

Cougar Connection

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

"One can never consent to creep when one feels an impulse to soar."

— Helen A. Keller



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Principal's Pen

Dear Parents:

I am pleased to inform you that for the second straight year Helen Keller Middle School is being recognized by Governor Rell for outstanding summer readership. Last summer HKMS students read a total of 1,652 books with an average of 4 books per student.

I applaud the dedication of our students, parents and teachers in fostering the love of reading throughout our community. Reading is an essential skill that directly correlates with academic performance. The Governor's Summer Reading Challenge was initiated in 1996, and since its inception, the number of children participating and being recognized has grown tremendously.

May Silverstein, Sarah Walde, and Julia Wargo will represent HKMS at a special awards ceremony conducted by Governor M. Jodi Rell on Thursday, May 7, 2009, at the Connecticut State Library in Hartford, CT. As the summer months are quickly approaching, I encourage students and parents to review the HKMS recommended book lists on our website to continue this great success. The Easton Public Library has all books available.

Kind Regards,

— **Joan C. Parker,**
Helen Keller Middle School
Principal

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://www.helenkellerps.org> and the Easton PTA website at <http://www.eastonpta.com>.

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ELF Stars Form for Teacher Appreciation Week.....	http://eastonlearningfoundation.org/stars_hkms.pdf

School Psychologist

See this article about talking to kids about the swine flu.

http://www.nasponline.org/resources/Talking_With_Children_About_Flu_FINAL.pdf

—*Meredith Klatt, M.A., NCSP,
HKMS Psychologist*



News from the PTA Presidents

A Letter From the PTA Co-Presidents

During this period of budgets and town meetings, we encourage you to stay informed on the issues, attend meetings and exercise your right to vote. Please call one of us or Melanie St. Raymond (EdCom chairwoman) if you have any questions. We also encourage you to write and speak with town officials and department heads whose budget items you question. All town departments are very open and willing to answer questions regarding their budgets.

We would like to thank all volunteers, friends and families, parents and children, teachers and school staff as well as administrators for helping to make this year a successful one. The PTA is just one cog in a big wheel that makes it all “go” and we couldn’t do it without your help. A special thank you to our editor, Lisa DeVoto, for her dedication and patience. Lisa, you have given us two very professional communication pieces, the Cougar Connection newsletter and the Easton PTA website to show off our town and our schools!

Many thanks from the Easton PTA, Kathleen and Margot.

Congratulations!

Congratulations to the play members and the many adults who directed and supported them in a fantastic production of “Stuck in the Middle.”

Congratulations to the PTA Techno Bees! Sponsored by the PTA, our Elf Bee team members are:

- Lynne Duffy, Media Center Director at SSES (Captain)
- Jeanine Arlotta, 3rd grade teacher at SSES
- Laura Hobbs, 3rd grade teacher at SSES

Nursing Notes

Attention to Grade 6 Parents:

The grade 6 Health Assessment is due by the last day of school, which is now June 18th. For those of you who have not handed in the form, please be aware of this due date. Doctor’s offices fill up quickly in the spring, so it is recommended that you make your appointments early. The Health Assessment form can be printed from the HKMS website (go to www.helenkellerps.org/Nurse/Health_Assessment.htm). If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact the school nurse, Mary Jane Bellenot, at 268-8651, extension 6.

Thank you very much,

—*Mary Jane Bellenot, RN,
HKMS Nurse*

Slate of PTA Officers for 2009–2010 School Year

The proposed slate of PTA officers for the 2009–2010 school year is as follows. (The installation of officers will take place at the PTA meeting on June 5.)

- President SSES—Claire-Anne Meskers (last term)
- President HKMS—Laura Jones
- Recording Secretary—Sharon Stemme
- Corresponding Secretary—Lynne Kocis (last term)
- Membership—Rachel Rios
- Treasurer—Jeanine Jones
- Asst. Treasurer—Stacy Vavaro

Open Positions for 2009–2010

The PTA will have openings for the 2009–2010 school year in 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 or Margot Abrams at 459-4759.

Open positions for 2009–2010 school year:

- PTA Co-President at SSES
- PTA Co-President at HKMS
- School calendar
- Directory
- HKMS Cougar Connection newsletter
- HKMS newspaper club, the Keller Teller
- EdCom
- International Day for Tolerance
- Concert CDs coordinator at SSES

- SSES School Hospitality
- SSES Lost and Found
- SSES Fifth Grade Yearbook
- SSES teacher appreciation coordinator
- PTA listserv coordinator

Thank You

Thank you to Susan Chabannes for serving as recording secretary. We hope you are on the mend! Thank you to Sharon Stemme for stepping in to finish the year for Susan as recording secretary.

Budget Information

How the Easton Budget Process Works

Easton is governed by town meetings and town votes. There is NO town charter or other government body that determines if SCHOOL AND TOWN BUDGETS pass or fail.

Because we are not governed by charter – each year, a town budget referendum is held – it usually takes place the first Tuesday in May. **If that referendum (or vote) fails, then the town will continue to hold as many referenda as it takes to get the budget passed.** In recent years – **budgets have either passed/failed by as few as 8 or 19 votes** – so each vote counts!

Easton also shares a high school with our neighboring town, Redding. Joel Barlow High School (JBHS) is part of the Region 9 school district. The Region 9 School District budget is decided by a second referendum question, and passes by a majority of the **combined** vote in Easton and Redding.

How does the Total Town budget break down?

The total Easton budget has several components.

- The **budget for the town** pays for Town Hall services, and other departments such as Public Works, Police, Senior Center, Fire Fighters, EMS and Library. It also covers any new equipment, vehicles, or office supplies, etc.
- The **Easton school budget** funds both the Helen Keller Middle School and Samuel Staples Elementary School. This funding is included in the referendum question on the town budget.
- The **Region 9 school budget** (for JBHS) is decided by a **separate** referendum question.

All of the school budgets include teachers' salaries (which are negotiated every three years with their union), school administrators' salaries, school

supplies, special education requirements mandated by the state, building costs and maintenance, buses, health insurance, etc.

For more information, please contact Melanie St. Raymond at melaniestraymond@yahoo.com.

Easton SEPTA (Special Ed PTA)

Be a part of the Easton SEPTA (Special Ed PTA). Under the auspices of the Easton PTA, a group of parents have formed a SEPTA. It is open to anyone who has a child with an IEP/504 plan or who loves a child with special needs. Please contact Stacy Varvaro at pvsav@optonline.net or Allegra Herman legs@optonline.net.

Family University

There is a Family University on May 18. See the flyer at <http://www.joelbarlowps.org/StudentServices/Guidance/FamilyUniversity2009.pdf>.

Uno Chicago Grill

The next Uno Chicago Grill day is Thursday, May 19. See coupons at:

http://www.eastonpta.com/pdf/uno_chicago_grill_april_23_2009.pdf.

PTA Job Fair

The PTA will hold a job fair on Wednesday, May 20, 10:15–10:45 AM at SSES in the cafeteria for anyone interested in volunteering next year. PTA representatives will be available for inquiries, and the "job book" will be available with descriptions for various positions the PTA offers. Refreshments will be served.

PTA Spring Social

Mark your calendars for Friday, May 22nd for our annual PTA Spring Social at Gray's Farm! (See http://www.eastonpta.com/pdf/spring_social_may_22_2009.pdf.) This is an adult-only event featuring Fairfield County's own "Tangled Vine" performing. Details will follow. Any questions or want to help? Contact Rich Cremin at 371-1125.

Bus Driver Appreciation Day

Bus Driver Appreciation Day is June 3.

Upcoming Board of Education Meetings

Easton Board of Education meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 PM at HKMS and are open to the public. Upcoming dates for Easton Board of Education meetings:

- May 19
- June 9

Check the ER9.org website for agendas, minutes and changes to the schedule at

www.er9.org/boe/EastonBOE/Easton%20BOE.html.

Connecticut Association for the Gifted (CAG) Minds in Motion

See the schedule of events at <http://www.ctgifted.org/events.htm>

For more information, call Anne Manusky at 374-7972 or email Anne at anne.e.man@sbcglobal.net

Upcoming PTA Meetings

There are only two remaining PTA meetings for this school year:

May 15	9:15 AM	Easton Town Library Community Room
June 5	9:15 AM	Easton Town Library Community Room

On June 5, 9:30 AM, in the Easton Town Library Community Room we will have the volunteer brunch and installation of officers. Thank you to all our volunteers for your dedication and service!

Our June 5 meeting is the last meeting of the year!

Big Y

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

Shopping Online?

Please think Box Tops and start at www.btf.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!

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

ELF News

First Annual Town-wide Trivia BEE

ELF First Annual Town-wide Trivia BEE: Thursday,
May 14, 7–9 PM at the SSES Cafetorium

BEE curious on our website:

<http://www.eastonlearningfoundation.org/bee.html>

ELF is looking for worker bees. If you are interested in helping, please call Ann Leibell at 371-4940.

Donate for Annual Sports Sale

Time to pack up those skis and skates? Lots of winter equipment is too small for next year. We will help you clean the garage! PLEASE donate your gently used winter gear to Easton Learning Foundation for our annual Sports Sale which will be held in September. We will happily pick up your gently used items and give you a receipt for your 2009 tax deduction.

Contact Barbie Powell at bgpowell@optonline.net.
Collection for the Sport Sale is ongoing, so gather your gear, and donate today!

Easton Garden Mart

The Easton Garden Club is having their 70th Anniversary Garden Mart:

Saturday, May 9, 9 AM–12:30 PM
Easton Firehouse Green
(the intersection of Center and Sport Hill Roads)
(rain or shine)

Annuals • Perennials
Baked Goods • Produce from Local Farmers

Featuring the Introduction of Easton's First Farm Map
Mother's Day Gifts and Teacher Gifts

Shhh... It's a Surprise!

Calling All Former Students of Mrs. Selvaggi

Mrs. Selvaggi, who teaches first grade at SSES, will be retiring this June. As a parting gift to her, the current room parents would like to put together a video featuring her current and former students. We need you! Please contact Denise Lynch by May 13th at denisemackev@snet.net or 452-9460 to participate in this wonderful project! And please don't tell Mrs. Selvaggi. We're trying to make this a SURPRISE!

Birthday Book Club

Birthday Book Club Turns "2"

Thank you to all those who so generously supported the HKMS Birthday Book Club, now in its second year! With your donations, Mrs. Weinschel has ordered many new books for the Media Center! She has selected books the students will enjoy reading for pleasure as well as books that support units studied in their classrooms.

We look forward to your continued support. It's not too late - there is still time to dedicate books this year if you'd like. See the form at

http://www.eastonpta.com/pdf/hkms_birthday_book_club.pdf.

Many thanks and happy reading!

—Kim Lenoci (mrskiml@yahoo.com)
and Mary O'Connor (toconnor02@snet.net)

Media Center Update

Take a Walk in My Shoes

7th Grade Families – Save the Date – May 19

The 7th grade will hold an international food extravaganza in the Easton Town Library Community Room on Tuesday, May 19th from 5:30–7 PM. Students will share the ethnic dishes they have researched for “Take a Walk in My Shoes,” an integrated technology and curriculum-based project. This is a collaborative effort run through 21st Century and the 7th Grade World Geography class. We will need parent volunteers to help oversee and clean up after the event. Students are being asked to prepare the recipe from the country that they studied. More information will follow.

If you are interested in helping out, please contact Carol Weinschel.

—Carol Weinschel,
Director, Learning Resources and Technology
(cweinschel@eastonps.org)

Keller Teller Newspaper

The Newspaper Club has just wrapped up our last issue for the school year, and copies of the *Keller Teller* will be distributed to the HKMS community later this month. (See previous issues at http://www.eastonpta.com/committees_a_i.html#newspaperclub.)

This publication would not be possible without all the hard work of our dedicated staff and the support of their parents. Thank you to all Keller Teller staff members: Sam Bartlett, Elizabeth Bobroske, Blythe Broadbin, Maria DeVoto, Cristina DiPalma, Giorgio Giardina, Brandon Harvey, Lara Kazmierczak, Sara Keden, Hunter Lightman, Michael Lin, Lorenzo Marchetti, Kaeli Prevelige, and Lia Stone. And thank you to everyone who submitted stories to our mailbox for publication throughout the year.

Thank you especially to the PTA for their financial sponsorship of all our printing costs. Thank you also to the library staff (Carol Weinschel, Marion Carlson, and Lisa Mellen) for the use of the library.

Next year, the club will be in need of parent volunteers, so please consider volunteering if you can.

—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

Soles for Souls

The 7th grade students will be participating in a fundraising initiative for Soles 4 Souls, an organization dedicated to helping people by collecting and distributing gently worn shoes for those in need. New clogs and flip flops can also be purchased through the organization. This is an excellent way to recycle old shoes and to help those less fortunate. The organization will be delivering shoes throughout Mexico and Guatemala this spring, summer, and fall. This region was part of our third quarter unit on Latin America, another reason this organization is a perfect fit, so to speak. Domestically, shoes are also provided to homeless shelters, inner city hospitals, areas devastated by disaster, Native Indian reserves, and The Appalachia's, etc. Shoes will be collected in school April 20–May 18. For 7th graders, a perfect time to bring in a pair or two of shoes would be at the “Take a Walk in My Shoes” evening on May 19 at the Easton Library. There will also be a collection box at the Easton Public Library. More details to come!

—Mrs. Rose,
7th Grade Social Studies Teacher

Kids Against Cancer

Kids Against Cancer to Hold Mother's Day Bake Sale

7th grader Jennifer Riccio will host the 6th annual Kids Against Cancer Bake Sale, to be held on Mother's Day, May 10th, rain or shine, to raise money and awareness for The Skin Cancer Foundation and PanCan (the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network). This year's bake sale will be held on the corner of Judd and Maple Roads 9 AM–5 PM. Come early for the best selection of premium baked goods generously donated by area residents, bakeries and supermarkets! Also for sale will be Mother's Day plants, flowers, and herb baskets. Kayleigh's Decorative Soap Dispensers will also be available for purchase. Any middle school students interested in helping out at the bake sale (by baking, making signs, or working a shift) can call Cindy Riccio at 268-5322 to volunteer. For those students in need of community service hours, you can earn them by helping out! Please help us reach our goal of raising a minimum of \$1,200 for these two very worthy causes, while at the same time treating your mom, wife, sister, aunt, or grandma to some delicious goodies for Mother's Day! We hope to see you all there!

JBHS Cheer Tryouts

Tryouts for the 2009–2010 JBHS Varsity Cheerleading team are June 1–5, 3:30–5:30 PM, in the upper gym at JBHS.

May 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
A, B, C, D, E, F indicates class schedule for that day (subject to schedule changes)						1 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 8:30 AM–3 PM & 6–9 PM—Book Fair 6–9 PM—8 th Grade Spaghetti Dinner
3	4 F Teacher Appreciation Week 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:30–8 AM— Newspaper Club 8:30 AM–3 PM—Book Fair 2:45–3:45 PM—Math Club	5 A Teacher Appreciation Week 6 AM–8 PM—Referendum Vote (SSES) 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:30–8 AM—Select Choir 5–7 PM—Ice Cream Social (SSES)	6 B Teacher Appreciation Week 7:40–8 AM—Student Council 2:45–3:45 PM—Debate Club 2:45–3:45 PM— Weather Club	7 C Teacher Appreciation Week Art & Spanish MOMA Trip	8 D Teacher Appreciation Week 7:30–8 AM—Gang Green 7:30–8 AM—Jazz Band 7:30 AM—Kids Who Care	9
10	11 E Spirit Week—Crazy Hair Art & Spanish MOMA Trip 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt	12 F Spirit Week—Stuffed Animate 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:30–8 AM—Select Choir	13 A Spirit Week—Hat 9:30 AM–12 PM— 5 th Grade Visits 2:45–3:45 PM—Debate Club 2:45–3:45 PM—Weather Club	14 B Spirit Week—Mismatch 7–9 PM—ELF Trivia Bee (SSES)	15 C Spirit Week—School Colors 7:30–8 AM—Gang Green 7:30–8 AM—Jazz Band 7:30 AM—Kids Who Care 9:15 AM—PTA Meeting 3–11 PM Westchester Dinner Theater	16
17	18 D Movie & Switch It Up Day— Moula Reward 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 6–9 PM—Family University (JBHS)	19 E 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:30–8 AM—Select Choir 12:10 PM—EARLY DISMISSAL 5:30–7 PM—Take a Walk in My Shoes 7:30 PM—Board of Ed Mtg Uno Chicago Grill Day	20 F 8 th Grade Class Picture Day 7:40–8 AM—Student Council 9:45–10:27 AM— Incoming 6 th Grade Parent Coffee 10:15–10:45 AM—PTA Job Fair (SSES) 2:45–3:45 PM—Debate Club 2:45–3:45 PM—Weather Club	21 A	22 B 7:30–8 AM—Gang Green 7:30–8 AM—Jazz Band 7:30 AM—Kids Who Care 7:30 PM—Midnight— PTA Spring Social	23
24	25 NO SCHOOL (Memorial Day)	26 C 7:30–8 AM—8 th Grade Govt 7:30–8 AM—Select Choir	27 D 2:45–3:45 PM—Debate Club 2:45–3:45 PM— Weather Club	28 E	29 F Lake Compounce Trip 7:30–8 AM—Gang Green 7:30–8 AM—Jazz Band 7:30 AM—Kids Who Care	30
31						

June 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
A, B, C, D, E, F indicates class schedule for that day (subject to schedule changes)	1 A	2 B 7:30–8 AM—Select Choir	3 C Bus Driver Appreciation Day 7:40–8 AM—Student Council	4 D 1:57–2:40 PM— Grade 6 Roman Day	5 E 7:30–8 AM—Gang Green 7:30–8 AM—Jazz Band 9:15 AM—PTA Meeting 9:30 AM—Volunteer Brunch	6
7	8 F 7:30–8 AM—Select Choir	9 A 8:15–8:59 AM— 7 th Grade Awards Ceremony 7:30 PM—Board of Ed Mtg	10 B 7:30–8:10 AM— 6 th Grade Awards Ceremony 8 th Grade Math Trip to Yale	11 C	12 D 7:30–8 AM—Gang Green 7:30–8 AM—Jazz Band 8 th Grade Dance	13
14	15 E 8 th Grade Trip to Six Flags	16 F Field Day—Grades 6, 7, 8	17 A	18 B LAST DAY OF SCHOOL (TENTATIVE) 8 th Grade Graduation (ECC)	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				