

COMPOST

The Parent Community Organization newsletter of Imagine Environmental Charter School **APRIL 2009** Vol. 1, Issue 4



Food for thought

BY KATE LUCE ANGELL

John Lash has a vision, and he's working hard in the ECS cafeteria to make it a reality.

"The two things that are important to me in my job," said the ECS Food Service Director, "are feeding children well and using local ingredients."

Take, for example, the peanut butter and honey sandwiches offered for every lunch. The peanut butter is from the East End Food Co-op, the honey is from local Maple Valley Farms, and the bread, which John picks up every day at 6 a.m., is from the Breadworks bakery on Brighton Road.

The Ben Avon resident said the experiences of his son Sam, 6, have guided him toward a greater concern about the relationship between children and the food they eat.

See John Lash, page 2

A letter from Jon

As the third quarter of our year draws to a close the faculty and staff of ECS continue to work hard to achieve the academic goals established for each student. While teaching and learning remains the center of each day we are also engaged in careful preparations for the 2009/10 school year. These preparations include, but are not limited to, the following important initiatives.

The development of our school's long term strategic plan.

The planning committee consists of parents, board members, educational partners, community members, teachers, and administrators. When complete, this extensive data driven strategic plan will contain goals and strategies designed to improve performance in all aspects of our school. Parents have already been asked to complete a variety of questionnaires from which valuable data has already been drawn.

See Letter, page 4

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John Lash brings his vision to the table

John Lash, from page 1

"I see the messages directed at kids about food from the media, from places like McDonald's, and I really think that this is a crucial time for them," he said. "Now is the time for developing healthy food habits."

"That's why I took this job," he went on. "I wanted to work with kids and show them that healthy food is delicious."

A former cook for the Oakmont Country Club, John said he made the switch to the culinary arts from "office jobs and cubicles" late in life, adding, "I wanted to do more." He happened to see the advertisement for the ECS food services position on Monster.com and was happy to find that Principal McCann and ECS parents are supportive of his passion for high-quality, good-tasting and locally grown food for children.

But despite all the support John said he's received, he's still had to go head-to-head with the food service company Metz and Associates, which holds the ECS contract, in order to work toward his vision.

His first challenge was the food service vegetables. "They would give us frozen vegetables that were steamed until they're mushy. I thought I could improve on that," he said. His solution was to experiment with blanching fresh beans, then putting them into the steamer that holds the hot food at the proper temperature so that they could finish cooking.

"Now the food service company does this," he said. "I didn't want kids to taste mushy green beans and think this was what vegetables are."

Another challenge was working with the company to offer a daily vegetarian entree option. "That was hard. They just had no way to understand the kind of food I was asking for," said John.

But the effort has paid off. John pointed to the tofu and veggie hoagie with teriyaki sauce as one of his successes. "I had to teach them how to cook tofu, how to season it, how to serve it." Other vegetarian options include pasta primavera, grilled cheese, and mac and cheese, which John ensures is made from scratch, with real cheddar cheese.



"I want the kids to have the real thing," he said.

Other innovations have been the Mediterra Bakehouse bagels he picks up from the East End Food Co-op and serves for breakfast, and the fresh fruit options served at lunch — as well as the daily fruit snack in many rooms, which ECS provides at no charge.

John said the number of ECS students taking advantage of the breakfast and lunch options he serves are growing slowly, although "buyers" make up only about half the students who eat lunch.

He's hoping to increase that number as parents realize the quality the school has started to provide, and they get excited about future innovations. The school lunch menu is posted on the school website at www.environmentalcharter-school.org.

"The word still isn't out," he said. "The plan is to serve lunch to 90% of students, which the food service company says is their average."

And as he noted, even more changes are coming. John, along with Nathan Guru, who also works in Food Services, currently makes 35 grilled cheese sandwiches a day on a small flat-top grill in the back room, since ECS has no actual kitchen—just a prep space where the trucked-in lunches are kept warm.

"But we're going to get kitchen equipment," John said. "The plan for 2010 is that they build a full-service kitchen for us."

After that, he noted, nothing will stand in the way of them making their own pasta and marinara sauce, their own soup stocks, their own dough for pizza crusts and bread—they can even bread their own chicken tenders.

"And we're aiming for local ingredients whenever possible," he added, saying he was in talks with the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture to this end. P.A.S.A. acts as a liaison between local farmers and bulk markets like the ECS kitchen. "They can hook us up," he added.

John concedes his vision may increase lunch prices, but maintains that it won't be by much. "Every time you're using whole ingredients, and cooking from scratch, it's cheaper than buying pre-packaged, prepared food," he said.

One of the most exciting things for him, John said, was the idea that he might be changing young people's ideas about food and nutrition.

"Hopefully we're exposing kids to something entirely new and different," he said. "I think I have the greatest job in the world."

That's debatable: **uniforms**

In the interests of making our newspaper a forum for a diversity of opinions, those of us here at ComPOST would like to introduce our "That's debatable" column as a new regular feature. Each issue, we'll solicit several opinions about a given issue and print them, right as they came from the source. We're hoping this will give parents and students a chance to express their positions about a topic and, hopefully, get a larger debate going about possible directions for our school. The opinions expressed in this column won't necessarily lead to the changes their debaters desire, but they should serve to open up more discussion—which is just what responsible newspapers should foster.

Do you agree with the school's **dress code** policy?

yes



Many pragmatic arguments can be made in support of school uniforms. Instead of rehearsing those, I want to approach this topic based on my experience in one of Pittsburgh's non-uniform public elementary school last year and as the parent of a daughter. School uniforms undercut the entire fashion hype that we found pervasive in our previous public school where our daughter was teased for wearing "boys clothing" and ostracized by many girls for not being into princess, beauty parlor, and other girl's games. Aside from the teasing, we were also concerned about what this says about how a consumerist culture manipulates children's perceptions of gender at an early age. Hence, for us the most persuasive argument in favor of the uniform dress code at ECS is that school uniforms undercut these pernicious sexist and materialist pressures. We particularly appreciate our school's NO LOGO policy. It helps us in our attempts to raise our children to understand that—contrary to what our media-saturated consumer society says — appearance and material possessions are not the essence of a person. Clothes should not make the student. The uniform policy takes the focus off the brands and hopefully puts it back on the individual.

- **Sabine von Dirke**

no



Why don't I like dress codes? First, our family has been blessed with hand-me-downs from friends with better fashion sense and budgets. It satisfied my environmental sensibility to use the clothes and pass them to other friends, and I loved seeing my children looking stylish and colorful. Now, during our morning search for the drab navy and beige, bags of perfect clothing sit unworn, waiting to become outgrown. Oh, sure, our kids could always change after they get home, if we enjoyed doing twice the laundry. Second, I chafe against the loss of liberty and individuality. (I didn't even want my bridesmaids to match!) This is why I'm not assuaged by opportunities to wear some other mandated color. Why do others like a dress code? I have heard that a dress code prevents indecent exposure, but I have not seen that problem with young kids, and furthermore, a drive by Oakland Catholic provides a display of uniform skirts hiked up to unseemly heights. I have heard it reduces social influence, but for a time, Jane-Mei wouldn't wear her jumpers because someone she didn't like wore one! I have heard that it is a socioeconomic equalizer, but I wonder if that is because it forces all families to spend hundreds of dollars on new clothes.

- **Stephanie Land**

Want to get into the fray?

Post your thoughts on the PCO message boards at www.ecspco.proboards59.com. Click on Newsletter to continue a healthy discussion of the dress code. If you have ideas for other topics to debate within our community, please e-mail newsletter@ecspco.org.

Our next topic for discussion is:

Do you agree with the school's **homework** policy?

If you have an opinion, please e-mail your response to newsletter@ecspco.org for possible publication in the next issue of comPOST.

Letter from Jon

Letter, from page 1

Further parent input sessions were conducted at the March 24 PCO meeting. Our school's strategic plan will be submitted to the state by August 1, 2009.

The further development of our environmental curriculum. Two environmental education grants have been submitted in the last month. A request for \$75,000 was submitted to the Heinz Foundation for an additional environmental instructor, further curriculum development, outdoor classroom construction, monitoring equipment, and staff professional development. A second grant for \$22,000 was submitted to the DEP to support the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania's (ASWP) School ground Habitat Enhancement and Restoration Project (SHERP), a long-term environmental education initiative. Classroom teachers and students will enhance/restore our school grounds to natural areas rich in species diversity that contain the essential habitat components of food, water, shelter and space.

The improvement of parent / school communications through the use of technology. A dedicated school data base and web hosted grade book system will be purchased before the close of the 2008/9 school year. This will automate teacher grade books and provide a parent a portal for instant access. The school will subscribe to a telephone alert system for school closures. A newly designed website will provide teachers the opportunity to post daily homework assignments. The school is committing to increasing the number of computers in each classroom prior to the creation of a mobile computer lab.

Please feel free to stop me in the hallway and share your thoughts about next year. We are determined to move into the 2009/10 school year ready to service our students and families in a variety of new and improved ways.

10 steps to green eating

1. Pay attention to what you eat because your food choices have a direct impact our planet.

According to Pew Center on Global Climate Change, as much of one-third of the man-made greenhouse gas emissions are a result of the food production and agriculture.



2. Shop for and buy food carefully to eliminate waste.

As much as one half of the food produced in the United States is wasted every year, including almost 15 percent of what you purchase and bring into your home. When possible, shop more frequently and eat perishables immediately. Freeze leftovers or pack them in your lunch the next day.

3. Start a compost pile. Food waste makes up the largest single component of household waste. Not only are you making a great soil additive for your garden, you are doing your part to reduce the release of methane into the atmosphere. Composting food scraps actually reduces the level of this greenhouse gas because the process is aerobic, in contrast to the anaerobic methane producing breakdown that is found in large scale landfills.



4. Make plant products a larger part of your diet.

Each pound of beef raised in the United States requires 8 to 10 pounds of feed grain, so eating lower on the food chain can really reduce your impact. Livestock farms also stress the environment by releasing large amounts of methane and forcing intensive farming of animal feed sources. Studies also suggest that a cow raised on a conventional farm consumes the equivalent of a barrel of oil in petroleum-based fertilizers and pesticides.

5. Know the dirty dozen. The non-profit Environmental Working Group calculates that by avoiding conventional varieties of peaches, apples, sweet bell peppers, celery, nectarines, strawberries, cherries, pears, imported grapes, spinach, lettuce and potatoes you can cut up to 90% of your pesticide exposure. Producing food without the use of fertilizers and

pesticides is not only healthier for the Earth, but it benefits farm workers and local communities. As an added bonus, organics have also been shown to have higher levels of antioxidants and nutrients. Read more about the dirty dozen at www.ewg.org/node/18866.

6. Eat whole foods. More highly processed options not only have less nutritional value but require more energy for production, packaging, and transport.

7. Know where your food comes from. Choose a local, small, organic farm committed to sustainable agriculture. Produce found at the grocery store has traveled an average of 1,500 miles before it reaches your plate. Small farms lessen their impact by relying less on large machines for farming and transport and by delivering goods to market faster, reducing spoilage. Studies now suggest that this type of farming can actually combat global warming by sequestering carbon in the soil, balancing other greenhouse gas emissions.

8. Opt for food with the least packaging. Avoid single serving sizes and recycle whenever possible. Buy in bulk.

9. Select energy efficient appliances. Use the microwave or toaster oven instead of the conventional oven. Minimize the energy required to keep your freezer cold by keeping it full. When it is time to clean up, load your plates in the dishwasher. A dishwasher uses up to half the energy and one-sixth the water of hand-washing. Just make sure that you have a full load and opt for a detergent that is chlorine and phosphate free.



10. Grow your own food. Herbs are easily grown on a windowsill, and patio gardens can provide a summer full of heirloom tomatoes. Community gardens, local farmer's markets, or even community-supported agriculture are other options.

To learn more, check out Bon Appetit's calculator that allows you to examine the environmental impact of your food choices at www.eatlowcarbon.org.

Additional information about green eating can be found at www.takeabite.cc and www.sustainabletable.org.

What's **going on** here? (LOCAL FUN FOR YOUR FAMILY)

Wednesday, April 8, 2009, 6 - 10 p.m.

Saturday, April 18, 2009, 6 - 10 p.m.

SIERRA CLUB ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL AT ECS

During this FREE film festival, there will be two evenings of engaging and thought-provoking films with an environmental theme. The event is family-friendly, refreshments will be available for a small donation, and donations will be accepted to offset cost of films.

For more info: Sierra Club Allegheny Group, www.alleghenyssc.org, Don Gibbon at dongibbon@earthlink.net

Saturday, April 18, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

EARTH DAY AT FRICK ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

The Frick Environmental Center invites the community to a day of celebration and stewardship of the earth. Park restoration projects, demonstrations, music, food, crafts, and nature exploration activities. Fun for the whole family! This event is free and open to the public.

Contact the Environmental Center at 412-422-6538 for more information.

Saturday, April 18, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

PARTY FOR THE PLANET & GREEN MARKETPLACE AT PITTSBURGH ZOO AND PPG AQUARIUM

Celebrate Earth Day at the Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium where we're holding our first ever Green Marketplace. Come and shop with local companies that offer eco-friendly clothing, jewelry, home and garden products, art, make-up, and many other products. Learn how to save money on your utility bills, sample all-natural foods, and find out how your entire family can reduce its carbon footprint. Kids can participate in the Recycling Olympics, make a reusable craft, touch animal bio-facts, and meet the Litter Bug mascot. Sponsored by PPG Industries and the Pennsylvania Resources Council. All activities are free with general admission.

www.pittsburghzoo.org

Sunday, April 19, 12 p.m. - 3 p.m.

DOGGIE DAY TREK WITH VENTURE OUTDOORS

Bring your canine companion for a social hike in the woods. We'll start out by letting the dogs to get to know each other, and

Mark your calendars for the Volunteer Fair and New Family Welcome!

In an effort to prepare for volunteering at ECS in the upcoming school year, a Volunteer Fair will be held on **Saturday, May 2, 2009** from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. This will also be an opportunity for us to welcome the newly enrolled families and to prepare them for the volunteering experience at ECS. We hope that you plan to attend to learn about the most common volunteering needs (individual classrooms, PCO events, Library, Environmental Studies, etc.) and to help show our new families what a great community we're building. A "Clearance Table" will be set up so that folks can complete those essential (but pesky) state and criminal clearances which will allow you to get started volunteering as soon as the school year starts. Light refreshments and coffee will be provided. Please contact Kate Brennan at parentinvolvement@ecspco.org or Angel Lehrian at social@ecspco.org if you're able to help out with this event.

then we'll cover 5 to 7 miles on various trails throughout the local parks, stopping for a snack along the way. The trails will be steep and rocky, and we will hike at a steady pace with a few short stops (the dogs get impatient!). Please remember: Only 2 dogs per person, dogs must have current vaccinations, and leashes are required (off-leash time will be included). Bring dog food, water, and bags to clean up.
Cost: \$16.50 non-member / \$9.00 member
www.ventureoutdoors.org

some people really read the minds of others? The secrets will be revealed at our science sleepover! Includes a movie in the Rangos Omnimax Theater, Buhl Digital Dome show, and plenty of time to explore.
Cost: \$35 per person
www.carnegiesciencecenter.org

Monday, May 11, 7 - 9 p.m.

AIR, HEART, AND LUNGS: MAKING THE CONNECTION

This presentation at ECS is brought to you by the Group Against Smog & Pollution. Please join us as we look at air pollution in our area and how it impacts respiratory and cardiovascular health. Dr. Fernando Holguin, a nationally renowned asthma researcher, now clinical director of the Pediatric Environmental Medicine Center at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, will be speaking about respiratory health. Dr. Donald Grandis, a cardiologist with Jefferson Regional Medical Center in Clairton will be speaking about cardiovascular health. This event is free and open to the public.
Contact GASP at 412-325-7382 or www.gasp-pgh.org for more information.

Saturday, May 16

THE BOOK AND HERB SALE AT WILKINS SCHOOL COMMUNITY CENTER

Come to the annual book and herb sale where the books are affordable, (prices start at 50 cents) and the plants are plentiful. Many popular paperbacks can be picked up for a bargain, and there will be many wonderful locally grown, organic plants to select from for your garden.
www.wscppgh.org

Wednesday, April 22, 5:45 p.m.

EARTH NIGHT AT ECS

This family-friendly event will incorporate a great deal of our student learning in a fun way that parents and children can share. Some highlights include: interactive workshops for families to learn about creative reuse of materials, the benefits of eating locally, and the highlights of green building models; artistic performances focused on environmental studies; student musical performances; learning how to reduce lunch waste. There will be no homework for students on that night, so the family is invited to come and celebrate the gifts of our Earth and learn how we can protect them.

Friday, April 24, begins at 6:30 p.m.

CARNEGIE SCIENCE CENTER SLEEPOVER: URBAN LEGENDS

Discover the truth behind urban legends on a day known for eerie myths: Friday the 13th! Does your stomach really explode when you mix pop rocks with soda? Can

Treespotting: **Black Cherry**

BY paul g wiegman

Spring brings the trees into leaf, but the color and texture of the bark is still a key identification feature for many species. One native tree common to the woodlands of Frick Park that is easy to recognize by its distinctive bark is black cherry (*Prunus serotina*).

The first part of the common name is appropriate since the trunk bark of mature trees is just that – black. Trunk surfaces are dark with scaly peeling small pieces a few inches across. Picture the trunk covered with black, burnt-to-a-crisp, potato chips and you have an image of the trunk of a black cherry. Younger bark and the coverings of twigs are smooth, shiny, dark reddish brown. Along the surface are prominent horizontal bumps that look like small slits. These are called “lenticels” and are common to all species of cherry trees.

Black cherry is the largest of the three cherry trees native to Pennsylvania. It can be found throughout the state and is common to northern tier counties, where it is an important timber tree. Black cherry wood is used for furniture, interior finishing, and veneer.

In our neighborhood, black cherry is valued by a wide variety of caterpillars. When webworms, or tent caterpillars, appear in the spring, they are usually found feeding on the emerging leaves of the cherries. Butterfly larva that use black cherry as a food source include eastern tiger swallowtail, coral hairstreak, red-banded hairstreak, and red-spotted purple. The larva feed on the leaves, but butterflies are never so abundant that the

trees die. Actually, the relationship has a positive side when the adult lepidopterons feed on the flower nectar when the cherries bloom and, in doing so, pollinate the flowers.


Black cherry flowers are small, white, and occur in long drooping clusters 3 to 6 inches long. They appear in late spring, just after the leaves fully expand. In the fall, red, turning to black, fruits ripen at the ends of twigs on the same arching clusters that held the flowers. The 1/3-inch bitter fruits are far from the sweet cherries we enjoy from grocery stores. However, they are an important food for grouse, many songbirds, deer raccoon, and small mammals.

The rounded seeds inside the fruit are called a “stone”. They are hard and easily pass unharmed through the digestive systems of birds and mammals. In this way, black cherry seeds are dispersed far from the parent tree where the animals harvested and ate the fruit, so the tree can rapidly spread to new locations.

If you want to see a black cherry to learn the look of the scaly bark first hand, Frick Park has plenty of specimens. One is easily found by going to the valley parking lot reached from Hutchinson Avenue. At the south end of the lot is a small cul-de-sac. On the left side of the circle, facing south, is a gate with a sign “Firelane Trail”. Just beyond the gate, toward the creek is a double-trunked sycamore with its distinctive light tan/white bark. Just behind and a bit to the right is another double-trunked tree, a mature black cherry.



Java With Jon

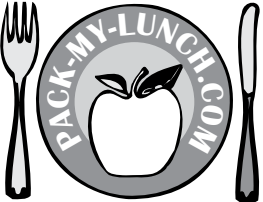


Bring YOUR hot topics—and your mug—to this informal gathering with our principal each month at ECS.

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from left:
**Sarah Anderson,
Beth Lott, Ailish Luedde,**
at the Open House
on March 14.

In addition to being a valuable reference to prospective families who have questions about ECS, parent volunteers assist with classroom tours and provide morning refreshments.



Library volunteer
Farhana Basha

The ECS library is a great place to build the future of ECS. Aside from helping students check books out, an automated circulation system is the recent result of many volunteer hours.



Ron Soltis, classroom volunteer

"I am surprised how smart and bright these kids are! Their questions are so appropriate!"

Helping with routine activities in the classroom is a perfect (and occasionally, surprising) way to get to know your child's curriculum and his fellow students.



Laurie Kellem, Jada Kellem, and Rayonna Thomson-Graham feeding birds at the Frick Nature Center.

Without our volunteers' help, ECS students would not be able to enjoy the wide range of outdoor activities that are an everyday part of our curriculum.

Field guide: **Giant bird nest?**

BY AMY BIANCO

Hey! Look up in that tree! A nest! And you're absolutely right. A squirrel nest, to be exact! Not as visible in the full summer foliage, squirrel nests, or "squirrel dreys", are often spotted in winter. The squirrel nests around Frick Park most likely belong to the common Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*). The Gray squirrel's larger, native cousin, the Fox Squirrel (*Sciurus niger*) also makes nests of leaves and twigs. A squirrel drey is usually 12 to 16 inches wide and 40 to 60 feet off the ground. These nests provide a dry, warm sanctuary during the winter. Like us, squirrels seek shelter from high winds and sub-zero temperatures, sometimes staying in their nests for days if the weather is particularly nasty. Seemingly thrown together and messy, squirrel dreys are actually very sturdy.

The outer shell is made of woven twigs, leaves, and moss. The inner nest cavity averages about 6 to 8 inches in diameter and is softly lined with shredded bark and grass. Tree squirrels prefer to nest in wooded areas. Lots of trees means lots of food! A diet of stashed acorns, beechnuts, walnuts, and the occasional mushroom or berry keeps these active animals fed throughout winter – not to mention snacks from the tasty bird feeders left by the ECS students!

Squirrels are solitary animals, so one nest belongs to one individual until breeding season begins in January. This is when squirrels are most gregarious, hopping, chasing, chattering, and skittering. By the end of February, adult tree squirrels may be sharing a nest with 4 to 5 blind, hairless babies. Although Fox squirrels have one litter per year, Gray squirrels may use the leaf nests again for a second litter in mid-summer. It is common for one squirrel to have several nests at the same time. Different nests may suit different weather conditions and having several scattered "hiding spots" offers added safety from predators. A squirrel will also

have to pack up the kids and move if the nest becomes infested with parasites. Unfortunately, squirrel homes also make fine homes for ticks, mites, and fleas!

So, on your next Frick Park hike, take another look at those clumps of leaves. Deceivingly still in the coldest time of the year, they hold the earliest signs of spring vitality! We should be catching glimpses of these winter babies very soon!



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Cleaning up local school buses



Image: Peter Bartholomew

BY MARLA FERRENCY

You probably know that many ECS students travel to school by school bus. You've probably also noticed the dirty diesel exhaust emitted from many school buses on the road. During their commute, students may be regularly exposed to high levels of diesel pollutants that can impede respiratory systems and cause asthma attacks and have been linked to other adverse health effects like heart attacks, cancer, and premature death.

What you may not know is that there

is technology -- and funding -- to solve this pollution problem. But most school districts and bus companies are not taking advantage of this opportunity to clean up their fleets. As parents and concerned residents, we can request that our school districts put the health of their students at the top of their priority lists by accepting funding to retrofit school buses with diesel particulate filters, which reduce diesel emissions by up to 90 percent.

The Pittsburgh Healthy School Bus Retrofit Fund (funded by the Heinz Endowments and Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection) offers full funding for diesel retrofits to school buses serving Pittsburgh Public Schools. To date, only one bus company, W. L. Roenigk, has accepted this money to retrofit 50 of its buses.

The Allegheny County Diesel School Bus Retrofit Program (funded by the Allegheny County Clean Air Fund) offers full or partial funding for diesel retrofits to any

Allegheny County public school district, which owns its buses or contracts out for school bus service. The following school districts have done some degree of retrofitting already: Penn Hills, Plum, North Allegheny, Deer Lakes.

ECS is in a unique position since our students come from 10 different school districts. We need to put pressure on all of these districts to protect the health of students. ECS encourages you to contact the school district in which you live to urge them to take advantage of local school bus retrofit funding.

ECS contracts out for school bus service only when running field trips, but even for these, the school has made a commitment to hire only companies with retrofitted buses, such as W. L. Roenigk.

For more information, visit:
www.gasp-pgh.org
www.dieselfetrofitrebate.org
pghdieselcleanup.wordpress.com
www.achd.net



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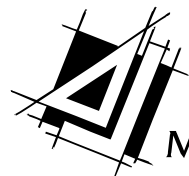
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Get fresh:

A seasonal recipe from John Lash

Roasted Red Pepper Sauce with Rotini & Broccoli

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 red bell peppers, roasted (or 12 oz. jar)
- 4-6 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 Tbsp. fresh thyme
- 3 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- Juice of 1 lemon
- Salt & pepper, to taste
- 1lb. rotini
- 1 bunch of broccoli, trimmed to florets
- Asiago cheese, grated, for serving
- Pignolini, for serving

TO PREPARE:

1. In blender or food processor, combine red peppers, garlic, thyme, olive oil, and lemon juice. Pulse until sauce-like consistency is achieved. Add salt and pepper, to taste.
 2. Cook pasta until al dente. Immerse broccoli in boiling water. When it turns bright green, leave in for 60 seconds, then remove.
 3. Serve sauce over pasta and broccoli. Top with cheese and pignolini.
- Great with red wine and crusty bread.



Principal McCann's Library Picks

April: *River of Words: Young Poets and Artists on the Nature of Things* has been chosen to help us honor youth who have infused poetry with images of nature.



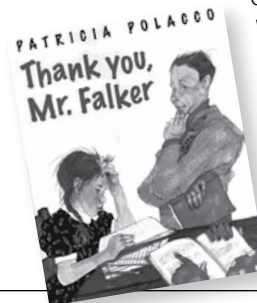
What happens when we ask children to find the poetry in water and earth and stone? What if we challenge them to reveal the wisdom of a place, and to find their connection within it?

Featuring poems and works of art that emerged from River of Word's annual contests over the past twelve years, this delightful anthology showcases the work of children seeking to explore, appreciate, and protect the watersheds in which they live.

May: *Thank You, Mr. Falker* by Patricia Polacco. In this rich story, Ms. Polacco offers much opportunity for discussion via examples of both acting with integrity and treating people poorly.

This moving saga of her struggle with a learning disability makes an inspiring picture book. Young Tricia wants desperately to read, but when she starts school she finds that the words "wobble" on the page. Teased by her classmates, she retreats into dreams and drawings. It's not until Tricia has managed to reach the fifth grade that a new teacher finally recognizes her pain and distress.

Without belaboring the point, the author clearly shows the ways that children internalize critical comments made by others and suffer for their differences.



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P A I R . C O M

5

GOOD RULES

to follow when you drop off your children

1. Please don't park or drive on the access road along the side of the school between the war memorial and the playground gates.
2. Please don't park on the crosswalks, double-park, or leave your car in the middle of the street, even if "it'll only be a minute."
3. Please don't turn around in the intersection of Milton and Henrietta Streets.
4. Please make sure you don't block the entrance of driveways or alleyways with your car.
5. If you wish to walk your child in to school and stay for a while, there is ample parking just a few blocks away from the school in Regent Square or on the other side of South Braddock.



Thanks to everyone who makes an effort every day to care for ALL the ECS students and our community members by respecting our public spaces.

Recycling:

You may have noticed that the school has a number of recycling dumpsters in the playground area. The school community and nearby community members are invited to place newspapers, magazines, office paper, catalogs, and junk mail (no phone books, cardboard, plastic, glass, metals, or trash) in the green and yellow Abitibi Paper Retriever bin ONLY. Thank you to everyone who helps ECS earn money through our Abitibi bin. If you need to drive up to the bin to recycle your paper, please do so after 6 p.m. or on the weekends. Students use the playground area throughout the school day, and no cars are permitted in this area during that time for the safety of our students.

The Abitibi Paper Retriever bin is the only dumpster open to the public. All other recyclables can be dropped off at Construction Junction (N. Lexington and Meade Streets in Point Breeze): www.constructionjunction.org.



Marriage and Sleep Study

**Are you married?
Do you and your spouse sleep in the same bed together?**



Researchers at the University of Pittsburgh are interested in couples and how they sleep together.

You might be eligible to participate in this research study if you and your spouse are:

- healthy, married, and between the ages of 18 and 45 years old,
- have a regular sleep schedule,
- sleep in the same bed together, and
- do not have sleep, psychiatric, heart, or other major medical problems.

Couples who complete the study will be compensated up to \$250 and will be entered into a lottery with a chance to win an additional \$500.

For more information, call 412-246-6674

Umoja visited the E-Day Children

BY KRISTAN ABESHOUSE

E-Day, the extended day program at Imagine Environmental Charter School, would like to express a sincere thank you to Umoja African Dance Troop for spending the afternoon with our children, and to Umoja's director and Imagine ECS mom, Mrs. Darcel Madkins, for spearheading this event.

The E-Day children were mesmerized by the story of Pittsburgh's role in the Underground Railroad, as told by storyteller Mrs. Connie Robinson. Her stories were brought to life by performing in full period costume and by transforming herself into the historical Pittsburgher Mary Peck Bond. Mrs. Robinson, as Mary Peck Bond, engaged all the children, as she shared this important yet painful part of our nation's history in a way that was sensitive to the ages of the children.

When Mrs. Robinson finished her presentation, she introduced the Umoja drummers led by Mr. Moses Shabaka Perkins. Their collective energized drumming brought huge smiles and bobbing bodies to all in attendance. Not only did the Umoja drummers entertain the children, but they also educated them about the drums and the traditions of African music. However, the highlight was the graciousness of the drummers when they welcomed the E-Day children to play along side them for a memorable finale to our special day.



Correction:


In the February issue of ComPOST, the article "Our Outdoor Classroom" stated incorrectly that the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy runs programs at the Frick Environmental Center. Those programs, as well as the Center itself, are part of the City of Pittsburgh's Department of Parks and Recreation.

comPOST

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The Parent Community Organization newsletter of Imagine Environmental Charter School is distributed to every family attending ECS in addition to many Partner Organizations and a broad range of community support groups. ComPOST is also available online at www.ecspco.org

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