



## This Month in the Middle

Volume 3, Issues 2  
November 2010



**Sixth through eighth grade students are given instructions from the groundskeeper at Locust Grove**

At Poughkeepsie Day School, community service and service learning have a long tradition. We have strengthened the participation of our middle school students this year, by taking them off campus for four days of service in our community. Our students will be among the best educated members of their communities upon completion of their education. Part of the vision of Poughkeepsie Day School is that they will be helpful to whichever community they find themselves after graduating. Organizations in Dutchess and Ulster counties welcomed our participation with enthusiasm. Student served meals soup kitchens, worked with younger children at a downtown day care and in our own PDS lower school, did outside work building trails for Scenic Hudson and weeding at Locust Grove, and visited with the elderly residents of the Vassar-Warner Home in Poughkeepsie. At the end of the day students were reflective and proud of their work. Their comments ranged from “I loved getting to use the tools,” to “I never realized what good shape old people could be in!” We preceded our off campus service with some time spent in service to PDS. A video of some of these highlights can be found on the [PDS Facebook page](#). Video of the off- campus service is in the works, so check the Facebook page often.

## **Oh Boy, Koi!**

An industrious, creative, and committed group of parent volunteers has been busy for months preparing for the first PDS Fall Festival Reimagined. To contribute to the festival's decidedly international themes, the PDS middle school students made koi to help decorate the event venues. The ambitious goal of the festival planners is that each student be represented by a paper goldfish. You will see them hanging soon, in anticipation of the great day. Hope to see you at the festival on November 20. The fun starts at 8am with a 5k run or walk. The festival, featuring games, food, arts and a used book sale, runs from 10am until 3pm. Purchase your admission wrist band [now](#).

## **Keeping in Touch On-line**

In addition to reading PDS news almost "as it happens," through Facebook and Twitter, MS parents can keep an eye on class activities on-line. Each middle school teacher maintains a Google website with class information and a course calendar. In addition, two teachers (Shirley Rinaldi, 6 Humanities and Laura Graceffa 7-8 science) are writing blogs along with their students. Bloggers love visitors, so check them out! A [directory](#) of all Google sites, which include links to the blogs, can be found on the [PDS MS webpage](#). For a screen movie of how to navigate from the PDS website to the classroom Google sites, [watch this](#).

## **The Tell-Tale Heart...and other Poe events**

Eighth grade students in Trace Schillinger's English class participated in a Poughkeepsie Area Big Read event at Vassar College on October 12. Students watched an original musical based on *The Tell-Tale Heart*. Their exploration of Poe's works also included a joint class in which high school teacher Brigham Taylor's ninth and tenth grade English students presented multi-genre interpretations of several of Poe's short stories to the eighth graders.

## **Middle School Parent Dinner**

Middle school parents enjoyed a meal prepared by our PDS chef Jen Ippolito in the elegant surroundings of historic Kenyon House set to candlelight. Many thanks to parent Beth Brofman for her hard work in organizing the event.

## **Eighth Grade Transition to High School Events**

Both the eighth grade students and the eighth grade parents had transition to high school events at the end of October. Liz Vinogradov, Head of High School, met with eighth graders to tell them about the high school program. Students have selected a mini class to attend on November 10. Parents had an information evening on October 28 with a chance to hear from high school teachers and students. After students attend their mini classes, they will have a chance to select a regular high school class to visit for one class period in November or December.

### **Admissions Information Sessions**

PDS will host two admissions information sessions for prospective families in November. The evening session is on Wednesday, November 10 from 7:00-8:30pm. The day time session is on Tuesday, November 30 from 8:30-10am. Our current families are our best source of new students, so please spread the word!

### **Faculty Professional Development**

Laura Graceffa is presenting at the National Middle Schools Association annual meeting in Baltimore. The title of her session is *Collaborative science writing: Using digital writing to enhance and accelerate learning*.

Trace Schillinger is presenting at the Annual National Writing Project meeting in Orlando, in conjunction with several other teachers and researchers from across the country, who have been working with teachers and studying ways in which to develop literacy skills across the content areas.

### **Middle School Dance**

Within days of being elected, the new middle school student council began to plan the first social events of the year. They have been hosting ice cream fundraisers at lunchtime twice a month and are making final preparations for our first dance which take place in the Chapman Room on November 5 from 5:30 to 8:30pm. Students may invite friends who attend other schools, but we must have names and contact information to Tricia Irving by November 3. Always an exciting event, we again will be enjoying the DJ talents of Krista and Michelle. Admission is \$5, which includes pizza and snacks, A discount of \$1 will be given to any student who brings a reusable water bottle to help reduce the mountain of paper cups that a dance typically leaves behind.

### **Lost and Found**

With the weather turning cooler, the lost sweaters and jackets pile up in our lost and found. We donate the left behind garments at the start of long vacation breaks. This month is a good time to check the bins in the hallway near the 7-8 lockers and by the gym doors.

### **Upcoming Events**

- Family Conferences—**November 2**, no classes, students attend conference with parents
- Middle School Dance-**November 5**, (5:30 to 8:30pm)
- Admissions Information Session – **Wednesday, November 10** (7:00pm)
- Veterans' Day- **November 11**, School closed
- Thanksgiving Recess – **November 24 – 26**
- Admissions Information Session – **Tuesday, November 30** (8:30am)
- [November Lunch Menu](#)

All the best,

Laura Graceffa

Acting Head of Middle School