



Adolescent Program

Guides: Alex Pape, Melissa Pavick and Caren Ross.

2023 Fall Edition

Dear MSGH community,

In the newsletter items below, you will read about the topics the adolescents have chosen to share with you about their life, work, and studies at MSGH Millstream Farm this fall. They will give you a first-hand glimpse into the goings-on in our adolescent community and what is meaningful to them, and you may glean from their topic choices why the farm environment is the ideal Montessori “prepared environment” for adolescent growth and development, meeting their needs for movement, variety, adventure, belongingness, joy, and creativity. Adolescents prioritize their social selves and take on adult-like responsibilities at Millstream – working together to run a small farm and small business enterprise, while gaining knowledge and skills across a broad, interconnected plan of academic studies.



Student Articles

Seminar by Fred

Seminar at the farm is an activity that we have on Wednesday mornings in between Food, Land and People projects and community lunch. Every week in Seminar, we read a short article or story about something that is happening in the world or topics that relate to us. It is important to read and stay educated about worldly topics even if they may not relate directly to us so that we can be present in other discussions with adults that concern these topics, and it teaches us social awareness and the ability to take in and consider the opinions of other people, although they may not mirror your own. After popcorn reading the literature, we have a civilized discussion about the topic. We are not supposed to raise our hands, and we instead listen to the conversation and add a comment on the topic at an appropriate time to move the conversation forward. The seminar is a useful skill for a student to learn as it encourages them to engage with teachers and peers as you would outside of school and breaks away from the "raising hands" method as a whole. We have talked about such topics as the value (or not!) of homework, the use of cluster bombs in the Russia-Ukraine war, U.S. arms sales to warring factions, and videogames. Students are encouraged to present ideas for seminar topics.



A Walk in the Woods by Tyler

A forest specialist from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection came to visit our school. We trekked down to the forest and explored the banks and land around the Nepaug River. The DEEP forester taught us about the trees and invasive species of plants, animals, and fungi. (Invasive is a term used to describe a plant or animal from somewhere else that is harming its current environment.) We hiked around the woods and found some old stuff, like a rusty metal bucket, barbed wire, and a tea kettle! But the best find was a black bear skeleton, which we quickly put in the museum room in the barn. The forester taught us about how to measure the diameter of tree trunks using a special measurement stick. He also taught us about legacy trees, which are particularly old trees that have dominated a chunk of forest space, creating a ring of smaller trees around them kept at bay by the legacy tree. Settlers often spared these trees from being cut down because they were good for shading livestock.

In addition to learning about early European settlement, we were educated about invasive bugs, like the emerald ash borers, who have been destroying the white ash trees all over Connecticut. We saw a dead ash tree. We also found a tiny wood frog in a rotting log. The wood frog can freeze itself in ice to hibernate, forcing its heart to stop pumping, and its eyes to freeze solid. Gross as it is, the wood frog seemingly resurrects itself come spring. They have a distinguishing horizontal black stripe along their chocolate brown body. As our wilderness excursion came to a close, we trekked through an invasive Japanese barberry thicket. The DEEP specialist said that these thorny plants grow well here because the Japanese climate and environment is surprisingly similar to ours. Finally, to get back to Millstream, we crossed the very cold Nepaug River in our boots. It was really low, so it was easy.



Art by Ruth

Twice a week the farm students have the privilege to have two wonderful art classes. These classes are taught by Priscilla Marshall, a great artist and an incredibly kind and caring person. In these classes we do a variety of things from sketching the animals to making plaster masks. These hours give the students a chance to unwind and learn how to cultivate our creativity.

Our first project this year was to sketch, research and write about the weeds in our garden. Each of us chose a weed from our bed and sketched it. Then we identified and researched it. We made two poster boards full of beautiful illustrations. We also made separate boards of plants that are poisonous to goats.

Closer to Halloween we made plaster masks. First we pressed tinfoil onto our faces. We then put strips of plaster onto the tinfoil. The next day we painted the masks. This was when we started to use our creativity. Some of us turned our masks into animals, people, or just a pretty design.

When we are not doing a project, we practice sketching. We sketch the goats and the chickens. Priscilla teaches us to observe, observe, observe. We learn how to draw depths and shadows, and to pay attention to where the light is coming from.



Creative Writing by Jasper

At Millstream Farm we love telling stories, and we love sharing those stories in the form of writing. Creative writing at Millstream is an amazing experience. We recently wrote scary stories for Halloween that we read aloud in the dark hayloft. Sitting in the hayloft you get a real sense of community– the cats roaming about, the chickens squawking, the goats banging their hooves against their fence, and the voices of your classmates either reading a story with everyone else listening or talking and having fun between stories.

Creative writing gives me freedom, the freedom of expression, and the freedom of creativity. You step into creative writing and your mind races with so many ideas. There are no bad ideas, and at Millstream we're working to make every writer a great writer. In our first story, for Halloween, we had to perform "show don't tell." An example from my story of this concept is: "Sean was as hot headed as the sun." In "show don't tell," the point is to use descriptive language instead of stating facts. Descriptive language techniques include similes, metaphors, and personification. The example taken from my story is a simile, meaning it compares two things to each other using the word "as." Creative writing at Millstream Farm is an experience that you remember forever.

Micro-Economy by Dillon

At Millstream we students run a business with some help from the teacher, Pape, who also does creative writing and literature. In a class called micro-e, which stands for micro economy, we harvest, plant, plan, sell, make stuff, and more. Over the past two months I have learned how to make grape jelly from a wild grape bush across the street. I have dehydrated kale, made hot sauce, extracted and bottled raw honey, and pickled multiple things. Micro-e is a fun way to learn how to run a business and have fun while doing it. Micro-e is four times a week in the afternoon. So far, we have had two sales this year, one at the main campus and one at the farm. Some of the money we make from the sales is to pay for the supplies for lunches we make. I have worked at one of the sales before. It's a good way to learn how to talk to customers. To run it we had shifts of one hour each.



Some of the most popular things people buy are our grape jelly, eggs, and honey.



Spanish In Our School by Kosi

En nuestra escuela, nos importa aprender el español. Lo aprendemos en grupos pequeños según nuestro nivel para que todos tengamos una clase donde podemos tener éxito.

Me gusta aprender español porque es divertido aprender un idioma nuevo, pero también es importante que todos aprendan un idioma. Me gusta la idea de poder hablar en un idioma diferente, poder hablar con otras personas que no hablen inglés. Acabo de aprender todos los "verb tenses" en el subjuntivo y el indicativo. Ahora, solo necesito mejorar mi vocabulario. Voy a leer literatura con mi grupo, comenzando con la novela *La casa en la calle Mango* por Sandra Cisneros.

Spanish In Our School

In our school, we care about learning Spanish. We learn Spanish in small groups according to our level in order for us to have a class where we can be successful. I like learning Spanish because it's fun to learn a new language, but it's important to learn one as well. I like the idea of being able to speak in a different language and to be able to speak with other people that don't speak English. I just finished learning all the verb tenses in both the subjunctive and indicative moods. Now, I can speak with all the tenses, and I only need to improve my vocabulary. In order to improve my vocabulary, I'm going to read literature with my group, starting with *House on Mango Street*, by Sandra Cisneros.

Community Lunch by Luca, food critic.

On Wednesdays, six students spend two hours preparing lunch for the whole class, using ingredients we get from our own farm. Our four community lunches that we made in September cost only \$69.25 all together, with an average price per community lunch of \$17.31. That is \$0.78 per meal.



I sat down at the long table with all my fellow students on September 7, 2023 after I had just finished making and cooking corn tortillas for almost two hours. For lunch, my cooking group (Jasper, Piper,

Abbie, Kylie, Harrison.) made rice and beans, tomato salsa, corn tortillas, and kale coleslaw. It was delicious. I then realized that I was going to cook meals for three more weeks. In those three weeks, we made pumpkin curry with chickpeas, flatbreads, and pesto pasta.

Now we take a trip to the third week of October. I was not on the cooking group that month but when I got outside, it was the most incredible meal I had ever seen. There were scrambled eggs, pancakes, home fries with chives, salami, and apple cider.



The eggs were very creamy and seasoned to perfection. The pancakes looked great with nice uniform edges. Alas, I am very allergic to gluten, but I had my own pancakes made with ingredients I had brought from home. My pancakes were a little grainy, but that didn't stop me from putting on loads of maple syrup.

I would recommend adding chives if you make home fries. The potatoes were seasoned well and were very crispy. The salami was brought back from Caren's trip to Italy. It was a little hard to chew but the flavor was there. And the apple cider was delectable. 5 stars.

Resurrecting the Old Cider Press by Eli

When I arrived at the farm a year ago, I noticed an old apple press sitting in the corner of the barn. Just recently I decided to take out that apple press and get it working again. It was so dusty and rusty that it took an entire week to scrub it clean. After that, we bought 20 pounds of apples for the great price of eight dollars. I looked up directions on how to use an apple press and realized that we had to grind up every apple that we were going to press. Pape found a small apple grinder in the cabinet, but we had to cut the apples into small pieces to fit them in the grinder which was taking over an hour. I



was amazed when I suddenly came across the original apple grinder. Using that, we could grind up all the apples in minutes instead of hours. I quickly dragged it outside with the help of another student but at that point all the apples were already ground.

We dumped the apple pulp into two mesh bags and put them in the apple press. Just from the weight of the pressing board on top, half of the juice

came out. Then we started spinning the top piece, pressing the apples down with a lot of force. We squeezed the pulp until there was nothing left, took out the mesh bags, and sprayed down the apple press. We ended up with almost two gallons of cider. The cider tasted great because it was so fresh. I had never had such good cider in my life.



Cats by Sandrine

Millstream Farm just got a new cat and her kitten for the barn. We got them from an animal shelter run by a woman who knew that the mama cat was already a barn cat and that she would teach her baby to hunt. We got the cats to help keep away the rodents that have been a problem since Billie, the old barn cat, died. The cats came with the names Sweet Pete and Paul Bunyan, but now they are Clover and Oliver. Clover has had her shots and been neutered. Oliver had his

vaccinations and will be spayed when he is four pounds. He has an appointment in December. We let them roam freely so they can catch rodents and they have done a good job keeping them away -- and not just Clover. Oliver is a great hunter, too. He also chases ping pong balls all over the barn. We gave both cats some of the catnip we grow and sell -- they liked it!



New Hens by Kylie

In early September, we adopted ten young brown hens from a farmer who fell off his tractor and couldn't take care of them. We all got on the Montessori bus to collect the chickens, and we partnered up and put one chicken into a bag each and brought them back to the farm in our laps on the bus. We made one of the old stalls into a coop for now. In the spring, we are planning to build an outdoor

area, a caged space where they can get sun and eat grass and insects. We call the new hens "the middle coop" because we already have a front coop and a back coop. The middle coop produces about seven eggs a day, which is out-performing the front coop, which is three years old and only producing about 1-3 eggs per day, and the back coop, which produces usually three a day. One of the chickens recently went missing because we left the door open.





Agroforestry by Stella Mae

At Millstream Farm, a flourishing agricultural system is one of the fundamental resources in the entire community. If the farm is devoid of a strong agricultural system, then the entire balance of the farm is destabilized. My fellow student Fred and I have conducted significant research, specifically on the topic of the wellbeing of the flora and fauna located in the region of Millstream and what crops we might be able to grow in the woods. One can conclude that one must commit to

the practices of maintaining the health of the woods and perhaps of nurturing Bur Oak, Sweetgum, Pecan, and Cucumber trees at Millstream. In the curriculum of Food, Land, and People, we absorb rich knowledge following topics of newest approaches to agriculture but also current events, social structures, and most notably, how to maintain the health of the local specimens.

Beekeeping by Harrison

In these past months, we have done a lot of fabulous work with the bees. Beekeeping is an elaborate process that involves suiting up in protective hats, gloves, veils, and full-body suits to get in close with the bees without getting stung. We opened up the hives, and all the bees started to buzz at one time. I had more than 20 bees on me! We fed them sugar water to supplement the nectar and pollen that are getting scarce at this time of year, and we removed the honey frames from the hive. One day, on Friday the 13th, we harvested the honey. We took turns with a big knife or a steaming hot scraper to cut off the wax caps on the honeycomb. Then we put the frames with uncapped honeycomb into a big spinner, which would spin for about ten minutes, drawing honey out of the comb. The honey would then slowly seep into a big bucket with a cloth that would filter the impurities from the honey after about an hour and a half. After we started to bottle the one-pound honey bottles and the half-pound honey bottles, we labeled them. It was a great experience.





Goat Breeding by Piper

Goat breeding is an essential component of Millstream Farm because, without kids, the mother goats don't lactate in the spring, and we would have no goat milk. Milk is important to our community because we use it to make dairy products to eat as snacks, and for our weekly community lunches. Milk is important to our micro-economy because we use it to make goat milk soap. Around September is the time when goats start ovulating or go into heat, so we are constantly watching and waiting for the different signs of them being in heat. Finally, once that time arrives, we load our goats onto the bus and bring them to the breeding farm where they do their thing. Once they have finished, we load them back onto the bus and hope that we will have babies in the spring.

Last Thursday we noticed that Rosebud was in heat, so we all abandoned class and piled into the bus with the goat slowly following. After a twenty-minute bus ride to Hops and Lops Farm, we arrived only to find that Rosebud was probably not in heat. We tried to see if she would possibly show signs of heat after seeing the male but unfortunately, she did not. We are now going to have to repeat this process the next time she ovulates.

Gym by Maya

We played half-field games of soccer in gym class at the beginning of the year in three-by-three configurations. Next, we practiced for a physical fitness exam before playing flag football. After two gym classes of flag football, we switched to capture the flag. Everyone enjoyed the capture the flag. In gym, we are free to move and express ourselves physically. For once, we don't have to worry about staying still and sitting in our chair; instead, we are encouraged to move. As we leap through the air to catch a football or sprint across the line in capture the flag, and as we celebrate with our team, we forget about everything else.





Sheep by Abbie

Unfortunately, our two sheep, Snoopy and Casper, have died after an overnight attack by a predator. We do not know a hundred percent what animal attacked them, but our vet guessed it was a coyote. Casper was found dead in the morning during barn chores, and Snoopy was nowhere to be seen. We set out on a search across

the hay field for an hour, hoping for the best. Eventually, when we were marching back, thinking the worst, Pape thought she should just check down the hill behind the compost. As I was walking up with my search party behind me, heads bowed thinking Snoopy had been dragged off, our walkie-talkies clicked on. Pape said she found Snoopy and the sheep was alive. We rushed over to her and helped Snoopy get up the hill. She had bite wounds that I flushed out with the help of other worried students. Unfortunately, Snoopy started going downhill rapidly, and we called an emergency community meeting to discuss what was the best thing to do. We made the humane decision to put her to sleep, which was supported by the vet. She died in her stall, lovingly stroked by the students. That afternoon, several students sat in the sheep stall to write poems, draw, and share stories about Snoopy and Casper.

Snoopy and Casper were a huge part of our farm experience, whether it was shearing, feeding, mucking, or taking them for walks. The sheep have been at Millstream Farm for 16 years, born in 2007 and adopted by us after their mother died. They were scared and skittish orphaned lambs, but despite their character, they were still adopted. Throughout those 16 years, they have had multiple shearings, where new and old students use the wool to learn the process of cleaning and transforming it into yarn for knitting and felting. On the farm, there are good and bad days, but we learn a lot from our experiences with the animals, even if it's sad.

Along the Way by Aiden

One of my favorite things at Millstream Farm is exploring in the woods. One of my favorite days at the farm was when we set off to the woods to look for an abandoned road. This old road was used by the colonists to travel from Hartford all the way to Albany, NY. We found the road near the town recreational fields at Brown's Corner, where we cut into the woods and walked along the old road through the Millstream property. Our guide was a forester from the Connecticut DEEP. We went with him to inventory trees and to learn how to



best use trees and forests at Millstream. I wasn't really interested at first until we found bones, tools, random trash, and lost items. I was most excited to find the bear skull. After we inventoried the trees and discussed possibilities for agroforestry, we got back by walking through a very cold river.



FLP Activism at MSGH's Millstream Adolescent Program: A designated time of study for contributing to our greater community and environment by Riley

Every Wednesday at the Millstream adolescent farm, our community splits into two groups from 10:00-12:00. One group spends the two hours in the kitchen, preparing community lunch. The remaining twelve students spend the time in a class called FLP (food, land, and people) activism working on semi long-term projects relating to the food, land, and people (all of which are interconnected) of our greater community.

In the first weeks of school, some of us had immediate inspiration for projects, while others took some time brainstorming and generating motivation. So far, the FLP class has been divided into five ongoing projects, each with students from all groups, so that when projects lose members to the cooking crew, there are fresh minds, eager to take over.

So far projects have included: 1) a goat browsing service in which students are researching how we could rent out our goats to browse down unwanted vegetation; 2) how and with what fish we could stock our pond; 3) the launch of a community compost service; 4) the replacement of a messy, overgrown area with a pollinator garden, and 5) an in-depth research of agroforestry to make use of all the forest land on Millstream's property. Students have spent class time doing broad research, collecting data specific to our campus, and in some cases, marketing and launching services for projects in which development stages have been completed.

The River by Beckett

I love the Nepaug River at Millstream. I love nature and I really like putting my waders on because it feels good when I'm in the water. I like to catch crawfish, and it is enjoyable swimming in the river and the pond with my friends. It is amusing to us and it also teaches us the beauty of nature and



how to catch crawfish. We also tested the water quality and collected the microorganisms at the bottom of the food chain and looked at them under a microscope. We also identified microorganisms, which gave us data about water quality. We also tested the soil with two experts, and I used their manual drill, an auger, to test the soil under us and see if it is gritty, silty, or soft like clay.



