

Toll Gate PTO Newsletter

May, 2004

Calendar of Events

- May 27, 2004 – 4th Grade State Fair – am only
- May 27, 2004 – 7:00pm – Special Education Advisory Council Meeting – Administration Bldg.
- May 28, 2004 – Field Day
- May 31, 2004 – Memorial Day – School Holiday
- June 1, 2004 – 4th & 5th Grade Band and Orchestra Concert
- June 4, 2004 – Family Picnic and Parent Appreciation Night
- June 10, 2004 – 5th Grade Promotion Dinner
- June 17, 2004 – Early Dismissal – Grades K-12
- June 18, 2004 – Early Dismissal – Grades K-12 – Last Day of School

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)

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

PRINCIPAL'S LETTER

Dear Parents and Guardians:

As I reflect upon this year, I am struck by the multitude of awesome accomplishments. Our goals primarily focused on building a sense of community spirit, reflecting on our practices as professionals to enhance student achievement, strengthening young literacy skills, and implementing a more structured and consistent writing program across content areas, via our theme, *We're Writing Right*.

In Hopewell Valley, our high standards always lead us to strong academic rigor, guided by our curriculum development, curriculum maps, as well as New Jersey Core Content Standards and the No Child Left Behind Act. In addition, the following categories reflect only a portion of all that we accomplished by working together

District Level including

participation by our staff members

Revision to the Strategic Plan
Revisions to the Language Arts and Spectrum Curricula
Revisions to the report cards, including rubrics at the first and second grade levels
Differentiated Instruction
Data Driven Instruction
Difficult decisions about the budget for next year

Curriculum

Reading

Readers' Breakfasts, Read to the Principal, Read Across America, Dr. Seuss' 100th Birthday, the 100th Year of Flight Celebration, Guest Readers, Library Volunteers, PowerPoint Presentations and Class Websites

(Cont'd on page 2)

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

With the end of school quickly approaching, we'd like to use our last column to look back on the year at Toll Gate through the various PTO activities and events that you all supported in one way or another. It's enlightening to reflect on how the PTO enhances the educational experience of our kids, and wonderful that we parents can have such rewarding and fun experiences as we make it all possible.

PTO programs fall into several categories: fundraisers, which of course pay for the other types of programs; curriculum and education-based activities; service projects; and social events. Some, such as the spring auction, cross over several categories - funds were raised at an adult social to pay for a new Outdoor Learning Center. The proceeds from the auction are already being put to use building trails through the woods behind the school. Work on the playground area has also begun - soon the basketball hoops will be reconfigured and a hitting wall for tennis and handball will be installed.

Some of this year's fundraisers were the annual gift wrap sale, Jazams shopping night (also a social event!), and our annual book fairs. The fall fundraisers paid for the teacher and principal startup-funds (each teacher in the school, and Ms. Bugbee, received a check at the beginning of the school year to use for the purchase of classroom and school supplies)

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Principal's Letter Cont'd

Writing

Our theme, *We're Writing Right*, student published newsletter, students as authors (Spectrum Projects), rubrics used in the classrooms, a theme per month, Beanie Baby Travels, and Penpal Projects

Music

"Annie," concerts, IKUZUS, the America Boy's Choir, Princeton Bravo Symphony, the Glass Harp Assembly, violins, and much more

Art

Solid instructional program that taught concepts of art not just arts and crafts, Meet the Masters, Art Enrichment, new art work hanging in the hallways

Spanish

An exciting conversational program for second through fifth grade students and contact with Spanish leaders

Character

Education/Citizenship/Leadership

Topics at School

Meetings included:

Communication – Words that Honor or Dishonor; Self-Esteem and Treating Others Special; Signals and Cues You Give to Others; Respecting and Honoring Others; Doing More than What's Expected; Integrity, Heroes and Role Models; Responsibility – Privilege – Leadership; Laughter and Fun

Project Democracy taught us the importance of our responsibility as citizens and that one vote really does matter.

Bullying and Taking Care of Each Other, DARE, CAP, Campfire Kids, DINOsolvers, Don't Laugh at Me

Leadership and Service

PTF (Principal's Task Force), CAT (Community Action Team), TASK (1200 Thanksgiving meals served), MillHill, Homefront, YIP (Youth in Philanthropy), helping our soldiers in Iraq, and serving many organizations in need

Family Involvement

Family Nights and Other Celebrations

Safety, Halloween, Holiday Crafts, Valentine's Day Social, ReadOver, Math Night, Art Gallery, Science, Book Café, Invention Convention, Fourth Grade State Fair, Spectrum Fair, Celebration of Learning, Mother's Day Programs, Outer Space Shows, Rainforest Presentations, the Kindergarten Program, End-of-Year Picnic, March Madness, Chess Tournament, Do Nothing Night, and more

Professional Development

Professional development, an ongoing event, takes place every day with its goal to rejuvenate our staff and provide ideas that help raise student achievement. Our staff not only attended district professional development activities but many attended workshops outside the district and each staff member participated in a Study Group throughout the year. At our faculty meetings, best practices were shared along with a variety of discussions about topics to enhance instruction. Weekly grade level meetings also provided opportunities for many professional conversations. Teachers were involved in a

coaching/mentoring process and many teachers supervised student teachers or JPE students.

Special Projects

One of the most exciting and motivating projects this year was (and is) our efforts toward promoting our Outdoor Learning Center, *Learning Outside the Box*. The success of our initial efforts on this project resulted from the helping hands of many. As most of you know, this project will be a three to four year phase-in program which will encompass new play choices painted on the blacktop, a new ball wall, a learning environment in the woods behind the playground, and much more. This will address the needs of all of our learners as well as the community. The excitement of the PTO Live and Silent Auction enabled us to raise funds to start this ambitious venture.

I could go on and on about how proud I am of your wonderful children and how thankful I am that we have such an involved community. The main point is that good schools depend on strong communities and on building strong relationships. I believe that we have achieved a very special partnership and that our students have benefited academically, socially, and emotionally from it. Anyone who walks into our school recognizes that Toll Gate Grammar School is a very special and unique place. I sincerely THANK YOU for your support through your time, talents, and treasures. It is truly an honor to be a part of this wonderful learning community and we will continue toward greatness. I hope each of you has

a very happy, safe, and restful summer.

Fondly,
Myra J. Bugbee
Principal

GOVERNOR'S TEACHER OF THE YEAR



It is my pleasure to announce that Toll Gate's representative for the Governor's Teacher of the year is Dave Tate. Mr. Tate is one of our highly respected special education teachers.

SKATEBOARDING/ ROLLERBLADING



As many of you have noticed, a sign prohibiting skateboarding and roller-blading has been posted. This is a Board of Education Policy that has been enforced at all the schools in our district. It is **not** a Toll Gate Policy nor a Principal's Policy. We will continue to have rollerblading parties in our loop under the supervision of staff members

PARKING



Unfortunately, parking around Toll Gate is limited. We have posted **NO PARKING** signs near the front entrance between 8:20-8:50 and 3:20-3:50. This is for the safety of all students and young children. Please respect these signs, park your car nearby, and walk to the front door to pick

up your child. Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

LOST AND FOUND



This is a final reminder that we have a number of lost items (jackets, hats, gloves, etc.). They are located on a cart in the cafeteria. Please claim any items that may belong to you as soon as possible. Any items left after June 18 will be donated to an organization which helps people in need.

President's Letter Cont'd

and a luncheon for teachers and staff on one of the in-service days prior to the start of the school year. This year we also funded a fall Wish List of over \$5000 for some "big-ticket" items (such as walkie-talkies for contact within the school and with police, the beautiful, custom entry mat that greets you when you walk through the doorway, the chick hatching project, and Global Beat Metephones for the music department) that the school needed and which were not in the school's budget. Throughout the year, we funded Mini-Grants to teachers, for a maximum of \$150 each, to pay for supplies and curriculum-related material, such as big reading pillows for the library, replacement mats for the occupational therapy room, supplies for 3rd grade Prairie Day, and a shark dissection kit for 4th grade.

We sponsored some wonderful assemblies, which were tied to curriculum, benefited all the students, and exposed them to fun and educational programs not taught in the daily classroom. Your children will remember the Glass Harp player, American Heroes by Jonathan Sprout, the Double Dutch jumpers and Story Salad Productions. Still to come are a honey bee assembly and the Wheels of Freestyle cycle show. This year we were privileged to help fund Poet-in-Residence Luray Gross, who

worked with all of our students on writing original poetry. Our Meet-the-Masters program took kids by the hand and led them through the process of discovery and creation with regard to art and great artists.

Toll Gate's tradition of community service has grown this year with the addition of the new Community Action Team (CAT). Monthly CAT Club meetings were a wonderful opportunity for kids to do hands-on projects for the benefit of others, while getting a better understanding of exactly whom they are helping. This program has been a huge success, and we plan on continuing and expanding it next year. Of course the annual TASK Thanksgiving dinner, another unique Toll Gate tradition, allowed kids to literally get their hands dirty (well, at least sticky) while we provided for others less fortunate than ourselves. Project Democracy, another PTO sponsored activity, taught kids the power and necessity of voting - one of the best lessons in community service around. Toll Gators are now acutely aware of the value of each and every vote, as the name Howe's Habitat was determined by a single vote!

All of this hard work deserves the reward of some fun family time, and this year the PTO organized family outings to see the Trenton Titans and Thunder play, an annual ice skating party, and, still to come this year, the end-of-year family picnic. This year's Thunder game was an extra special thrill when custodian Juan Aponte was honored as he stood on top of the Thunder dugout. We were also joined by a large group of TG teachers, making this truly a family event.

Believe it or not, this is NOT a complete list of all the PTO activities of the year. There isn't enough room to list them all, nor to thank all of the wonderful volunteers who made it all possible. You know who you are, and we truly appreciate

everything you did this year for our entire school community. We'd like to give special thanks to the rest of our Officers and Executive Committee who worked hard and long to make our PTO such a successful organization.

It has been our honor and privilege to serve as Co-Presidents this year. We leave you in the very capable hands of Pam Taylor, President, and Victoria Myer, Vice President, who now take over the helm for next year.

Adios Amigos.

Ned Fletcher
Ranee Teng
PTO Presidents

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!

CORPORATE REWARDS UPDATE



Summer is almost here . . . and that means it is time, once again, to thank everyone who has made the Corporate Rewards program such a success for our Tollgators this year! The program collected a grand total of \$1,196.11 in corporate cash rewards (\$765.20 from the General Mills Box Tops for Education Program and \$430.91 from the Target Take Charge of Education Program).

Much gratitude goes out to the following wonderful people, without whom Toll Gate would not have reaped any corporate rewards: Daryl Delaney and the girls of Cadette Troop #103 for trimming, counting and bundling thousands of Box Tops labels; Mariya Brown and Jessica Amodio for acting as liaisons for Little Leisure and the Toll Gate staff, respectively; Maureen McWhirter for always making sure that the Corporate Rewards propaganda was prominently displayed in each PTO Newsletter; and Randee Teng for sending those emergency Gator Grams every time something was overlooked for the Newsletter! But, of course, the biggest THANKS of all is for you, all of the supporters of our Tollgators who clipped Box Tops, shopped online at the Box Tops Marketplace and purchased with Box Tops Visas and Target Visa/Guest Cards all year long. YOU made corporate rewards happen!

Please continue shopping with your Cards and online at The Marketplace and clipping and saving those Box Tops labels all summer long. The cash for Toll Gate will keep on coming! Our next Box Tops labels submission deadline is October 31, 2004.

Don't have a shopping card that benefits our Tollgators? Just call 1-800-227-9605 (or visit www.boxtops4education.com) to become a Box Tops Visa Cardholder. Visit www.target.com (Financial Services link) to apply for a Target Guest or Visa Card, visit a Target store to apply for a Guest Card or call 1-800-394-1829 to apply for a Target Visa Card.

Remember that the Verizon Extra Credit for Schools program is looking to give Toll Gate cash all summer long also! 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.

Have a safe, relaxing, flyer-free summer!!!



PTO COMMUNICATION

There are many ways for you to get in touch with your PTO board, and for us to get information to you. You can send an email message to the entire Executive Board by addressing it to "tgpto@hvrstd.k12.nj.us". Our email communication to you is in the form of regular Gator Grams, which reach nearly all our families. If you're not currently receiving these messages, please send your email address to "tgpto@hvrstd.k12.nj.us" and we'll add you to the list. Our PTO website is easy to find at <http://tollgatepto.org>. This year we've installed a bulletin board on the wall opposite the main office. If you're in the school, stop by and check it out. There you'll find information about Toll Gate Parent Council, a copy of our new by-laws, and other general information.

If you receive Gator Grams and have changed your email address, please make sure to send a message to tgpto@hvrstd.k12.nj.us with the new address. Several addresses have been bouncing recently.

Our database is independent from the districts, and they do not keep us informed of changes that they are notified of. We expect to begin using Gator Grams as soon as school starts next year, so please keep us up-to-date, so we can keep you informed.

PTO SPRING T-SHIRT SALE

We wanted to thank everyone who supported the PTO's Spring T-shirt Sale. We sold over 150 t-shirts, as well as many beach towels, caps and sweatshirts. The sale raised approximately \$1600.00, which will go to the PTO's general fund. We appreciate your support!

Co-Chairs
Danielle Tartaglia and Jennifer Hastings

PTO ASSEMBLIES

Two more PTO-funded assemblies are scheduled before the end of the school year.

On May 26, the children will be treated to a program called "Dancing With the Honeybees." Mr. Clifford Wright-Sunflower will present the program, which uses honey bees, to teach environmental awareness. By the end of the hour presentation all the students, teachers and parents present will become part of a working hive: either nurse bees, construction workers, drones, guards, queen or flowers. After this "honeybee dance" the children will participate in smaller workshops to make a beeswax candle, observe a hive of bees and share their bee fears, experiences and questions. A kindergartener will learn that bees are not so scary and a fifth grader will learn about the integral part bees play in the ecological balance.

The morning assemblies will be at 9:05 for grades 3-5 and at 10:15 for K-2.

June 11 promises to be exciting for Toll Gators. On that day we will host "Wheels of

Freestyle" – a BMX Freestyle Bicycle Stunt Show with a positive message. For the younger students, the riders will focus their message on bicycle safety. For the older students, the riders will deliver powerful messages about choosing a drug free lifestyle, about living their dreams, and never quitting.

This high-energy show should ensure that no child will forget the 5-point bicycle safety check and why it is so important to wear a helmet.

Please join us at 1:15 or 2:15 on June 11 for a spectacular performance by Wheels of Freestyle.

SPECTRUM NEWS

Wow! It is hard to believe that this is the last newsletter of the year! What an exciting year! And what an exciting month!

Several Toll Gate students represented our community at the 10th anniversary of the Youth in Philanthropy organization. The celebration was held at the New Jersey Convention & Exposition Center in Edison NJ, on April 27, 2004. The children had a wonderful time explaining all that we do, as well as learning from other philanthropic students from the entire state of New Jersey.

The fifth grade annual Invention Convention was held on April 28 at Toll Gate. Many joined in the celebrating of creativity amongst our fifth graders! Congratulations to all on a job very well done!

Our first ever District Spectrum Fair was held Monday, May 17th. It was a wonderful opportunity for all students to see the projects done by the the students in our other elementary schools. Both Type III and Service projects were highlighted by our Toll Gate students. Please stop by the media center to view all of the Spectrum and service projects displayed at the fair. Projects will be displayed until June 4, 2004.

Current and upcoming Spectrum events- ICE activities include: grade five working diligently on their Think Tank group

creative activities, grade four busily making a model of the ocean floor as well as using "high tech" sonar devices to measure the depth of the ocean, and grade three enthusiastically practicing reader's theater using Aesop's Fables.

Advanced level math screening will begin this month and into June. All grade three students will take the initial screening test. Any students in grade four may be tested upon teacher and/or parent request. Please contact me if you need any further information regarding the ALM placement procedure.

Thank you all for such a wonderful year! I truly enjoy working with your children each and every day. Have a happy, healthy, and safe summer!

Sincerely,
Carol Chalela

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY

Wow! It's hard to believe that it's almost the end of the school year. I have had a wonderful time this year. It is so fantastic to have such wonderfully supportive administration, faculty, students and community that truly care and pitch in to help in an instant.

I want to take this opportunity to send out kudos to these special people:

- ◆ Ms. Bugbee – Your guidance helped make my adjustment to Toll Gate effortless.
- ◆ Mrs. Carol Meyer – With her efficient manner, Carol has managed all kinds of situations with expertise. It has been a blessing working with you.
- ◆ Mrs. P. Roveda – I'm so grateful to your dedication to the Media Center and your organizing of the volunteers of the past several years. We will miss you.

♦ To all the Media Center Parent volunteers – BRAVO and thank you all for precious gift of time. The chores of shelving, covering and checking children out and the many other things are such an awesome help to the smooth running of the media center. We couldn't do it without you.

Finally, I want to wish you all a healthy and relaxing summer vacation. Enjoy a good book.

Happy reading,

Chris Morgan

PLANT SALE

Once again our annual Plant Sale was a big success! We'd like to thank all the parents and school employees who purchased plants, and to give special thanks to everyone who helped out on the day of the sale. About a dozen families also took advantage of the opportunity to buy annuals, baskets, and landscaping plants at Jack's Greenhouse on May 15, so this might become a regular addition to the annual sale. The final figures aren't in yet, but we expect to have netted about \$1000 for the PTO. Thanks again to everyone who participated!

Randee Tengi and Cindy Carothers,
Co-chairs

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. Please make the following changes to your directory:

Robert and Susan Huber Family
E-mail address is:
bnshubernj@comcast.net

