EIGHTH GRADEERS PREPARE FOR PRESIDENTIAL BRIEFING

By Sally Buckley

In a creative response to the international 9-11 tragedy, 8th grade social studies teacher Karen Hart gave a series of research and reading assignments to her students. They had been planning to learn about the politics and geography of the Middle East and Central Asia.

Discussion carried the tone of reality as each student delved into the geography, economy, natural resources, history, and culture of nations including Qatar, Afghanistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. The unit ended with each student briefing Co-Principal Clara Scott (in lieu of President Bush). They told her about their country’s stance and its possible strategic role in the current U.S. foreign and military policy of forging an international alliance to challenge the al-Qaeda terrorist network.

From chats with my son, several of his friends, and Ms. Scott, it seems that Ms. Hart met her goal of expanding her students’ awareness of Middle Eastern and Central Asian nations and their cultures. The assignments also exposed them to the views of each country’s citizens regarding U.S. policies and the American people.

SITE COUNCIL MEETING NOVEMBER 7, 2001

By Monica Hinckley

FINANCIAL REPORT

Treasurer Peggy Riehle reported on the October budget. We are still working with the United Way regarding revenues. The $55,000 “operating funds” are available now. PEAK budget reported that there is a surplus in savings and that the use of these funds is up for discussion. PEAK did not accept Site council $2,000 allotment from last year. Parent costs have gone down – they are now $75.00. The possibility of scholarship funding was discussed as was an endowment fund. Attack the Gap priorities should be considered.

PRINCIPAL’S REPORT

Ms. Scott reported that the search for our new Vice Principal closes on November 12. If this initial search proves unsuccessful, we will not send a recommendation and a new advertisement will probably be posted to acquire a new batch of applicants. The Superintendent has the final say. Our new Vice Principal should be on board by second semester.

Mark Ellis reported for the Leadership Team that the carry-over salary savings are estimated at about $31,000. The focused uses for this would be supplies and copying. The retreat was a success with emphasis on holding effective meetings and improving listening skills.

TRANSFORMATION PLAN REPORT

Ms. Scott presented the School Transformation Plan. She explained that since the original mission statement no longer reflected our beliefs, the staff and parents have created a new Mission Statement and Vision Statement. A motion was made and passed for the Site Council to adopt both the Mission and Vision Statements as theirs too. The plan is now ready for submission to the district for funding. It is important to remember that funding depends on continual performance; the first installment relies on our plan, the next will be on our actions. Continual review of our performance will be required.

continued on page 2.
FROM THE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR – MARLIES VAN BERGIEJK

This month I want to extend special thanks to Andrea Akita who, for the second year, took the TOPS Family Directory project in her very capable hands. Eric and Joette Olson, who now manage our database, assisted her in this endeavor. If your family did not receive a copy of our bright yellow 2001-2002 Directory please contact me at school.

May your families’ social lives blossom...

As you all know: we frequently state our expectation of 15 volunteer hours per parent per school year. It seemed high time to calculate how close we come to meeting this objective collectively by reviewing the data from school year 2000-2001. I added up all the reported hours (14,408) and divided them by the total number of parents listed in last year’s directory (835). We averaged more than 17 hours per parent, which is terrific. While it is true that a number of those total hours are volunteered by people who are members of the larger community, I still think the figure of 17 plus hours is a valid one because parent volunteers frequently forget to report hours spent outside of the school building. I want to thank each and every one of you.

Ultimately, regardless of who our volunteers are, all TOPS students benefit from the efforts made by all volunteers. It really does make a difference, it does help to Attack the Gap, it does enrich the educational experience of all students and allows TOPS to keep setting the bar high.

If you need some ideas of how you, too, can get involved: consider teaching a TOPIC, using your talents by serving on a committee, or becoming a tutor. Or call or e-mail me and ask me to help you figure out how you can fit volunteering into your schedule.

On the subject of TOPICS: I am the parent of a fourth grader and I admit with some embarrassment that I have never yet taught a TOPIC. Meanwhile my fourth grader has spent many an intriguing hour in the TOPIC of her choice, thanks to other parents, teachers and peers who did answer the call to action. Thus, before she is a fifth grader and no longer eligible for TOPICS, I will finally figure out a way to step up to the plate and help keep the TOPICS tradition going. Won’t you join me?

Site Council Meeting continued from page 1.

Some new efforts would include K-2nd early morning homework club and middle school mentoring. There was some discussion of test data and the difficulties in interpreting them. Because of our small size, a percentage might sound high when in fact it is only representing 2 or 3 students. TOPS appears unique in that we are outwardly identifying race as a factor in Attack the Gap.

FUND DEVELOPMENT

The No-Bake Bake sale is underway. Flyers have been sent home with the Wednesday Go-Home bulletin and mailings are expected to go out when the Directory has been completed. Donations have started coming in, with about $11,000 received so far.

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Volunteer Coordinator Marlies van Bergeijk reported that families should receive the Directory sometime during the week of November 12. Site council reps were encouraged to communicate with room reps regarding meetings, etc. so that everyone can stay well informed. Marlies also advised that anyone who can should try to attend the all-city tutor training which is being offered, for free, next week.

DIVERSITY ISSUES COALITION

Gary Owens applauded the staff for their work on TOPS Mission and Vision Statements. This will make it easier to talk about the work that he is doing in the Diversity Issues Coalition. There were two meetings scheduled for October and November’s first Thursdays from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. More participants are needed. A Fall Study Circle will be held November 8 at 6:30 with further meetings to be on December 6 and 13. Gary is hoping to form a Middle School Study Circle in the Spring to discuss race before they leave for High School. Gary offered to report back on the UN Conference on Racism if we can use it to talk about issues pertinent to TOPS. A suggestion for creating a student-based project to erect a Peace Pole on school grounds was offered as a way for them to visualize peace.

FACILITIES COMMITTEE

The playground construction has been delayed due to a wall that needs rebuilding. A crew of volunteers is still planning on meeting November 10 and 11. Laurie Stusser-McNeil should be contacted for exact times, etc. (323-4556 or ljstusser@home.com) We are hoping to see completion sometime in January.

TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Kevin Crozier announced that our UW student, Tim Lee, will begin this Tuesday to help with hardware, software and teacher training. He will be putting in ten hours per week. His salary ($4,000) will be funded by the Leadership Committee. There are about 30-40 students working within the district in this manner. Tim’s appearance at TOPS will reduce the demands which have been put on Kevin because of his great tech expertise. Thanks to Kevin for all of his help thus far!

Continued on page 3.
FIRST GRADERS ADDRESS ELECTED OFFICIALS

By Teresa Nemeth

“GIVE IT BACK!”

Not an unusual phrase for a first-grader. Somewhat unusual, though, when addressed to Greg Nickels, Gary Locke, or George Bush, in a letter written laboriously by hand.

In an approach to Thanksgiving that included the Native American perspective as well as that of the European settlers, Margie Butcher showed her first-grade class this poster, printed around the turn of the century.

Reactions were immediate. “It’s not fair!” “I feel sad.” The children talked about government, then addressed letters to their elected officials.

“I know William H. Taft took it away,” wrote Edna, “but can you give it back?”

“I want you to give half of America,” Sabina added. “Or at least some.”

“It’s not nice,” some said.

“Did you remember to say sorry?” wondered Jack.

Mackenzie was emphatic. “And say it like you mean it!”

ROGERS PLAYGROUND UPDATES

Despite a slightly delayed construction schedule, the new playground is taking shape. A team of dedicated volunteer assemblers put the first and largest play structure together all in one day. It will tempt kids for a little while longer as the rest of the site is finished with ramps, seat walls, and walkways. Additional play equipment, wood chips, and landscaping will be ready for installation after the contractor is completely finished. We’re hoping to open the playground for cold, winter play by February!

Work parties will be scheduled for early January. Sign up now by calling Laurie Stusser-McNeil at 323-4556 or Rebecca Sadinsky at 723-7378.

Site Council Meeting continued from page 2.

MIDDLE SCHOOL SKI PROGRAM

Janet Moore announced that November 8th was the mandatory meeting for all participating parents and children. The first night of skiing will be January 18, 2002.

TOPICS

Tabitha Beaupain reported that the elementary staff met with regards to TOPICS because of current lack of parent participation. This has resulted in large classrooms for most of the day without any opportunity to have smaller groups for specific activities which require them. The staff is now drafting a letter to explain that TOPICS activities are expected and relied upon. They are also setting a date by which they hope to have the numbers they need or the entire program will have to be cancelled. (Please see the two articles on TOPICS in our Nov ’01 issue of TopsNews, page 5.)
**CHESS NEWS**

Each year at TOPS, with the coming of fall, the chess season begins. Once again, TOPS is fortunate to have Mark Morales lead the children in learning the game of chess. Held every Tuesday afternoon in the common area, between 3:30 p.m. and 5:00 p.m., a record number of children gather each week to learn, study, and compete in the sport of chess. Many of us know Mark Morales for his role in creating this exciting program at TOPS, and now many others in Seattle will receive the wise teachings that he brings to aspiring chess players.

The Seattle Chess Foundation, whose mission is “to strengthen the minds and character of our young people by advancing chess in our schools and culture”, has selected Mark Morales and Norman Alston to introduce chess to the Seattle Schools. The pilot project, started and funded this year by the foundation, is introducing chess as a part of the school curriculum in several Seattle schools. Medina, Montlake and Bailey Gatzert elementary schools, Whitman Middle School, and The Happy Medium School, are serving as the test schools for this project. The search for these two talented instructors was far reaching, and many qualified people applied for the positions. Please congratulate Mark Morales on his exciting new job! We are fortunate at TOPS to have Mark Morales leading our chess program.

The TOPS chess players have been successful recently, due in large part to Mark’s tutelage. On November 10th, the top four rated chess players from each grade, selected from the entire state of Washington, were invited to compete in the prestigious 2001 Candidates Tournament, held at Shorecrest High School. Jackson White, of Mr. J’s second grade class, qualified for and was invited to compete in this select tournament. By winning all three of his matches, Jackson won the second grade division!

With this victory in the Candidates Tournament, Jackson White will now represent the state of Washington (and TOPS!) in the annual British Columbia International Match. The Washington State Chess Team, grades one through twelve, will compete against the Canadian Chess Team on December 1st in Burnaby, British Columbia. Good luck, Jackson!

Anyone interested in having their child introduced to the sport of chess may contact Mark Morales at 325-4079. All levels of chess playing ability are welcome!

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**TOPS STUDENTS ON STAGE**

Broadway Bound Children’s Theater, a non-profit community theater based in Fremont, opens its fifth season with the Tony award winning musical “Annie” by Charles Strouse and Martin Charnin. “Annie” will be performed December 6, 7 and 8 at 7:00 p.m. at Hamilton Middle school, with a special matinee performance Saturday, December 8 at 3:00 p.m.

Broadway Bound’s cast includes over thirty kids from elementary grades to high school, attending public and private schools all over the Seattle area. TOPS cast members include: Brendan Griffin, 7th grade, Justin Savage, 7th grade, Miriam Schwartz, 6th grade, Jonah Ury, 2nd grade.

The show features popular numbers such as “Tomorrow”, “NYC” (New York City), “Hard Knock Life” and “You are Never Fully Dressed Without a Smile”. The story follows Annie as she searches for her family, despite the plotting of evil orphanage director Mrs. Hannigan.

Eventually Annie connects with both billionaire industrialist “Daddy” Warbucks and Sandy the dog.

“Annie” is directed by Broadway Bound founder Jimmy Nixon and features live orchestration. Tickets are $5 per person and will be available in advance by calling 679-3561 or at the door, although ticket buyers are encouraged to arrive early in order to secure a seat.

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**TOPS FAMILY SKI WEEKEND**

**FEBRUARY 21-24, 2001**

Won’t you join us? We’re going skiing!

Join us at Mission Ridge in Wenatchee for our traditional family ski weekend during the mid-Winter break. All ages are invited. And all ages have fun! Mission Ridge Ski area, twelve miles up from town, offers alpine skiing and snowboarding. They also run a great little tubing and Nordic area nearby, open on the weekends.

The Cedars Inn in Wenatchee has set aside 30 rooms for TOPS families to reserve. They need your reservation by January 20th in order to hold your room. Please call them at (800) 358-2074 or (509) 886-8000 or send email via their website at http://www.cedarshotels.com/CedarsInn-Wenatchee.html to make your reservation.

Look for complete details in the January TOPS newsletter and on the TOPS website at www.seattleschools.org/schools/tops/activities-menu.html

For more info on this fun tradition please call: Mary Sue Galvin at (206) 323-6439.
The staff at TOPS is so wonderful. Throughout the year, parents like to show appreciation for all that they do and how well they do it. One way the Staff Appreciation Committee recognizes the interior staff at TOPS is by having occasional Latte Days; parent volunteers serve lattes and home made goodies to teachers, student teachers, office staff, the librarian, custodians and cafeteria staff. At the last Latte Day, there was a tremendous show of help. Special thanks go to Tammy Luthy, Janet Morrison, Elizabeth Garfield, Doug Chapman, Lisa Waller, Judith Gille and Sheri Toussaint. If you want to help at the next staff appreciation event, please call Janet Moore at 283-7284.

We APPRECIATE TOPS STAFF!
Middle School P.E. Research Projects

By Don Zenke

During first quarter, middle school students did a great job researching new and interesting topics in Physical Education and Life Sports. They presented their findings to either their classmates or to younger students. Some students used technology such as photography, movie making, and Power Point to research their projects and interview people. There were also two guest demonstrators from Brazil. The topics included elephant polo, hang gliding, rock climbing, curling, Brazilian futsal, Filipino trinkling, wake boarding, human bowling, fencing, scuba diving, double dutch, skateboarding, martial arts, and archery.

As expected, our students worked well together in small groups. They also demonstrated a lot of poise and expertise with their presentations.
Sixth grade students perform their wake boarding presentation.

Human bowling

P.E. students learn from watching a martial arts demonstration.
MY OWN EYES

By Mac Hamilton, 8th grade

Recently, TOPS eighth grade received a visit from a filmmaker. She talked to our class about the types of things she made before (from television commercials to documentaries) and explained what it was like to make films for a living.

As an aspiring filmmaker myself, I found a lot of what she said to be very interesting. Especially that as a child she used to make Super 8 films with her family. The way that she talked about her career making films, you could tell that she wouldn’t be as happy doing anything else.

She also talked about all of the exotic places that she had visited so far in her career. If I become a director, I hope to travel around the world more also. She had made many documentaries about countries and various conflicts around the world.

Her passion ended up to be documentaries. She felt that you could catch some real raw emotions if you make a documentary. You can catch how people feel about issues as they sort of empty their guts.

Myself, I know that I would not want to make any serious, gritty documentaries. If I ever make a documentary, it will have to be something like Spinal Tap. I don’t think that I would work very well with real people who are trying to tell their story on film. I don’t think that I would cope very well with the real life pressure and danger. I don’t think that I would be able to hold it together if I messed up a shot and couldn’t try it again. If you are making a movie in Hollywood, your producer would probably be angry with you, but you would be able to try and get a shot again.

I was sort of surprised when she was really anti-commercial. Considering that she made commercials occasionally, I thought that she shouldn’t be badmouthing them. If she really hated commercials, I am sure that there would be a different way to get some more money. But then when I thought about it, I realized that I would rather have to do something that I didn’t like than not be able to do what I love.

In the end, I realized that I got a lot out of her presentation, and now I sort of envy her. I mean, she is one of the few people who actually likes, no, loves her job. She is a very lucky person. I hope that when I grow up, whatever I end up doing, that I like it as much as she likes to make film.

FOOD AND LATEX ALLERGY SUPPORT GROUP

There is a local support group for people with food allergies and latex allergy. It is called the Food Education Allergy Support Team (FEAST). If you are interested in getting more information, please contact Alice Cho Snyder at (206) 525-5228 or e-mail her at achosnyder2000@yahoo.com.

Welcome to 5th Grade

Portrait art greets visitors to the 5th grade classrooms.
Wayman Eyes
Seeing-Knowing What Is There

By Alyssa Erickson-Wayman, 8th grade

When I looked through my chocolate brown Wayman eyes, I saw art. Filming real people, without a script so they can talk from their hearts is art in its purest form. Sandy Cioffi showed us this as well as her ability to make the best of a script. Sandy Cioffi is a professional photographer in the Seattle area and has many notable films out.

During the coast of Sandy Cioffi’s presentation I viewed a roller coaster of different films. I saw the up close and personal side of Coe Elementary School as well as a fun twist to an anti-drug production. Sandy Cioffi told us how she loves to make people laugh in her comedies. Documentaries are also a big favorite since she can just sit and talk with people. She said that interviewing without a video camera is the way to do an interview because people really open up.

What struck me as being very interesting was not just one thing, but more a quality throughout the whole presentation. Passion was the quality that caught me by surprise. The way she talked about her work and her expressions revealed this. She smiled, opened up and used her arms and talked as if she was in love. Yes, I do think she was quite in love with her work. She said many times that she was her happiest when she was behind the camera. That’s the way every job should be. I enjoyed hearing about video production and how much Sandy Cioffi enjoyed creating it. It makes me want to consider taking a stab at video photography.

With My Own Eyes

By Claire Frost, 8th grade

Sandy Cioffi is a videographer who came in and gave a presentation on November 7, 2001. During the presentation she showed us parts of two of the movies she made. One was a documentary about Coe Elementary School, and the other was a fiction movie that she made for a company as part of their anti-drug curriculum for middle schoolers. Both were interesting and when she explained how they had gone about making them she made it seem so simple that I wanted to go out and start making movies myself. After we watched each movie, she asked us what we thought of them over all. Kids mainly thought that the documentary was okay, but that it didn’t really interest them because it didn’t relate directly to them. They were more interested in the anti-drug movie because we have all seen many movies with a similar objective, and they have been boring and corny. This one didn’t seem to try so hard to hold our attention, but it did a better job because of that.

When she said “Do you know what a Super 8 camera is? It’s one of those real old home video cameras that you find at garage sales. Well, I started making movies on one of those when I was six. I would arrange my friends and cousins around in the back yard and film them. I’ve been hooked ever since,” immediately I was interested in what she had to say. Artists don’t tell you how they started out when they were six. You hear that from athletes when you ask how many years they have been playing their sport. From artists, you hear how they were originally going to be lawyers or doctors but suddenly realized how wrong a career that was for them and they decided to follow their new-found passion for sculpture or whatever. It interested me because it shows how much it really meant to her to keep filming. It’s not like in a sport where you just show up for practice; you take classes and have to pay for film and equipment. This makes it so that you can’t just drop it when you’re tired because you have invested so much in it. You have to make sure that you have some motivation to keep going, and she definitely did.

The presentation left me wanting to hear more, and inspired me to make movies of my own.

School Tours

Tours of TOPS elementary classrooms will begin on January 15th and continue through February. They take place on Tuesday mornings from 9:30-1:00 a.m. No appointment is necessary, but visitors need to check in at the main office.

Middle School visits will take place on Wednesdays from 9:30-11:00 am, on the following dates: Feb 28, March 7, March 14, and March 21.

First graders celebrate their individual cultural heritage in handmade dolls. Come see them all in the display case near the office.
**ROCK WALL**

The new TOPS climbing wall has been a lot of fun and is getting a lot of use. After doing some climbing specific warm ups we started out climbing on one section just to get the feel of the new holds, how to balance and how to climb in a safe manner.

Once the students got familiar with the holds their first challenge was to traverse the whole wall keeping their feet below the three foot line without stepping onto the mats. This includes climbing down off the wall and onto our 12 foot by 4 inch balance beam (built by TOPS parent Frank Fabens) and then back onto the rest of the wall. Once students are able to pass the traverse test, they are able to move above the three foot line and do the other challenges. Other challenges include climbing while being roped together. When roped together, they have to communicate and work together. We have created pathways using a combination of colors and we’ve had a few students be able to traverse the whole distance using only one color! Even harder then that is traversing across below the three foot line.

A number of our TOPS students who were seeking even more challenge and adventure even let me blindfold them!

They either traversed across solo or worked with a spotter who verbalized where they should go. After accomplishing this feat, many students commented on how much harder they worked and how tired their muscles felt when they were done. (They’re going to be getting stronger without even knowing it!)

Thanks again to everybody who donated time and money to make our wall a reality. I typically have the wall open in the mornings before school so feel free to come in and climb with the kids!

*Ryan and Elija work as a team climbing while roped together.*

*Thanks to all the volunteers and their hard work.*
Seeking even more challenge, Isabella and Nikki go blind.

Joan and her class get the hang of it.
THE TOPS LIBRARY

By Steve Haines, Librarian

The TOPS library is....

....a large classroom with many books. As funny as this may sound, a school library's main function is to be a support to the classroom curriculum, supplementing texts and other material.

....an enjoyable space to read, study, finish homework, do research, learn library and information skills, be tutored, and listen to stories. During break times it is a comfortable place to meet with friends to play indoor games, draw or use the computers.

....a place where groups can meet to discuss books, participate in TOPICS, and discuss and plan school events.

The TOPS library is NOT....

....a substitute for a daycare center, a place to use ones "large motor skills", an area to partake of food and drink.

The library is open during school hours and most days until 4:30 p.m. It is occasionally closed because of after school meetings, when I am gone. See you there!

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