

ME Alumni

WELCOME

Our alumni event on March 31st was held on a warm clear evening, and we were fortunate to have David Gonski AC as our guest speaker. The friendly atmosphere is captured in the photos on this page. If you missed it, we hope you'll make it next time.

I was prompted during that evening to think about what enduringly defines this school, and the gift of this role is that I hear how our alumni view their time here after they have experienced other schools, and simply more of life, up to 30 years later.

I consistently hear the following themes:

- It's the only school that taught me to value and respect each person as they are, completely, regardless of what they are good at or whether or not I like them.
- I learned how to treat people, and I learned how to value other people's feelings, the way I valued my own.
- It made me very independent about my choices.
- There are great character traits in all the people I know through Montessori East; kindness and a quiet confidence.

These comments support the rounded and balanced approach to the nurturing of the whole child.

Enjoy reading about our ME Alumni. Keep in touch on Facebook and Instagram, and we look forward to seeing you soon.

Felicity Jensen
ME Alumni Coordinator

2016 ALUMNI CELEBRATION



Ellis Silove, Sam Goodman & Chad Martin



Letitia Sutherland, Carol Clayton-Vincent, Lou Pollard, Louise Healey, Silvia Von Amin, Jodi Lonstein



Yuki Sutherland-Spittle & Edward Worthington



Principal Bill Conway, David Gonski. By kind courtesy Wentworth Courier. Photo by Robin Amadio.



Mona Bhan & Georgina Byron



Jane Dobson, Sam & Tim Bassett



Susan Chahwan & Claudia Koch-McQuillan



Mia Collis & Vashti Tregonning



Paul Jensen, Joe Kouper, Izzy Jensen & Jacqui Kouper



Sahil & Anish Sharma

The 2016 Alumni Celebration was held at the Bronte Surf Lifesaving Club on 31st March, with guest speaker David Gonski AC.

ME Foundation

A New Era for the ME Foundation as Jackie Vidor hands the chair to Nick Tobias.



Jackie Vidor & Nick Tobias

FROM JACKIE:

It was 5 years ago that I wrote to our Montessori community to introduce our newly formed ME Foundation!

It was a long held dream to establish a Foundation for our school; to develop a structure that would support the goals of Montessori East and bring our past families back in touch. Today we have an actively engaged ME Alumni of over 600, among them my children Harry, Zak and Sabrina, and I am proud to say that our alumni community has helped raise over \$200,000 for the ME Foundation.

It has been a great privilege to have chaired the ME Foundation for this period and it is with mixed feelings that I am stepping down from this role. Our board members: Simon Bassett,

Peter Shorthouse, Nick Tobias, Raji Sivapalan and Sandra Fairfax have been incredible to work with and we have achieved so much together. I am happy to say I will continue to be part of this team as a board member.

I am so very pleased to hand over to Nick Tobias as my successor. Nick is an experienced leader who is passionate about Montessori education and Montessori East. Under his guidance the ME Foundation will continue to flourish and work towards its goals of a robust scholarship fund and a permanent campus where our grandchildren can reap the benefits of our current efforts. Thank you to all families who have supported the ME Foundation along the way, in kind and financially. Your contribution is always greatly appreciated.

FROM NICK:

On behalf of the whole Montessori East community I thank Jackie for her vision, enthusiasm and focus in building the Foundation for the school over the past five years as founding chairperson. Her deep love for the school is an inspiration, and I promise to do my best to carry out my new role with the same love and professionalism she has. It is an extraordinarily exciting time for Montessori East and I look forward to sharing that journey with you all.

School of the Future Project

At the March ME Alumni event we announced our intention to find a new site for the very long term for Montessori East. Our plan is to extend our current preschool and primary school and include a high school, teacher training facility and a place for parents to connect with our community.

We have commenced a search, and while this continues our energy goes into making a documentary that will be a valuable insight into

the uniqueness of Montessori and why this type of education is vital in our times. It creates a way to share our ambition and vision with others - reaching the broader community of people who may share our vision of the future of education. We'd like to sincerely thank those who have contributed to the documentary project for making it possible.

If you missed the March event, an excerpt of David Gonski's speech is here: <http://bit.ly/20tMnXd>

Reconnecting with Our Favourite Teachers

ALISON SMITH

Vaucluse and Bondi (Ocean Street) Preschools (1982-91)

Alison taught for five years at our Vaucluse Preschool, and was then the first directress of the Ocean Street, Bondi Preschool where she taught for a further five years, having been appointed to the role at age 25! Bondi was very close to her heart as she saw it grow from the ground up. During this time Alison became the President of the Montessori Teachers Association of Australia.

Alison has since lived for many years in Trinidad & Tobago, and in December 2015 moved to Auckland, NZ, with her Kiwi husband, who she met in Trinidad, and with whom she has an eleven year old son.

While living in Trinidad Alison became a part time DJ, and a Montessori teacher trainer.

Eventually she started a new career in advertising, and after five years in an advertising agency as the audio/visual producer, started her own TV production/event management company; Smith & Smith Productions Ltd. This was sold to relocate to Auckland.

Recently Alison caught up with one of her past students in Auckland, Caris Garrett, which she said was great!



Standing Bronwyn King, Raji Sivapalan, Jacqui Sole.
Sitting Lilly Kuruvita, Alison Smith

ME ALUMNI TODAY

Monique Pratten

1980-1982 Montessori East, Vacluse
1983-1995 Ascham School
1996-1997 Diploma of Jewellery Design, Sydney TAFE, Enmore



ME Alumni: What do you remember about your time at Montessori East?

Monique Pratten: We rode to school on my mother's white bike, with Mum cycling and me on the

back. I remember each day on arrival at school, we all sat and discussed what we would do that day. I always loved the clay, painting, and anything artistic, colourful and creative. I enjoyed stories and the afternoon rest. I remember the puzzles, especially the maps, and particularly the big world map.

MEA: What are you doing now?

MP: After a few years of travelling and experimenting with designs at Paddington Markets, I started Pratten (www.pratten.com.au) with my sister Justine in 2003. We design colourful bags, wallets and jewellery, and have them made. We wholesale and sell online, supplying retailers in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Dubai. The business involves a lot of travel to trade shows, and to source materials and visit manufacturers. I also have an 11-month old daughter, Toni Bee Troxler, who is half Swiss.

MEA: Toni's arrival might make some of the travel a little less easy?

MP: Yes, definitely! Our travel includes China, and we go to places most people wouldn't get to see. I love being able to see other ways of life when we go away.

MEA: Is there anything you value now about your Montessori experience, or that influenced your choice of study or work, or your experience of them?

MP: We were always encouraged to be creative at Montessori, which suited me well, and may well have influenced my choice of a career in design. We were also encouraged to think about and plan what activities we would choose. Later I went to Ascham, where the Dalton Plan demands organising your own time, so I was already used to that, and many of the girls weren't. It's also useful in my work; I like being my own boss.

MEA: Do you have any memories of Montessori East you'd like to share?

MP: Yes. I clearly remember being a sheep in a nativity play. I remember it because when I was a child my mother made me so many beautiful costumes, but this one was so plain; just a sheepskin draped over my back and tied around the middle! It was probably the most appropriate thing, but just didn't feel like a 'real' costume - the designer in me showing already!

QUICK CATCH-UPS

Olivia Breuer (18)

Vacluse Preschool 2000-2 E: olivia.breuer9@gmail.com

Olivia was dux of Moriah College last year and is excited about moving to the USA in August to study at the University of Pennsylvania. Her major will be PPE (Philosophy, Politics & Economics), and she wants to follow this with studying Business at Wharton Business School.

Olivia loves yoga and is a keen skier, touch footballer, and debater. She values Montessori as a good balance between comfort, learning to be self-directed, and she values being guided to her strengths; especially puzzles and problem solving.

Before she heads to the USA, you might be served breakfast by Olivia if you drop in to the restaurant at the Watsons Bay Hotel.

Harry Staub (22)

Vacluse Preschool, Bronte & Bondi Primary 1997-2004 E: staub_@hotmail.com

Harry recently spent a semester studying fashion at the University of Creative Arts, Epsom, near London. He found his time abroad challenging and exciting, and he recommends the experience of an exchange program in a foreign education system. It broadened his understanding of fashion and inspired and motivated him to progress his skills further.

Harry says the independent, self motivated attitude to learning which he gained through his Montessori education, has fostered his ability to overcome challenging obstacles with a smile on his face.



Olivia Breuer with her parents, Jodie & Tony.



Harry Staub

ME ALUMNI TODAY

Michael Trollip (19)

1999-2007 Montessori East
2008-2014 Reddam House (with Year 9 at Timbertop, Geelong Grammar)
2015 Gap year
2016 University of Melbourne, Bachelor of Science
E: michael.trollip8@gmail.com



ME Alumni: How was the transition from Montessori East to your new school?

Michael Trollip: Moving to Reddam was a fairly smooth transition. Now that I look back I feel that eight years in the unique environment of Montessori meant that I was ready for the academic and social challenges that a new school brings.

MEA: What do you value most about your Montessori experience?

MT: Several things. I think that one of the core principles of the school was that all people are valued and treated with respect. Everyone, from the most senior staff member to the youngest pupil is listened to and taken seriously. This sort of environment gave me the confidence to develop my interests, with support around what I was doing. An example that I always think of was that I really enjoyed maths and was not only allowed to pursue as many maths problems as possible, but was encouraged to as well.

MEA: What have you been doing since leaving school?

MT: I'm at the University of Melbourne, studying for a BSc. I'm unsure where I want to head with it but have always found maths and science interesting. Melbourne is a great place to study for students and I'm really enjoying what the city has to offer. Last year I took a gap year. I saved up working for over two years at the highly prestigious Harris Farm, Bondi Junction. I then spent three months in Canada, before backpacking through Europe. Travelling was a great experience; it gave me exposure to the enormous amount the world has to offer and reinforced how lucky we are to have grown up in Australia.

MEA: How did you consider that your Montessori experience influenced your choice of tertiary study or other pursuits, or your experience of them?

MT: Montessori education encouraged me to do what I enjoy, and to trust my judgment. It's given me the confidence to pursue areas that I find interesting, and let me be comfortable with that choice.

MEA: Has your Montessori experience influenced the person you are today?

MT: Yes. Montessori taught me so much more than simply how to read and write. The school went out of its way to have us treat others with respect, and act out of kindness and decency. I remember this from my earliest days at the preschool with Raji. I am so lucky to have learnt from her at such a young age, and that still resonates very strongly with me today.

MEA: Do you have any more memories of Montessori East you'd like to share?

MT: One of my favourite memories was one day; there was a sighting of a Minke whale at Parsley Bay. Instead of staying inside, we got to go down to see it. We were even in the newspaper. I remember the cameraman told us all distinctly to not point at the whale in the photo. I still pointed.

QUICK CATCH-UPS

Robbie Chapman

Mother of Camilla, Thomas & Olivia
Montessori East 1988-92 & 1996-2001 (Caulfield Montessori, Melbourne 1992-6)
E: robbie.wellness@gmail.com

Many of you will know Robbie as a kinesiologist, but she is also passionate about teaching Kundalini Yoga. Using asana, pranayam and mantra, she sees this beautiful practice as an opportunity to allow the mind to settle, drop deeply into the self and be with our soul. Robbie offers kinesiology and yoga in Bellevue Hill and Double Bay.



Robbie Chapman

Saxon Strauss (26)

Vacluse Preschool 1993-5
E: saxonstrauss@outlook.com

Saxon moved to England after leaving Reddam House in 2008. Since then he has been busy studying, and travelling during breaks. He completed a BSc. in Mechanical Design & Manufacture Engineering, and then moved to Glasgow, which he loved, and graduated there with a BNursing last year. After four months in Germany, Saxon has recently returned to Sydney to live.



Saxon Strauss