

Murray Matters

Fall 2004

News from the Murray Avenue School PTA

A Bountiful Fall at Murray...

Educating our children...enriching our children

Providing for our children...teaching our children to care for others

Keeping our children safe...watching our children grow

Communicating... cooperating

Raising funds...having fun

It has been great seeing so many of you at Back to School Nights, Internet Safety Night and Grade Level Coffees. These pages will tell you about more of the special programs and events taking place at Murray this year.

The school will be a flurry of activity in November with the Election Day Bake Sale, Visiting Day and the ever-popular Book Fair. You can read more about the Book Fair in this issue. As you purchase new books, please encourage your child to part with a couple of old books to donate to the Book Drive...details inside. Also inside, read more about the exciting new format of Murray's Silent Auction...a fun

night out for the grown-ups! Learn more about how our PTA funds are spent to enrich our children's total experience at Murray.

Also - please make this important date change on your district calendar. The All Elementary PTA meeting, originally scheduled for November 16, has been moved to November 30 in the Murray Auditorium. Please come hear the school district's new Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Anne Zimmer.

Thanks to all of you for making the Murray community such a special one!

Kelly O'Connor & Pam Friedman
PTA Co-Presidents



Our Cultural Arts program has already been busy with visits from Paul & Neil, shown here, on stage, doing their thing with the kindergarten.



Although "Walk to School Week" was a bit soggy-the kids were out in force. They got plenty of exercise and enjoyed the erasers they received at the finish line from PTA volunteers.

Murray ♥ s Books

The Book Fair is here, and while we vote for the next President, students vote for their favorite book. Then students gather their used books for the book drive.

Teachers, Building, District

Learn what our teachers are doing, what's happening in the new Media Room, and who *is* Janet Buchbinder?

The PTA Budget

Everything you wanted to know about the PTA budget, with a chart for those who like pictures!

Silent Auction

Find out the facts about Murray's big fundraiser, the Silent Auction. We hear it's "Adults Only" and not so *silent* anymore.

Internet Safety

A special PTA sponsored discussion provided some expert advice on how to keep our kids safe in world wide cyber space.



Murray Ave Book Fair

Child's Wish List

The Murray students love the Book Fair and their favorite part is visiting the Fair with their class to fill out their Wish List. Each child will be given a clipboard with a Wish List form. In addition to writing the title of book, your child will be asked to also indicate the table number or bookshelf location on the Wish List. These Wish Lists will be sent home to you giving you some guidance on what your child wants from the Book Fair. Naturally, there is no obligation to purchase the books on your child's Wish List.

What's more, if you find their selection has been sold out (you'll see this when a "last copy" sticker is on the remaining book on the table/shelf), just bring that copy up and we'll order one for you. The ordered books will be delivered to your child's classroom a day or two later. Reorders will be taken through Wednesday, November 3.

Also, this year, volunteers will be trained, and small posters will be displayed at the fair, to help shoppers make alternative purchases if a particular book is no longer available. Hopefully, everyone will find something wonderful at the Book Fair!

Teacher Wish List

Before the Book Fair opens, your child's teacher has been invited to get a sneak preview of the Book Fair, and to fill out Teacher's Wish Lists. These wish lists are books chosen for their classroom.

When you visit the Book Fair, a table set up near the entrance, next to check out, displays the folders set up for each teacher, administrator, and school "specialist." If you wish to purchase a book off the faculty's wish list, you may pull the particular book off the Book Fair tables or shelves and purchase it directly. Or, you may special order those books which will arrive at the school the following day.

Special Book Fair bookplates are available at the cashier to fill out and placed in the donated book (or will be put in the special order books by Book Fair committee at a later time). Our volunteers will deliver your gift directly to the faculty member that day.

Book Sets

For the first time, Scholastic Books is offering Book Sets and multiple Classroom sets of featured books for sale. This new feature will allow teachers to choose from a pre-determined list of sets available, and add them to their wish lists for purchase by Murray families. Murray parents can also order these wonderful libraries for their home.

Selection of sets available include:

Junie B. Jones, Books 1-10 & 11-20
Magic Tree House, Books 1-10, 11-20
Series of Unfortunate Events
Scholastic Classics, incl. *Black Beauty*

Multiple 6 Packs include:

Surviving the Applewhites
Ella Enchanted
The Wanderer
Because of Winn-Dixie
Crispin
Esperanza Rising

Also available are Book Fair Gift Certificates for teachers. Teachers can redeem these Gift Certificates during Fair hours (they cannot be used once the Fair closes).

Buy Books!

Stop by the Book Fair in the Murray small gym and pick up some early holiday gifts, donate a book to the Murray library or purchase a book off your child's teacher's wish list. No sales tax is charged. Visa, Mastercard, and American Express accepted. A portion of the money you spend goes to the Murray PTA!

Book Fair Dates & Hours

Monday, Nov. 1 8:15 AM-4 PM
Tuesday, Nov. 2 8:15 AM-4 PM, 6-8 PM
Wednesday, Nov. 3 8:15 AM-4 PM, 6-8 PM
Thursday, Nov. 4 8:15 AM-Noon

Vote for Books!

Pam Tannenbaum
Murray Library

In celebration of the Book Fair and Election Day, during the week of October 25, our classes will be voting on their choice for best picture book, choosing from three featured Book Fair selections sent by Scholastic Books. All three books will be read to all library classes (grades K-5) and each class will get to cast their votes during library time. Many of our students have reviewed and voted on picture books in library before. But this time, the winning book will be announced on the opening day of our Book Fair, and will be available to purchase at the Book Fair itself. Also, all the children who vote, will be eligible to win wonderful Book Fair raffle prizes, announced each day of the Fair during the morning announcements.

The books we will be voting on are as follows:

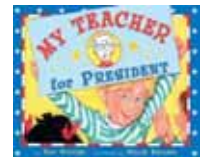
***Alice the Fairy* by David Shannon of *No David* fame.** With humor and imagination, Alice gets to find out that being a fairy is very useful even if your spells don't always come out right. For all the fairy "wannabees" out there!



***Duck for President* by Doreen Cronin.** This hilarious follow up to *Click Clack Moo* is about Duck who decides to enter the political arena and leave the farm. What could be better for this time of year!



***My Teacher for President* by Kay Winters.** A devoted student writes a letter to the local TV station nominating his teacher for president and you would be amazed at the similarities he sees in the two jobs. Another perfect choice for this November!



Donate Books!

Amy Kreisberg
ALKMDN@aol.com
Community Outreach Chair

Community Outreach is a one year old Murray program created in part to teach our children that there are people less fortunate than ourselves, not just world-wide, but in our own community. The Murray community should be very proud of last years' accomplishments. We completed three very successful projects, a book drive to benefit the Jersey City Charter School, a card writing campaign with the products distributed to residents at Sarah Newman Nursing Home, and a spring food drive to benefit the Larchmont/Mamaroneck Food Pantry.

The book drive was truly wonderful. We asked every Murray family to spend a few

minutes with their children choosing a new or gently used book to give to students at a school that didn't even have a library. The response was amazing with over 1800 books collected. A number of children from the Jersey City school came with their principal to pick up the books and they were overwhelmed. They wondered if each might be able to take one of the books home, since many of them didn't have any books to call their own.

The Murray community has a generous spirit and so, in addition to many new initiatives, we are once again planning a book drive. This year it will benefit a school a bit closer to home, in the Bronx.

Our drive will begin on November 29th and end on December 17th. With all of your help the children at The Bronx Charter School for Better Learning will have badly needed books for their new library in time for the holidays.

The Community Service Committee is working hard right now to develop programs for the rest of this year. If you would like to help, please let me know.

On behalf of the committee I would like to thank the entire Murray community in advance for supporting your children as they participate in the varied service opportunities offered at Murray.

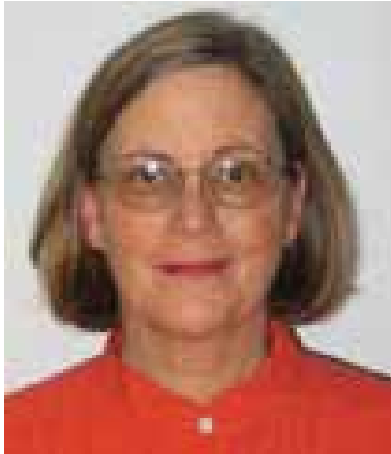
What's going on in the District?

Janet Buchbinder

School Board Member and Liaison to the Murray Planning Council

Julie Sertel

Editor, Murray Matters



Janet Buchbinder is here for us, so much so, that she encourages any Murray parent with a School Board issue to use her phone number listed in our district calendar and give her a call. Her role is to get to know our school and the Murray community and to be our voice at School Board meetings. Although she is not involved in the day to day matters of the school, she represents our interests at the School Board policy level.

All the schools in the district are assigned liaisons purposely chosen from their non-home area schools. Janet's children attended Chatsworth, but you'll see her at various Murray functions throughout the year.

We're lucky to have Janet. She has been intimately involved with many community

programs for several years, bringing an infinite amount of knowledge as a new member to the School Board. Her experience is deep and diverse. She was Treasurer for the Junior League, President of PT Council, co-president of the MHS PTSA, and was a member of the MHS Planning Council. She has been an active member of R.A.D.A.R. for over 8 years, co-chaired Family University and served on many special committees in the district. In addition to her School Board responsibilities, she is currently on the board of the Larchmont/Mamaroneck Counseling Center and the Westchester County Coalition for Drug & Alcohol Free Youth.

Let's make her welcome, and use this valuable resource.

What's going on with the Teachers?

LitLife

Julie Sertel

Editor, Murray Matters

You may have heard the term "LitLife" floating around the school and wondered if it was some new club. Actually, LitLife is a team of educators who are committed to the work of developing and cultivating a truly literate generation of children. The Litlife helps educators to learn more about the teaching of reading and writing.

This is the second year that the Mamaroneck school district has been affiliated with this program. Other school districts in our area who work with LitLife include Bedford, Bronxville, Dobbs Ferry and White Plains. How to use this resource is up to principal's discretion in each school. Rather than spread the

resource too thinly, this year Ms. Sczafave has chosen to target the upper grades. LitLife also caters to younger learners and Ms. Sczafave is planning LitLife sessions for the lower grade teachers in the future.

This year a LitLife consultant will come to our school for 10 sessions, which last several hours each. In the fall sessions which have taken place so far, the LitLife consultant is working with teachers on a writer's notebook study. The consultant and teachers meet first to plan the course of study, and then venture into the classroom to observe a demonstration lesson taught by the consultant. The

teachers and consultant then reconvene to debrief and plan for upcoming lessons. Ms. Graseck's 3rd grade class and Ms. Elkins' 5th grade class have hosted the demonstration lessons in their classrooms.

You may hear from time to time that your child's teacher was away from the classroom for a morning or an afternoon and wondered where they go. LitLife sessions are one of several training programs Murray teachers participate in. Ms Sczafave reminds us that in addition to teaching, teachers are also life long learners and continue to think deeply about their practice.

What's going on in the Building?

The Media Room

Julie Sertel

Editor, Murray Matters

The Media Room at Murray is a pilot program aimed at using technology to compliment the curriculum in all grades. Equipment available ranges from wireless laptops and digital cameras to a microscope which projects images on a computer screen. Murray is currently the only elementary school in the district to have a Media Room – and it is being put to very good use!

The Media Room opened its doors last March. Abbey Fitzgerald, the teacher assistant in the Media Room, says that every class came through at least once last year – and this year the facility is almost completely booked each day. Teachers come to Ms. Fitzgerald before they begin an area of study – to discuss and plan the ways in which the Media Room can be used to enhance the subject being taught. Together they have developed a wide range of very interesting programs.

To complement the 3rd grade study of “story telling” students are using video. They come to the Media Room in pairs. One directs, planning the shots and operating the camera. The other tells his

or her story, which was prepared on paper in the classroom and is brought to life in the Media Room. They review their work together looking for ways in which video can effectively expand the art of story telling.

The Media Room is also being used for country studies by various grades. There is an archive service provided free by PBS to New York state schools called United Streaming which students can access in the Media Room. It allows them to search and view real footage from the countries they are studying. Ms. Fitzgerald worked with the 3rd grade last year on a project about Egypt whereby students viewed footage of the Nile and of the streets of Cairo together, and then broke up into groups to discuss their impressions. They then created reports on the computers incorporating the information they learned in the classroom with information gleaned from the video they watched.

And there is more... At the end of the traditional tour of the school by incoming Kindergarteners, the kids came in to watch interviews their teachers had taped introducing themselves. Ms. Larva's 3rd grade class is creating a class newsletter in the Media Room. The students are writers, editors and publishers. With Ms. Fitzgerald's help, students do the layout, select photos and experiment with fonts and print styles.

The Media Room is a unique facility that brings together many different types of learning. As Andrew Hess, the Teacher on Special Assignment for Technology, explains “We are all familiar with the need to teach text literacy to students, but these children are growing up in a world full of media we did not have when we were kids. Our responsibility is to teach them how to critically understand and express themselves in the full range of media they will encounter.”

Learning vital skills and having a lot of fun too. *That's* what's going on in the Media Room.



Protecting our kids on the Internet

Pam Friedman
PTA Co-President

It's hard to believe that within our lifetime, the computer has changed our living habits so significantly. Thirty years ago we scoffed at the technological experts who were predicting that we would all have computers in our homes. At the time, we thought the handheld calculator was pretty cool.

Now, we are the first generation of parents that have to teach our children to say "no" to strangers on the street, and in cyberspace.

On Wednesday, Oct 13, 2004, Murray Avenue called in some experts and hosted an Internet Safety and D.A.R.E. curriculum discussion for Murray parents. Ed Cofino, Mamaroneck School District Technology Coordinator, Sgt. Tom Houlahan, Murray's D.A.R.E. officer and certified internet safety instructor, and Detective Bob Reynolds, Town of Mamaroneck Youth Officer, helped inform

parents about the inherent dangers of the internet and what we can do to help our children avoid them.

The key message from the speakers was that communication between parents and children is the most important and effective way to help children become responsible internet users. Spend time with your child while he/she is online. Ask them to teach you how to access various sites and services. **It not only educates us parents, but also opens the door for discussions and guidance.** By placing the home computer in a central location rather than in bedrooms or other isolated rooms, parents know what is happening when their child is online. All speakers stressed that the ultimate goal is to teach our children to know how to safeguard themselves.

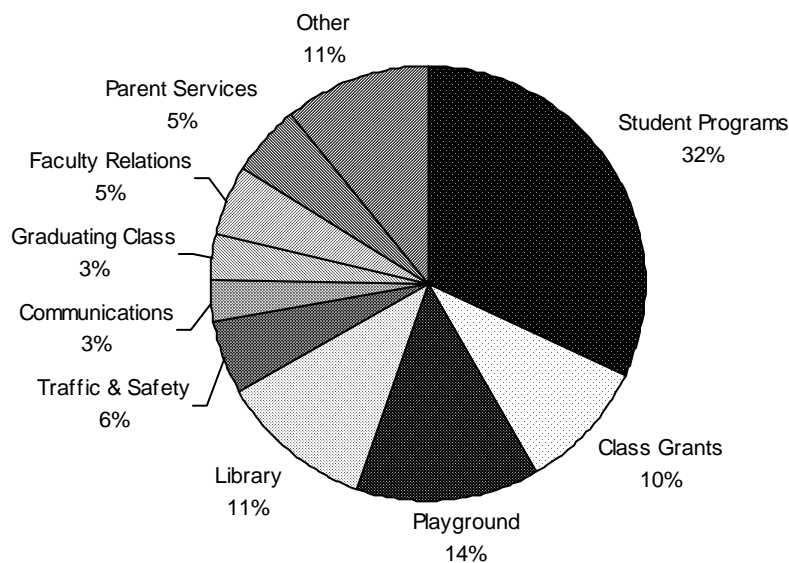
Mr. Cofino outlined the "Nevers" of Internet Safety:

- Never reveal your name, address, phone number, school, or any other personal information over the internet, especially in chat rooms.
- Never forget that people you meet on line are strangers.
- Never hesitate to ask your parents for help in an uncomfortable situation.
- Never meet in person someone you have met in a chat room without notifying your parents first. If a parent agrees, let them take you and make the meeting in a public place.

For more information and a slide show of this presentation, visit www.mamkschools.org/parents.

We want to thank Mr. Cofino, Sgt. Houlahan, and Det. Reynolds for giving their time to help make our children and families safer.

Murray Avenue PTA 2004-2005 Budget



The Silent Auction Shouts Out!

Tori Glendinning
Silent Auction Chairperson

The Silent Auction is now rated “R”! R for Rousing Fun and Rewarding Success that is—and now an “Adults ONLY” event!

The rumors are true. The Silent Auction is separating from the Spring Fair. It’s amicable and the best solution for all, especially Murray moms & dads! Mark your calendars with a big red heart and get a babysitter for February 12th!

While it has been a successful part of the long-standing Spring Fair, raising as much as the Fair itself, it has never had the focus and attention it deserved. After much thought and consideration, the real issue became clear to us: we needed to differentiate these two events.

The Spring Fair has been established as the Celebration of our School and Family and the greater Family of the Murray community...the essence of which is our children. A nice benefit of this is certainly that we raise money for the school.

The Silent Auction, on the other hand, is a Celebration of our Prosperous Blessings: the main focus has always been to raise money for the PTA so that our children can enjoy the benefits.

Simple PTA purchases ranging from new microscopes in the 5th grade classrooms to a complete re-do of a well-worn playground—these are the budgetary items that require major fund-raising. And, the focus of an evening directed to this, and to

having fun with our friends and fellow Murray parents, is what the NEW Auction evening will be all about.

The Auction Evening will consist of the very popular Silent Auction and a new addition: a LIVE auction! We are looking for great donations for the Live auction, so if you know of those that qualify for “impossible dreams come true,” please call Kristine Budill and let her know. And, if you have something for the Silent Auction, call her for that as well!

So get ready to eat, drink, be merry and BID! Mark your calendars for February 12. Want to Volunteer? WE NEED YOU! Please contact Tori Pough: 833-3035 or tori@pough.com.

The PTA Budget: Where Your Dollars Go

Maureen LeBlanc
PTA Treasurer

Over the last several years, the Murray Avenue School has significantly benefited from the PTA’s fundraising activities and the tremendous generosity of the Murray parent community in supporting these efforts. In particular, because of the success of the book fair, spring fair, and the silent auction, our three largest fundraisers, the PTA has been able to devote substantial funds to support numerous programs at the school.

Exactly which programs do those PTA funds support? In an effort to answer this question, the chart (to the left) provides an overview of the Murray Avenue PTA’s 2004-2005 budgeted expenditures.

As shown, during the current school year, about one-third of all the money raised will go toward student programs. These programs include our varied cultural arts

programs, the art appreciation program, the science fair, the publishing center, and Murray Magazine.

Another third will be used to fund three special projects—the library book project, the playground replacement project, and individual class grants. The first of these projects is the expansion and upgrading of the library’s non-fiction collection. In 2002, the Murray PTA voted to devote \$40,000 toward improving the library’s non-fiction section. A little more than half of this amount has already been spent, and the remainder will be used over the next couple of years. The second project involves the replacement of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade playground, an undertaking that is likely to begin this spring. Finally, the PTA also devotes a significant amount each year toward making one-time grants to individual classes for special programs

and equipment. In the past, class grants have been awarded for cameras, microscopes, equipment for the music and arts programs, and materials supporting the reading and spelling curriculums.

The final third of our budget will be devoted to a variety of other areas. These include improving traffic and safety around the school, supporting certain graduating class activities, bringing guest speakers into the school, and communicating with the parent community through the publication of Murray Matters, Tiger Talk, the Handbook and the student directory.

As this short review (hopefully) makes clear, PTA funds are used to support a wide range of activities and special projects at Murray Avenue, and it is only through your continued generous support that this is made possible. Please keep it up!

PTA Calendar

- Mon, Nov. 1 Murray Book Fair 8:15 AM-4 PM, Murray Small Gym
- Tues, Nov. 2 Election Day Visiting Morning: Stop in and observe your child's class
Murray Book Fair 8:15 AM-4 PM, 6-8 PM, Murray Small Gym
Bake Sale Throughout the day, hallway inside Daymon Terrace handicap accessible entrance
- Wed, Nov. 3 11:30 AM Dismissal Parent-Teacher conferences
Murray Book Fair 8:15 AM-4 PM, 6-8 PM, Murray Small Gym
- Thur, Nov. 4 Murray Book Fair 8:15 AM-Noon, Murray Small Gym
- Fri, Nov. 5 No School District conference day
- Thur, Nov. 11 No School Veterans Day
- Wed, Nov. 17 11:30 AM Dismissal Parent-Teacher conferences
- Wed, Nov. 17 11:30 AM Dismissal Parent-Teacher conferences
- Wed, Nov. 24 1:00 PM Dismissal Thanksgiving Break
- Nov. 25, 26 No School Thanksgiving Break
- Nov. 29-Dec. 17 Murray Book Drive Collect gently used books for donation. Drop off in designated boxes located in Murray lobby
- Tues, Nov. 30 All Elementary PTA Meeting 7:30 PM, Murray Ave. Auditorium
Come listen to the new Ass't Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction, Anne Zimmer
- Thur, Dec. 9 Murray Winter Concert 10 AM & 7:30 PM, Murray Ave. Auditorium
- Dec. 24-Jan. 2 No School Winter Break

Murray Matters

Fall 2004

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Murray Avenue School
Mamaroneck/Larchmont Council of the PTA
Larchmont, New York 10538

MurrayMatters is mailed to all Murray parents and distributed to Murray teachers & administrators.

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