

September 5, 2014

Dear Lansdowne Friends School Families,

We have had a terrific opening of school. There are many reasons to be so excited about the new year. First, the campus looks terrific. We have a new shop for Teacher Al Gaspar, and he already is working his magic with students working in and observing the gardens. The new preK classroom has been wonderfully transformed from what was the shop, and the porch is a great venue for play and exploration, simultaneously giving protection from the sun and harsh elements, but still allowing children to be outdoors. The new kindergarten classrooms are also exciting additions to the school. Second, we are excited to have our three new teachers, Narissa Bajjo in Kindergarten, Amy Keilbaugh for Art, and Misha Horsey for PE to add to our already wonderful faculty. Third, we are also excited about our theme of sustainability. At our opening faculty meetings, the teachers shared many of their ideas for how we could teach about sustainability throughout the curriculum. Much of this includes what we already do, including our gardening and composting programs, our emphasis on recycling and reduction of waste. It also includes augmenting units we presently teach, including the Dust Bowl, energy, and animal life cycles and butterfly gardens. We also hope to emphasize better nutrition which can help us lead healthier, more sustainable lives, and also, by eating more plants, help reduce our carbon footprints. Stay tuned for other manifestations of the theme.

I want to highlight three events coming up that adults might be interested in that are related to our theme. First, there is a panel discussion entitled "Climate Change: The Local and State Response" at the Free Library of Philadelphia on Monday September 15 at 7. The panel includes my brother, Robert McKinstry, an environmental lawyer in Philadelphia and Sarah Wu (my niece), Policy and Outreach Manager of the City of Philadelphia Mayor's Office of Sustainability. Second, \*school parent\* is a highly regarded professor at Drexel in the Department of Biodiversity, Earth and Environmental Science. He will be the keynote speaker at the 10th annual Cradle of Birding Festival Saturday, September 20, 2014. Third, on Sunday, September 21, there is a People's Climate March in New York City. This will be a chance to join with others to express concerns about addressing the threats of climate change. There are busses going to New York, including those going from Friends Center in Philadelphia.

Finally, and most importantly, I am so excited to see all of the children back in school. The campus, despite the hustle of getting the changes in the buildings and the sprucing of the campus, was far too quiet this summer. It was also such a pleasure getting to see all that could attend the Thursday morning coffee. I am looking forward to seeing even more of you at the playground picnic tonight and at Back-To-School Night on Thursday, September 18.

Please feel free to talk with me. Have a great weekend.

Sincerely,

John McKinstry  
Head of School