



NEWSLETTER

–JANUARY 2015–

FRONTPAGE NEWS

Thank you to our members for either contributing directly to or spreading the word about our crowd funding campaign for a new web site! We are grateful for your participation! Our efforts resulted in \$820 raised via RocketHub and after the campaign ended we were granted a \$1000 anonymous donation! We still have some work to do in raising the approximate goal of \$5000 and we will keep you posted as we move forward. So if you would like to contribute and missed our campaign there is still time! Please just contact any one of our boardmembers.

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NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE COORDINATOR

MARY CUSACK

As we look forward to a new year and renewed resolve to model Peace and positive, respectful interaction with our students, our peers, and all those around us, it is always good to look to the past for those qualities which help guide our future.

MEPI has been involved in a number of collaborative projects with other Montessori organizations. Our President, Dr John Moncure, has continued to represent MEPI at the Montessori Leadership Collaborative of most Montessori organizations. As a result of this involvement, we were able to welcome Andre Roberfroid, then President of AMI (Association Montessori International) as our Keynote speaker for our annual 2014 Conference. His vision of cooperation between organizations was refreshing to hear and also of his involvement with the United Nations.

Our representative to MACTE (Montessori Accreditation Council of Teacher Education), Teresa Noble, has done a wonderful job of keeping MEPI abreast of current Montessori trends and initiatives. Our close ties with MACTE has enabled us to offer workshops at our conferences, headed by MACTE personnel.

We are continuing to offer Montessori

School Accreditation, headed by Dr Daniel Jutras, to schools not only in the USA, but Canada and overseas as well. This is an important step for schools to work towards the highest standards of Montessori education.

This year, MEPI celebrates our 20th year of becoming a Teacher Preparation organization. We are excited to share many memories, history, and new beginnings with all of you at our upcoming conference, Feb. 20-22, 2015.

Dr Jane Bluestein, a long-time supporter of MEPI, will be our keynote speaker along with a special presentation of MEPI by one of our Founding members, Dr Sheryl Sweet.

We hope you will make plans to attend and join in the festivities as we look forward to positive, exciting and rewarding experiences in Montessori education.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

JOHN MONCURE



The Conference Committee is making final preparations for the 2015 conference in Pawley's Island. Soon we will be celebrating our 20th anniversary as a society—an important milestone for a professional organization started by a small group of brave people who imagined Montessorians working together in much the same way we guide our children to behave: with the social skills of collaboration, mutual respect, and sensitivity to others.

In preparation for this note to you I reached back to my very first President's Message, in 1999, to give me some context and to remind me of the roadmap that we will celebrate next February. In it I expanded a concept originally outlined at the conference that year by my friend Jon Wolff. In his remarks, Jon described three concentric circles of a prepared environment from the classroom inward, and I took the circle outward to stress the importance of our schools and our society. Writing then, I lamented our divisive national culture. I can report to you now that since that first message the greatest change I have seen is our maturation as a

society and a profession.

We began our journey as a very small group (when I say "we" I include those—including myself—who were welcomed to MEPI along the way). And while we still represent a tiny fraction of the affiliated Montessori professionals of late I have sensed recognition of our society. In discussions among our most distinguished colleagues I am gratified to hear our four initials listed alongside those of the larger (and smaller)societies. It is as if our profession—in the United States at least—has evolved from a monolith, to a bi-polar world, and now to a multicultural one.

This is as it should be. First, differences of opinion exist and should be honored. Second, Montessori teacher preparation is a very personal thing, and we adhere much more closely to the approach of our own teacher than we would, say, to almost any university professor we ever admired. Ironically, we can trace the passing down of Montessori wisdom and lore from all our teachers, through several generations, to Dr. Montessori. She would have been, I

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believe, content with the direction we as a profession are taking.

At the same time we applaud the diversity of our profession and the qualities of other societies, the MEPI office in Bloomington, the Board of Directors, and the various committees that make our society work must focus on doing the best we can for our members. A number of recent initiatives manifest this sense of purpose. The new school accreditation program is an example; it allows schools to go beyond recognition of classrooms as internship sites by assessing the entire school environment. Restructuring membership categories—which will occur this summer—moves from exclusivity to inclusive membership that encourages schools to seek self improvement. The MEPI Facebook page gives us a new venue for communications on a social media platform. We recently concluded a crowd-funding effort to raise sufficient capital to re-tool the MEPI web site, and we will be continuing that fundraising effort until we have amassed sufficient resources to roll out an amazing site. Next summer MEPI will hold its first mini-conference in Utah.

We take these effort- and time-consuming steps because they benefit our members. How, you might ask, does a mini-

conference in Utah help me when I live in Ohio (or any other specific measure)? The answer is simple: every time MEPI takes a positive step to increase its “footprint” in the Montessori landscape, every year conferees leave Pawley’s Island thinking, “Wow, that was an amazing event,” we increase the value of the MEPI teaching certificate. It makes heads of school take notice when they get a résumé from an MEPI-certified teacher. It makes prospective parents who’ve looked beyond the superficial recognize our initials as a stamp of approval from professional colleagues. It’s like looking in a watch store and seeing “Made in Switzerland” or on a wine label and seeing “Pauillac”.

We have much to celebrate this 20th anniversary, and I look forward to sharing with you our satisfaction with the accomplishments to date and continue planning for even more ambitious projects in the future.

MEPI GRADUATES

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEWLY CERTIFIED MONTESSORIANS!

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Institute for Guided Studies – Utah

Margaret Barton, Andrea Bolander, Chelsi Harris, Ashley Wood

Montessori Teacher Preparation of Kansas City – Missouri

Adrianna Campos, Lindsay Cardwell

Canadian Montessori Teacher Education Institute

Emily Carrido Nato, Evangeline Tulagan, Fatemeh Razavi, Kalaivanei Rajaratnam, Laura Malisa Dunn, Li Xiao Lan (Linda), Lilian G. Dilinila, Marie Rocca, Regina Manjuri Mazumder, Sabiha Bana, Susan Elizabeth, Schreiner, Tracee Noelle Downer, Victoria Colinares, Vinaya Pai

INFANT TODDLER

Institute for Guided Studies – Utah

Lexie Walz, Danielle Roberts, Tarina Dellila Cutler

ELEMENTARY 6-9

Institute for Guided Studies – Utah

Kaley Parsons

Institute for Guided Studies – Missouri

Jennifer Fuller

Montessori Teacher Institute – Georgia

Joan Geiser

ELEMENTARY 6-12

Institute for Guided Studies – Missouri

Tina Kay Henderson

Institute for Guided Studies – Indiana

Deidre Sheets

HANDS FOR PEACE

SILENT AUCTION

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

Time to prepare for the Silent Auction to be held during the 2015 MEPI Hands for Peace Conference in February in South Carolina. There is no better way to showcase your crafty talents! Items can include but are not limited to handmade jewelry, scarves, paintings, pottery and other crafts, Montessori materials, themed baskets, etc. Monetary donations will be accepted as well. All proceeds collected through this event will benefit the Shirley Plath Humanitarian Fund, a fund established to support research on topics of Montessori education, to spread the Montessori philosophy in developing regions, to continue Montessori teacher education, and to support the society's mission of "building

peace in the world through Montessori education."

As we look forward to this special 20th Anniversary celebration, the MEPI Board would like to encourage you to begin now thinking of ways you can help support the Silent Auction this year. If you would like to donate items early, or will not be able to attend the conference in February, but would like to provide items for the auction, please email Tina Childress, Silent Auction Coordinator, at tchildress@laurens55.org or Kacee Weaver, Chair of the Shirley Plath Humanitarian Fund Committee, at kweaver@mariamontessoriacademy.org. We will be happy to assist you.



HANDS FOR PEACE

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

MEPI'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY

*will be celebrated at the upcoming
Hands for Peace Conference.*

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

The conference will be at Litchfield Beach and Golf Resort in Pawley's Island, SC, with Sunday's Bonus at Brookgreen Gardens. The brochure with conference details may be found on the MEPI website, www.mepiforum.org. Dr. Jane Bluestein, Andrew Kutt, and many more Montessori friends will lead workshops in a wide variety of topics with a mix of age levels and focus groups. A unique item will be auctioned—a quilt created from many tee shirts and MEPI logo items that was the brain child of Sherry Sweet Miller who organized the collection of materials from many MEPI affiliated schools and MEPI founders. The quilt was pieced by Beth Langley and is being professionally machine quilted by Treadle Pushers Quilt Shop in Sumter, SC.

DON'T LET THE EARLY BIRD OPPORTUNITY FLY AWAY!

January 19th is the last day to register at the Early Bird Rates and save \$100. Be sure to watch the website and MEPI's Face Book page for updates and additions to the conference schedule.

[Register here](#) to enjoy celebrating MEPI's 20th Anniversary!

So, make your plans now to attend the conference February 20-22, 2015! You can network with old and new friends, enjoy participation in workshops and plenary sessions, and most of all, renew your Montessori spirit!

SAVE THE DATE!
MEPI SUMMER SEMINAR
SATURDAY - JULY 18, 2015
MARIA MONTESSORI ACADEMY,
SALT LAKE CITY UT

Conference details
may be found at
www.mepiforum.org

MY MONTESSORI JOURNEY

CHELSI HARRIS

recent MEPI graduate

When I first started in my Montessori Journey, I knew nothing about the Montessori method or how Montessori worked. I had just graduated from high school and was looking for a job. There was a Montessori school down the street from my house; I thought it was just a day care so I decided to apply. I was asked in my interview what I knew about Montessori, my reply was nothing, as I had never even heard of a Montessori school, and had no idea what it was. Somehow I was lucky enough to start working there as an assistant; this was the start of my Montessori journey and the best decision of my life.

I worked at Montessori of Olympus Cove for 4 years as an assistant; my knowledge of the Montessori Method grew tremendously. I fell in love with the Montessori Method and in my heart believed it was the best education possible. In 2011 I was lucky enough to start working at Elizabeth Academy; prior to starting my job I began the Montessori training. This training opened my eyes to the amazing legacy that Maria Montessori left behind. What I thought I knew about the Montessori Method was nothing in comparison of what I know now. This training has been the best decision I have

ever made. I have loved every part of it; although it has been very challenging it has been well worth it. I am a better teacher and person because of the Montessori Method.

I have known I wanted to be a teacher since I was in elementary school. School never came easy to me and I struggled all the way up into high school. I wanted to become a teacher, because I want to help all those children that struggle just like me. I had a teacher tell me once that I was stupid; it was very hurtful and damaging to me. I always thought I was stupid because a teacher told me so, and because of that I struggled even more in school; I had no confidence in myself. I want to be a teacher so I can give an education to every student in a way that best suits them; I want to follow the child and help them feel comfortable in the classroom and I never want to make them feel like they aren't worth it or that they can't do it, because anyone can and everyone deserves to be treated with respect.

The one thing I have learned through taking the training and working with children in a Montessori classroom; following the child is the most important thing we as teachers can do. This is why

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I believe the Montessori Method is so amazing. When I was in school I got left behind; the teachers didn't care that I didn't understand, or they didn't care that I was so far behind, they just kept moving a long and I got further and further behind. The Montessori Method lets children work at their own pace and no child is left behind. Teachers give them more one on one attention where that never happened for me in a conventional school.

I love that Maria Montessori created an environment in a way that promotes independence; I think being independent is key to a successful life; it teaches us more self respect, confidence and helps with our developmental process. During the time that I have been in training I have learned so many amazing things but one in particular stands out to me, and that is observations. It is so important for teachers to observe their students daily. This helps them get a better understanding of each individual child, and what they are

struggling with or even what they excel at. If only my teachers growing up would have observed me they would have realized that I was lost, and then maybe they would have helped me more. I am so grateful for the opportunity I have had to be a part of this amazing journey. I will forever be grateful for Maria Montessori, she was an amazing woman. I now know that I never want to leave Montessori, because in my opinion it is the best education possible. I can't wait for all the amazing experiences that I have to come while working in a Montessori classroom. I always wanted to be a teacher to help children learn better than I did; but after taking this training I have fallen in love with education and the Montessori Method. I am so glad I have had the opportunity to be a part of this wonderful journey.

MONTESSORI PUBLIC POLICY INITIATIVE FORUM

QUARTERLY MEETING

Richard Ungerer (AMS) and Virginia McHugh (AMI) began discussing public policy work and realized there was an opportunity for a joint project. AMS had a public policy committee; AMI/USA was working to reach out to various states. Through the Montessori Leaders Collaborative they began talking as a group about the various needs of the Montessori community and they got a grant from MLC to do a mapping of state organizations.

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Richard and Virginia explored doing a joint project around public policy and created a joint policy committee but then decided to create a larger effort, the Montessori Public Policy Initiative, to look at how AMS and AMI/USA could formally work together as well as reach out and include other Montessori organizations. MEPI was invited to the forum and Martha Teien, VP of MEPI was the representative.

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On October 27, 2014 this forum introduced attendees via conference call to the history of MPPI, the work accomplished to date and the needs assessment in progress. Participants included representatives from MACTE, AMS, NCMPS, Pacific Northwest Montessori Association, AMI, Trust for Learning, MLC, Montessori Foundation, and MAA.

There are 3 major components to MPPI:

1. the Council, which is the leadership group;
2. the Forum, which serves as an advisory group to the Council;
3. State Groups and Advocacy Coalitions which is the focus of our work.

MPPI is not in the business of drafting policy. They want to support the states in their own identified goals around policy and point them to resources. Legislators and regulators are not interested in our differences, so we need to learn to speak with a collective voice while representing the integrity of our respective organizations. The mission is to reach out and work together to create a system of communication to have an impact on Montessori public policy.

The largest body of work accomplished to date has been the identification of state groups and advocacy coalitions.

The MPPI Council will continue to meet monthly. The Forum will meet quarterly.

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