

November 2004

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# Philomath Montessori School Newsletter



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

There is a song often sung in Montessori classrooms called "At the Beginning." It goes like this:

At the beginning is a good place to be.  
What will each day bring for you and me?  
New life, new friends, new things to do!  
At the beginning is a good place to be.

And truer words were never spoken. This fall feels especially good to me. The weather has been pleasant and mild.



Blake, Shaden, and Leo on a mild fall morning.

All of the children are obviously enjoying their days at school. Parents have really pitched in to help as needed and have been supporting their children's process. It is a delight to see returning children grow and mature and to see the new ones trying so many new things.

And there are so many new things, new experiences, new vocabulary, new activities and new procedures for them to absorb! For some of these kids, this is their first experience with a roomful of potential friends and playmates. They don't even know what it means to be or have a friend. Is it someone who is the same age and gender as you? Someone who does whatever you tell them? Someone who wants to sit, stand, eat snack, drink water, work, play only with you? Well, our third-year students are still sorting this out. It is a complicated business, this business of friendship.

The children are, for the most part, very willing spirits. I see many returning children who are eager to help whenever asked and the new children (most of them) are courageous enough to ask an older child for help. They need help tying aprons, rolling rugs, putting materials back in good order, etc. It is this very combination of

need and generosity that helps us to learn to live a life of service

The new children are slowly learning to choose their own work. It must be difficult to mentally sort out the many presentations one has actually had from the many more activities one has only seen others do. There is, too, a hesitation for some to err. But as the days go by, children remember more and more what is theirs to do, how to set it up, which apron, which underlay, where to put it when finished and so on. They eventually "screw their courage to the sticking place" to paraphrase Macbeth and take a chance on not doing everything perfectly. We really try to cultivate what we call a "friendliness with error" which is so necessary for growth.



Jensen pieces together some sea creatures.

Parents may, as the year goes on, find that they need to be more attentive to keeping their child supplied with extra clothes at school. That is because Pauline and I have decided, when we notice someone changing, not to inquire about whether they "need" to change their

clothes or not. Some children just like to change, no? And this is as good a vehicle for purposeful movement, coordination, concentration, etc as any. So as long as they are independent about it and clean up after themselves, we will follow a policy of non-interference. I do hope this does not burden you parents unduly. Perhaps you might like to train your child to set his/her replacement clothes by your home's typical exit right after school. Then they can participate even more fully in the choice they've made to change clothes for no apparent reason.

Our study of Ghana is proceeding nicely. Leslie is preparing or has prepared lots of wonderful art activities that reflect Ghanaian arts. There are several kinds of paper weaving of varying difficulties, an Adrinka printing activity, a fish collage that reflects their fishing industry. We are walking on the line to African (not strictly Ghanaian) music, playing Ghanaian drums, polishing gourds (gourds are ubiquitous as containers there), and singing Ghanaian and African songs. We are also singing "Oats, Peas Beans and Barley Grow" as an homage to their very important crop farming. We have shared many beautiful books about or set in Ghana, too. At the least, I hope we are all coming to understand that Africa is a large continent with many different countries and cultures within it.

We are looking forward to the upcoming pre-conference observations. For you new parents, you will be observing in the hall, through the window. Please turn the lights off in the hall to make the

one-way glass more effective, remain quiet in the hallway and duck out of sight if someone is entering the hall from the classroom. Those returning parents who will be coming in, please be as unobtrusive as possible. We would like you to witness our daily life, not influence it directly. If someone addresses you, just tell them, "I've come to watch the work" and then turn your attention away. That will really help. And who knows, maybe this will be a new skill you may find enriching. Just observing without participating shows you an entirely different scenario than you would see if you intervened. It can be very telling. I hope you enjoy it.



Morgan grates some nutmeg

We also look forward to conferencing with you all. Please write your appointment down in a prominent place so you won't miss it. It

is greatly aggravating to us when folks don't show up! What a waste of time! Also, if you have any concerns or information to share, please don't wait for conference time. Give us a call between 2:30 and 4:00, e-mail or write us a note and we'll get back to you.

I do hope the school year is as positive for all of you as it has been for me. I would like to thank you all for your regular attendance and punctuality. It makes a big difference.

## Thank You's

It's really a staggering list of work that has been done in just the last two months by all of you. It started on Parent Workday when eight families came to help us get the classroom and schoolyard prepped for the new year. There was too much work done to even list! We'd like to thank **Jessica Bonds, Marla and Steve, Glo, the Leonard Family, Carol, Christi, Shaun and Sherri, Jin, Jonathan, and Jessica Neebe.** It feels so great to start the year organized and ready to go. We can focus on planning, creating and putting together new activities and getting to know our new families -- in other words, the fun stuff!

We are very grateful to our mentor parents for attending our new family orientation: **Kathy and Jeremy Donaldson, Judith Jayawickrama, and Jessica Neebe.** A special thank you to **Jessica Neebe** for organizing a couple of

get-togethers over the summer to introduce the new children to our school.

There are some jobs that need year-round attention and work; so we are very thankful that these parents are willing to take on the big jobs. **Jessica Bonds** is our Library Parent, **Carol** is our Marketing Parent, **Christi** and **Lisa** are our art parents, **Janie** is our Outdoor Maintenance Parent, **Sherri** is our Classroom Gift Parent, **Jessica Neebe** is our Volunteer Coordinator, **Lisa** is our School Chronicler, **Melissa** is our Meeting Secretary, and **Kathy** is our Newsletter Editor and Publisher.

There has been an intense amount of work done for the classroom as we try to re-supply everything at the beginning of the year and fill up the expression shelves with lots of art activities. **Jessica Bonds** cut out felt shapes for appliqué sewing, **Jessica Neebe** prepared felt for button sewing, **Jin** cut booklet paper, trimmed geography pictures, and prepped collage material, **Judith** prepared sewing cards, cut and collated papers for addition and multiplication, **Tom and Glo** cut math booklets, paper for metal insets, math writing paper, and clock paper, **Christi**, as one of art parents, has done lots of cutting -- butterflies, fish, tissue, circles, and small shapes, **Carol** has trimmed geography pictures, prepared burlap for sewing, and cutting for several art activities, **Kim** cut various shapes for many art activities, prepared the mobius strip activity, and trimmed laminated cards, **Dawnelle** cut collage shapes and strips for weaving, **Amy**

cut triangles for an art activity, **Barbara** cut sponges for cloth printing and prepared sewing cards, **Melissa** also prepared sewing cards, muslin for sewing, and cut clock paper, **Kelly** also prepared sewing cards (we use a lot!), **Lisa** cut paper shapes for art activities, and **Debbie** trimmed geography pictures. **Sherri** and **Lisa** did beautiful work on the tedious job of cutting out sandpaper letters for both the italic and cursive alphabets. **Lisa** also took care of printing the covers for our handbooks and getting them stapled as well. Thank you so much!

Over the summer **Denis** spent 12 hours mowing, trimming, and maintaining our garden! What a guy! **Chris** installed one of our new paper towel dispensers. He also recently saw that we needed some light bulbs replaced and took care of it. But either the bulbs were too old or the ballast is broken so he will be working on it again. Thanks, **Chris**!

A big thank-you to the **Mortensens**! I needed someone to receive our new greenhouse on a certain day and someone who would have no problems lifting heavy boxes. I thought of **Shaun** and he quickly responded to my call for help. He also patiently stored the boxes for more than a month and when **Allan** couldn't around to helping him get the greenhouse up, he organized a work party. So **Shaun** and **Sherri**, **Dave Alba** and **Jessica Neebe** worked in the rain to get our new biome house completed. That same weekend the



Mortensens refinished our picnic tables!  
Thank you all very much.



Wow, look at the new greenhouse!

I also wanted to acknowledge the special work that **Kathy** is doing for our school through the College of Philomath Community Corporation (CPC) and the Philomath Area Senior Citizens Association. **Kathy** analyzed the data from the Philomath senior survey (completed this past summer), and turned it into a presentable and effective document for planning and grant writing. She also used it to wow everyone at the stakeholders' meeting in August. And after seeing what she did to follow up with the senior survey respondents who indicated that they wanted to volunteer to help with the new senior center, I was delighted to hear that

she will be heading up the Public Relations work group for CPC. Go, **Kathy**!

As you can see, we have a fabulous group of people -- talented, hardworking, incredibly generous and just plain wonderful. Thank you for all your support and help!!

## Children's Books

I love good children's books. When I first starting teaching, it was difficult to find books that filled the bill. Over the years I have collected many and I'd like to begin sharing some of the titles with you. These are some of my favorites -- not only do they have stories that captivate, but illustrations that inspire. All of these books are appropriate for children 3 - 6 years old. Enjoy!

Everybody Needs a Rock by Byrd Baylor

Minou by Mindy Bingham

Grandfather and I by Jan Omerod

Night Tree by Eve Bunting

Miss Rumphius by Barbara Cooney

Oliver Button Is a Sissy by Tomie de Paola

How My Parents Learned to Eat by Allen Say

Something From Nothing by Phoebe Gilman

Max by Rachel Isadora

Emma by Wendy Kesselman

Helpin' Bugs by Rosemary Lonberg

Six-Dinner Sid by Inge Moore

All I See by Cynthia Rylant

The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant

Someplace Else by Carol P. Saul

Humphrey the Lost Whale by Wendy

Tokuda by Richard Hall

Ira Sleeps Over by Bernard Waber

Owl Moon by Jane Yolen

A New Coat for Anna by Harriet Ziefert

I Know a Lady by Charlotte Zolotow

## On Discipline

*When we speak of discipline in Montessori we mean self-discipline: the ability to function freely, responsibly and independently within one's environment. It means that the child has internalized discipline and it is no longer necessary for the adult or an authority to impose it externally. This is a point of arrival. It is never the starting point.*

*Below is an article by Polli Soholt, a Montessori teacher who began writing newsletters for other Montessorians before I began teaching. This article offers a valuable way to bring Montessori into your home.*

In order for children to become responsible for their actions, they need to learn that there are consequences for all their behaviors, both positive and negative. The consequences for their positive behaviors are getting what they want and/or satisfying others by their actions. Often children do not get to experience the consequences of their negative behaviors, as the adults take that opportunity away with punishment. For example, if a child writes on the wall with

crayons, sending her to her room does not make her directly responsible for her actions. If she is required to clean the wall (with adult assistance if necessary), she will learn that if you write on surfaces other than paper, you must clean that surface. An additional consequence could be that the child loses her opportunity to use crayons for one day. When the crayons are given back, she can be asked to tell the adult why they were taken away. This "self" reminder usually works, because it comes from the child. Adults who continually remind a child what is expected (when she already knows) are encouraging the child to tune them out. Children cannot be expected to develop good memories unless they are given practice, responsibility, and the opportunity to remember things.

It is important for adults to be consistent with behavioral expectations. If children are to hang up their jackets when they come home, they need to hang them up every time they enter the house. If they are allowed to leave their jackets on the floor sometimes, and other times are expected to hang them up, they will become confused about the expectations and guidelines, and spend needless energy and time thinking about whether today is a day to hang up their jackets or throw them on the floor. If adults are consistent, they will *know* that the jackets must be hung up *every* day. This consistency gives them a sense of security. They know what is expected, and will not fall into patterns of manipulative or sneaky behavior.

It is sometimes appropriate to take away opportunities as a consequence for unacceptable behavior. For example, if a child repeatedly disturbs others by running and shouting in the library, it would be appropriate to leave him with a sitter the next time the rest of the family goes to the library. It is important to use this consequence when the opportunity taken away is not a one-time event. For example, if a child is not allowed to go to a birthday party because his room has not been cleaned up, the lesson learned may not be the one intended. The child may begin to fear the adult; he may begin to dread being invited out; he may begin to hide important thoughts from adults; or if he has been hurt by his loss of opportunity, he may have learned how to hurt people. It is in everyone's best interest to allow him to go to the party, and when he returns home, curtail all other activities until his room is clean. It is important to make the consequence fit the "crime". Taking away a special opportunity is out of proportion to the offense.

There are situations wherein the adult will decide to correct a problem that was created by a child. This could occur when a child has left a mess unnoticed by the adult, and then gone to school or to a friend's house to play. If the adult is expecting company or needs to use the area affected while the child is gone, it may be necessary to pick up the toys or clothes and put them away. When the child returns home, it can be pointed out to him

that the things he left out had to be put away, and since it was his responsibility to do so, he now must make up the time the adult spent in doing some of her work. Choose a task that is suitable for his age and ability, and tell him "It took me 10 minutes to put away the things that you left out, so I need you do some of my work for 10 minutes. Here are some towels that need to be folded. I will let you know when 10 minutes are up."

If these consequences are presented to the children in a calm, matter-of-fact way, they will become simple lessons and not major events. These repeated simple lessons will allow the children to learn how to take responsibility for their actions and behavior.



Anna works diligently at her sewing.

## Silent Auction Update

We are making good progress on the annual Silent Auction fundraiser. For those who may not know, the fundraiser is held once a year to raise money for classroom supplies and for scholarships. As parents we solicit local businesses to donate gift certificates or items to be auctioned at the fundraiser. Also, parents can donate services/goods to be auctioned off. Examples of past parent donations include: Cookies for a year, Dinner for 4, help in your garden...

If you'd like to become involved in our largest fundraiser of the year here are some suggestions:

- Look over the business sign up sheets in the hallway. Sign your name next to a business and solicit them by November 18<sup>th</sup>. Make sure you bring with you a letter, receipt and blank gift certificate. Businesses may or may not need these, but you should have them available.
- Sign up to make a donation from your family on the "Family Donation" list.
- Sign up to be on a committee such as clean-up, registration

- Tell your family and friends about the auction and invite them!

Many families have already done one or all of the suggestions from above-Thanks! We feel that it is a great way to get involved in the school and to get your volunteer hours. The success of the auction reflects what level of parental involvement there is.

Here are the particulars so far:

December 11, 2004 6pm-9pm

At the Clemens Primary School

There will be a children's program as well

A couple weeks before the auction there will be invitations available for you to mail to family and friends. There will also be a sign up sheet for bringing desserts. Keep looking at postings in the hallway for updates.

Thank you again to all of those getting involved! If you have any questions please contact Jessica Bonds or Jessica Neebe.



PhM Alumnus Caelin dishes up a potluck dinner while Harrison watches from across the table



## 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. Please tune into your favorite local radio station for announcements. We will follow the same schedule as Philomath if there is a late start; however, no later than 10:30am.
- 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.
- Please **amend your class list**. I forgot to change the Bonds' telephone number to their current one: 929-3535
- There will be **no school** on Thursday, November 11 -- Veteran's Day.
- There will be **no school** Wednesday, November 24 and Thursday, November 25 -- Thanksgiving holiday. School will resume on Monday, November 29.
- There will be **no extended day** on Thursday, December 17. **Winter break begins**. School will resume on Monday, January 3.
- There will be **no school** on Monday, January 17, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.



Madison, Lillikoi, and Anya Mae

## Upcoming Events

We have a **Montessori in the Home parent workshop** planned for Thursday, October 28 from 6:30 - 8pm. Signup sheets will be on the wall. Free childcare will be available. Minimum signup is 10 participants.

On Thursday, November 18, we will have a **Parent Meeting** from 6:30 - 8pm. Free childcare will be available in the nursery.

Our annual **Silent/Live Auction fundraiser** will be held on Saturday, December 11 at Clemens Primary School. Come join us for an evening of excitement and fun!

We will have a **Children's Open House** on Thursday, January 20 from 5:00 - 6:30. There will be a signup sheet in the hallway. This is your child's opportunity to spend time showing you what they do in the classroom.

### *Mark Your Calendars!*

No School	
Tuesday November 11	Veteran's Day
November 24 & 25 (School resumes Mon. 11/29)	Thanksgiving Holiday
December 21 - 31 (School resumes Mon 1/3)	Winter Break
Monday January 19	Martin Luther King Jr.
Half Day Only	
Thursday December 17	Stone Soup



Michelle, Shannan, and Morgan listen as Cassidy tells a story at the potluck

Would you like more information about Philomath Montessori School? You can always call the school at 929-2672. We'll be glad to send you a brochure about our pre-school and kindergarten program.