

Editor's note: Editions of Educate! during year 2000 were distributed solely in e-mail format without pictures or graphics. For purposes of archiving and distribution, the text of these editions has been converted to PDF files. No other changes have been made.

Educate! the weekly newsletter of
The Swann Fellowship 1510 E. 7th St. Charlotte NC 28204 704-342-4330
SwannFello@aol.com

To unsubscribe, reply with "Remove." If this was forwarded and you would like to see it regularly, message with "Subscribe."

IN THIS ISSUE:

- CMS: Opening eyes to the world
- Diversity 101: Being faithful, but non-Christian, at this time of year
- Open houses, and more
- Teacher turnover 1999-2000: By the numbers

Last week's Fellowship ad in The Charlotte Post:

Let's talk turkey: Were separate schools equal last time around? Should we expect them to be this time? We all need to go to school together.

CMS: OPENING EYES TO THE WORLD

Gray Newman of Charlotte wrote to affirm a recent Fellowship ad that read: "Global Village 101: When schools cross class and culture lines, it's our children's first lesson in the wide world that's beyond their own front door." Newman wrote:

"I started first grade in 1970 at Idlewild Elementary School. I saw and interacted, for the first time, with children who did not look like me. They were of a different color, had a different type of hair and did not live near me.

"Then in the fifth grade I was bused from my East Charlotte home to Lincoln Heights Elementary and my eyes were opened wider. I saw a part of Charlotte I never knew existed and looked a lot different than what I was used to.

"During that year I was introduced to something else new, a black man, Mr. Diamond, who was in charge. I don't remember what subject he taught but I remember the lessons he taught me. He was the first of many black males that influenced me as I went through twelve years of Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools and I like to think that I am a better man today for what they taught me."

 The Mr. Diamond whom Gray Newman remembers is Kenneth Diamond, now 65 and still living in Charlotte. Diamond was at Lincoln Heights Elementary for more than two decades, as teacher and administrator, before retiring in 1988. "It's really nice to hear that someone thinks that of me personally," Diamond said last week.

And perhaps it's a good sign that Diamond couldn't remember the name Gray Newman: "I remember the names of ALL the bad ones. The quiet, nice kids, I don't remember them quite so well."

Diamond would not be drawn into a discussion of the CMS family choice plan that is projected to leave magnet programs at Lincoln Heights but turn many westside schools back into the all-black, mostly poor schools that they were when he arrived in the early 1960s. "I'm thinking and hoping that we're going in the right direction," he said.

DIVERSITY 101: Being Faithful But Non-Christian This Time of Year

The Christmas holiday is almost upon us and as decorations go up around town and people greet each other with "Merry Christmas," I want to remind dear readers that the holiday is not celebrated by all citizens of Charlotte, and that includes students in our public schools.

When my oldest child was in kindergarten, he came home with books about his favorite characters, all involved in Christmas preparations and celebrations. Did you know that Big Bird celebrates Christmas? As do Clifford the dog and Dr. Suess's characters as well as many others of our children's beloved fantasy friends. Schools put up Christmas trees, decorate for the holiday and have "winter" parties, with green-and-red color schemes and candy cane treats. In Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools, children have been assigned projects to study Christmas around the world, to write to Santa and to collect Christmas gifts for underprivileged children.

The Christmas season is a difficult time for non-Christian children. In our schools, Christmas is of overwhelming importance and outshines other views and observances. Christmas pervades the school environment for weeks.

The CMS Board of Education Religion in Schools Policy #5136 provides guidelines for teachers, parents and administrators about religions' role in the schools. The guidelines for holiday observance are sparse and open to interpretation. The policy states that staff should be sensitive to the diversity of students' beliefs and make an effort to provide ways for mutual respect regarding holiday displays and celebrations. School personnel are to avoid activities or assignments that might be seen as objectionable on religious grounds. A student can be excused or given an alternative activity if a parent objects to an activity on religious grounds.

Schools and teachers vary in their response to these guidelines. Teachers need a lot more input to understand fully how holiday observances differ among families and how to instruct students to respect all religious observances. We can help sensitize teachers about how non-Christian students feel when spelling and math worksheets have drawings of reindeer and elves, when ornaments are created in class or when students are asked to write about their best Christmas ever.

This is an appeal to those of you who care about supporting diversity in our schools. Help the

schools be diligent in respecting all children's views at this time of year. Remind school personnel that Christmas is a religious holiday and, like other religious holidays, has a dignified significance. Be sensitive to how non-Christian children perceive the Christmas symbols in their school. Help these children explain to their peers why they don't celebrate Christmas and ask teachers to talk about the variety of beliefs and cultural observances in our country. Encourage the school to hold parent meetings to discuss this issue and help teachers prepare assignments that do not promote one observance over another.

And then, dear reader, have a happy holiday.

-- Ginny Rosenberg

OPEN HOUSES, AND MORE

Below is the schedule of open houses and other events for this week and next. Each week through January we'll do the same. The highlight this week is Saturday's Showcase of Schools at the Merchandise Mart.

The schedule is an opportunity, not just for you to visit your own children's school, but to go to one you've never been to. It could even highlight a community duty: The more you learn about the schools, the better they will become, benefiting all children in that place and the larger community. Your visits will also be a morale boost to staff!

THIS WEEK:

Nov. 27 Monday

9:30 a.m. Irwin Avenue Elementary open house and coffee
9:30 a.m. Alexander Middle coffee with principal

Nov. 28 Tuesday

8 a.m. Harding University High tour, open house
8:30 a.m. Rama Road Elementary classroom observation
8:30 a.m. Piedmont Open Middle open house
9 a.m. David Cox Road Elementary open house
9 a.m. Olde Providence Elementary open house and tour
9 a.m. Greenway Park Elementary open house and tour
9:15 a.m. East Meck High school tours
9:15 a.m. First Ward Elementary tours
9:30 a.m. Billingsville/Highland Elementary open house. Reserve a space:
343-5525
9:30 a.m. Lincoln Heights Elementary coffee and school tour
9:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. McClintock Middle open house
9:30 a.m. Myers Park Traditional Elementary tours
9:30 a.m. Reid Park Elementary open house
9:30 a.m. Thomasboro Elementary coffee and tour
Noon, Collinswood Elementary - Spanish Immersion open house
Noon Dilworth Elementary open house
1:15 p.m. East Meck High school tours
4 p.m. Davidson IB Middle open house
5:30 p.m. Crown Point Elementary choice plan information and Q&A
6:30 p.m. North Meck High open house, information session
6:30 p.m. Ranson Middle open house

7 p.m. Butler High open house
 7 p.m. Cotswold Elementary PTA meeting
 7 p.m. Dilworth Elementary open house
 7 p.m. Huntingtowne Farms Elementary information session

Nov. 29 Wednesday

8:30 a.m. Rama Road Elementary classroom observation
 8:45 a.m. Bruns Avenue Elementary open house
 9 a.m. Huntingtowne Farms Elementary information session
 9:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. McClintock Middle open house
 10 a.m. Barringer Elementary open house

Nov. 30 Thursday

8, 9, 10 a.m. Blythe Elementary school tour
 8 a.m. Greenway Park Elementary family choice presentation
 8 a.m. Huntersville Elementary open house
 8:30 a.m. Piedmont Open Middle open house
 8:45 a.m. Bruns Avenue Elementary open house
 9:15 a.m. East Meck High school tours
 9:15 a.m. First Ward Elementary tours
 9:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. McClintock Middle open house
 9 a.m. Beverly Woods Elementary tour
 10 a.m. Devonshire Elementary open house
 11 a.m.: Albemarle Road Elementary open house
 1:15 p.m. East Meck High school tours
 5:30 p.m. Huntersville Elementary open house
 7 p.m. Myers Park High open house

Dec. 1 Friday

9:30 a.m. Amay James/Park Road Montessori open houses
 1:30 p.m. Oakdale Elementary coffee with the principal

Dec. 2 Saturday

CMS Showcase of Schools, Merchandise Mart, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Representatives of all schools will be present to help parents learn about their options under the Family Choice Plan now scheduled to be implemented next fall. Parking \$5 at Mart, free at Education Center on 2nd Street, with shuttle buses to Mart.

NEXT WEEK (Send corrections and additions to SwannFello@aol.com)

Dec. 4 Monday

8, 9, 10 a.m. Blythe Elementary school tour
 9 a.m. Collinswood Elementary - Spanish Immersion open house
 9 a.m. Lansdowne Elementary tour
 9 a.m. Nathaniel Alexander Elementary open house
 9 a.m. Villa Heights Academic Center open house
 1 p.m. Barringer Elementary open house
 7 p.m. Elizabeth Traditional Elementary PTA meeting
 7 p.m. Independence High PTA meeting and music
 7:30 p.m. Piney Grove Elementary open house

Dec. 5 Tuesday

8 a.m. Huntersville Elementary open house

8:45 a.m. Bruns Avenue Elementary open house
 9 a.m. Eastway Middle school tour
 9 a.m. Greenway Park Elementary open house and tours
 9 a.m. Ranson Middle open house
 9:15 a.m. East Meck High school tours
 9:15 a.m. First Ward Elementary tours
 9:30 a.m. Elizabeth Lane Elementary school tour
 9:30 a.m. Highland Elementary Billingsville Montessori tour
 9:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. McClintock Middle open house
 10 a.m. Spaugh Middle open house
 1:15 p.m. East Meck High school tours
 6 p.m. Berryhill Elementary open house
 6 p.m. Davidson IB Middle PTA meeting
 6 p.m. Piedmont Open Middle open house
 6:45 p.m. Selwyn Elementary PTA winter program
 7 p.m. Cotswold Elementary PTA meeting
 7 p.m. David Cox Road Elementary chorus winter concert
 7 p.m. Davidson Elementary winter holiday program and PTA meeting
 7 p.m. Hawk Ridge Elementary PTA winter program
 7 p.m. Independence High "Patriots on Parade" for prospective students and parents
 7 p.m. Learning Academy PTA meeting
 7 p.m. Myers Park High IB program information session
 7 p.m. Nathaniel Alexander Elementary holiday program PTA meeting
 7 p.m. Paw Creek Elementary PTA meeting

Dec. 6 Wednesday

8:30 a.m. Piedmont Open Middle open house
 9 a.m. Davidson IB Middle open house
 9 a.m. Oakhurst Elementary open house and tour
 9:15 a.m. Elizabeth Traditional Elementary school tour
 9:30 a.m. Barringer Elementary open house. Reserve a space: 343-5525
 9:30 a.m. Billingsville/Highland Elementary open house
 9:30 a.m. Chantilly Elementary open house
 9:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. McClintock Middle open house
 9:30 a.m. Myers Park Traditional Elementary tours
 9:30 a.m. Northwest School of the Arts open house
 9:30 a.m. Reid Park Elementary open house
 10 a.m. Davidson Elementary school tour
 2 p.m. Eastway Middle school tour
 3 p.m. Myers Park High tours, meet in art gallery
 6 p.m. Huntingtowne Farms Elementary information session
 6:30 p.m. Shamrock Gardens Elementary PTA Meeting

Dec. 7 Thursday

8 a.m. Harding University High tour, open house
 8:30 a.m. Blythe Elementary open house
 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Matthews Elementary open house
 9 a.m. Greenway Park Elementary open house and tour
 9 a.m. Independence High open house
 9 a.m. McKee Road Elementary parent tour
 9:15 a.m. East Meck High school tours
 9:15 a.m. First Ward Elementary tours
 9:30 a.m. Alexander Graham Middle PTA coffee and tour

9:30 a.m. Amay James/Park Road Montessori open houses
 9:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. McClintock Middle open house
 5:45 p.m. Crown Point Elementary choice plan information and Q&A
 10 a.m. Davidson Elementary school tour
 10:30 a.m. Hawk Ridge Elementary open house
 11 a.m.: Albemarle Road Elementary open house
 11:30 a.m. Irwin Avenue open house and coffee at Main Library, 310 N. Tryon
 1:15 p.m. East Meck High school tours
 2 p.m. Eastway Middle school tour
 5 p.m. Devonshire Elementary open house
 5 p.m. Spagh Middle open house
 5:30 p.m. Collinswood Elementary - Spanish Immersion open house
 6 p.m. Highland Elementary PTA winter program
 6 p.m. Hornets Nest Elementary magnet information and school tour
 6:45 p.m. Blythe Elementary information meeting on choice plan
 7 p.m. Collinswood Elementary - Spanish Immersion PTA meeting
 7 p.m. David Cox Road Elementary PTA meeting
 7 p.m. Crown Point Elementary winter program
 7 p.m. Greenway Park Elementary TA program
 7 p.m. Independence High band concert
 7 p.m. Lansdowne PTA meeting
 7 p.m. Myers Park Traditional Elementary PTA meeting
 7 p.m. Oakdale Elementary holiday program and PTA
 7 p.m. Oakhurst Elementary PTA winter program
 7 p.m. Olde Providence Elementary winter program
 7 p.m. Reid Park Elementary PTA meeting
 7 p.m. Selwyn Elementary prospective parent meeting

Dec. 8 Friday

9 a.m. Carmel Middle tour and information session
 9 a.m. Eastway Middle school tour
 9 a.m. Olde Providence Elementary open house and tour
 9:30 a.m. David Cox Road Elementary open house
 9:30 a.m. Ashley Park Elementary open house
 11 a.m. Dilworth Elementary open house

Dec. 9 Saturday

9 a.m. Lansdowne Elementary tour
 10 a.m. Oakhurst Elementary fair, tour and open house
 7 p.m. Lansdowne Elementary tour

Sunday Dec. 10

2:30 p.m. Irwin Avenue Elementary open house and tour

Source: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
 For last-minute updates see www.cms.12.nc.us

TEACHER TURNOVER 1999-2000

 From State Board of Education report
 (full report at http://www.ncpublicschools.org/teacher_education/t_turnover.html)

"The 117 school systems reported that 12,075 teachers of the 88,882 teachers employed during the 1999-2000 school year left their systems for a statewide turnover rate of 13.59%.

"This is up slightly from the rate of 13.41% reported for the 1998-99 school year, and the 12.30% reported for the 1997-98 school year.

"Turnover ranged from a high of 28.21% in Hoke County to a low of 1.65% in Yancey County."

Mecklenburg: 6,349 teachers, 1,234 leaving for rate of 19.44%

Durham 16.93%

New Hanover 16.48%

Union 15.91%

Chapel Hill-Carrboro 14.58%

Forsyth 14.17%

Guilford 12.29%

Wake 10.78%

 Send us e-mail addresses for people you think would like to receive
 this publication. Your comments and contributions are also welcome.
 To write about your school's activities, just do it -- then send it to us.

THE SWANN FELLOWSHIP

Lucy Bush, president

B.B. DeLaine, vice president

The name:

The Swann Fellowship was named for Darius and Vera Swann, who on behalf of their son James became the lead plaintiffs in Swann vs. Mecklenburg in the 1960s. Darius Swann was the first African American Presbyterian missionary ever assigned outside of Africa. His experiences in India led him to appreciate the value of an integrated society for human development.

The vision:

As people of faith, our vision is that all children in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System will have excellent educational opportunities which are both equitable and integrated.

The background:

Formed in 1997 out of several Charlotte religious congregations, the Fellowship focuses on being a witness to the value of diversity as an integral part of children's education, and educating the public on public school issues as they relate to this and allied subjects. The Swann Fellowship is a nonprofit organization exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. A copy of the license to solicit charitable contributions may be obtained from the N.C. Department of Human Resources, Solicitation Licensing Branch. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval or recommendation by the state.