

Ruffing—Yesterday & Today

The Alumni Newsletter of Ruffing Montessori School



Spring
2008

Ruffing Montessori School 3380 Fairmount Boulevard Cleveland Heights, Ohio

Hello from Ruffing

In many ways, the start of this school year marked the dawn of a new beginning. The final “punch list” items for the redevelopment project were completed just before our opening, and our students were welcomed into a bright, spacious, green environment. We have watched our community thrive this year with the school under one roof, reinforcing Montessori’s continuum of learning through the ease of connection with each level.

The excitement generated by our new building and the exceptional Montessori education offered must be contagious. Throughout this year, Ruffing received more applications for enrollment than in any of my seven years as Head. What I find particularly gratifying is seeing the generational flow as former students are now enrolling their own children.

If you do not live near Cleveland, you may not know about the Montessori High School at University Circle, scheduled to open in the fall of 2008. This endeavor is a product of former Ruffing Teacher/Principal David Kahn’s imagination and hard work. This one-of-a-kind model will allow families the opportunity to consider a complete Montessori educational experience through age 18. You can access information at www.montessorihighschool.org.

These are exciting, strategic and future-oriented times, and I thank you for being a part of our tradition and legacy.

Gordon L. Maas
Head of School



Class Notes

1980

Jay (Charles) Johnson welcomed his first child on June 4, 2007, with the birth of Charlotte Ann Johnson in Cape Coral, Florida. Jay is the owner of Bubba's Roadhouse & Saloon, a casual steakhouse in Cape Coral.

Brett Katz is Bellfaire's Director of Development and lives in Shaker Heights with her husband and new baby girl.

Walter Strauss, father of **Philip** ('80) and **Matt** ('84), died in February. Mr. Strauss was actively involved in introducing the study of French to the school's Montessori elementary curriculum

1981

Keiko Aikawa-Rho lives in Seattle, Washington where she continued her medical training at the University of Washington after receiving her M.D. at Case Western Reserve University's School of Medicine. She and her husband are both cardiologists and she adds, "I still have many fond memories of Ruffing!"

1982

Creed Mosoff Woodka lives in Shaker Heights and has a business taking unique pet portraits, Creed Woodka Photography.

1984

We are sorry to note the passing of **Diane Connelly**, mother of **Karin Connelly Rice** ('84), **Susan Connelly Thompson** ('87) and **Heather Connelly** ('91), in January. Diane was one of the founding Board members of the Fairmount Montessori Association. Memorial donations for Diane are being directed to create a garden at Ruffing.

Paul Osenar, who lives in Westford, Massachusetts, writes: "Amy and I welcomed child #2. We adopted Zenzem from Ethiopia in early 2007 and she turned 1 in August. Torin is enjoying being a big brother – most of the time."

Carla Boddy is married to Bryan Moore and they have two daughters, Nina (8 years old) and Hanna (4 years old). She is a Vice President and Senior Attorney at National City Corporation in Cleveland.

Jennifer Ray-Tomasek and her husband, Dale, have just purchased a century home (c. 1868) in Hiram that needs a total rehab. They are planning to use green building methods and materials and seek LEED certification. "We hope to be able to move in (mind you, not necessarily FINISH) by next winter. And perhaps in two to

three year's time, we will have a small farm, complete with a dairy cow, a coop full of chickens and a large vegetable garden.

"This is a beautiful extension of Dale's new business (to which I play many supporting roles) where he provides services for residential renovation, general carpentry work and custom cabinetry, all with a green building perspective. He can be reached at cstone@netlink.net."

1985

Matt Jaffe and his wife, Beth, live in Bay Village.

Kabir Syed is an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Pan-African Studies at Kent State University and continues to host a radio show featuring reggae and world music on Cleveland State's WCSB. He and his wife recently had a baby.



1986

Dan Charlick is an orthopedic surgeon in Lexington, KY.

Doug Sockman, a financial advisor with Sky-light Financial Group in Cleveland, was featured in the *Plain Dealer's* Ask the Expert column in the Business section. Doug is a certified financial planner, a chartered financial consultant and a chartered life underwriter.

1987

Todd and Missy Lawrence welcomed their second child, Daisy Grace, on July 20, 2007. They reside in New Jersey.

Sarah Haberman moved from Houston to Bellaire, Texas. She and her husband have two children.

Katie Ebner Goodno and George joyfully announced the birth of Ellen Grace on November 26.

Brant Silvers has relocated to New York from Cleveland to take a job with Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise. His son Abraham was an applicant to Ruffing, but now Brant and his wife are looking for a Montessori school in their new neighborhood.

Xantha Karp lives in Worcester, Massachusetts, where she and her husband Eric Chercover have two children, Helene and Jacques. After two and a half years at Dartmouth Medical School, Xantha is doing Postdoctoral work in Genetics at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. She recently asked for Ruffing's help in locating Montessori schools in her new area.

Xanthe Tabor is now living in Birmingham, Michigan.

Heather MacAyeal Hardy lives in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, where she is Director of Summer Arts at Middlesex School.

Cathy Exline Czerkie and husband, Jake, welcomed a baby, Nathan, on March 4, 2007.

1988

Adam Katz and his wife have two daughters. He is a teacher and swimming coach at Gilmour Academy.

Martine-Pascale Gaujean is married to Hubert May and currently lives in Midlothian, Virginia. After graduating from Hathaway Brown, she studied International Relations/Peace and Justice at Tufts University, then studied French Cultural Studies in graduate school at Columbia. She is now in her second year at the University of Richmond School of Law. "I decided to go back to school ten years after graduating from college to advance my career. I was married in 2003. My husband is an architect and interior designer and lives in the metro Washington, DC area. After I graduate, we plan to make DC our home. Whenever I am in Cleveland, I



drive by Ruffing and I think fondly of all the great memories I have from there."

1989

Scott Winn and his wife, Carie, have an almost-three-year-old daughter Aileen and a son, Aiden, born in November 2007. Scott has an undergraduate degree in outdoor experiential education and a Master's degree in Experiential Learning. He has worked as a wilderness guide for at-risk youth in therapeutic wilder-

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Alumni Activities

Dear Alumni,

Ruffing has taken steps to provide more services to alumni with the establishment of an on-site, full-time Development Office. As a result,

- * we threw parties for alumni in December 2006 and 2007;
- * e-mailed a Spring 2007 and this Spring 2008 alumni newsletter;
- * made a focused effort to find lost alumni and to include all alumni in the database;
- * have created more volunteer opportunities in activity planning;
- * promoted alumni for leadership roles in the school;
- * offer Ruffing admissions priority for children of alumni;
- * help alumni in other cities find Montessori schools near them;
- * keep alumni connected to one another.

We hope to increase to a twice-a-year alumni newsletter beginning in the fall. This issue is brimming with alumni notes and that is thanks to you for sending me items about yourself, your brothers and sisters and your friends. Keep them coming!

The month of December was chosen for the last two alumni parties because it increased the chance that those who live out of town might be able to attend. Maybe there is a better time for 2008? I welcome your feedback and ideas on this and on other ways the school can serve you.

Finally, I would not be doing the other part of my job if I did not remind you about the Annual Fund. One important objective for Ruffing's Annual Fund is to encourage alumni participation. Even modest donations from our alumni are more meaningful than you may realize. For example, when we seek foundation grants, one critical component of our application is the demonstration of support by our "recipients of service" (ie. alumni). Having a high percentage of alumni participation strengthens our proposal because it shows that our graduates valued their experience.

Someone recently said, "The only gift that is too small is the one you do not make." Ruffing students build a solid academic foundation, but perhaps more importantly, develop the confidence to be individuals, to stand up and be counted, and to pursue their dreams without the distraction of fear of failure. Every Ruffing student has a reason to make a gift that says "Thank you."

Carol Provan
Director of Alumni and Development

Class Notes

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ness programs, been an instructor with Outward Bound, and was service-learning coordinator for AmeriCorps Vista. He is now the Volunteer Center Director for United Way of Portage County, Wisconsin.

Sarah Winn, Scott's twin, is an Upper El Montessori teacher at Oak Meadow Montessori School in Littleton, Massachusetts. Previously, she taught at Acorn Montessori School in Lebanon, New Jersey, and Richmond Montessori School in Richmond, Virginia. In the summers, she works as a camp swimming director in Sherwood Forest, Maryland.

Dan Egleston and wife, Indrani, had a second child, Michael, in April 2007. Dan works as a software developer for Harley Davidson Dealer Systems.

Marissa Tiroly and her husband, Michael, are now living in Durango, Colorado.

Andrew Pimlott moved from Seaside, California, to San Francisco.

1990

Tyler Katz and her husband, Michael, are living in Pepper Pike, having moved back from California. Tyler is an obstetrician-gynecologist at Marymount Hospital and Michael is completing a Master's program in social work at Case Western Reserve University.

Sonja Rajki is an attorney with Schneider, Smeltz, Ranney & LaFond P.L.L. and lives in Cleveland Heights with her husband, Michael Lyford.



Amanda Lawrence shares the adventure she had last year: "I was asked to come to Pakistan in March 2007 to compete in the international cycling race called the "Tour of Islamabad," a three-day bike race for pros and semi-pros from all over the world that raises money for the Kagan Memorial Trust. (Ed. Note: She

has been participating in world-class competitive cycling since college and has five NCAA National Champion titles.) The trust was created in the wake of the October 2005 earthquake that killed 80,000+ people with a goal of creating a school in memory of the children killed in the earthquake.

I was really impressed by Pakistan and moved by the Trust.

When I went to visit the school site in the Himalayan Mountains of Pakistan, I had never seen so much beauty or destruction in my life. So I volunteered to come over and get the school started.

It opened in March 2008, starting with K-2 and will add a grade every year until it is K-12. The goal is a top-caliber education, free to all, for an area where all schools had been destroyed.

I volunteered in creating a curriculum, selecting students, raising money – including hosting a ball, hiring teachers, overseeing construction. I spent three months, including visits to India, Nepal and Dubai, but my favorite remains Pakistan."

Now back in Connecticut, Amanda is an attorney Scott+Scott LLP, working in securities, corporate governance and antitrust litigation.

Class Notes

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1991

Aqeel Brown works in Private Banking for Dollar Bank. He has a degree in Finance from Cleveland State University and lives in Cleveland Heights.

Michael Newman and his wife, Julia, just moved to Chicago after eight years in New York City. Michael works in the financial markets in derivatives trading.

Diambu Smith reports that he graduated from Cleveland State University with a Master's Degree in Public Administration and a Graduate Certificate in Urban Economic Development in May 2007. He is currently working as a Business Development Officer in the Economic Development Department of the City of Cleveland.

Jerome Cargile is married to Najaah Rashed-Cargile and has one child. He earned a degree in Sport and Exercise Science at the University of Akron and works as a Fitness Professional at the Fitness Connection in Houston, Texas.



1992

Kurt Chesko, resides in New York City and was recently promoted to Vice-President of the HALO Trust USA, the world's largest humanitarian landmine clearance organization. This work has taken him to Afghanistan, Armenia, Sudan, Somalia and Mozambique.

1993

Jennifer Skirball, a graduate of Cleveland Institute of Art with a BFA in Glass, has a line of beautifully-designed, unique jewelry, shown in the boutiques and top shops in Cleveland.

1994

Jeff Pacini and his wife, Megan, have returned to northeast Ohio from

New Jersey, where Jeff had been working for the National Basketball Association (NBA.) He returned to Cleveland to take a marketing position with the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Carole McElrath Becerra married Ben in March 2007. They are living in Garfield Heights.

Alumni News Wanted

Keep the Alumni Office in the loop as you change addresses, names, email and employment information. Much of our communication is sent by email – for both the cost and the environmental impact - but once an email sent to you comes back as undeliverable, we have lost you.

Check out the new Ruffing website www.ruffingmontessori.net: it lets you know what is going on in the school and is an easy way to inform us of the changes in your contact information or to submit any NEWS items we can share in the alumni newsletter.

Call me at 216-321-7571, extension 330, or carolp@ruffingmontessori.net if I can help you.

~ Carol Provan

Ben Krembs is working in Washington, D.C.

1995

Joshua Amata graduated from the University of Wisconsin and did Teach America for a year, then traveled for National Geographic Society.

Kelsey Martin-Keating is living in Shelton, Washington.

Erin Ellis Spencer writes: "I saw myself in the lost alumni listing of the Ruffing website and want to be found! I have wonderful memories of my years at Ruffing, especially my teachers Dave [Kosky], Joanne [Lint] and Jeanne [Fleischhacker]. I was actually on the website after reading an article about the Montessori high school planned for University Circle and wondered about my options for sending my son through Montessori. He's only a few months old, but it's never too early to start thinking about education!"



Rachel Appelbaum graduated from Cornell in 2003 and is now a USC grad student, getting an MFA in acting.

Ashly Lawrence lives in Chicago, is completing a Master's in Counseling Psychology and is engaged to marry Andy Conklin in June.

Tyler Exline, whose degree is in Computer Science, is working in software development for Harley Davidson Dealer Systems.

Amanda Paul is working for Kish Culinary in Cleveland. They do small upscale dinner parties and special parties, under the direc-

tion of Jonathan Kish, an experienced and well-known restaurateur and food professional. She adds: "I am currently single and taking this time to focus on my career and travel. I recently reconnected with some of my Montessori classmates. I know I appreciate all of the hard work and dedication that Montessori has given me. Every teacher and every lesson has impacted me in some way."

1996

Steven Cargile played defensive back/safety, #38, for the Denver Broncos in the 2007-08 season. Steve had appeared in three games for the Broncos at the end of the 2006-07 season. A graduate of Columbia University, where he earned all Ivy-League honors as a senior, Steve played in NFL Europe, as well as the practice squads for the Dallas Cowboys and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers before his current tenure with the Broncos. He was an all-state receiver and all-conference safety at St. Peter Chanel High School.

Alisa Weilerstein is attracting international accolades as a concert cellist in performances across the country. Critics have lauded her "performances that combine natural virtuosity and technical assurance with impassioned musicianship." Yo-Yo Ma describes her in *WMagazine* as "one of the most talented cellists of her generation." Recently featured in *Town and Country* and in the *New York Times Magazine*, Alisa has performed regularly with the New York Philharmonic and with leading orchestras across North America and Europe. She was named the winner of the 2006 Leonard Bernstein Award, won prestigious young artists and rising star awards and released an acclaimed recording on EMI Classics Debut series.

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Class Notes

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Kira Hennessey left her job as Communications Coordinator at YWCA Greater Cleveland to take a position as Communications Coordinator with the law firm Calfee, Halter & Griswold LLP.

Andy Stager and his wife, Taylor White, moved from Washington, D.C., to Chevy Chase, Maryland.

Diana Cohen graduated from the Cleveland Institute of Music and has been playing violin with a number of orchestras around the country, including the world-renowned New York-based Orpheus Chamber Orchestra.

1997

Meredith Exline is a Montessori teacher for ages 3 to 6 at Fieldcrest Montessori School in North Canton, Ohio.

Kathryn Rice is living in Washington, DC, working as a consultant for IBM, and recently spent two months in Japan for a project.

1998

Alex Cohen graduated from the Cleveland Institute of Music in 2006 and is a member of the San Diego Symphony, playing tympani and other percussion instruments.

Dan Budin, who graduated from Ohio University in 2006 with a degree in Public Administration, is living in Cleveland Heights and working with former Cleveland *Plain Dealer* publisher Alex Macahaskee at Alex Machaskee & Associates, a public relations and marketing firm in Cleveland.

1999

Emily Appelbaum reports: "I went to Yale in

2004, stayed two years, then took a year off to backpack, travel, write and explore – investigating art, alternative technology, sustainable living and green design in Vermont, California and Hawaii. After an awesome year, I am back at Yale, where I am expected to graduate in 2009 with a degree in architecture."

2001

Melissa Mauter, a junior at the University of Toronto, is spending this academic year at the National University of Singapore, studying economics and urban planning.

2002

Peter Hedman is a Harvard University sophomore, majoring in astrophysics. He was selected to be part of an eight-student research team at an observatory in Chile for first semester. From his thoughts on his first night in the Andes Mountains: "The sky is wonderfully dark—darker than I have ever seen it before...Looking at the long expanse of our galaxy, with dark dust

lanes visible among the diffuse glow of its billions of stars, you really get a sense of the scale of the universe."

2003

Clay Javid is living in the University Circle area of Cleveland and says hello to Chris Ackerman and Mr. K.

2004

These members of Ruffing's Class of 2004, now high school seniors, have been named National Merit Semi-Finalists: **Laney Kuenzel** (Hathaway Brown), **Bryn Adams** and **Katy Sadowski** (Hawken), and **Justin Wedell** (University School).

Hannah Dingwall left Ruffing after 7th grade when her family returned to Scotland. Hannah had been at Ruffing for her entire school career.



She was admitted to the most highly rated girls' private school in Edinburgh, Mary Erskine School; accelerated a year; graduated as Valedictorian of her class and will attend Oxford. Her mother recently wrote to us, expressing gratitude for the academic preparation Hannah received at Ruffing, noting that the school was exceptional in preparing Hannah for high school and beyond through "encouraging independent thinking, not simply accepting the obvious or given."

Cellist **Chris Irvine**, a senior at Shaker Heights High School, performed with the Cleveland Orchestra in February at the High School Matinee Concert. At this time, Chris is undecided about the next destination for his education. He auditioned at Julliard School (NY), Curtis School (Philadelphia) and the New England Conservatory (Boston).

Laney Kuenzel chose her Ruffing experience as the topic for her Senior Speech at Hathaway Brown School. After describing that Montessori gave her freedom to learn, she explains how this has formed her own enthusiasm for the pursuit of knowledge. "Not surprisingly, my favorite experience since switching to a traditional school is the one most reminiscent of my Montessori days. Last August, after com-

pleting a behavioral game theory project at the Research Science Institute, I returned home wondering about a related question: How did intercellular cooperation evolve when, in theory, natural selection favors self-interested agents? Just like at Ruffing, I independently chose a question to explore and planned my own approach. (She describes a computer program she wrote to simulate evolution and ran thousands of simulations to test this paradoxical question.) ... Based on my experience at Ruffing and my current game theory project, I dream of a career in academic research, a career that would give me the opportunity for Montessori-style, curiosity-driven exploration. I dream of having the freedom to explore what I don't understand, pose my own questions and use all of my knowledge and creativity to answer them. I picture myself sometimes frustrated, sometimes optimistic, but always challenged and engaged by the study of a topic I find truly fascinating."

Justin Wedell, who earned a perfect score on the ACT, competed at the City Club of Cleveland in a Lincoln-Douglas-style debate for the annual High School Debate Championship.

Ellie Shorey was the goalie on Hathaway Brown's state-title-winning soccer team.



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