



The Merriam Community News

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Ed Notes

This month Matt McDowell, our assistant principal, is the guest writer in the Ed Notes column.

Thank you, Matt – for all of your contributions at Merriam and for sharing your impressions with us. – E.K.



Whew! As I sit down to write this article, we are just coming to the end of our first successive 10 days of school since December and are about to begin a much-needed week-long rest for the students and staff alike. Earlier this week, we passed an important annual milestone for the children- 100th day- and it seems a logical time for me to reflect upon my initial few months here as a part of the Merriam School community. Taking part in the Kindergarten tours recently and having the opportunity to share with parents what makes Merriam School a truly special learning community has helped me to think about all that I have seen and been a part of here over the past few months.

Having come from outside the Acton School District, I can say without reservation, that Merriam is an amazing and somewhat unique learning environment where each child is known and cared for by a staff that gives their all each and every day. I have been fortunate to observe some powerful learning and community building occurring on a regular basis. Whether at our recent theme day celebration where the whole school was brought together across grade levels for another opportunity to live our core values, joining a kindergarten class for pancakes they made from scratch, watching a third grade math game to review & practice skills, student- led conferences (a first for me), visiting an Egyptian open house in a 6th grade class, or

Auction News: Tickets On Sale March 4

The Merriam Auction is Saturday, March 26, at the SpringHills Suites by Marriott, Devens. Tickets go on sale Friday, March 4. Look for details in your child's Friday mail folder.

Visit <http://merriam.maestroweb.com> for the latest Auction updates and to purchase tickets online.

“Greece: The Musical,” I have seen students excited and invested in their learning. They are indeed taking risks, showing persistence, and learning respect in all areas of the curriculum.

What has had the greatest impact on me is seeing the social development of the children. The Merriam School website proclaims, “Holding Community at Our Center.” Being new, I did not have a good understanding of what was really embodied in the slogan or how deeply the school is committed to building a caring community. Now I do. The weekly Monday morning All School Meetings, although brief, allow all members of the school, K-6, to come together, share, and connect. Furthermore, the classroom bonds that are forged as a result of looping create a real sense of family within our walls.

I do not mean to paint an overly rosy picture- like any family we have our struggles and disagreements from time to time. Issues come up in the classroom, at lunch or recess, and on the bus. Learning how to navigate interpersonal problems is an important part of education and of growing up. The real testament to what is working here is that each of these hurdles is seen as a challenge to be overcome and to learn from,

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Open Circle Guests Will Discuss Bullying Prevention

On Wednesday, March 16, from 7:30-9:00 pm, representatives from the Open Circle program will come to one of our PTO/School Council Community Conversations to talk with us about bully prevention. This promises to be a very informative evening. There will be a presentation and then there will be plenty of time for questions from the audience. This will be a wonderful opportunity for our entire community to continue to come together around this important topic. We hope that many of you are able to attend!

Donate Your Time on the Night of the Auction



The Merriam Auction runs smoothly with the help of dozens of parent volunteers who donate their time in setting up, running, and closing out the event. If you can spare any time, even just an hour or in 30-

minute increments, it would be greatly appreciated. Don't worry, you can still enjoy the night and help the Auction. Please contact Auction Night Coordinators: Lana Paone (lcpaone@comcast.net) and Kathy Simmons (kcsimmons@aol.com).

PTO Meeting Report

On January 11th Merriam moms and dads enjoyed muffins and doughnuts with their children as part of the PTO-sponsored Doughnuts with Dad, Muffins with Mom breakfast. This fun and informal gathering gave parents and students alike the opportunity to take a break from the typical hectic morning to share goodies with other members of the Merriam community. The PTO meeting immediately followed with an overview of the End-of-Year Conference Survey results and technology instruction in the classroom. Ed Kaufman reported on the findings from the parent survey on End-of-Year Conferences. The survey was implemented by a committee of Merriam staff with the goal of learning more from parents about their experience with the End-of-the-Year Conference. Across all Merriam grade levels, survey results indicate an overall positive

experience with most parents reporting that they found the Conference components informative or very informative. In response to survey feedback the committee hopes to pilot a revised End-of-Year Conference Summary Document with at least one grade level this year. Teachers from each loop gave presentations on how technology is integrated into the classroom at Merriam. Students in the early grades are taught how to use a computer for educational games and how to use a document camera in Science, while students in the upper grades are taught word processing, how to use Excel spreadsheets as part of Everyday Math, and how to use formatting tools to create the Merriam Monthly. Students also receive regular lessons and reminders in internet safety and responsibility.

Important Notice For 6th Grade Parent/Guardians

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has the following requirements for all students entering Grade 7 in September 2011:

- MMR: 2 doses.
- Varicella: A physician-certified history of chicken pox disease or 2 doses of varicella-containing vaccine for children under 13.
- Hepatitis B: 3 doses.
- Tdap: A single dose of Tetanus, Diphtheria and acellular Pertussis (Tdap) vaccine.
- A copy of an up-to-date physical examination will also be required for all students before entering Grade 7.

Many of the above vaccines may have been administered while your child was in elementary school. Please check with your Healthcare Provider to be certain that your child's immunizations are up-to-date and documented in his/her record. Send a copy of the exam and updated information record to your elementary school health office and the information will be included in your child's health record when it is transferred to the Junior High School in June. If you do not have the necessary paperwork completed before the end of school, send it to the school nurse at the Junior High School by August 26, 2011.

Parents Needed for Willow Books Fundraiser!

Our Willow Books fundraiser on Wednesday, March 9th is fast approaching.

Come along out of the cold and hear YOUR children's teacher read aloud from her or his favorite book! Come shop for books and buy treats and hot cocoa from Willow Books' cafe while your children are entertained!

We need parent volunteers to help us settle children, to answer questions, and to make sure the teacher readings run on time.

Interested in helping out? Please get in touch with Cultural Enrichment co-chairs, Cath Smith at cath.a.smith66@gmail.com (978 263 4377) or Ronit Ben-Shir at rbenshir@jccgb.org

Willow Books will generously donate 15% of all books and cafe sales* from this evening's event from between the hours of 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. to Merriam's Cultural Enrichment program fund. Our Cultural Enrichment program enables us to bring in some wonderful and enriching art and science programs to the school that enhance and broaden the educational experience for all of Merriam's K-6 children.

Past examples of our Cultural Enrichment events have been: guest children's book authors, Stephen Krensky (co-author, alongside Marc Brown, of the best selling Arthur series) and Alaskan non-fiction children's writer, Debbie Miller, the internationally renowned Latin American singing group, Sol Y Canto, the Commonwealth Ballet, acclaimed oral storyteller and musician, Odds Bodkin, and our latest fall 2010 event, the wonderful, Dancing Wheels, a troop of able and non-able bodied dancers.

Our schedule (subject to change) for March 9th:

6:00: Myrna Gutfreund (K): *Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed* by Mo Willems (Parent helper: Karen Brandstein)

6:00: Lee Trench (K): *There is a Bird on Your*

Head (An Elephant and Piggie book) by Mo Willems

6:10 Wendy Tompkins (K): *Wilfred Gordon MacDonald Partridge* by Mem Fox & Julie Vivas (PH: Kim McCormick)

6:20: Karen Sonner (Grade 1): *Skippy Jon Jones* by Judy Schachner

6:40 Annie Doble (Grade 1): *Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon* by Patty Lovell

7: 00 Fran Strohm (Grade 2): *We are in a Book* by Mo Willems (PH: Carmen Logue)

7:15 Melissa Reinhardt (Grade 4): *George's Secret Key to the Universe* by Stephen & Lucy Hawking (PH: Nidhi Lal)

7:15 Maryann Ayers (Grade 5): *The Cherry Tree Buck and Other Stories* by Robin Moore (PH: Carmen Logue)

7:30 Alyson Whatcott (Grade 6): *Cosmic* by Frank Catrell Boyce

***Note:** Willow Books gift cards and any advance book order sales are *excluded* from our fundraiser.

Donate a Raffle Item to the Merriam Auction

Raffle items are a great way to start the Auction evening, and to take a chance to win some fantastic prizes. To date, there are very few donations for the Raffle and more are needed to have it be successful. Raffle Wish List Items:

- \$20 scratch tickets
- Wii game (any)
- iPad
- Garmin or TomTom GPS
- NOOK or NOOKcolor e-reader

To donate now, go to <http://merriam.maestroweb.com>. Questions? Contact Renee Yourk at ryourk@verizon.net.



Parker Damon International Night

Save the date: May 6, 2011
Parker Damon Building @
6pm.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: *My family moved to America generations ago. I do not identify myself as "international". Can I then be a part of "International" Night?*

A: International Night is for ALL families from Merriam and McCarthy-Towne Schools. International Night proudly celebrates America as a part of the International community and encourages you to come and enjoy the evening as an American. If you can relate to another country as your cultural ethnicity and would like to share the culture with the community, that's wonderful as well.

American culture and heritage has a unique position in the world. American culture encompasses our rich history, our preferences for sports, our scientific and technological innovations, our popular culture that has expressed itself through movies, music, fashion, theater, architecture etc. Even American cuisine is distinctive in many ways. Come celebrate America as a nation, by setting up a booth on USA in the global village or having your kids dressing up or putting up a performance representing an American icon. Bring in a food like a pie / salad / barbeque / seafood to share with in our international potluck.

Q: *What will my kids get out of this experience?*

A: Research has shown that an international exposure to kids at an early age has an enduring impact that positively shapes both kids and adults. It's an evening dedicated to all the countries and cultures in the world that teaches people that differences across nations and cultures are a cause for celebration, exploration and respect. The kids will have a great experience traveling through different countries in the "Global" village. Encourage your kids to perform and be a part of the diverse lineup of performers entertaining the audience. It's a proud and an

The Merriam Auction Helps Fund our Teaching Assistants

We all know that the Merriam School is a special place and that one of the things that makes it so special is a dedicated teaching assistant in every classroom. Teaching assistants are an integral part of your child's learning experience. Throughout the school year, the Merriam PTO organizes many activities and events, including the Auction, to raise funds to support our teaching assistants. Last year, over \$53,000 was raised to fund EIGHT positions. Auction donations from parents and school staff brought in over \$28,000, or 53% of total Auction revenues.

enriching experience for them to watch and/or perform! Please contact Ally (allyli88@yahoo.com), if you want to register your kid to perform on the International Night. The spots are limited!

Q: *How much does it cost to attend the event?*

A: The event is FREE FOR ALL to attend. We request families to bring in some food to share with 6-8 people for our International Potluck Dinner. You can bring anything from an appetizer, a side, an entrée or a dessert.

Q: *How do I get involved?*

A: The International Night Committee is formed by a group of parent volunteers. We need plenty of volunteers to ensure the success of this event. There are many tasks you can help us with like greeting guests, directing traffic, decorating the cafeteria, organizing potluck dinner, serving food, coordinating with the hosts of the Global Village participants, hosting a country booth, helping with stage management, queuing the performances....the opportunities are endless!

For more information or If you want to volunteer to this event, please contact:
Jayanthi jaysrinath@yahoo.com or Ally allyli88@yahoo.com

Save the Date for the Merriam Yard Sale

Save the date for the Merriam Yard Sale: Saturday, May 14. Please save gently-used toys, books, DVDs, sports equipment, and household items for this important fundraiser. Thank you!

Healthy Recipe: Frozen Chocolate-Covered Bananas

This month's recipe is from Eating Well Magazine. Kids will love dipping bananas in melted chocolate and rolling them in coconut to make this tasty frozen treat.

Ingredients

- 4 large ripe bananas, peeled and cut into thirds crosswise
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup semisweet or bittersweet chocolate chips, melted
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup shredded coconut

Instructions

Peel 4 large ripe bananas, cut in thirds and insert a popsicle stick into the cut end of each piece. Melt $\frac{3}{4}$ cup semisweet or bittersweet chocolate chips. Cover each piece of banana with melted chocolate and sprinkle with coconut.

Place the bananas on a baking sheet lined with parchment or wax paper and freeze until frozen, about 2 hours. Makes 12 servings.

Questions for the Auction Co-Chairs?

Contact Donna German, donna@obxnj.com or Kristen Rivard, kristenrivard@hotmail.com.

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rather than a set-back. Merriam students know that their teachers care about them and are here to help guide them on their journey.

I feel very fortunate to have been invited into the Merriam Community and look forward to more of the same in the years to come. I hope everyone had a restorative break and a chance to reconnect as a family, either at home or traveling. Think Spring!

The Merriam Community News

Editor: Joe Campo • Production: Sue Follett

The next Community News will be published on Friday, April 1.

Email articles by March 25 to Joe at jb_campo@yahoo.com.