

Raintree Montessori School

October Newsletter

Thursday, October 1, 2015.....Silent Journey 2015, Taiko Drums, Odyssey 2015, The Fantastic Book Fair & More

Dear Parent,

What a wonderful group of people joined us for the Silent Journey. As we went from building to building, I heard someone say, "Can we have a weekend retreat here?" Another wrote in his evaluation, "Oh, no...6 hours, I don't know if this is going to be worth it. (It totally was!)" Participants lingered longer in classrooms, and the discussions following the journeys found parents comparing Montessori with their own school experiences. Inside find excerpts from the evaluations along with some photos which are also on Facebook and our bulletin board. If you participated this year, thank you for devoting those 6 hours. We had a great time sharing Montessori with you.

The fall is always busy with potlucks, parent nights, a book fair and more, and that's just the scheduled events, but probably the most important are those that are not planned, the students-generated projects; this is the essence of a Montessori school. Every collaboration, Going Out, research project, bake sale, act of kindness, soup sale, micro-economy and more set the stage for the kind of people our students will become; these opportunities build character, work ethic, compassion, grit, kindness, all ways to see the world through the eyes of other human beings. The discussion around these "soft skills" has been a hot topic for several years, and now the Kansas State Board of Education is taking a look at how to incorporate these important skills into the core curriculum. See **Kansas Citizens** inside.

The Erdkinder embarked on their fall odyssey last month traveling to the Ozarks where they kayaked down the Niangua River, explored Bridal Cave, hiked through the Hahatonka State Park and explored a castle ruin. Every odyssey has obstacles to overcome; last year it was a thunderstorm with a horse invasion at the campsite. This year it was getting lost on the hike. But real life is filled with obstacles, and learning how to deal with challenges builds character and strengthens the Erdkinder community. (Read more and see photos inside.)

September 21 was International Peace Day, and several years ago, Montessori schools around the world sang "Light a Candle for Peace" in a continuous sing-along. Each school was given a specific time to sing,

wrapping the world in a song about peace.

"Light a Candle" has become a Raintree tradition, something we sing at a celebration in January to honor Dr.

Martin Luther King, Jr. This year on International Peace Day, Ann Anderson asked her students to devote part of their day to creating a peace project. It could be a poem (Ann's students memorize, or write poetry each week), a poster, an essay, play, anything to celebrate peace. A few weeks ago, Claire Murphy came to my office with a poem she had written called "Silence," and she proceeded not to read the poem to me, but to sing it. I was stunned by her beautiful voice and the verses she had written. Last Monday, Willoughby Lam shared her peace project with me, a song called "Peace." Both the lyrics and the melody brought tears to my eyes. Afterward we talked about the verses and what they meant, about the Syrians escaping from war, trying to find a home. I have been humming the chorus ever since. "Peace won't you find me, carry me home. Peace won't you..."

When you get as old as I am, you become impatient. You want order, civility at the least, especially when the world seems filled with disorder and chaos. Maybe it's the 24-hour news cycle, the in-your-face Twitter feeds, the discourteous repartee so common these days. What kind of world are we leaving our children, our grandchildren? And then I think of our students. I could fill this newsletter with the acts of kindness they perform, the poetry they write, the causes they champion.

Friday Keith watched as an older primary student age 5, helped a younger classmate as he struggled to get on his shoes in the hallway. Watching from a distance, the older boy approached the little child, put his arm around him and said, "I'll help you," as he carefully slipped on the little one's shoes and showed him how to tie them.

These small acts of kindness happen every day, in every classroom. Yes, sometimes, children misbehave; they are children after all, but it is more common to witness what Keith did. That's the kind of world I want to leave in my wake. "Peace won't you find me, carry me home..." indeed.





Upper Elementary To Tall Oaks

Our upper elementary students will spend two days in the great outdoors at Tall Oaks, an outdoor educational center located on 350 acres near Linwood, Kansas. This year the students will get instruction in archery, participate in a ropes course, and other outdoor activities in addition to arts/crafts lessons, cooking over a campfire and enjoying a hayrack ride. Lisa Ryan's class went September 10 and 11, Ann Anderson's class will go October 1 and 2, Rose Bringus' class will go October 15 and 16 and Kathy's, October 22 and 23. Here's to great adventures ahead for our elementary students.



ONE WORLD TAIKO

Unforgettable Performance at Raintree

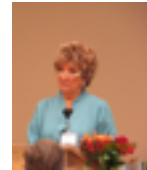
Taiko means "drum" in Japanese and One World Taiko is a professional Japanese drum ensemble that performed at Raintree last month. One World Taiko's music is drawn from Japan's tradition of lively festival drumming along with their own creative rhythms, arrangements and choreography, adding their energetic spirit to the ancient art of taiko. They perform on drums ranging from the large odaiko, 4 feet by 2.5 feet, to the shimedaiko, the size of a snare drum.

During a lively interactive section on how to play, a group of students were invited to the stage to learn the Taiko. What a great show!



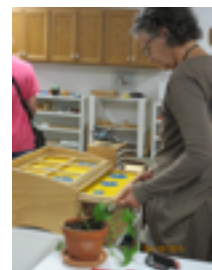
The Silent Journey 2015

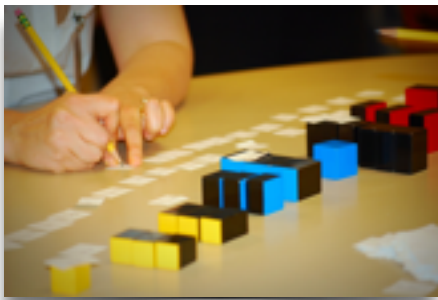
The evening began with light refreshments, introductions and instructions before the silent part of the journey began. Participants spent about ten minutes at each level



beginning in the toddler community, traveling to the primary, the lower elementary, upper elementary and ending in

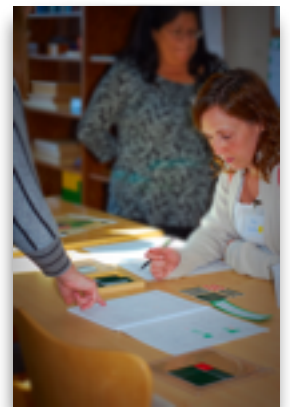
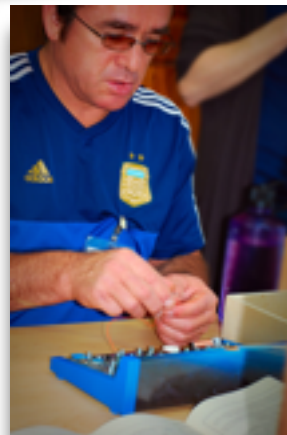
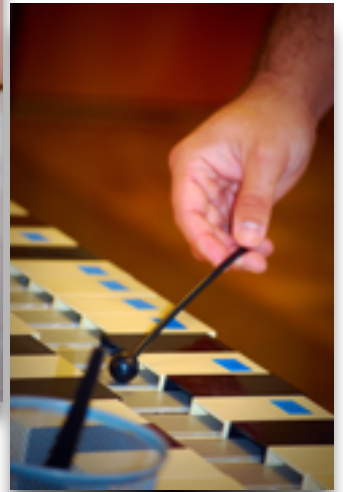
the Erdkinder. Participants were asked to give their impressions in a questionnaire at each stop along the way. The Silent Journey ended in discussion groups with instructions for the next day's journey, the Journey of Discovery. "Dress in comfortable clothes!" was one of the instructions.





The Journey of Discovery

The next morning after a light breakfast participants took another journey, the journey of discovery. Moving from level to level, they were given lessons and time to explore the materials. Making notations with the trinomial cube in the elementary, apple cutting in the toddler class, place value work with the Golden Beads, composing music with the tone bars and more.



At The Journeys' End

Each participant filled out an evaluation. The answers were compiled and given to our staff. This year there were four summary pages, more than ever before. We review the comments to see Montessori with fresh eyes to help us continue to grow in our implementation of authentic Montessori education and to aid in planning the next year's journey. See some of the answers to the evaluation questions below:

What was your immediate impression?

- Positive...a little unsure at first of the necessity for silence, but I get it now.
- So glad that Raintree exists at this place and time. "What the world needs now..."
- I found I enjoyed learning a new way to learn material I only memorized (past education). The facilitator did not make me feel inadequate. It was okay to not know and to learn. The Montessori way is the way. We feel very lucky to be able to have this school here for our daughter.
- My immediate reaction—I was very emotional. I wish I had had a Montessori education growing up and wish my older children could have had the opportunity to have Montessori education. Emotional, too, because I feel so fortunate to be able to send my youngest to Raintree. :)
- Grace and courtesy of the general overall people and atmosphere of the school. None of it feels forced or rehearsed. The teachers are very passionate about the children and how they understand their environment and self.
- What a wonderful opportunity to get a glimpse into the things going on. The school is beautiful and everyone is so kind. The community of teachers and staff were all extremely nice and welcoming.
- Reassured that this is a wonderful place to learn and make friends.
- I loved experiencing the classrooms for myself. I loved the layout, look and feel and uniqueness in each one.
- I was immediately taken with how many different materials are there for each concept. I can't imagine how much work it took to develop the curriculum at this level of complexity and depth.

What was your most memorable experience?

- The beauty within the classrooms and the beauty through the classroom windows. This place..it always puts me at ease to know my child is at the best place for her early education—awesome school.
- Surprisingly my most memorable experience was having another parent help and explain the Periodic Table that the

students created. Also doing the beads in the primary class where my child attends.

- I like how all the material learned from toddler through adolescent flowed together. The student was able to learn at their own pace and never felt ostracized by being too smart or not smart enough.
- The Silent Journey portion was incredible. It really allowed me to reflect on what I was seeing and helped my other senses to absorb the material.
- I really enjoyed experiencing math physically. To actually have an "ah-ha" moment where I really understood a mathematical equation instead of just memorizing it was amazing!
- Probably the passion shown by the guides. It was over the top. The way they talked about the children was awesome.
- The four lessons I received from teachers (2 group, 2 individual) I was impressed by how the teachers were so vigilant in their observations and how attuned they were to my needs at different stages of the lesson.

What value do you feel you derived from this experience?

- My specialization is self-determination. I was very glad to see how students' self-determination was empowered through schooling. Also, holistic learning approach seems to be embedded into the curriculum. Everything is linked to each other!!! Very beautiful.
- Greater understanding of the Montessori process.
- Flow of work—can easily see the progression from one room to the next.
- It took such creative thinking and imagination. I want to find a way to re-create my teaching to align with the Montessori way.
- Eye-opening connection to the future (possible).
- I would want to be here everyday so this is where I want my daughter to be.
- The value of knowing that no matter what my child is doing during the day at Raintree, she is learning, expressing herself, and undoubtedly helping others when she can. All of these things and what I want my child to be and do in life.
- I value the way my children are being taught here. They regard people as friends and are always willing to help another. It was a humbling experience.
- I gained even more respect for the teachers and also for the students and how involved they are as a community. Our society places such an emphasis on the individual, it was wonderful to see how a healthy group dynamic is fostered.

Will this influence your relationship with your child? How?

- Yes, I find myself wanting to research Montessori more and more. I want to understand her principles so I can apply them. I now feel the great importance of keeping a flow from home to school and back again.
- I will encourage more to let him explore a variety of things. I want to foster critical thinking.
- It makes me want to order and limit our environments more. I also want to work toward including my children in more daily activities.
- Yes, I will try to relate ideas and concepts with methods I saw here.
- Yes, I will try to give them more responsibilities at home and let them be leaders in some of the housework.
- Provide jobs more sophisticated than I currently thought she could handle. Now I know why she keeps trying to clean the windows at home!
- Yes. I want to try a Montessori approach in my home. More hands-on activities with them.
- Yes, I think it will help me to be more patient and allow and recognize when she's in concentration and learning at her own pace, instead of pushing what I think she should be doing.

Would you like something added or changed for future journeys?

- There seemed to be too little time in each environment. I wonder how many participants would have wanted more time. I did!
- Coffee on the first day!
- I think it would be awesome to have like a week-long adult Montessori experience so we can learn for longer than a couple of days. I would love it!
- I was skeptical about how long this was but after experiencing it, I wish we had had more time to spend in each class. This was absolutely wonderful. Thank you!
- This was a lovely experience. Teachers were friendly and helpful. Thank you for providing the journey!
- I would have enjoyed having a bit more time in the elementary classrooms. I also liked the idea of round tables for the large group time at the beginning of each journey.
- This was perfect. I'd definitely recommend it "as is" to any parent or teacher!



The Fantastic Book Fair

Kristin Hedges, Scholastic Book Fair Chairperson, and our parent volunteers did a **fantastic** job this year organizing the book fair. Raintree parents proved again how much they value getting books in their children's hands. Of course, the children helped, too, providing parents with lists of books they wanted. We always love to watch the students on preview day, poring through the shelves, seeking out their favorites. Our teachers, too, made lists of books they wanted in their classroom. Thank you everyone for your purchases!



A big thank you to Kristin Hedges who transforms the library into a cozy, inviting bookstore each and every year. A special thanks to Laura Bass, Cathy Dahl, Yvonne Lim and Mallory Bryan for working multiple shifts both setting up, running the book fair and disassembling it. The volunteers below made this fair one of the best ever. Thank you everyone!

Zina Amante
Kim Bellemere
Barbara Bosche
Meryl Carver-Allmond
Jennie Eddins
Jessie Garrett
Leslie Hazlett
Jennifer Higgins
Stacy Hutton
Kyle Koderitz
Michael Lueb
Lori Norwood
Shawna Rogers
Lindsay Roesler
Georgia Sizemore
Jeanne Sourgangs
Gina Spade
Jill Spader
Jennifer Talbot
Denise Trummel

And to our student volunteers, too!
Estelle Bass
Ethan, Haleigh, Hayden, and Shannon Dahl
Jake Hedges
Evie Stull



CLASS PICTURES

Tuesday, October 6 • Wednesday, October 7

Weather permitting we will take the photos outside. Please dress your child in regular clothes. No need to dress formally. We're going for the natural look. Please be mindful of the following schedule and arrive on time so your child will be included in the photo.

Tuesday, October 6

10:30 Amy's Toddler Class
10:45 Wafaa's Toddler Class
11:00 Diana's Toddler Class
11:15 Callie's Class

1:00 Rose's Class
1:15 Joe's Class
1:30 Ann A.'s Class
1:45 Dayle's Class
2:00 Lisa R.'s Class
2:15 Kathy's Class
2:30 Laura S.'s Class
2:45 Amy R.'s Class

Wednesday, October 7

9:00 Emma K.'s Class
9:15 Ann R.'s Class
9:30 Emma E.'s Class
9:45 Laura H.'s Class
10:00 Emily's AM Class
10:15 Jennifer's AM Class
10:30 Lisa's Class
10:45 Marcia's Class

1:15 Emily's PM Class
1:30 Jennifer's PM Class
1:45 Sixth-year Students
2:00 Erdkinder

Green Team Update

Last year Raintree parent Jeff Severin, Director of the Center for Sustainability at the University of Kansas, proposed organizing a Green Team at Raintree with the goal of becoming certified as a Green School. The Green Team is made up of Raintree staff Clay Kimmi, Jim Lewis, Kathy Klocke, Amy Rzadzynski and Emma Komp. Elementary and Erdkinder students are applying to be student representatives; twelve will be chosen. The focus this year is waste reduction, and the team will begin with a visit to the landfill followed by a waste audit in each classroom. Watch for Green Team updates in upcoming newsletters and Hubbli communications.

Coffee Cart News

Thank you for frequenting the coffee cart each morning. Our students strive to provide healthy, nutritious breakfast foods to our families along with fresh home-brewed coffee. Coffee cart cards are available for purchase, too, a \$5.50 value for \$5! You may also purchase another kind of card at the cart this year to support Habitat for Humanity. By purchasing a Hope Card for \$15, you will receive \$110 value from local businesses such as Merchant's, Orange Leaf, t.Loft, Paisano's and more. \$10 goes to Habitat for Humanity and \$5 to the Sixth-years' Chicago Trip. Cards will be for sale when the posters appear in the vestibule doorway. Thank you for supporting the Coffee Cart and Habitat for Humanity, too.

A Few Reminders and

A Thank You

- Thank you for respecting the oasis of calm we strive to maintain for the children in our school as you take your children to class and pick them up at the end of the day.
- Help! Our extra clothing reserves are empty! If you have found Raintree clothes among those in your laundry at home, please bring them back. At the beginning of the year our new little ones have more accidents as they adjust to their new surroundings so we need every available piece of clothing we can find. Extra Raintree clothes have little Raintrees drawn on them.
- Please check your child's bag frequently to make sure his bag has extra sets of clothes so we don't have to borrow from others.
- Our toddler and primary playgrounds are for toddlers and primary children only. During pickup time, please do not allow older siblings to play. When young children see the older students doing things they have been told not to do for safety reasons, it is confusing for them and can create an unsafe situation.

Where Can I Find Child-sized Tools?

Montessori Services has once again printed a special catalog for Montessori parents. We highly recommend the materials offered in the catalog from their child-sized practical life items to their noncompetitive board games. Ten percent of the purchase total is given to Raintree in the form of a credit to buy classroom materials if orders are received before December 31.

Kansas Citizens...

and business community say students need more than academics to succeed
by Denise Kahler
Director of Communications

The Kansas State Board of Education (KSBE) is reviewing the tabulated results from the Community Conversation events held throughout the state earlier this year where education officials asked Kansas residents and members of the business community what they want from their state education system. The board is using these results to support the development of its vision for K-12 education in Kansas.

Kansas Commissioner of Education Dr. Randy Watson and members of the board conducted 20 events across the state with nearly 1,700 Kansas residents, teachers, parents, students, and higher education representatives and seven events with more than 120 members of the business community to hear what they believe to be the characteristics, qualities, abilities and skills of a successful 24-year old Kansan.

The general community cited non-academic skills (soft skills – social-emotional, personality skills) 70 percent of the time and academic skills 23 percent of the time as characteristics of the ideally-educated Kansas youth, while the business community cited non-academic skills 81 percent of the time and academic skills 15 percent of the time.

“We don’t interpret this focus on soft skills to mean that Kansans’ don’t think academics are important,” said Commissioner Randy Watson. “We believe they are telling us that the importance of soft skills needs to be elevated. If a student excels academically, but can’t show up to work on time, that kid isn’t likely to be too successful. Similarly, if a straight A student in high school is suddenly a C student in college, will he or she have the emotional skills needed to persevere?”

Among non-academic skills, conscientiousness was the most frequently cited by both the community focus groups and the business focus groups, including its components, dependability, achievement striving (pursuing goals), and self-discipline (persistence, a strong work ethic).

Among academic skills, respondents emphasized instrumental skills and critical thinking over traditional academic skills. Instrumental skills are defined as applied knowledge and skills gained through study and training and applied in a profession or job.

“Soft Skills”

From a Montessori perspective...

The State Board of Education will announce their vision in late October. Watch the November newsletter for an update and comments from a Montessori perspective.

The Raintree Legotrons

First Lego League is a national program designed to teach children engineering and programming concepts and presentation skills in a fun and engaging way. From September-December the team members build and program a Lego Mindstorm robot, and research and prepare a project/presentation. The team will then compete in 1-2 tournaments in the Kansas City area this fall and if they do well, may compete in a regional tournament in January. We are piloting the program at Raintree this year with a small group of 5th and 6th years, **The Raintree Legotrons**, testing it out to see how it works. If it is successful and fun for everyone, we may expand it next year.

Healthy Community Guidelines

This fall we have had a number of cases of diarrhea in our toddler communities. Children must be excluded from school if they have diarrhea. Diarrhea is defined as “an increased number of stools compared with a person’s normal pattern, along with decreased stool form and/or watery, bloody or mucus in the stool.” Your prompt response in picking up your child is greatly appreciated when you are notified. At Raintree children must stay home for 24 hours and the stool must be its normal form/pattern before the child may return.



Halloween at Raintree

While our toddler and primary students do not dress up for Halloween, they do add a few Halloween songs to their repertoire as the holiday approaches. On Friday, October 30 around 9:00 AM, our elementary students parade through the Phoenix building dressed as someone from history or children’s literature, stopping at each classroom briefly to tell a little bit about who they are. The toddlers and primary students have a special snack, carve a pumpkin, and roast the seeds for another tasty treat while the older students return to their classrooms to celebrate.



**Daylight Savings Time Ends
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1**

The Erdkinder Odyssey

Fall 2015

This year the odyssey began at Powell Gardens in Kingsville, Missouri and by late afternoon the group was setting up tents in Lake of the Ozarks State Park. Every student had a job whether it was washing the car windows, starting the campfire or preparing meals. The next day they kayaked down the Niangua River. Thursday they toured Bridal Cave, hiked Hahatonka and explored the ruins of a castle. And even though they got lost on their hike, they persevered, found their bearings and returned Friday exhilarated from the odyssey and tightly bonded as an adolescent community, one of the goals of the trip. Watch for a photo collage soon to be displayed in the Phoenix foyer.





October

TALL OAKS TRIP

Upper Elementary Northeast

Ann Anderson's Class

Thursday, October 1 • Friday, October 2

POTLUCK

Lower Elementary Southeast

Amy Rzaczyński's Class

Thursday, October 1 at 6 PM

BONFIRE

Upper Midwest

Jennifer Powers' Class

Friday • October 2 • 6:30 PM

PARENT AFTERNOON & PICNIC

Upper Elementary Northeast Loft

Rose Bringus' Class

Friday • October 2 • 3:45-7:00 PM



CLASS PICTURES

Tuesday, October 6 • Wednesday, October 7

POTLUCK

Toddler East

Amy Wade's Class

Wednesday, October 7 at 6 PM

POTLUCK

Lower Elementary Northeast Loft

Laura Shoffner's Class

Thursday, October 8 at 6 PM

STAFF DEVELOPMENT DAY

Friday, October 9

No School

TALL OAKS TRIP

Upper Elementary Northeast Loft

Rose Bringus' Class

Thursday, October 15 • Friday, October 16

PARENT AFTERNOON & PICNIC

Upper Elementary Southeast

Lisa Ryan's Class

Friday, October 16 at 3:45-7:00 PM

TALL OAKS TRIP

Upper Elementary Southwest Loft

Kathy Klocke's Class

Thursday, October 22 • Friday, October 23

Waiting List Parent Night

Montessori in the Home

Thursday, October 22 at 7 PM

Great Room

Music and Dance Workshops

Elementary Classes

Monday, September 26

Wednesday, September 28

Leadership Lawrence Tours Raintree

Thursday, October 29

7:45 - 8:30 AM



Halloween Parade

Friday, October 30 at 9:00

Phoenix Building



November

Daylight Savings Time

Sunday, November 1

Fall back one hour!