



the Hawk Talk



Stillwater Elementary

www.stillwaterptsa.org

Unit 2.16.24

December 2013

Volume 9 Issue 4

Happy Holidays from the PTSA!

A Message from your PTSA President

As we move into the holiday season, my mind is on family traditions. We each grew up with certain traditions, then as we blended families and had children, we took something from each side of the family and, perhaps, added our own spin, so our children have the traditions they are growing up with.

When I was a child, our traditions were pretty simple – leftovers from the Depression-era my mother grew up in. We spent December watching the Christmas specials on television – Rudolph, Frosty, Santa Claus is Coming to Town, Andy Williams, etc. We would get a cut tree from a lot and decorate it with the same decorations every year. My mother seemed to always choose the Charlie Brown tree on the lot – the one with one side missing and needles falling off before we even got it home. Our tree always had different colored lights and silver tinsel hanging on it. I remember my mother getting angry when we would throw the tinsel on the tree rather than placing it carefully in clumps of 4 or 5 strings on each branch of the tree. My grandparents had a 4-foot tall silver tinsel tree that my grandmother decorated either with pink or baby blue decorations. (I hated that tree.) Christmas Eve and Christmas Day were spent with my maternal grandparents, either at our house or theirs. We each opened one gift on Christmas Eve and Santa delivered a few more to open Christmas morning. We always got an orange, unshelled nuts and a candy cane in our stockings. We had the traditional Christmas dinner of turkey or ham and the usual fixings. Sometimes one or more of my unmarried great aunts would join us. There was nothing sad about the traditions I grew up with. But when I was a kid, I dreamed of the kind of Christmas I would see on television with snow, lots of company, women baking cookies and pies, a large beautiful tree with elaborate decorations and white lights, lots of beautifully wrapped presents being exchanged, and a delicious multi-course Christmas dinner.

My husband has a large, close extended family with lots of aunts, uncles and cousins who lived nearby when he was a child. His parents owned a jewelry store, so Christmas was a busy time of year for their business. The kids worked in the store after school and during Christmas vacation. Other family members pitched in to help also. It was a time for the whole family and their many friends to get together at one house or another. Women wore fancy dresses and furs, men wore suits and ties. Cocktails were served. Their traditional Christmas dinner was prime rib, something I had never seen outside of a restaurant until I was an adult. My mother-in-law was famous for her pecan pie.

When I was a teenager, my family moved to a predominantly Mexican neighborhood. As I recall, all our Mexican neighbors were Catholic. My Caucasian family is not Catholic and rarely attended any church. Christmastime in this neighborhood was very different from the traditions of my family. Right after Thanksgiving, families started decorating their houses, inside and out. Nativities went on lawns with lots of lights and Santa, big candy canes, and fake snowmen.

Holiday Message continues on page 2 ->

What's Inside

Our Volunteers are Awesome	3
Popcorn	4
Elf Workshop	5
PTSA Board Elections	5
Fundraising	6

Fill out your forms online!
Stillwater PTSA now offers parents the convenience of event, membership forms etc. all in one place:
www.stillwaterptsa.org

Save the Date

November

Friday, Dec. 6, 13 & 20th
Release at 2:00pm

Friday, Dec. 6th
Elf Workshop 6-8pm

Tuesday, Dec 10:
Art Docent Training 7pm

December 23-January 3rd:
Winter Break

2013—2014
**STILLWATER ELEMENTARY
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Newsletter Editor
Ann Marie Gill

Holidays (continued)

Alters featuring the Virgin Mary surrounded by Christmas lights were prominent in homes. But most importantly to me, the cooking started, and then the parties. Huge parties that spilled into the street and incorporated the entire block went on every weekend between Thanksgiving and Christmas. The smells of cooking peppers, handmade tortillas, tamales of many varieties, homemade salsa and guacamole, shredded beef cooked in drums, and pit-cooked pigs and turkeys filled the air. The first year we lived in that house, these traditions were uncomfortable for my family. But our neighbors insisted that we join in the festivities and embraced us. For the next few years our neighbors gave us holiday gifts of tamales, enchiladas and Mexican cakes. We gave them See's chocolates. I loved those tamales and have never been able to find or recreate a tamale as good as those I remember. On Christmas Eve, the entire block, except for my family and a couple of other Caucasian families, went to church for midnight mass. While they were gone to church, Santa visited their homes. When they came home about 1:30 a.m., they opened their gifts, had breakfasts of eggs, tortillas, chorizo and pastries, and celebrated through Christmas Day with food and drink. As a kid, these seemed like such exciting traditions compared to the ones I was used to. As a result of living in that neighborhood, my family developed the tradition of eating a Mexican dinner on Christmas Eve, which is a tradition I have continued for our children.

I think about my daughter's birth family in Chicago who are African-American. Having Lacey in common has blended our families and we have all learned a lot about inclusiveness from each other. Their traditions include a small artificial tree, dressing up in their "Sunday best" for Christmas service at church, lots of praise singing and "amen" and "yes Lord", cooking lots of fried foods, greens, and macaroni and cheese, and many loud, animated people cramming into a small home to share holiday food, humor and cheer. They spend time remembering those who have passed and being grateful for what they have. Lots of "do you remember" stories are circulated. The family is too large for everyone to be able to afford to give everyone else gifts, so they draw names each year and give a gift to the person they have chosen. Right after Christmas comes the 7 days of Kwanzaa. Different family members host an evening meal for family and friends to celebrate their African-American heritage.

Another one of our daughters was adopted from Russia. We learned that Russian families celebrate Christmas in January. This is because the long-standing communist government did not allow Christian celebrations, and the only acceptable church was the Russian Orthodox Church. At the orphanage where our daughter lived for 7 years, Father Christmas brought each child a bar of bitter dark Belgian chocolate. This was quite a treat for those children and was the only gift they received. The ladies who were caretakers in the orphanage did their best to decorate and make the building feel festive for the holiday. Sometimes people from the community would provide extra food for the children living in the orphanage during the Christmas season, but most in that Siberian community were struggling to survive themselves during the harsh winter months. Our daughter had a hard time understanding and adjusting to the perceived largeness and commercialism of American Christmas. It was quite overwhelming for her for many years.

One of our sons married a woman from a Jewish family. They celebrate Chanukah with our daughter-in-law's family, with traditional Jewish food and the nightly lighting of a Menorah. They then celebrate Christmas. Christmas for their family is very secular. Our son puts up a tree that the family decorates with mostly homemade decorations. Our daughter-in-law never decorated a tree before having children. So our grandchildren are developing traditions that encompass both Chanukah and Christmas.

Holiday message continues on page 4 ->

Volunteers are always needed and appreciated!

Thank You for Making the Library Fun

It's certainly hard to find free time between the start of school and the holiday season, but many parents found time to help out, and for that the PTSA thanks you!

The library, also called the LRC (Learning Resource Center) offers opportunities for parents to be involved with young readers. Mrs. Roberts, along with co-VP Jae Holt, would like to thank the following Stillwater parents who helped make the library, fun, organized, and interesting:

Lloyd McCracken - providing steampunk-inspired art and manipulatives, "Reading Dad" and library assistant

Scott Riegel - "Reading Dad"

Floyd Burrow - "Reading Dad" and library assistant

Wendy Burrow - "Reading Mom" and library assistant

Melissa Lutzenhiser - library assistant

Gayle Saunders - library assistant

Julie Logan - library assistant

Pam Deming - Book Club moderator and library assistant



Thank you for your support of the library and making it a destination for our students!

Many Thanks To Give This Month

Reflections, Book Fair and Bingo Night have already come and been great successes! We want to thank all the many volunteers that made these events so successful. We would especially like to thank our president, Pam Deming for all her work on Bingo Night and for donating all those amazing books for the Bingo prizes. Thanks Pam!

There are many upcoming ways to volunteer in 2014. We have the Talent Show, Dads & Donuts, Moms & Muffins, Carnival and Staff Appreciation Week. These are really fun events. Some just need an hour of your time the day of the event, while others need a bit more to make them run smoothly.

If you have any questions, you can email one of us VP's, Jae Holt at jae_holt@hotmail.com, Julie Logan at juliemlo@hotmail.com or Gayle Saunders at gaylemaries@gmail.com.

Many thanks from your veeps,

Jae Holt

Julie Logan

Gayle Saunders



Holidays (continued)

As you can see, traditions in our family have evolved and changed over the years. Our grown children have spouses or significant others, and we have to share them with other families with other traditions. We now have grandchildren whose families are creating their own traditions. We have occasionally travelled out of state to spend Christmas with extended family. But our kids have said over and over that they want to spend Christmas at home. It just doesn't seem like Christmas when they're at someone else's house or in a condo or hotel somewhere. They want to wake up Christmas morning to their tree with the decorations we get out every year. They want their traditional Mexican Christmas Eve dinner, prime rib Christmas dinner, Dad's spiced apple cider, and Mom's homemade caramels. They want to bake and decorate cookies for Santa and open their presents in their own home. Although it doesn't look like the Christmas I dreamed of as a child, I am happy that our children love our traditions. This tells me that my husband and I have created the ideal Christmas for our children. Wherever life takes them, they will have happy memories of the holiday traditions our family has created.

Whatever your traditions, however and wherever you celebrate the holidays, the important thing is that you are creating memories and a foundation of traditions for your children. May your holidays be filled with love and happy memories.

Sincerely,

Pam Deming
President

Popcorn

Popcorn is available the second Wednesday of each month. Be sure to send a quarter with your kiddos. If you are interested in volunteering to help with popcorn please contact Bronwyn Boman at email bb092182@gmail.com.



Improving schools one ballot at a time.

Dear Riverview Families,

The Riverview School District will be running a renewal of the Technology Capital Projects Levy and Educational Programs Maintenance and Operations Levy in February 2014. Funding generated by these levies amounts to approximately 25% of the operating budget for our schools. Failure to pass these levies drastically reduces operating budgets for RSD. Parents are key to passing our levies and every vote counts. Please insure you are a registered voter.

REGISTER online or download forms at <http://www.kingcounty.gov/elections/registration.aspx>

DON'T DELAY! It takes one month to be eligible to vote.....Assure your voice is heard

VOTE for Riverview Schools in February 2014.

Thank you,

Riverview Schools Committee

<https://www.facebook.com/RiverviewSchoolsCommittee>

Elf Workshop December 6th

Is everyone ready to play some REINDEER games? Seeing is believing, so head on down to Stillwater's Annual PTSA Elf Workshop on Friday December 6th from 6-8 pm in the gym. We will have many new fun crafts and a few of the time tested favorites, such as our ever popular "fleece pillows". Mr. Madigan pulled some strings with the elves and Stillwater is excited to welcome some of Santa's most reliable form of transportation, but he is keeping it a secret which of the Reindeer will be flying in to spend the evening with us. Come have a cup of hot chocolate and a cookie, then go ahead and get your picture taken and visit with Mr. and Mrs. Claus.



If you are interested in helping organize or volunteering at the event, we would love to have you. Please contact Ann-Marie Bourgeois at stillwatersocialchair@gmail.com or Sarah McKenzie at sarahmckenzie@outlook.com. This is a great way to kick start your holiday season, let us help put you in the holiday spirit!!

Upcoming SWE PTSA Executive Board Elections for 2014-2015

Would you like to have a bigger voice in next year's events? Are you interested in leading the PTSA in a new direction? Do you have fresh ideas and energy to help out? We are looking for people interested in being nominated to serve as PTSA officers - President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer - for the 2014-15 school year.

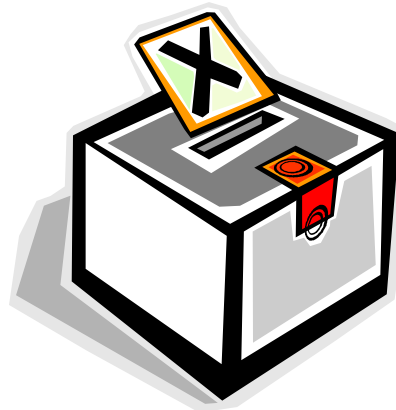
PTSA is one of the largest child/student advocacy organizations in the country and is truly focused on contributing to the education and enrichment of our children's lives, at school and beyond. The opportunities for contributing are countless and the more diverse the membership and leadership of PTSA is, the broader it's reach in our community can be. All it takes is a passion for kids and the commitment of a little time and energy (ok, maybe more than a little - but it's not an unmanageable amount either!) and you can truly make a difference.

If you are interested and would like more information, please contact the nominating committee,

Lynda Brown at l.brown@earthlink.net,

Jennifer Anderson at jennandjoeanderson@hotmail.com or

Julie Logan at juliemlo@hotmail.com.



Art Docent Training

Come and learn how to spend a few hours once a month to enrich your child's life through art. All art docents are highly encouraged to attend training even if you have been an art docent in the past because the program has changed. This year we are collaborating more closely with the teachers to provide a fun and exciting experience for the kids.



Training is December 10th from 7 to 8pm in Portable B.

Thanks,
Ruby Childs | rubyjchilds@gmail.com
Art Education Chair

Box Tops

Congrats to Mrs. Stephanie Rosbach's class for collecting the most BoxTops (520) and Labels for Education (373) for the month of October!

Thank you Laura Horne for counting them all for October!

****Make sure you put your teacher's name on the baggie or you will not get credit for your classroom!****

****Be sure to "LIKE" the Stillwater Elementary PTSA Facebook page to see who wins for the month of November!!!**

Entertainment Books

Please return your un-purchased Entertainment Books or send in a check for \$25 to Stillwater PTSA.

If you have any questions contact Marsha Staley at 425-788-7556 or email marshastaley@hotmail.com

Join the PTSA today
www.stillwaterptsa.org