Bringing the Arts To Light at Key School

This year has seen the flowering of an idea that’s been growing for quite some time: Bringing the visual and performing arts to the forefront at Key Elementary.

Back in 2009, an Arts Exploratory Committee headed by Key parent Lauren Goodyear Schramm began working on a proposal for the arts at Key. They surveyed parents, consulted teachers and administrators at Key, and discussed possibilities with the administration at Fillmore. They also consulted with other comparable schools and with experts in the arts. The goal was to find ways to bring more arts into Key while also improving students’ experience with the Fillmore program that was already in place.

The recommendations the exploratory committee presented to Principal Landeryou in May 2010 were both innovative and ambitious, and inspired many of the changes already seen at school. The Chorus program began with more than 400 freshly cut trees, wreaths, garlands, and lots more, this year’s Tree Sale fundraiser is set to be as fun as ever. Join us as we kick off the holiday season Saturday, Dec. 1 and Sunday, Dec. 2 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Key School parking lot. Our trees are freshly cut the day before and delivered straight from Maine and Pennsylvania by former Key parents Bill and Judith Jones.

We are also looking for volunteers! If you haven’t participated in the past, you will find it is a great community event and a perfect way to get into the holiday spirit. We will have a fire pit, hot chocolate, live holiday music, and endless kissing ball jokes. There is something for everyone (setup, sales, register, clean up) so please contact Chuck Wolverton at cwolverton@bdo.com if you are interested in helping out. Let it snow!—Pete Kaminskas

Enjoying the new cafeteria student art gallery

THE TREE SALE IS HERE!

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Same Team, Same Goal
Parents and Teachers, Working Together

The crux of the work we do as parents on behalf of the PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) is to provide support to our excellent, dedicated teachers so they can be their most effective in the classrooms. We receive regular feedback from them thanking us for our support. But are we doing everything we can to help them?

There’s no time like the present to evaluate our habits and routines and see whether we are upholding our part of the parent-teacher partnership to ensure that our kids are fully prepared for school each day—physically, academically, and emotionally. We recently checked in with our teachers to ask them how we are doing and what their suggestions are. This was their advice:

Get your children to school on time.
As soon as children are in their classrooms, teachers are ready to discuss the day’s work and give out directions, but when a latecomer arrives they have to start over. “A late start of even 10 or 15 minutes can impact the structure of the day,” says Ms. Scholem (pre-K).

Do your best to limit absences to times of illness or only when absolutely necessary. Every day of teaching counts in every grade—from our youngest to oldest students—so teach your kids good habits by showing them school is a priority. Tell teachers about absences or appointments in advance. Activities and lessons carry over from one day to the next and planning is influenced by the students who are present.

Make sure your kids have had a full night’s sleep and a healthy breakfast.
The recommended amount of sleep for 5- to 10-year-olds is 10 to 11 hours per night, according to the National Sleep Foundation. The Cleveland Clinic adds that lack of sleep can interfere with children’s cognitive function, which can lead to learning problems.

Read with your kids.
Listen while they read aloud and read to your children (choosing more challenging texts) at least 20-30 minutes every night. Ms. Jones (2nd) offers this advice: “Read daily and read a variety of genres and a variety of texts (magazines, newspapers, recipes, maps, travel guides, biographies, poetry, multicultural texts, etc). Children

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Harvest Fest 2012: It Was All Fun And Games!

Under a bright blue sky with a crisp cool breeze, this year’s Harvest Festival proved once again to be a fantastic event, bringing together the Key and Palisades communities, including Key alumni who return year after year. The festival also brought in about $3500 for the General PTA Budget. Rocklands Barbeque (thanks to the Snedden Family—huge Key supporters and alumni) provided some fantastic food, and the bake sale was a huge success thanks to dozens of delicious donations from Key parents.

The pumpkin-decorating contest was judged by local residents Mary Moore, Barbara Vandegrift, and Mat Thorp, and winners were announced by our very own Ward 3 Councilmember, Mary Cheh, who called the festival one of her favorite events of the year.

The festival would not be possible without months of planning and an outpouring of parent involvement. Special thanks to: Co-chairs Cao-imhe Dardis, Meriwether Beatty, Maria Garcia, and Ashby Mims; Paul Souchar (Haunted House); Abby Horrigan (Book Sale); Yong Lee and Lauren Regardie (Bake Sale); Ece Gimer and Kwik Kopy (printing); and Mr. Landeryou, all the teachers, room parents, and ticket sellers.

Thanks also are due for the generous donations from Kicks Karate, Hapmudo, Sullivans, Tugooh Toys, Glen Echo Hardware, Glover Park Ace Hardware, Ximena and Paul DeFilippes of Public Tenley, Jetties, Something Sweet, Georgetown Cupcake, Whole Foods, the Macarthur Safeway, Starbucks, AMC Loews Theater, and Dave & Busters.

SHHHHH! IT’S THE HOLIDAY SECRET SHOP

From Dec. 5 to Dec. 7, the gymnasium at Key Elementary School will be transformed into a pop-up holiday shop! The PTA’s annual Holiday Secret Shop allows students to purchase inexpensive gifts for their families during the school day. The children are always thrilled to have surprises to hand out for the holidays. (Instructions for making purchases will be coming home in their backpacks.)

The committee has already purchased more than 1,500 gifts, but help is still needed for wrapping them. (Bonus: This is something you can do in your own home!) If you would like to help out, please contact co-chairs Ayanna Kelley and Marilyn Nowalk at keyholidayshop@gmail.com. You can also volunteer during shop hours to help students make their purchases. Visit www.SignUpGenius.com/go/508094DA9AC29A57-holiday to sign up for a slot.

KEYNOTES

Keynotes is the PTA newsletter of the Francis Scott Key Elementary School, Washington, D.C.

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UPDATE: BIG MOMENTUM FOR RETAIL REBATE

The Key School Student Council is pleased to announce its sponsorship of the Key School Food Drive! During this charitable time of year, we are asking families to donate food and paper items to benefit SOME (So Others Might Eat). A list of suggested packaged items has gone home in student backpacks. The drive runs through Tuesday, Dec. 18th. The Student Council will keep a record of items donated for each class; the class with the most items collected will be rewarded with a class party.

The Student Council greatly appreciates the support of the entire Key School community. Keep a lookout for the Food Drive sculpture by the upstairs lobby that will help us track our goal!—Ms. Shields, Mr. Wetherald, and the Student Council

The Key community is doing an amazing job raising money through our retail rebate program. We’re already halfway to our goal of $5000 for the school year (thanks in part to the 1,450 individual box tops submitted in October), and the holiday shopping season has just begun!

If you haven’t done so already, please take a moment to make sure you’re signed up with our biggest earners: Safeway. “We’ve only got 13 new registrations this year,” says Retail Rebate chair Abby Horrigan. “Let’s get to 25!” Registration forms are in the front lobby of the school or you can go online (eScrip.com). Amazon.com. Shop through Key’s custom link and the school earns a little bit on everything you purchase. The link can be found on the Key school website (KeySchoolDC.org).

give. Add the iGive tool bar to your web browser and the program gives a little bit back to Key with every purchase. Available at iGive.com.

And remember, says Horrigan, “these programs help raise money for Key when you do what you regularly do. They just plain make sense!”

Taking a Look Ahead

From the Life After Key committee, here are upcoming dates for open houses and information sessions at local middle schools.

**Hardy Middle School**, 1819 35th St., NW, 202-729-4350, hardyms.org. Open Houses will be held from 9-10:30 a.m. on the following dates January 29, 2013, February 26, 2013, March 26, 2013.

**BASIS-DC**, 410 8th St., NW, 202-393-5437, basisdc.org. Parent information session on Wednesday, December 12, from 6:30-8:00 pm. To RSVP, go to tinyurl.com/BASISDC-RSVVP. Parent tours on December 4 and December 11, from 10-11 a.m. These are limited to 6 parents each and by reservation only. Please contact Abby Brisbon with BASIS DC at 202-393-5437 to sign up.
How can you help the arts flourish at Key?

Volunteers are needed to hang art in the cafeteria gallery, load the CD player each day at lunch, and for a variety of other upcoming projects. Email Traci Hill Femister at tfemister@hotmail.com if you’re interested in pitching in. The committee will be holding standing monthly meetings on the first Tuesday of every month from 6:30 to 7:30pm at the Palisades Library, starting December 4th. All are welcome.

Also needed desperately are CDs for the cafeteria music program! If you have some to loan or donate, please leave them in the “Art Committee CD Box” across from the front office. In it you’ll find pieces of paper to label loaner CDs with your name and phone number.

ARTS (FROM PAGE 1)

that very fall, and it continues to grow.

This year, under the stewardship of committee co-chairs Traci Hill Femister, Anjna Kirpalani, and Chris Feller, the Arts Committee has initiated several new projects to make the arts a part of everyday life at Key. Here’s what’s already in place:

Music at lunch. The Arts Committee has been playing music in the cafeteria for the children to enjoy at lunchtime. “The goal is to introduce the kids to many genres of music from around the world,” says Femister. With a CD player graciously donated by the Taylor family as well as help from Kindergarten aides Ms. Mehring and Ms. Clark, who make sure the music is played daily, students have listened to classical, jazz, Latin, and music from our own chorus.

Art in the cafeteria. The new student gallery on the cafeteria wall features work from Fillmore as well as pieces submitted for the seasonal Arts Committee projects. The first project, “Falling Colors,” brought in a truly remarkable range of work. “Thanks to all the students who participated,” says Femister. “It has been such a joy for us to see your ideas of fall colors!”

Work for the next Art Committee project, “Celebrating Winter Traditions,” is due Dec. 3rd. Students can hand submissions to their classroom teacher or parents can bring them to a dropbox in the 2nd floor teachers’ lounge.

Art for other committees. This year, the committee was asked to work with students to create cards as a gift for the veterans who participated in the Veterans’ Day assembly. Co-chair Kirpalani spearheaded this excellent effort in short order, working with some of the first graders. Students will also be working on a poster for the Holiday Shop Committee. If your committee has an art need, please contact Kirpalani at anjnak@gmail.com—preferably with at least three weeks notice.

Next up is an even more ambitious project: The first annual Key School Arts Fair, to be held in the spring. Much like the Science Fair, the Arts Fair is intended to showcase student work, with demonstrations by local artists and hands-on activities. But most of all, it will show that the arts have truly come home to Key Elementary.

Dylan Gibson, 1st grade

Emma DeFelippes, 2nd grade
who have developed a love for reading, who have been exposed to a variety of texts and come to class with a diverse reading background, show success in all subject areas!"

Check over your children’s homework with them. This both encourages them in the good habit of checking their own work, and shows them that you are involved in supporting their learning.

Communicate with the teacher about anything that might affect your child at school (academically, socially or emotionally) and let your children know that teachers and parents are on the same team, both working toward what is best for students. Mr. Riley (3rd) suggests reinforcing consequences at home for negative behaviors at school: “I would find it helpful for parents to brainstorm a few consequences for their children (less screen time, no playdates, etc.) when a bad ‘report’ comes home from school. This will allow the child to understand that parents and teachers are working together and have the same standards for acceptable and unacceptable behavior.”

Read and reference teacher communications that are sent or e-mailed home. And ask your child open-ended questions about what is going on at school, advises Ms. Mahurin (1st).

Be a good role model. “The most powerful thing for [students] is to have good role models at home,” says Ms. Shields (5th). “If they see positive, thoughtful, learner-centered behaviors at home, they will demonstrate them at school.”

Like us, you can probably spot a few things on the list that you are inspired to work on and we would like to thank the teachers for their input! Ms. Scholem offers this piece of praise as well:

“We have such great support from the parents here at Key. I feel that most parents understand and appreciate our program and that is wonderful ... I truly know how fortunate I am to work with the Key parent community.”

A Recipe For Health
Dairy-Free Holiday Cheer

Yes, you can do it! There are wonderful ways to adapt your favorite holiday treats without the dairy.

Why would you want to avoid dairy? As much as we love our milk and cheese, it is not a bad idea to minimize our dairy intake. The protein in milk, casein, causes inflammation in our cells. And while those of you who are not lactose-intolerant may not notice it on a physical level, it is still happening inside your body. Repeated cellular inflammation is what causes free radical cells, which are building blocks for chronic disease. Recent studies have shown that following diets higher in plant protein and lower in animal protein lessens risk for various chronic diseases (like cancer, heart disease, and diabetes). Reducing your dairy intake, therefore, is not a bad idea! If you are worried about not getting enough calcium because of reducing dairy, increase your intake of healthy foods like dark leafy greens (kale, collards), nuts (almonds), seeds (pumpkin), and seaweed (dulse and kelp).

This recipe is a super fun way to have a wintery treat without the dairy and refined sugar.

Hot Cacao
Serves 2

1 1/2 cups fresh almond milk
1 heaping Tbsp. raw cacao powder
1 Tbsp. coconut crystals
2 tsp. agave nectar
2 tsp. raw honey
1/2 tsp. cinnamon

Combine in a pan. Whisk vigorously to absorb the cacao. It will take a minute or two of whisking—stick with it. Heat gently, and please don’t let it boil. Pour in a pretty mug and enjoy! For adult taste buds, you can add a light sprinkling of chili powder for a Mexican Hot Cacao!

By Christy Halvorson Ross, co-chair of the Healthy Food Committee, along with Ingrid Bush. Ross is a certified nutritional counselor from the Institute of Integrative Nutrition and a certified raw foods educator. You can find her blog at www.thecancercompanion.blogspot.com. Recipe © Christy Halvorson Ross.