



# eyes wide open

THE SPRINGMONT NEWSLETTER -  
ALUMNI EDITION  
May 2023

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Dear Springmont Alumni and Families,

As health and safety measures eased over the past two years, we have focused on rebuilding our strong sense of community. Last year, we gathered as smaller communities, primarily classes and academic levels. This year has brought the resurgence of our larger community events and traditions. In the following pages, you will see photos from the Springmont Festival & Montessori Mile, which was expanded to include food trucks and inflatables. Seeing so many alums return to campus to join in the fun and reconnect with our community was wonderful. In February, we returned to the Peachtree Road United Methodist Church for the Springmont commUNITY Dinner. This year's celebration incorporated many cherished elements of International Night with a more intentional focus on what unites us as a community. Over the course of the year, we have also witnessed this unique sense of community among our alumni as we celebrated successes and milestones and supported each other in times of loss. It is my hope that you never lose this connection to one another and your school.



Looking ahead to next year, we are excited to celebrate Springmont's 60th anniversary. We kicked off the celebration of our 60th year in March with a trustee reception to welcome incoming Head of School, Elizabeth Lener. Throughout the evening, we shared what the Springmont experience has meant to each of us and our families. Watching current and former trustees arrive on campus and listening to the stories shared that evening was akin to what you might experience at a family reunion. It ignited a sense of hope that our strong sense of community remains despite the challenges we have faced over the past few years.

If it has been a while since you have been to campus, I invite you to schedule a visit and hope you will join us to celebrate our 60th anniversary next year.

It has been a pleasure to serve this community over the past two years as Interim Head of School. It has deepened my love and admiration of Montessori's approach and the Springmont community. I am excited for our future under Elizabeth's leadership and look forward to remaining an active member of this community.

Wishing you all the best,  
Megan



## Head of School Search Update by Joe Colonna, Board Chair

We are excited to share that Elizabeth Lener has agreed to accept the position of Head of School for Springmont. This decision is the result of many months of research, surveys, interviews and conversations with members of the Springmont community. Elizabeth comes to Springmont with over 25 years of experience teaching and leading in independent Pre K-8th grade schools. We chose Elizabeth for her background, experience, academic credentials and leadership skills. Elizabeth is a lifetime learner and committed to a supportive, inclusive and meaningful Montessori learning environment. I am more than confident that we have found the right leader for our school.



Elizabeth's official start date will be July 1st, 2023.

## Message from new Head of School, Elizabeth Lener

Dear Springmont Community,

Springmont came on my radar just a few short months ago but what an impression the school has made on me! I was excited by everything I read on the website and could not wait for my visit in January when I had the opportunity to meet many of you and see Springmont in person. What I heard during my visit was a deep love for the school, a passion for Montessori practice and a deep yearning to see Springmont become its best self. What I saw was a beautiful campus, classrooms full of engaged children, and a place where children could explore, tend and learn from the natural world. There is an understanding of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead and I look forward to doing that work alongside each one of you in the coming years.

I am humbled by the trust you have placed in me to steward this important and historic school and view it as my great privilege to serve the Springmont community on the next part of its long journey. I am excited to build relationships with each member of the community and for all that you will teach me! While I bring with me 26 years of experience in independent schools, I am new to Montessori and will be learning as much as I can, as deeply as I can, as quickly as I can. I trust that the community will help serve as my guides in this endeavor and be patient with my many questions as I build my understanding.

Searching for a new head of school is a huge undertaking. I want to take this opportunity to share my gratitude for the search committee and the board for their time, effort, and candor throughout this process. I felt welcomed and comfortable asking all my questions. I appreciate the time and perspective shared by parents, staff, teachers and administrators during our conversations and to the middle school students whose love of the school and their teachers was undeniable! After hearing them talk about the Landschool, I cannot wait for my first visit there!

After living in the DC area so long, my family and I are excited about a new adventure in Atlanta! My son Malcolm will be in the 11th grade at Galloway next year. My husband Rob will continue his work for the Environmental Protection Agency in a remote capacity, and our dog Chance is excited at the prospect of his own yard.

I very much look forward to crossing paths with each of you in the near future!

Warm regards,  
Elizabeth

# The Return of the Springmont Festival & Montessori Mile!

The Springmont Festival & Montessori Mile returned to campus on October 22nd after a three year hiatus and it was better than ever! We added two food trucks and inflatable playspaces for students, and a heated (pun intended) chili cookoff and a great alumni family turn out made this a welcoming, community-building event for all!



Alumni Brody Rohm and Callum Campbell



## Congratulations Springmont Alumni

Two of Springmont's 2019 Middle School grads have earned top honors at their high schools!

Nico Lamps has been named as the 2022-23 STAR Student for Campbell High School! The STAR nomination requires students have the highest score on any single test date of the SAT taken through November of their senior year and be in the top 10% of their class based on grade point average.



Happy Leveson-Jones has been named Salutatorian at North Springs High School! Despite the challenges and disruptions caused by the pandemic, Happy continued to excel and looks forward to the graduation ceremony at Ameris Bank Amphitheatre on May 25!

We are so proud of Nico, Happy, and all of Springmont's graduates as they continue to distinguish themselves in ways that underscore our mission to nurture self-directed, resilient, and aware human beings.

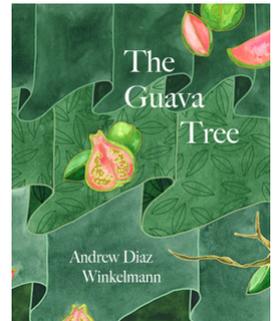
## Planning for our 60th Anniversary!

The 2023-24 school year marks Springmont's diamond anniversary and we are already planning ways to commemorate this milestone! We gathered former trustees on March 24th and began conversations about how alumni families can engage in the occasion. If you are interested in joining the planning committee, please email [development@springmont.com](mailto:development@springmont.com). In the meantime, mark your calendar for a community celebration Saturday, April 13, 2024 at Factory Atlanta.



## Andrew Diaz Winkelmann - published author!

Cuban-American author and Springmont Alumnus Andrew Diaz Winkelmann made his writing debut with a literary fictional novel, *The Guava Tree*, a story about the resistance embodied by immigrants that leave home in search of a better life. Released in English on December 13, 2022, the novel is a fictional depiction of the author's abuela and her search for home after her world is transformed in a blink of an eye.



Born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia, Andrew Diaz-Winkelmann embodies the next generation of storytellers who are reframing America's history. An avid supporter of education and empowerment for youth in diverse communities, Diaz-Winkelmann encourages aspiring authors to tell their own stories and uses his writing to lend a voice to storytelling from an immigrant perspective. The author intentionally works with Latino-owned businesses, including the book's publisher, 1010 Publishing, to feed the ecosystem of Hispanic-American literature.

"This novel is not only the story of my family's journey home, but a story repeated by people from all corners of the earth who embark on daring journeys in search of freedom, hope, and the unending possibilities that embody the American dream," states the author.

Learn more about Andrew and how he credits his love of learning and writing to his Montessori education at [andrewdiazwinkelmann.com](http://andrewdiazwinkelmann.com).

## A Tribute to Sophie Botello by Catherine Friedline

Sophie Botello passed away on November 8th, 2022, after her yearlong battle with stage 4 Fibrolamellar Carcinoma. Sophie was a true angel on this earth and means so much to so many people. She and her family are valued members of the Springmont community. Sophie and her brother Daniel attended Springmont as students, and their mom, Cecilia Fernandez, was a beloved Primary teacher for several years. Sophie was at Springmont until her 7th-grade year when she moved with her family to open a rescue farm. She completed her Montessori journey at Arbor Montessori and went on to graduate from Lakeside High School. Sophie was in her freshman year at Georgia State University before taking time off to focus on her health.

Sophie had a beautiful soul and was one of the most genuine persons that you could know. Her bright smile and contagious

laugh could light up a room. She was always kind and willing to do anything for her friends or any animal in need, no matter how small. She was easy to be around and made everyone feel welcome. Sophie was passionate about fair treatment for humans and animals alike. She made the world around her better. Her gentle soul, kind heartedness, compassion, and friendship will live on forever in our hearts.

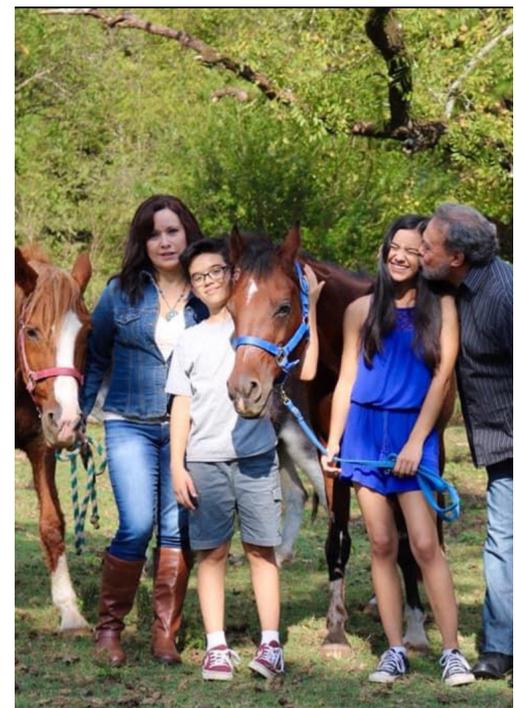


Springmont, like our pig, Pearl. She understood the social nature of the pig species and gave Pearl a home with other pigs for companionship.

In Sophie's honor, a celebration of life was hosted in the pasture so all the people and animals in her life could gather and remember her in her favorite place. To learn more about Best Friends Farm or donate in her honor, visit their website <https://bestfriendsfarmoxf.wixsite.com/website>.



In 2015 the Botello Fernandez family completed their lifelong goal of opening an animal sanctuary called Best Friends Farm to take in and care for vulnerable animals. Sophie, just like her mother Cecilia, dedicated her life to caring for animals' well-being and rescue. Sophie was always willing to help any animal in need, even if it meant getting up in the middle of the night or being out in the freezing cold. They even took in some of the animals from



# As Seen on Instagram



Posted by Alumni Parent, Dale Dyer



Posted by Alumni Parent, Steve Devinney



Posted by Margot Fumo, Class of 2012



Posted by Gavin Rolls



Posted by Melody Zadeh, Class of 2015



Posted by Samory Marshall, Class of 2018



Posted by Anna Hubert, Class of 2015



Posted by Sara Soba, Class of 2013



Posted by Shawdon Zadeh, Class of 2010