



The Merriam Community News

October 2009 - Volume 18 - Issue 2

Ed Notes

A number of Merriam parents requested that I include my comments from Open House in this month's newsletter. So here they are (with just a few short sections omitted).



I spent a good deal of time thinking about what I wanted to share with you this evening. I want our new families to know how welcome I want you to feel in our community. I want our returning families to know that you don't need to be new to ask questions, so please do not hesitate to contact me if you have anything on your mind. I want my staff to know how much of a difference they make in students' lives and in my life at school. These folks standing behind me are so good-humored, so generous (with their time and their energy), and so smart and talented that they make my job much easier, and put a smile on my face every day. And they do wonders with your children.

And then of course, I want your children to know how incredibly precious they are. Each child in this building is unique, with his or her own special way of interacting in the world. And they do the most precious things. One kindergartener always calls me "Mr. Ed" when she sees me in the hallway, and being old enough to remember the show with the talking horse, I can't help but laugh. On the first day of school I told the children that I love to wear ties with animals on them, and that they should feel free to take a look when they see me wearing one. On the second day of school Superintendent Stephen Mills came over to visit our school, and while we were in the hallway chatting an excited second grade boy came over and started tugging furiously at my tie, shouting "What is it? What is it?" Dr. Mills had a quizzical look on his face as this student examined the pattern in my tie thoroughly and finally exclaimed with great pride "Penguins!"

I congratulated him on discovering the right animal and then I realized that I would have to give a few lessons to the student body on how to politely go about the process of examining the

principal's tie. I'll share one more of the many precious moments I've already had with your children. Some teachers take their classes around the building on tours, to help them feel more comfortable finding their way around the school. As one young girl was leaving my office after a tour she came back in after the rest of the class had departed and whispered to me, "Is it OK if I come to visit you even if I'm not in trouble?" I'm afraid that no matter how hard I work against this tide, I'm going to have to work that much harder to help the children understand that my main role is to help and support them at school – rather than "get them in trouble." Children are indeed precious.

For some reason I've been thinking a bit more lately than usual about the days way back when I was in elementary school (my younger daughter likes to remind me that it was back when the dinosaurs roamed). In particular, I've been thinking about the messages I received from my parents and my teachers during that time. This nostalgia may be in part because both of my parents live in Florida, and I don't get to see them as much as I'd like.

A recent experience flashed me back to being in 3rd or 4th grade; sitting with my mom in the house that I grew up in, and talking with her about a difficult event that had transpired that day in school. In thinking back, I remembered that Mom often used the word "perspective" in our conversations. When I didn't do well on a quiz, or didn't get to play shortstop on the baseball team or I got into a disagreement with a friend, she would both honor the powerful emotions that I felt and at the same time help me to get some perspective – that somehow I would be OK if I looked at the big picture. And she helped me to see what the bigger picture was. At the time I may not have been aware of the gift my mother was giving me, but as I've gotten older I've realized the power of both empathy and perspective.

Many of us want it all for our children. I know that as educators we wish that we could give every student every possible positive learning experience

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that they could hope for at school. We want them to be happy, motivated engaged learners throughout every moment of the school day. But then we step back and understand that this is not possible – that part of being human is to struggle, to have disappointments, to be bored at times, and to face other challenges in life. The resiliency – which comes from facing and making their way through adversity - is a quality that will serve children long after they have left elementary school.

So – this year Merriam will be a place where your children will make new friends. They will have exciting projects that will keep them engaged. They will stretch their mental capacities. They will stretch their interpersonal capacities. They will have opportunities to perform, and to be athletes, artists, and musicians. They will read and be read to – and will go to all kinds of new places in their reading and their writing. And they will use technology in ways they've never used it before.

And in addition - when they struggle or feel disappointments or frustration, we will be right alongside them, providing them with support and - as my mother used to say, perspective.

Fall Social Dance Party Friday, October 16th

The 2nd annual Fall Social Dance Party, "Merriam Rocks," is Friday, October 16th from 6-8pm. The Cafetorium will come alive with awesome music, an amazing light show, and the students' best dance moves! So come by to meet up with your friends and have a great time!

If you'd like to get involved with this event, please contact Ann O'Grady, Fall Social Chairperson, at acogrady@hotmail.com or 978-635-1250. Your help will be greatly appreciated by all the students and the PTO!!

Important Information for All Parents Regarding Medications

Medication administration is an important issue in schools. Some students require medications at school in order to survive. Others need medications in order to learn. Occasionally, students require antibiotics during the day following a bacterial infection.

The goal of your School Nurse is to administer only those medications that are absolutely necessary

during the school day. All other medications should be given at home either before or after school.

State law requires a written order by a licensed prescriber and written parental permission before any medication can be administered to students, including over-the-counter medications. You can obtain forms for this purpose from the School Nurse, or from most Health Care Providers. All medication **MUST** be in the original labeled container and be labeled with the student's name. The School Nurse will not administer the following: expired medications, medications delivered in unlabeled containers, and medications in inappropriate containers such as zip-loc bags.

For the safety of all students, no medications are to be carried to school by students. The only exception to this rule is for Junior High and High School students who are allowed to carry inhalers or Epi-pens after certain requirements are met.

With your help, the School Nurse can provide a safe, supervised environment for students who require medications at school. Feel free to contact the Merriam School Nurse, Betty Mazzone RN, at x3752 with any questions.

Thank You for Your Merriam Library Gift Book Sale Donations!



Joan Hilton and I wish to thank all who contributed to the Gift Book Sale. With your help, we were able to raise more than \$1,000 and add 68 books to our library! Your generosity helped make our library an even stronger resource for our children. Thank you!

We are especially grateful for the help of our enthusiastic volunteers: ABRHS students Neha Sundaram, Claire Cote, and Lex Martin, and Merriam parent Wen Li. Thank you for jumping in and making this event so successful!

If you didn't have the opportunity to donate a book at Open House, it's not too late! We want to keep the Gift Book Sale going all year long... imagine if 100 books were donated to the library this year. What a boon to the Merriam community! Please help us reach this goal! Contact me, at any time, at mindyshapiro@yahoo.com, and Joan and I will gladly find a fabulous book (or two, or three...) to donate on behalf of your family.

- Mindy Shapiro, Merriam Library Gift Book Sale Coordinator

Fall Clean-Up is HERE! Sunday October 18th from 10 to 1

Join us for Fall Clean-Up of the gardens at the Parker-Damon Building on Sunday, October 18th from 10-1. Come have fun raking and cleaning up the grounds with other families.



We need your help! Do your part this year and help us clean up! We're getting lonely out here!

Bring your rakes, weeding tools, wheel barrows, friends, and neighbors... everyone is welcome!

Contact Amanda Lye (PDB Landscaping Committee Merriam co-chair) at (978) 635-9879 with any questions.

ABPCC Seminar on October 15th

Are you looking for a natural remedy to treat your child's ADHD, anxiety, or allergies? If so, please join us on Thursday, October 15, 7:30-9:00 p.m. at the RJ Grey Jr. High School Library as the Acton Boxborough Parents of Children with Challenges (ABPCC) support group kicks off the new school year with a talk about using Chinese medicine to help keep our children healthy and balanced.

Louise Dunn and Maria Broderick, Ed.D., are Licensed Acupuncturists and Chinese herbalists with Reservoir Family Wellness, LLC with a practice that focuses on treating children and adolescents with ADHD, anxiety, depression, OCD, tic disorders, as well as chronic illnesses such as asthma, allergies, and skin disorders (e.g. eczema).

Chinese medicine offers a gentle, natural alternative to treating common conditions of childhood. Our talk will review the basic principles of how Chinese medicine diagnoses and treats pediatric conditions. Focusing on the treatment of four common pediatric conditions (ADHD, anxiety, allergies and asthma), we'll demonstrate gentle needling or non-insertive techniques, and show a short film on children receiving acupuncture. We will display Chinese herbal tinctures used in our practice and describe our approach to herbal treatment. We are happy to answer questions on how we can work with your child's other health care providers to establish the role Chinese medicine has to play in an overall approach to treatment.

Our next monthly meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 22 at 9:30 a.m. at ABRHS in Room 131 East. We will discuss the October 15 seminar and Louise Dunn will join us to answer more of your questions. The primary goal of our support group is to connect parents with others confronting similar issues. By sharing concerns, experiences, resources and ideas with each other, we strive to form a community of parents who can provide mutual support and comfort. Join us!

For further information on our group, contact us: Francesca Ricciardi at fmr08@verizon.net or Ebit Speers at ebandmac@verizon.net.

Cultural Enrichment News

Cultural Enrichment at Merriam welcomes fall with performance excerpts of *Into the Woods, Jr.* and *Footloose* by the Starz-N-Lightz Repertory Theatre at our All School Meeting on Friday October 16th at 1:55 p.m. Morning kindergartners are invited to attend with their parents.

Into the Woods, Jr. The Brothers Grimm "go Broadway" as Sondheim and Lapine offer up a cockeyed fairy tale where all of your favorite characters - Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and his beanstalk, and The Witch -- meet and interact on their journey into the woods. This story is brought to life on the musical theatre stage and is a funny and engaging way to remember the fairy-tales. With unforgettable roles, dancing and wonderful songs, *Into The Woods Jr.* showcases an ensemble of talented young singers and actors including over 10 students from Merriam who will perform in the complete musical in November.

Footloose When Ren and his mother move from Chicago to a small farming town, Ren is prepared for the adjustment period at his new high school. What he isn't prepared for are the rigorous local edicts, including a ban on dancing instituted by the local preacher. To the rockin' rhythm of its Oscar and Tony-nominated top 40 score, *Footloose* celebrates the wisdom of listening to young people, guiding them with a warm heart, and an open mind. Ten students from Merriam are performing the full musical in January.

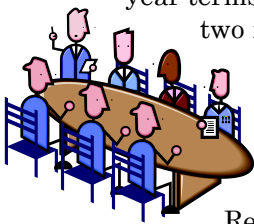
Starz-N-Lightz Repertory Theatre is open to all children from ages 5 through 18. For more information please visit www.starzNightz.org. For more information about Cultural Enrichment at Merriam, please contact Cath Smith at cath.a.smith66@gmail.com or Ronit Ben Shir at rbenshir@jccgb.org.

News From the Acton Public School Committee

School Committees are chartered by the General Laws of Massachusetts. As specified in the law:

"The School Committee in each city and town and each regional school district shall have the power to select and to terminate the Superintendent; shall review and approve budgets for public education in the district, and shall establish educational goals and policies for the schools in the district, consistent with the requirements of law and state-wide goals and standards established by the Board of Education."

The Acton Public School Committee (APSC) consists of six members who are elected for three year terms. The terms are staggered so two members are elected each year.



The Acton School Committee is combined with three members from the Boxborough School Committee to form the A-B

Regional School Committee. Both the local and regional Committees meet monthly on Thursdays. The meetings are broadcast on Verizon FiOS and Comcast cable television (live & reruns). A list of members, meeting times and locations, agendas, budgets, and more may be found on our web site: <http://ab.mec.edu/about/schoolcommittee.shtml>

The Acton School Committee holds one of its monthly meetings in each elementary school during the course of the year. Our next meeting will be held on October 15, 7:30 p.m., at Merriam School.

At our meetings, we fulfill the duties prescribed by law. Last year in addition to our important budget responsibilities, we hired a new Superintendent, Steve Mills. The Superintendent is the only school employee who reports to the Committee. The Superintendent has the responsibility for communicating and implementing the Committee decisions.

The Acton School Committee is part of our representative government. We welcome your thoughts and suggestions for schools when you meet with one of us in person, send an email, or call on the phone. At the beginning of each meeting, public participation is welcomed so that important issues not on the agenda may be brought to the attention of the Committee. Acton is fortunate to have parents and guardians who are

highly involved and supportive our school system. I hope that some of you will extend that involvement to the School Committee.

- John Petersen, Acton Public School Committee Member

Merriam Health Advisory Council Information

The Merriam Health Advisory Council is a group composed of two teachers, the school nurse, a Food Services representative, the principal, and three interested parents. The council will meet three times during the year, with the primary function of overseeing implementation of the Wellness Policy.

Wendy Tompkins and Annie Doble, kindergarten and fourth grade teachers respectively, and Betty Mazzone, our school nurse, will be on the council. In addition, one of the district Food Services representatives will also be part of the group. Here are brief descriptions of the three Merriam parents who will be on the council this year:

Bill Taylor – is a physician and is currently a member of the Acton Board of Health. He has a specialty focus in prevention and public health and has worked for many years for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. He is interested in many school-related issues such as diet and immunizations.

Kristina Rychlik - is a Registered Dietitian (R.D.) with a B.S. in Nutritional Sciences. She has worked professionally as a nutrition educator and consultant to food and food ingredient companies, and has a broad base of experience in food and food service. She grew up cooking, had a catering business in high school, and now enjoys cooking for friends, family, and Merriam Auction winners.

Diane Baum – is the mother of a ten year old and six year old with food allergies, asthma, and type 1 diabetes, and is familiar with a wide range of parental concerns associated with managing these problems in a school setting. She is also a strong advocate of physical fitness and the role it can play in helping those with diseases. She also was a volunteer coordinator for a health education program.

The first meeting of the council will be on Monday, October 26, from 4:30-6:00.

Weeding and Planting Group Needs Your Help

Join the Thursday 10 a.m. weeding and planting group! PDB Landscaping invites you to get out your gardening gloves!

Come have some outdoor fun with Merriam and McCarthy-Towne parents; working on the gardens, plants and beds around the Parker-Damon Building. Join us for weeding days (most Thursdays at 10, weather permitting).

Don't know anything about gardening? No problem! Join Amanda Lye and Karen Dean in front of the Parker-Damon Building. You'll learn different techniques used in gardening, planting, and put them into practice here on the Parker-Damon Grounds. The clean-up and landscaping of the Parker-Damon Building grounds is done only by volunteers and we need you!

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 2009-2010: We are participating in the Register Tapes for Education Program which allows us to earn free school equipment for Merriam. If you shop at Donelan stores, please save and send your receipts to the Merriam Collection Box, located in the School Office. We have until March 31, 2010 to submit eligible Donelan cash register receipts (receipts dated 9/1/09 to 3/31/10) into valuable cash value points. In April 2010, Merriam will select educational equipment with our program-to-date cash value points. Last year, we surpassed our goal of 100,000 cash value points and selected an Azden Sound System and office supplies. Our goal this year is to turn in 115,000 cash value points.

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

Box Tops for Education Spread the word to friends and family and enlist their help clipping and saving Box Top coupons for Merriam School. The ten cent Box Tops add up quickly. In previous years, Merriam has received more than \$900 from the Box Tops sent in by Merriam families.

New this year, Box Tops and Kimberly Clark are giving away a total of 1,000,000 Bonus Box tops in

"The Big Clip" sweepstakes. You can enter every day at *TheBigClip.com* to win up to 500,000 Bonus Box Tops for Merriam, worth \$50,000. The Sweepstakes ends 10-31-09.

Box Tops and Barnes & Noble have teamed up to create the Reading Room, which is an on-line shopping program with an emphasis on kid's books. When you purchase books through the Box Tops Reading Room at *www.btfe.com*, Merriam receives 6% on new book purchases and 3% on all other purchases.

Also, check out Box Tops Marketplace at *www.btfe.com*. The Marketplace is an on-line shopping program where school supporters can shop at more than 100 favorite on-line retailers like Lands End and Staples. A percentage of all qualifying purchases will be automatically credited to Merriam.

Send your Box Tops to school with your children or drop them off in the office. For more information, check out *www.boxtops4education.com*, *www.btfe.com* or contact Tricia Forrester at *puforrester@gmail.com*.

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.

Lost and Found Committee Volunteers Needed for This Year

It would be nice if the many lost articles of clothing could make it back home. Every year, lots of clothes are lost or forgotten at school. And, if clothes are labeled, we can help get them back to you.

Are you able to help us with the Lost and Found Committee? It is a small amount of time with very flexible hours.

Please feel free to e-mail Yvonne with any questions or to volunteer. Thank you.

- *Yvonnebenelli@aol.com*

Hungry? Try Your Hand At Old-Fashioned Fruit Crumble

Use whatever fresh or frozen fruit you have on hand to make this old-fashioned crumble. Typical crumble topping has as much as a half cup of butter—ours has just a tablespoon of canola oil and, for richness, chopped almonds, which are full of healthy monounsaturated fats.

Makes 4 servings

Total Time: 40 minutes

Ease of Preparation: Easy

2 1/2 cups fresh or frozen fruit, such as blueberries, peaches, plums

1 tablespoon granulated sugar

3 tablespoons whole-wheat or all-purpose flour, divided

1 tablespoon orange juice

1/2 cup rolled oats

1/4 cup chopped almonds or pecans

3 tablespoons brown sugar

1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

2 tablespoons canola oil

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.

2. Combine fruit with granulated sugar, 1 tablespoon flour and orange juice. Divide among four 6-ounce ovenproof ramekins. Combine oats, nuts, brown sugar, the remaining 2 tablespoons flour and cinnamon. Drizzle with oil and stir to combine. Sprinkle over the fruit mixture. Place the ramekins on a baking sheet.

3. Bake until the fruit is bubbling and the topping is golden, 20 to 25 minutes. Let stand for at least 10 minutes before serving.



**Save the Date
for the Merriam
Auction:

Saturday,
March 6, 2010

See You There!**

Nutrition Information: Per serving: 252 calories; 11 g fat (1 g sat, 7 g mono); 0 mg cholesterol; 38 g carbohydrate; 4 g protein; 5 g fiber; 1 mg sodium; 179 mg potassium. 2 Carbohydrate Servings.

Nutrition Profile: Low calorie, high fiber, low sodium, low cholesterol, low sat fat, heart healthy

Exchanges: 1 fruit, 1 other carbohydrate, 2 fat

Tour Guide Thank-You

A big thank-you goes out to the Merriam students who helped give tours during the new student orientation.

Those students were: Matt Armstrong, Emma Bowe-Shulman, Ryan German, Ben Hetherington, Andrew Jackson, Alec Jensen-Fellows, Chloe McKeon, Eliza Morse, Sophie Morse, Sam Vialle, Christina Vialle and Dan Walton.

Also many thanks to Dorene Bowe-Shulman, Sarah Hetherington, Lynn Armstrong, and Donna German for helping to make the orientation run smoothly.

The Merriam Community News

Editor: Joe Campo ▪ Production: Sue Follett

The next Community News will be published on Friday, November 6.

Email articles by October 30 to Joe at jb_campo@yahoo.com.