

CONSERVATORY NOTES

Nurturing Creative Expression in Early Childhood

by Gordon Carr

There wasn't much debate in our house about whether our two children were going to go to South Shore Conservatory for preschool and kindergarten. While admittedly my family has a special bond with the school and has for many years, I knew early on that this is where my daughter and son belonged and would thrive. Yes, our daughter showed an early interest in drawing, coloring, and learning and a love of animals that brought daily menageries in whatever crayon, pen, or paintbrush was available. Yes, our son was so tuned into music that as soon as he could speak he would pipe up about the saxophone in the background of the Springsteen song on the radio or chime in about the difference between a cello and a viola.

Of course, I think we all see creativity and imagination in our kids. We are all awe-inspired by the finger-painting masterpieces that are brought home in their early years or the first crayon scrawl of that dog/bus/train (the one where you pray you guess right when presented with it...). I knew that we would end up with a stack of such creations tucked in a box somewhere. I know because my mother can probably produce my 40+ year old box in a matter of seconds on request. But if you had told me we would have framed art on our walls produced by our 6 year old daughter, I would have said "not even we

are that delusional and blinded by parental love". But there it is for all to see.

What South Shore Conservatory has done for our two very unique kids is to allow them to express their imagination and broaden their creative mindset. The Conservatory Preschool, Pre-K and Kindergarten give children the platform to really let them run with their creativity, free from boundaries and offering many different outlets for music, drama/ performance, and visual art. At the same time, that freedom is delivered with subtle guideposts of structure, such as learning about – and more importantly doing – photography by following the techniques of famed celebrity photographer Annie Leibovitz, or art by interpreting the strokes and vision of the finest painters from Monet to Kandinsky. This is what arts-based education is all about. Provided by a truly multi-talented team of teachers, this full spectrum of learning is delivered in the most nurturing, heart-and-mind expanding environment. Margery was a first grade teacher in Massachusetts public schools for many years and knows the importance of a child's readiness for elementary school. When kids head off from the Conservatory they are fully prepared academically with the learning, reading, and math skills they need to compete and thrive.

Looking ahead, Margery and I have



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hundreds, perhaps thousands of decisions to make as we raise our two kids over the next decade or two. It feels good to know that our decision to have them go to South Shore Conservatory may have been one of the best ones we ever make. Thanks to the arts-based curriculum at the Conservatory, our kids and all of their classmates are inquisitive, problem solving, open-minded, social individuals. They are confident, expressive risk takers that will hopefully carry with them a lifelong love of and respect for the arts. So as parents, we feel pretty sure we got this one right.

Margery and Gordon Carr live in Hingham with their two children Charlotte and Cannon (above).