

# Odyssey Day School Newsletter

DECEMBER 2009



## From the desk of *Lori Conway*

Dear Parents,

Yesterday I had a wonderful Thanksgiving dinner with my daughter Charlotte, my boyfriend Geof, and his family at his sister's home in Newbury. We ate the traditional Thanksgiving foods, did not watch football (a new treat I'd never experienced before!), and simply enjoyed each other. I was so happy to be in the company of friendly people, surrounded by salt marsh and nature, and to avoid the heated political discussions that usually pervade Thanksgiving dinners on my side of the family...although they can be fun and stimulating as well as aggravating! We all know how that goes.

At the back of my mind—way at the back—were two thoughts. The first was that Thanksgiving is a national day of mourning for Native Americans. But, I knew I'd tried to honor that on Monday during the Thanksgiving Assembly by including plenty Native American essays and prayers. My second nagging thought was that we are officially in "the holiday season" and I'm the Head of a school that, like most other schools, really wrestles with how to "handle the holidays." It is both an intellectual and cultural exercise for me and the staff I lead, as well as one that necessarily brings with it a certain amount of personal and philosophical angst. I definitely have opinions on how to "handle" this hot potato, and yet I equally have the responsibility of at least trying to bring a diverse group of parents and teachers to consensus. I am alternately adept and clumsy at this, but always well intentioned. As much as I try to avoid the Lone Ranger approach, I also know that good leadership does at times require decisions to be made when consensus can't be reached.

Now in my second year at Odyssey, I've found my feet...a bit more...and continue to steady them beneath me in a school culture much different than the one I am recently coming from or the one I experienced as a child. But I know what I hold dear, perhaps more dear than any other principle when it comes to the education of children. It is that we must not only give them a solid academic and social foundation, but must also prepare them for life after Odyssey, and the bigger world out there that gets smaller every day. We live in a global society, no longer a Judeo-Christian one exclusively. The world our children will inhabit as adults is far, far different that the world of our childhoods. So how do we responsibly prepare children to leave their small, protective families, schools, and communities to go live and work in a more complex, textured world? I believe it begins in Preschool. From children's earliest days, they must be exposed to both their own family's beliefs and traditions, and also to those beliefs and traditions that are not held by themselves; the default conclusion of kids not exposed to a variety of faiths, cultures, and customs is that others are "different" and therefore somehow not as good as their own.

Among school leaders who debate these issues, schools that avoid conflict over holidays—over how many are represented, how much they are represented, and how they are represented—are referred to as "beige schools," the color beige symbolizing colorlessness and nothingness. It's a great way to avoid conflict—to simply say "we can't make everybody happy, so we recognize and celebrate nothing." It's also a great way to limit kids' imaginations and exposure to people and traditions that are different, which in turn, in my opinion, severely disadvantages them later in life. So what to do? I say, let's be inclusive, but let's have all stake holders contribute to this process. As we enter the month of December, I invite any all and all parents with a desire to share their family traditions to please contact me. Come into your child's classroom or an All School Meeting. Visit all of the classrooms if you like!

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### Upcoming Events

- ◆ Dec. 7-11 Literacy Week
- ◆ Dec. 8 "Wax Museum" & Book Fair
- ◆ Dec. 16 Winter Musical
- ◆ Dec. 21-23 Limited Child Care
- ◆ Dec. 24-Jan 3 Winter Vacation
- ◆ Jan. 4 school opens

# Kid News



*“As we express  
our gratitude,  
we must never  
forget that the  
highest  
appreciation  
is not to utter  
words, but to  
live by them.”*

*~John  
Fitzgerald  
Kennedy*

Do this if you are Jewish and interested, Muslim and interested, Hindu and interested, Christian and interested, Buddhist and interested, pagan and interested, Jehovah’s Witness and interested, atheistic and interested, or pantheistic and interested. Ditto for any of the many faith traditions I have failed to mention. Older students have the same invitation. The faculty will not prepare lessons around faiths or customs that are not their own, lest they do injustice to them out of unfamiliarity. Parents and students, you hold the key to bringing diverse experiences to all of our students. Come one, come all—you are welcome at Odyssey, and we will all be enriched by the experiences you offer. As a faculty, we will decorate and do art projects that are seasonal, educational and fun.

Please consider being part of the solution that so many schools seek. Your participation at this time of year—and all throughout the year—has no price tag, is better than any purchased or self-created comparative religions curriculum, and is broadening for all of us in a truly organic way. I look forward to a holiday season enriched by the diversity within our own school community, not a beige one devoid of risk-taking. Together, we can all contribute to this very important aspect of our children’s growth.

With all good wishes of the season,  
*Lori*

## Preschool News

Calling all Infants!!! Odyssey Day School is now accepting Infants! In the past we have only accepted Staff or Sibling inquiries. We have recently added additional Infant spaces to accommodate the inquiries we have received in the past. If you or someone you know is interested in Infant care, please contact us. We would be happy to set up a tour to meet your needs.

## Elementary School News

On Monday, November 23, Grades Pre-K/K-8 came together for the second annual Odyssey Day School Thanksgiving Assembly. Joined by a few parents, the students and faculty all enjoyed a special gathering to reflect on Thanksgiving and thankfulness, and to share multicultural poetry of the season and even a couple of musical interludes. Thanks to all of the teachers and students who volunteered to be readers, and to Rowan, Lauren, Amanda, Danielle, and Erin, who had the courage to perform musically for the school. And bravo to all of the students in Pre-K/K, first and second grades who worked together to perform whole-class readings that were greatly entertaining to the rest of us. I can’t wait to do it again next year, and hope more parents will join in!



# Community News

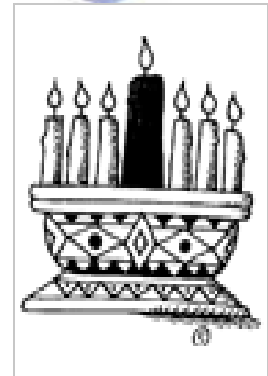
## Faculty & Staff News

We bid goodbye and send good wishes to Sara Roldan, Head Teacher of the PS2 classroom, as she assumes a teaching position in the Everett Public Schools.

Otherwise, although we have had plenty of teachers out sick, we have had no marriages, no births, and no deaths to report—an uneventful month in that respect, and an opportunity to move forward towards the New Year in good spirits!

## For Parents

- ✚ Secondary school application deadlines are fast approaching. If you have an 8<sup>th</sup> grader who is applying out and need the school to provide transcripts, teacher recommendation forms, or letters of recommendation and have not already done so, please let us know what is needed and provide us the paperwork and stamped, addressed envelopes for submitting materials on behalf of your child.
- ✚ On Monday, November 2, a very special event occurred. Retired Army Staff Sergeant David Dragan, father of teacher Val O'Brien, and grandfather of students Amanda and Hannah O'Brien, was a guest at our weekly All School Meeting. Dressed in uniform and easily commanding the attention of our Elementary students, Sergeant Dragan demonstrated the proper method of folding the American flag, assisted by 8<sup>th</sup> grader Ian Schwartz. This was the first in a planned series of assemblies focused on citizenship and patriotism.
- ✚ Please bear with us as we get our flag pole functioning and arrive at a system for making sure the flag is properly raised and lowered each day—or, left out under proper conditions, which we are currently researching. We know many parents would like to see this happen, and so would we, but it's been slow going due to mechanical issues. Thanks for being patient!
- ✚ In the event of snow, school closing info will be available on WBZ news radio, Fox 25 TV and internet, and on a school recording by 6:30 a.m.
- ✚ A great big thanks to Kim M. and Janet for the very successful Hoff's pie fundraiser. The pies were yummy!
- ✚ Congratulations to all the students, parents, and faculty who donated food items for the Wakefield Interfaith Pantry Thanksgiving Food Drive. Due to the leadership of the 5/6 class, and the generosity of our community, many families will have food on their tables who otherwise would not have.
- ✚ Another ongoing fundraiser is being run by the 7/8 class. Please bring in your scrap metal—it can be recycled, to the benefit of the Earth, and can bring us money as well, to the benefit of the school.



*Whether you celebrate or do not celebrate December holidays, we wish you all a wonderful Winter Break full of happy family moments, peace, and relaxation!*



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***“Parents and  
teachers as  
partners”***

**We're on the Web!**  
[www.odysseydayschool.org](http://www.odysseydayschool.org)

## From O.P.A.

OPA Chair Tom Maloney has been hard at work planning social events for the school community. We need more parent involvement! If you would like to get involved, please be in touch with Tom. There is an OPA mailbox in the lobby. Like last year, we hope to have some fun community events like movie nights, family swim/bowling parties, and restaurant fun-raisers. Please lend a hand!

Thanks also in advance to Eric Schwartz for planning this year's Book Fair. It will take place during Literacy Week, which is Dec. 7-11, with an evening event for parents on Dec. 8 from 6:30-8:00.

## From the Board of Directors

**From the Annual Fund letter from Spencer Warncke:**

It's always sobering to see how quickly we leap from one year to the next, but here we are again, already well into another school year along with all the things that accompany it. By now, most of you reading this newsletter should have received the Odyssey Day School Annual Fund appeal letter. If you have already donated, then we thank you for your continued support. If not, then we ask that you still consider donating to the fund. Your support is essential to ensuring that Odyssey Day School can continue its mission, and that our children can continue to flourish there. If you need another donation form, you can pick one up at the office, or request that we send one to you. As always, any amount is appreciated. This is a community effort, and all of your donations help.



**DASHING THROUGH THE SNOW, ON A ONE-HORSE OPEN SLEIGH, O'ER THE FIELDS WE GO,  
LAUGHING ALL THE WAY...**