

FROM THE CO-PRESIDENTS CATHY STOCKER & KAREN THORNTON

December was certainly a great month for Westbrook spirit! We had a wonderful turnout at Skate Night at the top of the month and by the time Winter Break rolled around kids were proudly toting home bags full of Westbrook spirit wear. (Finally, my kids have a winter hat cool enough to wear!) In between, Westbrook demonstrated its community of caring spirit by donating armfuls of coats and gifts to our sister school, Viers Mill Elementary. And let's not forget the dozens of families who showed their Westbrook pride by ordering Homemade Pizza and helping us raise \$764 toward our fabulous curriculum enrichment programs!!



Speaking of curriculum enrichment programs, look inside this month's Patter for some wonderful student voices describing their impressions of musical performances and special needs committee-sponsored assemblies! There's no better testament to supporting the Westbrook PTA!

So, thank you Westbrook families, for all your generous support and spirit! We wish you a most joyous and fulfilling new year!

Cathy Stocker & Karen Thornton

PTA Co-presidents

PS: You can find this and other recent Patter issues posted on our *new & improved* Westbrook website: <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/westbrookes/>

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WINTER COAT COLLECTION A RADIANTSUCCESS

Warm Up to Our Sister School!

Westbrook Families – Thank you for all of the coats collected during the coat drive! We collected about 70 coats, including half a dozen brand new coats, as well as boots, hats, gloves, and snow pants. All of the coats were given to the Linkages to Learning program at our sister school, Viers Mill Elementary in Silver Spring, and distributed to Viers Mill students or other MCPS children or teens, as needed. Thank you also to Kristin McNavage, Westbrook parent and Viers Mill teacher, who dropped off half of the coats at Viers Mill. Thank you! Valerie Baruch(Naomi, 2nd grade).

NEW VISITOR MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AT WESTBROOK

New & Improved Visitor Protocol

A new Visitor Management System (VMS) has been installed at Westbrook.

The VMS is being installed in every school in MCPS. This new system requires us to scan the license of every visitor to our building. Every visitor who goes beyond the main office (to volunteer, visit a classroom, attend a field trip, etc.), must check in AND check out in the main office. If you are just coming to pick up your child at the main office or leave something on the drop-off table, you will not need to use the system. Between now and winter break we will be practicing with the system and ask all visitors to please try to remember your license or ID. If you do not remember it, we know it is hard to get used to a new system mid-year and can work with that. BUT, after winter break, all visitors must have ID with them.

This system is designed to ensure the safety of our students, monitor who is in the building, and prevent unwelcome visitors. Please be patient and understanding with us as we implement this new system.

BULLYING STOPS HERE

By Jack Lavorel

Bullying is a bad influence and doesn't get you a lot of friends. But we can stop that!

On December 13th and December 20th Westbrook Elementary School invited 3 special guests. They each showed us a different way at looking at bullying. For example, our first guest had a disability. We all saw him in a different way. He was smart, funny, and gave us a very important message, "Believe and you can do anything," he told us. Our 2 other guests showed how you can be a bully and how you can stop it. You can help by not being a bully. What would you do if you had a bully? Very important message. "Believe". "If you believe, you can."

COMMUNITY OF CARING UPDATE

Value of the Month: Trust

These quotes will be read aloud on the loudspeaker at school each week and will be used as the basis of discussion as well. This month we are recognizing the value of **TRUST**.

January 3-6, 2012: "A trustworthy person is someone to whom we can talk and on whom we can depend." (How to Create a Community of Caring Elementary School)

January 9-13, 2012: Remember the golden rule...Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." (The Best of Character)

January 16-20, 2012: "Put your trust in others." (The Best of Character)

RECESS 101 APPEAL

By Lori Berman

Westbrook has limited recess equipment and lots of children who are looking for something to do at recess. The school is collecting used equipment, especially balls, so that our children will get more exercise and spend less time standing around at recess. (Balls are constantly lost in the creek.) Please go to your basement, find a couple of balls, a jump rope, maybe a rarely used hula hoop, and bring them to the main office.

More physical activity means our children will learn more, have more fun and, we hope, go to bed easier (a win-win for all of us!). In fact, one research study found that people learn vocabulary words 20% faster following exercise than they did before exercise. So, go now... run, don't walk... find a couple of things you no longer use and please drop them off this week at the main office!

Balls allowed: soccer, kickball, nerf balls, any other soft-type ball. Basic rubber playground balls are particularly popular. Balls not allowed: footballs, baseballs, softballs, lacrosse balls, etc.

They also really need teetherball clips (they seem to break or disappear a lot).

Please use permanent marker to write WESTBROOK on everything you send in.

January 23-27, 2012: "The only way to have a friend is to be one." A friend is someone you can trust. (Ralph Waldo Emerson, American essayist, poet & philosopher)

January 30-31, 2012: "Trust is something that is difficult to establish. It is very fragile that needs to be taken care of. Once trust breaks or shatters into pieces, it is difficult to rebuild." (K. Cunningham)

If you have any questions, please contact Randi Vogel (Ms. Pickle) at: Randi_S_Vogel@mcpsmd.org,
Nadine Gabai-Botero & Kristina Zissis
Community of Caring Liaisons

Westbrook Website

Revamped, Reorganized & Re-energized

Hey NASA! You think you are so special with your rocket launches and your high tech Mars rover? You want to see a launch? You want to see hot and high tech? Check out the launch of Westbrook 2.0!!!

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/westbrookes/>
The revamped, reorganized, re-energized Westbrook website is now your essential source for:

Quick links to the very latest on the Westbrook expansion project

Current info on all PTA-sponsored after and before school activities with hotlinks to parent coordinators

By-grade classroom newsletters and curriculum information

Monthly calendar of school and PTA events

Archived issues of PTA meeting minutes and Patter

Homework, absence, and discipline policies

Synopses of PTA advocacy efforts

A direct link to the Friends of Westbrook School (FOWS)

A website for making your charitable donations

And much more.....

We owe a deep debt of gratitude to Westbrook parent and new Webmaster, Jesse Gordon. Jesse donated dozens of hours of his creative genius to make this launch happen. The combination of his vision and amazing work ethic has been magical for our website! Feel free to contact him if you have additional ideas for useful material to house on the website, or just to talk shop with a brilliant, creative design guy (jessegordon@threeofchange.com).

So add <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/westbrookes/> to your bookmarks (heck, make it your homepage and stay on top of the very latest construction developments starting in the new year!) and please join us in thanking Jesse for what will surely become an indispensable resource for all Westbrook families!

VOLUNTEER UPDATE

Parent Volunteers Log Over 1,800 Hours

Congratulations and a big THANK YOU to those Westbrook parents who have been hard at work both in the school and at home. You have dedicated over 1,800 hours since September to Westbrook students, PTA Activities and supporting the school in general. This is an amazing start to our year and I know that the teachers and staff at Westbrook truly appreciate all of the time parents give to our school.

A gentle reminder to all: please keep track of your hours. If you have not done so, please start a page in the Volunteer Notebook in the Main Office to track your hours each month. If you are working mostly from home on school

events or committees, I will send a monthly email to the list serve requesting your hours logged.

Here are examples of activities which count:

1. Direct Student Support (classroom help, field trips, tutoring, guest speaker)
2. School Support (media center, recess rangers, chaperoning field trips, after-school & club activities, Xeroxing worksheet for teachers, at-home projects for the classroom)
3. PTA activities (Board, committees, fundraisers, organizing events, prep for meetings, room parent planning).

Please remember also that student confidentiality is critical. Any personal information about our students and their behavior is strictly confidential. Please do not gossip with other parents about students in any classrooms you are working in. This is unfair to our teachers and students and undermines our community of caring.

Thanks again for all of your hard work and I encourage everyone to join in and count your hours! If you have any questions you can contact Erin Harcourt:
erinharcourt@verizon.net.

AQUA EAGLES

In-School Field Trip, by Amanda Baratz

About a month ago, the 5th grade aqua eagles had an in-school field trip to grade our school yard in the following categories: runoff and erosion, transportation, vegetation, and bio diversity.

Runoff and erosion are pollutants that come down from rainwater or stuff that people dump onto roads, sidewalks etc. after answering some multiple choice questions, we got a score of 22.

In the transportation section, we got a score of 17, in the vegetation section, we got a score of 22, and in bio diversity, we got a score of 28. We also got 89 bonus points. Our full score was 101!!!!!! So our score is A+ :) .

Not only did the aqua eagles grade our schoolyard, they also pulled off lots of invasive plants growing on the fences by the stream. It was so much fun!

To help keep our school clean, and keep our grade at A+, make sure to always pick up your trash, don't throw stuff into the creek, and just over all, try your best to keep our school clean.



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A COMMUNITY OF CARING

FIND US ON THE INTERNET AT:
montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/westbrookes/



We're still collecting Box Tops so don't forget to keep clipping! Box Tops can be found on regularly used products such as General Mills cereals, Kleenex tissues, Ziploc baggies, Yoplait yogurt, and Hefty trash bags. Simply clip the Box Tops, put them in an envelope or plastic baggie, and either send them to school in your child's backpack or leave them in the Box Tops collection box on the drop-off table.

ENTERTAINMENT

Musical Theater News

In December, under the expert direction of Ms. Gianne McNeil, Westbrook First Graders performed a musical entitled *I Like Being Me!*

Written by Lanny Sherwin, the message of *I Like Being Me!* helps children to realize that they are not alone in their feelings and helps them to express how they feel. The charming and original lyrics are easy for children to relate to and understand. Some of Mrs. Wilson's first grader class had this to say:

-“I am excited because I learned my line and scared because it's sort of new.” Will

-“My favorite things were when our class sings *Your Special Light* and when my lines come into the musical.” Erica

-“I feel good. I am proud.” Joseph

-“The play makes me feel excited and wonderful. Plus I am not nervous.” Alexandra

-“I am excited because I learned my lines and my mom is proud of me. My dad is proud of me too.” Ziza

Mrs. Fernandez's kindergarten class viewed the musical, afterwards some of the students commented:

- “I liked how they singed and danced. I bet they worked hard on it. They were really good.”-Elizabeth

- “It was about how you should treat people the way you want to be treated.” -Abby

- “One of the stories was about being yourself.” -John

- “One of the stories was about good sportsmanship.” -Alex

- “I really liked the tune of how they singed.”-Vivian

The Westbrook PTA supports Ms. McNeil's commitment to directing a musical for each grade. We would like to thank Ms. McNeil for her dedicated initiative which goes way above and beyond the established music curriculum. The PTA underwrites the cost of these musicals with your generous contributions!

IN THE COMMUNITY

For Our Kids: Parent Support & Resource Organization

For Our Kids, For Ourselves is excited to announce our programming for 2012 beginning in January. We will be resuming our Sunday Lecture Series, and offering a new daytime Parent Support & Learning Program.

Our Sunday Lecture Series, presented by esteemed Healthcare and Education Professionals, will discuss hot topics that affect children and families with emotional and learning difficulties. This is a great opportunity for parents, teachers & educators, caregivers, health professionals, and others who are interested in learning about these behaviors to meet, learn and understand the issues and challenges that affect all who interact with our children and families. Location: Congregation Ohr Kodesh

Our new daytime Parent Support and Learning Program facilitated by Linda Warschoff, will provide both peer to peer support AND learning from a board-certified health professional. Each month, a guest speaker will be teaching and advising parents on concrete tools and recommendations on topics relating to raising children with ADHD and/or Sensory Processing Disorders.

The group will meet the third Thursday of every month (Jan-July) from 9:15am - 11:30am, at Congregation Bnai Israel, in Rockville. For more information or to RSVP for any

of our sessions, please email Jaime at adhdparentsforum@yahoo.com.

For Our Kids, For Ourselves is a grass-roots Jewish parent support & resource organization that is open to all faiths. Through our programs, parents are able to confidentially connect with others who understand the challenges of raising a child with learning & developmental differences and social issues.

AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Schedules Online

After school activities for the spring semester are listed on the PTA website at <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/westbrookes/pta/extracurricular.aspx>.

In spring 2012 we plan to offer all the same activities from the fall, on the same days of the week (unless some unforeseen conflict arises). For a number of activities, such as Glee Club, Chinese, and Chess, the fall session continues into January or early February, so the spring session will not begin until February or March.

Please bookmark the Westbrook Website so you can turn to the PTA page's "Extracurricular Activities" link for posted info about coordinator emails, dates/times, and registration info.