



# OUTLOOK

THE SOUTH ORANGE-MAPLEWOOD EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Newsletter, Fall/Winter 2004

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**A**s SOMEF begins its 6th year, I am honored to assume the Presidency of the Board with gratitude to my predecessors, Thea Okin and Sandra Karriem. Under their leadership, the Foundation has become a significant presence in our community. Many of our projects – the ACHIEVE Volunteer Tutor Program, Teacher Grants, the Michelle T. Riecke Teaching Fellowship – have become fixtures on the educational front, providing academic assistance to hundreds of children, exciting classroom projects in all the schools, and offering our staff the ability to explore and augment their skills and scholarship.

We are proud of our new initiatives, most notably, an \$80,100 donation to the District this fall, which included a major gift from an anonymous donor to purchase equipment and upgrades to the Emmy Award-winning CHS TV Studio Arts Program.

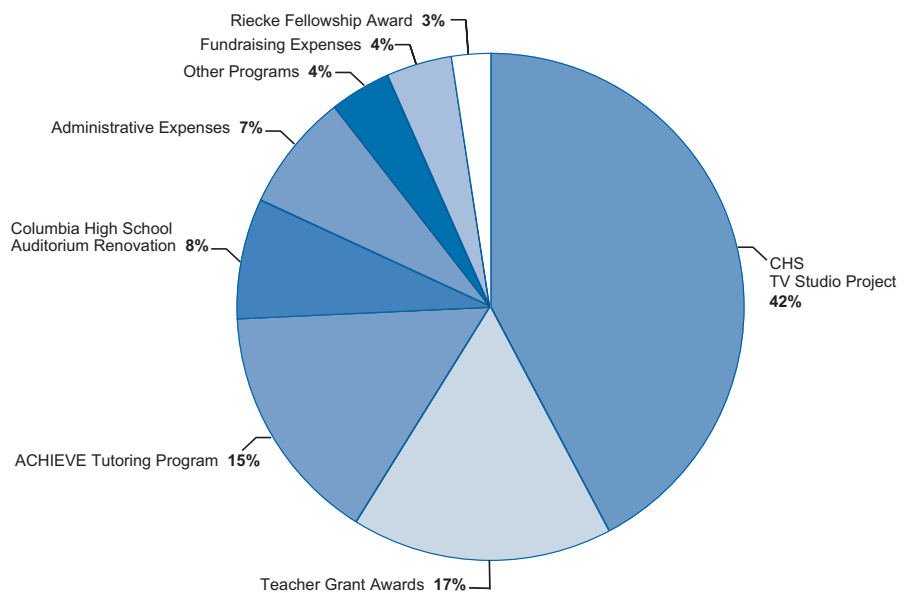
Fundraising remains the key to our success, and if the past is any predictor of the future, we look forward to a banner year. In our first fiscal year our combined revenues were \$34,301. Last year, we generated \$236,000 from fundraisers, grants, large gifts and campaigns!

SOMEF's continued success depends on developing new and exciting fundraising strategies and on the generosity of the community. Read on for news about our programs, plans for a new spring fundraiser, and, of course, our current year-end appeal.

Our district's academic excellence, the excitement our children feel in school and the creative efforts expended by our teachers are enhanced by SOMEF, but our programs rely on your contributions. As we settle into the school year, I want to thank you for your past donations and invite you to renew your support today.

Jean Campbell  
President

## PROJECTED SOMEF DISBURSEMENTS FOR THE CURRENT YEAR (2004-05)



Total amount represented is \$190,275.  
Audited Financial Statements available upon request.



### SOMEF RECEIVES A GRANT FOR ACHIEVE FROM THE STARBUCKS FOUNDATION



**THE STARBUCKS FOUNDATION** awarded a \$5,000 Youth Leadership Grant to the ACHIEVE Volunteer Tutor Program. The grant will be used to fund a new ACHIEVE initiative: a training workshop that will encourage parents to take an active role in their children's learning experience. The grant is the result of a cooperative effort between ACHIEVE and the South Orange Starbucks store whose partners (employees) served as tutors last year. This was one of only six grants awarded in the entire New York Metro area this year, and the only one outside of New York City! A pilot program for the parent workshop is being created by staff at Tuscan Elementary School in Maplewood for trial this spring.

## HONORING OUR TEACHERS

SOMEF gives families a special way to say “thank you” to dedicated school staff members. Here are a few examples of the heartfelt messages students and parents have sent over the years. Cards are printed with students’ personalized messages and distributed to recipients at the end of the school year. Proceeds go to the Teacher Grant Fund which has awarded 180 teachers more than \$75,000 in just four years!

**South Mountain:** *I want to honor my child’s teacher because she has taken the time to get to know each child. She is creative, kind, patient, and funny, and one of the most deserving teachers.*

*[This teacher] has worked with my daughter, and now she is reading and sounding out words. I am proud and blessed to know her. We need 100 of her in our schools. She is one in a million.*

**Tuscan:** *I want to honor my child’s teacher because she has a generosity of spirit, a core humanity that should (and hopefully one day will) become the norm in teachers. Her intelligence, spirit, and compassion are appreciated by her students and their parents alike.*

**Jefferson:** *I want to honor my teacher because she has shown me consistent kindness. She has helped me to understand what’s what and helped me decide what I want to be.*

**Seth Boyden:** *I want to honor my child’s teacher because she has changed my daughter’s life – and ours too. My daughter now loves to learn and has gone from the “bottom” learner to a “star.” I can’t thank her enough for her caring – it’s powerful!*

**SOMS:** *I want to honor my child’s teacher because she encouraged my daughter’s creative writing. She inspired her, expanded her knowledge, and made her want to strive for excellence. My daughter has grown as a writer and a young woman.*

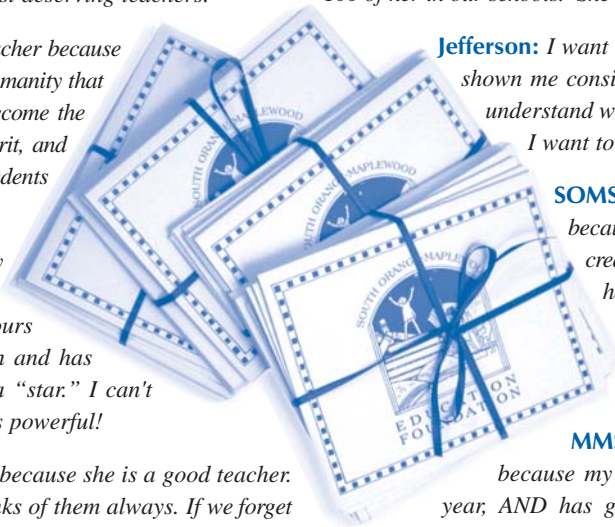
**Clinton:** *I want to honor my teacher because she is a good teacher. She cares about her students and thinks of them always. If we forget our lunch bags at school, she brings them to our homes. If we are sick, unhappy, or in a good mood, she will send a note home too.*

**MMS:** *I want to honor my child’s teacher because my child has adored social studies this year, AND has gained a global, long-range view of history for the first time. Thanks for the challenge!*

**Marshall:** *I want to honor my child’s teacher because she is a wonderful teacher. She is 1000 steps above being a good teacher – she is a beautiful and very caring human being, always willing to help.*

**CHS:** *I want to honor my child’s teacher because he captivates and motivates his students with his creative lessons and respectful personality. Our daughter has grown tremendously as a student due to his teaching.*

Pictured above are SOMEF notecards. Support SOMEF: purchase 6 beautiful cards and envelopes for \$10. To order, call 973-275-5088.



## RIECKE FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS ATTEND DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION CONFERENCE

Three 6th grade Maplewood Middle School teachers attended a conference this summer to learn about differentiated instruction. Differentiation addresses multiple learning styles and permits students to demonstrate their knowledge in various ways.

As recipients of the first Michelle Traina Riecke Teaching Fellowship, Valerie Sharp, Angela Medise, and Eve Kingsbury attended a four-day conference sponsored by Staff Development for Educators in Las Vegas. The conference exposed these teachers to the research and methods needed to address the reorganization of the 6th grade into classes of heterogeneous, diverse learners from the previous homogenous sections.

According to Principal Kristopher Harrison, who applied for the Fellowship, the teachers are now revising current units of

study to implement the strategies and have shared resources with 6th-grade colleagues at MMS. He expects the teachers to continue to share their experiences with differentiated instruction at staff and department meetings. While teachers have made many “wonderful, creative, adjustments,” the total teaching of the redesigned units won’t be fully realized until next year, he said.

Eve Kingsbury, a Language Arts teacher, already has redesigned her approach to teaching. The conference exceeded her expectations and she returned with many resources, including lesson plans and rubrics (assessment tools) that she’s been adapting for classroom use. She’s created “tiered” activities for students to select from in her teaching units. Kingsbury explained that she introduces students to the

final assessments at the beginning of a unit, and then teaches different ways students can achieve the learning objective. She’s constantly regrouping students based on interests and abilities.

The other two teachers, Valerie Sharp and Angela Medise, teach social studies and science, respectively. Mathematics remains homogeneously grouped.

The conference, said Harrison, provided a “dynamic opportunity for these great teachers to be exposed to the best minds in the field. SOMEF extended them an opportunity that will impact students for years to come.”

The Fellowship was established in memory of Shelley Riecke, former president of the South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education.

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## SPOTLIGHT ON GRANTS

### MINI-GRANT: VISUAL THESAURUS AN ALTERNATIVE LEARNING TOOL FOR THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

Blocks away from the corner of Valley and Parker, fifty Columbia High School students participate in the off-site Montrose Alternative Program. Here, they receive individualized instruction in a small setting. Students are selected because they have experienced significant difficulty in the areas of academics, attendance or behavior.

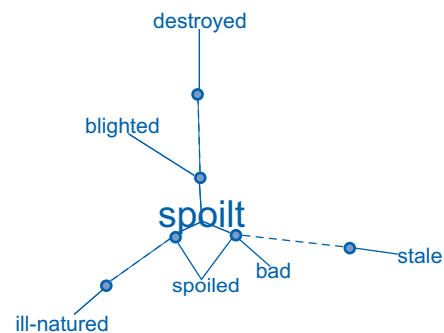
The English component of their coursework centers around a student-driven writing program that addresses all phases of the writing process, from the initial "motivational moment" through the rough draft, peer editing, and final revisions stages.

With the support of a SOMEF mini grant, a non-traditional technology-based tool is helping the struggling authors find their voice. Montrose students have access to the Plumb Design Visual Thesaurus, an engaging software program that creates 3-D relationships among English words. The software uses dynamic typography and design to create a web of relationships among words. The result? An innovative approach to language. Word forms that are closely related become brighter and are grouped toward the center, and those that have less relation disappear from the display.

Grant recipient, English teacher James Denham, has found the Visual Thesaurus to be an effective learning tool. "After using this interactive study tool for a three month period last year, our kids demonstrated significant improvement on a controlled vocabulary standardized test. They commented that it greatly expanded their awareness of word alternatives and also acted as an on-board dictionary when used in conjunction with their word processing program. It was easy to use, entertaining, and informative."

A resounding sixty-eight (68) percent of the students that participated in the project were able to improve their vocabulary recognition skills as a result of this study.

The Montrose Alternative Program has also forged a relationship with Plumb Design, the creators of the Visual Thesaurus, and was one of the first high school groups in the country to test the finished product when it was launched.

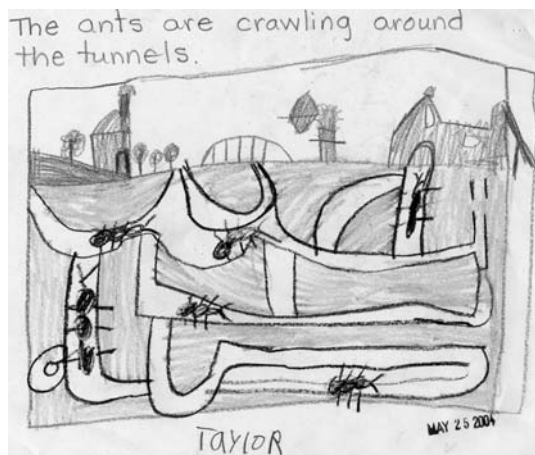


*An example of how Visual Thesaurus shows the relationships among words.*

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## MINI-GRANT: INTEGRATING ART

They say that a picture is worth a thousand words. At the Clinton School, the act of drawing helped give students a greater voice.



A SOMEF mini-grant allowed Kindergarten, first and second grade teachers to help their students make stronger connections between visual and verbal expression. Expanding on a Montclair State University funded demonstration project, the teachers used the grant to buy art supplies, and to further integrate art into their existing curriculum.

Across the grades, children were encouraged to draw. To sketch. To observe. To imagine. Kindergarteners participated in a classroom project, recording their personal experience at home with Goldie, a stuffed class mascot. First graders were more scientific in their observations, drawing and describing leaves from a variety of trees. Second graders engaged in field study, traveling to Sandy Hook to observe and record a lighthouse and its exquisite detail, as part of their integrated plan of study.

"Writers work from observation, imagination and memory," said Carol Lerner, a Clinton Kindergarten teacher. "We found that when our students wrote after having drawn in their sketchbook first, the writing was much more detailed and vivid. Even the youngest students, who would dictate their

sentences to their teacher, showed great imagination. It was as if the pictures acted as a stimulus to the brain."

Ms. Lerner and her Clinton colleagues – first grade teachers Marlene Cutrufello, Michelle Harth, and Beth Frascella, and second grade teacher Bernice Hall – believe that when art techniques are introduced alongside language arts, social studies, math and science, a student's critical thinking skills are enhanced, as are their fine motor skills and powers of observation.

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



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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 THE DATE: SUNDAY, APRIL 17TH**  
**SOMEF QUIZ BOWL**  
First time ever!

Our annual major fundraiser this year, will be a Jeopardy-style Quiz Bowl for the whole community!

All ages are welcome to join in the fun at Maplewood Middle School. Watch for details in school newsletters and other publications, or check our website [www.somef.org](http://www.somef.org) starting on February 1st.

**MAJOR GIFT TO THE CHS TV STUDIO**

Through the great generosity of a member of the South Orange/Maplewood community, SOMEF made a gift to the school district of \$80,100 to be used towards new equipment and upgrades to the Columbia High School TV Studio and its Emmy-winning TV Studio Arts Program. The official unveiling of the improved facility is anticipated in January 2005.

**YOUR DONATIONS TO SOMEF WILL BE MATCHED**

Donations received by DEC. 31, 2004 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

**2004-2005 Board of Trustees South Orange-Maplewood Education Foundation**

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