

**Newsletter • February 2008**

*Greetings!* We've had lots of fun getting to know each other over the last few months. It's not too late to get involved. We've got several events planned yet this winter and then it's time to start thinking about Spring! See more information below about the Wilmot Ski Trip, The Field Museum family field trip and the February Meet and Eat. Then in the Spring we need families to volunteer to help plan the Teacher Appreciation Luncheon, Spring Campus Clean up, The Loyalty Day Parade and Prairie Restoration Project. Please let us know how you are interested in getting involved. *The Parents and Patrons Organization*

**Reflections from Miss Liz**

Spring is coming-Keep the faith. Help your children observe the early signs of this special season. It is not only getting light earlier in the day, but the light is lasting longer in the evening. Have children listen for the beginning calls of the cardinals and chick-a-dees. On warm days the snow is beginning to melt and make small rivulets. Red-winged black birds usually return the first week in March. The robins are not far behind.

**Highlights of activities and topics of study:**

**Preschool and Kindergarten**

The first activities a child experiences in a Montessori environment are in the area of Practical Life, also referred to as Daily Living. The activities in this area help the child to develop his sense of concentration, independence, awareness, self-esteem, eye-hand coordination and confidence. Practical life is divided into two main groups: Care of Person and Care of Environment. The first group, Care of Person, is fairly self-explanatory. Examples of the child developing these skills in the classroom include the use of dressing frames, hand washing, food preparation, hair combing and teeth brushing, screwing, spooning and pouring. The second group, Care of Environment, include both care of indoor and outdoor spaces. Examples of activities in the classroom environment are indoor and outdoor voices, table manners, grace and courtesy, scrubbing tables and chairs, cleaning mirrors, watering plants, feeding classroom pets and recycling paper. On the playground similar activities are encouraged. The child is asked not to disturb nature and to put all playground toys away when outside time is over.

*Suggestion Box:* The Care of Person skills can be encouraged at home by allowing the child the opportunity to have time to dress him/herself, pour his/her own drinks from a small pitcher, serve his/her own food from a small dish, and screw and unscrew containers. By doing so, we are providing children the practice they need to master these skills and building their confidence so they are able to develop into "big boys and girls". The Care of Environment skills can be encouraged at home by allowing your child the opportunity to help prepare and set the table for family meals, clean tables, sweep floors with a child's size broom, help in yard work activities, and help care for family pets. Providing these opportunities at home provides practice for the mastery the child desires and fosters a sense of respect for self in relationship to the environment. Through these activities in Practical Life, the child develops concentration, independence, self-esteem, eye-hand coordination, confidence and a sense of order that the child will need for beginning reading, prewriting, math, science and geography.

"Never help a child with a task at which he feels he can succeed".....Maria Montessori

**Lower Elementary**

Lower Elementary is off to a fabulous start in 2008! With the new year comes a plethora of new beginnings across the curriculum, especially in the area of math. The children are having a lot of fun learning about fractions. *Ask your child about fraction families.* Additionally, we will be exploring linear and dry measures along with weight. Also, as always, all students continue to progress through their math facts and equations. They approach their story problems enthusiastically and with good focus. We are looking forward to both a very productive new year and investigating the always-inspiring experiments presented at the Upper El and Junior High Montessori Academy Science Fair.

## Upper Elementary

Upper Elementary is very busy studying simple machines. Each child has a partner while he/she explores levers, pulleys, inclined planes, wheels, axles and gears. The students are learning how these machines make our lives easier by helping us use less effort. The students' explorations lead them to problem solving skills as they record their information through graphing, weighing, drawing and measuring angles, assembling pulley systems, and accurately recording their findings. They also are learning scientific vocabulary such as fulcrum, load, effort, newton and spring scale. In February, the students are using the information they have gained from this study to create their own simple machines. They will present their finished products during the Montessori Academy Science Fair on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. We invite you to come see their interesting creations!

*Suggestion Box:* If you are an Upper Elementary parent, have your child look around your home for simple machines and discuss how they work.

## Junior High

Junior High is focusing on the annual *Montessori Academy Science Fair*. Students have been given the task of formulating a testable question. They are developing science experiments using the scientific method, carrying out these experiments on their own, and then producing a formal presentation of their findings to peers, parents and the public. One way that families can help their students during this project is to discuss the progress of their experiments during this period. Helping students learn to maintain a schedule will benefit them throughout their lives. We hope that all parents, Preschool through Junior High will join us during the Science Fair Open House on March 2<sup>nd</sup> to view and discuss our projects.

Junior High students are also engaged in service projects. They are making fudge to distribute at Hased House and on February 22<sup>nd</sup> the students are going to pack food at the *Feed My Starving Children* packing place. This organization sends food packets to poor countries around the world. The students will pack for two hours. They have also contributed their own money to purchase meals.

**Montessori Academy Science Fair Open House – Sunday March 2<sup>nd</sup> . Please join us for this annual event!**

## Parents & Patrons Organization Activities

- **Fundraising**

- TRIP – We have several more ordering opportunities coming up and we would like to encourage new users to look at this program. In March we will be offering a bonus on any travel related purchases as you plan your Spring Break get away --- there are many hotel and airlines offered including Travelocity and Disney. So, please consider trying the gift card program when you are planning.
- The company recently added Wal-mart/Sams Club gift cards to the list.
- You may order online or if you prefer we do have paper order forms available if you just want to take a look at what is available. If you have any questions about the TRIP program, please contact Caryl Riley at [mommyzilla@comcast.net](mailto:mommyzilla@comcast.net). Thank you all for your participation!

- **Purchases from Fundraising**

We made several purchases for the school including new reading chairs for Jr. High and new cushions and pillows for Lower Elementary. We also are funding dance/culture programs for both Lower Elementary and Kindergarten. We are now shopping for new playground materials for all grades and Montessori materials for Kindergarten and Pre-School.

- **Meet and Eat**

- The January **Meet and Eat** at Andre's Place was well attended with more than 50 people playing bingo and getting to know each other. Many thanks to the Andrea and Caryl Riley for coordinating it.
- The next **Meet and Eat** will be February 22<sup>nd</sup> again at Andre's Place. We will keep it very simple with table games. We will have several board games for families and kids. Stop by anytime between 5 and 7 p.m. We've reserved the back room so your family can grab a table, order dinner and play a game.

- **Read-Meet-Eat**

The PPO is sponsoring the **Cougar Baseball Reading Program** with the goal of all the children (Pre-school thru Jr.High) earning tickets to the baseball game on Friday April 25<sup>th</sup> at Cougar Stadium in Geneva. The program encourages children to read a certain amount each day (appropriate to their level). Each child participating in the program will earn a game ticket, food voucher and t-shirt. We can purchase additional tickets for parents and siblings at a discount and then will all be able to sit together at the game – our school will be mentioned and the children will be allowed down on the field to run the bases. Materials for this program will arrive home shortly. **This is a voluntary program being run through the PPO; it is not being run through the classrooms.** It will be a fun outing for all to watch a night baseball game. If you have any questions please contact: Caryl Riley 630-482-2620 or [mommyzilla@comcast.net](mailto:mommyzilla@comcast.net).

- **Family Field Trips**

- On April 5<sup>th</sup> we will be traveling to the Chicago Field Museum for the special exhibit “Mythic Creatures: Dragons, Unicorns & Mermaids”. By Friday, March 7<sup>th</sup> contact Sue Passalacqua at [Suzi0221@aol.com](mailto:Suzi0221@aol.com) with the number of students and adults that will be attending. Details will follow in a flyer.
- The trip to Wilmot Mountain Ski and Snowboard Area, Wisconsin on February 16, 2008 was great fun! There were 22 skiers. The weather was perfect, lots of sunshine, and snow conditions were great- fluffy, soft snow, and no ice! Many thanks to Ronni Verboom for coordinating this exciting event!

- **Prairie Restoration Project. Calling All Naturalist or Naturalist Wannabes!**

Are you ready for Spring? Hopefully, we can enjoy warmer temperatures soon and continue the restoration work in our little prairie! Keep in mind, this is a hands-on, outdoor classroom used by your child & the teachers. If the weather cooperates, those of you with Spring fever can come out and help with this project. Please consider lending a hand in any of the following phases of this project.

- ❖ *Late-March:* Herbicide the non-native grass and brush.
- ❖ *Early-April:* Perform a “burn” to clear out the area for planting native prairie plants. Do you know anyone with expertise such as a fireman/woman who could be a resource? This would be a BIG help!!!
- ❖ *Early May:* Drop seed and plant plugs of native prairie plants, flowers & grasses.

**It is a work in progress needing a community to guarantee its success!** Any bit of help will do! Please contact Sabrina Martin 630-879-0953 or [budamart@comcast.net](mailto:budamart@comcast.net) to offer any assistance.

- **Spring campus clean up** on April 19<sup>th</sup>. We have several activities planned for this day and hope that we can count on you and your family to come for a while to help spruce up the campus. Activities include: laying a thick layer of newspaper and mulching on the garden beds to prevent weeds; moving railway ties to define the garden area by the preschool/kindergarten building; replacing the play ground tarps; and putting up basketball hoops in both the pre-school and elementary play areas. Please watch for sign-up sheets or contact Caryl Riley at 630-482-2620 or [mommyzilla@comcast.net](mailto:mommyzilla@comcast.net). Hope we will see you there!

- **Teacher Appreciation Lunch.** \*\* Volunteers Needed \*\* It's that time of year again to honor our teachers with the Parent and Patron Organization's traditional Teacher's Luncheon, **April 11<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 AM.** Every year the parent organization provides all Montessori Academy teachers an opportunity to enjoy a fabulous gourmet lunch together with no interruptions. It's our way of saying “thanks” and giving us an opportunity to do a little something special once a year. In that spirit, we need volunteers to help with this event and hope you will lend your support in at least one of the following areas:

- ❖ Co-chair - someone to work & collaborate with current chair to plan menu, plan, coordinate, and possibly chair or co-chair event for 2009.
- ❖ Prepare/cook food
- ❖ Set up (10:30) & Clean up (1:30)
- ❖ Watch children during luncheon
- ❖ Coordinate Teacher Appreciation Gift (before event)
- ❖ Decorations & Table settings

**Share your gift of time and culinary artistry for our wonderful Montessori teachers.** Contact Sabrina Martin today at 630-879-0952 or [budamart@comcast.net](mailto:budamart@comcast.net). There will also be a sign up sheet near your child's classroom.

- **Loyalty Day Parade.** The Batavia Loyalty Day Parade takes place on May 5th and as always Montessori will be entering a float. Vicki Stevens will be the coordinator and support persons are needed to help during the week prior to the parade. Contact Vicki at VictoriaAStevens@comcast.net or call at 630-443-5385 to volunteer.
- **PPO Meetings:** Wednesdays, March 5<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 am and April 2<sup>nd</sup> at 8:30 am (we've decided to have all of our meetings in the mornings because we did not get evening participants – contact Andrea Plamondon ([andrea.c.plamondon@accenture.com](mailto:andrea.c.plamondon@accenture.com)) if you'd like to get involved but are unable to attend meetings.

Check the calendar on the website ([www.MontessoriBatavia.com](http://www.MontessoriBatavia.com)) and bulletin boards for more information about ongoing and future events and activities.

The primary purpose of this newsletter is to inform families about the activities in the Montessori environment so that we can work together for the education of the children. If you have topics that you want to see in this newsletter please contact Susan Vonderheid Radeztsky at [vonde@uic.edu](mailto:vonde@uic.edu) or 630-906-0569.