

# Montessori Pathways Summer Camp news

*July 4<sup>th</sup>-July 22<sup>nd</sup>*

*Notes from Ms. Alena*



Things have really been heating up in Summer Camp these past three weeks. After a long 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend, we found ourselves in an ever changing weather. From chilly days to unbearable warmth, we experienced all of the extremes until the big storm hit, leaving many of our families and our school without power—what an experience! Of course, talk of broken power lines, fallen trees and the difficulties of living without power buzzed around the school for quite a while thereafter. And after we all thought that we'd finally returned to our normal lives, yet another thunderstorm hit, leaving quite a few people without power.

One of our students even decided to take an interesting survey of who did and did not have power that day, taking count with yellow (power) and black (no power) squares. Thankfully, more families had power than not this time around. Regardless of such difficulties, we've continued our journey throughout the biomes, spending these three weeks in the **desert and woodlands**.



**The vegetables in our gardens are finally ripening!** We headed outside earlier this week to pick some of the ripe *grape tomatoes* for lunch—“*I'm so excited!*” said one of the kids. And indeed, it was quite an exciting experience to pick the tomatoes they've watched grow and ripen for so long, asking “*are they ready yet?*” each day.

*The raspberries* are also gathering a lot of attention—the children are eagerly watching the flowers turn to berries and slowly ripen. It is interesting to hear that the children have made a discovery of where the fruits and vegetables come from. “*I thought the fruits just come attached to the plant, but look! They're actually flowers first!*” explained one of our students to his peers. What a wonderful observation is possible in a natural Montessori environment. Thank you to all of the parents who helped contribute to our school garden earlier this spring—the children are really enjoying it!

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Our field trip to *Color Me Mine* proved to be worth the wait. Although the weather was still hot, a light breeze made the trip easy enough. Many of our children have already visited the studio before and encouraged their friends along saying that “*it’s right over there! You can almost see the sign! Just a few more stores!*” The air conditioned store was quite refreshing after our journey and, along with a blank plate, a few paintbrushes and paint, was the perfect

place for young creativity to flow endlessly. Some of the kids even made preliminary sketches before proceeding with their designs! The plates will be available early this week and will be sent home with the kids. On our way back, we took a small break in the shade of some trees and enjoyed some cool water while reflecting on the field trip before heading back to our school.



We will be cooling things down by **traveling to the arctic and tundra this week.**

On **Friday, July 29<sup>th</sup>**, we are planning to have a **field trip to Downtown Crystal Lake**, where we will enjoy *live music in the gazebo.*

Hopefully the weather will not let us down!

We are also looking forward to a visit from **Aloha Dancers** on **Thursday, August 4<sup>th</sup>**, with their *Drums of the World* program.

*Although it is only the middle of summer, it will come to an end before you know it. Plans for the school year are well underway and classes are being formed.*

*If you have decided to stay with Montessori Pathways for the 2011-2012 school year, please register your child by August 5<sup>th</sup> to allow for smooth planning and transitioning.*

Warmly,

*Ms. Alena*

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## *Notes from the morning class*

Since our last newsletter, **we've visited** the biomes of **Deserts** and **Woodlands**. We learned that one thing all deserts have in common are sun, wind and very little water. We discovered some of the inhabitants that have the ability to store water in their humps (camels) or their needles (cactus). We read about hot, cold, as well as coastal deserts and located each of them on the world map.



**We created** our own **sandstorms** using glue to paint our names then adding sand and blowing winds. We added a Dromedary camel (1 hump), cactus with flowers, and other desert creatures we would encounter there. Plants do not grow quickly in the desert which receives less than 10 inches of rainfall per year... (Didn't we just surpass that amount within the week?).

A fun game we played was **Animal Sound Bingo**: the children listened to various animal vocals, and they had to guess which animal made that particular sound. Lots of laughter at many of the sounds - some were very easy to guess like a cat, duck, lamb, but some were very tricky to identify like a whale, guinea pig or walrus. Nonetheless, a funny and fun activity!

On Monday, the 11th, we experienced a torrential rain/wind storm that had our "eyes to the skies". It was literally raining horizontally which didn't seem to bother the few brave souls who were here early. They continued to fold laundry, put away the previous day's dishes and eat breakfast as usual. Our power went out around 7:10 am so we had a "fun" time with flashlights, making hand shadows and making our way around the school in a different light.

We read stories and had a **special tasting activity** with Ms. Masha. *Treyson* brought **coconuts** to school, so we hammered one open, sipped the "milk" (not at all a favorite!), and shaved some of the flesh for a taste (again, not a favorite....oh well!).



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Tuesday, along with thousands of other businesses and homes in McHenry county, upon opening the school, we were still without power. Another hot and steamy day and no projection as to time of restoring power, we had to close. Thanks for your cooperation and understanding during this unexpected event.

Things gradually returned back to normal and the next day we continued to work on our Desert biome pages. We also **cleaned up a little outside** and **staked some of our tomato plants** which were affected by the big winds.

*In Practical Life*, the children were excited to **make rice crispy treats** one day and **home made popsicles from juice** on another day. We work as a team on these activities and everyone is included and therefore enjoys the end result immensely.



We had some very creative and different configurations in the *Sensorial area* of our classroom.

Several of the children decided to use the **Brown Stairs** and **Pink Tower** in unison to create a massive "tower" which needed a ladder to reach the highest level. Very careful placement and concentration were used to make sure the tower didn't fall; disassembling the tower also called for the same focus.

We learned that **Woodlands** vary from continent to continent and we would find different species in each. *Woodlands found here in Crystal Lake are called Temperate Forests*, which have seasons and deciduous trees who's leaves change colors. **We explored why leaves change colors**; their "summer work" is to produce chlorophyll (makes leaves green) which the tree stops producing as the temperature gets cooler.

As a class, we are **creating a large mural of a Woodland** using paper bags (which were once trees themselves!) as bark, and painted leaves on the branches and forest floor. You'll be surprised to see some interesting inhabitants of our woodland when you come for the art show at camp's finale!



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## *Working with Montessori materials*

### *Practical Life area*



Apple Cutting  
*(Motor skills, concentration, independence)*



Washing baby clothes  
*(Sense of order, sequencing, gross motor skill development)*



Cleaning after snack



Watering plants

*(Independence, responsibility, taking care of the environment, gross motor skill development)*

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## *Sensorimotor area*



Red Rods and Red & Blue Rods: Extension  
(Length discrimination, balance, concentration, imagination, pattern)



Cutting (Fine motor skill development, concentration, preparation for writing)



Color box N.2 (Learning names of the colors, matching, concentration, vocabulary development)

## *Language area*



The library is a popular spot and a great place for communication

Working with 3-part cards: parts of a volcano  
(vocabulary development, preparation for reading, learning parts of the volcano—not only scientific knowledge, but language as well!)

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Word building puzzle (preparation for reading)



## *Math area*



Working with fractions



Teen board (*learning and understanding teen numbers, recognizing the relationship between the quantity and its symbol*)



Hundred board (*reinforcing counting, concentration*)

## *Science area*



Geography: Learning about Asia



The outside area is the best place for observing nature: meeting cicadas and beetles

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Working with 3-part cards: parts of horse and parts of frog (*vocabulary development, preparation for reading, learning parts of the animals*)

*Most sincerely,*

*Ms. Christine, Ms. Katy, Ms. Masha & Ms. Alena*

### *Notes from the afternoon class*

We have had a great time together learning about some of the driest places on Earth and the beautiful woodlands that we live in!

Outside **water play time** has felt so good on these warm summer days. We shortened our time a couple of days due to the extreme heat, but were still able to cool off for a bit with the *pools, sprinkler, and slip and slide.*

One afternoon we **practiced blowing bubbles** with our faces in the water. Another day **the children built a hula hoop obstacle course** to crawl through. On the days after we experienced storms, we played on the pavement with *soccer balls, hula hoops, bubbles, chalk, and the balance beam.* We have also had the sandbox open to enjoy playing outdoors in the cool shade of the trees.

**Our gardens are growing** each day and are becoming filled with fresh vegetables and gorgeous flowers. *The children are learning to identify hibiscus flowers, petunias, marigolds, snapdragons, sunflowers, mint leaves, and yuccas.* They take great pride in caring for these beautiful gifts from nature.



Together we have learned that the **desert** is hot and dry during the day and cool in the evening. Once or twice a year there may be a shower of rain that provides enough water for the plants and animals to survive. Large plants, like the *saguaro cacti of Southern Arizona,* store

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water in their stems, roots, and shoots until it rains again. They can grow to be over 50 feet tall and live for nearly 200 years. During that time they are home for many desert animals including *mice, owls, and snakes* that burrow inside the cactus to protect themselves from the extreme weather. Some creatures eat the outside of the cactus when other water sources are unavailable.

We created oil pastel pictures of the desert at sunset/sunrise showing colorful sand dunes and an oasis. We *sketched the great horned owl and discussed* how although it looks like it has horns or ears on top of its head-it is really only tufts of feathers. We **added sand to our world biome map** to indicate where the Earth's deserts are located. The children were quick to discover the **Sahara Desert** which covers most of North Africa and is as large as the United States.



This week we learned about our biome, **the woodlands**. We focused primarily on the deciduous forest that has four distinct seasons- spring, summer, autumn, and winter. In the autumn the leaves change color and during the winter months the trees lose their leaves.

Animals adapt to the climate by hibernating in the winter and living off the land in the other three seasons. The trees provide shelter, food, and a water source. Animals are camouflaged to look like the ground or shadows.

We read *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein to not only share about the joy of selfless giving, but to start a discussion about the incredible resources that the forests provide for us. We also enjoyed the books *Raccoon at Clear Creek Road*, and *Groundhog at Evergreen Road*. Many of these forest animals are familiar to the children and everyone had a story to tell about seeing an opossum by the garbage can or a cardinal out their kitchen window.



*To mark the woodlands on our biome world map, this week we added woodchips.* Out of triangles and rectangles we **constructed paper foxes and raccoons**. We collected leaves from the play yard and **made beautiful crayon rubbings**. We then added watercolor paints to enhance the artwork. On Thursday we **painted four season trees** showing snow, budding flowers, and all the brilliance of autumn.

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Late afternoons give us an opportunity *to work with the Montessori classroom materials*. Some of our favorites were **the metal insets, trinomial cube, hundred board, cards and counters, Practical Life materials, and the animals of the world map**. We also played board games and learned the rules to hangman on the chalkboard. A favorite highlight of the week was strengthening our fine motor skills by **practicing knot tying and braiding** and making friendship bracelets for ourselves and our classmates!

Next week we will be “cooling off” and learning about the midnight sun and the polar night in the Arctic. See you then!

*Sincerely,*

*Ms.Becky and Ms. Masha*

