



The Harrington Her-

ald

A Message from the Principal

Elaine Mead,
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The Harrington Big Backyard program connects students, teachers, and parent volunteers to the wonders of nature. I love seeing groups of children as they go out for a walk with anticipation and when they return you can feel their energy and excitement. A survey of classroom teachers last year showed that the Big Backyard had a very positive impact on achieving goals for science inquiry and understanding the natural world.

I am most grateful to two parents, Giulia Paliotti and Pamela Cohen, who have dedicated significant energy and time to making the Harrington Big Backyard Program a source of pride for our school. These co-chairs are orienting parent volunteers and serving as wonderful guides to us all. They are here ready to walk and share their enthusiasm with children and adults. A special thanks to Pam who designed a website link that outlines everything about the program. If you have not seen the link on our website yet, I encourage you to check it out!

<http://harrington.lexingtonma.org/BigBackYardWebsite/index.html>

As a result of an LEF grant, "Revisiting the Big Backyard," Fran Ludwig, K-5 Science Coordinator, teachers, and parents across the school system worked together to improve and update our materials. Judy Crocker, former Harrington parent and currently the community representative on the Harrington School Council, worked on the project as a representative from our "backyard." As we continue to revise and refine our science curriculum, we appreciate how important the walks are for our children. Teachers make connections to literacy, mathematics, and social studies as well as science through these shared experiences.

Please note that the program relies on parent volunteers to lead small groups of 4 to 6 students on walks outdoors during the year. Each walk is held during school hours and takes approximately 30-45 minutes. Big Backyard walks are great fun and provide a way for parents to support the classroom teachers and also interact with the children. We are always looking for new parent volunteers. As the website says: "No previous experience is necessary!" I really appreciate how your support of the Big Backyard helps our school. Please join us. Sometimes the things we love the most are right here in our own backyard! I welcome your feedback and suggestions.

Editor's Note: It was recently said to me by a parent that she didn't want to volunteer for the BBY because she did not want to tell children the wrong thing. However, it is the purpose of the volunteers to provide questions more than provide answers. Likewise, it is not uncommon to make a list of questions that the children come up with and that can't be found out on the walk. BBY volunteers are not teachers, they are guides.



November

2	Wilson's Pie Sales fundraiser begins
3	Family Math Night, Grade 3, 6:45 - 8:00 pm
4	12:15 Early Dismissal - Conference Day
5	12:15 Regular Dismissal - Conference Day
5	METCO Family Friends Day
5	LEF Trivia Bee, Cary Hall, 7pm
10	Family Math Night, Grade 4 - 6:45 - 8:00 pm
11	No School - Veteran's Day
17	School Council Meeting, 7:30am - 8:30am
18	PTA film viewing (see flyer p. 6) 7-9 pm
20	Universal Children's Day
24	Family Math Night, Grade 5 - 6:45 - 8:00 pm
25	12:15 Dismissal (K-5) for Thanksgiving Holiday
26	No School
27	No School



October PTA Minutes

Claire Sheth,
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October 2, 2009

Suzanne Bruno Introduction:

The meeting opened with a welcome from PTA Co-President, Suzanne Bruno. The topic of the morning's discussion—"Meet the Vice Principal and Support Staff"—was a suggestion put forward by members of the support staff themselves. Support staff are a vital part of the Harrington community, providing much needed extra sets of eyes, ears and hands throughout the day—particularly during recess and lunch periods. Principal Mead underscored the important role support staff members play and acknowledged their flexibility and accommodation in meeting the needs of the students and school as a whole.

Support staff member, Kathy McCaffrey shared the following overview of their work with the students. Members of the Support team spend a great deal of time with kids during their less structured periods of the day, particularly recess and lunch. And, Ms. McCaffrey wanted to assure parents that, **despite what our kids say, the students have plenty of time to eat their lunch...** An aide is always available to stay in the cafeteria for the children requiring more time.

Their other main interaction with the students is during recess, the primary focus of which is ensuring safety at all times—this includes both physical and emotional considerations. **Aides move throughout the playground, looking for any students in need of assistance and make sure kids know there is an advocate for them on the playground should they need one.** Support staff also act as liaisons to the classroom teachers, letting them know of any playground behaviors that may need to be addressed in a more structured way.

After providing an overview of their responsibilities within the school, Support Staff returned to the classrooms/playground and parents were given the opportunity to ask follow up questions to Mr. Grant, Mrs. Mead and Ms. Chamberlain.

One parent participant remarked that, "I cannot imagine doing the job [the support staff] do, and I have a lot of respect for them." This parent went on to inquire about the *support* the support staff receive to be successful in their jobs. The response is that strong ties exist between support staff and classroom teachers. Classroom

teachers are expected to be very direct and proactive in establishing firm expectations with students regarding acceptable cafeteria and playground behaviors. In addition, Mrs. Mead has periodic meetings—generally monthly-- with support staff during which staff members raise concerns and work with other members of the faculty to address those concerns. Additionally, there is always the option to hold special Open Circle sessions to address specific challenges within a class or grade level and all support staff are versed in the Open Circle language of Double Ds.

Another parent asked about **the number of aides on the playground at any given time.** Generally, 2 or 3 aides are assigned to a recess period and then they, in turn, are supplemented with educational assistants who work with children with Individual Education Plans. They are also supplied with walkie talkies and first aid bags kits while on the playground.

The conversation about support staff broadened into a larger discussion about **resources available to the school/students to encourage appropriate behavior in and out of the classroom.** To this point, School Counselor Amy Chamberlain clarified her role within the school and referenced her October Herald article regarding some exciting new counseling initiatives happening throughout the district, including the "resiliency initiative" which will investigate how we as parents and a school community can better develop this critical skill within our children. Later in the year, the counseling department will be sponsor a resiliency workshop for parents. Ms. Chamberlain will also be circulating an overview of her role at the school through the listserv to ensure that parents know when and how to utilize her services.

The last question posed during the Q&A portion of the meeting was related to **class-size**—particularly concerns about the class sizes of this year's 5th grade. The educators present agreed that the size of the 5th grade classes this year are not optimal, but were unavoidable given the number of new families with 5th graders who moved into Harrington over the summer. Despite the numbers, the classes are well-managed and, should any of the classrooms exceed 26 students, Harrington will qualify for an "overmax" aide. Currently we are relying on a student teacher and aides as needed. It is unlikely that class size for future 5th grade classes will be as high—this year is somewhat of an anomaly.

The group then turned to **brainstorming topics for future meetings**. Suggestions include:

- Bringing in a speaker/expert to discuss issues/challenges involved in cultivating resiliency in children
- Have a meeting to better inform parents about MCAS
- Sponsor a Child CPR workshop
- Hold a Harrington PTA book club—pick a book regarding child development; parenting; the intersection of home and schools—and encourage the entire school community to read and discuss the book.

The PTA Executive Committee is taking these suggestions and working to build them into the schedule for future meetings.

Other news/dates to remember:

There are some exciting **new "Green" initiatives being planned within the school**. Under Mr. Grant's and Katie Cutler's supervision, we will be starting Green Fridays. Parent volunteers will help in the cafeteria from 11 – 2 in cafeteria to help kids recycle common lunchroom materials. Parents looking to volunteer should contact Katie Cutler from the PTA Executive Committee.

Additionally, Lexington has adopted a vision/goal of **reducing its energy consumption** by 20% over the next 5 yrs. The town has asked for representatives from each school—Ms. Mead and Mr. Smith for Harrington-- to lead each individual school's efforts. We will be turning to parents and students to come up with suggestions.

Ms. Mead also announced that the schools are looking for **community volunteers to help develop emergency management plans** for the district as a whole— making sure schools are safe and that there is a planned response should an emergency require it. A community-wide committee is being created and Harrington needs some parent volunteers to serve and discuss the plan's development. Meetings likely will take place Thursday afternoons.

Next PTA General Meeting: November 17 evening meeting with former teacher, Chris Geron, who will be sharing and discussing the documentary, "Consuming Our Children."



LEF Trivia Bee

Sue Schiffer, sgschiffer@hotmail.com
LEF Communications

Please join us at the 14th annual Lexington Education Foundation (LEF) Trivia Bee on Thursday, **November 5, 7:00 p.m.** at Cary Hall. More than

forty teams will tackle trivia in a "final Jeopardy"-style format in this "bee-loved" community event to raise funds for programs benefiting the Lexington Public Schools. **You won't want to miss this fun and exciting town-wide tradition; the chance to cheer on your favorite team of teachers, friends and neighbors; and the opportunity to test your own trivia know-how against seasoned competitors.** Admission is free.

If you would like to participate from the sidelines, **consider sponsoring a team from one of the nine public schools, or general sponsorship of the event.** Team sponsorship is a tax-deductible fee of \$375; through your sponsorship you will "bee" investing in our schools.

For more information about the Trivia Bee, or to participate as a sponsor, please visit our secure website at www.lexedfoundation.org or call us at 781-372-3288.



Box Tops

Ellen Cameron, eusol@aol.com
Jacqy Fiore,
jacqyfiore@rcn.com

Box Tops are still on going every Tuesday morning. The children have been wonderful remembering to clip them and bring them in. Even with all of these Monday holidays from school, we are amazed at their diligence. Remember another way to support the school is to log on at www.boxtops4education.com and shop through their website from over 50 online stores. Harrington will benefit with a percentage of your purchase, up to 8 % at no additional cost to you. We look forward to seeing your children on Tuesday mornings.



School Committee Update

Lisa Smith,
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The School Committee Meeting on October 6th, 2009 opened with a couple of comments from the public. Bonnie Brodner introduced the **SMARTS program** here in Lexington. One can find more information on their website at www.researchchild.org. The second public comment came from Judy Crocker, who is part of the **Safe Routes program**. She announced that the 1st International Walk Day

was held on Wednesday, October 7th. The walks occur once a month.

Dr. Ash followed the public's comments with two announcements. The first announcement is a **\$250,000 grant was awarded to Lexington High School to provide security equipment** in all public places of the school. Hopefully, within the next three weeks, the funds will be received to put in place 130 cameras in the school designed to improve security. The second announcement is that Tom Snyder productions will give Lexington Public Schools **free software called "Fraction Nation" to help develop fluency in learning about fractions**. It will include instruction, assessment and guided intervention. The retail value of this program is \$12,000.

There were two discussion items on the agenda. The first item was the **School Improvement Plans**. All nine public school principals were present at the meeting. There are eighteen improvement plans in total; one plan for each school for the prior year and one plan for the current school year. Rod Cole from the School Committee asked, "What is the process for each plan; where do these plans come from?" The plans are based on district goals that are to keep in alignment with the district goals given by Dr. Ash. The nine School Site Councils (from each public school) are formed to help with this process. The Councils are made up of administration, teachers, and parents and in some cases, a representative from the Lexington community. Specific goals and statements can vary from school to school; however, there is some uniformity between the plans; such as Clarke and Diamond Middle Schools are working together on common goals; as are all six Elementary Schools. Ultimately, each principal gets to add their own personal input for their individual plans.

The second item on the agenda was the report on the District Professional Development Plan given by the Chair of the Committee, Joanne Hennessy, who is a former principal from Diamond Middle School. There are 17 members on this committee rep-

resenting the nine public schools. They met in August to develop **a plan based on making use of federal stimulus dollars to sustain continuous learning for all students and to provide our teachers and support staff with the tools to make such learning happen**. Ms. Hennessy started her report by answering the question: "Why should a school district invest in a system of high quality, capacity building, professional development?" The committee found that "teacher quality and the quality of school leadership have a significant impact on student achievement, and effective professional development can contribute to improved instruction, gains in student achievement, and more effective school organization and management." Based on a study by Linda Darling-Hammond, the committee found that "teacher quality accounts for about 40 percent of the variation in student achievement." The committee documented ten principles addressing the effectiveness of professional development and the impact it has on student learning. "Professional development is most effective when it fosters a culture of continuous improvement, improves the learning of all students, is research based, is data driven, is job embedded, supports refinement of practice, encourages the use of new strategies, promotes shared leadership and responsibility, occurs in professional learning communities, involves and reflects the diverse nature of the community and is adequately supported."

The final items on the agenda were **voting to approve the six action items**. Three items included in the list are: the Jonas Clarke Middle School Field Trip to Cuernavaca, Mexico, a second Clarke field trip to Quebec City, Canada and to accept a \$5,000 donation to support the Professional Development Program. All six items were accepted and approved unanimously.

The meeting closed at 10:30 at which time the School Committee met in its Executive Session.



Harrington's Math Enrichment

Jen Roney, jaroney@comcast.net

FAMILY MATH NIGHTS provide opportunities for parents and children to work together on math-oriented games and puzzles. You and your child are invited to join us from 6:45-8:00 pm on the dates listed below. If you have any questions about Family Math Nights or are interested in helping out with this parent-run activity, please contact Jen Roney (jaroney@comcast.net). All math nights will meet in the cafeteria. We ask for a \$3 donation at the door to cover the cost of materials.

- Tuesday, November 3 – Grade 3
- Tuesday, November 10 – Grade 4
- Tuesday, November 24 – Grade 5
- Tuesday, January 19 – Grade 1
- Tuesday, March 9 – Grade 2
- Tuesday, March 23 – Kindergarten

MATH MORNINGS are opportunities for third, fourth, and fifth graders to investigate real-life math applications while honing their problem-solving skills. Math mornings meet once a week before school through the end of May. Parents are welcome and encouraged, but not required, to attend with their children.

Third Grade Math Mornings – Thursdays, 7:45-8:30 AM in the art room. Contact Jen Roney (jaroney@comcast.net) with questions or to receive announcements and have access to our materials on the internet.

Fourth Grade Math Mornings – Mondays starting October 26, 7:40-8:30 AM in the library. Contact Bob Foley (Robert.Foley@analog.com) with questions.

Fifth Grade Math Mornings – Fridays, 7:45-8:30 AM in the library. Contact Jen Roney (jaroney@comcast.net) with questions or to receive announcements and have access to our materials on the internet.

A Message from PTA Co-Presidents

Suzanne Kouri, kouri34@aol.com

Thank you all for a successful PTA membership drive! To date nearly 70% of the Harrington Families and more than 50% of our staff are members! The majority of our members are returning families and staff. We invite new families and staff

members to learn more about the contributions the PTA makes at Harrington and encourage you to become a member in this school year. Our goal is to be able to state that we have 100% enrollment! PTA is grounded in the community and it is our policy that all interested family have access to membership and not be denied membership due to financial limitations. Families can confidentially contact one of the Co-Presidents and we will make discrete arrangements to include all interested families.

We would like to extend a very warm welcome to the 56 families who are new to Harrington this year! 28 of you are Kindergarten Families. You have many great years ahead of you. You find great joy in watching your children and their friends grow, learn and mature in this close community. You and your children will make friends that will last for many years! We have 38 new students between the grades 1-5, nearly 17% of our entire student body! We would like to extend a special welcome to you as well. We hope that your transition has been smooth and that you are all settled in and enjoying Harrington.

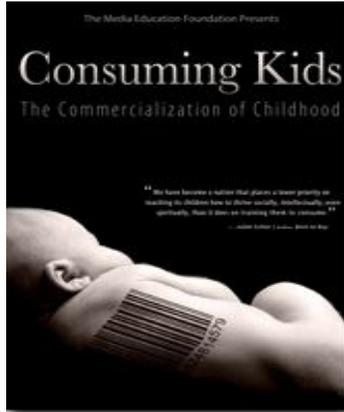
It is a reality that your donations make it possible for the PTA to advance our mission and provide multiple enrichment experiences, supplies, transportation for field trips, support to Harrington staff and more. Our membership drive has collected over \$4,000 in membership dues. We are extremely grateful to those of you who decided to generously donate beyond your membership dues. As a community you have directed and additional \$820 for enrichment, \$505 for Library, \$545 for Teacher Materials and \$1205 to the general fund. Your support makes a difference in the day-to-day experiences of our children. THANK YOU!

Thank you to PTA VP of Membership, Katie Cutler, and her team of volunteers, Jennifer Gerfen, Susanne Shavelson, Lynnell Stern, Ellyn Michelson, and Shuang Ma. Each of you did an amazing job starting with Kindergarten Orientation last Spring welcoming new families, working over the summer, and then at the start of the school year distributing, collecting and organizing all of the membership paper work. Thank you to Jerry Michelson and his superb job with our new PTA directory management software! The School Directory will a bit of a new and improved format. All PTA members will be receiving their copies soon.

Thank you all for becoming a PTA member and efforts, commitment and enthusiasm throughout the year! I hope to see you soon.

Harrington School PTA Presents

Consuming Kids: The Commercialization of Childhood



This brand new and critically acclaimed film throws desperately needed light on the practices of a relentless multi-billion dollar marketing machine that's selling kids everything from junk food to violent video games. **Consuming Kids** will change the way you think about childhood in the 21st century.

Wednesday, November 18, 2009
7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Harrington School Cafeteria
328 Lowell St.
Lexington, MA

Join us for the viewing of the film:
Consuming Kids: The Commercialization of Childhood

Followed by an open discussion.

For more information contact:
Suzanne Kouri: kouri34@aol.com
Suzanne Bruno: brunojs@comcast.net



The Campaign for a
Commercial-Free Childhood
www.commercialfreechildhood.org



Got Pie?

Support the Harrington PTA Fundraising Committee and let Wilson's Farm do the baking this Thanksgiving. Use the order portion at the bottom of this page & return it to your child's teacher. Include a check or cash with your order. Order your pies now! They are sure to go fast! **Orders due on Tuesday, November 17th.**

Pick up your orders at Harrington School lobby on Wednesday, November 25th, 8:30-9:00AM

If you have any questions, contact:
Catherine Murphy, 781-641-1559 or cgmurphy7@yahoo.com

ORDER FORM

Pie Variety	Price per pie	Quantity	Total	
Apple Hi-Pie	11.00			
Blueberry Hi-Pie	13.00			
Apple Raspberry Hi-Pie	13.00			
Apple Cranberry Hi-Pie	13.00			
Strawberry Rhubarb	10.00			
Red Raspberry	11.00			
Mince	11.00			
Pumpkin (thaw and serve)	10.00			
Southern Pecan (thaw and serve)	12.00			
Lemon Meringue Pie	13.00			
Chocolate Cream Pie	12.00			
Boston Cream Pie	12.00			
		Total # of pies =	Total amount owed =	

****Payment must accompany order form. Make checks payable to Harrington P.T.A.**

Child's Name: _____
 Parent's Name: _____
 Phone Number: _____
 Email address: _____

THANK YOU!

A Heartfelt Thanks . . .

International Food Festival came and went. It was an evening of exotic homemade delicacies and a warm time of mingling with friends old and new. Thanks to all who'd made this a successful evening. Thanks to **Pilar Lombana Azaroff, Samanthi Perera, Michael Kim, Qingli Wang, Yanling Zhang, Meenakshi Chhabra, Ming Yue & Wally Mei** for their help during this event. Special thanks to **Mrs. Culkins** from Harrington Extended Day-- she's been most gracious in allowing us to set up in her space at an early hour. Thanks to **Mrs. Minasian** for helping print the posters. Thanks to **Mrs. Wehmeyer** for her help with the lovely centerpieces. If you missed it this year, make sure you come next year. It's too good to miss!

- IFF Co-chairs, Henrietta Mei & Roberta Wilson

Michelle and I want to thank the **Harrington Community** for supporting the Walk for the Arts. Overall, it was a great afternoon walking, creating, and being with friends. There were over 125 walkers and we raised \$3000. If you are still interested in contributing please send us an email or fill out the donation forms located in the lobby. Thank you for all your support.

- Katie Cutler - katiepcutler@rcn.com

- Michelle Mabardy - mmmabardy@aol.com

The Harrington Herald

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The Harrington Herald is the monthly newsletter of the Harrington PTA, published ten times a year. In keeping with PTA Newsletter Policy, the *Herald* will print items directly related to the schools and their PTAs. This includes curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities that are PTA or system supported, and school sanctioned projects. All articles are subject to editorial discretion. Newsletter material may be emailed to Cristina Burwell (see above). If you cannot email your submission, please call her to make other arrangements.

Visit the Harrington school website for online editions and archive at <http://harrington.lexingtonma.org>.

Next Submissions Deadline: 20 November, ~~~~

