Message from the Principal

Welcome back and Happy New Years! I hope all of you had a wonderful winter break. In the true spirit of giving I want to thank our families and students for giving from their hearts.

Through our Winter Wishes program, your generosity provided gifts and food to 11 families. Students brought in 1,400 food items for our annual TOPS food drive! The remaining 250 food items were donated to Northwest Harvest who said that was fantastic!

This year we had 100% participation from all of our classes in our Penny Harvest program. We donated 27 bags of coins.

Our middle school students are continuing to stay in the holiday spirit by serving meals to the homeless at the Union Gospel Mission.

We still have many activities planned for the remainder of the school year.

Elementary and middle school visitations began on January 15 and will end on February 7, 2008. We continue to have a high interest in TOPS. We have approximately sixty or more visitors at each tour. The middle school visitation is scheduled for Thursday, February 7. This always gives us an opportunity to welcome prospective parents into our school.

Our students are busy preparing for our speech tournament which will be held in February. Steve has done a fantastic job with this tournament for many years. We are always looking for judges; if you know someone who you would like to recommend such as community members, friends, or grandparents, please call the TOPS office and give names to Helen or talk to Steve.

Our middle school ski program began on Friday, January 11. Approximately two-thirds of our middle school students are participating in this program. They leave school at 2:30 p.m. headed for Snoqualmie Summit. They are very lucky to have wonderful charter buses to transport them from the school to Snoqualmie and back. Special thanks to...

Continued on page 14

TOPS Auction 2008

By Kathy Wickward

Save the date! The TOPS annual spring auction is Saturday, May 3 at the Asian Resource Center.

The auction is the second major fundraiser of the year, raising money for all the programs also funded by the No-Bake. For those of you who have never been, it’s as painless as inviting your friends and family for a night of dinner and shopping. It’s easily one of the most enjoyable TOPS social events of the year.

Yet, like any party with 300+ guests, 500 items to sell, a catered meal, and a raffle, there is some time and effort involved to put it all together. For a single person it is overwhelming, but with a multitude of volunteers each taking their own piece of the event, the planning can be as much fun as the party itself! It’s a great way for new families to connect with the school and with parents from other grades.

Volunteers needed this year include:

- Silent Auction Coordinator trainee– work as part of a team to collect donations and enter them into the auction software program (MaestroSoft). Divide items into sections for display and set them out on...
CSJ Corner
Coalition for Social Justice

This is where you will want to look each month to find out what the Coalition for Social Justice has planned for the coming months!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THE FOLLOWING EVENTS!

Friday February 8, 6:00-9:00 p.m.
TOPS Movie Night presents Class Dismissed

This film will continue discussion about social class in the U.S. by looking at how TV frames working class life. Based on a book by Pepi Leistyna, Class Dismissed shows the many images of the working class from television’s beginnings to today’s sitcoms, reality shows, police dramas, and daytime talk shows. It explores the ways in which these images of class intersect with gender, race, and sexuality to give us a more complex understanding of television’s often one-dimensional representations.


Doors open at 6:00 p.m. and the films will show at 6:30 p.m. There will be time for discussion following the films. The evening will end by 9:00 p.m. Come when you can.

A light dinner of sandwiches, snacks, and drinks will be provided. Childcare is available and pizza, snacks, age appropriate movies, and games will be provided for children at Kids Co. Call 252-3510 to make a reservation.

Taste of TOPS
March 13: from 5:30-8:30 p.m.

This year’s theme will honor the culture of East Africa. There will be a potluck in the cafeteria and a number of events to educate and entertain will be presented throughout the school. The Annual TOPS Talent Showcase will begin at 7:00 p.m. in the Gym. Look in the Go Home for when forms to sign up for the talent show will be available and due.

You won’t want to miss this very special annual TOPS event!
Recently I had a conversation with an old friend that made me realize (again!) what an unusual school TOPS is. My friend has a son who goes to elementary school in Bellevue. We were talking about volunteering at school, and she told me how shocked she was to get a letter from the PTA asking her to consider running for their board of directors. She laughed and said “but I WORK!” I was sort of puzzled—but she told me that all of the really visible volunteers at her son’s school are stay at home moms. She couldn’t imagine it any other way.

I started to run down the list of our Site Council members: pediatrician/professor, Boeing guys, UW professor, business owner, nonprofit guy, . . . And then our fundraisers: accountants, business owner, counselor, health administrator, . . . And then our recurring TOPICS teachers: EPA women (we have at least three), attorneys, business owners, nurses, . . . And then the committee chairs: engineer, consultant, musician, . . . Now realize that these are just the volunteers I know well enough to know what they do.

We also have a fair share of volunteers who define themselves as stay at home parents and we couldn’t get along without them, but I think that TOPS is unusual in having such a variety of women and men involved on a day-to-day basis.

Why is the volunteer population at TOPS different from my friend’s school? I believe it is because we all come in knowing that the community will value our interests and expertise. We all know that part of what makes this school special is the active involvement of all of our families. We are welcomed by the teachers and staff; they create opportunities for us to work with the kids and each other in meaningful ways. If you have a good idea and the energy and support to follow through on it then TOPS has a system in place to help you make it happen.

How can we do even better? We need to work harder to include people with inflexible schedules or who commute to work. We need to make it easier for families whose first language isn’t English or who don’t think of school as a friendly place. We need to communicate clearly to new families that TOPS is counting on them. Do you have other suggestions? Please contact me at mgermani@seattleschools.org or 545-1771 and share them!

Volunteers Work at TOPS

By Maureen Germani, Volunteer Coordinator

By Maureen Germani, Volunteer Coordinator

Auction continued from page 1

the day of the auction. Create auction paperwork, such as bid slips, for items.

+ Live Auction Coordinator trainee – as part of a team, identify items appropriate for the Live auction, develop attractive display and paperwork for items, work with class project coordinator and with teachers for teacher activities.

+ Sound and Music – obtain and operate sound system the night of the auction.

Within the next couple of weeks, every TOPS family will receive their auction kick-off packet in the mail. It will be packed with information, including job descriptions, procurement ideas, and donation forms. All TOPS families are needed to procure or donate three items or services to sell at the auction. Each item should be worth $50 or more. Those who enjoyed hosting TOPICS for Grown-ups parties will be happy to know that those count towards your procurement total.

Yet there’s no need to wait. Procurement and donation forms are available now in the TOPS office.

Procuring items for the auction is easier than you’d think. All it takes is a few quick conversations with people who can donate a product or service to the auction. You’d be surprised how often people are more than happy to contribute – it’s great advertising for them! See the step-by-step guide in the auction packet for ideas.

Other ideas? We love to get restaurant gift certificates. These are so popular that one of your three items should be a restaurant meal, so next time you go out to dinner, ask the owner if they’d donate another dinner. Collaborate with friends to offer a service or a theme basket (anything with chocolate or wine goes over well). Can you donate a week at your vacation cabin? An afternoon sail on your boat? Music, knitting, or golf lessons? Mariners tickets? The possibilities are endless.

Room Reps! It’s time for your class to think about their auction art project and class basket. The class projects are often the highlight of the live auction…and they bring in a lot of money! The kids are really proud of their contribution to the school, the projects themselves are quite wonderful, and the artwork and the evening’s energy combine to create a bidding frenzy.

The class baskets have also been very successful and fun to put together. Usually one family from the classroom oversees the project, informing families of the theme and the dollar limit for contributions. Once all families have contributed, the coordinator puts them all together in an interesting basket or container. If your teacher is donating an event or activity, the basket can add to it.

Last year, it cost about $14,000 to put on the event. If we were able to have most of these expenses underwritten it would make a big difference – the money raised could go directly to our kids! If you or someone you know owns a business that would be willing to donate money or services to the auction, contact the auction committee now. The auction chair this year is Janet Morrison (634-2203, janetm@blarg.net). If you can volunteer, underwrite expenses, or have procurement questions or ideas, please call or email. It’s never too early!
November-December Site Council Report

By Scott Winter

The Site Council is the parent, faculty, and student governing body for TOPS. It meets each month during the school year. All are welcome to attend.

Meeting dates for the rest of the year are February 13, March 19, April 16, and May 21. Agendas and minutes are available on the TOPS web site.

Below are some of the highlights from the November and December Site Council Meetings.

ASB Report
At the November meeting, ASB co-chair Dallas Richardson briefly outlined the three areas of focus for ASB: community service, participation in school, and spirit. Dallas also gave a review of the “Monster Mash” dance, which was very well attended. The Site Council congratulated ASB on the excellent work. At the December meeting Dallas reported that the next dance would take place on February 29.

New Middle School Representative
Betsy Wells was introduced as a new middle school Site Council representative. Betsy has a daughter in the 7th grade.

Current Year Priorities
The Council completed a process of identifying priority projects/ focus areas for the current year. Four areas were selected:

- More effective integration of families and students of the Special Education and Deaf and Hard of Hearing Programs into the TOPS community.
- More effective communication with families, especially those with language barriers.
- Improving parent participation in TOPICS.

Sub-committees are being formed to work on the above priorities.

Mentoring of new families was also identified as a focus area. This has already been undertaken by the Coalition for Social Justice (CSJ). The Site Council will work to support and expand the efforts of the CSJ.

Update on State of the School Meetings
As previously reported, low attendance at the yearly State of the School Meeting, traditionally hosted by the Site Council, has raised the question of need for the meeting. Gerritt Kischner has begun working with several interested parents to clarify the needs traditionally served by the State of the School Meeting and to identify ways that these needs can best be met. There will not be a State of the School meeting this year.

Volunteer Coordinator Report
At the November meeting, Maureen Germani submitted a volunteer coordinator report describing the many ways volunteers

Continued on next page

2007-2008 TOPS Calendar
Send your events and dates to our webmaster, Jack Lee, at webmaster@topsk8.org. Please check Go-Homes and the web site for updates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 (F) Speech Tournament, Expository</td>
<td>5 (W) Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 (W) Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal</td>
<td>7 (F) TOPICS, 12:50 - 3:20</td>
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<td>7 (Th) Middle school tour, 9:30 a.m.</td>
<td>8 (F) Speech Tournament, Oral Interpretation</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 (T) Elementary school tour, 9:30 a.m.</td>
<td>13 (W) TOPICS, 12:50 - 3:20</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 (W) Site Council Meeting, 5 - 7 p.m., Library</td>
<td>15 (F) Speech Tournament, Editorial Comm.</td>
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<td>18 (M) Presidents Day; no school</td>
<td>19-22 (T-F) Mid-winter break; no school</td>
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<td>1-4 (T-F) Spring Break; no school</td>
<td>1-2 WASL Testing</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 (W) TOPICS, 12:50 - 3:20</td>
<td>2 (F) Middle school dance, 6:30-9:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 (F) End of third quarter</td>
<td>1-4 Middle school dance, 6:30-9:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14-30 WASL testing</td>
<td>13 (Th) Taste of TOPS</td>
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<td>16 (W) Site Council Meeting, 5 - 7 p.m., Library</td>
<td>19 (W) Site Council Meeting, 5 - 7 p.m., Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>16-17 (W-Th) 1st and 2nd grade Poetry Festival</td>
<td>21 (F) Professional development day; no school</td>
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<td>26 (W) Young Authors Celebration</td>
<td>26 (W) Site Council Meeting, 5 - 7 p.m., Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 (M) Spring Break; no school</td>
<td>28 (W) Spring Concert, 2 and 7 p.m.</td>
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<th>June</th>
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<tr>
<td>3-6 (T-F) 8th grade Camp</td>
<td>3 (Su) TOPS Auction</td>
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<td>4 (W) TOPICS, 12:50 - 3:20</td>
<td>14-16 (W-F) 7th grade Camp</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-6 (Th-F) 3rd and 4th grades to Camp Arnold</td>
<td>21 (W) Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal</td>
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<td>7 (F) Site Council Meeting, 5 - 7 p.m., Library</td>
<td>21 (W) Site Council Meeting, 5 - 7 p.m., Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 (Th) K and 2nd grade to Camp Long</td>
<td>26 (M) Memorial Day; no school</td>
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<td>13 (F) 8th grade Passage</td>
<td>28 (W) Spring Concert, 2 and 7 p.m.</td>
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<td>16 (M) Field Day – elementary grades</td>
<td>30 (W) TOPICS, 12:50 - 3:20</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 (M) Wild Waves – middle school</td>
<td>30 (W) TOPICS, 12:50 - 3:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 (T) Last student day</td>
<td>30 (W) TOPICS, 12:50 - 3:20</td>
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are contributing to TOPS. Highlights include the successful work party held on November 3. Coordinated by Molly LaPatra with help from Jim McDonald, Ellen Levi, and Sandi Shettler, over 80 volunteers spread mulch, pulled weeds, and generally cleaned up the grounds around TOPS. Another work party will be held in the spring.

The Auction Committee is hard at work. Janet Morrison is the Committee chair and Wilma Angell will be the volunteer coordinator.

The TOPS Family Directory went out at the end of October. Maureen expressed a HUGE thanks to Ellen Markman for the amazing job she has done on the Directory over the past several years. Scott Bishop will take over and Ellen will assist next year.

**eScrip Program**

Julie Wroble presented a proposal for TOPS to participate in the eScrip Program. eScrip is a fundraising program where members of the TOPS community would register grocery loyalty, debit, and credit cards. When the cards are used at participating merchants, the merchants would make a contribution to TOPS based on the value of the purchase made. The Site Council coordinates fundraising efforts for TOPS, and therefore, needs to approve any new fundraising programs.

Concerns were raised about the program involving only large retailers, and therefore, favoring them over smaller retailers. The program does not appear to have any conflict with existing TOPS fundraisers. Site Council members present approved of the idea of participating in eScrip. However, the consensus was to have Julie review more of the details, including more information on the list of merchants, at the next Site Council meeting before proceeding with implementation.

**Transportation Problems**

At the November meeting, there was a discussion of the problem of late buses. Several buses were perpetually late resulting in a significant loss of instructional time. Clara Scott and Gerritt Kischner discussed their efforts with the Transportation Office trying to resolve the issues. The decision was made for the Site Council to send a letter of complaint to the School Board.

**Principal’s Report**

Clara Scott reported on the many current and upcoming activities at TOPS including the outstanding job the middle school students are doing with their volunteer work at Union Gospel Mission. Ms. Scott also reviewed the wonderful accomplishments of TOPS students at the Young Playwrights Festival at the ACT. Over 200 plays were reviewed with most coming from high school students. Nine plays were selected for production at ACT including the play written by TOPS eighth grade student Hannah Atlas. The Young Playwrights program at TOPS is lead by Todd Moore and is supported by the dollars brought in through fundraising.

**CSJ Report**

Karen Stuhldreher reported on plans for the January 9 TOPICS organized by the Coalition for Social Justice (CSJ). There was lots of good parental involvement in the planning process for TOPICS around the social justice theme. It should be a fun and meaningful day.

**Building Leadership Team (BLT) Report**

Gerritt Kischner reported that the BLT approved Teacher Excellence Fund support for 10 teachers and staff to attend the Guiding Lights Weekend on January 25-27. The Guiding Lights Weekend illuminates the art of mentoring and explores the relationships important in teaching.

The BLT reviewed survey results from this year’s Open House. This was the first year where all grades were hosted on a single night. Based upon the review, the BLT will recommend a return to the curriculum night format where the different grade bands meet on separate nights.

**Math Games – Thank You Teaching Excellence Fund**

*By Tracy Seefeld, 2nd Grade Teacher*

The 46th Northwest Math Conference took place in Bellevue this year from the 11th-13th of October. Each fall during the month of October I look forward to attending The Northwest Math Conference. It is held in Canada, Oregon, and Washington.

Prior to the conference I looked through the program a few times to make decisions on what workshops or lectures to attend. Two of the workshops I attended helped reinforce the importance of math games to practice basic facts and to play them more than once. The other idea that was reinforced helped me make more sense of a couple math activities in the “Everyday Math” curriculum.

For over 15 years Joanne Currah and Jane Felling have created math games to help their own children be able to recall their basic facts, and then they created a business called “Box Cars and One-Eyed Jacks” to help other teachers and parents help children be able to recall their basic facts. In the Everyday Math program, I’m glad to see games that are new and some that I have learned from the books put out by Joanne and Jane.

During the “Back-Packinng with Box Cars” class, we played a new game that didn’t have a name at this time. It is designed for grades K-1, but can be adapted for other grades. You can play with 2 or more players. You need 2 six sided dice (or roll one twice), a 10 x 10 grid with squares big enough to write digits in them (you can play on the same game board or each player can have their own game board), and something to cover the numbers with (needs to fit the size of the squares).

First, write the digits 1-6 on the game board (in a random order). The goal is to cover 10 squares in a row, any direction. The first player rolls the dice; if they roll a 4 and a 6, they can cover 4 sixes or cover 6 fours. Continue to take turns, until you can’t cover what you rolled, and then you miss a turn. What math facts are they practicing for this game? Think about it!

I am grateful for the Teaching Excellence Fund that gave me the opportunity to attend this conference by paying for the conference fee and for TOPS staff having the flexibility to choose what workshops to attend on the annual October Washington State In-service Day.
News From The Library and Beyond

By Steve Haines, Librarian

“The book to read is not the one which thinks for you, but the one which makes you think.”
— James McCosh

A recent newspaper article caught my eye several weeks ago. A new study entitled “Reading Across the Nation” found that the “bedtime-story tradition is fading.” Thinking back to when my children were young it was one of the most enjoyable rituals of the day. The questions, the amazement, the “read it again Dad,” are all fond memories. According to the study out of Boston University and Reach Out and Read, the reduced rates of shared reading time can hurt family togetherness, diminish creative development in young children, and lower academic achievement. A survey of parents found that just under half of the parents said that they or other family members read every day to their children, from newborns to 5-year-olds. After that the rates plummet. For language development it is important to keep reading to children as they age. Besides, it can be a great way to relax from a busy day of using cell phones and computers/TV.

Newton’s Third Annual Hot-Wheels Derby

The 16 Hot-Wheel cars sat near the starting line all ready to race down the track one at a time in this annual, much anticipated 7th grade event. Our science teacher, Dan Bloedel, uses an online website (www.physicsclassroom.com) to teach the 7th grade class Newton’s three laws of motion. The derby is the culmination of all this challenging learning. So as the 16 cars, with names like Greased Lightning, Sup Dog, and Surf Beat await their three heats down the track, their owners are busily advocating for their cars and trying to remember the formula Speed=Distance/Time. With Mr. Bloedel’s booming voice admonishing, “ready, set, go,” Mr. Ellis (math teacher) lets each car in turn start down the track. As the momentum carried the cars to the finish line, the cheers went up urging the cars on. Some cars had a hard time making the finish line, which resulted in peels of laughter as well as groans from the assembled students. Their job was to calculate the speed of each car. When all was said and done Kolen’s Yellow Bug, Anna’s Audacious, and Alec’s Flying Mongoose sped down the 2,014cm the fastest.

Speech Tournament

Students in grades 3 thru 8 are busily memorizing, creating, writing, and studying how to give a speech as our annual voluntary Speech Tournament approaches. It starts off January 25 with Storytelling and ends up on March 14 with the 7th and 8th grade speeches. In between there is Expository Speech, Oral Interpretation, and Editorial Commentary. We are still looking for adult judges for this year’s tournament. Parents of TOPS students aren’t eligible but if you have co-workers or friends that might like to spend an interesting Friday morning at TOPS, please let Steve, Mary, or Helen know.

On a recent morning in Mary’s 5th grade classroom you could hear Cole’s name being shouted out as both Mary and I were trying to get the same book from him. We had just finished book two in John Flanagan’s Ranger’s Apprentice series and with book three, The Icebound Land in Cole’s hands, we could hardly wait to find out what happens to the main characters in this exciting series. Well I may have gotten to him first, but there was no way I was going to escape from the room. So I will just have to wait to be transported back in time. Ah, the thrill of a good read.
First through fourth graders spent a recent Wednesday afternoon participating in a rich and creative array of social justice themed TOPICS. The January 9 TOPICS were organized by first grade teacher Sarah Marks and CSJ members. Some 6th graders were observers in several different groups so that they could report back for this newsletter.

“I attended part of a TOPIC called Political Graffiti and Propaganda. We were shown pictures that are automatically recognized in advertising as being associated with particular products: Chester Cheeto, Tony the Tiger, Apple for Mac computers. Companies invent logos for advertising and people remember them. People are very influenced by this and will purchase certain things, watch a certain TV show and vote a certain way.

People in the United States are very focused on shopping and buying stuff. People buy stuff they don't need. They get into debt. And buying stuff doesn't make people happier. Stuff is made in this country so it doesn't last long and so people will have to buy more. We use up 30% of the world's resources but we only take up 5% of the world's population.”

- Rosie Yasukochi, 6th grade observer

“The topic (Knit For a Cause) taught social justice by giving to others who could not afford certain things that they need. The people in the topic spent their time making things for others. The topic helped people learn that social justice means universal fairness. I think the topic helped kids realize how fortunate they are, and by donating a few hours of their time they made other people's lives easier.”

- McKenna Niemer, 6th grade observer

“Today I went to a TOPIC about the economy. The leaders talked about a man who makes $51,364 an hour. Last year he made $450 million dollars. He is only the 57th richest person in the U.S.A. He has four mansions and he used to have five. But then he sold one to a famous golfer for $16 million dollars. Percentage-wise he pays less taxes than the person who cleans his toilet. How he got all his money is that he got loans from the bank and then bought companies with the loans. He fired some employees to pay back the bank loans. In my TOPIC we lined up 10 chairs that represented resources. One guy in our group got seven chairs. I got one and a half chairs and the rest of the people (I think it was 6) got the last one and a half chairs to share. Each chair represented 10% of the total resources in the United States. It was a fun TOPIC and I learned a lot.”

- Riley Calcagno, 4th grade participant

Many thanks for the creative energy and effort that went into these TOPICS:

- **Mine and Yours, Human Rights for Kids** / parents Suzanne Oelke and Patrick King
- **Poverty in Salvador, Brazil** / parents Nancy Bacon and Cindy Temple
- **What's in a Disney Movie: Watching Movies from a Social Justice Perspective** / parents Johnny Calcagno and Kate Trent
- **That's a Family** / parent Karen Stuhldreher and teacher Leslie Nilan
- **We Shall Overcome – Songs of Liberation and Justice** / parents Michael Adams, Dan Wheeitman, and Paul Shannon
- **Political Graffiti and Propaganda** / parents Linda and Carsten Stinn
- **Mapping with Heart** / parents Elizabeth Dickinson and Tracy Rowland
- **Celebrate Differences** / teacher Sarah Marks
- **Kids Are People Too** / Mr. Kischner
- **Knit For a Cause** / teacher Mrs. Stoneberg and parent Jeanette Miller
- **South African Civil Rights** / teacher Katie Waters
- **Family Diversity** / teacher Julie Gillett
- **Pictures in Our Mind: Examining Prejudice** / librarian Steve Haines
- **Skin Color** / teacher Tracy Seefeld
- **Economic Disparity** / parents Susan Welch and Julie Fisher

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**Social Justice TOPICS**

*By Lynne Goodrich*

By Lynne Goodrich
TOPS Celebrates Dr. Martin Luther King Jr
Dear Parents,

As auction time draws near, we thought we might remind you of what your money goes towards. This year, thanks to your contributions, the Gym has a lot of new equipment and things that students like myself enjoy very much. New, just for fun and relaxation, include an air hockey table and a foosball table. New equipment for the weight room, include my favorites, a speed bag and a punching bag, and many other machines that work all muscle groups, rowing machines, and the good old treadmill.

We also have new things that have a mix of both muscle work and fun, like the new, and very popular wave board. The “Wave” for short, is essentially a skate board, with only two wheels, one at the front and one at the back. It is made of two separate foot supports on top of the wheels, connected by a spring, incased in plastic. It is propelled by twisting the spring in the middle, to do this you must use your back foot, or entire body to turn the back support back and forth, thus giving you a good workout while racing friends, trying tricks, heck, some people have even tried to play sports, from basketball to hockey on these things.

So those are all of the new items we have already, but there are many things in store, like new tennis rackets, ping pong equipment, just generally new racket sport stuff. Don also tells me their are plans for remodeling the Basketball hoops.

Thank you for all of the great things we have, and have in store, thanks to your generous donations.

Walker Evans, Grade 7
**Thank you!**
*By Nyasha Sarju, Grade 8*

P.E. is always a fun class time because of all the games and equipment we have. P.E. just got better because of all the money families put into the auction. Now I can lift weights to get stronger and ride the cool new wave, which is a lot of fun. Thank you to all the parents for giving as much to P.E. as you did at the auction; it has made P.E. an even more fun and enticing period!

---

**P.E. is AWESOME!!!**
*By Riley Calcagno, Grade 4*

In P.E. we got some new stuff. Thank you parents for donating the money to get all of it. We got an air hockey table, a lot of wave boards, and a foosball table. It is very fun to play with this stuff in P.E. and we hope you will keep donating to our more than ever TOPS P.E. program! More stuff is coming!!! I can’t be more excited!

---

**Gym Class is the Best!**
*By Hana Habte, Grade 5*

Our PE class has many new things to work with that are lots of fun! I’ve been enjoying ping-pong, the cool new wave boards, foosball, air hockey, and much more. In the gym we also have a lot of different exercise machines and things for physical training.

Part of our time spent in gym class is spent making sure that everybody knows the rules. We also talk about being respectful and being friends to each other.

Some of the reasons students enjoy PE is because all the playing and running is good for our hearts and helps make us strong! It also gives us a chance to calm down if we need it.

Being in the gym class can also give us the chance to make new friends because sometimes kids help each other, they have to act respectful, we can’t bully, and we want to share our games and activities with each other. The gym rules keep us safe!
Winter Wishes and Food Drive for TOPS Families

By Sheri Toussaint

“It is not how much we give but how much love we put into giving.”
~ Mother Teresa

For many years the TOPS community has donated NEW toys, clothing, household necessities, gift cards, and other items during the holiday season. This year’s Winter Wishes and Food Drive events were a resounding success. Thanks to the generous donations from faculty and students and their families, the holidays were a lot cheerier for eleven TOPS families who received holiday gifts and baskets of foods. There were 1,400 food items collected for the food drive and 250 of those items were donated to Northwest Harvest. A note of thanks to Mary Chao’s fifth grade class for collecting 473 items for the food drive and a special thanks to Catrice Dennis, Daphne Jones, and Sheri Toussaint for coordinating both events.

Thanks again for your thoughtfulness and support!

Family #1 “I would just like to thank you for the blessings you have bestowed on my family.”

Family #3 “We thank you from the Bottom of our Heart, you have made this xmas the best.”

Family #5 “Que en esta Navidad se cumplan todos tus suenos y que en el nuevo ano se hagan tus propósitos.”

Family #6 “...mucho amor y mucha armadura en su hogar. Muchas Gracias.”

Family #8 “Muchas gracias por los regalos Navidad que bendija.”

Family #11 “...and also to say Thank You very much for helping make this a joyous Christmas.”
**Penny Harvest - Common Cents**

By Sheri Toussaint, TOPS School Penny Harvest Coach

“To raise a new generation of informed, capable, and caring young citizens by turning pennies into dollars, and dollars into deeds.” Penny Harvest Mission Statement, www.PennyHarvest.org

The Penny Harvest Service Learning Event was huge success. All of the students at TOPS school supported the event by collecting and donating over a thousand pounds of coins. Every TOPS class from kindergarten through 8th grade collected pennies filling numerous containers and sacks.

Our classroom representatives, Felix, Lina, Parker, Nina, Sam H., Terrell, Albert, Yaritza, Henry, Morgan, Gabe, McKenna, Magnus, Sasha and Dallas, met every Tuesday for the duration of the event to brainstorm ideas and report how things were going in their classes. As a school we exceeded our goal by filling 28 thirty-pound canvas sacks, which made a lot of cents! Stayed tuned for the report from the Scholarship Philanthropy Roundtable group who will tell us whom the money will benefit.

“It was fantastic seeing the students get more and more excited each time we filled another canvas sack. Knowing the coins they were donating would make a difference in someone’s life was the best part of this service learning event.” — Sheri Toussaint, TOPS School Penny Harvest Coach

**Classes that filled the most thirty-pound canvas sacks**

1st place: Leslie Nilan’s 3rd grade class filled 4 1/2 canvas sacks

2nd place: Joe Drummond’s 4th grade class filled 4 canvas sacks

3rd place: Leslie Spurr’s 4th grade class filled 3 1/2 canvas sacks

**Black History Month**

Submitted by Sheri Toussaint

**The History of Omega Achievement Week 1924-1925, Negro History Week 1926-1975, Black History Month 1976-**

"Negro Achievement Week" was established in 1924, and had its origins in the separate efforts of Mary Church Terrell and the African American collegiate fraternity Omega Phi Psi. They had begun the practice of honoring Frederick Douglass on February 14, the date he used to mark his birth. Carter G. Woodson was friends with Mary Church Terrell and worked with her and the National Council of Colored Women to preserve Douglass’ home and personal papers. Woodson was also a member of Omega Psi Phi. While Terrell’s celebration of Douglass was a local event and the Omega Achievement Week was part of their community outreach, Woodson broadened the scope of the celebration in three significant ways. First, he conceived of the event as a national celebration, sending out a circular to groups across the United States. Secondly, he sought to appeal to both whites and blacks and to improve race relations so he chose President Lincoln’s birthday as well as Douglass’. Finally, Woodson viewed Negro History Week as an extension of The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History’s (ASNLH) effort to demonstrate to the world that Africans and peoples of African descent had contributed to the advance of history.

**Negro History Week was established in 1926,** and was conceived as a means of undermining the foundation of the idea of black inferiority through popular information grounded in scholarship. Woodson selected the week in February that embraced the birthdays of both Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. Each year, ASNLH would select a national theme and provide scholarly and popular materials to focus the nation’s “study” of Negro history.

**Black History Month was established in 1976,** with the rise of the Black Power Movement in the 1960s, many in the African American community began to complain about the insufficiency of the week-long Negro History celebration. In 1976, the ASNLH, having changed its name to The Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History (ASALH) responded to the popular call, citing the 50th annual celebration and America’s bicentennial.
MEET THE TOPS CUSTODIANS
By Shelly Haverkamp

Every day, our dedicated custodians work very hard to keep our beautiful school building running efficiently so our kids can learn in a safe, clean environment. Recently, I sat down to chat with Saream Dy and Scott Anderson to find out more about who they are and what they do.

Q & A with Saream Dy

What’s your favorite thing about being a custodian at TOPS?
I don’t have a favorite thing, actually. I just keep the building nice, clean, and warm, and keep things flowing. That’s the best way I know how to say it. I keep it flowing. Whatever anyone tells me to do, I do it. I love to do it for the kids. That’s all.

How long have you worked at TOPS?
Well, actually, since 1992. Before that I worked at a different school. I came to the United States in 1979 from Cambodia.

How do you like living in the United States?
Well, actually, I love the United States. I wanted to raise my kids here for a better life. I didn’t want to be afraid for someone to kill my family. I wanted them to be able to finish school and have a better life.

What are your hobbies?
I like to teach TOPICS. One time I taught the kids how to make a paper toy with bamboo and coconut leaves. Palm leaves are the best because they don’t bend, but it’s hard to find them here. The kids love to blow the toy and push it forward. Also, I taught the kids how to make dragon head paper masks for Halloween. It’s better than buying a mask.

And we made a paper bird that moves when you wind up a spool. We made the spool out of clay.

If somebody asks me why I do it I say it’s for the kids to have fun. That’s all. I’m middle-aged and I still like kids. I like helping and fixing things, like the laminator machine. I like to solve problems, the little things, as quickly as I can.

How did you learn how to fix things?
By watching people, like carpenters. The truth is, I’ll tell you a story. In 1975, Khmer Rouge Communists took over my country and killed educated people. Anyone, doesn’t matter who. My name was on their list. I used my brain and I grew a mustache to pretend to be a farmer. By watching the real farmer, I learned as quick as I can to blend in. I took things day by day. I learned how to solve problems quickly. I used my brain.

The custodian job is not my hobby job. My hobby job is painting, art, and photography. When I came to the United States I worked during the day and went to school at night. When the custodian job became open, I applied. I do the best I can to set an example for my children. I tell them—Study. If you’re foolish, you don’t earn money. I do the best job I can. That’s all I say.

Continued on next page

JOB DESCRIPTION: TOPS Custodians

WHO THEY ARE:  Saream Dy
Scott Anderson
Mogos Woldenmichael

PROFILE:
Self-motivated, dedicated team players with an unusual knack for solving mechanical problems on time, with limited resources. Recognized by more than one staff member as the “go-tos” for smooth daily operation of a 72,470 square foot historic school building in the Eastlake neighborhood.

QUALIFIED TO DELIVER:

- Speedy correction of bursts, leaks, overflows, freezes, and floods
- Expert sanitation service including, but not limited to: sweeping, mopping, stripping, waxing, cleaning, sanitizing, polishing, scrubbing, buffing, disinfecting, vacuuming, and shampooing
- Prompt attention to doors left unlocked or ajar
- On-demand repair of anything broken, such as: copiers, laminators, toilets, pencil sharpeners, breakroom sinks, paper towel dispensers, door handles, file cabinets, lockers and drinking fountains
- Patient, accurate response to vague temperature requests, such as: not so hot, not so cold, not so drafty
- Good-humored, effective solutions to every conceivable building malfunction, especially on short notice with little warning
Molly LaPatra and the many parent volunteers who are assisting her in coordinating our ski program.

Several of our TOPS students were honored by the ACT theatre’s Young Playwright’s program. Our own Rebecca Ehlers was the mistress of ceremony for the event. Sam Heft-Luthy received honorable mention for his play. And Hannah Atlas’ play was chosen to be performed by professional actors in March. I have to say I was so proud of the representation of our students. For being a small middle school we were well represented. Many thanks to Ms. Eick for her work with all the students.

Our middle school play To Kill a Mockingbird was awesome. The director, Britt Boyd, did an excellent job directing the play. There were two evening performances and they were well attended (thank you for supporting our students).

What do you do for building security?

For security, one of my main responsibilities is to make sure all doors except the front door are locked at all times. This is probably my biggest challenge, because people forget, and sometimes the doors don’t shut all the way. I check the doors all the time and this takes a lot of time because it’s such a big building.

Also, we keep a big calendar with all the events going on at the school after hours so that I can keep track of who’s supposed to be in the building and who isn’t. A lot of non-school community groups use the building, like the Eastlake Community Council. There are school activities, too. I have to watch who’s in the building at night and make sure they’ve filled out all the paperwork to get permission. You’d be surprised how many people are here after hours. It’s a big job to make sure everyone goes through the right procedures to get permission. Even school groups have to fill out paperwork so we can keep track.

What kinds of things do you do for building maintenance?

Yesterday, I spent about two hours just changing light bulbs. In a building this size, there are always light bulbs out. During summer break we take apart the boiler and clean it and get it ready for inspection. We change the furnace filters and fan belts.

Floor maintenance is another big part of our jobs. All during winter break we scrubbed, waxed, and buffed all the floors in the whole building. We only really had six days to work.

What’s your favorite thing about being a custodian at TOPS?

I just like the school. I like to work with people, but I like the solitude, to tell you the truth. Once everyone goes home it’s kind of nice. I can work on what needs to be done. It’s a nice old building with a nice staff, and the parents are great.

What are your hobbies?

I like football, basketball, baseball, and soccer, and collecting music on vinyl and CDs. This weekend for the big Seahawks game, I’m getting together with friends for a barbecue.
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