



# The Merriam Community News

February 2009 • Volume 17 • Issue 6

## A Message from Ed:

*Reasonable Expectations.* This seems like a topic without a great deal of controversy. I can list the people I expect things from.... my children, my wife, my friends, my doctor, my plumber, my staff, MYSELF, and the list goes on.....



As I think about the people I know, I'm aware that most have very high expectations of themselves and of one another. And sometimes there's disappointment, anger, stress, and general upset when expectations are not met.

Are these expectations a good thing? Yes and no. I've seen how much people can accomplish when they push themselves to the limits of their abilities. I've also seen the toll it takes when we push too hard; health issues come up, relationships are stressed, and balance in people's lives is threatened.

So let's look at the school connection. When I look at our school community, I see a thriving place, rich with student, teacher, and parent opportunities for learning. Over the course of the year there are over a dozen committees that teachers can serve on to improve our school. Kids take part in a variety of learning projects throughout the year; they are often multi-tasking as they work in their classrooms, and are sometimes involved in a wide range of activities outside of school. Parents receive an extensive mail packet every week; it's a tremendous amount of information that we send out to you. We are doing exciting things and are all very busy.

We live in a community where the best is expected from everyone. I say that with tremendous pride; we are a community of achievers and a community who wants to provide every opportunity for our children. For good reason we celebrate all of the wonderful things that we do at our school and in our lives.

But I want to offer a word of caution and a suggestion. In addition to providing opportunities for children to do more, I believe that we also need

to help them to understand their limits. We need to model for children how to simplify, how to slow down, how to enjoy the moments of life – rather than simply tallying up the number of things that we do. We (kids or adults) can't keep adding on to our loads in life – one more after-school activity, one more committee to serve on, one more athletic event, one more commitment, one more whatever - without at some point paying the price. We need to recognize when it's too much, and then do something about it – something that helps to restore the balance.

Reasonable expectations.

## Merriam Book Fair Starts February 6

The Book Fair takes place from Friday, February 6th through Friday, February 13th. This is a fun event for kids and an important fundraiser for our fabulous classroom assistants. Please take note:

- **Classroom visits to the Book Fair.** Grades 1 through 6 will visit the Book Fair with their classes during the day and kindergartners are welcome to visit any time with their parents. The schedule of classroom visits will be provided and posted on the Merriam PTO Web site at [www.merriampto.org](http://www.merriampto.org).
- **Book Fair items and costs.** In addition to all the great books, please note there will be some non-book items at the fair, including pencils, bookmarks, etc. We are trying to limit these items, but please speak to your child before the Book Fair about what they are allowed to purchase. Books range in price from \$2.00 to \$20.00, with the majority around \$6.99. Taxes apply to all books and non-book items except for books purchased for teachers.
- **Teacher wish lists.** We have asked each teacher to fill a bag with books they would like to add to their classroom library. These books will be available for you to purchase tax-free, along with bookplates for you to fill out.

*Continued on Page 2*

## Scholastic Book Fair Hours

- February 5: 9:30 a.m.– Noon, Set up
- February 6: Book Fair Begins!  
8:00 a.m.– 4:30 p.m.
- February 7: 8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
- February 9: 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Also open  
6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. for the February Social
- February 10: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
- February 11: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
- February 12: 8:00 a.m. – 1:45 p.m.
- February 13: 8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.  
9:30 a.m. – Noon, Break down

### Merriam Book Fair – from Page 1

• **Book Fair hours.** Parents are encouraged to visit the Book Fair anytime it is open. The Book Fair will be open before and after school so you can visit with your child during student-led conferences. In addition, it will be open during the February Social on Monday night and during Basketball on Saturday. Hours are posted below.

• **Volunteers are still needed for this fun event!** To volunteer, please contact Pam Saarinen at 978-266-2924 or [pasaarinen@msn.com](mailto:pasaarinen@msn.com).

## Merriam Auction 2009 Update “Making a Difference”

**Online Bidding for Summer Camps Starts January 30th! To register and bid, go to:**  
<http://merriam.maestroweb.com>.

New this year! You may bid online or select the “Buy it Now” option for summer camps before the auction on March 28. This is a new and unique opportunity for the Merriam community and friends and family. Choose from more than 25 day and overnight camps. Take advantage of great values. Our plan is to sell all camps before the March 28th auction. Support the auction and get a jumpstart on summer planning.

A credit card is required for online bidding. Bidding is scheduled to run Jan. 30 through February 6th. For questions about Online Bidding for Summer Camps, please contact Kristina krychlik at [krychlik@mac.com](mailto:krychlik@mac.com) or (978) 263-7895.

## FAQs About The Merriam Auction



**What is the Merriam School Auction?** The annual Merriam School Auction, scheduled for March 28, is a fun-filled evening for the Merriam community. Moreover, it's the key source of funding for one of the highest priorities at Merriam: dedicated classroom teaching assistants. All of the event's monies go directly toward providing our children with greater individualized attention in the classroom than would otherwise be possible. In the past, the auction has raised as much as \$54,000 in one night.

**Do I have to spend a lot of money to attend the Merriam Auction?** All the night will cost you is the price of your ticket, which includes a full dinner and a new Merriam Movie. Anything more is entirely up to you. You can choose to enjoy the evening and spend nothing more. Perhaps you will just buy a raffle ticket for a chance to win an item decorated by your child's class. Or, you might team up with friends and splurge on a catered dinner for 8, a vacation week away, or Patriots' or Red Sox tickets.

Any bidding you do at the event will help Merriam reach its goal. There is another very important way that you can help – that may not cost you a cent – and that's by making a Community Donation.

**What are Community Donations at the Merriam Auction?** Community Donations are items or services that are provided by members of the Merriam community to be auctioned off on the night of the event. Your donation is limited only by your imagination. It can be providing a skill you already know, such as baking, knitting, jewelry making, photography, or even magic tricks. It can include a donation of time to provide a service, such as childcare, home maintenance, sports lessons, airport shuttle, computer repair, or electronics' hook-ups. Some of the most popular categories include themed dinners, kids' birthday parties, and tickets to sporting events. Here's your chance to be creative. Large or small, every donation helps and makes for a more varied and exciting evening.

**How do I make a Community Donation?** The Community Donations form, which includes all

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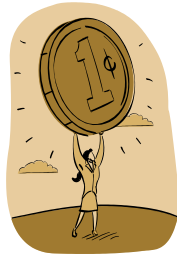
## Merriam Auction FAQs – from Page 2

pertinent information about your donation, is due February 13th. Check your child's backpack for the form. New this year, this form is available for online entry at: <http://merriam.maestroweb.com>. A downloadable MS Word version is also available online. Please note drop-off days/times on the form. If you have any questions about community donations, please contact Shannon Bischoff, Community Donations Liaison, at [sibischoff@yahoo.com](mailto:sibischoff@yahoo.com) or 978-635-9655.

**How do I learn more about the Merriam Auction?** Please visit <http://merriam.maestroweb.com> for answers to more FAQs regarding the Merriam Auction, as well as continuous updates and information about the school's biggest fundraiser scheduled for March 28, at 6 p.m., Marriott Spring Hill Suites, Devens.

## Learn More About Cashless Fundraising Opportunities

Merriam is participating in the following cashless fundraising programs that raise money and equipment for Merriam at no cost to you.



### Donelan Receipts - Register Tapes for Education 2008-2009:

We're down to the last two months to collect Donelan receipts. We have until March 31, 2009 to submit eligible Donelan cash register receipts (receipts dated 9/1/08 to 3/31/09) into valuable cash value points. In April 2009, Merriam can select educational equipment with our program-to-date cash value points. Our goal this year is to turn in 100,000 cash value points. Our deposit total for January was 15,939 cash value points, for a program total to date of 44,376.

Receipts can be sent to school with your child or dropped off in the office for the collection box.

**Target's "Take Charge of Education"** Do you shop regularly at Target and Target.com? Do you already have a REDcard? If not, would you consider getting one? You can easily enroll your REDcard in Target's Take Charge of Education program and choose Merriam School in Acton from their eligible school list. Once enrolled, 1% of your REDcard purchases at Target and Target.com are donated to Merriam. More than seven million Target cardholders participate

## Save the Date!

Merriam Auction  
Saturday, March 28, 6 p.m.  
Marriott Spring Hills Suites, Devens

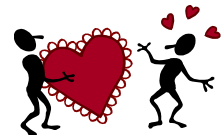
nationwide. For some schools, it adds up to as much as \$10,000 a year, distributed twice a year, in March and September.

**Box Tops for Education** Spread the word to friends and family and enlist their help clipping and saving Box Top coupons for Merriam School. Last year, the school received more than \$900 from the Box Tops sent in by Merriam families. Look for Box Tops for Education labels on some of your favorite products. Send them to school with your children or drop them off in the office. For more information, check out [www.boxtops4education.com](http://www.boxtops4education.com) or contact Tricia Forrester at [pvforrester@gmail.com](mailto:pvforrester@gmail.com).

## February Social Planned

Come to the Merriam February Social to celebrate the Chinese New Year and Valentine's Day. The event will be held **Monday, February 9, at 6:00-7:30 p.m.** in the Cafetorium.

This is a great family event where we can come together to celebrate the Year of the Ox with Chinese Dancing (see some Merriam performers). And everyone can enjoy making Valentine's Day cards and Chinese lanterns, and decorating Chinese boxes.



Dinner will be available: pizza, spring rolls, and water for \$1 each. And hot chocolate and cookies will be free for all. Admission is \$3/person, \$10 max./family. Please note this is not a fundraising event. Fees are to cover costs.

We need volunteers to bake cookies and to help during the event. If you're interested, please contact Dorene Bowe-Shulman at [boweshulman@verizon.net](mailto:boweshulman@verizon.net).

## The Merriam Community News

Editor: Joe Campo • Production: Sue Follett

The next issue will be published February 27, 2009. Email articles by February 20 to Joe at [jb\\_campo@yahoo.com](mailto:jb_campo@yahoo.com).

## News From Annie's Class: The School Store is Coming!

Annie's class is running the School Store. We are doing the School Store because our class agreed on it, and it will raise money for the school.

It would be learning because it will help us with math and making change. It will also help us learn how to fill out order forms, and it will help us have more confidence in ourselves. These are the ways that the School Store will be learning to our class.

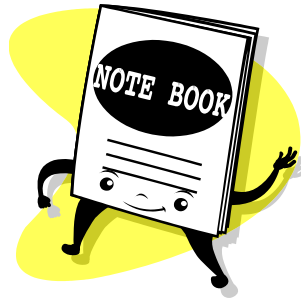
The School Store will be opening in February. It will be running during school hours. The School Store will be selling things such as arts and crafts, school supplies, and mini things that you might need. We hope the School Store is a big success.

## From Nurse Betty: Selected Facts about MRSA

Staph are bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. About 25-30% of the US population carries staph on their bodies at any time. Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is a rare type of staph that is resistant to some antibiotics. Severe infections with MRSA are rare and are more commonly seen in health care settings, not schools.

- **Transmission** – Staph, including MRSA are spread by direct skin-to-skin contact. It can also be spread by contact with items that have been touched or used by people with staph such as sharing towels, razors, and athletic equipment. Most people who have staph or MRSA on their skin do not have infections or illness. Staph infections including MRSA start when staph enter a cut or break in the skin.

- **Symptoms** – Minor staph infections may cause ordinary boils, pimples and rashes, such as impetigo. Severe staph infections are uncommon in healthy children. A sign of more serious infection could include high fever, headache, fatigue, and heat and pain around a wound. The symptoms of MRSA are the same as other staph infections.



- **Treatment** – See your doctor if the infection is large, painful, swollen, red, and does not heal by itself. Your doctor will determine if you need antibiotics. Students with an MRSA infection can attend school as long as the wound is covered and they are receiving proper treatment.

- **Reducing Risk** – Practicing good hygiene is the best way to prevent MRSA infections. Keep hands clean by washing them frequently with soap and warm water. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available. Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.



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For more information about MRSA, visit the MDPH website at [www.mass.gov/dph](http://www.mass.gov/dph).

## Merriam Plans Pajama Party To Celebrate Literacy

Come one, come all to Willow Books in Acton on Wednesday, March 11, from 6 to 9 P.M. for a special event celebrating literacy at the Merriam School.



Many of Merriam's wonderful teachers will be there too, reading from their favorite books. Wear your Merriam spirit apparel or PJ's, find a comfortable spot and listen to bedtime stories read by YOUR teachers! And, don't forget to visit the cafe for hot cocoa and treats!

Willow Books will donate 15% of all book and cafe sales to Merriam's Cultural Enrichment Committee!

Our wonderful teachers will need help from parents in order for the evening to run smoothly. Roughly 8-10 parent volunteers are needed to spend 20 minutes each assisting a teacher during his or her reading block.

To volunteer, please contact [cath.a.smith66@gmail.com](mailto:cath.a.smith66@gmail.com). Please let Cath know whether you have a grade preference. Teachers for the younger grades will read earlier in the evening.



## February Calendar

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Fri., Feb 6th – 13th. Book Fair. See Box, Page 2, for more information.

Fri., Feb 6th – 13th. Student Led Conferences

Mon., Feb 16th – 20th. Winter Vacation

Tues., Feb 24th. Kindergarten Night – Parent Information Evening

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### Children's Authors And Illustrators To Visit On March 11



Merriam's Cultural Enrichment Committee is pleased to announce the "2009 Meet the Authors" program. On Wednesday, March 11, authors Debbie Miller and Mike Knudson will spend the day at Merriam and meet with students.

Grade-level presentations will run throughout the day. Debbie's and Mike's programs are interactive, informative, and FUN!

Debbie comes to Merriam from Northern Alaska where she has lived for 30 years. Debbie writes award-winning nature-themed books, and has a wealth of knowledge about Alaska.

Mike Knudson is the author and illustrator of two chapter books about the very funny misadventures of two elementary school pals, Raymond and Graham.

Visit their websites at [www.debbiemilleralaska.com](http://www.debbiemilleralaska.com) and [www.mikeknudson.com](http://www.mikeknudson.com).

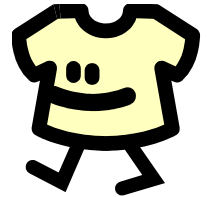
The "Meet the Authors" program comes to Merriam as part of the school's Literacy Celebration. The celebration continues that evening with a Pajama Party fundraiser at Willow

Books in Acton! For more information about the author visits, please contact [andreafidler@yahoo.com](mailto:andreafidler@yahoo.com).

### Come Check Out The Lost & Found Fair

The next Parker Damon Building Lost & Found Fair of this school year will be held Wednesday, Feb. 11 - Friday, Feb. 13, before February vacation.

All items in the Lost & Found with legible names on them (preferably first and last names) will be brought to the school office and a note sent to the student. Items without identifying names will be displayed in the hallway outside the multi-purpose room at the bottom of the main staircase. Any items not claimed by the end of the fair will be laundered and donated to charity.



Please remind your children to check the Lost & Found Fair for items that they may have lost. Families are also welcome to check the fair anytime the building is open. When school is in session, please remember to sign in the school office before going to the fair.