

FORZA VITALE!

Vol. 25, No. 3

A Newsletter for People Active in Montessori Education

Spring 2006

Greetings

It seems as though every year since our children started school, spring has had the tendency to fly by in a flurry of activity blurred by a kaleidoscope of amazing Northwest colors of rock flowers, azaleas, and rhododendrons. The days are longer, the sun is warmer and I can feel the approach of summer. For my family nothing says summer like camping. The girls know the routine by heart. Everyone packs their own bag, we grab our gear, put together the dry goods, throw a cooler into the back of the car and we're off. Life is good. We have only the necessities; some semblance of shelter, food, water and—most importantly—we have each other. When we go camping we disconnect from our normal daily grind and reconnect with each other and nature. We live for those times because in them magic happens and we feel truly alive. When we finally come back to civilization we're refreshed and rejuvenated and the whole world seems a better, brighter place.

The work that we do as Montessorians, whether it is that of a parent, administrator, guide, assistant, etc., demands that we stay centered, fresh, and healthy. Rejuvenation is not a luxury; it's a necessary part of a healthy existence. I like to say, "We have to put in to put out." Good health starts with the individual.

We with the OMA have put out another exciting year of workshops, newsletters, and festivities. In order to continue to have that "*forza vitale*" in everything we do as an organization we'll always need you—our members. I hope that you will take a little time out this summer just for yourself. Then, when you are feeling recharged, please

In This Issue . . .

Ritual as a Vehicle
for Renewal

Sharpen the Saw

Indirect Preparation for
Cosmic Education at the
Primary Level

consider contributing to the OMA in whatever capacity you think you can. I believe you will find, as I have, that it a very rewarding experience, and one that is very much worth doing. Working together we have a real chance of achieving Montessori's vision of a brighter, more peaceful future.

It has been a great honor for me to have served as the OMA Board president this year. I intend to continue to dedicate my energies towards the promotion of Montessori education and the OMA will, doubtless, continue to be a very vibrant avenue in my endeavors. I am looking forward to working with many of you at future OMA events. As always, your OMA welcomes you.

Warmly,
Vesna Kostur
OMA Board President

Forza Vitale!

OMA Information:

Greetings!	1
OMA Award Recipients	4

Features:

Ritual as a Vehicle for Renewal	5
Sharpen the Saw	7
Transformation of the Spirit: the Preparation of the Montessori Teacher	9
Indirect Preparation for Cosmic Education at the Primary Level	13
The Gift of the Apple Blossom	19
Championing the Cause of All Children	20

Area News:

OMA Administrators' Group	23
School News	24
MINW News	25
A Montessori Farm School in the Northwest	26
Classifieds	26
Membership Form	28

Forza Vitale!, published three times a year, is the official newsletter of the Oregon Montessori Association. Submissions of articles, reviews, school news, anecdotes and the like are encouraged. Address all correspondence to the Newsletter representatives of the OMA Board, listed below.



The Oregon Montessori Association was founded in 1979 to support the community of Montessori professionals, schools, parents, students, and all others interested in Montessori and early childhood education.

OMA Website: www.oregonmontessori.org

OMA Contact Information:

Two Rivers Montessori School
7740 SW Capitol Hwy, Portland, OR 97219
503-768-3847
e-mail: oregonmontessori@yahoo.com
P.O. Box 80151, Portland, OR 97280

OMA Board Members 2005-2006

Administration

Vesna Kostur
5429 SW Westwood View
Portland, OR 97238
503-963-8992

Carrie Brown
3609 N. Russet St.
Portland, OR 97217
503-284-8504

Nancy Pribnow
5909 SE 40th Ave.
Portland, OR 97202
503-771-6366

Newsletter

Mercedes Castle
3230 SW Vermont St.
Portland, OR 97219
503-939-8235

Stacey Philipps
5014 SW Custer St.
Portland, OR 97219
503-293-1675

Christina Jun
760 SW Vista Ave. #34
Portland, OR 97205
503-227-8188

Workshops

Michelle Becka
622 NE Jessup St.
Portland, OR 97211
503-281-3237

Annie Noonan
605 NW Dale Ave.
Portland, OR 97229

Layout: **Donna Andrews**
1528 NE 63rd Ave., Portland, OR 97213
971-645-5459 / dmawoman@yahoo.com



CALENDAR



JUNE

- 6 Montessori Institute Northwest
Primary Course Graduation**
503-963-8992
info@montessori-nw.org

- 9-12 2006 AMI Refresher Course:
Principles into Practice**
Sydney, Australia
02 9971 1104
montessori.org.au and
montessori@bigpond.com

- 9–August 11
Assistants to Infancy first summer
begins**
Montessori Institute Northwest
503-963-8992
info@montessori-nw.org

- 26–July 28
Annual Professional Development
Event of the NAMTA Center for
Montessori Adolescent Studies
(NCMAS)**
Hiram, Ohio
North American Montessori Teacher's
Association
440-834-4011
staff@montessori-namta.org

- 26–August 18
Montessori Foundation First On-Line
Summer Montessori Leadership
Institute**
Finding the Perfect Match: Attracting

and Retaining the Right Families for
Your School
800-655-5843
www.montessori.org

JULY

Date to be announced
OMA Administrator's Group Meeting
Providence Montessori
4911 NE Couch Street
Portland, OR

AUGUST

- 14-25 Introduction to Montessori Theory
and Education**
Montessori Institute Northwest
503-963-8992
info@montessori-nw.org

- 31 Oregon Montessori Association
Assistant's Workshop**
Save the date – location to be announced

OCTOBER

- 12-15 NAMTA Conference**
Sheraton Clayton Plaza Hotel
St. Louis, Missouri
North American Montessori Teacher's
Association
440-834-4011
staff@montessori-namta.org ■

Congratulations to the Recipients of the 2005 Oregon Montessori Association Awards

Lynn Rossing: Susie Huston Memorial Award Recipient

The Susie Huston Award is given to a guide who encompasses true Montessori spirit. This award is named in memory of Susie Huston, who started and guided the elementary program at Corvallis Montessori. She was later a primary guide from 1987 to her death by an auto accident in 1992. Susie was a rare person whose tremendous gifts deeply touched those who came in contact with her. This award honors a guide who displays “the wonder of Montessori” in the classroom. The award goes to someone admired for his or her teaching skills.

The recipient of the 2006 Susie Huston Memorial Award is Lynn Rossing. Lynn is one of those calm, wise guides whom you find in a Children’s House surrounded by many children who are engaged in their work. She is not one who enjoys the spotlight, so basking in the honor of the Susie Huston Award is not something to which she would have aspired. But those who work with her and who have had children graduate from her class would not have it any other way.

Lynn has a BA in English Literature from the University of Washington. Five years later, she began her Montessori training at the Montessori Education Center of Oregon with trainer Rita Schaefer, and has been working in Montessori classrooms ever since. Beginning at a Montessori Children’s House in Salem, she moved her guidance of children to Children’s Houses in Madison, Wisconsin. She also expanded her understanding of the second plane of development as a classroom assistant in lower elementary at Montessori School of Beaverton. She has worked as a Guide at the Franciscan Montessori Earth School, and the last six years at Childpeace Montessori School. She has been a member of the OMA since 1985.

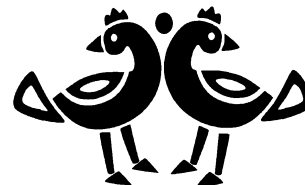
Lynn is particularly talented in connecting children to the work of the classroom as their point of normalization. Her steady presence and pedagogical soundness have made her a valued colleague and admired role model—truly a master teacher.

In addition to the accomplishments of her career, Lynn has two children that she has seen through Montessori education. She is an avid lover of music, gardening, reading and spending time with her darling dog.

Corinne Burden: Outstanding Dedication Award Recipient

This award honors someone whose promotion of Montessori education has made a strong, significant, positive impact on the development of Montessori education in the larger communities of school, neighborhood, city, region, country, or world.

The recipient of the 2006 award is Corinne Burden. Corinne graduated from MINW in 1999. She was a guide at Harmony Montessori School and the Earth School (she took over Lynn Rossing’s class when Lynn came to Childpeace!). When she left, she worked at Powell’s Books gaining a great deal of knowledge about children’s books and creating “Cor’s Book Corner” in *Forza Vitale*. She has also served on the OMA board, and still participates actively by helping out whenever it’s needed. Currently, Corinne serves as the Course Assistant at MINW—sharing and spreading all the wisdom she has gained over the years. Thank you Corinne for your dedication. ■



Ritual as a Vehicle for Renewal

By Patricia Oriti

Each day we strive to elevate our practice to Maria Montessori's vision of educating children to become agents of peace. This is not a small feat. We need to be strong in body and spirit. We need to find ways to regain our physical and spiritual vigor. We need recipes for Renewal. I know such a recipe but first let me tell you a story. This is a true story about my search for renewal.

This search began early in my work with children, in fact in the first months after my training. I found at the end of my day I did not feel elevated or energized. I felt tired. Sometimes, I even felt a little irritated with my trainer. Renilde Montessori had not described the work to be depleting. I did not find descriptions of fatigue in Maria's books. No one had mentioned exhaustion when I packed my family into our VW bus to head off to Canada for my training.

I knew it was not a good omen for me to feel this way so I began a daily reflection as Mrs. Hanrath, our school consultant, suggested. It was in this reflection that I found a solution. After dissecting each day, I found that it actually was not *all* bad. In fact, the most challenging parts of the day were transitions that seemed to take me hours to recover from. The beginning of the day, the end of the work cycle, the end of the day, especially the end of the day, left me drained. Or if not drained, without joy. The end of the day was not chaotic but it was not *elegant*. It lacked intimacy. That is when I began to think about rituals. I wanted to elevate my everyday life experience. Creating rituals became my path to renewal.

Why We Need Rituals

We need ritual to bring the sacred into our lives, to connect with Dr. Montessori's vision. I value rituals because they help me to elevate everyday life experiences to the sacred and in doing so, I am renewed. Gertrude Mueller Nelson discussed rituals at an AMI

conference some years ago. She said rituals are the places where humanity intersects with the transcendent. She went on to say that rituals help us to connect to a basic Montessori principle: Reverence. Reverence for all things, all persons, all processes of being and becoming and the power of nature. "Reverence is the way we talk to our soul. Reverence is the ability to stand in the midst of what is concrete and particular and know that we stand before mystery." You too, can create rituals. Here are a few suggestions:

Make a beginning-of-the-year ritual for yourself.

Do something that nourishes your spirit, sweetens your life. Visit a special place in nature; get a massage or manicure; be silent for a day. Only you can create just the right ritual for yourself.

Make a beginning-of-the-year ritual with your family or with a close friend.

My assistant and I went out to lunch on the first day of the school year. This was possible because the extended day did not begin until the second week of school.

Make a beginning-of-the-year ritual for the children.

I had a tradition with the returning children at the Franciscan Montessori Earth School during Phasing-In. We took a silent journey of the indoor and outdoor environments and then gathered together to share our observations.

Another ritual was to tell stories: "When I was at my home this summer, sometimes my thoughts made a picture in my head. I would sit very still, close my eyes and I would see the children. I saw William working with...", or "I remembered..." Tell some fun memory.

Or I would say: "I am going to tell you a story. This is a true story about a community of children and adults. You know this community. It is the Franciscan

(continued next page)



Montessori Earth School community.” And then I would proceed to tell them about the two weeks their parents and I worked on the environment before school began.

We need beginning-of-the-year rituals not just for ourselves and the children, we also need them for:

- **Administration** (for the administration and from the administration). The Earth School excelled at this. Mother Francine and Sister Kathleen Ann regularly made thoughtful gestures to the staff: a flower to celebrate the first day of school year; some candies left in our mailbox, just because; a note of appreciation at the end of the year, the list goes on. This kindness can go two ways. Consider writing a note or make a cup of tea for the administrator of your community.
- **Parents:** Invite parents to help prepare the environments (indoor and outdoor) during the contract weeks before the children begin. Let the first meeting of the year be extra festive. Parents will look forward to yearly traditions and the rituals embedded in them.

We need to create Rituals of Everyday Transitions: home to school; transitions throughout the day; school to home.

Transitions should be well thought-out. When they are done consciously and in reverence they become a benediction for the child’s movement from one activity to the next. If you see this movement as a blessing for each child, then you are honoring the moment and the child’s place in that moment, rather than wishing him to be somewhere different doing something else.

We also need End of the Year Rituals: Once again, for yourself, the children, their parents, your colleagues, the administration, and your family.

I expect everyone reading this article has some tradition, something you find yourself doing each day and each year. Here is my challenge: Whatever you do, do it consciously and with reverence. Be absolutely, deliciously present in the moment, and this is what will make an ordinary experience a spiritual one. I believe we all have an inner being that connects with something much wiser than our conscious selves. We just need to

tap in to it and when we do, we renew ourselves.

Over time, your coworkers, students and their families will come to expect and recognize such little ceremonies, which renew us. If you watch closely, you will see that they too will learn to ritualize. Then you can participate in their acknowledgment of the sacred, as they do, in yours. ■

Patricia Oriti is the author of “At Home with Montessori,” a popular parent resource. In addition to being the Pedagogical Advisor of Austin Montessori School in Austin, Texas, Patricia advises in schools throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe. OMA awarded her a Special Recognition Award for Local and National Commitment and Inspiration in 1996.



New Addition to the OMA Media Library

The Child in Nature (2006, 16 min)

Montessori Teacher Trainer Nimal Vaz, along with Robin Moore, Landscape Architect, and Thomas Berry, Theologian-Philosopher, show how the naturalized schoolyard brings the child into contact with the natural world and the universe. The video introduces teachers and parents to the necessity of outdoor learning environments for preschool and elementary classrooms.

Media Library items may be checked out for the price of postage by any member school. Contact David Cannon at 503-768-3847.

Sharpen the Saw

By Maren Stark-Schmidt

"The adult is the most important part of a child's environment," my Montessori trainer told us. "We need to make sure we remain healthy, well-rested and interesting people. Only then can we be of true service to the child."

"Remember this," she continued, "when you're tempted to stay up late to do a project for the classroom, when you start to make excuses for not exercising or eating right because you are too busy, and you don't make time for any interests outside of your work with the children."

Prevention was what my trainer was advocating. When I've forgotten this advice, I've dealt with that fire-breathing monster called burnout. As teachers and parents we need to learn that it's critical to take care of ourselves and take time to renew, refresh, and recreate ourselves.

In The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, Stephen Covey recommends that we stop often and sharpen our saw. Abraham Lincoln was reported to say, "If I had eight hours to cut down a tree, I'd spend six hours sharpening my ax." The time we use to sharpen ourselves is time well spent.

In our 24/7 world of cell phones, e-mail, all-night stores, work, children's activities, business travel, and more, it is challenging to set up parameters to have personal time in order to be healthy, well-rested and interesting. There are many needs to be met, making it difficult to find time to sharpen our saws and self-renew.

It is essential for us to make time for our personal "re-creation." One priority should be to schedule time every week for you and your spouse. Happy marriages produce happy children, in our families and in our classrooms. When our daughters were pre-schoolers,

we alternated between two neighborhood teenagers to babysit on Saturday afternoons from one to five o'clock. My husband and I would go to a movie, have lunch, or take a walk. We had time to visit without the children's demands on us. We also knew we had this time each week, so tensions didn't build up. Our sitters were thrilled to stay in the afternoon, having time and money to do things with their friends in the evening. These Saturday afternoons helped keep our relationship healthy and interesting.

If money for a babysitter is an obstacle for finding time for yourself, be creative and start a baby-sitting co-op. The key to a successful babysitting co-op is to have explicit expectations and consequences spelled out for the members. In the three years I was involved with a co-op, no one abused the privilege or the responsibility. Two members sponsored prospective members. There were twelve in our group, though groups with only four members have been successful. To begin, we each had ten hours of credit. If a member's balance reached zero, he or she had to "deposit" ten hours of babysitting before using the co-op again. Members called the bookkeeper, who arranged the babysitting. We each took turns being the bookkeeper for a month once a year.

Sleep specialists tell us that as adults we need eight hours of sleep per day. When we don't get our daily doze, we begin to accumulate sleep deficit. This lack

of sleep affects our sleep cycle, our ability to concentrate, our energy levels, and our critical thinking skills. In the long run, by getting eight hours of sleep per day with a regular schedule of bedtime and wake-ups, we'll be healthier, well rested and more interesting.

As Montessori teachers, it can be easy for us to be consumed by the needs of the children in our classroom. There seems to be always another piece of

(continued next page)



material to make, a lesson to perfect, parent conferences to plan, along with our daily work of guiding each child's development. In our passion for being a help to life, we can let our work take over every waking minute of our lives and neglect our physical fitness, family, friends, diet, hobbies and other interests. When we find ourselves in a situation where we are saying "no" to these activities frequently, we need to stop and consider this: the adult is the most important part of a child's environment. Take the time you need to be physically fit, have time with friends and family, and pursue interests outside of your Montessori work. Make appointments with yourself to do these important activities. A friend of mine blocks off time on her calendar using the initials M.E.

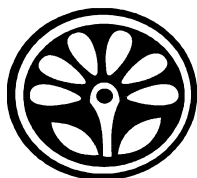
As school administrators, we need to encourage and create a school environment that helps our staff keep their work in proportion to their lives. New teachers need mentoring to help learn how to manage all the details of their classroom communities. Teachers need to be encouraged to be out of the building by a certain time each day. Also, we need to make sure that special school activities are reasonable and of mutual benefit to our school community. There needs to be on-going staff discussion and training on how to be more efficient

and effective at both the classroom level and as a whole school. These actions can help our teachers create equilibrium in their lives and thus be more vital in their efforts with children.

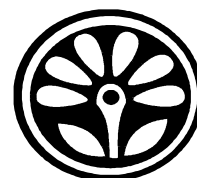
Keeping ourselves in balance keeps our world in balance. Remember, "Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me." Creativity is needed to find the time to remain "healthy, interesting, and well-rested." We are worth it. Our families are worth it. Our children are worth it.

Sharpen your saw, regularly. Your kids will love you for it. Best of all, you'll love you too. ■

Maren Stark Schmidt, an award-winning teacher and writer, founded a Montessori school and holds a Masters of Education from Loyola College in Maryland. She has over 25 years experience working with young children and holds teaching credentials from the Association Montessori Internationale. She currently writes a weekly parenting column, available at www.KidsTalkNews.com and is Creative Director for the Shining Light Reading Series, www.ShiningLightReading.com. Contact her at Maren@KidsTalkNews.com. Copyright 2006. Reprinted with permission.



Centenary of the Montessori Movement



Montessori is a worldwide social movement intended to Champion the Cause of all Children.

On the 6th January 2007 it will be 100 years since Dr. Maria Montessori opened the first Casa dei Bambini in San Lorenzo – Montessori has been around for 100 years and is still going strong – this is something to celebrate!

The focus of the Montessori Centenary is a call to action – a call to reinvigorate the Montessori Movement, restoring it to its original dimensions, that of a social movement intended to Champion the Cause of

all Children, in all strata of society, of all races and ethnic backgrounds, within and beyond the educational institutions.

For more information visit

[www.http://www.montessoricentenary.org](http://www.montessoricentenary.org)

Please contact the Oregon Montessori Association with your ideas about how we can celebrate this important milestone locally.

oregonmontessori@yahoo.com

Transformation of the Spirit: the Preparation of the Montessori Teacher

By Melissa Fronberry

*"The very nature of our relationship with children and with each other is a relationship of the spirit"
(Source 8, p.27).*

Last year, my older sister was married at a lovely historic villa overlooking Lake Michigan. As a spring affair, the location of the ceremony (either inside the villa or outside on the terrace) was determined by the weather. Her mid-May wedding day happened to be a bit chilly, so the powers that be kept us inside. The ceremony was held in a grand hall marked by glorious views of the gardens cascading down toward the lake and a huge fireplace that the florist decided to adorn with an abundance of coral flowers. The smiling faces of loved ones, the smell of fresh roses and my inner excitement all became one magnificent whirling blur until the voice of the pastor cast out and echoed off the marble walls of the villa. As the Maid of Honor, I had the responsibility to hold my sister's bouquet and straighten the long trail of her gown during various parts of the ceremony. I performed my duties with an unconscious grace while my attention was kept by the beautiful words echoing throughout the ceremony. Although I cannot recall the exact soliloquy, I have a general recollection that the pastor spoke about the joining of souls in a spiritual bond of Trust, Faith and Love.

"Trust," "Faith," and "Love" are words that one would most likely find in a spiritual teaching, or religious ceremony, yet they have their place in education as well. Dr. Maria Montessori perceived that these notions, among many

other notions of the spirit, are indeed necessary components of successful education of the whole being of the child. As part of the preparation to work with children, teachers must learn to garner spiritual qualities in their lives, "there must be a radical change in our inner state," which, until now, has prevented adults from understanding children (Source 4, p.114). The spiritual nature of the teacher's work is expressed in many ways in the classroom and will add to the joy in her work if it is fully realized.

First of all, the Montessori paradigm requires a Trust in the nature of the child to develop themselves fully and freely via a continuous engagement with their surroundings; the role of the teacher shifts from that of the tradition model. A teacher needs to firmly believe that the child has the strength and ability to create their own personality. "Ours is not always a direct teaching process. We do not *tell* the children what they must do to become healthy adult people. We *trust* that the child will select, from amongst the materials and people, the work and space needed for his or her own growth" (Source 8, p.23). By understanding the nature of the developing child, the teacher seeks to prepare an appropriate environment that will become the child's environment for growth and normalization. We set up the necessary conditions

(continued next page)



for growth and “create, maintain and enrich environments for young children....We make these spaces so beautiful that the children are called to be in them, to use them—and so are we” (Source 8, p.22). The teacher keeps this environment tidy, clean and in perfect working order. The didactic Montessori materials serve the interests of the developing spirits and are placed on the shelves with an intentional order. By serving the Sensitive Period for Order, we serve the spirit of the children in this environment. The teacher creates this environment that will belong to the children: “It is the environment in which she helps the little child to become master of it” (Source 1, p.14).

The Montessori Teacher must Trust in the children, their ability to choose work for concentration and in the didactic materials that offer children the potential to grow more fully. As a result of this Trust, the children experience the freedom to explore and through their open-ended exploration, develop themselves. “When we speak about freedom in education we mean freedom for the creative energy, which is the urge of life towards the development of the individual...this energy must be free in order to construct these children as well. We must aid this purpose” (Source 1, p.12). The teacher must act as an aid to freedom and trust that human nature will always urge towards normalization.

It is also through Trust that the teacher can give space for the children to act independently. “The teacher must help the children to be independent, to keep the environment in order by themselves” (Source 1, p. 15). She will show the children how to be independent, to wash, and dress and feed themselves. “We must help the child to act for himself, will for himself, think for himself, this is the art of those who aspire to serve the spirit” (Source 2, p.69). As a part of honoring the child’s independence, the teacher must maintain a hopeful attitude and honor both the child’s successful efforts and mistakes. “She must be ready not to interfere or correct. If correction is necessary, she must give it indirectly and at another time, never at the moment of real concentration” (Source 1, p.16). The role of the teacher then takes on several tasks: that of

leading the children toward concentration, honoring that concentration by not interfering, and becoming a “‘guardian angel’ of minds concentrated on work” (Source 5, p.153). She must protect those children that are concentrating and tirelessly offer work to those that are not. Before children are normalized, the teacher may do as she pleases to entertain the young children, giving them something interesting to do. “If you have a whole class you cannot pay special attention to each but you can tell them all a story, you can get them to sing, you can do exercises with the whole group....Nothing matters while the children are still deviated, everything will correct itself after concentration has come. We may use any means we have to attract the children’s attention. Their attention

is attracted through activity. Give them activity, attract them through sweetness” (Source 1, p.17). Children need to be offered interesting alternatives to their deviated behaviors. This will keep the Montessori Teacher continuously active at first, constantly improvising suitable work for these children.

Secondly, it is true that the teacher must Trust the child, and that through the concentrated work offered in the prepared environment the child will be led to normalization, but she must also have Faith. She must see the perfection that exists in every child.

There must be a clear vision of the unlimited potential of each child, no matter what their behavior. She must look not to the deviated behaviors, but to the pure spirit underneath for Faith. “A Montessori teacher has to visualize a child who is not yet there, materially speaking, and must have faith in a child who will reveal himself through work. The different types of deviated children do not shake the faith of this teacher, who sees a different type of child in the spiritual field, and looks confidently for this self to show when attracted by work that interests” (Source 2, p.67). The teacher needs to wait patiently for the child to show signs of this concentration.

Patience and Humility are two qualities that Dr. Montessori believes should guide the transformation of the teacher. Self-reflection becomes part of the preparation of the teacher so that she may remedy any behavior marked by Pride or Anger with Patience and



Humility. In *The Secret of Childhood*, Dr. Montessori gives us a clue as to the nature of this self-reflection, "The preparation our method demands of the educator is that he should examine himself, strip himself of pride and anger and become humble, first of all; then reclothe himself in charity. These are the spiritual qualities he has to acquire" (p.113-114). The teacher must seek to master herself and become objective, like a scientist in her actions, thoughts and words. It is only through objective observation that she can actively notice concentration and hence, the development of the children. The teacher will need to practice this type of observation as part of her training. "He who has been 'trained' to see, begins to feel interest, and such interest is the motive-power which creates the spirit of the scientist" (Source 3, p.102-103). Through observation, the teacher gains insight into the children's lives and interests, which in turn, makes her work much more valuable. She is able to meet the needs of the children by offering materials that will provoke their interests.

To teach in such a manner is a humble state of giving rather than a proud passing of one's superior knowledge to the lesser, inexperienced child.

Through self-abnegation, the teacher serves the spirit of the child, "confronted with truth, he is ready to renounce all those cherished ideas of his own that may diverge there from. Thus gradually he purifies himself from error, and keeps his mind always fresh, always clear, naked as the Truth with which he desires to blend in a sublime union" (Source 3, p.105).

Clearly, the spiritual nature of this work lies in this type of charity of one's efforts of body, mind and spirit. To teach in such a manner is a humble state of giving rather than a proud passing of one's superior knowledge to the lesser, inexperienced child. This mind shift is paramount and is a result of a Faith in the child. "A thorough *education* is indeed necessary to overcome this attitude; we must master and control our own wills, if we would bring ourselves into relation with the external world and appreciate its value" (Source 3, p.103). Such a shift in thought is quite drastically different from the mainstream mind set of the adult-

oriented culture we live in. Often, teachers will make the mistake of falling back on this attitude. Just as we need to have Faith in the children, we will also need to give ourselves room to make mistakes in our own behaviors. A contemporary Montessorian, Mary Raudonis Loew reminds us that "it is good to cultivate a friendly feeling towards error...for in error there is often discovery and innovation" (Source 8, p.23). In our own inner transformation as teachers, we will need to give just as much positive, hopeful energy to our own growth. We will need to practice the "art of doing with being, of bringing our own duality into harmony...[through the] art of possibility" (Source 8, p.26-27). We will need to be the people we envision, that can balance all of these responsibilities and continue to serve the spirit. We can try as we might to be unending in our giving towards life. "Our work is deeply grounded in the knowledge that life is ever moving in a direction towards fullness...we are content to know that we do our best in each moment...in this dynamic and continuing creation" (Source 8, p.20). As Faith guides us to believe in the child and in ourselves, there is one element that remains as the strongest pillar in the foundation of the work of education, and that is Love.

Love is expressed in all forms of creation. The Love and protection given to the young of any species is a very powerful force. All manners of people soften and gain a gentle rapport when approached by a young child. It is natural to Love children. In the Love we express as teachers, we become guardians over the entire child; body, mind and spirit.

"Our teachers thus penetrate the secret of childhood, and have a knowledge far superior to that of the ordinary teacher who becomes acquainted only with the superficial facts of the children's lives. Knowing the child's secret, she had a deep love for him, perhaps for the first time understanding what love really is. It is on a different level from the personal love that is shown by caresses, and the difference has been brought about by the children, who by their revelations of spirit have profoundly moved their teacher, bringing her to a level of which she had not known the existence; how she is there and she is happy...the greater spiritual happiness which the child can give" (Source 2, p.69)

(continued next page)

Maria Montessori leads us down the joyful path of the teacher who is both inspired by and giving of her Love to the children. The children, when they feel this type of understanding and respect, will shine. They feel free to explore and through their exploration, flourish.

The Love of the teacher should also be turned inwards. Just as she puts great care into the creation of a beautiful and suitable environment, she should demonstrate this care of herself both outwardly and inwardly. "The teacher must be dignified as well as attractive" (Source 1, p.17). By presenting herself nicely, she becomes a model for the children's behavior as well. The teacher must also realize her own journey of personal growth in her work; she must turn her Love within. In order to support the personal inner work of the teacher, Silvana Quattrocchi Montanaro suggests that the teacher maintain a daily time of meditation or prayer. She also reminds us to refer back to the Montessori literature for inspiration (Source 7, p.5-6). By referring back to Montessori's own words, we can refresh our minds with her vision that "supplies the energy for working every day in our environments with the awareness that we are working for children, for us and for the future of all humanity" (Source 7, p.6). Also, because this vision differs from the mainstream illusions of the inferiority of children, it is tremendously important that we refer to it for rejuvenation. Often, our minds can get toxic from the harsh illusions that are created against our work, and a few moments for daily prayer and reading could provide a great solace to a weary teacher in need of a reminder of the Love of the child.

In conclusion, the Montessori Teacher has many tasks to fulfill. Her role is a complex but virtuous one. By focusing her energies toward Trust, Faith and Love for the child, the work of education can become amazingly simple. "And in so loving, our life of service is made" (Source 8, p.25). Whether spoken in a cozy classroom or echoed in the grand hall of a villa, these words ring true. ■



Bibliography:

Source 1

The Child, Society and the World, Dr. Maria Montessori, The Clio Montessori Series

Source 2

Education for a New World, Dr. Maria Montessori, The Clio Montessori Series

Source 3

The Advanced Montessori Method - I, Dr. Maria Montessori, The Clio Montessori Series

Source 4

The Secret of Childhood, Dr. Maria Montessori, Orient Longman

Source 5

Discovery of the Child, Dr. Maria Montessori, The Clio Montessori Series

Source 6

NAMTA Journal Vol.28, No.2 Spring 2003, "A Montessori Life as a Spiritual Journey-Part2", Muriel Dwyer

Source 7

NAMTA Journal Vol.28, No.2 Spring 2003, "A Montessori Life as a Spiritual Journey-Part1", Silvana Quattrocchi Montanaro

Source 8

NAMTA Journal Vol.28, No.2 Spring 2003, "Nurturing the Spirit of the Teacher", Mary Raudonis Loew

Melissa Fronberry has been working with Montessori children for the past five years. She is currently earning a Master's of Education in Montessori Primary from Loyola College and training at the Montessori Institute Northwest. Along with her interests in Montessori, she also shares music lessons with children of all ages.

Indirect Preparation for Cosmic Education at the Primary Level

By Julie Reynolds

To give an idea of what we mean by Cosmic Education it is necessary to touch upon the background of the question, i.e., cosmic theory. This recognizes in all creation a unifying plan upon which depend not only the different forms of living beings, but also the evolution of the earth itself. Life progresses according to a cosmic plan and the purpose of life is not to achieve perfection along an unlimited line of progress but to exercise influence and to achieve a definite aim upon the environment.

- Dr. Maria Montessori, *Basic Ideas of Montessori's Educational Theory*, p.128-129

Over the recent Thanksgiving break, I took the opportunity to travel home to Arizona and visit with various friends of family. Considering my current student status and the rising cost of airfare, this trip was budgeted down to the penny. The only extravagance I allowed myself was the use of a rental car. I was going to Phoenix after all, which still lacks in any sort of public transportation means, and a car was a must in order to see everyone on my list. I estimated that one tank of gas was the most I could fit into the tight allowance, and planned my visits in a systematic, circular pattern starting with a friend closest to the airport, and making my way north, west, south, then back to the east side of the city over the four-day excursion.

Within twenty minutes of my arrival at the airport, my precise financial planning hit its first complication. Apparently, the online car rental registration did not include the daily insurance rate within the estimate. Fifteen dollars a day, for a four-day rental, set me back an additional, unplanned sixty dollars. Somehow I would make it work. However at this point there could not be any of the random little purchases that I usually made when traveling. I reasoned that this trip was for visiting purposes only, which altogether was a free activity. And as with all other aspects of my life, I have learned that things have a way of working

themselves out.

The third day of the trip was the Thanksgiving holiday. After dinner with a close friend and her family, I proceeded towards the West side of town for dessert with my father's best friend and his family. There was still one last stop for the evening: tea with a woman who was a close friend of my mother's. At this late point in the evening, I debated rescheduling. Yet, I knew I would not be back on her side of town for the rest of my trip, so this was my only chance. Another motivation was that this woman was my initial connection into Montessori education. She had been a Primary guide for ten years or so, and is currently training to become an Elementary guide.



After a fairly brief conversation with her about two years ago, I decided to take the steps toward my own Primary training. It was with her insistence that I searched out an AMI-affiliated program, with Loyola Masters accreditation. I was looking forward to being around someone who fully understood the experiences in which I am so immersed in currently.

Beyond empathy, I know that she is in a place where she can offer me guidance from the wisdom she has gained through her years of experience in the classroom. We touched on various subjects throughout

(continued next page)

our two-hour-long conversation. We talked a lot about Dr. Maria Montessori's various writings, and how they connect on a practical level in the classroom. She showed me some of her work for the elementary training program, and I talked about my own work, and how it relates. One thing that I recall being repeated time and time again is her reference to "Cosmic Education." She said this phrase somewhat in passing, and at the moment I chose not to inquire and just stored this title for something to look into independently, while simply absorbing the context of the conversation.

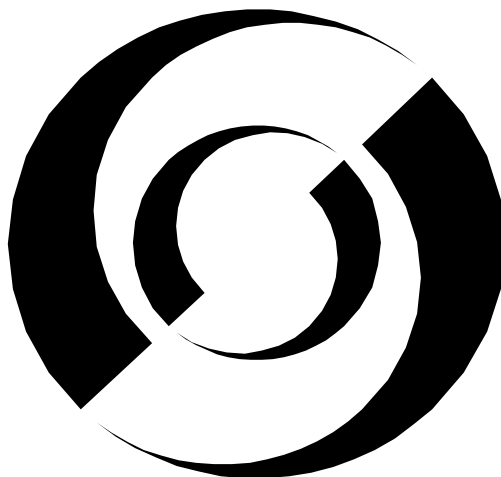
Finally, the warm tea was taking an effect, and realizing the hour-long drive back, we began to say our good-byes. We both planned on staying in better touch with one another. She even said that she would plan on a visit up to Portland sometime before the school year ended, possibly for my graduation. As I was walking out the door, she passed me a small group of bills, which she stated was to help specifically with the rental car that she realized was an added expense. I resisted, but she insisted, saying that she fully understood how tough it can be as a student, especially when traveling, and she wanted to help with what she could. I realized that it would be rude to refuse, and so we hugged, and I went off on my way.

It was not until I was out in the car alone that I looked to see what she had given me. Wrapped in my hand I found three \$20 bills, \$60 total – the exact amount that I had been so worried about having to spend outside my budget. It is hard to put into words exactly what I felt at that moment, but something quietly told me that I had just had my first lesson on Cosmic Education.

Definitions of Cosmic Education

As a product of the modern day, I first began my investigation into the notion of Cosmic Education through the World Wide Web, specifically as a Google search. At the time, I had no intention of ever using the information I found for a theory paper. Instead, I simply felt compelled by curiosity, and my expectations were small. Imagine my surprise when a quick search

provided over four million responses, with the most popular and accurate findings all related to Montessori Education. The first site that I read through was produced by the Austin Montessori School. According to the web site, the Austin Montessori School is an AMI-affiliated institution established in 1967 by Donna Bryant Goertz, with classes at the primary, elementary, and adolescent levels. An overall scan of the web site explained the principles of cosmic education, which I came to understand is introduced during the second plane of childhood at the elementary level. The comprehensive web site summarizes Cosmic Education as a response to what Maria Montessori referred to as her plan for the elementary child and the "Cosmic Curriculum."



"Cosmic" in this context means comprehensive, holistic, and purposeful. The goals of Cosmic Education go far beyond the usual goals of skill development and knowledge acquisition to address the development of the whole person. Children who complete the Cosmic Curriculum have a clear understanding of the natural world, of human knowledge, and of themselves. These children are prepared to leave childhood behind and to enter adolescence as

independent, confident, responsible, emotionally intelligent individuals, balanced in physical, intellectual and social achievements. They are academically and practically prepared to pursue self-education in many areas; to make responsible decisions and act on them in a responsible way; to recognize limits and give, ask for, and receive help, as needed (www.austinmontessori.org).

Although my interests are currently directed towards educating the child within the first plane of development at the primary level, I felt intrigued by this personally fresh idea, and further explored the philosophy of Cosmic Education. Clearly, this type of education serves the needs of the reasoning mind, which emerges around the age of six. This is the child who consistently is compelled to ask the world "why" and will not settle for a simple answer. This is the

child who is searching for the ultimate truths in life. This is the child, who after a basic understanding of her own self, immediately questions the position of this “self” within the context of the world. Cosmic education is the systematic response to this universal child. Give the child the world who asks for it, is Montessori’s answer to the reasoning child (*The Child, Society and the World*, Cosmic Education, Lecture, India 1946, p.93-98).

Through a series of five different stories that are all interrelated, the child in the elementary classroom is presented a holistic vision of knowledge that integrates the underlying principles of biology, zoology, botany, history, geography, physics, chemistry, and religion that are the essential building blocks of the world (austinmontessori.org). These five stories embrace the common link between man, animal, and the world, and how the cosmic task of each keeps the balance and flow continuing (*The Child, Society and the World*, Cosmic Education, Lecture, India 1946, p.108).

Of course it was necessary for me to turn my research efforts toward the source to grasp a fundamental understanding of Cosmic Education. And so I turned to the various writings of Dr. Montessori herself, to seek the root of this educational model. Of the readings I absorbed, the extract simply entitled “Cosmic Education” in the *Basic Ideas of Montessori’s Educational Theory* gave the clearest definition of Cosmic Education. Montessori strongly states her belief in the interconnectedness of humanity in this section taken from *The Child Society and the World*. In her mind, educating children on the universal connection of humanity is just as important as educating children on language and mathematics. Cosmic Education is essential to human development as all other aspects of academic studies. Montessori elaborates on this concept quite eloquently on page 130 of *Basic Ideas*.

This education must take departure and spread from one center; the cosmic plan of creation. In this concern, all that has developed during the different civilizations achieved by different groups is a preparation for the great and supreme triumph of the human agent who has already reached dominion over all things and who must now find dominion over himself. It has prepared and united an all-powerful energy in a union which, though unconscious, is real and which consists of all human individuals in one organized body.

At this point, as fascinating as this educational model seemed to me, I needed a way to connect the things that I have learned about Primary Montessori Education as a valid reason to continue my interest and focus. If this is where the child of the Casa is headed academically, the question I began to ask myself is how do the materials and organization of the primary classroom prepare the elementary child for Cosmic Education? Herein lies the purpose of this paper: to identify main examples of the indirect preparations made in the Casa for Cosmic Education later presented at the Elementary level. The connected materials, independent exploration of these materials, and the classroom energy as a result of the independent work are three important components of the Primary classroom that prepares the child of the first plane for Comic Education.

It is important to note that the following sections are just three examples of countless possibilities, all used to identify certain elements of the classroom that prepare the child in the Casa for future lessons on Cosmic Education. This paper is meant to introduce the concept of indirect preparation of the primary child for Cosmic Education by recognizing certain aspects already in place within the organization of the primary classroom. Rather than cataloging every imaginable example shown in the primary level as a preliminary that pertains to Cosmic Education, the goal here instead is to create an overall awareness of this principle that is intrinsically built into the life of the Casa.

Connections in the Materials: Examples from the Sensorial Area

One of my favorite days so far in the AMI primary training class has been the exploration of variation amongst the sensorial materials. From the pink tower to the cylinder blocks to the concentric figures, the connections between the materials are infinite. These connections are mathematical in nature, and their relationship is deliberately balanced to demonstrate the correlation to the child.

For instance, the equivalence of the height dimensions between the Brown Stair and the Pink Tower are an obvious relationship between seemingly contrasting materials. The Pink Tower consists of ten wooden cubes painted pink and graduated in increments from 1 cm³ to 1000 cm³ to develop visual discrimination of

(continued next page)

size in three dimensions. The Brown Stair demonstrates the change in width, by a progression from 1 cm x 1 cm x 20 cm to 10 cm x 10 cm x 20 cm (*The Discovery of the Child*, The Material for Development). Although these two separate materials are presented in different lessons, when a child constructs simultaneously with them, a discernible association manifests.

Another clear example of connections made in the classroom is with the use of the different boxes of the color tablets. Alone, this material is used for the refinement of the chromatic sense and in time will be applied towards the enrichment of vocabulary. However, another key application of this material is a game in which the child matches the colors to various objects within the room. What a surprise it is to the child that all of the color tablets have a connection to an item through visible resemblance. Some of these materials are set up for this relationship, such as the Pink Tower, and one of the degrees of pink within the color gradation.

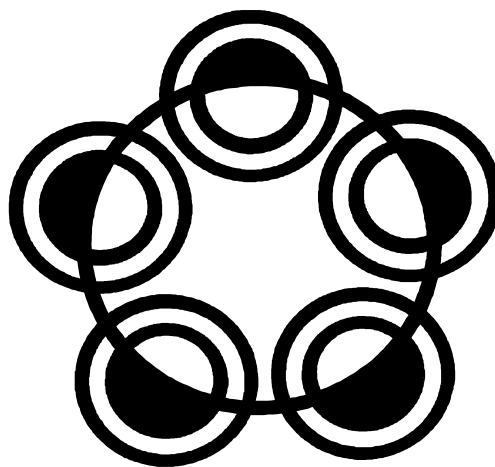
However, many of these relationships are formed out of chance. It is this sense of sheer coincidence that I believe most relates to the principles of Cosmic Education within the construction of the classroom materials. The sets of the materials that have a planned connection clearly demonstrate the universal principle of interrelation to the young child. However, it is the unplanned connections that are evidence of this principle of the interrelationship of the universe to the child.

Similarly, connections made between the size and shape of the geometric figures with various objects in the classroom occurs accidentally because of the truth of universal connected relationships. The list goes on and on, and the possibilities are endless. The materials discussed are used simply to form a concrete illustration of the relationship between the primary classroom materials. I have kept these examples within the Sensorial Area as a focus. It is important to keep in mind that the connections made in the classroom exist dynamically within all areas of the Casa.

The key point here is that early on through these

experiences the child will begin to form associations everywhere, and will begin to develop an understanding that all things have a universal relationship to one another. Through the three years in the classroom the child will experience time and time again the relationships shown in the preceding examples, as well as countless others. The materials consistently will allow the child spontaneous experiences of association between the exercises. These experiences during the time of the sensitive period in the first plane will lay the foundation for a solid understanding of microcosmic relationships between materials that later evolve into macrocosmic relationships of the universe in the elementary classroom. The child is presented with the unity of the universe through the belief that

since all aspects are related, the study of the parts will lead to an understanding of the whole.



Independent Exploration

With the corresponding materials in place, it is essential to create a classroom environment in which independent exploration of these materials is encouraged. This principle rings true in all areas of the classroom. From the shelves of the Practical Life area, to those of Language, to the many variations in the Sensorial Area, the same rules apply. You may choose any material available then work with it as long as desire allows, and return it to its place upon conclusion. Granting the child the trust of individual investigation is a crucial component to the development of the will and self-control (Theory lecture on the freedom of choice, Ginny Sackett).

This inherently aids the child in future independent study of cosmic interdependence at the Elementary level. The organizational principles of the Elementary classroom revolve around the independent study of overlapping themes between physical science, geography, mathematics, language, biology, history, and social studies. The child also has the freedom to personally plan and partake in field trips whenever the need for one corresponds with a current academic investigation. Continuing on with the notion of independent exploration of the world for the young child, one could easily see the benefits of having an

outdoor extension available at the Primary level.

Regardless of size and elaborateness, allowing the child the freedom to come in and out at will is the first step in giving the world to the child. These small voyages would be the first independent field trips personally chosen by the child. Furthermore, the child will begin to form a relationship with the natural world, which may not be accessible in other areas of her life. This is another example of an aspect in the Primary classroom that will aid the developing child in having a clear, empathetic understanding of the universe.

One final example within the fundamental principle of independent exploration rests in philosophy of choice in the classroom. In order for the older child to have the maturity in place to benefit from Cosmic Education, the indirect preparation of freedom for choice and study must be established at the primary level. This is done through the organization of the classroom that allows the child an environment in which he may choose work on his own accord, and then proceed to work alone for as long as he desires without interruption (*The Child Society and the World*, Montessori's Alternative Comprehensive School, p.62-63). This seemingly simple principle is the key to developing the essential self-control within the child to be able to fully concentrate and complete work related to interests within the Cosmic Education curriculum. These specific organizational guidelines established and matured through a child's three years in the Casa clearly support the independent abilities of the older child. A development of the will, self control, the ability to work independently, and the ability to concentrate are the effects of independent exploration with specific interrelated materials within a planned environment. Ultimately these skills will be put to use in gaining knowledge through Cosmic Education.

Classroom Rhythm and Order

Lastly, I return to a more personal finding that I feel is relevant as another indirect preparation created at the

Primary level, which will later help the child to understand the principles of Cosmic Education instinctively. Following in the theme of independent work and exploration, the Primary Montessori classroom creates an environment that is a microcosmic community of three- to five-year-olds that best simulate the rhythm and energy of the surrounding world. This can be further examined through the interdependence between the children in the classroom, the natural laws of society and the universe beyond that are implemented in the classroom, and finally the undeniable energy developed in a well functioning primary Casa.



The interdependent structure of the prepared environment grants the children daily interactions between one another of assistance, nurturing, guidance, and support. These experiences are mainly due to the mixed-age environment of the classroom (Theory lecture, *The Prepared Environment*, Ginni Sackett). At all points during the three-year cycle the child is in the Casa, she will have countless experiences of interactions with her fellow classmates. These interactions will evolve from that of dependence and need from the older child, to that of role model and guide for the younger children during her last year. These varied experiences help to shape the

child's understanding of the importance of social connections within a given community. An observer of a Montessori classroom will be quick to pick up on these constant maturing interactions between the children and how it relates to the rhythm of the classroom.

The interdependence of the children relate to the way that the classroom is set up to resemble the organization of society. Witnessing each other's accomplishments and successes, participating in the daily routines involving the whole community, and helping one another through grace and courtesy, all assist in the creation of the skills to later understand these similar connections within society as a whole. This rationale is well put by elementary teacher Juliann McDermott

(continued next page)

from the Lake County Montessori School in Minneapolis when describing the goals of Cosmic Education.

Through stories we introduce countless unknown inventors, those persons who paved the way for the life we live today. Because they are unknown it seems that every person throughout history has made a contribution to society. This brings the child to realize that she too is a participant in the drama of the universe and she has no substitute. The children see that they have a role in life that we call their cosmic task. All of Cosmic Education is designed to assist children to discover their cosmic task (www.lakecounty.school.org).

Just like the cosmic task presented to the elementary child, the younger child experiences her own cosmic tasks within the context of the smaller Montessori community. In addition to these social experiences, the experiences of natural cycles related to the universe are also constructed through the organization of the classroom. From a basic awareness of the change in seasons, to the more elaborate birthday celebration now an intricate part of Montessori classrooms (although not a creation of Maria Montessori herself), the young child of the primary class is slowly becoming acquainted with the cycles of the world around her.

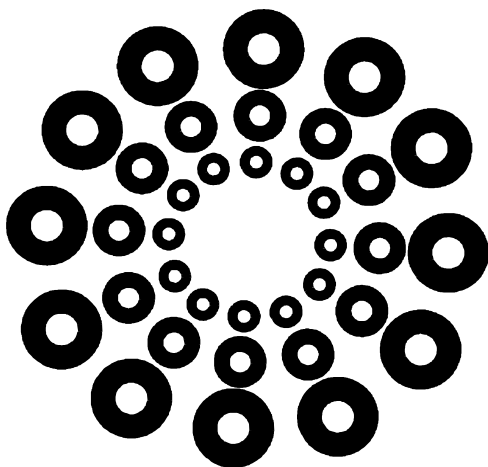
Lastly is the idea of the energy that is created in a Montessori classroom. The working "hum," as I have heard it referred to in class, is something that I find hard to put into words. However, I feel that this may be the most important way that the deeper notions of Cosmic Education are instilled in the younger child. It is the feeling that is produced when a class is hard at work, and each child is engaged in an activity seemingly separate from one another. Yet there is this invisible connection made in the classroom between the guide, the children, and the environment itself. Simple put, it is poetry in motion. And this energy, this vibe, this rhythm is life itself.

Final Reflections

I have now had the opportunity to begin the training

program at the MINW twice. On the first day of class both this year and last, the students are allowed the chance to give a few words regarding their past experiences that have led them to the training program. All told, I have listened to over 60 stories of mostly women from all around the country and even the world. One underlying theme seems to ring true of a random chain of events that now seem to have been a direct preparation for the program. In the same manner that we, as a class, seem to be cosmically intertwined, I see this as a reflection for the Casa community that we will ultimately be guiding. To end this discussion, I leave the first words that I read on Cosmic Education through the Australian Montessori Association web site of the now late Patricia Wilson, who was the first Australian AMI director of training. Her

words on Cosmic Education best summarize both the purpose and the need for indirect preparation at the primary level.



Firstly, Cosmic Education at its essence is about life; it is about the interdependence of all living things and in a very practical way is experienced by children at any age. The way in which it is experienced by the child 3-6 is different from the way in which the 6-12 year-old will come to it. But none of you as parents or Directresses, I'm sure,

would question the vitality of life in a 3-6 year-old and its interaction with the environment.

Secondly, and related to this, the guiding ideal in Montessori education is Indirect preparation. This means that anything presented to a child at any time in a Montessori program should be prepared for in a prior period. I strongly believe therefore, that we must lay the foundations for Cosmic Education in the Children's House (Patricia Wilson, www.aaaa.net.au). ■

Julie Reynolds is earnestly looking forward to graduation from MINW this June (the celebration party has already been planned!). However, a small part of her knows that she will miss the constant academic challenge. When Julie is not practicing presentations, studying theory, and revising albums, she finds the time to relax through yoga, biking, and reading.

The Gift of the Apple Blossom

By Carrie Brown

In my front yard, I have an apple tree. Each morning as I eat breakfast I can watch the apple tree, waiting for the blossoms to emerge. I have read about the life sequence of the apple tree in children's books but have never actually witnessed the phenomenon. Once the blossoms are open they only last a couple of weeks. It is amazing how waiting so patiently for apple blossoms to open can bring such joy and gratitude.

Last summer I closed Irvington Montessori and moved to another house. Needless to say, the move was difficult, as was coming to terms that Irvington Montessori had to close. Initially, my new yard was incredibly unkempt and this particular apple tree was hideous. Everything was in disarray.

This discontent, however, was productive. By taking a step back to reflect, I had time to contemplate how Montessori touches my life. In years past, I was preoccupied with presenting materials properly and preparing a beautiful environment while at the same time establishing meaningful relationships with the families. Years ago I only understood the mechanics of the method. During the past few months, I have been contemplating the meaning of joy and how it manifests in the classroom. I am learning that there are many layers in Montessori and it takes time to contemplate each layer.

Last September, I read an article in *Simple Magazine* called "Get Happy" (September 2005, pages 249-254), which offered suggestions for experiencing joy and happiness in one's life. The article suggests minimizing activities that bring you down, having fun, setting realistic goals, and making time for reflection, exercise, and socializing. The author reminded us to get plenty of rest and practice gratitude.

While reading this article, I considered how children naturally experience all of these things in a Montessori classroom. By being part of a community, following his or her own

innate path of self-construction, and being present in the moment, a child's sense of joy is naturally supported in a Montessori environment. What is even more of a gift is that while we are guiding children, the children are simultaneously guiding us in how to practice joy and happiness. We have an opportunity to slow down in our hectic life and consider the child's interior life as well as our own.

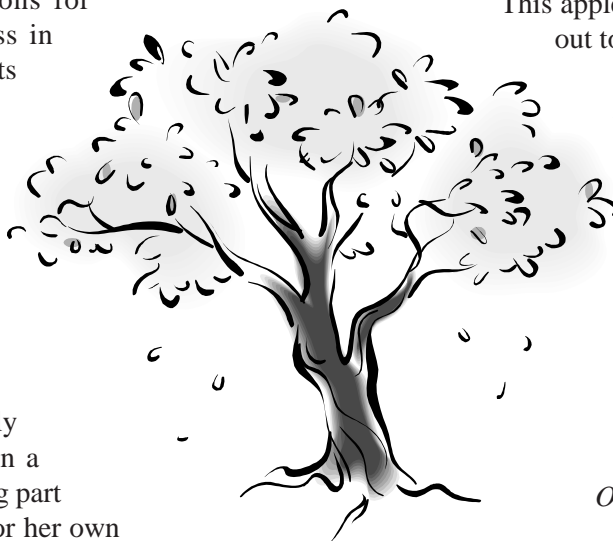
This past year I have taken a break from guiding the Children's House and have worked in a small traditional preschool that incorporates extensive gardening and art in its curriculum. While I wouldn't trade this experience for anything, it has deepened my appreciation for Montessori and I have contemplated the meaning of community in my personal life.

This has been an incredible year of contrasts. The harshness of winter and discontent has developed into new appreciation and awareness. What I appreciate most about the Montessori philosophy is that children have the space to grow roots while constructing themselves. The materials allow extraordinary depth of exploration. Developing a sense of community and an awareness of the earth develops a child's sense of wonder, empathy, and joy. Montessori allows time for real learning, the kind of learning which requires a depth to allow roots to grow. Each spring, I always appreciated how the children and their community would blossom.

This apple tree in my front yard has turned out to be such a gift after all.

As my neighbors and I admired the beauty of the apple blossoms this spring, I couldn't help but realize that stepping back, waiting, and gaining perspective can open new possibilities of awareness. ■

Carrie looks forward to actively returning to Montessori next fall and enjoys being a part of the OMA Board.



Champion the Cause of All Children:

A Report from the International Montessori Study Congress, Or Paula's Excellent Educational Adventure Down Under

By Paula Gibson-Smith

They say there is nothing like travel to broaden one's horizons. My trip to Sydney, Australia, last July to attend the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) International Study Conference afforded me the opportunity to learn first-hand through experience what I had only known through "book learning."

Among other things, the world is indeed round. I took off on Tuesday and didn't touch down again until Thursday. Even better of course was coming back, when I landed in Los Angeles before I took off from Sydney. (See me for a lesson on latitude and longitude and the International Date Line.)

I got to celebrate two 49th birthdays this year. Since my birthday is in July, I've never before celebrated with my students. This year I blew out the candle on a "Tall American chocolate cake" in Australia with a group of children at Camaragal Montessori School at Lavendar Bay where I did my student teaching in a class of 3-6 year olds. The next day when I made my daily call home to my husband, Jeff (me at 8:00 in the morning and he at 3:00 in the afternoon the day before), I heard "Happy Birthday!" from the U.S.

As I followed the tiny outline of my plane on the miniature screen at my business class seat (the only way to fly, if you've been saving your frequent flyer miles for 10 years as I have!), traveling 14 hours over nothing but ocean, I can verify indeed that the earth is mostly water. In that 14-hour period I went from summer with mostly day and a little night, the sun making in arc in the south, to winter with mostly night and a little day, the sun making in arc in the north. I thought, "Oh, I get it, the southern hemisphere. That's what I've been teaching about all these years!" And mathematics! I am so glad that the flight crew knew how to calculate miles per gallon. Somewhere over the Coral Sea the pilot informed us that we did not have enough fuel left to land safely in Sydney. (Now where was the flotation device again!?) We would be making an unscheduled stop in Brisbane to refuel before going on another hour to Sydney. Whew!

This perspective of our planet as a whole became an apt backdrop for the truly international flavor of the Congress: 900 delegates from 36 countries attended. After an aboriginal welcome in words, song and dance, the children of the area schools paraded into the auditorium dressed to represent the many countries of the delegates, each with that country's flag. It was a heart-stirring moment!

Lectures were delivered and simultaneously translated into four languages: English, Japanese, Thai, and Mandarin. I was impressed to find something like Montessori, which I have grown so familiar, so comfortable, maybe even complacent with, expressed with such energy and variety. From private schools in Europe to refugee villages in Asia, from public schools in the U.S. to aboriginal programs in Australia, we found ourselves sharing a common purpose—to champion the cause of all children.

Four days of speakers led us from the "Totality of Montessori's Cosmic Vision" to "The Essence of Education and The Essence of Service" to "The Essential Mandate":

"The 25th International Montessori Congress has breathed a new spirit and a new energy into the Montessori Movement. In Australia, the land of the Dreaming and the Spirit Child, we have come together from 36 countries and 6 continents and dared to dream our Montessori dream of championing the cause of all children, in all strata of society, of all races and ethnic backgrounds, within and beyond the educational institutions. We stand together to believe in and support this mission. Let us now translate our Montessori dreams to actions, because a great reform can only be accomplished through actions. Let us declare a call for action and with new resolve, work together on behalf of children everywhere. Keeping in mind the ideas discussed at this conference, let us vow to act sooner rather than later, because the lives of children today, in

both rich nations and poor, are in a state of crisis.”

To keep within the context of my excellent adventure down under, I would like to share with you some of the ideas discussed at this conference with an Aussie twist.

The Platypus was regarded as a hoax when a stuffed specimen was first sent to Europe. It appears to be assembled from the parts of other animals: a duck’s bill, a beaver’s tail, the fur of an otter, the claws and poisonous spurs of some unknown creature. In just such a way the complexity of the big idea that is Montessori can be reduced and misinterpreted by focusing on only a portion of its totality failing to appreciate the whole, wondrous reality.

Dr. Annette Haines opened her presentation on “The Totality of Montessori” with one of my favorite poems, “The Blind Men and the Elephant.” She likened the popular perceptions of what is Montessori to the elephant, an idea bigger than any of its parts. The blind men, each grasping a different portion of the elephant’s anatomy, represent a correct but limited view of Montessori; Montessori being early childhood education, or special materials, or a more effective way to teach academics, or an alternative program to traditional school, or good day care.

In Australia, the land of the dreaming and the spirit child, Dr. Haines recalled for us the Cosmic Vision of Montessori in the words of an aboriginal story:

“We have been here since time began. We have come directly out of the Dreamtime of our creative ancestors.

We have kept the earth as it was on the first day.

Our culture is focused on recording the origins of life.

We refer to forces and powers that created the

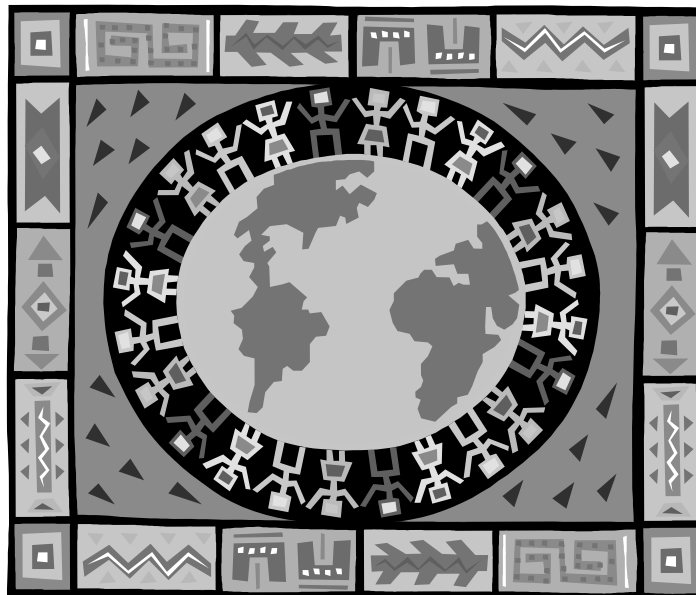
world as creative ancestors.

Our beautiful world has been created only in accordance with the power, wisdom and intention of our ancestral beings.

The Dreaming tells of the journeys and deeds of our creator ancestors.

The creator ancestors made the trees, rocks, waterholes, rivers, mountains and stars, as well as the animals and plants, and their spirits inhabit these features of the natural world today.”

Mary Hayes, the General Secretary of AMI, put this Cosmic Vision into Montessori terms with this chart of interdependencies. Montessori education unfolds for the child the continuing drama of the universe with its natural, biotic and human elements and their interdependent relationships.



For Dr. Montessori, the child is the central player, the new star upon the stage of the universe... “guided by his inward teacher, who labours (without tiring) in joy and

happiness – following a precise timetable – at the work of constructing that greatest marvel of the Universe, the human being...able to direct and mould the future of mankind.”

The aboriginal myths recognize this universal (power) as The Spirit Child. “The Spirit Child was informed of the natural order of things, something that involves all mankind, the universe itself and cosmic harmony.” The Spirit Child is our guide.

The Essence of Education necessary for this spirit child was explored by an array of multi-cultural speakers, who identified:

- An understanding of the development of the human being is the foundation of our work.

(continued next page)

- To honor the spirit child we must first remove the obstacles that we have put in the way of this natural, universal development; most particularly the obstacles that exist within our own hearts and minds.
- A central characteristic of the relationship between the adult and the child is a reverence for life. Maria Matsumoto, a teacher trainer in Tokyo, speaking through an interpreter, likened the Montessori teaching presentation to the tea ceremony in its focus on an effort to extend hospitality through carefully prepared materials and environment, and the creating of a special moment in time through respect and attention.
- The necessary role of work in self-construction and participation in the life of our planet.
- The essential connection to reality that enables this participation, and
- The liberty required by the human spirit to develop its unique potential and offer its gifts to the world.

The Essence of Service exemplified the scope of this Montessori approach in our world today. We heard of the Farm School for adolescents in Ohio, the efforts to reach aboriginal children in Australia, the campaign against child labor, and children's villages for Tibetan refugees in India. In a stirring presentation, a young man read a prepared speech from Mrs. Jetsun Pema, the force behind the Tibetan Children's Villages in India, who was unable to deliver her talk because of a health crisis in her family. He began his talk with a haunting song of praise and thanks in his native Tibetan for Mrs. Pema. The story of Tibetan refugee children, sent away by their parents, alone, over the mountains of the Himalayas, to live in villages in India so that they could practice the Tibetan culture denied them by the Chinese in their homeland was moving and heartbreaking. Especially when you realized that the poised young man telling this story to the filled auditorium was one of those children. He pointed out the house in the compound he lived in with several hundred other children and the Montessori preschool classroom that restored his self-confidence and self-respect, giving him the respectful, nurturing environment that he needed to adapt to his new world.

I experienced first hand the universality of Montessori and the child when I embarked on two weeks of practice teaching in a Montessori preschool in Sydney, Australia. Under the able oversight of Chris, the head teacher, originally from England, with the help of her assistant teacher from Malaysia and an aide from South Africa, I observed and gave Montessori lessons to a select group of 3-to-6 year olds, including...Harry, who answered an invitation to work with me, "Oh, I've had enough of that." I moved on to Henry, and Harry interrupted, "Not 'h' for Henry, 'h' for Harry!" When Chris mentioned at our last group gathering that "We will miss Paula," Harry declared forcefully, "I won't!" Talk about your connection with reality!

I was amazed how "at home" I was in this Montessori environment so far away from my own country. The language was somewhat familiar (of course, I know that children grow up speaking their mother tongue but it was still a shock to hear these little people speaking Australian!) but the classroom, the materials, the children, in their essence, were things I was totally familiar with even if the animals weren't.

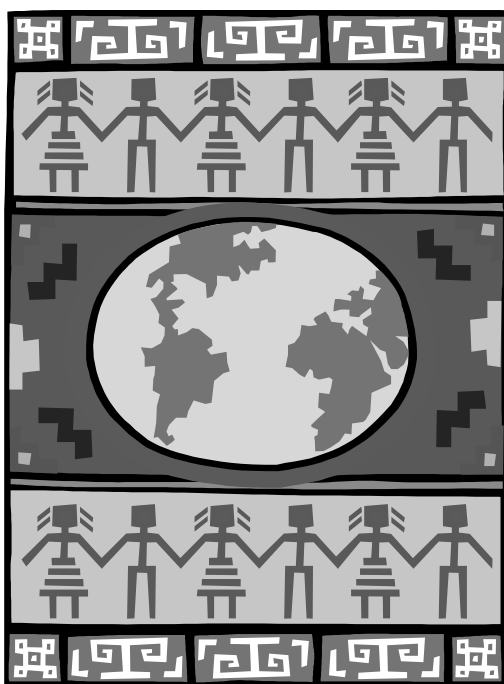
My packet of congress materials included three folded and sealed pieces of paper, on which was written: Open Day One: The Essence of Education. Inside was this quote from Montessori as well as numerous other quotes on the subject:

"Education should no longer be mostly imparting of knowledge, but must take a new path, seeking the release of human potentialities." –Maria Montessori

Open Day Two: The Essence of Service

"Whosoever touches the life of the child touches the most sensitive part of the whole which has roots in the most distant past and climbs toward the infinite future." –Maria Montessori

A fabulous PowerPoint presentation by Molly O'Shaughnessy, a Primary trainer from Minneapolis, Minnesota, moved us with pictures both tender and powerful, and music that called us to join this peaceful revolution.



The conference ended with another parade of children, this one inviting us to the centenary celebration of Montessori in 2007. Nearly a thousand voices joined together to sing “*Dona Nobis Pacem*,” (Give Us Peace).

Yet the spirit of the revolution continues. On the AMI website is the Montessori Centenary Declaration calls us:

- To participate in a universal social movement that places children at the centre of society, recognizing them as citizens of the world.
- To promote knowledge and understanding of the conditions necessary for the full development of the human being from conception to maturity both at home and in society.
- To create a climate of opinion and opportunities for the full development of the potential of all young people so that humanity may work in harmony for a higher

and more peaceful civilization.

- To reform education as a reciprocal, lifelong process in which every member of the human race is profoundly engaged.

The signed declaration will be presented to governments around the world in 2007, the 100th anniversary of Montessori’s first *Casa de Bambini*. Thank you for your part in this peaceful revolution to champion the cause of all children. ■

Paula Gibson-Smith received her AMI Elementary diploma from Ohio Montessori Training Institute in 1987 and her AMI Primary diploma from Montessori Institute Northwest in 2006. She teaches a class of 6-to-9-year-olds with the Spokane Public Schools at Jefferson Elementary School and gives elementary workshops in the Portland area through MINW.

OMA Administrators’ Group

Our OMA Administrators’ Group has met quarterly this year, and step-by-step, meeting-by-meeting, we are building a stronger sense of connection and support among our diverse group of people. Some administrators come to every meeting, some have been able to attend only once or twice, and some maintain an email connection but can’t join us in the daytime. So we gather, making good use of our short time together, and then through email we stay connected between meetings as needed.

In November of this year, the Franciscan Montessori Earth School welcomed us to a lovely luncheon; in January we went out to Greenstone Montessori in Molalla, to see their new school; and in April, with all their students out practice teaching, MINW’s staff was happy to host our meeting. It’s nice to meet in a different location each time!

Like the guides in so many classrooms, we administrators in all these Montessori schools (42 are listed in the directory, and 24 administrators have asked to be in our group) are so busy in our own buildings, with multiple demands on our time; and it is difficult to get out and share resources and experience, not to mention support and friendship, with one another. And yet we have so much in common, and we have different areas of invaluable expertise and experience. This year our agenda

items have included parent education ideas, board/administrator relationships, a tuition survey, the upcoming Montessori Centennial, and always the dynamic subjects, which come up in our discussions.

In between meetings, we have an active group email connection that allows us to touch base and respond to one another whenever questions or ideas arise. We hope to establish a more fluid tech connection in the future, perhaps using the OMA website as a focal point. We will also be establishing a more formal Liaison position to the OMA Board for next year. It’s gratifying to hear people’s appreciation of the group, and it seems a very worthwhile effort, on my part, to help knit our community together in this way.

We decided to have a summer meeting in July. As of this writing, the date is not settled, but we know it will be at Providence Montessori. Administrators, we sincerely hope that some of you who haven’t made it during the school year will be able to join us in the summer. Stay tuned for more information. ■

Jude Foster is the administrator at Harmony Montessori School.

SCHOOL NEWS

All Roads Learning Community

The children and the staff at All Roads have been avidly observing the large maple tree that grows outside of our windows. The rapid growth of buds turned to leaves has offered the starting point for many observations about the changing landscape around us. We have been enjoying the bounty of tulips, daffodils, the cherry tree blossoms, and lately, the marvelous rhododendrons that grace our little campus.

We are pleased to be “graduating” our third round of three year olds all destined for the Children’s House. And this year, we are graduating a Guide as well! We will be saying “so long” to Mercedes Behmer-Bieker who will be founding her own program, *Lilly Garden Montessori School*, in North Portland. Joelle Cowan, a once Montessori child and now a Montessori parent will join us in the fall.

Franciscan Montessori Earth School and St. Francis Academy

The Franciscan Montessori Earth and St. Francis Academy

have a unique position in the East Portland community. The Earth School is one of the few large private schools in Multnomah’s “East County,” a district that is historically more working class, economically depressed, and resource poor than the metropolitan area as a whole. As such, the Earth School, since moving to this location in 1994, has played an important and active role in the cultural and educational life of this section of East County, and is a good neighbor within its working-class neighborhood, hosting community and sports activities and providing recreational resources. While this location is in keeping with the underlying mission of the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist, it is also in keeping with a long tradition of community support associated with the philosophy of Montessori education.

Working with the Centennial Community Association, the East Portland Neighborhood Office, and our own neighbors, both residential and business, the school has been an agent of change and renewal in this part of Portland. Our students, parents, and staff have all had opportunities to participate in an ongoing outreach to the community, with this outreach taking many avenues.

Whether participating in a neighborhood festival, a neighborhood watch, or a community meeting with city officials, the community here at FMES has participated in some dramatic changes for the better. As we begin our celebrations of 30 years of service next year, we will count among our successes the changes, and renewal, that our presence in this part of Portland has helped to stimulate. ■

Montessori School of Beaverton says ‘Good-bye’ to a beloved Guide

By Peter Davidson

I first met Cathy Swan when she was a student at MINW in 1980/81. What impressed me then, other than her fiery red hair and sparkling personality, was her intense determination to understand Montessori as deeply and thoroughly as possible, and her generous willingness to share her knowledge and insights with others. Over the 25 years since, she has guided classrooms at Vancouver Montessori, Montessori School of Beaverton and West Hills Montessori, brought Montessori out into the general community through parent education and her work with Head Start, served on numerous Boards of Directors, served as Course Assistant and in administration at MINW

while in the Training of Trainers process, and, most recently, returned to the classroom for the last eight years while becoming a consultant and achieving the title of AMI Auxiliary Trainer. It seems a logical next step for such an accomplished and versatile Montessorian that Cathy has accepted the position of Head of School of the Montessori School of Lake Forest outside of Chicago. On behalf of all of the hundreds of people whose lives you’ve touched and enriched over those 25 years of service to the Montessori community in Portland, I want to say thank you, Cathy. We’ll miss you. Our best wishes go with you. ■

NEWS FROM MINW

These sunny spring days have been feeding the exuberant energy of both the MINW students and MINW staff. Our students have returned from Practice Teaching invigorated and inspired by their connections with the children.

Written Exams took place the first week of May and Oral Exams will take place over several days at the end of April and beginning of May. The students have been very focused as they undertake this important stage of training. Ginni has compared Exams to the third period of a 3-period lesson: Having taken in so much information over these last 8 months (second period), they now express what they know in a "third period." As in all three period lessons, this is an assessment tool or test that is not just for the teacher but also for the student to recognize their level of understanding and knowledge. M. Shannon Helfrich, Eduardo Cuevas, and Sandra Girlato will be joining our community during Oral Exams as the AMI Examination team. It is also always a pleasure to see many local AMI guides participate in these Oral Exams as "children."

By the time you read this, we will have seen each other at the OMA Spring Tea. We are thrilled that Corinne Burden, our Primary Course Assistant since 2003, will be awarded the OMA Outstanding Dedication Award this year. After many years of devoted work to both the OMA and to MINW, we are so happy to see her recognized by our community.

MINW staff is busy at work enrolling our three

upcoming Courses. Room is still available in each of the three upcoming courses: the Assistants to Infancy teacher training course, the Introduction to Montessori and the Primary teacher-training course.

The Assistants to Infancy summer course 2006-2007 is filling up with individuals both veterans to our community, individuals new to Montessori and others from around the globe who have other levels of AMI training. The Introduction to Montessori Course, a two-week course formerly known as the "Assistants Course," is scheduled for August 14 to 25. We are currently enrolling this course and look forward to introducing parents, assistants, and many others to the Montessori approach to children under the age of six. Our Academic Year Primary course is also enrolling and promises to bring us another group of vibrant individuals all seeking a deeper understanding of Montessori for ages three to six.

Staff is also currently working on our 2006-2007 workshop schedule. We look forward to a year focused on practical topics for working with children as well as events that reach out to the community beyond Montessori. Our first confirmed program offers an exciting kick-off to your academic year: an August 26 Saturday Seminar on the crucial first weeks of the year that Dr. Montessori refers to as the "collective stage of the class." Ginni Sackett, drawing strongly from Montessori's own words, will be speaking on this extremely significant time. This topic will offer a refresher for recent graduates and invaluable set of tools for more experienced guides. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. Hosts of 2006-2007 MINW Practice Teachers are invited to attend this seminar as our guests. ■

VIDEO PROJECTOR AVAILABLE TO BORROW

The Oregon Montessori Association has acquired a video projector that is now a part of our Media Library. This machine is available for OMA Member Schools to borrow for a modest fee of \$25.00 a week. A deposit is required. Contact David Cannon at 503-768-3847 for more information or to reserve the machine.

A Montessori Farm School in the Northwest!

Northwest Montessori Middle School (NWMMS) has begun a new effort to open a Montessori Farm School here in the Northwest. Drawing on funding from local and national sources, NWMMS will be employing experienced local Montessori teacher David Ayer, with input from his wife, Elise Huneke-Stone, who teaches elementary at West Hills Montessori, for a year of program development, with the goal of opening the program in September 2007.

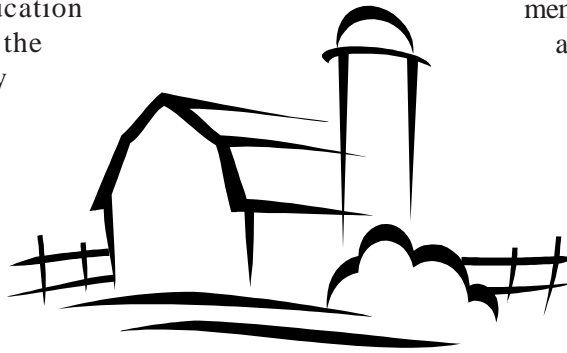
David and Elise, with 16 combined years of Montessori adolescent education experience, helped develop the program at the internationally recognized Hershey Montessori Farm School in Ohio for three years, and are part of national Montessori adolescent education work.

At this time the program is in development. Ultimately, however, the school will be located on at least ten acres in a rural area, if possible, with convenient access to Portland. Students will board during the week with the possibility of weekend stays. Day enrollment may also be offered. The school will serve grades seven through nine. Students will

care for the facility and themselves, produce farm and market goods to help offset costs, and become part of the fabric of the surrounding rural community. They will take part in a rich and engaging academic program over a wide range of subjects, including humanities, science, language, mathematics, and artistic expression.

An effort such as this will call for support from the Montessori community and beyond. We are currently in need of professional expertise in many areas, committee members, and, of course, cash donations. We are also searching for suitable property with a rural residential (RR) or farm/forest (FF) zoning. (Most rural land is zoned EF or AGF and is not usable for a school.) Finally, we are searching for an Angel; someone in a position to offer substantial support for acquiring and improving property. NWMMS is a 501 (c)(3) corporation, and all contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

You can contact NWMMS at David@NWMMS.org or 503-320-7939. ■



CLASSIFIEDS

Temporary Housing Wanted for Summer Trainees

The upcoming Summer Assistants to Infancy Course at MINW is attracting students from far and wide. Some of our incoming students are seeking housing for the summer (mid-June to mid-August). If you have a lead on temporary housing for a Montessori teacher-in-training, MINW would love to know. Contact the Montessori Institute Northwest at 503-963-8992 or office@montessori-nw.org.

Substitute/On Call Staff

From time to time we are in need of experienced Montessori certified primary (3-6 yrs old) teachers and assistants, both FT and PT, because of emergencies, maternity leaves, court dates, etc.

Contact:

Beverly B. Spiller, Administrative Director
Bethany Village Montessori
15188 NW Central Drive
Portland, OR 97229
503-533-5626

Seeking Head Teacher for New One-Room Pre-School in Eugene Area

The Head Teacher is a guide who helps direct his/her students' activities academically, spiritually, emotionally, and physically in a prepared learning environment that challenges each child to reach his/her fullest potential in these developmental areas, generally in accordance with Montessori philosophy and procedures for the preschool age group.

Professional Qualifications:

1. BA or BS minimum
2. Minimum of two years teaching experience in preschool education, preferably in Montessori environment
3. Montessori certification required
4. First Aid/Infant CPR Card
5. Current Food Handler's card
6. A clean Criminal record (as required by Oregon Law)

Submit necessary documents to complete personnel file, including three references, diplomas, transcripts, and Criminal History Registry proof.

Duties and Responsibilities:

The general duties and responsibilities of the Head Teacher shall include, but shall not necessarily be limited to, the following:

1. Be responsible for designing the classroom curriculum so that it integrates Montessori principles and applications. This pertains to Montessori philosophy of which the teacher must have more than passing understanding.
2. Set up the furniture (shelving, desks, and chairs) to create a learning environment for young children that are developmentally appropriate, safe, and attractive. This involves lifting and carrying weights up to 60 pounds.

3. Be responsible for displaying and maintaining the equipment in use in the classroom. All Montessori equipment should be checked DAILY for missing pieces. The teacher is expected to search thoroughly for the missing piece. Montessori apparatus is not to be put out for the children if it is missing any pieces. The teacher is to notify the Director as soon as a material is found to be incomplete.

4. Be responsible for keeping the materials and their shelves dusted, sponged and clean. Check shelves and works daily and maintain as needed. This is every teacher's responsibility. The Montessori environment is part of the educational process: it must be at its very best all the time.

5. Be responsible for providing library books or age-appropriate reading materials for the class. Must put up and change bulletin/display boards. This may involve standing on a ladder to reach the higher bulletin boards.

6. Be responsible for assisting children in toileting skills. This may involve helping children change their clothes.

7. Teachers may have to hold children and carry them in case of injury so must be able to life and carry weights up to 60 pounds.

8. Be responsible for checking with the director before adding any alterations to the program, such as parties or art shows, for example. Only the director can authorize policy changes.

9. Be responsible for acting as Substitute Director as needed.

10. Be responsible for reporting to CCD any suspected child abuse.

11. Be responsible for miscellaneous duties and details as needed.

Contact:

Heather Karr
1264 Lorne Loop
Springfield, OR 97477
541-747-1731 ■

Oregon Montessori Association

Membership and School Listing Form 2005-2006

Individual Membership Includes:

- Discounts to OMA workshops
- Three issues of the Forza Vitale Newsletter
- Copy of and listing in the OMA Directory
- Our Spring Tea celebration of our Montessori community
- Access to the local Montessori community through newsletter submissions and website classifieds

Individual Membership Form	
Name _____	Phone _____
Email _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> My address has not changed from last year (leave address section blank)	
Address _____	
City _____	State _____ Zip _____
School Affiliation _____	Relationship to School _____
Resources / Interests _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> I am willing to volunteer 1 hour for OMA work such as workshop set-up, stuffing envelopes, phone calls, etc.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Please include me in the OMA Speakers Bureau. I would consider giving a presentation on the following:	
Cost <input type="checkbox"/> \$30 Individual Membership <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Teacher-in-Training at	

☐ Please check here if you prefer to receive workshop and other OMA event announcements by email

School Listing Includes:

- Three issues of the Forza Vitale Newsletter
- A copy of and listing in the OMA Directory
- Listing on the OMA website
- Access to the OMA Media Library
- Access to place classifieds and calendar items on the OMA website and in the newsletter
- Our Spring Tea celebration of our Montessori community
- Increased community presence

School Listing						
Name of School _____						
Email _____			Phone _____			
Address _____						
City _____		State _____		Zip _____		
Administrator _____						
Website _____						
	0-3yrs	3-6yrs	6-9yrs	9-12yrs	12-15yrs	15-18yrs
Number of Classrooms						
Cost: \$15 per classroom (total of all classrooms - any age) Minimum Cost: \$45 Maximum Cost: \$105 (<i>Rate changes effective July 2005</i>) <i>Price also includes one Individual Membership - Please complete the Individual Membership Form as well</i>						

Thank You!

Send this form and your check to: OMA, P.O. Box 80151, Portland, OR 97280

FORZA VITALE!

Vol. 26, No. 1

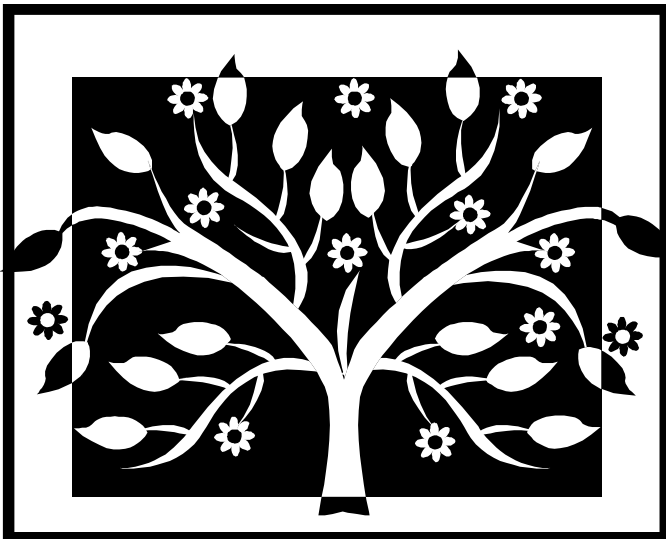
A Newsletter for People Active in Montessori Education

Fall 2006

Greetings

Welcome! Thank you for joining the Oregon Montessori Association. It is a blessing to serve within such a dynamic community. While the OMA has a diverse membership with individuals representing parents, administrators, Montessorians of various affiliations, large schools and small schools, we all share one thing in common: we want to make the world a better place. We look to the child for inspiration. We look to the child for guidance on how to live peacefully. We look to the child for self-reflection. How wonderful to take a moment to pause and reflect. We hope that this issue of the *Forza Vitale* will offer you inspiration.

We look forward to hearing from you! The OMA is a grassroots organization and there are many ways to be



In This Issue . . .

Glimpses of Diversity

*Developing a
Listening Ear*

Montessori on the Road

involved. Please feel free to contribute to the OMA by assisting at a workshop, submitting an article to the *Forza Vitale* or offering us suggestions on how to serve you better. We strive to serve the diverse needs of the Montessori Community and your membership is important!

Once again, thank you for joining the OMA! This year is a year of inspiration as we approach the Centenary anniversary of Dr. Maria Montessori's first *Casa dei Bambini*. We all have the opportunity to make the world a better place, and the child will guide us.

With gratitude,

Carrie Brown
OMA President

Forza Vitale!

OMA Information:

Greetings	1
Meet the Board	4
OMA Assistants' Workshop Encounters	5
Winter Workshop Announcement	8

Features:

Glimpses of Diversity	9
Developing a Listening Ear	11
Montessori on the Road	14
Diversity: A Community Perspective	16

Area News:

School News	19
Northwest Montessori Middle School	21
MINW News	22
News You Can Use	22
Classifieds	23
Membership Form	24

Forza Vitale!, published three times a year, is the official newsletter of the Oregon Montessori Association. Submissions of articles, reviews, school news, anecdotes and the like are encouraged. Address all correspondence to the Newsletter representatives of the OMA Board, listed below.



The **Oregon Montessori Association** was founded in 1979 to support the community of Montessori professionals, schools, parents, students, and all others interested in Montessori and early childhood education.

Oregon Montessori Association is committed to the principle of equal opportunity and does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, veteran status, ancestry, or national or ethnic origin.

OMA Website: www.oregonmontessori.org

OMA Contact Information:

Two Rivers Montessori School
7740 SW Capitol Hwy, Portland, OR 97219
503-768-3847

E-mail: oregonmontessori@yahoo.com
P.O. Box 80151, Portland, OR 97280

OMA Board Members 2006-2007

Administration

Carrie Brown
officers@oregonmontessori.org
503-284-8504

Mercedes Castle
officers@oregonmontessori.org
503-233-1633

Workshops

Annie Noonan
workshops@oregonmontessori.org
503-643-4535

Anna Varnelius
workshops@oregonmontessori.org
503-730-6617

Newsletter

Joelle Cowan
newsletter@oregonmontessori.org
503-297-5776

Christina Jun
newsletter@oregonmontessori.org
503-227-8188

Stacey Philipps
newsletter@oregonmontessori.org
503-293-1675

OMA Administrators' Group Liaison

Jude Foster
jude.foster@comcast.net

Layout: **Donna Andrews**
donna.andrews@yahoo.com
971-645-5459



CALENDAR



OCTOBER

- 29-Nov. 1 **American Montessori Society
Fourth-Annual Youth Visits the
United Nations Program**
New York, NY
www.amshq.org

- 18 **American Montessori Society
Touring Symposium – “M.A.P.S.”:
A Recipe for Reading Success**
Miami, FL
www.amshq.org

NOVEMBER

- 2-5 **Montessori Foundation &
International Montessori Council’s
Annual International Conference**
Clearwater Beach, FL
www.montessori.org
- 4 **American Montessori Society
Touring Symposium – Revisiting
Montessori Philosophy**
Avilla, IN
www.amshq.org
- 8 **Oregon Montessori Association
Administrators’ Meeting**
1:30 pm
Harmony Montessori School
Portland, OR
503-255-5337
- 9-12 **NAMTA
Communication: The Child, the
Parent, and Montessori Connections**
Baltimore, MD
www.montessori-namta.org
montessori@bigpond.com
- 15 **Montessori Institute Northwest &
Northwest Montessori Middle School
Present A Lecture by William
Damon: Fostering Noble Purpose in
Youth**
Oregon Convention Center, 7:00 pm
www.montessori-nw.org and
www.nwmms.org

JANUARY

- 6 **Centenary of Maria Montessori’s first
*Casa dei Bambini***
- 3-20 **Centenary Study Tour – Europe
Italy and The Netherlands**
www.montessoricentenary.org
- 6-7 **Montessori Centenary Conference**
Rome, Italy
www.montessoricentenary.org
- 12-14 **American Montessori Society
2007 Heads of Schools Retreat**
Punta Cana, Dominican Republic
www.amshq.org
- 19 **Montessori Institute Northwest
Celebration of Light**
www.montessori-nw.org
- 27 **Oregon Montessori Association
Winter Workshop: Music and
Movement with Diana Zegers**
9:00 am to 12:30 pm
Save the date – location to be
announced!
- 27 **Montessori Institute Northwest
Language & Math Area Review for
AMI-trained guides**
www.montessori-nw.org
- 27 **American Montessori Society
Brain Research and the Montessori
Method of Teaching**
Charlottesville, VA
www.amshq.org ■



Meet the Board



Carrie Brown, President

Carrie moved to Portland Oregon in the early spring of 2000. Both Carrie and her husband, Jasen, enjoy living in this beautiful city. Carrie has worked in various Montessori schools in Texas, New York City, and Portland for several years. When Carrie arrived in Portland, she was pleasantly surprised by the sense of community within the city. Carrie enjoys serving on the board as president of the Oregon Montessori Association because it is such a dynamic and inclusive organization. "I look forward to learning from my colleagues while working together to support the needs of the Montessori community; as well as promoting greater understanding of the Montessori philosophy within the larger community."

Mercedes Castle, Treasurer/Interim Secretary

Mercedes is looking forward to contributing to the OMA board as this year's treasurer. Mercedes is lead guide and director of All Roads Learning Community, a small Infant Community in southwest Portland. Mercedes enjoys spending time with her toddler son and her husband. She loves to read, cook, and sing and play the guitar.

Joelle Cowan, Newsletter

Joelle started her education as a Montessori kid at Childpeace Montessori and was fortunate enough to finish high school the same way, graduating from St. Francis Academy. Becoming a Montessori guide has always been a "someday" plan, but circumstances came together perfectly this summer, when she was able to leave her career as an IT professional and begin to pursue that dream of becoming a Montessori guide at the Assistants to Infancy level. She is currently working as an assistant at All Roads Learning Community. Joelle is excited to join the OMA Board as part of the *Forza Vitale!* team.

Jude Foster, Administrators' Group Liaison

Jude Foster is the mother of three; her youngest son is a senior in high school. Her daughter Eloika is the new mother of Terra Skye, now eight months old, so as parenting winds down, grandparenting begins. Jude is looking ahead with excitement — no 'empty nest' worries here! Jude is the founder and administrator of Harmony

Montessori School, now in its 13th year. Harmony is thriving, and about to step into the next stages of its evolution too. She is pleased to be serving on the OMA Board, and helping to link the diverse, dedicated, and wonderful schools in our larger Montessori community.

Tina Jun, Newsletter

This is Tina's second year working on the newsletter committee. She has been working within Montessori communities for almost five years in different capacities. Currently she is an assistant at Childpeace Montessori and plans to take her primary training next year. In her spare time, Tina likes to cook, doodle, be "outdoorsy," and spend time with her loved ones.

Annie Noonan, Workshops

Annie is looking forward to her second year on the OMA board and is hoping to expand the OMA community this year, to include more schools that are in smaller communities around Oregon. She loves spending time camping, cooking, and playing in her garden, with her husband, Mike, and two delightful boys; Evan who's seven and Ryan who is two.

Stacey Philipps, Newsletter

Stacey is serving her second year on the newsletter committee and enjoys the camaraderie and purpose of serving on the OMA board. Her daughter is in her second year of Montessori elementary school, and Stacey works as an assistant administrator at Two Rivers Montessori. She, her husband, and their daughter ride bikes, climb monkey bars, sing, pet cats, garden, and make marble track structures in southwest Portland.

Anna Varnelius, Workshops

Anna has been a children's house guide for four years. She moved her family from California to Portland specifically to do the teacher training at the Montessori Institute Northwest. She has a bachelor's degree in studio art emphasizing metal sculpture and ceramics and received her Masters in Education from Loyola College in Maryland. Her son is in his last year in the Children's House, and she and her family have fallen in love with living in the beautiful Northwest. ■

Assistants' Workshop Encounters

Oregon Montessori Association's annual Assistants' Workshop was held this year on the lovely campus of Montessori School of Beaverton. New and familiar faces gathered to hear words of inspiration on the coming year from Peter Davidson, our keynote speaker, and then chose individual break-out sessions according to their interests. The following stories describe two individual experiences at the workshop.

The Perfect Relationship

By Ashley Smith

A well-balanced guide/assistant partnership in the primary classroom is key to modeling working relationships for children. The role of the assistant is not secondary but a supportive role in this important partnership.

The primary assistants attending the break-out session at the OMA Assistant Workshop in August spent the morning with Ann Messick and Jacqueline McCarville, the guide/assistant team in a primary classroom at SunGarden Montessori. They have worked together for eight years, continually evolving their working relationship as guide and assistant. Here are a few key tidbits to think about that sum up what they shared.

In the children's eyes, they have two teachers. This is a testament to the importance of the partnership. In forging a partnership, some ideas include:

- Getting to know each other's strengths and weaknesses and utilizing these qualities
- Communication
- Listing three positive things at the end of each day
- Don't take anything personally
- Withhold prejudices
- Start out fresh each day
- Spell each other during frustrating moments
- Be genuine, as it is essential to be ourselves fully with the children and for them to see this between the adults
- We model the evolving process of a working relationship the best we can by being present

As an assistant, it was confirming to hear that this partnership matters and that one is not subservient to another, but supportive—that these are two very different roles, equally as important to the functioning of the classroom. As a parent, I came away from this session feeling that a successful working partnership between the guide and the assistant could also offer a model for parents and how important the quality of our own adult relationships are also models for our children. ■

Ashley Smith, designer and star-hat fabricator, is mom to Henry and Maile, who are elementary students at Odyssey Montessori. Ashley is currently an assistant at West Hills Montessori in the Sunflower Classroom.

Wonderful Food for Thought: OMA Assistants' Workshop Session on 0-3

By Corinne Burden

I was thrilled to have the opportunity to attend the Assistants to Infancy breakout session at the OMA Assistants' Workshop. I am about one-third of the way into the AMI Assistants to Infancy Training after having spent eight years very focused on the Primary level. The A to I experience has been so fascinating. All the familiar Montessori theory is there, yet when sundering it in the context of this younger child it all takes on a new cast and significance. I leapt at the chance to attend this workshop and breakout session as I have been hungry to find opportunities to reflect on what I have been learning.

Venus Zaron's presentation offered us useful and inspiring information. Her experience with Montessori began early as her mother was a Primary guide who has gone on to do extensive peer and adult education regarding Montessori. Venus is trained at both the Primary level and Assistants to Infancy. She is the mother of two young children and regularly shares her insight and experience by leading parent-infant classes, home consultations, and workshops. This made it clear that, as Venus herself stated, she "has a passion for working with people who work with children."

Venus invited us to be aware of our powerful role in the early lives of these children. 0-3 is a powerful time for the Absorbent Mind, and the children are taking in and incarnating all aspects of their environment, forming the basis for their intelligence and personality. Our influence and impression on them is as strong as the more formal didactic materials in the Prepared Environment. We educate these very young children about the nature of what it is to be human. Whatever our job title or role in the classroom, we are an educator. We can either be aware of this or not.

When working in the Montessori environment, we commit ourselves to an awareness of our role as an educator. This means we must commit to being aware of our movements, our words and even our thoughts. Our physical, emotional and spiritual presence is dramatically felt by the very young child who is still in formation.

Our physical commitment to the work involves grace and care in our movements. Venus encourages the adult in the Montessori environment to be attentive to our health so that we can be regularly present with the children, offering the best of ourselves. She invites adults in this Prepared

Environment to wear our hair back from our face. She emphasized that the face conveys so much of our feeling and intention and becomes a key tool in modeling concentration.

Functional, thoughtful clothing is important when working this age group. For example, shoes that are lightweight and flexible which allow for graceful, quick responsive movement. These shoes become particularly significant when you consider the little bodies that are underfoot in a Nido or Toddler community.

The Montessori teacher's overall appearance and mode of dress was often discussed by Dr. Montessori. Functionality is of course important, but she always emphasized that the teacher should be pleasant in appearance (she even used the word attractive). Venus shared an image from the A to I Trainer, Maria Teresa "Cha Cha" Vidales. She invites the 0-3 teacher to leave the home for work everyday as though you are about to meet many special people (like dignitaries or respected artists). I love this image as it conveys so much about the intention of the work. This daily preparation is not a rule or a chore, but instead a guiding principle.

The Assistant must regularly be brought to the most inspiring, lofty, and indeed theoretical aspects of this work. The OMA workshop is indeed a good launching point for this, but it is the day-to-day duty of the guide and administrator to ensure that this is kept up. To regularly bring to the Assistant's awareness, for example, that her seemingly overly fastidious duties related to cleanliness and order in the classroom environment are not persnickety but rather the predictable physical order of things allows these very young children to act independently. The external order of the environment brings an internal order in the form of peace, clarity focus and community. We assist the children in their self-construction, ultimately to help build a world of people of strong character capable of peaceful coexistence. The shelves are straightened for Montessori's vision of world peace! Okay, Venus didn't say exactly that, but you get the picture. This work can and should be elevating.

Assistants are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to learn about child development and parenting. Continuing education workshops and parents nights are ideal opportunities for an Assistant to learn more about

Montessori and child development. Watching the children functioning in an optimized environment allows the adult to observe the true nature of the very young child. Watching the trained guide will yield new ideas about interacting with this age child.

Assistants and the guide should meet regularly and keep lines of communication open. Written exchanges of information and thoughts can be a great complement to face-to-face meetings. Regular communication is essential in building understanding, trust, and mutual respect. The children and their Absorbent Minds will take in and incarnate the emotional climate and unspoken emotional aspects of the room. This includes adult attitudes toward the children and certainly the adults' interactions and feelings toward one another. Asking questions of the guide is essential in establishing and maintaining a clear understanding of her perspective and approach. Venus suggests that, rather than not asking questions, or inviting defensive responses, the assistant might approach the guide with a neutral "tell me about"

An essential part of work in a Montessori environment, and when working with children, is to engage in ongoing self-evaluation and self-observation. We must examine our prejudices and expectations. Individuals and cultures have unique expectations and prejudices related to different age groups of children. Adults working in a Montessori environment must examine theirs. Why are we choosing to work with this age group? Are we looking to fulfill a particular need in ourselves, such as a desire to have others dependent on us? Acknowledging the presence of these ideas allows us to separate them from us in a way that does not direct our behavior toward the child. Venus pointed out that a young child can be like a mirror, reflecting back to you everything that is inside you, both the good and the bad. Venus advised to let go of judgmental or negative feelings about particular children or members of a school community. She states that there is no time at all when speaking negatively about a child is okay. She suggests a tool of rather than saying, for example, "That child is so needy," you can turn it into an assertion of something constructive you might do. Such as, "I can help this child more confident if I break down the steps of putting on his jacket."

We must be wary of making assumptions about the child's behavior. For example, a child may appear angry or upset about nothing. What about the possibility that child is

embarrassed? I have been very interested in this as it came up often during my A to I training, that very young children often seem to get upset or act out because they are embarrassed. It is indeed very easy to pull others' attention on to them or laugh at their developing language and motor skills. Venus invited us to notice behavior, but don't make assumptions about it. If a child is in a state of disequilibrium, draw them closer to you. Help them to do what Montessori says will always center the young child—give them a motive and opportunity for purposeful movement. Engage them, link their movement and their mind and do a simple activity together, like preparing a snack or moving furniture.

Venus points out that the crux of our work with young children is our knowledge of all that the child has shown us and yet always allowing them to be someone new each day. We must let go of our assumptions, our habits, our prejudices, and our preconceptions when working with the very young child. Yet we do build up a relationship and knowledge of the child.



Adults in the Prepared Environment must be alert to their feelings toward each child as the children arrive at the classroom door in the morning. Does a certain child make our body or psyche tense up? Even our conclusion that a child is "well-behaved" is not necessarily helpful to the

child as we find ourselves almost disappointed when that child's behavior varies. Venus posed the question: Are we greeting yesterday's child or today's?

I find it fascinating to think that for the very young child, in a period of intense brain development, the child of yesterday really is a different child than the child of today. In offering the children the freedom to express themselves each day and every moment, we afford them an essential freedom. Staying in the present moment with each child is a very age-appropriate approach — a different moment in the same day we can offer them a warm greeting almost as though we are greeting them for the first time.

Venus invited us to consider our ability and desire to have a new day be a new chance to do something better or different. I know I often will wake up and commit to approaching a situation or environment differently today than I have in the past. "Unfortunate" would be too weak a word to describe a situation where I would not be able to come to each day with a fresh chance at things. A child must

(continued next page)

certainly be afforded this opportunity. Every day we reveal to the world who we are. The same opportunity must be afforded to the children we work with. We want for them to be happy and thrive; there is nothing helpful to come of only allowing them the paths they have chosen in the past.

In this break-out session, both the most practical and most spiritual advice for work with this age group had the common thread of staying present in the moment and focused on the child of that moment. When I worked in the Primary, I remember this to be true and am not surprised that it may be even more powerfully so for

work with the younger children.

I am grateful to the OMA, to Venus and to the others present in the A to I breakout, as the session gave me much food for thought. I look forward to future OMA events and to hearing what other classes Venus is offering in the area. ■

Corinne Burden is the Primary Course Assistant at the Montessori Institute Northwest and a current student of the Montessori Institute Northwest 2006-7 Assistants to Infancy program.



WINTER Workshop

OMA PRESENTS:

“MUSIC AND MOVEMENT”

With **DIANA ZEGERS**

SATURDAY, JANUARY 27th

9:00AM - 12:30PM



SESSIONS WILL INCLUDE:

HOW TO TEACH MUSIC THEORY TO THE 3-6 YEAR OLD CHILD

COPYCAT SONGS, INCLUDING HAND-OUTS

WORKING WITH BELLS

HOW TO WRITE SONGS

Diana Zegers is the founder of Montessori Schools of Central Kitsap. She is a certified Montessori teacher through the Montessori Education Institute of the Pacific Northwest, an American Montessori Society affiliate. She opened Barker Creek Montessori in 1991. In 1995 she opened Steele Creek Montessori and together the schools became Montessori Schools of Central Kitsap. She is the author of Discover Music, a curriculum that is being taught in over 1,400 Montessori classrooms. Diana is a frequent seminar presenter and a teacher trainer for the music and movement portions of several Montessori training centers. Diana enjoys gardening and trips to the Netherlands from where her family originates.



Glimpses of Diversity

By Jude Foster

“Diversity” is such a potent, many-leveled word, and clearly it will remain a critical issue as we move further into the 21st century. Celebrating diversity is one of the most important steps we can take toward achieving our goal of world peace, a brotherhood of man. Honoring diversity is surely a core task as we work with children. Yet here we are, in a country filled with people of different languages, different cultures, different colors, and different religions; but in many circumstances, this rich American reality remains almost invisible. And what of the global community? What a conundrum! How do we bring this human diversity into our schools and into the children’s lives?

At Harmony, we are guided by our mission statement, which includes five main areas of focus, the last of which is “embracing cultural and social diversity in our school community.” Once written, it became incumbent upon us to find ways to make this commitment real. We developed several financial aid programs, created a dedicated fundraiser for what we call the Children’s Fund, and did what a small school could do, in seeking out children. Actually, they seem to seek us out! It never feels like enough. And yet each child must be “Enough.”

As I contemplated what to write here, I found the individual children rising up in my memory. Unique, diverse children came into our school community, and with their very being, they enriched and broadened our experience. We lived diversity with them, one child at a time. Here, then, are some glimpses:

The first child I am remembering is Dorcelle. Her family of six had just arrived from a refugee camp in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Dorcelle herself had actually been born in prison. As a Christian family, they had been sponsored, relocated, and housed by the church where Harmony is located. Dorcelle was three years old when I met their family, and in those earlier days of Harmony, without a clear financial aid process, I simply enrolled her at no charge, and booked it as financial aid.

Dorcelle spoke Swahili and some French, so we used a little French to get started with her. She slowly grew

comfortable with her classroom, became accustomed to the food (at first she threw up after eating snack), and started to learn some words in our language. She began to interact with other kids, and many took her under their wing. Soon she was lighting up our days! I helped her family in other ways, and during our summer camp, her elementary-aged brothers spent a lot of time with us. For the other children in our program, Dorcelle was as much a part of the community as anyone else. No more, no less — they accepted her differences naturally. After a year, her family moved to join some other Congolese refugee friends on the East Coast. I grieved their leaving.

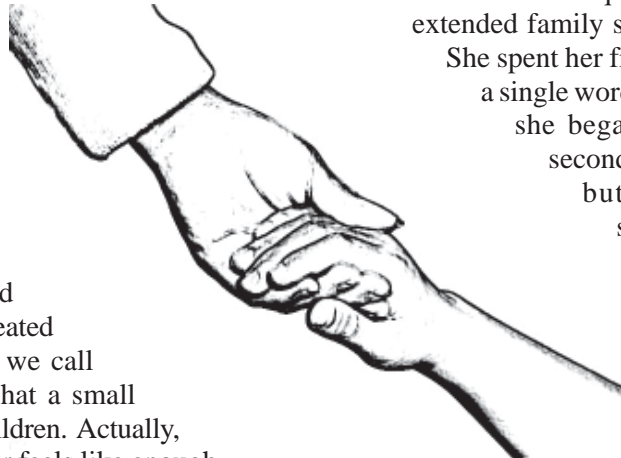
Another child unique in my memory is Yen. Her extended family spoke only Vietnamese at home.

She spent her first year with us without uttering a single word, until the very last weeks, when she began to whisper in my ear. The second year she would speak a little, but was still tentative, and sometimes we didn’t understand her. By the time she reached extended day, she was boisterous, confident, and fully bilingual.

In her second year with us, another Vietnamese boy enrolled, Binh, who also did not speak English. I thought, great, Yen will be able to help. Binh would cry every day in the early weeks. The only comfort we found was to call his dad and let Binh talk on the phone with him. Several times I asked Yen to translate: “Tell him his dad will come back soon.” Yen, whispering (in English): “Your dad will come back soon.” Me: “Tell him in your other language. He speaks Vietnamese like you.” She just shook her head. Yen couldn’t do it. She spoke English at school, Vietnamese when she walked out the door, and the two couldn’t mix yet in her brain. What an eye-opener that was for me. She and Binh never did speak Vietnamese to each other at school.

Then there is Tsering. Her Tibetan family had been granted political asylum and moved here from Dharamsala, India; soon after they arrived, they walked through our doors. They had no idea how much a Montessori school would cost, they just happened to live nearby. I didn’t even

(continued next page)



explain at first. By then our financial aid process was established, and I began to appeal for donations. Generous gifts came in, and that spring, our Children's Fund took its full shape.

Tsering was less than three when she started and spoke only Tibetan. She remained with us for four years. Very often her grandfather would walk her to school, and greet us in traditional fashion, with palms together. Each year her family was able to pay a little more toward her tuition (they were working at night and going to school by day, beginning a whole new life). Tsering absorbed our culture and language so fully, sometimes her mother worried that she was forgetting Tibetan! They remain my precious friends to this day.

This year we have two sponsored children at Harmony. One is Mandeep, a Punjabi Indian boy. His family runs a little quick-stop store nearby, and for two years I watched him in there, first as a baby, then counting change as a toddler, saying "hi" to customers. Finally I persuaded them to visit, and to apply for financial aid. Mandeep is a live wire, mischievous and funny; he keeps us laughing, and learns so quickly by watching the other children. Now in his second year, he is beginning to speak English in phrases.

And now we have a second Tibetan girl, Tenzin, who left a refugee camp in southern India just months ago. She is

already five, so will be with us just one year. She began in Summer Camp. At first she would bring me a simple animal puzzle every day, one made for the three-year-olds, and she would play "bring me" until she knew all the animals' names. Then she moved on to numbers, letters, objects, all with such focus and determination. She was so expressive, so visibly excited to use all the materials. By the end of summer, she was taking little three-year-olds under *her* wing. And after just three months, Tenzin is now spelling three-letter words. Her parents are very grateful she is with us, as they, like a number of other families we have known, begin their life in America with much determination.

This is just a glimpse of cultural diversity as it has unfolded in our school community. I hope that many of you have similar stories. These unique children, and others I have not mentioned, have each been whole and precious — they have been "Enough." Right now, it's the best we can give the children in our classrooms — a living, changing, interactive, and natural daily exposure — to make more real the cultural geography curriculum that is such a core part of Montessori. The children share their lives together. And awareness of diversity, in language, race, religion, and culture, becomes a natural part of their being. ■

Jude Foster is the administrator of Harmony Montessori School. She had fun Googling for pseudonyms for these children; only Dorcelle has her real name.



San Remo Lectures

(from Lecture IV, World Unity through the Child)

By Maria Montessori

A bewildered humanity has long been searching for harmony, for a point of understanding where hope and common interest may emerge. Humanity has not yet found this point. Many say that to reach an accord we should begin by eliminating all racial and national prejudices. However, is it possible to disregard elements that appear to be essential to our life and that of others? Reconstruction cannot originate from a negative formula which demolishes the essential structures of social organization that have prevailed in the world until now. Instead, we must begin with a new affirmation, in which the consensus and the hopes of all people may converge. That is, the intent to attain world unity through the child.

....there is little hope that the unity of men will be inspired by their reason; only their hearts can realize this unity. The child evokes the same, equally intense,

sentiments in all men, and these emotions have the power to radically transform their character, their perception of things around them....When a child is born, egoism is replaced by generosity and arid hearts are filled with tenderness. He inspires deep emotion and inspires the noblest attitudes....The child is, therefore, a universal spiritual force and a source of love and lofty sentiments; he is the true means to attain unity among the human beings of the world.

....education must channel the creative energies of the child toward an ultimate spiritual independence, utilizing to its utmost his miraculous capacity for adaptation, according to an ideal of altruism and love. On this foundation it is possible to attain mankind's most cherished aspiration — universal peace. In the newborn, we see the apostle of peace. ■

Developing a Listening Ear in the Montessori Classroom

By Melissa Fronberry

Have you ever noticed the way you felt when you were in a room for quite awhile and the refrigerator suddenly stopped running? The sound of a running fridge can be so subtle that it may go completely undetected for hours, and suddenly, when it is halted, we become aware of it in its absence. This can be true of the many sounds around us, the heating or cooling system, the dishwasher, background music, etc. It is possible even to acquire a sensitivity to hear high pitches of electronics like lighting, or a cell phone charging, for example. In the acoustic whirl of the electronic devices with which we surround ourselves, we may not notice how all these noises can add up to create stress in our lives. On the other hand, we can often find ourselves in spaces, like at a waterfall, or listening to our favorite music, in which sound has a health-giving quality. We also use sound, in the inflections of our voice for example, to express ourselves in communication in many different ways. As humans, we have the potential to distinguish the difference between the sounds that cause us stress and the sounds that heal, but do we always act in our best interest? It is only through an acute awareness in our listening that we can hope to distinguish this difference.

We begin hearing even before we are born:

Studies have shown that at birth, a child responds positively and specifically to the tones of the human voice. This implies that even while the child is in the womb, some musical [auditory] capacities are growing. Think about sounds that affect the fetus in the womb, the vibrational effect of the mother's speech, laughter and singing, music from the radio....Even after birth, the sound of the mother's heart has a soothing, calming effect on most babies (Source 3, p.95).

When we "hear" something, we merely perceive a sound by our ears. When we "listen," we give more energy in the form of attention to hear and **understand** the meaning of the sound. The earlier we begin to pay listening attention to the sounds around us, the more aware we become, and consequently, the more we can gain. As humans, we need to develop "listening ears" and foster an acute development of the senses in our children if we are to continue to develop as healthy beings. Although sensorial training may seem like an enormous task, the curriculum developed in collaboration with Maria Montessori gives us an insight

into how it may be done. She gives us a hint at how we may begin to develop the "listening ears" of our children. It is imperative that we give sensorial training to our youth in ways such as the Sensorial Exercises in the Montessori Curriculum.



In a Montessori Classroom, the Sensorial Area is one part of developing the "listening ears" of children. Experience with the Sensorial Materials offers the children opportunities to classify, categorize, and refine their sensory perceptions of all five senses, including auditory.

Children are able to form abstractions of their sensorial experiences and recall them with an accurate and discriminating memory through work with these materials. A foundation is laid by these first experiences for a pattern of exact and precise sensory experiences throughout the life of the child. The materials that isolate the qualities of **sound** are the Sound Cylinders (expressing a variance of volume) and the Bells (expressing a variance in pitch). The third quality of sound, timbre, is the nature of a sound, such as the difference between a young child saying "hello" and an elderly lady saying the "hello" at the same volume and pitch. Each sound has its own unique "voice," or timbre. In the Montessori classroom we focus on the development of distinguishing volume and pitch, however there is no reason that the sound of

(continued next page)

different materials, such as bells with the same relative volume and pitch, but made out of different metals, could not be explored for variance of timbre. An exercise like this could be simultaneous and supplementary to this study in the Montessori Materials. I would encourage this type of exploration.

First off, in preparation for the sound activities, the Montessori Method incorporates a Silence Lesson (as part of the Practical Life Area) in which children are shown and are later independently inspired to keep totally still and silent.

Training in the hearing of sounds brings us in a special way to the relationship that exists between a person and a mobile environment, the only kind that can produce sounds and noises. Where everything is at rest there is nothing but absolute silence. Hearing is therefore a sense which can receive impressions only from movements going on about a subject (Source 1, p.136).

If a child has had any experience with the Silence Lesson, they already have a foundation in listening. Often, after an exercise like this, a teacher may ask what sounds the children noticed that they hadn't before, such as clocks, traffic, or voices of other classrooms. This maybe the first time the child has had the opportunity to share such a listening experience with a group.

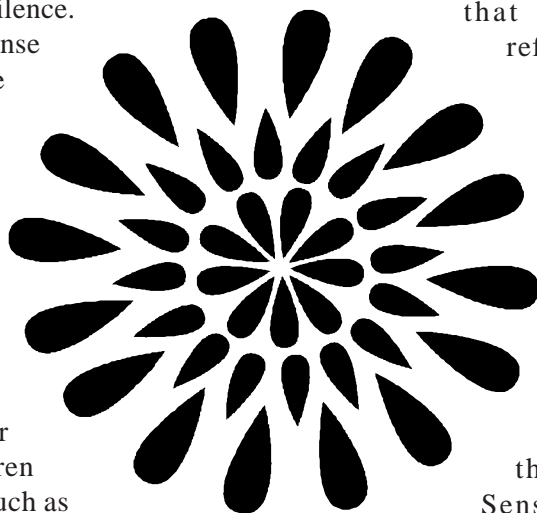
At around age three-and-a-half, the child will be ready for activity with the sound cylinders and bells. The sound cylinders, a material that consists of two boxes, one red with a set of six red-topped cylinders, and one blue with an identical set of six blue-topped cylinders. Each set of cylinders is filled with materials like beads, rice or sand, to demonstrate a gradation of volume when the cylinder is shaken in front of the ear. The two sets (red and blue) are identical and range from loud to soft. The child is given opportunities to identify each pair (distinguishing like sounds) and also grade them (distinguishing accurate differences in volume). Through language games, this material also gives

children the opportunity to create abstractions in their mind for the concepts of "loud" and "soft" and attach them to language.

We hear better, that is, with greater acuteness, when we notice lighter sounds than we did before. The training of the senses therefore leads us to an appreciation of the least stimuli, and the smaller the thing is that is perceived, the greater is the capacity of the sense. Training of the senses therefore essentially assists the minimal perception of external stimuli (Source 1, p. 136).

Exercises like the sound cylinders can fine-tune the ear to differing degrees of volume of a sound, drawing the children's attention to sounds that may have gone (like that refrigerator) previously unnoticed. They also may realize that loud sounds can be harsh and stressful and choose, for instance, not to stand so near to a large truck going by. Surely these distinctions can be and will be made outside of a Montessori Classroom, I mean to suggest however, that the sound materials offer a moment to pause and refine such senses. The Bells, the other sound material in the Sensorial Area, offer the child an opportunity to "distinguish the tones of a musical scale" or pitch (Source 1, p.137).

The Bells, which were invented by Anna Maccheroni, consist of two identical sets of individually mounted bells of the diatonic scale (the chromatic is explored later in the child's study). These bells are set on boards resembling the keys of the piano in a much larger scale. One set of bells remains fixed as a constant; the other set of bells may be moved by the child for exploration. "The first exercise consists in moving the bells about by their stands and ringing them with a little hammer so that the two bells producing the same sound can be placed next to each other" (Source 1, p.138). Next, after sufficient practice identifying pairs of tones, the child learns how to put the bells in order of the diatonic scale, first with the assistance of the control group, and then through the guidance of the "listening ear" that



the child has now developed. This sets an invaluable foundation for later music study.

Why are these exercises important? What are the benefits of a developed “listening ear”? The development of the senses actually precedes that of the higher faculties, and in a child between the ages of three and six it constitutes his formative period. We can therefore assist the development of the senses during this very period by graduating and adapting the stimuli to which a child is exposed just as we should assist him in learning how to speak before his speech is completely developed (Source 1, p.144).

The child is motivated toward self-development. If we offer children various experiences of the senses, like the auditory experiences of the sound boxes and the bells, we are appealing to their sensibilities, “aglow with intellectual love, which urge him indefatigably towards the outer world and make him garner impression of things as a spiritual milk on which he must feed to nourish his inner life” (Source 2, p.207). We are serving children’s needs when we help them develop “listening ears” through the concrete sensorial experiences in the Montessori classroom. We also open doors for healing and growth.

In his work, Jean Itard taught many “who were deaf how to hear others when they spoke, and therefore to speak themselves. He thus cured a great number of deaf people” (Source 1, p.137). We can offer these experiences to children young enough to act preventatively against hearing loss or damage. Through exposure to the bells, children of this age have a much greater chance of developing perfect pitch. Exploring pitch, the foundation of music at this age, can be very powerful for the child. “In many ways, music and rhythm are more foundational to our species than language. They have a power to evoke and express that no other medium possesses” (Source 2, p.96).



Indeed a great many musicians pay homage to developed senses of listening. Dr. Pauline Oliveros, a composer, performer and developer of Deep Listening® describes this term:

Deep Listening is listening in every possible way to everything possible to hear no matter what you are doing. Such intense listening includes the sounds of daily life, of nature, or one’s own thoughts as well as musical sounds. Deep Listening represents a heightened state of awareness and connects to all that there is. As a composer I make my music through Deep Listening” (Source 4).

She goes on to identify the importance of listening in the creation of music:

“As a musician, I am interested in the sensual nature of sound, its power of synchronization, coordination, release, and change. Hearing represents the primary sense organ — hearing happens involuntarily. Listening is a voluntary process that through training and experience produces culture. All cultures develop through ways of listening” (Source 4).

Dr. Oliveros has spent her energy offering retreats for adults to spend time in silence and be guided through group listening meditations. She feels that as adults we need to acquire “listening ears” just as much as children do. By giving children opportunities to listen at a young age, we are opening up future pathways to healing, music and to culture.

Another way that sounds are vital in our lives is in communication. The speech we use, the sounds of the words, and the way we phrase our sentences all give subtle nuances as to the thoughts we share with one another. The inflections in how we phrase a statement, rather than a question, provide loads of information in our communication. The more adept we are at listening to each other, the greater capacity we will have to **understand** one another, and the greater possibility for clear and precise communication. Proper communication is necessary for survival and harmonious, peaceful relationships with other humans and all life.

(continued next page)

In summary, developing the “listening ears” of our children is necessary in their formative years. By exposing them to Sensorial Exercises, like those found in the Montessori Classroom, doorways are opened for our children. Each time we offer opportunities for children to truly listen, we help them build foundations for proper auditory function and we build pathways to music, culture and better communication. “Listening ears” are important, not only for survival, but for the full development and happiness of the human being. As we become more aware and sensitive to the sounds around us, we become even more capable of developing a world that is more health-giving for all. ■

Bibliography:

Source 1: “The Discovery of the Child,” by Dr. Maria Montessori, Clio Montessori Series.

Source 2: “The Secret of Childhood,” by Dr. Maria Montessori, Orient Longman.

Source 3: “Seven Ways of Knowing,” by David Lazear, IRI/Skylight Publishing.

Source 4: www.deeplisting.org. Dr. Pauline Oliveros, professor at Mills Music College, San Francisco.

Melissa Fronberry has been working with Montessori children for the past five years. When she wrote this article, she was earning a Master's of Education in Montessori Primary from Loyola College and training at the Montessori Institute Northwest. Along with her interests in Montessori, she also shares music lessons with children of all ages.

Montessori on the Road

By Annie Noonan

Since joining the Oregon Montessori Association in the fall of 2005 I have had the desire to use it as a vehicle to explore the larger Montessori community in Oregon, and to see for myself what wonderful and unique things are happening in the niches of our beautiful state. When “diversity” was chosen as the topic for this issue of *Forza Vitale*, I decided to not put the adventure off any longer. So, on a clear autumn day, I filled up the tank and hit the road.

CORVALLIS

My first stop was the charming city of Corvallis. (I actually will use any excuse possible to spend time here, especially if it includes lunch at New Morning Café.) I had heard a lot about Corvallis Montessori School, and was thrilled to finally have a viable excuse to wander around the place. As soon as I pulled into the front parking area, I knew that I had arrived at a school that is serious about Montessori. Instead of basic, ordinary windows, delightful geometric shapes of all sizes covered the front façade: triangles, squares, circles, and a large half-moon above the entry.

Corvallis Montessori will celebrate their fortieth anniversary in 2007. The years of experience and wisdom contribute to the exuberance that is felt in buildings in which children are doing purposeful work. Physically, the space manifests the spirit of the Montessori method. Each room is bathed in natural light, and has easy access for

children to freely move between the indoor and outdoor environment. A bird-feeding area and raised garden accompany the individual classroom's namesake tree: bamboo, ginkgo, ponderosa, cedar, aspen, maple, and willow.

The school is made up of three Children's Houses, a lower elementary and an upper elementary. Besides the AMI-trained guides, there is also an Enrichment Coordinator and Artist-in-Residence on staff. Art and expression are encouraged. On Fridays there is a community gathering, where children are invited to read a poem, sing, play an instrument, or whatever suits their creative fancy. On the day I visited, the elementary children were busily working on a play that they had written, and were going to perform at a school dinner, which would help them raise money for the sixth-year trip to the Grand Canyon.

As I walked through the school with my lovely tour guide, Rhonda, I was continually impressed with the level of independence and happy collaboration that was taking place: older children sat in a circle, conversing and crocheting, while younger children frolicked enthusiastically in the large outdoor area. One small child, donning a helmet, was navigating a cluster of very large boulders. When he reached the top, he gave a joyful whoop, and then scampered down in order to do it all over again. Each of the elementary classrooms has a

kitchen-area for the children's use. Every week the lower elementary budgets and plans a meal, makes a trip to the grocery store, and then cooks and serves it to fellow classmates on Friday. Close proximity to Oregon State University, which is just a few blocks away, enables the children to utilize local academic resources. On one occasion, a child who had found an unusual bone was able to talk with a professor in order to gather more information about it.

Great learning is happening at Corvallis Montessori School, and to me, it was summed up in a quote that hangs prominently above the front entry (and below the half-moon) which reads: "live well, laugh often, love much."

NEWPORT

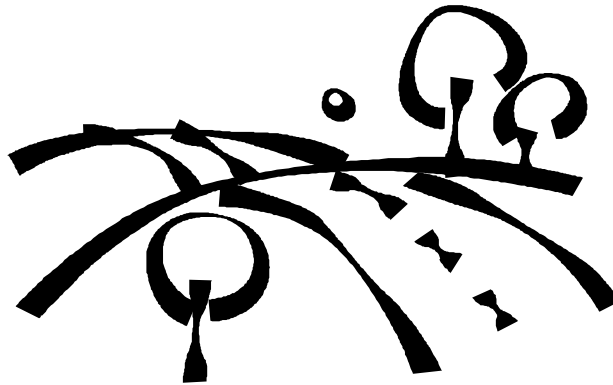
Now it was time to head west, to the beach! (Another place I never miss an opportunity to visit.) The school sits on ten acres, perched on a hill above the ocean. It is a teacher's dream location for a Montessori school. There is even a barn in front!

The school, Newport Montessori, which consists of two classrooms and enrolls children ages 3-7, is located in the large home next to it. Almost every inner wall has been removed. The two bedrooms, kitchen, dining room, and fireplace are all gone, leaving instead a large, beautiful open space for the children to freely move around in. The second classroom which is also large, bright, and spacious was created from the former garage. The hard work, time and effort put in by Jean Young, the administrator, and her co-teachers, Cathy, Therese, and Marge, to turn the residence into a Montessori school has paid off. The environment is beautiful! When I walked in, I was immediately taken with the large mural in the center of the room and the natural light that poured in from the large windows that make up the majority of the south side of the house. Children happily worked all around me, sewing, skip counting chains, and sorting through pictures in the geography folders, as Jean gave me a tour.

Her love for the Montessori method and the joy she gets from observing children at work, exudes from her being. "We are going at the pace of the child. It is so exciting to watch the children exploring new ways of doing things, to watching them take those steps."

Grace and courtesy are held in high regard, and it is evident everywhere I look. Children carefully maneuver around others who are working on rugs. They politely invite a friend to have snack with them. When children notice a kind action done by someone else, they quietly place a colorful clip on the "kindness tree". On Mondays, one child is able to host his parent for lunch. The child prepares the table, creates a flower arrangement from the garden, and then enjoys the company of her special guest.

I was most curious to know how they utilize the acreage and barn. The children have a large grassy area that they can run around in. Jean keeps the outdoor toys to a minimum, encouraging social interaction and creative physical movement, instead. There is a garden for harvesting tomatoes, beans, peas, radishes, and strawberries. She is hoping to have a greenhouse built within the coming year. A large area of the property is forested, which gives the children opportunities for nature



walks, exploring for interesting flora and fauna, and for deer sightings. The barn was inhabited for a time, by a miniature pony and a goat, until the goat got too "frisky" with the pony. For now it's empty, with future plans, which will include better-behaved animals. The day before my visit, a much more interesting guest made

an appearance. A child brought her (very dignified) alpaca through the classroom and out to the back field, where he spent the day being petted by the children.

Standing there, under a large alder with Jean, breathing in the fresh salty air and children's voices, one of my favorite quotes from Dr. Montessori's "The Montessori Method" came to mind: "*It is necessary to place the soul of the child in contact with Creation, in order that he may lay up for himself treasure from educating forces of nature.*"

I would like to thank both Corvallis Montessori and Newport Montessori for allowing me to experience the diversity and inspiration that comes from observing an environment that physically manifests the Montessori philosophy, and for giving me the opportunity to leave the busy city and enjoy the serenity of your schools! ■

Intrepid traveler, Annie Noonan, anticipates more adventures on the road, discovering Montessori schools around the Northwest.

Diversity: A Community Perspective

By Carrie Brown

Lolita Burnette, Manager-Project Diversity Initiatives at the Providence Academy at Providence Health System in Portland, facilitates training for approximately 3000 people a year. OMA President Carrie Brown spent a few moments with Lolita to ask her a few questions regarding the topic of diversity.

How would you define diversity?

Within the Providence system it is defined as: *"The belief in the inherent value of every person that is demonstrated by our behaviors of humility, listening, openness, willingness to change and inclusion, resulting in successful relationships."* It is not enough to just believe it but it must be acted out. Practicing humility means to realize that we are all still learning, to step back and listen to others, and to realize that there are many ways to do things; we do not have all the answers. Empathetic listening is different from active listening. Our actions impact others. A willingness to change our behavior shows respect for others.

We tend to think about diversity as relating to culture and race....

Well, human diversity encompasses all the differences we are born with; our gene pool, ancestry, gender, age, physical ability. When caring for patients, we do need to take into consideration a person's racial background or ancestry background because certain diseases may be a risk; such as, sickle cell anemia or diabetes among other diseases. Considering *race relations* is different and requires our actions be supportive of the inherent value of every person. Cultural diversity refers to learned behavior. Language and religious beliefs for example represent cultural diversity. Generational diversity (how I see the world) is interesting as well. Someone who grew up in the Great Depression and then experienced World War II lived in a time when command and control, loyalty to organizations, pensions, etc., affected one's point of view in life compared to someone who grew up in the last 35 years with the only knowledge of the loss of the Vietnam

War, television/consumerism, computers, no guarantee of pensions, etc., and who has a very different way of interpreting the world.

How can we prepare children to navigate life's diversity or live successfully in a diverse community?

Maria Montessori's vision of respecting all children is a miracle. Before Montessori the ideology was *you aren't good enough to invest in*. The combination of the highest respect for everyone, that all children have gifts, help children discover one's gifts are a miracle. Learning to respect others gifts develops cultural competence. Public

school rituals emphasize a hierarchy model and the texts that are used are not always representing different worldviews. Imagine the world if we all operated with Montessori's vision. What a wonderful place.

Carrie Brown pursued the topic of diversity with staff members at Providence Montessori School, who were invited to offer their thoughts on diversity.



“‘Childhood has shown me that all humanity is one,’ by Maria Montessori. That is what diversity means to me.”

“I was born into a wonderfully diverse nation which has offered home and sanctuary to people of all nations and cultures. We differ in many ways — many different values and personal dreams. Far too many unique aspects to be known as a ‘melting pot’, which suggests something like stew or sauce. Much better to be called a ‘salad bowl’ with each variety of texture and crunch discernable, and every flavor offering its own sparkle! Growing up in San Francisco made me think in salad bowl terms.”

“Even though I think that the word ‘diversity’ has become more defined by race/culture, I feel it is more often an issue of different ideas of lifestyle and opinion. It is difficult to respect and accept another’s feelings that differ from our own. I believe there is an exception when those

differences directly affect my chosen lifestyle, but, for the most part, diversity is the differences that make us all distinct humans. That is the way it should be and what makes the world interesting!”

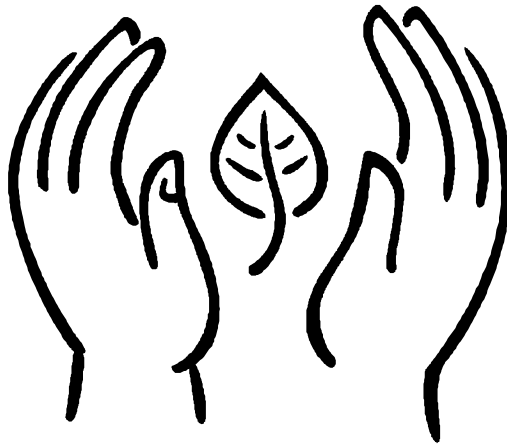
“To me diversity is the communities and networks of communities we create which encompass all our individual personalities, talents and perspectives.”

“Several years ago when Providence Montessori School shared its two-story building with a facility for medically fragile children, a four-year-old was overheard explaining to a new three-year-old: ‘Stairs are for people who walk. Elevators are for people who don’t walk.’”

“Diversity is not the approach to take. It is not how different we are that is important; it is how we are the same. It is through being human that we explore how others do it. As a human I need shelter, so what kind of shelter do they use in Finland? I put things in my house, what kind of things do they put in their house

in Finland? It is how we all need the same things and how we all meet those needs that we get an understanding of what is to be human. This is a small introduction to a larger discussion.”

“It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the dimensions of diversity contained within each individual”
(Gladstone.uoregon.edu).



“I really appreciate this perspective on the concept of diversity. Particularly about moving beyond simple tolerance (who wants to be just tolerated)...to embracing and celebrating our uniqueness (who doesn’t want to feel accepted and understood)? I celebrate that any day!”

“The basis (to me) or foundation for diversity is to have awareness that we (meaning all peoples, no matter their religion, color, age, sex, etc.) are more alike than different. All people have the same basic need for love, respect, understanding, etc.” ■

“If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place.”

Margaret Mead



WILLIAM DAMON

Fostering Noble Purpose in Youth

Director,
Stanford Center on Adolescence
Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution

Member,
National Academy of Education

7:00 PM, Wednesday, November 15

Oregon Convention Center, Ballroom 201

America's leading thinker on the moral development of children and adolescents

Damon's current work is a four-year, \$3M research project studying the development of purpose in young people.

Recent Books by William Damon:

- *Noble Purpose: The Joy of Living a Meaningful Life* (2003)
- *Bringing in a New Era in Character Education* (2002)
- *Greater Expectations: Overcoming the Culture of Indulgence in our Homes and School* (1995; Parent's Choice Award)
- *The Moral Child: Nurturing Children's Natural Moral Growth* (1988)

Northwest Montessori Middle School:

- *opening a Montessori farm school for grades 7 through 9 in September, 2007*
- *provides a unique educational opportunity for independent, responsible young people to grow personally and intellectually in a supportive community of peers and adults*

Montessori Institute Northwest:

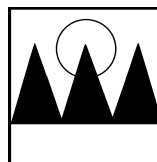
- *AMI Montessori teacher training, parent education, continuing education, and professional development*
- *affiliated with Marylhurst University, Association Montessori Internationale, and Loyola College of MD*

Tickets—\$25 • Available by telephone or online from:



Northwest Montessori
Middle School
www.nwmms.org

(503) 320-7939



Montessori Institute Northwest

www.montessori-nw.org

(503) 963-8992

SCHOOL NEWS

Franciscan Montessori Earth School and St. Francis Academy

The population of the Earth School has changed over the last thirty years, and it continues to change as we enter our next thirty years. As we consider the last three decades of service, it is inevitable that we realize just how much we have changed, let alone grown. Beginning as a school of 17 students in 1977, the Earth School is now home to more than 300. From a single room, the school has grown to a campus of almost ten acres. Those physical changes have been matched with population changes as our school community has grown.

By our 30th anniversary, our current student population more closely represents the population in East Portland than they ever have before, and our community reflects a wide ranging diversity of faiths, families, socio-economic status, and more. Within our school, parents identify more than twenty faiths, and our range of ethnic and cultural diversity continues to grow. By continuing to allocate significant funds to financial assistance, we also ensure that many students that otherwise would be unable to participate in Montessori Education have that chance.

Our diversity is something that we not only value as educators, it is the most frequently named positive attribute named by former families and students. They consider the opportunity to work in a community with so many different types of people instrumental in making them what they are today. Looking at this legacy from our 30th anniversary, this feeling is still summed up well by our theme developed for our 25th anniversary, "A community of individuals, one child at a time." As Montessorians, we recognize that true diversity is a reflection of the uniqueness of every child.



Montessori School of Beaverton

Students are noticing the arrival of autumn as we watch the leaves change color on the surrounding hillsides and flocks of sand hill cranes fly over on their journey south. We are taking advantage of the nice fall weather to build trails and a gazebo in the woods on our property. We hope to make it possible for the students to experience a profound sense of stewardship toward the stream corridor on our property, studying the plant and animal life, water quality and erosion, and taking steps to improve the environment of this suburban riparian habitat.

We also took a moment this fall to recognize that Kathleen Berry has completed her 20th year with the school, Peter and Mary Davidson their 25th! We are pleased to welcome back two wonderful teachers to our staff this fall, Robin Myers and Nora Imbrunetti. Robin was a teacher here from 1994 to 1998. Since she left the classroom to have her two younger children, Thomas and Oliver, we've been looking forward to the time when she would be ready to return to teaching full time. Nora was a classroom assistant here from 2001 to 2005. When she completed her teacher training at MINW in June we were delighted to have an opening to offer her. Everyone on our staff is thrilled to welcome back colleagues for whom we have such respect and affection.

All Roads Learning Community

All Roads begins our fourth year this year. We have a full classroom of inquisitive little toddlers; many of them children of Montessori Guides from neighboring schools! Joelle Cowan has joined Mercedes Castle and Alicia Owens as part of the teaching staff, and this has been a very smooth transition.

The children have been quite interested in construction trucks of late, which is convenient as All Roads is planning an expansion. We will be adding eight hundred square feet to our house, which will increase our capacity to sixteen children. We are all very excited about this change, and look forward to our new classroom, and toddler-sized bathroom!

As always, All Roads welcomes parent or student observers. Give us a call to set up your observation.

(continued next page)

Childpeace News

This fall, Childpeace welcomed several new Montessori guides to our staff roster.

Stephanie Wiant is now at home with twins, Oliver and Charlotte. Stephanie's four-year-old son, Elliot, attends Childpeace. Meredith Crandall Brown has taken her class. Meredith trained in London and worked recently at Pacific Crest Montessori in Seattle. It's wonderful to have her insights from the London training.

As she promised, Lynn Rossing retired after twenty years of work as a Montessori Primary Guide. She will be missed. Ivy Gibson, who is taking her own class for the first time this year, has been a Club Room (afternoon) Guide at CP for three years. Ivy completed her training in Portland.

Also joining us as a Primary Guide is Theresa DeVost. Theresa has worked both at SunGarden and Montessori School of Beaverton during her fifteen years of teaching, and her experience is already appreciated by our staff.

Peter Jensen has returned to his home in Seattle after three years as a Lower Elementary Guide. (Yes, he did

essentially commute during those years.) Taking his place is Samantha Garbush, who just completed her elementary training at Washington Montessori Institute. Samantha also worked as an assistant at MSB for a year and we are happy she joined us.

Greg Lawrence is busy with a group of 38 in his Upper Elementary class as we prepare to start a second Upper Elementary to finish the growth of our elementary. Stephanie Meyer, who was Greg's assistant last year, is in Milwaukee taking the elementary training, and she will return as our second Upper Elementary Guide next September.

Venus Zaron has offered very informative mother/baby classes at Childpeace during the last year. We thank Venus for this work and hope to continue providing information for parents of the birth to 18-month-old child.

Our elementary students continue their work with their Native Oregon Plant garden near to the school, the intergenerational visits to our southeast classroom at The Terrace, and have added a few piranhas to the Upper Elementary fish tank! ■



Centenary of the Montessori Movement

Montessori is a worldwide social movement intended to Champion the Cause of All Children.

January 6, 2007, will mark the 100th anniversary of Dr. Maria Montessori's first *Casa dei Bambini*—Montessori has been around for 100 years and is still going strong—this is something to celebrate!

The focus of the Montessori Centenary is a call to action—a call to reinvigorate the Montessori Movement, restoring it to its original dimensions: that of a social movement intended to Champion the Cause of All Children, in all strata of society, of all races and ethnic backgrounds, within and beyond the educational institutions.

For more information, visit: www.montessoricentenary.org

Plans are afoot for a local celebration—please contact the Oregon Montessori Association with your ideas about how we can mark this important milestone: www.oregonmontessori.org. ■

Northwest Montessori Middle School News Update

Northwest Montessori Middle School (NWMMS) continues to make progress towards our goal of opening a Montessori Farm School here in the Northwest. These are some of the latest developments.

Fundraising Success: In May of this year, the Montessori Institute Northwest offered NWMMS an unprecedented level of support: an immediate \$5,000 donation plus a challenge grant to match up to \$10,000 contributed before November 15. Thanks to broad generosity throughout the Montessori community, we are proud and excited to announce that we have exceeded that goal more than a month ahead of schedule. Contributions at every level, from parents, grandparents, schools, and the North American Montessori Teachers' Association, have allowed us to continue our development work with confidence. In addition, NWMMS has received contributions of furniture, materials, volunteer time, and professional expertise that help us use our resources as effectively as possible. Thank you to all who have contributed.

Of course, the fundraising isn't over yet. As we get closer to our goal of a September 2007 opening, we will need more support to carry us through our start-up year. If you can contribute in any way, please contact us and let us know.

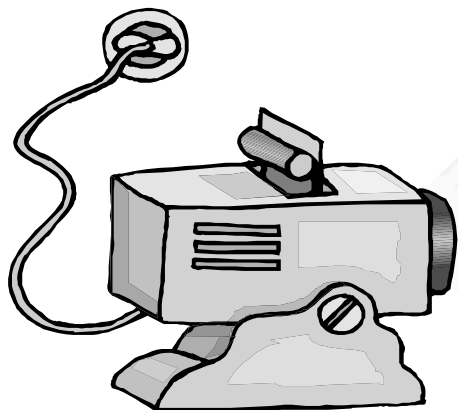
Character Development Expert to Speak: William Damon, director of the Stanford Center for Adolescence

and America's leading thinker on moral and character development, will speak in Portland on Wednesday, November 15 at 7pm in the Oregon Convention Center. Tickets are available online or by telephone from NWMMS and MINW. Professor Damon, a nationally recognized scholar, will speak on his current research into how young people develop a sense of purpose. The event is sponsored by NWMMS and MINW. Save the date and book your tickets today!

Property Search Continues: NWMMS is actively searching for property in rural areas near Portland, especially northwest Multnomah County and on Sauvie Island. In addition to rural property, we are seeking a site that can be used immediately for our September opening. An existing school, or a church with available space, located in or near a rural area, would work for this purpose. If you have leads or suggestions, please contact us.

Find Out More: Visit our new web site at www.nwmms.org for more information and the latest news. Or contact us:

David Ayer
Program Developer
503-320-7939
david@nwmms.org
PO Box 14490
Portland, OR 97293 ■



NEWS FROM MINW

The Montessori Institute Northwest is looking forward to another fantastic year of Teacher and Community Education. As many of you already know, January 2007 marks 100 years of Montessori education. We look forward to celebrating the Centenary with local Montessori schools, organizations, and individuals. It will be a wonderful opportunity to come together, celebrate our work, and share Montessori's vision with a broad audience.

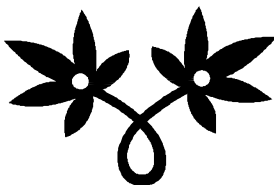
This year the Montessori Institute Northwest is proud to offer Montessori Community Education related to each age group of children. We have a parent seminar in April focused on preparing the home for the child under the age of three, Primary Seminars and Primary Area Reviews, Elementary Seminars, and we are co-sponsoring an event with the Northwest Montessori Middle School program on the sense of purpose in youth. Please visit our website for our complete list of workshops and seminars, www.montessori-nw.org. Here are a few of the highlights of this year:

We transitioned into the new year with an August Seminar designed for guides, administrators, and support staff in anticipation of the special nature of the first few weeks of the year known as the Collective Time.

Thirty wonderful students have begun the Primary Course this fall. They have already impressed the staff with their sense of purpose and joyous sense of community spirit.

By the time this is published, our students will have completed their first Observation session in area schools. We are very grateful to the guides and administrators who have open their community to our students for this essential aspect of their training.

Our 2006-07 Assistants to Infancy students have returned to their daily lives for an intervening year before coming back together next summer. They have their fascinating work cut out for them now as they work on Albums and complete extensive Observations in home and school settings. ■



News You Can Use

We happily stumbled across a great book for the outdoor extension, especially in the Primary Environment. The book, "The Outdoor Classroom" (available through Montessori Services or at the Montessori Institute Northwest), gives clear explanation of dozens of fun and reasonable outdoor Practical Life activities. This book does for the outdoor extension what "Let Out the Sunshine" did for the Expression Area. How wonderful to have a new excellent practical resource for our preparation of the Casa!

— Contributed by the Staff of the Montessori Institute Northwest

Another tip was brought to MINW's attention by many folks...

Need to put down an ellipse on carpeting? If you haven't tried it yet, Velcro makes an awesome alternate to electrical tape when creating an ellipse for the Casa. A Velcro line stays down, doesn't curl or stretch with use, is attractive, feels great and comes off without leaving a residue on your carpet. 45-foot rolls of Velcro are available at area fabric stores. ■

Classifieds

Montessori Teacher (CC) – 43954

Portland, Oregon. Providence Child Center - Montessori School. This full-time exempt Montessori teacher position is covered with an annual teaching contract. The work days for this position include instructional school days and other in-service work days. A comprehensive and competitive compensation package includes a generous number of paid holidays.

Required: High school graduate and Montessori certification from a nationally recognized training program for ages 3 to 6 years. Preferred: AMI certificate and college degree, at least two years of successful teaching in a Montessori program with children ages 3 through 6 years old.

The Montessori Teacher is a Guide who helps direct the children's activities academically, spiritually, emotionally and physically in a prepared environment that challenges each child to reach his/her fullest potential in each area, in accordance with Montessori philosophy. This position supervises at least one classroom assistant in conjunction with the Enrichment Coordinator. Performs all duties in a manner that demonstrates our core values: Respect, Compassion, Justice, Excellence, and Stewardship.

AMI Employment Listings: The Montessori Institute Northwest regularly receives Job Announcements from schools around the world. Positions are usually for AMI Primary Guides, but also often include different levels and positions as well. Come by the Institute and browse our Employment Opportunities Binder. Also, keep us in mind as a means for advertising your positions to the AMI community. 4506 SE Belmont, Portland, FAX: 503-963-8994.

Classroom material making service

available in Portland! Consider outsourcing your language materials, sewing projects and/or refurbish work. I specialize in the primary classroom and am an AMI-trained guide. Contact: Monica Motsko, M.Ed. at 503-244-

5155. Hourly rate or project bids available. FREE local pick-up and delivery for your convenience.

Part-Time Montessori Guide Position

Beginning January 2007

Fine Art Starts' new 3-6 year old program at the Carnegie Art Center (www.fineartstarts.com).

Our goal is to help children develop their own individual well-rounded minds with an emphasis on creative expression within a supportive classroom community. Children learn personal responsibility within a group operating with practical boundaries.

Limited to only 10 children, ages 3-6. This new program integrates Maria Montessori's philosophy and practice with an emphasis on fine art and creative expression through art, movement, music, and language.

You do NOT need to be an expert at all four areas of emphasis. However, if you are experienced with and/or have taught art, movement, music, and/or language to children then you may qualify for a higher-end pay rate. If you don't have experience with all four areas of emphasis, that's okay, too. We have weekly guests in each media...four specialist-guests a month.

You must be outgoing, experienced, hold a Bachelor's in Early Education, with Montessori training, and hold a current child CPR/first aid certificate. An AMI certificate is definitely preferred. You must also pass a background check prior to hire.

Rate of pay: \$15-25/hour, depending on experience and what you bring to the program.

Hours of program are: T, W, Th from 8-12, beginning January 9. Studio-classroom preparations can begin as early as December 1 and are very flexible hours. Please email your resume to us today: fineart@teleport.com
Thank you!

Sascha Gordon-Manning, Director
FINE ART STARTS!
503.723.9661 ■

Oregon Montessori Association

Membership and School Listing Form 2006-2007

Individual Membership Includes:

- Discounts to OMA workshops
- Three issues of the *Forza Vitale* Newsletter
- Copy of and listing in the OMA Directory
- Our Spring Tea celebration of our Montessori community
- Access to the local Montessori community through newsletter submissions and web site classifieds

Individual Membership Form

Name _____	Phone _____
Email _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> My address has not changed from last year (leave address section blank)	
Address _____	
City _____	State _____ Zip _____
School Affiliation _____	Relationship to School _____
Resources/Interests _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> I am willing to volunteer 1 hour for OMA work such as workshop set-up, stuffing envelopes, phone calls, etc.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Please include me in the OMA Speakers Bureau. I would consider giving a presentation on the following:	
Cost: <input type="checkbox"/> \$30 Individual Membership <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Teacher in Training at:	

- ☐ Please check here if you prefer to receive workshop and other OMA event announcements by email

School Listing Includes:

- Three issues of the *Forza Vitale* newsletter
- A copy of and listing in the OMA Directory
- Listing on the OMA web site
- Access to the OMA Media Library
- Option to place classifieds and calendar items on the OMA web site and in the newsletter
- Our Spring Tea celebration of our Montessori community
- Increased community presence

School Membership Form

Name of School _____						
Email _____			Phone _____			
Address _____						
City _____		State _____			Zip _____	
Administrator _____						
Web Site _____						
Number of Classrooms	0-3 yrs	3-6 yrs	6-9 yrs	9-12 yrs	12-15 yrs	15-18 yrs
Cost: \$15 per classroom (total of all classrooms of any age); Minimum cost: \$45 Maximum cost: \$105 <i>Price also includes one Individual Membership – Please complete the Individual Membership Form as well</i>						

Thank You!

Send this form and your check to: OMA, P.O. Box 80151, Portland, OR 97280
 Visit us on the web at www.oregonmontessori.org

Oregon Montessori Association is committed to the principle of equal opportunity and does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, veteran status, ancestry, or national or ethnic origin.

FORZA VITALE!

Vol. 25, No. 2

A Newsletter for People Active in Montessori Education

Winter 2006

Greetings

Feeling the sun on my shoulder as I write this address fills me with warmth and even more hope than usual. Soon the flowers will be poking their fresh little heads out of the rich Northwest earth while the shiny, bright green leaves gradually bejewel the currently naked trees. Nature has a lot to teach us about the organic process of growing things and I am amazed by how many similarities there are between growing plants, nurturing and educating children, and cultivating relationships between adults. Many of the Montessori lessons learned in the classroom draw upon nature for inspiration. These lessons needn't be relegated to the classroom or to the children only. They just as easily apply to organizations and to adults. Organizations evolve organically and people continue to grow emotionally well beyond childhood. That work is never finished.

Every year the OMA honors individuals in our community who deeply touch and influence us. Just as spring draws the flowers out of the earth, these special individuals have a way of inspiring us to reach deep within ourselves and do the work necessary so that we may put forward the very best we have to offer. Please take a moment to think of a special Montessorian you know who you feel is worthy of nominating for one of the two awards, the Susie Huston Award or the Outstanding Dedication Award, described in this issue.

It is also in the spring that the OMA accepts applications from candidates interested in serving on our board. We are so fortunate that Portland has such

In This Issue . . .

Coming Out of the Closet

Collaboration among Adults

**Organic Food and a
Healthy Environment**

a wonderfully rich and abundant Montessori community. It is an amazing fertile ground for the type of work that the Oregon Montessori Association does. One of the goals of this year's board was to expand our membership so that we may reach people outside our usual scope. I am delighted to report that we have attained that goal. As a result, our membership is stronger than it has been in years. Additionally, our workshops are successfully attracting people in numbers beyond our expectations. Our newsletter continues to be a great source of information as does our web site. In order to continue to do the good work of this fine organization, however, it is necessary for the OMA board to recruit new individuals; people who are as passionate about Montessori education as the

(continued on page 4)

Forza Vitale!

OMA Information:

Greetings!	1
Join the Board	4
OMA Winter Workshop Experience	5
Spring Tea Announcement	6

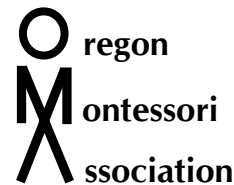
Features:

Collaboration among the Adults in a Montessori Community	8
Organic Food and a Healthy Environment	12
Cultivating Silence in Our World	15
Coming Out of the Closet	19

Area News:

School News	21
MINW News	22
News You Can Use	22
Classifieds	22
Map of Member Schools	24

Forza Vitale!, published three times a year, is the official newsletter of the Oregon Montessori Association. Submissions of articles, reviews, school news, anecdotes and the like are encouraged. Address all correspondence to the Newsletter representatives of the OMA Board, listed below.



The **Oregon Montessori Association** was founded in 1979 to support the community of Montessori professionals, schools, parents, students, and all others interested in Montessori and early childhood education.

OMA Website: www.oregonmontessori.org

OMA Contact Information:

Two Rivers Montessori School
7740 SW Capitol Hwy, Portland, OR 97219
503-768-3847
e-mail: oregonmontessori@yahoo.com
P.O. Box 80151, Portland, OR 97280

OMA Board Members 2005-2006

Administration

Vesna Kostur
5429 SW Westwood View
Portland, OR 97238
503-963-8992

Carrie Brown
3609 N. Russet St.
Portland, OR 97217
503-284-8504

Nancy Pribnow
5909 SE 40th Ave.
Portland, OR 97202
503-771-6366

Newsletter

Mercedes Castle
3230 SW Vermont St.
Portland, OR 97219
503-939-8235

Stacey Philipps
5014 SW Custer St.
Portland, OR 97219
503-293-1675

Christina Jun
760 SW Vista Ave. #34
Portland, OR 97205
503-227-8188

Workshops

Michelle Becka
622 NE Jessup St.
Portland, OR 97211
503-281-3237

Annie Noonan
605 NW Dale Ave.
Portland, OR 97229

Layout: **Donna Andrews**
1528 NE 63rd Ave., Portland, OR 97213
971-645-5459



CALENDAR



FEBRUARY

17-20 AMI Refresher Course, Administrative Workshop, and Assistants' Workshop
Charlotte, NC
585-461-5920
www.montessori-ami.org

26-March 4 Montessori Education Week
<http://home.neo.rr.com/larrow/>

Training at the Montessori Institute Northwest
503-968-8992
www.montessori-nw.org

30-April 2 American Montessori Society Annual Conference, "Montessori Education: Creating New Possibilities for Children, Youth, and Our World"
Houston, TX
www.amshq.org

MARCH

- 1 Primary Workshop, "Stimulating Complete Work Cycles"**
Montessori Institute Northwest
503-968-8992
www.montessori-nw.org
- 4 Elementary Seminar, "Stars, Stones and Stories, Rhythm and Rituals"**
presented by Paula Gibson-Smith at the Montessori Institute Northwest
503-968-8992
www.montessori-nw.org
- 9-12 NAMTA Workshop, "Montessori Talks to Parents: Schools Connecting to Families"**
Seattle, WA
440-834-4011
www.montessori-namta.org
- 15 Priority Application Deadline for 2006-2007 AMI Primary Teacher**

APRIL

- 3-28 MINW Students Practice Teaching in Primary classrooms throughout Oregon and Washington**
- 27-30 The Montessori Foundation and The International Montessori Council Second-Annual West Coast Conference**
Monterey, CA
800-632-4121
www.montessori.org

MAY

- 18 OMA Annual Spring Tea**
4:30 to 6:30pm
West Portland United Methodist Church,
home to Child's View Montessori
4729 SW Taylor's Ferry Road, Portland
www.oregonmontessori.org ■

Play a Larger Role in the OMA – Join us on the Board!

Exchange ideas and work with a wonderful group of dedicated Montessorians from all walks of life. Each board position requires a two-year commitment, beginning in June. Each committee retains at least one experienced member to help guide the newer committee and board members. Board meetings traditionally take place once a month and have been in Portland for the last several years. Hours of involvement vary from month to month, depending on board activities, community support, and specific goals of the committee and the board as a whole.

Interested? Know someone who might be a good candidate? Contact Vesna Kostur at vkostur@worldnet.att.net or oregonmontessori@yahoo.com for further details. We look forward to hearing from you!

Administrative Committee

Vice President/Secretary – Works with the president to conduct meetings, set goals for the OMA, and delegate tasks. The secretary records the minutes. This board member will take on the presidential duties during his/her second year. Please note that OMA outsources general administrative and secretarial functions, so that this position can focus on management.

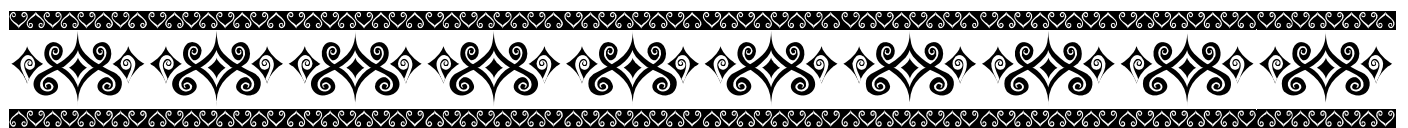
Finance – This committee maintains up-to-date and accurate financial records for the OMA (we have a pretty straightforward and simple financial life). This year, we are striving to complete our non-profit application, which this committee will facilitate. Members also participate in all board and administrative discussions and decision making.

Workshop Committee

Share the challenge of planning and organizing OMA workshops and events. Arranging speakers, venues, catering, announcements, and organizing supplies for events are among the tasks the workshop folks undertake. One to two new members are welcome.

Newsletter Committee

Work together to create the OMA newsletter, *Forza Vitale!*. Good writing skills are a must and editorial experience is helpful, but as in all other board positions, love for Montessori and a collaborative spirit are the most significant requirements for this position. A community member does the layout for the newsletter; the newsletter committee members choose issue themes, and they solicit and edit contributions. ■



(GREETINGS continued from front page)

current board members are. For me personally, serving on this board and working side-by-side with these amazingly dedicated individuals, whom I am proud to now call my friends, has been remarkably rewarding.

If you are someone who likes to work closely and collaboratively with others please consider nominating yourself for one of the available board positions. If you are unable to make this sort of commitment at this time, you may choose to contribute to the health and

advancement of the OMA by submitting an article to *Forza Vitale!*, by attending a workshop, or simply by renewing your OMA membership. However you choose to participate, the OMA welcomes you.

Warm regards,

Vesna Kostur
OMA President

OMA Winter Workshop

by Kate Brereton

The OMA Workshop, "Taking Charge: Caring discipline that works at home and at school," held on February 4 at Childpeace Montessori School, was presented by Karen Bissonette, M.A. It was well attended by Montessori guides, assistants, other support staff, and parents. A proud parent of three young boys, Karen effectively delivered information on "Avoiding Power Struggles and Recognizing Common Misbehaviors" based on the book *Taking Charge* authored by parent and teacher JoAnne Nordling, M.S., M.Ed.

The work starts with the understanding that a child has a basic set of needs that can help the child reach self-actualization in a positive and nurturing way. This "Staircase of Needs" begins with physical security, including a sense of security about the world as a place that can be trusted and as a place in which the child feels belonging. The staircase proceeds onward to the child developing a belief that he or she is truly loved by at least one other. As the child grows through these needs, each step reached successfully builds upon the last and it thus creates for the child a stronger sense of self and place in the world. The child who has these basic needs met will be empowered by a knowledge of self competency and self-esteem that is also didactically altruistic.

A key point in this approach is the belief that the adult often has needs that were unmet for them in their own development and that these lingering feelings can actualize a disciplinary force that is innately flawed. When the adult feels helpless addressing discipline this can lead to feelings of anger and resentment that paralyze the ability to provide the child the strong legs on which to climb their staircase of needs. Adults can hinder the process of constructive discipline by procrastinating, when it is more helpful to provide a swift response to a child's negative action utilizing acutely concise vocabulary.

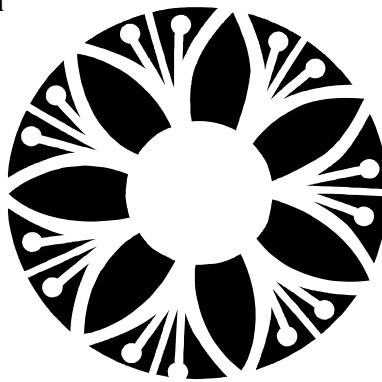
Here is one example of this swift and concise response

Karen describes. The described scenario involves an adult telling a child: "Put the clothes in the drawer." No response on part of the child. The adult requests again by gently repeating (as necessary), "drawer." This terse vocabulary is effective when presented with a matter-of-fact tone that is absent of our own emotional entanglements.

Adults must speak lovingly about their child and omit mentioning examples of discipline required, both in speaking with others and in talking with their child. The adult should also cognitively present a focus on positive behaviors, using the tool of affirmation whenever possible. Moreover, the adult should focus on recognizing neutral behaviors. These occur when a child is doing something that might not be firstly recognized as opportunities for positive attention yet are meaningful, such as contentedly reading, playing peacefully, or even just hanging out. One of my colleagues, Mary Sahn, a primary guide at Providence Montessori School, commented that "Children spend most of their time here." That valuable observation illustrated the wealth of occasions to encourage the child through acknowledgment of seemingly benign behaviors. It can say to the child, "I see you and you are loved."

Perhaps the most significant element of the workshop was the statement, "behaviors you give emotional attention will continue." This is something that stuck to my cranium like a mantra. As a Montessori guide, my own emotions can be the most influential prediction of the outcome a child will have in a given situation. Likewise, much of what was most meaningful to me about the workshop was Karen's use of examples from her own repertoire of parenthood. She had a calming delivery of the information. It felt real and most importantly, applicable. When a child does not do what is asked, refuses completion of regular daily tasks, seeks out negative attention, or physically lashes out, the adult is an aide who adjusts the environment to

(continued next page)



best afford the child to act appropriately. The adult also assists by modeling healthy conflict resolution and problem-solving techniques. Paramount is being truly in-tune with the inner self and reality of the child and having the openness to see that self in a context of a world that is new. We do our best when we listen to a child's thoughts and feelings. In doing that we must also be mindful to listen to ourselves and what we bring to that powerful, energetic being.

A special thanks to Childpeace Montessori School for hosting this wonderful event. The accommodations and the provisions were generous and much appreciated. ■

Kate Brereton is a primary guide at Two Rivers Montessori School. She received her AMI Diploma through the Montessori Institute Northwest and also has an M.Ed. from Loyola College.

For additional information or to contact Karen Bissonette, M.A. Visit the Parent Support Center: www.parentsupportcenter.org.

Resource material: *Taking Charge: Caring discipline that works at home and at school* by JoAnne Nordling, M.S., M.Ed.



You Are Invited To the OMA Annual Spring Tea

Who: All Oregon Montessorians and the 2005-2006 students of the Montessori Institute Northwest

What: An annual OMA tradition

Where: 4729 SW Taylor's Ferry Road, Portland

When: Thursday, May 18, 4:30 to 6:30 pm

Why: Meet your Montessori friends, new and old. OMA members past and present as well as the current teachers-in-training at MINW, come celebrate the work of Oregon's Montessori community, congratulate the MINW graduates, and join us as we present the Susie Huston Award and the award for Outstanding Dedication. Enjoy time together reflecting upon and celebrating this year's work!

How: The OMA Board is pleased to host this event. We welcome anyone wishing to help with set-up or clean-up, as early as 3:00 pm and as late as 8:00 pm.

RSVP: OMA members whose e-mail address is on file will receive an electronic invitation. Reply online to the invitation, or send your name and the number in your party to oregonmontessori@yahoo.com. Kindly reply by Friday, May 12, so we can provide refreshments for everyone.

OMA Award Nominations

Susie Huston Award

The Susie Huston Award is given to a guide who shares the wonder of Montessori in the classroom and is named for a local Montessori guide whose work made a distinct and inspiring impact on our local community. Who would you like to see recognized for the inspiring work they do?

Outstanding Dedication Award

The Outstanding Dedication Award is given to someone whose dedication to enlightening others of the benefits of Montessori education has made a profound impact on the community. Who do you admire for the promotion of Montessori education?

Nominate your candidate today! Let us know who you have in mind, along with a description of why your nominee deserves the honor. You can send your vote—along with your contact information—to oregonmontessori@yahoo.com, or look for a nomination card included in this newsletter. Past recipients are listed in the OMA Member Directory, and former recipients are eligible for additional nominations. Nominations must be received by April 15. Winners will be announced at the OMA Spring Tea.

Vote by mail:

OMA, PO Box 80151, Portland, OR 97280

Or vote by email:

oregonmontessori@yahoo.com ■



A New Look



The OMA logo is in need of a fresh look for our web site and printed materials. We welcome submissions of original designs to help us communicate our mission: to advance the Montessori educational movement in Oregon. Are your creative juices flowing? Guides, staff, children, parents, friends — any and

all budding or established graphic designers — are welcome to contribute ideas. Send your logo entry to oregonmontessori@yahoo.com. Entries will be displayed at the Spring Tea, and the final selection will be made by the OMA board this year. ■



**Don't forget to bookmark
our WEBSITE!**

www.oregonmontessori.org

Collaboration among the Adults in a Montessori Community – Creative Assistance

by Ginni Sackett

Presented at AMI/USA's 2004 National Conference

You have probably noticed that when Montessorians talk about the Prepared Environment of the classroom, we seem rather adamant about preserving a high adult-child ratio. Perhaps you've heard the somewhat daunting numbers that Maria Montessori herself used, based upon observation of children in the mixed age environments of the *Casas* in Europe. In *The Child, Society and the World*, Montessori summarizes her conclusions by saying that "The really profitable results come when the number grows; twenty-five is a sufficient number, and forty is the best number that has been found" (Montessori 1989: 65). In the same reference, she acknowledges that there can be even more than forty children, but "that depends on the capacity of the teacher."

This point of view leads us to some administrative difficulties here in the United States, where a ratio of one teacher to forty-plus three- to six-year-olds just doesn't pass muster with Children's Services or other state regulatory bodies, and where conventional wisdom insists that smaller class size and low adult-child ratios are essential to successful educational environments.

There is a further complication in our modern attempts to visualize this ideal Montessori classroom configuration—because some of us have been told that there was no assistant in these historic classrooms, and that the classroom assistant is actually an American invention to satisfy those "intrusive" regulatory bodies and their conventional wisdom. Because of this, many Montessori teachers might leave their training courses with little or no information about the role of this modern invention—the classroom assistant—or of support staff in general. Possibly, they have been led to believe that if their "capacities" were simply sufficient enough, they wouldn't need one!

This can leave teachers confused as to the role of the assistant and uncertain of what to communicate to assistants about their work in the classroom. Support

staff in general can often feel that they have the least defined and, certainly, the least understood role in the dynamic of the school community. The support staff has the least control over policy, procedure, or pedagogy, and at the same time can seem to be at the beck and call of those who are in control. Lacking clear guidance in how to fulfill their job descriptions, they fall back on their own resources—which might or might not match the more pristine Montessori vision of the adult-child relationship.

When I visit classrooms I often see one result of this situation—what I call "the ships in the night phenomenon." As I glimpse the activities of the adults in the room, I find myself wondering if one is even aware of what the other is doing; perhaps, both are simply grateful that one is not "interfering" with another. In the larger school environment, teachers, support staff, and administrative staff in general might have only a vague, or no idea let alone appreciation of what other staff members do throughout the day. And there can be a further complication: often, due to administrative and economic constraints in school communities, job descriptions and contract hours for teachers and support staff might be very specific as to individual duties and hours, but limit or deny the possibility of consistent, paid time together *away from* the children.

We don't have a very positive situation emerging here.

I think it is very important for all parties involved in a school to take a close look at the dynamics of staff roles and relationships in their communities, and to acknowledge some of the harsh realities I'm describing—because these realities can have a definitive impact on attitudes and capacities concerning their respective work. Without this acknowledgement, the relationships among the adults in the school environment can devolve into a rather nasty struggle over issues of control and influence.

Perhaps a helpful first step, then, *is* to acknowledge that teachers, administrators, and support staff are not

autonomous entities occupying different dimensions in the same space. Rather, the essential fact about all of these individuals who form the adult part of the school community is the *relationship* among them. In reality, the form these relationships take will make or break the school's success as a quality, educational program.

The truth of the matter is that a Montessori educational program is a *living environment*—designed for very particular and unique purposes related to the optimal development of children. Everything in that environment, and everything that happens in that environment, will directly impact those purposes. In ideal circumstances, nothing is placed in that environment and nothing happens in that environment unless it conforms to those purposes. It stands to reason, then, that *everyone* in the environment will represent a vital, dynamic presence, affecting and—we hope—supporting the fulfillment of those educational purposes. It is the responsibility, then, of *all* adults in the environment to construct the most beneficial relationships possible—relationships that include collaboration and communication, and that include the care and nurture of adults in the same spirit that we care for and nurture the environment itself.

Here in the Pacific Northwest, we have been graced with an eloquent description of all this in the Fall 2004 issue of the *Forza Vitale!*. In an article titled “The Casa de Adultini”, Merri Baehr Whipps tells us that “... what makes a Montessori school special is when it's organized and administrated like a Montessori class environment” and urges us to see that the school itself will thrive when it creates “... an environment where each individual employee can do meaningful work” (2004:10).

“Meaningful work:” if we are going to get anywhere close to our conference theme “Human Construction: The Ultimate Expression of Creativity,” a concept of meaningful work would be an excellent starting point. One of the reasons this is a good starting point is in that special word “work.” Montessorians are quite

clear that work is not a “four-letter word” to be scorned and avoided. Work is our honored term for the activity that engages the whole human being. Usually we think of this activity in an external sense—the work we do in the world, the work that is our livelihood, the work that is our passion, and in the worst case scenario, the work that is our “job;” but however we describe it, the external sense of the word “work” revolves around the way our activity affects the world around us.

There is also, however, an internal sense to this word “work,” and this sense is closer to our conference theme. Humans do not only “construct” onto the external environment; humans literally construct themselves. In our Montessori perspective, this human construction is the optimal development we wish to serve in children and adolescents. But humans also seem to have a unique niche among the Earth's life forms, in that we construct and re-construct ourselves throughout life, continually adapting and re-fashioning ourselves as we engage our energies in activity.

Combining the word “meaningful” with the term “work” builds a simple phrase that immediately points back to those relationships among all of the people who work in the same community—because the adjective “meaningful” also exists in two realms. First is the realm of the

individual: how does each individual person feel about the validity, worth, purposefulness, and dignity of the work they do? Second, is the social realm: how do *other* members of the community view the validity, worth, purposefulness, and dignity of the work of their colleagues? And finally, how do these individual and social assessments of a person's work interact with each other? We all know from personal experience how the nature of these attitudes towards someone's work can affect that person profoundly. That effect will be expressed in the quality of both the external and internal constructions that result from a person's activity: how their activity contributes or detracts from the surrounding environment; and, how their activity shapes and re-shapes the continual internal construction

(continued next page)



Mothers, fathers, politicians: all must combine in their respect and help for this delicate work of formation, which the little child carries on in the depth of a profound psychological mystery under the tutelage of an inner guide.

Dr. Maria Montessori, The Absorbent Mind

of that individual's personality. Meaningful work, engaging the whole personality, valued and validated from within and from the community, will result in positive and life-supporting outcomes. And engagement in this type of meaningful work is the well-spring of every type of creativity.

In this perspective, the simple question of how a school "creates an environment where each individual employee can do meaningful work" takes on a tremendous significance, and again brings our attention to the relationships among these "employees" as they work together in service of the school's purpose.

In a Montessori setting, if the community views the classroom assistant or other support staff as an outside imposition, mandated by bureaucratic regulations; or as an undefined extraneous presence whose function is simply to make someone else's job easier—then it robs those colleagues of both the individual and social meaningfulness of their work and constricts the creative possibilities of each member.

So, how do we avoid this un-constructive and debilitating situation? Let's start by expanding our understanding about the presence of support staff in a Montessori school. Let's look back at the history of Montessori education. It is true that we don't find specific reference to the role of an assistant in the classroom—the way we do about the role of the new educator known as the Montessori Directress or teacher. If we read accounts, however, of those early *Casas dei Bambini*, something else emerges—and that is references to cooks, gardeners, janitors, caretakers, etc.; and we discover that these individuals had great significance in the lives of the children and the functioning of the school. Perhaps it is here that we should look for the true heritage of the modern support staff, not in contemporary regulations and adult-child ratios. Perhaps this is where we can begin our re-

definition of the value and dignity of the support role in a Montessori Community.

Let's go back to the very beginning of Montessori education—the first Children's House in the San Lorenzo district of Rome in 1907. Here is where Montessori first noticed the children's interest in the work of the tenement's "support staff"—resulting in the creation of many aspects of the Practical Life area and the discovery of unconscious motives that lead children to repetition and concentration as they pursue the everyday tasks we call Care of the Environment, all prompted by the children's real interest in the work of real human beings. Even our photographic legacy points to the presence of more than one adult per classroom in the school community! Look carefully at Margot Waltuch's photographs from the Children's House in Sevres, France—count the adult heads among the children eating their daily full course meal. (Waltuch: 12) For that matter, study another photograph of the children gardening, accompanied by a grandly serious gardener—whom Margot describes thusly: "He enjoyed the children and they enjoyed him as he taught them" (Waltuch: 11).

If we widen rather than narrow our perspective, I think it becomes obvious that high-functioning, reputable Montessori schools of the past—just as with high-functioning, reputable Montessori schools of the present—have always relied upon a large, collaborative staff to support childhood education. Once we re-define *all* adult roles in the community in terms of the school's profound purpose of serving children's development, we will have a true gauge that puts *all* employee positions into their proper perspective.

In this perspective, the trained Montessori teacher's role is pivotal, and I don't want anyone to misinterpret that. Not superior, but definitely the pivotal role to the purpose of the school, because the trained Montessori

teacher has diligently prepared to provide a unique connection between children and activities that are proven to assist their development. Support staff—whether they work in administration or directly with children—are first of all supporting teachers in that unique role. Frequently, we say, for example, that the classroom assistant in the *Casa* is an assistant to the teacher, *not* an assistant to the children. The distinction here is not to make the assistant the “servant” of the teacher, but to correct a common misconception about the assistant’s relationship to the children. If we can define the tasks specific to the teacher, then we have a starting point in defining the assistant’s role in assistance to those tasks. Now we have a way of thinking, rather than a job description “recipe” and are ready to see the relationship between the teacher and the assistant in terms of a partnership, where each partner performs work dignity and value.

If we are going to abandon “recipes”, however, we have to embrace responsibility. If we are going to transform the relationship from one of superior—inferior to one of partnership, then *each* party has to commit to engage on a basis of equality and mutual respect. *Neither* party can hide behind imposed expectations, but each has to agree to participate in a creative and passionate enterprise. It means that all tasks that *can* be shared *should* be shared, even as we define tasks that are exclusive to one party or the other. And more importantly, there must be clarity in how *each* party will support the other in his or her typical or exclusive tasks. Let’s continue using our example of the Children’s House teacher and assistant to elaborate this.

In our teacher training course here in Portland, I tell our students that communication with parents is one of the *exclusive* tasks of the trained Montessori teacher. Of course, this does not mean that assistants need duck and go mute if they encounter a parent from their classroom. In fact, in many school schedules, logistics actually determine that the teacher rarely sees parents whereas the assistant might interact with parents several times a day as children arrive and leave. What this exclusive task of the teacher *does* mean is that it is the responsibility of the teacher to be very clear in how she wants the assistant to interact with parents. She must delegate an *appropriate* portion of her task and *clearly* define where the assistant’s accountability with parents ends and the teacher’s begins.

I call this “grace and courtesy” for assistants—just as

with the children in the classroom, the support person should never feel left in the lurch, not knowing what to do in a predictable (or unpredictable) situation. So, *together*, the teacher and assistant work out the assistant’s response to the parent who asks about the lessons her child received that day; to the parent who wants to talk about his child’s behavior with the assistant; to the parent who thoughtlessly discusses her child in the child’s presence; or to the parent that suddenly blurts out something completely unexpected for which the assistant has no prepared response—such as a complaint about a school policy.

Rather than constricting the assistant’s autonomy, however, these mutual discussions between teacher and assistant result in clear guidelines that actually liberate her from the uncertainties of the unexpected and free her for more casual, positive interactions. Meanwhile, parents will unconsciously experience the larger delineation of roles that has been set up (such as: if you have a question for (the teacher), here’s the pen and notepad for you to write it down; it sounds as if you might want to talk to (the teacher) about that—you can write the phone number where she can reach you and two different times today after 3 pm when she can call you; I’m not really free to talk about that right now, I need to stay with all of the children until they leave; I’m not really the one to talk to about that, perhaps you can step into the office for a moment and check with someone there). All of these responses can be said with a smile and pleasant but firm conviction—elements that will actually protect a positive, convivial relationship between the assistant and the parent. ■

Ginni Sackett is the Director of Training at the Montessori Institute Northwest. She has experience as a Montessori parent, 12 years as a Children’s House guide and is a consultant, trainer and examiner of the Association Montessori Internationale. Find out more about the Montessori Institute Northwest’s programs at www.montessori-nw.org.

Bibliography

Maria Montessori. “Montessori’s Alternative Comprehensive School”, *The Child, Society and the World: Unpublished Speeches and Writings* Gunter Schulz-Benesch, ed., Clio Press: 1989, pp.59-69

Margot Waltuch. *A Montessori Album* NAMTA: 1986

Merri Baehr Whipps. “The Casa de Adultini” *Forza Vitale!* Vol.23 No.3, Spring 2004

Organic Food and a Healthy Environment

by Jude Foster

Our school has always been committed to providing a healthy environment for the children in our care, and this is surely a value we Montessorians all share. It is, however, a many-faceted challenge to fulfill. This year we are taking new steps in our purchases and decisions at Harmony, and we have been keeping our parent community informed and involved. I recently wrote a long newsletter article on this subject, and got such a strong positive response from our parents that I decided it might be beneficial to share the same information here.

This fall the Oregon Environmental Council began a new certification program for "Eco-Healthy Childcare Centers." When I saw an article about it in *The Oregonian*, I sent for their information, and their requirements were a definite motivator. The OEC is dealing with issues like chemicals, lead, mercury, air, plastics, and recycling. They provide a checklist of 25 items, and to qualify the school or center must be doing at least 20 of them. We have just completed our certification process. Information about this program can be found at their website: www.oeconline.org/teachers.

We were ahead of the game at Harmony, and probably it's the same at most of your schools. For instance, we were already using simple biodegradable cleaners, except for disinfection purposes where CCD requires that we use bleach. We were already conscientiously recycling. We use only organic practices in our gardens and outside environment. But there is always more to be done.

A tremendous amount of information is available on these issues, but as consumers, and as childcare providers, we have to pay attention and search it out. Suffice it to say that the mainstream media and businesses are not

motivated to inform us about the dangers in our water or air, in products we buy, or in the food we eat.

Led by a short blurb and a link I found in *Sierra*, the Sierra Club Magazine, I also began exploring the Environmental Health Perspectives website: <http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov>. The number of scientific studies to be found there, and the amount of data, is overwhelming. The Sierra Club link pointed specifically to one recent study which is immediately relevant to this discussion:

It reported an analysis of the diets and blood tests of a group of preschool children in the Seattle area, which provided some striking results, and concluded: "Consumption of organic fruits, vegetables, and juice can reduce children's exposure levels from above to below the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's current guidelines, thereby shifting exposures...to a range of negligible risk. Consumption of organic produce appears to provide a relatively simple way for parents to reduce their children's exposure to

OP pesticides." Here is the link to this specific study: <http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/members/2003/5754/5754.html>.

I found those sentences buried in a government website stunning, and extremely significant. "Consumption of organic produce appears to provide a relatively simple way for parents to reduce their children's exposure to OP pesticides." It is criminal that we do not have greater public dissemination of this information. As a long-time organic gardener, I did not need convincing personally, but I was not aware that specific scientific studies had reached such clear-cut conclusions.

One key to assimilating all this information may be to fully realize, and then to remind ourselves again and again,



that all these toxins, chemicals, and pesticides are invisible to us, but they are nonetheless real. They are as real as the banana we see, as real as the child who eats it. They are also cumulative in effect. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of this information for our children's future health. More than 2000 new chemicals are introduced every year. Never before have so many toxins and pollutants been spread throughout our environment. All the children in this culture (not to mention the earth as a whole) are the ultimate guinea pigs.

So what more can we do? Here is what is happening at Harmony:

Milk

Last summer we committed to providing organic milk at lunch. This means we can't buy it at the mini-mart across the street anymore, but several parents offered to be our milk shoppers and it's working out fine. It also costs more (from \$3.59 - \$5.29 a gallon), but we judge it an important step in the right direction. We ask parents to contribute \$.25 a day to our milk fund.

Snacks and Food

We are buying more organic produce than ever before. Again, organic food is more expensive, but not prohibitively so.

Organic apples: widely available now, not just at natural food stores. The least expensive varieties often cost no more than good commercial apples.

Organic bananas: also consistently available throughout the year. Organic bananas are particularly important to buy, because pesticides and chemicals illegal in the United States are used on bananas in Central America.

Organic peanut butter: pesticides, fungicides, and herbicides are allowed on peanuts that are banned for most other domestic foods. We stock up when it's on sale.

Organic crackers: usually too expensive for our present budget, unless they are on sale. So our snack shoppers always watch for sales. We use no foods with trans fats (hydrogenated oils). This means, for instance, no Ritz

Crackers. But Wheat Thins are OK, along with rice crackers and various health food crackers. (Effective January 1, 2006, all packaged food products must list trans fats content on the Nutrition Facts panel.)

Cheese: too expensive for our group consumption, so we still buy regular cheese. Maybe as the demand goes up, the cost of organic cheeses will go down.

Other fruits and vegetables: our snack shoppers buy organic whenever it's available—celery, grapes, carrots—whatever we request or are using for snack that week.

Grains: Whenever we cook whole, organic grains, the children gobble them up. It's fun to serve buckwheat, millet, or rice, when a class is focusing on different continents. (Buckwheat—eastern Europe. Millet—Africa. Rice—Asia.)

Water

We use Brita pitchers and filters for drinking water in the classrooms. Brita filters remove a high percentage of possible contaminants, including but not limited to lead. The OEC project does provide a connection to a local lab for a free lead test for childcare centers, which is important if your school is in an older building. Our water tested lead-free.

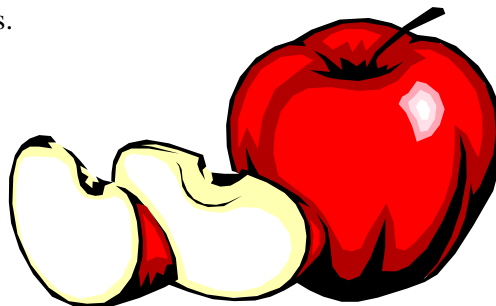
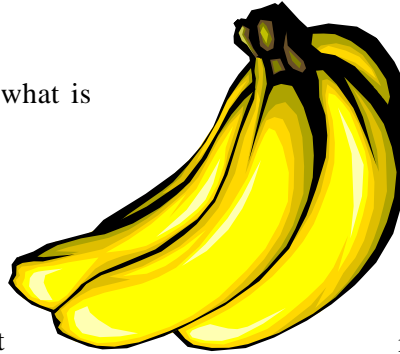
Plastics and vinyl

Last fall, a report came out that some soft vinyl lunchboxes contain a dangerous amount of lead. One web link you could check for more information is: <http://www.cehca.org/lunchboxes.htm>.

This link includes information on how consumers can check for lead with a simple kit.

No parent would knowingly expose her children to lead, and yet here is this commonly available product doing just that—it's so frustrating! A number of our parents switched lunchboxes when they got this information, with some using open baskets or cloth bags now. We are not yet ready to ban plastic lunchboxes (though maybe in the future...).

(continued next page)



Microwaves and plastic

On the OEC checklist, the item that hit me the hardest, both personally and professionally, was this: “We never use the microwave to heat food that is in plastic containers, plastic wrap, or plastic bags.” I knew this on some level, but had been letting it slide, bringing my lunch to school in Rubbermaid containers, etc. For my own family, I immediately went out and purchased some glass left-over containers. For school, we encouraged parents to do the same if they send “warm-ups” in their children’s lunches. We are now being more vigilant that no food is heated on a plastic plate.

Ten Most Important Foods to Buy Organic

This list was first published in 1997, and it’s a good place to start. Several different, slightly varying versions can be found on the web; here is one excellent link:

<http://www.heall.com/body/healthupdates/food/organic.html>.

The following are the ten most frequently and heavily pesticide-contaminated food products:

BABY FOOD: 16 pesticides are detectable in most mainstream brands.

STRAWBERRIES: The single most heavily contaminated fruit or vegetable grown and sold in the U.S.

RICE: Herbicides and insecticides have contaminated ground-water near rice fields in California’s Sacramento River Valley.

OATS and OTHER GRAINS: With 6 to 11 recommended servings, you can’t afford to ingest the excessive pesticides commonly used on grains. Even Cheerios have been found with illegal residues.

MILK: To stimulate greater milk production, many dairy companies use the growth hormone rBGH, followed up with antibiotics to treat infections that are often caused by the hormone.

CORN: 50% of all pesticides applied annually in the

U.S. find their home in corn. Most corn is fed to animals, which are then eaten by consumers.

BANANAS: The many pesticides widely used during banana production include ones linked to birth defects and nerve damage.

GREEN BEANS: 60 pesticides are used on green beans, and Mexican green beans are the worst offenders.

PEACHES: The FDA cited above-average rates of illegal pesticide violations on peaches.

APPLES: Domestic apples have been found to be nearly as contaminated as strawberries, with 36 different pesticides detected by the FDA.

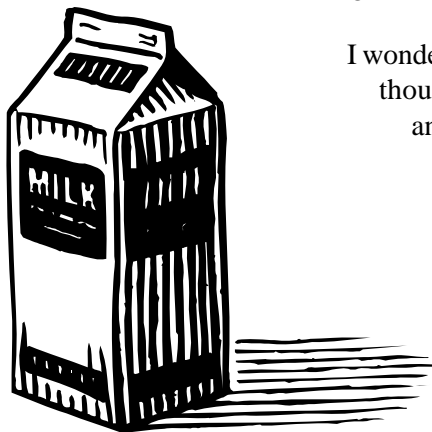
When I put this information in our school newsletter, I emphasized that my intention was not just to let parents

know what we are doing at school, but to encourage them to educate themselves, and to make informed choices at home. I did feel compelled to speak more strongly about it than I ever had in past years. It was not my intention to be alarmist, or to judge anyone’s lifestyle, either with our parents, or in our Montessori community. We’re all in this together, as parents, teachers, and fellow humans.

I wondered how it had been received at school, though, so several weeks later, I took an anonymous poll on parents’ reactions and thoughts. The overwhelming response was appreciation, and almost half of the parents said they were making some changes as a result of what they learned. I consider that a success and an affirmation. So I hope this information is useful to other teachers and administrators as well, and I hope that it spurs you on to learn more and make good

changes in your own lives. Let’s share what we learn in this vital area. It’s all for the sake of the children—and for this precious earth which is our home. ■

Jude Foster is the founder/administrator at Harmony Montessori School, mother of three, and brand-new grandmother of one.



Cultivating Silence in Our World

by Melissa Fronberry

“Silence is more than mere quiet. Silence is a state of being which offers a rich reward to those who can achieve it even for short periods of time.”

“The Nature and Theory of Silence Activities in the Children’s House”

by Mary Black Verschuur, Ph.D, *Namta Journal* Vol.13 #1 Fall/Winter 1987, p.101)

In the midst of stressful times, there is one remedy that I fall back on—silent meditation. I often create the space for silence by taking a bath. There are many parts to my bathing ritual, drawing the water and adding in fragrant lavender oil, or scented sea salts. Sometimes I light a candle, but usually, I keep the music turned off. This gives me an uninterrupted space to enjoy the stillness of my body soaking in the warm water, and listen. I listen to lots of things, but mostly to the sounds of my own body. If one submerges the ears and listens underwater, it is amazing how close one’s own breath can sound (this is due to the acoustic-coloration of the sound waves as they reflect off the surface of the tub and tile in my bathroom). It is rather womb-like and I find it very calming. During this time, I find my mind shifting from a constant production of thoughts, to that of receiving, being open and just existing. Usually, during the hustle and bustle of an ordinary day, I don’t stay connected with this kind of silence, but when I take a bath, I can lend an acute attention. After a sufficient time resting and creating silence, I conclude my ritual and drain the tub. How do I feel after this experience? Centered, relaxed and more connected to everything, including my own voluntary capacities, like breathing. It seems now, more than ever, there is a growing importance to protect our needs for this type of silent meditation: the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology reports that we are participating in one of the busiest, loudest times ever recorded in history (Source 1, p.1).

Sound, in general, can be the cause of much stress. Especially in our urban communities, the offensive environmental noise levels are skyrocketing as numerous modes of noisy transportation fill the streets, skies, and water. The ongoing cadences of construction work are not uncommon and often numerous sites can be found within a short distance of each other. These sounds are not only disturbing to humans, but are filling up acoustic niches that were once held by many species

of birds and other animals. We are literally taking up their sonic space and intervening with their growth and development. And those are just the sounds that are found around us. The constant inner dialogue of our minds, within our own bodies, can often be a source of emotional turmoil. We can, after much practice, learn to shut off this inner critique, but too often we defensively crank up the volume (of the radio, the TV, the iPod, the stereo) to give ourselves the idea that we are the illusionary masters of our unexpressed thoughts. However, distraction is only illusionary and to find a real solution we will need to pause and decide for ourselves to gather an understanding of our own thoughts and emotions (Source 1, p.1-3). Through silence, we can find an inner sense of peace with a deeper understanding of ourselves. If we learn how to be silent, we can restore not only our own health but that of the entire world. Cultivating silence is paramount to balancing our current situation.

First of all, silence is a skill that requires preparation and practice like any other. It has been found to have beneficial properties for the totality of our beings, body, mind, and spirit and can heighten our consciousness. In order to fully develop this subtle skill and to nurture the global soundscape in our lifetimes and beyond, we can begin by cultivating this skill ourselves and then sharing it with children.

Dr. Maria Montessori, a dedicated educator, discovered with great joy that children yearn to experience silence. She found silence to be a profound collective activity for children and an essential skill to the full development of the human being. She incorporated silence activities into the Montessori Method of education and many Montessori teachers already practice this skill with children worldwide. They have made many observations of what the developmental implications for silence can be.

(continued next page)

The word “silence” in itself has multiple associations. Within a social setting silence can suggest compliance or disapproval (Source 2, p.102). We “lend a listening ear” to friends who need our help and “selectively listen” to (or ignore) those we don’t wish to help. Often when we are young silence is enforced: “Silence is not generally taught, but imposed. Silence, as a concept, has been laden with fear and emotional tension. In fact, the total opposite, complete relaxation is required to obtain it” (Source 5, p.27). In Sanskrit, silence signifies a more optimistic notion of quiet, rest, and peace. Silent meditation can guide one to self-awareness and an expansion of consciousness. “Entry into a peaceful state of silence restores a sense of freedom and security to those who choose to do so” (Source 2, p.102). It is something we don’t often encounter until we create the time and space for it to occur, but its benefits are many.

Spiritually, silence can be incredibly fulfilling. “Through silence...we have the opportunity to reach out towards things which are normally beyond our reach, widening our horizons and allowing new things to appear...we become actively involved in the process of opening ourselves up to new perspectives by bringing ourselves into a state of equilibrium which thus allows the consciousness to expand” (Source 2, p.107). When we perfect the art of listening and keep our minds and bodies still, our spirit has the opportunity to connect with a deeper source of life within. As adults, silence can be a calming experience, such as listening to our breathing in the bathtub, and in essence we are led to the understanding that there is no such thing as true silence; there are always noises emanating from within. For children, the experience of silence can also have a profound impact.

In the early 20th century, when Maria Montessori was working in a Children’s House in Rome with young children (around three to six years of age), she discovered, much to her surprise, that children were entranced by silence. On one occasion, she brought a baby into the classroom of small children and quite

jokingly asked the young children if they could keep as still as the baby. The children, much to her amazement, took her challenge seriously and lay very still. Then she asked if they could breathe as quietly and she noticed the young children hold their breath and remain completely controlled, not making a sound. “This silence was a revelation,” she wrote (Source 7, p.54). The children had an interest in repeating this activity again and again at later times. The challenge of cooperatively keeping their bodies still was an attractive activity to them. Montessori and others practicing her method noted that many other concepts related to human development were also being fulfilled by the silence exercises.

The act of suspending all movement is an enormous feat for children less than six years of age. The “activity” involved in the creation of silence in a group requires a real effort on behalf of each individual to still their own body. “. . .[I]t should be a stillness of relaxation which comes about through the body’s being in equilibrium. To achieve this state of calm and balance requires great attention and will power, and it is the act of silencing or stilling mind and body that begins the activity of silence” (Source 2, p.104). It involves the coordination of their movement, mastery of their will,

an acoustic consciousness, and a notion of creating silence as a collective activity (Source 5, p.28). In order to create silence within a group of individuals, all must participate, or the silence is broken. This activity can also give children a sense of collective achievement (Source 4). To create silence develops the sensitivity to sound and increases the self-discipline of the children (Source 5, p.29). Creating silence incorporates an acute sense of concentration. This type of silence usually results in an increased interest in those sounds that are usually imperceptible to the ear: clocks, traffic, people talking in rooms nearby, wildlife outside, etc. It is an important opportunity for children to become fully self-conscious of their bodies and the sounds that occur around it (Source 2, p.108). “The exercises awaken in each child a consciousness of self, of one’s body and of one’s own innate ability to master movement. All this leads to an awareness of the ability to direct the



self on some predetermined course" (Source 2, p.105). This work, although seeming quite simple, can have a deep impact on the child's demeanor and personality.

In totality, the experience of silence is greater than merely stilling the body. It is a synthesis of all of a child's prior experiences of self-development. As they learn to master their body in a silence exercise, they also unlock a great sense of joy. "Silence is more than mere quiet. Silence is a state of being which offers a rich reward to those who can achieve it even for short periods of time" (Source 2, p.101). How do these children feel after experiencing such an activity? Mario Montessori gives us an idea when he writes, ". . . I wonder at what I saw sometimes after a silence lesson in certain children as they walked back to their place: an expression of peace; a light of tolerance, of goodness in their eyes; an inner smile on their composed faces. Perhaps they too, the children, had met the silence, the inner silence, the real silence....I realized more fully that the silence lesson is one of the most precious items of the Montessori approach. It is a delicate perfume" (Source 3, p.22). As adults, we have a great opportunity to offer such wonderful gifts to children through activities like the "Silence Game" offered in Montessori classrooms. I will share a brief explanation of this activity.

In order to prepare children to create silence, we must recognize that it is important to offer this activity when children are already in a peaceful state. Rather than command silence as adults often have in the past, we must look to silence with a respectful enthusiasm. We can begin by gathering a group of children that have the abilities to obey direction and keep their body under control. (This exercise was designed for children ages three to six years of age, however, feel welcome to experiment with children of other ages as well.) We should make sure that each child has a space for sitting free from other distractions. By having them move their body parts at first, we can then ask them to subsequently keep them still and suspend their movement of these parts. We first ask them to move their feet, then to keep them still. Then continue with other large muscle groups; the knees, torso, shoulders,

arms, and head, first asking them to move their body parts, and then to keep these parts still. During this activity we should also be participating to show the children the image that we are asking them to imitate (much like the baby was in the example of Maria Montessori's). Lastly, ask them to keep their entire body still and to close their eyes and listen. Let the silence last as long as it needs to, but do not force it. When you notice a child is going to break the silence, gently end the activity by quietly reading an appropriate poem or perhaps singing a song. You may wish to ask the children what sounds they noticed while they were listening. It can often be an interesting process.



We can alter the activity after sufficient practice to incorporate the movement and subsequent stillness of the fine muscle groups (toes, fingers, eyes, etc.) as well. At some point we will wish to define silence as "when there are no noises and we keep very still" so the children have a reference to this activity. After much practice, Maria Montessori was able to initiate this game of silence just by writing the word "silence" on a chalkboard and spontaneously the children would respond cooperatively to this instruction, whether or not they could read it. There are numerous variations that can be found to build on this activity. "Far and Near," an activity noted in *See with Your Ears* by Don Kaplan asks for children to distinguish between sounds they hear

by differentiating noises that sound far from those that sound near. This would be an excellent activity to develop aural acuteness. This book is a great resource for sound activities for children of all ages. Through these activities, we will begin to offer the unique experiences that silence can provide.

In conclusion, as the state of our world's soundscape fills with more and more noise, it is incredibly important for us to balance ourselves by experiencing silence. From this silence we can honor our own inner life of thoughts and emotions and gain a deeper awareness by listening to the sounds around us. We can gain an immense sense of calm and understanding

(continued next page)

by keeping ourselves still and calm. As adults we grow through the experience of silence, but our children have an immense investment in their own growth and development through silence as well. We embark on an incredible journey toward health of ourselves and of the world when we share activities like Maria Montessori's "Silence Game" with children. It is incredibly important that we do so for the state of human beings and other creatures that share our planet. So enjoy silence, take a bath, take rest, be peaceful, be silent. ■

Melissa Fronberry has been working with Montessori children for the past five years. She is currently earning a Master's of Education in Montessori Primary from Loyola College and training at the Montessori Institute Northwest. Along with her interests in Montessori, she also shares music lessons with children of all ages.

Bibliography

Source 1

Kendall Wrightson, "An Introduction to Acoustic Ecology," *The Journal of Acoustic Ecology*, Vol. 1 #1 Spring 2000

Please note: The World Forum for Acoustic Ecology (WFAE), founded in 1993, is an international association of affiliated organizations and individuals who share a common concern with the state of the world's soundscapes. Our members represent a multi-disciplinary spectrum of individuals engaged in the study of the social, cultural and ecological aspects of the sonic environment. Within this framework of care for the sonic environment WFAE works in collaboration with its Affiliated and Associated Organizations to promote:

EDUCATION in listening to the soundscape, sharpening aural awareness, and deepening listeners' understanding of environmental sounds and their meanings.

RESEARCH AND STUDY of all aspects of the soundscape. Some examples would be: monitoring and

evaluating actions affecting and altering the quality of the sonic environment, studying the effects of technology on the acoustic environment, studying the significance of the electro-acoustic media (radio, TV, background and foreground music, etc.) and their ever increasing presence in the soundscape, and studying attitudes towards silence in different cultures.

PUBLISHING AND DISTRIBUTING information and research on Acoustic Ecology.

PROTECTING AND PRESERVING existing natural soundscapes and times and places of quiet.

DESIGNING AND CREATING healthy and acoustically balanced sonic environments.



Source 2

Mary Black Verschuur, Ph.D, "The Nature and Theory of Silence Activities in the Children's House," *NAMTA Journal* Vol.13 #1 Fall/Winter 1987

Source 3

Mario Montessori, "Meditation on Silence," *AMI Communications* 1967 #4 p.20-22.

Source 4

Ginni Sackett, Notes from Social Cohesion Lecture on 10.17.05, Montessori Institute Northwest

Source 5

A.M. Joosten "The Silence Lesson," *AMI Communications* 1967 #4 p.27-29.

Source 6

Claude Claremont, "How to start the Silence Game with Quite New Children," *AMI Communications* 1967 #4 p.23

Source 7

Maria Montessori, *The Child, Society and the World*, 1989, Clio Montessori Series

Source 8

Don Kaplan, *See With Your Ears*, 1983, Lexicos

Coming Out of the Closet

by Donna Hargrave

AHA! The title of this article piqued your interest, didn't it? However, coming out of the closet in this case refers to my Montessori experiences, not my personal ones.

I offered to review MINW albums this year because I wanted to stay in touch with what is being taught lately. I was curious if some of the lessons had changed. I also wanted to refresh my own memories of my own lessons which are in some pretty primitive albums made back in 1983 when I actually had to use a typewriter instead of a computer.

What I joyfully discovered at the Practical Life album review meeting was that indeed, some of the lessons had changed, some new ones have been added and that some old techniques have been relaxed.

Back in 1983 when I took my AMI training, I was one of the students who challenged what was being taught. It's not that I didn't believe in the Montessori method, but I didn't think it needed to be so rigid nor elitist. I came into the training as an assistant in another Montessori school that followed the Montessori philosophy but not to a "T." So when I started learning some things in the training that didn't correspond to what I was exposed to at this particular school, I felt that I had to challenge it. I was pretty much shot down whenever I did this so I didn't speak up anymore during classes. In fact, I felt that each time I asked a question I was holding up the real learning of the rest of the class and I felt guilty about using that time just for me. So I just sat back, drank up what was fed to me and swallowed most of it.

When I entered my first year of teaching I entered with an open mind, not idealizing everything that Montessori wrote. I had to keep telling myself that these children I read about in my classes were not perfect children, nor children in today's world with today's problems. I had to

tell myself that when I made mistakes while showing a child a lesson, that I was not going to ruin them or ruin the experience for them. Yes, I said that WHEN I made mistakes, not IF, because in your first year and even in your twentieth year, you are bound to make mistakes when you give lessons.

As I worked with more and more children over the years and encountered different personalities and learning styles, I found that I had to change some of the lessons to fit these children better. I tried to keep in mind the Montessori philosophy while doing so, so that I didn't veer too far from the purpose of the material. For instance, I made up

my Object Box 2 just the way it was written in my album: put all of the phonetic objects in with only one new phonogram. I found that the children I presented it to were pretty bored and wanted more. So I changed it to all phonograms. I balanced that with individual phonogram lessons and books that contained these same phonograms. Since then, I have found that the training center has changed that

lesson and my "idea" now corresponds with what MINW teaches.

I also found that I ran out of time to teach Sandpaper Letters to every child who was hungering for it. There are so many lessons to teach, so many children who are ready for more, how was I going to get my Sandpaper Letter lessons in? Plus, I also had to make time to observe my class! I glanced at my assistant, who was sitting on her stool, just like I'd taught her. We were taught that assistants were only for doling out polish, threading needles for sewing, cleaning children up after bathroom accidents, and redirecting them to an activity. I saw an adult that looked BORED. Now here was my biggest Montessori infraction. I gave her the power to give a lesson!

(continued next page)



Well, not right then and there, first I prepared her. After school, I taught her the sounds of the letters and the dipping of the fingers in warm water and the correct tracing of each letter. I taught her the idea behind a three-period lesson. I had her watch my lessons to put it all together. I made up a list of what letters to give first and more orders of letters. I made a list of which children needed what letters. Then I set her free. I had to make sure that one of us was available to the children, so I observed my class while she gave a lesson. What I found was that she started feeling important and excited about coming to work. Hey, if I was capable of learning how to give a lesson, wasn't she?

I was rewarded for doing this in many ways. That same assistant, Arlene Nething, has been employed with my school for 17 years! I also taught her how to give lessons on the Dressing Frames which frees me up to do an extended lesson on Addition with the Golden Beads. (Some dressing frame lessons are rather quick). For those transition times, she also knows how to redirect a child to other Practical Life lessons such as Open and Close, Stringing Beads, etc.

Arlene has worked with other teachers over her years at Aquinas/Camas Montessori School. She is currently the assistant to Nina Draper, who confessed that during her first year of teaching, Arlene was a Godsend! She and Arlene have been together for about 5 years now. In 1991 I hired another assistant who has been with me in my classroom ever since, Barbara Williamson. I don't know what I would do without her. She keeps her own record book and follows the progress of each student she teaches Sandpaper Letters to. She lets me know when she thinks they're ready for Letter Blending and more. I've often asked her if she would ever like to take the Montessori

training and become a teacher and she says that the amount of responsibility she has right now is just right. She'll leave the parent/teacher relationship and all of the other record keeping to me.

Over the years, as I have hosted several MINW student teachers in my room, I have tried to explain my use of the assistant to them, hoping that they discover the value in having a trained assistant who is respected for what she can do and happy with her job.

I am so relieved that the training center and Ginny in particular, have made me feel comfortable enough in what I do differently to expose myself to all of you. I don't mean to say that what I was taught in the training center was wrong, because it wasn't. Everything that I learned in the training back in 1983 was and is valuable and I try to follow the philosophy as closely as I can. However, now when student teachers visit and see me introduce Washing a Table a little different than the training center does, Ginny said that they are told to respect the different ways of each person, while looking to see if the purpose is followed and the steps are clear. It eases my mind to know that I am not being secretly scrutinized back at the training center and that I can actually use my own knowledge and experiences to design my lessons for each particular child's needs.

I couldn't do this without having a great foundation which I received from my own training. ■

Donna Hargrave is the founder of Aquinas Montessori, now Camas Montessori. She took the AMI training in 1983 at the Montessori Education Center of Oregon, now known as MINW. She has been a primary teacher for 5 years and a teacher/administrator for 18 years.

Join us for the Spring Tea party!
RSVP to
oregonmontessori@yahoo.com
by Friday, May 12

SCHOOL NEWS

Ridgeline Montessori Public Charter School

Ridgeline Montessori Public Charter School in Eugene is in its second year with a middle school class. This 7/8 class is guided by Jennifer Wyld and Patti Bear with 32 students in a K-8 school with a total population of 226 students.

This has proven to be a marvelous curriculum with these adolescents as they have what is called an Immersion Week for each six weeks spent in school. These youngsters spend several weeks out of the classroom with a variety of activities. The students spent five days and two nights on a nearby ranch where they poured concrete, built fences, erected a tee-pee, grubbed out blackberries, built a wooden deck, cleaned animal stalls, cooked meals on a tiny wood stove, and slept in a hay loft.

On another week the students wrote an original musical play. They wrote the script, the song lyrics, designed and produced the costumes, and presented the play to parents and the entire student body on Friday afternoon.

Later on this year one week will be spent with a local business as an intern. Students work as teacher aides, clerks, baristas, veterinary assistants, and the like. In previous years these students have also built and refurbished trails, painted community fences, removed invasive plants, planted hundreds of trees, and helped out at a food bank.

These students have many opportunities for age-appropriate practical life experiences that extend their classroom to include the whole community in which they live.

Franciscan Montessori Earth School and St. Francis Academy

With more than 300 students, the role of Earth

School support staff and our parent community cannot be understated or undervalued. At the Franciscan Montessori Earth School and St. Francis Academy, an additional 36 staff supplement our teaching staff of classroom Montessorians. In that number one finds administrators, maintenance staff, classroom assistants, development staff, language specialists, tutors, office and reception staff, computer and IT staff, kitchen staff, and more. Parent volunteers supplement those numbers throughout the year as they support our Earth Experiences, sports, after school programs like chess, scouting, robotics, music, the green team, and more. The Earth School is a dynamic representation of the collaboration of effort that makes even difficult programs possible. Our staff, our parents, and our students enjoy the daily experience of approaching life with the confidence that many support their efforts.

Each one of these staff members has a direct effect on the overall educational experience of students and families, whether they help in the preparation of meals or assist in the use of the computer lab. The opportunity to see the myriad activities that adults engage in while operating a school are clearly evident to the students of the Earth School. From the day a child begins their experience in Children's House, to the day they graduate from the Middle School, St. Francis Academy, our students are supported in their growth by literally hundreds of staff and volunteers.

In addition to the work within the school itself, members of our staff maintain the Earth school campus, spread across nine acres, along with the staff and volunteers from Wy'east Soccer League, who maintain our "classic" soccer field. We also enjoy a relationship with groups such as the Eastside Jewish Community of Portland and the Portland Revels, who use our facilities for their work and programs, supported by the efforts of our students and our greater community.

If true community is a goal of Montessori Education, then it has its underpinnings in our support community here at the Earth School. Without their help, the lofty ideals of the classroom would be far less likely to have an outlet in our student's daily lives. ■

MINW News

Last week the staff of the Institute enjoyed hearing a rousing chorus of "This Little Light of Mine" from our trainees in the MINW classroom. Actively cultivating one's own flame, caring for ourselves, and devoting one's self to being a beacon of interest and activity for our students, our alumni, and ultimately for the children is at the heart of our mission here.

We continue to marvel at this group of Teachers in Training who, like Montessori's analogy of the tapestry, have brought their own uniqueness and strengths to the course and make it an inspiring year for all of us. We have just begun our study of the Mathematics Area and the students are looking forward to their return to local classrooms in April for Practice Teaching. Applications are already coming in from around the world for next year's course!

On January 9, AMI Assistants to Infancy Trainer Patricia Wallner visited Portland for an information session at the Montessori Institute Northwest. Attendees learned more about the many aspects and applications of Dr. Montessori's training to work with infants and toddlers. If you missed this event, contact us for more information or to set up a time to visit to the Institute. For those interested in applying in this course, we will continue to accept applications until the course is full.

We are looking forward to hosting Paula Gibson Smith in March for an Elementary Seminar. Congratulations to Paula for her recent acceptance to AMI's Training of Trainers Program! What a wonderful next step for Paula after her many years in Spokane's Public AMI Montessori Elementary programs.

We look forward to seeing you around the Institute at upcoming events. Check out our re-vamped website at www.montessori-nw.org for more news and details. Thank you to the Montessori family behind Wolfpk.com for helping us design a site that reflects our Montessori principles of simplicity and beauty. ■



News You Can Use

We had an olfactory epiphany here at the Institute this year! Tired of the Smelling Jar lids getting switched between jars (and the smells getting muddled), Ginni bought glass spice jars with attached flip back lids.

On the Practical Life front we also discovered that Portland's City Liquidators has an impressive selection of enameled metal basins, pitcher and buckets in a variety of colors. ■

From the Staff of the Montessori Institute Northwest

CLASSIFIEDS

Montessori Teacher Training

The Montessori Institute Northwest is currently enrolling two courses leading to the diploma of the Association Montessori Internationale: Assistants to Infancy summer course 2006 and 2007 for working with children ages birth to age three. Primary academic year course 2006-07 for working with children ages three to six. B.A. and M.Ed. options also available.

Contact the Montessori Institute Northwest for more information: 503-963-8992, www.montessori-nw.org

Employment Announcement

SunGarden Montessori Center announces several employment opportunities for the 2006-2007 school year. We are seeking candidates that hold an AMI Primary Diploma.

For the guide position we will give preference to candidates with prior classroom experience.

Positions open:

One guide, Oregon City site
One assistant, Oregon City site
One assistant, West Linn site

Positions begin on August 21, 2006

Please send cover letter and resume to:

Melody Burchyski, Administrator
SunGarden Montessori Center
2284 Long Street
West Linn, OR 97068
Or email information to
Melody@sungardenmontessori.org

SunGarden Montessori is an AMI member and celebrating our 25th year as an outstanding primary program. We offer excellent salary and benefits, a stimulating work environment, and support professional development. For more information about our school, please visit our web site at www.sungardenmontessori.org.

Classroom Materials Available

For questions or more information you can visit www.oregonmontessori.org, contact shannon@sungardenmontessori.org, or call 503-655-2609.

Montessori Books Available for Purchase

Portland's Montessori Institute Northwest regularly carries a large number of books by and about Montessori. Visit www.montessori-nw.org or call 503-963-8992 for more information. ■



OMA ANNUAL SPRING TEA

THURSDAY, MAY 18TH
4:30 TO 6:30PM

WEST PORTLAND UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH, HOME TO
CHILD'S VIEW MONTESSORI
4729 SW TAYLOR'S FERRY
ROAD, PORTLAND

REGISTER BY FRIDAY, MAY 12TH
OREGONMONTESSORI@YAHOO.COM



Alaska:

Anchorage Montessori School (0-12)
907-276-2240

Montessori in the Northwest

Yakima:

Montessori School of Yakima (3-6)
509-966-0680

Longview:

Klahowya Montessori Children's House (3-6)
360-578-9885

Vancouver:

Cascadia Montessori School (6-12)
360-944-8096
Good Shepherd Montessori School (3-6)
360-892-7770
Vancouver Montessori School (3-6)
360-256-0872

Wenatchee:

Montessori Children's School (3-6)
509-663-5687

Camas:

Camas Montessori School (3-6)
360-834-7434

Columbia River

NW Portland - Beaverton - Forest Grove:

Childpeace Montessori School (0-12)
503-222-1197
Elizabeth Perry Montessori School (3-9)
503-357-9740
Little Fruit Farm Montessori (3-6)
503-521-8603
Montessori School of Beaverton (3-12)
503-439-1597

SW Portland Area:

All Roads Learning Community (0-3)
503-939-8235
Child's View Montessori School (3-6, summer elementary)
503-293-9422
Odyssey Montessori School (6-12)
503-892-6366
Sherwood Christian Montessori (3-6)
503-625-7758
Two Rivers Montessori School (3-12)
503-768-3847
West Hills Montessori School (3-9)
503-246-5495
West Hills Montessori II - Garden Home & Multnomah (3-6)
503-246-5495

NE Portland:

Providence Montessori School (3-6)
503-215-2409

Willamette River

SE Portland - Gresham - Sandy:

Franciscan Montessori Earth School (3-14)
503-760-8220
Gresham Montessori Center (0-6)
503-491-0151
Harmony Montessori School (3-6)
503-255-5337
Montessori Institute NW (Teacher Training)
503-963-8992
Morningstar Montessori House of Children (3-6)
503-661-1457
Native Montessori School (3-6)
503-916-5364
Whole Child Montessori Center (3-6)
503-771-6366

Lake Oswego:

Village Montessori (3-6)
503-675-8565
West Hills Montessori - Lake Oswego (3-6)
503-636-1408
West Lake Montessori School (3-6)
503-635-1493

West Linn:

Cascade Summit Montessori School (0-6)
503-723-5644
SunGarden Montessori Center (3-6)
503-655-2609

Milwaukie:

Milwaukie Montessori School and Daycare (3-6)
503-786-4256

Molalla:

Greenstone Montessori School (3-12)
503-759-3212

Willamette Valley

McMinnville:

McMinnville Montessori School (3-9)
503-434-5081

Salem - Albany - Corvallis:

Corvallis Montessori School (3-12)
541-753-2513
Philomath Montessori School (3-6)
541-929-2672
Salem Montessori School (3-6)
541-364-6615
Sundborn Children's House (3-6)
541-924-9480

Eugene:

Eugene Montessori School (3-6)
541-345-7124
Far Horizons Montessori School (3-12)
541-485-0521
Ridgeline Montessori Public Charter School (3-14)
541-681-9662
Willamette Valley Montessori School (3-6)
541-689-4751