

THE CORNERSTONE

News from the Charter Foundation

Issue IV

www.thecharterfoundation.org

May 31, 2007

“A vision without a task is but a dream. A task without a vision is but drudgery. But a vision with a task is the hope of humanity.”

--Rudolf Steiner

TELL ME AGAIN, WHAT IS THE CHARTER FOUNDATION?

The Charter Foundation is the non-profit organization which receives and disburses all funds donated to the Sebastopol Independent Charter School. It owns and manages our primary asset - the school building at 200 South Main St.

WHY DOES OUR SCHOOL NEED DONATIONS?

Although our school receives the same amount of money per child as other public schools, the local district is not required to give us any facilities. Our Waldorf program therefore requires that:

- * **We pay for our own buildings.**
- * **Our teachers are to be *State-certified AND Waldorf-trained.***
- * **We provide for Specialty Teachers** (Music, Handwork, Eurhythmy, Woodwork, Games and Chorus).

We simply cannot offer this wonderful education without a significant contribution of money from the parent body.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

The school depends upon a Parent Pledge Program to raise funds. By filling out a Pledge Form, you let us know what we can expect from your family and you make a commitment that works for your financial situation. The most helpful participants do the following:

- ◆ Fill out a green *Pledge Form.*

- ◆ Make regular payments.
- ◆ Volunteer for our fund raising activities: Rummage Sale, Auction/Gala, E-Scrip Coach, Calendar Sales, etc...
- ◆ Make sure you are signed up for E-Scrip and Community Smart (see the back side of the green Pledge Form).

New packages with forms for next year will be mailed out in June. Remember that our expenses don't stop over the summer, so please keep sending in your pledges. Thank you!

HOW DO WE SPEND OUR MONEY?

The Charter Foundation has made an *equal* commitment to (1) saving for a future school site and (2) helping to fund current school operations. We are also committed to transparency and accountability in our actions. Our board is staffed by volunteers to minimize overhead. After building and fund-raising expenses are paid, the available money is split 50/50 between long-term savings and monthly grants directly to the school. The school administration is responsible for applying the grant money in the wisest fashion.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Financial Q & A.
- The 100% Participation Drive.
- Our search for a permanent Site.
- A Matching Grant Program.

Financial Q & A

Q. How is the Pledge Program going?

A. We are able to fund our school and savings, but overall pledges are down compared to last year. This could be part of a general downturn in the economy, but is not a good trend. If everyone signed up for E-scrip, school-pop, and Community Smart, it would help reverse this trend at NO COST to parents!

Q. How are our savings looking?

A. We'll have over \$300,000 in liquid assets by June 31st, combined with the equity built up in our school building of about \$2 million dollars. This gives us a fighting chance to act quickly in the real-estate market, but will still require a creative set of financing partners to carry us through the purchase and construction phases. A matching grant (see previous article) that is earmarked for permanent site development has increased our savings by an extra \$25,000 this year.

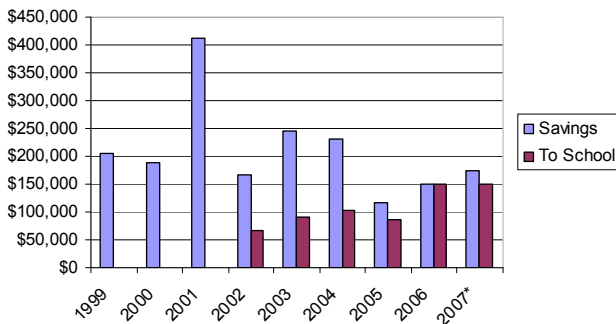
Q. Will we be able to manifest our dream?

A. The realities of building a new campus, while maintaining a fully functioning school, are daunting. Since we don't know where the permanent site will be located there are really too many unknowns to answer this question accurately. However, we can predict that our new campus will require a renewed fund-raising effort, as well as significant parent labor. The Foundation is confident, however, that this creative community, with its long tradition of saving, working together, and doing what it takes to succeed, will overcome whatever obstacles lie before us. We will be able to realize our dream of a beautiful K-8 campus that meets our needs and belongs to us and the children of the future.

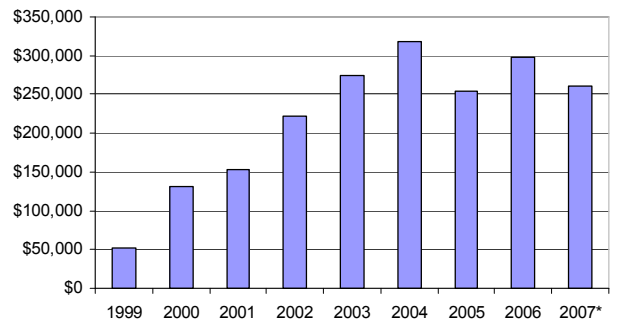
Q. How are directors chosen for the Foundation Board?

A. The Charter Foundation board is self-selecting, meaning that the existing board members nominate and approve all new members. Our members volunteer for 3-year commitments to the board on a rotating basis. Although it is not a requirement, all of our current board members are also parents at the school.

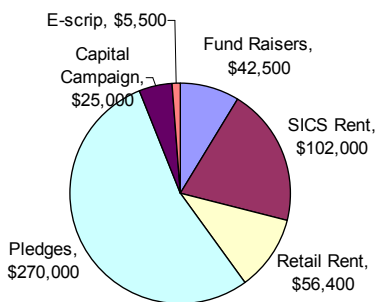
Distribution of Money



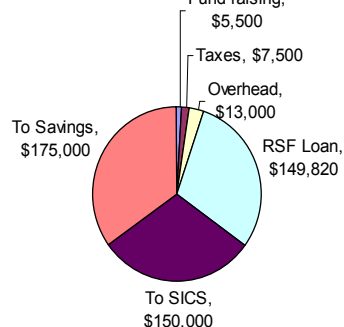
Pledges Per Year (2007* estimated)



Projected 2007 Income Sources



Projected 2007 Expenses



THE 100% PARTICIPATION DRIVE

We ask for a tax-deductible, monthly donation of **\$170/month/child**. This equates to \$2040 per year per child. In an economically diverse community such as ours, we know that not everyone can afford to pledge at this level. In an effort to get every family pledging at **some** level (a level set by each family), we are offering a \$500 grant to each class that has 100% participation in the Pledge Program by June 30th, 2007. This money can be used to help offset the costs (and fundraising effort) for the eventual 8th grade trip for each class.

If you aren't yet participating in the Pledge Program, we hope this extra incentive helps. The higher our pledge participation rate, the easier it will be to borrow money for our permanent site. Please make the effort to donate at the level that you can afford to this program. **Even a minimal, one-time pledge counts.** (Of course, to make this drive really successful, it must generate at least as much money as we give back to the classes.) We currently have 87% of children represented. There are just a few weeks left in this school year. Let's do it! We really need to have everyone contributing.

THE SEARCH FOR OUR PERMANENT SITE

The Site Committee is composed of members of the school administration, school board, and Charter Foundation. Our mission has been to seek out and explore possible sites for a future home for our school. Currently, we have narrowed down the search, and are in active conversation with several property owners, as well as ongoing discussion with the Sebastopol Union School district.

As you may know, charter law requires that we locate our school within the boundaries of our chartering district. Many other factors that we must consider are traffic patterns, minimum space needs (about 4-5 acres), availability of sewer/septic capacity adequate for a school, zoning regulations, neighbors, use permits, etc. And of course, price!

When we are convinced that we've found that place and can overcome the hurdles of building a school there, we will have a community meeting before making big decisions.

Community members are still calling in with land tips and that is a good thing! Don't hesitate to call me if you know of a 5+ acre site that is in the Sebastopol Union School District – all of the feasible leads we have found so far are from word of mouth, not searches for parcels officially for sale. And light a candle, say a prayer, or make a wish for our "permanent site" dreams to come true soon. ~Susan Olson, Site Committee Coordinator

A MATCHING GRANT FOR OUR CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

In anticipation of our need to apply a large down payment for our eventual land purchase, we are offering a chance to donate directly to the Capital Campaign. The **Marcia Brady Tucker Foundation** has generously offered to match all donations to our capital campaign fund with \$1 for every \$3 that is raised. *Special recognition* will be made for all donors to the capital campaign when we build the permanent school! We will be building a school used by generations of children. What a great way to donate to a local cause and be able to see the results year after year.

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTING WITH R.S.F. BENEFITS OUR SCHOOL

The Rudolf Steiner Foundation Collaborative provides financial vehicles for investors who wish to support organizations and individuals practicing economic, environmental, and social sustainability. If you invest in this fund, you would generate about 1.5% interest directly **to our school** in the form of a grant (distributed after 1 year). In addition, it generates money for **you** at modest rates (last rate was 4.0%). See www.rsfsocialfinance.org for info, or contact **Jim Wheaton**.

PARENTS' PERSPECTIVE PAGE

Thoughts and letters from the parents to the parents.

Fellow Parents –

I'm inspired to share with you my experience with our pledges. Initially, we found that our monthly offering came easily. Although, when our income changed, we fell behind. I felt disappointment and futility. I didn't pay our pledge for a couple months. I felt my fear of rejection and rationalized that if I can't meet "their" expectations, (my own, really) I won't even try.

Realizing that we had much to barter with, we found many items that the school needed and were able to supply some of those. After years of some very creative ways of paying our pledges, I'm grateful that we have been able to support this exquisite community from which we have received soooo much!

So, if you're feeling the angst of futility; maybe you can't give as much as you would like, I certainly understand. I also know how gratified we feel in giving what we can. Besides, there's that \$500 which each class receives when it reaches 100% in pledges. With that saved you will have a much easier time when your child reaches the eighth grade and you are raising funds for the big outing at years end.

-Sahar Pinkham (824-1796), parent of our third grader, Elijah.

Dear SICS administration and Charter Foundation,

I am writing this letter to express my appreciation and support for the SICS pledge program, administered by the Charter Foundation. We are a new family to the school, having recently transferred from another Sonoma County public school district. I want you to know that my husband and I both feel that the \$170 per student per month pledge request seems reasonable, and the evidence of effective pledge funds management can be found in many ways and places.

The public charter school we transferred from also relied on a pledge program for the school's success. However, the pledge commitment rate was disappointing, hovering at around 40%, despite the fact that the per-student per month request of \$100 was measurably less than the \$170 at SICS.

I would like to convey how it felt to be a family that pledged, while so many other families did not. It was, frankly, very demoralizing. My husband and I felt as if our contributions made little difference. Instead of our contributions going toward supporting all the programs that benefited our daughter, we knew that we were simply part of an ineffective effort to barely prevent the school from outright failure. The poor pledge commitment was a determining factor that turned potential success into bare-bones survival.

Surprisingly, the pledge rate did not increase into the lower grades, instead remaining fairly constant at around 40%. This, sadly, showed a lack of commitment on the part of even those families whose children would theoretically be at the school to reap the benefits of programs being set up with current pledge contributions. This was nothing less than a lack of parent community commitment to provide our own children with a quality education through the upper primary grades and into their middle school years.

*I hope that even more families with children enrolled at SICS will come to realize that their pledge contribution must be a very high priority in their family budgets, weighted along with other essentials. SICS is able to provide the quality of inspired, dedicated teachers and relevant, effective programs, and to provide a competent, professional administrative staff, means that, ideally, every family that **chooses** to enroll their children at SICS understands that this educational environment cannot happen without a high level of family pledge support.*

Thank-you for your efforts to achieve a good pledge commitment from SICS families, as well as for your oversight to ensure that our pledge contributions are being spent wisely. We, as a participating family, appreciate this.

Regards, Linda Sexauer