



On The Prowl

The Bennett-Hemenway PTO

September 2013 Newsletter



PTO Scholarship Supports Ben-Hem Alumni in Memory of Jackie Searle

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 Casey Kelly (Ben-Hem Class of 2005). Casey wrote a great essay about her experience with service work, as part of her Girl Scout troop growing up, and the impact that random acts of kindness had on people after the tragedy faced by a Connecticut elementary school last year. At one point in her essay, Casey stated, "My community has been a very positive influence on me, and so I have done my best to give back as much as possible." This is certainly an attitude worth rewarding.

But who is Jacquelin Searle? After speaking with several Ben-Hem parents, it was discovered that very few people are aware that the PTO sponsors a scholarship and even fewer still know who Jacquelin Searle was.

Jacquelin (Jackie) Searle was a first grade teacher at Bennett-Hemenway for more than twenty years. She grew up in South Natick and got her teaching degree in Framingham. Jackie was a child of the 60's and was very involved in civil rights. According to Mr. Stuart Peskin, former Ben-Hem principal, Jackie believed that every child has value, and every child is deserving. It is no surprise then that parents loved her.

Current fourth grade teacher, Ms. Cate O'Brien, remembers Jackie as being very kind and gentle. "She taught students how to respect each other," she said.

One thing that stuck out in Ms. O'Brien's memory was that each year Jackie would have students make civil rights signs and march around the school for Martin Luther King day. Mr. Peskin said that he felt her focus on civil rights "made her a better teacher".



One of Jackie's favorite sayings was "It's not a problem, it's a solution that we haven't found yet." Mr. Peskin stated that this was an attitude that was adopted by the entire school, and was (and is still) what makes Bennett-Hemenway such a great place to teach and learn.

Because of the impact that she had on the Bennett-Hemenway community, the school and PTO wanted to ensure she was remembered by all for years to come. If you visit the school library, you will find a memorial containing pictures and articles about Jackie. It sits next to a picture of Mahatma Gandhi, which represents the peaceful nature with which Jackie lead her life and taught her students.

To find out more about the Bennett-Hemenway Jacqueline Searle Memorial Scholarship and read Casey Kelly's essay, visit the Educational Enrichment website:

<http://www.benhempto.org/getinvolved/enrichment>.

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GET INVOLVED

Upcoming PTO Events

Thursday, 9/26 (5 pm – 7 pm): Family Picnic

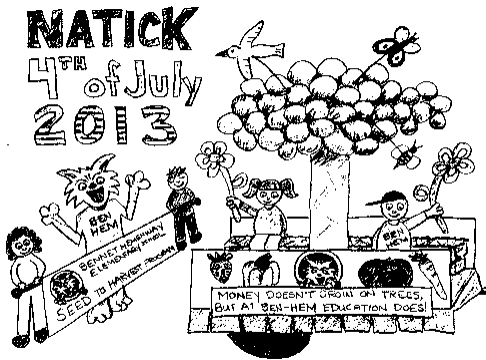
Tuesday, 10/8 (7 pm – 9 pm): PTO Meeting

Sunday, 10/20 (2 pm – 5 pm): Tilly & Salvy's Pumpkin Festival

Friday, 10/25 (6 pm – 8 pm): Monster Mash

4th of July Float Makes Its Way into The Seed to Harvest Garden

At the end of the 2012-2013 school year, the PTO accepted the invitation of the Natick Friends of the 4th to enter a float in the 4th of July parade. In the end, over 25 families participated in riding down Main Street singing Ben-Hem songs and chanting Ben-Hem cheers.



The goal with the 2013 Ben-Hem float was to highlight our Seed to Harvest garden program. In doing this, it was important to ensure that some of the

lessons of this program were incorporated into the float. This was done with a design that allowed us to reuse many of the items included for other purposes after the parade.

The final design included the use of six 8-foot by 2-foot wooden panels painted by Kate Clancy (Ben-Hem mom) with colorful fruits, veggies, and flowers. In the float, they were placed on their side around the perimeter of the float. Just last week, they were affixed to 6 posts along the back wall of the school to provide some color and fun to our Seed to Harvest garden.

Several companies donated their time and/or resources to make the Ben-Hem float possible: Folan Contracting Services, Decorative Painting by Kate Clancy, Hunnewell Farm, and Stop & Shop.

Class of 2018 Comes Together

This year's Kindergarten class came out in full force to attend the two Kindergarten Meet & Greet sessions sponsored by the PTO this August. Over 90 students were at one of the two events, and 74 students attended the first session! It was really great to see parents and students so eager to get involved. Students enjoyed playing on the playground, doing parachute games, and meeting new friends. Parents also benefitted from the event by meeting other parents, and asking questions of the PTO representatives. It was a great time, and a good start to the year.

The PTO Kicks-Off the School Year

The first PTO meeting of the year was held on Tuesday, September 10. There were over 45 parents, teachers, and school administrators in attendance. Almost one-third of the attendees were Kindergarten parents looking to get more involved in the Ben-Hem community. The first hour was spent introducing the new PTO Board members and reviewing the budget and objectives of the PTO for the year. Many communication changes were made over the summer to support the objectives, including the new PTO website and online calendar. In addition, the SUPPORT YOUR KIDS campaign was launched to help make it easier for parents to Get Involved, Volunteer and Give to the PTO and Ben-Hem. The second half of the meeting included a Committee & Events Fair and hands-on volunteering (sorting homework packets for the third grade). There were a lot of good discussions and there seemed to be a general excitement around the volunteer opportunities available. This was evident by the number of volunteer sign-ups that resulted from the Committee & Events Fair. Thank you to everyone that was able to attend! The meeting presentation and meeting notes are available on the PTO website for those who were unable to attend.

Calling All 4th Grade Parents

Each year, a group of 4th Grade parents team up to plan community building activities for the students finishing up their last year at Bennett-Hemenway Elementary School. Activities in the past have included Gym & Swim evenings at Longfellow Sports club, movie nights, yearbook, end of year festivities and more.

If you have ideas and would like to get involved, please attend the first planning meeting on Tuesday, October 8 from 8 pm – 9 pm in the school library (following the PTO meeting). If you have any questions, just email 4thgrade@benhempto.org.



VOLUNTEER

New "In-School" Volunteer Programs

At the first PTO meeting, it became apparent that there is an enthusiastic population of parent volunteers who would like to spend more time in the school. To facilitate this, the PTO has begun two new volunteer programs that allow parents to volunteer at Ben-Hem during school hours.

Teacher Time Savers: The PTO has noticed that there are a lot of tasks that go along with teaching that don't necessarily need to be done by the teacher. Many of these tasks don't have a pressing time deadline, such as copying papers, sorting, counting out packets, collating, cutting, labeling, laminating, etc.

Parent volunteers can help out on whatever day or time that works best for their schedule. Just drop by the Teacher Time Savers workstation, set up in the Teacher's Work Room, and check the binder for any new or unfinished work requests. It's easy and fun (especially if you bring along a friend to chat with while you work).

Lunch Helpers: Lunchtime can be a little stressful for students, especially Kindergarteners, if they can't open their drinks and lunch containers on their own. Having parent volunteers present to assist with these tasks is very helpful. Parents can now sign up to be a Lunch Helper for a month at a time on one of more days of the week.

All volunteer opportunities, including Teacher Time Savers and Lunch Helpers, can be found on our website at <http://www.benhempto.org/volunteer>.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Meet Shannon Starling! Shannon is a Ben-Hem mom who recently got involved with the PTO by attending the September PTO meeting and helping out on multiple occasions with the Teacher Time Savers (labeling books for the Literacy department's new classroom libraries).

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

A: I have 3 students at Ben Hem. James is in 4th, Brian is in 3rd, and Kinslee is in 1st. I also have 2 more kids Kylah and Madison both are 15 and go to Keefe Tech.

Q: How long have you lived in Natick?

A: I have lived in Natick pretty much all my life. I even went to the old Ben Hem.

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

A: This is my first year volunteering for the PTO. I love it so far.

Q: What prompted you to get involved?

A: My son Brian has autism and is non-verbal. He is in the access classroom as well as integrated into Mrs. LePlantes typical 3rd grade class. I joined the PTO in hopes of making the Ben Hem events more integrated. I am hoping to make PTO events more adaptable for kids like Brian and his friends in Access. They are part of the school too, and I would like to be their voice.

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

A: I am on the Board of Directors for PATH, which is the Parents Association for the Handicap. I got to sell raffle tickets at the Camp Arrowhead family day. It was amazing.

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

A: I just left my job as a Shift Leader at Papa Gino's this summer so that I could be home with the kids. So I am lucky enough to be a stay at home mom of 5 kids, right now. Which is great because I can volunteer a lot more.

Q: What volunteer opportunities interest you the most?

A: I am really enjoying all of my volunteering. Today I am volunteering at Natick Days for PATH. I am a room parent for Ms. Gavin's Access class. I am also helping plan my 20th high school reunion from Natick High for this November. I am also part of the Natick SEPAC and I absolutely love helping out the Special Olympics. I have joined the Monster Mash committee and will help take it over for next year.

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

A: They love it. They think it is so cool to see me at school. I wish I could have done it sooner.



GIVE

There are many ways for you to give to the Ben-Hem PTO to ensure that there is budget available to continue the many great programs offered every year. With the Points Programs, many of these options don't cost you anything extra and take only a moment of your time. For more information, please go to: <http://www.benhempto.org/give>.

September is the PTO's biggest month for fundraising. We are trying to achieve our goal of \$36,915. With the donations received already from the SUPPORT YOUR KIDS drive, we are more than half way there. The drive ends October 11.

Also going on now is the Genevieve's Gift Wrap fundraiser from September 16 through September 27.

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/ontheprowl.

Question of the Month: What is your favorite thing that you did this summer?

“I rode in my jeep that had no roof on it!!!”
– Mrs. LaPlante

“I spent a lot of time with my daughters.”
– Mr. Silverberg

“I went to Newport, RI.”
– Mr. Cappabianca

Mrs. LaPlante (Third Grade Teacher)

Interviewed by Anastasia (3rd Grade)

Q: How long have you been teaching?

A: She has been teaching since Ben-Hem first opened! (15 years ago)

Q: What did you want to become when you were a girl?

A: She’s wanted to become a teacher since she was a little girl. You might be wondering why she’s wanted to become a teacher. Well, Mrs.LaPlante says that she always wanted to see how kids learn.

Q: What is your favorite thing to teach in third grade?

A: History.

Q: What do you like to do?

A: Mrs. LaPlante loves to read, watch movies, and travel.



Mr. Silverberg (Third Grade Teacher)

Interviewed by Spencer Wick (3rd Grade)

Q: What is your greatest life experience?

A: Being a dad.

Q: Have you always wanted to teach third grade?

A: No. Mr. Silverberg did two different things but his current job is his favorite.

Q: What is your favorite word?

A: Think!

Q: Have you ever met someone famous and if so, who?

A: Jake Berkowitz who finished 8th in the Iditarod*.



* The Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race is an annual long-distance sled dog race run in early March from Anchorage to Nome.

Mr. Cappabianca (Gym Teacher)

Interviewed by Ryan Fernandes (2nd Grade)

Q: What’s your favorite sport?

A: Baseball.

Q: What is your favorite game?

A: UNO (a simple card game).

Q: What’s your favorite hobby?

A: Running.

Q: Do you have any kids?

A: Yes. He has a beautiful 3 year old daughter named Victoria.

KID’S CORNER

FALL FUNNY: Use the decoder key below to answer this autumn riddle!

How do you fix a broken pumpkin?



⊖ ⊗ ⊕ ⊗ ⊖

⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗

DECODER KEY:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
○	★	⊙	•	⊕	▲	□	⊗	⊗	☾	⊖	⊗	●
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
◆	*	⊗	⊗	●	◇	☾	★	⊗	⊙	⊖	⊖	⊖