

September 19, 2011

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**Upcoming Events**

Sep. 19	Cross Country vs. Fremont (Home) 5 PM
Sep. 19	Soccer vs. Bethany Christian (Away) 5 PM
Sep. 22	Parent Education Event: The Great Lessons Green Farmhouse 6 - 7:30 PM Please RSVP for event and child care
Sep. 22	Cross Country vs. Prairie Heights (Away) 5 PM
Sep. 26	Soccer vs. Garrett (Home) 5 PM
Sep. 27	Soccer vs. Prairie Heights (Home) 5 PM
Sep. 30	Infant and Toddler Classrooms Closed

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				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	

## Headlines from Oak Farm Montessori School

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[www.oakfarm.org](http://www.oakfarm.org)

260-897-4270

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

### FROM JUDITH CUNNINGHAM, HEAD OF SCHOOL

#### Your Child's Brain Development and Montessori

Each day we see the positive effects of Montessori education on our children. We witness the strengthening of the children's fine motor skills, the sharpening of their reasoning skills, and their increasing independence and interdependence through daily interaction with their teachers and the prepared Montessori environment.

How does the Montessori Method accomplish this?  
Lori Bourne in *Montessori for Everyone* explains:

Pediatric neuropsychologist and Montessori parent Steve Hughes believes that Montessori curriculum triggers specific brain functions that greatly aid cognitive development. In fact, he refers to Montessori as "the original brain-based method of learning."

Dr. Hughes completed his PhD in clinical psychology at the University of Minnesota and his post-doctoral fellowship in pediatric neuropsychology at the University of Minnesota Medical School, where he joined the faculty of the Division of Pediatric Clinical Neurosciences in 2001.

In his clinical work, he has studied the neurodevelopmental benefits of classical Montessori education. He gives presentations at Montessori and educational conferences on the

connection between Montessori and brain development. At his website, [Good at Doing Things](#), he shares information from his lectures. He has a lot to say about Montessori and the brain.

#### The Hand-to-Brain Connection

In [this article](#) from *Public School Montessorian*, Hughes gives an example of the task of learning to read, a basic building block of education for all children regardless of schooling method. Reading requires three separate brain functions: capturing visual symbols, decoding each symbol's sound, and assigning each symbol meaning. While each of these brain functions can be taught separately, Montessori materials such as the Sandpaper Letters and Moveable Alphabet encourage simultaneous use of each function, resulting in neurological networks that coordinate reading.

Hughes also focuses on the tactile methods of Montessori as they relate to brain development, asserting that the hands are a child's strongest link to the brain. When motor movements are repeated they become templates in the brain that serve as a starting point for new experiences.

Because Montessori emphasizes hands-on learning, children are able to master information more quickly and easily than when conventional educational methods are used.

## LETTER FROM JUDITH

*Continued from page 1*

The repetition of activities, multisensory materials, and self-guided learning common to the Montessori classroom create the perfect “recipe” for human brain development.

It is interesting to note that much of Maria Montessori’s early work in education lay in the treatment of special needs children. Today, intervention methods for special needs students closely resemble Montessori methods, suggesting perhaps that what Montessori has been doing for over 100 years is extremely effective in creating and strengthening neural pathways.

### **Mirror Neurons**

Physical movements are not the only method of brain development supported by Montessori education. Maria Montessori spoke of the “absorbent mind” of a child being like a sponge literally soaking up what they see and do. Although at the time she had little actual neurological research to back up her claim, a new discovery in the area of neurology, called [mirror neurons](#), goes hand in hand with her hypotheses.

Mirror neurons are found in the frontal lobe of humans and other species, including primates and birds, and fire when an animal or human performs an action or when that animal or human observes another animal of the same species performing the same action.

While research in the area of mirror neurons is ongoing, scientists believe that they show the importance of learning by example or imitation. The Montessori classroom, with its presentations, its multi-age groupings, and repetition of work is the perfect place for children to observe as well as act.

A child who watches another child move the Pink Tower blocks is having neural pathways strengthened even though they are not moving the blocks themselves. There is also evidence that mirror neurons come into play in a social context, teaching response to emotions and appropriate ways to solve social problems.

Dr. Hughes’ work provides the scientific proof for the Montessori Method. While Dr. Montessori developed her materials without the benefits of today’s technology, through observation she knew that a child’s fine motor skills, shape and size discrimination, and hand/eye coordination were being strengthened through this work. Like Dr. Hughes, Maria Montessori was a scientist before she was an educator. Bourne writes:

She didn’t guess at the materials she created; she observed, made changes based on her observations, and observed some more. She let the children teach her rather than pushing her own ideas on them.

The fundamental touchstones of educating through Montessori – preparing a natural and supporting environment, and adapting that environment for a child to fulfill his or her greatest potential – have proven to be more than helpful educational theory. The Montessori method holds a proven place in creating neural pathways that facilitate cognitive development.

At Oak Farm, we adhere to the Montessori philosophy because of its proven success with our students; however we also keep abreast of current research in brain development and academic theory. It is gratifying to see that both research and academic theory are supporting the Montessori philosophy and the work we have been doing within the Oak Farm community for the past twelve years.

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## CROSS COUNTRY TEAM RACE WELL IN FIRST MEET

**By Marta Wysong, Cross Country Coach**

Oak Farm’s cross country team competed in their first meet of the season last Tuesday against Fremont and Eastside Middle Schools. The Falcons raced well, especially since it was many of the athletes’ first time in a cross country race. The girls’ team finished second with a few top-10 finishes, including Desiree (4th place) and Erinrose (10th place). The boys ran hard as well, with Peyton (3rd place) leading the way for the Falcons followed closely by Ben (4th place). The cross country course is 3 kilometers long, or 1.9 miles. The Falcons race against Fremont again on Monday, September 19 for their only home meet of the season. Come out and cheer on our runners at our home course!

## **SEPTEMBER 22 PARENT EDUCATION EVENT: THE GREAT LESSONS AND THE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY PROGRAM**

On Thursday, September 22, 2011 from 6-7:30 PM, the lower- and upper-elementary teachers will collaboratively present The Great Lessons, a unique, unifying, principal component of the Montessori elementary curriculum. These stories/lessons are designed to awaken a child's imagination and curiosity so that she is struck with the wonder of creation, thrilled with new ideas, and awed by the inventiveness and innovation that is part of the human spirit. The stories provide the cohesive infrastructure of the elementary curriculum because they cover all of time, from the creation of the universe to modern civilizations and our inventions.

Come to the Green Farmhouse and listen to the First Great Lesson, work with the demonstration materials, and wonder how your imagination can strike your interests in knowing more.

Please RSVP to Lisa by 3:30 PM on Wednesday, September 21 for this event. Child care will be provided for our Primary through middle-school-age students. Child care will be held in the Victorian Farmhouse at a cost of \$5 per child. RSVP's for child care and payment must be made by 3:30 PM on September 21 to Lisa Rimmel.

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## **HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE FLU VIRUS BY PARTICIPATING IN OAK FARM'S FLUMIST-VACCINE CLINIC**

**By Jillian Chaulk, RN**

The FluMist vaccine (a gentle nasal spray) is once again being offered free of charge to all Oak Farm students in cooperation with the Noble County Health Department and Parkview Noble Hospital. Each student will bring home a packet of information including a consent form. Those who are interested and eligible (see requirements posted in packet) need to return the signed consent no later than October 7, 2011. The vaccine clinic is scheduled for Tuesday, November 1 at 9 AM.

We encourage all students to take part in the FluMist-vaccine clinic. We have a student currently undergoing chemotherapy whose siblings attend the school. Our goal is to keep all students at Oak Farm and this family free from the flu this season. Please sign your consent form to help make this happen! Contact Jillian Chaulk, RN with any further questions by phoning the school and requesting extension 25201. *Please note: Jillian a part-time nurse at Oak Farm this year. Her hours are Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 8:30 AM - 12:30 PM.*

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## **VISION AND HEARING SCREENING TO TAKE PLACE AT OAK FARM THIS FALL**

**By Jillian Chaulk, RN**

Oak Farm will be offering vision and hearing screening to all students this year. Vision will be screened with a device known as Spot ([www.pediavision.com](http://www.pediavision.com)) and hearing will be screened with an Earscan Audiometer.

Vision screening will be held on Tuesday, September 27 beginning at 9 AM. Hearing screening will take place on Friday, September 23, Thursday, September 29, and Friday, September 30. The hearing screenings will be given by our Speech Therapist, Sarah Holland. Students will bring home more information this week. If you do not want your child to be screened, please sign and return the appropriate paperwork.

Please contact Jillian Chaulk, RN with any further questions by phoning the school and requesting extension 25201. *Please note: Jillian a part-time nurse at Oak Farm this year. Her hours are Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 8:30 AM - 12:30 PM.* Sarah Holland, our Speech Therapist, can be reached at school on Fridays.

## NEWS FROM THE TODDLER I CLASSROOM

By Lori Zacharias, Toddler I Teacher

The Toddler I class has gotten off to a great start for 2011-12 school year with taking adventurous walks in the woods. The children are learning the daily routine which includes learning to separate from Mom and Dad, use a work rug, and toilet independently.



The students are hungry to work and often aren't even ready to go outside at our normally scheduled time. As educators, we know the importance of getting our children outside. Two articles found on-line—"Mom's right: Kids need to get outside, play . . ." *Star Tribune*, March 27, 2003 and Jon Henley's "Why our Children need to get outside . . ." dated August 16, 2010—give truth to the knowledge we already know:

Too much indoors can cause: obesity, depression, ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyper Disorder), and Nature Deficit Disorder.

Daily doses of the outdoors promote: better learners, less stress, increased attention spans, trouble shooters or problem solvers, self-discipline, self-awareness, creativeness, physical, emotional and mental well-being.

We all love to be around people who carry the characteristics of what the outdoors can promote. What a blessing it can be for all of us!

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## MIDNIGHT IN PARIS - WINTER WONDERLAND 2012

By Jillian Chaulk, OFPO Representative

Please join us for our first Winter Wonderland meeting on Wednesday, September 21, 2011 at 6:30 PM. Amy Dankert will be hosting the meeting at her residence. Her address is 4321 Bandera Cove, Fort Wayne, IN, 46845. We will be providing light snacks and refreshments.

We are looking to have an auctioneer to host a live auction. If any families know an auctioneer we would love to contact someone in the Oak Farm community before turning to an outside source. Please email me at [jillchaulk@gmail.com](mailto:jillchaulk@gmail.com).

### French Trivia and Facts

Eiffel Tower nickname : Iron Lady

The Eiffel Tower was built in 1889 located on the Parc du Champ de Mars in Paris.

Is the Eiffel Tower ever painted?? Yes. The Eiffel Tower is painted every 7 years and takes 18 months to paint. It requires about 50-60 tons of paint every 7 years.

How do you say Eiffel Tower in French? The Eiffel Tower in French is la Tour Eiffel. The word tour means "tower" in French and it is pronounced pretty much like the English word of the same spelling.

Top girls names in France: Emma, Jade, Lea, Manon, Chloe

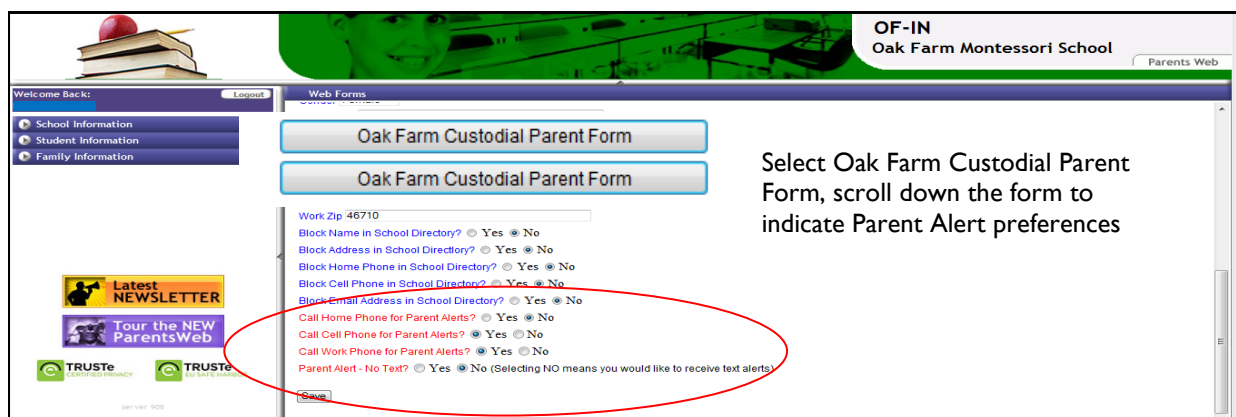
Top boys names in France: Lucas, Nathan, Enzo, Louis, Mathis

## NEW PARENT ALERT SYSTEM TO BE TESTED SOON

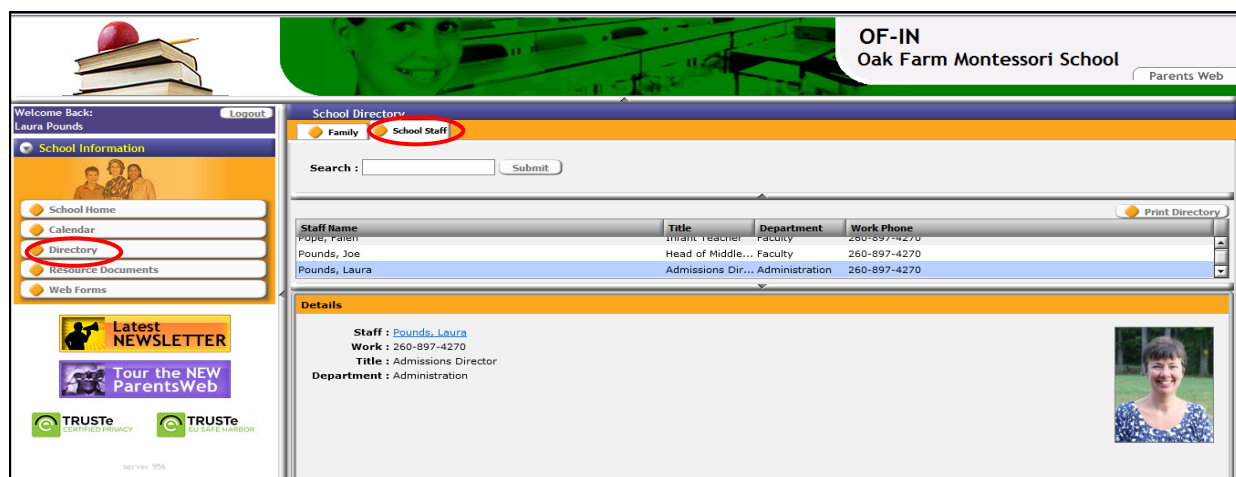


Our new school-information system, Renweb, offers Oak Farm a Parent Alert system. This system can be activated to provide parents information about the school. Oak Farm will be able to provide a voice recorded message and a text message to make parents aware of a school delay or closing.

In each parent's information found in the "Oak Farm Custodial Parent" web form on Parents Web, you will see four Parent Alert Options in red that are used to select how you prefer to be notified. The system defaults to the parent's cell phone number and sending text alerts. If this isn't the way you want to be contacted, you will need to edit your information on Parents Web by logging in and selecting Web Forms>Family Demographic Form>Oak Farm Custodial Parent Form. Each parent listed must be edited individually. We will be testing the new Parent Alert system in October. Watch later newsletters for more information.



Oak Farm's **School Staff** directory is now available for viewing from Parents Web; simply click on **Directory** and select the **School Staff** tab at the top of the adjacent screen. Double click on any faculty member to obtain more information including title, an email link, and a photo.



If you need assistance with Parents Web, please contact Laura Pounds by phoning the school or emailing [lpounds@oakfarmschool.com](mailto:lpounds@oakfarmschool.com).