A Word From Ellon …

At this time of the year as we prepare to say our farewells – to our children sailing their boats to go to school, and our younger group who will join us again after the holidays – one feels the air of excitement and anticipation building. We can be confident that much has been achieved, and the children are now ready to take their next steps. As we prepare for the celebrations this week, together all staff have had the opportunity to reflect and appreciate how much all the children have achieved this year. It is always inspirational to be part of each child’s journey and I thank you for the opportunity.

This year has been a busy year, with Periwinke’s 25th Anniversary being celebrated as well as everything else. I would like to thank you all for the support and generosity of time you gave to make this event the very special day it was.

As this year is rapidly coming to a close one gets a sense of the ever-increasing speed at which we are all living our lives. Yes – even here in Byron Bay! It seems to be getting harder and harder to fine the balance between work, family life and time for oneself. My wish for you all this Christmas is that there will be a space to slow down, rejuvenate and enjoy the holidays with your children. May you all have a joyous Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Happy Holidays,
Ellon

“The light of Christmas should shine as a light of peace, a light that brings outward peace only because it first sheds inner peace into human hearts.”
Rudolf Steiner
From a lecture given in Dornach on 24 December, 1920.

CHILDREN SAILING THEIR BOATS THIS YEAR …

Alysia  Allande
Alekzander  Charlize
Ayla  Chille
Hapi  Gaberielle
Holly  Genevieve
Joey  Gordon
Koa  Hannah
Leela  Jake
Yonatan  Kiana

Sail, sail my boat …
Carry me across the water …
Sail, sail my boat.

Zoe  Max  Tonali
Welcoming our new Newsletter Editor for 2012

After three years of editing the Periwinkle newsletter, the time has come to move on (at least for now). At the end of December our family is moving to Alice Springs: James has a position as a Child Trauma Counsellor with the Northern Territory Government, and Esther has a place at the Alice Springs Steiner School.

Editing Periwinkle’s newsletters has been such a valued experience for me. I have been blessed with the support and positivity of the Periwinkle staff, PMC, trustees and families – and I have had the opportunity to deepen and enrich my own Steiner journey. Thanks to everyone who has contributed articles, photos and feedback.

I am delighted to welcome Amber Greene as the newsletter editor for next year. Amber brings many skills to the task – both as a writer and an educator – and I look forward to seeing the upcoming newsletters.

Warmest wishes,
Jenny Edney

2012 Term Dates

Staff in-service at Stamford Valley Steiner School: 23–25 January

2012 Parent Orientation Evening (all new & returning families): Friday, 27 January, 7pm–8.30pm

Term 1: 30 January – 5 April
Term 2: 23 April – 29 June
Term 3: 16 July – 21 September
Term 4: 8 October – 14 December

Library Book Decree

Many years ago, Caesar Augustus required all those in the Roman world to return to their ‘own town’ for a census ... similarly, it is time for all the Periwinkle library books to return to their ‘own shelf’ for the holidays.

If you have any outstanding books borrowed from the Periwinkle library please return them over the coming week so the shelves are stocked ready for next year.

Still to come this term ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 Dec</td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>End-of-year Celebration for Mon–Tue–Wed group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Dec</td>
<td>Thu</td>
<td>End-of-year Celebration for Wed–Thu–Fri group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Dec</td>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>Working Bee (Pack-up): 9am–12pm, children welcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Dec</td>
<td>Sat</td>
<td>Working Bee (Oiling timber): From 9am, no children please</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

End-of-Year Working Bees

It’s that time of year when we say our goodbyes to old friends and new, and tuck Periwinkle away safe and snug for a new year. There will be two opportunities for you to choose from for our end-of-the year clean-up.

**Friday, 16 December, 9am–12pm**

Please join us to help pack up all the beautiful toys, clean and polish furniture, mend any broken toys, pack away craft items, clean the gutters, organise and clean out the shed and so much more. Many hands make light work so please come along, bring some morning tea to share and children are welcome.

**OR**

**Saturday, 17 December, from 9am (weather permitting)**

Please join us to oil all the beautiful timber play structures, veranda, posts, steps, etc. This is a very important job and must be done to keep our fabulous playground in great condition and to protect it from the elements. Unfortunately, we can’t have children present on this day – the timber needs to stay clean of sand, grit and little hands while we work.

Please bring some morning tea to share, and wear clothes/shoes that you don’t mind getting stained and some work gloves.

Please place your name on one of the rosters on the sign-in bench.

A huge thank you for all the hard work the families have put in this year to help maintain this beautiful school, and thank you in advance for coming along to help us with the preparations before the long summer holiday!

Cyndi Harris, Working Bee Coordinator
To Our Families ...
by Xiola for the Periwinkle staff

On behalf of Periwinkle staff, I would like to offer all families our sincere gratitude for entrusting us with the care of your children. For each and every child that has been a part of our program, we give thanks. Every child offers us the chance to learn more about ourselves as educators and as human beings.

On one level the work of the early childhood educator may appear menial. There is always so much to be done! Hungry tummies to feed, runny noses to be wiped, grazed knees to tend to, dynamics between children to be watched closely over...

However, far from being menial, it is in these daily moments that we have the opportunity to truly meet each child and to respond to them with loving kindness. Not unlike the task of parenting, caring for the young child as a profession constantly asks us to rise in our own development as a human being. It asks us to suspend our judgement, to be in the moment and to meet the situations before us with consciousness and grace. Not an easy task, but one that we aspire to in our daily work.

Over recent days the Periwinkle staff have been poring through photographs of the children that we have taken over the year as part of our documentation of their learning journey. In compiling the children's portfolios, what has really stood out to me is how much love and affection we collectively feel for the children in our care. We have taken great delight in watching and supporting these beautiful children to grow and develop.

To those children who are 'sailing their boats', we will truly miss you! However, we trust that wonderful new beginnings lay ahead of you. To those families and children who are returning, we look forward to another year together!

Love Xiola x

Wishing our Families and Staff a Joyous Christmas and Happy Holiday.

From the Periwinkle
PMC.

Farewell For Now But Not Goodbye
by Ellon

Jenny Edney, editor and founder of the Periwinkle newsletter in 2009 is moving to Alice Springs at the end of this year and this addition is her final newsletter. Over the past three years Jenny has brought the newsletter to a standard that is second to none; we have been so blessed to have her (a professional editor), to take on this role.

Words cannot express how much her contribution has meant to us all here at Periwinkle. She created a newsletter that was of an outstanding quality, beautiful, informative and a vehicle that reflected the activity and philosophy of Periwinkle to our families and many others who have become regular readers of the Periwinkle Newsletter.

As well as doing the newsletter, she has also been the communication officer, ensuring all messages to families were sent out and also guarding that parents did not receive unnecessary emails. As we become more and more hi-tech emails to all of us can be overwhelming and another thing to address within a busy day. Jenny managing this in the way she did was a great support to me and something I just never had to worry about. It just all happened perfectly.

This year Jenny has been very active, working with me and the staff on developing the whole-food program. Her input, creativity and knowledge has again made this task ever so much easier than we could imagine.

So to say goodbye to Jenny one can feel a deep sense of loss and there is that space in my heart – however, I prefer to value the wonderful opportunity it has been to have had her so involved and the fabulous education she has shared with us all. My deepest gratitude and thanks, words do not express how much you are appreciated Jenny.

I feel excited for the Steiner School in Alice Springs who will be welcoming “The Edney family” into their community when Esther starts Class 1 there next year. The picture I have is of a stone thrown into a pond – it just ripples out, out, out. I think Jenny will take a little of Periwinkle to that community and that is a very special thought to have the spirit of Periwinkle now being shared in Central Australia.

Another positive is we also know Jenny will be only an email away!!!

A very special thank-you Jenny from all staff and families.
Warmest regards,
Ellon
It’s a wonder how I fell into this role as a working bee coordinator. I have never regarded myself as very handy or good at gardening. I suppose it helps that my husband is super handy, so I thought between the two of us we might be able to manage.

The experience of working on the school gardens has been a great journey. It’s been fun at times, wet and cold at times, hard work as well as rewarding. It has also sparked a renewed interest in plants and gardening for me, which has been passed on to my son Gordon. He loves gardening and he especially loves “pest control!” … picking the caterpillars and snails off the plants is such fun!

The gardens at Periwinkle are a work in progress; they will need much TLC in the years to come. Thanks to the dedicated parents and teachers, they have been transformed from gardens that were a bit overgrown, neglected and weedy in places into tidy little pockets with fresh splashes of colour and scent. There is even some biodynamic composting happening with the help of Sandra Frain.

“I love to just stop for a moment and look around at this place and sense the goodness, truth and beauty all around. To just breathe in the delicious smells wafting from the kitchen and watch the children play and discover the wonders in the garden is so satisfying.”

It has been exciting to watch the gardens evolve and flourish. In 2010, the three veggie beds were built by the parents and staff at a working bee, and all the surrounding landscaping has since received a lift in the way of new compost and mulch, heaps of weeding and a variety of new plants. It would be great to see these gardens planted out with even more perennials to provide splashes of colour and beauty for each season of the year. The teachers and children also reap the benefits of lovely fresh arrangements in the classroom.

It’s easy to get caught up in the bustle and business of family life, work, study, etc and not have time for much more. Being involved at Periwinkle has opened up new pathways for me. Before joining the craft group, I could barely even sew on a button let alone make felt slippers or a beautiful doll. Being a part of the Parent Management Committee and helping to care for the school grounds has been vastly rewarding. Another perk is I have made new friends along the way.

I know daily life can seem busy. I love to just stop for a moment and look around at this place and sense the goodness, truth and beauty all around. To just breathe in delicious smells wafting from the kitchen and watch the children play and discover the wonders in the garden is so satisfying.

At Periwinkle, there seems to be continuous renewal all around; the school is always changing, improving but also steadfast in upholding the true essence of Rudolf Steiner’s indications for early childhood education. I feel blessed my son has had the opportunity to experience the precious gifts this school has to offer. I look forward to coming back next year, when my daughter begins her Periwinkle journey, and to giving the gardens some more TLC. I do hope you will join me!

“Today let us bring to mind … all that the Christmas festival can bring home to our hearts if we regard the science of the spirit not as dull, grey theory, not as a mere outward confession, not as philosophy, but as the very pulse of life within us.”

Rudolf Steiner. From a lecture given in Berlin on December 24, 1905.
The transition from preschool to primary school can, at times, be more daunting for parents than their children. Kiana my eldest child, finished Periwinkle this time last year. I hope that sharing a bit of Kiana’s journey might calm any nerves that may arise as preschool comes to an end and many of you are gearing up for a few changes ...

The transition from preschool to primary school can at times be fuelled with uncertainties about the choices you are making for your child, regarding where they will go to primary school, how they will fit in and adapt to a new environment or how ready they might be to make a leap into the big wide world.

Kiana attended Periwinkle for two years before entering into kindergarten at Brunswick Heads Primary School.

During her time at Periwinkle Kiana developed many beautiful characteristics and skills that gave her confidence and a strong sense of self.

There is no questioning that Kiana is a happy, respectful and independent personality; however, no matter how confident a child, there will still be moments of fear and uncertainty towards starting any new adventure. Her years at Periwinkle gave her an ability to stay open and calm, no matter what was challenging her.

Kiana left Periwinkle ready to take on the world! Her enthusiasm for learning and discovering creatively and her freedom to follow her own independent line of play as well as contribute happily in a group dynamic can greatly be attributed to her years spent exploring the world of Steiner education. The honest nurturing, genuine connection, attentive focus and calm of all the beautiful women rubs off onto the kids, and I believe this energy never leaves them.

By the time a child is five and ready to start primary education, their personality and many conditionings are well in motion. Your child has soaked up more than they ever will again in this same time span. Whatever they have been exposed to has become them, thus a part of whom they are, essentially.

The essence and energy of Periwinkle will be with Kiana, at her core, for the rest of her life.

Her calm focus, with confidence as she connects with other children and teachers, has given her the opportunity to approach a new adventure with directness and enthusiasm. It did not take her long to find her groove.

Kiana has taken the warmth and softness of Periwinkle into her public school classroom; she has stood strong in transition and confidently added her individuality to her class dynamic. She is respected and interacts positively with each individual she meets. She is presently enjoying reading and writing, yoga classes, choir and very comfortably speaking in front of the whole school.

I’d love to think that it was all my great genes and good parenting that created a happy six year old, and maybe this helped ...

The Periwinkle experience nurtured and confirmed life to be a safe, happy and exciting place to grow ...

We may have a home that provides this for our children, but a child’s first steps outside the home environment stay with them as they create the foundations for life’s building blocks.

I now watch my second child Chayse blossom as he grows into a young, bright, excitable discoverer. Chayse has his own magical Periwinkle story which I will leave for another time ...

Portraits at Periwinkle: 2 for 1 photos

A special offer for Periwinkle families from our ‘resident photographer’ Nick – when you order your Periwinkle photos you will receive a 2nd copy of the same photo for free.

In Nick’s words: ‘It’s Christmas man.’

Please note: This applies to B&W prints only, not folios and canvases.

The Preschool to Primary Transition: A parent’s perspective
by Katie Healey

Periwinkle Preschool Newsletter

December 2011, Page 5
Susan Perrow’s Speech
at Periwinkle’s 25th Anniversary Celebration – 22 October, 2011
(and photos from the celebration, by Nick Burrows)

I have been asked to tell you a story, so here is how it goes – there was once a young woman who wanted to have a place where children could play and hear stories and sing songs … a special place where children could have time to be children … a special place (with no hurrying!) where children could have time to enjoy childhood. The young woman shared her wish, her dream, with many people, and finally found a church hall in Bangalow for her dream to actualise. Advertisements were placed in the local newspapers and 14 children were enrolled to begin, two days a week, February 1986.

‘What to call this special place?’ wondered the young woman … In fact she wondered about it continuously – while cooking dinner and sweeping the floor and shopping for groceries – “What to call this special place, this sanctuary for young children?” … Then one day while sitting on the beach at Broken Head, she was watching her 3 boys play on the sand, and she noticed many beautiful little periwinkle shells all over the rocks … ‘Like little children all over the shire,’ she thought … and the name ‘Periwinkle’ was born! A name that later would inspire many stories! A name that gave wonderful imaginations, especially with a reference to being a ‘boat’.

Parents were told that ‘PERIWINKLE’, in an attempt to nourish and guide more than to ‘teach’, offers to ferry your little ones in a warm and loving boat across the sea from home to school … Periwinkle, little boat, cross the sparkling sea afloat … silver moon, golden sun, shining down from sky above, bless our little boat with love …

At first there was no money for furniture and toys … but what did this matter? This determined young woman had been inspired by a conference where she had learnt that ‘a good toy for healthy child development should be 90% imagination and 10% toy’ – so, with 90% enthusiasm and 10% finances she thought, ‘I can do this,’ and she gathered baskets of shells and gumnuts and seedpods and feathers and blocks of wood and cloths … cloths of all sizes – big ones to make cubbies, and small ones to knot into dolls and frogs and rabbits and caterpillars, and medium-size ones to use for dress ups and flags and many many other creative purposes. She never tired of watching how many ideas for play came from such simple materials.

At the first parent meeting the parents looked around the somewhat bare room and when some anxiously asked, ‘What will our children do here, there is very little for them to play with,’ they were then asked to bring in more raw materials for the playroom … and so the ‘toy’ collection increased.

At first there were no tables and chairs … The children sat on low benches at tables made from planks of wood stretched across from church pew to church pew. The kitchen was stocked from this woman’s home – yes – by now you may have guessed that this woman was ‘me’. My boys could tell you some funny memories here – ‘Where’s the egg beater Mum?’, ‘Where’s the frypan Mum?’, ‘There are no tea towels in the drawer Mum’ … ‘Oh let’s guess … they are at Periwinkle!’ (But boys, be impressed at the well stocked kitchen now – it even supplies lunch for the children every day. From little things big things grow!)

There was no equipment in the garden of the church … but we had a wonderful park down the road that we walked to quite frequently. Sometimes we even had rest time in the park: Using my grandfather’s old canvas car cover, all the children would lie down on it, and we would pull it up over them, leaving their heads peaking out – we would lie there and watch the clouds changing shape in the blue Australian sky above us … Sometimes pinecones would fall (fortunately never on the children), and after our rest we would gather them up and take them back to preschool … more toys for the baskets!!

On one occasion, as we passed by the other preschool in Bangalow to reach the park, the children looked through the fence at all the things in the garden and one of our children said, ‘We don’t need all this … we are lucky, we have shells and gumnuts and seedpods – and best of all, we get to go to the park!’

Another advantage of using the park was the community connections we established – chatting with the elderly and playing with young parents and their toddlers. On one occasion the council workers were sitting at a bench while the children were all ‘knocking on the door of the knocking-door tree’. ‘What’s going on here?’ one of the workers called out – so the children invited him to come and also knock on the door of the tree – which he did … he marched across in his huge workboots and bent down and knocked ‘three times’ –

Continued next page ...
then a child said, ‘Listen – can you hear the magic gate opening into the forest?’

Meanwhile, parents helped make chairs and tables (so well made they are still being used 25 years later!); old tyres and saw horses made way for sturdy wooden climbing frames; washing buckets on the floor were replaced by proper sinks; the kitchen was slowly stocked; hand-written flyers were replaced by professionally printed brochures; and amateur bookkeeping was replaced by more skilled accountancy (my first volunteer bookkeeper only did her work when the stars were positively aligned!).

Slowly, slowly, slowly … Periwinkle was growing in numbers of days, numbers of children and numbers of teachers. Sue Gould joined with me as a co-director, and what a creative team we made – Sue with her musical and song writing skills and my passion for stories … some of our festivals and plays have been so popular (on a universal scale), and have now been taken up in other parts of the world. An interesting coincidence happened just last year when Sue and I were both working in different parts of China and crossed paths for one day and compared notes – we were still drawing on some of the resource ideas we had created at Periwinkle many years earlier! To mention some more examples here – every year in the botanic gardens in Nairobi 200 parents and children (African, Indians and expats) meet to play Sue’s rainbow bridge game and have a treasure hunt; and my ‘Garden of Light’ play (with songs by Sue) has recently been used by a puppetry group in the Philippines who do shows for children who live in the garbage dumps. And some of the Periwinkle stories are now in several languages, including Chinese, Croatian and Portuguese.

But I digress … back to my story … 4 years in the church hall (packing up every week) were followed by 2 years in the showground shed (at least here we didn’t have to pack up every week … only once a year at showtime … this was progress!). Inspections were passed with flying colours, and all the necessary paperwork was done to secure funding, even if only two days a week were available (with extra grants given from time to time by supportive politicians – thank you Don Page!) Susan told a story here of Don’s speech that came with a $10,000 cheque – and a child putting up her hand after ten minutes saying, ‘Please mister, I am trying really really hard to sit still but my feet need to move!’

Meanwhile, the search for land and fundraising for Periwinkle’s own ‘home’ continued in earnest. Then after many ‘dead ends’, one day a call came through from Byron council (OUT OF THE BLUE!) – it was the morning after my mother had died and I was in Sydney organising her funeral … I picked up the receiver to dial out and a voice said, ‘So and so … from Byron Council here … we have a block of land in Sunrise Beach that has been allocated for a community project. Would Periwinkle be interested to accept this offer?’ … YES!! ‘Would you agree to pay a dollar a week for a 25-year lease?’ … OF COURSE!!!

The condition of the offer was that building needed to commence within the year … we had a few thousand dollars in the bank and needed 100,000! This is where community support flooded in like sparkling waves coming up the beach at high tide at the Pass! What wasn’t given in donations was given in building materials or labour or interest-free loans, and within the year the target had almost been reached … The builder didn’t know it hadn’t been completely reached, but fortunately, within the time-frame of the building project, it was reached!! And small miracles happened … one example was the approval of the kitchen within the playroom … apparently this had never been done before (safety reasons)! … many other preschool teachers warned me it would be an impossible feat: ‘The kitchen needs to be in its own separate room,’ they all said! Our first application was rejected … but we were adamant that our program needed this kitchen in the main room – for bread making and many other domestic chores that were vitally and integrally woven into our program … So I made an appointment to see the top inspector in the Byron Council and with fingers and toes crossed I walked into his office and sat down. He pulled out the rejection letter and drew a red line across it: ‘Let’s start again shall we … now let’s see,’ he said, ‘a smoke detector in the ceiling should take care of our responsibility in this matter … are you happy with this?’ … Another resounding YES!

Another miracle began like a nightmare … just a few weeks before moving in, I was called in the middle of the night – ‘Byron fire dept here … thought you needed to know that a fire has been reported at your preschool – our fire engine is on its way there now!’

I pulled on some clothes and jumped in the car and drove from Suffolk to Sunrise in a blurry mess … but when I got there the fire engine had left and the neighbour was standing out the front – he had been the ‘miracle’ … for an unexplainable reason he had arrived home late and walked down the side of his garage that he never usually used – then he saw flames through the window of our preschool – he shouted to his wife to call the fire dept and turned on his hose, jumped the fence, broke the window and put it out … just in time before it had begun to engulf the entire room.

Continued next page …
A ceiling needed scrubbing and some floor boards needed sanding, but this was the only damage.

A most memorable moment was the day we moved the preschool down from the Bangalow showground to its new home ... 20 cars and trucks and utes loaded up and in convoy coming down the highway ... a sight in my rear vision mirror I will never forget! Then, because the fence and verandas weren’t quite completed, we had a week or so of many parents, and my own three boys, and Sue’s children, coming to preschool and finishing the work on weekends and during the week ... while the little children stayed home!

Eventually, in late Feb 1992 we began sessions ... what a joy ... what a privilege ... to be in such a wonderful new building with such an exciting new playground. At the opening ceremony I found it impossible to thank all involved in making the Periwinkle dream come true, so instead I read from Kahlil Gibran’s thoughts on giving:

‘And there are those who give and know not pain in giving, nor do they seek joy, nor give with mindfulness of virtue; They give as in yonder valley the myrtle breathes its fragrance into space. Though the hands of such as these God speaks, and from behind their eyes He smiles upon the earth.’

Five years later, it was time for both Sue Gould and myself to move on ... Sue to Melbourne to study Eurythmy and myself to Africa to work in teacher training and mentoring (yes I still have one foot there!).

I have told you some stories of the first 11 years ... My thanks to many others who have carried Periwinkle forward, and helped it grow more beautiful by the year. Firstly to Jill Benham for running Periwinkle during my year off, then to Kate Murray for taking over the directorship and, with the help of her team of assistants and parents, leading the preschool for the next 10 years, then finally to Ellon Gold for joining us 3 years ago and, with a supportive and committed staff, and extremely efficient parent committee, tackling all the challenges and bringing Periwinkle beautifully to what we see here today – we did indeed strike ‘gold’ when Ellon decided to come and live in Byron Bay.

My heartfelt thank-you to the trustees – Lyn McCormick, Sue Gould, Margaret King, Ian Hamilton, and more recently Sandra Frain and Ellon Gold – who have given Periwinkle their wisdom and love and guidance through good times and challenging times over the past 25 years.

And finally, a never-ending thank-you to the families who have supported and trusted us in good times and not such easy times – it has been a long but pleasurable mentoring (yes I still have one foot there!).

Ah, the children – the last thank-you has to go to them – the ‘twinkle in the eye of Periwinkle’.

HAPPY 25TH BIRTHDAY PERIWINKLE! it is time to light the candles and sing our birthday song.

(A ceiling needed scrubbing and some floor boards needed sanding, but this was the only damage.)