

The Brookwood School

September 2011

GOOD NEWS

It's Brookwood's 30th!

Welcome to the 2011-2012 school year. This year is particularly special because it is our 30th anniversary! Thriving as a small child-centered Montessori school for thirty years in such a rural area is quite an accomplishment. Brookwood has evolved in those years to additionally provide the most comprehensive and high quality infant, toddler and school-age childcare as well. This is not only due to the addition of space six years ago, but to the dedication of the people who care for those children and the Boards of Trustees who care for the organization.

We have terrific staff in every area of the building. Our Infant and Toddler teachers put in long, happy days loving and teaching children to care for themselves, their environment and to be part of a social world. An emphasis is placed on grace and manners as well as learning about the world around them. Our Preschool teachers spend many hours in preparation before a single child shows up. The premise of the Montessori "Prepared Environment" (read the article on page 4), is to ensure that children will have access to what they need, that they will be able to function independently in the classroom, and that there is a highly developed sense of order with a place for everything and everything in its place. This continues on the "school side" of the building with many more lessons, materials and plans put in place to personalize the curriculum for each and every child where they will excel academically and develop who they are.

What Brookwood offers is of the highest quality and unique to this area. We are challenged by the economy and need everyone to help us boost our enrollment to continue to maintain our staff and offer more.

One way to become a part of the process is to participate in the PTO. Some families believe that this group is in place solely for the school-age programs. This is not true. The PTO's efforts are designed and focused to benefit every program. But they need more members among their ranks. Parents of children in the Infant, Toddler and Preschool programs make up the larger portion of our families and your help can make a tremendous difference even in small ways.

As always, we want to make sure the lines of communication are open and functioning well. We try to keep you informed with all of the things happening at Brookwood via emailing the MONDAY MEMO and this monthly "Good News" Newsletter, as well as postings on classroom doors. However, the best communication often is a personal one. Please feel free to come in and speak with any of us about anything. We want your child's and your experiences here at Brookwood to be the best, so please don't hesitate to speak with us. **Please be sure we have an active email address for you on file.** We are happy to send this and other notices to more than one address.

Please share your ideas and interests with us as we all work together to improve and grow the Brookwood School.

Thank you,



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

An updated calendar will be posted for each month on the website

It's important to have an active email address for everyone

Get involved in the PTO

From the Board - Welcome to the 2011-2012 Year



Dear Brookwood Parents,

I wish to extend a warm welcome to everyone for a new school year. We begin this year with many opportunities to become closer as a community and to grow our community. As a Board, we have taken ourselves to task and along with Gina, are working to grow Brookwood and its programs. This summer we had our Annual Meeting and retreat to help us begin to move ahead with this commitment. Many of the results of this are now reflected in our Strategic Plan and our goals. In our meeting we outlined many strengths including our staff, Montessori philosophy, faculty and our facility.

One area that we are looking for support is in our parent organization and participation. Because Brookwood is an independent school and a non-profit organization, it is key that the families who attend here at every level participate in some way. This is true whether your child is in our infant program or our school-age program. Just like any other community-based organization, volunteerism is essential for growth and success. We hope that the care and education your child receives here at Brookwood from our talented teachers in our beautiful facility inspires you to participate.

From a fundraising viewpoint, we are working on several terrific events we hope you will attend. The first is a dinner at the Blue Mingo Grill on Friday, September 16th, being hosted by Ms. Jane Clark, which is honoring previous Board members whose dedication to Brookwood was significant to its success.

Dr. Robert Lancey, President, Board of Trustees



News You Can Use

Each month we will try to put all the things that come up during the previous month in this column. Some of these will be more immediate, some ongoing. Please refer to this column each month for new information.

Everyone will receive a **School Directory** and **Family Handbook**. The handbook will be brand new and has important information.

Checking children in and out should be done with numbers designated to the specific adult who is dropping off or picking up that day. This includes other approved people like aunts, grandparents, babysitters, etc. If there is someone picking up your child who does not have a code, ask Vera and we will get this for them. This is important for a number of reasons including safety.

The main extension is the place to leave important messages that need immediate attention. This includes calling about a change in dismissal. Do not leave these messages on Gina's or others' extensions as they may not be picked up as readily as the office will be.

Illness and Medications

We appreciate that it is always difficult when children are ill and need to stay home. It is important that families think about and put in place a "Plan B" in the event that children are sick and have to be out of school for a prolonged period. Sometimes children develop symptoms of illness while at school and must be picked up during the day. Children may not return to Brookwood until they are symptom free for 24-hours without medication. This rule is part of state child-care licensing regulations that we must follow.

If children are not coming in due to illness, please call us and let us know so that we can pass it on to other parents to be watchful of symptoms. The more aware we all are, the better prepared we are to prevent the spread of illness.

Also, whenever medications are brought in for administering; they must be in their original container, a "Written Medication Consent" form must be filled out in detail by parents and the doctor, and a measuring spoon (if needed) must be included.



PTO Page

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All parents, grandparents and guardians of Brookwood children belong to the PTO, and are considered partners in education along with the Brookwood Staff. We encourage everyone to become active, involved members of the PTO and to participate throughout the year in improving the quality of the educational and life experiences of our children. Be sure to pick up your handbook at our Welcoming Ice Cream Social.

Get To Know Your PTO!

Welcoming Ice Cream Social to be held on **Wednesday, September 7th at 2:30 & 4:30** in the main entrance. We are gearing up for a terrific year and invite all families, Infants through Lower Elementary, to join us in celebrating the start of the school year with some ice cream! Information will be available on our upcoming events as well. It's simply a sweet way to stop by and introduce yourself or let us introduce ourselves! Meet PTO Facilitator, Angela Chadwell, and see what is in store for the upcoming year while enjoying an ice cream sundae.

All future meetings will be held on the **first Wednesday of the month at 6pm**. Meeting agendas are sent out to all parents via email about a week prior to the meeting, and Meeting Notes emailed to all parents within a week of the meeting, by Angela. Please check to make sure you are getting the emails so you are kept informed, and if you are not receiving them, please provide your current email address to Lorraine in the Main Office.

One of the roles that the PTO plays is to support events hosted by the school. The first event this year is the 3rd annual **"Shop-a-Round"** on Saturday, October 15th. This event will be to raise items for the Annual Auction by inviting all of your favorite at-home vendors to the school so that people can purchase things they need and want for themselves or for gifts. Some of these vendors include Pampered Chef, Tupperware, Silpada Jewelry and many more! Local craftspeople are also invited to round out a great and fun event. If you are a vendor and would like to be represented at this event, let us know now! First preference of vendors will be given to members of the Brookwood community. Otherwise we are looking for helpers to set up, take down and assist on that Saturday. Call or email Angela if you can help.



WE COLLECT BOX TOPS FOR EDUCATION!

Box Tops for Education is another simple program to earn cash for our school at no extra cost to you. Please clip Box Tops from hundreds of your favorite General Mills Products. Turn in your Box Tops and we will submit them and get 10 cents for each Box Top. You can also join the Box Tops Booster Club at www.boxtops4education.com and our school earns up to 8% of each qualifying purchase when you shop at over 200 online stores signed up with them. Periodically send your box tops to school with your child.



PTO MEETINGS

Meetings are held once a month on the first Wednesday of the month. Next month our meeting is on **Wednesday, October 5th** at 6:00 pm.

There are a number of programs that help benefit Brookwood directly by earning points, dollars or vouchers. Tools for Schools at Price Chopper requires that you sign up or re-enroll, but the other programs like "Box Tops" and "Labels for Education" are about collecting the labels/box tops and turning them in. Look for a packet of information to come home on these programs and how you can help us acquire things like PE equipment.

Come participate in this dedicated, energetic group consisting of parents, teachers, Board members and staff!

Each month we will have an article about the Montessori philosophy and education for you to enjoy. Our hope is that this will educate you to the process in which your child is involved, and help you to better appreciate the many layers of this amazing form of educating children.

Montessori Terminology:

The Prepared Environment, The Montessori Materials, The Process of Normalization

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The Prepared Environment



The "prepared environment" is Maria Montessori's concept that the environment can be designed to facilitate maximum independent learning and exploration by the child. In the prepared environment, there is a variety of activity as well as a great deal of movement. In a *preschool* classroom, for example, a three-year-old may be washing clothes by hand while a four-year-old nearby is composing words and phrases with letters known as the movable alphabet, and a five-year-old is performing multiplication using a specially designed set of beads. In an *elementary* classroom, a small group of six- to nine-year-old children may be using a timeline to learn about extinct animals while another child chooses to work alone, analyzing a poem using special grammar symbols. Sometimes an entire class may be involved in a group activity, such as storytelling, singing, or move-

ment. In the calm, ordered space of the Montessori prepared environment, children work on activities of their own choice at their own pace. They experience a blend of freedom and self-discipline in a place especially designed to meet their *developmental needs*.

The Montessori Materials

In the Montessori classroom, learning materials are arranged invitingly on low, open shelves. Children may choose whatever materials they would like to use and may work for as long as the material holds their interest. When they are finished with each material, they return it to the shelf from which it came. The materials themselves invite activity. There are bright arrays of solid geometric forms, knobbed puzzle maps, colored beads, and various specialized rods and blocks. Each material in a Montessori classroom isolates one quality. In this way, the concept that the child is to discover is isolated. For example, the material known as the pink tower is made up of ten pink cubes of varying sizes. The preschool-aged child constructs a tower with the largest cube on the bottom and the smallest on top. This material isolates the concept of size. The cubes are all the same color and texture; the only difference is their size. Other materials isolate different concepts: color tablets for color, geometry materials for form, and so on. Moreover, the materials are self-correcting. When a piece does not fit or is left over, the child easily perceives the error. There is no need for adult "correction." The child is able to solve problems independently, building self-confidence, analytical thinking, and the satisfaction that comes from accomplishment. As the child's exploration continues, the materials interrelate and build upon each other. For example, various relationships can be explored between the pink tower and the broad stair, which are based on matching precise dimensions. Later, in the elementary years, new aspects of some of the materials unfold. When studying volume, for instance, the child may return to the pink tower and discover that its cubes progress incrementally from one cubic centimeter to one cubic decimeter.

The Process of Normalization

In Montessori education, the term "normalization" has a specialized meaning. "Normal" does not refer to what is considered to be "typical" or "average" or even "usual." "Normalization" does not refer to a process of being forced to conform. Instead, Maria Montessori used the terms "normal" and "normalization" to describe a unique process she observed in child development. Montessori observed that when children are allowed freedom in an environment suited to their needs, they blossom. After a period of intense concentration, working with materials that fully engage their interest, children appear to be refreshed and contented. Through continued concentrated work of their own choice, children grow in inner discipline and peace. She called this process "normalization" and cited it as "the most important single result of our whole work" (*The Absorbent Mind*, 1949). She went on to write,



Only "normalised" children, aided by their environment, show in their subsequent development those wonderful powers that we describe: spontaneous discipline, continuous and happy work, social sentiments of help and sympathy for others. . . . An interesting piece of work, freely chosen, which has the virtue of inducing concentration rather than fatigue, adds to the child's energies and mental capacities, and leads him to self-mastery. . . . One is tempted to say that the children are performing spiritual exercises, having found the path of self-perfectionment and of ascent to the inner heights of the soul. (Maria Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind*, 1949)

E.M. Standing (*Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work*, 1957) lists these as the characteristics of normalization: love of order, love of work, spontaneous concentration, attachment to reality, love of silence and of working alone, sublimation of the possessive instinct, power to act from real choice, obedience, independence and initiative, spontaneous self-discipline, and joy. Montessori believed that these are the truly "normal" characteristics of childhood, which emerge when children's developmental needs are met.

Cello Comes to Brookwood



David Gibson, a graduate of Julliard and Yale is offering cello lessons here at Brookwood on Tuesdays after school.

He is taking students, beginners (5 years and up) through advanced.

To find out more... call David at 607-445-4016

We are excited to add this opportunity to our after school opportunities at Brookwood



Brookwood T-Shirts for Sale

\$7 for Children

\$10 for Adults

* Limited sizes available

PICTURE THIS



Camp was a blast!



Upcoming Events

Here's what's coming up:

Get to Know Your PTO - 9/7 @ 2:30 & 4:30

Pumpkin Festival in Cooperstown - 9/25

"Meet the Teachers" night - 9/27

School Pictures - September 28 & 29

... beginning of October

PTO Meeting - 10/5 @ 6PM

Staff Development Day - 10/7 NO SCHOOL or
CHILD CARE

SHOP AROUND - 10/15