

Wellsprings Friends School

Autumn, 2005



Exciting Days!

by Dennis Hoerner, School Head

Once again at full capacity of sixty students, Wellsprings has been having an exciting beginning to its twelfth year. Many special events are described in this newsletter. One essential part of the school is field trips, sometimes by the whole school but also on a day-to-day basis by various classes. A list of those undertaken during the first term appears in the sidebar.

I personally attended two inspiring conferences in early October. The first was the annual Gathering of Heads of Friends Schools, held this year at Westtown School, outside of Philadelphia. The other was here in Eugene, the three-day conference of the Oregon Association for Alternatives in Education. These conferences coincidentally represent the two legs Wellsprings stands on: our radical belief in the essential Goodness in each person; and our commitment to providing an alternative, integrative approach to learning. Our school is a living example of what Marshall Rosenberg (founder of Non-violent Communication) has termed “life-enhancing education.”

Support for this awesome school comes first and foremost from individuals. We also have moved into a new phase of actively seeking foundation support, in which we are efficiently being helped by Carsie Blanton, who has joined our community as a part-time grantwriter. The first fruits have started appearing in the recent awards of \$6,000 from the Braemar Charitable Trust, \$1,000 from the Juan Young Trust and \$100 from the Selco Credit Union. In addition, Wellsprings is the recipient of a three-year grant of \$1,000 per year from the Clark Foundation, administered by the Friends Council on Education.

Other part-time staff additions besides Carsie are Maggie Matoba, who teaches Gardening; Laurie McCloskey, teaching a World Cultures class; and Mary Steinberg-Pichey, who has become our first—and desperately needed—“Kitchen Coordinator.” Mary, mother of Wellsprings graduate Janine Pichey, is well-known in the WFS community. She has volunteered in many ways over the last three years, including her dynamic presence on the Fundraising Committee.

Wellsprings Friends School and its students are *thriving*.

First Term Field Trips

September

- 9 Miniature golf
- 13 Jacobs Gallery
- 14 Puppet material collection
- 15 Ken Kesey Statue and visit to former teacher
- 18 Churchill High School Community Garden
- 20 Burrito distribution to homeless people in Eugene
- 20 EcoVillage sustainable community (Eugene)
- 22 Collect job applications
- 22 Eugene Public library
- 23 Guitar Center
- 23 Bowling alley

October

- 6 Visit to Tree Sitters in the McKenzie Forest
- 12 Latino Market
- 13 Sky Art planning meeting at Lane Community College
- 14 Bioneers Conference
- 17 Goodwill
- 20 Ropes Course
- 21 Pumpkin Patch
- 25 Hult Center performance of “The Great Tennessee Monkey Trial”
- 27 Lane County Landfill
- 28 Echo Hollow community

November

- 1 Burrito distribution to homeless people in downtown Eugene
- 1 University of Oregon Bookstore
- 2 Maude Kerns Art Center (Dia de los Muertos exhibit)
- 3 Aprovecho Research center (Cottage Grove)
- 8 Mushroom Hunt

New Staff Member

by Amelia Kimball ('07)



Chanci Herer is the newest addition to the Wellsprings full time staff. She is teaching Storytelling, Creative Writing, Grammar, Spanish, and Outsiders Literature.

Self-described as “first and foremost a mother” (to one and a half year old son, Kamiloh), Chanci miraculously finds time to pursue another passion, writing. She has published some of her work and writes everything—poems, music, and short stories. “Everything I like to do can be done at home,” she says.

Chanci comes to the Wellsprings family from tutoring at Ashland High School for two years. She says that she prefers the more laidback atmosphere of Wellsprings, commending the informal nature for instilling a sense of equality in the energy between students and teachers.

Next term she plans to teach Singing and Songwriting and Art, and continue with her various English classes.

ManiFest II

Dedicated to Mani Shimada (1987-2003)

by James Fox and Miya Shimada

We made it! We had another successful ManiFest! About three hundred people, including many from the WFS community, gathered at the WOW Hall on October 8 for a night of wild music and a celebration of Mani’s life and spirit. The bands, Tormentium (from Eugene and featuring former WFS student Jesse Levine), Necryptic (from Eugene), World of Lies (from Portland) and Rutah (from Spokane) put on a great show.

This year’s theme for ManiFest was “Lotus Grows in a Pit,” which is based on the Buddhist idea that a beautiful flower blossoms in a muddy place. Inner goodness resides and flourishes everywhere, sometimes even more in a place of chaos. With this theme, we envisioned ManiFest to be a place for cultivating “nonjudgment.” The spirit of ManiFest is to recognize and embrace the inherent goodness in every person, regardless of appearances.

This year, like last, ManiFest was a collaborative project among students, parents, staff, volunteers, musicians, and many other supporters. We were touched by seeing ManiFest grow into an opportunity for dialogue and a bridge between individuals.

Of course, ManiFest was fun at its heart! We hope that it will grow every year and continue to be a reminder of love, compassion, courage, and being in the moment.



Eugene Celebration Parade

by Aubree Ridge ('06)

On Saturday, September 29, Wellsprings participated in the Eugene Celebration parade for the first time. Our parade float theme was diversity. Quite a few students, staff and friends rode on bikes while everyone else was on foot. We carried signs of hope saying “Celebrate Diversity,” “Accept Others,” and “Diversity is Sexy.” Helena Marcus’s first period art class had been making colorful masks to wear. We also got help to finish the masks from folks who went on the camping trip. Only a few people wore the masks though because it was a challenge to ride bikes and wear them at the same time.

Actually being in the parade was a great experience. An awful lot of people enjoyed what we had to say. We cruised down many parts of downtown and garnered a lot of support from family, friends, and even strangers. It was great experiencing the feeling of being an important part of the Eugene Community. I definitely look forward to next year’s parade; hopefully Wellsprings will be part of it all again!



Doing Good!

by Trevor Cooley ('06)

Tuesday, November 1, I came to school a little early to help Helena [Marcus] make burritos for the second time this year. You might think that I am doing this for a cooking class, but it is way better than that. Helena teaches a “Do Good” class where the students and Helena do good things for other people. Unfortunately I am not in this particular class, but I joined the class for this assignment.

We worked through our morning classes to make about 75 burritos that would be handed out to homeless/hungry people at parks around town. Like I said, this is the second time I have done this this year; and after doing it, it makes you feel so good about what you did. It makes me wonder why more people don't get involved.

“There is magic with the act of kindness that transcends cultural, racial & religious differences.”

Experiencing Tea

by Sarah Beechinor ('05)

My high school was completely different from all the others in Eugene. It's small, liberal and self-defining. The staff is incredible, and everyone feels like family.

During my senior year, I took Japanese class in order to graduate. However, instead of simply being a means to an end, the class became very meaningful to me. Every Tuesday we went to our teacher's house and practiced *chado* (“the way of Tea”) in her tatami-mat tea room.

Our teacher, Miya, is a short, fun-loving woman with long black hair and a face that's warm with classic beauty. She reminds me of an Asian version of Audrey Hepburn. When she's around you feel joy wrap around you giving you good energy.

The meditation accompanying the tea ceremony was very inspiring. Towards the end of my last semester, Miya said she wanted to dress me up in kimono and host my first real tea ceremony. I felt so special and excited because I've always wanted to dress up in a kimono, and I felt as if I was a daughter to her. Anyone who has met Miya would understand. She is like the mother to all the kids who attend Wellsprings. Wearing the kimono was slightly painful but once I saw my reflection in the mirror, my heart melted away.

The dress was beautiful, and the colors made an elegant contrast together. The inside of the robe was a pale pink with white butterflies and the dress robe, which is on the outside, was a darkened maroon with moonlight stitching. My hair was spiraled up in chopsticks and when I walked into the tea-room my dress gracefully moved with me. I served all the students authentic green tea, including myself, and felt grateful that I had an opportunity to learn and grow from that experience.



The Gift of Silence

by Hanna Still

Our opening ritual at Wellsprings Friends School is to launch each day with a Morning Circle of checking-in and announcements. On Fridays this is followed by an approximately fifteen-minute Circle of Silence.

Friday of the second week of school this fall, I was introduced to the students at Morning Circle, and then I remained in the Circle for the period of Silence. I was quite amazed how everyone present exhibited a calm and comfort with the Silence.

By today, we have concluded four weeks into the school year. It's Friday again. As the lunch hour began, I was close to the school's entry. I pulled a half sheet of paper and pen from my purse. A new student came by and I asked whether I might ask her reaction to the period of Silence.

"The one journey
that ultimately
matters is the jour-
ney into the place of
stillness deep within
one's self."

-Elizabeth O'Connor

Unhesitatingly, she replied: "It is totally awesome! It is much needed. Every school should do that! We become a group; it gives us focus. —Today is my tenth day at this School."

Right away a student walked by who has been at Wellsprings for more than a year and who will graduate before long. To the same question, she immediately responded: "It could be used more creatively. People submit to it, as if it were the same as submitting to 'doing nothing'! I personally like it. But with guidance and discussion we could use it more creatively."

By that time I was sitting on a small bench, finishing writing every word, when a new student peeked my way to see what was transpiring. Again, I simply asked whether I might inquire her reaction to the period of Silence. Without missing a beat, the new student exclaimed: "We should have it every day! It is so powerful. We come together in the Silence and it becomes like a ritual for us by which we find ourselves in community."

The girl picked up a backpack and moved on, while another student looked quizzingly to discern what was going on there at the bench in the corner. "Oh," he had no doubt that he knew his thought on the matter - exactly - as soon as he heard my query: "When one is in a school, one's mind is so occupied in so many directions that there is no time for me to see what's going on in my mind. In the Silence I get a chance to see what's going on in my mind"

I was puzzled! How come I used to hear resistance on the part of youth towards periods of Silence, whereas in this situation I encountered only warm receptivity toward Silence?

And as always, Silence led me to clarity: It is the common, consistent approach at Wellsprings that all interaction is based on deep listening, that the hearer is expected to reflect on the speaker's words, the thoughts which are raised, that the hearer develops courage to form his/her own truth. With deep appreciation, I note this style in every teacher, the school head, most gratefully. The seeds of Silence are growing in the students.

Ways to Support Wellsprings....

- ✓ **Volunteers** provide much needed assistance around the school. Contact Yancey if you have some time to offer and would like to find out how you can help.
- ✓ **Financial Contributions** are welcome anytime, but in particular twice a year, fall and spring, we appeal to the friends and supporters of Wellsprings to open their wallets as well as their hearts. General fund financial support from the community is *essential* for the continuation of our work.
- ✓ **Stock Transfers** Several contributors to Wellsprings find this to be one of the most attractive ways to give to the school. We have a DTC account whereby we can receive any amount of stock, small or large. If you risk a large capital gains tax by selling stock, it may be an advantage to donate your stock to Wellsprings, a non-profit organization, for the tax deduction. Contact Trustee and Treasurer, Hanna Still, at 541-345-5588 for details.
- ✓ **The Mani Shimada Memorial Fund** was set up to honor a well-loved student who died suddenly in 2003 from bacterial meningitis. A designated portion of the fund is available each year to support on-going Wellsprings projects. To contribute this way, your check should be made out to the school with "Shimada Memorial Fund" in the memo line.
- ✓ **Automatic Monthly Payments** You can easily arrange for a regular payment of a specified sum to be made to Wellsprings on the day of your choice. Just contact your financial institution.
- ✓ **Donated Items** from pens and pencils to couches to sports equipment, etc., are always appreciated. Call the office if you have something to give that you think we might be able to use.

In addition, did you know that you can automatically have contributions sent to us when you shop?! It's all done electronically, and *there is no cost to you*. The following programs are easy to use and benefit Wellsprings with little effort.

eScrip: After registering your credit, debit or store cards with eScrip, each time you use those cards at participating merchants, Wellsprings will receive a percentage of your spending. You can register at www.escrip.com.

Albertsons sponsors local schools through their Community Partnership program. Simply register the school code through your preferred savings card at www.albertsons.com.

Washington Mutual has a program called WaMoola for Schools. Please contact a representative of Washington Mutual if you are a member to sign up for this program.

I would like to support Wellsprings Friends School right now! Please accept my tax-deductible check for the amount of \$_____.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Mail donations to:

Wellsprings Friends School
3590 W. 18th Avenue
Eugene, OR 97402

Wellsprings Friends School is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization; contributions are tax-deductible.



A “Glory-ous” Meal
by Hanna Still

Wellsprings Friends School is blessed with many cherished friends and kindred spirits. Among them are deep and profound relationships. Morning Glory Café, located at 450 Willamette Street, is such an outstanding model of partnership.



Follow the circle of love:

- Wellsprings Friends School is a healing culture where students’ psyches grow.
- Students cherish this affirming support.
- Parents of such students rejoice, experiencing the emotional, self-affirming, nurtured, growth evidenced in their offspring.
- The greater sense of self-worth encourages students to advance their life possibilities.

Morning Glory is owned by Gail Brown and Katya Blissenbach, parents of Colin, a senior at Wellsprings. Student, parents and school are an excellent match. Our budget calls for us to raise \$39,000 this fiscal year. Appreciative of the School’s approach, Gail and Katya offered to sponsor a benefit dinner at their restaurant.

This glorious dinner took place Friday evening, November 4th.

- ** The owners and several Wellsprings students and parents cooked 144 meals! (consisting of lasagna, salad, bread, tea, coffee, and blueberry and apple cobbler)
- ** Eleven Wellsprings students waited on tables and did clean-up.
- ** Parents provided four hours’ worth of great music.
- ** Stories decorated the tables.
- ** The tables were arranged to provide an excellent mixing of community guests and Wellsprings students and parents.
- ** The joint Morning Glory and Wellsprings spirit of generosity and sharing prevailed: 47 dinners were served for free, and yet, *\$1,825 was contributed to the badly needed Wellsprings income.*

Wellsprings and Morning Glory Café are blessed as we live supportively in the spirit of love, providing one another with an inner glowing warmth.

