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May 2009

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**Upcoming Events:**

- Apr. 30 Coffee with the Head 8:30 AM  
Victorian Farmhouse
- May 1 Meet the Sustainability Team:  
May Day Celebration 5:30 PM  
RSVP to Kelly
- May 8 •Celebratory Breakfast for Mothers/VIPs  
RSVP to Kelly
- Infant and Toddler Programs Closed
- May 20 Primary Annual Kindergarten Celebration
- May 22 Last Day of School

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
April	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

## Headlines from Oak Farm Montessori School

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### FROM JUDITH CUNNINGHAM, HEAD OF SCHOOL

**We Are All Responsible for A Proper Education We Owe That to Your Children and Our Students**  
*(inspired by an a column by Thomas Friedman)*

Over the past several years while many schools were watering down their curriculum or teaching to the test, Oak Farm has continuously worked hard to smarten up. That is our obligation to you and it is our obligation to our students. The results are measurable in that our students perform academically above their peers in public school and are emotionally and socially mature.

But is that measuring stick the right one to use?

The following is an excerpt from a column by Pulitzer Prize winning columnist Thomas Friedman.

Just a quick review: In the 1950s and 1960s, the U.S. dominated the world in K-12 education. We also dominated economically. In the 1970s and 1980s, we still had a lead, albeit smaller, in educating our population through secondary school, and America continued to lead the world economically, albeit with other big economies, like China, closing in. Today, we have fallen behind in both per capita high school graduates and their quality.

Friedman then summarizes:

... in the 2006 Program for International Student Assessment that measured the applied learning and problem-solving skills of 15-year-olds in 30 industrialized countries, the U.S. ranked 25th out of the 30 in math and 24th in science. That put

our average youth on par with those from Portugal and the Slovak Republic, rather than with students in countries that are more relevant competitors for service-sector and high-value jobs, like Canada, the Netherlands, Korea, and Australia.

Fourth-graders compared well on such global tests with countries such as Singapore. But high school kids lagged far behind, which means that “the longer American children are in school, the worse they perform compared to their international peers.”

There are millions of kids who are in modern suburban schools “who don’t realize how far behind they are,” said Matt Miller, one of the authors of the study Friedman quoted. “They are being prepared for \$12-an-hour jobs — not \$40 to \$50 an hour.”

At Oak Farm, your child’s education, which will provide the foundation for his or her future, is our responsibility. But it is a responsibility we share with you.

Dr. Montessori often said, “The parent is the first teacher of the child.” Our experience is that “The parent is also the last teacher of the child.” Let your child understand that you respect the importance of education. Share with him or her your thoughts about school and let him/her know that you are there for support.

Supporting your child’s education will be one of our topics at the next Coffee with the Head this Thursday right after drop-off in the Victorian Farmhouse. I hope you will be able to join us.

## OAK FARM MONTESSORI GOES GREEN: MEET THE SUSTAINABILITY TEAM ON MAY 1ST

Oak Farm's new Eco-Literacy Project was created to protect and utilize our land with two main goals in mind:

- To expand teaching beyond the classrooms and into the greater campus setting of the gardens, woodlands, wetlands, prairies, and conservation corridors.
- To "practice what we preach" by supporting "green" practices across the campus.

Please plan on joining us on May 1, 2009, from 5:30 - 7 PM for a potluck dinner and presentation on how we are building a sustainable community at Oak Farm Montessori.

5:30 PM	Potluck dinner (table service, coffee and water provided)
6:00 PM	Eco-literacy project presentation for parents (Victorian Farmhouse) Supervised games outside for children
6:30 p.m.	May pole, music, dancing, mingling, and bonfire outdoors

Please phone or email Kelly Elias [KElias@oakfarmschool.com](mailto:KElias@oakfarmschool.com) to RSVP by Wednesday April 29.

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## SPANISH LESSONS WRAP UP IN TODDLER AND PRIMARY CLASSROOMS

Hola. My name is Veronica Flores, and I am the Spanish teacher for Toddler and Primary. I have been teaching your children since the beginning of the school year. Since it is almost the end of the year, and I would like to let you know what your children have learned.

They have been working on numbers, colors, fruit, vegetables, animals, parts of the body, and shapes. During their lessons, we are conversing in Spanish and using basic, everyday words and phrases such as: good morning, yes, no, and what is your name?

I have enjoyed teaching your children, and I look forward to our time together next year to build upon their bilingual skills.

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## SCHOOL STORE ITEMS STILL AVAILABLE

We will be sending in our order for school-store items on Friday, May 1. This will ensure the items are received before the last day of school. If you have not already done so, please stop in to check out our selection of t-shirts, hoodies, and other one-of-a-kind Oak Farm items. Orders will be accepted at the main entrance of the Victorian Farmhouse until end of the day on Thursday, April 30th. Please contact Kelly Elias at [KElias@oakfarmschool.com](mailto:KElias@oakfarmschool.com) or 260-897-4270 with any questions.

## OAK FARM PARENT ORGANIZATION (OFPO) IN ACTION

Hello Fellow Parents,

I want to stay connected and share about the OFPO as it continues to develop, however, sometimes I don't know what to write. As you have questions about the OFPO, please email them to me at [belburton@gmail.com](mailto:belburton@gmail.com).

I will have more information about the developments of the OFPO later this spring and summer. We are currently doing some fine-tuning. I will let you know more as I know more. The main characteristic of the OFPO I want all everyone to remember is that this parent organization is *different*. We probably all have preconceived notions or personal experience with other parent organizations. Personally, I have those notions too and they bug me. When Lorene Dekko Salsbury, the school's founder, asked me to start a parent organization, we met several times, and neither of us wanted a "typical" parent organization. We didn't want that for the school, because they can be destructive, and I wanted to develop an organization of which I was willing to be an active member. I tend to avoid organizations where one person does it all because I have a life, and I don't want to be that person! I also like to support and encourage and I wanted to be a part of something with a positive, supportive motive. Oak Farm strives to be a model Montessori school. The OFPO also strives to be a model Montessori parent organization. The challenge is, we are "writing the book" on what a model parent organization looks like. We have researched other parent organizations, and while some have ideas for activities we may borrow, the over-all structure is quite different from what we are trying to form. Our goal is to be efficient and effective since most of our households have single or two working parents. We don't have time to "do it all" and we want to be smart about our involvement.

If you have any contact with highly effective and positive parent organizations, I'd like to know about them so we can learn from them. There are many that are quite good, but we want to be a notch above that. (Please note, we will probably mess up once and a while during the learning process, but I want you to know our intentions!) This is one reason it's hard to communicate exactly what the OFPO is all about in detail at this point. Those details haven't been figured out yet, and we have little examples from which to draw.

The main aspect of the OFPO I want you to remember at this point is that it's *different*. We want to be a model parent organization, highly effective in support of our children's school. If you have any ideas or questions, please email me at the above address.

### Volunteer Opportunities

By Rachel Scheidler & Joni Dietsch

OFPO Volunteer Coordinators

### May Day Celebration

Volunteers are needed to plan, coordinate, and supervise outdoor games for all children attending the May Day Celebration on May 1. These games will take place from 6:00 - 6:30 PM, which is after the potluck dinner and before the bonfire and dancing.

### Arts Festival Preparation

This year's Afternoon with The Arts Festival will be held on May 19th immediately after school in the Oak Farm Arts Center. The festival is an important event that showcases several programs offered by Oak Farm. To prepare for this event, we need volunteers to help get the Arts Center ready. You do not need to commit to all hours or days, but if you can offer some time on any of the following days, reply either to Heather Miller or to [ofpovolunteer@gmail.com](mailto:ofpovolunteer@gmail.com)

- **Friday, May 1 (12:30pm – 4:00)** Help students and staff unload art boards, cover art boards with back ground paper, sort student artwork, and other general tasks.
- **Thursday, May 7 (1:00pm – 3:00)** Assist Lower Elementary students to set up their individual displays for the art show. If you have a step stool that you could bring from home, please do so.
- **Wednesday, May 13 (12:30pm – 3:00)** Assist Upper Elementary and Middle School students to set up their individual displays for the art show. If you have a step stool that you could bring from home, please do so.

Any individuals interested in these volunteer opportunities or wanting more information may send an email to: [ofpovolunteer@gmail.com](mailto:ofpovolunteer@gmail.com) Thank you to all of those who have volunteered already and will do so in the future. Your time and efforts are greatly appreciated.