



Follow the Child

THE MSGH COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

JULY 2011

Dear Families and Friends,

Here we are at another year's end—our 46th! It's been an interesting year to say the least, with record snow days, unprecedented auction fundraising (thank you so much), and a new Family Association that freshened events to serve you better.



UNA'S CHAT

Through it all, we continued to do what we do best: provide your children with authentic Montessori education in a warm and caring environment. This is where our passion lies.

As you know, we are in the process of planning for the next phase of our school's development, and our need for a permanent home requires us to do some intense marketing to ensure that both our current community and the community at large understand who we are and what we do.

This starts with our upcoming annual report. In this end-of-year "round up," you will read updates on programs and learn more about our key strategic goals.

Going forward, one of our main goals is to chip away at de-mystifying AMI Montessori education. Our publications offer the most obvious opportunity to do this, so we have been writing and will continue to write philosophy and curriculum articles for *Follow the Child* in a format that takes a Montessori concept and translates it into commonly used language. We will also try to illustrate those concepts visually whenever possible to keep you connected to the many ways in which our materials support learning. In this way, the information should be more accessible and easier to understand. We also hope that this will make it easier for you to repeat concepts when explaining MSGH to your friends and family.

Word-of-mouth marketing remains our strongest source of referrals, and we thank you for your support; it has kept our school strong and almost fully enrolled during a time when most schools faced their toughest years ever. Many, many children who are enjoying their youngest years here thank you for that.

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The colored globe isolates the classification of continents and water.

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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

EDITOR/WRITER

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LAYOUT/PHOTOGRAPHER*

Melanie Cilfone

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And while we do want to give you easier ways to explain your child's education to others, we also want to help you understand more about all that your child receives here. Each and every member of the staff is passionate about what she does, and we want to show you the depths of what your children experience. Once you start to see how much happens here every day, you will see why many refer to an **MSGH education as an early investment in a child's future.**

De-mystifying Montessori education will also be a core element of our future advertising strategy. We serve families from over 34 towns, and approximately 50% come from West Hartford. As we plan for a new site, we strive to strengthen our base in West Hartford and surrounding towns, so that we will be strong and healthy for the future.

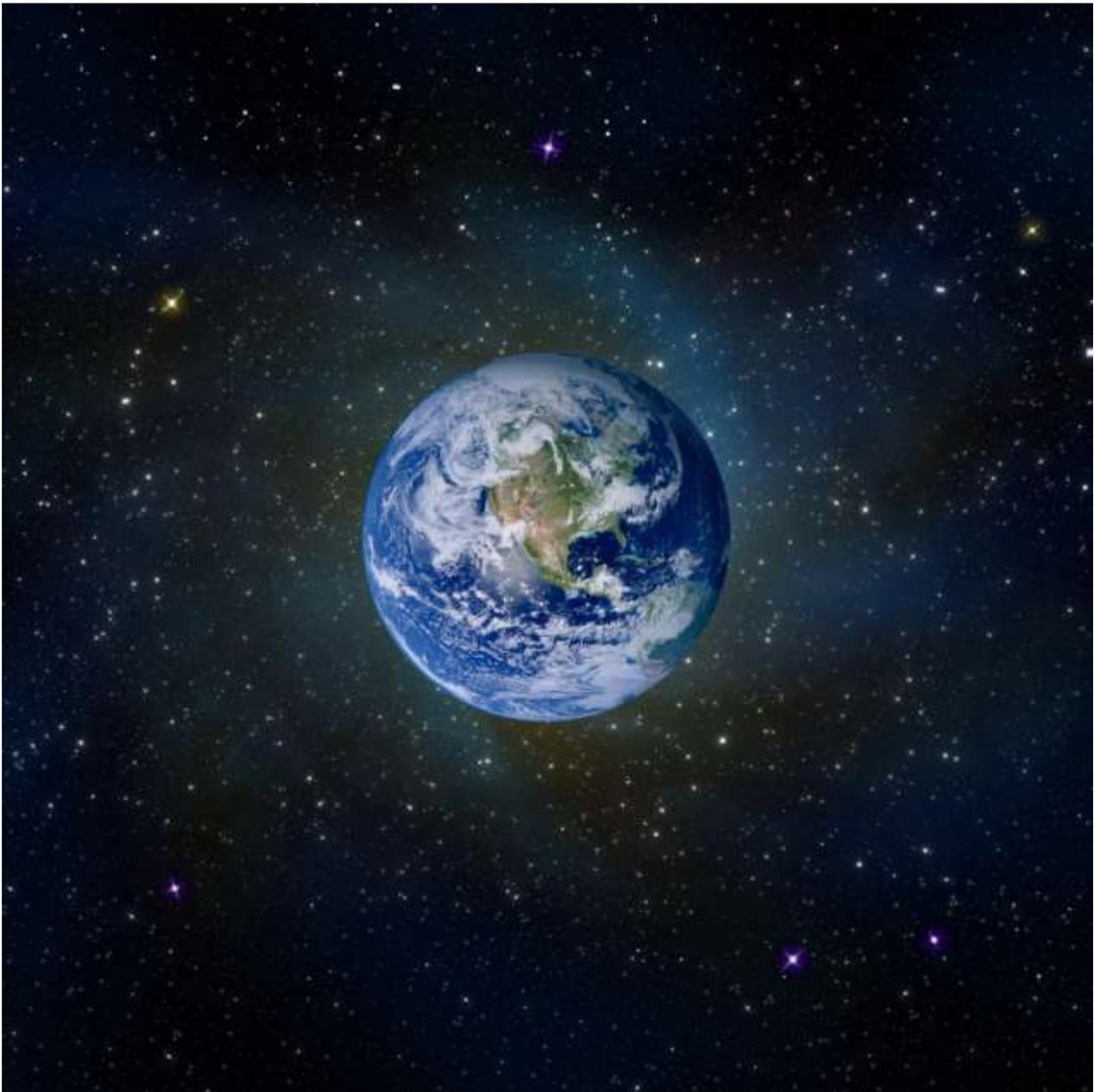
This brings me to some exciting news: beginning with our annual report, which will be mailed out in early August, our school will be unveiling the result of a year of hard work finding a fresh new look for MSGH. **We've been steadfast in our core programming for over 46 years, but the general look of our materials and our use of technology needed freshening to compete with today's standards. We look forward to sharing it with you—especially the gorgeous photos of your children that were captured during our June photo shoot.**

Speaking of being steadfast for an impressive number of years, this issue also highlights the 25th anniversary of toddler teacher, Teresa Reynolds. **Double digit numbers for years' served are not uncommon in our community, and we are humbled by the commitment Teresa has made to MSGH for much of her adult life. She will tell you that MSGH is a treasure for your family to discover, but we would like her to know that she is most assuredly one of ours.**

I wish you a wonderful summer with sunshine, family, friends and lots of time to enjoy them. **Don't forget to give your children time to just be this summer; the adults they are destined to become will thank you.**

Una





As an AMI-Montessori School, our presentation of information is guided by two fundamental principles:

- 1. Start with the global and move toward the specific.**
- 2. Start with the concrete and move toward the abstract.**



A Close-Up Look at MSGH's Guiding Principles

By Amanda Aronson

We all want our children to see the relevance of their education and appreciate how details relate to the bigger picture. We want them to achieve *true understanding*—but how do we go about this?

Here at MSGH we navigate our way toward this goal guided by two principles: we introduce **information first from the global perspective, then move at the child's pace toward more specific detail.** We also introduce concepts with a concrete *experience* before talking about them abstractly.

The importance of concrete experience is often underestimated in traditional education, but imagine if you were blind; could you comprehend the concept of a triangle if you never held one in your hand and felt its points? And if you were to begin the study of botany, wouldn't it be helpful to go outside to touch real plants? Starting from a concrete place, whether by using Montessori materials or by interacting with the environment, creates a bridge to a deeper learning experience for children. It allows the essence of a concept to be revealed, making it easier to grasp and apply in real life.

We'd like to show you what all of this looks like in your child's classroom by offering you a glimpse into the geography portion of our Cultural curriculum. In this way, we can illustrate the process our teachers follow. As you read, notice how the *information* being presented grows more and more *specific*, while the *materials* become more refined, more *representative*, and eventually less necessary.

The three components of geography are physical, cultural and political. Physical geography is illustrated through globes, puzzle maps and land and water forms, and it launches an exploration of cultural geography and the very concept of culture itself. As children become more abstract thinkers and better able to grasp concepts of political geography, they examine how culture can create borders and **governments and drive human behavior in groups.** It's important to notice, however, that the study of geography is not linear; threads of art, music, botany, zoology, etc., are woven in and out of what is being learned. This creates a fuller, deeper picture of our world.

It might also interest you to know that the overall Cultural curriculum that we present at MSGH is based on the model taught in the European AMI training programs. Theirs is broader and deeper than what is taught here in the United States.

Take your time with this article. Read it once all the way through, then perhaps go back and read it again with each of our guiding principles in mind. This is an illustrated walk through a sliver of what your children experience here, and we encourage you to show this article to them to hear more about where they are on the continuum. Enjoy!

In the primary classroom, children begin by hearing a story about being in a spaceship in outer space. If they look out the window, they will see the earth—and it's a sphere!

From there, they learn that the globe is land and water surrounded by air.

The sandpaper globe offers a concrete way for children to comprehend this concept using texture.

Moving toward the more specific, teachers wonder aloud about what might be found in the water, or on the land, and lessons branch off into zoology, botany, etc.



Next, the colored globe classifies the land into “large chunks” or continents, and they are named. But what if we want to see them all at the same time? A flat, two-dimensional map is introduced.





Lessons are then presented on the individual continents, reinforcing their names and shapes. Starting with the concrete, children begin working with puzzles and tracing maps. Children who are reading revisit this work over the years adding names of states, capitals, etc. and they often learn these in English and Spanish.



The *flavor* of each continent is represented in a folder with photos of people, flora and fauna, landscapes, and the types of houses, etc. that can be found there.



The exploration of the continents continues to get more specific as countries and states are classified.



Remember, the curriculum is not linear. *Early on*, when children first look at the continents on the globe, they notice their shapes. This begins their exploration of land and water forms. Teachers draw their attention to islands, lakes, isthmuses, straits, etc. and provide a simple definition of each.

Then, children gather their materials, set up them up in a left to right orientation (to reinforce the direction we read in English), and concentrate their attention on select forms.

Below, Elliott is distinguishing an island from a lake. Many teachers here like to point out that Ireland is an island!



Children then move from concrete molds of land and water forms to abstract photos, which helps them see real-life depictions of what they are studying.

As children learn to read, they match a label with its corresponding photo. A “control card” with the correct match allows them to check their work independently.

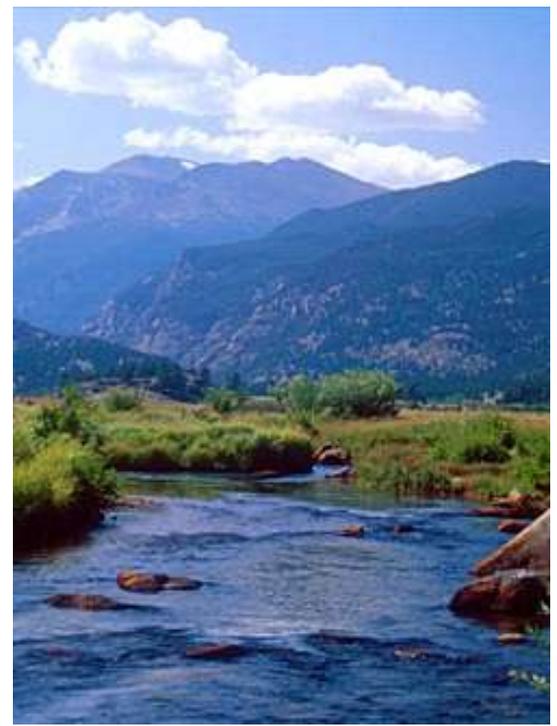




As children continue to absorb the many components of physical geography, they begin to transition to the study of cultural geography.

The geography folders, which were used earlier to provide the flavor of each continent, are now used as a way to introduce the abstract concept of culture. Studies deepen as children examine how the look and feel of a country and its people relate to its geography.

Continued exposure to language, music, art, zoology, botany, etc. provides the context children need as they begin to understand what *creates* a culture.



Cultural geography naturally involves the study of history, as children develop interest in the evolutions of the cultures they have been learning about. Their explorations are based on the needs of man: food, shelter, clothing, defense, and spiritual needs (religion, art, music, etc.).

Toward the end of primary and into elementary, cultural geography segways into political geography, and children delve deeper into examinations of government, economic structures, industry, production, alliances, interdependencies and cultural influences.

Newly acquired information is constantly being synthesized into the big picture, which is provided through timelines and “The Great Stories” (more on this in a future article).





Always moving toward abstract thinking, current events and more sophisticated readings and discussions about the world are enjoyed in the classroom; yet, concrete materials continue to remain available should a touchstone be required to deepen understanding. We believe that by keeping learning firmly rooted in concrete understanding, while also showing its relevance, it can remain stimulating and joyful for the child.



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

The Success of the Art of Learning Annual Gala Continues to Grow in 2011!

By Susan Rich-Bye

It was a night to remember! Gala supporters helped raise over \$71,000 to foster our Cultural and Financial Aid Programs and had an amazing time doing it! Classroom projects were the stars of the evening—along with getaways, epicurean delights, family activities and sports. Families also showed their support by raising their paddles for children to participate in the ever-popular Teacher Outings. We offer our profound thanks to all who supported this important event.

Let's keep it growing!



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full committee not pictured

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Alicia Brown
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 The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts
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 Lisa Campo, William Raveis
 Central Optica
 Chakalos Management
 The Children's Museum
 Melanie Cilfone Photography
 Classic Cakes by Carol Murdock
 Claypen
 Connecticut's Beardsley Zoo
 Connecticut Forest & Park Association (donated by John and Lorri Chapman)
 Connecticut Science Center
 Connecticut Trolley Museum
 Contours Spa and Wellness
 Cooper-Hewitt Nation Design Museum
 Donna Karan International
 Downright Music and Art
 The Elizabeth Grady Skin Care Salon
 Farmington Miniature Golf and Ice Cream Parlor
 The Fitness Continuum
 Fleet Feet Sports



Florence Griswold Museum
 The Foothills Delery
 The Funny Bone Comedy Club
 Jacqueline Gaztambide (artist)
 Gillette Ridge Golf Course
 Grace Nails
 Billy Grant and Grant's Restaurant
 The Green Tambourine
 The Harriet Beecher Stowe Center
 Hartford Children's Theatre
 Hartford Stage
 The Hartt School Community Division, UHART
 Headworks Salon and Day Spa
 Healthtrax Fitness and Wellness Center
 Hill-Stead Museum
 Iris Photography
 The Ivoryton Playhouse
 The Kakery
 Kaoud Oriental Rugs
 Kidcity Children's Museum
 Kiddy Winks
 Kimberly Boutique

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 Lux Bond and Green
 Lyman Kitchens
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 Therapeutic Massage Associates
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 Town of West Hartford Veteran's Memorial Skating Rink
 Vinothérapie Spa
 Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art
 Matthew J. Wagner Fine Photography
 Waterford Group Charitable Foundation
 West Hartford Symphony Orchestra (donated by Early and Tutch Shirane)
 West Hartford YMCA
 Whole Foods Market Bishops Corner
 Walter Wick and Linda Cheverton-Wick
 WINAM Wines, LLC
 Winding Trails, Inc.
 Wood-n-Tap Restaurant



Animated bidding during the Live Auction kept the night lively and fun for all.





Walk for Peace

Ducklings





Bushnell Park
Carousel

Moving-On
Ceremony



FAMILY ASSOCIATION NEWS



Yummie Oberstein

Welcome to Next Year's Co-Chairs:
Yummie Oberstein and Rebecca London

Thank you to all who supported this year's Family Association and who have committed to serving as volunteers next year.



Rebecca London

Looking for a way to help that is short, sweet and concentrated to a window of time?

Help is still needed to organize orders for next year's fundraisers.

Late August: Mabel's Labels Back-to-School Fundraiser

November: Lyman Orchard Thanksgiving Pie Sale

November/December: Innisbrook Wrapping Paper Sale

Please contact Rebecca London at remonroe@yahoo.com with any questions, comments or to offer support for next year! Extended family members are welcome and encouraged to get involved.

Welcome, New Board Members



Kanwar Singh



Jacqueline Copp Moffett



Patrick Scully



Members of the Board of Trustees

From left to right: Neil Fox, Adam Anderson, Kevin Stolworthy, Catherine Flavin-McDonald, Jenn Van Scoter, David Tyson, Jacqueline Copp Moffett, Brenda McVerry, and Kanwar Singh.

Not Pictured: John O'Brien, Patrick Scully, Clare Doyle Dowd, Nathaniel G. Mays, Yummie Oberstein, and Una Barry.

Volunteer Fathers: An Increasing Trend

This year, more than any other, we noticed an incredible increase in the number of fathers volunteering and attending events. We also noticed that their support and participation were consistent.

As the year progressed, you may have noticed a growing number of fathers dropping off their children in the morning. More fathers attended Parent Information Nights and asked questions about curriculum. Our Family Association enjoyed a surge in steady volunteer support to prepare for and clean-up from events. And during those quiet, mid-day times in the building, there was a steady trickle of fathers sharing lunch with their children.



Leon Pierce and Ed Taupier

What you may not have seen, were the many summer hours some fathers spent on our campus last year painting, hammering and hanging to help teachers with their Back-to-School To-Do lists.

Fathers seemed to be everywhere this year, and if you listened closely to the commentary among the women, they were behind the scenes too. They were capturing and editing video footage, chairing the auction, lugging and hauling supplies for the auction, shopping for wooden dowels to make kite kits and cutting paper hands for Heart of Montessori. They were also pushing brooms on clean-up committees, painting henna on hands, chaperoning field trips, attending Family Association meetings, hosting playground playdates, producing the elementary play, recording music and burning MSGH Voices cd's, teaching origami on lunch breaks, serving on the Board of Trustees and committees, reading at birthday celebrations, and just generally hanging around at drop off and pick up to enjoy the company of others.

“[Their involvement] created a deepened social experience for men at events and set an example for incoming fathers to get involved.”

They were here—and their children knew it.

Not only did their involvement mean a lot to their children, it helped significantly, created a deepened social experience for men at events, and set an example for incoming fathers to get involved. Dads who do want to help now know that they won't be the only man among a gaggle of women. They can assume that there will be other men at school events to hang out with and do whatever it is that men do when they are all together. In short, they're apt to have a great time while helping their child's school stay strong.

For families, the growing presence of fathers on campus is just plain fun. For the school, it is incredibly helpful, and for the kids, it's invaluable. This year kids saw both mothers and fathers contributing, and it set a fine example for what it means to be a member of a community.

If this is the growing trend, let's keep a good thing going. Thank you, Dads!

Enjoy two of Ms. Michelle's go-to recipes for healthy summer eating. They are kid tested and as you can see, mother approved!



Ms. Michelle's Healthy Shake

3 cups spinach
3 bananas, cut up
2 cups strawberries
2 cups blueberries
3-4 cups water
2 tablespoons lime juice
2 tablespoons agave nectar

Combine all ingredients in a blender, then blend and enjoy!

Sun Butter and Banana Toasted Sandwich

4 slices whole wheat, seven grain or raisin bread
3 tablespoons sun butter
1 ripe banana, peeled and sliced the long way



Put two slices of bread on the counter.

Spread half the sun butter on each slice.

Top each slice with half the banana slices. Cover each with another slice of bread.

With help, place a skillet on the stove on medium heat.

After about 2 minutes, add the sandwiches.

After about 2-3 more minutes, the bottom should be golden brown. Using a spatula, flip each sandwich and cook until the new bottom is golden brown, 2-3 minutes.

With help, use a spatula to put the sandwiches on a plate, let cool for a few minutes and cut in half. Enjoy!

NATURE'S CORNER

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

Spend one of your summer days touring Hartford's Bushnell Park, and not only will you enjoy a wonderful day outside and deepen your family's education, you will be giving your child local knowledge that builds pride for where you live.



How to Get Started

Visit the websites listed below for background information on the many statues, fountains, and structures found in the park. They all have stories with facts interesting to children and can be easily printed out. Then, you can just walk along and discover, or you could make up a scavenger hunt that will lead you through the park. Young children enjoy trying to spot things, which also encourages them to look more closely, and older children enjoy the challenge of matching facts with their corresponding elements. www.bushnellpark.org, www.theancientburyingground.org, www.thewadsworth.org

Tips

1. If your child's interest isn't naturally piqued by a large structure, draw his or her attention to one component, then ask a question or offer a fact. No interest? No worries. Just move right along.
2. Follow your child's lead. You may only get to a few things in one visit, but enjoy the conversation and save the rest for another day.

Suggestions For What To See & Focus On

Soldier's & Sailor's Memorial Arch: This arch is a memorial. What is a memorial and who is being remembered? There's also something unique "in" the arch.

The Capitol: Look up. There are statues near the dome. Who are they and what are they doing there? There is an underground walkway hidden from view. Where does it go?

Corning Fountain: What cultural group does it honor? Does the thing on the top appear anywhere else in Hartford?

The Carousel: This is a Stein & Goldstein carousel. Why is that significant? Hint, the horses were hand carved and known for certain features. What did the carvers do for work before they were carvers?

Horace Wells Statue: This guy invested something we all deeply appreciate.

The Pumphouse Gallery: What does a pump house do, and what is unique about what they used to build it?

The Park River: Wait, where is it?



Not In The Park, But Not-To-Be Missed

Stone Field: Are these just rocks, or is there a pattern here? (FYI, this outdoor art installation has national recognition and is under threat of being removed. More for older children to think about here relating to how a community can have their voices heard and who decides if it stays or goes.)

Ancient Burial Ground: Hartford's first burial ground. Were there any rules about being buried here? Older children are fascinated by the tombstones, because some say how the person died.

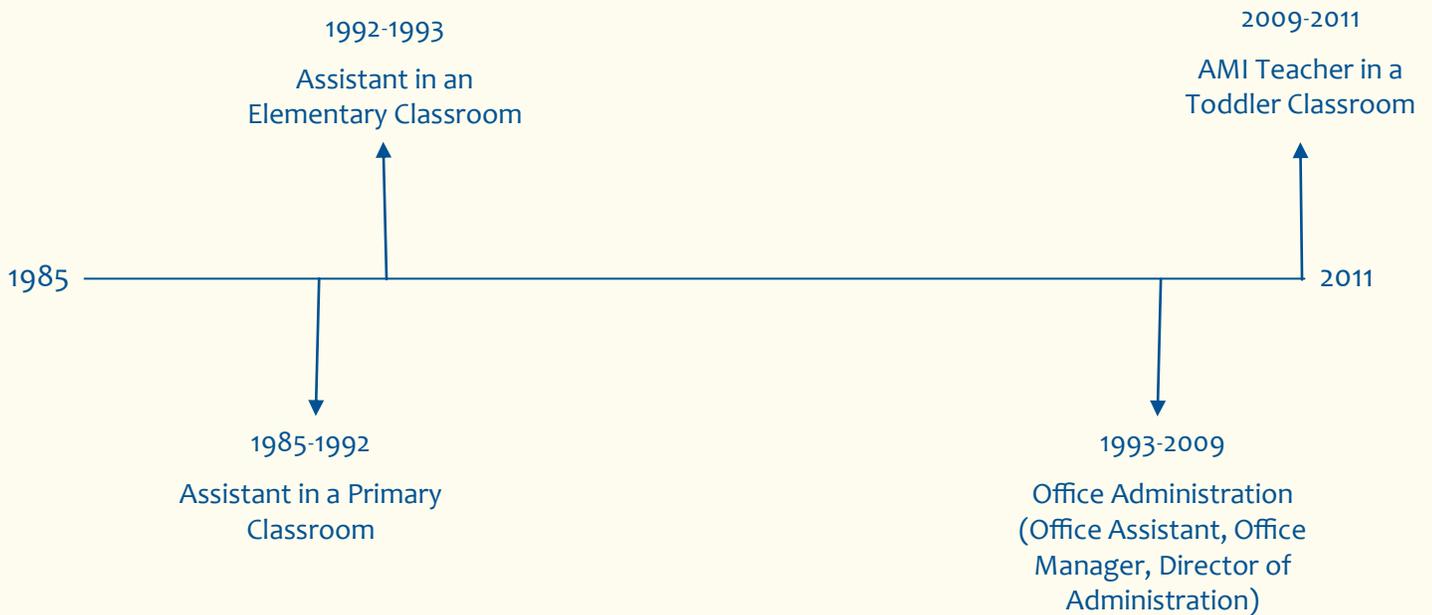
Photos courtesy of BushnellPark.org



Teresa will tell you that MSGH is a treasure to be discovered, but she is most certainly one of ours.

Thank you, Teresa, for your unwavering commitment to MSGH. Your many contributions over 25+ years are woven through much of the fabric that makes us strong. We love you!

Teresa's MSGH Timeline



Fun Fact: When Teresa first moved to CT from the Philippines, she spent a couple of months living at the home of Stefan Augsberger (Anastasia's dad). Stefan attended MSGH, and his younger brother Alexis was enrolled at MSGH at the time. When Teresa was walking Alexis to school one day, she inquired about employment. Teresa was hired shortly after and since then she refers to MSGH as her "home away from home." Now Stefan's daughter, Anastasia, is one of the children in Teresa's toddler class.





“It is such a nurturing experience to be in Teresa's classroom as a parent that I can only imagine what it must be like to be in her room as a child. She has a rare ability to maintain perspective and calm, while still experiencing the children's many ripples, waves and tides. She tunes into their actions, reactions, emotions and thoughts each day and joins them where they are.

As we all know, toddlers possess a wonderful, yet exhausting, capacity to experience each detail of their day in full texture and dimension. She shares this energy with them, while still managing to teach! She models patience, curiosity, persistence, kindness, civility, and love through work, and the children emerge from her classroom having learned, in a word: civilization.

Our children's lives are much richer for their experience with Teresa, and we wish her a Happy 25th Anniversary.”

~ The Pendergrass Family





**Upper Elementary
Camping Trip**

2010-2011 ANNUAL FUND SHOWS OUR COMMUNITY STRENGTH

By Susan Rich-Bye

Throughout the year, supporters of MSGH have shown our community's strength by contributing to the Annual Fund. Support comes from all segments of our MSGH family: parents, grandparents, board members, staff, alumni parents, alumni, and friends of MSGH. Annual Fund gifts not only help to bridge the gap between tuition revenues and the cost of educating each child at our school, but they signify an investment in our school and its future.

Thank you to all who contributed to this year's Annual Fund Campaign!



Watching our Artist-in-Residence



Painting in the garden



Sharing laughs in the leaves



Apreniendo con la Señora Rivera



Enjoying the Connecticut Science Center

MSGH Annual Fund 2010-2011

Thanks to the generosity of those listed below, we raised over \$47,003.98!

*Indicates Leadership Gift

Giving levels will be published in the Annual Report

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Dr. and Mrs. John O'Brien*

2010-2011 Annual Fund cont.

GRANDPARENTS (cont.)

Nina J. Pearlmutter, MD*
Dick and Judy Reuning
Milo and Mary Scherer
Tutch and Early Shirane*
Herb Yager and Sue Scott Yager

FACULTY/STAFF

Anayancy Aguilar
Amanda Aronson*
Una Barry*
Maria Bautista
Orla Black
Tomiko Blais
Risa Brophy
Sheila Caselas
Mariluz Connolly
Catherine Croce
Christy Forchette
Jessica Gorski
Lisbeth Harrison
Michelle Hebert
Maria Herrera
Mark Hilsdon*
Petrina Lewis
Renee Lewis-Lockhart
Liza Martin
Mary McHale *
Angelica Prado
Raziya Rahman
Kim Randalot
Teresa Reynolds*
Susan Rich-Bye
Nancy Rivera
Douglas Smith
Leslie Wetmore
Nancy White *

TRUSTEES

Adam Anderson
Sahar Al Seesi *
Clare Dowd*
Valeria Caldwell-Gaines*
Neil Fox *
Nathaniel Mays*
Catherine Flavin-McDonald *



Reading in the Toddler nook



Picking pumpkins



Creating Auction projects

2010-2011 Annual Fund cont.

TRUSTEES (cont.)

Brenda McVerry
Yummie Oberstein*
John O'Brien*
Lawrence Santilli*
Kevin Stolworthy*
David Tyson*
Jennifer Van Scoter *

FRIENDS

Anonymous*
Ruby Arguilla Tull and Brian Tull
Big Y World Class Markets*
Yolanda Canzanella
Paul Cryan Photography
Suzanne D'Aquila
Carol and Jim Kuszik
Mike and Pat Kuszik
Marianne Craig Moore
Smart Tuition

IN HONOR OF

Nathaniel and Maia Aronson
Maria Bautista
Riley and Piper Christopher
The Cloud Grandchildren (Danielle,
Sydney, Adam, Scotty and Sandy
Cloud)
Alexander and William Ellis
Janine Fleury and Nicole Fleury
Felicita Figueroa Sanchez
Abigail and Keely Hughes
Lilian Margolis
Morgan Miele
Koe and Rayden Pipins
Teresa Reynolds

IN MEMORY OF

Jack Fox
Mary Bell Mays
Rithisha Ramesh
H. Donald Sestina
Dennis F. Simas

MATCHING GIFTS

Aetna Foundation
Arch Re Facultative Underwriters, Inc.
Babson Capital Management LLC
Honeywell
United Health Group
United Technologies Corporation



Sharing 'Mariposa,' the all-school Spanish auction project



Planting in the garden