

Tiger Talk In Depth

Springtime in Paris is nice. But springtime at Murray is the cat's meow!

News from the Murray Avenue School PTA | Spring 2007

2007 PTA Grants Total \$8,300

The Murray Avenue PTA was delighted to award \$8,300 in grants this year to teachers and staff for new equipment, guest instructors and novel classroom materials. Grants were awarded in the areas of science, technology, literacy and physical education. The largest number of grants, representing more than half of the funding, was awarded to support enhancements to the science curriculum.

All teachers and staff in every grade and discipline are eligible to apply for PTA Grants, which are supported by Murray parents' fund raising efforts.

New computer equipment, including microscopes are located permanently in each classroom.

"Having microscopes in the classroom allows us to have a 'teachable moment' presents itself we can pull out a microscope and look at it. We did not have that opportunity before. My class is currently using the microscopes to observe everyday items such as hairs, spices, water samples, insects and baking products."

Additional grants covered:

Science

- Weather workshops in the classroom for second graders led by Stepping Stones Museum for Children of Norwalk, CT.
- "Does it Sink or Float?" workshops for fourth graders led by guest instructor Shelly Volk.
- Rocks and minerals workshops for fourth graders led by guest instructor Shelly Volk, featuring her large collection.

Technology

- New computer equipment, including computer monitors, keyboards, printers, and software to support their literacy development.
- Computer room book and copy holders to enable students to secure their work while typing in the computer lab.

Literacy

- "Time for Kids" kits to enhance non-fiction reading skills in the third grade literacy curriculum. The kits, which were recommended by the LitLife consultant, include age-appropriate articles, transparencies, activity cards and lesson plans.

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Save the Date!

Murray Beau Wednesday, 16th May 2007

Meet at the Main Entrance after school (2:30 pm)

Students, parents and caregivers are invited to help beautify our school grounds. Join us for a garden tour and help with the 5th grade classes planted as bulbs last Fall (by the playground entrance next to the Gymnasium / Lunchroom). During the summer, we encourage Committee volunteers and their friends and children to stop by whenever they can pull unwanted weeds and help keep the gardens beautiful. Please contact Lisa Ballard if you have any questions at 834-4354 or lisafranballard@hotmail.com. Many



Save the Date!

Spring Fair is a Star-Spangled Community Effort Saturday, May 12th

Who says backyard barbecues are reserved for the 4th of July?

Murray Ave. School's giant backyard barbeque at the Spring Fair has been a great tradition for the past decade, thanks in large part to the efforts of Murray parents, including Ranada Ferguson and Paul Galvez. More than 1,000 meals are served up annually under their helm, and this year will be no different. Joined by Warren Goodman, who is going on his 7th consecutive year at the American Food Booth, Murray Ave. Fair this spring.

"The American Food booth is simply one example of the dedicated efforts put forth each and every year by the Murray community. Nearly all of Murray's families contribute in one way or another - either by volunteering at a booth, preparing goods for the bake sale or donating to the book sale.

Due to the enthusiastic response and success of last year's Americana theme, the Red, White & Blue will prevail again this year. Returning again in 2007 will be the ever so popular Murray Idol, Caterpillar/Sea Monster, and the Pie Throw (Jets & Giants this year), as well as some old-time Murray classics, including the Cake Walk, Crazy Ball, Olympic Challenge, Kids Crafts, Hair Color/Tattoos and Lollipop tree, to name a few.

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Tiger Talk In Depth

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- Debra Schwartz
- Abbey Straus
- Eric Waldron

Many thanks to Jennifer Scazafave, Cruz Soler, PTA Co-Presidents Jennifer Conley and Sue Bokert

"Tiger Talk In Depth", a Murray Avenue PTA Tri-Annual Newsletter, is also available online at www.mamkschools.org/murray Questions? Call Corinne Zola at 834-0110

THE WANT ADS

Our PTA has over 40 committees to choose from, all of which complement a variety of interests, skills and time availability. We need your participation.

Please consider becoming a Chair for one of the following committees:

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| After School Clubs | Skating Party |
| Art Appreciation | Silent Auction |
| Bake Sale | Spring Fair |
| % H D X W L A F D W S I R Q P D I O H Q | Star Appreciation |
| Book Fair | Luncheon |
| Class Photographs | 7 U D I A F 6 D I H W |
| Community Outreach | Turn of TV Week |
| Cultural Arts | Walk to School Week |
| Game Room | Website |
| Healthy Hair | Grade Level |
| Library | (need one per grade |
| Lost & Found | and three for |
| Lunchtime Activities | 5th grade) |
| Murray Magazine | Contact Debra |
| Editors | Schwarz, Vice Presi- |
| Murray Memories | dent, Parent Services, |
| New Family Welcome | for information or to |
| Parent-Staff Fall Fling | sign up!! |
| Publicity | |

Murray Matters

A letter from your PTA Co-Presidents

Dear Murray Families,

April 15-21 was National Volunteer Recognition Week. But a mere week doesn't do justice to the volunteering that goes on here at Murray and the impact it has on the life of the school. We shudder to think about Daymon Terrace at drop-off time without those volunteers! It breaks our hearts to imagine a year without a yearbook or a spring without Spring Fair! Without volunteers, we'd have no fund raisers or funds. No room reps helping teachers. No after school clubs, no lost-and-found, no class photos, no directory! All of our committees make important contributions to life at Murray and none can be taken for granted. We are very grateful to each and every one of you for giving your time to our wonderful school.

We asked a few fellow volunteers "why they do it" and "what they get out of it." We thought their responses might feel familiar to you:

"I have found no better way to forge friendships than to work on a project with other parents."

"I believe what the research says—that kids care more about education when their parents are involved in their school. It just rubs off somehow."

"It's an opportunity to put my skills to good use for a good cause—the kids in our community."

"It's important to know what's going on at my child's school. I always feel more in the loop when I'm volunteering."

"Since I work, it's a great way to stay connected."

"When I see a need for improvement, volunteering is one way I can be part of the solution."

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I feel voicing my opinion."

"They grow up so fast. Now's the time."

Though none of us want to be "helicopter parents" who hover too closely over our own children, we should never apologize for being involved in our children's school. Advocating for kids and excellence in education is an important part of being a parent. Volunteering is how we "put our money where our mouth is."

Now's the time to start thinking about how we might contribute to the life of the school next year. In addition to your own individual reasons for volunteering, we hope you will consider an important group reason as well: a strong and vital volunteer community makes for a better, stronger, more open partnership with our school. When parents and V F K R R O V Z R U N W R J H W K H U W K H F K L O G U H Q E H Q H A W 7

Sincerely, Jen Conley and Sue Bokert

Jen Conley and Sue Bokert

How Can Parents Take Advantage of the Special Services at Murray?

Have you ever worried that your child might be struggling in school? Did you know that our school offers support services for children who are or emotionally? Murray offers Reading and Writing Specialists, a Speech Therapist, a Psychologist and a Social Worker. There is also English Language support for Language Learners ("ELL").

What is the process for obtaining these services?

First, approach your child's teacher about your concern. If the teacher concurs, he or she will refer your child to the Instructional Support Team ("IST").

What is the Instruction Support Team?

The IST is comprised of: the Assistant Principal, School Psychologist, Reading Specialist, one of the Special Education Teachers and one Regular Education Teacher. For your child, the team will also include his or her Classroom Teacher and, if warranted, an Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, or ELL Teacher.

What does the IST do?

The IST will discuss your child's needs, identify

question and develop an action plan. It generally reconvenes every 10 weeks to review the child's progress. While parents are not included in the initial meeting, communication between the classroom teacher and parents is encouraged throughout the process.

How does the action plan work?

The team devises strategies for the classroom teacher to implement directly, such as: re-teaching certain materials to the child, providing extra WLPH WR ÀQLVK ZRUN RU child may also qualify for services from one of our specialists if, upon screening, the child meets certain criteria.

If the plan includes services from one of our specialists, your child receives those services anywhere from daily to weekly, depending on the nature of the service and on the need. The specialists consult regularly with the child's classroom teacher to coordinate with current classroom instruction and to monitor the child's progress. Your child will be dismissed from services once the specialist and the classroom teacher agree that KH RU VKH KDV SURJUHVVH

What services are available?

- **Reading:** Linda DeLasho, our Reading Specialist, is available to students in Grades 1-5.

meets with students in small groups up to four times a week.

- **Writing:** New this year, writing specialist Lisa Kmetz is available to students in Grades 4 and 5 who need help organizing and composing their thoughts on paper. She meets with students in small groups, usually three to four times a week.

- **Speech and Language:** Students in all grades who demonstrate a need in this area will be offered the support of our Speech and Language Therapist, Marge Gasthalter. Typically, the therapists see students in small groups on a weekly basis.

- **Psychological:** Our school Psychologist Celia Anon sees students daily, most in group settings. 7KH JURXSV JHQHUDOO\ IRFXV H J OHDUQLQJ LVVXHV -VHOI tion or social skills), include students in the same RU GLIIHUHQW JUDGHV DQG LQF QRQ FODVVLÀHG VWXGHQWV 6 one on one consultations.

- **Social Work:** Merrill Schaffer, our social worker, is available to parents and students in all grades. Her work focuses on supporting the whole family GAAUAFUHQW\

- **ELL: English Language Learners.** This service is available to students in all grades for whom English is not their primary language.

Reported by Susan Leonard

PTA GRANTS (continued from page 1)

Physical Education

- A "Hip Hop Artist in Residence" in February to enrich the dance curriculum for all students.
- Adjustable double-runner ice skates to aid students with motor skills issues in learning how to skate.

The PTA Grants program enables us to put money we raise directly into the classroom to support new and improved programs for our children. Each Fall the PTA considers grant ideas from Murray Avenue teachers and staff. Grant requests are typically for amounts of \$1,000 or less and can be for one class, an entire grade or even the whole school. Applications

are reviewed by a Grants Committee comprising members of the PTA Executive Committee and the general membership. All applications are also reviewed by Principal Scazafave to ensure that they are not covered elsewhere in the school budget. Funds awarded must be spent in the current school year.

The PTA is proud to fund so many exceptional innovations this year. Thanks are due to teachers for submitting excellent grant proposals and to Grants Committee members Debra Lara, Silvia Lederman, Liza Mason, Kristen McCarthy, Tracy Owen, Suzanne Schlegel, Abbey Straus and Ann Wilson for their time spent evaluating these requests.

For MURRAY MEN only

Contributed by Eric Waldron

- X P S L Q « W K H Z D W H U L V A Q H

Never mind what your wife tells you...you really are a desirable and sought after breed. All you need to do is take the plunge and get involved in the PTA.

I know what you are thinking... PTAs are a "woman's thing". Well, I am here to tell you that is "old school" thinking and that PTA work is important and rewarding, and needs you; the untapped resource... the PTA Dad.

As dads, our involvement can really change the way people think of the PTA; and dare I say that dads might bring a different perspective to the table?

Today, more men than ever are getting involved in PTA. Nationally, about 1,000,000 out of 6,000,000 PTA volunteers are men including many in senior positions. Sure, it's a minority, but a growing one and a trend that I have personally observed in my 5 years as a PTA volunteer.

The idea of the PTA as "cookie baking mamas" is also an outdated stereotype (although I am all for bake sales), and I have discovered that the business of the PTA is vitally important to our children's school experience. Serving on various committees I had always been impressed (and the business at hand was conducted.

Most important, as a PTA dad you can make a real impact on how our children perceive the world. Of course our kids are accustomed to seeing mom volunteering, but dad? Let's just say it gets the kid's attention.

Now please don't think I am implying that if you're not involved in the PTA you are not interested in your child's education. We all know there are many ways to participate from helping with homework to going on class trips to sharing an interest with your child's class. Just consider participating on one of the many PTA committees as one more way to give your time.

What about time, you ask? Time is not as big an obstacle as you might think... there is PTA work that requires nothing but a phone and email, or just a small amount of physical presence. Soliciting donations for the Silent Auction or ordering inventory for a Spring Fair booth are examples; Murray Magazine needs editors, Science Fair set up, and Fall Fling could use an open bar and car service (just a suggestion). Let's DOVR QRW IRUJHW FDOOLQJ UDIÁH ZLQQHUV 'D\PRQ 7HUUDFH GURS RII KLJK SURÀOH DQ

So gentlemen this August when that PTA package arrives at your home take a look at the volunteer sheets and pick something that interests you. Start small if you want and if you need a little convincing call someone who has already served on the particular committee or position that interest you (the names are in the calendar). Go for it and get wet!

Eric Waldron served on the Murray Avenue PTA Executive Committee from 2003-05 and has served on various PTA committees including Silent Auction, Spring Fair and the Understanding Handicaps task force.

He has also served on the PTA Committee, is Special Education co-grade chair rep for Central school, and the School Liaison Chair for SEPTA. Mr. Waldron also volunteers as a parent member for the Committee on Special Education.



Murray ROARS

ROARS is an ongoing part of our everyday lives. The tenets of ROAR - Respect, Open Communication and Acceptance are instrumental in not only our school but our lives. The philosophy of the ROAR program is to teach our children that there is not necessarily one right answer to a problem, and that with practice they can learn to solve problems on their own is empowering and will help them not only at Murray but at camp, at home, in middle school and beyond.



This spring, the students learned about Open Communication. Teachers, parents and students participated in interactive grade wide assemblies that brainstormed the meaning of communication, discussed the pitfalls of poor communication and reviewed good listening skills. Teachers, in particular, stole the show by making these lessons memorable with their humor and candor. To carry this message into the classroom, teachers received ROAR Activity Packets. The activities teach students strategies for resolving conflicts.

blame and preventing escalation should a problem arise. Though all teachers as a matter of course teach these skills to our children on a daily basis, ROAR allows for a common language on the playground, a common language for our children.

for each child, ROAR Parent Packets were sent home for easy reference. The packet contains activities, information, conversation starters, book reviews and teacher techniques for resolving conflicts. The packet is a great resource for your whole family.

To reinforce the messages, posters went up around the school encouraging students to write raps, songs, poems and cheers about Open Communication which were then shared during morning announcements. When you are at Murray, be sure to take note of the ROAR signage going up around the school and the ROAR bulletin board where our children proudly display their work on Respect, Open Communication and Acceptance.

And remember, we are all in this together!!!

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How to Become An "Askable Parent"

Aware + Available + Approachable = Askable Parent

How do we instill healthy attitudes in our children about sexuality, as well as respect for themselves and others? How do we talk to our children about sexual issues? How do we give age appropriate information about sexuality, anatomy, puberty?

Murray parents had the opportunity to ask their own questions to Mamaroneck Schools District Wide Health Teacher Kathleen Degnan at a special event organized by the Murray PTA. Ms. Degnan teaches Health at the four district elementary schools and Mamaroneck High School. The focus

Children who have open discussions with their parents are better prepared for the decisions they have to make in the future regarding their own sexual health.

of the health education program to help kids realize that they are growing up and with that comes the responsibility of taking care of their own body.

Through her experiences of elementary and high school students, it is clear that they want honest, age appropriate information

regarding sexuality, and the children who have open discussions with their parents are better prepared for the decisions they have to make in the future regarding their own sexual health. Ms. Degnan admits that this may be a challenge as they will tell their child too much and traumatize them. However, she advises that this is not so. Ms. Degnan provides some helpful hints to help us with this process.

Be Aware

- Educate Yourself
- Be comfortable with your own sexuality
- Be comfortable with terms. Do not use baby words or slang terms. Always use the correct names for body parts.

Be Available

- Spend time with your children
- Know what they are doing, watching on TV and music they are listening to. They are bombarded with mixed messages about sex.
- Use the media as a tool to discuss your feeling about what's appropriate and what's not.

Be Approachable

- Give them opportunities to ask questions
- Minimize the intimidation factor
- + Remember, with anything children learn, they must re-visit the topic numerous times before they fully absorb the information.

When answering questions:

- Provide small honest pieces of information.
- Ask them if you have answered their question.
- If not, ask them what they don't understand.
- It's okay if a child asks a question a second time.

Many thanks to Program Chairs Kelly O'Connor and Ilene Rome and to District Health Teacher Kathleen Degnan



Silent Auction

Botanica

A Celebration of our Children's Growth

School proved once again that Murray parents and the Larchmont/Mamaroneck community care about their children's education! Thanks to the generosity of many volunteers, donors, and bidders, the event raised over \$35,000 for use in our school.

The whimsical garden setting of "Botanica" provided a beautiful zebro, the design included a Children's Garden, where blossoming photos showcased the diversity of children that make up our school. Over 225 auction items offered something for everyone, with tickets to shows & events, weekend getaways, parties, sports memorabilia and more.

The funds raised through "Botanica" will support many special programs at Murray Avenue School, from new technology and library books to cultural arts programs and special teacher requests. Thank you to all who made it a success and a special thanks to event chairs Chris Hofstedt, Polly Kolatas and Kathy Langan.

