



# OUTLOOK

THE SOUTH ORANGE-MAPLEWOOD EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Newsletter, Fall 2001

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



In these extraordinary times, there is no greater gift we can give our children than to prepare them to deal with the future. And there is truly no better way to prepare

them than to give them the best education possible – one that promotes creative thinking and problem solving, and builds character and respect for others. The South Orange-Maplewood Education Foundation (SOMEF), a non-profit community-based organization, is dedicated to enhancing the educational experience for all of the children of our school district.

Formed in 1987, SOMEF was reinvigorated in 1999 after a period of dormancy. Our board of trustees is comprised of parents, educators, community members, and school district representatives. We have already accomplished much:

- ★ Funding for over 30 innovative programs initiated by teachers and staff through our mini-grant program and other sponsorship opportunities. Some highlights include an Opera Workshop at the Clinton School, a Weather Station at Jefferson, and *Promote*: a program to encourage and motivate our academically at-risk 9th graders.
- ★ Raising over \$16,000 towards the restoration of the Columbia High School Auditorium.
- ★ Helping to sustain the ACHIEVE Volunteer Tutor program with over \$20,000 raised.

Looking ahead to this year we have some very exciting plans. As part of our initiative to target children of the middle school years (a time when interest in school may be most at risk), we have formed a partnership with

## THE VERY SENIOR PROM: A VERY BIG SUCCESS



*"Midnight at the Oasis"*

the Whitney Museum of American Art. (see related article, page 2)

We believe that a lot has been accomplished in the short time since our rejuvenation. But we have so much more to do. Our diverse student body is unique in its needs, but we believe that our outstanding community has the resources to meet those needs.

Please take a moment to look over the first issue of our newsletter to learn more about the Foundation. It is our goal to forge a partnership with you to prepare our children for the future. I encourage you to view SOMEF as a friend in that partnership.

Thank you for your support.

Thea Okin, President

**SAVE THESE DATES  
IN 2002!**

**ADULT COMMUNITY  
SPELLING BEE**

Sunday, January 27th  
2-5 PM

**THE 2ND ANNUAL  
VERY SENIOR PROM**  
Late Spring – Date TBD

## WHAT IS A "LEF"?

Local Education Foundations (LEFs) are nonprofit, community-based organizations that work to improve student achievement for all public school children. A LEF is comprised of key players in the community, administers innovative school programs, awards grants, and enhances the visibility of the public schools.

Local education foundations are independent of the school districts they serve and are comprised of a board of directors reflective of its community.

There are hundreds, if not thousands of LEFs across the country each working towards similar goals, and the South Orange-Maplewood Education Foundation is our LEF. Schools cannot function in a vacuum. Parental, community and private sector involvement is necessary to provide a full and effective education.

The South Orange-Maplewood Education Foundation has raised over \$80,000 in just two years. With your help we can achieve what many other districts are accomplishing nation-wide. Following are a few examples of ways that various LEFs have utilized funds raised from their communities.

**WOODCLIFF LAKE, NJ** – In March 2001, this foundation approved a \$25,000 grant to upgrade the facilities at the Dorchester Elementary School Library with new carpeting and state-of-the-art computer equipment. The Woodcliff Lake LEF also provides an annual \$10,000 grant to the



**WHITNEY** Whitney Museum of American Art

### THE WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART COMES TO SOUTH ORANGE-MAPLEWOOD

SOMEF will be funding an exciting innovative program – the training of 40 to 50 of our middle school students to become junior docents at the

Whitney Museum of American Art. The three-month program will take place at both the middle schools and the museum itself.

Over 8 sessions, students will be trained to examine, critique, discuss and ultimately make presentations regarding works of art at the Whitney. The program, which runs from October–February, will culminate in a presentation at the

Whitney for the students, their parents, faculty, and interested community members. Attendees will have the opportunity to be directed by our junior guides through the museum.

One of the highlights of the program will be a study of the works of Jacob Lawrence, an African American painter whose work is featured at the Whitney, the Smithsonian, the Metropolitan Museum and other major art institutions.

Once the students have developed their skills through study, discussion, research and writing, they will then relay their knowledge to other classes in the middle schools as well as in the elementary schools.

Woodcliff Lake Schools Library Fund for new books and other research materials.

**HILLSBOROUGH, NJ** – A \$1000 mini-grant was awarded to provide a digital video camera for the high school social studies department. The program, a Model Congress and a Model United Nations, utilized the video camera to analyze student performances in preparation for competitions.

**BROOKLINE, MA** – One of the first LEFs in the country, established in 1981, this foundation has raised over \$2,500,000, with annual fundraising exceeding \$228,000 in 2000! Last year, the foundation completed a three-year cycle to improve literacy in grades K-3. This initiative resulted in a dramatic lowering of the percentage of students in the early grades who read below grade level.

**CHAPEL HILL, NC** – Established in 1984, this foundation has raised over \$1.2 million. In 1986, the foundation began hosting a luncheon for teachers and administrators. A local bank has provided monies for a \$1000 “Teacher of the Year” recognition award, while two “Honor” teachers each receive \$500. Thus far, 30 teachers have received over \$21,500! The extra funds have enhanced the reputation of the school district and have aided in the recruitment of high-quality teachers and administrators.

Education foundations across the nation are funding many innovative programs. Your support of SOMEF strengthens our commitment to excellence in public education.

### HOW TO APPLY FOR A TEACHER MINI-GRANT

If you are a teacher or staff member in the SO/M School District with a great idea for enhancing your students' educational experience, please consider applying for a SOMEF mini-grant. Applications are available from your school's principal.

Important information required for the grant application includes:

Applicant's name and title of the project

School which will benefit

Amount requested (suggested range for individual grants is \$250 to \$500, but all proposals will be considered)

Project description, objectives, itemized costs, how the project will be evaluated for success

When the project is complete, a brief evaluation should be submitted to SOMEF

The deadline for mini-grants for spring 2002 was November 2, but if you have missed the deadline and are still interested in a grant, please call Gloria Turner, chairperson of the SOMEF Mini-grants committee, at (908) 277-2852, ext. 311.



Recipients of SOMEF Fall 2001 Mini-Grants with a few SOMEF Board members

**Front:** Karen Weiland, Carolyn Shane (SOMEF Board), Bernice Hall;  
**Standing:** Joan Lee (SOMEF Board), Barbara Eames, Deborah Prinz (SOMEF Board), Diane Laden, and Beatrice Greenberg (not shown, Pieta Cohen Bellizia, Cheri Golub)

**2001-2002 Board of Trustees  
 South Orange-Maplewood**

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**GRANTS AWARDED FOR FALL 2001**

**Writer's Workshop for Grades 7 & 8**

Pieta Cohen Bellizia  
 Maplewood Middle School

**Writing Through Art**

Bernice Hall  
 Clinton School

**Dance and Musical Theatre Workshop**

Barbara Eames  
 Clinton School

**Audio Library for the Resource Room**

Diane Laden  
 Jefferson School

**Sand Table for Kindergarten Class**

Beatrice Greenberg  
 Marshall School

**Community Resource Manual**

Karen Weiland and Cheri Golub  
 SO/M School District

**SPOTLIGHT ON MINI-GRANTS:  
 "PROJECT ASTRO NOVA"**

A SOMEF grant funded South Orange Middle School 6th grade science teacher Diane Grant's implementation of the "Project Astro Nova" program during the 2000-01 school year. As a participating teacher in this program, Mrs. Grant was paired with Dr. Ken-Ichi Nishikawa, a local amateur astronomer and South Orange resident, who visited the young scientists during their classroom exploration of the universe.

One of the most exciting activities was the creation and observation of a comet created from common ingredients including dry ice, dirt and water. After being "comet chefs" the students recorded the ingredients, the color, surface characteristics, the jets, and the slow disintegration of their comets.

Mrs. Grant placed the comets on display for the students to watch during the day as they slowly sublimated (turned directly from a solid to a gas), which is what comets do when heated by the sun in interplanetary space.

This engaging, hands-on experience in astronomy will be repeated this year, re-using materials provided by SOMEF funding.



SOMS "Comet Chefs"

**"BEE" YOUR BEST**



As part of its ongoing efforts to raise funds to support the ACHIEVE Volunteer Tutor Program and other important school

district programs, SOMEF announces its first ever **COMMUNITY SPELLING BEE** for adults. Scheduled for Sunday, January 27th, 2-5pm, this will be an afternoon of friendly competition and community spirit.

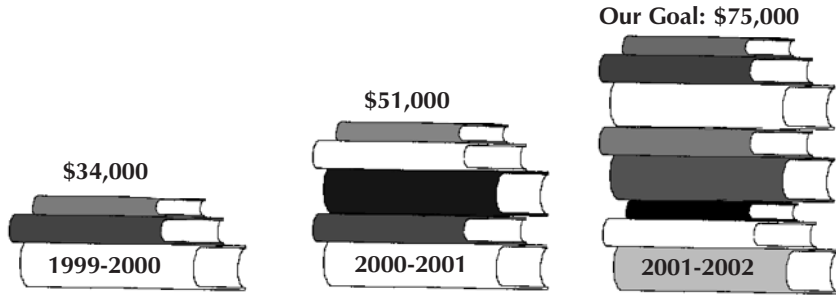
Challenged by words from the official "BEE" book, *Paedia*, teams of 3 spellers, will compete to the finish for prizes and cheers. Delicious All-American desserts will be provided by our local eateries.

Teams can be formed in many ways – among office or commuting buddies, classroom or PTA parents, tennis, golf, or walking partners, or family members. Education foundations in Montclair and West Orange have raised large sums of money and had over 30 teams compete!

Each team can raise the \$300 entrance fee by group sponsorship or through individual donations. Can't find teammates? Just raise \$100 for yourself & the BEE committee will find you a team.

Deadline for team sign-up is December 15th. For more information, call Karen Basedow, 313-9813 or Deborah Prinz at 378-9637.

## HELP SOMEF REACH ITS 2001-02 FUND RAISING GOAL



## ACHIEVE: UP AND RUNNING AGAIN

With the generous support of SOMEF, the ACHIEVE student tutoring program is now up and running in the South Orange-Maplewood school district for the 2001-02 school year. The school district had cut funding by two-thirds for this volunteer program, a staple in the community since 1997. The \$20,000 provided by SOMEF – and the other private contributors will provide critical administrative support for ACHIEVE so it can process teachers’ requests for tutors and recruit, screen, train and place volunteers in the best matches. ACHIEVE provides free tutoring for over 200 South Orange-Maplewood students each year who are academically at-risk.

The SOMEF Board of Trustees embarked on a vigorous campaign to raise sufficient private funds through grant applications, solicitations, petitions, and newspaper publicity. By July, the initial goal of \$20,000 was met. In addition to generous contributions made by many community members, Maplewood attorney David Dubrow, and the Sagner, Weiss, and Reinlieb family foundations provided major donations. We very much appreciate their support.

ACHIEVE’s Fall 2001 recruitment efforts have resulted in more than 50 tutors already signed up to work one-to-one this

**QUOTE OF THE DAY...**  
*The United Way of Northwest Louisiana started an “Over and Above” campaign that encourages donors to help victims of the terrorist attacks while maintaining or increasing support for local nonprofit groups. “Local needs are still here,” says Patrick Jinks, the group’s campaign and marketing director. “They don’t go away just because there are more high-profile needs.”*

year with district students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Volunteer recruitment will continue through February, with the same goal as in past years of reaching 150 tutors.

ACHIEVE tutors are adults from the community, as well as high school and college students. Volunteers may select from many options in terms of the age group and time of day they wish to tutor. No teaching experience is required, but training, offered three times a year, is provided. To become an ACHIEVE tutor, please call Deborah Prinz at 378-9637.

**SAY YES TO EDUCATION!** I want to join the many other community members who believe SOMEF will help promote excellence in our school system. I would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to the South Orange-Maplewood Education Foundation (SOMEF):

- |                |          |               |          |  |
|----------------|----------|---------------|----------|--|
| ☆ Graduate:    | \$200.00 | ☆ Honor Roll: | \$ 50.00 |  |
| ☆ Scholar:     | \$150.00 | ☆ Patron:     | \$ 25.00 | Mail to: P.O. Box 84, Maplewood, NJ 07040  |
| ☆ High Honors: | \$100.00 | ☆ Other:      | \$ ____  | For more information, please call 378-2055 |

Please make checks payable to: South Orange-Maplewood Education Foundation

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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*Ensuring a bright future for our children*

SOUTH ORANGE-MAPLEWOOD  
 EDUCATION FOUNDATION  
 P.O. Box 84  
 MAPLEWOOD, NJ 07040 (973) 378-2055