



The Stanwich Heart

The Monthly Newsletter of The Stanwich School

January 2011

COMMITMENT • COMPASSION • WISDOM • COURAGE • HONESTY • FORGIVENESS • JOY

Dear Stanwich Parents,

Ringing in the new year with excitement as we launch the next chapter in our school's life. This has been a year of growth and challenge as we begin our Senior House and plan for the start of our building project. Your commitment and energy have allowed us to move forward to meet the needs and fulfill the dreams of our children. Highlights include the unexpected recognition for our work with St. Jude's and the surprise gift of a new playground, the Division B Championship of the Middle School Boys' Squash Team, and the successful completion of the building process.

Year 13 has been our "Lucky Year" with approvals in hand; our future is now up to us. While we have had several opportunities for each of you to become familiar with our plans and our building program, we welcome the chance to answer individual questions. I would like to meet with each of you in the coming weeks to review our project and invite your commitment to our future. We will be reaching out to you in many ways to ask for your support, and I look forward to seeing each of you in the coming weeks.



Pat Young re-connected with alumni at the annual Alumni Turkey Bowl.

Wisdom, the value we focus on each year in the month of January, seems particularly important this year as we reflect on the wisdom we have learned through our journey. Many of you will be asked to share wisdom with your children and their classmates in a values assignment this week. In addition we will be discussing the wisdom our students are gaining. While we have indeed learned a great deal working together, I truly value the wisdom of "hold on to the dream," which has

been our beacon throughout the years. Our community demonstrates hope and faith, a legacy we intentionally pass on to our students.

January is also a month we celebrate reading. We share books with our students in morning assemblies, in faculty presentations, and with parent guest readers. We encourage family reading times and book discussions. We invite your recommendations and ask that you email titles of your best reads to Barrie Richmond, who will keep a record of these suggestions and make them available to all at the end of the month.

Several of you have inquired about the documentary, *Race to Nowhere*, which is getting so much attention. This film asks us to examine the current driving forces of our educational goals and the impact it could be having on our children. We are in the process of securing a showing and dialogue for our community in February and will let you know the details as soon as possible.

Our Junior House sports teams invite your support at their basketball, hockey, and squash games. All sports are listed on our website and can be found at the Today @ Stanwich page by clicking on the "All Teams Scoreboard" icon, or at www.stanwichschool.org/athletics/winter.asp. Come on out and root for the home team and join in the Cougar Spirit.

You will be receiving information soon about our Charter Day festivities on January 28. Please plan to join us in the evening for our parent-faculty celebration. Year 13 has indeed been a blessed one, and we have much to celebrate.

Fondly,

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Pre-K Cottage



Barbara Kennedy
Head of Pre-K Cottage



Celebrating the Holidays
Sporting special reindeer headbands that they made, Pre-K students celebrated Christmas and Hanukkah with a festive holiday program of songs. The children also decorated centerpieces that they shared with special loved ones.

It's Been a Very Good Year

For Pre-K we look forward to January and will

- Continue to learn about the letters of the alphabet
- Invite the Kindergarten to visit and watch Nappy's Puppets
- Practice dressing in layers to keep warm during recess
- Learn about healthy dental habits
- Investigate how to measure with scales and tapes
- Play games with Mr. H., sing with Madame Covney, and listen to stories with Miz. Liz

Continue to learn and play together;
2011 will be another great year!



Primary House



Julie Colligan
Head of Primary House



The Joy of the Season

To tell the Hanukkah and Christmas stories, PH students dressed as Judeans, angels, sheep, and cattle and sang in English, French, Hebrew, and Latin. Included in the program were renditions of *O Hanukkah*, *Henei Mah Tov*, *Angels We Have Heard on High* and *Joy to the World*.

The Spirit Of The Season

The spirit of this wondrous season has been alive in the Primary House this December. The very first night of December began the celebration of Hanukkah, and later that week we celebrated the Strings Assembly. The *Stanwich Choristers*, a group of children in Grades 3-6, then rekindled a tradition of singing at The Nathaniel Witherell Center. The group's gift of music deeply touched the hearts of so many people (pictured below).

The children experienced the joy within when adding a cozy pair of mittens or a hat to the mitten tree, or placing a new copy of a favorite book or loved game under the tree as they gave to others.

December was filled with many beautiful moments when the children felt the joy in giving, truly experiencing our motto, "The Gift is in the Giving." In their final gift, the children gave of themselves, the greatest gift.

As they shared songs, verses, gestures, and actions in the stories of Hanukkah and Christmas, the adults and children alike were filled with the warmth and spirit of the season. God Bless All!



Blast Off!

As part of their science unit on the Solar System, Grade 3 students made and launched their own rockets at the Bridgeport Discovery Museum and Planetarium.



Colonial Times

As part of studying "Community," Grade 1 students toured the Bush Holley House, dressed in colonial clothing, and made colonial-era toys.



Intermediate House



Meaghan Mallin
Head of
Intermediate House

Is That Your Final Answer?

This year a new and fabulous tradition began in the Intermediate House as we held our first IH Trivia Bowl (pictured below, left). The always amazing Miz Liz designed the Trivia Bowl as a fundraiser for the library, and over one hundred IH students gathered to participate in this special event on a Friday afternoon. The assembly room was brimming with excitement as the children found their tables and met their teams, comprised of a mix of 4th, 5th, and 6th graders.

As the questions were read by teachers, the students worked to come up with their best answers in categories such as music, math, television, and Stanwich people and history. After a pizza lunch, several rounds of trivia, and a great effort by all, our winners emerged. As their reward, Miz Liz and I served them a restaurant style lunch in my office during the school day.

This event incorporated so much of what we are working to develop in our students: leadership, collaboration, good sportsmanship, and of course, joy. We thank the army of parent volunteers who helped to make this event possible!

Now, for those of you who want to test themselves, here are some sample questions from the Trivia Bowl:

SPORTS: What team won the first ever Superbowl? (Green Bay Packers)

SCIENCE: What is the human body's largest organ? (Skin)

STANWICH PEOPLE & HISTORY: What is the most popular boys' name and the most popular girls' name in the Stanwich Intermediate House? (Alexander, Caroline)



Civil War Wax Museum

Students in Grade 4 learn about the Civil War in their history lessons, write a five-paragraph essay about the strengths of the North, and read historical fiction novels. Then each student researches a Civil War character and writes a speech telling the person's life story. Dressed in costume, students come to life when a parent or other visitor drops a chip in their cup to hear their speech.



Holiday Concert

To celebrate the holiday season, IH Band, Orchestra, and Choir groups performed in the auditorium at Central Middle School.



Junior House



Dana Montañez
Head of Junior House



Enjoy the Show

One of my favorite student gatherings to observe is the rehearsal the afternoon before the Holiday Concert and Art Show. Every student attends this rehearsal after sports and there is always a flurry of activity. Students move in and out of gym, adjust their chairs, tune their instruments, practice their pieces, and speak to each other as well as to their music teachers. But what makes this rehearsal so interesting and splendid is that every student moves, adjusts, tunes, practices, and speaks all at the same time! The noise level is absolutely tremendous, and it is a miracle that anyone can focus amongst the cacophony.

That said, this rehearsal is a beautiful example of student excitement and pride in the school and in what has been accomplished individually or as a group. It is a rare window into middle school life, and the chaotic splendor of it all never fails to bring a smile to my face as look around the gym and see happiness and laughter in all their glory.

After the show, parents and students leave remembering the amazing art and musical performances; I too remember these things, but my favorite part is what happened before the big show when everyone comes together.



Holiday Performance

In front of a standing room only audience, the JH Band, Orchestra, Bell Choir, Encore Choir, and Choir groups gave a wonderful concert. Music included: *What Child is This*, *Angels Bach has Heard on High*, and *Everybody Rejoice*.



JH Art Show

In concert with the holiday performance, JH students displayed original works of art they had been working on the past semester.



Parent Association

Dear Stanwich Community,



I hope everyone had a restful and relaxing break. While we had a busy fall, the Parents Association is back at it again with a busy 2011 planned with all sorts of fun and interesting activities.

On January 28, we will have our annual Charter Day, The Blue & White Birthday Celebration, where we will celebrate year 13.

This has always been a fun event, and this year we will have a Giving Tree which will help support various items for our classrooms. The invitations will be coming shortly, but be on the look out for a couple of changes. The party will be held at the First Presbyterian Church in Central Greenwich at 7:30pm. We look forward to seeing you there and as in the past, there is no charge for our parents. So come and socialize, see what's going on at the school, and taste more of the delicious wine from our Stanwich family, the Touzot's.

The planning committee for our annual benefit has already had their first meeting in December, and there were so many wonderful ideas and energy, I can tell this is going to be another memorable celebration of our 13th year. We plan to have both a live and silent auction with the proceeds going to our Capital

Campaign. Save the date, Friday April 29th. We would love more volunteers. Please contact our Chair, Ingrid Winn, if you can help us plan this very exciting evening. We are also looking for items to add to our auction; please contact our auction chair, Jesse Drennen, to discuss possible suggestions.

We will be continuing our Arts and Enrichment programs at the various House Assemblies. Future highlights include Phenomenal Physics, puppeteer and storyteller, Hobey Ford, winner of the UNIMA Citation for Excellence, three Jim Henson Foundation grants, and member of the Kennedy Center Teaching Roster, and we will recognize the Martin Luther King holiday with special speakers. We welcome contacts for interesting speakers, from adventurers to entrepreneurs to philanthropists. Please contact Arts and Enrichment chair, Lisa Harkness, with your suggestions.

Upcoming Community Service programs will include a Food Drive, Letters to our Troops, Friendship Bags for the Boys and Girls Club, etc. And for this wintry weather, don't forget our Spirit Store. We have lots of Stanwich flannel pants, wool hats, etc., to keep you and your children warm this winter.

—Wynnn McDaniel, Parent Association President

The Parent Association wishes to thank Andrea Mitchelson for her leadership during her tenure as President. We are grateful that Wynnn McDaniel is ready and able to assume her new role.

Announcements from the PA

Charter Day Celebration! Friday, January 28

CHARTER DAY is the day the state of Connecticut recognized The Stanwich School as a new school by signing our charter certificate. Classes commenced the following September. We are marking our 13th year!

* A day filled with "birthday" activities and giving for the whole Stanwich Community:

- The PH students make Stanwich birthday hats and IH students make arm bands at home and wear them to school on Charter Day; Friday, January 28th,
- JH buddies visit the PH & IH students,
- The whole school enjoys cupcakes,
- Special art projects are made by students and presented at the parent Birthday Celebration the evening of January 28.



All Primary House students should come to school on Charter Day with a homemade birthday hat. Be creative – give it a Stanwich theme!

Save the Date • Join our parents and faculty for the Blue & White Birthday Celebration
Friday, January 28th, 7:30pm

First Presbyterian Church, 1 West Putnam Avenue, Greenwich • Invitations to be sent shortly

COMMUNITY SERVICE

The Intermediate House students went into “overdrive” making bags for the Meals on Wheels program. The students decorated the meal bags with festive holiday themes, as well as wrote their own stories to brighten up the recipient’s day.

The Meals On Wheels Association of America provides well over one million meals to seniors who need them each day. These decorated bags are a wonderful way to create a joyous meal for everyone this holiday season.



Arts & Enrichment 2011

We are looking forward to a wonderful 2011 Arts and Enrichment program. Our goal is to support and enrich our wonderful Stanwich curriculum with performances, discussions, demonstrations, and interactive experiences.



Puppeteer, Hobey Ford

Coming in January, we have Mr. Fish’s Phenomenal Physics and award winning puppeteer and storyteller, Hobey Ford. Our Martin Luther King Jr. holiday program will showcase African drummers in original costumes!

If you have any ideas for interesting programming for Arts and Enrichment assemblies, please contact Lisa Harkness lharkness@hotmail.com or Debra Seiter cdseiter@optonline.net.



STANWICH
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE

NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTIONS

It isn’t too late to add some of the following to your New Year’s resolutions:

- Change your attitude – become more environmentally sensitive – changes in behavior will follow
- Recycle or reuse as much as possible
- Learn to compost your household’s organic matter
- Give up disposable plastic shopping bags – make the switch to reusable shopping bags
- Ditch the disposable coffee cup and adopt a reusable mug
- Get an energy audit from local power or energy provider or “green” consultant
- Lower your heat (or AC) by 3 degrees
- When your traditional light bulbs burn out – switch to CFL or LED
- Switch to a renewable energy provider
- Mind the faucet and stop the leaks
- Shorten the shower
- Use green cleaners and lawn products
- Carpool, bike, and walk
- Use school buses when available
- Support local businesses and farms



Senior House



Derek Krein
Head of Senior House

Tag, You're It

When presented with a problem, most of us have said to ourselves or others: "Be rational about this; think logically," as though we could actually flip the switch controlling emotion to the "off" position. Well, neuroscientists at the University of Southern California tell us that separation of the emotional from the rational is neurologically impossible. Emotion is the "rudder" that guides our thinking, and we think in the service of social and emotional goals. Our experiences are subjectively felt, tagged, and stored as emotional data that informs how we respond to similar situations in the future. This is not only how we come to love or hate math or history but how we use our intuition, our feelings, as a guide in solving all sorts of problems – we come to feel whether we are on the right or wrong track.

Let's narrow our focus to the academic day of our children. As humans, we tend to learn what is emotionally relevant to us. So our students need to have enough successful experiences solving emotionally relevant problems to develop their intuition – for intuition is our emotional guide to problem-solving. Dr. Immorodino-Yang, a neuroscientist at USC with a doctorate in education, suggests in her 2007 article, "We Feel, Therefore We Learn," that "knowledge and reasoning divorced from emotional implications and learning lack meaning and motivation and are of little use in the real world."

Unfortunately, the manifestations of negatively tagged emotion are more readily recognized in schools: fear, emotional irrelevance, failure, and humiliations in school make learning difficult, if not impossible. And what creates fear, is considered emotionally irrelevant, or is understood as failure or humiliation is different for each student. So should every student receive an A, a gold star, or a trophy for every endeavor or task undertaken? Of course not, but in order to be meaningful the majority of practice that precedes student performance (class participation, a test, lab, recital, or game) needs to be tagged with relevance, increasing efficacy, and authentic encouragement. John Holt wrote in 1967, "How much people can learn at any moment depends on how they feel at that moment about the task and their ability to do the task." When we feel powerful and competent, we leap at difficult tasks. The difficulty does not discourage us; we think, "Sooner or later, I'm going to get this." At other times, we can only think, "I'll never get this, it's too hard for me, I'm never any good at this kind of thing, why do I have to do it?"

So here's hoping the joy, excitement, and optimism of the holiday season will continue on at home and at school for the remainder of this year and every year. This game of tag is too important.

Happenings

Turkey Bowl 2010

Stanwich's third annual Homecoming was a huge success with over 100 alumni, parents and faculty gathering at Stanwich East.



Save the Date - January 26

ATHLETICS PARENT EDUCATION

Wednesday, January 26, at 8:00am - IH Assembly Room



Please join your fellow PH and IH parents for a special talk on Stanwich's Athletics program on Wednesday, January 26, at 8:00am in the IH Assembly Room. Our PE staff will outline our school's Athletics program and philosophy, and highlight our coaching staff and athletes.