

# February 2012

## INSIDE THE WOODS

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Edited by Eloise Rochelle

### **The Time is Nigh – Party-Up**

Our much-ballyhoo'd 50th year gala celebration is just weeks away now – March 3. The anticipation is intense and the busy-ness is nonstop.



Food! Drinks!

Conversation!

Great stuff to bid on that you cannot live without!

Silent Auction Big Board bidding!  
And no live auction to slow things down.

Preview auction items on Feb. 22, 8:45 AM

We'll celebrate our past and build our future.

**Are you coming to the Party? It's time to buy your tickets!**

### **December Toys for Tots drive a great success**

This December, the lower and upper elementary classes participated in the Toys for Tots donation drive. Children brought unwrapped toys and placed them under the Christmas tree in the Music Room. At the end of the drive, all the children were very excited to visit the Music Room and see how many toys had been received.

Toys for Tots began in Los Angeles in December 1947 with a hand-crafted Raggedy Ann doll made by the wife of Marine Reserve Major Bill Hendricks. She asked her husband to deliver it to an organization that would present it to a needy child on Christmas Day. Major Hendricks could find no such agency. That lack prompted him and members of his Reserve Unit, to collect and distribute 5,000 toys to needy Los Angeles area children at Christmas 1947. The seed was planted and Toys for Tots was born.

The program has grown tremendously since that beginning. Today, Toys for Tots serves over 600 local communities, covering all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

We offer special thanks to Guy Harrison for transporting the toys to the George R. Brown Convention Center for distribution.

.... Michelle Romero

### **Party for the Woods High School Graduates**

Betcha didn't know Woods High School has 117 graduates! Woods High School opened in 1999 with its first class graduating in 2003. Our 50<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration year seemed the perfect time to toss a grand party for them.

On Saturday, January 7<sup>th</sup> 30 of our graduates gathered at the home of 2010 graduate Sage Coram. It was a fun evening full of laughs and updates on the studies, travels and lives of our Alums.

Many who could not attend the January 7th event stopped by Woods High School on December 16<sup>th</sup> and during the week of January 3<sup>rd</sup>. Our next Alumni Event is on March 2<sup>nd</sup> when our Alumni Family Dinner will take place on the Wirt Road Campus.

## Comparing Parenting Styles

By Elizabeth Stepankiw

Research psychologist Diana Baumrind identified three basic parenting styles in the 1960's based mostly on observations and interviews. Her research pointed to one parenting style providing the most positive outcomes for the child. She used the terms permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative to describe parenting styles (Baumrind, 1967).

The permissive parent does not apply any punishments and is always accepting of all the child's impulses, desires, and actions. This parent makes few demands on the child for responsibility in household work and uses reason and sometimes manipulation in an attempt to control behavior, but does not impose rules concerning the child's conduct.

The authoritarian parenting style seems to be the complete opposite of the permissive style. This parent has an absolute standard of behavior and controls and judges the child based on this higher authority. The child is assigned household chores and autonomy is restricted. There is no verbal give and take in this

relationship; obedience is valued most. Punishments are applied when the parent evaluates the child's behavior to be inadequate.

The authoritative parent values autonomy in the child's actions as well as conformity to a reasonable set of rules. Verbal give and take is encouraged with the parent providing warmth during interactions; when the child does not conform to the expected behavior the parent takes the time to explain the reasoning behind the policy. The child is not overly burdened with restrictions, yet expectations are high. The authoritative parent listens to the child's viewpoint, but is able to exert firm control when the situation requires it.

The warmth, rational control, and high standards that the authoritative adult offers result in the most favorable outcomes for children. The children of authoritative parents have a high degree of motivation to achieve as well as self control. They tend to be more competent, self confident, and enjoy better social relationships than other children. They behave in ways that demonstrate a strong sense of social responsibility (Lillard, 2005, p. 268).

Dr. Montessori's ideas concerning teaching styles were noticeably aligned with today's research on parenting styles. She instructed teachers to provide a prepared environment in which children have the autonomy to make decisions as well as discoveries in their own learning. Teachers are to provide clear boundaries. Teachers intervene in the child's activity only when their activity is not constructive. Teachers are to have high expectations for the children, provide reasons and sensitivity when correcting children, and warmth in their interactions. (Lillard, 2005, p.273).

Furthermore, Dr. Montessori advised teachers to be careful in the way we praise a child.

*To tell a person he is clever or clumsy, bright or stupid, good or bad, is a form of betrayal. The child must see himself for what he can do (Maria Montessori (1967a, p. 250).*

Additional research on communication styles demonstrates how adult responses to children have an immediate and enduring effect on the way children approach learning and problem solving.

When children receive judgmental feedback--comments that assign a character trait to the child, such as "you must be smart," then they tend to see mistakes as a reflection of their

own intelligence. As a result, they shy away from any work that may result in mistakes, thus lowering the number and difficulty of the tasks they are willing to take on.

When adults respond to children's work with comments such as, "you must have worked hard on this," then children seem to view their intelligence as being not fixed, but something they could improve with effort. They are much more willing to take on difficult tasks and view mistakes as being opportunities for learning--they are willing to work at something, despite problems, in order to master it (Dweck, 1999).

Montessori encouraged parents and teachers to value our own mistakes and learn from them, for our own benefit and that of the children. She stated that,

*It is well to cultivate a friendly feeling towards error, to treat it as a companion inseparable from our lives, as something having a purpose, which it truly has (Maria Montessori, 1967a, p.246).*

The authoritative parenting style encourages the child through positive (not judgmental) communication, modeling a healthy attitude towards mistakes, and a firm, consistent structure.

## Books, books, books – Can't have too many

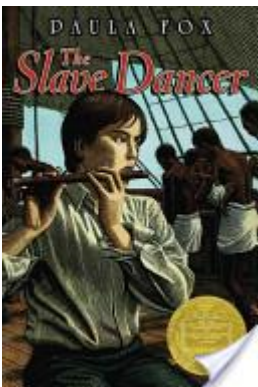
Continuing the recommendations from last issue, these five are longer books which build background knowledge



Famed oceanographer Robert Ballard takes young readers to the bottom of the sea and into the luxurious sunken liner in this epic tale of discovery. As he explores the Titanic, children are taken back in time to this magnificent ship's tragic voyage

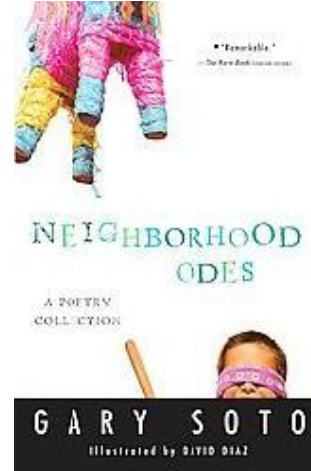
through photographs, archival images, and informative diagrams—as well as evocative paintings by a leading Titanic artist. An adventure story as well as a history, this thrilling retelling of Ballard's amazing discovery is powerful and poignant.

*Experiencing the Titanic*, Black Walnut/ Madison Press (2009) - Paperback - 64 pages.

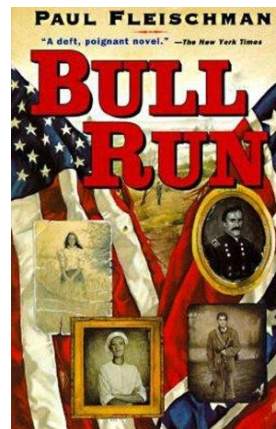


*The Slave Dancer*, by Paula Fox. One day, thirteen-year-old Jessie Bollier is earning pennies playing his fife on the docks of New Orleans; the next, he is kidnapped and thrown aboard a slave ship, where his job is to provide music while shackled slaves "dance" to keep their muscles

strong and their bodies profitable. As the endless voyage continues, Jessie grows increasingly sickened by the greed, brutality, and inhumanity of the slave trade, but nothing prepares him for the ultimate horror he will witness before his nightmare ends -- a horror that will change his life forever. 192 pages.

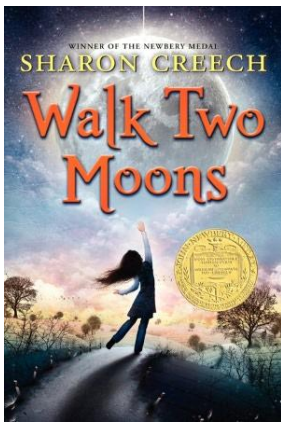


Award-winning poet Gary Soto and Caldecott winner David Diaz turn their eyes on the world of kids. From family pictures to pinatas, from the *gato* with a meow like a rusty latch to Fourth of July fireworks. *Neighborhood Odes* (Poetry).



*Bull Run*, by Paul Fleischman With sixteen different people, as they head for the battle at Bull Run, the first major battle of the [Civil War](#), Fleischman lets their many voices speak individually as they tell variously of their excitement, loathing, fear and hope about this battle

which several of them are convinced will be the only one in the Civil War. For some of them, it is. They each get a short chapter in no particular order and are later given others, some more than others. The effect is of the humanity and horror of war. It's a powerful statement. In an appendix, Fleischman lists the pages on which each of the voices can be heard, making this an ideal choice for reader's theater. The accessibility of the reading make it a good choice for less skilled readers but the depth of it and the message in it should challenge anyone's thinking. 194 pages.



*Walk Two Moons*, by Sharon Creech. Salamanca Tree Hiddle, 13, believes her mother will return before the tulips bloom. During a car trip from Ohio to Idaho with her grandparents, Sal relates all that has happened the past year after her

mother's sudden departure from home. A story within a story, Sal tells about Phoebe Winterbottom, her charismatic friend, who exaggerates, who believes she is being stalked by a "lunatic," who avoids cholesterol, unless it's her mother's brownies, and whose mother also has left home. Themes of love, life, death, and relationships are at the core of this story which is playful, imaginative, and satisfying. Awarded the 1995 Newbery Medal. 280 pages.

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### Free Play Benefits Children's Development

Wondering whether to boot up our child's favorite computer game or send him/her outside to play? Experts from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and Mathematica Policy research, Inc., in Princeton say outdoor play should be given the highest priority. In addition to providing the benefits of physical activity, play helps develop three key areas of well-being:

- **Attention.** Being able to pay attention is an important skill that's needed for learning, and play helps to develop it. Many parents and teachers believe that when kids get plenty of play time, they are better able to learn and behave in the classroom. In addition, the unstructured environment of the outdoors lets kids make decisions and encourages them to solve problems. The problem-solving kids learn that playing outdoors aids them in learning

executive functioning – a term used to describe the complex skills of planning, organizing, sequencing and decision-making.

- **Affiliation:** In play, kids learn to connect with peers and family members while at the same time learning cooperation skills and how to compromise. Working with others while playing also helps them cultivate empathy for others and learn to be flexible, self-aware, and self-regulating.

- **Affect:** The fact that play makes children happy (and improves their mood, or affects it) could be one of the most important reasons for frequent outdoor play. Regular physical activity (and for kids that means play) is thought to reduce anxiety, depression, aggression, and sleep problems and improve overall emotional well-being.

Researchers emphasize that many parents may be haunted by their own discouraging experiences with exercise or negative associations with weight-loss attempts, which could lead them to be reluctant to encourage physical activity in their children.

What this means to you: Encouraging your child to simply play on a daily basis – preferably in an outdoor environment like a yard, playground, or park – not only provides great physical benefits but also has positive effects on learning, social relationships, and mood. When looking for an outdoor play space, seek an area that has equipment appropriate for your child's age and development level.

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Adapted from article in *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, January 2005, by Hillary L. Burdette, MD, MS, and Robert C. Whitaker, MD, MPH; reviewed by Steven Dowshen, MD.

# Maria Montessori: Her Early Years

*"Dr. Montessori was a genius observer of children, who arrived at many of the same insights suggested by research that has come after her. Her ultimate goal of finding a better way to educate children became grander with each passing year, as she watched the world become torn apart by two world wars. Ultimately her aim was to help humanity be its best self."--Angelina Lillard, The Science Behind the Genius (2005, p.345)*

*"Maria Montessori's inspired ideas about the education of children have impacted people all over the world. But she never intended to be famous. After having to memorize the lives of famous women as a child and being pressed by her teacher to aspire toward fame, she replied that she would not want to be famous because she cared "too much for the children of the future to add yet another biography to the list [of biographies to memorize]" (E.M. Standing, 1957, p. 21).*

Maria Montessori was born in Chiaravalle, Italy on August 31, 1870. Her mother, Renilde Stoppani, was the niece of Antonio Stoppani, an Italian geologist and paleontologist whose books were very popular and stimulated general interest in science. Like Maria, he was very much ahead of his time with his ideas. Her father Alessandro Montessori was a military commander, a conservative and dignified man who had received commendations for his bravery in action.

In 1875, the family moved to Rome where they stayed, and Maria attended first grade in a public school the following year. Much to the dismay of her parents, she insisted on entering a technical school for boys at the age of 13 to pursue her interest in math and engineering. By 1890, her interests had moved more toward medicine as she

enrolled at the University of Rome where she studied physics, mathematics, and natural sciences.

When Maria received her Diploma di licenza, which made her eligible to begin the study of medicine, she had to appeal to the Pope to be allowed to continue her study of medicine. In 1894, she won the Rolli Prize and scholarship and with other money she earned, she financed most of her own education.

It is interesting to note that when she did her cadaver dissecting work, she had to go to the lab at night by herself because it was considered improper for a woman to be in the presence of a man while dissecting the body.

In the spring of 1896, Maria handed in her final written thesis on the psychiatric study of paranoia, and on July 10, she became the first woman to receive the degree of doctor-laurea-of medicine in Italy. After

graduating, she took a position as an assistant at the San Giovanni Hospital attached to the university. She represented Italy as a delegate at an international women's congress in Berlin that fall and worked as a surgical assistant as well as in a private practice. She described herself as being the "servant, cook, nurse, and doctor in one" while in this position.

Maria joined the staff at the psychiatric clinic of the University of Rome in 1897 as a voluntary assistant. While there, she realized the children in the institution were starved for experience. In her search for information, she studied the works of Itard, a physician and educator of deaf-mutes, and Seguin, who had developed methods for the education of children with mental disabilities.

She audited the teaching methodology courses at the university. She studied the work of anthropologists who suggested that observation rather than

theorizing was the way to prevent abnormality. She also studied the work of Pestalozzi and Froebel, who had developed sense training techniques for children.

In the year 1900, Maria was given the opportunity to experiment with the materials and ideas gained from her studies. She was appointed to be director of a school called the Scuola Magistrale Ortofrenica (the Orthophrenic School) opened by the National League for the Education of Retarded Children to train teachers.

She developed materials that went beyond those of Itard and Sequin and taught "retarded" children to read and write. Her accomplishments led her to wonder what "normal" children would be able to do if they were stimulated in their development rather than suffocated.

Compiled by  
Elizabeth Stepankiw

Sources: Kramer, Rita. Maria Montessori: A Biography, Lillard, Paula Polk. Montessori: A Modern Approach, Standing, E.M. Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work, Quade, Larry. Lecture Notes, Houston Montessori Center, 1988.

Next Month: Maria Montessori's Discovery



### Why, it's Santa Claus!

Good ol' Santa made a surprise visit to the School of the Woods campus on Friday, December 16. And he brought his guitar.

This was the day of our traditional Holiday feast, too – the day before the Winter Break. Here are some snapshots of the activities.

