

YOUR GUIDE TO THE LOCAL GOOD LIFE

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FOR THE HAPPINESS OF A CHILD

AT THE SAME FINISH LINE

BY A.E.BAYNE



Meagn Mason and Students Were Visited by Musician
Laura Shepherd (right)

For many, the words “school,” “classroom,” and “teacher” evoke vivid images from our collective consciousness of students being led through curriculum - sometimes engaging, at other times soporific - but always based on the same data driven statistics of age, grade, and test scores. While many programs, including some in public schools, have moved away from this traditional model, one remains nonpareil in the school reform movement: the Montessori Method. Fredericksburg does have a variety of Montessori schools from which to choose, but **Megan Mason** saw a need for a small program that gives families the opportunity to ease pre-kindergarten and kindergarten aged children into a learning environment. She hired two adult assistants, **Taylor Pointdexter** and **Lauren McGrath**, and opened **Village Montessori of Fredericksburg** this year.

Offering a class ratio of one certified teacher and an assistant to ten children, Village Montessori provides a level of support not found in many early education classrooms, or even in other Montessori programs. Typically, even Montessori schools support between 15 to 20 students per class, but Mason feels like she has found a niche for children who find comfort in a more personalized setting. She says, “It’s a wonderful foundation. Education is not one-size-fits-all; some kids do very well in public school, while other do a lot better in a Montessori setting because they work better at their own pace. Even if they continue into

public education, the hands-on learning and self-paced environment sets them up for a strong educational future. They develop so much from having the freedom to follow their curiosity, which they might not get in a traditional classroom.”

Mason describes her program as one of self-directed exploration that caters to each child’s individual intuition and interests. To accomplish this, she calls on members of the local community to assist in showing students what the wider world has to offer. Mason describes units of study from this year, “We’ve learned all kinds of fun things. We had a unit on music where local musicians came in and shared their talents and allowed students to look at and play their instruments. Now we have an ongoing music program. Art is a part of the everyday curriculum, so we visited LibertyTown and went to one of **Bill Harris’** classes. Students had the opportunity to mix paint, brush it on the canvass, and ask questions. Currently, we are working on a unit showing how all the different jobs in a community work together to make it strong. A police officer came to visit, and we will take field trips to the fire station and grocery store.” Through these real-world interactions, Mason’s students experience and learn on their own terms.

Mason explains that even adults never stop learning. She takes something away from time spent with her “kiddos,” including lessons on patience and joy. “One thing I get a dose of every day is to take things less seriously. As adults, we

have a tendency to let things eat away at us. Kids can throw it off when something doesn’t go right. Everything is so new to them; you can see it in their faces, a whole new world... There is such joy in that.”

Just as **Maria Montessori** said that education can be tested by the happiness of the child, Mason shares this, “I absolutely love the significance it places on the individual and how it demonstrates that your education can and should meet you where you are. Montessori shows that we don’t all have to be on the same page at the same time, but we can all come out at the same finish line.”

For more information about Village Montessori of Fredericksburg, contact Mason through her website at <http://www.villagemontessorifredericksburg.net/index.html>

A.E. Bayne is a teacher and writer who has lived and worked in Fredericksburg for 14 years.

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