

Murray Matters

Late Winter 2005

News from the Murray Avenue School PTA

Murray Volunteers=Success

Could spring be right around the corner? We certainly hope so! We have had enough of the cold and snow and are looking forward to the warm spring weather and all that it brings. Namely our Turn off TV Week, Spring Fair, Spring Arts Festival and concert, Beautification Day, and Science Fair! But before we move on to the next season, we need to take this opportunity to acknowledge all those individuals who made our winter so successful and fun.

For all those wonderful lunchtime activities and assemblies, we must thank our dedicated volunteers who made game room, both upper and lower, knitting nook, bingo, and lunchtime assemblies possible. We know it can be difficult to recruit volunteers for these shifts, but it is so worth the effort. Thanks to all of you who worked at lunchtime, our children were cozy and dry on those cold and wet weather days. (Never in the history of the PTA have there been so many alternate activities for children to participate in.)

Speaking of cold weather, how can we ever thank all those parents who have braved the bitterness of early winter mornings to work our Daymon Terrace drop off service. It is not an easy job when your hands are freezing and your eyes are tearing. But they do their job with a smile

and hello, making our children feel welcome and safe when they first arrive at Murray. Thanks should also go to all the parents who make the effort to help it run smoothly by following the procedures correctly and conscientiously. We know it doesn't always run efficiently, but can you imagine life without it?!

Without the help of what seemed like thousands of volunteers our Silent Auction could not have been so successful. From the committee chairs to all those who attended, we did an amazing job making our first adults night out Silent Auction an incredibly fun and lucrative event. All the funds raised are going directly back into the school to help fund such things as increasing our library collection, our Cultural Arts programs, and our new playground as well as some new ideas to help make Murray even better!

Of course, we could go on and on about our volunteers and how fortunate we are to have such a dedicated parent body. In fact, the numbers are quite staggering. Murray can boast that we have well over 250 parent volunteers helping make our children's experience at Murray fun, safe, and fulfilling. Please read on to hear more about our offerings and see your children taking advantage of all that you do!

Kelly O'Connor & Pam Friedman
PTA Co-Presidents

Winter Wonderland

Our first annual "adults only" night raised a big ruckus and big bucks. Did you miss it? See the pictures, inside.

District News

Find out who Annie Zimmer is, get an update of the school district budget vote, and learn what the Murray PTA & the Mamaroneck Schools Foundation granted Murray.

What's Next?

Spring Fair's coming soon. Find out what's new this year. The Franklin Institute visits to get kids thinking about the Science Fair. And, Murray gets "beautified!"

Picture Gallery

See what our kids are doing for lunchtime activities.

PTA Calendar

Even though the PTA has already accomplished so much, we're just warming up, along with the weather!

Winter Wonderland... a truly wonderful evening for all

The much anticipated Silent and Live Auction to Benefit the Murray Avenue School was held on February 12th at St. John's Episcopal Church on Fountain Square. This was the first time the auction was separated from our annual Spring Fair and, as with any first time venture, there were a lot of unknowns.

Could it be done? Would people come? Would they spend?

Yes! Yes! And Yes!!

Looking back at the event now, one can see that the huge amount of preparation that went into it insured its success. The organizers, and there were many, did an amazing job tending to every detail. The twinkling lights that covered the room were enchanting, the champagne flutes were coated with sugar, and the clipboards awaiting bids were everywhere. The number of items available was impressive: over 200 in all, about 1/3

Philharmonic. And more—much more...food prizes, gift baskets, vacations, jewelry, sports memorabilia, a box of tools, a bag of books, haircuts, taxi rides, ballet lessons.

The atmosphere was lively. Early in the evening guests were offered a chance to buy a balloon. For a small donation you



Carolyn's smiling but secretly thinking, "this is so NOT going in the livingroom."

got an immediate surprise: a manicure gift certificate or a restaurant voucher, for example. The mood was set, and it was time to move on to the silent auction tables. People could be seen hovering around coveted prizes, eyeing each new bid. Several dedicated parents arrived with their programs already marked and systematically went after their personal favorites. Around 8:30 pm the silent auction closed and it was time for the newest, most daring part of the event: presenting Kevin Danehy—*live* auctioneer. Kevin did a phenomenal job with the crowd. Bidding was fierce, but friendly. In just minutes bids went from hundreds to thousands. Everyone had fun watching, and people even had fun spending. Several times the bidding was so enthusiastic that additional prizes were made available on the spot. The biggest money maker of the evening was the Olympic hockey team photo. As organizers saw all those paddles go up and the bidding rise, another photo

was added for auction. It happened again with the signed Derek Jeter jersey. The first was such a draw, adding a second doubled the income, as well as the number of victorious bidders.

The Winter Wonderland raised more than twice as much as last year's auction with about half the revenue coming from the silent auction and half from the live portion. These funds will enable the PTA to move forward rapidly on several important projects. First on the list is equipment for the 1st through 3rd grade playground. Look for shiny new structures as early as this summer. The PTA also plans to complete their commitment to upgrading the library's non-fiction collection and to expand the cultural arts program.

The evening exceeded everyone's expectations not only financially but in terms of wonderful spirit of the event. Tickets sold out early. Those who couldn't get tickets sent contributions anyway. More than 300 attended. Everyone brought a checkbook and a smile. There was a special mix of enjoyment and a feeling of doing something for your kids. As one exhausted volunteer summed it up, "it was fun, meaningful, and profitable."



Tori tending to every last detail.

donated by local businesses and 2/3 by Murray families. There was something for everyone: the ever popular sport tickets ... the Mets, the Knicks, the Jets; the famous tours...HBO, Gourmet Magazine, a TV ad taping; event tickets...Z100's Zootopia, The Late Show, The New York



Mary Lou arranging the munchies.



Pam and Betsy have a new perspective on volunteering. Note to Pam: new rule—all PTA events must serve champagne. Think of the numbers of volunteers you'd get!



The Bokerts are happy "winners!"



Two of our hostesses, (who didn't know what they were getting into,) before the event: Jane Bernstein and Kristen McCarthy. Thanks, gals!



Lori, picking up a couple of bartenders.



Jeremy, isn't that your wife elbowing her way to a clipboard?



Sue and Jennifer have a bonding moment.

And now for the...

Murray Spring Fair 2005

By Kathy Eiberg

It almost feels like Spring so it must mean that Murray's annual Spring Fair is just around the corner. Get ready for many fun and exciting new additions this year.

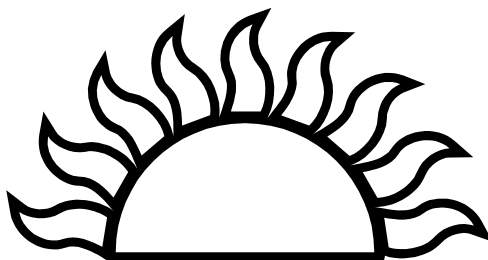
Start your engines because for the FIRST time at the Fair we will have Go Karts!!! Of course, we will also have all of your favorite rides, games and many new prizes!

We know you will love using the new wristband tickets. No more clamoring for lost tickets or looking for a place to keep them.

Running around all day going from booth to booth will be sure to make you hungry so check out the Country Kitchen, delicious gourmet food cooked and served by our own Murray parent volunteers, or the new ice cream stand!

We will also have a school spirit booth where kids and parents alike can purchase a variety of fun and very cool Murray memorabilia.

Volunteers are always needed for this large scale event. If you can give an hour or two, contact your classroom representative. We look forward to sharing another sunny, fun-filled day with your family and friends on Saturday, May 7.



School Budget Vote

Would you be surprised to hear that less than one third of the parents of children currently attending Mamaroneck Public Schools have voted in the school budget election the last two years? School budgets affect things like class size, educational programs, staff development and building construction. We hope you will become an informed voter. By the time you receive this publication, the Superintendent will have proposed the budget for the 2005-2006 School Year. Highlights from this budget are available on the district web site

www.mamkschools.org Complete copies of the budget are available at the district offices. On April 12, the school board will adopt a budget. Sarah Tate, Assistant Superintendent for Operations will come to a Murray PTA meeting for a **Budget Discussion on April 14, 7:30 pm.** Ms. Tate will answer any questions and then through a vote of the meeting attendees it will be determined whether the Murray PTA will endorse the budget as a group. We encourage you to come to this important and informative meeting. Our children deserve to have us understand all the facts before we cast our vote. The community **School Budget Vote will be held on May 17.**

There will be voter registration for the entire district at Mamaroneck High School on Wednesday, May 11th from 7-10 am and 4-9 pm. Not sure if you're registered? You can find out by calling the District Clerk's office at 220-3007.

Mamaroneck Schools Foundation Awards

By Jill Simpson

The Mamaroneck Schools Foundation proudly announced the recipients of its 2005-2006 grants in an awards ceremony Monday, March 7th at the Hommocks Auditorium. Thirty-five different grants in the areas of science, technology and math; literacy, the arts, and cultural enrichment; special education, athletics, and new facilities, totaling \$328,000, will be used to fund innovative programs and exciting new equipment for every school in the district. A district-wide grant called "Building Bridges" grew out of the work of the "Understanding Handicaps" task force and will offer resources for building awareness and sensitivity across all the schools. All the elementary schools will also benefit from an author-in-residence program with distinguished author Patricia Polacco. \$40,000 of a generous \$100,000 anonymous donation has been designated for training and staff development throughout the district.

"We were especially pleased with the creativity, thought and effort that was put into the grant applications this year," remarked Sabrina Fiddelman, president of the Mamaroneck Schools Foundation. "While we were fortunate to be able to award more grant money than ever before, thanks to the generosity of donors and families in our community, we also had a very difficult time narrowing our selection this year, because there were so many grant requests deserving of funding."

Listed below are the grants that have been awarded to Murray Avenue Schools for the 2005-2006 school year:

Building Inclusion with Danas

This grant will fund 5 Dana handheld computers for use by the resource room at Murray Avenue School for 3rd, 4th and 5th graders. The Dana combines the power, ergonomics and functionality of a computer with the size and affordability of a handheld. They will be used for note

taking and writing activities by students whose physical and perceptual difficulties limit their ability to write extensively by hand.

All Elementary: Patricia Polacco, Author in Residence

Patricia Polacco, distinguished author of many books for young readers, including *Mr. Lincoln's Way*, *The Keeping Quilt*, *Thank You, Mr. Falker*, and *Babushka's Doll*, will visit all four elementary schools. Each school will have two assembly programs, one for K-2 and the other for 3-5. Ms. Polacco will talk about her experiences of growing up with a learning disability as well as issues of teasing and bullying. There will also be an evening presentation for parents. The PTAs will contribute funding to this grant as well.

Electronic Spellers

This grant supports the young writers in grades 3 -5 at the Murray Ave. School with the purchase of 60 electronic spellers. The students will continue to be taught how to use dictionaries and other reference materials competently, but will now have an added tool to help alleviate some of the frustrations many children experience during the writing process. The spellers will help children of varied ability to enjoy and expand their written expression.

Building Bridges Program

This program, a follow-up to "Understanding Handicaps," is designed to provide ongoing opportunities for students, staff and parents to develop awareness, sensitivity and respect for all individuals, including the disabled, across all the schools. Among the specific projects it includes are: the development of specialized resources at the school libraries; utilization of shared literature experiences at the elementary and middle schools; increasing community awareness through building-wide efforts at the four elementary schools; creating a collection

\$328,000 in Grants

of instructional resources to be housed at the Teacher Institute; and development and implementation of training for 20 Mamaroneck High School students to act as volunteer coaches for the High School Special Olympics Team.

This grant will fund the training by the Creative Response To Conflict (CRC) group of a core committee of Murray Avenue School administrators, teachers and parents as permanent facilitators to promote communication, community and constructive conflict resolution.

Training and Staff Development

This special grant, funded by an anonymous donor, is designed to support continuing professional development for district teachers and administrators. The funds will be used to support attendance at national and local conferences, the formation of study groups using educational literature, and other forms of professional training and study.

Founded by parents and community members in 1997, the Mamaroneck Schools Foundation is a non-profit volunteer organization that helps fund innovative programs, materials and enhanced facilities and equipment beyond the scope of the regular school budget. Including tonight's awards, MSF has awarded over \$1,250,000 in grants, touching virtually every child in our district.

Save the Date: The annual Mamaroneck Schools Foundation Benefit Gala is scheduled for Saturday, May 21 at the Mamaroneck Beach & Yacht Club. Send in your reservation form in quickly so you can bid on some exciting auction items like tickets to Z100s Zootopia Concert, American Idol's live finals with airfare and hotel, one day internship at the Ellen Tracy fashion line, and VIP tickets to Teen People's Listening Lounge featuring Kelly Osborne. The Gala sells out fast, so reserve early!

Murray PTA awards more than \$7000 in Class Grants!*

Each year the Murray PTA gives the teachers and administration of Murray Avenue School the opportunity to apply for class grants that will enrich the educational lives of our students. We are pleased to announce that this year our dedicated teaching staff submitted many inspired grant requests in October. Thanks to the generosity of the parent community (that's YOU!) and the hard work of volunteers at our various fundraising events (YOU AGAIN!), the PTA was able to say yes to funding the following:

- A permanent, adjustable basketball hoop for the kindergarten playground
- 20 electronic dictionary devices for grades 2-5 to enhance writing, spelling and vocabulary skills
- Colonial Life study for all 2nd graders, including workshop materials and the rental of a "Heritage Trunk"
- "Native American Day" for all 3rd graders, including workshop materials and a Native American storyteller
- Two dozen acrylic mirrors for K-5 students when doing self-portraits in art
- New magazines and periodicals to enhance the 4th grade literacy curriculum
- A digital camera for use by 4th grade classes
- A Latin American assembly for 5th, 4th & 3rd grades, plus workshops for all 5th graders
- A DVD/VCR player for inclement-weather recess, & new age-appropriate DVDs
- A Conductor's Stool for Orchestra, Band & Choir
- A new stereo system for the Phys. Ed. Dept.

* *These grants are separate from the Mamaroneck Schools Foundation grants, usually with smaller requested amounts and more immediate need to our school.*

Annie Zimmer

Back by Popular Demand

*Kelly O'Connor
PTA Co-President*

Ms. Zimmer is new to the Mamaroneck School District this year. In her role as Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction she is involved with teachers and administrators from all of the district's schools. Last November, parents from all four district elementary schools gathered in Murray Auditorium to hear Annie Zimmer speak about Reading and Literacy. Those who attended know that Ms. Zimmer is extremely passionate and knowledgeable about education. Spending many hours in classrooms, she brings great anecdotes to her speeches that really allow you to understand the dynamics of children's learning processes.

We are pleased that Ms. Zimmer has agreed to offer another great opportunity for parents to gather and gain a better understanding of what their children are learning. Annie Zimmer will talk about the **Math Curriculum** at an All Elementary Meeting on **May 11, 7:30 pm in the Hommocks Library**.

This is a great opportunity to bring those questions that have been raised at the Murray grade level coffees, like: how do children learn math, what is "TERC," how do I help my child if I learned a different way, is the curriculum consistent across the district so they're all at the same place when they reach the middle school? Attend this enlightening meeting and have your Math questions answered. We hope you will Save the Date.

Lunchtime Activities

The Knitting Nook



The Game Room



Special Assemblies



Lu Ann Adams, Storyteller



Westchester Senior Orchestra

Curious Minds Gear up for the Science Fair

By Jennifer Conley

Do bananas really turn brown faster in the fridge than on the counter? How do dogs see things differently than we do? What exactly *is* a tsunami and how can we predict one?

Curious minds want to know! That's why we get so many kids participating in the annual Murray Avenue Science Fair. This year it will take place on Thursday evening June 2nd for parents and friends, and Friday June 3rd for students.

We kicked off the Science Fair cycle in February when a scientist from the world-famous Franklin Institute put on a chemistry demonstration for students in grades 2-5. Chemistry is fascinating to kids because at first it seems like magic—and then you start to understand the scientific concepts behind it. At the assembly Assistant Principal Jeremy

Barker, previously the science coordinator for the Rye Schools, talked to the kids about the Science Fair—and then gave them handbooks to take home. We are thrilled to have Mr. Barker's enthusiasm and expertise on board.

"I think that the Murray Science Fair is a unique opportunity for children to explore and discover within areas of interest in science," says Mr. Barker. "I am thrilled that the Murray Community demonstrates how much it values both science and inquiry-based learning with this exciting event!"

If you have ever been to the Science Fair, you know why so many kids choose to participate. It's fun to become an expert in something! You get to delve into a topic that really interests you—and then you get to do an experiment or build a model or display a collection! It's a rare opportunity for kids to teach their peers, parents and

teachers a thing or two. The PTA is proud to sponsor this exhilarating event because of the pride we see on the faces of so many kids. Non-competitive science fairs really do instill confidence and make science seem more accessible and fun.

So if your child is in grades 2-5, encourage them to do a project for the Science Fair. And help them get their topic question submitted by March 21st. Because curious minds want to know: Does soda really rot your teeth? Why are steroids so bad for your body? Will we ever put people on Mars? If your children are too young to participate yet, bring them to the Science Fair on June 2nd—they will learn so much and you will all be inspired.

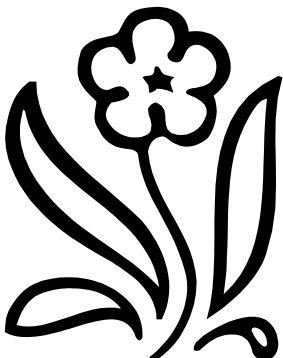
If you have any questions about the Science Fair, call Suzy Wolf (833-1232), Angie Leissl (833-3830), or Rory Ellis (833-8308).

The Franklin Institute Visits Murray to get Students Excited about the Science Fair!

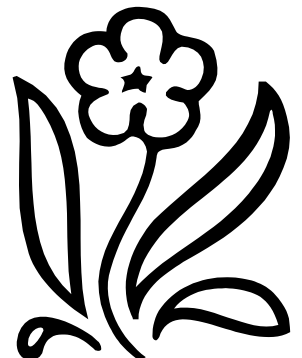


Thinking of Spring?

by Debbie Hilden and Jenny Reibstein



The Beautification Committee has been thinking spring all along! In preparation for this spring, last fall, the fifth graders planted tulips, crocuses and daffodils in their garden, near the fourth/fifth-grade playground—their legacy to the school. Now, we'll be working with the kindergarteners to start marigold seeds in their classrooms, which they'll transplant into the Murray Garden so that this fall's incoming kindergarteners will have petals for wool dyeing. And it's never too early to think about the spring thaw and planting flowers in your own garden. Look for pre-sale order forms in early April, to be picked up at this year's Beautification Day Celebration, May 14.



PTA Calendar

- Fri, April 1 Fifth Grade Square Dance 7:30 PM, Palmer Gym (MHS)
- Wed, April 6 Parent/Teacher Conferences Students report to school at 12:30 PM
- Thurs, April 7 Orchestra and Choir Concert 7:30 PM, Murray Auditorium
- Wed, April 13 Parent/Teacher Conferences 11:30 AM early dismissal
- Thur, April 14 PTA Meeting: Exec. Elections & District Budget Discussions 7:30 PM, Murray Library
- April 18-22 No School Spring Break (April 25, Snow make up or School holiday)
- April 25-29 Turn off TV Week Look for fun programs all week long!
- Sat, May 7 Spring Fair 11 AM-4 PM, Murray Large Playground
- Wed, May 11 Program with Annie Zimmer Assist. Super. discusses Math, 7:30 PM, Hommocks Library
- Sat, May 14 Murray Beautification Day Murray Grounds
- May 16-20 Walk to School Week
- Tues, May 17 Incoming Kindergarten Parents Meeting 7 PM, Murray Library
- Wed, May 18 Spring Arts Festival 6:30 PM at Murray Band Concert 7:15 PM, Murray Ave. Auditorium
- Sat, May 21 Mamaroneck Schools Foundation Annual Benefit Gala 7 PM, Mamaroneck Beach & Yacht Club
- Thurs, May 26 Volunteers Coffee 9:30 AM, Place TBD
- Mon, May 30 No School Memorial Day
- Thur, June 2 Science Fair 6:30-8 PM, Murray Small & Big Gyms
- Tues, June 7 Murray String Solo Night 6:30 PM & 8 PM, Murray Auditorium
- Thurs, June 9 PTA Meeting: PTA Executive Installation & State of the School, 7:30 PM, Murray Library
- Tues, June 21 5th Grade Graduation 9 AM, Murray Auditorium
5th Grade Graduation Party 5-7 PM, Murray

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