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# Philomath Montessori School

## October 2008



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

### Classroom News

Last night the temperature dropped to thirty-five degrees. My poor cocker spaniel, Sophie, who was recently shorn at the groomer's, was shivering terribly this morning as she went about her "outdoor business." It seems that fall weather is here. In the classroom, that means lots of practice putting on our coats and boots, then putting our shoes back on when we come back inside. We also get to practice putting our boots into our boot bags, which is actually very difficult for our beginners. We try to come back inside a little early to allow time for all that, but if you come to pick up your child at noon, you may find stragglers in the hall. Just ignore us.

We're learning about Sudan, which was once one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world, with hundreds of tribes, languages and ways of life. War, famine, drought and urbanization has changed all that, but it is still a very interesting country. We've learned about the vast differences in the lives of urban and rural dwellers. We've learned how the Dinka care for their herds and how they use every resource that the cattle provide, even dyeing their hair with urine. Pauline told us how many people have to labor all day just to fetch water. We've learned that in some cultures where there are

few resources, people express themselves through body art. They dye, paint, bead and even scar themselves to show their creativity, marital state and status within the group.

Of course, you can't learn about an African country without talking about its wildlife. Since Sudan is a very biologically diverse country, possessing desert, grasslands, rainforests, mountains and one of the largest swamps in the world, called the Sudd, it has many, many different kinds of fauna. Its flora, too is diverse and iconic with acacia, ebony, baobab, papyrus and rubber plants. Some of these plants are mentioned in the African myths we've been reading. Today, after reading *How the Cheetah Got His Speed* and *Why the Cheetah's Face is Stained with Tears* to the full day kids, one of them told the story of *How the Lion Got His Roar*, from her memory of it from last year.



*Anna W.*

We have spoken to everyone, but more at length with the full day, about the religions that abound in Sudan, particularly Islam and traditional African religion. We have read and told about the five pillars of Islam and also of the ancient traditions of indigenous African religion, which include altars, offerings, ancestor worship and the spirits that inhabit all things. Christianity is also widespread in Sudan. We have not yet mentioned the civil wars and ethnic hatred that has devastated the nation, but we will touch upon that reality, too.

We have learned that Muslims are forbidden to create human figures in their art and so geometric design and calligraphy flourish in Muslim cultures. Leslie has created some lovely activities which emphasize these art forms. Sudanese music has been somewhat hard to find. We have some, provided by our library parent, Barbara Hinds-Cook, who always scavenges what there is to be found for us. We have been walking on the line to music from many African countries. Today we spoke about how some tribes, for centuries, if not millennia, have created dances that mimic the movements of animals. That really inspired the children and today's dancing was particularly outstanding.



*Hayden.*

A lot of non-Sudanese things have been going on as well. We've been memorizing poems. I believe this is great brain-training as well as a hallmark of cultured people everywhere. The

children love it. One girl in particular is great at remembering the names of the poets, too. We rely on her. We can recite "Good Morning" by Muriel Sipe, "Susan Blue" by Kate Greenaway and "Mice" by Rose Fyleman. There will be more to come. Pauline has been introducing us to a featured artist each month, too. Leslie then creates an art activity that borrows from the artist's style.



*Joey.*

Last month Pauline told us about Hans Arp, who believed strongly in the power of chance and so would let his collage materials flutter to the paper and he would secure them wherever they landed. Today we learned about Faith Ringgold. Yesterday was her 78<sup>th</sup> birthday. She is an artist who frames her pictures in quilt squares. Her pictures usually tell a story. She also is the author of many children's books and is a songwriter as well. We are singing her song "Anyone Can Fly." We have learned some other new songs this year, too, including "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning", "The Sound of Music" and "Crawdad Hole". We've been playing some organized games on the playground such as Five Brown Buns, London Bridge, What Time is it Mr. Fox? and Farmer in the Dell. A few children have learned a little song and dance from the opera "Hansel and Gretel." We have great fun.

We often, though not every day, go out for a time after lunch, too. The older children

and I have played some fun math games which call for us to divide ourselves up into groups of 2, 3, 4 or 5, sometimes resulting in a remainder. We also replicate the Cards and Counters formations with our bodies, demonstrating which numbers are odd and which are even. Fun! I think we will next play the preposition game, asking children to go behind, in front of, around, under, over, through, next to, above, on top of and beside various playground landmarks. More fun!

Speaking of fun, I really enjoyed our lunch workshop for full-day parents. It was very well-attended and pleasant. Pauline and I got to share some ideas for kids making their own nutritious, sustainable, portable lunches. I would really appreciate some feedback from you parents who attended, though. Did you like that? Would you come again? Was it useful? Or should we throw the whole thing on the scrap pile? Are any kids making their own lunches? Perhaps I shall have to grill you at parent-teacher conferences.

As you all know, we sent a dear friend to his rest on Wednesday, October 8. Our alumnus dad, Ed Bomber was taken from us far too soon. His death was brought up at group on the day of his funeral and Pauline and I were prepared to address it. We solicited from the children what they already knew about Ed's passing and what their conceptions of death and the afterlife were. They knew plenty. Pauline read a book we own called "Lifetimes" that spells out how every living thing has a beginning and an end and what is in between is called life. Perhaps you at home have had the opportunity to share your beliefs and experiences about this important phase of life, too. We benefit our children and lay the foundation for a richer life when we speak to them of spiritual matters. They are all ready to receive your ideas on some level and as they mature so will their understanding. I hope mine will, too.



## Remembering Ed Bomber

When I think of Ed, a smile and a ready quip to make those around him laugh come to mind right away. Add to this his generosity when it came to heading up a resurrection of our Love of Learning Fun Run, donating matching funds for new equipment in our school office, or bidding madly at our auction. He was passionate about running and biking (and as Gearhart said, getting there with swimming), but it never exceeded his passion for his family. It has been very difficult for all of us to accept Ed's death. To Kay, Paul, Gavin, Joanna, Allyson, and to their extended family, we offer our thoughts, prayers, and support.

If you would like to be part of our circle of support for the Bomber family, use the link below, and enter your email address under "Interested in becoming a member of this community???"

<http://www.lotsahelpinghands.com/c/607705/login>

You will be asked to enter your name, phone number, and any other information you want to provide. You will get a confirmation message inviting you to sign-in, create your own password, and begin signing up to help. If you have any problems, email Pauline (phmsch@gmail.com).



*Beginning of year potluck.*

## Concentration

When parents meet with Pauline or myself for Parent-Teacher Conferences, they are likely to hear us speak of concentration. We'll relate how often we see your child concentrating, if at all, how long it tends to last, what may impede his/her concentration, which activities promote concentration for your child, etc. We set great store on concentration here and I'd like to explain briefly why that is so. To us Montessorians, concentration is not just a useful skill that helps us to be productive people. Concentration is the key to inner peace and fulfillment. Concentration on an activity, deep focus and repetition of an activity indicates to us that this piece of work is deeply satisfying to your child on an unconscious, developmental level. Children of this age cannot concentrate on something simply because we desire it or ask it of them. They will only concentrate on something, doing it again and again, forsaking all temptation to leave it only if it is meeting a developmental need. That need may be physical, like the fine motor skills needed to sew or hold a pencil correctly or the large motor work and great exertion required to carry something heavy from place to place. It may be an intellectual activity such as sorting out the five classes of vertebrates using picture cards of reptiles, birds, mammals, fish and amphibians. It may be a social activity such as organizing a game or observing others resolve a conflict. Whatever it is, it must be something the child finds truly fascinating and therefore, is usually something he

has chosen himself. It also usually involves physical movement as movement integrates the brain. Pauline and I do assign work to children if they are reluctant to settle on something themselves (and some are!), but the chances that real concentration will ensue are unlikely if the work is not self-chosen. So we also place great importance on initiation and self-direction. The child has an unconscious wisdom that will guide him to the right thing if it is not confused and distracted by disorder, excess or interference.



*Ian A. gets a lesson from Doni.*

Concentration is so valuable because it is the beginning of Dr. Montessori's formula for world peace. Following an event of concentration and work, the child's innate drive to develop herself is satisfied. The work of the child is creative and the creation she is building is her adult self. When she has been allowed to do so, she feels a deep sense of peace. She feels centered. She is immediately more pro-social and her anti-social tendencies seem to fall away. A child who is pathologically shy becomes more outgoing. A child who demands constant attention becomes more emotionally independent. A messy child becomes neater. An aggressive child is gentled. A loud child is quieted. A selfish child becomes generous. This state is fleeting and requires another session of concentration to be rekindled again and again. Dr. Montessori referred to this phenomenon as normalization. She felt that these pro-social tendencies are the norm for the child and that he becomes deviated and anti-social when his energies are not properly

channeled. The flow of his life force being channeled into purposeful activity is like water and sunshine to a plant. He blossoms. Dr. Montessori believed that if all children were offered the opportunity to develop themselves and become normalized, we would become normalized adults, uninterested in harming or influencing each other unduly and ta-da! World peace.

If you would like to speak to us about how you can promote concentration at home, we would love to discuss it. Please give us a call.



*Card and counters*

## Thank You's - October 2008

The many art, writing, and sewing activities that fill our shelves require lots of preparation to be appealing and ready for children to jump into when they feel inspired. Our thanks to following parents who have helped us inspire the children: **Janel Lawrence** cut large circles and body shapes for drawing and prepared the many components for the mobile activity, **Alyssa Moses** also helped with the mobile activity and she prepared paper for our bead stair writing, **Gretchen Goode** traced and cut paper for drawing and painting, **Heather Gerding** prepared our paper chain cutting activity, **Anya Mae Panose**, who graduated last June, prepared collage shapes for us (it's been a nice way for her to stay connected to us!) **Debbie Alba** sewed a hem around our new snack table cloth and **Hattie Muir** cut labels for Africa and Asia maps.

A strong gust of wind in September broke a huge branch of the oak tree that shades our play yard tearing down the corner of our fence. A big thank you to **Trevor and Keller Norland** for coming in that very weekend to repair and secure our fence!

There have been some leftover jobs from our parent work day that **Trina McGaughy**, our volunteer coordinator, has been trying to get done. So **Lanny McGaughy** will be sanding and painting our much-used and worn monkey bars as well as posting a couple more No Trespassing signs. He also removed the scrap lumber from our play structure repair project. Thank you **Trina and Lanny!**

**Lua Siegal** is organizing our Montessori Services order and also brought in her projector to do a dry run for our parent ed night. We ended up cancelling, but we are still grateful for the time and energy she spent setting up.

Many thanks to **Naomi Cohen** (Leslie's daughter and one of our alumnus) for taking some great shots at our potluck!

**Phaedra Hinds-Cook** gifted our class with a beautiful book filled with stunning black and white photos that depict life in Madagascar through a young girl - *Torina's World*. **James Cunningham** presented our classroom with *Shells* from our gift list - a shell identification book that we've been longing to have in our classroom. Many thanks, **Phaedra and James**, for your generous gifts!

A very big and warm thank you to **Michele Mincinski and Dodie Wilson** for stepping up to chair our auction fundraiser!! With enthusiasm even!! Yeah!!



*Meagan and Phaedra.*

## Sydney's Leaving

At the end of November, Sydney is moving down to Davis, California and she's taking Monica and Jeff, too. We are going to miss our classroom guardian. Her strong sense of order often compelled her to let a new one know what the rules were, but always in a sweet and patient way. Then she'd swiftly break away outside on the trail of Diego - to the rescue! Like Diego, her hero, she was a leader who was always willing to offer a helping hand -- much like her awesome parents.



*Sydney.*

During Sydney's first year, Monica did a fabulous job with Beth garnering many donations from restaurants and caterers for our auction

fundraiser and then last year, she co-chaired our big fundraiser with Dodie. Together they exceeded all expectations. Jeff also stepped up to head up the Calzone booth which not only brought in a chunk of change, but also was great fun! He spent most of the day with smoke in his eyes, but also with a grin on his face. We are going to miss these guys a lot. We want to thank them for the many things they have done for our school and for sharing Sydney with us. Now, Oregon is just north of California so, Monica and Jeff, please visit often and stay in touch!

## Newsline and Calendar - Upcoming Events

- 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 ([http://www.philomath.k12.or.us/school\\_closure.php](http://www.philomath.k12.or.us/school_closure.php)) or call the school - there will be a message announcing our school closure/delay. If there is a delay, be sure to check Philomath School website again or call the school before leaving home - **sometimes a delay turns into a 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 a **fundraiser** at the Toy Factory on Friday, November 7, from 6:30 - 8:30. The Toy Factory will be donating 10% of all sales that evening to our school! Please invite family and friends!

- There will be **no school** on Monday, November 10 -- it is a teacher inservice day **and** on Tuesday, November 11, Veteran's Day.
- On Thursday, November 15, we will have a **Parent Meeting** from 6:00 - 7:00pm. Free childcare will be available in the nursery.
- There will be **no school** Wednesday, November 26 and Thursday, November 27 -- Thanksgiving holiday. School will resume on Monday, December 1.
- There will be **no extended day** on Thursday, December 18. **Winter break begins**

**Thursday, December 18 at noon.** School will resume on Monday, January 5.

- There will be a **Parent Meeting** on Thursday, January 17 at 6:00.
- There will be **no school** on Monday, January 21 -- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.
- **If you plan to use morning care, please call us the day before to let us know.** Since we have no children who come early on a regular basis, Leslie does not come in as early as before.