



End of Year Newsletter & Update

December 7, 2011

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE STAFF...

Please join me in celebrating the longevity of our staff. We are so blessed that our organization continues to be served by such wonderful people! Some milestone anniversaries this past year were:

Janice Zachary, Accounting Specialist	17 years of service!
Sue Bass, Administrative Assistant	16 years of service!
Jane Smith, Lead Teacher, Tot II	14 years of service!
Elizabeth Heath	11 years of service!
Cindy Payton, morning floater	10 years of service!
Lynne Shell, Lead Teacher, Detectives	8 years of service!
Jessica Grieshaber, Co-Teacher, Dreamers	6 years of service!
Judy Vasiloff, Director of Program	5 years of service!
Brendan Agnew, Co-Teacher, Discoverers	2 year of service!
Katy Jones, Lead Teacher, Explorers	1 year of service!
Jessie Smith, Co-Teacher, Explorers	1 year of service!
Ross Becker, Co-Teacher, Detectives	1 year of service!
Tim Suffridge, Lead Cook	1 year of service!
Dausha Janko, Team Member	1 year if service!

Do the Math! That's over 94 years of Service to a 40 year old organization! Woo Hoo!

(Disclaimer to staff: I hope I haven't overlooked anyone's anniversary dates! I tried not to!)

I'm not sure how it feels to you, but 2011 just whizzed by for me.....where did it go? Seems like just a few days ago we were celebrating our time together at the end of 2010.....maybe time is like a meteor; just cruises along in space for millions of years, then – once it hits our atmosphere – just burns away quickly. *(disclaimer: this is absolutely not scientific data).* It just feels that way to me!

We've had a year full of adventure, challenges, laughter, growth, set backs, victories..... gosh! We've experienced REAL LIFE here at Middle Earth during 2011!



For those of you that could make it, we thank you so much for your participation in the recent **Celebration of Families!** It was a night of good food, family fellowship, and fun activities in the classrooms. Some children were out with illness, some families had other commitments and tried to juggle both; but we had a wonderful time! Thank you to everyone who participated. The evening really arrived early this year (the first Thursday in December turned out to be December 1st!) but, we pulled it off! We enjoyed ourselves tremendously! I especially had fun at the front entrance with my 'snow', straight from the North Pole. I've got a direct line to the guy with the sleigh. 😊 Next year, I'd like a quartet, or a harpist, to join me in the lobby! I'll get to work on it.

Fall Festival 2011

The Fall Festival was a wonderful success thanks to everyone's contributions, participation, and financial support in terms of ticket sales, food sales, picture sales, and auction purchases! This event was successful in large part due to the efforts of Amber Bui, Holly Mills, Judy Vasiloff, Janice Zachary, homeroom parents, the teaching staff, and IBC volunteers.



Proceeds of the event break down as follows:

- Net Ticket Sales: \$565.40 which goes to the Teacher Bonus Fund.
- Family Leadership Committee: \$437 from the sales of food and fall picture booth
- Auction Sales*: \$781
Distributed as:
Classrooms: \$100/class
Administration: \$81

(* These funds were used to purchase classroom gifts for the children to open during the Celebration of Families. This was the first year we have done this!)

Thank you to Amber, Holly, and all committee members for making this festival such a success!

Kansas Maid Frozen Pastries (formerly known as Butter Braids) Fundraiser

The Family Leadership Committee (FLC) under the direction of Amber Bui and Holly Mills held a successful Kansas Maid fundraiser.

225 pastries were sold for a total of **\$1460** benefit to Middle Earth! This would not have happened without everyone's support. IBC volunteers pitched in, too! So, enjoy Kansas Maid yummy Braids and thank you for your support! These proceeds go to support Program Enhancement opportunities.

Thanks to Our M.E. Board Members...

I would like to express my appreciation to our Board members for their leadership and service to Middle Earth!

Officers for the upcoming year are:

Alva Brockus Board Chair
(Sarah – Detectives;
Henry and Charlie, Big Kids)

Kim Teuscher Vice Chair (Ella -
Detectives)

Becky Bowling Secretary (Dylan
– Discoverers)

Nyky Wilson Treasurer (Ava -Tot II and Mia - Tot I)

Returning members are:

Dawn Hallman (Makenzie, Big Kid; Katelyn, Serendipity;
Grayson – Tot I)

Amber Bui (Hudson, Discoverers)

Russ Gammill (Kate and Davis: alumni)

Tracy Schumacher (Jake, Serendipity and Reagan, Dreamers)

Linda Goeringer (son, Jarrod, alumni from early 1980's;
grandson Boomer, Tot I)

Claudia Griffith (alumni parent, grandson, Oliver, Serendipity)

New members as of November 2011:

Brian Hall (Reagan, Tot I)

Susan Steele (retired educator, community volunteer)

Thank you to these volunteers who share their expertise, leadership, and financial resources to Middle Earth. I have a great list of bosses, yes? Without their support and guidance, Middle Earth would be a very different place, indeed. **We can have up to 15 members of the Board, and would love to hear from you if you, or someone you know, is interested in serving. Together, we'll have a bright future.** 😊



Did you Know...

Did you know that we have two full-time employees that are alumni of Middle Earth from their childhood? Did you know that we have six children enrolled whose parents used to be the children here? Isn't it wonderful to be involved with something that has such staying power and influence in the community? We have families enrolled that represent 3 generations of involvement, and now former children who attended Middle Earth bring us their children to love and nurture. This is just part of what makes me so proud to be involved in the Middle Earth family.

Inclement Weather Update

The process that involves posting school closings on the major television stations remains such that Middle Earth cannot be listed. (I have suggested to the organizers that they consider a tiered approach to listings, so that large centers like Middle Earth **COULD** be posted. But, it isn't a possibility currently).



So, in the case of inclement weather and our inability to open for care, the following approach will be taken:

—Use our mass email blast to communicate

—Post the information on our website, www.middleearthok.org

If lack of electricity is a reality, we will try to use the homeroom phone lists and call families via a 'phone tree' type system.

At the very least, I wanted you to know that at this time we will not be able to post Middle Earth on the major TV stations when we are trying to communicate a school closing. We do not necessarily follow the Norman Public School's closing schedule. The Board Chair and Executive Director confer and make an independent decision based on the information we have at hand!

VOLUNTEERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Middle Earth was adopted this semester by the Integrated Business Core (IBC) Company "Sooner Stickies" for their volunteer, community service hours! The IBC program is part of the Michael F. Price College of Business. These students have volunteered every week, most days each week, and during special events such as our Fall Festival, Kansas Maid distribution, the Celebration of Families, taking down our shade structures, cleaning, sorting, decorating, painting.....the list goes on and on!

They will have contributed over **750 volunteer hours** with us by the end of this semester! The financial proceeds from their 'product sales', the Sooner Stickies, are designated to support the Bethesda Alternative agency here in Norman.

If you see one of the students, please help us express our gratitude to their many hours of volunteer time! They have gotten to know your children well, and we have appreciated their support.

2011 Dates to Remember:

Winter Holiday	Center closed Friday, Dec 23, and Monday, December 26
New Years Eve	center closed Mon, Dec. 30

Middle Earth 2012 Holiday Schedule

At the recent meeting of the Board of Directors, the dates for holiday closings for 2012 were approved as follows:

Memorial Day	Monday, May 28
Independence Day	Wednesday, July 4
Labor Day	Monday, September 3
Thanksgiving	W-F, November 21, 22, 23
Winter Holiday	M-W, Dec. 24, 25, 26
New Years Eve	Monday, Dec. 31

In addition, the days for professional development and in-service training were approved as follows:

In-Service Days: Thursday Aug. 16

Friday Aug. 17

M.E. academic Year begins:

Monday, August 20th

Last Hurrah: Some of you may remember that my husband, Rick, and I are the annual announcers of the Holiday Christmas Parade in downtown Norman. Well, we are turning the microphone over to new announcers after this year's parade! The parade begins at 10 a.m. at Norman High School and heads east on Main Street. We stand across the street from Copelin's Office Supply with the judges. If you want to hear the last vestiges of our 14 year announcing run, join us near the judging area! In addition, please support the Norman Kiwanis Club which serves pancakes from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday in the Norman High School Commons. Eat breakfast, enjoy the parade, and head home for naps! We do!!!!!!!

I love you all, Happiest of Holiday times to each of you, and – as always – I hope you get the chance to make new memories! As time goes on, they are becoming more and more important to me. I am grateful for so many things, and here are just a few:

Thank you for:

- Giving us the opportunity to care for and love your child(ren)
- Sharing with us your time and resources and talents
- Being a part of the community that we know and love as Middle Earth.

Happy Holiday Season to each of you! Enjoy!

With gratitude and much love,

Ms. Elizabeth, for all of us 😊