

# Montessori Pathways' News

November 2010

Notes from Ms. Alena



At the end of October we participated in the **UNICEF** trick-or-treat fundraiser. Many kids who went trick-or-tearing on Halloween also collected donations from their neighborhood. The Kindergarten Club has been hard at work counting the money and the results are in: \$111! We have sent in the money to help underprivileged children all over the world. We thank everyone who participated.



The **new gym equipment** is finally in! Thank you to everyone who participated in the mums sale— with the money collected we were able to get an obstacle course activity set. The pieces can be rearranged to create new challenges each time. The kids have already had a chance to try them out and they're having a blast.



We would also like to thank *Ms. Karen* for hosting both **Montessori evenings about Math and Critical Thinking**. Even the second meeting was not enough to cover all of the information about the math activities available in a Montessori classroom! We hope those who attended received a lot of interesting information about the materials and had a greater insight about what their children do every day to develop their critical thinking skills. Thank you for attending!

The **Thanksgiving celebration** was a huge success! The kids enjoyed performing for you and cooking the delicious food. Almost all of the parents attended and we hope you had a great time.

There isn't much time left until our **Winter Celebration**, which will be held at school on **December 16<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m.** but the kids are doing their best to prepare. We hope to see everyone there supporting their kids. It should be a great time for everyone to enjoy each other's company!



We would like to remind everyone that **Winter Camp** will be available **December 20<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>**. A little break is always nice, but it's even better spent in the company of friends. Join us for an activity filled camp filled with explorations. Don't let your child fall behind as the year comes to an end!

We hope the holidays find you in good spirit. Let everyone find peace and joy during these blissful days.

*Ms. Alena*

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## Notes from the classroom: Ms. Jocelyn and Ms. Christine

November is often a month in which everything begins to click for the children. They thrive on the routine of the day and find great comfort in trying new works and being a part of the school community. As an introduction to celebrating Thanksgiving, we focused this month on *the theme of gratitude and thankfulness*. These very abstract ideas can be difficult for young children to understand, so throughout the month we read a variety of stories and incorporated opportunities during daily group time to discuss the concept of being thankful and showing gratitude to others. In addition to creating an awareness of appreciation for things in our lives, these language activities offered the children opportunities to practice taking turns in a group, patiently listening to others and showing respect for others thoughts and opinions.



During one of our group discussions about gratitude, the children naturally began to share their thoughts about Thanksgiving and the foods they enjoyed. As they listened to each other describe their favorite foods, an idea began to form in the children's minds: Why don't we have a Thanksgiving celebration at school and everyone can bring something to share? It was wonderful to watch as the children got excited at the prospect of each being responsible to provide food items and then prepare it at school to share with their classmates and families. It is wonderful to see the children really embrace our Montessori ideal of each child (and family) as a valued and important part of our community and that by working together we can create a wonderful celebration.



In preparation for our big Thanksgiving feast, the Practical Life area of our classroom was especially busy. Your children enjoyed not only contributing items for this day, but also the hands on experience of planning and preparing the feast as well. Some of the specific tasks we tackled were scrubbing the tables, cutting and rolling the turkey slices and securing them with toothpicks, cutting and arranging fruit and vegetables, making cranberry/orange muffins (cracking the eggs was a big hit!), and shaking the whipping cream to make homemade butter – the children enjoyed a preview taste on the line and were delighted with the results.



The flowers were cut and arranged into small vases and the tables were set with such enthusiasm and care. This was a special "job" for some of our classmates that don't usually do this in preparation for lunch every day. We learned that plates go first, followed by napkins on the left with the fork, and the knife and spoon go to the right of the plate; glasses are placed at the top of the plate. This is a wonderful activity to extend at home; counting the number of place settings and vocabulary of left, right, top encourages a sense of order and contribution to the family meal.



The children dusted the shelves, rolled the rugs up tightly and checked to make sure our environment was beautiful for you; they did these things with a sense of community and pride in our classroom.



We hope you enjoyed the Performance which the children began practicing for in October – it is amazing how quickly and adeptly a child can learn with music!

It was a busy month and we are all eager and excited to celebrate our Winter Celebration in a few short weeks!



*We would like to extend a big thank you to all families who provided food and materials, attended the performance and feast and helped to set up and clean up in our classroom. We couldn't have done it without you!*

A few Thanksgiving related activities that you may have seen come home this month include *paper weaving, tissue corn husks; I am Thankful for... papers and Thanksgiving story bracelets*. Each of these activities focused on fine motor skills, focused concentration and had a specific step by step process that each child followed in order to complete. As they related to our conversations about thankfulness, Native Americans and the First Thanksgiving, they were meaningful to the children who participated.



As each child continues to be challenged and work at his or her own pace, we continue to add new work into the classroom in order to keep every child interested and challenged. This month we added *a new series of phonogram picture word sets*. These sets consist of 12 picture cards and 12 matching label cards for phonogram words. In its' simplest explanation, a phonogram is a word that can be sounded out using each

individual phonetic letter sound. As the children continue to work on mastering all of the letter sounds these phonogram sets give the child the opportunity to read more complex words by using the sounds they know and the visual cues given on each picture card. For children who are ready to move beyond simple three letter word building, the phonogram sets provide an easy transition to reading and introduce the children to more advanced vocabulary.



Coming up next month...*Animals in winter and hibernation*. Did you know that skunks hibernate? We will be reading a variety of books and introducing a new work that categorizes animals that hibernate, migrate and adapt.

Finally, Ms. Christine and I would like *to invite the parents to volunteer either in the classroom or at home*. In the classroom we would love for you to come in and read stories, help with a special food preparation activity, play a musical instrument or share something special about your culture.

Did you have another idea? Just let us know we'd love to arrange for you to come in and share it with the children. We always have easy tasks that can be completed at home too: making play dough, cutting paper, laminating items or preparing items for a special activity. Just let us know at drop off or send us an email if you are interested in volunteering!

*Miss Jocelyn and Miss Christine*

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## Notes from the classroom: Ms. Karen and Ms. Ambreen

### Preparation for the Celebration:



The children really loved the process of preparing for the celebration. It meant so much to them. They *cut fruit and baked muffins and ground cranberries* and so much more. They had been *practicing the songs to sing* for weeks. Often the older children would take the “teacher’s copy” of the program and sing all the songs themselves, spontaneously, on their own. Refrains could be heard to echo throughout the classroom. All of this preparation was a gift from them to you. It culminated in the presence of you, the parents, in their environment. You were the guests and they were the proud hosts and hostesses. It was



delightful.

### The Gifts of Montessori

During this holiday season of giving, let’s pause for a moment and look at one of many gifts Montessori offers. This approach gives both parents and educators many tools which are particularly effective in working with young children.

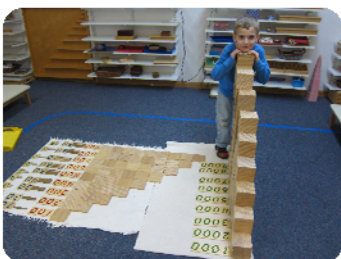


First, as a foundation, it is based on a respect that underlies the entire Montessori approach. It helps us to understand each child as a person with his or her own interests, strengths, weaknesses, and purposes. *Perhaps the most important idea is to respect the child’s work and understand that his absorption in an activity is part of the very process of construction the person he/she is to become.*

At the same time, *it helps the child develop within a community and thus to learn to respects the rights and feelings of other.* He learns how to wait his turn, how to respect the work of another by not interfering, how to wait for completion of a conversation before speaking, how to practically experience that there could be multiple points of views in a situation and so on. The child also learns to extend simple courtesies to others through daily that occurs in the community of the classroom and within the family.



Second is recognizing *the importance of a prepared environment for the child.* This is truly a blessing for the child. It allows him to become an increasingly independent and competent person. Thus he experiences growing confidence and awareness of his own capability. A prepared environment is foundational for the child. The environment is predictable. The children feel secure and independent in the order that surrounds them. It is nurturing and gives a solid, safe base for the child to learn, to experiment and to grow. It is an environment that offers the possibility of accomplishment and therefore pride and a sense of satisfaction in a job well done.



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.....Having given the child real things in a real world, we expected to see his joy and delight in using them. But actually we saw far more than that. The child's whole personality changed and the first sign of this was an assertion of independence. It was as though he were saying: "I want to do everything myself. Now, please don't help me."

Maria Montessori  
The Absorbent Mind P. 170

### **Direct from Atlanta, Georgia:**

The middle of November, I was fortunate to attend a national Montessori conference in Atlanta for a long weekend. I went in part, because I was totally intrigued by the topic: 3 days of presentations by nationally well-know presenters on the 3 period lesson! I really wondered how they could do that. I could have done about 20 minutes, so clearly there was a depth to this technique I did not quite understand.

To briefly review: a 3 period lesson is a way of conveying information:

*Period 1: Give the information to the child simply: "This is red. This is blue"*

*Period 2: Ask the child for a response: "Show me red. Show me blue"*

*Period 3: Ask the child for a verbal response: "What is this (child: red) What's this (child: blue)?"*

As Montessorians, we have known that this is a powerful, clear and simple tool that can be used in any curriculum area. It is efficient, simple and elegant.

It is all of this and more. It is the basis for the entire foundational plan of lessons:

- Knowledge
- Comprehension
- Application
- Analysis
- Synthesis
- Evaluation

Next month, more on how it is a key, it opens doors. What does this third period tell us? Why is it a critical step in learning? For now, suffice it to say, I was again made aware of the richness of the Montessori approach and its depth of understanding of the learning process!

### **Our speech pattern this month is:**

***"Many hands make light work!"***

Actually, we thought of this on the day of the Thanksgiving Celebration. Thank you to all the parents who helped to set up the feast and also stayed to clean up. It was a pleasure to have your company and it saved us hours of work! When the last parent left, even the floor had been vacuumed. This was our actual experience of "many hands make light work."

As our speech pattern for the month, it reinforces the pattern presented last month.

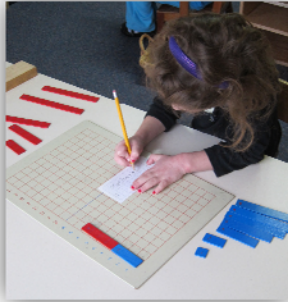


## Our special December song is:

Put a song in your heart for Christmas  
'Tis a season of light and love  
Hang a wreath, trim a tree  
as we carol merrily  
Put a song in your heart for Christmas

## “Off the Shelf”

### The Addition Strip Board:



This is a board that is divided into squares, eighteen across and ten down. The numbers 1 – 18 are printed across the top of the board. There are also 2 sets of strips in increasing length from the size of one square to the size of nine squares. By placing 2 strips on the board touching end to end, one red and one blue, we get a sum. The answer will show at the top of the board. For example 2 strip and a 3 strip = 5. The number 5 will be above the end of the strips that were put on the board. This is an advanced math material. It is loved by the children and used in a variety of ways: simple addition, ways to make a number, showing the doubles of numbers, etc. It is in frequent use. In this way, through repetition, the children come to “memorize” their addition facts (also have multiplication, division and subtraction boards).

It is a higher level activity since it moves the children toward abstraction. It is not as concrete as actually taking 2 separate markers and actually adding 3 separate markers and then counting 5 markers as the answer. At this time of the year, many of the kindergarten children are using these materials.

## “Taking It Home”

In this season of gift giving for our children, let’s think beyond (or in addition to) “toys”. There are several sites on the web that offer beautiful, specially designed kitchen tools that your child would love to use in food preparation at home. This range from blunt-tipped knives to choppers, from vegetable scrubbing brushes to rolling pins and aprons, etc. all in an appropriate child-size.

*Food preparation* is the **favorite** activity in the classroom. The 3 year olds love it and the 6 year olds love it. There are child-sized tools for cleaning (ex. broom, mop, etc.), sewing, weaving, etc. As you peruse the web site or catalogues, you will find many other ideas that are just right for your child. An excellent site is [montessoriservices.com](http://montessoriservices.com). I am sure you will find others too, but this site offers a lot of variety.



If you want to go out on a limb, get a food dehydrator. This week we had a tasting activity involving dehydrated bananas. The children LOVED them and begged for more. One child said she was going to ask Santa Claus for a food dehydrator (true!).

*Miss Karen and Miss Ambreen*

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# Kindergarten Extended Day

## In General

Wow, again in looking back, so much has taken place. Below are a few of the many highlights from this month. The weather cooperated and we had a wonderful time on the outdoor field trips.

### Field Trips



Our field trips this past month have been great! First we went to the *McHenry County Conservation District Living Lands Farm*. The focus was on ***animal preparation for winter***: hibernation, migration, thickening of fur, nests inside of the dead tree trunk, storing food for winter, increasing body fat for winter, etc. We spotted some



magnificent soaring hawks while on the hiking trail. Highlight: have you ever pet a skunk? We did.

Next trip was to the *Prarieview Education Center*. The focus was on ***plant survival through winter***. That focused on seeds: transportation of seeds (ex. they were transported by us on our clothing), different kinds of seeds, and general observation of the plant life at this time of the year.



*Both our guides, Leslie and Andy, were excellent. Our thanks to Abe Martin, Evelyn's dad, who works for MCCD and brought us the information, and also to Scott Cain and Tammy Knowles, our frequent parent drivers and to MCCD itself for fitting us into their tight schedule and for creating a lesson specific to our requests.*



### Curriculum

The children have spent several days working on individual activities: it has been beautiful to see their increased absorption, concentration and attention to detail.

Group activities have also been a part of the curriculum. These include *a study of Georgia O'Keefe* (see Miss Terri's section). What inspiration! I hope you enjoyed the display of their beautiful creations as much as we did.

*On Election Day*, we held our own election. That included the meaning of voting; how the majority wins the election and then we follow the majority regardless of how we individually voted. We had ballots, a ballot box, stickers we received after voting, and, of course, we tallied the votes for the winning "treat": chocolate chip cookies won. The cookies were enjoyed the following day.



We had an "*indoor field trip*" when we invited *members of the Crystal Lake American Legion* to come visit on Veteran's Day. Jim Dyson and Don Rhodes told us a little bit about their military experience. Jim was on a submarine ---yes the children's eyes were glued to him.

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Don was in the army Drum and Bugle Corp. After their personal stories, they demonstrated the flag folding ceremony for us. All in all, it was quite impressive. The highlight had to be going outside so Mr. Rhodes could play taps and reveille on his bugle for us. Quite the event!



### Mathematical Thinking



See Veteran's Day above. After the morning presentation, we made American flags in the afternoon Kindergarten Extended Day. Although not specifically a math lesson, there were so many math components in the simple project: alternating pattern of colors of the stripes, the number of short stripes, the number on long strips, the number of red short stripes, the number of long red strips, the short white strips, the long white strips and the number of stripes altogether. We had to both begin and end with the red strips. The field of the flag is rectangular in shape. The edges and corners had to match up precisely. We had talked about the number of stars. And so on. So a "simple" and fun project had an interesting number of math components: comparison, vocabulary, 1 - 1 correspondence, sorting.

In short, we are having an interesting and productive time in the Kindergarten Extended Day. *The children are all improving in such general learning skills as listening, organization, and problem solving as well as social skills and independence.*

Miss Karen

### Notes from the classroom: Ms. Terri and Ms. Donna



The afternoon class started off the month of November by *making a large poster board calendar*. It has been a way to track the temperature each day (what a warm month!) and draw a weather picture (i.e. rain, sunshine, wind, etc.). It has been lots of fun and there have been many eager volunteers each day.

Our first art project this month involved *cutting and gluing*. We cut assorted sizes of squares out of red, yellow and blue construction paper and glued them down on a larger piece of black construction paper. First, we practiced cutting by both turning the scissors themselves and also cutting straight edges. Then, we practiced making patterns by combing the various sizes and colors before gluing the pieces down. Each child's work was very unique.



*Our artist of the month was Georgia O'Keefe.* She lived from 1887-1986 – she was almost 100 years old when she died! She often painted large flowers that covered the entire canvas.



The kindergarteners and I (Ms. Terri) each picked a flower and drew it on a large poster board making sure to use the whole space. The flower had to touch each of the sides of the poster board. It was a challenge for some of the little hands and bodies to do such large work so we stood up while we painted. We used our whole bodies as we mixed our colors, drew and painted. Each child chose three or

four colors of tempera paint to make our beautiful O'Keefe flowers. There artwork was on display during the Thanksgiving feast which many parents commented on.

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Speaking of the feast, the afternoon children *made the turkey headdresses* for their performance. We drew and cut out our feathers on colored construction paper and glued them to the turkey bodies and stapled them to the headbands to be worn during the kindergarteners' "Turkey Number." The younger children also made turkeys to decorate the classroom. We even *made tipis* for the Thanksgiving décor. We looked at books about Native Americans and some of the children copied the Indian symbols for the sun, moon, stars, deer, etc. on their tipis. The tipi itself was a half circle shape cut out of a brown paper bag. After we decorated them we made a cone shape and stapled it in place.



With the weather getting colder we have been *cooking and baking* in the afternoons. We have been enjoying smelling the *applesauce* cook after we chop up all the apples and add cinnamon and water. It cooked for several hours so the apples (with skins) were nice and soft. After it cooled we spooned the apple chunks into a masher and turned the handle and watched as the apple sauce poured into the bowl. This is a work for several children and it takes a lot of strength and coordination to hold the masher in place over the bowl as another child turns the handle. All the effort is worth it though, and the children love our home-made apple sauce.

*Blueberries and pumpkin bread* are still popular to make with the children. The children also love to make *fruit cocktail*. We cut grapes, pineapple, cantaloupe and honey dew melon into bite size pieces. The children then spooned the fruit cocktail into bowls for the afternoon snack (we usually serve it with animal crackers or graham crackers).



Our favorite food that we made this month was for the Thanksgiving feast. We made *cranberry orange relish*. The children washed the cranberries and peeled and cut up the oranges before spooning them into the food grinder. The grinder attached to the side of the counter and was at a great height for the children to turn the crank and watch the sauce fall into the bowl. We added powder sugar to make it edible – I mean sweeter. Boy, are cranberries sour!

We also made the "*Yummy Pumpkin Dip*" for the feast which we served with pretzels and apple slices. Many parents asked for the recipes and received a copy but for those of you who didn't –here it is:



## Yummy Pumpkin Dip

8 oz. package softened cream cheese  
1 (15 oz.) can of pumpkin  
2 cups powdered sugar  
1 t. cinnamon  
1 t. ginger  
Apple slice  
Stick pretzels

*\*Note: we left out the ginger because we didn't have any but it was still great and feel free to triple or quadruple the recipe as we did. Enjoy!*

Due to the weather being cooler we have been using the lower level of school for doing large motor activities. Half of the students who are with us after 4pm go downstairs and the remaining students stay upstairs. The students enjoyed playing a game called "Jack Be Nimble" where they either jumped over an orange cone or a folded up gym mat. We relearned "Red Light Green Light".

Thanks to those of you who bought mum plants. Our new gym equipment is loads of fun. We can set up different types of obstacle courses with our different sizes of foam noodles, balance beams and small hoops. We also have enjoyed the four part climber through climber. Some of the children said that it was like riding on a train.



We found us walking like a turkey by flapping our wings and strutting around as we gobbled. All classes have been working on overhand and underhand throws using balls and beanbags.

The Kinders also tried to be the first to pick up the bean bag which was sitting between two partners. Not only did we have to grab the bean bag first but we had to have taken it with the correct hand that was called. If right was said, you had to grab it with your right hand to be declared the winner of that round. We switched partners after five rounds. We also tried without partners sliding the bean bag between their arms which we called goal posts. You scored if your partner let the bean bag go between the goal posts. You didn't score if your partner prevented the bean bag from going through the goal posts.

*Have a Wonderful Winter!*

