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leadership
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action

Meriden Children First Initiative



www.meridenchildrenfirst.org

Summer 2006 Issue #52

Full-Day Kindergarten to Grow in Meriden

For several years the Meriden Board of Education has had the expansion of full-day kindergarten as a priority. Given limits to school space and budgets, this had been a paper goal.

There is every good reason in the world to expand the availability of full-day kindergarten. Kids who have full-day K experience do better on a range of measures than their half-day peers. Meriden ranks 8th of 11 other CT towns that are similar to Meriden in annual hours of kindergarten instruction.

It's important to remember that no matter what the dollar cost today to expand K, there's a greater cost for our children and community to NOT do anything. Investing in early education such as full-day K has a great return, not least of which are reduced expenditures on remediation and fewer high school drop-outs.

Last Fall, then Board of Education Member Trevor Thorpe convened a

committee of parent and community leaders to discuss how best to implement full-day kindergarten. That group met several times, concluding with a final report in January 2006.

The Board adopted a version of the report in late February, which means that four to five additional classrooms will be added to Hanover Elementary School. This will allow an additional 100 children to participate in full-day kindergarten.

The cost of the facility is reimbursed by the State of Connecticut by more than 85%. That's a good deal.

There is also the question of how to pay for the salaries, benefits and other supporting costs for the additional K classrooms. This past legislative session, Meriden's state delegation sought funding to help pay for the expansion of full-day K. This effort fell short, but there is a

hope that the next session will bring additional resources.

Congratulations to the full-day kindergarten committee for their efforts, and to the Meriden City Council and Board of Education for their commitment to move this forward.

Full-day Kindergarten Committee members include:

Len Suzio, Chair
Lois Lehman, Asst to Chair
Miguel Cardona, Principal, Hanover
Dante Bartolomeo, Parent
Craig Hazel, Parent
Roland Cockfield, NAACP
Sean Moore, Chamber of Commerce
Amy Filippides, Parent
Barbara Fraser, Citywide PTO
Christine Ganter, K teacher
M.J. Higgins, K teacher
Mary Cortright, Superintendent
Elizabeth Felix, K teacher
Sandy Conway, Preschool teacher
Scott Hozebin, Board of Education
Mark Hughes, Board of Education
Maureen Kelleher, Language Arts
Glen Lamontagne, Asst Super.
Kathy Notkowski, K Teacher
David Radcliffe, Children First
Trevor Thorpe, City Council
Pat Lynes, City Council
Karen Rainville, Easter Seals Head Start
Sandy Maier Schede, City Council
Marjorie Tucci, 1st grade teacher
Jeffrey Villar, Assoc. Super.
Kellie Young, K Teacher
Rosalie Katzer, Secretary

Children First is a non-partisan community-wide collaborative of parent and community leaders with a shared vision: *All Meriden children will come to school ready to learn and will be successful.*

Children First is supported by grants from the Graustein Memorial Foundation, Napier Foundation, Cuno Foundation, Meriden Foundation, CDBG and other important partners.

[Send articles, information & comments to](#)

105 Miller Street Meriden, CT 06450

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Parent leadership Training

Congrats to new graduates of the Meriden Parent Leadership Training Institute class. There was a wonderful ceremony on June 12 at the Board of Education. Thanks to the following local officials for attending:

Michael Cardona, Board of Education, Jim Ieronimo (United Way), Chris Donovan (State Rep. & House Majority Leader), Cathy Abercrombie (State Rep & PLTI Grad), Hilda Santiago (City Councilor and PLTI Grad), Mayor Mark Benigni, and Mary Cortright (School Superintendent).

This year's graduates are:

Geo Filippides
Trudy Haury
Sandra Jackson
Jena LeBlanc-Webb
Daniel O'Bryan
MaryAnn Pasquence
Ritza Policard
Kristin Riley
Teri Salafia

Thanks to Noemi Gonzalez for her support of the class.

Donate your **old cell phones and used ink cartridges** to Children First.

Proceeds benefit the Buddy Reader Program. Call 630-3566 for pick-up or drop them off at Children First inside the Meriden Public Library.

In 2005, your ink cartridges were turned into more than \$400!

Save the Date:

Children First Annual meeting
Wednesday, October 11, 6:30

John Barry Elementary School

Thank You Audrey & Jim

There are so many people in Meriden who work hard everyday to improve the lives of area children and families. Many of those efforts go unnoticed and unrecognized.

When these important people move on to other pursuits, it gives us pause to think about their contributions. So in that spirit, we want to thank two important people who are moving on: **Audrey Burke** (Director Pupil Personnel, Meriden Board of Education) and **Jim Ieronimo** (Office of Adult and Continuing Education, Board of Education). Meriden is better because of your work.

CT Parent Power

www.democracyinaction.org/ctparentpower/

Connecticut Parent Power is a statewide parent action network with a history of strengthening the voices of parents on the many decisions that affect our children and families. Parents are uniting together to build local and statewide networks with the goal of providing accurate and important information on issues, training on how and when to take action, and connections with other people statewide that are ready to act to protect and benefit children.

Each year, Connecticut Parent Power defines priority issues necessary for children's well-being and a plan for action to implement or protect those priorities.

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How Schools Work

** Save the Date **

Learn about how our schools and city works from your local and state elected leaders!

**Wednesday, September 27,
6:30 p.m.**

Board of Education, 22 Liberty St.

Health Care for Everyone (in Meriden and Connecticut!)

Meriden Children First was one of ten organizations across Connecticut to recently receive a grant from the Universal Health Foundation with the purpose of supporting efforts to improve the state's broken health care system. For more information about this project, visit www.healthcare4every1.org. In June, there was a fascinating discussion on local and state health issues. Thanks to those below who participated.

Marlene McGann, MAWSAC
Sean Moore, Chamber of Commerce
Ramesh Sanghvi, small business owner
Kim Paluska, Community Health Center
Hilda Santiago, CT Parent Power/City Council
Barbara Sokol, Board of Education
Chris Donovan, State Rep/Majority Leader
Roland Cockfield, NAACP
Tauna Idone, CT Parent Power
Frances Padilla, Universal Health Foundation
Dante' Bartolomeo, Children First
Marissa Cardona, Children First

Claudia Ferrara, Midstate Medical Center
Lea Crown, Meriden Health Dept
Joe Lynes, Shelter NOW
Esther Silcott, parent leader
David Salafia, small business/City Council
Lou Brady, Community Health Center
Debbie Johnson, parent leader
Beth Vumbaco, Health Department
Ann Pratt, CT Parent Power
David Radcliffe, Children First
Greg Polanski, Firefighters Local 1148

Helping Children Improve Reading Skills

Senior Buddy Readers Celebration

The Senior Buddy readers program marked the successful completion of their fourth year with a celebration at the Augusta Curtis Cultural center on June 8th. Guest speakers at the event included Superintendent Mary Cortright, Senior Center Director John Hogarth, Hanover School Principal Miguel Cardona and Thomas Hooker School Principal Marion Hourigan. Ben Franklin School Principal Daniel Coffey was also present. Each expressed their thanks to the senior volunteers who dedicated one hour a week during the school year to help first and second graders improve their reading skills. After receiving certificates and gifts, the seniors enjoyed cake, coffee, and the historic atmosphere of the Curtis Center. Rose Flowers and Gifts and Kogut Florist donated floral arrangements for the event and The Friends of the Library donated a free book coupon for each of the volunteers.

Senior Buddy Readers is an intergenerational literacy and mentoring program currently operating in six Meriden elementary schools. During the 2005-2006 school year, 80 senior citizen volunteers provided one-on-one reading help to over 200 children. To find out more about the Senior Buddy Readers program, call David Radcliffe, Director of Meriden Children First Initiative, at 630-3566.

Thanks to 'Books to Dreams' and the founder Miriam Stannard Epstein for her support of the Senior Buddy Readers program and her continued donations of gently used books. Since September 2004, Books to Dreams has donated 486 stuffed animal "Reading Buddies" and 1,000 books for the at-risk children who participate in the Senior Buddy Readers program. Our Books on Wheels lending library book carts would be very bare without Books to Dreams' donations of library books.

The 7th Annual Silver City Brewfest

Spend An Evening With Good Friends For A Good Cause

**A Charitable Event for Meriden Children First Initiative's Senior Buddy Readers Program
Friday, September 8, 2006 • 5:00 – 9:00 PM • Rain or Shine**

Downtown Meriden (Next to the Police & Courthouse Complex)
Tickets are \$20 per person or \$25 the day of the event.

Sample over 25 International & Micro Brews

Don't like beer? We have a selection of 25 Wines to Sample.

**Includes FREE Hamburgers, Hotdogs & Music
Judge the Local Restaurants in a CHILI COOKOFF!**

Must be 21 years or older to attend. Driver's license/photo ID required.

Order your tickets today to support this valuable program!

Name: _____

No. of tickets: _____

Address: _____

Payment: ___ Cash ___ Check Total enclosed: \$ _____

Phone: _____

Orders and payment can be mailed to:

Meriden Children First Initiative • 105 Miller Street, Meriden, CT 06450 • Phone: 630-3566

Make checks payable to: Silver City Brewfest or Children First Initiative

You can also pick up tickets Valencia Liquor, 1231 E. Main St., Meriden, below Ocean State Job Lot

Optional Reading: **Dave's Observations on Childhood**

*David Radcliffe has been the
Director of Children First for
seven years.*

*The notes that follow feature his
wife Chauce and sons, thirteen-
year old Gage, and identical twin
first-grade graduates Ben and
Noah.*

Ben was trying to come up with the
word 'diaphragm', the muscle to help
you breathe. 'Is it called diarrhea?',
he asked.

Ben and Noah wrote a number of
letters to Santa this past Christmas, to
make sure they were covered present-
wise. Ben's last note read: "Santa, I

wrote you four letters, did you get
them?"

Chauce and I went out to eat the other
night. It's strange to go to a restaurant
and not ask for crayons for the kids.

A song overheard at a school music
holiday event: "The most famous
reindeer at the mall . . ."

Ben's dream summer vacation is to go
to a gas station to get snacks.

Noah is really into "Wheel of Fortune".
He said the lady who turns the letters is
named 'Man a Wife' (Vanna White).

We were driving to nowhere in
particular one day. Noah was asleep.
He woke up suddenly and out of the
blue asked if the pizza party is still on,
then he fell right back to sleep.

Meriden Children First
105 Miller Street
Meriden, CT 06450

2006 Meriden Community Resource Directory

Revised one pager, easy-on-
the-eyes in Spanish and
English available at the
Meriden Public Library and
online at
www.meridenchildrenfirst.org

2006 Parent's Guide to the Education Budget

Family-friendly booklet that
explains all the mysterious and
gooey insides of the local
budget-setting process.
This is important info for
parents & taxpayers.

Call 630-3566 for a copy, stop
by the library or
print your own from
www.meridenchildrenfirst.org