

December 2003 Calendar of Events

12/10, 7:30pm - 4th and 5th Grade
Concert

12/11 - Family Night (holiday crafts)

12/12, 9am - School Meeting

12/19 - 9am TG Parent Council

12/21, 6:30pm - Communities of Light

12/23 - K-12 Early Dismissal

12/24 - 1/4 - Winter Break

1/5 - School Reopens

1/9, 7:30pm Toll Gate Trenton Titans
Hockey Outing

PTO Executive Committee

Co-Presidents

Ned Fletcher (737-8825)
Randee Tengi (737-7198)

Vice President

Catherine Ahmad (818-9239)

Secretary

Sandee Steinberg (818-0470)

Treasurer

Molly Mahn (818-1694)

Room Parent Coordinators

Randi Plevy (730-1890)
Frank Jankoski (818-1380)

Executive Committee Email

tqpto@hvrds.k12.nj.us

PTO Website

<http://www.hvrds.k12.nj.us/tollgate/home/pto/home.html>

Toll Gate PTO Newsletter

PRINCIPAL'S LETTER

Dear Parents,

We all know that you, the parents, are the first teachers of your child and the home environment can have a profound impact on fostering positive feelings toward literacy. We often speak about how children develop language. They learn to talk almost unconsciously at first. They move from babbling to speaking and interacting with others to have their needs met and to explore the world around them. As parents you do not list a set of rules for your children to learn before speaking but you respond to your child, reinforce sounds, and use language for real purposes. Just as children learn to talk by talking, they learn to write by writing.

As you know, our theme this year is "We're Writing Right." Writing is nothing more than talking on paper. Helping children understand that removes many barriers that block some students from writing easily. There are four parts to language – reading, speaking, writing, and listening. Reading and listening are the receiving and decoding parts of the message. Speaking and writing are the transmitting parts of the message. All four parts affect each other.

Why do so many children today have difficulty with the idea of writing? Think about the family structure and daily pacing. Today's life is busy and family time is shrinking. When we are busy we have less time to discuss topics. The language children hear will come out in their writing so I encourage you to TALK, TALK, and TALK some more. Children become writers through meaningful interactions with more knowledgeable people (parents, for example). Children become better
(Continued on Pg. 2)

PRESIDENTS' LETTER

With the holiday season rapidly approaching, this is the perfect time of year to think about ways of sharing what we have with others. For the 17th year in a row, our Toll Gate staff, students and their families have prepared the Thanksgiving Dinner for more than 1000 guests of the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK). Our TASK Committee, led by Maude Tatar and Elizabeth Haines, did a phenomenal job organizing this tremendous undertaking, and our large circle of friends helped to pull it off. Special thanks go to Lauri Kilstein who has run the Pie-A-Thon for 15 years now. Not only have countless hungry people felt the warmth of her generosity, but a thousand Toll Gators have heard her explain why this project is so important. For many kids, this is their first real explanation of what poverty is and how they can help.

Everything we as a school do to help others is greatly needed and appreciated by the organizations we assist – from the TASK dinner, to the collection of winter coats for the Rescue Mission of Trenton and the collection of medicine cabinet supplies for Millhill. This year we'd like to find more ways to involve the children directly in helping those in need, and at the same time be more responsive to the needs of the charities in our area. As a start we have formed a new committee to act as an umbrella group that will encompass all of Toll Gate's philanthropic projects. Our new Community Action Committee (CAT) was introduced at the December PTO meeting. More information will be coming home in January. Right now we'd like to let
(Continued on Pg. 2)

PRINCIPAL'S LETTER...

writers by practicing and receiving constructive feedback.

At Toll Gate this year, one of our goals relates to writing. We will make efforts to create a writing community. In this community, students will be encouraged to "find their writing voices" and feel comfortable in taking risks to become competent writers.

Our students will be expected to engage in monthly writing exercises (*often based on a theme or genre*). The students will also develop skills in composition (*organization of thought, creativity and ideas*) as well as editing (*grammar and mechanics*). To accomplish this writing goal, students will participate in Writers' Workshop, learn and use peer-editing strategies, as well as apply rubrics to their work.

Listed below are some practical suggestions to help you better understand young writers and to encourage you to use shared writing opportunities at home:

•Accept whatever your child writes. The writing could be in the form of drawings, letters of the alphabet, or approximate spellings. (As children get older, it is important to expect the spellings to be correct.) You might say, "I noticed you wrote most of the letters in mommy. You started the word Sam with an s. Let's check to see if it is turned the right way."

•Believe that your child can write. You might say, "Let's leave a note for mommy to let her know we are riding our bikes." If your child says that she cannot write, you may say, "You know how to draw a bicycle, don't you?" Let her draw a picture in the note. OR "You know how to write your name, don't you?" Let your child sign her name.

•Sit side by side with your child to share the writing experience.

•Help your child express his thoughts and discover what he really wants to say by talking through his ideas with him.

•When the writing becomes difficult, share in the writing. Make some letters or write a word for your child.

•Be willing to help your child say the word slowly and listen for the sounds, rather than just spelling the word.

•Celebrate what your child can do as a writer. You may say, "I noticed you tried really hard to use the sounds of the letters to write that word. Would you like me to show you how adults write that word?"

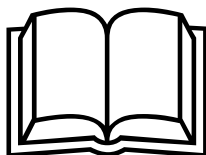
A good writer is generally a good reader. Reading is a key to success in all walks of life.

Fondly,
Myra J. Bugbee

Special Thought

The ordinary acts we practice every day at home are of more importance to the soul than their simplicity might suggest.

Thomas Moore



I would like to invite students to read to me again this year. If your child is interested, please encourage him or her to write a note to me indicating the title of the book he or she would like to read and one interesting part of the book. I will periodically call the children to the office to read to me as my schedule allows.

PRESIDENTS' LETTER...

you know about a few of our ideas.

Both HomeFront and TASK are in constant need of food staples – TASK provides hot meals twice a day, and HomeFront runs a food pantry for needy families. Beginning with our December Family Night (Crafts, on December 11), and continuing with the rest of this year's Family Nights, we'll be asking those attending to make a donation of canned goods. This is a simple way for us all to pitch in on a regular basis, and will have a significant impact (the HomeFront food pantry was closed all summer because they simply didn't have any supplies).

On December 21, Womanspace will hold its second *Communities of Light* to help victims of domestic violence. We encourage you to purchase an extra set of luminaries and join us at Toll Gate as we place

them around the circle, uniting our school with our community on this special night.

There are so many worthwhile organizations that can use our help – Anchor House, Habitat for Humanity and Millhill, to name just a few. Our hope is that by learning about the needs of others, and the many ways we each can pitch in to help, we all – kids and adults – will become lifetime volunteers, developing a culture of respect, and growing our circle of friends.

Best wishes to you and your family for a happy and safe holiday season,

Randee Tengi, Ned Fletcher
PTO Co-presidents

PARENT COUNCIL

The Toll Gate Parent Council representatives for this year are:

Stella Scafidi	PreK
Adrienne Fawcett	K
Kathy Frederick	1 st Grade
Aida Valcarcel	2 nd Grade
Bonnie Piper	3 rd Grade
Susan Huber	4 th Grade
Tara Russell	5 th Grade
Ned Fletcher	PTO Rep.
Myra Bugbee	Principal
Ida Chiaradia	Vice.Principal

The parent council meets once a month to discuss various issues relating to the school. If you have anything you would like to see discussed please feel free to contact any of the above representatives.

Minutes and/or agendas from the Toll Gate Parent Council and District Parent Council meetings are posted on the PTO web site.

COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM (CAT)

In January, CAT will send home information about upcoming service projects for kids, parents and staff to participate in. If you'd like to help plan and run some of these activities, contact Elizabeth Haines 730-4887, Maude Tater 818-0711 or e-mail ebhaines@elizabethbdesign.com.

TRENTON TITANS



Join the Toll Gate family on Friday, January 9, at the Sovereign Bank Area for a night of Trenton Titans ice hockey. Tickets are \$13 for adults and \$8.50 for children, and must be ordered by December 22. Contact Michelle Needham at 818-1450.



CORPORATE REWARDS

Wow! Toll Gate's first check from the Box Tops for Education program will total \$429.20! That is almost as much as we earned ALL of last year. We submitted \$216.00 in clipped Box Tops labels, had \$15.00 in online purchase credits, received a whopping \$197.70 in Box Tops Visa credits. And, we have 3 new Box Tops Booster Club members!!! As always, a huge THANK YOU goes out to Daryl Delaney and the girls of Junior Troop #103 for trimming, counting and bundling over 2,150 Box Tops labels! Great job girls!! Many thanks also to everyone who clipped, shopped and charged for our Tollgators over the last six months.

Now that Toll Gate has earned CASH back from Target and Box

Tops this school year, let's work on Verizon. With Verizon Extra Credit for Schools, 5% of your long distance spending (including calling card and international calls) can go directly to Toll Gate. Each quarter, even during the summer, a check is mailed based on the dollars collected for Toll Gate. Call 1-888-223-2051 to sign up for Verizon long distance and to designate Toll Gate as your favorite school. Already have Verizon long distance? Just call 1-877-X CREDIT to sign up for Extra Credit for Schools. For more information about this Verizon program, visit www.verizon.com/extracredit.

Want to find out more about all of Toll Gate's Corporate Rewards programs? Just visit the PTO Web site, click on Fundraisers and browse the links for Box Tops, Target and Verizon in the Corporate Rewards area! It's that simple. You are only a few clicks away from learning more about how to earn CASH back for our Tollgators. Of course, you can always call Linda Hilliard (737-0172) for live chat about Corporate Rewards too!

PTO COMMUNICATION

The TGPTO web site (see Page 1 for URL) has been expanded this year, and is your one-stop-shopping site for PTO information. If you've mistakenly tossed one handout too many, look here! The newsletters can be found under "Newsletters." Forgotten the date of the Family Night? Look under "Calendar." Need to know who's chair of a committee – check out "Committees." Budget updates and PTO, TGPC and DPC meeting minutes will also be posted.

The PTO now has a bulletin board on the wall opposite the Main Office. If you're in the building, stop by and take a peek.

Remember: You are a member of the PTO! Come to our next meeting on February 3 to participate in the decision making (and learn lots about what's going on at Toll Gate and the district), volunteer to help at

an event, support a fundraiser - they're all important ways you can contribute to and support your school.

Gator Grams are brief emails that remind you of upcoming events – sort of an up-to-the-minute newsletter. If you provided a family e-mail address when you filled out your child's directory information online, then you should already be receiving Gator Grams regularly in your inbox. If you're out of this loop and want in, email us at tgpto@hvrsd.k12.nj.us

IN THE EVENT OF A SCHOOL CLOSING

The new CAN system for emergency closings has replaced the human touch we used in the past to contact you of school closings, early dismissals, and delayed openings. As with this Friday's snowstorm, an automated system will make calls in the event of an early dismissal or school emergency. **This system will not be used to inform parents of school closings prior to the start of the school day or delayed openings.** You have several ways of getting this information including the district's web site (<http://www.hvrsd.k12.nj.us>) the district's emergency email notification list (<http://www.hvrsd.k12.nj.us/forms/emergencycontact.asp> to subscribe), or by calling the 24-hour recorded message phone line at 737-8449



THANKS FROM THE EXEC COMMITTEE

The PTO has held many successful events already this year and we'd like to thank the chair people who made them happen. Cindy Batchelder and Mary Wagner have made sure that for another year, Toll Gators' presents will be the best wrapped anywhere. Thanks for sorting out the many orders in a timely fashion with such a small crew. Kathy Frederich and Cindy Carothers presented a wonderful book fair this year. The selection was excellent, especially so for older readers. They did a wonderful job turning a hallway into a world full of books. Thanks to Tracy Meyer and Frank Jankoski for heading our JaZams fundraiser before Thanksgiving. It was a great night to socialize with friends while the kids enjoyed the free babysitting at Toll Gate. JaZams donated a full 20% of all purchases that night to Toll Gate, so it was nice to support a local business while getting gifts more thoughtful and educational than the big boxes carry. And of course, Linda Hilliard continues to tally money for Toll Gate with her Corporate Rewards Committee. Please see her column in this newsletter to find out more!

Jill Murray, our hospitality chair, has provided refreshments for many events, but contrary to rumor, has not opened a business doing such. Thanks to Michelle Needham for organizing our Trenton Titans and Thunder outings this year (get your Titan ticket order in NOW so you can watch Toll Gate dad Mitch Smith drive the Zamboni!) Cynthia Beloff chaired Picture Day and Carol Meyer has been helping the PTO recognize staff birthdays with cards, balloons and a gift certificate to a local eatery (this year Sumo Sushi). Carol would love to have a helper to pass out the good cheer-stop in the library if you are interested. Thanks to Paula Roveda for once again organizing the library volunteer staff. Our assembly program has gotten rave reviews for its first offering, Jonathan Sprout's hero concert. Look for more events

arranged by Tara Russell, and remember, parents and off-hour kindergarteners should feel free to attend these events.

Finally, Terry Foster (818-0838) and Jamie Tanguay (818-0937) are this year's Families Helping Families Chairs. If you are in need, or going through a crisis, we'd be glad to help. If you know of someone at Toll Gate who could use the community's assistance, consider directing them to Terry, Jamie or the Executive Committee. We can help with meals, errands, child care and referrals. The Executive Committee would like to thank these and all who've volunteered so far this year. It's made a big contribution to our school's community and your child's education.

PTO WANT ADS

The PTO is seeking the donation of both a digital and 35mm point-and-shoot camera for use by various committees. They will be left in the office and used to take pictures throughout the school year so various PTO and school events can be captured for the yearbook and promoted in the local newspapers. If you have either type of camera that you'd like to donate, please contact our Publicity chair Janet Bamford (737-8972)



TGG RECOGNIZED

Youth in Philanthropy is a program whose purpose is to educate our youth about the importance of serving others as well as to encourage the involvement of young people in philanthropic activities.

Last year Toll Gate students were recognized as a group of children who perform an amazing number of philanthropic activities. Toll Gate, as well as a few other schools who

perform a large amount of service projects, have been invited to help plan and organize the 10th anniversary Youth in Philanthropy celebration. The celebration will be in Edison on April 27. Approximately 500 students will be invited to participate in this event to showcase their service projects, have fun and discuss the value of philanthropic activities. Carol Chalela and Ms. Bugbee are on the planning committee and several of our students will participate in the celebration.

DIRECTORY UPDATE

You should have received a draft copy of the directory info that we have for each of your children. Please verify, SIGN, and return ASAP so we can get the directory printed and distributed – the perfect holiday gift! If you did not receive a sheet for your child contact Ned Fletcher (737-8825).

BOOK FAIR THANKS

Many thanks to all of the volunteers who worked to make the Scholastic Book Fair such a success! Over \$10,000 was earned, with a percentage going to the PTO budget. It could not have been done without all of you - those who set up, took down, and re-stocked books, those who assisted children and parents with selections, ran the cash register, or who purchased books! We really appreciate your efforts - Thanks again!

Kathy Frederich and Cindy Carothers, Co-Chairs

GIFT WRAP SALE

The Gift Wrap fundraiser was a great success - thanks to your support, we sold over \$10,000 worth of gift wrap and candies, yielding more than \$5,300 for PTO-sponsored activities! Thank you for supporting this fundraiser!

Cindy Batchelder and Mary Wagner, Co-chairs

FROM THE LIBRARY

Reflecting back on the month of October, the Toll Gate Media Center has been an extremely busy place. We began the month by having our Parent Volunteer Orientation. This dynamic group of parents has been doing a fabulous job of keeping the Media Center orderly by consistently working their volunteer hours and being thorough at their jobs. The astounding thing is that the group read all of the shelves in the library in just three weeks! A Toll Gate Media Center Record!!

The first meeting of the lunchtime book discussion group, "Chew and Chat," was held in October. The sign-ups exceeded the usual 10 students due to enthusiastic demand. The group met for a lively discussion of our featured author for October, Chris Van Allsburg, and yummy chocolate donuts. Departing words of one fifth grade boy were, "When can we do this again? This was fun!" The next "Chew and Chat" will be for third and fourth graders using both Louis Sachar's series', *Marvin Redpost* and *Wayside School*

Highlights for October were:

- K – Reading enrichment with autumnal and Halloween themes
- 1st – Completed first author study on Cynthia Rylant
- 2nd – Finished author study of Daniel Pinkwater.
- 3rd – Completed a unit on locating and utilizing the fiction section of the library and made ads for their favorite book characters (which are now displayed in the library).
- 4th – Commenced research, using atlases as the resources, on an Asian country.
- 5th – Each fifth grade class completed a ready-reference for the popular call numbers that all grades use. They are currently learning how to use the almanac.

Of course the month of October ended with witch's brew, sewer bugs, dry ice bubbling in a cauldron, a host of books, oral storytelling, readers' theatre and other activities

centering on Halloween, and an "eerie" time was had by all.

Happy reading, Chris Morgan

The library now has a display case in the hall near the main office. This month, we exhibited Kennan Meyer's and Liam Foster's collections. If your child would like an opportunity to display their cherished collection, please have them obtain a Display Case Information Sheet at the Media Center. Note that comic and cartoon trading cards are not allowed.

Birthday book donations can be made throughout the school year. Please contact the Media Center for details.

SPECTRUM NOTES

I.C.E. (In Class Enrichment)

Lessons for students in Grades 3 through 5 - current focus:

Grade 3 - Poetry Grade 4 – Writing

Grade 5 - National Geographic Geography Bee Practice

A.L.M. (Advanced Level Math for Grades 4 and 5) Students are working diligently with their unit studies, as well as enrichment activities and the National Olympiad Contest that began this month!

A.L.L. (Advanced Level Language for Grades 3 through 5) Grade 3 reading enrichment begins this month. Teacher recommended students will meet once a week to discuss selected readings from the Junior Great Books collection. Students are required to do most reading on their own, and are responsible for work missed in regular classroom. Meetings will continue through the second marking period.

Grade 4 reading enrichment has also begun. Students have been reading and discussing selected pieces from the Junior Great Books collection. Meetings will end on December 23, 2003.

Grade 5 writing enrichment. Students have been working diligently on edits on "The Case of the Shucked Finger." Final drafts should be ready to submit to the New Jersey State Bar Foundation before Thanksgiving break.

Type III's (aka, Spectrum Projects) are well under way! We have many interesting projects in the works already. It is not too late for students to begin a project. A student embarking on a Type III project should have an interest in and some basic knowledge of a subject, then decide how their project will differ by creating an original product, performance, or way to solve a problem. Once students have decided on the topic and satisfied one of the Original 3 Ps ideas, we will try to secure a mentor to work with the student. Many projects will take the entire school year to complete. Students will meet with me once a week for progress reports and assignments. Students will be responsible to do research and other relevant work from home. Other Spectrum Projects include service projects that many students have shown interest in as well.

Mentors needed! We are currently in search of mentors for students wishing to engage in Spectrum projects. Expertise in the following areas is needed: writing video games and computer programs, landscaping (specifically what kind of grass grows in our area), whales, animal shelters. Please call if you would like to volunteer your time and talents!

Also, due to popular demand, I will be starting an afterschool **Poetry Enrichment group** for students in grades 4 & 5. This weekly session is for students interested in delving into deeper poetic concepts. We will explore many types of poetry as well as creating a group and/or personal anthology. Some outside research and/or writing will be required. More information will be coming home soon!

Please feel free to contact me at 737-4008 x8242 or via e-mail at cchalela@hvrds.k12.nj.us for any questions or concerns in any area of the Spectrum program. I look forward to a happy and productive year with you and your children.

Carol Chalela,
Spectrum Teacher