

Dear Home School Families,

I wasn't planning to have a March newsletter but there were some things that needed clarification and updating and so here is a bonus newsletter for you to enjoy! First of all, we wanted you to know more about the upcoming Swap Meet at the next Collicutt Activity Day. Also for you folks in the Calgary area and those who are happy to drive there, we wanted to let you know about the details for the Harriet Tubman presentation and location for that and for the Michael Mitchell concert on the same day.

Secondly, I want to encourage you all to read the article at the end of this newsletter about another very important 'R' in addition to the common '3R's' and to enhance learning in those areas. I love it and believe in it strongly. Thanks to Elizabeth Witten for passing this along to share with all of us. Charlotte Mason would certainly agree with what is there as she has been our advocate of play and time enjoying and learning from nature for a long while!

Lastly, I want to tell you about some updates on our website: www.familieslearningtogether.com. After personally neglecting the website for awhile now, we are now focusing on keeping it updated and the big addition to it is a link to 'Calendar'. I am grateful to my daughter Karla and her husband Jim Canon for helping to set this up for us. You can click on any month from February to May in particular at this point and see what activities are planned. Some of them are not even in the newsletter yet but we will be putting them on the calendar as soon as they are organized and confirmed. Not only is it on the calendar, but when you click on an individual activity or tour, you will be able to see all the details you need to book your spot for that activity and get the times and directions.

As I said I'm very excited about this as I admit my communication in this area has been somewhat lacking although you are all so forgiving and understanding. Please feel free to give us feedback on how this works for you and what is good about it and what may be beneficial to you to add to it. Happy Reading and Happy Homeschooling! Kathy Snider ☺

Activities:

Swap Meet

Get ready for our annual swap meet on **Friday, March 20th** at the next Collicutt Activity Day. Start your spring cleaning and have your children do the same as you bag up things that you aren't using anymore and that others would be able to make use of. This of course can include books, curriculum items, skates, shoes, clothes, sports equipment etc. This has always been a popular day where you come in and if you have something to give away you set it out on tables and then you and your children take bags and pick out what they want to take home to keep or at least use for a year or two.

So the focus is on free things but we do also have an area where some people sell more valuable items at a good price so be prepared for this as well. People have even gone away with such things as a sewing machine, new watch etc! We will have this from 1 – 1:30 for everyone and then when the gym classes for the children start at 1:30, parents you are welcome to continue to look through things. Help make this our best swap ever!

Gym Classes at the Collicutt

Monday gym times at the Collicutt, led by Jay Rodriguez have been enjoyed by many and we are extending the days for the month of March. If you are interested in doing this for another 4 times (cost will be \$20/child) please let Kathy know and you can make payment arrangements at the same time. The times are 12 noon – 1 p.m. for approx. 5-9 year olds and 1-2 p.m. for the older children ages 9 and up. The dates are March 2,9,16,30.

World Math Day

Submitted by Amy Cote: World Math Day is a website for kids to practice their fast-math skills. You are matched against 2 or 3 other people with around the same skill level from anywhere in the world and are asked math questions for your grade. If you would like to join the website as a member of FLT, e-mail me (Amy) at horsefreak17@catholic.org with your first and last name, age, and grade. (or your child's, if you're a parent.) I will sign you up, and then e-mail you back with your username and password. (unfortunately, we can't choose our own.) The website, if you are wanting to check it out, is www.worldmathday.com. I've heard that on some computers, only www.worldmathsday.com works, but I've never actually seen it happen. If you have more questions, you can either e-mail me, or go to the 'contact us' link on

the website. The *real* 'World Math Day' is on **March 4th**, but you can still play on the site all year round. If you have more questions you can either e-mail me, or go to the 'contact us' link on the website.

ArtSparks Activities

Below are a list of activities that are open to anyone not just our homeschool group, but Venessa Kalist attends many with her children and wants to share the great opportunities with other homeschoolers here in Red Deer or willing to drive to Red Deer. March activities start with March Fun Friday on **Friday, March, 6th** with an activity called '**Fill in the blanks**'. Evan, who leads the group, has a surprise for us with that one, so hopefully you're adventuresome and will come and join us that day!

On Woohoo Wednesday, Evan will again be leading us in a '**Pattern puzzle**'. That will be Wednesday, **March 11th**. We will be looking at pictures to discover cool abstract designs to re-create. Movie Monday, on **March 16th** will be on the topic of '**Celtic design**' to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. We will be 'tying' ourselves up in fancy knot patterns as our starting point.

All special classes are held from 1-2 pm. in the Discovery/Stewart Room at the Red Deer Museum + Art Gallery. Free to members and only \$3.50 drop-in fee for everyone else. Suitable and enjoyed by all ages. Check the website for other artsparks info www.artsparks.org and keep your ears open for more renovation makeover news! Our first bit of news, in that regard, is that we will be setting up classes at Parkland Mall starting the beginning of May. What exciting times!

Poetry Recital

Here's your reminder to both those of you signed up and those 'wanna be's', that our annual Poetry Recital is approaching and will take place on **Tuesday, March 10th** at 7 p.m. at Balmoral Bible Chapel (just East of 30th Street on Highway 11). It looks like we have a wonderful agenda so far but there still may be room if you check with Venessa (dvkalist@telus.net or call 342.1716). Also, here's a reminder that originally written poems have their own special category and prizes.

Mom's Supper

Here's another chance to go for supper with some other homeschool Moms and visit and eat! This will take place on Sunday evening, **March 15th**. You can meet the others at 6:30 p.m. at Gulliver's restaurant. Call another Mom and pick her up and let Wanda know you are coming by contacting her at dwendlebury@yahoo.ca or 403.358.5958.

Dance Lessons

Beginning **Wednesday, March 18th**, we are offering free dance lessons (by KS) from 3:40 p.m. to 4:40 p.m at Balmoral Bible Chapel in the room where we meet for band. We will be doing the old time waltz, the two step, the polka, heel-toe polka, 7 step pattern dance, schottische, butterfly and one line dance. We will also meet two other Wednesdays, **March 25th** and **April 1st**. It is lots of fun and a good chance to learn some fun family dances. Also please check later in the newsletter for information about a family dance that will be held Friday, May 29th in Lacombe. These lessons would be good preparation for that dance but there will be opportunity to practice for an hour before that dance as well.

Art Gallery Tour Field Trip

Date: **Thursday, March 19**

Time: 11:00am (lasting not longer than 1.5 hours) Location: BCA – Bilton Contemporary Art 4B 5809 – 51 Ave, Red Deer
Age Group: best for 6 yrs and up Limit of 15 students. There is no cost. Contact Corinne McLean @ 403-347-0203 to register. The children would get a tour of the gallery and an art class. The artist there now is a watercolor painter and so it should be very interesting and lots of fun!

Activity Days at the Collicutt Centre in Red Deer

Following are the dates for the next two activity days at the Collicutt. There was some confusion created in the last newsletter so please double check these dates with what you marked on your calendar.

March - Friday, March 20th - 1 – 1:30 Swap Meet and gym time from 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

April – Thursday, April 30th – Field Day and Gym times 1 – 2:45 p.m.

For the swap meet, please bring things that you want to pass on to others to enjoy using. As we said this can be books, curriculum materials, skates, ball gloves, shoes, coats etc. Most all of the ‘stuff’ is free though there will be some things for sale as well.

Also please note that we are excited to say that we are planning a ‘**Lego Project Display**’ time at the Collicutt Activity Day on Friday March 20th. Please read more information about this later in the newsletter.

Lego Project Display

This is our second annual Lego Project Display and so you won’t want to miss it! We had lots of fun with it last year and are looking forward to seeing new creations this year! So be sure to bring yours out to show others! On **Friday, March 20th**, your child is invited to bring something special to them that they have made out of Lego. We will have tables for them to display them on and they should also have two papers or cards to put by it with their name and age and creation name on it. If you are bringing something to display, you should arrive about 12:50 in order to set it up before people arrive at 1 p.m. We are excited about this idea and trust that many of you will participate and enjoy displaying yours as well as seeing others! We discussed prizes and here is the plan in regards to that. Each person entering a creation will give us one of their cards with their name and age on it and we will put it in a ‘hat’ (hmmm someone must volunteer to build a Lego hat for this!). We will actually need two hats as we will have a random draw from these names in two age categories. One will be for those that are under 10 years old and the other for 10 and older. The person of the name picked will win – guess what – some cool Lego! If you wish to donate a prize for the other group, let us know.

Participants are welcome to have help building a project or it may even be a family project – it’s not ‘cheating’ to have help, as the projects aren’t judged, just enjoyed – both in the building process and in the observing portion!

Helicopter Rides

Here’s an update on the helicopter rides. Currently we do not have enough people to make this event happen in March. So for now the event has been cancelled. We will keep it in mind for the future but for now you’ll have to settle with a virtual helicopter ride online or something like that!

Pre- Teen (10- 12 yrs.) Lunch & Serving Opportunity

Lunch place: Pizza hut

Serving place: Red Deer Food Bank

Cost for Lunch: Lunch Buffet (Kids \$4.99 Adults \$8.99)

Date: March 25, 2009

Time: 11:45-3:00

Serving task: Sorting donations

Please sign up by **March 20, 2009**, call or email Taylor at 403-340-3090 or cattes@telus.net Thanks.

Teen Activities

Are you between the **ages of 13-17**? If you are, we are planning some really fun activities for the next couple of months. We meet every 2-3 weeks, and one of the volunteered teens will be planning an activity. If you would like to get updates on what is happening please email Kyla at cattes@telus.net Thanks.

Band Concerts

Wednesday, April 15th, we are planning to have performances in three different places. The first one will take place at the Golden Circle and they are back in their facility by the downtown Rec. Centre. We will plan to meet there at 11:40 a.m. and

play at their noon lunch. This concert will be only for the Senior band members. The next two places will include beginner and senior bands and here is the information for them:

2 p.m. at the Red Deer Nursing Home (meet at 1:45) and **3:30 p.m. at Victoria Park** (meet at 3:15).

The Senior band will also be playing at the AHEA Convention on Friday morning, April 17th.

New Parent Meeting

We are once again planning a meeting for parents interested in starting home schooling in the fall of 2009 or those just recently started. This is an opportunity to invite those that are interested and have some questions that maybe they have been asking you! We will go over some information about Families Learning Together, getting started with homeschooling, as well as talking about choosing materials to use for your children. This meeting will take place on **Wednesday, April 15th** at 7 p.m. at the Snider's house. We find this a good time of year to go over these things before you go to the AHEA convention (see info later in newsletter) Again, please call 348-0723 if you are planning to come.

Alberta Home Education Association Convention

This year's convention at the Westerner in Red Deer will be held on Friday, **April 17th** and Saturday, **April 18th, 2009**. We have brochures available if you would like one or you can check their website for more information www.aheaonline.com. This year's main speaker is Kevin Swanson and you can learn more about him by checking his website at: www.generationswithvision.com.

Fencing Demo and Lesson

Here's a chance to learn or participate again in a fencing time. The last few years it has been lots of fun and so here is a chance for anyone interested to try it again or for their first time. The Red Deer Fencing club has agreed to provide introductory lessons for our group and electronic bouting. The class will take about 2 hours – 10 a.m. to noon and the date is Saturday, **April 25th** at the Grandview Elementary School gymnasium. Students need to be at least 9 years old and need to wear gym clothes to participate. This would include a t-shirt and clean runners (that you carry there, not wear outside) and sweat-type or loose pants – not shorts. The cost will be \$15 per child or adult.

Also have fun preparing yourselves by checking out the following websites to learn a bit about the sport and perhaps become familiar with the names of the various items used. <http://www.fencing.ab.ca/>; www.red-deer-fencing-club.ca

If you would like to participate please contact the Sniders (email: k.d.snider@shaw.ca or phone 348-0723) by April 15th.

Canadian Kid's Singer – Michael Mitchell – Concerts

We now are excited to say that we have booked 3 Michael Mitchell concerts and so wherever you are in Alberta, you should be able to make it to one! He does an excellent job of promoting a love for our country through songs and stories relating to Canada and our history as they relate to the songs that he sings. He is famous for the song: Canada in My Pocket and is one all our children should learn! It is also fun to learn the many traditional Canadians songs as well.

The plan in honour of our country, we ask that you wear as much red as possible the day you attend one or more of the concert opportunities. You can learn more about Michael on his website: <http://www.michael-mitchell.ca/> You can order his CD's there on the site or they will all be available for sale at each of the concerts.

Following are the dates and locations:

Edmonton: Monday, April 20th at 9:45 a.m. at Calvary Community Church in Millwoods. If you are attending this one, please contact Rhonda Snider at 780.298.4623. The cost for this one is \$5 child with a family max of \$18.

Red Deer: Thursday, April 30th, 2009 at 10:30 a.m. at Balmoral Bible Chapel. There is no cost for this concert, thanks to the money raised from the Collicutt pass sales organized by Alison Rittamer.

Calgary: Wednesday, May 6th at 1:30 p.m. – at the Tuscany Club located at 212 – Tuscany Way, NW Calgary. Again the cost here is \$5 per child with a family max of \$18. You need to call Kathy at 403.348.0723 or email k.d.snider@shaw.ca if you would like to attend.

Dramatization of Harriet Tubman

This will take place in **Calgary on Wednesday, May 6th at 11 a.m.** We are excited to once again book actress, Shannon to do her 45 minute dramatization of the story of Harriet Tubman. She performed this for us once before in Red Deer and it was very well received by homeschoolers of all ages. It is very moving and has sad parts and so it says for all ages but you might want to think about this if the children are very young. If they are prepared before hand, then of course it is much better.

The cost for this play is \$5 per child and a maximum of \$18 per family just as the Michael Mitchell concert which will be held just after this. Both presentations will be held at the same place at the Tuscany Club (212 Tuscany Way N.W. Calgary) and we will plan to eat lunch together between these two events! Here is a description of Harriet:

Harriet by Kisha Henryatta A one-woman dramatization of the life of Harriet Tubman, approx. 45 mins in length without any special staging requirements. Time: 1851, shortly after the Fugitive Slave Law is passed Place: An abolitionist meeting in Boston Suitable for audiences of any age and interests, this play will bring Harriet Tubman, a freed slave living in the 1800's, into the classroom or auditorium with astonishing clarity.

This play will absolutely take hold of your soul! This true story chronicles Harriet Tubman's life with remarkable accuracy. She was a very unique individual with truly amazing strengths and has become an icon to African Americans and Canadians!

AMA Driver Training

Here's the update on the Driver Training Classes for this year that will take place at AMA in Southpointe Common in May. The class dates are as follows on Mondays and Wednesdays:

Monday, **May 4th** from 9 a.m. – 12 noon., Wednesday, May 6th – 1-4 p.m., Mon. May 11, Wed. May 13, Mon. May 18th and Wed. May 20st. Please note that all Monday classes will be held from 9 a.m. - noon and Wednesday classes are from 1 – 4 p.m..

There is 18 hours of classroom instruction and also 10 hours in-car driving with an instructor for each individual. These in-car hours are arranged separately with each individual student. The cost will be \$549 plus GST for AMA members and \$629 plus gst for non-members. An individual membership is \$89 for a year so it is better if you aren't a member for one parent to become one and get the services for the year. You can register directly with AMA by calling 342.6730. We need ten students for the course and so if you are planning to take it, please call at least a month in advance so that they will know they have enough to run the course. Of course if you know now, please call right away. You can get your name on the list and then pay either right away or closer to the date, but it's good to let them know so that they are assured of having 10 homeschool teens available so that they can run the class.

Opportunity to Raise Butterflies

Looking ahead to spring (since it's so warm today as I write this!), we wanted to let you know that we will be ordering butterfly larvae again and so here's your chance to play ahead for this activity.

If you are interested, you can order your own from Wards Canada (www.wardsci.ca or 1-800-387-7822) or in Red Deer and area, call Venessa Kalist at 342.1716 or dykalist@telus.net and we will order in bulk. We are estimating the cost to be about \$2.50 or \$3 per larvae and some recommend ordering in groups of 5 for better chance of getting at least a couple. Success rate they say is about 60-70% and it takes about 3 weeks to complete the process before your butterflies would be ready for release. You have plenty of time to call, as we want to order them by April 2nd, but you might just want to call now while you are thinking of it! The plan is that we will have them in time for you to pick them up at the Collicutt Day in Red Deer in April. In Rocky, you can order from Kathy Snider.

Tea at the Cronquist House

Thursday, May 14th at 2 p.m., you have the opportunity to attend a lovely afternoon tea at the Cronquist House here in Red Deer. It is located at Bower Ponds and is a house that was built in 1911 and restored starting in 1976. For more information on the history of this house you can check the following website:

<http://www3.telus.net/rdchs/chs2.html>. This tea has been arranged just for our group and is conveniently set for a

time close to Mother's Day, to give our children a chance to take us out for a nice time together! It's also a chance to dress up in something spring like and enjoy time together. The cost is \$9/person and payment should be arranged ahead of time so that your spot is reserved. Along with tea, you will enjoy fancy sandwiches and a dessert of either pie and ice cream or cheesecake. All ages are welcome to come including a Grandparent if they would like to join you. Please contact Kathy if you would like to attend (k.d.snider@shaw.ca

Adventures at Canada Olympic Park

We are excited to have booked three activities at COP in Calgary for **Tuesday, May 26th**.

The first two are called Challenge Courses. In the morning from 9 a.m. – 12 noon we have booked for ages 12 and up and the course is called: 'The Conquerors'. Here is the description:

'The purpose of this program is to develop the participants' interpersonal skills while focusing on personal growth and development through challenge by choice. This program starts with initiative and low rope activities, and then focuses on the high rope pods.'

Then from 1 – 4 p.m., we have booked the program called: 'The Explorers' for children ages 8 – 12 yrs. old.

Here is a description for the Explorers:

The purpose of this program is to provide participants with the opportunity to explore their personal limits, challenge themselves physically and emotionally, and to identify their personal boundaries while creating awareness of challenge by choice. This program involves both team initiatives and the low ropes course.

Doesn't all this sound fun? The cost per person is \$25 and you need to contact Kathy at k.d.snider@shaw.ca or 403.348.0723 to book your spot. Check out this website for more detailed information:

http://www.winsportcanada.ca/cop/lessonsprograms/outdooreducation/challengecourse_s8drjh.cfm

Ok... What is the third activity booked you are asking?? Well it is called the 'Skyline at the Park' and is North America's fastest zipline! This will be for children ages approx. 12 and up and adults as well! I had to make sure I could go! ☺ This will take place at COP at 1 p.m. and the sooner you email or call the more of a chance you have of being able to do this. It is possible for younger children to go with an adult as long as they are over 70lbs (32kg) so if you are interested check with Kathy.

Here is a description of this activity as well: 'Emulate a ski jumper as you get harnessed in and ride a cable from the Ski Jump Tower to the base of the hill, for some exhilarating fun.

Your adventure includes instruction, three ziplines (one of which is a trainer line at the base of the hill), transportation to the ski jump tower via summer chairlift or shuttle, and access to the tower. Allow one hour. Group capacity 30/hour. Year-round fun! The cost for this is \$45/person.

Alberta Steam Train Ride – Stettler to Big Valley

Thursday, May 28th - Come and join others to ride the diesel train from Stettler to Big Valley. We are excited to present this field trip to you again this year. It was so popular the last few years that we decided to book it again. So if you weren't able to go yet, call Grandma and Grandpa and plan it for this year. There are only two days a year that they offer this trip to school aged children at this discounted price for them and accompanying adults. This is what they say about it: See and experience pioneer railway travel and learn about how the West was settled by the railways. Includes hamburger and hot dog lunch, and guided tours of historic sights in Big Valley. For more information check out this website:

<http://www.absteamtrain.com/index.htm>

The train leaves Stettler at 10:30 a.m. and returns at 3:55 p.m. We would need to meet at 10 a.m. to load. The cost of all tickets is \$28 including gst. Children ages 3 and under are free. Normally an adult ticket is \$81 so it is a good deal.

Please contact Tracey Lytle asap to book a spot (btlytle68@gmail.com or 403.227.0052.) as we have to confirm numbers with them. We currently have two coaches booked for our group. Also we need to arrange payment when you book.

Pattern Dance in Lacombe

On **Friday, May 29th** at the Lacombe Memorial Centre, the Blackfalds Pattern Dancers are organizing a dance that families are welcome to attend. The organizer David, has also agree to meet with any families from our group, at 5 p.m. to teach and go over some of the dances that will take place during the evening. This is a great opportunity and it should be lots of fun. For example they do the 'Cotton Eyed Joe' and will practice it with us.

The dance includes a supper which starts at 6 p.m. and then the dance is after that. Tickets are \$25/each and ½ price for those under 17 years of age, free for children under 6. For more information contact Kathy (k.d.snider@shaw.ca or 348.0723).

Annual Bike Ride/Picnic

Friday, May 29 from 12 noon – 3:30 we have the picnic shelter booked at the Little Great Chief Park which is just past Bower Ponds. We will have a contest to see which Dad can build us a fire and then start eating around noon. We generally leave for the bike ride at 1 p.m. or just before and some of the group usually rides to Heritage Ranch (shorter ride) and the older ones generally ride to 3 Mile Bend or Discovery Canyon or a variety of other places! Bring your own hot dogs and buns and perhaps a snack to share. This is always a fun event so pump up those tires with air and come along! You can also get your June – August newsletter on this day. We have had this event for years and it is always a fun one!

Collicutt Passes – If you need a Collicutt book pass for a great price and it is also beneficial to our group, call Alison 347-7086 to get your name on the list for one later this spring.

Curriculum for Sale: Teaching the Classics Book & DVD's \$75; Spelling Power (3rd ed) \$35; Saxon Algebra 1 (New) \$65; Grammar Songs Book & CD \$15; Math-U-See Zeta Book & DVD \$25; Math-U-See Pre-Algebra Book & DVD \$45; Story Starters (K. Andreola) \$30; Write Shop I Teacher's Manual (Updated) \$25; Progeny Press Study Guides: Where the Red Fern Grows \$15, The Yearling (Incl. book) \$20, A Tale of Two Cities (Incl. book) \$20. Please call Stacey Contenti at 403-341-5434 or email: goin2hvn@telus.net.

The 3 R's? A Fourth Is Crucial, Too: Recess

By TARA PARKER-POPE Published: February 23, 2009

The best way to improve children's performance in the classroom may be to take them out of it.

New research suggests that play and down time may be as important to a child's academic experience as reading, science and math, and that regular recess, fitness or nature time can influence behavior, concentration and even grades.

A study published this month in the journal Pediatrics studied the links between recess and classroom behavior among about 11,000 children age 8 and 9. Those who had more than 15 minutes of recess a day showed better behavior in class than those who had little or none. Although disadvantaged children were more likely to be denied recess, the association between better behavior and recess time held up even after researchers controlled for a number of variables, including sex, ethnicity, public or private school and class size.

The lead researcher, Dr. Romina M. Barros, a pediatrician and an assistant clinical professor at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, said the findings were important because many schools did not view recess as essential to education.

"Sometimes you need data published for people at the educational level to start believing it has an impact," she said. "We should understand that kids need that break because the brain needs that break."

And many children are not getting that break. In the Pediatrics study, 30 percent were found to have little or no daily recess. Another report, from a children's advocacy group, found that 40 percent of schools surveyed had cut back at least one daily recess period. Also, teachers often punish children by taking away recess privileges. That strikes Dr. Barros as

illogical. "Recess should be part of the curriculum," she said. "You don't punish a kid by having them miss math class, so kids shouldn't be punished by not getting recess."

Last month, Harvard researchers reported in *The Journal of School Health* that the more physical fitness tests children passed, the better they did on academic tests. The study, of 1,800 middle school students, suggests that children can benefit academically from physical activity during gym class and recess.

A small study of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder last year found that walks outdoors appeared to improve scores on tests of attention and concentration. Notably, children who took walks in natural settings did better than those who walked in urban areas, according to the report, published online in August in *The Journal of Attention Disorders*. The researchers found that a dose of nature worked as well as a dose of medication to improve concentration, or even better.

Andrea Faber Taylor, a child environment and behavior researcher at the Landscape and Human Health Laboratory at the University of Illinois, says other research suggests that all children, not just those with attention problems, can benefit from spending time in nature during the school day. In another study of children who live in public housing, girls who had access to green courtyards scored better on concentration tests than those who did not.

The reason may be that the brain uses two forms of attention. "Directed" attention allows us to concentrate on work, reading and tests, while "involuntary" attention takes over when we're distracted by things like running water, crying babies, a beautiful view or a pet that crawls onto our lap.

Directed attention is a limited resource. Long hours in front of a computer or studying for a test can leave us feeling fatigued. But spending time in natural settings appears to activate involuntary attention, giving the brain's directed attention time to rest.

"It's pretty clear that all human beings experience attentional fatigue," Dr. Faber Taylor said. "Our attention has to be restored from that fatigue, and there is a growing body of research evidence that nature is one way that seems particularly effective at doing it."

Playtime and nature time are important not only for learning but also for health and development.

Young rats denied opportunities for rough-and-tumble play develop numerous social problems in adulthood. They fail to recognize social cues and the nuances of rat hierarchy; they aren't able to mate. By the same token, people who play as children "learn to handle life in a much more resilient and vital way," said Dr. Stuart Brown, the author of the new book *"Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination and Invigorates the Soul"* (Avery).

Dr. Brown, a psychiatrist in Carmel Valley, Calif., has collected more than 6,000 "play histories" from human subjects. The founder of the National Institute for Play, he works with educators and legislators to promote the importance of preserving playtime in schools. He calls play "a fundamental biological process." "From my viewpoint, it's a major public health issue," he said. "Teachers feel like they're under huge pressures to get academic excellence to the exclusion of having much fun in the classroom. But playful learning leads to better academic success than the skills-and-drills approach."

Ron Chambers Associate Professor Theatre and Dramatic Arts
University of Lethbridge, Canada

