

## CONSERVATORY NOTES

# Thanksgiving: Kindergarten Style

By Elaine Sorrentino

I was recently invited to visit the South Shore Conservatory's Kindergarten classroom to talk with the students about Thanksgiving. The students and their teachers, Jill Martin and Karen Hill, had transformed their classroom into a Native American Wampanoag village with a Wetu, student-created Native American vests and authentic-looking artifacts. For a moment there I thought I was at Plymouth Plantation!

The students eagerly shared their vast knowledge of the Wampanoag tribe. Their first order of business was to correct my reference to their Wetu as a teepee. Their favorite fact to share was that the Native Americans accidentally discovered popcorn. The students confidently articulated how the Wampanoags gave the Pilgrims the means to take care of themselves, teaching them how to plant corn and other crops, and build their shelters.

While all the kindergarteners agreed that the first Thanksgiving was in celebration of a good harvest, there was lively debate about what the first Thanksgiving Day might have been called. However, the group was pretty certain about the first Thanksgiving Day meal. According to the students the menu included turkey, meat, venison, turkey, corn, turkey, mashed potatoes, turkey, clams, turkey, mussels,

fish, and popcorn, with plums for dessert. (What, no turkey for dessert?)

When asked what they were grateful for at home, they all wanted to answer at once. One student was excited that his grandma was coming. One little girl said she was grateful for her brother and her family, and, not to be outdone, the girl next to her said she was grateful for her WHOLE family. The next student said he was grateful for food and his mom, dad and brother who ALL cooked. In true Thanksgiving tradition, one boy said he was thankful for food and for the Native Americans because they taught us how to plant. And finally, one child was simply thankful for everything.

At school the students are thankful for their friends, their teachers, the tables, learning, reading with Ms. Brown, the toys and one boy just blurted out "MATH!" One very honest student answered "I like lunch." Careful not to leave anyone or anything out one child added, "the school and everything and everyone." Ms. Martin was thankful for the music and art that they have in their school. As a class they all decided they were thankful for the earth, and we all agreed that the Native Americans were most likely thankful for the earth as well.

Part of the kindergarten Native American unit included asking each student to



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to choose a name for him/herself in the Native American style of describing their connection to the earth. Before I bid the class goodbye and Happy Thanksgiving, their red-haired teacher, "Scarlet Fur", dismissed the children individually by beating a drum to the rhythm of their Native American names: Woodland Woman, Golden Sunrise, Chirping Chickadee, Crystal Waterfall, Moving Rock, Blowing Leaves, Morning Moose, Skipping Deer, Twirling Rose, Flying Hawk, Chipping Axe, Wild Horse, Warrior Wolf, and Tall Grass.

All of your friends at South Shore Conservatory wish all of you a Happy Thanksgiving! May your day be full of turkey and popcorn and turkey...!

*Elaine Sorrentino is South Shore Conservatory's Communications Director. She also teaches in the Conservatory's arts-based Preschool and PreK programs.*