

FULL CIRCLE PRESCHOOL

Winter has been in full swing at the preschool! After a heavy snow fall, several classrooms trekked into the woods to set up a story walk, *Over and Under the Snow*, by Kate Messner. Involving the children in this process helps instill a sense of ownership and responsibility for our woods and the learning experiences we create together.

Despite the seemingly slow pace of the winter months, we've been very much keeping the spirit alive in our synagogue. We were thrilled to take part in this year's Mitzvah Day as each classroom worked to collect sanitary items to create a care kit for new families arriving through the Refugee Resettlement Program. It is always a pleasure when our programs can come together for the wider community. Special thanks to Naomi and Karen for their hard work and dedication.

The teachers of Full Circle also completed a 5-part workshop series with Emma Redden of the Full Story School on how to talk to children about racism, gun violence, homelessness, incarceration, inequity, and society's unfair stories about good and bad. We are all still learning how to unlearn all the preconceived notions and stories the world has taught us to believe. Because there IS enough food and money for everyone in this world, but no, it isn't shared equally. Because there are so many circumstances that cause people to fall into the gray area of what's "wrong and right." Because sometimes people steal food not because they are criminals or wrongdoers, but because they are HUNGRY. So often we avoid talking to our children about these injustices because we don't even know how to make sense of them as adults. But it's so important to have these conversations—or else we are just supporting complacency. We can feel confused and vulnerable about all the injustices in our world AND talk about them until we've found the right language to use. We can make mistakes, show our vulnerabilities, and figure out how to have these hard conversations with our peers, colleagues, and the next generation. So often, we are expected to leave our own issues at the door and be fully present with the children in our lives, but we are allowed to be full human beings, too. We are allowed to talk to children about the things our own parents felt too vulnerable or nervous to talk about with us as children. I'm so proud to be doing this work with our learning community as we try to retell those stories that have been told to us for so long that we are not all equal or worthy of love, justice, and basic human understanding.

We've certainly all reached a new level of COVID fatigue this year, but spring is on the horizon, and we look forward to the slow wake of our woods and all that has been hidden under the frost. This year, we have big plans for gardening, community outdoor workdays, outdoor gatherings, and togetherness.

While some of our usual programming has been on hold due to COVID, we have been so thankful for our weekly music and Shabbat gatherings with Cantor Steve. During his recovery time, the children drew pictures and sent him well wishes. The love within our community is profound, and has carried us through difficult weeks of masking, COVID scares, antigen tests, stomach bugs, cold weather spells, and exhaustion. But we remain strongly rooted in love, community, and hope.

With love,

~ Erika Geremia
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PHOTOS BELOW



