

**Dear Families,**

**As many of you know, when I was a child growing up in the Bronx my brother and I and all the other kids on the block went to the local public or parochial graded schools. You know, the ones with all the desks screwed down and the teacher standing up there in front of the blackboard making sure we the pupils sat silent and still in their so structured classrooms while they drilled us with their lessons. The root of the term “pupils” means being puppets, and that is exactly what we were – their puppets. They pulled the strings and we danced to their will. These schools with tight boxed grades were first created in Prussia as “factory” schools of mass education. As the factory way spread throughout Europe and then America, more and more children like me and my friends were placed within them. Sure they taught us a lot of academic skills as the years droned by, but we did not learn with our hearts – we did not learn with our lives. This factory modeled graded schooling produced a shallow knowing in us of how to do academic tricks, but our minds/hearts/souls were not at all there. We were performing like wooden puppets – little Pinocchios – little Pinocchios who had deep, deep within a yearning to be real, to live learning as human persons not as so still sticks.**

**You can imagine my absolute awe when in 1960 I first witnessed a true Montessori learning environment and saw a room full of boys and girls moving freely about, taking up learning work freely from shelves and setting themselves to it with a willed concentration, with enthusiasm, and joy. There was no teacher dictating and demanding, but rather a team of educators quietly observing and guiding the individual learners to new challenges. The children were moving about freely and orderly – alive and a-learning like so many varied plants in a well prepared garden. After all those years of suffering the drudgery of graded schooling, I suddenly was standing in a Shangri-La of happy, independent learners – it was a new world. It was much more than a school. It was a place where life was answering life. I never left it. I made sure all my seven children benefited from a full twelve years of Montessori education. My youngest daughter just graduated**

college Summa Cum Laude, and when I asked her what she wanted to do now with her life, she answered, "Make this world a better place."

Our Island Village Montessori School continues that tradition of creating joyful, self-motivated, life-long learners within a community of enlightened parents and caring educators. Surrounding our Island Village are the many old fashioned graded schools of today in which children are still being dealt with as pupils in narrow one year boxes of instruction. Tragic but true. Within Montessori schools as ours, children develop their academic and social abilities within natural three year age spans that flow into each other over all the years of perfecting their learning powers. More Montessori graduates than you can imagine wish with all their hearts that they could continue learning in the Montessori way. Just last week one of our graduates-to-be confided to me privately that she was sad to be going. "Why can't Island Village have a senior high school too?" I knew perfectly well what she was wanting and answered with a smile, "Someday we shall. Just you wait and see. Something this good must go on."

Peace,

Paul