

## *A Mom's Montessori Moment*

*Shared by David Ayer*

*One of our Children's House parents recently shared this story with us, and gave me leave to share it:*

Anna (5 1/2) and William (3 1/2) spent a week on my mom's farm and towards the end they were getting quite comfortable there. They asked if they could ride their bikes down to the barn and I said sure.

"You mean we can go by ourselves?" Anna asked, surprised.

I thought about it for a minute and about the importance of independence, and it felt like the right time to let them go off on their own. They were thrilled and looked over their shoulders at me as they rode away and waved.

Of course, not much time passed before I snuck through the woods to make sure they were safe. The scene when I arrived made me smile. I assumed the kids, when left to their own devices, would have been fooling around, but it was quite the contrary.

Anna was scaling the fence with a shovel, and William was right behind her. She lowered herself into one of the horse stalls and began to shovel manure. Since she didn't know how to open the gate, she carefully scaled the fence with each load and placed it in the wheelbarrow.

What was especially surprising to me about this is that we had never once discussed cleaning the barn with them. It was something my mom usually did while we were just hanging around. Then I was reminded of Montessori and the powers of observation and their teacher's reminder to me that the children's work never stops. For them, there is no division between the classroom and the world.

This was the beauty of Montessori unfolding before me. By the time I went to fetch my mother to take in this scene, the stalls were cleaned and the children were both busily sweeping the barn floor. Neither of us dared disturb their work and kept out of sight. When they were finished, there wasn't one straw of hay to be seen. We could have held a banquet there. The barn floor has never been so clean!

We scurried back to the house to greet Anna and William when they arrived. Not surprisingly, they didn't even mention what they had done. For them, the satisfaction had been in the work itself. They didn't return seeking any reward or praise, for they had already earned it from themselves back at the barn.

Even though their teacher was half a world away at the time, I couldn't help but feel that her gentle hand and the wisdom of her guiding were right there with us at the farm.

**About David Ayer:** David discovered Montessori through his daughter, Virginia, who attended Whole Child Montessori School, and his wife, Elise, who was teaching in the upper elementary at Montessori School of Beaverton. He earned his primary diploma at the Montessori Institute Northwest in 1995.

David taught at Vancouver Montessori School before starting the Montessori Adolescent Project Northwest with Elise. He continued his Montessori adolescent work at the Hershey Montessori Farm School and the Franciscan Montessori Earth School before joining Sunstone Montessori School as Assistant Director.

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