



2022

The Oak Grove Owl

A Newsletter and Annual Report for the Oak Grove Community



EXUBERANT ENGAGED EAGER

Nurture the child.
Empower the student.
Unleash the potential.



Thoughts from the Head of School

Dear Oak Grove Friends and Supporters,

Collective Effervescence, a term coined by sociologist Émile Durkheim in the early 20th century, refers to the sense of energy and harmony people feel when they come together in a group around a shared purpose. We feel collective effervescence as teammates on a field during an exciting game, at a concert when an entire crowd starts singing along to the same song, when standing in ovation with fellow theatergoers after a particularly moving play, and even when banging pots and pans out one's window to express appreciation for essential workers.

Until March 2020, many of us took for granted that we generally found some sort of collective effervescence at least once a week, according to Dr. Adam Grant, organizational psychologist at Wharton School of Business. In the early months of the pandemic, most of us quickly discovered that although watching a comedy special on Netflix lightened our spirits, and having a Zoom happy hour gave us valuable face time with friends and family, they really didn't bring the same joy as when we were able to share delight in the same space together. Even the most introverted introverts, who recharge through solitude, found that during pandemic times they experienced increased feelings of anxiety, stress, and loneliness, said Dr. Grant in 2021. As the pandemic turned endemic, toward the end of the 21-22 school year, I noticed that many of us craved gathering once again, but our social muscles had atrophied a bit. We needed to be intentional about re-establishing routines for connection and community after many months of solo joy-seeking.

For me, this school year has been about creating opportunities for the Oak Grove community to find themselves in the midst of collective effervescence after several years of significant isolation and distance.

At the beginning of the year, we had a family campout at school, complete with glow-in-the-dark accessories, s'mores, and flashlight tag. In December we were able to hold our Winter Solstice Concert indoors, packing families and friends into the Upper Elementary classroom amidst a sea of twinkle lights and a pit band to accompany the students' angelic voices. Just before Valentine's Day, we resurrected the OGMS Family Social and Talent Show at a beautiful space in the historic Kirby Mill Building, when I, alongside many parents, wrestled a lump in my throat during all of the brave, brilliant student performances. And just this week, we were able to once again serve pancakes to children in pajamas to celebrate Read Across America Day and Dr. Seuss' birthday. I am still waiting for the moment at a school event when my heart doesn't soar, realizing we've pulled it off. We're gathering! Our people are showing up! And we're laughing and connecting and celebrating joy together! Collective effervescence, made even sweeter because we're now aware of its ephemeral presence.

My most valuable pandemic lesson is this: that community isn't built on accident. A thriving community is created by hardworking humans who cultivate moments for collective joy and connection. And when those moments happen, and friends and neighbors show up for each other time and time again, we feel a sense of belonging, of truly being seen and valued while more deeply understanding those around us.

Although we needed to be intentional about creating opportunities for gathering and celebrating this year, we did not need to worry about reviving the spirit of the Oak Grove community - that never faded. Attending outdoor concerts, our parents still beamed with pride as their children confidently took their place on stage. Exquisitely designed Montessori lessons still ingrained in our children the values of self-motivation, curiosity, and problem solving, even while their teachers taught through a mask. And a socially distanced Hibernation Festival may have not included the traditional potluck meal, but the afternoon was reliably chock-full of fall fun and frolicking!

In this, Oak Grove's 41st year, I would like to invite you back to our thriving community. If you find yourself in the neighborhood, please pay us a visit. Join us for our reimagined annual fundraiser, the OGMS Spring Fling and Online Silent Auction, on May 6th. Save the date for our Second Annual Young Alumni Event on June 24th. Connect with us on social media, or even drop us a line to let us know what you're up to. **Collectively effervesce with us at Oak Grove!**

Thank you, most sincerely, for your support of Oak Grove Montessori School. As we have continued to intentionally rebuild post-pandemic, your unwavering belief in our mission has allowed us to continue the crucially important work of educating the young people who hold the promise of our collective future.

Yours in community,

Brooke

BROOKE HOPKINS,
HEAD OF SCHOOL



...Where are They Now?

For over 40 years, Oak Grove has educated hundreds of students. These alumni leave our school and join a talented group of individuals that are leaders in so many different fields. Time and time again, we hear from our alumni how their Montessori education, at Oak Grove, prepared them with the skills needed to greet the next chapters of their lives. Most notably, they recognize that Oak Grove's curriculum and environment fostered essential communication skills, time management skills, and collaborative work abilities that contribute to their ongoing success.

The research continues to demonstrate, unequivocally, that an educational setting based on student-centered learning, high levels of engagement, peer-teaching, collaboration, and problem-solving, yield the most positive long term results for students. The multi-aged Montessori classroom and three-year cycle offer a curriculum that prepares our children with the skills they need to greet their futures with excitement and anticipation.

The most meaningful way to know about the outcomes of an Oak Grove education and experience are to hear directly from our graduates themselves. We asked three more graduates to share some thoughts about their time at Oak Grove. We asked about their lives after Oak Grove, their hobbies and interests, their real-world vision, and about how their time at Oak Grove has influenced their journey.

PROFILE *What are our graduates doing now?*

REAL-WORLD VISION *What is important to our graduates?*

IMPACT *What habits, skills, character qualities do our graduates trace directly back to their time at Oak Grove?*

Former students and families are vital to the stewardship of the Oak Grove community. You serve as an integral support system for the school and help us paint a vivid picture of success for our current and future families. We are committed to broadening and building alumni relationships; we want to hear from you and want to know what you are doing now! Please email, call, or stop by. We would love to swap stories and keep you connected.

Hannah

Where are you now?

After doing some international traveling immediately out of high school, then going to college in Rhode Island, I've been back in Connecticut! My true loves in life are baking/cooking, spending time outdoors and spending time with friends and family. If I'm not doing any of those things, I'm probably at work! I've been working for the past 3+ years at a local Medical (and recently now also Adult-Use) Dispensary, where I manage patient intake and the front-of-house team. I plan to continue to combine my passion for food with my passion for cannabis as the industry continues to grow in Connecticut, and I know my future holds more opportunity within this new(er) field!

If you could change anything in the world, what would you change?

That's a loaded question. Apart from the obvious (eliminate world hunger, achieve world peace, etc.), I would probably want to change the mentality of society as a whole. Everything everywhere is continuing to speed-up and hyper focus on instant gratification, in virtually ever aspect of life, and I think slowing down and enjoying the little things is SO important. Before we lose that ability entirely, I think the concept of "slow living" should be universalized.

What habits, skills, and character qualities do you trace directly back to your time at OGMS?

I credit so much of who I am today to my formative years at OGMS, and I think the last question I answered I think is evident of that. I truly believe that much of my empathy, out-of-the-box thinking, and creativity (and the ability to express it) are still present today because of how that was nurtured in me as a student at Oak Grove. I celebrate being different in so many ways, and the privilege of getting to have gone to Montessori school is one of them!

Academic Transition

The academic transition was a bit of a shock at first, but I felt as though I acclimated quickly. I had above-average grades throughout my public school career, but certain subjects became more difficult for me after OGMS. As a visual learner, math became trickier without the assistance of Montessori tools, but subjects like geometry I would continue to excel at because of the visual aids.

Social Transition

Like the academic transition, everything was a bit of a shock at first, but again- I felt as though I acclimated quickly. I had friends in almost every "group" or "clique" in public school, and always felt particularly at home with the artistic/alternative crowds, all of which continued to contribute to my individuality and uniqueness as a person (again, something I have always prided myself on).



How does the mission and philosophy (Respect, Independence, Engagement) of OGMS still guide you today?

I think those core values are what get me through most things in life, whether consciously or not! My independence has carried me to new places and experiences, where my engagement has then led me to new people and connections with whom I have the utmost respect for. Respect, particularly, is one of the biggest pillars in my life.

What defines the OGMS experience?

Another loaded question! I think for me, it was getting to celebrate and nurture the things that make me different, and getting to learn about the world through a lens that not everyone gets to see it through, which is very special. The connections you make here are for life!!



"Our care of the child should be governed, not by the desire to make him learn things, but by the endeavor always to keep burning within him that light which is called intelligence."

— Maria Montessori

Maizey MabrySmith

Where are you now?

I'm currently pursuing a J.D. at the University of California, Berkeley School of Law. Upon graduation I hope to work in business and intellectual property law with an emphasis in technology. I love hiking, my pets, and spending time with family and friends.

When I'm not studying or attending classes, I like to spend time with my two cats, Madge and Penny. One hobby that I can thank OGMS for is my love of knitting. A few years back, I knit a blanket for my college dorm and, I have to say, it's one of my proudest accomplishments. I'm also trying to explore California during my time here. I recently took a road trip to Malibu to visit some friends. We explored LA, saw the Hollywood sign, and took in the gorgeous views. I've also visited Alcatraz, gone surfing, and taken the BART for the first time. I typically spend my school breaks in Florida with family, which is a favorite tradition of mine. I'm not employed during my legal studies (we're not allowed to work during our first year of school) but I'll be doing legal work in the summers. Currently, I'm in the job search process for the summer of 2023 — my favorite prospect is a tech startup that is building an AI to simplify the legal contract review process!

If you could change anything in the world, what would you change?

My passions include environmentalism and supporting the local unhoused community. I've attempted to advance sustainability during my undergraduate degree at UConn both by working for the Office of Sustainability and by attending the United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland to learn more about global environmental policy and climate change. I have also done research on housing policy during the Covid-19 pandemic to better understand the links between homelessness, evictions, and mortgage forbearance. I have put this knowledge to good use by volunteering at a local homeless shelter that provides important resources to its residents.

What habits, skills, and character qualities do you trace directly back to your time at OGMS?

I directly attribute my time management skills to my time at Oak Grove. In 9-12, specifically, I remember being assigned a set of work on Monday that was expected to be completed on Friday. Very early on, I was trusted with large chunks of unsupervised time and quickly learned how to manage it. I also thank Oak Grove for my curiosity and independence. I truly have a love of learning that was fostered during my time there. I enjoy collaborating with others but I also thrive on my own. Lastly, OGMS taught me kindness. The culture of inclusivity mixed with their family-style environment reminded us to value everyone's unique ideas and perspectives.

Transition out of Oak Grove

After Oak Grove I went to Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy for 7th and 8th grade and decided to stay there for all four years of high school as well. Academically, the transition was a breeze. I found that I was on par with (and often above) my peers in all subjects. I also noticed that I possessed a unique way of problem solving and thinking outside the box that my teachers appreciated. Socially, I struggled a bit because I was very shy and didn't know a single person at the school. Going from a class of 4 to 200 would be difficult for anyone, let alone an eleven-year-old. After a few months, though, I made lifelong friends who I'm still close with today. In fact, I was recently back in Connecticut for the holidays and spent time with two of my closest friends from seventh grade!

How does the mission and philosophy of OGMS still guide you today?

I'm guided by the OGMS mission in everything that I do. I truly wouldn't be where I am today without my time at Oak Grove. Having respect for all individuals has taught me that treating others with kindness means kindness will come back to you. I find that I'm much more independent than many of my peers in both academia and general life skills. I know how to advocate for myself and communicate effectively, both of which came in very handy when I moved across the country and started living alone in California. Finally, I've always loved to learn which has kept me engaged during my undergraduate and graduate experiences. OGMS also taught me to recognize that personal development is just as important as school, so I've been sure to supplement my studies with hobbies and extracurriculars that support my emotional and physical health while mitigating burnout.

What defines the OGMS experience?

I believe that family defines the OGMS experience. I graduated eleven years ago and I know I could still pick up the phone and Cindy would be there in an instant if I needed her. The same goes for many other teachers, students, and their families that I met at Oak Grove. Growing up, I was privileged to have so many wonderful people in my corner and I'm forever grateful for that. This truly is an incredible community of bright, caring people who want to see you succeed.

The Seth Brody Memorial Scholarship Fund

EACH YEAR Oak Grove is able to offer additional financial aid because of the support and generosity of the Brody family and the S. Rubenstein Family Foundation. Please join us in supporting the **Seth Brody Memorial Scholarship Fund**.

If you would like to donate to the Seth Brody Memorial Scholarship please contact Cindy Henry, Head's Assistant at cindy@ogms.org



The Collaboratory

The Collaboratory is well on its way to completion. There is one more door to put up and then install the rest of the windows and the stained glass sign.

We are using it this week as a workshop for the Upper Elementary students to build 2 birdhouses for this year's Goods & Services Raffle! We can't wait to see the finished products!

Stop by to see us on June 24th from 4 til 7 p.m. for the Young Alumni Celebration!



Dear Oak Grove families and friends,

Oak Grove's Board of Trustees have been especially active over the last several months and it's great to have an opportunity to share it here. To start, the Board welcomed new members Angela Fournier, Paloma Kunze, Katie Roy and Laura Sczurek this year (2022-23) after long-time members Ricardo Trindade and Amy Lambeck completed their terms last spring. I'd like to extend a deep thank you to all board members, past and present, for dedicating your time to this vital function of Oak Grove. The past few years have required a deeper time investment than in the past, and your work to help keep Oak Grove moving forward is invaluable. We are very lucky to have such a deeply committed community of board members. Thank you!

This fall, we welcomed back a long-standing Oak Grove tradition of having our Annual Meeting as an adult social event in the lobby at school. It was wonderful to be socializing with returning and new families and the evening FLEW by.

The Board's most significant work this year has been related to our role in ensuring operational leadership (aka Head of School!) for Oak Grove. With the unexpected departure this fall of Dr. Jorge Nelson, we were fortunate that our Associate Head of School, Brooke Hopkins, was able to step into the role of Head for the remainder of this academic year. We thank Dr. Jorge for his passionate service to Oak Grove and wish him all the best. The Board and Head of School Search Committee has had a very full schedule these last few months as we made our way through the search process for our next Head. We are delighted to share that Meghan Rosenfeld has been recently announced as our next Head of School. She begins in that role on July 1, and she will be on campus this spring as she works to transition into the role and meet the community.

A Letter from the Board of Trustees

A close second to ensuring operational leadership, the Board has been very active in its role of safeguarding the future of the school by strategically looking at the big picture. Much has changed in the independent school world in the last decade, but particularly the last few years. For success, Oak Grove must adapt to a post-pandemic environment of evolved family (current and future) and staff needs. While there are many aspects to how this translates to operational improvements, they all mainly involve an intentional upgrade of internal systems and tools to meet the current needs of our community and create a resilient, efficient operational environment. The Board's role in this effort is to support the Head of School, who implements these initiatives, by high level goal-setting, alignment, support and help to remove barriers for success. We can't thank Brooke enough for her commitment to this process and determination to achieve these goals. Her leadership and dedication have allowed Oak Grove to make this critical investment into our future, and we deeply appreciate her care and willingness to step in as our Head of School this year. Thank you, Brooke!

Thanks for reading, and we hope to see you at this year's re-invented fundraising event, the Spring Fling, or at the OGMS Alumni day!

ELIZABETH (BETH) ACLY GNAZZO
OGMS BOARD CHAIR

2021-2022 Board of Trustees

Beth Acly Gnazzo, *Chair*
Megan Burnett, *Vice Chair*
Bob Powell, *Treasurer*
Matt Coolbeth, *Secretary*
Angela Fournier, *Member At-Large*
Brooke Hopkins,
Head of School, ex-officio
Clare King'oo
Paloma Kunze
Kathryn Roy
Laura Sczurek

Who We Are

- We are a group of people who care deeply about Oak Grove. Most are parents of current or ex-students, or simply community members who want to help.

What We Do

- We actively support and promote the school's mission, vision, strategic goals, and policy positions.
- The Board sets policy and focuses on long-range and strategic issues. Trustees are not involved directly in specific management, personnel, or curricular issues.
- Trustees have the responsibility to support the school and its head and to demonstrate that support within the community.
- Trustees contribute to the development program of the school, including strategic planning for development, financial support, and actively being involved in annual and capital giving.

Thank You All for Enriching Our School with Your Generosity

THE OAK GROVE ANNUAL FUND helps us to evolve, meet our operating budget each year, and ensures that our educational programs and thoughtful investments in faculty and facilities are maintained and strengthened for years to come. Your generosity helps us honor our commitment to uniquely nurture our children's love of learning as well as their sense of personal and social responsibility. **THANK YOU!**

2021-2022 Annual Fund Donors

Visionary (\$15,000 & above)

David Miller & The Brody Family*
The Benevity Fund

Guardian (\$2,500 to \$4,999)

Todd & Emily Schutte

Sustainer (\$1,000 to \$2,499)

Bob & Betty Burnett
Jennie & Hisham ElShakhs
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Josh Milotte & Megan Burnett
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Laura & Jonathan Sczurek
Ricardo Trindade & Roxana Mocanu

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KC Carrancio
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Jerry Shi & Kate Zhou
Haiyan Tan & Honglian Wu

This report gratefully acknowledges gifts received between July 2021 and June 2022. Donations to the 'Raise Your Bid', 'Planned Giving' and 'Giving Tuesday' are included in the Annual Fund. If there are any errors or omissions, please accept our deepest apologies and notify Cindy Henry at cindy@ogms.org. Thank you once again for your generosity!

This year's Annual Fund helped to directly support our Financial Aid Fund & Supplemental Operating Costs.

2022 Gala & Auction

We are so grateful for the Oak Grove Community for donating, purchasing, and attending our Gala on April 2, 2022! And we couldn't have had a successful event without the tireless help of

Megan Burnett, Beth Acly, Amy Lambeck, Rachel Goldberg, Karina Adler, Roxana Mocanu, Brooke Hopkins, Cindy & Joe Henry, Rachael DeHay, Julie Giannelli, Greg Howard, Tami Toscano, KC Carrancio, Paloma & Eric Kunze, Christina Baldwin, Teresa Bielecki, Derek Waldron, Jorge Nelson, Sheila Kaytis, Bob Powell, Dede Delaney, Matt Coolbeth & Jennifer Nelson.

Special thanks to Horizons for hosting an amazing event!

Thank You to Our Donors

All Things Bakeshop
Cambera Farm Bakery
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Coyote Flaco
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Highlights Magazine
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Mango's Pizza
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OGMS Board of Trustees
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Stirrup Fun Stables
Teresa Bielecki
The Adventure Park at Storrs
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The Gnazzo family
The Henry's
The Lambeck family
The Trindade/Mocanu family
The Wireless Zone

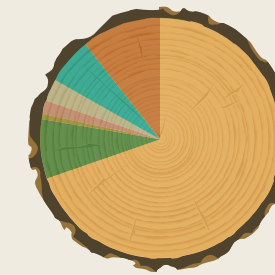
Tied and True, Amanda Hawkins
Vanilla Bean Café
Waldron's Studion88
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OGMS Statement of Activities and Expenses

for the fiscal year July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022

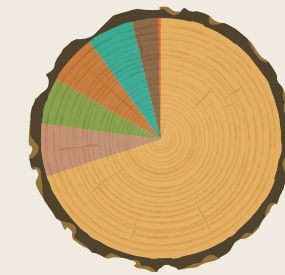
Income



Tuition	69.7%
Fundraising	8.0%
Summer & Enrichment	0.7%
Before & Aftercare	1.8%
Grants	3.0%
Administrative Income (Includes 10k Infrastructure Grant)	6.2%
SBA Funding (Funding from forgiven PPP funds and EIDL loan)	10.6%

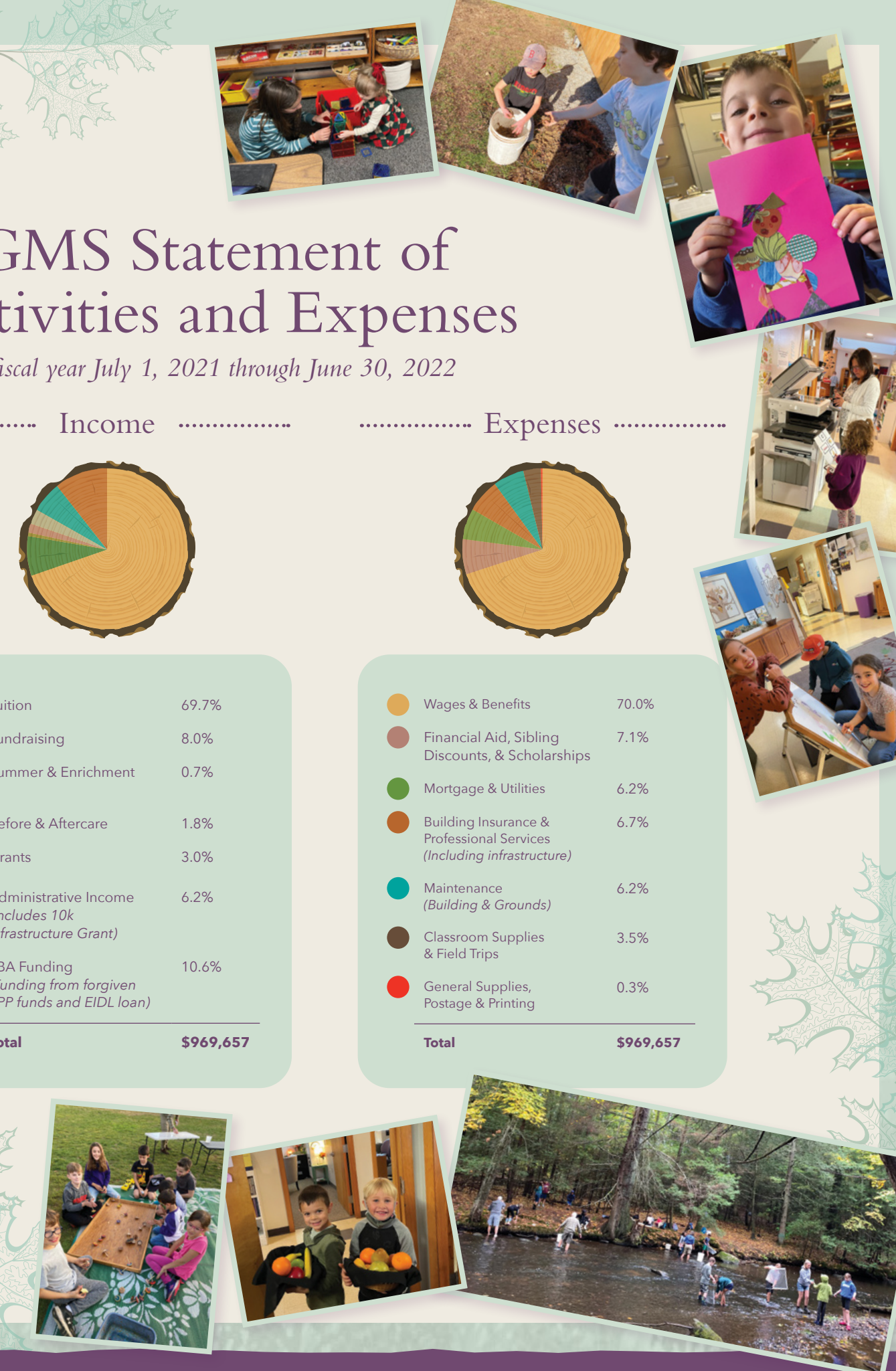
Total \$969,657

Expenses



Wages & Benefits	70.0%
Financial Aid, Sibling Discounts, & Scholarships	7.1%
Mortgage & Utilities	6.2%
Building Insurance & Professional Services (Including infrastructure)	6.7%
Maintenance (Building & Grounds)	6.2%
Classroom Supplies & Field Trips	3.5%
General Supplies, Postage & Printing	0.3%

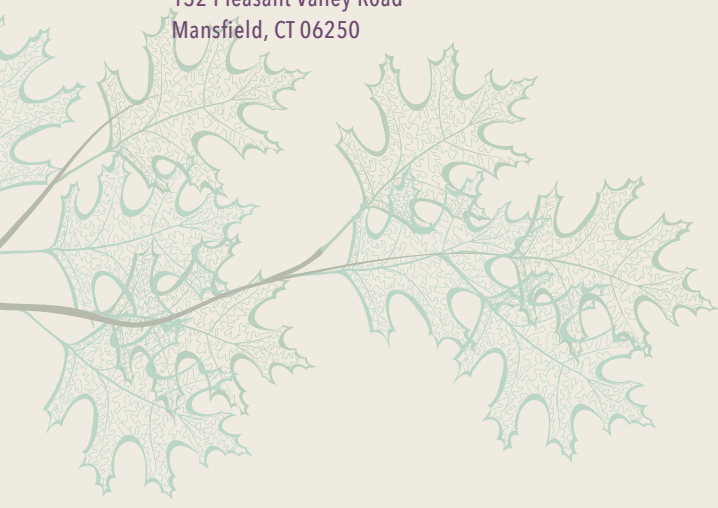
Total \$969,657





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Save the Date!

OGMS
Spring Fling
Horizons Commons
May 6, 2023
5:30 pm

& Online Auction, May 4th - 6th

Congratulations to the
Graduating Class of 2022!



Surya Bronner, Kelsa Rose Gnazzo, Mason Martin, Gabriella Nollet, Peter Schutte, Greta Thompson, Stella Trindade