

*A newsletter for community building*

Winter 2011

Volume 4, Issue 2

## Celebrating Years of White Bear Montessori School History!



The First Presbyterian Church in downtown White Bear Lake was home to WBMS from 1970 to 1998.



WBMS children help clear out school materials to make room for church Sunday School.

In September, 1970, White Bear Montessori School opened its doors for the very first time. What began as a small, grass-roots effort led by a handful of dedicated parents has since matured into the AMI-accredited, staff--and-parent-operated school we all enjoy today. Our current community represents only a small number of the countless families WBMS has served over the years, and we have the unique opportunity of celebrating together this great milestone in the life of our school. Here is a look back into our past, our people, and our beautiful story.

WBMS spent the first 28 years operating out of the basement of the First Presbyterian Church in downtown White Bear Lake. In its first year WBMS offered a half-day, one-classroom program. By 1978, it had grown to include a Toddler environment, morning and afternoon Children's House environments and had been accredited by the Montessori Federation of Minnesota.

Renting space from a church had its challenges. Laurie Pittman, who started working at WBMS in 1995 explains that "lack of space was a challenge. There were two Children's Houses on the main level. The Toddler Community was only three days a week and we shared space with the church nursery. We had to load up *lots* of toys in the nursery, and haul them down the hallway twice a week to set up and take down the room. The children stored their outdoor clothing in the narrow hallway outside of our classroom. The entryways into the church were very narrow with tiny landings - nothing like our big foyer we have now." The dedicated WBMS staff did this for 28 years!

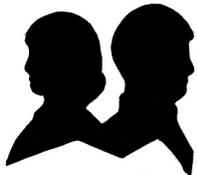
### Voices from the Past:

Eric Hargesheimer sent all four of his children to White Bear Montessori School between the years of 76—79, 81—84, and 88—90. Eric served on the Board of Directors for four of these years, both in publicity and as a member-at-large. When asked to share what sort of challenges the board faced during those times, he shared that renting space was nice because they didn't have to worry about maintaining the building. However, "we had to negotiate a yearly lease with the church. This was critical because these were the years of the energy crises, and heating costs were a big part of our lease. The other major issue always centered around the enrollment process. We generally had a waiting list for our morning and afternoon sessions. Thus, how much priority to give returning students or siblings created much discussion."

What Eric appreciated most about WBMS was how it developed a love of learning within each of his four children as well as how it taught them to manage their time and to have the confidence to ask questions. These days his children are all grown up with children of their own, two of which also attend WBMS! His daughter, our very own Sara Bromeland, is a WBMS alum and the mother of Chloe (Elementary) and Collin (CH2). These days, Grandpa Eric brings Chloe and Collin to school each morning. Eric enjoys watching them grow and progress year to year. He witnesses how comfortable they are in talking with adults and believes this will serve them well in life. "I especially like the term doing 'work'. Because completing 'work' gives them a feeling of accomplishment."

1979-80

*Parents' Handbook*

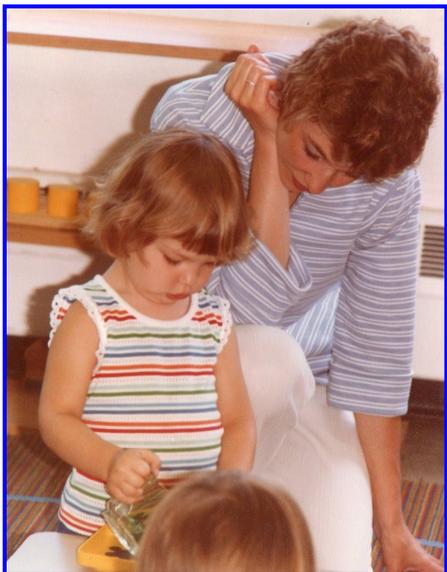


*White Bear  
Montessori School*

*at  
1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church  
5<sup>th</sup> and Bloom  
White Bear Lake, Mn.*



**Narrow halls quickly fill up with childrens coats and bags making coming and going tricky.**



**Alicia Peterson, around age 4, doing pouring work when she attended White Bear Montessori School.**



Did Eric ever guess his daughters future husband would someday be President of the WBMS Board of Directors? Not really. He knows that the job is challenging but thinks it's great that Shawn "shares Sara's love for the Montessori education values."

What does Sara remember from her WBMS days? "I attended WBMS from the ages of 2 to 5, from 1977—1980. My guides were Sheri Pearlson and Kathy Clock. I loved going to school. When I first started, the program ran only Tues through Thurs, so the first thing I would ask every morning when I got up was, 'Do I get to go to school today?' My favorite work was cutting vegetables. We also had a bunny for a class pet and I really enjoyed that. My mom remembers that I began to love math during a summer math enrichment program offered at WBMS."

Sara said that it was her history with the school that inspired her to send her children. However, it took their local pediatrician's recommendation that they look into Montessori education for then two-year old daughter to convince Shawn, a public school administrator. Sara adds that since that time Shawn's commitment to WBMS has clearly multiplied. Shawn works full time each day as vice-principal for a public middle school, then he heads over to WBMS to spend a few more hours running a second school. Both Shawn and Sara are amazed with their children's experience and the dedicated staff at WBMS, which says a lot since both Shawn and Sara work for the public school system!

Our current community includes a few additional WMBS alumni. Alicia Peterson, mother of Eloise (CH3) and Lucy (Toddler) attended from 1979—1982. When she entered a Children's House upon enrolling Eloise, she realized "I've seen all this before!" She recalls a teacher named Darlene. When looking for pre-schools for Eloise, she says they "looked into WBMS in response to my mom's encouragement. We knew Eloise needed something, especially when Lucy arrived!" Alicia's husband, Chris, is serving his first year on the Board of Directors as the chair of Funds Development.

Another alumni and current Board Member is Jen Esnough, mother of Eric (CH3 Extended Day). Jen attended WBMS in the early 70s and like Sara Bromeland, remembered her Guide Sheri Pearlson. Jen asked her parents, Eric and Diane Wesman, why they chose WBMS, and Diane replied "When Dad and I wanted to find a school for you, I did a lot of research into various educational options—the Waldorf school, etc. After reading Maria Montessori's book, we decided to enroll you in WBMS. Although it was then conveniently located at the White Bear Presbyterian Church, we would have happily driven much farther for you to be a Montessori student. By the time you went to Kindergarten at Birch Lake school, you could read the newspaper and were proficient at pouring liquids from large pitchers into small glasses. You must have done well at movable letters and pouring work! I still see your guide, Sheri Pearlson, from time to time at her home at the nearby Presbyterian Homes. Dad's most vivid recollection was the big progressive dinner we planned for a fundraiser. He even remembers the menu."

Jen said, "I've never forgotten the fun of doing potato work, and having the chance to float through the classroom, choosing what it was each day that held my interest. I clearly remember it being a fun place to be, where I was encouraged to challenge myself. They always made me feel smart and capable!"

Sara Bromeland (mother to Chole in Elementary and Colin in CH2) at about age 4, created this Children's Cook Book as one of her Children's House projects!

When Dewayne and Jen decided that their son, Eric, needed more challenges than his daycare center offered, Jen's mother suggested they return to WBMS. Dewayne and Jen took Eric to a Visit Day in Spring 2010, and he warmed up to the staff right away. When Jen attended Eric's first Parent-Child Night, she noticed the bead chains hanging on the wall and that triggered a memory of her days in Children's House. "It was an amazing flashback to my days in the Children's House at the Presbyterian Church. For years, I had had a sense of texture and a specific purple color. I couldn't recall exactly where it had been from. When I walked into the CH3 classroom for Parent-Child night and saw the beads in the math area, I knew immediately where the memory had been. It was a wonderful sense of coming full circle. I loved those beads and have been so excited for Eric to share in that same love of learning that I have had."



Jen and Eric Esnough

Current Children's House 3 Assistant, Sarah Weisbecker, attended White Bear Montessori School from the age of 4 to 6 years old. During this time, her mother was taking the Montessori training and working as an assistant in a Children's House here at WBMS. Sarah has very fond memories of her Children's House. "I remember doing the pink tower, the counting chains, and the punching work with the puzzle maps. (We would punch out the outline of each continent in construction paper and make a hanging paper globe - very fun!) My most vivid memory is doing pickle work. Every time I smell pickles, I go back to my time in Children's House. I remember birthday celebrations, spring walks down to Cup N Cone, and holiday celebrations." She says that although WBMS has grown significantly since her time as a student, many of the wonderful things she remembers have remained constant. She is grateful that, 20 years later, she can work at the school that created so many great memories for her and can help give her Children's House 3 children that same foundation. The icing on the cake is her own daughter, Gemma (Toddler) is now experiencing the benefits of Montessori education. White Bear Montessori again touched the lives of *three* generations of one family!



Sarah Weisbecker presents the Stamp Game in Children's House 3.



Anne Campbell, WBMS Alum

Anne Campbell attended WBMS in the late 1980s and has very clear memories of the time she spent at the school. "I remember sitting in a circle in the basement passing around someone's pet chinchilla. I loved learning about animals. I also remember putting on 'productions', little plays of sorts. We decorated costumes with sequins and glitter and had a blast. I remember celebrating 'May Day' on the playground, tying beautiful ribbons around a pole and singing." Anne is now engaged and living in Manhattan where she works in marketing for Rolex. Her family still lives in the White Bear Lake area.

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# 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Fun Fact!

- During the ground-breaking ceremony for our current location, School Board members buried three PCV time-capsules under the flagpoles by the main entrance. No one remembers what exactly was put inside of them, or if there is a specific time they should be dug up. Perhaps when we celebrate our 50th Anniversary?
- When WBMS moved to its current location, a staff lounge complete with couches and a piano (piano lessons were held here) was located where the women's bathroom downstairs is today. By 2002, gender specific adult bathrooms were needed. The staff lost their lounge in hopes that someday it would be replaced. They are still waiting.



The WBMS community celebrates a soggy ground-breaking ceremony in September, 1998.

40 years, continued from page 3

## Voices from the Not-So-Distant Past:

Sorcha Ashe, 2009 alum, shares her thoughts about attending White Bear Montessori School.

"I attended White Bear Montessori School from kindergarten until the end of third grade. I am now in fifth grade at Oak Hill Montessori. White Bear Montessori School is the best school I have ever been to. I love White Bear Montessori for the following three reasons.

- White Bear made me feel welcome in every sort of way. It was very cozy; the teachers were very warm toward me and the other classmates, and the things that I learned there I could always understand.
- Another reason I liked White Bear is because they taught empathy and the way you should feel toward yourself and others and how to respect your environment and classroom materials.
- I love how I felt so at home there; a major factor in this was Patty Shade, the elementary class teacher who was the best, the most favorite teacher I have had so far and probably will ever have.

These things contributed a lot to why I think WBMS is such a great school."

Olivia Dohmeier attended WBMS from 2002 to 2008 and offers her thoughts.

"In my opinion, WBMS is an excellent school. My family has been coming here since 2002. I was four years old the first time I came to White Bear. It was November 2002, in the middle of the school year, but everyone was very welcoming. I was at White Bear for 5 years. I have two little brothers named Ben and Simon (CH2 Extended Day). Both of them have also gone to this school, Ben for 7 years, and Simon for 4, with 3 more to go. We've each had different teachers, but all of them (and their assistants) were very kind and great with kids. I love how all of WBMS's staff teaches. They do a fantastic job of explaining how to do the work and why you do it that way. For me, I didn't understand everything right away, but the teachers would try explaining it a different way and at some point it would just click and I would go, 'Oh, I get it!'"

"Another great thing is cursive. I started learning how to write in cursive when I was in Extended Day, and it's been very helpful so far in all of my schools after White Bear. Now, I go to Mahtomedi Middle School, and Montessori helps me a lot even now. I get most of what my teachers are trying to explain right away, and (without trying to brag) I get pretty good grades. Every now and then, I'll come along when Mom goes to pick up Simon, and I think this school hasn't changed much. I look at White Bear fondly, and it's still the same wonderful school from four years ago. *Continued on page 5*



40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Fun Fact!

- White Bear Montessori School had no Head of School and was completely Board run from 1970 until early 1998. Brenda Yarbrough was the first Director. The term Head of School wasn't used until the year 2000. Brenda started as a parent volunteer and later transitioned into being hired part-time.
- WBMS started the one-year AMI accreditation process in 1998. This international accreditation insures that WBMS will maintain the Montessori mission which is attractive for staff and parents.
- White Bear Montessori is one out of only ten Montessori schools in the state of Minnesota accredited through AMI. WBMS goes through a rigorous re-accreditation process every three years.



The original playground at First Presbyterian Church.

# 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Fun Fact!

## Tuition



If paid in one payment:

- Toddler.....\$360
- Level I.....\$520
- Extended Day (inc. Level I)\$790

The above amounts include \$50 application fee. If paid in installments, there is a \$15 surcharge, with approximately one-third of the total due 9/1, 12/1 and 2/1. Please check with Mary Ala 429-7963 if you have questions about tuition.

Tuition rates for the 1979-80 school year.

## Greetings from the President

As President of White Bear Montessori School, I wish to welcome you and thank you for being a member of WBMS for the 1979-80 school year.

There are now 12 children in the Toddler class, and Level I (A.M. and P.M.) is filled with 24 children each. I would attribute this growth to the commitment of both directresses and parents to provide quality education for our children. Like anything worthwhile, this commitment involves work and sacrifice.

The Executive Committee would like once again to invite parent participation in the Board Meetings held on the 2nd Thursday of every month. A summary of the minutes will be sent in the Newsletter and the agenda will be posted at school. Everyone is welcome.

WBMS is a parent owned and operated school--every parent counts, each one is needed. Thank you for your support.

Sara Hunt

Sara Hunt was the school board President responsible for WBMS gaining its initial accreditation through the Montessori Federation of Minnesota which accredited 9 local Minnesota Montessori schools at the time. The AMI accreditation WBMS received in 1999 replaced this local one.

40 years, continued from page 4

## New Spaces:

As White Bear Montessori School continued to grow, the lack of space at the First Presbyterian Church was an increasing problem. Around this same time, the congregations of Lamb of God and Majestic Pines churches decided to merge, making the space at Lamb of God too small. The small building and its 3.7 acres on the corner of Labore and County Road E went up for sale, and WBMS stepped in. Classes were held at the new location for the first time in September 1998 while construction on the east side of the building started to take place.

Heather Will was a Children's House Guide with WBMS at the time and explains that the "main entrance to the building was up the deck stairs leading in between what is now Children's House 1 and 3. Because we moved in while construction was still going, the office was located in the upstairs hallway. We had three Children's Houses upstairs and one Toddler environment downstairs. But if you wanted to go to Toddler from Children's House, you had to go outside, down the stairs and in their door. Fortunately, by the end of that school year the rest of the space was complete."



1201 E County Road E when it was the Lamb of God Church. The main entrance was the door on the upper deck.



WBMS had 76 children attending when the school moved to its current location. They gathered in the current Enrichment Center for this all-school photo.

40 years, continued from page 5

### Present Day:

As a small non-profit, White Bear Montessori School has been blessed over the last forty years with delightful children, enthusiastic parent communities and dedicated staff. At the beginning of each school year the Board of Directors welcomes families to become involved because the administrators and staff can't do this alone. Many hands make light work, so they encourage parents to invest their talents in nurturing our school community. This is what makes WBMS a truly exceptional place to be.

In talking with alumni, they all say that White Bear Montessori School was a warm, close-knit community. It is the same today, just with different faces. To many, WBMS was and is so much more than simply a school where you drop your child off and walk away.

As we celebrate White Bear Montessori Schools 40th year, we can confidently say it has remained the grass-roots, staff-and parent-operated organization that began back in September 1970 and it is committed to offering a fabulous AMI education to our community for years to come!



Children's House of yesterday



Children's House today

40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Fun Fact!



- The very first Auction was held in 1997 to raise money for the purchasing of the new school location. Since that time an auction has been held every year to meet that year's budget.
- The current wooden playground structure was donated by a family when the school moved to the County Road E location.
- The Elementary program opened in 2002 with nine children. There were seven 1<sup>st</sup> graders and two siblings who came back to WBMS for the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.
- The Parent/Infant program was first offered in 2002.
- At peak enrollment, WBMS had 117 families!



WBMS logos throughout the years.