

Ronan McElligott Memorial Playground

[News and Updates]

Welcome to the January 2009 update for the **Ronan McElligott Memorial Playground** project, a volunteer-led effort to build a barrier-free playground in Westford, Mass.

Happy New Year! We all have certain things we think about at the New Year. As a child, I remember fondly a neighbor's New Year's Eve party we went to every year. We were kids and it was a fun night to stay up late with silly plastic noisemakers and watch Dick Clark on TV.

As adults, New Year's is often a time when a lot of us make resolutions. We're going to exercise more, lose weight, get organized, recycle more, even reduce our carbon footprint. And if you're like most, half of those resolutions have gone out the window before Valentine's Day.

It's human nature — we all want to be better and do more, whether it's for ourselves, our families, the environment, or our community. You realize what's truly important to each of us, though, and that's where a resolution is no longer just something we talk about in January, but something we really believe in and are committed to.

This playground is something we've all believed in since we first reached out for support just over a year ago. We're all committed to making this playground happen and building it in 2009.

It's not a resolution, but a true commitment to change and to ensuring

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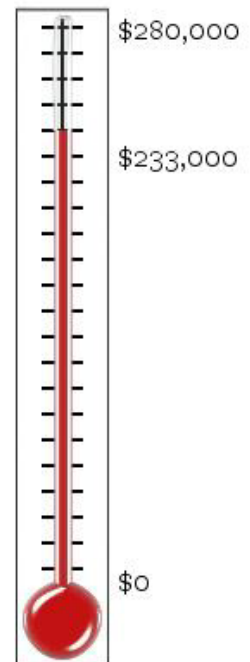
- Bamboo Restaurant Hosts February 12th Benefit
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that *all children*, special children like Ronan in particular, have a place to play.

I hope we can count on your continued support this year. Our goal is in sight but we've still got some work to do to reach it. Having raised \$233,000 in just over a year, I don't doubt we can reach the remainder of our goal and be ready to build in 2009.

Enjoy this newsletter, and please take a look at some of our upcoming events, including a fundraiser hosted by **Bamboo Restaurant** in Westford on **February 12th**. Just come by for some great Asian food at lunch, dinner, or take-out. Mention Ronan's playground and 20% of your bill will be donated to the project.

As always, if you have ideas or questions, please contact us at 978-692-9065 or ssmcelligott@comcast.net. And be sure to visit our project website at www.westford.com/ronansplayground.



Bamboo Westford Hosts Fundraiser on February 12th

Mark your calendars for **Thursday February 12th**. Bamboo Restaurant on Route 110 in Westford is generously **donating 20% of sales** for any customer that comes in that day and mentions the Ronan McElligott Memorial Playground. You don't need to bring anything — just be sure you mention the project. The fundraiser applies to lunch or dinner, take out or eat-in.

Bamboo
Fine Asian Cuisine & Sushi Bar

So grab some friends and colleagues and enjoy the buffet lunch. Join the family and have a nice dinner. Or bring lunch or dinner *to you* with Bamboo's comprehensive take-out menu. There is something for everyone!

For more on the restaurant or directions, please visit www.bamboogourmet.com or contact them at 978-589-9666. Special thanks to our friends at Bamboo for their generosity in hosting this event.

St. Patrick's Day Family Celebration to Support Ronan's Playground



Families and children of all ages — we invite you to celebrate Irish and Scottish culture on Thursday March 12th from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. at the

Parish Center for the Arts in Westford. Proceeds from this second annual event will support Ronan's Playground.

The foot-tapping Celtic folk music of **The Boston Kiltics** will bring a twinkle to your eye and **Celtic Bells** — a family of performers with Scottish ancestry — will share a fascinating story of Celtic culture. Round out the event with Irish step dancing, refreshments, raffles, and games and crafts for the kids. Wear some green and you might just win a prize for being the best dressed lass or lad!

Admission is \$15 per person. Children under two are free. Family maximum is \$40. Space is limited. To reserve your tickets, please contact Heidi Tierney at 978-392-0470 or intothewoods3@aol.com.



Alpha Tae Kwon Do Academy Hosts *Night of 1,000 Kicks* for Ronan's Playground

Students at Alpha Tae Kwon Do Academy in Chelmsford kicked out 2008 with its annual '*Night of 1000 Kicks*' to benefit Ronan McElligott Memorial Playground.



The participants at Alpha Tae Kwon Do raised nearly \$700 and performed exactly 1,000 kicks on the night of December 30th. Led by Master Instructor Andrew Rollinson, this was the Academy's 6th annual event. "We feel this is an important way to get fit, get healthy, and give back to the local community," says Rollinson.



Congratulations and special thanks to the Academy and to the students from Alpha Tae Kwon Do who participated in this year's event, and to their friends and families who pledged their support. To learn more about Alpha Tae Kwon Do Academy, visit www.alphatkdo.com

Come Laugh with Us! April 5th Comedy and Auction Night for Ronan's Playground



You're invited to join us on Sunday April 5th at Bainbridge's Restaurant in Chelmsford. We guarantee more than a few laughs with performances by three local comedians, including headliner and

Bedford native **Jim Colliton**.

Colliton's style, which has often been compared to that of Jerry Seinfeld, is funny, clean, and as heard in his newest CD "Stories from the Suburbs," contains humor we can all relate to. Colliton has been seen on national television shows like Ed McMahon's Next Big Star, Comcast Comedy Spot Light and Comedy Central Laugh Riots, as well as XM Satellite Radio's Comedy Channel.

In addition to a 90-minute comedy performance, the evening will include delicious hors d'oeuvres, cash bar, and exciting and unique silent auction and raffle items. Tickets are advance sale only and are \$35 per person. To purchase tickets or donate an item to our auction or raffle, please contact [Stephanie McElligott](mailto:Stephanie.McElligott@westford.com). All proceeds from this event will directly support Ronan's playground. We hope to see you there!

Bodyology is Coming to Westford



'Bodyology – The Amazing 3-D Musical Health Show' is coming to the Westford Academy Performing Arts Center on Friday February 13th. Sponsored in part by Lowell General Hospital and Pediatrics West, this multi-media, interactive stage show is sure to both entertain and educate families about the human body, good nutrition, healthy habits, and physical fitness.

The show is free and open to the public, and appropriate for families with children in Kindergarten through fifth grade. The 'Bodyology Art Gallery,' featuring wellness posters created by Westford

second and third graders will be showcased in the lobby from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. Family performance on stage will follow from 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.



Be sure to stop by our table for Ronan's Playground while you're there. We'll be there with more information on the project, display board with our playground design, and will be selling cookbooks for healthy lunch box menus with proceeds to benefit the playground.

For more information visit www.slimgoodbody.com/national_tour/ or contact [Heidi Tierney](#) PTO K-2 Enrichment Chair at 978-392-0470.

Welcome to Holland

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My friend Kristen shared a poem with me a few months ago. While it was written over 20 years ago by Emily

Kingsley, it has a timeless message. The poem has been reprinted in many languages and many forms all over the world.

I know a lot of you that read this newsletter have children with special needs or know a child with special needs. As Ronan's mom, the poem was meaningful to me and I hope it will be to you as well. If you do not have a child with special needs, I hope this poem is just as powerful for you, and that you realize what a beautiful place Holland really is. It's just a little bit different.

Welcome to Holland

I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability — to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this...

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip — to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum. The Michelangelo David. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting.

After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."

"Holland?!?" you say. "What do you mean Holland?? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy."

But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.

The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place.

So you must go out and buy new guide books. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.

It's just a different place. It's slower-paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around ... and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills ... and Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts.

But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy ... and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned."

And the pain of that will never, ever, ever, ever go away ... because the loss of that dream is a very, very significant loss.

But... if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things ... about Holland.

Yes! I want to help give *all children* a place to play.

Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation of:

\$500 \$250 \$100 \$75 \$50 other _____

Please make checks payable to: WFOR-Ronan McElligott Memorial Playground and mail to P.O. Box 2011, Westford, MA 01886

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

The measure of a person's life, especially one taken from us far too soon, is not counted in years, but by the lives affected because he lived.

