



# Madera Matters

## President's Message

This is my fifth year as a Madera parent—and it's a year of great change for our school. Since last year, we've lost many wonderful long-time teachers and our school secretary, and we've welcomed new faculty and staff to our community. The district has rearranged our school borders and has added many students displaced by last year's school closures. We have also added split grade-level classes and are learning to adjust to a much larger student body on campus.

These changes have an impact—there are more crowds for morning drop-off and pick-up, and school events are noticeably more crowded. Please keep this in mind as you make the rounds to school—allow a few more minutes, NEVER leave your car in the drop-off area, and be patient and alert when passing on the Arlington. Rushing through the crowds could have tragic consequences—it's better to be a few minutes late.

### Thank you!

There have been some great Madera events in the past month—the first of two Barnes & Noble Book Fairs, the Spirit Rally, the Olympics, and several grade-level picnics. The time-honored tradition of Friday ice-cream sales has resumed, and plans for Red Ribbon week and Halloween celebrations are moving forward. Thanks to all for all of the time and energy spent on these events, with a special tip of the hat to Lianne Tsujimoto-Wong, Gail Tsujimoto-Cho, Barbara McCormick-Degnan, Elaine Alexander, Shari and James Ough, Erik & Amy Hanson (Mr. & Mrs. Incredible), and to all of the other parents who have helped make our school a better place for our kids!

### District Update

As many of you have heard, the school district and teachers union have reached a tentative settlement to their negotiations. The union will vote on this package in early November, and both the union and the district have said they are pleased with the results of the settlement. This removes the threat of a teacher's strike at our school this year. Thanks to our teachers, administrators, and members of the community for their concern, time, and effort to resolve this issue, which is good news for all of our children!

Other news: the school board has authorized the preparation of construction documents for the new Portola Middle School. The project slowly continues to move forward. If all goes according to plan, the new campus will accept its first students in 2013.

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Madera Matters,  
October 2009

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### PTA Executive Board

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## President's Message (continued from pg. 1)

### Instrumental Music

Our long-time music instructor, Jane Magid, was laid off last year by WCCUSD as a cost-cutting move. I'm pleased to say that Jane has found work teaching music in Hercules, and we have taken steps through the PTA to continue music opportunities at Madera. I personally feel that support for the arts is very important in school, and I'm grateful for the support and interest this program has generated.

The Madera PTA budget includes \$10,000 in funding to maintain music instruction this year. Kathy Guarneri has joined PTA reps from Harding, Kensington, and Fairmont in meeting with the City of El Cerrito to investigate the possibility of city support or incorporating this in the El Cerrito after school programs. This group will continue to explore options with the district and the City.

Meanwhile, we have had conversations about resuming music instruction at Madera after the first of the year. There are complications: some feel that the music program gets in the way of more important academic priorities, and if the instructor is not hired through the district, students are unable to attend band practice without another teacher present. Instrument rental is another challenge, and it's been suggested that music programs be offered BEFORE school for those who would like to participate.

We'll continue to move this forward and hope to have it in place soon. If you would like to get more involved in making this happen, please let me know.

### Budget Initiatives

At the September PTA meeting we approved a budget for this school year that builds on the successful programs we've had in the past, and includes some new initiatives. We've purchased a new copier for our teachers—the old ones that were purchased by the PTA many years ago, lived a long and happy life, and were due to be replaced.

We've approved a library book purchase, cultural arts assemblies have begun, and we've reimbursed many of our teachers for funds they've spent on supplies and field trips.

Still pending are expenditures on additional math and science programs, PE, and the lower playground fencing. If you're interested in helping with these programs please let me know... or come to the next PTA meeting to take place on Monday, November 9<sup>th</sup>... see you there!

~ David Miller

## Come to the PTA Bookfair—December 6<sup>th</sup> at Barnes and Noble

The PTA is hosting a bookfair at Barnes and Noble, at the El Cerrito Plaza Sunday, December 6<sup>th</sup> from 9am-10pm. Just mention "**Madera Elementary School**" at checkout, and a percentage of your purchase will benefit the PTA (gift cards, memberships, textbooks and magazine subscriptions, do not count, but café purchases do). If you can't make

it to the store, you can phone in your order to 510-524-0087. Orders of \$25 or more can be shipped for free. You can purchase books for your child's teacher, classroom and the school library. There will also be children's activities. After shopping, stop by **Pasta Pomodoro** or **Rubio's** for a bite to eat. Present a flier at the restaurant and 20% of

your bill will also benefit Madera's PTA.

Thanks to all of you who have already signed up to help. We still need volunteers to walk the mall and pass out fliers and to assist with children's activities. To help, please email [samandhank@sbcglobal.net](mailto:samandhank@sbcglobal.net) or contact Barbara McCormick-Degnan at 510-235-8065.

## Introducing Ms. Woody and Mrs. D'Onofrio—New 1st Grade Teachers

Among the many new faces at Madera this year are two new first grade teachers, Danielle Woody and Christina D'Onofrio. Both have experience teaching in WCCUSD schools. Ms. Woody comes to us from Harding and previously taught at Bay View in San Pablo; Mrs. D'Onofrio taught first grade at Verde in Richmond for three years, and at a private school in Oakland for two years. Ms. Woody, who previously taught 5th and 6th grades, says she would be happy teaching first grade forever. Mrs. D'Onofrio loves teaching first grade because in that year the kids grow the most—you can see the progress they make.

Both are impressed with the support they are getting from Madera parents. The parent involvement is “a dream come true,” says Ms. Woody. It enables her to provide instruction that is appropriate for the different levels within the class and to challenge each student because “kids need to be served.” Both also have benefited from the willingness of the other first grade teachers to collaborate, answer questions, and suggest lesson plans.

When asked why she wanted to go into teaching, Mrs. D'Onofrio said that she knew in kindergarten that

she wanted to become a teacher and that while other interests came and went, teaching was always on her “what I want to be when I grow up” list. Ms. Woody’s father was a teacher and her grandparents were professors. She tried other fields—archaeology and politics—but returned to teaching because it is “a creative profession.” She is now pursuing a master’s degree at Cal State East Bay and received her bachelor’s degree at UC Berkeley. Mrs. D’Onofrio also received her teaching credential through Cal State East Bay. Please extend a warm welcome to them!

## Introducing Molly Wahl—Garden Coordinator

Hello. My name is Molly Wahl and I am the new garden coordinator for Madera Elementary School. I come to your lovely community with eight years of teaching experience, a love of gardening and food, and a desire to help people connect to our earth. I have a Bachelors in Sociology, a Masters in Teaching, and I am working toward a Permaculture Design Certificate. More importantly, I am committed to building community and raising awareness around issues such as sustainability, food systems, and eco-justice.

I have thought for a while about a catchy way to sum up what my role is going to be at Madera Elementary, and my attempts have yielded the following: as the garden coordinator I will help things grow. Obviously, such things as herbs, vegetables, and fruit trees will grow with my assistance, but it is the less tangible things that I hope

to “grow” the most. I want to grow access to the garden, thereby ensuring that any family member, teacher, and child who wants to be involved will be. I want to grow enthusiasm for this project because this small patch of abundant earth is a blessing.

The only way all of this “growth” can happen is if we work together. I look forward to hearing your vision for the garden, and seeing you in the garden during both classroom visits and work parties. If you wish to talk with me further about the garden, please feel free to email me at [mollywahl@comcast.net](mailto:mollywahl@comcast.net) any time.



## Did You Know?

Has your child ever come home excited about a cool school Assembly? Did you know that each year the PTA sponsors Assemblies for the entire student body? This year, the PTA is funding six of them thanks to your contributions and to Ms. Schooley and Ms. Miller, who coordinate them. They include:

September 18: Magic Circus

October 27: Alborada (Andean music and dance)

November 6: Animals from Around the World

January 22: Legends of India

March 29: African Acrobats

April 16: Lively Tunes for Children

May 28: Halau’o Keikiali’l (Hawaiian)

## Got News?

The deadline for the next issue of the Madera PTA Newsletter is January 4.

Please submit items for events that will occur in January or February to Clare Sheridan at [claresher@yahoo.com](mailto:claresher@yahoo.com).

Please include your phone number in case of questions.

Thanks!

## Upcoming Events

- ◆ No school—Parent-Teacher Conferences, Tues., Nov. 2
- ◆ Garden Work Party, Saturday, November 7, 2-5 pm
- ◆ School Site Council, Monday, November 9, 3 pm
- ◆ PTA Meeting, Monday, November 9, 7:15 pm
- ◆ Madera Yard Sale, Saturday, November 14, 8 am—3 pm
- ◆ Madera Book Fair at Barnes & Noble, Sun., December 6
- ◆ School Site Council, Monday, December 14, 3 pm
- ◆ PTA Dinner Meeting, Monday, December 14, 6:30 pm
- ◆ Winter Sing Along, Thursday, December 17, 7:00-8:30 pm
- ◆ Winter Break, December 21-January 3

## Got Stuff? Need Stuff? Come to the PTA Yard Sale!

The Annual Madera PTA Yard Sale is fast approaching, so get organized and gather your unwanted treasures for our school benefit. With your help, our goal of increasing sales by 50% will be achieved. Last year we made roughly \$1200, and with your donations our school will continue to prosper.

### *Why should I participate?*

Because you *love* Madera; you *love* making money for your school, and you *really love* keeping excess items out of our burgeoning landfill!

### *What should I donate?*

Furniture, electronics, small appliances, household items, dishes, bric-

a-brac, toys, games, books, linens, clothing, and shoes are all items that have sold well in the past. No donation is too small. Kudos to those who donated last year, and an A+ to the folks that organized their clothing donation by size! We found that items in good condition sell the best.

### *Where do I bring donations?*

We will be accepting items for donation the week of the sale. You will be able to bring your items to school at specified times, to be announced. Large or heavy items, such as furniture, may be brought to the school on the morning of the sale, unless otherwise arranged.

**\*We cannot accept computers, folding baby cribs/playpens, or car seats.**

### *How else can I help?*

A little help goes a long way! We will need many people to help sort and price items, make signs, post signs, post internet advertising, work at the sale, and clean up. Clean-up is an important component of this sale.

*And come to the sale!* Saturday, November 14, 8 am—3 pm, in the school parking lot.

To participate, please contact Jessica McGuire at 510-260-4312 or by email: [patrickmc2@comcast.net](mailto:patrickmc2@comcast.net).