

Dante's Down the Hatch Owner Sponsors Playground Ship at Buckhead's First and Only Montessori School

On Saturday, August 22, at 5:00 pm, Carlisle Montessori School, Buckhead's first and only Montessori school, will celebrate its Grand Opening with a dedication presented by school founder Gina Ward to Dante's Down the Hatch owner Dante Stephens. Dante, a Montessori graduate, sponsored the construction of the school's main play structure, designed as a ship, which is known to stop traffic on Lindbergh Drive.

ATLANTA – On any given weekday, traffic slows down to a halt on Lindbergh Drive in [Buckhead](#). It's not because of an accident. Nor is it because of road construction. A different kind of construction causes rubber-necking on Lindbergh Drive. There is a ship docked on the front lawn of [Carlisle Montessori School](#).

The ship was named Her Majesty's Service (HMS) Eva Sigrid, after a Montessori educator who studied in England under [Dr. Maria Montessori](#) in the 1920s. For 42 years, Ms. Sigrid taught hundreds of children aged two to seven. She even applied the [Montessori Method](#) to teach hearing-impaired children during her last six years in education.

Erik Davin, of Erik Davin Enterprises, constructed the ship, along with Carlisle Montessori parent, Wojtek Felendzer. Felendzer felt compelled to help build the ship to honor his son.

“It is a great advantage for my son, Kuba, because he knows that I helped build it,” Felendzer says. “It helps him feel like he belongs at the school.”

On any given weekday, a six-year-old Captain may be commanding the ship. Or a five-year-old Lieutenant overlooking a sea of children from all over the world.

One of those children might be Kyan, a four-year-old adventurer. He is the First Lieutenant of Carlisle Montessori School. When he was three years old, Kyan was the first student to enroll. He is currently one of the eight international pioneers, all between the ages of three and five.

“As the class grew, he grew along with them,” says his mother Shannon Longnion. “The fact that the kids are integrated with other ages helps [the younger] kids learn a little bit faster and helps to keep them interested and pursuing to learn more as they see older kids learning at the next level.”

On any given weekday, an Admiral might be guiding her crew over a bridge to discover a continent. Or gathering loot from a garden.

She is Gina Ward, Montessori educator and founder of [Carlisle Montessori School](#), the first and only Montessori school in Buckhead. Ward previously started the first

Montessori school in Auburn, Georgia. Sixteen years later, she envisioned an in-town Montessori school to serve the residents of Buckhead and surrounding areas.

“I wanted to design a beautiful and functional playground with gardens to cultivate and harvest,” she recalls. “With cozy nooks, a bridge, and a magnificent ship play-scape specifically designed with its sponsor in mind.”

He is Dante Stephens, benefactor, son of Eva Sigrid, Montessori graduate, and founder of [Dante's Down the Hatch](#), a nautical-themed restaurant in the heart of Buckhead.

“My mother rode her bicycle daily until she was 88,” Dante remembers. “My mother and I jointly shared my Montessori childhood with Atlanta area Montessori parents. I, a product of that great system, credit my strong will and zest for life to it.”

Gina applied as a part-time hostess at Dante's Down the Hatch during the time she was brainstorming plans for the new school. She secured a job and an ally when she revealed her Montessori background during their interview. Dante gained a faithful employee and a chance to support his late mother's legacy.

On Saturday, August 22, at 5:00 pm, Dante and Gina will celebrate the official Grand Opening of Carlisle Montessori School with the dedication and christening of the HMS Eva Sigrid.

About Carlisle Montessori School:

The Children’s House at Carlisle Montessori School offers three- to six-year-old children a natural, home-like environment with progressive [AMI](#) approved quality materials, AMI Certified Teachers and highly trained staff. It is the first and only Montessori school in Buckhead, located at [1036 Lindbergh Drive, Atlanta, GA 30324](#). There are currently 14 students enrolled in the fall, with space for an additional six children.

About Dante's Down the Hatch:

Dante's Down the Hatch is a jazz and fondue restaurant and club created around the illusion of an 18th century sailing ship tied to the wharf of a mythical Mediterranean village. The 13-level entertainment complex is located at [3380 Peachtree Road, NE, Atlanta, GA 30326](#).