

Your Parent Teacher Organization

Mansfield Middle School, 205 Spring Hill Road, Storrs, CT 06268



MMSA NEWS



Volume XII, Issue V

March 2007

From the Principal

Dear Parents,

One of our greatest sources of pride at MMS is the variety of activities and experiences that our students are able to explore during their four years here. As we tell fourth grade students and parents during orientation activities, middle school is a time to try out a range of interests.

By this point in the year, most students have found the connection(s) at school that keep them engaged and motivated. If you're not sure that your child is feeling connected at school, here are some questions that you might ask.

- What are your favorite things to do during X-Block?
- If you have a problem at school, who is the person you're most comfortable talking to about it?
- What are your favorite classes?
- Which after-school activities do you want to join next marking period? (Or which ones have you liked best so far?)
- What is the best part of your day at school? (Don't be concerned if "lunch" is the answer, particularly if it sounds like a positive social time for your child.)
- Which teacher would you like to get to know better?

There are many opportunities to explore – and they come in several varieties. A student may try an X-Block offering as a one-time daily choice or on an on-going basis. Students may choose among many offerings each day, including world languages, art, industrial technology, computers, physical education, library, and the interest center. There are many after-school activities, as well. Most meet once a week for seven weeks. There are several music ensembles, for which students make a year-long commitment. There are seasonal athletic teams for seventh and eighth graders. There are also some annual events like plays, competitions, and National History Day.

Our hope is to provide offerings that will engage each of our students. We have added activities in the past based on student requests. We know that students who feel that they have a special connection to their school are more likely to be successful here. Sometimes a child needs some encouragement to move beyond the comfort zone and try an unfamiliar activity or meet a new adult. Please help your child to make that first step. Sharing a story from your own life about feeling vulnerable or facing a new situation can often be helpful. Offer a strategy or two. If you would like to work together with us to encourage your child, please let us know how we can help.

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Upcoming Events:



- Magazine Drive begins: March 8th
- Board of Education Meeting: March 8th
- No school: March 23rd, Common Curriculum Day
- History Day: March 24th, 7am—5pm
- MMSA Meeting: April 3rd, 7-9PM, Rm. 99
- No School: Good Friday, April 6th
- Board of Education Meeting: April 12th

Safety First in Physical Education

From time to time some parents have asked about protective gear available for Physical Education classes. We begin each unit by including safety rules specific to each activity, and we frequently reinforce the safety rules throughout the duration of the activity. We also have "safety" equipment available like shin guards, goalie pads, and helmets for activities such as field hockey, soccer, and floor hockey. We encourage students to provide their own safety equipment in cases where there are individual concerns. Be assured that one of the MMS Physical Education Team's primary goals is to make our classes a safe place to play and learn!



MMS Magazine Drive

The annual MMS Magazine Drive will be taking place from Thursday March 8th to Tuesday, March 20th, 2007. Magazines, music and other items will be offered for sale at great prices! If you have magazines coming up for renewal here's your chance to do so and support the school at the same time. All proceeds from the Magazine Drive benefit Computer and Technology programs at MMS.



Visit our website at: www.mmsnet.org
Link: *Mansfield Middle School Association*

From the Principal (continued)

If you get the sense that your child is still looking for a connection at school, please get in touch with the homeroom teacher, the guidance counselor, or Mr. Trembly (429-9341 x112; tremblywn@mansfieldct.org), Mrs. Morell (x162; morellcv@mansfieldct.org) or me (x161; cryanjl@mansfieldct.org). We know that feeling connected at school is critical to each student's success here.

Sincerely,
Jeffrey L. Cryan
Principal

The "Home Plate" hits a "Home Run"

At the February MMSA meeting Janice Mills, the cafeteria director at MMS, spoke to parents about the positive changes in the school lunch program. These changes were brought about by new state nutritional guidelines enacted in the fall. Gone are the ice cream bars and the big cookies. In their place are baked chips, low fat cookies and granola bars. Meal options now include white pizza, veggie wraps and chicken roll ups. The response from parents has been very positive and the kids seem to like the new choices as well. Next time you're at the school stop by and look at the banner designed by Janice which relates healthy eating and healthy habits to a baseball team.



Organic Land Care Workshops

The Town of Mansfield will be offering a series of workshops focused on nontoxic methods of landscaping in an effort to reduce pesticide and synthetic fertilizer use. Each year American homeowners use approximately 70 million pounds of pesticides to maintain their lawns, mostly for aesthetic purposes. As the use of these chemicals increase, researchers continue to uncover the links between pesticide exposure and serious human health problems. For more information, check out the Mansfield Web site at: <http://www.mansfieldct.org/town/current/events/index.php>

The MMSA Presents Robert Rivest



Mark your calendars for Tuesday, March 20th when the MMSA is proud to sponsor a performance by renowned mime artist Robert Rivest. A former student of Marcel Marceau, Robert has trained internationally with renowned masters of mime, dance, theater and improvisation. Robert's performance will touch on two popular themes at MMS this year – healthy eating and healthy attitudes. This is a show for the entire family. It starts at 7pm in the auditorium. Look for a flyer with more information to be coming home the week of March 12th.

Mrs. Dickinson Requests MMSA Help for State Event At MMS

On Saturday, May 19th, Mansfield Middle School is hosting the CT Junior Solar Spring (JSS) Races. Students in grades 5-8 from across the state design, build and race their solar powered cars. Students are being judged on technical design, innovation and speed. It is quite the sight to see.

In case of inclement weather, we'll race with battery-powered packs in the gymnasium. JSS is a program designed by the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association and endorsed by the CT State Department of Education (SDE). Mr. Greg Kane, SDE Consultant for Technology Education & Engineering Sciences, is running the event that day. (Last year MMS placed 2nd and 3rd in Innovation and Design.)

Here is the schedule for the day:

- Judging & Car Inspection begins at 9 a.m.
- Racing begins at 10 a.m.
- Awards will be given at 2:30pm

We are looking for adult volunteers (Full day 8:30—2:30 or half day 8:30—11:30 or 11:30—2:30) for the following areas:

- Be a hallway monitor (Give directions to food and bathrooms)
- Sell coffee and muffins in the morning
- Sell pizza and snacks in the afternoon.
- Assist at the first aid station.
- Be a line judge.
- Work at the car repair station with hot glue guns.
- Help with the general crowd.

Call/email Mrs. Dickinson if you have any additional questions. Phone: 429-9341 ext 108, or email: dickinsonna@mansfieldct.org.



March 11th

From the MMSA President

Dear Parents,



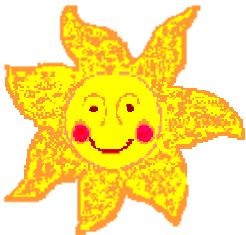
As we glide into March and look ahead to June, the MMSA can still use your help with a few upcoming events. For instance, plans for History Day are underway but it's never too late to volunteer. If you'd like to help out for a couple of hours on March 24th please contact Laura Smith at 429-8735.

And though it sometimes seems like winter will never end, spring will come, and with it the MMSA Plant Sale in May. If that's something you're interested in, you can call Sondra Boyer at 487-5812.

And finally here's a plea to all 7th grade parents - we still need someone to coordinate the refreshments and decorations for the Eighth Grade Closing Ceremony. It's been a tradition at MMS that 7th grade parents take charge of this event. It only requires some minimal planning and a few hours of your time the night of the Ceremony. You'll appreciate it next year when your child is an 8th grader and other parents before you are working to make it a memorable evening. If you'd like to accept this task or would like more information please give me a call at 423-1127.

Don't forget to check out the great deals offered during the MMS Magazine Drive. All proceeds from this fundraiser go directly to technology programs at the school. Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,
Mary Sikand,
MMSA President



News from the Mansfield Board of Education

Here are some highlights from the February 1, 2007 Board of Education Meeting:

- The building committee has been meeting with various architects and has narrowed it down to four finalists.
- The Board is looking at biodiesel fuel alternatives for MMS instead of standard fossil fuels once the current electrical heating system is replaced.
- Food Service Director Beth Gankofskie reported on the changes in the school lunch program as a result of the new state guidelines enacted in the fall.

The next meeting(s) of the Board of Education are Thursday, March 8th and Thursday, April 12th. All parents are welcome and encouraged to attend.

K12NOW - Receive School Notifications Immediately Mansfield Middle School

Mansfield Middle School has signed up to use a new service called *K12now*. This service will allow us to communicate with you via **email** as well as cell phone or pager **text messaging**. We will use this service to inform you of emergency closings and announcements about school events.

This service is free of charge and signing up is fast and secure. You can enter up to four email addresses and two cellular phones or pager text messaging phone numbers. *K12now* allows you to choose which addresses receive emergency or priority notifications and which addresses receive general notifications. Your personal information is never shared or sold, and there is no advertising attached to the service.

K12now will complement our present procedures. We encourage you to sign up for this service. We think that it will help us to communicate with you more effectively.

To sign up free of charge, go to <http://myk12now.com> and enter the school code from the box on the right.

Parent Registration:
<http://my.k12now.com>

When prompted, you will need to enter the code below.

Now Code:
GST-WPJ-K

Box Tops for Education

Now is the time to send in all those box tops you have been clipping. The MMSA will be sending in another batch soon and will receive \$.10 for each box top. This is an easy and painless way to earn money for MMS! Please place box tops in the marked container outside the main office.

Also, we are looking for someone to take over as Box Tops Chair for the school. Anyone interested should contact Sondra Boyer at 487-5812. Thanks!



MMSA 2006-2007 Board

Members and Committee Chairs

For a complete listing of the 2006-2007 MMSA Board Members and Committee Chairs, please go to:
<http://www.mansfieldct.org/schools/mms/parent/positions.htm>