



## WORKING IN THE SCHOOLS

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Winter/Spring 2004

## A Toast to WITS

Many glasses were raised to honor the work of WITS at the first Grace Wine and Charlie Trotter event, an intimate dinner party at founder Marion Stone's home on Monday, October 13, 2003.

The evening began with a toast by Dick Grace of Grace Family Vineyards in Napa Valley. Known for donating his rare, expensive wines to fundraise for various causes around the globe, Dick lifted his glass to WITS volunteers. "The wonderful dinner reinforced my strong belief in the kindness and generosity of people. This becomes especially obvious when we are able to focus on helping and caring for our brothers and sisters in need. Therein lies the true path to happiness."



Guests tasted three 2001 vintages as well as bid on a one-of-a-kind 2001 Grace Imperial. This exceptional bottle, etched and hand painted with the WITS logo and school supplies, represented our mission of tutoring and mentoring Chicago Public School students.

In addition to the wine, Chef Charlie Trotter treated guests to an eight-course meal that complemented the flavor of each wine tasted. On top of all his exquisite cuisine and service, Chef Trotter donated, for auction, a Grace Imperial from his own private collection along with a dinner for twelve in the top bidder's home.

Capping off the event, Daviel Bonds, a 5th grader from Byrd School, shared with guests how working with a WITS tutor has changed his life.

The event was a huge success, raising \$110,000 for WITS! Chef Trotter best recapped the experience when he said, "What an extraordinary evening! I am always humbled by the extreme generosity of Dick and Ann Grace. The evening was filled with

laughter and great company of friends who gathered for such a worthwhile cause. I look forward to the Second Annual WITS Dinner!"



*WITS Co-Founder Marion Stone and Chef Charlie Trotter*



*WITS Co-President Roger Carlson, Co-Founder Marion Stone and Dick Grace of Grace Family Vineyards*

## WITS Board of Directors

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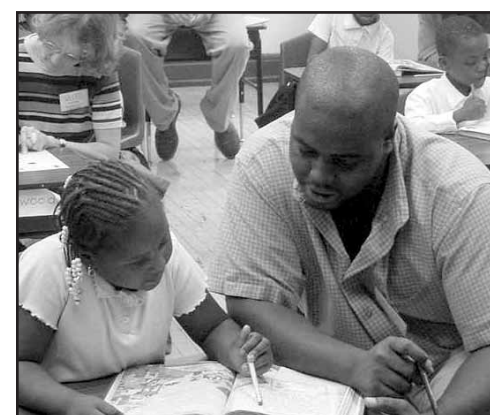
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**WITS News**  
Managing Editor:  
Lauren Weiner

## Strength in Numbers



Three years ago, with the support of Everybody Wins, NY and UBS, WITS began transporting 25 volunteers to Manierre School to read aloud one-on-one to 4th graders during their lunch hour. Today more than 1,300 Power Lunch volunteers from 13 corporations and organizations across Chicago participate in the program.

In the second year evaluating the program WITS was able to acquire comprehensive data regarding the participants in Power Lunch. In total, 464 volunteers, 350 students and seven schools participated in the study. The results are in and the numbers are impressive!

**According to Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) reading scores, 67% of the Power Lunch 3rd grade students reached immediate promotion level (students advance to next grade level) or promotion range (students must complete summer school then advance to next grade level) for reading while only 32% of the 3rd grade students in the control groups (students not in the Power Lunch program) reached such proficiency levels.**

According to teachers' reports, 87% of all Power Lunch students somewhat improved, improved, or very much improved their read-

ing comprehension and 85% had similar improvements in their vocabulary since the beginning of the school year. Furthermore, 77% of all Power Lunch students somewhat improved, improved, or very much improved their reading ability and 72% somewhat improved, improved, or very much improved their (1) listening comprehension, (2) attention span, and (3) ability to articulate thoughts.

In addition to the changes in reading ability, changes in self-confidence and attitudes toward reading were prevalent as well. As one student stated, "I learned that if you want to learn how to read, sometimes you can use some help. Every week I saw my Power Lunch partner, I knew I was going to get better at reading. Now that I am better at reading I think I am going to be a Power Lunch partner just like the one I had." By the end of the

*Continued on page 3*

## GIFT REPORT

WITS is deeply grateful for the generous contributions of our donors. Your support of the WITS tutoring and mentoring program is critical to our success in serving children in the Chicago Public Schools.

Below is a list of WITS supporters from July 1, 2003 through January 31, 2004. Due to space limitations, we were unable to print donors

who gave up to \$199. Please know that your name will be included in the annual report and accept our heartfelt gratitude for your generosity.

WITS deeply regrets any omissions or misspellings that may be present throughout the list. Should you encounter an error, please call us at 312.751.9487 and we will make the necessary corrections.

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Little Brown & Co. Office Depot  
Osco Drug  
Pleasant Company  
Random House Inc.  
Natalie Rothstein

Special thanks to Dick Grace, Grace Family Vineyards, for his wine and inspiration!

## Corporation Profile: Equity Office



Equity Office Properties Trust joined forces with WITS in the fall of 2002. Seventy-Five employees participated every Tuesday in the Power Lunch program at Gladstone School. The connection between the corporation and students was immediate and the energy felt among the employees was contagious.

Jamie Kasher recalls, "When my group first got on the bus to leave for the school on our first day of volunteering, the bus was noticeably quiet. After the hour of volunteering, I got back on the bus and it was amazing. People were talking to each other over the seats and meeting each other for the first time. Not only is it a great volunteer program, but it's also an excellent way to foster employee interaction."

Since then, Equity Office has adopted Gladstone School and provided the funds for a new library. In their second year of volunteering, volunteers from Equity Office Residential now share the bus with the Equity Office regional and corporate office employees.

Thank you Equity Office. We look forward to a long and rewarding relationship working together to help Gladstone School.



## Chicago Public Schools 2003-2004 Calendar

*WITS volunteers, please note that all schools are closed on the following days:*

Friday, March 26	Professional Development Day
Friday, April 9	Professional Development Day
Monday, April 12 – Sunday, April 18	Spring Vacation
Wednesday, April 21	Report Card Pickup
Monday, May 31	Memorial Day
Monday, June 21	Teacher Institute Day

## Above and Beyond

*WITS would like to recognize a few dedicated volunteers who have gone out of their way to reach out to their students:*

- Elaine Levinson, a longtime classroom volunteer, started the "Mrs. Sonya Carson Book Club" at Sojourner Truth Elementary School. Inspired by Mrs. Carson's ability to raise two successful children from an area much like Cabrini-Green in Detroit. The student with the greatest number of completed book reports wins a pizza party for their classroom. Now just about every classroom at Truth participates!
- Lois Scheyer inspired North Shore Congregation Israel to help collect hundreds of gloves and coats to donate to children at Jordan and Hibbard School and helped keep children warm this winter.
- Thanks to Natalie Rothstein for donating her beautiful globe centerpieces from her Bat Mitzvah. WITS gave each school a globe for the holidays and now our volunteers can share their travel experiences with the students!
- And many thanks to all our corporations that sponsored holiday parties for students across Chicago. Many gifts were given and received and happy memories were made!

## Home Sweet Home

The night was one to be remembered. They came by the hundreds to sit by their fires in their favorite robes and enjoy their favorite home cooked meals in support of WITS. But the highlight of the WITS fall “non-event” was “staying home to read a good book.”



*WITS Board Members Terri Lind and Lili Ann Zisook*

Prior to the event, guests visited bookstores or local libraries to choose a book for the evening. Some guests chose to cuddle up with a classic such as *Gone With the Wind* while others opted for the hot new bestseller, *The Da Vinci Code*. The book selection was vast but as one guest put it, “I had to pick out a perfect book to read on the gala evening!”

After enjoying the meal of their choice, guests made their way from the kitchen to the couch or bedroom, getting comfortable for the evening’s entertainment emceed by authors ranging from John Steinbeck to Jane Austen.

While WITS donors around Chicago stayed home, WITS students and volunteers benefited from new books, supplies and valued transportation to and from the schools we serve.

In the end, the first “Stay Home and Read a Good Book Non-event” raised more than \$95,000 and counting! Thank you for staying home and making a difference in lives of Chicago Public School children.



*WITS Co-President Ginny Carlson*

## Strength in Numbers continued . . .



program, 61% of the Power Lunch first graders improved their attitudes toward academic reading and 47% improved their attitudes toward recreational reading compared to only 53% and 37%, respectively, of all students in the control group.

**Among second graders, more than half (54%) improved their academic attitude toward reading during**

**the Post-Test despite the fact that students came from one of the lowest achieving schools in Chicago.**

Among third graders, approximately 40% of all Power Lunch students improved both their academic and recreational attitudes toward reading.

WITS is currently processing our 3rd evaluation of the Power Lunch program. As our commitment to service grows, WITS aims to continue to use evaluations as a tool to gauge the quality and effectiveness of the program. For additional information regarding the 2002–2003 Power Lunch evaluation, please contact Lauren at 312-751-9487.

## Report Card From the Executive Director

We are very proud to present the results of our program evaluation on page 1. These studies show the academic impact of WITS volunteers. Our students improved in all reading-related behaviors in addition to increasing their test scores.

But the numbers are only a part of the story. How do you quantify hugs? Can we count smiles?

We recently asked our teachers to write letters to their volunteers. We asked them to tell the volunteers about the difference they make in the lives of their students. Ms Kathleen Glennon, 3rd grade teacher at Stowe school wrote, “The air is magical and you make it so. The special together time is unlike anything I’ve ever seen. After you leave, the students want to gather around and share what they have just experienced. They want to savor it and share it with me privately.”

In expressing her thanks, Ms. Carriere, 3rd grade teacher at Peabody School said, “You give the students the benefit of your attention, time and knowledge. These students do not generally have such a relationship with adults. By listening to them, appreciating them for who they are and focusing on their positive qualities, you help these students grow and develop in numerous ways.”

In these days of ever-increasing accountability, we think that it is important to keep in mind that each WITS volunteer leaves an imprint on their student’s heart. . . and that is something that can’t be measured.

## New Corporations & Organizations

*The following is a list of new corporations that have joined the WITS volunteer force this school year. Thank you for your dedication.*

AT&T Wireless  
Chicago Public Schools Central Office  
Deloitte & Touche  
Humana  
Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago  
Northwestern University Law School  
Queen of All Saints Parish  
U.S. Equities

## New Board Members

*We would like to welcome Robert Allegrini and Julie Kelly as our most recent additions to our Board of Directors. Thank you for your commitment.*

## WITS Board Member Profile: *Elliot Lehman*

**What led you to become a WITS volunteer? What kind of an impact has that had on your life?**

My principle and vocational activities have always been with children. I was President of the Jewish Children’s Bureau for five years. And even throughout my business career with Fel-Pro, we became a world famous business for views on children and day care. I have three children of my own, eight grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Children are a huge part of my life and have always been important to me. When I used to make public speeches, I quoted Wordsworth often, insisting that “child is the parent of the man.”

**Why did you decide to join the WITS Board?**

I wanted to help get out an important message from WITS: that WITS is as good for the volunteer as it is for the child. It gives the volunteer a sense of identification with children and gives the child a role model. For WITS children and the children at Jordan School, I am a role model they would not ordinarily have in their life.

**What is your education/background?**

I graduated from Wisconsin in 1938 with a BA in Journalism. I always enjoyed the men-

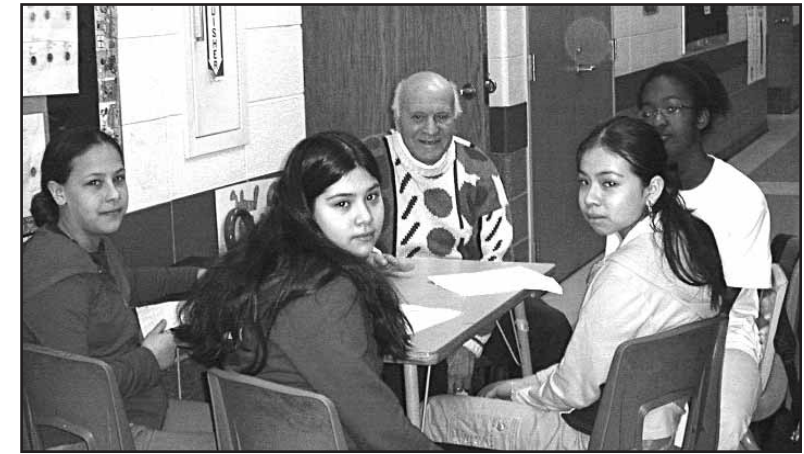
tal stimulation of classroom work. Even now, I participate in classes at the Institute For Learning and Retirement (ILR) at Northwestern University. The best part about those classes is that I don’t have to take any exams!

I have had a very interesting life and have been fortunate to travel extensively. When I read with my students I try to weave my personal history into the stories. When I speak about my naval career, I do not portray myself as a hero but instead describe to the children the places I visited and all the different people I met that were very different from me.

My background has helped me form my major role with the students. . . I am an interesting old guy that is interested in them.

**What advice would you give children today?**

Reading is the single most important activity that will lead them to knowledge of their



world. Reading will help them prosper economically, intellectually and socially.

We asked Elliot’s teacher from Jordan School, Ms. Suzanne Schaefer, what she thought of his influence on the students and her classroom . . . “I am always amazed by the student’s reactions to Elliot. They think he has all the answers even when he tells them he is not an expert. He shares his life experiences with them and inspires them to write stories about their own experiences. He admires the role of the teacher in our society and is my weekly reminder why I continue to teach.”

## Junior Board News Flash

In October of 2000, WITS hosted a fundraiser honoring Co-Founders Joanne Alter and Marion Stone; the pinnacle of the evening was a surprise gift of a new Junior Board. Now, three years later, the Board consists of 50 young professionals raising both funds and awareness.

Led by Co-Presidents Dana Newman and Lauren Weiner, the Junior Board has raised \$100,000 for the organization and installed a new Saturday tutoring program within the past three years. They are now passing the torch to Jill Jacobs of Morningstar, Junior Board President, and Fred Krol of Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal, Junior Board Vice-President.

Both Jill and Fred are founding members of the Junior Board who strive to increase Board membership, add another Saturday program tutoring site and continue to expand the Junior Board’s annual May fundraiser, “A BlackBoard Affair.”

On January 10th, the Junior Board launched the second year of tutoring at Walsh Elementary School. Junior Board members recruited 40 volunteers to work one-on-one with students for two hours on Reading Comprehension, Phonics, Sight Words and Reading Aloud.

In addition to the Saturday program, Junior Board members are gearing up for “BlackBoard Affair 2004” at kaleidoscope on Friday, May 7th from 7—10pm by soliciting items for our well-known Silent Auction.

Congratulations to the Junior Board for your past, present and future accomplishments!



**Thank you, thank you, thank you. . .**

To K.O. Construction for donating paint and 20 hours of painting services. We now have a fresh looking office!

**Pretty please. . .**

Below is a WITS wish list. Maybe you can help.

- Larger office space at reduced cost
- Recommended bus companies