

COMPILED BY SUSAN BRAUN JOHNSON



St. Peter's Newbery Readers. Photo by Sheila Walter Faison

News from St. Peter's Interparish School

St. Peter's Newbery Club Reading Adventure

Nearly 30 students in grades three through six embarked upon the annual St. Peter's Newbery Club reading adventure, an independent reading group centered on books awarded the prestigious Newbery Medal for distinguished contribution to American literature for children. Club members read four separate Newbery award winning novels of their choice, followed by a reading of the 2006 Newbery Honor Book winner, "Whittington." Members were required to successfully pass a test on each of the five books, as well as complete a 10-page written assessment of "Whittington." Rounding out the club's reading adventures was a student performance of "Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!"

Eighth-Graders Moving On Up!

Years of hard work have paid off for the St. Peter's Class of 2009! Congratulations to the eighth-graders who have been accepted by a host of area high schools, including Georgetown Visitation, Gonzaga College High School, St. John's College High School, Elizabeth Seton High School, School Without Walls and Archbishop Carroll High School.

St. Peter's Mom Published

St. Peter's mom Selene Benitone has recently published a children's book titled "Mommy Without Hair? My World Turned Upside Down." Benitone's heartfelt book was written to help children (ages 3-10) cope with a cancer diagnosis in the family. Based on her own diagnosis, Benitone's book is told through the eyes of her 4-year-old son and takes readers from the initial stages of a mommy's cancer diagnosis, through chemotherapy, and ending

with a celebration party marking the end of treatment. The simple, straightforward, positive prose offers families an open and safe way to talk about cancer. Colorfully illustrated by renowned Memphis artist Jeanne Seagle, the charming characters are bright and engaging. Visit www.jacksbackpack.com for more information and to purchase a copy.

The Greening of St. Peter's

St. Peter's Interparish School has launched a number of new environmentally friendly initiatives based upon the Green Flag Program. The Green Flag Program provides assistance and guidelines for making the school environment healthy and safe through investigation, education, innovation and action. Green practices now in place at St. Peter's include nontoxic cleaning products, a school-wide recycling program and low-VOC paints.

St. Peter's also has launched a Green Club dedicated to heightening environmental awareness throughout the school. The club hopes to establish two rotating composters in the school's new garden, in which food waste will be deposited daily. The Green Club meets every two weeks for activities and discussions related to the greening of the school and environmental issues.

Save The Date: St. Peter's Yard Sale!

The always popular St. Peter's Yard Sale will be held May 16 in the St. Peter's Church basement (313 Second St. SE). In addition to fabulous yard sale treasures, there will be fun fair activities, grilled food and bake sale treats. Gently used donations will be accepted at the church basement May 11 through May 13 from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. and from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., as well as May 14 and 15 from 8 a.m. to noon and 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. They will be unable to accept computers, televisions or electronics. Please contact rmtmasters@msn.com regarding donations or questions. —Submitted by Sally Aman.

Capitol Hill Cluster School News

Watkins Elementary Garden Partnering with Fresh Farms

Watkins gardener Barbara Percival and the Fresh Farms Markets' FoodPrints program are teaming up for a series of lessons that Percival says "will enable us to expand greatly our vegetable gardens, and to

provide many more children with an opportunity to grow, harvest, cook and enjoy fresh vegetables. We hope to start planting our first lettuce and peas by the end of March."

Fresh Farms is a nonprofit organization that operates eight farmer-to-you markets in DC and Maryland, including one on H Street. Their FoodPrints program engages children in growing, cooking and eating healthy food. Fresh Farms is providing Watkins with expertise and resources to improve and enhance the E Street vegetable garden, as well as curriculum support, including field trips to farms and farmers' markets, and school visits by chefs and farmers.

Stuart Hobson Academic Achievers

Jordan Persons, Elizabeth Murphy and Madison Hartke-Weber took part in the citywide spelling bee, with Jordan finishing in the top ten. Another Stuart student, eighth-grader Brittany Williams, will represent the school this month in the National Geography Bee.

SWS Auction is coming!

April 18 marks the annual School-within-School at Peabody Jazz Gala and Auction, which raises important funds for the Cluster's Reggio Emilia program for pre-K and K students – praised by Newsweek as the "best early childhood education in the world." To purchase tickets or donate, visit www.swsauction.org.

Capitol Hill Classic Celebrating its 30th Next Month

It's the 30th anniversary of Washington's longest-running 10K race — and the Cluster's largest fundraiser—on May 17. The race also includes a 3K and a children's Fun Run. Sign up for the race, share your stories and pictures from past races, and pick up training tips at www.capitolhillclassic.com. As part of the school's commitment to healthy habits, students, parents, and faculty are training for the race with fitness expert (and Cluster parent) Elizabeth Brooks. To join the group, see www.thinkingcorrectly.com.

Robert Brent Elementary News

Brent Receives Grant

Brent Elementary's Schoolyard Green Team recently received an \$830 grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust for signage for all the gardens and trees at Brent. As a result of the grant, the greening team will install botanic-garden quality signs on the front lawn of the school, in the school's outdoor classroom

and in the school's Butterfly Garden.

Brent Elementary Glee Clubs Hold Spring Concert

Robert Brent Elementary School's glee clubs recently performed two special concerts in honor of Black History Month under the direction of Brent music teacher Tamara McDowell. The performances by PK-4 through fifth-grade students celebrated the life and music of African-Americans and featured songs such as "We Shall Overcome," "Sing About Martin" and "This Little Light of Mine." The school auditorium was packed for both performances, and "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" received a standing ovation at the end of the evening.

Brent Library Receives \$2,000 donation

Brent Elementary School's library recently received a generous \$2,000 donation from Brent parent and local Capitol Hill real estate agent Jason Townsend. The library will use part of the money to purchase additional science and black history biography related books. The remaining funds will underwrite the cost of a pull-down computer projection screen that will ensure students are using the latest technological resources in the library. As a local real estate agent who wants to help area schools, Townsend, along with his partners Tom Faison and Jesse Hagopian, will contribute 20 percent of their commission on any real estate sale or purchase to a local school. All the buyers or sellers have to do is state their interest in the "Capitol Hill Education Fund" during their first meeting with the RealEstateinDC.com team. When the transaction is complete — sale or purchase — Jason, Tom and Jesse will send a check to Brent, or any other school, as the beneficiary of the award. Folks don't have to have children who attend the school, just a concern for — and a desire to help — the children who do. If you have any questions or comments, please call or e-mail Jason at 202-415-7400 or Jason@RealEstateinDC.com.

Taste of the Hill

Back by popular demand, the Brent PTA presents A Taste of the Hill on April 25, from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. This fabulous event will take place once again on the rooftop deck of Jones Day law firm, 311 First St. NW, which has an incredible view of the US Capitol. A Taste of the Hill will feature a wine tasting and food pairing from top Hill Restaurants including: Charlie Palmer Steak, Montmartre, Belga Café, Match Box, Sonoma, Sticky Rice and possibly a few other favorites of yours. Tickets are \$75 each and can be purchased by contacting Denise Diggs at 202-775-9300 ext.



Brent glee club students perform during a special black history month concert.

13 or denise.diggs@verizon.net. This one-of-a-kind Hill event also includes a silent auction and live jazz. For more information about "A Taste of the Hill," visit Brent's website, www.brentelementary.org/gala.

Maury on the Half Shell

Beau Reed's third grade class recently took a ride aboard the Half Shell on the Anacostia River. The children picked up their study of environmental stewardship where they left off at the end of fall, part of the Living Classrooms educational program. Reed said of the experience, "By far the favorite activity was getting to drive the boat. We learned about the anatomy of a clam by dissecting one. Other stations included identifying fish that we caught with a giant net and looking at plankton through a microscope. They also learned to use a compass and map to find the boat's location in the river."

Xavier wrote in a thank you note that "the trip was thrilling."

Sean wrote, "Thank you for a wonderful trip on the Half Shell ... my favorite activities were making boats, dissecting clams and fishing with a net." To learn more about this program, visit www.livingclassroomsdc.org.

Maury Loves Disco

Maury Loves Disco was fun, fun, fun! Ev-



Maury third-grader Aliyah, confident at the helm. Photo by Beau Reed.

everyone got down when the DJ played a little funk, a little Blondie, and other good tunes. Kids danced, played with balloons and jumped for bubbles. It was a great way to play on a dreary March day, and several parents requested that we do it again! Stay tuned for Maury Loves Disco II ...

Outdoor Toys Grant

ANC 6A commissioners made a whole school of children wildly happy with \$500 worth of outdoor toys! Basketballs, soccer balls with pop-up goals, a parachute with balls, double-dutch

ropes, hop balls and Big Wheels were just some of the many items that will contribute to active and healthy recesses at Maury. Thank you, ANC 6A!

Happy Birthday in a Box

Dr. Seuss's birthday was celebrated by parents and friends, including friend and neighbor Elizabeth Nelson, reading their favorite Seuss books to the students. Elizabeth's pick was "Horton Hatches



River Park Nursery School's Sock Hoppers

an Egg." The librarian, Ms. Sweeney, who organized the event, said, "The kids really enjoyed it."

To learn more about Maury Elementary, visit www.mauryelementary.com, call 202-698-3838, or stop in at 1250 Constitution Ave. NE. —Submitted by Heather Schoell.

Tyler Elementary Community Nights

Students at Tyler Elementary have been thrilled to attend Community Nights at Tyler this winter. On Feb. 25, students enjoyed a community night with an author visit. After a free family dinner, families enjoyed a presentation by the dramatic African storyteller Auntie Oye. The evening also included a question and answer period with Auntie Oye and a performance by Tyler's Choir and Bell Ensemble. To celebrate black history month, music teacher Pedro Hart arranged a show of songs and bell playing for students in preschool through fifth grade.

In other news, Tyler students ages 3-5 are participating in a spring soccer clinic. Soccer clinics focus on technical skills, ball control, team play, sportsmanship and a great time for the beginner soccer players. Tyler parents are busy planning for Spanish immersion summer camp and writing grants to bring more health, nutrition and fitness instruction to Tyler's outdoor classroom (currently under construction). Stay tuned for more Tyler news this spring. —Submitted by Catherine Jouet.

St. Anselm's Offers Private Tours

St. Anselm's Abbey School, an independent Roman Catholic school for academically gifted boys in grades 6 through 12, welcomes visitors for private tours by appointment. Located on the quiet

grounds of a Benedictine monastery in Northeast Washington, the school welcomes students from all religious, ethnic, social and economic backgrounds. St. Anselm's operates a rolling admissions schedule and therefore is still accepting applications for all grades for fall 2009-2010. For more information, please contact E.V. Downey, director of admissions, at admissions@saintanselms.org or 202-269-2379.

River Park Nursery School Thanks Local Businesses

In February, River Park Nursery School held its fourth annual sock hop fundraising event. The sock hop gives current students and alumni the opportunity to celebrate the success of RPNS as well as introduce some new faces to the director, Bernadette Blum. Refreshments and music were provided for everyone to enjoy, along with face

painting, caricature drawing, hula-hooping and the annual crazy sock contest.

Thanks to the many local businesses that graciously donated to the event to make it a success including Coldwell Banker, Harris Teeter, Marvelous Market, Dawn Price Baby, Capitol Hill Arts Workshop, Results Gym, The Fairy Godmother, Groovy DC/Groovyland, Schneider's Liquor, Moto Photo, Tortilla Coast, Southern Maryland Seafood and Market Lunch.

For all of you that could not make it this year, RPNS looks forward to seeing you next year. For more information on River Park Nursery School, please visit the website at www.riverparknurseryschool.org. —Submitted by Carey Dugan.

Spring Into April at the Hill Preschool!

The weather is getting warmer, and the children at The Hill Preschool have many engaging activities planned throughout the month of April. The Caterpillars will learn about animals that live at the zoo and in water by visiting the National Aquarium and zoo. They will also learn about dinosaurs by taking a trip to the Museum of Natural History to see the dinosaur exhibit.

Bumblebees and Butterfly 1 students will focus on community. The Bumblebees will visit the post office, the Capitol, Eastern Market and the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library. But-

terfly 1 will visit the Postal Museum, Harris Teeter, a dental office, National Capital Bank and the Navy Museum. Fire safety will be discussed when a firefighter visits their classroom. Pretend play will also be explored as they set up a grocery store and pretend to shop and pay for groceries. The theme for Butterfly 2 is animals and the circus. They will learn about different animal habitats and characters in a circus. They will visit the Baltimore Aquarium, go to the circus and participate in a performance at Discovery Theater about the rain forest.

All of the children will continue to experience activities that encourage social interaction, learning about their surroundings, counting, and strengthening their language. The Blue Sky Puppet Theater will also visit The Hill Preschool to perform "Pig Tales," a story that traces a day at school of three nursery school pigs. —Submitted by Rachael Hall.

Jenkins Hill Child Development Center Update & Yard Sale on April 18

After renovations, Jenkins Hill Child Development Center, an independently run, nonprofit day-care center, has obtained Certificates of Occupancy from DCRA for the ground floors of their new space at 1527 & 1529 Pennsylvania Ave. SE. They will share the building with Friends of Tyler School and Jan's Tutoring House. Jenkins Hill is currently in the licensing phase and anticipates a possible re-opening in their new home on May 1. Susan Nowak, director says, "Jenkins Hill looks forward to the opportunity to serve the families of infants and toddlers in our community again." For over 26 years, Jenkins Hill Child Development Center had been located at the Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church, but their lease was terminated.

Jenkins Hill will hold a yard sale at the park on 15th Street & Kentucky Avenue, April 18, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Donations are needed and should be brought directly to the site prior to the sale be-

The Butterfly 2 class on a trip to the National Air and Space Museum.





Ms. Coles' fifth-grade class at River Terrace Elementary School screened documentaries at the National Geographic.

tween 8 and 9 a.m. There will be coffee and baked goods. Receipts for charitable contributions will be available. For more information contact Susan Nowak at jenkinshillcdc@yahoo.com.

River Terrace Elementary School Students Screen Documentaries at National Geographic

On March 18, 19 fifth-grade students from River Terrace Elementary School in Ward 7 screened documentary short films at the National Geographic as a conclusion to an innovative four-week program sponsored by Live It Learn It and the National Geographic Channel called, "Kidumentaries."

As part of the program students from Ms. Coles' fifth-grade class investigated the key elements of stories, storyboards and script development along with the principles of digital camera operation to create their own short films on personalized topics such as "The Urban Birdhouse" and "Pet Detectives." Staff from Live It Learn It, a nonprofit organization that boosts the academic achievement and motivation of students at DC public elementary schools by connecting them to the city's resources, and the National Geographic Channel worked with students on site at River Terrace Elementary School during the past month.

Program highlights included: a welcome by Mark Green, senior vice president, operations, National Geographic Channels International; and descriptions of the 11 documentaries

by Erica Harper, program manager, Live It Learn It, along with four participants from River Terrace Elementary School.

Shannon Foster, principal of River Terrace Elementary School, captured the amazement felt by all audience members in National Geographic's Grosvenor Auditorium at the conclusion of the program, when she explained that she "intentionally stayed away from work being done on this project" because she wanted it to be a surprise—and that "it certainly was." Foster added, "We greatly appreciate the efforts of both the National Geographic Channel and Live It Learn It to create these truly inspirational academic learning opportunities for our students." —*Submitted by Anne Eigeman.*

Bridges PCS Application Deadline – April 15

Bridges Public Charter School is an inclusive preschool and pre-Kindergarten program for children ages 3-5 years old. It is a free public school open to all District of Columbia residents. (Non-residents can apply and attend the school for a fee.)

The application deadline for the lottery for the 2009-2010 school year is April 15. Applications received after April 15 will be put on a waiting list. The lottery for the 2009-2010 school year will be held at Bridges Public Charter School at 11 a.m. on April 30. During each school year, as spaces become available, Bridges enrolls students from the waiting list.

If you would like your child to attend Bridges, please download the PDF of the application, complete the

form, and return it to the school in person, by mail, or via fax.

You are eligible to apply if: You reside in the District of Columbia. Your child is eligible to attend preschool if they will be 3 years old by Dec. 31.

Bridges is located at 1250 Taylor St. NW. 202-545-0515. To learn more about the school or for the application, log on to www.bridgespcs.org.

DCPS Concludes Lottery Process for Out-of-Boundary, Pre-school and Pre-K Enrollment

On March 18, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) held the 2009/2010 lottery for the out-of-boundary, pre-school and pre-kindergarten enrollment process. This process provides families the option to apply to have their child attend a school other than the school(s) assigned to them and a centralized opportunity to apply to pre-school and pre-kindergarten programs. The results of the lottery are posted online at www.k12.dc.us/lotteryresults, and letters were scheduled to be mailed home by March 31.

According to a press release issued by DCPS, this year the application process was revamped to accommodate several significant upgrades: The web application was streamlined, and the application period was extended to allow parents more time to weigh their options.

All school lotteries were conducted centrally to improve transparency, fairness and efficiency. Parents had the option to apply for up to five out-of-boundary schools instead of three in previous years. Students who currently attend an out-of-boundary school were automatically accepted into their designated feeder school. DCPS received more than 3,400 applications; 15 percent of the applications were pre-school, 33 percent were pre-kindergarten, and 52 percent were K-12. Close to 60 percent of the total number of applicants were placed at a school of their choice, including 63 percent of pre-school students and 64 percent of pre-kindergarten students.

The lottery process has closed, but families can still enroll out-of-boundary and in pre-school/ pre-kindergarten programs by inquiring at the school of their choice about available slots. If there are none available, students will be placed on a waitlist by a

first come, first served basis.

Families should know that there are still excellent schools with space and resources available that are eager to welcome additional students. The central office staff is equipped and committed to helping every family explore alternative options, and find the best school for their child.

As parents and guardians review the lottery results online, they should consider the following: These results include both in and out-of-boundary applicants to pre-school and pre-kindergarten programs and out-of-boundary applicants to grades K-12. In cases where a school had more applicants than seats available a random lottery was used to determine placements.

Students received preference in the lottery process only if: they were applying in-boundary for pre-school or pre-kindergarten; they have a sibling at the requested school; they live within three blocks of an elementary school or five blocks of a secondary school.

DCPS added 100 pre-kindergarten slots this year at four of the schools with the highest demand – 20 each at Janney, Murch and Eaton; 40 slots at Lafayette.

Most students were accepted at no more than one school and were waitlisted for any school at which they were not accepted. Some students could have been accepted to two schools if they applied for pre-school/ pre-kindergarten and were accepted to their in-bound option and one of their out-of-boundary options.

"The out-of-boundary process is one more tool DCPS families can use to make choices based on what is in the best of their child," said Chancellor Michelle Rhee. "This year we set out to make the process easier and more transparent both for families and school-based faculty and staff. This is only the beginning of the enrollment process for 2009/2010, and we look forward to working in step with District families as we continue to plan for the next school year."

For information about the out-of-boundary process, including questions about the lottery and alternative school options for families, call 202-478-5738 or send an e-mail to enrollmentprocess@dc.gov.

Send submissions to Susan Braun Johnson at schools@billrag.com by April 15.

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