

# WILTON HIGH STUDENT GIVES BACK TO MONTESSORI EN ROUTE TO EAGLE SCOUT AWARD

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WILTON — A Montessori School alumnus is giving back to his old school with a new nature trail for current and future students to enjoy the 8-acre property he once loved to roam.

That alumnus is still a student himself — 16-year-old Sebastian van Eck attends Wilton High School and is applying for his Eagle Scout badge, but he still wanted to give back to his alma mater. On Tuesday, that school held a ceremony to thank him for his work.

"We have been blessed," said head of school Mary Zeman while addressing the entire school, which had gathered in the woods around the newly revamped fire pit for the ceremony. "I think everybody here has heard the story that a long time ago Sebastian was a Montessori School student, then he had an idea he was working to become an Eagle Scout, and he had to think of something he wanted to do for someone else. Sebastian had the idea to make our beautiful woods even more beautiful."

Eight-year-old Isabel Vlahakis read a thank you note to the Wilton teenager that said: "Thank you for

fixing our woods."

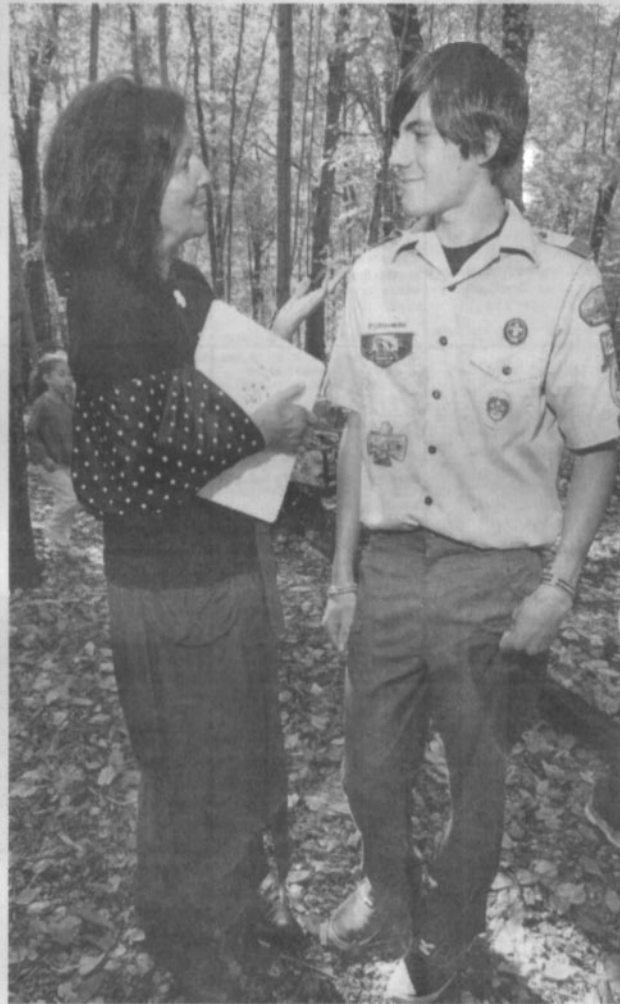
Ten-year old Michael Kimball presented Sebastian with a T-shirt with the word Civitas, this year's school theme, which means citizenship in Latin. Civitas at The Montessori School is a word that encourages citizenship and high regard for self, family and friends, as well as one's home, town, state, country and world. It was last year's theme as well, but it was so popular the school chose it again this year.

Cecilia Bersch, 8, and Raymond Jia, also 8, played the violin as students gathered and departed.

Sebastian, a member of Troop 125 in Wilton, said he was touched by the ceremony, but he just hopes the renovations will benefit the school. In addition to the fire pit area with new wooden benches, he created newly developed trails of wood chips outlined clearly with wood logs and wooden numbers hanging from various trees for identification purposes. He also created an identification system and a map of the area.

"I just happened to like this school so much, I thought it'd be nice to give back," he said. "Most of the other Eagle Scouts do nature things, so I thought why not give back here?"

Sebastian began his



Photos by Erik Trautmann  
**BLAZING A TRAIL** At left, from left, the head of the Montessori School in Wilton, Mary Zeman, congratulates boy scout and former student Sebastian van Eck following a ceremony honoring the Wilton teen for creating hiking trails behind the school. Above, Montessori School students Raymond Jia and Cecilia Bersch play violin at the Tuesday ceremony. Below, Zeman welcomes students an guests.



project in June and said he will know in approximately five months if his project will be accepted.

The Eagle Scout designation requires 100 or more hours on a project for a community, school or

church. Potential Eagle Scouts are not allowed to spend money on their projects — all services and supplies must be donated. Sebastian said Jeff Moore, a husband of a Montessori teacher, donated two loads

of wood chips.

Potential Eagle Scouts have to present their projects to the Boy Scout council for review at the district, local and National Council levels and keep an in-depth log of hours worked and

hours worked per volunteer.

"I just thought being an Eagle Scout is really impressive and the nature trail would really benefit the school," said Sebastian.