Independence
We all know what the term independence means but I want to share with you how and why it is so important to understand this term in the context of Montessori training in teaching a child, your child. Often, we rush through our daily morning routine when we should perhaps try to slow down to cherish the time with our little ones. One of the first things visitors notice about a Montessori classroom is the calmness as well as the fact that young children are able to individually work with great concentration. Let’s dig a little deeper and look at what we are ultimately trying to accomplish and teach the child in the Montessori environment: to be independent adults!

Luckily, a Montessori classroom is a perfectly prepared environment that supports this drive to independence consistently and throughout. Under the urge of nature and according to the laws of development, though often not understood by the adult, the child is obliged to be serious about two fundamental things: the love of activity and his or her own independence. Because human childhood lasts many years it is easy for us to lose track of its purpose. In our society, childhood has almost become an end in itself, the aim being to have as much fun as possible before waking up to the harsh realities of life. The child is isolated from the real tasks and activities of the community and entertained by toys which often have little relevance to his/her future life.

In modern Western society, children have no function in a family. Meaning that they are not expected to make any contribution to the smooth running of the family unit when they are small and, therefore, feel no commitment or responsibility when they are older. If the parents wait on the child and only expect help from him/her as a favor, the child does not consider himself/herself relevant as a contributor.

The development of independence is the child’s burning need. The child is driven towards independence by his/her “horme,” a term borrowed by Maria Montessori from Sir Percy Nunn: The child’s conquest of independence begins with his first introduction to life. While he is developing, he perfects himself and overcomes every obstacle that he finds in his path. A vital force is active within him, and this guides his efforts towards their goal. It is a force called the ‘horme.’ - Sir Percy Nunn.

In the Montessori context, this term represents “the inner drive” or drive for self-construction, of the child, which is most dominant during the first three years of life, during the spiritual embryonic stage of the absorbent mind. As the child matures and acquires societal mores and a greater understanding of life, the ‘horme’ gradually diminishes with the development of the will. In other words, the child begins to make conscious decisions about his/her actions.

All of his/her energies are directed toward mastery of self (the horme). The child needs to participate in the every day activities of his/her family and community to enable him/her to develop a sense of belonging and self-worth. In order to do this, s/he needs to be taught the skills required for care of self. The child does not need help, only scaffolding. In every instance where the child has the capability to do something her/himself, s/he will want to do it.

It is easy to forget that the children can participate in, and even control, the course of their day. It is not uncommon to see children taking Activities of Everyday Living off the shelf throughout the morning and then at home sit while their dinner is prepared, served, and cleared away by adults. Why? It is as if none of the children’s activities bear any relation to real life, as if the skills acquired by repetition of the Activities of Everyday Living were not relevant to the daily life in the classroom. The skills are perfected, so that children can independently prepare, serve and clear away dinner. At every point throughout the day the adult should try to put the child back in control of his/her own activity – toy kitchens are poor substitutes for the real thing.

Freedom to act, combined with independence-enhancing skills, allow the child to develop autonomously and gain the experience and confidence needed to become a fully functioning adult. Remember this whenever possible: allow the child to dress bathe him/herself, help with cleaning, let the child have a voice in decision making. And remember, you are always being observed by those little eyes, you are their role model for good table manners, hygiene and how you deal with frustrations in life.

I will leave you with a few of my favorite quotes from Maria Montessori on independence:
* Never help a child with a task at which he feels he can succeed.
* Help me help myself
* The child’s first instinct is to carry out his actions by himself, without anyone helping him, and his first conscious bid for independence is made when he defends himself against those who try to do the action for him.
We would like to thank Yiyi and Amelia's families for offering snack to our classroom these past two weeks.
Thank you to Gavin and Ethan’s family for offering community snack!

Skyler working on a special gift for her parents.

Camilo using a stamper to create snowflakes.

Colton working with constructive triangles, this lesson helps the children realize that the equilateral triangle can be subdivided into other types of triangles and is early preparation for geometry: to show that all plane figures constructed with straight lines are composed of triangles.

Gavin with the continent map during an after geography lesson.
We officially welcome our new friends Stone, Sophia, Lemon, Shail and Arya to our classroom!

Arya is working with the baby washing activity which is part of our Practical Life curriculum.

Lemon is transferring liquid from one vessel to another. In this activity she is exercising her hand and eye coordination.

Lily is using an apple slicer with the help of Miss Giannina.

Shail is concentrating on transferring liquid using hand and eye coordination.

Isabella is placing the Sliced apples to make apple sauce fresh apple sauce.

Aurora is exercising her wrist muscles by using a bubble making activity.

Thank you to Carraway Family for providing community snack last week.
- Thank you to all the volunteers that help in our classroom.

Students in our classroom have been collecting celery and lemon balm leaves from our Earth boxes; they washed them with Mrs. Giannina’s supervision and made celery and lemon balm flavored water.