

Childlife Montessori

Educating the next generation with basic knowledge and skills necessary to survive and thrive in the future is a significant aspect of long term sustainability for any community! Taking it a step further is Montessori education.

Developed nearly 100 years ago, Maria Montessori - the first female physician in Italy - observed that the minds of children at young ages are like sponges, soaking up everything around them. She saw that young people learned best when engaged in purposeful activity rather than simply being fed information, that they learned by using their hands and whole bodies, and that they responded to a very open classroom. She also saw that each child had his or her own path, and developed the idea of teaching to the individual child.

In accordance with this philosophy, Childlife Montessori in Fairhaven has been creating tomorrow's self-motivated, independent and life-long learning citizens for over 25 years. Steve and Kathie Wilson both teach ½ time with a handful of additional staff, and each year impact the minds and hearts of forty-eight 3 to 6 years olds. They have created a very rich, multi-sensory environment that emphasizes natural and earth sciences, multiculturalism, peace education, conflict resolution, and sign language through experiential and hands-on learning.

As early members of Sustainable Connections, Childlife Montessori crafted a Sustainability Commitment addressing their goals for supporting Strong Community, Healthy Environment, Meaningful Employment, and Buying Local First, including actions like developing a mentor program for new families, helping staff with goal-setting, processing film and purchasing gas through locally owned enterprises.

Most recently Childlife Montessori set out to connect students with needs in their own community. In the spring they talked about how all people needed the same things and some didn't have all they needed. The kids then decided to help local people who didn't have enough food. Steve and Kathie taught a gardening unit, including what makes up soil, the history of gardening, what tools are used, and then brainstormed with the kids about what to plant.

The students helped plant a garden, and came by the school throughout the summer to help weed and harvest the food. They grew beets, cabbages, onions, lettuces, kale, carrots, and potatoes in their "Garden for the Food Bank." Then they harvested what was ready and took it to the Bellingham Food Bank for families in need.

Kathie hopes to see other schools plant and harvest food for others as well. She explains, "For kids to see things grow -- they can remember when they put the seeds in, and they feel really happy about the fact that it's a garden for the food bank. It's not that hard, the kids get so much out of it, and so does the community."

For more information about Childlife Montessori, call Kathie or Steve Wilson at 671-3380.

Sustainable Connections is a business network establishing and supporting a local living economy that sustains itself, our community and a healthy environment. We envision sustainable business practices that lead to a healthy environment, meaningful employment, strong communities and buying local first as commonplace in our region and a model for the rest of the world. Look for more information about membership and upcoming events at www.sconnect.org, or give us a call at 360-647-7093.

