



## December 1st -- Important in Two Ways



First there was Thanksgiving – a day to give thanks, eat too much turkey and pie and watch football. Then Black Friday sales came along, often with news of fistfights in stores over deals. And the following Monday became Cyber Monday for online sales.

Enough commercialism! A new idea stirred. What if, after near-orgies of buy, buy, buy we had a day to give, give, give? Started by the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y in New York and the United Nations Foundation, the idea of giving -- in both deeds and money -- took off. By 2019, Giving Tuesday is estimated to have raised nearly \$400 million for non-profits in one day and it is hoped it will grow further in 2020.

This year, Giving Tuesday coincides with a 72-year-old celebration of the abolition of the military in Costa Rica. The military budget and even physical resources like barracks have been invested instead in education, culture and in later years, protecting Costa Rica's amazing ecology. Costa Rica's high literacy rates and its role as one of the top international ecotourism sites are some of the fruits of that approach.

At MFS, our form of giving on December 1<sup>st</sup> will be to mark the holiday with lessons on peacemaking and non-violent conflict resolution – alternatives to military approaches. Our hope is that the youth we teach will carry that peacemaking forward in their communities and their lives.

We hope you'll keep the Monteverde Friends School in mind for **Giving Tuesday**.  
Just [CLICK HERE](#) for ways to make a tax-deductible donation.

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## Thanks to the Pandemic, a New International Opportunity

Seven of our MFS students spent the past weekend working hard – but in an opportunity that would not have been available except for the pandemic. Students emerged from the weekend tired but exhilarated by the new experience and the new friends they made.

They participated in a Quaker Model United Nations (QMUN) weekend conference organized by students of the Moorestown Friends School (the other MFS!) in Moorestown, New Jersey. In the previous two years of this annual

conference it was held in person, usually including only students from east coast US Friends schools given the travel involved.

This year, when the conference was virtual, our students could participate. Offered the opportunity – completely voluntary -- and despite the amount of time and work involved, some of our Monteverde high school students decided to attend.

As in Model UN's that hundreds of thousands of students around the world participate in each year, each student was assigned a country to research so that they could speak on behalf of that country. They were then assigned to a committee organized around issues -- based on Quaker testimonies such as simplicity, peace, and integrity, for this conference. Each student was to bring to the conference their opening statement for their assigned country.

After these statements were presented in committee groups, blocs were formed across countries whose positions had a lot in common. Committees then worked to agree on a single position across countries.



Eleventh grader Ana Cristel Pérez Picado, for example, was assigned to represent Venezuela on the topic of ameliorating Venezuela's current humanitarian crisis. Cristel presented an opening statement focused on how an international effort of humanitarian aid for the people was needed. That wasn't initially a position accepted by all countries; the student representing the United States argued forcefully for intervention with sanctions and military force.

However, Cristel soon found an alliance with China, which gave a powerful bloc that was then joined by other countries. In an unusual accomplishment for a first-time participant, Cristel's position won the support of the entire committee. This was sufficiently rare for a new participant that the chair recognized Cristel's accomplishment in the larger group!

Tenth grader Samara Sáenz had a different challenge. She was excited to be assigned to the Stewardship Committee, which was challenged to simulate the international community deliberations in 2015 as they worked to reach the Paris Climate Accord. She felt excited that she would be able to utilize skills from the environmental science that she studied in 9th grade. However, she was assigned to represent Iraq, where the economy is dominated by oil and fossil fuel sales. That meant she had to argue for a slower transition to renewable energy in order to support Iraq's economy – not a position consistent with her own beliefs!

She reflected that arguing that position “Was hard, but ended up being fun, putting myself in someone else's shoes.”

There were many other things they appreciated about the conference – e.g. seeing the skill with which more experienced students chaired the groups, both making sure that everyone was heard and being able to enforce speaking time limits but do so gently.

Both students, when asked whether they would want to participate next year, answered with an immediate “Definitely!”.

When asked whether they would recommend the conference to others, both qualified their responses. As Cristel put it, “It was hard to get into the conference and understand everything, but it gets to a very unique and fun opportunity. The beginning is hard. Almost everybody there was new to me, and there you are by yourself – but you get used to it and become more comfortable.”



Samara agreed, saying “It’s a lot of work and really exhausting”, so it would depend on whether other students are willing to work hard. And it wasn’t all hard work – when her bloc had some spare time they had fun debates about Christmas and what the best cookies are!

The QMUN may not be virtual next year, and our students may not have the chance to participate again, but who knows what seeds have been sown and what might grow out of this experience.

### **Creativity Grows with Virtual Learning**

When classes are meeting in person and the teacher provides the supplies for a hands-on exercise, that can set some limits on creativity. But with our students at home for virtual learning, it opens the door to some greater creativity as they have to find their own materials (though we would still rather see them in person!).

Recently, our 3rd and 4th graders were studying how wheels and axles work. Their assignment was to use things from around the house to build a car or vehicle. Take a look at the amazingly creative results!



*From wood shop crafting to beer cans to green food container lids ... and then there are juice cartons and toilet paper rolls!*



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