

Toll Gate PTO Newsletter

March, 2004

Calendar of Events

- March 11, 2004 – Early Dismissal
- March 12, 2004 – School Meeting – 9:00am
- March 15, 2004 – School Board Meeting at Toll Gate Grammar School – 7:30pm reception
- March 17, 2004 – Year Book orders due
- March 27, 2004 – Auction Fundraiser
- March 29, 2004 – Book Exchange
- March 29, 2004 – Everyday Math Explained – a program for parents
- March 30, 2004 – Toll Gate PTO Meeting – 7:00pm-Media Center
- April 2, 2004 – Last Day of Classes Before Spring Break
- April 13, 2004 – Classes Resume
- April 14, 2004 – School Meeting on Recycling
- April 14-April 16, 2004 – Author in Residence
- April 19 – April 21, 2004 – Author in Residence
- April 20, 2004 – Meet the Masters Family Night and Art Gallery – 7:00pm

PTO Executive Committee

Co-Presidents-

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

Vice President-

Catherine Ahmad (818-9239)

Secretary –

Sandee Steinberg (818-0470)

Treasurer –

Molly Mahn (818-1694)

Home Room Coordinators-Randi Plevy (730-1890) and Frank Jankowski (818-1830)

PRINCIPAL'S LETTER

Dear Parents and Guardians:

We are fortunate to live in a country in which each of us has a valued voice in decisions about our government, where we go to school, how we worship, and much more. The time is quickly approaching for us to demonstrate to our children the value of even one vote. It will soon be time to vote in our annual school budget and Board of Education election.

After the Americans won the Revolutionary War, our Founding Fathers realized that some rules to help govern the country would be necessary. They created a document called the Constitution which became the law of the land. This set of rules and regulations defines the duties of the government and shares decision-making so that no one group would have too much power.

In the simplest form, we the people, determine the way in which decisions are made about the daily life in our schools. When you buy a backpack or a poster board for a State Fair Project, your family pays for it. Who pays for the rest of the things at school, such as school buses, books, computers, and paper and pencils for the students? Of course most of the money to purchase these items comes from the local government, which comes from local taxes.

I encourage you to attend Board of Education Meetings (*The March 15 meeting is at Toll Gate.*) and discuss with your children the value, responsibility, and privilege of voting. At the Board of Education meetings and the Superintendent's Coffee Klatches, learn about what

(Cont'd on page 2)

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The whole school is itching to get outside after the first few warm days. The kids are on the playground and even the fields, which are (mostly) dry enough. Although the adults are waiting for the last frost and for our gardens to dry out some more before we start our spring chores, there is no shortage of us out on the streets like hibernation has just ended. The outdoors at Toll Gate has been on our minds as well, while we prepare to make the first improvements there since the playground was installed.

Several areas on the school grounds could use a face-lift, and groups of volunteers and school staff are making plans where parents can help. One area is the blacktop, which is due for resurfacing, and then will receive a layout of painted games. A problem there is shade, or lack thereof. Some places would benefit from planting trees, including the picnic table area near the Peace Bench, the brick patio area, and the lawn along the primary wing classrooms. Lack of shade was cited as a major deficit of our outdoor space in the report on Hopewell Valley recreational facilities (available for the asking at the Recreation Office in the Administration Building). The plantings in the front of the school could look better, though several generous volunteers helped clean things up last year. Opportunities also exist close by the school to develop gardens with the students (one for

(Cont'd on page 2)

Principal's Letter Cont'd

each vote means, how much thought and what important decisions have been made to design the proposed budget, listen to the platforms of the Board of Education Members who are running for election. Be an informed voter.

On April 20, not only will you have an opportunity to make your vote count but your children will also be able to vote on a topic that is important to them. Each school in our district has chosen a topic relevant to that school. We have spent a great deal of "behind the scenes" work to begin the task of developing our *Outdoor Learning Center* and our Toll Gate students decided that an important question for them is to name the learning center. Students' choices will be 1) Howe's Habitat, 2) Gator Woods, 3) TG Wonderland, or 4) a write in vote. At our April School Meeting we will discuss, debate, and learn more details about the choices. I also encourage you to begin a dialogue at home with your children. Help them understand that their vote for our *Outdoor Learning Center* matters just as much as yours does in the budget and Board of Education election.

I would like to congratulate our students on meeting my reading challenge. We all had fun as I fulfilled my promise and ate green eggs and ham.

Fondly,
Myra J. Bugbee

Special Thought: When spiderwebs unite they can tie up a lion.
Ethiopian Proverb

President's Letter Cont'd

butterflies perhaps, or crop plants, depending on curriculum and interest).

A final outdoor asset, where work has already started, is the woods just past the playing fields. Many of you may not realize that those woods are school property, and hold great potential for teaching opportunities. A large focus this year, and in the next few years, will be making the woods safe and accessible to our teachers, students, and community. In recent

years the trail here has become overgrown and unusable (except by those who leave piles of cans and bottles behind). New trails are being groomed, poison ivy cleared and curriculum training is being developed to give teachers a great new resource for reaching kids and teaching them about nature and the environment.

A broad group of people from Toll Gate and the surrounding community have already signed on to help out in these tasks. Molly Rice and Cynthia Wiley have organized a great PTO sponsored community event for March 27, our "Learning Outside the Box at Toll Gate" Auction, which will provide funds to take us a large step forward toward reaching these goals. As always, there are many ways for you to help. If you have an interest or expertise in any aspect such as gardening, landscaping, healthy eating for kids, nature or the environment, let us know. Toll Gate is the largest piece of public land in Pennington and with a little TLC it could be an even more wonderful place to celebrate the outdoors.

Ned Fletcher
Ranee Teng
PTO Presidents

TOLL GATE PARENT COUNCIL

The parent council representatives for this year are as follows:

Stella Scaffidi	PreK
Adrienne Fawcett	K
Kathy Frederick	1 st Gr.
Aida Valcarcel	2 nd Gr.
Bonnie Piper	3 rd Gr.
Susan Huber	4 th Gr.
Tara Russell	5 th Gr.
Ned Fletcher	PTO Rep.
Myra Bugbee	Principal
Ida Chiaradia	V.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 from the last Toll Gate Parent Council meeting are attached along with minutes from the District Parent Council Meeting.

FROM THE YEARBOOK COMMITTEE

PHOTOS DUE BY
MARCH 8!

Capture the memories!!

Orders are now being taken for the 2003-04 Toll Gate Grammar School yearbook. Teachers will be distributing flyers to the students this week.

Cost: \$13.00 (cash or checks payable to Toll Gate Grammar PTO)
Orders Due : March 17, 2004

We also continue to need additional photo contributions (no digitals please) of candids and 2003-2004 events including class activities, concerts, field trips, assemblies, and anything else you might have showing the Toll Gate students and spirit. We are especially looking for photos depicting the "Circle of Friends" and "We're Writing Right" themes.

Photo contribution deadline is March 8, 2004, so dig out those photos now! Send photos in an envelope marked 'Yearbook' or deposit in the black and white checkered box in the front office.

Please contact us with any questions. Thanks for your assistance!

Lisa Mathiasen 818-0090
Liz Bell 730-8777

REMINDER ON DISTRICT GIFT POLICY

Throughout the school year, there are times when parents and students would like to show their appreciation to their teachers and other school staff. The HVRSD has an official policy on gifts to

school personnel that you can review at:
<http://www.hvrds.k12.nj.us/district/policies/4000/BP4050.pdf>

From the School Handbook:
"We are most appreciative of the many acts of kindness directed toward our school employees. We will always cherish work from the hands of children as a sign of their appreciation and respect."

REMINDER TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS

If your committee has finished its work for the school year, please return the portfolio to our PTO secretary Sandee Steinberg. You can give it directly to Sandee, bring it to a PTO meeting, or leave it in the office in the PTO Secretary mailbox. Also, please let us know if you are interested in heading up the same committee next year, and thanks for volunteering!

SCHOOL BUDGET AND ELECTION NEWS

The School Board is preparing its 2004-2005 school budget, and throughout March will be holding a series of meetings for the purpose of presenting the budget to the public and answering questions. The budget and school board election is Tuesday, April 20.

Toll Gate parents have several easy opportunities to become informed. On March 15, the board will hold a board meeting at Toll Gate - much closer for many of us than the Administration Building down the road! Come meet your school board at a reception that will be held from 7 - 7:30, then attend the regular board meeting at 7:30, which will include an opportunity for the public to learn about the budget and ask questions of the board.

At the March 30 PTO meeting, Assistant Superintendent John Bach will present the proposed 2004-2005 budget. This is

also an excellent opportunity to become informed and ask questions in a less-formal setting.

Last, we encourage you to join Superintendent Nick Lorenzetti at one of several informal Coffee Klatches. These are a great forum for two-way communication between the administration and the community. Topics can be whatever is of interest to you. Meetings are held at the Administration Building at 425 S. Main Street. Please call 737-4000 ext. 2101 to RSVP.

Friday, March 19, 2004 - 10:00 a.m.
Wed., March 31, 2004 - 10:00 a.m.
Tuesday, April 13, 2004 - 7:00 p.m.

PROJECT DEMOCRACY: LET'S VOTE

Project Democracy needs volunteers to help kids vote on Election Day, April 20th. The shifts are 2-4, 4-6 and 6-8pm. (Remember, the Meet the Masters family night is that evening, so if you plan to go, you won't want to sign up for the late shift.) The kids are voting this year on a name for the wooded area of Toll Gate. If you are interested in what the school board has to say about the adult questions, why not come to the board meeting to be held at Toll Gate on March 15th at 7:30pm with a reception to meet the school board at 7pm. Anyone interested in helping spread the word that every vote counts should contact Ned Fletcher at 737-8825.

COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM (CAT)

On Tuesday, March 23, CAT will meet in the Cafeteria to brown bag drawing materials/homework aids for the children of Homefront. Please look through your art supplies (used or new) for the following: children's scissors, glue sticks, markers, crayons, little pads of paper, stickers, etc. These bags of supplies will be

given to the children when they visit with their parents.

Cutlery Rolling Moved to
Tuesday for the Month of March
Tuesday, March 16
Tuesday, March 23
Tuesday, March 30

CORPORATE REWARDS UPDATE



A big THANK YOU goes out to the 83 Target Visa and Guest Card holders who have designated Toll Gate as their favorite school for the Target Take Charge of Education Program! These holders have generated \$201.52 for Toll Gate in the second half of this school year. Toll Gate's check will arrive shortly!

Have you checked out the Booster Club at www.bboxtops4education.com? The Club offers special coupons and meal ideas, among other things. Toll Gate gets 5 Bonus Box Tops for every person who joins the Club before March 31, 2004, so JOIN NOW! Toll Gate has 14 Booster Club members already this year. Don't forget to try shopping online at the Box Tops Marketplace, too! Participating vendors give Toll Gate up to 10% cash back on all online purchases made! Give Marketplace a try.

Are you taking advantage of the Verizon Extra Credit for Schools program? With this program, 5% of your long distance spending (including calling card and international calls) goes directly to your favorite school. 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.

Please do not hesitate to call Linda Hilliard at 737-0172 with any questions about the Corporate Rewards program. Remember, too, that links to all of our Corporate Rewards programs are now contained in the "Fundraiser" section of the PTO Web site at www.tollgatepto.org



NEW PTO INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS!

Writing to your PTO Board has never been easier!
Our new internet address is tgpto@hvrsd.k12.nj.us

PTO WEB SITE/ BULLETIN BOARD

The PTO now has a new, shorter way for you to find our website. <http://www.tollgatepto.org> will get you there! Our main page has been redesigned, and we update the content on a regular basis - usually once a month. Check it out!

GATOR GRAMS

One of the best ways to keep informed about what's going on at Toll Gate and around the district is through our email notification service, Gator Grams. We use Gator Grams mainly as brief reminders about what's coming up in the next few days and weeks.

Most of you are already signed up and receiving what we hope are useful updates once or twice a week. If you are not

currently receiving Gator Grams, we encourage you to join the group by sending a brief message to tgpto@hvrsd.k12.nj.us. And please register an email address that you read on a regular basis, as Gator Grams are often reminders of events coming up in a day or two. Feel free to register more than one address if you like.

A note to parents of 5th grade students - think of Gator Grams as preparatory training for Timberlane Middle School. They've solved the 'flyer lost in the backpack' problem by handling virtually all of their communication electronically through their Wolf Flashes, including PTO newsletters.

NEWS FROM THE SPECTRUM OFFICE

Congratulations to Will Russell! This year's current winner in Toll Gate's the 3rd annual National Geographic Geography Bee! Will finished first after five rounds of questions given to our top ten finalists. Congratulations to all who participated in this year's contest.

Important Information Regarding the Spectrum Fair:

This year's Spectrum fair will be held before the May 17th School Board meeting that is currently scheduled to be held at Stony Brook Elementary School. For the first time, students from all four Hopewell elementary schools will display their Spectrum projects together. Students who have successfully completed a Type III or who have a "work in progress" may display their projects at the fair. Service projects will also be displayed as well. Type III projects include student work that has resulted from an original product, performance, or way to solve a problem. Letters will be going home next week giving more detailed information on the display requirements. Please contact me if you have any immediate questions or concerns.

Carol Chalela

PLANT SALE

Annual PTO plant sale is coming in the spring. Look for information to come home in the backpacks in the near future.

TOLL GATE BOOK EXCHANGE IS COMING !!!!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS for TollGate's annual BOOK EXCHANGE - Monday, March 29.

This is a wonderful opportunity for students to "trade" one of their books from home for a different book from a classmate. Books for exchange will be collected during the week of March 22. Look for a flyer in the backpacks next week with details about this fun event! Any questions? Call Penny Hoffman 737-6608 or Julie Stafford 730-1823.

MEET THE MASTERS

The Meet The Masters projects are wrapping up in March. We are now the proud custodians of 750 pieces of art, which we are sorting through to select each child's best masterpiece. These best pieces will be displayed at the Meet the Masters Family Fun Night on April 20. The other masterpieces will come home in backpacks over the next few weeks. Congratulations docents, for doing such a great job this year with all the classes. We will have a celebratory Thank You coffee sometime in March - please check your e-mail and join us! And an invitation to all - save the date April 20 for our Family Fun Night - join us for a night of Family Art Projects, Music, Art Treasure Hunts and Dessert. Thanks again for a Great Year of Art! Questions? Please call Kit Greener or Kim Hansen.

TOLL GATE AUCTION

The Learning Outside the Box
Silent and Live Auction will be
held on Saturday March 27, 2004 at
ETS in Princeton, N.J.

STUDENT DIRECTORY CHANGES

If you know of any
Directory corrections or changes,
please contact Mary Griffin at 737-
0748 or mbeaug@aol.com. Thank
you