

Save the Date!

- February 1st
Tuition Due
- February 5th
Informational Coffee
- February 6th
2026-27 Applications Due
- February 16th
President's Day, No School
- February 19th
Adolescent Parent-Student
Meeting, 3:30^{pm}
Elementary Parent-Student
Evening, 3:30-6:30^{pm}
- February 20th, 3:30-5:30^{pm}
Primary Parent-Student Eve
- February 26th, 3:00-5:00^{pm}
Science Fair
- February 27th, 9:30-11:30^{am}
Primary Family Field Trip

Inside this Issue!

PA News	2
Science Fair	3
PJ Day Recap	3
Parent-Student Evenings	4
Coffee, Anyone?	4

Montessori School of Lemont

Since 1972

Volume 32, Issue 7

February 2026

Honoring the Life and Legacy of Norine Colby

Norine Gibbons Colby was a beloved educator, visionary, and the founder of Montessori School of Lemont. It was with heavy hearts that we announce Norine passed away peacefully at home on January 5, 2026, following a battle with cancer.

Norine was featured in a Chicago Tribune article by Susan Degrane in April 2020 after sharing her story of growing up in post-Depression poverty to immigrant parents. Norine devoted her life to empowering children. She understood that education, when rooted in respect, independence, and wonder, has the power to change lives. As an adult, Norine worked her way through night school to become the first person in her family to attend college. She discovered Montessori education while studying at St. Xavier College, earning her bachelors degree in education.

She began her Montessori career as a classroom assistant and went on to earn Montessori certifications at the 3–6, 6–9, and 9–12 levels, as well as a Master of Education from Purdue University. In founding Montessori School of Lemont, Norine created far more than a school, she built a community where generations of children have been nurtured, challenged, and loved. Her legacy lives on in every classroom, every student, and every educator who carries forward her deep commitment to Montessori principles and to the dignity of each child.

Norine was known not only for her quiet strength and unwavering commitment, but also for her honesty, intelligence, and wry sense of humor. She inspired countless teachers, parents, and students through her example and work.

MSOL Board Member Sheila Gabler shared that “My husband and I first met Norine at the Lithuanian Center, where she had her Montessori school. Before we knew it, she had us looking up words in the dictionary, sweeping glitter off the floor with a broom and dustpan of all things, and then sitting down to

share a cup of her wonderful coffee. She then said, “Let’s continue this conversation in the parking lot.” She wanted to have a cigarette, and my husband was thrilled because he smoked too. He turned to me and said, “We’re sold!” I love the school, and I love her. That was the beginning of a beautiful relationship with Norine, then with Therese, and with the Montessori journey of life.

Norine was unlike anyone I had ever met. She was a true scholar, yet she had an incredible sense of humor. Over the years, we would go out for lunch, or wine late at night, and talk about everything: literature, children, homeownership, and life itself, always with laughter.

In 2001, when they were moving into the school they are in today, we knew we wanted to be part of it. Norine always had one constant priority: making children feel safe, comfortable, and inspired, giving them a world where their minds and souls could expand far beyond what any other school could offer.





Mrs. Colby and 7th grader, Ryan on Move Up Day '25



Norine Colby

(Continued from page 1)
Norine officially started the school in 1979, but Montessori was in her blood and in her life for decades before that.

When I sent my three children there, I knew Norine had built more than a school, she had built a community. A place where not only the children thrived, but where families wanted to be involved. When my youngest son was three, he met Norine and asked her, "Are you a leprechaun? Do you know where the pot of gold is?" She roared with laughter. That Halloween, she wore a leprechaun hat as her costume.

Though small in stature, her light spread far and wide, shining 24 hours a day. You knew that if you came to Montessori, you would learn, grow, and be fulfilled on every level.

My children are adults now, and they credit much of their success to what they learned from Norine. She taught them how to manage their time, how to journal, how to be self-starters and leaders, and how to invest in themselves rather than waiting for the world to tell them who to be. Norine was woven of

love: love of life, love of children, love of teaching, love of family, and love of community. I know, and I'm sure, that she is seeing the rewards now, in the hundreds and hundreds of children and families she touched, guided, and taught academically, emotionally, and spiritually. She expanded the minds and hearts of thousands. For a little Irish girl to become such a huge force, and then pass the torch to Therese, is a historic legacy.

And now, I want to say to Norine: You are home. Your incredible life's work here is complete. Job well done, my friend. You will be dearly missed."



Mrs. Colby and the class of 2009 'Going Out'

Parents' Association News

-Kristin Wade



We are busy planning the **2026 Annual Fundraiser!** Past themes have varied from adult-only casino nights, galas and golf outings to kid-centered family friendly events.

This year, our first family friendly event was so well received that we are planning another one next fall. Do you enjoy a night out without the kiddos or prefer to bring them along? [Share](#) your thoughts with us! Proceeds benefit the classrooms and the building fund for campus improvement and development.

We are also planning the **2026-27 Social and Philanthropic Events.** The MSOL traditions you love and the moments your children cherish simply cannot happen without parent involvement.

Whether it is helping with your favorite event, running for a board position, or volunteering as a Room Parent, there are many ways to get

involved. Every bit of help makes a difference, and there is always a place for anyone willing to lend a hand. Be part of what makes our school community so special. (Continued on page 3)



Lower El students read bedtime stories to Primary students on PJ Day

Parents' Association

(Continued from page 2)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Grandparents and Special Persons' Day, April 10th

Come celebrate and honor grandparents or special person and strengthen the bond between generations. Information about classroom times and details will follow.

Consider sharing your *Time, Talent, Treasure* with your MSOL family.

We understand **TIME** is precious. If you're able to give some of your time to help cultivate the MSOL experience for our kids we value your **TIME!**

As the world keeps growing and evolving the MSOL family is interested in your **TALENTS** that you would be willing to share with the school. Lastly, in this fast paced world you may not have the resources to share your time or talent, though would be interested in sharing (donating) your **TREASURE** to assist with MSOL reaching its highest potential.

The Parent's Association of the Montessori School of Lemont exists to support the school's philosophy, programs and activities for the benefit of all students, staff and families.



Yellow Room students love their Guest of Honor visits!

Pajama Day Recap

Wear a pair, share a pair!

On January 30th, students and staff wore their pjs to school and donated 161 pair of pajamas for residents of Guardian Angel Community Services in Joliet. Their mission is to provide diverse services that inspire people to improve the quality of their lives in their greatest time of need.

MSOL has been supporting Guardian Angel since 2007 and our annual donation provides pajamas for all of the children in Suzy's Caring Place, their residential facility for abuse victims.

Special thanks to Jeanine Galetti and Jackie Claxton for sorting, counting and delivering the pajamas!



**"I'll take
matters into
my own hands.
I'm a
Montessori
kid."**

-N.M., age 12

Science Fair



Upper Elementary and Adolescent students are busy preparing for the Science Fair later this month. On February 26, older students will hone their presentation skills on the younger students during the day, and present their

projects to their parents and the MSOL community after school.

This bridging activity connects students across levels, giving younger students a glimpse of what's ahead while helping older students refine their presentation skills and respond to thoughtful (and sometimes unexpected!) questions.

Scientists from Citgo consult with Upper El students in the design phase of their projects and by Adolescence, projects are formally judged by a high school science teacher. These and other conventional assessments and tools such as rubrics, percentage grades, and I:I technology are thoughtfully integrated into their Montessori, project-based work to support high school readiness.



Upper Elementary students checking out a beaver skull in Environmental Ed class

For all the little reasons

The Montessori School of Lemont is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that has been educating children ages 3 through 8th grade for over 50 years based on the methods and philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori. The school was established in 1972 by teachers dedicated to offering families an individualized educational approach for their children. The school relocated to Lemont in 1990. In 2001, the school moved to a permanent location after the construction of a new campus on 7.5 acres of donated land. In 2010, a third was completed to accommodate the growing enrollment and in 2011, a "natural" playground and an organic community garden were created. Funds are currently being raised to improve and grow our campus.

The Montessori School of Lemont does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, national origin, age, socio-economic level, physical ability, genetic information, and learning style in the administration of its educational policies, admissions, hiring, scholarships or other school programs.

16427 W. 135th Street
Lemont, Illinois 60439

Phone: 815-834-0607
info@lemontmontessori.com
FB: montessorischooloflemont
Find us on Facebook!

lemontmontessori.com



Parent-Student Evenings

Parent-Student Evening is a time to immerse yourself in the Montessori environment with your child as your teacher. Twice each year, students of all ages take on a leadership role and guide parents through their day-to-day activities, presenting lessons, and most importantly, introducing you to their besties!

Adolescent Parent-Student Meeting
Thursday, February 19th at 3:30^{pm}

Elementary Parent-Student Evening
Thursday, February 19th at 3:30-6:30^{pm}

Primary Parent-Student Evening
Friday, February 20th at 3:30-5:30^{pm}



Coffee, Anyone?



Interested in learning more about Montessori?
Join us for Coffee!

Philosophy • Curriculum • Campus Tour
Admissions Process • Q & A

Join us for coffee and stay for a few years!

To register, call or email us at
info@lemontmontessori.com



MONTESSORI
School of Lemont