

August 23, 2011

Volume 5, Issue 1

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Upcoming Events

Aug. 25 Coffee with the Head 8:30 AM
 Victorian Farmhouse
 Aug. 30 Soccer vs. Lakewood Park 5PM (Home)
 Aug. 31 Updated Webforms Submission Deadline
 Sep. 1 Monthly Tuition Installment Due
 Sep. 1 Soccer vs. Bethany Christian 5 PM (Home)
 Sep. 2 Infant and Toddler Classrooms Closed
 Sep. 5 **SCHOOL CLOSED** – Labor Day

August 2011

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

Headlines from Oak Farm Montessori School

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Our mission is to provide a Montessori environment that inspires children to reach their potential through meaningful work.

FROM JUDITH CUNNINGHAM, HEAD OF SCHOOL

Dear Parents,

I am filled with excitement and anticipation because of all the opportunities, new experiences, and challenges that the 2011-2012 school year will bring to all of us.

As I move in to my fifth year at Oak Farm Montessori School, I continue to be inspired by the dedication of our community of parents and faculty. The partnership, common goals, and values shared within our community are fundamental to our students reaching their unique potential and to providing them with strong models of ethical and moral stewardship. Our children need our community to work together to provide an optimal learning environment and quality Montessori experience. I am looking forward to our joining together for another year of growth in every positive meaning of the word.

As part of our faculty’s professional development this past year, we studied the incredibly positive impact of physical activity on brain development. As Dr. Ratey, Harvard Professor and author of the best-selling book *Spark*, wrote, “Consistent exercise and certain types of specific exercises, can both temporarily and permanently affect the way your brain is able to focus, its ability to deal with stress and anxiety, and its ability to learn...Exercise is like fertilizer for the brain...it’s so good, it’s like Miracle Grow.”

Several of us traveled to Naperville High School in Illinois, where one study took place, to verify the impact of their daily physical education program. During our three-hour visit we witnessed focused,

engaged students in all the classes, and calm and order during passing in the halls; we saw no obese students and encountered only ten overweight students in their high school of 3,000. Importantly, Naperville students’ academic performance has shown great improvement. In 1999 Naperville’s eighth graders finished first in the world in science, just ahead of Singapore on the international standards test called TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study). The test included students from 38 countries. In math, they placed sixth – behind only Singapore, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Japan.

As a result of our evaluative study, Oak Farm students will all have daily physical activity. Elementary and middle-school students will enjoy tracking their level of aerobic activity with heart-rate monitors while learning the value of personal fitness. As a learning activity, they will also be able to monitor their progress in academic areas based on their level of physical activity. Look forward to hearing from Andrea Deihl, our elementary and middle-school PE specialist, who will keep us informed of the implementation and results of this new component of our curriculum.

Because parents who make the choice to utilize a Montessori education are sometimes worried about how their children will fare when faced with a transition to traditional school, here is an important statistic we want to share with you. As you know or will realize shortly, Montessori schools do not give

LETTER FROM JUDITH

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grade-driven report cards because grades in themselves are seen as an inadequate measure of a child's growth and performance. However, to prepare our middle-school students for high school, we do utilize rubrics for self-improvement, give percentages on tests and quizzes, and administer the Stanford Achievement Test. Our middle-school students took this national achievement test last March and scored, as a group, at the 87% level demonstrating that they performed at or better than 87% of other students nationally who took this test. That level of performance provides a clear benchmark as to the academic value of their Oak Farm Montessori education and is an indicator of how well they will continue to do when transitioning to another academic institution.

First Day and Separation

The first two weeks are "the most important time in the school year for all children," says University of Kentucky professor Thomas Guskey in his column in *The School Administrator*. "What happens during this critical period pretty much determines how the rest of the year will go." Students return from summer vacation filled with positive expectations and it is our role to meet them. At Oak Farm, the focus of the first school day is on the emotional and social development of the students: as individuals, in a community of friends and learners.

Sometimes parents feel a sense of separation anxiety on these first days. As parents, we need to strike a balance between being thoughtful and being over protective. "Some parents behave in such a way that says to the child, 'You need me to be safe in the world,'" explains Dr. Annette Mont, a Certified Child Therapist MSW who holds a Masters in Counseling and hosts a parenting workshop on a variety of topics including coping with separation anxiety.

"Smart parenting means keeping your child safe without making the child feel he or she is unsafe without you." She says that a constant message of fear can have serious effects on a child's development. Children may suffer from feelings of inadequacy, phobias, or depression. They may be teased by kids in school for being a mommy's boy or crybaby because of an intense attachment to the parent.

"I had a case where the parents said to the child that the world is not safe without them. They didn't let the child go on school trips or down the block to visit friends. As this child grew older, he began acting out in extreme ways because of his feelings of inadequacy," says the good Doctor.

From this we learn that it's important to help your child develop a sense of independence and self-confidence. Empower your children by giving them choices and letting them make decisions. "Parents who don't do this are saying to the child 'Mommy needs to be there, and you can't get along without her.' You have to give children a sense of empowerment so that they are capable of making choices. "If a child is incapable of making choices how can he or she leave your side?" asks Mont.

Back to School Do's and Don'ts

Don't

- Talk to her teacher about her feelings in front of your child
- Pressure her to make friends. Instead ask her what was fun about school
- Dwell on your child's negative feelings or over react
- Cry when you drop off the child
- Linger at the observation windows

LETTER FROM JUDITH

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Back to School Do's and Don'ts

Do

- Smile and reassure your child when you take her to school
- Walk away if the teacher needs to assist her into the classroom
- Send love notes in her lunch box and pictures of her family
- Get to know other moms
- Set up play dates with classmates
- Establish a peaceful, happy morning routine
- Empower your child with choices to learn independence

At Oak Farm Montessori we take every effort to not only support your child's academic achievement, but also his or her emotional and social growth by guidance, mentoring, and setting an example. At our next Coffee with the Head, on Thursday, August 25, we will be discussing How to Support Your Child's Growth and other topics of interest. I look forward to you joining us.

This is going to be an exciting year and I am pleased to say, on behalf of the staff and faculty, "welcome" to our new families and "welcome back" to our many returning families.



Our thanks to those of you who have already logged in to Parents Web, a feature of our new school management system, and have reviewed and updated your family's information. Please note that the deadline for submission of this information is August 31. If you need assistance with Parents Web, please contact Laura Pounds by phoning the school or emailing lpounds@oakfarmschool.com.

Our weekly newsletter is available for viewing from Parents Web; simply click on **Latest NEWSLETTER** on the Parents Web main screen.

A screenshot of the Parents Web interface. The top header includes a logo of a stack of books with a red apple, a green-tinted photo of a child, and the text 'OF-IN Oak Farm Montessori School' with a 'Parents Web' link. Below the header, there's a 'Welcome Back: Laura Pounds' section with a 'Logout' button. The main content area is divided into three columns. The left column has 'School Information' with links for 'School Home', 'Calendar', and 'Web Forms'. The middle column is titled 'School Announcements and Calendar' and shows 'Today's Items' and 'Tomorrow's Items' with dates like '8/23/2011 - Lower Elementary Returning Students Begin'. The right column is 'School Calendar - Dates To Note' with a list of dates and events such as '8/22/2011 - 2011-2012: T1 Begin', '9/5/2011 - Labor Day', and '10/26/2011 - Parent-Teacher Conferences'. A red circle highlights a 'Latest NEWSLETTER' button in the bottom left corner of the interface.

Light the Night



The Oak Farm Acorns

Dear Parents, Students, Teachers, and Staff,

We would like to invite you to join our Light the Night team which will be raising both funds and awareness for leukemia and lymphoma. We are walking in memory of our school's Founder, Lorene Salsbery, and in honor of our friend and fellow classmate, Allison Burton. Allison was recently diagnosed with a form of Leukemia. We wish her the best and hope she gets better soon.

The LLS (Leukemia & Lymphoma Society) was founded in 1949 when a diagnosis of leukemia, lymphoma, and myeloma was almost always fatal. Thanks to innovative research, funded in part by the LLS, the survival rates for a few blood cancers have doubled or some even tripled. So it's important to donate and raise money so someday leukemia, lymphoma, and myeloma will be 100% curable.

Over 912,000 Americans are battling leukemia, lymphoma, and myeloma. Every 4 minutes someone new is diagnosed and every 10 minutes someone dies. Leukemia causes more deaths than any other cancer in young adults and children under 20. Lymphoma is the most common blood cancer, and the survival rate for myeloma is only 37%.

Our team is called the Oak Farm Acorns, and we want you to be part of our team! Our captains are Jordan (7th year), Ben (5th year), and Emma (3rd year). Our adult co-captain is Natalie Axel. There are several ways in which you can participate. If you would like to be an active team member and help raise money, please contact us ASAP at natalie.axel@gmail.com or (260) 343-8270 for more information! If you are interested in making a donation, the captains will be speaking to their classes and will have information to hand out to those classmates who would like to participate. The money raised will help provide assistance programs for patients and families. It will also help educate healthcare professionals on the latest medical advances and research. The Light the Night Walk will be held on September 27, 2011. Please consider walking with us starting at 7 PM at East Noble High School in Kendallville, IN. It will be a great opportunity to show the community what we can do!

We hope that you will join us to honor Allison as she bravely fights her battle. Lorene believed in giving back and so do we! She made such a difference in so many lives. We hope we have inspired you to walk. Thank You!

Jordan
Middle School 7th year



Ben (center) and Jordan (right) will participate in the Light the Night Walk in honor of Allison (left) and in memory of Lorene Salsbery. The walk is on September 27 in Kendallville.