

**Spring Workshop**  
 Saturday, April 13, 2013  
 Henry Ford Community College (at Ford Rd.)  
 Dearborn, MI

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*Special Needs in Montessori*  
 Debbie Edwards from Shelton Montessori

## President's Corner

Pat Moore

Dear Montessorians,

This New Year brings new challenges to Montessori schools. In particular the Great Start rating system being implemented by the State of Michigan for all childcare centers is a concern.

The proposed system does not take into account the unique differences of Montessori programs. Members of the MMS Board and various schools have been researching and discussing how we can respond in a helpful and meaningful manner. We have been in touch with national organizations such as AMS, since Montessori programs are facing similar issues in many states. We need to make sure that Montessori personnel have some input on any rating system. The society has sent out an appeal to sign a petition, which asks for a delay in publishing the ratings until there is a review of the proposed system.

Please consider signing this petition and asking the parents and families of your students to do so as well. It can be found here: <http://www.change.org/petitions/michigan-dept-of-education-office-of-great-start-and-the-ecic-delay-the-public-posting-of-the-tqris>

Approximately 270 Montessorians attended the Michigan Montessori Society Best Practices Workshop held in November at Meadow Montessori in Monroe, Michigan. It was a day covering a variety of wonderful topics. Our many thanks go to the staff at Meadow for hosting us

so graciously. The sight of so many of our professionals eager to continue their education is inspiring. These workshops also provide opportunities to reconnect with colleagues and friends.

Mark your calendar! The next workshop is on April 13 and will feature Debbie Edwards from the Shelton School in Dallas, Texas. This school is the largest school for children with learning differences and uses Montessori methods and materials to teach the students. It is always a timely and worthwhile subject. Hope to see you there.

Don't forget to "like" Michigan Montessori Society on Facebook. It raises the awareness of Montessori in our state.



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## From Dowagiac to the Dominican Republic

When a Michigander decided to take her knowledge in Montessori education abroad, she had no idea she would end up transforming a community.

In 2009, Sarah Ross, a Dowagiac, Michigan native and graduate of Montessori Teacher Academy, opened 3 Mariposas Montessori (3MM), a nonprofit early childhood education center in La Ciénega, a village on the outskirts of Cabarete, Dominican Republic.

Before 3MM, the families of La Ciénega didn't have access to early childhood education. Since participation in education before the age of 5 is one of the biggest factors for overcoming poverty, Sarah started with a 3-6 year old Montessori program. Since 2009, 3MM has become a huge part of the community and has seen so much success! 3MM is not only a school; we also work with the parents of the students, as well as sponsoring and training Dominican individuals who would like to be teachers. This year, we additionally opened an Infant-Toddler program for children under 3 years, as well as a program for previous students that have aged out of the Montessori program (older than 6 years). The parents of all 42 children enrolled in our programs are actively involved at the school. One of the mothers has even been so dedicated to the school and her growth as an educator that we're sponsoring her education in the Montessori method. She'll be a certified Montessori and lead teacher at 3MM by August 2013.



This spring, 3 MM is hiring a Montessori certified teacher to work with our 3 - 6 year olds. Over 70% of our students live in poverty and attend 3MM on a full scholarship. Donations from individuals, organizations, and companies are the only way we are able to offset these disparities. We are always eager to work with other professionals in the Montessori field, which could include group trips to 3MM or school partnerships.

We also always welcome any Montessorians interested in holding a workshop or training for our teachers. Please visit our website to learn more about 3MM, the difference we are making in our community and how you can get involved.  
[www.3mariposasmontessori.com](http://www.3mariposasmontessori.com)

Allie Kolstad  
Administrative Assistant  
3 Mariposas Montessori  
[facebook.com/3mariposasmontessori](https://www.facebook.com/3mariposasmontessori)

## A Remarkable Journey-- Only the Beginning

Odalis was raised by her grandparents on a cocoa farm in the Dominican Republic. With her brothers and cousins, she walked two hours to school and two hours home everyday. In total, that's more time than was spent in the classroom. Her school was typical of that of a rural public school in the DR—no electricity, chairs but no desks, holes in the tin roof that leaked on rainy days and teachers who were absent more than they were present.

When Odalis was 14 years old, Carlos, a childhood friend, asked if she would be his wife. They moved to a poor coastal village called La Cienega to live with Odalis's mother, which is common for newlyweds in the DR. The move, unfortunately, created complications that forced Odalis to drop out of school. A year after moving in with Carlos and her mother, Odalis gave birth to their first child. She was 15. Carlos quickly found a job thatching roofs and Odalis cleaned apartments along the beach for tourists. Fortunately, Odalis's mother was able to take care of their son while they worked to support the family and another baby on the way.

When their youngest, Karla, was about four years old, a friend of the family told them that she had enrolled her son in school. She said that the school was different than how Odalis imagined school and Odalis should

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## Maria and Madelyn



Many years ago, Meadow Montessori School (MMS), like so many other schools around the nation, invited Sanford and Judy Jones to do an opera workshop. For the first couple of years, the school hosted them in the summer and then gave them a well-deserved week during the school year. As time passed and competence and confidence grew, the school produced its own operas, written by Sandy Lentner. Sandy has composed / compiled a total of eight productions; more importantly, she has inspired a student to write her own opera.

This year, MMS is pleased to present the work of high school senior, Madelyn Abraham, *Maria Bella Vita*.

Madelyn first became interested in the life

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## A Remarkable Journey, *continued*

come along with her to see it for herself. That's the day that Odalis found 3 Mariposas Montessori (3MM) and the children of 3 Mariposas Montessori found Odalis!

Because the 3MM class was already full, Karla wasn't able to enroll immediately. That, however, did not stop Odalis! She had never seen a school like 3MM in the DR—students were playing, working, exploring, sharing, and loving learning. She wanted to be part of it. Odalis started volunteering as a classroom assistant a couple of days a week, and the children fell in love with her! She was compassionate, kind, happy and encouraging. On one of Odalis' days off, she asked herself why she was sitting at home when she could be with the children at 3MM. Since then Odalis has been teaching in the classroom every Monday through Friday.

It didn't take long for 3MM's Founder and Director, Sarah, to realize that Odalis was not only a kind human being and loving mother but also a natural born teacher. Sarah invited Odalis to enroll Karla and asked Odalis to become an official teacher in training at 3MM. As a teacher-in-training, Odalis receives daily hands-on Montessori training from Sarah, leads the morning circle with the children and is the official parent liaison. 3MM created a scholarship fund for Odalis to learn English. The classes have been extremely motivating for Odalis because she is now able to communicate with the interna-

tional volunteers. 3MM also received a grant to send Odalis to an internationally recognized Montessori teacher-training program. Odalis attends all-day Saturday classes and full-time summer courses. She will be La Cienega's first certified early childhood teacher.

If you ask Odalis how her life has changed over the past two years, she will start by telling you that she has become a better parent and role model and feels responsible for the future of not only her children but of the entire community. She will explain that school can and should be fun, rewarding and available to all children and that communication between adults and children is more effective with words than with violence. And she will tell you that she is happy.

If you ask her husband Carlos what he thinks about Odalis's new role, he will tell you that he has never been prouder of anyone in his life. He will tell you that Odalis has created a life for their family that neither of them ever dreamed was possible. He will tell you that he loves her for it.

And if you ask a moto-taxi driver, a cleaning lady or a street vendor in La Cienega about Odalis, they will tell you that she is their hero.

## Maria and Madelyn, *continued*

of Maria Montessori when she was a young girl in need of a good idea for a History Fair project. She decided to learn about Montessori and was intrigued not only with her great accomplishments, but also the interesting similarities between them—like a love of learning and desire to share knowledge.

When it came time to choose a “Start Something New” project (a graduation requirement at Meadow’s high school program), Madelyn decided to blend her passion for music and performing with her gratitude for her Montessori education. What better way than to write an opera, highlighting Maria’s remarkable life story?

Madelyn has been working on this project for more than a year, sifting through biographies, songs (without copyright limitations!), dialogue possibilities, and folk dances. The process has been so much more involved than she realized it would be, but the rewards have already been great. Daily we hear children singing the tunes in our halls and identifying themselves by their character names!

Meadow will present Maria Bella Vita during the first week of March to an appreciative audience. Madelyn is currently putting her work together so it can be shared with other schools. Wouldn’t your program like to present Maria Bella Vita?

## Great Start Rating Systems

Like many great ideas, the package when delivered isn’t all it was supposed to be.

The Quality Rating and Improvement System Design Project from Great Start is designed to improve and protect early learning centers for children throughout Michigan. As Montessorians, we know better than anyone that early education is essential. You may not know that 64% of the children under the age of six in Michigan are in the care of someone other than a family member. If 64% of the children were in Montessori schools, we would have no hesitation about the quality of their care and learning. But this is not the case.

The typical childcare and/or early learning setting in Michigan is licensed but not accredited. (Less than 4% of center-based programs are accredited). Great Start contends that because of this, there is no objective way to determine the quality of programs.

As Montessorians, we can disagree. Schools and centers affiliated with the Michigan Montessori Society and/or accredited by the American Montessori Society are quality programs. Yet, we are in danger of being lumped in with all the others and judged by standards that do not apply to Montessori education.

As you read this, the Early Childhood Investment Corporation and the Great Start Early Learning Advisory Council (GS-ELAC) are working with legislatures to complete a design for QRIS in Michigan. Montessori needs to have a voice at the table.



The Board of the Michigan Montessori Society is actively involved with this process. Thanks to Jackie Kalogerakos, the Council understands that their proposed measuring stick cannot and should not measure Montessori schools. We need to continue to have our voices heard, so please join the chorus. Contact your representative and sign the petition referenced in Pat Moore’s President’s Corner.