First-ever PTA social a hit

By Valerie Kellogg

Students stacked apples, fished for pretzels, bounced pencils into glasses, built structures out of cups, and kept feathers afloat with only their breath at the Southdown PTA’s first-ever social for second- and third graders on Nov. 5.

Parents ran these and other “Minute to Win It” games from the hit NBC show as well as relay races, a freeze dance and a disco party where students were given glow bracelets and ran around to music in the dark.

At the end of the event, students joined their families in the cafeteria for ice cream sandwiches, snacks and refreshments. Siblings had been able to color and watch movies while the event went on inside the gym.

The event was chaired by Kimberley Steinberg, Christine Verville and this correspondent. Meg Langton, Carol Stolfa and Tara Manduca also helped organize the event.

By Rene Babich Dumas

Students made their lists and checked them twice before heading to the PTA’s Holiday Boutique, which took place from Nov. 30 to Dec 1. Held on the stage this year, each class had a chance to come, with lists and budgets in hand, and buy a wide assortment of goodies.

Ably orchestrated by parents Laura Cheshire and Nina Rathore, this year’s boutique featured items ranging in price from 40 cents to around $8. Kids could choose from a variety of gifts, including jewelry, ornaments, toys and gadgets. There were scarves and hats handmade by Rathore. Hot ticket items included a #1 Grandpa flashlight/measuring tape combo.

All the money raised will go toward funding PTA events and programs for parents, teachers and students.

“I love doing the boutique because the kids are always so excited to shop for their parents, grandparents, cousins and friends,” said Cheshire. “It makes them feel good to give the gifts.”

Upcoming events

Dec. 20 PTA Presidents meeting
Dec. 22 PTA Cookie Exchange/ Holiday Concert
Dec. 24 Holiday break begins
Jan. 3 Board of Ed meeting
Jan. 7 PTA Meeting at 7:30 p.m.
Jan. 17 No school
Jan. 19 SEPTA meeting
Jan. 24 PTA’s PARP begins
Jan. 27 PTA Barnes & Noble Night
Jan. 30 Alexander King of Jesters
Feb. 4 PTA VIP Night

Kids go shopping

Parents volunteered to help kids pick out and restock items like this.

SIGN UP: Become a fan of the Southdown PTA on Facebook and Twitter for daily updates, reminders and news. For the links, go to www.southdownpta.org.
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Southdown Splash is the newsletter of the Southdown PTA. If you have an article idea or want to work on this publication, contact Valerie Kellogg.

Getting-to-know-you a hit

By Rene Babich Dumas

Kerry Rinaldi knows firsthand how tough it can be to meet other parents when you’re trying to balance the demands of a job and family. So she came up with an idea to have an event where parents could mingle after work and kids could spend time playing games and eating ice cream (what’s better than that?).

About 85 Kindergarteners and 1st graders, along with their parents and siblings, converged Oct. 15 for a getting-to-know-you.

Volunteers were plentiful at the spirited soiree. Denise Murtagh, Kim Cousins and Dawn Weir rocked the house for the freeze dance. Arienne Lima and Kimberley Steinberg channeled their inner Picasso at a very popular face-painting station. Debbie Perille, Amanda Laserson and Marni Walters commanded the all-important kitchen, where children sat together to eat snacks and ice cream.

Joy Berenstein administered the tattoo station (always a crowd pleaser); Louise Dole and Rene Babich Dumas (yes, that’s me) — with leadership from Ellen Maleszewski — ran the relay races; and Laura Cheshire made sure everyone had a nametag. Melissa Balm and Denise Murtagh kept things hopping with a game of hot potato.

“The kids really loved all the events, especially the face painting and freeze dance … and, of course, the ice cream,” said Rinaldi. “And I think many parents made connections and at least got to know the families of their kids’ classmates a little bit. I’m very happy with how it turned out and really appreciate the help of all the volunteers.”

Message from the President

Where does the time go? This fall has been so busy with so many wonderful activities. I want to thank all of our volunteers for all they have done for our children. I specifically want to thank our chairs — Kerry Rinaldi for our first Kindergarten social, Kimberley Steinberg for getting our school in beautiful shape, Kerri Brandine for our fall plant sale, Laura Cheshire for both Miss Chocolate events, and all our terrific moms for our first second and third grade social.

December is a busy month as well. We held a fourth grade dance. The fourth grade committee is slowly but surely pulling together. We have a cookie sale at the winter concerts. The new Spanish outreach committee met. And there will be all the wonderful holiday parties hosted by our teachers and class parents.

There will be many events to look forward to in the winter and spring.

Dawn Weir
Meet the teachers

By Lyndia Flynn Agrillo

Southdown welcomed six new fourth grade teachers to the school this year: Chris Dugan, Mary Grever, Katie Joseph, Patrice Monks, Colleen Simko and Soraya Triessl. We asked the teachers to tell us a little about themselves. Here’s what they told us.

Chris Dugan
Favorite activity “Playing golf, coaching soccer, hiking, fishing, watching sports, movies, listening to music”
Favorite food “Pizza”
Favorite sports teams “Mets, Giants, Islanders, Knicks”
Favorite book or movie “Lord of the Rings” (book and the movie) and “Polar Express” (picture book)
Role model “My parents are my role models.”

Soraya Triessl
Favorite activity “Spending time with my family and traveling”
Favorite food “Pumpkin pie”
Favorite sports teams “Yankees and Red Sox”
Favorite book and movie “Twilight” series and the movie “Beaches”
Role model “President Obama because he has changed the way we see the world.”

Katie Joseph
Favorite activity “Playing with my 4-month-old daughter”
Favorite food “My favorite snack is popcorn.”
Favorite sports team “Yankees”
Favorite book or movie “My favorite book is ‘Paddington Bear’ because my father used to read it to me every night.”
Role model “My mother is my role model. She was also a teacher. She always cared so much about her students.”

Patrice Monks
Favorite activity “Spending time with my kids and my dog … lying on the beach and shopping at Marshalls.”
Favorite food “Vanilla Häagen-Dazs and Pringles”
Favorite sports team “The Yankees, ever since I had a crush on Bucky Dent.”
Favorite book and movie “Because of Winn Dixie,” “The Coat of Many Colors” and “Up”
Role model “My 11th grade English teacher, Mr. Rice.”

Colleen Simko
Favorite activity “Reading”
Favorite food “Mrs. Arcuri’s lasagna”
Favorite sports team “New York Giants”
Favorite book and movie “To Kill a Mockingbird” (book) and “I have many movies that I really.”
Role model “My Mom because she is a strong, brave woman who taught me to be an honest, hard-working, giving person.”

Mary Grever
Favorite activity “Walking my dogs”
Favorite sports team “New York Jets”
Favorite book or movie “The Giving Tree” (children’s book) and “Christmas Vacation” (movie)
Role model “I admire my grandmother, and I believe Oprah Winfrey is a good role model.”
Librarian’s Corner

By Ellen Blanchard
The Southdown Library Media Center has a Birthday Book Club, which accepts donations of new books in honor of a student’s birthday. We have a special bookplate that is put inside each book. Donations can be made at any time during the year and are always appreciated. I have a list of titles that we would love to add to our collection and will post that list on the library eboard. As always, do not hesitate to contact me directly by phone or note if that is more convenient.

Our third and fourth graders have begun borrowing magazines (second graders will begin borrowing shortly). The easy way to recognize our magazines is the colored plastic envelope they should be coming home in: purple for 4th grade, green for 3rd grade and blue for 2nd grade. This envelope helps prevent the magazines from ending up in your recycling or garbage piles by mistake. Magazine subscriptions make wonderful holiday gifts and having a personal copy of the magazine allows your child to do all the puzzles, word searches, crafts, etc. that cannot be done in a library.

“Books are gifts that keep on giving” is a simple but very true expression. Books make excellent holiday gifts that can be read over and over again. Each reading brings a new layer of appreciation and understanding, plus the added benefit of sharing something special between parent and child.

Our 2011 P.A.R.P. Program (that stands for the PTA program known as Parents As Reading Partners) starts Jan. 24 and looks to be an exciting and fun-filled three weeks of reading and activities. More information will be coming in January, but the process is a simple one – spend 15 minutes or more reading each day with your child or encourage your child to read independently for at least 15 minutes each day.

Birthday board needs volunteers

By Theresa Matthews
The annual Southdown Turkey Trot Fun Run was an exciting heart-healthy event. The mild temperatures produced record laps around the field. Laps were tallied on students’ individual turkeys by a heart hole punch.

Hope you all went outside to participate in the annual Rake-A-Thon. All funds collected go toward the publication of Southdown’s Art and Literary Magazine, which the PTA helps produce. The suggested donation was $2 a bag — but, of course, any donations now are still appreciated.

By Valerie Kellogg
Help mark your child’s birthday by volunteering to decorate the birthday board in the cafeteria. The PTA provides materials and supplies; you come up with the design and do the work by the first day of the month. Write to Ewa Adamczyk Alvarez at ewakaayahoo or Michelle Stack at stackmich@yahoo.com to sign up.

Southdown’s turkey trot a success

By Valerie Kellogg

REMINDER
Southdown participates in the Box Tops for Education Program. For every box top, the school receives 10 cents. Our goal is $500. We collect box tops year round. For details, call Kerri Brandine at 631-923-0531 or e-mail lukeri19@aol.com.