

TOPS NEWS

March 2004 ♦ Volume 7, Issue 7

The monthly newsletter of TOPS, a Seattle Public K-8 alternative school

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Spring is always a welcome reminder as to why we live in this beautiful city! Seeing the sun a bit last month was a good excuse to spend time outdoors and enjoy the beginnings of spring. As we head toward the end of the year I wanted to have the opportunity to share with all of you the process that the Seattle school district and employees at TOPS go through when they take a leave of absence for personal or medical reasons.

First and foremost we are always striving to do what's right for kids. With this in mind, we then need to make sure to not only honor people's decision-making process regarding taking a leave of absence, but also to be fully supportive. We at TOPS are fortunate to have such a committed, dedicated staff. People may need a leave of absence for a variety of reasons: medical, personal, or for family matters. I believe that people make these decisions in the best way they can. The Seattle school district follows a protocol that allows employees to request a leave of absence, and then we have the duty of filling that position in the best manner possible. The steps we take allow us to first speak with principals from other buildings in order to find the top substitutes available. Next we do our best to hire this person in a timely manner so that we can transition the kids well by having the long-term

substitute come before our staff person leaves. We are guided in this process by the contract that employees hold with the Seattle school district. Once a person is on leave, the long-term substitute can fully take over.

Employees are given until May 15 each year to request a leave of absence. We are fortunate in that we have found incredible individuals to fill the difficult shoes of staff members who have had to leave TOPS for one reason or another. We like to look at leaves of absence as opportunities to meet people who may be good additions to our staff in the future. Thank you all for your support in this process; the staff is very appreciative of the community support TOPS provides.

FEBRUARY/MARCH NEWS:

Congratulations to the storytelling and expository writing winners! These students worked incredibly hard to polish their performances for judges during the week of February 9.

Storytelling: 1st Jackson White; 2nd Tova Steele; 3rd Tatum Hardy; 4th Jane Markman.

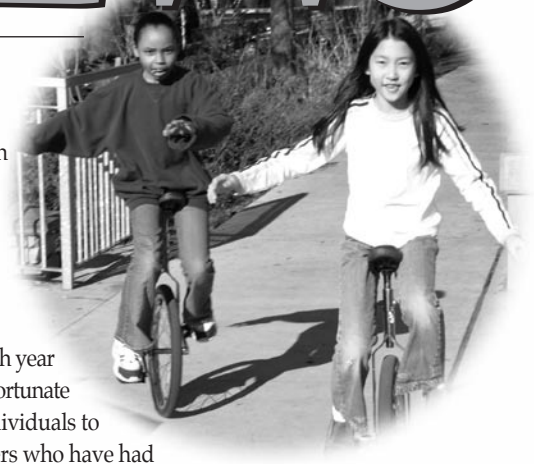
Expository: 1st Natalie Shields; 2nd Adrienne Remijan; 3rd Michael Haruta; 4th Timur Maraghe.

WASL preparation is beginning as we look toward our testing dates during the last two weeks in April. Please remember that your students will need extra sleep, a good breakfast, and some pats on the back during this week.

A special thank-you to the students and parents in Mr. J's class. The overwhelming kindness that has filled his classroom has been unbelievable. We are so thankful to have so much support during these challenging circumstances. We are so impressed by how well the students have adjusted thus far.

Please remember that spring break is April 5-9.

We are continuing to mainstream two classrooms from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in kindergarten, first grade, and third grade. We also are mainstreaming some



Photos provided by Don Zemke

TOPS at Seward
2500 Franklin Avenue East
Seattle, WA 98102

Phone: (206) 252-3510
Fax: (206) 252-3511

Principal: Clara Scott

Assistant Principal:
Chris Drape

Site Council Chair: Dave Sarju

NEWSLETTER ONLINE

The TOPS newsletters are available online in PDF format, usually before the printed copy arrives in your mailbox! From the TOPS home page (<http://www.seattleschools.org/schools/tops>), click on *Latest Newsletter* in the *Quick Links* section.



**SEATTLE
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**

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WHAT'S AHEAD FOR THE CLASS OF 2008

(OUR TOPS 2004 GRADUATES)

By Dana Twight, member of the Washington State Board of Education and nine-year TOPS parent of a member of the class of 2008

ABOUT THE OUTRAGEOUS PUBLISHING SERVICE

Welcome to the seventh newsletter of the 2003-04 school year. Teresa Nemeth is the editor, Cindy Suzumura handles photos, design, and layout, and Toby Harris and Peggy Riehle get it mailed off to you. Don Zemke provides many of our photos.

We need your submissions: calendar additions, classroom news and news from the larger community, faculty notes, committee reports, opinions, profiles, compliments, congratulations, children's art, photos, and anything else significant to the TOPS community.

Submit your contributions to the newsletter box in the main office or, preferably, by Word file or email to Teresa at zongora2@cs.com. Please send photos to csuzumura@mindspring.com.

Deadlines for 2003-04 are March 17, April 14, and May 12. If newsletters are to arrive the first week of the month, there can be no exceptions to these deadlines.

On a recent high school tour a Seattle educator did not recall that our eighth graders are members of the Class of 2008. How could they forget? Our eighth graders are the most famous graduating class in a decade in Washington State.

Here's why:

In 1993, House Bill 1209 passed our legislature and the governor signed the Improvement of Student Achievement Act. This began the most recent version of education reform in Washington State. The bill established common state academic standards, an assessment (known as the WASL), and a Certificate of Mastery. We changed our expectations for students with this bill. The central premise became one which expected all students to meet common standards. A 19th-century model of "skills for some kids" morphed into the 21st-century model "higher skills for all kids."

As it stands now, the Certificate of Mastery (which might be renamed the Certificate of Academic Achievement) requires a passing score of 400 on each of three tests, reading, writing, and math. (These individual scores and the combination of scores are under review by the A+ Commission.)

In 1995, the Class of 2008 entered kindergarten. It was also a momentous day at TOPS, as the new superintendent, John

Stanford, visited on his first day of school. In 1995, most of us were hanging out in the kindergarten, not thinking about our kids as future high school students. Somehow, all the parents were gently ushered out of Joby and Joan's kindergarten classrooms, and before we knew it, our children had made it to fourth grade. In 1997, all fourth graders across the state took the WASL in reading, writing, math, and listening. The math, reading, and writing WASL is given each spring in grades 4, 7, and 10, and a science version is given in grade 8. The assessment for listening has been eliminated, due to its unreliability (not enough test items). Many students received their best scores on this portion of the WASL.

In the year 2000, the Washington State Board of Education decided that the Certificate of Mastery would be required for the Class of 2008. This was originally proposed in the 1999 legislative session, but the bill did not pass. In 2001, our seventh graders and tenth graders took the WASL. TOPS eighth graders will participate in the science WASL this spring. In 2006, our students will have their first opportunity to take and pass the WASL tests in reading, math, and writing—and this time it will be for real: a passing score will be required for graduation.

Current law does not allow for retakes. House Bill 2195, currently making its way through the legislature, would allow for a minimum of four retakes, beginning with the summer of 2006. An alternate assessment will be available for special populations, including students

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WEB RESOURCES FOR PARENTS, EDUCATORS, AND STUDENTS

WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
www.sbe.wa.gov
(elected by school board members across the state; responsible for high school graduation requirements)

WASHINGTON STATE PTA www.wastatepta.org
(the original parent-teacher organization; lobbies actively on behalf of the 1,000,000 K-12 students in Washington State)

WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL BOARD DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION www.wssda.org
(all school board members across the state)

ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON PRINCIPALS
www.awsp.org
Event in a box at www.awsp.org/wpff/tools.htm

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION (OSPI) www.k12.wa.us
(implements all education laws and regulations as a result of laws enacted by the Legislature; policies enacted by SBE and other education boards such as the A+ Commission)

WASHINGTON ROUNDTABLE www.waroundtable.com
(business group involved in education reform)

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMISSION www.k12.wa.us/accountability/
(members from around the state appointed by the governor)

PARTNERSHIP FOR LEARNING www.partnership4learning.org
(Coalition of diverse groups from the Office of the Governor to the PTA to the Public School Employees to the Multi-Ethnic Think Tank supporting education improvement). Sponsors of the Campaign for the Class of 2008.

For more education links go to: <http://www.sbe.wa.gov/EdLinks.htm>

(Next issue we hope to include phone numbers, for those without Internet access)

INTRODUCING...OUR NEW DANFORTH INTERN

Hi, my name is Kimberly Kinzer and I am the new administrative intern at TOPS. Like Gerrit Kischner (intern from September through January), I am a student in the Danforth program at the University of Washington. This program also brought you your assistant principal, Chris Drape, who interned at TOPS last year. The Danforth program is a one-year program that focuses on educational leadership. Students are asked to complete at least two internships during the school year as well as attend classes at the University of Washington on Thursdays and one Saturday per month.

I have taught middle school and high school English, writing, and social studies for almost eleven years, spending the first five years of my teaching career in

the Lake Washington School District. For the past five and a half years I have taught middle school students at Pacific Crest School in Seattle. I am very excited about the opportunity to work with the staff and students at TOPS; already students are quizzing me on their names (thank you, Helen, for the yearbook).

Generally, I am at TOPS on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays, and when I am not at the school I am at the University of Washington or teaching writing and social studies at Pacific Crest School. Thank you to many of the parents and community members at TOPS who have already been so welcoming. I hope to have the opportunity to meet many more of you in the near future.

What's Ahead for the Class of 2008 continued from page 2

in Special Education and English Language Learners (ELL). People in Washington State know that retakes of the WASL assessments are essential for students and a necessary legal requirement. (See Bill No. 2195 at www.leg.wa.gov for bill status.) Major increases in funding are needed for intervention programs for students and professional development for educators. For example, the recommended ten days annually of professional development for educators has never been funded.

What other new requirements will the Class of 2008 need to meet for graduation? The new state graduation requirements already adopted consist of the following four items:

1. Earn a Certificate of Mastery (known as COM or possibly CAA) by meeting state standards on the tenth grade Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in reading, writing, and math by the end of high school
2. Complete a Culminating Project on a topic of the student's choice
3. Map out a plan for High School and Beyond (getting to graduation, and the year after)
4. Meet state and local district class requirements

This year, the Class of 2008 will be legally notified of their obligations and additional requirements. This is why you will see action on WASL retake funding, and local district adoption of new rules, before our eighth graders enter high school this September. There are many changes

In Seattle, the proposed new district standards can be found on the Seattle Schools web site (www.seattleschools.org). They include the state requirements plus other major changes including the following:

1. A performance-based Course of Study: the student demonstrates what he or she knows and can do. (From 2004 to 2012, the Seattle Schools will transition away from a credit-based system to a performance-based system. This is supported by the continuing changes made by state policymakers to move everyone from students to educators and administrators to a performance-based system. Major changes have already been made to move Washington State away from a diploma signifying "seat time.")
2. Course of Study: A student may demonstrate proficiency in a variety of ways, including the familiar--such as in-school instruction, competency assessment/ tests--and the less familiar, such as Running Start (classes at the community college taken for college credit during high school), other college/university/ technical classes, AND "out-of school learning experiences."
3. The Three, Four, Five-Year Plan:

A student will be able to graduate after demonstrating knowledge and competence in various areas after the completion of a planned course of study lasting 3, 4, or 5 years. Students can attend high school through age 21 or graduation, whichever comes first.

ahead for our students. Many of these changes are still being debated among parents, students, educators, policymakers, and legislators. These discussions are essential. I would encourage others to submit articles to this newsletter, covering No Child Left Behind and offering editorial commentary (pro/con) about high-

SITE COUNCIL MEETING *FEBRUARY 11, 2004*

By Ellen Markman

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Clara Scott gave the Site Council updates on the Special Education programs at TOPS, and the recent staffing changes.

In Special Education, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) program has nine students. Two are mainstreamed in the kindergarten and first grade classrooms, one child for three-quarters of the day and the other for a half day. It has been decided that one of those students is ready to move into the regular classroom for next year, and a seat has been set aside to accommodate that child next year.

In Judy Holben's Intermediate Special Ed class (grades 3-5) there are seven students. Two of those children are mainstreamed for part of the day, and another spends all but one hour of the day in Tracy's third grade classroom. Doug Frazier has nine students in his middle school class, with three mainstreamed for part of the day.

The Special Ed teachers feel very welcomed by the TOPS community and feel they have been included as part of the overall program.

Clara reported on what has been a "trying year" around staff changes. Mr. J, the second grade teacher, is on a two-and-a-half-day work week, with Louise Chacartegui, a veteran second grade teacher at TOPS, teaching the rest of the week. Lana Fuller, a sixth grade teacher, left at the end of last year on medical leave, and is now on a family leave to be with her baby boy. Lana had informed the administration of her plan to convert her medical leave to family leave last year, and Rebecca Moslo was hired to replace Lana for the entire year. Margie Butcher was on medical leave in the fall and converted that to family leave in January to spend time with her daughter born in October. Susan Mamlock was the long-term substitute in first grade during the first semester, and Leslie Nolan has been hired as a long-term substitute for the remainder of the school year.

Teachers who are on family leave have until the end of the school year to decide whether to return to their schools next year. They have the option to extend the family leave another year, but their positions in their current schools are not guaranteed at that point.

BUILDING LEADERSHIP TEAM

Chris Drape reported on the last meeting of the Building Leadership Team, where they looked at student work and examined how the product matches what the teachers were hoping to create. The next couple of months the BLT will be working on the budget for the 2004-05 school year. The budget for TOPS is expected from the district February 23, and the BLT will help work up a proposal on how to spend the money for next year.

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Katie Waters, third grade teacher, spoke on behalf of the multicultural education committee, requesting they

be allowed to spend more money than planned on multicultural assemblies, which are easier to arrange, and less on artists-in-residence, which are not readily available. There have been more assembly opportunities than anticipated this year, with the Book It Theater's *Sadako and the 1000 Paper Cranes* performance and an upcoming Peruvian Scissors Dance visit added to the agenda. Friends of TOPS (Site Council members acting in their non-profit board capacity) voted to allow the committee to spend money on the assemblies instead of artists-in-residence. Katie welcomed anyone who would like to join the multicultural education committee to please do so. See Katie Waters in third grade for details.

MUSIC COMMITTEE

The music committee has enlisted the help of Chris Drape, assistant principal, to help with the music program. Chris reported that the opening for a middle school band and fifth grade strings instructor has been filled. Paul Gillespie started February 11. The middle school strings group has a new coach, Scott Teski, a University of Washington student, coming in once a month. Laurie Roth sent a report that the choir program is on track and on budget.

READING BLOCK

Carla Fetterley, second grade teacher, reported on the first and second grade reading block program. The reading block takes a great deal of coordination and about the biggest chunk of Friends of TOPS money, but it reaches nearly 110 kids every day. As the year goes by, they see much progress being made by students at all reading levels. Carla mentioned that with budget cuts from the district in mind, it will be a challenge to sustain the program as it exists next year.

RFP PROCESS

Steve Havas, Site Council treasurer, made a presentation on the upcoming RFP process. (See article this issue.)

SCHOOL BOARD REPORTER

The Site Council voted to seek a volunteer or two to report the activity of the Seattle School Board to the Site Council. The purpose of the position is to inform the TOPS community of our district's direction and work together with the district's policy makers. The Site Council specifically noted that the role is that of a neutral reporter, not an advocate. (See article this issue.)

SPECIAL AUCTION ITEM

Jennifer Shaw reported on the procedure for selecting the Special Auction Item. (See article this issue.)

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Kathy Cox-Czosnyka reported on the upcoming Site Council elections in the spring. (See article this issue.)

BOARDERS WANTED

By Dave Sarju, Site Council chair

Your TOPS Site Council is looking for one or two members of the TOPS community to keep the Site Council up to date on what's happening with our Seattle School Board. The Site Council's role includes advocacy and supporting the TOPS mission. While this position is itself not an advocacy role, you will be expected to regularly attend school board meetings, held on the first and third Wednesdays of each month at 6 p.m. (with the exception of three months out of the year, when only one meeting is held during the month). There is flexibility

in how this role can be fulfilled, including "job" sharing and sometimes reporting to Site Council in writing. This role could be a good fit for a person who enjoys peeking behind the scenes or learning in advance the direction of our district.

Baggy clothing not required.

Site Council meetings are currently held the second Wednesday of each month from 5 to 7 p.m. You can learn more about our School Board at <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/board/index.html>.

2003-04 TOPS CALENDAR

Please check Wednesday Go-Homes and the web site for updates.

MARCH

2 (T)..... Middle school forum, 7-8:30 p.m.
3 (W)..... 2-hour early dismissal
4 (Th)..... All-city tutoring training, Meany Middle School, 8:45-1:05
4 (Th)..... Taste of TOPS, 6-9 p.m.
5 (F)..... Speech tournament: editorial commentary
10 (W)..... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m., library
11 (Th)..... CSJ meeting, 6-8 p.m., library
16 (T)..... Grades 5-8 to SCT, *Shape of a Girl*
19 (F)..... Professional development day—no school
20 (Sa)..... TOPS chess tournament
24 (W)..... Volunteer orientation, 3-4 and 6-7 p.m., library
24 (W)..... RFP working sessions, 5 and 6 p.m.
24-26 (W-F)... Grade 6 to Camp Moran
31 (W)..... Poetry festival

APRIL

1 (Th)..... Poetry festival
1 (Th)..... CSJ meeting, 6-8 p.m., library
2 (F)..... End of third quarter
4 (Su)..... Daylight Savings Time begins
5-9 (M-F)..... Spring Break; chess camp at TOPS
13 (T)..... Middle school forum, 7-8:30 p.m.
14 (W)..... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m., library
14 (W)..... Deadline for RFP submission; auction procurement form deadline
15 (Th)..... Grades K-4 to SCT, *Mrs. Piggie Wiggle*
21 (W)..... Class pictures
21 (W)..... Volunteer orientation, 3-4 and 6-7 p.m., library
28 (W)..... Site Council budget meeting, 5 p.m.
29 (Th)..... Site Council budget meeting, 5 p.m.

MAY

4 (T)..... Middle school forum, 7-8:30 p.m.
6 (Th)..... CSJ meeting, 6-8 p.m., library

8 (Sa)..... TOPS auction
12 (W)..... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m., library
12 (W)..... Communications committee, 7-8:30 p.m.
19 (W)..... 2-hour early dismissal
19 (W)..... Volunteer orientation, 3-4 and 6-7 p.m., library
21 (F)..... Art Walk, elementary play
22 (Sa)..... Elementary play, 2 and 7 p.m.
31 (M)..... Memorial Day—no school

JUNE

1 (T)..... Middle school forum, 7-8:30 p.m.
3 (Th)..... Kindergarten puppet show
3 (Th)..... CSJ meeting, 6-8 p.m., library
9 (W)..... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m., library
11 (F)..... Eighth grade passage
15 (T)..... Last student day, fifth grade passage

A Message from the Principal continued from page 1

of our students from the Special Education Contained Classrooms into math, PE, and art. We think our model here at TOPS is working well and we plan to do more of this work as the year progresses.

We have just completed the budget for next year and thus far we are happy to report that we will not experience any severe cut-backs in our current programs.

Happy St. Patrick's Day, enjoy the sun while you can!

~ Clara

WE NOMINATE...YOU!

By Kathy Cox-Czosnyka and Chris Drape

There are a lot of ways each of you gets involved here at TOPS. First and foremost, you support your kids and their teachers in the classroom. As you know, though, there are several other ways to help TOPS deliver the quality education that each of our children deserves.

There are two governance groups parents participate in here at TOPS: the Site Council and the Building Leadership Team. It is time to start thinking about membership in either or both of these groups for the 2004-05 school year.

FIRST – SITE COUNCIL:

According to our bylaws,

“The Site Council serves as one of the governing bodies of the school, with responsibilities for leadership, advocacy, fundraising, financial stewardship, and strategic planning to assure the highest standards of educational excellence and an inclusive, supportive school community. We operate under the current school district policy with regard to Site Councils.

The purpose of the Site Council at TOPS is to promote students’ intellectual, social, physical, and emotional growth in collaboration with the Leadership Team. The Site Council will:

- 1) Advance the mission of TOPS
- 2) Support staff in their efforts to facilitate and enhance student learning
- 3) Enable families to become informed about and help shape the educational and extracurricular programs at TOPS
- 4) Build community and communication within TOPS, and between TOPS and the broader community of Seattle
- 5) Provide direction to the Friends of TOPS in allocating funds raised by TOPS families, consistent with the school mission and the Site Council strategic plan
- 6) Evaluate the state of the school and parent-funded programs
- 7) Advocate for the interests of TOPS with the Seattle School District and the City of Seattle
- 8) Attend to other issues, such as student safety or facility maintenance and improvement, as they arise.

Members of the Site Council represent and are expected to communicate with their constituency, but they vote in the best interests of the school as a whole. Members of the Site Council are not paid for their services to the Site Council.”

Responsibilities:

The Site Council meets one Wednesday a month (from 5 to 7 p.m.), with additional meetings as necessary for focus groups, committee work, or during budgeting season. Members of the Site Council comprise the Board of

Directors of the non-profit Friends of Tops organization, and are responsible for the allocation of funds raised by Friends of Tops – that budget is set in spring each year for the coming year.

Membership in Site Council includes parents, guardians, staff, and administrators; the non-staff membership is elected by grade band, three representatives per band (nine total). For 2004-05, there are four positions open, two each in the K-2 and 3-5 grade bands. (The 6-8 grade band has no open positions.) If you are interested in nominating yourself or a friend, please contact a member of the nominating committee (listed below). Site council meetings are open to everyone, so feel free to come and see what it’s all about.

NEXT UP – BUILDING LEADERSHIP TEAM:

The teacher’s contract explains the role of the BLT directly:

“The primary function of a Building Leadership Team is to promote and facilitate the collaborative decision-making process which affects academic achievement. The more specific responsibilities of the Building Leadership Team are to oversee the facilitation and development of:

1. An Academic Achievement Plan [now referred to as ‘Transformation Plan’], including the configuration and structure of the school’s classes and/or program offerings.
2. The development of a school-wide professional development plan to support the Academic Achievement [Transformation] Plan.
3. The school’s budget.”

The BLT is the steward of the academic program of the school – the critical support and advisory team for the principal, who is responsible for the final decisions. The Transformation Plan lays out the academic focus the school has refined in order to boost student achievement. For TOPS the three areas of focus are:

1. The impact of race on learning
2. A quality writing program
3. A quality math program.

The BLT plans professional development activities to meet the needs of teachers as they work to implement the Transformation Plan.

In terms of the budget, each school in the district has control over how it allocates money received from the district. The BLT determines staffing needs for the program to meet the goals of the Transformation Plan, and allocates the budget accordingly. The money Friends of TOPS raises from the No-Bake and the auction is not a part of the budget the BLT works with, and is allocated through the proposal process facilitated by the board of directors (Site Council members) of Friends of Tops (see related article this issue on RFPs).

Continued on page 7

A TOPS FAMILY IN NEED

By Patricia Bittner

Joe Robinson, TOPS class of 2003, was hit by a car early in the morning on January 12 while on his way to school. Joe suffered broken bones and a head injury and has been in a coma ever since.

Joe and his family were a part of the TOPS community for nine years. His parents Tim Robinson and Andrea Okomski gave much to our school; you may remember their brightly colored car, donated to a car-painting TOPIC. Not only were they involved in TOPICS, their contribution was critical in the fight to keep TOPS and all Seattle public schools commercial-

free. TOPS is the place it is today because of families like Joe's.

Joe's parents and friends are by his side 24/7 waiting for him to pull through. Many of you have asked how you can help this family. If you'd like to be put on an email list to receive updates on his condition and learn about fundraising efforts, please contact Maggi Lubov at daisydoggie@comcast.net. You can also make contributions to the Robinson Fund at any US Bank, and there will be a contribution jar at the Taste of TOPS March 4.

Here is one link to an article about Joe: <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/4034332/>

PIKE PLACE MARKET SPONSORS BENEFIT

By Dana Twilight

Valentine's Day was celebrated differently this year in the Sanitary Market building of the Pike Place Market: there was a benefit for the Robinson Fund. Joe Robinson, a Ballard high school freshman, is the son of Andrea Okomski (former Market artist) and Tim Robinson (Market artist). As mentioned in a recent column by Nicole Brodeur in the Seattle Times, the Market community began raising money on Joe's behalf within two hours after the early morning accident. The live auction included performances by Artis

the Spoon Man and Jim Page, lunch with Jean Godden, milk and cookies in the City Council chambers with Council President Peter Steinbrueck, many pieces of original art, and bowling with Councilmember Nick Licata. Linda Downing and her son Graham were spotted in the crowd, as were current and former TOPS students. Some even brought their parents. No dollar figures were available at press time, but an auction volunteer stated that the "response had been greater than anticipated." The funds raised will help Joe's parents pay for his rehabilitative care.

We Nominate...You! continued from page 6

TOPS' Building Leadership Team is composed of the two administrators, five staff members elected by the school staff, and three parents/guardians – one from the Site Council executive committee and two elected at-large from the TOPS community. While the contract does not require parent representation on each school's leadership team, the TOPS staff believes such representation is a critical component for our school community.

Responsibilities:

The BLT meets on the first and third Tuesdays of each month, from 4 to 5:30 p.m. (sometimes a little longer). You will represent a grade band (K-4 or 5-8), and it will be your responsibility to facilitate communication – from the community in to the BLT, and from the BLT out to the community.

Qualifications:

Communication is key! BLT members must be excellent communicators, concerned and committed to supporting

the academic focus of the school. As a BLT member you must be comfortable representing the ideas and opinions of a wide variety of people. You must also be able to honor the staff Code of Conduct, which includes confidentiality as appropriate. You must attend meetings consistently—we need people who will take ownership of this and see it through!

If you are interested in nominating yourself or a friend for the BLT, please contact a committee member (listed below).

Nominating committee:

Kathy Cox-Czosnyka..... kcoxczos@ch2m.com
Keith Cohon..... cohon.keith@attbi.com
Shirley Bossier..... sbossier@speakeasy.net

HOW YOUR MONEY IS SPENT: INCLUSIVE STRATEGIES

By Elizabeth Dickinson

Student achievement and school climate improve when schools, families, and communities work as partners. This conclusion, reached by educational researchers James Comer at Yale University and Joyce Epstein at Johns Hopkins University, is the rationale for the “Inclusive Strategies” project funded by Friends of TOPS.

“Inclusive Strategies” provides \$2140 in the 2003-04 school year to help enable all families to participate fully in the TOPS community. Specifically:

- ◆ \$1440 is designated to fund childcare for school committee meetings, study circles, community forums, and all-school functions. To date, it has been used primarily for Site Council and Coalition for Social Justice meetings, as well as for the October State of the School address and community forum. Committees needing childcare for meetings or events are welcome to request it from Ms. Scott.
- ◆ \$500 funds the translation of invitations to school events, classroom information, and other communications

central to the life of the TOPS community, for families whose primary language is not English. For instance, reports accompanying parent-teacher conferences, the invitation to Taste of TOPS, the TOPS mission statement, and brochures for the kindergarten fair have been translated into Spanish and Vietnamese. Translation funds serve the approximately 40 families at TOPS for whom English is a second language. We hope that in future years, we can also fund the translation of other languages represented in the TOPS community, but for which we do not have in-house translation: Somali, several Chinese dialects, Tagalog, and Tigrigna (the language of Eritrea).

- ◆ Finally, \$200 is available to provide bus transportation, if needed, to the Taste of TOPS, so that all families who wish can participate in this community-building event.

If you have ideas about how “Inclusive Strategies” funds could be used, either this year or in the future, please share them with Ms. Scott or a member of the Coalition for Social Justice, or use the CSJ box in the office.

FROM THE TOP-TEN LIST OF UNINTELLIGIBLE ABBREVIATIONS *ITEM NUMBER ONE: RFPs!*

By Steve Havas, Site Council treasurer

RFP = Request For Proposal. And here are the details...

As we close down an extremely generous No-Bake Sale season and approach the TOPS auction, Friends of TOPS will be considering and deciding how to allocate these funds contributed by the TOPS community to best support the school in 2004-05. Friends of TOPS is the non-profit organization managed by the Site Council. Between March and June proposals for curriculum enhancement, classroom support, and community inclusion are created, assessed, and prioritized in order to establish next year's budget.

If you have an idea for a project that could benefit TOPS that will require funding, then now is the time to put together a proposal, get staff sponsorship, and submit it to Friends of TOPS for consideration. Many of the great programs at TOPS are created and managed by the parent community, so don't be bashful!

If you don't have an idea but would still like to see the types of projects and ideas that are submitted to Friends of TOPS, then plan on attending the April 28 and 29 meetings to see the tremendous passion and energy of the TOPS community at work as we review all the proposals.

Examples of 2003-04 projects that are funded by Friends of TOPS include the drama program, art programs, music

program, library resources, literacy block, technology equipment purchases, translation services, classroom supplies, and a wide variety of other needs.

Following is a description of the process that Friends of TOPS follows to establish the budget. The key date for you to remember is that April 14 is the deadline for submitting ideas. You can find copies of the RFP form on the TOPS web site or in the treasurer's box in the school office. You can also email me at shavas@seanet.com or call me at 282-8355 if you have any questions.

RFP SCHEDULE

March 24, 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. Working sessions at TOPS providing guidance on RFP writing and project manager responsibilities.

April 14 Deadline for submission of all RFPs to the treasurer's box in the TOPS office.

RFPs will be numbered, copied, and distributed to Site Council members by April 23, for review prior to April 28 meeting.

April 28 and 29, 5 p.m. Site Council meetings at which all those who have submitted a proposal will need to

Continued on page 10

HERE COMES THE ANNUAL TOPS AUCTION – MAY 8, ASIAN RESOURCE CENTER!

By the auction committee

Well, TOPS parents, it's starting to be that time of year again. Time to roll up our collective sleeves and get busy collecting items for the 12th annual spring auction. You should have received a packet of information and donation forms in the mail. We ask you to do your share for this fundraiser by procuring at least three items for the auction.

What kinds of items can you round up? Here are a couple of tips. Over the past couple of years the most sought-after items (after the class art projects and teacher activities) have been restaurant gift certificates and home-cooked dinners. How great would it be if everyone went to their favorite restaurant and procured a dinner for two or got together with a couple of friends to offer up some home cooking! Tickets to sporting events, weekends at a vacation home, theater tickets, hotel stays, airline tickets, theme baskets, and salon gift certificates have always been strong items for us.

Anytime you're out in the community, please get the people you do business with as excited about TOPS and participating in our spring auction as we are. You'll be surprised how easy it is to bring in donations of products and services. The deadline for turning in the procurement forms is April 14. Additional forms can be found in the office. Actual items can be accepted in the TOPS office until April 28 and class baskets, art projects, and anything perishable can be delivered to the site on the

morning of the event as long as we know it's coming.

Start thinking about the class art projects and class theme baskets. Both these projects are great opportunities to be creative, work with kids and other parents – and have fun. Every year we see how proud the kids are to have worked together and created something of beauty—and to know how much they helped raise for their school. As always, there are many ways you can volunteer for the auction, depending on your talents and time available. Please call volunteer coordinator Tammy Luthy at 322-3784 to find out how you can help.

Our fundraising goal for this year for the auction is \$75,000. We've already received several generous donations of cash toward underwriting. It costs around \$10,000 to put on this event, so everything we collect early on translates into more auction money going straight to Friends of TOPS, and straight into the many programs that benefit our kids. If you'd like to help underwrite the auction by donating cash or services please call Ellen Markman at 329-1205. Remember that all underwriters and businesses are listed in the auction catalog.

Any other questions or ideas? Call our co-chairs, Tan Tobin at 325-8155 or Rhian Lombard at 325-5395. And please check the TOPS web site for more info as we get closer to the date.

THE SPECIAL AUCTION ITEM

By Jennifer Shaw

Each year at the spring auction we designate a special item to benefit from the live auction giving. Auction attendees are invited to donate whatever amount they can afford to pay for the special item. This item is a program or project, with a specific cost, that benefits the TOPS community as a whole and will likely not be funded through other sources. Past special auction items have included multicultural books for the library, improvements to the playground at Rogers Field, the TOPS music program, and the art program.

The Special Auction Item sub-committee is seeking proposals for this year's auction item. In reviewing proposals we need to know:

1. How will this program or project benefit the TOPS community as a whole?
2. What is the total cost of the program or project for the 2004 – 05 school year? Please provide an explanation for how the total amount was reached. For instance, instructor costs, costs for material, book purchases, etc. The Site Council will need to give specific approval to programs or projects that will extend beyond one school

year, and will take into consideration the amount of funds raised and the willingness of the project manager to coordinate the project for additional years.

3. If the fundraising goal is not met, will there be a way to fund the program or project as proposed or to scale back the proposal to meet the funding level?
4. Who will be the project manager? This can be a committee, like the art committee for last year's project, but we need to have at least one person who will commit to coordinating the project or program for the 2004 – 05 school year. The project manager or committee will also need to coordinate with the auction committee to prepare the live auction presentation and pre-auction promotion.
5. Can this program or project be funded by another source?

Please send your suggestions to Jennifer Shaw, 325-4079 or Jennifer@aoki-sakamoto.com. Deadline: March 26, 2004.

Thanks from the Special Auction Item sub-committee:
Jennifer Shaw, Sheri Toussaint, Gloria Albetta, Chris Drape.

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY AND BEYOND

By Steve Haines, librarian

"A library is not a luxury but one of the necessities of life."

~Henry Ward Beecher

Sixteen slightly nervous students plus four amazed, awestruck judges equal one fantastic start to this year's speech tournament. Started by former fifth grade teacher



Photo provided by Steve Haines

Tom Rowe, and a tradition since the earliest days of TOPS, the annual speech tournament challenges students in grades 3-8 in a series of speech categories spread out through the month of February and early March. Students first compete in their classrooms to get one of 16 total slots in each category. So that everyone who wants to compete may have a chance, students are only eligible to participate in one category a year. At press time we have finished our storytelling speech. This is a story taken from a published source. Students memorize the text but must pretend they are reading from the book. Judging is based on "introduction, suitable materials, re-creation of scene/mood/characters, ability to keep in character, effective use of voice and facial expression, poise/posture/comfort, and overall performance." The speech must be within a 3-7 minute time frame. Everyone gets a certificate and

the top four finishers, based on points, earn a trophy. Congratulations to first-place finisher Jackson White, who took his speech from the book *How I Became a Pirate*. The four judges come from all parts of the community and are always encouraged by how much work and effort the students put forth. Students who don't wish to participate in the voluntary tournament, held in the library loft, are given the opportunity to make at least one speech presentation to their classmates. The other speech categories include expository (a demonstration), oral interpretation (a memorized poem or published speech), and editorial commentary (think a serious Emily Latella). The eighth grade participates in a separate oral interpretation speech, giving speeches from famous Americans.

I think this valuable and enriching experience is one more example of the unique programs offered at TOPS. Not only does speech meet district standards but also it provides our children with leadership skills, presentation skills, and self-confidence. I'm always amazed at how hard the students and staff work during this time in their busy schedules.

On Thursday, Feb 5, students from grades 3-5 ventured to the Seattle Children's Theatre to experience the world premier of *Tibet Through the Red Box*. This play was adapted from a book of the same name, which was written and illustrated by Peter Sís. It tells the story of a difficult trip that the author's father, a filmmaker from Czechoslovakia, made in the early 1950s while helping to make a film of the Chinese constructing a road into Tibet. This book is illustrated with highly detailed drawings. We have this Caldecott Honor book and many of Sís's other highly regarded books in our library. Check www.petersis.com to see the complete collection.

From the Top-Ten List of Unintelligible Abbreviations continued from page 8

come and answer questions (each proposal will be assigned one night or the other). All interested community members are encouraged to attend and listen.

May 12, 5 p.m. Site Council meeting at which the preliminary budget and key issues, as identified by the finance committee, are reviewed.

June 9, 5 p.m. Site Council meeting at which the proposed budget is reviewed and approved by Friends of TOPS.

NOTAS AND NOTICIAS

By Maestra Rabbitt

I have high expectations of my students, which they continually meet and exceed. They challenge me to learn as well.

In all my classes the first words my students learn are *hola* and *adiós* and as part of Latin manners, they are required to begin class with salutations and end class with farewells. The younger students greatly enjoy saying hello, asking how I am, and responding to my query as to their *salud*. Both my afternoon groups also enjoy saying *hola* and *adiós* to *maestro J*.

Recently one group began saying toodaloo instead of *adiós*. I judged that they were ready to learn other farewells and we learned *hasta luego*, *hasta la vista*, *hasta luego*, and *que estes bien*. They now use all those terms when saying goodbye. At the same time, we discussed (in English) literal translation and concept translation and idioms so they would understand that, for example, "peace out" cannot be literally translated to Spanish, as it would make no sense and is not a common type of parting phrase. These are issues hard for many adults in this country to understand, yet my students comprehend cultural differences and language differences now and do not expect that everything they are familiar with in the dominant culture and language of this country is going to be present in another culture and language.

As I tried to look up toodaloo for spelling and origin, I found that the word goodbye, as with *adios* and *adieu*, is a contraction of God be with you. *Cada maestro un estudiante...*

Cada maestro un estudiante..-from the Cuban phrase cada maestro un estudiante, cada estudiante un maestro-every teacher a student, every student a teacher

Mis estudiantes de Español son muy estudiosos y muchas veces sobresalen. A mi también me obligan a aprender.

Ellos aprenden a decir hola y adiós y como parte de las buenas modalidades tienen que saludar al principio de la clase y a despedirse al final de la clase. A los más chiquitos les encanta saludar y preguntar por mi salud y responder a mis saludos y a las dos clases de la tarde también les gusta saludar a maestro J.

Recientemente los estudiantes de una de las clases empezaron a decir toodaloo al salir de la clase en vez de adiós y decidí que era tiempo que aprendieran a usar otros términos para despedirse. Aprendimos a decir hasta la vista, hasta luego, hasta luego y que estes bien. Conversamos sobre algunos términos que se usan aquí, así como peace out, que no tienen traducción al Español y no son despedidas que se usan normalmente. Esto es a veces difícil de entender a los adultos de este país, pero mis estudiantes ya saben que lo que existe en la cultura de este país no tiene porque existir en otras culturas y lenguas.

Al tratar de buscar la palabra toodaloo para ver como se deletrea y cuales son sus orígenes, aprendí que goodbye, al igual que adiós y adieu, es una bendición que quiere decir que dios te protege. Como se dice en Cuba, cada maestro un estudiante, cada estudiante un maestro.

Hola – hello

Adiós – goodbye

Salud – health,well-being

Hasta luego – until later, see you later

Hasta la vista – see you later, until we meet again

Que estes bien – be well

Adieu – adios in French



Photo provided by Sheri Toussaint

Three generations collaborated on a Valentine TOPIC: Dallas (grade 4) and Cyprus (grade 3) Richardson worked with Grandma, Grandpa, and Mom (Olga) to teach beading and heart pillow - making.

FEBRUARY WAS BLACK HISTORY MONTH

This year's theme: Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas: Fiftieth Anniversary

Photo provided by Sheri Toussaint



Black History Month poster created by Judy Holben's class

On May 17, 1954, Chief Justice Earl Warren read the decision of the unanimous Court:

"We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal

educational opportunities? We believe that it does. We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of

the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment."

Here are some ways TOPS celebrated:

Judy Holben, Bill Smith, and their Intermediate Special Ed students created a poster of Northwest black pioneers, highlighting Seattle families, and hung it in the main hallway next to the Black History Month calendar.

Teachers shared with their classes daily black history facts compiled three years ago by Mr. J and former TOPS teacher Mrs. B.

Sheri Toussaint shared biographies of some of our accomplished African Americans on the CSJ listserve. These spotlights, as well as those from 2002 and 2003, can be found in spiral-bound, laminated booklets in the TOPS library.

Webmaster Jack Lee created a Black History Month page for our web site (Community - CSJ -Black History Month).

Let our awareness of black contributions grow year-round...

TASTE OF TOPS

Thursday, March 4 in the TOPS cafeteria

This year's theme: "Building Community through SATYAGRAHA"

Potluck dinner 5:30 -7 p.m.

Student Talent Showcase 7 -8 p.m.

Parking available at Saint Patrick's Church

"The word Satya (truth) is derived from Sat, which means being. And nothing is or exists in reality except Truth."

M.K. Gandhi, *Young India*, July 30, 1931

"Truth (Satya) implies love, and firmness (Agraha) engender and therefore serve as a synonym for force. I thus began to call the Indian movement "Satyagraha," that is to say, the Force which is born of Truth and Love or non-violence, and gave up the use of the phrase "passive resistance."

M.K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*

Please note that the March CSJ meeting has been changed to Thursday, March 11, from 6 to 8 p.m. in the TOPS library.



The TOPS middle school Peacemakers group's theme for this year is Satyagraha. They painted the word as a picture and it hangs over the entrance to the kitchen in the TOPS lunchroom.

FORUM ON RACE: LUNCH WITH LANI GUINIER

By Sally Jo Gilbert de Vargas

On Monday, February 9, a group of TOPS parents and friends joined hundreds of guests at the Fairmont Olympic Hotel for an inspiring luncheon and talk by Professor Lani Guinier. The program was sponsored by the Urban Enterprise Center and the University of Washington. It included a video presentation about Seattle's economic urban renewal program, called "Closing the Gap," and a keynote address by Professor Lani Guinier, entitled "Race and Gender, Lift Every Voice!" Facilitated table discussions followed the keynote address as part of the "It's Time to Talk" series.

Lani Guinier was the first black woman to be appointed to a tenured professorship at Harvard Law School in 1998. Before joining the Harvard faculty, she was a tenured professor for ten years at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. She has written several books, the latest of which is *The Miner's Canary* (Harvard Press 2002), written with Gerald Torres. Professor Guinier explained the concept of the Miner's Canary in her talk. Canaries were once taken into the mines to use as a signal when the underground air got toxic. If the canary began to die, it meant that the air was dangerous, and the miners would evacuate the mineshaft. Guinier related the experience of the canary to that of people of color in America. According to Guinier, the suffering of people of color is a sign of larger, even more far-

reaching institutional inequalities that are affecting the "atmosphere" for all of us. It is her belief that race is both a diagnostic tool and a decoy. She reminded us that when Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated in 1964 he was involved in a "Poor People's Campaign," which stressed economic justice for all Americans. Guinier challenged us to find ways to take positive action which will clean the atmosphere of the injustice which is poisoning our society. Her special message to educators was to remember that the purpose of education in a democracy is not only to prepare our children for the world of work, but also for the responsibilities of citizenship and service to the community. Finally, Dr. Guinier challenged us to contemplate the question, What is the relationship between race and the American dream in our experience? Lani Guinier's talk was passionate and inspiring, and stimulated animated conversation at the TOPS table. Special thanks to Marlies van Bergeijk for organizing our participation in this event, and thanks to everyone else who participated: Janet Moore, Jennifer Shaw, Sheri Toussaint, Benling Wong (TOPS parents) and their guests Anena Metoyer, Anne Willoughby-Holt, Dr. Flora Wilson-Bridges, Mrs. Gladys Eddleton, and Mrs. Sarah Levant. We saw several other TOPS faces in the crowd, both as guests and behind the scenes, and we hope that we can represent our community with a number of tables at the next event.

THE COALITION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE INVITES YOU...

...TO AN OPEN DISCUSSION ABOUT RACE AND CULTURE IN A SCHOOL SETTING

Thursday, April 1, 6-8 p.m., in the TOPS library

Childcare provided. Please call the office 24 hours in advance, 252-3510.

Please join Teresa Nemeth, Sheri Toussaint, and Beth Wheeler as they respectfully share differing responses to a recent Undoing Racism workshop*. You are invited to stay for a discussion, facilitated by Lisa Love, Seattle Public Schools Health Education Specialist, about the issues we confront as we consider race and culture in a school setting:

How are we affected at TOPS?

Why do we sometimes find ourselves at odds working on seemingly common goals?

What can we learn about each other's perspectives?

How might we better understand each other's perceptions?

How does undoing racism fit into the larger context of multicultural education?

Where is the productive intersection of ideology and personal relationships?

We don't have the answers, but we do have faith in the positive intent of our community, and in our capacity to take a small step forward. Please come and be part of the conversation.

*The Undoing Racism workshop (12-03-03) was presented by The People's Institute, sponsored by the Washington State Association for Multicultural Education (WSAME), and held at Antioch University.

INTRODUCING JILL REIFSCHNEIDER, OUR NEW FIFTH GRADE TEACHER

By Ellen Markman

What's the best way to prepare for a job teaching fifth graders at TOPS? Apparently, it's helpful to have done extensive field work with wolves, ducks, and chimpanzees.



Photo provided by Jon Markman

That at least was the path taken by school newcomer Jill Reifschneider, who was chosen from a field of 70 highly qualified applicants last summer. And it is a path that has helped her already make a unique contribution to our community, enriching the science curriculum with her deep personal understanding of what it takes to be a patient, careful, objective student of nature.

Jill has been preparing to teach fifth graders in Seattle

her whole life. She grew up in suburban New York but always dreamed about heading west. After a couple of years of community college on Long Island, she made her escape on a Greyhound bus to Montana. She earned a bachelor's degree in wildlife biology at University of Montana in Missoula – a program that included working on a wolf-tracking project along the Canadian border in Glacier National Park.

After graduating, she decided to join the Peace Corps so she could work with wildlife in Africa. She worked on a duck project in North Dakota while waiting for her application to be processed, then finally got the news she had waited for: She snagged a job studying chimpanzees in Burundi.

Her work there led her to believe that conservationists and developers needed to work together. So when her contract was up, she returned to the United States to earn a graduate degree in Conservation Biology and Sustainable Development at the University Wisconsin in Madison.

She and her husband then decided to move to the Northwest to work and raise their first child. She joined a co-op preschool in Bothell and became a community activist focused on environmental issues. Jill combined the multiple threads of her life by teaching environmental education classes in local schools on a part-time basis, and soon discovered that she loved working with children even more than working with animals. So she went back to school again to earn one more degree – this time in elementary-school education at Pacific Oaks.

Jill taught fifth grade in the Northshore School District for a year, then taught combined fifth and sixth grade in the Edmonds School District – each on one-year contracts. Last year she learned about the fifth grade job at TOPS, and applied. She was chosen out of a tough field, and says she feels very fortunate to have joined our community. “The parental involvement, high expectations socially and academically, and administrative support make TOPS like no other school I’ve taught at,” Jill said. “The staff is wonderful, high quality, supportive and positive – the sharing of ideas is productive and rewarding.”

We’re glad to have her too. After dealing with wolves and ducks, a roomful of fifth graders must seem like a walk in the park.

NO-BAKE BAKE SALE 2003-04 CONTRIBUTIONS

(FINAL INSTALLMENT)

By Sheri Toussaint, No-Bake chair

WE DID IT!!!!!!

**93% PARTICIPATION AND
\$70,004.15 RAISED**

*GRACIAS, ALLA MAGAH, TODA, CÁM ÓN EM, DANKE,
ARIGATO, MERCI, ASANTE, TOA CHIE,
THANK YOU* to the entire TOPS community and beyond.

The No-Bake budget was \$2000 and was used to support the carnival event and fundraising campaign. There were 450+ volunteer hours, \$3126 in underwriting donations, 375 financial contributions, and an average donation of \$187.00.

New contributors, as of January 19, who helped us reach our goal:

(Legend: *TOPS Student, **TOPS Faculty, ***Alumni Parent)

ABC Towing

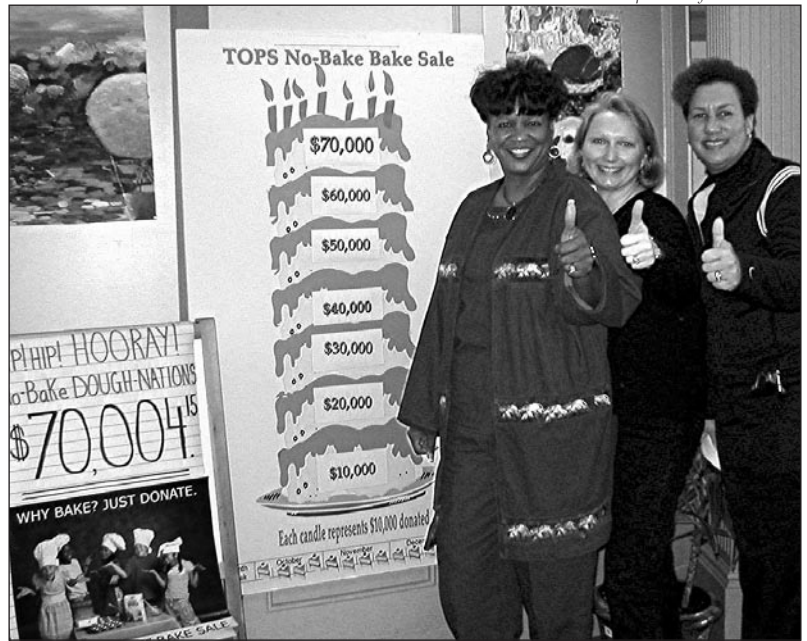
Bengtsson, Jon & Barbara
Binder, Jacqueline
Bloom, Marc & Cheri
Bossier, Shirley & Charles Pickel
Boxer, Gisela
Boyer, Sherrie & Tom
Brooks, Allison & Jeffrey
Burger, Charles
Chase, Gail & John
Cole, Marty, Ki Gottberg
Danielsson, Per & Karol
Eickelberg, Lori**
Espiritu, Elizabeth & Alfred
Heggen, Joan

Hirshberg, Wendi & Rich
Hopper, Jeffrey & Helen
Howell, Richard & Lois
Imanaka, Dwight, & Cynthia
Joan & William French
Kimmerly, Brita & Darrell
Lee, Judith & Jill
Lee, Vivian
Leonard, Bruce & Melissa
Martin, Jason & Mollie
Mentyka, Sharon & Stephen Schlott
Moberly, Kent & Elaine
Morrison, Bob & Janet
Nemeth, Teresa

Okimoto, David & Dina
Otis, Renee
Partners in Design
Patterson, Philip & Marisa
Paulsen, James & Bonnie Morita
Pennylegion, Michelle & David Hurley
Pickering, Jay & Rachel
Roll, Luzita**
Rowe, L. Jean
Simonson, Ann & Peter
Sing, Helen
Solomon, Biruk & Alemtsehay Tefferi
Solomon, Mahlet*
Solomon, Nathnael*

Tokuda, Wendy
Twight, Dana
White, Ron & Casey
White, Trudi & Robin Miller
Wickward, Kathryn & Gordon
Wong, Diane & Nelson Dong
anonymous
anonymous

MATCHING
Safeco



TAKE A HIKE!

By Anna Czosnyka and Kate Macklin, grade 7



Photos provided by Kate Macklin

On middle school TOPICS day (January 15), we took a hike with Marianne Trangen, the sixth grade social studies and language arts teacher, Mr. Bloedel, the seventh and eighth grade science teacher, and about five TOPS parents and thirty-three other TOPS students. We all took the Coal Creek Park trail on Cougar Mountain. The trail was in the heart of Bellevue, though on the trail we only saw a total of four buildings and two cars.

On the morning of January 15, we all thought the hike was going to be miserable. It was raining, cloudy, and the trail was for sure going to be muddy. Some people in other TOPICS laughed and said: "You have to go hiking in the rain." However, once we got to the trailhead and started to hike, the rain stopped and the trail turned out to be



really fun! Nothing was miserable about it. Mr. Bloedel taught us a lot about the history of Coal Creek Trail, and we had a great time.

SKATE KING 2004

By Taylor Cassell, grade 5

One of the best days of a kid's life is the TOPS grade school day to go to Skate King. The yellow busses, the smooth skating floor, the Slurpees and flashing lights...it's a kid's dream!

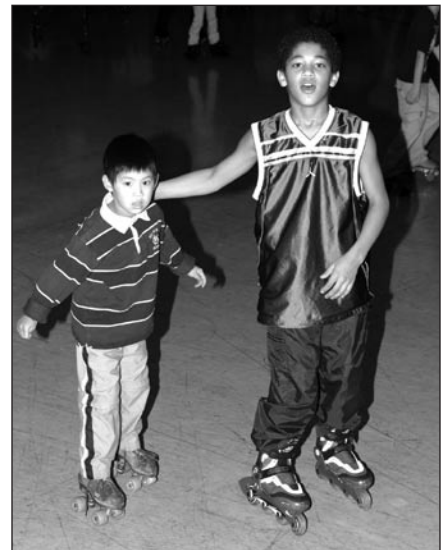
Every year in PE Don and Eric get the school district skates for a two-week period so we get to practice and learn how to skate in class before going to Skate King.

Skating in PE is always a lot of fun also as we get to do everything from learning how to stop, to doing the limbo, playing roller hockey and basketball, and doing tricks.

Every year now since kindergarten, we've gotten to go on this annual trip. I remember my first time when I was in kindergarten my fifth grade buddy helped me with my skates and took me around the rink a few times until I got comfortable doing it on my own. Now, the circle is complete as I was helping my kindergarten buddy!

This year at Skate King I got a warning for skating too fast. After that I took it easy and slowed down when the supervisors were watching. After skating for awhile I took a break and played videos, air hockey, and ate some junk food.

Thank you teachers and parents for making this annual adventure possible!



TOPS SKI BUS

By Jon Kaimmer, grade 6

My friends and I really liked going up on the ski bus this year although it would have been more fun to go up for the whole day instead of night skiing! Still, it was fun to get out of class an hour early, eat junk food, hang out with all my sixth grade classmates on our own luxury liner cruise bus, and then ski together.

I learned a lot and discovered that the most important piece of



equipment by far was my helmet. Let's just say that I played the role of "Jack" and took a tumble down the mountain and busted my head on a rock. Since I had a helmet on the result was a small bruise, but had I not had it on it could have been fatal!



It took a couple times to figure out the whole routine from getting myself and all my gear on and off the bus and finding my lesson and what runs to ski (maybe I should have paid attention at the information meeting). Anyway, after the second time up I pretty much had it all figured out including which runs I would have a blast on and which ones would send me to the hospital.

I noticed that by the end of the program people who had never skied before had some good skills and could ski most of the runs. Overall, going up on the ski bus was a lot of fun and I can't wait to do it again next year. Special thanks to Janet Moore, Janice Lovell, and John Savage for organizing the program and all the parents who chaperoned.

MIDDLE SCHOOL SKI BUS

By Hannah Gallagher, Grade 8

My years spent at TOPS have gone by so quickly. I think back to third grade, and it feels as if it were yesterday or at least last week. My three middle school years have meant so much. They have been full of wonderful memories. Including those fantastic ski bus nights.

Ski bus is not only a trip to go skiing/snowboarding, it is the opportunity to hang out with your friends. There was never a ski bus night that let me down. Ski bus was something to look forward to during the week. Looking forward to the endless



snowball fights and going up the chair lift. Looking forward to the everyone's excitement.

Learning how to snowboard with my friends was great. Not only did I learn a new skill but also I became friends with kids from other grades. I won't ever forget those loud, enjoyable bus rides up to the pass, sitting next to your friends watching movies and talking.

I can't picture TOPS without the ski bus. Ski bus enhanced my middle school years, and has now left me with memories that will last forever.

MIDDLE SCHOOL TOPICS: INNERSPACE SKATEPARK

By Alex Dorros, grade 8

I remember in elementary school at TOPS, TOPICS day was something to look forward to. As kids get into middle school they no longer get to participate in TOPICS. TOPICS day was a time to have fun but also to learn something and share something with other students. Until a few weeks ago I and many other middle school students had not been in a TOPIC since the fourth grade. I was

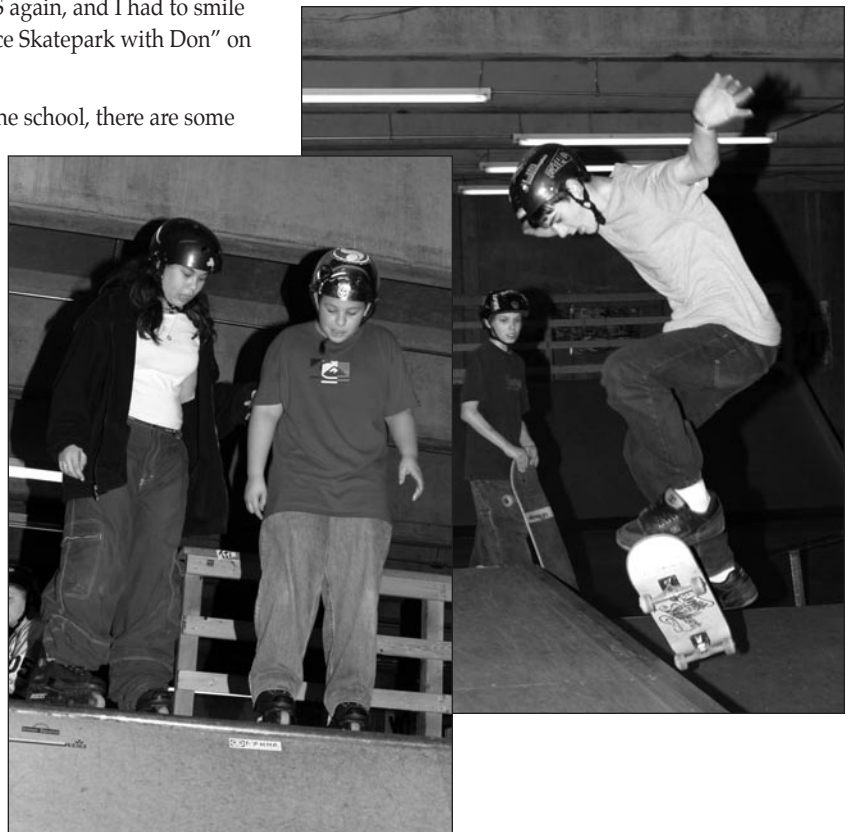
Everyone got right to work skating around and having lots of fun. Looking around one would see flips, airs, jumps, and grabs, as well as some nasty falls. Many of the participants had actually never tried the sport but after a little while they were feeling quite confident. Almost everybody had at least a few goals in mind. It was very exciting for them to accomplish them or maybe try to by the end of the day. It was also a very good way to get some exercise. It might look very simple but there are many skills required, such as timing, coordination, and balance. After the trip was over, everyone agreed that it was definitely worth it. Beginning in-liner Kristina Myles had to say, "I took some really bad falls, but it was still fun." I would have to agree with her on both parts.

I hope that middle school TOPICS day will happen again, and skateboarding will be an option. Everybody learned something, and seemed enthusiastic about the trip. It is amazing how much everyone can learn just in one day. Special thanks to PE teacher Don for organizing the trip, and Mike at Innerspace Skatepark. You can find out more about Innerspace on the web at www.innerspaceskateboarding.com.



excited to hear that we would be able to participate in TOPICS again, and I had to smile when I saw "A trip to Innerspace Skatepark with Don" on the list of choices.

Though there are not many in the school, there are some skateboarders as well as in-liners who were also very happy that they might be able to go to a skatepark. In fact, I was actually surprised about how many people signed up with skateboarding as their first choice. After Don prepped us on what to expect and how to behave at the skatepark, we were ready to go. All eighteen of us carpoled (in separate cars) to the skatepark, which is located in the Wallingford area. As we stepped into the skatepark there were many "Ooh's" and "Aah's" as everyone gaped at the assortment of ramps and rails.

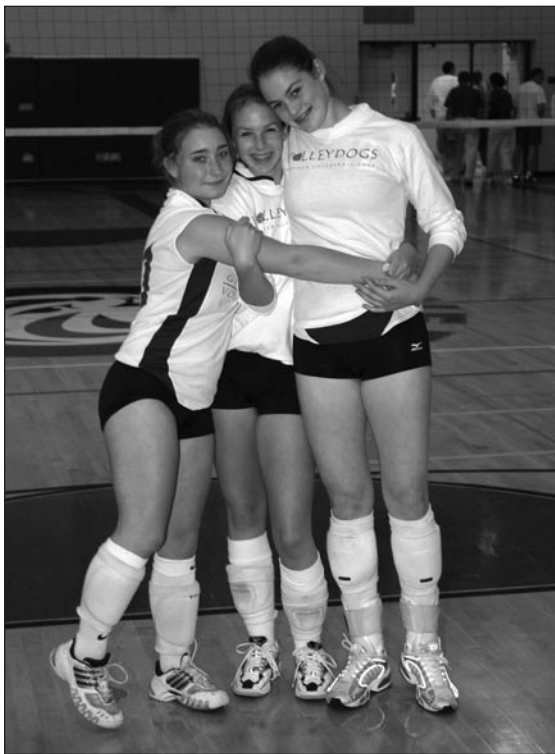


VOLLEYBALL REFLECTIONS FROM A TOPS ALUM

By Lillie Cohn, TOPS class of 2001

Remember seventh grade? The year full of broken friendships, identity crises, and mundane book reports? That wasn't the case for me. I had my share of book reports, but the spring of my seventh grade year I found something that I've grown to love over the past few years. I started playing volleyball in seventh grade. With a few fellow seventh graders, and some eighth graders, we started the first volleyball team in the history of TOPS.

Despite the fact that this team was young and inexperienced, our coaches, Mandy (for the first year) and Carolyn and Angela (for the second year), showed us how to have heart. I know that these women were the reason I pursued volleyball. They were consistently positive and held high expectations for the team. We started with the basics. No one knew anything about volleyball, not even the rules, so the coaches had to start from scratch. The first season we lost most of our games, but the next season, as



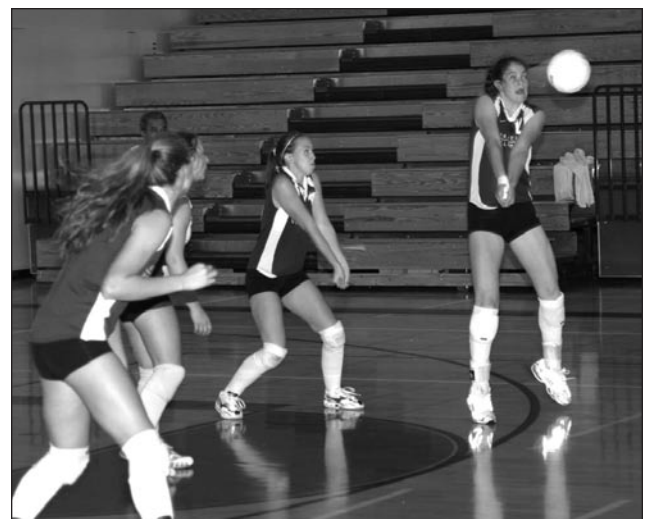
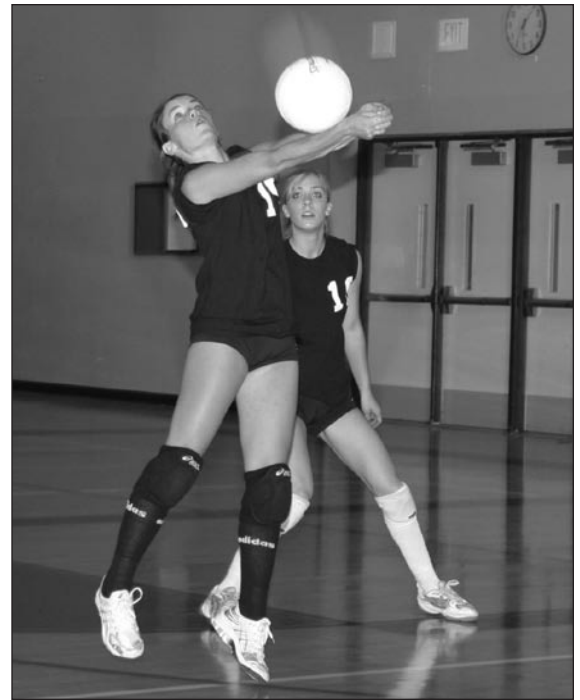
the coaches began to build on the program, we lost only twice. Even though TOPS is much smaller than the schools we compete against, the volleyball team was able to beat many of its opponents.

After my eighth grade season I knew I loved the sport, and I was ready to try out for Garfield High School's team. I had no idea what the competition was going to be like for a spot on varsity, nor did I know anything about how intense volleyball could be. On the first day of tryouts I remember walking into the gym and seeing a girl, six feet

tall, smashing balls straight down. Little did I know that soon enough, I would be surrounded by that type of player. The coaches at TOPS prepared me for high school ball better than I could have imagined. I made varsity my freshman year. Although my skills weren't as fine tuned as the rest of my team, I gained respect from my teammates through my hard work. Carolyn and Angela taught me that above all, hard work would prevail over talent.

I can't tell you a better feeling than wearing my school colors in a gym full of fans who are screaming and cheering for every point. There is pure joy in having the gym lights beating down on a crowd of noisy, rambunctious schoolmates yelling your name. Besides representing your school and doing something fun, another advantage to playing team sports is that you make many new friends. My freshman year, I remember feeling good walking through the intimidating hallways of Garfield and seeing the familiar face of an older teammate. I have made many good friends through volleyball. Before high school games we would all gather in the locker room studying, doing homework, and laughing. I still am lucky enough to play with Amanda Jamieson and Burnley Dluhosh, two of my teammates from TOPS.

Without volleyball, I wouldn't be as happy as I am today. It has taught me so many important skills. I've learned to be disciplined, to manage my time wisely, to be assertive, and to make friends. I love volleyball, and I couldn't see my life without it. This is why I'm planning to play in college. Who knew that all this was started by a makeshift net and a flat ball in the TOPS gym. I would encourage every middle school girl to try volleyball during PE. I hope you will realize how great it is, and will begin to love it as much as I do.





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A MESSAGE ABOUT THE FEBRUARY 3 SCHOOL LEVIES FROM SUPERINTENDENT RAJ MANHAS

Dear parents and guardians:

On February 3 Seattle’s voters showed overwhelming support for two school district levies. Unofficial returns showed the Educational Programs and Operations levy winning approval from 78 percent of voters, and the Capital levy garnering 74 percent of the vote.

The results sent a resounding message to the children of our city. In supporting the levies, voters said to our students that we care about you, that we value your education, and that we are willing to invest in your future.

The \$338 million Educational Programs and Operations levy represents 23 percent of the District’s general fund and pays for important day-to-day educational services, including lower class size, instructional support, and a variety of other student

activities. The \$178 million Capital levy funds 700 projects, improving every school in the District and ensuring a safe, secure learning environment for every student. Repairs and upgrades will be made to roofs, life safety and mechanical systems; to library, science and art facilities; and to technology systems and equipment that support teaching and learning.

I know that many of you worked hard to win support for these levies and I want to extend my heartfelt thanks for all the time, energy and commitment you’ve given to this effort.

I want to extend a special thank you to Schools First! and the incredible corps of volunteers who worked tirelessly to ensure passage of these levies – and success for our students.

Sincerely,

Raj Manhas, Superintendent

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