

The Advocate

Mount Daniel Elementary — Grades K-1

NOVEMBER 2006

Thomas Jefferson Elementary — Grades 2-4

From the President

Kathleen Donovan

On October 22, I was able to attend TJ's Outdoor Classroom Master Plan Workshop, facilitated by Nancy Striniste, and was completely inspired. It was a remarkable experience to take a few hours to ponder, dream, and begin to plan wonderful new outdoor learning spaces for our elementary school students, as our staff had done a few days prior, and to realize the benefits of the funds raised in last year's PTA Home and Garden Tour.

Particularly inspiring was the thoughtfulness of the small group participants as they brainstormed, collaborated, and helped establish the foundation for the Master Plan's development.

As a Brooklyn native, I am relatively new to green spaces and gardens, but am enticed by the promise of gardening, and reflected during the workshop on the many similarities between gardening and parenting.

As parents, we have plans, visions, hopes, and dreams for our children. We nurture and tend to our children,

Fundraiser News

PTA Fresh Premium Coffee Sale

Order gourmet coffee from Java Joe's in a unique Falls Church-labeled package. With over a dozen flavors, whole bean or ground, regular or decaf, they are great for hostess, holiday, teacher, and birthday gifts. Order forms are due back by November 17 and coffee will be delivered in early December. Contact "Java Mike" Connelly with questions.



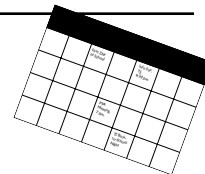
TJ Book Fair

The results are in on another fantastic Book Fair at TJ. We raised over \$4,000. As you know, all proceeds go to support the school library. In addition, hundreds of books were purchased from the teachers' wish lists for use in their classrooms.



Great job by Jennie Ehrenzeller and Helen Heil; event chairs Tammy Gorman, Charlotte Hyland, and Sue Neuhart; and the many dedicated parent volunteers who helped! Happy reading and stay tuned for details on the Spring Book Fair at Mount Daniel.

Mark Your Calendars



- Nov. 3 — 1st Quarter Ends
- Nov. 6-7 — Professional Days/
Grade K-4 Parent-Teacher conferences
- Nov. 15 — Mad Science of Washington, MD, 9:30 am
PTA Meeting in Mount Daniel Library, 7:00 pm
- Nov. 23-24 — Thanksgiving Holiday
- Nov. 29 — Mad Science of Washington, TJ, 9:00 and 10:00 am
MD Principal's Coffee, 9:30 am
- Dec. 22-Jan. 1 — Schools closed for Winter Holiday

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

trying our best to ensure that we have the tools we need to care for them until they grow strong enough to flourish and withstand the inevitable elements that will come their way. Our children and our gardens are sources of joy, adventure, and delight, and perhaps — some seasons — a source of concern; but, ultimately a commitment to and a celebration of the future.

It was exciting to spend an afternoon beginning to shape a little corner of the future for our children and our community, and to join so many parents and staff committed to enhancing our children's school experience.

As November and the season of gratitude are upon us, I am grateful to be surrounded by a community of parents and educators who are such thoughtful, diligent, and skilled gardeners. Have a wonderful November, and a Happy Thanksgiving.

*... Inch by inch, row by row, someone bless these seeds I sow.
Someone keep them warm below 'til the rain comes tumbling down.*

— David Mallett

November PTA Meeting: Testing and Your Child

Please join us November 15 in the Mount Daniel Library. Staff will talk about standardized and informal testing used at Mount Daniel and TJ. Discussion will include purposes of testing, what various assessments measure, and how results are used to inform instruction.

News from TJ

Trudy Taylor, Principal



The month of October brought several fun events and activities. Our book fair brought many excited readers to browse all the wonderful books that filled tables in the library. Thanks to Jennie Ehrenzeller and her great parent volunteers for making the book fair so successful this year. Our 4th graders made a journey back in time to Jamestown on October 20 — a very fun and informative day for all. And the Halloween Pumpkin contest finished out the month — it is always fun to see all of the very creatively dressed pumpkins.

I wanted to share with all of you some of the ways we reinforce positive behaviors at TJ and hopefully encourage children to make good choices. Each week teachers recognize students being *kind, fair, safe, responsible,*

and respectful by filling out a *Tiger Paw* slip. These are collected by selected students at each grade level and read aloud over our PA system everyday.

We also have *Tiger Awards* given out by the playground aides to children they see following the *Tiger Rules*:

- Treat others as you would like to be treated.
- Include others.
- Gain control of your body.
- Exercise good manners.
- Restrain Impulsivity.
- See the needs of others.

The children get to wear their award stickers around for the week. A drawing is then held of those students each week at each grade level to receive a gift certificate to our school store. Many students proudly wear their awards each week.

We will be beginning a new addition to the *Tiger Award* soon that will be given out in the cafeteria. Six students from each grade level will be chosen in our Thursday drawing from those receiving the award the previous week, and they will get to sit at a round table in the cafeteria on Friday and have a special dessert. We are hoping to have many awardees over the year.

Our TJ students are very well behaved most of the time and we are happy to recognize their efforts.

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• Thank you to everyone who participated in the TJ Book Fair the week of October 23. It was a great success! All funds raised from the sale are used to purchase books and materials for the TJ library, which is greatly appreciated. If you purchased any items that needed to be ordered from our supplier and have not received your order by November 15, please contact Jennie Ehrenzeller, TJ librarian, at 703-248-5667.

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News from Mount Daniel

Kathy Halayko, Principal



The Word of the Month at Mount Daniel in November is "Thankful." What better time to express thanks to our many volunteers for their support, time, and interest in all aspects of our school program. The topic of the first Principal's Coffee in October was "Volunteering at Mount Daniel." A number of parents attended and learned about a variety of opportunities for volunteering at school and with the PTA. We appreciate you and welcome you to Mount Daniel whenever you can come! A special thank you to the PTA for providing beverages and goodies for every Principal's Coffee. Please come to the next coffee on Wednesday, November 29 at 9:30 am. The discussion will be "Understanding Cooperative Discipline" which is the program we use at both Mount Daniel and TJ. Janet Kremer and Ann Gordon will lead the discussion.

In the first weeks of school some children would arrive at Mount Daniel in the morning and ask if their classroom location had been moved overnight! They were anticipating the move into the new wing as was all the staff. We appear to be on hold at this time and await the approval of various permits through Fairfax County. We look at the beautiful new spaces and know that any day now we will occupy them. We will notify you as we know more.

The Mount Daniel Outdoor Classroom is busily preparing for the fall clean-up in Danny's Garden behind the school, organizing the Memorial Garden in the front, and planting bulbs around the building with each classroom. Please watch for requests for classroom helpers on these garden days.

In November, we look forward to parent-teacher conferences. At this writing teachers are in the midst of gathering information about all aspects of the school day that will be important to share with families about their children. We encourage you to contact your child's teacher or specialists by telephone, e-mail, or written notes if you have any questions about the school program.

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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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Growing and Mentoring Kieran Sharpe, School Board Liaison

The system's new strategic plan reflects parent and community input calling for improvement in a wide range of areas. The School Board is looking at a growth model to apply for students, staff, and the Board itself. This means regular assessment of student achievement and effective use of this data by staff from week to week and year to year.

The growth model differs from the "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) model usually associated with the federal No Child Left Behind law and Virginia's Standards of Learning. Instead of looking at one grade level and then at the same grade level in the next year, which involves two different sets of students, the growth model looks at the same set of students as they move from grade to grade. This doesn't mean that we plan to ignore AYP; we're well aware that our middle school did not meet AYP standards last year and that meeting the standards will only get more challenging as the minimum passing rates rise over several years. However, to make real improvements, it appears best to focus on particular students as they study week to week. For some middle school students later this year, this may mean study on Saturdays. And since we've only had limited success

Assemblies

The PTA is very excited about our next assembly: **Mad Science of Washington** where children gain an understanding of what science is about and how it affects their world through fun and exciting science experiments and demonstrations. Showtimes are November 15 at 9:30 at Mount Daniel and November 29 at 9:00 and 10:00 at TJ. Parents and siblings are always welcome.

Teacher Wish Lists

- **Miss Allan and Mrs. Reuhs, 4th Grade, both need:**
- Digital stop watches for word study (speed sorts)
- Decks of cards for math games
- Lysol/Clorox disinfectant wipes
- Electric pencil sharpener
- Board games (Guess Who, Sorry, Clue, Connect Four)
- **Miss Allan also needs:**
- Highlighters for note taking when we do research
- Sandwich baggies, ziploc or the like, for Word Study
- paper for drawing (blank paper if possible)
- **TJ Cafeteria**
- Hand sanitizer

with voluntary summer school, we're seriously discussing a "mandatory" version for at least some students.

Focus on individuals' progress also leads to mentoring. A city/school task force on gang-prevention sees that helping kids succeed in school, sports, music, and other positive activities is critical to keeping them away from gangs. It has identified mentoring as a high priority, but finds a need to boost the supply of adult mentors, particularly men. While a great corps of adults already engages in coaching youth sports, leading scout groups, and other forms of mentoring, the task force still wants 50 new mentors. If you'd like to mentor, please register for the Fairfax Mentoring Partnership's (www.mentorfairfax.org) next training class: Monday November 20 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at the Fairfax City Regional Library, 3915 Chain Bridge Road in Fairfax; contact Kristen Brennan at 703-324-5701 or kristen.brennan@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Child Supervision Guidelines Prepared by Fairfax County

Even with guidelines, there may be situations when it is not safe to leave a child unsupervised. Parents are ultimately responsible for making decisions about their child's safety.

Whenever any child is unsupervised/unattended the following should apply :

- There must be no emotional, medical, or behavioral problems which affect judgment or decision-making skills.
- Child must be comfortable being alone.
- Youth must have a safety plan worked out with the parent/caretaker, which includes:
 - How to access parent or other responsible adult at all times.
 - What to do in case of emergency.
 - Guidelines for acceptable behavior.
 - Knowledge of emergency telephone numbers.
- Youth must demonstrate the ability to follow the safety plan and to make decisions that reflect concern for personal safety.

Age Guidelines	
7 years and under	Should not be left alone for any period of time. This may include leaving children unattended in cars, playgrounds, and backyards. The determining consideration would be the dangers in the environment and the ability of the caretaker to intervene.
8 to 10 years	Should not be left alone for more than 1 1/2 hours and only during daylight and early evening hours.
11 to 12 years	May be left alone for up to 3 hours but not late at night or in circumstances requiring inappropriate responsibility.
13 to 15 years	May be left unsupervised, but not overnight.
16 to 17 years	May be left unsupervised (in some cases, for up to two consecutive overnight periods).

Source: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/childreneyouth/homealone.htm>

Parent Teacher Conferences

Early next week, many of us will participate in parent teacher conferences. During these conferences, both parents and staff members have the opportunity to share information about children, learn new information, and build effective relationships with the mutual goal of supporting children's learning.

Here are some tips to prepare for your child's parent teacher conference:

- Prepare a written list of any questions or comments you may have for your child's teacher. Talk with your child, and find out how he or she thinks school is going. Do you have any questions about your child's academic or social development, peer relationships, homework, or class participation? Is there something you wish to share with the teacher about your child? Many families and staff find it useful to forward questions or concerns in advance of the meeting, so teachers are prepared to address these issues.
- Be prompt. In order to ensure that all families have the opportunity to meet with teachers, it is imperative to arrive on time and be respectful of the length of the conference. If you still have concerns, ask the teacher if you can set up another meeting at a later date.

Reflections: "My Favorite Place ..."

Art Shows and First Friday Event

School Art Shows

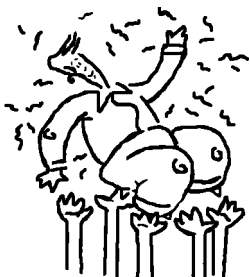
November 13 to 23
Pre-K to grade 2 at Mount Daniel
Grades 3-5 at TJ

First Friday

Please join us at Stacy's Coffee Parlor on Friday, December 1, for a special evening celebration of the entrants and their works.

Visit Stacy's between November 25 and December 2 to see all of the art displayed.

- Seek clarification when needed during the meeting. Take notes on information shared during the conference, especially if one parent or guardian cannot attend the meeting.
- Discuss how your family can support learning at home.
- All good relationships require effective communication. Be honest and direct about any questions or concerns you may have, and discuss methods for future home school communication.



**WE COULDN'T
HAVE DONE IT
WITHOUT YOU**

October was a busy month with a lot of events that were possible only with the help of many people:

Melissa Dana for organizing the Health Screening for third graders. Beatriz Caballero, Yolanda Cobb, Chris Cook, Muliani Lyng, Ellen McRae, Cyndi Mercado, Sue Neuhart, Melissa Surette, Carolyn Welch, and Eileen Zaenger for testing the hearing and vision of our third graders.

Nancy DeLew, Meg Haensel, Evelyne Horovitz, and Judy Lubnow for organizing the Movie Night. Sarah Flanagan, Angela Newburn, Juliana Perez, Erik Rasmussen, Carol Sly, Janet Tan, and Robin Tucker for setting up, cleaning up, and serving pizza, drinks, and other goodies at Movie Night.

Nora Pishner for all her hard work with the Danny t-shirt orders.

Sue Earman and Raphaelae Pelaez for helping us outfit our children in very cool TJ and Mount Daniel spiritwear.

Tammy Gorman, Charlotte Hyland, and Sue Neuhart for organizing the TJ Book Fair. The many parents who helped at the TJ Book Fair: Gabriella Azrucci, Ann Anderson, Beth Anderson, Carolyn Brown, Amy Casillas, Laurie Clark, Rachel Clark, Surekha Cohen, Ashleigh Collins, Chris Cook, Miri Cordaro, Mylene Doctor, Katie Dodge, Jean DuBro, Lisa Ferguson, Tonya Fields, Sheila Frost, Kimberly Gadsden, Lisa Gallimore, Linda Garlet, Jackie Handly, Kauai McLean-Harrison, Nan Hof, Christine Jones, Jen Keren, Susan Loyd, Cyndi Mercado, Sakiko Nakaya, Nora Pishner, Beth Reusch, Andrea Roberson, Nancy Romps, Julie-Anne Rose, Lidia Saavedra, Giovana Sanchez, Jen Sausville, Debbie Schantz-Hiscott, Deb Segal, Carol Ann Siciliano, Priscilla Stegenga, Michelle Summers, Melissa Surette, Heather Tourkin, Michelle Whitaker, Rohini Winters, Niki Wisemiller, and Carver Zullo.

Mia Musolino, Ann Divecha, and Judy Fraser for organizing the TJ Outdoor Classroom Master Plan Workshop. Kathy Allan, Tong Chu, Rachel Clark, Surekha Cohen, Karen Fitzgerald, Jackie Handly, Mona Johnston, Dan Maller, Rich Markus, Andrea Roberson, Carol Sly, Melissa Teates, Chris Turner, and Suzanne Young for attending and giving suggestions. Sandra Cornejo and Annette Schubert for child care.

Carol Sly and Kate Nesson for creating the PTA Directory. Steve Marshall for help with technical manipulation of the data. Marybeth Connelly and Catherine Beddow for help with proofing. Ruth Ann Castillo for assistance with the labeling and stapling of the membership cards.

Laura Gogal for serving as the PTA Representative for the Falls Church Education Foundation Grant Review Committee.