
Philomath Montessori School

October 2006



***For the Families and Friends of the Philomath
Montessori School***

Classroom News

A new school year is in full swing! Most everyone seems to be getting the hang of our routine. There is a lot of wonderful work happening and also a lot of watching of work. I am beginning to see the new children drift away from their beginning activities like spooning and pouring as they receive lessons on more complicated processes such as washing a chalkboard or making a collage. We are doing lots of vocabulary enrichment with the children and you can do that at home, too. Try telling your child the names of things as you go through your day. They love to learn new words.



**Anya Mae, Shaden, and others
pursuing a variety of activities.**

In addition to our usual activities, we have been enjoying a special unit of study: Native

Americans. We have studied this subject matter before, but this time it seemed richer and more informative. For one thing, we focused on three distinct regions: the Northwest, the Southwest and the Plains. We have some cards which show indigenous peoples from these three regions satisfying their basic human needs: food, shelter, clothing, defense, art and spiritual practice. This has helped to show that there were and are many different native cultures on the continent of North America.

The full-day children were visited by a docent from the Benton County Historical Museum. Mrs. Strader spent about 45 minutes showing the children authentic-looking replicas of artifacts of the Calapooia Indians. She showed us a digger, fishing hooks made of bone, a long bow, fresh and roasted camas bulbs, maps, a picture of Calapooia women digging camas. She also shared one authentic artifact, a massive stone mortar and pestle. We had planned that she would speak for only 20 minutes, but she had more to show and the children were such an attentive audience. She checked in with them several times to see if they could sit still another 10 minutes, then another 10 and another. I could not have been more pleased with the children's good audience manners. Most of the full-day children later wrote her a thank you card or made her a present. I will deliver them as soon as they are all finished. Our families are all cordially invited to bring their children to this wonderful museum. As it is just across the parking lot, I encourage you to visit often. You can stay for 5, 10, 15 minutes or however long your child is interested and well-behaved. If you need to cut

your visit short one day, you can always go back another. I am told that they change their exhibits monthly.

Several days after our visit from Mrs. Strader, I saw a child running around with what looked like a stick. (We don't do that.) I invited her to put it in the yard debris bin and she showed me that it wasn't a stick at all, but a spongy stem from the sunflowers. Then another child fetched a withered iris leaf. I recalled that Mrs. Strader told us the Calapooias made rope from weaving strips of iris leaves together. We then spent a lovely autumn afternoon braiding iris leaves. They really do make a very sturdy rope. We shall have to remember this activity and not be so zealous in cutting down our spent iris foliage next year! Hands-on experience with the day-to-day activities of another culture is a meaningful way to appreciate that culture.

We are now receiving parent observers in class. That is always a bit unnerving for me as I see our class and myself through the eyes of a visitor. One always hopes to be seen in a positive light, but when people observe, they see us warts and all. It's a bit like being the lion-tamer in the circus. One hopes the lions won't do anything too unseemly when the audience is present. Dr. Montessori strenuously encouraged observation as she felt that was the best way to reveal the amazing powers of the young child to the world. So I put aside my self-consciousness and welcome you all. And when you speak of what you have seen, and you will...be kind.



Sara!

We hope that you are also feeling settled in and comfortable with us. If there are any concerns, confusion or comments, we hope you will call us up after school so we can discuss them. In the meantime, we will be meeting with all of you for parent-teacher conferences. That should give us an opportunity to flesh-out your understanding of how your child spends his/her time at school. It is also a great time for you to inform us as to new interests your child has revealed to you. Knowing these helps us to meet their needs with presentations. We are looking forward to seeing you all there!

Meet Phyllis Pearson!

Phyllis is the newest member of our staff. She will be doing our bookkeeping and billing. By coming in to work each afternoon, Phyllis will be our "in case of emergency" 2nd staff member; required if we go beyond 10 full-day students. She will be here to help the afternoon teacher should the need arise.

Phyllis is a mid-west lady, having been born in Indiana and spending much of her adult life in Illinois. She moved to Corvallis 5 1/2 years ago to be near her two grandsons who are Philomath Montessori graduates. Other family includes a son, an adopted daughter, 2 step-sons and a step-daughter.

Phyllis is an avid reader and quilter. She leads a quilting group at the First United Methodist Church and is treasurer and board member of Quilts from Caring Hands, a non-profit organization that makes quilts for children in crisis in Benton and Linn counties. She is currently taking part in the Corvallis Program for Bible Literacy, a two-year-long class.

We are fortunate to have Phyllis, who has a vast and rich history of previous work experience to bring to the table. Please join us in saying, "Welcome, Phyllis!"

Let's Stay Healthy This Year!

We are making a valiant attempt to keep everyone healthy this winter by focusing on one of our best defenses - washing our hands. In class we've talked about germs and how we can pass them from one individual to another and from one thing to another just by touch. We've also discussed (or is it disgust?) mucous and saliva in conjunction with hands and fingers - when they come in contact, we always need to wash our hands immediately. So, as you can imagine, we have been sending many a child to the sink often, frequently, and many times. We're hoping they get tired of it and a light bulb goes on, but, as Doni likes to say, Rome wasn't built in a day. Another component of this is HOW you wash your hands. Too often we see children put soap on their hands and immediately rinse it off! No rubbing involved! So here are the steps we have been going over in the classroom and we would be SO grateful if you would follow up on these in your spare time.

- 1) Turn the water on, wet hands, turn water off.
- 2) Put a little soap in your hand (or rub soap bar between hands) and then
- 3) Rub palms together, then the back of both hands, then
- 4) Grab each finger with the other hand and rub back and forth, giving each digit individual attention, then
- 5) Rub around each wrist with the opposing hand.
- 6) Turn on the water and rinse thoroughly.
- 7) Turn water off.
- 8) Dry hands.

We have been practicing at group by pretending to wash our hands while going through all the steps. I actually see children who can remember most of the steps!

So lend us a hand... a **clean** hand, please!



Kieran and Taylor together on the tire tree.

Respect Life

Charlene Trochta

I would like to extend this respect for life to a respect for all things - living AND nonliving. Too often I see children and adults (me included) treating the things around us as trivial and inconsequential. If it breaks or becomes worn out prematurely, we just replace it. It not only fuels the over-consuming culture that we live in, but often this attitude spills over into our sensitivity towards living things. So this respect for life should include all things. When we learn to treat everything as a "thou" instead of an "it", think of how it shapes who we are. (PT)

A few years ago, the children were lining up to go out onto the playground. Someone spied a shivering bundle walking on the garden ties near the small playscape. Children quickly tiptoed to look, and as they came near, their voices lowered to whispers and soft tones. There under the steps to the slide, shaking with fright, was a baby possum. How had it gotten there? Maybe it had become separated from its mother in the rainstorm the night before.

The children were very concerned for the little animal. They wanted to know how to get it back

to its mommy, but she was nowhere in sight. What to do? One of the older children said, "I bet Dr. Spitz would know what to do," whereupon, a small box was obtained and placed on the ground. The little possum quickly crawled into this dark place of safety. Soon, with an escort of teacher and several children, the orphaned possum was on its way to Dr. Spitz' office. Our casa received a call later in the day to report that the little critter was old enough to be weaned, was taking nourishment, and when strong enough would be taken to a wildlife safe haven and set free.

Awareness, sensitivity, empathy, concern, and compassion—these are all character traits that we hope our children will develop and carry into adulthood. To respect life in all forms, whether plant, animal, or human, at whatever level of development, from earliest potential to maturity to death, this is the highest principle that identifies us as humans. In the Montessori environment, the first lesson in the natural sciences is: everything is either living or non-living. The child begins to sort objects indoors and outdoors. Living things can grow. Living things respond to the world around them. Living things reproduce, i.e., make more like themselves. Everything that is alive has a *beginning*; everything that is alive has an *ending*. The in-between is called *living*.



Leo taking a break to tie his shoes.

Observing the sprouting bean seed is a miracle to behold. This dry, hard, small ovoid shape, when planted and watered, has within itself all that is necessary to sustain the plant until the necessary parts are formed that will allow it to make its own food for growth. Not only that but, as it matures, the flowers die and form beans. Inside each bean is the potential for continuing life. The seeds inside contain all that is needed to generate new plants: beans, seeds--a never-ending circle, the life cycle.

The minuscule green speck on a milkweed leaf becomes a tiny caterpillar. As it voraciously feeds on the leaves, it grows and grows. One day it begins to wiggle and attaches itself to the top of a container or to a twig. The wiggling becomes more pronounced until the skin begins to split, and underneath a pale green chrysalis appears. Inside the chrysalis, a new transformation begins. One fine day, the chrysalis turns transparent, and before long, splits and a beautiful monarch butterfly emerges. If one has ever been privileged to observe this miracle with a group of young children, you know that children are touched by the miracle of *life* more profoundly than we may realize. Could it be that in the unconscious memory, there is stored an eternal impression of the moment of their birth—their transformation from fertilized cell to fetus to infant—their emergence from their chrysalis, the womb, into the world?

Whether it is observing life cycles in nature, planting seeds and caring for plants, sorting pictures, or reading books, the emphasis at Casa Montessori is always on an awareness that all living things have within them a "life force," an energy, an awareness, a sensitivity, no matter at how low a level; that all living things have a purpose for their existence at whatever level of development; that all living things are interrelated and interdependent.

If our children can go out into the world as adults with this attitude, this awareness, perhaps there will be less need for "earth days," wildlife federations, commissions on human rights, and other means of bringing the adult consciousness to the most important principle: respect and concern for anything begins with the most basic respect *respect for life!*

Taking Montessori Home: *Respect for life at home*

Who feeds the pets in your home? . . . takes the dog out for a walk? Cleans the hamster's cage? Who helps weed the flower beds, water the plants? Who prepares the meals?

Anything that is alive needs nurturing, care, and sustenance. Nowhere can the important lesson be made more clear to children than to their daily life routines in the home. Nowhere is it more important that this lesson be learned than by example in the home. How each member of a family meets his/her needs as well as being aware of the needs of other family members is the first step in developing the ability to live in a community, in society. The simplest tasks of caring for pets or plants and preparing meals are all opportunities to learn what 'meeting needs' is all about. Sometimes, family members may involve themselves too deeply in solving the problems of society and the world and they forget to first pay attention to the basic needs and rights of *life* right in their own home.

Much of what is basic to the Montessori philosophy about respect for *life* in the prepared environment is easily adapted for application in the home. First and foremost, are grace and courtesy lessons. To be polite shows respect for self, as well as for others. "Please" and "thank you" are so easy to say, take only a moment, and change feelings of "have to" into "want to." It is much easier to form positive habits from the early years than to have to unlearn negative

habits later on in life. Kind words and gentle actions nurture kind and gentle persons. Kind and gentle persons have an instinctive and natural respect for life.

Pets in the home provide companionship and entertainment. More important, however, is the life lesson to be learned from having a living entity dependent on you for the continuation of life. A pet needs food and material sustenance as well as emotional nurturing. From their earliest years, children can participate in providing this sustenance and accepting responsibility for it in small, successive steps. When they forget to balk at carrying out their responsibility, one need give only a gentle reminder, "What if we forgot to give you lunch? What if we didn't feel like taking you to the doctor when you are sick?" Every privilege carries a responsibility. To have a living thing dependent on you is a great responsibility. A pet is not a toy that can be mistreated or discarded when not wanted. Children can be taught to treat pets with care and gentleness.

Watching the cycle of seasons in your outdoor environment prepares a child for beginnings and endings—birth, life, death, rebirth. It isn't necessary to offer intellectual explanations to children to help them apprehend these great mysteries of life. Watching leaves bud out, live, change color, dry up, fall, only to see new leaves reappear next spring is a perfect example of birth, life, death, rebirth. We cannot know how, but when a child is made aware of these processes, the apprehension, the unconscious preparation for later conscious understanding takes place.

In food preparation, to talk about how our food is made available to use is a great lesson in respect for life. *Life sustains life.* Other living beings' efforts are necessary for all of us to sustain *life*. Disrespect for resources and life can create situations where *life* ceases to exist, or conditions which make *life* extremely difficult. Animals, plants, and humans have had to secure

food long before the advent of supermarkets, plant nurseries, and pet stores. Those cultures which remain close to a prime source for their food supplies, by necessity, show much more respect for plants and animals than modern cultures do when it comes to conservation of resources. Letting your children have a small garden, helping them to get it to fruition, and then eating the products of their efforts is an exceptionally vivid and dynamic lesson of our dependency on others for our food supplies.

Plants not only maintain life, they add to beauty. Many times a child will pull off a flower not realizing that it is a living thing. My Japanese Ikebana teacher once told me, "The flower has given up its life for you. You must show it to its greatest beauty." Take the flower, place it in water (floating it will do if no stem remains), and enjoy its beauty. When it wilts, explain to the child that if we leave the flower on the plant, it will live longer. And if you do cut flowers for a bouquet, remember to show them to their greatest beauty.

We are never as fully alive as when we are children. When we respect our children, we respect *life*. When **we** respect *life*, we teach our children to respect *life*. If we all could learn to respect *life*—in the words of John Lennon, just "imagine!"

Respect for Life: Book Recommendations

There are many children's books that parents can share (meaning to sit together closely and read the book together, stopping from time to time to answer questions or to discuss a thought). Below is a selection of books that should be available in your library. All present a respect for life in many different forms, periods of development, life cycles, and the interrelatedness of life. Enjoy!

The Farm Book. E. Boyd Smith. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982.

Bread, Bread, Bread. Ann Morris. NY: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1989.

Tree of Life. Barbara Bash. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1989.

The Great Kapok Tree. Lynne Cherry. NY: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1990.

Once There Was a Tree. Natalia Romanova. NY: Dial Books, 1985.

Miss Rumphius. Barbara Cooney. NY: Viking Press, 1982.

The Land of the Grey Wolf. Thomas Locker. NY: Dial Books, 1991.

A River Ran Wild. Lynn Cherry. NY: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992.

Brother Eagle, Sister Sky. Susan Jeffers. NY: Dial Books, 1991.

Lifetimes. Bryan Mellonie & Robert Ingpen. NY: Bantam Books, 1983.

Beyond the Ridge. Paul Goble. NY: Bradbury Press, 1989.

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Allyson working with polygons.

eScrip

Here's a really simple way to raise money for the school—sign up with eScrip and a percentage of your purchases will automatically be donated to Philomath Montessori School every time you use your credit or club cards to shop at Safeway, Office Max, Merry Maids, Eddie Bauer, Sierra Trading Post and a number of other merchants.

The percentages donated by the merchants vary from 1% to as much as 8% (Eddie Bauer and Sierra Trading Post both give 5%, Dream Dinners gives 8%). Signing up is easy, just get your credit cards and grocery club card numbers ready, go to www.escrip.com and follow the 6 easy steps: (1) select Philomath Montessori School; (2) enter your name and address and, (optional) e-mail address and phone number; (3) enter your grocery or other merchant club card number; (4) enter your charge or debit card numbers and expiration dates; (5) enter any retail credit or gift card numbers; and (6) check over the information. EScrip pledges to keep all information provided safe and does not sell any names or addresses to anyone. You can also elect to create a password protected account which will enable you to track purchases and donations to the school. It's easy, free, and could add up to a lot of dollars for the school, what's to lose?

Thank You

We've had a lot of help from parents just in the last month and half - a constant stream of projects. **Tessa Hanover and Jessica Neebe** sewed loops on classroom cloths, **Tessa** also cut paper for writing single words (tedious!), **Barbara Hinds-Cook** trimmed some laminated geography charts, **Lanny McGaughy**, **Michelle Mincinski**, and **Dodie Wilson** cut shapes for various painting activities, **Sherri Mortensen** prepared two different collage activities and cut shapes for drawing, **Jin Kim** cut shapes for sand painting, **Melissa Schreiber** prepared 3rd level sewing cards and will be creating journals for our older students. Thank you for doing such beautiful work - it draws the children like a magnet and inspires them!

John Miedema cut an unusable lock off our lock box so we can get it back into the classroom and **Jeff Skinner** will be reattaching the molding on our east wall. Thanks for the help!

In our school yard, **Trevor and Melissa Norland** have been mowing, trimming the borders and pruning back our shrubs and plants, **Lanny McGaughy** posted new 'no trespassing' signs, **Jessica Bonds** removed broken plastic panels around the tower, and **John Miedema** fixed our faucet outdoors and our backdoor light (which just needed a new lightbulb - duh!). Many thanks for taking care of these jobs.

A big thank you to the **Boroom-Hanover** family for gifting a handsome bench for the adults in our outdoor area - we have it in a beautiful spot that has a full view of our backyard. By the way... the children are enjoying it a lot, too. Thank you also to **Bill Maher and Eager Beaver Landscaping** for taking care of our lawn this summer. When I called because we hadn't received a bill, he insisted "No, it's a community service". Another big thank you goes to **Jessica Bonds** for donating a large ad space in MOM magazine. Look for us in the next issue! The children loved all the fruit that was sent in, too. **Jessica Neebe** and **Carol Hulstrunk** both sent in a box of fruit - plums and pears. **Phaedra**, for her 3rd birthday, gave our school the wonderful book "Roots" and **Harrison** for his 7th birthday gave us some lovely pansies to plant in our garden. Thank you very much for thinking of us on your special occasion.

We are very grateful for the dreamcatcher and books that **Janel Lawrence** sent in, the incredible sand paintings that **Beth Jordan** lent us, and the books and story CD that **John Miedema** let us use during our focus on Native Americans. Many thanks to the **Benton County Historical Museum** and their docent **Ellen Strader**. Mrs. Strader brought in many incredible artifacts from the Calapooia tribe that lived in the Willamette Valley and shared them with our very curious and engaged full day class.

Right after our parent meeting in September, **Karen Patrick** did some research online for both the Natural Step organization and EScrip. The

information she gathered was very helpful and she'll be sharing it with you in this newsletter and at our next meeting. **Carol Hulstrunk** got the lowdown on the Calzone booth for us and **Jeff Skinner** (and **Monica**, too) has volunteered to head up that fundraiser! Thank you all for your help!

It looks like the Silent/Live Auction festivities have begun -- the signups are up and it appears that spaces are filling up quickly. Many thanks to **Christi McLaren** and **Carol Hulstrunk** for their organizational wizardry and to all of you for your responsive support.

Our deep appreciation to **Jessica Neebe**, **Kathy Donaldson**, and **Tessa Hanover** for all the work they are doing in connection with the College of Philomath Community Corporation (CPCC) and the Philomath Area Senior Citizen Association (PASCA).

Many, many thanks for all that you do to support us and we hope all of you are enjoying the beautiful fall as much as we are!



Sydney doing opening and closing activity.

Newsline

- ❖ As we enter the fall/winter season, please remember that our school follows the Philomath School District on **severe**

weather conditions. If they call off school, so do we. If there is a one-hour delay, it does not affect the opening of our school. If there is a two-hour delay, we will open at 9:45. Please tune into your favorite local radio station, check the school district web page or call the school - there should be a message announcing our school closure.

- ❖ It's also time to think about **changing the extra clothes** from summer wear to winter warmth. If they have an accident, changing into short-sleeve shirts and shorts may be a little disagreeable.
- ❖ There will be **no school** on Thursday, November 9. It is an inservice day.
- ❖ There will be **no school** Wednesday, November 22 and Thursday, November 23 -- Thanksgiving holiday. School will resume on Monday, November 27.
- ❖ There will be **no extended day** on Tuesday, December 20. **Winter break begins Tuesday, December 19. School will resume on Wednesday, January 3.**
- ❖ There will be **no school** on Monday, January 15 -- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Upcoming Events

- ❖ On Thursday, November 16, we will have a **Parent Meeting** from 6:00 - 7:30pm. Free childcare will be available in the nursery.
- ❖ We are planning to put our **next newsletter** out the week of February 12th. If you would like to put an article in our newsletter, please email me a copy at phms@peak.org by February 8.