

MINUTES OF NICHOLS SCHOOL PARENTS' ASSOCIATION GENERAL MEETING ON JANUARY 14th, 2009

ATTENDEES

S. Angelakos; C. Augustine; K. Andersen; R. Avino; M. Bacon; S. Carney; L. Bell-Chopra; A. Bellows; J. Borgesi; D. Bourne; D. Briatico; R. Bryan; D. Corbett; J. Ennis; C. Fenn; E. Gurney; G. Higgins; M. Jones; T. Kawi; W. Lowe; Z. Mohamed; T. Michaud; J. Munro; N. Oak; C. Pegado; B. Regan; M. Rockwell; L. Vossler; L. Wright; S. Yerkovich; L. Yusick; S. Zamor; Y. Zhang

MULTI-CULTURAL GUEST SPEAKERS

Dr. Mary Rockwell, Director of Studies:

Of the Core Competencies that Nichols established several years ago, one is Cultural Competency/Global Awareness (http://www.nicholsschool.org/ftpimages/44/misc/misc_58190.pdf) We feel that students need to be able to understand diverse cultures and be able to conduct themselves in global situations, especially as many graduates are employed internationally. This core competency is being addressed through:

- the curriculum in History/English/Foreign Language classes, through our three exchange programs and
- in co-curricular programs: New this year, One Community- stresses our commonalities rather than diversity (*see also October minutes for this group's goals*) Blog moderated by Sheila Zamor to post family traditions, customs (*see Oct minutes*)

Tom Michaud and Yajie Zhang, Upper School Foreign Language Teachers:

Global Horizons -cultural awareness on campus. Students decide on programming: Guest Speakers are international students from several other schools speak about cultural differences experienced at Morning Meetings. Also celebrations with food, games, student created displays with info on the culture, attended by Upper & Middle School students. (so far: Spain/Israel/African countries) Also tapping into international backgrounds of Nichols parents- 1 out of every 13 Nichols students have a parent from another country.

Sheila Zamor, Director Multi-Cultural Affairs:

SUMA (Students United for Multicultural Awareness) Zamor leads meetings twice a month covering topics: Tolerance 101 Workshop, discussion of Presidential Election

Annual People of Color Conference (sponsored by NAIS, National Association of Independent Schools) in New Orleans- 3 Nichols SUMA students attended

Student Leadership and Diversity Conference themed "Be the Change You Want to See in the World" (sponsored by BISSNET, Buffalo Independent Secondary School Network, a consortium of 17 Independent Schools) at Daemon College- Nichols students attended for the first time/were encouraged to spearhead their own ideas in a Diversity Club.

Civil Rights Season- Collaboration of SUMA/Global Horizons- examines the foundations of Civil/Human rights and how they relate to all of us as we are one community.

International Students- currently at Nichols from Korea, Sweden, China-will graduate with a Nichols diploma. Current hosts: a local uncle, a Nichols family, a faculty member. Seeking host families for one academic year. (Barb Regan spoke humorously about their wonderful experiences as a current host family.)

Warren Lowe, International Dinner Coordinator:

Our biggest multi-cultural event coming soon: 2/9, snow date 2/11 6pm in Rand Dining Room, a huge pot-luck dinner, bring a family size dish to share. Costa Rican exchange students attend. Entertainment/video presentations. Volunteers needed. New this year: food types will be arranged on tables by continent and speedier serving process.

REPORT OF MR. RICK BRYAN, HEADMASTER

- In keeping with the idea of having our students learn more about the world and be more involved, Kelly Ostendorf, Upper School History teacher, is on sabbatical this year working on an initiative to integrate geography more into our curriculum, doing a lot of research on how different schools have integrated it into curriculum. (to supplement the program already in place-full year geography course taken by all 6th graders)
- Appreciation expressed on parental efforts on class gatherings, most recently the rescheduled JPP Breakfast
- Praised success of improved School/Parent Communications via Director of Parent Relations, Gyda Higgin's terrific emails/parent portal and Parent Association's help in bringing info together and suggestions on what info would be useful to post. Acknowledged results as increased awareness through effective communications, our goal right from the beginning. (*goal identified at Sept PA meeting, see minutes 9/9/08*)
- Center '63- Construction: has begun, waiting out this week of single digit temperatures for pouring concrete, but moving right along; structure will really begin to take shape in the Spring when steel arrives. Sustainability Features of the Building: quantified/exciting to see all the different elements, how they will come together and how they will benefit the students. A presentation for the students will be scheduled, probably in February. Construction: Safety features built in so no concerns about the equipment interfering with the students; Parking/access to the gym tweaked, made area behind Moot pick-up/drop-off rather than parking.
- New Automated Snow Day messages have surely been enjoyed
- 2009-2010: Vacation calendar is nearly finalized, will be posted on parent portal. Academic calendar: upcoming year and maybe the year after, the school year will likely start before Labor Day: **school may begin Wednesday before Labor Day weekend.**
- Marketing/Communications Committee: How to tell our story better, what we are, what we're doing, the experiences the kids are having and communicate it to the community/clarify misperceptions. Headed by Sasha Yerkovich who has been developing an initiative. Travers Collins hired to do a branding exercise for the school which will involve many focus groups and confidential surveys of students/parents/staff for valuable honest input on the essence/thoughts about the school/how the school's image looks within the community.

When people come to campus for “See Us in Action”, they say Nichols is clearly different from preconceived ideas/observation differs from how it had been described by others.

- Board Meeting: at end of January a preliminary budget will be adopted for next year. At next Parent Association meeting 3/3, a summary of enrollment/staffing (who is retiring/leaving, update on hiring) will be given, in terms of budget and the current economic scenario. Stay tuned-a lot to talk about after the next 6 weeks.

REPORT OF JOHN MUNRO, ASST HEADMASTER AND HEAD OF MIDDLE SCHOOL

- Geography Bee yesterday
- No cold day tomorrow even if public schools are closed as long as the driving conditions are safe.

REPORT OF CYNTHIA PEGADO, SECRETARY

- Since our last meeting, 3 members of the Nichols community received cards sent by the Secretary on behalf of our Nichols Parent Association expressing our support during difficult times. Sympathy to: US Math Teacher Jody Kuhns (mother), Parent Association VP Laurie Wright/Lindsay '12 (grandfather), Allison Stenlik '12 (grandmother)

REPORT OF JACKIE ENNIS, MIDDLE SCHOOL GRADE REP COORDINATOR

- MS Parking lot safety concerns-parents reminded to slow down in pick-up traffic
- New MS Uniform exchange program- started by Debbie Howe, MS teacher/parent
- 6th grade: skating party, 1/23, includes project to benefit Child Advocacy Center (CAC)
- 8th grade: Parent Coffee at Bagel Jays TBA

REPORT OF LORI VOSSLER, UPPER SCHOOL GRADE REP COORDINATOR

- Form III (9th Grade) Post Exam Pizza Party 1/23, Evening Parent Gathering 4/17
- Form IV (10th Grade) 11/08 was Parent Gathering, Buffalo Yacht Club
- Form V (11th Grade) JPP Breakfast was rescheduled to 1/8 from Snow Day
Junior Parent Coffee, Bagel Jays 2/18, 8am; Evening Gathering March date TBA
- Form VI (12th Grade) Halloween Breakfast, 12/5 Evening Parent Gathering, Garret Club
Spring Senior Breakfast 3/17, Winter Parent Coffee, Bagel Jays TBA

CHARACTER EDUCATION/WELLNESS

Stephanie Angelakos for Wendy Amato: Wellness Panel

Freedom from Chemical Dependency (FCD) Parent Workshop, 2/10 at 7:00pm

FCD educator Gretchen Hagenbuch: “Healthy Habits”, how to help children enjoy a drug-free adolescence

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Annual Fund: Tarik Kawi described outstanding support from the Trustees and appealed for parent support. We are half way to the parent goal (*financial goal stated in Sept minutes: Annual Fund is 7% of operating budget which is \$835,000 of which \$100,000 is Parents Division goal. Aim is 100% participation.*) Parent Phonathon 1/25 or 1/26. Volunteers needed, buffet dinner provided.
- Spirit Committee: Stephanie Angelakos explained function is to support Nichols arts/athletics however needed. At Winter Concerts, basket raffle/gingerbread house fundraiser was done for the Arts Dept. Upcoming fundraisers for Spring MS concerts/Eine Kleine Nacht Musik. Barb Regan is working on 100 Years of Hockey.
- Derby Day Auction 5/2: Mary Bacon announced theme: "Tulips and Mint Juleps" (green and white!) Great Live Auction items already. Encouraged attendance at Derby Day Gift Gathering Party 1/23. Volunteers needed for Restaurant Acquisitions.
- Nominating Committee: Chris Augustine requested Parent Association to start rounding up candidates for next year. Nominate yourself or others. Use nominating form on Parent Portal, or email her or ghiggins@nicholsschool.org

OLD BUSINESS

- Minutes of the Parents' Association General Meeting on October 28, 2008 were approved upon motion by Jackie Ennis, seconded by Monica Jones.

NEW BUSINESS

- 100 Years of Hockey 1/30-31: Sarah Carney enthusiastically urged all to attend Winter Sports Night-Be a part of history! Not just for hockey fans, but a school-wide event. Mailing should have already been received with a detailed schedule/email was sent out today by Gyda about this very special, once in a lifetime event. Buffalo Fare Buffet pizza/wings. Many friends/alumni arriving from out of town. Cheer on the Big Green and also enjoy free skate. Sat evening Gala Event will be a lot of fun featuring a 30 minute documentary (ESPN narrator), Hockey Hall of Fame/uniforms from the 1940's.
- Nichols Ski Days MLK Day at KB, Pres Day Monday at Holimont
- Parent Portal: Gyda Higgins, Director of Parent Relations, announced that new postings are added daily, message boards are functioning enabling parent to parent chats.
- Capital Campaign: Parent Association President, Stephanie Angelakos explained the importance of supporting the Capital Campaign and encouraged everyone to speak to others about the importance of reaching our goal of 100% parent participation.

Meeting concluded at 5:05 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Cynthia Pegado, Nichols Parent Association Secretary