

# The Advocate

Mount Daniel Elementary — Grades K-1

OCTOBER 2006

Thomas Jefferson Elementary — Grades 2-4

## From the President

**Kathleen Donovan**

I hope that all of your children had a wonderful September and are now happily settled into their new classes. While my children seem settled in at school, our after school hours are probably like many of yours.... enjoying these lovely fall afternoons, playing with friends in the neighborhood, completing homework, shuttling to baseball, soccer, dance, Brownies...sound familiar? Our community is brimming with incredibly enriching opportunities for our children to participate in, and these activities can be a great way to spend time and to encourage our children to explore their interests.

Nevertheless, it is sometimes difficult to find a healthy balance for our many priorities... family time, school-work, relaxation, recreation, getting to those fabulous monthly PTA meetings.... it can certainly be a challenge!

Our school community is not alone in trying to respond to this challenge. Current literature is filled with perspectives that vary from "The Over-Scheduled Child" to "The Benefits of Busy". The time we spend raising our children is precious and sometimes seems fleeting, and many families strive to find the right balance for our individual children. Renate Jobst writes "Parents need to help their children find a healthy balance between work and play. It's a lifelong lesson." Your PTA may be of assistance this month!

To help us reflect on supporting our children at school and at home, the PTA is delighted to be able to host Laurie Chester, Academic Coach, and Kim Smith Kidd, Personal Success Coach, who will join us to share information on understanding brain development related to organization and time management, homework and study strategies, and development of the whole child. At our next PTA

### October PTA Meeting

Please join us for the PTA Meeting on Oct. 18th in the Mount Daniel Library as we welcome Laurie Chester, Academic Coach, and Kim Smith Kidd, Personal Success Coach. They will share information on understanding brain development related to organization and time management, homework and study strategies, and balancing children's activities.

meeting (October 18th at 7pm at Mount Daniel), we will learn practical strategies we can use to develop effective routines and support our children in developing study habits, and reflect on our choices in scheduling extra-curricular activities. I will look forward to seeing you there!

"We have only this moment, sparkling like a star in our hand — and melting like a snowflake."

— Marie B. Ray

## Mark Your Calendars

- Oct. 13 — Family Movie Night in Mary Ellen Henderson Cafetorium
- Oct. 18 — Ms. Vee, MD, 9:30 am  
PTA Meeting in Mount Daniel Library, 7:00
- Oct. 23-27 — TJ Book Fair
- Oct. 24-25 — TJ Book Fair evening sales
- Oct. 25 — Ms. Vee, TJ, 9 and 10 am  
MD Principal's Coffee, 9:30 am
- Oct. 27 — Reflections Submissions due
- Nov. 1 — TJ Principal's Coffee, 8:45 am
- Nov. 3 — 1st Quarter Ends
- Nov. 6-7 — Professional Days/  
Grade K-4 Parent-Teacher conferences

For a full 2006-07 PTA calendar, go to <http://www.fallschurchpta.org/pta-calendar.html>

## Are You on the Listserv?

The PTA e-mail listserv is a great way to find out about upcoming events. If you are not on our e-mail listserv, please send an e-mail requesting to be added to Laurie Clark at [sclaurie@aol.com](mailto:sclaurie@aol.com).

Membership for this year's PTA is growing daily. Thank you to everyone who sent in their dues and joined to support another great year of PTA activities.

Also a big thanks to everyone who checked over their child's label for the directory and returned it. The directory is in the works and the goal is to send it home in the backpacks around Oct. 13th.

It's not too late to join the PTA (\$14) or to order extra copies of the directory (\$4). Please contact Kate Nesson at [knesson@yahoo.com](mailto:knesson@yahoo.com) to find out how.

## News from TJ

**Trudy Taylor, Principal**



We have had a great beginning to our year this first month of school. It has been a very busy month that has flown by and it is hard to believe it is October already. The students were welcomed back the first week with our Welcome Assembly where the students were treated to a special visit from the "real" TJ Tiger whose secret identity remains a secret.

We had a Recess Rodeo the first few weeks of school when each class came to the playground and went to four different stations to learn from our playground aides (Mrs. Ohr, Mrs. Poff, Mrs. Werner, Mrs. Heil and Mr. Hall) about our rules for the blacktop, the equipment, and the fields. They also learned from our PE teachers, Mr. Greiner and Ms. Huber, how to play Knockout (a favorite game played at the basketball hoop) and Kickball. By hearing the rules for these popular games, we hope to lessen the disagreements that occur at recess when children bring different versions of the games from other places. We asked the children

to sign a contract stating that they agree to follow the playground rules for the remainder of the year. We also talked about the necessary consequences should they forget to follow the rules.

We have begun a new practice of having the children go out to recess first (except on Weds.) and then eat lunch. Our hopes are that they will get their wiggles out first and be ready to eat a more leisurely lunch after they have had time to play first. Previously, students had rushed through their lunch before going out to play. We hope to encourage better eating habits this year.

A reminder to those of you who accompany your children to the bus stop in the morning: nearby neighbors may appreciate a quieter gathering. I have heard from a few of our neighbors that the bus stops are very noisy in the mornings. Thanks in advance for your consideration in this matter.

I hope to see many of you at our first coffee on Wednesday, Oct. 4 at 8:45 a.m. The coffees will be the first Wednesday of each month and I hope you will be able to join us sometime during the year.

## News from Mount Daniel

**Kathy Halayko, Principal**



The new school year has begun with big smiles and much enthusiasm at Mount Daniel. The annual Welcome Back Assembly on Sept. 27 was complete with a variety of new songs by kindergartners and first graders and a few old favorites like "Danny is a Friend," led by our new music teacher, Jamie Dean. The staff was introduced to the students, and we talked about assembly manners as we anticipate many outstanding assemblies throughout the year provided by the PTA.

Phase I of the Mount Daniel move to the new wing also began on the 27th. The fire marshal has permitted a partial occupancy of the new space, which is certainly a step in the right direction. Teachers were able to unpack boxes that were in storage with a local moving company for about a month. Thank you to the PTA for the special afternoon snacks on the day of Move I! We await the next phase of complete occupancy as soon as a final inspection is completed. Stay tuned!

We hope you enjoyed your visit to your child's classroom on Back to School Night, Oct. 5. Teachers enjoyed sharing their daily class routines and curricula with you. We hope this snapshot of the school day at Mount Daniel was helpful and fun. We thank St. James School for permitting our families to park in their school parking lot. Thanks also go to the FCCPS Department of Transportation for the shuttle bus service to Mount Daniel.

As mentioned at Back to School Night, please remember to always send a note to your child's teacher if any change occurs at dismissal including early dismissals, changes in transportation, or changes in day care. The teacher will copy your permission note and give it to the bus driver and/or day care staff on the day of the change. Notes directly to day care are also encouraged. Last minute changes to transportation after 1:00 PM cannot be honored by the staff unless it is an emergency. We receive numerous requests for changes in transportation in order to accommodate play dates. We ask that play dates be scheduled after your child is safely at home. In the case of child care needs or an emergency, we request that both families involved in the change send a note to the teacher or office confirming the transportation change. We appreciate your support in helping us provide the safest environment possible for your children.

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• 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 sclairie@aol.com  
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## Volunteerism – Participating in the PTA and in the Classroom

During the first week of school, Mount Daniel and TJ families received a PTA Volunteer Form. Many, many thanks for the great response we have received from so many parents! It is clear that our families really support our students and school staff and want to be involved! Please don't hesitate to return the Volunteer Forms as committees are still being formed. Once formed, the committee chairperson will contact each volunteer with information on their respective committee and ways that the volunteer can help.

There are many ways to participate for both stay-at-home and working parents. Events such as the Book Fairs, Movie Nights, Family Party, and Spring Fling require evening and weekend volunteers to staff the events. Fundraisers such as Art Magnets, Java Joe's, and Wrapping Paper need volunteers to organize and distribute orders. Many Outdoor Classroom activities occur on weekends.

In addition to PTA committees, there are many other opportunities for participation in your child's school and classroom. Room parents are coordinated through the PTA but work directly with the teachers to organize classroom volunteer needs. There are usually several room parents and one lead room parent per classroom.

They plan classroom parties, class baskets for raffle at the PTA Family Party, and Teacher Appreciation Week, and organize field trip chaperones and volunteers in the classroom to help with reading, writing, Waterford computer lab, and art. Most teachers circulate sign-up forms at Back to School Night and in backpack mailings. Depending on the specific classroom schedule, some opportunities are early in the morning or near lunchtime, which is often more convenient for working parents. Time commitments are typically less than an hour but provide a great chance to see your child in the classroom and observe their learning and social environment.

Volunteers are also needed throughout the year to supervise the playground at Mount Daniel, monitor first graders during lunchtime, and assist in the TJ library and publishing center. These efforts are coordinated directly through the school and can be scheduled on an on-going basis — weekly, bi-weekly or monthly — or as a substitute fill-in. Several forms were distributed to parents in early September. Parents with other siblings should make alternative arrangements for these children when they are volunteering at the schools or chaperoning field trips. Please contact Catherine Beddow, PTA Volunteer Coordinator, at 703.538.5519 with any questions.

## Environmental Awareness and the TJ Outdoor Classroom

In honor of Annette Mills and Dave Eckert, environmental books have been purchased by the PTA for the TJ and Mount Daniel libraries. These books are a great way for your child to learn about the environment and complement the Outdoor Classroom learning that is part of their regular curriculum. The TJ collection includes:

*Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* by Richard Louv

*A Place for Butterflies* by Melissa Stewart, ill. by Higgins Bond

*The Empty Lot* by Dale H. Fife, ill. by Jim Arnosky

*Starting Life: Tree* by Claire Llewellyn and Simon Mendez

*Herman and Marguerite: An Earth Story* by Jay O'Callahan, ill. by Laura O'Callahan

*Butterfly Eyes and Other Secrets of the Meadow* by Joyce Sidman, ill. by Beth Krommes

*Eyewitness Pond and River* by Steve Parker

*Gregor Mendel: The Friar Who Grew Peas* by Cheryl Bardoe, ill. by Jos. A. Smith

*John Muir: America's First Environmentalist* by Kathryn Lasky, ill. by Stan Fellows

The Mount Daniel collection is still being compiled.

Using money raised from the PTA Home and Garden Tour in April, the Outdoor Classroom committee is working with Ms. Nancy Striniste to develop a master

plan for the TJ outdoor classroom. This process will begin with a Schoolyard Master Plan Workshop to gather input from parents on Oct. 22, from 2:00-4:00 pm in the TJ Cafeteria. For more information, see the Outdoor Classroom insert in this Advocate.

Mount Daniel will also be developing a master plan once the construction project is complete.

### Art Magnets

This fall TJ and Mount Daniel will be involved in the *Art Made By Me* fundraiser using student artwork. Families will have the opportunity to order fun and functional personalized greetings, gifts, and stationery items from art made by your child. A piece of art created during the scheduled art curriculum will be sent home soon, and you will have the opportunity to review the products and order at that time.

A portion of the proceeds from each item will go to the Elementary PTA. There is no obligation to order and all artwork will be returned at the end of the program.

Some great artwork and more information will be coming your way soon.





