



WIZARDS PTA NEWS



The newsletter of the Woodlin Parent Teacher Association

JUNE 2008

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PRESIDENT'S CHAT

WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT

This month's school newsletter had a wonderful piece by Mrs. Sirgo on things people have learned this year. With that in mind, here are some things I've

learned from my involvement with the Woodlin PTA.

- Our PTA does a LOT. I always knew that the PTA raised money, did some events, and organized clubs, but money for



Linda Giannarelli as Superwoman—juggling all her duties!

the activity bus? for scholarships? for the performances at assemblies? Somehow those things had never sunk in before I was on the Board.

- One person *can* make a difference. Some of the best things that have happened at Woodlin have come about because a few people had an idea and worked diligently to

implement it.

- But... It takes a group to keep something going. Our Geography Bee—started by a Woodlin parent with a great idea—is still going strong only because others continued the tradition when those first parents left. The new nature trail will succeed only if it becomes everyone's nature trail.
 - New things may take time. The Junior Great Books program was first discussed among Wood-
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GEO Geniuses Go for the Gold!

Woodlin's annual Geography Bee competition was held last month, and once again our students impressed their teachers, parents and classmates with their knowledge, confidence and team spirit. The winning teams this year were:

3rd Grade—Sage's Geo Wizards: Benjamin Auer-

bach, Julia Hammer, Peter Melinchok and Lucy Pasenelli and alternates Nathaniel Story and Oscar Villatoro.

4th Grade—Grant's Ninja Pandas: Mehar Cheema, Schuyler Cross, Doyeon Kim and Brendan Witt and alternates Marta LaSota and Jeffrey Maclay

5th Grade—Barrish

Bobcats: Carly Gregerman, Max Martin-Udry, Marcos Melendez and Dina Pinsky and alternates Ronald Ramsaran and Griffin Rowell.

Congratulations to all the students who participated in the program, whether as team members or alternates, or if they helped

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Summer Fun & Money

Yes, you can fundraise for Woodlin all summer long! We had a terrific year for fundraising thanks to everyone's hard work! Do you know you can also help out during the summer? Here are the easy ways to help:

- ◆ **Save all your 2008 Snider's receipts.**
- ◆ **Cut out the School Box Tops on Kleenex boxes, cereal boxes and other products.**
- ◆ **Be sure you have registered your Giant and Safeway cards to Woodlin. You have to renew each year.**
- ◆ **Use www.boxtops4education.com or www.schoolpop.com when shopping on-line. Part of your purchase can benefit Woodlin.**

You can also look forward to Sally Foster returning when school starts up in the fall. Have other ideas for fundraising? Please contact Chris Rutledge at crnkar@yahoo.com.

—Jane Curtin

FLEA MARKET THANKS

Our spring festival was a wonderful time for all with new, successful twists due to the vision of Shelly Duckett. One old standby, the flea market, happened because of two standouts—Linda Giannarelli and Alexis Ruffin. They stepped up and stepped in to help sort on Friday. Alexis returned on Saturday and got right into sales mode. She saw a need and did not wait to be asked. She stayed to help clean up and was joined by Lisa Otterstrom. These three women were not assigned to these

jobs but came forward and filled a tremendous need. I could not have had the flea market without their skill, expertise, and hard work. A special thank you goes to these three special women. Our children are graduating this year and I will miss our camaraderie over the past years. Thank you also to Gabe Schrier, Taylur Duckett and Jordan Leach who moved cart after cart of flea market stuff from the All-Purpose room to the sales area outside the gym. They kept us on schedule and got us set up in time.

—Dara Schrier

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lin parents and staff in the 2005-2006 school year, but not implemented until 2006-2007. It takes time to talk, plan, and build consensus and energy, but it's worth it.

- A lot of issues of concern to parents go beyond one school. We have an active county-level PTA that works on issues like curriculum, school lunch policies, and MCPS budget priorities, and the state and national-level PTA organizations work on even bigger-picture issues.
- The Woodlin community has an amazing group of volunteers! So many people give so much time to Woodlin's kids, including time spent in classrooms, in scouting, and in sports, as well as time spent on PTA activities.

Elaborating on that last point, I owe huge thanks to all the parents who served on the Board of the PTA for 2007-2008, including: Jane Curtin, Shelly Duckett, Ramesh Kurup, Laurie McWright, Michelle Radecki, Chris Rutledge, Julie Savage, Karen Sharp and Lisa Otterstrom. In particular, special thanks to PTA vice president Karen Sharp, who has shared the president's duties with insight, grace, and good humor. (And on top of that, she makes really nice flyers!) Thanks to Elly Sullivan--PTA bookkeeper this year—for all of her work, including many late-night trips to my house for me to sign checks. And thanks to every single person who served as a lead volunteer for an event or activity this year. (I started to single out a few people but then the list got too long...)

On the staff side, special thanks to Mr. Rafael, Mr. Huntley, and Mr. Franco, for cleaning up after many PTA events, and to Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Bacon for not losing patience with me (or at least hiding it very well). Huge thanks to Jenni Smakula and Kate Bradshaw for their dedication as the staff representatives on the PTA Board. Last but not least, thanks to Mrs. Sirgo and Mr. Clarke for being such terrific partners for the Woodlin PTA.

Next year, Woodlin PTA is going to be even better! We (I keep saying "we", I can't help it!) have a stellar group of incoming officers—Lynne Yao as president, Karen Sharp continuing as vice president, Sydney Trent as secretary and Lois Trojan as treasurer. Thanks to all of them for agreeing to serve (and to Karen for agreeing to serve again!)

Finally, thank you to everyone for the privilege of serving as Woodlin's PTA president for the past two years.

Have a great summer, and I hope to see a lot of you over at Sligo!

—Linda Giannarelli

GEO Geniuses Go for the Gold!

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their classmates study or cheered them on or colored in flags for decorations.

Special thanks goes to Michael Melinchok and Martha Kyrillidou for their talents at the microphone. Thank you to all the parent volunteers who helped in the finals with score- and time-keeping, decorations and set up: Michelle Radecki, Carol Woodside, Jennifer Pasenelli, Alexis Ruffin, Sally Gonzalez, Yael Traum, Carole Giunta, Lisa Walker and to our distinguished judges, Mrs. Schweitzer and Mrs. Tencer. Thanks also to Ms. Stephens and Mrs. Athanas for all their help with this program throughout the year, and also to Ms. Sirgo and Mr. Clarke for their support. This program wouldn't happen without them.



I've run this program for four years, and will miss it (and most everything at Woodlin) as my youngest child moves on to middle school. It's been a real pleasure to see so many students learn about the world around us! The Geography Bee Program will be in good hands next year, with Lisa Walker at the helm. She will need volunteers, so if you like the program, please consider volunteering as the tradition continues.

—Brenda Mejia,
Geography Bee Chair

—Brenda Mejia,
Geography Bee Chair

Principal's Corner

LOOKING AHEAD:

Building Positive Parent Partnerships

While we know that PTA stands for Parent Teacher Association it can sometimes be a challenge to make the association the type of partnership we know schools require to go from good to great. Over the last few months we have begun to look more closely at the Association piece of our partnership



Principal Sarah Sirgo

and identify ways that we can improve. To guide us in this work, the National PTA has identified six standards for Family-School Partnerships.

At Woodlin we are committed to having parents feel welcome and believe we are working hard on each of the

challenges or problems with a positive expectancy. We will also be open to hearing one another and respectful of each other in our interactions and communication.

The first step toward increasing our work together has already begun. On May 27th and 28th we held two parent focus groups with our African American and other families of color as well as Latino families. These meetings, facilitated by the Division of Family and Community Partnerships, were to have families come together, share information, hear best practices for engagement and identify barriers to a positive partnership. This information will be used by the School Improvement Team in July to identify specific actions we can take to move our partnership to the next level.

National Standards for Family-School Partnerships



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standards shown above. However we do have roadblocks and must address each of the roadblocks in order to build a successful partnership. In order to do this work, we need a collective commitment to reflection and support. This means that we will approach

actions we can take to move our partnership to the next level.

Thank you for your willingness to support the school community and your children. Your involvement is essential and we appreciate all you do for students!

—Sarah Sirgo

MUSIC ROCKS AT WOODLIN

On Monday June 2, 109 4th and 5th grade Instrumental Music students performed a wonderful spring concert. Twenty percent of our students were able to participate due to the generosity of the Woodlin community and the fund established to keep our school instrument collection abundant and in good condition.

In the past two years, Woodlin has been able to replace six 20-year-old violins, one cello and a trombone. With this year's addition to the fund, Woodlin will buy new flutes and trumpets.

In these lean financial times, it is a credit to the PTA and all con-

tributors who keep our instrument collection plentiful and ensure that every Woodlin 4th and 5th grader has an opportunity to play an instrument.

Bravo to Joan Phalen, former Woodlin parent and current para-educator who organized the effort starting the instrument fund three years ago. A special thanks to Linda Giannarelli who picked up the organizational effort the last two years.

Bravissimo to the PTA for once again spearheading a fundraiser for the instrumental music program!

To all contributors, thank you!

—Susan Mathis, Instrumental Music Teacher



New Website Design Coming to Woodlin

I will be the Webmaster next year for the Woodlin PTA website: www.woodlinpta.org I'd like to make some changes and would love to hear from you regarding the current site and what you'd like to see in the new site. I'm trying not to duplicate too much info that is on the school site.

Please include in your feedback: What do you currently use the site for?

What information needs to be on the site that is not there now? What do you like about the site? What needs to be changed on the site?

This is your chance to send any gripes, compliments and suggestions. I hope to hear from you.

—Jane Curtin

jane_curtin@yahoo.com

PTA Helping Teachers and Students

The PTA Grade Level Fund provides \$400 for each grade to bring in or implement an enrichment activity for the students of each grade level. Several grades levels put those funds to use this year.

Kindergarten used the funds to bring in a program called "Echoes of Nature." Students learned about different animals native to Maryland. They even had an opportunity to see some of the animals that they learned about firsthand. The students loved learning about and seeing the different animals.

The first grade teachers used the funds to implement "International Day." In each of the classrooms, students learned about the culture of a particular country. They completed an activity that is special to that country as well as sampled

native foods.

The third grade team used the funds to bring in a science program by "Neptune's Classroom." During the program, students participated in hands-on activities that supported the final science unit, sound.

Fourth grade students watched and participated in a program about native tribal dancing. This program supported their social studies unit.

The Learning for Independence (LFI) classrooms used the grade-level money to help fund their community outings.

All in all, students greatly benefited from the programs brought in or implemented using the PTA Grade Level funds.

Thank you, PTA!

—Kate Bradshaw
Third Grade Teacher

Editor's Note of Appreciation

This year's newsletter would not have been a success without the dedication of many people. A special thanks to everyone who sent articles, photos, and interviews. I'd like to thank Deborah Ferrin for photocopying and distributing the newsletter and Jane Curtin for posting the newsletter to the website. I'd also like to thank Sixto Cotto, Anna Giles, Lisa Walker, Jorge Soder, Gladys Solis, Norma Garcia, Elaine Gonzalez for translating and Karla Silvestra and Julia K. Burnbam for coordinating the translators. I wish to thank the PTA Board for their kindness and encouragement. I especially wish to thank Karen Sharp, Laurie McWright, and Shelly Duckett for their gentleness and helpful advice. And I can not adequately express my sincere thanks to Linda Giannarelli for her assistance and thoughtfulness with each newsletter. And, of course, I could not have done this without the patience and understanding of my husband and son.

See you next year!

—Pat Price