



# Community Comment

October 2011

## 59th Annual Book Show

by MaryAnn Schwartz

Like seeds of imagination, books grow our children's curiosity and love of learning. From October 10-12 the Community School gymnasium will transform into rows of well-planted literary selections as we "Grow Our Garden of Books."

To complement our garden theme, award-winning authors and illustrators Sarah Stewart and David Small (*The Gardener, The Money Tree, The Library*) will visit on October 12. You won't want to miss learning about their collaborative efforts and possibly, why David keeps his television in the closet!

Our new retail partner in 2011 is Left Bank Books. The staff at Left Bank has worked tirelessly to ensure we have an amazing crop of books to choose from. Left Bank will donate 25% of each purchase back to Community School, resulting in even more books being bought for the School. We are delighted to fuel our St. Louis economy through the support of this local independent book seller.

Left Bank Books has made supporting Community School simple by posting our teachers' wish lists on their website! Go to [www.left-bank.com](http://www.left-bank.com) and click on

the Community School link. Your gift will be acknowledged with a nameplate in the inside cover of each book. If you are unable to come to the show, you may purchase a gift card or book online for your child.

Please mark your calendars for the following activities:

### Monday, October 10

8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Book Show is open for student and parent shopping (Best Seller Bonanza for adults in Haven Art Gallery)

### Tuesday, October 11

7:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Grandparents Day at the Book Show! Book Show is also open for student and parent shopping (Best Seller Bonanza for adults in Haven Art Gallery)

### Wednesday, October 12

8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. – Book Show is open for student and parent shopping

8:15 a.m. – Assembly: Guest Authors and Illustrators Sarah Stewart and David Small

9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. – Student Workshops (Discovery Center)



Making books an integral part of our children's lives is a key component of a Community School education. Over 22,000 volumes can be found in the Discovery Center and classroom libraries. Approximately twenty-five percent of books in the Discovery Center and an even higher percentage in the classrooms are donated by Community School families! Every book plants a seed for future success. We look forward to seeing you at "Growing Our Garden of Books" from October 10 through 12.



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## Community Comment

The parent newsletter of

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#### 2011-2012

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# Headlines:

A Message from Matthew Gould  
(Excerpted from Grade Night speech)

Every educator needs a set of guiding principles and beliefs. First and foremost, I believe that learning is a natural and primary occupation for human beings. Curiosity is an astonishing source of energy for young children as they explore, manipulate, and question the world around them. Something inside compels them to master the complexities and mysteries of their young lives. They are able to conduct systematic and, many times, sophisticated research.

So how do we allow this natural curiosity to grow within the environment we call "school"? Students go off to school and often confront environments that do not promote their growth as learners or human beings. Historically, schools have been organized around the best lessons in discipline, punctuality, the acceptance of authority, and conformity. School then, for most children worldwide, has become boring. Emphasis needs to be placed on higher levels of cognitive work (analysis, evaluation and creation), on experiential learning, and on genuine problem solving.

The faculty at Community is remarkable. Our teachers have the wisdom to let children teach us who they are, thereby unleashing our ability to create dynamic and organic educational programs. A prime example of teachers working together for the common good is our transition of math programs this year to *Math in Focus: The Singapore Approach*.

The background on math at Community School is interesting. When I came to Community in 2004, the School did not utilize one math program. When we started mapping our curriculum that year, we noticed that we weren't always consistent in our math teaching from grade to grade. Thus, in 2005, we adopted a fairly simple and standard math program published by Houghton-



Mifflin. However, that program just went out of print. After a yearlong study, the teachers unanimously chose *Math in Focus*, also published by Houghton-Mifflin, the U.S. version of Singapore Math.

But what is Singapore math? It is based on the national math system of Singapore and promotes a deeper understanding of numbers and math concepts. Students in Singapore have repeatedly ranked at or near the top on international math exams since the mid-1990s.

In contrast to the most common math programs in the United States, Singapore math devotes more time to fewer topics, to ensure that children master the material through detailed instruction, questions, problem solving, and visual and hands-on aids like blocks, cards and bar charts. And with Singapore math, the pace can accelerate by fourth and fifth grades, putting children as much as a year ahead of students in other math programs as they grasp complex problems more quickly.

Singapore math's added appeal is that it has largely skirted the math wars of recent decades over whether to teach traditional math or reform math. Indeed, Singapore math has often been described by educators and parents as a more balanced approach between the two, melding old-fashioned algorithms with visual representations and critical thinking.



### *Headlines, continued:*

Some recent research suggests that students who are taught Singapore math score higher on standardized math tests and, in anecdotal reports, teachers say it helps even young children to develop confidence in their math abilities.

This work on our math program leads me to one of the things I love about Community School and the teachers of Community School. They are always trying to improve: improve their practice to educate children, improve their program, and improve their methods of supporting kids to reach their full potential.

It's tricky because, as we all know, the landscape of education – and of society for that matter – is marked by rapid change.

Some of the challenges we are addressing today include: the incredible speed of change we are experiencing; the overwhelming amount of information that inundates us daily; the ever-expanding world of social networking; the democratization of resources, and thus the loss of authority in determining the quality and verity of the sources of information our students encounter; and the growing complexity of the problems that face us and the need for working together with discipline and creativity.

It is essential that today we must do far more than teach children 'how to learn' and 'how to look things up.' We must teach our students what knowledge has most value, how to use that knowledge, how to organize what they know, how to understand the relationship between past and present, how to tell the difference between accurate information and propaganda, and how to turn information into understanding.

In addition, we need to underscore the importance of creative and ingenious responses to problems and model strategies of adaptation to rapid change. And we

have to provide opportunities for meaningful teamwork.

So we have our work cut out for us. In order for our students to be ethical and responsible leaders in this technological, rapidly changing, complex, conflict-ridden and interconnected world, school has to be a place of practice for the skills they will need. Students need tasks that are meaningful and engaging and demand analytical reasoning.

How do we do this here at Community?

- We do it by creating an environment where everyone is excited about learning and exploration and demonstrating those passions in the classrooms.
- By creating relationships within which we can face failure and learn from it.
- By appreciating and respecting the children in our care in their uniqueness and honoring their individual voices.
- By creating assignments that are open-ended and demanding research and analysis and clear explanation of results.

I end my reflections with a story of a chaplain and retired head of school who spoke at a conference I recently attended.

He described to us a trip he had taken some years ago to Fiji where he visited a small village on the banks of a swiftly flowing and debris-filled river. While standing at the edge of the river, he saw a child on the other bank walk to the rapid water carrying a heavy tin bucket. Slowly and

carefully the child slipped into the river, holding fast to the bucket and keeping it above the water line as he swam across.

"I kept wondering what was in that bucket," the chaplain said. "What was so important, so precious that the child was risking his safety in order to transport his treasure?" What he discovered was that the bucket contained schoolbooks that the child transported to and from his hut each day on his way to school.

I have thought about this story ever since because I want our school to be a place so central to a child's life that he or she would venture through challenges to come here every day. I want it to be a place for exploration alongside encouraging adults and stimulating lessons, a place for taking risks and discovering hope and possibility in the midst of complexity and change.

Community School is a remarkable and unique institution. It is a place that lives its mission and supports children to be all that they can be. It is a place where parents work as integral partners to sustain what happens at the School every day. I remain so grateful to be part of this incredible school and, as always, I appreciate your support.

*Matthew*





## Hats Off to Bill Bolster!

by Michelle Hammersmith

Community School is pleased to welcome our new President of the Board of Trustees, William “Bill” Bolster.

Bill is a familiar face on campus. He is entering his eleventh year as a parent and his sixth year as a member of the Board of Trustees at Community. He also played starring roles in the 2010 Annual Giving videos soliciting and thanking donors for their support. “I’m the bald-headed guy standing next to the mailbox,” said Bill. “The video is a testament to the quality of teachers at Community.” (To view the video, go to [www.communityschool.com/GettingInvolved/AnnualGiving](http://www.communityschool.com/GettingInvolved/AnnualGiving).)

Bill is a firm believer that Community School is the best elementary school in St. Louis. “My wife, Tricia, and I have been blessed to be a part of the Community School family for 11 years. Community School has been a central part of our lives and has helped our children grow academically and personally in ways we could not have imagined when we first walked onto the campus. This outcome is a direct result of the work of the administration, staff and teachers – a group of people who make

Community such a special place.”

Bill graduated from Georgetown University and received his J.D. from Saint Louis University School of Law. He is an attorney with Lewis, Rice & Fingersh, where his practice focuses on general corporate matters. Prior to becoming a lawyer, Bill worked in the Corporate Media and Sports Marketing Department at Anheuser Busch and as an account executive at WSBK-TV in Boston.

Bill has distinguished himself as a volunteer in the St. Louis community. In addition to his tenure on the Community School Board, he is Chairman of the Board of the St. Louis Chapter of Autism Speaks, President of the St. Louis University School of Law Dean’s Council, is a member of the Missouri Blue Ribbon Panel on Autism (Missouri Senate appointment), and serves on the Board of Trustees of St. Johns Mercy Foundation.

Bill and his wife, Tricia, have three children: Patrick, in 6th grade at Community School; Drew, an 8th grader at John Burroughs School and a 2010 graduate



of Community School; and Will, a 9th grader at Hiram Neuwoehner School. In his free time, Bill enjoys annual summer trips, skiing and playing golf – all with his family.

Bill’s excited about his new role as President of the Board of Trustees and looks forward to continuing working with Matthew and the other Board members, as well as carrying out the goals of the Strategic Plan – in particular, maintaining the school’s excellent enrollment.

Hats off to Bill Bolster!

## Admission Notes

We all know that to really “get” Community School you have to come through the doors and experience it. We are hosting two events this fall to invite potential families into the School.

First is our Open House, held in early November, which consists of a presentation (including remarks from two recent CS graduates) and a tour of the School. Next is “Monday with Matthew” — an early morning time to come in, have some coffee, and

informally chat with Head of School Matthew Gould. Parents will have the option of going on a tour afterwards.

If you know anyone who is in the process of choosing a school for their child(ren), please encourage them to attend one of our events! Word of mouth remains our single best marketing tool.

Don’t forget to let prospective families know about our new half-day nursery program!

## Open House

Saturday, Nov. 5 - 9:30 am

## Monday with Matthew

Nov. 14 - 9:15 am

Visit the Admissions section of [www.communityschool.com](http://www.communityschool.com) for more information.



by Mark Palmer

# Advancement Update

It seems that in every respect, the school year at Community has, to use a racing analogy, come out of the starting blocks in a sprint! The students are fully engaged in their classes, and the campus is alive with sounds of joyful learning. What an exciting time to be a part of Community's continuing growth!

As noted in our recent Annual Report, last year's fundraising efforts were spectacular! Our Annual Giving Campaign achieved its highest results in the history of the School, exceeding the goal of \$476,000 through the generosity of our parents, grandparents,

alumni and friends. The Community Classic events raised more than \$40,000 toward operations. And parents donated thousands of volunteer hours to make our numerous events so successful. We thank each and every one of you for the dedication and support you offer the children of Community.

With the new school year comes new opportunities and possibilities. Through participating in Annual Giving, being a part of the School events, and contributing to the upcoming Cornucopia auction, you can play a vital role in providing the best education for

children in all of St. Louis. Send in your Annual Giving gift or pledge as soon as possible – 100 percent participation is our goal. Watch for more information concerning the exciting items that will be available at Kaleidoscope: Cornucopia 2012 on Saturday, March 3. Contact CPA President Susan Goldberg to find out ways you can get involved with parent-driven activities. In these ways, you can help the School race toward another record-breaking finish, where the students will be the true winners!

# Get Involved!

by Cindy Haines  
VP of CPA Communications

Welcome to all new families and welcome back to all those returning to Community School, where we begin an exciting and enriching year together. Community School is a place where every child is known. It doesn't have to stop there: every parent can (and should) be known as well.

They say it takes a village. And a village is what we have here - a literal community of involved and interested parents and excited and engaged children. The parental involvement, both in and outside of school, is not only a critical piece in helping our children achieve a life-long love of learning and strong self-confidence, but also helps set the groundwork for continued academic success.

The Community Parent Association (CPA) is one way for you to become more involved in your child's school experience. Did you know that just by virtue of having a child at Community School, you are already a member of the CPA? It's true! The rest is easy.

Parents are encouraged to invest their time and expertise at all levels: from parent activities in the little building to driving on any one of the multitude of field trips our kids take each year. But it goes so much further: there are many more volunteer opportunities that can be molded to accommodate differing interests and time availabilities. Don't be afraid to try something out – even if it is beyond your comfort zone. What better way to model such behavior that we'd like to see in our kids?



Parent volunteer at School Picnic

See below for some of the opportunities that abound. To get involved, contact CPA Chair Susan Goldberg for more information.

Year-round committees	Event committees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book Covering &amp; Repair</li> <li>• Community Comment</li> <li>• Discovery Center</li> <li>• Faculty Appreciation</li> <li>• Mailing Committee</li> <li>• School Tours</li> <li>• School Store</li> <li>• Yearbook</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book Show - early October</li> <li>• Cornucopia Auction - March</li> <li>• Family Picnic - September</li> <li>• Flower Sale - December &amp; late April</li> <li>• Grandparents/Special Friends Day - early May</li> <li>• Stan &amp; Clayton Rice Night - late October</li> </ul>



## Welcome New Faculty & Extended Day Staff!



**Candace Glass**, JKE, has a bachelors in education from Lindenwood University. In addition to teaching for ten years in the area, she also spent several years writing and editing web-based lesson plans for educators. Candace commented, *“I am so grateful to have found a home in Community School, a place where, thankfully, the social and emotional development of a child are equally as important as academic growth – kind people make the world a much better place in which to live and grow.”*



*“It is such a privilege to be in the presence of children when that spark goes off and new learning occurs. In those ‘a-ha’ moments their eyes light up, toothy grins appear, and some even jump out of their seats. That excitement drives the teaching-learning process and I get to be a part of it everyday.”* says **Robin Kinman** (4S). Robin has a masters from Bank Street College of Education and has been an educator for over 20 years, the last ten at Forsyth School.



**Pete McKeown** graduated from Tufts University with a degree in English, and previously worked in education in Boston. Last year he substituted at Community and taught at Burr Oak Camp. Pete says, *“It’s so refreshing to see students of all ages walk in to school exuding a contagious enthusiasm, excited to learn something new each and every day.”*



**Wayne Scott**, Upper School P.E., received a masters in health and physical education from Northwest Missouri State University. He taught at John Burroughs for the last five years, and is also on the Jamaican Olympic beach volleyball team. Wayne says, *“I feel a sense of satisfaction as a teacher when students can express themselves freely through activities, while having fun and interacting with each other.”*



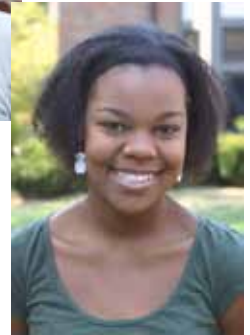
*“I am so happy to be working at Community in Nursery. I really believe in the quality of nurturing and training that the program provides.”* **Stephanie Summerlin** is the new Nursery teacher. She has a bachelors and teaching certification in art and is working toward her masters in teaching from Webster University. She has been a frequent substitute at Community and teaches a variety of classes at COCA.



**Kemper Wisland**, 3S, received his masters in education from Webster University. He has taught at multiple independent schools as a long-term substitute in gym, fifth grade, and nursery, coached lacrosse, and was a member of Community School’s Extended Day program for two years. Kemper says, *“Community School is, was, and always will be the best independent elementary school in St. Louis, trust me... I know from experience.”*





Community School is pleased to welcome **Cat Cooke**, a student teacher from Washington University, who is working in Fifth Grade this semester. Cat is working toward her master's degree in education.



We would like to extend a huge welcome to our two new Extended Day staff members, **Johnny Buse** and **Mahdiah Atkins!** They help make the After School Program hum until 6:00 every night.


## Focus on Faculty


 Community School is thrilled to announce First Grade teacher **Debbie Barmeier** has been honored with the ISSL *Teacher of Distinction* award. Congratulations to Debbie!


 On August 30, Drama teacher **Caroline Zarinelli** received a Peabody Logos Leader in Education Award. Congratulations to Caroline!

 Many teachers took part in professional development this summer: **Dustin Cutts** (5) and **Megan Futhey** (3S) attended the Singapore Math Conference in Colorado; **Mindy Bezdichok** (3N), **Christine Bugnitz** (P.E.), **Jenn Haney** (Upper School Music), **Lynn Christopher** (4N), **Lori Marusic** (French) and **Nancy Schmer** (P.E.) attended the Arts Integration Academy in Arizona; **Mike Pieroni** (4S), **Pete McKeown** (2S), **Kemper Wisland** (3S) and **Robin Kinman** (4S) attended Teachers College Reading Project in New York; **Martha Overcash** (SKW) and **Gale Reed** (SKE) attended S.P.I.R.E. training; **Caroline Zarinelli**

(Drama) attended Project Zero at Harvard University.

 During in-service week, faculty members participated in workshops led by Math in Focus expert **Shelly DuBose**. Ms. DuBose also conducted grade level training with the faculty during the week of September 26.

 **Christine Bugnitz** (P.E.) has been invited back to present at the ISACS conference in October.

 Faculty were busy in other ways this summer as well. Congratulations to **Jered Gruszka** (2N) on the birth of Rocco; **Mike Pieroni** (4S) on the birth of Adelaide; and **Nikki Dantuono** (4N) on the birth of Lucas.



*Second Grade teachers at Math in Focus training.*



# Stan & Clayton Rice Family Night

by Maggi Helmkamp & Nancy Schmer

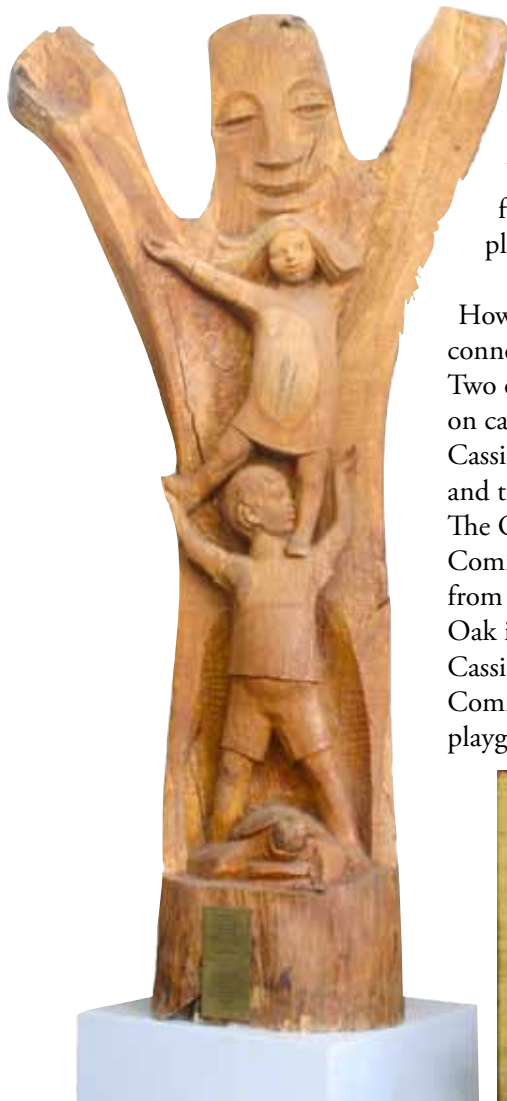
Calling all 5th and 6th graders and their dads or special friends for an evening of fun on Oct. 26! It all begins at 5:00 p.m. with outdoor games coordinated by physical education teacher Nancy Schmer, followed by a fried chicken dinner. The evening's entertainment will be provided by animal wrangler extraordinaire Serengeti Steve. It will be fun to watch as well as be part of the entertainment.

in honor of Clayton Rice, Class of 1996, and his father Stanley who died in a house fire in 1998. The School honors them each year during this event because of the special bond between Stan and Clayton—they were often characterized as best friends. This annual event which includes 5th and 6th graders and their fathers or special friends occurs each fall.



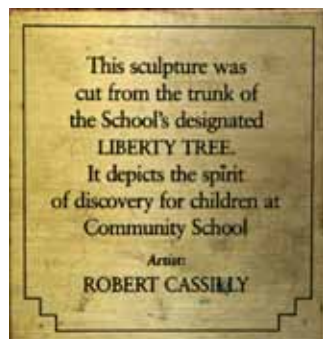
Stan and Clayton Rice Family Night, formerly Father's Night, was renamed

**Please save the date and time now:  
Wednesday October 26th from 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.**



The recent death of Bob Cassilly stunned many St. Louisans. The local artist and sculptor is perhaps best known for Turtle Park across from the zoo, and the sprawling playground of the City Museum.

However, he also had a direct connection to Community School. Two of the most-loved sculptures on campus were created by Cassilly - the Communisaurus and the Oak Tree sculpture. The Oak Tree sculpture in the Community Center was made from the School's Bicentennial Oak in 1982. The following year, Cassilly designed and built the Communisaurus located on the playground just outside the ECC.



# Cassilly & Community

These two works are icons on the Community School campus. It's a rite of passage for young children to climb all the way across the Communisaurus, and every first grader knows the story of the Liberty Tree, and the sculpture made from its trunk.

Our deepest condolences go out to the family and friends of Robert Cassilly.

