



Follow the Child

THE MSGH COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2010

Twenty-five years from now, what will you say when you bump into an old friend who asks about your life and wonders about your child whom she has never met? Will you speak about the career path your child has chosen, whether he is married or not, or what kind of person your child is? Maybe you'll speak about his character and how he lives his life? What would you *like* to be able to say about your child?

I ask this question of every family who seeks to become a part of our school community. I have asked it of many parents from a variety of cultural, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds and family structures, and it stops most everyone in their tracks. It calls up passion and intensity, and often, tears.



UNA'S CHAT

When the answer does come, parents describe a child who is confident, independent, responsible, kind, self aware, respectful of others, moral, determined, joyful, compassionate, and considerate. A person who is family oriented, empathetic, passionate about life and his life choices, not afraid of challenges, who has good friends on whom he can rely; someone who cares about

the world and who is—happy.

Note that nowhere in that list did anyone aspire for his or her child to be a renowned mathematician or scientist. No one spoke of great wealth or social status. The focus was on the core qualities of a successful human being.

I then ask a second question: “If you wish for all of these wonderful attributes for your adult child, what do you do each day to make this future a reality?” I am nearly always met with silence. Most parents admit that they had never thought about this concept.

Conscious Parenting

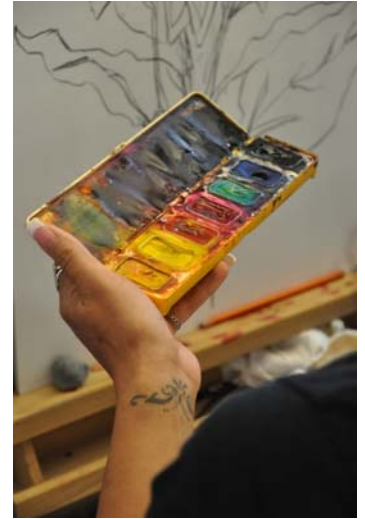
This concept is “conscious parenting.” It’s how I refer to knowing who your child is, and then within that context, thinking actively about your long-term goals and dreams for him. This encompasses his emotional and social health, as well as character development and happiness.

Conscious parenting is about being a “life” model for your child. His emotional and social attitudes and responses are founded on yours. He sees life through your lens almost exclusively until the ages of 5 or 6-years-old; after that, other influences begin to gain a foothold, and yours is tempered yet still essential, for support, guidance, interpretation and grounding in your family’s standards, rules and traditions. There’s a balance here in that your time of maximum influence is short, but in that time your child is establishing the core of his character and personality. This is your primetime; a time for very active, conscious parenting. So how can you be a conscious parent?

What does Conscious Parenting look like?

First, recognize the goals you have for your child. Learn about your child’s development. Then, every interaction you have together, every environment he is exposed to, be it positive or not, becomes an opportunity to make your dreams for your child a reality. It is foolhardy to plan for a child’s career path in life. Therein lies a recipe for disappointment for you as a parent and unhappiness for your child, but you absolutely influence—if not determine—how your child views and approaches life, oth-

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Mission:

The Montessori School of Greater Hartford fosters a strong foundation for confident, compassionate participation in the world by nurturing each child's unique gifts, passion for learning, and independence.

As a community, we enrich families, live our diversity, and embody the Association Montessori Internationale standards of excellence.

FOLLOW THE CHILD

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LAYOUT

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Montessori School

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ers, adversity, opportunity, etc.

As a parent, it is your responsibility to be aware of your child's natural development and of his motivations and tendencies during each of its stages. Armed with this knowledge, you have a better understanding of your child's behavior and how to respond appropriately to and support his needs.

Overlaying that knowledge are the hopes and dreams you have for your child. These inform the messages you deliver and how you deliver them in your actions, inactions, demeanor (body language speaks volumes), tone of voice, and the language you use in your child's presence.

Your messages may be

"You can do it!" You're independent and a problem solver,

"You know what to do." You're thoughtful and you make good decisions,

"Tell me about it; we can solve it together." You can trust me to listen without judgment, and I'll always have your back.

You may not use these words, but everything about you gives these messages (remember that body language).

The toughest times to parent consciously are the times you respond to a behavioral issue. The only reason to respond instantly is if your child or another is in danger. Otherwise, slow down your response. This is crucial for you to establish your game plan and approach your child calmly. This takes practice, and as with everything, becomes easier and more natural with time. Remember to listen to your child and involve him in finding a solution to the problem. "What do you think should happen now?" or "What do you think we should do about this situation?" The message you want to send is that the child is responsible for his behavior and for changing it if necessary.

Conscious parenting is a journey you take with your child to discover each other. Awareness of your own actions, and their impact on your child, paired with knowledge of his development, will enable you to support your child fully. In this way, he has the best chance of becoming that confident, independent, responsible, kind, self aware, respectful, determined, joyful, passionate and happy adult you will describe to your friend in twenty-five years.



Enjoy,

Una

Recommended Reading

Becoming The Parent You Want To Be. By Laura Davis and Janet Keyser

Girls Will Be Girls: Raising Confident and Courageous Daughters. By JoAnn Deak and Teresa Barker

It's a Boy! Understanding Your Son's Development From Birth to Age 18. By Michael Thompson

Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys. By Michael Thompson and Dan Kindlon

RAISING HEALTHY CHILDREN AND KEEPING THEM SAFE TAKES CONSCIOUS, EARLY WORK - AN INTERVIEW WITH KIM RANDALOT

By Amanda Aronson

As parents, we look ahead quite often. We think mostly of the exciting experiences that await our children, but we also try to anticipate how they will cope with challenges.

Parents of young children may be in the throes of supporting little ones as they manage their first encounters with conflict or name calling. Parents of adolescents may be negotiating the uncharted waters of online safety, texting, or how to encourage their children to respect their bodies. And as their lives begin to expand and include more people, the dangers of society do lurk in our minds.

Ask parents of an adolescent dealing with any kind of abuse what they wish for, and many respond with the same answer: to rewind. They wish to go back in time and give their child specific skills that might have minimized the risk of being targeted.

Fortunately, many of us are in the position to look ahead. Now is our time to prepare our young children for the realities of today's society, and Kim Randalot is an MSGH teacher who can help us do it.

Before becoming an AMI educator, Kim worked extensively in the field of community education and advocacy for women and families. In addition to case work, she developed curriculum for body safety and bullying prevention for 3-6 year olds, as well as sexual-abuse prevention for caregivers. Kim continues to be a state-certified Sexual Assault Crisis Counselor and Battered Women's Advocate.

AA: Kim, in our conversations about trying to keep children safe from abuse in today's society, you've mentioned that prevention is not just about how to minimize being targeted; it also means raising children who will not target others.

KR: Exactly. Children have the right to feel safe and others should feel safe around them. This topic is about raising a child's awareness about his or her rights *and* responsibilities. When we foster body-safety skills, we are also fostering life skills. For example, teaching children that their rights include that their bodies are their own, and that no one may touch them without permission, encourages empowerment and self-esteem. Teaching personal responsibility means that one must listen to another person's declaration of his or her body rights, which encourages self-control. These skills build a foundation of respect for one's self as well as for others.



AA: You talk about raising healthy children who can build a healthy society. That's a big topic. Where do we start?

KR: We start by encouraging healthy individuals. If we can do that one child at a time, we can create a healthy society and cause a ripple effect of positive behaviors being modeled for the next generation. In terms of body safety, we do this by using teachable moments through situations that come up spontaneously to practice assertiveness and respect. When children learn and practice these concepts early in their development, they internalize them and integrate them into their personality, which they will be able to draw from later in life. Una speaks about "conscious parenting." This is conscious teaching. *Conscious parenting and teaching are critical.* Early childhood is the time when children are learning about relationships and forming their character. We need to foster healthy character formation and model healthy relationships. Development in these areas should not be left to random experience.

AA: MSGH nurtures the whole child and fosters "a strong foundation for confident, compassionate participation in the world." Can you help parents understand one way in which MSGH does this?

KR: Yes! Our classrooms are environments where we encourage the independence of the individual. We give children tons of opportunities to learn that they are capable human beings and that they have something to contribute; as a result, they are empowered to be an active part of their classroom community. This aids in the development of healthy self-esteem and self-respect. When one can re-

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spect himself or herself, he or she can also begin to respect others and contribute positively to the community.

AA: In addition to what your AMI training has taught you about nurturing healthy development, are there aspects of your teaching that you are particularly conscious of because of your background?

KR: I'm always thinking about how our everyday Montessori routines translate into "education for life" skills.

Fostering assertiveness is important in all of our classrooms. Like my colleagues, I try to infuse this into my communication with the children about everyday situations. For example, we encourage children to call others by their proper name, and we discourage name calling of any kind. However, we give children the words to use if someone does call them a different name. We tell the children, "If someone calls you something other than your name, you can say, 'That's not my name.'" These assertiveness skills will empower them in other situations. *Confident, empowered children are more likely to stay safe.*



Knowing that we need to help this generation learn about body boundaries, we empower children by encouraging clear communication and appropriate body behavior. We have a "parts of the body" lesson, so children learn the names of their body parts in an educational, positive way. (Parents can build upon this at home by giving children the proper vocabulary for their reproductive organs. This helps children to be comfortable if they need to talk about any of their parts or functions.) Also, the same way we practice boundary-setting skills when we facilitate grace and courtesy by saying, "Please don't touch my work," we teach children that they can also say, "Please don't touch my body."

MSGH has been focusing on working with the children in the area of emotional literacy, so they can become more aware of how they are feeling and learn to communicate and manage their emotions. Supporting this, I created pic-

ture cards to foster emotion and feeling awareness. This gives children the proper vocabulary to help them to communicate clearly and aids interpersonal skill development that is needed to develop healthy relationships with others.

We also discourage *any* secrets in the classroom. Because young children find it difficult to distinguish reality from fantasy, they can also have difficulty distinguishing what is a good secret and what is a bad secret.



"Confident, empowered children are more likely to stay safe."

AA: As I've gotten to know you this year, it seems that you draw a lot of inspiration from Dr. Montessori's teachings about guiding a child's path to development and education for peace.

KR: Absolutely. Dr. Montessori was a strong advocate for children and cared about the problems of the age in which children live. Dr. Montessori spoke about the role of the Montessori teacher as a guide to the child's development by providing optimal learning experiences, while at the same time, protecting the child from obstacles that may harm that flow of development. She taught that a healthy society is more than the absence of violence and hostility; it is the presence of a healthy state of being. Like Dr. Montessori, I believe that if we can support the healthy, normal development of a child, we can change the world.

AA: Thank you, Kim. You have highlighted why **confident, early work to foster assertiveness, confidence and self respect can have long-reaching positive effects on our children's lives. Thank you for that and for demonstrating how the MSGH community overall nurtures our children's development each day.**

KR: Thanks for talking about this important topic. We all want children to grow up to be happy, confident, peaceful adults. By practicing these skills and role-playing healthy routines with our children early and often, they will become empowered to handle a variety of situations and be better able to reach their healthiest, fullest potential.

SEASONED MONTESSORI EDUCATOR BRINGS 25 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE TO MSGH

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARK HILSDON



Mark dressed as Pythagoras on
Mystery History Day

Mark has been involved with Montessori education for over 25 years as an owner and head of school, a primary, lower elementary and now Upper Elementary teacher. Enjoy this closer look into his background, notes about upper el programming and a sneak peek into what's in store for his students this year.

FTC: Can you tell us about your family background?

MH: I am the last of seven children. My five older siblings were born in Hampton, Virginia, because my Dad worked for NASA as a manufacturing engineer during WW2. When he helped launch Jarvis Airfoil in Portland in 1956, the family moved to Connecticut. My sister and I were born and raised in Middletown. Engineering, art, music, and teaching are the dominant professions in my family. Now, my wife and I live in the area with our two-year-old son, Noah, and we have another baby on the way in February.

FTC: What drew you to Montessori education?

MH: Frustration basically. For example, in high school I really liked both algebra and my algebra teacher. He gave us in-class time to work on the latest chapter and time for homework. Though I couldn't really express it at the time, I enjoyed the repetition and felt that each time I finished a problem, it helped to set the process in my mind—like concrete. The problem was that the bell would ring and it would be time to move on. The message to me was that the bell was more important than my needs as a learner, and the learning process was often interrupted, much to my frustration. I also recall a huge disconnect between the amount of effort I would put into a class and the grade I "earned." I might have received a B- in algebra, but an A in Language Arts, which I felt I did very little to earn.

I never pictured myself becoming a teacher. I thought I'd be a musician, an artist, or even an actor. But when I first heard about Montessori education, I remember having an "Aha! moment." I found *The Absorbent Mind*, one of Dr. Montessori's later books, and was amazed by ideas such as: "different learners require different amounts of time to learn. They do things until something within them is satisfied - then they move on to other work and activities." That was completely relevant to my own frustrations.

By the time I graduated from Goddard, I had narrowed my focus to Montessori education and written a paper on the Great Reading Debate (phonics vs. whole-language instruction) and how Montessori's Total Reading program lands in that debate. The rest is history.

FTC: You have held a variety of positions within the Montessori world!

MH: A variety of positions, yes, but MSGH is only my third Montessori employer. I like to establish myself long term.

FTC: Can you note a bit about how Upper Elementary differs from Lower Elementary or Primary?

MH: In UE, students become more capable of working abstractly. They can arrive at a division problem, for example, using the same algorithm that you and I use. Also, in the 4th, 5th, and 6th year, we have to be mindful of where the students will go next and the expectations of those programs. I have been heavily involved over the years in aligning Montessori math and science curriculums with the CT state standards. In many cases, I find that Montessori goes above, beyond, and deeper than what the State requires; however, when we find an area where our Montessori curriculum doesn't align with State standards, we are trained to design or tweak lessons to meet that need.

FTC: What is one thing that drew you to the MSGH community?

MH: I've always admired the cultural complexion of MSGH. The diversity here reflects our country and the world as a whole. This is not just a trivial notion for me. I enjoy and embrace cultural complexities and find many opportunities to educate students to them. MSGH offers a wide spectrum of opportunity to learn about culture.

FTC: Can you tell us a bit about your interests?

MH: Since I was a teenager, I have composed and recorded music and have long-been a home-recording enthusiast. When I started as an assistant in a Montessori school, I began recording children singing and songs for them. I now have about 12 years worth of children's mu-

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sical recordings! I also love to read, but admit that my growing stack of unfinished books outweighs the stack of finished books by a factor of ten. I prefer non-fiction to fiction.

FTC: What are you reading with your class right now?

MH: Well, our first read-aloud was Andrew Clements' *A Week in the Woods*, which the students really seemed to enjoy. They get a lot out of listening to fluent and expressive reading. I often stop at words or concepts they are unfamiliar with, and I wonder aloud and make predictions about what might happen next. As we finish chapters, I give the students comprehension questions about what we read. With *A Week in the Woods*, a few students discovered other Andrew Clements books and several of them have already read a number of his works. I'd like to engender more of that kind of interest in authors, and maybe once we have some other authors under our belts, do some comparing of writing styles. We'll be reading some Sharon Creech this year, also Norton Juster, Jean Craighead George, Kate DiCamillo, and some short and humorous works of Mark Twain

FTC: What are some things that excite you about the upcoming year?

MH: I am excited that the children in my charge are entirely in my charge. In the public realm, things get very complicated when you have students getting pulled out for a variety of reasons. I like that the full weight of the curriculum is back on my shoulders.

Field trips we're planning include a challenge course, the Mark Twain House, Mystic Aquarium or Seaport, The Pequot Museum, The Trash Museum, Elizabeth Park, The CT Science Museum, Hartford Stage, and trips to the Simsbury Community Farm. In May, we plan to begin incubating duck eggs. As the duck embryos develop within the eggs, we will "candle" them and record the eggs' weight loss on a graph.

FTC: I'm sure we'll hear more about that. Thank you, Mark, and welcome to MSGH.

MH: It's my pleasure. Thank you.

MYSTERY HISTORY DAY - FRIDAY, OCTOBER 29



Push the "button" for clues that will help reveal the identity of the mystery history character. Some of this year's characters were John Lennon, Cleopatra, Jane Goodall, and Pocahontas.



A “DIFFERENTIATED” GIFT - THE WAY IT SHOULD BE GIVEN

By *Amanda Aronson*

“If a child is struggling to learn something, it is our responsibility as Montessori teachers to find the key that will unlock the concept in his or her mind, and we draw from our observations and understanding of that child’s interests, sensitivities, and learning styles to do so.”

- Una Barry

A brief wave of sadness swept over me when I heard Una utter those words. In one thought, she clarified for me the difference between the way education should be—and, realistically, the way it often is.

As a traditionally-trained teacher, the importance of differentiating lesson instruction was drilled into me to be able to meet the needs of different kinds of learners. However, so was “finishing my curriculum on time,” which meant at the same time as my teaching partners and definitely in time for the test on Friday. This was important, because we had to start the next unit on Monday in order to be done by holiday break, etc.

Hands-on learning was there, of course, but it was more the exception than the rule, and getting kids out of the classroom to learn was a juggling act with other

teachers and their lessons plans for the week, their test days, existing schedules for music and art specials, individual student-support appointments, and whatever else was built into the day to lock me into my 40-minute teaching block. Daily, differentiated instruction may be taught in our graduate programs, but traditional classrooms are not set up to support this goal.

Moreover, what was not drilled into me and my fellow colleagues was that if an individual student was struggling, then it would be up to us to find a way to reach that student...no matter what. We wanted this, of course, but there just never seemed to be enough time to work with each of my students one-on-one before they were off to their after-school activities. Sadly, even the most well-intentioned teachers in non-Montessori classrooms begin to see the same old pattern emerging. If a student is having trouble “keeping up with the class,” the dialogue slowly whispers toward “what’s wrong with him?” and eventually to the child’s mind as he or she silently wonders “what’s wrong with me?” No teacher goes into teaching planning that heartbreaking lesson.

MSGH students are lucky. Their Montessori classrooms are naturally differentiated. Children are using all of their senses to learn each day, and the classroom is consciously set up for this. Children are inspired to learn, and they are given the gift of time. Time to question; time with the teacher; time to try out different methods of learning; time to digest information and discuss its application to life and its connection to other content. How different from a traditional classroom, where true, daily differentiated instruction is the goal, but so often not the norm.

This holiday season, when I think of what gifts my children are receiving, I place their MSGH education among the highest. They are the recipients of a *true education*—how it was meant to be enjoyed in its purest form. And it is being delivered in an individually-designed package meant just for them, the way they learn, and by teachers who are trained to keep looking for the best way to





NOVEMBER 15, 2010 - THE DAY I SAW “IT”

By *Amanda Aronson*

The next time someone asks me to describe Montessori, I will recall what I saw unfold in the P1 classroom on November 15, 2010.

I’ve observed classrooms before; however, I’ve never had the luck to see the essence of the Montessori method so obviously illustrated to me. So that Monday morning when a short observation to capture a few photos resulted in a ninety-minute and 355-picture visit, I was shocked.



I assumed Michelle Thomas would be set up beautifully on Day One of her first Visiting Artist week, but I was struck by how authentic she looked. She was positioned in front of the window, natural light pouring in, brush in hand, paint palette on the floor, beret fixed to her head, and sunflowers set before a crimson backdrop. She sat nearly swallowed by children huddling around every square inch of her body. Out of respect, they were standing still, many with their hands behind their backs, and they remained transfixed.



Children who were not interested in what she was doing were happily doing other things. Some were outside, some were chatting over snack, others were working together or independently with materials, and there was the teacher: observing, guiding, adjusting...but not interfering.

Time passed easily as I wandered outside, snapping the children in the garden, but when I returned, the entire classroom configuration had changed. Many of the children who had been standing near Michelle earlier were now working





with materials—art materials. Inspired, they had scanned the room for what they needed to explore their own works of art.

Jillian and Julia began working with the droppers to see how mixing the primary colors can create new ones. Dani looked on quietly. Anika, a third year, began painting her own masterpiece beneath a work of art created by renowned artist, Sol LeWitt. Trey, a first year, observed. Scotty got out the paint bowls; Maev and Lauren began searching for all of the art hanging in the room and discovered a variety of paintings, sculptures and masks, with Lauren recalling that one mask had been made by a previous visiting artist. Priyanka began spreading glue on some kind of orb, and Maia was cutting and pasting. The children worked together, laughed together and became absorbed together. They were happy.

It was Anika and Trey; however, that held *me* transfixed. They stayed at that easel together for nearly an hour! She painted layer after layer while chirping along to him while he stood star struck, his dimples indenting with each new smile. She “taught” him all about painting, and he just gazed up at her—at one point even holding her left hand as she painted with her right.



When she was finished, she turned, beamed, and announced: “I’m done!” Trey stood beside her proudly, seemingly ready to take his own bow. Then together, they put away the supplies, washed the easel and quietly moved on respectively to their next endeavors. Dani, who had been a quiet observer of Jillian, Julia, Scotty and Anika, then took over the easel.

I can only begin to imagine what Trey absorbed by observing Anika for so long, and can only hope he remembers how safe and important he felt while doing it. Seeing Dani slide effortlessly right into her spot without a word, was truly magnificent. Her presence in the classroom that day illustrated for me how powerful observation can be.

I feel fortunate to have been in the classroom that day. I saw first-hand what can happen when children are not just inspired, but when they are also encouraged to follow their inspiration with the time, space, materials and guidance that make it joyful. To me, *that* is Montessori.



Dani is the child in the last picture!

NATURE'S CORNER

Each issue will offer ideas or resources for enjoying nature with your family.

“A child... is a spontaneous observer of nature... he needs to have at his disposal material upon which he can work.”

Resist the urge to stay indoors this winter. Grab a field guide and take winter walks!

Winter in New England can be a magical time of year for children and parents to bond outdoors. Commit to going on regular winter walks with your child. This is calming for all, and the options for learning abound.

You could simply walk, or you could set out on a scavenger hunt to look for leaves or berries from evergreen trees. A conversation about evergreen vs. deciduous trees will naturally follow. In snow, look for animal tracks and wonder aloud where they lead and to which animal they belong. Pique your child's curiosity about animal behavior. Where are they? How do they keep warm? Who is sleeping? Sprinkle bird seed and see which birds did not fly south! Brightly colored cardinals and blue jays become easy to spot against the white snow. Gather pine cones and look up to show your child which trees pine cones fall from.

Winter is a quiet time when viewed from indoors, but once outside it is quite the opposite. Encourage children to set out, walk, gather, and at some point, close their eyes and just listen. They will soon see that winter is indeed a busy time in nature.



Photo by Ruby A. Tull

Help Support MSGH While Doing Your Everyday Shopping!

1. **Place an order for a gift card via our Scrip program.** Sign-up forms are in the weekly e-bulletin, which is available through the MSGH website under School Information/Publication Archives. Just click on any of the dates listed in December and beyond. There are many stores to choose from, and a percentage of cards ordered will be given to MSGH. Some schools in West Hartford have raised over \$50,000 through this program. With enough support, Scrip participation can be a huge help to us.

Please learn more by emailing lauriemailhot@yahoo.com.

2. **Register your Stop and Shop store card** and a percentage of your purchases will automatically go to an MSGH account. Just visit www.stopandshop.com/aplus, look for “Join the Program” and register your card by selecting Montessori School of Greater Hartford. It's easy!

Upcoming Dates

(Check the online calendar for specifics.)

Thursday, December 23

Winter Sing-Along

Wednesday, January 12

Elementary Open House with
Visiting Alumni

Sunday, January 23

Open House

Sunday, February 6

CT Whales Hockey Game and
Free Skate

Saturday, March 19

Heart of Montessori (New Event!)

You won't want to miss this fun-for-the-whole-family
event filled with games, music and more!

• • • • •

Parent Information Nights 5:30-7:30 p.m. (Dinner Included)

Thursday, January 27

Toddler: Language

Primary: Math Part 1: *Introduction of Numbers 1-10
and the Continuation of Counting*

Elementary: Math

Wednesday, February 16

Toddler: Independence: *Help Me Do It By Myself*

Primary: Math Part 2: *The Decimal System*

Elementary: Going Out



Photo by Ruby A. Tull



Photos by classroom teachers

FAMILY ASSOCIATION NEWS



Dear Friends,

First, a heart-felt thanks to all of you who are actively supporting the MSGH community. With families coming from 34 surrounding towns, there have been a variety of events happening at different days and times, and it takes a lot of consistent volunteer effort to make them happen. You're not only planning, your chaperoning library walks, donating goods to classrooms, planning fundraisers, and introducing yourself to those you may not know. All these things together help keep us strong.

A special thanks to our hard-working classroom representatives who planned playdates and socials for classes this fall. Your time each month to touch base with families continues to be very much appreciated. Many new formats and times were tested out, as well, so we are able to learn more each year about how best to keep both children and parents connected.

Attendance at Parent Information Nights has also been wonderful, and this year we have heard quite a lot of feedback from families about how much they are enjoying the socialization of these evenings, as well as the opportunity to deepen their understanding of their child's education.

As you know, our Parent Association evolved this year to what is now our Family Association. That was not a name-only transition. We are seeing more involvement from extended family and friends, and many of their inquiries and offers of support are results of their exposure to the e-bulletin, which comes out each week.

For those of us who were accustomed to the paper method of communication, the transition will take time, but it has already proven to be more reliable and accessible. Family and friends can see archived bulletins for event dates, calendar information, get scrip sign-up forms, etc, and they are subsequently interested in supporting and attending MSGH events and committees. This is great for MSGH, because not only do we need their support, it's wonderful for the children to see their family world harmonizing with their school world. Please do your part to keep this good trend going by reading the bulletins yourselves each week and forwarding them on to others who can then ask to be on our mailing list. Better yet, send along their addresses!

We have had an unprecedented number of new volunteers emerge from the parent community this year, and they are supporting committees, planning individual events and contributing skills to the classrooms—thank you! Many hands make light work.

With Much Appreciation,

Yummie Oberstein
Family Association President

**Thank you to those of you who have volunteered to bake
for our Family Support Committee. A little bit of TLC goes a long way!**

Committee Chair: Wendy Glisson

Volunteer Bakers: Julie and Glynn Griggs, Bonnie Huang, Michele Tabora, Anna Barresi,
Dahlia Pendergrass, Jennifer Coffey, and Jennifer Pierce

If you are interested in baking, please contact Wendy Glisson at wendyglisson@comcast.net.

TOP 10 WAYS TO INVOLVE FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL LIFE AT MSGH

1. Sign them up for the weekly news bulletin. They'll enjoy school photos, note important dates and see ways to volunteer.
2. Put them on the MSGH Mailing List to receive this *Follow the Child* publication.
3. Encourage them to attend Parent Information Nights to learn more about Montessori philosophy and meet the faculty.
4. Invite them to all-school events.
5. Encourage them to volunteer at all-school events like the upcoming Heart of Montessori. This is an easy way for loved ones to meet other families, enjoy seeing your child at events, and contribute in a fun, meaningful way.
6. Ask them if they would like to bake for the Family Support Committee. We have lots of working families, so bakers are in high demand and very much appreciated!
7. Contribute to the Annual Fund in honor of your child. Perhaps this could be a birthday or holiday gift. A contribution to the Annual Fund supports the programs your child enjoys at MSGH and helps keep the school secure for future generations.
8. Encourage them to attend the school auction in May. You'll all enjoy a night out together and support MSGH at the same time.
9. Ask them to order gift cards via Scrip, or to register their Stop & Shop store card to support fundraising efforts through their every day shopping.
10. REFER, REFER, REFER. The more your family and friends know about your child's life at MSGH, the more they can help spread the word. This word-of-mouth referral is a huge support and keeps the school healthy and strong.



MSGH **The ART**
OF LEARNING
Annual Gala
"The palette of life"

2011 MSGH Auction Chairs: Valerie and Larry Santilli

Please join us and share your interests and talents by becoming a member of the Spring 2011 MSGH Auction Committee.

It is a fun way to become more involved at our school,
and there are many ways to help:

- Sponsorships
- Music/entertainment
- Program-Book ads
- Table Captains
- Auction-item donations
- Invitations
- Decorations and centerpieces
- Packaging Mystery Boxes
- Writing auction-item descriptions
- Event preparation for silent and live auctions



Photo by Ruby A. Tull

**For further information, and to join the Auction Committee,
please contact Susan Rich-Bye at 860.236.4565 or
susanr@msgh.org**

**Saturday,
March 19
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.**



**Watkinson School
Auditorium
and Theatre**

Come enjoy this new event, which we hope will reflect the fun, warmth, diversity and inclusion of family that is at the “heart” of MSGH, while also promoting literal heart health.

Here’s a sneak peek at some of what we’re planning...

Entertainment

Double Dutch Performance and
Demonstration
Hartt School of Music Suzuki
Entertainment

Games

Potato-Sack Races

Service

Jump Rope for Heart
(Fundraiser for the American Heart Association)

Hands-on Activities

Henna Painting
Kite Making and Flying
Japanese Tea Ceremony

Our committee is working hard to create the events that will be enjoyed.

Want to help? We would love your ideas for games or activities that either get families moving or reflect cultures from around the world. The Theatre and Auditorium will be offering simultaneous fun, so be in touch with ideas for entertainment.

**Thank you to all of our
Committee Members!**

Committee is not just limited to parents. We hope to have the involvement of extended family and friends both as we plan events and on the day of to help “man” booths .

Kristen Singh, Michele Tabora, Tracey Harris-Dowdell, Laura Miele, Dahlia Pendergrass, Anna Barresi, Early Shirane, Yummie Oberstein, Amanda Aronson, Susan Rich-Bye, Setareh Mozafari , Jutta Proestler, Bonnie Huang, Wendy Glisson, Meg Keough, Ashley Szyluk, Teresa Reynolds, Jennifer Pierce, Vasundhara Chimade, Deanna Crooks and Chris Francis, Claudia Phelan, and Stacey Cloud

Parents often wonder how children fare after leaving MSGH. We just received a lovely note from the Dimov family, who moved to Newcastle, England this summer. Enjoy this little excerpt:

“Philip is doing very well. He seems to be at the top of the class in terms of reading (already at the top level) and earns consistent praises by his teachers. He has turned into a voracious reader and is overall very comfortable in all subjects. In addition, socially, he has made a lot of new friends and seems to be already popular in the class. This is a great attestation to the solid academic and social development he had undergone at MSGH. In addition, his new school uniform seems to have instilled a feeling of seriousness, and he has made quite a leap in maturity. Zoya has also adapted very well and is popular among her new teachers. She has a very cohesive group of friends in her class and so school is an exciting and joyous experience. Again, MSGH has laid a strong foundation.”



Submitted photos



Philip Dimov

Alumni Parent Feature

A MOTHER'S REFLECTION

Rosaida Rosario is a familiar face in the MSGH community. Not only is she a trainer for our staff through her work consulting with Leadership Greater Hartford, she is the mother of two alumnae: Amor, who is now 34 and an Assistant Attorney General with the CT State Attorney General's office; and Mariela, now 30 and a NYC journalist and blogger with one of the leading publications for the Latina community nationwide. We sat down recently to inquire about her reflections of MSGH during her eldest daughter's years, as well as how her family feels their MSGH education contributed to their lives.

Rosaida, when your girls were young, how did you select MSGH?

Amor had been in a family daycare situation where she was exposed to children with a variety of different backgrounds and abilities. Because it was very important to us to expose her to an environment where she could grow up without prejudices, we felt that MSGH would be an environment that would continue to nurture her in a diverse atmosphere.

What do you remember about Amor's early MSGH experience?

I remember joy. We wanted her to be inculcated with a joy for learning, and when she would get out of the car each day, her eyes would sparkle. She embraced the school immediately, and the education she received at MSGH played out exactly as we had hoped it would. She would come home happy, and she would tell me what she was learning and be singing songs like “Frère Jacques,” and others that reflected different languages and customs. We particularly enjoyed her exposure to Spanish, because as a Latina child, she had her culture affirmed, as well as the cultures of others. Her vocabulary also exploded. She learned how to decode and encode, and I remember her reading at four-years-old. I also appreciated that the school recognized that children learn in different ways, so I was won over by the many sensory learning materials.

Was sending your second child to MSGH a decision that you debated?

Not at all. It was an easy decision for us. This is not to say that it wasn't a sacrifice. It was. But when my husband and I thought about the girls' education, we de-

“She said everything she needed to know to get into Harvard, she learned at MSGH, and that Harvard was her finishing school.”



Submitted photo From left: Roberto Rosario, Amor Ali Roberto, Ali Bahmanpour and Rosaida Rosario

decided that an outstanding education was better than any material gifts we could give them—or any inheritance. Their education would be their inheritance.

Parents often wonder how children transition from the primary program. Since MSGH did not have an elementary program at that time, how did Amor do when she moved on?

Initially, the transition was difficult, but not because of MSGH. When we left MSGH, the parochial school she went to for first grade was very regimented, and we noticed that much of the material was review for her. When she would finish her work quickly, she would look to help the other students, because MSGH had nurtured in her a value of teamwork, so this was what she was used to. The teachers explained to her that this was cheating, and that she could not help the others. She took to the rules and the new school culture quickly, but I remember that the joy of learning disappeared immediately. We switched her to a public school, and her teacher recognized that she needed more challenging work and recommended her for the gifted program. This was a much better fit, but the school board voted to end the program not long after she started, so this was a real disappointment. It was then that we moved to West Hartford, and Amor did just fine.

Does Amor remember her time at MSGH?

Absolutely. In fact, she sings its praises. She did so even when she graduated from Harvard! (She did her undergraduate work at Harvard, where she graduated on the

Dean’s List, and her post-graduate work was at NYU Law.) I remember her saying that she credited two schools with her success: MSGH and Harvard. She said that everything she really needed to learn to get into Harvard, she learned at MSGH, and that Harvard was her finishing school. The joy of learning, her early exposure to intellectual curiosity, patience, and working with others were all things she learned in her earliest years.

Thank you, Rosaida. We look forward to hearing more about Mariela’s life in an upcoming issue of Follow the Child, but it’s wonderful to hear your reflections on why you chose MSGH initially and how both you and Amor feel it impacted her life. For those of us with young children, it’s amazing to think that these early years will leave such an impression on them.

Alumni

Please share your stories and photos!

We would love to hear from you.

Communication can be sent to

information@msgh.org.

THE ANNUAL FUND: CREATING A CULTURE OF GIVING

By Susan Rich-Bye

Montessori provides many insights into child development and education, and it helps guide children and families to the importance of caring for others and being part of a community. Children thrive in an environment that helps develop their sense of caring and awareness, while encouraging their own individuality and independence. It is our hope that this culture of caring and giving is celebrated at home as well as at school. By supporting their school, you show **your children** how much you value them and their education, and you also set an example as a strong community citizen.

The MSGH Annual Fund helps to bridge the gap between the cost of each child's education and tuition dollars. So what can your contribution help fund? Montessori classrooms provide rich, sensory environments for children—but it is costly to outfit and maintain the materials needed for all of MSGH's nine classrooms. In addition to the costs of Montessori materials, which can be as high as \$2,000; other classroom supplies cost \$750 per classroom per year.



When MSGH students journey around the region and beyond for enriching experiences to augment their academic studies and to enjoy art, music, theatre and community cultural activities, the average cost of buses ranges between \$150 and \$200 per trip. Admission fees can run from \$150 to \$500 depending upon the experience. Teacher training is another vital component of providing the strongest Montessori experience possible for your children, and costs average \$1,000 per teacher per year. And finally, MSGH is also committed to ensuring that our community is rich in diverse cultural and life experiences and that we make them accessible to families who would not be able to afford them without financial aid.

Please support MSGH and consider making a generous gift to the Annual Fund. Participation in the Annual Fund is a very important measure of the school's financial strength and family commitment. Your gift, in any amount, is very important and will be deeply appreciated.



Photos by classroom teachers.



Montessori School of GREATER HARTFORD

Annual Fund Campaign 2010/2011

Categories of Giving

The Maria Montessori Circle	\$5,000 +	Sustainer	\$500-\$999 (<i>Leadership Level Begins</i>)
The Pink Tower Circle	\$2,500-\$4,999	Patron	\$250-\$499
The Director's Circle	\$1,500-\$2,499	Supporter	up to \$249
Benefactor	\$1,000-\$1,499		

Name(s): _____

(As you wish to appear in the Annual Report)

Maiden Name, if Alumna _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Home Phone _____ E-mail _____

_____ *Please initial here if you wish to remain an anonymous donor.*

Please accept my/our gift to MSGH's Annual Fund:

I/We pledge a total gift of \$ _____

Indicate your choice:

Pledge to be fulfilled by June 30, 2011

Check enclosed

Charge my gift

one payment or _____ installments in the months of _____

Payments must be completed by June 30, 2011

VISA MasterCard Discover

Card Number: _____ Expiration date: _____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

My employer, _____ will match my gift.

(Please enclose your employer's gift form.)

Gift of Stock (Advancement Office will send information.)

(over)

Please designate my gift to the following fund:

- Classroom Materials and Programming
- Faculty Professional Development
- Financial Assistance
- Where MSGH needs it most

Please apply \$_____ of my gift to the Endowment

Should any fund become oversubscribed, MSGH will use the gift where it is most needed.

My gift is:

- In Honor of: _____
- In Memory of: _____

Affiliation (Please check all that apply.):

- Alumnus/a
- Grandparent
- Current Parent
- Grandparent of Alumnus/a
- Parent of Alumnus/a
- Friend

If more convenient, you may donate online at:
www.msgh.org >Support MSGH >Give Online

For questions, please call Susan Rich-Bye, Director of Advancement 860.236.4565 ext. 24

Thank you for supporting the Montessori School of Greater Hartford!

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