



Ben-Hem Happenings

The Bennett-Hemenway PTO

January 2014 Newsletter



Cultural Arts Kicks Off 2014

Written by Krissy Fernandes, PTO Co-President

In the winter months, it is always difficult to keep students' attention. With day after day of indoor recess, students can't wait to get out of their classrooms and do something different. Luckily, the January Cultural Arts line-up has offered some relief.

Tanglewood Marionettes

To start off the New Year, Kindergarteners were treated to an entertaining performance by Tanglewood Marionettes. A master puppeteer captured the students' attention and imagination within the first few minutes with just a gloved hand. The kids were amazed how a hand could transform into a character that could express when it was happy or sad. The hand was then given a head and a nose and took on a life of its own. Students were then introduced to more advanced puppets such as the ticklish, orange, mouth puppet and a wide array of marionettes.



The main show, entitled "The Fairy Circus", involved appearances from a wide variety of merry marionettes including a juggling clown, a leaping grasshopper, and a very leggy spider. The sounds of laughter emanating from the Cafetorium spoke to the popularity of the performance with students. These feelings were echoed by teachers later on through

post-event evaluation forms. As one teacher put it, "We love the Tanglewood Marionettes!"

Help your mittens find their match!
CHECK THE LOST & FOUND
 (There are plenty of coats, shirts, shoes, hats and scarves looking for mates as well.)

LOST & FOUND

Eujin Neilan

The imaginations of our Second Graders were put to the test when children's book and illustrator, Eujin Neilan, visited their classrooms.

Eujin Neilan was born and raised in Seoul, South Korea as part of an art-loving family. When she moved to the US in 1993, she decided to take some art courses and wound up getting her M.F.A. degree in Illustration at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco. Eujin now lives in Natick with her husband and two children. She says that the most rewarding aspect of being a children's book illustrator is that she has the freedom to imagine new worlds from a child's point of view. Eujin loves to face the challenges of each book and explore different approaches.

It is this perspective that Eujin shared with students. She showed them the techniques that she used to get the swirling texture in some of her illustrations and explained that a single illustration can go through many sketches and drafts before it is complete. She explained the Three I's of Illustration: Imagination, Inspiration and Information.

At the end of each session, Eujin had students close their eyes and use their imagination to visualize the character as she read from the book "Imagine A Dragon." Afterward, students got an opportunity to make their own dragon illustrations.



Suzy Kline

This is not the first time Suzy Kline has visited Ben-Hem and there is certainly a reason why teachers and students asked for her to come back. Suzy Kline is a storyteller who is able to share her experiences as an author in a way that captures the attention of students from Kindergarten to Fourth Grade.

Suzy Kline is the author of the Horrible Harry and Herbie Jones book series and more. She was an elementary school teacher for 25 years and has used many of her experiences teaching as inspiration for her books.

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Cultural Arts Kicks Off 2014

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Suzy shared some of these stories with the students to show them how something ordinary that happens to you in real life can transform into something extraordinary in your writing. One example that she shared was something that she witnessed in the cafeteria while doing a school visit like ours. She was walking through the cafeteria when she saw a lot of the kids raising their hands and calling for one of the helpers to come over. She asked what was going on and was told "That's the ketchup lady." Suzy followed her to one of the tables and watched as the woman served up ketchup to each of the kids in the shape of a smile.

Suzy pulled from this experience to create a messy situation for Herbie Jones. One day at lunch, Herbie and a friend got into a ketchup fight using little ketchup packets. Needless to say they got in trouble, but the punishment extended to the whole class. They were not allowed to use ketchup packets for an entire week. But Herbie's punishment didn't end there. To replace the ketchup packets, a helper walked around the cafeteria serving ketchup to the students out of a bottle. She drew smiley faces for all of the students, but when she got to Herbie and his friend, all they got was a mound of ketchup!

This was just one of the stories shared to demonstrate that



inspiration for writing can come from anywhere. Suzy encouraged students to carry a notebook with them everywhere to record those moments where inspiration strikes.

The session ended with Ben-Hem teachers being brought up to the front of the assembly to each take a part in a "play" about a haunted bathroom. Then as a parting gift, each student was given an "Inspiration Notebook" to take home.

SCHOOL HAPPENINGS

Fourth Grade Committee Update

Written by Joanna Jones, 4th Grade Committee Co-Chair

The 4th graders have been busy having lots of fun this year, all while raising funds to help support the year-end special events to celebrate their "promotion" on to middle school.

In October, the 4th Grade Planning Committee began their meetings and created a plan and a budget for the year. This group of dedicated parents has been hard at work planning social events for the 4th graders, and sometimes their families, to come together and celebrate their final year at Ben-Hem.

The proceeds of these events, along with a generous donation from the PTO, help cover the costs at the end of the year.

We kicked off the year with an Ice Cream Social which brought out almost 75 families in November, followed by a very successful Bake Sale during the Holiday Fair, and a Longfellow Swim and Gym Night in December. The first event of 2014 was a Movie Night for the 4th graders in the cafetorium where 55 members of the class came out to watch "Despicable Me 2".

We are well on our way to meeting our fundraising goal and there are still many events for the 4th graders to look forward to. In February we have our second Longfellow Night and an Open Paint at Palettes. In March, families are invited to an evening at Roller Kingdom, and in April we will have a second Movie Night. The year will end with their special Promotion Ceremony, as well as their 4th Grade Fun Day in June. During these events, the students will receive a class t-shirt, yearbook and DVD, and will present a gift to the school.

If any parents are interested in getting involved, please contact the 4th Grade Planning Committee 4thgrade@benhempto.org.

Around the World in 60 Minutes

Written by Krissy Fernandes, PTO Co-President

This was Debbie Knapik's first year as chairperson for Ben-Hem's annual International Night, and I'm sure that all in attendance would agree that it was a huge success.

As students entered the lobby of Ben-Hem, they were greeted with cheerful balloons and friendly smiles. At the check-in table, students received their passports and travel times. From there, students picked a table and began setting up. The displays were as unique and creative as the countries they were representing and many students even dressed in regional outfits.

Promptly at 7:00p, students (and parents) began their travels. They went from country to country, asking questions, learning some interesting facts and stories, and receiving a stamp from each in their passports.

Students who participate in International Night have lots of fun and many come back year after year. In fact several fourth graders were recognized at the event for having participated all five years that they were at Ben-Hem: Elora Barros, Joey Knapik and Jacob Simon.



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COMING SOON

February 4: PTO Meeting

Join us for our mid-year review! We will look back on the activities of the first half of the year and have a discussion around what worked and what didn't. Guest speakers at the meeting will be this year's candidates for Natick School Committee. There are two positions currently open. Bring your questions and learn about what they want to achieve.

February 5: Restaurant of the Month

Bring a flyer and join the Ben-Hem community for lunch or dinner at UNO's Pizzeria & Grill in Natick. UNO's will donate 20% of all Ben-Hem sales though out the day back to our school.

February 5: Palette's Open Paint

Support our Fourth Grade and have fun! Sign-up for Palette's Open Paint from 1:30p – 3:30p and they will donate \$5 for each participant to benefit the Ben-Hem Fourth Grade end of year activities.

February 28: Ben-Hem's Got Talent Show

Can you sing? Can you dance? Can you juggle? Do you have a talent you would like to share? Would you like to support your fellow classmates? If so, please join us for the first annual Ben-Hem's Got Talent Show. To participate, fill out a form and return it to the PTO by February 12.

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VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Meet Debbie Knapik! She is a mother of three and this year's chairperson for our annual International Night.

Q: How many students do you have at Ben-Hem this year? What grades are they in?

A: I have two students at Ben-Hem this year

and a soon-to-be kindergartner. Joey is in 4th grade and Anna is in 2nd grade. Allison is 5 and will be a Kindergartener next year.

Q: How long have you lived in Natick?

A: We moved to Natick in 2001.

Q: When did you first volunteer with the Ben-Hem PTO?

A: My first PTO event was helping with set-up at the Monster Mash when Joey was in kindergarten. I had to untangle and hang holiday lights.

Q: What prompted you to get involved?

A: My background is as an educator so I've seen how parent involvement can really add to the amazing school experience that our teachers provide for our children. It's also nice way to meet other families in the Ben-Hem community.

Q: What was your most recent volunteer experience? What did you like best about it?

A: On January 24th, I organized International Night for the first time. It was a fantastic night thanks to the enthusiasm of the kids and their parents. What I loved most was how different every presentation was. Some kids brought technology into their project and some did a huge poster entirely in their own handwriting. Some shared the culture of their family and some chose the most random and different place they could think of. We had new kindergarten students and we had experienced fourth graders. The diversity of the presentations is what makes it fun.

Q: What volunteer opportunities interest you the most?

A: I enjoy volunteering in ways that let me get to know Joey and Anna's classmates. This is such a big school that I'm still meeting new kids at 4th grade events!

Q: What do your kids think about your volunteering at their school?

A: They love seeing me on occasion in their classroom or at after-school events. Unless they are on the playground during recess and pretend to not know me. 😊

TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Where Teachers Answer to the STUDENTS!

Each month, several student volunteers will interview teachers at Ben-Hem with questions of their choice. A subset of the questions will be published in this newsletter. You can view the full interviews and pictures online at: www.benhempto.org/happenings. If you are interested in interviewing a teacher, have your parent email us at happenings@benhempto.org.

Question of the Month: If you weren't a teacher, what would you want to be?

“An astronomer, because I love the stars.” – *Ms. Hayes*

“That's easy. I would want to be a writer. I would want to write children's books. And I'd want to win the Newbury Medal.” – *Ms. Krakauer*

Ms. Hayes (Third Grade Teacher)

Interviewed by Sydney Dretlyer (3rd Grade)

Q: Where did you go to college?

A: University of Hartford for my undergraduate degree; UMass Boston for my Master's degree. Right now I am

finishing up my CAGS in STEM Education online at the University of Cincinnati.

Q: Why did you choose to become a teacher?

A: Because I have always gotten along well with kids, and also I like seeing how kids think.

Q: What is your favorite holiday?

A: Easter, because it means spring is right around the corner.

Q: What is the craziest thing you've ever done?

A: Ridden a camel.

Ms. Krakauer (First Grade Teacher)

Interviewed by Ethan Duncan (1st Grade)

Q: What is your favorite thing to teach?

A: My favorite thing to teach is reading. However, I love teaching everything, but I came into teaching because I thought that reading was what I wanted to do.

Q: Where did you grow up?

A: Well, until I was 10 years old, I lived in Washington DC so I pretty much feel I grew up in Washington, DC then I moved to Massachusetts. In Weston.

Q: What do you do on the weekends?

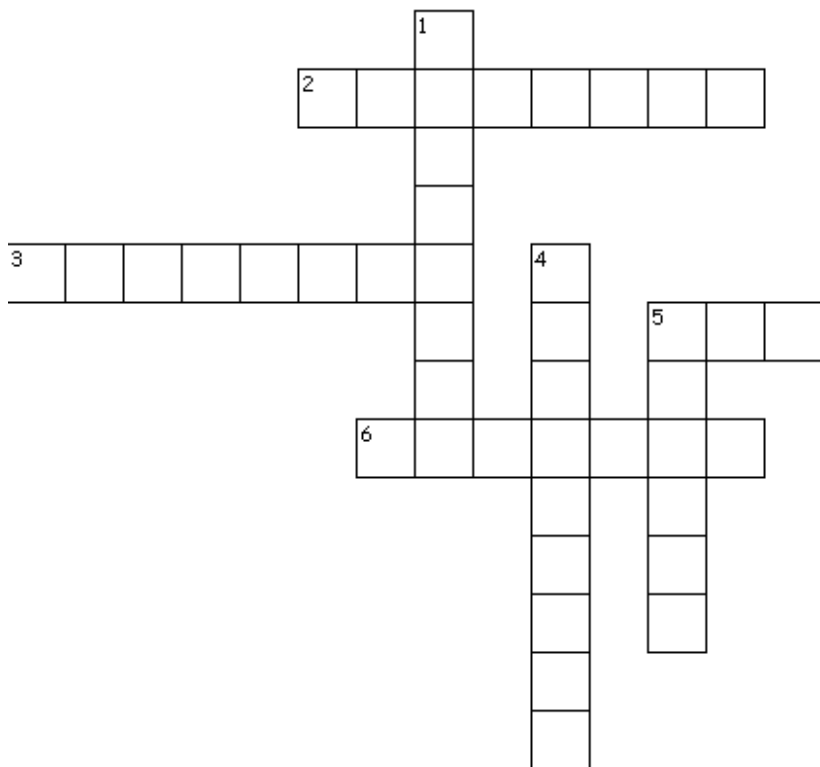
A: I read. I run. I play with my puppy. And I work.

Q: What is your favorite book?

A: Charlotte's Web.

KID'S CORNER

WINTER FUN CROSSWORD: Answer the clues to fill in the puzzle below.



Across

- A ball of packed snow made for throwing at other people for fun
- To slide downhill over snow on an object with a smooth bottom or runners
- To travel over snow on a pair of long narrow pieces of hard flexible material
- A representation of a human figure created with compressed snow.

Down

- A long narrow sled used for the sport of coasting downhill over snow or ice - typically can hold multiple passenger
- A board resembling a short, broad ski, used for sliding downhill on snow
- Used to move on ice in a gliding fashion