



Turning the Page

TTP Newsletter

September 2009

Volume 7, Issue 2

Aiton Parent Patrina Swinson Receives Parent Award

Award presented at Turning the Page's Third Annual Gala



Last Saturday, September 12th, Turning the Page hosted our Third Annual Gala, celebrating our organizational accomplishments with friends and family. Turning the Page took a moment during this special event to honor a parent with the Buffy Atkins Memorial Award, dedicated each year to a parent who has worked tirelessly for his or her school community. Ms. Patrina Swinson, from Aiton

Elementary School, was this year's award recipient and will receive a DC College Savings plan set up in her daughter's name.

Ms. Swinson has been working with the Aiton community for several years but during the last school year the Parent Teacher Association, of which she is president, showed tremendous growth. Under Ms. Swinson's strong leadership, the school community enjoyed a Motown Christmas event that incorporated all Aiton classrooms, a health and wellness campaign that includes health discussions and exercise classes, and a well-received teacher appreciation breakfast. Dave Petersen, a current VISTA coordinator at Turning the Page who worked closely with Ms. Swinson during the 2008-2009 school year, commends her for her "incredible vision. She truly cares about improving the lives of both parents and students in her community."

The gala, held at the Carnegie Institution in Washington, DC was a huge success, netting more than \$20,000. The gala was featured by Metromix, Washington, DC; click [here](#) to see images from the night! Turning the Page will have additional pictures, courtesy of Sara Duke Biscoe Photography online soon. We thank everyone who supported this year's gala and offer up one final congratulations to Ms. Patrina Swinson.

Community Night Preview

Turning the Page's flagship program begins its 11th year

We are very excited to begin [Community Nights](#) for the 2009-2010 school year! The Community Night series is our longest-running, most well-attended and well-loved family engagement program. During the 2008-2009 school year, we hosted 56 Community Nights across our seven partner schools. More than 600 parents and 1,000 children attended at least one event and collectively received over 5,000 free books. In addition, 40 university students spent more than 1,800 hours leading students in educational activities.



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This year, we will again be hosting 56 Community Nights at our partner schools, including eight at Payne Elementary, our newest school partner. As in years past, each evening will begin with a hot dinner, before our child mentors lead the children through educational activities and book readings while parents participate in a series of workshops. The workshops will be centered on this year's theme "Walking Together," which will emphasize the importance of community collaboration for children's success. To that end, we will facilitate workshops on developing effective parent-teacher relationships, building vocabulary, preventing bullying, and raising healthy children. As always, one Community Night at each school each semester will be devoted to hosting a local author.

[Community Nights](#) begin September 17th at Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School from 6-8 p.m. and continue the week of September 21st at M.C. Terrell, Tyler, and Garfield Elementary Schools. Our program will begin in the following weeks at Aiton, Browne/Gibbs/Young E.C., and Payne Elementary Schools. We can't wait to share the Community Night experience with all of our new and returning parents, students, teachers, and volunteers!

Click [here](#) to find out more information about volunteering at one of these events.

Parent Leadership Program Kicks Off

Parent leaders meet to discuss goals and kick off school programs

In late August, Turning the Page held a short Parent Leadership seminar for Parent Leaders at our partner schools. We welcomed committed Parent Leaders to the new school year and worked to energize parent organizations at each school. Parents separated into school-based groups, getting to know their new VISTA liaison, [planning activities](#) for the year, and addressing challenges. The Parents almost unanimously agreed that the session was enormously helpful for them and the VISTAs loved the opportunity to meet the parents they will be working with throughout the year.



Turning the Page's [Parent Leadership Workshops](#) and support of parent organizations within schools have become an integral part of our work with our seven partner schools. During the 2008-2009 school year, we held three six-hour Saturday training sessions. These sessions focused on, among other issues, understanding the ramifications of No Child Left Behind, parents' rights under this law, important information about the governance and budget of DCPS, and time for parents to share successes and challenges with parents from other partner schools. This year, we will again host three, six-hour sessions beginning in October.

We look forward to working with our returning and new parent leaders this year!



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School Partner Spotlight: M.C. Terrell Elementary School

School community works to support its students with the support of Turning the Page



M.C. Terrell Elementary, located in Ward 8, was built in the 1970s as a "school without walls." Although that describes an architectural technique using very few walls or doors, it is seen in the school's welcoming environment as well. M.C. Terrell serves 225 students in Pre-Kindergarten through 6th grade. Turning the Page is excited to continue partnering with the M.C. Terrell community for this our fourth school year.

Turning the Page has welcomed parents to 24 [Community Nights](#) in the past three years. We were thrilled to see attendance at these events reach its highest number ever during the 2008-2009 school year, with 74 families (representing almost forty percent of M.C. Terrell's student body) participating in at least one Community Night.

Building on the success of Community Nights, Turning the Page has worked tirelessly with the committed parents at M.C. Terrell to develop a more active parent teacher organization. With their great attitude, spirit, and a strong commitment to their students, Turning the Page is confident that the Terrell PTA will make strides toward involving more parents in the coming year and leading many successful volunteer projects.

Demonstrating the depth of the M.C. Terrell commitment to the TTP partnership, three teachers, Ms. Parker, Mr. Rice, and Ms. Keith will participate once again this year in TTP's classroom programs, bringing arts education and writing instruction to their students.