

# ODYSSEY

A PUBLICATION OF FUND FOR TEACHERS



Mo gathers eggs with students at Nunawading Primary School in Melbourne, Australia.



Mo's students harvest vegetables they planted in Beard Elementary's kitchen garden.



Mo assists a student picking tomatoes for a Caprese salad.



Mo takes a student through the process of making basil fettuccine.

## A Harvest of Hope

Convincing a child to try squash blossom quesadillas would challenge any Top Chef. If that child has autism and eats only goldfish, saltines and Jell-O®, the chef can pack up his knives and leave the kitchen. Unless it's at Chicago's Daniel Carter Beard Elementary, where 2010 Fellow Melissa "Mo" Stenger created a kitchen garden for children with severe cognitive disabilities and behavioral issues.

With her 2010 fellowship, Mo partnered with the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation in Melbourne, Australia. Her daily lessons included digging compost piles, gathering eggs, harvesting vegetables and exploring new cooking techniques in the kitchen gardens of eight elementary schools across Southern Australia. She used these experiences to build Beard Elementary's kitchen garden program the following school year. Faced with Chicago's limited growing season, she wrote an additional

grant that funded a greenhouse and extended students' gardening time. In the kitchen, she helped students use harvested produce to create palate-challenging recipes, such as green tomato and raspberry jam, basil fettuccine, Caprese salad and squash blossom quesadillas.

*"When we move to the garden and I hand out rakes, trowels and watering cans, they immediately focus and assume responsibility for their learning."*

"My students' attention spans range from 5-10 seconds, so classroom walls grow increasingly confining for all of us," explained Mo. "When we move to the garden and I hand out rakes, trowels and watering cans, they immediately focus and assume responsibility for their learning. It's my hope that this elevated engagement gets generalized across their other learning environments."

"Students with autism are very interested in *processes*," said Laura Massaroni, parent of one of Mo's students. "This kitchen garden engaged my daughter in the process of growing, harvesting and cooking food, which made her more willing to try the final product on the plate. Her trying new tastes and textures gives me hope that she will be able to tackle additional challenges independently as she grows up."

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*In this issue we...*  
*hope for authentic connections with others, celebrate our differences, appreciate community, and reflect on happy endings. Fund for Teachers wishes you a new year full of these same aspirations.*



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## From the Executive Director



isn't it? Each man's life touches so many others."

Fund for Teachers, like a certain workshop in the North Pole, buzzes with activity at this time of year. We facilitate the process between dream and reality by conducting information sessions across the country, hosting grant-writing webinars, and fielding emails and phone calls from diligent applicants. It's an exciting time. It's the *application season*. Following thoughtful funding decisions by local selection committees this Spring, Fund for Teachers will award its 5,000th teacher grant.

I'm privileged to visit our Fellows at work across the country. Their work powerfully personifies hope and fosters communities of cooperative learners who shape our future. I am continuously amazed by the creative classroom implementation of a fellowship. Fund for Teachers believes in this good work and values your support of it. Great teachers have their objectives in sight, your support makes their resulting classroom magic possible.

This holiday, I wish for you and yours the satisfaction of good work, the joy of amazement and, above all, the incentive to BELIEVE.

Happy New Year,

Karen Kovach Webb  
Executive Director

## Our Mission

Fund for Teachers enriches the personal and professional growth of teachers by recognizing and supporting them as they identify and pursue opportunities around the globe that will have the greatest impact on their practice, the academic lives of their students and their school communities.





Mary dressed by a Hmong elder during the school's celebration.



Danielle, Carissa and Mary meet students at a primary school outside of Huay Xai, Laos.



Hmong elders teach music on traditional instruments.

## A “Quib Tshiab” of Culture

Different is rarely cool at school, and being Hmong in LaCrosse, WI, is different. Consequently, Hmong students at Summit Elementary were reluctant to share about their language, homeland or families. To understand more about this growing community’s rich culture and these students’ heritage, Danielle Fields, Carissa Brudos and Mary Hangartner used a Fund for Teachers grant to venture to Laos and Thailand and learn for themselves.

After experiencing Buddhist temples and hill tribe villages across Southeast Asia last June, the teaching team returned to LaCrosse determined to transfer a little of what they experienced to all Summit students. They approached elders at the local Hmong Community Center to ensure their plan’s authenticity and invite community participation. A school-wide Hmong “quib tshiab” (celebration) ensued in October, with 20 Hmong elders leading students in traditional art, music, games and storytelling.

“For the first time, our Hmong students exhibited pride in their identity,” said Danielle. “Our celebration shone a light on these students’ culture in a way that fostered a “cool factor” among peers. Their classmates now seek them out to learn more.”

*“By celebrating who we are and using that as a learning experience, we make this world a smaller, better place.”*

The celebration confirmed Danielle’s purpose for teaching. “When I was younger, my motivation for teaching was to save the world,” she said. “I still believe that’s what teaching is all about. Our fellowship and this celebration breathed life into that mission. By celebrating who we are and using that as a learning experience, we make this world a smaller, better place.”



# Appreciating True Fellowship

Ebenezer Scrooge has Tiny Tim. George Bailey has Clarence. Santa has Rudolph. Working alone, we're prone to discouragement and frustration; but alongside another, inspiration and vision take flight. So it goes with Fund for Teachers Fellows. Often, after observing a fellowship's impact on a peer, additional teachers at that school subsequently apply for a grant, creating a community of Fellows catalyzing school-wide change. Two great examples are Urban Assembly's Harbor School on Governor's Island in New York City and Arroyo West Active Learning Academy in Moorpark, CA.

## Owning What They Teach

After six consecutive years of students' rising assessments at Arroyo West Active Learning Academy (AWALA), scores suddenly plateaued. The majority of English learners and economically disadvantaged students also exhibited below state-mandated proficiency in Language Arts. A team of AWALA teachers investigated possible causes and determined that "one size fits all" reading lessons failed most of their students. The staff decided to move away from anthology-based instruction and reclaim responsibility for what they taught, to whom, and how.

"We envisioned creating an engaging curriculum that met individual needs of all students, so we wrote our Fund for Teachers grant with hopeful hearts," said Jennifer Fernandez. "Upon hearing that we received the grant, we knew we were about to change our school forever." The six-member team enrolled in Teachers College Reading and Writing

Project's (TCRWP) Summer Institute at Columbia University in New York City and, for two weeks in July 2009, investigated instructional strategies to make reading and writing come alive in their classrooms.

Inspired by their colleagues, a second team of six AWALA teachers applied for a Fund for Teachers grant to participate in the same institute the following summer. Consequently, twelve teachers collaborated to introduce the Reading and Writing Workshop techniques learned on their fellowships in every AWALA classroom.

No longer does every student read the same story from the same book. Instead, teachers conduct reading lessons based on students' interests and individual abilities. After demonstrating a new skill for the class, teachers guide mastery of that skill as students read self-selected, leveled books. During daily writing workshops, students pick a topic and style of writing and the teacher acts as a mentor author, modeling writing techniques and conferring with students as they move through the writing process.

"Teachers' implementation of their fellowships changed the lives of our students and teachers," explained Susanne Smith-Stein, AWALA principal. "Our students now think and talk at very high levels about what they read and write, and our teachers are empowered to teach reading and writing in authentic, creative, and meaningful ways."



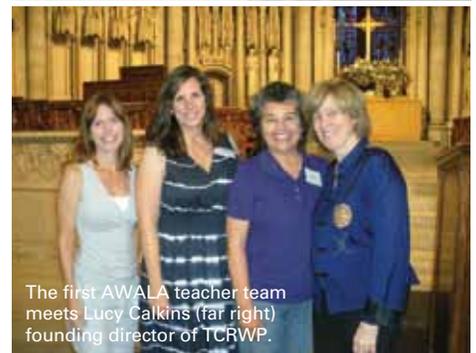
Sharon Knecht, member of AWALA's first FFT fellowship team, guides a student as he plans his story.



AWALA students participate in a read-aloud time.



An AWALA first grader tackles independent writing.



The first AWALA teacher team meets Lucy Calkins (far right) founding director of TCRWP.





Students participate in an "Introduction to New York Harbor" Class.



Harbor School's Vessel Operations Class cruises the Statue of Liberty.



Two students perform a "buddy check" prior to descending into New York City's Jamaica Bay.

## Creating Opportunities In the Open Water

Earning advanced technical SCUBA certification in the Bahamas sounds more like a vacation than a Fund for Teachers fellowship. However, 2006 Fellow Shaun Strobel used that certification to start an afterschool SCUBA club at The Harbor School. Working with students who previously could not swim, Shaun pioneered one of the school's most popular offerings and trained two additional teachers to continue his work.

Six years later, the SCUBA class is now a formal Career and Technical Education program. This fall, The Harbor School became the first public high school in the United States admitted into the American Association of Underwater Sciences, qualifying teachers to certify students as scientific divers.

Since 2005, six additional Harbor School teachers applied for and

*"We had the opportunity to get off the teaching treadmill."*

received Fund for Teachers grants, all supporting the school's rigorous, college preparatory curriculum focused on water job skills and environmental stewardship.

"We're developing a common language, culture and experiences for people who love being on and around the water, and the way you develop that love is to nurture it," explained Murray Fisher, school founder. "Seven of our teachers obtained Fund for Teachers grants pursuing maritime-related learning and each fellowship reconnected those teachers with the passion that made them want to be a teacher here in the first place. By

studying drafting with Indonesian boat makers, traveling the Maritime Silk Route in Asia, or observing traditional boat building on the Spanish island of Formentera, these teachers brought new technical skills and passion back to our students."

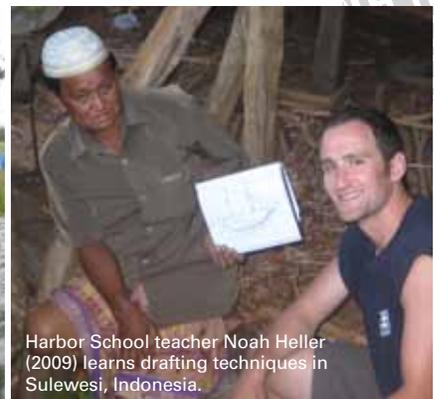
"Fund for Teachers gave me the opportunity to completely personalize my fellowship to what I teach in my marine systems technology class. But the experience also made me feel like I'm part of a gathering of peers here who feel reinvigorated and refocused after their fellowships," said Brendan Malone, 2005 Fellow. "We had the opportunity to get off the teaching treadmill, expand our own study of the subjects we teach, and return reminded of how important our subject matter actually is. That shared energy is something that definitely transfers to our students."



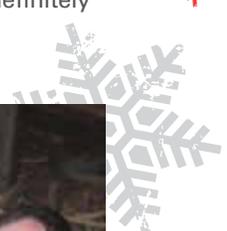
Brendan Malone teaches marine systems technology in the school's boat building workshop.



Harbor School student surfaces after a SCUBA class.



Harbor School teacher Noah Heller (2009) learns drafting techniques in Sulewesi, Indonesia.



# Through the Lens of a Fellowship



Spice Market



Where's Teacher?



Death-Defying Stunts with Icebergs

Rachel Allen and her teaching partner, Karen McMurdo, stopped in the Muslim Quarter of Old Jerusalem to shop before descending into the underground tunnels surrounding the remains of Solomon's Temple. The teaching team was studying the Arab-Israeli conflict at Hebrew University to add relevancy to the history curriculum at Marble Hill School for International Studies in the Bronx, NY. To Rachel, this scene of varied offerings in a spice stall represented the multicultural aspects of Jerusalem. To voters in Fund for Teachers' first Fellow Photo Contest, it looked like first place.

Fund for Teachers invited 2011 Fellows to submit one photo taken on their fellowship to celebrate the global adventures our Fellows accomplished this summer. Pictures of people,

places or things qualified and 75 Fellows submitted entries. Our Facebook friends selected the following winners:

First Place - "Spice Market" taken by Rachel Allen in the Old City of Jerusalem; second place - "Where's Teacher?" taken by Jenna Mann at Zylen Academy, Kibera Slum School, Nairobi, Kenya; and third place - "Death-Defying Stunts with Icebergs" taken by Lisa Ward in Uummannaq, Greenland. Rachel was awarded a flip-cam and Jenna and Lisa received Visa Gift Cards for their winning entries.

Finalists' photographs are posted on [fundforteachers.org](http://fundforteachers.org).

## Once Upon a Time

by Carmen Kaemingk,  
Hicks Elementary, Houston, TX

Reflecting on my fellowship tracing the origins of European fairy tales, I am still in awe of the opportunity – and extremely grateful. The rationale behind this fellowship was taking fairy tales off the movie screen and activating students' imaginations through the magic of reading. My team's grant application began, "Once upon a time, there were two teachers in search of a way to make fairy tales come alive for their urban students." We didn't imagine how the fairy tales would come alive for us.

In France, we explored the chateaus that inspired Charles Perrault's *Sleeping Beauty* and *Puss in Boots*. In Italy, we explored Pinocchio Park and met craftsmen who carve wooden boys



Carmen poses with a statue of the Bremen Town Musicians in Germany as she reads the fairy tale on her Kindle.

like Carlo Collodi described. Driving along Germany's Fairy Tale Road, we encountered statues of notable Brothers Grimm characters like Snow White, Rapunzel, and Little Red Riding Hood. Throughout our trip we took photos, filmed many reenactments, purchased mementos, and found fairy tale books in

their native languages to share with our students.

This fellowship renewed my love for teaching and my determination to find new ways to inspire students' love of reading and learning. Since the day I returned, I poured any free time into researching new teaching methods and ideas. I truly didn't realize the rut I was stuck in and how I let the negative aspects of education drag me down, suppressing my creativity. As a result of my fellowship, I now feel the passion experienced when I first began teaching.

I can't say enough how much my fellowship impacted me, my teaching and my classroom. Many co-workers asked about my experiences and voiced a desire to pursue their own fellowships. I tell them there is nothing like being empowered with a Fund for Teachers grant. Their classroom will never be the same and neither will they.

Editorial note: Carmen and her colleague, Kirsten Carlson, are collaborating with colleagues to create a "Fairy Tales 101" to teach parents to identify plot, setting and characters with students at home.

## New Year's Resolution: Join the Fellow Alumni Association



In October, Margie Roganser, Lucy Kloksin, and Susan Dardar attended FFT's first Chicago alumni event.



Jessica Chan and Wil Beshears (both 2010 Fellows) hosted FFT's first Los Angeles alumni event in September.

"My FFT fellowship was incredible in and of itself. As the only Fellow I knew in Los Angeles, however, it ended with me," said Jessica Chan, 2010 Fellow and teacher at the Westridge School. "Los Angeles is home to 130 Fellows who had never met. We were missing a valuable opportunity for professional networking, classroom inspiration, and personal encouragement. After hosting our first Alumni event this fall, I'm motivated by our potential for learning from each other and giving back to Fund for Teachers in appreciation for what we've been given." To join an existing alumni group or start a new one, email Fund for Teachers at [info@fundforteachers.org](mailto:info@fundforteachers.org).

## Food for Thought Luncheon



(left to right) Joanne King Herring, Dr. Kelli Cohen-Fein, Sam Chaltain and Danielle Ellis.

Diamonds + diplomacy + learning + lunch proved to be a winning formula for teacher grants in October when Fund for Teachers hosted its third annual Food for Thought luncheon in Houston. More than 250 guests enjoyed honoree Joanne King Herring's tales from her new book *Diplomacy and Diamonds*. National education advocate Sam Chaltain delivered the keynote, encouraging support for "one of the nation's best organizations in education today, Fund for Teachers, and its work enabling educators to experience first-hand opportunities that enhance the classroom environment." Many thanks to event chairs Dr. Kelli Cohen-Fein and Danielle Ellis for leading this successful event.

## A Harvest of Hope (Continued)

Other parents voice more simple aspirations – verbal, or even non-verbal, communication with their children. "Grateful parents approach me and say, 'My daughter wants to join me in the kitchen now,' or 'My son reached for my arm in an effort to try a new food,'" said Mo. "These students' exposure to gardening and cooking is contributing to increased connection with their parents, as well as enhanced social skills, healthy food choices and a sense of pride – things not easily measured on standardized tests but essential in life."

Editorial note: In August, Mo was promoted to assistant principal at Beard Elementary. She trained two teachers to continue her work in the kitchen garden and created a district-wide study group pioneering kitchen gardens in 11 schools. In October, Mo also hosted Fund for Teachers' first Chicago Fellow Alumni event.



**Deadline for 2012 FFT Grants: January 27, 2012**

Complete and submit applications at [fundforteachers.org/apply.php](http://fundforteachers.org/apply.php)




## Making the Video

In October, Fellows and students across the country welcomed a Fund for Teachers film crew into their classrooms to help document the impact of a Fund for Teachers grant. These teachers' native habitats provided a compelling backdrop for capturing the ripple effect of teachers' fellowships and their "followships" back home.

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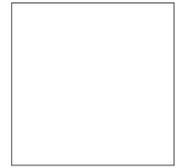


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## Alumni Updates

**Margret Atkinson** (2011 Zachary, LA) presented at the National Association for Gifted Children's conference in New Orleans in October. Her topic, "Being an Upstander, not a Bystander," was inspired by her fellowship researching individuals' resistance to intolerance during World War II.

**Paul Timm and Virginia Fritz** (2011 Wisconsin) completed the first phase of creating on their school grounds a replica of Lewis and Clark's trail. With the help of students, they blazed through two miles of forest and hills to simulate the explorers' westward trip, as well as two return trails from the point where Lewis and Clark split up. This winter, they will create information signs with the woodshop teacher, computer graphics teacher, and students. The final step entails installing the signs and dedicating the trail this spring for outside education efforts. Timm and Fritz retraced Lewis and Clark's journey from St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean, via Harley Davidsons, on their fellowship last summer.

**Teri Marsh, José Torres and Kristie Long** (each 2011 Houston) represented FFT on Houston Independent School District's Student Achievement television show in October.



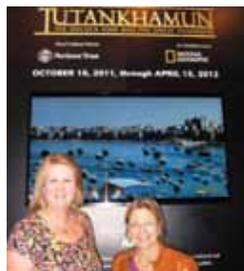
**Erik Fogel** (2007, 2011 New York) was elected executive director of the New York Urban Debate League and will lead a city-wide effort to sustain debate and the highest academic opportunities for all New York City students. His "day job" continues as the coach of the Bronx School for Law, Government and Justice's award-winning debate team. Follow his work at [bronxgreatdebaters.org](http://bronxgreatdebaters.org).



**Mitch Pengra** (2010 Houston) visited **Marilyn Sandler** (2007 Chicago) to learn about the Snoezelen room she constructed after learning about the unique teaching method for students with autism on her fellowship in Israel.



**Boston Fellows** greeted commuters in a South Station exhibit in November. FFT partner Boston Plan for Excellence annually presents framed collections of Fellows' photos and stories, sharing the work local teachers accomplish on and with their fellowships.



Forty **Houston** Fellows explored the Museum of Fine Arts' *Tutankhamun: The Golden King and the Great Pharaohs* exhibit on Educators Preview Night, sponsored by Apache Corporation. Pictured: (left) Nancy Hess and Lesli Edge (both 2006).

**Jean King** (2003 and 2007 Houston) was named Teacher of the Year, Elementary Division, by the Texas Art Education Association.

