

FingerPoints

MARCH 2006 EDITION

E-Newsletter for *Teaching Is Too Important to Take Seriously*

Welcome to March - You Can Make It!

Ahh, March. Spring is in the air. Okay maybe it's not in the air yet, but we don't care. We know it is March, and soon after will come Spring Break, and soon after spring break comes summer and relief. It is the time of the year to start thinking,

"You know, I think I can make it." However, spring is also a time to clear out the old and open your self up to the new, and in this case laughter.

Scott Endres

The Finger of the Month - #4 Laugh at the World Around You

I don't know about you, but around here it is starting to feel like spring. Granted it may change back to winter in 10 minutes, but right now it is spring. And with spring comes spring cleaning.

Recently, because of personal events, I have found myself going through some old belongings, and some of these items I haven't seen for years. It, in a way, has been sort of a life spring cleaning, because the items go all the way back to my childhood. Some items I have found have brought back wonderful memories and times I had forgotten. However, some I found made me wonder why I kept them. Did I really need a plastic glow-in-the-dark coffee cup? How about program from the local high production of a country version of the musical "The Wiz"? (You don't want to know.) Or how about 4 pirate hats from Long John Silver? (Okay, maybe I'll keep those.) The point is, there was so much dumb stuff I have kept, that it was difficult to get to the items which brought back the great memories.

This made me think about laughing at the world around us. Sometimes it is very difficult to see the things in the world that are funny. Why is that? It could be a lot of reasons, but sometimes it is because we haven't done our own personal spring cleaning. We let emotions, feelings and other people's actions get in the way of us seeing what is truly funny in the world.

For example, I have recently been going through a divorce, and if any of you have been through it, you know a divorce is not a place where you see a lot of humor. In addition, to make a bad situation worse, I had to take my 6 year-old son with me to go pick up the divorce papers my wife had filed on of all days,

Valentine's Day. Now, since my son didn't know what was going on, I wanted to make sure to not show a negative reaction to him. To do this, I made sure on the way there, to rid myself of any negative thoughts and feelings (trust me, it wasn't easy). As I sat in the van with my son singing in the back, while I read the papers, it hit me that I had finally accomplished what I had wanted to for so long. I had finally given my wife a Valentine's Day present where I would keep giving and giving and giving to her. Thinking about this, I couldn't help but laugh and soon my son was laughing with me.

I have no doubt, that if I had not been forced to throw out the negative feelings I had about the situation before I got there, I would not have been able to laugh at that situation. Most importantly, my son wouldn't have been laughing, even though he didn't know what he was laughing about.

So, what do you need to throw out to be able to laugh at the world around you? Is it the constant whining of students? Or is it the hard feelings you have against a staff member or family member? Or maybe it is just the trials that life has given you, that make it really difficult. Whatever it is that is getting in the way of you laughing at the world around you, make sure this March to do a little spring cleaning. This doesn't mean that you have to clean everything out forever, because we all know that when we clean, it just gets dirty again. But if for just one day, sit down and throw away at least one thought or feeling that is getting in the way of you laughing. Look at it this way, at least you didn't get divorce papers for Valentine's Day.

AATH AAHHHH!!!

It was my pleasure February 16-19th to be able to attend the 2006 conference of the Association of Applied and Therapeutic Humor (AATH). First, it was a pleasure because I was receiving an award for *Teaching Is Too Important to Take Seriously!*, as it was named the 2006 member Book of the Year. The award was both an honor and a humbling experience, because of my admiration for all the great people who belong to AATH and the work they do.

The AATH started in 1988, by a group of health care professionals who were using laughter to help heal patients. Over the years the association has grown to include scholars, researchers, speakers, business executives, educators and even clowns. What these professionals have in common is the commitment to using humor and laughter in order to help others. If you get a chance, check out www.aath.org to see what it is all about.

Part of the pleasure of attending the AATH conference, was the chance to meet so many wonderful people, who continually amaze me with their tireless work. To profile all of them would take a newsletter at least 20 pages long. So in this issue I will only mention three people and programs. I highlight these, because they all would be great to have in your school. However, expect to hear more about the AATH members over the next several issues.

Marcus Engel www.marcusengel.com

Marcus Engel is a professional speaker and author who inspires and empowers audiences nationwide. His extraordinary story challenges individuals to achieve success by making intelligent choices. After a drunk driver shattered his body and left him permanently blind, Marcus overcame unimaginable obstacles to reclaim his life. This dramatic story challenges us to recognize that choices – not circumstances – determine happiness. Marcus' unforgettable message of overcoming adversity will cause you to view obstacles as opportunities, eliminate self-limiting behaviors and live life to the fullest.

Tou Ger Xiong www.gohmongboy.com

For a high-energy and interactive presentation about diversity, your group is sure to have a culturally shocking yet enlightening experience with Tou Ger Xiong, first Hmong comedian, storyteller, and rap artist. Tou Ger combines personal stories, humor, rap, and explosive energy into a lively performance that provides education and entertainment for people of all ages and professions. Get ready to listen, learn, and laugh along in a program that will not only teach us about the colorful world in which we live but a little more about ourselves.

Comedy Cures www.comedycures.org

If your school is looking for a fund raiser, it would be hard to find a better one. Started from her chemotherapy chair as she battled breast cancer, Saranne Rothberg founded Comedy Cures in order to help people find and use their laughter. The ComedyCures Foundation tickles funny bones! They bring joy, laughter, and therapeutic humor programs to kids and grown-ups living with illness depression, trauma and disabilities. Through large & small scale therapeutic comedy programs, they entertain and educate patients, families and caregivers about the power of a comic perspective and the positive benefits of laughter on the body, mind, and spirit. "Yes, laughter is great medicine!" Love, laughter and hope are communicated in every aspect of our unique programs.

HAVE A JOKE OR A FUNNY STORY FROM TEACHING?

SEND IT TO FINGERPOINTS@PAPERWADIDEAS.COM AND I'LL SHARE IT IN AN UPCOMING ISSUE.

© 2006 PaperWad Ideas

These are the Days of Our Lives

March is apparently the time to celebrate, as you can see from the number of events this month. Remember these are real holidays celebrated by someone, somewhere. So just celebrate! (Brought to you by www.brownielocks.com)

Month

Humorists are Artists Month

National Umbrella Month

Optimism Month

National Caffeine Awareness Month

National Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Awareness Month

(Shouldn't the last two cancel each other out?)

International Mirth Month

National Frozen Food Month

Play the Recorder Month

Weeks

1-7 National Write a Letter of Appreciation Week

1-7 Universal Human Beings Week

6-12 National Procrastination Week (Originally scheduled for the week of 1-7)

14-21 National Toad Hollow Week

14-21 American Chocolate Week

19-24 World Clown Week

13-19 International Flirting Week

20-27 National Bubble (Blowers) Week

20-26 National Spring Fever Week

Days

1 Beer Day

1 Pig Day

1 Stop the Bad Service Day

3 I Want to Be Happy Day

3 What If Cats & Dogs Had Opposable Thumbs Day

6 Fun Facts About Names Day

7 Unique Names Day

8 Learn What Your Name Means Day

9 Joe Franklin Day

9 Name Tag Day

9 Panic Day

10 Mario Day

10 Middle Name Pride Day

13 Open an Umbrella Inside Day

15 Brutus Day

15 Ides of March (Watch Your Back!)

16 Curlew Day

16 Lips Appreciation Day

16 Absolute Incredible Kid Day

18 Awkward Moments Day

18 Forgive Mom & Dad Day

18 National Biodiesel Day

18 National Chocolate Caramel Day

20 Act Happy Day

21 National Dance Day

22 As Young as You Feel Day

22 International Goof-Off Day

23 Near Miss Day

26 Make Up Your Own Holiday Day

27 Kite Flying Day

27 Quirky Country Music Song Titles Day

30 Mule Day

31 Bunsen Burner Day

31 National "She's Funny That Way" Day