

July 29, 2009

Dear Parents,

Merritt Academy lost a beautiful little girl on July 22. As a tribute to Natasha Saab, a student at Merritt since 2003, this issue of the Wednesday Letter will honor her and celebrate her life.

There are not words to adequately express how we are all feeling, but included here are some thoughts and memories of a very precious child who brought joy and love to each of us who knew her.

We miss you, Natasha.

*Coral*



*I was extremely blessed to have Natasha as a student in my first grade class two years ago and my third grade class this past school year. Natasha is one of the most joyful and caring people that I have ever known. I looked forward to coming to work every morning and Natasha had a lot to do with that. There are not too many jobs where you are greeted every day with a warm hug and a beautiful smile and that's what Natasha did every single Day.*

*One of the first memories I have of Natasha was of her wearing these tennis shoes that would light up with each step she took. Little did I know the impact that this child would have on me. This incredible child literally lit up my life! In so many ways, Natasha became the teacher and I the student. Natasha's willingness to help her classmates with a math problem or study for*

*a spelling test taught me how to be more helpful. The playfulness she displayed on the playground and during center time taught me to enjoy life even more. Natasha's performance in Merritt's talent show, Spring Performance, and the assembly the third grade class hosted taught me more about courage. Her willingness to tackle and master complex learning concepts taught me more about determination. Natasha's participation on individual and group projects taught me more about creativity and her everyday hugs, her little notes written to me and left on my desk, her constantly comforting a friend, and her kind words taught me more about love.*

*I am a better person for knowing this precious little girl and I will continue to thank God every day for bringing Natasha into my life. Words cannot describe how much I loved and will miss Natasha.*

Tiffanee Saunders, Natasha's first and third grade teacher

*Natasha's class came into the music room, the day of this year's Spring Performance, for one last class before the show. I was playing the piano softly as the students entered the room. Natasha came in first, walked over to me at the piano and without saying a word gave me a great big hug. She held on and soon it became a group hug with the entire class. That group hug turned out to be the best confidence booster ever and we went on to give our very best performance that evening!*

Dr. Edward Nassor, music teacher

*I used to laugh at her antics in the late afternoon when she and George were waiting for the bus to leave! She liked to run around without her shoes on and just have a great time. She was full of joy and I loved that. As her principal, I never had to reprimand her, only enjoy her terrific personality. I'm so thankful that we were blessed to know her for the many years she was here.*

Linda Potts, Principal

*Natasha always had a hug and a smile for me during lunch, and no matter how my day was going, she never failed to cheer me up or brighten my day even more. She was generous, kind, and she had an amazing indefatigable spirit.*

Bree Melton, teacher



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*There was never a time that precious Natasha would not come and give me a hug. I will always remember Natasha for her beautiful smile and constant willingness to give to others. She was always such a happy little girl. I loved every Wednesday during my and Natasha's time on the playground when we would sit down with each other and talk and laugh together. I will miss her greatly.*

Pam Young, Librarian

*I remember her hugs when she saw me walking my students to the playground and back, her kind little conversations we usually had about her day or family, her bright mind and pretty smile. I also remember her way to deal with the teachers, and her brother, based on respect. I remember how close she was with her friends, especially Kalyna White. She valued friendship a lot. She liked to be close to me and always tried to help me around the classroom or with the other students. She was very artistic. In K4, we had a little talent show and she was the first one who wanted to take a part in it. Natasha will not be forgotten, never.*

Yelena Kushnir, Natasha's K4 teacher

*I was a brand new teacher at Merritt Academy and it was the very first week of school. George, Natasha's brother, was in my class. On Natasha's birthday, she came into my room at the end of the day and gave me a goodie bag full of prizes and treats. The same one that she had given to all of her classmates and friends. She had only seen me around for a couple of days, but the single fact that I was George's teacher was enough for her to include me in her special day. I was touched by her kindness and generosity. I have loved seeing these and her other wonderful traits blossom over the last two years.*

Hallie Rasmussen, Teacher

*I did not have the chance to get to know her very well, but I do remember her smile extremely well. It's strange how vividly I can remember her at the playground. She was a very special, delicate flower and she will be terribly missed! But like her brother said, her memory will always live in our hearts. Sweet dreams, dear Natasha.*

Gaby Detwiler, Staff Accountant

*Natasha will certainly never be forgotten and we will continue to thank her for the wonderful memories she gave us by carrying out what she thought was most important: cherishing and appreciating the loved ones around you, always keeping a smile and great attitude, and most of all...being the best you can be. Natasha was truly an angel and as her older brother, I am humbled and thankful towards God for giving us such a beautiful gift on this earth. Keep shining our little angel.*

Robbie Zebhdeh , Natasha's older brother

#### COUNSELOR'S CORNER

As I write this message today, I am feeling great sadness over the loss of Natasha Saab. She was such a loving child, one who reached out to help others, including me, who were new or in need. She was always quick with a smile and you could count on her for a hug to brighten your day. I will miss her.

Following so closely on the heels of Mr. Ray's death, it is even more difficult. It is hard for adults to cope with loss, so to know that our children are having to deal with this is an added sadness. I have attached an article from a website, [www.childgrief.org](http://www.childgrief.org) to the Merritt website under my name on Teacher Pages which you might find helpful. I went into the articles for "Children" and "Teens" and found some good information on children and grieving. You may want to peruse it first and use that to talk to your children or direct them to parts of it. It makes the point that there will be a jumble of emotions and feelings and that this is normal. It also gives tips on how they should care for themselves as they grieve. There is helpful information for parents as well so that you can monitor your child's reactions to an event.

It is important for us as adults to role model and teach our children coping skills. If there is anything I can do to help you, please feel free to stop by and visit, call or email me. This is a time when it is important to use all of our resources to help each other and especially to monitor our children as they deal with this loss.