

NEWSLETTER



Pathfinder Ranch
Outdoor Education Camp

H A P P Y HOLIDAYS

Wishing all of our Meher families a joyous holiday season filled with love, laughter and time with loved ones.

**WISHING YOU A SAFE
AND HAPPY HOLIDAYS!
FROM
MEHER MIDDLE SCHOOL**

May you all have some slow, relaxed days of enjoyment with your children and may the New Year bring health and happiness to everyone.



Peace and love.

Adela Muñoz
Director



► **Fundraiser Results**

The results of our Fall fundraiser with Charleston Wrap are in. Thanks to everyone's support, we sold a grand total of \$7,996! Our school gets to keep approximately 40% of those sales!

We are happy to report that a total of 53 students participated. Our top seller was Xavier Johnson from Mrs. Wildhaber's class at the Altadena site. He sold 51 items! Way to go, Xavier! He and his family will get to enjoy a family four-pack of tickets to Knott's Berry Farm.

The top sellers from all of the classes were:

- Ms. Rivera: Logan Tam
- Ms. Roque: Diego Campa
- Ms. Tenold: Logan Tong
- Ms. Strand: Francesca Alvarado
- Mr. Mindes: Nixus Flores

They each received a wind-up zoo animal that represented their class in the Big Zoo Race, on Wednesday, December 12th. The doggie operated by Franchesca Alvarado won the race so her class gets an ice cream party!

Meher, we know that when we work together...anything is possible. Congratulations, everyone on another successful fundraiser!

Elizabeth Cardenas-Chagoya



Nixus Flores was absent.

► **Holiday Celebrations**

On Friday, December 21st, classroom parties will be held. The Primary and Elementary classes have their own special flyer about their Christmas party schedules.

There will be a gift exchange also on that day. Each child is asked to bring a small gift which is suitable for either a boy or a girl of your child's age. The gift should be worth no more than \$10. Gift tags can say whom the gift is from but not whom it is for.





November slipped away leaving behind some festive and memorable activities to cherish. December came in with even more activities. These include colorful and fun things to do in the classroom. Aside from their academic learning, the children are busy with projects that are geared to decorate our classroom and have little surprises for their parents too! These are the triggers that inspire them to come to School every day.

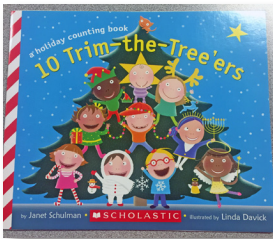
Before I describe the inspiring events of December, let me first close up November by relating the remaining classroom activities we had. A few days before we had our Veterans Day holiday, we discussed the importance of it and why our country celebrates it. We said that it is a public holiday held on the anniversary of the end of World War I to honor US veterans of all wars. It is an honoring of America's veterans for their patriotism, love of country, and willingness to serve and sacrifice. A reflective thought left the children with understanding of the importance of being united and fight for a common goal in attaining peace so that we, Americans, could live in a better country. Next was our peaceful and happy Thanksgiving party. The

food was plentiful and we have a lot to be thankful for, including the support, services and generosity that are given by our parents to our class as a whole. The set-up and clean-up was done by parents volunteering their time and calling off from work to be with us and their children on this day. We give our parents a big thank you for all their hard work in making our party a successful and memorable one. The teachers and our children are indeed very grateful.

In our classroom we had our Christmas tree set up and lighted just right after our Thanksgiving Day! The children watched me and Mrs. Suh set it up and placed a few glittery strands and lights on it to complete it along with our silvery star on top. The rest of the decorations were the children's mini Christmas projects. We kept our Christmas tree lighted during class hours. Our staircase is decorated too with little Christmas trees and stars originally decorated by the children; no two are alike. They have their snowman and gingerbread man to be punched and decorated too. These decorations will be placed in their brown bags and be sent home by Friday, December 21st.

Our parent conferences went

smoothly and there was good rapport, understanding and learning that went both ways. Information on how to help children progress in their learning process was given during the conference. This is the first of two parent conferences for this year. Our last one will be in May 2019. So dear parents, let us support our children in their studies by helping them sleep early at night and reading to them every day in order to increase their vocabulary and love of reading.



The children in our class are busy as usual learning and mastering good skills that will benefit them in the next step of their grade level. Every day I take a sigh of contentment watching them work continuously and with concentration. The older children love to read and master their reading with the following: puzzle words, phonograms and some functions of words. Then they start to write a few of these words in cursive script. They move from rug work to table work as they gain knowledge and have fun learning at school every day. Their breaks are snack, lunch and recess time. The younger children are busy using their large and fine motor skills and at the same time learning to socialize properly with other children. At the end of the day every child goes home excited to tell their stories read, lessons done, songs and poems

learned in circle time. The children have been singing Christmas songs as early as the day after Thanksgiving! Their favorites are Jingle Bells, Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer and Drummer Boy. They sometimes hum these songs as they work in class.

Our December activities have started. These are the Food Drive, Toy Drive and Vision Drive. We will be having our Christmas party on Friday, December 21st. All parents are invited to join in the celebration. Thank you so much for your support and generosity to the needs and activities of our class and school as a whole.

To Mrs. Suh and Ms. Martinez, thank you as always for your continued assistance and follow up with the children and parents; but most of all for your dedication and love for them. God bless you both and families too. To the other teachers that come to help us in our class in one way or the other, Ms. Bayon, Ms. Ramirez and Ms. Kulwicki, your support, energy, love and guidance to the children in our class are recognized and appreciated too.

Have a happy Holiday and a Prosperous 2019 to one and all!

Love, Mrs. Rivera, Ms. Suh, and Ms. Martinez



"We have the possibility to form the citizen of the world, and the study of the young child is fundamental to the peace and progress of humanity."

—Maria Montessori



The days have flown by so quickly with all the festivities that started with our Thanksgiving Feast last month. A number of families participated by either sending food or helping out in the classroom and by simply being there to taste the "Stone Soup" the children made. We are indeed so grateful for all your support.

We just concluded our parent-teacher conferences. Thank you for setting aside time to re-connect, set goals and discuss your child's progress in the classroom.

In early December we watched a presentation called "Environmental Defenders" sponsored by the County of Los Angeles. The upbeat songs and movement were used to teach the children to "re-use...reduce... and recycle" in order to help save planet Earth.

The results are out for the Fall Fundraiser. Congratulations to **Diego Campa** for being the top seller in our class.

Our birthday celebrant this month is Victoria Delgado who turned 4 on December 2nd.

The Holiday Season is here once again. The children are doing art projects to decorate our classroom. They also helped by choosing an

ornament to hang on our Christmas tree. You can hear carols being sung with "Jingle Bells" as their most requested one. The festive scents of oranges and spices will fill our room as we make projects and bake gingerbread cookies and other holiday treats.

Here's a poem we've been reciting and practicing...

*Christmas is a candle, Christmas is a star
Christmas are the wise men travelling
from afar
Christmas is a story, Christmas is a tree
Christmas is a carol sang for you and me.*

Have a wonderful Christmas Holiday everyone!

Mrs. Roque, Ms. Lopez, Ms. Bayon



Class News

This month, we had four birthdays in one week! Claire turned 6 on December 3, Ezio turned 8 on December 5, and Julia and Anthony both had a birthday on December 6. Julia turned 7 and Anthony is now 8 years old. We must not forget Paolo, who turned 6 on December 12, and Connie and Juliet, who both turned 7 December 18 and 19 respectively.

One of the girls from Upper Elementary, Rafaela, continues to share her passion for gymnastics with our class, and she choreographed a holiday performance for our class to learn to the theme of Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory. She came a couple of times a week with two main assistants (also from Upper Elementary), Francesca and Ayushi, and held an optional gymnastics class where she put her leadership skills to work. Rafaela and her assistants are to be commended for their energetic and caring attitude towards the younger children. Our class had a fantastic time and we look forward to seeing what creative and challenging ideas Rafaela comes up with next.

Curriculum News

In Montessori we give children the opportunity for what we call "big work". We give them lessons, expectations, materials, and then uninterrupted time to concentrate. Big work takes time, and children might be researching one topic day after day. For example, one group has been working together to put together a poster about gems and minerals over the last couple of months. Doing this project teaches them skills like being responsible with all the research you've collected, collaborating with others and at times compromising, revising, dedicating time and effort towards the

work, and feeling satisfaction at all the hard work accomplished at your own will. The group who made the minerals poster recently shared it with the class, explaining what they learned. Then they put together a trip to the Gem Room at the Natural History Museum to see the beautiful rocks glimmering under the lights and to read more information about the ones that interest them. This kind of trip is called a Going Out. Another group has been inspired to pursue a Going Out as well. They started researching about the different types of dogs, such as where they come from and each one's physical features. They are continuing their research in class and asking for help from parents and teachers to find a place they might be able to learn even more and do a Going Out for that.

It rained on the day that we planned to visit our gardens as a whole class, so we did a short lesson on weather and climate and then the following week we went outside for the Garden Harvest day instead. This month's lesson was about roots. First we did a lesson on the job of the roots in relation to the whole plant and we looked at class charts to demonstrate this. Then, children each wrote a short report about it and made an illustration, and lastly, we spent time exploring the gardens and looking at the roots of the plants up close. Third years led the exploration of the gardens. So far this year, in addition to root, we have studied flower, leaf, and seed.

Calendar News

Our class will have a nice holiday celebration on the last day of school for the year, December 21. We will be on break for two weeks, from December 24 - Jan 4.



The classroom has been quite busy this past month; a variety of projects have been explored. A favorite this past month for many of the Upper El students has been finding the square roots of very large numbers. Using the peg board, they are able to concretely arrive at the square roots of numbers into the millions and billions. After a lot of practice on the peg board, the work can be done on paper, abstractly. It takes a lot of practice to be ready for that. TJ Ogden, a sixth grader, decided to follow up his work with square roots by making by hand a quilted pillow of the work he did on his peg board. Other math lessons being practiced in the class are: positive and negative numbers, notation of cubes, Pi, prime factor trees, algebraic notation of a quadrinomial, long multiplication, finding the circumference of a circle, and the sum of angles.

One aspect of the classroom that is unique to a Montessori Elementary, is the opportunity for students to go on a Going Out. Last week, Enzo Chavez and Alik Onar went on a Going Out to the Los Angeles Auto Show. Beforehand, they did research on a variety of cars, put a presentation board together, and organized the

planning of their trip. One highlight for them was being able to go into some of the brand new car models, like a Maserati.

The Derpy Times is our class newspaper written by many students which has been coming out regularly with new issues. The classroom newspaper features fun, creative, mostly fictitious stories that feature adventure stories. Most Fridays, when the newspaper comes out, the students enjoy gathering around to listen to the funny articles the latest edition has created.

A variety of other work has been going on in class. Some examples of independent work are: research of the Boeing Company, research on the history of Rubic's Cube, a timeline of human development, and a model of a working farm, many of our students have been helping Rafa and the Lower Elementary with a Charlie and the Chocolate Factory performance. Rafa has been giving gymnastics lessons twice a week to the students of Ms. Tenold's class for most of the school year, and loving it. Also, in the spirit of the holidays and our canned food drive, a few children have been learning about poverty, the cost of expenses, net and gross income, and

► Mr. Mindes' Class



the minimum wage of our area. This exercise helped open their eyes and broaden their perspective on the larger picture of the costs of living.

We are really thrilled to celebrate the holidays together, and will be enjoying a class party and gift exchange. We hope everyone has a wonderful holiday and winter break, spent with friends and family. We will see you safely in 2019! Thank you, and Merry Christmas!

Happy Holidays Meher Families! Since our Thanksgiving celebration last month, December has been a slow crescendo of activities leading us to winter break. It started the week after the Thanksgiving holiday with a field trip to an Urban Homestead in Pasadena, a model in sustainability. The literature class invited Rosie Yasukoshi, an artist and alumni of Occidental college, to present her graphic novel, a chronicle of her life growing up in a biracial household. The students presented their business proposals to a panel of teachers – Mrs. Munoz, Mr. Chavez, and Mrs. Chagoya – in a setting that imitated an episode of *Shark Tank*, right down to the judges (teachers) asking probing questions. However, they are not done quite yet: the last week before break, the students will sing Christmas Carols to the primary grades and throw a Middle School holiday party where they will present creative projects to each other. I'm betting they'll be busy up to the very last minute!

MS. TENOLD'S CLASS



HOLDING A CRICKET



WRITING EXERCISES

Besides these activities, there's a lot going on in regular classes. Below is a short description of what teachers are covering:

Math: We have covered a range of topics from formulating and solving linear equations to reading, creating, and interpreting graphs. We have also spent time reviewing percent problems and operations with integers and decimals.

Biomimicry: We have focused on key concepts to enable us to develop an inspired solution to

climate change for a national youth design challenge in which the Middle School is participating. To that end, we have studied the design process – identifying, exploring, creating, refining, and sharing - principles they have already covered in their micro-economy class. We have defined climate change and the issues that surround it. We have discussed a framework of questions (What are the ISSUES?/What are the RELATIONSHIPS? / What are the BENEFITS?/ What are the CHALLENGES? / WHO is the article about? / WHAT is the problem? / WHEN is it taking place? / WHERE is it taking place? / WHY is the problem occurring?) which will enable the students to simplify and categorize their readings on climate change.

Micro-economy: Students presented their business proposals in a formal setting, mimicking how an entrepreneur might pitch his idea to interested investors. We are currently dissecting their proposals, considering how to align their business plans to real-world constraints.

Literature: We began reading “A Farewell to Manzanar”, continuing to look at the theme of the outsider, as well as writing and presenting essays.

I’m guessing that the students will be pretty active in their classes to the last minute as well, but it will make the winter break feel well deserved! Please join the students for the Middle School holiday party if you have the time; however, the students want me to tell you to BYOF ... bring your own FOOD!

Business Presentation by Julia Hernandez

My hands fidget as I wait for my name to be called. I’m the last one to present my business proposal to a group of three scary looking judges; our assignment for Micro-Economy was to present a business proposal. Everyone is nicely dressed and practicing for their presentation, I feel my hands get sweaty at the thought of presenting. As I’m getting up to present I tell myself to *relax* and how good I will feel once I’m finished. The light of the projector shines on my face and I see the judges smiling at me, I take a deep breath and remind myself to speak loudly and clearly. As I’m nearing the last few words of my presentation, I feel a wave of relief and accomplishment, It’s *finally* over. I let the feeling of relief sink in. It doesn’t last long. My hands start to fidget again, the judges start to ask their questions....*here we go again.*

December by Vanessa Artiga

December is one of our most exciting and busy months, we have a lot of events popping up. We started our busy month with fun little activities such as decorating our classroom with Christmas themed decorations, each of us brought in a stocking to be stuffed. Along with all of our fun activities we are having a Secret Santa for our classroom. On one of our most recent Friday’s all five of us students had a dress up day called ‘Blast from the Past’ we were all given the opportunity to dress the way our parents dressed from their early teen years, it was really fun getting to live in the shoes of our parents. On the 20th of December, we will be caroling to the Primary and Elementary students, as well as handing out small gifts that we are positive they will love. And finally in honor of Christmas and the last day of school before winter break and the new year; we will be having a small Christmas lunch for the five of us, we will have food, games, a bake-off, karaoke and many more activities. Have a happy holiday and Merry Christmas from The Middle Schoolers to you!

by Lindsey Tanner/AP

December 3, 2018

Top tot toys? Blocks and boxes backed over high-tech toys

In this Friday, Nov. 9, 2018 photo, toys sit on the shelves at a Walmart Supercenter in Houston. Pediatricians say the best toys for young children are simple, old-fashioned toys like blocks and puzzles rather than costly electronic games or the latest high-tech gadgets. The advice is in a new report on selecting toys for young children in the digital era. It was published Monday, Dec. 3 by the American Academy of Pediatrics. (David J. Phillip, File/Associated Press)



Skip the costly electronic games and flashy digital gizmos. Pediatricians say the best toys for tots are old-fashioned hands-on playthings that young children can enjoy with parents — things like blocks, puzzles — even throwaway cardboard boxes — that spark imagination and creativity.

“A cardboard box can be used to draw on, or made into a house,” said Dr. Alan Mendelsohn, co-author of a new report on selecting toys for young children, up to around age 5.

Many parents feel pressured by ads promoting tablet-based toys and games as educational and brain-stimulating but there’s not much science to back up those claims, Mendelsohn said. Their main misconception: “The toy that is best is the one that is the most expensive or has the most bells and whistles or is the most technologically sophisticated.”

Simpler hands-on toys that parents and young children can play with together are preferable for healthy development, said Mendelsohn, a pediatrician at NYU Langone Health in New York.

The report published Monday by the American Academy of Pediatrics cites studies suggesting that heavy use of electronic media may interfere with children's speech and language development, replace important playtime with parents and lead to obesity.

Studies also have found that more than 90 percent of U.S. kids have used mobile devices and most started using them before age 1.

The pediatricians' group recommends no screen time for children up to age 2, and says total screen time including TV and computer use should be less than one hour daily for ages 2 and older.

"A little bit of screen time here and there is unlikely to have much harm if a child otherwise has other activity," Mendelsohn said. But he added that screen time can overwhelm young children and is difficult to limit and control.

The academy's website offers suggestions on ideal toys for young children, including balls, puzzles, coloring books and card games.

Shopping recently at Dancing Bear Toys in Asheville, N.C., a store that doesn't sell electronic toys, Leah Graham Stewart said she supports the academy's advice even if avoiding digital toys and games is tough.

She said she's noticed her two young boys tend to misbehave after playing on an iPad she typically reserves for long airplane rides.

"We try to keep it as minimal as possible," Graham Stewart said. "I just tell them to go outside and play."

Erika Evers, Dancing Bear's co-owner, said the store's mission is to give kids an alternative to tech toys.

"Not that video games and electronic toys don't have their place — in moderation, in our opinion," she said. "But we feel like kids really need opportunities to socialize and interact with their environment in a way that is hands-on and tangible." ■





Happy Fall!

Winter Break

This year winter break will be from December 24th - January 4th. The school will be closed during that time.

Multicultural Feast

Thank you to all the parents that made this year's multicultural feast a big success. While we had fewer parents this year than years prior, it was still a festive event filled with an assortment of delicious foods as well as lively conversation. For those who could attend, thank you for carving time out of your day to join us. For those who brought food, thank you so much for sharing your culture with the rest of Meher.

Hightouch Hightech

We kicked off December with a bubbles program from Hightouch Hightech. This is the fourth year in a row we have had them here, and this is the second time I have requested the bubbles presentation. I thought I knew what to expect, having had the bubbles presentation before. I was wrong! It was a completely different presentation with bubbles. It was so exciting to see even more things the children could

do with bubbles. They seemed to really enjoy the soapy presentation.

Christmas Tree Lane

On December 8th, Meher Montessori had an information table set up at the Altadena Tree Lighting Ceremony Winter Arts and Crafts Festival. This was our 6th year in a row in attendance. This is my favorite community event because as the day turns into night, more and more Meher alumni come to say hi. It is always a treat when former students come by and tell passersby that "this was my preschool" with such pride in their voices. I want to give a special thank you to Ann Harrer, Calvin's mom, who spent almost the whole day keeping me company at the Meher table. She even helped me pack up and drop everything back off at the school once we were finished!

Parent/Teacher Conferences

I love parent/teacher conferences because it is a great time for uninterrupted one on one time with each child's parents. This year was no different. I was really touched by how many of the parents of our new friends said they have seen positive changes in their children since starting school here just three short months ago. I was

also delighted to hear from a multitude of parents about the Kindness Cards, and how well received they are. I just had more made by Linda Joe (aka Mrs. Yoshida), Meher's resident art design expert. These will continue throughout the school year.

Our next round of conferences will be in May.

New Staff Alert!

In case you have not yet heard, we have hired another assistant teacher. Claudia Sykes joined us on December 17th. We hired her because our classroom is going to grow. When we come back from winter break, on the 7th, we will have at least four new children in the room with us. Ms. Sykes has a Montessori background, and we are excited to welcome her to our Meher family. The final headcount for our new friends will be in January's newsletter.

Winter Program

We will have a short winter program, followed by a refreshment party on Friday, December 21st. The program will begin promptly at 1:00 in the church sanctuary. The refreshment party will immediately follow in the daycare room. All the children will sing. We hope everyone can make it.

As we close out 2018, I want to thank all the families current and past for their support in our small school. It is only because of your positive word of mouth that we can grow and enroll more children and hire more staff. Meher would not be here without you. Thank you!

Until 2019,

Mrs. Wildhaber, Miss McCray, Miss Tinajero, and Ms. Sykes



December 2018

Why I Believe in Montessori: A Parent Perspective

I've not been a Montessori parent for the major part of my life. In fact, prior to the past two years, I would definitely not have been able to discern a style to my parenting. For the most part, it is what I learnt through experience with my parents, trial and error, and a lot of reliance on my intuition.

The past two years have been a journey in exploring new-found respect for the insights into the simple, yet powerful philosophy of Montessori, and I am going to try and break it down to you in the simplest way possible.

"Don't jump on the sofa, don't run down the stairs, you'll trip, no this, not that..." sound familiar?



When you step into a Montessori environment for the first time, or when you hear about it, what will jar your senses is that the methodology is not founded on parenting principles of paranoia and fear, but on allowing the child to be enabled, empowered, and to have freedom within limits.

A number of parents worry - Does this freedom mean that my child will not have structure? Discipline? Will the classroom run amok, will my child start getting used to getting their way and become defiant?

I can assure you as a parent who had similar concerns, that you are in for a pleasant surprise.

There is structure, there is discipline. But these honor the spirit for the child and feed their self-confidence.

Every child, when he or she enters the classroom learns the beauty of respect and courtesy, social norms, as the initial phase in the class enables them to greet each other and socialize.

The guide in the room will always ask the child what work they would like to explore that day and all the children walk around, picking up the work that appeals to them. They carry it back to their place of work and the day progresses with their attention to mastering the lesson. The guide observes each and every child in the class and understands where to step in and ask- "I see you looking at that work and you've not done it before. Would you like me to show you how it is done?" Or, "I see that you have left this incomplete, would you like some help?"

There is an insurmountable level of respect for a child's ability and power of comprehension; and that feeds the child's confidence and love for self.

I still remember the sense of frustration and inadequacy I felt as a child when in the traditional learning environment, we had math concepts introduced to all of us at the same time, regardless of our having mastered or comprehended the concepts prior. Looking around a class of fifty odd children, I would feel a sense of inadequacy and failing when other children would be nodding their heads and jotting down notes furiously, while I struggled.

Not the case in a Montessori classroom. Every child approaches their learning at their pace and because fellow classmates all work at the same time on different works, the insecurities and self-doubt in one's capability, do not arise.

Another beautiful aspect of a Montessori environment is the mixed age groups.

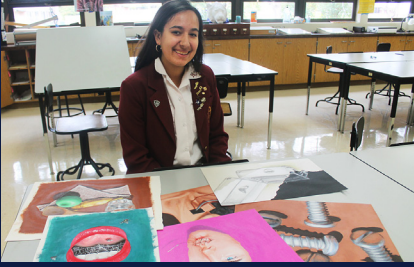
Ever tried teaching your younger child something for days, and then watching in disbelief when the older sibling gets the learning across in a matter of hours? The wonder of this foundation is that it works on both, the child that is learning the lesson, and the child giving it. This how leadership skills are developed and subtly introduced.

I am not an expert in Montessori. Far be from it. All I am, is a parent just like you, who wants nothing better than to see their child grow up as a confident, self-loving, independent and respectful individual. With a Montessori education, I assure you they can. ■

~ Supreet Kaur, Montessori Parent



**FORMER MEHER STUDENT ARTWORK
FEATURED IN LOCAL GALLERY EXHIBIT**



Congratulations to Samantha Gonzalez '19 whose artwork was featured in La Virgen art exhibit at Picture THIS Gallery in Long Beach. Samantha was an artist reception Saturday, December 8, from 12- 4 p.m. at 1430 Norse Way, Long Beach, CA, 90808. The following is a description of the exhibit:

“The Virgin Mary is known by many titles (Blessed Mother, Virgin, Madonna, Our Lady), epithets (Star of the Sea, Queen of Heaven, Cause of Our Joy), invocations (Theotokos, Panagia, Mother of Mercy) and other names (Our Lady of Loreto, Our Lady of Guadalupe). All of

these titles refer to the same individual named Mary, and are used variably by Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, and some Anglicans. A few of the titles given to Mary are dogmatic in nature. Many other titles are poetic or allegorical and have lesser or no canonical status, but which form part of popular piety, with varying degrees of acceptance by the clergy. Yet more titles refer to depictions of Mary in the history of art. Various artists come together to exhibit their own interpretation of La Virgen, the Virgin Mary. The exhibit is on display now through December 29th.”



We observe that a child occupied with matters that awaken his interest seems to blossom, to expand, evincing undreamed of character traits; his abilities give him great satisfaction, and he smiles with a sweet and joyous smile.”

—Maria Montessori



Season's Greetings from

