

# The Greenleaf Scholar

GREENLEAF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NEWSLETTER | SPRING 2010

## It's in the Books: Community Groups Committed to Literacy at Greenleaf

From its first days as a school in 2007, Greenleaf Elementary set out to build a culture of literacy and strong English Language Arts (ELA) achievement, and when Outreach Coordinator Rodolfo Perez connected with Judy Zollman and Oakland's Temple Sinai, he found the perfect community partner to support that effort.

Since Temple Sinai's People of the Book volunteers began visiting Greenleaf, the school's library has been transformed: They cleaned the library, retired old and damaged books, and most importantly, replaced them with scores of new books on a range of subjects and reading levels.

In its devotion to supporting not just reading aptitude but a *love* of books, the organization is careful to connect Greenleaf scholars with suitable texts. "We really want to find books that fit the interest and reading level of the kids," explains Temple Sinai's Judy Zollman. "Watching students get excited when they find something that fits them, to see kids so enthusiastic about books – that's just a wonderful thing to see happen." To continue the momentum that started in the library, Temple Sinai has staged two book giveaways a year, for three years running.

"Judy Zollman and Temple Sinai have been terrific in organizing [Greenleaf's] school library and related activities," says Judy Pam-Bycel, outreach manager for the Jewish Coalition for Literacy (JCL), another key community partner. Completing another piece of the literacy puzzle, JCL has teamed up with Greenleaf to match students with volunteer reading tutors.

In keeping with Greenleaf's focus



on individual student improvement, JCL tutors have been matched with kids needing "that extra boost," says volunteer Joan Diengott. Along with fellow JCL volunteer Deborah Sosebee, Diengott has been working one-on-one with 3rd-graders in Amy Young's class.

"They're great kids," says Sosebee. "It's been really rewarding for us and feels very positive. It's great to see them get excited about reading and improving."

I was in orange and yellow and when Joan helped me, I went to green because I tried really hard," reflects 3rd-grader Alejandra. "I enjoyed it because it was fun." 3rd-grader Alexis, who worked with Deborah, speaks excitedly of moving from yellow to blue.

Both partnerships have also turned into "wraparound" community efforts.

Zollman says Temple Sinai has brought teachers to the temple to educate members on the needs at Greenleaf. As the result of a meeting about student nutrition, Sinai organized a produce drive for the campus. "Our temple is very generous and socially active," says Zollman. "When we see the needs, we want to fill them."

For its part, JCL has brought the experience full-circle by relaying the stories of Passover and other Jewish holidays. All of the different connections have established a real foundation, and Diengott and Deborah feel energized after every visit. "The kids are always happy to see us and work with us, and there's a lot of civic pride and classroom pride here," reflects Diengott. "I always leave feeling like this was the best part of my week!"

# Greenleaf Scholars Glimpse the Future During Career Day



The strides made by students like Alexis and Alejandra (in the previous article), combined with Greenleaf Elementary's rising Academic

Performance Index (API) score (777 this year!), reflect the school's focus on high achievement. Our 1st Annual Career Day gave them a chance to see where their continued hard work might lead, years down the road.

To host the most comprehensive Career Day, Greenleaf staff appealed to people they knew in several fields. Among the presenters were a doctor, a public speaker, a landscape designer, and a firefighter. These professionals rotated

to different classrooms so that students were exposed to a range of careers. In Maureen Weiner's class, 1st-grader Tyreke was brimming with questions for computer game designer and animator Mitchell Weiner, who shared a short animated video he'd created. "I want to make games when I grow up," Tyreke said after the presentation.

Weiner also brought along a working model of one of the characters, which the class clamored to see up-close. In their follow-up questions, they were piecing together what it takes to wind up in

a career like this. "Did you go to college for this?" one student asked.

A key part of Career Day was making connections drawn between the outside world and the classroom. Ms. Weiner helped the kids draw parallels between the model of the character and their work in class, comparing its creation to the clay sculptures they'd recently done in class.

All of the visiting professionals took pains to, as Greenleaf's flyer urged, "make their job come alive for our students." Laura Cusak, a chef, demonstrated cutting safe cutting techniques with her collection of cook's knives. After answering students' questions about her path to becoming a chef, she left them with a message that echoed across all of the Career Day participants' presentations:

"If you ask people, and study, and be really open, you can discover your passion and pursue it. And then you'll be inspired and fulfilled by what you do."



## SUPPORT GREENLEAF!

Due to state cuts, Greenleaf's already tight budget is taken yet another major hit as we look to 2010-11. In order to continue offering our kids the resources they deserve – events like Career Day, field trips, after-school programs, musical instruments, and more – we must appeal to the wider community.

You can help support Greenleaf scholars with a one-time or recurring tax-deductible donation.

Visit [www.oaklandschoolsfoundation.org](http://www.oaklandschoolsfoundation.org) (designating "Greenleaf") or send a check to "OSF/Greenleaf," P.O. Box 20238, Oakland, CA 94620. Thank you for your support!



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