

OMA at Vancouver Children's Festival

Montessori guides and administrators gathered at Westfield Shopping Mall in Vancouver, WA to represent Oregon Montessori Association via creating a miniature Montessori environment for the public to explore. The 20' x 20' exhibit was part of the 7th annual Children's Festival. Six low tables and chairs and three sets of shelves featured works from local toddler and primary environments. Three higher tables held elementary materials, resources and completed middle-school projects. Cascadia Middle School student volunteers were on hand to describe the work. A parent resource table displayed books, summary sheets, and school literature while a laptop played the videos "Montessori at Home" and "Edison's Day".

Dozens of families stopped by to take advantage of the opportunity to experience Montessori materials first hand, many for their first time. This led to great conversations with parents and other caregivers about the benefits of Montessori education. A few children enjoyed the work so much their families lingered for as long as an hour.

Complete lessons such as sink and float, the world puzzle map, and binomial cube were given to young visitors by local Montessori guides. Visitors seemed to enjoy the truly interactive nature of our exhibit and relaxed atmosphere. Several myths were carefully debunked including the classics "Montessori doesn't have structure" and "Eventually kids have to live in the real world, Montessori won't prepare them for that." After receiving an elementary math lesson, one enthusiastic parent commented that "I always knew like $8 + 2 = 10$, but now *I know it* and I know *why* I know it."

Several Clark County Schools also contributed items for the 250 goody bags distributed to festival guests. A Clark County School listing/Montessori information sheet was bundled with the goodies.

Thank you so much to everyone who volunteered at the event. Our long list of dedicated guides/assistants/administrators includes: Julie Davis and Emma Davis (A Peaceful Path Montessori) Alejandra Paz (Bamboo Montessori) Donna Hargrave, Nina Draper, Jessica Huynh, Monica Sorenson-Haeder (Camas Montessori) Danielle Bengé, Tami O-Kinsilla, and Amy Lilly (Cascadia School) Susan Cusack (Field of Dreams Montessori) Susan Clark and Elaine Ritter (Good Shepherd Montessori) Traci Tingley (Handia Montessori) and Katrina Woermann (Lakeshore Montessori).

A big thanks to the following parent volunteers and board members for helping at the event, stuffing goody bags, setting-up and dismantling the display: Jerin Boyer Marie Tabata-Callerame, Jon Davis, Angie Simas, Lee Huntington and Katie Runnells. (Cascadia School)

It was a joy to observe Montessori student and alumni volunteers interacting with visitors and helping to dismantle our display. Thank you Cassidy Reynolds, Marilyn Blakewood, Mia Draper, Hayden Carter, Fiona Fitzpatrick and Sam Benge, Woody Davis and Theo Davis! (Cascadia School)

Thanks also to Cathy Dorner (OMA president) for encouragement and for proofreading the Montessori fact sheet that was distributed in the goody bags.

Thanks also to OMA director Jen Ryznar, and the OMA board for assistance in funding our exhibit fee and for their continued support of Southwest Washington schools.