



Le Jaguar International

Volume '04 Issue 2 February 2005



SSI PTSA President's Message

from Dave Ottalini



As I write this, we have just gone through one heck of a snowstorm and the wind-chill is at minus-something-I-don't-even-want-to-contemplate. But I also know that spring is just around the corner. The days are getting longer. We're already halfway through the school year. Hard to believe!

In taking a look at how far we've come this school year, I am proud to tell you about everything we've accomplished so far. As I've mentioned in the past, you have one of the most dynamic group of parents I've ever seen working for SSI (or any school!) this year. Our Los Padres committee for our Hispanic parents is working very hard and helped with the purchase of FM wireless equipment for translations. We have approved the purchase of a new outdoor sign. The project to renovate the "Old Blair" auditorium is moving forward rapidly. Our students loved the two-day jazz program in February. Our teachers have been appreciative of all the support you've shown them (especially on the food front!) and are looking forward to winning some of the \$4000 in mini grants we have to offer. There's more but you get the idea!

I hope that you take the time to talk with your child about her or his school day, look in their backpacks for the latest information and check on homework assignments in their binders. Backpacks are black holes sometimes so a little digging may be required. Ask questions. Take the time to say thank you to your child's teachers and the SSIMS administration who are spending so much time working for their success. If you have questions, call, email or set up a conference. Do not be afraid to do this – SSI wants your child to succeed! Remember the MSAs (Maryland State Assessments) are coming in early March. It is imperative that every child come to school and take these tests.

I also hope you will consider getting involved. I have been telling our incoming 6th grade parents that while we spend a lot of time and effort in elementary school, something happens to parents when we hit middle school. Unlike K-5, we don't have time to "wait and see" what's going on. Middle school only takes three years to complete and that means we, as parents, must step up and get involved as quickly as possible – even if it's not "cool" with our kids.

I tell you this because we are already working to select the leadership for next year. I hope you will want a voice in who your PTSA leadership is – but you will need to be a member to have that voice. It is never too late to join and we would welcome you into the PTSA fold. And if you really want a voice, then running for office or taking on one of the PTSA chairmanships is a great way to have a real impact.

I mentioned that we have a lot to be thankful for. We

also face many challenges that we, as parents, need to be aware of. Bullying remains a real issue here at SSI. We have created a committee to work on this problem and their efforts are something to be proud of. They have sent out a survey, coordinated parent volunteers to be hall monitors, pushed for solutions on our busses. The Empower Program will be coming to talk to all segments of our school. We will host them in April at the PTSA meeting. But I would urge you, as parents, to open your eyes and listen to your children. The "Golden Rule" is an excellent guide for all of us to impress on our children.

On other fronts, we still need to come up with better ways to communicate with all our parents, lobby the Board of Education to make sure that our facility and safety needs are met, make sure the new grading and reporting policy really works, and more. These things are long-term issues that will have to be taken up by those of you who will be here next year and beyond. Many 8th grade parents who are involved with SSI are "retiring" from middle school and are looking to you parents who will remain to continue the good fight in the future. I know we can count on you!

I look forward to seeing you at a future PTSA meeting and always remain available for comments or questions.

New Sign for SSIMS

At long last, SSIMS will have a bright, illuminated sign at the corner of Wayne Avenue and Dale Drive that will properly identify the entrance to the school. The large, 5' x 10' sign will provide SSIMS with plenty of space to communicate important information to the community. The sign is being funded primarily by the PTSA with some financial support from the school. Parents Ann Collins, Lisa Gabriel, Dave Ottalini and Ole Varmer worked closely with Assistant Principal Tim Britton in selecting the sign which will be installed by MCPS, hopefully in late spring. Stay tuned for more information about this exciting project!

Upcoming MCPS Holidays / dates to remember

- March 25 & 28 Easter Holidays*
- March 29-31, April 1 Spring break – No school for students and teachers
- April 7 Third marking period ends
- April 8 Professional day for teachers – No school for students; report card preparation/planning
- April 21 Report card distribution





SSIMS Anti-Bullying Coalition

The Anti-Bullying Coalition has been busy. We have started several campaigns to help change the climate of our school. We have been working closely with the counseling department to bring the Empower Program to SSIMS. They will be visiting the school in April to hold workshops for students and parents. Please visit their website at www.empowered.org to learn more about their program.

Another project we are undertaking is Hall Monitoring by our parents. A small group of us have met with Ms. McCoy to begin the process. Mr. Harris, security officer, was also present at the meeting and welcomed the help we are offering and had suggestions on how we can better achieve this task. We are hoping to be a positive presence in the hallways for the children and help with the transition between classes and at the beginning and end of the day. The details are still being worked out and we hope to have monitors in place after Spring Break. A morning orientation meeting will be held the third week in March (specific date to be announced). If you have any time during your day, even if it is not within the times listed below, consider becoming a Hall Monitor.

The critical times for Hall Monitoring are:

7:25-8:10 Morning

12:40-1:15 PM Lunch

2:30-3:10 PM After school

For information on the Anti-Bullying Coalition or if you are interested in becoming a Hall Monitor, contact Emily Sudbrink at ee.sudbrink@verizon.net or Holly Harness at haharness@starpower.net.

Message from the Principal

from Cynthia L. Best-Goring

It's hard to believe that I have been your principal for over half of this school year 2004-2005. I continue to appreciate being your leader and working collaboratively with you as we make joint decisions that are all accomplished within the framework of what is best for our children; our young ladies and gentlemen. We are making steady and positive progress in attaining the goals of our 5 Point Plan for Success:

1. Implementing with rigor the Middle Years Program
2. Integrating the critical thinking components in all subjects
3. Providing accelerated and enriched math instruction
4. Strengthening our Foreign Language program with extension and enrichment opportunities, and
5. Using resource supports provided by our Montgomery County Public School system.

Together we will attain my ultimate goal of establishing Silver Spring International Middle School as a Blue Ribbon School standard of excellence.

SSIMS "Old Blair" Auditorium Update

The project to renovate our auditorium is picking up steam! The "Old Blair Auditorium Project" is now an incorporated organization and work to obtain a lease from Montgomery County Public Schools could be completed by the time you read this. The group hosted a tour and open house on February 14th for elected officials and other interested parties. A bond bill has been introduced in Annapolis for \$1 million to help fund the project. A business plan is also being developed. Many of us who have worked on this project, including many SSIMS parents, really feel this is going to happen. If you would like to help, please join the Auditorium List by sending an email to: oldblairauditorium-subscribe@yahoogroups.com with "subscribe" in the Subject category. The auditorium web site, with lots of great information is located at: <http://oldblairauditorium.org>

8th Grade Promotion Is Coming!

Our 8th graders will soon be saying their good-byes to SSI. But before they do, there will be a promotion ceremony at Blair High School on June 13th to honor their accomplishments. Traditionally, our 7th grade parents have helped with the promotion event since it will be their children "walking the walk" next year. Our 7th grade VP, Adrienne McBride, is heading up the parent's committee, so if you would like to help (decorations, reception afterwards, etc.) please contact her at adrienneaemcbride@starpower.net.



Volunteers Needed to Help With Promotion Ceremony

Completing three years at SSIMS and moving on to high school is a major step for our students. Volunteers are needed to help with the promotion ceremony recognizing this achievement. Anyone willing to help with the promotion ceremony should contact Adrienne McBride at 301-589-4570 or via email at aemcbride@starpower.net.



SSIMS PTSA

Le Jaguar International is published by the Silver Spring International Middle School PTSA

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Winter Concert Draws Rave Reviews

The SSIMS Winter Concert on January 27 pleased the ears and stirred the admiration of all in attendance. The well selected and well performed program showcased the skill, and hard work of the chorale and instrumental music students and the dedication, of their teachers, Mrs. Evonne Baasch (chorus) and Mrs. Brandi Dean (instrumental). The night's performance, which was held in the Blair High School Auditorium, also highlighted how richly SSIMS students and teachers deserve a home venue like that which can be provided through renovation of the Old Blair auditorium on the SSIMS campus.

Below is a sampling of the evening's "boffo reviews."

"If you missed this concert, you missed a fantastic program. You'll get one more chance - there is another concert in the spring!" – PSTA President Dave Ottalini

"What a lovely concert! What talented kids and dedicated teachers! And what a lovely group of parents – you came through big time – if you noticed the bake sale and raffle table, it was positively sagging with all of the goodies you contributed! Many thanks to all of you who brought things for the bake sale, and to all of you who stood behind the table making sales." – Cecilia Munoz

"Yes, thank you to every one who came and supported the music program last night. It was truly a success and I am very proud of our students." – Mrs. Brandi Dean, instrumental music teacher



New System Makes It Easier to Be a Drop-In Volunteer

submitted by Lisa Gabriel

Do you have an hour to spare after dropping your child off at school? Have a day off work when school is in session? SSIMS needs you, and volunteering at our school is now easier than ever. Just stop by the small workroom (located inside the front office, past the teacher mailboxes) where boxes are set up for teacher requests for clerical or classroom volunteers. Please remember to sign in at the front office, and log your volunteer hours into the notebook located in the small workroom.

Some **IMMEDIATE NEEDS** include:

- Ms. Joseph has a work request in the small workroom to copy materials onto transparencies;
- ESOL classes need Reading Volunteers. Classes meet in Rooms 119B and 120 during every period except 4 and 7.
- Media Center: Ms. Randolph can always use help filing books;
- Volunteer Coordinator: Periodically update our data on the number of volunteer hours people have already completed at SSI this year. In the spring MCPS will be asking for that data.

Additional needs are listed on the "Help Wanted" section of the PTSA web site: http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/schools/ssims/ptsa/ptsa_volunteers.html. Note that many jobs do not require time during the school day.

Have other ideas and skills? The PTSA is YOU, so please contact me at lgsag@aol.com or Ms. Urbanek at Cathy_M_Urbanek@fc.mcps.k12.md.us and let us know how you can help.

2006 Montgomery County Public Schools Program Budget Now Available on Web

from Monica Hayes, MCCPTA Operating Budget Committee

The fiscal year 2006 (FY2006) Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Program Budget is now on the MCPS web site at: <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/budget/FY2006/superintendent/program.shtm>

The Program Budget essentially breaks down recommended FY 2006 spending by program. All resources are identified by program, and the total matches the total operating budget. Each program summary includes a description, recommendations for significant changes, and staffing and salary data. Each summary also includes information about other resources used for the program in the current FY 2005 budget, the recommended FY 2006 budget, and the change between the two budget years.

MCPS also plans to post the Personnel Complement to the web site as soon as possible.

Upcoming PTSA Meetings

Our March PTSA meeting (including Los Padres) will be held at Eastern Middle School on March 8th. The likely start time is 7 PM. We will be hearing from Dr. Crystal Kuykendall, National and International Motivational Speaker and author of "From Rage to Hope II: Reclaiming Black and Hispanic Students". Dr. Kuykendall will bring her uplifting message and strategies to help ALL children achieve their educational potential. We are working to make sure a Spanish translator will be available.

In April, we will be hosting the Empower Program, which will talk about anti-bullying issues for parents. We have invited the Eastern PTSA to come to SSI for this event. May is election night! We will be electing the new PTSA leadership for next year.



SSIMS Music Calendar, Spring 2005



February 25	Sweet Solos – Music Students & Families	April 6	Hershey Park	final payment due (\$25)
March 1	Hershey Park 2 nd payment due (\$25)	May 3	State Orchestra Festival, Festival Orchestra (if advance)	
March 11	District Ensemble, Students (Paint Branch HS)	May 4	State Band Festival, Festival Band (if advance)	
March 12	District Solo, Students (Paint Branch HS)	May 7	State String Solo & Ensemble, Students (if advance)	
March 15	District Orchestra Festival, Festival Orchestra, 11:50 AM (Wheaton HS)	May 14	State Solo & Ensemble Band, Students (if advance)	
March 17	District Band Festival, Festival Band, 10:00 AM (Blake HS)	May 21	Strathmore Concert (see Mrs. Dean)	
April 2	Strathmore Concert (see Mrs. Dean)	May 24	Spring Concert, all music students, Blair HS	
April 2	State registration deadline (if advance)	May 27	Hershey Park Festival, Festival Band & Orchestra	
		June 13	Graduation, 7 th grade orchestra	

SSIMS Families Honor SSIMS Staff

SSIMS students and their families know where to find dedicated, caring staff with loads of expertise! In the PTSA holiday fundraiser, 40 families generously donated \$1003.00 to the “New Sign Fund” and \$737.00 to the “Staff Gift Fund” in honor of our great SSI staff. Many thanks to our outstanding staff and many thanks to the families of these students for such generous donations: Meredith Metcalf, Dylan Stinson, Taylor D'Ottavi, Allison Isrin, Max Pollaco, Jenna Williams, Darien Harris, Paul Shelton, Ariana Kosok, Corrine Ducey, Ana Starkis, Camille Huang, Ade Townseld, Eric Gabriel, Ben Sudbrink, Gregory Snail, Annie Holt, Mia Bullock, Sam LeBlanc, Camila Ugaz, Diane Adamson, Thafhim Siddiqua, Thomas Abe, Russell Ottalini, Seth Goldman, Andrew Mackesy, Kaitlin Schwindt, Gillian McBride, Katie Baugh, Andrew Freese, Sierra Cody, Sophie Schwadron, Philip Morris, Jacob Gulezien, James Richardson, Nicole Richardson, Paul Shelton, Catie Schulze and Brendan O'Connor.

Together these families applauded the following staff: Cynthia Best-Goring, Gloria McKoy, Tim Britton, Claudine Biggs, Dorett Lewis, David Hagberg, Jorge Kuznetzoff, Darlene Cobb, Lori Earby, Dawn Hurley, John Jackson, William Jameson, Kathryn Medland, Carole Muller, Denise Moore, Rebecca Mall, Srta Goldsmith, Anne Catherine Mahler, Juliette Salomon, Anita Zeiger, Kelly Scaringi, Moya Malcolm, Barbara Moore, Shawaan Robinson, April Tegler, Erin Kell, Tinie Bradley, Celita Davis, Soojung Kim, Araceli Oakes, Betty Pierre Saint-Walla, Melissa Sigley, Tracy Tomlinson, Hendri Williams, Matthew Gannon, Brenda Randolph, Evonne Baasch, Brandi Dean, Carlo Bianchini, Dessalyn Dillard, Vikki Epps, Ms. Richards, Terrence James, Adam Seidman, Kim Barnes, Melissa White, Lora Adams, Amy Halter, Jason Jefferson, Rosemary McNary, Kari Rowe, Elizabeth Wade, Security Team, Stephen Boeckman, Anne Brobby, Shenice Coleman, Nina Taylor Rubin, Wes Yokoyama, Heather Yuhaniak, Lillian Black, Rebecca Joseph, Phil Lynch, Dana Young-Chaka, Debra Epstein, and Ms. Rubin.

Support SSI When You Shop At Giant, Safeway, And Target Parents, Faculty, Staff and Community, Please Read On



Here is a way to raise money for SSI when you shop at Giant, Safeway or Target: sign up for their bonus programs next time you shop or sign up online. The more families who register, the more money is raised for SSI at no cost to you. Fewer than 100 cards are registered so far with each program: we know there are more of you out there! Doubling the participation should at least double the amount we raise this year. Registering is easy:

- 1. Giant Bonus Club Card** – Your card needs to be reregistered every school year for Giant! Please designate SSI (designate up to 3 schools if you wish) online at www.giantfood.com/bonuscard.aplus.pin.cfm. All you need is your Giant bonus card number (12 digits) and SSI's ID# **03788**. Giant's Program runs through April 2005. So far, SSI has earned nearly \$370 through the program.
- 2. Safeway Club Card** – Like Giant, your card needs to be reregistered each school year for Safeway. Just go to www.eScrip.com and designate SSI for your Safeway card and any other store credit cards that you wish to add to help earn additional credit for schools. All you need is your Safeway Bonus card number (11 digits) and SSI's ID# **6564289**. Safeway's Program runs through May 2005. Lost your Safeway card number? Call 877-723-3929.
- 3. Target Take Charge of Education program** – Target will donate an amount equal to 1% of Target Visa and Target Card purchases made at Target and *Target.com*, and 1/2% of Target Visa purchases made elsewhere. If you already have the card, visit http://target.com/target_group/community_giving/take_charge_of_education.jhtml to designate SSI's ID # **115655**. If not, designate SSI when you fill out your application. Only 37 people have designated SSI so far!

THESE PROGRAMS HAVE STARTED, SO REGISTER NOW!

Besides Online Registration, you may also:

- fill out a card, available at most Giant stores, or call 1-877-366-2668 (for GIANT) to designate over the phone.
- for Safeway call 1-800-801-4973 (this is an automated system ONLY for renewing your school choices from last year, not for making school changes-adding/deleting).



Northwood Forced to Abandon Unique Schedule

Students from SSIMS who will enter Northwood High School this fall will find a far different school schedule in place than the one currently used by the school. Northwood is being forced to drop the popular 4x4 block schedule – in which students take just four 90-minute courses per semester – in favor of an eight-block, alternate-day schedule. In the latter format, students take eight courses at a time, four per day. The 4x4 schedule is used by many school districts around the country, but Northwood is the only Montgomery County High School to use it.

The dramatic change was dictated by the central administration of the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) who contended they never specifically approved the use of the 4x4 schedule during the planning year that led to Northwood's re-opening as a high school last fall. At a forum in mid-January in front of more than 150 Northwood parents, students and teachers, a panel of six high-ranking MCPS officials publicly admitted the use of the 4x4 was a regrettable mistake.

Community Superintendent Steve Bedford, who apologized for the error, said Northwood's implementation of the 4x4 block "was not vetted with the leadership" of MCPS. He and others on the panel faulted those who served as deputy superintendent and area superintendent at the time. Neither currently fills those posts. Joining Bedford in an unusual show of force at a school forum were two deputy superintendents and the district's top administrators for curriculum and assessment, as well as the director of public information. The MCPS officials said the uniqueness of the 4x4 schedule – with Northwood being the only one of the county's 24 high schools to use this format – would severely complicate mid-year student transfers in and out of Northwood. The officials also said the schedule would pose problems of test security because of the scheduling of state and county exams at specified times.

Two dozen Northwood parents and students (including several with children at SSIMS) vigorously testified at the forum about the advantages of concentrating on four high school classes at a time. Several 9th graders who said they had struggled academically in middle school said under the 4x4 schedule they had been able to stay eligible for after-school activities. Bedford said the school system also erred in failing to communicate with parents and students at Northwood its decision to drop the 4x4 block schedule. That decision apparently was made just a few weeks into the school year but was first referenced publicly at Northwood's Open House in November for prospective 9th graders and their parents.

Northwood Principal Henry Johnson, while disappointed with the decision to drop the 4x4 format, told the Indian Springs Civic Association at its January meeting that he was proceeding with plans for next year. He said with the help of parents that he's concentrating his efforts on making sure that Northwood's renovation includes refurbishing of the 30-year-old auditorium so that the school can offer a top-notch theater program.

Superintendent Jerry Weast's detailed explanation for ending the 4x4 block, contained in a four-page memo dated December 12, 2004, is available by calling the MCPS Communications Office at 301-279-3391.

Law Center Has New Medicaid Project for Children With Developmental Disabilities



The Maryland Disability Law Center (MDLC) has begun a new project that they hope will greatly assist children on Medical Assistance and MCHP with developmental disabilities to receive the services they need. Children on Medicaid are legally entitled to a wide range of essential services if a doctor or other professional finds the services to be medically necessary. These services include in-home nursing, in-home therapeutic behavioral aides, in-home personal care, home health care, access to specialists, medical equipment and supplies, specialized therapies including physical, speech and occupational therapy, therapeutic nursery services, case management services and other medically necessary services.

Unfortunately, many families and caregivers do not know such services exist, or do not know that children have a right to such services or under Medicaid. Families who are aware of the services sometimes have trouble accessing them because of denials, delays, or lack of providers.

The MDLC is currently reviewing cases of children with developmental disabilities who have been denied Medicaid services, have had the delivery of approved services delayed, or whose families cannot access services covered by Medicaid for other reasons. We are seeking case referrals, will investigate cases and represent some of the children ourselves. We will not be able to accept every case due to funding limitations but we will do our best to make appropriate referrals. We are also developing a panel of pro bono attorneys who will soon be available to represent children from low-income families. We hope to have the pro bono panel operational by March or April 2005, when we will be able to expand the number of cases we can accept.

Available Materials – MDLC has developed a set of materials designed to educate health professionals, providers, and families about the services children are legally entitled to receive under Medicaid, and the ways families can best access services.

MDLC can provide training to groups of professionals, and we are available to speak to parent groups on the same topics.

For case referrals, contact MDLC's intake office at 410-727-6352 Mon.-Fri. 10 AM-12 PM.

For presentations, training or materials contact MDLC Staff Attorney Nicole Joseph at 410-727-6352 ext. 229 or nicolej@mdlcbalto.org.



SSIMS Website Updated

Our webmasters have been busy updating the SSIMS website, so check it out if you haven't for a while. Of particular interest is the intramural sports schedule of games that is now included on the calendar.

Information about end of semester exams can be accessed either through the NEWS or Department menus. English and PE department pages have been completed.

Comments on or suggestions for the website can be emailed to Mary Abe PTSA secretary, at mc.abe@verizon.net.