



The Pony Express

President: Catherine Houck

Editor: Kathleen

Mt. Erie PTA
1314 41st St, Anacortes, WA
360-293-9541
www.mteriepta.org
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Executive Board

President: Catherine Houck
chouck8@msn.com
Vice Pres: Silja Shjarback
shjaresa@fidalgo.net
Secretary: Leslie Tysseling
casaverdegi@hotmail.com
Treasurer: Joan Ockerman
joan@candjos.com

Board of Directors

Family Night/Auction Chair:
Suzy Gilbert
suzygilbert@gmail.com
Hospitality/Teacher
Appreciation:
Megan Atterberry
lucallily@verizon.net
Membership:
Kristen Murphy
vauxmur@frontier.com
Membership Co-chair:
Emily Hylton
emilyhylton@comcast.net
Communication:
Kathleen Horr
kathandruss@msn.com
Website: Sarah Nichols
sarah@aquarianaudio.com
Volunteer Coordinator:
Jessica Notaro
jessicanotaro@me.com
Dads of Great Students
(DOGS): Silja Shjarback
shjaresa@fidalgo.net
Legislative: Tanya Twete
dttwete@gmail.com
Fundraising: **Open**

Ad-Hoc Committees

Winter Reading Program:
John Dumas
lucallily@verizon.net
Reflections: Kristen Murphy
vauxmur@frontier.com
Reading is Fundamental:
Gina Thomas
ginat123@comcast.net
Missoula Children's Theater
(MCT): Silja Shjarback
shjaresa@fidalgo.net
Science Discovery Program:
Bob Linder
islandtug@hotmail.com
Box Tops: Sunni Ausland
ausland@comcast.net
and Ellen Kline
ellenkline@comcast.net
eScrip: Beth Holiway
bholiway@comcast.net
T-shirt Sales: Gina Thomas
ginat123@comcast.net
Mustang Points: Amy Sikic
asikic@aol.com
Yearbook: Melinda Moore
mmoore@asd103.org

From the Principal, Mr. Steve Bruland

February brings much excitement to the Mt. Erie School community. We began the calendar year with the Winter Reading Program, which runs until March 11th and is coordinated by John Dumas and Megan Atterberry. A lot of time and thought has gone into planning the program and John offered a presentation to a number of Mt. Erie parents at the parent group meeting last month. The program is going well and students are very enthusiastic about reading and really seem to be having fun too. We kicked off the festivities by holding a school assembly in which the staff volunteered to motivate the kids. After an opening about the importance of reading by Mr. Donaldson, he introduced a "reading song" and the entire staff, with white shirts and sun glasses, danced and sang before the whole student body. Students loved seeing their teachers make fools of themselves and had a great time cheering them on. Now they are busily busy working toward their own personal reading goals in addition to goals for each classroom and the school. When the students reach the goal for the school, we will have another assembly to sing the reading song together and dance with each other. Mr. Donaldson, Mr. Knorr, and I will even sit in a giant tub and pretend to be scoops of vanilla ice cream while the students pour their favorite topping on our heads. I'm hoping for pineapple.

If your child comes home and talks about "DEAR", this is an abbreviation for "Drop Everything And Read". The staff incorporated the idea into the school schedule to provide more reading opportunities. We select random times in the day and make an announcement over the PA system. Students stop where they are and read. Since they never know when the announcement may come, they must carry a book with them at all times. The reading program last for six weeks and I would like to extend a big thank you to John, Megan, Mr. Donaldson, and all the staff for emphasizing the importance of reading and making it exciting as well. I have heard many positive comments from parents and it is really exciting to watch the flurry of reading at Mt. Erie and see children truly enjoying reading.

Another excitement at Mt. Erie is the selection process for the new school Principal. Chris Borgen, Superintendent of Anacortes Schools, is leading the search for the new leader of Mt. Erie. The last day for applications was January 31st and the selection process has now begun. Mr. Borgen and his team are combing the applicant files and the staff will also be involved in the start of the search process. After this initial portion, residents of Anacortes will be able to get involved in the process as well. We will send out a notification when the time comes for those who want to meet the prospective candidates. I know whoever is chosen to take over the helm of Mt. Erie will be a lucky person. Not only does Mt. Erie have wonderful students and teachers who work hard but we also have parents who care.

Come watch the kids sing, dance, and pour toppings on the three lumps of ice cream after the reading program is complete. See you there!

Mark Your Calendar

- Mon, Feb 7th - Reading is Fundamental (RIF)
- Tue, Feb 8th - PTA Board meeting in the PTA room, 2:15pm
- Fri, Feb 11th - Family Fun Night - parent/child Valentine's dance, 6:30pm in the gym. Dance instructor included.
- Fri, Feb 18th - No School
- Mon, Feb 21st - President's Day, No School
- Fri, Mar 4th - ASD Art Show at the Depot.
- Mon, Mar 7th - Auditions for Missoula Children's Theater production of "Pinocchio" 3:45-5:45pm in the gym.
- Thu, Mar 10th - Tue, Mar 15th Early release for Parent-teacher conferences.

teachers, sponsor lunches, help out at special events, and so on. You can do as much or as little as you want--anything is helpful. Current needs include:

- 10 cookie bakers needed. Mt. Erie is scheduled to provide 10 dozen cookies for the opening night of the Anacortes School District Art Show at the Depot, Friday, March 4th.
 - Volunteers are also needed to help set up and take down students' art at the art show. Set up prior to opening and take down at the end of March.
 - Several volunteers needed to help decorate, work setup, or help with refreshments for the upcoming Family Night.
- Please join us and be a volunteer. Thanks!

Volunteers Needed

We need of volunteers and if you can help, please contact Jessica Notaro, the volunteer coordinator at jessicanotaro@me.com and she will put you in touch with the right people. A new volunteer form went out so please consider letting us know what you can do to contribute to not only the PTA but also to Mt. Erie School. We assist the



PTA MEMBERSHIP 2010-2011

Month	Members	Goal
January	196	225

Still Time to Join

It's not too late to join Mt Erie PTA. If you haven't done so yet, please complete the membership form at www.mteriepta.org and turn it in to the school office with your check. We'll send you a receipt, a directory, and a coupon book with lots of deals at local businesses. In addition, membership cards should be coming out soon! Questions? Contact Emily or Kristen. Your membership is important to Mt. Erie staff and students!



The Future Speaks...

"I vote for a paperless newsletter. It saves trees." Gavin Bigelow, a former Mt. Erie Elementary student, simply and eloquently cemented your PTA's decision to go paperless with our newsletter at the last PTA general membership meeting. We felt we were confusing our readers by alternating between paper and electronic so starting with this month, *all PTA newsletters for the rest of this school year will be sent out via email.* We will happily provide paper copies to those who do not have email access or request a paper copy. Thank you for embracing the future.



Watch D.O.G.S.

Thank you to our wonderful November, December and January Watch D.O.G.S. volunteers. You are AWESOME! Kids don't forget to high five your Watch DOG when you see them at school! Special thanks to: John Dumas, Kevin Harris, Rob Hoxie, Chris Johnson, Johnson, Dave Juhl, Dale King, Bob Linder, Jeff Miller, Dave



Prewitt, Eric Shjarback, Dustin South, Jess Talosi, Jonathan Van der Schuur, and Mark Willingham

From the President

Hello Mt. Erie Parents and Students! Have you heard about the ship's captain bellowing out over the school intercom system, "Drop everything and READ!?" It's true; students stop whatever they are doing and read for fifteen minutes or more when such commands come from the bridge. Strange things are afloat at Mt. Erie Elementary. Last Thursday, all the teachers, dressed in white shirts, ties, and blue jeans, brought their students to the gym for an assembly to kick-off the Winter Reading Program. Seeing the entire Mt. Erie staff dancing with books was quite a surprise! More suspense will envelop us at the ending assembly in March where final prizes will be drawn for all the students who read at least six hours. Top readers will also be awarded and we'll find out if Mr. Bruland, Mr. Knorr, and Mr. Donaldson will have ice cream sundaes constructed atop their heads! Everyone may be dancing with books by the end of the program.

Students also met a local author, Rosanna Porter, and a local illustrator, Lynda Porter, this past Wednesday, February 2nd. The Tofu Ling book series by Anacortes resident Rosanna Porter is about a mouse family living in the floorboards of an artist's studio (check out www.raisykinderpublishing.com for more info). Margo Cunningham, the elementary school librarian, arranged for the author visit which was paid for by the PTA.

As a parent-teacher group, we can look toward more school community-wide programs and projects in the future. A wonderful collaborative effort between the entire Mt. Erie staff and your PTA is bringing Mt. Erie's Winter Reading Program to new heights! Efforts focusing on Math and Science are next. Despite budget cuts, enriching activities for our students can be continued with creative solutions. Passion, commitment, and collaboration will keep our schools strong and generate opportunities for our children. **Invest in your future; nurture the next generation!**

Speaking of the future, big decisions about funding for education are being made in Olympia. Our PTA has an energized legislative representative, Tanya Twete, keeping us informed about potential changes in our school district (see article below). A state-wide PTA Focus Day is this February 21st in Olympia. Everyone's participation is welcome! Your opinions and involvement at the local and state level can make a difference. Together, we will forge a stronger school system. Thanks for stepping up! Happy Reading!

Report from the Capitol

It's the first week of legislature in Olympia and policy makers are holding hearings and taking comments on the state of things related to education. Governor Chris Gregoire outlined her agenda in the State of the State, reiterating her intent to consolidate eight education agencies and their plans into one. Washington State's education report card still leaves much to be desired, receiving mostly low Cs. You can read more about our report card and the budget cuts on www.educationvoters.org.

Closer to home in Anacortes, Skagit county early learning agencies met at the Education Service District (ESD) on January 11 to discuss a regional approach education legislation. Representatives from ESD, Office of Superintendent of Public Education, Washington State Health Department, and private providers, as well as Whatcom, San Juans, Snohomish, Mount Vernon, and Anacortes School Districts were in attendance. It was facilitated by the Director of Legislature from Thrive by Five, a nonprofit public-private partnership for early learning who's slogan is "Working to ensure all children in Washington state are ready to succeed in school ...and life!"

We discussed Regional networking, state fund dissemination, regional lobbying, and sharing of resources. This approach allows our region to have a bigger and more focused voice in Olympia and also helps our local schools by sharing information and resources.

Parent involvement makes a good school great



Pinocchio Audition!

An audition will be held for the Missoula Children's Theatre (MCT) production of *Pinocchio* Monday, March 7 in the Mt. Erie gym from 3:45 to 5:45 pm. Anyone interested in auditioning should be there immediately after school and plan to stay for the full two hours. Also some of the older cast members will be asked to stay for a rehearsal immediately following the audition.

Roles to be cast include Pinocchio, the Blue Fairy, Jiminy Cricket, the Fox and Cat, Candlewick and Crew, Urchins, School Kids, Puppets, and Toys. Students in all grades are encouraged to audition. No advance preparation is necessary. Assistant Directors will also be cast to aid in rehearsals throughout the week and to take on essential backstage responsibilities. 50-60 children will be cast. If cast, the cost is \$20 per child. Some scholarships are available; see Mrs. Stacey Estenson.

MCT touring productions are complete with costumes, scenery, props, and make-up. MCT Actor/Directors will conduct rehearsals throughout the week after school each day.

Although still tentative, *Pinocchio* will most likely be presented in the gym 7pm on Friday March 11th and sometime between 11am and 3pm on Saturday March 12th. For more information, contact Silja Shjarback at 588-0866 or shjaresa@fidalgo.net.

Family Nights Rock at Mt. Erie!



January's Family night was a **BLAST!** Val Holgeerts (thank you Mrs. H!!) put on a fast-paced human pinball game in the gym and everyone was laughing and working up a sweat! Competitiveness really came out as the balls were flying (who knew Mr. Bruland had such a competitive streak!!). Parents and children alike had a ball (and many parents were sore the next day let me tell you!).

Board games were set up in the library and enjoyed by many families needing a break from all the action. Families enjoyed Trouble, Scrabble, Pictionary, and Yahtzee and a few others not seen before. If you didn't join us in January, be sure to mark your calendars for the upcoming Family Valentine's Dance on February 11 starting at 6:30pm!

If you have questions or suggestions or wish to volunteer to help out at a family night, please contact Suzy Gilbert at suzygilbert@gmail.com or 588-8380. **As always, Family nights are free and fun for the whole family!** See you this Friday!

Upcoming Family Nights:
Feb 11th - Family Valentine's Dance
April 15th - Go Green Night
May 13th - Variety Show

Calling All Writers

The Young Authors Conference is an annual celebration of young authors held every spring at Skagit Valley College in Mount Vernon. Professional authors and illustrators provide hands-on workshops for students as they arrive for a day of celebrating the art of writing and illustration.

Students begin the day getting acquainted with each other as they share their own manuscripts. Each student then spends one hour with the featured author, one hour with a local author, and one hour with a local illustrator.

PARENTS: This is *not* a school-sponsored event, unlike previous years. **Students must take a bound, illustrated, original manuscript with them to the conference.** Writing workshops will be held on Monday afternoons 3:30-4:30PM beginning February 14th at Mt. Erie Library with 6th grade teacher Tammy Dellutri and several parents. These workshops will help students create a well-written, nicely illustrated and bound manuscript (story) to bring to the conference.

If your third to sixth grade child is interested in attending, please contact your child's teacher or Catherine Houck (see info on next page). You will receive an "Intent of Interest Letter" explaining the requirements in slightly more detail. Conference information also is available at the Northwest Education Service District website at www.nwesd.org. The cost is \$22 per student and payment *see "Writers" on next page*

More MCT

Interested in the Missoula Children's Theater? See yourself organizing and helping put on a MCT residency week next year? Silja Shjarback, our current MCT Chairperson, would love to "show you the ropes" this year with *Pinocchio*. If you have interest, contact Silja at shjaresa@fidalgo.net or 588-0866 to learn more details.

And if you would like to host one of the MCT directors for the week of March 6th, please contact Silja for more details. We're looking for a private pet-free bedroom but not necessarily a pet-free home. Call Silja today!



Who are Watch D.O.G.S. ? (Dads Of Great Students)

Watch D.O.G.S. are fathers, grandfathers, uncles, and other father-figures who volunteer at Mt. Erie for at least one day each year at an official WATCH D.O.G.S.® school. During the day, Watch D.O.G.S. may read and work on flash cards with students, play at recess, eat lunch with students, watch the school entrances and hallways, assist with traffic flow, mentor students, and do many other assigned activities where they actively engage with not only their own students, but other students as well. On the day of their participation, Watch D.O.G.S. are given a schedule for the day and they wear an official WATCH D.O.G.S.® t-shirt with a disposable 'Dog Tag' identifying them as Watch D.O.G.S.

What do you need to do to become a Watch DOG at Mt. Erie?

1. Order a T-shirt. Order forms can be found at www.mteriepta.org under Watch DOGS. The next (and possibly last for this year) deadline for ordering T-shirts is MARCH 15th.
2. Turn in a completed district volunteer form/background check. Forms are often available on the sign-in table in the foyer of the school and are also available at the district office in the Middle School. Contact Jayne Branch at jbranch@asd103.org if you are unsure about your volunteer form status.
3. Join the Mt. Erie PTA if you are not already a member. This is not mandatory but highly recommended so you will receive our emails and other communication and be current on what's going on at Mt. Erie.
4. Sign up for your volunteer day. Days are from 8:15am to 3:40pm except on late start Wednesdays which is 9:00am to 3:40pm. You can view the calendar on-line at www.mteriepta.org under Watch DOG calendar and let Silja Shjarback (shjaresa@fidalgo.net) know which date you would like. Or you can sign up in the PTA office on the master calendar. This master calendar is the most current so if you view the online calendar, it is helpful to give a first and second choice in case another Watch DOG has signed up for your first choice at school.

There is still time to make a great impression in the lives of the students. Please sign up today!

Get your groove on at the Valentine's Family Dance!



Our next Family Fun night is coming up on February 11 from 6:30-8pm in the Mt. Erie gym.

We're planning a fun-filled Family Valentine's Dance! Parents and children are welcome to come and learn some fun, new hip-hop dance moves from a local instructor who will be teaching during the dance. Also, expect some old favorites like the Electric Slide, Macarena, and the Chicken Dance to enjoy with your family. **And as always, family nights are FREE!!**

If you can bring drinks or snacks, or have questions, please contact Suzy Gilbert, the Family night coordinator, at 588-8380 or suzygilbert@gmail.com.

Parents – please do not drop children off at this event. This is to be a family-oriented dance for all to enjoy. You might even pick up some new moves!

See you there!

Writers

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payment must be made to the Mt. Erie PTA by February fourteenth (scholarships are available through Stacey Estenson, phone: 293-9541 or email: sestenson@asd103.org)

Transportation: Not provided. We will coordinate carpools.

Date: Wednesday, March 23rd (6th grade only on Friday, March 25th)

Time: 9am-2 pm

What to Bring: Bound, illustrated, original manuscript and a sack lunch.

Questions: Contact Catherine Houck 293-1297 (home), 708-3855 (cell), chouck8@msn.com