

December 2007

I'm amazed I've survived the fall with enough strength in my fingertips to write this update. We knew it was going to be busy, but we had no idea.

Imagine:

We filled our field trip calendar BEFORE school even started. Every Tuesday and Thursday morning, 826 Seattle is packed with students writing for Mr. Geoduck's publishing house or Choose Your Own Adventure stories or Tiny Team Tales.

We have reached a new record in drop-in tutoring students attending per session: 40! And that wasn't just one isolated time, but often. And for some miraculous reason (I think it is the calm of Toffer) those 40 students, ages 6 to 18, all (most of the time) seem rather studious, focused, and have actually been getting their homework done. (Congratulations to Fayruz, who was having a very hard time at the beginning of the year in her math and science classes at Whitman — last week, she won a special award for getting an A+ in both subjects. She (well, really, her father) said it is because she comes to 826 Seattle every day and is finally getting her homework done.

Both the Hamilton Middle School and the John Marshall Alternative School projects are in full swing with over a hundred students writing essays about important things in their lives. The first Hamilton book will be coming out in January. Our John Marshall book, with celebrity sponsor, John Moe, will be out later in the spring.

And of course we've had workshops all fall. Personal statements and yoga and writing and researching on the internet and making comics on our brand-new iMac computers.... It's all happening. I did hear, however, that the contemplative state of the 10 to 13 year olds in Yoga for the Writer's Mind was sadly corrupted when it started snowing last weekend, right in the middle of class. How could any self-respecting ten year old do yoga and think about writing while it is snowing outside?

By the time you read this, we will have celebrated the publication of our first-ever 826 Seattle workshop anthology of essays, stories, and poems called *826 Seattle Writes the Rain* with a rousing publishing party. You can still pop into the Greenwood Space Travel Supply Company and pick yourself up a copy or two. The size was chosen to fit into the average holiday stocking. At \$10.00 it's a steal....but we're not saying to steal it...as tempting as that might be.

How do we finance the above work? Generous (generous) individual donors and events like our (second annual) Mustache-a-thon and our (second annual) Don't Forget to Write A Check fundraising breakfast. And our November event, the (third annual) People Talking and Singing at Townhall Seattle that netted us \$30,000. Gigantic thanks to Dave Eggers, John Roderick, Rosie Thomas, El Vez, Sasha Frere-Jones, Eugene Mirman, Todd Barry, and all the 826 Seattle folks who made this evening, simply put, a smashing success.

Other news: 826 National founder Dave Eggers just won the Ted Prize because Dave (not Ted) does amazing work in the world with the 826s and to improve the situation for the Sudanese and changing the way writing is done through McSweeney's. In February, he will get up in front of a thousand of the smartest, best-connected folks in the world for twenty minutes and make a wish, which could darn well be granted. Bono's was, Al Gore's was ... why not Dave's? People like Dave are given the Ted prize because they wish for things like help for Africa or attention to global warning, and then wealthy smart people put their heads

together and figure it out. If you don't know about the Ted Prize got to <http://www.ted.com> and check out the twenty minute "wishes" of past winners. It is inspirational...as is Dave.

Lastly:

It's the holiday season and the time when many folks are thinking about their blessings. As Founding Executive Director of 826 Seattle I feel, frankly, blessed by a stunning staff — a group of crazy folks who somehow found their way here, who genuinely care deeply about the well being of young people, who don't mind working long hours for what would be considered in any corporate world slave wages, who smartly keep our programs running, our store full of space travel supplies (imagine trying to source those out), our books in the black, our volunteers properly feted, and our students in Clif Bars. Equally important, our staff also have between them some great tattoos, the requisite sense of humor (description: odd), can bowl a pretty good game, and are willing to wear the dorky holiday sweaters that I found at Value Village at our holiday party.

I asked them yesterday at staff meeting if, by chance, anyone out there reading our newsletter wanted to give a gift to help make their 826 Seattle work easier, what would it be. They all lit up, grabbed pieces of paper and started making lists. "Whoa," I had to say, "One or two things, maximum." So, here are their answers:

Alex Allred: our Financial and Operations Manager and Youth Advisory Board adult overseer and volunteer coordinator and general go-to gal who could easily have the name (Go Ask) Alex wants a Quickbooks for Mac upgrade as in [http://quickbooks.intuit.com/product/accounting\\_software/pro\\_mac\\_financial\\_management\\_software.jhtml?lid=left\\_nav](http://quickbooks.intuit.com/product/accounting_software/pro_mac_financial_management_software.jhtml?lid=left_nav) (Alex's eyes, in fact, glaze over at the tantalizing thought of a Quickbooks upgrade in the same way mine do when I imagine myself with naturally curly thick hair.)

Justin Allan: our Store and Events Manager and Graphic Designer and Resident Vegan (every place has to have one) and an extraordinary maker of barnyard animal noises. wants EITHER a gift certificate to the ReStore where he can get the appropriately vintage store fixtures... or a set of cupboards...uppers and lowers for the kitchen. (Serious. Anyone know someone who is remodeling who would like us to come pick up the old ones and use them for needed store storage and Justin's future Greenwood Space Travel Online Store Station?)

Norma Andrade: Our Director of Programs and soon-to-be new mother and resident expert at how to help all foreign-born folks feel welcome here and bike rider extraordinaire (when not seven months pregnant) wishes for a video camera or a digital camera. (Great used ones that are replaced this holiday season by even greater ones welcome!)

Toffer Lehnherr: Our Drop-In Tutoring Manager who showed up like an angel one day and said: what can I do to help? And now he has 40 kids a night, all saying, mostly at the same time, things like "Toffer, I want a Clif Bar, help with my spelling, calculus, language arts, there's no toilet paper, he said something mean to me, she doesn't like me anymore, would you call my mother and tell her I'm here, somebody drew graffiti in the bathroom," and Toffer always looks so calm. He wishes for more handmade mailboxes so each student has her own cubby. The ones we have now were handmade. We can get the lumber. Any woodworkers out there needing a little project?

And me ... what would I wish for? I guess I can easily wish for the staff to get what they want so they stay all happy and stuff because, simply put, if they are happy, I'm happy.

Have a lovely holiday season, an exciting new year, thank you so much for all the support you've given 826 Seattle this year, and remember, whether you go on a trip or even stay home, don't forget to write.

Teri

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826 Seattle

[www.826seattle.org](http://www.826seattle.org)

*"Because in our culture the ability to express oneself effectively in writing opens large doors."*