



# OUTLOOK

THE SOUTH ORANGE-MAPLEWOOD EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Newsletter, Fall/Winter 2005

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**S**EVEN is a lucky number. This is the seventh year the South Orange-Maplewood Education Foundation has contributed to our community by adding to the vibrancy of our schools. SOMEF is proud to support innovative programs across the school district and professional development opportunities for our dedicated teachers and staff. Hundreds of children are also excited about learning because they've been touched through SOMEF grants to their teachers.

As we look ahead, I'm excited to tell you that we are expanding our Teacher Grant Program and will distribute over \$30,000 in grants this year! We're also reaching out to community business partners to fund new projects as we did earlier this year with PNC Bank (see below).

As we shape our future, it is important that we keep our roots strong. One of SOMEF's early imperatives was to raise money for the ACHIEVE Volunteer Tutor Program. In 2001, when the school district cut its funding for ACHIEVE by two-thirds, SOMEF jumped in with both feet to make sure that this valuable and free resource was sustained.

Started in 1997 by its current coordinator and SOMEF Executive Director, Deborah Prinz, ACHIEVE has addressed the academic achievement gap by providing free tutoring to over 2000 children in

the district. Volunteers help in all areas from basic reading skills to high school-level math, science and English.

ACHIEVE is an exceptional community/school collaboration that is envied by districts throughout the State. While the school district currently provides facilities and teacher services, ACHIEVE is funded largely by SOMEF donors like you.

As Federal mandates and curricula create greater demands on our students, the free tutoring sessions provided by ACHIEVE become indispensable. Increased donations earmarked for ACHIEVE - and in fact an endowment - will allow ACHIEVE to continue its vital work uninterrupted in our school district.

This is a year when I consider myself to be very lucky. As you carefully select your charitable donations for the end of the year, I hope you'll share that sentiment, and give special attention to SOMEF and especially to ACHIEVE. Our overall budget this year for grants and programs is over \$75,000. While our fundraisers will cover a portion of that, this end of the year campaign can make an immediate difference in our schools.

There are over 6,000 students in this district, nine schools, two towns and, one very generous community to help us with our vision for the future. We thank you in advance for your continued support.



Jean Campbell  
President

## SOMEF RECEIVES A GRANT FROM PNC BANK

**S**OME six year old children need more time and practice to develop the social skills they need to function in a first grade classroom setting. When Asst. Superintendent of Schools Marilyn Davenport conceived a new, intensive social skills program, SOMEF helped it come to fruition.

Our President Jean Campbell and Treasurer Nancy Sobieski brought the proposal to the attention of Alex Quiceno, VP for Business Banking, PNC Bank, South Orange, and Joseph Whall of PNC Corporate Communications. The social skills program was in line with PNC's current corporate campaign, "Grow Up Great," that fosters school readiness.

Through a generous grant from the PNC Foundation, a group of young children attended summer school in July at the Seth

Boyden Demonstration School. In an intimate classroom setting, they had numerous opportunities to practice social skills such as respect, cooperation and self control.

The \$5,000 grant - a first partnership between the bank and the community not-for-profit - paid for the staffing and supplies. Using music, art, reading, play time, and snack time, the instructor, Allison Larger and her aide, Erin Murphy, carried out the program with supervision from Karen Weiland, the director of the District Social Work Program and the Parenting Center.

The successful program exceeded everyone's expectations, and had "huge ripple effects" for the children and their families. The teachers predict that the effects of this intensive program will also extend to the children's first grade classes, where their improved behavior will have a positive effect on the whole class.



Standing left to right: Joseph P. Whall, Marilyn Davenport, Deborah Prinz (SOMEF Executive Director) and Alexander Quiceno. Seated: Alyson Larger

## HELPING CHILDREN TO BECOME GOOD READERS: DROPPING "A PEBBLE IN THE POND"



National attention is being focused on the importance of children acquiring good reading skills at an early age to ensure lifelong literacy. Local teachers understand that some parents are not always confident in their ability to support their children's reading development. This prompted a collaboration of local volunteers and professionals who pooled their efforts and resources to produce an original instructional film to be used in conjunction with a new workshop for parents and tutors of elementary school age children in our school district.

Here's how the project evolved: Deborah Prinz, Coordinator of the ACHIEVE Volunteer Tutor Program, recognized the need for a parent workshop and applied for grants from the Starbucks Foundation, The Junior League of the Oranges and Short Hills and the Orange Orphan Society to fund the project.

Meanwhile, under the leadership of Assistant to the Principal, Malikah Majeed, members of the Tuscan Elementary School teaching staff developed a format and outline for the reading program. Enter freelance director of photography, Paul Gibson (coincidentally an ACHIEVE tutor AND a Tuscan parent) who agreed to work on the film along with colleague, John Schaaf, and the team was complete. Thanks to the discounted rate they offered for their services, the entire workshop, including the film,

was completed for just under \$8,000.

A workshop, featuring the new 35 minute film entitled, "A Pebble in the Pond" premiered at an evening workshop for parents of students in the ACHIEVE Volunteer Tutor Program at Tuscan School in June. The workshop covered topics such as selecting the right book for your child, ways to improve comprehension and how to foster a love of reading. The basic strategies presented in the program are ones that give parents and children great ideas that will lead to the lifelong enjoyment of reading.

This fall, ACHIEVE volunteers participated in the workshop as part of their training as tutors, and more sessions are planned for the winter. The program will also be repeated in other schools at



parent workshops co-sponsored by the District Parenting Center.

We estimate that more than 250

tutors and parents will

participate in the workshop this

year alone. DVD and VHS copies of the film will also be on loan to parents and tutors at each of the school libraries.

Kudos to Tuscan School staff members Janie Van Oss, Robert Reyes, Anna Reyes, Maura Sackett, Lorraine Borek, Anne Devonish and Mary Ann Hess who created this invaluable resource for South Orange and Maplewood families and to the generous grant makers whose support made it possible.

"A PEBBLE IN THE POND" WAS MADE POSSIBLE  
WITH THE HELP OF GRANTS FROM



**JUNIOR LEAGUE OF  
THE ORANGES AND SHORT HILLS**  
*Women building better communities*



**THE  
STARBUCKS  
FOUNDATION**

*Still images from "A Pebble in the Pond," an original, 35-minute instructional film made at Tuscan Elementary School for parents and tutors of elementary school age children in our school district.*

## HELP "GRANT" A TEACHER'S WISH

This fall the SOMEF Teacher Grant Committee received 66 exceptional proposals with requests totaling almost \$100,000. With just \$32,000 to allocate, we were able to fund or partially fund 42 innovative projects. It is not too late to fulfill a teacher's dream, however! To view a list of qualified grant proposals that still are in need of funding, visit our website, [www.somef.org](http://www.somef.org) or call 973-378-2055 after December 1st. Your donations to SOMEF, including funds raised from Honor Your Teacher and Staff tributes, have enriched the lives of our children with poetry, puppetry, philosophy, photography and so much more. In the past seven years, the SOMEF Teacher Grant program has grown from \$1,000 shared among three proposals, to more than \$185,000 awarded for 200 individual grants.



## WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT THE ACHIEVE VOLUNTEER TUTOR PROGRAM:

### TEACHERS:

"Any staff member you speak with can easily tell you about the success of and demand for the ACHIEVE program. The reliability, training and capability of the tutors, along with Deborah Prinz's attentiveness to the needs of individual students is a testament to her professionalism and sense of caring."

William Berrios, Sarah Mazak, Robin Straus – CHS

"I love the confidence it brings to the children." Tuscan 3rd grade teacher

"The committed volunteers were outstanding" MMS 6th grade teacher



### PARENTS:

"It is great that this is available. My son's tutor worked directly with his teacher to bring him up to class level"

South Mountain Kindergarten Parent

### STUDENTS:

"The tutors really care and show concern. Recruit more!" CHS 10th grader

"I like that we have our own peers teach us things about a subject we find difficult." CHS 10th grader



After school tutoring at Tuscan Elementary School.



## A REAL SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT

Maplewood Mayor, Fred Profeta, presented ACHIEVE Coordinator, Deborah Prinz, with an official proclamation on September 6, 2005, extending congratulations to SOMEF and the South Orange/Maplewood Schools for their cooperative efforts to sustain the tutoring program. The resolution commended the volunteer tutors for their efforts and dedication over the past nine years to the youth of the Township of Maplewood and the Village of South Orange.

## TEACHER GRANT: CLINTON FIRST-GRADERS RECEIVE A HUMANE EDUCATION

Last spring, Beth Frascella and Jennifer Motz – first grade teachers at Clinton Elementary School – developed a teaching project to help their kids develop a sentiment of kindness toward all living creatures. The SOMEF mini-grant of \$1,000 they received for their "Humane Education" effort afforded them the opportunity to purchase educational materials from the ASPCA, to care for gerbils in the classroom, to take a trip to St. Hubert's Animal Shelter for its "Make Kindness Contagious" program, and to develop a relationship with the local Jersey Animal Coalition of South Orange.

The most exciting part of this project was the unexpected and fortuitous nesting of a wild mallard outside of Clinton's kindergarten doors. The first-graders created a safe haven for the duck while she cared for her eggs. "We experienced as a group the real life trials and tribulations of becoming involved with the needs of a wild animal. . . It was a wonderful experience for all!" according to Mrs. Frascella and Mrs. Motz.

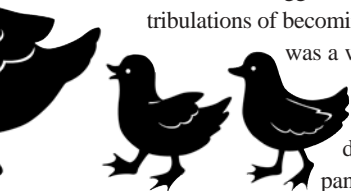
Beyond the laudable goal of teaching children about responsibility and kindness to companion and wild animals, the Humane Education project had other educational benefits as well. For

instance, in baking cat and dog treats to donate, they used their measurement skills and learned how to follow recipe directions. They made displays that documented all their activities and they used their artistic skills to create cross-stitch wall-hangings.

While the students were learning to nurture the human-animal bond, the teachers witnessed an expansion of the kids' compassion toward one another. Their hands-on experience with animals helped the students achieve one of the main goals of character education – respect for one's peers – as well. Mrs. Frascella and Mrs. Motz plan to use last year's materials and the funds remaining from their grant to continue this successful project with their new first-graders.



Charlie the dog from the Jersey Animal Coalition of South Orange with students from Jennifer Motz' and Beth Frascella's first grade classes.





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**The South Orange-Maplewood Education Foundation (SOMEF)**

We believe that an exemplary public school system is essential to the well-being of our community. Our mission is to enhance the educational experience for all South Orange-Maplewood School District students and staff by providing funds to enrich educational programs, activities, and facilities.

**SOMEF NEWS FLASH!**

**SAVE THESE DATES:  
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12TH**  
for the return of the  
**SOMEF QUIZ BOWL**

a Jeopardy-style Quiz Bowl  
for the whole community!  
At last year's inaugural event, 37  
competing teams helped raise over \$14,000!

**SATURDAY, APRIL 22ND**  
for the return of the  
**NIGHT OF 100 DINNERS**

Join us for an elegant dinner at one of a  
number of private homes. Last year's  
memorable culinary & social event  
netted over \$9,300 for SOMEF.

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE:  
WWW.SOMEF.ORG**

**MULTIPLY YOUR GIFT TO SOMEF  
WITHOUT TAKING ANOTHER  
DOLLAR FROM YOUR POCKET!**

Many companies set aside funds to support non-profit organizations and have programs through which they will "match" the charitable contributions made by their employees. Through corporate gift matching, your employer can multiply your gift to SOMEF, making it go further.

Over the last two years, donors like you have taken advantage of generous corporate matching programs at JP Morgan Chase, the Washington Post Company, Pfizer, Verizon, Prudential, Bank of America and others. Check with your company's Human Resources office to see if they offer gift matching.

**YOUR DONATIONS TO SOMEF  
WILL BE MATCHED**

Donations received by DEC. 31, 2005  
will be matched, thanks to a generous  
"challenge" from a group of Board  
members and friends of SOMEF.

Please send your check  
made out to SOMEF to  
PO BOX 84, MAPLEWOOD, NJ 07040

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