

FALKTalk

Volume 12 Issue 1
September 2001



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From the Director...

Welcome to (or back to) Falk School for another exciting year! We have had a glorious beginning, and I hope that this will be the best year of your child's experience here at the school.

I always find myself writing about student safety, traffic and parking problems, and school routines in this issue. This year is no different, but I am going to use this month's column to describe a new initiative we are now undertaking.

Over the past year, Falk School has experienced an increase in hazardous pedestrian and traffic related incidents. The construction of the Pederson Center has impacted the traffic flow; shift changes at this site and the UPMC hospital group overlap our arrival and dismissal times.

Traffic from the out-patient facilities at the VA Hospital has steadily increased, and we have witnessed many cars that travel at excess speeds, despite the blinking school signs, and do not heed the stop signs.

(Continued on page 2)

From the PTA President...

It is hard to believe that summer is over and we are well into full swing with many activities, both past and in the near future. The New Parent Welcome, sponsored by the PTA and Falk faculty on August 26, was a huge success. Many new families attended, and there was good representation by the teachers and PTA.

Thanks to Sabina Rosenfeld and Laura Zaspel Lawson for their part in making this event successful. The sale of Sally Foster gift-wrap has been successfully completed. Thanks to Lori McDermott for coordinating this event and to all of you who participated in the sale.

Please mark your calendars for two upcoming events: the General PTA meeting on October 11 and the multicultural picnic on October 13. Information regarding the picnic can be found on page 4. Last year's picnic was a blast, with good friends, wonderful games, and incredible food!

(Continued on page 2)

Back to School Calendar

SEPTEMBER

Sally Foster Gift Wrap Sale (through website until December 15)

OCTOBER

October 8 — No School; PAISTA Conference

October 11 — General PTA Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Cafeteria

October 13 — Multicultural Picnic, 2:00 p.m., Schenley Park

October 17 — Delivery day for Sally Foster Gift Wrap

October 18-19 — No School; NALS Regional Conference in Toronto

NOVEMBER

November 5-6 — No School; Primary/Intermediate Parent Conferences

November 7-8 — Falk School Talent Show

From the Director...(Continued)

*The Falk
School
Advocacy
Committee
made five
specific
requests to
Risk
Management.*

A group of parents who will henceforth be known as the Falk School Advocacy Committee began meeting last year. A small core group gathered in my office at the beginning of this year to prioritize the agenda for this committee. They suggested that we contact Risk Management and Health and Safety here at the university to voice our concerns and to ask for several accommodations.

With their help, I have drafted and sent a letter to Risk Management, with copies to Health and Safety, requesting the following:

- 1) immediately re-institute the deployment of University of Pittsburgh safety officers to direct traffic during arrival and dismissal;
- 2) remove the portion of sidewalk that sits at the center of the school's semicircle and replace it with a small barrier, thus preventing the urge to walk through that

area at peak traffic times and increasing by one lane the space for moving in and out of the area;

- 3) place additional signage along Allequippa street to indicate the need for caution;
- 4) designate six spots on University Drive A behind and below Falk School as parking for the Falk Community; and
- 5) immediately conduct a site visit and develop a risk management plan for the Falk School.

We are now waiting for a response from the two identified departments. We hope the response will be favorable, and we are looking forward to positive changes. My thanks to this core of people for their suggestions. If you wish to know more about the Advocacy Committee, please contact me at the Falk School office.

— William McDonald

From the PTA President...(Continued)

The General PTA meeting will be held Thursday October 11 at 7:30 p.m. in the Falk cafeteria. The agenda for this meeting is two-fold. First is the introduction of the new MAT's (master assistant teachers). Second is your opportunity to meet and discuss school issues with the parent and faculty members of the PTA. This promises to be a great way to find out what the PTA does and how you can be a part of it.

One final and personal note. Almost sixty years ago, my grandmother was the PTA president of the school my mother attended. I am sure that she was as grateful as I am now to serve in this capacity. The differences in our experiences, such as communication, technology and travel, lessen as I compare the events of the 1940's with those of the recent weeks.

In each of our times, we lived and are living in a time of uncertainty with threats to

our homeland. Yet, paramount to our concerns about national security in both these times was/is the safety, constancy, and involvement in our own children's lives.

Presently, I know that my step is a little higher when my daughter speaks proudly of my involvement with the PTA and of my caring about what happens during her eight hours away from home each school day. I urge you to show your children that you care too by getting involved at Falk. Be a french fry server in the cafeteria, volunteer to be a room parent, serve on a PTA committee — have your children see that you are a big part of a very big part of their lives.

Feel free to call me at 412-380-9366 or e-mail me at lblington@superiorwells.com with questions or concerns, or if you would just like to chat.

—Lynn Billington

Library News

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED The library depends on parent volunteers to provide valuable support for its programs. Two types of volunteers work in the library: Clerical Volunteers and Circulation Volunteers.

Clerical Volunteers help manage the library's periodicals collection. New magazines are checked in, stamped, labeled, entered into the library's circulation system, and shelved. The back issue collection requires maintenance as well. A Clerical Volunteer also assists with shelving library materials and works in the library for an hour or two each week or every other week. Clerical Volunteers are currently needed. Contact Ms. Herward for more information about this opportunity to support the library program. Call 412-624-8010 or email her at Lherward@home.com.

Circulation Volunteers work in the library about one afternoon a month during primary classes' circulation times. These volunteers check books out to students on the circulation computer, assist students in locating and selecting library materials, and assist Ms. Herward as needed during the class time. No Circulation Volunteers are needed at this time. Contact Pam Greenhouse (412-422-2613) to put your name on a list for future openings.

BIRTHDAY/GIFT BOOK PROGRAM The library and the PTA coordinate a Gift Book Program as a means of expanding the library collection while commemorating special times and special persons: birthdays, holidays, grandparents, teachers, interns, and sometime even pets. An appropriate bookplate is placed in each book. All Falk students, teachers, interns, and staff benefit from the continuous updating of the collection.

Those students who have birthdays in the fall will be receiving letters inviting their families to participate in this program. Students with birthdays in the winter, spring, and summer will receive information later in the year. Families may make donations at any time. Some families choose to make selections for siblings at the same time. Others make one book donation in honor of the family rather than individual books for each child. Feel free to write notes on the Gift Form as needed. Please keep in mind that all dollar amounts are suggested donations. Pam Greenhouse and Nancy Glynn will coordinate this pro-

gram with Ms. Herward. If you have any questions about the Birthday/Gift Book Program contact Ms. Herward (412-624-8010), Pam Greenhouse (412-422-2613), or Nancy Glynn (412-825-6545).

Thank You to the many students and families who donated books at the end of the school year: Julia Blume, Eva Resnick-Day, Alix Glynn, Demetre Lardas, Davida Fromm, Julia Cohen, Evie Moreno, Rebecca Greenhouse, Alexis Lambrou, Peter Lambrou, Paul Del Presto, Maggie Del Presto, Jeff Del Presto, Geoffrey Beaman, Nathan Resnick-Day, Warren Lea, Angela Perfetti, the Brostoff Family, Deryn Beaman, Mark Bagnato, Anna Battaglia, Tessa Coulter, Joaquin Gonzalez, Melanie Grace, Benjamin Grace, Sanna Herwald, Laura Hritz, Ricky Hritz, Daniel Hrusa, Matthew Kurs-Lasky, Jessica Kurs-Lasky, Drew McDermott, Weasie Offerman, Henry Permigiani, Ted Permigiani, Simrath Randhawa, Sophia Rosenfeld, Colin Rutenbar, the Simmons Family, Duane So, Rachel Weingart, Conor O'Donnell, and Maeve O'Donnell. More complete information concerning these gifts is published in the Library Newsletter.

BOOK SELECTION Students at Falk School have a wide range of reading interests and abilities. Every effort is made to assist students in making appropriate reading choices. Please contact Ms. Herward if you have concerns about your child's library book selections. Keep in mind that parents may check books out of the library. See information under Heartwood Program for the most convenient times.

LIBRARY NETWORK The new library network will have six student search stations, a circulation station, a librarian workstation, and the server. The library software has been updated to the Windows version of the library automation software from Follett Library Software. A new component to the program will allow access to the library catalog over the Internet. A link to the catalog website will be placed on the library website. The network will be connected to the Pitt network, and the Internet. Technology policies put in place last year will govern the library computers as well, including the Acceptable Use Policy. The Internet will be accessed for school research only. Teachers and/or the librarian will identify websites, and student use will be supervised.

—Linda Herward



Health News



The national tragedy of September 11, 2001 continues to hang heavy on all of us. In addition to our own personal feelings and reactions, we as teachers and parents have concerns for our children. They are obviously impacted, although the extent of this will depend on many variables.

The following tips for parents were prepared by Prevention Education at the Institute for Psychiatric and Addiction Services at St. Francis. These tips will be important, not just as we cope with the current crisis, but as the country continues to deal with the long-term impact.

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Limit students' direct exposure to news. Be forthright in offering information, but do not offer graphic details.
- Normalize the family routine. There is safety in routine.
- Let children talk about what they have heard and seen. Don't deny their fears. Listen and offer reassurance.
- Respond to children on their own terms. Younger children want to know how they will be directly affected.
- Do not allow inappropriate or "graphic" talk in front of your children (e.g., specifics about what has been seen, racial comments, joking, etc.).
- Be calm and reassuring. Children look to parents as models.
- Don't speculate about the crisis in front of the children.
- Attend to physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs of your families and yourselves.
 - Physical needs include: eating,

sleeping, and exercising.

- Intellectual needs can be met through education about common responses to trauma, reviewing past experiences, and coping strategies.
- Emotionally, children should be encouraged to listen to music, talk about their feelings, spend time with pets, and support each other through tears and physical connection.
- Spiritually, families may want to pray together according to their beliefs.
- Take care of yourself.

In addition to these tips, you have probably seen or heard many more offered during the media's ongoing coverage. I have accumulated a number of articles and other resources on various related topics. Please feel free to contact me or any member of the Student Assistance team for additional information, to discuss a particular need or concern, or to browse our article collection. The Student Assistance team members are:

- Dr. William McDonald, 412-624-8022
- Mr. Cesar Canizares, 412-383-9610
- Ms. Eileen Coughlin, 412-624-8016
- Ms. Susan Sholtis, 412-624-8023
- Ms. Jackie Metcalf, 412-383-9608
- Ms. Donna Priore, 412-648-2356
- Ms. Jill Sarada, 412-383-9613

On a final note, we have received many offers of assistance from parents. The media has shown us countless examples of people pulling together to assist others in the midst of this crisis, and the same has proven true of the entire Falk community. Thank you to all.

— Susan Sholtis, RN

Contributions?

Please send any contributions to Amy Scerba at ascerba@mindspring.com.

Music Notes

Welcome back to all of our Falk School musicians and to our new musicians also! All our classes are off to a great start.

The Primary classes are working on vocal exercises, rhythm patterns, performing on the classroom instruments, and singing lots of songs. The Intermediate students have been learning about Band instruments and preparing songs for Chorus. The Sixth Grade students are participating in an exciting “World Music Drum-ming” curriculum and working on vocal solos.

Our performing groups are all up and running. The Intermediate Chorus is open to all Intermediate students and rehearses every Wednesday from 10:30-11:10. The Intermediate Band meets every Friday

morning at 8:00 a.m., and the Middle School Band meets every Thursday from 12:30-12:55.

Any student in grades 4-8 is encouraged to participate in our Instrumental Music Program. Sign-up information was sent home to all 4th and 5th grade students and any new Middle School students. If your child wants to participate in this program and you did not receive a pamphlet, give me a call (412-383-9617) and I’ll send you the information.

An exciting new group has started this year. The Middle School Jazz Band meets every Monday morning at 8:00 a.m. They sound great already! Drop in and hear us sometime!

—Lee Ann Conover



After School

Welcome to a great beginning of an exciting school year at Falk School. We are writing to inform you of a few changes in the After School Program. Two of the major changes are actually new after school directors!

Maria Martin and Jessica Ohodnicki will be co-directing this year’s after school program. Both are teachers and come to Falk School with an extensive background working with children.

Ms. Martin taught at a private inner city school last year and has a background in dance. She also taught at the Theater Arts camp this past summer at Falk School.

Ms. Ohodnicki recently graduated from Edinboro University of PA and has served as a camp counselor over the past several summers. She has also been the Director of Arts and Crafts at summer camps. We are both looking forward to this upcoming school year with enthusiasm.

In terms of after school, we would like to remind you that all children are welcome

on a regular or as needed basis. We both have planned a lot of fun and exciting activities for our after school children. Some highlights to look forward to are new crafts, fitness activities, and the return of Jerry Meyers, the chess master.

We would also like to remind parents and children that the expectations and rules of Falk School are also to be followed in the after school program. Safety and the well being of the children are very important to us. We want this program to be fun, but we do expect respect from the children toward the after school staff and peers. Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

We look forward to meeting all of the Falk School families. If you have any questions, please feel free to call us at 412-624-8195.

—Maria Martin and Jessica Ohodnicki

Computer Room News



Excitement is in the air of the computer room! Students of all ages are happy to be working on the computers!

Kindergarten is busy learning the names of the computer components and experimenting with the “tools” available in “KidPix” (a fun and creative drawing program).

First grade is also using KidPix to create “Action Pictures.” Students use the “stamps” feature to choose animals that move, group these animals according to their described movement (walking, swimming, flying, crawling, etc.), label these groups, and finally print a beautiful full-colored picture. When visiting Falk School, remember to walk by the Computer/Gym area to see lots of educational and attractive student work!

Are your **Second and Third graders** telling jokes around the dinner table? They are learning some of those jokes in the computer room along with the manipulation of wire frames, fonts, colors, size, and movement when creating “Riddle Books” with the software program “Print Artist.”

Fourth and Fifth grade students are using “Microsoft Word” to create Newsletters. Students are required to pre-write; correct errors; learn about layout, point size, and fonts; and finally print their final drafts. We have editors, writers, photographers, cartoonists, and illustrators. Their chosen subject matter was not a surprise as the classes chose to split into two main groups of boys and girls: one newsletter will be about the interests of boys and the other newsletter will be about the interests of girls. Stay tuned for these to come home in the future.

Middle School attends computer class in five week cycles. Our first cycle happens to be 7th graders. Inspired by a graduate class in Social Studies that Dr. McDonald and I are

teaching, the 7th graders began this year's project by researching various current events on the Internet that have relevance to their lives and posed an area of conflict.

Some of the chosen subjects included: Are backpacks too heavy?, Should marijuana be legalized as a medicine?, Palestine vs. Israel, Wolves: an endangered species?, Hunting, Homosexuals in the Boy Scouts, and Limits on Musical Lyrics.

Students organized their findings into two different types of charts. One chart taught the students how to draw tables and organize the information. The other chart involved using a new software program called “Inspiration.” This is a “Web Mapping” tool.

Finally, I had the students take turns videotaping each other while giving presentations on the material learned. Other projects that I hope to complete before the end of this school year include: creating your own web site, e-mail/pen pals with other students in another country, Power Point, and Video Editing.

The computer lab is often the recipient of monies from fund-raising because the computer lab and its contents are used by the whole school. This year's fund-raising effort will include the collection of printer ink cartridges, Giant Eagle receipts, and General Mill's Box Tops for education. Be on the lookout for more information about these fund raising efforts in your children's book bags!

The computer room is always interested in gently used but up-to-date computers, monitors, etc. We are always in need of monetary donations, volunteers to help with our fundraisers, and guest speakers/teachers to talk about their relationship with technology. For more information, call Mrs. Bianco at 412-648-8459.

Multicultural Picnic

Please join your Falk friends on Saturday, October 13 at 2:00 p.m. at the Veteran's Pavilion in Schenley Park for a potluck picnic and celebration of cultural diversity. All Falk Families are invited!

Each family should bring a dish to serve 12, a serving spoon, and beverages and silverware for your family. If possible, make a dish which reflects your ethnic heritage, or one you would like to celebrate, and bring along a card describing it. We will enjoy multicultural games and music, ethnic dancing, and even a piñata, so please plan to join us!

Watch for a flyer on this event to be sent home with your child, and please complete and return it so we may have a tally of those attending.

For more information or to offer suggestions, please call or email: Jane Dirks (412-242-5166, dirks@sis.pitt.edu) or Sally Rafson (412-421-2629, sallyai@stargate.net).



Sally Foster Gift Wrap Sale

Thanks to all for ordering Sally Foster again this year! The delivery date has been scheduled for 10/17. If you would be interested in helping on delivery day (10/17), please contact Lori McDermott at 412-247-0397. If you have been unable to make the ordering deadline, you still have the ability to use the Sally Foster website and Falk PTA will benefit!!

Sally Foster has added the ability to order products from a secured web site. The web site address is www.sallyfoster.com. This is an easy and convenient way for out-of-town

family and friends to order and support Falk School. For a nominal UPS fee of \$5.95, orders are processed and shipped directly to the purchaser within 4-7 business days.

The online store is open now until December 15, 2001. Falk School will receive the same 50% profit on all online sales during this period! The online purchaser must know the child's homeroom teacher's name and our Falk School Sally Foster Account Number (0356881).

Heartwood Books

THE HEARTWOOD PROGRAM is a literature-based ethics curriculum for children. The program uses illustrated books from representative cultures around the world to help children understand seven attributes: courage, loyalty, justice, respect, hope, honesty and love. The stories are primarily folklore, legends and hero tales. The books are read aloud in class and then discussed. The different attributes are featured throughout the school year according to a

schedule. Parents are encouraged to read the books aloud with their children. Many of the books are available at the public library. Falk School Library has most of the main books and many of the supplementary books. Stop in the library after school Tuesday through Friday between 3:10-4:00 or before 8:30 to arrange to borrow books. Contact Ms. Herward (412-624-8010) for a complete list of the Heartwood books.

(Continued on page 8)

CHECK OUT the monthly menu on the Falk School's website: www.pitt.edu/~fls.

Published by the Falk
School PTA

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FALKTalk

The Heartwood Program... (Continued)

OCTOBER Main Books for Courage

Abiyoyo, P. Seeger
Very Last First Time, J. Andrews
The Boy Who Held Back the Sea, L. Hart
Following the Drinking Gourd, J. Winter
The Flame of Peace, D. Lattimore
The People Who Hugged Trees, D. Rose

Supplemental Books For Courage

The Bridge Dancers, C. Saller
Call It Courage, A. Sperry
The Courage of Sara Noble, A. Dalglish
El Chino, A. Say
The Firebringer, M. Hodges
Mikko's Fortune, L. Kingman
Momotaro, the Peach Boy, L. Kingman
Messa's Fish, N. Luenn
St. George and the Dragon, M. Hodges
The Samurai's Daughter, R. San Souci
The Sleeper, D. Day

NOVEMBER Main Books for Loyalty

The Legend of the Bluebonnet, T. DePaola
The Seven Chinese Brothers, M. Mahy
Teammates, P. Golenbock
The Sailor Who Captured the Sea, D. Lattimore
Cornrows, C. Yarbough
The Nightingale, H. C. Anderson

Supplementary Books for Loyalty

Buffalo Woman, P. Goble
The Big Wave, P. Buck
Brothers: A Hebrew Legend, F. B. Freedman
Doodle Flute, D. Pinkwater
The Mousehole Cat, A. Barber
Rosie and the Yellow Ribbon, T. DePaola
Summer of My German Soldier, B. Greene
Two Pair of Shoes, P. L. Travers
The Voice of the Great Bell, Hearn, retold by M. Hodges
The Wave, M. Hodges
The Weaving of a Dream, M. Heyer
The Whipping Boy, S. Fleishman