

# HMS PTO TIMES

*Hilltop Montessori School*



## Upcoming Events

### October 3

#### **Job Demonstration**

Preschool: 3:45 - 4:45

Elementary/Middle: 5:00 - 6:00

**Toddler students will meet Sunday, October 2 at 5:30 PM. Check with Ms. C or Ms. Susan for details**

### October 9

#### **Hilltop Hustle**

Mt. Laurel Park 2 -5 PM

### October 11

#### **PTO Meeting**

Meet in the multi-purpose room 8:45

### November 14-18

#### **Scholastic Book Fair**

### November 23

#### **Thanksgiving Feast**

## LETTER FROM THE PTO PRESIDENT

Hello Hilltop Families,

We are off to another great year at HMS! Fall is in the air, and the PTO has some exciting events planned for the school year. Perhaps one of our biggest events is the Hilltop Hustle 5K Fun Run/Walk. This event will be held on Sunday, October 9 from 2-5 p.m. at the Mt. Laurel Park. There will also be a pizza social at the school for Hilltop students and families. Whether you are a runner or not, come out and enjoy the fresh air, food, and fun! The event will serve as a fundraiser for the PTO, as well as provide a great opportunity for our Hilltop families to socialize and get to know each other better. We hope to see you there!

Our first PTO meeting on September 13 was a success, with around 20 parents in attendance. Thank you so much to those who attended. PTO meetings are a great way to become more involved in enriching the experiences of our students

and families, as well as allow us to strengthen community at Hilltop. I encourage you to attend a meeting and see what PTO is all about! Our next meeting date is Tuesday, October 11 at 8:45 a.m. in the multi-purpose room.

Feel free to contact me at [sallydollar1@gmail.com](mailto:sallydollar1@gmail.com) for more information about the PTO or how you can get involved. You can also visit our blog at [www.hilltopmontessori.com/blog/pto](http://www.hilltopmontessori.com/blog/pto) or check us out on Facebook. Whatever your talent or interest, we would love to have you become involved with PTO!

Sally Dollar  
PTO President

# From the Executive Director...



With less than a month into school, I am always amazed at how rapidly our children assimilate themselves into the school routine. Maria Montessori defined this process as “normalization”, which is described as the time “when the children begin to work seriously with a material or activity.” Montessori also observed that when the children’s desire to learn is satisfied, that the children become more calm and appear rested and content. They are also more compassionate with each other and they exhibit increasing responsibility for their classroom environment. At Hilltop Montessori, we are proud to announce that our classrooms have already reached this level. Visitors to the building (even at the second day of school) remark about the level of concentration in our little ones, and the self-discipline and independence of our older students. Children love to learn in an engaging, academic and socially stimulating environment and this is

something I am proud to witness every day.

As we are already deep into the learning process, we also look forward to a very successful year with many opportunities available for parent interaction and participation. To start, “Job Demonstration Time” (the Montessori equivalent to Parent Open House) is on October 3rd for preschool through middle school children. Preschool parents are invited into the building with their child that afternoon from 3:45 to 4:45 and elementary/middle school parents and students are invited from 5:00 to 6:00. This is a wonderful opportunity to interact with your child as they “show” you their work; the pride exhibited on their faces during this opportunity is unique. We hope you visit on October 3rd and involve yourself in your child’s learning process. And for those parents of our youngest students (the toddler classrooms), the teachers are planning a pot luck on Sunday, October 2nd so even our little ones can “show” their jobs. We look forward to these special opportunities, as well as many others, as we begin our first semester of 2011-2012. See you then!

Michele Scott  
Executive Director

## From the Assistant Director...

Hello Everyone! My name is Melanie Morrison and I am originally from Minnesota but moved down to Alabama about 8 1/2 years ago with my husband who took a new job down in Montgomery. I have my Bachelors in Sociology and Early Childhood Education. I am Infant/Toddler Certified AMS. I had my training in Atlanta about 7 years ago. I have been assisting/teaching for about 14 years. This is my first year at Hilltop and I am very excited to be a part of the community with both of my sons, ages 5 and 3 1/2, attending Hilltop. I am looking forward to getting to know everyone and will be subbing in the classrooms as needed to help with getting to know your children. I will also see some of you in the carpool line when I help out in the mornings occasionally. I will be assisting Michele with admissions and fundraising as well. I look forward to a great year and I am here anytime if you have any questions or need assistance with anything. If I don't know the answer right away I will find out and get back to you!

As I said I am excited to be a part of the Hilltop Montessori community and look forward to getting to know each and everyone of you!

Warm Regards,  
Melanie Morrison

# From the Classrooms

## Toddler Times

Ms. C & Ms. Shelley

It has been a good start of school; the children are getting adjusted to their new environment. The new environment is awesome! The children like the new room and the new playground especially the trike path. Thanks, PTO for providing us with the trike path. I would like to share photos of the children working and getting acquainted with each other.

Enjoy the photos!



# From the Classroom

## Ms. Susan's Toddler Class

The new toddler program is off to a great start. The children are getting settled into the rhythm of the day. We are enjoying our time together as we come to know one another. Each day the children come into class and have a morning work cycle from 8:30 to 9:30 and then as weather permits, we go outside. At this time our class blends with the other toddler class for outside time followed by music, sign language lessons and group snack. Another work cycle comes at about 11:00 followed by Spanish lessons, then lunch and naptime. As the children awaken, we head outside again and then have another snack before dismissal.

The toddler work cycle is the time for new lessons and for the children to choose educational activities in the classroom. They

choose work they are ready for and the activities are designed to develop sensory, language, social and practical life skills. Outside and at music time, we are learning to be a community. We sing and sign songs designed to enhance the subjects in the curriculum. Sign language has been a huge hit for the children and we have covered many new signs you may see at home. If you check your calendars, the individual sign of the day is listed, so feel free to ask for a demonstration! We have covered polite words like please and thank you, family members and parts of the body.

The routines of the day are a huge part of education for the children. As they learn to take care of their bodies, they are learning valuable life skills. Toileting or diapering, dressing, hand washing, nose wiping, gathering supplies,

cleaning up spills, serving and eating food, throwing away trash and preparing for nap all teach coordination, courtesy, independence, etiquette, order, social expectations, confidence, self-regulation, decision making and concentration. This develops the child's sense of themselves as an independent person.

This past month we have celebrated a birthday in class in the Montessori tradition. We are now planning for another great Montessori activity, Job Demonstration Night on October 2 at 5:30. Look for more information on this special event coming in your email box very soon.



# News from the Classroom



## Toddler Pre-Spanish News

**iBuenos Dias!** We have had a great start this year I have enjoyed working with your kids and seeing the smiles on their faces!

And I have been MUY FELIZ when your kids tell me the day of the week, the month, when they count to 20, know the colors, know some words and opposites. We have also learned the ABC –El Alfabeto!, and have talked about the Continent of Australia, and the animals that live there. We also have talked about vertebrates and invertebrates in Spanish. With all the little ones we have gone over the days of the week, the numbers, colors, family members, and body parts. We have had days full of fun singing, dancing, and playing games like “El Burro” on Mexico’s Day.

Thanks for sharing your kids with me!

Ms. Ana Diaz

# From the Classrooms

## PreSchool News

Ms. Marcia & Ms. Allison

**H**ello Families of Ms. Marcia and Ms. Allison's class

Once again, I would like to thank all of you for the generous outpouring of condolences and support you offered me. It was very difficult to start a year off in such a tumultuous way but I think we are on the right road now. Ms. Lorena did a fine job of starting the children out the first week with Ms. Allison, who is herself new to the classroom.

Of course, there was a period of readjustment when I returned from New York and resumed my work. All those changes have affected the 'normalization' of the class. That term is a fancy way of

saying that the children are in the process of "getting used to being in a school setting with expectations of behavior and lessons in a large group of 23 children". It means coming to understand that walking and talking with inside voices in the classroom is a good idea if one wishes to be safe from bruises and heard by others. It means being able to say "Good Bye" at the car door in the mornings assured of the fact that your family will pick you up every day after school. It also means, that lessons are given and that the children who receive them need to practice in order absorb the new skill and move ahead with new lessons built on the foundation laid down by previous ones. In Montessori, there is a partnership between the student, the Guide (or teacher) and the Environment (the prepared classroom). In our class, all this is settling out

nicely now. Yes, there are some instances of differing ideas on what constitutes appropriate conduct between us, but we do engage in 'critical thinking' group discussions with these young people and they do come up with their own very workable solutions.

Our cultural topics for September were Australia for Geography and Living/non Living; plant, animal, mineral; vertebrate/invertebrate and natural/man made things for Science. The new topics for October will be North America and animal classification. The children's shares need to reflect these cultural subjects Mondays through Thursdays. Fridays are always open to fun things like our fashion sharings and favorite toys.



## Scholastic Book Fair

November 14 - 18

Contact Jill Walton at [jjweldonw@att.net](mailto:jjweldonw@att.net) for more information or to volunteer.

## Ms. Shellie & Ms. Lorena

Can you believe it is already October? Time flies when your having fun. We will be studying the continent of North America. Also, we will talk about fur/feathers/scales, tracks and tracking, and animal habitats and animal classification.

In Science, we will be study the human body which is perfect with all those skeletons that come with the season.

We have started cooking on Friday's and the children LOVE it. Snack always taste better when they make it themselves. Even better, we have eaten tomatoes and Swiss chard from our garden!!!!

# From the Classroom

## Mary Jo and Christi's Class

We are having such a great school year so far. The students are settling into the classroom and we have all enjoyed getting to know each other. It is going to be a wonderful year!

In August our first topic of study was the world. We began learning about the world by studying our two Montessori globes. One shows land and water and the other the seven continents, which are represented by different colors. Our continent map also showed the students the seven continents and we enjoyed singing the continent song. In our science experiment, we collected samples of land, air and water. The children's favorite was "catching air" in a bottle.

For September, we began our tour of the world with Australia. We learned about landmarks and the animals

that live there. The children enjoyed coloring Australian Aboriginal masks. Since Australia is an island, we also studied the oceans of the world. The children loved learning about the creatures of the ocean, including whales, dolphins and jellyfish. Two crafts that the children made were jellyfish out of recycled materials, and diffusing paper sea creatures which they painted. For our science curriculum, we studied vertebrate/invertebrate, plant/animal/mineral, living/non-living, and natural/man-made. We made monster toast for our food prep and the children loved eating their drawings.

Next month we will visit North America. Our areas of science exploration will be animal classification, habitats, and tracks and tracking. We will also study the human body.



# From the Classrooms

**Ms. Cindi and Ms. Toni**

**W**e love our new classroom! The children have adjusted to the space and love working in the environment. We now have three new garden beds outside adjoining Mary Jo and Marcia's gardens. The classroom feels complete with the garden addition! The children have already planted our fall garden and spring flower bulbs. We will begin harvesting the sweet potatoes soon.

September has been a very busy month. Toni and I have

given many new lessons in all areas of the classroom. Toni has brought new materials to the classroom and a fresh approach to learning. The class is benefitting greatly and we are having fun! We will begin our units on the Seasons and North American in October. This will continue through November. Please check your weekly updates to see what we are studying each day.

Our class is now complete with the addition of Brandon Newsome and Alex Anders. Both kids moved up from the

toddler class. Welcome to the class!

We are in full swing with volunteers in the classroom. I truly appreciate the help and want to thank everyone who is helping. I also want to thank the Newsome family for donating wonderful books and a new camera for the class. Look for pictures on our blog page soon!

Thanks for sharing your wonderful children with us!

Cindi and Toni



## Hilltop Hustle 5k

Join us for our first annual Hilltop Hustle 5k Fun Run/Walk on Sunday, October 9th from 2 - 5 PM in Mt. Laurel Park.

### Schedule of events

**2pm** - Registration at Mt. Laurel Park

**3pm** - 5k begins

**3:30** - 1 mile event begins

**4:30** - Pizza Social

\* **Pizza Social** for Hilltop families

\* **Commemorative water bottle** for all participants

\* **Goody bag** for each family

\* **Prizes** for adults and for kids in the 1-mile run/walk

# From the Classrooms

## Lower Elementary News

**Ms. Carol & Ms. Vicky**

We are very excited to start a new year. We are happy to see all of our returning students and welcomed our new ones. The past few weeks have been great and the children are adjusting beautifully. (So are Ms. Carol and Ms. Vicky)

This year we have incorporated our science lessons and experiments with our cooperative learning. The first week we learned scientists "observe". After observing leaves, pine cones, mud daubers, hornets, and a mystery box with all our senses, we did a cooperative learning project. Each group was given a tray with 20 objects on it. They had 2 minutes to observe all items, then a cover was placed over the tray and they had to write down all the things they "observed" in 2 minutes. This was much harder than

they thought. The highest number of objects remembered for any group was 14 out of 20.

This past week we learned scientist "measure". We used all forms of measuring -- rulers, scales, thermometer, measuring cups, paper clips, pencils and even our hands. For cooperative learning the children had to invent their own units of measurement and a tool used to measure things. They had to measure the distance from their elbow to their wrist bone. This distance had to be given a name. Then they made their own ruler that size. They had to divide this tool into 10 equal segments and give those smaller units of measurements a name. Examples of these are: A glatch with smaller units called glatchettes, a stone with smaller units called stonelettes, and a sim with smaller units called simlettes. Then they had to measure a mat, a

yardstick and a tray with their new tool and its new units of measurement. The class had a wonderful time coming up with their names and then saying them when reporting their measurements of the objects. For example on group's tray was one glatch and three glatchetts long and another group's mat was 5 sims and 8 simletts long.

We will continue to tie what scientist do into our cooperative learning. We look forward to more fun and learning!!!

### **DATES TO REMEMBER:**

Our first book report is due Sept. 26.

Job Demonstration Night is October 3, from 5 – 6pm.

Our first field trip is on October 11<sup>th</sup> to Ruffner Mountain.

## **Ms. Dama & Ms. Chelsea**

We are enjoying our class this year. Everyone has been working so hard! Our first book reports were a big success and we are looking forward to the next one!

We've already presented one of Maria Montessori's Great Lessons, and the children are still talking about it. It was indeed a big bang!

We will inviting parents in soon to start reading with our children weekly. If you're interested, please contact us via email.

Be sure to check the classroom blog, as we will be updating it weekly.

**"It is the child who makes the man, and no man exists who was not made by the child he once was." - Maria Montessori**

# From the Classrooms

## Upper Elementary News

### Ms. Janet & Mr. Brent

Upper Elementary students have had a great month. Most were excited (yes, really) to learn that a completed work plan in the Upper EI means a choice of more work (not free time)... what a great group! We are working to develop a strong sense of community and to continue to provide a learning environment that is socially and emotionally (as well as academically) encouraging. "Share" time helps to build that sense of community, and we've had some really great "shares" including short videos, ribbons, coins, keepsakes, books, games, beautifully completed class work, a copy of the Declaration of Independence, and more. We also build our sense of community through group games like "Vortex" and "A What?" and through shared experiences such as dissection, literature discussions, and writing workshop.

Students had their first dissection for the year during the week of September 12<sup>th</sup>. Fourth and fifth level students dissected mussels (molluska bivalvia) and sixth level students dissected squid. Most students enjoyed the exploratory nature of dissection, and several took home a few bits and pieces in Ziploc bags.

We finished reading The View from Saturday, a story told from multiple points of view that highlights friendship, cooperation, the value of diversity, and complementary skills. In the book, the four central protagonists come together each Saturday to take tea. Meeting each week for tea time is one way they develop their strong sense of community, and we are working to foster such a sense of community in our classroom. In the story, Ms.

Olinski observes how civilized and courteous it is to sip a cup of "slow tea". It is an experience we would like to provide for our students. As our culminating activity for the book, the Upper Elementary hosted a (formal, not mad) tea party on Tuesday, September 20<sup>th</sup> at 2 PM. Each student brought his or her own teacup and saucer from home, and parent volunteers provided tablecloths, teapots, cloth napkins, beautiful floral arrangements, glass plates, silverware, and a wide variety of tea party foods including petit fours, biscotti, meringues, brownie bites, and tiny sandwiches. Students were seated in groups of four or five, each with their own teapot and selection of treats. Most remarked on how calming the experience was and how it differed from lunch time. It was a highly positive shared experience!

We are currently reading Three Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin. This book differs from our first two read-alouds in that it is nonfiction. We expect to have some kind of community service project as follow-up for the book.

Upper Elementary students presented their completed "Book Bag" book reports on Thursday, September 22. For this report, each student read a book and chose five 3D physical objects to represent character(s), setting, or elements of the plot. Students then wrote a note card "museum label" for each object. During our presentation time, each student made a display of his or her illustrated bag and five objects with note cards. Students enjoyed exploring their friends' selections. Our next book report selections will be biographies.

Students are enjoying hands-on Montessori math lessons on a variety of grade-level topics. For several math lessons recently, the follow-up

work was completed with materials and the end product was a photograph which we printed and taped or stapled into a student's math notebook. Students seem to really like having photos in notebooks!

Speaking of photos, more pictures are available on our class blog at <http://www.hilltopmontessori.com/blog/upperelem/>. We regularly update our blog with photos and information about classwork and activities. If you've had a blog login and password in the past, that should still work. Anyone who needs blog access who has not had a login and password previously should email [webmaster@hilltopmontessori.com](mailto:webmaster@hilltopmontessori.com) with their name, their child's name, and their child's teacher's name to request access. Blog access is school wide, so once you have logged in to the blogs, you can check out photos and information from all the classes and from PTO. J







# From the Classrooms

## Middle School News

### Middle School Algebra I

By: David Allen

This year the Middle school students that took pre-algebra are now exploring the wonderful world of Algebra I. We started the algebra this year by studying patterns and sequences. Next we studied the order of operations, stem-and-leaf plots, and graphs and functions. We have an algebra test every week. We also have overnight homework every day to help us get better at algebra!



### Middle School Pre-Algebra

By: Justin Rudd

The middle school is learning many things in pre-algebra, including order of operations, properties, and the distributive property. Most of the 6th grade comes to our classroom to do pre-algebra with us. We enjoy seeing our friends.



### Middle School Grammar and History

By: Trey Moss

The middle school has been doing language arts. The middle school has an hour of grammar every Tuesday and Thursday. Middle school has learned about the usage of commas. Middle school has also learned about colons. This Thursday middle school will take its first test.

While 7th grade has taken civics, 8th grade has been learning about

mankind's history. The 8th grade has learned about the earliest humans all the way to the first empires. The 8th has mostly learned about early Mesopotamia. The 8th grade has our first chapter test on Friday.



### Middle School Extracurricular Activities

By: Hayden Desmond

The middle school has been taking many extracurricular activities, those include; Music, P.E, Spanish, and Art. In music with Mr. Derek, we have been covering the Pirates of the Caribbean theme, treble clef and base clef. In P.E with Coach Trey, we have participated in activities such as; dodge ball, kickball, Ultimate Frisbee, and Football just as the regular season of football had started. In Spanish with Ms. Amber, we have talked (in Spanish) about how to greet people (in Spanish), and how to tell other people where you are from (in Spanish). In art with Ms. Ona, we have been covering Joshua Franco, Elements of Design, shading, and different types of shading.



### Community Service Projects

By: David Fox

This year, Middle School has been looking forward to more community service projects. Last year, some of our community service projects included "A Day Without Shoes," where we walked around the town of Mt. Laurel without shoes. Another was last year's middle school haunted house, "The Trail to Nowhere." The middle school has

thought long and hard about what community service projects to do this year and here are some ideas: we might volunteer at a local soup kitchen, go get goods from store for the elderly, or make a speech about bullying and why you shouldn't do it.



### Earth Science and Civics

By: Isaac Charlemagne

In Earth science, we are currently studying meteorology, geology, biology, and oceanography. We are also studying the hydrosphere, the biosphere, the lithosphere, the atmosphere, and the asthenosphere. We do Earth science every day. Other than those eight things, we are also learning about technology. We have a test every other week.

In civics we are studying immigration. We have learned that the first immigrants were the Spaniards. They came in the 1500's. We also are learning about documented and undocumented immigrants. We have some very long, fairly easy section assessment tests; they are simple enough.

**Everyone welcome to come to our monthly PTO meetings. All meetings take place the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 8:45 in the Multi-Purpose Room.**



### Future PTO Dates:

October 11

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November 8

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December 13

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### Hilltop PTO Officers

**President:** Sally Dollar

**Vice President:** Harper Basquill

**Secretary:** Nancy Patterson

**Treasurer:** Paola Garza

**Fundraising Chair:** Martha Kay Griffith

**Social Event Chair:** Libby Holmes

**Publicity Coordinator:** Alli Kahl

**Newsletter Editor:** Jennifer Burke

**Box Tops Co-Coordinators:** Jenny Brengelman

Elana Swiney

**Scholastic Book Fair Coordinator:** Jill Walton

**Teacher Appreciation Week Coordinator:** Anneris Schutts

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