They are explorers, and activists, artists, entrepreneurs, educators, farmers – even mayors.

And they have big ideas for a better world.

That was the lead-in to the story “30 under 30” in a recent Christian Science Monitor and it caught my eye. This description sounds like a combination of Post Oak’s “Portrait of a Graduate” and “The Montessori Mafia,” one of a series of articles identifying a disproportionate number of Montessori alums who are creative and entrepreneurial leaders in business, technology and the arts.

So I read “30 under 30” just to see if I knew anyone. Thirty people under thirty years old with big ideas for a better world. How many of them were Montessori children? It was an international group;
seventeen grew up and went to school in the USA. Imagine my surprise that on first reading I could identify two as former Montessori students: Alisa Weilerstein and Ronan Farrow. Alisa Weilerstein is a concert cellist, sometimes called “the young Yo Yo Ma.” She recently won a MacArthur Foundation “genius grant.” She began playing the cello at age four and first performed with the Cleveland Orchestra at age thirteen. Here is a video of Weilerstein performing at the White House two years ago with the violinist Joshua Bell, who is himself another Montessori alum. (http://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/joshua-bell-awadagin-pratt-and-alisa-weilerstein-perform-white-house-8-8)

Ronan Farrow went straight from Montessori school to Bard College at age eleven. He graduated from Yale Law School at 19 and now, at 22, he is a special advisor to Secretary of State Clinton and is Director of the State Department’s Office of Global Youth Issues. He was recently awarded a Rhodes Scholarship. Weilerstein and Farrow are extraordinary. Yet as Peter Sims asked in the pages of The Wall Street Journal, “Is there something going on here? Is there something about the Montessori approach that nurtures creativity and inventiveness that we can all learn from?”

He went on to say, “the Montessori educational approach might be the surest route to joining the creative elite, which are so overrepresented by the school’s alumni that one might suspect a Montessori Mafia.”

So what is it about the Montessori approach that nurtures creativity and inventiveness?

This week I heard from two Post Oak parents about Brené Brown, a research professor at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work. She connects creativity and innovation to three personal characteristics: vulnerability, authenticity, and courage. How do we develop those characteristics? It begins with a willingness to be wrong – to accept that we are imperfect. Dr. Montessori said that children must develop a friendly relationship with error. When you are learning something new, you are going to make mistakes, you’re going to demonstrate poor performance. But if you keep practicing, you get better and better.

Do you embrace that attitude? Or does it scare you? Do you celebrate your errors, or do you attempt to bury them in the sand?

Here is an excerpt from Brené Brown’s article “Want to be happy? Stop trying to be perfect:”

The quest for perfection is exhausting and unrelenting, but as hard as we try, we can’t turn off the tapes that fill our heads with messages like “Never good enough” and “What will people think?”

Why, when we know that there’s no such thing as perfect, do most of us spend an incredible amount of time and energy trying to be everything to everyone? Is it that we really admire perfection? No – the truth is that we are actually drawn to people who are real and down-to-earth. We love authenticity and we know that life is messy and imperfect.

We get sucked into perfection for one very simple reason: We believe perfection will protect us. Perfectionism is the belief that if we live perfect, look perfect, and act perfect, we can minimize or avoid the pain of blame, judgment, and shame.

We all need to feel worthy of love and belonging, and our worthiness is on the line when we feel like we are never enough (you can fill in the blank: thin, beautiful, smart, extraordinary, talented, popular, promoted, admired, accomplished).

Perfectionism is not the same thing as striving to be our best. Perfectionism is not about healthy achievement and growth; it’s a shield. Perfectionism is a 20-ton shield that we lug around thinking it will protect us when, in fact, it’s the thing that’s really preventing us from being seen and taking flight.

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Yes! Through your generous contributions, the Post Oak Fund is at $247,000 with only $3000 to go to reach our financial goal! Please send in matching gift forms if those are available at your work.

“龍年快樂 long-nian-kuai-le!”
Happy New Year of the Dragon!

“恭喜发财 gong-xi-fa-cai!”
Wish you good prosperity!

The NIHAOMA Chinese class at The Post Oak School celebrated the Chinese New Year of the Dragon. Students made a book of the New Year, learned the meanings of traditional symbols like the dragon, sang the Chinese New Year song, and received a hong-bao, the lucky money for children!

–Jiayao Pang
Co-founder of NIHAOMA Chinese
Moon Maiden Mania

Mania can be described as obsession, desire, love, craze, passion, and enthusiasm. This captures the mood around the school and the building excitement for our upcoming performance. Opera Week begins Monday, January 30 when final preparations for The Moon Maiden will take place. Everyone is anticipating a wonderful night on Friday, February 3 at 7:00 pm in the beautiful Dunham Theater on the Houston Baptist University campus. Doors open at 6:30 pm to the general public and all cast members are asked to be at HBU no later than 5:45 pm the night of the performance, dressed in full costumes; crew arrival times vary and will be announced. Please remember to get your tickets, either online or at the front desk. Online ticket buyers can exchange your confirmation for paper tickets at the front desk. Everyone attending the performance MUST have a ticket to be seated. No ticket is needed for Post Oak Elementary Students (1st – 6th grade).

Directions and a map are on the back of each ticket. The cost is $15* each pre-sale or $20 at the door. You won’t want to miss this production!

Performance DVDs are also on sale. You can order yours now from Moving Memories Video at www.mmvideo.biz/opera or purchase at the front desk by check (made out to Moving Memories Video). The cost is $35 and these professional DVDs will give you long lasting memories of this beautiful performance.

Choreography and staging will begin Opera Week under the direction of William and Hollis Bokhout from Children’s Opera Workshop. Costume fittings are well underway and rehearsals will continue next week.

This performance will be professionally recorded and we request that you avoid flash photography, and also take fidgety children to the lobby. Because this is a community effort, Post Oak requests that no flowers be given to children performing at HBU. We ask that you celebrate with your children privately. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Many long hours have gone into the planning and execution of this opera and we thank everyone who has helped make this vision a reality. Special thanks to all the children who submitted artwork for our beautiful posters, tickets, and T-shirts. One week and counting... see you on February 3!

—Amy Kirchner, Opera Marketing

Get Your Tickets

Tickets can be ordered via a link on the homepage. Avoid the line at will-call on Opera night and bring your receipt to the Post Oak front desk to collect your paper tickets or buy directly at the front desk.

OPERA WEEK IS NEXT WEEK!

PERFORMANCE
February 3, 2012 at 7 pm
Houston Baptist University, Dunham Theater
7502 Fondren Road

*The opera is a budgeted expense for Post Oak, it is not a school fundraiser. Additional funds raised by ticket prices go to offset the difference between the budgeted amount and the full cost of the opera. Having to change venues this year increased our expenses and resulted in an increase in ticket prices to $15.
Three Generations Strong

All of us at Post Oak feel a sense of family community and participation. For parent Jessica Gregg, family participation is real as she works with her mother, Valle Caldwell, and grandmother, Arlene Elmendorf, on opera costume designs. Family talent is one of the most evident parts of our Post Oak Community and we are so pleased to have three generations working together. Our beautiful costume designs are under the direction of Michelle Munn, Gina Li, and their hard-working committee.
I have a lot of memories from my time at Post Oak. Some of them are whimsical and joy-filled, like climbing the mast of the old wooden pirate ship that used to sit beached in a sand pit in the playground. Some of them are mysterious, even spiritual, like the middle school field trip we took to a Native American sweat lodge. And some of them are difficult and somber, like the unexpected death of a classmate’s father. None of them, however, are strictly academic. They’re all profoundly experiential.

Because my younger brother went to St. John’s, I was aware from a young age that education was being done differently at Post Oak versus other schools. The specific implications of that difference didn’t really hit me until I arrived at Episcopal for my first day of high school. Switching classrooms every hour was an adjustment, and the constantly rotating bevy of people in those classes took some getting used to as well.

Beyond the social change of going from a class of eight students to one of 150, I found myself completely prepared for the academic rigors of a traditional high school. The loose, conversational nature of lessons at Post Oak gave me the confidence and urge to participate often in class discussions in high school. The close bonds I developed with my teachers at Post Oak inspired me to try and create the same sort of relationships with my teachers at EHS. I’d often drop into various classrooms after school to ask teachers specific questions or further discuss a topic touched on in class that day. I was fortunate enough to create several relationships with teachers at EHS that have carried through college and into my adult life.

As far as college goes, the most important value Montessori imparted me with was self-motivation. The independence one is given in college can lead to a lot of distractions, sometimes at the peril of one’s GPA. I can recall various research papers assigned during college that had prompts as wide-open as the Grand Canyon. Discussing the prompts with other classmates, I got a real sense of panic from them with regard to the vague direction given by the professor. This always puzzled me because vague or indirect prompts never threw me; rather, I quite enjoyed them. Thinking back on this now, I realize my love for digging into research and finding the topics that interest me harkens back to my middle school days at Post Oak. Von Niezgoda assigned us a research paper in the 7th grade with the instructions to write 10 pages on basically any historical topic we wanted. It was intimidating for a 13 year old to have that freedom of choice, but having met that challenge then allowed me to meet those challenges with ease in college.

This powerful self-motivation has become crucial in life post-college. Something that stupefied me initially upon graduation from USC was that life after school had no direction. I could literally go anywhere I wanted and there was no prescribed course load left to get me there. I’ll admit, at first this prospect terrified me. And some days it still does.

But mostly, it just excites me. Post Oak is the reason behind that excitement. More than anything else Post Oak left me with the conviction that education isn’t just an institution. It’s not somewhere you go to have factoids and formulas spoon fed to you. It’s not a company you work at “to pay your dues” in the hopes that someone notices you and gives you a promotion.

Post Oak taught me that education, in its purest form, is that drive, it’s that need within oneself to explore and understand. That’s education. And it doesn’t end with a graduation. It’s a process, it’s life.

Another value Post Oak instilled me with that’s carried into adult life was a love for community service. From helping teach kindergarteners to read to delivering meals to the elderly, my two years of middle school community service at Post Oak left me with the conviction that helping others is sacrosanct. Here in LA I volunteer at a
Post Oak Students Run for Autism Speaks

by Lana Rigsby, Post Oak parent

It seems Post Oak students were everywhere this weekend, helping make the world a better place. It is said that one in 110 kids in the US today has autism, a disorder in their brain development that can make their lives a lot harder. Autism Speaks is the nation’s biggest organization that looks for causes, treatments, and even cures for autism. This takes money, and lots of it. Together with their parents, a group of our kids stepped out early Saturday for the Rockets Run—a fundraiser that goes directly to help Autism Speaks. Some ran a kilometer, many ran five kilometers, two ran SIX kilometers! It all went to show that helping people feels good and can also be a lot of fun.

1K runners: 5K runners:

Thanks Dads!

The Post Oak Dads’ Club wants to thank all the dads for a successful poker night. According to Alan Ying, about 40 dads participated and congratulations go to the winner, Bill Bucy. Together the group raised $4600 for Post Oak. Thank you to all the dads and their families for their support!

Polo Champ

Great news from Post Oak parent Jenee Stefanakis to John Long:

All that training and hard work paid off! Horsegate Polo team won the international polo tournament for kids in Florida during the holidays. He will be leaving at 2:30 on Tuesdays for his intense training in Polo. He is competing and representing Houston Interscholastic polo and also training to go to Palm Beach again to compete on Presidents Day weekend.

Thank you for supporting us in his journey of becoming who he wants to be!

Spotlight on Alumni continued from previous page

non-profit called 826LA. There I help other volunteers tutor kids from first grade to high school, helping them with their homework, studies, and extra-curricular writing. There’s very little in life I find more fulfilling and I know volunteer work wouldn’t be as large a part of my agenda were it not for the early impetus I got at Post Oak.

Sam Geer (2002) – Graduated cum laude from Episcopal High School; commended National Merit Scholar; graduated summa cum laude from the University of Southern California (School of Cinematic Arts); received the Director’s Scholarship at USC; recently interned on the film Beginners, directed by Mike Mills starring Ewan McGregor; works at Apple Inc. in Santa Monica, CA; volunteers with 826LA
SCENES from The Post Oak School

1. Buttoning with the dressing frame.
2. Caring for the environment.
3. Delight in the discovery of reading.
4. Multiplication with the checkerboard.
5. Discovering relationships in both physics and mathematics while walking the plank.
Post Oak Students Help Re-Plant Houston

We parents tend to think in terms of our legacy: what can we do that will matter to our children (and our children’s children) and make their world a better place? Montessori kids begin to think that way too, at an earlier age than many of their peers. Hosting a fruit sale to help hungry Somalians, which Mrs. Kluk’s class did last week, is just one example of how Post Oak students help—and they know their efforts will have long-term results. But this past weekend was a little different. A group of Post Oak Brownies from grades 1–3 did something that will have long-term results right here in their own hometown.

As part of a volunteer army of hundreds of people armed with shovels and spades, they planted trees in Memorial Park and helped our city start healing from last summer’s devastating drought.

Mayor Annise Parker was on hand to cheer the volunteers on and to explain why our work was important. Houston lost 66 million trees last summer, she told us, and more than 11,000 parks. But already Houstonians have replanted 1.2 million of those lost trees—20,000 of them in Memorial Park alone! Mayor Parker explained how vital it is to a city to have a healthy urban forest, and that to stay healthy the forest has to have all kinds of trees of different ages mixed together (reminding me of mixed-age Montessori classrooms with their diversity of students). She pointed out that we planted tiny baby saplings as well as trees so big it took six girls and a grown up to get them in the ground, and talked about how that would make the forest harder next time there’s a dry summer.

Our girls planted at least a dozen of those new trees, and gave them names like “Crystal”, “The Beetle Tree”, “The Peace Tree” and “S’more”. They made note of where “their trees” are so they can come back to see them growing. And one day, many years from now, our children will be able to come to Memorial Park with their children, point to the trees they planted, and talk about the green and living legacy that they left last Saturday.

by Lana Rigsby, Post Oak parent

We were so touched by the generosity of the students in Mr. Pinto’s upper elementary class when they chose The Broach Foundation for Brain Cancer Research to donate their “secret santa” cash in lieu of exchanging gifts this past holiday season. To each of the students in Mr. Pinto’s class, a very heartfelt thanks for your generosity in supporting the Broach Foundation and helping to find a cure for brain cancer.

This act of kindness again reminds us how wonderful The Post Oak School community is and how glad we are to be a part of it. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Sincerely,

Jamie and James Broach
The Broach Foundation for Brain Cancer Research
Bearkats Impressive in Win vs. St. Stephen’s

by Scott McGill, Post Oak parent

The Bearkats rode a dominating second half to defeat St. Stephen’s 31–12 at home on January 17. Leading the way was \underline{[player]} with 13 points, and [player] also chipped in with strong performances on offense. But it was a sterling team effort, particularly on the defensive end, that led the Bearkats to victory.

The game started slowly for the Bearkats. Cold shooting and turnovers plagued the team in the first half, which ended with St. Stephen’s leading 10–6. St. Stephen’s was led by the firecracker play of [player] and the steady inside presence of [player]. The Bearkats entered halftime looking for answers, but encouraged by their defense and rebounding.

In the second half, the Bearkats began to click in every facet of the game. Crisp passing led to easy baskets, and stout defense kept St. Stephen’s off the scoreboard. The Bearkats had a 13–0 run to begin the half and outscored their opponent by a stunning 25–2 margin over the course of that period. Contributing to the one-sided play was an injury to [player] of St. Stephen’s; a blister limited his playing time and his effectiveness when he was on the floor.

Particularly impressive in the second half was the Bearkats’ ability to get out on the fastbreak. Time and again, the team ran after a rebound or a turnover, leading to many easy and even uncontested layups. If the Bearkats can continue to play with such energy and efficiency, they will be a very difficult team to defeat. ✨
Bearkats Basketball

Jan. 31 vs. St. Stephen’s
@ Post Oak
Feb. 8 vs. St. Stephen’s
@ Post Oak
Feb. 9 vs. School of the Woods
@ Woods, 5:00 pm
Feb. 13 vs. Memorial Lutheran
@ Memorial, tbd
Feb. 21 vs. St. Stephen’s
@ Post Oak
Feb. 28 vs. St. Stephen’s
@ Post Oak

Games at Post Oak begin at 4:15 pm in the gym.

Bellaire Little League is looking for boys and girls ages 4 to 6 (by April 30, 2012) to PLAY BALL with us this Spring!

Did you know that if your child is Age 4 as of April 30, 2012, he or she is old enough to play ball with Bellaire Little League? Check BLL boundaries online at www.bellairell.org. Also, if your Little League where you reside does not offer a comparable age program, you are eligible to play with Bellaire Little League. Come join us for these age groups! Contact bellairelittleleague@gmail.com to verify eligibility.

Bellaire Little League offers:
**Rookie** (Age 4, $150), **T-Ball** (Age 5, $230), and **Coach Pitch** (Age 6, $255).
Price includes a uniform.

Registration has closed for those between ages of 7 and 12, but there is plenty of room for younger players to join in the fun. So spread the word to your friends and let’s PLAY BALL!

For Coach Pitch, practices start Feb. 6 and games start Feb. 21.
For Rookie and T-Ball, practices start Feb. 21 and games start Mar. 19.
Opening ceremonies with the Parade of Teams is Mar. 3.

Register online today at www.bellairell.org

• Do you want to learn some fun and effective communication tools for parents?
• Are you interested in teaching your child social and emotional intelligence?
• Are you tired of yelling at your children?
• Do you know how to develop problem solving skills in your child?
• Have you said “NO!” more than three times today?
Then this is the class for you!

REDIRECTING CHILDREN’S BEHAVIOR
The Gentle Art of Parenting

This is a positive, powerful, informative, and fun training course which will give you a complete system for handling every situation in which adults interact with children, from infancy to adolescence. www.deborah-fry.com

Jan. 31, Feb 7, 14, 21, 28, March 6 (6 Tues. evenings)
6:30 to 9:00 pm
Cost: $235 per person, $335 per couple
(Includes book, workbook and 15 hours of class time)
CALENDAR
For more, visit www.postoakschool.org

JANUARY 29–FEBRUARY 4

Mon–Fri
1/29–2/3
Operan Week

Tue
1/31
Bearkats Basketball in the Post Oak gym
4:15 pm
Redirecting Children’s Behavior (Reg. & fee r’qrd.)
6:30–9:00 pm

Wed
2/1
CANCELLED: POPA Coffee/Work Day

Thu
2/2
PRI Parent/Child Night
Group 1: 5–6 pm
Group 2: 6:15–7:15 pm

Thu
2/9
Bearkats Basketball at School of the Woods
5:00 pm

Fri
2/10
Re-registration deadline for returning students

FEBRUARY 5–11

Coffee with the Elementary Director
9:00–10:00 am

Wed
2/8
Bearkats Basketball in the Post Oak gym
4:15 pm

Thu
2/9

Fri
2/10
Check out our online calendar—or download a copy of the printed calendar at www.postoakschool.org

NOTICE BOARD

Green Tip of the Week
Think about food:

• In the US an estimated 40% of food gets thrown away.
• Worldwide, roughly 1/3 of all food produced is not eaten.
• Food that rots in landfills produces 20% of all methane emissions which contribute to global warming.

Sources: EPA, World Food Programme

Home Needed for Pepper the Guinea Pig. Less than a year old. Cage included.
Email:

Home Needed for Pepper the Guinea Pig. Less than a year old. Cage included.
Email:

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 5:00 pm on the Tuesday before publication to Communications Coordinator Elaine Schweizer (elaineschweizer@postoakschool.org). If publication is on a Thursday due to school closure on Friday, then the deadline is 5:00 pm on the preceding Monday.
All photos in The Weekly Post are by Elaine Schweizer unless otherwise noted.
The Post Oak School was founded in 1963 and accredited by both the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) and the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS).
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