



# CASIS PTA POST

Issue 58

[www.casispta.org](http://www.casispta.org)

April 2009

## The Prez Sez...

Happy Spring! With the break behind us, we are unbelievably in the last quarter of our school year. We can all look forward to a fun season, packed with student fitness events such as Fun Run and Track and Field, a few quiet campus TAKS testing days, and a volunteer appreciation reception for all of you who help make Casis such a special place. We will also welcome new students at Round Up and prepare a proper send off for our fifth graders!

Many thanks to the PTA Board and PTA Treasurer, Carol Kern, for the many hours devoted to building our 2009–2010 budget. We heard many budget proposals, incorporated most of them into next year's plan and worked hard to reduce expenses where possible to present a balanced budget. Thanks also to our PTA Nominating Committee, which worked hard in January and February to build a strong leadership slate for the 2009–2010 school year. We will vote on our proposed budget and leadership slate on April 17 at our noon general meeting. In addition, we will discuss our growing student population at Casis and our administration's plans to address new needs. Specifically, we will discuss the need for a new portable building and the best placement for that portable. Please join us for this important business meeting. This is the last chance for serious business because we expect the May meeting to be all fun and very little business! In fact, the meeting on Friday, May 22, at 8 a.m. will be a PTA Volunteer Appreciation Event, and we look forward to celebrating our many hardworking parents who give us their time to support our wonderful school.

Another thank you that cannot wait goes to our outstanding Author Visit Team. Carolyn Ostrom, Cami Hawkins and Laura Wieland hosted an incredible opportunity for our students and teachers to be inspired by author James Howe.

I hope you will join us for our 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Fun Run on Sunday, April 19, at the O. Henry Middle School track. We invite students, friends and parents to participate in all of the fun individual and relay events. All proceeds will benefit the fifth-grade study trip to Port Aransas. Lace up your shoes and come on out! Thank you to chairs Jennifer Modesett and Courtney Houston for planning this event, and to Cami Hawkins and Anne Long for organizing our fifth graders to help manage the event.

Please mark your calendars for Track and Field Days on Wednesday, May 20, and Thursday, May 21. Parents: please plan to be a part of these fun fitness days. Thank

## Proposed 2009–2010 Casis PTA Officers

|                                   |                    |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| President                         | Sara Marler        |
| President-Elect                   | Ashley Putman      |
| VP Communications                 | Martha DeGrasse    |
| VP Services                       | Laura Grim         |
| VP Ways and Means                 | Brandy Reimers     |
| Secretary                         | Thresa Nasi        |
| Treasurer                         | Janet Harris       |
| Assistant Treasurer               | Greta Gonzales     |
| Historian/Corresponding Secretary | Anne Veeraraghavan |
| Parliamentarian                   | Julie Ballard      |
| Volunteer Coordinator             | Liza Layne         |
| AC-PTA                            | Dawn Goetzel       |
| Principal                         | Patty Martin       |
| Teacher Representative            | Stacey Ross        |

Thank you to the members of our Nominating Committee for their hard work in putting together a slate of outstanding officers to lead our PTA next year! We will vote on this slate at the April general meeting. Thank you to Karen Brimble (Chair), Robin Shepherd, Jay Foster, Liza Layne, Ellen Miura and Sheryl Jett for your service!

you to Sharon Goss, Heather May, Sheryl Jett and Laura Northway for planning this event!

I want to let you know that our Technology team has been busy spending PTA funds on new resources for our school! We purchased 15 new computers this fall and plan to buy another 18 computers this spring. We bought 12 document cameras with carts, cables and locks, eight VCR/DVD players and six LCD projectors. We used our generous IBM match dollars to outfit our school with new monitors. Thank you to Charles Golson, Technology Planning Chair, for working with Cindy Sanders to coordinate our purchases with plans for what we will receive from the AISD bond package.

In our last issue we were concerned that efforts to establish boundaries for the new Southwest middle school might impact the O. Henry Middle School boundary. I am happy to report that the new middle school WILL NOT impact the O. Henry Middle School boundary, so there is no longer a concern.

Please take a look at our articles on what is growing in our garden and the school's new anti-idling campaign. I hope to see you at our many fun spring events and thank you for all you do to support Casis!

—Julie Ballard

## Help Casis Go Green and Stop Idling

Casis is partnering with the CLEAN AIR Force of Central Texas and the City of Austin's Child Safety Division to encourage parents to be "idle free" in pick-up areas. Vehicle emissions are harmful to children (both in and around cars), drivers, teachers, and crossing guards. So when you pull up in the pick-up line, turn off your engine until you need to move forward. You'll be making Casis a healthier and safer place. Turning your car on and off also saves you gas and is actually better for your engine. Look for brochures in your Friday folders with more information about idling. For the sake of everyone's health, let's make Casis IDLE FREE!

## Thank You for Shopping!

### *Randalls Remarkable Card*

Thank you for designating Casis Elementary PTA as your Remarkable Card beneficiary organization. Your shopping resulted in \$4,700 in checks to Casis this year!

### *Box Tops*

Box Tops earned \$626 this last collection period, for a total of \$1,392 for the 2008–2009 school year. Please keep clipping those Box Tops! Stacey Ross's class clipped the most, with 441 box tops!

## Portable Placement for 2009–2010

Casis is growing and requires an additional portable for 2009–2010. Because of fire codes, there are three options for the location of the portable:

- 1) The west side of the school on the gravel area of the back playground, next to the playscape.
- 2) The northwest side of the school, covering a portion of the track between the slab and the organic garden.
- 3) The south side of the school, between the Kindergarten wing and the Hillview playground.

The PTA Leadership, Campus Advisory Committee and the Casis Administration support the location of a future Casis portable *on the south side of the school near the Hillview playground*. We understand the portable will be visible from Exposition. We support this location because the portable will:

- a) provide a positive learning environment, since it is the quietest location,
- b) not decrease the size of the back playscape area and/or track and field for recess, and
- c) be easier to install because it already has sewer and water lines previously installed from a former portable there in the late 1990s.
- d) assist in keeping our class grade levels together in the same vicinity.

We will discuss the proposed portable location and other Casis growing pains topics at our general meeting on April 17 at noon. Please join us!

## Brown Bag Lunches

We hope you were able to join us for our brown bag lunch series with our principal in January and February. We addressed several topics that popped up as concerns for parents as we entered the new year. In our Departmentalization gathering, we covered our campus decision to keep children with a single classroom teacher for all subjects. We also discussed other campuses that have decided to have children in older elementary classes rotate through more than one teacher for subject matter expertise.

In our Playground Safety meeting, we discussed parent concerns about playground accidents. Several proposals to increase playground safety were forwarded to our principal and the PTA Board. As a result, the Board has asked AISD for assistance with erosion around our play court slab and with more chipped wood material under the back playground. In addition, the Board approved the purchase of padded pole covers for the poles that hold our new shade cover. Other efforts are under way to establish a new playground safety committee to be staffed with parent volunteers, with the purpose of boosting our parent presence on the playground during lunch recesses to help reduce playground accidents and incidents.

Finally, we were very pleased to welcome O. Henry Principal Pete Price to our school for a gathering on what to expect in your child's transition to middle school, and to allow parents the opportunity to ask questions as they prepare to send their child to our wonderful middle school. It was a very popular session, and we plan to make this an annual visit.

Your PTA Board wants to hear from you on what topics would be most interesting or helpful to you as brown bag gatherings or as guest-speaker events. Please contact us with your ideas at [julie@bcballard.com](mailto:julie@bcballard.com).



## Save the Date!

### PTA Volunteer Appreciation Reception May 22, 8 a.m., Casis Cafeteria

The 2008–2009 PTA Board of Directors would like to invite all Casis PTA volunteers to join us for a special volunteer recognition reception! We thank you for all you do for our school and we would like to honor you. A breakfast reception, complete with live piano tunes provided by our own *Music Man* Kevin Dunn, will be followed by our final PTA general meeting for 2009!

## Quiet Campus Zone! TAKS Testing Dates

April 28, Third- and Fourth-Grade Math  
April 29, Fourth-Grade Reading  
April 30, Fifth-Grade Science

### **Congratulations to Our Austin Partners in Education PTA Campus Award Winners!**

#### ***Volunteer of the Year: Jay Foster***

Father of Griffin (second grade) and Elisabeth (2008 graduate), Jay has served Casis Elementary in many ways, including in his children's classrooms and through countless hours in service to the PTA Treasury Team. Jay served on the PTA Board in 2008–2009 as Assistant Treasurer, and during that year, while covered up in mountains of PTA check, cash and credit card transactions, determined that our treasury model was not sustainable and that we needed an online transaction system. He followed up by gathering requirements from our many PTA committees, building a design and then pursuing a relationship with Austin Software Architects (Thank you, Schiesz Family!) to build the PTA online transaction system that we all enjoy using today. Process your PTA forms online at [www.casispta.org](http://www.casispta.org), and you will have access to your records 24-7!

#### ***Volunteer Group of the Year: Organic Garden Team (Leaders: Marika and Martin Milliken, Lisa Shubin, Lynn Boswell, Robbi Cooper)***

Built in spring 2008 by volunteers, the Casis Organic Garden is a quarter-acre outdoor classroom at Casis Elementary. PTA parents Marika and Martin Milliken, Lisa Shubin, Lynn Boswell and Robbi Cooper conceived and created this outdoor learning center. This group leads a lunch recess garden program that engages 250 students weekly in hands-on gardening and composting. Students also explore topics in earth and solar sciences with our human sundial, as well as in math, arts and literature.

#### ***Volunteer Group of the Year: Casis Times Team (Leaders: Mike and Sally Ward)***

For the first time in years, in September 2008 fourth- and fifth-grade students began producing a four-page monthly newspaper in an after-school club that includes 58 students. Guided by parents who are working journalists, the students designed their paper (after *The New York Times*), organized their own staff (everyone rotates jobs each month to learn the most) and decided what to cover and where stories should run (January's issue was a special "green" issue). Parents support an extended learning network, helping with writing and editing, lining up guest speakers and arranging journalism-related field trips.

#### ***Campus Partner of the Year: 1379 Kids (Owners Mike and Lindsay Rosenthal)***

Our local business, 1379 Kids, located in the Casis Village shopping center, has been a very big Casis supporter since it opened in May 2007. Owners Mike and Lindsay Rosenthal donate consistently to our landscaping fund, have offered a percentage of profits to the school on Casis purchases, and support our Fun Run through sponsorship and emcee skills. Mike Rosenthal has also served as our Community Partner on our Campus Advisory Committee for two years, meeting monthly to advise our principal on our campus improvement plan and issues that arise. In addition, Mike, who is a former pro football player, donated a fun football group clinic to the Carnival silent auction this year. Thank you to the Rosenthals for all of their support!

### **How Does Our Garden Grow?**

The Casis Organic Garden marks its first birthday this spring, and this young project is growing up fast. It's hard to remember that just one year ago, this place that's so full of life was a hot, unused strip of land beside the teacher parking lot. Visit today, and the happy children, yummy veggies, developing caterpillars, giant human sundial and brand-new fruit plants that fill the space remind us that we have a good deal to celebrate. A dedicated team of parent volunteers from every grade level has worked with Casis teachers and students to make the most of the garden, growing a wide variety of vegetables, fruits and flowers that change with the seasons. Every child at the school has had the opportunity to plant, tend, harvest and—finally—eat the crops. Who knew how much kids love radishes?

Students garden during visits with their classes, and everyone in grades 1 through 5 is invited to work with parent volunteers during lunch recess every Friday. Between 250 and 300 children show up on a typical Friday, taking care of most general maintenance during that time. Spring planting has begun, with a new approach that we think will bring greater and more consistent success. Last fall's system of individual classroom beds has been replaced by community beds, allowing us to grow large sections of each crop and ensuring a successful garden for every class to use and enjoy. Spring crops include tomatoes, peppers, cantaloupe, beans, cucumbers, potatoes, herbs and a combination of corn, squash and beans that is known as a Native American Three Sisters garden.

We have a growing mix of fruit, including strawberries, blackberries, figs and a Satsuma tangerine tree donated by the McGahagin family, with more to come. Students are also growing some native Texas plants and a mix of flowers. We continue to encourage teachers to use the garden for science, math, writing, reading and art projects. And we always love more volunteers—no gardening experience required! To learn more, email Marika Milliken at [marika@raleighavenue.com](mailto:marika@raleighavenue.com) or visit the garden's Web site: [www.casisorganicgarden.org](http://www.casisorganicgarden.org).



*Third grader Diamond Robertson composts vegetable and fruit remnants, while three friends Hayes Ewald, Nora Ozer and Anne Marie Marler look on.*



# \$\$ CASIS COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS \$\$

*Ways your day-to-day shopping can raise money for Casis*

*Published by Casis PTA*

*April 2009*

Did you know that many local and online businesses donate money to Casis just by your patronage? Below is a list of these opportunities as well as information on how a business can partner with Casis.

## Match



### Dell Employees

Choose to support the Casis PTA, and Dell will match your donation dollar for dollar with a CASH donation to the PTA. Contact Anna Belle Williams at [ab\\_williams@dell.com](mailto:ab_williams@dell.com) to learn more.



### invent Hewlett Packard Employees

Any HP employee may choose to submit his or her Casis PTA contributions through the HP Product Matching Program. HP generously gives a 3:1 product match. Identifying HP/Casis parents will help pool contributions to maximize this matching resource for our technology program. Please contact Ashley Putman at [Ashley@Hotlink.com](mailto:Ashley@Hotlink.com) for details.



### IBM Employees

Any donation you plan to give to Casis (including Spanish or Technology contributions) can be pooled with all IBM/Casis parents for an employer matching contribution from IBM. IBM generously donates 4:1 with IBM product. Last year Casis received 32 printers for the teacher classrooms. Please contact Cynthia Bengtson at [cbbengtson@yahoo.com](mailto:cbbengtson@yahoo.com) to pool your contribution for Casis.

*Does your company match? Please contact Ashley Putman at 473-2755.*

## Shop



### Austin Software Architects

Austin Software Architects provides a variety of software, hosting, and integration services that provide a cost effective solution for high-quality business needs.

<http://www.austinsoftwarearchitects.com>

(512) 535-0074

### Gayle Velayos Photography

Gayle's bright photographic murals of children are on display in the Casis cafeteria to promote our Health and Wellness program. Gayle is also the official PTA photographer. She specializes in children's portraiture. For more information, please call Gayle Velayos at (512) 769-6503 or visit her Web site, [www.gaylevelayos.com](http://www.gaylevelayos.com).

### Westbank Dry Cleaners

Turn in your dry cleaning receipts at Westbank and three percent of your total will be donated to Casis. To date, \$1,586.00 has been donated.



### The Soup Peddler

Order healthy, delicious meals delivered free. New menu each week! Five percent of purchases go to Casis. Order at [www.souppeddler.com/casis](http://www.souppeddler.com/casis).



### Randalls

Casis receives a percentage of your Randalls purchases. Designate your Remarkable Card to #4888, Casis, today. Over the last 10 years, Casis has received more than \$50,000!

## Clip



### Boxtops for Education

Many General Mills products have small, pink, box-top coupons on the package (go to [www.btfе.com](http://www.btfе.com) for a current and complete list of participating products). Casis earns 10 cents for each box top submitted. This year the PTA has earned more than \$1,300! Box tops are collected and submitted twice a year. Or, place them in the box-tops folder, located in the office. As always, keep clipping and saving box tops for the next collection period.

## Partner

Are you interested in partnering your business with Casis? Please contact Ashley Putman at [Ashley@hotlink.com](mailto:Ashley@hotlink.com) for more information.