



2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT



THE
CHILDREN'S
HOUSE
Montessori School



COMPASS
Montessori Junior High

LETTER FROM MICHELE



Dear Children's House and Compass Montessori Supporters,

Over the past several years, we have navigated a pandemic, a major flood, and the reconstruction of our Park Street Campus. Finally, the 2023-2024 school year felt like one where we were fully settled back into the rhythm of life at The Children's House and Compass Montessori Junior High.

Thanks to your generosity, we continue to be a school community dedicated to our mission of nurturing confident, lifelong learners who contribute to their communities and the greater world.

We believe that every child deserves the opportunity to experience a Children's House education. To ensure this happens, we provide financial support for families and strive to include students from many backgrounds. We celebrate our differences with thought and intention because a diverse group of families who value a high-quality Montessori education are vital to the positive outcomes of our school.

We are committed to supporting all learners, not only the children, through opportunities for professional development for staff, discussion and educational sessions for parents and caregivers, and service to the greater community.

When we as adults are at our best, we can fully champion the development of the 257 students we serve. We extend our heartfelt gratitude for your commitment to personal growth and partnership along this journey of lifelong learning.

With Appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michele Shane". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Michele Shane,
Head of School

Board of Directors

2023-2024 school year

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40 YEARS OF THE CHILDREN'S HOUSE A REFLECTION BY RYAN SULLIVAN



We often reminisce about our first visit to The Children's House. We scheduled a tour because my wife, Jessica, was pregnant with our first child, Shamus. When we entered The Children's House, the environment was unusually calm. This was a noticeable and welcome difference from the other daycares/schools we had toured in the area. Jessica had worked in a traditional daycare growing up and knew immediately that The Children's House was different. As we learned more about this special place, we recognized that each detail was intentional. It was more than just keeping our kids safe, The Children's House focused on development and community from the earliest age. Little did we know the impact this magical place would have on our family.

Fast forward ... three more kids (Paddy, Kathryn, and Siobhan), and 13 years later, Shamus is in his last year at Compass Junior High. We are in that bittersweet reflection period. This community has been another home for our family. It is where Jessica and I have grown as parents. You can't help but think about what is next. What does that look like? Many before us have experienced this transition and we know that our school has consistently provided a supportive and nurturing environment. A beautiful and safe place for children to fail, learn about themselves, be curious, and be thoughtful.

As The Children's House celebrates its 40th anniversary, I'm sure the school too is thinking about what comes next. What we are certain of, is that we are truly thankful for this beautiful community, and all it has done for our family, and we know that The Children's House will continue to thrive for the next 40 years, shaping young minds and fostering a strong, supportive community. And...we know we'll be here for at least another eight years.

YOUR IMPACT: BRIGHT FUTURES FUND & GALA

Our *Bright Futures Fund* supports our school - the people and the physical space - now and well into the future. In June 2024, we were challenged to reach our \$225,000 *Bright Futures Fund* goal before the end of our fiscal year by a Children's House family who matched gifts up to \$12,500. The Children's House community met this 10-day challenge by raising \$27,500 including the \$12,500 match!

Since our *Bright Futures Fund* launched in 2020, the fund has raised \$810,722. Visit our website [traversechildrenshouse.org/giving.asp] to see a full list of projects supported by our Bright Futures Fund, including a new roof in 2024 to keep our Long Lake Campus beautiful and well-maintained.

The 2024 Bright Futures Gala was a beautiful celebration of Montessori education and our school community. During the event, we premiered a video about how Montessori prepares children for the future, [watch it here: traversechildrenshouse.org/why_montessori.asp].



Scan to Watch

Thanks to Summer Hennessy, Hanna Lee-Kleb, Emily Kolassa, and all of the volunteer efforts that made this gala exceed all expectations. Jen Lake and Ryan Sullivan co-emceed the event and special remarks were made by Michele Shane, Head of School. The gorgeous backdrop of the Cathedral Barn, music by the amazing Chris Sterr, and Modern Bird's dinner made the evening special and memorable. The party ended with dancing and rocking music by The Timebombs! Special thanks to everyone who made a gift in support of our *Bright Futures Fund*. We are beyond grateful for the support of our parents, alumni families, and the greater community.





GRANDPARENTS GIVING BACK

Jim and Kelley, long-time residents of Traverse City, have deep roots in the community that span generations. Jim's connection to the area began in 1949, when his parents moved here, and he was born at Munson Hospital. After spending years living outside of New York City, the couple returned to Traverse City in 1981, raising their four children on the beautiful shores of Long Lake. Recently, they have transitioned to seasonal residents, but their commitment to the community remains strong, especially when it comes to supporting The Children's House.

The couple's ties to The Children's House began with their firstborn, Jason, in 1984. The Griffins' four children all spent time at The Children's House throughout the years, and their passion for quality education never wavered. When their grandchildren, Annie and Nolan, were born, Jim and Kelley made it a priority to ensure they received the best possible educational experience at The Children's House. They are consistently impressed by the dedication of the staff and the overall nurturing environment that fosters individual growth. The couple believes that the unique sense of community at The Children's House differentiates it from other educational opportunities, creating an atmosphere where children thrive.

As advocates for The Children's House, Jim and Kelley are inspired to give back, motivated by their own educational journeys and the success it has brought them. They have witnessed firsthand how The Children's House instills confidence, independent thought, and strong skills in their grandchildren—qualities that set them apart from peers at other schools. The fond memories of their grandchildren learning to take initiative, like tidying up without prompting, reflect the positive impact of The Children's House experience. Jim and Kelley envision a lasting influence on their grandchildren, equipping them with the tools they need to navigate their futures with confidence and success.

LEARNING THROUGH SERVING

Community is central to learning at The Children's House and Compass Montessori Junior High. These young people are learning to become good citizens and are quite capable and motivated to make a difference through community service.

Montessorians describe children in the second plane of development (ages 6 to 12) as full of wonder and having a strong sense of justice. When given the freedom to explore ideas and inspiration to learn more, students at The Children's House organically create ways to make an impact outside of their classrooms.

In 2021, then 4th year student, Mollie Janiszewski, wrote an independent research paper on Ruby Bridges and then raised enough money to invite Ms. Bridges to speak via Zoom with all of the Elementary and Junior High students. The children were in awe of Ruby's bravery and reflected on the impact one person can have on improving the world. Inspired by her actions, classes have followed their interests and created plans to make the world a better place in their own way.

Student projects inspired by Ruby Bridges have included sponsoring families through Paper Angels (a program of Child and Family Services), writing cards to children in hospitals, collecting items and food for those in need, starting a petition to ban plastic bags at local grocery stores, planting trees, raising money for the Women's Resources Center (by creating and selling cookbooks), and projects shown in pictures on this page.



Learners celebrating Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day on November 14, 2023.



Upper Elementary students, Sloane, Louisa, and Sawyer recording a video about their wish for the future: solar panels at our school. "On Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day in November, our class talked about how to make the world a better place. Our classmates talked about lots of ideas and Finn mentioned solar panels. We really liked his idea so we formed a committee. Ruby Bridges means a lot to us because she changed the world, and we can too." The video was shown at the Bright Futures Gala in May 2024 and along with their can drive, they raised over \$5,000.

Thank you to the generous supporters of the solar panel project:

Rachel and Lindsay Atkins
Abbey Bosco
Alison and Eric Breithaupt
Polly Carlton and Patrick Cotant
Jeff Fedorinchik
John Hogan
Rebekah Fahey and Charles Horn
Alicia Walker and Bryce Hundley
Cecilia and Mark Irwin
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Kristen Berlacher and Keenan May
Jill and Martin Miklos
Renee and Rob Mittelstaedt
Karen Mueller

Sally and Addison Proctor
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Jessica and Ryan Sullivan
Sarah Bancroft-Treadway
and Corey Treadway
Taylor Vancil
Emma Wanroy
Norie Warnke
Courtney Watts
Sabrina and Kevin Wheaton



Upper elementary students bringing cheer to residents at the Pavilions on December 6, 2023.



Elementary students mentoring children in Primary while painting cards together for Meals on Wheels recipients.



Lower elementary students raising money at their bake sale in November 2023 for the Cherryland Humane Society.



Compass Junior High students working as volunteers for Food Rescue in November 2023 as part of their exploration of the idea of community and how society functions.



Compass Junior High students restoring nearly 100 gravestones of Veterans of the Civil War and Spanish-American War at Oakwood Cemetery, which has over 2,000 gravesites of Veterans.



Compass Junior High students supporting people experiencing homelessness by volunteering at Safe Harbor.



3rd, 4th, and 5th year students planting seedlings along the Ottaway River with the help of Grand Traverse Conservation District volunteers on May 3, 2024.

OUR ALUMNI: 2024 GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

These former students graduated from our Junior High in 2020 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are proud of our alumni and the grit and independence they are exhibiting through the choices they are making, their confidence in knowing who they are, and what inspires them to keep learning and growing.



Ella Kirkwood attends Williams College and as of now, she is planning on studying Environmental Studies. With this degree, she hopes to be an environmental consultant. Ella reflects that “The Children’s House gave me the curiosity to love learning and pursue the things that interest me. The ability to discover my intellectual passions of my own accord has shaped me into a life-long learner and consistent immersion in the outdoors informed my love for the environment.”



Casey Klau, recipient of the 2024 Braiden Voss Memorial Scholarship, attends Michigan State University and is working toward a BFA in Apparel and Textile Design. She is enjoying college life, meeting new friends, and attending classes where she continues to learn more about her major. She is excited to see where this chosen path will lead her next. “My Children’s House experience taught me so many valuable lessons about community, responsibility, following your passions, and taking pride in your work. I’m so grateful for my time there and feel it has definitely helped shape who I am in so many positive ways!”



Matthew Magiera is currently enrolled in the aviation program at Northwestern Michigan College. He earned a private pilot certificate before graduating high school last year and is working on instrument rating with a commercial certificate. Matthew is on track to complete the aviation program within a year and will apply to become a full-time pilot. “The Children’s House, specifically the Junior High, helped prepare me for my future by exposing me to many different activities such as aviation during our many class trips. This helped foster my love of aviation and shaped me into the pilot I am today.”



Morgan Pauly is living in Detroit and attending college at Wayne State University. She’s majoring in psychology and minoring in philosophy with the hopes of continuing to earn a PhD. She’s contemplating whether to focus on cognitive or clinical psychology but regardless, she knows she wants to be in the field of psychology. She thought of a quote by Alexander Heijer to describe what it means to her to grow up at The Children’s House, “When a flower doesn’t bloom you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower”.



Daklen Schiller is working full-time for Team Bob’s as a Warehouse Receiving Associate, intending to gain more experience in plumbing and construction. He hopes to begin training through the Master Plumber Apprentice program to become a Journeyman or Master Plumber and a business owner. “The Children’s House encouraged me to view problems in a positive light and challenges to be solved rather than feared. My schooling experiences have supported my collaborative approach to work. I am comfortable expressing my thoughts, helpful to others, and able to see things from a broad point of view.”



Violet Purcell is currently doing a postgraduate year in music composition at Interlochen Arts Academy with a focus on electronic and recorded music. She enjoys learning how to record different instruments and use a recording studio. After this gap year, Violet will be seeking a B.A. in Music Composition. “The Junior High program helped prepare me by giving me the independence to figure things out myself and giving me a ton of opportunities to go places and meet people that I never would have been able to at any other Junior High.”

FEATURED ALUMNI: ELLIOTT PETTY



After growing up at The Children's House, Elliott Petty graduated from Culver Academy in 2013 and earned a B.S. in Business Administration, Project Management, from Elon University in 2017. He currently works for a software company in Grand Rapids and focuses on technology for the banking and lending industry. Outside of work, he enjoys tackling a long list of home improvement projects and spending as much time as possible in Leland during the summer, rock hunting, and feeling connected to nature.

When asked about his time at The Children's House, Elliott replied, "I think about Patty a lot. She was an incredible teacher." Patty Anton was the first Upper Elementary Guide at The Children's House, developing a foundation for Montessori elementary education through 6th grade. Reminiscing about his time in Upper El, the trips away from school like camping, kayaking, and visiting the State House in Lansing were the most memorable experiences. But it was the everyday unique experiences at school that, only now as an adult, he recognizes as extremely valuable. For example, Elliott remembers not being allowed to go into the woods at recess. The reason why has long escaped his memory, but what stuck with him was how Patty used that experience to teach him how to make a mature and diplomatic request. She showed him how to write and present a petition to the Head of School. "Now as an adult, I find myself thinking: What would Patty do in a situation like this?"

"The older I get the more I appreciate having a lifelong love of learning. When I was a kid, I didn't understand what that meant, but I definitely recognize now the effect on my character." He acknowledges that the teachers did not teach him what to think but focused on critical thinking: how to learn, work, and complete research projects. It was all valuable in developing him into who he is and how he approaches his life and work today. Growing up with Montessori teachers guiding and modeling how to treat everyone with respect, to care about your neighbor, and the value of compassion shaped the way he thinks about the world today. "To me, lifelong learning means to be willing to learn something new, and this mindset has helped me develop along the career path I'm on today."



"I'm glad those are the type of people that rubbed off on all of us."





THE KAREN CIRCLE

Twenty years ago, on November 3, 2004, Children's House parent, Dr. Karen Gilhooly, and students Anna Maas, Rowan Sanford, and Sierra Fetterolf were lost in a tragic car accident. We honor them every year when we plant daffodils, notice the quilts dedicated to them in the halls of our school, spend time in the sculpture garden and labyrinth, and attend the annual Karen Circle luncheon.

Since 2005, women in our school community have come together to help children learn to live healthy and active lives. Inspired by Dr. Karen Gilhooly's commitment to healthy lifestyles, members of our giving circle make things happen that are outside of our school's general operating budget. The group's cumulative gift now totals \$338,000.

In November 2023, members of the Karen Circle awarded \$31,000 during their annual luncheon to the following projects:

- Professional Development
- Country Research Books for Elementary
- New Chairs for the Gym
- Employee Relations
- Milkweed Classroom Climber
- Caregiver + Child Class Seed Funds
- Primary Library
- Laminator, Cart, and Supplies
- Gross Motor Furniture for Nido and YCC
- Compass Junior High Intermester and Art Materials

Thank you to the members of the Karen Circle:

Suzanne Allen
Sarah Bancroft-Treadway
Danielle Beauvais
Marjorie Beers
Mindy Beers
Kristen Berlacher
Betsy Corbett
Mona Daddario
Lori Lemonnier
Courtney Kaiser-Sandler
Carrie Goodreau

Soon Hagerty
Jeanne Haynes
Summer Hennessy
Diana Huckle
Durkhanai Jan
Connie Kerns
Hillary Loomis-King
Nicole Klau
Brittany Luea
Karen Lundmark
Tammy Hagerty

Renee Mittelstaedt
Judy Murphy
Angela Petty
Carrine Pomaranski
Emily Riddle
Dr. Cynthia Ruoff
Evi Sickinger
Molly Stanifer
Gretchen Uhlinger



DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING

Montessori is an educational model designed around the belief that world peace can be achieved through the child. Children are the hope for a peaceful future. Dr. Maria Montessori's peaceful intentions in lessons and stories in our classrooms inspire children to transform the world and make it a better place.

In the classrooms, at every level, our environments are thoughtfully curated to include books, art, artifacts, music and songs, materials, and cultural and history

lessons, that are windows and mirrors for children to learn about themselves and the world around them.

A grant from the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation's Diversity Equity Inclusion Fund helped to further our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging by updating classroom libraries with new titles and providing a learning opportunity for our staff on why diverse books matter for all children and strategies for sharing stories that reflect different cultures, identities, and experiences.

2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR ENROLLMENT SNAPSHOT

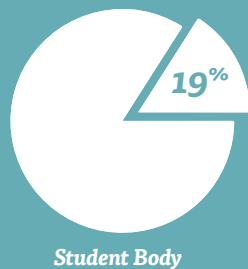


146 3 MONTHS
— TO —
STUDENTS 6 YEARS



111 1ST GRADE
— TO —
STUDENTS 8TH GRADE

\$448,356
TUITION
ASSISTANCE
FOR 48
STUDENTS



STRATEGIC FINANCIAL DIRECTION

The Children’s House prides itself on its commitment to fiscal responsibility, ensuring that every dollar is allocated wisely to enhance the educational experience for our students. Central to this commitment is our focus on staff compensation, recognizing that our teachers and staff are the mainstay of our institution. By prioritizing competitive salaries and benefits, we attract and retain talented educators who are dedicated to fostering a positive learning environment. This investment in our staff not only boosts morale but also translates into improved student outcomes, making it a cornerstone of our financial strategy.

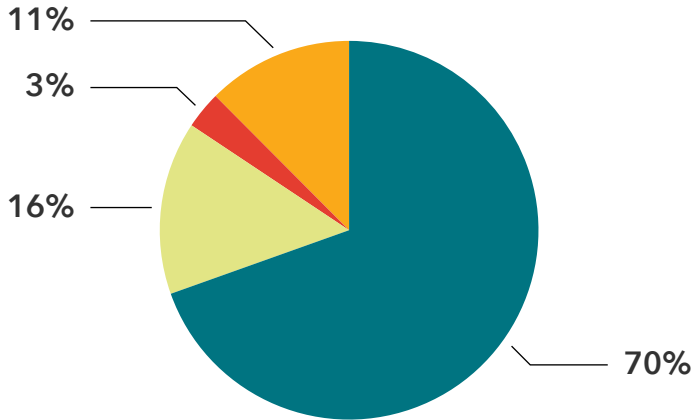
In addition to prioritizing staff compensation, we are equally dedicated to maintaining our buildings and grounds. A well-kept school environment is crucial for both safety and learning. We have implemented a comprehensive maintenance plan that ensures our facilities are not only functional but also conducive to student engagement and growth. By regularly assessing our infrastructure and addressing necessary repairs promptly, we create a space where students feel valued and inspired to learn. This proactive approach reflects our understanding that a safe and welcoming environment is integral to academic success.

We are incredibly grateful for the generous contributions to our *Bright Futures Fund*, which plays a vital role in our fiscal strategy. This fund allows us to address both expected and unexpected financial challenges without compromising our mission. Whether it’s replacing a roof or installing a new play structure, our *Bright Futures Fund* empowers us to remain flexible and responsive to the needs of our community. The support from our donors not only enhances our financial stability but also strengthens our ability to provide high-quality Montessori education.

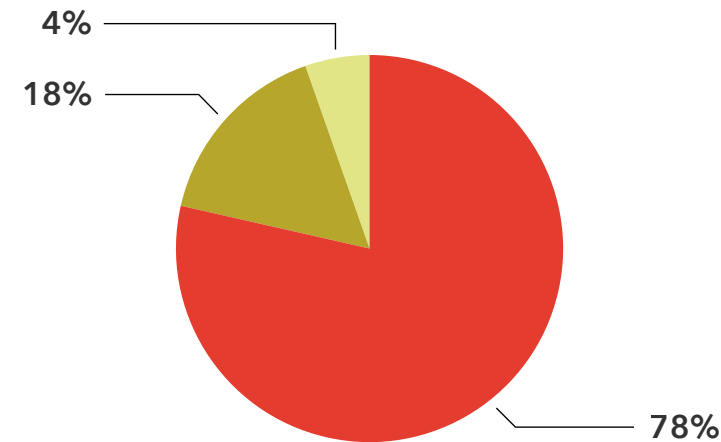
As we look to the future, it is clear that our school is in good hands. Through careful budgeting, strategic planning, and community support, we are well-prepared to face whatever challenges may arise. Our commitment to fiscal responsibility ensures that we can continue to provide an exceptional Montessori education for our students while safeguarding our resources for years to come. Together, we are building a brighter future, one that is rooted in sound financial practices and a shared vision for excellence in Montessori education.

Summary of the financials for fiscal year 2023-2024:

Revenue Total	\$5,188,181
● Tuition and Fees	3,624,958
● Contributions	566,309
● Lunch & Childcare	162,342
● Grants and Other Income	834,572



Expense Total	\$4,643,919
● Education Programs	3,633,208
● Administration	842,298
● Fundraising	168,413



Net Assets Start of Year
\$3,500,707

Net Assets End of Year
\$4,044,969

Increase in Net Assets
\$544,262

OUR DONORS

With sincere thanks, we recognize those who give generously in support of The Children's House and Compass Junior High.

Bright Futures Fund Leadership Giving Levels

Founders Circle

Carrie and Scott Goodreau
James and Kelley Griffin
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Tammy Hagerty and Bruce Luoma
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Megan and Scott Wick

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Mark Bishop
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Abbey Bosco
Julie and Daniel Boss
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Brick & Corbett
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Alison and Eric Breithaupt
Jessica Holli and Justin Brousseau
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In honor of Mark and Mary Jo Carrier
Maria and Michael Carroll
*In memory of Maureen and
Ronald Pomaranski*
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Comfort Center
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Spenser Daddario
Courtney and Christopher Danbrook

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Down to Earth Outdoor Services
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Anna Foulkrod
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Karen and Michael Libby
Lilies of the Alley
Brittany and John Lister
*In memory of Maureen and
Ronald Pomaranski*
Brittany Luea
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Katharine and Daniel Marvin II
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Catherine and Eric Maxson
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 Nancy and Gary Woodard
 Agnes Woynarowski
 Janelle and Benjamin Yule
 Lindsey and Adam Ziter



COMPASS MONTESSORI JUNIOR HIGH



We welcomed Junior High alumni to see our freshly renovated Park Street Campus and reconnect with their friends and faculty on December 22, 2023. We are so grateful for our growing alumni community and the lives they are creating for themselves!

Annual alumni events keep our community connected through the bond of growing up at The Children's House and Compass Montessori Junior High.



THE CHILDREN'S HOUSE
Montessori Children's House, Grand Traverse

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Traverse City, MI 49685

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