

FAMILY NEWSLETTER January – February 2012

Happy New Year to our DaVinci Families!!!

EVENTS COMING UP

NO SCHOOL: This **Monday, 1/16** for MLK, Jr. Day, **Friday, 2/17** for board and staff in-service, and **Monday, 2/20** for Presidents' Day.

TOWN HALL MEETING DaVinci Charter School Board and staff are updating the school's strategic plan for the next three years. You are a very important part of this process - we need your input! Please join us to share what you expect from DaVinci along with ideas on the best ways to make that happen. The discussion will focus on identifying what matters most to our school community, our biggest strengths and the best opportunities for DaVinci into the future. The town hall meeting will start promptly at 6:30 p.m. We hope to see you there!

Wednesday, January 25, 2012....6:30 – 8:00pm
Ada County Extension Offices - 5880 Glenwood Street
(east side of Glenwood across from City Hall & Library – at the far east end of Marigold St.)
Garden City, ID 83714

DaVinci Town Hall Meeting Agenda 1/25/12

6:30PM.....Welcome & Introductions

6:40.....Identification & Prioritization of Strengths

7:10.....Identification & Prioritization of Opportunities

7:50.....Next Steps

CAPITOL DAY for CHARTER SCHOOLS Wednesday, February 1 we will be busing our 3rd – 8th grade students to spend the day in Boise learning about their state and government. See more information on our website. Any students' parents supporting charter schools may attend, but we need parents of these students to "officially" chaperone, so please let their teachers know if you can join us. The cost of two buses has been donated, so there will be room for chaperones to ride this time. Breakfast and lunch are provided, so we need to have the number of people attending reported by January 25. This is sponsored by the Idaho Coalition of Charter School Families and is an exciting opportunity for our students to be directly involved with the legislature and tour the Capitol.

FAMILY FUN MATH NIGHT Thursday, February 16. 6:30-8:00PM This is our third annual fun night sponsored by our staff and Micron! Parents and their students are invited to a fun evening of math games, food and fun! We ask that families stay together and start by playing the games in their own child's classroom. Afterwards - if you have time- you are welcome to have your family roam to other classrooms to try games in younger or older classes. There will be teachers and volunteers in each room to help you get started!

PHILHARMONIC SYMPHONY: February 27 Our 1-8 grade students have been invited to a special performance geared to introducing students to this type of music. They have a great musical and informational presentation we are lucky enough to be invited to at Capitol High School.

U of I McCall Outdoor Science Camp (MOSS Camp) Our 6-8th grade students – along with teachers Brenda Miller, Ryan Porter and Brenda Boyle -will spend January 17-20 in McCall living in cabins and learning science hands-on in the snow while traveling on snowshoes and cross country skies! This has become an annual special event for our older students – thanks to the extra efforts of Brenda Miller and to Darin and Jeanna Vickery for their generous donation to cover the remaining balance! (Think snow!)

BOX TOPS & CAMPBELL SOUP LABELS As you prepare those recipes and warm up with soup this winter, please remember to save your education box tops and soup labels. If you'll put them in the box on Secretary Jeanna's desk, we can turn them in to receive money for the school! \$300 has been made so far!

COMMUNITY CIRCLES, 10AM - You're always invited to join us! **Schedule:** 1/25/12 – 6-8 graders sharing their MOSS Camp experiences, 2/8/12: Wren's 3-4 class, 2/15: Kindergarten, 2/22: Brenda's 7-8, 2/29: Marti's 1-2

FACILITY UPDATE

Why did we move to our current location this summer? *The search for a different facility to lease or purchase started two years ago. We have explored many options – all which must follow our charter and be located within the Garden City limits. The short version is that last spring we needed to move immediately because we found it unacceptable that businesses dealing with guns and alcohol were allowed to lease the spaces next to our school. The landlord decided to not renew our lease as “the school did not fit the direction they wanted the strip mall business to head towards”.*

Can we start building a new school now? *Nope...not yet!*

Why not? *We want to be sure our stakeholders understand that nothing has been finalized, but we are diligently continuing to work towards this goal. As has always been stated, it’s not easy to finance a charter school as the state does not provide facility funding for us and we cannot use local tax money to help like traditional school districts. The local taxes you pay are only going to your neighborhood schools – not public charters. We want to be sure funding for a school is done very carefully while being fiscally responsible. Charter schools that have gotten in financial trouble have often made over confident projections for their future income which comes from the state - based on student attendance. We will not let this happen to us! We insist upon sticking with the same budgeted amount we’ve used for leasing our facilities the last four years, as we do not want to base any loans on “wishes”, but on “reality”.*

What has to happen to be able to build a school? *We have to have an official financial package approved and signed – in addition to making sure all aspects of legal requirements for public schools are met. We have been working closely with attorneys as we creatively work out-of-the box to make this happen!*

What’s currently happening?

- *We are continuing to work with Garden City community member and businessman, Dave Evans, and a bank which is interested in funding our future school facility. We have the main loan (approximately \$2 million) close to being finalized. However, a \$300,000 down payment is needed.*
- *In past years this amount (\$300,000) has not been a possibility as any fund raising money needed to go towards covering the many budget cuts resulting from the Idaho legislature’s educational budget decisions. We’ve been very frugal and have been able to weather various budget cuts by some very creative and unusual thinking: cleaning our own school, finding an improved system to provide an affordable lunch program, parents choosing to donate funds to help support our special programs, grant writing, depending on volunteers to help with many projects that would normally cost us, etc.*
- *In June 2011, we had applied and been accepted for a low interest federal loan to meet this down payment requirement. However, in November 2011- when we were ready to use this federal loan to complete the collaborating bank’s requirement to be considered – the employee responsible for releasing the funds through the federal program changed and he decided we did not qualify for the funds!*
- *I am working with the bank, various community members and the DaVinci Board to find alternative routes for this down payment. We have several leads (loans, grants, etc) we are working on, but welcome your input on other ideas as we want to get this finalized. In the ideal world, a donation from a person or business or group that believes in our unique school is what’s needed!*

If I have ideas or questions, who should I contact? *We thank those who participated in the Fund Drive recently. It raised about \$1300 and showed support from our families, staff and board. However – you can see that we obviously need more money! Please contact Director Cindy Hoovel as she’d be glad to answer any questions or hear any ideas you have regarding funding ideas or donations.*

What do I do if I want to donate money towards this? *We have a building fund and would be very excited to have any donations possible to meet our down payment needs. There are also some federal income tax credits available for people making donations to educational institutes.*

We continue to work towards this dream of building our own school and feel confident this facility will eventually become a reality through perseverance, positive thinking and creative problem solving! We have some incredible support from the community, city council and Dave Evans. However, nothing is definite at this date. *You will be notified immediately whenever finances are official and there will definitely be an all-school celebration! As always, I welcome your questions, comments and ideas, so feel free to contact me!*

Sincerely,

Cindy Hoovel, Director

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