



# Cabin John Cougar News

Spring 2009

Newsletter of the Cabin John Middle School PTSA

The Cabin John Cougar News is the PTSA newsletter for the Cabin John Middle School parents and teachers.

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PTSA President: Sara Beth Watson  
Newsletter Editor: Roz Renberg  
Send feedback, comments, or interest to:

[CougarPTSAVPComm@gmail.com](mailto:CougarPTSAVPComm@gmail.com)

## PTSA President's Letter

Dear CJMS PTSA Members,

It has been a busy spring for the CJMS PTSA.

**Your PTSA funds at work.** Activities supported by the PTSA that directly impacted students include:

- PTSA funded a special speaker one night and a special activity the second night for the 6<sup>th</sup> graders at Outdoor Ed.
- PTSA co-funded actors from the Shakespeare Alive Program who worked with all seventh graders in the classroom. In addition, they worked with approximately forty 7<sup>th</sup> grade students who performed *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for parents and friends on the evening of May 7 and at school the following day. It was an outstanding performance! The PTSA also provided dinner for the dress rehearsal.
- PTSA funded Poet Gayle Danley's work with the 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Reports were that she was spectacular! CJMS experienced Poetry in the Halls during National Poetry Month and over sixty students participated in the poetry response program. All the students were eligible to receive prizes for their efforts, with fifteen students earning "notable response" honors.
- PTSA also provided funding for the CJMS Media Center's Black-Eyed Susan celebration. Each year 10 young adult novels are nominated for the prestigious Maryland Black-Eyed Susan Book Award. CJMS students who submitted online or written book reviews were invited to a pizza party.
- PTSA provided funds in support of CJMS' 1st Annual Black History Celebration which included poetry readings by students, motivational speakers, and informational sessions. It was well attended and received rave reviews from all that participated.

## SSL HOURS DUE

All SSL hours for the second half of the year are due **June 5th!** Don't forget to turn in your forms. You can download all SSL forms from the website [www.mcpsssl.org](http://www.mcpsssl.org).

- PTSA also provided funding for the CJMS Media Center's Literary Café, which was held in the media center on the afternoon of April 1. Students had the opportunity to share their poetry, short stories, or other creative original writing in a café atmosphere. The Literacy Committee selected the final pieces of writing from among those submitted.
- Also this spring, funds from the PTSA helped to purchase microphones for the instrumental music program.

**Board of Education Meetings.** This spring both the Wootton and Churchill clusters had their visits from the Board of Education. The Wootton meeting was held April 23 at Cold Springs ES. The schools discussed priority issues including keeping modernizations on track during these difficult financial times; physical plant issues including the impacts of over-capacity enrollment; parent involvement, especially in the School Improvement Plan (SIP); and impacts of standardized testing and meeting the needs of all students. The Churchill meeting was May 14 at Churchill HS. Similar issues were discussed and both meetings included excellent discussions with the BOE members. Current and former CJMS students were involved in the entertainment for both meetings. Pre-meeting entertainment at the Wootton meeting was provided by a cappella singers from Wootton, and several performers announced their middle school was CJMS. At the Churchill meeting the Hoover Band and the CJMS Advance Orchestra performed. In the words of a BOE member the orchestra was "phenomenal." Thanks to the coordinators from both clusters for organizing the meetings.

Cabin John Middle School 10701 Gainsborough Road, Potomac, MD 20854 (301)469-1150  
[www.CabinJohnPTSA.org](http://www.CabinJohnPTSA.org)

**Volunteers.** All of these activities would not have been possible without the hard work of PTSA volunteers and CJMS faculty and administration. I want to thank all of the volunteers who have worked so hard this year to improve the middle school experience for our children. A special thank you to Margie Kalik, Claudia Bonangelino and all who helped them provide lunches for the faculty and staff and the great baskets for Staff Appreciation Week. Another big thank you goes to Tabatha Yeatts- Lonske and Ramah Muralidharan for the cultural arts program. The many programs offered provided opportunities for all CJMS students. Thanks also go to Byron Johns, Greg Barr, Jenny He and Roz Renberg for production of the newsletter, listserv and website to keep us all informed and to Jeongseon Choi and Duffy Kean, our Montgomery County PTA delegates, who made sure CJMS was represented at the county level. Thanks are also in order for Lynn Weintraub who completes two years serving as our treasurer, Allison Wise who completes two years as VP of Education, Draga Dubick who served this year as VP of Administration, and Lynn Markenson who served this year as Secretary. And a big thank you to all of the other parents who have helped throughout the year. We all have very busy lives and the time you have given is priceless. To those of you moving on to Wootton, Churchill or another school we will miss you. For all those who will be here next year we look forward to seeing you at the Tilden Holding School. Thanks to everyone for their support this year. I look forward to working with Ramah and the new board.

Sara Beth Watson, 2008-09 President

### Principal's Message

Dear Cabin John Middle School Families,

As the school year quickly comes to an end, I am taking this opportunity to list some of the accomplishments that have occurred to make the year a very successful one for the Cabin John Middle School (CJMS) family. We are very proud of the following lists, which are among many CJMS highlights:

### Students

All subgroups attained Adequate Yearly Progress ( AYP) on the 2008 administration of the Maryland School Assessments (MSA)  
An eighth grade student received a Dr. Benjamin Carson Foundation scholarship for attaining an extraordinary number of Student Service Learning (SSL) hours  
Science Fair Project winners at the school, county, and state levels  
Math Team student competition held at the county level  
Knowledge Masters students participated in the spring competition on April 22<sup>nd</sup> and increased their score by 250 points over the fall competition  
Geography Bee student competition held at the school and county levels  
Best Buddies Award for Outstanding Service at the Middle School Level received by CJMS  
Reflections Winners at the county level  
Band and Orchestra students performed at the Superintendent's Administrators & Supervisors Meeting in December, 2008  
Band and Orchestra achieved "Superior" ratings at the County Festival and will perform at the state level  
Chorus students received "Excellent" and "Superior" ratings at the

County Festival and will perform at the state level  
Chorus performed at Barnes & Noble Book Store on April 22<sup>nd</sup> as a part of Teacher Appreciation Day  
Art work displayed in county and state venues  
Washington Post Grants in the Arts for student programs - Shakespeare Alive  
All "A's" and B's" Honor Roll students received quarterly recognition with certificates and "212 Degrees of Success" slogan tags  
Students received recognition for Random Acts of Kindness  
Mentoring program continued for "At Promise" students  
Advisory Program developed based on student interests  
Student Government Association (SGA) representatives participated in Leadership Conference in Annapolis, MD

### Staff

Staff members dedicated their time and professionalism for the education of all students through instructional - day and after-school enrichment programs  
Instrumental Music Teacher named Maryland Music Teacher of the Year (Received a plaque at the state level reception and a plaque at from the Montgomery County Council)

## Congratulations to the newly elected PTSA Executive Board 2009-2010

President  
V. P. Administration  
V. P. Communications  
V. P. Education  
Secretary  
Treasurer

Ramah Muralidharan  
Allison Wise  
Sara Beth Watson  
Sharon Bland  
Jackie Taladay Dowski  
Greg Barr

## Music Concerts

The Cabin John Music Department will be celebrating "20 years of Musical Excellence." Join us for a great night of choral music on May 26, 7 p.m., and band and orchestra on May 27, 7 p.m. Both programs will be at the Churchill High School Auditorium. The concerts are FREE and open to the public.

- Choral Music Teacher hosted University of Maryland music majors for their practicum experiences
- Instructional Leadership Team "Courageous Conversations" book study on race and the achievement gap
- Staff members continued to focus on segments of the Middle School Initiatives
- Staff members collaborated on Prome-thean Board training and use
- Staff members received recognition for energy conservation efforts
- Counseling Department coordinated the CJ Cares Program
- Counseling Department sponsored Thanksgiving dinners for economically-challenged families
- Student Literary Café, Black-Eyed Susan, and Podcasts programs sponsored by the media specialist
- Intramural coaches promoted with students athletes through middle school competitive games
- Grants received by the special education department for enhancements to the program
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation Program of field trips and bay studies coordinated by three teachers
- Quebec, Canada travel -implemented by French teacher for students to experience a French culture

### PTSA

- Funded student enrichment activities
- 6<sup>th</sup> Grade - Outdoor Education
- 7<sup>th</sup> Grade - Shakespeare Alive Program
- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade - Artist in Residency Poet

Coordinated and provided staff grade level and department luncheons, the annual staff "Cookie Buffet" for staff, and staff luncheons for the beginning and end of the school year

Recognized staff members during "Staff Appreciation Week" with raffles and special treats

Honored "Wish Lists" for staff members

Sponsored two staff members who presented at the MICCA Conference (Technology) on April 21<sup>st</sup> and April 22<sup>nd</sup>

African-American Parent Meetings were co-planned with NAACP Representative and PTSA Vice President (February-May)

Partnered with CJMS administration and teachers to enhance communications to parents and the after-school program offerings for students

As I composed the above list, it occurred to me that this is the last principal entry for the "Cougar News" that will be written from the current CJMS building. In a matter of weeks, we will leave this building and look toward occupying the Tilden Holding Center with nostalgia, anticipation and excitement. Please know that we will do all we can for our students, staff members, and parents to prepare for a different venue of a "Cougar Den" for two years. Our 2009 parent summer mailing will contain important information about our move, school opening activities, and the 2009-2010 school year.

It has been, and continues to be a pleasure to be a part of the educating of your children. Good luck to our eighth graders, who will continue to pursue their education at the high school level. In August, 2009, we will welcome our current sixth and seventh graders back to CJMS and additionally welcome current fifth graders as they become "Cougars".

I wish you a safe, relaxing, and enjoyable summer with your loved ones. Finally,

thank you so much for being a part of the CJMS family, and continue to give that extra 212 degrees of effort in all that you do.

Sincerely,

Dr. Paulette L. Smith

## CJMS ON THE MOVE

Submitted by Bill Everly

The end of the school year is rapidly approaching for the students and certainly for the staff. In a few short weeks Cabin John Middle School (CJMS) will be house in the Tilden Holding Center (THC) for two years, while the new CJMS is constructed. CJMS staff members have already begun the process to move everything out of CJMS before demolition begins. The administration has had several meetings with central office staff to ensure a smooth transition. Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) personnel and personnel from various companies have begun inspecting the current facilities to prepare for demolition, identify elements of the building that can be salvaged and used in other MCPS buildings, and relocate of the two portable classrooms and the "East Wing", where most of the sixth grade classes are currently housed.

At the beginning of June a team of packers will be assigned to CJMS to assist in boxing and packing book rooms, storage closets, science materials, art supplies, technology education equipment, etc. The team will assist staff throughout the month of June. In addition, the CJMS staff is providing input on classroom furniture needs at THC and is already thinking about how they will "set up" classrooms at the temporary site. By the end of June the current CJMS site will become a construction site, therefore, CJMS offices will be relocated during the summer. Because of several work projects, the THC site will not be available for staff during part of the summer. Projects include improvements on the heating, cooling, and ventilation system; improving bathrooms to meet ADA standards; removal of asbestos; installing nine portable classrooms; and installing Prome-thean Boards in classrooms. As summer approaches, CJMS will inform parents and the community where the

CJMS summer offices will be located. So that everyone is up-to-date on CJMS information throughout the summer, we strongly suggest parents check the CJMS web site on a regular basis. In addition to the web site, a summer mailing will be sent to parents in the beginning of August.

## 7th Grade Report

Submitted by David McCutcheon

May was Shakespeare month for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade! We salute Ms. Wolf, Ms. Larrain, and Ms. Morelli who have volunteered countless hours to make our Shakespeare unit a success. During the Shakespeare unit students had the opportunity to read, watch, and actually perform Shakespeare. Working with a troupe of Shakespearean actors made this a special experience that extended outside of the regular classroom. This 7<sup>th</sup> grade tradition has been one of the highlights for students for years.

A note about final exams: There is a saying in the running world – sprint through the finish line. In other words, don't stop early. Instead, keep going until the race is through. We try to teach 7<sup>th</sup> graders that this motto is true for school as well. Starting in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade year students are faced with the challenge of final exams on the last few days of school. Since they will face exams in high school and college it is important that they learn not to slack off just because the weather is warm and vacation is approaching. Instead, they should work extra hard the last few weeks of school and think of vacation as their reward for success. This is a new concept to students but a lesson that is valuable to learn.

Working together, we can make the end of the year a great one for all students!

## 8th Grade Report

Submitted by the 8th Grade Team

“The great thing in this world is not so much where we are, but in what direction we are moving.” Oliver Wendell Holmes

As our rising ninth graders prepare for the transition to high school, we hope that the

eighth grade experience has provided them with the tools to continue to grow as responsible citizens and successful learners. We hope that we have opened their eyes to the many possibilities that exist ahead.

We have advocated for each child's needs and have worked tirelessly to engage them in the subjects we teach. It is only, as Patricia Neal once said, that “a master can tell you what he expects of you. A teacher, though, awakens your own expectations.”

Teachers are required to wear many different hats, but we try not to let it go to our heads (no pun intended!) In spite of our duties to nurture, praise, respect, and, yes, love our students, we are, above all, good academic teachers. We are fortunate that we get to wear that most important hat. We know that the impressions we make in our students' lives may lay dormant for many years, surfacing in adulthood. We try not to feel guilty at the end of the teaching day if a lesson does not go as planned. If we make a difference in one child's life that day, we consider it a success. Each of us knows as Christa McAuliffe did, “I touch the future. I teach.”

FYI~The eighth grade end of year planning committee is mobilized and meeting to ensure that this year's activities will afford our students a memorable closure to their CJMS experience. Ms. Carolyn Wallert is coordinating the effort. Please offer her as much support as possible; the suggested contribution is twenty-five dol-

lars per student, and information appears on the CJMS Web site. Watch for flyers and save these dates:

**June 5-Eighth Grade Dance**

**June 11-Eighth Grade Luncheon**

**June 12-Kings Dominion Trip**

**June 16-High School Orientation Visit**

Thank you for sharing your youngsters with us this school year. Continue to advocate for their needs, celebrate their individuality, and nurture their talents. Have a safe and pleasant summer.



A SPECIAL THANK-YOU

to the PTSA's

, Margie Kalik and Claudia Bonangelino

for sponsoring and organizing a week of treats and surprises!

FROM THE CJMS STAFF

VISIT OUR PTSA  
WEBSITE  
[www.cabinjohnptsa.org](http://www.cabinjohnptsa.org)

JOIN THE PTSA !  
VOLUNTEER and BE AN IMPORTANT PART OF  
YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL

LOOK FOR 2009-2010 MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION  
IN YOUR JULY SUMMER PACKETS

**Parent Volunteer Breakfast**

*CJMS Staff  
will host a breakfast  
for all  
parent volunteers  
who have  
provided invaluable assistance throughout the  
2008-2009 school year.  
Thursday, May 28th  
8am - 9am*

*Take advantage of this opportunity to visit with  
teachers and administrators you have worked with  
during the past year and enjoy a  
delicious breakfast banquet together.*

**Churchill Cluster  
Update  
Spring 2009**

**Board of Education Visit:** Our cluster had a great opportunity to meet our Board of Education members at Churchill High School on May 14. We were treated by our phenomenal Hoover Jazz Ensemble, led by Robert Dahlin and the Cabin John Advanced Orchestra, led by Scott Herman. We wanted to present the BOE with an example of our fine music programs, showing the value we place on the "whole

child" since some schools in the county are compromising their music programs due to the goals of "No Child Left Behind" or schedule issues. While only a handful of parents attended the meeting, we appreciate all of our PTA leaders who came to talk with these elected officials-they did an excellent job representing their PTAs. Our principals and administration from all schools were represented and our Community Superintendent, Sherry Liebes and Director of School Performance, Renee Foose also came.

**Budget Challenges Continue:** This year has been very challenging and we have been fighting to keep all of our programs intact as budgets are getting cut despite

federal stimulus money coming to the county. While kleenex and hand sanitizer may run out by the end of the year and textbooks and supplies are a serious concern for next year, we are weathering the recession so far without too much pain. Next year could be another story.

The Maryland State Department of Education has denied the waiver request by the County Council of \$79,537,522 from its "maintenance of effort" requirement and we are waiting to see how this will affect our schools. While the federal stimulus funds and a \$24 million error which led to an unexpected increase in funds were a welcome relief, this money is coming in after the budget was established in December, which has presented challenges for MCPS and the Montgomery County Council.

**Changing of the Guard:** We are saying goodbye to Janette Gilman as a cluster coordinator. She is looking forward to helping more at her children's schools next year. Our cluster's loss is Hoover and Churchill's gain! Thanks Janette for your countless hours of service to the eight school communities the past two years! If anyone wants to know how you can be a PTA President or Cluster Coordinator while working full time, talk to her because she does it effortlessly!

**Seven Keys to College  
Readiness**

Please join us on Friday, May 29, 2009, at The Universities at Shady Grove, Building II, Multipurpose Room, 9630 Gudelsky Drive, Rockville, for an overview of the Seven Keys to College Readiness and to discuss ways we can work together as partners to ensure that students understand the pathway to college. A light breakfast will be served at 8:30 a.m., and the meeting will be held from 9:00-11:00 a.m.

Please RSVP to Ms. Agie Alvez, director, Montgomery County Public Schools Office of Communications and Family Outreach, at 301-279-3399 or via email at [Agie.Alvez@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Agie.Alvez@mcpsmd.org).

Merry Eisner will join Laura Siegel and Laurie Halverson as a Cluster Coordinator. Merry was PTA President at Bells Mill and then VP of Legislation and VP of Educational Issues at the county level (MCCPTA.) She has also been nominated by the MDPTA Nominating Committee as VP of Legislation of Maryland PTA, so we look forward to having her legislative skills and political connections in our cluster!

We wish our parents a wonderful summer and hope to see many more of you as we continue to advocate for the best education our children can have.

## Churchill Cluster Coordinators

### Janette Gilman (outgoing)

[janettegilman@comcast.net](mailto:janettegilman@comcast.net)

home 301-838-9274

cell 703-585-2991

### Laurie Halverson

[lauriehalverson@verizon.net](mailto:lauriehalverson@verizon.net)

home 301-983-6453

cell 301-466-9744

### Laura Siegel

[LASSiegel@aol.com](mailto:LASSiegel@aol.com)

home 301-983-2513

cell 301-523-5560

### Merry Eisner (incoming)

[merry.eisner@gmail.net](mailto:merry.eisner@gmail.net)

home 301-983-5225

## Wootton Cluster Update

### Spring Update

Submitted by Jennifer Pories,  
Wootton Cluster Coordinator, MCCPTA

### Cluster Meeting with Board of Education

On April 23, the Wootton Cluster Principals and PTA leadership met with Board of Education (BOE) members Patricia O'Neill, Chris Barclay, Laura Bethiaume, and Phil Hoffman, at Cold Spring Elementary School. The BOE meets with each MCPS Cluster every few years. We began working on the Agenda for this meeting back in January, receiving input from all

Wootton Cluster schools. Cluster parents presented each Agenda item as follows:

1. Are we Meeting the Needs of All Students – Susan Avijon, parent Robert Frost MS
2. Future of Gifted and Talented Program – Amy Fowler, parent Travilah ES
3. Need for More Parental Input – Sara Beth Watson, President, Cabin John MS PTSA
4. Testing Issues – Karen Collishaw, Cluster Representative, Dufief ES PTA
5. Capital Budget School Needs – Andrea Bernardo, Area Vice President, MCCPTA
6. Teacher Support and Training – Rich Edelman, Wootton Cluster Coordinator, MCCPTA

There was discussion following the presentations and the feedback from BOE members was that they greatly appreciated the positive tone in which all of our points were presented. Thank you to all of the presenters, to Cold Spring Elementary School for hosting, and to the Wootton High School PTSA for its generous donation for refreshments.

### Wootton High School Senior Becomes New SMOB

Congratulations to Tim Hwang, Wootton High School Junior, for being elected Student Member of the Board of Education (SMOB) for 2009-2010. Tim was chosen by MCPS middle and high school students throughout Montgomery County. Tim will begin his term on July 1.

### Budget Update

On May 21, 2009 the Montgomery County Council approved the MCPS Capital and Operating Budgets for 2010. Details of these budgets can be found on the MCPS website. The Cabin John Middle School modernization was included in the Capital Budget. We thank the MCPS Teachers for foregoing their cost of living increases this year in order to balance the budget during these difficult economic times.

The Wootton Cluster Coordinators are in the process of collecting Capital Improvement requests from our Cluster schools, which are due to MCPS staff June 1 for 2011.

## Calendar

### May

- 25 No School/Memorial Day
- 26 Choral Music Concert
- 27 Band and Orchestra Concert
- 28 Parent Volunteer Breakfast

### June

- 3 Quad Cluster PTA Meeting
- 5 SSL Hours Forms Due
- 5 8th Grade Dance
- 11 8th Grade Luncheon
- 12 8th Grade Kings Dominion Trip
- 15 Last Day/Early Release
- 16 High School Orientation Visit

### August

- 20 6th Grade Orientation
- 21 6th Grade Orientation
- 28 6th Grade Mini Day
- 31 First Day of School

## YOU'RE INVITED TO THE QUAD CLUSTER PTA MEETING

(for Churchill, Wootton, Rockville and Richard Montgomery Clusters)

Wednesday, June 3

7:30 p.m.

Wootton High School Media Center,  
(2100 Wootton Parkway in Rockville)

In attendance will be (Montgomery County Council of PTAs) officers, Cluster Coordinators, PTA Leaders and MCCPTA parent PTA members. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss concerns about our children's education and help our county PTA leaders prioritize issues for advocacy in the 2009/2010 school year.

# Farewell to Cabin John MS

*Cabin John will remain, but the building will be renewed...*  
Current & former students, parents, staff, and neighbors  
are invited to a farewell visit to the original school building

## CJMS OPEN HOUSE

*Self-guided tours and light refreshments*

**Thursday, June 4, 2009**

**3:00-5:00 P.M.**

10701 Gainsborough Road  
Potomac, Maryland

Questions: 301.469.1150

**Sponsored by CJMS and PTSA**

Follow the building modernization at: <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/cabinjohnms/modernization.html>



*Farewell and Good Luck to our 8th Graders*