

# Spirit

FALL 2006

THE NEWSLETTER OF RICHMOND WALDORF SCHOOL

## Fifth-Grade Olympics Embodies Waldorf Spirit

By Katie Bullington, RWS Fifth-Grade Teacher

As the Winter Olympics 2006 in Turin, Italy reached their midway mark, the Fifth-Grade at the Richmond Waldorf School prepared for an Olympics of a different sort. Amid the headlines of career-ending injuries, performance-enhancing drugs, over-zealous pride, victory and defeat, there still glimmers a seed of the original spirit of the Ancient Olympics once held beneath the hills of Olympia nearly 2,800 years ago. It was this ancient contest of will, strength, courage and skill that inspired the fifth graders as they studied the history and mythology of the ancient Greek civilization.

The study of ancient civilizations is traditionally taken up in the Waldorf fifth-grade year when the students have reached a point in their development to better look out into the world that stretches farther away from them. Through story, image and biography the students get a glimpse of India, Persia, Babylonia, Egypt and finally Greece. As a culmination of the study of early Greek culture and history it has become tradition for regional Waldorf schools to meet together for a Greek Olympiad of their own. In keeping with the spirit of the games, many classes travel great distances

after having prepared for this special event all year long. In the spring of 2006, schools in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Maryland and Virginia met at the Washington Waldorf School in Bethesda, Maryland on May 24 and 25 for two days of healthy competition and fun.

In September the students at RWS heard the Greek story of Pelops, who sabotaged a chariot race against king Oenomaus, causing his death, in order to marry his beautiful daughter Hippodamia. In honor of the great king's death (and presumably to ease the guilt of killing his love's father)

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*Great Zeus,  
mighty ruler of Olympus,*

We pledge our honor  
to these games.

Strength and grace  
will guide our limbs.

Courage and beauty  
will guide our hearts.

Truth and the spirit  
of cooperation will  
guide our minds.

We pledge to strive  
with all our skill  
to win with grace and  
lose with dignity.

OATH TAKEN BY WALDORF  
STUDENTS AT THE START OF  
THE PENTATHLON



JAMIE Z-W, FIFTH GRADE

# RWS Philanthropic Efforts Best Ever

By Mary Anne Pastore, RWS parent



## Please join us for the Michaelmas Pageant and Back-to-School Picnic on Thursday, September 28



"In autumn Saint Michael  
with sword and with shield  
Passes over meadow and  
orchard and field.

He's on the path to battle  
'gainst darkness and strife—  
He is the heavenly warrior,  
protector of life."

This has been a banner  
year for the Richmond  
Waldorf School in our  
giving to the broader  
Richmond community

outside our school walls. We started  
the year off with donations to Katrina  
Relief efforts. Our community offered  
lots of clothing for those left with nothing  
at the Hill School, the Waldorf  
School of New Orleans. Their lives had  
been devastated and our help was  
greatly appreciated by many distant  
Waldorf families.

At the annual Lantern Walk at the  
Carillon, we collected coats and winter  
clothing from our families to be given  
to people in need more locally. We delivered  
a packed-to-the-roof van filled  
with warm winter clothing to the  
William Byrd Community House right  
here in Richmond. If only you could  
have seen the faces of the women  
receiving this gift! They were delighted  
and, oh, so thankful.

We continued with our giving all through  
the holidays. Our food drive collected  
non-perishable foods for the Central  
Virginia Food Bank which they distributed  
to many families for holiday meals.

Amy Farley, our development coordinator,  
helped arrange for our participation  
in an Adopt-a-Child-for-Christmas  
program with the Virginia pre-school  
initiative at Patrick Henry Elementary  
School here in our neighborhood. Amy  
assigned each RWS class, as well as the  
faculty and board, a child from the  
program. Each group then enjoyed selecting  
toys and clothing from their child's

wish list. Thanks to our community's  
generosity, each child's wishes were met  
and in some cases went far beyond  
expectations.

It was beautiful to see the enthusiasm  
of our children as they helped with  
some of the choosing of gifts for children  
their own ages. Our students also  
helped load the mountains of gifts into  
vehicles for delivery. They were quite  
amazed at how much our community  
can make a difference when we join  
together as one.

We were excited to end this school year  
with two programs in which the children  
played a major part. The first was  
The Heifer International Read-to-Feed  
Program. Our students received information  
from Heifer, which included a  
pledge packet. Before we began the  
program, children and their parents asked  
friends, neighbors and relatives to  
pledge an amount for each book the  
child read. So if Grandma pledged one  
dollar for each book, and her grandson  
read fifteen books, he could then go  
back to his grandmother for fifteen  
dollars to be donated to Heifer International.  
Through this program, our  
school helped families in developing  
countries receive livestock to support  
their families.

On May 16, all of our families were  
encouraged to come the James River to  
help with clean-up and planting. A  
large group of students, their teachers  
and parents were led in the effort by  
Ralph White, manager of the James  
River Park System, and volunteers.

Thanks to all in our community for  
giving throughout the year. What better  
message to share with our children  
than that of helping those who have less  
than we. This kind of work can fill our  
hearts with greater purpose, as well as  
hope for a better tomorrow for all. ♦





## Third Grade Learns Tools of the Trades Back in Time

By Catherine Roseberry, RWS parent

Williamsburg was a true educational gift for our third graders, wrapped up in a brilliantly sunny, unexpectedly warm day in early November. Miss Augusta's purpose in making the trip was for the children to see how things are made; how the human hand works with materials to produce things that are tangible and necessary. In this way the children gain respect for the work of their ancestors who lived prior to the Industrial Age as well as a greater appreciation for the gifts of today's technology.

Our first call was on the harness and saddle maker, who was as adept at his trade as he was at handling third graders. Although dressed for the eighteenth century, he (and the other interpreters) acknowledged that the children came from a different time, and could best relate to an earlier world by comparison

to their own: "How long did it take to get from Richmond town to Williamsburg? How long might it take a man on a horse?" He had tantalizing materials, pelts of soft furs (even a frog's hide) and sharp blades and awls. And, when the children bubbled over with excitement from their discoveries, the harness maker brought them back to his time by blowing a sharp whistle between his fingers: a desired skill for any century.

Next we followed the sycamore trees lining Duke of Gloucester Street to the colonial garden, where the fall root vegetables continued to grow under the care of the master gardener. The children, being children, were drawn to the enormous half-barrel of rainwater in the middle of the garden. The gardener explained the trials of raising vegetables without the benefit of a watering hose; then, to the children's delight he demonstrated the miracle of suction with a curious vessel called a thumb pot that would release its water when one's thumb was removed from its top. Each child then had the chance to try this trick with the colonial watering jug.

Behind the Wythe House we found the weaver, a patient woman slowly turning out lovely textiles on an enormous loom. The children watched, wide-eyed, as she spun wool to yarn on her spinning wheel, then wove a bit on the loom, throwing the shuttle back and forth, back and forth between the warp.

Next to the colonial wheelwright's shop, located on the grounds of the Governor's Mansion. The wheelwright explained the levers, pulleys and other tools he used in his work. A half-finished carriage took up part of the shop, much like a modern-day car in a garage, but instead of grease and oil, the ground was littered with wood shavings.

The cabinet maker's shop was just around the corner. The ladies—even the eight- and nine-year-old ones—were allowed to sit on well-made chairs and benches while the young gentlemen  
*[CONTINUED ON PAGE SIX]*

### WORKING

Molly De Havas

The Farmer is sowing his seed,  
in the field he is sowing his seed.  
The Reaper is cutting the hay,  
in the meadow he is cutting the hay.  
The Gardener is digging the ground,  
in the garden is digging the ground.  
The Woodman is chopping the trees,  
in the forest is chopping the trees.  
The Fisher is drawing his nets,  
in the sea he is drawing his nets.  
The Builder is laying the bricks,  
in the wall he is laying the bricks.  
The Cobbler is mending the shoes,  
in the shop he is mending the shoes.  
The Miller is grinding the corn,  
in the mill he is grinding the corn.  
The Baker is kneading the dough,  
in the kitchen he is kneading the dough.  
The Mother is rocking her child,  
in her arms she is rocking her child.



*"The true aim of education is to awaken real powers of perception and judgment in relation to life and living. For only such awakening can lead to true freedom."*

—Rudolf Steiner, Philosopher and Founder of the Waldorf Movement (1861-1925)

## The Challenges of Growing into a Middle School

By Jenny Dilworth, RWS parent

The Richmond Waldorf School is considering taking a leap. And as with any new venture, it is always nice to have one hand to hold, and another to give a little push to the back. In mid-January, Whitney Macdonald visited from the Emerson Waldorf School in North Carolina, and provided us with support, inspiration, and encouragement in considering plans for a middle school grades into a reality.

He began his talk on adolescence and education with some insights into the questions facing young people in grades six through eight. While what we see from the outside may appear to be rapid changes of style along with cynicism or self-absorption, internally the students are asking themselves profound questions such as, "Is there such a thing as absolute truth?" "Is the world essentially a good and beautiful place?" and, "What will be my unique contribution to the world?"

One of the basic questions we face as parents and teachers is how to welcome the idealism inherent in this search for meaning, and minimize the pressures from media and popular culture that our children face every day. As these external pressures increase, our influence as parents begins to take a back

seat to the opinions of our children's peers. What then does a Waldorf school do to meet these challenges? If our goal, as Whitney believes, is to help remove obstacles that keep the students from finding their own meaningful relationship to the world, our curriculum must both reflect these conflicts and offer the students help in finding answers to their questions.

First, Whitney reminded us that Waldorf education is based on the deep understanding of child development put forth in Rudolf Steiner's lectures. To this foundation is added a deep relationship with the class teacher that may extend eight years and offer the adolescent another trusted adult to

help guide them. Waldorf schools also offer the students an unspoken belief in beauty, not as an abstraction, but as something that they created tangibly each day on paper, knitting needles, musical instruments, or wood. There is an investment of persistence and self-discipline

underlying this process, so the students directly experience having an impact on the world as well as an emotional connection to what they create.

When students leave fifth grade, they finish their primary journey through world mythology and begin to experience a natural hunger to study "something real". To meet this need, they are introduced in sixth grade to the world of the Romans whose strength of will created a system of laws and architecture, which endures today. Typically,

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seventh graders feel an urge to question existing boundaries, so they study the Renaissance, an era when artists and scientists rejected the accepted beliefs of their culture to search for deeper levels of truth based on their own experiences.

One of the memorable quotes from the evening was that, "Seventh graders have had it, but eighth graders are gonna do something about it!" So the Waldorf curriculum offers the eighth graders the opportunity to study the history of revolution. From Martin Luther to the modern struggle for civil rights, the students are asked to hone their understanding of the history of great ideals, and what happens as they are implemented in the world.

In the physical sciences through the study of acoustics, optics, and mechanics, middle school students begin to develop their capacities to hear and observe along with the objectivity to stand outside of an experiment and describe what they see happening. At a time in their lives when rapid physical growth and hormonal changes causes powerful emotions, the study of magnetism and chemistry speaks to the students' interest in the laws of attraction as well as the explosive potential of natural substances. Along with a new self-consciousness and interest in romance and sexuality, the students also begin their study of anatomy and physiology.

In the arts, the children have their thinking challenged by the introduction of charcoal and perspective drawing. Their tendency to think in black and white terms is addressed by the challenge of working with shades of gray, and their

ability to stand outside of a situation and "look from a distance" is enhanced by geometry and linear perspective.

Whitney also took time after the overview of the curriculum to answer questions on a range of topics from incorporating new students to the advantages of coed education. He offered the enthusiastic help of the Emerson faculty as well as an array of beautiful lesson books from their middle school students. He said that starting a middle school was like parenting, "If you wait until you feel ready, you may never do it." An article by

Judy Chavez, given to the fifth grade parents by Katie Bullington, summarized the goals of the Waldorf middle school like this:

To encourage and inspire the children:

- ❖ To think clearly and independently and to question the status quo;
- ❖ To learn out of their own experiences and not to be satisfied with second- or third-hand knowledge;
- ❖ To study and work not in order to pass an exam or get a good grade, but to satisfy their own desire for learning;
- ❖ To have a sense of their own dignity as human beings; and
- ❖ To have a sense of belonging to the world and of being needed in the world. ◆

**"Typically, seventh graders feel an urge to question existing boundaries, so they study the Renaissance, an era when artists and scientists rejected the accepted beliefs of their culture to search for deeper levels of truth based on their own experiences."**

## THE RAINBOW ROOM: A BOOMING AND BEAUTIFUL BUSINESS

By Mary Kay Kriva, RWS parent

RWS has been operating a school store, The Rainbow Room, since we moved into our larger space three years ago. The store is run by volunteers and is open on Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 8:15 until 9:00. The premise of the store is to make readily available Waldorf-inspired toys, games, make-believe play items, books, craft and school supplies to the school community and the community at large. It is definitely worth a visit if you're in the neighborhood!

In addition to the store hours during the year, merchandise is offered at the annual Holiday Bazaar that is held at the school in November. The majority of annual sales come from the Holiday Bazaar and the profits from this event are put towards fundraising. A portion of the store inventory is also offered at May Faire—our celebration of spring held at the beginning of May on the school grounds—and the profits from this event are combined with the sales made during the year.

As a store volunteer, I am filled with joy when people walk into the space for the first time and gasp with delight at the beauty of the merchandise. The Rainbow Room has been described as a "magical place" where one can come and fill their senses with the natural beauty of the items their children experience at school every day. ◆



## Tools of the Trades

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE THREE]

sat on the floor. Much to everyone's surprise, the cabinetmaker didn't make cabinets like in the kitchen; he made furniture and harpsichords and even coffins! Then, after asking who took piano lessons, the cabinet maker allowed one of the class to play the harpsichord, which he did, and quite well, too.

Our last visit was to the cooper, who had barrels ranging from pint-size to the enormous—and enormously important—hogshead, a cask or barrel formerly used in the transportation of tobacco. The cooper discussed the structural engineering of the form of the barrel (one man could roll and control a filled hogshead because of its perfectly suited shape). The children gained new appreciation for the design adage, “form follows function.”

In our long and delightful day, we saw a time and a place far away and not so far, where we could see that work was important and interesting and much more involved than we first thought. We saw a vision of our past and a glimpse of our future, through the minds and hands of our third graders. ♦

## Fifth-Grade Olympics

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE]

Pelops is said to have started the Olympic Games. Chariot racing was certainly one of the first events held in Greece, but the fifth graders focused their attention on the Pentathlon events of javelin, discus, running, wrestling and long jump. Each week throughout the fall we embarked on a new event and we continued to practice into the spring.

Before practicing any event we went back to one of the initial intentions of the games—to gain the attention and good graces of the gods.

Each event is dedicated to a particular Greek god and has its own special emphasis. In throwing the javelin, we must not only throw far, but also strive for a beautiful arc in the air to garner the attention of mighty Zeus. To achieve the end result of a javelin sticking in the ground pointing to the heavens is not an easy task.

In discus throwing we worked on letting go of the discus at the right moment—not too soon and not too late—while maintaining a balanced spin on the disc. The ancient Greeks wrote odes to the gods upon the surface of the discus and hoped that Apollo, among others, would notice as it flew through the air.

In honor of Heracles we engaged in Greek wrestling. This is upright wrestling in which only the hands touch and the students try to establish a physical “dialogue” of giving and receiving energy in this dance of strength and balance. With the running long jump, students must achieve weightlessness in the air in direct contrast to the pounding of their feet on the earth. The students' hope is to land with hands in front of feet in the sandpit with Artemis watching how gracefully they soared through the air.

Finally, Hermes inspired our three-quarter-mile relay run in which we passed a scroll from runner to runner, striving always to keep the head up and the body upright.

The fifth grade class went to compete in the games, but not with the intention of winning a victory for our school. When we arrived, our students from Richmond were regrouped with other students into “city states.” Individual competitors were not only judged on how far they threw or how fast they ran, but also on grace, beauty and form. Sportsmanship is of great importance

**“Individual competitors are not only judged on how far they throw or how fast they run, but also on grace, beauty and form. Sportsmanship is of great importance...”**

and each student signed an agreement stating the following:

*I will be polite. I will be truthful. I will respect all who attend. I will attend to all instructions. I will behave courteously, fairly and nobly toward everyone.*

*I will applaud all contestants politely at the end of each event.*

*I will not cheer or boo any contestant during an event. I will not tease another. I will compliment the performance of both winners and losers. I will win with grace and lose with dignity.*

In the end, the fifth graders came home with much more than medals and olive wreaths. They came home with a new-found sense of respect for themselves, their classmates, and their peers at other Waldorf schools they can now count as friends. They returned with a broader sense of our Waldorf community and the world, and hopefully the inspiration to continue to conduct themselves with honor and determination in all of their tasks. ♦

# Science and Math in the Waldorf School

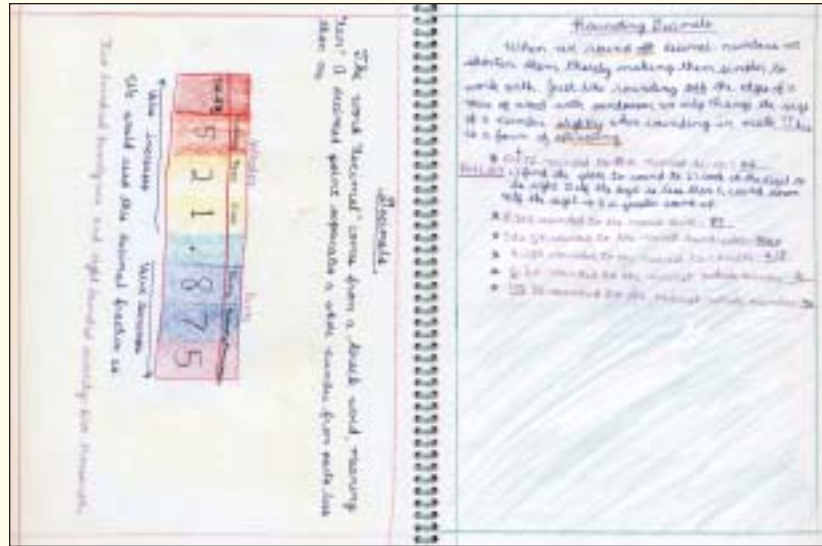
By Min-Soo Kim, RWS parent

For my family, finding RWS and sending my children to its kindergarten is a blessing. However, as far as math and science goes, I had concerns from the beginning. As a kindergarten parent, I noticed that Waldorf education puts great emphasis on art and literature. But what about logic, mathematics, and science? Where is the balance between so-called left-brain and right-brain activities? As an engineer who majored in physics, I just could not get a solid picture how my children would learn math and science later at this full-of-art school.

Then I learned about a Waldorf Education Day to be held at the Emerson Waldorf School in North Carolina, and a talk to be given there entitled "Science and Math in the Waldorf School." I hoped that this might be an opportunity to resolve my concern as a Waldorf parent. So the day after the Lantern

**"A great deal is said today about the need for engineers and for scientists, and the point of view is taken that if you have better science courses and specialize sooner in the scientific branches of knowledge, you are going to get better scientists. I think that the best scientist is the best and most creative thinker and the task of education is first of all to educate human beings who then become scientists."**

—Rudolf Steiner



MADELINE B, FIFTH GRADE

Walk, my whole family got up when it was still dark and left around 6 AM for EWS. It took about three hours to get there, but it turned out that every mile we drove was worthwhile.

EWS is a fully developed school located on fifty-four acres of beautifully wooded land. It has a twenty-five year history and now is offering nursery through high school programs. I have to admit I couldn't resist feeling envious. It made me hope that our school can eventually find its own way to realizing its dream of advancing through eighth grade.

The workshops at the conference were very well organized and the snack in between healthy and delicious. The teachers did a wonderful job in showing what they were doing in their classrooms and how they were doing it. The only thing I was sorry about was that after the opening presentation I had to pick only two workshops to attend out of a total of eight. I'm pretty sure I missed a lot of good things in the other six. And I'd like to give thanks to the high school students of EWS who took care of our three children during the whole time. Without them my wife and I wouldn't have been as fully engaged or as impressed with what we learned.

After attending the programs, I became convinced that Waldorf School has a very unique and strong curriculum in math and science that no other school can provide. I understand that Waldorf education does not aim for making each student into an automaton. Rather, it aims for developing the capacity within each student to really ask questions and cut through dogma and think critically. I discovered this was just how I would have liked to learn myself. As one of the teachers said, "Science is about how nature works, and how I am really a part of nature." I hope my children will be able to understand and appreciate Nature as they grow up. And I do believe that, nourished with Waldorf education, they will surely grow into individuals who can really enjoy learning and make independent decisions.

Please see the June 2004, Research Bulletin for "The Teaching of Science" by David Mitchell, pages 17 to 20 at [http://www.waldorflibrary.org/Journal\\_Articles/RB604.pdf](http://www.waldorflibrary.org/Journal_Articles/RB604.pdf). ♦

# Fall 2006 Community Events Calendar

## September

5	Tuesday	5:30 to 8:00 PM	Back-to-School Meeting and Ice Cream Social
7	Thursday	8:15 AM to 2:45 PM 8:45 AM	Grades First Day Back to School Rose Ceremony Kindergarten Visitation Day ( <i>time to be arranged with parents</i> )
8	Friday	8:15 AM to NOON 8:30 to 10:30 AM	Kindergarten First Day Back to School ( <i>for 3- and 5-day students</i> ) Parent Tea
28	Thursday	NOON to 3:00 PM	Michaelmas Pageant and Back-to-School Picnic

## October

16	Monday	9:00 to 11:00 AM	Sprouts Parent/Toddler Class ( <i>continues through 20 November</i> )
14	Saturday	10:00 AM to NOON	Open House
24	Tuesday	6:30 to 8:00 PM	Waldorf Education Night
25	Thursday	8:45 to 11:00 AM	Prospective Parents Observation Day (RSVP)

## November

3	Friday	4:00 PM	Lantern Walk at the Carillon in Byrd Park
8	Wednesday	8:45 to 11:00 AM	Prospective Parents Observation Day (RSVP)
18	Saturday	10:00 AM to 3:00 PM	Holiday Bazaar

## December

8	Friday	9:00 to 11:00 AM	Community Spiral Walk
15	Friday	9:45 AM to NOON	Holiday Assembly

## January

20	Saturday	10:00 AM to NOON	Open House
22	Monday	9:00 to 11:00 AM	Sprouts Parent/Toddler Class ( <i>continues through 26 February</i> )
24	Wednesday	8:45 to 11:00 AM	Prospective Parents Observation Day (RSVP)
27	Saturday	10:00 AM to NOON	Town Meeting

Join us on the third Wednesday of each month for the  
CommuniTea Café right after drop off in the PA Room.

Please call the school  
at 804.377.8024  
for details and to confirm  
all events. In the event  
of cancellation, the school's  
answering machine  
will be updated.

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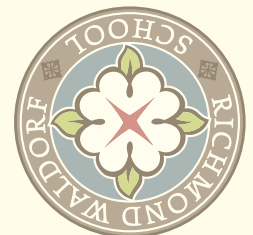
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