

MONTESSORI ACADEMY

November-December 2009 Newsletter

Please enjoy the third of nine monthly newsletters keeping you informed about what's happening in our classrooms...

The Three to Six Program:

The kindergarten children held a Pow Wow to close out their unit of the Indians of North America. They made ankle bells and turtle rattles and danced to the beat of a drum made from rawhide. In the tradition of the Native Americans they made a corn pudding, and shared it with the younger children for the afternoon snack time. Many children liked the pudding so much they prepared it for their families Thanksgiving Dinner.

In honor of the first Thanksgiving, the 3-6 year olds held their second annual feast. All the children helped with this preparation. The children in the West Room prepared turkey hot dogs to share; while Maggie Blough, Hans Carter, Marissa Capparelli, and Kiran Yasuda made cornbread. The children in the North Room prepared delicious pumpkin custard with homemade whipped cream. The feast was held in the West Room where Maggie Blough dressed the tables for the occasion. It was a festive time for us all.

For the month of December the children will be exploring the traditions of Hanukkah, Christmas and Kwanzaa. They will have the opportunity to hear stories about the traditions of these holidays and share in a few games that young children play during these celebrations.

Lower Elementary:

Throughout the month of November, the children have been fascinated by the plant kingdom. We began our botany unit with early, spore-producing plants, such as fungus, moss, algae, lichen and ferns. The children learned to identify these on our nature walks. We talked about covered and uncovered seeds, and used pinecones to illustrate the latter. When we discussed covered seeds, the children saw fruit and vegetable halves and the seeds inside. They were surprised at how diverse the seeds were in color, shape, size, and number.

The children dissected a lima bean seed and learned to identify its parts. They planted three of their own in cups and watched them grow with awe, checking on their growth every morning and caring for them. We learned about the function and parts of the roots, stem, and leaves as these developed before their eyes.

The children really loved the experiments that we did. One involved food coloring and carnations. They learned that the xylem carried the water, minerals, and food coloring up the stem to the leaves, or petals, while another showed a plant's respiration. We put a philodendron into a bag and watched as condensation formed on the inside. This proved to the children that the plant really is breathing and letting off moisture.

In January, we are going to watch different bulbs bloom and study the parts and function of the flower. We have four narcissus sprouting in the room and a giant amaryllis bulb in the wings. The children are very excited to see what these bulbs will become.

Upper Elementary:

We recently visited Heritage Prairie Farm in Elburn over Thanksgiving. The students had such a wonderful experience with Bronwyn Weaver and her staff visiting and learning about the different foods that were available during the colonial days. Our day started touring the farm and learning about the vegetables that would have been harvested for a traditional Thanksgiving meal. Students had the chance to make butter, try roasted chestnuts, learn about bees and honey and also learn about the pickling processes for different foods. Our students not only brought a wealth of information back to school with them, but an understanding of the trials and tribulations that our ancestors may have faced as they settled in the new world. The information they brought back was invaluable and will create memories for us all. We are so thankful to all Parents who take time to bring to our classrooms experiences that will last a lifetime for everyone. Thank you for all your support throughout the years.

The Junior High Program:

Junior High has participated in a number of outreach opportunities recently. These are examples of the life skills that children learn by doing. In October, a preschool parent asked if the Junior High could communicate with her father, Peter, after she noticed Ms. Julie bringing her “teaching assistant” (Peanut the Cat) home after school. Peter volunteers with a cat rescue group in California and writes a “cat blog”. The Junior High students, and Ms. Julie, wrote to Peter. He has updated his blog with Peanut’s story. If you would like to read it, it is found at www.HomelessCatNetwork.com, click on “Peter’s Blog” and scroll to “Learning From Peanuts”.

Junior High also volunteered for the Montessori Academy prairie burn in mid-November. Ben Hudetz, a Junior High parent, coordinated the event. It was held on one of the beautiful, warm, sunny November days that we were so privileged to enjoy this year. The students look forward to helping Mr. Hudetz again in the spring.

Finally, the entire elementary school made cookies to support the Heifer Project prior to Thanksgiving. The elementary students raised \$200.00 and were able to provide two goats and four chickens to a needy village.

These are examples of how we can all prepare our children to be giving individuals in our society.