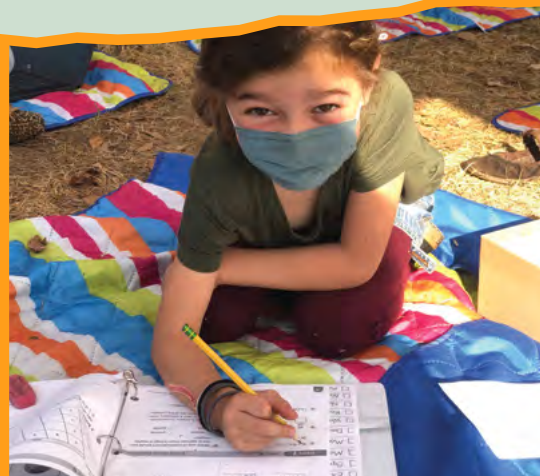




2020

The Oak Grove Owl

A Newsletter and Annual Report for the Oak Grove Community



EXUBERANT ENGAGED EAGER

Nurture the child.
Empower the student.
Unleash the potential.

Thoughts from the Head of School



Dear Oak Grove Family:

The year 2020 has been an unprecedented year filled with changes for Oak Grove, for each family, and for the world at large. On March 13th of 2020, we all left our campus not knowing that it would be our last in-person day of the school year. The months to come required teachers to reinvent instruction and the entire school experience. Students adapted to a new model of learning, and parents took on a new role in their child's education. As a community, we came together to reimagine school and found the strength to persevere through a very uncertain time.

Over the summer, we set back to work creating a plan to bring all of our students, faculty, and staff back to school safely. In addition to creating a distance learning program, we made modifications to our building and enhanced our technology. Our accomplishments in 2020, reflect the strength, dedication, and resilience of our faculty, staff, and community; we have a lot to be proud of.

Until now, most of us were unaware of how privileged were to be attending school daily. However, that simple act of going to school in person can no longer be taken for granted. At Oak Grove, we are so fortunate that our students are able to make use of outdoor classrooms, the nature trail, the apple orchard, and the field behind our school. We observe them working happily both inside and outside--telling stories, learning with friends, making books about nature, completing math problems, and working with their teachers.



Because of Covid-19, we have experienced a decrease in enrollment. However, we hope to regain many of our long-standing families as well as attract new families when the pandemic is brought under control. Even during this difficult period, we have enrolled some new students. For example, our ability to offer in-person learning brought an alumna back to us, whose family helped to construct the berms that surround our building in the 1980s. We are delighted to see her return to Oak Grove with her own daughter.

We are making a special appeal this year for everyone to donate to our Annual Fund. We need 100% participation to meet our operational budget for this school year and to ensure that we can continue to keep our doors open for in-person learning. Your contribution will make a significant difference to our school, students, and faculty.

In closing, I would like to celebrate and thank the children of OGMS. They have adapted beautifully to all of the new procedures that we have required of them. In fact, they are role models for us all, leading us into the future with excitement and ambition.

With much gratitude,



SHERRIE CLUNE,
HEAD OF SCHOOL



...Where are They Now?

For over 38 years, Oak Grove has educated hundreds of students. These alumni leave our school and join a talented group of individuals that are leaders in so many different fields. Time and time again, we hear from our alumni how their Montessori education, at Oak Grove, prepared them with the skills needed to greet the next chapters of their lives. Most notably, they recognize that Oak Grove's curriculum and environment fostered essential communication skills, time management skills, and collaborative work abilities that contribute to their ongoing success.

The research continues to demonstrate, unequivocally, that an educational setting based on student-centered learning, high levels of engagement, peer-teaching, collaboration, and problem-solving, yield the most positive long term results for students. The multi-aged Montessori classroom and three-year cycle offer a curriculum that prepares our children with the skills they need to greet their futures with excitement and anticipation.

The most meaningful way to know about the outcomes of an Oak Grove education and experience are to hear directly from our graduates themselves. We asked three more graduates to share some thoughts about their time at Oak Grove. We asked about their lives after Oak Grove, their hobbies and interests, their real-world vision, and about how their time at Oak Grove has influenced their journey.

Former students and families are vital to the stewardship of the Oak Grove community. You serve as an integral support system for the school and help us paint a vivid picture of success for our current and future families. We are committed to broadening and building alumni relationships; we want to hear from you and want to know what you are doing now! Please email, call, or stop by. We would love to swap stories and keep you connected.

PROFILE *What are our graduates doing now?*

REAL-WORLD VISION *What is important to our graduates?*

IMPACT *What habits, skills, character qualities do our graduates trace directly back to their time at Oak Grove?*



Emily Bruggeman



Profile

I graduated from the University of Vermont with a double major in Political Science and Russian Language this past spring. Immediately after graduation, I accepted a research position at a DC think tank working with their Russian affairs department. This experience offered a wonderful foothold into research work, and allowed me to seamlessly

combine my two academic disciplines. Recently, I transitioned from this position to a new firm that offers strategic insight on political campaigns. My work specifically addresses voter turnout and effective organizing tactics. By virtue of the campaign trail, I am all over the place! Currently, I am based in Savannah, Georgia. Being so fresh out of college, I am eager to dabble a bit professionally before returning to school, though I hope that higher education is in my near future. It would be a shame to let my Russian degree go to waste, and I would love to eventually return to Eastern Europe for further language practice and cultural immersion.

"Oak Grove gave me the time and freedom to independently pursue my own interests, which gave me an excellent advantage when it came time to transition academically. I had the confidence to undertake new projects and skillsets, a wide knowledge base to pull from, and comprehensive liberal arts exposure, which carried me well through college."

Oak Grove's emphasis on personal connection and meaningful relationships made the social transition quite smooth. Our classroom experiences instilled fundamental social skills, so navigating new terrain felt like second nature. But even if I had not made new friends after Oak Grove, all would be well: I am still quite close with the folks I met there."

Real-World Vision

If you could change anything in the world, what would you change?

Having been steeped in political work for a few years now, I have seen first-hand the deteriorating effects of post-truth beliefs. If I could change one thing, it would be for us to have a collective, baseline understanding of what constitutes fact and fiction, and perhaps more importantly, for every person to be endowed with the necessary tools to thoroughly vet information. I feel grateful to live in the information age; it allows me to learn far more than I could have in any other time. But it also comes with an immense responsibility to employ logic, be critical of your sources, and rely on open discourse before svitriolic outbursts to arrive at the truth.

Impact

What habits, skills, and character qualities do you trace directly back to your time at OGMS?

I attribute any diplomatic skill of mine to Oak Grove. Patience, conversation, and mutual understanding were the pillars of our disciplinary process. I remember feeling quite reassured that all disputes would be met with an unbiased mediator, and that each person involved would have a chance to say their piece before any conclusions were drawn. There was a strong sense of justice in this procedure. I try to carry these same practices with me today when navigating my personal and professional life. Sometimes it's easier said than done, but I believe Oak Grove gave me a strong foundation to stand on.

How does the mission and philosophy (Respect, Independence, Engagement) of OGMS still guide you today?

I certainly would not have had the interest, confidence or encouragement to pursue half of my academic activities if it were not for these three tenets. From an early age I learned how to prioritize my interests so that I made time for the things that fascinated me most, while also keeping an open mind and engaging with new ideas. In many ways, the Oak Grove mission spurred my decision to study a new language, live in Russia, and embark on a career path which I would have otherwise never considered. I attribute all of these developments with my elementary school experience, in that it fostered the necessary curiosity and encouragement required for new endeavors.

What defines the OGMS experience?

Above all else, community. It is a place where everyone knows each other's name and is concerned for their wellbeing. Though Oak Grove has certainly grown since my time there, I doubt it feels any bigger. This sense of place has stayed with me well after my graduation, with some of my closest friends being those that I met in kindergarten. I am grateful for the abundance of people in my life who came directly from this school—such bonds are hard to replicate!

Nadia Henry



Profile

Nadia is gearing up to graduate from the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia with a degree in Psychology. Nadia enjoys listening to music, djing, and taking long walks through the city. Her main interests center around social justice and ethnomusicology which is reflected in her job choices, as Nadia has coordinated educational support and documented Black music with MusiQology in Philadelphia for the past four

years. Upon graduation, Nadia plans to spend a month in Jamaica working with the Grace Kennedy Foundation to implement and streamline local initiatives to ensure that the company is providing the maximum amount of aid to the people of Jamaica.

While in School, Nadia has been working in her community to support Philadelphia students and promote voter registration.

Okay for Philadelphia Schools: As the coordinator for the Silverman Fellows program I was responsible for providing assistance to schools all over West Philadelphia. While this often took the form of academic support, it also took the form of genuine connections between students and a greater sense of community in the classroom. Those connections are the foundation of the Silverman Fellows program and something I prioritized when refocusing the program.

Robert F. Kennedy Foundation for Human Rights Advisory Council: I, along with 3 other college students from across the country advise on the focus of the nationwide RFK Leaders human rights campaign for the year. This past year we decided to focus on voter disenfranchisement. Over the course of the year, we created a Voter's Registration PSA that was disseminated throughout the US, and a colleague and I wrote a piece on voter disenfranchisement that went on to be published in Blavity.

"My academic transition out of Oak Grove was phenomenal, I came into middle school with breadth and depth of knowledge that many of my peers would not know until years later.

The social transition out of Oak Grove was more difficult than the academic transition but still very successful for me. I had a hard time adjusting to ALL the rules of public school, but I really relished the opportunity to get to know new kids my age and share my interests with them. I also think that Oak Grove was really instrumental in the development of my personality and my morals which helped me to navigate a lot of social situations all the way up until adulthood."

Real-World Vision

If you could change anything in the world, what would you change?

If I could change anything in the world, I would change its reliance on capitalism. Capitalism to me is the biggest blockade to receiving any semblance of justice in this country and across the globe. It works to uphold every -ism (racism, sexism, classism, etc.) and its big-wig proponents are contributing to climate change at a vastly higher rate than any group of citizens are. Without capitalism, poverty would no longer exist, global suffering would be extinguished, and people could finally live without fear.

Impact

What habits, skills, and character qualities do you trace directly back to your time at OGMS?

I trace my love of learning directly back to my time at OGMS. My curiosity and hunger for new information has brought me to the Ivy League and many other places I could have never even dreamed of and it's all thanks to Oak Grove.

How does the mission and philosophy (Respect, Independence, Engagement) of OGMS still guide you today?

I think that I've really taken the mission and philosophy of Oak Grove to heart and its guided me throughout my life thus far. Respect is paramount to me and I think that mutual respect between myself and my peers, and myself and my superiors/professors has created the space for very honest and very productive dialogue in my life. Additionally, learning how to be independent during my time at Oak Grove prepared me to accept personal responsibility in all facets of my life and to push myself to be better. Engagement in my community is also extremely important to me, I have spent the last four years in Philadelphia tirelessly working to support my community and uplift their voices and concerns so that they are met. Oak Grove was instrumental in teaching me how to care for others and listen to their needs.

What defines the OGMS experience?

What defines the OGMS experience for me is the ability to learn independently. I think that independent learning and the ability to explore one's interests fully is so vital to a child's development not only academically, but personally. I learned how to take pride in the things I did, motivate myself intrinsically, speak empathetically, and create happiness for myself and those around me. The education Oak Grove provides reaches far beyond the academic, it truly prepares a child for anything the world may throw at them.

The Seth Brody Memorial Scholarship Fund

EACH YEAR Oak Grove is able to offer additional financial aid because of the support and generosity of the Brody family and the S. Rubenstein Family Foundation. Please join us in supporting the **Seth Brody Memorial Scholarship Fund**.

If you would like to donate to the Seth Brody Memorial Scholarship please contact Cindy Henry, Head's Assistant at cindy@ogms.org

*One of our seniors, who graduated in 2020, ran an independent campaign by selling owl masks to support the **Seth Brody Memorial Scholarship Fund**, and we want to highlight his heartfelt initiative.*



Days of Yore

Celebrating 40 Years of OGMS!

Oak Grove Montessori School was organized in 1981, and classes were first held at Temple B'nai Israel in Willimantic. As time went on and students outgrew the spaces at the synagogue, the idea was born to build a Montessori school of their own.

Joan Hill is considered the cornerstone of Oak Grove and wore many different hats as founder, parent, administrator, board member, and teacher for the first seventeen years of Oak Grove's existence. She is often spoken of as a force of nature by former colleagues, parents, and students. Joan was the driving force behind establishing Oak Grove and creating the original purpose-built space that became Oak Grove's permanent home. There are many dedicated 'Oak Grovians' that helped establish Oak Grove in its early days; you may recognize these names: Jan Evans, Karen Drazen, Nancy Rawn, Wendy Cody, Marlane Bottino, Bill & Virginia Meehan, Marylin, Allan & Corey Brown, Jeffrey Trawick-Smith, Ruth Ettenberg Freeman, and countless others over the years.

In 2001 Oak Grove was now even growing out of the 'new building,' so a building committee was formed with Karen Drazen, then the Head of School, appointed as the General Contractor. A Capital Funds Campaign was launched, and plans were underway to construct the addition as it stands today.

A new Upper Elementary classroom was built, along with a parent lobby, two administrative offices, a nurse's office, a conference room, a teacher workroom, and a storage room. This was completed by 2003, just in time for the first day of school.

Since its beginning, there have been four Heads of School; Joan Hill, Karen Drazen, Susan Angelides, and presently, Sherrie Clune. They have all been committed to a quality Montessori education for each and every student, honoring our mission statement:

Nurture the Child. Empower the Student. Unleash the Potential.

The year 2020 was a very challenging year for Oak Grove and the whole world! Our nation continues to grapple with crises of racial injustice, public health, the economy, and public safety. Through this uncertain and unprecedented time, Oak Grove was able to keep our mission strong for our students and community, and we would like to give sincere thanks to all of the dedication, foresight, and vision of those that came before us.

We are looking forward to a safe and exciting future.



Montessori Open House

The staff, parents and students of the Oak Grove Montessori Elementary School are inviting the public to an Open House, March 4 from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

The school is located in the lower level of the Temple B'nai Israel at 345 Jackson Street in Willimantic.

The Oak Grove School first opened in the fall of 1981. At that time, organizers all felt excited over the challenge of trying to develop an educational alternative based on the Montessori method.

Already the Board of Directors feel that they have come a long way, and would like to share accomplishments and continuing their enthusiasm with prospective parents, educators, and the community.

The evening's program will include a slide show about the school, shown at 8 p.m. and again at 9 p.m., presentations by teacher and parents on aspects of the Montessori philosophy and method — particularly how it applies at the elementary level, displays and demonstrations of classroom materials, and examples of work the students have done this year.

There will be refreshments and plenty of informal discussion.

2019-2020 Board of Trustees

- Ricardo Trindade, *Chair*
- Dan Polhemus, *Vice Chair*
- Bob Powell, *Treasurer*
- Sherry D'Alessandro, *Secretary*
- Bill Piotroski, *Member at large*
- Sherrie Clune, *Head of School, ex-officio*
- Lindsey Baah
- Clare Costley King'oo
- Bill Covey
- Jeannette Ferris
- Amy Lambeck

OAK GROVE MONTESSORI
ELEMENTARY AND PRESCHOOL

Thank You All for Enriching Our School with Your Generosity

2020 is a year to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Dr. Montessori's birth. We also celebrate her amazing legacy of Montessori education, as well as her commitment to advocating for the human rights of the child. Our mission statement reflects Montessori's advocacy for children and it guides everything we do at Oak Grove Montessori. We had to work very hard this year to translate our very hands-on, in-person environment to a fully online experience for our students that included Zoom, Google Classroom, physical distance, and remote connection. Though this was a very unexpected turn of events, and it was and continues to be a very different experience, it was an opportunity for us to evolve, and for all of us to be committed and creative about how we would continue to meet the needs of our students and families. **THE OAK GROVE ANNUAL FUND** helps us to evolve, meet our operating budget each year, and ensures that our educational programs and thoughtful investments in faculty and facilities are maintained and strengthened for years to come. Your generosity helps us honor our commitment to uniquely nurture our children's love of learning as well as their sense of personal and social responsibility. **THANK YOU!**

2019-2020 Annual Fund Donors

Visionary (\$15,000 & above)

David Miller & Rich & Carrie Brody

Champion (\$5,000 - \$10,000)

The Benevity Impact fund

Guardian (\$2,500 - \$4,999)

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Sustainer (\$1,000 - \$2,499)

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Robyn Vanlandingham

This report gratefully acknowledges gifts received between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020. Donations to the "Raise Your Bid Card" auction item are included in the Annual Fund as well. Great care was taken to ensure accuracy of this report. If there are any errors or omissions, please accept our deepest apologies and notify Sherrie Clune at sherrie@ogms.org.

This year's Annual Fund helped directly support:

- VZ OGMS Music Program
- Professional Development for Staff
- Building Safety and Security
- Enhancements
- Supplement Our Operating Expenses

2020 Gala & Auction

Our Annual Gala & Auction was thrown a curveball last year, to say the least. After months of planning and prepping, we had to cancel our in-person Gala just days before the event. We had such an incredible Gala team this year, and we were able to shift gears on a moment's notice to a fully online Gala and Auction, **Give a Hoot for Oak Grove**. We had an amazing virtual Gala filled with technology firsts, laughter, and good cheer. Over \$25,000 was raised through the silent and live auctions, raffles, and sponsorships.

A huge thank you to our entire auction committee for coming through for Oak Grove during such an unprecedented time to raise much-needed funds for the school. Thank you to our families for making this event so successful, and we extend our sincere gratitude to everyone that made our online Gala & Auction a huge success.



2020 Shaken, Not Stirred Auction Committee

Beth Acly	Matthew Coolbeth	Amy Lambeck
Lindsey Baah	Ashley Covey	Jennifer Nelson
Tiffany Blumenstein	Karen Fitzgerald	Jennifer Scapetis
Sherrie Clune	Heidi Groeger	Natasha Sheer
Chelsea Cole-Kelly	Cindy Henry	



Thank You to Our Sponsors

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Elephant Rock Productions	Renovare Anti-Aging & Regenerative Medicine
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Innovative Hoisting	Tao Vitality
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Thank You to Our Donors

Ahimsa Ayurveda	Giannelli Family	Michelle Jordan & Dan Herzog	Storrs Center Cycle
Aidan Henry	Graham Kolar & Nicole Connolly	Mohawk Mountain	The Adventure Park at Storrs
Audrey Blake	Grounded Coffee	Mohegan Sun	The Hairline
Balis/Boylan Family	Grove Collaborative & Amy Lambeck	Mt. Southington	The Spa at Norwich Inn
Barbash Family	Heather Abel	Natasha Sheer	The Willimantic Food Co-op
Beebe Construction	Heather Armstrong	OGMS Auction Committee	Tycer Media
Board of Trustees	Honglan Wu	Peace At Home Parenting	Upper Elementary Class
Connecticut Concert Ballet	Isankofa Natural Skin Care	Primary Class	Wadsworth Atheneum
Copper Beech Institute	Japanese Body Balance Shoppe	Redtwig Garden Design, LLC	Water Wizards Irrigation, LLC
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Dougal Art	Lisa Jordan	Shelby Clark	
Drew's Honeybees	Little Red Shed Photography	Sherrie Clune & John Campbell	
Dr. Myriah Hinchney/Tao Vitality	Logee's Greenhouses	Song-A-Day Music	
Funky Flamingo Boutique	Lower Elementary Class	Stephen Frechette, Jr. & Lindsey Baah	
	Maya Rogers & Tyler Sherman		



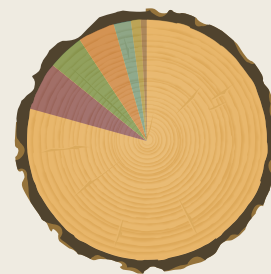
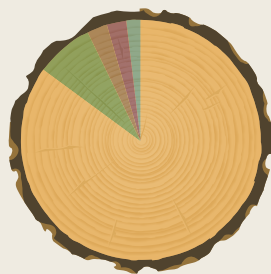


OGMS Statement of Activities and Expenses

for the fiscal year July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020

Income

Expenses



	Tuition	85.1%
	Fundraising	7.7%
	Summer & Enrichment	2.7%
	Before & Aftercare	2.6%
	Grants	2.1%
Total		\$939,574

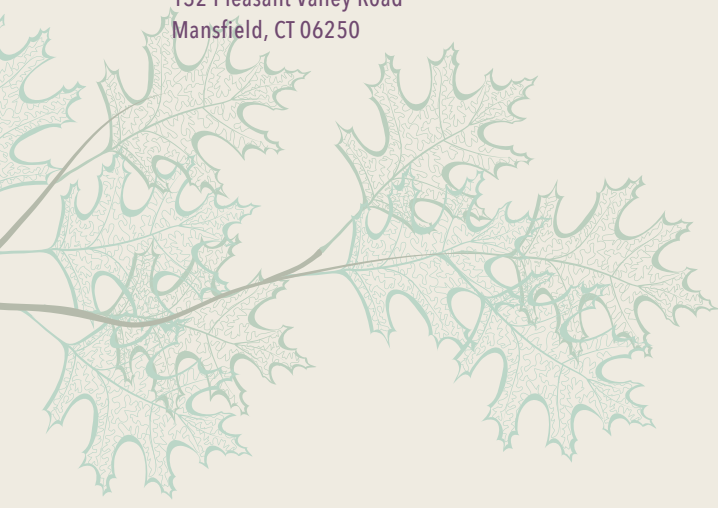
	Wages & Benefits	79.3%
	Financial Aid & Sibling Discounts	6.5%
	Mortgage & Utilities	4.9%
	Professional Development & Insurance	4.9%
	Maintenance, Building & Grounds	2.3%
	Classroom Supplies & Field Trips	1.3%
	General Supplies, Postage & Printing	0.8%
Total		\$902,149





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OGMS

Save the Date



Online Silent Auction

**OPENS FRIDAY, MAY 21ST
@ 5PM**

**OAK GROVE
MONTESSORI**

Congratulations to the Graduating Class of 2020



Visit the Online Silent Auction at
charityauction.bid/OGMS2021Auction

(from left) Aria Teva, Russel D'Alessandro, Griffin Boulay, Gavan Jordan,
Logan Giannelli, Edward King'oo, Aviv Teva, Amelia McAleer