



# Ben-Hem Happenings

The Bennett-Hemenway PTO

June 2014 Newsletter



## “Bobcat For Life” Award

*Written by Krissy Fernandes, PTO Co-President*

What is it that makes Ben-Hem such a great place for our kids to learn? The teachers? Absolutely! The administrators? Of course! The great families in our community? Without question! But one of the most important contributors to ensuring that Ben-Hem is a fun environment for all students to learn in is the on-going efforts of parent volunteers.

Ben-Hem is lucky to have one of the most involved and supportive parent groups in all of Natick. Parents volunteer their time in the classrooms, at events, behind the scenes and more. We would love to thank each one of you by name but are afraid that we would leave someone out. Instead, please accept our heartfelt thanks for every one of you who has offered your time and skills to better the education of our students.

We would especially like to thank those parents who have taken on the sometimes daunting task of chairing a PTO committee, signing up to be room parent, or repeatedly volunteering for any job that comes your way. Your contributions have helped to shape our children’s education.

In order to recognize those parents who make outstanding volunteer contributions to Ben-Hem, the PTO has introduced the annual “Bobcat For Life” award. This award is presented each year, by the exiting 4<sup>th</sup> Grade class, to a parent volunteer who has gone above and beyond for our school.



This year, we are pleased to present the “Bobcat for Life” award to Joanna Jones. Joanna has seen three students through Ben-Hem. This year she celebrates the promotion of her youngest son, Max, to Wilson. Joanna has been an active participant of the PTO since day-one. Over the years she has

taken on the roles of individual contributor, room parent, committee chair, and PTO Co-President. She has been a perpetual volunteer and has even stepped in to help in the front office when needed. Words are not enough to describe Joanna’s many contributions to the Ben-Hem community. She will be greatly missed, but will forever be a Bobcat!

Here are just a few of the comments that we received about Joanna Jones:

*“The fourth grade will be lost without her.” – Ms. Obrien*

*“Mrs. Jones volunteered countless hours of her time to enrich the lives of ALL Bobcats! She always did so with a genuine smile on her face. We will miss her greatly upon her “graduation” from Ben-Hem. Thank you, Mrs. Jones!” – Mrs. Briones*

*“What an excellent choice for the “Bobcat For Life” Award. I can think of no one more deserving than Joanna Jones! Even though I’ve only had Joanna as a parent in my classroom for the first time this year, I’ve felt like I’ve known her for years! Joanna is such a positive and helpful presence, and the Ben-Hem community has been so lucky to have her all these years. Thank you, Joanna, for all you’ve done for Ben-Hem!” – Mrs. Kern*

*“The nice lady with the camera. Thanks for always being there for our great kids.” – Mr. Cappabianca*

## 2014 Scholarship Winner: Lucia Cavacini

*Written by Krissy Fernandes, PTO Co-President*

Each year, the Bennett-Hemenway PTO sponsors the Jacquelin Searle Memorial Scholarship as a way to continue to support our students even after they have left and Ben-Hem. The scholarship is awarded to a Natick High School student who attended Bennett-Hemenway Elementary School and is going on to higher education. Applicants are asked to submit an essay with the following idea in mind: “Service to others is a value to be celebrated and each one of us can make a difference.”

For the 2012-2013 school year, the Jacquelin Searle Memorial Scholarship was awarded to Lucia Cavacini (Ben-Hem Class of 2006). Lucia wrote a great essay about her experience volunteering to help kids through the Comets hockey organization, playing for others in the Natick High School Marching and Pep Band, and her family’s efforts to help the community in Guatemala where her brother Giovanni was adopted from.

Lucia states it perfectly in her essay that “giving back to the community and being able to help others is something that everyone should embrace. No matter your financial situation, family situation, etc., everyone can make a difference.”

# YEAR-END SUMMARY

## Thank you for a great year!

The end of the school year can be a very hectic time for parents, teachers and students. There doesn't seem to be a moment to catch your breath as you race toward the finish line. We couldn't, however, finish the year without looking back on all that we, as a community, have accomplished for Ben-Hem.

### We Asked

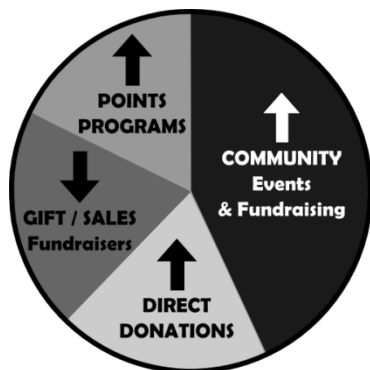
In September (it seems so long ago), the Ben-Hem PTO rolled out the Support Your Kids campaign. The purpose of this was to communicate all of the different ways that parents could support, volunteer, and get involved in their student's educational experience.

Part of the campaign was a request for financial support so that the PTO could provide all of the great Cultural Arts and other events and programs that our community enjoys every year. The goal was to raise \$36,868 in order to meet the 2013-2014 budget. Thanks to the generosity of our community members, we started off the year with \$12,198 in revenue from the previous year's An Evening Out fundraiser. That left \$23,950 still to be raised.

Financial support was not the only resource needed to execute on this year's plan. We also needed parents to volunteer their time to help students get out of the car in the morning, chair and help with events and projects, and work behind the scenes.

### You Answered

Thanks to all of your generosity and hard work, we ended up meeting or exceeding every goal we had for the year. As of the June 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting, we raised over \$50K in support of the PTO. That is a \$13,654 difference! The great part about this result is that the additional revenue came not only from an increase in direct donations, but also from community events and points programs that didn't cost families anything extra. Our goal is to continue this trend next year while reducing the revenue from gift/sales fundraisers. To this end, we have decided not to hold a Genevieve's catalog sale in the 2014-2015 school year.



The volunteer effort was also significant. Even with the addition of several new events and programs this year, we still received enough parent support to be able to staff each one.

## Our Kids Received!

With the outpouring of support from our community, we were able to provide 14 Cultural Arts performances, 12 student and family events, monetary and labor support for our teachers, buses for one field trip per grade and Special Olympics, 7 school spirit days, and so much more!

Looking at the list to the right, it is amazing what we have accomplished together this year. The educational experience of each of our students has improved as a result, and our community has grown stronger.

Next year we plan on providing the same wonderful events and programs. We look forward to working with all of our continuing parents again next year. For those that are moving on, we sincerely appreciate all that you have done to help build this amazing community. We hope that you and your children look back on their time at Ben-Hem with fondness.

Have a great summer!

The PTO Board  
*Krissy Fernandes*  
*Tracey Gondelman*  
*Chris Scully*  
*Debbie Forte*  
*Jen Little*  
*Lauren DiCicco*

## EDUCATIONAL ENRICHMENT

- Jackie Searle Memorial Scholarship Grant Funding
- Cultural Arts
  - Fireseed Arts (All School)
  - Suzy Kline, Author (All School)
  - Bubble Mania (All School)
  - Prismatic Magic (All School)
  - Tanglewood Marionettes (K)
- Michael Glaser, Oceanographer (K)
- Nutcracker, Impulse Dance (1st)
- Andrea Lovett, Writer (1st)
- Eujin Neilan, Illustrator (2nd)
- Roger Tinnckell, Musician (2nd)
- Andrew Green, Poet (3rd)
- Paul Revere House (3rd)
- States of Matter (4th)
- Wheelock Theater Trip (4th)
- Seed to Harvest Garden
  - STH Classroom Activities
  - STH Summer Activities

## STUDENT & FAMILY EVENTS

- 4th of July Parade
- Kindergarten Meet & Greet
- Family Picnic
- Monster Mash
- Frozen Treat Night
- International Night
- Biography Night
- Ben-Hem's Got Talent
- MCAS Yoga by Jackie Killorin
- Science & Math Night
- Family Fun Night
- 4th Grade Events

## SCHOOL & TEACHER SUPPORT

- Morning Drop-Off
- Supply Closet Inventory
- Playground Improvements
- Teacher Enrichment Funds
- Teacher Time Savers
- Field Day Popsicles and Ribbons
- Field Trip Busses
- Special Olympic Busses
- MCAS Water

## SCHOOL SPIRIT

- Spirit Shirt Contest
- Spirit Wear
- School Spirit Days
  - Pajama Day
  - Sports Day
  - Hat Day
  - Mismatch Day
  - Crazy Day
  - School Wide Ben-Hem Spirit Days
- Spirit Day Pictures with Benny
- Spirit Salon

## APPRECIATION

- Teachers' Lounge Makeover
- Teachers' Breakfasts & Luncheons
- Nurse & Staff Appreciation

## FUNDRAISING

- Stop & Shop Sweep
- Scholastic Book Fair
- Holiday Fair
- Yard Sale
- Restaurant of the Month
- Support Your Kids Drive
- Genevieve's Fundraiser
- Square One Art
- Points Programs (Stop & Shop, Box Tops, Donelan's, Amazon.com, etc.)

## COMMUNICATION

- Weekly Bobcat Bulletin
- Monthly Ben-Hem Happenings Newsletter
- Bulletin Boards

## FAREWELLS

This year, Ben-Hem says goodbye to two of its long-time and dedicated staff members. Thank you for all that you have done and we wish you well on your next adventure!



Jeanne Andersen  
Outside Placement



Gail Ronan  
Speech Therapist

*Good-Bye Ben-Hem!*

*It's hard for me to believe, but after 36 years, I am 'graduating' from Bennett-Hemenway Elementary School. The halls and families of the 'old' and the 'new' Ben-Hem have been second homes to me. The support of the Ben-Hem community has buoyed my professional career and the relationships with eager, wide-eyed students have strengthened my heart. I have cherished my time here as a Speech-Language Pathologist and will carry these memories forward as I head into the next chapter of my days. Thank you, Ben-Hem!*

*Gail A. Ronan*



WELLESLEY • NATICK • NEWTON

**Great Haircuts for the whole family!**

*Never a hassle, our "no appointment ever, just walk-in" policy is sheer convenience at an easy-to-afford price.*

**OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK**

843 Worcester St Natick - 508.651.9122

**WWW.HAIRCUTSLTD.COM**

*Dear Fourth Graders:*

*It was a truly privilege and pleasure getting to know so many of you over the years. I am so proud of each and every one of you. As you head onto your next adventure, remember these wise words from your pal Dr. Seuss:*

*"You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. You are the guy/girl who'll decide where to go."*

*Congratulations!! Enjoy your summer!*

*Kelly Gaagenty  
a/k/a "Mrs. G"  
a/k/a "Cheryl's mom". :-)*



### CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2014!

Please join us in saying farewell to our 4th grade class of 2014 as they get promoted to Middle School. It is sad to see you go, but we are all very proud of your many accomplishments. Congratulations and we wish you the best of luck as you move on to 5th grade!

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Meet Heather Carr! Heather is a long-time Ben-Hem mom who just finished her 5<sup>th</sup> year chairing the Family Fun Night event. Thank you Heather for all of your hard work!

**Q:** How many students do you have at Ben-Hem this year?

**A:** I have one child at Ben-Hem this year. James is in 4th grade.

**Q:** How long have you lived in Natick?

**A:** I have lived in Natick since 1993, 21 years. Wow I didn't realize I had been here that long.



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

**A:** I first volunteered with the Ben-Hem PTO when my oldest son Ryan began kindergarten. I started as a room parent and volunteering in the cafeteria to help out during kindergarten lunch. I then moved into helping out during various PTO events from the Ben-Hem yard sale, the Halloween dance, the book fair, A Night Out and Family Fun night. When my oldest son was in 4th grade I became co-president of the PTO. I just completed my last Family Fun night!

**Q:** What prompted you to get involved?

**A:** Before I had children, I was a teacher in Sherborn, and saw first-hand how important a school PTO and parent involvement was to a child's learning. That prompted me to get involved in my own children's school.

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

**A:** My most recent volunteer experience was Family Fun Night. I LOVE that PTO event! It is such a great way to bring the Ben-Hem community together and end the school year!

**Q:** What do you do when you aren't volunteering?

**A:** When I am not volunteering, I am usually found in my car, taking my children to their various activities. And whenever I have a free moment, I am reading.

**Q:** What volunteer opportunities interest you the most?

**A:** Those volunteer opportunities that bring the entire Ben-Hem community together interest me the most. Ben-Hem is such a large school and it is great for students and family to have opportunities to get together and socialize.

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

**A:** I don't think my kids really even think about me volunteering at their school. It is just something that has been

happening since they began school. I got them to help me whenever I could, which I thought was important.

**Q:** Anything else you want to share?

**A:** I have truly enjoyed all of the time I have spent volunteering at Ben-Hem!. As a new parent to the school it was a great way for me to meet new people and the families that my children spent a significant part of their day with.

## 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](http://www.benhempto.org/happenings). If you are interested in interviewing a teacher, have your parent email us at [happenings@benhempto.org](mailto:happenings@benhempto.org).

### Mrs. Rasmussen (Learning Center)

Interviewed by Ethan Duncan (1st Grade)

**Q:** How many years have you been teaching here?

**A:** I have been teaching here for almost three and half years.

**Q:** What is your favorite thing to teach here?

**A:** My favorite thing to teach is reading, here. Or what we call literacy.

**Q:** Why is reading your favorite subject?

**A:** I like reading the best because here's so much to learn. It's entertaining and it's informative.

**Q:** What do you like to do when you aren't working at school?

**A:** I like to garden, plant flowers, and cook and go to my daughter's soccer games and cheerleading competitions. I like to be with my daughter and family.

**Q:** What's your favorite flower?

**A:** A peony.

**Q:** What's your favorite book?

**A:** That's a tough one. The favorite I like to read to students is A Bad Case of Stripes. One of my favorite books is The Secret Life of Bees. It has a really nice message

**Q:** Is there anything else you'd like to say that I haven't already asked you?

**A:** I really love my job. I love my job and love working with Kindergarteners, first graders and second graders. I think I'm pretty lucky to come and work here at Ben-Hem. I think it's a terrific group of students and teachers.