

Cornerstone Monthly Newsletter

January 2025

Dear Cornerstone Families,

At our Early Childhood staff meeting last week, we shared our “whys.” I introduced the topic by asking the team to answer why they work at Cornerstone and that there was no right answer: “it pays the bills” is as valid an answer as “I believe that children are the future of humanity.” Here are some of their responses:

Because everyone deserves to be seen, heard, valued, and cared for

Because helping others makes me happy

Give children the education I wish I had and I wish everyone would receive

I do this because it's a beautiful community, love children and everyone here makes me happy

This is always a hard time of year. Everyone's sick, it's dark and cold, there are fewer joys on the horizon than in the fall. And then, of course, the world is, at times literally, on fire. There is so much that feels hard right now, but being with children every day helps me, at least, to focus on the here and now and on the things that I can control.

Cornerstone's classroom teams meet weekly, to check in on systems, update each other on children's growth, and to debrief about the week that's happened and the week to come. This year the elementary teams have started each meeting by sharing roses or gems. Just like at the EC meeting, there are no wrong answers. (My gem at a recent Marsh team meeting was the discovery that the meeting schedule corresponds to the land and water forms, with Forest/Garden alternating with Marsh/Pond. Not a deep or particularly important insight!) Here are some of the recent joys in our classrooms:

Budding unexpected connections between students

Child counted to 110 today!

4th years looked out for a 3rd year

Children cheering for each other during soccer

Five years ago, during the early part of the Covid pandemic, we all repeated the Mr. Rogers' line, “look for the helpers.” Now, in this new hard time in our history, let's remember that the children are helpers, too. They make all this work matter. In the words of Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum, “Joy is an act of [...] resistance.” Sharing the children's joy is its own way of speaking truth to power.

Alyssa

Toddler Community

The Stone Soup event was an evening of community, comfort foods, and a warmer January day. Several of our toddler families were able to attend. "Gracias" and "compliments to the chefs!" We look forward to more community gatherings.





Children's House 1



January has certainly been a challenging month with sickness going around. I'm sure many of us felt its impact! Despite it all, the children continue to show up each day with incredible excitement and enthusiasm, which always brightens our days.

We've had so much fun reading with the older children in the afternoons. It's been a wonderful opportunity for collaboration and connection, and the children truly enjoy these shared moments.

In the mornings, we've been diving into explorations with the sensorial materials. It's amazing to see the creativity and curiosity the children bring to their work, discovering new ways to engage with the materials and each other.



Thank you for your continued support and for helping us create such a joyful and resilient community. Here's to a healthy and exciting February ahead!



Children's House 2

Something that I love about Cornerstone Montessori School is the community that we have here. I love the children, the families, the staff, and all the overlap. I love the events when we have an opportunity to come together as a whole community. And I love making soup with the children as we prepare for the annual Stone Soup event. Cornerstone has been doing the Stone Soup event I think since its creation as a school or shortly after. If we missed your family this time, don't fret, we have more school events coming up this year. We also want to hear from families about what events you'd love to attend.



Lower Elementary Garden



We have had a wonderful start to the new year in Garden! Children have been involved in many different creative and fascinating projects. There have been investigations of biology with parts of the seed and varieties of root vegetables; explorations of music with writing of original songs and playing them on the tone bars; and studies of art with interpretations of Picasso's blue period using watercolors. As a class community, we have also compared and contrasted several different versions of the folktale "Stone Soup" and sang "One Voice" together in preparation for our recent school event.

This month, we started the first book of an exciting new series called *The Bookwanderers*. Tilly Pages, an 11-year-old girl who lives with her grandparents in their beloved bookshop, discovers that she can interact with some of her favorite characters inside their own stories! She unexpectedly joins the Mad Tea Party in *Alice in Wonderland* and goes to school with Anne from *Anne of Green Gables*. Tilly soon learns about the secrets of bookwandering and embarks on a quest to solve the mystery of her mother who disappeared when she was a baby.





Lower Elementary Pond



Back in December several students did the research and preparation needed for us to take a trip, a going out as we call them in Montessori. It was wonderful finding a way to take learning outside the classroom because of the way the learning expands and connects so naturally. We got to see plenty of fish and learn more about them, certainly, while also getting to learn about how the city bus system works, connect with other members of the community (we had the same bus driver for the trip out, and for the return trip!), and see some bonus wildlife just around the corner from school. The excitement generated from this journey makes me suspect that more going outs are in our future.

Inside the classroom, despite the many distractions of illness, cold, and even those local turkeys jumping on the roof during read aloud, I have loved seeing the dedication and creativity of the students: new students jumping into the work, whether it's familiar or not; students using ideas from a descriptive writing lesson to write riddles and invite their classmates to try and solve them; and work with rhyming and couplets leading to new songs.



Upper Elementary Marsh

In Montessori elementary classrooms, we often talk about Big Work; this work drives excitement about school and takes place over days or even weeks. It is generally work that children choose themselves, inspired by lessons and/or their own interests. Right now, in Marsh, we have children writing plays, adapting books, creating 3d models from 2d pictures, exploring the periodic table, making books about country studies, and designing a moveable water cycle display for presentation, among other things. Sometimes when children feel at loose ends, we encourage them to think about Big Work, about what they are most excited about to help guide their choices. It's exciting to see them work independently and in groups on these unique projects.



To balance this Big Work, we also of course have practice and daily work - math (lots of fractions and decimals, mean and median, algebra, ratios and proportions), reading (independent books), writing (many children are working on The Story of My Name essay), and language work (spellography, word study). For read-aloud, we are in the middle of a science fiction book called *The Light Thieves* by Helena Duggan, which has given us the opportunity to explore lots of British vocabulary (torches, queues, tills, crisps) and to think about technology and society.

It was great to see so many families at Stone Soup! We have an upcoming field trip on February 4th to the Minnesota Orchestra that we will prepare for with a guest presentation on instruments on January 31st.



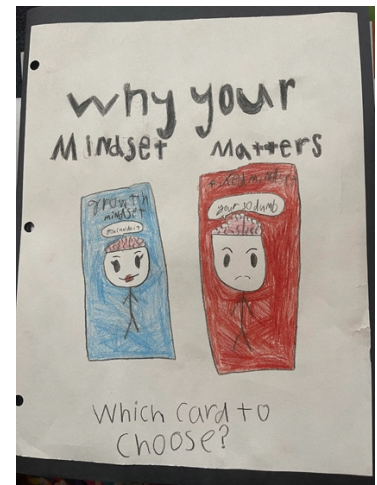
Upper Elementary Forest



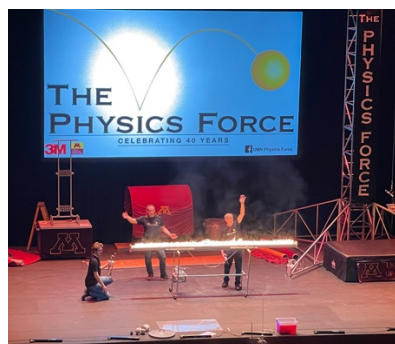
6th Years' Minnesota to the World research projects got underway this month. Their research includes learning about topics such as Manifest Destiny & the US/Dakota War of 1862; The Equal Rights Amendment; The successful adaptation of the Hmong people in the US; Causes of WWI; The Rise & Fall of the Fur Trade; Slavery & the US Civil War.

Other Forest children have completed their very first five-paragraph essay on the importance of a growth mindset, while other children have been developing their summarizing skills. Children are learning about human migration out of Africa and early humans, physics,

European imperialism in the Americas, powers, fractions, square root, angles, triangles, weight & capacity, comparative adjectives, irregular verbs, and much, much more.



Upper Elementary children will have a visit this Friday from MN Orchestra volunteers before our trip to see the orchestra on February 4th. We recently finished Chasing Vermeer by Blue Balliet and have begun Chains by Laurie Halse Anderson for our Read Aloud time from 3:00-3:30 daily.



1611 Ames Ave Spotlight

This month we are thrilled to highlight the smiling face at our front desk! Daylin Galdamez has been the receptionist at Cornerstone for 6 years.

Daylin writes, *I have the joy of greeting and meeting the children and anyone who enters the building. It's been an amazing experience here. I love to cook and go to the gym and also spend time with my family and do fun activities in my free time. Outside of Cornerstone I am a wife, mother and expecting my second little one later this spring.*

Not only does Daylin answer the phones, know every single car by memory, and take children's temperatures, she is also incredibly flexible and good-natured, and is always eager to do whatever is needed to support our community.



News from MCM

Montessori Center of Minnesota (MCM) is enrolling now for the 3-6 Orientation Course which gives parents and caregivers an inside look at what makes Montessori so impactful for children aged 3-6. Through engaging online sessions, you'll learn how young children learn, grow, and develop independence—and how Montessori environments support their needs. This course will help you gain insight into how young children learn, and support the developmental needs of the child aged three to six, while also offering practical insights you can apply directly to support your child's growth at home and beyond.

Course Details:

Director of Training: Lakshmi Shekar

Format: Online classes.

Dates: Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, March 31–April 24, 2025, 6:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m. CST.

Cost: \$950 (tuition assistance is available).

This course earns you an AMI 3-6 Orientation Certificate and deepens your connection to your child's development. Enroll today!

<https://www.montessoricentermn.org/montessori-training-programs/orientation-courses/>

Don't forget to check out the remaining workshops that MCM is hosting too!

<https://www.montessoricentermn.org/community-montessori/workshops/>

News from CMES

The CMES Board of Directors approved the school's strategic plan for the next three years this past December. The four pillars of Access, Community, Equity, and Sustainability remain consistent from the previous strategic plan, as we look towards continuing to solidify and strengthen our work in these areas. Please visit the CMES website for the full plan!

