



Making an Impact

Your Generosity at Work

Fall 2021

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Spotlight on Parent Engagement

FROM LAURA ZHU, Parent Engagement Volunteer

As we entered yet another new school year with masks and social distancing, it became clear to me that while safety was still everyone's top priority, our families were also desperate for connection to the school community. As I have been with the school since early 2013 when my eldest entered Toddler, my three children (Sam 5th grade; Ian 3rd grade; Art kindergarten) and I all remembered the joy that TMS traditions such as Fall Festival, Global Celebration, and the Spring Gala brought to the community in the days before COVID. After chatting with other parents and staff, I was able to, in conjunction with the TMS Board and administration, form FAM (the Family Association of Montessori) to try to bring back as much of that convivial spirit as can be safely mustered while taking appropriate precautions.



In the few short weeks school has been in session, we have already seen great success with FAM's Friday Frolic events - students & their families meeting after school at nearby Mondauk Common Park - and parent events, a newsletter, and much more are on the horizon.

FAM has also sent squares of fabric out to every student and staff member to adorn our building facade with Peace Flags celebrating International Peace Day, TMS, and all types of love and unity. While formerly an installation of this sort would have taken place at the school, this way every member of our community can still take part to showcase all the diverse pieces that complete our TMS puzzle.

Several current parents have already stepped up to help, but if any additional parents, grandparents, or friends of the school would like to volunteer, please contact me at lzhu@themontessorischool.us. Just like our Peace Flag installation - the more individuals take part, the greater the whole can be for everyone!

News from the Board of Trustees

FROM BRITTANY SHEARON, Secretary and Trustee Committee Chair

A natural progression of serving on our Board of Trustees is the commencement of a trustee's term. As we open up another school year, it's with great appreciation to acknowledge two board members who have served TMS for many years helping our school live out our mission. These trustees have devoted many years of volunteering at TMS to support community building and activities, culminating in board service. Please join all of us in thanking these two dedicated, passionate TMS advocates for their board service.



Julia Levin, a 2002 TMS graduate, joined the board in 2013, recently serving as Secretary and Trustee Committee Chair from 2016-2021. Julia's background as a student of TMS along with her non-profit experience in education and workforce management was instrumental in dedicating countless hours helping the board advance our digital strategy by creating and cultivating our board collaboration website. This was especially invaluable during the pandemic when the board was operating 100% virtually, allowing the board to continue governance and monthly committee routines required under our by-laws. Over the years, Julia has provided a unique perspective given her history with TMS, enabling our board to see through the

eyes of the student when discussing ways the board could invest and support our program. Julia plans to continue supporting TMS volunteering while growing and advancing her career.

Rashida Wellbeck joined the board in 2017, playing an active role on the trustee committee. Rashida's background in research helped lay the foundation for our Parent Survey design, questionnaire and results reporting. The findings from this work helped TMS administration understand parent sentiments and satisfaction that informed parent meetings and communications. Rashida's collaborative style and insightful, probing questions supported many effective board deliberations. Rashida and her husband, Timothy, along with their three Montessorian children, Leilani, Timothy and Amariah, have relocated out of state, unfortunately limiting further trustee involvement. However, they wish to remain strong advocates of Montessori education.



Meet New Staff at TMS

We welcome these new classroom assistants and specials teachers to TMS. Our students have been looking forward to the return of specials after a year without!



Katie Haldeman / PE

Education: B.S. in Psychology and a B.A. in Dance with a focus on Kinesiology/Movement Science, Ursinus College



Liz Hoffner / Technology Integration Specialist

Education: B.S. Early Childhood/Elementary Ed, Duquesne University; Masters in Ed and concentration in technology, Arcadia University; Instructional 2 Certification; Professional Development Instructor; Level 2 Google Educator



Taylor Nolan / Lower EI Assistant

Education: B.S. Early Childhood Ed., Temple University, Certified Instructional 1 Grades PK-4 and Grades 5-8



Paige Sfida / Lower EI Assistant

Education: B.A. Psychological & Social Sciences, Pennsylvania State University



Brienna Weigner / Music Teacher

Education: B.Mus. Piano Pedagogy, Cedarville University

Alumni News

Aja Sullivan '08

In July, NextRoll introduced Aja as Program Manager of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, on their new DE&I team. NextRoll is a marketing technology company that is committed to building diverse teams of "Rollers" and proud to be an equal opportunity employer. Aja is looking forward to making a change and impacting people's lives. Aja has a BS from Towson University in psychology, and an MBA from the University of Maryland Global Campus.



Alice Wistar '10

Alice graduated from Princeton University in 2020, and recently moved to San Francisco. Alice is undertaking a virtual Princeton in Latin America fellowship with EARTH University as well as working full-time as Marketing Sales and Operations Coordinator at Black Sheep Foods, a plant-based meat start-up. Alice also does college essay tutoring and is working on submitting an environmental communications article to a public health journal.

Chandler Ryan '11

"I graduated from Penn State in December 2020 with a Bachelor's of Science degree in finance after 3.5 years. I am currently working for Ellucian, which is a software company for higher education located in Malvern, PA. I primarily focus on financial planning and analysis for the company's operating expenses. So far, my job has been 100% virtual but I still really enjoy it!"

Jack Ter Doest '11

"I am currently a senior at UMass Amherst studying Finance. I am looking into a career in investment banking or equity research. I hope everyone at The Montessori School is doing well! I am extremely grateful that my parents sent me there for my education."

Marika Bartels '13

Following her graduation from Germantown Friends School in 2019, Marika spent a service gap year working at a hospital in Germany. Marika is interning in Germany at a company that makes glass. She also coaches gymnastics. Marika expects to graduate from Northeastern University in Boston in 2025.

Isabel Li '20

"I go by Coco now and identify as non-binary using they/them pronouns. While I miss the teachers at TMS I still occasionally contact close friends. I'd love to get back and see everyone at some point!"

If you have alumni news you would like to share with the TMS community, click here:

[**We Want To Hear From You!**](#)

Putting Your PA Tax Dollars to Work

HAVE YOU HEARD OF EITC?

You can give your PA tax dollars to The Montessori School for scholarships through the EITC (Educational Improvement Tax Credit) PA tax credit program!

It's easy to qualify for PA tax credits if:

- You are an employee, owner, or shareholder of a business authorized to do business in Pennsylvania,

OR

- You are a retired or a non-profit employee who owns stock (at least 1 share) in a business that operates in PA,

OR

- You are an individual who pays PA taxes,

AND

- Your minimum PA tax obligation is at least \$3,500 annually.

Last school year, during the **FALL** Cycle of the EITC program, which is now underway again this year, these TMS families and alumni families donated a total of \$55,000 to TMS scholarships through this program!

- Tammy & Matt Brinker
- Kim & Doug Burke
- Colleen & Mark Mele
- Sarah & Jason Schein
- Rachel & Matt Shearon
- Yuzhen & Guangkai Shi
- Oya & Ali Yuksel

In our most recent **SPRING** Cycle of EITC, even more TMS families and alumni families gave their PA tax dollars to TMS that added another \$58,000 for scholarships!

- Joan & Jim Levin
- Tracey & Rod Sandmeyer
- Karen Walsh & Jay Lipschutz
- Sue & John Zaharchuk

These families have all made a huge difference in the lives of many TMS children, especially during difficult times of the pandemic, by providing funding for scholarships. But the need continues...

Would you please consider joining them in this incredibly important and easy way to make an impact for TMS children?

The Fall Cycle is a short one with credits being exhausted quickly. You can reserve your tax credits today for the 2021 tax year by simply completing a [FALL 2021 EITC JOINDER](#). Your donation of your PA tax dollars to TMS will not be due for 60 days from the date of your reservation!

Visit The Montessori School EITC/OSTC webpage [PA TAXES AND YOU](#). You will find these and more:

- Pre-recorded Information Session: [PA TAXES and SCHOLARSHIPS Powered by EITC Donations WEBINAR](#) of September 28, 2020.
- [FALL 2021 EITC JOINDER](#) for downloading to reserve your credits. Instructions are found on the form.

HERE'S AN
EXAMPLE OF
HOW EITC
WORKS:

Did you know, for as little as \$350 out of pocket, you could donate \$3,500 to TMS? It's easy using the EITC tax credit. You simply fill out the paperwork, making a minimum donation of \$3,500, and then Pennsylvania will issue a tax credit to you for 90% of your donation amount!

- (1) You write a check to TMS for \$3,500 (a minimum of \$3,500; maximum equal to your Pennsylvania state taxes)
- (2) Pennsylvania would credit you \$3,150 (or 90%)
- (3) Your net spending would be \$350
- (4) Donation received by TMS would be \$3,500

Teacher Wish List

This past spring, TMS requested donations to specific areas in the school that were asked for by teachers. We are grateful for these donors who generously contributed to these choices:

- Children's House Sandboxes
 - Kadan & Yianni Avgiris
 - Sarah Moffatt & David La Salle
- Lower El Chromebook Charging Stations (pictured)
 - Amy Brickman & Ivan Maddock
 - Rob & Roberta English
 - Gregory & Misty Harth
- Makerspace Shelving
 - Kadan & Yianni Avgiris
 - Nima & Jigar Desai
- Outdoor Play Equipment
 - The Elsey Family
- Picnic Table For Outdoor Use
 - Kadan & Yianni Avgiris
 - Linda & Jay White
- Toddler Sandboxes
 - Kadan & Yianni Avgiris
 - Lisa & Keith Tietjen



Class Gift of 2021

We greatly appreciate contributions from the families of the graduating class of 2021 towards an Outdoor Classroom. Donations were made by parents Dareus Conover, Nima & Jigar Desai, Sarah & Jason Schein, and Alicia & John Stoddard.

Look for our 2020-21 ANNUAL REPORT Coming Soon!

The donor report will include a comprehensive list of all names of contributors who gave to TMS between August 1, 2020 through July 31, 2021.