

# CWS NEWSLETTER 2012

## Editor's Note:

June 18, 2012

For the first time in years, I attended the PTA meeting this morning, the last of the 2011-2012 school year and the last one I'll ever attend as a parent at the Children's Workshop School.

My fifth grader graduates next week. My oldest daughter is a 2009 alum. As I sat and listened—already an outsider—to the desires, hopes and concerns of the assembled parents for next fall, I was reminded of the almost embarrassment of riches my two children have benefitted from during their stay at CWS, all funded by the PTA, which dear readers—is you (and in many cases, the people you are connected to)—Turtle Bay, CWS Band, NiteStar Farm Trip, DC Trip, Alvin Ailey, Bent on Learning, Ballet Hispanico, the list goes on.

While unseasonably cool breezes came through the open auditorium windows, the PTA hammered out details of procuring and installing air-conditioning units on the third floor. They discussed the logistics of language teachers, a technology plan, and most intriguingly, plans for our school's 20th anniversary this coming fall. The outgoing PTA co-president, Melissa, was dressed in shorts for the all-school picnic. After serving for four consecutive years, at the official close of this morning's meeting, she threw up her arms and said, "I'm done!" with not a small amount of jubilation.

I relate a bit; after nine consecutive years of producing at least one newsletter a year (some years have been more fruitful than others), I will be handing over the newsletter reins to someone else. That person is still unknown, but perhaps perusing the pages of this at least, albeit, modest edition, will inspire you. Thanks to Amy Steinhauser for taking on the layout for the very first time! — Julie Turley



## From Nancy to New York: Meet the Thomas/Van Dam Family

Nina Van Dam entered Carolyn's class last fall knowing no English. Her parents, Isabel Thomas and Marcel Van Dam and sister, Ava, had moved to New York City for one year from Nancy, France. Isabel had been wanting to come to New York City for awhile, so Marcel, a singer/songwriter and guitar player, researched getting an artist's visa, which took six months. Marcel tells me that the family found the East Village by accident years ago and liked this area. "Suddenly we ended up on St. Marks Place," he said. "We had a good feeling about it." I met up with Isabel and Marcel at the East River Park during the All-School Picnic.

### How did you find CWS?

That was thanks to our super of our building here in New York. We didn't know where to go. He told us that CWS was a very good school. First, we were made to go to PS 19, because of where our apartment is. When I went there with Nina, they told us she had to wear a school uniform. I took a chance and went over to CWS. Before they told us there were no spots, but when we came here, Joyce was in the office. She welcomed Nina into the school.

### How's the year been for Nina?

She has had a good year. For her, CWS was the perfect school. Carolyn (now on maternity leave) was the perfect teacher. Very patient. Warm. It's nice that the parents here are very present and involved. It turned out to be a good school for us to meet nice people from all over the world.

**Marcel, you've done two fundraiser performances for CWS (one at The Living Room and one at the Sidewalk Café) with current CWS parent Frank**

### Vigilante (Francesca's dad). How did you two find each other, you being a newcomer?

I sent out a video to present myself. Then Frank said he would like to play with me. So that's how we got together. [Frank and Marcel sound awesome together, by the way] We are recording to have a souvenir of our collaboration. We already recorded five songs, and will record more.

### What's Nina's school in France like?

It's quite a different school. Stricter. No time for play. Learning by repetition. Here it's more about understanding. In French schools, there are lots of things to learn just with the French language. Here they don't discourage you from doing something you're not good at. In France, it's rather competitive. High speed of learning. In France, Nina's really advanced, but she came with no English. She picked it up, but it took two or three months. She started soccer here. She got interested in France. But here she really got into it. She's also drumming.

### What will you miss most?

Isabelle: I will miss everything. All our French friends said, "You're going to miss French food." But I didn't, and I found my special French drink here. And there are things here we can't find in France. Not a lot of foods with cinnamon in France, for example! What I like the most I can walk every day and discover a new street, a new place to get coffee, new places to eat. In Nancy, we go to the same restaurant. Marcel: What I'll miss the most the melting pot, the diversity. Here you have people from all over the world. They get along. Everybody's mixed and different, but that's okay.



## Interview with Afterschool Clubs Coordinator and CWS parent, Darryl LaVare

by Bess Rinzler-Foster (Miriam's and Jason's 4th Grade Class)  
Bess was in Darryl's afterschool Mural Club this year.

### ARE YOU A NEW YORKER? WHERE WERE YOU RAISED?

I was born in Anchorage but only because my Dad was stationed there during the Viet Nam War. We moved to Memphis, TN when I was two and was there until I was 18. I moved here (to NYC) in 1990, first to Ludlow Street. I started coming to New York when I was in college. I always loved the lower east side. I came right to CBGB--I went right there! I came with a band from Providence, RI.

### HOW DID YOU LIKE GROWING UP IN MEMPHIS?

It's a nice place to visit. I am Jewish. There was a lot of anti-Semitism, a lot of racism and closed-minded people. But there was a lot of good music, and good people, too. You can find good people anywhere.

### HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOU DECIDED ON ART AS A CAREER?

I think it was when I was about 13. I was going through kind of a rough time in my life. My parents got divorced and I started painting and drawing in my room. Then in 9th grade I had a very inspiring teacher. Her name was Mrs. Early. She encouraged me and she also entered some of my pieces in a Scholastic Awards competition. I won this full scholarship to go to Rhode Island School of Design for the summer. I went to Washington DC to get the award. It was a turning point in my life, because I wasn't really interested in anything else as far as an education. I liked punk rock music A LOT. But then I thought I could go to art school! I went to the school and I REALLY liked it! I believed that if I did well those two years, then I could go to college there and become an artist.

So I went to Rhode Island School of Design, and I planned my schedule around coming to New York. Everything was here. I was dating a guy who lived here, and the punk music was here. I never left. I have been here ever since.

### DOES MUSIC INSPIRE YOU ON THINGS TO PAINT?

Yes, music does definitely inspire me! As you know I put music on (laughter), smooth calming music when we paint [in Mural Club]. I put music on when I paint at home, too. I like everything from old jazz--I could

just listen to Billy Holiday over and over again--to punk rock and rock and roll. I also like to listen to classical music. I like to imagine what it reminds me of when I am painting.

### WHAT OTHER THINGS INSPIRE YOU?

People, light and dark, sunlight, moods. I like to paint when I'm angry, when I'm sad; I like to paint my emotions. I like to paint about politics. Sometimes when I paint, it's about ugliness, sometimes its beauty.

### WHAT IS ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE THINGS TO PAINT?

People! I can just get lost in a face, trying to get emotions and expressions, making the painting look like the person. I am in interested in people, in human nature. Using lights and darks can make something more realistic.

### HOW OFTEN DO YOU PAINT?

That varies. I like to paint everyday.

### IS IT HARD TO FIND TIME TO PAINT?

It is SOOOOOO hard to find time to paint, that is my biggest challenge with work and kids. I have to force myself to make the time, to say I'm not going to do dishes; I'm not going to check email. It's really hard to do. Then once I do get started painting . . .

### WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS ONE OF YOUR BEST TRICKS FOR PAINTING?

One thing is the study of anatomy; the other thing is to try to "see." Like I tell you kids in class: really try to see something, examine it for what it is, not what I think it is "supposed" to look like. Try to really investigate it. I try to really look more at the subject that at the painting itself. Get lost in it. You see things you don't even know you are seeing.

### WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO RUN A PAINTING CLUB?

Because I love art! My art teacher inspired me so much that I want to inspire and paint with others, with kids. Hopefully, I inspire them.

*[Editor's Note: You can see the Mural Club's fabulous creations on the walls of 12th Street buildings near CWS and in the school yard.]*



# The African Burial Ground Fieldtrip

by Bess Rinzler-Foster (4th grade, Jason's and Miriam's class)

*[Editor's Note: Every other year, as part of their curriculum, the third/fourth grade classes visit the African Burial Ground in lower Manhattan.]*

If you get ranger Doug, be prepared to be shocked. He has such energy, in his words, and is very dramatic. He came banging on a drum, chanting "sankofa sankofa." He really tries to make you feel how the African slaves in America felt. "Sankofa" means learn from the past.

At the burial grounds they have a wonderful theater. You can record or watch videos people made about the burial ground. There is a big room with wax figures and a heavy barrel. You alone or with a partner push the barrel. They have a quite a lot of replicas of shackles and beads.

The African burial ground is a cemetery in New York City. It is the largest and oldest African cemetery. The cemetery is five blocks long and has about 15,000 skeletons in it. It was discovered when a government building was going to be put up. The government took some of the bones and put them at the basement of Howard College for anthropologists to study. People started to protest. Finally, the government gave up and returned the bones. The government put up the building, but also built a memorial at the African Burial Ground.

## Sauer Park Q and A: Stella (5th grade, Jessica/Crystal) Interviews Katya (3rd grade, Molly's Class)

### Q: WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT 3RD GRADE?

A: WORD STUDY AND READING

### Q: FAVORITE COLOR?

A: BLACK, RED, BLUE, AND GREEN

### Q: FAVORITE ANIMAL?

A: BABY TIGER AND BABY PANDA

### Q: FOR FUN?

A: PLAY WITH FRIENDS.

### Q: FAVORITE SEASON?

A: FALL AND SUMMER

### Q: FAVORITE JELLYBEAN FLAVOR?

A: LEMON

### Q: WHAT ARE YOU STUDYING IN SCHOOL?

A: IMMIGRATION

### Q: WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO IN THE 3RD GRADE?

A: BALLET HISPANICO

### Q: FAVORITE FRUIT?

A: CANTALOUPE

### Q: WHAT CLASS?

### A: MOLLY'S CLASS.

### Q: FAVORITE DESSERT?

A: FRUIT TART

### Q: DO YOU HAVE A PET?

A: YES, A GERBIL NAMED CLOVER.

### Q: HOW OLD ARE YOU?

A: EIGHT

### Q: WHAT BOROUGH DO YOU LIVE IN?

A: BROOKLYN

### Q: FAVORITE BOOKS?

A: THE AMERICAN GIRL DOLL SAMAN-

### THA SERIES

### Q: FAVORITE MOVIES?

A: ONE OF THEM IS, JUDY MOODY AND THE NOT BUMMER SUMMER

### Q: WHAT'S THE MOST INTERESTING THING ABOUT YOU?

A: I'M A GOOD DANCER.

### Q: HAVE YOU ENJOYED THIS INTERVIEW?

A: YES