



Burning Issues

President's Message

This is the final Burning Issues of the year, and I want to take the opportunity to recognize

the PTA Board of Directors for working so hard for the school.

President-Elect Cindy Campbell was my steady and supportive partner, and a champion for thinking outside the box and doing things differently this year. Cindy Campbell and our VP for Fundraising, Ellie Abramowitz, led the charge to break away from the Adult Auction/Fundraiser and replace it with the **Fill Our Pond** Check Writing Campaign. The campaign was wildly successful, thanks to all of you reading this, and to the teachers and staff for offering their outings. Cindy and Ellie could not have pulled it off without the help of Julie Garcia, Surya Shah or Erin Deric. The committee worked together to create a new fundraiser and social event from scratch. Ellie Abramowitz, Cindy Campbell and Laura Weiss also led the way to a different kind of **Spring Fair** - the **Spring Fling**, complete with a movie night and fewer parent volunteers!! They also had the steadfast help of co-chair Tami Chambers.

I would also like to thank the VP for School-Based Programs, Karen van Loon. Not only did Karen keep all of our school-based programs running, like **International Night**, she also headed up the data entry for the School Directory and served as the PTA Webmaster! If Karen says she is going to do something, it gets done with skill and efficiency.

I would also like to thank Elissa Ginsky, VP for Volunteers, for keeping on top of all of our wonderful volunteer programs. Elissa also ran the **Mini-Relay for Life** at Burning Tree!

Vicki Herson served as VP for Community Based Programs and she is another shining example of thinking outside the box. Vicki had the idea that Burning Tree should help out the DC Food Bank, and she made it happen in a big way. Not only did she organize and publish the drives, she physically dragged loads of donations to her car and single-handedly delivered them to the food bank. The Food Bank is so pleased with Burning Tree's efforts, they have asked Burning Tree to show other schools how

to run a successful food drive. Vicki did this, while overseeing all of the other Community Service programs that our school participates in. (Continued on page 2, column 1)

Wanted: Committee Chairs 2009-2010

Want to get more involved in your child's school and the PTA? Why not consider co-chairing one of the many great events and/or programs that the PTA organizes? Some of the programs that need one or more co-chairs for next year are listed below. For more information or to co-chair, please contact this year's VP for the Program or contract Cindy Campbell, PTA President-elect (CampbellHannegan@comcast.net). For descriptions of these programs, please refer to the BTES PTA Directory.

School Based Programs, Karen van Loon

- Back To School Picnic
- Creative Writing Club
- FLES – French only
- Newspaper, *Rabbit Report*

Fundraising, Ellie Abramowitz

- Fill Our Pond
- Spring Fair
- Spirit Shop

Community Based Programs, Vicki Herson

- Fannie Mae Walk for the Homeless

Volunteers, Elissa Ginsky

- Child Care for PTA meetings
- Landscape and grounds
- Lunch and Recess Volunteers
- Room Parent Coordinator for K-2

Inside This Issue:

Community Base Programs	4
Fundraising News	3
Mini-Relay for Life	5
President's Message	1
School-based Programs	1
Thank you's	2-5

President's Message *(Cont'd from page 1)*

Vicki also had the great idea that it was time to "Beautify Burning Tree" -- inside! Over the summer, and after looking at countless paint colors, she made sure that the interior was brighter when classes began in the fall.

Now, how do all of the successful PTA events get paid for and recorded in our budget? A huge shout-out to Lisa Norwalk, the PTA Treasurer, who keeps us all in line and ensures people get paid on time! Need a cashbox for tomorrow and forgot to ask about it? Don't worry, Lisa already thought about it. Lisa also pulled double duty by serving on the Landscape and Grounds Committee and the Environmental Education Committee.

The PTA's tireless Recording Secretary was Surya Shah. Thank you, Surya, for turning what we all said at meetings into words that made sense and were easy to read! Katerina Papaioannou, VP for Membership, kept our membership level very high, AND also ran the Science Fair! MCCPTA Delegates Darrin Hartzler and Ira Feldman were fabulous representatives for Burning Tree. Darrin also served as our Parliamentarian AND head of the Budget Audit Committee! Ira Feldman created and ran the Environmental Education Committee! At-Large Representative Yvonne Van Lowe was a vital contributor to all discussions and led very important meetings for Burning Tree parents with special needs students.

I also must recognize our Ex Officio Members, Dorene Rosenthal and Olivia Lai, former PTA Presidents who are ALWAYS available to give sound advice and support. Dorene also served as Burning Tree's Cluster Representative. Olivia will be "graduating out" this year. She has been a wonderful asset to our school these past eight years! She will be truly missed.

Thank you to our wonderful Teacher Representative Helene Granoff. It would not be the PTA without teacher input. And LAST BUT NOT LEAST, Mrs. Erdrich and Mr. Tark, who are incredibly supportive of the PTA. We would not accomplish what we do without the responsiveness and support of Mrs. Erdrich and Mr. Tark.

I wish next year's PTA Board of Directors a wonderful year, and I thank all of the new members for their commitment and service to our school.

Lisa Sanfuentes, PTA President

Thank you Room Parents!

Thank you very much to all the wonderful mothers and fathers who served as room parents this year. The children, teachers and PTA really appreciated your help and support. It is not an overstatement to say that many of the year's most memorable events literally would not have happened without your time, effort and creativity.

We tried something new this year with the way we structured the room parents' roles and we are very grateful at how enthusiastically you all embraced the changes. If you have any suggestions on how we can make it even better, please don't hesitate to let the PTA Board know. Thanks again. Have a safe and happy summer!

Dorene Rosenthal, Room Parent Coordinator Grades 3-5
Brenda Conroy, Room Parent Coordinator Grades K-2

THANK YOU – THANK YOU – AND THANK YOU

My job was easy this year, very easy even. The chairs and co-chairs of the school-based programs accepted the job, did their thing and it was fabulous every time. A big Thank You to:

Joan Wolf-Chiaverini for running the **After School Programs** and the **Cultural Arts Assemblies**. I have no idea how you find time to do all these things, and when your eldest leaves BT, you better adopt some kids in BT (you are welcome to pretend mine is yours).

Robin Gonzales and Nancy Samit. The **Back to School Picnic** was a blast! Thank you for making sure all had fun.

Rosanna Morrison from **Creative Writing Club**. Thank you for helping the kids produce another more than great blazing pencils. It will be really hard to fill your shoes!!

Ira Feldman and his **Environmental Education Committee** team for making sure our kids are prepared to protect our planet. The PTA went (almost completely) paperless!

Sujata Pasic for the **Family To Family – New Families program**. Please realize the new families are ever so grateful for the kind greetings they all received.

Julie Zebrak for **Family To Family – Kindergarten**. The playdates for the kids (and parents) entering Kindergarten were a great help. Thank you for

making sure all new Kindergarten parents got all the info they needed.

Jennifer Katz, Heidi Grunwald and Dale Sorcher. Absolutely silly, but TIA for what is probably going to be a great celebration: **Fifth Grade Farewell**.

Aparna Gude Merci Beaucoup Patti Klepp, Gracias mucho, and Liza Fues Xie Xie for running the **FLES** program without a single glitch!

International Night's Allison Ellis, Santi Karamchetty and Agnes de Gonneville. Wow. A GREAT International Night.

Jennifer Katz and Ben Katz for doing a fabulous job with the **Ribbit Report**. This newspaper is always an interesting read.

Katerina Papaioannou and Celine McGowan who ran the ever growing **Science Fair and Lunch with a Scientist** like absolute pros!

Robin Rosenblum who got over a 100 people walking on this year's **Walk to School Day** (after eating only healthy snacks...)

Probably can't say it enough. **THANK YOU!**

School-based programs – Karen van Loon

Final FUNdraising News

Spring Fling Movie Night Review

Thanks to all the families who came to Burning Tree to enjoy the Spring Fling Movie Night despite the gloomy weather forecast! We had a great turnout for both the fair and the movie and hope everyone had a great time! And as an added bonus we raised \$3,400 for Burning Tree!

In addition to the BT community, I would also like to thank the following for helping to make this event such a success. A heartfelt and huge thank you to my fabulous co-chairs Laura Weiss, Tami Chambers and Cindy Campbell. We spent many hours working together to revamp the Spring Fair and coordinating all of the details. Horton L. Fant, the ever-faithful pachyderm, was very impressed!

Thanks so much to all the committee chairs who also lent a much needed helping hand before and during the fair: Olivia Lai and Teresa Halabi (Bag-O-Mania), Ellie Abramowitz and Cindy Campbell (Prizes), Tami Chambers and Laura Weiss (Volunteer Coordinators), Barb Butrica (Food/Potomac Pizza), Russell Ginns, Melinda Gray and Tracey Fitzsimmons (Homemade Games), Ellen Agler (Ticket Sales), Celine McGowan (Arts and Crafts),

Joan Ishimoto (Cake Walk), Amy Lenkin (Drink More Water), Kristen Farren (Incoming Kindergarteners), Anne Ruskowski (Signs) and Louise Howe (Troubleshooter).

Special thanks to our BTES parent Dr. Charlie Weiss and his Bradley Hills Animal Hospital for sponsoring the amazing giant inflatable 5-sided World Sports Games! Mrs. Erdrich won the "Save the Day" award for finding the BT movie projector when the projector we rented malfunctioned, discovered while the gym was full of children eagerly awaiting the start of the show! And thanks to Dave Abramowitz, DJ extraordinaire, for entertaining the crowd during the Cake Walk!

Thanks so much to all the parents who volunteered to help the day of the fair: Swati Agrawal, Allison Bartleman, Britta Battaile, Kim Bayard, Marcia Berman, Rachel Bottone, Christine Brake, Maryam Bukar, Christian Chambers, Celeste Chang, Kathy Chelst, Yi Wen Chen, Alexa Claybon, Kathi Colonna, Brenda Conroy, Melissa Conway, Sharon Curry, Marna DeLeon, Chris Einberg, Jan Einberg, Marilu Enciso, Theresa Fong, Thomas Fong, Mireya Gonzalez, Stacie Gould, Melinda Gray, Robert Guest, Vicki Herson, Lauren Hodas, Elise Brown Hughes, Sheryl Isaacs, Pam Janssen, Natalia Kamiya, Santi Karamchetty, Marianne Katinas, Jennifer Katz, Ana Kiron, Alan Kirschner, Patti Klepp, Mary Kunst, Brian Kux, Sara Lacombe, Ruby Lee, Lisa Lerner, Katherine Lewis, Brian Liu, Anne Mandigo, Glen Mandigo, Beth Martino, Ruth McDonald, Alin Mirestean, Monica Mirestean, Rosemary Mitchell, Gina Okon, Joe Okon, Moira Pagano, Farish Perlman, Jamie Pierce, Shane Pittman, Margarita Quesnel, Julie Kanoff Rosenblatt, Dorene Rosenthal, Mireya Rossi, Sody Schnieder, Surya Shah, Howard Soloman, Sheryl Steinberg, Karen Strause, Delia Tang, Cecile Taylor, Steve Turow, Marita Valianatos, Eliza Voigt, Celeste Wallander, Berta Wengle, Eva Wolny, Robin Wright and Kevin York. Additional thanks to all the Pyle and Whitman student volunteers who did such a great job in helping the fair run smoothly.

And finally, thanks to the BT staff that ran the Teacher Challenges (see article below), the parents who donated a bag(s) and/or made a financial donation to help support Bag-O-Mania, as well as the parents who donated a cake(s) for the Cake Walk. It truly takes all of us pulling together to make the fair a success for our school and children!

A Final Thanks!

What an incredible fundraising year we had at Burning Tree this year. Many thanks to all of the co-chairs, volunteers, teachers and families who supported our events throughout the year. Your participation and enthusiasm made it possible to fund many wonderful school activities such as the Back-to-School Picnic, Arts Festival, and Cultural Arts, and to provide assistance to our sister school, Broad Acres. Your support also makes it possible to purchase teacher and community "wish list" items that greatly improve the school and the educational experience of our children here at BTES. Much appreciation goes to the following people for their willingness to co-chair our 2008-09 fundraisers. It was a pleasure working with such dedicated and energetic people. Many thanks to the following co-chairs:

Bingo Night: **Laura Weiss, Tracey Fitzsimmons, Barb Butrica & Sharon Tompkins**

Book Fair: **Sharon Curry, Elizabeth Padgett & Rachel Bottone**

Dine Outs: **Nancy Sandler**

Fill Our Pond Campaign: **Julie Garcia, Surya Shah, Erin Deric, Cindy Campbell, Lisa Sanfuentes & Ellie Abramowitz**

Original Artworks: **Britta Battaile & Marianne Katinas**

Plant Sale: **Lisa Baker & Mary Kunst**

Sally Foster: **Kristen Farren & Jamie Pierce**

Shop for our School: **Amy Lenkin**

Spirit Shop: **Laura Weiss & Little Cindy Lou Who**

Spring Fair: **Tami Chambers, Laura Weiss, Cindy Campbell & Ellie Abramowitz**

I've enjoyed serving as VP for Fundraising and hope you will continue to be generous with your time and support for our incoming VP for Fundraising, Julie Garcia. Julie will be an energetic and very hardworking addition to the Board! Thanks again and I hope you all have a wonderful and relaxing summer!

Ellie Abramowitz, VP for Fundraising

Teachers Challenge Students at Spring Fling

Ms. Loftus was soaked by the end of our Spring Fling Movie Night and it wasn't even because of the rain!

Students lined up to take their turns hurling wet sponges at our brave gym teacher, who, fortunately was dressed in protective goggles and padding. It was quite a sight! Mr. Tark and Mr. Wells took their challenge to the hoop as they played two against five basketball games with enthusiastic students. Ms. Carone hosted a dance party featuring freeze tag during the lull in the rain. Rain and wind unfortunately disrupted Mrs. Granof's cup stacking, Mrs. Shapiro's hula hoop challenge and Mrs. Erdrich's puff ball toss, though all three of them came ready to play. Yertle the Turtle was looking forward to the cup stacking, maybe next year! Many, many thanks to each and every one of these teachers and principals who gave their time and effort to make our Spring Fling a day to remember!

Laura Weiss, Spring Fling Co-Chair

Community Based Programs

Thank you to the fantastic BTES students and parents for your generous support and contributions to all of the Community Based Programs throughout the school year. Together we accomplished an enormous amount within our community.

A special thank you to everyone who supported the **Food for Kids** Program. Throughout the school year, our children donated over 1,500 pounds of food for the Capitol Area Food Bank. The Food Bank was so pleased by our effort they have asked that next year our students teach other schools how to run a successful food drive.

In October, our students all participated in the **Fannie Mae Walk for the Homeless** led by Julie Zebrak. A huge thank you also goes to Mrs. Erdrich and Mr. Tark who led this worthy event and to Ms. Whalen for her help in coordinating the event.

Over the winter holidays, Julie Garcia brightened the holiday season for scores of local children through our annual **Adopt-an-Angel** program which matches needy children with Burning Tree families who buy them holiday gifts.

In March, the students spent their lunch break participating in "**1000 Sandwich Day**" to benefit Martha's Table. The students spent part of their lunch break preparing sandwiches for distribution and ultimately prepared over 1500 sandwiches! A special note of thanks goes to our co-chairs Britta Battaile and Ruth McDonald for organizing this important activity.

Our sister school, Broad Acres Elementary in Silver School benefited from our various collections throughout the year, financial donations from the PTA, and collaborations. Sheryl Isaaks, Minki Chatterji and Wynne Sitrin did an amazing job organizing our assistance and working with the leadership at Broad Acres for this significant program. Broad Acres also benefited from the hard work of Ann Ruskowski and Cathi Colonna who collected all of those **Box Tops for Education** turning tops into cash to support our sister school.

Our year wrapped up with the exciting **Mini-Relay for Life** led by Elissa Ginsky where the children walked during two consecutive days of their recess to promote awareness and commemorate those touched by cancer. A special note of thanks also goes to Ms. Loftus for her enthusiastic participation.

A special thank you to Doreen Rosenthal, who served as our School Board/County Council Liaison, and to our phenomenal PTA President Lisa Sanfuentes and President Elect Cindy Campbell who gave their support and guidance to all of these important events.

Vicki Herson, VP for Community Based Programs

Mini Relay for Life Has a Successful Week

For the first time all spring, we had 3 beautiful days in a row that were perfect for the children of BTES to show their support for the American Cancer Society by running laps. On May 20-22 during recess students, teachers and parents wore purple shirts, hats and plenty of sunscreen while doing laps in support of a cancer survivor, in memory of a loved one or just because they supported the cause (or wanted a cup of Gatorade).

A very big thank you to the SGA, Ms Backenstoe and Mr Wells who started the fundraising with a booth selling Luminarias at Spring Fling and then again at lunch during the week. The Luminarias were beautifully decorated by the kids and lined a very large track. Thank you to Mrs Erdrich, Mr Tark and Ms Loftus for the opening ceremonies where we all talked about ways to keep healthy. Thank you to the parents who came out to cheer their children on and for sending your children with \$1 to donate and decorate the Luminaria. Thank you to the teachers who came out to walk and run with their students.

Lastly, a huge thank you to **Girls on The Run**, Tammy Schulman, Beth Martino, Marna Deleon, Elizabeth McGlynn and Celeste Wallander for their

generous donations of water and Gatorade and for keeping our children hydrated during the relay. We raised more than \$183 for ACS and had a great time in the process.

Elissa Ginsky & Liza Fues, Relay for Life Chairs

Thanks for Volunteering!

So as the school year ends (how did that happen so quickly), I would like to take this last opportunity to thank everyone for all they have done throughout the year, but most importantly for this past month. The end of the school year is a notoriously busy time and each year it seems to get busier, with this year as no exception.

A very big thank you goes to Cheryl Liu, the School Supply Kits Coordinator. She has already gotten our children on the road to an organized, successful 2009-2010 school year. Thanks as always for thinking ahead.

Thank you again, to the women who coordinate all of the Staff Appreciation Lunches, especially the most recent lunch on May 6. Kathy Chelst and Beth Martino make “catering” a lunch look easy. The teachers always appreciate their effort, that of everyone who helps out that day, as well as all of the families who donate the delicious food.

Thank you also to the continued Herculean effort of the grounds committee. I am always amazed by how beautiful the grounds of Burning Tree look. Thank you to all of the volunteers who seem to always be at school pulling weeds, raking mulch and working on the beds. Your efforts truly show.

Elissa Ginsky, VP for Volunteers

Burning Issues is published monthly by the Burning Tree PTA, the week following each PTA meeting.

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We welcome your contributions and suggestions. Please send your articles via e-mail to Joe Busch at jbusch@urban.org or call him at 202-261-5569. This is the final edition for this school year.