

# Scribbles - A Homegrown Neighborhood Preschool, Educating Children and Helping Them Discover Who They Are, What They Can Do and Who They Can Become

By Arlene Aspell

Scribbles Preschool, Inc., Located at the Community Church in the heart of Mountain Lakes, is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as the town of Mountain Lakes celebrates its centennial. Scribbles began as a small home-based creative arts program for scribblers two to three years old, led by co-founders and Mountain Lakes residents Mimi Lyons and Karen Schwinger.

Parents in Mountain Lakes encouraged us to expand to a full preschool program in order to give them other options when a local nursery school closed its doors. These parents found the perfect location for us at the neighborhood Community Church and the name "Scribbles" remained with us. Parents continued to be the foundation of our educational mission by raising funds and constructing by themselves an extensive outdoor playground with the assistance of many talented volunteers. The children of today continue to enjoy our spacious, sunlit classrooms, which provide a warm, cheerful, inviting atmosphere for learning.

Many families have stayed in touch with us over the years. Some parents who are in particular professions, such as a nurse, a doctor, a dentist, a chiropractor, a chef, a musician and an educator have come back to share their expertise and enrich our curriculum. Others have welcomed us to go off-site and we have taken field trips to a grandma's alpaca farm, a family's dentist office, and even a restaurant. Some Scribbles alumni have returned to share their professions and their talents and to assist us with our Summer Camp.

Our innovative teachers, some of whom have been with us since the beginning and others for fifteen years or more, are continually engaging children one on one and in small groups to make the theme of the month come alive and be meaningful through hands-on experiences and dynamic play. It is interesting to note that some young teachers who were parents of Scribbles children later become teachers at our school. Today the moms of eighteen Scribbles alumni continue to teach here. This on-going commitment shows we are a family of teachers, parents and children happily immersed in a preschool program that works for all of us.

Since it began, Scribbles has received high recognition for its preschool program in general and its developmentally appropriate practices. Several universities send teacher candidates to us to observe and to assist. We have also been acknowledged by educational organizations, The Learning Disability Association and teacher award programs.

As we reflect on the last 25 years, we are grateful for the on-going support of Mountain Lakes families, past and present, and we look forward to future years of serving the needs of our young children from Mountain Lakes and surrounding communities in this beautiful setting.

Happy Mountain Lakes Centennial to all!