



MANTUA PTA NEWS

www.mantuapta.org

February 2004

Carole Thomas President's Message

Never Too Late!

I continue to be inspired and encouraged by the strength of our PTA and the commitment from so many of its members to enhance the education of all of our children. Thank you to all of you who continue to work diligently on our children's behalf and especially to a few of you who have stepped up in the last couple of months to fill some vacancies.

Thank you to Suzanne Summers for volunteering to be our county representative at County Council meetings. It is critical for Mantua Elementary School to have a voice (and ears) at these meetings, but it is impossible for PTA members to attend every school and county government meeting – so it is wonderful to have someone on our Board to keep us informed about issues that impact our children and their education.

Also, thanks to Dave Lenox for stepping in to serve as our representative on the FCCPTA's sponsored Special Education group. Dave has jumped in with both feet and has already made progress in developing strategies and programs to help parents of students receiving special education services. As our representative, Dave has received several emails with extremely useful information that he would like to share with parents of children with special education needs (actually a lot of this information is valuable to ALL parents). If you are interested in joining the Mantua PTA's Special Education distribution list, please contact Dave Lenox at DavidLLenox@aol.com.

Lastly, thank you to John Jennison for volunteering to serve as our liaison to the "Renovate to Educate the Next Era at Woodson" (RENEW) committee. Many of you will remember touring the Woodson High School building in the Fall of 2000. Those who toured Woodson saw a building built in 1962 that has never undergone a major renovation (only a "cosmetic" renewal in 1981). As you may have seen, there are many issues with the aging building including: inadequate electrical systems for computers and other high tech equipment, exposed auxiliary ducts that vent fumes from run-down science labs, an outdated HVAC system that sometimes requires DAYS to shift from heating to cooling and vice versa, inadequate storage and teacher workspaces, makeshift classrooms with some students taught in 10 ft. by 24 ft. classrooms, and no facilities to hold the entire student body. Many of you will also remember witnessing at that time the successful efforts of many folks in the Woodson pyramid community to ensure that Woodson High School was identified on the FY02-06 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) with construction commencing in FY05. RENEW is currently working to ensure that the school budget and CIP maintains this original schedule (which has been modified to have construction commencing in FY07) and will once again need the Woodson community to rally behind this effort.

In keeping with the PTA's goal of making the PTA meetings not only an opportunity to conduct our business, but also an opportunity to educate and inform parents about school and child issues, John will provide a status report on the Woodson Renovation status efforts and educate parents on what they can do to help keep the effort on track. In the meantime, check out this site for the latest RENEW information: <http://www.renewinc.org/>.

Ready to jump in to help out your child's school and its PTA? Great! We have the following positions to fill:

- *Traffic Committee Chair*
- *School Board County Representative*
- *Nominating Committee for the PTA Executive Committee*

Please contact Carole Thomas at caroleandjay@aol.com if you can help out in one of these positions.

Jan-Marie Fernandez, Cheryl Thompson, and Tina Tingler Notes From the Mantua Principals' Office

In school, students learn how to use math skills such as adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing. They also apply these skills in logical and systematic thinking, the interpretation of data, and pattern recognition. The “hows” and “whys” of math are just as important as the skill of math. Parents should help their children practice and reinforce math at home. Here are some tips noted in *Report to Parents* published by National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP):

- **Being enthusiastic:** When parents tell their children that math is important and interesting, children notice and emulate this same attitude towards math.
- **Showing math's relevance:** Parents should send the message that math is relevant as they involve their children in daily math-related problem solving experiences ranging from doubling a recipe to planning a route of errands.
- **Playing math and strategy games:** Plan a family night once every week and play different games. Many board games involve math skills such as counting, computing, and/or developing strategies. Ask other families what games they play at home or ask your child's math teacher for some ideas.
- **Connecting math to the future:** Accountants, engineers, and auto mechanics use math in their profession. Share how you use math in your profession with your child. Children need to know how the knowledge of math is important for their future careers.
- **Reinforcing number facts:** Help your children study for math tests by using flashcards, counting change at the store, or play games.
- **Helping with homework:** Math homework is assigned to students as a way of reinforcing what is learned in class. Parents should offer to help their children when they are stuck with their homework, but be sure not to give them answers as teachers use homework to determine mastery of skills and concepts. When parents help their child with homework, it is important for the parent to communicate with the teacher about the math curriculum to know that their children learn in school and set high standards so that young mathematicians will learn important skills and ideas before moving on to middle and high school math classes.

When parents help their children practice and refine skills in math, children see math as relevant, intriguing, and fun. Consider using the following resources as you work with your child at home:

www.figurethis.org informs parents how to use challenging and engaging math problems for students in the upper elementary grades.

www.nctm.org contains ideas in the “families area.”

<http://mathforum.org/parents.citizens.html> links to a variety of online resources.

www.learningfirst.org includes tips for parents.

“Positive Parenting” Workshop for Korean Families

Our Parent Liaison, Younghee Kang, in coordination with the Mantua PTA, is planning an evening workshop for Korean families on Tuesday evening, Feb. 24. Dr. Park, an educational psychologist who is the Director for the Youth and Family Program at the Korean Community Service Center, will be speaking in Korean on the topic of Positive Parenting. This workshop will take place at the Mantua Library at 7:00 p.m. All Korean families in the Woodson Pyramid are invited. If you have questions, please leave a message for Ms. Kang at school office.

Congratulations to Ms. Toth and Mrs. Buck's 5th graders for scoring as a team **FOURTH** in the nation in the gold division of the WordMasters! This is quite an accomplishment, since there were no perfect team scores in this division, and no team scored over 190/200.

Fairfax County Public School Budget News The subject of the January 29 Fairfax County Council of PTAs General membership meeting was the Superintendent's FY 2005 Proposed Budget. The proposed budget totals 1.8 billion, an increase of \$136.4 million (8.2%) over 2004. About 85% of the budget is for employee compensation, including a 3% market scale adjustment for teachers, 2% for support employees, and a step increase averaging 3.1% for all eligible employees. \$15.4 million in budget cuts are also included in the proposed budget.

The 2005 cost of educating a general education student is \$9, 201 (an increase of 7.9% over 2004), the cost of educating a special education student is \$16, 071, an increase of 6.5%. ESOL students cost an additional \$3,071 each (an increase of 5.2%). Some students are receiving multiple services, such as special education and ESOL. The average annual cost of educating a student in Fairfax County in FY 2004 was \$10,113. That figure is lower than per student costs in the Counties of Arlington, Falls Church, Alexandria, and Montgomery. The average teacher's salary in Fairfax County, excluding fringe benefits, was \$55,265 in 2004. This was less than the average salary of teachers in Arlington, Loudon, and Montgomery Counties.

Largest Budget Increases from FY 2000 to FY 2005:

The cost of teacher's health insurance has increased 102% in the past 6 years. The cost of specialists has increased 52% in that time, largely due to the need for technology training. Although overall growth in students is 8% since FY 2000, English as a Second Language (ESOL) students have increased 80% in that time period, and special education level 2 and preschool students have increased 18%, and free and reduced price lunch students have also grown 18%.

In FY 2005, FCPS expects to receive less than 20% of its budget from the state of Virginia, whereas other Virginia school divisions receive about 45% of their funding from the state. Virginia ranks near the bottom of all states in funding for education, and Fairfax receives much less than most divisions due to a Local Composite Index. The LCI is based largely on real estate values but not adjusted for cost of living. FCPS must ask Fairfax County for an increase of 9.7%. For more info about the 2005 Proposed Budget, visit www.fcps.edu.

Counselor's Corner

We have been noticing lately that certain topics and problems are popping up with some of our students. These problems have to do with anxiety related to current events. For example, some children may be having a harder time than usual, separating from parents, or being worried about their own safety or the safety of their parents. Some children may be having difficulty falling asleep at night, having bad dreams, and/or awakening in the night and having difficulty going back to sleep again. Violent or scary events that happen in our world, for example, kidnappings, can instill fear in most children, but especially in children who tend to be sensitive or to worry a lot. Please be very mindful of what your children are being exposed to in the news, especially graphic newscasts. It is often helpful to screen and filter what the children see and hear. Try to convey confidence that you (the adults) are doing everything you can to keep everyone safe. At school, when we practice fire and tornado drills, we explain to the children that we are not doing this to scare them, but so that we are all prepared with a plan just in case something might happen. If children ask you "what will happen if . . .", explaining your "plans" to them, may help them feel more assured that you are taking care of these uncertainties. Please let the counselors know if you need any additional help.

This month, the K-3 classes will be learning more about Friendship skills in their Guidance lessons. Students in grades 4-6 will be focusing on how to work together cooperatively in groups, and deal with conflicts. The sixth graders will be having a visit from the Counselors at Frost on Feb. 23.

KIDS CARE CLUB NEWS

We Share Because We Care Saturday, February 7, was a wonderful evening. Our *Share To Care*--A Talent Show was awesome with so much talent being shared. The performers had such fun with their routines and it showed. They performed with all their hearts, knowing that the evening was dedicated to Cameron McClain as he battles Leukemia. Even though we had an exact repeat of conditions from last year-- snow on Friday, no school, no ACT II dress rehearsal-- the show went on and pretty smoothly. The crowd was super and helped the Kids Care Club raised over \$3000 for Cameron's Cause.

The evening boasted a spectacular display of talent by our students, parents and staff. We congratulate all the performers; all are stars!! The stars who performed and shared their talents were: Ilyas & Hamed Abawi, Mya Abousy, Aaron, Emily & Ilana Adler, Marien Alejandro, Shannon Baker, Sarah Barham, Alexandra Bellido, Mari Berger, Bonnie Bishop, Samantha Bryant, Carol Ann Bulger, Hannah Casey, Christy Cippichio, Olivia Cliff, Katie Clark, Abby Cochran, Emily, Katie & Wendy Cox, Heather Coleman, Maddie Curry, Erica Dickison, Tracy Dien, Emma Dreyer, Bradley Eshelman, Kelle Esherick, Greta Fairbanks, Meghan Farrell, Katie & Emily Freeman, Ashley Frongello, Re Gade, Johanna Gehman, Sara & Hala Ghannam, Katie Gianturco, Kayla Guglielmi, Adam Gordon, Laura & Robbie Gostel, PJ & Rocky Granam, Isabel Greenberg, Mia Gross, Melissa Halbbrook, Emily Halstead, Morgan Hedden, Shannon Henris, Kelly Hill, Lexus Holland, Emily Horton, Jordan Jackson, Angelica Jennings, Kaelin & Mady Jennison, Kathryn Joe, Allia Kabbani, Ms Kerlin, Christina Kim, Daniel Kim, Eric Kirkland, Steve Kuhn, Austin Lahiff, Jessica Laiti, Christine Lee, Michelle Lee, Camille Loomis, Maddie Love, David & Jacob Luftglass, Lauren & Nina Lukow, Hannah Major, Ameila Marosek, Lexi Mayer, Julia Mead, Erica Messenger, Brianne Mikesch, Elvis Miller, Sydney Mills, Dee Dee & Shelly Montgomery, Anna, Genie, & Lily O'Hara, Ethan Olswang, Michael Prutuch, Emma Quinette, Joceline Reguerin, Denita Relaford, Joanna Reyes, Sammy Richmond, Ali Romig, Julia, Mia & Paul Savoca, Joshua & Megan Schiffres, Aubrey Sharman, Lucy Shi, Kari Smith, Janet Sottolano, Joanna Sperapani, Georgia & Savanna Stephens, Zora Stephenson, Anne Stickley, Carli Strandberg, Marlee Stynchula, Ellery Thomas, Bridgett Torrise, Candice Tsung, Matt & Joey Urbanek, Joy Vander Clute, Lucy Varley, William Wainscott, Cindy & Lizzy Wallin, Marie Whitehead, Morgan Willard, and Erwin Xia, Rui Ying Yang, Jessica & Alan Yellowitz, Allen Yoo, Dennis Wang, and Hong Hou, Zhou.

A special thank you goes to Joyce Montgomery, for her inspiration and help with food and decorations and to Beth Whitehead for her eye for talent, stage and sound expertise. We especially thank Mrs. Fernandez for emceeding the evening, Ms Thompson for producing the video and Denita Relaford and Bill Wainscott for interpreting. Thanks too, to our crew, Claire Whitehead on spotlight, Josh Whitehead on curtain, Andrew Payne on lights, Danayit Musse, backstage, and all the wonderful parents and their helpers who coordinated the behind-the-scene details, helped with refreshments, and cleanup! And last, but certainly not least, a BIG THANK YOU to Jennifer Cooper. Thanks for caring and sharing to make the evening so special.



Get ready to blast off into the future with Galaxy Quest 2004, Mantua's annual spring carnival. There will be class games and booths, the ever-popular cake-walk, a moon bounce, great raffle prizes, cotton candy, Kettle Corn and more. You may browse through the Galaxy Trading Post for those one of a kind treasures or obtain space provisions (food) at the Cosmic Café. This is a wonderful event for the whole family and kids of all ages.

Galaxy Trading Post – The trading post needs quality toys, books, household items and more for this attraction. (No clothing or shoes please.) If you are cleaning out your closets and homes of unused items, and would like to donate them to the cause, contact Nancy Robinson at 703-352-0510 or mrsrobinson@cox.net or Cindy Dengler at 703-503-8080 or denglece@osd.pentagon.mil.

Poster Contest – All students from preschool to sixth grade are invited to enter the poster contest. Students must work independently at home, using this year's theme "Galaxy Quest". Entries are due in the front office on Monday, February 23rd. All entries will win a prize!!!

Cake Decorating Contest – Theme decorated cakes will be judged and the winners awarded Carnival tickets. There are age categories from K to Adult. For further details watch the alert news and flyers on the WEB.

Check out the WEB – Full details on how to volunteer, advance sale of raffle tickets and event tickets may be found at the PTA WEB site www.mantuapta.org. Just click on the carnival location to find out full information and to obtain flyers for all of the events.