

Alumni Newsletter

April 2009

¶ Thirty Year Reunion
1978-2008

REFLECTIONS

Dorothy Zografi

I feel as though I personally visited with each and every one of you, when, this past summer I spent hours compiling my files of former families and the names, ages, and years attended of your children, and entered these into an Excel Data Base. As I “traveled” through the years from the time I became affiliated with MCM in 1978 as a teacher, and later as owner/administrator, I envisioned a 5 year, 9 year or 12 year old, depending on years at the school, and projected to asking myself, “how old each one of you is today”. I visualized faces with each name entered and in this way 280 MCMS alumni passed before my eyes.

I also continue to have the experiences of “bumping into” some of you in various places about town and to learn that your children’s and family’s years at MCMS lived on in importance and in your memories many years later. How I love hearing about the lives of those of you who are now teen-agers, young adults, in college, married with children, schools attended(ing) and careers spawned. To realize that a Montessori played a role in shaping so many lives is most gratifying.

I’ve been “retired” since 2006. “Moving on” was not as difficult as it might have been since Mary Lee Gleason, who had been serving as Asst. Administrator for three years prior to my retirement, was extremely qualified and well prepared to

step into this role, now termed Head of School. In 2007 I began a tenure serving on the Board and, subsequently, some Committees, to provide a historical perspective for the evolving Board as it was moving forward into a “new era”.

My vision for this Newsletter is a result of my participation in MCMS at a very important crossroads in its 37 year history, which I wish to share with all of you. The families who attended our school since 1978 (where my records begin) are this “history” and, also, part of the “future”.

Consequently I wish to share briefly about our “history”, where we are “today”, and then glimpse into the “future”. Please stay with me through this journey while thinking about the years and ways you were involved, your children during those earlier years, and how MCMS is very much the same, but also how it has entered a new (to coin a Maria Montessori term) *Stage of Development*. Just as the developing child needs to have a positive relationship with changing environments and situations to succeed, so does our school in its journey into the 21st century. At the conclusion of this communication I will recommend “effortless” ways you can remain part of our “story” and thank you in advance for your time and interest

MCMS: Past, Present, Future

Past

Madison Central Montessori School was founded in 1972 by owner/director Carol Alver. Dorothy Zografis replaced Carol in the classroom in 1978, when Carol became a full time Montessori consultant, and became owner/administrator in 1984, though she continued to be a Primary Directress until 1989. Over the 37 years of its history MCMS was located at Hoyt School from 1975-91 and West Beltline Highway from 1991 to date.

Present

At the West Beltline Highway location programs were added and physical space was renovated and expanded to grow from two Primary classrooms to what we have today; three Primary classrooms (ages 3-6), two Lower Elementary classrooms (ages 6-9), one Upper Elementary classroom (ages 9-12) and one Adolescent Program classroom (ages 12-14), with a total capacity for 140 students. Due to space limitations we have yet to realize our vision for reviving our Toddler Program.

Future

In 2002 we were informed that the State wanted to build/improve the Hwy 151/Verona Road/Beltline Corridor, a major undertaking, with a consequence that our building at 4337 West Beltline

Highway would be sacrificed and demolished. Just as we were preparing for that eventuality, we learned that the project was put on hold for an indefinite time (“at least 20 years”), due to lack of funds, so we relaxed. Meanwhile, in 2006, to address the need for more space for our growing programs, which now included the second Lower Elementary classroom, we leased then vacant commercial space from an adjacent business, and had it remodeled to be the new home for our Upper Elementary and Adolescent Programs.

However, the need to do something about the problematic Interchange sent the State back to the drawing board and the previously tabled larger project is now divided into three smaller phases. Phase I is scheduled to begin in 2013, and our building is once again on the chopping block.

Consequently we are preparing for this eventuality. In addition to the magnitude of the work and commitment which has become a large priority for our very active and energetic volunteer parents, the Board formed a Site Committee. *We will be sharing a great deal more about the progress in this area because we must find a “new home” soon, with the work beginning now, so we can have a smooth transition sometime around 2012 to a currently unknown location and building*

Administration: Past, Present, Future

Dorothy Zografi was Administrator from 1984 until her retirement in 2006 and is well known to most of our alumni. Since her retirement she has been on the MCMS Board with a strong interest in the Alumni Association and staying connected to our families and history.

Mary Lee Gleason, our current Head of School served as an Administrator and Assistant to the Head of School from 2004 to 2006, and Head of School from 2006 to this year. However, last November Mary Lee submitted her resignation, effective July 1, 2009. Mary Lee is very well known to the school and will be missed. She was the first teacher in our Elementary Program beginning in 1992 and continued in that position until her daughter Abby was born in 1995. Over the years Mary Lee remained involved and committed, serving in just about every capacity, and teaching position, making her well qualified for her tenure as Head of School. Mary Lee cites “changing needs of her family” as her reason for leaving at this time. This was a difficult decision for Mary Lee noting how MCMS has been a vital part of her life for the last 17 years. The parents and staff will certainly miss her but know she will not be far away even as she steps down from this commanding responsibility.

Introducing our new Head of School

We are very happy to introduce our new **Head of School, Vicki McCarthy** who will join us in July. Vicki has been involved with children in educational setting for more than sixteen years in Montessori schools in Milwaukee and California.

When our Parent Board received word last September of Mary Lee’s plan to resign at the end of the 2008-09 school year members formed subcommittees to approach the daunting task of seeking out candidates to fill the position of our new Head of School. The Board recognized that the school was going to be faced with many challenges in the near future that required special leadership for navigating us through unknown territory (See MCMS Future). It was also recognized that any Head of School for MCMS had to also be Montessori Trained, have experience in Montessori classrooms, and have demonstrated Administrative skills and experience. Since we are very protective of and passionate about MCMS we were also seeking someone who would recognize and be enthusiastic about advancing our valued history. Though these were the ideal goals, the Board realistically wondered if we could find a candidate that could answer to our job description.

Well we did after a 5 month carefully coordinated search. Our prime candidate Vicki McCarthy enthusiastically accepted our offer and shared “MCMS is an incredible school with a dedicated and committed staff. I am enthusiastic, hard working, and prepared to contribute my knowledge to the school, its faculty and its families in order to keep MCMS on its current path of excellence.”

You will be able to read more about Vicki McCarthy in our MCMS Alumni Blog beginning in April.

Parent Board: Key to the Future

Pivotal to the future of the school is the energy and remarkable commitment of our current Parent Board. Parent Board President, Laura Anderson best summarizes the vision of the Board in the following statement.

Our Parent Board has evolved into a very pivotal group of committed parents who serve on committees and are devoting hours to addressing needs and priorities for not only a continuously growing school, but for a school that must find a new home and be ready to move in the near future. Part of this reality is within our ability to control and part is subject to known and unknown forces that are out of our control. It is the part that is within our control that parents are addressing in commendable ways. The amazing teamwork among the Board members themselves and in relation to the parent community makes the work we do meaningful and fun.

Laura Anderson, President

Alumni Association: Past, Present, Future

Until this time all communications with our Alumni has been in the form of Newsletters, as is the case with this Newsletter. Well, all that is changing thanks to Amy Jester, Board Member and current parent who has volunteered to steer our efforts into the 21st century by using a MCMS Alumni Blog.

However to be successful we need YOU. It is as easy as going to your - computer. Read on !!!

- Beginning April 1st Go ONLINE and type in WWW.MCMSAlumni.org to receive the latest alumni news and updates.
- Sign up on the blog to receive updates by e-mail or through your RSS Feed Reader.
- Not only will you be able to receive our information through your e-mail but you will be able to respond to our news or share your news.

For additional information and/or to share your information and comments please contact a member of the Alumni Committee.

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