The Art of Community

In his recent book *The Art of Community: Seven Principles for Belonging*, author Charles Vogl tells us that the experience of community has changed in a single generation. The size of each individual’s social network has decreased by one-third in the last few decades, and the number of people who say that they have no one to talk to about meaningful issues has tripled in that same time period. Vogl states: “Building community creates a venue for friendship, and friendship defeats loneliness... those of us who are able to connect what may be a new lonely generation will have a profound effect on the health and well-being of those we serve...” Reflecting on community at MSS, we see our parents creating connections at our socials, playgroups and other school events. Over our 24 year history, we see that our families form friendships that last far beyond their children’s nine years at MSS. Many years after graduation, both students and parents continue friendships and support each other. Reach out and take time to develop these long-term friendships by inviting parent acquaintances to hike, bike, share a meal, arrange a playdate – make those connections that will last a lifetime!
When you think back to some of the happiest times in your childhood, where were you? It is likely that you were outside, playing in your backyard, in a “woods” patch of trees and grass. All you needed as a young child was some dirt, rocks and sticks, and an old spoon. The basics that young children are drawn to are pretty simple to supply and exploration and discovery in nature are often our best childhood experiences. In fact in a recent study of ten-year-olds, 70% of them report a preference for being outdoors to indoors.

At MSS, our outdoor experiences begin in the cottage gardens and at recess, then move to the Land Lab in elementary, where the students can explore in the woods, pond and fields.

For many students, the first lesson can begin with being comfortable sitting in the grass, walking in the woods and learning that there are no wolves and bears here! They learn about different varieties of plant and animal life, create “forts” and structures, and play fun games that teach lessons about the natural world. They go exploring, orienteering and on scavenger hunts, learn about how to navigate in the woods, and how to use a compass and read a map. Read about some of our MSS families and how they found a great outdoor biking and camping opportunity to share with one another on page 7!
**Alumni and New Arrival News**

**Jesse Carpenter** (Cedar) and her sister Rowan Halbritter welcomed their new little brother Ethan Wade Halbritter to their family on August 28, 2018. Ethan Wade was 9 pounds 11 ounces and 22 inches long. His parents Taylor Halbritter and Justin Rice are thrilled with their new arrival, and we can’t wait to meet him! *(photo right, from family.)*

The Quigley family also welcomed a new arrival - baby Caide - in July. **Isla Quigley** (Pine) and her sister **Aria Quigley** (Birch) are so excited about their new little brother. Parents Tyler and Paige Quigley let us know that they are “working on the sleep part but he is well worth the exhaustion! His big sisters are so in love, he has two extra mommies!” Caide John Quigley *(photo left from family)* was born July 22, 2018, weighed 7 pounds 11 ounces and was 20 inches long.

**MSS MEETUP!** **Mychal Emmanuel** (2014) and former MSS student **Mia Sveen** recently bumped into each other at a soccer game at West Genesee High School, the first game of their 2018-2019 season, and took a photo to share with us *(right)*. Mychal Emmanuel is currently in her junior year at Christian brothers Academy. She plays soccer and continues to dance at the Ballet and Dance Center. Mia Sveen, a senior at West Genesee, belongs to the high school chorale, plays violin and is the first chair/concertmaster for the symphony. She is in the student senate, Spanish club, and the national honor society. As a senior Mia is now looking at colleges and is planning on a Biology Major. Send us your Montessori “meetup” photos and news for the newsletter!
Our Peaceful Classroom Communities

These photos capture our cottages and classrooms as our students experience them - the beauty, serenity and security, where they respect, care for and appreciate one another.

When a student enters his cottage in the morning, he greets his friends, washes his hands and chooses his first activity of the day. There is a wide of choices for him in all curriculum areas, ranging from multistep geometry or science material to yoga, reading a book or snacking with a friend. His community is a very peaceful, calm and secure environment, where he has freedom within the developmentally designed boundaries set by his teachers. He and his friends are all part of creating behavioral norms each year and use their communication skills and “I messages” to assert to, then listen to their friends when a challenge arises. Peace rugs or Peace Roses are used to ensure that each viewpoint is expressed and heard.

Careful attention is given to each classroom environment by teachers. Each is set up for the success of the student: everything needed is at hand, is their size and is age-appropriate. Their academic progress and skill acquisition are insured, as they work through the curriculum at their own speed. One common thought of our adult observers is that they would like to repeat their school experience at MSS!
Clockwise from above left: Julie Martin giving an addition lesson to Tamsin Thomas while Anderson Hager and Ben Anderson observe in Maple Classroom. Cedar student Elodie Michel works with grammar materials, and Ronan Kenny, Nehemiah Chao and Danny George study a geometry problem together in Willow Classroom. River Hogberg and Felix Demartini chat over their snack in Oak Cottage. Evergreen students Alia Gordon, Juliet DePaulis and Aidan Mountain focus on a range of activities, doing research and language work. August Kligerman of Pine Cottage uses the stamp game to solve math problems. Megan Donnelly-Heg gives her Evergreen students Coleman Wimer, Jaasim Zaman, Simone Winkelman and August Niederhoff a math lesson, while a Birch Cottage student looks up Asian country names in Birch Cottage.
After her graduation from MSS, Maria Vazquez (2010) went on to excel in middle and high school at the Jamesville-DeWitt Schools. She is currently attending Loyola University in Baltimore and is really enjoying her experience there as a junior with a major in information systems and minor in data science. Maria is on the board of the Crochet for a Cause Club, where students crochet bed mats for homeless people from recycled plastic bags. The club’s mission is “to aid the homeless by crocheting portable bed rolls from plastic bag yarn (plarn), to decrease waste, improve the environment, and to provide useful fellowship opportunities for our members.”

Maria has traveled extensively in Europe in recent years, primarily to Spain to visit family. She and her younger sister Julia Vazquez (2011) both learned to speak the Spanish language fluently while living in the country.

Maria participated in Loyola’s study abroad program this past summer, and she let us know that “the program was amazing; I couldn’t speak more highly of my experience... it was well-planned, educational and immersive.” Maria found that the Czech Republic was culturally quite different when contrasted with other European countries, due to its recent communist past. She and her fellow Loyola University students were able to speak directly with Czech people about their experiences during World War II, in both Prague and rural areas. They went to the Jachymov uranium mines to see POW camps and were surprised to learn that the recent history of the country is not taught to its young people.

Maria’s family remains very connected with MSS, as her mother, Sharon Vazquez, is our Sixth Level Program director.
This fall some of our MSS elementary students and parents participated in a Tour the Towpath event on the Erie Canal. Students Alia Gordon (Willow), Simone Winkelman (Evergreen), Siri Brubaker (Willow), Frankie Berrier (Cedar) and Will Brubaker (Willow) all completed the 36-mile ride from DeWitt to Rome with an overnight camp-out in Canastota. The adult riders were Heather and Matt Brubaker, Heather Sullivan, Joel Winkelman, Sam Gordon and Sara Stebbins. Neve Gordon (2018) joined them for the second day, riding from Canastota to Rome. Some highlights of the ride included the Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum on Saturday and Lock 21 on Sunday. The museum has a lot of canal exhibits, including a replica canal boat and mule stable, plus a working blacksmith. Lock 21 is a functional lock, and the students were able to observe it working both ways, raising and lowering the water levels to transport boats both eastbound and westbound.

MSS parent Sara Stebbins remarked that “this was a great event and we all had so much fun! I definitely think we'll have another MSS contingent next year.”
Our Beautiful New Playground!

All our students are enjoying the new elementary playground this fall, including Evergreen students Laila Khalil (left) and Jaasim Zaman (right). In addition to the fitness track, the playground has tetherballs, sand tables and our soccer field. Fitness teacher Chantelle Van Wormer is using the track for many of her fitness classes, too, where everyone works on their personal best on all the equipment!