



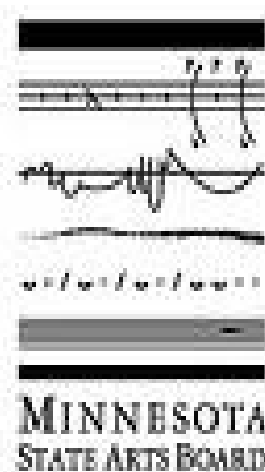
## Exciting Opportunities at Avalon

At Avalon we are always trying to find ways for our students to get out and learn in the larger community or to bring members of that community to us. Below are descriptions of several community based learning opportunities Avalon students have been participating in this school year.

### Graphic Novel Project

The 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders just finished a very cool and exciting graphic novel project, made possible in part by a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board. The students are working with photographer Barry Kleider to create graphic novels based on personal memoirs they have written in conjunction with cell phone photography. Leading up to this wonderful project, students read two fictional novels written as memoir, Nightjohn and Sarny, both by Gary Paulsen, and the graphic novel Barefoot Gen by Keiji Nakazawa. Some high school students have also joined the younger students in reading Barefoot Gen, and many have also undertaken reading Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi. Barry has also introduced students to the language and art of photography, talked extensively about the storytelling power of photos, and has students thinking about how to tell their own stories through both image and text. At the end of the project, each student will have a completed graphic novel of about thirty frames that we hope to present in many different ways. There are plans to have a gallery-type display set up at J&S Bean Factory on Thomas Avenue, the Merriam Park Library, and Canvas Art Center (connected to Hancock-Hamline Elementary School). The students are also planning on presenting their work to the Avalon community at a presentation night this spring.

Please keep your eyes peeled for future announcements about these gallery displays and the presentation night – we'd love to have you join us to celebrate the wonderful work our students are doing!



More projects on page 2!

### Upcoming Events

- March 5** Chili Night/Annual Meeting 6-8:30pm
- March 9** Board Meeting 6pm
- March 11** Early Release– 1pm
- March 13** Open House 10:30am
- March 25** Last day of Block 3
- March 25** Early Release– 1pm
- March 28-April 2** Spring Break
- April 12** MCA testing begins
- April 13** Board Meeting 6pm
- April 13** Presentation Night 7pm
- April 13** Open House 7pm
- May 6** Early Release– 1pm
- May 11** Board Meeting 6pm
- May 20** Open House 7pm
- May 31** Memorial Day– No School
- June 3** Recognition Night 6pm
- June 8** Board Meeting 6pm
- June 9** Last day of school and  
**GRADUATION!**

## More Exciting Opportunities at Avalon!

---

*Continued from page 1*

### **Theatre Boot Camp**

In October, students met with professional actor Charles Fraser for Avalon's first "Theatre Boot Camp" – a week's worth of theatre activities to help students either begin to act (like 9<sup>th</sup> grader Mckenzie Boyle) or to refine their acting skills (like 12<sup>th</sup> grader Maddie Hite-Smaka). They worked on actor voice warm-ups, improvisational games, and scenes of neutral dialogue where the pressure is on the actor to create a back story for a character. Students ended the week with a look-in rehearsal for family and friends!

### **One-Act Play in Rehearsal**

Once students finished the boot camp, they went on to work with Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. Fresh from his work in the History Theater's *Buddy Holly Story*, Charles Fraser served as the director of this absurd play in which characters argue with actors about how to play scenes! A dark and disturbing play, not meant for children under the age of 11, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* challenges our notion of what it means to be alive (as well as how to "act" out our lives well). It was performed November 19, 20, and 21 at Avalon School.

### **Bothello!**

Avalon students had the unique opportunity to see two productions of William Shakespeare's

classic tragedy *Othello* – one at the Park Square Theater and the other at the Dorothy Day Center (put on by 10,000 Things Theater). At Park Square, students participated in an immersion day – a workshop on developing the actor's voice, a "build a moment" exercise in which students heard and saw the actors talking about their parts and the play before then acting out key scenes as a preview, and then a performance of the play. By seeing both *Othellos*, their experience was a **Bothello** production! On Thursday, November 12, students also had the good fortune to meet with actor Steve Hendrickson, who played Iago in the Park Square production. Asking questions about the play as well as the career of acting, students deepened their understanding of both Shakespeare's play and the spectacle of theatre!

### **Romeo and Juliet**

Professional actor Charles Fraser will be directing *Romeo and Juliet* here at Avalon School! Performances will be April 15, 16, & 17, with tickets costing \$5. There are over 30 students grades 7-12 in the play, and Dan Arnold and LaRoux Dodge are playing the leads. In preparation for their performance, Avalon students saw the Guthrie Theater's production of the play on January 20<sup>th</sup> and were accompanied by Avalon advisor Jo Sullivan. Further preparation will occur during February when volunteer Lois Charboneau (who directed last

year's *Once in Lifetime*) and student-teacher Shelia Twomey will be helping students memorize their lines. Avalon advisor Kevin Ward is looking for parent involvement in the production of the play, and an announcement of a parent meeting will be forthcoming. Contact him at [kevin@avalonschool.org](mailto:kevin@avalonschool.org) or 651-649-5495 ext. 211 if you have questions.

### **Macbeth**

Professional director and actor David Mann will be leading a guided project on *Macbeth* here at Avalon during the month of February. In fact, some of the cast of *Romeo and Juliet* will be brushing up their Shakespeare during this project. Students will have seven one-hour sessions and will also see the Guthrie Theater's production of this famous tragedy. Many of the interested students want to know about the origins of all the Macbeth-related superstitions, but they also are hoping for a few acting tips from Mr. Mann.

### **Avalon's Music Class**

University of Minnesota professor (and parent of an Avalon alumnus) Alex Lubet is leading a project on music and culture with 11 Avalon students grades 7-12. The group meets Mondays and Wednesdays, and Alex is bringing along graduate students from the U to help teach and work more closely with students on their projects. Their final deliverable will be a concert of

# The Opportunities Don't End!

*Continued from page 2*

some kind at the end of the year as this project will last until May. Alex is also hoping to have a “Music Garage” a couple days a week after school for students to get individual help on music-related matters.

## **A Visit from Macalester**

For three days in January, Macalester professor and long-time friend of Avalon Peter Rachleff spent time with the American Studies 1848 seminar. The group discussed immigration of the Irish, Germans, and Mexicans (refugees of the Mexican-American War) and what pushed and pulled them to America. This connected with the class's larger exploration of the challenges of keeping a country together in spite of its contradictions and inequalities. Peter urged the students not to get too cynical in their study of history – instead, it should empower them to be activists, working hard to make the world a better place. As Gandhi said and Paul Wellstone repeated, “You must be change you wish to see in the world.”

The Marshall-Brennan Constitutional Literacy Project was founded in 1999. The Project was named for the late U.S. Supreme Court Justices Thurgood Marshall and William J. Brennan Jr. and was founded with the enthusiastic support of their widows, Mrs. Cissy Marshall

and Mrs. Mary Brennan (1916-2000). Justices Marshall and Brennan were chosen because of their commitment to education as the touchstone of both effective democratic citizenship and personal success in our society.

## **The Marshall Brennan Project**

The Marshall Brennan Project places selected law students, known as Marshall-Brennan Fellows, in local high schools to teach a course on Constitutional Law. As Marshall-Brennan fellows, we seek to cultivate active, involved high school student-citizens who understand their role in preserving constitutional principles. We hope to provide the high school students we teach with the tools necessary to gain an understanding of and appreciation for democratic freedoms and responsibilities.

William Mitchell College of Law founded their chapter of the Marshall-Brennan Project in the Fall of 2009. Over the last year, William Mitchell faculty and students have worked directly with the St. Paul Public Schools to create a curriculum that meets both Minnesota state standards and district expectations. The William Mitchell law students selected to be Marshall-Brennan Fellows take an advanced Constitutional Law seminar as part of their Law School education.

The Fellows: Kyle Johnson and Andre Moulton

Kyle and Andre are currently second year students at William Mitchell College of Law in St. Paul. Prior to law school, Kyle attended college at St. John's University in Collegeville, and Andre attended college at Macalester College in St. Paul. They became involved with the Marshall-Brennan Project because it presented an opportunity to share with young adults a topic we are passionate about – constitutional law. They greatly enjoyed getting to know the students throughout our first week of class. They are looking forward to building relationships and exploring constitutional rights with the students for the next eight weeks.

## **Prom**

Avalon is once again hosting prom. This year, prom has an Alice In Wonderland theme and will be on May 29th, starting at 7:00 PM and ending roughly around 10:00PM. It will be held at Hamline University. Tickets are going to be sold for \$15. We are raising money for prom by selling suckers for \$.50. These are being sold before and after school and during lunch. All proceeds of the suckers go directly to prom. Get excited for Avalon prom!

## Yearbook is Coming!

The Avalon yearbook committee is currently working to finish up the last half of the yearbook, but there are a few essentials left that we need, and we need your help.

First, we have a new feature this year called Shout Outs, which is directed towards 8th graders and High School Seniors. It is an opportunity for the family/guardians to send in a hello, congrats, or even goodbye to their graduates. It costs only \$2 for a quarter of a page and \$1 for an eighth of a page. Feel free to send in just a message or even a picture.

The next thing the committee still needs to take care of is senior pictures. All high school senior will need to send in a current picture of themselves, along with a completed copy of the senior survey (still to be

handed out). All pictures and surveys MUST be in by Thursday, March 11th. If a senior does not have senior pictures, contact Laura and she can arrange to take a picture or two.

On the topic of pictures, yearbook has extended the deadline for baby pictures! If you'd like to see your little babies in the yearbook, make sure to send in a picture. If the picture is sent by e-mail, make sure that it is in .jpg form. If a hard copy is turned in, it will be returned to you promptly. All baby pictures must also be in by March 11th. Also, if you or your student have any school-related pictures from the current year, feel free to send those in as well.

Any questions or comments can be sent to [laura@avalonschool.org](mailto:laura@avalonschool.org)

## Sports Update

The Charter Stars Basketball team (comprised of students from Twin Cities Academy and Great River as well as students from Avalon) is progressing nicely toward the end of their season. So far they have a win-loss record of 15-6! Avalon's Office Manager Holly Bell has attended every game this season. She reports, "I loves to see the team realize their potential!" Bell also said a highlight of the season so far is seeing the player's skills exceed their own expectations. Their last scheduled game will be on February 26th and they are planning to have a banquet at Avalon in Mid-March. Avalon will offer co-ed Ultimate Frisbee for the spring sports season. Please contact Anni Bowers ([annika@avalonschool.org](mailto:annika@avalonschool.org)) for more information.

## GSA News

Avalon's GSA just had a dance on Friday, February 12, and is now busy working on three things:

- **The Spaghetti Dinner** on Friday, March 12 at 7pm. The cost is \$5.
- **Annual concert– Night of Noise** in late April.
- **Lobby Day** on April 22. At this annual event GSA members join others from throughout the state to talk to their legislators at the State Capitol. Parents are welcome to join!

The GSA is also looking into the possibility of a GSA-related service week.

Keep your eyes on the weekly email updates for more information about these events.

## Lease/Facilities Update

Avalon's lease at 1745 University is up in the spring of 2011. At this time we are evaluating our space needs and working to make a plan for the future. With the current real estate climate, it is advantageous for us to explore our options in order to determine if 1745 University is indeed the best home for us. There are currently many properties available and looking for tenants. We are committed to staying in this general area. We will keep everyone updated about opportunities to get involved in the process as it develops. Please contact Gretchen at [gretchen@avalonschool.org](mailto:gretchen@avalonschool.org) if you have any questions or concerns.

## Egypt!

Avalon advisor Kevin Ward is heading to Egypt March 27 and will be there for two weeks observing teaching practices in a school in Cairo. Sight-seeing of some kind will also be part of the trip (aren't there pyramids or something in Egypt?), but the main focus will be on an exchange of ideas about how best to help students learn in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Kevin's host in Cairo will not only be subjected to his sense of humor but also project-based learning Avalon style! Kevin is hoping to connect with some Avalon students to create a project around his trip and also to help develop a seminar that students can take next year.

## Upcoming Spring Events

As this newsletter is being published we are in the middle of a winter storm, but spring will come before we know it, and with it, many exciting activities here at Avalon.

### **Chili Night/ Annual Meeting**

**Friday, March 5 from 6 to 8:30pm**

Please join us for our annual community event/annual meeting. The evening includes a lovely chili dinner as well as both a silent and live auction. The school board will give a brief overview of the year and hold elections for a new board member. Please join us for this wonderful event.

We are still accepting donations of auction items and chili! Contact Holly if you have something to donate!

### **Presentation Night**

**Tuesday, April 13, 7pm**

Ever wonder what kind of projects students are undertaking at Avalon? Come to this presentation night to find out.

### **Service Week**

**April 26-30**

Every year Avalon picks a week to suspend all regular activity and to get out into the community to work on service learning projects. The topics range from

homelessness to food production to environmental issues– and much more. Look for more information coming home in the near future.

### **Senior Presentations**

#### **Dates/Times TBD**

Each senior is required to present their senior project. We will inform you of the dates as they are determined. These evenings are not to be missed!

### **Recognition Night**

**Thursday, June 3 6pm**

This is a potluck extravaganza. We gather together to honor our students who have shown outstanding work in one of four areas. The awards center around our mission and include: Community Building, Engaged Citizenship, Active Learning, and Hope for the Future. We also honor our valuable volunteers. Please mark this celebration on your calendars now!

### **Graduation!!**

**Wednesday, June 9, 6pm**

We will hold our graduation on Wednesday, June 9th at 6 PM at Sundin Music Hall at Hamline University. Hamline has hosted us for every Avalon graduation and we are happy to return to our sponsor's beautiful hall. This is not your typical high school graduation! It is a personal, uplifting, fun event. Information regarding tickets will be provided early this spring. We hope to see you there.

## Testing Update

As winter rolls toward spring, we inch ever closer to state test time here at Avalon. The second week of April is the big week. Please help us by working hard to make sure that your student is well rested and fueled up with breakfast that week. We will be offering some supplemental breakfast options as well.

Here is a list of tests for each grade level:

7th – MCA's in Math and Reading

8th– MCA's in Math, Reading, and Science

9th– GRAD test of Writing

10th– MCA-II/GRAD in Reading

11th– MCA-II/GRAD in Math

9-12 Biology Students– MCA in Science

Please note that all the tests labeled as GRAD tests are tests that must be passed to graduate. If a student does not pass them during the spring administration we offer remediation and then they can retest the next year.

The MCA's are not graduation requirements, but the results for our school are important– so it is pertinent that all students work to the best of their ability on these exams. Thanks!

# Yearbook is Coming!

## Avalon students win top honors in Economics and Language and Literature at the Academic Decathlon Regional Competition

This year's Avalon Academic team is composed of returning members Dan Arnold, Matt Lesicko, and Maddie Lachowsky, along with new members Sophia Weidman, Peter Berlin, John Ordyne, and Liza Karachunski. Jo Sullivan is our coach. Normally, the teams have nine team members. This year's competing team was two members short because two students withdrew from the team in January.

The Regional competition was held on Saturday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>. Congratulations to Matt Lesicko who tied for the highest overall score in Economics, to Sophia Weidman who received the highest score in the Language and Literature category, and to Dan Arnold who was Avalon's top overall scorer. Dan won gold medals in the SuperQuiz, Language and Literature, and math categories, silver medals in the Science and Art categories, and a bronze medal in Economics. In addition to his gold medal for Economics, Matt also won a bronze medal in math. In addition to her gold medal in Language and Literature, Sophia won a silver medal in the SuperQuiz category. Maddie won a bronze medal in Science, and Liza won a bronze medal in Music. Overall, the Avalon team placed fourth out of eleven teams. For a complete listing of team and individual place winners, please visit the Minnesota Academic Decathlon website at: <http://www.mnscsc.org/>

[student\\_outreach/mnad/ad.html](http://www.mnscsc.org/student_outreach/mnad/ad.html) and click on "regional scores."

Academic Decathlon, a national scholastic competition for high school students, was created to provide opportunities for students to experience the challenges of rigorous team and individual academic competition. Each student competes in 10 events, which are Economics, Essay, Art, Interview, Language and Literature, Math, Music, Science, Social Science and Speech. Each year the Science or Social Science topic is used for the Super Quiz topic.

The ten-event academic program strives to foster a greater respect for knowledge, to promote wholesome interschool academic competition and to further develop student communication skills. A unique aspect of Academic Decathlon is that it is designed to include students from all academic ability and achievement levels. Each nine-member team consists of three "A" (Honors division), three "B" (Scholastic division), and three "C or below" (Varsity division) students. Each team member competes in all of the 10 events against other students in their individual divisions, however, team scores are calculated using the top two individual scores from each division to arrive at an overall team score.

The Academic Decathlon State Competition will be held on Feb. 28 – March 1 at Oak Ridge Hotel & Conference Center in Chaska. Good luck to our team!

## Senator Visit

Avalon's State Senator Ellen Anderson stopped by Carrie and Nora's advisory on Tuesday morning, February 2nd. Representing Senate District 66, she was invited to join advisory and hear directly from Avalon students about their feelings of Avalon and charter schools in general. A member of the E-12 Education Budget and Policy Division, advisories thought it important to give Anderson a better image of what charter schools do. After a short but informative discussion, Anderson was treated to a tour by Keegan Casper, Alex Kaardal, and Holly Marsh. All current high school students who also attended Avalon Middle School, they were able to highlight the best of our programs. Rumor has it that Senator Anderson was so impressed that she noted that her teenage son might be interested in checking out the school. For now, we're more than pleased to have a well-informed state senator who knows what Avalon is all about.

## Fencing

Fencing at Avalon meets Thursdays - 3:45 - 5 PM in the cafeteria through Feb. 25th. Come observe or give it a try. Our high school team has had three tournaments with very strong showings. We have two remaining tournaments along with the state high school championships on Feb. 21st at Roseville High School. More information on the high school tournament at [www.askfred.com](http://www.askfred.com). Contact Janet B. for more info on fencing at Avalon [jab5100@gmail.com](mailto:jab5100@gmail.com).