



# OUTLOOK

THE SOUTH ORANGE-MAPLEWOOD EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Newsletter and Annual Report, Spring 2004

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



As president of SOMEF for the past three years, I have had the privilege and pleasure of watching this organization take its place as an important institution in our community. Through the hard work of our excellent and committed board and the wonderful support provided by our residents, SOMEF has been able to grow from an idea to a fully operational foundation.

From our very first year in 1999, when we were called upon to offer only three grants to our district staff, to this most recent grant season when we received 75 grant applications, the Foundation has made great strides. Not only have we been able to offer grant funds to support staff creativity and innovation, but we are constantly communicating with the administration to structure new programs and partnerships. Staff development, summer programs for at-risk students, thousands of hours of free tutoring provided by ACHIEVE volunteers, and initiatives that address the achievement gap are all areas of focus for our organization.

The establishment this year of the Michelle Traina Riecke Teaching Fellowship, an endowment fund that will enable staff members to take part in enrichment programs that will be shared with appropriate district personnel, is a testament to Shelley Riecke's vision and passion for education. Those who were touched and inspired by Shelley have contributed over \$100,000 to this fund. Please see page two of this newsletter for news about the first Riecke Fellows.

On the horizon is the restoration of the Columbia High School Auditorium, as well as a multi-disciplinary study of American history in conjunction with the Newark Museum for all sixth graders. All of this takes lots of hard work and...money. So I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported SOMEF either as a Board member, a participant on a committee, or as a generous donor. And I encourage all of you to get involved - whether it is through continued financial support or through active participation. There is clearly nothing more important for our children and our community than the success of our schools.

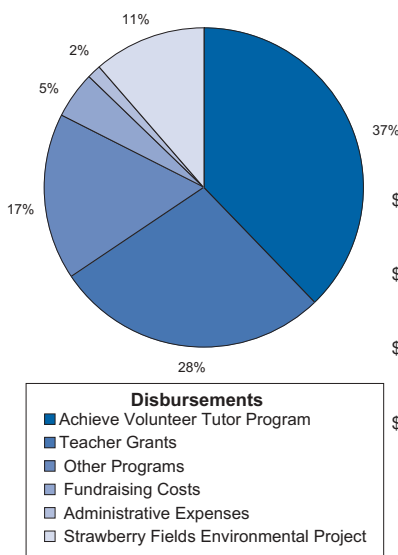
Finally, I would like to give a warm welcome to our incoming President, Jean Campbell, and the new board. I am certain that SOMEF will continue to be phenomenally successful.

Thea Okin

## SOMEF FINANCIALS AT A GLANCE

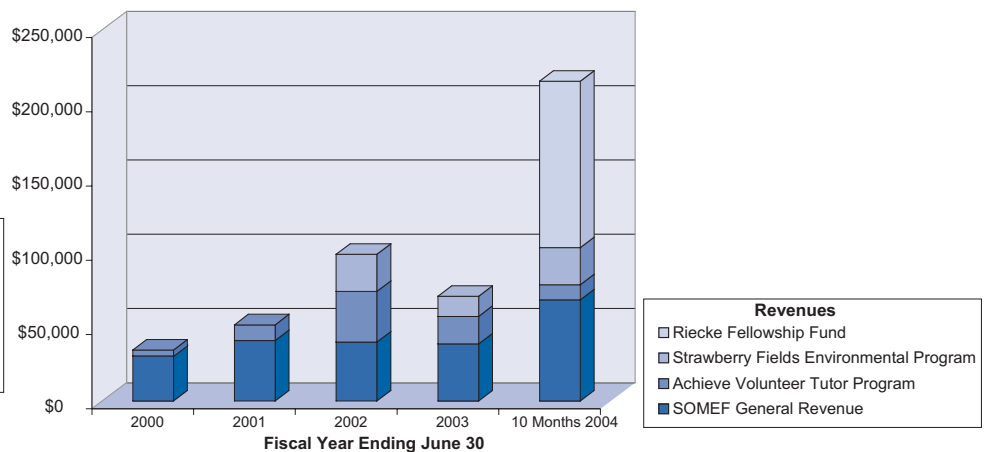
Audited financial statement on page 2

SOMEF Disbursements by Percentage for 2003-04 School Year



DURING THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR, MORE THAN 650 DONORS GAVE A TOTAL OF \$215,000, AN INCREASE OF 205% OVER THE PREVIOUS YEAR.

SOMEF Annual Revenue



**South Orange Maplewood Education Foundation  
Financial Statement\*  
Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2003**

**Balance Sheet**

Assets	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$34,303
Investments	55,826
Total Assets	<u>\$90,129</u>
Liabilities	
	\$0
Net Assets	
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$43,617
Net Assets Reserved for Special Projects	31,172
Net Assets Reserved for Achieve Volunteer Tutor Program	15,340
Total Net Assets	<u>\$90,129</u>

**Statement of Revenues and Expenses**

Revenues	
Donor Contributions	\$38,686
Fundraising Events	26,608
Contributions from Organizations	3,937
Interest Income	1,306
Total Revenues	<u>\$70,537</u>
Expenses	
Mini-Grants Program	\$18,569
Staff Development Grants	11,400
Achieve Volunteer Tutor Program	24,477
Special Projects	7,588
Total Program	<u>\$62,034</u>
Administrative and General Expenses	<u>\$4,066</u>
Total Expenses	<u>\$66,100</u>
Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets	<u>\$4,437</u>
Net Assets at the Beginning of the Fiscal Period	\$85,692
Net Assets at the End of the Fiscal Period	\$90,129

\*Based upon audited financial statement for the fiscal year ending 6/30/2003

**DONATIONS TO SOMEF  
ENRICH THE  
EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE  
FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF  
IN MANY WAYS:**

**ACHIEVE VOLUNTEER TUTOR PROGRAM:**

ACHIEVE addresses the academic achievement gap by supplying over 200 trained volunteers who give over 3,000 hours of free tutoring annually to 300 SO/M students who are academically at-risk. Volunteers are students in grades 8-12 and adults from the community.

**SOMEF TEACHER GRANTS:**

Since 2000, SOMEF has awarded \$75,000 in grants to teachers for 144 of their innovative projects and activities in all nine schools.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:**

SOMEF supports continuing education for teachers through the Michelle Traina Riecke Teacher Fellowship, the Ferguson Tripod Project and more.

**COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM FUND:**

SOMEF has earmarked over \$30,000 so far toward the renovation of this 2,000 seat architectural gem that serves the schools and the community-at-large.

**SPECIAL PROJECTS:**

SOMEF responds to staff requests for worthwhile initiatives that fall outside of the scope of the school budget like the Bridge to Success summer program.

**VISIT SOMEF'S WEBSITE: [WWW.SOMEF.ORG](http://WWW.SOMEF.ORG)**

**FIRST RIECKE FELLOWSHIP AWARDED**



The first Michelle Traina Riecke Teaching Fellowship was awarded to four Maplewood Middle School staff members. They will attend the National Differentiated Instruction Conference, where they will learn creative new strategies designed to meet the needs of a variety of learners. They will share their knowledge with their SO/M colleagues at a two-day seminar in September. The Fellowship was established in memory of Shelley Riecke, former president of the SO/M Board of Education.

Pictured are, left to right, Lauren Kell, Valerie Sharp, Ryan O'Dell, Kristopher Harrison, Thea Okin, Richard and Margaret Traina, Sarah, John and Elena Riecke.

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## SPOTLIGHT ON GRANTS

### MINI-GRANT: COMMUNITY QUILT INSPIRES



Angelica Allen, Ellen Weisbord, Karen Hamel, and Linda Nettleton.

Anything is possible when we work together. Children, teachers, and families from Marshall School celebrated their community and the spirit of artistic collaboration during a reception in the grand courtyard of the Newark Museum on a sunny Sunday in late May. The event was the culmination of the Marshall Community Quilt project.

Principal Angelica Allen introduced quilting as the overarching theme for the year, believing that the art of collaboration had much to offer the school and its community.

After studying the rich history of quilt making, everyone participated in a school-wide field trip to see “Quilt Masterpieces from Folk Art to Fine Art” at the Newark Museum (which was curated by Marshall parent Ulysses Dietz). Next, 400 students, under the capable direction of art teacher Ellen Weisbord, got to work on a community art project. Each child created individual squares with the help of their families to express the theme “community,” and then they collaborated with their classmates on larger squares that incorporated pieces of photographs of the children in traditional quilt patterns and designs. Selecting colors, themes and patterns were exercises in community decision making, and parents and friends worked together for a old fashioned quilting bee to assemble the oversized panels. A Mini-grant from the South Orange-Maplewood Education Foundation funded the materials and fabrication of the quilt. Marshall School parents supported the project with an earlier trip to the Museum, as well as by organizing the reception.

The final product, a grand, kaleidoscopic and richly layered creation, was exhibited at the Newark Museum on May 23, 2004. Each and every Marshall Student can now proudly say their artwork is “museum quality.” Going forward, the community quilt will hang in Marshall School, serving as a reminder to all students (and parents) that anything is possible when we work together.

### MINI-GRANT: PROJECT ADVENTURE CLIMBING WALL

Columbia High School sophomore, Claudia Seixas is determined to reach the top. Having made several attempts on the Project Adventure climbing wall, she feels that this challenge has taught her perseverance and the will to test her own limits. On the ground, the belayer, Michael Rubin, a junior, feels like his classmate’s “lifeline,” using his whole body to secure the climber’s harness, concentrating on the many variables involved.

Columbia was a trendsetter in 1984 when it adopted Project Adventure, a physical education program based on challenge or “adventure” education. With \$10,000 from the district, a Title III grant, the help of two colleagues, and the goal of teaching life skills, teacher Dominick Deo introduced this multi-phase program that promotes social and communication skills and problem solving and develops self-esteem and respect. Project Adventure begins with several weeks of trust activities and cooperative games that include knot and harness tying, before progressing to low and then high climbing elements, where students learn to balance, climb, support and ultimately to belay. Junior Thomas Spring summed it up best: “It’s a perspective you don’t often see, a chance to explore and test your limits.”

Project Adventure is an active class. No sitting around here. Senior, Will Kearny said it is different than most gym classes; “you understand teamwork and trust when belaying a climber thirty feet in the air.” The program provides a wonderful opportunity for students of different backgrounds to learn to depend on each other. Senior, Aslyne Bien-Aime gave it her all when she pulled down her blindfold to navigate the catwalk using her senses. She was scared and a little confused by the cheers of support, but, in the end, she was able to focus on the belayer’s commands and make her way across the log.

Viola DeLuca, who has taught adventure education at Columbia for 19 years, is the program’s greatest advocate these days, along with certified instructors David Brothers, Robert Sutherland and T. Charles Taylor. They recognize the value of the program and know that its continuation depends on maintaining and updating the equipment on the twenty year-old course. This spring, Ms. DeLuca received an \$800 SOMEF grant to purchase a cargo net climbing element and a swinging log. Having gone so far as to hold fundraisers on her own to sustain the program, DeLuca invites interested community members to contact her, so that students can continue to be challenged to set personal goals and find the inner strength to reach for the top.



This cargo net was purchased through a SOMEF grant.



P.O. Box 84  
Maplewood, NJ 07040

**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.

**2004-05 SOMEF OFFICERS**  
 PRESIDENT: JEAN CAMPBELL  
 VICE PRESIDENT: SANDRA KARRIEM  
 VICE PRESIDENT: GLORIA TURNER  
 RECORDING SECRETARY: SANDRA KUREK  
 TREASURER: NANCY SOBIESKI

We welcome new trustees Patti Coleman, Richard Goldstein, John Jeffries, and Mark Tolstoj, and we thank departing trustees Stephanie Booker, Sheryl Hoffman, and Lenny Robbins for their hard work and dedication.

I would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to the  
 South Orange-Maplewood Education Foundation (SOMEF):

\$500.00                      \$100.00                      \$25.00  
\$250.00                      \$50.00                      Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to: South Orange-Maplewood Education Foundation  
 Mail to: P.O. Box 84, Maplewood, NJ 07040  
 For more information please call 973-378-2055

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

*All gifts are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.*

*The South Orange-Maplewood Education Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit incorporated in the State of New Jersey.*



**2003-2004 Board of Trustees South Orange-Maplewood Education Foundation**  
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