



The Pink Panther

Henry J. Kaiser, Jr. Elementary School

25 South Hill Court, Oakland, California 94618 (510) 879-1710

SCHOOL & COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

MARCH 10, 2008

Dear Kaiser Families,

Some of the events from the past week made me remember an unusually similar week about a year ago. For this week's letter I've drawn upon the letter I wrote a year ago, because the words are appropriate again.

This week families who were selected in the Options lottery began to call about enrolling in our school for the fall. (We also had many calls from those not selected, but that's another topic!) The calls ranged from those who were relieved to have gotten their choice to those who were upset that they were assigned here to those who asked, "Where is Kaiser? I don't know anything about that school." Those responses made me think about the range of people we have in our community, and their children. While it's easy to sit in judgment about *those* kids, we need to remember who belongs at Kaiser School. **Our school is for everyone who needs an education**, except the most disabled whose needs we cannot meet. It's not that we just don't discriminate on this or that basis, but we actively *welcome* all children into our learning community.

One day this week I had a difficult conversation with one of our parents. She witnesses daily the difficulties a few children have in managing their behavior. Like any parent, she wanted to know why these children were in the class and what was going to be done about them. The conversation was difficult because I couldn't find a way to convince her that *those* children belong here and benefit from being here. I couldn't find a way to help her see that *those* children who have such visible needs are as much a part of who we are as a learning community as her well-behaved, well-performing child. I felt like I failed *those* students and the teachers who so steadfastly work with them. The conversation ended uncomfortably and it haunted me through the week.

In the upper grades we have a significant number of *those* children who have already been through difficulties at other schools. Their parents have brought them to Kaiser in hopes that we could do something that other schools could not. In some cases we succeed and fulfill their hopes. I could walk down the hall and point to children whose stories would bring tears to your eyes for the tragedy and for the growth. During school tours during January parents often asked me about the secret of our success. I tell them it's because the portion of children who have high needs is relatively low, so that the teachers and community can meet their needs. Sometimes it takes only a few months to help, and sometimes it takes a few years. It remains critical that we extend and maintain a stance of welcome and support.

My own experience reflects that welcome. In the early 1980s, I left Cincinnati where gay people were regularly beaten and jailed by the police, and moved to California. When I became a teacher I was welcomed into the Kaiser Community and my partner and I were amazed at the tolerance, no, the *affirmation* we received. When we adopted our first son, whose mother had a history of alcohol abuse, the faculty and parents had a shower for us. Eventually we adopted a second, whose mother also had a history of drug and alcohol abuse. Our sons came to Kaiser School and soon showed behavioral and learning problems; again, the community here never treated them with less respect than any other child. Oh, occasionally I would hear

(Continued on page 2)

Getting In The Know

(continued from page 1)

comments that hurt deeply, like the teacher who said in alarm that crack babies were lemons and would ruin our schools, or the single mother who looked me in the face and wondered how I was damaging my sons by adopting them into a motherless home. For the most part however, this has been a supportive community. Over the years I continued to teach and to grow as an educator myself, in an environment where I've been accepted and respected. Instead of being treated as social trash, we were treated as human beings, and the way we were treated helped us to grow into being better human beings ourselves, and helped us to become a family. Oh yes, my family has its problems, as do all families, but we have been able to grow largely because of the support we've received at Kaiser School. So I know first hand the nurturing and transforming affects of living, working and growing in a supportive community. Yes, *those* kids belong here. We all do.

Mel Stenger, Principal

KAISER CALENDAR

DATE / DAY	EVENT
March 14	Baseball ticket orders due to Robin
March 10-14	Parent-teacher conferences – 1:25 early release daily
March 19	SSC meeting
March 26	PTA board meeting
March 24-28	Spring break – no classes
March 31	Caesar Chavez Day – no classes

**The Pink Panther is also available at
www.KaiserElementary.org.**

HAVE A STORY? GET IT IN THE PINK!

Parents, teachers, classroom volunteers and students: Great things are going on at Kaiser every day! Why not let the community know about them? Send your story to the PINK PANTHER!

How to Reach Kaiser School

Our phone number is **(510) 879-1710**
(includes a 24-hour message service).

To participate in the school community group,
go to (and join) this website:
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/kaiserelementaryschool_group/

How to be in the *Pink Panther*

To include your story or information in your school newsletter: forward your news, questions, or article to **both** of the editors by **5 p.m. on Sundays** via e-mail:

**carriemail2001@yahoo.com – Carrie Shepherd
jolie@earthlink.net – Jolie McRae**

Please put "Pink Panther" in the subject of your email to ensure that it is not deleted accidentally!

Pink Panther's PTA Sponsors

PTA President: Janice Murphy
VP Communication: Lisa Downes

Pink Panther Staff

Co-editors: Jolie McRae & Carrie Shepherd
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Getting In The Know

Take me out to the Ball Park...

Oakland A's tickets are now available to Kaiser families and friends for a cut rate and the A's will donate \$8/\$10 of every ticket we buy to Kaiser School!!!!!!

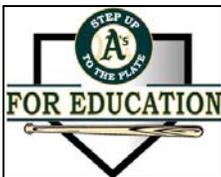
Simply...

- Look for the order forms (plaza level \$22 / field level \$28) online at www.kaiserelementary.org or on the table outside the office
- Select which games you would like to attend
- Return to Robin with your completed order form and a check to Kaiser School PTA by **March 14**.
- Tickets will be mailed directly to you at the address you provide on the order form by the Oakland A's

Extend this offer to family, friends and co-workers!!

All seats on a single order form will be together and all Kaiser seats will be in the same area!!

This is a fun and easy way to raise money for our school!



Let's Hit a Bull's Eye!

Do your part to help reach Kaiser's fundraising goal of \$15,000 as our annual pledge drive kicks into high gear! Keep an eye out for the giant dartboard that will be hanging in front of the school to help us track our progress and let's put a dart DEAD CENTER!!!

CONGRATS TO KAISER ODYSSEY OF THE MIND TEAM!

Congratulations to the Kaiser Elementary Odyssey of the Mind team, which competed in the San Francisco Bay Region Odyssey of the Mind competition on Saturday, March 1! The team members were Alex McSpadden, Kendall Murphy, Maddie Murphy, Gwen O'Keefe (from Chabot Elementary), Clayton Peppas and Neil Wessling.

The team placed 6th in their division, which was a great accomplishment for their first year being involved. Team members designed and developed a vehicle that they drove in a road rally. The vehicle had to complete several tasks that were designated by the officials. Starting in November, team members met weekly with their coaches Mel Peppas and Julie Mills to develop and work on their vehicle and various other required components. The kids did all of the design and work themselves. The hard work paid off when hundreds of students and families showed up for the exciting competition.

The team put on an excellent performance. The judges stated they were very impressed with the team's performance. Some of the comments the judges made included the construction of their vehicle was brilliant, that they had a wonderful performance, they had good teamwork and it looked like everyone was having fun. A great time was had by all. Team members are already talking about competing again next year and hoping more Kaiser students get involved.

Odyssey of the Mind is an international educational program that provides creative problem-solving opportunities for students from kindergarten through college. Kids apply their creativity to solve problems that range from building mechanical devices to presenting their own interpretation of literary classics. They then bring their solutions to competition on the local, state and World level. Thousands of teams from throughout the U.S. and from about 25 other countries participate in the program. You can learn more about Odyssey of the Mind at www.odysseyofthemind.com.

New PTA Board Now Forming

We currently are in the process of putting together our PTA board for next year. Because some parents already have held their PTA position for two years and are “termed out,” now is the time that we need new families to step forward and get involved! The two most crucial board positions we need to fill are those of:

Financial Secretary -- who deposits all money received by the PTA and keeps an up-to-date record of those deposits; and

Treasurer – who organizes and manages the PTA budget, writes all checks and keeps all financial records for tax and auditing purposes.

WE CANNOT FUNCTION AS A PTA WITHOUT SOMEONE PERFORMING THESE TASKS!

The other open positions are:

Secretary – who takes notes at all PTA meetings, distributes those notes and keeps a record of them.

V.P. of Programs – who schedules and organizes all school assemblies for the students

V.P. of Fundraising – who oversees the pledge drive and assists with other fundraising efforts done by the PTA

Parliamentarian – who updates the PTA bylaws and keeps meetings focused and on track

Historian – who keeps track of the hours and activities of the PTA membership and helps the president organize that information at year-end for the CA State PTA

Auction Chair – who acts as event planner to pull together our school’s biggest fundraiser. (It is important to note that last year’s Auction Chair, Alison May, again will do all solicitations and will act as an invaluable resource.)

After School Programs Chair – who finds and organizes classes on such things as music, dance, drama, language, etc. that students can take after school

Site Safety Coordinator – who gathers emergency packets from all students at the beginning of the year, organizes the emergency container on the upper yard, and works with the school administration to disseminate information about school emergency needs and plans

We will be announcing the candidates for all PTA board positions at our next PTA Association meeting on Wednesday, April 2nd and then voting on the positions at our May 7th meeting. Being an active member of our board is the best way to get first-hand knowledge of school-related issues and the best way to be part of the decision-making process.

If you are interested in any of the positions listed above, please contact PTA president, Janice Murphy, at 510-482-5453 or via e-mail at Janice-Murphy@SBCGlobal.net.