

Toll Gate PTO Newsletter

February, 2004

Calendar of Events

- February 12, 2004 – Family Night
- February 13, 2004 – School Closed – Staff Development
- February 16, 2004 – School Closed – President’s Day
- February 17, 2004 – Regular School Board Meeting Hopewell Elementary School – 7:30pm
- February 18, 2004 – Report Cards Issued
- February 26, 2004 – Literacy Workshop for parents at Stony Brook Elementary – 7:00pm
- March 2, 2004 – Hopewell Valley “Do Nothing Night”
- March 2, 2004 – Read Across America Day – Details to follow
- March 11, 2004 – Early Dismissal
- March 15, 2004 – Regular School Board Meeting – Toll Gate Elementary School – 7:30pm
- March 27, 2004 – Toll Gate Auction Fundraiser
- March 29, 2004 – Book Exchange
- March 30, 2004 – Toll Gate PTO Meeting – 7:00pm

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:

Helping Children Take Responsibility

We often speak about R³ behavior at Toll Gate. One of the R's represents RESPONSIBILITY. As adults, one of our missions is to help our children become responsible or accountable – responsible about homework, responsible about practicing musical instruments, responsible about taking an active role in their learning, responsible about treating others with respect, on and on.

I see many examples of responsible behavior at Toll Gate but I am often asked, “How can I help my child become more responsible, more organized? His room is a mess or she takes hours to do her homework.”

Whether the responsibility has to do more with remembering to bring home homework assignments, an unkind word said to a classmate, or a small child running into the road, the same principles apply. Consequences should be given quickly after the “offense” and then, after the discipline, a debriefing is critical. When feelings have calmed a bit, make sure that your child hears you say that you love him or her and then ask, “What did you do wrong?” This type of question begins a conversation when asked gently and not accusingly.

It is important for the child to take responsibility for his/her own actions. If others were involved, it is easy to blame them but the inappropriate action of one person does not justify a wrong choice regarding one's own behavior.

(Cont'd on page 2)

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The topic for this month's letter is “building our school community.” You might feel that it's already built and that there's no need to create it again. It might need some touching up, or a bit of tinkering, that's all. Well, yes and no. If a community were made of only physical structures, or programs we buy, then we all could sit back and relax, letting someone else do the job. But our past two years on Toll Gate's PTO Executive Board have shown us that this is not the case. Our school community is made up of people, and it is constantly changing as families move, staff are reassigned, children grow, and we all face challenges that shift with events both local and in the wider world. A community needs to adapt to these changes – in other words – it must continually be rebuilt.

It takes proactive people to create a strong sense of community. We all feel busy, rushed, pressured. Take some time out and think about how much we all gain when you put aside some of the things you “have to do” and extend yourself others. To being with, keep an eye out for new families or families new to you - we're too small a school for us to not all know each other. Help new children and families feel a part of the neighborhood by inviting them for a play date or to join you for a pizza dinner.

As parents, teachers and families, we all need to constantly reconnect with each other to keep our school

(Cont'd on page 2)

Principal's Letter Cont'd

Try not to get into a dialogue about the whole situation. Remind your child that sometimes it takes a great deal of courage to take a stand that is different than his/her friends' choices but doing so can lead to responsible adult decisions. Even if two siblings are fighting, try not to focus on just one child's offense but help each realize his or her own contribution to the conflict and teach the offended child how to respond properly.

When a child identifies what he or she did wrong and takes responsibility for the behavior, it is the first step toward changing behavior. Sometimes children may not realize what they did wrong and that's when an adult needs to state what the wrong action was and then asks the child to repeat it back so that he or she can take responsibility for it. Sometimes a child says, "I don't know," when he really does know. In that case, give him/her time to sit and think about it. It is amazing how quickly a child remembers what happened when choices are taken away.

Discipline comes from the Latin word meaning "to teach" and these are the strategies that I use when addressing a discipline issue, as well as proactively teaching during *School Meetings*. My philosophy is "to teach" the children what we expect, leading them to monitor their own behavior, and guiding them in making wise choices. I hope the techniques are helpful to you. Note: If a behavior continues, identifying the source of the misbehavior may be valuable and other strategies may be necessary to help correct it.

Some ideas from Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN

Happy Valentine's Day,
Myra J. Bugbee
Principal

Special Thought:

"Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right paths, but the final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands." Anne Frank

President's Letter Cont'd

community strong. This is a core mission of the PTO - to build connections between parents, staff and students. As you might expect, this does not happen on its own. To build a successful school community we need volunteers to work with kids in the classroom and on school-wide projects; help raise funds for programs, supplies and equipment; attend school events (and don't be afraid to help out - you can even offer suggestions to make it better), and to run our organization. We need leaders, followers, organizers and worker bees. Let us know if there is a skill from work or a hobby that you can share - the PTO has needed everything from accountants to zoologists at one time or another. There is no minimum time requirement, but the more we all put in, the stronger the community we create for our kids and ourselves. The school is such a large part of your children's world, and you expect so much of them there - show them how much you value their efforts and teach them by example the gift (and responsibility) of giving back to the community.

Keeping informed also gets you involved in your school community. A group of parents who came to hear Steve Cochrane, principal of Timberlane Middle School, did just that at our last PTO meeting. Steve told us of the challenges facing Timberlane, both right now and in the years ahead. He laid out an ambitious, well-crafted plan to meet those challenges. Parents asked questions and voiced concerns. If you have children in the fifth or fourth grades, the time to learn about these issues is now - some of these improvements will take two or more years to implement. As members of the wider community, and especially as parents, we need to help guide our schools for the present and look ahead to where they should be in the future. Which brings us to a very important way that you can help build our school community and teach your children one of the most important social lessons you can - when the time comes, please go to

the polls and vote. And take your children along - they can vote too!

Ned Fletcher
Randee Tengi
PTO Co-Presidents

TOLL GATE PARENT COUNCIL

The parent council representatives for this year are as follows:

Stella Scafidi	PreK
Adrienne Fawcett	K
Kathy Frederich	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 meet 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.

REPORT CARDS

Due to the number of snow days the issuance of report cards has been delayed until February 18, 2004.

THANK YOU

As always, we sincerely appreciate all the work that the committee chairs and volunteers do to make our PTO work for our kids, school, and community. Thanks to Michelle Needham for running our annual night out at the Trenton Titans. We had terrific seats, the Titans clobbered their opponents, and everyone who went had a wonderful time. (Look for

information from Michelle on ordering tickets for Toll Gate's night of baseball with the Trenton Thunder on Friday, April 30. This is another really fun family event.) And thanks to everyone who works so hard on committees that run all year long - our Bank Day Tellers, our new CAT Committee and Publicity Committee organizers, the Assembly Committee, The Families Helping Families Committee and Carol Meyer who sends each staff member a gift and card from the PTO on their birthday. Our appreciation of the time and effort that every single one of our committee persons contributes can't be overstated.

HOPEWELL VALLEY'S NIGHT OFF IS COMING ON MARCH 2

The Hopewell Valley Municipal Alliance has organized the first "Hopewell Valley's Night Off." This community-wide initiative is designed in response to the increasing demands of work and school on personal and family time. With support of local school officials, sports leaders, parents, community and religious leaders, all sports practices, classes, and homework will be canceled on this special evening. Mark your calendar now, and enjoy a special evening with your family.
<http://www.hvrsd.k12.nj.us/district/news/nightoff.htm>

REMINDER TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS

If your event or program is finished for the year, please return the portfolio to Sandee Steinberg. You can leave it in the office in the PTO Secretary basket.

Chairs of active or upcoming committees are requested to attend the PTO meeting on 3/30 and give a brief report.

COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM (CAT)

Thank you students and parents for your help and enthusiasm. The first CAT Club was a huge success when fifty student plus parents participated in the Millhill Valentine Decoration Activity. Millhill is grateful for the decorations which already adorn the hallway and classroom bulletin boards. On February 5, CAT volunteers rolled over 600 pieces of cutlery for TASK. The assembly line was a joy to watch.

The February 24 CAT Club's activity will be baking for Anchor House. Anchor House is a homeless and trouble youth shelter for children ages nine through sixteen. The CAT Club will bake healthy breakfast goods and treats in the Toll Gate cafeteria. Student participants are asked to bring a brownie, muffin or quick bread mix plus a disposable baking dish appropriate to the mix. A flier will be sent home with details. We are also hoping a representative from Anchor House will give a short talk to the students. CAT will provide eggs and oil. Parent participation and donations are welcome.

Cutlery Rolling Schedule:

Thursday, February 12
3:30-4:30
Media Center

Thursday, February 19
3:30-4:30
Media Center

Thursday, March 4
3:30-4:30
Media Center

CORPORATE REWARDS UPDATE



Calling all Visa Card holders!!! Does your Visa give you

perks like airline miles, gift rewards or cash back for your favorite school? Do you have a Target Visa that awards cash back to Toll Gate, but only at a rate of 1% of your purchases when those purchases are made at Target? Why not SWITCH to the Box Tops Visa? Remember that Toll Gate receives a full 1% CASH back from ALL purchases made with a Box Tops Visa Card. Call 1-800-227-9605 (or visit

www.boxtops4education.com) to become a Box Tops Visa Card holder. Our few Box Tops Visa Card holders earned Toll Gate almost \$200 during the first half of the school year . . . Imagine how much Toll Gate could earn if all of our parents, teachers, staff, etc., shopped with a Box Tops Visa Card!!!

Our last submission deadline for clipped Box Tops labels from General Mills products is fast approaching (March 31). Please deposit all Box Tops in the collection bin located in the Main Office. Counting and bundling of Box Tops are already underway. Let's leave no Box Top label behind!

Have you checked out the Booster Club at www.boxtops4education.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.

Toll Gate will receive its second check from the Target Take Charge of Education Program in March. Target offers a full 1% CASH back for purchases made with a Target Guest Card (good at Target stores only) and up to 1% CASH back for purchases made with a Target Visa Card (good at Target and elsewhere). 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.

Verizon wants to help Toll Gate earn big dollars too! With Verizon Extra Credit for Schools, 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.

Questions? Don't know whether to apply for a Box Tops Visa or a Target Guest Card? Please call Linda Hilliard at 737-0172 for counseling! 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@hvrnsd.k12.nj.us

PTO WEB SITE/ BULLETIN BOARD

The PTO's web site address is as follows:
<http://www.hvrnsd.k12.nj.us/tollgate/home/pto/home.html>

The TGPTO web site 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 and flyers for some events can be found under "Forms and Flyers and Stuff." Forgotten the dates of the Bookfair? Look under "Fundraisers." Budget updates and PTO and TGPC meeting minutes will also be posted.

The PTO now has a bulletin board on the wall opposite the Main Office. Please remember: You are a member of the PTO! Come to the meetings 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 our wonderful school.

GATOR GRAMS

The PTO will soon begin to use Gator Grams to send timely email messages to parents. If you chose to provide a family e-mail address when you filled out your child's directory information online, then you will automatically be subscribed to this service, and your email address will be printed in the directory. If you did not provide a family email address and would like to receive Gator Grams, please send an email to tgpto@hvrnsd.k12.nj.us

A MESSAGE FROM THE LIBRARY

Wow! The 2004 Read Over was a wonderful success. Contributing to the triumph was a delightful group of volunteer readers. They are: Anne McDougald, Laura Hefta, David Graber, Maggie Landis, Kathy Frederick, Melody Maskell, Julie Slattery, Lisa Foster, Barbara Witmer, Carey Compton, and Janet Delatte.

Of course, no evening is a complete success unless there's food and here again parent volunteers stepped in to aid the cause. We dined on book related refreshments such as popcorn (*The Popcorn Dragon*) and fruit salad (*Anansi and the Talking Melon*). So three cheers to the following contributing chefs: Molly Rice, Nancy Ross, Molly

McDougald, Catherine Ahmad, Suzanne Fleming, Tara Russell, Petra Ross-MacDonald, Carol Meyer, Nancy Archibald, Nina Quale, and Karen Nyby.

In conclusion, I want to send out additional kudos to Carol Meyer, Dr. Ida Chiaradia, Carol Olson and Myra Bugbee for their support and help.

On the schedule next is Read Across America on March 2. Happy Valentine's Day to all and happy reading.

Chris Morgan

NEWS FROM THE SPECTRUM OFFICE

ICE classes:

Grade 3 parents, ask your children about the Metamorphic rocks they ate in ICE class last month! They were quite yummy! As we depart from our study of Rocks and Minerals...our focus will shift to the study of Hopewell Valley & Colonial times.

Grade 4 is busy working on Logic Puzzles, and in the next few weeks I will share information that I learned first hand about the California Tide pools - be sure to ask about the gigantic Starfish!

Grade 5 survived our 3rd annual Geography Bee quite nicely.

Some of the questions were extremely challenging, but our student's managed to shine. Our **top ten finalists** after seven rounds of questions were: Carly Gurick, Heather Hoffman, Alex Simonian, Sarah Toussaint, Kevin Roveda, Enzo Cortet, Zeke Ljutich, Stacey Perris, A.J. Rubin, and Will Russell. The final rounds will take place the week of February 9...stayed tuned for the winner! Next activity in Grade 5 is the Annual **Invention Convention**...parents please look for the information flyers over the next few weeks!

Many students have embarked upon Service projects this year. Due to our high philanthropic school community,

Toll Gate has been invited to participate in the 10th anniversary celebration of the Youth In Philanthropy organization. Children who have been involved in service projects this year may be invited to share their experiences at this celebration. The celebration will be held at the New Jersey Convention & Exposition Center on April 27, 2004. Transportation has been provided courtesy of our Superintendent. More information to follow.

As always, please feel free to contact me with any questions concerning our program!

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 !!!!

Save those books you've read and placed in piles, under the bed, in the closet. On March 29th the Toll Gate Book Exchange will be held. Children will be invited to bring in a book on their reading level that they are willing to exchange. They will have a chance to select a book to bring home from those brought in. This is a great chance to expand their reading horizons. We are also asking for any extra children's books families would like to donate. All extra books will be donated to the Mill Hill Child Literacy Project and Homefront. Look for more news in the coming weeks. For additional information contact Penny Hoffman at 737-6608 (HoffmanPen@aol.com) or Julie Stafford at 730-1823 (stafford@axiaconsultants.com).

MEET THE MASTERS

Meet The Masters is in full swing! The 1st, 3rd, 4th and

5th grades have begun their sessions, and by the end of February, every grade will have gone through at least one adventure. The kids are really enjoying themselves and creating wonderful stuff. We're saving the art work until April, when we'll celebrate at the April 20 Family Fun Night. Thanks once again to all our wonderful volunteers! Questions? Call Kit Greener or Kim Hanson.

THANK YOU

We'd like to extend a sincere thank you to all the Toll Gate families who participated in the Womanspace Communities of Light in December. Special thanks go to Penny Hoffman, our Toll Gate coordinator, for making sure that luminary kits were available to every family who wanted to share in this important display of solidarity to help victims of domestic violence. In addition to Penny, thanks also to Maude Tatar and Ned Fletcher for helping with the luminaries around the Toll Gate circle. Our town and school created a beautiful display and sent a powerful message.

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. Students, teachers and parents are working hard to complete Class Masterpieces and Class Baskets by the end of February! The Masterpieces that have been completed so far are incredible. Special thanks goes to Kit Greener, Mary Bradley, Petra Ross-MacDonald and Susan Tobias for their "over the top" efforts. Invitations will be sent to all parents and faculty by mid February. Thanks to Chris Murphy and the Front Porch for this wonderful donation to the auction.

We are in the process of creating the auction booklet

and have found that this is a very expensive project. If you can donate printing services, please contact Molly Rice or Cynthia Wiley.

PTO-FUNDED ASSEMBLIES

Each year the Toll Gate PTO funds several assemblies for the students. We look for performances that are fun, exciting and educational.

On March 9, David Zucker will be presenting "Poetry In Motion." Mr. Zucker combines mime, acting, vocal gymnastics, humor, audience participation, props and puppets to introduce a cast of characters drawn from the poems of Lewis Carroll, Shel Silverstein, Edgar Allan Poe, James Whitcomb, and many more.

There will be performances at 1:30 and 2:30 on March 9. Please come and see your PTO funds at work!

STUDENT DIRECTORY CHANGES

Please note the following corrections and/or changes in the 2003-2004 Student Directory:

The Mathiasen family home number is 818-0090.

The Levandowski family email has

been changed to s11dowski@verizon.net.

The Crane/Webster family email

has been changed to egwebster@verizon.net.

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

REMINDER!

Even though you may let your child's teacher know, it is also important that you call TELESAFE or the school nurse anytime your child is going to be absent from or late to school.