

# THE *Montessori* OBSERVER

*"This is education, understood as a help to life; an education from birth, which feeds a peaceful revolution, and unites all in a common aim."*

—Maria Montessori

Spring 2008



## INSIDE

Strategic  
Planning  
2

Microeconomy:  
Achieving  
Economic  
Independence  
3

Alumni  
News  
4



Outdoor  
Education  
6

The Arbor  
Peace Pole  
9

# O *Montessori* BSERVER

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## A Parent's View of Arbor's Strategic Planning

or

### *"How I Got Conned into One of the Best Experiences of My Life"*

by *Eli Flournoy*

Now, when someone comes to you and asks you to be co-chair of a sub-committee, under the auspices of an initiating committee, within a joint task force, reporting to the board of directors, in a year-long strategic planning process to lay out the future of your kids' school for about ten years or so after they're gone, you might say, "sure, I could do that," or you might say, "I'd rather stick toothpicks in my eyes for the next twelve straight months." But make no mistake: Larry Gramlich and Jan Deason are smooth operators, and when they signed up the most persuasive person I know (my wife, treat queen Jill Flournoy) to do the food for the kickoff event in 2006, I knew I was destined to be a strategic planning man.

My sub-committee: Arbor and the Greater Community. We set out to discover how Arbor views, and is viewed by, the community around us, and to lay out a vision for what role Arbor should be playing in that community. What a team! Led by my amazing co-chair Beth Bowers (who did all the work), we had parents and teachers; representatives of Emory and LaVista; doctors, lawyers, and business owners represented in our group. The best part of the whole process was getting to know what a diverse and fascinating group of people we have at Arbor.

What we discovered about Arbor blew me away. Arbor is an industry

leader. Not only is Arbor the largest and most respected Montessori school in Atlanta, our reputation is known nationally and even internationally. We figured Arbor has a role and responsibility as a neighbor to those who live in the area, as a business in the economy along the LaVista corridor, and as an example and resource for other schools in Atlanta. In studying each of these areas we kept coming back to one simple theme for how Arbor connects to its greater community: SERVICE.

Every class at Arbor has community service built into its curriculum; it's at the core of the Montessori philosophy. So, our committee's ultimate "strategic plan" proposal for Arbor and the greater community was to take this philosophy to the next level and "brand" Arbor Montessori School as a service-orientated institution. We can do this through expanding alumni, neighborhood, business and professional outreach. Arbor shares so many different challenges and issues with our community, such as the ever-present possibility of LaVista being widened to a four-lane highway. We need local stores to support Arbor's fundraising efforts, and they need our business. Schools in our area are incorporating Montessori methods, and students and families outside of Arbor can benefit from the vast expertise of our school and its alumni. The possibilities are endless.

*(continued on next page 10)*

# Microeconomy: Achieving Economic Independence

by Barbara Anne Fox

What were your early adolescent years like? Certainly you were aware of the physical changes of your body, and those of your peers. Did you also identify how annoyed you were with authority figures – especially your parents? How much you wanted to take on important work? Those lofty discussions of ideals and dreams of what you'd do when you were adults in just a couple of years kept you engaged way past the “bed-time” your parents tried to enforce.

And so it continues for the adolescents that we work with in our classroom each day. Thanks to the work of Maria Montessori, as well as the early pioneers in Montessori adolescent education, and to research from various specialists on adolescent development, Arbor's Middle School offers a prepared environment to address the developmental needs of these young adults-in-the-making. In part this includes the “microeconomy” – a smaller, more manageable, experience in the supply and demand of our market system. We include the microeconomy, not because a state or national standard requires it, but because Maria Montessori in *From Childhood to Adolescence* tells us “to put the adolescent on the road to achieving economic independence.”

From its inception in 1997, Arbor's program incorporated the best practices at the time and provided students an experience in business endeavors. The business opportunities were chosen by the students, allowing for them to serve their fellow students and acquire a sense of usefulness to the community. Proceeds were used to allow end-of-year trips to locations that extended the

studies of the classroom to the world at large. Students assumed responsibilities for managing these businesses as their skills developed.

Then in 2000 the Hershey Montessori Farm School in Huntsburg, Ohio initiated the “erdkinder” (land children) experiment to demonstrate the approach to adolescent education described by Maria Montessori. Soon a more formalized approach to the education of the adolescent, applying Montessori principles, began to crystallize. It became clear that the adolescent student benefits from producing work that is exchanged with the community.

*It became clear that the adolescent student benefits from producing work that is exchanged with the community.*

At The Farm School, it was easy to identify “occupations” of real work in which to incorporate scientific studies with the experience of the microeconomy. For example, work to build a chicken coop serves as a means to study the physiological needs of the chickens and how best to provide for them.

The chickens provide eggs to be sold at the market and engage the students in the production and exchange of goods. Dr. Montessori, in part one of the third Oxford Lecture, 1936, states: “Social life is not sitting in a room together or living in a city. It does not regard social relations. The essence is

that something is produced which is useful to the whole of society, and is changed for something else. It is production and exchange, which does not only bring in the people near to one, but those far distant. Division of labor enters into it too. Well, the youth should experience this in life. This is the secret of social life.”

Another point of crystallization occurs from participating in an enterprise that grows through reinvestment of earnings, thus providing insight into the mechanism of entrepreneurship. In our example of the chickens: as the demands of the community increase for more of the excellent produce from the farm, decisions must be made about how to meet these indicators of success. Does the farm add more chickens? Is the gain from sales sufficient to support expansion? Is the demand important enough to the community to continue expanding without profit from this endeavor while expanding another business that is more profitable? These are all excellent questions that any business must consider as they experience success or challenges.

The Farm School served as a model of what constitutes a microeconomy. We began to identify opportunities to implement a microeconomy at Arbor. In 2004 the Middle School joined the experiment as an urban model of the farm experiment, with an intention to demonstrate the global application of Montessori's work. The establishment of the Organic Garden in 2005 was the first step in moving our class businesses from the fundraisers of the past to the microeconomy of today. What we grow and harvest from the garden will supply produce for the  
*(continued on next page 11)*

# ALUMNI NEWS

**Harper Addison** writes, “Last year I spent a semester in Kenya studying ecology, wildlife management, environmental policy, Swahili, and doing research. We were stationed in southern Kenya, about 5 hours outside of Nairobi so that I got to wake up and look at Mt. Kilimanjaro every morning. According to the Kenyans, we were definitely in the bush. It was an absolutely amazing experience and I’m trying to figure out a way I can get back to Africa and hopefully do some more research. I’m graduating from Davidson in May with a BS in Biology and a minor in Southern Studies. In February I’m auditioning for a dance program with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. If I get the audition I’ll be moving to New York for the next couple of years, after which I’ll probably end up going back to law school or design school. If I don’t get the audition, I’ll take the year off, try to travel and do field work for students getting their PhDs or masters in biology and then go back to school. There isn’t much else going on other than enjoying the last semester of college and trying to figure out what I’m going to do after graduation.”

**Lauren Albrecht:** Lauren currently lives in Washington, DC where she works as the media intern at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. As a part of her work, she corresponds with journalists and policy makers throughout the country to ensure that they are given accurate and timely information. Her favorite part of living in DC? “I ride the train everywhere and never have to worry about paying for gas – it’s amazing!”

**Melina Baetti** writes, “I graduated Summa Cum Laude in May 2007 from the University of Georgia

with a dual degree in Public Relations and French and a minor in Sociology. I really enjoyed my time at UGA and was very involved as the President of the Hispanic Student Association and doing Public Relations for the UGA men’s basketball team. I’m living in Paris right now doing a full-time internship on the Worldwide team of Publicis Consultants, an international Public Relations firm under the Publicis Groupe. I work on the Champs Elysees, right next to the Arc de Triomphe! I love living in Paris and I’m having a great time. In the future I’d like to get my MBA, and continue traveling the world.”

**Lauren Deibel** has been at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington for the past four years, and is graduating in May with a degree in psychology. After graduation she plans to move back to Atlanta to attend nursing school at Emory or GSU.

**Lidia Hanevold** writes, “I’m engaged to be married in September, graduating in about a year and a half with a BS in psychology, and have a five month old son named Micah. Things are rockin’!”

**Lamya Khoury** writes, “I’m getting ready to start my final semester at Brown and graduate in May (!!). I’m majoring in psychology and working on a senior project on the association between early life stress and hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis abnormalities as a biomarker for depression and other mood disorders. As of now, I’m planning on getting a job doing research somewhere for a couple years (either with the group I work with now in Providence, at the NIH, or maybe in Atlanta but probably not), taking some pre-

med classes at the same time, and trying to clarify what the next step will be (MD, PhD, both?). Academics aside, I'm pretty involved in a group at Brown called Brown Outdoor Leadership Training (BOLT); it's a program for rising sophomores to go backpacking for a week in New Hampshire (a preventative tool of sorts against the sophomore slump), and I've been a group leader for a couple years now. The leader training is really intense and focuses on group facilitation and awareness, leadership skills (obviously), communication skills, etc. Really, it just makes you a better person, I feel. Anyway, I'm really excited to be a leader mentor this semester and I get to train a new class of leaders and hopefully lead a training trip in April!"

**Jessica Murphy** writes, "After leaving Arbor, I attended Paid-eia with a number of my Arbor classmates. I graduated in 2004 and attended Florida State University where I will be graduating in April with a double major in Public Relations and International Affairs. I've included a few highlights to fill in my college experience. While attending FSU, I had the opportunity to study abroad in Valencia, Spain for four months. I improved my Spanish, acquired a taste for paella and perfected the art of fiesta. This past summer I lived in the Ecuadorian Amazon with a Quechua tribe. I got in touch with my natural side by bathing in rivers, eating bugs and harvesting our own food (I never realized my Medicine Bow experience might actually come in handy). I also visited the Galapagos with my mom at the end of my trip where we saw Blue-footed Boobies (it's a bird, don't worry), warm weather penguins

and Darwin's finches. My travel experiences have inspired me to see more of the world so I am planning a post-graduation trip to travel around South America with friends this summer. I have spent the past two years working for the non-profit Volunteer Florida Foundation which has inspired me to pursue a MPA in non-profit management. I am taking a year off of school and moving back to Atlanta where I will be working and applying to graduate school. If anyone knows of a non-profit looking for a part time hire let me know!"

**Joanna Reid** writes, "I work at a suicide and crisis hotline, and I'm getting married in May, then my future husband (CRAZY to say) and I are moving to Washington, D.C. in the fall."

**Lauryn Saxe** writes, "I'm graduating from UGA in August with a BA in Public Health. Then I'm getting my master's in public health and going to nursing school to be a nurse practitioner."

**Lauren (Monacell) Timmons:** Lauren graduated Arbor in 1991, then went to Woodward Academy and Columbia University. She recently worked as Associate Producer for the movie, *Bonneville*, starring Jessica Lange, Joan Allen, and Kathy Bates. Lauren's sister, Heather, has her masters degree in Social Work, is currently living in Augusta, GA, and is getting married in September.

**Shelby Zimmer** writes, "I left Arbor in 1998 after 6th grade. I went to Paideia and graduated from high school in 2004. I took a year off and worked at a preschool, nannied, and applied to college. I knew I wanted to go to a women's college and I got a very gener-

ous academic scholarship to Agnes Scott, so I decided to stay close to home. At Agnes Scott I work in the Writing Center. The center offers free tutoring to all students on any type of writing from any class or for applications, etc. I love my job have made some really great connections with my coworkers as well as people I tutor. After major-hopping for a while, I've settled on History and am currently in London for my junior year at University College London. I didn't travel much last term, but I did manage to get up to Dublin to see my brother with the band, 'The Police' I don't know exactly what I want to do after graduation, but am pretty certain it will involve education. I, too, am really excited that there is more Arbor alumni activity. When I think of being a kid, all my memories are connected to Arbor. In fact, my two best friends to this day are Blythe Winchester and Maria Baetti, who were both in Emory I with me. I hope my children will be second-generation Arbor kids, but if I don't live in Atlanta, they will still definitely go to a Montessori school!"

**Notes from Steven Spellman, Principal of St. Pius X Catholic High School, January, 2008:**

Ten Arbor graduates were on the Dean's List, Principal's List, or Honor Roll last semester. "We are very proud of these students and their accomplishments. It was the excellent foundation they received at your school that has allowed them to achieve such distinction here at St. Pius X. Congratulations. What a wonderful job you all do at Arbor. We are thankful for the outstanding education and preparation you provide your students."

*Many thanks to Katie Payne, former Arbor student, for compiling the Alumni News.*

# Outdoor Education at Arbor

by Cindy Ragozzine

*It is crucial that we encourage development of a fruitful, positive relationship between the child and nature.*



A Montessori education is about possibilities. The prepared environment invites the child to explore and internalize academic challenges on his own terms, mastering concepts consistent with his own internal timeline. The child becomes aware of the power of his own natural unfolding and is then open to a world of limitless opportunities. This specially constructed environment also supports the development of a strong social individual, a person capable of understanding and expressing his needs for the most successful outcome.

Because this setting offers an unusually diverse scope of experience, it is difficult to view it as

limited. Yet children need more than what this carefully developed environment can provide, so it is important to give them an even wider, more varied field for exploration. The natural environment offers a place where every observation and introduction has the potential to yield countless opportunities for academic, emotional and spiritual growth.

For modern urban and suburban children experiences in nature are lessening as the natural environment itself is shrinking around them. Many children experience nature primarily through a television or computer screen and actual contact with nature is often unfamiliar and can be uncomfortable

or even upsetting. Because exploration of nature is rarely part of the play habits of contemporary children, it is crucial that we encourage development of a fruitful, positive relationship between the child and nature.

At Arbor great value is placed on giving children exposure to the natural world. Children here can still enjoy a real outdoor playtime – building forts out of leaves, pretending to be eagles or horses, or collecting acorns and sticks. Unstructured outdoor time is especially important for younger children as they establish themselves socially.

Outdoor work is an extension of the classroom at every

level. Even the youngest primary children can be spotted on the patio sweeping leaves or watering plants. Gardening is a popular work choice that allows children at different levels to work together towards a common goal. Again, the benefits are multifold: children learn cooperation, develop concentration, get exercise and gain greater understanding of the origins of the food on which they depend.

For many years Arbor students have benefited from an off-campus outdoor program run by Mark Warren. Children in upper  
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*A Montessori education is about possibilities.*



*Outdoor work is an extension of the classroom at every level.*

elementary go camping at Mark's Medicine Bow and absorb from a skilled naturalist the history and diversity of our local flora and fauna. They learn to respect the life of the natural world when immersed in natural surroundings. This is more than an education in botany and zoology; it is the cultivation of an awareness of the value of life on our planet.

A Montessori education is about possibilities. Our outdoor program isn't a superficial exposure to the outdoor world. The purpose of Arbor's program is to plant the seed of appreciation for the quiet, infinitely complex natural world which supports us. To elevate the value of this world is an attempt to maintain the true goal of education-enriching the soul of the child.

*Facts about Arbor's Upper Elementary Outdoor Program at Medicine Bow:*

Class camping trips and optional Parent/Child weekends are held at Medicine Bow, 35 acres of wooded land near Dahlonega and adjacent to the Chattahoochee National Forest. The land offers a variety of native plant and animal habitats for exploration and study. Mark Warren's house is on the property and assures easy access to shelter and telephone in case of emergency.

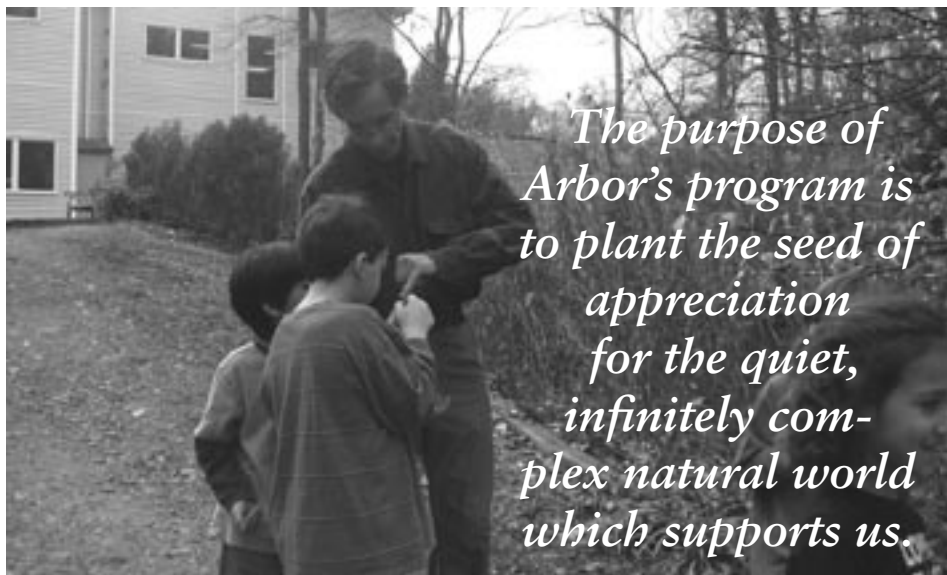


Small groups of children spend three days camping in the North Georgia mountains, once in the fall and again in the spring of each year. Students receive instruction in outdoor safety, botany, native animals and their habitats, archery, canoeing, and the uses of native plants for food, medicine, and crafts. They also learn individual and cooperative responsibility in packing their own gear, providing their own shelter and preparing their own meals. *Sixth Year Trip to*

*Cumberland Island:* The sixth year students spend four days camping on Cumberland Island, studying the ecology of Georgia's barrier islands. *Sixth Year River Trip:* The sixth years celebrate three years of canoe training with a whitewater river trip from base camp at Medicine Bow.

*Parent/Child Weekends:* These weekend trips offer parents a special way to spend time with their children. Intergenerational learning activities and games give students an opportunity to show parents what they have learned in the Outdoor Program.

One of Arbor's Upper Elementary teachers or aides accompanies the children on all Outdoor Program trips. The programs are lead by Mark Warren, who has been working with Arbor since 1986. Mark served for ten years as a naturalist and environmental educator for the Georgia Conservancy. He is the author and illustrator of *Magic in the Woods*, and designer of the American Wilderness Awards. The National Wildlife Federation has named Mark a Georgia Conservation Educator of the Year. 🌿



# The Arbor Peace Pole

*By Olivia Naegle, 7th year, Arbor Middle School*

This past fall, Arbor celebrated 100 years of Montessori by deciding to purchase a peace pole. A peace pole is recognized internationally as a symbol of peace. It is a four or six-sided pole that normally stands about 3 meters tall; the pole is made of environmentally friendly materials. In order to

get our peace pole we had to get a committee to be in charge.

The committee of the Middle Schoolers was formed. The committee went to the Peace Pole website, looked at all the possible languages, and different stain options for the wood. After showing our teacher, Jacqui Miller, the

website, we came up with a list of languages to give to each class. With the list we asked each class to vote on which eight languages they wanted the most. After Middle school voted, we collected the results from all of the classes and ran the ideas by the Diversity Com-  
*(continued on next page)*





mittee. We came up with Swedish, Swahili, Cherokee, Chinese, Urdu, Spanish, English, and Hebrew. The languages would say, “May Peace Prevail on Earth.”

Next, we needed money to buy the peace pole. We asked each class to find some way to collect money and other contributions. For example: Kate’s class had a bake sale and our class had each student bring one dollar in to school. After the \$275 was collected, we ordered our peace pole.

After five weeks, our peace pole finally came. We started planning the ceremony and then planted our peace pole in the ground.

About two days after the pole was planted, we had our ceremony. All of the classes came, except for the Emory campus; they had their ceremony at a more convenient time (about a week later). Several

people from the Middle School, Upper Elementary, one from Lower elementary, and also one visiting student from Peru volunteered to say the languages at the ceremony (which I think was a nice touch). After they spoke the languages we sang three songs: Teaching Peace (led by the primary classes, which was, of course, adorable), *Down by the Riverside*, and *Imagine*.

Our peace pole currently stands out by the carpool line in the small garden island. Our peace pole teaches peace whenever someone walks by. I hope that will last for years to come. 🌱

## Strategic Planning *(continued from page 2)*

All this, and we were just one of six task forces, along with: Structure, Governance and Administration; Arbor’s Montessori Community; Facilities and Programs; Communications and Marketing; and Funding. I encourage everyone

to read the extraordinary ARBOR MONTESSORI SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLAN, “Firmly Rooted, Ever Growing,” approved by the Arbor Board of Directors on December 11, 2007.\* Although my family is in its last of eleven years at Arbor,

it was a privilege to have the opportunity to help shape the future of this great school.

\*You can find Arbor Montessori School’s Strategic Plan on our website, [www.arbormontessori.org](http://www.arbormontessori.org), under Community—Parent Resources. 🌱

# Microeconomics *(continued from page 3)*

newly established Middle School Market as well as for the food service businesses of Coffee House and Pizza Day.

Our students have planted asparagus in our garden with Walter Reeves, attended a Sustainable Atlanta Roundtable, shared garden produce with Alice Waters at a CDC event, and some have read Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*. They double dug, rotary tilled, and constructed raised beds in which to sow and reap the benefits of their labors. As we explored the options for the Market, we visited the Decatur Farmers' Market to get a sense of the kinds of goods that the customers we serve expect to find. We also enjoyed sampling the products to understand the competition!

And as ideas emerge for ways to reach out to the community through the Middle School Market, new "occupation" studies are being planned. The service to the community of the very first business, Pizza Day, continues to be a mainstay of the microeconomy. But now, instead of funding the end of year trip, the funds from the businesses are reinvested in the needs of the business to provide better support for future work in the microeconomy – just like a "real" business would do.

As an example, in an occupation last year, a group of students studied the requirements for the businesses as they made plans for the kitchen redesign. This year the class decided to commit \$6000 of profits from last year and the anticipated profit of \$6000 from the current year toward the kitchen renovation. Over the winter break, Phase I of the renovation was completed. With bigger, better ovens and better refrigeration, a good crop of tomatoes and a cooktop to allow for canning, maybe 2008-2009 will see a few Arbor Middle School pizzas making their

way into your child's classroom.

As we developed the vision of the microeconomy, we identified a need to organize our businesses around a unifying focus. Given the overwhelming fascination the adolescent has with food, the direction to provide nutritional sustenance from Montessori, and the needs of our time for a return to a "slow food" focus, we found ourselves creating a program aligning with the well known "Edible Schoolyard" and principles from the Center for Ecoliteracy. Not only are we able to find endless opportunity for study in the work of the garden, food safety, nutrition, and now, honey bees, but we are connecting to a groundswell of attention around local, organic food, community gardens, and a focus on nutrition. Our timing could not have been better.

At this point it is relevant to share details of the organization and project Arbor collaborates with in Project 2012. The following comes from NAMTA's website:

*The NAMTA Center for Montessori Adolescent Studies (NCMAS), which opened in June, 2004, represents the culmination of NAMTA's 27 years of Montessori adolescent leadership. The work of the NCMAS is to establish program design and validity based directly on the educational syllabus or framework suggested by the writings of Maria Montessori found in the Appendices of From Childhood to Adolescence. Project 2012 is an eight-year plan, working with many schools, to consolidate and define a universal syllabus or framework for ages 12-18 as suggested by Dr. Montessori.*

*In the last quarter of 2004, The Hershey Foundation, Mrs. Orcillia Oppenheimer, and the Dekko Foundation have committed to the funding of Project 2012 over the next eight years for the sake of Montessori secondary school reform.*

*Project 2012 activities include:*

- *Three adolescent colloquia (think tanks) of AMI trainers and practitioners: every third year, beginning in 2005 (October 6-9)*

- *On-site consultations for start-up and evaluation of Montessori adolescent programs*

- *Indexing of archives and publication of a history of Montessori thought on the adolescent plane of development*

- *Connection with other planes of development for "whole-school" implementation*

- *Facilitation of a consortium of "Montessori" high school experiments*

- *Development of a Montessori high school in relation to a farm school with full documentation*

- *Continuation of NAMTA's summer professional development event, A Montessori Orientation to Adolescent Studies (Ages 12-18)*

- *Adolescent research from outside the Montessori community in order to facilitate a dialogue with the national adolescent reform movement*

- *Founding of The Montessori High School at University Circle in Cleveland, Ohio."*

I cite this to help the reader understand the importance of the work the middle school students are experiencing. Montessori writes, "We might call it a 'school of experience in the elements of social life.' And we most certainly do!

The work is real, it's hard, it's rewarding, and it's fun. The students take pride in their contributions to their community and have a sense of what it takes to share in the work ahead. You can rest assured that as you participate in this microeconomy by participating in Pizza Day, Coffee House, Arbor Store, and the Middle School Market you are contributing to the development of the adolescents in our lives. 🌱



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