



THE STINGRAY SUN

ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

JUNE 2022 • ISSUE 3 • VOLUME 1

STERLING MONTESSORI
EST. 1997



FROM THE LHU BOARD

Dear Sterling Community,

We did it! Through perseverance and commitment to our students, staff and families, Sterling completed the 2021-22 academic school year with the grace and courtesy we expect in a Montessori school. While we continued to navigate an ongoing pandemic, prioritizing the health and safety of our students, we managed to reintroduce in-person events, including an amazing International Festival, Movie Nights, Garden Days and Band/Music performances, all while delivering an exceptional educational experience for our students. Sterling's teachers, administrators and staff continued to go above and beyond. It could not have been done without each of you and we owe an enormous amount of gratitude.

In February of this year, the Laura Holland Uzzell Foundation announced the search for our next Executive Director to succeed the great work done by Josie Spreher over the last four years. We are pleased to announce Maureen Capillo has been selected and accepted the position of Executive Director, beginning on July 15th. I hope you have had a chance to read through my announcement and will help us welcome Maureen this year.

Maureen is a skilled and dedicated Montessorian, bringing teaching experience from public and charter schools, along with six years of Montessori leadership experience. Maureen joins us to carry forward our strategic priorities. There is much to be excited about

as we prepare to enter the deep work of self-study for Step 7 of the American Montessori Society Accreditation process during the 2022-24 school years, which follows our mission and vision of ensuring that Sterling offers consistent, authentic Montessori lessons to each student.

This June, Sterling celebrates 25 years as a charter school. In our original application, as today, the Montessori philosophy served as a grounding focal point for our school. By pursuing AMS accreditation, we work towards our original mission and join a small but mighty group of AMS-accredited public schools. Public Montessori is not only a proven good for all types of students: it is at the heart of the philosophy. Dr. Montessori began what would become the Casa dei Bambini with the poorest and most ignored children in early twentieth century Rome. She showed that, when given the right tools and attention, even these children could learn and thrive. This is why our continuing work in diversity, equity and inclusion is so deeply tied to the pursuit of authentic Montessori education.

At Sterling, we are able to accomplish much of our work by maintaining our financial health. I am pleased to report we remain in good shape, thanks in part to the generous donations of time, talent, food, and donations to our Annual Fund (Sterling's Treasure Chest). Our community donated over \$45,000 this year (a 28% increase over last year). Each Director on the LHU Board donated to the Treasure Chest, and we saw the generosity of our parents, grandparents and staff. These donations supplement our public funding and private tuition revenue, allowing us to achieve our goals. Please consider participating in the 2022/23 Annual Fund, which includes our goals to enhance the outdoor environments of our Sterling campus.

We thank you all for your continued support and may we continue to give our children the roots of responsibility and the wings of independence.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Uzzell, President
On behalf of the LHU Board

2021/22 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Katie Brown | Chris Morton |
| Kim Elliott | Rachel Richardson |
| Leslie Hamilton | Kari Schwab |
| Ryan Hill | Elizabeth Uzzell |
| Kevin Hughes | Robert Wolfe |
| Wally Lewis | Lan Zhu |

AMS ACCREDITATION

The American Montessori Society (AMS) is the leading organization for quality Montessori education. In 2019, our LHU Board, along with support from Administration, began the journey to obtain Montessori Accreditation from AMS. Given the excellent reputation of Sterling over the years, many may wonder why we would seek accreditation? We know from experience that there are many Montessori schools that are in name only, and do not practice what they preach.

- Accredited schools have obtained the highest level of recognition by AMS.
- Accredited schools meet a standard of excellence in the implementation of Montessori education that is recognized by the entire AMS community.
- Accreditation affirms that a school is what it says it is and does what it says it does.
- Most importantly, accreditation is a process that results in ongoing school improvement and professional development.

“By accrediting your school with AMS, you are signaling to your community that it is among the highest quality Montessori schools in the world. Accreditation establishes you as a leader within the Montessori community and leaves you well positioned to meet your state’s public policy requirements.” - AMS website



AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY®
education that transforms lives

Sterling has completed Step 6. Under the leadership of our Administrative Team, including our new Executive Director, Maureen Capillo, we will spend the summer assessing our readiness to submit our AMS Accreditation Application in September.

- **Step 1:** Your school is a member of AMS and has affirmed its commitment to the [AMS Code of Ethics](#).
- **Step 2:** At least 20% of your lead teachers hold Montessori credentials. Your school has a mission statement and a plan for how/when it will incorporate the [5 core components](#).
- **Step 3:** At least 40% of your lead teachers hold Montessori credentials and your school implements at least 1 core component.
- **Step 4:** At least 60% of your lead teachers hold Montessori credentials and your school implements at least 2 other core components.
- **Step 5:** At least 80% of your lead teachers hold Montessori credentials and your school implements at least 3 other core components.
- **Step 6:** 100% of your lead teachers hold Montessori credentials and your school implements the other 4 core components. If your school is interested in accreditation, you are eligible to apply for candidacy.
- **Step 7:** Your school has submitted a self-study that demonstrates compliance with the [AMS School Accreditation Institutional Standards](#).
- **Step 8:** Your school has submitted a self-study and hosted a peer validator to demonstrate compliance with the AMS School Accreditation Instructional Standards.
- **Step 9:** Your school has completed a strategic plan for continuing improvement.
- **Step 10: AMS School Accreditation**

STERLING'S MISSION

The mission of Sterling Montessori is to create a diverse educational community, grounded in the Montessori philosophy and teaching practices, that fosters curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking in its students. We strive to empower each student to become life-long learners who respect themselves, others and their environment.

STERLING'S VISION

Sterling Montessori is a model charter school that demonstrates how the Montessori Method and a commitment to academic excellence helps students reach their full potential. We envision a sustainable, accessible, and diverse institution that graduates thriving students who are engaged in lifelong learning and are empowered to become positive, contributing members of their immediate and global communities.

The process of a Self-Study (Step 7) of Sterling involves **forming committees, a deep analysis** of our Montessori teaching practices, **surveys** and **an AMS Team Visit** to assess our progress. This process can last from 18-24 months and will require commitment from all stakeholders - the LHU Board, Administration, Faculty, Staff and Sterling Families. We must have a growth mindset to be able to do this work.

This work is important and hard, but also very exciting for all stakeholders.

This work should reveal an overall goal to complete the mission of authentic Montessori practices across all levels.

GIVING THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

"THE GREATEST GIFTS WE CAN GIVE OUR CHILDREN ARE THE ROOTS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND THE WINGS OF INDEPENDENCE" - DR. MARIA MONTESSORI

There are so many ways to give. A tenet of Montessori education is to teach and model global citizenship in our growing world community. We strive to teach our students how to make the world a better place by awareness, opportunity and participation. Through age-appropriate lessons, our Sterling students demonstrated their connections to the greater community this academic year by incorporating lessons of giving. Here are but a few examples, many incorporated into lessons and days of service:

Children's House sent lovely Valentine's Day cards to two area senior citizen homes. The beauty of linking the young and the wise of our community is just a beautiful thing to witness.

C4 and D16 made placemats to donate to Meals on Wheels to help brighten the days of those who receive meals. A few of our students also gave a presentation about the services that are provided by Meals on Wheels to their classmates. Collaboration continued between C4 and D16 who made Valentine's cards for children impacted by pediatric cancer. What a way to give perspective and share in good wishes for those that are struggling.

D12 ran a Valentine's Day Food Pantry Collection through Interact of Wake County. This incredibly successful drive was only possible because of generosity and care.

D10 completed a Battery Recycling Project. To many of us, battery recycling seems an afterthought but is an incredibly important part of stewardship of our environment!

Similarly, D18 organized a Recycling Used Markers project to collect dried out and used markers (we all have them around the house) and send them to the Terracycle (as Crayola had temporarily paused this program due to COVID).

Outside of school, we have a group of MS families and students volunteering with the Miracle League. Students and staff always raved about their nights with their leagues! We know many truly benefit from their participation.

Children's House through Middle School students all participated (on their own) to clean up our campus, some on Earth Day, some as stewards of their environment throughout the academic year.

Middle School, along with the leadership of the Student Council, held a bake sale during Spring Garden Day and our International Festival, to raise funds for the Ukrainian Red Cross. Through their ingenuity and your generosity, **over \$2,000 was raised!**

Meanwhile, the Middle School Garden, funded through a Whole Kids Grant acquired last academic year, and with the hard work of virtually all Middle School Students, held their own Farmstand. They took orders and delivered to families fresh vegetables grown in our own garden, not only teaching stewardship of our gardens, but also business skills. **What a treasure and THANK YOU to all the families who supported this healthy endeavor!**



Finally, we thank MS parent Julia Brandon for her in-service to our students on the **I Am Remarkable** initiative by Google: View the video [here](#). We can all make a difference!

OUR PARENT FACULTY STUDENT ASSOCIATION (PFSA)

Based on the concern for the health and safety of our students, staff and families, our ability to gather as a community has been limited for the the last two academic years. In 2021/22, and following guidance from NCDHHS, we eased some restrictions and opened up some **really special events** that contributed to the feeling of some normalcy.

We acknowledge MANY people contributed greatly to the bottom line of these events by:

- Contributing to book donations to our level libraries *and* The Caring Place through our Love of Reading Book Fair, **raising close to \$1,000** for our Annual Fund
- buying plants and volunteering during our Garden Days, **raising over \$700** during our Spring event.
- offering cash donations for beautifully designed International Festival crafts, bringing in **over \$1,500** to our school
- baking absolutely delectable sweet and savory treats for our inaugural Holiday Treat Exchange!

Plus, our **Charleston Wrap** fundraiser in the Fall of 2021 brought in **over \$8,000** in Annual Fund dollars. We cannot thank our community enough (including our extended community of grandparents, alumni, and friends) for being stewards of our school and beginning the rebuild of community.



STERLING'S 2021/22 PFSA CHAIRS

It's said it takes a village, and this is certainly the case for Sterling! We are so very grateful for this group of individuals that give their time, energy and enthusiasm to bring happiness and joy to our community! Thank you all so very much!

- HOSPITALITY/ TEACHER APPRECIATION: **Jenn Jewett**
- INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL: **Megha Patel & Paige Ossman**
- CLASS PICTURES: **Laura Chintapalli**
- FALL FUNDRAISER: **Jenn Jewett**
- GARDEN DAYS: **Nicole Kumar & Leslie Hamilton**
- MOVIE NIGHTS: **Lisa Hicks**
- BOOK FAIR: **Maureen Churchill**
- GIVING TREE: **Cari Farris**
- HOLIDAY TREAT EXCHANGE: **Julie Disclafani**

We also thank all the unnamed volunteers who gave their time and support to these endeavors! Please consider the same for the 2022/23 school year!



"We shall walk together on this path of life, for all things are part of the universe and are connected with each other to form one whole unity."

- Dr. Maria Montessori



STUDENT COUNCIL & THE CARRYING PLACE

Our 2021/22 Student Council was very involved in giving back to their school and wider community. Here's an example of a report by our Student Council President, Hannah Pooley, to our Board and PFSA, proving they are leading by example:

"Hi everyone! My name is Hannah Pooley, I'm the student council president and we are here today to give a short update on what the student council has been doing.

For the past couple of months, members of the Student Council have participated in weekly zoom meetings with the Carrying Place, helped with teacher appreciation (setting up the teachers lounge and making cards for each of the teachers and faculty members), picked up trash around the school, and brainstormed the ways that we can make Sterling a better place.

In addition, most members of the Student Council were able to volunteer at the International Festival.

Recently, the MS student council members have been helping the PE teachers organize and plan the Middle School Field Day which is coming up on Friday, April 29th.

Our next big initiative will be to sort, clean, and donate the large amount of lost & found items that have been accruing at the front office."

In addition, every member of the Student Council wrote personalized notes/cards to each member of our Faculty and Staff for distribution during Teacher Appreciation Week in May.



For the 2021/22 school year, Sterling partnered with the local non-profit The Carrying Place. This organization teaches homeless, working families with children, life skills for attaining independent living while providing short-term housing and support services to address their individual needs.

Based on our established development funding "buckets", and in the spirit of giving back, which is a tenet of Montessori education, 3% of our Annual Fund will be donated to The Carrying Place. **We are pleased to present this year a check to this organization in the amount of \$1800!**

We look forward to continuing the partnership for a second year for 2022/23, including the close partnership with our Student Council This will enable us to deepen our collaborative relationship throughout the school year.



The Carrying Place (TCP) teaches homeless, working families with children, life skills for attaining independent living while providing short-term housing and support services to address their individual needs. Families live in apartments leased by TCP in an environment similar to permanent housing except rent and utilities are paid by TCP. Since our inception in 1993, TCP has served 500 families. About 80% of families who graduate from TCP continue to live independently and stay employed at least a year after completing the program. Currently, the program supports 10 families at a time and about 25 to 30 families annually. Since 2021, we have assisted 36 families that included 121 adults and 74 children.

As a non-profit transitional housing program in Wake County, TCP supports families in their journey to independence and self-sufficiency. This is achieved through the mentoring and guidance of Support Partners and staff. Families are paired with a volunteer team of Support Partners that provide weekly guidance in managing personal finances, setting attainable goals, seeking permanent affordable housing, and maintaining their employment.

TCP Children & Teen's Program normally serves the children & teens of TCP families. Weekly meetings, which includes programming for teens, strives to provide stability to children by addressing their immediate needs and offering weekly educational programs. Since Covid forced the program to switch to a virtual format, these weekly meetings were opened up to the community as well. For instance, we are grateful for the partnership we have with Sterling Montessori and your student's participation in our weekly programs.

While in TCP's housing program, families get assistance with details such as school enrollment and school-related needs, transportation, tutoring, childcare, diapers, clothes, and referrals for mental health services. Children six years and above are expected to participate in the weekly Children's program. These programs work to break the cycle of homelessness by supporting each child's development and providing services for them to thrive. Our long-term goal is that no child returns to programs such as this as an adult.

TCP's Graduate Program is for families that have completed the 16-week transitional housing program and are now living in independent housing. The program seeks to elevate the skills and opportunities of families to help them achieve financial freedom and be more productive citizens. It is an extension of the TCP 16-week program. In graduate program, families attend monthly educational and life skills workshops and work on their long-term goals of securing better employment, skills, college and career planning for their children, debt management, and homeownership. TCP continues to support participating families and children with referrals and resources as and when needed.

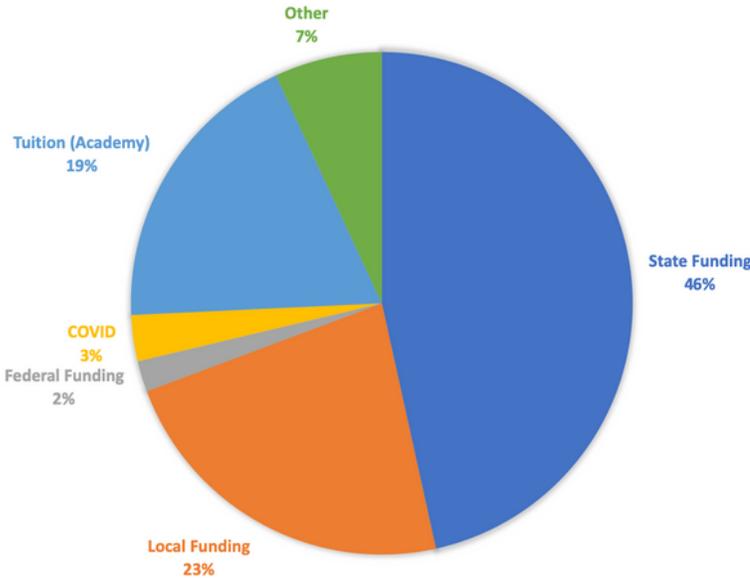
For us to help even more families in need, we are partnering with the Town of Cary, Greenwood Forest Baptist Church and other community partners to build affordable housing for our families. In the next 3 to 5 years, we hope to support 60 families annually and house 20 graduate families.

STERLING'S 2021/22 REVENUE & EXPENSES

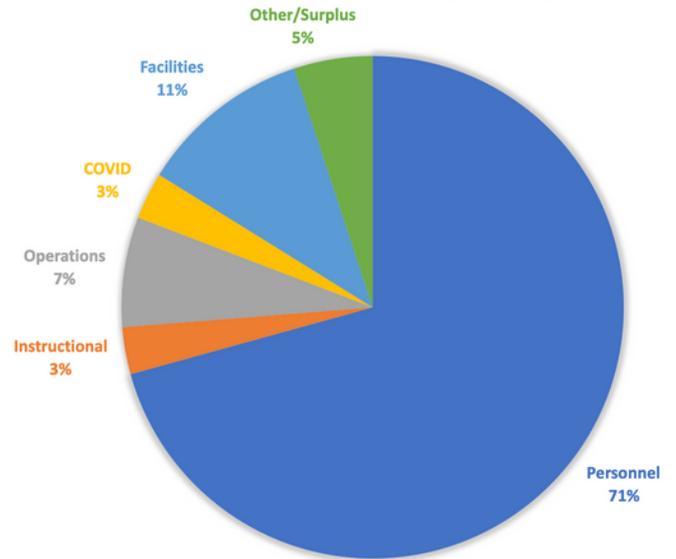
Our development office has been hard at work the last couple years introducing the Annual Treasure Chest Fund. Many in our community may wonder, why should I donate? Isn't the school funded by our state?

Charter Schools are a special case. There is a substantial funding gap between charter schools and public schools. According to the Center for Education Reform, charter schools are funded nationwide on average at 64% of their district counterpart. The largest reason for this shortfall is that charter schools do not receive capital funding from the states. While Sterling is fortunate to own and operate the buildings that make up the campus, most of the campus is over 20 years old, which increasingly requires significant capital maintenance that is not funded.

2021/22 REVENUE (\$8.8M)

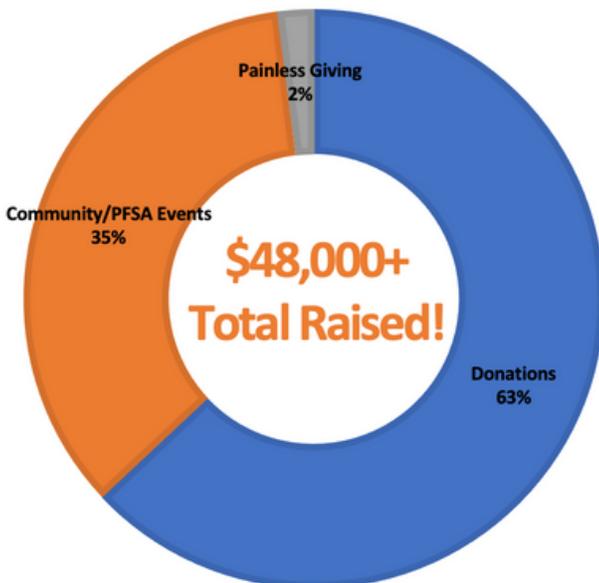


2021/22 EXPENSES (\$8.6M)



2021/22 ANNUAL FUND

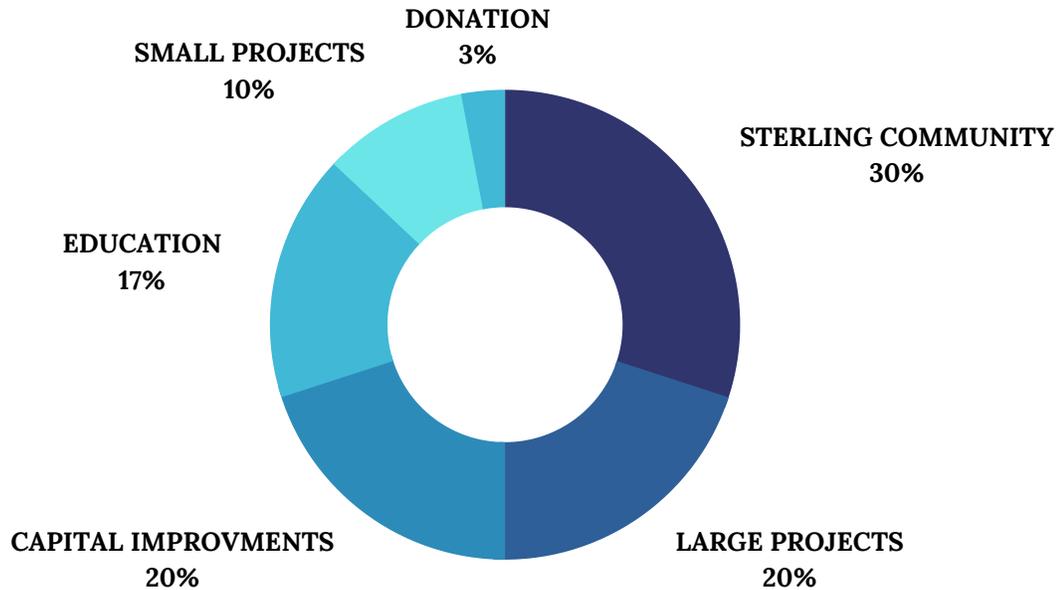
■ Donations ■ Community/PFSA Events ■ Painless Giving



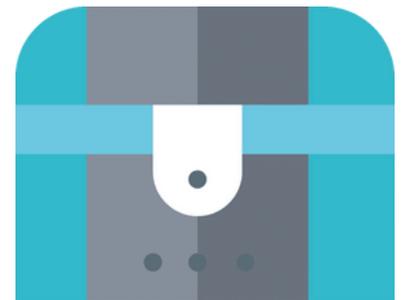
Visit our [website](#) for more information on joining painless giving.

ANNUAL FUND DEVELOPMENT BUCKETS

Our development office has been hard at work funding the following "buckets". Each year, Administration, Faculty and the Board, along with feedback from our community, will define the the specifics of the development goals that Sterling will work towards during the academic year. We will continuously evaluate the percentages for each bucket and adjust accordingly.



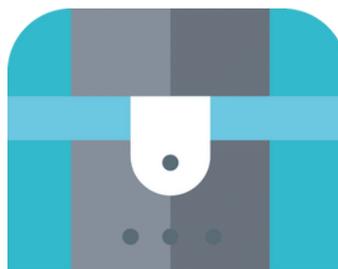
- **30% STERLING COMMUNITY** - Hospitality, Teacher Appreciation, Community Events, United Arts Council, Graduation, Matt Oberst Scholarship
- **20% LARGE PROJECTS**- Large, expensive projects that could be multi-year fundraising endeavors. May be matched by grants and corporate partnership. Examples include replacing playground(s) equipment, running track, electronic doors and locks.
- **20% CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS** - Plumbing, electrical, landscaping and any capital improvements not covered by Charter funding. Examples include: awning, land-grading for drainage.
- **17% EDUCATION** - Classroom materials needed for Sterling education; any additional Professional Development not covered in current budget and any services/programs needed.
- **10% SMALL PROJECTS**- Smaller improvement needs for the school community. Examples include a Sensory Garden for EC, Shade Sails for the field, larger furniture purchase.
- **3% DONATION TO THE WIDER COMMUNITY** - Sterling will give a monetary donation back to a community non-profit and each level (CH, EL, MS) participate in their way. Each year, Sterling will work with one community organization (i.e. The Caring Place). In the spring, our student council would vote on the recipient service organization for the next school year.



CELEBRATING OUR GENEROUS ANNUAL FUND PATRONS

PLATINUM PATRONS (\$1000+)

Anonymous
Dilipkumar & Kavita Bhatia
Timothy & April Minh
Chris & Candi Morton
Natalia & Jason Olson
Shristi and Chanshyam Shrestha
Michael & Janae Sick
Anne Thompson
Robert & Leslie Wolfe



DIAMOND PATRONS (\$500 - \$999)

Anonymous
Khaula Baloch & Rafiq Shahid
Mark & Cynthia Gamble
Alison & Brian Hicks
Ryan & Jennifer Hill
David Jang & Jiyoung Ryu
Mary & Rick Karcher
Wallace & Jenny Lewis
Suresh and Aparna Shetty

GOLD PATRONS (\$50 - \$99)

Nuthawin Charoensri & Paveena Gacibil
Yashaswini Charabuddi
Wyleen Davis
Lucille Jewett
Josie & Chris Spreher
Phoebe & Evens Thermitus

EMERALD PATRONS (\$100 - \$499)

Anonymous
Anonymous
Anonymous
Sonia & Sujeev Bains
Katherine Brown and Andrew Gluckman
David & Harriet Chen
Christine Clayton
Kimberly & David Elliott
Laxmikanth Gollapelly & Jyothi Kotoju
Leslie & Eric Hamilton
Sherry & Len Hill
Kevin & Julie Hughes
Randy & Jennifer Jewett
Nicole and Dwayne Jones
Hardik Joshi & Poonam Patel
Nicole Langlois and Shane Butcher
Allen Luo & Laura Sun
Ling Ma
Tayler Mariner and Martin Lee
Kristina Markina
David & Kyle Munn
Kari & Andrew Schwab
Kamal & Kokeela Thapa
Elizabeth Uzzell
Hemantha Kumar Veligaram & Swathi Deenadayalan
Chikkam & Brundavanam Venkata Betty Warren
Erin & Charles Woodard
Winni Zhang & Pao Ling Pei
Lan Zhu & Kenneth Lui

RUBY PATRONS (UP TO \$49)

Rizwana Ali
Mahesh Babu Bullee & Sujatha Kuruba
Linda Baggish
Stephanie Deming
Melanie Graham & Jason Mullinax
Steven & Marie Mansbery
Norleen Perotto
Galina & Alex Rogozhina
Ellyn & Larry Smith
Retnasankar Subramonian & Devi Retnasankar
Mohammed & Tabassum Vikar
Sudha Vissamraju and Rupesh Avula

The Annual Fund Treasure Chest ensures the ability for Sterling to continue its growth in providing Montessori education. The generosity of donors to the Fund today and going forward provide a foundation for our goals in growth and enriching experiences for our students, faculty, staff and families.

We sincerely thank all our donors!

As we continue our development efforts we celebrate the partnerships with our local businesses and foundations that support of educational goals and vision of Sterling.

LOCAL BUSINESS DONATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS

| | |
|--|---|
| <u>Academy of Kalari Adimural</u> | <u>HumSub Textile Printing</u> |
| <u>Batala Durham</u> | <u>Kim's Taekwondo</u> |
| <u>Best Brains</u> | <u>LVS Organic Farming</u> |
| <u>Carolina Tamil Kalakkoodam</u> | <u>Patel Brothers</u> |
| <u>Chandi's Spa & Salon</u> | <u>Quail Ridge Bookstore</u> |
| <u>Chinese Language School & FASCA - Raleigh</u> | <u>Taiwanese Cultural Club of Raleigh</u> |
| <u>The City of Morrisville</u> | <u>Triangle Taiko</u> |
| <u>Disha Yoga</u> | <u>We Plant it Forward</u> |
| <u>Fairview Garden Center</u> | <u>Yoga with Brisa</u> |

Thank you to all our community for your participation and donations!

For all the ways you can give, or to give today, please visit sterlingmontessori.org/annual-fund.



Checks may be made payable to:
Sterling Montessori Academy & Charter School
202 Treybrooke Dr.,
Morrisville, NC 27560

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2022/23

This academic year, we began exploring our options to enhance our outdoor learning environments. Purposeful play is paramount to a Montessori education, and we recognize Sterling has some areas in need of improvement. We have begun consultation with the Natural Learning Initiative to create a Master Outdoor Plan.

This will be a **huge, multi-year endeavor**, requiring collaboration and cooperation from all our stakeholders. More information, including a Board Committee, should be forthcoming in the 2022/23 school year. We hope you will continue your generosity and support this important endeavor.

*"The land is where our roots are. The children must be taught to feel and live in harmony with the Earth."
– Dr. Maria Montessori.*

