

Stephen Knolls Newsletter

Information for Parents of Stephen Knolls Students

April 2009

Calendar Updates

For calendar information you can go to the MCPS website and click on School Calendars under Short Cuts. <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/calendars/>

Note From the PSA President

Parents and Staff, don't forget to sign up to help with our **Annual Spring Community Yard Sale and Fair on Saturday, May 16th from 11am until 3pm.** We could really use your help. Since we'll be having another cake walk this year we would love any donations. If you don't like to cook then feel free to buy a cake or cupcakes. We're not picky! If you are interested in selling your items at the Yard Sale a space with a table and chair will be \$15 again this year; a space only is \$10. Contact Ms. P at 301.649.1970 to make a reservation. If you have any other questions call me at 301.530.2353 or samcampbelldesign@comcast.net.

We also will have our **Staff Appreciation Breakfast on May 1st.** We need help with food donations and if you can spare a little time that morning that would be great! Frittata's, muffins, fruit and anything else you can think of that our staff would enjoy can be dropped off the day before or the morning of the breakfast. We can re-heat hot dishes in the oven or microwave. Let's show our staff how much they mean to us and our children.

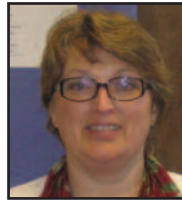
We had a Feasibility Meeting this past week and starting this summer we will see some improvements to our school. It may take some time to get everything we'd like for our building but we'll keep on top of it. For now the side playground will get a new rubberized surface, new ceiling tiles have already been installed and more automatic doors will be installed. There will be more improvements as time goes on (things like new bathrooms will take time).

We will have a **PSA Meeting** after Spring Break concerning the Yard Sale so please join us. Date and time will be announced later. Have wonderful and restful Spring Break!

Best,
Sam Campbell
Stephen Knolls PSA President

PRINCIPAL'S CORNER

Dear Families and Staff:



We have had a busy third quarter just come to a close on March 30th. The teachers and therapists are completing the third quarter updates and will be sending home a progress update soon. As always, we are focusing on learning at Stephen Knolls School. The Alternative Maryland State Assessment (Alt-MSA) was just completed and sent on its way

to be scored. We are hoping to have another year of high Reading and Math scores. This will be the first year that the Science scores will count toward our AYP (Annual Yearly Progress). In order to prepare for the science, staff received training in this area. We also held our first ever Science Fair! What a wonderful display of prekindergarten thru 12th grade science concepts and experiments. Each class displayed what they were doing in the classroom and had items for other students to explore. Ms. Anita O'Neil and Mr. Jonathan Keiffler came out from the main science departments to enjoy this event.

The first week in March brought us "Read Across America" week. Each of the special visitors wore a Dr. Seuss hat and read a special story to the students. The children loved to have the visitors in their rooms and we loved showing off our school.

We have a busy 4th Quarter planned for staff and students.

- Spring break will be the week of Monday, April 6th thru Monday, April 13th. We hope everyone enjoys time with their friends and families.
- The Week of April 14th thru 17th is Math Week. Each classroom will have a math activity displayed outside their classroom for other students to enjoy. I get to judge the best projects. (I know that will be a very difficult decision!)
- The Week of April 20th thru April 24th is Earth Week. A flyer will be coming home that describes how we are learning about the environment.
- PSA Yard Sale will be held Saturday, May 16th. We hope to have a large family turn out to make this a fun event for everyone. PSA is sending home a flyer with phone numbers for you to call if you are interested in setting up a table.
- Spirit Week comes to SKS the Week of May 18th! More information will be coming home about this and our Field Day events!

As you can tell, things are happening at Stephen Knolls School! We are making sure that our students are learning and also having fun! Let's enjoy the nice weather and take time to celebrate our families.

Sincerely,
Tina Shrewsbury
Coordinator

The Classroom Corner

Preschool Update

February and March were a busy months for Pre-K and PEP classes. During February, we celebrated Groundhog's Day, Valentine's Day, President's Day and Black History Month. Mrs. Rosenfeld's class discovered that objects produce shadows. We shined a flashlight on many different objects and discovered what our shadows looked like. Mrs. Varner's and Mrs. Garrett's classes learned that Groundhogs live underground and come up out of their holes to see their shadows. Mrs. Varner's and Mrs. Garrett's classes also started some special activities. The first was "The Special Person of the Week" (King or Queen). Each week, a child in each class is picked randomly, and all week they have special privileges such as sitting in a special chair, being able to bring in toys to show and having their story and portfolio shown and read to classmates. This activity promotes positive self-esteem. The second activity was the "The Take Home Library" where students check out a book from the class library and carry it home in the baggy and cloth bag provided. When the book is read to the child, he /she is to draw or have a parent write what the child dictates about the book read using a "Driting Sheet." When the book, bags and "driting" sheet are returned to class, the child can select a new book to check out. This activity is to promote family reading. We select books on Mondays and Wednesdays.

All of the preschool classes learned about Community Helpers. Mrs. Klein's class learned about mail carriers. They dressed up and delivered Valentines to their friends. Mrs. Davin and Mrs. Rosenfeld learned about Firefighters.

The Preschool classes will continue their phonics work by learning about letters and sounds. The letters V, I, J, K, F, C, and H were explored in several classes. In addition, some classes learned some new sight words. Activities included matching letters and their sounds, as well as writing the letters with manipulatives, and shaving cream. Reading books is always a favorite activity and some of the books we read included: *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *5 Friendly Fireman*, *Valentine Mice*, *It Looks Like Spilt Milk*, *Franklin's Valentine's*, *Under My Hood I have a Hat*, *Send It*, and *Millions of Snowflakes*. These are all good books to explore at your local library. The Collaborative class finished up the Store Unit and began the Restaurant Unit. They also learned the letters V for Valentine, P for President, G for girls, and B for boys.

The ESOL Classes, taught by Ms. Jun, have gotten off to a great start with many participants going to her daily.

In Math, some of the Preschool classes continued to count with 1:1 correspondence. We also explored patterns, more and less, directional and positional words, and recognizing numerals. We all participated in the science fair and carried out various explorations and experiments. In Math, the collaborative class finished the Sorting Units and began the Pattern Unit. Children from Mrs. Rosenfeld's class, Mrs. Klein's class and Mrs. Garrett's A.M. class have begun mainstreaming with Mrs. Varner's Pre-K classes during Literacy and Math times. We are busy in the B hall, but we have a lot of fun!

Elementary School Update



Ms. Rowe's class spent a lot of time learning about famous African Americans in history in celebration of African American

History Month. The students did oral reports on each famous person using voice-output devices and we identified the shared character traits that make for a strong, independent thinker. We celebrated Chinese New Year by shopping for exotic food at an Asian market and enjoyed tasting it during snack time that week.

Ms. Riffle's class finished up their unit on the Water Cycle. The students loved playing in the water! Ms. Weiss' class completed their Science Fair experiment on Force and Motion. The students really enjoyed participating in the fair.

Middle School Update

The students in Mr. Tarloff's sixth grade class and Mrs. Robinson's eighth and ninth grade



combination class have been very busy over the last few weeks. They have been working hard on their Alt-

MSA testing sessions in Reading, Math and Science.

On February 18, 2009, the students took some time out from their usual classroom routine to head to the gym to experience the wide variety of lab experiments and presentations at the First Annual Stephen

Knolls Science Fair! They practiced their scientific discovery skills by looking at, listening to, and touching everything from plants to tennis balls to toy cars. They also got to use some reading and counting skills at some of the demonstration tables.

Outdoor Education

Mr. Tarloff's 6th grade students were able to attend the day sessions of Outdoor Education at the Smith's Center and join their classmates from Longview and Carl Sandburg Learning Center. This was the first time in a very long time that Stephen Knolls was able to attend this yearly event. We look forward to next year's 6th grade group going out for a longer period of time.

Read Across America Week

Although the schedule was mixed up by the unexpected snow storm which cancelled school on Monday, March 2, 2009, and delayed the opening time for school the following day, the students were visited later in the week by a host of Guest Readers from around the school system and the community. These individuals enthusiastically shared their love of reading by reading aloud to the students in our two classrooms from a selection of age appropriate books, newspapers, and poetry. Each student was proud to receive his/her own personal "Read Across America" sticker and certificate to commemorate the event. They made thank you notes and sent them to the Guest Readers to let them know how much the class enjoyed their time together. We all continue to enjoy the written word and are already looking forward to next year's event!



High School Update

The Senior High classes are busy with their Otis Spunkmeyer Cookie Baking business. It certainly smells wonderful in the building when they are baking. They also have busy preparing for the end of the year Prom. They will vote on the theme and elect a king and queen.

The Supporting Arts

Preschool Art

Our latest big project in the preschool art room is a jungle painting. We talked about all of the different things an explorer could find in the jungle (trees, snakes, birds, tigers, fish etc.) and then the students drew their own jungles with oil pastels. We then used watercolor paint to finish our jungles, and practiced mixing secondary colors (orange, purple, and green) from primary colors (red, blue, yellow). The oil pastels and watercolor paints repel one another, and the effect is a great resist. The oil pastels resisted being covered up by the paint because oil and water do not mix. The lines stayed bright and the paint filled in anywhere on which there was no drawing. Ask your child how many different animals they included in his/her painting.

As the weather starts to get warmer, you can use the opportunity to paint outside with your child. Collect a couple of large paintbrushes from around the house (the kind used to paint walls), and a big bucket to hold water. Kids can practice painting with water on outside walls, driveways, sidewalks, and balconies. After a couple of hours the paintings will be gone, and the sidewalk is ready for another session. You can also tape the paintbrush to a long stick for large muscle fun.

School-Aged Music

The students in the school age music program practiced playing their instruments in preparation for their School Program "Shakin' It Up". The March performance was enjoyed by everyone in the building. What a wonderful example of adapting music so everyone can enjoy it! Additional movement and listening examples were presented to the students, when time allowed. The preschool students have been practicing their singing. They learned songs related to the winter season, bears, and emotions. Also, they played instruments to the beat, in rhythm patterns, and on cue.

Preschool Physical Education

As the spring of the school year approaches, it is a good time to review some of the activities that have been covered in our school-aged Physical Education program. So far this has included the following:



running, jumping, hopping, balancing, jumping jacks, cardiovascular endurance, and spatial relationships to objects, other students, and general space. Our students also continue to practice the visual eye tracking of a variety of objects from different sized balls to slow-moving balloons. They have practiced their underhand throwing skills as well as overhand throwing skills, kicking balls,

rolling and bowling balls at targets, and using paddles to strike balls and balloons. They have practiced basketball dribbling, soccer dribbling, and passing balls with their hands and/or feet. Some exciting jump roping and hula hooping activities have also been added! The students also have been introduced to the practice of children's "beginner" Yoga. Some classes have been introduced to age-appropriate tag games, as well. This spring the students will be revisiting, practicing, refining, and extending many of the skills that they have covered thus far in the school year as practice is the mother of skill mastery. This spring they will be having fun with parachute activities and Mr. House will continue to provide specific and prescriptive feedback to help the students master motor skills, while affording opportunities for them to succeed in cooperative situations.

It is a well-documented fact that Americans become increasingly less active as they age. Just as children and youth can learn the habit of regular physical activity, they can learn to be inactive if they are not taught skills and given opportunities to be active during their

childhood. Parents can help their children form healthy habits for a lifetime by getting them outdoors to parks and recreation games on a regular basis.

Mr. House once again would like to invite you to visit his physical education class. There you will see our students participating in developmentally appropriate activities that will help increase their physical competence, self-esteem and joy of being physically active no matter what their physical abilities may be. By enhancing our students' physical activity education, we certain we will be able to help them enjoy a lifetime of physical activity and good health. We welcome your support!

School-Aged Physical Education

During the month of January, the students completed some experiments, which involved using a basketball to explore different scientific ideas. The first experiment involved the use of two basketballs. One was inflated until it was full, while the other did not have much air in it at all. The students tried to bounce each ball. They discovered that the one with more air inside bounced better because the increased amount of air molecules it contained caused it to react off of the ground and bounce higher. The second experiment involved creating friction on the ground to demonstrate that the more friction that exists, the slower a ball will roll on a surface. We used a volleyball net which was placed on the ground to create the friction. The third and final experiment involved weight. The students first predicted which was heavier, a basketball or a beach ball, and then held them to find out. These experiments served as a great lead-up to our science fair which also explored many scientific hypotheses.

Read Across America Week March 2-6, 2009



Stephen Knolls School's annual Read Across America event got off to a late start this year, due to a surprise snowstorm. But by Wednesday morning, we were back on track and enjoying the benefits of having approximately twenty Guest Readers come and read to students in each of the classes. Some classes were even able to listen to more than one reader on different days of the week. These Guest Readers enthusiastically answered the call to read to our students. They came from MCPS' Central Office, from MCEA (the "teacher's union"), Barnes & Noble Bookstore in Bethesda (where we held our November Fundraiser), The Maryland State Board of Education, and the Maryland State Government down in Annapolis. All of the students and staff enjoyed the entertaining interaction that was provided by every Guest Reader. It was hard to tell who was having more fun, the Guest Readers or the students! Students came home with certificates and stickers among other things to mark the event. It is hard to keep track over the years, but we think that 2009 marks the tenth anniversary of Stephen Knolls School's celebration of this NEA (National Education Association) promotion of the joy that reading provides to children and adults of all ages. We encourage each family to take the "Read Across America Pledge to Read to My Child" throughout the whole year to make reading a real family affair! We wish to extend a heartfelt thank you to our Read Across America Event Coordinators, Mrs. Regina Robinson and Mrs. Patricia Skelly.

The Media Connection

In the media center, school age classes emphasized Black History Month through books, newspaper articles, internet, and jazz music. Preschool classes used Curious George to introduce the idea of a "main character" and snow stories to learn about "setting". And we especially enjoyed our visit from the Cat in the Hat during Read Across America week.

They are especially excited to announce the final totals from the Barnes & Noble fundraiser. Thanks to everyone who participated, our media center now has an additional 146 books and 2 DVDs! These books are directly related to the school curriculum and are a great support for our teachers. Thank you all!!

A Healthy Perspective

Did you know that the highest rate of flu is in the spring?

Remember to:

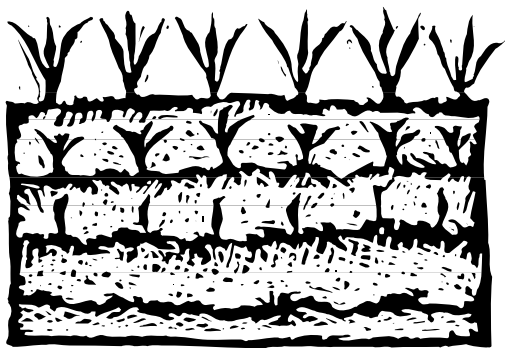
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Treat yourself and those around with consideration and kindness.

Also, please remember to send in those absence slips when your children stay home.

Reaping Earthy Rewards— The Stephen Knolls Greenhouse

Plants and students continue to thrive in our greenhouse. The purchase has begun of adapted tools and materials through the expenditure of funds obtained from the the Connections Beyond Sight and Sound Grant

awarded to Stephen Knolls. The original plan was to incorporate heat lamps into our current greenhouse so that we could grow vegetables with the purpose of starting our own little mini-farmers market in the spring. However, our staff is now over the moon because we have been allocated part of the Montgomery County Public School's federal stimulus package for the building of a new greenhouse!! Yeah!!! This may mean that we will delay the start of our mini-market until the new greenhouse is built - but how exciting and worth the wait! More details will be forthcoming as we become aware of them.



The Therapeutic Touch

Communications For School Aged Students

During the month of February, we honored presidents, past and present, by studying about President Abraham Lincoln, who celebrated his two hundredth birthday this year, and President Barack Obama. We used pictures, "News 2 You" (a national weekly children's newsletter written using picture symbols), augmentative equipment such as the Step-By-Step, Big Mac, and the wonderful Promethean Boards. Students enjoyed seeing enlarged items on the screen. We also studied African-American History Month, featuring Dr. Mae Jemison, Dr. Benjamin Carson, and many others. In addition, we started a Quilt project. In the period of the Underground Railroad, quilts were used as important modes of communication among slaves. During our activities, we used gestures and sign language to make choices, answer yes/no and WH (who and what) questions, and follow directions. In March, we will start our projects on spring by planting various types of plants and learning about their life cycles. So stay tuned to hear more about our wonderful activities that incorporate communication, history, and science.

Science Day-February 18, 2009



Stephen Knolls School held their first school-wide Science Fair Day on February 18, 2009. Each of our fifteen classrooms displayed their poster expo along with an experiment. Every student had an opportunity to be a SCIENTIST for the day and explore the world of physics, life, earth/space, and environmental science. The exhibits featured classroom projects, hands on experiments/ activities and

Science and Math related worksheets. Picture communication symbols, tactile objects, assistive technology, and voice output devices were implemented to address the multi-sensory components of learning.

Science projects are great opportunities to build real-life research experience! Students participated in activities using the five "E"'s of Science: Engage, Explore, Explain, Extend, and Evaluate!

Expos featured the following exhibits and experiments:

- Plant Life Cycles: Terrarium Ecosystem
- Force & Motion with Magnets: Gravitational Forces Between Objects
- Friction & Gravity on Varying Surfaces
- Electrostatic Force: Salt, Pepper, Balloon, and Wool Experiment
- The Respiratory System
- The Digestive System
- Human Body: Bones of our Hands and Feet
- Density and Buoyancy: Does it Sink or Float?
- Growing hands: Graphing our data!
- Building Towers
- Chemical Reactions: Building a Volcano and Causing An Eruption With Baking Soda And Vinegar
- How Does Air Pressure Effect the Dynamics of a Bouncing Basketball?
- Physics of Sound Waves - Loud and Soft Frequencies
- Understanding the Water Cycles: Condensation, Precipitation, and Evaporation

We had many visitors from Montgomery County Public School's Central Office: Ms. Anita O'Neill (Pre-K-12 Science and Engineering Supervisor), Jonathan Kieffer (Instructional Specialist; Science and Engineering), and Ms. Bronda Mills (Director of School Performance). What a great day it was for staff and students for learning and exploring Science concepts!

Community Connections

Mar. 16, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM. Time for Tea: Stress Management with Yoga. Connect with other parents of young children with special needs over tea, light refreshments and great conversation. Wear loose, comfortable

clothing and bring a blanket and pillow.

Gwendolyn E. Coffield Community Center, 2450 Lyttonsville Rd., Silver Spring. A collaboration of MC Government, Community Support Network and Toddlers Program.

RSVP by Mar. 2, 240-777-1216. Mention if you need any aides, services, or assistance with childcare to participate in this seminar.



Mar. 17 - May 7. Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy, \$. Call for appointment. St.

Elizabeth Catholic Church, 917 Montrose Rd., Rockville. Offered by American Hyperbarics, Inc, 888-425-0402.

Mar. 18, 7:00 - 8:30 PM. Independent Living. An Adolescent Transition Lecture for adolescents and young adults with disabilities, parents, clinicians and community providers designed to educate about issues important to adolescents with disabilities approaching adulthood. Kennedy Krieger Institute,

Greenspring Campus, Bowles Bldg., Board Rm., 3825 Greenspring Ave., Baltimore. Co-sponsored by the Maryland Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene, Office for Genetics and Children with Special Health Care Needs and the Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities at Kennedy Krieger Institute, RSVP, Jenny Jones, 443-923-2790, 800-390-3372.

Mar. 20, 9:45 - 11:45 AM. Putting an End to Whining (\$30/person; \$55/couple; \$25/PEP member; \$45/PEP couple). For parents of children ages 2-12. Learn how to set limits on these behaviors and encourage more positive interactions. PEP, 10100 Connecticut Ave., Kensington. Offered by the Parent Encouragement Program (PEP), registration required, 301-929-8824, www.parentencouragement.org/.

Mar. 21, 2:30 - 5:00 PM. Good Work! Raising Responsible, Competent, Cooperative Kids. (\$35/person; \$60/couple; \$30/PEP member; \$50/PEP couple). For parents of children ages 2 - 18. Learn practical strategies to help children develop life skills, connect with others, organize tasks, manage time, solve problems and set/meet deadlines. PEP, 10100 Connecticut Ave., Kensington. Offered by the Parent Encouragement Program (PEP), registration required, 301-929-8824, www.parentencouragement.org/.

Mar. 24, 6:30 - 7:30 PM. MCPS Curriculum - MCCPTA Delegates Program. Learn more about the curriculum in MCPS. Carver Educational Services Center, 850 Hungerford Dr., Rockville. MCCPTA, www.mccpta.net.

Mar. 25, 6:30 - 9:00 PM. Tricare/Other Benefits & Safety Considerations for Military Parents of Children with Autism and Other Cognitive Disabilities. This class and support group for military parents will feature guest speaker Scott Campbell. Wonderful opportunity to learn about medical benefits and safety issues and to network with other families. Army Community Center Service, 9800 Belvoir Rd.,

Bldg. 200, Fort Belvoir. Reservation required - on-site childcare and free foods/beverages. Sponsored by Fort Belvoir and Fort Myer Military Community Exceptional Family Member Program, Marcia O'Connor, 703-696-8467, TTY 703-696-4675.

Mar. 26, 7:00 - 9:00 PM. Step-Parenting: Realistic Expectations. Explore the importance of crating new rituals in the family while maintaining respect for differences among family members. Interpretación en español disponible si se registran con anticipación. Bethesda Library, 7400 Arlington Rd., Bethesda. Offered by the YMCA Bethesda Youth & Family Services. Questions or registration with Pam Mintz 301-229-1347, parenting@ymcadc.org.

Mar. 28, 11:00 AM - 4:00 PM. 15th Annual Young Child Celebration. "Children Bring Communities Together" celebration with family friendly hands on activities with doorprizes and give-aways. Lakeforest Mall, 701 Russel Ave., Gaithersburg. Sponsored by Montgomery County Early Childhood, Dept., Health & Human Services, Gregory Stevens, 240-777-4661, Gregory.t.stevens@montgomerycountymd.gov

School Absence Form

Date

My child, _____
first and last name

was absent on _____
Date

due to _____
reason why

Parent signature

Please complete this form and send it in to your child's teacher after an absence from school.

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