

Cougar Connection

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

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



Interim Principal's Pen

Dear Parent/Guardians,

As George Harrison of the Beatles once wrote, "It has been a long, cold, lonely winter" and that description surely applies to Easton, but spring is a mere month away now, so we can hope that we are through the worst of this "extreme winter". To help chase away the winter blues for those of us who did not go away for the February vacation week, Student Council organized a Tropical Day theme, and snow cones were served in the cafeteria on Friday, February 25; thank you, Mrs. Rose, for suggesting the snow cone idea and, a special thank you goes out to the ECC who loaned us the snow cone machine.

Meanwhile, students and staff have been involved in other special events here at HKMS. First, Sue Kaplan and the staff worked collaboratively for the past six weeks on completing the National Blue Ribbon application for Helen Keller

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CALENDAR @ A GLANCE

- 3/3 Choral Concert 7 pm - Samuel Staples Elementary School
- 3/4 Instrumental Concert 7 pm - Samuel Staples Elementary School
- 3/8 CMT Testing
- 3/11 PTA Meeting 9:15 am - Easton Public Library
- 3/17 CMT Testing
- 3/18 CMT Testing
- 3/18 Guy's Night Out - 6:30-9:00 pm
All 6th and 7th Grade Boys Invited
- 3/21 CMT Testing
- 3/22 CMT Testing
- 3/25 Girl's Night Out - 6:30-9:00 pm
All 6th and 7th Grade Girls Invited



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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

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Middle School; our school was one of only four schools in the state to receive the Blue Ribbon nomination. As Mrs. Kaplan wrote to staff this month, "Our Blue Ribbon application has been completed and submitted to US Department of Education. The Parker Family is also very grateful and hopeful that our school will receive this recognition next year. It will be the ultimate honor for them as you know how much this recognition meant to Joan Parker. " We will be notified in the summer if our school will be recognized at a special ceremony in Washington, D.C. in the fall.

Also, congratulations go out to Gianna Forte, Grade 7, whose Reflections Dance entry came in First Place at the local level for her grade division. We should know soon if Gianna's entry will be sent on to the National Level.

At the suggestion of Jack Pantalena, 8th grade students and several staff members organized and participated in a basketball game on Thursday, February 24. The event was so successful that future games are being planned.

Teachers: Kristen Colasanto, David Breyer, Brian Walsh, Steve Marcello, Ashleigh Moore, and Jimmy Tierney (from SSES)

Students: JM D'Augelli, Greg Fracassini, Joe Ganim, Jack Pantalena, Ben Stein, JR Richetelli

Scorekeeper: CJ Kowalski

The final score: Teachers: 75 and Students: 49

Here is hoping that the month of March is kinder and gentler than the previous three months have been for all of us!



Best regards,

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



News from the PTA Presidents

Dear Parents,

A BIG THANK YOU:

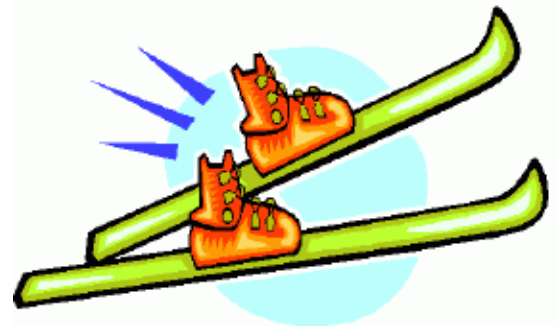
The Ski Club was such a huge success, and we have to thank all our great volunteer chaperones and helpers, without whom it couldn't have been possible:

Special thanks to Alison King for being so great at keeping track of all the details and getting those reports ready for the trip.

Also:

Tom Auray, Hilde Azarian; Dave Bartlett, Kristin Bartlett, Jackie Bebon. Caroline Biederman, David Biederman, Tim Brady, Katie Callahan, Tom Carter, Dorece Crisculolo, Pam Cruz, Carlos Cruz, Julie Dawid, Ginna Donnelly, Phil Falcone, Robert Fey, Tricia Fey, Jodi Forte, Skip Garaffolo, Will Goetz, Sam Hooker, Nell Hooker, Mitchell Kaufman, Gerry King, Lynn Kocis, Shelagh Kuhsel, Art Laske, Nick Lemma, Paul Lenihan, Denise Lynch, Kyle MacGillivray, Suzanne McCauley, Steve Miller, Meighan Morrison, Paul Pronovost, Nancy Rosenthal, Doug Tomczak, Jim Triano, Jeff Ulmer, Lori Underberger, Karen Valenti, Russell Wilkerson, Peter Howard.

Thanks to the HKMS Office Staff for helping us organize the paperwork and keep track of the students each Friday.



HELP OUR KIDS STAY HEALTHY FOR CMTs!

The HKMS Administrative Staff and Teachers have asked for our help in keeping the students alert and in their best form for taking CMT's this month. We are going to provide healthy snacks for the students as they take these tests March 17, 18, 21, 22. We would greatly appreciate any donations parents can make in this effort. If possible, please provide whatever you can:

March 17: pretzels and oranges
 March 18: granola bars
 March 21: goldfish crackers
 March 22: Graham crackers

Please contact Laura Jones, stoneybell@sbcglobal.net, if you can provide anything, any amount, any of the days as listed above. You can drop off the snacks by 8:00 to the HKMS office each day.

THANKS!!!



HKMS School play, "Twisted Tales"

The Keller play is entering its final few weeks of rehearsals. We look forward to having a wonderful production put on by the hardworking directors/writers, Robin Pantalena and Lea Mikos. Look for your chance to buy tickets for the April 1 and April 2 performances in upcoming notices and emails!

IF YOUR 7TH OR 8TH GRADE CHILD IS INTERESTED IN ASSISTING IN ANY PART OF THE PRODUCTION (Programs, Sets, Backstage, food/flower Sales) please contact Laura T. Jones, stoneybell@sbcglobal.net, to help you get in contact with the coordinator of that activity.

Very sincerely,

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

BE INVOLVED

- **Tuesday March 8, 7 p.m.** - BoE meeting, Easton Senior Center
- **Same night, at 8 p.m.**, Board of Ed presents the current budget recommendations to the Board of Finance, also at the Senior Center
- **Friday, March 11, 9:15 a.m.** - PTA meeting, Easton Library
- **Monday, March 21st, 7 p.m.** - Public Hearing on the budget (likely to be at SSES)
- **Monday, April 25, 7 p.m.** - Town Meeting (likely SSES)
- **Tuesday, May 3** - Referendum -- Polls open at SSES from **6 a.m. to 8 p.m.**, SSES

Message from the Media Center... We love to read!!!:



Our students participated in the Connecticut Nutmeg Voting again this year and we selected "The Lemonade War" for the Intermediate Winner and it won. While we did not select the Teen Award, the book that won was "Unwind". One out of two is a great percentage. Our students certainly know how to pick a winner! We now have a full complement of the 2012 Nutmegs available in the Media Center. The books look terrific and I encourage students to come and check them out. It's never too early to get a headstart on next year's books. Happy Reading to one and all!

Our students are very excited about writing book reviews for our collection. Please encourage them to continue recommending books and ask them to show you their reviews on line. They can be accessed through the link: http://www.helenkellerps.org/Learning_Resources_and_Technology/Learning_Resources.htm; and clicking on "Search for Books". This is an excellent way to promote reading and access our collection from home, too.

Carol Weinschel,
 Director of Learning Resources & Technology,
cweinschel@eastonps.org.

Easton Boy Scout Troop 66 Hosting Fifth Annual Gourmet Breakfast

Easton Boy Scout Troop 66 will be hosting their 5th Annual Gourmet Breakfast on Saturday, March 19, 2011 from 7:30 am to 12:00 noon. The event will be held at the Easton Community Center located at 364 Sport Hill Road, Easton, CT. This event is the single largest fundraiser by the Easton Boy Scouts, which helps support their educational and skills development as future leaders within the community.



The gourmet breakfast features local culinary chefs, some trained at the renowned Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. The chefs will be cooking made-to-order omelets, Belgian waffles, crepes and Danish Ebleskivers. You'll have to attend to find out what those are, but "delicious" immediately comes to mind! Traditional pancakes, bacon, sausage and beverages will be available as well. The Boy Scouts will be greeters, servers and bus boys.

Last years' fourth annual event was very successful and a delight to all. Due to popular demand we've started earlier for those early birds! It's sure to be a great way to enjoy a delicious breakfast with your family, friends and neighbors.

Tickets may be purchased in advance for \$10.00/Adults or at the door \$12.00/Adults, \$8.00/Seniors (65 and over) and \$8.00/Children (10 and under). Advance tickets are available directly through the scouts. Donations are welcome as well.

**For more information
contact us at
452-9190.**



8th Grade Government Sponsored Events

Save the Dates

Friday, March 18th: Guy's Night Out
Friday, March 25th : Girl's Night Out
Friday, May 6th: Spaghetti Dinner

Eighth graders will be hosting Guys' and Girls' Night Out for 6th and 7th graders. Sixth and seventh graders can come enjoy a night of **fun featuring activities including;**

Ping Pong, Dancing, Game Rooms, food for students to enjoy and so much more.

The events cost \$10 and will run from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on the dates specified above. Permission forms are required and can be located on Eighth Grade Government Extra-curricular website if needed. Please see weekly newsletters sent home by sixth and seventh grade teams for more details.



Joel Barlow High School Cheerleading Tryouts

Tryouts for the 2011/2012 JBHS cheer team will take place on Monday, March 14 and Tuesday, March 15 from 6 – 8:30 pm. Actual tryouts are Friday, March 18 from 2:30 till 6:30 pm in the JBHS upper gym. Please sign up for tryouts in the HKMS office by Monday March 7th.

Information will be forwarded to everyone who signs up prior to tryouts.

EdCom News about the School Budgets

Changes are already underway, particularly at Keller!

Budget decisions have lasting affects on the education of all our children.....here are some things to know:

- Initial budget proposals at the January Board of Ed meeting came in at 3.84% (increase over what is in the budget for this school year), with much of that increase due to rising non-discretionary costs. In that budget was a request to reinstate a choral instructor at Keller based upon a review of the impact of teacher reductions at Keller.
- At the January meeting, the Board of Ed requested a series of tiered cuts from the administration based on anticipated requests from Easton's Board of Finance.
- School administrators worked on some re-structuring of the curriculum, in particular at the 6th grade level, and at the February Board of Ed meeting they presented these tiered cuts to the BoE.
- Also at the BoE meeting in February, updated information on transportation costs, health insurance and early teacher retirement announcements brought the revised budget down to about 3%.
- Now with the re-structuring of the curriculum, the budget sits at 2.31% over the current one....***and this includes the addition of the choral teacher, a PE teacher and a full year foreign language program for the incoming 6th grade class***
- But....this budget may still not pass if there is not enough support for these changes. It is important that parents stay informed....**watch for EdCom updates via the PTA listserv and coffee dates with Board of Ed Chair Dr. Dan Underberger, where parents can come to discuss the budget.**



Board of Ed Meetings are a happening event in Easton! Please come to a BoE meeting to find out what all the discussion is about....

if you can't make one of the BoE meetings (**see *BE INVOLVED on page 3***), watch for an upcoming coffee/question and answer date with Dr. Dan Underberger. Or...you can come to a PTA meeting! EdCom will be updating on an ongoing basis. Next meeting on Friday, March 11, 9:15 Easton Library.

**COME PLAY LACROSSE
THIS SPRING WITH
RELAX**

BOYS & GIRLS IN GRADES K-8

NEW K-2 BOYS & K-2 GIRLS PROGRAM

Easy Schedule! Fun Play!



Register ***NOW!*** *Deadline is March 4th*

WWW.RE-LAX.ORG

Call the Redding Boys & Girls Club
203-938-3166



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 \$ _____



March 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3 Choral Concert 7 pm at Samuel Staples Elemen- tary School	4 Instrumental Concert 7 pm at Samuel Staples Elementary School	5
6	7	8 CMT Testing	9	10	11 PTA Meeting at Easton Public Library Community Room 9:15 am	12
13	14	15	16	17 CMT Testing Happy St. Patrick's Day!	18 CMT Testing Guy's Night Out - 6:30-9:00 pm All 6th and 7th Grade Boys Invited	19
20	21 CMT Testing	22 CMT Testing	23	24	25 Girl's Night Out - 6:30-9:00 pm All 6th and 7th Grade Girls Invited	26
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