



# Montessori Pathways' News

November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010

## Notes from Miss Alena

### School Events

Who can believe that yet another month of the fall has gone by? Not too long ago we were getting Halloween costumes ready and suddenly it's time to find that Thanksgiving turkey. The month of October was extremely busy for our students.

Excitement began with **picture day**, the results of which are very adorable. The majority of the pictures have been passed out; the rest will be distributed on Monday. Please remember to bring your payment or return the pictures you do not wish to purchase by the end of the week.

The children enjoyed **the field trip** to see the **play *Honk!*** by the Children's Youth Theater. The characters of the play were portrayed by children from elementary to high school. The songs, dances and costumes were professionally prepared and added to the playful story. Once we arrived back at school, some of the children took to drawing their favorite scenes from the play. Variations of the ugly duckling's signature "honk!" filled the school for the rest of the day!



The weekend found us **celebrating the Halloween at Tom's Farm**, which was filled with many interesting activities for the kids to enjoy. Not surprisingly, the haystack, animals and corn maze (the walking and driving variety) were big hits. The beautiful weather and interesting costumes made



the day quite festive. We spent some time in a party room where children and adults alike had a chance to enjoy everyone's company and a nice rest. Thank you to everyone who came, we hope you also had a great time!



Last, but certainly not least, a lot of our students trick-or-treated with a cause on Halloween. The UNICEF collection boxes have found their way back to school and are quite full. Our kindergarten students are working hard to provide us with a total count of the donations. It's valuable for the children to learn to give back; thank you for helping us do so.

### Coming School Events

#### Montessori Evening for the Parents: Tuesday, November 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM.

We would like to invite you to our Parent Evening on Tuesday, November 16th at 7:00 PM with the topic of “*Math and Critical thinking in Montessori*” presented by Miss Karen.

#### Thanksgiving Celebration: Wednesday, November 24<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 AM.

Detailed information and RSVP form is coming soon.

*Ms. Alena*

### Notes from the classroom: Miss Jocelyn and Miss Christine



Autumn began with weeks of beautiful warm weather, but cooler temperatures are finally here and the natural result in the classroom is an elevated level of **self-care**. *Practicing how to zip new fall jackets, tying and fastening outdoor shoes and boots, and putting on hats and mittens are a daily work for every child. These activities build coordination, concentration and independence. The sense of accomplishment and positive feeling of “I can do it myself” is invaluable to the children as they continue to work in all areas of the classroom.*

As the school year progresses, our classroom is constantly changing to meet the developmental needs of every child. At the end of October, the process of a beloved classroom work, **baking**, was modified to increase the skill level and provide an independent multi- step process that will lead to critical thinking and problem solving opportunities. The revised classroom work of baking in our classroom now requires the child to *measure, pour, stir and knead their own batch of dough prior to rolling, cutting and decorating their “cookies”*. As the year progresses every classroom work activity is monitored and adjusted in order to provide challenge and variety.



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Our October healthy classroom **tasting activities** of trying cantaloupe and comparing red and green bell peppers were a huge hit. Many children did not realize that red bell peppers are in fact sweet, not hot. *They were fascinated by the number of seeds in each of these foods and enjoyed exploring each food through all five senses before tasting.* Additionally, our new **organic lunches** have provided even more opportunities to try new foods for many of the children. The beautifully prepared fresh and local produce provided at lunch have made many of the children lovers of plums, sweet potatoes and broccoli!



children are continuing their work on learning **letter sounds**, while others have moved on to **phonetic word building, phonetic reading and sentence building.** Interest in working with **numbers** and math materials is exploding too!

This month was rich in academic work all throughout the classroom. As we *“follow the child”* and provide *developmentally appropriate and challenging work to each individual, the work being done every day is always varied. The children are amazing observers, and as they see a friend being presented with new work, the natural inclination is to be interested and curious to try it themselves.* As more children work with

**Math and Language materials**, the ripple effect in the classroom is inevitable. Many



A meaningful math work for every age in the classroom is **Cards and Counters**. *This multi-step work develops many different skills associated with math and exposes the child to explore the **natural pattern in numbers**. To begin, the child orders numeral cards 1 through 10. Next, a quantity of counters equal to the numeral is counted out and placed under each card in a specific organized pattern. As the child continues this work he or she will independently notice and be able to correct any counting mistakes when it is discovered that there may not be enough counters to finish. The order and*

*organization involved with this work is detailed and builds concentration and focus within every child. In addition, to creating **a concrete association with numbers and their quantity**, this work is relevant to the older child to experience **the concepts of odd and even numbers** in an easy to understand way.*

Finally, we really enjoyed meeting with all of the parents this past week for **fall conferences**. It is always wonderful to create a solid home and school connection, as we all work together to provide the best for your child! Please remember that we are always available all year long to answer questions, offer help or discuss concerns.

*Miss Jocelyn and Miss Christine*

## Notes from the classroom: Miss Karen and Miss Ambreen



We have certainly enjoyed the past month. Undoubtedly the glorious weather has been a contributing factor! There are always lots of events unfolding. At this time of the year, the room is settling into a natural rhythm and pattern. *The children are respecting the work of others, carefully walking around the floor activities of their classmates and observing the lessons of their classmates with quiet attention.*

### Harvest Time:

In keeping with the harvest time of the year, it is time to “crank up” our food dehydrator. This method of preserving food is, of course, historic. It is also a science lesson taken from real life. The process of **drying the food** changes the shape, texture, weight and look of the food. And it concentrates the food’s flavor. Yummy! ***So please feel free to send in LOTS of fruits and vegetables.*** Often stores will have them on the discount rack. Those are perfect for our use. This is a practical part of our **food preparation activity** and the dried fruits are served for snack. If we get enough vegetables, it will be a chance to use them in soup and see what happens to the dried vegetable as it is cooked in liquid and reconstituted.

### Conferences:

We are finishing up the conferences. If you have not met with us yet, we will be contacting you to set up a personal appointment time that works for you. It has been a real pleasure meeting with you and, as always, conferences allow us to understand your child and your family in more depth.

### Our speech pattern this month is:

*Home is where the heart is.*

With the use of speech patterns, not only are the children getting some “words of wisdom”, but they also are getting an experiential base of rhythm patterns. Most of the speech patterns we clap have different rhythms, thus building a base or “collection” of experienced rhythms. We continue to clap the first and last names of the children, also adding to our repertoire of patterns. It is good to hear from you that many of the children have already learned both the first and last names of their friends.

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**Special November song is:**

I celebrate my family  
People close to me  
There are many branches  
On my family tree.  
Loving, caring, helping, sharing (repeat the line)  
(Repeat the first two phrases)

**Our author of the month: Bill Martin Jr.**

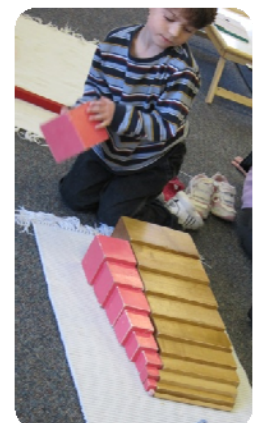
Our author is perhaps best known for Brown Bear Brown Bear and Chicka Chicka Boom Boom. His books are known for their creative use of language including alliteration, repetition, rhythm, and rhyme. Those characteristics put them at the forefront of children's literature. He has written for almost 65 years (yes the first book was published in 1945) and the total collection numbers over 300.

**“Off the Shelf”**



At this time, a frequently used Sensorial material is **The Pink Tower**. *This material provides endless fascination for children age 3 to 6. The pink tower is a series of pink cubes in graduated sizes. The task is to build them into a tower in the proper sequential order. There are many additional patterns that can be made with the set of 10 cubes, each pattern a demonstration relationship, balance and creativity. Each cube is mathematically exact and built in the metric system. So the smallest pink cube is exactly 1 cubic centimeter. The next cube is two cubic centimeters, etc. through 10 cubic centimeters. So each time the child handles the material, he/she is learning metric measurement through active, hands-on experiences with the materials. Thus the sizes of the cubes grow progressively in the algebraic series of the third power. It takes 8 of the smallest cube to make the next size cube in the series (2 cubed is  $2 \times 2 \times 2 = 8$ ). It takes 27 of the smallest cube to make the third cube in the series (3 cubed is  $3 \times 3 \times 3 = 27$ ) and so on. So the child is developing a mathematical sense as he is simply having fun working with the beautiful cubes.*

**The Brown Stairs** is closely related. *They are a series of rectangular prisms. The square face of the rectangular prism matches the pink cubes. Children invent many beautiful and intricate ways to combine and balance the cubes and prisms. So although each of the materials is simple enough individually for a three year old to manage, together they challenge the oldest group of children in the classroom. Often we see pink cubes and brown prisms perfectly balanced or built in relationship to each other in a variety of ways. The balanced constructions help the child refine his coordination and develop the ability to sustain attention and concentration. In addition, since both the cubes and prisms are sets of 10, the children are getting active experience to ground them in understanding the base ten of our number system.*



### “Application and Insight”

Overheard while listening to the conversation of Kindergartners setting out glasses for lunch. **“Look, we have 16 glasses. That made the square of four!!”** What an exciting discovery for them. Simply observing the visual pattern, but that pattern was full of mathematical content.

### “Practical Problem Solving”



Over and over, heard during the class: *“I know what we can do”* when a problem comes up. *The classroom is set up as a “learning laboratory” in which simple problems that can be solved by the children come up on a daily basis.* One example is a child needed to write the word “Australia” and did not know how to spell it. Solution: rather than asking the adult, child went to the geography area in a different part of the room to “research” the answer and looked up the label for the continent cards to get the information. Another example: a number for the 100 board was temporarily missing. Solution: child went to get paper, pencil, and scissors and cut it out himself to make the needed number and then went on to sequence the rest of the 100 board numbers.

### “Taking It Home”

In the classroom, **cooking and baking** have a central importance. So many snack-making skills are well within the reach of our young children: *slicing, dicing, grating, mashing, juicing, spreading, and measuring.* But we have to accommodate the environment for them so that the tasks are comfortable and safe. So how do we begin? We have a low work surface that is comfortable for the child. Some of the tools we have on hand are child-size choppers, nut crackers that have a screw handle, pizza cutters, cutting boards, small “knives” used as spreaders, apple corers. There is no limit if we watch for interesting things for a “kid’s kitchen”. Many of these kitchen tools now come in “child-friendly” size too. How about molds and various cookie cutters which have many applications? Even coffee grinders to grind those whole beans for their parents so mom and dad can wake up to that delicious aroma in the morning.



Think: **CHRISTMAS GIFTS.** Then, if we can introduce these tools and the techniques one at a time, the future cook will build a repertoire of skill. The kitchen is a natural science and math laboratory. It also becomes a place of companionship, warm and full of delicious smells.

*Miss Karen and Miss Ambreen*

## Kindergarten Extended Day

### UNICEF

Halloween gave us the opportunity to increase our awareness of the needs of others. We talked about the children of other lands who may not have sufficient medical care, food, education, etc. It was an exciting idea for our children --- to think that they could actively help the children of the world in a very specific and concrete way. *Maria Montessori felt deeply that if children are nurtured in body, mind, and spirit, they will guide humanity toward a more peaceful world. Every time children discover more of the world, and their valuable place in it, a peaceful planet is one step closer.*

### Mathematical Thinking

We have continued developing the **skills of estimating**. Part of the math in the full process of estimating is computing the correct answer. Last month we discussed that process and all it entailed.

(And we continue to feed the frogs!) Yes they are still alive. Twice a week, we draw a name out of the frog basket. The question always is “how many names are left in the basket” and “Whose name did we draw” ---- with clues that they can use to guess the answers.



**Mathematical thinking and vocabulary** come up all the time in the “real life” of the classroom. Whether it is figuring out *how many* there are for lunch (take absentees into account, count the placemats, etc.), *dividing* the lunch bunch into groups at tables, casual discussion of who was *first* to arrive in the morning, etc. Even folding napkins becomes a lesson in *geometry*.

Additionally (pun intended), the children are moving more into **place value** and working with **the facts of addition**. Those subject areas in math will always be a part of the Extended Day, a work in progress

We are counting (another pun!) on **calculating** the UNICEF **money** that the children collected on Halloween. We will sort the coins and then group them in order of denomination, calculate the subtotals and then the final total. We should be able to give you a report shortly.



### History/Geography /Biology Curriculum

Our curriculum took us to the **Challenger Space Center** just a few weeks ago. We were dazzled by, among other things, a 10-by-40 foot mural of the solar system INCLUDING Pluto. We played Jeopardy using planet names, made airplanes to illustrate the power of thrust when they were flown and were truly awed by the photos from Hubble telescope.

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(PS Ask your child what a Goldilocks planet is.)

**History** will be focusing on a *timeline of the development of the complexity of life*. At the end of our study, each student will have made a *History Time Line* of their own, illustrating the changes that have occurred during the life of our planet. This is the start of a long-term project.



In **Geography**, our map study continued with activities including direction and also using a map to reach our recent destination of the ice cream store. We continued with a demonstration of converting a globe into a flat map. This is preliminary to an emphasis *on making the maps of the various continents*. They also made their own map of the playground. The story of Christopher Columbus fit right in.

We continue our study of **biology**, first with *the categorization of living and not living* according to characteristics: Does it grow? Does it need nutrition? Does it reproduce? If so, we classify it as living. Our scheduled nature field trips will help us to understand the cycle of living things with particular emphasis on preparation for winter. How do animals survive? What do plants do to prepare for winter?



Finally, they enjoyed three days with Miss Terri as a guest teacher for Kindergarten. She has a broad background in working with children in **various media**. So they made their **clay pieces** and are awaiting the viewing of their final product. (More details in Miss Terri's news).

This month, together Miss Terri and I will focus on the **artist Georgia O'Keefe**. Our children are all artists in residence!

*The truth is that when a free spirit exists, it has to materialize itself in some form of work, and for this the hands are needed. Everywhere we find traces of men's handiwork, and through these we can catch a glimpse of his spirit and the thoughts of his time.*

*Maria Montessori*

*Miss Karen*

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## Notes from the classroom: Miss Terri and Miss Donna



The afternoon class has been enjoying the rather warm October weather. Except for the last few windy days, it has been a beautiful month.

This week, we made **scarecrows** for our first art project. We talked about and drew the basic shapes: circles, squares, rectangles and triangles. We combined these into the shape of a scarecrow and then drew them on a poster board. We drew over our pencil lines with a permanent marker before erasing the pencil marks. This took several days to complete and was challenging for small hands to hold down the poster board with one hand and firmly erase with the other. Next, we colored our scarecrows with craypas (oil pastels) and finished with white and blue tempera paint for the sky. They look amazing! Each is very unique and the children are very proud of this big work.

Our next seasonal art project involved a **pumpkin and some gourds**. We set up a still life using these items and again practiced shapes on one side of the paper. We used black construction paper and craypas. We practiced blending the colors together to make new colors. Rubbing white craypas over any of the colors made a pastel shade of that color. Again, the children were challenged to hold down the paper and push down firmly with the craypas away from their bodies. Coordination and small motor control are both coming into play and being strengthened all while having fun and making beautiful art.

The afternoon children helped paint a **fall mural** for our hallway. We mixed and painted the blue sky and green grass for the background with tempera paint. We are now adding trees, black cats, pumpkins, bats, a witch and any other seasonal items the children come up with.



are just itching to crack some eggs.)

**Baking** is a very important activity in the PM class. Cracking eggs, scooping flour, measuring teaspoons (salt, baking soda, baking powder, vanilla, etc.) are all being introduced to the children as we create a yummy snack. The children are challenged to hold the bowl still while stirring or while holding a small hand mixer. Occasionally we have a spill or mess but it is all part of the process (Parents – any time you want to make scramble eggs at home, just remember those small hands

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We made a special treat for *Mr. Aaron's birthday* this month. He loves pumpkin bread, so we made him some and surprised him with it. We even made a card and sang to him. Our baking also included blueberry coffee cake and carrot cake. For the carrot cake we shredded three cups of carrots - lots of work but worth it. We used the mixer and lots of ingredients and four children got to crack eggs.

For afternoon **reading time** I once again started chapter books. We are reading the The Little House on the Prairie series, starting with the The Little House in the Big Woods. It is great for the children to learn about another time in our history when there were no stores to buy things from. Clothes were made and food was whatever Pa shot while hunting with bullets he made himself. The children love it and ask for story time.

We finished up the month by **carving two pumpkins**. It was fun to decide the face shapes. We voted on each part of the pumpkin face (i.e. circles, squares, triangles for a happy or scary face). Then we made pumpkin seeds and enjoyed them for snacks.



This week, I, Ms. Terri, also had the opportunity to work with the kindergarten class. I subbed for Ms. Karen for three days and was able to do two **clay projects** with the children. Lots of practice went into learning to make coils and slabs which *coil pots and slab plates*. It was fun to work with the terra cotta clay and get messy (but it washed off easily). The children collected assorted items (from nature) like leaves, twigs, berries, bark, etc. and pressed them into the clay slab plates for a unique and beautiful design and texture. I will clear glaze the clay pieces and fire them in my kiln before you get to see them (in about a week or so). They are treasures.

October found all classes learning a "Warm up Driving Activity" which uses most of our loco-motor movements. A few of these actions were: "It's raining" we had to do 3 jumping jacks, "School Zone" we walked slowly, almost as if we were in slow motion, "Bumpy Road" we had to skip.

We continue to count off by 2's, 3's, 4's and remembering which direction we should be going when clockwise and counter clockwise directions are given.

Ball rolling was one of our skills learned this month as we tried to hit a cone or empty plastic bottle. We are getting better at hitting our targets.

Halloween activities in the gym class ended our October activities. We used overhand and underhand skills to hit the pumpkins hanging on the wall. Rubber spiders were used in a partner throwing and catching game.

The Kindergarteners played a game called "HAPPY HALLOWEEN". Three teams were chosen, ghosts, pumpkins, and black cats. The children had to search for their paper cut out with the correct letter, going out one at a time to spell out Happy Halloween.

