Ask an adolescent to describe her needs, and you might hear a litany of i’s: iPad, iPhone, iTouch, and iMac. The i’s have it, it seems. But, if you can convince the adolescent to move beyond the thin veneer of popular technology to a deeper place, a more heartfelt place, you might hear her say she needs “concern” or “support” or “trust”.

Dr. Montessori said that adolescents need, “protection during the time of the physical transition,” and “an understanding of the society which he is about to enter to play his part as a man.” She described adolescence as a sensitive period for the development of “noble characteristics,” namely social justice and personal dignity. She said that
adolescents display a delicate nature. People often criticize teenagers for being lazy and disrespectful. Middle school teachers are either hailed as having the patience of Job, or ridiculed as having a sadistic desire for punishment!

I see these teens very differently. I see students struggling to avoid the distractions of our culture so they can go about the work of development. We must prepare an environment to support this struggle.

Those who have embarked upon the Montessori Journey at Post Oak have noticed that the prepared environment of the Infant Community includes materials evoking language and opportunities for developing physical independence; have seen that the prepared environment of the Primary community includes materials for developing practical life skills; and realize that the Elementary prepared environment utilizes the imagination of the six-to-12-year-old to open the doors of history, science and culture, and affords the child room to explore morality within the context of society.

But how can we prepare an environment for the adolescent whose worldview has shifted, and who must all at once understand himself and the world? In Dr. Montessori’s words, this environment should be simple, characterized by “an open-air life, individual care, and a non-toxic diet.” She maintained that “during the difficult time of adolescence it is helpful to leave the accustomed environment of the family in the town and go to quiet surroundings in the country, close to nature.” As a result, Post Oak Middle School heads to Blackwood Land Institute in Hempstead, Texas, twice each year. Blackwood has been prepared by nature herself for the development of our Erdkinder (children of the land).

- “Aren’t you happy we’re going to Blackwood today, Ms. Gray?”
- “Can you believe this is the last time I’ll come to Blackwood, Ms. Gray?”
- “Did you see how wonderful the chicken coop looks now, Ms. Gray?”
- “Ms. Gray, don’t you agree that the days have been long, but our week has been short?”

As I heard these questions this past week, I could do nothing but smile and nod. Speaking would have brought tears of unspeakable pleasure as I observed the awakening of such strong, confident, capable young people. I am grateful to Blackwood for receiving the Erdkinder and providing ever-changing modes for their development. My gratitude is echoed by their own. Please read the words of some of the Middle School students as they reflect on what went well at Blackwood this week:

“I loved having the opportunity to reconnect with nature in the serene peaceful forests.”

“It’s a nice way to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city.”

“We learned so much about agriculture and cooperating with our fellow classmates.”

“I know that Blackwood is helping to save our Earth slowly but surely.”

“The work was tough, but extremely rewarding.”

“I really like how the fieldwork changed from day to day.”

“It was very nice to take a break and go out into nature.”

“In the future, I hope that more people will get to experience Blackwood because it is truly one of a kind.”

Not everyone is at liberty to “experience Blackwood,” but we can all make a conscious decision to heed the heartfelt voice of the Erdkinder. This voice urges us to give adolescents more time to unplug from technology and to immerse themselves in natural surroundings. This voice urges us to give teenagers more opportunities to understand how individual actions collectively affect our world’s natural resources. We are reminded that every action of the teenager is purposeful and necessary to prepare the adolescent for adult society. We do the teenager and ourselves a disservice if we allow his exterior to convince us that the future is lost. On the contrary, the teenager is poised to enter the world and take on all its issues.

Consider the last instance when a teenager revealed his inner self to you. Did you allow preconceived notions to distort his message? Or did you allow yourself to see him clearly, through a lens cultivated by both a recognition of the seriousness of his work, and a desire to aid his development? Now, more than ever, it is essential that we see the true potential of the adolescent. It is only through our clear vision that he may develop his own.

For recent photos of Blackwood, see pgs. 8–9
Get your opera tickets!

Get your tickets now for the 2010 production of the opera *Pearl* performed by the students of The Post Oak School! *Pearl* will be performed Saturday, April 24, at 7:00 pm at Episcopal High School in Underwood Theatre.

Tickets are $10 each for children and adults and are available for purchase on the website. Online purchasing ends on Thursday, April 22, after which time you can only purchase tickets at the door for $15 each. Tickets purchased online can only be retrieved the night of the opera at the will-call table.

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Middle School book corner

*Zlata’s Diary*, by Zlata Filipović, is the real-life diary of an 11-year-old girl who is living her day-to-day life during the Bosnian-Herzegovinan conflict. This book portrays what life is like during a war. It describes some of her day-to-day struggles, like the method with which she gets her education and how she manages to keep in touch with her friends who have evacuated the city. This novel is a window into the life of a child who is struggling to hold onto the order of her former life in a war zone. The novel is repetitive sometimes, but overall I believe that it is a decent tale of fascinating positions.

— Grade 7

*The Good Earth*, by Pearl S. Buck, is a fictional story about a Chinese farmer named Wang Lung. *The Good Earth* is about Wang Lung’s life as he tells his troubles and successions in life. Wang Lung starts as a farmer working his way through life. Through the novel, he ascends from being a poor farmer to being the town’s richest member of the nobility. Throughout his long life, he experiences a lot, including famine, drought, fights, floods, and the challenge of leaving his home.

*The Good Earth* is an interesting book because of the facts about Chinese farmers in a time when the Western influence was reaching China but many inhabitants of the country were trying to hang onto their old traditions and customs. The book was a wonderful piece of literature because the writer uses the power of description to captivate the reader and to keep the story fresh and exciting, yet it is still a retrospective tale that is deeply human. I really enjoyed the book and I learned a lot.

— Grade 7

Wear your opera t-shirt day!

Friday, April 23, wear your opera t-shirt at school and show your excitement for *Pearl*!
Spring Signing Day
Bearkats
April 28, 2010

Sign up for the 2010-11 sports seasons!

Students currently in grades 5, 6, & 7: join us on April 28 between 11:30 am–1:00 pm in the gym for pizza and to learn more.

Eat. Sign. Play.
SEA CURRENTS

“We are sent by the oyster king,
stay away, stay away
With our voices hear us sing,
stay away, stay away”

SUNFISH GIRLS

“Swimming along in the river’s blue water
Playmates to Pearl, our dear goddess’ daughter.”

SUNFISH BOYS

“Sunfish, sunfish, bright sunny sunfish
Funfish, funfish, plenty of funfish.”
Lower Elementary students in Orly Kluk's class embarked on a camping trip March 26. The students and their families camped in Brazos Bend State Park, visited the George Observatory, participated in a simulation of a space flight, and performed their class play “Spaced Out” in an outdoor theatre.

**Grade 1**

I went on a camping trip and I had lots of fun. I rode my bicycle to the observatory and pretended to be an astronaut. I was in a play called “Spaced Out.” I was the Greek astronomer Hipparcous in the play. I liked the play because my whole class was in it. I liked the play because I was the first person in my class to speak. I liked playing on the playground. I climbed up a crooked tree. It was fun!

**Grade 2**

My favorite thing about the camping trip was being Sally Ride in my play because it was a terrific privilege to play her. She was the first woman astronaut to be in space and I spoke before every song. I got to learn about her and she is alive today. I loved the mission control pretend flight to the moon because I was Life Support. My job was to make sure that everything was safe to be in space. I loved being at the camping trip because I got to see people, and I got to interact with my friends’ parents and families.

Friday, March 26, after school we went on a camping trip for two nights at Brazos Bend State Park. My favorite things about the camping trip were setting up tents, playing with my friends, dinner, s’mores, and performing our play, “Spaced Out.” Mission Control Simulation Space Flight was fun because I had the job of communication with my friend Iizzie. We had to make sure everything was ok and talk to Mission Control on a microphone and then tell them how things were going. That night, we went to the George Observatory and we saw the bottom of the moon on a huge telescope. It was really cool! We also saw a satellite and star maps. We saw the Big Dipper, but I could not see it because it does not look like a spoon to me. Then we went back to the campsite and had dinner and s’mores. On Sunday, we had to go. We brought our own breakfast and then it was time to take down the tents and go home. The whole time was really fun.

I liked the camp out because we got to make s’mores and I got white chocolate in mine. We got to sleep in tents and my pillow was very comfy. We got to go to the George Observatory and I got to go in the big telescope and see the moon. It looked like it was a piece of glass and a baseball had smashed into it. We also got to go on a Simulated Space Mission to the moon because nobody had gone to the moon in 40 years. We got to sing campfire songs like “Down by the Bay.” We also got to go on many nature hikes and find many animals. I got to play with all my friends. My favorite thing that we did was perform our play, “Spaced Out.”
Middle School scenes from
Blackwood Land Institute
1. Say cheese! Class photos were this week.
2. Admission Director Vivian Blum does her practice teaching for her AMI Primary diploma, which she will complete this summer.
3. Thorough hand washing.
4. Getting to know South America with the puzzle maps.
5. The itsy-bitsy spider went up the water spout.
6. Corn, basket, ball, nest, and clown with the moveable alphabet.
The upcoming MS 150!

By Bev Peters, Parent and Team Captain

It was almost a year ago when Post Oak alumni parent Manuel Posada asked if I would be willing to be the team captain this year for the Post Oak Pedallers. Despite my initial hesitation (I wasn’t a rider—how would I know what to do?), I decided I would take on the challenge, especially to support my daughters.

So here we are just a few days from the ride. Everyone is prepared and it has been amazing to watch the growth of the kids, both interior and exterior. They are all definitely stronger with muscles that can take them up the many hills we’ve encountered. More amazing, though, is the constant belief in themselves and support of their classmates. If someone reaches the top of an especially challenging hill before another, they stop to encourage those behind them. If one person has to stop by the side of the road, everyone stops to make sure they’re alright. We now know we will all make it to Austin, but it will be as a group, not as individuals.

Last week I was riding with Middle Schooler and she said to me, “When I see those hills in front of me they look like they are 90 degrees, and I think I’ll never make it. Then I start riding on it and it’s not so bad.” We talked about how many times we had thought we’d have to quit, and somehow kept going. I then asked her if that was a little bit like life—it looks so challenging, but when you’re in it it’s not so bad. We both agreed it was a good analogy. I especially think of who are going on to high school and how those beliefs of perseverance and optimism are so important to their success.

None of this would have occurred without the parents. They’ve driven the support vehicle, supplied food and gear and a variety of other things. The Posada family, especially Manuel, has always been there to help with anything, reminding me of what needs to happen next. Bob and Vicki Harvey, as well as , invited us to spend the night in their beautiful ranch and fed us well during our two-day ride in Brenham last weekend. To all these people a big THANK YOU.

So on to Austin it is!

Volunteers needed for the opera!

I only have an hour, would that be helpful?
I only have time to do stuff at home, would that work? YES!

Any and all help is appreciated especially during Opera Week (April 19–24).

Please contact the opera chairs:
Munira Jannmohamed
Claudia Rojas-Jimenez

Even if you have only an hour, please offer your help.
CALENDAR
For more, visit www.postoakschool.org

APRIL 18–24

Mon-Sat
04/19-24
Opera Week

Wed-Thu
04/21-22
High school?— Discussion groups with School Consultant J. Littleford

Wed
04/21
First Day of Ridvan

Thu
04/22
Earth Day

Fri
04/23
Wear your Opera T-Shirt Day!

Sat
04/24
Pearl
Post Oak Opera
7:00 pm at EHS

APRIL 25–MAY 1

Tues
04/27
Leadership Circle Reception

Wed
04/28
Bearkats Spring Signing Day for the 2010-11 sports seasons 11:30 am–1:00 pm

Fri
04/30
Teacher In-Service Day
Classes not in session; only students with expanded-year contracts attend

Welcome to Hollis & William Bokhout!

The Bokouts are directing and choreographing Pearl. They will be around campus next week working with the students to prepare for the performance on Saturday.

ABOUT THE WEEKLY POST

The Weekly Post appears on most Fridays of the regular school year. You can receive a printed copy from your oldest child, or a PDF version online.

Submit letters, articles, or photos in electronic form by 5 pm on the Tuesday before publication to Communications Coordinator Shannon Neufeld (shannonneufeld@postoakschool.org).

THE POST OAK SCHOOL: founded in 1963 and accredited by both the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) and the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS)

4600 Bissonnet, Bellaire, Texas 77401 / Telephone: 713-661-6688 / Fax: 713-661-4959 / www.postoakschool.org

NOTICE BOARD

The Post Oak High School?
Join a discussion session.

Responding to requests from Post Oak parents and others, our Board of Trustees is exploring the feasibility of creating a Post Oak High School. A series of parent meetings April 21-22 will help determine whether it happens. Please register for one now online: www.PostOakHighSchool.org

Barbara Hacker’s green tips of the week
Kid-tested, parent approved. Check out www.healthytoys.org and shop smart.

GREEN glossary
Phthalates: A family of compounds that make plastics soft and flexible and are also commonly found in personal-care products. Phthalates wreak havoc on the liver, kidneys, lungs, and endocrine system; studies have linked them to asthma and allergies in children, and to certain types of birth defects in male infants due to prenatal exposure. Problems start at phthalate levels below those found in the bodies of one-quarter of American women, according to a survey by the Centers for Disease Control.

Keep track of school events with our online calendar—or download a fresh copy of the school’s printed calendar, all at http://www.postoakschool.org