

# Follow the Child

THE MSGH COMMUNITY PUBLICATION



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**"The greatest gift we can give our children are the roots of responsibility and the wings of independence."**

*-Dr. Maria Montessori*

## Dear MSGH Community,

Welcome to the edition of Follow the Child that wraps up the 2021-22 school year. A year that's been filled with the typical steady progress in the classrooms – the children's sanctuaries for their growth and development – and a slow, though at times not continuous, reclaiming of the usual activities that happen outside the classrooms, that help to weave the fabric of the community together. Observations, in person conversations with teachers, classroom birthday celebrations, and volunteering were just some of the ordinary day-to-day reasons for parents to come in. Visiting artists and programs, field trips and classroom socials dotted the calendar.

You'll notice MSGH's Adolescent Program highlighted in several places in this publication and it was an Open House, at Millstream Farm, in its April glory, that brought many of us together this spring. Soon after, Grandparents Week delighted us as many, many grandparents came – some ducking out of work for a quick visit, some travelling from a distance and many lingering for tea and conversation – in response to our invitation. You'll notice that we highlight this important constituency in our Community Spotlight on page 18.

Our end of year events – the Bushnell Carousel Picnic and Moving-on Ceremony – did much to quell the disappointment around the cancellation of our gala. And, though faced with a rainy last week of school, we certainly had luck on our side and were able to host both events as planned. Picnicking and carousel riding are surely two joyous activities and when combined make for a most enjoyable evening. It felt good to introduce our newest families to this annual tradition.

'Moving-on' at MSGH is a special moment. Completion of a three-year-cycle is worthy of acknowledgement and celebration, and we did this in style in our natural, outdoor amphitheater on MSGH's 'hill' as the final event of the school year.

The largest group acknowledged were those completing their primary cycle and simultaneously moving from their first (0-6 years) to their second (6-12 years) plane of development. MSGH's elementary program is ready to receive them as they bring an already enormous store of knowledge and a multitude of skills. They know what it means to be part of a group. They have gained an understanding of socially acceptable behavior. Through their work in primary, they have developed concentration skills and the ability to direct one's

own activity: a self-discipline. They possess a store of language, an interest in the world, and skills in reading, writing and mathematics. The cosmic approach at the Elementary level, an approach that is integrated and interdisciplinary, will appeal to their growing ability to reason, their expanding moral sense and their developing facility to imagine. What an exciting time for these children and with so many of them continuing their Montessori journey, we are opening a new lower elementary classroom in the fall – a milestone for our school.

Just like a classroom community does not remain static year to year, neither does a school as a whole. With heartfelt congratulations, we sent our graduates off to high school. They are well-equipped for life beyond MSGH, and like the graduates before them are ready to embrace their next stage with a deep interest in making a contribution. To all students and families who are not returning in the fall, you are now part of the MSGH alumni family, a family that is forever growing. You can read some alumni news in the pages of this publication. We are always ready and interested to hear from you and keep up to date with your happenings.

As you read through, you will also see that we also honor those who stay. We celebrate toddler teacher, Kathy Riveros, at her ten-year mark, along with Spanish teacher, Senora Rivera, and Director of Advancement, Toko Odorcuk (whose roots are also in the classroom) at their twenty-year anniversaries. A decade or two can pass quickly at MSGH and longevity of tenure is a hallmark of MSGH. That said, we are also an institution that attracts new talent, and we are certainly accomplishing that as we continue to grow.

This Follow the Child is full of informative pieces from many new contributors along with pictures that speak to the vibrancy of our community. I hope that you can put your feet up with a glass of lemonade to peruse or get down on the floor to browse the pictures little ones. Enjoy!

Mary

THE BUZZ OF THE CLASSROOM!



# ¡Olé Montessori Mexico!

By Caren Ross

Every once in a long while an opportunity comes along that reignites and revitalizes you and reconnects you to a mission much larger than yourself. That was my experience last fall in Cuernavaca, the “city of eternal spring,” where I spent five weeks sharing and deepening my understanding of Montessori culture, in a Mexican context. It was the trip of a lifetime.

I was invited to Cuernavaca to participate as an adviser in a new AMI diploma course that trains adults to be Montessori teacher-guides at the adolescent level. The two-year-long course, which includes off-site practicums, observations, and research papers, is historic -- one of just three new Montessori adolescent-level teacher-training diploma courses in the world, and part of a movement to disseminate and diffuse Montessori educational philosophy more deeply and broadly.

While we studied Montessori theory and practice mostly in an urban setting, at a Montessori school serving children aged 2-18, we spent a week at the school’s beautiful farm, in tropical paradise, where we were able to form a community of learning that included not only Montessori deep dives but also a coffeehouse, improvisational theater, music, birthday parties, salty fried grasshoppers, and a Day of the Dead altar rich in cultural significance. Like our MSGH farm at Millstream, the farm in Chiconcuac, just outside Cuernavaca, is the prepared environment for the school’s 12-15 year-old students.

At the farm, I was put in charge of the Chicken Occupation -- how to use chickens as a point of departure for academic studies -- and I had the whole thing planned out in detail. Then, lo and behold, on the first day there were suddenly no eggs in the coop. Obviously, no plans had prepared us for that eventuality. We had to solve the mysterious Case of the Missing Eggs. After collecting evidence -- little patches of fur and a small hole in the chicken wire, little footprints and



broken eggshells around a nearby tree -- we realized there was a thief in our midst. Our first work, then, was to identify the little rascal, figure out where and how it was entering the chicken coop, and do something about it. That’s quintessential Montessori work at the adolescent level. A real problem arises, and the students solve it.

Many of the other Occupations at the farm in Chiconcuac are different from the ones we do at Millstream, as each place offers unique challenges and opportunities, diverse flora and fauna, and different climates and cultures, but there is a fundamental, underlying unity to what they do and

what we do. That connection is what is so exciting. In both places, the adolescent work is connected to the land and to being part of a collaborative community where everyone has important roles to play. The farm environment’s variety of work and study drives curriculum and supports a natural course of human development through the tumultuous teen years.

We spent the last day of the farm week in the village of Chiconcuac, exploring the community

ous ways of being and of interacting with peers, and that commitment to collaboration further coheres and solidifies in adolescence, a critical time for the construction of a social self.

Montessori education isn’t meant to stop at age 6, or age 12, or really even age 18. It’s meant to go through university, to support natural human development and tendencies right into adulthood.

As Montessori adolescent programs take hold



beyond the farm, talking to residents, and recognizing the importance of the interdependencies of communities within communities, as they expand outward to the world and universe -- the idea being that adolescents need to work in wider and wider spheres as they grow older and understand the interconnectedness of all life and people. The older adolescents at the school in Cuernavaca, aged 15-18, do not go to the farm; they do community work from Cuernavaca and have more specialized academic work, learning how they can apply their knowledge and contribute to a better, more peaceful, just world. From the earliest years in Montessori education, children learn harmoni-

across the world, the Montessori Training Center Northeast, based in Hartford, is gearing up to fuel this movement. I am very grateful to the training center for sponsoring my trip to Mexico and to the MSGH community for supporting my time away from beloved Millstream. As I rode to school in Cuernavaca, looking out at the Popocatepetl volcano spewing vapor lit up pink in the dawn sky, I felt deeply connected to my work and mission, feeling fresh inspiration and dedication to Montessori children and to MSGH. It’s a good thing, at any age, to be nudged (or shoved!) out of one’s comfort zone and change perspective.

# After the Adolescent Program

by *Claire Jenkins*

I loved the energy I felt at MSGH. It felt happy and upbeat, and the kindness I received from the staff and my classmates was amazing. I loved the way the administration valued the students' input on things and were always working to be more inclusive and positive.

I loved and really enjoyed being at Millstream Farm and having the hands-on farm experiences unique to the farm. I also enjoyed being able to study what I was interested in and how the guides were always there to support me in whatever my interests were. My feelings and ideas were always accounted for and validated.

I miss the program so much as a whole. I really miss being able to study and dive deeper into subjects and topics I am interested in during my school day. I also miss the outside time we would have and I especially miss cooking with Pape. Feeling valued as an individual student was empowering.

Right now I live in Utah and attend one of the two public high schools in my city. I play on the varsity softball team and enjoy living so close to the mountains. I recently got my driver's permit and am learning to drive in my city. This past summer, I worked at a nearby water park as a cashier in the grill and hope to get licensed as a lifeguard this summer.

In the future, I am so excited to come back and visit. I am planning to go to college to study the brain and different brain traumas. I am excited to learn more on the subjects I love, and how I can use my talents to help those around me.

My three years at MSGH in the adolescent program were some of the most significant growing and learning years of my life. I am so grateful for the experiences and lessons I was taught through hands on activities and bonding with some amazing people. My teachers helped me find my strengths and weaknesses. They helped me strengthen my weaknesses and also to use my strengths to help others. I am also grateful to the staff at the West Hartford campus who were always friendly and helpful even if they didn't know me very well. I feel so blessed for the experiences and people I met.



**Claire Jenkins**  
Adolescent Program Alumna '18



## The New Kids on the Block *at Millstream Farm*

Millstream Farm has a full house with some new arrivals!

All four kids are healthy, happy, and officially have names:

**Ivy, Juniper, Azalea and Aster.**

## MSGH ADOLESCENT PROGRAM FEATURED ON FOX61



NEW HARTFORD, CT — Their classroom studies have come to life at the Montessori School of Greater Hartford.

Author: Jim Altman

Published: 5:10 PM EDT  
April 27, 2022



Scan with your mobile device to view more!

# A SAMPLING OF MSGH

## INVERTEBRATES

*With Mystic Aquarium*

With lobsters, sea urchins and sea snails in tow, staff from the Mystic Aquarium visited our Elementary students on the West Hartford campus for an interactive and informative presentation on invertebrates!

Did you know that octopi are in the mollusk family?



## MOVEMENT

*With Pascal Rekoert*

Dance instructor, Pascal Rekoert, joined us to get our Adolescent and Elementary students grooving! With fun prompts and thoughtful music selections our students were up and moving! In regards to trust falls Pascal stated:

"All were aware of the seriousness of the task. This level of concentration and trust is essential in dance, and the students were brilliant!"



## MARACATU

*With Dr. Juliana Cantarelli*

Sharing her Afro-Brazilian culture and music, Dr. Cantarelli worked with our Primary, Elementary and Adolescent students by leading them through song and dance. Making use of a variety of drums, instruments and the Portuguese language- beautiful music and insightful ideas filled the air!

Thank you to our music teacher, Colleen Casey-Nelson for organizing our guest instructors.



### Looking To Join The Fun?

Scan the QR code to the left to access a special "Montessori Class" Spotify playlist curated by the very own Pascal Rekoert!



# Building Resilience in our Children

by Amanda Rouleau

“Resilience” seems to be a buzz word lately. It’s thrown around as both a compliment – “Wow, you’re so resilient!” and an excuse – “The kids will be fine, they’re so resilient!”. Children are known to “be resilient.” But resiliency, or the ability to overcome hardship or stress, isn’t coincidental. It’s a skill that’s introduced and practiced. If we want our children to show resiliency in the face of a challenge, we need them to practice it when they’re comfortable. There are things we can do to help.

We need to help our children identify and name their emotions, both the ones that feel good and the ones that don’t. The more emotional literacy a person has (or the ability to “read” their body and mind to understand their emotion, then attach a name to it), the more connected to themselves they’ll be. “The limits of my language means the limits of my world,” said Ludwig Wittgenstein. A person who can accurately assess and describe their feelings can then address the feeling if they’d like it to change (with a negative emotion) or create more of it (for a positive emotion).

We must allow our children to see us struggle. We must model going through hard things, having difficult conversations, and making mistakes. If your children think you’re perfect, they’re going to feel that they need

to be perfect – which is an impossible standard for anyone. We want children to know that it’s normal and inevitable to stumble, fall, and have challenges. What matters is how we handle it, and if we don’t like how we handled it then we apologize and try to do better. Children will face challenges, small and big, and sometimes we won’t be there for the big ones, so to make sure they are equipped for success we want children to have the skills and confidence to handle things themselves. They gain these skills and confidences by having ample opportunity to practice them over and over again. Allowing “safe struggle” builds that resilience muscle so that when a challenge happens out in the world, children feel prepared to handle it independently. We don’t want our children to get overly frustrated or ever be physically/emotionally unsafe, but if they’re in the middle of figuring something out, let them! Try not to swoop in and do it for them. They’re building that resilience muscle. For example, your child is trying to tie their shoes and having a hard time pulling the loops through. It is tempting to finish tying it for them, but be patient and watch instead. Often, they will try repeatedly, experimenting with different methods, and -maybe!- succeed in finishing. But even if they don’t, giving them time to be in the middle of the process of figuring it out is extremely beneficial.

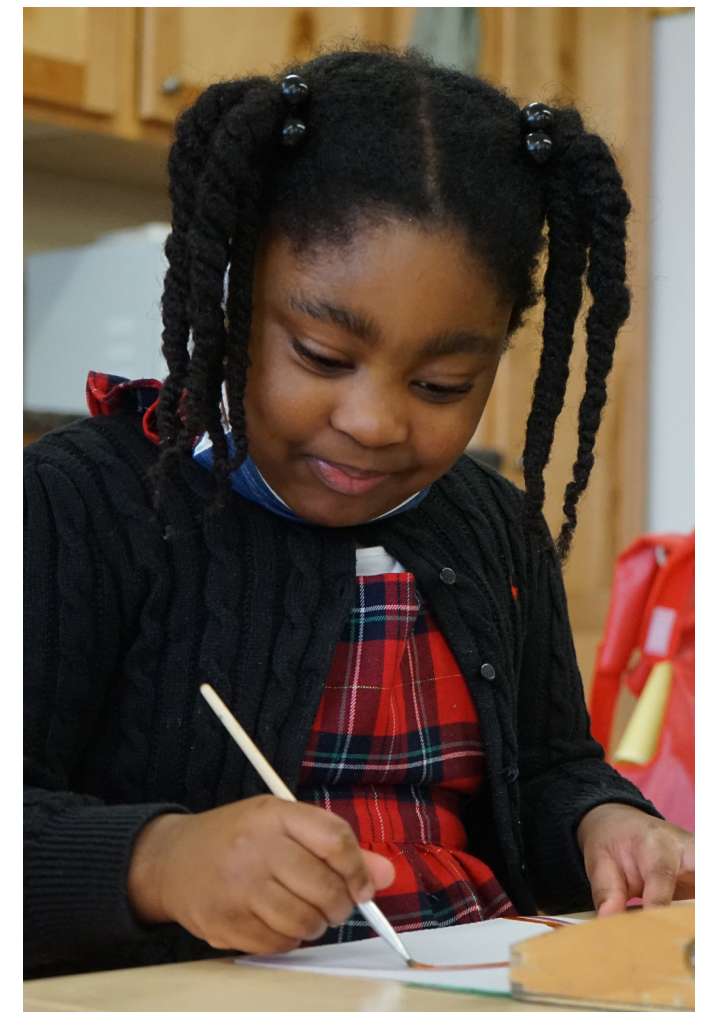


“If we want our children to show resiliency in the face of a challenge, we need them to practice it...”

One of the most protective factors in a child’s life is a supportive relationship with a trusted caregiver. While it’s beneficial to have more than one, amazingly, research has shown that even in the case of trauma, just one close relationship was enough to get the child through the tough time (Bellis, M.A., Hardcastle, K., Ford, K. et al , 2017). So be sure that your child knows that you are a person they can turn to, to talk about anything. Having open, nonjudgement communication is important to have your child view you as someone they can come to in times of need. Build that connection by having small, simple conversations together every day.

And finally, take time to celebrate joy! Life can be hard, but it is also beautiful, and often there is something to be grateful for even in the midst of a challenge. And just like resilience, gratitude is a skill that strengthens the more often it’s practiced. When you notice something wonderful, say it. When you feel happy, dwell in it. Model this for your children! Putting positive experiences front and center in your life helps to make the challenges appear as what they really are – passing moments.

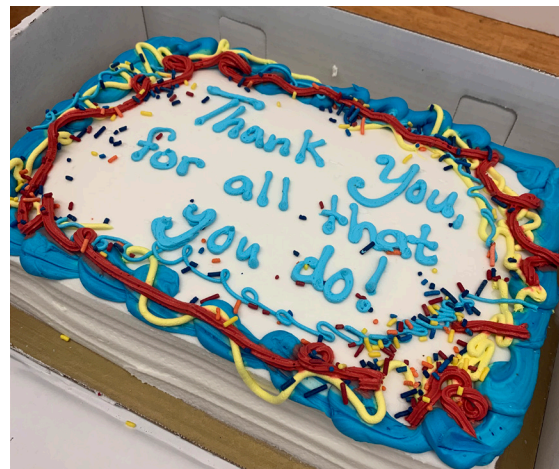
Children truly are incredibly resilient when they’re given the support they need. Let’s offer those supports ahead of time so that they can move through challenge with grace and come out feeling stronger.



# The FAMILY ASSOCIATION

Thank you to the Family Association for facilitating and participating in many wonderful activities at MSGH! Examples include, the Food Drive, Coat Drive, Coffee Hours, and the Auction Baskets. In addition, the very generous Teacher Appreciation gifts and treats were enjoyed throughout the year.

We appreciate you!



THANK YOU!



## Supporting a Toddler's Independence in the Home

**The young child is far more capable than you might think.** Many prospective parents observing the Toddler community for the first-time comment, "How are you getting the children to do that?" Or, a current parent may comment, "I notice that my child cleans up after himself at school but not at home. What can I do that would help?" Supporting your child's budding independence at home can seem daunting, but there are ways you can encourage it and, in turn, help support their experience at school.

**Independence with Dressing.** In our Toddler Community, your child will be expected to participate in dressing and undressing themselves and to take over this responsibility as soon as they are capable. To help your child succeed in this area, choose clothing that is manageable for their current skill level. Velcro or slip-on shoes are manageable for a toddler; shoelaces are not. Elastic waist pants are comfortable for their growing and moving bodies and the lack of zippers, snaps, belts or suspenders will help them dress without frustration. Additionally, pullover shirts are preferable to those with buttons. At home, you can demonstrate to your child how to put on and remove articles of clothing. When modeling for your child, your movements need to be very slow, analyzed, and precise. In the beginning, the effort can be collaborative. For example, when putting on a sock, you could start the process by stretching the sock around his toes and pulling up to his instep. Your child (after being shown), could then slip his thumbs into each side of the sock and, using a raking motion, grip the material and pull it over the heel and up the leg. Demonstrating patience by allowing sufficient time for your child to practice and refine these skills is key to building confidence and independence.

**Independence with Food and Mealtime.** Food is such an important aspect of the Toddler Community yet, for parents, mealtime can often be one of the most frustrating parts of the day. In the Toddler Community, the children set the table, serve themselves food and drink, drink out of a glass, and enjoy conversation. Our toddlers clean-up their meals, scraping their plates and putting them on the dirty dish cart. At home, you can support your child in this experience by eating meals together as a family. Sitting together signals to your child that this is an important time of day and emphasizes the social aspect of eating. Set the technology aside and make the evening meal a special time. Whenever eating, allow your child to decide whether they eat part or none of what is being offered. That should always be a matter of choice. Encourage your child to use silverware and refrain from allowing them to walk while eating (a choking hazard) or play with the food. Both should signal that mealtime is over. Whenever possible, allow your child to be part of preparing the meal. Toddlers can gather items



## INFANT MASSAGE

Free 3-Week Virtual Course  
Wednesday, September 7, 14, 21  
10:30-11:30a.m.



Come and enjoy a relaxing bonding hour with your child, with both participants experiencing the benefits of infant massage in a welcoming group setting. The benefits of your child participating in infant massage include improved sleep patterns and infant ability to self soothe. It can offer your baby relief for digestion issues, including colic, and creates a beautiful space for you to bond with your little one. This class is open to all parents and caregivers of babies aged 0-6 months.

Contact Main Office [information@msgh.org](mailto:information@msgh.org)



from the refrigerator, wash fruit and vegetables, stir, peel, and even chop with supervision. Include them further by allowing them to help set the table and remove dirty dishes to the sink or dishwasher. Mealtime is a social occasion where you have the opportunity to model not only good table manners but also polite conversation - how to listen as well as speak to others.

These simple suggestions support the toddler in developing independence, along with confidence in his own abilities and as an important member of his group- your family.



# Join Us in Celebrating Staff Milestones!



**NANCY  
RIVERA**

**20**  
years of  
service

**TOKO  
ODORCZUK**

**KATHY RIVEROS**

**10**  
years of  
service



*Thank You  
Pat Scully!*

After 11 years of service as a non-parent trustee Pat Scully, will be leaving the MSGH Board of Trustees in anticipation of his retirement move to Syracuse New York.

Pat has been an outstanding board member. He has served on almost all of the board's committees and chaired many of them throughout the years. He has served the board through the purchase of our permanent home, a head of school search, the addition of the Adolescent Program and strategic plan implementations in addition to all of the routine work of the board. Pat's continued focus has been the mission of our school and the needs of the children and families we serve. He has been an exceptional addition to the board bringing his calm and grace to every conversation and his contributions will have a long legacy as we continue the important work he has devoted so much energy and talent to.

It is with deep gratitude that we wish Pat much happiness as he embarks on his next adventure.

By Rebecca London, Board Chair





# Community Spotlight with *Annelieke Schauer*

Three of Annelieke's grandchildren attend MSGH- Maddie, Miles and Max

**How do you describe "Being a grandparent?"** Fun. These little persons are so unpredictable, so loving, so funny, and so charming that I cannot imagine my life without them. We are blessed to have all five grandchildren within 50 miles.

**What is the greatest reward of being a grandparent?** The greatest reward of being in relationships with grandchildren is listening to them, in a way I could not do when our four children were younger because there was so much going on, and I was not as observant. I now can watch and observe more carefully the way each child is telling us about themselves by the way they act, play, and speak and are with us. I realized children tell us more than I ever knew they did.

**What is the most surprising part about being a grandparent?** I don't feel like a grandparent, which is a surprise. I actually feel as if I am of no age at this point.

**What do you love to do with your grandchildren?** With Maddie and our other grandchildren, I love to listen to them talk with one another, and with me. I love reading to Maddie, and she loves learning vocabulary words with Mrs. Wordsmith.com. If I am around when she needs comfort, or has a question, that's a gift for me.

**How do you know that your granddaughter is benefiting from a Montessori education?** We knew Montessori was perfect on the day Maddie had her little interview. She knew it too. Her Mom and I remember that day very well.

**At what moment did you know Montessori was right for your granddaughter?** MSGH had space for Maddie when she needed to go to a program at 17 months. Her Mom, Grandfather and I then began to read about Montessori education as much as we could. I soon realized we had been incredibly fortunate to find MSGH and began to really pay attention to how the Montessori pedagogy worked, particularly pure Montessori and not adapted to fit into another system. As the years have gone on, we all see Maddie flourishing, learning about herself and others, being given the time and space she needs to learn in the way she does best. And she is making good friends and becoming a social person who understands kindness. What more can we ask?

*"To listen more carefully."*



**How do you know that Maddie enjoys school?** Maddie loves school. She loves her lessons with Mrs. Lockhart, and she loves being able to move throughout the day. There is a lot of outdoor play and this also benefits Maddie. There is space and time to move from one activity to another, gentle reminders if she needs to spend more time on something. Maddie has a strong sense of empowerment and self that has come from all of the decisions she gets to make.

**What is the most important life lesson you would like your granddaughter to have? What is the most important life lesson that your granddaughter has taught you?** Be kind to all others. Maddie has taught me to observe better. To listen more carefully. Her grandfather would say that she has taught him that no matter what they are doing, they can enjoy it. I hope our family, which includes Gwen, Maddie's Mom, and Maddie and my husband and me, can grow to be an integral part of the communities we find ourselves in, be that our neighborhood, MSGH, or our faith community at church. The organization needs to reach out but we need to reach back, so to speak. I think MSGH does a good job reaching out. I think it is the job of MSGH family adults to reach back and support the school, and especially the teachers, to the extent that they can.

# Grandparents' Tea Hosted by *Mildred Unfried*



# Creative Innovation in the Discovery of One's Voice

by Priscilla Marshall

Magical moments occur during adolescents' years of explorations into the world around them when seemingly disparate concepts come together, ideas begin to coalesce, and previously hidden patterns appear, just as pieces of a puzzle suddenly begin falling into place. The foundation for adolescent exploration has been thoughtfully and collaboratively prepared by the young child, his or her parents, and primary and elementary guides during the earliest years. Once the child has mastered the necessary skills for life within his or her known environment, windows begin to be left slightly open, doors are left invitingly ajar, and the child catches glimpses of the infinite possibilities beyond.

Often, somewhere between the 12th and 13th years, students discover the methods, materials, and forms of communication that resonate with their desired form of self-expression.



In explorations of Art, among all the materials, forms, genres, methods, and histories, students will discover a particular form or substance of creative expression that excites and resonates with their increasing abilities and expanding understanding. Adolescents will start to discover and develop their own unique voice of expression within the art realm.

During the 2020-2021 school year the adolescents studied the Renaissance in their Humanities course. Following this thread of history into their Art lessons, they analyzed the use of perspective in the works of Renaissance artists. While studying some of Leonardo Da Vinci's drawings, one student was captivated by the artist's renderings of the human form, particularly *The Lady with an Ermine*, c.1491 and *the Studies of a Woman's Hands*, c.1478. His eyes sparkled as he started drawing a pencil rendering of his own hands. As he subsequently concentrated on his drawing practice, his work has become increasingly more accomplished. This year, his graphite portraits of fellow classmates show the promise of exquisite mastery.

As technology develops and aspects of it become ever more diminutive and portable, the iPad appears more often in students' hands. It is a useful tool; speeding up the process of what many adolescents may see as the more "mundane" steps in the making of art. An iPad speeds the painting process by eliminating the act of grinding up one's pigments, blending them with a medium, stretching and priming a canvas, stretching watercolor paper, and waiting for these materials to dry before beginning to paint. The touch of a key opens up a world of seemingly infinite options for all aspects of designing and creating. However if one hasn't learned the fundamental skills of drawing, color mixing, or experimented with blending paint pigments with different types of mediums, or worked with the various textures, thicknesses, and properties of drawing, printmaking, and watercolor paper, one's practical understanding and tactile practice is missing critical components. Access to the most advanced technological devices alone does not make an artist. A competent and masterful artist will produce quality art no matter what tools and materials are available.

One of the adolescent students thought carefully about the color-mixing aspect of painting a watercolor assignment. In choosing to use his iPad for the assignment, he first mixed and blended by hand each of the colors he intended to use, noting the intricate pigment ratios of each. He then photographed the base colors, as well as his blended combinations, and stored these swatches on his iPad, inventing his own custom-blended palette for the painting. This is an innovative, creative answer to the practical integration of the use of traditional materials and techniques and new forms of digital technology.

The Montessori philosophy of learning and the subsequent foundational framework superbly sets the stage for this manner of experimentation, creative problem solving, innovation and mastery that goes on every day in the adolescent classroom. The student is learning in one of the most fertile environments; one that stimulates a hunger for knowledge, a thirst for multidimensional exploration, ideally positioning the student on a path for a lifetime of passionate learning.



# Neurodiversity Community, Creativity, & Connections

by Lindsay Cook

Neurodiversity is defined as “the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one ‘right’ way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits.” (“What is neurodiversity?” by Nichole Baumer on health.harvard.edu). We’re all wired in our own way, with distinct gifts and challenges! Like our fingerprints, our brains are all different—a beautiful rainbow of emotions, thoughts, perceptions and beliefs.

I see it as a parent, with my own three children, and the way that they move through the world. One is social, able to make friends with strangers at the park and happy to chat the ear off anyone who will listen. The other takes time to warm up, needing a moment to observe, and has struggled with spoken language since his toddler years. Some kids are goal-oriented, organized and driven to achieve, while others are creative dreamers with big ideas and questions.

Learning challenges often come with a “flip side of the coin,” a gift and ability. The kids who struggle to connect with others often have a rich mental life filled with interesting facts, amazing memories and unique interests. A child who has difficulty with blocking out distractions often has gifts of leadership, interpersonal skills, physical capabilities, creativity or expressiveness. Students for whom it’s difficult to master specific skills—reading, writing, or math—may shine in other areas. And the struggle itself is a gift! Children learn resilience, a “try-again” attitude and to embrace mistakes as they wrestle with their challenges.

How does a Montessori classroom support its diverse students? Diversity in learning styles is the base upon which the philosophy is built. At her first school in Rome, Scuola Magistrale Ortofrenica, Dr. Montessori developed her materials while working with children who were not neuro-typical. She noted that all learners benefit from concrete and visual materials, a calm, organized environment, academics broken into small sequential steps and opportunities to move their bodies. Our multisensory manipulatives gradually move from concrete to abstract. Our instruction is individualized, based on each child’s needs and readiness. And the heart of the Montessori classroom

is a culture of encouragement, that embraces mistakes and emphasizes respect. Maria Montessori invented her method over a hundred years ago and today’s science validates it.

As parents, let’s embrace our child’s unique wiring, with strengths and weak spots! Learning about one’s own feelings and thinking (“metacognition”) is step one. You can support children in developing skills of self-reflection. Ask your child: “What comes easily to you? What can be hard? Where are you able to learn best? How do you feel when something is hard? What can you do?”

Model your own thinking process and mistake-making aloud. Read about heroes and sheroes who are neurodivergent! We can learn from the likes of Temple Grandin, Walt Disney, Picasso, Steven Spielberg, Anderson Cooper and many more who have learning differences. Always work from the assumption that your child wants to succeed and is doing their best.

“It is remarkable how clearly individual differences show themselves, if we proceed in this way; the child, conscious and free, reveals himself,” Maria Montessori wrote in *The Montessori Method*. It is our own differences that makes the world a beautiful, fascinating place!



## Resorces About Neurodiversity:

### TODDLERS

*Beautiful Oops!* (Saltzberg) teaches children to embrace mistakes and turn them into something beautiful.

*I Like Myself!* (Beaumont) celebrates self-acceptance and self-love.

*It’s Okay to be Different* (Parr) is a colorful celebration of differences.

### PRIMARY

*All the Ways to be Smart* (Bell) is a beautifully illustrated and imaginative book that celebrates many different definitions of “smart.”

*My Wandering Dreaming Mind* (Saunders) is the story of a girl who has trouble paying attention and learns to focus on the positive.

*Wiggles, Stomps and Squeezes Calms my Jitters Down* (Parker) is a book for anyone who has ever felt the need to wiggle, stomp or squeeze.

### LOWER ELEMENTARY

*Your Fantastic Elastic Brain* (Deak and Ackerly) teaches about our brains, how they work and how to help them grow.

*The Hank Zipzer* is a series (Winkler) that features a boy with learning differences, based on the real life of the author, actor Henry Winkler.

*Aaron Slater Illustrator* (Beaty) tells the story of a boy who struggles learning to read, but shines in his own way.

### UPPER ELEMENTARY

*Fish in a Tree* (Hunt) tells the story of a girl who learns not to hide her learning challenges and discovers that all great minds don’t think alike.

*Who is Temple Grandin?* is part of a series about the lives of inspiring humans. Many books from the *Who is \_\_\_?* series feature extraordinary people who have changed the world.

### ADOLESCENT

*Same but Different* (Peete) is a narrative about the challenges and triumphs of being a neurodiverse teen and the effects on family, school, friends, and life.

*The Growth Mindset Workbook for Teens* (Schleider and Mullarkey) contains a practical set of activities to help young people develop a growth mindset.



# The Social and Moral Shift from Elementary to Adolescence

by *Christine Blais*

The driving question for the elementary-aged child is “why?” It is with this question in mind that we provide them with the keys to the Universe through Montessori’s Cosmic Education Curriculum. While “why?” is the motivating question, one of the key characteristics of the elementary-age child is the orientation towards group life, or better known as “the herd instinct.” The elementary years are an important in that they encompass a time of intense intellectual growth and the ability for moral reasoning. Montessori feeds and nurtures these by sowing as many seeds of culture as possible so as to develop strong foundation for the work of adolescence.

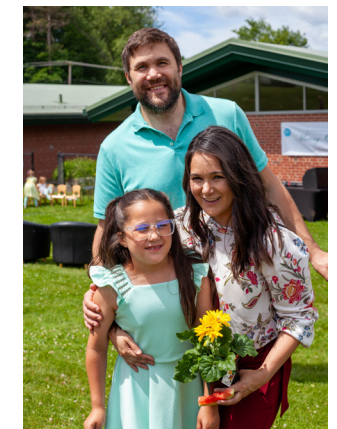
The new questions that come into play for the adolescent are “How does this relate to my life and my world?” “How will I apply what I know?” Using the seeds of culture (the natural laws they have studied and formulas that I have learned) “How can I save the world?” It is as though they are forming a chrysalis from which the adult will emerge with a strong understanding of who they are and what is their relationship to society. All the while, the adolescent needs to acknowledge that they are a member of society and accept that dual responsibilities of being an active member of the society while remaining true to oneself. Their focus has now shifted from the “herd instinct” of the elementary-aged child that has guided them towards society, to a deeper and broader understanding of and sensitivity about who they are and what their role is.



# Moving-On Ceremony



**Congratulations**  
to our 2022  
Adolescent Graduates:  
Colleen Mathais  
Logan Hebert



# CORNELL BOUND



## Alumni Corner: Ayden Cinel A College Essay for Cornell University

My heart racing, I clutched the smoker tighter, gripped my Montessori teacher's arm, and clambered over the electric fence surrounding the hive. To my adolescent mind, inspecting a bee colony seemed less an entree to discovery and more a portal to disaster. "Come on!" Steve coaxed. "Now's the perfect time before we harvest honey!" My curiosity won, barely: I ducked in and anxiously peeked at the complexity of the beehive.

Worker bees crawled over each other, inspecting the brood. Drones, spent from mating, lay dying. The queen, her body warmed by a huddle of bees, lay countless eggs. And, just beyond reach was the honey, guarded fiercely by thousands of insects. Fascinated, I vowed to continue my exploration.

A couple weeks later my newfound pride at being "one with the bees" was dashed when I forgot to don protective gear and a worker plunged its stinger into my scalp. Tearfully, I ran to Steve, who flicked it out with a credit card.

Afterwards, the mere thought of the beehives made my head throb. Yet, although I chided myself for getting overly comfortable with the insects, the secrets of the apiary domain were far too alluring for me to give in to fear. I began to view the sting as a sign that I was progressing in my quest for knowledge and in my hunt for honey.

In some ways my annual visits to my dad's hometown on the Black Sea were no different from my forays with the bees. I dreaded the weeks far from home in a culture I didn't understand, struggling to communicate in a language I barely spoke. Turkey was a strange, confusing place, one I initially had no interest in exploring. My outings with my grandfather, in particular, were very "bee-like": baffling, bewildering, and, at times, even frightening.

One day, after an excruciatingly slow, silent, and scary drive along the cliff edges of the Kachkar mountains, we pulled up to a pink and white building. Wordlessly, dede gestured to the Arabic letters above the entrance and led me inside. Not knowing what to do, I awkwardly imitated my grandfather and several elderly men in prayer. Then, I saw them: honeycomb-shaped carvings in the ceiling. I would later learn that muqarnas represent the vastness and complexity of creation. That afternoon I merely marveled at the Islamic architecture and held on tight as we hurtled around hairpin curves, finally reaching an old house perched above a beautiful valley. Familiar wooden boxes dotted the hillside. "Bal alayoruz," my grandfather said, "we're getting honey."

Until that day I had never found life in Turkey satisfying. Objectively, I knew my life in Connecticut was no better than my Turkish relatives', yet I had mistakenly believed my life to be more interesting. Watching the men perform their ablutions in that simple mosque, and, later, savoring that wildflower honey, I understood: there is much more to the world, more to explore and understand. Suddenly, I wanted to learn it all, no matter how challenging the journey of discovery might be.

Learning to coexist with the bees and embracing my Turkish roots are my greatest life lessons so far. Thanks to them I have come to appreciate how important it is to explore and strive to comprehend the mysteries of the universe - the natural and the human worlds - even in the face of fear or setbacks. Through these experiences I learned how to connect with and form lasting bonds with people from around the world, despite our differences. They opened a door to inquiry about everything from quantum mechanics to molecular biology and from astrophysics to medicine, and propelled my decision to take an EMR certification course and to pursue a career in science. Such simple experiences have taught me that, no matter where my curiosity leads next, and no matter how challenging the path may be, the honey at the end is always worth it.



William E. '22  
Gold Key, CAEA Best in  
Drawing Award, Drawing Category

## William Ellis

MSGH Elementary Graduate, 2022 Gold Key and Best Drawing Award

William Ellis was among the first Toddler students at MSGH. He moved on to Watkinson School in 2015. His love for Drawing and Music was nurtured and encouraged. As he matured, his creativity became more evident in his work. He participated in the Northern Regional Choir Honors program for Middle and High School for 5 years. He runs track and currently hold the 100 and 200 meter records at Watkinson.

He recently won a gold key and best drawing awards in the Scholastics art competition.

He will attend Cornell University in the fall to study Civil Engineering. William is the product of a Montessori education, well rounded, confident and energetic. He believes that what ever you do, you should find enjoyment in it.

*Best Wishes, Ayden and William!*

*Tell Us What You've  
Been Up To!  
(Students and families)*

We wish to include your news in our next *Follow the Child*. Current and "back in the day" pictures along with fond memories of your time at MSGH are always welcome. Updated email addresses for the entire family are also helpful so we can stay in contact with everyone

Please email [Tokoo@msgh.org](mailto:Tokoo@msgh.org).

Connect with MSGH!  
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## Our 2022/2023 Children's Fund

When you enroll your child or children into our classrooms, you are opting into a culture of respect and commitment to support each child's individual gifts. Every day, we are re-inspired and energized by our Mission: To foster 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 (AMI) standards of excellence.

Our Mission guides us towards the vision that our students will develop into courageous individuals and who are capable-catalysts for peace. Contributions made to our Children's Fund help us reach the full richness of our Mission; we are grateful to have our community support and join in these efforts.

The Children's Fund is the cornerstone of our development efforts at MSGH. Members of our community contribute to the Children's Fund each year, helping to bridge the gap between tuition dollars and the cost of educating each child at our school. These generous contributions benefit each and every student, family and teacher at MSGH by underwriting classroom materials, cultural enrichment programming, professional development, and MSGH's Flexible Tuition Program. Each member of the MSGH community is asked to participate in supporting the Children's Fund: parents, staff, alumni and alumni parents, trustees, grandparents and friends. We seek to attain the highest participation rates possible, and we encourage every family to give in the amount that best suits them.

On behalf of every child and faculty member at MSGH, past and present, thank you for supporting the MSGH Mission and the incredible work taking place daily in our classrooms. With your help, we can continue to offer the best possible educational experience for children and their families. I hope you will join us through a gift to the MSGH Children's Fund.



# Montessori School of Greater Hartford

## 2022-2023 Children's Fund

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Education for Peace	\$10,000+	Benefactor	\$1,000-\$1,499
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- In Honor of: \_\_\_\_\_  
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To give online, visit:

www.msgh.org → Support MSGH → Children's Fund



For questions, please contact Toko Odorczyk, Director of Advancement at 860.236.4565 ext. 112.

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**Thank you for supporting the Montessori School of Greater Hartford!**

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Have an idea for the next publication?  
Let us know by emailing [ericak@msgh.org](mailto:ericak@msgh.org).  
We would love to hear from you!

For copies of FTC photos or articles, please contact the Advancement Office.



**Our Mission:**

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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