May I help?“

May I help?” Travis, it turns out, is eight.
“Today’s my birthday,” he said later. But right at that moment he had come to the communion rail at the front of the church to ask if he could help. The worship service was over and the last of the congregation was stragglng out as I worked to remove wooden trays holding little cups of grape juice.

Kathy and I clean up and put away after communion on an occasional basis, part of a small group of volunteers. Last Sunday we were the only ones to show up, until Travis came forward. I smiled and thanked him and gave him a job to do. “Many hands make the work light,” I said. At the end of the service the minister had asked for more willing helpers – not particularly for that day, but continued on page 2
in general, because the volunteer corps was depleted. And Travis responded immediately. I hadn’t met him before, in fact, I don’t remember having seen him previously. So we talked as we worked. That’s when I discovered it was his birthday. I also learned that he attends a Montessori school – not Post Oak, but another Montessori school here in Houston. Then it clicked into place for me. Here was an eight year old boy with the self confidence to approach an unknown adult with an offer to help. He was self confident, though not brash or arrogant. He was modest without being shy. He knew that he would be able to help if given the chance, had obviously been given opportunities to help out, to contribute his efforts, and so felt empowered to offer. I’ve seen these characteristics in Montessori children over the years. It reminds me of another similar example from my years in Cleveland. University School is an all-boys school, a prestigious and highly-competitive prep school. There were eight Montessori graduates in a student body of 400 that year, eight boys who had completed eighth grade at Ruffing Montessori School before going on to high school at U. S. Four of those boys were among a group of forty being inducted into the honor society. The disproportionately high representation of Montessori students being honored for scholastic excellence was immensely pleasing to all of us who had worked with those boys in earlier years. Montessori prepares students to succeed academically in even the most rigorous schools. I’ve heard that everywhere I’ve gone around the country in speaking to teachers, parents and graduates from mature Montessori programs.

The Headmaster of University School reported to me one other tidbit that was even more outstanding. A call was broadcast to the entire student body to help set up for the honor society induction. Twenty boys showed up after school to offer help, a group that included all eight Montessori boys. Montessori students are ready, willing and able to work, whether it be academic work, or the unglamorous grunt work that makes a community run. They feel a sense of connectedness, a sense of responsibility as members of the community. They feel a sense of their own capability – they just know that they can tackle any project, large or small. And they feel empowered to act. These are personal characteristics that consistently reveal themselves in Montessori children.

Schools have no honor roll for character formation: it’s too hard to measure. Our society has a penchant for talking about which can be measured – simply because it can be measured. As adults, we rarely know about the academic achievement of our friends and associates. But their character is of the essence in our regard for them. I was very pleased for those four boys being inducted into the honor society, just as I am pleased by the academic kudos earned each year by our Post Oak graduates. But I was even more pleased by the unexpected recognition of Montessori’s impact on character formation because Montessori said, “Education is preparation for life.”

Thank you, Travis, for helping out. •

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Bearkat Beginnings: A History of Sports at Post Oak
by Post Oak Parent Amy Kirchner

What exactly is a Bearkat? Aside from it being Post Oak’s mascot, Wikipedia claims it to be some kind of binturong, a carnivorous mammal that resides in Southeast Asia. At Post Oak we know Bearkats as our 6-8 grade athletic team. Coach Mark Tucker was around at the inception of the Bearkats in 1995. Former Middle School student expressed an interest in playing basketball for Post Oak and thus began the sports program. went on to play varsity basketball at Bellaire High School and received a scholarship. She was just one of many students who excelled at sports through the Bearkats program. The early participants came up with Bearkats as our official mascot. Early games were played against local Montessori schools. The initial Bearkat colors were blue and white but later changed as the school adopted green as its official school color. Several other small private schools have since been added to our game schedule. This year, the Bearkats played a total of 17 basketball games, a record number!

Aside from basketball, Bearkat athletes participate in flag football, cross country, soccer and volleyball. All 6-8 grade students are eligible to play. Intramurals are available for 4-6 grade students. Intramurals are a good way to learn about and participate in school sports. The running club, formerly known as the “Speedy Turtles,” trains on the Episcopal High School track 3 days per week before school. Two former Post Oak Students, twins went on to participate in running club and cross country at Post Oak. They are record-setting runners at EHS and are applying to Division 1 universities with an eye toward their running programs.

The focus of the Bearkats is on learning the sport itself and practicing good sportsmanship. Everyone gets an opportunity to play. Practices occur several times per week right after school. It is easy to follow the Bearkat paw prints at the Peace Circle which were painted in the fall of 2011.

Coach Tucker is assisted by Physical Fitness Specialist Andrea Dilger (currently on maternity leave) and Coach Jones who is currently working with our Bearkats and Intramural players. Physical Fitness begins at an early age at Post Oak and has helped many students excel at sports during their time at Post Oak and beyond. Congratulations to Coach Tucker on 20 years at Post Oak and for continuing to grow the Bearkats program. Spring soccer league is coming up so stay tuned for game dates and make sure to come out and support your team. Go Bearkats!
Join us at The Post Oak School’s 2014 Book Fair and read your way through adventures based on “Heroes Throughout History”. Books can be fun, informative, exciting, and imaginative. So, come out to see where your imagination can take you and help spark our children’s interests in reading.

Purchases Benefit our School: Our faculty has selected books you can purchase to be used in our Library and classrooms. Additionally, when you purchase any book during the Book Fair, the proceeds support our school.

Volunteers Needed: A large part of the success of the Book Fair rests upon the many parent volunteers who help the event run smoothly. If you are interested in volunteering, we have some time slots open in SignUp Genius. Wednesday evening volunteers are still needed to help prepare the books for sale. Thursday volunteers are needed to help with the various planned activities, faculty book sales, and clean-up. Thank you to all the volunteers who have already signed up to help. We look forward to seeing everyone at the 2014 Book Fair!

– Vareen and Jennifer

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Please turn in this form to the front office.

Local Support
Jerry Built, Chick-fil-A and Pronto Cucinino are all proud supporters of the Post Oak School Book Fair. They will donate a portion of their proceeds the evening of book fair to our school. Coupons will be distributed before Book Fair.
Confessions of a Frustrated Gardener (and tips for Springtime!)

by Jeff Streich, Post Oak parent

I was sad to give up my garden back in Minnesota. I had devoted years to creating a productive garden. All the work was worth it to have the convenience of fresh herbs and veggies right outside the door. Even better was the interest that my son took in growing and eating right from the garden. He even had his own separate garden from which he was able to pick the specific plants he wanted to grow and share with his friends. Mint, strawberries and stevia were popular.

Once we moved to our house in Houston, I wanted to get a garden started. But I soon found out it is not quite as easy here. The clay soil, the summer heat, don’t get me started... I have yet to succeed in harvesting half of what I plant!

The sun is both our friend and enemy in Houston. I find that veggies prefer morning sun. Sometimes, the morning sun just happens to be in your front garden. Consider planting there, as well. You could either show your garden off with pride, or use landscaping to conceal it.

Houston has a few pluses, but the soil is not one of them! I recommend a raised bed for planting. Purchasing good quality soil is a must. SouthwestFertilizer.com (Bissonet and Renwick) has many options. When creating the bed, use a shovel to break up the clay to bond the bad and good soil. That also helps with drainage, so your plants won’t drown when it rains. You can raise your beds with stone, cement blocks, wood, or even old tires. Another easy option is to use pots. Container gardens are a great way to experiment with different plants, and to find out where they grow best. Make sure to water them well, or place them near your sprinklers. Also, verify that they drain well.

The plants I have had most success with have been:

- HERBS
- OKRA
- EGGPLANT
- CHERRY TOMATOES
- KALE
- BROCCOLI
- CAULIFLOWER
- SWISS CHARD

Planting seedlings increases your success rate and gives you a jumpstart to harvest time. Otherwise, seeds are good too. Spring planting can be started toward the end of February.

For more detailed information, here is a good source:

Please write me an email to share your successes, frustrations, and/or more tips at streichteam@gmail.com.

Check the Post Highlights for the date and time of our next Green Team meeting!
1. Work on reading comprehension begins in the Primary classroom.
2. A Lower Elementary student works on an Astronomy presentation.
3. Occupations work in Middle School includes making a model of a solar-powered car.
4. An Upper Elementary student reads intently.
5. Infant Community students wait patiently for their turn to feed one of the class pets.
6. An Upper Elementary student nears completion of a history report.
7. Working with clay in Lower Elementary art class.
8. Lower Elementary students begin the big work of mapping out the Timeline of Life.
9. Upper Elementary friends doing independent work.
10. During Music “specials,” Lower Elementary students enjoy an opportunity to sing together with instruments.
11. Eeyore the bunny is a friend to all in the Full Day Infant Community.
### CALENDAR

**FEBRUARY 16-22**

| Mon 2/17 | Presidents' Day  
          | School Closed |
|---------|----------------|
| Thu 2/20 | Upper Elementary  
          | History Fair   |
|         | 7:00 p.m.      |
| Fri 2/21 | F.I.S.H. Meeting |
|         | 9:00 a.m.      |

**FEBRUARY 23 - MARCH 1**

| Tue 2/25 | Coffee with the  
          | High School Director |
|          | 10:15 a.m.    |
| Thu 2/27 | ADMISSION DAY:  
          | PRIMARY  
          | All levels in session except  
          | for Primary: Primary  
          | students with expanded year contracts attend |
| Fri 2/28 | ADMISSION DAY:  
          | PRIMARY, ELEMENTARY AND  
          | MIDDLE SCHOOL  
          | Infant Community and  
          | High School in session:  
          | Primary, EL and MS  
          | students with expanded year contracts attend |

### NOTICE BOARD

#### SCIENCE NIGHT THIS SATURDAY AT THE UT GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES!

The UT Graduate School of Biomedical sciences (GSBS) is hosting a night full of fun and interesting science showcased by pioneering scientists at UT Health Science Center and MD Anderson Cancer Center. Bring the whole family and get your science on!

**WHEN:** Sat., Feb. 15, 3 - 6 p.m.

**WHERE:** 7435 Fannin Street, South Campus Building II (SCRBII) Ballroom

[facebook.com/UTGSBSOutreach](http://facebook.com/UTGSBSOutreach)

### Congrats!

We in the middle school are proud to announce that our dear friend, [redacted], competed in and won the Scholastic Regional Poetry Competition! She will now be going on to Nationals, where we wish her all the best. She has worked extremely hard on her poetry, and this win was quite well-deserved. Congratulations, [redacted], and good luck.

### Where in the world will your 50th shirt go on Spring Break?

Join us this Spring Break as we gather images of Post Oak families and friends sporting their 50th gear all over the world! We will be capturing all of the fun on our Facebook and Twitter pages, and in the Post. Send your pics during Spring Break to jessicajackson@postoakschool.org.

### ABOUT THE POST

The Post is distributed via email every other Friday of the regular school year. You can receive a printed copy from your oldest child, or view the PDF version online.

Submit letters, articles, or photos in electronic form by 5:00 p.m. on the Tuesday before publication to Communications Coordinator Elisa Schmidt (elisaschmidt@postoakschool.org). If publication is on a Thursday due to school closure on Friday, then the deadline is 5:00 p.m. on the preceding Monday.

THE POST OAK SCHOOL was founded in 1963 and accredited by both the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) and the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS)

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