WHAT’S GOING ON AT MMS?

LOTS! Read on.....

This is such an exciting time for our school! We are growing and changing in so many different areas that it can be hard to keep track of. Read on to learn about all of the many happenings at Mountaineer Montessori School:

There is a big meeting this week, (Thursday, March 13 at 6:00) to kick off of the Gala Committee’s work. You can let Amy Hill know if you are interested in helping, but cannot attend the meeting.

Speaking of the Gala – mark your calendars! It will be held on Saturday, May 31st at The Berry Hills Country Club. This year’s Gala promises to be absolutely MAGICAL!

Here are some programming updates: Because of increased enrollment, we are planning on opening a new Lower Elementary class next year (1st-3rd grades). We are in the process of finalizing the hiring of a new teacher. For the Upper Elementary class, we will also need a new teacher since Suzanne will be moving up to teach in the new Middle School program. We have a strong candidate for the Upper EI position as well. We should be able to announce the new teachers within the next few weeks.

Most of our classes for the 2013-2014 are already full, but there are a few openings at some levels. If you know people who are interested, please encourage them to call even if they have heard that we are full.

We are going to enter a team of Primary students in the Mac and Cheese Cookoff on April 5th starting at 11:00 at the Capitol Market. You will not

We will be kicking off the Middle School Capital Campaign next month. We need to raise $200,000. If you know of any funding sources that we should be in touch with, please let us know.

We are waiting for the latest round of test results to come back before making a decision about if and when to allow the children to drink the water at school. You will be asked to give permission beforehand. In the meanwhile, please continue to send a bottle of water with your child to school every day.

There is a Strategic Planning Committee hard at work making plans and setting goals for the school for the upcoming years. You will receive a survey shortly, asking for your input.

As you can see, things are really hopping at school these days. It’s a wonderful feeling and a great opportunity for us to become even closer as a community.

So many thank you’s to our amazing parents:

Theo and his dad have been bringing us water from home every day. You should see Theo lugging those heavy gallons in everyday!

Thank you also to all of you who have stepped up and volunteered to serve on one of the really important committees that is hard at work. You are having a huge impact on our school’s future.
A recorder ensemble rehearses

Here is the latest update on our Music Ensemble Groups:

In Orff Ensemble we have been working diligently on preparing pieces for our Spring Recital. In keeping with the Around the World theme in music this year, we will be performing Silver Moon, a folk song from China; a salsa piece from the Caribbean and an as-yet undecided third piece. We have acquired some new instruments for our ensemble: an authentic tall rain stick and a beautiful set of chimes from Peru.

The Choir has been learning several songs from around the world. We are a small group with a big heart and we look forward to sharing our hard work at the Spring Recital.

The Recorder Ensemble has fun Friday early mornings practicing pieces with three-part harmonies. We have played a lot of songs and need to decide which ones we will perform in the recital, but for sure we will be joining the Orff Ensemble.

CARING FOR OTHERS

Maria Montessori wrote, “Children have an anxious concern for living beings, and the satisfaction of this instinct fills them with delight. It is therefore easy to interest them in taking care of plants and especially of animals. Nothing awakens foresight in a small child, who lives as a rule for the passing moment and without care for the morrow, so much as this. When he knows that animals have need of him, that little plants will dry up if he does not water them, he binds together with a new thread of love today’s passing moments with those of the morrow."

Our Montessori school continues to care for many animals: guinea pigs, hamsters, fish, turtles, birds, frogs ....the list goes on. We are very fortunate to have Karen Kelly. She nurtures these many creatures that enrich our learning environment. Thank you, Karen, for sharing your love, knowledge, and skills with us!

This year, inspired by a series of heartwarming stories about Henry and Mudge, (a boy and his dog), the children prepared homemade dog bones for the Kanawha Charleston Humane Association. While rolling the dough, Mitchell Ferrell chanted, “Helping people, that’s what we’re about!” Karen paid a surprise visit with her dog, Danny the dachshund. She talked to the children about the shelter and explained dog-safety rules. Danny even performed tricks! Recently, we took a nature walk and sprinkled bird seed along the way. The children noticed how busily the birds searched for food. They felt empowered to be helping them. This is a wonderful activity to do together. This month, look for opportunities for your child to care for others.

FROM A GRANDPARENT

“Look, Nana, this is Europe!” exclaimed three-year old Dylan as he pulled out an irregular shaped piece of red construction paper from his backpack. As a retired Montessori teacher, I recognized it right away. “I see you poked it out,” I acknowledged with a smile on my face. To some, that small bit of red paper may have looked like just a scrap, but after 39 years in a Montessori classroom and now a Montessori grandmother, I knew it represented much, much more. In his carefully prepared classroom at Mountaineer Montessori, Dylan was offered a myriad of stimulating activities from which to choose. That day, he decided to undertake a demanding and time-consuming fine motor activity. Under the guidance of his well-trained teacher, he learned how to carefully grasp the poking tool and punch holes precisely on the outline of Europe. Completing this work required concentration, self-control, and perseverance. You can imagine his feeling of accomplishment when, after considerable effort, he was able to hold the shape of Europe in his hands.

That is the beauty of the Montessori classroom. It offers the child an environment designed to thoughtfully exercise his natural tendencies for exploration, manipulation, repetition, exactness, activity, work, and self-perfection. qualities that support life-
**JUNIOR ELEMENTARY**

**Peace Curriculum (Part 1 of 2)**

“Establishing lasting peace is the work of education; all politics can do is keep us out of war.”
- Maria Montessori

Upon returning from Winter Break this year M.M.S. Jr. Elementary began to devote forty-five minutes each Monday and Wednesday to the study of Peace. Our “Peace Curriculum” includes song, creative writing, drama and art. We study the history of peace and the people that bring peace to our lives.

Our first exercise was to write a “call and response” prayer for peace:

**“Peace Will Come”**

When we use our hearts to love others as much as ourselves...
We respect each other and help each other learn.
When we use our ears to listen to each other...
We respect each other and learn something new.
When we use our eyes to see each other as beautiful gifts...
We respect each other and see each other as friends.
When we use our hands to congratulate each other and our arms to hug each other...
We respect each other and lend a helping hand.
When we use our words to build up others...
We respect each other and bring smiles to each other’s faces.

Our class formed four groups. Each group drew a slip of paper with one of the four winds written on it. The children in the group that received the slip that said “North Wind” were asked to write and perform a skit that illustrates courage. “Courage to walk facing the strong winds of life – courage to let go of harshness in our words and actions.” The children who received the slip saying, “East Wind” are writing and performing a skit representing “the rising sun of the new day – walking in a peace filled manner.”

(To be continued next month)

**ADVANCED ELEMENTARY**

**Sixth Year Students Take it Up a Notch**

Sixth-year students in the Advanced Elementary class have earned certain privileges. Some are already becoming leaders in our school. Others enjoy planning and implementing the school’s lunch program. Yet others help plan class field trips. But, the biggest honor bestowed upon sixth-year students is the “Sixth-Year Project,” or SYP.

Guest guide Darlene Spangler is leading the sixth-year students through this yearlong project—the culmination of which will be a 10-page research paper and oral presentation, with visuals, on a topic of their choice. By the end of April, the students will have completed their final research papers with bibliographies and footnotes. Each student will then develop and present a 10-minute oral presentation during a semi-formal invitation-only event, tentatively scheduled for the parent night of May 13th. Parents, MMS staff, and other friends and family will be invited.

The project started early in the year. Students came up with three or more possible topics of interest, narrowed down their selections based on available resources at the library, and decided on their yearlong projects. They gathered a variety of resources, including nonfiction books, reference books, films, interviews, and documentaries. In all, the students will have collected more than 100 note cards each. Darlene has taught them how to take good notes, make outlines, edit their work, and write expository essays. Later, they will learn public-speaking skills to prepare for their big presentations.

As a special treat for completing this project, all sixth-year students will go on an overnight trip. They will know the dates and times; however, all other details will be a surprise. (Parents will be given all the information well in advance).

The sixth-year students have taken on this challenge with enthusiasm and excitement. No doubt, they will be filled with an incredible sense of pride in their work when it is done—not to mention an incredible sense of relief. In addition, the project will be an important milestone in their lives because the skills they have acquired will prove extremely valuable in many future endeavors. And, from a personal standpoint, I can say unconditionally that working with them has been an amazing experience for me and an important milestone in my own life.