



Building Our Future

Annual Report
2012-2013



building friendships • helping others • a place of joy • self expression



Helping Others



“The first essential for the child’s development is concentration. The child who concentrates is immensely happy.” —Dr. Maria Montessori

Dear Families and Friends,

As we enter our 25th year and I ponder our future, I remember a young boy years ago who came to our school after experiencing mostly failure for the first eight years of his life. His mother came to us with hope that her son could somehow have success. After a few months our class was preparing for the annual play for the first through third graders. Since this boy was the only one who wanted the main role, it was given to him. I was silently concerned about how this child could possibly learn his lines since both reading and memorization were difficult for him. Before I had a chance to come up with an answer, two very earnest and hard-working older girls announced to me, "We are going to help him learn all those lines!" Over the next few weeks they did just that. The day of the play this child was an absolute success, the star of the play, with many adults and students feeling very happy for him.



Mona Nixon
Head of School

For me this story epitomizes the Montessori experience and its most profound effect: hope. Dr. Montessori called the children who were in her classrooms "children of promise." Having the freedom to make the decision to help another child in such a significant manner offers the giving child an opportunity to construct his inner self on a very deep level. It also shows that being in a community built on love and respect offers all of us a lifeline. When human beings work together for the good of all, we have a brighter future.

This past year Mountain Laurel staff and families worked diligently to create a strategic plan for our school. We stayed the course through a lengthy process, examining all areas of our work and giving each person a chance to contribute. Some of the suggestions were expected and others were surprises that became valuable parts of our plan for the sustainability and growth of Mountain Laurel. Probably my favorite outcome of making a strategic plan was the positive energy that built up throughout the year, which manifested as a strong drive in so many people who wanted to have their hands in making the actual changes.

Just since last spring we have accomplished much. We revamped the office, taking out walls and moving the staff break area out of the busy traffic and into a quieter part of the building. PTO took on the task of making our staff area lovely and inviting for us. We also have an attractive waiting area for visitors now. We are in the process of replacing the cedar fence with a white vinyl fence which will be much easier to maintain. Our school store has opened, serving the dual purpose of funding the Elementary Model United Nations Program as well as highlighting the products from the Junior High Program. The survey we did gave us valuable information about parental wishes and needs concerning Mountain Laurel. Most importantly, the survey let us know that many of you are looking forward to your children having the opportunity to continue their education at Mountain Laurel throughout elementary and junior high.

Most promising for our future is not only that our enrollment has increased but that the families we are attracting are either already knowledgeable about the unique gift of a Montessori education or bursting with enthusiasm about their new adventure into this child-centered approach. I think this is due to two occurrences: the growing number of Montessori schools worldwide as well as the many graduates from Mountain Laurel who are proving to be happy, balanced, compassionate, accomplished young adults.

I want to thank every member of our community—students, parents, grandparents, family, staff, friends of Mountain Laurel, businesses, and other organizations who have supported us and helped us grow to who we are today. As we serve the children who are to become the adults of tomorrow, we are serving all of mankind.

With sincerest appreciation,

Mona Nixon
Head of School, Founder
Mountain Laurel Montessori School

Envisioning Our Future, Together

In the fall of 2012 our community of parents, teachers, staff, and board members gathered to work together to “Envision the Future” of Mountain Laurel Montessori School in the form of Strategic Planning. Guided by a consultant from Boston, we

explored the strengths and challenges facing Mountain Laurel and found that we all had much to celebrate in what MLMS has accomplished and continues to do for our children and families. Smaller focus groups identified initiatives that guided the creation of goals. The result was a five-year Strategic Plan that outlined needs and goals.

Some of the identified goals follow, and each has a five-year timetable of smaller, manageable steps

toward fulfillment. To the great credit of our hardworking administration, parents, and staff we have accomplished many goals set for Year 1 (2013-14), already!



Five-Year Strategic Plan

- ❖ Increase enrollment
- ❖ Extend outreach in the greater community
- ❖ Attain accreditation
- ❖ Continue support for high-quality Montessori environments
- ❖ Provide adequate compensation for staff
- ❖ Offer opportunities for continuous professional development
- ❖ Enhance internal and external communication
- ❖ Improve Front Royal campus signage & physical entrance signage
- ❖ Implement effective marketing plan

Thanks to MLMS parent Mike Shotton of Shotton Design, the Mountain Laurel Montessori School website got an updated look and interface which will grow with us.

New website



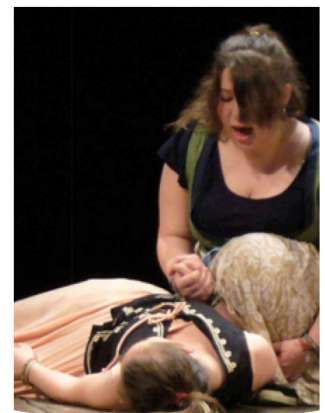
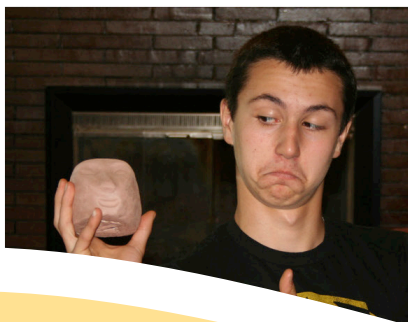
Previous website



Our new Jr. High brochure designed by MLMS parent Pam Owens of Pam Owens Design offers a glimpse of our farm campus and introduces our comprehensive Jr. High program.



Self Expression



"We must support as much as possible the child's desires for activity; not wait on him, but educate him to be independent." —Dr. Maria Montessori



Outdoor Classroom



“It is almost possible to say that there is a mathematical relationship between the beauty of his surroundings and the activity of the child; he will make discoveries rather more voluntarily in a gracious setting than in an ugly one.” —Dr. Maria Montessori

Having been first a parent and then a board member at Mountain Laurel since 2000, I have had the opportunity to witness the rhythms of the school year many times over. Each school year brings new and exciting developments; whether it is starting a new classroom, adding a building, or welcoming new families into the fold. I am awed and comforted each year as I watch the MLMS community steadfastly provide a high-quality education for our children in each stage of development, from infancy through the junior high years.



Kris Boucher
*Chairman,
MLMS Board of Directors*

It is truly my privilege and pleasure to remain affiliated with Mountain Laurel even after my own daughter has graduated and moved on to high school. As she grows closer to adulthood, I see the skills she has learned through her “education for life” at Mountain Laurel serve her well as she faces new situations and decisions. We are both grateful for the years she spent at Mountain Laurel.

The heart of a Montessori education lies in “following the child.” The adults lovingly provide key lessons so that students may create themselves and grow to be sincere, caring adults who contribute to the well-being of their communities and the world. I see these qualities in so many of our students, past and present. In this way, Mountain Laurel is *Building Our Future* by growing responsible, kind, and productive members of society, one child at a time.

Last fall the MLMS Board of Directors and administrative team embarked on an ambitious strategic planning initiative so that Mountain Laurel may continue to guide students for many years to come. Elements of the plan include ensuring MLMS’ financial stability, enhancing our fundraising capabilities, connecting with alumni, retaining our talented staff members, beautifying and maintaining both campuses, and energizing our marketing and outreach capabilities. I am thrilled to report that progress has been made in many of these key areas. School safety has been improved with the re-design of the Front Royal campus reception area and installation of new door locks. The beauty and maintenance of both campuses has been enhanced, including new fencing, signage, and landscaping in Front Royal and the establishment of a grounds committee at the Jr. High. The purchase of a second bus and school van enables MLMS to reach new markets for enrollment. Lastly, the MLMS organization has been restructured, defining roles and responsibilities and clarifying lines of communication.

As we kick off the 2013-14 Annual Giving Campaign, I urge you to contribute to sustaining Mountain Laurel’s future with a generous financial contribution.

Sincerely,

Kris Boucher

Chairman, MLMS Board of Directors

MOUNTAIN LAUREL MONTESSORI SCHOOL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

<i>Kris Boucher, Chairperson</i>		<i>Monica Nixon, Head of School</i>
Carolyn Linke	Maureen McGowan	Stephen Graham
KC Dickman	Ernie Ryliès	Rob Glazier

In the Classroom



“A felicitous environment that guides the children and offers them the means to exercise their own faculties permits the teacher to absent herself temporarily. The creation of such an environment is already the realization of great progress.” —Dr. Maria Montessori

Holidays Around the World

“Winter Holidays Around the World” allows our primary and toddler children to tour the world without ever leaving school! Children experience the crafts, foods,

games and traditions of various countries during this festive celebration. This is a favorite event of parents, children, and teachers alike, because of the loving preparations and lively participation by a great many volunteers.



Summer Mentorship Program

Our *Summer Mentorship Program* is unique in the Montessori world. It was developed by veteran Primary teacher Carrie Irre, for students with special needs who require a small class structure with specialized support systems. The design of the classroom community incorporates five students with special needs teamed with support staff, and Mrs. Irre as their head teacher. The class also has a group of approximately ten peer mentors with a second Montessori teacher to support and guide them. In the Montessori setting, the children form a small community, interacting and assisting each other despite any barriers of communication, social differences, or physical capabilities. Compassion and caring abound as students work together and help one another.





2013 Wine Tasting and Silent Auction



Thanks to the tireless work of co-chairs Odalys Martin & Clare Schmitt and their devoted husbands Gerry & Carl, our annual auction had its greatest success yet. Many thanks to all the dedicated volunteers and generous donors who made this such a fabulous event.



Donors Sustain Our Future

Donors are an important part of the Mountain Laurel Montessori School community and in *Building Our Future*. Each of you who have contributed, whether financially or with time and talent, has had a positive effect in the lives of our children and families. We would like to especially thank our top donors this year for leading the way by making significant financial contributions to our Annual Giving Campaign.

We would also like to express our deepest appreciation to parents, grandparents, alumni, and special friends who donated time, talent, energy, and funding by their volunteer work on both campuses. The volunteers are too numerous to mention all by name, but here are a few examples of the work our community gave. Parents David and Cheryl Fox-Wyrick and Jes and Kyle Kuzmick worked to create our beautiful new entryway at the Front Royal campus. This not only enhanced our reception area, but also improved our safety and security. Teacher, Carrie Irre, offered an after-school program, Jr. Great Books, and donated her earnings. Alum, Eme Boucher volunteered for the third summer as a Camp Counselor in our Elementary Summer Camp Program. Grandmother, Cathy Bovey, read with students in the classroom. Jr. High parent Mark McCormack built a new “bear-proof” shed for the Front Royal campus refuse containers. The Trumpetto and Buracker families participated in our Neighborhood Association’s annual clean-up of the shared roadway. Friend of MLMS and local environmental activist, Hal Hunter, helped fund a significant portion of the new farm mower for the Jr. High campus.

Your names and stories are too numerous...We cannot express enough our thanks to the MLMS community for each and every hour of volunteer work that you gave and every additional dollar you contributed to support the children and our mission of providing “an education for life.”

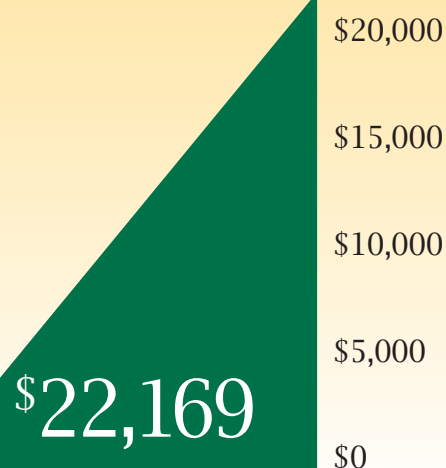


Each of you who have contributed, whether financially or with time and talent, has had a positive effect in lives of our children and families.



2012-13 Annual Giving Campaign Sets New Record

Thanks to the many generous donations from parents, staff members, board members, family, and friends, we are proud to announce a new record for the Annual Giving Campaign. We exceeded our goal and raised \$22,169. Every one of our teachers, staff and members of the Board of Directors participated in the 2012-13 Annual Giving campaign. Our goal next year is to celebrate 100% participation of parents as well. Please accept our heartfelt thanks for your contributions to *Building Our Future*.



2012-2013 Donors

The Golden Bead Leadership Circle—\$1,000 +

Kris & Chris Boucher *
 Cara & Frederick Broadhead *
 Paul Davis, Phoenix Roofing *
 Douglas Forest *
 Elaine & Gerry Glier *
 Colleen & Robert Hencken *
 Siggie Hepp-Dax *
 Melissa & Douglas Ichiuji *
 Carrie Irre *
 Susanne Jackson *
 Lisa, a long-time friend of Mountain Laurel *

Mona & Jon Nixon *
 Julie & Stephen Pettler *
 Victoria & Ernie Ryles *
 John Sweeny *

The Pink Tower Supporting Circle—\$250-\$999

Kristen & Thomas Adams *
 Sandra & Philip Baumgart *
 Cathy & Robert Bovey *
 Patricia Brinklow
 Castiglia's Restaurant & Pizza *
 Nancy & Michael Grambo
 Margaret & Thomas Hogan
 Maureen McGowan & Jeff Bussells
 Andrea & David McKay
 Margaret Primm

The Binomial Cube Contributing Circle—Up to \$249

Mary & Patrick Ahern *
 Keri Ayres*
 Michelle & Jon Beamer
 Katerina & Matthew Bradley
 Misty & Jeff Brown *
 Chrystal Capozio
 Alice & Fred Catlin
 Natalia Chistyukhina & Luigi Scotto di Clemente
 Patricia Christian
 Leslie & David Compton
 Mark Cuppett *
 Heather Davis & Jose Padua
 Margaret & Anthony DeMato *
 Margaret & Michael DeMato
 KC & Rick Dickman
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 Rose & Bryan DiNinno *
 Kara & David Draper
 The Edsell Family
 Teresa & Andrew Farmer

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 Julie & Joshua Grove
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 Beth Irwin
 Josephine & Michael Jefferson
 Janet & Tony Jewell
 Rebecca & Reggie Jones
 Anne Kassira & Gassan Kanderian
 Melissa & Mathew Kelly
 Belinda & Scott Kittrell
 Edel & James Kunkel *
 Elena Schlossberg Kunkel
 Jes & Kyle Kuzmick
 Tim Lilburn & Leslie Fiddler
 Sarah & Mark McCormack
 Rebecca Nixon
 Catie Noel
 Karen & Wayne Northart
 Pam & Jock Owens
 Naomi Pitcock

Susan & Jitender Randhawa
 Elizabeth & Michael Schelin
 Sherri & Stephen Schmidt
 The Schmitt Family
 Nancy Slattery
 Ruth Swenson
 Lori & Scott Warrender
 Kathleen Wilkins
 Wendy & Scott Wilson
 Kristal Wines & Christopher Tennett

Businesses & Organizations

Castiglia's Restaurant & Pizza
 Christchurch School
 Paul Davis, Phoenix Roofing
 Pam Owens Design, LLC
 Shotton Design, LLC

Grants

Miller Family Foundation through the Community Foundation
 Serving Richmond & Central Virginia
 Piedmont Environmental Council (Garden Awards)
 Rappahannock County Farm Bureau

14 Why Support the Annual Giving Campaign?

Q: Does Mountain Laurel really need my gift? What about tuition paid by families?

A: While tuition funds contribute to the school's annual operating budget, maintaining our beautiful environments and excellent quality depends on the support of our community. Even with tuition, we still need your gift to provide this quality education to those who seek it. There is an approximate 15-20% gap in the amount of tuition paid and the annual operating costs of the school.

Q: When will my support be needed by the Annual Giving Campaign?

A: The Annual Giving Campaign runs from year to year beginning on July 1st and ending on June 30th. You have the opportunity to give anytime by mailing a check or by giving online. We send a direct mail appeal each year to alumni, current families and friends of Mountain Laurel.

Q: I can't afford a big gift. Is there any point in me giving?

A: Annual gifts—no matter the size—add up and are an important income stream that ensures the school's fiscal health and continued excellence.

Your participation also plays a major role in encouraging large donors, corporations and foundations to support the school. When participation rates are strong, foundations and corporations are more likely to award grants and funding to MLMS. Each individual's contribution also inspires giving from other Mountain Laurel families as we join together to support the school in whose mission we believe and whose community we cherish.

Q: Who gives to the MLMS Annual Giving Campaign?

A: In addition to current families, MLMS faculty, staff, and board members give back to the school with their own Annual Fund gifts. Mountain Laurel also receives donations from alumni, parents of alumni, grandparents, and many other friends of the school. Through this united community effort, we are able to provide a Montessori education for our children otherwise unavailable in our area.

Q: How does my annual gift help the different programs at MLMS?

A: The Annual Giving Campaign at MLMS supports all programs. Your gift to the fund goes where

it is most needed, unless you note the specific area you would like to support. Most funds contributed support replacing well-loved and used materials in the classroom, improving our grounds, building upkeep and maintenance, financial aid assistance, staff development and maintenance of our beautiful environments. Through your Annual Fund gift, our dedicated teachers can offer the best programs to your children.

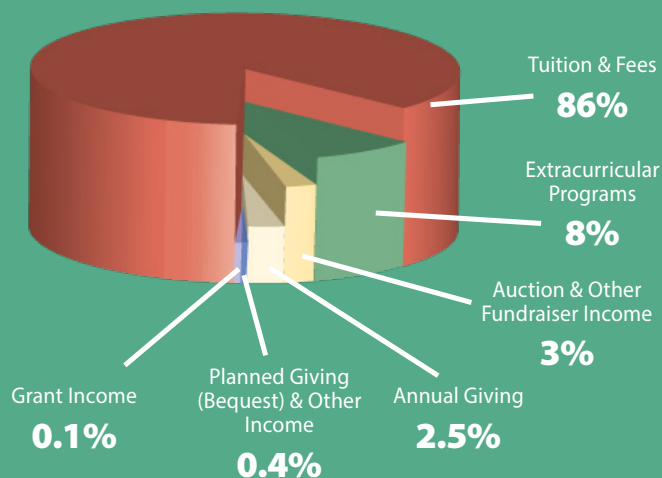
Q: I'm a former student or parent. Why is my participation so important?

A: As an alumni student and family, you are our greatest testament to an MLMS Montessori education. Your caring support ensures that MLMS will continue to have a positive impact in our children's lives. By Building Our Future through your financial contributions, you assure that Mountain Laurel Montessori School will be here for your children and your grandchildren.

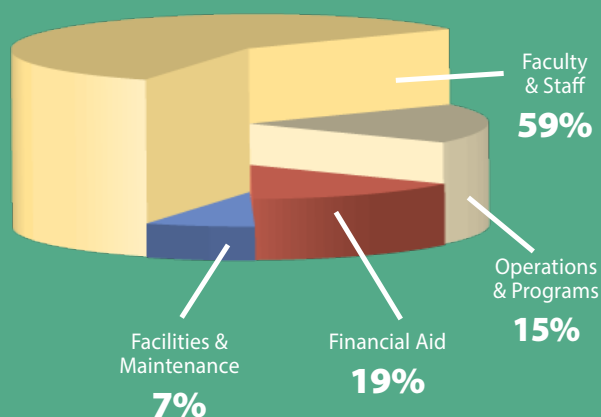
Q: Is my Annual Gift tax deductible?

A: All monetary contributions are tax deductible as Mountain Laurel Montessori School is a 501 (c) 3 organization.

2012-2013 Income



2012-2013 Expenses

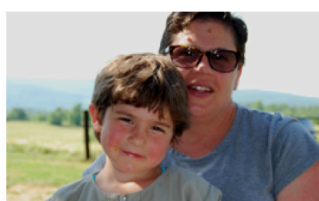
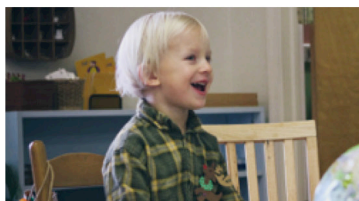
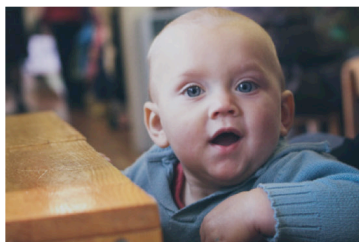




Building Friendships



“And so we discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being..” —Dr. Maria Montessori



A Place of Joy

Mission Statement

Provide ideal learning environments for each stage of a child's development, adhering to the highest standards of Montessori education.



Mountain Laurel Montessori School

Mona Nixon, Head of School

P.O. Box 102 (mailing)

155 Biggs Drive, Front Royal, VA 22630

(540) 636-4257

info@mlm-school.org

MountainLaurelMontessori.org

"There is in the soul of a child an impenetrable secret that is gradually revealed as it develops." —Dr. Maria Montessori