

Montessori School celebrates Harvest Festival, 50 years



Erik Trautmann

Montessori School is celebrating 50th anniversary

Hour photo / Erik Trautmann The Montessori School 5th grader Marie Berliet and 6th grader Marcus Sang get homemade soup dished up by athletic director Jason Brasher during the Harvest festival as part of the school's 50th anniversary celebration in Wilton Thursday.

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By **MATT COYNE**

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WILTON -- Every Halloween, the Montessori School holds its annual Harvest Festival.

Nursery school students and middle schoolers at the Norwalk campus came to the Whipple Road building. They sang songs, including a school favorite, "Fall in New England." And they made and ate vegetable soup with each class contributing a vegetable to the soup.

But Thursday's celebration, one the Montessori School community looks forward to each year, had an added twist. In recognizing the school's 50th anniversary, students presented and buried a time capsule to be opened in 15 years time.

"As you can see, this is well sealed," said Interim Head of School David Blanchard, holding up the wide, silver cylinder for the students to see. "This is famous steel. It's supposed to last 100 years, so certainly it'll last 15."

Inside the capsule, the committee of fourth-graders who put it together included a picture of the school's soccer game, poems, and pictures of President Barack Obama and of staff and students out of more than 100 suggestions by students.

The time capsule will be buried in the center of the labyrinth, a brick structure in the front of the school. "I would hope they wonder what it was like, even if it's not that far into the future. They'd still probably want to know a little bit what it was like," said fourth-grader Zachary Williamson on future students opening the capsule.

In addition to celebrating the 50th anniversary since the school's small beginnings on a porch in Norwalk, Thursday was the 25th Harvest Festival. The 2013-14 school year also marks the 10th anniversary of the Norwalk middle school's inception.

Eighth-grader Francesca Bruni said she and her classmates understand the anniversary well. "It's definitely in the back of our minds a lot," she said. "We're doing a senior art project with a theme of the 50th year; it's kind of always in our lives and in our conscience."

For Francesca, it was a bittersweet day. Thursday was her 12th Harvest Festival, and while she finally got to take part as a leader, it was also her last.

"It's always been my dream ever since I can remember to be one of those middle schoolers who stand up there and dump in the vegetables (into the soup)," she said. "Today, my dream finally came true and I was able to do that and I was able to help with the singing. This is definitely a Montessori dream for me." That is by design, said Assistant Head of School and Director of Admissions Dana Eisenberg. A large part of Montessori pedagogy includes celebrating traditions and holding rituals. The school, she said, takes time to celebrate whenever appropriate.

"We celebrate beginnings, we celebrate closings, we celebrate our thankfulness for things at every turn," Eisenberg said. "I think (students) have a grasp on it because they have so many instances of understanding what happened before. There's a real appreciation of what we stand on."

