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Students Host Their Parents!

This is the time of year for our parents to visit classrooms and cottages, hosted by their students! They are attending these very special occasions of Fathers’ and Mothers’ Nights in primary and Parents’ Night in elementary. The joy that each student has hosting their parents or grandparents in their classroom, showing them their favorite work choices, demonstrating a material or sharing their research or portfolio is wonderful to see. They are so proud of their accomplishments and what they have learned, and thrilled to share with their family members! As a parent, your choice of Montessori has given them the most important gift, a foundation for life! Their Montessori experience will help in the formation of those all important neurological connections as their young brains grow and soak up information naturally and easily. You and your Montessori teachers see the child as naturally eager for knowledge and capable of initiating learning in our supportive, thoughtfully prepared learning environments. At MSS you have chosen a child-centered, independence-building, teacher-facilitated classroom model - a world-class education. Thank you!

Lola Coleman and her father, Carlton Coleman, above in Pine Cottage, and, right; Clara DePaulis and her dad, Steve DePaulis, in Oak Cottage as they all enjoy Fathers’ Night!
Classroom observations, parent-teacher conferences and Mothers’/Fathers’/Parents’ Nights are the most important times you spend at MSS! You have sent your child to Montessori, understanding that these early, formative years are the time when her brain is still developing, making neurological connections, making sense of her world and soaking up information. This time is vital for her learning. To maximize your investment in her future with the Montessori education you have chosen, you must understand how the method works, and what her school day looks like. Here is what you should look for when you observe:

- The children’s respect for one another, their cottage and their teachers.
- Multiple age levels interacting, as the youngest students observe and learn from older role models and mentors, and older students learn to be leaders by offering assistance to others.
- How your child’s teachers guide students rather than direct them.
- The students working independently or in small teams or groups, making their own work selections.
- The ways in which the educational process is child-centered and self-directed, allowing students to take on increasing responsibility for their education, friends and community.
- How the classroom is designed for independence within structure, allowing the children the freedom to make choices, make mistakes and learn from them.
- How the prepared environment with distinct curriculum areas gives the children a wide range of curriculum choices, in beautifully organized, consistent locations.
- The gentle tone of the room that allows your child to feel safe and secure as she peacefully pursues her learning under her teacher’s caring guidance.

Support your child’s Montessori experience and her teachers by scheduling your observation today!

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Every year we ask you for donations to our Annual Fund, and you may wonder, what is that all about? You are paying tuition for your child’s education, so why is annual giving so very important?

Montessori School of Syracuse is a nonprofit, and though we receive your tuition dollars, you might be surprised to learn that tuition does not cover all the costs of your child’s education! Public schools receive tax dollars to operate, but all other school choices need outside support. Nondenominational private school choices operate only with their tuition income and donations, and receive no federal or state support.

When you give to MSS, your tax-deductible gift to our Annual Fund supports the strongest early childhood foundation possible for your child or grandchild. Montessori has been internationally known for over 100 years for its approach to early childhood education, a foundation for life and the most important years for your young person.

Your child’s early childhood experiences in primary and elementary are the most important education he will receive as brain development and neurological connections are being made. Dr. Montessori knew this from her observations, and her research and methods have now been proven to address the most important developmental needs of the child from infancy through age 18. Your child’s brain is not fully formed until she turns 25 or 30! The person your child will become—the kind, world citizen who can problem-solve, communicate effectively, collaborate and think creatively—this is the young person whose education you support with your gift to the Annual Fund!

Clockwise from above left, p. 2: Lisa Milazzo gives Tommy Ellis a lesson with the Pink Tower Montessori material in Maple Cottage. Arohi Jagtap works in Oak Cottage with a dressing frame, practicing the practical life skill of buttoning. Madame Xena Mezache, our primary French teacher, reads a French book to Tamsin Thomas, Isabella Gingold and Madeleine Curtin in Maple Cottage.
Lily Beale-Gleason (Willow) is a member of the Syracuse Children’s Chorus and performed at its recent Stand Together event. Lily is a chorister in the Preparatory Ensemble, which provides a collaborative experience for young people to share their joy of singing through choral music. The photo at top left shows Willow friends Siri Brubaker, Lily Beale-Gleason and Will Brubaker at the performance.

The Redhouse production of A Charlie Brown Christmas in December included Ryan Dunn (2014) playing the role of Shermy. One of the only two high school students in this performance, Ryan was last onstage as Charlie Brown, in You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown, produced by his older brother Jared (story pp. 6-7). Ryan says that he fell in love with theater when he played the role of Mike Teavee in Willow Classroom at MSS in Willie Wonka Jr.

Lesia Wojtowycz (2015) and Fayrouz Enany (2016) and belong to the CBA Drama Club and this year put on a production of You Can’t Take It with You! The club is independent of the school’s other musical productions, and did a wonderful job with the production, in which Fayrouz starred as the inspector, Mr. Henderson (right), and Lesia had the role of the Grand Duchess Olga Katerina (left).

The East Syracuse Minoa Central High School recently presented The Dining Room, and the Abrams girls were involved in making it a great production! The juniors were both crew members: Taylor Abrams (2014) was head of costumes, and Jessica Irene Abrams (2014) was part of the Construction and Run Team. Taylor’s earlier work was as a cast member for the Festival of One Act Plays and on (continued on p. 5)
(continued from p. 4) the costume crew for *The Musical Comedy of Murders of 1940* and *Les Misérables*. Jessica Irene Abrams made her debut on Spartan Stage with this play. (Photo: Jess, Brenda, Bill and Taylor Abrams.)

**Katie Niederhoff** (2017) did costume support for the Everson Art Museum’s 50th anniversary event this September. She and her mother, Julie Niederhoff, spent two days helping the Bandaloop Vertical Dancers get their costumes ready for the event and were on-site during the performance to support them. Both mother and daughter reported that it was a great experience! Katie learned of the opportunity through her internship at the Syracuse City Ballet last year, and also from former MSS parent and Everson liaison Sarah Dulany-Gring. In the photo at middle right, Katie is in the center of the dance group.

Our alumni are welcome and encouraged to attend our school events, and we were thrilled to have a group of high school alumni attend our recent Harvest Festival. In the photo below right: **Catherine Jean Durkin** (2016), **Olivia Davis** (2015), **Ellie Pedone** (2015), **Fayrouz Enany** (2016) and former MSS student **Lili Linder-Czerniak**. Catherine Jean and Lili are both freshmen at Jamesville-DeWitt, and Olivia, Ellie and Fayrouz are students at CBA.

Another alumni visitor and also a performer at the Harvest Festival was **Caleb Randazzo** (2017). A middle school student at Jamesville-DeWitt, Caleb presented an engaging and amazing magic show to students in our art gallery. In the photo at the bottom left, **Tommy Ellis** (Maple), **Will Burbaker** (Willow), **Caleb**, **Zachary Jones-Pike** (Evergreen) and **Anna Chiodi** (Willow) watch the magic show.

**Jorge Niederhoff** (Willow) created an award-winning display of his family’s monarch butterfly work for the New York State Fair’s Onondaga County 4-H booth. Jorge’s family is part of the Orange Clovers 4-H Club, and they raised these butterflies at home as part of the project. Not only did they inform the public about monarchs, they boosted the number of these butterflies in the wild. In addition to his monarch work, Jorge also competed in the New York State Time Trial Championships for cycling in July. Jorge is the 2018 New York State silver medalist in his age group and is pictured on his bike in the photo at middle left.
Jared Dunn (2012) began his time at MSS in Maple Cottage in 2004. From an early age, he loved singing and performing, but he really developed a love for theater with Mrs. Getz in the Willow Theater Workshops. After he graduated in 2012, theater became a cornerstone of his post-MSS experience.

Since graduating, he has worked on over twenty school, community and regional theater productions. He was especially struck by the people and connections he made working in the Syracuse theater community, and his experiences led him to found At Rise Productions, a community theater company that targets high school students as artists and audience members. This past May, he directed At Rise’s first production, *You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. For this, he was nominated for a Syracuse Area Live Theater (SALT) award for Best Director of a Musical in the community theater category. The cast, pit crew and creative team of *You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown* were all students 18 years old or younger, although they received plenty of help and support from parents and mentors, including MSS alumnus Luke Tarnow-Bulatowicz (2010). The cast included Jared’s two brothers Ryan Dunn (2014) and Justin Dunn (2018), who played Charlie Brown and Woodstock, respectively. The cast also featured former MSS student Blake Lucas in the role of Linus.

This summer, Blake unexpectedly passed away, leaving the community reeling from the loss of a loved one. Blake and Jared’s friendship started when they were in Cedar Classroom together, and although they had been out of touch for a few years, their old bond came back naturally when they worked together on *You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. After Blake’s passing, Jared helped put together a cabaret fund raiser for Blake’s family in his memory, featuring nine original songs that Jared co-wrote with his friend Nancy O’Connor, the music director of *You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. The entire cast was there to sing the songs, and friends and family came to offer their love and support. Luke returned to Syracuse to help with the tech aspects of the show. It was incredibly difficult, but it was beautiful to see everyone gathered there to honor Blake with music.

After graduating from MSS, Jared first attended Wellwood Middle School in the Fayetteville-Manlius School District for two years. The contrast between MSS and Wellwood sparked Jared’s interest in learning about different kinds of education, and in ninth grade, he decided (continued on p. 7)
Alumni Focus: Jared Dunn

(continued from p. 6) to homeschool. After his year of homeschooling, Jared spent his sophomore year at FM High School before moving with his family for ten months to Almuñécar, Spain, where he attended the local Spanish public high school. For his senior year, Jared returned to FM High School from which he graduated in 2018.

Jared is now spending a gap year in Spain, something he had been planning to do since he was very young, before attending Brown University in the fall of 2019. He is currently volunteering with Aiurri Montessori, a Montessori school in Vitoria-Gasteiz, which is a city in northern Spain in the Basque Country. He volunteers four days a week, helping out in the three- to six-year-old classrooms in the mornings and teaching English to the six to nine-year-olds in the afternoons. He plans to stay in Vitoria-Gasteiz until the end of January, and do some more traveling around Spain and Europe, volunteering with more schools.

Photos from page 6, left to right: Jared having a primary math lesson with Kathleen Parrish; Jared as a lower elementary student and in a high school portrait. Jared with Will Kowarik (2012) in Alice in Wonderland, Jr. at MSS in upper elementary. Actors and attendees at his production of You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown: Bianca Lucas and Emma Wardell (former MSS students), Pat Getz (MSS teacher), Justin Dunn (2018), cast member Lindsey Puck, Blake Lucas, Justin Dunn, Sharon Vazquez (MSS teacher), Ryan Dunn, Mari Emmanuel (Willow), Julie Hikman and Lisa Lucas (MSS teachers), and former MSS parent Katherine Wardell. Jared at Aiurri Montessori in Spain.
Every year we have a school-wide continent focus, and this year’s is the Americas! To begin the year, Willow Classroom students went on a field trip to the Farmers’ Museum, an 1850s rural farm village re-creation in Cooperstown, New York, to learn about some facets of early American life. In October, all the elementary students visited the Oneida Nation’s Shako:wi Cultural Center to learn about Native American history. The center helps guests experience thousands of years of Oneida history, from the key role they played as allies of George Washington during the Revolutionary War to the current day. The Willow students brought their experiences and research to life for the rest of the school when they created their own Willowsburg town in the Great Room, and invited everyone for a visit. Each team of Willow students learned about a unique early American profession, such as hat-making, silversmithing, printmaking, wig-making or teaching. They wrote research papers, created costumes, shops, classrooms and gardens, and then shared their expertise with the primary and lower elementary students. Our youngest students learned so much from their older friends, and already look forward to being the leaders in Willow!

Clockwise from above left: Cedar Classroom students pose on the stairway of the Oneida Nation’s Shako:wi Cultural Center, which all the elementary students visited this fall. Pine students Jacob Felver, Sophia B., Isla Quigley and Linnea Wiley learn about feathered quill pens at the printer’s shop of Willowsburg. Teachers, left to right, Coralee Donnelly-Heg, Mira Gordon and Siri Brubaker pose in their early American classroom in Willowsburg.
MSS students and alumni recall making environmental art with their former art teacher Kathleen Barry and have now created an outdoor "Art in Nature" space to remember her with. Teachers, students and alumni have worked over the past year since Kathy’s passing to create the space, clearing it of weeds and debris, and painting beautiful flat rocks to decorate the area. The smooth stones are from the shores of Lake Ontario, where Kathy enjoyed spending time, and were painted with thoughts and images that remind them about Kathy. The many beautiful decorated stones will be rotated to include all the designs. MSS staff members Denise Weinberger, Sandy Sharp and Sharon Vazquez worked with the students and alumni to create this space in Kathy’s memory. The garden includes a butterfly flower garden and wooden bench with a “Kathy’s Place” plaque (above), and our students will keep the space vibrant and alive by moving and switching out the rocks in an ever-changing memorial to our beloved friend. We miss Kathy every day, and she will forever be a part of our community!

Clockwise from above center: The plaque from the garden bench at Kathy’s Place. Cedar students sit on the garden bench, from left to right: Elodie Michel, Noelle Chiodi, Frankie Berrier and Brandon Burch. Willow students Sierra Panipinto and Mari Emmanuel organize the decorated smooth stones in Kathy’s Place.
On the last day of classes each year, we celebrate international traditions of peace and light at our Peace Celebration. This annual tradition brings together our whole community to enjoy music of the season. Our families share their traditional festivals of light, this year including Advent, Ayyām-i-Hā, Diwali, Eid, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Rohatsu and Chinese New Year along with a Native American thanksgiving address. Students, teachers, parents and grandparents join in singing international and traditional songs of peace.

Clockwise from above left: Aria (Birch), Paige, Isla (Pine), and Tyler Quigley shared Advent with the primary community. Isaac Martin and Geancarlos Ramos Gonzalez (Pine) sang holiday traditional songs with hand signs. Sam Gordon and his daughters Alia (Evergreen) and Mira (Willow) explained Rohatsu, a Buddhist celebration, and Saskia Enders, Aidyn Graham and Romy Amador-Gates (Maple) sang along in primary.
Our Annual Alumni Reunion was so much fun this year! We exchanged stories of past and present, enjoyed Dinosaur Bar-B-Que, and best of all, took our annual alumni student and parent photos. What a joy to see our alumni and hear all about what they are doing now. We had junior high, high school and college students, as well as graduates who are doing a wide range of interesting and challenging work. Our oldest attendee this year graduated in 2001, and is now thirty years old!


Our alumni parent attendees this year were, from far left to right, top row: Larry and Oana Fratostitanu, Ted Emmanuel, Claudine and John Ward, Mary Lawyer O’Connor, Julia Gordon, Selina Lazarus, Sharon Vazquez, Anna Stout, Aaron Halbritter, and Bob Quinn. In the front row from left to right: Kim Pedone, Kara Williams, Heejung Michel, Leslie Oliver, Susan French-Lawyer and Kathy Spensieri.
Getting Ready for the Theatre Workshop

Willow students, including at left, left to right, Betty Anderson and Siri Brubaker, and right, Mitchell Rovit and Evangelin Zubieta, are preparing for this year's Little Mermaid Jr. workshop. The upper elementary students are making the props, costumes and sets for the production, while learning their lines and musical numbers, both singing and choreographing them. The underwater props give a preview of the exciting production just ahead in February!