



OUTLOOK

THE SOUTH ORANGE-MAPLEWOOD EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Newsletter, Spring 2002

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



I often marvel at our community, where people seem to have boundless energy to put toward causes they care about. But, I also often wonder what motivates

people. Some recent experiences I've had may shed some light.

Within the past month I had a conversation with someone who made me aware of the difference between philanthropy and charity. Philanthropy facilitates societal change, while charity seeks to help those in need without necessarily changing the status quo. Money is one means to effect change, but not the only one. Passion and commitment are truly the special ingredients.

I attended the Coalition on Race's May 16th presentation on the Achievement Gap with Dr. Ronald Ferguson, who acknowledged that this nationwide problem might be solved through incremental changes made by parents, teachers, students, and administrators, which may result in a sea change – one the philanthropists would recognize as "societal".

Which brings us to why we as individuals volunteer. I believe it is because our passion for our causes drives us to be part of that sea change – to make a difference. Perhaps we're not satisfied with the way things are, or we simply believe that things could be even better if we work to *solve* problems instead of just identifying them. Lucky for all of us that we live in a community where people understand this, and are motivated to do something about it!

If our children's education is something you feel passionate about, please think about getting involved with SOMEF. Give us a call. Visit our website. We'd love to hear from you.

Thea Okin, President

THE ADULT SPELLING BEE WAS F-U-N



KAREN BASEDOW: BEE-ING THERE FOR ACHIEVE AND SOMEF

When word came down last spring that School District funding for the ACHIEVE Volunteer Tutor Program was to be cut by two thirds for the 2001-2002 school year, the SOMEF Board went to work to come up with the funds needed to keep the program running. Among the community members who responded to the call, was a South Orange phenomenon named Karen Basedow. Karen had learned about ACHIEVE from a friend, who had related how well her child had responded to the

ACHIEVE tutor, accepting more help than he had previously from his mother.

Karen, who had been active in the South Mountain PTA and Main Street South Orange, felt that saving ACHIEVE was a cause that deserved support. After "getting a team together," she contacted coordinator, Deborah Prinz and offered to organize a fundraiser. Having heard of the success of community spelling bees for adults in

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Montclair and West Orange, Karen declared, "We can do that!"

Organizing a big event was nothing new to Karen. With a Masters degree in Food and Nutrition, she had worked in food service management at St. Barnabas Hospital and Saks Fifth Avenue, where she helped to develop hi-tech methods for meal delivery and planned catered events for up to 2000 guests.

Using her undeniable powers of persuasion, Karen brought in committee members, Linda Anderson, Pam Kaiser, Zaida Pacheco, Terri Nitti, Karen Richards, Karen Hilton and Joy Markel to share the responsibilities, while Deborah enlisted school librarian, Jane Rauen to organize the Bee itself. With Karen at the helm, all the details fell into place.

On Sunday, February 27th, 117 spellers (39 teams of 3), along with their families and friends, showed up at Maplewood Middle School for an afternoon of friendly competition and community spirit. Organizers were thrilled that, despite being scheduled opposite the NFL playoffs, many audience members stayed through the final round, which was won by the Vose Avenue Neighborhood Association Team.

The Community Spelling Bee for Adults netted an amazing \$16,000 for ACHIEVE and SOMEF, getting the Foundation off to a great start in raising its portion of the funds needed to run the tutoring program in 2002-2003. SOMEF is indebted to Karen Basedow and her committee for their efforts in making the Bee such a success. Indications are that there's lots of enthusiasm for repeating the event next year.

Karen's experience shows that, when it comes to raising money for a worthwhile program, "where there's a will there's a way." Between her determination and her organizational skills, she turned it into "a piece of cake," and, according to her, she also benefitted, making new friends and getting a sense of satisfaction from the results.

SOMEF needs more talented people like Karen Basedow to help with fundraising. Money raised by these events is returned directly to the children and staff of the South Orange-Maplewood Schools in the form of mini-grants for special projects, new equipment, staff development and much more.

Do you have a great idea for SOMEF? We'd like to hear it. Please call (973) 378-2055, and let's talk.



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SOMEF SUPPORTS STAFF DEVELOPMENT

During the course of the year, our children's teachers "go back to school." They might spend a day at a workshop, enroll in an evening course, or attend a professional conference. This is called *staff development*, the time that teachers, school administrators and other members of the educational staff spend in activities that will improve their skills and knowledge.

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

SOMEF has a brand new website

www.somef.org

Learn more about our latest
programs, projects, fundraisers.

Special section for district teachers!

When we raise our expectations for our children, we also are expecting teachers to learn and do more. According to The U.S. Department of Education, "the educational programs that are consistently recognized as 'making a difference' for kids all emphasize the importance of providing high quality professional development for teachers." As of September 2001, the State of New Jersey adopted new standards that require teachers to complete 100 hours of approved professional development over five years.

The South Orange-Maplewood School District provides two full days of staff development during the school year. The SOMEF Board elected to offer additional funding for staff development because they recognize the significance of building on

teacher excellence in our district. This includes staying up-to-date in the latest techniques, curricula and technologies as well as providing the tools needed to address the complex issues associated with closing the minority achievement gap.

"We are constantly learning more about the changing needs of children who learn at different rates and in different ways. The goal for professional development in our school district is to foster deeper knowledge of content areas while helping teachers understand how children learn," stated James Memoli, South Orange-Maplewood School District Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Professional Development. Mr. Memoli also declared that "teachers tell us that they need more

time for inquiry, reflection and opportunities for sharing ideas with colleagues. We hope to provide them with the tools they need to balance District requirements with students' individual priorities."

At present, SOMEF is awaiting a proposal from the school district that will outline potential staff development offerings for the 2002-03 school year. The Foundation board will determine which programs fit best within the SOMEF mission, and provide funds allocated for this purpose.

So, the next time you feel inconvenienced, because your child has a "day off" due to a staff development day, remember how critical it is for your child's achievement and ultimately for the growth of our community as a whole. Research has confirmed that a highly skilled teacher is one of the strongest predictors of student achievement*.

*Source: The Public Education Network
(www.publiceducation.org)

SEE WHERE YOUR SOMEF DOLLARS ARE GOING

During the 2001-2002 school year, 96 District staff members referred students for ACHIEVE tutors. With all 9 schools participating, a total of 235 students were served. One hundred fifty-seven volunteers, including 74 adults and 83 high school students, signed-up for the tutoring program.

According to Jefferson School teacher, Patti O'Neill, "...the ACHIEVE tutors are angels in disguise. They have given many of our struggling students the extra one-on-one help and encouragement that they so desperately need."



Spring 2002 Mini-Grant Recipients

COMING UP:
HONOR YOUR TEACHER AND STAFF
 Tribute Cards Available
 Deadline: June 10th
BARNES & NOBLE FUNDRAISER
 June 13th-15th
2ND ANNUAL VERY SENIOR PROM
 June 8th
FOR MORE INFO:
www.somef.org or call 973-378-2055

MINI-GRANTS AWARDED FOR SPRING 2002

Mosaic Magic

Angelica Allen, Marshall School

Health Fair

Lorraine Borek, Tuscan School

Japanese Zen Garden

Anne Devonish & Janie Van Oss
Tuscan School

American History Through American Art

Bernice Hall, Clinton School

Fostering Literacy and Science Through Art

Irene Dunsavage & Mary Ellen Murray
Clinton School

Overcoming Adolescent Obesity

Michelle Epstein
Maplewood Middle School

Star Search

Antoine Green
Maplewood Middle School

Dramatic Play Area

Bebe Greenberg, Marshall School

Earth Day Celebration

Kathleen Hester, Elizabeth Cicenía,
Lynn McGlotten & Mary Pat Riordan
South Orange Middle School

Mosaic of Reading Club

Cheryline Hewitt, Tuscan School

Empowerment Zone

Barbara Jackson, Ana Reyes
& Joyce Smith, Tuscan School

For the Love of Poetry

Meta Johnson & Donna Del Guercio
Clinton School

"The Buzz at Boyden" Newspaper

Nick Klose, Seth Boyden School

Teacher Resource Center for Special Education

Tara Melchior
Maplewood Middle School

Behavior Strategies

Janie B. Quinn
Maplewood Middle School

Group Mentorship

Michele Reisman
Maplewood Middle School

MLK Silent March for Peace

Craig Rynar & Richard Palmgren
Maplewood Middle School

Book Bags

Victoria Schodowski, Gail Jaffe
& Martha O'Connor, Tuscan School

MMS Family Computer Camp

Valerie Sharp & Anna Herstatt
Maplewood Middle School

Arbor Light Box

Michele Stein
Maplewood Middle School

Transition Enhancement

Peter Trebour & Karen Timberlake
Maplewood Middle School

Author Visit

Lisa Winkler
South Orange Middle School

SPOTLIGHT ON MINI-GRANTS: "BOOK BAGS"

Tuscan kindergarten teachers Gail Jaffe, Victoria Schodowski, and Martha O'Connor were busy amassing items to fill many Book Bags, so that their exciting project could get underway this past April.

The Book Bag Project, which is being funded through the SOMEF teacher mini-grant program, consists of thematic collections of fiction and non-fiction books, poems, songs, hands-on educational activities, and games. Some of the books are at the students' independent reading level, while others are meant to be read to the child as a shared reading experience. Book Bags extend reading across the curriculum, enriching the students' reading experiences and enjoyment, while building skills and comprehension. The Book Bag

Project allows students to self-select a book and activities on a Monday and keep it at home for 4 nights. This allows ample time to work with the book and materials while building reading skills, exploring math, science, and social studies concepts, and sharing enjoyable and educational experiences with family.

Equally important is the opportunity to bring parents into the school community and afford them a way to participate in their child's learning.

The SOMEF board members who were able to see the Book Bags had a hard time returning them to their rightful owners because they looked like so much fun!

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 or on our website. Important information required for the grant application includes:

- ☆ Applicant's name and project title
- ☆ 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 Fall 2002 is October 18. Questions? Please call Gloria Turner, chairperson of the SOMEF Mini-grants Committee, at (908) 277-2852, ext. 311.

Support the CHS Auditorium Renovation Project
by "purchasing" an auditorium chair.
Watch for details in the Fall.

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