

## **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Montessori School of Florence is to “. . . make available to the children and families of Florence, South Carolina and its surrounding area, both pre-school and elementary education of the highest quality, consistent with the methods and principles of Montessori education.” The school is a private, non-denominational, non-profit corporation operated by the Board of Directors. The Montessori School of Florence accepts students without regard to race, gender, religion, or national origin.

## **The Purpose of Montessori Education**

The Montessori method of teaching young children is based on the methods and philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori, an Italian physician and educator (1870-1953). Dr. Montessori's work extended over many years and over three continents. It includes specially designed materials, which were refined through observation of children. She has written numerous books, which are available at our school and through bookstores and libraries.

A Montessori school provides a secure, orderly, stimulating environment based on the basic concepts discovered by Dr. Maria Montessori. It is more than just a method of learning, it is a way of life. A Montessori school begins with love and respect for the child.

Dr. Montessori believed that no human being is educated by another person. He must do it himself or it will never be done. A truly educated individual continues learning long after the hours and years he spends in the classroom because he is motivated from within by a natural curiosity and love for knowledge. Dr. Montessori felt, therefore, that the goal of the early childhood education should not be to fill the child with facts from a pre-selected course of studies, but rather to cultivate his own natural desire to learn.

In the Montessori classroom this objective is approached in two ways. First, the child is allowed to experience the excitement of learning by his own choice rather than by being forced. Second, the teacher helps the child to perfect all his natural tools for learning so that his ability will be at a maximum in future situations. The Montessori materials have this dual long-range purpose in addition to their immediate purpose of giving specific information to the child.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wolf, Aline C., A Parents' Guide to the Montessori Classroom. Altoona, PA. Parent Child Press, 1980.

## **Our Goal**

The Montessori School of Florence provides for the positive development of the child academically, physically, psychologically, and socially. Five ideas have been incorporated to contribute positively to the child's success in school and their overall development. The five ideas are:

- \*Pre-school experiences that prepare children to learn
- \*Classes which are small enough to engage every child
- \*High standards in curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- \*Strong, meaningful family participation
- \*Making education part of a larger community commitment to healthy youth and family development

Montessori education is considered one of the most effective programs in producing long-term school success. The Montessori methods give the child a concrete foundation for the understanding of concepts and abstractions and a refinement of his/her senses.

## **Admission**

Enrollment to the Montessori School of Florence may begin at the age of two. All children are accepted on a six week trial basis. Students and parents are interviewed by a teacher and/or the director. An Admissions Committee makes the final decision. Since the programs are three year cycles, it is recommended that children enter at the beginning of the program cycle.

## **Programs**

Toddler: Monday – Friday 8:30 A.M. – 11:45 A.M.

The 2 K classroom is for children 2 years of age by September 1 through age 3. Toilet training is not required.

Pre-primary: Monday - Friday; 8:30 A.M. – 11:45 A.M.

The Pre-primary classroom is for children three years of age by September 1 (and toilet trained) through six years of age.

Extended Day: Monday - Friday; 8:30 A.M. – 2:45 P.M.  
Friday; 8:30 A.M. – 11:45 A.M.

The Extended Day program is for students who are five years old by September 1, and physically and academically ready to extend their school day. Extended Day students will remain with their morning teacher and classmates for the Extended Day time. The teacher must recommend each child for the program. It is important that the child be ready to stay the extra hours.

Lower Elementary: Monday – Friday; 8:30 A.M. – 2:45 P.M.

The Lower Elementary classroom is for students six through nine years of age.

Upper Elementary: Monday – Friday; 8:30 A.M. – 2:45 P.M.

The Upper Elementary classroom is for students nine through 12 years of age. All programs are designed to allow children to work at their own pace with Montessori materials. The curriculum is sequenced according to the child's needs and abilities. A comprehensive curriculum includes language arts, math, science, geography, health, art, music, and physical education.

Before/After School Program: Monday – Friday; 7:45 A.M. – 8:15 A.M.  
11: 45 A.M. – 5:30 P.M.

The Before/After School Program is available to all children from 3K through 6<sup>th</sup> grade enrolled in the school. The Before/After School Program enrollment form will need to be completed before using this service.

Children coming to the After School Program at 11:45 A.M. will have a rest period on individual cots. You will need to send a small cover for your child. Remember to label the cover with the child's name. No bottles or pacifiers are allowed. A mid-afternoon snack will be provided.

Please inform the office of any changes in your Before/After School Program needs. Although the program allows for "drop-in" use, a 24-hour notice is required for availability.

### **Tuition**

Tuition is payable in 10 installments with the first installment due at (re)enrollment and the remaining installments due on the first day of each month (September through May). Please remit payment in check or money order.

Tuition payments made after the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month must include a 5% late fee.

The Before/After School Program will be billed at the end of each month and is due by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the next month.

### **Arrival/Dismissal Procedures**

#### Arrival

Pre-primary arrival time is between 8:15 A.M. and 8:30 A.M. Please enter the school driveway from Warley Street. A staff member will meet your child at the front entrance. If you arrive after 8:30 A.M., please park your car and walk your child to the playground or classroom. You will need to sign the late arrival form located in the front office. Students will not be admitted to school after 9:30 A.M. without doctor's excuses. Students who habitually arrive late miss integral morning instruction as well as create a disruption to the rest of the class.

Lower/Upper Elementary arrival time is between 8:15 and 8:30 A.M. Please enter the school driveway from Warley Street. Students will report directly to their classrooms. If you arrive after 8:30 A.M., please park your car and walk your child to the office and sign the late arrival form located in the front office. A staff member will accompany the child to class.

Three late arrivals will equal one absence. Students will not be admitted to school after 9:30 A.M. without prior approval.

### Dismissals

At the appropriate dismissal time for your child, please enter the car pool line from Warley Street. Your child will be helped into your car. Please be sure your child is seatbelted before driving away. Please wait your turn in the line. Do not pass cars that are loading. Please do not park and walk up to the loading area to get your child. It is dangerous for children to be walking among the cars.

A child may leave school only with parents or a designated driver unless the school is notified in writing of other arrangements. Please include in your note the child's first and last name, day and date of change, and name of person picking up your child. If your child is going home with another child, include this information.

If your child is not picked-up within 15 minutes of dismissal time, your child will be taken to the After School Program and you will be billed accordingly.

Please avoid picking up your child during school hours unless absolutely necessary. If this is necessary, send a note as to the time you will be arriving. When arriving for your child, report to the office and a staff member will bring the child to the office.

Our children seldom bring home papers, as they work with concrete materials which are process, not product, oriented. Asking, "Do you have any work to bring home?" usually puts the children on the defensive. The teachers will welcome an opportunity to suggest activities for home follow-through in your child's particular areas of current interest. Continuing Montessori principles and activities at home will give you a good idea of his/her capacities and achievements as demonstrated in class at any given time. Do not be discouraged if your child offers little or no description of his/her school activities.

Children in the Elementary program will not have traditional homework assignments as they master their skills in the classroom. Remember your children have worked hard all day and need a time to unwind and relax. Topics that are springboards for individual research may be offered for home discussion.

These discussion topics are designed to encourage your child to ask questions and look for answers.

## **Attendance**

Every effort should be made to be at school every day because absences disrupt the sense of order of the child and individual lessons are missed. Absences are classified by the school as excused or unexcused. Anytime a student is absent from school, a note explaining the reason for the absence must be brought in on the day of return to school. The note must include the day(s) absent, the reason, and the parent or a guardian signature. The note should be given to the teacher.

### Extended Day and Elementary Students' Guidelines

**Excused Absences:** The school grants permission for absences such as sickness, family emergencies, doctor's visits, and/or school-sponsored activities. Students taking an extended family trip must keep a daily journal and make up work as requested by the teacher.

**Unexcused Absences:** If the absence is not valid it will be unexcused. Extended absences due to family vacations will be unexcused if the appropriate guidelines are not satisfied. Any student having more than 10 unexcused absences will jeopardize their progress to the next grade level.

### All Students

**Illness:** If your child has contracted a contagious illness, please keep your child at home and call the school. Certain situations may demand that other parents need to be alerted. Children returning to school after having a communicable disease must have a physician's written statement giving permission to return.

If your child is found to have head lice, he or she will be sent home for treatment and will not be allowed to return to school until all nits and live lice have been removed.

If a teacher suspects that a child is ill, a parent will be called to come for the child. In order to keep the spread of illness in check, please keep your child home if he or she is displaying any of the following symptoms:

1. An above normal temperature in the last 24 hours.
2. A cold or illness with sore throat, cough, runny nose, or earache.
3. A rash or discharge from nose and eyes.
4. Vomiting or diarrhea in the morning or on the way to school.
5. Any type of contagious illness.
6. Not well enough to go outside. No child may be left unattended in a building.
7. Dropping off a "sick" child while you go purchase medicine is not allowed.

If your child has an allergy or other condition which causes a runny nose or cough, please inform the faculty so that it will not be confused with a contagious disease. If your child has been diagnosed with a contagious disease, a phone call to the office would be appreciated so that we may be alerted to any symptoms in other students.

### **Permission to Administer Medications**

Medications can be given by the staff provided that:

- a. a Permission to Administer Medications form is completed (located in back of handbook)
- b. medication is in its original container with a label in place and legible
- c. a measuring device is furnished by the parent

### **Orientation Period**

The first few weeks of school for the Pre-primary child may be somewhat tearful and your child may have misgivings about going to school. This is a natural response to the change of a new school situation. Because the child will already have met the teacher and visited the classroom with the security of the parent's presence at the meet your teacher/see your classroom visit, we ask that you smile assuredly, say good-bye, and leave quickly. Prolonged good-byes usually increase, rather than alleviate, a child's anxiety. The teacher greeting at the car will help your child. The children soon become accustomed to the morning ritual.

During this orientation period your child will gradually be introduced to the classroom environment. The children learn where the bathroom is located, where to hang coats, general classroom procedures and ground rules. The children also make many new acquaintances among children and teachers. It is possible that during these first few weeks of school adjustment your child may seem unusually tired or irritable, or may temporarily regress in certain areas. This is normal behavior.

### **Emergencies**

On the Emergency Medical Form and Consent, you must list the names of two local individuals who will be able to come to pick up your child if you are unavailable during the day and your child is sick. Sick children may not remain at school.

Minor accidents, which occur during class, will receive prompt and careful attention of teachers. In the event of a serious accident, we will attempt to promptly notify the parent, and make arrangements for the child to be taken to

the doctor or to get emergency medical treatment. Parents must inform the school of any change of telephone numbers or other emergency information.

### **Health Records**

South Carolina Immunization forms are required by law for all children attending school. These forms must be received at the school before the start of the school year. These forms may be obtained at the SC Health Department, or at your doctor's office. For Pre-primary students, please bring updated immunization forms if your child receives additional shots or boosters.

### **Clothing**

Please dress your child in comfortable clothes, appropriate for the weather, which will allow the child to go to the bathroom independently. The children will be working with material, such as paint and glue, which may stain clothing. For the sake of safety as well as noise level, we ask that children not wear clogs or hard-soled boots. Rubber soled shoes are preferred.

Weather permitting, we will play outside each day. On cool mornings, a light jacket or sweater should be sent or worn. Your child may not get cold running to or from the car; however, he/she may be cold during our outside playtime in the early hours at drop-off. In cold weather, please send gloves or mittens attached to the coat or jacket, and a hat for hoodless garments.

Please label any garments that may be misplaced, or that may be identical to those of other children. We will put unidentified clothing in the school's lost and found. All unclaimed items will be donated to charity at the end of the school year.

All Pre-primary and Extended Day students must have at school a complete change of clothes labeled with his or her name. Children staying for the After School Program must have a second complete change of clothes to be kept in the After School Program room. When we send soiled clothing home, please send a replacement the next day in a bag labeled with your child's name.

### **Personal Belongings**

We ask that toys and similar "play" items, lip balm, jewelry, vitamins, and medicines be left at home. Candy and gum may not be brought to school. If your child has items of special interest which he or she wishes to share with the class, please send a note to the teacher requesting permission to send the item.

**If your child should come home with an unfamiliar object, please return it to the school, as it may be an important part of the school equipment.**

## **Birthday Celebrations in the Pre-primary Classes**

We celebrate birthdays at school by using a globe and a candle to symbolize the rotation of the Earth around the sun each year. On your child's birthday please send a short sentence for each year he or she has lived which describes something he or she did.

Example:	1 year	Susie learned to walk.
	2 years	Susie got a new brother.
	3 years	Susie began Montessori.

The teacher may request a photograph as a newborn and one for each additional year. Children who have a summer birthday may celebrate their birthday at school during the year.

If you would like to share a special snack with the class on your child's birthday, please check with the teacher ahead of time. Please be aware that students may have severe food allergies. Common allergens, like nuts, should be avoided when sending a group snack. A cookie or a cupcake will make a nice, special snack that day. In order to avoid hurt feelings among our students, no one (faculty, students, or parents) may distribute party invitations on school grounds at any time. Do not send gifts to school for another child.

## **Snacks and Lunch**

Please be sure that your child has a balanced breakfast before school each day.

We will offer a snack that will include such foods as juice, fruit, vegetables, crackers, and pretzels to our students. Please be sure that teachers are aware of any allergies your child may have. Parents may provide an alternative snack for a child with a restricted diet.

All students staying until 2:45 P.M. or later need a lunch box or bag with a nutritious lunch and fruit juice or milk. No soft drinks or sweet desserts are permitted. Please send the lunch with your child when he or she arrives each morning because bringing a lunch to your child after school begins is disruptive. Sharing food brought from home for lunch is not allowed.

At times during the year, parents may be invited to have lunch with their child in the classroom. Having lunch with your child on a regular basis, however, is not permitted. Parents who wish to have lunch with their children on an occasional

basis are requested to obtain permission from the Director prior to making arrangements with your child. We do not permit students to leave for lunch.

### **Parent/Teacher Communications**

We encourage parents to discuss with the teacher any aspect of your child's development at any time. When you wish to talk to your child's teacher, please call the school or send a written note. If it is imperative that you talk with the teacher that day, please park and come into the school because **only the briefest comments are possible during arrival and dismissal** and much information should not be discussed in the child's presence.

The teachers are eager to know of both happy changes and upsetting occurrences either in the child's or family's life. Parents should not hesitate to send a note about such matters as a sleepless night, stress in the home or at school, or any other information providing insight into the child's behavior.

Any incident occurring in school which has upset your child should be reported in the same manner. It is gratifying for the staff to hear what you particularly appreciate and value in your observation of school surroundings and your own child's growth in relation to the school.

### **Observations**

The Montessori School of Florence encourages parents to observe their child at work throughout the year. All classrooms are equipped with observation windows. Please call the school office to schedule your observation time.

When you come to observe your child in the Montessori classroom, you will see a joy of learning as children work purposefully at their own pace with the Montessori materials. You will be aware of the respect the children have for one another and for the material. You will notice the beautiful environment with everything that is the child's size, developmentally appropriate, and multi-sensorial so that each child can experience success and develop at their own pace.

Observations will help expand your knowledge of the Montessori philosophy and curriculum. We hope you enjoy your visits.

## **Conferences**

Conferences are scheduled several times during the year and are indicated on the school calendar. Those conferences are important and we urge parents to attend on the scheduled date. It is often difficult to reschedule missed conferences.

## **Ground Rules and Discipline**

The word “rules” often seems negative because it usually includes many “do nots” and connotes authority. However, within the Montessori framework, ground rules have evolved from a more positive base.

Maria Montessori believed that “education centers upon the care of the living being... the total person including the biological and social. Education is a natural process, which develops spontaneously in the human being. It is acquired by experiences in which the child acts on his/her environment.” This is the positive base of the Montessori approach expressing her central attitude and “view of man.”

From this base grow the ground rules, developed to provide a balance of rights and responsibilities. They allow for freedom within limits and promote respect for each other and the materials, within an atmosphere of choice. Ground rules provide the necessary structure to assist a group of people in living harmoniously together. Without them, there would be confusion and disorder. They are a way of saying to the child, “I know you can and I expect you will.” The adult is there only to see that the limits are respected; the limits themselves are not within the adult but within the situation.

Our emphasis is on positive reinforcement. However, if a child is not in control of his/her behavior, he/she will be taken out of the classroom. In the event a child experiences continued difficulty, the parents will be called and the situation discussed. If the behavior warrants, the parent will be called to pick-up the child for the remainder of the day.

**Conduct:** At the Montessori School of Florence, we operate on the assumption that everyone in the school will treat everyone else in the school with care and dignity. Therefore, three basic behaviors are forbidden.

1. No child or adult will hurt another child or adult.
2. No child or adult may disturb the work of another.
3. No child or adult may mistreat the property of the school.

These rules of conduct apply to any student, teacher, parent, or visitor in the school.

### Ground Rules of the Classroom

Responsibilities of the child: After the first five or six weeks of school, we expect each child to be able to:

- a. Understand the classroom rules of safety and respect
  - walking, rather than running, in the classroom
  - using an “inside” voice
  - speaking and acting kindly to others, no hurting by name calling or hitting or kicking
- b. Choose work, follow through, and return work to its original place. This helps develop focus, concentration, and coordination in order to move ahead with more advanced activities and feel a growing sense of inner order and calmness.
- c. Respect the work of others by not interrupting, and by assisting only when invited.
- d. Respect the rights of others to be able to listen and participate in group activities by sitting quietly and taking turns when responding to questions or participating in games.
- e. Cooperate with the teachers by being able to listen and follow simple directions such as, “Come and sit on the line for music time,” or “It’s time to put on our coats for recess,” without ignoring or talking back.

Respect, manners, and cooperation are needed to function well socially in the group situation of the classroom and later in society.

Role of the adult:

- a. To respect the child
- b. To prepare the environment
- c. To give lessons to children
- d. To act as an appropriate model
- e. To observe the child at work
- f. To reinforce the ground rules
- g. To intervene if the child is disturbing, dangerous, or destructive to him/herself or others
- h. To mediate in problem solving, if needed

## Discipline Policy

We adhere to the Montessori method of education and discipline. We use positive and creative methods of discipline that are appropriate to the age and developmental level of the child. We also take into consideration the family situation, as best we understand it.

1. Discipline will only be used in the case of the breaking of an established rule previously outlined for the child.
2. Discipline will be appropriate to the problem.
3. Discipline will be positive and will never be intended to lower the child's self-esteem.
4. Discipline will not involve food or drink.
5. Corporal punishment will not be used.

## Procedures for Infractions

1. Time out for five minutes
2. Assigned to a desk for one week or a work to complete
3. Student conference with Director
4. Student conference with Director, teacher, and parent
5. Suspension for one day, resulting in an unexcused absence
6. Suspension for three days, resulting in unexcused absences
7. Expulsion from the school

## **Montessori Teachers**

Your child's teacher is a highly trained professional. She has received post bachelor's training in the Montessori Method. Montessori training is extensive and intense.

Tim Seldin, Director of the Montessori Foundation in Alexandria, Virginia, wrote about the Montessori teacher. In his article he stated, "Montessori teachers do more than present curriculum. The secret of any great teacher is helping learners get to the point that their minds and hearts are open and they are ready to learn, where the motivation is not focused on getting good grades but, instead, involves a basic love of learning."

"Dr. Montessori believed that teachers should focus on the child as a person, not on the daily lesson plan. Montessori nurtures and inspires the human potential,

leading children to ask questions, think for themselves, explore, investigate, and discover. Our ultimate objective is to help them to learn how to learn independently, retaining the curiosity, creativity, and intelligence with which they were born. Montessori teachers don't simply present lessons; they are facilitators, mentors, coaches, and guides."

"Montessori teachers closely monitor their student's progress, keeping the level of challenge high. Because they normally work with each child for two or three years, teachers get to know their student's strengths and weaknesses, interests and anxieties extremely well. Montessori teachers often use the children's interests to enrich the curriculum and provide alternate avenues for accomplishment and success."

It is important to remember that your child's teacher uses methods that are nontraditional in nature. Parents schooled in a traditional classroom setting may have no frame of reference for the Montessori method and at times may feel some discomfort with nontraditional methods. It is important to recognize that in the Montessori environment, your child's teacher is the expert and is utilizing methods that have helped successfully educate children for one hundred years. Although we appreciate input from parents about their children, your child's teacher is responsible for maintaining a prepared Montessori environment and for presenting material and information in a Montessori way.

### **Field Trips**

A limited number of out-of-class field trips are taken throughout the year. In-class field trips are also scheduled to help the children know and understand more about their neighborhood and community. If you can participate or know of anyone who could (dentist, doctor, fireman, potter, needlecraft expert, gardener, musician, actor, historian, someone from a foreign country, or anyone with a hobby to share), please contact the teacher.

At times we will request that parents help drive our children on field trips. Before volunteering to drive or be a chaperone on a field trip, please know that we ask parents to be responsible for their assigned groups. Please do not bring other children in the family who are not members of the class going on the trip. The parent chaperone will need to focus their undivided attention on their assigned group and not be distracted by other family members. This is a great responsibility and we appreciate your cooperation. Parents attending field trips will be required to sign the field trip guideline form by the day prior to the field trip and present a current driver's license and proof of insurance.

## **Liability Coverage for Transportation of Students**

It is important that all parents transporting students be aware of the liability coverage.

In an automobile insurance liability claim, the insurance of the vehicle would apply first and be primary. If the accident involves the transportation of the students for the school, the liability protection of the school would be excess over the liability insurance of the vehicle.

There is no automobile medical payments coverage provided by the school. If a student is riding in a private vehicle, the only coverage provided by the school is excess liability over the coverage provided by the owner of that particular vehicle.

If a student is injured on our property or at another location during a school sponsored activity, the child's health coverage would be filed first and the medical payments of the school would be excess. The excess medical payment coverage would cover any out-of-pocket expenses you may incur such as deductible or co-insurance payment.

## **Emergency Closing**

In the event of an emergency school closing due to factors such as bad weather, a message will be placed on the school answering machine and with the following:

Television:	TV 13 TV 15
Radio:	WJMX 103.3 FM WJMX 970 AM

If we need to close the school during the school day, you will be advised to come to the school to pick up your child.

## **Board of Directors**

The Montessori School of Florence is operated by the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is an elected, volunteer board whose members serve three year terms.

## **Parents/Teachers/Friends Association**

The Parents/Teachers/Friends Association (PTF) is comprised of all the parents and teachers of the school. Any person who is a friend of the school and who would like to contribute positively to the school may also be a member. The PTF is composed of various committees organized to operate board approved fund-raising activities and provide support to the teachers.

While parents are encouraged to volunteer their time and money for the benefit of the school, no parent may collect money from parents for school related activities without the permission of the Director. This includes, but is not limited to, gifts for a teacher.

Each year, a teacher will ask a parent to be the volunteer parent for their classroom.

### Parent Volunteers

The teachers and assistants are able to handle everyday work in the class and outside assistance is not necessary. On occasion, parents will be asked to assist with a task when helping with special projects. Montessori believed that the adult should not be the obstacle between the child and his/her learning. Adults may perceive that children are not getting the help they require and provide too much assistance. At times the best learning comes from making mistakes then being able to see and correct the mistakes. If adult intervention occurs at the wrong time, then important learning may not occur

Permission to Administer Medications

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Medication \_\_\_\_\_ Refrigerate Yes/No

Dosage \_\_\_\_\_

Times to be given \_\_\_\_\_

Dates to be given \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Office Use:

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Time \_\_\_\_\_

By \_\_\_\_\_

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Permission to Administer Medications

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Medication \_\_\_\_\_ Refrigerate Yes/No

Dosage \_\_\_\_\_

Times to be given \_\_\_\_\_

Dates to be given \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Office Use:

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Time \_\_\_\_\_

By \_\_\_\_\_

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Permission to Administer Medications

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Medication \_\_\_\_\_ Refrigerate Yes/No

Dosage \_\_\_\_\_

Times to be given \_\_\_\_\_

Dates to be given \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Office Use:

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Time \_\_\_\_\_

By \_\_\_\_\_

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