MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

A Big Thanks to All The "Friends of TOPS," including parents, staff, students, family members, and community members who have donated to make the No-Bake Sale such a success. We have raised over $80,000! A special thank you to all the parents who helped on the No-Bake Sale to ensure its success. We appreciate YOU!

The month of February was very busy! February 2 marked the halfway point in the school year and the end of first semester for middle school students.

The Middle School Ski program ended February 2 with a full day of skiing at Snoqualmie. About two-thirds of our middle school students participated and had a great time. A special thanks to Molly LaPatra and the many parents who assisted and chaperoned. Skiing was fun for all the students and parents alike.

TOPS continues to offer many programs supported by Site Council grants, including Math Olympiad for 4th and 5th graders, a math enrichment class for 8th graders, and Study Club.

Congratulations to our Middle School Boys' and Girls' Basketball teams for a great basketball season. We appreciate Don & Eric and all the coordination they do, and for their participation in after-school sports for elementary and middle school students.

Middle school play rehearsals for Twelfth Night are in full swing. The performance will be March 9 at 7 p.m. and March 10 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Taste of TOPS is Thursday, March 15. Our theme this year is Southeast Asia with a focus on India. Middle school teachers are coordinating the presentations at this year’s event. For those new to TOPS, Taste of TOPS is a family event with a potluck and multi-cultural experience with food, costumes, and entertainment. Please invite grandparents and family to join us.

We have two camps coming up in March: 5th Grade Camp at Camp Colman, March 21-23 6th Grade Camp at Camp Moran, March 21-23 The outdoor education camps are always a highlight for our students, parents, and staff.

Our Auction this year is Saturday, May 5, at the Continued on page 3

TOPS Auction Call to Action

By Kathy Wickward

The TOPS annual spring auction is a mere two months away. Our goal is to raise $100,000 this year. We know we can do it, but we need every TOPS FAMILY to get involved to make this event fun and successful! We are asking every family to do two things:

1) Volunteer to help with planning or on the night of the Auction. We are still in need of people to fill volunteer positions. We are particularly in need of people to fill the crucial positions of volunteer coordinator, set-up coordinator, and registrar. Here is what these valuable people do:

The volunteer coordinator keeps track of the jobs being done and the positions needing to be filled. This person actively recruits in addition to fielding calls from willing volunteers. If you love working with people, we recommend starting this year by training beside our own Tammy Luthy. Please contact her at 322-3784 or thejeffandtammyshow@comcast.net.

The registrar receives invitations and keeps track of attendees, assigning them a bid number and such, and Continued on page 9
About the OutrAgeous Publishing Service

Welcome to the sixth newsletter of the 2006-07 school year. Jamie Flaxman and Ann Simonson edit, Sharon Mentyka does the layout, and Jane Summerfield, Peggy Maraghe and Roxanne Robinson get 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 or to the newsletter box in the main office. The deadline for the April issue is March 16. Would you like to edit or otherwise help with our newsletter? Newcomers welcome. Please contact Jamie and Ann at topsnewsletter@gmail.com.

Stewardship in Action

By Linda Furney

This is the third time our first and sixth grade buddies have gotten together for stewardship activities, and each time they really “dig in” and have fun.

Our mainstay project is taking care of our Zone at the west entrance to the school. We’ve been gathering trash from under the bushes, removing weeds from the planting areas, raking leaves, and sweeping the steps and walkways. The kids love to be outside and pitch right in with all the work - and you can really see the difference they make! As we are working, we talk about the things we find and what we are doing: why we remove trash; how come some things are biodegradable and some are not; why we remove weeds that can be damaging to other plants; etc. And when the occasional earthworm is dug up, we talk about how they improve the soil. This is a really great way to foster environmental awareness and action - and the kids see it as a chance to get out and have some fun.

Thank you to the parent volunteers who have helped so far! If you would like to volunteer to help with the first & sixth grade stewardship activities (it’s really fun!), there is a sign-up sheet outside the first grade classrooms – or you can contact Linda Furney at 206-769-8278.

Photos by Laurie Stusser-McNeil
Dear Parents,

OUR CHILDREN ARE AT RISK FROM CARS.

I sit here still in shock at what I witnessed yesterday, February 15, 2007 at 5:20 p.m. at the corner of Franklin Ave. and Roanoke St. I was putting my stuff into the back of my car in the parking lot, when I heard a crashing noise. I watched with horror as a late model dark grey Honda Accord drove up the wheel chair access on the sidewalk and crash over the curb onto Franklin Ave. in front of the school!

The person then drove the Honda the length of the playground in front of the school and drove around the bollards at the south end of the playground going between a tree and a telephone pole to crash over the curb and onto Louisa St. The car then turned up hill, went to Boylston Ave. and turned right to head south. I ran to see if I could get a picture but I was not quick enough.

We were lucky that it was rainy and no children were out on the playground. I cannot imagine the scene with children there.

While I watched this start to happen a late model dark colored BMW 5 series, a 535i I think, waited and then drove up Roanoke the wrong way. When I got back to the intersection of Roanoke and Franklin, I watch this BMW come back down the hill from in front of the driveway to TOPS. I can not believe that this person risked a head-on collision to save a minute or two.

I was not able to see who was driving the car in either case, but that is beside the point. This is not the first time that I have watched people driving dangerously around TOPS. I have personally talked to several people that I witnessed going the wrong way up the street and/or in the parking lot and told them that it was not okay to be going the wrong way. I am now bringing this issue to the wider TOPS community. I do not want a child to get hurt before it stops.

I am worried about our children. The children expect cars to be in certain places and not go the wrong directions. I am appalled at the disregard for the law and for the safety of our children.

OUR CHILDREN ARE AT RISK.

Please follow the traffic pattern indicated by the arrows in the parking lot. Do not go up the wrong way to the top of the lot. Follow the flow of traffic to the right as you enter the parking lot.

Please go around the block and come down the hill on Roanoke St. to the parking lot at TOPS. Do not disregard the law and go the wrong way up the street.

PLEASE DO NOT PUT OUR CHILDREN AT RISK.

Sincerely, Mark Ellis

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Message from the Principal continued from page 1

Asian Resource Center, and the Auction Committee needs YOU. This is always a well-attended event and lots of fun! This is a major fundraiser for TOPS and we welcome participation from all families! If you have friends or family who can donate goods or services, please ask. We have acquisition forms in the office.

We are grateful to have Danny Rock, Danforth Intern from the University of Washington, with us through April. He will be working closely with the middle school students and staff, coordinating school activities with the ASB. He recently accompanied them to a leadership conference in Des Moines, offered by the Association of Washington State Principals.

Congratulations to all of the Speech Tournament participants and winners. They were awesome!!

Our inclement weather days changed our schedule for students, but we did keep our mid-winter break! We are making up the days by changing two professional development days to student days and adding two days at the end of the year. Our last student day is June 22. I hope you had a great mid-winter break!

Cheers! ~Clara

CSJ CORNER
UPCOMING EVENT

MARCH 15: TASTE OF TOPS
5:30-8:30 pm

This year’s theme will honor the cultures of India and South Asia. There will be a potluck in the cafeteria and a number of great events to educate and entertain will be presented throughout the school. TOPS Middle School staff is organizing these special events related to Indian and South Asian culture. The Annual TOPS Talent Showcase will begin at 7:00 pm in the Gym. (Forms to sign up for the Talent Show will be available March 1 and DUE March 12. Be sure to get them in on time!)

You won’t want to miss this very special annual TOPS event!

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.
NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY AND BEYOND

By Steve Haines, Librarian

“To read without reflecting is like eating without digesting.”
— Edmund Burke

I’m sitting downstairs in this large beautiful library catching snippets of the oral interpretation speeches that are being given in the loft by our talented 4th and 5th grade students. The contestants come into the library one at a time and wait with me until it’s their turn to go before the four judges.

This speech category is probably the most nerve wracking of all because it is three to eight minutes of memorized material presented without any prompts or notes. This year the speeches range from humorous poems found at gigglepoeetry.com to a poem from Robert Service entitled “The Shooting of Dan McGrew.” Our students put an immense amount of time and effort into their performances for which we can all be proud of. At press time we still have several weeks of speeches to go. Watch for next month’s full recap of this year’s tournament.

“Every effort must be made in childhood to teach the young to use their own minds. For one thing is sure: If they don’t make up their own minds, someone will do it for them.”

This quote by Eleanor Roosevelt was included in a packet of materials that the elementary teachers shared after returning recently from a one-day, district workshop on creative literacy. The presentation centered on comprehension and the need for students to become aware of their thinking as they read. One way to do this is modeling “Thinking Aloud” by verbalizing the thoughts one has when reading, and connecting those inner conversations with the text. The 1st graders had a homework assignment that required them to think about their reading and respond by either writing or drawing a picture. We were able to share our reading in the library.

One week we all read The Brand New Kid by Katie Couric, and thought out loud about what we were thinking as we read the story. The following week the students shared their assignment with the group and with each other. Parker shared that while reading the book Redwall he thought about being on the land near Walla Walla that his family owns. Cooper, who read Snowflake Bentley for homework, drew a picture of snow falling at his house. These “inner conversations” help readers and listeners monitor their comprehension of the story and keep them absorbed in the writing. When readers pay attention to their thinking, they are more likely to learn, understand, and recollect what they read.

The 2007 children’s book awards were announced at
By Sherice Toussaint, Grade 6

Black History month is a good way to reflect on achievements made by African Americans. On Sunday, February 11, I attended the “Speaking Out!” presentation about Seattle’s Black community over the past 150 years.

Manual Lopes was the first Black man to come to Seattle. In 1870-1871, more than 1000 Blacks lived in Seattle. According to the census, Archie Fox, Robert Dixon, M.F. Monett, J.T. Bush, and Martha Johnson were listed as Mulatto instead of being called Black.

William Grose was the first Black man to buy a large plot of land in the Rainier valley. In 1890, First AME and Mount Zion were the first two Black churches in Seattle. In 1910 Booker T. Washington visited Seattle and there were 2,296 Black people living in Seattle. Jobs were great. Gordon McHenry was hired as the first Black engineer at Boeing in 1943. After WWII, the population of Blacks increased by 400% to 16,000 people.

After the war, things changed in Seattle and Black people were being excluded from some public places like some theaters, some small sandwich stores and some schools.

By the 1950’s most of the Black community lived in the central area. Thelma DeWitty was the first Black school teacher hired by the Seattle Public schools. In 1959, Tim Martin was the first Black to move to Bellevue.

In the 1960’s Seattle had many marches, demonstrations and riots. Stokley Carmichael gave a speech at Garfield High School in 1967 which started the call for Black power. In 1968, the open housing law was passed. Edwin Pratt, Urban League director was killed in 1969 and his murder is still unsolved.

By 2003 there were 50,000 Black people living in Seattle.

Presented by Larry Gossett, King County Councilmember, Carver Gayton, Executive Director of the Northwest African American Museum, Reverend Samuel McKinney, Pastor Emeritus, Mount Zion Baptist Church, Micki Flowers, News Reporter and Anchor (Ret.), KIRO TV, and Mona Lake Jones, author and poet.


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### 2007 TOPS Calendar

**March**
- 6 (T) .......... BLT meeting, 4 p.m.
- 7 (W) .......... Professional development day; 2-hour early dismissal
- 9 (F) .......... Middle school play, 7 p.m.
- 10 (S) .......... Middle school play, 2 and 7 p.m.
- 13 (T) ........ Leslie’s 3rd grade class play, *Twelfth Night*, 10 a.m. and 7 p.m.
- 13 (T) ........ BLT meeting, 4 p.m.
- 14 (W) .......... Leslie’s 3rd grade class play, *Twelfth Night*, 10 a.m.
- 14 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
- 15 (Th) ........ Taste of TOPS, 5:30-8:30 p.m.
- 16 (F) .......... Regular school day – make-up day
- 21-23 (W-F) .... 6th grade to Camp Moran
- 21-23 (W-F) .... 5th grade to Camp Colman
- 30 (F) .......... Middle school dance, 6:30 p.m.

**April**
- 3-4 (T-W) ...... Poetry Festival, 1st and 2nd grades
- 4 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
- 6 (F) .......... K-5 to Skate King
- 9-13 (M-F) .... Spring break; no school
- 16-30 .......... WASL Testing
- 20 (F) .......... End of third quarter

**May**
- 1-4 (T-F) ..... WASL Testing
- 5 (Sa) .......... TOPS Auction at the Asian Resource Center
- 7-11 (M-F) ... Teacher Appreciation Week
- 8 (T) .......... BLT meeting, 4 p.m.
- 9 (W) .......... Nurses’ Day
- 9 (W) .......... Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
- 16-18 (W-F) .. 7th grade camp
- 16 (W) .......... Professional development day; 2-hour early dismissal
- 18-19 (F-S) ... ArtFest
- 18-19 (F-S) ... Elementary play
- 28 (M) .......... Memorial Day; no school
- 30 (W) .......... Spring Concert, 2 and 7 p.m.

**June**
- 5-8 (T-F) ...... 8th grade camp
- 7-8 (Th-F) ...... 3rd and 4th grade camp
- 12 (T) .......... 6th and 7th grade Orientation
- 14 (Th) ......... K, 1st, 2nd grade to Camp Long
- 15 (F) .......... 8th grade Passage
- 18 (M) .......... 5th grade Passage
- 19 (T) .......... Field Day, elementary grades
- 19 (T) .......... Wild Waves, middle school
- 22 (F) .......... Last student day

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**SCHOOL CALENDAR CHANGES**

Due to the need to make up days for when school was closed, there will now be school on the following days:
- Friday, March 16
- Thursday, June 21
- Friday, June 22 (the last day of school)

Please note these changes on your calendar.
TOPS BOYS
BASKETBALL 2006-2007

By Koji Pingry, Grade 8

TOPS basketball 2007 has been a series of ups and downs. Because of “Students Not in Good Standing” and injuries there have been many problems with our team. We started the season with a win, an easy victory against AS1 who had no team and had to forfeit. Then in our next two games we lost because some of our best players were out with the “Student Not in Good Standing” rule.

We were all looking forward to an outstanding year when we got all of our players back but then two key players suffered injuries, so we lost two more games that easily could have been won. Even so we were able to pull through with three victories over Salmon Bay, McClure, and Summit, thus giving us the chance to get in the payoffs for the first time in 7 years. So now we cross our fingers hoping that the other teams haven’t done any good so we can move on as the 4th place team in the North division.

Even if we don’t get in, please look forward to the annual staff game where we 8th graders plan to thoroughly pummel the teachers.

*Note from Eric: “TOPS Students never have and never will beat the talented TOPS staff.”

THIRD GRADERS ON SKATING IN PE

It was fun, and you get to help your friends and talk and skate at the same time. ~ Claire Maclay

I loved the way we had one skater in the front of the train and everyone gets to be in the train. I had so much fun doing it. The way we did it was cool! ~ Henrietta Bilokur

I think that it was fun and it was really fun that I was in the front of the train with my scooter. A lot of people had fun. I know I did. ~ Nalica Hennings

I thought it was very fun but I kept on falling! Even though I fell it was still fun! ~ Jenny Vo

I thought it was fun because we were going so fast! ~ Salma Serrano

Photos by Don Zemke
**Girl’s Basketball Season**

*By Cassie Winter and Nyasha Sarju, Grade 7*

“Box Out! Rebound you guys let’s go. Why do I have to tell you every time to pass to the open person? Geeeeeeez! It’s not that hard to play smart!” That’s Eric’s alter ego coming from the bench.

“No turnovers! Air ball, air ball! We are having a mental breakdown.” That’s the voice of our new assistant coach, Chuck.

Here comes the referee. “Coaches I need you to step back, and please calm down.”

That pretty much describes our season in a nutshell. Well, we must have played somewhat good, because for the second time in two years, TOPS has made it to the playoffs. We have come a long way this season, from technology challenged people who can’t work a clock, and spectacular blow outs, we have landed a fourth place spot in the playoffs. Chuck, our new assistant coach, has brought a new and exciting tempo. When Eric isn’t talking to us out of pure frustration, Chuck will take over and calmly coach us through to the end of the game.

This year, we have broken grade barriers and really mixed up what we have learned as a team, which has brought us to fourth place. Considering we are one of the smallest schools, if not the smallest school in the district, that’s a big accomplishment. We would just like to say THANK YOU to the eighth graders, we couldn’t have made it this far without you. This season was a great experience.

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**Come See the Middle School Play**

*“Twelfth Night” by William Shakespeare*

**Friday, March 9 at 7 p.m.**

**Saturday, March 10 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.**

*Suggested Donation $7 adults, $4 students and seniors*
**TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK**

*IS COMING IN MAY.*

**PLEASE SEND US QUOTES ABOUT YOUR FAVORITE TEACHER.**

**TELL US WHAT MAKES YOUR TEACHER SPECIAL.**

**WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM BOTH STUDENTS AND PARENTS. SEND YOUR COMMENTS TO US ANY TIME BEFORE WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18 AT TOPSNEWSLETTER@GMAIL.COM.**

**THANKS, ANN & JAMIE**

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**TOPS STUDENTS HONORED**

**February 22 to March 20: John Stanford Center**—display of student work from Writers In the Schools: Joelle Worthly, Reid Chapman, Sasha Barker-Aderem, Jonah Ury, and Alex Morrison will have their poetry on display.

**March 1 at 7:30 and March 3 at 12 noon: ACT’s Allen Theatre**—Rebecca Ehlers’ play “Magic On Mainstreet” will be performed as part of the Young Playwrights Festival—tickets are $5 for students and senior citizens or $10 general admission—call 206.292.7676 to order or get them at the door.

**May 24 at 7pm: Illsley Ball Nordstrom Recital Hall at Benaroya**—a student from TOPS will read his or her original work from the WITS program at TOPS this year. Tickets are free.

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**The Ski Bus**

*By Emma Sadinsky, Grade 6*

I was pretty nervous my first time. When we were getting off the bus and getting our ski gear on it was really annoying and I kept thinking, “I’m never going to do this again.” But once I was in my lesson I was having a lot of fun. Now I am thinking “I really want to go again.” My advice, don’t give up because of all the gear.

I’m in the beginning snowboarding class and snow-boarding is definitely hard to learn. But once you get the hang of sliding down a hill and turning it becomes much easier and fun. I’m still learning how to stop without falling over and going downhill without running into someone. But I’ve only had my first lesson and it’s already fun to board downhill knowing soon I am going to scream for help because I can’t stop if I don’t fall first.

On the bus be prepared for noise, lots and lots of noise. If you plan to sleep bring earplugs. If there is anything that you want with you on the bus, like your I-pod, take it out of your school backpack and put it in your ski pack.

Don’t buy food at the lodge – it’s pretty unhealthy and expensive. If you’re stuck with getting dinner at the lodge, wait an hour after lessons end to avoid long lines. So at least bring healthy snacks in your pocket.

Bring water resistant mittens and/or gloves. Especially if you are a first time snowboarder because you are going to fall a lot and your hands are going to get soaked and once your gloves or mittens are wet you need to go in.

If you are a beginning snowboarder like me you won’t be going on the chair lifts on your first trip or even second. Stick to the Magic Carpet, which is a conveyor belt that takes you up a small hill without hiking up it. It’s free; no lift ticket needed.

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**Middle School Ski Bus**

*By Jane Markman, Grade 6*

I am in sixth grade and it is my first year on ski bus. We have gone three times so far.

Our first time it was amazing. First of all, it was the first time for a grade, and also the snow was amazing. It was hectic because we did not know what to do. I like how we can go ski when we are ready, and not when the parents tell us. I skied with all my friends, in lessons, and not.

We have started to get the hang of it. How to get on, where to put our stuff, and when to change. I don’t really like how crowded it is, for getting changed, but it is so fun to be with friends. This is the only school activity that we have not had parents following our every moves.

The snow was okay. It rained once, but being with friends washes it all away. I wish lessons were a little shorter so we could ski with others longer. Ski bus is the best thing in sixth grade so far. All the elementary kids – totally do it in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. It rocks!!!
WE C.A.R.E. AT TOPS:

TIPS FOR PARENT VOLUNTEERS

IF YOU SEE:

❖ Students doing something that you feel is unsafe
❖ Students being hurt either physically or emotionally

YOU SHOULD:

❖ Tell them to stop. You can say, “We don’t do that at TOPS, you need to stop now.” If the children appear to be playing roughly, you can say “I know you’re playing, but at school we need to keep our hands to ourselves.” Often the behavior will end if you tell the children to stop and stand there until they find something else to do.
❖ Report the incident to a staff member. This can be done by talking directly to a staff member or by submitting a written report and putting it in the bully report box which is located in the library. Jennifer, the school counselor, checks this box daily and will follow up with the children involved.

IF YOU ARE ALONE WITH THE CHILDREN, AND THE SITUATION SEEMS SERIOUS, YOU CAN FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

❖ Tell them to stop.
❖ Get the facts. Try to get the perspective of all students involved.
❖ Have students generate solutions and discuss consequences. You can say things like, “What we’ve been doing hasn’t been working, what’s something else we can try?” and “What do you think will happen if we try that?”
❖ Once you and the students agree to a solution, follow up to ensure that they are sticking to their agreement and that everyone is OK.
❖ Report the incident to a staff member.

THANKS FOR SUPPORTING THE C.A.R.E. PROGRAM.
The Kindergarteners and their families celebrated the Lunar New Year in grand style on Saturday, February 10, in the TOPS lunchroom. Parents and a few middle school volunteers helped students with several craft projects, including lanterns and some ferocious dragons. Xiao Yu Jackson, who does double duty as both staff and parent, wrote Happy New Year in Chinese characters on red banners for families to take home. The potluck was delicious, and the evening ended with a magnificent dragon parade of Kindergarteners banging on their noise makers (I mean instruments). Thank you to Joan and Joby and all of the parents who organized this event!
For the first half of this school year, a subcommittee of the site council met regularly to try and finish a piece of business that started two years ago with the question: What makes TOPS an alternative school?

Our initial goal was to reach two audiences: new parents and the district/school board. Although we eventually dropped the district as an audience, because they are developing procedures that will lay out more specific expectations of alternative schools, we took into account the 5-point alternative school policy passed by the school board last year, as well as the 12-point policy developed by the alternative schools committee. In addition, we incorporated comments of parents and staff, which were gathered at a pair of forums held two years ago.

Initially, we had hoped to unite much of what we observe about TOPS under the “City School” concept. We reasoned that much of what we do at TOPS would fit the concept today just as well as it did 30 years ago. It would be easy to remember, easy to build on, easy to say. All we had to do was to carefully define what we meant by City School. However, many outside the committee disagreed. “City School” meant, to the staff, a very specific curriculum idea that no longer exists.

Many who read our compromise statement will note that much has changed, at TOPS and at the district. Much of what was alternative 30 years ago is now the norm within the district. Schools have much more freedom to try different programs. And much of what made TOPS alternative 20 years ago exists now only as a “legacy.” Yet that legacy continues to influence who we are as a community, and continues to set us apart from traditional schools.

This statement has been included in the materials given to parents at the kindergarten fair and on tours. A more abbreviated form appears as a panel in the new TOPS brochure.

TOPS NO-BAKE RAISES $81,000

BY FEBRUARY 16

At press time, we were still counting donations and hope to reach our goal of $82,000.

Cheers and thanks to our generous donors. Please remember to contact your employer to determine if your donation qualifies for corporate matching funds. Check your go-home or the TOPS website to see our final no-bake totals.
TOPS Historical Society

By Toby Harris

One of the more memorable programs in which TOPS led an active role was the Underground Railroad project. Rhonda Hollingsworth, a TOPS parent at the time, was awarded a grant to develop curriculum for Black History Month, commemorating the legacy of Harriet Tubman and others. Six weeks of study prepared the students at TOPS, Garfield High School, and possibly other schools in a simulated journey through African American history through the Underground Railroad.

Each student (perhaps only in the upper grades) received a “journey book” to kick off the experience. The booklet, entitled “My Journey to Freedom,” features a before picture of the student on the front and an after picture on the last page. The opening paragraph, Imagine, states:

By opening this book, you have begun a journey. Say goodbye to your mom and dad, sisters and brothers, friends, pets, relatives and teachers. When you reach the end of this journey, you will not be the same person....

And a later paragraph:

Go Free or Die

...The goal of your journey will be to find Harriet Tubman. Her identity will be a secret until the end of your journey. You have now become a passenger, searching for freedom.... You must learn to use the same signals and signs used for the Underground Railroad or you will not be able to open the doors to freedom. This journey book and a secret network of people called abolitionists will help you to prepare for the final miles of your trip.

Students studied slavery, vocabulary, and prominent African Americans from those years in history. They learned about the culture that captive Africans brought with them to America, songs such as Go Down, Moses, and games played by the slaves. They read the Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman and learned the power of individuals and our words. They learned how thousands of persistent and brave Africans Americans were able to survive and make it to freedom by following the signs and signals of the Underground Railroad.

Mary Chao, current 5th grade teacher, whose 4th graders were very involved in the event, remembers learning to call the runaway slaves “fugitives” once they left their owners. The journey book tells us the fugitives then became passengers and their guides were conductors. Chao proudly proclaimed that TOPS principal at the time, Karen Kodama, was even interviewed on NPR about the project.

In Joby Moore’s Kindergarten class (yep, she was there then, too), they studied West Africa by reading stories and doing plays. They learned a bit about Harriet Tubman and were introduced to the concept of slavery and being brave. With gusto, they sang Follow the Drinking Gourd, a coded song that gives the route for an escape from Alabama and Mississippi to the North.

Journeys usually began on a Saturday at the end of the day. This was because Sunday was a day of rest and passengers would not be missed until Monday. Thus, the
final miles of the journey, the culminating end of the unit, was held on a Saturday, the 22nd of February, 1992.

Mary Chao described hallways and classrooms throughout the school converted into stations (homes and other places) where passengers stopped on their escape routes. “The art teacher was very involved,” recalls Steve Haines, “and quilts and dioramas lined the hallways.” Haines, TOPS’ current librarian, was a 3rd grade teacher at the time.

For that final day, many children bundled up in layers of clothes to play the role of runaway slaves. Students were warned not to consume too many liquids on the day of the final trip because “restroom breaks will be scarce. Expect to be cold, wet, hungry, crowded and tired. It is part of your journey and you must endure.”

Some of the younger students, including kindergartners, ran to older classrooms and were “hidden.” Some students were abolitionists, some conductors, and others took on the role of fugitive hunters and went to classrooms looking for the hidden passengers. Students also boarded buses and visited Garfield High School where they met Harriet Tubman, played by Constance Rice (former Mayor Rice’s wife).

It is believed, though unclear and unconfirmed from the records and memories, that Underground Railroad events at TOPS may have taken place the year before and/or the year following the 1992 citywide project. However, it was the 1992 Underground Railroad that was touted as a great success due to teacher enthusiasm, active parent involvement and support, and the bold efforts of Rhonda Hollingsworth.

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**ANNOUNCEMENT**

Two terrific TOPS parent volunteers are now joining Toby as caretakers of the TOPS Historical Society Archive. Charlene Forslund and Cindy Porter are getting to know what’s in those boxes and files. They will continue exploring and refining the Archive next year. Watch for news on how we all can preserve TOPS history.

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Stations in St. Louis (above, left) and Worthington, Ohio (above, right). Harriet with former slaves (left).
MIDDLE SCHOOL DANCE, FEBRUARY 9

Photos by Don Zemke
March is Women’s History Month
National Women’s History Month was initiated by the National Women’s History Project, a nonprofit educational organization founded in 1980 to “promote gender equity through education about women’s diverse lives and accomplishments.”

March Is Deaf History Month
Commemorates the March 13, 1988 victory of the Deaf President Now movement where students at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC staged a near riot, demanding a deaf president for the university. It celebrates deaf history and key events in deaf heritage.

March 2007 Holidays
March 1: Dydd Dewi Sant (Wales) The feast day for the patron saint of Wales, St. David. Celebrated as a patriotic and cultural festival.

March 2: World Day of Prayer Worldwide movement of Christian women of many traditions who come together to observe a common day of prayer each year, and who, in many countries, have a continuing relationship in prayer and service.

March 3: Hina Matsuri (Japan) On this day, also known as Doll Festival, parents celebrate their daughter’s happiness, growth, and good health. It originated about 1,000 years ago in the Heian Period (794-1192). Dolls dressed in the fashion of the people of the ancient court are displayed at home along with peach blossoms.

March 3: Holi (Hindu) Marks the arrival of spring and the season of hope and joy. Also known as the Festival of Colors and celebrated with festivity and exuberance.

March 3: Lantern Festival (Taiwan) Also known as Shang Yuan Festival, taking place on the fifteenth day of the new moon. Decorative lanterns are carried by children or adorn temples. Lantern contests are held in many cities. Also celebrated by eating tang yuán, a glutinous rice dumpling symbolizing family unity.

March 4: Purim (Jewish) Like other Jewish holidays, begins at sunset and concludes at sunset the following night. A joyous celebration commemorating the intervention of Esther, a 6th century queen, who saved the Jews of ancient Persia from Haman’s plot. The book of Esther/The Megillah is read aloud in synagogue – children dress as characters in the story and hiss and use noisemakers whenever Haman’s name is mentioned.

March 17: St. Patrick’s Day Celebrated in honor of Ireland’s patron saint who came to Ireland as a Roman slave at the age of 16 during the 5th century. He brought Christianity to many in Ireland. Celebrations in the U.S. are secular and date back to 1737 when Boston held its first St. Patrick’s Day parade.

March 20: Great Lent (Orthodox Christian) Many Christian Churches observe this period of fasting and penitence (40 days, not including Sundays), beginning on Ash Wednesday (February 21) and ending on the Saturday before Easter. Great Lent is an Orthodox Christian holiday that always begins on a Monday between February 15 and March 21. It is a period of self-denial observed with abstinence from meat, dairy products, wine, and olive oil.

March 20: Spring Equinox When day and night are the same length.

March 21: Naw Ruz (Iran) Iranian New Year and very important celebration. Unlike many other festivals in Persia, Naw Ruz is not exclusive to one religious group. Always on the first day of spring in Iran. Recognizes the rebirth of nature with rituals practiced for more than 3,000 years.

News from the Library continued from page 4

this year’s American Library Association mid-winter conference held in Seattle. Among the winners are two local authors. Laura Kvasnosky won the Seuss Beginning Reader Award for her picture book, Zelda and Ivy: the Runaways, and Kirby Larson’s Hattie Big Sky is a Newbery Honor book. Larson’s great-grandmother living in Montana, and the anti-German sentiment the homesteaders faced in 1918, inspired the story. An interesting article can be found on Larson at the Seattle Times website. The library will have both books soon.

NOT TO BE MISSED

Feb. 22-Mar. 20 at the John Stanford Center, a display of student work from Writers in the Schools. TOPS Middle School students are showcased. Yes, we love to write at TOPS.

Mar. 1 at 7:30 or Mar. 3 at noon at ACT’s Allen Theatre, 6th grader Rebecca Ehlers’ play “Magic On Mainstreet” will be performed as part of the Young Playwrights Festival. Adults $10, students $5. This is the best money you will spend this year. “Be there or be square.”
SAVE THE DATE!

EIGHTH ANNUAL TASTE OF TOPS AND TALENT SHOWCASE

OUR THEME WILL HONOR THE CULTURES OF INDIA AND SOUTH ASIA

THURSDAY, MARCH 15, 2007

5:30-8:30 PM

Potluck in the TOPS cafeteria and Talent Showcase in the gym
Events to entertain and educate about Indian and South Asian culture throughout the evening

TALENT SHOWCASE--CALLING ON ALL STUDENTS!
FORMS FOR THE TALENT SHOWCASE WILL BE AVAILABLE MARCH 1.
THEY WILL BE DUE MONDAY, MARCH 12. BE SURE TO GET THEM IN ON TIME!

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