

In this update (with special bolded words for easy findage):

- one sentence about Teri's trip to Mexico
- plug for store
- update on John Marshall project
- JAWSL news
- how to be generous: a few ideas

It is April and time for the next update. The good news is that while I was in **Mexico** for one week, 826 Seattle managed just fine without me. While I was fighting claustrophobia while swimming in underground caves, staving off the effects of my scorpion sting (note to self: Even though the guidebook said a scorpion sting could kill, it doesn't always), and watching my skin sizzle through SPF 45, all was copacetic at 826 Seattle...kids got tutored, several field trips happened, copyeditors were working their way through the John Marshall essays, and Justin was filling the shelves with new products.

Check out 826 Seattle Heroes While Teri Was On Vacation (and at all other times also; ignore me in this collection. I am not my hero):

<http://www.826seattle.org/about/staff/>

(Have you been in **the store** lately? Tons of new stuff like Grow Your Own Carnivorous Plant Kits and Instant Space Vacation Slide Shows, not to mention the BEST Greenwood Space Travel Supply embroidered towels ever. Hang those in your guest bedroom and you'll never get rid of those houseguests.)

Since my last update, 49 **John Marshall** middle and high school students have completed several drafts of essays on the subject of change. Last year 27 students completed essays on family, published in our runaway best seller "It's Not Always Happily Ever After." Enrollment turnover at John Marshall School is quite high. We have three returning students from last year's project and 46 new students who have, as one teacher put it: never worked so hard on one piece of writing in their lives. Twenty-five 826 Seattle tutors went to John Marshall for five weeks, at least three days a week, to work one-on-one with these students, many of whom have only rarely worked one-on-one with an adult on their writing, if ever, in some cases.

The essays are unbelievable...especially when you reflect on the fact that these stories are about the lives of many kids who aren't even old enough to get a driver's license. There is a story about an arranged marriage that was canceled, another about the arrival of a new baby, another about leaving a gang, another about leaving a family, and another about changing homes for the 17<sup>th</sup> time. (Yes, 17 times and still in high school.)

Right now the essays are being read by copyeditors. This week we begin meeting again one-on-one with students to review the copyeditors' suggestions and invite students to sign off on these changes (or convince us otherwise). A designer is working on the book

cover, based on student input. A photographer has taken each student's photo. A writer is taking information from questionnaires that each student filled out and writing short bios about each author.

All of the adults mentioned above are working strictly as volunteers. One take-away piece of info from the above story: Our city is full of people with giant hearts.

You will have an opportunity to hear students read their stories in June at John Marshall School, along with enjoying (we can only presume based on our own experience) a talk by author and 826 board member Sherman Alexie. You'll also have a chance to purchase one (or several) copies of the new book (title to be revealed at a future time) and have them signed by the authors and share some cupcakes, coffee, and congratulations with these young authors. Please come. It was my favorite night last year. Definitely a lipstick occasion....if you wear lipstick....heck, even if you don't.

If you read my last update carefully (we could have a reading comprehension quiz right now) you might remember that we are going to be administering the **JAWSL** to interested students at 826 Seattle just as soon as they finish taking the WASL. For those of you who don't know, the WASL stands for the Washington Assessment of Student Learning, a standardized test that 10th-grade students across the state must pass to receive their diplomas. This test is reputed to measure things like ability in math, writing, reading comprehension, and other skills that contribute to a successful life. We think there are equally important qualities that contribute to a successful life, such as a sense of humor, ability to resist whining, and a sense of kindness. For this reason we have developed the JAWSL, which stands for Jokes Are Where Students Learn, where we will be scientifically (kind of) testing students' abilities toward kindness, their resistance to whine, and a general sense of humor. Student scores will be posted on our web site and should allow us to make some authoritative statements (or at least make the statements authoritatively) about the kind of students who attend 826 Seattle.

Speaking of whining, a staff member (who will remain unnamed) was complaining recently that it is always kids who get to take tests. Isn't that a weird truth – as we get older we enjoy (well, some of us) IQ tests and crossword puzzles and numbers games, but as kids it is misery to do them. We've decided that perhaps some of you might wish to have your senses of humor, senses of kindness, and ability to stifle a whine assessed. It could help you figure out what to work on in this age of self-improvement. With this in mind, we have decided to post a copy of the test on the web site so that you and your whole family can take the JAWSL at home, on a road trip, or even during work hours when you are supposed to be accounting or designing bridges or whatever it is you do.

As we discussed this at a staff meeting, Therese, our Development Director, immediately started envisioning ways to turn the JAWSL into a FRO (FundRaising Opportunity) where we would actually score your JAWSLs for you in exchange for a generous donation (amount as yet undetermined) to 826 Seattle. However, Therese has some other spring FROs occurring that would squelch the thunder of the JAWSL-FRO so we've decided for this year to:

- a) post the test
- b) post the scoring matrix
- c) invite you to do two things:
  - 1) score your own test
  - 2) give us a donation just for the heck of it (PayPal online...so simple)

*(Please circle the steps above that you intend to take. This is a way of practicing for the test, which will be up on the web site toward the end of April.)*

**Speaking of donations**, if you'd like a little more control over how we might spend some of your donation money, here are a couple of things you could send us money for and suggest we purchase:

- **Ace Wonder Paper Cutter.** We cut a minimum of 60 manuscripts a week for field trips and then there are store labels and in-house publications of student essays and a multitude of other things, so it's no wonder the paper cutter we have is tired...better put: exhausted. We want one of those paper cutters they have at KINKO'S with the miracle zippy blade that literally flies across the (several, count 'em) pages. The one we want costs \$143 (plus tax).
- **One or two more IKEA Norden Tables.** Last year there was plenty of space at our tables when we had an average of 10 kids a night. We are easily up to 35 students per drop-in session and we need more tables. We love these tables because they are sturdy and they have leaves. Each Norden table costs \$299 (plus tax).

Handy-Person Woodworker Alternative Donation:

See the above mentioned growing numbers and you'll understand why we have run out of mailboxes for the students. We have these really lovely little square cubbies with students' pictures on them. Students arrive for drop-in and race to their mailboxes where they find homework they forgot the day before, special notes from tutors, maybe even a little knit hat from Sophia waiting for them. We have 60 mailboxes, hand built by my father many years ago for the school where I used to teach. I took them with me when I left there; some things you just can't leave behind. Now we need 60 more. Yes! We have 35 kids a night for drop-in, but guess what? They aren't the same kids. **WANTED:** A woodworker/carpenter type with a giant heart who would build us 60 more. We'll send you a photo of the ones we have. I know, I know, we could probably find some ready-mades at IKEA, but we prefer the built-with-love quality of the ones we already have.

Stay tuned for announcements of the John Marshall Publishing Date and the JAWSL posting. Happy spring.

Teri

PS: One of our volunteers is sponsoring a half-marathon/10K run and inviting participants to donate money to 826 Seattle. Check out: <http://ducatsrun.rls2.com/index.html>. I'm leading a team of either half-marathoners or 10Kers...depending on how much I train between then and now. Right now a slow 10 K seems to be what I'm headed for. Whichever it is, I think "lead" is perhaps a misnomer. I'll most likely be bringing up the rear. Whatever, I welcome all 826 supporters to join us!