



International Conference “Montessori without borders” organized by PFGW

*Submitted by PFGW President, Malvina Segovia*

The International “Montessori Without Borders Conference”, organized by the Paraguayan Federation of Graduate Women was held on the 19th and 20th of November in commemoration of María Montessori’s 150 years. This initiative, aligned with the GWI organizational development plan and its objectives, sought to highlight the figure of an outstanding woman who managed to transcend physical and temporal spaces working for peace and education. The event was conceived as part of the Voices of Educateurs sans Frontières Program from the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) based in Amsterdam, and it was developed through partnerships with the official Montessori associations of the region: The Asociación Paraguaya María Montessori, The Fundación Argentina María Montessori and Montessori México, all of which are AMI affiliates. It was also supported by the Research Directorate from the Faculty of Philosophy of the National University of Asunción, GWI and UNICEF.

The Educateurs sans Frontières (EsF) Program seeks to review, within the context of the 21st century, some key aspects of social reform of the pioneering Montessori educational principles that were first introduced in 1907. EsF is a network of Montessori practitioners, who work with communities and other partners to promote human development from the prenatal stage to early childhood care and education, through elementary school, adolescence, adulthood and the elderly. EsF strives to promote children’s rights around the world, regardless of race, religion, political and social beliefs and it is committed to transcending borders to serve children through innovative educational initiatives that utilize Montessori’s principles and practices.

The central themes of the conference were the social value of education as a space for transformation and the Montessori philosophy as support for the human development. The conference brought together educators, parents and caregivers from the most varied backgrounds and countries. Speakers from Paraguay, Argentina, México, Colombia, the United States, Spain and Italy united for the cause to make a memorable event. The funds raised as registration fees were sent to three different educational Programs: A School support program in Paraguay for girls aged 9-12 managed by the Asociación Promotora de Iniciativas Sociales (APRIS), the Girls Education for Brighter Futures by GWI and the Educateurs sans Frontières Program by AMI.

During the opening session, GWI Executive Director, Stacy Dry Lara and PFGM President, Malvina Segovia presented recognition awards to three outstanding women. It was a great honor to recognize Jane Nelsen, founder of Positive Discipline, for her lifetime achievement and enduring commitment to education and peace; Beth Pfannl, former recipient of a GWI grant, for her leadership and empowerment of women through education; and Susan Mayclin Stephenson, for her fifty years of dedication to Montessori and education without borders values. The great success of the congress could only be possible with the generous collaboration and support from people and institutions committed to education, development, and peace. Thanks to this and other local and international initiatives, Paraguay's NFA has taken leadership in the national educational transformation process.