



The Merriam Community News

January 2009 - Volume 17 - Issue 5

A Message from Ed

I'm sitting in school at the moment; a day seemingly no different than any other, except that it's quite different. This is our first snow (or I should say "ice") day, school is closed, and I'm in to check on the school. There's no power at my house, the basement is flooded, and I'm hearing on the news that there are people without heat and electricity throughout the state. I immediately begin to think about those who are most vulnerable in these situations, those who may not have the resources or friends or neighbors or health to get them through this kind of a crisis. My mind then shifts to the countless people who are already working to help others at this time: firemen pumping water out of basements, people preparing shelters, neighbors checking on one another, people working overtime without sleep to get the infrastructure working again.



What is it that permits some people to rise to the occasion in these situations? I'm often inspired by those who manage to put others before themselves, and then accomplish these sorts of heroic deeds. I'm inspired first by the sheer selflessness, and then by the fact that these people think about acting on behalf of others, and then actually do it! So many of us empathize about the plight of others, but then for whatever reason, are unable to act. I don't say this to be critical (there are so many reasons why it is difficult or even impossible to take action), but rather to express my genuine admiration for those who step forward in times of crisis.

I wonder how we can help children to understand that feeling of satisfaction that comes from giving to others. I wonder how we can help children to develop those feelings of empathy and compassion that resonate deep inside. It seems to me that at least one way to do this is to provide children with opportunities; opportunities to learn about and then to discuss the challenges that people face, and then additional opportunities to actually do something and "make a difference."

It is with spirit that Merriam School has had Service Learning as one of its primary components of community building since it reopened a little over fifteen years ago. Kids either give to their school community, by taking part in school jobs, or give to the larger community (either Acton or beyond) by taking part in service learning activities. The kinds of jobs and the forms of service have changed over the years, but not the spirit behind the work.

This year we have worked to revitalize our community service component at Merriam – in spite of the fact that there are greater demands on schools and children than ever. Still, the message we want to deliver to our students is that no matter how busy we are, we always have at least a little time to help others.

Take a look at some of the ways that students at Merriam are already or soon will be making a difference this year:

- Decorating flower pots for senior citizens
- Corresponding with local senior centers
- Cleaning up the school playground
- Recycling paper at school
- Watering the indoor school plants
- Working on landscaping projects outside the school building
- Weeding and other projects in the Outdoor Classroom
- Shelving books and other projects in the school library
- Setting up and running the school store
- Collecting Halloween candy and distributing it to people at shelters and soldiers in Iraq
- Participating in all aspects of creating the school newspaper, *The Merriam Monthly*
- Leading the "Pledge of Allegiance" every morning at school
- Delivering weekly mail packets to classroom teachers
- Collecting items for the Household Goods Recycling Ministry
- Setting up and running the school Post Office and coordinating the school Book Swap

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A Message from Ed – from page 1

Thank you to the Merriam students and staff for all of these wonderful community contributions!

From Nurse Betty: Dressing for Winter

The cold weather has arrived! Students will continue to go outside for recess unless it's very cold or raining. Recess is a very important part of their day, and gives kids a chance to exercise, socialize, and get some fresh air.

Please make sure that your children are dressed appropriately for outdoor activity. Coats, hats, mittens, and boots are a must when the weather is cold, and don't forget snowpants when there is snow on the ground.

Dressing appropriately for the winter temperatures will keep the children not only warm and comfortable, but healthy as well.

Check Out the Parent/Teacher Resource Library

As part of our ongoing efforts to provide communication to you about topics relevant to your children's education, we have opened up the Parent/Teacher Resource Library. It's located in the right rear of the Parker Damon Library. You can visit the library during school hours, or arrange a time with Ed Kaufman to stop by before or after school. During school hours, Joan Hilton can assist you with the check-out process, as long as she is not busy with a class. Ed will be happy to help you at a time that you have pre-arranged.

There are many categories of books in the library: books about parenting, books that discuss learning for children, teaching guides for different curriculum areas, and books about child development, just to name a few. Here are some titles that you might find interesting:

- *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*
- *The Morning Meeting Book*
- *Teaching Students to Read Nonfiction*
- *Essentials of Team Building: Principles and Practices*
- *Being Your Best: Character-Building for Kids 7-10*

Save the Date!

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

- *Speaking of Boys: Answers to the Most-Asked Questions about Raising Sons*
- *Teachers are Special: A Tribute to Those Who Educate, Encourage, and Inspire*

Come See Merriam Students Perform On Stage

Thoroughly Modern Millie will be performed in January by the Acton Teen Repertory Theatre (through the Acton Rec. Dept.), the same group that did *Grease* and *Beauty and the Beast*. This is a musical about young people in New York City in the Roaring '20s (that's the 1920s). Merriam kids in it are Hannah Cheyney, Madison Cring, Nina Euele, Rachel Hemond, Sarah Mamlet, Anna Strahle, Maddie Strahle, and former Merriam students Ryan Cheyney and Annemarie Hanna. The show is directed by Mary Spinosa-Wilson and choreographed by Shayna Garlisi. It's based on a book by Richard Morris and Dick Scanlan, with music by Jeanine Tesori and lyrics by Dick Scanlan.

Shows will be on Fri.1/23, Sat.1/24, Sun.1/25, Fri.1/30, and Sun.2/1. The Friday and Saturday performances will be at 7:30 p.m. and the Sunday show is at 2:00 p.m. Performances are at the R.J.Grey Junior High School auditorium, and doors open 30 minutes before showtime. Admission is FREE! For more info, call the Recreation Dept. at 978-264-9608 ext.0.

Book Fair Volunteers Needed

The Merriam Book Fair will be here before we know it! Dates of the fair are Friday, February 6 through Friday February 13. Students, parents, and teachers will have a chance to find some great deals right in the lobby of Merriam. This is a wonderful opportunity to buy books and to raise funds for our teaching assistants.

Volunteering at the book fair is a lot of fun, and there are lots of different time slots available for volunteers. If you'd like to help, please contact Pam Saarinen at 978-266-2924 or pasaarinen@msn.com.

Merriam Camp Fair Looking for Volunteers

This is a fun event and a very easy volunteer opportunity! Please consider helping out for one of the times listed below:

	Time	No. of Volunteers Needed
Trade Show Bags	9:30-11:00 am	12
Set Up	2:00-3:30 pm	12
Bake Sale	3:45-4:45 pm	4
Camp Check-In	3:45-5:00 pm	10
Camp Fair		
Shift 1	4:45-6:45pm	10
Shift 2	6:30-8:30pm	10
Child Watch	4:45-6:45pm	3
Child Watch	6:30-8:15pm	3

If you can help out, please call or email Trudy Khosla at 978.263.6258 or merriamcampfair@aol.com. Come out and support our second largest fundraiser. This Camp Fair event will contribute more than \$15,000 for 2009 - 2010 Classroom Assistants. We need your help to make this event a success!

This night would not be possible without the Merriam Community support and volunteers donating their time. Thanks you for your consideration and we look forward to hearing from you soon. If you can't donate time – think about donating baked goods for our bake sale.

Please Contact Tina Hamilton & Kathy Simmons at merriamhospitality@yahoo.com or call Tina at 978.635.1336.

Communication Task Force Looking For Your Help

Effective communication is a vital part of maintaining a healthy and thriving school



environment. At Merriam, approaches to communication have evolved dramatically over the past several years.

Prior to 2004, the PTO and Merriam office used to send information out to families and the community via Friday mail and paper fliers solely. Past PTO Chairs Bern Haan and Catherine Longwell, established the Merriam PTO website and online email system. Currently maintained by parents Jim Salem and Katy Frey (webmaster), the PTO's email system and website have expanded and improved the dissemination of Merriam School news to all families, teachers, and staff. In addition to being the recipient of this information, we can also initiate communication. Families can e-mail their teachers and the principal, and can seek out needed information such as bus forms on the Merriam School website and the latest fundraisers on the PTO website.

As our communication network gets more complex and continues to evolve, we hope to create a Communications Task Force that will create a plan for an effective communication approach for the school. Among our concerns is how we balance the benefits of a much "greener" system with making sure that all communication is being received and read by families. The Task Force will be responsible for establishing the optimal combination of messages, frequency, and channels of communication to assure that students, teachers, parents, and the Merriam community stay connected and informed.

If you are interested in communication at Merriam and would like to join our Communications Task Force, please e-mail Ed at ekaufman@mail.ab.mec.edu.

Help Make Another Memorable Merriam Movie

Merriam Parent Christo Tsiaras will create an unforgettable movie for the auction. He needs 300 photos to make this special keepsake. Classrooms, all school meetings, or after-school activities make great pictures. No home pictures please.

Please send Christo school-related still photos or short videos (either taken by parents/guardians or teachers). Shots can be digital (over 300kb in file size) or can be scanned and returned to you. Please send to: christo@dreamalleypictures.com.

Diabetes: Understand the Warning Signs

Diabetes is one of the most common chronic diseases in children. In the United States 1 in every 400-600 children has Type I diabetes. (National Diabetes Education Program).

Type 1 (Insulin Dependent) diabetes is most common in youth.

Type 2 (Insulin Resistance) diabetes is most common in adults but is on the rise in youth.

“Diabetes is a chronic disease that impairs the body’s ability to use food properly. Insulin is a hormone produced in the pancreas that is necessary for the body to convert food into energy. In people with diabetes, either the pancreas doesn’t make insulin, the body cannot use the insulin properly, or both. Without insulin, glucose (sugar) builds up in the blood.” (American Diabetes Association)

Early detection and knowledge of the warning signs is your greatest weapon against the disease and its complications. Behaviors a child might exhibit in school that could indicate undiagnosed diabetes are:

- Excessive urination (frequent trips to the bathroom especially in close sequence, bedwetting)
- Excessive thirst (frequent trips to the water fountain)
- Irritability
- Lack of energy, fatigue, drowsiness
- Rubs eyes, complains of difficulty seeing the board
- Difficulty paying attention

Other symptoms may include:

- Sudden vision changes
- Fruity/sweet odor to breath or urine
- Increased appetite
- Rapid or unexplained weight loss
- Nausea, vomiting or abdominal pain
- Tingling or numbness in the legs, feet or fingers
- Frequent infections of the skin, cuts that are slow to heal
- Darker patches of skin usually in neck folds
- Itching of skin and/or genitals

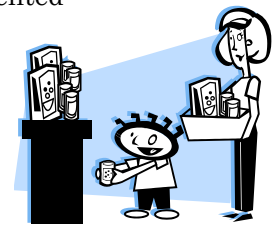
Note: Many of these symptoms can be related to illnesses that are not associated with diabetes. Only a healthcare professional can provide appropriate diagnostic tests and treatments.

References:

- American Diabetes Association at www.diabetes.org
- National Diabetes Education Program at www.ndep.nih.gov
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov

Making a Difference with a Community Donation

Please consider donating a service, a talent, a personal creation, or an item to the Merriam Auction. Donations are often received through the generosity of employers and their nonprofit foundations. Your donation, large or small, goes directly to funding our talented classroom assistants. Our dedicated classroom assistants provide outstanding educational support for 18 hours per week and set Merriam apart.



Here are a few ideas from past auctions, but new concepts are always welcomed:

- Theme parties or home-delivered meals.
- Rewards points.
- Service Consultations: Donate a few hours of your talent.
- Event tickets: The Sox or theatre tickets.
- Artistic contributions: Jewelry design, photography, or musical talents.

If you have any questions about community donations, please contact Shannon Bischoff, Community Donations Liaison, at sibischoff@yahoo.com or 978-635-9655.

Question: Where can you:

- learn about homework resources and strategies?
- enjoy muffins and donuts with your kids before school?
- connect with Merriam friends?

Answer: The January PTO meeting!

Homework: Resources and Strategies

Tuesday, January 27th, 2009

8:45 a.m.

Multi-purpose Room

Camp Fair Slated For January 27

Merriam's 16th Annual Summer Options CAMP FAIR will be held TUESDAY, JANUARY 27th (Snow date – Thursday, January 29th).
When: 5-8 p.m. – Parker Damon Gym.
Admission is free!

Choose from over 90 Camps & Programs - Grade School, Jr. High & High Schoolers. Participating Programs Include:

- Day, Partial Day and Overnight Programs
- Academics, Art, Community Service, Computers, Drama
- Family Camps, Music, Outdoors, Sports, Study Abroad, Travel

Merriam community we need your help! Please tell your neighbors, friends and relatives about this event! All 90 camps are expecting huge attendance! A successful event = many, many people in attendance.

So mark your calendars and tell all you know to come out on Tuesday the 27th and check out all the options for your kids this summer. We also have a new segment of high school offerings. So please let all of the high school families you know about this great fair & incredible opportunities for their high school kids.

For Fair Attendees Only:

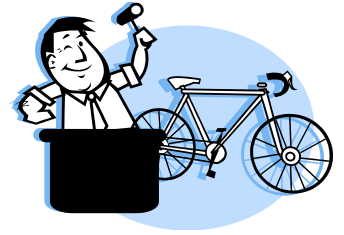
- Camp Incentives
- FREE Program Catalog
- Kids' Movie - Kids entertained while parents find the perfect summer programs 5:30 & 6:45 showings – email merriamcampfair@aol.com to reserve a space
- Dinner Solved - Enjoy Pizza, Hot Dogs, Popcorn, and delicious fresh Homemade Baked Goods for extremely reasonable prices.

The committee appreciates the generous support of our local businesses for this incredible event: The Princeton Review, Cambridge Savings Bank, Roche Brothers, Citibank, Dominos, Lawrence Academy, Savoury Lane, Donelan's, Stop & Shop, Quill & Press, Nestle, Dunkin Donuts, Welch's and Rugged Bear.

New for This Year's Auction: Bid Online For Summer Camps

It's just like eBay, only better. Now, there's no need to wait until the auction date of March 28 to bid on summer camps. After you learn all about camp offerings at the Merriam Summer Options

Camp Fair on Jan. 27, you can bid online for many of them. Choose from 27 day and over-night camps, such as:



- Camp Windridge Tennis & Sports Camp, 2 weeks in August, value \$2730
- Camp Kingswood, 2 weeks, value \$1890
- Camp Thoreau, 2 weeks, value \$1550
- Day Jams Rock Music Day Camp, value \$350
- Gymnastics Academy of Boston, week of 1/2 day camp, value \$175

Support the auction and get a jumpstart on your summer planning. Online bidding will take place during the first two weeks of February. More details on this new, exciting way to bid for summer camps are coming soon.

Merriam's 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 are participating in the Register Tapes for Education Program which allows us to earn free school equipment for Merriam. If you've shopped at Donelan's this holiday season, please save and send your receipts to the Merriam Collection Box, located in the School Office. 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 December was 15,458 cash value points, for a program total to date of 28,437.

Receipts can be sent to school with your child or dropped off in the office for the collection box. Also, don't forget to fill out the contest entry form by January 15, 2009 to win an iPod Shuffle and \$500 grocery store gift certificate. Additional contest forms are located in the collection box. Contest rules at www.shoppercredit.com/shoppercontest.

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January Calendar

Wednesday, January 14th: Theme Day

Wednesday, January 14th: Birthday Lunch

Tuesday, January 27th: PTO Meeting, 8:45 a.m. Muffins with Mom & Donuts with Dad

Tuesday, January 27th: CAMP FAIR, 5:00-8:00 p.m. Come join us for this free event to check out area camps. This year features dinner options and a Merriam Bake Sale!!

Cashless Fundraising – Continued from p. 5

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 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 or contact Tricia Forrester at pvforrester@gmail.com.

The Merriam Community News

Editor: Joe Campo
Production: Sue Follett

The next Community News will be published on
January 30, 2009.

Email articles by January 23 to Joe at
jb_campo@yahoo.com.

Join us for the February Social

Celebrate Valentine's Day and
the Chinese New Year!

Monday, February 9th
6:00-7:30 p.m.

Parker Damon Cafetorium



PIP Plans Math Night For January 21

Turn off the electronics and come play! AB PIP (Parent Involvement Project) will hold a fun family math game night – at no cost and for all ages – on January 21, 2009, from 5:00 to 8:00 pm, at Boxborough's Sargent Memorial Library.

Come play "domino math," learn how "Math Circles" work, discover Kenken and share your favorite family math games. See how games can be a fun engaging way to sharpen kids' math and computational skills.

To learn more about game night and other PIP activities, visit the PIP website at www.actonpip.org.