

JANUARY NEWSLETTER

Dear Parents,

DECEMBER HIGHLIGHTS * * * *

December weeks were busy! The children worked very diligently on their **Christmas gifts** for you - both in their designs and execution - and were so thrilled with them and excited to give them to you. We hope you will enjoy them for many years to come. You may have noticed that sewing projects occur in each different grade level of our program at MCH. Sewing, we have found, is an excellent way to develop fine motor skills, follow very new and generally unusual directions, and expand the ability to see and create something artistic in both color and design.

We had a great **field trip tour** of the festively decorated Victorian **McConaghy House**. It was a real eye-opener for the children, as they saw just how household life was conducted 150 years ago. Our excellent docents showed us each room in the house and brought it alive with stories of the people who lived there and by showing us many of the objects they used each day, and especially at Christmastime. By far the most popular room was "Archie's Room" where the children were able to dress up in Victorian children's clothes, play with Victorian toys, and have a tea party if they wished. It was hard to get them to leave. Thank you to the drivers who helped us to get there.

We were doubly fortunate to have not just one, but two terrific **field trips in December**. Our second was to see a performance of **Ballet Folklorico** and our very own Montessori alums, **Ariela Moreno** and **Jude Gallardo**, dancing with the company. It was a wonderful tour of Mexico, seeing the different styles of dancing and costumes from each region. A memorable trip indeed. Thank you to those who drove for this trip also.

Everyone's creative talents were delightfully stretched on another afternoon when **Kristin Rodriguez**, mother of Joy, brought us to the enchanting land of **Gingerbread Houses**! After the basic houses were handed out, which Kristin had so generously and lovingly made for each child, everyone went to the grand smorgasbord of candy delights and chose which candies would transform their house structures into magical designs of every sort imaginable - from castles to fairy houses and everything in between. What fun! A huge thank you to Kristin for this wonderful holiday experience.

The **Cultural Cookie Exchange** was great as always. By partaking in this experience of "tradition," it becomes yet another experience for the understanding and

growing realization of what "Time" is about. And speaking of "time," thank you for all the *time and effort* you put into it. We know (from our own experience!) how much work making the cookies is, but we can assure you it is well worth it. When we hear comments like "Now I know how the dough turns into bowties!" and "The dough felt so sticky but my grandma said that was just right" and "I could make the shape by just putting my finger in it" and on and on... We know these were experiences they will remember for a long time. The cookies were delicious and beautiful, and the children seemed so proud to share them. It was very sweet to hear them talk to each other during the party telling how much they liked each other's cookies. The Third Years were even talking during the days before about how much they were looking forward to what they had tasted from their friends' cookies last year, remembering many details about who made what and what they were like. Be assured, this experience makes a very big impression on them.

Before our Cookie Exchange and party, the children hosted an **Open House** for the Kindergarteners and First Years. This is what we consider "advanced Practical Life." Just as they learned "practical life" skills like carrying, pouring, grace and courtesy, etc. in Montessori Pre-School, here they learned through practice and experience how to be gracious hosts to guests. They each had a specific area and holiday activity in the room to explain to our young visitors and to also make them feel welcome in "our home" - including serving them refreshments. They were even able to give a tour to two fire fighters who happened to stop by to check our smoke alarms! The children were so excited about having guests; it was a wonderful experience. (The fire fighters also seemed to have a great time. ;)

UPCOMING EVENTS * * * *

We have one more big **writing project** in January. The children will be making their **Personal Timelines**, which is the third and last of the major writing projects for the semester. (#1 was the *Columbus Journal* and #2 is the Pilgrim "*Letters from the New World*" book.) The Personal Timeline is a continuation of our study of timelines in our History area. It is a tradition in Montessori Elementary for the children to annually make a Personal Timeline of their lives. It is a wonderful keepsake to have - to see how your child perceives his or her life each year. Upon completion, the Timelines will be on display in class for a while, and then will go home around the beginning of the 2nd Semester. More details about this project will be coming home next week.

Second and Third Years will begin **grammar lessons** around the end of the month, and will be learning **Verbs (2nds)** and **Adverbs (3rds)**. After the lesson, they should begin marking that part of speech when doing their Spelling homework sentences. We have been sending the corrected Spelling homework home each week so that you can see how your child is doing with mastery of the grammar parts of speech. Be sure to always look for it on Mondays.

For some **special math work**, the Second Years will start working with **telling time**. The Third Years will be moving to the end point of their work with money and making change. The last activities for money are "**purchasing items**" at "Safeway" (with practice being both a clerk and a customer) and finally a very fun "**Allowance Game**." Important and necessary **multiplication practice** will also occur.

We are finally going to be able to recite our poem **november sunset** this week and you will be given a recitation too. Your family can still catch some colorful sunsets - which are great to look at not only in November, but any time during the Winter months when sunset comes so early. Our **new poem is Robert Frost's Stopping By Woods On A Snowy Evening**. It's an especially wonderful poem for them to have in their heads and hearts if you take a trip to snow.

In the **Cultural Subjects** in History we will begin our study of the **Egyptian Civilization**. We will look at this ancient civilization just as we did the Cave Dwellers and Nomadic Peoples: through Montessori's "Fundamental Needs of People" and see how the Egyptians fulfilled those needs. This is always a favorite study for the children.

More in modern times in our **History** study, we will be discussing **the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** and the Civil Rights Movement in our country. There will be a number of excellent books for the children to read about Dr. King and also some books read to them. We will also see a movie about him.

Our **field trip** this month will be to the **California Academy of Sciences** in San Francisco. We are going specifically to see an outstanding exhibit now showing called "**Giants of Land and Sea**" which focuses on the unique and extraordinary plants, animals, and land on our own part of the Earth: Northern California. We are so fortunate to live here, and the children should understand why!

In the field of **Botany**, we will get our bulbs (actually-we will learn-"underground stems") into the ground since we ran out of time to do this planting in December. Then we wait.....until Spring! What will those dried-up, odd-shaped, brown stems bring?

Also, now that **Winter** is definitely here, please remember to have your child wear his or her MCH school sweater, sweatshirt, jacket, or hoodie for inside the classroom, as it is too cool inside the room to have only a short-sleeved polo shirt.

The end of January also brings **Report Cards**. As in the past they are not given with a conference unless of course you would like one. If you do, please contact us and we will be happy to set up an appointment time for you.

One last note to **Third Year parents**. It is now the time to begin the decision making process about where your child will be going for 4th Grade. To give you some information we hope will be helpful, Mary Anne will be having a special meeting for you on Wednesday evening, Jan. 16th. At that time we can discuss points for consideration in making that important next-school decision, and answering questions you may have, Another set of dates you may want to keep in mind is Jan. 27th thru Feb. 1st when Catholic schools have their annual Open Houses and visitations for prospective families during Catholic Schools Week. *Wherever* you are considering for your child, it is very important to visit the school, talk to the teachers, and observe a class in action to get a feel for whether that school is a good match for your child.

Sincerely,
Mary Anne and Toni

CALENDAR:

Wednesday, Jan 9th - Field Trip to CA Academy of Sciences, "Giants of Land and Sea"

Friday, Jan. 11th - Sharing Day - The children may bring something interesting they received as a gift; Book orders are due

Wednesday, Jan. 16th - 4th Grade Information Meeting for 3rd Year Parents, 7 p.m.

Sunday, Jan. 20th - Rare Celestial Event! Super Full Moon (moon closer to earth than usual), and Total Lunar Eclipse/Blood Moon (due to color during totality) Totality will be at 9:16 pm

Monday, Jan. 21st - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day: NO SCHOOL and NO DAY CARE

Thursday, Jan. 31st - First Semester ends; Report Cards

