

# Stockton School News

Winter 2010

Stockton Borough School—Serving the Community Since 1832



Student volunteers help sort some of the clothing that will be available at the Stockton PTO's annual Rummage Sale. Pictured are (front) Molly Nemeth (back, left to right) Mariel Vandegrift, Rowan Goeckeler, Laurel Nestor-Pasicznyk, Hope Vandegrift, Hannah Kozuhowski, and Christopher Terepka.

## Stockton PTO Rummage Sale Set March 20-21

The Stockton Borough School PTO is seeking donations of gently used items such as clothing, shoes, household items, linens, toys, books, music, and electronic games for their annual Rummage Sale. Donated items can be dropped off between 9:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. at the Prallsville Mill on Route 29 in Stockton beginning Monday, March 15, through Thursday, March 18.

Donations are tax deductible. When items are dropped off, ask for a receipt. This will enable the donor to place a value on the donation for federal income tax purposes. While all donations are appreciated, large furniture, old computers and other electronic items, and items in poor condition cannot be accepted.

The ninth annual Stockton Borough School PTO Rummage Sale will be held Saturday, March 20, and Sunday, March 21, at the Prallsville Mill on Route 29 in Stockton. The Rummage Sale will open at 9 a.m. and last until 4 p.m. on Saturday. On Sunday the doors will reopen at 9 a.m., with all items on sale for half the marked price. At noon there will be a bag sale—\$5 to fill a bag. Sandwiches, soup, and other refreshments will be available during both days of the sale.

The sale benefits the students of the Stockton School. For more information, or to volunteer, contact Jim Gallagher at (609) 397-4005.

## Restoration Grant Funds Used to Reduce Debt and Local Tax Burden

What looked to be a simple white envelope received at the school recently represented years of hard work. Inside was a check from the New Jersey Historic Trust made out to the Stockton School for \$208,780. This funding was for a grant used to help pay for the historical building restoration/renovation project that was completed in the summer of 2008.

"We knew the building needed extensive work," explained Board spokesman Rick McDaniel, "But we wanted to do our best to find alternative funding to help defray the cost of the project to our taxpayers."

In a referendum vote in September 2007, Stockton voters gave approval to the board to borrow approximately \$542,000 to pay for the exterior renovation project. The state grant was used to reduce

Stockton's actual debt incurred. Bonds have been issued to pay the approximately \$290,000 balance owed on the debt over a period of 10 years. The state is expected to reimburse the school for 40 percent of the annual debt payments, further reducing the impact on local taxpayers.

The \$208,780 check represented 95 percent of the total grant amount. The remaining 5 percent will be used toward property tax relief for Stockton residents.

## Registration Open for Pre-K, Tuition Students

Stockton Borough School offers a private tuition program for Pre-K (age four) through sixth grade. If someone you know lives outside of the Borough and is interested in enrolling a child in our unique school, please tell them to visit our webpage at [www.stocktonschool.us](http://www.stocktonschool.us) for more information. Interested parents can also call the CSA Suzanne Ivans at 609-397-2012 to arrange a personal tour of the school.



Members of the Stockton School Robotics Club program their robotic device to maneuver the test track and perform tasks at the Regional Robotics Competition. The Stockton team members (wearing white polo shirts, left to right) included Lukas Calabrese, Laurel Nestor-Pasicznyk, Darrell Kreider, Ethan Stanley, Christopher Terepka, and Jose Elizondo.

## Robotics Club Active at Stockton

This fall, Stockton School started a Robotics Club as part of its after-school enrichment program. But this was not playing with toys—the club members designed and assembled a series of robotic devices that were able to perform various tasks. Not only did the students have to assemble the components, they also were required to program a small computer that would control the device.

Another task assigned to the Club was to suggest new ideas and technologies (light, sound, and radar sensors) to make transportation safer in their neighborhood. Club members chose to tackle the traffic flow issue on North Main Street (Route 29) near Schuck's Garage at the intersection of Route 523, the scene of several accidents. The students researched

New Jersey Department of Transportation (DOT) data pertaining to that intersection and came up with an interesting solution to address the problem. Their suggestion was the placement of sensors on Route 29 north of Schuck's Garage, which would detect oncoming traffic and trigger a warning light at the intersection of routes 523 and 29.

Club members presented their idea to Borough Council and the Mayor.

Next on the club's agenda was a trip to the Regional Robotics Championship in Hillsborough, where they competed against clubs from much larger schools—some with corporate sponsorship. Stockton's Robotics Club performed very well at the championship, and its members look forward to the next competition.

Did you know that national studies indicate that, on average, American children spend 50 percent less time playing outside than children did 20 years ago? A recent report (available at <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/08/090803083633.htm>) showed that seven out of ten children suffer from vitamin D deficiencies and concluded that parents should "turn off their TV and send their kids outside" for 15 to 20 minutes a day.

Stockton residents are luckier than most—we live in a town where it is safe for most children to walk to school. Weather permitting, our students go outside to play at recess throughout the school year. In good weather, young people can often be found running and climbing on the playground after school as well.

*(Editor's note: In an effort to make the community familiar with the fine full-time and part-time instructors at our school, we will be profiling members of our faculty in future issues of the Stockton School News.)*

### Audrey Aguirre, PE and Health Teacher

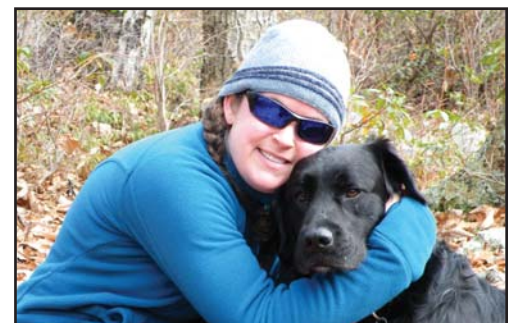
My name is Audrey Aguirre, and I graduated Wesley College in Dover, Delaware in 1995. I graduated with a BS in Physical Education and completed both student teaching and an internship in a cardiac rehab unit in a local hospital.

I was a Physical Director at a YMCA for six years before I started teaching in public schools. I spent five years at Warren Middle School and a year at Readington Middle School before I decided to stay home with my children.

Stockton School offered me a great opportunity to re-enter teaching on a part time basis. Stockton School's small student population is a wonderful environment to implement Adventure Education, which is my passion in Physical Education. Adventure Education is based on experiential learning, which is learning by doing. It incorporates character education and real world lessons that students can take with them on their real world journey through life.

Warren Middle School provided me with intense training for Adventure Education with High Five in Vermont. I attended a week long intense training on low and high ropes courses, and team building activities. I hope to bring even more Adventure Education into the Physical Education curriculum at Stockton.

I also teach two days a week at Lebanon Borough School. In my spare time I enjoy hiking with my husband and two sons, as well as my dogs Maxwell and Pluto. I also own my own small business, "Black Dog Plants", which provides gardening services, plants, gourd art and relief wood carvings.



# Pulitzer-Winning Journalist Visits Stockton School

Stockton Borough School had several visitors last fall, among them Mr. Thomas J. Hylton, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist from Pennsylvania. But Mr. Hylton and his associates did not visit this historic neighborhood elementary school to lecture—they came to learn.

Mr. Hylton is an advocate of “Smart Growth,” a belief that current patterns of land development are not in the long-term interest of our communities. The Smart Growth movement is concerned with the economic, environmental, and social costs of abandoning existing urban and suburban infrastructure in favor of newly constructed, low population density communities that contribute to the problem of urban sprawl. Supporters of Smart Growth would prefer to see the redevelopment of existing neighborhoods in which people can walk to workplaces, schools, retail stores, libraries, parks, and entertainment venues. Mr. Hylton described these principles in his book *Save Our Land, Save Our Towns*; he subsequently hosted a documentary on Smart Growth that aired on more than PBS stations nationwide.

Mr. Hylton first learned of Stockton School last year through contacts in the Smart Growth Network, an international



Award-winning journalist Thomas Hylton (center) and representatives of several Pennsylvania school boards speak with Stockton's Suzanne Ivans (left).

organization that promotes the innovative application of Smart Growth principles. Together with School Board members from three Pennsylvania districts (Pottstown, Allentown, and Schuylkill County), Mr. Hylton observed teaching methods used at the school and discussed a wide range of education issues with Stockton School Chief School Administrator Suzanne Ivans, teachers, and Stockton School Board member David Pasicznyk.

Mr. Hylton and his associates were particularly interested in Stockton School's method of teaching combined classrooms. “Many educators argue that placing children of different ages in the same class-

room, called ‘multi-aged grouping,’ is actually a superior method of education,” Mr. Hylton said in 2008. “They point out that students of the same age have an enormous range of abilities. With multi-aged grouping, children have more opportunities to work at their own pace and develop skills when they are developmentally ready. Older students in the class can help teach younger students. This helps children bond, and it builds the confidence of the mentoring student.”

At the conclusion of his visit, Mr. Hylton commented, “After experiencing Pennsylvania public schools for decades, Stockton was a breath of fresh air. You definitely have your priorities in order and make maximum use of your resources. Even as we were leaving, it was interesting to watch two girls leaving the building with your new (non-English speaking) student and some primer books to find a cozy spot on the playground equipment where the girls could help him with his English.”

Mr. Hylton noted that in Pennsylvania, many communities are losing their small neighborhood schools. “Our school does more than just educate our students,” said Suzanne Ivans. “We are an integral part of our local community.”

## Stockton Student Wins History Essay Contest

At the end of the 2009 school year we were pleased to learn that Ms. Rachyl Rackin won First Place for her essay, “The Most Historic Place in My Town.” The contest was sponsored by the Hunterdon County Historical Commission. Rachyl's winning essay featured the Stockton Firehouse. She was invited to an awards ceremony at the Hunterdon County Historical Commission and also received an award at Stockton School's end-of-year Recognition Ceremony.



Kindergarten students Jennifer Tokash (left) and Elizabeth Grecco (right) enjoy a story read by community volunteer Martha DeBlieu. The Pre-K and kindergarten students celebrated the birthday of Dr. Seuss on March 2 by making “Cat-in-the-hat” headwear, eating green eggs and ham, experimenting with homemade goop, and listening to stories.

If you have news about a Stockton School graduate, send your story and/or photos to [sbs@stockton-school.us](mailto:sbs@stockton-school.us). We'll try to include an update in our next newsletter!

# Ask the CSA

*Question: Can you help me understand my child's NJ ASK score? I feel like my child's strength is reading, but her test scores were higher in math and science.*

*Answer:*

All New Jersey students in grades 3-6 take the Math and Language Arts Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) in May of each year. The 4th grade students also take a science assessment. Results of the assessments are classified into three levels: partially proficient, proficient, and advanced proficient.

The assessments are norm-based but not standardized. Norm-based means it is "normal," meaning that NJ ASK tests what could be expected of a typical New Jersey student in that grade level. These norms are established by experienced teachers who meet and review the test and establish criterion based on what they believe to be representative of a typical student for each grade level.

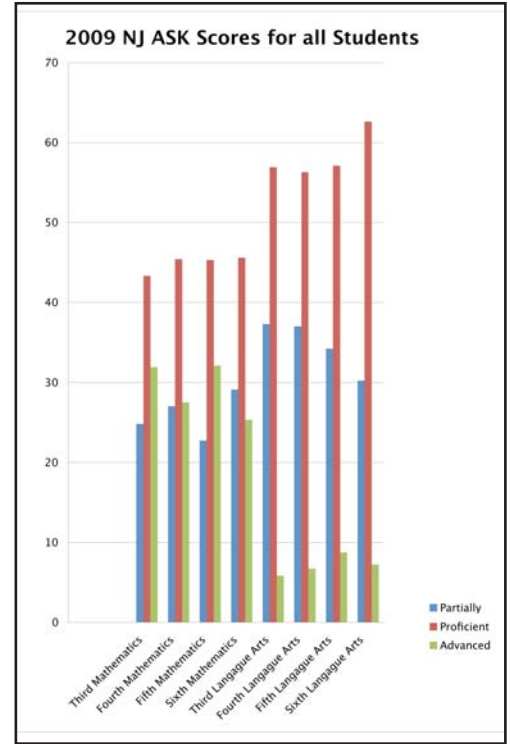
However, the results are not standardized, meaning they are not made to fit a statistical model of a standard bell curve, with the majority of the students in

the middle and smaller groups of equal size on the low (partially proficient) and high (advanced proficient) ends.

As you can see from the graph on the right, the results of the NJ ASK test are not consistently distributed. While the math graphs show a fairly standardized distribution, language arts graphs are skewed to the left—with many more New Jersey students labeled partially proficient (blue) than advanced proficient (green).

While the test scores for Stockton students are not publically published due to the small numbers of students tested, I am pleased to announce all of our students last year scored higher in every subject and for all grade levels, compared to total state averages and compared to schools in our district factor groups (DFG), which are schools that have a similar socio-economic designation as Stockton.

—Suzanne Ivans, CSA



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Citizens to Support the Stockton School  
c/o Stockton Borough School  
19 S. Main Street  
Stockton NJ 08559