



# The Merriam Community News

May 2011 - Volume 19 - Issue 8

## Ed Notes

In education we talk about spiraling or revisiting topics, because students need time to see concepts more than once, sometimes simply because they haven't visited the material in some time. For a similar reason the principal newsletter article in May has been traditionally devoted to the placement process. We want to be sure that Merriam parents are reacquainted with the time, energy, care, and priorities that are utilized in creating classes for the following year. Though it's about four months before we begin school next year, we'll begin the process of creating groups soon. For some of you this will be easy. If your child is in the second year of a loop, he or she will be with the same students and teacher for another year.



For students entering first, third, or fifth grade, we will soon undertake a process to create balanced groups. Our professional staff will work to create groupings where children will be comfortable, and will be able to learn and grow together. All children will be grouped with a "comfortable peer" from their current class or a previous class. A "comfortable peer" is usually not a best friend; rather he or she is someone who a child is familiar with and will be glad to have accompany him/her into the next loop. In the placement process attention will be paid to strengths and needs of students, and special education considerations will be factored in. In addition, we look closely at potential relationships in the classes as well as group dynamics. Classes will be created without a teacher's name associated; I will add the teacher's name to each group once the process is complete. There's no magic formula for creating balanced classes. A great deal of time is spent on discussions that enable us to do the best job we possibly can. Just as an example, teachers from

## Merriam Auction Nets Over \$50,000!



Many thanks to all who made Merriam's 12th Annual Auction a success! We are excited to announce that together we raised over \$50,000 to help fund our classroom teaching assistants.

- Auction 2011 Co-Chairs Kristen Rivard and  
Donna German

one or two loops back will assist in the placement of fifth graders. Special educators also join the process to advise about placement of children. Remember – kids grow and change – even over a summer – and these changes can affect the dynamics of a group we've created. The good news is that our teachers work hard every year to bring students together and to build a sense of community, and that's something you can count on in every classroom at Merriam.

We will not accept requests for specific teachers or for specific peers to be with your child next year. I am happy to explain in more detail (just give me a call) why we do not take those requests, but from all that I've experienced and all that I know it is not the best way to construct classes. Our emphasis is on creating groups of children that will fit all of our learning environments, rather than matching teachers with students.

From my own experience as a parent (and as a student, many years ago), I truly understand the anxiety that accompanies this process. Many of us have assumptions about what will be the "right" placement for our children. And sometimes there's disappointment when the new class doesn't fit those assumptions. But often those assumptions

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## International Night Is May 6



Celebrate the cultural diversity of the Merriam and McCarthy -Towne Schools at the 5th Annual Parker Damon International Night! Join us: **Friday, May 6, 6:00-8:30 p.m., in the Cafetorium.**

- 6:00: 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!
- 7:15: International Entertainment by students of Merriam and McCarthy-Towne Schools
- 8:30: Raffle – Win a gift certificate and items from local restaurants and stores!

All families are encouraged to participate and wear clothing from their country of origin or ancestry! This is a family event! Students should be supervised by an adult at all times.

Note to all the participants: There will be a rehearsal at 6:00 pm on Thursday, May 5th in the Cafetorium. All the dancers please make sure that you have submitted your music in MP3 format to Ally Li ([allyli88@yahoo.com](mailto:allyli88@yahoo.com)).

Parker Damon International Night Planning Committee:

- Jayanthi [jaysrinath@yahoo.com](mailto:jaysrinath@yahoo.com) or Ally [allyli88@yahoo.com](mailto:allyli88@yahoo.com) (Merriam)
- Katherine (Kim) [katharinelarsson@yahoo.com](mailto:katharinelarsson@yahoo.com) or Olyvia [olyvia.sharan@gmail.com](mailto:olyvia.sharan@gmail.com) (McCarthy-Towne)

## School Picnic Reminder

Please join us Friday, June 17th from 5:30 - 7:30 on the back playground for the End-of-Year Picnic. This is a fun time to catch up with friends and line up summer play dates. Bring your own picnic dinner, non-alcoholic beverages, and a

blanket or chairs. This is not a drop-off event - all children must be supervised by an adult.

## Cultural Enrichment News

### Ball in the House

Cultural Enrichment at Merriam is very excited to welcome *Ball in the House* to our afternoon K-6 All School Meeting on Friday May 13th from 2:15 to 3:15 p.m.

All morning kindergarten students accompanied by their parents or guardians are most welcome to attend. Meanwhile, check out this superb Boston-based acappella group at <http://www.ballinthehouse.com>.

We are able to sponsor these marvelous curriculum-based Cultural Enrichment programs for all our students thanks to YOUR support!

If you have any questions or suggestions about Cultural Enrichment at Merriam, or if you wish to join our committee or volunteer your services by previewing or recommending local arts, math, or science shows for our school, we welcome you! We especially need help planning our 2011-12 program. Please get in contact with one of the current co-chairs below:

Cath Smith at 978-263-4377;  
[cath.a.smith66@gmail.com](mailto:cath.a.smith66@gmail.com)  
Ronit Ben-Shir at 978-263-9872;  
[rbenshir@jccgb.org](mailto:rbenshir@jccgb.org)

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don't prove to be accurate. My best experience as an elementary student (fifth grade) occurred in the class I most dreaded entering (I didn't think the teacher would like me); I wound up having an amazing and transformative year. When my daughters were in classes with a very good friend (something they thought they wanted), it often created problems that were not anticipated. If we trust the process and reassure our children that their new class will be great – and it almost always is – we help to make the transition that much easier.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

## 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](mailto:amandalye1@yahoo.com) or (978) 635-9879, or Karen Dean, at [dkdean83@gmail.com](mailto:dkdean83@gmail.com) or (978) 274-2084.

## Sun Safety for Children

Childhood sunburns can increase your child's risk of developing skin cancer as an adult. Even a suntan can be harmful to children. Tanning is an outward sign of internal skin damage. Research shows that much of the damage to skin is done in the first 18 years of life. Protecting skin and eyes during these early years can reduce the risk of some types of skin cancer by up to 78%. Melanoma is a cancer of younger people and can start as early as adolescence.

### Youth and Skin Cancer

- 50% of lifetime exposure to UV light occurs during childhood and adolescence.
- It can take less than 10 minutes for a child's skin to burn.
- Children with severe sunburns are at an increased risk of skin cancer.

- A person born today is twice as likely to develop malignant melanoma compared to someone born only a decade ago and 12 times more likely as someone born 50 years ago.
- Being sun safe is the first step to reduce the chances of getting skin cancer later in life.

### Teach Children Sun Safe Habits

Children learn healthy habits best at a young age. Therefore, it is important to begin protecting your children from the beginning and to teach them the importance of sun safety. With sun damage accumulating over a person's lifespan, beginning sun safety habits at a young age should be a priority.

- Maximize protection between the hours of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Wear sun-protective, light-colored clothing including long-sleeved shirts and pants made of tightly-woven fabric.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat that protects head, face, ears and neck. If a baseball cap is worn, make sure to use sunscreen on ears and neck.
- Wear UV-protective sunglasses with 99%-100% UV absorption.
- During peak sun hours (10-4pm) seek shade. Shadow rule-if your shadow is shorter than you, the sun's rays are at their strongest and you should seek shade.
- Encourage children to play in shaded areas, especially during peak sun hours.
- Use a sunscreen of SPF 15+ and apply a generous amount (about a palmful) 30 minutes before going outside.
- Reapply sunscreen every 90 minutes or after swimming, towel drying, or perspiring, even if the label says the product is waterproof. Don't forget the lips and ears - both areas burn easily.
- Strongly discourage the use of tanning beds.

### **The Merriam Community News**

Editor: Joe Campo ▪ Production: Sue Follett

The next Community News will be distributed on Friday, June 3.

Email articles by May 27 to Joe at [jb\\_campo@yahoo.com](mailto:jb_campo@yahoo.com).

## PTO Fundraising News

Thank you for helping to reach the PTO fundraising goal!

We sincerely appreciate the many volunteers who have been incredibly generous with their time, talents, and participation in PTO-sponsored events. Thanks to the passionate work of our volunteers, most of the fundraising events thus far have been successful in achieving our forecast to date. However, we need your financial support to reach our final 2010/2011 school year fundraising goal.

Several families have shared with us that they prefer to make direct donations. The direct appeal that was sent home to all families in the Friday Mail Packets is designed to give you this opportunity to make a cash donation and take advantage of matching corporate funds, if available through your employer. The direct appeal is our last fundraiser of the year. As you know, funds raised by Merriam PTO are gifted to the Acton School Committee and used exclusively to keep classroom assistants in every classroom at Merriam. Thank you for your support.

### Looking to Get Involved?

Our Parent Teacher Organization is looking for volunteers who can help with a variety of projects next year. Getting involved in a committee is a great way to build friendships and get closer to your child's school experience. Send us an email and we'll find a good fit for you! Contact: Neena Arora, PTO co-chair [neenaarora@aol.com](mailto:neenaarora@aol.com).

### AB PIP Offers Summerskills Workbooks & Nature Guide

Parent Involvement Project (PIP) is coordinating the sales of Summerskills Sharpeners, a series of Math, Language Arts, and World Language workbooks for pre-K to Grade 12. These workbooks are designed to reinforce the skills learned in the just-completed school year. Parents are generally advised to select the book grade level that corresponds with the grade their student has just finished. More information about Summerskills may be found on the PIP website: <http://actonpip.org/>.

The cost is \$17 per book. At least \$2 of each book purchase will go to support PIP's math and science enrichment activities, even more if we have a big order! The order forms are available online at <http://actonpip.org/pdf/2011summerskillsorderform.pdf> and at the Acton Memorial Library. The order deadline is May 20, so place yours now to guarantee "backpack" delivery in mid-June.

In cooperation with the Acton-Boxborough schools, AB PIP is selling Acton Naturally, a Pocket Naturalist's Guide, a great introduction to our local plants and animals. More info at: [http://actonpip.org/pdf/2011natureguideflyer\\_spring.pdf](http://actonpip.org/pdf/2011natureguideflyer_spring.pdf) and the guides can be ordered right along with your workbooks.

Contact Susan Krikorian at 978-635-0174, email PIP at [actonpip@yahoo.com](mailto:actonpip@yahoo.com) or visit the website for more information about Summerskills and PIP.

### This Month's Recipe: Oatmeal Energy Bars

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cooking Time: 20 minutes

#### Ingredients

- ½ cup peanut butter
- ½ cup Splenda for Baking
- 1 tbsp cocoa powder, natural unsweetened
- 2 tbsp red raspberry preserves
- ½ cup whole wheat flour
- 2 cups old-fashioned oatmeal
- 2 ½ large egg whites
- 1 3/5 oz light soy milk
- ½ tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon

Mix flour, baking soda, and cinnamon in a bowl. In an electric mixer, combine peanut butter and splenda until fully incorporated. Mix in egg whites. Pour in flour mixture, then oatmeal, then cocoa and jelly if desired. Set oven to 350 degrees. Spray pan and press down in the pan. Bake for 20 minutes.

