Many years before we became “globalized,” Dr. Montessori designed a curriculum that taught children to be world citizens. Having stated that “establishing lasting peace is the work of education,” she taught the beliefs and traditions of our world’s diverse cultures, the science of the natural world and our interrelationships, and each child’s place in that world as a caring, contributing individual. In addition to the peace education that happens daily in the classroom, our annual school-wide events, such as the Harvest Festival, the Peace Celebration, and the Cultural Festival, bring us together to learn more about one another’s cultures and traditions. We celebrate the natural world and the seasons, sing about peace and world harmony, and experience the cultures of the world. At the Cultural Festival, we wear international clothing, sample foods from all over the world, assemble and display the children’s work, and spend time with each other as a caring community.
As we begin our third decade, we are pleased and proud to continue to provide a strong and reliable alternative educational option for our Syracuse community. In the midst of upheaval in many other educational settings, the time-tested and scientifically proven Montessori approach to education provides the best setting to facilitate students’ intrinsic drive to learn.

The annual State of the School is a summary of our status as of August 2015, starting with a brief history of our school. We opened the Montessori School of Syracuse in 1995 with seven students, one elementary classroom, and one “self-interned” Montessori teacher. Pat Getz, Susan French-Lawyer, and I opened the school in Temple Beth El for our elementary-aged children and other graduates of the former Kynda Montessori School. In the years since our school’s creation, trustees Jack and Carol Lawyer have been the school’s biggest “angels”—donating and loaning money to begin classrooms, renovate facilities, and create programs.

A significant piece of our history is the arson fire of October 2000, directed at the temple where we originally rented classroom space. Forced to find a new home quickly, our entire community came together to find our current location at Waldorf Parkway. Our campus is the former NYS teachers’ union retirement home, where a new tree was planted for every teacher. This site has close to ten acres, including ten buildings and a wooded lot. In addition, our Land Laboratory in Pompey includes over 50 acres of woods, open fields, a pond, and our “Nature’s Classroom” in a barn.

We are a not-for-profit, 501(c)3 Education Corporation, chartered by the NYS Board of Regents. Donations made to MSS are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law; we are not a charter school. Our Board of Trustees is responsible for guiding policy and maintaining financial viability.

**THIS SCHOOLYEAR**

Montessori education is referred to as “peace education.” Our 21st year’s theme is “Peaceful Classrooms.” We are finding that we often observe anxiety and stress in ourselves and in our students and families, and these are being observed on a national scale as well. This year we will be emphasizing mindfulness, meditation, communication, and social skills, as well as other strategies to support all of us at MSS in maintaining a peaceful learning environment.

Our continent of study this year is Africa, and we have many exciting plans for this fall. Right now we are showing the work of Michelle Gabel, whose recent photographs of Sudan at ArtRage Gallery inspired MSS art teacher Kathy Barry to invite the artist to display her works in our school’s Art Gallery. Gabel’s “Images of Sudan” are appropriate for students of all ages, and we encourage you to drop in for a viewing. We have invited MSS parent John...
Dau to share some stories from his home country of Sudan, as well as talk with our older students about his experiences as a “lost boy.” Fitness teachers Dylan Kinsella and Chantelle VanWormer have invited Biboti Ouikahilo, originally from Ivory Coast, West Africa, to teach African dance to the elementary students. They will perform for parents and primary students at this year’s Cultural Festival.

Pat Getz and Alina Plourde’s recorder students will be learning Africa-themed music and African folk songs. We are decorating our classrooms with textiles and cultural objects from Africa, as we study the continent’s history, cultures, and art. Our African drumming group, Savannah Juvanis, will perform at school and at the Westcott Street Fair in September and at Plowshares in December. At our August Staff Retreat, we learned to make Adinkra-style block prints from Ghana with Kathy Barry, something we will share with our students.

OUR STAFF
Every year we employ an average of about fifty staff members; about half are full time and half part time. Fifteen are classroom teachers, ten are specialty teachers, ten have administrative and administrative support roles, and ten are Care staff. Many of these roles are shared or overlap, and these numbers are approximate. All of our teaching teams include two (or three) teachers, one or both of whom are Montessori-trained. At the elementary level, one or both have a teaching degree and state certification. Our staff come from a wide range of backgrounds and bring a variety of academic and life experiences to MSS.

OUR ENROLLMENT
Enrollment as of August 1, 2015, is approximately 150 students, and Susan French-Lawyer is still meeting with parents interested in fall enrollment. Although we rarely admit new students at the elementary level, this year we welcome four new students to our Upper and Lower Elementary classrooms.

FINANCIAL AID AT MSS
Financial aid is needs-based, according to assessment of each family’s financial resources via tax returns and written statements. About one-third of our students will receive aid in 2015-16, and almost 20 percent of those bring a range of diversity to MSS. Two interesting facts you should know about our school: tuition revenue does not cover the cost of doing business, and all financial aid comes from tuition dollars. As a private school we receive no state or federal aid.

SUMMARY
We are known throughout New York State and nationally for our world-class Montessori school for 3- to 12-year-old children. Our art, music, performing arts, French, fitness, Great Books, theatre, and nature education programs are of the highest quality. Many of these programs are unique to our school—not offered elsewhere in CNY. We make all of this available to working families with incredible Care and Summer programs staffed by teaching professionals. Our best advertising is through word-of-mouth—from our parents, staff, and friends of the school—so remember to continue to spread the word!

Window is published by the Montessori School of Syracuse five times per year unless otherwise noted. Contributors to this edition are Nancy Finch and Mary Lawyer O’Connor. Editing is provided by Kathleen Parrish and Susan French-Lawyer. Comments, questions, and submissions are welcomed by Mary Lawyer O’Connor at msshead@gmail.com.
MSS and CBA graduate Jack Brower (’08) has begun his freshman year at Haverford College in Philadelphia.

Nate Brower (’10) just began his senior year at CBA, where he enjoys three varsity sports: soccer, basketball, and track.

MSS alum and CBA grad Will Brower (’07), a sophomore at Elon University in North Carolina, is spending a semester abroad in Shanghai, China, this fall.

Jason Cavanagh (’14) sang “Light of the World” and “All for the Best” as part of the cast ensemble in Godspell Junior this summer. Jason currently attends FM as an 8th grader.

This summer the Dunn boys, in various combinations, were featured in a number of Redhouse Productions: Oliver, Forbidden Broadway, 13 the Musical, and Carousel. Jared (’12), Ryan (’14), and Justin Dunn (Willow) were joined by former MSS student Neve Gordon in Oliver.

Ireland Fernandez-Cosgrove (’13) recently had two roles in the MPH Summerstock production of Bye Bye Birdie, as a reporter and a fan. She is a freshman at FM this fall.

Alex French-Lawyer (’06) is beginning his senior year at RIT in Rochester after completing a seven-month internship at PCC Structural Steel in Groton, Connecticut.

This page, clockwise from above left: Neve Gordon performed in the musical Oliver; Ireland Fernandez-Cosgrove and MSS music teacher Pat Getz celebrate Ireland’s performance in Bye Bye Birdie; Will, Jack, and Nate Brower look forward to a new school year; family and friends gathered in support of Kaelem Michel at his recital: Justin Dunn, Ryan Dunn, brother Aiden Michel (Cedar), Kaelem, Sam Dunn (Willow), and Maggie Dunn (Cedar).
Pianist/composer Kaelem Michel (Willow) was a prize winner in the inaugural Sonatina/Sonata Festival, held in May at Syracuse University. Kaelem studied composition at the Society for New Music’s Composers Corner program. His *Sonatina in C Minor*, 2015 (for piano and marimba/xylophone), was performed by professional musicians at a Cazenovia Counterpoint concert at Stone Quarry Hill Art Park in July. In August Kaelem played a program that included nine works and his original *Nocturne in A Major*, Op. 2 No. 2, with his teacher, Patricia DeAngelis, at Maple Downs Retirement Residence.

**Rachael Lieblein-Jurbala** (’09) is in her freshman year at Connecticut College with a dual major in modern dance and global studies/sociology. She was just chosen by the college to be a Presidential Scholar and will be performing at the college's Faculty Dance Concert in December.

**David Oliver** (’07) is beginning his senior year at West Point after a busy summer of training at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in England and traveling through Europe.

**Emily Vilburn** (Cedar) and her parents, Rachel and Matthew Vilburn, and brother, David, welcomed two new sisters, Ann and Natalie, to the family this summer. On August 10, 2015, Anna was born first, at 4:36 p.m., weighing 6 lb 13 oz and measuring 21 inches. Natalie was born at 4:37 p.m., at 6 lb 9 oz and 21 inches. Congratulations to the Vilburn family!
Support Your Child at Home

We teach conflict resolution at all levels at MSS, and you can help your child learn to be a peacekeeper at home. Pick a quiet corner; furnish it with cushions and a peace rug or small table. Decorate the space with symbols of peace and calm, and add a peace flower or a talking stick. This special place and its objects are only to be used for conflict resolution.

When your family finds two members in conflict, you or another family member can invite them to the peace table/rug. Each person in the conflict has an opportunity to speak using an “I” statement while holding the peace flower/stick. For example: "I am feeling sad because you took my toy." The flower gets passed back and forth for each person to share his thoughts, one at a time. The conversation should continue until the issue is resolved.

Ground rules should be discussed ahead of time when you set your table up: calm, kind words only, no name-calling or yelling. Sometimes a family member will need to calm down first, before coming to the peace table.

While this technique is used primarily in a Montessori classroom between two students, teachers and parents can use it when talking with children as well. Parents and siblings can use the peace table at home to inspire conversation and conflict resolution.

Pictured above: In Maple Cottage, teacher Julie Martin uses a puzzle map to show Brandon Burch the seven continents, while, at left, Grace Chao matches continent name cards with images. Very early in Montessori, young students learn world physical geography from the continent to the state level. They also learn the traditions of diverse cultures and the science of the natural world and each child’s place in it.
The Montessori School of Syracuse has so many different resources available for our students: We have a beautiful Library, Nona’s Corner, run by our librarian, Nancy Finch, as well as reference libraries in each classroom. Our Music Cottage is dedicated to lessons in music, theater, music history, recorder, African drumming, Suzuki violin, and piano lessons. Our Art Studio is an amazing room full of supplies and materials to inspire creativity in the visual arts. And we have our Montessori Art Gallery, now showing an amazing body of work by photographer Michelle Gabel.

We are honored to display these striking photos that illustrate the grace and dignity of the people of Sudan. While specific to a time and place, the images of children having lessons under a tree or finding a moment to play with friends remind us of daily life events we all share. They also show the hardship of poverty and how it affects the country and its people.

Michelle Gabel is a former photojournalist with the Syracuse Media Group and a graduate student at Syracuse University’s Newhouse School of Public Communications. The photographs were taken during a trip to the region in 2009. They are part of a larger exhibit of Michelle’s work shown at ArtRage Gallery in Syracuse this summer.

“Images of Sudan” will be on exhibit in the MSS Art Gallery through October 18th. When you drop your child off in the morning or arrive early for dismissal, come on in and take a look.

While there, you can read about Michelle’s work, as well as the work of “lost boys” and humanitarians Gabriel Bol Deng and John Dau. Both men are survivors of refugee camps in Sudan and are now human rights activists living in Syracuse.

Two of John’s children attend MSS: Agot Leek (Willow) and Leek Leek (Evergreen). John will visit our school throughout the year to tell Sudanese folk tales and share with our older students stories about his experiences in Sudan and the work he is doing to help improve the lives of families there.

The art exhibit and John’s visits tie in nicely with this year’s study of Africa.
The first day of school was very busy for our students. A visitor to any of our classrooms could look around and see children engaged in many separate and unique activities. The students were excited about their choices from a wide range of work in all subject areas. This observation reveals two core characteristics of the Montessori method: independent freedom of choice within the classroom structure and the beauty of the three-year cycle. All the returning students knew what to do and how to interact with one another and their environment, even on the first day of school!

**Liam Strouth-Hens** of Maple Cottage works with the spindle box, a number and counting exercise.