Who Made The Saturday Night Symposium Possible

The Diversity/Inclusion Committee continues to be a dynamic, mobilizing force for community-building at our school because of its shared vision of unity and equal respect for all. For the last several weeks, members of the committee, with others who wanted to help, worked with tremendous energy on the Founders Day program for adults held Saturday evening.

An expansive energy took hold, and in every area people seemed to say, "I want to do more." A preschool teacher started by offering to make dinner for the whole school. Then others started offering food, and the dinner quickly became a feast. Others offered tablecloths, flower arrangements for every room, and tremendous dedication in every facet of dinner arrangements.

Then the idea of a book display took off, and several people collaborated on gathering a huge collection of recommended children's books and then created a bibliography, which we'll make available for parents in the Office.

We are profoundly grateful to our speakers, teachers, parents, grandparents, staff, White Horse Youth Chorale families, group facilitators, food providers, and organizers, ticket sellers, Office helpers, beautifiers, and environment preparers and cleaner-uppers, and we look forward to more delightful events that bring members of our extended community together in the near future.

We'll be featuring the creative ideas that came out of our discussion groups in future articles, and the Diversity/Inclusion Committee will be moving on to exciting new projects. We'll announce the next meeting soon, and everyone will be invited to attend.



Participants enjoyed a bountiful feast featuring dishes from more than a dozen countries.



The White Horse Youth Chorale opened Saturday's program with four numbers, three of them original school songs.