

PTA News

January 2019 Spotlight

This month, we feature **Michael Flower**,
Farmington River's Music Program Director



Can you give me a bit of background: Where do you live, and do you have children/pets or live with someone you'd like to share with us?

In September, I moved to Pittsfield to a great apartment which took almost a year to locate. It provides a comfortable working space for my photography and music, along with the normal amenities in a traditional home. I have a wonderfully talented daughter who lives in New York City and currently works as an au pair for a State Representative's family, while attending auditions for commercial film and theatrical productions. My daughter, Victoria, has been an Equity actress since the fourth grade. I have no pets, and live alone.

What was your job before coming to Farmington River?

I have been working as a commercial and fine art photographer since 1982. As part of my career, I have designed and directed photography programs at a number of public and private schools, as well as tutoring talented aspiring photographers ranging in age from middle school to retired adults. I created **Berkshire Mountain Photographic Workshops** in 1995, which offered photography programs to people of all ages, abilities and interests. The most successful workshops I directed took us traveling to Havana, Cuba in 1999 with 21 students from **Simon's Rock College** in Great Barrington, along with a few hand-picked faculty members to study centuries of social and economic reform on the island country through the study of architecture. Our group lived in Havana for three weeks, and we spent our time traveling, photographing, recording music and ambient street sounds, attending exhibits, historic sites, cultural events, interviewing citizens, writing prose and conversing in Spanish.

What are your hobbies, or what do you enjoy doing on your time off?

Music has always played a central part in all of my family members' lives. My mother was a jazz vocalist, arranger, composer and recording artist. She played with some of the most talented musicians I have ever met. My stepfather is a classical guitarist who studied with Andre Segovia and José Thomas. He, too has performed, recorded his music, and was a classical guitar professor at both **Simon's Rock College** and **Ithaca College**. About 20 years ago, my interests in music really began to peak, prompting me to buy a set of congas. Shortly afterwards, I returned to playing guitar after not having played since 1976. During the spring, summer and fall, I love to kayak and cycle. I enjoy going to art exhibits and concerts, taking very long walks when time allows, cooking, eating and spending quality time with my friends and family.

What is your job at Farmington River, and what does it entail?

Up until recently, my responsibilities at Farmington have been to teach grade-level appropriate general education music classes to all of our students, direct the school chorus, and instruct instrument lessons to 4th, 5th and 6th grade students. I have been trying to rebuild our musical program and expand the availability of instruments to the students while balancing short and long-term investments for our program. Soon, I will be gearing up to work with the entire school community for the traditional school spring play. My hope is to be inclusive of all grade levels for this upcoming production. I hope to reintroduce a "Talent Night" that will allow all students to preform special talents and interests they have for our school community at an open performance. So far, the range of hidden student talent spans ventriloquism, gymnastics, dance performances, singing and traditional

musical ensembles. There may even be a magic act in the works for the performance. Teaching must support and encourage every student's strengths and interests.

How do you feel about working at Farmington River, and what are your goals in your position?

I love teaching at Farmington. I feel totally supported by students, faculty, administration, staff, PTA, School Board and amazing members of the Otis Cultural Council. My long-term plan is to teach here for ten years, and create a new and exciting music program that I can pass along to its next director. I am working to get our students to begin feeling comfortable reading and writing musical notation, as well as embrace a wider understanding of musical history, important international composers, and all musical genres.

What's your favorite part of the day?

Being greeted each morning by our students. I leave my doors open when I'm not teaching or providing lessons. Regardless of grade level, students seem comfortable coming in to say good morning, waving as they pass by, or sharing a personal story with me. Often, I find myself reminding some children they must head off to their home room to check in with their teachers. We are very fortunate having such committed professionals teaching here, keeping our students both happy and genuinely interested in being part of our school's community.

What message do you wish to give to children and parents?

Character qualities that we will never regret acquiring in life are honesty, integrity, and sincerity. All students at school need to learn age-level, appropriate skills to function and participate in our society. It is



UPCOMING EVENTS

Next PTA Meeting

Thursday, January 17 at 3:15 pm
in the School Library. Child Care available during meetings! Just send your child with a note to stay after school.

Holiday Concert Rescheduled

Thursday, January 17:
PreK-3 perform at 9 am
Grades 4-6 perform at 6:30 pm

Student Council Fundraiser

Tuesday, January 29 at 5 pm
at the Knox Trail Inn!
10% of all food sales will be donated to the FRRSD Student Council (see reverse for more info)

Tubing at Butternut

Friday, February 1
Our 2nd annual tubing trip!
Details sent home via backpacks and email (see reverse for more info)

FRRSD PTA®

everychild.one voice.

Follow us at [Facebook.com/FRRSDPTA](https://www.facebook.com/FRRSDPTA)

Welcoming your comments and ideas!
Get in touch at PTA@FRRSD.org

See more online at [FRRSD.org/PTA](https://www.FRRSD.org/PTA)

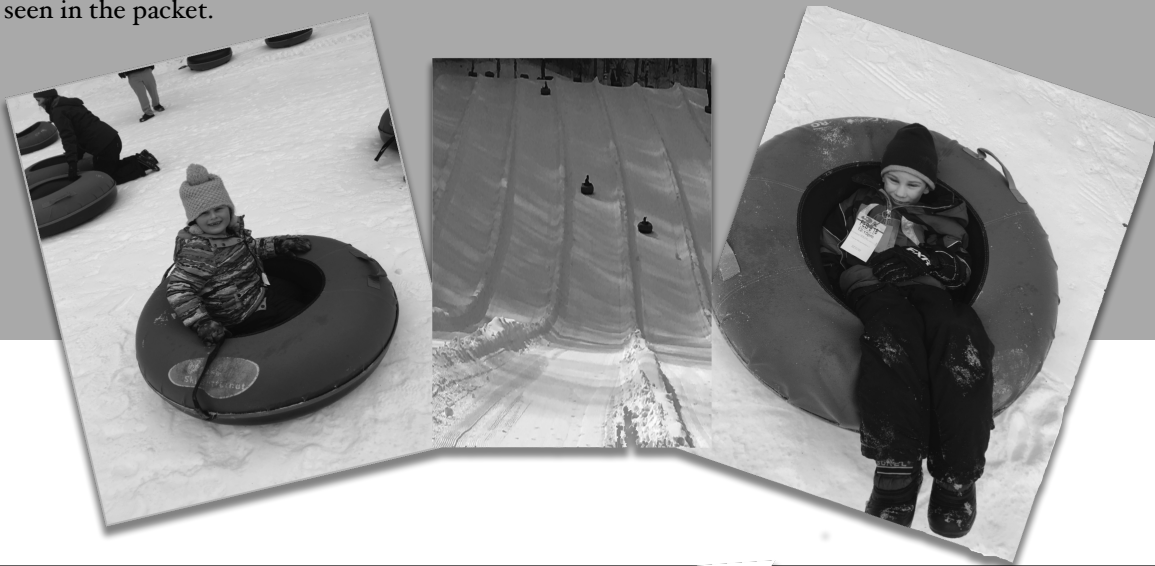
important, however to not lose sight of our creative interests and aspirations. Dreaming is essential. We all need to make time in our lives to appreciate, identify, and enjoy our creative spirits. All expressive artistic studies help balance our uniquely individual personalities, and make us well-rounded human beings.

◆ GENERAL PTA NEWS ◆

THE ANNUAL FARMINGTON RIVER HOLIDAY CONCERT IS RESCHEDULED! Photo opportunities and joy await! **Thursday, January 17: PreK-3** perform at **9 am**, and later, **Grades 4-6** perform at **6:30 pm**.

FRRSD STUDENT COUNCIL FUNDRAISER is a new event — imagined, organized and hosted by our very own Student Council! Your support will help the **Student Council** be able to afford to create and chair fun events for their fellow friends and students at Farmington River. It's easy to help! Please join us by going out to dinner on **Tuesday, January 29, starting at 5 pm** at the **Knox Trail Inn**. **10% of all Knox food sales shall be donated to the Student Council.** (Please remember to mention to your server that you wish to help support the Farmington River Student Council!)

OUR 2ND ANNUAL TUBING AT BUTTERNUT IS COMING UP SOON! Back by popular demand, our PTA-sponsored Annual **Tubing** adventure at **Butternut Ski Resort** for **Grades K-6** is scheduled for **Friday, February 1st** as a **daytime field trip**. **No money is required!** Note: all students must submit signed waiver forms by January 18th in order to attend. A complete information packet was sent home in backpacks over this past weekend, along with an email reminder. All details can be seen in the packet.



WANT TO HELP THE PTA, BUT DON'T HAVE TIME TO VOLUNTEER OR ATTEND MEETINGS?



◆ **Box Tops are the simplest way for us to raise money!** Anyone can participate. Each Box Top is worth 10 cents, and it really does add up! We use this money to help support activities and programs throughout the year. During the 2017-18 school year, we earned over \$700 ... that's free money for us! For a list of products, visit: www.bboxtops4education.com



◆ **Amazon Smile purchases help us earn money!** Simply visit <https://smile.amazon.com> and log into your Amazon account. You can select **Farmington River Elementary School** as your charitable organization, and Amazon will then donate .5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to us! AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know: same products, same prices, same service.



◆ **Price Chopper Tools for Schools:** This program allows you to earn points to help our school get needed equipment, such as school supplies, musical instruments, and playground equipment. Simply sign up at the store, or visit: www.pricechopper.com



◆ **Stop & Shop A+ School Rewards offers customer opportunities** to be rewarded by earning money for their designated school!

"Knowledge brings you the opportunity to make a difference."

—Claire Fagan