

## *Notes from Nirvair 3/26/10*

*Congratulations to all our Southern Arizona Regional Science Fair participants. Middle School student, Phoebe, and both upper elementary classes won honors for their projects, including first prize to Palo Verde class, teacher Kathy Bodenhemier. Congratulations to students, teachers and parent volunteers for all their hard work. And congratulations to upper elementary teacher, Erin Donaghy, and this year's Model UN students for another successful presentation in New York this month.*

Can you imagine the privilege of going to school and choosing your own work, working in collaboration with friends, or outdoors, developing a first-name relationship with the teacher, learning math and other subjects with beautiful hands on materials? This is the privilege given our children every day at Khalsa Montessori School. They also are getting the head start of a whole-child learning model that includes excellent instruction in the explicit curriculum, the academic subjects being taught, as well as the soft skills needed to access the curriculum for success in school and in life. These skills include independence, responsibility, self-direction, social and emotional skills, organization, accountability, and how to be a contributing member of the community. At Khalsa Montessori School children learn about the world and their place in it as they learn to care for and respect themselves, each other and the world we share. They are introduced to kind and gentle relationships, eco-awareness, and healthy habits for a lifetime of well being. The multi-age, multi-cultural, multi-ability classrooms build awareness and appreciation for our colorful world. Parents benefit, too, and are welcomed into an extended community of families, friends and faculty that supports the children, each other and the work of the school.

Our k-8 students benefit from an award-winning Excelling School program, a free public education in a private-school-like Montessori learning environment. What is amazing is that we are able to offer this program in Tucson, Arizona. Arizona continually ranks among the lowest states in the nation for services to children and families, and in funding for public schools. Arizona now faces a budget crisis that is threatening all public charter schools as well as district schools. This week the legislature voted to slash school funding and further cuts are in store if a 1% sales tax fails to pass in May.

All schools in Arizona were under-funded before the budget cuts. Charter schools receive even less in per-child funding than our 47th-ranked district schools. Charter schools do not have backups available to district schools such as budget overrides, access to special state funds for buildings and maintenance, or bond initiatives in affluent neighborhoods. In addition to the budget cuts for schools, the legislature has devised a clever plan to effectively cut payments to schools by 1/12th next year. They are changing payments from the first of the month to the end of the month which means we will lose one month of funding for the year. Theoretically this lost month would be made up at some point in infinity or at the school's last month of operation, whichever comes first. For the year ahead the payment shift creates some challenges.

We have strived to offer a world-class Montessori education with a fraction of the budget of private Montessori schools, public schools in other states or some affluent Arizona district schools. We will be initiating some new fundraising efforts to find revenue sources outside of public funds. With your help we increased our Extracurricular Activity Tax Credit funds by about 20% this year. We hope to do even better in 2010 and invite you to encourage your family and friends to participate. In addition to your tax credit help, we hope you will also consider including Khalsa Montessori School in your charitable giving plan for 2010. All donations are tax deductible.

*Thank you for your continued support!*