
PMFS COMMUNITY NEWS

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Plymouth Meeting Friends School

February, 2008

PMFS Plans New Project

By Anne Javscas

Our Campus Planning Committee worked last winter with James Bradberry Architects to develop schematic designs for the renovation of the main school building, primary wing and the library. Our goals were to upgrade these very old buildings in need of major maintenance, add more space for classrooms primary-grade six, administration and the library, and address some health and safety needs such as a private, supervised space for sick children to lie down. Last summer and fall, with completed drawings in hand, fundraising consultants Edward F. Swenson & Associate conducted a financial feasibility study. Consultants interviewed members of the parent community, alumni, members of Plymouth Monthly Meeting, and friends of the school.

Our School Committee received the results of the feasibility study in December. After studying the results and determining the next steps to meet our multiple goals, we are ready to share the study results and our thinking about it with the community. We have invited school parents, staff and members of Plymouth Monthly Meeting to our Community Meeting for this purpose.

Please join us on **Thursday, January 31, 7:00 PM** in the Plymouth Friends Meetinghouse for a presentation and discussion. Feasibility consultants Edward Swenson and Jennifer Shropshire will talk about the opportunities and challenges for the School that surfaced during the study. The Clerk of School Committee, Karen Ort, and I will talk about directions we are considering.

We want the community's input as we begin to move forward to meet our goals. The formal presentation will last about an hour, with informal conversation and refreshments afterward. This is the beginning of an exciting new endeavor. It is one that will enrich the experience of our students and improve our facilities.

This Year's Mexican Exchange

By Dottie Leonard

This month, there is a feeling of excitement in the fifth grade classroom. When you enter the room you will probably hear a conversation about Mexico and the Aztecs or about customs in a new culture. Ask any fifth grader about what the class is studying and you will learn that the group is getting ready for their exchange program in Mexico that begins on January 31, when they depart, until February 14, when they return.

This year marks the 38th year of the program. The class will be accompanied by their teachers: Leann Stover Nyce, Fifth Grade head teacher, Gladys McLendon, PMFS Spanish teacher, and Dottie Leonard, Exchange Program coordinator. Their destination is Cuernavaca, Morelos, where each student will be hosted by a fifth grade student from Colegio Williams, a bilingual school with grades from pre-k through high school.

Preparations for the program began in September with the first of three parent orientation meetings. All students and parents then sent letters and photographs to the families in Cuernavaca and later received responses that included family information and pictures. During the past two months many families have communicated by e-mail and some by telephone. In the fifth grade classroom the group has been learning about cultural similarities and differences, practicing Spanish greetings and phrases, figuring out time differences and monetary equations, and researching pre-Columbian civilizations. In Art Journal classes Ann Alberts and Dottie have been teaching about Meso-America, emphasizing archaeological sites that the students will visit and murals by Diego Rivera that the class will see in Cuernavaca.

During this first phase of the exchange, the fifth graders will meet daily at the Williams School with their teachers before embarking on the scheduled day-trip on their itinerary. Sites that they will explore include Teotihuacán – with the great Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon, Taxco – a colonial town located in the mountains, Xochicalco – an 8th century trading center, Xochimilco – the Floating Gardens, Tepotzlán – a local village with a large market, and Las Grutas of Cacahuamilpa – a cave with stalactites and stalagmites. In addition to

the daily trips, students also spend time with their Mexican buddies and families, attending after-school classes, playing games together, or visiting friends. On weekends the families plan activities and excursions that will introduce the PMFS students to other family members and to different interesting areas in and out of the city. Every child keeps a daily journal and has a workbook with activities related to the daily educational trips.

In many ways, our students begin preparing for the exchange experience before fifth grade with their overnight camping trips in first and second grades, the two-day stay at Wallops Island in third grade, and the four days in Washington in fourth grade. Each year they learn different ways of being independent while traveling with their classmates. They also learn from older brothers, sisters, and friends who have participated previously in the program.

The second phase of the Mexican Exchange program takes place in May when our students and their families host the Williams School friends for their two-week stay with us.

The program is a cross-cultural exchange in which children learn to appreciate similarities and differences between countries. Our purpose is to promote cultural awareness and knowledge through the experience of living with a family in Mexico and hosting a Mexican student in our country. Both PMFS and the Williams School believe that such experiences promote a deeper sensitivity to differing cultures and contribute to world peace and understanding.

Developing News

By Betsy Torg and Juanita Nyce

LIVE at the Plymouth Café! We have a date, a time, and a location! Saturday, March 1, 2008, is the day; the time is 5:30-9:00pm; and the location is Brittingham's Irish Pub on Bethlehem Pike in Lafayette Hill. Invitations will be in the mail shortly for this PMFS community event, but in the meantime, mark your calendar, call your friends, and reserve your babysitter. Featured performers will be PMFS's Bill Alberts, Keisha Hutchins and her partner Doug Hirlinger, and a young alumni band TBA. Get ready to enjoy music, fine food and the pleasure of each other's company. Be there LIVE on March 1!

Grandparents and Special Friends Day is coming....on Friday, April 4, 2008. Grandparents and Special Friends Day is a long-standing tradition at PMFS. This annual event

provides the opportunity for our students to share their school with a grandparent, relative, or special family friend. This year's event will take place on Friday, April 4, in the morning. Invitations will come home with your children in their red folders in March, but in the meantime, you can ask your grandparent, relative, or special friend to put this special date on their calendars.

If you have any questions about Grandparents and Special Friends Day, please contact Betsy Torg, co-director of development at (610) 828-2407 or betsyt@pmfs1780.org.

Volunteers Needed

Grandparents and Special Friends Day is coordinated by the development office with support from faculty and parents. There are many volunteer opportunities. Please contact Betsy at betsyt@pmfs1780.org or (610) 828-2407 if you are willing to help with registration and food set up, or to be a greeter, classroom ambassador, or photographer.

If you have already made your contribution to the PMFS 2007-2008 Annual Fund, thank you! Your gift to the Annual Fund immediately benefits each student and faculty member, supports school programs, and provides for the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of our beautiful campus and facilities. The dollars raised go directly into the operating budget and are used the same year they are received.

If you have not made your gift, you still have time before the phone-a-thon which has been re-scheduled for March 11, 2008. We encourage you to make your gift today, as annual giving is the lifeblood of the school. Each year, annual fund giving contributes unrestricted funds to the school's general operating budget to help offset expenses not covered by tuition.

Parent participation in the Annual Fund matters. Every gift, regardless of size, is important and appreciated. If you have not yet made a 2007-2008 Annual Fund gift, please consider how you can participate. You may send your gift to the development office or contact Juanita at 610.828.2407 or juanitan@pmfs1780.org.

Summer Arts Camp

Exciting changes in store for 2008!

By Karen Mudry

In 2008, the Summer Arts Camp is entering its twenty-fifth anniversary year! Our camp has programs designed for children aged 3 through 15. New programs and classes have been added to our already outstanding program to ensure a fun and art-filled summer.

Junior Camp program (ages 3-6).

Campers will participate in traditional early elementary school activities such as: crafts, stories, play time, and water play. Subgroups will be developed as interest, skill, and age dictate. In addition to our classroom staff, there will be specialists in the areas of: Morning Program (9am-1pm) Dance, Creative Drama, Spanish, and Nature, Afternoon Program (1pm-5pm) Art, Music, Fitness, and Story Time. Campers may register for one through seven weeks. Full and half day programs are available.

Explorers Camp (age 6) This new program has been designed to bridge the Junior and Intermediate camps. These campers will attend classes of their choice from the intermediate program in addition to participating in some of the Junior Camp activities.

Intermediate Camp (ages 7-14)

Campers will choose their own classes and create their own schedules. All classes accommodate beginner, intermediate, and advanced campers. Enrollment ranges from 8 to 20 campers per class. Classes meet 5 times each week. Classes in the intermediate camp are split into two age groups, 7 to 10 year olds and 11 to 14 year olds. In this traditional camp program, the minimum registration is three weeks. To insure adequate attendance and preparation for final productions, performance classes are eligible for six and seven-week campers only.

New Intermediate classes include:

Digital Video & Animation: Campers will learn video techniques and video animation and also edit their videos and burn their own DVDs.
Design Arts: Students will apply their art skills to various aspects of design, including fashion, architecture, and product design.
Arts & Crafts: A course designed to expose our campers to various art forms such as: Printmaking, Papier-mâché, as well as hand built items in various media.
Game Time: This activity is available free of charge for campers who are enrolled for four or more classes. When campers are not scheduled for a class, they will participate in an organized game or cooperative sport.

Leadership Program (ages 13-15).

Participants take the leadership class and two other classes of their choice; for the remainder of their day they assist the camp staff. Lunch is provided. **Leadership II** is designed for young leaders who have completed the leadership program. Participants take three classes of their

choice; for the remainder of their day they assist the camp staff.

The Summer Arts Camp is a perfect mix of education and fun! Certified educators in their field teach the classes. Additionally, many teachers have their Masters Degrees in their subject areas, while others bring experiences from their performances worldwide. The camp counselors are a group of talented college students from various universities such as: The University of Pennsylvania, Drexel University, Villanova University, and The George Washington University. All of our counselors are former campers who share a passion for the arts.

You can register by mail or in person 6:30-8:30 in the Corson Lobby, Steinbright building on **February 20, March 18, April 22** or **May 21**. Meet camp director Karen Mudry and some of her staff. Registration forms will be available soon online at the PMFS web-site. Questions? Call Karen at 610-828-2589 or e-mail her at artscamp@pmfs1780.org.

Register by February 20 at 2007 prices!

Art Show Opening

By Bill Alberts

This year's Pre-K / K/ Primary art show will run from **February 1** through **February 22**. The opening night will be **Friday, February 1** from 6:30 to 8:30 pm.

Opening night is always an exciting time for children as they bring their parents and loved ones to view their work. PMFS art teacher, Ann Alberts always makes sure that the art is displayed to its best advantage. It's a pleasure to attend an art opening at PMFS and watch the reactions of the children as they search for their pieces and proudly show them to their families.

Ann says, "Children's art should be about what they imagine and how they express themselves through it." Come see the art these very young artists have produced. Through it, they offer us all an insight into the world as they see and imagine it.

It's an eye-opening vision.

In the Library

By Lynne Haase

What is a celebrity? For many of us, famous actors, musicians, or athletes come to mind. My most admired celebrities are the authors and illustrators who have created the works I love. After meeting our visiting author/illustrators, I believe my students think of Peter Brown, Adam Rex and Jackie Morris as celebrities. While enjoying a book or admiring a painting, it feels as though the work has always existed. Alternatively, creating art is hard

work and even the most creative and prolific writers and artists must work hard to come up with ideas and follow those ideas to fruition. All of the authors and illustrators we have invited to Plymouth Meeting Friends School have described this process.

Before author/illustrator visits, I expose students to the artist's work. The students begin to formulate questions and ideas about the author and his or her work. Often, the students are surprised by the responses they receive to their questions.

Jackie Morris is the author and illustrator of *Snow Leopard*, *The Seal Children* and *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*. She illustrated *Lord of the Forest*, *Can You See a Little Bear*, *Time of the Lion*, *Stories from World Religions*, *Mariana and the Merchild*, *How the Whale Became*, and seven other books. She also compiled and illustrated *The Barefoot Book of Classic Poems*. Jackie spoke to primary through sixth grade students on Monday, January 14th. Via photographs, she took us on a journey to the remote village in Wales in which she resides. She finds artistic inspiration in the daily walks she takes along the winding roads, rugged hills and dramatic coastline of her home. Every day, the landscape changes due to season, weather, time of day, and wildlife. Jackie decided to become an artist at the age of six when she watched her father draw a bird. The bird appeared so realistic, Jackie was certain it would take flight.

This was Jackie Morris' first visit to the U.S. and she was taken aback by the magical connection our school had to her home. There was once a Quaker community over the hill from her village. Due to mistreatment by the landowners, this entire community decided to seek a better life in...you guessed it, Pennsylvania! The walk that Jackie takes near her village includes a small road called *The Road to Pennsylvania*. As we walked by the gravestones on our campus, Jackie wondered if some of the Friends buried here began life near her small village in Wales.

Plymouth students always impress our visitors. Some of the observations and questions made by the students, Jackie claimed to have heard from no one else. Jackie noticed that the Plymouth students are risk takers; she was pleased that the students were not afraid of her.

We will have the opportunity to meet at least two more authors this year. Emily Jenkins,

of *Toys Go Out* fame, will visit our school in April. Also in April, our own Catherine Murdock will talk about her latest book, *Princess Ben* and the craft of writing at the Chestnut Hill Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia during TV Turn - off Week.

PTO UPDATE

By Cindy Toso

The Used Clothing Sale is coming! Gently used kids clothing can be dropped off in the Corson Lobby in the mornings and afternoons during the weeks of February 11 and February 18. The sale will be open to the PMFS community February 25-29 from 3-5 pm. The sale is open to the public on Saturday, March 1. Look for more details in Red Folder mail.

Movie Night scheduled for February 22 is cancelled due to conflicts with the art show and a drop-off in attendance.

Thank you to all who donated to the collection for Laurel House.

A huge thanks to John Gilliland and Alyssa Davidson-Arms for coordinating the purchase and installation of the new playground equipment. All of the teachers and kids agree that it is a big hit!

Strawberries in January? Yes, it is time to think about Strawberry Festival...the most fun school day of the year. This 70 year-old tradition is a true community event that requires the participation of all parents, students, teachers, and staff at PMFS. This year's Strawberry Festival will be held on Saturday, June 7.

How can you participate? We are currently forming the coordinating team for this year's festival. We need your help!! Can you take a leadership role? Please contact Julianne Pitone-Watson (215.836.0852 or j.pitone@verizon.net) or Chris O'Melvin (610.397.1919 or comelvin@phillynews.com).

Admission Office

Gentle reminders:

February 15 is the date that ALL contracts are due into the office, unless you have had a conversation with Anne or Ellen before that date. There are waiting lists in several grades so your cooperation is most appreciated.

Another important deadline is for submission of financial aid applications. In order to have responses out earlier this year, you must have submitted the SSS form to the Pittsburgh address and copies of those forms plus substantiating materials to PMFS by February 11.

Any questions? Please call Ellen at 610.828.2288, x 226 or ellenh@pmfs1780.org