

## **Faculty & Staff Spotlight: Matan Tsufim**

Matan Tsufim, "Mr. Matan," our practical arts teacher for grades 5-12, has a long and rich history with Waldorf education. Born in Jerusalem, his earliest school experience was at Michael Hall Steiner School in northern England, where his parents moved when he was five. Three years after that, he and his family joined Kibbutz Harduf, an anthroposophic community in Northern Israel and Matan began attending the Harduf Waldorf School, where he remained through Grade 12.

After completing a required three-year stint in the Israeli army, Matan headed to Pennine Camphill community in Wakefield, England. Camphill, inspired by the teachings of Rudolf Steiner and Karl König, is an international movement of over 100 communities, designed to meet the needs of children, youth and adults with developmental disabilities through a combination of community life, the arts and work on the land. During his time at Camphill, Matan was involved in various craft workshops (pottery, blacksmithing, and woodwork) and completed his foundation studies in anthroposophy with a special focus on healing education.

"Camphill communities are about bringing each person to their full potential independent of their abilities," says Matan, who later earned degrees in psychology and special education, and is currently working toward his M.ED. in Waldorf Education. "They're a great example of learning by doing."

Prior to becoming the woodwork instructor at WSOC last year, Matan worked as teacher for special education at Shaked Waldorf School in northern Israel.

In addition to his experience as teacher for special education, Matan is an experienced craftsman who has been honing his crafts, ever since he graduated from Waldorf High School in 2001.

What is his favorite part about his job at WSOC?

"I love to see the kids think outside of the box, exploring all of these different materials," he smiles. He acknowledges it can be daunting to use a tool you've never seen before. "I enjoy helping them come to an understanding that they CAN do something. 'Can't' is the worst word ever!"

Also, in our modern age, this is often our children's first experience with real physical "work," he says. "Our kids aren't growing up on farms, and not as much is asked of them at home, so they have no exposure to this kind of labor." Woodwork not only fires up the brain, he says, but also ignites the will.

"Our traditional school system is so weighted on academics. Students aren't reaching their potential because they haven't developed the will forces to push through difficult tasks."

Currently, his projects with the children include carving spoons in Grade 6, building stools in Grade 7, lyres (an ancient wooden musical instrument with 7 strings) in Grade 10 and jewelry in Grades 11 and 12.

"We are building upon the curriculum layer by layer," he explains. The carving of a spoon, for example, provides the foundation for skills with tools that will later be used to create a lyre out of wood, or shape objects out of precious metals to create wearable art.

"Each project is an extension of the one that comes before it," he says. He refers to a fundamental tenet of Waldorf education: continuously building one's inner resolve, tenacity and grit to grow a strong human being. Creating a project from scratch invites mistakes, frustrations, and the dreaded process of ditching your work and starting all over again. Ultimately, however, something of beauty is born from it all.

"Working with all of these materials," Matan notes, "is the ultimate expression of strengthening the will."