

one world

THE MONTESSORI SCHOOL OF RALEIGH • SEPTEMBER 2007



Welcome

by Meg Thomas,
Head of School

In a school setting, the beginning of a school year is more significant than the beginning of an actual calendar year. The preparation of the learning environments inside and outside, the return of a reenergized faculty and staff, and the exuberance of the students loaded down with school supplies excited to rekindle friendships and ready to learn are all elements that add to this significant time.

For some students this time involves a

return to a familiar multi-age classroom community where they belong. For others, they are the newest members that will contribute to the dynamics of the classroom community. No two communities are alike and no community is the same each year. This vibrancy fuels our journey as a school to assist children in exploring, cooperating, creating, and becoming who they need to be in this world.

I like to think about the thoughtful decision and choice that you made as parents to send your children to The Montessori School of Raleigh (MSR). Whether it is because of the Montessori philosophy and method, or the continued nurturing of your children's potential and

skills, the emphasis on the whole person, or the hands-on learning opportunities within a curriculum that is river deep and river wide, MSR is a unique learning community. I truly believe that no other learning community in the world is quite like ours.

This is why MSR has the mission to strengthen what we value—our children and their learning opportunities as well as chances to share what we do well with others. Our unique light as individuals and as a school cannot make a difference if we do not teach our children the importance of cherishing what we have and sharing a piece of that uniqueness with others beyond our community.

Marcie's Amazing Journey

She had never left the country, had never even traveled alone, yet one hot day in the middle of July, Marcie Westphalen flew 8,000 miles to offer her service to a group of children she had never met, organized by an adult she didn't know.

"It was time for me to take a step instead of always just wanting to do something," Marcie said. "Now I'm glad I did. It all sounds crazy, I know. But I knew, I just knew, this was the right thing for me."

The 'right thing' was a journey to the village of Dhapasi, just outside Katmandu, Nepal. There, Marcie became 'Mom' to the 32 children living in the Nepal Orphan's Home, or Papa's House as it is lovingly called. She joined Michael "Papa" Hess in caring for the children ranging in age from 5 to 17. And for two weeks, Marcie cooked for them (pancakes!), braided their hair, and walked them to school. She played games, helped them with their studies, told them stories, and listened as they opened their hearts to her.

"Nepal is such a poor country. My research showed that these children have nothing. So I went wanting to give them love, shelter, food, a safe place . . . the things we'd want for our own children.

"Papa is amazing. He is giving these children a life, a chance, hope." At Papa's House the children are safe. They are learning that the world can be a better place and already some, the oldest at least, are beginning to make plans—one wants to open a hair salon, another may help teach. It's a start for them, for a life they never imagined.

Continued on page 4



Marcie Westphalen, Children's House VI assistant, embraces the children of Papa's House.

Our Toddler Leaders Tell Us: What I Wish Every Parent Knew...

Routine and consistency are very important to your toddler—especially their mealtime and bedtime routines.

— *Judy Goff and
Barbara Krebs, Toddler I*

Let your children walk up the hill and to our door. When you carry them it is much harder for us to peel them off you. It shows you are holding on to them tightly, as if you don't want to let them go in.

— *Elaine Rogers and
Susan Gray, Toddler II*

Toddlers are much more capable than we realize e.g., when given time, they can dress themselves in the morning (with little help). Yes, their shirt might be inside out or on backwards, but what's more important, their feeling of accomplishment or whether their socks match?

— *Caryn Collins and
Yvonne Lue, Toddler III*

We appreciate and honor the gift you are giving your children by allowing them to remain children as long as possible. Also, children go through phases and you shouldn't be overwhelmed by a bad morning or two; it's all part of the game. Finally, we wish parents knew that children thrive on mutual respect for time, rules, and routine. Rewards mean much more when they are earned through merit and not simply given for doing what is expected of them.

— *Cathy Bocklage and
Shelley Cruse, Toddler IV*

explore



Each issue of One World will examine a different MSR environment—presenting its philosophy, goals, challenges, and successes. This issue invites you into the world of our Toddlers.

Life in the Toddler classroom begins at 8:35.

The door closes and, for the next 190 minutes, MSR's youngest greet friends, select their works, and go. They may choose to create art or work puzzles, serve themselves a snack, measure, pour, go for a walk, or—perhaps the most important of all—practice patience. They are exploring their world and learning how they—as real people, not babies—fit into it. They are our toddlers, children so young age is still measured in months, and they are *busy*.

The Real World

You may be surprised the first time you look

into one of our Toddler classrooms. There's no plastic, no bright primary colors, and no pictures of flying dogs. Everything is real, natural, and tiny. And everything invites a conversation.

What's important? "Language, language, language," Susan Gray, Toddler II co-director said. "We do what we call 'sportscasting.' For example, when a child is painting we might say, 'I see you're using a lot of colors.'"

Indicating a picture of a crying baby, Toddler III director Caryn Collins adds, "Or we would say, 'Look at her face. Does she look happy?'"

Development

"With this age child, everything is 'real.' The imagination develops later," Cathy Bock



lage, Toddler IV director, explains. This is why real things—plants, dishes, art materials—are present in the classroom and vibrant, squishy, stuffed animals are not. Cathy adds, “If we talk about something, we bring a real example and let the children experience it. There’s no plastic for them to play with, because that’s not real.”

Let us take the child out to show him real things instead of making objects which represent ideas and closing them up in cupboards.
— Maria Montessori

“Another thing: You won’t see six dolls here or six sets of anything,” Judy Goff, Toddler I director, explains. “We teach patience and waiting to take a turn.” In this situation, where ‘sharing’ can lead to a false sense of entitlement, ‘patience’ guides them to conflict resolution.



The Guides Confess

Ask our Toddler directors and assistants to describe what they do and you’ll hear words such as advocate, observer, and guide. Ask them why they do it and their words reveal not only a profound respect for the children but insights and daily cause for celebration.

“It feels really good when a little child ‘gets’ the work cycle for the first time,” Shelley Cruse, assistant in Toddler IV said. “When you see him go get the work, complete it, and put it away.”

The child is truly a miraculous being and this should be felt deeply by the educator.
— Maria Montessori

Elaine Rogers, Toddler II co-director, described a three-year-old child in her class who helped one of the youngest. “The youngest child has trouble pushing the button on the water cooler and the older child has started helping. First, he helped by getting water. Now he is teaching how to press the button. At age three not only is he learning to teach but to have empathy and recognize when someone needs something.”

“These are little people,” Shelley added. “And when a two-year-old child sees a younger child crying and the two-year-old says, ‘Let me read a book to you,’ you get a glimpse of the people they will become.”

Loving the Great Outdoors

When our children play outdoors, they are surrounded by nature. Great care is taken to design playgrounds and structures that are as safe and natural as possible. This fall will see the completion of a new Toddler playground, large enough to accommodate our growing population and specially designed for their size and curiosity.

The new playground is a direct result of your continued giving to our 30th Anniversary Capital Campaign. The campaign, which runs through December 2007, has also provided an all purpose court and bike shed on the middle school campus and the Murrell Nature Pavilion.

A record-breaking Casino Night last May brought our 2006-07 Annual Fund gifts up to \$153,709. In addition to providing financial aid, this money was used to purchase chairs for Lower Elementary, chairs and bookshelves for Children’s House, a new activity bus, Montessori training and workshops for six staff members, and books for the parent resource library.

Thank you to all who contributed and, especially, to the parents who chaired these projects: Madison Rouser and Leslie Roth, Casino Night, and Melissa and Chris Matton, the 2006-07 Annual Fund.

2007-08 Annual Fund

Goal: \$150,000

30th Anniversary Capital Campaign

Goal: \$1,250,000

Gifts to date: \$1,169,903



Marcie's Amazing Journey *Continued from page 1*



this was the beginning of a life she had only rt holds so many memories that it would take t all. There are moments I'll never forget—like ight with a girl's arms wrapped tightly around go back next summer and bring my daughter, meet her Nepali 'brothers and sisters.' e learned: We have been lucky enough to be rovides us with opportunity and security. If we ourselves then we have missed the opportunity

to change the course of life for those less fortunate than ourselves. I believe if we all just made the choice to help *one other person*, the world would be a different place."

Find out more. If you'd like to learn more about Papa's House and how you can help, visit nepalorphanshome.org or write Marcie at mw@msr.org.



Not Your Mother's PTA

do you know that every time you volunteer at the school, you are supporting the Montessori Parent Staff Association (MPSA)? Each week, volunteers read to our children, chaperone field trips, stuff Wednesday folders, laminate materials, and organize craft projects. In the next issue of One World, you'll meet parents caught in the act of teeing and you'll find out how you can be involved, too.

Words to Live By

read this when my kids were younger I love this book." Yvonne was waving a copy of *Siblings without Rivalry* by Faber and Mazlish. As quickly as she had picked it up she put it down to grab another. It was *Hurried Child* by David Elkind. Then she pulled out another, *Yardsticks* by Chip Wood. And another.

Meet Yvonne Lue, assistant in Toddler III and the faculty member who enthusiastically manages our Parent Resource Library.

through teens; parent guides to the Montessori method; meeting physical needs of children; and helping children cope with issues such as grieving, divorce, and yes, even puberty. The best news is that this lending library is free to all MSR parents. Come check it out today.

If you'd like to suggest a book for the Parent Resource Library, e-mail Yvonne: yl@msr.org

Let Your Hair Go...

to someone who really needs it!

To donate next spring
your ponytail needs
to be this long
(10 inches).
Get growing!

