

**Winter 2008**

**Dear Friends,**

Hopefully you have been enjoying getting the CMS Newsletter. I know I have enjoyed hearing from past students and parents. If you have an opportunity, please stop by CMS and visit.

Each fall when we start the new school year, I think about how blessed I am to have this position at Community Montessori School. Not a day goes by that I don't hear from or about a former student and what they are accomplishing in their lives. It makes me proud to have touched their lives in some small way. I am constantly amazed at how diverse our students are and how many wonderful career choices they have made.



**Mrs. Ashby's morning greetings**

Montessori education is in its 100th year. CMS has been a part of this incredible method of education for 37 years. I become more convinced year after year that this system produces well educated, but more importantly, well developed citizens of their community and the world.

I am told that not many people are lucky enough to enjoy their work

as much as I do. Friends ask all the time when I am going to retire or don't I want to retire. I reply "if I ever wake up in the morning and dread going to school, then I will start to think about retiring", so far that has not happened – as I said – I am a very blessed person. I will continue to come to school and greet these precious people as long as my health, the board of directors, and the parents allow me to do so.

Fondly,

Mrs. Ashby

p.s. look below for our exciting news!



**Groundbreaking News...**

We have welcomed in 2008 with a bang here at CMS and MMSK... that bang will be the sounds of the building construction that will soon begin on Stone Road! In Mid January the CMS Board of Directors gave the approval to go ahead with the design and construction for the MMSK portion of the new building! Ross Tarrant architects (headed by past parent Martha Tarrant), is hard at work on the design plans for MMSK. Our goal is to break ground in September 2008 and have the new MMSK building ready for classes in the fall of 2009! Our current 5th & 6th graders will be the first

students on the new campus! I am sure many of you, both parents and alum, can reflect back on the hard work and excitement that came when CMS moved to Crestwood Drive.



**Aerial view of the Stone Road Campus**

We have many funding prospects in the works right now to help with our continual fundraising efforts. MMSK is a great start, but we will be working extra hard to raise the additional money needed to bring the whole school together on Stone Road. We are in the process of setting up meetings with a few local foundations and corporations that fund schools like ours. Please share with us any contacts you may have that can help us continue to open more doors in the Lexington Community!

As CMS embarks on our largest project to date, we are so thankful to the many past parents and alumni that have made gifts to the Campaign! The support of the entire CMS and MMSK family (past and present) will be needed to help us bring this amazing vision to life! Letters of Intent are available on our website at [www.cmsmontessori.org](http://www.cmsmontessori.org) and all gifts to the Campaign are 100% tax deductible!

## Long-Term Assistants

By Melody Pennington-Cole

At CMS, the teachers (or guides, as Maria Montessori called them) have a tremendous impact on students. Classroom assistants also play an important role in Montessori education and influence the children greatly. They provide invaluable help to the guides and keep meticulous records on classroom activities, all while providing guidance and support to the students. Mrs. Ashby says, "The most significant contribution the assistants make is freeing up the guides to spend one-on-one time with the students. This would not be possible without their help."

Three assistants have been with Community Montessori School for many years. As alumni, you may recall having them in your classroom...



**Marlene Owens** has been with CMS for 21 years. She has spent time in most of the classrooms and she currently assists Richard Franklin in the 3-5 year-old primary class. Ms. Marlene also runs the after school program for students. She is instrumental in coordinating the after school programs, including Spanish, gymnastics, band, and art. When not at school, Ms. Marlene is equally industrious. She enjoys tending her roses, managing rental properties, riding motorcycles with her husband, and eyeing cool cars, like Corvettes! She has one daughter, Kasey, who is a CMS alumna. Her favorite thing about CMS is spending time and interacting with the children.



**Mary Hagihara** also started at CMS in 1987, when her youngest child was a student. (All of her children, Laura, Eric and Emily, are CMS alumna.) She spent time assisting Alan Wallace, Jean Gillespie, and Elizabeth Farrar. Ms. Mary then became a floating assistant for 2-3 years and spent time in all the classrooms at CMS. She is now helping Marilyn Spitz with the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> year students. In her time off, she keeps very busy! Ms. Mary has run marathons in the past, walks regularly, and is an avid tennis player and fan. She expresses her creative side by painting, drawing, designing stained glass, and gardening. Ms. Mary's favorite thing about CMS is the close-knit, family feel at the school between the students, parents, and staff.



**JoAnna Gravitt** has been with CMS for 18 years. She started after hearing about the school from a family with children enrolled. She has assisted Joanne Simpson, Elizabeth Farrar, Marilyn Spitz, and is now with Anne Gray in the 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> year students' room. She is a talented seamstress and spends hours working on costumes (as well as scenery) for the plays in which students participate. Ms. JoAnna's favorite thing about CMS is seeing firsthand the interactions between students and watching them grow and change. Ms. JoAnna has 2

children, enjoys caring for her pets, and sewing in her time away from school.

Our classroom assistants nurture students and bolster the efforts of our teachers - the Montessori classroom would not function without them. They hold an important place in the hearts of the children, parents, and staff. If you would like to contact any of your former teachers, or, assistants, please email.

They would love to hear from you!  
[jashby@cmsmontessori.org](mailto:jashby@cmsmontessori.org)

## MMSK: An Educational Odyssey

By Mike Childress

There is considerable hand wringing among educators today over the state of the American middle school. While there are undoubtedly many fine middle schools across the country, there is a growing concern that the fundamental structure of middle school education fails to adequately address the social and academic needs of young teens. Indeed, according to a 2004 RAND Corporation report, *Focus on the Wonder Years: Challenges Facing the American Middle School*, "middle schools have been called the Bermuda Triangle of education and have been blamed for increases in behavior problems, teen alienation, disengagement from school, and low (academic) achievement." Now in its eleventh year, the Montessori Middle School of Kentucky (MMSK) is designed to shepherd students through the childhood-to-young-adulthood metamorphosis with a holistic approach that is attuned to the students' social sensibilities while encouraging rigorous intellectual exploration in an academic context that emphasizes real-world applications of abstract constructs.

With an enrollment of around 60 students mainly from Community,

Providence, Lexington, and Versailles Montessori schools, MMSK is led by a cadre of highly-qualified educators, in both staff and faculty, who are fully immersed in the Montessori pedagogy and demonstrate a level of subject matter expertise in mathematics, the sciences, and the humanities that would arguably rival anything found in a postsecondary setting. And the teaching has a decidedly applied component to it. Students learn not only physics and higher-order mathematics; they also learn how to apply these lessons in real-world applications like bridge building and landscape architecture. Likewise, in the humanities they learn not only about the birth and development of cities; they search out and interview local officials who are responsible for delivering governmental services. Imparting knowledge, of course, is their principal objective, but they also engage in an ongoing effort to ensure that the disparate collection of personalities meld into a single community.



**MMSK students working on the land**

The creation and nurturing of an embracing and robust community is viewed as an integral element of the students' intellectual growth. While the necessity of community awareness is multifaceted, ranging from the understanding of one's place in the wider society to the development of an enhanced sense of empathy, it really boils down to ensuring that these malleable and somewhat insecure students feel sufficiently secure socially so they can become academic risk-takers. Toward this

end, there are many community building exercises, ranging from daily community meetings to the out-of-state Odyssey trips. Indeed, even the academic exercises, like the city study, where students travel to downtown Lexington for a few days, have an ancillary benefit beyond the purely academic—they help build community.

Beginning in the fall of 2009, MMSK is expected to move to its new location on Stone Road. Meanwhile, as the construction proceeds, the students, faculty, and staff will continue to build community at its current location and develop an environment where students can feel unencumbered as they pursue intellectual self-actualization.

*A quote from Dr. Maria Montessori on the day she opened her first Montessori School, January 6, 1907...*

*"I started my work like a peasant who had put aside good seeds of wheat, and to whom a fertile piece of land had been offered so he could sow it according to his wish. But it was not to be, as soon as I moved the sods of the earth, I found gold rather than wheat. The sods were hiding a precious treasure."*

### **100 Years of Montessori Education**

**By Suzanne Irwin**

During 2007 CMS and MMSK students, faculty, and parents

celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> year of Montessori Education in an effort to bring awareness to the wider community about this long standing tradition. Maria Montessori began the first Montessori school in Italy in 1907 and began being recognized in the United States in the 1950's. Her method is still vital and applicable to the education of young people of all cultures today.

This past spring the parents and faculty of CMS and MMSK designed and constructed an installation of international flags and timeline of the history of Montessori education. The installation was made up of twelve gateways each six feet wide by twelve feet high placed along a path on the land on Stone Road. Each gateway hosted two flags from different countries around the world and were flanked by red vertical flags and information about the history. This was an impressive display and a meaningful journey to take on the land that will be the new home for CMS and MMSK.



**The Flag Installation on the Land Spring 2007**

CMS hosted a banner during the whole year sharing our celebration with our immediate neighbors, and we sponsored an announcement on public radio to share the long-

standing nature of the Montessori education with Lexington and the region. In November the theme of Celebration for Education was the celebration of 100 years of Montessori education. Mrs. Ashby made the statement during the evening that Montessori can now be considered a "traditional" education.

The students have been talking about Montessori history in the classrooms and there was a collaborative effort between all the students at CMS to create 100 flower sculptures from cardboard and paint that were then 'planted' in the front circle by the extended day students. 100 flowering bulbs have also been planted for a spring display of this celebration. Montessori has proven to be a timeless and well proven method of educating the entire person and we celebrate 100 years.



**The Flower Sculptures celebrating Montessori Centennial**

## **The Second Generation Comes Home**

**By Alyson Gum-Jeter**

In thinking about this newsletter, it came to my attention that many of our Alumni now either have children of their own that are now enrolled, or are still involved with the school in some form or fashion. It was so fun for me to chat with

these past "class-mates" (as we are parents now ourselves). CMS made such a positive and important impact on us, why would we not want the same for our own? It is such a "gift" for us as parents to have our children be in the same safe, stable, familiar, environment, that we remember. We share the feeling of "Coming Home". As said by Todd Vincent, "Mrs. Ashby is like a fine wine, she just gets better with time"

Alumni and extended family that have enrolled their children in Community Montessori School include:

- ❖ **Kristan (Wieland)** Curry – Joshua and Caroline
- ❖ **Diane (Bobys)** and Greg Padgett - Ellis and Avery
- ❖ **Todd Vincent** and Sylvia – Ellie and Alex
- ❖ **Rachel Cullman- Clark** and T. C. Hand – Jack
- ❖ **Lauren (Higdon)** and Chris Howard – "Tag"
- ❖ **Aric Myers** and Sheila – Grace and Emma
- ❖ **Alyson (Gum)** and Phil Jeter- Lauryn & Lincoln
- ❖ **Steve Grigalis** and Carla – Tyler
- ❖ **Julie (Byron)** and Shannon McDaniel –Aidan
- ❖ **Marie (Marefat)** and Peter McClellan – Emma
- ❖ **Sarah Shepherd**-Florier – Haley
- ❖ **Bill Adams** (Tonya) – Lauren
- ❖ **Frances Edwards** (grandmother of Robert Edwards)

And let's not forget Katy Evans (CMS class of 1996, and 1st graduation class of MMSK 1998),

who is now the assistant in one of our primary classrooms. Also Mrs. Marnie Bassiri-Downs now has 3 grandchildren here, Avery, Leo, and Elara Downs. Bill Adams we are so thankful to have your continuing help on the web site.

### ***Did we leave anyone out?***

Look forward to seeing more of you and your babies in the future.

P.S.

F.Y.I., children of alumni take priority on our application list and have automatic admission!

## **Save the Dates**

### **The Second Annual MMSK Alumni Gathering**

**When: June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2008**  
(The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sat in June)

**Where: 727 Stone Road**  
(The Land)

### **Celebration for Education**

**When: November 7, 2008**

**Where: Keene Barn and Entertainment Center**



**Let's Celebrate...**

**\$109,000!** That is our amazing profit from the Celebration for Education this year! CFE 2007 was chaired by parents Jason Vujakovich and Marsha Melville who were assisted by a large core of parent volunteers. Our lovely event this year was once again held at the Keene Barn and Entertainment Center on the grounds of historic Keeneland Racecourse. We not only raised the most money we have ever raised from CFE, this year was a record for attendance as well, easily surpassing 1,000 guests.

For the first time CFE invitations were mailed to all of our past parents and alumni and we were so thrilled to have so many families respond to our invitation! We hope to see many more of you next year!

*“Whoever touches the life of the child touches the most sensitive point of a whole which has roots in the most distant past and climbs toward the infinitive future.”*  
~ Maria Montessori ~

**We are always grateful for past and present Board Members who have served our school so well. Here are the current members of our Board of Directors:**

**Executive Board Members:**

- Martha Tarrant
- Clyde Simmons
- Joh Evans (Treasurer)
- Kathy Waller
- Linda Slagel (Board President)

**At Large Members:**

- Phil Jeter
- Nathan McConathy (Secretary)
- Dean Capello

**Here are the current staff members:**

**CMS Staff:**

- Primary Level Teachers  
Peggy Somsel  
Jennifer Crouch-Hughes  
Richard Franklin

Primary Level Assistants

- Kate Davis-Rosenbaum
- Katy Evans
- Marlene Owens

Junior Level Teachers

- Annie Gray
- Catherine Mason
- Marilynn Spitz
- Joanne Simpson

Junior Level Assistants

- JoAnna Gravitt
- Kriis Zeps
- Mary Hagihara
- Paula Larmore

- Spanish – Norma Flores
- P.E. – Paul Hickner
- Librarian – Deborah Todd
- Reading – Elizabeth Jones
- Reading Asst. – Susie Oldham
- Administrator – Janet Ashby
- Admin. Asst. - Ann Towsley Evans
- Secretary – Diana Davis
- Campaign Mgr. – Katie Toffey
- Campaign Asst. – Marla Ross

**MMSK Staff:**

Administrator  
Janet Ashby

Education Director  
Vivian Langefeld

- Bernie DeVille
- Janinne Johnson
- Nancy Marefat
- Chris McGinley
- Rebecca Self
- Amy (Deaton) Sither
- Winni van Gessel

**Fun Fair  
September 2007**



CMS parents Robin Bradley and Leslie Bales assist Mr. Ashby with Bob's Whoppers... You've got to love the Fun Fair.

**“Ms. Diana”**  
~The Tooth Fairy of CMS~  
  
Do you have any idea how many teeth Ms. Diana may pull in a day? Month? Year?... stay tuned for the report in the next newsletter!

Please stay in touch!  
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