

2025

THE SEED

ANNUAL REPORT



LITCHFIELD MONTESSORI SCHOOL

50

Celebrating

Years of Learning!

A LETTER FROM THE
Head of School

Dear Families and Friends,

At Litchfield Montessori School, we believe that learning happens everywhere: in the classroom, in nature, and through the relationships we build as a community. This year, that belief has been vividly brought to life through our hands-on classroom work, transformative outdoor experiences, and a shared commitment to enhancing the spaces where our children grow and play.

The incredible energy around our PLAYGROUND CAPITAL CAMPAIGN, a project designed to reflect our core Montessori values—creativity, independence, and connection to the natural world - is the highlight of our year. We envision a dynamic outdoor space where children can climb, build, imagine, and collaborate. Our new playground will serve as an extension of our classrooms, providing opportunities for physical exploration, problem-solving, and unstructured play that is essential to a child's development.

Thanks to the generosity of our families, friends, and community partners, we are close to reaching our goal to break ground in the summer of 2025. But we're not there yet. To make this dream a reality, we're calling on every member of the LMS community to help us cross the finish line. Whether through contributions, spreading the word, or supporting upcoming fundraising events, your involvement makes all the difference. Together, we can create a space that will benefit not only the children of today but also future generations of LMS students.

Our focus on hands-on, real-world learning extends far beyond our planned playground. In the fall, Upper Elementary students embraced adventure and independence during a tree-climbing day, where they learned to ascend and descend ropes high in one of our campus trees—a powerful experience for children and adults alike. Elementary classes explored the natural wonders of Nature's Classroom and White Memorial, connecting their studies to the world outside. These outdoor experiences deepen resilience, teamwork, and a profound appreciation for the environment—values that are foundational to Montessori education.

As we reflect on this year, I am filled with gratitude for the unwavering support of our families and community. Events like the Harvest Feast, Annual Wine & Beer Tasting Gala, and monthly Community Circle, Weekly Update, Friday coffee hours, school play dates, and game nights keep us connected, ensuring we all feel a part of the village that nurtures every child at LMS. Your continued support and engagement demonstrates the power of partnership in creating an enriching environment for our children.

With gratitude,



Diane Hart
Head of School



A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE

Board of Trustees

Dear Litchfield Montessori School Parents,

The Board of Trustees at Litchfield Montessori School is proud of our legacy of fostering independence through Montessori pedagogy and offering developmentally appropriate opportunities for risk-taking. We see the immense promise that a Montessori education holds for a child's future.

As part of our ongoing commitment to enhancing the learning experience, this year we are thrilled to announce the installation of a new, state-of-the-art heating and cooling system across our campus. This upgrade will provide a comfortable, consistent learning environment for students and staff year-round, while also representing a sustainable and significant enhancement to our school's infrastructure.

In addition to providing a comfortable indoor environment, we remain equally dedicated to nurturing students' growth through enriching outdoor experiences which have always been a vital part of the Litchfield Montessori experience. Through our wilderness program, imaginative play in "Mudville", hiking, field trips, and observing local wildlife, children forge meaningful relationships with their environment. Activities such as balance bikes, off-road biking, and tree climbing further enrich their connection with the outdoors. Additionally, the LMS playground has provided years of joy, and we are thrilled with the progress of the Capital Campaign for its replacement. The new Kompan playground will offer enhanced opportunities for physical, social, and cognitive development. By encouraging active play and teamwork, it fosters essential skills like problem-solving, collaboration, and resilience—all in a secure and engaging setting. With strong community support, the campaign is nearing its goal.

These advancements and offerings are only possible thanks to the invaluable support of our parents, whose dedication continues to uplift our school community. We sincerely thank you, our parents, for your unwavering support of LMS faculty and programs. Your dedication and sacrifices provide your children with a rich and impactful education. Together, we foster a nurturing community where children excel, families bond, and the Montessori vision thrives.

Sincerely,



Chris Ford
President, Litchfield Montessori School Board of Trustees

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Upcoming Events

WINE & BEER TASTING GALA & SILENT AUCTION
 Friday, February 28th
 at The Litchfield Inn

COMMUNITY CIRCLE
 Thursday, March 7th at 3:30pm

SPRING CLEANUP
 Friday, March 28th after school

COMMUNITY CIRCLE
 Wednesday, April 17th at 5:30pm
 Thursday, May 8th at 3:30pm

GRANDPARENTS DAY
 Friday, May 9th

SCHOOL PLAY
 Thursday, May 22nd

MOVING ON CEREMONY
 Friday, June 6th

FROM A *Montessori Parent*

— ALEXA MERRILL

Montessori has been woven into the very core of my children, and our family, for over a decade now. It began as a way to engage my first-born child, Emerson, who was an internally motivated, highly curious, hands-on learner from the start. It was a natural fit for us both, as I approach each day as an opportunity to learn, and to teach, while remaining rooted in experiences that nurture and support the whole child. Before I knew it, Montessori became a way of life. But, the unexpected gift was that it ended up providing a profound insulation between our children and the ever intensifying forces outside of us in this modern world that threaten to interrupt the natural flow of childhood.

We have embraced Montessori throughout the many phases of our family life: babies, toddlers, multiple pregnancies, many moves, a worldwide pandemic (including 18-months spent living in quarantine), nearly 12-years combined of homeschooling children. All the while, there has been an ever-increasing assault of technology, social unrest, and many societal shifts away from the protection and nurturing of childhood. We are heading toward a more technology focused world, an overwhelming and hyper-stimulating environment, and an undue pressure to perform academically from a very young age. In the face of all this, Montessori keeps us grounded. Montessori keeps us engaged and exploring, learning and connecting, living life in real time, face-to-face, with our hands in the dirt, in the work, and in the natural world.

In our family, Montessori means hand juicing oranges at five o'clock in the morning, organizing, writing, and performing plays or concerts in the living room, or conducting science experiments like attempting to cook raw pasta over heating vents just because we're curious. It means our kids create "peace cubes," or tiny little forts of peace, outfitted with weighted and plush blankets, books, essential oils, snacks, soothing sounds, and quiet activities to spend time in when they have trouble managing their emotions or impulses. It means family meetings with beautifully handmade talking sticks when we need an extra potent form of conflict resolution. It means creating wild and elaborate worlds to immerse ourselves in on a Sunday afternoon: fully mapped out societies with governments and flags and currency and

laws and shops, all created by children. It means our children regularly running out into the yard to plant different seeds from the foods that we eat just to see what will happen.

It means grating soap, hand mashing bananas or playdough, writing our own recipes to test, or pressing flowers and leaves into clay that we'll later paint. It means jumping into rivers with all our clothes on, and getting as dirty as possible. Montessori means all of this, instead of screens, instead of modern stress, instead of a hyper fast paced or over scheduled life.

Montessori means slowing down. And the beauty of all of this is that our children are protected, their childhood is preserved, and their minds are kept pure. I see my children thriving and growing, and also becoming the exception in the modern landscape where, in eras past, they would have been the norm. Because that is all Montessori is— a philosophy, a lifestyle— that keeps us rooted in the way that young humans were meant to be nurtured and allowed to thrive. While it still does this, I think that now, more than ever, Maria Montessori's aim to save the world is so powerful and urgent. These children's daily rituals, routines, work, and experiences, are providing the antidote to modern anxiety. There is a soothing of sensory and attention issues in an environment that nurtures and teaches grace, courtesy, and the art of human relationship. Montessori gives children the space they need to learn to stand on their own two feet.

I watch my children out in the world, and I feel so grateful that their foundation—their minds, their hearts, their way of seeing the world—lies in Montessori, and will serve them always. As a young mother, I embarked upon a life that should not be revolutionary, and yet Maria worked through me. She saved my children, and they will carry Maria's mission out into the collective, walking evidence of her powerful teachings. ■



SUPPORTER'S CIRCLE

Katherine & Mitchell Alibozak
Melissa Lafferty & Peter Allen
Michelle & Adam Augustine
Camielle Hausheer &
Nathan Barnett
Christine & Roy Bouffard
Candace & William Boden
Sarah & Michael Bresson
Michele Caulfield
Alyssa & Joshua Chouinard
Dr. Leslie Coopersmith
Chelsea & Ryan Crichto
Deborah DeGuire
Joline & Greg Douglas
Jamie Dwan
Zahra Ali & Sat E
Amanda & Daniel Fortier
Robert Fredrickson
Elizabeth & Peter Frew
Kathleen Furman
Linda Garretson
Kate Gnitzcavich
Heather & John Grustas
Carmela & Mark Hansen
Muriel & Bruce Haynes
Heather & Michael Madow
Deborah Helck
Gabriela Anastasio &
Will Holloway
Dr. Cara & Daniel Johnson
Lisa Joseph
James Kaniewski
Erin Karpenko
Palmer Marrin & David Kleeman
Megan & Michael Kowalchick
Jessica Veneziano-Lemo &
Matthew Lemos
Thomasina & Steve Levy
Stephen Lewis
Kara Zarchin & Robert Madden
Chelsea & Juan Mendoza
Alejandra Barciela &
Zachary Meyer
Linda & Henry Milkowski
Courtney Maum &
Diego Ongaro
Lisa & Ronald Palladino
Eva & Thomas Pedro
Roger Perreault
Michelle & Joseph Pratt
Joyce Rawski
Sarah & Peter Robertson
Christine Rosa
Andreas Rothbauer
Jillian Rothbauer
Jen Ryan
Ileana Santore
Jeffrey Schmidt
Jeffrey Schmidt Sr.
Katelyn Sohl
Martha Soliday
Helena & Zachary Sweet
Waterbury Orthopedic
Association

Annual Giving 2023-2024

FOUNDER'S CIRCLE

Amy & John Ducci
Julie & Gregory Miller
Kathryn Flodquist
Heather & Christopher Ford
Lindsey & Jonathan Rotolo
Susan Ford
Leslie Smith
Mary & Richard Loyer
Triford Foundation

HEAD'S CIRCLE

Barbara Ellis & David Bernard
Janet Lebovitz
Linda Saarnjoki & Rusty Davis
Laura Bertrand & Stephen Pfender
Marina & Brock Putnam
George Seaborn

COMMUNITY CIRCLE

Hugh Cahill
Rachel McGinnis
Shelia & Ronald Caselas
Lynnette & Joseph McKnight
John Merrill
Anne-Marie & David Fenn
Caroline Nastro &
Linda Garretson
Brian Nurenberg
Diane Hart
Valiant Energy
Mary Kranzlin

FRIEND'S CIRCLE

Carole St. Mark & Charles Conn
Joann & James Robertson
Allyson Rovetto &
Margaret & Donald Samela
Maximilian Gomez-Trochez





My position as the guide in the Young People's Community is truly the greatest work I could do. For me, the children's all-encompassing joy and enthusiasm for learning is a gift they give me every day. For the children, YPC builds not only a strong foundation, fostering independence and creativity, but also creates a love of learning and a zest for exploration throughout their lives. This magic happens through an environment that adapts to the unique needs of each child.

At Litchfield Montessori, our YPC focuses on creating an environment that supports our children's developmental needs during a critical period of rapid physical, psychological, and neurological growth. The environment is meticulously organized to encourage self-construction and independence. It caters to our children's sensitive periods, promoting learning through interaction with appropriate materials, and real practical work that calls to them. The Montessori guide plays a critical role in preparing and maintaining an environment that aligns with the developmental needs of each child. They observe, adapt, and model positive behaviors and movements, allowing children to explore and learn without unnecessary interference. When you, as the adult, make the choice to sit back and observe the child working through challenges, you have the opportunity to witness the miracle of learning, and it is the most soul-fulfilling experience I've ever known. For infants and toddlers, every single moment is filled with new experiences, which elevates their level of enthusiasm for all of the little things we adults take for granted.

From birth to three, human beings' brains undergo significant growth, forming neural pathways through exposure and repetition of language, movements, and sensorial

experiences. The Montessori environment nurtures this process by providing stimulating activities that foster motor skills, cognitive abilities, and social and emotional growth. Children are encouraged to explore freely within logical and consistent boundaries, promoting autonomy, decision-making, and self-regulation. This approach aids in developing their will, concentration, and their ability to independently make good decisions.

Movement is integral to learning in Montessori classrooms, aiding in the development and refinement of voluntary movements and self-confidence, aligning physical actions with intellectual growth. Simple activities such as setting the table for lunch, scrubbing cloths, participating in dressing and toileting, wiping the mirror, and replacing materials to their

“Movement is integral to learning in Montessori classrooms, aiding in the development and refinement of voluntary movements and self-confidence, aligning physical actions with intellectual growth.”

space on the shelf - to actively playing outside and dancing to music - all aid in developing self-awareness and growth, coordination, and a sense of accomplishment.

By the end of their time in the YPC environment, our children are fully prepared and excited for the new challenges they will meet in the Children's House, and as I see them move on, I am sad, as I will miss them, but I also know they have done their work and I'm happy to let them grow! ■

WHO AM I?



Each October, the elementary children host a special event called Who Am I? The children bring costumes to school which best represent a story book character, historical figure or famous person along with three facts about that character or person. After lunch, they excitedly dress up and have the other children guess, "Who am I?" The Great Hall is filled with laughter, joy, and appreciation of the talents of our children, along with the scent of freshly popped popcorn. The costumes and questions are a testament to the elementary children's creativity and knowledge of books and people of influence. We have had such notable people represented as Eleanor Roosevelt, Ruth Bader Ginsberg, and Nikola Tesla, and characters ranging from Goldilocks to Lucy Pevensie from the Narnia series. One year we hosted two Where's Waldos, Salvador Dali, and football player Dan Marino! The children always make this event a unique LMS tradition.. ■





Fall Festival

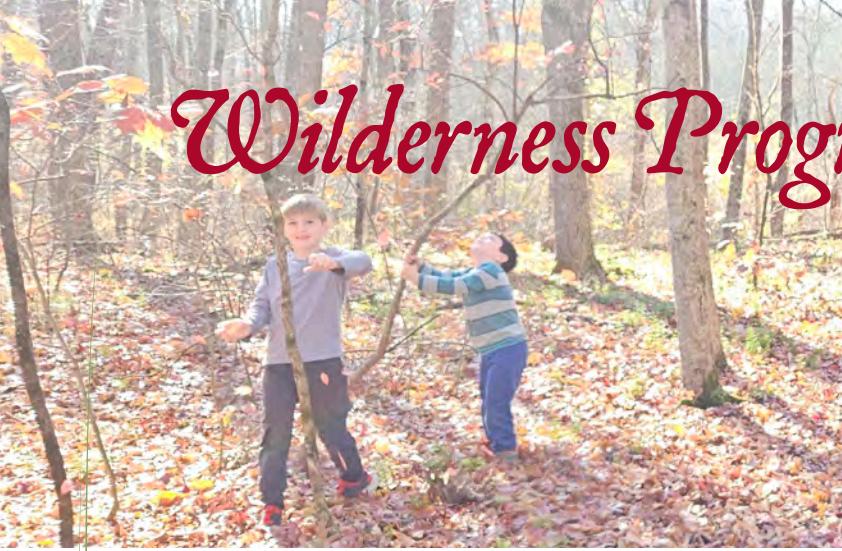
OCTOBER 2024

This year, the weather was a glorious addition to our celebration of fall where children found arts and crafts, food, pumpkin painting, and face painting. Once again, we had Stacy Whitman of the independent bookstore in Winsted, The Curious Cat, with her carefully curated selection of books. We hosted a successful Tea Cup Auction, and Hindsight BBQ returned with delicious fare. Various local vendors presented everything from handmade bracelets to alpaca fiber goods. Our sixth year fundraising concession stands added to the fun offering treats of popcorn, baked goods, and maple flavored candy cotton. We thank everyone who joyfully celebrated with us the astounding abundance of autumn in New England. See you again next year!



Wilderness Program

– BY MELISSA DA'VERSA



Outdoor education provides lessons in language, mathematics, writing, art, music, and science. It is rich with opportunities and organized learning that fosters a child's love, respect, and wonder of the natural world.

When we go into the woods as a class, children are encouraged to walk slowly, engage their five senses, and to find in the peace of the woods some new discovery – a new sight, a new smell, or a new sound. As we observe the children, we see the sense of wonder and amazement on their faces when something is unearthed and revealed in a different way.

The goal of outdoor education is to establish a special relationship with nature, one that gives the children a sense of comfort and peace, while also challenging them to learn and grow. I have spent my life with my hands and feet deep in the soil. When I think back on times that I found clarity and peace with whatever the world was throwing at me, I was in the woods or in the garden. The big complex world of nature has a way of putting things in perspective.

We believe it is important to have an outdoor education class that is as organic and fluid as possible. We start out with a plan, but often the woods or the children's interests and discoveries move us in a different direction, and these classes end up being the most fulfilling. We have spent time this year exploring the nature trails, and observing the changes in the landscape as the earth prepares for winter. Along the way, the children harvested clay in the creek bed, made natural dyes with plant material, found Eastern newts, watched ducks as they migrated south, and a host of other amazing things. We planted bulbs and wildflower seeds. We built bug hotels where beneficial insects sleep the winter away, while we eagerly await spring

for the promise of them pollinating our wildflowers. Our time has been filled with creativity, adventure, and quiet observation of the world around us.

Through outdoor education, children have the freedom to explore, discover, and grow by fostering their relationship with nature. This not only nurtures the mind, but also the hearts, inspiring a lifelong curiosity and respect for the environment. We encourage you to go outside with your children, plant your feet upon the earth, point your faces toward the sun, take a deep breath and grow!



3RD YEAR TRIP TO Peabody Museum

– GRAIL KEARNEY

Each year, as their time together in Lower Elementary comes to a close, the third-year students take part in a final field trip with their teacher. Having devoted a good part of the year to the study of the Timeline of Life (a study of animal and plant life during the geological time periods of our earth), visiting the Peabody Museum in New Haven seemed like the ideal destination! We were particularly excited about this trip as the Peabody had recently reopened its doors after an extensive remodeling project. Indeed, we were not disappointed! The children were delighted and had a great time touring the many interesting exhibits. It was particularly rewarding to see the amazing collections of fossils and prehistoric creatures. If ever there were a perfect accompaniment to the Timeline study, it would certainly be the Peabody! Not only did we see remarkable examples of animal and plant life, but we enjoyed other parts of the museum as well. The children were thrilled by the outstanding mineral and gem collections. They also enjoyed seeing the full-sized animal dioramas and bird collection housed on the third floor. When it was time for lunch, we picnicked together outside in a lovely outdoor area. Finally, we took a little time to visit the Peabody gift shop where the children shopped for a keepsake as a memory of this wonderful experience. ■

Grandparent's Day



Each year, we set aside a day in the spring to celebrate our grandparents. They visit the school to see their grandchild's work, make a little craft or do an art project together, have story time and tea, or simply visit with their beloved family members. This is one of our cherished days at Litchfield Montessori School as we understand that our grandparents possess a wealth of wisdom, experience, and historical perspectives. Our school benefits in profound ways from their presence, and setting aside only one day to celebrate them doesn't seem like enough! We consider our grandparents "a little bit parent, a little bit teacher, and a little bit best friend," who make the world a special place not only for their grandchildren, but for our entire community.

Boston

- KATE GNITZCAVICH



The sixth year trip to Boston was an event that students had been excited about for some time. We had the opportunity to visit many of Boston's gems and some hidden surprises along the way. All in all, it made for a very fulfilling and memorable experience.

Two places we visited early on during our trip were the New England Aquarium and the Museum of Science. There is something about an aquarium of sea creatures that is mesmerizing, and Boston's four-story tank was something we could have gazed at for hours. The penguins were the highlight, as we could watch them flit about and gather eagerly during feeding time. There is something for everyone at a science museum, especially for the curious and hands-on learner. We tried to hit all of the floors of exhibits, including a fantastic electricity show that was literally, shocking!

Taking in some of the city's historic landmarks, we booked a tour of the Freedom Trail. We learned a lot about Boston's most famous historic residents, saw the Granary Burying Ground, Boston Commons, and the

Old State House. Our tour guide was both very knowledgeable and had a great sense of humor. To add an element of surprise to our trip, we booked a visit to the WNDR Museum, an immersive art experience. This playful and imaginative space was a delight, from the giant-sized pin art to the mirror-ball room.

For one special evening, we booked an escape room, which was a fantastic activity for our group. Tackling different puzzles around the room, cooperating when things got difficult, and cheering each other on led the group to success in the end.

There is so much for our students to explore and experience on the sixth year trip. Whether it is learning to navigate a subway, exploring a National Park trail map, trying new types of cuisine, or simply being away from home, the experiential learning, and confidence and independence building that comes from this experience, creates lifelong memories that our students will treasure for years to come. ■

Favorite Upper El Moments

Some favorite moments of Upper El shared by a few of our 6th Year graduates

MADIGAN

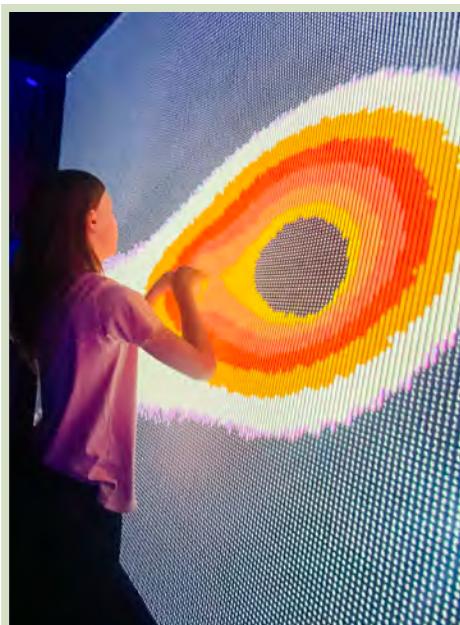
Project night was pretty cool. I enjoyed sharing information on moths and puppets. It gave me a sense of confidence.

EMERSON

One of my best friends, Madigan, was also on the trip (Boston), and it was really fun hanging out with her one last time as classmates. She always spoke her mind, and I admired that. I miss her a lot. I made some memories in Boston that I will always treasure.

CHRISTOPHER

My favorite memories of LMS are skiing at Mohawk and the sixth-year trip to Boston!



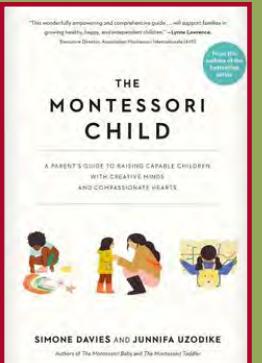
CLIMBING NEW HEIGHTS IN *Outdoor Education*

— JAY POTTER

In a recent highlight of our Upper Elementary class's outdoor education program, students experienced the thrill of technical tree climbing. After learning to tie the Blake's Hitch friction knot the previous week, students had an opportunity to observe through their classroom window an arborist preparing a tree for them, pruning it and setting up ropes (including the use of a six-foot-tall slingshot!). On climbing day, the entire class simultaneously ascended high into the tree, each student using their own strength and courage, and had plenty of time to savor the view and to climb up and down multiple times. The experience offered a physical and emotional challenge, exposure to some advanced knot-tying, and the work of a skilled arborist, a close-up view of the upper canopy of a mature tree, a unique squirrel's-eye perspective on the beauty of our woods in autumn, and a lifetime memory with friends. It's enriching experiences like these that make our Montessori school a special place for our children to learn and grow.



RECOMMENDED READING



When new YPC families join us, they receive a copy of *The Montessori Toddler*, by Simone Davies, recommended by Susan Patrick. It provides a clear introduction to the Montessori approach for parents of young children. Davies has another book coming out this March titled *The Montessori Child*. We'll be sure to put copies in the foyer library when it comes out. Our monthly Community Circle offerings address the topics our families need throughout the year. In the spring, there will be a book discussion on *Hold Onto Your Kids*, by Gordon Neufeld and Gabor Maté. There are a few school

copies already in circulation. Whether or not you are able to finish the book in time, feel free to join us for some take-away notes and conversation about our role as adults in the lives of our children.

New Language & Cultural Exchange Bookshelf

Help us fill our new Language & Cultural Exchange book shelf in the hallway where families can find books that represent the diversity in our school. If you speak a language other than English at home, please contribute texts ranging from board and picture to chapter books. Adults and children alike will enjoy learning new languages and building our awareness of each other's cultural backgrounds.



ENRICHMENT PROGRAM *Spanish*

— GLORIA VEGLIANTE



Our Spanish enrichment program guides students in acquiring the language in a most natural way. We begin with listening, followed by comprehension and speech, then reading, and finally writing. The curriculum follows a three-year Montessori learning cycle that allows the students to use and build upon the knowledge they gained in previous years. The Spanish lessons are filled with interactive games, music, art, and celebrations.

The students learn not only the language of the Spanish speaking countries, but they also explore cultural celebrations such as Spanish heritage month, Day of the Dead, other winter holidays and end of the year celebrations. The interactive lessons are tailored to foster cultural understanding of the Spanish speaking countries. The students are also encouraged to research and prepare presentations in Spanish. As a culmination of their Spanish studies, the sixth graders are invited to an authentic Latinoamerican restaurant to practice their communications skills over a shared meal.



Baking with Kelsey

— KELSEY FERGUSON

Baking is an essential part of a Montessori Children's House practical life skills curriculum, but also for learning language, math, chemistry, and basic life science, and, of course, the joy of creating delicious treats! Baking also brings movement and awareness of space as the children gather ingredients, stir, and mix, and are guided to the kitchen to place items into the oven. I recently hosted the 'Baking with Kelsey' afterschool club where we practiced measuring and leveling wet and dry ingredients, separating egg whites, beating, and mixing ingredients to the proper consistency, scooping dough onto the cookie sheet, and pouring equal amounts of batter into bread tins. Each week, the children took home a small box of treats to share with their family, and a copy of the recipe to enable baking at home. Watching their faces as the children discover their own ability to create delicious baked goods was one of the joys of hosting the club, and I hope to schedule another one in the future.

New England Winter

— DONNA FORTIER



In New England, we generally enjoy the changing of seasons and the celebrations each season brings. In the winter, the shorter days and decreased light can sometimes change our mood and energy, bringing the need, as parents and educators, to focus on self-care. I recently spoke with Dr. Elizabeth Geiling, LMHC, who has facilitated several workshops at Litchfield Montessori for our teachers and staff. She recommends these simple ideas to fight off the winter blues:

- Go outside every day, walk, sit, and look at the sky.
- Be intentional and focus on positive information via social media.
- Make a spiritual connection through prayer, meditation, or energy work
- Drink cold water, use ice, and add a twist of mint or lemon.
- Clean or organize something for 15 minutes - a drawer, a countertop, make your bed.
- Listen to music, something upbeat with energy. Sing at the top of your voice. Dance!
- Watch something funny - laughing lifts our mood.
- Make food because self care involves nourishing your body with healthy food.
- Make something - draw, paint, color, create.
- Reach out to a loved one, talk to a stranger, and actively seek out human connection.
- Listen to someone else, volunteer, because helping helps you!
- Cuddle with your pets, talk to them, and tell them your troubles, hopes, and dreams.

Or my favorite mood booster: Curling up with a good book, snuggly blanket, and a warm cup of tea!

Field Day 2024 – SAM COCHRANE

Field Day is a much-anticipated event at Litchfield Montessori School that beautifully blends physical activity, community spirit, and the school's core values of independence and cooperation, with a sense of adventure and curiosity. As students run, play, and laugh together, they not only strengthen their bodies, but also build lasting friendships and cherished memories, embodying the spirit of the Montessori philosophy. The 2024 Field Day at Boulder Ridge was a terrific example of this!

It began with the always popular bus ride from school. Upon arrival at Boulder Ridge, the students hopped off and quickly got into the action, which included activities like volleyball, Memory, Gaga, Court Chaos (a variety of tennis activities on the courts), and more teamwork activities that were all wonderfully guided by our family volunteers.

The action-packed afternoon, provided to us by Boulder Ridge, included a kid favorite lunch buffet, zip lines, kayaks, tennis, and fun in the pool. Field Day is one of the children's favorite events of the year, and the success of Field Day is amplified by the involvement of families who volunteer their time, so I hope to see as many of you as possible for this year's event. PLEASE DON'T MISS THE FUN! ■



School Play

SLEEPING BEAUTY (KATHRYN SCHULTZ MILLER) – SUSAN PATRICK

Last year's theatrical production was "SLEEPING BEAUTY," by Kathryn Schultz Miller, adapted and directed by Elizabeth Dayton. This adaptation has Aurora, after falling under the spell of the spinning wheel, awakened by the support and love of her friends and family - the fairies who raised her away from the dangers of the castle - while the prince is busy freeing the forest community of Morgana, the ego-centric enchanter of the woods. "Sleeping Beauty" also featured silly characters like the Duchess of Dilly Dally, the Baroness Von Verysnoot and the Duke of Blusterville, as well as Gruesome Ghouls, Forest Animals, and Townspeople. The highlight of Elizabeth Dayton's adaptation and direction were the musical numbers which showcased the musical talent of our elementary children. Through the generosity of the Landmark Community Theater community, we were able to perform in their beautiful theater with the help of their sound and stage crew. Thank you to everyone in our community who made this production such a success! ■



Expressions of Art

LMS' WINTER ART SHOW

— DIANE HART

Litchfield Montessori School's winter art show, "Expressions of Art", features work from our talented students. The exhibit offers a look into the power of creative expression. Through different artists and mediums, the children bring forth their marvelous imagination. As a central focus of Montessori elementary education, the independence of the child is encouraged, giving them the space to develop his/her unique and personal interpretations of life.

The exhibit opens with Henri Matisse, a French visual artist. He is best known for painting, sculpting, drawing, and collage. Matisse broke free from the classic art world and ushered in a time of intense color, bolder and simplified forms, and decorative patterns. Towards the end of his career, due to his health and lack of mobility, Matisse turned to the art of collage, or cut paper. He painted his own paper and then designed a composition from forms that he cut from the paper. He called it "drawing with scissors."

The elementary students mimicked Matisse's collage process by painting pieces of paper and then designing a composition on canvas with cut paper. From



fun, colorful, whimsical forms, to intricate patterns, the students created their own unique compositions.

From the world of collage we move into the three dimensional art form of mosaic work. The elementary students were introduced to this process by creating an image made with small regular and irregular pieces of colored stone, glass or ceramics. The pieces are held in place on a surface with mortar and grout. In ancient times, mosaics were practical and not artistic. A floor would be made from many different stones, but with no eye for beauty. Eventually, the idea came to create aesthetically pleasing mosaics for murals,

floors, pots, and plates. This ancient art form has lasted centuries, and holds the history of many cultures within the images portrayed. As a class, we sourced our designs from the natural world and the divine nature of patterns. The children designed intricate pictures and carefully placed the pieces in the mortar to create their mosaic. The pieces are abstract, colorful, and a thing of beauty.

And then we turned to Norman Rockwell, American painter and illustrator, for our next inspiration. Rockwell embraced the happenings of everyday life, and is most famous for his illustrations in "The Saturday Evening Post." The themes that are common throughout his paintings are children, family, Santa Claus, dogs, friendships, and heartfelt moments. He is the quintessential New England artist and portrays many scenes that pull at our heart strings or bring a smile to our faces.

Building on that emotion, the children were asked to sketch

"In a world which often emphasizes what we lack, gratitude gently redirects our focus to what we have."

In the hustle and bustle of our daily lives it can be easy to overlook the small blessings that surround us. Yet, taking a moment to acknowledge and appreciate these gifts can transform our outlook and enrich our lives in profound ways.

Gratitude is more than a fleeting feeling; it is a practice, a conscious choice to focus on the good. Whether it's the warmth of the morning sun, a kind word from a friend or co-worker, or the smile on the faces of the children we see each day, recognizing these moments can foster a sense of contentment, joy, and peace in our hearts.

I have a gratitude journal, where each day I jot down three things for which I'm thankful. Some days it is as simple as observing a fluffy cloud in the blue sky, and other days it is for the busy teacher who answered my questions about Montessori philosophy. The simple habit of writing in a gratitude journal has helped me notice and cherish the positive aspects of life, even the simplest ones. It reminds me that even on challenging days, there are still reasons to smile and feel joy.

a moment from their life that embodies a time of love, joy, or gratitude. Once sketched, they drew the final piece on watercolor paper and then used mixed media (colored pencil, crayon, watercolor, and black sharpie) to bring their image to life. The drawings truly speak to what is truly important in this world.



The children of Litchfield Montessori School are encouraged to be independent thinkers as well as good citizens of the world. The expression of their unique qualities, and their love for the world around them is beautifully evidenced through their artwork. We hope you can see this for yourself at their show on display at the Oliver Wolcott Library in Litchfield for the month of January. ■

Gratitude

— DONNA FORTIER

Gratitude also has a ripple effect. When we express appreciation, it encourages others to do the same, creating a cycle of kindness and goodwill.

I've noticed that a heartfelt appreciation or a small act of kindness can brighten someone's day and strengthen the bonds within our families and communities.

In a world which often emphasizes what we lack, gratitude gently redirects our focus to what we have. It teaches us to savor the present moment and to recognize the abundance already in our lives. And as Montessorians, our lives are filled with abundance!

Take a moment today to pause, take a deep breath and reflect on the people, experiences, and simple pleasures that bring a smile to your face. By embracing gratitude as a community, we open ourselves to joy, connection, and a deeper sense of fulfillment. ■



Playground OUTDOOR EDUCATION

For those of you who have been part of our community in recent decades, you know there has been a focus on ensuring our children spend time outdoors. We value the important work children do at recess and provide outdoor PE and wilderness programs. Camping trips, a ski program, and doors that lead directly out into an outdoor learning environment provide opportunities for exploration and freedom of movement. The outdoor spaces on our campus are actually what I noticed during my first visit when looking for a school for my toddlers.

During morning and afternoon recess, children play on the playground. As they reach Lower Elementary, they build communities in the nearby woods, often self-governed by a “mayor”. The Upper Elementary children may lead themselves further into the woods, giving them the freedom and responsibility to explore on wooded paths just far enough in to give a sense of wilderness.

The senses play a key role in the presentation of all lessons. Maria Montessori viewed the outdoor environment as a natural extension of the sensorial experiences of the classroom: the sound of birds, the color of the sky, the feel of bark on their fingertips, the tangy smell of a crushed leaf. As we guide the children to explore the world outside the school, they forge a connection to nature, learning respect for the environment and for all living things.

The wilderness program is an integral part of our curriculum, aligned to Maria Montessori’s belief that developing interpersonal skills with even the youngest children is the foundation that will promote understanding and peace between peoples around the world. Through guided outdoor activities, students gain practical skills, develop resilience, and deepen their understanding of the environment. From hiking to identify animal tracks and local flora and fauna to building campfires and cooking food, our program encourages children to engage all their senses and to grow in confidence. Spending time in nature fosters teamwork and problem-solving skills as children collaborate on outdoor challenges, such as those presented during camping trips and the rope climbing experience brought to our campus (featured on this edition’s cover), which we hope to incorporate as a regular activity.

We believe children who spend regular time outdoors experience a range of benefits, from improved physical health to enhanced cognitive and emotional well-being. Our playground is a natural extension of our classrooms. It is a place where children meet challenges physically, develop social skills, practice critical thinking, and learn negotiation skills. Social skills in personal relationships are supported with firm and kind guidance by our teachers. As the learning



that takes place on the playground is just as important as the classroom, we are thrilled to announce we hope to break ground on our brand-new playground this summer! You, our community, have made this possible with your commitment and support, as well as generous funding from outside donors and grants. Designed with input from our Montessori-trained faculty, this playground will serve as a vibrant extension of our indoor learning spaces.

Our playground is an integral part of this outdoor environment that offers our students a unique and robust opportunity to engage in outdoor recreation and play. See how you can help us with our final push this spring so we can all celebrate the joy and creativity this new addition will bring to our community, and stay tuned for updates on our playground’s progress and upcoming outdoor adventures. Let’s embrace the great outdoors and inspire our children to explore all that nature has to offer. ■

Your contribution is appreciated!

Scan the QR code below to take you to the [Playground Fundraiser page on our website](#).



Additional Considerations

ANNUAL FUND

Our deepest gratitude to all who give and help to make our annual campaign a success.



To make a donation, scan the QR code. Thank you!



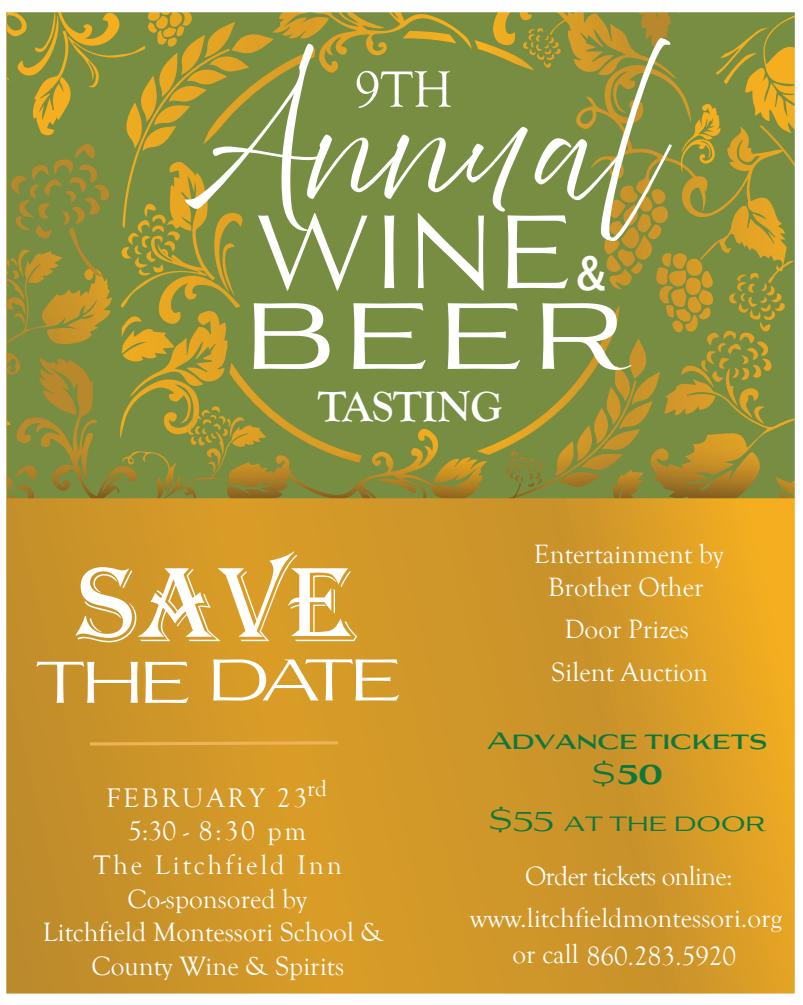
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