



THE SEED

SPRING 2022

Newsletter



THE FUNDAMENTAL NEEDS OF HUMANS ART SHOW

By Monika Geerling

During the month of January, our talented Montessori students featured their art work at the Oliver Wolcott Library. The exhibit offered a look into the important lesson of what binds humans together, and asks, "How can the needs of human beings be satisfied physically, so that the species can survive?"

The exhibit was an exploration of the clever ways people discover how to fulfill their needs, sometimes in spite of enormous obstacles. As such, we are called to remember the work of Maria Montessori, who inspired us to consider the basic idea of human needs through the categories of spiritual and physical: the spiritual relates to religion, love, art, and vanity, while the physical encompasses food, clothing, shelter, and defense. The exhibit offered a look into how each student interpreted the needs of humans.

Throughout human existence, art has played an essential role in bringing forth the creative, thoughtful, and beautiful part of human nature. The library exhibit features the colorful, painted still-life portraits of the Bosc pear. Inspired by the movement of Pop Art in which commonplace objects are elevated to the level of fine art, students painted multiple portraits of their pear. As a continuation of our in-depth study of the color wheel, each child brought to life the exquisite and individual nature of the pear through the use of primary and complementary colors with the medium of acrylic paints on canvas.

(continued on page 3)



Festival de Luces SEASON OF LIGHTS

– KATE GNITZCAVICH, GRAIL KEARNEY, SUSAN PATRICK, MOLLIE SMITH, KATHERINE VANDIVER, & GLORIA VEGLIANTE

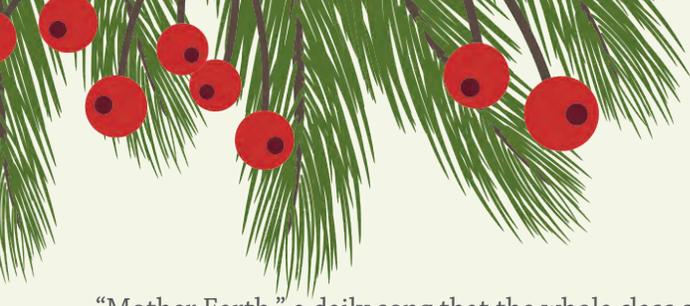


We were so happy to have an in-person *Season of Lights* event this year. It was reimagined from years past and enjoyed by everyone. Parents traveled around the building enjoying the festivities as the children raised their voices in celebration of the season. The parents began in YPC, then traveled to Children’s House, Upper Elementary, and ended in Lower Elementary. After the performance, parents and students were invited for cookies and cocoa made by many parent volunteers. Each class from our school played a part in the celebration this year.

The Young Person’s Community joined in the event for

the first time with their rendition of “Jingle Bells”. They sang it once in English and once in Spanish. With Spanish consistently spoken in YPC, the youngest children are seamlessly infusing the language into all parts of their day. After that, they danced, and played rhythm instruments along to the class’s favorite Spanish song, “Chocolaté,” singing along with Sirius Coyote, a musical group consisting of two former Spanish teachers of LMS.

This year was also the first year that Children’s House has been a part of the Season of Lights celebration. The children were given a list of songs that we could learn and sing together....to their teacher’s delight they chose



“Mother Earth,” a daily song that the whole class sings before enjoying lunch together. As a child said, “Miss Mollie, ‘Jingle Bells’ is a classic...we must sing that one!” and so we did! It filled our hearts to sing together again. We also enjoyed seeing our parents gathered around us, supporting us with love and joy.



The Upper Elementary performed a small collection of pieces to get into the holiday spirit. They also helped to decorate the field with holiday topiaries and garlands along the patio fences. The children opened with a dance performance, “Dandya Raas,” an Indian folk stick dance. Keeping in time to the music, and switching partners made for a fun and challenging dance. Fourth years Katerina Rondos and Emerson Merrill sang an acapella rendition of “The First Noel” and fifth year Chloe Hart sang the classic, “O, Holy Night.” Keeping with our wintery theme, the children sang the beloved, “I’m Dreaming of a White Christmas,” and finished with the hauntingly beautiful, “Shalom Chaverim.”

The Lower Elementary’s role in the event was great fun from start to finish. On the morning of the performance, the Lower El children gathered in the backyard to make ready for their guests... brooms were flying, greenery and festive ribbons were hung and the stage (our red striped rugs) were marked by beautifully and lovingly prepared pots of pine and berries. The effect was wonderfully festive and the children were thrilled to welcome their families to their concert. Once our audience had gathered along the fence, they were graciously welcomed by second year Ari. The children sang a variety of holiday classics including: “Jingle Bells,” “Dreidel, Dreidel,” and “We Wish You A Merry Christmas.” They also sang “Feliz Navidad” effortlessly and graciously, projecting pure joy. Finally, our third year girls Tessa, Ren, and Mia did a memorable choral reading of an excerpt of Edgar Allen Poe’s, “The Bells.” Following the concert, we enjoyed a lovely reception with hot chocolate and cookies for all. ■

(continuation of Art Show piece)

The creative work also moved into the world of pottery, exploring the essential human need for food and how to contain it. The students worked with terracotta clay and sculpted it into bright, colorful bowls. The shape and design of each bowl was unique to the child.

The art show in total demonstrated for us that humans are more than a body; they also have a spirit that needs to be satisfied. This was interpreted by the children as they depicted a moment in time when they felt either love, peace, awe, or wonder. On the surface of a wooden pallet, the children used rocks, tree bark, and live plants, and arranged a composition to represent the memory. The creations were abstract and simple in their display, yet delivered a meaningful and beautiful message.

“Throughout human existence, art has played an essential role in bringing forth the creative, thoughtful, and beautiful part of human nature.”

Through the students’ art, we realize how we are all connected, and how essential the most basic needs are to our survival as a human race. We look to be an integrated being of body, spirit, and intellect—finding gratitude and appreciation in the smallest of details, and understanding the spirit is never quite at rest, but forever searching. ■





Jimmy, Joseph, Julia and Hadley



Parent Reflections

STUDENT LIFE AFTER LITCHFIELD MONTESSORI SCHOOL

– DIANE HART, LISA GUARNIERI, MICHAEL CREUSS & HEATHER FORD

I knew Montessori was best for my daughter, Julia, based on what I'd learned about it in college studying different educational philosophies. I felt confident in my decision to send her to Litchfield Montessori School when I visited a classroom there and saw and heard the culture in action; the engaged voices of students and adults, and the independence and respect demonstrated toward young people in that environment. Everything felt right.

It's difficult, however, to tune out the often unsolicited advice of people in your life who feel compelled to give their two cents about what's best for your child. It takes a village, right? So, as parents, we try to stay open-minded and listen to our village. The big concern from others was not about whether Montessori would be good for my child while she was there, but what would come after. I heard one colleague bemoan how children from a Montessori environment are accustomed to being on a first name basis with educators. How can a child learn to live in the real world after living in such an idyllic one? I'm so glad I followed my instincts, informed by what I'd read and observed about a Montessori education, because a year

after my daughter completed her eight glorious years at Litchfield Montessori, I can say without question that she is thriving and that her time at LMS was essential to nurturing her confidence in new situations.

I think she would do well in any school environment now. We made the decision to send her to our town's public middle school because she expressed that she was eager and ready for buses and lockers and hundreds of classmates. All of that was a huge shift after being in a graduating class of four, with only twelve upper elementary classmates in her last three-year cycle.

She was used to having her sister in class with her, too. When she was five, at the end of her first three-year cycle at LMS, I had expressed concern that she would share a classroom with her three-year-old sister in Children's House. Their teacher assured me that siblings navigate sharing a classroom well, and I learned to trust that the adults who supported my children by day were doing more than teaching them to read, write, and compute.

I learned how to follow my child, to trust them with glass objects, and to provide them with what they

needed in order to complete tasks by themselves. I extended the respect they received at school to our relationships at home. I tuned in to them, observed their success in the Montessori environment and learned how to trust that they are

“I felt confident that Julia would be successful this school year, even with very new adventures ahead of her...”

capable of handling so much more than I realized at home, too. Julia and her sister overlapped in the same class three times throughout Julia’s LMS tenure and, as promised, they handled their time together at school with grace and courtesy.

I felt confident that Julia would be successful this school year, even with very new adventures ahead of her, but her experience in public school has exceeded my expectations. She has been brave, embarking on new friendships, trying out for a team she didn’t make, and auditioning for a school play in which she has a lead role. She has maintained her connections to Litchfield Montessori, continuing work on the pollinator garden in the autumn with her classmates from last year and making plans to return in the spring, and coming on half-days to mentor younger students. Julia arranges travel, dates, and times independently. She reaches out to her Nana or a friend of our family to get herself to LMS after school on those days and makes sure staff members know she’ll be there. She feels everyone’s trust in her and confidence that she can take charge of her own destiny.

The “real world” of a public middle school isn’t phasing her. Having to call her new teachers by “Mrs.” or “Mr.” isn’t a big lift. She has joined in fully with her new friends, attending events like football games and other school functions, and socializing via phone texts with all the preteen zeal one would expect. She has excelled academically in her classes, while juggling rehearsals for the school play, and continuing to balance ballet multiple days a week after school. She even manages to grace her family with her presence! As I felt in my heart before she started at LMS, and felt again when she left LMS, she is ready for anything because of her time spent there.

-Diane Hart



Those of you who are aware of Jimmy and Joseph’s affinity for paleontology may find it fitting that we liken their transition from LMS to Talcott Mountain Academy to a shift from one geologic time period to another. They adapted to their new environment of continuous streams of school assignments and confluences of due dates and wowed us in the process.

Joseph and Jimmy were curious and resilient as infants. I remember their eyes being glued to the pages of Dr. Seuss’, “Oh, the Places You’ll Go!” as I read it from beginning to end without hearing a whine or a peep. I also remember how they stared back at me with calm and curiosity through a large window as they watched frantic facial expressions of their mother who just realized she locked herself out of the house!

WE'VE COLLECTED OVER
150
WINTER HATS,
GLOVES & SCARVES!

TRADITION
The Giving Tree
- DONNA FORTIER

The Giving Tree is a longstanding and treasured tradition at LMS. Each year, the children collect mittens, gloves, hats, scarves, and coats to decorate the tree. They love seeing the gear they collect grow and grow on the donated tree in the school’s entrance. This year, our donations went to the Community Health and Wellness Center of Greater Torrington, who distributed our items to excited and thankful children in the Torrington public school system, enabling them to play in the snow! Thank you to our generous community for all your donations!

Kindness

Jimmy and Joseph's curiosity and resilience have served them well at their new school; so has their bravery, strong work ethic, and kindness, which were so well-nurtured at LMS. Joseph described how he stayed with a classmate who experienced a cramp after gym class so he would not be alone. Jimmy described how he tried to distract a young

“Jimmy and Joseph’s curiosity and resilience have served them well at their new school.”

student’s attention away from inappropriate language on the school bus by encouraging her to read her book.

Curiosity, resilience, bravery, a strong work ethic, and kindness continue to be dominant traits in Jimmy and Joseph’s evolving characters, and we could not be more proud of them.

-Lisa Guarnieri and Michael Cruess



Our daughter Hadley joined the Litchfield Montessori Young People’s Community in the Fall of 2011 and graduated in 2021. Throughout those ten years, Hadley benefited from a rich curriculum and a sense of belonging and connectedness. Each three-year cycle, with its own unique curriculum targeted to meet the students where they are in their journey, allowed her the time and space to acquire the skills and ideas being explored. The nature of the three-year cycle also provided opportunities for Hadley to learn from elders in the class and practice leadership skills as she grew. Teachers served as guides, providing the structure and support necessary for Hadley to develop strong academic and self-advocacy skills. The Wilderness Program, a favorite of Hadley’s, allowed her the opportunity to take positive risks, build confidence, and spend many hours outdoors exploring nature.

After Litchfield Montessori, Hadley was accepted to the Rumsey Hall School in Washington Depot. Rumsey Hall is a co-educational junior boarding and day school with a traditional and robust curriculum. Hadley’s transition

to Rumsey’s welcoming and friendly community was seamless. Most would agree that the middle school stage of adolescence is a period of rapid growth, both social and emotional, that can be challenging to navigate. Hadley’s holistic elementary school experience prepared her to tackle these challenges head on, allowing her to thrive throughout her first year at Rumsey.

The Litchfield Montessori curriculum prepared Hadley well for her current experiences in math, science, history, and English. Her Rumsey teachers have complimented not only Hadley’s strong public speaking skills, but also her sound self-advocacy skills. Typical of middle school, Hadley experienced more frequent homework and assessments as well as the introduction of weekly effort grades, but because LMS had helped develop a strong work ethic, sound study skills, and cultivated the

“Teachers served as guides, providing the structure and support necessary for Hadley to develop strong academic and self-advocacy skills.”

desire to do one’s best work, the increased workload did not create the stress that an ill-prepared student might experience. We are pleased with the LMS program’s ability to help prepare Hadley for such a transition, and grateful to the faculty and staff for their time, effort, and expertise.

-Heather Ford



Orange

Orange is the color of
warm fire,
a glowing jack-o-lantern,
a beautiful flower,
a package of new
sticky notes,
the second color
of the rainbow,
and, uh...well...Oranges.

Bunny Wesson
5th year student

The Sugar Snap Pea

Green as a new leaf,
bright as the sun,
snap it and it pops,
it's so fun!
Sweet as sugar,
perfect for a snack,
yummy enough to steal it.
Give it back!

Emerson Merrill
4th year student

Milk

Milk is cold
And good
And sometimes chocolate
It is wet
Spills and sours easily
Milk is part of cereal
Which is maybe a soup
It is cow
And goat
And almond
And soy
And coconut
And strangely pigeon
Also chocolate
Though we have already
discussed that.

Leo Martinez
6th year student

Falling Leaves

The leaves are dancing
through the sky,
and a wise elephant
would not know why.
Yet when they come free
from their branch,
they cannot wait,
they simply have to dance.
Maybe they really
want to be free,
and other leaves
need company.
Sandrine Sweet
5th year student



Emergency Shelters

EVOLUTIONARY MEMORY AT WORK

– ED THORNEY



We all remember the joy of building a fort... the vision, the creativity, the gathering of resources, careful placement of materials, and finally that warm feeling of pride as we enter our new, safe hideout. Our Adaptive Memory (sometimes called Evolutionary Memory) recalls the skills required to live through crisis. To be sure, our ancient ancestors survived because they built a shelter quickly. Our adaptive memory is what attracts us to a campfire, to water, playing tag, competition, cooperation, beating the odds, strengthening our bodies, and building shelters.

This fall, elementary students were tasked with surviving a New England winter night. Add to your imagination that the storm is already upon us, darkness is setting in, the temperature is dropping, we have no extra clothes to put on, and no food to eat—we step into a life-or-death mind-set. This was how our elementary students started class one day. They were challenged with building a shelter that could keep one or two people alive through a cold winter night. The guidelines were:

- To choose an existing structure such as a log, fallen tree, overhang or rock to use as the primary support
- Roof must be low to keep in body heat
- Wind, rain, or snow proof as possible
- You only have 30 minutes from site selection to completion

Students had the choice of working in a pair or alone. Most chose to work in a pair. We walked out as a group along the path that leads towards the canoe launch and stopped in an area where students could spread out, choose a site, and let the challenge begin.

As their instructor, what I first observed was how much the children enthusiastically embraced the challenge of a time-bound, high-stakes project. The sense of urgency of life vs. death consequences became a high-spirited mantra that kept them physically active and emotionally tuned in. They applied themselves well! The last five-minute countdown was as dramatic as it gets, students scrambling to complete the finishing touches before the grim reaper of a winter's night came calling! What I also observed was the power of creative energy. For some, it was total individuality, their cognitive process unfolding into something real. For the pairs, some divided the two tasks of gatherer and builder. In other pairs, students shared both jobs as they designed and built cooperatively. To observe moments of efficiency, chaos, confusion, commitment, frustration, satisfaction, creativity, and pride was a special 30-minute view into humanity's ancient evolutionary memory.

When time was up, we moved as a group from one shelter to the next while the owners of that dwelling presented



their design with the pride of a survivor. Most outdoor Education classes start in the Potter's Barn for the initial briefing with instructions and safety protocols before moving into the woods or pond for the activity. We then return to the barn for a debrief. In the late fall and winter, the barn, with its cozy wood stove, sets the tone for a meaningful dialogue designed to reinforce what was learned.

During the debrief after the shelter building exercise, some of the comments from students included:

"I like working alone because it is very efficient, no one to argue with."

"Working as a team is fun when your partner and you divide the labor efficiently (ie. gathering resources and construction.)"

"I liked how my partner and I just worked together. We listened to each other's ideas for a change, and it made it fun."

"My partner and I divided the jobs, I got stuff and he built it."

"We spent too much time talking in the beginning. We waited so long to start building we almost didn't finish. Too much chatter, not enough action. But when it was done, it was great!"

"At first, the sticks and stuff I needed were all around me, but then I had to go farther away, and people accused me of stealing their stuff!"



"As their instructor, what I first observed was how much the children enthusiastically embraced the challenge of a time-bound high-stakes project."



I shared with the students how the nature of crisis requires accurate decisive action and some groups squandered valuable time by arguing over decisions. Pairs and individuals that chose a site quickly and got right to work created solid shelters with good protection, while pairs that thought too hard and talked too much got less done and struggled to finish. Sometimes, when we see a project in our mind's eye it has to be dramatically modified by what is actually in front of us. How quickly we adapt determines our success.

I love that LMS students take an unusual pride in getting dirty and wet, and become totally immersed in their environment when they have a challenge to meet! Since the initial construction day, students have asked to return to their shelters and make improvements. Maybe some dreary, cool, and drizzly day these adventurers can test their shelters out for 30 minutes, and just maybe, there will be hot cocoa waiting back at the barn. ■

Peaceful COMMUNITY IN ACTION

– DEB DEGUIRE

It was with absolute joy that I returned to LMS this fall to engage with the Elementary students in discussion, role play, and art using Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Six Principles of Nonviolence."

My first visits were to get to know the students and introduce them to Dr. King and his vision of "The Beloved Community." I am always moved by the responses children have as they learn about his legacy. Their fresh minds have so much compassion, serious questions, and logical solutions for a better community and world.

In the Lower Elementary, we sang songs and played cooperative theatre games. We defined each of the six principles and talked about how to use them in everyday life whether at school, at home, or with other friends and family in response to conflict.

*"Hate cannot drive out hate,
only love can do that."*

– Dr. King

Conflict is normal and to be expected. It is how we respond in these moments that makes the difference. We talked about the everyday things that cause us frustration or may even elevate to angry outbursts. In nonviolence work, we say that the goal is to return to normal.

Conflict has three levels: normal, pervasive, and overt. A simple conflict for a child may be that the cereal they expected to have for breakfast was just consumed by their sibling. Voices rise, blaming may ensue, and suddenly this normal problem has reached the second level, pervasive. In this state, the best thing for all parties is to walk away or get an adult involved to reduce the energy and avoid hurting each other. If the conflict continues to rise, it may end with overt actions like hitting or other destructive behavior. At the overt level we say, "This is the 9-1-1," help is required. When people become heated, it takes time to reach a calm and receptive state of mind where mutual agreement



may be reached. While bodies are heated up, voices are raised, and words begin to harm, too. Dr. King said, "Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that." In analyzing conflict we begin to see how management can be the change maker.

The Upper Elementary explored and discussed values. We defined the term, considered the things we personally value, and then pooled results to see where we have common values. This exercise included small groups with the goal of selecting five values that they all shared from a list of 20. In some cases, a group had to reach a consensus which could mean someone's core value didn't make it to the group list. In the end, we saw that we shared common values and got to know a little something more about each other and what we value. Deeper listening occurs when we share what matters to us.

I told stories of how people were committed to nonviolence to achieve a goal back in 1955 during the Montgomery Bus Boycott. We learned about Rosa Parks, but also the many people behind the scenes whose quiet support was equally essential, like Georgia Gilmore. She created a secret group of cooks and bakers who sold homemade meals during the boycott. The monies they collected were anonymously donated to the Montgomery Improvement Association which had been formed to manage the bus boycott. Her donations raised funds to buy additional station wagons for the carpool system created to get people to and from work. She and many others risked losing their jobs for supporting the movement to desegregate public transportation in Montgomery. These stories demonstrate the courage of nonviolence.

The Upper Elementary students eagerly took on a presentation of the Montgomery Bus Boycott in the



form of Readers Theatre. While we practiced the short play, more stories of what this struggle meant for Black America were shared; real stories of the sacrifices made to amplify the problems in order to desegregate public transportation. We broke down the six principles and saw how they were applied for a successful outcome after 381 days of boycotting buses nonviolently in Montgomery, Alabama.

Six Principles of a Peaceful Community:

1. *Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.*
2. *The beloved community is the goal for the future.*
3. *Attack problems, not people.*
4. *Do the right thing even if it is difficult.*
5. *Avoid hurting the spirit or the body of yourself and others.*
6. *The universe is on the side of justice.*

Finally we launched a mural project to represent one of the six principles. The Upper El students selected a principle, designed, and painted a mural.

The faculty has also gotten involved. As part of the school's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work, we read the book *Stamped* by Ibram X. Kendi and Jason Reynolds which helped us consider the messages we've learned about race from the media, family, community, school, and peers. We journaled using the book *How to Be Anti Racist: A Journal for Awareness, Reflection and Action* by Ibram X. Kendi and joined together to discuss our reflections. We will continue this work throughout the year.

Understanding the complexity of race in America today takes digging into the weeds and learning the history of the struggle. Dr. King is as relevant today as he ever was. His philosophy of nonviolence changed unjust laws and continues to provide a framework to use in looking at our 21st century problems.

As Dr. King said in a speech given at the National Cathedral in 1968, "We shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice." ■



LMS Food Drive

The Upper Elementary students collected non-perishable food items last semester. They were donated to the food pantry at St. Michael's Church in Litchfield, which provides food to many households throughout Litchfield County. Our students really enjoyed the process and were thrilled to deliver the items to the food pantry in December. We all appreciate the bountiful donations from our community!



Summer Camps!

JUNIOR SUMMER FUN CAMP

(AGES 3-5)

&

ABUNDANT CIRCLE

(AGES 6-11)

Week 1: June 20 - 24

Week 2: June 27 - July 1

Week 3: July 5 - 8 (4 day week)

OUTDOOR CAMPS

(AGES 8-11)

Summer Adventure Camp:

June 27 - 30 (4 day week)

Creative Woodworking Camp:

July 5 - 8 (4 day week)

Thank You! FOR YOUR DONATIONS!

ANNUAL FUND

We continue to work towards our goal of **\$120,000**. Thank you to all who have contributed to the Annual Fund. Your gift makes a difference!



AMAZON SMILE

Do you shop on-line? The **Amazon Smile program supports non-profit organizations**. Link Litchfield Montessori School to your Amazon account. Then just shop at www.smile.amazon.com and a portion of the proceeds will come to us!

Check out our website for updates and more photos!

www.litchfieldmontessori.org

Upcoming Events

6/20	Summer Camps Begin
6/10	Moving On Ceremony
6/9	Last Day of Classes
5/24	Field Day
5/22	Healthy for Life 5K
	All School Picnic

www.litchfieldmontessori.org

860.283.5920

Northfield, CT 06778

5 Knife Shop Road

LITCHFIELD MONTESSORI SCHOOL

