

Burning Issues

President's Message

The other day I had the opportunity to see your PTA dollars at work! I was volunteering in the computer lab and Ms. Lopez was using the Promethean White Board to teach the first graders how to log on to an educational web site. **The PTA purchased four Promethean Boards, ELMO's, laptops and other technology for the school this summer.** The Promethean Board, among other things, projects what the children are seeing on their monitor onto a large screen in front of the class. This way Ms. Lopez was able to easily show all the children at the same time the steps to take, thus making it easier to teach!

During our PTA meeting last week, our newest specialists also used a Promethean Board and ELMO during their presentations. Who knew these boards could also play music! (ELMO's are a modern day projector which can project pictures and book pages onto a screen). I was intrigued by how these interactive technologies brought the presentations to life. Recently, 30 teachers and staff were trained on these boards so they too can use this amazing technology to work with our children. **These technologies help the teachers captivate the children's attention and make it easier for our kids to learn.**

However, even with these great improvements, the school could still use additional technological improvements and one of the PTA's goals is to buy additional items this year. Thanks to the generous support of so many BTES families last year we were able to purchase this equipment. **However, this year our fundraising is down and only 18% of our BTES families have made a contribution to our largest school fundraiser, the Fill Our Pond check writing campaign.**

Over the next few weeks the families who have not contributed will receive a fundraising letter. *Please take a moment to read this and make a donation. Every level of donation will be greatly appreciated! Help us bring improved technology to every classroom! (Continued on page 2.)*

2009 International Night, Thursday, November 19th, 6pm -- 8pm

The flags are hung, the country banners are adorning our hallways and it's time to enjoy a tour of the world, Burning Tree style. Don't miss out on one of the most popular evenings of the Burning Tree Year for both visitors and participants alike.

It's not too late to register and take part in the **Parade of Nations** or to set up a booth to represent the **Countries of the World** - including the USA of course. Registration forms are available online at <http://www.burningtreepta.org>. For more information, questions or assistance with setting up your booth, please contact:

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Special Report



An interview with the Gregory & Carmen Votaw, founders of Burning Tree's International Night, page six.

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President's Message *(Cont'd from p. 1)*

Another great way to support BTES as the holiday shopping season begins is to do all of your on-line shopping at www.onecause.com (formerly School Pop). Go to this website and it leads you to literally *hundreds* of popular stores, from Gap Kids, to Home Depot, to Target. Just about any store you shop at on-line is available through One Cause. By shopping through One Cause these stores will give a percentage of your purchase to BTES. (Make sure to designate Burning Tree PTA or Burning Tree Elementary School when you first log on to the website). You get your items and the school gets a donation at no cost to you! *If you shop on-line this holiday season and through-out the year, please make your purchase count!*

Thanks for supporting our school! Have a happy and safe Thanksgiving vacation!

Cindy Campbell, PTA President

Call for Volunteers for the Burning Tree ES Book Fair

This year the BT Book Fair will be held on Tuesday, December 8th at the **Downtown Bethesda Barnes & Noble** and we're looking for your help to ensure that it is a success!

****Even if you can only spare ONE HOUR, we can use your help!****

We have split the day into one hour time-slots from 9:00 am - 9:00 pm, with the most help needed between 4:00 pm - 9:00 pm. We could also use a few helpers on Monday, December 7th, from 9:30 am - 11:30 am to sort books and set up the "wish list" boxes. So, if you can spare an hour, we would love your help! If you can volunteer for 2-3 hours, even better! But, if you have a time-slot preference, please sign-up as soon as possible to ensure that you get the slot you want.

Please email or call me if you are interested or have any questions. Elizabeth Padgett 301-263-1212 (evenings); 202-418-5401 (days)

P.S. Want to know what you're getting into before you volunteer? Here's a summary of what we will be doing:

9:00 – 10:00 am we'll be setting up the displays.

11:00 am-4:00 pm we need volunteers to sit near the wish list boxes and play "host" to early shoppers. (This is an ideal job for someone with a baby, toddler

or preschooler in tow as the little ones can enjoy the B&N children's area while mom or dad "work" the fair.)

4:00 - 6:00 pm we expect to get busier

6:00 - 8:00 pm BT teachers will be reading aloud and we expect to be the busiest. So lots of help is needed during this time.

Finally, when it's all done, we'll need help until 9:00 pm or so, straightening things up.

Looking forward to seeing you there!

Thank You for Walking!

A HUGE thank you to all Burning Tree Students, Teachers, Parents, Mrs. Erdrich, Mr. Tark, Mrs. Whalen and Mrs. Loftus for participating in the **2009 Mini-Walk for the Homeless**. The day was sunny; the kids were energized and over \$2,000 were raised.

Back-to-School Family Picnic – THANK YOU!

Although rain forced us to postpone the Back-to-School Picnic, we could not have asked for more perfect weather two weeks later. There was much eating, drinking, talking, laughing, and playing—all indicators of a successful event!

Of course it takes a village to put together an event like this, and so there are many who deserve our thanks.

Thanks to **Building Services** for mowing the grass, setting up tables and chairs, and cleaning up afterward. Thanks to Allison Ellis and the **Landscape and Grounds Committee** for beautifying the area behind the school. Thanks to Mrs. Burstyn for sharing her microphone and Ms. Loftus for sharing her toys. And thanks to Mr. Tark for helping us set up the new high-tech speakers!

As usual, **Potomac Pizza** (Chevy Chase location), was easy to work with and very dependable. And, of course, their food was delicious!

Many parents donated their time. Eva Wolney strung up the Picnic banner outside and hung posters around the school. Ellie Abramowitz, Amy Brown, Joe Busch, Cindy Campbell, Wen Chen, Elissa Ginsky, Jim Gray, Elizabeth McGlynn, Ana Romera, and Laura Weiss all helped in various ways the day of the Picnic and were invaluable. And a special thanks to Robin Gonzales who chaired the Picnic for many years. Robin walked us through every step of

running the event, patiently answered many neurotic questions, and helped organize things on the day of the Picnic.

A number of **Pyle and Whitman students** also volunteered. Jordan Abramowitz, Angela Ames, Nina Amjadi, Rachel Berman, Kate Ellis, Caroline Evans, Hanalei Fong, Tara Fotoohi, Yasha Fotoohi, Rachel Gilchrist, Hannah Ginsky, Casey Lee, Billy Lenkin, Larry Lenkin, Makiko Miyazaki, Carly Morgan, Rohan Sivam, Kevin Tang, George Wilson, and Tyler Weiss helped make signs, run kids' activities, and clean up. There are also a few students who showed up at the last minute to volunteer and so we apologize for forgetting their names, though we appreciated their help.

Finally, thanks to Mrs. Erdrich and Mr. Tark for their continued support!

Rachel Bottone and Barb Butrica, Back-to-School Picnic Co-Chairs

Book Fair is coming Tuesday, December 8th and 9th

During the Book Fair the BTES community thinks about sharing the love of reading and getting more books out into the community. Last year BTES families donated over 600 new & gently used books to needy children, our sister school and our own classrooms! This was a terrific demonstration of our school's love of books and we have the opportunity to share the love again this year.

The week prior to Book Fair will be a Children's Book Drive. On December 1-9th, we will be collecting "gently used" or "like new" books in the lobby at school. Please take a moment with your child to review the books on their shelves at home and encourage them to pass along books they no longer need. Remind them that good stories are meant to be shared. Do be sure, however, to box up and keep a few old favorites and stash them in the attic; your baby will thank you when you're the grandma!

The Book Fair Event this year will once again be at Barnes & Noble in downtown Bethesda. The Book Fair is a fundraiser for the PTA and Barnes & Noble donates 20% of what you spend directly to Burning Tree. We have many activities planned all day December 8th and have an extra day just for shopping on the 9th.

On December 8th, **Teacher Wish List Books** will be available from 9 am until 9 pm. These are books

requested by our teachers that you can purchase for your children's classrooms and our specialists. We will also have a **Wish List from Broad Acres**, our sister school. This is a great way to get new books into our schools.

At 1:30 on the 8th, Mrs. Erdrich will be presenting a "**Principal's Coffee**" in the upstairs Barnes & Noble Café. Last year the talk was very well attended, we will reserve some extra tables this time!

Then at 4:00, we are re-running last year's "After School Special". This was a Scavenger Hunt and other activities that will begin at 4:00 to keep the kids busy while mom & dad shop. And, of course, **Teacher Read Aloud Stories** and prize drawings will be back, from 6:00 until 8:00 pm. If you need a dinner break, **Dine Outs** are scheduled downtown for the same evening---we've got you covered! There will be plenty going on all day, so be sure to "Swing on by the Book Fair."

In addition to YOU getting a jump on your Holiday shopping on the 8th & 9th, your far away friends and family can too. Like last year, if you have friends or family that want to support our school they can shop at their local Barnes & Noble on December 8th & 9th and as long as they quote our **voucher number 10082196** or print out & bring in one of our vouchers BTES will get credit. The vouchers are available at www.burningtreepta.org.

Finally, keep an eye out on BNet and check this paper, the Book Fair Co-Chairs are putting out a call for volunteers; we need just a little help to make the Book Fair a success. Supporting the Children's Book Drive and coming to Book Fair is a great way to support reading, books and the PTA!

Book fair Co-Chairs: Rachel Bottone, Sharon Curry, Elizabeth Padgett.

Volunteer Corner

A Big Thank You to Kathy Chelst, Anne Ruskowski and Beth Martino for their preparation and planning of the Staff Appreciation luncheon on the 5th. We are grateful to all of you who donated food, beverages and your time to host the staff. I've heard from several teachers that it was a wonderful treat and greatly "appreciated!"

A round of applause for the Landscape and Grounds committee co chairs Allison Ellis and Christine Brake for all their hard work this year. **The Beautiful Burning Tree** event last month was a huge success! Thank you to all the families who dedicated their

Saturday morning, despite the drizzle, to show up and help spruce up the beds and general areas around the school. It looks fantastic! We also appreciate the help of Mrs. Erdrich and her husband along with Mrs. Flicker for contributing their time towards this endeavor. We're so very proud of our school and your support of this project is reflected in all the work put forth. Thank you again!

Consider the Library Gift Program When Planning Your Child's Next Birthday Party!

For the last 3 years, our daughter has picked a charity to donate to in lieu of gifts for her birthday. If this idea is something you like, consider the Burning Tree Media Center! It's easy to implement. On our invitations we write "No gifts please! If you are interested, we are collecting monetary donations for Burning Tree Elementary Media Center". Regan decorates a box that she leaves out. If people want to donate they can without any pressure. It's up to the guest. The best part is watching the excitement in your child's eyes when they deliver the donation. Plus, Regan still gets gifts from her family. Through this program you can honor your child, expand our library collection, and benefit everyone at Burning Tree. If you are interested in participating in the Library Gift Program, you can at anytime throughout the year. The forms are available in the PTA box in the workroom, under Media Center/Birthday Books. Forms are also available at www.burningtreepta.org under "Library Gift Program." All donations are tax-deductible and 100% of your donation will be spent on the purchase of books for our Media Center. Questions or how to get started? Call or email Tanya Kreter (301-229-1766 kreter@verizon.net)

Keep Track of Volunteer Hours!

I need to alert you to a change in the way you sign in at the school for any volunteer work. I have added a Volunteer sign-in sheet (on purple paper) to the same desk as the Visitor's sign in at the front office. Please make sure you print your name so that it is legible as you sign IN and OUT on the Volunteer sheet for any time you are spending in the classroom, lunch room/recess, media center etc. It is very important to remember to Sign Out upon departing the school so I know how long you were there. If you forget to sign out, I will only be able to credit you with an hour of service. Many of you also spend a lot of time volunteering from home, working on various projects

and events for the PTA and for the school. We really would like to keep track of this time because it adds up to hundreds of volunteer hours! You may submit your hours to me by emailing your totals at the end of each month to lbsegert@verizon.net. No need to break down what you are doing, I just need the total hours worked. There is a volunteer form available for downloading on the PTA website that you may use to help keep track of your time -- www.burningtreepta.org. If you have any questions regarding this new process, please do not hesitate to ask. Thank you for your help in making BTES a better place for our children by volunteering your time.

Lisa Segert, VP of Volunteers

Bingo Night a Great Success!

Please join me in thanking our Bingo Night co-chairs for their great work in bringing the Burning Tree community Bingo Night 2009! Thanks to our new Bingo co-chair Kristen Farren for joining co-chairs Tracey Fitzsimmons and Barb Butrica as well as co-chair emeritus Laura Weiss who will "retire" this year. Tracey and Laura deserve special thanks for their years of Bingo service to the community! This fun, festive and prize-filled night is truly a BTES favorite, and it just seems to get better and better.

Thank you, ladies, for your commitment to organizing this entertaining evening. The planning process for the co-chairs starts in earnest during the summer, when the rest of us haven't even begun to turn our thoughts to school functions, and proceeds throughout the fall. This year we had the special challenge of replenishing the prize supplies, and we've already heard how delighted the children were with the prizes and with the Smencil consolation prize. Thanks also to our long-term, outstanding emcee Joan Wolf Chiaverini, who also "retires" this year. We'll miss her jokes and red suit!

We are already looking forward to Bingo Night 2010!

Greenraising Campaign

Many thanks to Kristen Truitt and Cindy Nickerson for spearheading Burning Tree's first Greenraising fundraiser, which replaced our Sally Foster sales this fall. The PTA wanted to support our school's efforts to become more environmentally aware, and Kristen and Cindy researched opportunities, identified the Greenraising company, and coordinated this

fundraiser from start to finish! Burning Tree received 40% of the proceeds from both catalog and online sales that occurred during a specific time period in October, and we look forward to receiving and using our new, earth-friendly products this week. Don't forget to pick up your order on the stage in the APR when you come in for parent teacher conferences.

Original Artworks Make the Perfect Holiday Gift

What could be more heartwarming during the holiday season than a cup of tea, coffee or hot cocoa in a mug with a picture designed by your child? Maybe a sweatshirt, note cards or a mouse pad with the same design! Britta Battaile and Marianne Katinas, together with Ms. Parrott, are once again volunteering their time and energy to bring us the Original Artworks program and fundraiser, this year in time for the holidays. I know that my family has collected a fairly amusing set of ceramic tiles and mugs depicting scenes from our lives (and the lives of our pets) over the years that I wouldn't trade for anything. Look for the artwork and order forms in your child's backpack this week, and stock up on stocking stuffers for your children and truly welcome gifts for grandparents and other family members.

Our Pond Needs You!

Thanks to those who have already contributed to the Fill Our Pond campaign. This check-writing campaign is the PTA's major annual fundraiser and will cover the costs for a very large portion of the items that the PTA is able to provide for the school this year.

We are sorry to report that our Pond level is lower than it was at this point last year, both in the number of families participating and in the amount of money donated. *Families who have not yet contributed can expect to receive a second request letter within a few weeks, and we urge you to consider making a donation. A donation of any amount is greatly appreciated, tax-deductible, and goes directly to helping our teachers, staff, and students achieve to the best of their abilities.*

In addition to big-ticket items such as the recent technology upgrades (promethean boards, Elmos) and the school painting refresh, the PTA also funds programs like cultural arts assemblies, International Night and the Science Fair and purchases for the

school items that the County can no longer provide in a timely way, like new lettering for the signs, extra science equipment, and die cut tools for the office. Please be assured that in many ways, large and small, day in and day out, the PTA strives to use every dollar our families contribute to improve the quality of education; the morale of our staff, students, and families; and the reputation of our wonderful school in the community. A donation to the BT PTA is truly a donation to the daily lives and the future of our children.

Staff Appreciation Luncheon Update

Thank you to BT family Gurvinder and Shahab Ravery for their generous donation of a delicious catered lunch from their restaurant **Nest**, for the Staff Appreciation luncheon. The salads, pastas, sandwiches, cookies & brownies were enjoyed by everyone for days! (Nest is located at 4921 Bethesda Avenue in Bethesda (301)718-6378 or www.nestwinebarcafe.com.) We would also like to thank all the families who donated fruit and drinks and the volunteers who helped to set up, serve and clean-up.

Kathy Chelst, Beth Martino & Anne Ruskowski, Staff Appreciation Co-Chairs

Walk-to-School Day FOOTnotes

Our ninth **International Walk-to-School Day** event was a terrific success again, with 18 more walkers this year – **260 total walkers!**

Go Burning Tree! Thanks to Robin Rosenblum for tireless efforts and excellent work organizing it and making it so much fun! The weather cooperated beautifully. Thanks to all the families and staff who joined us on the walk wearing green and white and Burning Tree apparel – Mrs. Erdrich, Mr. Tark, Mrs. Whalen, Mrs. Uhar, Ms. Lopez, Mr. Duffy, and special thanks to Ms. Loftus who did a fantastic job waking us all up, leading the warm-up exercises and getting us safely to school. Thanks to the Curry/Schechter family for providing printed signs and the wonderful music to enhance the event, Trader Joe's for their beautiful display and delicious, healthy snacks, and Montgomery County for providing the reflective armbands for the kids.

As much fun as it is to get together on **Walk-to-School Day**, it is important to try to walk whenever you can. The day is intended to encourage healthy bodies, a healthy environment and pedestrian safety.

Leave cars at home when you can, and ask a neighbor to walk with your child when you cannot. Most importantly, teach your children what it means to walk safely – go to www.safekids.org and click on “safety tips” and “pedestrian” to find out how – or go to our own school website under PTA programs!

As always, if you have suggestions on how to improve Walk-to-School Day, please email robin@buypromos.com.

Thank you!

Ribbit Report Update

Extra, Extra, read all about it: The Ribbit Report has had its first meeting! If you're still interested in joining, let us know before our next meeting on Friday, December 4th.

In search of a few more reporters and photographers to work for Burning Tree's very own school newspaper The Ribbit Report. No experience necessary. Anyone second grade and up can join. Please sign up as soon as possible. Our next meeting date is 12/14, at 8:15 am in the computer lab. Meetings take place every third or fourth Friday after that at 8:15 a.m. Email

Amanda_driscoll@mcpsmd.org, or CatherineTYang@yahoo.com.

Thanks, and see you soon!

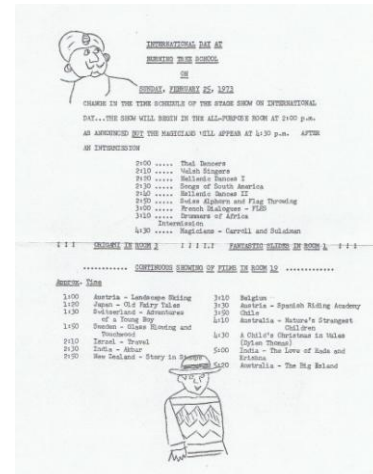
Interview with Carmen and Gregory Votaw, founders of International Night at Burning Tree Elementary School.

By Anna Colabewala, 4th Grader and Line Vreven, PTA Representative-at-Large for International.

Background:

The first time the International celebration at Burning Tree Elementary School took place was Sunday 25th February 1973, more than 26 years ago. It was a whole day event and suitably called International Day. This great tradition later evolved into the present International Night celebration. This year it will be on Thursday 19th November. We talked to two of the most active co-founders: Gregory and Carmen Delgado Votaw, proud former BTES parents. Gregory Votaw retired as Vice President EMENA (Europe, Middle East and Noirth Africa) at the World Bank. Carmen Delgado Votaw, born in Puerto Rico, is former Chief of Staff of a U.S. Member of Congress, former President of the Inter American Commission on Women of the

Organization of American States, Executive of various Non-Profits like Girls Scouts of the USA and United Way of America. She was awarded the Women’s Hispanic Heritage Award for Education in 1996. (Other nominees that year were Jimmy Smits, Oscar de la Renta and Isabel Allende.) Carmen Delgado Votaw was inducted into the Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame in 1992. (*Below is a picture of the agenda from the first International Night.*)



Q) What inspired you to start international night?

A) 1. Greg Votaw: The purpose for the event? There were lots of families with origins and knowledge of other countries, so we thought it would be fun to share products, costumes, food, traditions, etc. Surprisingly, it worked! It helped build a community spirit and support for B.T.E.S.

2. Carmen Delgado Votaw: Everybody had art, music, movies, costumes, talents and especially very good food they all wanted to share. It was open to the entire neighborhood and this terrific positive energy generated lots of goodwill for the school and its community. It was a great way for people to get to know each other.

Q) When the idea was launched, was anyone against it?

A) Carmen: Oh no everyone just embraced it and we had a large committee working on the event. Up to that time BTES only had one outdoor spring event and this was a wonderful idea for an indoor event in winter. It brought different things to the school. We had daytime shows with displays, a fair, performances from the different language classes and countries, continuously played movies from various regions. We decorated all the corridors in the school, the gym where the fair was held and the all purpose room hosted performances and movies were. People

were able to move from table to table and get acquainted with each other and each other's products, handicrafts and food. We even had an art sale and certain countries gave demonstrations about their native dress, its history and how it was worn. For example one lady showed kids how to tie a sari. Since people have different interests, we devised a system to keep them circulating. We had volunteers to help people and a meeting sign where people could gather to find a guide. Lots of kids volunteered for this.

Q) How big was the BTES community at that time and how diverse?

A) 1.Greg: BTES was a smaller school at the time; it had classes from K to 6th grade. Most international people were connected to the World Bank and IMF, less to embassies or international companies. It had fewer nationalities than what now seems to be the case, but was a diverse area.

2. Carmen: European countries were eager to show their movies; there were not so many Latin American movies available or accessible at the time. At the beginning, some people, especially from certain Asian countries, felt shy to participate.

Q) How did the Principal and Teachers react to the idea?

A) Carmen: The Principal, who was very innovative and energetic, fully supported the idea. The teachers just loved it. They all thought it was very enriching and helped with their teaching in the classroom. Students from different countries got to know each other better and got to know more about each other's cultures from the various displays and activities.



(Above, interviewer Anna with the Votaws.)

Q) Did you also have a booth?

A) Carmen: we had a booth on Puerto Rico. I put up lots of posters and statues of carved saints. I also brought several sombreros called jibaro hats, which are worn by people who work all day in the field. They were a big success and stirred up a lot of questions.

Q) What did people usually put up in their booths?

A) Carmen: in general people put a map, a flag, and a display typical for their country.

Calendar of Upcoming Events



Thursday November 19 – International Night

6:00 – 8:00 pm

Wednesday, November 25 – Early Release

Thursday/Friday, November 26 & 27– No school

Thanksgiving

Tuesday\Wed, December 8 & 9 – Book Fair

Barnes & Noble in downtown Bethesda
9:00am – 9:00pm

***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. The deadline for the next issue is **Friday, December 4th**.