

Newsletter • November/December 2007

Greetings! We started the school year with numerous opportunities to get know each other in our school community. It's been fun meeting and making so many new friends. Thanks to all of those who helped make these events such fun and enriching. We've had welcome coffees, campus cleanups, a zoo trip, a drum circle, and dinner at Andre's. Please join us when your schedule allows in the upcoming winter months. If you have suggestions or want to help plan future activities please contact Andrea Plamondon (andrea.c.plamondon@accenture.com) or come to the next Parent & Patrons Organization Meeting on January 9th at 8:30 a.m. *The Parents and Patrons Organization*

Reflections from Miss Liz

With the coming of Christmas, remember, a few gifts that offer creative possibilities are often a better choice than a large quantity of presents. If you feel your young child is over-whelmed with too many gifts from grandparents and relatives, put some away on a shelf for a time and then rotate them throughout the year.

Highlights of activities and topics of study:

Preschool

Hooray! Here come the months of joy and celebration. The children are truly enjoying the festive month of November. They are learning about the Native Americans and Pilgrims, and sharing their storytelling skills with their friends and peers. Storytelling helps children to be more confident and develops their imaginative skills. The children also enjoyed Thanksgiving related crafts. In the month of December we will continue to learn how different cultures around the world celebrate the "Festival of Lights", Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa. Remember to create some of your own traditions during this holiday season.

Kindergarten

Native American cultures had an allure for the kindergarten children that developed through tribal map making, intertwined with stories, songs and poems, and a visit to the Schingoethe Center for Native American Cultures at Aurora University. Ms. Joey brought the Indian Dwelling replicas from the Center. The children observed them very carefully and then diligently started drawing them. The field trip to the Center for Native American Cultures also delighted them. The children saw how to build wigwams in a video, and then instructions were given to guide the children as they built two wigwams themselves- no small accomplishment for kindergartners! Back at school, we completed our study by making three totem poles, one was even seven feet tall! Please have your children tell you a story about their experience at the Center or about making their totem pole.

Lower Elementary

The Lower EI is enjoying the joys of autumn. Last month we took a seasonal field trip to Heritage Prairie Farm. This autumn, children have learned to identify several leaves: beech, maple, oak, poplar, lime and chestnut. In the classroom, we have been working on letter writing. Each child wrote a thank you letter to Prairie Farm expressing his/her thanks for our lessons on barn animals, vegetable patches, honey and farm life. The children also wrote letters of encouragement to motivate a student partner to work toward his/her goal for the week. Our Thanksgiving feasts were welcomed with excitement, both with the cooking and the feasting! At home, take time with your child this holiday season to write a letter to a relative or friend. This concrete form of communication is a beautiful way to share and to give. It is also a chance to receive, as a letter is often sent back in return.

Upper Elementary

The Upper Elementary children have been studying China, the longest on-going civilization the world has known. China has many fascinating aspects that interest the students. There is the Great Wall, the Ming Tombs, and the impressive Imperial Palace, to name a few. China also has given the world gifts of paper, silk, the compass and the first firecrackers. As we continue our studies, the children will be traveling the old Silk Road from Xi'an, China to Venice, Italy, encountering all the dangers along the way as well as the dramatic

landscape of the Taklamakan Desert and the Tien Shan Mountains. Ask your children to name some of the important dynasties and why they are remembered. Your children might also enjoy a visit to the Lizzadro Museum in Elmhurst to see their beautiful Chinese jade.

Junior High

In Junior High, literature is one of the many academic areas that is studied. Currently, our emphasis in history is World War II. In conjunction with the history emphasis, two literature selections are being studied. First, the entire class is analyzing the novel "A Boy at War" by Harry Mazer. Second, a small group has chosen to do an in-depth study of the novel "Code Talker" by Joseph Bruchac. Novel study allows students to go beyond the basic facts. Students come together on a daily basis to discuss their understanding of assigned chapters. New vocabulary words and writing techniques are also analyzed. As the students read a novel about a boy their age during this time period, history makes personal connections with them. This is a wonderful opportunity for the family to have an open dialog concerning the great price our military pays to preserve our freedom.

Parents & Patrons Organization Activities

- **Fundraising.** Yes, Montessori families, the fundraising craziness is over--except for our on-going TRIP program, but more on that later.
 - **Five-B's BBQ.** The BBQ, held on a not too cold Friday night, was a tremendous success. Special thanks go to our Jr. High students who took orders, assembled dinners, sold baked goods and ran orders to the cars. We'd also like to say "Thanks" to Donna and Sue for the wonderful baked goods that were great sellers (although we think some of the profits were consumed by hungry Jr. High helpers). We served 271 dinners. The results, including specific class donations, total \$981.25. Funds will be allocated to the classrooms to help purchase their Wish List items. Thanks to all the families that helped sell tickets and who helped the day of the event.
 - **Poinsettia Sale.** The flowers will arrive at school on December 5th. We hope to have them ready for pick-up that day. We sold nearly 100 plants and earned \$733 for our classrooms. These funds will also help purchase classroom items.
 - **TRIP.** We have had a steady group of families participating in the program and have earned approximately \$300 - this means \$300 will be given back in the first Family Tuition Reimbursement. The credit will be calculated in December after the December 15th order and credits will be applied to the January tuitions. We will have 3 order periods in December so you can order for holiday shopping and for holiday giving. If you have not yet tried this program, we do encourage you to consider trying it. You may order directly online, or you may use hard-copy order forms (available in Ms. Stacie's office). If you have any questions about this program, please contact Caryl Riley at mommyzilla@comcast.net.
 - **For Small Hands - just in time for holiday gifts.** When families place orders over \$25.00 from the *For Small Hands* website <http://www.forsmallhands.com/> or catalog, and designate Montessori Academy as the credit recipient, our school will receive 10% of the merchandise total in merchandise credit. Enter the school customer number for Montessori Academy (**#114700**) when placing your order on or before December 31st, 2007. Credits (similar to a gift certificate) will be accumulated and tallied, and credit vouchers sent to our school in January 2008. If you have any questions please contact Susan Vonderheid at vonde@uic.edu or 630-906-0569.
 - We will keep you up-to-date on classroom purchases. Thank you all for your participation!
- **Meet and Greet**
 - The October **Meet and Greet** with the Drum Circle was a huge hit! It was wonderful to have a large number of families sharing laughter and fun! Many thanks to the Caryl Riley for coordinating it.
 - The next **Meet and Greet** will be January 19th and will feature *Bunco with a twist—Bago*. We are asking each person to bring a \$1 item/prize to swap around as we play. It's a very easy dice game and fun for all ages!

- **Fall campus clean up** helped maintain and improve the beautiful environment that our children are so fortunate to interact with daily. Thank you to Caryl Riley for organizing the activities and many thanks to the families that participated.
- **Family Field Trips**
 - Our trip to the Brookfield Zoo was tons of fun! Thanks to Sabrina Martin for coordinating the event.
 - Save the date for our second annual trip to **Wilmot Mountain Ski Resort** on February 16th. More information will follow in January 2008.
- **Montessori Academy's Prairie Restoration Project.**
 - Many thanks go out to the following people who on November 10th cut down invasive brush in what will become an outdoor classroom for our Montessori children: Miss Liz, Mr. Wayne, Caryl Riley, the Martin Family and the Fogleman Family. Chainsaws were buzzing and children were pruning all morning. Even one 9-year old was sawing down small trees! We also enlisted some help from visiting boy scouts foraging for wood.
 - Linda Bagby connected us with prairie restoration representatives from Fermilab. One of their stewards visited our Montessori prairie and advised us how to proceed in the spring. We also had representatives visit us from the Conservation Foundation who offered some valuable input on how to carry on with our efforts. We are very grateful for all their help.
 - Future plan of action is to herbicide the non-native grass and brush in late March and perform a "burn" to clear out the area for planting native prairie plants. Fermilab and another private donor have offered to donate seed, which will then be raked into the prairie clearing. Hopefully, our children can participate in a hands-on learning experience while helping with the plantings.
 - Please contact Sabrina Martin to offer any assistance to this project. It is a work in progress needing a community to guarantee its success! Any bit of help will do! Please call or email to see how you can help: 630-879-0952 or budamart@comcast.net.
- **Volunteers needed** for the following activities:
 - The **Teacher Appreciation Lunch** in April needs support persons. Contact Sabrina Martin at 630-879-0952 or budamart@comcast.net to offer any assistance.
 - **Loyalty Day Parade** Vicki Stevens will be the coordinator and support persons are needed. Contact Vicki at victoriastevens@comcast.net to volunteer.
- **PPO Meetings:** Wednesdays, January 9 at 8:30 am and February 6 at 5:30 pm.
- **Waffle Wednesdays.** What's a Waffle Wednesday? Has your child come home talking about Waffle Wednesday? Wonder what that's all about? Waffle Wednesday started as an early morning birthday celebration for one family. Over time, other families got wind of the idea and now, a small group of families meet between 7 and 7:30 am at the Waffle House just north of school on Rt. 25. If you are a morning person or you need incentive to get your little one out of bed easily, join us on Wednesdays. Hope to see you there!
- Check the calendar on the website (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 or 630-906-0569.