

MERCY
MONTESSORI

Spring 2014

QUARTERLY



Greetings from the Principal

Spring 2014

Spring. Let's hope that it has finally arrived and is here to stay! As we welcome in the warm spring breezes, appreciate spending time outside for work and play, and celebrated the wonders of Easter, I happily send you our Mercy Quarterly. As you will see, our students enjoyed the long winter months and accomplished a great deal. It's hard to believe that we are looking ahead to the 2014-2015 school year and Play Day is right around the corner!

Each of our quarterly newsletters features one of Mercy's four age divisions. This spring we highlight our lower elementary and the great things that take place in a 6-9 classroom. The world of these students is a fascinating place, with growing autonomy, higher level thinking, engaging Montessori lessons, and tender teaching that fosters collaboration and a sense of well-being. We are proud to be an authentic Montessori school, with all of the sequencing of lessons and Montessori philosophies untouched by proficiency testing and outside pressures. The wonderful faces of our first, second, and third level students are proof that the mission of Mercy Montessori is thriving in 2014. Our foundress, Sr. Jacinta Shay, would be so pleased.

The 2014 Spring Fling Auction took place on March 22 and was a roaring (20s!) success. It was a Great Gatsby kind of night, and our Mercy community was in high spirits. We expect no less! The proceeds raised support our student financial assistance program, and make it possible for many children to attend our remarkable school. This is in addition to Mercy's sliding tuition scale. We thank the many volunteers, sponsors, and party-goers who made this event fun, while helping us to achieve our fundraising and community building goals. Thank you, thank you, on behalf of the children who benefit greatly from your generosity and volunteerism.

I wish you a lovely spring season, with a renewal of enthusiasm for all that you hold dear. We'd love to see you here at 2335 Grandview Avenue. Please know that our doors are always open to you and feel free to send any updated information to Kara Olding (kolding@mercymontessori.org) or Gretchen Hooker (ghooker@mercymontessori.org).

In the Spirit of Mercy,



Patty Normile, Principal
Mercy Montessori

Our Mission

Mercy Montessori Center nurtures the development of the whole child in the context of a Catholic community that inspires the love of God, respects individual differences and cultivates a life-long love of learning. The goal for each child is to become a contributing member of society and ultimately a citizen of heaven.

Upcoming School Events

May 9, 11:45 am

- Teacher Appreciation Luncheon

May 14, 9:30 am

- May Crowning
- Teachers' Years of Service Awards

May 22, 9:30 am

- End of School Year Mass

May 23

- Booster's Thank You Coffee 8:30 am
- End of School Year Assembly 9:30 am
- Class of 2014 Graduation Mass 6:00 pm

May 26

- Memorial Day Holiday

June 2

- Play Day 2014!

June 3, 12:00 pm

- Final Day of School

The full school calendar, including dates and times of additional events, is viewable on Renweb and at www.mercymontessori.org.

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Religious Celebrations



Mary Ann's circle organized the December Mass.



Maggie Power and Ambrose Cronican reenacted the Epiphany, during Mercy's January school Mass.



Melissa and Noreen's circle carefully planned the January liturgy for the school community.



The children in Phyllis' circle created a wonderful February Mass.

School Supports St. Aloysius Orphanage with Toy Drive

Marybeth's circle organized and delivered toys to St. Aloysius Orphanage in December. Children ages 5-15 received the gifts. This is the 17th year that Mercy Montessori families have supported the annual community service project. St. Aloysius offers a wide range of programs serving children, adults, and families in need of education, healthcare, resources, and counseling. Mercy's students are proud of their long-standing tradition of giving to the young children served by this non-profit organization on Reading Road.



Upper elementary students in Marybeth's circle are pictured with some of the toys they collected to ensure the holiday season was a good one for children of all faiths who are served by St. Aloysius Orphanage.

Breakfast with Santa Came to Town Despite Ice and Snow

Breakfast with Santa postponed? Well, only for a few days! In an early December weather twist that was just the tip of the 2013-14 winter season iceberg, Breakfast with Santa was cancelled and moved to a weeknight. Thanks to the quick thinking of our MMPA and the flexibility of many wonderful volunteers, the pancake breakfast, elf shelf, and photo op with Santa Claus went off without a hitch.

The “greener” elf shelf was a favorite shopping destination for the 3-9 year old set, who could choose from eco-friendly gifts this year. Lucie Hawgood and Nora Fink organized this year’s Christmas gifts. A few crafts were offered in to-go bags, since the event had to be relocated from the gym (it’s usual Saturday location) to the parlor area. Jeanne Coughlin artfully supplied the raffle baskets and Stephanie Sommer made certain that Scrip cards were available for purchase. Kudos to Mary Beth Losch and Celeste Morgan who took lead roles this big holiday event. They made sure everyone had time to meet with Santa Claus. “How does that Santa at Mercy know all of the children’s names?” one second grade boy was heard asking. Mercy Montessori’s Breakfast with Santa is a wondrous treat for all, year after year.



Four Mercy Students Perform in Cincinnati Ballet’s Nutcracker

The Aronoff Center stage held not one, but four Mercy Montessori performers during this year’s the Nutcracker. Audrey Hull (3rd level), Andrew Kelm (3rd level), Abby Klesa (1st level) and Charlie Klesa (4th level) were part of the Cincinnati Ballet’s magical, holiday production. Everyone who saw them perform was amazed by their abilities and reported that it made the ballet even more special to watch. Congratulations!



Junior High Delights All with Original Production



Junior High students filled the auditorium with the Christmas spirit in their original production of “A Year Without Santa Claus”. The Christmas Play was created, designed, and performed by Mercy’s talented 7th and 8th level students. From sound to lighting, costumes to videography, Mercy’s junior high takes charge and knows how to delight a multi-aged audience. Parents, grandparents and siblings were on hand for this festive seasonal presentation. With Sr. Aloyse at the piano, and Mr. K. and Miss M. behind the scenes, it was a wonderful morning for all.



Meet a Lower Elementary Teaching Team

Melissa Himmelbauer and Noreen Sullivan are one of three energetic 6-9 teaching teams at Mercy Montessori. Nearing the completion of their second year co-teaching, they clearly take pride in the classroom community they have built during that time. Melissa is in her twelfth year at Mercy, and Noreen joined on in August 2012 after moving over from Good Shepherd Montessori. Outgoing and passionate about their students' whole-child education, both are self-described bookworms who constantly read for work and pleasure, and encourage their students to do the same.

"It is a joy to work with such competent, excellent teachers. We have a tight 6-9 team. Melissa and I get along very well because our personalities compliment each other and we are passionate about the same things. The team teaching model works great because we can focus closely on what the children are doing in each of our areas. We are devoted to the work. We are constantly looking for ways to find the kids more time to engage in their work; we want it to be kinesthetic. We also believe that being able to express their knowledge of the things they are studying is so important. The ability to put their work into words is essential," reflects Noreen.

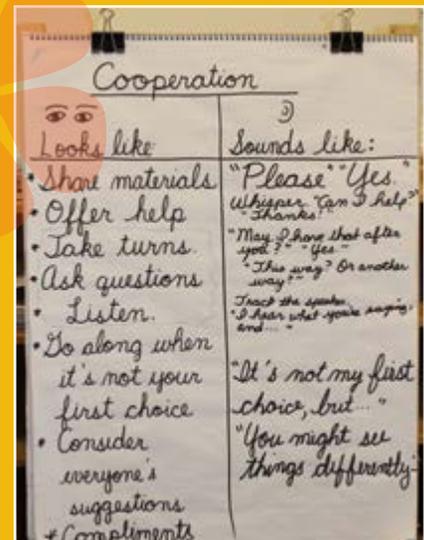
"Having two educators in the classroom provides a parenting-like technique where we share observations and can give children more attention. Our goal is to help students grow in all areas and through observation we are able to support them. Mercy's model fosters collaboration because Noreen and I notice different aspects of children. We can help each other to realize and identify students' strengths and areas to focus on and offer support," adds Melissa.

"We place a lot of value on peace education," states Noreen. "It is really the work of the 6-9 children at this age. Through peace education we have a sense of focus in our classroom and find that children are able to do the work they need to do when they can get along with people. We continue to discuss as a class 'what does cooperation look like and sound like?' These are abstract concepts that need to be defined. Together we model being appropriate and being together peacefully, and that builds a strong sense of community. All of this helps children grow to their potential academically, in all areas of the curriculum."

"Noreen and I continue to attend workshops and read a lot about teaching strategies. We incorporate ideas into the Montessori philosophy, and the layering of peace education is the icing on the teaching. The added value of Mercy is that we love the whole child, socially and academically. When you pair this with how involved our parents are in their child's education, the result is unique and special," Melissa shares.



Lower elementary's Noreen and Melissa are nearing the end of their second year of co-teaching. The 6-9 educators integrate many teaching strategies into the Montessori philosophy.



Pictured is a chart visually outlining what the children feel cooperation looks and sounds like. "Through peace education, we have a sense of focus in our classroom and find that children are able to do the work they need to do," states Noreen.

Meet A Mercy Elementary Family

The Wright Family

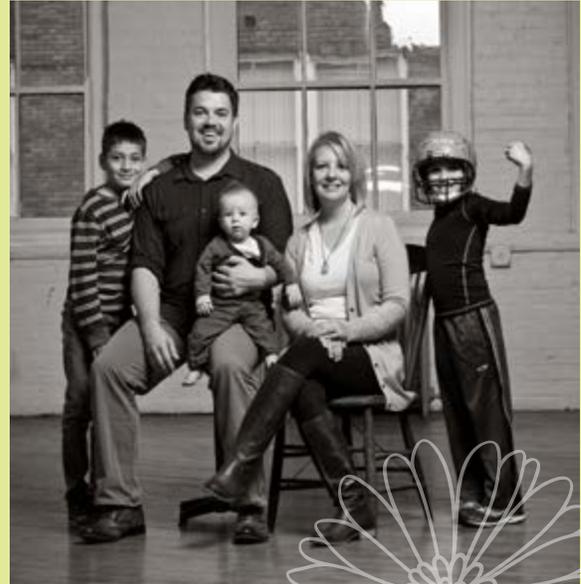
Brooke and Aaron Wright are thrilled with the education their sons, Mac, fourth level, and Te, third level, are receiving at Mercy Montessori. With two boys a year apart, these parents have had a concentrated experience in the lower elementary division. And with baby Oliver pulling up the rear at 10 months, they will have another opportunity to loop through the 6-9 classrooms in the blink of an eye.

“My sister has Montessori training, I nannied a Montessori child when I was younger, and Aaron and I were introduced to Mercy by the Reider family. Aaron used to be in health education and made presentations all over the city; he’s probably been in every elementary school in Cincinnati,” shares Brooke. “During our tour with Patty, two things made us choose Mercy: one, the student leadership and two, it was so peaceful. We were toured by an eighth grade boy who really impressed us, and all the classrooms were peaceful, with kids working and focused.”

“It’s the education I wish I would have had,” remarks Aaron. “I love the way the children learn how to learn. It’s been fascinating to see the next bump up from the lower el with Mac. He can organize his day and be successful in the upper el. Te and Mac are polar opposites and to see both of them thrive at Mercy is amazing, because they started at such different points. I don’t think Te would have survived a typical school environment. Mercy embraces what is positive in his particular make up and I don’t think that would have happened outside of a Montessori environment. People have a slogan that says, ‘Every child has a gift to bring.’ That is what happened with both of our boys. Te could have been easily discouraged, but by focusing on what he can bring to the table, that is a win.”

“Mac is a type-A achiever, so he wants a checklist, a work chart, so that he knows what’s expected of him and can check it off at the end of each day.” As Brooke observes, “Although they have very different personalities and learning styles, Mac and Te’s time management is amazing. They sit down every day and plan out their day. The lower el work chart builds the foundation. And the multi age group gets them to step into that leadership role. They are learning how to do lead and work by watching older kids model it.”

“Te just loves to read and his 6-9 teachers have fostered that and encouraged him. Te has some learning challenges and his teachers have been awesome. Susan went out of her way last year to provide materials for Te because he was having fine motor issues, and was stuck in that in-between point of needing support, but not qualifying for educational services. Moving around is so key to him; the Montessori materials are important because he is so hands on,” remarks Brooke. “Everybody is so encouraging and Mercy is the right fit for both of our boys. Walking around and seeing how peaceful the environment sealed the deal for us the first day Aaron and I visited Mercy.”



Board of Directors Member: Julie Bruns

Julie Bruns is one of the newer members of Mercy Montessori's Board of Directors. An attorney at Frost, Brown, Todd and mother of two boys in first and third grade at Guardian Angels, she is the first board member without a direct affiliation to Mercy. Julie's husband works for Fidelity Investments.

"My understanding is that there is an initiative to include non-Mercy Montessori affiliated members on the board. I have a past affiliation with Mercy Neighborhood Ministries, where I served on their Personnel Committee with an HR focus. As a labor and employment attorney with Frost, Brown, Todd, I represent corporations and businesses needing help with HR policies and issues.



"I work with Jane Shea, a Mercy alumni parent and mother of a former Mercy teacher (Maura Shea Lund). Jane was aware of my prior involvement with a Sisters of Mercy institution, and my interest in Catholic schools and education. I finished up with Mercy Neighborhood Ministries three or four years ago, after our committee met our goals. I was looking for some type of board service when this opportunity came along and it seemed right up my alley. Having two boys who are enrolled in a Catholic elementary school, I was very interested in serving the school and helping other children.

"I have been very impressed with the academics of this school. It starts at the top with Patty's commitment to the school and it is evidenced with all of their excellent programs. These children are exposed to early (education) and it obviously helps them later in life. The graduates all seem to attend impressive colleges and universities.

"This is my first year of service in a three-year term. It's exciting to be a part of the board and see the inner working of the school. I enjoy being able to bring my lawyer perspective to the board meetings."