Alumni News from Mimi Berfield

My time at Vineyard Montessori (Fall 1997-Spring 1999) in Ms. Carmela’s class has remained as some of the most vivid memories I have, despite my being only 3-5 at the time (I’m thinking hours smelling spices or discovering colors, to being allowed to wear a brown paper shopping bag on my head for our entire Winter concert!). The freedom and encouragement to indulge and explore in sensory experiments has manifested as a lifelong joy for me. I will finish my undergrad degree in Visual Studies (a mixture of art history, theory, and studio courses) and Minor in Hispanic Studies at Eugene Lang College in NYC in the Spring, and I can really say Montessori has prepared me with tools that have carried over these 17 years later, through helping me build a rich inner world in myself, and a fond and playful curiosity of what surrounds me. I cannot wait to see how the school grows, especially through watching my cousins Quin and Will shine and bloom there.
Primary with Miss Chris and Miss Holly

In our classroom, as well as many Montessori Primary classrooms, books of various types can be found interspersed throughout the environment. Beyond the book corner which many picture books are found, research books are placed in our science and geography areas to show photographs of actual children from different cultures or themes (insects, rocks, and birds) offering genuine material about our larger world. The children love to look at these books which spark their curiosity and lead to group discussions related to the books. Teaching children the careful handling of beautiful reference books allows for a true appreciation of what lies within. By reading to the children from these books, children obtain skills such as attentiveness, auditory perception, vocabulary development, curiosity and logical thinking. The children have many opportunities during our day to enjoy looking at books and to reap the benefits of being read to by both friends and teachers.

During gardening this week with Miss Emily, the children finished planting peas and lettuce in our outside garden beds. Last week, she let the children use microscopes to view seeds in different stages of development. Hopefully the weather will remain nice so that the children will see the first sprouts in our garden when they return from vacation.

Primary with Miss Ty and Miss Rebecca

Thank you so much for the donations of egg cartons and toilet paper rolls from several of you. We are using them for creative art projects — the children decide what they want to create with them. Sort of like three-dimensional collage, these projects are delightful to witness! We’ve seen toilet paper “people:” kings, queens (with egg carton crowns), robots, mommies and daddies, and even one policeman. One child created a necklace, and there have been other colorful designs. This ability to take random bits and pieces and create a unique “invention” is wonderful for the children, and is wonderful for us teachers to witness. They use problem-solving skills and learn a great deal through hands-on experiences leading to a solution. “How can I make this piece of cardboard look like a…..?”

I have the sewing exercises grouped with art, but they really, philosophically belong with Practical Life. A strong practical life curriculum is rooted in meaningful work. Maria Montessori says in The Discovery of the Child: “If a child does not set a table for a group of people who are really going to eat, if he does not have real brushes for cleaning, and real carpets to sweep whenever they are used, if he does not himself have to wash and dry dishes and glasses he will never attain any real ability.”

The sewing curriculum answers the need for real, meaningful work for the children. All the threading and lacing exercises started at the beginning of the year. Then we introduced snipping yarn, which led to making necklaces. A recent addition to our sewing shelf has been “sewing a button,” where the children attach a button onto a small square of cloth and then get to take it home.
This week, students worked in the areas geometry, geography and word study. We started a poetry unit last week that will take us into April. So far they have written a Jack Prelutsky style poem, Five W's and List poems. They will continue to write Synesthesia, Cinquain, Diamante, Haiku, Tanka, and Shape poems. Each week, the children will be introduced to a particular form of poetry and its elements. The children research and study several samples and then collaboratively compose one together on the white board. All the students have been enthusiastic and creative during the process of producing and building these poems.

Emily came in Wednesday and worked with the students to measure and graph the growth of their peas. There is a pea growing competition amongst all the schools and our class is participating. This competition between all island elementary schools will end on June 5th. The Tisbury School is in the lead right now with their pea’s growing to a whopping 3 cm. We planted three varieties including the Green Arrow, Early Frosty and the Strike. Our Green Arrow peas are the tallest at 2 cm. After vacation our students will be writing letters to the other schools in order to share gardening information and exchange tips.

All of our students will be traveling this vacation and undoubtedly learning about their world through their experiences. Madeline left for Virginia, Marysol is going to Florida or Mexico (her mother works for American Airlines) the Coggin’s children will be working in their ice cream store in Bar Harbor, ME, Quin is camping in a tent with his Dad in the White Mountains, Silas went on a three week trip to Florida and Colorado, and Danny and Tomas will be returning from Chili. Enjoy your vacation!

“Wherever you go becomes a part of you somehow.” — Anita Desai
VMS PTO Minutes: April 12, 2016

Called to order by Nicole de Bettencourt at 6:00pm

Attendance: Nicole deBettencourt, Rachel Shea, Debbie Jernegan, Chris, Ty, Erin Slossberg, Guinevere Cramer, Holly Lawyer, Skylar Menton, Cate Bernard

March PTO Meeting Minutes approved

Montessori Moment presented by Ty:

Ty presented an introduction to Division that is used in the Primary and Elementary Classrooms. The teacher introduces a practical scenario to the children, i.e. sharing cookies, and demonstrates dividing the cookies using glass beads and rings. Example (12 divided by 4 equals 3) four rings represents the children and three beads in each ring show each child receives 3 cookies.

Treasury Report:

Income: $854.29 total income

- $40.00 Expense used for child watch during parent training
- $814.29 Net income for March

Current Balance in PTO account: $10,519.29

Approval of $1200 to be spent on Pam Benjamin’s After school Art program for 20 children

Director’s Report: Highlights below

* Special visitor’s day was a great success, 100% participation.
* The Spring Social is April 28th. parents encouraged to come out and meet new families and hear the State of the School Address from a board member.
* Return Enrollment Forms to Debbie
* Letgo Your mind Summer Program: There is still a limited number of spaces available.
* Irene will finish her Elementary II training and now has her certification.
* New books in the library if anyone is interested in borrowing them: Tinker Lab, Art of Tinkering and Love of Learning.

There was a vote to have the End of year Ceremony at the Tabernacle again this year pending availability. Vote approved:

Fun Fridays: Start May 13th and runs for 4 weeks. Looking for parent volunteers, A sign up list will be put up in the hallway.

Big Night Out Update:

* More tangible items would be helpful. We have already received a Pirate Adventure Basket, MV Distilling Basket, Beach Basket, etc.
* There will be a Money tree and Dice game at the celebrity bar
* Nicole will hand out a a reminder to parents requesting help with auction items