

# TOPS NEWS

June 2005 ♦ Volume 8, Issue 9

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

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Summer is almost here!

The school year seems to be flying by. Every day brings exciting news and events! This is also field trip season, which means that TOPS students are taking part in exciting happenings around our community. Our 7th and 5th graders had a fun time at camp. Also, the elementary play was performed without a hitch. As I write this, we are looking forward to our spring concert on June 1. Thanks to our music staff.

Congratulations to our track and volleyball teams for their individual and team contributions.

Thanks to Sandy Green and her committee for treating our staff so well during teacher appreciation week and early dismissal days.

Our recent TOPS auction was enormously successful and surpassed our goal of \$80,000. Thanks to our auction co-chairs Tammy Luthy and Janet Morrison and their committee for



the exciting auction. Thanks to the parents who donated to the Special Auction Item and to the auction in general.

Thanks to all of our wonderful parent volunteers who help our school to run smoothly.

Well done, Seymour Kaplan Award winners! The winners of this prestigious award will be announced in June at the award assembly.

Congratulations to the 8th grade class as they move on to high school. Our good wishes are with you as you continue your educational journey. The TOPS community thanks you for the memories you have given us and the beautiful 8th grade gift of pictures of past graduates.

Have a great summer. Remember me when you read a book in the sunshine this summer. I will see you in the fall!

Cheers!

Clara



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**Principal:** Clara Scott

**Assistant Principal:**  
Gerrit Kischner

**Site Council Chair:**  
Kathy Cox-Czosnyka

### NEWSLETTER ONLINE

The TOPS newsletters are available online in PDF format 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.

## STAFF APPRECIATION, CONTINUED

My apologies for omitting Charles Holmes and Paul Gillespie, instrumental music teachers! TOPS thanks both very much for their work. Here is what their students say:

*"We like Mr. Gillespie because he is funny!"*

*"I enjoy band with Mr. Gillespie because he lets us choose the songs. He is open to what we say."*

*"I like Mr. Holmes because he is really patient."*

*"Mr. Holmes challenges me. He doesn't repeat the same music pages over and over again, but keeps us moving ahead."*

Also, Mr. Ellis's (7/8 math) final remark was cut off. It should have read, *"I am grateful to Mr. Ellis for helping me when I didn't understand."*

~ed.



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## ABOUT THE OUTRAGEOUS PUBLISHING SERVICE

Welcome to the ninth and final newsletter of the 2004-05 school year. It is also my final issue as editor. Thank you all for the inspiration you have given me to do this every month for the last three years. I'm not sure I can even express what a rich experience it has been. Thanks to all the suppliers of terrific articles and photos over the years. You have brought such depth to this little publication, and to the school as a whole.

Thanks to Cindy Suzumura for her beautiful layouts, Toby Harris and Peggy Riehle for their lightning-quick labelling and mailing, and Don Zemke for his steady supply of lively photos.

Please welcome the ultra-capable editing duo of Ann Simonson and Jamie Flaxman! They have set up an email address specifically for the newsletter. You may now send articles to [topsnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:topsnewsletter@gmail.com).

Deadline for the September issue is August 1. You may also contact Ann at 722-8962, and Jamie at 286-1295.

Bye. Teresa Nemeth

# REPORT FROM THE SCHOOL BOARD

By Kathy Wickward, Johnny Calcagno, and Sheri Toussaint

On May 17, Seattle Public Schools Superintendent Raj Manhas called a press conference to announce that the district will respond to "overwhelming" public sentiment (and tepid board support) by significantly backing away from his preliminary proposal to reshape the district.

There are no longer any schools slated for closure in 2006. APP students will continue to have a program at Garfield until more advanced placement programs are in place at other district high schools.

"As we look at balancing our 2006-07 budget without school closures, we will have to make some equally difficult, collective choices," Manhas warned. "The community has made it clear that they understand our funding crisis and they are willing to roll up their sleeves and help." Manhas then announced the formation of a committee of community leaders to work with him over the next several months to address the budget shortfall. According to district staff, the specter of school closures may again rise if this committee is not successful in finding other, acceptable options to balance the budget.

Although school closures are now off the table for 2006-07, the district intends to present a revised student assignment and transportation plan for implementation in 2006-07 that will likely include reduced elementary and alternative school choice.

It will, however, also include a provision to grandfather all students to their highest grade. Manhas committed to bringing forward his revised student assignment and transportation plan with time for extensive public comment before it is finalized. District staff are uncomfortable with the grandfathering provision because it would postpone any fiscal savings, particularly if transportation were also extended. Failing to extend transportation would present serious equity issues, as not all student families would be able to provide their own transportation to their school of choice.

The teachers union continues to feel that school closures must be a part of the budget balancing act. District staff members who were involved in the contract negotiations will not consider returning to the union to ask for more concessions because the union was willing to give up so much already. This suggests that a significant number of layoffs may be unavoidable.

Even with the superintendent's announcement about shelving the school closure portion of the plan, multiple organizing efforts, both at TOPS and citywide, continue working to ensure that choice and equity are not overlooked in any new proposal coming from the school district.

The Alternative Schools Coalition, comprising representatives from many of the city's alternative schools, met on May 17 to discuss how best to communicate the need to preserve alternative schools as unique programs that draw from neighborhoods all over the city. Before the April 20 announcement of the reshaping plan, the Coalition had presented the school board with a list of recommendations in light of the budget crisis, but board members commented publicly that they felt they had not heard enough from the alternative schools community as a whole. The Coalition is consequently now working on reformulating the previous communication into a package that includes a cover document and supporting materials from individual schools. The key concepts highlighted in this package will be the continued need for choice and equity/access in the district, and continuity through grade levels.

At TOPS, a group of parents have been organizing not only against the elements of the original reshaping plan that most affected our school, but also calling for a more

comprehensive city- and statewide analysis of the revenue and spending problems facing the district. Now that the original plan is off the table, the TOPS activists have developed a concise petition and statement calling for the preservation of our school as a unique, successful school that should be available to residents throughout the city. The petition and statement also highlight the issue of grandfathering siblings of current students.

The Communities for Public Education is a new citywide group, formed in response to the original reshaping plan, that now hopes to help the district find "creative solutions to solve the budget problems while strengthening the programs to educate all students." At the May 18 school board meeting, a CPE representative advocated an education summit, and putting

the brakes on the original reshaping proposals until all key decision-makers at the city, county, and state levels are at the same table.

Please send your letters in support of alternative schools to Superintendent Raj Manhas and the Seattle School Board members:

Superintendent Raj Manhas  
[rsmanhas@seattleschools.org](mailto:rsmanhas@seattleschools.org) 252-0100

District I - Sally Soriano  
[sally.soriano@seattleschools.org](mailto:sally.soriano@seattleschools.org) 252-0052

District II - Darlene Flynn  
[darlene.flynn@seattleschools.org](mailto:darlene.flynn@seattleschools.org) 252-0031

District III - Brita Butler-Wall  
[brita.butler-wall@seattleschools.org](mailto:brita.butler-wall@seattleschools.org) 729-3202

District IV - Dick Lilly  
[dick.lilly@seattleschools.org](mailto:dick.lilly@seattleschools.org) 297-4533

District V - Mary Bass  
[mary.bass@seattleschools.org](mailto:mary.bass@seattleschools.org) 720-3303

District VI - Irene Stewart  
[irene.stewart@seattleschools.org](mailto:irene.stewart@seattleschools.org) 933-5338

District VII - Jan Kumasaka  
[jan.kumasaka@seattleschools.org](mailto:jan.kumasaka@seattleschools.org) 760-4747

# STEWARDSHIP: IT'S HAPPENING!!

By Laurie Stusser-McNeil

Have you heard your student say it yet? From Cynthia's art classes focused on the new school calendar to Kindergarten News, across campus on Earth Day to the Building Leadership Team's report, there's a word that has found its way into the TOPS vocabulary: stewardship. The idea, the movement, this responsibility of ours to care for our school and surrounding property is starting to sink in and become a part of who we are as a community.

The stewardship committee ended its final facilitated session by agreeing it had indeed accomplished its primary goal of studying the interest level and viability of launching the program. The answer? A resounding YES!

The stewardship committee has agreed to stay organized for the next year and is actively encouraging new members. This fall, the committee will guide the launch of the "zone" plan that worked so beautifully on Earth Day. Each class will have a volunteer position (stewardship coordinator) to work with their teacher and the stewardship committee to create an ongoing, meaningful experience for the students. They will link the care for their assigned area of the school and public

grounds (the class's "zone") with learning and "growing" opportunities.

Thank you, TOPS, for embracing stewardship as your own and seeing that our community is guided by a sense of citizenship and respect. As our vision statement spells out, it is the responsibility of all of us to make our world a better place:

## **TOPS STEWARDSHIP VISION**

*The TOPS community cultivates a school culture that values stewardship by making connections between our collective action and the impact we have on the Earth.*

*Students, teachers, families, and staff work and learn together to care for the school and the surrounding public spaces. Stewardship values are modeled through school policies, classroom systems, etiquette, and sustainable programs. Students learn about stewardship through integrated, sequential, and action-oriented experiences.*

For more information and to get involved, contact Laurie at [ljstusser@comcast.net](mailto:ljstusser@comcast.net).

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## 2004-05 TOPS CALENDAR

Send your events and dates to our webmaster, Jack Lee, at [Lee@Oz.net](mailto:Lee@Oz.net). Please check Wednesday Go-Homes and the web site for updates.

### **JUNE**

- |                 |   |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|---|
| 1 (W).....      | Spring music concert, 2 and 7 p.m.  | 9-10 (Th-F) ... | Grades 3-4 to Camp Arnold                         |
| 2 (Th).....     | CSJ barbecue and social, 5:30 p.m.  | 15 (W).....     | Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.                    |
| 3 (F).....      | Grades K-2 and DHH to Camp Long   | 17 (F).....     | 8th grade passage reception, 7-9:30 p.m.          |
| 7 (T).....      | Middle school orientation for rising 6th and 7th grade families, 6-7 p.m. | 20 (M).....     | Grade 5 Moving Up ceremony                        |
| 7-10 (T-F)..... | Grade 8 to Deception Pass   | 20 (M).....     | Middle school to Wild Waves; elementary field day |
|                 |   | 21 (T).....     | Last student day                                  |

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*Report from the School Board continued from page 2*

There is a web site set up by TOPS activists for tracking current developments in the district's restructuring: [www.keepustogether.org](http://www.keepustogether.org).

The Alternative Education Committee has researched the definition and characteristics of alternative education. On June 1 the committee will present recommendations and a best practices document to the Seattle School Board members.

Alternative schools recognize that they are different from traditional schools—this is, in fact, their purpose. Choice is a cornerstone of alternative education; students, families, and staff choose a particular school because of its distinct mission, culture, and educational practices. Alternative

schools are strengthened and enriched by the presence of students and families who represent a cross-section of the city. In order to provide choice, equitable access, and diversity, all alternative schools should have the option of all-city draw.

The district repeatedly asserts its commitment to alternative education. However, if district policy and budget fail to support key elements of alternative education, alternative schools will be unable to provide a true alternative to the traditional schools.

# SITE COUNCIL REPORT

MAY 18, 2005

By Teresa Nemeth, filling in for Louise Bush Rosen

## AUCTION

Tammy Luthy and Janet Morrison, auction co-chairs, reported that this year's auction had raised \$20,000 more than last year. As a result, TOPS will be able to continue its core programs despite next year's funding gap. Huge thanks went out to the entire community for its support. Site council members generally agreed that it had been an especially fun event. Boat Street Catering provided delicious food, and this year's eighth graders provided excellent help. (See auction wrap-up p. 6)

## MEETING TIME

Kathy Cox-Czosnyka, Site Council chair, noted that third-Wednesday meetings conflict with school board meetings, and asked Site Council members' preferences for next year. It was agreed that second Wednesdays would be better.

## SOUND SYSTEM

Phil Czosnyka reported on the gym sound system, last year's Special Auction Item. He was happy to announce that floor and ceiling mics will be installed for the elementary play. After much preparation and paperwork, the sound baffling system is now waiting for district approval before going to bid. Gerrit Kischner, assistant principal, is hopeful we can get approval by the end of the school year.

## PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Clara Scott thanked Tammy, Janet, and everyone who worked hard on the auction.

She was happy to announce that TOPS' K-4 teachers had received an Academic Improvement Award in reading and math at the most recent principals meeting. She was gratified to note that there was a whole box of awards from the state superintendent's office, many of which were given to schools that had struggled in the past or were even slated for closure in the recent district reordering proposal.

Seymour Kaplan Humanitarian Award recipients for the 5th and 8th grades have been identified, and will be announced at the end-of-year awards assembly, 5th grade moving-up ceremony, and 8th grade passage.

The last honor roll, to appear May 27, will include 112 students, which is a significant portion of our middle school.

The spring concert will be June 1 at 2 and 7 p.m. Clara sent invitations to all the school board members, as well as to Superintendent Manhas, to this year's Art Walk, which takes place Friday, May 20.

Ms. Scott reminds parents to check the lost and found. All leftover items will be donated to charity on June 21. She notes that items are given to a not-for-profit charity—one that gives clothing away rather than selling it.

Clara hopes parents will retain the energy generated around school closures and district reorganization. The superintendent is putting together a new committee, on which Clara hopes TOPS will find representation, and she will find out about the application process for parents in the next two days. Katie Waters added that the energy should also be taken to the Legislature to fix the funding issue, which is the root of the problem.

## BUILDING LEADERSHIP TEAM (BLT)

Gerrit reported that the BLT is working on the professional development plan for next year. The staff will build on the math and writing work accomplished this year. The staff has begun looking at spring writing samples—real data, Gerrit was enthusiastic about pointing out—and that the comparisons with fall writing samples have led to rich conversations. He is proud of TOPS for following through with the work on writing, and he commented that Lori Eickelberg has done a spectacular job of leading everyone through it. All grades produced samples.

## VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Randi Niemer was not able to attend tonight's meeting. The Site Council notes that the fund development chair and No-Bake chair positions remain to be filled.

## DRAMA

Linda Korbus, drama committee chair, reported that play rehearsals have been going well, and that 150 children are participating.

Tracy Waters' third grade play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, takes place Tuesday and Wednesday, May 24 and 25.

## BUILDING USE POLICY

Maureen Germani, Site Council assistant chair, reported that she, Gerrit, Clara, Randi Niemer, and Site Council member Lianne Shepherd met to formalize the policy for parent-sponsored after-school activities. They agreed to use as a template the one-page description that already exists, but to make a clear, formal checklist out of it, so that there would be a sense of fairness and no questions about why one activity was approved while another was not. Maureen emphasized that there would be a clear process to follow, starting with talking to Clara and Gerrit and continuing with getting sign-off from the teachers. This policy will apply to after-school enrichment activities only and not community events, for which there is already a policy in place with the district. Clara explained that we have to be careful that an after-school activity does not supplant what is being taught in the classroom, because that would conflict with union rules.

## SCHOOL BOARD

Johnny Calcagno, who has done substantial work informing TOPS parents and coordinating a response to district reorganization proposals, reported on efforts by

*Continued on page 5*

# WHAT TOPS FAMILIES ARE CELEBRATING

Compiled by Lynne Goodrich (CSJ Member)

## JUNE IS GAY/LESBIAN PRIDE MONTH

Cities all over the world hold Gay Pride festivities on different dates in the month of June. Many cities choose the weekend closest to June 27-29 so that the celebration will coincide with the anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising (see below).

## JUNE 2005 HOLIDAYS

**June 2: Native American Citizenship Day.** Congress enacted a law in 1924 permitting Native Americans to become citizens of their own country.

**June 6: D-Day** (United States) On this day in 1944 during World War II, allied forces invaded France, an action long awaited and hoped for by occupied Europe. Intense fighting in Normandy lasted many weeks.

**June 11: King Kamehameha Day** (Hawaii) Kamehameha was the name of the first five monarchs of the Hawaiian Islands.

**June 12: Shavuot** (Jewish) Celebrates the Ten Commandments, the foundation of Jewish law. It is customary to read from the Book of Ruth and study the Torah.

**June 14: Flag Day** (United States) First observed in 1877 on the 100th anniversary of the Continental Congress' adoption of the Stars and Stripes as the official flag of the United States.

**June 19: Father's Day** (United States) First celebrated in Spokane, Washington, on June 19, 1910. Sonora Smart Dodd originally thought of the idea while listening to a Mother's Day sermon the previous year. Dodd and her five siblings were raised by their father after their mother died in childbirth. It was not until 1966 that a presidential proclamation declared the third Sunday of June Father's Day. This proclamation by President Lyndon Johnson was made permanent by President Richard Nixon in 1972.

**June 19: Juneteenth** (United States) Celebrates the freedom of over 250,000 slaves at the close of the Civil War. The holiday is based on events that occurred mainly in Texas, but is now celebrated nationwide. The celebration takes its name from June 19, 1865, the day federal troops finally arrived in Galveston to enforce the Emancipation Proclamation.

**June 21: Summer Solstice** Longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere, and shortest day of the year in the Southern Hemisphere.

**June 21: Last day of the school year at TOPS!**

**June 28: Stonewall Rebellion Day** (United States) The Stonewall Inn was a gay bar in New York City where spontaneous resistance to police harassment inflicted on the homosexual community occurred in 1969. It sparked a new and visible phase of political organization for gay rights.

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*Site Council Report continued from page 4*

TOPS community members and asked whether it would be appropriate to circulate a petition at the elementary play. The response was yes. Kathy Cox-Czosnyka said that the next step, following the staff and parent community forums, is to send a delegation of about five TOPS parents to five School Board members with a message about who we are and what elements of our program we would like to retain and strengthen. Clara emphasized that there should be representatives from the clusters of the School Board members we choose, and that we should be able to represent a diversity of ideas.

Site Council members briefly discussed the differences between a PTA and a site council, and noted that a PTA might not be limited, in advocacy, by the same rules as a site council.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Steve Havas, Site Council treasurer, reported that, because of misunderstanding, some stewardship calendars had been sold at the auction with the assumption that proceeds would go specifically to the stewardship program. He reminded that targeted fundraising requires Site Council approval, but said that since some calendars had been sold that way, Friends of TOPS (the Site Council acting as a nonprofit body) would follow through this time and

donate the proceeds to the stewardship program.

Judith Lee initiated a discussion about visibility and accountability. The treasurer and Site Council members recognized the time required to produce perfect visibility. It was noted that last year, there were monthly newsletter articles—but that seems to require a coordinator.

Lianne Shepherd brought up the issue of teacher stipends, and suggested creating more clarity about when they are advisable and when not.

There was a brief discussion about separating the year-opening carnival from the No-Bake Sale as budget line items, and whether the carnival was a necessary budget expense. Some Site Council members suggested it would depend who organized the carnival (whether the organizer did it well). Clara suggested that it was a good community-building activity, particularly since there aren't many others till later in the year, and should be funded.

The remainder of the time was spent reviewing budget items and answering questions. The budget committee will make a recommendation to the Site Council executive committee during the last week of May, and the executive committee will bring that recommendation to the Site Council. The final budget will be approved June 15. Please check the TOPS web site for updated budget information.

# AUCTION WRAP-UP

By the auction committee

The 2005 TOPS spring auction was a smashing success. Revenue broke the \$100K barrier, surpassing our wildest dreams to raise a minimum of \$92,000 for Friends of TOPS! Bravo and thanks to the staff and families of our fabulous school!! Hundreds of TOPS hearts and hands joined to create a successful fundraiser and a darn good party.



Auctioneer Steve Hardy, with his dry wit and light-speed verbal reflexes, pulled \$33,885 out of the live auction. Attendees also pledged \$22,000 in the live auction to close the budget gap for next year. Ted Johnson, in his last year after 10 years of TOPS auctions, was fabulous onstage as master of ceremonies and class project pitchman. Kermit Rosen gave a crowd-pleasing live keyboard performance. Boat Street Kitchen provided a delicious French Moroccan dinner for 292 attendees. TOPS 8th graders and teen alumni jumped in as volunteer superstars.



Photo provided by Jon Markman

Richard Phillips and Lynne Goodrich were Golden Raffle and Freestone Inn raffle winners this year. New this year, only 100 Golden Raffle tickets were sold. The winner was able to choose

from any of the live auction items for just the \$25 cost of the ticket. Richard chose the Lopez Island getaway package, but not before flirting with taking the kindergarten project (knowing it would have a high resale value). The kindergarten class projects, prompting

the night's most breathtaking bidding wars, sold for a combined total of over \$4400!

The auction committee bids a fond farewell to Ted Johnson, Rhian Lombard, Paige Chapel and Diane Magasich, auction superstars for the last 10-plus years. And many, many thanks to every TOPS family who gave of their time and resources to make this year's event a hit!

Please remember to seek MATCHING FUNDS from your employer. Many corporations will match your donation to Friends of TOPS dollar for dollar. It is easy! Check with your human resources



department for information. Our Friends of TOPS tax i.d. number is 94-3142402.

We will gladly continue to accept donations to Friends of TOPS. You can deliver checks to the TOPS office or mail to Ellen Markman, 3715 E. Union, Seattle 98122.

## 6TH GRADERS LEARN SCIENCE BY KAYAK

WITH THE HELP OF UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON STUDENTS.



Photo provided by Mary Hartly

# NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY AND BEYOND

By Steve Haines, librarian

Photo provided by Steve Haines

*"When I got [my] library card, that was when my life began."*

~Rita Mae Brown

## TRIP ON THE VIRGINIA V

"I don't think I really want to do this," quipped one anxious 2nd grader as we were preparing the students for our trip aboard the historic steamship, Virginia V. "You're telling us that this boat that was built on a beach in 1922 and has a triple expansion steam engine made in 1898 isn't going to sink when we are on it? No way." With our safety assurances in mind, the students from Julie's 2nd grade, Joe's 4th grade, and Tom O'Connor's 8th grade classes stepped back in time to relive what was once a very common occurrence in our part of the world. Now used primarily for excursions, the Virginia V once was part of a vast "Mosquito fleet" that would ply the protected waters of Puget Sound carrying passengers, freight, and mail to such exotic spots as Lisabuela, Olalla, and Fragaria. In the early days of Washington's history the water was the main source of transportation, and communities depended on these vessels for contact with the world. While on the Virginia V, the students recorded information in a logbook as they went from station to station on the boat. They learned the history of the vessel, how to navigate on the water, and why weather is so important to mariners. They also experienced the history of our route, which was from the ship's berth at the south end of Lake Union up through the Montlake cut and into Lake Washington to Webster's Point. The students really enjoyed visiting the wheelhouse, meeting the captain, and learning the origin of the terms "port" and "starboard." The students were also able to experience the engine room up close and discovered that even something very old, if well taken care of, can still be of use. The two-hour trip was over before we knew it and the only thing we had to worry about was how to dodge the huge raindrops the fell intermittently. The students were very appreciative of their experience. Joe stated that it was the best field trip he had ever been on. The highlight for me was being asked to blow the whistle. The sound is "hair-raising." If you would like to blow the whistle or learn more about the history of the Virginia V, go to [www.virginiaov.org](http://www.virginiaov.org).

As reported in the December edition of *TOPS News*, this all came about because the Virginia V Foundation received a grant from King County's Heritage 4Culture program to create a set of curricula providing teachers and students with direct hands-on experiences learning about a historic vessel and maritime history. Four teachers from our school (Joe, Julie, Tom, and I) were selected, along with several teachers from Whitman, Ballard High, and Valley View School in the Highline school district, to help develop and pilot educational activities dealing with maritime heritage. Our trip was underwritten by a grant from the History Channel. This all wouldn't have happened without the commitment to preserving maritime heritage by the project team, JoAnn O'Connor, Dr. Jacqueline Schwartz, and Holly Taylor.



They have been extremely positive and accommodating throughout this ongoing process.

## WHAT TO DO, WHAT TO DO?

Summer vacation is fast approaching and with it comes the valuable time for our students to make explorations and to relax. One valuable resource our children and young adults can take advantage of is the Seattle Public Library's annual free Summer Reading Program. This year's program, called "Reading is Natural," kicks off on Saturday, June 25, with a performance by master storyteller Won-Ldy Pay and dancer Etienne Cakpo as they weave the enchanting tale "The Story of the Bell, Shaker and Drum." Activities are planned at all of the open branches this summer. The best thing: it is all free. What better way to explore new information and ideas, all the while searching for that perfect read. Don't forget to get a library card if you don't already possess one. It is the best card you can own. Check it out at [www.spl.org](http://www.spl.org).

## CALLING ALL BOOKS!

The end of school also means closing our library down for the summer. That means getting all of those favorite books back to the library so that I can take an inventory after school closes. For the most part, the books find their way back home. It sometimes takes some effort to search all of those places that we have for our "stuff," but the students are quite happy when the book is returned and they don't have to be nagged by me anymore. Remember, books that are accidentally sent to the public library eventually come back to us, and conversely if I find any public library books I will return them. Speaking again of the public library: we have some interesting developments in the works to combine the school district's and public library's cataloging systems. More to follow.

Have a restful summer and READ ON!

# EIGHTH GRADE LEGACY GIFT TO TOPS

By Debrah Walker

Before the end of school, in the main entry hall, a photo gallery will be hung of all TOPS 8th grade graduates beginning with the first class of 1993. This year's 8th graders voted to reestablish this tradition as their legacy gift to TOPS.

Before the Seward school building remodel, the photographs of the first five years of 8th grade graduates hung in the hall outside the old office. During the move over and back from the McDonald school building that tradition was forgotten, but the photographs were stored away safely until they were found this spring. This class of 8th graders will be the twelfth to graduate from TOPS, and it seems appropriate that it is this class to reclaim the tradition.

A number of these students are the youngest in their families and will find their siblings in these photographs. Within this class we have the last, largest group of longtime TOPS families. With Emma Johnson's 8th grade passage her family takes the record of 18 years. Our daughter Josie Baldner, along with Ross Holzworth, will come in second with 17 years for each of our families. There are those families who have been at TOPS for 12 years or more: Lucas Chapel's, Wilem Girvin's, Erica Hall's, Zac Hockenbery's, Kate Macklin's, Anna Ludwig's, Anne McKeon's, Marcus Morales's, and Emma Slaton's. For all families this time of passage is poignant. Our students have been at TOPS for most of their lives. They are both glad to

be moving on and sad. Every day closer to passage they grow a bit more nostalgic, as do the families.

We have been part of this community for a long time, and, like all these families, have been part of many changes: from making due while housed in portables on the Stevens school campus, to winning the fight to expand from a K-5 to a K-8 program, to winning the fight to move into and then remodel the Seward buildings. TOPS has grown from a small, struggling, but determined community to a large, successful, and well-established school. I have learned that struggles never really end, and neither do the debates--they only change.

It is very nostalgic to see these photographs again, and even better to be reminded of all the great kids and families and staff that have made this school. To see the faces that made the frustrations worth our time.

There will be two more pieces to this photographic display. A short history of TOPS to put the photos into context, and a Chinese calligraphy. During the TOPS trip to China in April, Bobo Davenport's mother Qiao had a calligraphy done by an accomplished artist. It translates "Bountiful Harvest," which will become the title of the display. "We send forth our students as the bountiful harvest of our school."

We thank TOPS for all these good years, and wish you all well with future harvests.

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## TOPS 7TH GRADER WINS FIRST PLACE IN NARRAMORE ART CONTEST

Emma Framson won first place in the technical division of Seattle Public Schools' Narramore Art Contest for her acrylic on canvas. Floyd Narramore was a Seattle architect and arts booster who made funds available to Seattle Public Schools for the support of visual arts. TOPS art teacher Luzita Roll selects TOPS middle school students' work for submission to the contest, which has been running for several years. This year, a watercolor by 6th grader Johanna Garcia and an ink drawing by 8th grader Anna Ludwig were also entered. Congratulations to our TOPS artists!

Each year in April, the artwork is displayed in the main hall of the John Stanford Center for Educational

Excellence for several weeks before being judged. The ceremony to honor Narramore winners was Tuesday, April 26. Work from Luzita's students has won awards on a number of occasions. Some of these same students, now in high school, won awards again this year. First place winners receive \$100; everyone can attend a nice reception in the Stanford Center auditorium.

Students can also make their pieces available for sale by silent auction. Most decide not to put their pieces up for sale, however.

# CELEBRATING A FIFTH YEAR AT THE STATE CHESS TOURNAMENT WITH TOPS CHESS

By Laura Henry

As I “space-bagged” my household this weekend, sorting and stowing the extra clothes in my closet, I mused that I have enough TOPS chess T-shirts and Washington State

Chess Tournament T-shirts to make an adult-sized quilt: ten in all. This April, my son Benji and I traveled to Linden, Washington, to represent TOPS chess at the state tournament, along with 3rd grader Liam Hensel. It was our fifth opportunity to partake in the community celebration of chess as a social and intellectual experience for children.

The odyssey began way back in 1st grade when my immigrant transplant son found a place for himself in the after-school chess program at TOPS. Although the day program at TOPS, I found, overwhelmingly emphasized literacy and language-related challenges, chess club offered a way for my rambunctious spatial thinker to achieve on his own terms while learning fundamental life strategies, such as short-term goal-setting, and the benefits of measured decision-making. And as I surveyed the scene at the Washington State fairgrounds—swarms of children playing touch football, Frisbee, and basketball with parents and children from around the state, children excitedly explaining their last matches to their parents over their notation pads, adults discussing parenting and education issues over coffee—the state tournament once again seemed to validate these lessons no less than has the phenomenal growth of scholastic chess in Washington state in the last five years.

Chess offers the bilingual child a chance to compete with peers and frequently an opportunity to identify with other children in transnational families—witness the high proportion of Asian families involved in chess. And

contrary to popular stereotypes, scholastic chess at TOPS also graduates an unusually large share of well-rounded athletes. This is no doubt due to the level of physical activity in between rounds at tournaments as children meet up with friends from the local basketball and soccer team for spontaneous play on the school grounds.

The TOPS chess program has grown along with the regional popularity of chess, supported by the annual TOPS chess tournament in the spring. This tournament was brought back a few years ago largely under the leadership of parent Mark Morales. Hosting again 400-plus child participants and their families for a day of chess and unstructured play, the tournament this year drew teams from as far south as Salem, Oregon. It was good to its reputation for offering a dependable source of competition and recreation, thanks to a treasury of goodwill built up by successive groups of chess club parent volunteers. This year game designer and 1st grade parent Michael Adams took over as the coach of the chess program, creating a decidedly gentler environment for a predominantly younger group of children.

The chess club exemplifies many of the goals of the TOPS mission. Chess is open to anyone willing to put in the effort to learn. The self-supporting TOPS chess club offers full scholarships for year-round instruction and supports fully the travel and hotel costs of competing in state tournaments—for anyone. This year, for the first time, the club successfully experimented with promoting 6th graders as chess instructors, offering leadership development opportunities for them while broadening TOPS’ commitment to multi-grade interaction. It’s a wonderful tradition to add to what must be counted as an enormously successful program in the TOPS experience.

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## “WRITERS IN THE SCHOOLS” STUDENT READING AND CELEBRATION FEATURES TOPS 8TH GRADER

Student writers from each of 19 participating public middle and high schools (most from Seattle, one from Bellevue, and one from Renton) were invited to present one of their works at a reading and celebration at Elliot Bay Books on Saturday, May 21. TOPS 8th grader Abbey Roth was selected to read her poem titled “Car Trouble.” There was a standing-room-only crowd, and afterwards students got gift bags with treats (books, journals, pens, cookies, etc.) and were treated to a swanky reception up in the Arts and Lectures offices. TOPS’ writer-in-residence, who works with Lori Eickelberg’s 7th and 8th grade classes, is Stokely Towles. He and the other professional writers introduced their student writers and

talked about their work, their attitude, and their creative process before the students took to the podium.

Writers in the Schools (WITS), a program of Seattle Arts and Lectures, is an award-winning literary arts education program developed in partnership with the Seattle Public Schools. WITS brings regional and local writers into the classroom to work with students and teachers across the curriculum in year-long residencies. Writers collaborate with teachers to create an environment in which students recognize language not only as an abstract set of rules, but as a way of finding and expressing their own thoughts and stories. Founded in 1994, WITS has reached more than 40,000 students and 800 teachers.

# JOHNNY B. KING: THIS IS YOUR LIFE (WELL, AT LEAST 7 YEARS OF IT)!

Photos provided by Michael Chapko

By Sam Heft-Luthy, grade 5

The curtain coming up at the beginning of a play not only marks the beginning of the entertainment, but it marks



the end of a long, time-consuming rehearsal period. But trust me, there's nothing more satisfying than taking that final bow at the end, knowing that you have brought the audience joy.



Sometimes a play takes half a year to write, produce, and direct, sometimes

TOPS' own Joan and Melissa Rivers (we bought them from TV guide), followed by the opening song, made original for the show, "Come on In." There were thirteen songs in all, which made for a diverse selection of upbeat and melancholy, and a fun play.

more. But this year, Julie Jameson, our fabulous director, decided to put on a play that has been seven years in the making. The TOPS elementary play this year was a parody of an old show called "This Is Your Life," where people (usually celebrities) would be shown events in their life – good and bad – that, for whatever reason, they couldn't remember

themselves. The result was a montage of the greatest scenes and songs from seven of the past elementary plays. The opening sequence was a red carpet-style interrogation by



# JUGGLING JUGGLES THE BRAIN

By Don Zemke, PE teacher

Juggling is not just for street performers, circus entertainers, and clowns. Although we know that juggling is a good way to develop and improve hand-eye coordination, studies have shown that juggling is also good way to increase brain development!

Brain researchers from at the University of Regensburg (Germany) have found that learning to juggle can change brain structure. In their study, magnetic resonance imaging was used to measure the size of different areas within the brains of the subjects. Brain scans were taken before anyone practiced juggling, three months after the jugglers practiced, and three months after the jugglers stopped practicing. The results of the brain scans show that a significant expansion was found in the mid-temporal area and the left posterior intraparietal sulcus within the brains of the jugglers. These two areas of the brain are important for processing information related to moving objects.

So, this summer, TOPS students, let's improve our test scores and make it a priority to juggle on a regular basis. Juggling balls are easy to take on vacation, camping, to the beach, to

grandmas house, etc.... You can also develop partner routines with your family and friends.

How To Make Your Own Juggling Bags

**Materials:**

- ◆ 9- to12- inch balloons
- ◆ Sand, bird seed, or rice (filler)
- ◆ Funnel
- ◆ Scissors

**Procedure:**

Insert the funnel into the top of one balloon and fill it with the filler. Tie off the balloon and cut off the excess stem. Take two more balloons and cut off the stems. Stretch first one and then the other over the filled balloon to cover the knot and reinforce the juggling bag. Repeat the procedure two more times to complete your set of three juggling bags.



# BEING PE TEACHER FOR A DAY

By Anna Duncan, Grade 4

Last week I had the opportunity to be PE teacher for a day for the 4th graders. When the day came I wanted to make things fun so I cancelled stretches and gave everybody free choice!



It was really cool to be the PE teacher for a day because I had so many things that I could do: run laps, have free choice, play spot, etc.... And it was so cool to know that I could choose anything I wanted!

Additional comments from other student PE teachers:



*"I liked being able to choose the music for the day." ~Gabe*



*"I liked being able to choose the different activities and tell all the students what to do." ~Max*



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## QUILT TOPIC IN HONOR OF MR. J

Over 60 students and numerous helpful parents combined efforts to create 7 quilts for homeless children at First Place school, as well as one quilt for Mr. J himself. Elizabeth Dickinson organized the project, and Christine Naranjo-Clarke, Rebecca Sadinsky, Sandi Kurtz, and Jenny Beadon-Snow were additional master quilters.



*Photos provided by Laurie Bo Roth*

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