

# MONTESSORI MATTERS

MONTESSORI ACADEMY OF LONDON

EXPECT MORE FROM EDUCATION

Issue 9 – February 2015



## Fundraising Matters

### *A message from Margaret Whitley*

As a school, Montessori Academy of London has always worked hard to be fiscally responsible and to maintain our high educational standards while also keeping our tuition increases as modest as possible. Recent increased needs have been supplemented by fundraising efforts, but for the most part, we have managed our increases in operational costs through moderate tuition increase.

In the coming years, we anticipate increased financial needs because of government-mandated renovations to comply with new regulatory requirements. These renovations will ultimately cost close to \$1 million ... and this does not include the previously planned Elementary renovations that are estimated to cost \$500,000.

These capital expenses are partnered with increased annual operation costs of almost 15%, thanks, in large part, to new regulations affecting our Toddler and Casa programs. We also need upgrades to our technology, outdoor spaces and training to ensure we continue to provide our students an exceptional education experience.

These expenses are the new reality for privately funded schools in a world of

increased regulation.

As many of you know, tuition for next year has been budgeted a higher rate than in the recent past; through thoughtful planning, we are managing the increases as best as possible.

Tuition currently supports 98% of our operational costs. To keep tuition reasonable, we are bolstering our fundraising initiatives led by our Annual Appeal, which kicks off in a few weeks.

{A Montessori education} will demonstrate a tremendous ripple effect on not just a few, but the many people your children will encounter throughout their lives.

I'm aware of the perennial asks to support countless worthy causes. They all matter – especially to those who believe in their missions and visions, and have been touched by their efforts.

In the case of Montessori education, MA has affected all of your lives in ways you may not even realize yet. The potential

impact on a child that attends a Montessori school not only benefits your child, but you as a parent and a person. It positively affects everyone your children connect with today or tomorrow. It will demonstrate a tremendous ripple effect on not just a few, but the many people your children will encounter throughout their lives.

When you give to Montessori Academy, your contributions support health and wellbeing through renovated playgrounds; financial support to ensure likeminded families can continue in our school; and academic excellence leading to a successful future for your children and our greater community.

You can prove that Montessori matters by giving what you can during our Annual Appeal. •



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# Giving What You Can Matters

*A Montessori education is priceless to the MA community — for students today and in the future.*

When asked why she supports her children's school through donations and gifts, current MA parent and Board member Julie Elgie doesn't need to think for long, "My family and children have been given so many opportunities through the hard work and giving of many in the MA school community," she says.

"(It's) the teacher who takes extra time in their day to truly listen to my daughter's anxiousness over a new challenge, another parent who volunteers their time for hot lunch or sponsors the school musical," she adds. "These actions and extras go beyond tuition dollars and operational expenses. They are part of the experience that makes so many of us MA parents comment: *I wish I could have gone to a Montessori school when I was growing up.*"

Julie knows a thing or two about fundraising, having worked as an Alumni Development Officer at Western University and in other development roles at local not-for-profit organizations.

As the mother of twin daughters who have attended MA since Casa, she sees the non-quantifiable value of a Montessori education, while her years working in development give her a unique perspective on the need for not-for-profit organizations to fundraise.

If you look at 'development and fundraising' as an industry, Julie says, "It's a competitive marketplace. There's an increased need for transparency and communication with donors to ensure long-term partnerships." In essence, every not-for-profit needs to show supporters why it's worthy of donations.

Fortunately, the "worth" of a Montessori education is evident to parents through their children and to alumni through their interactions with the world. A Montessori education offers

more than just academic excellence. It offers social awareness and a compassionate worldview. It offers lifelong friendships between classmates *and* their teachers.

"Montessori truly is a unique experience that is beyond just reading, writing, math and a safe place to send my children every day," Julie says. "They learn daily about the importance



of giving back to their friends, safeguarding the environment, and making the world a better place. My children inspire me to give back to the place that believes in the potential of every child: Montessori Academy."

Your donation to Montessori Academy of London's Annual Appeal goes far beyond supporting current students. It supports the longevity of accredited and authentic Montessori education in London.

"If we can give back even just a little bit today, maybe some other child — now or in the future — will benefit from being part of this wonderful school community." •

## Fundraising Builds Community

*Participation at any level is the first and foremost goal of every annual appeal.*

*By Sarah Harding, Alumna & MA Board Governor*

Eighteen years ago my now 20-year-old son started in the toddler full-day program of a Montessori school in Chicago. I was thrilled with the gentle, nurturing, stable environment that it provided for my son. I could not have been happier with the school...but I was surprised to receive a letter asking for a contribution to the school's annual fund.

Tuition for the full-day toddler program was already steep and my husband and I were just at the beginning of our professional careers. Contributing to an annual fund even at a modest level was not something that we had planned for on top of tuition.

In the days and years that followed that first appeal letter, I learned that the annual fund was not something I could leave to others in the school. Everyone needed to contribute at whatever level they could manage. Fundraising was an essential part of the finances of that school, just as it is for the Montessori Academy of London.

*Continued on page 3*

Continued from page 2

# Development Matters

*Your gifts today help the Academy grow and flourish.*

Montessori Academy is an independent, tuition-based school that receives no government funding. This puts a burden on our tuition. Currently, 98% of MA's budget comes from tuition. Everything from classroom material and teacher salaries to snow removal and light bulbs is paid for by tuition dollars.

## Why give?

We need support from our families, alumni, community partners, foundations and others to address the growing gap between tuition revenue and the expenses of delivering cost-effective, world-class education that promotes academic excellence and prepares our students to engage the world as active citizens and successful leaders.

The Academy and its Board of Governors have done an incredible job managing our costs through sound financial planning and management. But the reality is that operating costs and expenses continue to rise - and compliance with new regulations is only adding to those increases.

To keep tuition manageable and still provide the best quality Montessori education for our children, we need your support.

## Every gift matters

Some donors hesitate to give because they feel they "can't give enough" or their gifts won't make a difference.

Every gift makes a difference. While a snowflake doesn't seem like much when it lands on your hand, what happens when that snowflake combines with other snowflakes? Anyone who's driven through a snowstorm knows just how big an impact those snowflakes make together.

The same can be said for donations. If every MA family gave \$50, we'd have \$12,000 to invest into our various initiatives. Together, our gifts add up fast!

## What's in it for you?

As a donor, you receive the wonderful feeling that you've made a difference in the education of our children and the families across London who expect more from education. You also benefit from tax savings through your donations!

Watch for your Annual Appeal, and please give to support MA's most urgent need - capital improvements.

We're changing lives through Montessori education. We don't know what the future will bring, but we do know our graduates will shape it. Through your generous gifts, you can, too! •

*For information on how your gifts can benefit you, visit the Canada Revenue Agency's Charities and Giving site: [www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/)*



## How fundraising can have an impact

Without generous donations, tuition would have been pushed beyond the budgets of many families. The annual fund kept tuition at a reasonable level and it also sustained a pool of financial assistance for families who struggled to make ends meet but were nonetheless committed to a Montessori education for their children.

I eventually became a trustee on the board of that Montessori school; and over the course of my 12 years on that board, the 17 years my three children spent in that school, and my involvement with three other independent schools, I learned just how crucial charitable contributions are to a school's core mission.

Charitable contributions helped keep our teacher salaries competitive, provided important professional development, helped fund major capital and classroom projects and made it possible to keep up with changing technology.

In short, fundraising helped to ensure my children's school would remain a vibrant, stable and supportive environment. It was - and is - that important.

Sitting on the Board of the Montessori Academy of London and three other independent school boards, I realize the central place fundraising plays in balancing the books. But I've learned one more thing about fundraising. Fundraising builds community...and community is the heart of any school.

Your donation is a show of support for the school's mission and a commitment to all the wonderful things that happen in your children's classrooms. That's why participation at any level is the first and foremost goal of every annual appeal.

I live 400 miles away from London, Ontario, but I am happy to sit on MA's Board and contribute to the Annual Appeal and other fundraising efforts because my education started here. This is a community that matters to me and Montessori is an educational option that I believe in. I hope you will join me in supporting the Academy at whatever level feels right to you. •



# Financial Support Matters

*Your gifts to the Ann Marie Harding Financial Support Program help families who are committed to a world-class Montessori education.*

A priority at Montessori Academy of London is to make world-class, accredited Montessori education accessible to as many London-area families as possible.

Recognizing that tuition increases are necessary and the primary source of revenue for the Academy, we want to offer as much support as we can to families who are committed to the Academy and Montessori approach, but who might not be able to afford tuition.

That's where our *Ann Marie Harding Financial Support Program* comes in. Available to families who "demonstrate a commitment to Montessori Academy of London," the program is one way we try to ensure authentic, accredited Montessori education remains accessible to families in the area.

Christi St. James (Tzaras), an MA alumna, knows not only how important a Montessori education is, but how imperative it is for MA to offer support. Her parents had immigrated to Canada from Greece when she started at MA – then called Montessori House of Children.

"Mrs. Harding, who owned the school at the time, knew that my parents did not

have much money, and that it would have been almost impossible to send my two brothers and me to the school if we had to pay the full tuition," Christi explains.



Ann Marie worked closely with the family to ensure they could afford to send all three children to the school from Casa through Grade 8.

That opportunity – and education – has had a huge impact on Christi. "I saw first-hand what kind of education and foundation the program gave me in my future schooling after I graduated in Grade 8 and went on to high school and university. The program gave me a solid foundation in all subject matters, especially in math."

Christi's Montessori education was so important to her that she didn't hesitate to enrol her sons in the Montessori school in Calgary, where she lives with her family.

"There was no question I would register my children in a Montessori program," she asserts. "Because of my unwavering belief in Montessori education, my sons are in the program and I am very active in the Montessori school in Calgary, helping make the school a success."

Being part of a Montessori school helps shape who children are as they grow up and well into adulthood. Their experiences become part of a legacy – a desire to pass on to future generations the exceptional learning experiences they had as children.

"Eventually, Montessori children become parents who send their children to Montessori schools and become active in the school," Christi says.

Your support of the *Ann Marie Harding Financial Support Program* could benefit your grandchild and the children of those who receive financial assistance today. Your gifts have a lasting impact. •



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