

MIGHTY ROOTS



GROWING HEALTHY MINDS
AND STRONG BODIES

VOL. 1 | SPRING 2023



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Cover Photo: Cari Schawo



Why Mighty Roots?

Mixed aged groups

Cross curricular classes

No forced curriculum or homework

Small class sizes (10-12 students per class)

Nature based learning on our 5 acre campus



Welcome!

Welcome to the first edition of our Mighty Roots magazine! Our hope is to bring encouragement and inspiration as we travel along this homeschooling journey together.

We are taking the road less traveled in our children's education, but we believe it's the right one for our families! At Mighty Roots, we are rooted in family, in our beliefs, in love, in acceptance, in nature, the desire to never stop learning and to never stop growing. We are rooted together.

Our roots run deep here, and it's in our roots where our greatest strength lies.

A Message from our Director

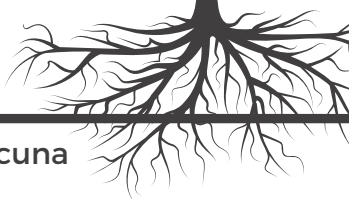


Education is so much more than the teaching content of academic subjects. Academic subjects are the opportunity to teach the attitudes and life skills that truly matter.

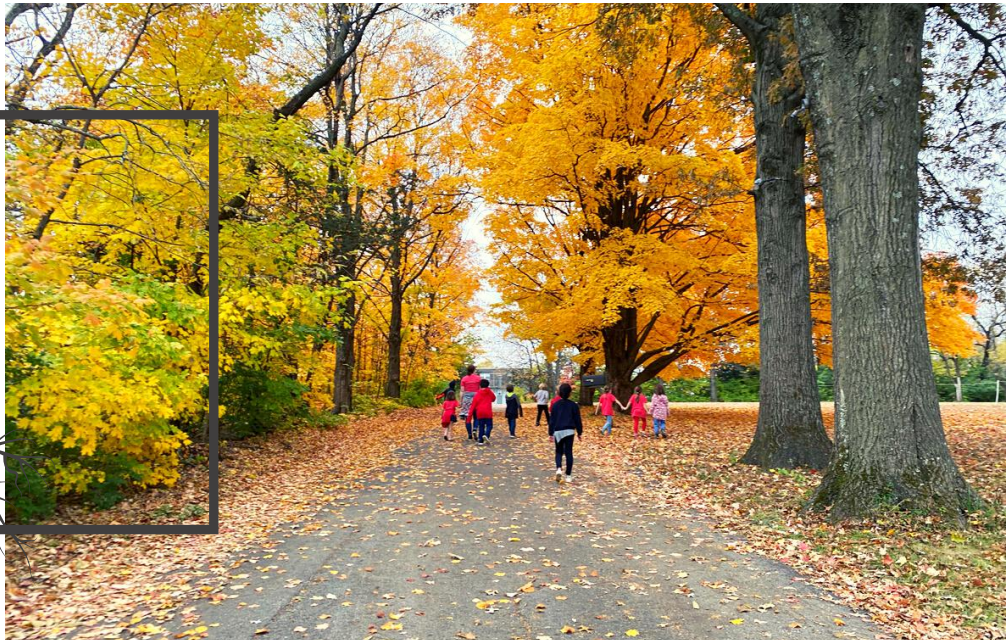
Here at Mighty Roots, we provide active, cross-curricular, multi-age education in a nature-rich environment.

~ Tracy Schroeder

OUR ROOTS



By Kristine Acuna



Tracy Schroeder, Renee Bichel and Kristine Acuña came together to create a program that would later be called Mighty Roots Academy. Each wanted a lasting, caring place that would encourage their children and program participants to grow in knowledge, foster a sense of wonder and further their understanding of themselves, their peers and the world around them.

A recognition of the abundance of traditional, seat-based, parental participation requirement (involvement) and numerous Christian co-op opportunities surfaced. While each founder strongly held to their personal Christian faith and beliefs, they also valued diversity. Their programming would use loving kindness and respect for all as the overarching guide. As such, this community prioritizes people and relationships. In such an environment the founders believed that children and their adults could learn and interact with loving kindness, and any differences or preferences could be navigated while acknowledging and respecting others' points of view. This desire to serve the homeschool community in a different way, means that Mighty Roots Academy programming is an educational, not religious, not-for profit organization.

The hallmarks of active, multiage learning in a nature-rich environment that crosses subject areas when appropriate are the unifying reasons for Mighty Roots Academy programming. The founders wanted students to learn in an active manner which comes through increasing wonder by engaging students in cooperative activities, immersing them in real-life situations, taking learning outdoors or bringing in unique skill building activities, along with many other varied experiences. Multiage learning can equip all students with various opportunities to mentor and be mentored.

(Continued)

Our Roots Continued

More advanced students share their expertise with younger students, and younger students encourage older students to see their strengths, in addition to allowing them to play and see the world around them with young eyes. Synthesizing learning and encouraging a broader understanding of many subjects and their interrelationships by having multiple subject areas represented also occurs in lessons when possible. In providing time outdoors, especially supervised free play outside students creatively explore, play and are enriched by, and in, nature.

The founders wanted a diverse group of individuals to find a place of belonging in all of Mighty Roots Academy programming. This creates a community that holds space for everyone to be seen and heard, while recognizing each individual's inherent value, dignity and worth.

Mighty Roots Academy welcomes any and all who desire to prioritize mutually respectful relationships built on loving kindness in addition to active, multiage learning in a nature-rich environment where students are challenged across multiple subject areas and allowed to participate in nature and create their own supervised free play while outdoors.



Kristine is a founding member of Mighty Roots. She has been a Learning Guide in many classes such as Spanish, Robotics, CSI and more!



Nature is at the core of Mighty Roots Academy

"Children come alive by being outdoors. The outdoors awakens their minds, centers their hearts, and gives them depth of soul. It is not the abandonment of academic work, but a help to it."

~ Ainsley Arment

Outdoor Skills

Our beautiful 5 acre campus offers a multitude of outdoor opportunities. Students pull together skills of communication, teamwork, engineering, math, science, chemistry, and meteorology in classes like Outdoor Skills, Explorer's Club, Geology and Paleontology, Makers and Inventors class, and Sensory Science.



Bread on a Stick



Students combine their fire starting skills, whittling skills, and cooking over a fire for this yummy snack.

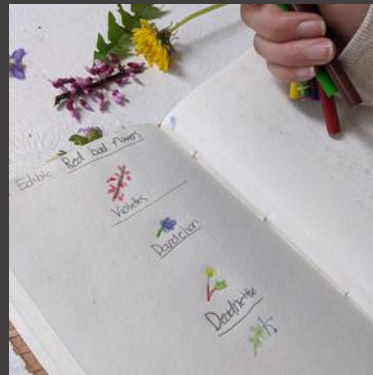


Our outdoor courses gives students hands-on experience with the natural world. Students develop skills to help them navigate the great outdoors as well as wilderness survival skills. Some of our topics have been: plant identification, water filtration, fire starting, campfire cooking, hand woodworking skills, outdoor games, archery, slingshots, and other topics according to students' interests.

BUILDING A SHELTER



ROPE MAKING



LEARNING ABOUT WILD EDIBLES



MAKING DRINKING GOURDS, BOWLS AND BIRDHOUSES.

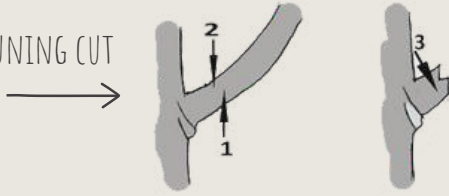


FIRE BUILDING

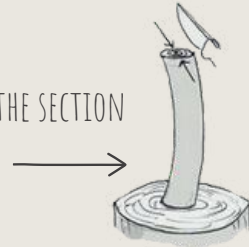


Spoon Carving

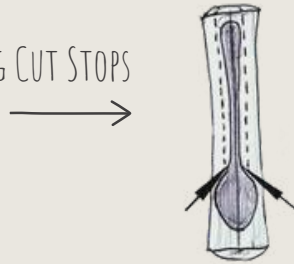
1. PRUNING CUT



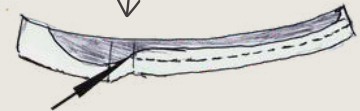
2. SPLITTING THE SECTION



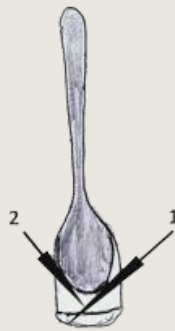
3. SAWING CUT STOPS



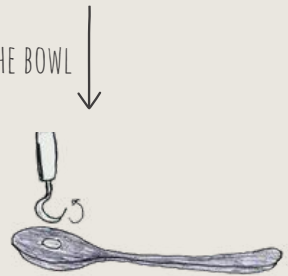
4. STOP CUT ON BACK OF SPOON



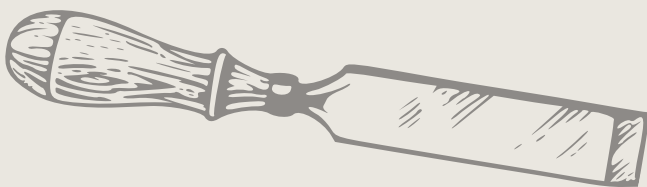
5. REMOVING EXCESS WITH A SAW



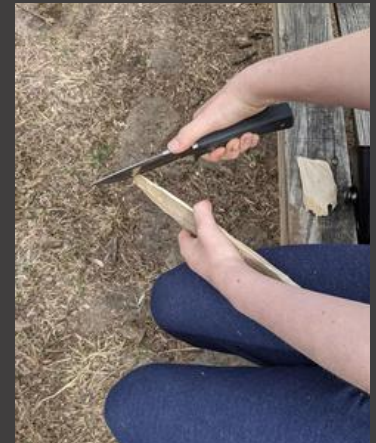
6. HOLLOW OUT THE BOWL




7. DIRECTION OF CARVING WITH CROOK KNIFE



SPOONS MAKE THE IDEAL FIRST CARVING PROJECT





"We need to
allow children
to move in ways
that make
adults gasp."

- Angela Hanscom



Tips to Get Outside

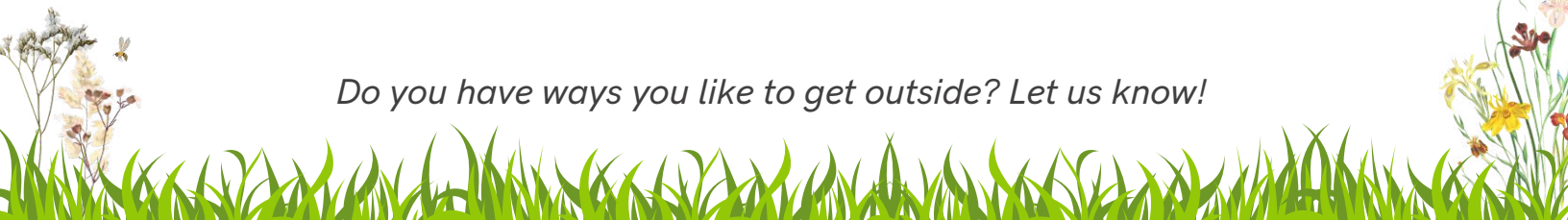
Getting outside doesn't have to be an elaborate planned out event. It can be as simple as reading on your front porch or drawing pictures in your driveway. There are many ways to get your child involved outside.



- 1 Set up an outdoor seating area.
- 2 Keep a picnic blanket by the door.
- 3 Find or make a nature nook in your yard.
- 4 Have a wagon or cart handy.
- 5 Have a learning basket or tote with items to take outside.
- 6 Take your lessons outside. Read on the porch or on a blanket in the grass.
- 7 Put up a swing.
- 8 Use sidewalk chalk in your driveway.
- 9 Keep a folding table in your garage to do crafts or play dough outside your garage.
- 10 Find an area or use planters on your porch or deck to grow a garden.



Do you have ways you like to get outside? Let us know!



A top-down view of a clear glass bowl filled with a large quantity of dried, purple violet flowers. The flowers are densely packed and show various shades of purple and blue. The bowl is set against a light-colored, textured background.

VIOLET

SYRUP

Violets bring the promise of spring and of warmer days. Wild Violets are nourishing, soothing and cooling and have long been used to fight inflammation and infection. It's a vitamin rich plant including vitamin A and C.

Wild violets are easily identifiable by their 5 petalled flowers and dark green heart-shaped leaves. They are low-growing plants that prefer fertile soil and are commonly found in meadows, pastures, lawns, and at the edges of wooded areas.



Where to Find Violets

Violets love to grow in moist and shady places. You can often find native violets growing near stream beds or underneath a canopy of shrubs and trees. In many places, violets start to bloom around the same time as dandelions.



How to Identify Violet

Violets have irregular flowers with five separate petals arranged in bilateral (side-to-side) symmetry. They have five sepals which can persist after the flower has bloomed.



How to Harvest Violets

Violets are easy to harvest using only your fingers. The flowers and leaves can easily be pinched off.

How to Use Violet Syrup

You can simply take it by the spoonful to soothe a sore throat or dry cough or to address lymphatic stagnation. You can add a small amount to sparkling water for a fun beverage. You may even add the syrup to cakes and frostings. Yum!

How to Make Violet Syrup

What you'll need

- 1 1/2 cups fresh purple violet flowers
- 2 cups just-boiled water
- 1/4 cup honey (or sweetener of choice)
- Lemon juice (small amounts, optional)

Directions

1. Place the violet flowers in a pint-sized glass jar.
2. Fill the jar with just-boiled water. Stir well. Cover.
3. Let sit for 30 minutes (or until the color has drained from the flowers; longer is fine).
4. Strain off the flowers.
5. At this stage you can choose to add lemon juice. When you make violet tea, the water turns blue. You may add just a few drops of lemon juice to make it purple. The more you add, the more the color will change. More lemon juice can result in a magenta or pink color. Go slowly to get the color you want.
6. Add honey (or sweetener of choice). Stir well.
7. Store in the fridge and use within a few days. For a longer shelf life, measure the liquid, add an equal volume of honey or sugar, and use within a month. Discard if it develops mold.

Yield: Approximately 2 cups

Special Considerations

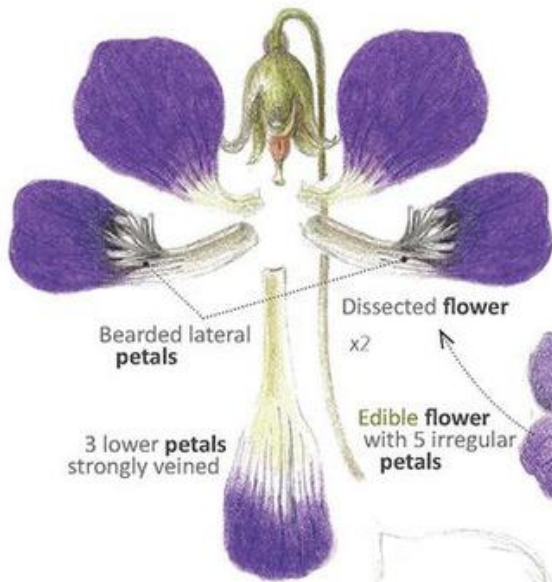
- Violet roots and certain species can cause vomiting or diarrhea if you eat too many.
- While violet flowers are easy to recognize, violet leaves have many look-alikes, some of them quite toxic, including monkshood (*Aconitum* spp.) and lesser celandine (*Ficaria verna*).

Always be certain you can identify the plant before harvesting and ingesting.



VIOLET

Viola sororia Violaceae

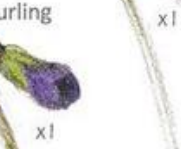


Flower color varies from deep purple to lavender to white

Side view of flower with spur



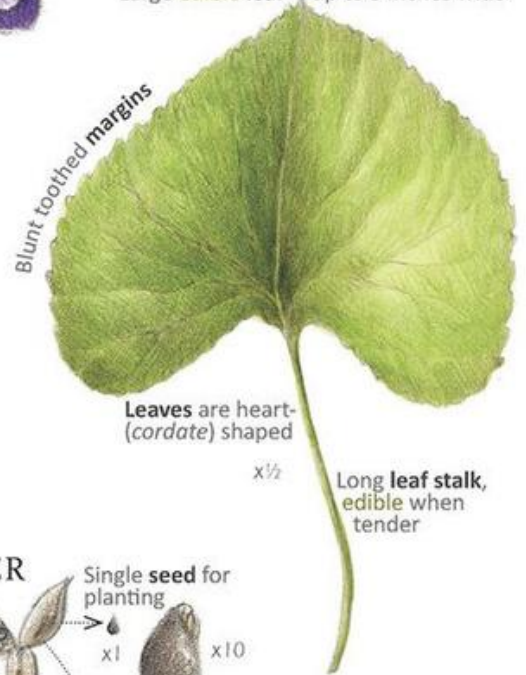
Edible flower stalk



Edible unfurling flower

MID SUMMER – FALL

Large edible leaf up to 5 inches wide



Long leaf stalk, edible when tender

Harvest flowers with stalks in spring; leaves with tender stalk spring–fall.

Many other *Viola* species are used similarly, with the exception of violets with yellow flowers. Caution: they may have a strong laxative effect.

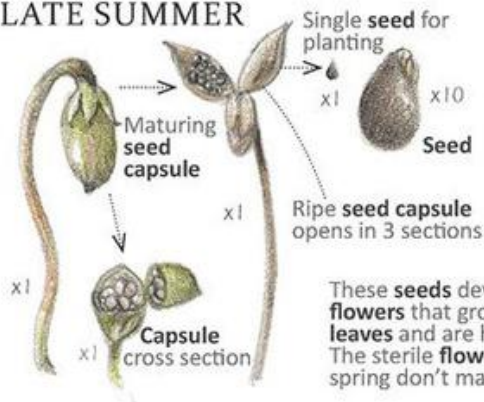
SPRING In flower

Edible young leaves & flowers



x1/2

LATE SUMMER



These seeds develop from flowers that grow under the leaves and are hidden from view. The sterile flowers we see in the spring don't make seeds.

HABITAT

Light: Full sun to part shade
Soil: Moist, rich
Hardiness Zones (USDA): 4–8
Found: Woods, gardens, meadows

LIFE CYCLE Perennial

REPRODUCES BY Root division; seed

SIZE 3–8" tall by 8" wide

CULINARY USES

Leaf & Tender Stem: Raw in salad, pesto, goddess dressing; cooked in soup, beverage.

Flower: Raw in salad, butter; as beautifying garnish.

Qualities — Flower: Mild with slight acidity; very high in vitamin C; extremely decorative. Leaf: High in vitamin C and beta carotene; mucilaginous; thickening agent; cooling, soothing.

RENEE BICHEL

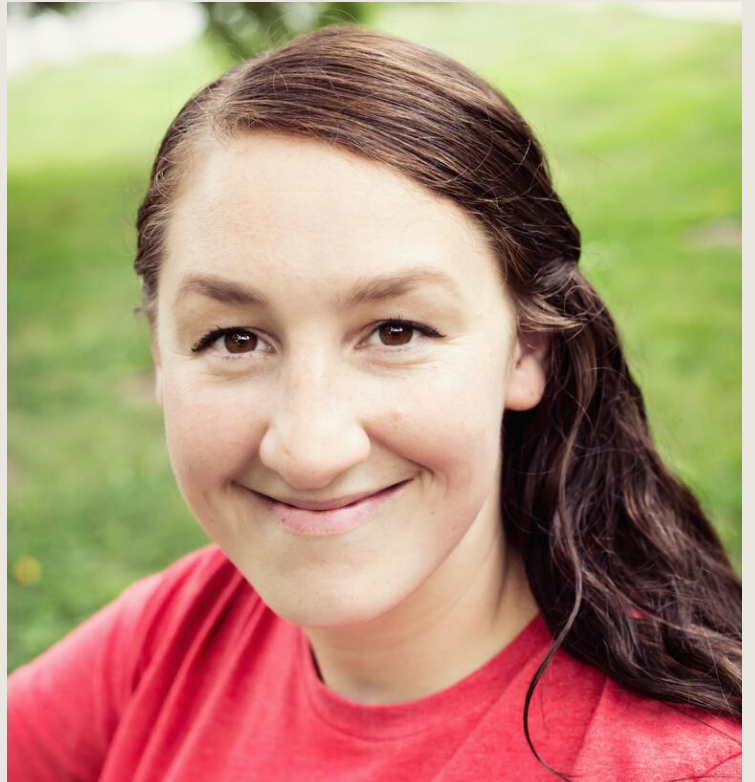
CO-FOUNDER OF
MIGHTY ROOTS ACADEMY

BY SHANXI OMONIYI

Renee was in 3rd grade of public school when her father started attending a church where lots of families homeschooled. Her parents were divorced, and her father had primary custody.

“He started to feel a real calling to educate me himself,” Renee said.

Renee said her father made many sacrifices to homeschool her, which included changing his full-time work schedule and listening to her concerns about the transition.



“I really did like public school, so it took a little bit to get used to the idea of being home,” she said. “But I did trust my dad. We had a very good relationship. He was a fantastic parent.”

For her first year of homeschooling in 4th grade, her father put her in a homeschool co-operative that met one day a week so she could still receive a classroom experience.

“I immediately made friends, and it didn’t feel as harsh of a shift,” she said. “I feel like he was smart, he knew what I needed, and just provided those things for me so I didn’t feel lonely.”

Her homeschool schedule looked different than most. She would do some classes on her own in the morning while her father was at work. Then, once he finished work, he could help her with anything else she needed in the afternoons and evenings.

“What’s lovely about homeschooling is, it doesn’t have to look a certain way,” she said. “You can do it any time of day.”

Renee enjoyed her experience so much that she said by age 16 she knew she wanted to educate her own children at home. Today she has three children, ages 9 to 14.

“I feel like my dad did a really good job of preparing me for the world and preparing me for college classes that I took,” she said. “I loved the idea of a family unit being together more, and not eight hours a day doing separate things. And then maybe getting a few hours in the evening to be together – and then starting that day over again.”

Renee said she needed some time to convince her husband, Curtis, about her choice to homeschool.

(Continued)

“We have a relationship where we like to debate,” she said, noting that she had thrived during homeschool speech and debate classes when she was growing up. “There are things we debated that I came around to his end, and this is one where he fully came to my side.”

Renee also said that hybrid homeschool models, such as the one she had growing up, can provide a middle ground by providing enrichment programs, extracurricular opportunities and other social gatherings.



“You have class experiences, you have group experiences, and you’re learning in discussions with people who don’t necessarily hold the same views as you,” she said. “And those are things that I wanted for my kids, especially going into high school.”

Renee would encourage any mom to consider homeschooling, since moms already have so much knowledge about their children’s academic, social and other needs.

“I don’t really have any special ability. It’s just the path that I’ve chosen for my family, and we all work at it together,” she said. “It does take some sacrifice for sure, but it’s one of those things that is worth it for me.”



— o o o —
Renee is a founding member of Mighty Roots. She is a Co-Director and Learning Guide. She lives in Peculiar with her husband, three kids and four dogs.

Why Volunteer?



We need your help!

We know that with busy lives, it can be hard to find time to volunteer.

However, the benefits of volunteering can be enormous. Volunteering at Mighty Roots offers us tremendous help to keep our program running. It's a great time to work along side other Mighty Roots families and make new friends!



Giving of your time has also been shown to help protect your mental and physical health. It can reduce stress, combat depression, keep you mentally stimulated, and provide a sense of purpose.



Snapshot



“Photography is a way of feeling, of touching, of loving. What you have caught on film is captured forever... It remembers little things, long after you have forgotten everything.”

~ Aaron Siskind

Our photography students have been hard at work this year learning the master the art of photography. Most recently they have been working on macro photography.

Macro photography is a fun way to capture extremely small scenes or images in up-close, vivid detail. However, it is not easy. It takes patience and a lot of practice. Our students are exceeding our expectations for this class and are producing some amazing images!

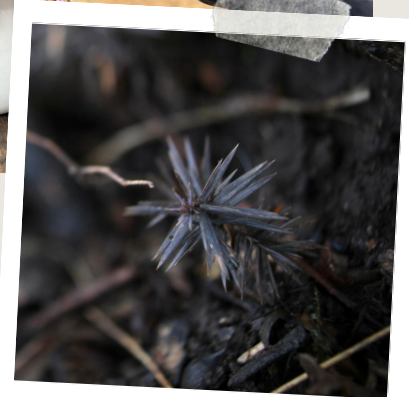


photo by Hailey

photos of students by:
cari schawo

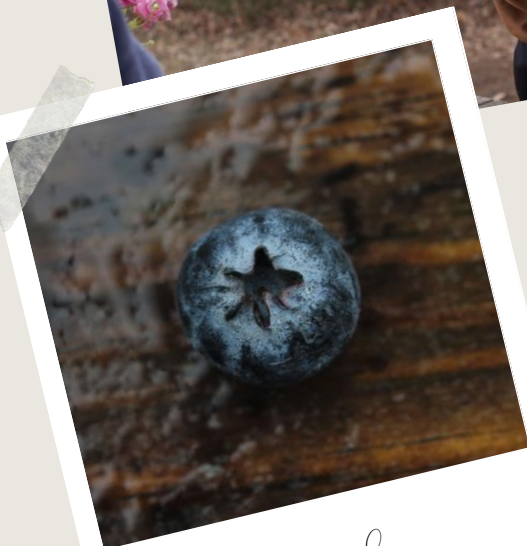


photo by Isaac



photo by Isaac

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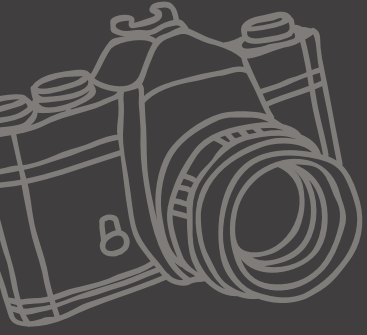



photo by Evelynne



photo by Josh



photo by Addie



**"The beauty of
the natural
world lies
in the details."**

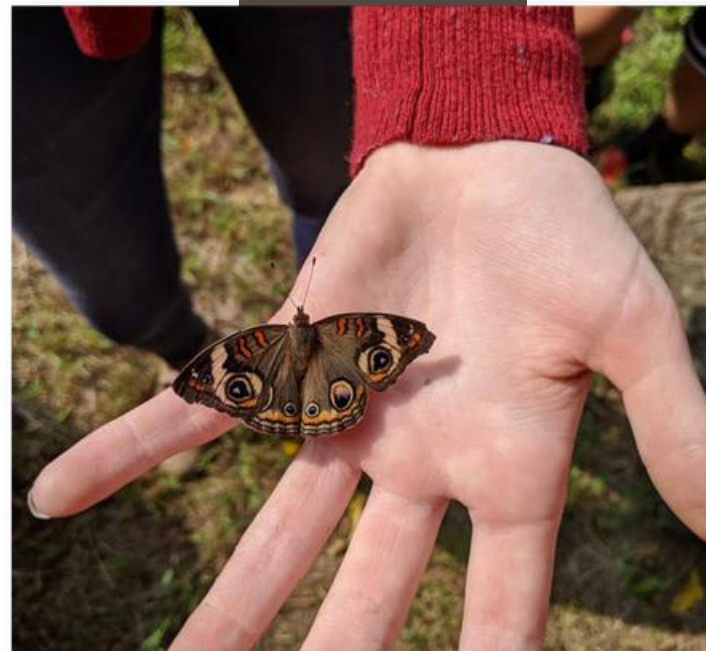
—Natalie Angier

THE NATURE OF THINGS

photography: cari schawo



Nature play is a key component of the Mighty Roots Academy homeschool program. Nature play allows students supervised yet unstructured time to play as they wish and with whom they wish. This is a completely student led time where they develop skills like problem solving, teamwork, conflict resolution, negotiation skills, the ability to express their wishes and desires and how to regulate their emotions. This is done within the safe context of adult supervision but without adult interference. Students in Mighty Roots Academy programs will participate in Nature play every day!





Rainy weather makes for fun days of hunting for worms in our Creative Explorations class. Our students used problem solving skills, small motor skills as well as large motor skills. The class also worked on their cooperation skills while working together to dig and hunt for worms!

photography: cari schawo



MY CALL TO HOMESCHOOLING

BY CHRISTINA SANDBERG

Homeschooling wasn't an option when I was a child. I don't think I even knew what it was or that it even existed. Getting on a school bus at 7:15 every morning and spending the next 8 hours in a classroom was just what you did. But I always felt deep down there had to be something more. I can remember looking out the windows of my classroom, especially on really nice days just wishing I could be outside. Coming home, I would run down our driveway and barely go inside to say hello to my Mom before I was running back out the door to try and get every last minute of daylight outside that I could. It was as if I was trying to get something back that had been taken from me for the past 8 hours.



Think back to some of your best memories of childhood. For me, most of those moments happened outside. I loved being outdoors... the fresh air, the sound of the birds, the way the wind would move through the trees and then blow through my hair... the feel of the sun on my face and the ground beneath my feet. There was a creek behind our house just past a cattle farm, and the owners of the field behind us would let us go through their field to get to the creek, as long as we closed the gate so that his cows wouldn't get out.

Past the gate, after I secured it with a rusty fence wire, I would run across the field careful not to step in the cow patties and find the spot in the fence along the creek where the barbed wire was just loose enough to crawl under. I would spend hours exploring that small piece of creek bed and making things out of sticks and vines. My sister and I would drag logs from fallen trees and make pretend campsites and forts. After a huge rain, the whole area would change and there would be new places to explore. It was magical. It was there I felt alive.

(continued)

“

EVERYBODY NEEDS BEAUTY AS WELL AS BREAD,
PLACES TO PLAY IN AND PRAY IN,
WHERE NATURE MAY HEAL AND GIVE STRENGTH
TO BODY AND SOUL.

~ John Muir

”



I can close my eyes and still see it. The creek winding behind our house and going up beyond the hills, the bright blue skies and the lush green trees from the woods on the other side. I can hear water trickling over the rocks, the cows lowing in the distance, a crow cawing out from the branch of a tree. It was my heaven. It called out to me.



Nature is powerful, just the memories of that outdoor experience alone brings a flood of emotions as I write this. There is a sense of timelessness in our time spent outdoors. Time in nature should be at the heart of every childhood. But it's this time, this freedom to spend time outside and just be a child, that is being taken away from our children. There is a pressure to get children to grow up, to pack their schedules and fill their days with testing and bookwork. We are in a hurry to rush through life and and get them to become who they are supposed to be. We forget that right now is *where* they are supposed to be. A child is *who* they are supposed to be. Outside is where our children belong. It's as simple as that.

(continued)





When my son was born, I knew I wanted something different... something more for him and for us as a family. And that's when homeschooling called out to me. It called out from the depths of my childhood, from that deep longing in my soul. It called out with the promise of freedom and the hope of something more. It called out to the wildness of my heart and quickened my spirit and gave life to my memories.

I have since answered that call, however its calling hasn't come easy, but hard things are often worth it. The ability we have to hang on to our children's childhood a little longer and to witness it along the way far exceeds any struggle and hardship that may come. Homeschooling gives us the freedom to take learning at our own pace. On nice days, the days when I longed to be outside instead of at school, I can now take my kids outdoors and give them the freedom to enjoy the sun, to run through the grass and play in the mud. Math and reading will still be there when we come back in.

It can wait, their childhood can't.

Christina and her family have been a part of
Mighty Roots since 2020. You can follow her on
Instagram at [@csandberg04](https://www.instagram.com/csandberg04)

Snail *charcuterie* anyone?

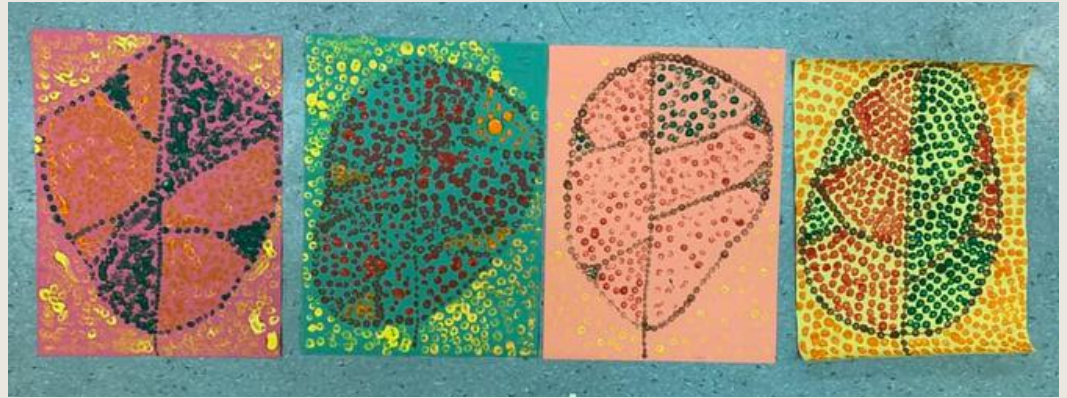
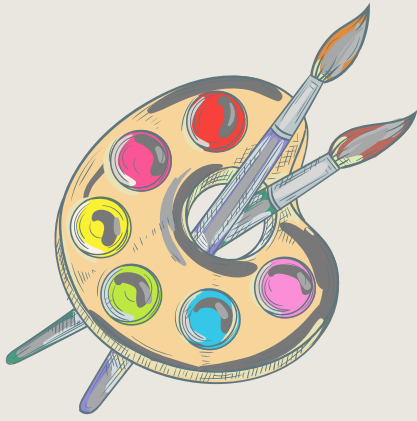
photography: cari schawo



"For observing
nature, the best pace
is a snail's pace."

~ Edwin Way Teale





the **ART** of it all



MIGHTY ROOTS
OFFERS SEVERAL ART
COURSES FOR YOUR
BUDDING ARTIST!



ART



ART EXPERIENCES CHALLENGE STUDENTS TO DEVELOP TECHNICAL SKILLS IN A VARIETY OF MEDIUMS, INCLUDING DRAWING, PAINTING, PRINTMAKING, AND MIXED MEDIA, AS WELL AS CREATE MEANINGFUL, ORIGINAL ART.



Our students got the opportunity to have Mr Dale Guthrie, a clay artist, and grandpa to two Mighty Roots students, come visit our class and teach us about working with clay slabs. Students used what they learned to create gnome houses.



Dyslexia

-words by tracy schroeder-

is more common than most of us realize.

Recognizing dyslexia helps make sure you use the right teaching techniques to help the dyslexic person find success.

If you have a kid that struggles with reading, spelling, remembering multiple directions at once, confuses left and right, transposes letters or numbers or reads words differently than what is written on the page, these are a few signs that their brain may be different too. It doesn't mean they are doomed to fail but maybe they need a different approach to learning. I can't say I fully understand dyslexia, but I have learned so much as I have learned how to help the learners in my own family.

I even learned that though I was a great student in school and even part of the gifted program, I have mild dyslexia even though no one realized it.

photography by Cari Schawo





You will see mistakes in my Facebook posts or the fact that it has taken me over ten minutes to type the previous two paragraphs. I say a lot of words incorrectly and often don't hear differences in sounds. I hate reading out loud because I will probably read something out of order or not be able to figure out a word. I love math but get so frustrated because I often misread prices on items I am purchasing or totals at the cash register. The list goes on.

I share this even though it's embarrassing, because the more I help my my family and others with dyslexia, the more I realize that there are a lot of people with dyslexia that don't even know it. People who get frustrated or feel inferior when really their brains just work different than how school classrooms and curriculums are set up. But when we learn to learn differently, we find success.

I highly encourage you that if a young one in your life shows some of these signs, you take steps to see things the way their brain sees them. Doing this will make a world of difference!




Tracy is the Director and founding member of Mighty Roots. She lives in Grandview with her husband and three children.

fungi!

Wet weather at
Mighty Roots
provides lots of fun
fungi to examine.



A photograph of two children, a boy and a girl, digging in a garden. The boy is on the left, wearing a grey shirt, and the girl is on the right, wearing a pink shirt. They are both focused on their work, using tools to dig in the soil. The background shows a brick wall and some greenery.

**In the spring,
at the end of the
day, you should
smell like**

DIRT

~ Margaret Atwood

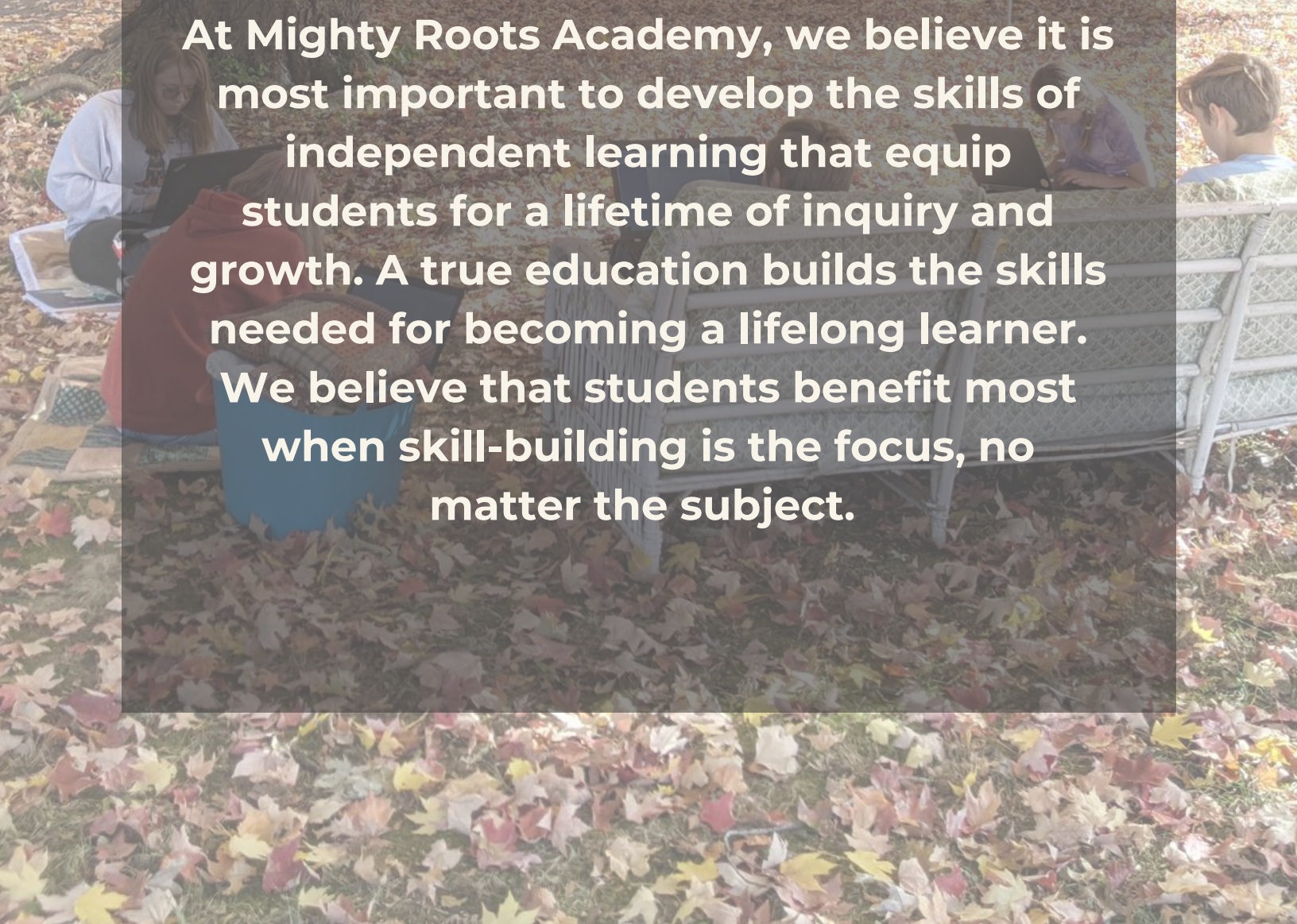


Our Mission

The mission of Mighty Roots Academy is to provide active, multiage learning in a nature-rich environment.

Our Philosophy

At Mighty Roots Academy, we believe it is most important to develop the skills of independent learning that equip students for a lifetime of inquiry and growth. A true education builds the skills needed for becoming a lifelong learner. We believe that students benefit most when skill-building is the focus, no matter the subject.





Mighty Roots Academy

mightyrootsacademy.com