



COMMUNITY Messenger

Upcoming Events

JUNE 28

**Summer Enrichment
Program begins**

JULY 30

WHMS Golf Outing

AUGUST 22

Tri-City Valley Cats Game

AUGUST 27

**Summer Enrichment
program ends**

SEPTEMBER 7

Phase-In week begins

OCTOBER 2

Fall Family Fun Day



WOODLANDHILL
MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Next fall, for the first time in 24 years, children at Woodland Hill Montessori School will not be able to count on Sue LaVigne to remove their splinters.

After working for the Montessori School of Albany/Woodland Hill Montessori School for 23 years, she is retiring. On Friday, June 18, Sue is slated to give the keynote address for the Elementary Moving Up and 8th Grade Graduation ceremony, her last official act at WHMS.

Sue joined the administrative staff of Montessori School of Albany, as it was known then, on August 15, 1987. She had seen the job announcement for an Office Manager in the *Times Union*, and applied since her daughter was leaving for college and her two boys were in high school. She walked into the office on that August day, having not worked outside the home for 18 years, answered the phone that was ringing off the hook, and the rest is history. For over 23 years, Sue has been the go-to person for children with splinters, fevers and cuts. She's provided band-aids and TLC to students, and hand-holding to anxious parents bringing their child to WHMS for the first time.

WHMS has grown quite a bit during Sue's tenure. When she first started, MSA was located in the Fort Crailo School in Rensselaer. She was the only paid full-time office staff. There was a part-time administrator and payroll coordinator, both volunteers. There were five teachers back then (Julie Adams being one of them!), and 45 students, most of whom attended a half-day program. Liz Cahrenger joined the team the following year. The Elementary program, which consisted of 1st and 2nd grade, had only six children.

Today there are 245 students at WHMS. Our Elementary program, which has expanded through 8th grade, has 143 students, and our Primary level has 102 students.

What Sue has loved most about working at WHMS is getting to know the families (many of whom have become close friends), seeing the little smiling faces each morning, and the camaraderie of the staff and faculty. She also likes to wear silly hats for car line, which the kids love.

The most exciting time for Sue was watching this building being built. Sue, along with the WHMS community, waited eagerly from the ground-breaking until the doors opened. However, it was a bittersweet time for Sue. Days after moving into this building in November 23, 2002, her husband Paul suffered a stroke and was hospitalized for months before passing away in March 2003. The flagpole outside was dedicated in Paul's honor on November 8, 2003.



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(Head Teachers & Assistant Teachers)

Primary Teachers

Valerie Ang & Julie Murphy
Emmy Cole & Diane Lanci
Liz Cahrenger & Kristen McDermott
Nancy Hillengas & Marion Newton
Cassandre Hall & Lourdes Ortega

Elementary & Middle School Teachers

Julie Adams & Astra Rodrigo
Sandy Blakeman, Olga Febus & Amy Poole
Maryann Montgomery & Ann Ayers
Andrew McClain, Sherrie Clune,
Cindy Bishop & Michele Prailleau
Leah Blind, Theresa Cunningham, & Cora Heiser

Special Teachers

Nieves Gonzalez-Montejano *Spanish*
Dan Sedia *Primary Music*
Marla Bracco *Violin*
Livia Denis *Piano*
Christina Pickreign *Elementary Music*
Jacob Colwell *Physical Education*
Janis Rink *Art*
Maggie Schmonsky *Reading Specialist*
Karen Green *Consultant Teacher*
Jane Benson-Rivera *School Counselor*

After School Staff

Meg Parascandola *Director of School Care*
Amanda Bentley *Assistant Director*
Ashley Ciccone, Kaitlyn Ciccone, Sharra Hammer,
Raegan Hammond, Corie Hart, Melina Smyres,
Jada Schmidt, Esma Ulcay



Gymnasium dedication

Dear Woodland Hill Montessori School Families,

This year marks the 45th anniversary of Woodland Hill Montessori School. Founded in 1965 by parents looking for a school that would recognize and develop the immense potential within all young children, the Montessori School of Albany, as it was known then, provided preschool education for three- to six-year old children.

The school started with approximately twenty students and has grown since then to provide Montessori education to a greater range of ages. The elementary program was added in 1986 to serve six- to 12-year old students, and the middle school created in 2001. This year's middle school consists of 23 students – our largest middle school to date.

Woodland Hill is the one of the few pre-K through 8th grade Montessori schools within the state. This year, there are 245 students from six local counties, covering twenty-nine school districts.

This year was also marked by the opening of our new 11,000-square foot addition. The addition contains a gymnasium, teaching kitchen, stage, rooms for art, music, band and violin, a conference room and a bright atrium. It opened officially in May 2009, and has been used for so many occasions and events that we wonder how we ever lived without it. We thank the entire community for the support of this very worthwhile project.

As you read on the front page, our beloved Sue LaVigne is retiring after 23 years of dedicated service to WHMS. While the buildings have changed and the amount of students has increased dramatically since Sue began, our commitment to providing the most comprehensive Montessori education has not.

In order to ensure that our program is available to all, we have established the Susan LaVigne Endowment Fund, which will provide additional financial aid. This is something that we have talked about for years, and we are proud to be unveiling at this time.

We thank everybody who has helped make the 45 years so wonderful, and look forward to the future at WHMS.



Susan Kambrich
Head of School
skambrich@woodlandhill.org



Michael Endler
President of the Board of Trustees
mender@woodlandhill.org

Moving to the new school brought some new challenges. Driving to school one day, Sue heard reports of a bear-sighting in our area, so she was not surprised when one of the Lower El teachers called her to say there was a brown bear outside of the classroom window. The bear, which had been attracted by the compost pile, left the campus without incident.

While many things have changed at MSA/WHMS, some things never do. Her first official duty at MSA was fishing Rich Pascarelli's retainer out of the sink. He dropped it by accident and Sue had to remove the trap to retrieve it. Earlier this week, she helped a student who had gotten their finger stuck in their lunch container.

In addition to her three children and their spouses, Sue has seven grandchildren, five of them who have attended WHMS: Tori LaVigne, Susanna and Will Klose, and Trey and Matthew LaVigne, who is currently a student in Nancy's class.

All of us at WHMS thank Sue for her years of extraordinary service and dedication, and we wish her the best as she begins a new chapter of her life. 🌸

SUSAN LAVIGNE SCHOLARSHIP FUND

To show our appreciation for Sue, and to ensure that future generations recognize her contributions to the school, the WHMS Board of Trustees has decided to establish the school's first endowment fund, to be named the "Susan LaVigne Endowment." The board could think of nothing more fitting than naming a fund established to help others after a woman who has done so much, for so many, for so long.

The Board of WHMS has set aside \$100,000 to establish the endowment, which will provide additional financial aid to the WHMS community. This first step will provide a foundation to build upon in years to come and will enable us to reach out to a broader constituency.

To make a donation to the fund, to honor Sue LaVigne and to ensure that WHMS remains affordable for a wide variety of families, please fill out the form on the back page and mail to Woodland Hill Montessori School, 100 Montessori Place, Rensselaer, NY 12144. Contributions may also be made on-line at www.woodlandhill.org.

NEW BOARD MEMBERS



Diana Ehrlich recently joined the Albany-Colonie Chamber of Commerce as the newly created position of vice president of

advocacy and communications. She has 17 years of experience representing the business community. Prior to joining the Chamber, Ehrlich served as the assistant state director of the National Federation of Independent Business. Ehrlich previously served as assistant vice president of the Life Insurance Council of New York and legislative analyst for the Business Council of New York State, Inc.

Diana received her bachelor's degree from Siena College and her MBA from The College of Saint Rose. She lives in Colonie with her husband and two sons, both students at WHMS.



Vincent LaBella is an Associate Professor at the University at Albany College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering, where he teaches and

conducts research in areas related to physics and next-generation semiconductor devices. In both his teaching and research, he utilizes innovative information technology solutions such as web based learning environments and audience feedback systems (clickers) to enhance the learning environment in his lectures. Vincent earned a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering and a B.A. in Physics from Rutgers University, a Ph.D. in Physics from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1998. Vincent is also a former Montessori student and has three children at WHMS. He and his family reside in North Colonie.



Jennifer Krygowski is a former teacher, and an owner of The 2 Fireflies, a company specializing in kiln-fired glass jewelry. Jennifer has served

WHMS as Vice-President of *Friends* for one year, and President of *Friends* for the past two years. She has also served as Gala committee co-chair and as sub-committee chair for the School's Guiding Principles and Mission section of the 2009-2014 WHMS Accreditation Self-Study. Jennifer earned her B.S. in Elementary Education from the College of Saint Rose, a M.S. in Educational Psychology and Methodology from University at Albany, and a NYS Teaching Certification for Pre-K-6th grade. Her son is in his third year of WHMS. Jennifer lives in West Sand Lake with her family. 🌸

ACCREDITATION

IN NOVEMBER 2009, A TEAM OF EDUCATORS VISITED WOODLAND HILL MONTESSORI SCHOOL AS PART OF THE YEAR-LONG RE-ACCREDITATION PROCESS.

There are two phases of the re-accreditation process: a self-study and an on-site peer visit.

Beginning in January 2009, Steering Committee Chair Patricia Altman coordinated the effort, along with Susan Kambrich, Moira Rienzo and Diane Carusone-McGinn. The first step was submission of a self-study in June to the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools and the American Montessori Society. Teachers Sherrie Clune, Liz Cahrenger, Nancy Hilengas, Valerie Ang, along with Moira Rienzo, Michael Endler and Jennifer Krygowski all chaired subcommittees, comprised primarily of faculty members, that explored the many ways we serve children. The teachers met over many weeks to determine what these attributes, qualities and programs are that define our Montessori program at WHMS. Each committee wrote a section of the self-study reflecting the essential qualities of our school.

AMS Accreditation is a voluntary process undertaken by schools that are committed to continuous school improvement.

Through a documentation of compliance with AMS Standards and a comprehensive self-study process, a school defines itself in terms of strengths and areas that need improvement.

According to the AMS website, “the real value resides in the good things that happen to the school as it achieves and maintains accreditation. The self-study process is one of discovery and empowerment. The school’s self-study examines

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itself in light of its own philosophy, involving all its constituents. It results in strong self-evaluation and a strategic plan that fosters continuing school improvement. The school complies with Standards for American Montessori Schools and six essential qualities established by research and consensus as the essence of the educational nature of Montessori education.”

As part of the site visit, the team spent the week at WHMS meeting with teachers, parents and administrators, touring the

school, visiting classrooms, and having lunch meetings with Lower El, Upper El, and Middle School students. They also met with the WHMS Board of Trustees.

At the end of the week, the re-accreditation team gave an oral report to the school, where they described Woodland Hill Montessori School as a “gem of a school,” and encouraged the board, faculty and staff to “bask in the laurels” of what has already been accomplished before adding more layers to the already successful program.

The team’s report also commended the WHMS Board of Trustees for their careful planning and work to bring the present facility to fruition; the Head of School for her innovative intentions to constantly look for ways to improve the ongoing programs at WHMS; and the tireless efforts in developing the partnership of the parents, teachers, and children as well as the putting into living practice the child-centered Montessori philosophy and curriculum.

Woodland Hill Montessori School is proud to be dually-accredited by the *Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools* and *The American Montessori Society*. ❁



ELEVEN MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS VISIT THE UN

The Middle School students, along with teachers, Cora Heiser, and Leah Blind, and parents Maryann Montgomery and Dennis Phayre, spent four days in October 2009 in New York City visiting the United Nations.

In October, the 8th Graders traveled to New York City to participate in The Montessori Model UN (MMUN) project, a gathering of Middle School Montessori Schools around the county. The objective of the trip is to inspire students to become better educated and more productive global citizens. Maria Montessori supported the work of the United Nations as a forum where peace could be created. In MMUN, students step into the shoes of ambassadors to debate current issues. Currently more than 200,000 high school and university students participate annually in the program. This is a wonderful program that we have participated in for the past five years.

In January, the students presented the information about the trip they took to the United Nations. Each student presented one aspect of their trip using a Power Point presentation to offer details of the experience to the Upper El. ❁



WHMS Highlights

On Friday, May 29, 2009, the new gymnasium and cultural arts wing was officially opened at a ribbon cutting and dedication ceremony. All of the students attended the event, along with alumni, board members, parents, local politicians and business leaders. The gymnasium, art and music classroom space has been a wonderful addition to Woodland Hill Montessori School.



and a flag banner. It was an excellent event, and was enjoyed by all who attended.

The Middle School students collected food for Conserns-U this fall and delivered them in mid-November. The collected over 275 items for the food pantry, which provide a Thanksgiving meals to over 250 families in Rensselaer County.

Thanks to the generosity of the Woodland Hill Montessori School families, the Lower Elementary classes were able to collect 311 pairs of shoes for the "Shoes for the Shoeless" campaign. This campaign was coordinated by the Delmar Bootery in Stuyvesant Plaza and the shoes were distributed to families in need throughout Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio and West Virginia.

In July, a group of five WHMS 8th graders, along with parents and teachers, flew to the Sinai School in Babati, Tanzania. They spent their time plastering and painting seven classrooms, building two new cooking stoves, and surveying the site for the solar tower and playground equipment to power the water well at the Sinai School. They also taught basic English lessons to their counterparts, who, in turn, taught them basic Swahili. They also enjoyed playing baseball, soccer and other sports with the Sinai students. The WHMS group also went on a two-day safari at Tarangire National Park and Lake Manyara. All of the WHMS students thoroughly enjoyed the trip and made memories to last a lifetime. The story was covered by WTEN. The students also attended the American Montessori Society's Annual Conference in Boston this past April, to present information about their trip in the workshop, *Montessorians as Global Citizens*.

The WHMS Drama Club performed two outstanding renditions of *Seussical, Jr.* in December. Their weekend performances included a craft fair to benefit the students who would like to travel to Tanzania this summer. Sue LaVigne praised the performances, "I think we need to rename the school Woodland Hill Montessori School of the Performing Arts. I can't tell you

when I enjoyed anything that much. Every one of those children gave it their all."



Sinterklaas, (the Dutch St. Nicholas), visited Woodland Hill on December 7. He handed out candy canes to all who have been good or at least did their best to

be good this past year.

Henry Hudson landed at Woodland Hill on Thursday, January 7. Carl Bensi, a.k.a. Henry Hudson, taught our Woodland Hill students about Hudson's exploration aboard the Half Moon on what is now called the Hudson River. Hudson, an Englishman, was hired by the Dutch East India Company to find a passage to the "islands of spicery" or an easier passage to the east—rather than go all the way around the Cape of Good Hope. Hudson's exploration of this area changed history. WHMS elementary students have been studying about the Hudson River and this special visit helped to bring history alive. In March, Hudson Talbott, author of *River of Dreams*, visited WHMS. Talbott wrote the well-known book about the Hudson River.

An ad-hoc committee of WHMS parents has been formed to investigate the possibility of adding a ninth grade or possibly a high school to Woodland Hill. As part of our strategic plan, we intend to investigate this option. Although the reaccreditation team recommended that we focus on the exceptional programs we currently offer and fortify our burgeoning Middle School, the committee is exploring the prospect for the future.

Upper Elementary students performed *Macbeth* to rave reviews on May 13 and 14. UE Students have been producing William Shakespeare's plays for the past 17 years. This year's play, *Macbeth*, is a tragedy-themed tale of murder, mayhem, temptation, crime and punishment. ❁



Barry Keegan, with the help of UE teacher Andrew McClain, the other UE teachers and students have been working on resurrecting the Longhouse. The project received attention with two full color pictures in the front page of the Times Union Capital Region section.

Fall Family Fun day was held on Saturday, October 3. It was an excellent event, attended by over 200 people, both WHMS families and the general public. Games, raffles, craft vendors, food, a bouncy slide, and a bake sale were all part of the fun day.

On October 23, ten WHMS parents, organized by teacher Cassandre Hall, created a beautiful Diwali celebration for the Primary children. The celebration included Indian dress, arts and crafts, food, dance, decoration and storytelling. The decorations included sand art, candles, paper lanterns, light pots,

2009/2010 ANNUAL FUND DONORS

The 2009-2010 Annual Fund has raised \$31,075. The Annual Fund supports every facet of the WHMS experience, from class field trips to guest lecturers; from classroom equipment to library resources; from faculty development to financial aid. *

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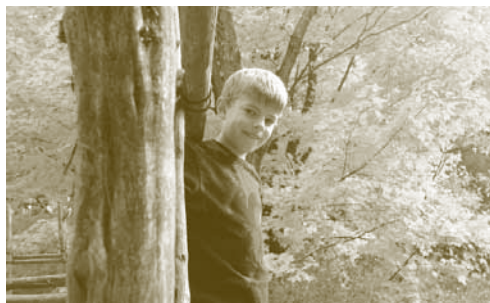
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* Denotes a gift from WHMS Grandparents

** Matching gift



WHMS HELD ITS 45TH ANNIVERSARY GALA, ROCKIN' THE SAPPHIRE BLUES, ON FRIDAY, APRIL 16.

Nearly 200 gathered at the Franklin Plaza in downtown Troy to celebrate 45 years of Montessori School of Albany/Woodland Hill Montessori School history, and to recognize in particular those remarkable teachers with their own special anniversaries: Julie Adams (25 years), Sandy Blakeman (17 years), Liz Cahrenger (21 years) and Andrew McClain (17 years).

Music for the cocktail hour was provided by WHMS Sapphire Blues Band featuring WHMS parent Patrick Mottolese on piano and Charles Austin on guitar (WHMS band leader and guitar teacher). Later in the evening, Doc Scanlon's



Rhythm Boys provided the entertainment. A special multi-media presentation, along with the Live Auction of classroom projects were the big hits of the evening.

The Gala was a wonderful success, which the Times Union newspaper recognized this as a great event in the Capital Region by sending a photographer and featuring the evening in the April 23 issue! We raised over \$31,000, which will go towards supporting the school's mission of bringing a unique, child-focused, individualized learning environment to Capital Region students from pre-school through 8th grade. ✨

WE THANK ALL OF OUR SUPPORTERS, ESPECIALLY OUR CORPORATE SPONSORS:

PLATINUM	Franklin Plaza Ballroom
GOLD	Boies, Schiller & Flexner LLP; Glynn Spillane Griffing Architects, P.C.; Zandri Construction Corp.
SILVER	Allstate Insurance Company; CDPHP; H-ITT LLC; Key Bank; Kivort Steel; O'Donnells Painting & Decorating; R.K. Freedman & Son; Sabre Technical Services; TMI

WHMS ALUMNI

Do Montessori students do well in High School?

Last December, we surveyed parents of the WHMS Class of 2009, to find out how our alumni transitioned into high school.

Five of our 8th grade graduates were enrolled at their local public schools and one student was enrolled at Emma Willard School.

- 100% of the children transitioned very well into the 9th grade.
- 83% of the families feel that their children were very well-prepared for 9th grade, with 17% responding somewhat well-prepared.
- 83% of the parents feel their children are handling the academic load at their schools very well, with 17% responding somewhat well.

All of the students were taking at least one, and up to six, of their core academic courses at an accelerated, honors or advanced-placement level. **The average GPA of the WHMS Class of 2009 was a 91, with the GPAs ranging from 85-98.**

Our alumni are participating in the following extracurricular activities: Crew, Girl Scouts, part-time job, soccer, baseball, ski club, rugby, band, field hockey, Emmasaries (Emma Willard ambassador), SOAR (animal protective group), Foreign Student Group, and the student discipline review board.

We recently heard from:

Rex Tien, MSA'98 recently e-mailed and shared the following:

"I will be graduating from Princeton University next year (2011) with a degree in Mechanical Engineering and two certificates (like minors): one in Bioengineering and one in Robotics. I hope to enter a graduate program in Neural Engineering in order to study brain-computer interfaces and neural prostheses (robotic prosthetic limbs that can be controlled through thought). I certainly wouldn't be where I am today if Sandy hadn't sparked my interest in science with her passionate and fascinating presentations of complicated ideas (the Big Bang presentation comes to mind immediately). Subsequently, it was Andrew's nurturing nature that allowed my scientific curiosity to flourish, as he encouraged us to design our own experiments, and somehow had a way of not only answering any question I might have, but allowing me to discover the answer for myself.

Congratulations to WHMS alumni who have recently graduated from high school:

Marina Assaf will be attending Binghamton University and will be studying Human Development and Pre-Medicine.

Alexa Evans will be going to Wagner College in Staten Island where she will be majoring in nursing.

Caroline Kambrich will be attending Keene State College in New Hampshire.

Congratulations to our 8th Grade Graduates! We are sure that they are well-prepared for the future high schools.

- Daniel Cavanagh** Darrow School
- Lily Eastman** Emma Willard School
- Haylie Gernert-Dott** Niskayuna High School
- Cara Lanci** Emma Willard School
- Grace McCarthy** Emma Willard School
- Grace Montgomery** Emma Willard School
- Anna Passero-Koennecke** Niskayuna High School
- Lucas Phayre-Gonzalez** Albany High School
- Alexis "Ali" Reinhold** Capital Lyceum
- Sierra Wallace** Albany Academy

Alumni can keep up with WHMS happenings and connect with other WHMS/MSA alumni on Facebook at the group "WHMS/MSA Alumni Group" or by becoming a fan of "Woodland Hill Montessori School." ✨



100 MONTESSORI PLACE
NORTH GREENBUSH, NY 12144

WWW.WOODLANDHILL.ORG

OUR MISSION

Woodland Hill Montessori School—a diverse and engaging educational partnership of parents, teachers, children, and community—nurtures a child’s love of learning and sense of personal and social responsibility, using the child-centered Montessori philosophy and curriculum to develop the intellectual, physical, spiritual, artistic and academic excellence inherent in each child.



We are/I am pleased to contribute to the Susan LaVigne Scholarship Fund for Woodland Hill Montessori School.

Name(s) _____
(as they should appear for recognition purposes)

Child(ren) who attended WHMS _____
(please list years of attendance)

Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone Number _____ Email _____

Donation Amount \$ _____

ALL GIFTS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE TO THE FULL EXTENT OF THE LAW.

PAYMENT OPTIONS: Make your gift on-line now at <http://www.woodlandhill.org/giving.htm>
 Check enclosed Checks should be made payable to: WHMS Susan LaVigne Scholarship Fund
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