

Cougar Connection

A Publication of Helen Keller Middle School and the Easton PTA
February 2009

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



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Cougar Connection Deadline—The Cougar Connection is a monthly publication of Helen Keller Middle School and the Easton PTA. We welcome submissions from the HKMS community. Send your school-related and PTA-related articles to Lisa DeVoto at lisadevoto@optonline.net one week before the first of the month. Previous issues of the Cougar Connection can be found on the Helen Keller Middle School website at <http://er9.org/hkms> and the PTA website at <http://www.eastonpta.com>.

Principal's Pen

Dear Parents:

I recently read two articles that are certain to interest you. Please find here a summary of key points:

Article #1:

ACT, a nonprofit test developer and research organization based in Iowa City, Iowa has just released a report, "The Forgotten Middle: Ensuring That All Students Are on Target for College and Career Readiness Before High School." The report says that the **“level of academic achievement students attain by eighth grade has a larger impact on their college and career readiness by the time they graduate from high school than anything that happens academically in high school.”**

In conducting the study, researchers found that three behaviors significantly predicted the student's future academic performance: **“academic discipline, orderly conduct, and having positive relationships with school personnel.”**

Academic discipline is described as including the following:

- the ability to complete homework assignments on time
- the perseverance to work through multiple-step directions
- the self-control to focus on academics

By their middle school years, students exhibit 'orderly conduct' by independently completing assignments and managing projects. "The Forgotten Middle" study indicates these college and career readiness characteristics should be a primary focus in middle school in order to achieve greater gains in high school. A student learning organizational skills in middle school will find high school and college projects easier to manage.

“Having positive relationships with school personnel” could take on many nuances such as every student

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knowing a caring adult in the school, or a small school culture where no student's accomplishments or needs are neglected. Through these relationships, school has meaning for students.

Ultimately, the report is a reminder that the middle school years are just as important for college and career preparation as the high school years; in fact, probably more so.

Article #2:

The article reports on a study released last month from the National Institutes of Researchers and Yale University. In a detailed look at nearly 30 years of research, the report analyzed how the amount of exposure to television, music, movies, the Internet, cell phones and videogames affect the health of our children and teenagers. Strong connections were found between media exposure and problems of childhood obesity (86%), tobacco use (88%), sexual behavior (93%), drug use (75%), alcohol use (80%) and low academic performance (65%).

In all, 173 research efforts, going back to 1980, were analyzed, rated and brought together in what researchers said was the first comprehensive view of the topic. About 80 percent of the studies showed a link between a negative health outcome and media hours or content.

Most surprising were the conclusions that the average modern child spends nearly 45 hours a week with media exposure. By comparison, children spend 17 hours a week with their parents, on average, and 30 hours a week in school. Food for thought!

Best regards,

—Joan C. Parker,
Helen Keller Middle School Principal

News from the PTA Presidents

As we look forward to spring we also look forward to the events that come along with it. Our annual adult Spring Event, cookie dough sales, chorus concerts, teacher appreciation, 8th grade graduation and, of course, the wonderful Drama play. We are happy to say that through the financial support of our families we were able to provide \$2,000 additional funds to the Drama Club to assist Ms. Scrivani and Ms. Schweikert (and their 90 students) accomplishing their goals. Volleyball and Field hockey were a GREAT success and many of our children are now enjoying Wrestling, Debate Club and Drama. All of these are made possible by your financial support of your PTA. Thank you for all your continued support!

Nursing Notes

Back To Basics – Tips to Keep Yourself Healthy

The single most important intervention to prevent the spread of germs and diseases is **hand washing**. Teach children to wash their hands often and with warm water for at least 20 seconds to prevent germs from spreading. If you don't wash your hands thoroughly, germs can live on your hands, where you may spread them to surfaces, to others and to yourself.

Other measures to prevent the spread of germs include the following:

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth because viruses can spread when your hands touch surfaces that have germs.
- If you are ill, stay home to help yourself get better and prevent others from getting sick too.
- Keep cuts and healing wounds covered with clean, dry bandages.
- Maintain good general hygiene with regular bathing.
- Do not share personal items such as water bottles, drinks, eating utensils, towels or razors.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue, when coughing and sneezing, and throw away your used tissues in a proper receptacle.

—Mary Jane Bellenot, RN,
HKMS Nurse

Family Fun Night

See the Harlem Globetrotters
Friday, February 20, 7 PM
Arena at Harbor Yard, Bridgeport
Deadline for Tickets: Wednesday, February 11
http://www.eastonpta.com/pdf/harlem_globetrotters.pdf



2009 Nominating Committee Forming Now

Please join the 2009 Nominating Committee. This is a short-term position for 5 individuals.

The Easton PTA is looking for a few members to form a short-term committee as required in our by-laws. Five members of the Nominating Committee will select their own chairperson. Committee members will seek individuals to fill vacancies in the PTA Executive Board for the 2009–2010 school years.

The current Board will assist with guidelines, job descriptions and some potential leads. Phone calling or "in person" contacts may be used. The slate should be presented by the April meeting.

Please call or email Dina Massey, Membership chairperson at 374-6422 (dmmassey@optonline.net) if you are interested.

PTA's Education Committee (EdCom)

EdCom, the Education Committee of the PTA, helps to keep the town and school families informed on issues related to the town budget and especially education related issues, during the budget season.

People are needed to assist on this committee by attending a few budget meetings, coordinating signage, providing information to the newspaper and helping with two mailings. Please call Melanie St. Raymond at 372-0233 or email her at melaniestraymond@yahoo.com, if you can help.

Brick Dedication Coordinator Needed

We are looking for a parent or parents from each grade who will coordinate the campaign for graduating families of 8th graders and others in the spring. The materials are all prepared for this venture. Bricks are dedicated to graduating class members and installed around the flagpole area at the pickup loop. Call Kathleen Wasmer at 452-8211 for more information, or if you are interested.

Open Positions

The PTA will have several openings for the 2009-2010 school year including positions on the Executive Board as well as chair people positions for events and fundraisers. If you are interested in learning more about these positions, please contact Kathleen Wasmer at 452-8211.

Upcoming PTA Meetings

Please note that our next PTA meeting is the third Friday of February, February 20 at 9:15 AM in the Easton Town Library Community Room. Future planned PTA meetings are as follows:

February 20	9:15 AM	Easton Town Library Community Room
March 13	9:15 AM	Easton Town Library Community Room
April 24	9:15 AM	Easton Town Library Community Room
May 15	9:15 AM	Easton Town Library Community Room
June 5	9:15 AM	Easton Town Library Community Room

CDs for Chorus Concert

The Chorus concert will be held at 7:00 PM on February 11th at HKMS. CDs will be available for purchase that evening.

Food Service Survey

The Easton PTA supports healthier food choices for our children and we encourage you to fill out the survey the administration has sent to us to provide individual input. Please respond to the survey by February 10th to be counted. To take the survey, go to http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=fSEpNe6_2fuGPpF1cOT23mDQ_3d_3d.

Shopping Online?

Please think Box Tops and start at www.btfe.com! When you link through the Box Tops for Education Marketplace, you save time and energy and earn cash for our school, too. HKMS will receive a donation of up to 8% back on every qualifying purchase, at no additional cost to you. Some of the dozens of participating retailers are Lands' End, Pottery Barn Kids, Gap, Williams Sonoma!

Big Y

Please remember to choose our school when you shop at the BIG Y. We earn points which we can exchange for supplies.

—Margot Abrams
(margotaz@optonline.net)
and Kathleen Wasmer
(kathleenmom@optonline.net),
Easton PTA HKMS Co-Presidents

Easton Learning Foundation (ELF) Fundraiser

SportsCenter of Connecticut in Shelton, CT

Saturday, March 28, 10 AM–1:30 PM

<http://eastonlearningfoundation.org/funday.html>

Food for Thought from the Easton Redding Community Coalition

Prescription Drug Abuse and Heroin Moves Into Connecticut Suburbia

Though overall teen drug use is down nationwide, there are more teens abusing prescription drugs than any other illicit drug, except marijuana - more than cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine combined.

Every day, 2,500 kids age 12 to 17 abuse a prescription painkiller for the first time, and more people are getting addicted to prescription drugs. Drug treatment admissions for prescription painkillers increased more than 300 percent from 1995 to 2005.

Teens are abusing prescription drugs because many believe the myth that these drugs provide a "safe" high. Especially troubling is that the majority of teens who abuse prescription drugs say they are easy to get and are often free.

White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP)

At this time of year, college students are home and we all have children and guests visiting our homes. Sadly, our medicine cabinets are often filled with medications that are easily stolen and abused with dangerous, addictive and often fatal consequences. Please take the time to remove these medications from your medicine chest and "Lock Your Meds Up."

Of the most concern, is the trend of young people abusing prescription painkillers, especially opiates such as OxyContin. Once a young person gets addicted, they easily switch to heroin as it is much cheaper (about \$5 per bag of heroin vs. \$40-60 per pill) and easily obtained.

Heroin Moves Into Connecticut Suburbia

(By Grace E. Merritt, The Hartford Courant,
December 21 2008)

Heroin, a drug usually associated with skeletal addicts in the inner city, is increasingly infiltrating Connecticut's suburbs.

The complete article can be viewed at:

<http://www.courant.com/news/custom/topnews/hc-heroinsuburbs1221.artdec21.0.5827301.story>. Visit The Courant at <http://www.courant.com>.

Easton Learning Foundation (ELF) First Annual Town-wide Trivia BEE

Thursday, May 14, 7-9 PM

at the SSES Cafetorium

Have you heard the buzz?

It'll bee swarms of fun!

BEE curious on our website:

<http://www.eastonlearningfoundation.org>

ELF is looking for worker bees.

If you are interested in helping,
please call Ann Leibell at 371-4940.

Keller Teller Newspaper

The Newspaper Club meets Monday mornings before school in the Media Center, 7:30-8 AM. The club publishes the *Keller Teller* several times during the school year. Copies of the newspaper are distributed to the HKMS community. (See previous issues at http://www.eastonpta.com/committees_a_i.html#newspaperclub.)

The staff is busy wrapping up the second issue of the school year. All students are welcome to submit an article to the Keller Teller mailbox in the main office.

—Lisa DeVoto,
Newspaper Club Parent Advisor

Easton Volunteer Fire Co.'s 74th Carnival
Looking for some warm thoughts to get you through the chill?
Think SUMMER and mark your calendars!
Easton Volunteer Fire Co.'s 74th Carnival
July 28-August 1, 2009

February 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 A 7:30-8 AM— Newspaper Club 2:45-3:45 PM—Math Club 3-5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	3 B 7:30-8 AM—Yearbook Club 7:35-8 AM—Select Choir	4 C 7:30-8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:40-8 AM—Student Council 2:45-3:45—Debate Club 2:45-3:45—Weather Club 3-6 PM—Play Rehearsal	5 D 3-4 PM—Play Rehearsal Ski Trip (Mount Southington)	6 E 7:30-8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:30-8 AM—Gang Green 7:30-8 AM—Jazz Band 7:30 AM—Kids Who Care 3-5:15 PM—Wrestling Club 6:30-9 PM—HKMS Dance	7
8	9 F 7:30-8 AM— Newspaper Club 3-5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	10 A 7:30-8 AM—Yearbook Club 7:35-8 AM—Select Choir	11 B 7:30-8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 2:45-3:45—Debate Club 2:45-3:45—Weather Club 3-6 PM—Play Rehearsal 7 PM—Chorus Concert	12 C 11:15 AM—7 th Grade Coffee 3-6 PM—Play Rehearsal	13 NO SCHOOL (Winter Recess)	14
15	16 NO SCHOOL (Winter Recess)	17 NO SCHOOL (Winter Recess)	18 D 7:30-8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:40-8 AM—Student Council 2:45-3:45—Debate Club 2:45-3:45—Weather Club 3-6 PM—Play Rehearsal	19 E 3-6 PM—Play Rehearsal	20 F 7:30-8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:30-8 AM—Gang Green 7:30-8 AM—Jazz Band 7:30 AM—Kids Who Care 9:15 AM—PTA Meeting 3-5:15 PM—Wrestling Club 7 PM—Family Fun Night	21
22	23 A 7:30-8 AM— Newspaper Club 2:45-3:45 PM—Math Club 3-5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	24 B 7:30-8 AM—Yearbook Club 7:35-8 AM—Select Choir	25 C 7:30-8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 2:45-3:45—Debate Club 2:45-3:45—Weather Club 3-6 PM—Play Rehearsal	26 D 12:10 PM— EARLY DISMISSAL Ski Trip (Mount Southington) Uno Chicago Grill Day	27 E 7:30-8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:30-8 AM—Gang Green 7:30-8 AM—Jazz Band 7:30 AM—Kids Who Care 3-5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	28

A, B, C, D, E, F indicates class schedule for that day
(subject to schedule changes)



March 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
1	2 F 7:30-8 AM— Newspaper Club 2:45-3:45 PM—Math Club 3-5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	3 A 7:30-8 AM—Yearbook Club 7:35-8 AM—Select Choir	4 B 7:40-8 AM—Student Council 2:45-3:45—Debate Club 2:45-3:45—Weather Club 3-6 PM—Play Rehearsal	5 C 3-6 PM—Play Rehearsal	6 D 7:30-8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:30-8 AM—Gang Green 7:30-8 AM—Jazz Band 7:30 AM—Kids Who Care 3-5:15 PM—Wrestling Club Sound Tigers Family Night	7	
8	9 E 7:30-8 AM— Newspaper Club 2:45-3:45 PM—Math Club 3-5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	10 F 7:30-8 AM—Yearbook Club 7:35-8 AM—Select Choir	11 A 2:45-3:45—Debate Club 2:45-3:45—Weather Club	12 B 3-6 PM—Play Rehearsal	13 C 7:30-8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:30-8 AM—Gang Green 7:30-8 AM—Jazz Band 7:30 AM—Kids Who Care 9:15 AM—PTA Meeting 3-5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	14	
15	16 D 7:30-8 AM— Newspaper Club 2:45-3:45 PM—Math Club 3-5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	17 E 7:30-8 AM—Yearbook Club 7:35-8 AM—Select Choir	18 F 7:40-8 AM—Student Council 2:45-3:45—Debate Club 2:45-3:45—Weather Club 3-6 PM—Play Rehearsal	19 A 3-6 PM—Play Rehearsal	20 B 7:30-8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:30-8 AM—Gang Green 7:30-8 AM—Jazz Band 7:30 AM—Kids Who Care 3-5:15 PM—Wrestling Club	21	
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29	30 B 7:30-8 AM— Newspaper Club 2:45-3:45 PM—Math Club 3-5:15 PM—Wrestling Club 3-6 PM—Play Rehearsal	31 C 7:35-8 AM—Select Choir 3-6 PM—Play Rehearsal	A, B, C, D, E, F indicates class schedule for that day (subject to schedule changes)				