

# The Advocate

Mount Daniel Elementary — Grades K-1

DECEMBER 2006/JANUARY 2007

Thomas Jefferson Elementary — Grades 2-4

## From the President

**Kathleen Donovan**

Happy December! As I write this column, Jack Frost is seemingly banished, again, for the time being ... but, nevertheless, toward the winter holidays and vacation we go! Although our PTA did not formally meet during December, our work as a PTA was evident throughout the month. It was great seeing so many families out and about at the library's art show, choral concerts, Odyssey of the Mind meeting, the Reflections celebration at Stacy's Coffee, and at the Mad Science assemblies at TJ and Mount Daniel.

Watching our children's faces as they perform, learn something new at school, work through a challenge, or just jump rope with friends on the playground, I am constantly reminded of the magnitude of the task we undertake each day as parents and teachers, and hope that as we make our resolutions for 2007, we will also take time to reflect on the joys and accomplishments of 2006.

Our PTA is looking forward to continuing our work during the new year, and will offer many gratifying opportunities for parents to support our schools, build community with one another, and connect with our children as they learn and grow.

Rob, Daniel, Mary Catherine, and I send our very warmest wishes to each of you for a joyful holiday season, and peace, health, and happiness throughout the New Year!

## January PTA Meeting: Internet Safety

Don't miss the January PTA Meeting — our topic will be an important one for all parents. Whether your children are already exploring the internet or not, at some point they will likely be, so it's important for parents to know how to use the internet to enrich children's learning, but also to be cognizant of the potential perils that may accompany web surfing. We will learn about steps parents can take to protect their children on the internet at home, and TJ's Mr. Knight will share information on how Internet Safety is addressed in TJ's Computer Lab as well.



## You Are a Marvel

Each second we live is a new and unique moment of the universe,  
a moment that will never be again...  
And what do we teach our children?  
We teach them that two and two make four,  
and that Paris is the capital of France.

When will we also teach them what they are?

We should say to each of them:  
Do you know what you are?  
You are a marvel.  
You are unique.  
In all the years that have passed,  
there has never been another child like you.

Your legs, your arms, your clever fingers,  
the way you move.  
You may become a Shakespeare,  
a Michelangelo, a Beethoven.

You have the capacity for anything.

Yes, you are a marvel.  
And when you grow up, can you then harm another  
who is, like you, a marvel?

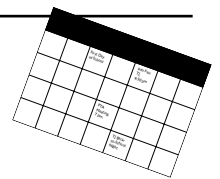
You must work — we must all work  
to make the world worthy of its children.

— Pablo Casals

## Mark Your Calendars

- Jan. 3 TJ Principal's Coffee, 8:45 am
- Jan. 17 "Washington Chu Shan Chinese Opera," MD, 9:30 am  
PTA Meeting in TJ Library, 7:00 pm
- Jan. 24 MD Principal's Coffee, 7:00 pm
- Jan. 26 Schools closed, Professional Day
- Jan. 31 "Washington Chu Shan Chinese Opera," TJ,  
9:00 am and 10:00 am
- Feb. 5 Schools closed, Professional Day
- Feb. 7 TJ Principal's Coffee, 8:45 am
- Feb. 9 Movie Night, Mary Ellen Henderson Cafetorium

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



# News from TJ

**Trudy Taylor, Principal**



It is hard to believe the holidays are already upon us. We have had many fun activities in the past month: our third graders have enjoyed trips to the Arlington Planetarium, our 4th graders had to put on their thinking caps to answer the very tough questions in the first round of the Geography Bee (many of us adults found them to be very challenging questions!), and our special needs students took a field trip to the new Clemyjontri Park in Arlington, a new playground designed especially for children with disabilities.

We also shared in the grand opening of our students' art display at the Mary Riley Styles Library on November 30. It was nice to see so many of you joining us for this special event, and having our TJ Chorus sing added an extra special touch to the evening. Many thanks to Julie Talbert and Marie Harbison for making this all possible. The TJ Chorus also performed at the Senior Citizen's Center and sang a popular sing-a-long at one of our local Starbucks and.

Everyone at TJ would like to thank the PTA once more for the wonderful fine arts programs that you provide for our students. In November, we had the Mad Scientist delight everyone with his magical concoctions. It is always amazing to me how uninhibited the children are about volunteering to come up front with the presenters when "helpers" are requested. Any parents who are

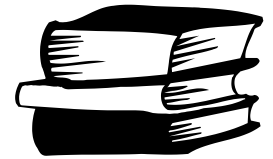
## Tax Deductions

Many thanks to everyone who supported the PTA's fund-raisers that, in turn, support our children and their schools. When you prepare your taxes, don't forget that these purchases are tax deductible: Innisbrook wrapping paper at 50% tax deductible; Java Joe coffee (40%); and art magnets (25%). Spiritwear is not tax deductible because the PTA does not make a profit on that sale.

Book fair purchases are also tax-deductible: 25% for personal purchases and 100% for teacher wish list purchases. You should have received a receipt for purchases at the Book Fair. We would like to send out a special thank you to the person that anonymously purchased over \$400 of TJ teacher wish list items, ensuring that all of the wish list purchases were fulfilled.

We would also like to thank the many people who made donations to the PTA. These are 100% tax-deductible and can be made throughout the year (checks can be made out to FCE PTA). These donations are used to fund PTA projects such as school assemblies, the reading incentive program at Mount Daniel, the publishing center at TJ, team grants for the teachers, and this newsletter.

Dear TJ Parents,



Thank you so much for all the fabulous books you purchased for us at the Book Fair! It never ceases to amaze us how generous and thoughtful the parents of our students are. Every year we look forward to browsing through the wonderful selection of books to create our "Wish Lists" and are always overwhelmed by the astounding number of books you all purchase for us. Each time we use these books for a lesson, a read aloud, or see a student enjoying them independently, we'll think of your generosity and thoughtfulness. The fact that we are able to have such well-stocked bookshelves in our classrooms clearly impacts the enjoyment our students find in books. We are very fortunate here at TJ to have such involved and giving parents to help our bookshelves stay that way! Thanks again ... we're already looking forward to next year's Book Fair!

Sincerely,

*The Teachers at TJ*

able should come and share in an assembly with the children sometime during the year. They are quite a treat and always very informative.

Recently at TJ we experienced another example of what makes Falls Church such a special community to live in when two of our school board members, Kieran Sharpe and Susan Kearney, came by for an afternoon chat with the teachers. It was a wonderful conversation sharing appreciation for what we have and dreaming of what could be. I would bet there are not many places where this happens!

The Mount Daniel Book Fair is just around the corner — look for more information in the February issue.

I wish all of you a wonderful holiday celebration whatever your traditions may be as we look forward to a new year. Enjoy your family and friends and send us back your wonderful children.

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](mailto:sclaurie@aol.com)

# News from Mount Daniel

Kathy Halayko, Principal



The **Third Annual Ghana School Fund Drive** was a big success thanks to Mount Daniel families and staff. Through your efforts, \$659.05 was raised along with a total of 1547 items like shoes, socks, books, glue, highlighters, pencils, and backpacks for children who attend the Asebi School in the capital city of Accra in Ghana. All of the donations were delivered to a member of the VCU School of Social Work in December. She could barely fit all the supplies into her car. This fundraiser was sponsored by first graders and their teachers who hope that the generous efforts of Falls Church City families and staff at Mount Daniel will make the difference to children who could not previously attend school because they could not afford the required supplies.

Would you like to learn more about the Mount Daniel reading program? Do you wonder how reading is taught to young children, and how you can help at home? Kathi Bakin, our reading specialist, and Carol Monsess, the Language Arts Curriculum Resource teacher for Mount Daniel, will provide an overview of **Literacy and the Young Child** for parents on Wednesday, January 24, at 7:00 pm in the school library. This will be the first evening Principal's Coffee of the year, so we hope families will be able to join us. Please let us know if there are other topics you would like to discuss at our monthly coffees.

On December 8, the Mount Daniel staff celebrated **National Inclusive Schools Week** by hosting a breakfast to show our appreciation to the many school employees who provide the students with the tools they need to learn. Classroom teachers joined the special education teachers and paraprofessionals, ESOL and TAAP staff, the counselor, central office staff, and the Mount Daniel office to enjoy festive and delicious treats. We are proud that all staff throughout the school division reach out to provide quality education to all students in our schools and to create an inclusive community.

**Assemblies**

The PTA is very excited about our next assembly: the **Washington Chu Shan Chinese Opera**, who uses an exhilarating combination of storytelling, song, dazzling costumes, and awe-inspiring acrobatics to produce an exciting and engaging performance of traditional Chinese Opera. Showtimes are Jan. 17 at 9:30 at Mount Daniel and Jan. 31 at 9:00 and 10:00 at TJ. Parents and siblings are always welcome. For a list of assemblies throughout the year, visit the PTA website at <http://www.fallschurchpta.org/pta-committee.html> and click on Fine Arts Assemblies.

A Mount Daniel Book Club will begin when we all return from winter break. **Families Read Aloud Together** was begun last year through a grant from the Falls Church Education Foundation. It was so well received that we want to spend the month of January reading another great book together with all of you! The Mount Daniel staff has selected *The Mouse and the Motorcycle* by Beverly Cleary. This is a charming story about a boy who meets a mouse during vacation, and the many adventures they have together. Books will be sent home after the break so look for a letter giving you more information. Families' comments from last year guided this new book selection. *The Mouse and the Motorcycle* is shorter, and we hope we have planned a less demanding reading schedule. We want you to know that while participation in the book club is optional, we do hope you will join us in the many adventures of *The Mouse and the Motorcycle*.

The Mount Daniel staff wishes you a peaceful and happy holiday season and our best wishes for the New Year.

**The Family Assistance Fund**

Some of our families and students in Falls Church City are unable to have the holiday of their dreams due to their family's limited resources. Throughout the year the Family Assistance Fund, established through Falls Church City Schools, collects donations to assist our neediest families. The majority of the donations are used for holiday and back-to-school assistance for approved families with at least one school age student. However, the funds are also used for items such as winter coats, student's medical emergencies, and other crises that may occur at times other than the holidays.

Just as has been done over the last four years, the holiday program for students and families will be implemented with the help of the City's Housing and Human Services Division. Due to confidentiality issues we can no longer do the 'adopt a family' or personally deliver/shop for specific children and families. Instead each designated family will receive gift cards to purchase food and gifts for their family.

If you know of a family that could benefit from some assistance this holiday, please contact me via e-mail ([sinclair@fccps.k12.va.us](mailto:sinclair@fccps.k12.va.us)) about the family. If you would like to make a personal donation to the Family Assistance Fund, please send it to me through the backpack to the central office or to 803 West Broad Street, Falls Church VA 22046. I will send you a receipt documenting your tax-deductible donation. Please make checks payable to the "Family Assistance Fund."

Thank you in advance for your generosity and kindness.

Susan Sinclair  
FCCPS School Social Worker  
703-248-5634

## What's Cookin'?!

As announced this fall, the Innisbrook Wrapping Paper fundraiser will not be held next year and, in considering fundraising alternatives, the PTA has chosen to replace it with a cookbook project. The project will begin in early 2007 and will provide opportunities for participation from everyone — families, students, teachers and administrators — as we assemble recipes, artwork, and ideas from our PTA community.

It promises to be a very creative, fun, and engaging fundraiser for everyone! If you are interested in being on the Cookbook Committee, please contact Catherine Beddow at 703-538-5519. Be on the lookout for more information in your child's backpack in January!



### Screenings for Preschool Children

A Child Find Day is held from 1:30-3:30 pm on the first Wednesday of every month at Mount Daniel throughout the school year. Parents may have their children screened for suspected delays in speech/language, fine and/or gross motor skills, cognitive abilities, and daily living skills. Those children identified as eligible may receive special education services through Falls Church City Public Schools. Child Find is an opportunity for children with special needs to receive early intervention services.

Parents with concerns regarding the development of their preschool age child (two years old by Sept. 30, 2006) may contact Ann Gordon, Child Find Coordinator, 703-248-5650, to discuss their concerns and schedule an appointment for the next Child Find Day.

## Testing and Comparing Kieran Sharpe, School Board Liaison

Our staff presented a great program on student testing at the November PTA meeting. How our students do on standardized tests such as the SOLs and SATs is undoubtedly important as they compete for places in college or the job market. And certainly, the comparative reputation of schools can be an important factor in this competition.

The board and staff have discussed what comparisons among schools are most meaningful. In this context, we've noted two online tools for school comparisons. They can be found at <http://www.just4kids.org/jftk/index.cfm?st=US&loc=home> and <http://www.school-matters.com>.

Beyond simple rankings, we should look for comparisons that can help us find effective programs at other schools and consider how they might apply in Falls Church. One program that staff has already begun to research is the Primary Years Program (PYP) of the International Baccalaureate organization, who made a presentation at the April 2006 PTA meeting. Please look for more information about PYP to come to you from Principals Kathy Halayko and Trudy Taylor. Also, let us know your assessment of PYP and the online resources noted here or others you may have found useful.

Further, look beyond the numbers. Many standardized comparisons look only at core subjects like math, social studies, and reading. They leave out important components of education, such as art, music, and health as well as sports and other activities.

And then there's the importance of a supportive community. This can be reflected in the size of a school or its classes, but often depends heavily on intangibles that defy easy comparison. A great memory of my family's experience with our schools occurred on just the second day of my son's entry here. My wife came to the TJ office bringing the lunch our son had forgotten. As she approached, the secretary said, "Hello Mrs. Sharpe, I see you've brought Greg's lunch. His room is the second one down the hall on the left." Well, when we saw that — knowing the name of a new parent and her child and what class he would be in on just the second day of school — we received a clear message. This is a system that gives its students great individual attention.

I hope you'll find that while we pay attention to the numbers, we're still sustaining this sort of excellence in community. Please do your part to help. Let us know any time you see a way to improve. Best wishes for a joyous holiday season.

# Big Thank You!

This month we are thankful to:

Jill Martin for preparing and filing the taxes for the PTA.

Laura Gogal for coordinating the wrapping paper pick-up and deliveries.

Jane Cashin for manning the wrapping paper pick-up night and delivering orders.

Catherine Beddow, Laurie Clark, Marybeth Connelly, Mechelle Coppock, Belinda D'Agostino, Laura Gogal, Charlotte Hyland, Megan Schlitt, and Janet Tan for delivering wrapping paper orders.

Michael Connelly and Cheryl McMillen for coordinating the Java Joe's coffee fundraiser and supplying us with neat stocking stuffers and much needed caffeine.