

April 2004

**Garrett Park Nursery School's
50th Anniversary: May 1, 2004**

by Sara Phang

The Garrett Park Nursery School (GPNS), located next to Garrett Park Elementary School on Oxford Street in Garrett Park, celebrates its fiftieth anniversary with a Silent Auction fundraiser and a cocktail party on Saturday, May 1, 2004 at the Garrett Park Town Hall.

The Anniversary honors both the contributions of parents and the experiences of the school's alumni across 50 years.

GPNS is a parent-owned and operated nursery school founded in 1953 in Garrett Park, Maryland. GPNS provides stimulating preschool activities for two-year-olds, three-year-olds, and four-year olds, and a preschool extended day program, plus a kindergarten enrichment program.

Instruction is informal; each child chooses his or her own activities and is given ample time to play both indoors and outdoors. The program introduces age-appropriate concepts in science, math, social studies, and logical thinking, and encourages the development of language and literacy through books, story times, rhymes, poems, finger plays and music. Thematic units of study such as dinosaurs, reptiles, mammals, and the human body enliven the classroom.

An essential philosophy of GPNS is that children "learn by doing" through a hands-on approach. Each child is encouraged to develop at his or her own pace, to develop self-confidence, and to interact positively with peers. Social and emotional growth are encouraged, including respecting the rights of others, learning to follow directions and routines, and resolving conflicts with others. Classes remain small. GPNS has a total of about 40 students, between 10 and 16 in each class, thus enabling close attention to individual children.

The school day lasts two and a half hours. Two-year-olds attend twice a week; three-year-olds three days a week; and four-year-olds five days a week. Due to the co-operative nature of the school, tuition is relatively low.

The setting is scaled for little ones: the three classrooms feature clay, paint and sand tables, puzzle tables, dress-up corners (including a wooden "castle"), reading corners, science centers, and blocks.

The "Rug Room," resembling an old-fashioned pioneer cabin with wood roof beams and rafters, has a comfortable rug where children can sit and play games, listen to music, or listen to stories. Open, child-sized "lockers" line the walls. The school library of picture books is kept here.

Outside, the fenced playground features a climbing structure, slide, swings, balance beams, riding tools, and open space.

GPNS has a strong tradition and philosophy of parent participation and co-operative instruction. Besides the permanent staff, parents help with the classes on a rotating basis and carry out all non-teaching tasks necessary to the school. Parents contribute art supplies, sew dress-up costumes, and donate favorite picture books to the school library.

Moms and dads also provide snacks and take turns cleaning the rooms. Parents even have donated bicycles and improvements to the school playgrounds, such as fences for safety and an upcoming sandbox; they escort

the older kids on field trips at least twice a year. Parents serve on the Executive Board of the school, write the Newsletter, and participate in major fundraising events. Parent participation helps ease the transition from home for both children and parents. Attending GPNS is truly an experience involving the entire community.

GPNS is accredited by the Maryland State Board of Education, is licensed by the Department of Human Resources Child Care Administration, and is a member of the Maryland Council of Parent Participatory Nursery Schools. The full-time teachers have a minimum of a BA or BS in Elementary Education.

Kathy Jan, the 2's Teacher, received a B.A. from the University of Maryland in 1986 and is qualified in Early Childhood Education. She has taught the 2's class since 2002. As a parent (her daughters Sierra and Lauren attended), she has participated extensively in GPNS and has served on the Board of Directors for three years.

Brenda Artim, the 3's Teacher and Kindergarten Enrichment Program Teacher, has a B.S. degree in Management from the University of Maryland, with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education and Child Psychology. Her son, Jonathan, attended GPNS in 1997-8. She has taught the 3's class at GPNS for five years and the KEP for four years, and is presently Director of the Nursery School.

Tance Harris, the 4's Teacher, has a B.S. in Elementary Education. She has taught the 4's class at GPNS for 18 years. Claire Genova, the Extended Day Teacher, has been teaching at GPNS for two years and has a B.S. in Elementary Education from Slippery Rock State College.

GPNS alumni, even after many decades, hopefully will renew their memories of being two, three, or four years old at GPNS on visiting the locale and meeting old classmates at the 50th Anniversary Silent Auction Celebration.

The Celebration will be held Saturday, May 1, 2004 from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m. at the historic Garrett Park Town Hall at 10814 Kenilworth Avenue, Garrett Park. GPNS alumni, family, and friends all are invited.

A tour of the GPNS campus and information was kindly provided by Teresa Stavish. The school's web site: www.garrettparknurseryschool.org