



# Friends Corner *Express*

[www.brixhammontessori.org](http://www.brixhammontessori.org)

**BRIXHAM MONTESSORI  
FRIENDS SCHOOL**

18 Brickyard Court, York, ME • 207-351-2700 • [info@brixhammontessori.org](mailto:info@brixhammontessori.org)

## Winter 2016/2017 CALENDAR of EVENTS

December 8  
Holiday Choral Concert, 6:30pm

December 12-14  
Holiday Teas, Dates and Times vary

December 19-January 2  
Holiday Break/No School

January 15  
New Student and Tuition Assistance  
Applications Due

January 16  
Martin Luther King Day/No School

January 24  
Extended Day (K) Parent Information  
Session, 8:30am

January 25  
Early Release/Staff Meeting, 12noon

January 26  
Lower Elementary (Gr 1-3) Parent  
Information Session, 8:30am

February 1  
Returning Student Registration Due  
Program Level Teacher Meeting,  
3:30pm

February 8  
Back to School Night for Elementary  
And Extended Day (K), 6pm

February 20-24  
Winter Break/No School

March 10  
Parent/Teacher Conferences/No  
School

March 15  
New Student Registration Due

***Our Mission:  
To honor each child's  
individuality, creativity,  
and intellectual potential  
through an enriched  
Montessori educational  
program***

## A Note From Alica

Welcome to the 2016 winter edition of the Friends Corner- a quarterly newsletter published for our wider Brixham community to include Brixham grandparents, alumni families and staff, and friends of Brixham. We hope you enjoy reading the newsletter and encourage you to stay in touch by "Liking us on Facebook" and reading our monthly blog post on the Brixham website, [www.brixhammontessori.org](http://www.brixhammontessori.org). As always, we look forward to hearing from you; so please send us a note or email. We'd love to hear from you!

Cheers,

*Alica*



## Brixham Launches New Forest Friday Program

*By Meg Kerr and Angi Weiser-Smith, 3-6 Teachers*

After participating in a seminar about outdoor education and attending a book reading from Angela Hanscom's "Balanced and Barefoot", we were reminded of the importance of minimally structured outdoor play and interaction with nature, so we began to think of ways to add this element to our classroom beyond the experience of recess. Being outdoor enthusiasts and nature lovers, we decided to experiment with Europe's Forest Kindergarten model and pilot our own "Forest Fridays" program. Twice a month, our class visits a local forest and spends the whole morning work period in the woods regardless of the weather!

What we've observed so far has been very encouraging and exciting for our classroom: children have slowed down, taken the time to explore nature, and develop their sense of wonder. With busy school and after school schedules and the increased use of media both in school and at home, many young children miss out on the opportunity to play for extended periods of time outside in nature and experience its wonders. However, studies show that long periods of time to play freely outside fosters children's ability to listen; improves their visual skills; enhances their sense of touch and spatial awareness; and increases their ability to concentrate. Extended periods in nature not only strengthens children's academic foundation but also their immune system and their overall sense of well-being. Kids that play outside are healthier, happier and more in-tune with their surroundings and each other.

We invite you to visit us on a Forest Friday to see what a morning looks like when children are engaged, curious, respectful, and most importantly, free in their play.

**"Star light, star bright, first star I see tonight" ...BMFS WISH LIST:**

hyacinth bulbs	plastic sleds and shovels	Bluetooth speaker
potting soil	Mac Pro for art studio	CD player



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## Why Art Matters

*By Sarah Boys, Studio Art Teacher*

Art is heard in music, seen in a play, a painting hanging on a wall, a sculpture in the garden, or a piece of jewelry dangling from a lobe. Art is all around us, and it's created by everyone around us. Art is a part of every culture throughout history, and is available to all walks of life. Art is created by a child, by an adult, by anyone regardless of one's economic, social, or cultural background. Art is what unites us and creates environments and communities that nurture one another. Art can be a collaborative experience through problem-solving and sharing ideas, or art can be an individual experience of expression. A young child can pick up simple materials like a pencil and piece of paper, and without prompting or instruction, know how to simply draw and make meaning from his or her drawing. It's a natural process and universal to all children regardless of language, ability, age, or cultural backgrounds. Art speaks to all!

Many studies have shown that having art in schools improves a student's performance in the traditional core studies, as well as improves the overall emotional and mental health of the student. As much as ongoing exposure, the arts can help boost students' performance in math or science as they explore patterns, geometry, and symmetry, and increase their observation skills and attention to detail. The arts also build critical thinking skills, essential to success in all areas of learning.

With the art education program at Brixham Montessori Friend's School, I've created a studio classroom that welcomes students into a creative, free-thinking and prepared art environment. Along with the environment, I've created a program that emphasizes not only the various artistic techniques and art mediums, but the artistic process which is valued above all else. Every day I'm reminded of the importance of this art program's creative offerings when I see the joy and enthusiasm in my students' faces.

To read more about the importance of arts in education, <http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/music-arts/the-importance-of-art-in-child-development/>

## Have you included Brixham in your annual giving and charitable donations?

### Special thanks to our generous annual fund donors who have given to date (as of 12/13/16)

Susan and Derek Ahl  
 Chance and Woody Allen  
 Kristin and Silas Beane  
 Marlane and Bob Bottino  
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 Michelle and Freddie Sico  
 Kathryn Simonds  
 Angi Weiser and Jason Smith  
 Stephanie and Matt Smith  
 Carla and Jim Spencer  
 Michael Stone and Peter Welch

In addition, special thanks to Amazon Smile, Black Sheep Design, Bob's Clam Hut, Johnson Strings Instrument, Robert's Maine Grill, Starbucks of Kittery, The Golden Harvest, and Wentworth Gardens for their gifts-in-kind and financial contributions!



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## **An Opportunity for Service**

*By Heidi Salisbury-Finley,  
Admissions and Upper EI Parent*

Recently the upper elementary students had the opportunity to “go out” and visit the Footprints Food Pantry in Kittery. They heard much about people in need: people who do not have enough food; people who are homeless or who live out of their cars or hotels; people with unique dietary needs, such as the elderly; people with pets or special needs; and people with limited means to cook or refrigerate their food. All of these things were important for students to hear, but what they **saw** at the Food Pantry was perhaps, the most important: a group of “every day” people all working together to help meet the needs of their community. Students saw that when people come together, they can make a very real and powerful difference- every day people like you and me!

Many thanks to all who were able to donate canned and dry goods during our Fall Festival of Thanks- students were able to deliver these goods plus some cash to the Food Pantry on their visit!

## **Why Do Elementary Students Need to “Go Out”**

*By Stephanie Smith, Upper Elementary Teacher*

“Going Out,” as it is known in the Montessori world, takes a variety of forms from classroom field trips to enrich our curriculum to service projects to enrich our lives. But the key differentiator for Montessori is that the “going out” experience is student-led. Between the ages of 9-12 years old, students are developmentally ready and intellectually capable of exploring their environment outside of the classroom. By providing opportunities to “go out,” we are fostering students’ independence when they plan a trip with many details and their critical thinking skills as they coordinate and piece those details together. Students’ confidence in themselves and each other also increases once they have accomplished their goal and experience the complete process of planning and executing a trip.

If you walked into our classroom during one of our planning sessions, you would likely see students working in small groups, researching places to visit, costs and transportation routes, and deciding what’s important to see or learn at these sites. Being a democratic society, you also likely see students taking a vote or attempting to reach consensus with group presentations of ideas and discussion. No matter what, there is always give and take and plenty of opportunity to practice grace and courtesy, active listening, and respect for one another and their ideas (a true collaboration!).

In the end, when everything has been planned, organized, and communicated to families, students are ready to “go out” and enjoy the product of their hard work. An experience, no doubt, they feel much pride in as they “own” the experience from start to finish!



## **Looking for Construction Help**

Our classroom counters are beginning to fail and we need someone who can help us install new counters and sinks. If you have this talent or could help with the plumbing, please let Alica know. Ideally, the counters would be replaced over a long weekend or the winter break in February. Thank you!

*Pictured to the right is an example of one classroom’s challenge and the frog tape which is no match for the old laminate countertop!*



## **2016-2017 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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**Michelle Sico**      **Elisa Marhue**      **Derek Ahl**      **Alica Johnson-Grafe, Head of School**  
**Alison Bell, Business Administrator**      **Heidi Salisbury-Finley, Admissions**

Interested in serving on the Board of Directors or in a board advisory role? Please let us know!



## Expanding Brixham's After School Programs

We heard it loud and clear, parents of elementary students want more options for late aftercare, and we're working on it! This year we have more after school clubs and enrichment programs than ever: a STEM club, a chess club, a recorder ensemble, a late aftercare program with special studio art opportunities, and more ideas in the works! If you have a hobby or interest that you think might be fun to share with elementary students, please let us know. This age loves to do just about anything (cooking, sewing, robotics, etc.) and clubs can meet as often as you like- thank you!

## Staff and Alumni News

**Allie Fitzgerald**, former 3-6 teacher, writes that she is working at her local public school in Wolfboro, NH and assisting the guidance counselor each day (working mostly with third graders), and that she is also attending Endicott College full time with an anticipated graduation date of May 2017. She also writes that her daughters, Eila (8) and Neva (6) really like their new school and classmates... and they have loved visiting Brixham friends outside of school this fall (they really miss everyone). Allie's husband, Jeremy is in Brooklyn, NY where his work in urban permaculture remains intriguing; Allie and the girls look forward to moving with him in June.

### ***A Montessori Moment from Allie on "Why I'm Thankful"***

*On the way home from school I had the pleasure of listening to Eila and Neva talk about a school project about thankfulness and what they were thankful for. Neva is thankful for the earth and the sun so she can see the beautiful earth, and for her family and friends. Eila asked her if she was also thankful for our cat, Frida. Neva said she was certainly thankful for Frida and would say that next year.*

**Dayna MacIntosh**, former toddler teacher, writes that she has been subbing for the past two months in a kindergarten classroom in Brunswick and that they have the largest kindergarten population in the state (there are eleven kindergarten classrooms at her school)! Also, Dayna is very excited to "finally" fill out her paper work and receive her K-3 state teacher certification!

***Congratulations to both Allie and Dayna for their accomplishments: past, present and future!***