



# Our History and Staff Team

## 2007-08

### *Our Staff Team*

#### Co-Directors

**Rina Woodfin** is a seasoned and certified Early Childhood Educator and Director. She has been teaching at MSP since 1993 and co-directing since 2002. Besides being a gourmet cook, Rina appreciates listening to Jazz and classical music. She has greatly enhanced the cohesiveness of the staff team with organization, dedication and her delicious baked goods.

#### Program Coordinator & Teacher of The Rabbit Class

**Myrna Shadley** has a B. A. in Education. She has worked in Early Childhood Education since 1980, both as a teacher and Director. Myrna is in her 5<sup>th</sup> year at MSP. She is delighted to be part of the Mustard Seed community and enjoys getting to know the children and families in the Rabbit class. This year Myrna is also our parent resource person, in charge of the “Our Space” bulletin. Myrna is a mom to six children and grandma to three. She enjoys gardening, spending time at the beach and being with her family. *The teaching team for the Rabbit class includes: Shirley, Myrna, Megan, Monica, Sharon, and Candace.*

#### The Roo Class Teachers (1.5 to 2.5 years old)

**Denise Hattam** is working toward becoming certified in Early Childhood Education. She has taught in the Pooh Bear class two years ago and was our substitute last year. Denise has always had a heart for children and children ministries. Her passion includes Sunday school teaching for the two-year olds at a local church in Berkeley, taking walks with her daughter, biking, and reading biographies of people of faith and other books of inspiration.

#### The Piglet Class Teachers (2 to 2.9 years old)

**Monica Pelucchi** is a certified Early Childhood Educator. She has been teaching at MSP since 1996. Monica works diligently, patiently, creatively and flexibly with children. Her teaching combines love & humor with developmentally appropriate limits. She has a contagious enthusiasm and enjoys the outdoors and social gatherings. Monica is a dedicated teacher at MSP and a loving wife and mother to her husband and two children. She is a great cook and baker. She is Italian and speaks her language fluently.

#### The Pooh Bear Class Teachers (older 2.9 to 3-year olds)

**Vicky Brodt** is a certified Early Childhood Educator. She is in her 6<sup>th</sup> year of teaching at MSP. Vicky also works with children’s ministry at Berkeley Covenant Church. She brings a diverse and rich training in Early Childhood Education, along with her creativity, to the classroom. Also a certified horticulturist, she enjoys gardening, quilting, and spending time with her two kids; Sean (14) and Chelsea (6). She produces the MSP newsletter “Seedling”.

**Shirley Wong** has an M. A. in Clinical Psychology and an Early Childhood Program Director Credential. She was the founding Director of our sister school in Oakland—Little Sprouts Preschool. She has been teaching at MSP since 2001. She finds great joy in working with young children and seeks to get to know each child’s personality and learning style. She enjoys hiking, horseback riding, and spends quality time with friends and family.

#### The Rabbit Class Teachers

**Megan DeRouche**y is one of the teachers in the afternoon extended care. She taught the toddler class last summer. Megan was the gym teacher at MSP five years ago and has been a part of the afternoon teaching team for two years. She is kind, loving and energetic in the classroom and maintains appropriate boundaries with the children. Megan is now a new mom to her daughter (Johana) who was born this past summer. It brings her great joy to spend time bonding with Johana and simply “being” a mom.

**Sharon Lee** is a certified Early Childhood Educator and has been teaching at MSP since 1993. She is a graduate of Sook Myong University in Korea, in Art. This is the 7<sup>th</sup> year that Sharon co-teaches the Roo class. She is wonderful and warm with toddlers and creates strong bonds with them, inspiring trust and affection. She is calm and skilled in helping these toddlers transition through the separation process. She is fluent in Korean. Her excellent Korean cooking brings special warmth and laughter to our staff team.

**Carmela Asucion** has a B. A. in Child and Adolescent Development with an emphasis on Young Child & Family. She co-taught the Roo class last year. She is warm and gentle in the way she connects and interacts with children. Her “kid-at-heart” personality really comes through in her teaching and interactions with the children. She was also involved in Jumpstart—a program aimed to prepare the children for kindergarten and the staff to be involved with the children's family and community. She is fluent in Tagalog.

**Jill Wang** has a B.A. in Public Relations. Jill was a preschool teacher for two years at Decatur First United Methodist Preschool in Atlanta, Georgia. She relates with children and adults with warmth and enthusiasm. Jill communicates with children in clear, age-appropriate and respectful ways. She has two sons: Jameson has graduated from MSP last year and Ryan attends MSP this school year in the Kanga class. Jill enjoys traveling and camping with her family. She also loves to read, cook, scrapbook, and take long walks.

### The Tigger Class Teachers (older 3- to 4-year olds)

**Meri Thwaites** is a certified Early Childhood Educator and Director. She has been teaching at MSP since 1986 and has years of experience teaching the Pre-K class. Meri is warm-hearted, hospitable and humorous. She welcomes children and families into her life and keeps them in her spirit. She shares her gift of music and singing in the classroom and combines welcoming warmth with loving/healthy boundaries with the children. Meri has just become grandmother to her first grand-daughter Johana.

**Helen Wu** is a certified Early Childhood Educator and Director. She has a B.A. in Art and Psychology and is currently working toward her Master of Fine Arts Degree. She has taught at MSP from 1989 to 1996 and co-directed the preschool from 1996 to 1999, before moving on to become the Children Ministry Director at a local church. Having raised her two sons to adulthood, Helen holds a deep passion for nurturing children and helping them to cultivate

their multi-faceted potential. With her warm and loving nature, she brings a nurturing presence that children can readily sense in the classroom. It has truly been a joy to welcome Helen back to MSP last year to co-teach the Tigger class.

**Erwin Vista** is a certified Early Childhood Educator and has a B. A. in Music. He is in his 3<sup>rd</sup> year of teaching at MSP. Erwin has taught the older pre-K class at MSP for two years. He brings wonderful music skills and talents as well as a love for children to our teaching team. He teaches children piano outside of MSP. He has an even temperament that brings calmness to the classroom. His awareness of children's different temperaments makes him especially attuned to children who may need an extra word of encouragement and individual attention on a particular day. He also brings the joy of science discoveries to the children on a daily basis.

### The Kanga Class Teachers (4- to 5-year olds)

**Kristen Matarazzo** is a certified Early Childhood Educator and has a B. S. in Fine Arts. She is in her 4<sup>th</sup> year of teaching at MSP. She taught Karate to children 4 - 11 year-olds at the Academy of Martial Arts. Kristen is a keen observer of children. Children feel an instant comfort with her and she balances humor with the setting of healthy boundaries. She is sensitive to provide activities that both encourage and challenge children to discover their potential. She is a leader and a ready public speaker. She enjoys reading, having coffee with friends and laughing.

**Candace Martinez** is a certified Early Childhood Educator. She taught and directed the Little Sprouts Preschool for the past few years. Candace is insightful about children's needs and interests, and she engages them in activities that would cultivate in them a love for learning. Her teaching and curriculum combine healthy boundaries with fun & games, drama, songs, and creative expression. She encourages children to become aware of and communicate their feelings and needs with teachers and peers. For fun, she loves to explore new restaurants and cafes with her husband.

### Specialists for Elective Classes

**Gym/Music/French** (Nathalie Sanchez): She is a certified Early Childhood Educator. She is French Canadian and speaks French fluently. She comes with experience in dance, movement, singing and music, including two recorded albums. This school year Nathalie is our music and gym specialist. She will teach gymnastic as well as music, songs and movements once a week during the morning classes. The gymnastic routines help the children build body-confidence, coordination, motor skills, strength, and flexibility as well as a love for movement. Each class includes a warm-up, followed by age-appropriate tumbling passes, obstacle course and large muscle movements that build integrated strength and coordination. Nathalie will also continue to teach French as an elective course. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of French Immersion at MSP! In the French class children will learn French through conversations, songs, arts and craft activities, as well as the French culture.

**Dance** (Mary Lyons): Mary was trained at the Royal Academy of Dance London, England. She had a dance school in Scotland for ten years. She has been operating "Dance Center One" in Walnut Creek. This is the 7<sup>th</sup> year that Ms. Lyons is teaching dance at MSP. With a passion for creativity and discipline, she is committed to teach dance to children of all ethnicity. In dance children learn a variety of activities in large and small groups, such as skipping, turn taking, posture and beginning dance positions for a variety of dance forms such as ballet, tap, and jazz.

**Karate** (Kristen Matarazzo): This is the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Karate at MSP! Kristen was an instructor and student at The Academy of Martial Arts for 6 years. Karate is a wonderful opportunity to help children strengthen their gross motor development. Through the use of games and drills, children also learn self-control, perseverance, listening skills and team work.

**Spanish Immersion** (Janet Martorano): Janet was a chef and cooking teacher at Berkeley Montessori School. Teaching has always been enjoyable to her. It particularly brings her great joy and excitement to teach children in her native language (Spanish). This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Spanish Immersion at MSP! In this elective class Janet hopes to instill in children a love for learning the Spanish language and the Mexican culture. She intends to share with the children her knowledge of the Mexican culture and teaches them Spanish through conversations, songs, stories, arts, and cooking activities. Her son Nick (17) and daughter Gabby (15) were once students at Mustard Seed Preschool.

### Other Support Staff

**Laurie Fiddes** (Bookkeeper); **Nimota Abina** (BCC receptionist); **Elizabeth Liu** (Office Support); **Ron** (Repair & Maintenance)  
**Mustard Seed Committee:** Jo Ann Moseley, Peter de Laveaga and Laurie Fiddes

## *History of Mustard Seed Preschool*

Mustard Seed Preschool was founded in 1979 as a non-denominational, non-profit Christian school dedicated to excellence in education and nurture. Children from all faiths and backgrounds are welcomed. It has been operated by the Berkeley Covenant Church since 1986. One of the distinctive qualities of Mustard Seed Preschool is the strong sense of community and "family" created by the relationships between children, parents and teachers. The commitment and dedication of our staff to create a supportive and nurturing environment for families with young children has been, and continues to be, the strength of our school. We are also blessed with low staff turnover.