



The Lamplighter

SPEMS Monthly Parent Newsletter

April 2015



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SCHOOL CLOSED:

- 4/3 Easter Holiday
- 4/24 Battle of the Flowers Holiday

Practicing Kindness

Andrew Kutt is the founder and head of the *Oneness Family School* in Maryland. He is an active member of leading Montessori organizations in the United States and is a highly sought-after speaker. I was grateful for the opportunity to spend time in his workshop at the recent *American Montessori Society Conference* in Philadelphia. In his workshop, Kutt discussed his concerns about the disappearing virtue of kindness:

"Sometimes I think the virtue of kindness is disappearing along with the likes of the cassette tape, the landline telephone, and video rental stores," Kutt began. "As TV shows become ever more crude, music more crass, and video games and movies more gratuitously violent, their influence on children becomes stronger and more worrisome. Parents feel powerless to counteract these forces because it's 'the way kids act in the neighborhood.' Some parents feel that teaching kindness will make their child 'soft' and more prone to being bullied."

Kutt noted that the virtue of kindness, what Montessori called 'Grace and Courtesy' skills, was *not* disappearing from Montessori schools.

"Educator Maria Montessori dedicated a part of her curriculum to teaching Grace and Courtesy skills, in part because her earliest students were children of immigrant factory workers from the rough and tumble streets of Rome,"

Practicing Kindness *(continued from page 1)*

Kutt said. "Grace and courtesy skills are *still* included in the curriculum at Montessori schools today."

At SPEMS we teach students basic grace and courtesy skills, such as using words to express feelings, listening to others express their feelings, and making eye contact when speaking. We both model and teach children to say "please," and "thank-you," and "excuse me," and to introducing themselves in a polite manner.

However, kindness goes beyond these basic common courtesies that my mother taught me when I was in grade school. Kindness is being mindful about the situation, needs, and feelings of another.

The great author Elizabeth Bowen called kindness an "act of imagination in regard to another." Learning kindness does not just "happen." Students need to learn the *meaning of kindness* just as they learn the meaning of other important vocabulary words and ideas. They must be shown examples through stories. And like anything else we want them to be good at, they have to *practice it* - through small skits and re-enactments, games and role-plays.

Having spent over 25 years in education and watched hundreds of children grow from toddlers to adults, I can confidently state that teaching children kindness will make them *stronger*, not weaker individuals. Equipping them with the power and ability to connect with others provides them with a basis for building strong relationships - an essential skill for business collaboration, as cited frequently in the *Harvard Business Review*.

Kindness - *grace and courtesy* - will build resiliency in our children and prepare them for success and a life well lived. Along the way, our society will become more harmonious, and even our traffic jams might be less fraught with frustration and impatience.

Please see the *kindness practices* suggested at right to start you and your child on the way to building a kinder and stronger world!

Kindness Practices

- ◆ Perform a random act of kindness each day. Ensure that your child participates in the act, or witnesses it from nearby. Let it be a random act, from the heart and unsolicited.
- ◆ Ask someone, "How are you doing today?" Look him or her in the eye. Pay full attention to the response. Notice how you are appreciated for asking and showing concern. This simple act of humanity can touch people in a very meaningful way. We never know the impact of our care and compassion.
- ◆ Pause and give thanks for all of the gifts in your life. Even if things aren't going entirely as you wished, there is much to be grateful for. Say the words silently to yourself: "I am grateful for..." Complete the sentence/prayer in your own way.
- ◆ Think of someone in your past who affected you in a positive way - someone who helped inspire, encourage or challenge you. Hold that person for a few moments in your loving thoughts. Say thank you!
- ◆ Next time someone rudely cuts you off on the road, pause before reacting. Ask yourself what the circumstances must be for that person to act so thoughtlessly and disrespectfully. What state of stress or unhappiness must he or she be in? If you can, go one step further and send some "positive energy" so that the person may find some peace today.

Students raised **\$490** during our **Wells of Love** fundraiser! The money has been sent to **Amman Imman** and will go to help build a new water well for the people of the Azawaks in West Africa. It is our school's **act of kindness!**



Summer Opportunities

SPEMS Summer Program July 7-31

This four-week program is taught by our staff of Montessori-trained teachers. The program emphasizes science, cultural studies, language, art, practical life, gross-motor activities and music.

Scholarships, half/full day, and after-school care are available. Call 210-271-2861 to register today!

Christ Church hosts 'Hometown Nazareth' VBS July 8-11

Christ Episcopal Church will host a 'Hometown Nazareth' themed Vacation Bible School June 8-11 (Monday through Thursday) from 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

The program is open to children aged 4 years through 5th grade. The \$25 registration fee includes a Hometown Nazareth t-shirt and four days of games, music, crafts and fun with friends!

To register, go to cecsa.org and click on *formation* and *children's ministry*.

Camp Capers One-Week Summer Camp Sessions

The Episcopal Diocese's *Camp Capers* in nearby Waring, Texas offers students ages 8-18 the opportunity to experience the unconditional love and friendship of a Christian community through one-week, age-grouped summer camp sessions. *Scholarships are available.*

For more information and to register your child for camp, go to dwtx.org.

Save these dates:

April 2 - Easter Egg Hunt

Ready your baskets! SPEMS will hold its *Annual Easter Egg Hunt* on the grounds of Lambermont on Thursday, April 2.

April 8 - SPEMS Picture Day

Photographer *Angela Bartels* will be at the school on Wednesday, April 8, to take both individual and class pictures.

May 28 - Summer Concert

Primary and elementary students are already learning songs for the evening *Summer Concert* to be held on Thursday, May 28. You won't want to miss this! Look for more details next month.

June 3 - Moving -Up Picnic

Join us as we honor our students who have completed the final year of their program and are ready to move up to the next level. Celebration will be at 11:00 a.m. and parents are invited to stay and picnic (BYO). School will be a half day session for all students on this day.



April 9
6:00 p.m.

Grayson Street Jazz is a neighborhood collaboration to raise money and awareness for *St. Paul's Episcopal Montessori School* by celebrating culture, music and community. It is held on the beautiful grounds of *Lambermont* located next door to the school.

This month features a fun family event, starting at a family-friendly earlier time of 6:00 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children. 'VIP Bistro tables' and a 'Party Porch' are also available. Purchase tickets at the SPEMS front desk or online at <http://www.graysonstreetjazz.com/>

TODDLER CORNER

Transitioning from the Toddler room to the Early Childhood room, April 17, 8:30 -9:30 a.m.

Toddler parents are invited to join us for this presentation, which will explore the practical considerations that need to be addressed to make this move successful. Whether your child is moving up next school year or later in the year you are welcome to attend. This is a great networking opportunity for parents of toddlers.

Hear Music with Toddlers



April 30, at 9:00 a.m.

Another great toddler-parent education opportunity! Join your child for music lesson with toddler teachers and Ms. Kathy, our music teacher. Dress casual—you will be sitting on the floor and joining in the fun!

Sharing the Easter message

Through the period of Lent and especially as we approach the Holy Week many Christians are thinking about and reflecting on the sacrifice of Jesus. However, when we are thinking about it with small children, it's hard to know what to say so they can appreciate it and yet not be disturbed or scared!

Over fifty years ago, Sofia Cavalletti—a Hebrew and Scripture scholar—and Gianna Gobbi—her Montessori collaborator, came up with a brilliant idea that allows the children to think about the Easter story. The *City of Jerusalem Map* is one of the works found in our Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Atrium.



This is an amazing lesson that allows us to walk along side Jesus through his last days, his death, and his resurrection. Children come to understand that Jerusalem was a real city, and become familiar with its features. They also begin to appreciate that Jesus spent some of the most important moments of his life in Jerusalem.

As I've worked with this material over the years and shown it to children of different ages, I've come to appreciate it very much. In a very subtle way, without becoming overly emotional, this material takes children to the heart of our faith. It gently explains the Last Supper and Jesus' death, and it celebrates the joy and hope that is His resurrection. The focus is not on Christ's suffering and death, but rather on His passing through suffering and death to the joy of His resurrection. *Christ is risen!*



We can show children the cross and the tomb, but we always remove the cross and replace it with a candle. The candle is lit as we sing "*The light of Christ has come into the world, the light of Christ has come into the world.*"

Italian Feast

A Huge success!



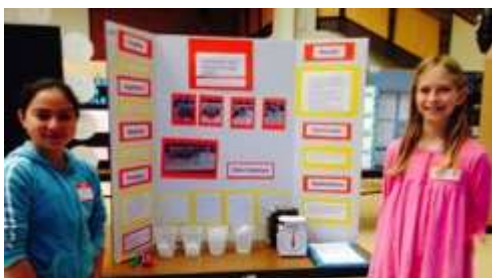
A big "thank you" goes to all the generous donors who helped purchase items for our playgrounds and gardening program. All the items posted were purchased and the event raised over **\$9,000!**

Kudos also go to our Advancement Committee team, led by SPEMS parent, Kim Scott. The team served a terrific Italian dinner and the brownies baked by our Upper Elementary students were a special treat!

We look forward to seeing our **new storage sheds** full of **new playground equipment** and **gardening tools soon!**

Big Think Science Fair 2015

Scientists ask questions and look for answers: They “*think big*.” St. Paul’s students aged 5 to 12 had an opportunity to “*think big*” at the *Big Think Science and Research Fair* held Feb. 27th in the St. Paul Parish Hall. At the fair, students displayed research on topics ranging from “Apples Rotting” to “A Zebra’s Stripes” while guest experts quizzed them about their work and offered constructive feedback.



Deandra Rodriguez and Eleanor Bird represented SPEMS at the SAES “Big Think” regional science fair on March 20.

Two of SPEMS students also traveled to Dallas on March 20th for the *Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools’ Regional “Big Think” Science Fair*. Deandra Rodriguez and Eleanor Bird met many new friends in Dallas. They also participated in team challenges – like levitating a teammate with a clipboard and 10 pieces of paper – and visited the local Good Shepherd Episcopal School’s SPARQ lab. (SPARQ is an abbreviation for *Solving Problems Asking Real-World Questions*). The girls also saw a presentation on “*The Science Behind the Movies*,” and got a chance to jump from a 16-foot tower onto a giant airbag! Their visit inspired fellow classmates to “keep thinking big.” We look forward to a larger group of students participating in next year’s regional science fair. – Blanca Bird, Lower Elementary lead guide

The Lamplighter Photo Gallery

April 2015

Thank you to our board members for sponsoring and hosting our 10th Anniversary Carnival...

