

Cougar Connection

A Publication of Helen Keller Middle School and the Easton PTA
April 2011

"One can never consent to creep when one feels an impulse to soar.."
— Helen A. Keller



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The Cougar Connection is a monthly publication of Helen Keller Middle School and the Easton PTA.

Previous issues of the Cougar Connection can be found on the Helen Keller Middle School website at:
<http://www.helenkellerps.org>

and the Easton PTA website at:
<http://www.eastonpta.com>

Please submit information in MS Word format by the 25th of the preceding month to Caroline D'Agostino at:
cd@d-agostinodesign.com

Interim Principal's Pen

Dear Parent/Guardians,

Mother Nature has been kind to us lately, and we are all relieved to feel the bright early spring sun shining down on us. Perhaps, winter is really over?

In addition to the improved weather conditions, we have good news about our students to share with you. Gianna Forte, Grade 7, whose Reflections Dance entry came in First Place at the local level for her grade division, has learned that her entry will be sent on to the National Level. Gavin Feltman, Grade 8, will represent HKMS at the state level Geography Bee in New Britain on Friday, April 1. The HKMS Track and Field after school activity began on March 30; the students will be coached by Mr. Astle and Mr. Walsh who are both social studies teachers at HKMS. Finally, we are excited to announce that the music lessons for students

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CALENDAR @ A GLANCE

- 4/1 HKMS Play, Twisted Tales at JBHS, 7 pm
- 4/2 HKMS Play, Twisted Tales at JBHS, 7 pm
- 4/7 Staff Day Dismissal, 12:10 pm
- 4/8 PTA Meeting 9:15 am - Easton Public Library
- 4/8 8th Grade Transition Dance
- 4/12 Easton BOE Meeting, 7:30 pm
- 4/13 Peer Leaders' Community Supper at Golden Hill Methodist Church, 4-6:30 pm
- 4/18-22 SPRING RECESS



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interested in learning the flute, saxophone, or clarinet will begin this month after school in the Band Room. Beginning April 11, on Mondays from 2:45-3:45, flute lessons will be given by Mr. David Folman (a former student of HKMS), and on Thursdays from 2:45-3:45 he will give clarinet and saxophone lessons. Our thanks go out to the PTA for funding these lessons which give all our students an opportunity to learn a new instrument this year.

In keeping with the HKMS tradition of community activism and caring for others, our students have developed a fundraiser. Nancy Culliton, one of the sponsors of Student Council, wrote the following: "Student Council is supporting a fundraiser for the victims of Japan's recent disasters. The fundraiser plan was formulated by sixth grader Milan Spisek. Each homeroom will be receiving a 'Japan Disaster Relief' shoebox. We are challenging each student to donate \$5.00 toward this disaster relief. All monies collected will be sent directly to the Red Cross. The fundraiser will start March 29th, and it will conclude on Friday, April 15th. The homeroom who raises the most money will receive a prize. We will also put additional collection boxes in the office and faculty rooms for staff and parents who wish to contribute to this disaster relief."

Let's hope that Spring is really here.

I hope you all have a wonderful April vacation later this month.

Sincerely,

Adeline Merrill,
amerrill@eastonps.org
Helen Keller Middle School Interim Principal



News from the PTA Presidents

Dear Parents and Teachers,

As we eagerly usher in Spring, we are grateful to continue all our efforts to renew, respond and progress through all that our Keller community brings to us. Whether it is dedicating time and energy to the wonderful extracurriculars - including the incredible effort on the play production this month; committing ourselves to find ways to improve and increase the programs that are offered to our children and staff in a struggling financial climate; focusing to find additional leadership for our school that maintains the special culture we have here; and even looking for ways to honor all that has been instituted in HKMS in the incredible last few years, we are reminded every day, of what a special group of staff, parents and children we are blessed with and are so grateful to be actively involved this way in the future of our children.

We encourage you to truly take the time to appreciate what we have and to also consider what additional progress you would like to see. As the budget for the new year has been developing over the past few weeks, it has been your input and support that has helped to drive the direction of our school and Board of Education and we cannot thank you enough for your valuable feedback. This school, is all of ours, and your involvement speaks to that.

In entering our last few months in our terms as co-presidents we consider ourselves so lucky to be a part of this team. What an amazing opportunity we have to be truly listened to and appreciated. And it is you, as parents and staff, that have made that difference. We encourage your support and involvement at all levels to continue, and to grow as we guide our children through this ever-so-important stage of life.

Sincerely,

Heidi Adair (hadair@optonline.net)
and Laura T. Jones (stoneybell@sbcglobal.net)
Easton PTA HKMS Co-Presidents

MIKEY'S WAY BLUEFISH GAME



On page 5 is a flyer from Mikey's Way, a Barlow based group founded in memory of a JBHS grad who many of you may remember died of cancer a few years ago. Michael Friedman suffered from brain cancer, but before he died, he organized this group to raise money to provide toys/entertainment for hospitalized kids. He, as one of them, knew that there were too many long, scary, boring hours spent as a seriously ill patient/kid. His parents - and a group of students at Barlow - are continuing Mike's wonderful mission.

Please join us for a night with a great cause at Harbor Yard for a Bridgeport Bluefish Game to support Mikey's Way... and after this winter, I think we'll all be looking for a wonderful excuse to take the family "Out To The Ball Game!"

BULLYING TOPIC ADDRESSED

This past Wednesday the PTA sponsored an evening at SSES with Dr. Joel Haber, psychologist and "bully coach," addressing parents in an educational conversation and inspiring seminar on understanding the causes of the bullying dynamic and offering skills and tools that we, as parents, can use to intervene and help remedy the epidemic of bullying. We learned to define what bullying is (where do you cross the line from "normal" juvenile conflict to bullying and the different types of bullying), who the targets are, what motivates bullies to behave the way they do and, most importantly, how to handle it (as a target, a bystander or a parent.) Dr. Haber's book, "Bullyproof Your Child for Life" is one of many resources to help parents learn how to deal with bullying (from both sides - as the parent of a bully and a parent of a target.)

As concerned parents, we urge you to continue this conversation with your children. We encourage you to check out the school's counseling site and newsletter at:
<http://www.hkmscounseling.com>

8th GRADE PARENTS: KELLER to BARLOW Transition Program

The Transition Team from Joel Barlow led by Guidance Counselor Henry DeAngelo and including Barlow PTSA President Jen Wastrom will be visiting our PTA meeting on **May 13 at 9:15 @ SSES (note location)** to offer tips and advice particularly for 8th grade parents with incoming Freshmen. They will also bring a helpful list of Frequently Asked Questions. Please use this as an opportunity to ask questions and get advice on managing your 8th grader's critical transition from middle school to high school.

HKMS Talent Show & Spaghetti Dinner

Most recognized as the "8th Grade Spaghetti Dinner", Friday, May 6th also brings the opportunity for students to entertain! The 8th Grade Government is looking to recruit students to perform at this year's dinner. All talents welcome. Encourage your child to contact a member of 8th Grade Gov't to be part of the fun! (See flyer on pg. 6).

HELP WANTED

The first week of May is going to be busy at HKMS. Please consider helping out...



BOOK FAIR:

Set up: Friday, April 29

Regular Hours: Monday, May 2 - Friday, May 6,
7:45 am-3:30 pm.

Spaghetti Dinner Hours: Friday, May 6, 6:00 pm -9:00 pm.

Contact Britt Bast to volunteer an hour or two of your time:
brittbast@gmail.com

TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK:

Monday, May 2 - Friday, May 6.

Different activities are planned for the week, including a breakfast and a lunch for the teachers and staff.

Look for more details to come in the next few weeks.

Contact Dina Massey to volunteer:

dmmassey@optonline.net

ED/COMM Budget Update and News to Know

Easton Schools Budget was presented again at the Board of Finance meeting....

On Tuesday, the Board of Finance decided to move forward with a budget increase of 1.91% for the school year 2011-12....this budget will include the following restorations:

- Restoration of a full-time music teacher (at present 55% of students do not have music)
- Restoration of a full year of foreign language instruction for 6th grade (vs. the current program of one third of a year of instruction)
- Full-time P.E. teacher (Health now taught in P.E. as Wellness, and a number of instructional days were cut in half)
- Extra curricular program fully funded (PTA had partially funded again this year)

Stay informed about the school budgets.....look for upcoming coffee dates to ask questions about what this budget includes. The PTA will be sending out listservs about important dates and information on the referendum.

Come to the final Town Meeting on Monday April 25 at SSES.....last meeting before the referendum where the Board of Finance will present the final budget to the town.

Tuesday May 3 is the Town Referendum!

In order to pass this budget, with the restorations included, we need everyone to come out and cast your vote!

Information on absentee ballots will be out on listserv over the next few weeks. Once the town budget is finalized, ballots can be prepared and the Town Clerk's office will likely open for additional hours to complete an absentee ballot should you need to do so.



BE INVOLVED

**Friday, April 8th, 9:15 am @ Easton Library
PTA Meeting**

Guest Speaker: Board of Ed Chairman,
Dan Underberger (TBC)

**Friday, May 13th, 9:15 am @ SSES
PTA Meeting** (note location change for the May meeting)

Guest Speaker: Barlow Transition Team

Book Fair Monday, May 2 - Friday, May 6,
7:45 am-3:30 pm.

Volunteer at the HKMS Book Fair (Dates)

Mon, May 2 – Fri, May 6:

Sign up to help with Teacher Appreciation Efforts



Career Discovery Workshop
@ Easton Public Library

Thursday, April 28th @ 4:00pm

Come and learn about different careers! Guest speakers will be on hand to talk about their jobs and answer questions.

Registration is required.

Contact Lynn at 261-0134 for more information or to sign up.

**JOEL BARLOW HIGH SCHOOL
and
THE BRIDGEPORT BLUEFISH
TAKE A SWING AT
CHILDHOOD CANCER**



Mikey's Way Foundation
www.mikeysway.org



DATE: JUNE 11, 2011
TIME: 7:05pm
LOCATION: BALLPARK at HARBOR YARD
500 MAIN ST., BRIDGEPORT, CT
COST: \$15.00 per ticket

PURCHASE TICKETS AT:
MIKEYSWAY.CHARITYHAPPENINGS.ORG

Artwork By:
Alex Cheu

**Help JBHS raise money for Mikey's Way Foundation
and let's help kids cope...Mikey's Way**

Helen Keller Middle School

38th Annual Spaghetti Dinner

What: A delicious spaghetti dinner with salad and desert, along with an enjoyable talent show

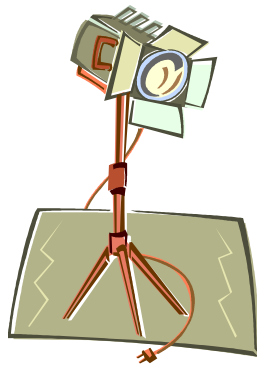
Where: The Helen Keller Middle School Cafeteria

When: Friday, May 6th from 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Cost: \$7.00



Come for a night of entertainment and an appetizing meal!



Hosted by Helen Keller Middle School's 8th Grade Government



HKMS BIRTHDAY BOOK CLUB

This is a **great** way to support the **HKMS Media Center!**

Your \$25 donation will buy quality books that are hand selected for a great variety of student's interests and with academics in mind!

Honor your student's birthday by donating to the **HKMS Birthday Book Club**. Each book will be marked by a special bookplate inscribed with a dedication to your child in celebration of his/her birthday.

Students will be recognized in their birthday month by receiving \$1 voucher to be used toward the snack of their choice in the HKMS cafeteria. (* Summer birthdays will be recognized in the Fall.)

Join at any time of the school yearor now so you don't forget!!!!

Questions? Please call or e-mail Kim Lenoci (mrskiml@yahoo.com) or Mary O'Connor (toconnor02@snet.net or 524-0108)

Please make checks payable to Easton PTA-HKMS Birthday Book Club and send your check in to HKMS, Attention: HKMS Birthday Book Club

***** tear off

HKMS BIRTHDAY BOOK CLUB

YES! Please include my child/children in the HKMS Birthday Book Club! Each book contributed is \$25. Please include your child's birthday year in the date.

Childs Name _____ Birthdate _____

Homeroom teacher _____ Grade _____

Childs Name _____ Birthdate _____

Homeroom teacher _____ Grade _____

Total Amount Enclosed \$ _____



April 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 School Play - Twisted Tales 7 pm at Joel Barlow HS <i>April Fools!</i>	2 School Play - Twisted Tales 7 pm at Joel Barlow HS
3	4	5	6	7 Staff Day - 12:10 pm dismissal	8 PTA Meeting 9:15 am at Easton Public Library 8th Grade Transition Dance	9
10	11	12 Easton BOE Meeting 7:30 pm	13 Peer Leaders' Community Supper at Golden Hill Methodist Church 4-6:30 pm	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
SPRING RECESS						
24 HAPPY EASTER	25	26	27	28	29	30

