

The Advocate

Mount Daniel Elementary — Grades K-1

FEBRUARY 2007

Thomas Jefferson Elementary — Grades 2-4

From the President

Kathleen Donovan

Hey, PTA — We're #1! I am delighted to announce that our very own Falls Church Elementary PTA ranked 1st place for membership in the Virginia State PTA's Division 1, and was recognized for "superior membership achievement" (largest percentage of members vs. student enrollment) with a whopping 251.44%! Not only were we ranked 1st in Division 1, but our PTA had the highest percentage of members in all divisions across the Commonwealth! Kudos to our stellar Membership Chairs, Kate Nesson and Carol Sly, and congratulations to each of you for your commitment to our PTA.

While I was delighted and quite proud to see our PTA recognized for superior membership achievement, this recognition just is a confirmation of what is visible each day in our schools ... an active, vibrant parent community, and administrators and staff that value, welcome, and encourage parental participation. It is wonderful that so many of us took the time to complete a PTA membership form and make a financial contribution to the PTA, and I am equally inspired and gratified by the hundreds of parents that commit their time and talent to our schools throughout the year. Your dedication enriches our children and our community. I would like to invite you at this time to consider your interest in a PTA leadership role next year.

During the winter, our PTA undertakes the task of recruiting PTA members to consider serving in leadership roles for the upcoming year. At our February PTA meeting, we will elect a Nominating Committee in accordance with our bylaws. Once elected, the nominat-

ing committee will immediately begin the process of identifying interested members to serve on the Executive Committee or to chair one of our many PTA Committees next year. A list of all committees and Executive Committee positions are posted on our website at: www.fallschurchpta.org

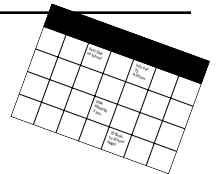
Each year, there are frequent opportunities to get involved. Once our Nominating Committee is elected, we will publish the members' contact information on our website and in the March *Advocate*, and will announce via e-mail how you may get in touch with the committee to express your interest. Meanwhile, please feel free to contact me to volunteer or obtain further information.

Have a great month, and I hope to see you around TJ, Mount Daniel and/or at MEHMS for our February Movie Night!

I shall pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.

— Mahatma Gandhi

Mark Your Calendars



- Feb. 7 — TJ Principal's Coffee, 8:45 am
 - Feb. 9 — Movie Night, Mary Ellen Henderson Cafetorium
 - Feb. 19 — Presidents' Day, Schools Closed
 - Feb. 21 — "Dylan Pritchett" assembly, MD, 9:30 am
PTA Meeting, TJ Library, 7:00 p.m.
 - Feb. 28 — "Dylan Pritchett" assembly, TJ, 9 and 10 am
MD Principal's Coffee, 9:30 am
 - Mar. 5-8 — Spring Book Fair at Mount Daniel
 - Mar. 6-7 — Spring Book Fair at Mount Daniel, with evening hours also
 - Mar. 6 — Mount Daniel Parent Orientation. 7:30 pm
 - Mar. 7 — TJ Principal's Coffee, 8:45 am
 - Mar. 12 — Professional Day, Schools Closed
- For a full 2006-07 PTA calendar, go to <http://www.fallschurchpta.org/pta-calendar.html>

February Meeting: Summer Activities

- Please join us at the PTA Meeting on Feb. 21st in the TJ Library at 7:00 pm for a discussion on summer activities.
- The Executive Committee will bring information about activities in the area and invite you to come and share your thoughts on children's experiences from previous summers. We hope this exchange will broaden our children's horizons this summer.

News from TJ

Trudy Taylor, Principal



Well, now we know that winter really is here — for those of you who were missing it! The students have been real troupers. They already had their field taken away and now with the recent snow/ice there have been days when they can't even play on the equipment because of all the mud. Everyone is becoming very "close" out on the blacktop. I feel the need daily to take my hat off to our playground aides!

We had a visiting author come on January 23 — Mr. Bentley Boyd, who does graphic arts stories (comics by another name) for children based on educational themes like Jamestown. It is a great way to entice children to not only read but learn history. He was a huge success with all of the grades, as you can well imagine. Don't be surprised if you see your children attempting to create graphic art. It is definitely a way to hook children into reading and writing.

Our After School Reading and Math Clubs began this week. Students who could benefit from additional small group instruction were invited to attend based

PTA Launches Spring Book Fair at Mount Daniel, March 5-9

The Spring Book Fair is just around the corner! Just in time for spring break and the first grade reading incentive program, the Spring Book Fair at Mount Daniel will take place March 5-9, 2007. Several hundred books — including a number of titles that will interest upper elementary students — will be on display in the Mount Daniel Library. Many of the successful aspects of previous Book Fairs will continue:

- Evening sale times: Tuesday and Wednesday 5:30-8:30 pm
- Story time for children during evening sales
- Teacher wish lists

After the success of the Fall Book Fair at TJ, we are excited to offer this PTA fundraising event in the second semester to benefit all the students in our elementary schools. We need your help! Please consider volunteering for the book fair. Day and evening volunteer opportunities include: set-up, assisting children with wish lists, story time readers, and cashiers. You can commit to as little as one hour and make a difference! Please contact Chris Cook at 703-237-0113.

The Spring Book Fair at Mount Daniel is a PTA-sponsored fundraiser. All profits from the sale go directly to the elementary libraries to purchase new books.

Assemblies

The Falls Church Elementary PTA is very excited about this month's assembly. Dylan Pritchett packs African and African-American stories, riddles, games, and music into his performance. Showtimes are Feb. 21st at 9:30 at Mount Daniel and Feb. 28th at 9:00 and 10:00 at TJ. Parents and siblings are always welcome. For a list of assemblies throughout the year, please visit the PTA website at <http://www.fallschurchpta.org/pta-committee.html> and click on Fine Arts Assemblies.

on test scores and teacher recommendations. We will soon be turning our attention to summer school also with the same purpose. For parents wanting to plan ahead, **Elementary Summer Schools will be held from July 9-Aug. 3**. More information on specific days and times will follow as they are determined. The elementary summer schools have traditionally been in the morning.

On February 2, second grade parents are invited to attend an Arts Sharing Assembly at 9:15 am in the gym. It will be an opportunity for students to share some of their artistic and musical talents and creations. It always makes the students feel so proud to share their accomplishments with you.

We had two information nights for parents in January. On the 11th we had a Title One Reading presentation by our reading teachers, Carey Gray and Mary Klink. Parents learned how their children are taught to read and ways they can help their children practice their reading at home. On the 25th we had a presentation by Heidi Lang and Cindie Carlson, our TAAP teachers, about our gifted and talented program. They introduced their new website explaining the selection process for TAAP. Anyone is invited to attend any information night we have even if your child is not currently receiving the targeted services.

Please remember to send your child to school dressed for the weather with a warm coat and boots if there is snow on the ground. Thanks for your cooperation!

The Advocate is the newsletter of the Falls Church Elementary PTA, which supports Thomas Jefferson Elementary, 601 S. Oak St., Falls Church, VA 22046, 703-248-5660; and Mount Daniel Elementary, 2328 N. Oak St., Falls Church, VA 22046, 703-248-5640.

Laurie S. Clark, Editor (703-237-6637)

Correspondence for The Advocate should be sent to the Editor, c/o Elementary PTA, Thomas Jefferson Elementary School, 601 S. Oak St., Falls Church, VA 22046

Articles for The Advocate should be submitted by e-mail to sclaurie@aol.com

News from Mount Daniel

Kathy Halayko, Principal



Winter has finally arrived in Falls Church! Please remember that children at Mount Daniel will play outside for recess every day unless it is raining, snowing, or temperatures are extremely low. Thank you for sending so many of your children with warm coats, mittens, hats, gloves, and boots during our most recent snow. Please label all of these items or they may end up on our Lost and Found box. On your next trip to Mount Daniel stop by to check on the many treasures we have collected. Lost and Found is located in the school foyer and in day care.

The Elementary PTA Cookbook

Families will soon receive details in their child's backpack regarding the Elementary PTA's cookbook fundraising project. The cookbook committee is seeking recipes to assemble an interesting, innovative, and updated family cookbook. Appetizers, soups, salads, entrees, vegetables, breads, and desserts — the committee needs your recipes!

Many households already own various school or community-based cookbooks, which typically include long-standing family favorites and tried-and-true standards. The cookbook committee hopes to instead compile new recipes incorporating updated techniques, current cooking trends, natural ingredients, fresh foods, and international flavors. Features will include menu items for casual picnics, neighborhood get-togethers and outdoor entertaining, as well as elegant dinners and special occasion meals. Updated family favorites will include quick, simple, and healthful meals for our busy weekday lives and fun and nutritious fare for the pickiest of palates.

The cookbook's success — as both a cooking guide and a fundraiser — requires the strong support and response of our families, teachers, staff, and friends to provide their favorite signature recipes. Students are also encouraged to provide their recipes and will have an opportunity to submit artwork and illustrations. Selected recipes will be reviewed, sorted, and tested and each published recipe will include an acknowledgement of the contributor.

Recipes will be collected during February and March. Advance sales orders will be taken in May, and the cookbook will be published in Fall 2007 in time for gift-giving and holiday entertaining. Contact Catherine Beddow, Ellen McRae or Gisella Schneider for additional information.



Look for important information on page 4 of this issue of the *Advocate* about registering your rising kindergartner for school in September. If you have not already done so, please complete a form and return it to Mount Daniel as soon as possible so you can receive registration information from the school this month. An orientation meeting for new kindergarten parents will be held in the school's multipurpose room on March 6 at 7:30 p.m.

The results of the Cognitive Abilities Test will be sent to parents of first graders with their child's report card on February 2. If you have any questions about your child's test results or need help interpreting the information you receive, please join Dr. Juanita Briscoe, FCCPS Testing Coordinator, on Tuesday February 6 at 7:00 p.m. in the Mount Daniel Library for the information you may need.

Please remember to update your child's emergency care card whenever you make a change to your phone numbers, email, or designated emergency contacts. The office will make note of your changes on our official emergency care information forms.

Mount Daniel students and staff received the following note from Kelly McCall, who is a VCU social worker. She and her colleagues were instrumental in transporting your generous donations of shoes, clothing, school supplies, backpacks, and funds to a school(s) in Ghana during December. The country of Ghana has been a unit of comparative study in Social Studies in first grade for many years. This was our Third Annual Ghana School Fund Drive, and we hope the VCU staff will have pictures to share with us for our Ghana study and Ghana Day.

Dear Mount Daniel Elementary,

The VCU School of Social Work, children and teachers of Ghana, and plenty of others wish to thank you for your hard work and dedicated efforts to gather clothing, books, shoes, book bags, and money for sponsorships and uniforms. We were truly touched by your contributions and are excited to continue the spirit of giving as we embark on our two and one-half week journey to Ghana. Your compassion and generosity will continue to better people's lives as we travel far and wide to share your kindness. We look forward to sharing with the teachers, students and parents the effects of all of your wonderful efforts upon our return. Be ready to see first hand how the supplies and materials will help the school children of Ghana to receive a better education and live a more fulfilling life! Thank you again from all of us!

VCU Students and Leaders

Kindergarten Registration Information

Mount Daniel School's principal and staff will present a Kindergarten Information Night for parents of prospective kindergarten students on **Tuesday, March 6, 2007 at 7:30 p.m.** in the school's multipurpose room. To be eligible for kindergarten, students must be five years of age by September 30, 2007 and a resident of the City of Falls Church. A brief overview of the school day, curriculum, day care program, and registration requirements will be presented through a video and panel discussion. Parents will receive a packet of registration information by mail prior to that evening with instructions for on-line registration. Registration will be held for kindergarten parents and students Wednesday, May 2, 2007. You will be notified of a time that will be reserved for you and your child to see a classroom and turn in completed registration forms. To receive a registration packet, please complete the information below and return to Mount Daniel School, 2328 North Oak Street, Falls Church, Virginia 22046. **Please pass this information to new neighbors and friends, and ask them to call (703) 248-5641 or (703) 248-5644 to receive a registration packet.**

Child's Name _____
 Date of Birth _____
 Gender (Male/Female) _____
 Parent/Guardian Name(s) _____

 Address _____

 Telephone _____
 Email Address _____

Mount Daniel Seeks Preschool Information

Mount Daniel School is seeking current information about the numbers and ages of preschool children **up to 5 years** old in Falls Church City to assure we have an accurate count as we prepare for future kindergarten classes and to keep you informed of preschool issues. Please complete the information below and return to Mount Daniel School, 2328 North Oak Street, Falls Church, Virginia 22046. **Please pass this information to new neighbors and friends and ask them to provide us with this information.**

Name(s) of Child(ren)
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

Gender (Male/Female)	Date of Birth
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____

Parent/Guardian Name(s) _____

 Address _____

 Telephone _____
 Email Address _____

Keeping Your Children Safe On the Internet

At the January PTA meeting, TJ's own Steve Knight gave a presentation on Internet Safety. He spoke about internet filters and gave suggestions for many commercial software packages.

He told us about two great websites for kids: NetSmartzKids.org and iKeepSafe.org and he also showed us the pledge between students and parents that he recently sent home with all 3rd and 4th graders.

The Virginia Department of Education has published its *Guidelines and Resources for Internet Safety in Schools*, which provides information about what schools, students, parents, and school administrators should know. Below is a list of what parents need to know:

- The Internet is a valuable learning, communication, and entertainment provider. A child's Internet use

should be based on age and the family's needs and values.

- Parents must understand potential Internet dangers and prepare their children, just as they prepare them for going to the playground or crossing the street.
- Parents can provide the best protection for their children and help reinforce the principles learned in the classroom. Families should reach agreements about acceptable Internet activity and content.
- Monitoring is crucial. Parents should know where their children go online, how long they stay there, and the warning signs that something is wrong.



Copies of all these documents, plus other internet safety information, are available online on www.fallschurch-pta.org in the Resources section.

Car Seat Laws

One of those "grey areas" of parenthood is the question of when to let your child move from a booster seat to a regular seat belt. A good general rule is that children should be in a booster seat until their knees bend over the edge of the seat when sitting properly.

Virginia law requires that children under 6 years of age be restrained in a child safety seat. It also requires that all children ages six through 15 be properly secured in a child safety seat, booster seat or safety belt no matter where the child is seated in the vehicle.

So while the law says that your 6-year-old can use just a seat belt, many people feel that isn't long enough. Many states are seeking to change their laws to require children to stay in restraints through 8 years and 80 pounds. While Virginia and Maryland require children under age 6 to be in booster seats, 11 states (including nearby Pennsylvania) and the District of Columbia have recently passed laws raising that to 8 years.

The best thing to remember is that the vehicle's seats and restraint systems were designed with adults in mind, not 7-year-olds.

Sources: <http://www.dmv.state.va.us/webdoc/general/safety/childsafety/laws.asp> and <http://www.inventiveparent.com/state-laws.htm>.

Elementary PTA Family Movie Night

Movie night on Friday, February 9 will take place in MEH's cafetorium (enter door #5 at the back of the building). The movie is **Cars**. Pizza and food sales start at 6:30 and the movie starts at 7:00.

Parents need to supervise their own kids.
Bring sleeping bags and pillows for the kids.

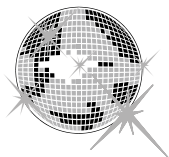
Volunteers are needed to sell food and clean up — please contact Meg Haensel.



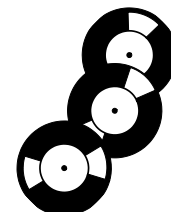
We look forward to seeing you there!

World Book Online Service

The FCEPTA is proud to provide the World Book Encyclopedia Online Service free to all families of students at Mount Daniel and TJ. Once you have logged into the service, you will have access to an Atlas, Dictionary, Encyclopedia, and the Explore Virginia section. This user-friendly site can be very helpful as your student works on school research projects or just investigates a topic for fun. To access the site, go to <http://www.worldbookonline.com> and enter the Login ID: tjfccps and the Password: tiger (all letters are lowercase).



TJ-Mount Daniel PTA Family Party and Class Basket Auction March 24th 6-9 PM @ Community Center



The PTA is planning a huge family-oriented party so big that only the community center can hold it. Admission to the event is free. The 4th grade will be selling pizza and the popular class basket auction will be held throughout the evening. As always, children need to be accompanied by an adult.



Entertainment Includes:

Teacher Karaoke	Big Light Show	Conga Line
Bubble Machines	Strobe Light Beach Ball	Limbo Contest

First 400 Kids Receive A Free Glow Bracelet

Cool music videos will be shown on a huge screen including:

<i>Hannah Montana</i>	<i>Shrek</i>	<i>Tony Hawk</i>	<i>High School Musical</i>	<i>Go Go's</i>
<i>Village People</i>	<i>BMX Tricks</i>	<i>Hillary Duff</i>	<i>Air Bud</i>	

Fun For The Whole Family

Visits and Vision

Kieran Sharpe, School Board Liaison

During December, I visited Mount Daniel and Thomas Jefferson to observe some classes and talk with staff. Joining me at Mount Daniel were current school board members Joan Wodiska, Rosaura Aguerreberre, and Susan Kearney as well as former members Jessie Thackrey, Lou Olom, and Betty Blystone. We toured the new wing and talked with Principal Halayko, plus a couple of classroom teachers and the music, Spanish, and pre-school staff. All visitors were very impressed with the bright, cheerful, and very functional new spaces. But as Mrs. Blystone later said, the most impressive and most important thing was the great enthusiasm the students and staff showed for the facility.

The classroom teachers at Mount Daniel seem to have integrated Spanish lessons into their regular daily routine. No doubt, their willingness to learn new things helps inspire the students and their parents to be continuous learners as well.

At TJ, Mrs. Kearney and I met in the library for more than an hour after school with about a dozen teachers. They varied from the very new to the long-tenured. Some had taught only in Falls Church while others had taught elsewhere, including outside Virginia.

They said there just isn't time enough to do all that's asked of them. All seemed to take very seriously the task of preparing every student to do his or her best, particularly in regard to the SOL tests. Going beyond the SOL content was clearly important for many as well. Still, they like some aspects of having such hefty responsibility. In many cases, they have more autonomy and flexibility here, they say, than they would get in many other schools.

Until late February, the school board will be preoccupied with the 2007-08 budget. Soon thereafter, we have resolved to discuss a vision for our schools over the next ten years and beyond. We'll look to our strategic plan and the inputs received from parents, staff, and community in its development. But many features could be clarified: How early (i.e., at what age) should schooling begin? Should the last years of high school look the same in 2020 as they do now? Should we add the Middle Years and Primary Years Programs to our International Baccalaureate Program? Should we expect all students to achieve fluency in two languages?

Please work with us toward a vision that assures our schools sustain an outstanding reputation for excellence.

LOST!

"Mom, I can't find my hat!"

"My one glove is missing!"

"I left my coat at school!"



If this sounds familiar, usually just as the family is scurrying to meet the morning bus or walk to school, your child's misplaced items may be waiting for rescue in the Mount Daniel or TJ lost and found bins.

Mount Daniel maintains a box for lost and found items at the front entrance to the school. When clothing, accessories, umbrellas, and other personal items are found on the buses and school grounds, the Mount Daniel staff returns them to this box. Students and their parents are encouraged to search the box when items are missing. In the spring, the box is emptied and items are displayed for the children to claim. Unclaimed items are then donated to Goodwill Industries.

The TJ lost and found bins are located in the hallway outside the gymnasium. PTA volunteers periodically sort the items and return those with identification to the office, which then forwards them to the classroom. Unclaimed items are stored an additional month and thereafter are donated to Goodwill Industries.



Kate Nesson and Carol Sly for completing and distributing the PTA directory addendum.

Catherine Beddow and Becky Trainor for serving on the district-wide committee that is looking into the Primary Years Program.

Stacy Hennessey for hosting the Reflections artwork and for her generous donation to the Reflections participants.

Annette Hennessey, Gabriella Abruzzi, and Mechelle Coppock for providing the delicious goodies for the principal's coffees.

Terri Tornell, Lisa Ferguson, Beckie Geren, Sylvia Malm, and Eileen Zaenger for keeping our children entertained and enlightened through the school assemblies.

Virginia Hamilton, Michael Pierce, Vanessa Piccorossi, and Bonnie Schuen for serving as Reflections judges.

Annette Hennessey's Girl Scout Troop, who all submitted art entries to the Reflections program.

Mrs. Nelson's kindergarten class, who all submitted entries to the Reflections program.

Jennifer Cipriano and Kathleen McCleary for their great leadership in chairing the Reflections program.