Tall oaks from little acorns grow!

On Thursday, January 15, 2015, Oak Farm will celebrate its 15th BIRTHDAY!!!

You are invited to join in the celebration!

Please mark your calendars for this event at Oak Farm. The night could be cold & dark, but the buildings will be warm and bright with all the memories from the past 15 years! Come see photos, connect with former families and faculty, tour classrooms, and enjoy a celebratory reception in the Victorian Farmhouse.

Your family is an important part of the Oak Farm story... We hope you are all able to come celebrate the school!

Our Mission:
To provide a Montessori environment that inspires children to reach their potential through meaningful work.
Celebrating Founder’s Day

On November 10th, Oak Farm students established a new tradition at our school: Founder’s Day. We chose the birthday of our school’s founder, Lorene Salsbery, to recognize and honor the gifts we receive as members of the Oak Farm community, and the passion, vision, effort and commitment Lorene put forth to make this incredible school come to life. On a crisp, sunny fall day, we enjoyed our new opportunity to take pause and both look back in thanks while reflecting on the gifts of the present.

We gathered in Lower Elementary in the Red Barn, the building and program where Lorene was first a teacher, and the home of one of our original two classrooms 15 years ago. We heard the story of Lorene’s life, her love of Montessori education to empower and inspire children, and how she decided to found a Montessori school in Avilla, Indiana. We heard from special guests Oak Farm alumnae Jorden Axel and Bailey Hager, who shared favorite memories of Oak Farm and knowing Lorene. We also were treated to a reading of Oakey: The Story of an Oak Farm Girl by the book’s author, Sharon Smith, as well as a poem reading by long time former Oak Farm teacher Elizabeth Smith-Meyer. Finally, lower elementary students shared their reflections on how they model our school’s Vision and Values of life-long learning, leadership, emotional literacy and citizenship that Lorene helped articulate and which she hoped would be the gifts that all Oak Farm students would receive in their time here. Our ceremony concluded with the Oak Farm song as we raised flags in the Lower Elementary courtyard.

We look forward to growing & evolving our new tradition on November 10th each year as we celebrate Founder’s Day!
**Infant & Toddler**

As the seasons change outside so do the seasons in the infant classroom. This year our room moves at a fast pace during this season as the children take big steps, literally, in their development. The infants are moving towards independence from us as adults, both emotionally and physically. They are becoming social beings, exploring cause and effect with their peers. They are transitioning from all fours to two feet and joining their fellow humans walking upright. With this physical change they are experiencing a great pride and joy in their accomplishments.

They are more aware of their surroundings further away from their bodies and are excited to move toward new things. We are introducing new experiences to them especially tactile through homemade play dough, shaving cream, and more. They enjoy doing these activities as a group, watching faces for responses and sharing in their own fun of what they are discovering.

**Primary**

Children in Primary are very busy at work. Primary students come into their classrooms at August’s end and begin an adventurous year of learning and growing; children make new friends, meet new teachers, enjoy new and past works, and progress in adjusting to their daily schedules, social norms, and environment. As the Primary school year rolls along, the newness of the classroom turns to comfort. Their time in the classroom is occupied with lessons and works that are inviting, purposeful, and meet the needs of the Primary aged student. Homes of a Primary child may echo the names of works, such as dishwashing, snack, tracing, the pink cubes, outdoor work, art, table scrubbing, the bead chains, sandpaper letters, polishing, P.E., the brown prisms, the bead stair, the exchange game, and many more. During their work at school, faces light up with intrinsic satisfaction as they discover a new truth from a work, complete a bead chain, polish a metal tray, or scrub a table. Yes, they polish and scrub.

Ask a Primary aged child about snack, polishing wood and metal, floor scrubbing, or caring for their classroom. Did you know they care for the many works in their classroom, prepare their own snacks, help their friends zip their coat, give lessons to others when ready, pour their own drinks, wash dishes, help make our green cleaning products, and clean up after themselves without adult assistance? They are well on their way to becoming successfully independent.

Both invite and encourage a Primary aged child to help care for their environment, others, and their self at home. The Primary child is falling in love with work, while learning independence and responsibility. Children have both a great need and desire to do purposeful work, belong, and contribute, as they discover and learn their place in the world. Primary children learn and develop the additional essential skills of order, concentration, and coordination through caring for their environment, others, and their self.

The Primary child is working on becoming the adult they will be, and they are very busy at it, the good kind of busy.
**Lower Elementary**

The Lower Elementary students enjoy Writer’s Workshop. Currently, the lower students are working on an Author Study. Each classroom chose a children’s author to use as a mentor writer. The students were introduced to the authors through biographical information such as where they grew up, their hobbies or personal stories about their writing. Students have an opportunity to listen to or read the author’s stories. The students work independently and/or with a partner to examine the author’s writing carefully. Students are beginning to read like writers. As a group, the students work together to identify the traits or characteristics they see in the author’s writing. Reading like writers helps beginning writers build critical thinking skills by comparing and contrasting themes or analyzing texts.

“*You can relate to characters or problems in the books to your own life.*” – Lane, 3rd year

An author study improves writing skills for young writers. Looking closely at the mentor writer’s work, students begin to incorporate some of the author’s traits into their own writing. The students create a plan for their writing; develop characters and other story elements. Students began to see themselves as writers.

“I like being the author of my own story.” – Weston, 1st year

**Upper Elementary**

Sixth years shared both their enthusiasm and knowledge of the Montessori Model United Nations (MMUN) with parents at Upper Elementary’s recent Parent Education Night. With the guidance of UE teacher Sara Gensic, eight students facilitated a mock MMUN discussion with parents acting as delegates.

Working in teams of three to five, parents and students were given this question, “Should middle and high schools delay the start of the school day to better accommodate the needs of the adolescent?” Participants discussed the pros and cons of the concept and then drafted simple resolutions stating their opinions much like UN delegates do with world issues.

In the months ahead, this type of dialogue and exchange of ideas will continue as students take on the roles of delegates and research real world issues such as Rights of the Child and Eradicating Poverty. Twenty-four of our Upper Elementary students will participate in MMUN at IPFW this March.

Students participate in mini-lessons prior to an open session for writing. In addition to studying the author’s work, students learn how to look for and use punctuation, add details to their writing, to reread for understanding, create meaningful illustration, etc.

“I like having animals in my story that talk and using dialogue in my writing.” – Laila, 2nd year

With their growing confidence, students take risks and challenge themselves to apply new ideas to their writing. There is a genuine love for writing developing inside these young writers!

Thoughts shared by the students about the evening:

“It helped parents know what it is like to be on the MMUN team. We got to question parents and their ideas on the topic.”
- Lulu (Rapporteur)

“I enjoyed the Tabletop Twitter with parents. It was a good way to get your ideas down.”
- Allison (Delegate from Austria)

“My group felt that a later start time might help teenagers do better in school.”
- Tia (Delegate from Croatia)
**Middle School**

Each fall, middle school staff and students engage in an extended learning opportunity in the form of a trip. Destinations vary, but the three goals that shape the experience remain the same: 1) embrace the history and the people of the place, 2) experience independence, interdependence, and leadership, and 3) indulge in intellectual stimulation.

Students recently returned from three days and four nights in Yellow Springs, Ohio.

Highlights include:

- Conversations with some amazing people including the great-grandson of President Theodore Roosevelt, the great-grandson of former slave Addison White, a real-life movie star and animal rights advocate, a 1947 graduate of Wilberforce University, a raptor caregiver, an archivist, an entrepreneur who is a leader in the local farm-to-fork movement, and children at a small Montessori elementary school.
- Immersions into the natural and man-made wonders of the area including hiking in a 1,000 acre nature preserve, biking 20 miles on a former railway, and visiting an agritourism business.
- Discussions on timely and historical topics including the underground railroad, Buffalo soldiers, living off the grid at the university level, sustainability, ecological preservation, and the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act.

Experiences like this play a critical role in the middle school curriculum and act as a foundation to the formation of our community.

“Perhaps travel cannot prevent bigotry, but by demonstrating that all people cry, laugh, eat, worry, and die, it can introduce the idea that if we try and understand each other, we may even become friends.” – Maya Angelou
Specialist: Sarah Holland
Social Skills & Language Development

Did you know?
Language development encompasses many areas, including speech, vocabulary, word structure, and sentence structure. Even as infants, children are always listening and learning the meaning of words. Children typically begin to use their first words about the age of one year. Vocabulary continues to develop throughout life. Even as adults we are learning new words from others and readings. A learning environment rich in language opportunities helps develop all aspects of your child’s language development.

Social language is an area of language development that is given great focus at Oak Farm. The understanding and use of social language begins during infancy and continues to develop throughout life.

At Oak Farm, I partner with teachers to bring social language opportunities into the classroom, helping children learn “grace and courtesy” while building relationships. The result is a language-rich environment that supports our students as they grow.

If you have any questions about your child’s language development feel free to contact me at sar@ballstate.bsu.edu or call me at Oak Farm.

Social language refers to the understanding and using nonverbal communication with skills such as:
- eye contact
- facial expressions
- tone of voice
- body language
- gestures

Social language includes social graces such as:
- turn taking
- use of manners
- initiating conversation
- maintaining conversation
**Specialist:**
**Spanish with the Toddlers**

“The only Language men ever speak perfectly is the one they learn in babyhood, when no one can teach them anything!” - *Maria Montessori*

Children are fascinated by the sounds that surround them. Led by their curiosity they are constantly surprised by the many and varied sounds produced by both nature and humans alike, be it music, animal sounds, big machines, etc. When children are exposed to new sounds, they are even more attentive, immediately quieting down to listen with all their senses. The same kind of thing happens when they hear “Buenos días”, “Hola” etc.

Spanish lessons are a part of the daily work routine wherein students are invited to participate in a lesson during the work cycle. Children can choose to do so or decline if they find themselves engrossed in another task. Those interested in participating in Spanish, (one to two children), will often request back to back lessons. Occasionally some students are unable to participate in a lesson and so for them we’ve created “Community Time” which takes place weekly. This gives everyone the opportunity to get together as a group at the end of the work cycle to review learned vocabulary, learn a new song with movement, recite the days of the week, play musical instruments or listen to a story. This is a time during which the children can practice and show everyone what they’ve learned. Students look forward to these weekly gatherings and constantly ask: “When is Spanish Community?”

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**Specialist:**
**Spanish at the Middle School**

Students in Middle School Spanish have been working on their family trees using our current vocabulary list of the family. Students were given a choice: to create a real family tree or to make one up but, whatever their choice, the genealogical tree had to go back three generations. In preparation for this project students were instructed on how family trees are created, the importance in designating female and male, the purpose of the family tree (bloodlines) and how each generation has to be on the same visual line. Those students who chose to invent a family seemed to enjoy naming “relatives” and marrying them to interesting individuals. The results are great and the individuality displayed in the style of the trees is wonderful.

These first nine weeks have concentrated on reviewing material that most students have already learned. The focus has been: what have students learned and how well did they learn it? Review tools have included games, skits, puzzles, practice sheets etc. During the next nine weeks, students will begin to pursue a differentiated curriculum, aimed at moving them on their own unique path. The goal is to stimulate the intellect, prick curiosity, and, above all, give students the minimum language tools so that they can begin to speak meaningfully in Spanish without getting bogged down in the “what verb - what tense - how do I conjugate it” syndrome.

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These are some helpful websites to teach Spanish at home:

- www.123teachme.com/learn_spanish/spanish_for_children
- www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL96BF220334D699A2
- www.alonndra.com/
Experience a Different Kind of Christmas Gift This Year

As we enter into this season of Thanksgiving some of us are already looking beyond the turkey and cranberry sauce and ahead to our Christmas shopping lists. This year, what if you considered changing up your gift purchases and switching from the ever popular gadgets and toys and giving your dear friends and family a memorable experience instead? While shopping for an experience gift takes time to think about the person’s likes and dislikes and also takes creativity on our part, there are so many benefits to these thoughtful gifts.

When shopping for your favorite little ones, instead of buying them a $60 Furby (ouch!), why not set them up with an 8-week gymnastics class at the Classic City Center? Scratching your head at what to get the more adventurous children in your life? Then check out the Canlan Ice Sports programs that include hockey and skating lessons. Sports enthusiasts might prefer to have tickets to the TinCaps, Komets, or Mad Ants instead of yet another team jersey to hang in their closets. Maybe you need a gift for the whole family. You could consider purchasing a family membership to Science Central or the Fort Wayne Children’s Zoo; two gifts that can be used repeatedly for an entire year. Lastly, think about buying a gift certificate from Arts United, which can be redeemed for tickets to a variety of cultural performances in Fort Wayne.

Hopefully these suggestions will get you thinking outside the box about different meaningful gift possibilities that not only won’t steal away our precious time and attention, but won’t require us to make room for yet another thing in our house. So, have you thought about what experience gift ideas you would enjoy?

A note from Oak Farm’s GREEN TEAM

THANK YOU FOR HELPING THE ART ROOM! They still need:

- Plastic Caps & Lids - any size, shape, color

The Middle School students will be making a LARGE mosaic with these!

Please rinse all items prior to bringing them to school.
Primary 4 to Open 2015 - 16 School Year

This year Oak Farm boasts record enrollment as we began our school year with 241 students. With several programs full and several wait lists to boot, we are in the final steps of growing to our ultimate size of around 300 students.

For the 2015 – 16 school year, we are excited to anticipate the addition of our fourth and final primary classroom. This year, primary enrollment reached full capacity, and we are already receiving applications for next school year. We have launched a search for a new Montessori primary teacher and possible assistant teacher to join our faculty, depending on the number of new students who enroll for next school year. Primary families will receive more specific communication regarding the addition of the new classroom in the spring, as well as updates on staffing announcements when there is news to share.

Upper Elementary is also poised to grow, as our two Upper classrooms are anticipated to reach full capacity next year. Pending reenrollment and new spring enrollment for 2015-16, an additional Upper Elementary teacher may also be added to our faculty to help us accommodate our expansion.

Because of the number of classroom and staffing decisions that we face this spring as we welcome new families to our community, it will be crucial that we receive prompt communication from all of you regarding your intentions to reenroll next year so your child’s spot can be guaranteed. Be sure to keep an eye out for reenrollment materials on their way to you in early January so that you can be sure to be part of next year’s outstanding Oak Farm program!

Discovering Me begins January 26th!

This is much more than a playgroup or parenting class. It is an opportunity to better understand your child and your role as a parent. This class is open to anyone who is expecting and/or cares for a young child up to age 3.

Find a brochure by going to the Discovering Me page on our website: oakfarm.org/discovering-me-program

Please share with friends and family!

You had a choice... Why Oak Farm? Why Montessori?

With ALL the choices there are in education today, your family chose Oak Farm to be your child’s school. Why? Maybe these prompts will help you:

- We came to Oak Farm because...
- We like Montessori because...
- The teachers at Oak Farm are...
- My children thrive at Oak Farm because...

We would LOVE to hear your family’s story.
Please share them - email them to Macy (mmcnaughton@oakfarmschool.com) or post them on Facebook, or share a review at greatschools.org, yelp.com.
We want to Celebrate WITH you!

As the 2015 Tall Oak Gala approaches - March 7th at Dupont Downs - we hope to create an "Evening in the Garden" that will be special for each one of our great community.

Please click on the following link to a survey which will enable the Gala committee to tailor this year's events to our Oak Farm Family. Your responses will be anonymous and invaluable in the planning process for a truly memorable experience at the Tall Oak Gala.

With your input we can reach our fundraising goals and provide a fun filled night for all attending.

Please, take the survey at:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YP8MJP7

NEEDED: Upcycled Bud Vases for Our Gala Garden Themed Centerpieces

Need to clean out your cupboards? We are looking to collect an eclectic collection of glass bud vases. We would like to collect varying sizes and heights. Please no taller than a wine bottle with an opening just large enough for 3-5 stems. They can be clear or tinted glass. Please drop off all bud vases you’d like to donate to the Vic House before winter break.