



Woodland Hill
MONTESSORI SCHOOL



2021
annual
report



Woodland Hill

MONTESSORI SCHOOL



We joined the Woodland Hill Montessori school 16 years ago when our oldest son entered Primary just shy of three years old.

Much has changed since 2005. We have added a Toddler program, expanded Primary and Elementary, and have a vibrant Middle School with over 40 students. Our campus has undergone three building expansions to create space for the many families who are drawn to WHMS. This year we have 344 students and are one of the largest accredited American Montessori Schools in the country.

With all this growth, what has remained constant, from our 1965 beginnings in a rented church basement, is our grounding in Montessori philosophy. At our center are the child and the teacher who sit side-by-side. In the early 20th century, Dr. Montessori was seen as a radical as she worked with poor children in Italy who were considered “unteachables.” She was a scientist and she demonstrated that what was considered impossible was possible. Dr. Montessori led us to see that there are unique intelligences and capabilities inherent in each child – and it is our work to provide the environment and support for that unfolding in its own time.

As we enter the new year, I wonder about reflecting on possibility in the spirit of Dr. Montessori. What feels impossible in our time? And what conditions – what environment – might spark something new?

In June, our two youngest sons will graduate from the WHMS Middle School program. We have felt incredibly fortunate to be a part of this learning community and are most thankful to the administration and faculty who live the mission each day by recognizing and developing the intellectual, spiritual, physical, artistic, and academic excellence inherent in each of our children!

To all our families, our alumni, and members of our extended community, may you have a safe and healthy new year!

Warm regards,
Tamara Gatchell
President of the Board of Trustees



As we finish out the final days of 2021, I look back on the year with a deep sense of gratitude and look forward to 2022 with tremendous hope. The adversity of the pandemic challenged all that we hold true as individuals and members of a community. It has brought clarity to what we value, an

opportunity not to look back on what was but rather the gift of seeing what is possible with a shared vision and hard work.

Dr. Montessori gave us the gift of an educational method that centers observation as the key to knowing what a child needs to flourish. Our teachers have been at the children’s side, witnessing their development through what is now almost two years of a global pandemic. Their dedication, resilience, bravery, and love provided the students with the chance to continue their studies and personal growth under circumstances no one could have imagined. They were there to give the children what they needed, and for that, we are eternally grateful.

This year has brought growth to Woodland Hill, both in numbers and in our Montessori practice. We have welcomed new students at all levels of the program, bringing our student body to a record-breaking 344 students. Along with the new students, we have welcomed new faculty and received tenured faculty back to campus after participating in formal Montessori training over the summer months. We have invested in Montessori Math materials to ensure that all children have access to the brilliantly designed tools for learning. The faculty and staff have engaged in professional development activities to inspire and invigorate our practice. And equally importantly, we have been able to increase access to mental health support through an increase in our counseling services.

Our campus is alive with the promise of tomorrow. Thank you for being here with us for the journey.

Sincerely,
Michelle Edwards
Head of School

OUR MISSION

Woodland Hill Montessori School—a diverse and engaging educational partnership of parents, teachers, children, and community—nurtures a child’s love of learning and sense of personal and social responsibility, using the child-centered Montessori philosophy and curriculum to develop the intellectual, physical, spiritual, artistic and academic excellence inherent in each child.

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NEW BOARD MEMBERS

WHMS welcomed five new trustees to the board this year.



Carlos Elguero, M.D., is a family physician. He has a bachelor's degree from the University of Massachusetts, and attended medical school at Ross University, School of Medicine. Dr. Elguero has been a WHMS parent for four years and has two children attending Woodland Hill.



Alex Pieterse, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor and Doctoral Training Director, Counseling Psychology at The University at Albany. He has a doctorate in counseling Psychology from Columbia University. Dr. Pieterse is an associate editor for The Counseling Psychologist, and The Journal of Psychology in Africa. He has a son in Upper El and has been a parent here for two years.



Jesse Roberts is a Senior Solutions Architect for Amazon Web Services. He holds a bachelor's degree in Theology and a master's degree in Philosophy from Biola University. Jesse also serves as WHMS' Maker Space Coordinator. He has two children at WHMS and has been a parent here since 2013.



Wendy Gilman is serving on the WHMS Board of Trustee for the second time, having previously served from 2012-2018. Wendy is a parent to two WHMS alumni. She is the Vice-President for Business and Finance at SUNY Cobleskill. Wendy had a bachelor's degree in economics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a master's degree in Operations Research and Statistics from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.



Rex Tien, Ph.D. graduated from WHMS in 2000 and is the first alumnus to serve as a member of the Board of Trustees. Rex is currently a Neural Engineering Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. He has a doctoral degree in bioengineering and biomedical engineering from the University of Pittsburgh and a bachelor's degree from Princeton University in mechanical engineering.



Highlights

Campus Enhancements



The Toddler class has a **brand-new playground** this year. Located in the clearing in the woods that was used for music class last year, the playground was built by PE teacher Ben Kelts in late August. The students are enjoying the wide slide, climbing ladder, tire swing, sandbox, and Community Playthings tunnel.

New signage was installed around the WHMS campus, replacing the original signs from 2002. Inside the school, ADA-compliant classroom and rooms signs were installed. Three spaces were named by Capital Campaign donors: The Hearst Family Lobby, The Agrawal Family Science Lab, and The Scheib Family Teaching Kitchen.



The **FLOCKart gallery** arrived as a shipping container in late August. The container exterior was prepped by Susan Thomas, Megan Stasi, and Sandy Schneider. Artist Fernando Orellana painted a colorful mural on the outside and Susan Thomas installed lighting, flooring, and an HVAC system inside to convert the container into an actual art gallery. On October 7, nearly 200 people gathered in the WHMS parking lot at an event sponsored by Susan Thomas to celebrate FLOCKart and view Fernando Orellana's artwork.

Alex Torres & His Latin Orchestra entertained the crowd, who also enjoyed tacos and churros from La Capital Tacos.

A large **rope climber** was installed on the Elementary and Middle School playground in October. It was purchased with proceeds from the Raise-the-Paddle auction during the 2021 eGala: *Sequins & Slippers*.



New Programs

FLOCKart, the new year-long cultural project aimed at augmenting WHMS's visual art classes with onsite gallery exhibits, plus class visits and lectures from practicing artists, kicked off this fall. WHMS parent Susan Thomas is the driving force behind the project, with help from art teacher Megan Stasi and assistant art teacher Sandy Schneider. There are six exhibits scheduled for the 2021-2022 school year.



Upper El's Shakespeare performances were performed differently this year due to COVID protocols. Patrick's class presented theirs live over Zoom, and Cindy and Michele's classes filmed their Shakespeare plays using Claymation and Stop Action videos.

In May, 11 Middle School students presented **TEDx-inspired talks** to the Middle School and live on Zoom. The students' presentations included what defines a family, the power of video games to stay connected during a pandemic, creative writing, anti-bias, and gender and sexuality.

In December 2020, WHMS began **weekly surveillance testing** for all faculty, staff, and students, allowing us to identify non-symptomatic cases to keep them from spreading. Over the course of the year, we have collected nearly 12,000 samples, and have detected six positive cases.

Instead of our usual in-person Spring Concert, the students of Woodland Hill performed and became the audience of five **"Artsemble" parades** under the direction of Megan Stasi and the specials faculty. They imagined, designed,

Professional Development

WHMS faculty and staff attended a presentation by the AMS Director of Anti-Bias, Antiracist Education, **Maati Wafford** on Friday, May 28 during the Staff Development Day. Maati spoke about exploring identity, countering the power and privilege in Montessori classroom environments, and supporting the children in our classrooms based on their developmental needs.

WHMS hosted a **Conference on the Hill** in conjunction with the American Montessori Society's virtual annual conference from March 5-6. Woodland Hill teachers watched the workshops, ate meals together, did art projects, yoga, and trivia, and just bonded with each other, while being inspired during the AMS conference.

Assistant Head of School Erin Mergil and Upper El Assistant Teacher Vinita Shekhar completed the **AMS Anti-bias, Antiracist (ABAR) Certificate Program**. The program provides a thorough examination of ABAR education to support Montessori schools and classrooms in creating just and equitable spaces for all.

Woodland Hill teachers worked across levels to delve into Montessori Lessons Studies on our October 8 **Staff Development Day**.



Instead of one large ceremony, this year we held three different ceremonies for **Moving Up (3rd and 6th years) and Graduation (8th grade)**. The ceremonies were held in the amphitheater and were praised for their focus on those students moving up.

prepared, practiced, and presented the parade to highlight the musical, artistic, and language talents of all the children.

Accomplishments

We began this school year with **344 students, our largest enrollment ever**. As of September 8, there were 30 Toddlers, 110 Primary students, 94 Lower El students, 66 Upper El students, and 44 Middle Schoolers.

To commemorate **Veterans Day**, Upper El students made paper poppies, requesting donations for the local veterans' hospital. They raised over \$150 to benefit the Albany Stratton VA Medical Center.



Grandparents and Special Friends Day was held virtually on Friday, May 14. The students created artwork for their grandparents or special friends that was copied and mailed to them. Each student was also recorded sharing what they enjoyed doing with their grandparent or friend.



Due to COVID protocols, this year's **Middle School trip** was at the Adirondack Camp on Lake George. The 'intentionally rustic' camp featured open-air cabins. The students enjoyed swimming, paddle boarding, dancing, making s'mores around the campfire, and playing Manhunt at night.



WHMS student **Ranna Payafamar** was the youngest artist featured in the Albany BID's Winter Wonderland public art project.

Upper El student **Lena Calabria** won this year's spelling bee by spelling the word *malice* in the final round. This year's bee was held outside and via Zoom for remote learners.

The Upper El held a **toy drive** in December 2020 to benefit local children through the Salvation Army.

WHMS Middle School students participated in **Future City**, a project-based learning program where students imagine, research, design, and build cities of the future. The final leg of the competition was on Saturday, February 13 when three WHMS students joined a Zoom session for a Q&A about their city.

A sampling of campus events

Sara Howard's Lower El class learned about the **Day of the Dead** (Día de los Muertos), a two-day celebration starting on November 1. They read about Día de los Muertos and made an *ofrenda* for Maria Montessori after reading a short biography about her life.



As part of their archaeological unit in science class, Middle School students were able to get hands-on experience with North American artifacts with two guest educators from the **NYS Museum**. Middle School students engaged with activities including identification of stone and bone tools, projectile point examinations, topographical map studies, and an overview of Indigenous foodways from the Mohawk Tribe of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.



A play about **Johnny Appleseed** was performed by second-year students in Sara's Lower El class.

On Friday, September 24, the WHMS community gathered in the amphitheater to celebrate **International Day of Peace**. This year, the students learned how to "sign" instead of "sing" our *Light a Candle for Peace* song (Sing Peace Around the World). Sign Peace instead of Sing Peace allowed us to maintain our safety protocols and also taught students another way of being inclusive global citizens.



In May, the Middle School participated in an immersive **Civil Rights program**. Through Zoom, the MS hosted activists, including one of the youngest people to be arrested in the Civil Rights protests in Selma, Alabama; the Director of Tour Ministry at the Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama; the president of the Rapp Road Historical Society; and WHMS staff member and Albany Councilman Owusu Anane. The culminating discussion was led by Dr. Melba Pattillo Beals, author, activist, journalist, and one of nine Black high school students to desegregate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957. The students read her memoir, *Warriors Don't Cry*, in anticipation of the opportunity to hear her speak.

The **WHMS Computer Literacy Committee** prepared a self-led experience that each student could do on their own as part of the 'Hour of Code,' a worldwide effort to celebrate computer science, starting with one-hour coding activities.

As part of their cultural studies, Upper El students studied **Ancient Egypt**. The students presented a report on Egyptian gods and created headdresses to represent them.



Upper El students created time capsules about the Pandemic. After the students presented theirs, the Upper El teachers held a **“Closing of the Time Capsule” ceremony** to present their version of a time capsule, to be opened in 25 years by future WHMS Upper El teachers.

Students in the Upper Elementary learned about **Black American Changemakers** during Black History Month. Each child then chose a Changemaker they were interested in learning more about and painted beautiful portraits with a snippet of their impact on American life.

On Friday, April 30, parents gathered at WHMS for the first time in 15 months for the **Primary Pinning Ceremony**. The third-year Primary students received a Montessori Leadership Pin. This longtime, much-beloved tradition recognizes their leadership skills.

The annual **Book Fair** returned in-person to WHMS in November. The Book Fair supports the school library with its sales.

Stephanie’s Primary class held its **5th annual Spring Tea** on Friday, May 7. This year’s tea was slightly different in that the children’s guests were their stuffed animals or dolls. Stephanie created the Spring Tea in 2017 as a celebration of grace and courtesy.

Middle School students attended a workshop entitled **Mentors in Violence Prevention**, a bystander-focused gender violence and bullying prevention approach that is especially well-suited to adolescence.

Parent Education

The Diversity Committee held a virtual **Book Club Conversation** on December 14, 2020 to discuss *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race* by Beverly Daniel Tatum, PhD.

The **Diversity Committee** also hosted two caucus conversations for parents. The caucuses offered an opportunity for those who share a common identity to meet separately to gather, connect, and learn. These safe and confidential spaces allowed for conversations about shared experiences that are often unspoken in mixed groups. One caucus was for any parent that identified with the Black experience including Black parents and parents raising Black children. The other was for Asian families.

The **Suzuki violin program** hosted two events for parents of WHMS: *Helping Parents Practice - An insightful discussion for parents of students across all ages about motivation, practice strategies, the parental role, and child-parent relationships* with world-renowned Master Suzuki Teacher Edmund Sprunger, and *Empowering Parents and Students* with master teacher Carrie Reuning-Hummel.



5th annual
Spring Tea

congratulations



Congratulations to the Class of 2021!

Seventeen 8th graders graduated on Friday, June 18 in the WHMS amphitheater.

Nora Bennett was nominated by her classmates and teachers to speak at graduation to represent the Class of 2021.

Stanley Hadsell served as our keynote speaker. He was the longtime manager of Market Blocks in downtown Troy.

Fred Galt, parent of Caroline, WHMS Class of 2014, and Julia, Class of 2021, and secretary on the WHMS Board of Trustees for 15 years, also spoke to the graduates.

Our graduates will be attending the following schools this fall: The Albany Academies, Bethlehem High School (2), Darrow School, Emma Willard School (6), Guilderland High School, LaSalle Institute, Manhattan School of Music Precollege, Maple Hill High School, Shaker High School (2), Tech Valley High School (2)

We wish them all much success in high school.

We also acknowledge the WHMS Class of 2017 as they move onto college.

WHMS Class of 2017 College Choices

- Berklee College of Music
- Brown University
- Endicott College
- Hudson Valley Community College
- Marist College
- Rochester Institute of Technology
- University of Mass Amherst
- University of Miami
- Villanova University
- Wellesley College
- Yale University



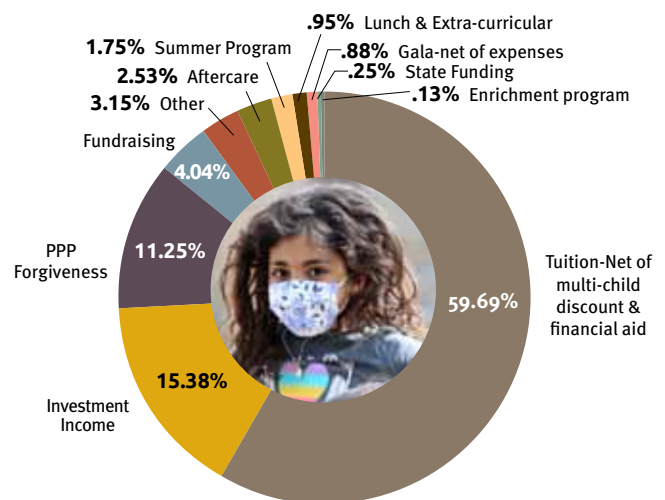
financials

Woodland Hill Montessori School Statement of Activity

for the year ended June 30, 2021

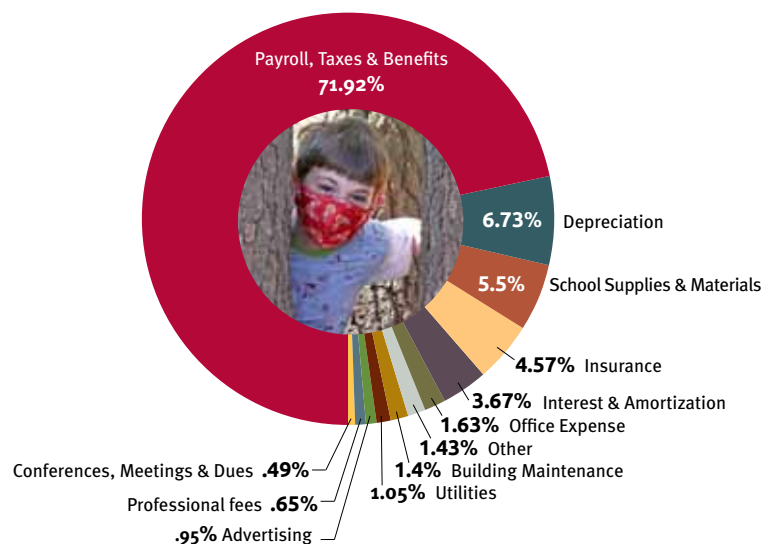
REVENUES

Tuition-Net of multi-child discounts & financial aid	\$3,171,621
Investment Income-Net of expenses	816,911
PPP Forgiveness	597,867
Fundraising	214,806
Other	167,357
Aftercare	134,531
Summer Program	93,044
Lunch & Extra-Curricular	50,297
Gala-net of expenses	46,581
State Funding	13,431
Enrichment Program	6,710
Total Income	\$5,313,156



EXPENSES

Payroll, Taxes and Benefits	\$3,402,646
Depreciation	318,580
School Supplies & Materials	260,111
Insurance	216,182
Interest & Amortization	173,453
Office Expense	77,223
Other	67,586
Building Maintenance	66,461
Utilities	49,717
Advertising	44,981
Professional Fees	30,955
Conferences, Meetings & Dues	23,164
Total Expenses	\$4,731,059
CHANGE IN ASSETS	\$582,098



Statement of Financial Position

As of June 30, 2021

ASSETS

Cash and cash equivalents	\$709,097
Investments	4,122,972
Receivables (net)	328,689
Prepaid expenses	2,844
Land, building, and equipment (net)	5,882,195

Total assets **\$11,045,797**

LIABILITIES

Accounts payable and other current liabilities	908,581
Accrued expenses	176,316
Deferred revenues	1,421,957
Long-term debt	1,557,025

Total liabilities **\$4,063,879**

NET ASSETS

Unrestricted	\$4,462,156
Board designated	2,499,922
Temporarily restricted	19,840

TOTAL NET ASSETS **\$6,981,918**

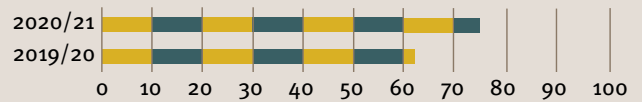
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS **\$11,045,797**

Financial Aid

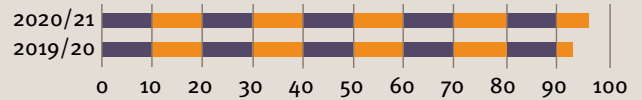
Woodland Hill is committed to serving families of diverse socio-economic backgrounds through a growing financial aid program and affordable tuition.

FINANCIAL AID AWARDS AND APPLICATIONS

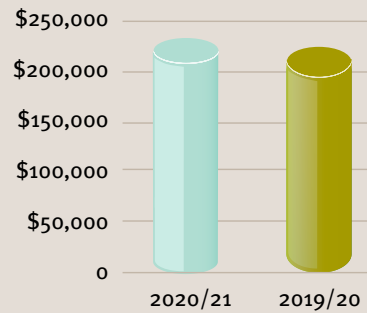
Number of students awarded financial aid



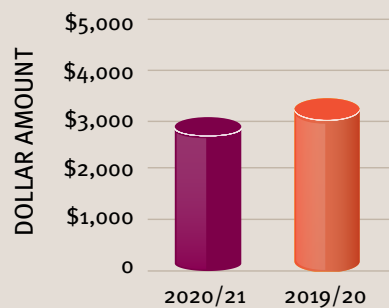
Number of students applying for financial aid



FINANCIAL AID AWARDED



AVERAGE AWARD PER STUDENT



2020-2021 honor roll of donors

Great care was taken to ensure the accuracy of this report. A donor may be listed in several categories in this report. If you made a gift during this period – July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021 – and your name is misspelled, omitted or listed in the wrong category, please accept our apologies and notify Moira K. Rienzo, Director of Development at mrienzo@woodlandhill.org

Woodland Hill Montessori School is proud to recognize alumni, parents, grandparents, and friends for their contributions. This list includes all unrestricted, donor designated, capital campaign gifts, and donations received through the eGala 2021 between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021. We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of our donors.

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Mary Kopley
Sheila Krauss
Annemarie Lanesey and Joseph Payette

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Tami Meek
Michele Miller and Mia Martinez
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WHMS gratefully acknowledges the donations from grandparents of current and former students this past year.

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We are so appreciative of the former families who continue to support Woodland Hill Montessori.

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Great care was taken to ensure the accuracy of this report. If there are any errors or omissions, please accept our apologies and notify Moira Rienzo, Director of Development at 518-283-5400 or mrienzo@woodlandhill.org

Woodland Hill Montessori School gratefully acknowledges gifts received for the WHMS Fund between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021.

The WHMS fund

150 for Montessori

Thanks to our generous supporters, over \$63,000 was raised through The WHMS Fund – 150 for Montessori to assist with the unique and ongoing expenditures that arose from the pandemic. Proceeds from The WHMS Fund – 150 for Montessori allowed WHMS to purchase PPE and disinfecting equipment and supplies; enhance outdoor learning spaces to provide social distancing; upgrade internet to provide live streaming of daily activities for students learning remotely during 2020-2021; purchase Chromebooks for our students; and supplement financial aid for those enduring hardship due to COVID-19.

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In honor of Greg '14 and Marguerite '16
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In honor of Maria Montessori
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This list acknowledges gifts and pledges to The Campaign for Woodland Hill Montessori School from 2018-2019.



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NEW FACULTY

We welcomed five new faculty members this year.



Laura Angell joins us as an Assistant Teacher in Lower Elementary with Julie Adams. Laura has a bachelor's degree in English with a minor in education from the University at Albany. Prior to working at WHMS, Laura worked at the Honest Weight Food Co-op.



Julio Gonzalez joined the WHMS faculty as an Assistant Teacher in Melinda Putney's Upper El class. Julio has a bachelor's degree in physical education from Queen's College, City University of New York, and holds New York State Teacher Certification.



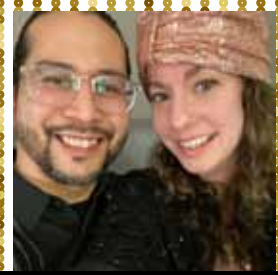
Hannah Heiser is the Assistant Teacher in Sara Howard's Lower Elementary classroom. Hannah had worked as a substitute teacher at WHMS since 2020. Hannah has a bachelor's degree in Environmental Sustainability from SUNY Oneonta.



Shania Jackson is a Lead Teacher in the Upper Elementary. Previously, Shania taught 4th grade at School 2 in Troy, where she was an active member of the Community Empowerment and Engagement Team, and 3rd grade at Albany Community Charter School. Shania has a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood/Childhood Education with a concentration in Black Studies from the State University at New Paltz. She holds NYS Teaching Certification through 6th grade.



Evan Kelly joins the Middle School team as a science teacher. He has a bachelor's degree in business from the University of Colorado and a master's degree in environmental history from Montana State University. His professional experience includes teaching English to secondary students in Ukraine as a volunteer in the United States Peace Corps, and most recently, working as an archaeological field technician in the Green Mountain National Forest.



2021

gala



WOODLAND HILL MONTESSORI SCHOOL

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eGALA21

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The 2021 eGala: Sequins & Slippers was held virtually on Zoom on March 20. The virtual format made the eGala accessible to all, and the evening felt like a true community event. The guests all enjoyed themselves, and we raised a lot of money for Woodland Hill.

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The WHMS Fund – Supporting Equity & Hope

Woodland Hill Montessori School

The WHMS Fund: Supporting Equity & Hope will provide assistance with operational expenditures related to JEDI (Justice, Diversity, and Inclusion) education including faculty workshops and ABAR (anti-bias antiracism) training; parent education programs; Library, classroom, and curriculum materials; guest speakers; and program work associated with our JEDI consultant, Nishant Mehta. Your support demonstrates your belief in our shared values and your commitment to a better, more sustainable world. Through our work in JEDI, we will grow in wisdom and develop tools to act responsibly through honest dialogue. By listening to, considering, and embracing different points of view, we will understand and include vital perspectives in all that we do. We, in turn, will be strengthened with new experiences and opportunities that truly make a difference for all members of our community.

Supporting & Equity Hope