



November 2009

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(And Build a
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Montessori de Terra Linda Gets Greener

by Julie Ansara



More than one prospective family has been initially drawn to Montessori de Terra Linda because of the beautiful gardens surrounding the school.

For all of us, the grand wisteria blooming in the spring is a spectacular reminder of the beauty of the planet with which we are entrusted. As new parents quickly learn, the landscaping is not just attractive window dressing, but rather a reflection of the commitment our school community makes to be good stewards of the land.

Pre-primary teacher Laurin Abramson works with parents to create a reusable method of packing lunches, just right for little hands. Primary students use glasses, plates, silverware and reusable napkins in the classroom. Elementary students organize Coastal Cleanup participation and other awareness projects. This environmental action, rooted in Montessori practices, has always quietly progressed. Now, thanks to the hard work and effort of the members of the Green Committee over the last year, this commitment is being formally recognized. As of September 2009, Montessori de Terra Linda is Bay Area Green Business Certified—one of only six

private schools in Marin County to obtain this distinction.

Awarded by the Marin County Community Development Agency, this certification recognizes businesses as environmental leaders in our community. To obtain the certification, a business must comply with environmental standards and demonstrate a focus on conservation, recycling and the use of non-toxic products. The agency conducts site visits to verify that suggested changes are being implemented. The certification is good for three years.

Dana Armanino, Green Business Coordinator for the Development Agency, worked with Green Committee member and parent Jenn Allison, who spearheaded the effort for the committee. "I thought they did a great job fulfilling the certification requirements while involving the children in the education and application of the changes rather than just doing it at an operations level," Armanino said. "It is really nice to see that."

Committing to this effort was one of the first projects the Green Committee took on last year. Though the school was already fulfilling many of the criteria required by the agency, there was room for improvement.

"We were pretty close," Jenn said. The school needed "to be reviewed by Marin Municipal Water District and PG&E for

The Messenger
620 Del Ganado Road
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Phone: 415.479.7373

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Mission Statement

Montessori de Terra Linda is a diverse community of teachers, parents and children working together for the education of the child, utilizing the methods of Maria Montessori. We serve children ages 2-12, providing a rich learning environment based upon the belief that all children can reach their personal and academic potential.

MdTL believes that the genuine cooperation of parents, students and educators combines to provide an effective and highly successful experience. Engaging and applying our core values, we work to develop responsible and caring students who are self-motivated and who respect themselves, their peers and their surroundings.

our water and energy usage and come into compliance with those regulations as well as pass an inspection by a county representative for this program. [The review] also included green cleaning, landscaping practices and office purchases.”

“One of the biggest changes was probably having the old inefficient lights and ballasts exchanged in the Willow House by the East Bay Smart Lights Program. They gave us a rebate for 68% [of the total project cost].”

Other changes that took place last year included using both sides of sheets of paper, removing disposable lunchroom supplies such as coffee cups and plates from school functions, and even choosing a pre-used modular unit for the Upper Elementary classroom, reducing off-gassing impact.

Throughout the process, there have been surprises. Recent changes to the Primary classrooms included the installation of camping toilets within a privacy enclosure for the children to use during class hours. Though this was actually a result of state licensing requirements, the change has produced a wonderful environmental benefit. “The use of the potties in the classroom has really cut down on our water usage,” according to Business Manager, Karen Walls. These camping toilets hold up to 4 gallons of fresh water to be used for a full day in the classroom. This is substantially less over the course of a day than the maximum 1.6 gallons per flush allowed from a low flow toilet.

Another surprise came when auditors from the Development Agency came to inspect the school and discovered that copy paper “that we thought was recycled, wasn’t recycled,” laughed Karen. “What this taught us was that we needed to create a document of procedures for ordering equipment and supplies that would be readily available to all the teachers and staff.” The school created guidelines that designate its preference for items that are recycled, durable and long lasting. Additional cost allowances of up to 15% are granted for items that meet any of these criteria.

The benefits of the Bay Area Green Business certification are many. As a certified business, we will be recognized as an environmental leader in the community. We can now benefit from the expertise available from the Development Agency to support and continue our efforts. From a financial perspective, we are operating more efficiently, diverting funds saved through conservation to programs that directly benefit our children. Finally, we can take great comfort in the fact that we are improving the health of our children, the faculty and staff by using the least toxic options available.

Most of all, nothing compares with the feeling that we are doing good in the world by nurturing respect for the planet and its inhabitants. At Montessori de Terra Linda we, alongside our children, can be proud to say we are tending beyond our own backyard.

Mary's Montessori Moment



Montessori de Terra Linda is a unique, vibrant school, nurturing both mind and spirit, and is the start of a promising future for each of our students. There are so many stories to be told about our

alumni. Why are Montessori graduates so successful? What is the portrait of a Montessori graduate? What was important and meaningful to them about their time at MdTL? We are actively working to reach out and contact our alumni to hear these stories.

The following are two emails that I received this summer which illustrate how early Montessori education is a building block for success later in life:

“Natalie Kidd, who attended MdTL from Primary through Upper Elementary, just graduated from high school and was accepted at her dream school, Boston University. I am so proud I could just burst. We have been so blessed with our daughter, and to see her begin her dreams is just an awesome experience. I hope you have a wonderful summer and great new school year. We think so fondly about our Montessori time.” . . . Laurie Kidd

“Dear Maha Kali,

Oliver would enjoy talking to you at some point. Just wanted to write you a brief note to share the joy we feel about Oliver's progress in the Bavarian Public School system which is the toughest in Germany. Oliver just got his grades on Friday and can now enjoy six weeks of vacation which will be spent in Croatia, Hungary and Venice, Italy. The German grade system goes from 1 (best) to 6 (worst). Oliver's grades were: (a) German, 2; (b) Religion, 1; (c) Math, 2; (d) Social Studies, 2; (e) Crafts, 2; (f) Arts, 2; (g)

Music, 3 and (h) Sports, 2. We are so proud and know that you have had a HUGE role to play in preparing Oliver for his future studies. THANK YOU! We hope to be able to speak soon. Love, the Sandbergs”

We also have hired Megan Wolohan, an MdTL alumni to be our new Primary Movement and Gardening Teacher. The following is the bio she wrote to introduce herself. She has a warmth and sensitivity that shines through each day as she works with the children. It is a delight to have her return as a teacher to our school.

“My name is Megan Wolohan. I attended Montessori de Terra Linda beginning at the age of two with teacher Laurin Abramson and continued through age six. I then went on to Saint Ignatius College Preparatory. Through my coursework I began to focus my interests in studying the development of children. I participated in community service hours at Marin Head Start. After graduating I attended University of California San Diego majoring in Human Development and volunteered at the Preuss School that provides an intensive college preparatory curriculum for low-income students. Upon completion of my B.A., I was accepted to the Child Development Masters program at the University of California Davis where I explored working with children in hospitals and research with youth. My Master's thesis focused on high school student engagement in the classroom. Through all of these experiences I have pursued my passion in better understanding child development. I look forward to joining MdTL as the Primary Movement and Gardening teacher.”

Do you have a Montessori success story to share? Would you like to help us reach out to alumni? Call the office and let us know!

Lower Elementary students Molly Phelan and Sarah Khalifa read The Peace Book by Todd Parr on the International Day of Peace which was celebrated by the entire school on September 21st.

Upper Elementary students recited poems about peace that they had written and parents Sarah Davis and Julian Chandlee led the students in a song they wrote, Dream of Peace.



Famous Montessorian: Julia Child

by Verona Tanihara

Julia Child—pioneering, engaging, brimming with enthusiasm and unquestionably a master of the culinary arts. These may be some of the things that come to mind when you think of Ms. Child, the first American woman to attend the renowned Cordon Bleu culinary school in Paris and the first female to be inducted into the Culinary Institute Hall of Fame. But what you may not know is that Julia attended a Montessori school as a child and credits that experience with her love of working with her hands.

In fact, Julia embodied the Montessori philosophy on many levels, blazing new trails in the world of American cooking, bringing a sense of fun to the process of learning and creating and lacking any undue concern for mistakes

she made. Maria Montessori wanted kids to develop “a friendly relationship to error”—to understand that mistakes are a normal part of learning, and that to learn, you must be willing to make mistakes and then move forward. And there was Julia—potatoes flying out of a pan, chicken on the floor—always forging ahead with gusto and trilling something like, “You must have the courage of your convictions!”

This attitude, an underlying current in Montessori education, took Julia far in life and it certainly plays a part in the success of so many Montessori graduates.

Bon appetit!

A New MdTL Tradition – The Birthday Basket Inspires Caring and Sharing

The idea for our community’s new tradition of the Birthday Basket came from Pre-primary teacher, Laurin Abramson. She saw a story on the news about a boy who on his birthday asked his friends to bring a gift of food to give to children less fortunate rather than a birthday present for him.

On your birthday or the birthday of someone in your family, you can bring a non-perishable food item in a non-breakable container to add to the basket. When the basket is full these items will be delivered to the Marin Community Food Bank where they will be distributed to families in need.



On his birthday Cameron Schlesinger proudly adds a can of food to the Birthday Basket.

A Fresh New Face for MdTL

by Drusie Davis

Moving from the old world script of Maria Montessori to a look that embodies who we are today, MdTL has a new school logo. While the most prominent place you see the new identity is the building sign, it is all around you, from the weekly bulletin to this year’s Annual Report.

As part of our new school identity, we have retooled MdTL’s web site with a new design and additional content. For prospective families there is a wealth of information about programs offered and the admissions process, as well as links to educational resources. Current families will find

frequently used forms, an online calendar, and news about the latest school events. During the remainder of the school year we will launch additional functionality that enables parents to review volunteer opportunities and log volunteer hours served. We encourage all in our community to regularly visit the site at www.mdTL.org.

Thanks go out to the dedicated parent volunteers and staff members who worked hard to thoughtfully select the logo and implement it on a school-wide basis.

IMAGINE...The Difference You Can Make In Our Community

by Lynn Simons

By now you have received a letter asking for your participation in our Annual Fund program. A once-a-school-year voluntary donation program, MdTL's Annual Fund is designed to raise the additional monies needed to offset the difference between the school's annual expenses and tuition dollars.

But what does this really mean for your child? Every donation we receive helps build a stronger school for our community. Each dollar you donate goes directly toward the operation of our school and also helps to fund special projects. For example, this past year your donations have helped to "green" our school, inside the beautiful classrooms and outdoors in our gardens. In recent years, the school's fundraising activities resulted in the creation of MdTL's unique Artist-in-Residence program and funded a new play structure for the Pre-primary and Primary children.

If you have already made a tax-deductible contribution, we extend our warmest "thank you." This year, all contributing families will receive a re-usable canvas bag imprinted

with the school logo and will also be recognized in the Annual Report.

If you have not yet contributed, we encourage you to do so at a level that is comfortable for your family. Our goal is 100% community participation and every donation makes a difference. Working together, we can ensure that MdTL remains a strong independent school that nurtures the minds and hearts of our children.

We would like to thank the following families who have already contributed to the 2009-2010 Annual Fund:

Cook Family
Davis Family
Jagoda Family
Matthes Family
Mathews Family
PG&E (through the Tanihara family)
Shaw Family
Tatum Family

MdTL Board of Trustees

by Cheryl Jagoda

The MdTL Board of Trustees has six standing committees. All of these committees play an important role within the community. We encourage members of the MdTL community to step forward and participate. If you are interested in joining the Board of Trustees, we ask that you participate on a committee prior to applying. Questions can be addressed to the chairpeople or any member of the Board. Thank you in advance for your interest and support.

Committee Descriptions

Communications – Drusie Davis, Chairperson (Meeting time varies – subcommittees set times)

The Communications Committee is responsible for the creation and management of internal and external communications at MdTL. Key responsibilities include publishing the Annual Report and "Messenger" newsletter, management of the school's website, public relations, alumni database and working with other committees to effectively communicate their projects.



2009-2010 MdTL Board of Trustees: Drusie Davis, Bob Cook, Cheryl Jagoda, Lauren Mathews, Lynn Simons, Sofia Alexander, Jim Petray. Not shown: Brian Arellanes, Diane Mina, Haluk Ulubay

Finance – Jim Petray, Chairperson (2nd Tuesday of each month at 5:15 p.m.)

The Board Treasurer leads the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee reviews the health and state of the business, while providing leadership in creation, ratification and management of the school's budget. This committee reviews all audit comments and implements any necessary changes

resulting from these comments. Guided by the investment policy set for the school, the committee manages the MdTL investments.

Fundraising – Diane Mina, Chairperson (4th Monday of each month at 8:30 a.m.)

The Fundraising Committee plans and executes yearly fundraising activities. The major fundraising events include, but are not limited to, the Annual Fund, Auction and online fundraising.

Governance Committee – Cheryl Jagoda, Chairperson (3rd Monday of each month at 8:30 a.m.)

The Governance Committee provides oversight of the Board of Trustees practices and procedures, including maintenance of the bylaws. The committee is currently responsible for the documentation of the Board of Trustees recruiting process, as well as the execution of that process until the process is sufficiently mature such that a separate committee or sub-committee can be formed. Furthermore, the committee ensures

ongoing Board education and conducts an annual Board self-assessment.

Green Committee – Amy McKelvey and Linda Kealey, Co-Chairpersons (1st Monday of the month at 8:45 a.m.)

The Green Committee takes a leadership role in our community for creation of an environment of health and sustainability throughout the MdTL campus. The committee consists of an energized and forward thinking group of parents and staff working together to achieve such an environment.

Strategic Planning – Bob Cook, Chairperson (1st Tuesday of each month in the evening)

The Strategic Planning Committee creates the vision for where MdTL is going as an organization over the next year or more. This includes setting goals for the organization and achieving buy-in from the Board of Trustees. The committee is responsible for the creation of a written strategic plan, including a plan for execution and evaluation of the plan's effectiveness.

MdTL Welcomes New Board Treasurer Jim Petray

by Lauren Mathews

At September's Board meeting, the MdTL Board of Trustees voted to approve James Petray as its newest member and Board Treasurer. Jim is the only current Board member from outside of the MdTL community; however, he has had several years of contact with MdTL. For six years, while working for a previous employer, he performed our school's annual audit and presented the results to the Board.

Jim is a C.P.A. and has been in practice for thirty-three years. He is currently a partner at Burr, Pilger & Mayer LLP where he has a diverse range of for profit and not for profit clients including six private schools, various charities and private foundations. He is a member of the administrative

committee of the California State Board of Accountancy which oversees enforcement of state laws governing CPAs.

Past volunteer board positions include the Novato Youth Soccer Association, the Novato Youth Center and the Novato Little League. He's presently a Trustee, Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair of Hanna Boys Center, a residential high school and treatment center for troubled boys in Sonoma.

Jim lives in Novato with his wife and has two grown sons. Jim's passion for youth education, as well as his business and board experience will be a great asset to MdTL.

Teachers Choose New Names for their Classrooms

Following the lead of naming MdTL's newest Upper Elementary classroom Willow House after a local tree, the teachers in the other classrooms have also named their rooms after a native tree. New signs will soon reflect their choices:

Laurin and Olga – Acorn Room
Jessica and Kat – Sequoia Room
Jennifer and Norma – Maple Room
Deirdre and Christina – Aspen Room
Maha Kali and Emily – Bay Laurel Room

Montessori Training

by Emily Strand



This past school year at MdTL marked my first experience working at a Montessori school. As the Lower Elementary Assistant I had numerous eye-opening and inspiring moments that led me to make the easy decision to start Elementary Montessori training.

In the middle of June I left Maha Kali and the Lower El class to drive across the country to Kansas City, Missouri for the first of three summers devoted to the training.

For the next nine weeks, thirty other individuals and I had a truly amazing experience. The first five weeks were

spent inside a Primary classroom to lay a solid foundation for the Elementary work that would follow. When we began the Elementary coursework we were all so elated and ready. We learned some lessons from all subject areas of the classroom and spent many hours practicing with one another.

Though some days seemed to push us to our limits, I know my classmates and I felt so lucky to be part of something we really believed in. I will be thrilled to be back with them next summer for the next stage of our training. But for now I'm enjoying putting all that I learned to good use assisting Maha Kali.

Erdkinder

by Olivia Jane Morfit

The Erdkinder program, directed by Robb and Erin Wirts, is truly the next step up in Montessori education. The moment I walked into the room, it seemed different to me. The teachers explained about complicated things like changing classes, proper use of the lockers (at last) and homework. The first day flew by in a flurry of activity, running from class to class and unpacking our brand new stuff into the lockers. I suddenly felt much older, surrounded by students my own age or a grade above me, as opposed to the younger students in my sixth year at Montessori de Terra Linda. *I could get used to this!* I thought, slamming my locker and walking to math. Upper Elementary felt like a long time ago.

You are never bored in the Erdkinder program, I will tell you that. I have written ten essays in three weeks and completed four projects and reports in that time. Compared to MdTL, the work load is colossal, but my friends quickly assured me it was little more than average. Everyone rose quickly to the occasion.

The students, coming from three different schools, were segregated at first, but quickly mixed together. We became a family. We go places all the time in our awesome ten-seat vans nicknamed Big Bertha and White Lightning. So far, not a month into the school year, we have been on several microeconomics class outings, and to Yosemite and Napa. The St. Vincent campus, with its gorgeous church and old Spanish charm is beautiful and scrupulously well-maintained. We have a library/study space, a science lab, and a math and history room. We are in the process of renovating

a large room upstairs which will be an art studio, a music area, a student lounge, a faculty work space, a computer lab and a kitchen. We are also making a darkroom for a photography elective. The school also has access to a swimming pool and an auditorium, perfect for some epic games of dodge ball.

The Erdkinder experience is a wonderful one, not to mention, the perfect follow-up to the Montessori de Terra Linda education. So far, I have had a great experience and expect to do so for the remainder of my time here.

Olivia Jane Morfit graduated from MdTL last spring and is among the first students in the new Marin Montessori Junior High-Erdkinder Program at St. Vincent's campus in San Rafael. Erde kinder, roughly translated from German, means land children. The young adolescents, age 12- 15, in the Erdkinder program, engage in real-life problem solving, social relations and exploration of their environment. Students gain a sense of ownership, belonging and responsibility by researching the history of the land; they study science and math concepts by experiential projects and entrepreneurial endeavors. This balanced approach of theory and hands-on learning is a major tenet of Maria Montessori's observations about early adolescence. More information about the Erdkinder program, including descriptions of some recent school activities, can be found at www.marinmontessori.org.

Greetings from the Parent Association

by Parent Association Co-Chairs: Jennifer Darby, Erin Giacoppo, Diane Mina, Michelle Sebastian

With a few events behind us and some exciting things ahead, the school year is in full swing. Last month the Parent Association (PA) hosted our school's first Book Browse and it was a literary success! We really enjoyed sharing age-appropriate titles recommended by the Head Teachers and Head of School with our school community. It was so nice to get reacquainted with some old favorites and discover some new literary gems in the process. Speaking of literary gems, a special thanks to MdTL parent and published author Tanya Egan Gibson, who shared her own book, *How to Buy a Love of Reading*, at the Browse. Congratulations, Tanya!

Next month we hope to see you at the MdTL Holiday Party on Friday, December 11th (grown-ups only, please). This festive gathering is a wonderful way to kick off the holiday season and connect with other parents in our community.

Join us January 30, 2010 at the MdTL Pancake Breakfast. This school tradition is a great event for the entire family. There is a lot of excitement surrounding the Pancake Breakfast—from the planning and preparing, to shopping and setting up and, of course, *eating* those delicious pancakes! This gathering is always a fun way for everyone in the MdTL community to come together, get involved and even earn volunteer hours. The entertainment is especially exciting for the kids. Last year we featured The Reptile Guy.

He unleashed some incredible creatures, such as a Solomon Island Skink, a decades old tortoise and a massive python that wrapped itself entirely around one of our students. (A loving embrace we assure you!)

In addition to these special functions, the PA holds monthly meetings on Wednesday mornings after drop off in the Sanctuary. We have speakers on various topics we hope you will find interesting and relevant to your family. For example, in December, our featured speaker will be Valerie Young—a nutritionist, world class runner and MdTL mom. Valerie will talk about healthy and delicious ways to get you and your kids through the holidays, the New Year and beyond. Stop by for a dose of healthy ideas or to ask a specific question to Valerie during this educational and engaging session.

And remember, by attending our meetings and events you can earn volunteer hours. More importantly, you can connect with other members of our wonderful, diverse and unique community. Each parent in our school has something special to offer; we look forward to getting to know you this year. Look for our announcements and meeting times in the weekly bulletins.

A special thanks to all of the parent volunteers that make these school-related events possible—we couldn't do it without you!

Creative Minds and Bodies Through Music

by Amanda Hahn

The music program at MdTL is based on Orff Schulwerk, an active approach to teaching and learning music and movement. This creative approach is based on the premise that children are innately musical and that they naturally love to sing, dance and play. Developed by German composers Carl Orff and Gunild Keetman, the philosophy of the Schulwerk embraces music, movement, speech and drama through games and joyful play, awakening the creativity and musical potential of the child. Orff and his colleagues created recommended guidelines for an appropriate sequence that provides many opportunities for aural, visual and kinesthetic learners to feel successful in the music-making process. The Orff approach uses instruments, both small percussion and barred instruments such as xylophones, to incorporate hands-on

rhythmic and melodic experiences and to experience playing together.

A typical class has a mix of activities. We sing songs from around the world or chant rhymes and poems to explore our voices and stimulate our sense of rhythm and imagery. Students identify patterns, hone listening skills and practice taking turns during rhythm games. We play percussion instruments to experiment with their sounds and work on fine motor control. Through dances and expressive movement activities, students learn awareness of their bodies and the space around them. The selected material varies with each age group; the classes are structured to meet every child's developmental needs.

An important element of an Orff class is the opportunity to share or discover something that is truly one's own. Students might do this through trying a new style of singing, improvising and composing at the xylophone or sharing opinions and giving each other feedback. Through these experiences, they work toward creating a sense of aesthetics and they practice listening to and supporting each other.

Last spring the Lower Elementary students reminded me of another important aspect of Orff Schulwerk. When I work with the Lower Elementary class, the students are divided into two groups. On this particular day I first met with a group of 2nd and 3rd year students. I began singing and miming to help the kids guess the translation of a new Spanish song from Guatemala.

Vamos a la mar! Tum! Tum! Come to the sea! Let's get some fish, with their colorful mouths, fry and roast them. Fast Forward

Tum! Tum! came easy as they imagined drum sounds. Learning the actual song through echoing didn't come as quickly as I thought it would. When it came time to assess how much they had grasped, I started the second line, leaving a blank for my students to sing *pecado* at the end. What I heard coming back to me was everything but *pecado*: *vescaro*, *kestaro*, *frescado* or *pesado*. How appropriate—the last one translates as tedious, tiresome, annoying! After some corrections and attempted run-throughs, the expressions on their faces were telling me that this wasn't as fun as they hoped it would be. It had been a last-minute thought to bring this song to them anyway, so I decided to drop it for now.

The younger students of Lower El came in excitedly from P.E. shortly thereafter, ready to switch places with their classmates. I started class by continuing the rhythmic *ostinato* ideas we had begun exploring at the end of last week's class. Half of the group was at the xylophones, trying to keep their pattern going steadily as the other half sang, tempting the instrumentalists to be pulled into the rhythm of the song's whole text. When we switched jobs, the second group of singers was eager to move their bodies. "Can we get up and dance, please? As long as we keep singing, can we dance?" I wanted to be fair to the new xylophone players, who had just sat patiently while singing, so I quieted them, telling them we'd get up to dance in just a moment. Plus, I needed time to think. I had absolutely no plans for dancing this week.

"Ok! Let's come back to our circle – a *standing* circle," I improvised. The energy was building because this meant a DANCE was coming! They excitedly followed my movements and the Spanish words of the Guatemalan fish song. We danced with big sweeping arms and small steps while our flattened palms mimicked fish swimming in water. Their pronunciation and understanding of the translation was nearly perfect by the third time through. We honed our movements to be more choreographed. "How closely can we stand to start so our waves have lots of room to move backward? Are we holding one frying pan or two? What else can we do with the rest of our body while we show our fish lips?"

This group learned the song quickly by using their entire body, whereas the first group felt stuck, because I was stuck trying to stick words in their heads that meant nothing to them. My students reminded me that they will soak up these experiences so much more thoroughly and joyfully when their minds and bodies are fully engaged and have ample space to create something of their own. Orff Schulwerk at its best is child-centered, allowing every lesson to be fresh and unique.



**Amanda Hahn, Orff Schulwerk
Music and Movement Teacher**

Amanda enjoys the sweet energy of young students and their interest in exploring, imagining and learning. She teaches a half-hour class to the Pre-primary students twice a week and she meets with each Primary class for a 45-minute class one afternoon per week. At the Elementary level she appreciates her students' eagerness to be challenged and to work collaboratively. She teaches Lower and Upper Elementary students one 45-minute session per week.

Amanda has been teaching music in schools for twelve years. In addition to her work at Montessori de Terra Linda, she currently teaches Orff-based music classes at Nicasio School, conducts woodwind classes at French American International School in San Francisco, and teaches flute through the San Francisco Community Music Center. She also offers lessons on flute and other woodwinds, piano and voice in her home studio.

A native of Wilmington, Delaware, Amanda received her Bachelor of Music degree from Boston University

continued on next page

and Master of Music degree from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music where she studied flute. Amanda completed the 3-year Orff Schulwerk certification course at Mills College and has since participated in intensive week-long courses to further her training.

Amanda is an active flutist, performing in chamber music recitals, and regularly sings with choruses in the area. She is on the board of the Northern California chapter of

the American Orff Schulwerk Association and is editor of their journal. She loves being outside hiking or just enjoying the sunshine, practicing yoga, or lounging with a good book. Amanda, her husband Kevin, and his sixth-grade son excitedly await the birth of their baby in January!

New Staff

by Lauren Mathews



Claire Allen – Upper Elementary Assistant, PE Instructor, Elementary After School Staff

The list of Claire’s titles above is just the beginning of what she does each day at MdTL. Claire spends mornings assisting Micah in the Upper Elementary classroom. After a break for lunch, she conducts Physical Education for the Lower and Upper

Elementary students. In the afternoons she works one-on-one with Lower Elementary students, helping with reading. Then, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., she directs the Elementary After School Program. There’s no doubting her when she cheerfully admits that the days go by fast.

Although this is her first experience working at a Montessori school, Claire fondly recalls what she admires about friends who attended Montessori schools. “They are confident people who are lifelong learners.”

Claire brings a wide variety of teaching experiences to MdTL. After receiving her B.A. and K-12 teaching certification in Music Education from Whitworth University in Spokane, Washington, Claire worked as a teacher’s assistant in a classroom for children with severe autism in Oklahoma. She’s taught English language to business professionals in Italy and music at an elementary school in Boulder, CO. For four summers she worked at a youth camp outside Yosemite National Park, where she met her husband, Scott, a graduate student in the MFA Program in Writing at California College of the Arts. This past summer she and Scott designed and coordinated a program that offered a week-long camp experience to underprivileged children in Stockton, Fresno and Las Vegas. “We developed a camp-in-a-box, bringing games, songs and crafts to a park for a week.

We partnered with local church groups in these communities to find volunteers and mentors so that once camp week was over, these children would continue to be connected to resources.”

Claire’s compassion and calm demeanor have already earned her appreciation and respect amongst the Elementary students. She’s thrilled to have the opportunity to work with two fantastic teachers, Maha Kali and Micah.



Megan Wolohan – Preschool Movement and Gardening Teacher and Primary After School Staff

On Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings, a small group of about seven Primary students gather on the bench near the gate. These students have been selected by their teachers because of their need to move around more than the class-

room allows or because they are not currently engaged in a work. Megan leads the children to the grassy field by Willow House and they do some singing and stretching—exercises to warm up and get them centered in their bodies. Then they practice running, catching, kicking and other gross motor activities in a series of stations she has prearranged. After forty-five minutes of outdoor movement, the children return to their classroom and Megan gathers a second group. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the procedure is the same but the garden is the focus of activity. Under Megan’s guidance, the children recently planted some radishes, and harvested lettuce from which they made a salad; they are currently growing flowers. During lunch Megan assists in Jessica’s Primary 1 Class and supervises on the playground.

After a break, she preps for the Primary After School activities, a responsibility she shares with Marissa Gurat.

Megan's initiative and determination are evident in her efforts to have MdTL featured in the November issue of *Fast Forward* magazine. As part of this effort she asked the Head Teachers to collect their student's artwork and poems about nature, which she submitted for publication in this local children's magazine. Sloat Garden Center awards a grant to schools who participate, which will further support gardening at MdTL.

Megan first became interested in child development during high school at Saint Ignatius College Preparatory in San Francisco. She earned a B.A. in Human Development from University of California, San Diego and was accepted to the Child Development Masters program at the University of California, Davis. She's volunteered at Marin Head Start and the Preuss School, which provides an intensive college preparatory curriculum for low-income students. She's been

a counselor at a sports camp, worked with children in hospitals, conducted research on student-teacher interactions, and worked as an assistant teacher at the Hanna Fenichel Child Development Center.

Last spring, as Megan was working on her Master's thesis, she became interested in exploring Montessori as a possible career choice. The Montessori philosophy of education aligned with her background in child development. Its focus on the child and providing a developmentally appropriate environment piqued her interest. Megan feels fortunate to be again part of the community of MdTL, where she went to school from ages 2 through 6. She remembers picking peas from the garden to eat, tracing cursive letters with her finger, and doing yoga. She has no memory of the purposefulness and structure to the lessons that are so evident to her now. "It might seem rigid to someone not familiar with Montessori but I see now how the structure creates calm and orderliness."

Interview with Mary Yahnke, Head of School

by Upper Elementary students Grace Hitchens and Zoe Simons

What is your favorite color?

My favorite color is lavender.

Where were you born?

I was born in Pontiac, Michigan.

How many children do you have?

I have four boys, three sons and one stepson.

Why did you want to be Head of School?

My son wanted to move to California and MdTL sent out an email for a new Head of School in California and that was a great opportunity. I emailed them back and said that I would be moving to the Bay Area and it seemed like it could be a good fit. We began to talk and learn about each other.

What college did you go to?

I went to Aurora University and it was very small.

What is your middle name?

My middle name is Margaret.

What was the first word you said?

I am not sure, but when I was three years old I used to say pasgetti instead of spaghetti!

Grace Hitchens, Mary Yahnke, Zoe Simons



What made you decide to work in a Montessori school?

My mom worked at a Montessori school and then I had my boys. I knew this was a special setting for children and this drew me to working at Montessori schools.

Can you describe your job as Head of School?

I support the teachers, office, staff, parents and the Board. I also help the school make decisions.

What are some of your hobbies?

My hobbies are bird watching, cooking new recipes and reading.

What do you enjoy about your job?

I enjoy working with the staff and parents every day. I like to engage with the families at school to get to know them and help them with their questions.



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Calendar

November

- 25 Fall Sing 11:30 a.m.
Minimum Day 12:00 noon dismissal
- 26-27 Thanksgiving Recess – School Closed

December

- 1 Tuition Assistance Applications available for Fall 2010
- 3 Parent Education: All About Elementary
- 11 Parent Association Holiday Party
- 16 Parent Association Meeting
- 18 Priority Deadline for Sibling Applications (for Fall 2010)
Minimum Day 12:00 noon dismissal
- 21–24 Winter Recess – Primary Winter Camp
- 25 Christmas Day – School Closed
- 28–31 Winter Recess – Primary Winter Camp

January

- 1 New Year's Day – School Closed

- 4 Staff in Service Day – No classes
- 5 School Resumes
- 9 Admissions Open House 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon
- 18 Martin Luther King Day – School Closed
- 20 Parent Association Meeting
- 29 Tuition Assistance Applications Due
- 30 MdTL Pancake Breakfast 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

February

- 11 Elementary Parent/Child Night 5:00 and 6:00 p.m.
- 12 Re-enrollment contracts due
Minimum Day – 12:00 noon dismissal
- 15 President's Day – School Closed
- 16–18 Mid-Winter Recess – Primary Mid-Winter Camp
- 19 School Closed
- 22 School Resumes
- 24 Parent Association Meeting