

# Merriam School

## ■ Community News ■

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### MESSAGE FROM SANDRA

#### Class Grouping for 2008-2009

Merriam teachers are working hard to create class groupings for the 2008-2009 school year. The goal is to create classroom groupings that are balanced with respect to boys/girls, grade levels and individual strengths and weaknesses. We are in the middle of that process now, and are giving consideration to grouping each child with a comfortable peer. We will maintain children's experiences of staying with the same teacher for two years whenever possible. However, several situations this year render that impossible. We will have a new section of fourth grade, and Emily Murphy and Leah Robb will be out on family leave.

The process of creating groups is indeed about creating groups of children who will work well together. It takes a great deal of thought, discussion, time and effort on the part of all staff at Merriam. The capability of groups of children to become communities of learners, and the collective needs of children, are kept firmly in mind.

Explanations of why an individual child is in one group or another will be impossible to answer on a child-by-child basis. However, we can assure you that much thought and time goes into the process of forming new groups.

We have received input from some of you concerning your children and the creation of new class groupings for

next year. If, in your letter, you explained the factor/s (social, emotional, academic) that you most wanted us to consider in this process, and you understood and followed the guideline of not using names, we certainly are considering your feedback as part of all the information in front of us.

The staff shares your sincere interest in your child's learning and social needs. Please remember it is not possible for us to explain why individual children have been placed in one class or another. We anticipate and expect your understanding and appreciation of the complexities of this process.

#### Saying Good-Bye To Judy and Diane



As the school year ends, we have to say good-bye to two pillars at Merriam, Judy Craig and Diane Walsh.

Diane Walsh came to work as office administrative assistant at Merriam in 1998 after holding a similar position in a Littleton elementary school. Her bright smile, positive attitude and warm welcoming affect have been the face of Merriam School since the day she arrived.

Diane greets students, parents and staff with kindness and understanding regardless of the nature of the interac-

tion. She is professional and reassuring in her approach to all people. In a busy elementary school office, Diane triages concerns and models respectful communication. It has been noted often that Diane has taught hundreds of children to say "thank you," and scores of adults to wait patiently for their turn. Diane has successfully built trusting relationships with many people who have then relied on her gift for listening and advice beyond her job description.

Diane will be remembered for her interpersonal strengths that have welcomed visitors, provided safety and security for children, been the link from home to school for parents and befriended faculty and staff. There is no position in an elementary school that requires as much interaction with as many people in as vital a way as the school office administrative assistant. Multitasking is essential in this job. Technological advancements over the last 10 years have meant that the school offices are called on to collect and disseminate ever-growing amounts of data. Diane takes this on, all the while being the person who must know everything about everything and everyone and keep chaos at bay. Diane accomplishes these seemingly impossible tasks every single day. Diane is the "face" of Merriam School and will be sorely missed.

*Contd. on pg 2 Sandra*

Judy came to work at Merriam as an office assistant in 1999 from a career in medical research. She had a lot of experience with small animals and their daily needs, and she brought her skills of nurturing and tending to teachers, parents and students at Merriam.

Judy's responsibilities have included the purchasing of all our office and classroom supplies and the paperwork and organization of the state MCAS tests. It is fair to say that Judy has kept our heads above water financially and out of trouble with the state regarding the myriad of details surrounding the MCAS. These tasks are very detail-oriented and often require a great deal of patience to get everything exactly right.

Judy will always be remembered for her calm, unflappable presence no matter what the situation. Even when the Office is buzzing with children, teachers and parents all in need of something, Judy naturally triages and eventually helps each person get what is needed.

Judy is a creative thinker and was often called on to help figure out how to problem-solve unusual situations. For example, she helped figure out how to get fifty-plus large beach balls filled with air and ready to go for Theme Day - the balls didn't fit in a car, and we had to take them out of the building to fill them with air. Judy was also called on to figure out how to get peonies when we couldn't find any in bloom. She appreciated Merriam's need enough to go knocking on doors where she saw flowers blooming in yards. Her dedication to our all-school efforts to celebrate community have always been extraordinary, and her patience and calm as the Merriam nurturer and problem-solver will be enormously missed.

## MESSAGE FROM SANDRA

As I wind up my last month as principal of Merriam School, I remain humbled by this community of students, teachers and parents. It is and has always been an honor to represent this school in the larger community. Reflecting on the past 14 years, I know that I have been challenged and rewarded every day in this position. I know as a community you will all continue to grow and develop and that Merriam School will remain true to the defining values and structures that identify the school to those in and outside the building.

Thank you for all you have given me. I am a better person for knowing you and for having had this experience. I have always believed that we are the sum total of all of our experiences. This one has made a major impact on my life. Thank you.



### From The PTO: Thanks to All

The PTO has had a wonderful year, thanks to the efforts of the entire Merriam community. Thanks to all Merriam parents, staff and students for your help with the long list of PTO-sponsored social and fundraising events, as well as your support with community-building and communications.

Everyone has helped in some way, big and small! You have attended, organized and staffed events. You have donated time, talent, money, goods, services and delicious food. You have read, sent and replied to emails, flyers and newsletters. You have volunteered in classrooms, on field trips, at the library, on theme days, in the office, at the Auction, on committees and more. And thanks to your generous participation and contributions, we have surpassed our fundraising goal of \$84,000 this year! This is an amazing achieve-

ment that will benefit an amazing school-thanks to all of you!

And for every parent who has volunteered in anyway this year, please allow Merriam staff and students to express their appreciation, too. Join them at the **Parent Volunteer Reception, Monday, June 2, at 8:30 a.m.**, in the Cafetorium. They will honor and thank parents with a special musical program during All School Meeting, followed by a reception in the lobby.

Fortunately, many of you have already volunteered for next year -- to serve as committee chairs, coordinators and representatives. Thanks



for helping to keep all of our activities organized and fun! In particular, we would like to say thank you and welcome to our new PTO Board for 2008/2009: Lynn Armstrong, Chair; Donna German, Co-chair; Lisa Pratt, Treasurer; and Kim McCormick, Secretary. The new Board has already been working hard planning for next year. And, we are especially grateful to all the coordinators who have agreed to stay on for another year. Your help and experience during such a transitional year for Merriam will make an enormous difference for our whole community.

Thanks again to everyone for all your support this year!

--Carol Leandro, Cathy Utt, Lynn Armstrong and Sandra Wilensky

## Save Your Spot For The Portrait Fundraiser

The Family Portrait Fundraiser has been scheduled for next fall. Two professional photographers will again donate their time for this PTO fundraiser. Matthew Handelman and Paul Friedman are scheduled to take portraits the weekend of September 27 and 28, at the Acton Arboretum.



Paul is a current Merriam dad. His work can be viewed at [www.paulfriedman-photography.com](http://www.paulfriedman-photography.com). He will be taking pictures on Saturday, September 28 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Matthew is a former Merriam dad, and his work can be viewed at [www.singingshadow.com](http://www.singingshadow.com). He will take pictures on Sunday, September 29, also from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

If you are interested in reserving a sitting now, please contact Katy Frey at [katyfrey@comcast.net](mailto:katyfrey@comcast.net) or (978) 264-0680. Appointments will be confirmed upon receipt of a check for \$50, made payable to The Merriam PTO. Please send your check to the Merriam office in an envelope marked Family Portraits. All proceeds go to the PTO to help fund our amazing Merriam assistants.

## Thanks For Supporting The Direct Appeal

The PTO's Annual Direct Appeal letter was sent home to every family in April. This is the last fundraiser of the school year. We would like to thank all the Merriam families who have already made direct donations. As a result of your support, we have raised more than \$3,200 to help fund teaching



## Spring Yard Sale Is A Big Hit!

A million thanks to all who made our Spring Yard Sale a success! Recycling items from our homes and some delicious baking contributed to more than \$1,100 in profit, funds that will support the sixth grade's impending send-off celebration.



What made this year's yard sale a success? You. Thank you for:

o Donating great items. This year we had tons of great sports equipment, books, high-end household decorations and some of the best yard-sale bargains ever: a massage chair, a double running stroller, an in-car DVD player, top-of-the-line bikes-even a designer cat/dog carrier. Thank you for donating such good stuff, and making sure it was clean and in good condition.

o Volunteering. Many of our volunteer "staff" pitch in year after year, and they are so helpful and fun to work with. Special thanks this year to Andrea Pincumbe, the hardest working sixth-grader ever! We have never been more organized and orderly.

o Baking. We added a bake sale this year, and you baked and bought, elevating our proceeds considerably. Special thanks to Robin Herr Pershing for leading this aspect of our sale, and to all our talented bakers.

o Coordinating. School staff were instrumental in making this event run smoothly, including Diane Walsh, Nirmin Morris and Sandra Wilensky. And do our PTO and other parent leaders ever get thanked enough for all they do? Ideas, communication, logistics and tactical facilitation all came from Carol Leandro, Lynn Armstrong, Cathy Utt, Susan Russell and Katy Frey-and were much appreciated.

o Purchasing. It's always crazy to show up on a spring Saturday, with all that's going on in beautiful Acton, but we had an excellent turnout this year.

Please know that whatever we don't sell, we share with charities ranging from Household Goods Recycling Ministry to Goodwill, all of whom share in our thanks.

Sandy Cummings and Margaret Miley, Yard Sale Organizers

assistants in every classroom for next year!

There is still time to contribute - we welcome any donations you can make to the Direct Appeal. Checks payable to the Merriam Community PTO can be sent to the attention of the PTO Treasurer via the Merriam Office. Check our website, [www.merriampto.org](http://www.merriampto.org), for details and a contribution form.

The Merriam Community PTO is a non-profit organization (i.e. 501c3), so

you may be eligible to have your donation matched, or even doubled, by your employer. We are excited to have received matching corporate donations from such companies as Fidelity, Sun Microsystems, Raytheon and Siena Corporation. Check with your personnel office today to see if your company offers this great benefit.

Thanks again for your generosity and support!

## PTO Fundraising & Planning Update

At our last PTO meeting of the school year on May 12, we took some time to review our accomplishments this year and begin some planning for next year. To date, the PTO has raised more than \$87,000 this year, surpassing our goal of \$84,250. This is an amazing achievement given the economic climate. We want to congratulate all our fundraising chairs and their hardworking committees for a job well-done! And thanks to everyone for their generosity in support of our classroom assistants.

At the meeting, we noted that all of our fundraisers were very successful, with only a few falling shy of our forecasts. The Merriam Auction succeeded in raising more than \$54,000 - kudos to Auction Chair Lisa Robb and her spectacular team. We were also fortunate that several parents stepped forward this year to lead two new fundraisers for Merriam, Directory Advertisements and SCRIP Gift Cards. Thanks to Sue Metcalf and Cathy Castaneda for piloting these programs, and thanks to all of you who supported them or participated in the programs. Also helping us to exceed our fundraising goal this year was the record success of the 2008 Summer Options Camp Fair. Thanks to Trudy Khosla and all of the Camp Fair volunteers. The Camp Fair is a trade show, so not only is it our second largest fundraiser, but its earnings come from fees paid by the camps rather than our families.

We also believe, very strongly, that much of our fundraising success is due to the time and effort that parents and staff put into communications and community-building, including our social events, Community Conversations and International Night. While these efforts and events do not specifically raise money, they do bring us

together to share ideas, cultures and fun. Those shared experiences contribute to our school in immeasurable ways. So thanks also to all of the coordinators, committee chairs and council representatives, and all the volunteers who help them to support our connections as a community. Especially, we would like to acknowledge Katy Frey, our webmaster; Jim Salem, our email guru; Sue Follett and Joe Campo, our Newsletter Editor and Publisher; and the amazing Friday Mail Team, led by Lauren Johnson and Hannah Bloch. These hard-working volunteers keep us informed about all the great things that are happening here at Merriam.

With all these accomplishments, we will also face some challenges next year -- being the largest elementary school in Acton and facing possible cuts in the district's teaching assistant budget. Also, the addition of the new fourth-grade section will result in a slight decrease in available enrollment space for our Before/After School Program (the room housing this program will become a regular classroom). Since this program also helps to fund teaching assistants at our school, the PTO will continue to look for new and creative ways to raise funds as we strive to maintain the current level of classroom assistant hours.

Fortunately, as we begin to plan for next year, some new ideas have already emerged. We plan to have some fun, community-building activities during our September PTO meeting and our first Community Conversation is going to be led by our very own new principal, Ed Kaufman! Another idea that we are considering is to alternate our Fall Square Dance Social with a Disco/Lip Sync Party, just to try something different and inspire some new families to participate.

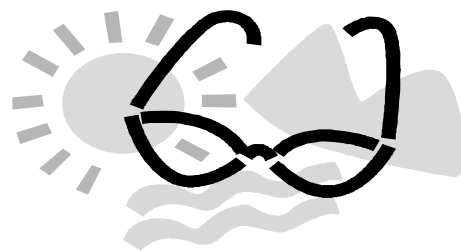
We are always searching for enthusiastic and energetic people to brainstorm

and execute new ideas for the future. (For information on how you can help, see *PTO Coordinators Are Needed* on page 7). As the old saying goes, many hands make light work. Please consider joining our team. It will be a worthwhile experience and a great way to meet new friends.

Finally, we would like to recognize the very talented PTO Board that served over the past two years: Co-chairs Carol Leandro and Cathy Utt, Treasurer Susan Russell, and Secretary Hannah Bloch. We have been incredibly fortunate to have such a highly skilled group leading our committed volunteers and helping to foster communication and community-building at Merriam. A huge, heartfelt thank you to each one of you for all the work you have done over the past two years to help make Merriam the wonderful place it is.

Lynn Armstrong and Donna German, PTO Chair and Co-chair for 2008/2009

(along with Carol Leandro, Cathy Utt, Susan Russell and Hannah Bloch)



### Merriam School

### Community News

The next Community News will be published in September 2008.

Email articles to Joe Campo at [jb\\_campo@yahoo.com](mailto:jb_campo@yahoo.com).

## Important News About Class Groupings

At the year-end conferences, parents and guardians will receive a letter similar to the one below. PLEASE KEEP THIS LETTER IN A SAFE PLACE. IT WILL CONTAIN IMPORTANT PASSWORD INFORMATION THAT YOU WILL NEED IN THE FUTURE.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

We are writing to inform you of an important innovation in the on-line emergency card system. On August 22 you will be able to get (child's first name)'s placement information when you file his on-line emergency card. You access the on-line emergency card system with the same username and family passwords assigned last year (provided below). To view the placement information, log into the system and

1. Review the current information for (child's name) and make any necessary changes.
2. Indicate whether you grant permission for the school nurse to treat your child.

When you click Submit, a screen will appear with placement information for (child's name).

**Since you are required to review/update this information each year, it is important to keep the username and password until (child's first name) graduates from high school. Please save this letter for future reference.**

### WebAddress:

<https://absis.ab.mec.edu/public>

**Username/Family:** student\_number

**Password:** Web\_Password

Class placement information will be available August 22 along with a list of your child's classmates. Note that bus numbers and pick-up times will be posted in The Beacon the week before school begins. Please log in to the emergency card system on or after this date. Please understand that you may experience difficulties logging on given the high volume of activity on August 22. If you experience problems

accessing the system, try again later. If problems persist, please e-mail [anicolle@mail.ab.mec.edu](mailto:anicolle@mail.ab.mec.edu). Every year we must have updated emergency contact and health information on each student. With

your help we could start the year already having this essential information!

## On Your Way To The Pool?

In case you missed the deadline for ordering Caribbean-themed beach towels, a few extras will be available to purchase at the Beach Party on June 12.



The 100% terry velour cotton towels (30" x 60") are available in pink, lime green or Caribbean blue. A fun shell graphic and "Merriam Beach Party 2008" are embroidered on the towel. (Please note that this is not a fundraiser.)

If you have questions about the towels, please email Katy Frey at [katyfrey@comcast.net](mailto:katyfrey@comcast.net)

## Remember The Rules Of Sun Safety for Kids

Childhood sunburns can increase your child's risk of developing skin cancer as an adult. Even a suntan can be harmful to children. Tanning is an outward sign of internal skin damage. Research shows that much of the damage to skin is done in the first 18 years of life. Protecting skin and eyes during these early years can reduce the risk of some types of skin cancer by as much as 78%.

### Youth and Skin Cancer

- Half of lifetime exposure to UV light occurs during childhood and adolescence.
- It can take less than 10 minutes for a child's skin to burn.
- Children with severe sunburns are at an increased risk for skin cancer.
- A person born today is twice as likely to develop malignant melanoma compared to someone born only a decade ago and 12 times more likely as someone born 50 years ago.
- Being sun safe is the first step to reduce the chances of getting skin cancer later in life.

### Teach Children Sun Safe Habits

Children learn healthy habits best at a young age. Therefore, it is important to begin protecting your children from the beginning and teach them the importance of sun safety. With sun damage accumulating over a person's lifespan, beginning sun safety habits at a young age should be a priority.

- Maximize protection between the peak sun hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Wear sun-protective, light-colored clothing, including long-sleeved shirts and pants made of tightly woven fabric.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat that protects head, face, ears and neck. If a baseball cap is worn, make sure to use sunscreen on ears and neck.
- Wear UV-protective sunglasses with 99%-100% UV absorption.
- Seek shade during peak sun hours. Follow the Shadow Rule: if your shadow is shorter than you, the sun's rays are at their strongest and you should seek shade.
- Use a sunscreen of SPF 15+ and apply a generous amount (about a palmful) 30 minutes before going outside. Reapply sunscreen every 90 minutes or after swimming, towel drying or perspiring, even if the label says the product is water-proof. Don't forget the lips and ears-both areas burn easily.
- Strongly discourage the use of tanning beds.

Further information can be found at [www.shadefoundation.org](http://www.shadefoundation.org) and [www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/choose\\_yourcover/guide.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/choose_yourcover/guide.htm).

# This & That - June

## Merriam School/PTO Events

Sunday, June 1: **Landscaping Day at Merriam**; 10 a.m.-Noon, Parker Damon Building. Families welcome.

Monday, June 2: **Parent Volunteer Reception**, 8:30 a.m. Cafetorium and Lobby.

Wednesday, June 4: **Birthday Lunch** - June birthdays.

Thursday, June 5: Merriam Alumni High School **Graduates Reception**, 12:45 p.m., Lobby.

Friday, June 6: **School Spirit Day**: Blue and Gold day.

Monday, June 9: **All School Meeting** honoring Diane Walsh and Judy Craig, 8:35 a.m.

Wednesday, June 11: **Birthday Lunch** - July Birthdays.

Thursday, June 12: **Caribbean Beach Celebration** honoring Sandra Wilensky; 5:30-7:30 p.m.- Rain or shine!

Friday, June 13: **Breezy Point Field Trip** for sixth-graders.

Friday, June 13: **School Spirit Day**. Red, White and Blue day.

Monday, June 16: **Field Day**.

Monday, June 16: **Sixth-Grade Celebration** Dinner, 5:30 p.m., Cafetorium and Lobby. For sixth-graders and their parents/guardians.

**Last Day of School**: Thursday, June 19 - 12:15 p.m. dismissal.

## The Sandra Wilensky Scholarship Fund

Have you been thinking about a retirement gift for Sandra to honor her decades of service to Merriam and Acton Schools? Here's a terrific idea that reflects your appreciation and generosity.



A scholarship fund has been established in Sandra's honor. Starting next year, a scholarship will be given to a graduating AB senior who attended Merriam, exemplifies Merriam's core

values and actively participates in community service.

If you'd like to contribute, please make your check payable to The Sandra Wilensky Scholarship Fund and send it to:

The Merriam School Sunshine Committee  
11 Charter Road  
Acton, MA 01720  
Questions? Email Catherine Longwell at [cmlongwell@comcast.net](mailto:cmlongwell@comcast.net).

## Advertise in Next Year's School Directory

We need your ad for the 2008-2009 Merriam School Directory! The Merriam PTO wants to continue to offer members of the Merriam Community the opportunity to publicize their businesses and services year-round.



We are happy to announce that Patricia Magyar of oharadesign has offered her expertise in graphic art for this fundraiser for our classroom assistants.

If you are interested in placing an ad, please reserve your advertising spot by June 12 by e-mailing Sue Metcalf at [suemetcalf@verizon.net](mailto:suemetcalf@verizon.net) with your name, phone number and ad size. All ads are black and white. Sizes and prices are:

SIZE	PRICE
Quarter Page (5.125" x 1.8125")	\$ 45.00
Half Page (5.125" x 3.875")	\$ 75.00
Three-Quarter Page (5.125" x 5.9375")	\$110.00
Full Page (5.125" x 8")	\$125.00

Ad copy and graphics should be submitted by June 18 to Patricia at [oharadesign@verizon.net](mailto:oharadesign@verizon.net). High resolution PDF files are needed. If you have questions regarding ad layout or format, please contact Patricia by email or at (978) 263-3881.

Payment to the Merriam PTO will be billed and collected in early September. If you have any questions, contact Sue Metcalf.

## New Faces At Merriam Next Fall

Merriam will welcome four new teachers and two new office assistants next September.

**Vanessa Mann** is a former Merriam faculty member who will return after raising her children to teach fourth grade. Vanessa taught third and fourth grades at Merriam in the early years of the school.

**Tracey Steege** is coming to us from the Hudson Middle School and will teach fifth grade next year.

**Alyson Whatcott**, who worked as a classroom assistant at Merriam and was a long-term substitute in fifth grade this year, will teach sixth grade in the fall.

**Cindy Calnen**, who is presently a fourth-grade teacher in New Jersey, will come to Merriam to teach grade four.

**Allison Nicole**, a former assistant at Conant School, has joined us in the office and will be the Lead Administrative Assistant in the office in starting at the end of June.

**Kathleen Sullivan**, who's coming to Merriam from Concord, will be the support administrative Assistant, and will start in September.

Many thanks to the Hiring Committees for their hard work.

## PTO Coordinators Are Needed

Almost all PTO event and committee coordinator roles are filled for the 2008/2009 school year. As a result, the PTO is sure to have another very successful year supporting Merriam with communication, community-building and fundraising for our classroom assistants!

We still have a few key openings. So, if you enjoy coordinating, organizing, planning -- or if you have been wanting to find a more meaningful way to support our school, please consider volunteering for one of these important positions. In every case, the previous chair/coordinator has offered to support you and many key committee members will already be returning -- so this may be the best year ever to step into these positions!

The following positions are available: Social Committee Chair, Fall Social Coordinator, Cultural Enrichment Co-chair, Gift Book Sale Coordinator, Sixth Grade Event Coordinators (generally handled by fifth-grade parents), School Committee Representative (this position can be shared) and School Council Parent Representatives (two representatives will be elected in the fall). Important Auction positions include: Business Donation Coordinator, Publicity Coordinator and Art Coordinator. To learn more, contact next year's PTO Chairs, Lynn Armstrong ([Lynn.Armstrong2@verizon.net](mailto:Lynn.Armstrong2@verizon.net)) and Donna German ([donna@obxnj.com](mailto:donna@obxnj.com)).

Thanks for sharing your time and talents.

## Help Welcome New Merriam Families

Volunteers are needed to welcome new families to the Merriam community. There will be a New Student Orientation on August 25 at 2:00 p.m., during which parents who are new to Merriam meet with the principal and students tour their new school. In addition, there is an ongoing need for "Buddy Families" throughout the school year. The opportunities are:

### New Student Orientation

- Students entering fifth and sixth grade conduct school tours for the new students;

- Adult volunteers direct new families, provide refreshments and supervise students;
- A photographer is needed to take pictures of the new students for a welcome display.

### Buddy Families

Buddy Families help welcome new families to the Merriam community! This simple and meaningful outreach involves just a few phone calls to parents of new students and answering questions, big and small, about Merriam and about being a parent in Acton. Bi-lingual skills are an added plus.

If you are interested in either volunteer opportunity, please contact *Sandra Kane* at [sndkpk@comcast.net](mailto:sndkpk@comcast.net).

### From The School Nurse: Tick Facts

Ticks are bugs that feed on the blood of mammals, birds and reptiles. Deer ticks and dog ticks are found throughout Massachusetts and may spread different disease-causing germs when they bite. Ticks are generally found in grassy, brushy or wooded areas. Ticks do not fly or jump. They attach to animals or people that come into direct contact with them.

*Deer ticks:* Both nymph (young) and adult deer ticks will bite humans. The highest risk of being bitten by a deer tick occurs throughout the spring, summer and fall. However, adult deer ticks can search for a host any time winter temperatures are above freezing. Deer tick nymphs are the size of a poppy seed and deer tick adults are the size of a sesame seed.

*Dog ticks:* In general, only the adult dog tick will bite humans. The highest risk of being bitten by a dog tick occurs during the spring and summer. Adult dog ticks are about the size of a watermelon seed.

*Contd. on pg. 8 Ticks*

*Contd. from pg. 7 Ticks*

*How can I protect my family from tick bites?*

The single most important thing you can do is check yourself for ticks once a day. Favorite places ticks like to go on the body include areas between the toes, back of the knees, groin, armpits, neck, along the hairline and behind the ears. Remember to check your children and pets, too.

Use repellents that contain DEET on exposed skin and those that contain permethrin on clothing. Be sure to read product labels to ensure safe and proper usage.

Stick to main pathways and the center of trails when hiking. Wear long-sleeved, light-colored shirts and long pants tucked into socks. This will keep ticks away from your skin and make it easier to spot a tick on your clothing.

There is currently no human vaccine available to protect against Lyme disease or any other tick-borne disease found in Massachusetts.

What should I do if I find a tick on myself or my child? The tick should be carefully removed as soon as possible. The longer an infected tick remains attached to a person or animal, the higher the likelihood of disease transmission. Use fine point tweezers to grip the mouthparts of the tick as close to the skin as possible. The tick should not be squeezed or twisted, but pulled straight outward with steady, gentle pressure.

You should not apply kerosene, petroleum jelly, nail polish or a hot match tip to remove the tick; these measures are not effective and may result in injury. Notify your health care provider if you have been bitten by a deer tick, or if you develop a rash or other flu-like symptoms following a tick bite.

Further information can be found at [www.mass.gov/dph](http://www.mass.gov/dph) and [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

## **Cultural Enrichment Recap for 2007-2008**

This year, the Cultural Enrichment Committee was able to present an interesting variety of new programs to Merriam students.

- As part of Merriam's Literacy Week celebration, children's author Stephen Krensky visited All-School Meeting on March 3, to introduce students to the process of transforming an idea into a book.
- In celebration of St. Patrick's Day, Celtic performers Jerry and Nancy Bell, accompanied by their children, treated us to an energetic Irish and Scottish musical and dance show at All-School Meeting on March 14.
- On May 23, the Bamidele Dancers and Drummers took Merriam on a musical journey across Africa, South America and the Caribbean. Students and teachers alike enjoyed participating in the songs, dances and stories.

Cultural Enrichment arranges for a variety of performances and cultural events to enhance and deepen the educational experience of Merriam students. Planning is already beginning for next year's programs. Please contact Cathy Castaneda ([cathy\\_castaneda@hotmail.com](mailto:cathy_castaneda@hotmail.com)) or Catherine Smith ([catb.a.smith66@gmail.com](mailto:catb.a.smith66@gmail.com)) with any questions or suggestions.

## **Last Chance For Scrip Orders**

The Merriam PTO will offer one last chance to place a Scrip order this year. This program has already raised \$1,500 to support teaching assistants in the classrooms at no additional cost to the Merriam community. Thank you to all the families who have participated in the program through gift card purchases. We've received very positive comments from those who have taken part.

We will place one final gift card order this school year. ALL ORDERS MUST BE IN THE MERRIAM OFFICE BY CLOSE OF BUSINESS

ON MONDAY, JUNE 9 SO WE CAN DISTRIBUTE CARDS ON FRIDAY, JUNE 13. Order forms are available from the Friday Mail Packet and the PTO website.

Think of all the great uses for gift cards this month:

- Dads
- Grads
- Teachers
- Coaches

Also, several retailers are offering special bonus contributions this month - look for the highlights on the order form. Check out the extensive list of participating merchants. If you have any questions, please contact Cathy Castaneda at [cathy\\_castaneda@hotmail.com](mailto:cathy_castaneda@hotmail.com).

## **Come Learn About Gardening**

Have you ever wondered:

- How to divide an established perennial?
- How to plant a bulb?
- When or why to use a perennial plant instead of an annual?
- What to consider when choosing a plant?

Here is your opportunity to learn! The Parker-Damon Landscaping Committee would like you to join us for:

### **Planting and Gardening Day June 1**

#### **The Parker Damon Building 10 a.m.-Noon**

Amanda Lye will hold an informal and hands-on demonstration of different techniques used in gardening and planting, and discuss how we hope to use them here on the Parker Damon Grounds. Come learn a little about gardening and get a little practice for your own gardens! There will be a handout to take home to help you with your own garden ideas.

If you have any questions, please contact Amanda Lye at [amandalye1@yahoo.com](mailto:amandalye1@yahoo.com).