

# superstar 10

march calendar

# it's spring!

well, almost...  
the vernal equinox is  
march 20th.

- 2 | Read Across America Day
- 2 | Dr. Seuss Birthday
- 14 | Daylight savings day
- 17 | St. Patrick's Day
- 18 | Storytelling Night 6:00pm SM
- 20 | Spring arrives!
- 30 | Spring Picture Day

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**School hours:**

**Full Sessions K-5**

**South Mountain:**

First Bell 8:05am  
8:10am-2:40pm

4-hr Sessions  
8:10am-12:10pm

**Annex:**

First Bell 7:55am  
8:00am-2:30pm

4-hr Sessions  
8:00am-12:00noon

**SAVE our PLANET**



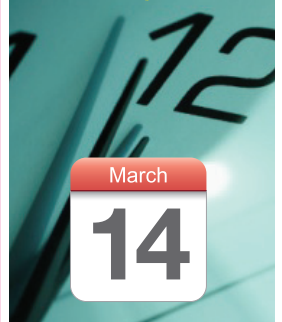
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**Contact: Kim Miller by email at: [kdmills@optonline.net](mailto:kdmills@optonline.net)**

**box tops:**

**Please keep bringing in those Box Tops!**

**Yvette Holowczak**  
[yvholowczak@yahoo.com](mailto:yvholowczak@yahoo.com)

daylight savings  
don't forget!



it's almost spring!

## presidents column

Sylvia Cutler & Laura Reichgut, PTA Co-Presidents



We can't believe we're well past the 100 days of school and it's March already. We look forward to the warmer days of spring, especially after so much snow was dumped on us these past weeks! We'd like to remind you again to be cautious and courteous when dropping off and picking up your children from school, as they're our precious cargo and we still anticipate more inclement weather conditions as March comes in like a lion.

It seems that so much has been happening these past weeks, and the horribly saddening devastation caused by the earthquake in Haiti has truly hit home in our school district and our own South Mountain community. We applaud Ms. Lehn's "Chores for Change" and "Helping Hands for Haiti" initiatives which encourage our children to help contribute to the urgent relief effort bringing aid to the many Haitians affected by this unexpected disaster. We thank Laura Griffin for volunteering to be the parent coordinator to spearhead the school's charitable effort and we gratefully acknowledge the immediate attention and deep concern that she, as well as our Superstars and entire school community, has made to support this imperative humanitarian cause.

With charity in mind, we hope to see you at our annual Storytelling Night on Thursday, March 18 from 6:00 to 7:30pm at South Mountain School. This year we'll be promoting a theme of "Giving, Kindness and Consideration" to help communicate to our children the important significance of being caring and compassionate towards others, especially those in need. We promise this to be a wonderful evening of fun for our children as they enjoy stories read by parents and staff, entertainment, crafts and a snack. We also ask if you can bring a book to donate, we will be accepting collections for the charity ReRead: Free books for Children Literacy Program. Don't forget to have your Superstars wear their PJs and bring a favorite blanket or stuffed animal to get comfortable and have a great time!

Speaking of books, we'd like to thank all of the 5th grade parents for organizing a fabulous used book sale to benefit the 5th grade camping trip. Despite snow days trying to sabotage the sale, we're glad it could be extended so that everyone had a chance to shop. The incredible amount and selection of books at both schools was quite impressive and it looked like the kids got some great books to read at awesome prices. Many thanks to everyone who donated and helped with the sale, as it is an essential effort in helping the 5th graders accomplish their funding goals for their trip. Also, if you missed it last month, they'll be selling again at Storytelling Night so we ask you to stop in the cafeteria and help support their sale.

Please look out for an announcement rescheduling our February general PTA meeting. Due to snow cancellations, and most importantly, other major district conflicts on that night, we felt it best to postpone our "Technology in Action" meeting to make sure all could attend. We are excited to have Paul Roth, our district's Chief Information Officer, come and present all the new and impressive technology at South Mountain. It's sure to be an informative evening and we're anxious to share with everyone the great enhancements the PTA has helped purchase as a result of all your generously donated dollars.

We have a lot of wonderful events coming up in the next few months such as the Teacher and Staff Appreciation Luncheon, the Spring Art Show and Concert and of course the ever popular School Spirit Day and our School Fair. We know there'll be a lot going on and as always we welcome your help and look forward to seeing you at these exciting events!

*Sylvia and Laura*

## communication tips

### TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

At our last general PTA meeting, our panel of veteran parents offered up some very helpful tips for effectively communicating with your child's teacher. Some of those tips included:

- 1 Open the lines of communication with your child's teacher by asking him/her how he/she would like to communicate with you (*email, notes, phone calls*).
- 2 Introduce yourself and your child by writing a short note to his/her teacher, explaining your child's strengths and areas of possible improvement. Also, be sure to include your child's extra-curricular activities so that the teacher gets to know your "whole" child.
- 3 As much as possible, try to involve your child in any communication with the teacher. This emphasizes that you (*the parent*), child and teacher are a team. In middle school and high school, other teachers and guidance counselors may become part of the team.
- 4 Understand what is in your child "official" files and make certain that they accurately reflect your child's progress.
- 5 Information is key because it allows us, as parents, to make better choices. Start tapping into the "buzz" in middle and high school by having middle school or high school students as babysitters. They are a source of uncensored information. Also, talk with other parents about resources and approaches.
- 6 When in doubt, speak with the teacher. Graciously advocating for your child will be viewed as such, not as nagging.
- 7 Each day, give your child a "glow" (*something he/she did really well*) and a "grow" (*what can be done better*) moment.
- 8 Finally, our panelist offered an array of resources they use often:
  - a. Library, library, library
  - b. The Parenting Center in the SOMSD (*led by Karen Weiland*)
  - c. Powerschool (*formerly Edline*)—online communication tool for middle and high school students
  - d. The Read-Aloud Handbook by Jim Trelease (one of the many books mentioned)

*Special thanks to moderator Lynne Toye and parent panelists: Goldie Bryant, Patty Brown-Christenson and Renee Leviton.*

## making SM safe

## principal's message

Tina Lehn, Principal

South Mountain School should be a safe and nurturing place for every child who comes through our doors. The teachers and I are dedicated to doing everything we can to provide a safe learning environment for every single child. However, there are times when our children come to school worried that someone is going to taunt or bully them. This robs them of that feeling of safety.

I have been thinking a lot and reading a lot about bullying lately. I have met with and talked to several children in our South Mountain who have been bullied, and several who are doing the bullying. Bullying is a serious issue that every school in the nation faces. The research shows that up to a half of all children will be involved in bullying this year as a victim or a perpetrator, with many more witnessing bullying acts on a regular basis. We are committed in South Mountain to confronting this problem so that those who are being bullied can feel safe again, and those who are bullying can learn to change their behavior.

Every morning, our teachers use The Responsive Classroom activities at morning meeting to model ways to interact with each other. When incidents of bullying have come to light, I have met with the children and asked our social workers to meet with them as well. I have also asked the social workers to present several lessons that talk about bullying, and show the children the effects bullying has on their classmates. They have also created a leadership group in fifth grade that will not only address issues of bullying, but will present their findings to staff and children over the coming months.

If you ask a child who is bullying others why he or she is doing this, here are some of the reasons they give:

- Because I see others doing it
- Because it's what you do if you want to hang out with the right crowd
- Because it makes me feel stronger, smarter, or better than the person I'm bullying
- Because it's one of the best ways to keep others from bullying me

If your child tells you he or she is being bullied, don't tell them it is no big deal. To them it is, and they need your support as well as some strategies to help deal with it. If it continues, reach out to me and I will address it in school as well. To reduce this problem, parents and schools need to work together so that children realize that the adults in their lives are making their world safer.

There are several excellent websites that provide resource for families of those being bullied as well as those who are bullying. I encourage you to consult the Education.com **Special Edition on Bullying at School and Online**. This resource helps parents take an active role in addressing bullying at school and online. It includes articles, video clips, quizzes, online workshops, community forums and quick-fact lists, all available free-of-charge at:

<http://www.education.com/special-edition/bullying/>

A highlight of the content is a list of 10 actions parents can take to help reduce bullying. The complete list can be found at:

[http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref\\_Ten\\_Actions\\_Parents](http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_Ten_Actions_Parents)

I am including a survey that you may wish your child to read. I believe that many of our children who may be bullying others haven't really realized the pain they are inflicting. If your child is willing to answer these questions honestly and you are willing to talk to him or her about it in an open way, you will have opened the door to an important dialogue that will help your child grow to be a kind person, willing to speak up when they see bullying, and brave enough not to join in. You may also wish to share it with them and talk about it without asking them to fill it out.

**You do not need to return this to school:** I offer it as an option to open the door to a conversation with your child, and as something your child can reflect on.

Tina

## contact info:

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**Renee Leviton**

## principal's survey (optional)

There's a boy or a girl (or maybe more than one) whom you've repeatedly shoved, or punched or physically pushed around in a mean way just because you felt like it.

You had someone else hurt someone you don't like.

You've spread a nasty rumor about someone, in conversation, in a note, or through email or instant messaging.

You and your friends have regularly kept one or more kids from hanging out or playing with you.  
*Examples: at your lunch table at school, during sports or other activities, or activities that are a part of a club or other kind of group activity.*

You've teased people in a mean way, calling them names, making fun of their appearance, or the way they talk or dress or act.

You've been part of a group that did any of these things—even if you only wanted to be part of the crowd.

## hello superstars!

## fundraising 2010

Shana Teitelbaum & Marilyn Wright, Fundraising VP Co-Chairs

We hope you are enjoying a break from snowy February and are hopeful for a sunny March. As you probably have noticed, things have been relatively quiet on the Fundraising front.

Thank you to all who supported our Valentine's Day Wish fundraiser. As you may be aware we raised over \$600 for our school. We worked very hard to provide your teachers and school staff with special wishes from each and everyone who participated.

Apparel sales have been completed and we hope you are enjoying your new gear. Please keep an eye out for some additional spring apparel items.

**Say Cheese Again!** We will be offering spring photos. This round of photos will be taking place the last hour of school until 1 hour after school. Parents, this is an excellent opportunity to get the siblings together for a group photo. We will notify you of the specific date and location, which will take place in a few weeks.

As promised, here is a continuing list of monies raised from our events this year:

## Past Fundraising Events

September	Book Fair Profit \$4,200
October	Picture Day Profit \$4,077
October	Gift Wrap Profit \$5,000
October	Walk-a-thon Profit \$10,000
November	Bake Sale Profit \$720
December	Vendor Sale Profit \$300
January	Skating party apparel sales profit \$476
February	Valentine's Day Wish profit \$700



We plan to spend a large portion of our school's profits on cultural arts this spring, with a focus on topics that are specific to our school.

**Thank you!**

*Shana & Marilyn*



**Attention!** Effective immediately, The Township of Maplewood will be enforcing the non-idling ordinance which states any car running longer than 3 minutes will be served a summons. We ask that you be sensitive to our children and help us stay green in all ways!

## march reminders



March

2

**Dr. Seuss' Birthday**  
**Read Across America Day**



March

14

**Spring Forward:**  
**Remember to turn your clocks forward one hour.**

March

12

COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL presents:

**BIG, The Musical**  
**March 12, 13, 19 & 20, 7:30pm**

**March 14 & 21, 2:00pm**

General

Admission

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\$15 at the door

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March

26

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**March 26-28**

Reserved Seats

(Rows 1-10)

All Reserved

Seats: \$15

For more information and tickets, call:

**Sara Griffiths or**  
**Kathy Hester**  
**(973) 378-2772**

General

Admission

Adults: \$10

Students/

Seniors: \$7

Presented at South Orange Middle School  
Sterling Hall  
70 North Ridgewood Road  
South Orange, NJ

## special ed pto

## special education

by Marilyn Lehren

Special education will likely be a casualty of school budget cuts, but it's too soon to tell the full impact on programs at South Mountain Elementary School.

Educating children with disabilities has come a long way in recent years. This year alone, inclusion classes were added in every grade in every elementary school. These classes are team-taught by regular and special education teachers. Twenty-nine new teachers were hired throughout the district, staff trained, and new technology purchased, funded by \$1.5 million in federal stimulus funding.

These programs are likely to be cut and altered as the Board of Education grapples with a budget gap and steep state cuts in funding for schools.

"It's going to be hard to promise we can sustain everything we've started so far," Superintendent Brian Osborne told a large group of parents attending the Feb. 4 meeting of the Special Education Parent-Teacher Organization, a district-wide group that advocates and supports children with special needs.

One in every seven children in the school district is categorized as having special needs. They include a wide range of learning disabilities, autistic spectrum disorders, ADD/ADHD, visual and hearing impairments, and cerebral palsy. The recent gains in special education have allowed children to attend their neighborhood schools and decreased the number of pullout programs, where children leave their home classroom to learn subjects like reading and math.

South Mountain provides a full array of special education services to help students with learning needs and the PTA is committed to supporting the needs and abilities of all our children and is represented at the Special Ed PTO meetings. The advocacy group provides forums for information and support, and sponsors sports programs at the YMCA and a songs/stories program at the Maplewood Library.

The PTO also works with other groups in promoting special events for children with special needs, including a sensory-friendly showing of films at AMC Essex Green in West Orange. These include "Diary of a Wimpy Kid" at 10am on March 20; and "How to Train Your Dragon" at 10am on April 10. Presented with the Autism Society, the movie auditoriums will have their lights brought up and the sound turned down, families will be able to bring in their own gluten-free, casein-free snacks, and no previews or advertisements will be shown before the movie.

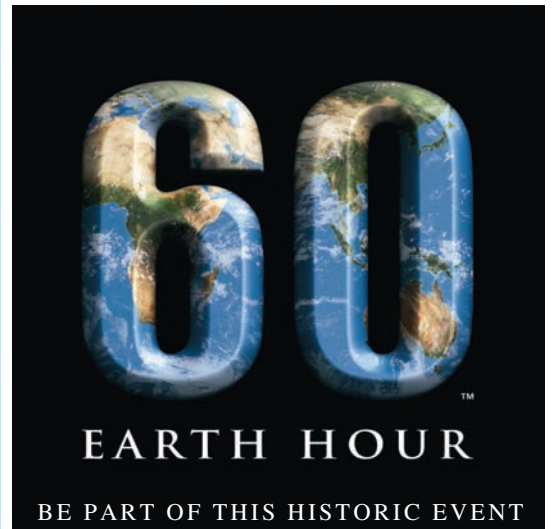
Support and information for families is also available at the Parenting Center, which presents workshops to help families through the maze of the special education process. These include a March 16 workshop on "The ABCs of IEPs and the 123s of 504s." The session, beginning at 7:30pm, will provide an overview of which students might be eligible for each plan, how each process works and how they differ from each other.

The Parenting Center also sponsors a monthly support group for parents of elementary and middle school children diagnosed with ADD/ADHD or children who have attention difficulties.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call or email South Mountain's special education liaison. Your privacy and confidentiality are assured. marilynlehren@hotmail.com or (973) 313-9683.

Marilyn

## be part of earth hour



On March 27, 2010 at 8:30pm, local time, World Wildlife Fund is asking individuals, businesses, governments and organizations around the world to turn off their lights for one hour — Earth Hour — to make a global statement of concern about climate change and to demonstrate their commitment to finding solutions. Turn out. Take action. *Be part of this historic event.*

This largest climate event in history will be celebrated around the globe. Just like New Years Eve, Earth Hour will travel from time zone to time zone starting at 8:30 pm in New Zealand. The United States will witness Earth Hour in cities like Miami, Atlanta, Nashville, Chicago, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. These will join other U.S. cities as well as others around the world, including Abu Dhabi, Amman, Auckland, Beijing, Bogota, Cape Town, Copenhagen, Dubai, Guatemala City, Edinburgh, Helsinki, Hong Kong, Istanbul, Kiev, Kuala Lumpur, Lisbon, London, Manila, Mexico City, Moscow, Oslo, Rome, Singapore, Shanghai, Sydney, Tel Aviv, Toronto, Vancouver, Wellington and Warsaw. 🌟



**Volunteers are still needed to read, share your storytelling skills or help out with the night.** Please contact Janet Christmann (janet973@optonline.net); or Kimberly Minor (kimberlyleeminor@gmail.com) if you are able to volunteer.

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### PTA Executive Board 2010/2011

Join our Nominating Committee!  
The Nominating Committee is a  
group of parents who help identify  
possible candidates to serve on  
the PTA Board. We are looking for  
4-6 parents to join the committee  
this year.

Please contact:

Jen Stemmermann via email at  
jenstemmermann@yahoo.com  
by Wednesday, March 10th.

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## a busy, wonderful 2010!

### programming

Patricia Canning & Marietta Zacker, Programming VP Co-Chairs

We hope everyone is enjoying our winter wonderland. We thank you for joining us during a busy, but wonderful beginning to 2010.

**The Night of the Superstars**, orchestrated by Wendy Miller and Tom Mixon was absolutely amazing. Over 300 South Mountain families attended in their best South Mountain gear. Everyone had a wonderful time and had a moment to shake away the January blues by roller skating with friends and seeing other South Mountain families.

Our second Midtown Direct general PTA meeting: **"Communicating with your Child's Teacher"** was an overwhelming success. The parent panel discussion led by Lynne Toye, shared some very insightful tips. We captured some of those tips for you (see box entitled *tips for communicating with your child's teacher*). Our thanks to Lynne Toye and parent panelist: Goldie Bryant, Patty Brown-Christenson and Renee Leviton for sharing their time and wisdom with the South Mountain community.



We also had another successful visit with the residents of Village Apartments, an independent retirement community in South Orange. Seven South Mountain families spent the morning playing games and singing with the senior residents. Other dates for similar events are being scheduled. Please contact Kanani Briggs (skbriggs1@gmail.com) if

you are interested in participating.

#### Upcoming Events...

**Thursday, March 18 – 6:00pm: Story Telling Night** – Come dressed in your PJs to hear some of your favorite stories and discover new ones. The theme for the night is giving and sharing through volunteerism. Volunteers are still needed to read, share your storytelling skills or help out with the night. Please contact Janet Christmann (janet973@optonline.net); or Kimberly Minor (kimberlyleeminor@gmail.com) if you are able to volunteer.

**April: General PTA Meeting** – We hope to bring you "Technology in Action" (originally scheduled for our February meeting). Date and time to be announced.

**May 3-7: Teacher Appreciation Week** – Each day there will be a special reminder to each teacher and staff member of how appreciative we all are of their hard work. This will culminate in a luncheon on May 7. The planning is being spearheaded by Maria Witt (mariagwitt@yahoo.com) and Michele Billec (mbillec@verizon.net) – stay tuned for more information.

*Patricia & Marietta*

### ad notes:

### Advertising Info

We have made changes to the advertising section of the Superstar newsletter. The PTA welcomes your personal or business ADs, which are still subject to South Mountain families only.

The new advertising rate card will be sent upon request. For more information, please contact Wendy Miller by email at: wemiller5@aol.com

We are now offering a 10% discount for AD placement in three or more issues, a 15% discount for placement in six or more and a 20% discount for all issues of the newsletter.

For advertising information please contact:

#### Wendy Miller

email: wemiller5@aol.com

phone: (973) 761-6780

All checks should be made payable to:

#### SOUTH MOUNTAIN PTA

and sent to her home address:

Wendy Miller

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South Orange, NJ 07079

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For larger sizes and display ADs, please inquire. Submissions by email only.

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2009/2010 Rate Card is now available.

Email request to: wemiller5@aol.com

#### classifieds:

##### Advertising Policy

**Deadline:** the 18th of the prior month when you wish your AD to appear. Contact Wendy Miller at:

(973) 761-6780 or wemiller5@aol.com

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