

Odyssey Day School Newsletter

May

2009



From the desk of Lori Conway

Dear Parents,

It's hard to believe that New England winter is finally over and spring has arrived. As a native southerner, I find the winters here long and tedious, but perhaps this is related to the fact that I never learned to ski!

It is Earth Day, and as I write this month's letter home, I can't help but reflect upon how much more focus on the environment there has been in the news lately. From Obama's efforts to raise the profile of wind power and other clean energy solutions, to increased media attention on the science, politics, and mobilization of social networking around climate change, to the clarification of the role of fossil fuel dependence in our current economic woes...we are all finally paying attention. How many of you visited our Science Fair last month? With its Summit title "Making the World a Better Place," and triple theme—Pollution, Health, & Energy—a collective statement was made by the students through their chosen projects, many of which demonstrated concern for the environment and its effects on people, plants, and animals. There were experiments on acid rain and solar power, a project related to local vs. imported produce, and many other green-themed ventures too numerous to mention.

I recently saw Al Gore speak at the Wang Center, and one of his central messages was aimed directly at our children. He told the story of the first manned moon landing, and Kennedy's initial call-to-action that the United States put a man on the moon within ten years. It happened eight years later. The average age of the scientists and engineers working in Houston was 26. Gore pointed out that this meant that those men and women were only 18 years old—seniors in high school—when JFK first issued his challenge. That challenge was taken up, and eventually executed, by students. My own daughter, age 17 ½, sat beside me, engrossed in the idea that global warming is going to be solved by her generation, not mine...if it is to ever be solved.

All of our children are inheriting a highly stressed planet from our generation, and that of our parents, and it is our job to prepare them for the tasks ahead that, according to Gore, will be exponentially more difficult than landing on the moon, and exponentially more expensive and consuming than World War II.

Schools—especially independent ones like Odyssey that can design their own curriculum and programs free of state mandates—are on the front lines in terms of educating children about these imperatives. We are also charged with helping our students develop the values and the skills that will be needed to address the most enormous problem ever faced by humanity. How can we as teachers and as parents best equip our children for this challenge? There are many answers to that question. Thinking about our own small school community, I would suggest that we continue, and even increase, our focus on sustainability, community service, globalization, and environmental awareness that already exists with greater passion here at ODS than at any other school at which I have worked.

Pat Bassett, President of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), writes extensively on the topic of the role of independent schools in leading the way to a greener, more economically and environmentally sustainable future. His work and his vision for all of our schools are framed by Koffi Annan's observation that "our biggest challenge in the new century is to take an idea that seems abstract—sustainable development—and turn it into a daily reality for all the world's people." Bassett believes our greatest potential point of impact is with today's students who

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Upcoming Events

- ◆ May 18-22: Celebrate the Arts Week
- ◆ May 21: Spring Concert
- ◆ May 25: Memorial Day—School closed

Kid News

have grown up amidst a dialogue quite different than their parents' generation ever experienced, with all of the aforementioned issues at the forefront of discourse, never remembering a time when these concerns were not constantly, thematically a part of their lives.



I believe there is a reservoir of social capital and social commitment in independent schools like ours that, once harnessed, can make a huge difference in the world. Witness the tens of millions of dollars raised and contributed by independent schools for disaster relief during this decade (think tsunamis and hurricanes, here and across the world). Jared Diamond, author of the best seller *Guns, Germs and Steel*, in speaking at a recent NAIS conference, said: "Most of us parents set as the highest goal of our personal financial planning to secure our children's future...but you are wasting those efforts and you are throwing away all of that money if you don't also invest to ensure that your kids end up in a world worth living in." Lofty words. Yet don't the times merit this sort of thinking and action?

As many of you know, Odyssey Day School's school-wide theme this year has been *The Global Classroom: Building a Better World*. I know that this theme will continue to reverberate in our community long after it has been replaced by future annual themes, because this year's theme is this century's theme. I am proud of your children and our teachers who worked so hard this year to connect their teaching and learning to such an important worldview. May it continue, and continue, and continue. Happy Earth Day to all!

Lori

Preschool News

The Odyssey Day School staff is gearing up for another fun-filled summer! Preschoolers through 2nd graders will enjoy arts/crafts, sports/games, swimming, and outdoor play. In addition to these fun activities, The Little Explorers Summer Program will offer swimming lessons at the YMCA, in-house events (e.g. Curious Creatures, Travelling Tide Pools) and field trips (e.g. WIngarsheek Beach, Garden in the Woods.) We are still forming summer groups and accepting enrollments on a continuous basis, so don't miss out! We look forward to seeing you this summer at ODS!

Elementary School News

On two upcoming Wednesdays during the month of May, the school will be run by auction "winners" Molly & Lizzy Warncke (working together as co-Heads), and Emily Douglas. Congratulations to all three "winners" from Janice's class, the word "winners" appearing repeatedly in quotes because I'm not all that sure that my job is that much of a prize! However, I am absolutely positive that the school will be in excellent hands on these two days, and I wanted to let parents know that if you have any complaints or concerns, please feel free to bring them to Molly, Lizzy, or Emily! Just kidding, folks! Here's wishing them a fabulous experience walking in my shoes for a few hours and then giving them back to me. Many thanks to the Warncke and the Douglas families for their generous donations to the auction that "won" these opportunities for their children. I am sooo looking forward to a break from my job! ☺

*"A mother is a person who seeing there are only four pieces of pie for five people, promptly announces she never did care for pie."
~Tenneva Jordan*



Community News

Faculty & Staff News

Nothing new this month...holding steady and enjoying the nicer weather!



For Parents

- ✚ If you haven't already, come check out the newly painted Multi-Purpose Room!
- ✚ As most of you know, our Elementary School is accredited by AISNE (the Association of Independent Schools in New England) and we are nearing the end of our three-year accreditation process. With many thanks to Margaret, who helped me with the final report, as well as Joe and other Board members who helped with the school governance sections, we are all awaiting final news from AISNE regarding our accreditation status. A "yes" will mean a green light for the next seven years until we start the process all over again. I'll let you know the outcome when I hear it, but am very hopeful we will receive a great result!
- ✚ Just a reminder that our Annual Fund is still open. We remain short of our fundraising goal, but have received some very generous donations lately for which we are grateful. The best news is that the participation rate of families was the highest this year it has ever been—that, combined with 100% faculty participation and 100% Board participation—speaks very highly of Odyssey Day School. Remember: No amount is too small, and participation is what really counts!
- ✚ As I sent around by email, our spring auction exceeded its goal and raised over \$14,000 to go towards the newly refurbished Multi-Purpose Room. Thanks so much to everyone who came out to support the school. It was a fun night, and the bidding was terrific. Special thanks to our effervescent, never-tiring auctioneer, Janet Barrineau!

***“We do not
inherit the
earth from
our
ancestors,
we borrow
it from our
children.”***

***~Native
American
Proverb***



Odyssey Day School
11 Paul Avenue
Wakefield, MA 01880

Phone:
(781) 345-6050

Fax:
(781) 245-9760

Email:

loric@odysseydayschool.org

*“Parents and
teachers as
partners”*

We're on the Web!
www.odysseydayschool.org

From O.P.A.

From Annie Barr...

The next OPA meeting will be held at the Dockside restaurant at 7:00 p.m., 1099 Main Street, Wakefield.

There will also be another OPA-sponsored Dockside FUN-raiser event on May 14th at the Dockside. Dinner from 6:00-9:00 p.m. Volunteers to help with this event are needed. If you can help, please email Annie at OdysseyParents@aol.com.

From the Board of Directors

Welcome a-Board to Preschool parent Linda Tinkler, who has just agreed to join the Board beginning in September, with a special focus on the school's marketing efforts. Thanks Linda!!



Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel.
By th' mass and 'tis, like a camel indeed.
Methinks it is like a weasel.
It is backed like a weasel.
Or like a whale.
Very like a whale.

~ William Shakespeare