

# Philomath Montessori School Newsletter

DECEMBER 2017



To Develop the Human Potential

## Learning from each other

By Doni Manning-Cyrus

Jessica was sharing with me some tidbits about her recent parent-teacher conferences. We try to keep each other apprised of the good information we reap from these meetings. She was meeting with the family of a new child and they mentioned that certain children in the class seemed to cause their child some curiosity and concern. These curious children seemed to behave differently from the majority of our classmates. And this child was right on. She nailed it. Some kids do behave differently. This child's mother was quick to point out to Jessica that she regarded these behavioral differences as a boon to her child's development, teaching the child how to live with a diversity of personalities. And this mom was right on. She nailed it. Children do benefit greatly from being in community with people who challenge us.

Whether it be from developmental delay/disability, underdeveloped social skills or emotional issues, some children require more from the people around them. These demands that are placed on us, uncomfortable as they may be at times, are actually a blessing in disguise. We are now required to call upon our creativity, patience, forbearance, tolerance, empathy and compassion to create as much peace as possible.

As we know, to whom much is given, much is required. Those of us who can already manage our emotions, tolerate conflict, follow directions, etc., are at an advantage. We have these gifts to



Nico and Ella explore with the pink tower and brown stair.

share with those who do not ... yet. We must stretch ourselves to meet these challenging individuals where they are and bridge that gap.

Sometimes that may mean avoidance of the child who is not yet peaceful. That can be a useful gambit. It may mean ignoring small infractions of classroom rules and etiquette and "picking one's battles." It may mean making an extra effort to compliment and

acknowledge these children when they briefly do something positive that others do habitually. It may mean figuring out an approach that this person will welcome.

We teachers can often help with that by coaching. For example, our kids expect that when people speak, they will look at each other. They see, though, that not everyone is willing and able to do this. So this stymies them. It is

expected of them, so how do they proceed in communicating if this other person is not showing that they are receptive? This is when the adult may come along and say, "Looking at people is hard for this child at times. I think you should talk to her anyway and see if she can still hear your words." We often try to remind the children, when we speak of differences, that everyone has some things that they are good at and some things that are especially hard for them.

Jessica was recently telling me of a podcast interview she had listened to featuring a mother of four children, two of whom were on the autism spectrum and two of whom were typical. The eldest daughter, who was one of the typically developing kids, was interviewed as well. Jessica was struck by how mature and articulate this daughter was when she was asked, repeatedly, about the challenges of living in such a household. She never really admitted to the challenges, but kept bringing it back to the advantages. She felt she was more empathic, sensitive, tolerant and independent because of the skills she developed in community with her brothers with autism.

As I get older (yes, it's true!) I pay attention to the little tips one hears regarding how to ward off dementia. Being socially active is highly recommended as the mental acrobatics necessary to be with other humans is great cognitive exercise. People who lose their hearing later in life and do not rectify this have a much higher risk

Continued on Page 2

of dementia and Alzheimer's as they retreat further and further from the social world, hear less and less of what is said around them and cease to make those efforts required of social beings. The very same challenges that help to keep the elderly mentally fit also develop the brains of wee ones. It makes so much sense, does it not?

So, this mom who met with Jessica showed tremendous astuteness in realizing that what could be readily considered a hindrance to her child's education was, indeed, a help to her growth, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Her comments inspired this article and I thank her. I'm sure you will thank her, too, when you wrangle with a co-worker or family member who challenges you, for her insight. Instead of cursing this difficult person, you can silently thank them for helping you to stay so very, very sharp!

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, we are beginning our study of Nepal, which will continue until the end of January. I know very little about this landlocked, mountainous nation that borders India to the north. Now that I have done a bit of research, though, I am enamored. If you really want to get away from it all and escape to a culture that is a world away from your own, I highly recommend Nepal. Things are different there! If you do go, don't point to things with your finger. That's rude. Use your chin or your whole hand. We will be learning about some of these differences of etiquette as the weeks go by. They are fascinating. We will



**Roen shows off the brass he's busy polishing.**

be learning about social and family life, the economy, geography and wildlife. We will count to ten in Nepali and learn a few other words. I haven't learned a song in Nepali yet, but I intend to do so and then sing it with the kids.

We are greeting each other with "namaste" and our hands placed palm to palm,

thumbs toward one's chest. The meaning of "namaste" is (roughly) "the divine in me sees the divine in you." I tell the kids that it means that "what is most wonderful in me sees that which is most wonderful in you." Some may not know the meaning of divinity, but as we learn about

**Continued on Page 3**

## Thank You!

*Our sincere and humble thanks for the many things you do for us and give to us!! We are so fortunate.*

### Classroom and Take Home Projects

Cut burlap and muslin fabric for sewing: **Kai Foster**  
Prepared sewing cards: **Karen Remedios**

### Donations

Walnuts: **Houtman family, Remedios-Natarajan family, and Petersen family** (P.S. We have a healthy supply of walnuts now, so no need for more contributions!)

Flowers: **Russo family and Zuschlag family**

### Repairs

Installed outside motion lights: **Kail Zuschlag**

Fixed leaking toilet: **James Deatherage**

Classroom cleaning: **Alicia Jones, Kristen Arzner, Rachael Oehler and Kim Purdy**

### Other

Annual Giving Campaign Committee: **Julie Wiethorn and Rachel Houtman**

Phone Tree: **Amy Bassett**

Meeting minutes for November: **Alalia Berry**



**Melany Berry inks a feather while Gabe, Cedar and his mom, Tara, observe during a special nature printing activity.**

**Child/Parent Nature Printing Day!** – A special thank you to **Duncan and Melany Berry** (Laura Hulick's grandparents) for leading a community nature printing activity! We had so much fun and look forward to doing art with you again in the future :-)



Hinduism, we will learn about Brahman, the one true God that encompasses everything in the universe, seen and unseen, and that Brahman is in us, too!

I am really excited to learn more about Hinduism. I do so hope that everyone feels as positively about studying religions as I do. I realize that, of course, the scripture and stories of a religion we are learning about may be counter to the religion that the child practices at home. Some people may feel concern about this. I wish to assure you that religious study is not religious worship. The National Association for the Education of Young Children endorses the practice of introducing the variety of world religions at a young age, just as we endeavor to show and embrace the diversity of ethnicity, race, differing abilities, lifestyles, etc. This helps children grow into adults who respect and appreciate differences and, more importantly, similarities. This prevents bigotry and prejudice. And just as learning a second language helps one to understand one's mother tongue on a higher level, I believe this is true of spiritual practice as well.

Beyond the Himalayas, learning continues on other fronts. We have swapped out our simple knobbed puzzles for more complex ones and the children are really responding to this higher challenge. We have a pair of gloves on the shelf for kids to practice putting on as this is quite difficult for inexperienced hands. Our songs have taken a turn for the snowy. We have been singing "Suzy Snowflake," "Frosty the Snowman" and "Build a Little Snowman." We have also started reading some books about snow. Perhaps a bit premature, but it FEELS wintry lately! This is probably a good time to tell you that cold hands are plaguing some of our kids outdoors and spoiling their fun. Please, everyone, send a pair of gloves for your child to keep at school and make sure that their jackets are warm and waterproof.

Plenty of interesting Grace and Courtesy lessons have been shown lately, such as: how to look at someone when speaking; how to say "excuse me" when someone is in your way; how to let someone walk past your table without touching them; and what to do when someone passes gas. This last one is a goodie. When I demonstrate what to do, I sit still saying and doing nothing. That is what is proper. Did you hear the story of



Gabe works on an advanced drawing activity.

Queen Elizabeth II inspecting her cavalry on horseback? She was accompanied by the captain of the mounted guard and when her horse let out a rather loud toot, she apologized. "Think nothing of it, Mum," said the Captain. "If you hadn't said anything, I would have thought it was the horse!"

Even as we learn about Nepal, the Himalayas and

Hinduism, many of the kids are very excited about the coming of Christmas and all its lovely

trappings. This anticipation is used as fodder for classroom work. "Let's write all the Christmas words we can think of!" "Let's sew an angel!" "Let's take a walk in our neighborhood and look at decorations!" Even as we use the energy of the winter holidays to inspire our students' activities, the classroom remains a calm, undecorated oasis of normalcy in the midst of what can be a chaotic time. Rest assured, even as a family's schedule amps up to take in all the holiday magic, as visitors arrive bearing overwhelming gifts for our kids, as parents become testy under the burden of the many traditions they wish to carry out, we remain largely untouched by the frenetic energy of the holiday season and provide a comforting routine for the child to count on.

**Even as we use the energy of the winter holidays to inspire our students' activities, the classroom remains a calm, undecorated oasis of normalcy in the midst of what can be a chaotic time.**

Continued on Page 4



**Dahlia is all smiles while she does burlap sewing.**

And speaking of holidays, are you searching for a high-quality gift for your child? Consider getting a handsome globe for the whole family to enjoy! In our geography work, we begin with the whole and move to the details. We do this in most of our nomenclature work. So we begin by revealing that the Earth is covered in land surface and water surface. Then we move on to teach the names of the seven continents. This can sometimes take a very long time! But we don't really progress toward learning names of countries until the continent names are safely tucked in long-term memory. Having a globe at home to refer to the continents and other place names would be helpful to your young child and very valuable in the years to come. If not for the winter holidays, perhaps for a future birthday.

In closing, I wish all of you Season's Greetings, safe travels and all the very best in the coming year. I know I am fortunate to be in community with such wonderful people and I thank you for your presence in my life.

Happy Holidays!  
Doni



**Mackay prepares to fold a cloth into a pattern designated by stitching that shows where to make the creases.**

## Newsline

❖ Winter Break begins **Monday, Dec. 18**. School resumes on **Tuesday, Jan. 2**.

❖ Please join us for our next parent meeting at **6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 11**.

❖ There will be no school **Monday, Jan. 15**, in observation of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

❖ There will be no school **Monday, Feb. 19**, in observation of President's Day.

❖ Our benefit concert – **The Love of Learning Annual Fund-raiser** – will be **Friday, March 16**, from **7 to 11 p.m.** at the Corvallis Oddfellows Hall.

## Annual Giving Campaign update

The Annual Giving Campaign is well underway! We are four weeks in and have approximately two to go. I am happy to report that *we are on target* to reach our two goals:

- ❖ \$7,500 in total contributions
- ❖ 100% participation by current families and board members

We are approaching \$6,000 raised with over two weeks to go and with 70% participation by current families and 65% participation by our board. Isn't that wonderful?! Many thanks to everyone who has contributed. Your generosity makes our program strong and sustainable and for that we offer our sincere appreciation. We will be accepting contributions for the AGC until Dec. 31.

**Here's wishing all our wonderful families and friends a joyous, relaxing winter break. Be sure to factor in some quiet time for you and the kids during this season of celebrations. And above all, safe travels wherever you go. Big hugs from all of us!**



# Toying around

by Gloria Singh  
A-to-I Course Assistant,  
Montessori Northwest

*Putting a bit of thought into selecting and organizing your child's toys is well worth the effort. You – and your child – will have peace, develop good values and characteristics, and enjoy the celebrations*

Gift-giving occasions such as birthdays and holidays can often be overwhelming for young children and their parents. As the birthday celebration or Christmas morning comes to a close, you may have a pile of toys that hold your child's interest for a few hours or days, but not much longer. Many parents look for opportunities for their children to experience gratitude and appreciation, and develop the characteristic of honoring and taking good care of their belongings. Here are some suggestions and strategies that can help:

## Try high-quality classics

Aiming for quality over quantity can be a good guideline when selecting toys. A well-made set of blocks, a realistic doll, a red wagon are all classics for good reasons ... they are open-ended, inviting the child to apply his own creativity and allowing him to use the toy in many ways that will last for years. I'm sure that many of us have watched children play longer with the box the toy came in than with the toy itself – there's so much creative potential in the box! Look for toys that share that same characteristic.

## Living in the real world

Remember that younger children like best to participate in real life, so giving gifts that encourage independ-

ence and inclusion in the life of the family are very much enjoyed, such as child-size kitchen tools and personal care items (hairbrush, personalized bath towel and washcloth, etc.), gardening tools, etc. The gift of a child-size table and chair can be invaluable.

## Limitation

Toys from grandparents (both sets!) and Santa and aunts and uncles and friends ... can be numerous and overwhelming. Spread the gift-giving out over a period of time like one wise mother who reserved some of her young son's birthday presents and doled them out every other week until they were all opened. This limits the sudden abundance and overwhelm of numerous presents and prolongs the special day over a longer period of time. Perhaps most importantly, it helps the child appreciate each gift and the giver in a way that can be lost when gifts are received all at once.

## Keep toys fresh

When you notice that a particular toy is played with less often, put it away out of sight and replace it with a different toy. This will re-awaken your child's interest in a toy and prolong the life of the toy – a very budget-friendly practice! You also will be able to observe your child's development over time, because you will likely be able to see her playing with the toy differently as she grows and develops.



Try storing toys on a shelf for easy access.

## Get rid of the toy box

A toy box becomes a catch-all and dump for odds and ends, broken toys, bits of paper and junk! Of course, the object your child wants is always at the very bottom, so you end up with items strewn about and a child reluctant to take the time (or too overwhelmed) to put everything away. If you arrange a few toys on a shelf, the child can see and easily choose an interesting toy and replace it when he's done using it. Toys with many pieces can be contained in small boxes or baskets that fit on the shelf. If your child is very young, you can model cleaning up and soon she will be helping you and then doing it independently, at least most of the time.

## Donate gently used toys

Give your child an opportunity to learn about others who are less fortunate by sorting through the things your child has outgrown and giving them away. Older children can be included in choosing items and can go along to drop them off. This can become a family tradition and is a practice that your child will always remember.