

# TOPS NEWS

April 2006 ♦ Volume 9, Issue 7

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

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

A lot is happening at TOPS as always.

We had hundreds of parent visitors at TOPS during the open enrollment period for September, 2006. We look forward to welcoming new students for next school year. It is always a pleasure to hear the many compliments from visitors about the artwork that is displayed at TOPS. Visitors also comment on the fact that our students are engaged and "on task."

We just finished our Speech Tournaments and are pleased that so many students participated. A special thanks to all of our judges from the community and school district for taking time out of their busy schedules to be a part of these tournaments. I had an opportunity to hear the 8th grade speeches on March 10. Our students are so poised and articulate. I applaud them! All of us at TOPS are grateful to Steve for planning and hosting these tournaments.

Our sixth grade campers had a wonderful time at Moran

State Park, March 8-10, in spite of the cool weather. Our fifth graders went to Camp Orkila March 22-24. These camps would not happen without fantastic parent support and participation, not to mention the organization by staff and parents.

Taste of TOPS was fabulous, with our focus on Latin America and Mexico. This was the seventh annual event and sponsored by CSJ. Thanks to all of our students who participated in the talent show. Everyone enjoyed the delicious ethnic foods. Many thanks to all who participated in this event. Carla and Julie had students make many of the decorations for this event.

On March 18, our Chess Club held an all-day Chess Tournament at TOPS. There were about 300 students who

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**Principal:** Clara Scott

**Assistant Principal:**  
Gerrit Kischner

**Site Council Chair:**  
Marlies van Bergeijk

### 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.

## TOPS RAFFLE

*By Kathy Wickward for the Auction Committee*

### INN AT CANNON BEACH RAFFLE

Tickets go on sale after spring break for the TOPS auction raffle! Following TOPS tradition, raffle tickets are \$5 each and are available on Fridays at school in the weeks before the auction, through the raffle coordinators, as well as on



auction night. Look for the raffle table set up just outside the office. The winner will be announced at the auction, but need not be present to claim their prize!

This year's raffle prize is two nights of deluxe accommodations at the Inn at Cannon Beach. The Inn is situated just one short block off the ocean in a beautiful garden setting. The certificate can be used Sundays-Thursdays, April-June 2006 and September 2006-April 2007.

### GOLDEN RAFFLE

Just introduced last year, the Golden Raffle will also be held on the night of the auction. Only 100 tickets will be sold for \$25 each, and the winner has their pick of the live auction items, including class projects and teacher activities!

Raffle co-coordinators are kindergarten parents Cindy Porter ([cederporter@msn.com](mailto:cederporter@msn.com), 324-6309) and Doug Manelski ([dougmanelski@gmail.com](mailto:dougmanelski@gmail.com), 533-0282). Contact them to purchase tickets, or to help out with ticket sales.

## MAY TOPS NEWS DEADLINE

Tuesday, April 18. Submissions to [topsnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:topsnewsletter@gmail.com)



SEATTLE  
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# THANKS TO ALL THE PARENT CAMPERS

It's camp season at TOPS! Many parents have worked many hours to organize and prepare so our kids can attend camp again this year. Marianne, Darin, and John's classes had over 25 parents show up at Camp Moran to help and that doesn't include the numerous parents who contributed to the planning and preparation. We are lucky to have a community so willing to support our kids. Grades 3-8 go to an overnight camp and grades K-2 go to Camp Long. It's not too late to be a camper for 2006, so sign up to go with your child's class now if your child hasn't gone yet!

*Photo provided by August Drake-Ericson*



*Michael Ericson and crew at Camp Arnold, spring 2005*

## ABOUT THE OUTRAGEOUS PUBLISHING SERVICE

Welcome to the seventh newsletter of the 2005-06 school year. Jamie Flaxman and Ann Simonson edit, Cindy Suzumura handles photos, design, and layout, and Toby Harris gets it mailed off to you. Don Zemke provides many of our photos. G & H Printing prints the newsletter.

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 by email to [topsnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:topsnewsletter@gmail.com) or to the newsletter box in the main office. Please send photos to [csuzumura@mindspring.com](mailto:csuzumura@mindspring.com). The deadline for the May issue is April 18. Would you like to edit or otherwise help with our newsletter? Newcomers welcome. Please contact Jamie and Ann at [topsnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:topsnewsletter@gmail.com).

Please take a look at the job postings that Toby Harris has excelled at the past few years that need to be filled.

Thanks to TOPS Volunteers!

Randi Niemer, TOPS Volunteer Coordinator, 252-3541  
Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

### **TOPS NEWSLETTER BULK MAIL MANAGER:**

Be in charge of the 400+ piece bulk mailing of our wonderful newsletter! Do you like details? How about chatting with another TOPS parent while you perform repetitive tasks, or watching TV while doing repetitive tasks? You can also be among the first to read the newsletter each month! All you have to do is seal, label, sort, and count newsletters. Then you pay a visit to the lovely Stanford Center School District mailroom down in Soho and voila - we parents get our newsletters! Personal training provided by Toby Harris, experienced bulk mailer and TOPS parent. Call (634-3951) or email ([toj@earthlink.net](mailto:toj@earthlink.net)) Toby Harris if interested.

### **TOPS HISTORICAL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVE**

Maintain the TOPS Archives and/or write monthly articles for the newsletter on TOPS history. Next year will be my last year as a TOPS parent and I'd like to pass on the TOPS treasure trove. It's helpful if you have file organizing ability or interest, knowledge of preservation or interest, and curiosity. We could do it together next year. It can be as many or as few (within reason) hours as you'd like. Call (634-3951) or email ([toj@earthlink.net](mailto:toj@earthlink.net)) Toby Harris if interested.

*Message from the Principal continued from page 1*

participated. Michael Adams, our coordinator, planned and hosted this tournament with assistance from other volunteers. We are proud of our students who love the game and continue to learn more each year. We display our trophies in the main office.

Testing will begin right after Spring Break. The dates are April 17-May 5. Please remember to avoid scheduling appointments or absences during this time. The Go-Home and individual classroom newsletters will have more information about testing in the next few weeks.

Middle School mid-term reports were mailed the week of March 17. If you did not receive one, please call the school office at 252-3510. We are more than half way through the third quarter.

Our K-5 students are looking forward to the annual Bellevue Skate King field trip on Friday, March 31. A special thanks to Katie Waters for coordinating this event again this year.

Adam Wong, 8th grader, a member of the Young Playwright's Program, funded by Friends of TOPS, wrote a

play that was directed and performed by professional actors at the ACT Theatre on March 2 and 4. Thanks to our parents, staff, and students who came out and supported Adam.

Congratulations to . . .

Michael Haruta and Art Hedman for being selected as Mayor's Scholars. They will be honored at a reception in May at the Municipal Building.

Our Girls' Basketball team for making it to the playoffs.

Our Kindergarteners who celebrated 100 days of school. They were so cute as I tried to trick them in their counting to 100.

To Katie's 3rd grade class for a wonderful production of *A Mid-summer Night's Dream*. They were awesome.

Please join me in welcoming Sarah Marks, who is a long-term substitute in 1st grade. We thank Karen Wong for her 15 years of service at TOPS. We will miss her.

Cheers!

~Clara



# STEWARDSHIP IN ACTION

By Laurie Stusser-McNeil

**APRIL 22  
IS EARTH DAY!**

What can you do for the environment this month? TOPS kids are:

- Planting
- Picking up litter
- Mulching
- Raking
- Pulling out weeds
- Learning about seeds & bulbs
- Recycling

Do something nice for the Earth in April. It feels great!



*Photos provided by Laurie Stusser-McNeil*

## HAVE AN IDEA? WANT MONEY?

**RFP=REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL  
(IT'S TIME TO DO IT AGAIN)**

By Maureen Germani (SC Vice Chair)

Budget season is here! It is time for Friends of TOPS (the Site Council acting as a nonprofit organization) to allocate money raised from the TOPS community through the No-Bake and Auction fundraisers. Friends of TOPS money helps fund curriculum enhancements (e.g., science equipment, art, music, drama) and community-building programs like the directory and this newsletter. In 2005-06, about \$130,000 will be spent to support TOPS. If you have a new idea you would like to have funded or a current program you'd like continued next year, submit your proposal and it will be considered. Please complete a project proposal form (Request For Proposal, or RFP) and submit it to the Finance Committee. This form is available on the TOPS web site (under Site Council, budget) and in the treasurer's box at school.

**Here are some key dates for you to remember:**

**April 7:** Deadline for RFP submission.

**May 10, 5 p.m., Site Council meeting:** Those who have submitted a proposal may be requested to come and answer questions. Applicants will be informed of the date of at least one additional special Site Council meeting scheduled during April or May to discuss RFPs.

**June 14:** Site Council reviews and approves the budget.

Should you have any questions, please email me at [maureen@germani.org](mailto:maureen@germani.org) or call 545-1771.

## CSJ CORNER

Welcome to the CSJ corner where you can look each month to find out what the Coalition for Social Justice has planned for its monthly meeting the first Thursday of each month from 6:30-8:00 p.m. in the TOPS library. Childcare is provided.

CSJ is a group of parents, staff, and administrators who work together in support of the stated mission and vision of TOPS. The purpose of our work is to educate ourselves and the school community about issues of academic equity, cultural diversity, and social justice as they affect our school and the broader community.

### **APRIL 6 MEETING:**

Planning for 2006-07 school year and RFP process: this will be a "mini-retreat" from 6:00 to 8:30 to discuss the direction, activities, and events for next year. Everyone's ideas are welcome. If you cannot attend the meeting, feel free to send your ideas to:

- Bonnie Cech, [bcech@cechsystems.com](mailto:bcech@cechsystems.com)
- Karen Stuhldreher, [kstuhldr@sccd.ctc.edu](mailto:kstuhldr@sccd.ctc.edu)
- Lynne Goodrich, [goodrich\\_yas@msn.com](mailto:goodrich_yas@msn.com)
- Sheri Touissant, [sheritoussaint@hotmail.com](mailto:sheritoussaint@hotmail.com)
- Gerrit Kischner, [gakischner@seattleschools.org](mailto:gakischner@seattleschools.org)

# NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY AND BEYOND

By Steve Haines, Librarian

*"Resolve to edge in a little reading every day, if it is but a single sentence. If you gain fifteen minutes a day, it will make itself felt at the end of the year." ~Horace Mann*

"READY, SET, GO!" was the oft repeated exclamation from our science teacher, Dan Bloedel, as he directed 7th grade students to let their "hot wheel" cars fly down the track during the 1st Annual Hot Wheels Derby. This was a culmination of a physics unit on Newton's laws of motion for the 7th graders. The students were calculating the speed of their cars over a 20+ meter distance. Let's see now what was that mantra that the students were repeating?  $Speed = Distance / Time$ ,  $Speed = Distance / Time$ . So why do this activity in the library? Well, in previous years the track was set up in the Middle School hallway and had to be taken down each day. Enter the library with its long counters. With the help of parent handyman, Bob Morrison, we had the supports made and the track up in no time. The oohs and aahs were flowing as the cars sped down the ramp. There was also plenty of laughter as some of the cars couldn't quite make it to the end of the track. Jackie Robinson's "Purple J" car took first place with a time of 6.91 seconds and a speed of 2.99 meters per second. Was this activity engaging for the younger students? You bet, they can't wait to get to 7th grade.



Photos provided by Steve Haines

## YPP (YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS PROGRAM)

*A couple of weeks after school started I was sitting in class and my teacher asked if any of us wanted to join this playwrights thing. I raised my hand because I don't think I was really*

*paying attention. Later that week I found myself at the first of these YPP (young playwrights program) meetings. There is a group of about twenty of us, both seventh and eighth graders, we met once a week on Mondays and Wednesdays during sixth period.*

*At the beginning of the classes, we were getting these scenarios and prompts to write about. We learned different ways to write dialogue or how to change prose into dialogue. As the weeks went by, however, more and more of our assignments were*

*related to this upcoming play we were going to write.*

*Finally one week, Scott and Holly (our fab teachers) told us that since that we had to get our plays in before Thanksgiving break, and that there weren't going to be anymore meetings because of early dismissal, we had to finish our plays as homework. So basically they gave us a couple of weeks to write a play worth reading in addition to our already insane schedules. Easier said than done. Oh and did I mention that from all the plays from all the schools and from all the students, one of the plays is going to be chosen and performed by real actors? Pretty cool. Most of us have found a little time to write our plays and most of the plays are*

*pretty good.*

*I'm really going to miss going to the LA room during sixth period and working on my play. It was a fun way to spend the end of the school day with my friends and other people who I feel I got to know a little better since YPP began. Also - sixth graders, you should do this next year, it's a good experience if you want to learn how to write a play if you've never done that before or just for kicks.*

*~Finley Baba, 8th Grade*

That one playwright from TOPS was 7th grader, Adam Wong, whose hilarious play, "To Breathe or Not to Breathe," was one of 10 plays selected from a pool of over 200 judged works written by students in middle and high school from participating schools. The 10 young playwrights were then paired with professional directors and casts from ACT Theatre. They went through the process from rehearsal through performance. The Young Playwrights Festival took place in the Bullitt Cabaret at ACT in early March. Adam's work was included with four other plays in Program A. It seemed to garner the most laughs as a large cast of characters including great-grandmother Dalaila, Monarch Dictator President Bob, Archpriestess Bobette, and a demented moose, plot and scheme to get the law against breathing revoked. We are all very proud of Adam and know that we will experience more of his writing talent in the future.

## 2006 SPEECH TOURNAMENT

Ah, the library loft has successfully witnessed another 80 students over five weeks as they stepped up and gave their speeches to the judges in four different speech categories. The final category belonged to the 7th/8th graders as they memorized famous speeches, prose, and poetry for the Oral Interpretation speech. Most of these students have been in one or more of the categories in their careers at TOPS. It starts in Kindergarten through 2nd grade where students memorized short poems. Then it was on to 3rd grade where they were eligible for the Speech Tournament if they chose to. In each classroom they participated in preparing and giving speeches. This year's winners:

### STORYTELLING, FEB. 2

- 1st..... Tova Steele, *Norty Boy*
- 2nd.... Clara LaPatra, *Alphabet Soup*
- 3rd..... Rebecca Ehlers, *Stephanie's Ponytail*
- 4th..... Tessa LaPatra, *There's a Monster Under my Bed*

### EXPOSITORY, FEB. 10

- 1st ..... Jane Markman, "How to make Cinnamon Rolls"
- 2nd.... Xiaochun Lee, "Worms 'n Dirt"
- 3rd..... Edna Pennylegion-Hurley, "Shortbread Cookies"
- 4th..... Ian Scott, "Corn Snake"

### ORAL INTERPRETATION, FEB. 16

- 1st..... Anna Duncan & Lani Chapko, "Poems for Two Voices"

*Continued on page 5*

# AUCTION DONATIONS ARE DUE APRIL 7TH!

By Kathy Wickward for the Auction Committee

Have you been procrastinating? Do you realize that your auction procurement items are due days, maybe even hours, from when you read this in the newsletter? Don't wait any longer! April 7 is the deadline to turn in those fabulous goodies to the TOPS office. The office may be closed by 4 pm, so get them in early. We are looking for items to sell, gift certificates, getaways – all new and all worth \$50 or more. Pound that pavement, call in those favors, it's time to create our auction marketplace.

Do you have money that you meant to contribute to the No-Bake Sale, but forgot to send in? Do you have a line on supplies for the auction night party? Help us underwrite expenses! As they say, a penny saved is a penny earned. Help us to earn more from the auction by keeping our costs down. Send contributions to Ellen Markman: 3715 E. Union Street, Seattle, 98122. Donations are tax deductible.

Do you like to throw theme parties? If so, you already have

an auction item! A TOPICS for Grown-ups Party! Simply decide on a date, theme, and number of people to invite. Design a poster, plan your party, and have fun! Special donation forms are available in the go-homes, in the office, and through Sandy Green at [thetangeloes@hotmail.com](mailto:thetangeloes@hotmail.com) or 328-1998.

Can you volunteer the night of the auction? We still need help! This is a great, one-shot way to participate! Contact Tammy Luthy at 322-3784 or [thejeffandtammymyshow@comcast.net](mailto:thejeffandtammymyshow@comcast.net).

Would you jump at the chance for a three-night getaway at the Inn at Cannon Beach? Then jump! Take the chance and buy a raffle ticket for \$5. Tickets will be on sale after spring break. See the accompanying raffle article for more details.

Will you come to the auction? Don't forget to R.S.V.P. to Ellen Markman by April 21st. You should already have your invitation, or you will be getting it in a day or so! Auction night is May 6, 2006. Bring friends and family to our party! We hope to see you there!

## UW RESEARCH STUDY

TOPS is participating in a University of Washington research study focusing on child safety. This study will provide data for the establishment of helmet safety standards aimed at protecting the child head and neck. We are looking for volunteers between the ages of 6-14 years old. Volunteers will participate in a one time, 20-minute session to measure and evaluate the strength and fatigue of their neck muscles, as well as their head and neck dimensions. Volunteers will receive \$10 compensation. All testing will take place at TOPS during and after school. If you and your child are interested or have any questions about the study please contact Dr. David Nuckley at [dnuckley@u.washington.edu](mailto:dnuckley@u.washington.edu), 206-625-0663 or Amy Vincent at [amyvin@u.washington.edu](mailto:amyvin@u.washington.edu).

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## A NEW ONLINE WASL RESOURCE CENTER

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in partnership with AWSP, the Washington State PTA, and Partnership for Learning has launched a new online WASL resource center for families and students. It is available at [www.wasl2006.org](http://www.wasl2006.org).

The resource center provides students and their families with a convenient source of timely and important information regarding the WASL, retakes, and alternative assessment options. Information is also included about testing in grades 3-8.

Key features of the site include:

- A complete schedule for this year's WASL assessments, score releases, and retakes.
- Straightforward answers in Q&A format about the development and scoring of the WASL.
- Simple tips to help prepare students for the exam.
- A link to a sample WASL test.
- Information on alternative assessments.
- Links to other important information related to WASL.

WASL testing will start at TOPS for most grades (3-8) on Tuesday, April 18, or Wednesday, April 19. Watch the Go Home before Spring Break for the final schedule.

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*From the Library and Beyond continued from page 4*

2nd.... Sam Heft-Luthy, "The Military Industrial Complex"  
3rd..... Benji Oh, "In Behalf of Simplified Spelling"  
4th..... Leah Allen, "It's Hard to be an Elephant", "I Wouldn't Need a Haircut"

EDITORIAL COMMENTARY, MAR. 3

1st..... Eliana Schwartz, "Gay Marriage"  
2nd.... Ariana Bengtsson, "Declawing Cats"  
3rd..... Marie Leadon, "Animal Testing"  
4th..... Cassie Winter, "Women in Professional Sports"

7th/8th EDITORIAL COMMENTARY

1st..... Ezra Comert-Morishige, *The Watcher*  
2nd.... Georgia Jamieson, *A Million Little Pieces*  
3rd..... Sam Woestwin, "Walrus and the Carpenter"

Congratulations to all of the students who participated this year. Thanks to the TOPS community including parents and staff for supporting this worthwhile annual endeavor. A special thanks to Helen Hundley and Mary Chao who do much "behind the scenes" work to make this event a success.

# NEW AFTER-SCHOOL MANDARIN CHINESE PROGRAM LAUNCHED AT TOPS

By Deborah Wang Ferguson

The brand new TOPS Mandarin Chinese program is off and running! After months of planning, we launched the program in January with two after-school classes, one for Kindergarteners and one for Grades 1-3.

The response from TOPS families has been fantastic. Both classes are fully enrolled, with a total of 29 kids. We had so much interest from families that unfortunately several had to be turned away.

There are currently only a handful of Mandarin Chinese programs in the Seattle School District, and perhaps only three or four within public elementary schools here. So we are thrilled to have a program that makes TOPS stand out in the system.

The kids meet every Thursday afternoon and spend their time learning the spoken language, practicing character writing, and sampling bits and pieces of Chinese culture. In the kindergarten class, we are doing arts and crafts, playing numbers games, and singing Chinese songs. The kids in Grades 1-3 are also working on reading and writing with a series of workbooks designed to teach Chinese literacy skills to young learners.



The program is organized by myself and two other TOPS parents, Nancy Bacon and Ann Simonson. Our biggest challenge was finding teachers for the program. Although Mandarin is growing in popularity, it is still not a commonly taught language, and there are few programs designed for young children, and few teachers with experience teaching them.

We were lucky to find two wonderful teachers. Our teacher for Grades 1-3 is Hong Jiang, a native of China. She is the co-founder and principal teacher of the Seattle Chinese



Academy in Bothell, and she also teaches Chinese at Westside School. She has a Master of Philosophy degree in Communications from City University in London and a BA in English Literature from the Shanghai International Studies

University. In addition to teaching, she has also been Deputy Director of International Development at the University of Washington, and a news editor at the BBC in London.

Our Kindergarten Mandarin teacher is Xiao Yu Jackson, who is also the Chinese language interpreter for TOPS. She is a native of Hunan Province in China and she majored in psychology at San Francisco State University. She is currently pursuing a Masters in Social Work at the University of Washington.

Before we put the program together, we launched an informal survey of TOPS parents to gauge their interest in a new Mandarin program. We were very encouraged by the response. It seems clear to us that many TOPS parents value the opportunity for their kids to learn a second language. Recent studies on early language learning (including groundbreaking research at the University of Washington) show that exposure to other languages literally makes kids smarter. It opens up new neural pathways in the brain. Young children learn foreign languages easily, and they can replicate unfamiliar sounds with ease. Researchers have found that the palate tends to harden after puberty, so it is crucially important that children are exposed to other languages early on.

And if your kids are going to learn a second language, doesn't it make incredible sense to learn Chinese? China will undoubtedly be a major political and economic force in the coming decades. The State Department has declared Chinese a strategically important language, and millions of dollars of federal money are now going into beefing up Chinese language programs around the country. Our state is a major trading partner with China, and so many of our companies here—Microsoft, Boeing, Starbucks—speak endlessly of the importance of the China market and the value of having employees who know the language and culture. Giving your kids access to this important language can only be of benefit to them.

We have great ambitions for this program, and we hope to add additional sections next year. If you would like to lend a hand, please contact me at [homeferguson@yahoo.com](mailto:homeferguson@yahoo.com). We especially need parents who can help us move

Mandarin into the upper grades. To all of the people who have helped get this program started, many thanks. Xie xie!



## TOPS MANDARIN PROGRAM FEATURED ON KUOW PUBLIC RADIO

The TOPS Mandarin program was recently mentioned in a story on KUOW, the NPR News and Information station in Seattle. Reporter Ruby de Luna visited the Grades 1-3 Mandarin class as part of a feature on foreign language opportunities for young children. If you missed the story, you can find it on the KUOW website, at [www.KUOW.org](http://www.KUOW.org). Click on "Search Archives" and then type in keyword "Chinese."



Photos provided by Ann Simonson & Deborah Wang Ferguson

# INFLUENCE, MONEY, POWER!

## (AND, OF COURSE, MEETINGS, WORK AND RESPONSIBILITY)

By Maureen Germani (SC Vice Chair)

*Do you long to be involved with the inner workings of TOPS?*

*Do you want to help decide how we spend our \$150,000 budget?*

*Do you have a contribution to make on issues of curriculum and community?*

*Do you LOVE meetings?*

*Then run for a position on Site Council or the Building Leadership Team!* Those are the two governance groups here at TOPS. The nominating committee will be accepting names until April 28.

Do you need to know more before you can commit? Read on:

### **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 budget preparation. Members of the Site Council comprise the board of directors of the

nonprofit 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 the Site Council includes parents, guardians, staff, and administrators; the non-staff membership is elected by grade band, three representatives per band (nine total). For 2006-07, there are four open positions. If you are interested in nominating yourself or a friend, please contact a member of the nominating committee (see below).

Site council meetings are open to everyone, so feel free to come to our April 5 meeting 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.

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).

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.

## **101 DALMATIANS COMING TO TOPS**

The Elementary Play this year will open on May 19th in conjunction with the ArtFest. This year’s production is the musical 101 Dalmatians and will be directed by Michaela Koerner. Michaela is a local actress and director and has worked for many professional venues in the Seattle area. Auditions will be coming up in April!

## **LOST...**

...a large Cuisinart pot missing from the Taste of TOPS. Please call Cindy Suzumura at 632-9116 if you have seen it. We’d love to reunite our lid with its pot.

*Continued on page 9*

# SEVENTH ANNUAL TASTE OF TOPS

By Sherice Toussaint, Grade 5

Again, the Taste of TOPS was so awesome, our theme honored Central America, South America and Mexico. Everybody looks forward to the TOT because its fun way to share our cultures with one another. This year we had a salsa tasting table, a table to make Mexican flowers and papel picado. There was a Copoeira demonstration (Brazilian Martial Arts), Salsa dancing taught by Senora Rabbitt and a Mariachi band. The classes who performed were Joby and Joan's kindergarten class, Ms. Rebecca Rabbit's Spanish class, Sari and the Inspire choir (which I am a part of) and Don Zemke's Double Dutch and Circus Arts teams. The students who performed in the Talent Showcase were Nina Adams, Leo Shannon, Riley and Johnny Calcagno, Pei Ming Tokuda, Conor Courtney, Atticus Pennylegion-Hurley, Will Roth, Ruby Wood, Tessa LaPatra, Margot Maraghe, Tonika



Lowe, Ryan Flood, Marianna White, Hanna Wigley, Rebecca Ehlers, Kylin Sandstrom, Anna Duncan, Lani Chapko, Sylvie Nemeth, Cooper Phillips, and Dick Carlton (TOPS grandparent).



# A MONTHLY CALENDAR OF HOLIDAYS

## WHAT TOPS FAMILIES ARE CELEBRATING

Compiled by Lynne Goodrich, CSJ member

### APRIL 2006 HOLIDAYS

**April 1: April Fools Day** The day originated with changes in the calendar. At one time New Years was celebrated on March 25. In 1582 King Charles IX adopted the Gregorian calendar and the beginning of the new year became January 1. Those who refused to accept the new date or simply forgot received foolish gifts and invitations to nonexistent parties.

**April 5: Third Moon** (Chinese) Also known as Spring Remembrance, Ching Ming ("clear and bright"), is when Chinese families show their respect by visiting the graves of ancestors to clear away weeds and make offerings of wine and fruit.

**April 6: Organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints** The "Church of Jesus Christ" was officially organized in the home of Peter Whitmer Sr., in Fayette, New York, on April 6, 1830.

**April 8: Buddha's Birthday** (Buddhist) Celebrated by Buddhists in Japan, Korea, and the United States. One of the most important of Buddhist holidays. The founder of Buddhism had the given name Siddhartha and lived in India from 563 BCE to 483 BCE. Ceremonies include the offering of flowers, burning of incense, and bathing statues of baby Buddha with ladles of sweet tea.

**April 9: Palm Sunday** (Christian) Occurs on the Sunday before Easter Sunday in the Western Christian liturgical calendar. It signals the upcoming end of Lent and the beginning of Holy Week.

**April 11: Id-Mawlid-Al-Nabi** (Muslim) The Prophet Muhammad's birthday.

**April 12-19: Passover** (Jewish) Festival of Freedom. Pesach is an eight-day observance that begins at sunset of the 15th day of Nisan in the Hebrew calendar. It celebrates the delivery of Jews from Egyptian slavery and commemorates the historical ideal of freedom. A ceremonial feast known as the Seder takes place on the first two nights of Passover with the reading of the Haggadah and the eating of symbolic foods.

**April 13: Gudipadwa** (Hindu) The beginning of the Hindu New Year. Also called Yugadi or Ugadi.

**April 13: Cambodian New Year** A major holiday based on the lunar calendar and celebrated for two to three days. Homes are thoroughly cleaned to remove unclean spirits and new clothes are made to represent a new beginning.

**April 14: Good Friday** (Christian) Observed in commemoration of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, this is the oldest Christian celebration.

**April 16: Easter** (Christian) Commemorates the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It also marks the end of Lent. Determining the Sunday following the full moon on or after the vernal equinox sets the date. Many churches hold sunrise services to symbolize the return of light to the world after Jesus' resurrection.

**April 18: Ramanavani** (Hindu) Birth of Ram, incarnation of Vishnu (the Preserver) in Hinduism.

**April 22: Earth Day** First observed on April 22, 1970. The goal of the day is to attract attention to the need for clean air and water and the need to conserve the earth's natural resources.

**April 23: Orthodox Christian Easter** Orthodox churches use the Julian calendar to calculate Easter Day and adjust the date so it falls after the Jewish Passover. Also known as Pascha.

**April 25: Yom Hashoah** (Jewish) Holocaust Memorial Day commemorates the six million Jews killed by the nazis during WWII. In Israel all public entertainment is closed on the date. At ten in the morning, a siren is sounded, everyone stops what they are doing, and stands in remembrance.

**April 30: Beltane** (Celtic) A Celtic festival named after the god Belenus and meaning "brilliant fire." The festival starts with two bonfires made from nine different woods. Modern celebrations include maypole dances and jumping the cauldron for fertility of reproduction and imagination.

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*Influence, Money, Power! continued from page 8*

#### RESPONSIBILITIES:

The BLT meets once a month (on Tuesdays this year), 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 Site Council or the BLT, please contact a nominating committee member:

Maureen Germani at [maureen@germani.org](mailto:maureen@germani.org), 545-1771  
Judith Lee at [judithell@yahoo.com](mailto:judithell@yahoo.com), 723-1736

# JUMP ROPE FOR HEART 2006

By Don Zemke and Eric Herndon, PE Teachers

This February, TOPS' P.E. students participated in the American Heart Association's Jump Rope For Heart program. During the course of the month, students developed jump rope skills and learned about the importance of a heart healthy lifestyle.

The jump rope component required students to set a jump rope goal, practice the skill periodically, and then demonstrate their new skill on the stage at our Jump Rope For Heart celebration. The celebration was a lot of fun with Eric as the M.C., and the students performing some great jump rope routines!

Thanks to all of the students and parents who choose to participate in the optional American Heart Association fund raiser. This year TOPS students raised \$5,005.71!



Photos provided by Don Zemke

## PE MEMORIES

By Emily Mathay, Grade 8

I've been at TOPS for nine years. PE has been fun from start to finish. I remember doing Jump Rope for Heart just for the prizes, all of which were cheesy. But if you got something big, you thought you were the coolest person in the world. Everyone would brag about what they got. I remember I got a bubble clock, and I was sooo proud. I just couldn't get over the fact that I got a bubble clock that had suction cups on the bottom, so you could stick it upside down.

I remember doing double dutch after school. I was on the double dutch team, and I remember that we were "dogs" and we came out of a doghouse. I also remember that I wasn't too good, and I ended up messing up all the time. But, the important thing is that I had fun.

Then there was the unicycle club. Oh wow. That was extra super fun. I probably bruised every single part of my body falling off that unicycle, but I didn't care. I got pizza for being able to stay on my unicycle and unicycling around the middle circle in the gym. The proudest moment I ever had in unicycle club was when I managed to ride the "giraffe." I actually rode

the giraffe. I would point at it and say, "Yeah, I rode that really big, tall, scary-looking unicycle."

There was skating, which was always fun, and capture the flag, tag, Olympic type games, ping pong tournaments, volleyball weeks, basketball weeks, Frisbee weeks, baseball weeks, and lots of other stuff I can't even mention. But I enjoyed every single minute of it, except running the mile.

My favorite memory of PE . . . hmm. . . I don't think I have a favorite! There were so many of them, and a lot of them I listed already. OOH! Ok, here is one: We had just gotten our rock wall, and there is this one part where you have to hold on with your hands and hop across kind of, and I kept trying and trying, but I could never do it. Then, I tried again, and I made it almost to the other side, then I slipped. I was hanging there, and laughing and I was about to drop, then I decided



that I was not going to drop, and I hopped across. I was so proud of myself!

These were my fondest memories of PE at TOPS.

# SAILING ANYONE? SPRING QUARTER P.E. ANNOUNCEMENT

6th period seventh and eighth graders will again have the opportunity to learn to sail and or to advance your sailing skills at the Center for Wooden Boats on Lake Union on Friday afternoons. Space is limited so contact Don for information and details. [dwzemeke@seattleschools.org](mailto:dwzemeke@seattleschools.org)



# VOLLEYBALL!

By Allie Seroussi, Grade 8

There are many great things about TOPS volleyball. But I think the best and most important element of volleyball at TOPS is that everyone gets to play. We have a JV team and a varsity team, so the beginners still have a chance to play in games. And nobody is cut from the whole team. If you want to play, you can!

Another good thing is our coaches, Angela and Molly Moore. Molly is a TOPS alumnus who now plays volleyball for Ballard High School. They are really encouraging. They always find fun ways to practice, like instead of running laps around the gym; we'll have relay races or play tag. We also play a game called "Dog



House," which is like a mini-scrimmage. Our coaches always enforce hustling, teamwork, and putting away the volleyball equipment after practice. They are committed to coaching the team and helping everyone do their best during games and practice.

Our coaches' hard work paid off. On Saturday, March 11, 2006, the varsity team won our first game of the season!

We played the McClure Mavericks. It was truly a great game. In volleyball, there are 3 games of a whole match. You

have to win two out of three of the matches. In our first game, we won the first two matches and then the game was over. Molly was the coach for that game and she coached us nicely. Everyone got to play for at least most of a game.

If you are a 5th grader, 6th grader, or 7th grader, come and play volleyball next season! Its super fun and you don't have to be a volleyball star to play. I hope we'll see you next year!



Photos provided by Don Zemke



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## 2005-06 TOPS CALENDAR

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

### APRIL

5 (W)..... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.  
6 (Th)..... 2nd-5th grades to SCT  
6 (Th)..... CSJ meeting, 6:30-8 p.m.  
10-14 (M-F) .. Spring break; no school  
18 (T)..... Newsletter deadline  
21 (F)..... End of third quarter

### MAY

4 (Th)..... CSJ meeting, 6:30-8 p.m.  
6 (Sa)..... TOPS Auction at the Asian  
Resource Center  
9 (T)..... 5th grade to Thornton Creek  
9 (T)..... BLT meeting, 4 p.m.

9 (T)..... Newsletter deadline  
10 (W)..... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.  
12 (F)..... Kindergarten to SCT  
17 (W)..... Professional development block  
time; 2-hour early dismissal  
18 (Th)..... 5th grade and Kindergarten to  
Children's Festival  
19 (F)..... ArtFest, 5:30-9 p.m.  
19 (F)..... Elementary play, 7 p.m.  
20 (Sa)..... Elementary play, 7 p.m.  
24 (W)..... 1st-3rd grades and Elem. SE, DHH  
to SCT  
24-26 (W-F) .. 7th grade to Mt. St. Helens  
29 (M)..... Memorial Day; no school

### JUNE

1 (Th)..... CSJ meeting, 6:30-8 p.m.  
6-9 (T-F)..... 8th grade to Deception Pass  
9 (F)..... Middle School dance, 6:30-9 p.m.  
13 (T)..... Spring Concert  
13 (T)..... BLT meeting, 4 p.m.  
16 (F)..... 8th grade Passage, 7-9 p.m., TOPS gym  
20 (T)..... Middle school to Wild Waves  
21 (W)..... Last student day

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