



The Merriam Community News

March 2011 - Volume 19 - Issue 6

“Stroll to Somewhere”

Last week I went to see the film *Race to Nowhere* with my wife and fourteen-year-old daughter. It was an eye-opening movie about the stresses and pressures that many of our children face in their school years in our society. The movie consisted primarily of interviews with students, parents, teachers, counselors and psychologists, administrators, and other experts in the areas of stress and education. And the message was clear: many children (of all ages) in many of our schools are over-booked – scheduled with school, activities, and homework from early in the morning until late at night. In a number of these cases kids have literally zero “down” time, - to play, read for pleasure, or take on other unstructured activities. In addition, many who were interviewed in the film discussed the toll that this relentless schedule and pressure can take on children. Though most of the children in the film were in middle school or older, the point was made that these pressures often begin for kids in elementary school.



One interesting point of discussion from the film was the role that homework plays in some of these difficulties. In fact, research was quoted that found that homework in the elementary grades does not improve student performance. It does, however, add more to children’s plates at this early age and it is also sometimes a source of struggles at home in the evening. The Merriam staff will be spending a couple of meetings this spring and then next fall looking carefully at this topic of homework - and examining it from all sides. I WELCOME your comments on this subject– so please send me your emails!

We live in a fast-paced, get ahead, move forward, don’t look back kind of society. Perhaps we don’t give ourselves and our children enough time to

“stop and smell the roses.” After all, there are times when it’s helpful to be speedy and efficient, and there are other times when reflection and deliberation are of utmost importance. My hope is that here at Merriam we strike the balance of giving our students a rigorous education while at the same time giving them time to laugh, play, explore, take initiative, be curious, and work at a pace that fits their learning style. During a Merriam School project you just might see all of the above happening!

Sometimes a “Stroll” is just as good as a “Race.”

Spring Garden Clean-Up!

Make a difference to the outdoor gardens and grounds your children enjoy EVERYDAY!!!!!!

Sunday, May 15th from 1:00pm - 4:00pm!

Merriam Families are important to this effort, and only a few of steadfast families have attended in the last several clean-ups! Please do your part to help us this year! We need help cleaning up the garden beds, and grounds around the school and play areas!

Only with your help can we make our school grounds look beautiful! Bring your rakes, weeding tools and wheel barrows. The whole family is welcome - and we need all the help we can get! The landscaping of the grounds is done only by volunteers and we need you!

Can’t help Sunday? Contact us to find out what other days we will be out there weeding or planting! For more information, please contact: Amanda Lye, at amandalye1@yahoo.com or (978) 635-9879, or Karen Dean, at dkdean83@gmail.com or (978) 274-2084.

Cultural Enrichment News

Willow Books Fundraiser - A Great Success!

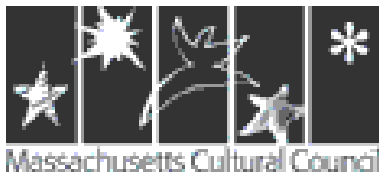
A massive thank you to everyone who attended and assisted at our Willow Books fundraiser on the night of March 9th. Willow Books donated 15% of the proceeds from all sales that night, our dedicated teaching staff donated their precious time, and we raised over \$537 for our Cultural Enrichment program at Merriam.

Ball in the House - An Upcoming Event

We hope to bring Ball in the House to our afternoon K-6 All School Meeting on Friday May 13th from 2:15 to 3:15 p.m. More details will follow nearer the time, but meanwhile feel free to check out this superb Boston-based a cappella group at <http://www.ballinthehouse.com>. Many thanks to Ronit Ben-Shir, who has worked very hard on securing this performance.

Dancing Wheels - a memorable performance

Once again, we are very happy to announce that, alongside all of the other elementary schools of Acton and Boxborough, we were awarded \$200 towards the program by Dancing Wheels. They performed at Merriam's ASM in November 2010.



Massachusetts Cultural Council

This program is supported in part by a grant from the Acton-Boxborough

Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, <http://www.massculturalcouncil.org>. On behalf of Merriam, we wish to thank the Acton Boxborough Cultural Council for their generous support of our school's Cultural Enrichment programs.

Thank you for supporting Cultural Enrichment at Merriam! Of course, we are able to sponsor these special curriculum-based Cultural Enrichment programs for all of our K-6 students thanks to YOUR support! If you have any questions or suggestions or if you wish to join our committee, we welcome you! Please contact: Cath Smith at 978-263-4377; cath.a.smith66@gmail.com or Ronit Ben-Shir at 978-263-9872; rbenshir@jccgb.org.



International Night May 6

Celebrate the cultural diversity of the Merriam and McCarthy -Towne Schools at the 5th Annual Parker Damon International Night!

May 6, 6:00-8:30pm, in the Cafetorium

International Potluck. Please bring a dish or dessert to share, enough to serve 8-10 people- please label all the ingredients and specify whether it should be served hot or cold. Disposable serving dishes are encouraged. If you would like your serving dish returned, please put your name on it.

Global Village. Get a Parker Damon passport, visit over 10 countries from all over the globe, fill your passport with stamps, and win a prize!

International Entertainment by students of Merriam and McCarthy-Towne Schools

Raffle. Win a gift certificate/items from local restaurants and stores!

All families are encouraged to participate and wear clothing from their country of origin or ancestry! Any student wishing to share a dance, song, story or other cultural entertainment should contact Ally (allyli88@yahoo.com).

We are still looking for volunteers to help out with the event. It is an easy and fun night to get involved with the Merriam & McCarthy Towne Community! For more information or to volunteer for the evening or to host a country at the global village, please contact: Jayanthi jaysrinath@yahoo.com or Ally allyli88@yahoo.com.

This is a family event! Students should be supervised by an adult at all times.

A Community Conversation - Bully Prevention Part II

On March 16th, the Merriam PTO and the School Council presented our fourth Community Conversation: Bully Prevention Part II. Meredith Shaw of the Open Circle Program at Wellesley College joined parents and teachers in a discussion on bullying prevention. Meredith talked about what bullying is and is not, the types of bullying – direct and indirect, described the warning signs of bullying behavior and action we can take to prevent this. Her goal was to leave with parents and teachers having a sense of hope that bullying can be prevented and incidences of bullying situations reduced.

Open Circle has found that 85% of students have witnessed bullying but only 10% of the students intervene to deflate the situation. Intervention can prevent about 50% of bullying situations. It is this “code of silence” that needs to dissipate to reduce bullying behavior. An important way to do this is to have a common language at school and home and have open communication with students, teachers and parents. She noted the Open Circle Program teaches students at their grade level how to resolve situations on their own and to seek help from an adult if it can't be done on their own.

Following Meredith's discussion, Ed presented Merriam: Holding Community at Our Center. Merriam is a place for students to feel safe, and to take responsibility for self and others. We do this through our all-school meetings, family groups, theme days, and community days. Meredith and Ed answered questions from parents, and throughout the meeting parents and teachers provided great feedback on how to deal with bullying scenarios.

It's Time for Another Lost and Found Fair

All Lost and Found items will be displayed in front of the Multi-Purpose Room on the lower level, during the week before April Vacation. You and your children are invited to please take a look for any possible lost items. The L & F Committee do our best to return all clearly labeled items to

their owners. After the break, all remaining items will be donated to charity.

From The Nurse: Tick Facts

Ticks are bugs that feed on the blood of mammals, birds, and reptiles. **Deer ticks** and **dog ticks** are



found throughout Massachusetts and may spread different disease-causing germs when they bite. Ticks are generally found in grassy, brushy, or wooded areas. Ticks do not fly or jump. They attach to

animals or people that come into direct contact with them.

- **Deer ticks:** Both nymph (young) and adult deer ticks will bite humans. The highest risk of being bitten by a deer tick occurs throughout the spring, summer and fall seasons. However, adult deer ticks can also be out searching for a host any time winter temperatures are above freezing. Deer tick nymphs are the size of a poppy seed and deer tick adults are the size of a sesame seed.
- **Dog ticks:** In general, only the adult dog tick will bite humans. The highest risk of being bitten by a dog tick occurs during the spring and summer seasons. Adult dog ticks are about the size of a watermelon seed.

How can I protect my family from tick bites?

- The single most important thing you can do is check yourself for ticks once a day. Favorite places ticks like to go on the body include areas between the toes, back of the knees, groin, armpits, neck, along the hairline, and behind the ears. Remember to check your children and pets, too. Remove any attached tick as soon as possible.
- Use repellents that contain DEET on exposed skin and those that contain permethrin on clothing. Be sure to read product labels to ensure safe and proper usage.
- Stick to main pathways and the center of trails when hiking.
 - Wear long-sleeved, light-colored shirts and

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This Month's Recipe: Pineapple Parfait

You won't mind serving dessert on a busy weeknight after assembling these quick parfaits.

Ingredients

- 2 8-ounce containers (2 cups) nonfat peach yogurt
- ½ pint fresh raspberries, (about 1 ¼ cups)
- 1½ cups fresh, frozen or canned pineapple chunks

Preparation

Divide and layer yogurt, raspberries and pineapple into 4 glasses.

The Merriam Community News

Editor: Joe Campo • Production: Sue Follett

The next Community News
will be published on Friday, May 6.

Email articles by April 29 to Joe at
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From The Nurse — continued from page 3

long pants tucked into socks. This will keep ticks away from your skin and make it easier to spot a tick on your clothing.

- Talk to your veterinarian about the best ways to protect your pets from ticks.
- There is currently no human vaccine available to protect against Lyme disease or any other tick-borne disease found in Massachusetts.

What should I do if I find a tick on myself or my child?

The tick should be carefully removed as soon as possible. The longer an infected tick remains attached to a person or animal, the higher the likelihood of disease transmission. Use fine point tweezers to grip the mouthparts of the tick as close to the skin as possible. The tick should not be squeezed or twisted, but pulled straight outward with steady, gentle pressure. You should not apply kerosene, petroleum jelly, nail polish, or a hot match tip to remove the tick; these measures are not effective and may result in injury. Notify your health care provider if you have been bitten by a deer tick, or if you develop a rash or other flu-like symptoms after a tick bite.

More information can be found at
www.mass.gov/dph and www.cdc.gov