

# Environmental Education at FSM

By Lili Herbert, Head of School

**T**oasting bagels over a fire in the Friends School's side yard. Calculating the percentage of FSM's recycling that is paper, glass, metal, or plastic. Identifying and drawing special places in nature. Conducting research on animals native to Minnesota.

These are all ways students experience environmental education (EE) at Friends School. EE is not something we teach one time a year as its own class. EE is woven into every day and all subjects in all grade levels. Our EE program grows directly from fundamental Quaker beliefs about peace, justice, simplicity, and service to community. We have the goal of preparing students to become stewards of the earth by:

- Validating students' innate fascination with the natural world,
- Instilling a sense of respect and reverence for the world around them,
- Fostering their sense of place in the world and attachment to the natural world,
- Modeling simple living,
- Providing a solid scientific framework with which to understand environmental issues,
- Providing the skills to make conscientious decisions,
- Instilling a sense of hope and commitment to the future,



Composting in the FSM back yard.



Boys in the trees at Crosby Farm.

- Helping students become responsible citizens rather than simply consumers, and

- Breaking down the artificial barriers our culture imposes between the human-made and natural worlds.

Over the course of a student's time at FSM, she will have made many field trips to locations throughout the region, participated in recycling and composting every day, taken overnight trips to environmental education centers, studied the natural and earth sciences, and developed an appreciation for the natural world.

One highlight of the EE program is the seventh and eighth grade Crosby Farm project. Students visit the park

on the Mississippi River once a month and conduct many studies. They learn about the river, native and invasive plant and animal species, geology, seasonal changes, issues related to human use of the park, tree species, and more. This year the students are sharing their data with the Will Steger Foundation, which seeks to build awareness of the natural world through recording data. In addition to the science and math skills students learn through this project, we also seek to build a sense of awe and wonder by allowing time for journaling, exploring, and playing. In May, the whole school spends a day at Crosby Farm, where the seventh and eighth graders teach all the younger students about the many things they learned at the park. And then we have a whole-school picnic, meeting for worship, and a game of

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# Live Auction and Gala Full of Jazz

By Sarah Deschamps

New Orleans Jazz was the theme of this year's Gala and Live Auction, held at the Woman's Club of Minneapolis and featuring the talented Mouldy Figs. The number one goal of the Gala is to bring the Friends School community of parents, alumni parents, grandparents, staff, and Quakers together, and this year we met that goal with resounding success. We had the highest attendance ever, and the feeling throughout the evening was one of joy and support for Friends School. We enjoyed delicious Cajun food, swing dancing by FSM graduate Sara Van Vreede and her friends, and plenty of conversation.

Thanks to the generosity of our parents, grandparents, and the Twin Cities community, there were over eighty silent auction items this year ranging from gift certificates to local restaurants to tickets for a Gophers football game. Our live auction was exciting and filled with amazing destinations including a penthouse apartment in Los Cabos, Mexico, and a beautiful getaway cabin in Lutsen, Minnesota. We had the highest number of Great Gatherings ever, with opportunities for cheese making classes, ice skating parties, and wine tasting trips, among many! If we missed you at the Gala, you may still sign up for Great Gatherings. Simply go to the FSM website and register on line.

One highlight of the evening was the \$15,750 we raised for new library books. At last year's Gala we raised over \$13,000 to remodel our library. With that remodeling complete and our library looking spectacular, we felt it was time to update our book collection. (The library books at Friends School are, on average, eighteen years old!) Thanks to the hard work of librarian Emily Prebich and the financial support of everyone at the Gala, our new library collection will be state-of-the-art for a school of our size.

We want to thank the entire community for making the Gala the successful event that it is. There are so many volunteers who work many months to put on this great event, and many others who donate time and treasure to it. We could not make this the success that it is without all of you. ●



Auctioneer Glen Fladeboe looks for bids during the live auction.



FSM alumna Sara Van Vreede (left) teaches swing dancing at the gala.

It might be summer, but school's not out! Each year Friends School invites the entire community to join us for arts, academics, and recreation during our summer program in June, July, and August.

From baking gingersnaps to launching rockets to painting landscapes in the park, we offer something for everyone between the ages of 4 and 14. Two of our especially unique programs include Imagine That, an integrated, multi-arts program just for early childhood, and Mock Trial, a chance for middle-schoolers to prepare and try a case in the courtroom at Hamline University.

About half of our students attend FSM during the year, and half come from other schools all over the Twin Cities. For the past four years, we've also been delighted to have international students in attendance. When we say everyone is welcome, we mean it!

For information about this year's program and for great pictures from previous summers, go to [www.fsmn.org](http://www.fsmn.org) and click on the summer camp tab. —Melanie Spewock

## SUMMER AT FSM



Teacher Lorraine Royal and summer students make a new friend.

# Anne Lippin, Multi-Talented Volunteer

by Brad Bradshaw and Sarah Deschamps

**F**riends School parent Anne Lippin is a family doctor with additional training in lactation education. Since having her own child, she has focused more on being a mom than a doctor. Her son, Ezra, joined FSM last year in the kindergarten class. With Ezra at school, Anne decided to become more actively involved in his education, and the way to do that at Friends School is to volunteer.

Anne's volunteer work is unique in that she is not focused on just one area of the school; she helps in many different ways. Anne loves to garden—a particularly good talent to have at Friends School—and one of her favorite volunteer jobs is working in the perennial section at the Plant Sale. She also makes amazing cookies, and baked enough for the entire middle school while they were working at the Plant Sale last year.

Anne has gotten involved with the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC), a group of parents who work on many different aspects of Friends School. She is in charge of communication for PIC, taking minutes at the meetings and writing PIC notes for the weekly newsletter.



Anne Lippin and her son Ezra

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

And if that's not enough, Anne is also deeply involved in FSM's music program. A piano player since age seven, Anne offered her skills as room parent for Brad Bradshaw, our talented music teacher. She accompanies Eagle Singers and Falcon Choir, our after-school choral ensembles. She also updates the music library and beautifies the music room, allowing Brad to focus on teaching.

Brad says that working with Anne has been one of the most rewarding experiences he has had at Friends School. Her dedication and commitment are nothing short of miraculous. While classroom teachers have always had room parents, specialists have not. He remembers the day when Anne walked into his classroom last year and said, "You need a room parent!" From that day, she has worked tirelessly to assist the music program however she can.

Without Anne's help, we could not accomplish all that we do in the music program. Her role as piano accompanist has been vital to the advancement of students' musical progress. Having an accompanist allows Brad to conduct away from the piano, giving him valu-

able opportunities to focus on students' development of tone, diction, and musicality. It's one of many ways Anne's volunteer work in the classroom directly benefits students.

In addition to her wonderful piano playing, Anne has done phenomenal work helping with what Brad calls "the above and beyond." From arranging classroom decorations to finding orchestra musicians, from setting up for music performances to providing a much needed meal-on-the-go, Anne has graciously given her time, talent, and energy to the music program. She is a talented musician, a devoted and trustworthy volunteer, and a warmhearted and compassionate person.

Volunteers like Anne are essential to maintaining life at our school, and to providing the energy and talent we need to reach our goals. She inspires teachers through her encouragement and support. And perhaps of greatest value, through volunteers like her, our students witness the spirit of generosity in action. They see the importance of helping others, which inspires them to do the same here and in the larger world.

Knowing that there are people like Anne invested in our success makes us better teachers, better students, and just better people. ●

*Anne's role as piano accompanist has been vital to the advancement of students' musical progress.*

# Interdisciplinary Education Shines at FSM

By Sarah Deschamps

Interdisciplinary projects happen all the time at Friends School; for example, history and English are combined to create a project that involves both subjects. But this fall, Friends School took interdisciplinary education to a whole new level with fifth and sixth grade students. Visiting artist and photographer Wing Young Huie was invited to help create a project that incorporated art, humanities, and Spanish. The results were astounding!

Many Twin Cities residents may be familiar with Wing Young Huie's *The University Avenue Project*, which asked people a series of open-ended questions that promoted self exploration such as

- What are you?
- How do you think others see you?
- What don't they see?
- What advice would you give to a stranger?
- What is your favorite word?
- Would you describe an incident that changed you?
- How have you been affected by race?

After all of the answers were gathered, Wing chose a single answer, had the interviewee write the answer on a small chalkboard, then took a picture of the interviewee with his or her answer. The statements became powerful reflections of the inner thoughts of individual people. He calls this practice Chalk Talk.

Wing came to FSM to lead a Chalk Talk workshop with the fifth and sixth grade art classes. He spoke about meaningful pictures and helped students learn what kinds of questions might elicit them. Students first practiced by asking each other questions, selecting an answer to write on their chalkboards, and taking a photo. Next, parents were invited into the classroom.



5th grader Cole (left) and 6th grader Makena (right).

## CLASSROOM SPOTLIGHT

their meaningful pictures again by using the chalkboards and taking pictures. After they had the technique down in art class, they then went to their humanities classrooms.

The goal in humanities was to create Chalk Talk-style questions that could be translated into Spanish. Students worked with partners and teachers to develop a set of questions to be used for their Spanish-speaking interviews. They then visited the senior citizens at Centro, an agency in Minneapolis which serves the Latino community. During their initial interviews, they simply wanted to get to know their subjects and practice their Spanish questioning skills, so this first encounter was done at a very basic Spanish level. The students had prepared questions such as *¿Cómo se llama?* (What is your name?), *¿Dónde se nació?* (Where were you born?), and *¿Cuál es su libro favorito?* (What is your favorite book?)

When the students returned to their humanities classrooms, they worked on higher-level

Chalk Talk questions and translated those into Spanish. During a second visit to Centro they asked questions like *¿Qué consejos le daría a un extraño?* (What advice would you give to a stranger?), or *¿Cuál es su palabra favorita?* (What is your favorite word?). Once their subjects had answered those questions in Spanish, the students picked a favorite one and had the person write it on a chalkboard. They then took a photo of the person holding the chalkboard with the chosen statement. When students returned to school after this visit they worked on refining their photos in art class, making certain they understood what their subjects had said in Spanish. They then returned to Centro a final time in mid-December

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A senior citizen at Centro – *Yo soy una señora mayor de edad.* (I am an older woman.)

# Dancing, Grooving, and Moving

By Sarah Deschamps

## Interdisciplinary Education

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and offered their subjects the photo of their Chalk Talk. There was a lot of emotion and many strong feelings on the part of both students and senior citizens in the room as the photos were revealed.

“When Augustina saw the Chalk Talk picture it made her so happy, and I saw her smile for the first time” said Cole.

“It was really amazing to have this experience of speaking Spanish with Spanish-speaking people. I would really like to know more about Paola’s childhood. I wonder if by moving to the United States, Paola has found a different part of herself or if she feels the same,” wondered Audrey.

Rajni reflected, “I liked giving the seniors the pictures because I got to see the joy on their faces. It felt good to see them be happy and laugh. That was a great experience for me.”

For the final piece of the project students presented the process they used and their results at this year’s Martin Luther King celebration in January. This experience in art, humanities, and Spanish was one the students and the senior citizens at Centro will never forget. ●



Hannah Esparza and Jae Haile Phillips dancing with fifth and sixth graders.

**T**here was a complete transformation at Friends School when Latin dance instructor Jae Haile Phillips and his dance partner, FSM parent Hannah Esparza, hip-hopped their way into the school.

In November, Jae came to Friends School for a weeklong Latin dance residency. With Spanish teacher Veronica Guevara studying in Cuba for the week, it was the perfect time to bring in Jae and Hannah. They worked with all of our students, kindergarten through eighth grade, assisted by FSM aide Persida Cifuentes.

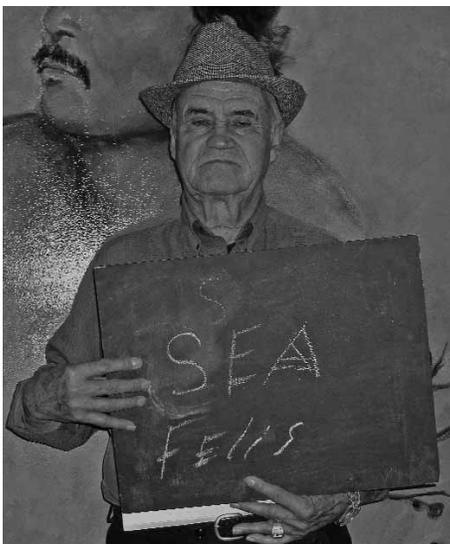
Jae began salsa dancing in 2004 while studying in Sydney, Australia. His experience includes directing, facilitating, and choreographing many after-school and youth programs around the Twin Cities. He teaches salsa and hip-hop classes at the Social Dance Studio, and has found a way to blend the two styles in his salsa and hip-hop fusion class. He is currently the choreographer for the Minneapolis Professional Salsa Team.

On the first day of the residency, students walked into class feeling anxious and nervous and asking questions like, “Do I have to touch anyone?” Jae immediately got their attention, welcomed everyone, started to learn their names, and captured their desire to move. His sense of humor, respect for the stu-

dents, and ability to showcase their growth made dance classes the buzz of the school. Students were thrilled and excited by what they learned and were disappointed if it was not a dance day. Lunchtime turned into dance practice, and any free time during the week was spent perfecting the hip-hop or salsa step they had learned that day.

Normally middle school students approach dance instruction with dread and heavy feet. Some older readers may recall middle school dance instruction in the gymnasium as one of the units we had to take. Friends School middle school students felt the opposite way. Students who normally would never dream of dancing with a partner not only danced, but were willing to dance with anyone.

They learned merengue, salsa, hip-hop, and fusion (a combination of salsa and hip-hop), with all of the steps and complexity that each of these dances demands. Students were right there with the instructors showing their steps. There were encouraging high-fives, a sense of accomplishment, and a feeling of disappointment when it all had to end on Friday. Jae and Hannah found a way to ignite the light in all of the children. As the students walked through the building that week, they were dancing with the stars. ●



A senior citizen at Centro – *Sea feliz* (Be happy).

# Friends School of Minnesota Is Blogging!

**F**SM has launched a new school blog. Each week, FSM teachers, staff, parents, alumni, and other community members are posting about Quaker education, progressive education, and community connections.

Here are some posts you might want to check out:

- What Is Community? by Janet Thometz & Sally Wiedeman
- Recess Every Day by Lili Herbert
- Exploring the Natural World with Kindergartners by Marshall Anderson
- Shane Zack, Bluegrass Mandolinist (an interview)
- Down by the Riverside: Middle School Math, Science and Humanities by Alex Liuzzi
- Why a School Bags and Sells Coffee by Lili Herbert
- Autumn in the Library by Emily Prebich
- H-o-o-o Loves Owls? by Sally Wiedeman

## Why a school blog?

### 1. A blog is a fresh, live face of the school in action.

Blog posts are quick snapshots of FSM life, highlighting what we do at this little Quaker school in Minnesota while joining the larger conversations

about education. More casual than the public face of our website, blogging invites us to let our hair down a bit as we write, post photos and videos, and link to other great resources.

### 2. School blog = marketing tool.

A school blog is great marketing! Its content draws people to our school website, connecting prospective families and donors to FSM while raising our school profile in the world of education. Other schools find social media is working for them, as well.

### 3. A blog reaches a larger, more diverse audience.

Most families find FSM through word of mouth. Social media such as blogging, Facebook, and Twitter are natural extensions of word of mouth but with a much wider reach. Articles spread over time as people link, repost, and tweet, which helps FSM get found by search engines. Do a Google search on "progressive education Minnesota" and see the results of one month of blogging!

### 4. Blogs are earth-friendly and cost less than other media.

Unlike brochures, newsletters, and postcards, which are expensive and

quickly out of date, blog articles don't require paper or delivery resources and they don't end up in the recycling bin after reading. Blogging is far less costly than traditional marketing. A little school with a little marketing budget can make a big impact on line.

### 5. Blogging builds community.

The blog is a place to share ideas and resources, and to participate in conversations about education, the arts, social justice, conflict resolution, environmental education, Quaker values, and more. Blogs bring together many voices, inviting comments from readers who offer other perspectives and new resources.

If you would like to be a guest blogger, let us know!

## How do I find the blog?

You can find links to blog posts on our school website's homepage at [www.fsmn.org](http://www.fsmn.org), or go directly to [blog.fsmn.org](http://blog.fsmn.org). You can subscribe there to receive new posts by email.

You can also keep up with current posts on the Friends School of Minnesota's Facebook page.

We are now on Twitter as well @FriendsSchoolMN and @FSMAdmissions. ● —Susan Nagel

## Environmental Education

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### Capture the Flag!

All of this fun stuff is thanks to the thoughtful work of FSM's Environmental Education Committee. The committee has articulated what each student should learn and experience at each grade level, and also works to provide professional development for staff to better meet EE goals. This year, noted environmental educator David Sobel will spend an entire day with faculty to explore our school's next steps in environmental place-based education. Dr. Sobel will present to the wider public the evening of March 19 here at Friends School. All are welcome!

A walk down the halls of FSM reveals our deep commitment to the goals of our EE program. Writing, art, photos, and graphs all related to the important goals of building awareness of and respect for our earth can be seen everywhere. This is a critical component in preparing students to embrace life, learning, and community with hope, skill, understanding, and creativity, with a commitment to the Quaker values of peace, justice, simplicity, and integrity. ●

Right: Will Steger meets with students at Crosby Farm.

Below: Students set a monarch butterfly free.



# Veronica Guevara Explores Modern Cuba

by Veronica Guevara

Cuba is now open to tourists from the United States. This November, I spent a week leading a group of adults from Minnesota on a visit to that island. My reflections during the week of that trip follow.

## Itabo, Matanzas, Cuba— 29 de noviembre 2011

*Buenos días!* It is early morning of our second day in Itabo and I am up with the *gallos*, who actually crow throughout the night. I am in the *comedor* of the *pension* where we are staying. It is connected to Santa María Virgen de Itabo, a small Episcopal church that Bishop Griselda Delgado del Carpio came to as a deacon in 1986. She said she cried when she first saw the church because it was in ruins at that time. You wouldn't know that now. It is fully restored and painted, and has a lovely garden surrounding it.

It's as if Bishop decided, "I will make a beautiful center where people can learn and grow in love." A vibrant community of volunteers keeps the sustainable garden project going. The church is now a lovely showcase for sustainable development, and people come here from all over to see this small jewel of hope in the Cuban countryside. I feel lucky to be here, and grateful to the Friends School for supporting my trip.

Yesterday was our first day working. We planted coffee in Favorito, a smaller town of 300 people. The Episcopal church owns the land that we worked and is turning it into another sustainable garden like the one in Itabo.

We rode to the site on a small school bus purchased by an Episcopal church in New York and sent down this August by Pastors for Peace. It is painted bright pastel colors, and reminds me of the small bus I drive for field trips and athletics at Friends School. We drive past tractors and horse-drawn carriages along a small single lane. Life is slower and simpler here. Everyone knows one another and waves and greets each other as they pass. In many ways it reminds me of Friends School, greeting one another by name as we pass.

Tomorrow morning we will plant tomatoes in the red, rich soil. It is fun working side by side with the crew from Minnesota—a librarian, an artist, a geography professor, a lay minister, a Spanish teacher, an IT manager, a writer, a student, a priest—and our new Cuban friends. I say "friends" because we've been friends since the moment we arrived.

It is a wonder to watch craftsmen working here. They have a quiet and careful way. We outsiders can't believe how they do it. Even with so few materials and tools they make it work. Enrique says that this is why Miami Cubans do so well after immigrating—they begin with nothing, but they are both hardworking and fearless.

We will visit the medical clinic on the corner, in which the doctor and nurse we interviewed work. We heard many great



Veronica (left) with members of the crew on coffee-planting day.



Spanish fort in Havana, Cuba.

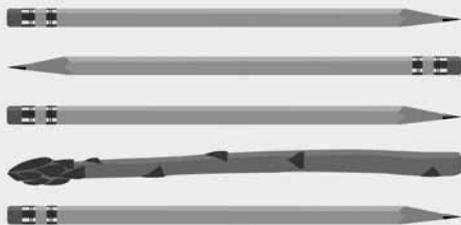
stories about the Cuban medical system, and now we hope to see that in action. We are also hearing many anecdotes to the contrary.

I am so grateful for this time and opportunity to be with Cubans working, eating, chatting, and celebrating. I am getting a sense of what the realities of their lives are. I have visited their homes, seen their gardens, their kitchens, living rooms, and bedrooms. I am humbled by the contrast with my own life and needs.

I am excited to connect my Cuban experience to Spanish learning at Friends School! I hope it will help motivate students, just as visits to Mercado Central and Centro in the Twin Cities have, to embrace the steps of learning to listen, speak, read, and write in Spanish with confidence. I hope they will also be inspired to learn more about Latin America, to seek out news about Cuba and other countries, to care about the struggles of those peoples' daily lives, and to understand how our choices and policies here in the United States impact Cubans and Latin Americans. ●

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### Editor-in-Chief

Sarah Deschamps, Development Director

### Editing, Proofing, Contributing Writers and Photographers

Marshall Anderson, Brad Bradshaw,  
Persida Cifuentes, Veronica Guevara,  
Lili Herbert, Kak Jarvis, Ken Lippin,  
Susan Nagel, Tim Sheldon, Melanie Spewock,  
Janet Thometz, Barbara Van Vreede,  
Sara Van Vreede

### Layout and design

Pat Thompson



**Friends  
School**  
OF MINNESOTA

1365 Englewood Avenue  
Saint Paul, MN 55104  
Phone: 651-917-0636 • Fax: 651-917-0708  
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