MEET OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS
STARTING YOUNGER: WSMS PILOTS A PROGRAM FOR TWO’S
TRANSITION IN THE ADMISSIONS OFFICE
ANNUAL REPORT OF GIVING 2012-2013
This year marks a significant milestone for WSMS as we celebrate 50 years of serving children and families, and take strong steps forward in building for our future. Our 50th Anniversary Celebration and Auction at Chelsea Piers spanned multiple generations and brought together our founding families, our first Montessori teacher, faculty past and present, and students and families from the ‘60s through today—including the dad who built our beloved Spring Fair Trolley (in his apartment)!. This joyous celebration provided us all with renewed motivation to build on the glorious success of our past to ensure the future of this great school.

Inspired by the generosity of the WSMS community, our Board created the school’s first-ever endowment fund with a contribution of $1,000,000. Our hope is that continued support by the WSMS community will grow this seedling endowment and enable us to provide tuition assistance to the increasing number of children that need financial support.

The Two’s Program that we launched this year is off to a terrific start. I am very enthusiastic about offering WSMS families this option to enroll their children earlier—a practice increasingly endorsed by child development researchers. Read more about this exciting innovation on page 6.

“Transition in the Admissions Office” bids a fond farewell to outgoing Admissions Director Suzanne Day and a warm welcome back to Judy Lyons, who returns to the position she held from 1987 to 1996. I am delighted that we will be continuing to see Suzanne at WSMS in her new role as a trustee.

Finally, I want to express my appreciation to our Board of Trustees for all that they have accomplished in this very busy year. I extend my deepest thanks to outgoing Board President Valda Witt, whose service in that role since 2009 has been essential to where we are today, and my warm welcome to incoming president Alex Southwell.

And I thank you all, not only for your generosity, but for the many ways in which you help make WSMS a joyful learning community, where infinite respect for one another is linked to the shared purpose of doing what’s best for our students. I am grateful to be your partner in this worthy endeavor.

MIMI BASSO
HEAD OF SCHOOL
From the BOARD

Although I only recently assumed the role of Board President, I am proud to say that I have a longer relationship with WSMS than just about anyone else at the school today. I have been a trustee for five years; I am the father of three WSMS students; and, in the mid-’70s, I was a student at WSMS myself!

My parents were both educators and confirmed Upper West Side residents, and they were particular about where their only child would begin his formal education. They chose WSMS for its reputation for providing the best beginning education, its partnership with parents, and its commitment to socioeconomic diversity. Happily, some things never change.

WSMS has been fortunate over the years in the commitment, diligence, and expertise of its trustees, whose guidance has helped the school earn its exemplary reputation and achieve financial strength. Valda Witt, our outgoing President, set the bar even higher with her expert leadership and strong sense of collaboration. She focused on building the school’s culture of philanthropy to help secure our financial future; having the Board operate according to best practices; ensuring the security and safety of our students; and spurring us on to create an endowment to guarantee financial aid for future students. Her leadership will have lasting positive effects, and I am thankful for her continued presence on the Board.

We are grateful as well to have in Mimi Basso a leader whose energy, vision, and exceptional knowledge of early childhood Montessori theory and practice are an inspiration to the children, families, faculty, staff, and trustees with whom she works on a daily basis. She expertly manages an astounding range of responsibilities with tremendous warmth, good humor, and excellent judgment.

This year is in full swing, and once again WSMS has an impressive list of accomplishments to celebrate:

• A thorough review of school safety and security, which has resulted in significantly enhanced systems and technology, along with in-depth faculty and staff training

• Brand-new flooring in every classroom, new lighting in our entry hall, and fresh carpeting, extending up the stairs all the way to the gym

We are very proud of our past successes and are already planning for an even more vibrant future.

• Continued on-site opportunities for faculty to develop new skills and knowledge through our Visiting Scholar Program

• The launch of the Two’s Program, a key element in our 2011 Strategic Plan

• Tuition assistance provided to 20% of our students, and the creation of our first endowed fund, the Founders Fund for Financial Aid, to ensure our ability to meet the ever-increasing demand for financial aid in the future

On behalf of the WSMS community, I want to thank the members of the Advancement Committee, especially committee chair Myles Amend and Annual Fund Chair Monique Neal; 50th Anniversary Celebration and Auction Co-Chairs Joanna Hagan Rego, Stacey St. Rose-Drayton, and Mary Vertin; Alumni Outreach Co-Chairs Tina Connolly and Amy Tarr; Parents Association Co-Presidents Kristen Chae Arabadjiev and Amy Groome; Spring Fair Co-Chairs Robin Alston, Nissa Booker, and Maggan Daileader; and Advancement Director Patricia Luciani.

WSMS holds a worldwide reputation for its unparalleled work with children, our state-of-the-art facility, and our Teacher Education Program (WSMS-TEP). We are very proud of our past successes and are already planning for an even more vibrant future.

To all of the people mentioned in these following pages, we cannot thank you enough for your support. Your remarkable participation in our fundraising efforts reached new heights in this, our 50th year. Your generosity and commitment ensure the continued strength, vitality, and growth of our school.

ALEXANDER H. SOUTHWELL
(MADELINE ’07, LUCAS ’11, AND GEMMA, 4W)
PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Fundraising Results

2012-2013:

ANNUAL FUND $321,484
AUCTION & SPRING FAIR (NET) $298,292
TOTAL $619,776

2012-2013 Revenue (unaudited)

Auction and Spring Fair (net) 5%
Annual Fund 5%
Tuition, Fees, Gov’t Programs 90%

2012-2013 Operating Expenses (unaudited)

Financial Aid 12%
Administrative Expense 25%
Building Maintenance 13%
Instructional Expense 50%

WSMS
West Side Montessori School
SUZANNE DAY

Suzanne is the proud parent of two WSMS alumni, Carter (11) and Gigi (9), and served as WSMS Director of Admissions from 2008 to 2013. Before joining the WSMS administrative team, she volunteered as the WSMS Parents Association co-president for two years and worked on the WSMS admissions committee. Suzanne received her Doctor of Pharmacy degree from the University of North Carolina and worked as an oncology clinical pharmacy specialist for 12 years prior to starting her family. Suzanne and her husband, Doug, recently relocated to Washington, Connecticut. They will continue to spend time in the city and remain involved in many NYC-based organizations.

MAGGAN DAILEADER

Originally from Stockholm, Sweden, Maggan has BS and MS degrees in Accounting from the University of Florida, and an MBA in Finance from New York University. She spent sixteen years in finance and banking at IBM, Scotia Capital, and The Royal Bank of Scotland, then changed careers to become a yoga teacher, an integrative therapist, and a stay-at-home mom. Maggan and her husband, Tim, are parents to Madeleine and Declan, who began their third year at WSMS this fall. Among many roles as a WSMS parent, Maggan served as the co-chair for the Spring Fair (twice) and interviewed applicant parents.

KATHLEEN FRIERY

Kathleen is currently Senior Producer at Braun Production. She has more than 20 years’ experience as a network news magazine producer for shows including 20/20, Good Morning America, Connie Chung Tonight, and Anderson Cooper 360. She has won four Emmy Awards (for Anderson Cooper), and contributed to coverage that won Peabody Awards and a DuPont Award. Kathleen graduated from Potsdam College with a BA in Political Science and has a master’s degree in journalism from NYU. Kathleen is married to WABC anchor Bill Ritter, and their daughter, Ella, started her second year at WSMS in the fall.
AIMA RAZA

Aima is co-founder and President of the Peace Project Inc. (PINC), a non-profit organization that seeks to create safe and peaceful communities in countries around the world by promoting peace education in schools, interfaith projects, and sponsoring various community-based initiatives. Prior to PINC, Aima worked as a management consultant focusing primarily on the financial services industry. She graduated from Fordham University School of Law in 2003 and holds a master’s in Global Affairs from NYU. Aima’s twin boys, Rafay and Mikhail Khan, are in their second year at WSMS. She is married to Agha S. Khan.

MICHAEL SECKLER

Mike has been an entrepreneur since 1996. His current business is Euclidean Technologies, an innovative investment management firm that uses cutting-edge statistical computing to evaluate individual companies as potential long-term investments. Earlier in his career he co-founded Employease, which was acquired by ADP. Mike graduated from Williams with a dual major in Geology and History. Mike and his wife, Caren Pasquale Seckler, have three daughters: Sophia, who graduated from WSMS in 2012, Maggie, who completed her last year at WSMS this past spring, and Elizabeth, who began her first year at WSMS in the fall.

JOANNA HAGAN REGO

Joanna is the mother of two current WSMS students: James, who began at WSMS in 2011, and Josie, who began this fall in the Two’s Program. She is an active WSMS volunteer, most recently co-chairing the 50th Anniversary Celebration & Auction. Joanna received her BA in English Literature from Brown University. Before having children she worked for 15 years as a theater producer, overseeing such productions as Martin Short’s Fame Becomes Me on Broadway, Nickelodeon’s Blue’s Clues tour, and Wayne Brady in Las Vegas. She is married to Matthew Rego.

CORDELL G. SPENCER

Cory Spencer was born and raised in Montreal, Canada. He attended the University of Western Ontario and Harvard Business School, and spent over twenty years at Morgan Stanley, where he was a member of the Management Committee and the Operating Committee. Currently he is focusing on pro bono work, parenthood, and a music career. Cory and his wife, Elizabeth Canino, have two children who attended WSMS: Katie, who is in fourth grade, and Patrick, who completed his final year at WSMS last June.
If you were to stop by the 1W classroom this fall, you would probably notice that something has changed, but you might not immediately be able to pinpoint what. The room is still every inch a West Side Montessori School classroom, from its spacious layout and warm atmosphere to its inviting array of work materials, thoughtfully arranged. It is when you see the children, and the tables and chairs they are using, that it might dawn on you that just about everything—and everyone—in this room is a bit smaller than usual. Welcome to the Two’s Program at WSMS.

Launching this fall, this new program offers two-year-olds the opportunity to enjoy the many benefits of a WSMS education, with a curriculum tailored to the developmental needs and abilities of this age group. As eagerly anticipated as this program has been by these new young students and their families, no one is more excited about it than its head teacher, Karen Deinzer.

MEET OUR HEAD TEACHER

“It’s amazing how many things two-year-olds are capable of mastering,” Karen marvels. “This program will give them the opportunity to discover things on their own, and the responsibility to do things for themselves.”

Karen has had extensive experience working with infants and toddlers. She comes to us from Twin Parks Montessori Schools, where she was Infant/Toddler Coordinator. Prior to that she was Executive Director of Cornerstone Montessori in North Kingstown, Rhode Island. In the “small world” department, our Head of School, Mimi Basso, had Karen’s daughter in her class when Mimi was running a toddler program in Ridgewood, New Jersey.

“Karen became interested in Montessori education because of her daughter’s experience,” Mimi recalls. “She is probably the best toddler teacher I’ve ever known. I remember when she told me she wanted to take the training, I thought, ‘I hope they don’t ruin her!’ because she’s so good naturally.”
"I wanted to learn all about the philosophy," Karen remembers about those days. "I was amazed by the extent to which simply touching materials helped my daughter—helped all the children—to internalize information. It's such a natural way to learn."

For the Two's Program, Karen is leading an energetic and dedicated group of teachers. Neeta Arbeiter, a former WSMS head teacher (1995-2000) who earned her master's degree and her certification in early childhood Montessori education from New York University, is thrilled to be back after having taken some time off to be with her children. Kassi Baxter, a graduate of Penn State who worked with Karen last year, is also on board. WSMS teachers Hulda Haughton and Mingma Ukyab complete the team. Together they gently guide and support the children, work with parents and caregivers to address any concerns and facilitate healthy separation, and, perhaps most important, maintain a cheerful and relaxed atmosphere that puts children and adults alike at ease.

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

The idea of a WSMS program for two-year-olds has been around for a few years, but it was the school's most recent Strategic Plan, adopted in 2011, that specifically identified such a program as a possible means of achieving our goal to expand and improve our offerings to students and their families. Proceeding from that plan, the school performed market research that, upon evaluation, clearly indicated the desirability and potential benefits of a two's program.

“We found out that 60% of our children had attended a formal program before coming to WSMS,” Mimi reports. “We figured that if parents were already enrolling their two-year-olds elsewhere, it would provide so much more consistency for the children if they could start here.”

Of paramount importance to Mimi was that the program be consistent with WSMS's mission, particularly with regard to the school's commitment to building a diverse community. Part of this commitment is providing options for working parents in need of full-time programs. As a result, parents of two-year-olds have a choice of three programs: two three-hour mornings a week, three three-hour mornings a week, and five days from 9 am to 3 pm.

For this first of two pilot years, enrollment is limited almost entirely to younger siblings of currently enrolled students: 20 out of this year's 24 students fall under this category. This majority is intentional: The idea is to keep spaces in the Early Childhood (ages 2.8 to 6) Program available for families with no prior connection to WSMS. The school has a strong sibling policy when it comes to admissions. Therefore, younger siblings who come to WSMS at age two aren't shrinking the number of available spaces for the following year, as presumably they would have been accepted if they had applied a year later. Thus, the Two's Program is open only to families who already have a child enrolled in the school, or to those who have been personally referred by a WSMS family.
“We don't want to be that school where you have to enroll your child at age two in order to secure a place,” Mimi asserts. She expects that the program will remain limited primarily to younger siblings of enrolled students. She also anticipates, however, that all students at WSMS will benefit from the new program, as the confidence and comfort level of the younger children will have a ripple effect throughout the other classrooms after they've moved up to the Early Childhood Program.

JUST RIGHT FOR TWO'S
As for what goes on in the Two's classroom, the curriculum is consistent with WSMS, but geared toward younger learners. Most of the materials are on trays with handles, which allow them to be easily picked up and carried (“We want children to be able to succeed in what they're trying to do,” Karen explains). Many of the materials teach the children about self-care: dressing and undressing, toileting, washing hands, dishwashing. One particularly thoughtful station consists of a box of tissues on a small table in front of a mirror. A child can look at herself while she is blowing her nose or wiping her mouth, and inspect her face when she’s finished.

Because two-year-olds tend to have shorter attention spans than three-year-olds, the days, at least initially, are more open-ended than those in the Early Childhood Program. Children are free to explore at their own pace, with comparatively few group activities. Karen devotes a lot of time to music with puppets and props, knowing that children's participation will increase as their attention spans grow. Group snacktime gives the children a chance to socialize by talking about what they're eating. Every day includes many opportunities for gross motor development, including walks around the neighborhood, which introduce a wide range of topics to discuss.

“Our goal for this program is not to have these children reading earlier; it is for them to develop socialization skills, to refine and develop large motor skills, and to really feel good about themselves,” Mimi explains.

A large part of feeling good about oneself is having a positive experience learning how to separate from parents and/or caregivers. This process often affects the parents as much as, if not more than, the children.

“Separation should be a happy phase-in for both parent and child,” Karen concurs. “It's essential to give both of them time to make the transition.” Accordingly, the process is as gradual as it needs to be for each family. Parents and caregivers are asked to sit quietly in the classroom; children can sit in their parents/caregivers' laps if they prefer.
The Two’s Program is not the only exciting development at WSMS related to educating very young children. Also launching this year is a teacher preparation program for adults seeking to become Montessori-certified teachers of infants and toddlers (see sidebar, “WSMS Expands Teacher Education Program”).

EARLIER IS BETTER

The lasting benefits of early childhood education have been highlighted with increasing frequency in various arenas, from universities to the White House. James J. Heckman, Nobel laureate and professor of economics at the University of Chicago, has argued forcefully for education policy reform that would make quality early childhood education available to all. In a recent editorial in the New York Times he writes:

*The cognitive skills prized by the American educational establishment and measured by achievement tests are only part of what is required for success in life. Character skills are equally important determinants of wages, education, health and many other significant aspects of flourishing lives. Self-control, openness, the ability to engage with others, to plan and to persist—these are the attributes that get people in the door and on the job, and lead to productive lives. Cognitive and character skills work together as dynamic complements; they are inseparable.*

In her keynote address at WSMS’s 50th Anniversary Celebration, Alma Powell, Chair of America’s Promise Alliance—and proud WSMS grandmother—observed, “West Side has always understood that education is not simply what happens when children start first grade—that the all-important foundation for success is built in those earliest years.”

The Two’s Program at WSMS promises to strengthen that foundation further by increasing options for WSMS families with younger siblings; by contributing to the school’s continuing efforts to build as diverse a community as possible; and by helping a wider range of students develop the cognitive and character skills necessary to become, in the words of Maria Montessori, “a uniquely endowed individual living a whole life in a whole world.”

WSMS EXPANDS TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

This past August West Side Montessori School’s Teacher Education Program (WSMS-TEP) launched an Infant & Toddler Program, through which adult students may earn an Infant & Toddler teaching credential from the American Montessori Society (AMS). WSMS-TEP has already gained international recognition for its success in teaching students to become effective and responsive Montessori teachers. With the Infant & Toddler Program, WSMS-TEP is expanding its offerings to accommodate those wishing to work with children from birth to age three. The annual program begins with a three-week summer session and continues through the academic year. After the academic coursework is completed, students apply their knowledge in a supervised student teaching placement in a Montessori classroom.

Among the four distinguished teachers in the program is Maria Gravel, a pioneer in the Montessori world. With her husband, Doug, Maria played a pivotal role in the formation and growth of the American Montessori Society in the 1960s (in 2010, she and Doug received a Lifetime Achievement Award from AMS for their ongoing leadership within the organization). She also designed and established one of the very first infant and toddler programs in New York City: the Seton Day Care Center at the New York Foundling, which she ran from its inception in 1972 until 2008. Both Mimi and Karen took their Infant Toddler training under Maria at Seton.

When asked what skills she and her colleagues are teaching their Infant & Toddler adult students, Maria replies, “We are trying to help them gain the knowledge and the competencies to design environments that are warm and nurturing, and where the developmental needs of these young children are being supported. The goal is for every student to recognize that each child is his/her own unique person with his/her own learning style, and to offer each child activities that will help him/her grow and become an independent learner.”

Maria’s fellow teachers in the program are Mimi Basso; Karen Deinzer, head teacher of WSMS’s new Two's Program; and Tara Greaney, Director, Christine Beshar Children’s Center, Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP, and former Director of the Early Program at the Caedmon School. There are seven students enrolled this year. Two of them, Neeta Arbeiter and Kassi Baxter, are also teachers in the Two's Program; three others will be starting infant and toddler programs in other schools.

“This new component of WSMS-TEP is really going to make a difference,” Mimi enthuses. “Part of the mission of our school is to disperse the best practices in early Montessori education. Since we were getting an increasing number of inquiries from people who wanted to be trained in the burgeoning area of infant and toddler education, we felt it was imperative that we meet that need by creating another training program. We see it as having great growth potential, and I couldn’t be more excited about our team.”
Transition in the Admissions Office:
A Sad Goodbye, and a Warm Welcome Back

Deciding where your child should start her or his academic career is an important—if not agonizing—decision. At WSMS we think the best person to help you figure that out is a fellow parent.

From the very beginning, in 1963, our admissions directors have been current or former WSMS parents. For the first decade, founding parents Susanna Doyle and Sally Burke headed the administration and admissions efforts. They used current parents as the liaisons to prospective WSMS parents—and this clever and effective approach has been taken ever since.

Eventually the head of school slot was assumed by a professional credentialed educator (as required for accreditation), but with only one exception, the role of admissions director has always been—and continues to be—held by a parent of currently enrolled students or alumni.

This fall we say a fond goodbye to former WSMS parent Suzanne Day as Director of Admissions, and celebrate the return of former WSMS parent Judy Lyons into that role.

At the beginning Suzanne was not an obvious choice for the admissions slot. She came to WSMS in 2005 with her son, Carter. Michelle Zemor, then Director of Admissions (and parent of Alina ’98), recognized a kindred soul and asked Suzanne to join the interviewing staff. Suzanne’s career to that point had been in pharmaceutical oncology—a vastly different environment than that found in an early childhood school! Having children had provided Suzanne with a much-needed break from the intense environment of a cancer hospital, and she found she loved talking to parents about her children’s experiences. When Michelle decided to leave in 2008, Suzanne was offered the job. The timing for going back to work was earlier than anticipated, since daughter Gigi was still at WSMS, but this was clearly a fortuitous opportunity too good to defer.

As someone with an ardent belief in the school’s mission and a history of involvement, Suzanne found the transition to becoming an employee an easy one: “I am selling something I believe in. We have a great team; everyone pitches in and is collaborative and supportive.” She found prospective parents to be “kind and gracious, and easy to deal with.” The hardest parts were having to say no to families on the waitlist and not being able to meet every expectation for financial aid.

Suzanne oversaw the implementation of online applications and scheduling (though she initially worried about parents losing Becky Bonelli’s friendly first contact when they called), as well as the installation of a new database customized for admissions, which was upgraded this past summer.

Suzanne also managed the research into—and implementation of—the new Two’s Program (see page 6). As she says, “This was a topic for my whole time as Director. We included it in the strategic plan, did research, conducted focus groups and surveys, and identified the risks, logistics, pros and cons. We took our time before deciding to do this as a pilot program with siblings and legacy families.”

Suzanne is sad to leave WSMS, but excited about her new life in Washington, CT. Her children are attending Washington Montessori School, so she will be bringing the perspective of an ongoing Montessori education to her new role as Secretary of the WSMS Board of Trustees. We are delighted that we will continue to see her on a regular basis.

And Suzanne says, “I am thrilled to have Judy Lyons succeed me. She is the epitome of an admissions director!”

Judy is back in familiar territory: she initially took on the admissions role in 1987. She succeeded Judy Leon (mother of three alumni, grandmother of an alumna and a current student), whose husband had been transferred to
London. Like Suzanne, Judy Lyons had served as a parent interviewer, and was pondering what her next steps would be when her children were older. At the time Ben had just moved on to Collegiate (after four years at WSMS—in those days Collegiate did not have a kindergarten) and Hannah was just a year old; they are now 32 and 26, respectively.

Prior to having children, Judy had honed her people skills as a flight attendant for TWA, but she credits Ben's teachers with preparing her for the admissions job: “West Side Montessori educates you to be a better parent. I learned to choose words carefully, and be mindful of tone of voice and facial expression when speaking with children.” This sensitivity transferred to her dealings with both prospective and current parents. Part of her goal as Director of Admissions became to “stress to prospective parents how much I had learned from teachers, administrators, and the mental health consultants, and how [the parents would] learn too.”

Judy’s husband, film critic Jeffrey Lyons, travelled frequently. After nine busy years doing admissions and juggling kids (and volunteer commitments) at schools on opposite sides of town (like Suzanne’s, her kids were at Collegiate and Brearley), Judy opted in 1996 to hand over the well-oiled admissions function to Joan Silverman, who was the first (and only) non-WSMS parent in that role. But Judy’s attachment to WSMS was strong, and she maintained her close connection with colleagues on the faculty and administration, as well as parents she had known through the years. When Mimi Basso needed someone to replace Suzanne this past spring, she reached out to the one person she knew could walk into the job.

Of course, things have changed quite a bit over the past 17 years, but the WSMS approach is deeply rooted. As Judy says, “Maria Montessori was considered innovative long ago, and her educational approach would have continued to evolve, just as WSMS has evolved over the years to reflect changes in the community, the environment, technology …”

Judy says that one of her most important steps in the ’90s was to delay the application start date until October 1 in order to remove the frenzy from the first days of the school year. WSMS continues to take a more relaxed approach than many other schools, allowing online applications until early January. As Judy explains, “We want to appeal to a diverse population, and keeping admissions open and flexible is the best way to do that.”

She is amazed by how many new early childhood options are now, and excited by the prospects of the Two’s Program. And she finds it invigorating to be back at work with colleagues from the past, including Joan Sisler, Donna Lovell, Marcia Polanco, Neeta Arbeiter (a student teacher back then!), Margot and Melissa Mack, Sarah Gillman, Barbara Grant, Mimi Basso, and, of course, Becky Bonelli. One of the things she’ll be doing is recruiting parents for those interview slots … and likely training a future candidate for the director position.
WSMS ADMISSIONS DIRECTORS
OVER THE YEARS

1963-1968............................... Sally Burke
Molly ’65, Dana ’67, Nat ’69

1968-1976............................. Susan Heath
Julian ’70, Sebastian ’72

1976-1986............................ Barbara Angle
Eliot ’75, Amanda ’78, Hilary ’78

1986-1987............................ Judy Leon
Chris ’82, Matt ’84, Kirsten ’86
Kiep ’13, Malolae 2Wam

1987-1996............................ Judy Lyons
Ben ’87, Hannah ’93

1996-1998............................. Joan Silverman

1998-2008............................ Michelle Zemor
Alina ’98

2008-2013............................. Suzanne Day
Carter ’07, Gigi ’09

2013.................................. Judy Lyons
Ben ’87, Hannah ’93
Why I Give

I first realized how very special WSMS is during an observation visit I completed for my master’s program at NYU in the spring of 2010. After observing, I wrote:

I noticed the Head of School welcomed each child to the building with a friendly-sounding, “Nice to see you, my friend,” and a handshake. I noticed teachers also shaking hands with students at the doors to the classrooms. Respect was also demonstrated at all times towards children and adults. When a girl screamed in the classroom, rather than scolding her, the teacher calmly approached her, bent down to her eye level, and quietly spoke to her. I heard the teacher say to another student, “If you don’t want to work with her, you can walk away.” She then turned to the girl and said, “I see you’re upset. Do you want to see if you can work in the block area?” The teacher’s soft tone of voice and calm manner were a respectful way to speak to the young girl, and at the same time served as a good model, which the girl could learn to emulate.

I have continuously observed moments like these since that day, and could not be more thankful for the opportunity I have been given to work as part of the welcoming and respectful faculty here at WSMS. I can honestly say that this is the most supportive, creative, and welcoming group of colleagues with whom I have ever worked. I feel so lucky to be a part of this community and hope to continue being an active member for years to come.

When I was first asked to give to our Annual Fund this past spring, as a new teacher just out of graduate school (with loans to pay), I thought, “How much could I actually help? I don’t have much.” But when I thought about how fortunate I was to be at this special school, I knew I would give what I could for a place for which I have great respect.

– Tracy King, WSMS teacher

There are many different reasons why current WSMS parents, alumni parents, alumni, grandparents, friends, trustees, teachers, and staff donate to our school, but Tracy’s words perfectly capture two fundamental motives shared by all: a belief in our mission, and a generous desire to help ensure the strength and vitality of our school for today’s students and for generations to come. Whatever form a donation takes—a monetary contribution to the Annual Fund, a gift in kind, a donation of time and talent toward one of WSMS’s many committees and events—and whatever the size, the underlying spirit is the same, and we are deeply grateful for every single gift we receive. To all of you, our sincere thanks.
WSMS FACULTY, STAFF, AND TRUSTEES ACHIEVE 100% PARTICIPATION FOR THE FIFTH YEAR IN A ROW!

The Cornerstone of Our Fundraising Effort
Every single gift to the Annual Fund makes a significant difference to our school. Each contribution helps us to sustain and enhance the exceptional level of education that we offer each child; to continue to attract and retain superb teachers through fair and competitive compensation and outstanding professional development opportunities; to offer financial aid to more than 20% of our students; and to achieve a balanced budget while maintaining and augmenting reserves to ensure the school’s long-term vitality. This year, contributions to the Annual Fund once again topped the $300,000 dollar mark, demonstrating the ongoing generosity of our current and alumni families, grandparents, alumni, foundations, and friends.

The Importance of 100% Participation
Community support is a key indicator of the strength of any school, and WSMS is strengthened immeasurably by the many tangible ways in which our community demonstrates its commitment to our mission. This past year, faculty, staff, and trustees reached the significant milestone of 100% participation for the fifth year in a row. We are most grateful for their unanimous show of support.

We are deeply thankful for all gifts to the Annual Fund, no matter the size. We encourage all members of the WSMS community to contribute, as a high level of participation sends a powerful message to prospective families and potential donors that our mission is compelling and worthy of support. Thank you.
Composed of the entire WSMS parent body, the Parents Association carries out multiple missions, all of which are vital to the life of our school:

• Raising funds for the school’s financial aid program by producing two annual fundraising events, the Auction and the Spring Fair

• Serving as a voice for parents’ views on policy and program decisions at WSMS

• Building and maintaining a strong school community by promoting understanding and friendship among WSMS families through close communication and a wide array of school events

We are awed by the amount of time, talent, and goodwill bestowed so freely by our parent community this past year. Once again, PA co-presidents Kristen Chae Arabadjiev and Amy Groome assembled and led an energetic, creative, and hardworking group of committee chairs and class representatives, whose names you see here. This list of volunteers constitutes only a small percentage of the many parents who contributed to the success of the PA’s endeavors. To all of you, our heartfelt thanks.
PA CO-PRESIDENTS
Kristen Chae Arabadjiev
Amy Groome

FAMILY FUN
Book Fair
Jean Chong
Amanda Lindemann

Bulb Planting
Jennifer Cabrera Lynn
Mike Seckler

End-of-School Picnic
Diana Campbell Miller
Rachel Wang

Grandparents & Special Visitors Day
Melissa Hilfers
Sarah Loewenstein

Hat, Mitten, Coat and Boots Drive
Laurie Izes

Pumpkin Picnic
Shika Goel
Nandita Sood
Beatrice Yang

Sandsational
Jennifer Cabrera Lynn
Mike Seckler

WSMS Merchandise Sale
Daniela Messina

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February 2, 2013 – Pier 60, Chelsea Piers, New York, NY

The 44th Annual Auction was one for the history books, tied as it was to WSMS’s 50th Anniversary Celebration. More than 640 guests—current and alumni parents, current and former faculty and administrators, and friends—gathered under one roof to celebrate the school’s 50 years and to pay tribute to the five founding families who started it all back in 1963.

Highlights of the evening included witty and thought-provoking remarks from Jeffrey Lyons and Bill Ritter, leading into an eloquent and inspirational keynote address by Alma Powell. Broadway leading ladies Anastasia Barzee and Jennifer DiNoia delivered a knockout rendition of “For Good” from Wicked, while a chorus of WSMS faculty and parents did a fantastic job leading the audience through a spirited medley of school songs. Guests were also treated to a vibrant excerpt from WSMS at 50, a documentary produced by Lit Films. The Live Auction was a rollicking event, culminating in many guests donating bids on the WSMS 50th Anniversary Commemorative Quilt, a gorgeous work of art created by the children of WSMS, which is currently on display in the school. The combined Auction and raffle raised close to $300,000 for the Financial Aid Fund.

Co-chairs Joanna Hagan Rego, Stacey St. Rose-Drayton, and Mary Vertin brought together an amazing team of collaborators, including a veritable army of energetic and talented WSMS parents, past and present. Sincere thanks to Joanna, Stacey, and Mary, to the committee chairs, to our presenters and performers, and to everyone who donated their time, talent, financial resources, and so many wonderful auction items, all for the benefit of our Financial Aid Fund. Thanks to all those who so generously purchased tickets for our teachers. A very special thank you to the WSMS faculty and to our children, who worked so hard to create the commemorative quilt. Special thanks also to those teachers who donated their time and creativity to this year’s Teacher Time projects, and to the administrative staff for all their help and support. And our eternal gratitude to our founders, whose powerful vision for our children and our community continues to touch us all and guide our future.
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Children, parents, teachers, and neighbors came together on Saturday, May 11, for a great day of games, food, shopping, and entertainment on West 92nd Street. Kids had a wide array of fun activities to choose from, including basketball toss, herb planting, mini golf, and photo pin making, while grown-ups caught up with friends and found bargains at Second Hand Sue, the book sale, and the general store. Everyone enjoyed the live music and the terrific food, from the burgers and hot dogs to the delicious international buffet to the always popular bake sale.

All funds raised at the Spring Fair support the WSMS Financial Aid Fund. Our heartfelt thanks go to co-chairs Robin Alston, Nissa Booker, and Maggan Daileader; to the stellar group of subcommittee chairs they assembled, whose teamwork made every aspect of the Fair run smoothly; and to all who so generously donated their time, talent, and financial resources to help make this beloved annual WSMS family tradition such a success.
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- ...and all of the WSMS faculty and staff
Very special thanks to the WSMS faculty, who provided many of the photos used in this magazine, and to the WSMS administrative team—a multi-tasking, multi-talented, always collaborative group who has helped in ways too numerous to count.

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Special Thanks: Barbara Angle, Gil Burke, Suzanne Day, Karen Deinzer, Susanna Doyle, Sarah Eson, Maria Gravel, Judy Lyons, Michelle Zemor
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