



Many thanks to the generous donations that made Ms. Elizabeth's Butterfly Garden a reality!

Welcome!

The newsletter is one way for Montessori of Macon to highlight happenings in our classrooms and community. This edition is our first edition this school year and looks a little different from our usual newsletters. We thought it was important to begin by introducing you to the staff members of Montessori of Macon. We hope as you read a little bit about our staff, that you will be encouraged to get to know them even more! As always, we want to thank you for sharing your children with us as we strive

"to educate the whole child for a whole world!"

Montessori of Macon's Mission

"To Educate the Whole Child for a Whole World."

The Whole Child ... While providing a thorough academic program we also support the emotional, physical, spiritual and social growth of our children. Montessori of Macon provides experiences for growth as our children mature into human beings who are reaching their greatest potential and pursuing their passions.

The Whole World ... Dr. Maria Montessori believed that the most important goal of education is peace. It is through the process of learning to live with each other in the small communities developed in our classrooms and learning about the larger world we are a part of, that children will have the desire and skills to live peacefully.

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Michele Scott
Head of School

I first discovered Montessori of Macon as a parent, just like all of you. At the time, my daughter Emily was 2 years old and I knew I wanted something more than a day care experience for her. I had driven by the Montessori of Macon sign on Forest Hill twice a day on my way to and from work and finally decided to call and learn more about Montessori. My first visit was to observe in a Primary classroom. I remember sitting for about 20 minutes in the classroom and was in awe at what I saw. I observed children engaged and learning in a loving environment. The level of work and skill demonstrated by the children surprised me. The children's level of independence was obvious and most importantly ... learning looked fun. At the end of the observation, the decision was so easy!

As they say, the rest is history! We enrolled Emily in July 2003 and were excited about the future of her learning and thriving in such a nurturing environment. Almost a year later, Jeffrey and I were overjoyed to welcome another beautiful daughter to our family – Katie. By this time, I had volunteered on several committees and was on the Board of Directors. The more involved I became in the school ... the more I learned about Montessori and MOM.

Michele Scott continued...

My professional background is very diverse. I have a Bachelor's degree in Adult Education and have worked in a wide variety of industries in a training/organizational development/process improvement capacity. My husband owns his own small business and when Emily was two I took a break from the "corporate climbing" and assisted him with his business. In 2006, a position in the office became available at Montessori of Macon and I was excited about the opportunity to join the amazing staff in the work that goes on here. As my role has evolved with our school, I continue to be amazed each and every time I step foot in our classrooms. I am continually grateful to have the opportunity to be part of Montessori of Macon!



Ember Kemmerer
Office & Admissions Specialist

I have been working at Montessori of Macon for the past 7 years. I first came to Montessori of Macon as a student, in fact, I was in the very first class! I knew when I had my daughter, Aniston, this was where I wanted her to be. I feel MOM offers so much more than just an education. For me, Montessori of Macon is a home away from home.

I have a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and a Master's degree in Professional

Ember Kemmerer continued...

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Counseling. While working on my master's degree I completed an internship at the local Youth Detention Center as well as a women's shelter. Although I learned a lot from these experiences, I knew my heart was at Montessori of Macon.

I came to work at MOM in 2009 as the Toddler 1 assistant. Although I loved working with the toddlers, I knew my strengths were best served in the office. In 2011, I began working in the school office. In addition to my duties in the office, I have put my counseling degree to use by working with the middle/high students as a College and Career Specialist.

I have an 11 year-old daughter, Aniston, who is a 6th grade student in the Upper Elementary classroom. We live with my boyfriend Mike and our two dogs, Maggie & Newman. We enjoy going to the movies, bowling and watching *Friends* reruns. Although I've never been a sports fan, Aniston has been involved in softball for the last few years and has made a HUGE fan out of me! I never knew how exciting (and nerve wracking) games could be!

In my down time, my favorite thing to do is read. I enjoy reading books by Dan Brown, Michael Connely, Philippa Gregory, Beverly Lewis and most recently by Julie Klassen. I have Montessori to thank for my love of reading. Some of my favorite MOM memories were of my class listening as the teacher read *Where the Red Fern Grows* or *A Wrinkle in Time*.

I am so grateful to be part of this community! I can't imagine being anywhere else, or having Aniston anywhere else. I look forward to the many years ahead!



Cara McHenry
Administrative Assistant

I grew up in Fayetteville, GA which is about 20 minutes south of Atlanta. I graduated from Sandy Creek High School where I was very active in everything from sports to philanthropy clubs. I also started babysitting in the summer and working in my church in the nursery. That is where I found out working with kids was exactly what I wanted to do!

I went to Wesleyan College and majored in Human Services and Religious Studies. While at Wesleyan, I had the opportunity to work at St. Andrews Montessori my sophomore year and that is where I discovered Montessori was my calling. I was able to land an internship here at MOM and also started as an aftercare teacher in January of 2014. Later that year, I was hired as an assistant and I could not have asked for a better place to have my first job. I joined the office staff in the summer of 2015, and I enjoy being able to interact with all the families from all of the classrooms.

In my spare time, I enjoy loving on my dogs, camping, kayaking, tennis, and attempting to recreate things I find on Pinterest. I am getting married later this year, and am looking forward to a new chapter of my life!

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Deidra Wilson
Lead Teacher, Toddler 1

I moved to Georgia at the age of 15. Macon has truly become the place I call home. I have been part of the Montessori of Macon community for over eleven years now. I am currently the Lead Teacher in the Toddler 1 Class. Before working with the toddler age group, I spent five years working with primary students. I have come to realize my biggest passion is working with the toddlers. I enjoy their curiosity, excitement and need for order. The very first toddler class consisted of only eight toddlers. It has been wonderful watching the growth of our Toddler program.

I attended Paine College, and have received both Toddler and Primary American Montessori Society credentials through the Atlanta Montessori Teacher Education Program. In addition to being a teacher, I am a mother to three beautiful children, TaShya (age 16), Akira (age 13) and Xavier (age 9). I am very grateful that my children had the opportunity to experience Montessori of Macon as well.

In my spare time I enjoy spending time with family and friends. I also try to stay active by playing basketball and bike riding. I am really glad to be part of such a great school!



Crystal Bentzel
Assistant Teacher, Toddler 1

I am very excited to be joining Montessori of Macon's educational staff this year as a teaching assistant in Toddler 1. Our family first joined this community in 2010 when my son, Evan, entered the Primary classroom and my daughter, Elizabeth, began in the Toddler classroom. I had the privilege over the last two years to work on campus as a substitute teacher and as an office support assistant during the school breaks. I also had the opportunity to assist in each classroom, in addition to teaching a cooking elective for the Middle/High class last school year. I have thoroughly enjoyed observing the students in the various planes of development as outlined by Maria Montessori.

Prior to working at MOM, I was a Corporate Manager for a large restaurant supply company for fifteen years. I left my position in order to spend more time with my family and to pursue a career in education. I received my Associate's Degree in Business Administration and Information Technology from Macon State College, and most recently completed my Bachelor's Degree in Accounting from Western Governor's University.

I am a military wife celebrating 15 years of marriage this year with my biggest supporter and husband, Brian. We have two witty children, Evan (9) and Elizabeth (7), whom have grown up before our eyes on this very campus. Our household would not be complete without our sweet dog, Josephine Coconut (Jojo). Outside of the classroom I stay busy spending quality time with my family and operating my company, "The Kid's Course", which offers culinary classes for children.

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Amanda McGee

Lead Teacher, Toddler 2

I first discovered Montessori of Macon, while home schooling my children. I noticed the similarities in my methods of teaching and the philosophy. I immediately reached out to the school not only to enroll my children, but to look for a teaching opportunity for myself. My daughter Annemarie is now 11 and my son Jay is 13. They have learned so much from this amazing school. It has taught my children how to really think for themselves and to see the big picture in all situations.

I am now enjoying my 6th year of teaching toddlers at Montessori of Macon. The philosophy has brought so much order and understanding to my life inside and outside of the toddler classroom. I completed my Infant and Toddler Montessori training at the CMTE in North Carolina. It was one of the best experiences of my life.

In my downtime, I love to paint using India inks and acrylics. I enjoy making soy candles and soaps. I have 7 cats and 2 dogs. Animals are a big part of my life and I hope to eventually have a sanctuary place to rescue needy animals in search of forever homes. My husband and I have been married for 14 years. We just purchased our second home in the rural part of Monroe county. Even though it's not in the mountains, it's a nice quiet haven that I've always dreamed of living in. I remain grateful for my amazing job, family and friends. I continue to learn and grow from the toddlers that I get to teach. They keep me feeling young and joyful! I hope to enjoy many more years at Montessori of Macon.



Carla Davis

Assistant Teacher, Toddler 2

I am originally from Miami, FL where I studied art and volunteered to help elementary students who were behind in reading and math. While I enjoyed working with the children, I moved to Gainesville, FL after I graduated high school and began my 20+ year career in social services, working to rehabilitate developmentally disabled children and adults. I have also owned and run a residential/commercial lawn care and janitorial business since 1996.

I began working at MOM as a substitute and aftercare teacher in 2012 and absolutely love the school, the children, the community and the fundamentals of the Montessori method. I believe I have found my second calling and look forward to working with your children for many years to come.

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Paula Del Rio

Lead Teacher, Primary 1

I was born in Colombia, South America and am the mother of two children, Luciana (8) and Jeronimo (12). I am a Civil Engineer and I have a Master's in Business Administration, as well. I moved to the US with my family in 2005. I completed my first Montessori Primary training in Texas in 2008, followed by wonderful experiences in two different Montessori schools in Dallas, TX. Additionally, I received my Primary AMS certification in 2013. I also taught preschool at an international school in Colombia.

I first came to MOM in 2010 as a substitute for the Primary 2 classroom. After that experience I worked in the Toddler 2 classroom. These experiences turned out to be some of the most exciting and challenging experiences of my career.

The Montessori method helped me discover my passion for teaching. I really enjoy working with children. The classroom is my peaceful, safe place. Traveling and spending time with my husband and children are my other big passions.



Whitney Selman

Assistant Teacher, Primary 1

I am 25 years old and currently live in Forsyth, GA. I attended Mary Persons High School and graduated in 2007. After graduating high school, I enrolled at Gordon College in Barnesville, GA and attended for two years.

I have been working at Montessori of Macon since 2010. I was the Primary aftercare teacher for two years before becoming a Primary assistant in January, 2013. In my spare time, you can find me cooking, reading and spending time with family and friends.



Barbara Burns

Lead Teacher, Primary 2

I am originally from Chattanooga, Tennessee and the youngest of six children. I have enjoyed the pros and cons of being part of a close, large family. I have been married to Joe for 35 years. Joe and I have lived in South Korea, Japan &

Barbara Burns continued...

Germany prior to moving to Georgia in 1991. I received my BS in Psychology from the University of Maryland in 1986. We have two beautiful and bright daughters, Ashleigh & Sarah. Our family joined the MOM community in 1996, when I began the AMS Primary Training. Our children attended MOM through the Upper Elementary Program. I taught in the Primary 1 class for 16 years before taking a temporary retirement! I have spent the last 4 years catching up on my to do list! We enjoyed traveling to Germany & Prague, planned and survived a wedding with Ashleigh & Zachary Irwin, and enjoyed fresh tomatoes from my new gardening efforts. This summer I worked hard to prepare the environment and I am very excited to be working with the children in the Primary 2 classroom!



Caitlin Walker

Assistant Teacher, Primary 2

I was born and raised here in Macon. Although I never thought I would stay in my hometown this long, I feel I am right where I belong. I was born in a very theatrically driven home. One of my siblings and I were always performing in plays and pursuing creative endeavors. My father even opened up his own fine arts facility which housed summer camps and after school programs where I worked as a camp counselor. It was from there that he decided to try and take on creating his own Montessori Preschool, which was located in downtown Macon. It was through my father's program that I first became interested in the Montessori philosophy, and also sparked my love of working with children.

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Caitlin Walker continued...

Unsure of what the next step in life would be after I graduated high school, I decided to pursue a long-term dream and travel to Africa where I taught English as a foreign language to 8 through 12 year-olds at a school in Accra, Ghana. After my return I decided to attend Mercer University. I received my Bachelor's degree in Philosophy with a minor in Art. The greatest gift I received throughout college was the ability to travel. Thanks to Mercer's wonderful study-abroad program I was able to knock out a large number of my courses in France, Italy, and Greece.

After graduating from college, I married my best-friend, Bo Walker, and soon became a stay-at-home mother for our two boys, Liam and Finn. My children not only gave me a greater sense of love, but their love encouraged me to pursue my dreams even further. I knew I wanted to work with children and I knew the Montessori community was one I could really call home.

I feel fortunate to have been given the opportunity to substitute teach and work as an aftercare teacher over the past couple of years here at Montessori of Macon. I am thrilled to be in my first year as an assistant teacher with Ms. Barbara in Primary 2. I am enjoying working with the children that I have already been fortunate enough to meet while working aftercare and substituting. I am also very much looking forward to the new students and families I will get to know this year both as a teacher and as a mother. Montessori of Macon is a beautifully woven tapestry of diversity and love. It brings me great joy to deepen my roots in this community.

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Sally Smith

Lead Teacher, Lower Elementary 1

I was born in Macon, GA, however, I grew up all over the country (and some in Europe)! My father was in the United States Air Force. Traveling provided an interesting, broadening education. I graduated high school from Punahou School in Hawaii (where President Obama graduated!). For college, I graduated from Mercer University here in Macon with a BA in Economics with a Business concentration.

Working with my hands has always been my favorite thing. I sew, do crafts, garden, knit, macrame, work with animals, keep bees and chickens, cook, keep a worm bin, build decks and tool houses, redo kitchens and baths. Many times I have “dragged” my husband into projects that we have both learned to love. I am truly interested in all areas of self-sufficiency.

We have three children and while they were growing up, my husband and I loved to help with their activities and lead some of the groups they were involved in. I have worked with young children for about twenty-five years. I have worked with children at Montessori of Macon for about 6 years, first as a substitute teacher and aftercare teacher, and then as an assistant teacher. After receiving my certification for teaching Lower Elementary from the American Montessori Society, I began this wonderful journey with the Montessori of Macon children. This gives me great satisfaction and joy because I have such

Sally Smith continued...

a deep respect for Maria Montessori's method of teaching children and the way that MOM works as a school and community. Children are so important! I welcome this opportunity to come to school each day and learn with these dear young people and help them realize their own potential.



Jenny Benjamin

Assistant Teacher, Lower Elementary 1

This year is my first year in Lower Elementary, and my second year being back full time at MOM after having my son. I have enjoyed this age group because learning is fun and easy for them. It is interesting to observe them asking questions and wondering about their world as they grow. I also learn from them, about cartoons, movies, sports, dinosaurs, ocean life and many other things.

Before coming to MOM, I worked in another Montessori School for six years. I received training from North American Montessori Center and earned a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education from Macon State College. I was born in Macon and have lived here all my life. I attended a local Magnet school where I studied other cultures and gained an appreciation for the art of literature through reading and writing. In my free time I enjoy reading, shopping and gardening. During breaks from school I love to travel and have hiked and camped all over the United States with my family. I am looking forward to this year and the new adventures it brings!!

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Gyni Wood

Lead Teacher, Lower Elementary 2

I was born in Charlottesville, Virginia, not far from the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains which run through western Virginia. As I was growing up, I spent time at summer camps in north Georgia and North Carolina. I loved being outside and hiking during those weeks, something that I have found a way to include in my adult life by volunteering and hiking with the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club.

My family moved to Georgia when I was five years old, just in time for me to begin kindergarten. My school experience was a traditional one, during which I discovered a love for geography, art, and literature. My academic years culminated with a degree in English Literature from Agnes Scott College near Atlanta.

My husband, Mark, and I are the parents of three amazing young adults as well as grandparents of two beautiful sweet girls and a baby boy. When our children were small, I was very interested in learning everything I could about child development. I read everything I could to find about what they needed in order to learn and thrive. When my youngest child was two, I began working in her morning preschool and found I loved the warm, nurturing environment with its emphasis on working with each child as an individual. I spent eighteen years there, leaving that work in 2009 to help care for my infant granddaughter.

My Montessori journey began in the fall of 2010, when a friend invited me to substitute in a Montessori classroom. I felt at home in the Montessori environment from the very first day. The classrooms were inviting, the materials fascinating. Here everything I had learned about child development was being put into practice in a controlled, methodical, logical way. I eagerly accepted substitute opportunities in every classroom, from Toddler through Lower Elementary, trying to absorb as much as possible

Gyni Wood continued...

while I weighed my options for the future. When the opportunity to work full-time in MOM's Lower Elementary class arose, I quickly accepted. My training through CMTE in North Carolina has expanded my understanding of math and language in ways that have enthused my teaching and make me eager to keep learning. The children of MOM make each day an adventure. They are curious, insightful, enthusiastic learners who challenge me to bring my best to the classroom. I'm looking forward to learning and growing along with them for many years to come.



Katherine Moss

Assistant Teacher, Lower Elementary 2

I am a kid at heart and a forever-learner. I value creativity and imagination, compassion and laughter. I truly believe there is always room to grow, and one can learn something new every day. Perhaps that is why life has brought me into the classroom.

My husband and I have been together since we were in high school and he is my best friend. We live here in Macon and have three wonderful boys, aged 4, 8, and 10. Together we enjoy movie nights, cooking, and traveling. Personally, I love animals and music. I also enjoy the outdoors, kayaking, hiking, and photographing nature.

I have a background in Biology but have found my home here at Montessori of Macon. This is my third year in Lower Elementary and I have truly enjoyed working with this age group. It is so fulfilling to watch them learn and grow, discover their passions and talents, and become their own individual selves. I can't wait to see what else this year has in store!

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Fran Hirsh

Lead Teacher, Upper Elementary

I have just completed my 16th year at MOM and my 10th year as a teacher in the Upper Elementary classroom. Aside from Upper El, I've taught in both the Primary and Middle School classrooms. I truly enjoy teaching Upper El because I am constantly learning – learning new information, new ways of teaching, and about how students learn. No two days are ever the same in Upper El. Every day is a new challenge, a new opportunity for growth.

I became interested in the Montessori method during my son's enrollment in a Montessori Primary program. My husband, Sol, and I were extremely impressed with his excitement about school, the hands-on methodology, as well as the global approach to learning, a hallmark of Montessori education. We knew this was what we wanted for our children and wished we had this opportunity when we were kids! Both of our children attended MOM into Middle School.

I am originally from Brooklyn, New York and moved to Georgia in 1983 to attend Life Chiropractic College to pursue a career in chiropractic. After earning both a B.S. in Nutrition and D.C. degree, I practiced chiropractic in Macon for five years. Prior to moving to Georgia, I received an AAS from Manhattan Community College in Respiratory Therapy and worked in that capacity for several years in Brooklyn. I attended Montessori elementary training at Barry University in Miami Shores, Florida.



Kerry Keene

Lead Teacher, Upper Elementary

After completing my training this summer, I began my first year as co-teacher with Ms. Fran in the Upper Elementary classroom. Prior to this new role, I was the Upper Elementary assistant for three years, before spending last year in Lower Elementary. My time in Lower Elementary gave me a wealth of knowledge on the Lower Elementary curriculum. Going forward this knowledge/experience will help me assist the students as they transition from Lower to Upper Elementary. Before coming to Montessori of Macon 4 years ago, I graduated with a Bachelor's degree from UGA in both Psychology and Child Development. I am excited to be back with these wonderfully interesting preteens of Upper Elementary and cannot wait to see what we learn in the classroom this year!



Daniella Subieta

Lead Teacher, Middle School

When I visited MOM for the first time, I was enchanted. So much learning, patience, and real human potential being tapped! Now that I am a teacher here, I know the dedication and commitment it takes to create these peaceful

Daniella Subieta continued...

classrooms. I am excited to be here and contribute to this beautiful community.

I grew up in Marietta but have spent the past five years in Utah, where I graduated in journalism from Brigham Young University and minored in Latin American studies. My passion for writing led me to a few different internships; my favorite was with the *Friend*, an international children's magazine. There I realized that I wanted to be working with children more directly and helping them grow in more than just academics.

I moved to Macon with my husband a little over a year ago, and I started getting involved in children's advocacy and education. What I discovered about the development of the whole child brought me to Montessori of Macon, where that full development is honored.

I continue to freelance write and volunteer with children's groups. I love teaching writing and personal development. I think what makes this life joyful is getting to share with the rising generation the gifts that we as adults have worked so hard to cultivate, and that mean so much to us.



Robert Hudgins

Teacher, Middle/High School

I began teaching in the Middle/High classroom at Montessori of Macon in 2015, returning to the school where I had been taught by Elizabeth Irwin and was classmates with Sarah Kelley in the first years of the school. In 2016, I took on the additional role of teaching music in the Montessori of Macon classrooms. I hold a Bachelor's degree in Music Composition from Mercer University and a Master's degree in Mathematics Education from the University of Georgia.

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Sarah Kelley

Lead Teacher, High School

I have a long history with Montessori. I was a student at Montessori of Macon in the first years of the school and was taught by Elizabeth Irwin. I then returned to Montessori of Macon in 2008, while attending Wesleyan College, to teach drama and aftercare. In the summer of 2013, I journeyed out to Houston to begin my secondary Montessori training with Dr. Betsy Coe at the Houston Montessori Center. In 2014, I completed my training and took over as the lead teacher for the Middle/High program. I continued with my education, earning a Master's degree in Education with Montessori Integration. This year, my role has shifted to focus on the High School program. As always, I am excited to work with adolescents and to be part of the MOM community.



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EDUCATING THE WHOLE CHILD FOR A WHOLE WORLD

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Save the date!

16th Annual Culture Fest



Join us as we Celebrate Cultures Around the World.

- ☀ Enjoy a taste of Montessori of Macon's finest ethnic cuisines.
- ☀ Revel in the talent of local performers honoring their culture.
- ☀ Take pride in our diverse Montessori of Macon community representing countries around the world!

Saturday, October 22nd

11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Montessori of Macon – 855 Tolliver Place

This is an International Potluck, what will your family bring?
MOM families bring a dish to share that is representative of their families origin... or something they like to cook.