

MEANINGFUL LEARNING IN MEDICINAL PLANTS: supporting our community with an eye for a changing climate

Since the spring of 2022, Media-Providence Friends School, in partnership with Media Meeting, has been an official growsite for the African Diaspora Earth Care Coalition and Singularity Botanicals in Chester, PA. According to their website, “Singularity Botanicals produces medicinal herbs and offers multifaceted educational programs which support their cultivation and use.” Singularity Botanical, founded by Pamela Boyce Simms, “fosters plant medicine selfcare sovereignty to ensure that populations which are the most climate change-vulnerable have access to, and can produce their own natural medicine.” Simms is an evolutionary culture designer who is a veteran of local, regional, and national environmental resilience-building. She works with Quaker, Buddhist, and African Diaspora Earthcare and environmentalist networks.



There are several garden beds that surround the MPFS middle school building, brightening the playground with greenery and small, flowering buds. Students, aided by members of Meeting Media, and teachers Daryl Ballough and Karen Carbutt, helped to dig and fill the beds and plant the various herbs including holy basil, rosemary, skullcap, motherwort, calendula, and chamomile to be used in the tinctures, oils, and teas created by Singularity Botanicals.



Middle school students harvesting medicinal herbs with Media Meeting Member Wayne Peischl

“The eighth graders felt a strong sense of purpose and pride towards improving social and environmental injustices within their community. One student also shared that tending to the herbs was ‘plant therapy’ for him,” writes T. Daryl. Students actually chose to grow chamomile, after doing research and learning that in herbal medicine, chamomile tea has been used to ease anxiety and promote sleep. They also learned how they would need to harvest, dry, and treat the chamomile flowers in order to use as a tea.

In the fall of 2022, eighth grade students, with the guidance of Wayne Peischel and Greta Hudak and T. Daryl, began harvesting the herbs. “We have formed a meaningful, balanced, ongoing relationship with Wayne, Greta, Janet (Nicholson), and Pamela, founder of Singularity Botanicals,” writes Science Teacher Daryl Ballough.

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LETTER FROM The Head of School

The whole MPFS story matters: *the importance of Preschool - Grade 8 education*

When I think about what a Preschool - Grade 8 school should be, I see a place where students learn to be responsible, kind human beings. It's also where they develop a love of learning, and a solid foundation of who they are as learners. This is what I want for my own son, and this is what Media-Providence Friends School provides for our students.

Research has shown that these are the most pivotal years for young people to develop a love of learning and a love of school. We take great pride in having this be especially true at MPFS. Learning is best accomplished when students have a hand in the process, and as a Friends school, we believe strongly in that partnership.

The end result for our graduates are students who love learning and advocate for themselves in the classroom. This student is also compassionate, has a strong sense of self, and feels a responsibility to make the world a better place. Our graduates are chomping at the bit for the next chapter in their education, because they are prepared academically, socially, and emotionally.

Like in many aspects of life, this development takes time; it happens gradually and builds upon itself, year over year, as our students progress from Preschool - Middle School. It is an investment in time, and an investment financially for our families. And I whole-heartedly believe, there is no better investment one can make than in their children.



Jon Hall, Head of School

Choosing the experience of the full MPFS journey for your child is an investment that pays dividends; any alum or alum family will confirm this. Give us the time we need, and we will give your children the experience and preparation for the life they deserve.

What is The Friends Collaborative? Making Quaker education accessible

The Friends Collaborative. Increasing access to Friends education for more families

MPFS is one of the founding members of The Friends Collaborative (TFC), a Special Purpose Entity LLC formed in 2016 to secure tax credits offered through Pennsylvania's popular EITC and OSTC tax credit programs.

The EITC and OSTC programs were previously only open to corporate donors. Still, with the formation of organizations like TFC, qualified individuals now have the opportunity to receive tax credits while supporting MPFS.

The purpose of TFC is to foster the growth of Quaker Education by providing funding that makes Quaker education accessible for more families. TFC is made up



of Quaker schools across PA in partnership with Friends Council on Education. We have grown to support children at 20 Friends schools with over \$26 million in financial aid.

With this easy program, it only costs a dime to donate a dollar, participants receive a 90% tax credit. To learn more, contact T Cynthia, Director of Development, and secure your tax credits to benefit financial aid for MPFS students.

Co-Inventor and winner of Nobel Prize in Chemistry visits middle school science lab



Chemist Seva Rostovtsev gives a demonstration to middle school students in the MPFS science lab

MPFs Grades 7-8 students were fortunate enough to have the co-inventor and winner of this year's Nobel Prize in Chemistry visit and speak with them about his work with Copper-catalyzed Click Chemistry! It is customary with Chemistry Prizes, for the preceptor (Dr. Barry Sharpless), not the postdoc, to receive the award, but Seva has obviously contributed greatly to this field of study and advancement and has received significant recognition.

Seva Rostovtsev was born in Tula, Russia and received his undergraduate degree in Chemistry in 1996 at the Higher Chemical College in Moscow, Russia. He then moved to the United States and obtained an M.S. degree in Chemistry at University of Nebraska, Lincoln. He kept moving west and joined the Bercaw group at California Institute of Technology, where he worked on C-H bond functionalization with platinum and received his PhD in 2001. As a postdoc in the Sharpless lab at The Scripps Research Institute, Seva was one of the co-inventors of copper click chemistry. He joined DuPont Central Research in 2003 where he worked on a number of projects ranging from oxygen scavenging with laccases to synthesis of OLED materials. Seva moved to DuPont Crop Protection

in 2013. He is currently the Director of Discovery Chemistry at FMC Agricultural Solutions. He has published 9 papers and is a co-inventor for over 20 patents.

In his current role at FMC Agricultural Solutions, Rostovtsev uses chemistry to figure out how to deal with agricultural pests. For example, crop protection chemicals he's helped to create ensure that wineries or soybean farms in France are able to eradicate fungal disease that destroy crops. According to Rostovtsev, we lose up to 40% of potential food products every year due to pests. With the population boom, food insecurity is a real threat in many parts of the world. FMC works to combat this ongoing challenge within agriculture.

"I really like to invent something & see people use it in the world. It's a very collaborative field. (To make a new product) you may need a physicist, mechanical engineers, you need chemists... you cannot do it alone," said Rostovtsev about what excites him about his field. For example, he worked on OLED (organic light emitting diodes) technology, currently used in newer televisions, to provide superior quality.

MEET Michele Hill, Guidance Counselor

Our guidance counselor Teacher Michele Hill joined us for the 2022-23 school year and says she has felt the warmth of our community since first stepping foot through the doors at MPFS. Having a full-time guidance counselor at a small, independent school is unique and we are proud to be able to offer this support to our students. Read below to learn more about T. Michele!



Though this is T. Michele's first year at MPFS, she has been working in education for over 11 years. She has found MPFS to be a particularly special community and an enriching place to work.

"MPFS has been the most rewarding experience of my professional career. Working in an environment where I feel valued and appreciated day to day has made this first year so much easier. The students are so kind and greet me with a smile when they see me," writes T. Michele.

T. Michele received her undergraduate degree in Psychology from Neumann University and her master's degree in Education with a concentration in School Counseling at Wilmington University.

"I chose to be a guidance counselor after years of working within the mental health system and wanting to take my knowledge into the school environment to help children work through many issues that arise during the school day that can affect their learning process. I have always wanted to be in a career where I can make a difference," writes T. Michele.

T. Michele values the care with which faculty and staff at MPFS treat their students. "Helping students prepare for the next levels of their education is a job that each and every teacher here at MPFS takes on with such care and consideration for their students," she writes. During group guidance, T. Michele helps students develop coping skills, equipping them to handle challenges in the years ahead.

T. Michele grew up in Glenolden where she currently lives with her family. She has three children: Briannah, 21, James "Jamie," 15, and Ryan, 11. Michele and her family also have a dog named Lilo and two cats named Angel and Nani.

When she's not working at MPFS, T. Michele loves to sing and does it often – she even sings as a cantor at her church. She volunteers at many programs for her church as well as at her son's school where he performs in shows. She loves reading and going for nature walks. During summers, she enjoys spending time at the shore and being with family.

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"This has been such a satisfying adventure because of its environmental/social justice piece, as well as it gave us the opportunity to work collaboratively with members of Media Meeting," writes T. Daryl.

This on-going partnership with Media Media and Singularity Botanicals deepens our commitment to the

Quaker testimonies of stewardship and community. It also deeply resonates with the MPFS vision statement, "Meaningful learning, purposeful life." This service learning project, like so many of the cross-curricular service projects happening across grades at MPFS, emphasizes the connections between our academic curriculum and

the lifelong pursuit of knowledge that creates active changemakers. We hope this new mission statement resonates with you and your relationship with MPFS, and we encourage you to take some time to reflect on these words.

STUDENT RACIAL AFFINITY GROUPS: **justice, equity, diversity & inclusion** programming for our students

Editor's note: *this article was originally published in the student newspaper, The Window, written/edited by MPFS middle school students. The Window can be found at thempfswindow.com*

From the creators of the LGBTQ+ Affinity group last trimester, MPFS has brought to you the Racial Affinity Group, a group separated into two subdivisions to create support for POC members of MPFS as well as white allies.

Kina Nichols described what she does as a facilitator of the Racial Affinity Group and what she wants for the students:

We discuss topics pertaining to social identity, intersectionality of these identities, prejudice and discrimination, and activism to name a few...I think the students just appreciate having a brave space to openly discuss their experiences, opinions, and feelings pertaining to the topics we discuss. My goal is to facilitate a space where students feel comfortable to discuss such hard topics and engage in tough conversations to ultimately gain more awareness of the world we live in and the best way they can navigate the world to live a fulfilled lifestyle.

Having a space to share your thoughts, opinions, and personal experiences without being marginalized can indeed be very helpful.

Student Saya Spalding participates in the White Allies Affinity Group, which plans many interactive activities. "I feel that it's very important to learn that it's okay to be who you are and learn how to help others do the same," said Saya.

Humanities teacher and affinity group leader Teacher Sarah Alden sees the group as a space to discuss topics regarding race, diversity, justice and inclusion not just at MPFS but in the world around us. "We learn about institutional

racism, microaggressions, and identity in order to better understand the way we move in the world and how we can impact others... I think students feel interested in learning more about the world we live in and I hope it motivates them to work towards a more anti-racist school environment and the wider community."

T. Sarah goes on to say that she feels it is important for students to have these conversations and learn that it's okay to not feel comfortable doing so all of the time. "We are working towards creating a community of learners who are excited to engage in topics regarding race, gender, sexuality, and other forms of identity expression in order to create a braver and more inclusive space at MPFS," says T. Sarah. "Ultimately, our goal is that students will take what they learned in affinity groups and apply it to their everyday lives, to stand up to inequity and call out injustice in the wider community beyond their time at MPFS." Her response shows how dedicated she is to teaching students about this cause.

Through the anti-racist affinity groups, students will become aware of the discrimination within our country, and the rest of the world. Depending on the group, students can either become a better ally or find a safe environment in which to share experiences.

— *Juliet Morgan, Sixth Grade*



Students celebrate the installation of the MPFS Peace Pole in partnership with Media Meeting on International Day of Peace

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STEAM Week 2023

focused on renewable resources!
Students age 3 - grade 8 studied energy and how it is created, wind power, solar energy, reusing and repurposing items, the problems of fast fashion, and much more!
Visit mpfs.org/steam to learn more.

IMPORTANT DATES:

Spring Auction • April 21
Virtual Admissions Open Houses
April 21 & June 19
Eighth Grade Graduation • June 9
MPFS Fund Donation Deadline
June 30

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