Small acts, when multiplied by millions of people, can transform the world.

~ Howard Zinn.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Dear TOPS Families,

It's busy as always at TOPS with so many wonderful activities for our students. They have been actively pursuing their academic, physical, and artistic well-being. Middle school students had a great basketball season. It was fun to watch both the boys and girls teams as they played with focus and passion. Thank you, Don and Eric, for another great season. We're all looking forward to spring sports; sailing, volleyball, track, and Ultimate Frisbee.

Eighth grade students experienced transformative learning during the three days of Planting the Seeds. TOPS students worked in numerous agencies and organizations that support the homeless of all ages. They had to live without cell phones, iPods, and many personal belongings during this focused period of social justice learning. The students reported that this experience helped them to see things in a different way and helped them learn about opportunities to help in the Seattle community. Sincere thanks to Lori Eickelberg and her dedicated crew of volunteers for making Planting the Seeds a safe and productive learning experience.

Our Kindergarten students celebrated Day 100 of school in fine fashion! Did you know that our school year is now half over? All of our students enjoyed Spirit Week at the end of last month. Culminating Spirit Week was the Middle school dance. Our middle school students enjoyed a fun Friday evening of dancing to music and enjoying the company of friends. It’s always fun to watch how they grow throughout the year.

Procure, Procure, Procure: We hope that each TOPS family will procure items with a total value of at least $150. Individual items should have a value of $50 or more each. All items must be new and unused.

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BRING IT ON HOME FOR TOPS!

By Jamie Flaxman

The 2010 Spring TOPS Auction is just two months away, Saturday, May 1, so mark your calendar for the year’s biggest and most fun event. And this event is also TOPS’ largest fundraiser, raising $110,000 for the materials, services, and programs that our children benefit from each and every day at TOPS, and we need your help to make it a success!

Procure, Procure, Procure: We hope that each TOPS family will procure items with a total value of at least $150. Individual items should have a value of $50 or more each. All items must be new and unused.

TOPS at Seward
2500 Franklin Avenue East
Seattle, WA 98102
Phone: (206) 252-3510
Fax: (206) 252-3511
Principal: Jo Lute-Ervin
Assistant Principal: Jeanne Kuban
Site Council Chair: Susan Welch

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.topsk8.org, click on Latest Newsletter in the Quick Links section.

APRIL TOPSNEWS DEADLINE

Wednesday, March 10 • Submissions to topsnewsletter@gmail.com
Welcome to the sixth newsletter of the 2009-10 school year. Ann Simonson, Dori Cahn, and Doriane Nieburgs edit, and Paul Loovis handles photos, design, and layout. 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. Please send photos to javabrain@msn.com. The deadline for the April issue is March 10. Would you like to edit or otherwise help with our newsletter? Newcomers welcome. Please contact Ann, Dori, or Doriane at topsnewsletter@gmail.com.

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.

CSJ is seeking more participation from members of the TOPS community to help with planning and ideas. Please consider spending your volunteer hours at TOPS with CSJ. Contact Karen Stuhldreher at kstuhldr@sccd.ctc.edu for more information.

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**CSJ CORNER**

Welcome to the CSJ Corner where you can look to find out what the Coalition for Social Justice has planned. Please mark your calendars for meetings and events! The Coalition for Social Justice will meet each month in the TOPS Library from 5:30-7:30 p.m.; until we have a consistent day of the month, check the CSJ Corner for meeting announcements. Our goal this year is to build a larger group that is committed to discussing and working on issues of diversity, social justice, and inclusion at TOPS.

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**TASTE OF TOPS 2010: the sustainable table**

**Thursday, March 18 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.**

This year's theme for our annual all-school potluck is sustainability and socially just farming. Gather with the TOPS community to share good food and learn about how to support environmentally and socially responsible food production. We will also have:

- Food-related booths;
- Thought provoking films;
- Raffle to benefit Lettuce Link with fabulous food prizes;
- Recycled objects family art activity;
- Annual book fair

Join us with a favorite food dish to share – all food is welcomed. Families are invited to bring picnic supplies and use local ingredients in the spirit of re-use and sustainability. Plates and utensils will be provided if needed.

---

Photo by Don Zemke
TASTE OF TOPS 2010
the sustainable table

March 18th
5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Gather with the TOPS community to share good food and learn about sustainable and socially just farming practices. Visit local food related booths in the gym. Watch thought provoking films and learn how you can help.

All school potluck - bring a favorite food dish to share. Families are invited to bring picnic supplies and use local ingredients in the spirit of re-use and sustainability. Plates and utensils will be provided. All food welcomed.

Raffle to benefit Lettuce Link with fabulous food prizes

Recycled objects family art activity

Annual Book Fair

Brought to you by TOPS middle school faculty and the Coalition for Social Justice
SOCIAL JUSTICE TOPICS IN JANUARY FOR THE THIRD YEAR
by Karen Stuhldreher

Recently, I was talking with Joby in her classroom when I noticed a poster on the wall that I hadn’t seen before. I asked her if this was new and she said, “Well yes, we’re studying about how ‘We are all the same’ and ‘We are all different.’ Kindergarteners still need to talk and learn about this.” I thought about that for a moment and replied, “Actually, I think a lot of grown ups still need to talk and learn about that too!” I went home thinking about how that mantra manifests itself in my own life. Times I celebrate diversity and times I shy away from it. This was how my social justice TOPIC was born.

Thanks to Joby acting as a catalyst, twelve 1st - 5th graders, and three adults (myself included), began our TOPIC by listening to two different pieces of music and painting our inspirations. Students then compared their two paintings and we talked about similarities and differences between the two. Next, children were paired up with one another and made Venn Diagrams (anyone who was in Sarah or my 1st grade classes know how much we LOVE Venn Diagrams) based on their similarities and differences. While working on these, the 5th graders in the group helped each student make paint that resembled their skin color and students painted self portraits. Throughout this creative process, students were conversing about what they had in common and what was different. In order to break through discomfort, we need to have experiences with others who are different than ourselves! Sometimes admitting differences can be risky, and we tend to move toward those who are most like us.

The culmination of our conversations and artistic expressions can be seen in a banner that is hanging on the way to the cafeteria. I encourage you to have someone in your life who is willing to talk about similarities and differences with you and who allows you to be your own unique self.

- Kristina Stoneberg, 4th grade teacher

FROM THE PARENT TOPICS LEADERS:

Songs of Freedom—

An enthusiastic group gathered to share the power and joy of singing together in a TOPIC called Songs of Freedom. We explored a bit of the history of “We Shall Overcome” and its use in struggle movements from the labor movement, through the civil rights movement, and now as an anthem used as a change catalyst all over the world. Using traditional Freedom Songs as a launching point, we created new verses that addressed issues that these children experience and wrestle with at TOPS.

- Michael Adams

Continued next page
Homeless and Hungry in Seattle’s University District—Let’s Give a Helping Hand—

O ur social justice TOPIC began with a short ride by Metro bus to the University District. Led by Steve Haines, seven 4th and 5th grade students and I all rode to University Temple United Methodist Church on NE 43rd Street. We walked through a short alley on the southeast corner of the church and entered the Roots Kitchen through a set of blue double doors. Once inside, we cleaned our hands with sanitizer, donned plastic gloves, and looked to see what we could do to help prepare the Friday Feast. The Friday Feast is a hot dinner served every Friday from 6:00 to 7:00. The restaurant-quality meal feeds approximately one hundred homeless young adults or other low income persons.

We were assigned two important tasks: one task was to prepare a large fruit salad and the other was to prepare dessert platters. We broke into two groups and went to work. One group of students began cutting up apples, pears, oranges, bananas, melons, and pineapples into bite-sized pieces. Each piece of fruit went into a giant-sized bowl we had been asked to fill. All of the fruit had been donated to the Roots Kitchen and much of it had bad spots that needed to be cut off first. Blueberries, strawberries, and raspberries were inspected carefully, and only the firm ones went into the bowl. After about an hour and a half, the bowl was finally full and the salad looked beautiful. The second group was hard at work filling dessert platters with doughnuts and other pastries—also donated to the Roots Kitchen. As each platter was filled, students carefully tore off long sheets of saran wrap to cover the pastries and keep them from drying out.

As students worked at their tasks, many commented that they were really enjoying this TOPIC. Many expressed a desire to come again to help. Soon it was time to leave. As we waited for our bus that would take us back to TOPS, Steve led a short discussion on causes of homelessness and the need for places like Roots (which also shelters young adults in addition to providing meals). We all seemed to agree that our TOPIC was a valuable one.

Poverty In Brazil—

O ur TOPIC took a magic balloon ride to Brazil where we journeyed to Salvador in Brazil’s northeast corner. We learned about the cycle of poverty and the reinforcing elements that keep people from living their full potential (i.e. hunger, sickness, lack of proper shelter, lack of adequate education, lack of work, and lack of love and support). We saw how the cycle of poverty affects impoverished people living in Salvador and how one project -- Bahia Street -- is addressing all of the elements of poverty to support girls as they go from illiteracy to university. The kids then chose one part of the world that they care a lot about -- which ranged from India to Haiti -- and created posters that encouraged their fellow students to get involved in projects that addressed the cycle of poverty in working for a better world.

- Nancy Bacon

What is “Real Change”? Learn about Seattle’s Newspaper That Supports People who are Homeless—

W e invited a guest from Seattle’s homeless newspaper Real Change. Anitra was great with the children. She knew how to engage them in an interactive way (not a lecture at all). The kids were attentive and respectful — we let them know that at the end. She said it was the most energetic, thoughtful group of children she’s ever spoken with.

Anitra spoke about homelessness in a gentle way. She gave the kids a window into the root causes, a few of the statistics (“19,000 children are homeless in Washington State, that’s about forty-three TOPS schools of kids on the streets”), the struggles with surviving on the streets, the realities of what the shelters are like, and she relayed some of her personal struggles with bipolar disorder. She emphasized the importance of community in helping someone suffering to rebuild their life. She also talked about Real Change and how it functions to help the homeless.

After recess, we turned what we learned into action. Anitra gave us a real world example of “Nickelsville,” the tent city that has experienced sweeps, and is at risk of not having a permanent location. She shared with us that the people who live in “Nickelsville” have a dream of building a better place. She even told the kids that a seven year old boy lives there. We then brainstormed the kind of improvements we could make to “Nickelsville,” based on a successful place in Portland called “Dignity Village” that has wooden shelters, a community garden, community eating space, and other amenities. We then wrote a letter to the newly-elected Mayor McGinn asking him to honor the dreams of “Nickelsville” by donating a piece of city land by May 2010.

We are hoping to have the letter printed on TOPS letterhead and signed by all the children in the TOPIC. We would like to send the letter to Mayor McGinn, to Real Change (to possibly be published), and to the people at “Nickelsville.”

- Kari Connor

Continued next page
Life in a Dictatorship Through the Eyes of a Child—

We talked about what a dictatorship is and what it would be like to live in a country that is a dictatorship. Then we read *The Composition* by Antonio Skarmeta, winner of the Jane Addams Children’s Book Award for the best picture book promoting peace and social justice. In the book, Pedro, a 9 year old boy, sees the father of his friend, Daniel, taken away by soldiers. Daniel tells Pedro that his father was taken away because he was against the dictatorship. Pedro is confused and doesn’t understand why his parents listen to a radio with bad connections every night. Then a captain visits his class at school and tells the class to write a composition — “What my Family Does at Night.” We stopped reading the book at this point and everyone wrote their own version of what they thought Pedro wrote in his composition. We shared our compositions and talked about what everyone had written. Then we finished the book to learn about what Pedro actually wrote.

We learned a lot about freedom, moral choices and personal responsibility.

- Janis White

Consumption in Seattle: What’s Useful and What’s Wasteful—

Inspired by a previous Social Justice TOPIC led by Susan Welch, Tracy Seefeld and I did a TOPIC on consumption. The goal was really to just get the kids to think about what they buy, and where the stuff comes from, and why we buy, and thinking a little about the lifecycle of the products we buy. We started by watching *The Story of Stuff* video. As Johnny Calcagno said, “this lady talks a little fast and she’s directing her talk to a much older audience.” Later on in the session we tried to discuss planned obsolescence and perceived obsolescence: the ideas that some stuff is made to break down so you have to replace it, and other stuff gets outdated, like cell phones, the size of a tennis shoe, etc, and we choose to replace them. After the video we went shopping!

Ok, really, we took a Metro bus to the U district and went to Walgreen’s. We met the store manager who toured us around the backrooms of the store. We learned that they have over 10,000 different products in their store. They get all their things shipped to Seattle from their big warehouse in California. It all comes in boxes and there is a big old machine that just flattens boxes all day long.

We went on a treasure hunt in the store looking for:
   a. A product that was made from recycled material.
   b. A product that is probably toxic.
   c. A product that should probably never have been made (and seems totally useless) ...things like that.

Then we came back to school. The kids had a lot to think about and maybe next time they are in a store like Walgreen’s they will do just that.

- Karen Olive

Adventure Playhouse: Imagine...

Annie Barrett and I led an improvisational drama class with a focus on empathy and self respect. I believe if you experience (via imagination) what it’s like to be homeless, powerless, or disadvantaged, you are more likely to help instead of judging or ignoring. I also believe that the more kids love and respect themselves, the more they are able to “love thy neighbor as thyself.” Loving and being kind to yourself leads to acceptance and love for the people around you. Fear and anger is what causes people to disrespect others.

We played with being homeless, being teased, being discriminated against, and then banding together to fight against injustice. We read and acted out Dr. Seuss’s *The Sneetches*, where the “star-bellied” snubbed the “plain-bellied.” The kids were divided into two groups: half were given stars and were told not to talk to or play with the plain-bellies. Each group was given a chance to be “starred.” (What I found most interesting was that the kids had a hard time recognizing the benefits of being in the privileged group! Why that is might be a topic for a longer article).

I hope my short class planted a seed of empathy, and that the next time they see a homeless person, they will remember what it was like to not have a home and how cold and scary it was. Not just think “I’m supposed to respect this person because it’s the right thing to do,” but to actually feel what that homeless person might be feeling. And that they will have the self confidence to do what feels right.

- Cynthia Steiner

There were also TOPICS in which students learned about the history of child labor laws and the reasons we have labor unions; why art is an important part of learning at school; and a TOPIC in which the children decorated over 40 shoeboxes that were then delivered to First Place School by the 8th graders during the Planting the Seeds Project in February. The shoeboxes will be used by the homeless students at First Place to keep their school supplies and treasures in while they are at school.

In just one short afternoon, the elementary students at TOPS learned so much about the world they live in, its history, its music, and the experiences of people who live close by and far away. Hopefully they also gained a greater sense of understanding and empathy for people who are both like them and different. As Joby teaches kindergartners at TOPS, “We are all the same; and we are all different.”
**Penny Harvest Roundtable**

By Melissa Leonard, Penny Harvest Coach

Now that the generous families and faculty of TOPS have collected thousands of pennies, we have convened a student “roundtable” to determine who will be the beneficiary of our donation. We have $1000 to give and have a volunteer group of committed students who will determine the needs of our community and make the hard decision of where our pennies can do the most good. The TOPS Penny Harvest Roundtable consists of Fiona Kubalak, 1st grade, Souma Yabuki, 2nd grade, Maile Soo, 4th grade, and Parker Cech, Festus Gilligan, Owen Leonard, Nicole Godbout, Gabriella Kimmerly, and Lucy Kolpa, all 6th graders. These students will be our collective philanthropists and will be meeting on consecutive Thursdays during lunch to do the research necessary to make this difficult decision. By the time you read this, the students will have interviewed members of the community to investigate what other people believe to be current areas of need, and researched organizations based on those findings that could use our pennies to meet some of the concerns of our extended community. After doing that, it will be this roundtable of students (not their parent facilitator) who will determine the organization(s) to receive our penny donation.

I’m proud we have students who will step up and donate their lunch/recess time to this effort and appreciate the support TOPS faculty and families give to this worthwhile learning experience.

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**Please Don’t Litter!**

There no longer are garbage cans along the Franklin Green Street. That means everyone must pack out their garbage before school, during recess, and after school. Please, either bring it home in your backpack or carry it back up to the school’s garbage cans. Lunch bags, juice boxes, wrappers, you name it—please don’t litter!

Thank you!

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**2009 - 2010 TOPS Calendar**

Send your events and dates to our webmaster, Michael Drew, at webmaster@topsk8.org. Please check Go-Homes and the web site for updates.

**March**

2 (T) ..........Elementary school tour, 9:30 - 11 a.m.
3 (W) ..........Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal
4 (Th) ..........Middle school tour, 9:30 - 11 a.m.
9 (T) ..........Kindergarten tour, 9:30 - 11 a.m.
10 (W) ..........Site Council meeting, 5 - 7 p.m.
10-12 (W-F) ....6th grade Camp
12 (F) ..........TOPICS, elementary school
18 (Th) ..........Taste of TOPS, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.
19 (F) ..........Professional development day; no school
23 (T) ..........Leslie’s 3rd grade play, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, 2:10 p.m.
24 (W) ..........Leslie’s 3rd grade play, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, 12:40 and 7 p.m.
26 (F) ..........TOPICS, elementary school
26 (F) ..........Kindergarten ABC Celebration
29-31 (M-W) .Spring Break; no school

**April**

1-2 (Th-F) ....Spring Break; no school
3 (W) ..........Site Council meeting, 5 - 7 p.m.
9 (F) ..........TOPICS, elementary school
14 (F) ..........Elementary school play
14 (F) ..........Property Festival
15 (Th) ..........Elementary school play
19 (W) ..........Professional development block time; 2-hour early dismissal
23 (F) ..........Middle school dance, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
30 (F) ..........TOPICS, middle school

**May**

1 (S) ..........TOPS Auction, 5 p.m.
5 (W) ..........DHH to SCT
7 (F) ..........Grades K, 1st, and 5th, S.E. to SCT
12 (W) ..........Site Council meeting, 5 - 7 p.m.
14 (F) ..........TOPICS, elementary school
14 (F) ..........Elementary school play
14 (F) ..........ArtFest
15 (S) ..........Elementary school play
21 (M) ..........Memorial Day; no school

**June**

2-4 (W-F) ....7th grade Camp
9 (W) ..........Site Council meeting, 5-7 p.m.
9 (W) ..........ASB Elections
10 (Th) ..........Kindergarten Puppet show
10-11 (Th-F) ....3rd – 4th grade Camp
16 (W) ..........State Museum, Library
18 (F) ..........8th Grade Passage
18 (F) ..........8th Grade Passage Award Assembly
21 (M) ..........Field Day
21 (M) ..........Wild Waves
22 (T) ..........Last student day, 2:20 p.m. dismissal
The thrill of mobilizing the TOPS Middle School skiers and boarders for five fun Friday outings to The Summit at Snoqualmie is over for another year. The weather delivered different snow conditions each week from ice to slush to sugar snow but the variety didn’t dampen anyone’s spirits. A huge thank you to Don Zemke, grade coordinators Joe Germani and Michael Drew, Mark Brannon and Juan Perla, Sheila Gilligan and Frank Cech, and finally to all the parent chaperones and emergency drivers for helping each week. We’ll be back next year for more thrills and spills! Here is what some 7th graders had to say about their experience:

“I like going to Central Terrain Park- it’s tight listening to music and going off boxes and getting air on jumps.” –Teddy

“It’s fun-I like snowboarding.” –Morgan

“Ski Bus is super exhilarating!” –Nate

“2nd year and it’s been really fun. My favorite run is Silver Fir, everything about it.” –Wilder

“Ski Bus is awesome!” –Cole

“It’s awesome-I like everything!” –Bay

“1st year and it’s been a great experience. I like the Golden Nugget Run best.” –Daisuke

“The Terrain Park goes hard!” –Curtis

Photos by Molly LaPatra
“Ski Bus is awesome—it’s the best!” – Yohji

“Ski Bus is fun!” – Margot

“It’s really fun because you can ski with people from all grades and you get to make friends with some 6th graders.” – Maddy

“It’s fun—you get to hang with friends chillin’ & eating chicken fingers!” – Gene

“Ski Bus is fun except when Yohji gets mad at me for going slow!” – Toby

Photos by Melissa Chow
TOPS CHINESE PROGRAM CELEBRATES THE NEW YEAR!

By Nancy Bacon

TOPS Chinese language teachers Xiao Yu Jackson and Pollyanna Wang organized the 4th annual Chinese New Year party after school on February 10, 2010. Four days before the true New Years celebration that welcomes the Year of the Tiger, students in grades K – 4th grade sang traditional songs in Chinese, ate dumplings and orange slices, and rotated through activities that taught about Chinese culture.

This year, 33 students take Chinese language after school at TOPS. Now in its fourth full year, the program teaches basic conversational Chinese with culture and geography lessons woven in along the way. Parent volunteers support the teacher during class time in classrooms generously shared by teachers Tracy and Joan. The TOPS Chinese Language and Culture program plays an important role in TOPS’ educational community. It teaches an important world language while children are young enough to learn with ease, connects that language to the experiences of TOPS students whose families come from China, and promotes greater appreciation for our world’s diversity.

Students enjoying success after building a “Great Wall of China.”

Xiao Yu Jackson leading a game about body parts.

Pollyanna Wang leading “Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes” in Chinese

Gōng Xī Fā Cái
Happy Chinese New Year!

Xiao Yu Jackson teaching Chinese caligraphy writing.

Photos by Nancy Bacon
Please consider underwriting a portion of our auction expenses underwrite: Each year it costs over $14,000 to hold the auction.

Monday after spring break). Procurement/Donation deadline is Monday, April 5 (the

Think about the businesses you frequent often and the organizations you belong to, such as hairdressers, restaurants, museums, clubs, theaters, and stores. Ask these businesses and organizations if they will donate to the auction. It’s always better to approach a business in person. Ask for the owner or manager. Introduce yourself as a family of TOPS and provide them with a copy of the procurement letter you received in your auction packet. Tell them that TOPS school needs their support and ask them “Can your business support our school through a donation to our spring auction?” Remind them that all donations are tax deductible. Let them know that 300 people attend our auction and that their business will be listed in our catalog and website. It’s a great opportunity for exposure! Fill out the donation form completely, giving the business their copy. Thank the owner/manager warmly!

Hot procurement items include restaurant gift certificates, getaways, boat trips, retail gift certificates, special dinners, theater/music tickets, gardening items/plants, salon/spa gifts, alcohol (wine, martini packages, margarita packages), chocolate, coffee/tea, jewelry, and anything golf or snow sports related.

You can submit your items either with the procurement form you received in the mail in February, online at www.tops.maestroweb.com, or you can pick up additional procurement forms in the TOPS office. If you’d like a letter that you can use for a business, you also received one in your packet in February or you can download a copy from the TOPS website at www.topsk8.org/helping/auction. You can also see what’s been donated already at www.tops.maestroweb.com.

Procurement/Donation deadline is Monday, April 5 (the

Underwrite: Each year it costs over $14,000 to hold the auction. Please consider underwriting a portion of our auction expenses with a cash donation, a donation of products (beverages), or services (volunteer). New this year – purchase ad space in the catalog. Perhaps your business or a business you know would like to support TOPS through the purchase of advertising in the catalog. Or think about getting together with another family & writing a well-wishing message to your child’s class. For more information, contact Pam Copeland.

Volunteer: We still have some specific volunteer needs, as well as day of event volunteers are needed. For the committee we need volunteers for:

- Topics for Grown-Ups
- Dessert Dash
- Silent Auction Team
- Sponsorships & Underwriting
- Team Food

If you’re interested in volunteering for one of these jobs or for day of event, please contact Beth Eagen.

Attend: You’ll be receiving your invitation to the auction in mid to late March so watch your mail. Whether you spend a lot or a little, the auction is a great time to spend with friends or make new friends. The event is not restricted to just TOPS parents and guardians – bring grandparents, neighbors, family friends, and make a night of it. Want to ensure you have a reserved table – a mere $100 will guarantee you and nine of your closest friends a great evening of food and shopping, all for a great cause.

For More Information: Check out the auction websites at www.topsk8.org/helping/auction/ and www.tops.maestroweb.com or contact members of the Auction Committee:

CO-CHAIRS
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New this year: WIN A FREE TICKET TO THE AUCTION!

If you submit at least $150 in auction item donations by March 15 (you don’t have to donate items yourself, just your name has to be listed as the solicitor), you will be eligible for a drawing for one (1) free ticket to the auction.

Auction continued from page 1
No-Bake Campaign

By Louise Bush

The 2009/2010 No-Bake Campaign has wound down and we are taking stock. Despite the very tough times facing our school and our community, you dug into your pockets and donated to our children, our teachers, and our staff. We are grateful to each and every family and friend of TOPS who donated to the campaign. For many of us, even a small donation is a big sacrifice in this economy, and we thank every donor on behalf of the TOPS community. And please remember, if you have not donated, it is not too late! There is no deadline, and we will gratefully accept your No-Bake donation whenever you are able to send one in.

Last month TOPS News published the names of many of the families and individuals who have donated to the No-Bake this year. This has become a tradition of the No-Bake campaign, and every year names are left off of the first list of donors for a variety of reasons (donations that take a while to come through corporate giving programs, donations made later in the winter, donors who’ve chosen to remain anonymous, and the ever possible human error by your No-Bake Committee). The list of donors in the February newsletter was not a complete list of every family or individual who has donated to the campaign, and as donations continue to come in more names will be added to the list. We will update the list of campaign donors in next month’s newsletter. Until then, thank you again for all you do for (and give to) TOPS.

Message from the Principal continued from page 1

TOPS 3rd - 5th grade teachers will be spending three days with a Staff Developer from Columbia University Teachers College, studying authentic implementation of Writers Workshop. They have already benefited from two days of professional development earlier this winter. The K – 2nd grade teachers enjoyed a similar training with the teachers at South Shore K - 8. This is teacher training at its best and we thank the Friends of TOPS for making it possible for our teachers to have these special opportunities.

By now you have received a letter about the Measure of Academic Progress, commonly known as MAP. We have now completed two rounds of this district assessment in reading and math. We continue to learn how to administer the test, how to analyze the data, and how to effectively use the information to inform instruction for TOPS students. Our teachers have done a great job, jumping in and managing the analysis of this brand new assessment tool. This is our learning year.

School tours for future parents and students of TOPS continue into this month with the help of parent volunteers and our very own students. The Taste of TOPS is coming up, too. We look forward to an enjoyable evening that celebrates “The Sustainable Table.” Our learning and activities continue as we get closer to spring.

Sincerely,

Jo Lute-Ervin
Coming up to this time of year always reminds me of one of my favorite authors, Dr. Seuss, and the annual reading celebration around his birthday in early March. The National Education Association does a great job with their Read Across America Day, which is an “annual reading motivation and awareness program that calls for every child in every community to celebrate reading.” We will be sure to be reading that day, as we do every day. To learn more, check www.nea.org/readacross.

One of the aspects that I enjoy about TOPS is the amount of parent support that is given, from working in the classroom to supporting Friends of TOPS. It certainly creates a more varied educational experience for our students. For example, this month, Cynthia, parent of Shane in the 1st grade, was able to come in to our Reading Block and work with the students on staging a play from a book that we were reading. Now I could have done this, but because drama is her specialty she was able to organize this in a fraction of the time and with much more enthusiasm.

Another example comes from the popular Writers in the Schools program, WITS, that is for students in 5th – 8th grade. Here is what happened this past month in the 5th grade as reported by Erin and Alyssa in Libby’s class.

“WITS teacher Merna Hect recently invited her friend, Tom Pruiksma, to recite poems and stories to the 5th grade classes while also performing a small magic show. Mark, a student in Nina’s class, had shown a magic trick to Merna that inspired her to invite Tom. Tom is a poet, writes essays, and is a translator. He is fluent in both Spanish and Tamil. He has been doing magic shows since he was eight and is a self-taught magician. The climax of his time with us came when Alex, Terrel, Aleisha, Isaiah and Libby tied Tom up in four minutes using rope. His goal then was to untie himself in less than four minutes while reciting the poem “Casey at the Bat.” Of course he was able to do it in three minutes and 45 seconds. This was a great experience for us, hearing from a real poet and magician, and having Merna, who spent two months teaching the 5th graders about poetry.”

These are just two of the countless examples of the variety of education that goes on everyday. Thank you TOPS.

“\The more that you read, the more things you will know.\nThe more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.\n\n~ Dr. Seuss\n
Photos by Steve Haines
Think “famous” for a number of writers from Lori Eickelberg’s 7th grade classes. On January 21, Zoe Gluck took the stage in the Illsley Ball Nordstrom Recital Hall at Benaroya and read her poem, “Advertising Blues,” to a packed audience, before acclaimed poet Kim Addonizio and Port Townsend blues poet and musician Gary Lilley presented their work for the Seattle Arts and Lectures Poetry Series. Original poems by 7th graders Wilder Brannon, Claire Duncan, Henry Elliot, Nate Kahn, Maria Perla, Qingyu Onouye, Naomi Walker, and Erin Wolf were also on display for the evening poetry event. Every 7th grader completed a broadside combining poetry and visual art and several of these are on display at the West Seattle Diva Coffee House, including work by Noah Forslund, Andy Johnston, Ricky Nguyen, and Rikki Parent.

Public acclaim for creative writing has also come to Nina Binder’s and Libby Sinclair’s 5th grade writers. Yin Deng, Olivia Liu, Lina Oppenheimer, and Erica To, along with many students in Nina’s class, wrote compassionate poems about their response to the earthquake in Haiti. These four poets will be published in the next issue of Skipping Stones, an award-winning internationally-recognized multicultural magazine for young people. All of the writers in Libby’s class have created beautiful “freedom quilt” squares with poetry and symbols. A sampling of these quilt squares are on display at the West Seattle Diva coffee house, including work by Isaiah Bishop, Mei Lee, Thomas Luong, and Abbey Miller.

...And, more to come! In celebration of National Poetry Month, all of the 7th grade broadsides will be on display in the school and a Poetry Evening will be held for Nina’s and Libby’s 5th grade classes. Also, anthologies of student work from the WITS residency this past semester will be rolling off the press in time to mark April’s celebration of poetry. And the freedom quilt created by Libby’s class will be on display later this month.

Blues for the Night Sky

The moon shining through the clouds whispering asking the stars what is love.

The stars crying back answer no can hear their sorrow.

The sky filled with all this emotion coming closer and to emptiness.

Maria Perla, Grade 7

Advertisement Blues

They don't under-stand the pressure they put us to be. We control them. We know the invisible world. We think that hand with we have grip hand. We know the invisible world. We think that hand with we have grip hand.

But we are an control their are. Is a perfection. Grip no choice but to follow their lead, or be ostracized.

Reverberation, not Blues

Slap Back echo-ing magical loud any thing you call it the sound of a pick hitting the strings and echoing for me the most enlight-thing. bone of your fingers, the crowd is waiting, just you and your guitar, ready?

Nate Kahn, Grade 7
Blues Song for Falling Off the End of the Earth

Field Fall I'm alone
Yellow Forever? So
Field He calls me Alone
Strands of Space Looking for
Gold Cadet The
I'm reaching Yes, End
Out That's right Of
To find I can't The earth.
The Get Wishing
End Far That I
Of the Enough Could
World. Away Just
Does From here. Fall
It not Gold, Off.
Drop off? Yellow Not
Could I Grass Sways

Erin Wolf, Grade 7

Monday Morning Blues

I
Hate
The
Sadness
The feeling, that washes over you on a Monday morning
You know?
That feeling?
I wish the rain would come down
And wash
Away
The sadness.
That it could pound away the broken Souls.
That it could patter against their cracked hearts
And make them Whole
Again.

Claire Duncan, Grade 7

Big Climb: “TOPS to the Top”

By Nina Binder, 5th Grade Teacher

Hello TOPS community,
Many of you remember that last year we had a fabulous team of TOPS students, teachers, and friends to climb the Columbia Tower. We raised over $12,000 for leukemia in Mikael Perla’s name! Well, we are at it again. This year we have registered again as “TOPS to the Top.” The climb is on Sunday, March 21. We encourage you to support our fight against leukemia by joining our team of climbers or by donating. Please register and donate online at www.bigclimb.org for our team, TOPS to the Top. Our discount code for the registration fee is TOPs (case sensitive.) We look forward to seeing you there!
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