



NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2025

The Albrook Almanac

About Me: Maria Pando

I was delighted to join the Albrook School family last August and am truly grateful for the warm welcome I have received. I am a passionate, dedicated, and experienced Montessori-ian with extensive experience working in Montessori schools in both the United Kingdom and the United States.

I firmly believe that teaching is one of the most rewarding professions, as it allows us to witness children flourish and grow into their unique, confident selves. I am committed to ongoing professional development and enjoy attending conferences, workshops, and seminars to continue learning and growing as an educator.

In my free time, I enjoy watching soccer, traveling, gardening, and listening to music.



A Heartfelt Thank You to Our Volunteer Parents

by Ms. MacNeill



We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the amazing volunteer parents who generously shared their time and creativity to decorate our school for the fall and winter seasons. Their beautiful use of orange, red, and yellow hues transformed our hallways and entrances into a warm celebration of fall. The students especially delighted in the cheerful scarecrows, which added a special holiday flair to our Thanksgiving season.

Before we knew it, time flew by, and it was time once again to decorate the campus, this time with festive winter holiday cheer. Thanks to our dedicated volunteers, the school was perfectly adorned for our Holiday Dinner for Breakfast event and beautifully prepared for our annual International Winter Holiday Celebration.

(Continued on page 2)



The Albrook School

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We are truly thankful for all of the parents who gifted their time, creativity, and artistic skills. Their colorful contributions helped set the mood for the season and brought joy to our entire school community. From the bottom of our hearts, we send a big THANK YOU to our Glitter and Tinsel Team: Mohini Patel, Nicole Gujral, Alex Petrucci, Nadia Mule, Cristina DelMauro, Tina Raman, Minami Fahey, Lina Jabara, Daina Raiffe, Lana Bachkhaz, Jaslyn Vesuvio, Sarah Iosifescu and Barak Shimon.

Coat Drive

By Sharon Hoffmann

We're excited to share that we've wrapped up another incredibly successful coat drive! This year, we partnered with Sparrow House through one of our local businesses, The Cottage, in Peapack. Sparrow House is a local community outreach which provides clothing and food to New Jersey residents in need. We collected 52 coats—a wonderful show of generosity from our community.

We were informed that they are also in need of warm mittens and hats, for these families facing frigid temperatures. Thanks to your support, we were able to provide even more warmth and comfort to those who need it most.

Thank you all for your kindness, donations, and continued support. We truly could not have done this without you!



Book Fair 2025

by Sarah Iosifescu, Asher's and Ari's Mom



One of the highlights of the fall was our annual book fair which was a wonderful success. Students from PK-1 through upper elementary came to the book fair on the Wednesday before parent-teacher conferences to browse books on display and pick out books for their wish lists. The kids loved looking through the books and getting to pick which ones they wanted to add to their lists. We had parents help to write book lists for the younger students while our kindergarten and older students took the initiative to write their own lists! During parent teacher conferences, parents were able to stop by the book fair and purchase books from their children's wish lists.

Special thanks to Jazz Vesuvio, Barak Shimon, Sarah Iosifescu, Neha Padwal, Lorissa Scanlon, Elise Jennings, Minami Fahey, Fiona Wang, Lana Bachkhaz, Nicole Gujral,

Urooj Rehman, Sarah Mulvihill, Pearline Hong, Amanda Kauffman, Tina Raman and Julie Faller for volunteering. Many of the classes had their book wishlists granted as well - a warm thank you to all of those families that donated books for the classrooms. We hope all of our kids and families are enjoying their new books and gadgets!

(Continued on page 3)

Albrook School Food Drive

by Ms. MacNeill

Albrook School Community Comes Together for Annual Food Drive Albrook School's tradition of giving began with its first food drive in November 1992 in support of the Interfaith Food Pantry in Morristown. As the need for food assistance grew over the years, our school proudly partnered with the Somerset Food Bank to continue this important mission of service. Once again this year, our hallways were filled with the inspiring sight of students proudly carrying, pulling, and carefully transporting boxes and bags full of much-needed food items. Watching our students participate so enthusiastically reminds us that the true spirit of giving is learned through action, compassion, and community.

The staff at the Somerset Food Bank shared that ongoing effects from the recent economic challenges have significantly increased the number of families in need. This heightened demand makes community support more critical than ever. It is through the generosity of families like those at Albrook School that the Food Bank can continue to keep shelves stocked and provide essential assistance to those facing food insecurity.

"Helping others in need teaches our students that kindness and generosity can make a real difference," shared Ms. Virk "These experiences help our children understand the importance of looking beyond themselves and supporting their community, especially during times of greater need."

We would also like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Mr. Barak Shimon for serving as our Food Bank liaison and transporting all donated items safely. His gift of time, generosity were instrumental in making this year's food drive a success.

Thanks to the collective efforts of our students, families, and staff, this year's food drive will help make many families' holidays a little brighter.

Clubs

by Sharon Hoffman

Fall 2025 was another successful season for the Albrook Afterschool Club program. Each program is geared to enhance your child's individual talents and cultivate a different facet of a well rounded individual. The creativity of art, the science of baking, the analytical moves in a chess match; all of these things promote thinking in a different way. We will begin our winter club session in mid January, we hope the children enjoy! Enjoy these photos from the dance club on this page and the next.



(Continued on page 4)



International Day/Winter Holiday Celebration

by Ms. Marvi and Ms. Lipman

We celebrated our very first International Day in April 2005, and it has since become a cherished tradition at Albrook School. Over the years, we have loved guiding our students on a joyful journey around the world, exploring diverse cultures through song, music, and food. In preparing for this special day, our students not only discover the rich tapestry of global traditions but also develop a deep appreciation for the connections that unite us and the beautiful differences that make each culture unique. Introducing young children to the wider world in this way nurtures empathy, curiosity, and a lifelong love of learning about others.

In December 2023, we added a new twist to our annual International Day by combining it with a celebration of Winter Holidays from around the world. It was an excellent way to finish the year as a community, honoring the holidays and celebrating the rich cultures represented in our school.



(Continued on page 5)

On Thursday, December 18, the Albrook School community came together for this joyful annual celebration. The festivities began with a warm welcome from Ms. MacNeill, followed by the lighting of the Community Peace Candle and the Menorah in honor of the fifth day of Hanukkah, followed by the lighting of the Holiday International Tree. The audience then enjoyed a delightful video of our Stepping Stones students singing Jingle Bells. Next, our elementary students showcased their musical talents with a recital of seasonal songs, featuring recorders and a variety of percussion ensembles. Followed by a grand choral performance, where preschool, kindergarten, and elementary students brought to life songs representing the many holidays they had studied. Each classroom highlighted a particular holiday or festival, creating vibrant exhibits to share what they had learned.



Audience members were also invited to enjoy foods associated with each holiday, both during the performance and in the classrooms. True to Montessori philosophy, this celebration reflects our commitment to peace education and fostering awareness of the diverse communities both within our school and around the world. It was a joyful reminder of the connections we share and the richness of our differences. We hope everyone enjoyed this special gathering and the many ways it brought our school family together.



Grace and Courtesy

by VanGogh Teachers

Grace and courtesy lessons are woven throughout all classrooms at The Albrook School. This year, we are placing a special emphasis on how grace and courtesy are taught and demonstrated in daily classroom life. Lessons on practical skills, such as setting the table, are available on classroom shelves. Several parents have shared that their child independently set the table at Thanksgiving, an accomplishment that made a lasting impression.

Learning to complete tasks independently supports not only individual development but also the overall classroom community. Children regularly apply these skills when cleaning up after lunch and during classroom celebrations. They are taught to respect personal space and maintain a

(Continued on page 6)

calm, quiet learning environment so that all classmates can focus on their work. Additionally, children learn to return materials to their proper places, making it easy for others to access them.

Each classroom at The Albrook School establishes expectations that promote grace and courtesy within its unique environment. In the Van Gogh classroom, the helper of the day has responsibilities such as organizing the classroom closet, washing tables, and setting lunch tables with placemats and plates. The helper also rings the bell to signal transitions and greets visitors to the classroom. These responsibilities build self-confidence and help children develop effective communication skills. When the class travels to another area of the school, the first child in line holds the door open for classmates, demonstrating consideration and respect.

Beyond the classroom, children at The Albrook School are exposed to meaningful opportunities to practice grace and courtesy in the wider community. Through supporting other groups and charitable causes, children learn the importance of helping others and treating everyone with respect.



In the Spirit of Giving

By Ms. MacNeill

It's that special time of year when the air fills with excitement and the joy of holiday wishes coming true. This year's marks the 35th year of the Albrook's holiday tree. Each year the tree has proudly stood in our reception hall, shining with a heartfelt purpose, supporting young children. Throughout the years, our school has partnered with various organizations that serve children in need. This year, we are delighted to share that we worked with two wonderful groups. Our Upper Elementary class participated in the Toys for Tots Drive, teaming up with the Bernards Township PBA to support the Somerset County YMCA Toy Drive. Our preschool classes and the wider school community joined together in partnership with Holiday Hope, a nonprofit that collaborates with twenty-two agencies across New Jersey and New York to assist children of all backgrounds during the holiday season.



Thanks to your generosity and giving spirit, we collected a beautiful assortment of gifts. These filled holiday wish lists with both wanted and needed items, coats, mittens, backpacks, games, art supplies, and more. Each child's wish was written on a red paper heart, including their name, item category, and size when needed. These hearts decorated our Christmas tree in the main entrance, a touching display for all who visited. We would also like to extend our sincere appreciation to our Material Making Committee for making the hearts. And acknowledge Ms. Hoffmann, who worked closely with Holiday Hope. Her remarkable attention to detail helped ensure that every child on our list received exactly what they wished for. Albert Camus once said, "Real generosity toward the future lies in giving all to the present." Thank you for supporting our Heart Tree and this treasured tradition. Through your kindness, we brighten the holidays for many young hearts while modeling for our students the true joy and importance of giving.

(Continued on page 7)

The Stepping Stones Holiday Celebration

by Ms. McCusker and Ms. Behar



On Wednesday, December 17, the holiday spirit was shining bright at the Stepping Stones Holiday Sing-Along! Parents gathered in Albers Hall to catch up, enjoy a hot cup of coffee, and nibble on cookies. At the same time, our little performers put the finishing touches on their preparations.

The students had been practicing their songs for weeks, and it showed. Like true professionals, they rang their bells, spun their dreidels, and carefully passed the candle from friend to friend. Their glowing light-up crowns added an extra sprinkle of magic to an already special performance.

It was wonderful to welcome parents and extended family members to share in this joyful celebration. The warmth, smiles, and togetherness in the room truly captured the spirit of peace and joy of the season.

Parent Workshop

By Ms. Dignam

Ms. McCusker and Mrs. Dignam were joined by a large group of enthusiastic parents for a parenting workshop in Albers Hall. Together, they discussed common parenting challenges, reviewed typical toddler and preschool behaviors, and shared practical strategies for addressing them, including helping children handle frustration and disappointment by acknowledging their feelings and then guiding them forward. Some of the techniques we covered included:

- Understanding age-appropriate behavior
- Establishing routines to reduce frustration
- Getting the child's attention before giving directions
- Acknowledging feelings before responding or redirecting

Respectfully acknowledging a child's feelings is a powerful tool that helps them feel understood and better able to move through disappointment.

Kindergarten Swim Program

by Ms. Dignam and Ms. Tarangul

Every Wednesday in the fall, all of the kindergarteners gathered in Albers Hall for an early lunch; it was the start of their swim day at Albrook. The bus ride quickly became a major highlight for our budding swimmers. Each week, we traveled to Little Dolphins Swim School in Bound Brook, where the children worked in small groups with their dedicated instructors. We were consistently impressed by the confidence the staff instilled in even our most timid students and by the skills they imparted to our more experienced swimmers. In the end, all of the children had great success and fun with their friends.



In Honor of 39 Years of Service

By Ms. MacNeill

Earlier this year, we shared, with deep gratitude and warm wishes, the news of Lynda Zeitlin's retirement. After 36 years of devoted service in our business office, and many more before that as a dedicated parent volunteer, Lynda has chosen to begin an exciting new chapter in her life.

Over the decades, Lynda has been an integral part of Albrook's journey. She supported the school as it grew from a small, two-classroom campus into the vibrant six-and-a-half-acre community we are today. Her steady guidance, unwavering dedication, and countless contributions have left a lasting and meaningful legacy.

To generations of students, Ms. Zeitlin was affectionately known as "the Lady in the Pink Tower." Her office, painted pink and overlooking the playground in Building A, made her a familiar and beloved presence in their daily lives.

In honor of Ms. Zeitlin's 39 years of service, the APA, on behalf of the entire school community, dedicated a bench in her memory. The bench proudly sits on the patio in Building A and features a beautiful plaque that reads:

*To Ms. Zeitlin, our beloved Lady in the Pink Tower.
Thank you for 39 years of unwavering love and dedication.
Your Albrook Family.*

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the school community for this thoughtful and meaningful gift honoring Ms. Zeitlin and all she has given to Albrook.



Kindergarteners Visit Lower Elementary

Over the course of three days, all kindergarten students had the opportunity to visit our Lower Elementary. Each child was matched with a Lower Elementary mentor who made them feel welcome. We began with introductions, and then each mentor and mentee worked together on a special STEAM challenge. They created buildings using marshmallows and toothpicks. The students did a wonderful job in collaborating, and we observed a great deal of creativity and teamwork. While it was, of course, hard to resist eating the building materials, all the children had a great time doing this project, and the kindergarteners had a nice introduction to the elementary program.



Expanded Care Program- The Matisse and Degas Rooms

Our Pre-K Expanded Care program has gotten off to a wonderful and exciting start this school year. We have truly enjoyed watching the students dive into the many engaging activities we prepare for them each day. From making popsicles in the school kitchen to creating art with colorful fall leaves, the children have been happily busy exploring and creating.

It has been especially rewarding to support the children as they transition from their full-day classroom programs into Expanded Care. Through a consistent daily routine, welcoming group activities, and hands-on art projects, we strive to help each child feel comfortable, confident, and at home. These experiences also give students opportunities to express themselves creatively while practicing and strengthening the fine motor skills they develop in the classroom.



One of the most cherished moments of our day is story time. After reading aloud together, the children eagerly share personal experiences, fostering meaningful connections and strengthening their sense of community.

When they are not enjoying time on the new playground, the children can be found engaged in creative projects such as painting trees using unique materials like broccoli florets as paintbrushes. These fun and imaginative activities allow them to explore art in new and exciting ways.

Whether they are learning about sharks, hedgehogs, and owls or hosting the best birthday parties for their dolls, the Pre-K students have truly made the Matisse and Degas Rooms their own. Through play and thoughtfully planned activities, they continue to build friendships and grow each day socially.

We look forward to the winter season, which will undoubtedly bring many more opportunities for fun, friendship, and growth.

Ms. Traconis, Ms. Stevenson, Ms. Wlodarska, and the supporting team.



APPLICATIONS FOR THE 2026 -2027 SCHOOL YEAR WILL ONLY BE ACCEPTED AFTER JAN 1, 2026

Procedure and Criteria for Awarding Financial Aid/Scholarships:



A limited number of scholarships are offered each year to students in the Kindergarten and Elementary Programs. Applications must be submitted to FAST; it is Independent School Management's (ISM) FAST (tuition assistance for School Tuition) program. FAST provides a need-based tuition analysis service. A report is generated and supplied to The Albroom School indicating what a family should reasonably contribute toward tuition. ***All applications must be submitted to FAST no later than March 2, 2026.*** All information is kept strictly confidential.

The Administration and the Board Scholarship Committee review all the financial aid applicants and award scholarships based on the following criteria:

- The family's demonstrated commitment to Montessori Education
- Student's personal potential within the class and program
- Financial need based on expected family contribution (a measure of the family's ability to pay for the child's education)
- Academic merit

The dollar amount of scholarships awarded is affected by the total amount of money designated for scholarships for that school year and the number of applicants awarded scholarships.

The application process is self-guided. You may partially complete the application, save your work, and then return to it later. FAST offers online email help and a 24/7 helpline is provided. ***The non-refundable fee for the application is \$60.00*** and is to be paid at the end of the session by the applicant using a credit card. VISA, MasterCard and AMEX are accepted. After completing the online application, you will be required to ***mail or scan and email all of your 2025 tax documents for both state and federal taxes with all the schedules and W-2's to:***

Independent School Management
Attn: FAST Processing
2207 Concord Pike #417
Wilmington, DE 19803

Write THE ALBROOM SCHOOL's name on the outside of the envelope to ensure quick application processing.

Please use the hyperlink below to submit your application:

[FAST \(Application available in January, 2026\)](#)

All families submitting applications will be notified of the results before April 1, 2026.

APA Holiday Party



*The Albrook School
wishes everyone a
healthy & peaceful
new year.*

Upcoming Events

Monday, January 19
Martin Luther King Day
School Closed

Friday, January 30
In-Service Day
Half-Day

Thursday, February 5
Friday, February 6
Parent Teacher Conferences
School Closed

Thursday, February 5
Friday, February 6
Parent Teacher Conferences
School Closed

Monday, February 16 through
Wednesday, February 18
Mid-Winter Break
School Closed

Staff Holiday Party

