

Charlotte Skyline Zentangle by Jane Wieland, Keystone's First Student

A Note From Our Board Chair



I don't know about you, but to me this past year-and-a-half has felt a bit like being caught in a time warp – suspended in a strange place, waiting for the colorful, spinning icon on the screen to disappear so the program could re-boot (while seriously hoping it would not start in the same place where it left off). Children, however, don't have time for things like standing still or getting stuck. Children's development marches on, pandemic or not. In much the same way, Keystone also marched on - taking the Montessori philosophy of "follow the child" to a whole new level!



As we take stock of the past school year, I want to express gratitude to the faculty and staff of Keystone for being there, as always, to walk alongside the children and gently watch over and honor their continuing development.



As my 88 year-old father is fond of saying, "Children - they all grow up. But how they turn out, of course, is a different story." In other words, the growth our children experienced this past year was going to happen anyway, but the direction of that development had everything to do with the space we held open for them during that time.

Keystone contributed to our children's development, in part, by quite literally holding open its doors this past year. But it was much more than that. The teachers and staff held open for the children a space of love, patience, joy and curiosity in which to conduct their own growth. And I know that you, as parents, worked as hard as you could to do the same in your own homes. These are the gifts that allow children to continue to march onward in their development, transforming what they've gathered along the way into offerings for each other, their communities and – eventually – the wider world, as they grow. May we all work to "follow the child" in that example, and may our next school year be full of just as much growth (but maybe a little less hand sanitizer).

With gratitude for the community we share,
Ariana Shahinfar Klotz

What Do You Mean, No 'Pot Yuck'?!

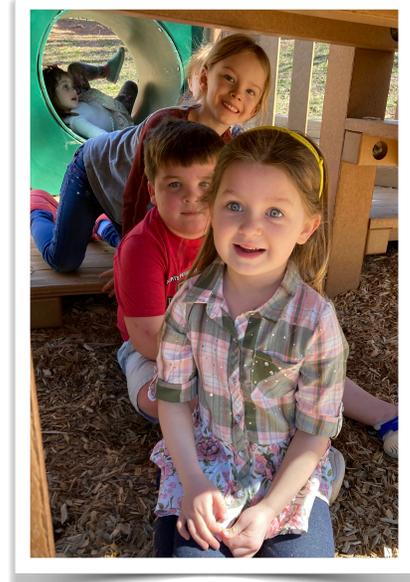
Dear Keystone community,

Since 2014 we have happily distributed an annual letter to inform our friends and families of the activity at Keystone during the school year. Until last year. It simply didn't happen. Covid-19 happened instead, and with it all of our focus, our energy, as well as our letter writing, was forced to suddenly change. The '2019 Summer of Construction' was abruptly overtaken by the '2020 Summer of Covid'. (You can probably guess which one was easier!) This letter will attempt to catch you up on the growth and success that has taken place despite this global interruption.

Along with most of North Carolina we watched anxiously as stories about Covid-19 took over the news. Our first online meeting with the county health department about the virus took place in late February and just a couple of hectic weeks later, the decision was made to close the school. Our families were sent scrambling as school and child care became suddenly unavailable. The Keystone staff collaborated to develop support for the Keystone families while remaining true to the Montessori approach. We were not confident that online teaching would necessarily result in online learning, therefore we opted to concentrate on reassuring our community. Supporting parents in their roles as newly-crowned substitute teachers became our primary focus. We hosted Zoom meetings with children, as well as with parents. We offered ideas for projects, activities, books, games and crafts. We tried to help the best way we felt we could authentically do so.

When it became apparent that the 2019-2020 school year would not resume, the Keystone board deliberated and voted to refund tuition money for the missed school days. It was vigorously agreed upon that this was the right action to take and I am proud of the board for having the integrity to make that decision.

Supplied with new air conditioners, air purifiers, non-contact thermometers, non-contact soap dispensers, gallons of hand soap and sanitizer, an array of walkie-talkies, and stacked boxes of face masks and disinfectant wipes, we looked forward to reopening the school in the fall. Protocols and procedures were researched and developed during the summer, and the decision was made to open four weeks earlier than originally planned. No extra tuition, just extra classroom time in case we had to have another closure during the 2020-21 school year. Parents and children were tired of being quarantined and everyone was eager to be back within the peaceful environment of our school. We understood and appreciated the needs of the Keystone families and we responded to those needs. It was a risk, but a risk worth taking, and one that proved to be successful. Keystone was able to remain open throughout the entire school year, with only one temporary closure of the elementary classroom due to possible exposure. We were indeed fortunate not to experience any transmission of Covid-19 between the children and the staff during the entire year. Whew!



Congratulations Jane & Thomas! Have fun in Middle School!

Slowly but surely, we moved ahead and began peeling away the weighty layers of the pandemic. While many of our activities were set aside this year, we were able to continue with carefully orchestrated school tours, parent education evenings on Zoom, as well as our community outreach efforts. A pandemic doesn't lessen the need for food and clothing for many people. We recognized the importance of continuing our monthly 'Operation Sandwich' in support A Roof Above, as well as our wintertime 'Warm the Heart, Warm the Soles' shoe and coat drive to assist A Child's Place. The generous outpouring of sandwich supplies, coats, and shoes, attest to the strong element of kindness that runs through the Keystone community.



Even though our 2020 'Fun-Raiser' scheduled for April had to be 'cancelled due to Covid' (how many times have we heard or read that phrase!), the need for a new play structure persisted. The school and the church had agreed to collaborate on this project and share the cost of the purchase and installation. So, our fun and games night that was planned, gave way to simply a request for donations. Again, the friends and families of Keystone responded, and before long \$19,500 was collected for the Playground Enhancement Fund. During the winter break the new play structure was installed and the subsequent delight was evident in the children's voices upon their return in January.

Because parents and staff shared the responsibility for keeping the school safe, we were able to successfully maneuver through the pandemic maze. The Keystone parents understood and respected the protocols that were put in place. They were diligent about observing their children's health and detailing possible exposures. They were scrupulously honest about their family's conditions, and demonstrated supreme caution when there was any doubt.

The Keystone staff provided a strong foundation for what was predicted to be a tumultuous year. With amazing courage, dedication, creativity, strength and flexibility they provided a safe harbor for all the Keystone children. They supported nervous parents with confidence, grace, and understanding. The staff repeatedly rose to each and every challenge that presented itself, and found solutions. Even though it was a year without picnics, school plays, and going-outs, it was still an incredibly successful school year marked by the laughter in the halls, the thrill of new lessons, and the happiness that reverberated throughout the school.



As we stop and reflect upon all that has transpired over the past year, we can take great pride in our work and in what was accomplished. It was a huge team effort, and not only did we make it to the end, we made it to the end quite well. Once again, we can say we acted in the best interest of the children. And once again we were able to witness the amazing growth and development that occurs in our Montessori classrooms. This year was a tremendous learning opportunity for all us.

So now we pause for a bit, before we get ready to start again. Hopefully it will be year where we can connect in person with the entire Keystone community. Hopefully we can once again engage in lively discussions, parent evenings with funny anecdotes, all-school picnics, and of course, our famous fall 'Pot Yuck'!

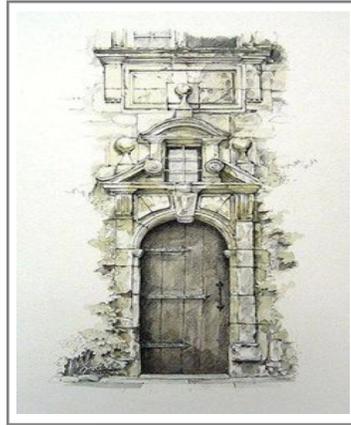
Take care,

Hawley Hoggard

Head of School

The San Lorenzo Fund

of Keystone
Montessori School



Over two years ago we created a tuition assistance fund named The San Lorenzo Fund. We believe that education can change the world, and we believe that the Montessori approach is the best method to accomplish this. Children deserve to learn in a manner that is joyful, logical, effective, and respects their natural development. They should learn in an environment of love. All children, regardless of their family's financial situation, deserve this.

We hope that you will seriously consider making a tax-deductible donation to The San Lorenzo Fund of Keystone Montessori School. We know that with your help we can empower many more children.

“The word education must not be understood in the sense of teaching but of assisting the psychological development of the child.”

-Dr. Maria Montessori



We are grateful for the continuing support of the congregation of
Sedgefield United Methodist Church. As always,
their acceptance and understanding have been instrumental to Keystone's growth and success.

Keystone Montessori School admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

Keystone Montessori School is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization

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