

Friends of Wingra

Fall 2011

Student Council: By the Students, For the Students

Twelve students of all ages sit on the floor in a circle with poster paper and markers, their half-eaten lunches beside them.

An eight-year-old boy describes how the daily kickball game at recess is turning ugly. There's fighting about the rules, not everyone gets to play, and kids' feelings are getting hurt.

The facilitator, Molly Murphy, then reads a letter from Room 103 (Pond) Teacher Tiffany Rampey asking the students to help come up with a solution to these recurring problems.

Listening to the group discussion it was clear that each student had something to contribute and valued the chance to share his or her ideas.

"They have a voice, and they know how to use it. Every kid has something to contribute," says Molly.

Molly brings it to a vote: "Do you believe Wingra School should have school-wide rules for kickball?"

She reminds the students that "being a part of student council means making decisions based on more than what's good for you."

Ten yes votes, one no, and one maybe.

The specific rules will be decided at the next meeting, and one council member suggested including more regular kickball players in that discussion.

At the end of the half-hour meeting, Molly shakes each student's hand and thanks each one for serving on student council.

Background

Even though Molly facilitated the

meetings, student council wasn't her idea. It was her daughter's. Earlier in the spring, eleven-year-old Miranda wanted some ideas for dealing with conflicts at school.

Miranda and her mother talked about how students can help each other solve problems and come up with ideas about how to make school a better place.

The idea of a Wingra School Student Council was born.

Miranda presented the idea of a student council to other students in the Lake (Rooms 105 and 107), and fellow Lake student Dash Cooper volunteered to help get the group going.

What is the fairest way for representatives to be chosen? They eventually decided to ask interested students to sign up. All the names were put in a hat, and two student names were drawn from each classroom.

Term limits are still being decided.

The student council met three times in the spring during Friday lunchtime.

Practicing Democracy

Miranda wasn't really thinking about democracy when she wanted to start a student council. She just wanted students to have a voice. But that's the root of democracy, isn't it?

One insightful 8th grader noticed the similarities between discussing who gets to decide kickball rules and the debate about who gets to decide about taxes leading up to the American Revolution.

Having a voice—power—in the way your world is structured is no small thing.

"I just love what happens when you give them the floor," says Molly. "It's so lovely. You can tell they've been in a place where

they're asked to share what they think."

That's one of the beautiful things about a Wingra education. Students are encouraged to speak up for themselves and others, to pursue their interests, and to tap into their power.

What do the council members think?

"I like student council," one girl says.

Her friend responds. "I do, too. This is cool."

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Letter From Paul

As I write this note, the sky is cloudy and gray, and the leaves are changing. We've started another great year at Wingra, but these words will focus on the year that we finished, just a few short months ago.

The 2010–2011 school year was a busy one, full of wonderful news and events.

In case you have not been able to follow along on a regular basis, here are just a few things that stand out in my memory.

Last fall, Wingra School hosted the Progressive Education Network regional conference. Educators from throughout the upper Midwest spent a day at Wingra participating in workshops, sharing ideas, and discussing practice.

Also last fall, we started an exciting new tradition: an annual community get-together to raise funds for the Joyce Perkins Scholarship Fund, which supports our tuition assistance program. The gathering occurred on the Epic campus in Verona where we enjoyed music provided by Ben and Leo Sidran.

In the cold months of winter, we enjoyed the steady heat provided by our hot water boilers, funding for which is being raised through our capital campaign, ably headed by our new Campaign Manager, Christen Ring.

Wingra's Board of Trustees revised our bylaws, revised the trustee selection process, and

created a trustee handbook as a guide and resource for new board members.

The theme of our All-School Unit last spring was Do It Ourselves. For two weeks, students in mixed-age groupings explored activities relating to the sub-themes, Publish It, Build It, Perform It, Make It, Design/Invent It, and Fix It. Great fun and great learning!

Our graduating senior students planned and staffed two fundraisers—sandwich sales and a Friday night spaghetti dinner. Proceeds from these two events contributed more than \$1,500 to Wingra School.

But, of course, the heart of Wingra School is not the special events but the wonderful teaching and learning that occurs in our classrooms, every minute of every day.

We are so fortunate to be part of a school community that genuinely respects children for *who* they are and *where* they are and sees learning as a dynamic and continuous process of discovery and creation.

Being part of this every day is what keeps me inspired as an educator. At a time when the wider educational discourse seems preoccupied with curriculum standards and standardized assessment, Wingra stands out as a model of progressive practice. I am so appreciative of our wonderful teaching staff and the important work they do here each day.

So, what's new in your life? Please drop us a line and let us know. Better yet, come and visit the school.

Wingra School is turning 40 this year, and we're having two 40-year celebrations: Friday Night Fever



Paul Brahce, Head of School

on September 30 and the Community Celebration on May 5. We hope to see you there!

But no matter when or where, we love to hear from longtime friends and former Wingra families.

Friends of Wingra gratefully accepts articles, story ideas, photos, "What's New with You" contributions, comments, inquiries, and address changes at the address on the back cover, attention Rebekah Bovenmyer. Or by email to rebekah@wingraschool.org.

Head of School

Paul Brahce

Editor

Rebekah Bovenmyer

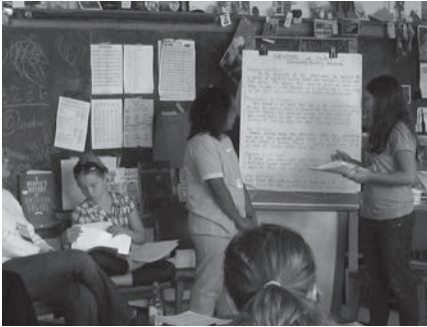
Layout

Rebekah Bovenmyer

Between issues of *Friends of Wingra*, visit www.wingraschool.org for recent news and events.

Sign up for the e-newsletter at www.wingraschool.org.

A Year in Pictures, 2010–2011



Sky students present at PEN.



Joyce Perkins, Kim Cotant, and Colleen Pardun at the Fall Benefit



Building a 3-dimensional map of Hawaii



Leo Sidran plays at the Fall Benefit.



All dressed up for Kids' Night Out



Friday Follies



A Lake student presents her independent project on pandas.



One of the creative cakes at the cake auction



Playing in the Spring Concert



Mary Campbell presents a diploma.

Democratic Schooling at the Sky Level (Grades 6–8)

By Sky Teachers Allen Cross, Miriam Kopelow, Dawn Liska-Tollefson, Kathy Oker, and Emily Sonnemann

“Just a quarter of our country is optimistic about our system of government—the lowest since polls by ABC and others began asking the question in 1974,” reported Stanley B. Greenberg in the July 31, 2011 *New York Times*, *Sunday Review*, “Why Voters Tune Out Democrats.”

This is distressing news. What does this mean for the future of our country? The basis of democracy is popular sovereignty, rule of the people, and dependent on civic engagement.

Even with this present pessimistic view of our government, we know that people are capable of contributing positively to the various communities in which they are involved.

Inspired by the feminist concept that *the personal is the political*, we work to tie local civic engagement to participation in our larger system of government in a meaningful way.

Our government is a tool of the people. Learning how to use this tool—to *live* democracy—must be a fundamental focus of education starting at a young age.

Equality

One of the basic principles of our democracy, and Wingra’s pedagogy, is that we are all equals—no easy concept to manifest in a traditionally authoritarian setting.

We tend to stress processes of learning and being together over production.

That is not to say that students are full citizens of our school community; the staff are still the final authorities here.



Teachers prefer informal small group times where students have a voice over standing and lecturing.

We know that we learn from each other in a synergistic manner. We are equals in our common quest for knowledge and living a happy and healthy life. As we nurture the pure joy of learning, we view knowledge, like democracy, as a tool. All in Wingra’s learning community are equals in confronting new problems and learning about new ideas and technologies to deal with those problems.

Justice

We know that there is more to democracy than simply rule by the majority. There are other forms of decision-making that are more equitable and can lead to a more socially just society. Students practice different forms of decision-making strategies in different contexts to ensure that everyone’s voice is always heard.

Knowing how to engage positively and willingly participate in decision-making

events (like voting) is at the heart of the democratic notion of popular sovereignty.

Students do this in the Sky classrooms when they sign up on the morning agenda board and ask a classmate to facilitate the discussion or problem-transformation session. We teach these democratic skills and attend to opportunities for participation and sharing power.

Valuing the Process

In order to decrease external motivators and competition, we do not grade or test the kids. Rather, evaluation is authentic and collaborative. Students keep portfolios, and we write narrative summaries of our observations after interviewing students about

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their progress toward meeting goals.

We tend to stress processes of learning and being together over production. We believe that this method of schooling leads to greater intellectual autonomy, the basis of a free-thinking deliberative democracy.

The Nature of Knowledge

Just as democracy is not static, neither are we in our modes of dealing with learning and living life.

We function with the understanding that knowledge often changes over time and that each of us holds a particular interpretation of the world. We honor diversity, and there is a richness of learning because of this.

Part of our respect for local knowledge and interpretation is made manifest in how we present much of our curriculum. Rather than relying on teacher-directed presentations, we create thematic centers.

Students make choices about the particular content and ways of going about conducting their learning. We encourage students to negotiate the modes of learning activities.

Engagement

We expect students to be active participants in their learning—to take ownership of it—and to work to make Wingra and the larger world an even better place to learn and live.



Sky students stand on stage with Rev. Jesse Jackson during a rally at the Wisconsin State Capitol in April 2011. Photo by Miriam Kopelow.

The skills and concepts of democratic action are learned and put to use daily in the Sky classrooms. Students learn to take appropriate, effective action.

Examples of this engagement include students starting (and continuing!) the *Yearly Wingra Duck* yearbook, planning and facilitating a student-led unit, leading morning discussion times, and planning social events on the Sky's Social Committee.

One of the basic principles of our democracy, and Wingra's pedagogy, is that we are all equals

Students have also come up with ideas to meet particular needs they see by starting groups, such as Kids for Peace; a chapter of the Gay, Straight Alliance; a Kids' Discussion group; Playground Participatory Action

Research group; Debate Club; Roses for Charity; Play Pumps; and Dungeons and Dragons.

We believe that individual civic engagement is essential for the success of our national democratic project and for living a healthy and productive life.

With this kind of democratic schooling, we hope that, rather than feeling pessimistic about our government, Wingra students will feel empowered to make changes they want to see in the world.

Like the Wingra song says, whatever you make of it, depends on you! ...depends on you!

Teaching About the Watershed

In May 2011, Sky (Room 200 and 202) teachers Dawn Liska-Tollefson and Kathy Oker collaborated with other community educators to teach a course to area teachers called “Wingra Watershed Field Experience.”

More than 50 teachers participated, earning three graduate credits through Edgewood College and increasing their understanding of limnology and watershed sustainability. As part of the course, participants shared what they learned by educating the public at “Science Nights” on Thursday evenings during the summer at Wingra Boats.

“It’s been so exciting to witness these ‘students’ taking what they learned in our workshop and then providing this great public service to the community,” says Kathy.

Two years ago this group of educators designed this course for teachers to learn more about how to build a unit on watersheds and water-related science to help students develop a stronger land ethic.

Professionals from Memorial High School, Spring Harbor Middle School, Wingra Boats, Edgewood College, Park Elementary, and UW-Madison Arboretum collaborated to develop and present this course.

This is the second time that Dawn and Kathy have helped teach this course, and their discussions with area educators about how to construct meaningful curricula and engage children in watershed activities

continue to be “invigorating and exciting.”

The course is possible because of a grant from the David S. Bourne Foundation, which the Friends of Lake Wingra received to educate the community about the watershed.



Students in the watershed course get hands-on experience.

Alumni News

Melissa Dembski-Sullivan (1998–2001)

Melissa Dembski-Sullivan was named a 2011 All-State Top Scholar in the Waukesha district.

Congratulations, Melissa!

Bailey Flanigan (1999–2002)

Bailey Flanigan was named a National Merit Semifinalist.

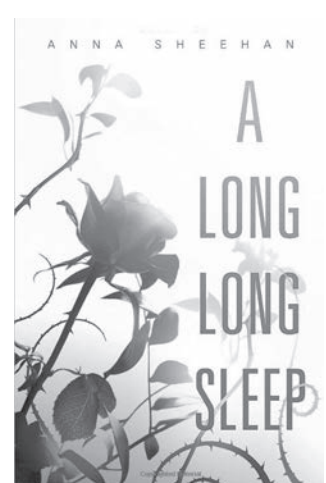
Congratulations, Bailey!

Anna (Stackhouse) Sheehan (1984–1989)

Anna (Stackhouse) Sheehan published her first novel, *A Long, Long Sleep*, a young adult retelling of *Sleeping Beauty* crossed with the *Terminator*. Reviews have been very positive!

It debuted August 9, 2011, in the U.S. and is also being published in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Brazil, and Russia.

Anna is on Facebook and has a website, <http://annasheehan.com>. She lives on a self-sustaining farm in Oregon with her daughter, mother, and assorted Irish Wolfhounds.



This is Anna (Stackhouse) Sheehan’s first novel.

Staff Changes

We've had a few changes to our staffing this year. See the website for a complete list of Wingra staff.

Art Teacher Barbara Westfall

accepted a faculty position at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville in August 2011.

We are so sad to see her go, but we are happy for her to have this wonderful opportunity!

Barbara has been an important and highly-valued member of our staff for nine years, and she will be dearly missed. We wish her all the best in her new role!

Resource Teacher Molly Murphy

departed to increase her role providing support to students and families at the Madison-based Integrated Development Services.

We thank her for all the ways she supported students and teachers during her time with us. We wish her all the best!

Both of these positions are in the process of being filled.

We're happy to announce that **Amber Gray** will be officially

joining the new teaching team for Wingra's Extended Day Programs. Amber will be working cooperatively with Marieka Greene to plan and lead the programs.

Amber brings a wealth of experience in environmental and outdoor education. On top of her time teaching, she has been

a naturalist, a program manager for clean energy, and an aquatic invasive species specialist. Amber has also performed prairie and woodland restoration work and written a watershed curriculum.

Welcome, Amber!



Amber teaches students about plants in Extended Day.

Board of Trustees

Wingra School is a nonprofit organization governed by a Board of Trustees composed of parents, staff members, and community volunteers.

The Board provides support for all aspects of the school through fundraising, policy development, maintenance of the organizational structure, and participation in financial and long-range planning.

For more information, visit www.wingraschool.org/board/

Members 2011–2012

We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of our Wingra School trustees for your hard work and dedication to our school:

- Jim Miller (President)
- Warren Palmer (Treasurer)

- EJ Alexandra
- Jeri Barak-Cunningham
- Allen Cross
- Katie Dowling-Marcus
- Jim Laudon
- Joe Ring
- Beth Rogers
- Alastair Shore
- Greg Simmons
- Angie Sparks
- Regina Whitemarsh

3 Funds = 3 Ways to Support Wingra Students

You want to support Wingra, but it's a little confusing. Which fund makes the biggest impact?

The answer is that they all make Wingra a better place, just in slightly different ways.

If you're not able to support each fund, use this primer to help you decide which one means the most to you—and find out where you can learn more.

Capital Campaign

In 2006, an anonymous donor group gave us an amazing gift of \$1 million to purchase the Dudgeon School building where we had been renting space since 1972.

In addition, these same donors provided a matching opportunity of \$4 million to improve and expand the building:

- \$2 million by December 31, 2011
- \$2 million by December 31, 2017

With the money we've raised so far, we have made significant improvements to our new home, including

- New heating system
- New windows and doors
- Security system
- Electrical upgrade

Next we'd like to improve the following areas:

- Making our outdoor environment innovative, creative, and green
- Improving our gym space and community gathering space
- Upgrading our classroom spaces, lighting, hallways, and bathrooms
- Improving our building's accessibility

Every gift given to the campaign is matched dollar for dollar. Gifts may be given outright, or pledged and paid through the end of 2017.

Thanks to our amazing donor group, the entire amount pledged is matched right away. Gifts can be made in cash, check, credit card, and securities or stock.



For More Information

For more information about the capital campaign and how you can be involved, contact Christen Ring, Capital Campaign Manager at (608) 238-2525 or christen@wingraschool.org. Or visit www.wingraschool.org/giving

Joyce Perkins Scholarship Fund

We have a strong commitment to tuition assistance, making it possible for many families to attend our school who otherwise could not afford it.

Named after a beloved former director, the Joyce Perkins Scholarship Fund was created in 1987 and has provided \$2 million in tuition assistance over the past 25 years.

Currently 20 percent of our students receive tuition assistance — that's one out of every five students.

Funds are raised through donor designated gifts and special events, such as the annual Fall Benefit held on September 30 in 2011.

Wings for Wingra Annual Fund

The Wings for Wingra Annual Fund is a yearly fundraising effort to support the current operations of the school.

Gifts help enhance the day-to-day life of our students and staff by supporting key elements of our program, such as classroom equipment, staff salaries and development, technology, and tuition assistance.

Tuition covers approximately 80 percent of the cost of a Wingra education. The Wings for Wingra Annual Fund helps close that gap.

Any gift—no matter its size—makes an immediate impact for our students. Gifts can be made in cash, check, credit card, securities or stock, and online.

Matching gifts can double your gift value, and we encourage you to check with your company for matching gift program information.

For More Information

For more information about the Joyce Perkins Scholarship Fund or the Wings for Wingra Annual Fund, contact Ashley Fletcher, Development Director, at (608) 238-2525 or ashley@wingraschool.org. Or visit www.wingraschool.org/giving



Capital Campaign Update

by Christen Ring, Capital Campaign Manager

Wow, summer flew by. I can hardly believe that the leaves are starting to change!

This past summer was one of connections. For me, connecting with family and friends but also connecting with alumni and former Wingra families.

During the last week in July a group of dedicated volunteers, including teachers, board members, current parents, and staff spent a week making calls and connecting with our extended community and encouraging participation in Wingra's capital campaign.

It was wonderful to be in contact with so many people and hear about why Wingra is important to them and why they want to participate in this amazing matching opportunity.

Here are just a few of the inspiring messages we heard that week:

"Our years at Wingra were the best years of our life!" ~ *Former Parent*

"Wingra is the best school I have ever been to." ~ *Alum*

"I am now a teacher, in great part, because of my experience at Wingra." ~ *Alum*

"Yes, we want to be a part of this effort to support Wingra." ~ *Former Parent*

"Our son's 7-8th grade experience was wonderful! We are so thankful to Wingra and would be happy to make a gift." ~ *Former Parent*

"The hardest thing was moving and leaving Wingra. We were concerned about our daughter's transition to a traditional high school, but she did wonderfully. The way they do it at Wingra really works!" ~ *Former Parent*

Thanks you so much to everyone who has participated in the capital campaign. We have a unique and unprecedented opportunity to raise matching funds, and it is community participation that will allow us to meet our goals.

To date, the Wingra community has contributed more than \$1.2 million toward our goal of \$2 million by December 31, 2011.

For more information or to participate in this campaign, please contact me at christen@wingraschool.org or visit www.wingraschool.org/give/capitalcampaign.html.

Many thanks,

Christen Ring

Calendar

Check out this calendar for some of the important things that will be happening this year.

For more school events and event details, see our online calendar at www.wingraschool.org/calendar

September 30: Friday Night Fever
We kicked off our 40th anniversary celebration with Friday Night Fever, our 2nd Annual Fall Benefit for the Joyce Perkins Scholarship Fund.

Learn more at www.wingraschool.org/fallbenefit

October 13: State of the School
We hosted a State of the School event about where we are, where we're going, and how we are going to get there.

We heard from key administrative staff and board members about our

strengths, challenges, and opportunities. Small group discussions followed.

October 15: Wings for Wingra Annual Fund Fall Fund Drive Begins

Letters mailed for the beginning of the fund drive.

November 19 and January 21: Open Houses

Do you know someone who might be interested in sending their kids to Wingra? Tell them about our Open Houses, hosted by current parents.

December 5-8: Capital Campaign Community Outreach Phone-a-thon

Calls will be made to the Wingra community for the second half of the outreach phone-a-thon.

December 31: Capital Campaign Deadline
Phase I ends for the capital campaign. Let's celebrate the end of 2011 with a successful end to the first phase of the campaign!

February 2: Alumni Night

Recently graduated alumni return to talk about their transitions to high school.

May 5: Community Celebration

It's our big 40th anniversary bash! We hope to see you there!

Stay in the Loop

Are you getting our quarterly *Friends of Wingra* e-newsletters?

Sign up at www.wingraschool.org/friendsofwingra/

See the latest news and catch up with old friends.

Wingra School Donors

Wingra School cannot do what it does, cannot be what it is, and cannot have its positive impact on the lives of so many young people without the dedication and commitment of our supporters. On behalf of the students and staff at Wingra School, thank you for your generosity.

The following is a list of our donors during the 2010–2011 fiscal year (July 1, 2010–June 30, 2011).

Anonymous (6)
Scott Anderson and Collette Stewart
Sarah Archibald
Artsonia
Teresa Atkin
Angela Baker
Geoff and Amy Baker
Marguerite Barratt
Leonard and Jennifer Barry
Fred and Jana Bartlit
Mike and Julie Bauhs
Bernard Bazan and Julie Shiner-Bazan
Gidget and Gordon Bazsali
Brian and Jennifer Beck
Pamela Becker*
Linda and Niles Berman
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Alan Weinberg and Claire Weiss
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Barbara Westfall and Carl Johnson
Tom Whitmarsh

Marvin Wickens and Judith Kimble
Kat Williams
Ann Jarvella Wilson and David Wilson
Al and Lindy Wilson
Rebecca Youngerman*
Nan and Jim Youngerman
Sylla and Peter Zarov
Judy and Red Zitske

Tribute Gifts

In honor of Flora Berklein*
Susan Bernstein and Daniel Kleinman

In honor of Miriam Kopelow
Murray Kopelow and Cathy Bachman

In memory of Leo Langheim*
Anonymous

In honor of Joyce Perkins
Tom and Lynn Hirsch

In memory of Judy Schugar
Gail and Robert Weigl

In memory of Joel Ungrodt
Lyn Ungrodt

* Wingra School Alumni

What's New with You?

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Business Phone: _____ Email: _____

Degree _____ Year _____ Institution _____

Degree _____ Year _____ Institution _____

Degree _____ Year _____ Institution _____

Message—any professional and/or personal information about yourself (or your former Wingra student) you would like in the next issue of *Friends of Wingra*.

Wingra School
718 Gilmore St
Madison, WI 53711

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

