Our Peace Celebration

Our primary and elementary Peace Celebrations were occasions of warmth and joy, where we shared songs of the season and of world peace. Montessori is often referred to as “Education for Peace,” as we teach our students communication skills and create classroom cultures of responsibility, tolerance and harmony. We learn about the best that the peoples of the world have to offer and that we all have the same needs and rights. Our families shared their traditions of light, some of which occur this time of year, including Advent, Ayyám-i-Há, Chinese New Year, Diwali, Eid al-Fitr, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa.

Clockwise from above left: Cedar student Grace Dawkins and her father Gary Dawkins shared their family celebration of Kwanza; Cora Zachery (Maple) and her grandfather Michael McGrath lit advent candles. Bottom photo from left to right, Willow students Mia Enders, Grace Chao and Joye Lai shared the Chinese New Year.
Mary Lawyer O’Connor
Head of School

It is exciting to watch your kindergartner enter a new developmental phase as they finish their time in the 3-6 classroom and prepare to move to first grade. This is also a time that some parents start researching whether to continue at MSS or move to another school setting.

The elementary program at Montessori School of Syracuse includes the things you’ve come to love about your child’s primary MSS experience: our caring, skilled teachers who facilitate your child’s learning in all curriculum areas, giving them the opportunity to focus, explore and excel; a safe, secure and intimate campus setting where everyone knows and cares about your child; a rich developmental academic curriculum that provides a strong foundation and prepares your child for the future; communication skills consistently taught at every level that are important to your child’s long-term success; and a community of like-minded families who share your values about education.

Our elementary program does all of this, and much more, and we do it as a seamless transition to the next level. In addition to the robust Montessori curriculum, at the elementary level we add small-group lessons in art, fitness, library, Great Books, music and recorder, Land Lab and French. In upper elementary we add Tech Lab and Theatre Workshop. Our global, multicultural approach to education, our peace and communication skills curriculum, and our nature education programs are all continued at a more advanced level, giving your child the world-class Montessori curriculum they deserve.

As you consider your options for elementary school, we invite you to take a closer look at our elementary program in these ways: schedule a classroom observation with me at msshead@gmail.com, to see Montessori “in action,” and attend our spring Open House on Sunday, February 9, from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Photo above: Elodie Michel, a lower elementary student in Cedar, is working with the checkerboard. This math material is a concrete representation of a math concept that allows the student to move along the passage of abstraction at her own pace. There is no need to have all multiplication facts committed to memory yet, and a child may multiply large numbers while skip-counting the beads.
What about Social Skills?

There is often a misperception that Montessori does not focus on learning social skills, but the opposite is true! Montessori fosters independence through individual work but at the same time places a high value on social skills, as part of the grace and courtesy curriculum. Children learn to be polite, courteous and respectful of each other, their teachers and their classroom environment. Each day they practice polite greetings and eye contact, and their group lessons teach the use of “I statements” and listening skills. Most of all, the adults at our school model respect and consideration every day.

Photos clockwise from above left: Elliot Demartini and Rocco Pinti work on illustrating the pages of their bird books together, an activity combining science, writing and social skills development in Birch Cottage. Aidyn Graham and Maddie Curtin count from 1 to 100 with a math material in Maple Cottage. Delaney Hughes and Isla Quigley in Pine Cottage discuss, explore and write about cultural objects from South America.

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Maple Cottage’s **Austin Cater-Cyker** is so pleased with his new baby sister (in the photo, below, bottom left) as are his parents, Jill and Stephen. On November 2, Mackenzie Cater-Cyker was welcomed into their family! Austin and Mackenzie are also cousins to **Sophia Cater-Cyker** in Cedar Classroom.

Syracuse benefits from two different ballet companies performances of the holiday favorite **The Nutcracker**, and both had MSS students performing in them! **Madilyn Ellis** (Cedar) played a mouse in the Syracuse City Ballet. She is pictured here (middle photo, below at left) with her Cedar friend **Laila Khalil** (Laila on the right). **Evi Zubieta** (Willow) has been dancing in The Great Russian Nutcracker for four years now. This year she is dancing the parts of a party guest and a dancer in the Chinese sentinel. She is pictured in the far right photo, (below) in costume.

**Disney’s Frozen Jr.** at Christian Brothers Academy (CBA) included **Marielle Emmanuel** (2018) in its cast as the character Oaken. The November production was put on by the CBA middle school. In the middle photo (far right page 5) Marielle and her good friend **Sierra Panipinto** (2018) pose after the musical (Mari left, Sierra right).

The Symphoria Youth Orchestra included students with many connections to MSS! **Aiden Michel** (Willow) played co-principal clarinet with former MSS student **Phoebe Donaghy-Robinson**. Other former MSS students in the Repertory Orchestra were Phoebe’s sister **Kalysta Donaghy-Robinson**, playing the tuba, and **Bianca Lucas**, playing the flute. Bianca is the daughter of Lisa Lucas (Willow team teacher). The Symphoria Youth String Orchestra included **Alexander Qui**, former MSS student and son of WenFang Zhao (Birch Cottage teacher). Alex is shown in the top photo on page 5.

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Quinn Wimer (2018) recently went to Africa for two weeks to work with the organization HOPE for Ariang in South Sudan. The organization was founded by a “Lost Boy of the Sudan,” Gabriel Bol Deng. Quinn and his mother, Elizabeth Wimer, worked at the school, which has over 1,000 students in grades 1-8, and just seven teachers. Quinn’s aunt Alice Wimer made quilted checkerboards that Quinn and Elizabeth brought along. Quinn taught teachers and students the game, which was new to them, and their current goal is to start a checkers club. They remarked that by the end of their trip, the students had quickly developed strategies and were beating them at checkers! At the bottom left appears a photo of Quinn with students at the Sudanese school. Quinn is sixth from the right.

Two of our second grade Cedar students, Emma Martin and Juliet DePaulis (in photo below left, left to right) observed some homeless people in our city, and decided to take action. They petitioned administrators to set up their table at the MSS Makers Fair and raised $300 by selling their handmade items: ornaments, chocolate truffles and lots of hot chocolate! The money they raised was donated to In My Fathers Kitchen.

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The Everson Museum’s Festival of Trees hosted three events with MSS students this year!

The first was **A Charlie Brown Christmas**, with the Chiodi Family and Elodie Michel. Elaina Chiodi (2017), Ben and Anna Chiodi (Willow) and Noelle Chiodi (Cedar), along with Elodie Michel (Cedar) danced in a Guzman Studio production of that show at multiple venues, including the Festival of Trees. Ben and Elena are pictured in the middle right photo, left to right, and Noelle, Anna Chiodi and Elodie Michael, as the Woodstock team, are pictured left to right in the third photo at the right.

A number of MSS students and alumni take Kathak dance lessons at the Anjani Dance Academy for Classical Indian dance and they performed at the Festival of Trees too! Current students **Sharvani Dhungana** (Pine), **Aarohi Jagtap** (Birch), **Aaditri Manocha** (Cedar), and former students **Anika** and **Kavya Arasu**, and **Sarbani Sumathi** all took part in the performances of Kathak dancing. The girls are pictured below left to right, Aarohi Jagtap and Sharvani Dhungana, and (left to right) Aaditri Manocha and Aarohi Jagtap.

And last but not least, our African Drumming Group Savannah Juvanis was invited to perform at the Everson, and at the annual Plowshares Craft Fair. In a photo from the Everson performance, above right, left to right **Brandon Burch, Maggie Dunn**, teacher Connie Walters, **Simone Winkleman, Will Brubaker** and **Aiden Michel** (Willow Classroom).
Robert Dotterer graduated from MSS in 2011 and went to the Jamesville-DeWitt High School public schools for middle and high school, graduating from JDHS in 2017. He is currently a junior at Hamilton College, majoring in math and economics.

Robert’s consistent sports focus and passion has been tennis, and he began competing while in the Evergreen (six-to-nine-year-old) classroom at MSS. He enjoys competition and played in many tournaments during his elementary years.

Robert played varsity tennis for six years for JDHS, and in four of his six years on the team he qualified for the New York State Public High School Athletic Association Tournaments, playing at the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York City. For two of the tournaments, he played doubles with MSS graduate Peter Hatton (2015). In addition, Rob had the distinction of being the first player in JDHS history to earn 100 wins during his high school career.

Robert now plays tennis for Hamilton College, and was one of ten men on the Hamilton College men’s tennis team who earned 2019 Intercollegiate Tennis Association scholar-athlete status. To be eligible for this honor, the athlete must be a varsity letter winner and maintain a grade point average of 3.50 or better for the academic year. In the 2018-19 season, Robert was named to the Spring All-Academic team by the NESCAC, the New England Small College Athletic Conference.

Robert feels that both his MSS and Hamilton College educations have taught him how to think and learn, and have provided him a foundation for success, whatever future path he chooses to take.

Photos from top right, down: Robert and his teammates at JDHS celebrating his distinction of being the first player in JDHS history to earn 100 wins during his high school career. Robbie hammering in a peg on the MSS entry-way, built in honor of his father, David Dotterer, who passed away in 2006, when Robbie was seven-years-old. Robert’s mother Lori Dotterer donated the beautiful entryway structure that we walk under every day, in David’s memory. In the final photo, immediate right, left to right, are Julia Vazquez, Tyler Gabriel, Jeff Gabriel and Robert Dotterer. This photo was taken their senior year, when they all qualified for the math honor society Mu Alpha Theta and the National Honor Society at JDHS. Jeff, a very good friend of Robert’s, passed away in 2019 in an auto accident. All four were members of the MSS class of 2011.
Alumni Focus: Annabella & Jeffrey Owens

After completing preschool and elementary at MSS, Annabella Owens graduated in 2012 and continued her education at East Syracuse Minoa (ESM) school. She graduated from ESM in 2018 and moved on to Colorado College (CC) in Colorado Springs. Annabella is majoring in cultural and linguistic anthropology, and minoring in French, with the long-term goal of law school. In the summer of 2019, she traveled to Dakar, Senegal, to study abroad, speaking Wolof and French with her host family. They traveled together to the Museum of Black Civilizations and the Gorée Islands World Heritage Site in Senegal. Annabella participated in field work for her research, investigating the repatriation of cultural goods from western countries to Senegal. Annabella also did a multiweek internship in Colorado Springs working for the Refugee and Asylee Program there, a nonprofit refugee resettlement program.

Annabella’s older brother Jeffrey Owens also attended MSS, graduating in 2009. He moved next to the ESM school, graduating in 2015, and proceeded to Colorado College, majoring in STEM psychology and minoring in French. During his time there, Jeffrey studied abroad in Grenoble, in the French Alps. He graduated from CC in 2019 and was delighted to have Oprah Winfrey as the commencement speaker at his graduation. Jeff currently works for an innovation institute in Colorado Springs doing project-based work for the institute's various clients. He is now looking at graduate school choices, with an eye toward research & business innovation.

Nuriyah Owens and her children wanted us to know that they applaud and celebrate our 25th anniversary with us. They joined our school community in 2001, one of the first new families on our Waldorf Parkway campus!

Alumni Focus: Kea Glazier

Kea Glazier graduated from MSS in 2007, then went on to Jamesville DeWitt High School (JDHS), where she graduated in 2013. She continued with her love of performing arts, which began at MSS, and participated in musicals, dance and theatre. She competed on the track and gymnastics teams and was a member of the National Honor Society. She kept up her study of the French language and in high school was the president of the French club. Kea was an avid equestrian through high school and college, spending summers competing at local shows.

During high school and college, Kea had an active role working alongside her mother, former MSS teacher Theresa Grosso, helping her run her juice bar, Koinonia, in DeWitt where she discovered her interest in business. In college at Syracuse University (SU), Kea studied business and found Koinonia the perfect opportunity to apply the skills she learned to real-world scenarios.

Kea graduated from SU in 2017 with a B.S. in business management. While there, she was a member of Delta Phi Epsilon sorority and the Western Equestrian Team. After graduating from Syracuse University, she spent a year in the coastal city of Wilmington, N.C., before moving to Washington, D.C., where she now works for a nonprofit on a corporate engagement team helping to connect corporate partners with philanthropic opportunities in the local community. Kea is concurrently pursuing her masters in homeland security and counterterrorism at Penn State University.

In her spare time, Kea enjoys traveling, hiking with her dog and a good book. Kea keeps a journal of personal poems and short stories, a passion she discovered during her time at MSS. She is deeply appreciative of the inspiring guidance of Carol Lawyer, who was influential in cultivating her interest in creative writing.
Clockwise from above: Aarohi Jagtap and her father, Prasad visited Birch Cottage, where she showed off her fine-motor dexterity during Fathers Night. Tommy Ellis and his dad Kevin Ellis use a scale to weigh a thousand-bead cube in Maple Cottage. Henley Cordaro shows her father Rick how to do the binomial cube work in Pine Cottage; Hiroshi Kato and his daughter Akari Kato work on a bead chain in Pine Cottage.
Mothers, Fathers and Parents nights are highlights of the year for our students and their guests. Students host their parents, grandparents and special friends in their cottages and classrooms. A guided classroom tour, some favorite materials and lessons on classroom norms, such as rug-rolling, often feature in these visits. It is always delightful to see a primary three-year-old guiding her father in pushing in his chair, or showing mom where to put something on the shelf. Though the purpose of each material is not always immediately clear to the visitor, each one is teaching skills important to the child’s academic success. One example is the metal inset material. Tracing the geometric shapes refines the pencil grip and gives practice correctly holding the pencil. The hand control to steady the pencil is practiced. Developing movements while tracing the geometric shapes of straight and curved lines, prepares for letter formation and continual lines which assist with cursive writing. So what might look like “coloring” is much more complex!

*Photos clockwise from above left: Nora Coleman and her dad Carlton Coleman, did some drawing together during his visit to Maple Cottage. Bella Gingold did her best cursive writing, while her mother, Samantha and grandfather Neil observed in Maple. Issac Martin (Pine Cottage) shows his mother Julie Martin one of his favorite choices, hammering.*
Our 25th Anniversary Annual Fund!

What is your special Montessori memory? Maybe it is seeing the pride in your child's eyes when they brought home their first continent map, hearing them describe the characteristics of an amphibian or their excitement at following animal tracks at the Land Lab. It might be the self-assurance you saw in them as they presented their science research project, took on a lead role in the play or spoke at their graduation ceremony. Perhaps it was being impressed by your grandchild's curiosity or their kindness toward others, or the joy in their faces at the Peace Celebration? If you attended MSS, it is likely that you have many amazing memories about your time here. This year we are celebrating 25 years of providing world-class Montessori education in central New York at MSS. Please help us continue to thrive by supporting our school community with a special anniversary gift to the Annual Fund. Your generosity makes a difference in the lives of our students, and every dollar contributed by parents, grandparents, alumni, staff and friends of MSS goes to our students and their educational “foundation for life.” Visit mssyr.org to donate.

From left to right: Willow students Simone Winkleman, Siri Brubaker, and Caitlyn Coryell enjoyed being holiday elves at the Peace Celebration. Another Willow student Betty Anderson at the far right, sang a beautiful Silent Night solo for the elementary event.