

KCIS Connections

Kalamazoo Communities In Schools Newsletter

January 2009

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From the Executive Director

by Pam Kingery, M.S.W., L.M.S.W.

January is National Mentoring Month, a time to highlight the positive benefits mentoring can have on young people. One of Communities In Schools' "five basics" is that every child should have a one-on-one relationship with a caring adult. Every child needs at least one adult—preferably more than one—who is very familiar with his or her hopes and dreams, and who is committed to addressing the needs that might prevent him or her from achieving those dreams.

Mentoring is a well researched "high impact strategy." In other words, we know that it makes a substantial positive difference in children's lives—in their success in school, social-emotional well-being, life skills and chances for a productive future. Because mentoring is so effective, KCIS works with many organizations and individuals to increase the number of children in the Kalamazoo Public Schools who have a mentor. These mentors will help students to be college-ready, increasing the chances that they can successfully utilize the Kalamazoo Promise for post-secondary education and training.

Just over a year ago, I decided to practice what I preach. Through Big Brothers Big Sisters, my husband and I became a "Big Couple" to an elementary student who attends KPS. Initially, we wondered how this energetic boy would connect with and enjoy a relationship with us. We didn't imagine that we would have much to offer.

Our "Little" enjoys so many things, many which could easily be termed mundane—filling the bird feeders, taking our dog for a walk, baking cookies. We haven't forgotten how to play Uno or Monopoly and we love to read, all things that have made us downright popular with him. He has been to Michigan basketball and

baseball games with us and we have told him the same things we told our son: "If you want to go to Michigan, you're really going to have to study very hard." And, "Your job is to be the very best student that you can be."

There are lots of "boomers" whose own children are grown. Local businessman and mentor Alan Sylvester, specifically, recruits men whose children have recently left home, creating an empty nest. Male mentors are an especially limited and sought-after resource. Too many boys have too few positive male role models in their lives.

So how about you? Whether you are young and hip, older and wiser, man or woman, you could be a mentor and give a young person the gift of a little extra caring, a regular dose of attention, or perhaps a special talent or hobby.

Think you are too busy? Trust me, there are lots of very busy people who are mentors; they may spend an hour a week at their mentee's school or they just incorporate their mentee into normal family life.

If you are willing to explore some options for mentoring, here are some contacts:

Big Brothers Big Sisters: 888-898-3001

Kalamazoo Communities In Schools: Coco Cook, Director of Mentoring/Tutoring, 337-1601 x208

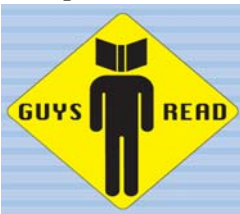
YWCA of Kalamazoo: 343-8365

New Genesis: Pastor Ervin Armstrong, 343-7023

News In Brief

- On December 12, the Kalamazoo Youth Development Network KYDNet gave KCIS an award recognizing our contribution and support for the CC2Y pledges.

Guys Read Information Session Jan. 8



"Guys Read" is a program that connects young boys with male mentors from the community to read and discuss books together.

Needed: Men to come lead a book discussion with a group of 6-8 boys, once or twice a month.

Required: You would read books and facilitate discussions of the books with the boys. In the weeks that you don't meet, you would join the

boys in a "blog" conversation set up for your group.

Rewards: For the boys, a relationship with a male role model. For you, fun and the chance to read new books, or share favorite books with others.

Interested? Come to the Guys Read Information Session on **Thursday, January 8 at 4:15 p.m.** in the library at King-Westwood Elementary School, 1100 Nichols Road.

Questions? Contact Ms. Kurtyak at Lincoln Elementary at 337-0640 or Coco Cook, KCIS Director of Mentoring/Tutoring at 337-1601 x218 or ccook@kcis.us.

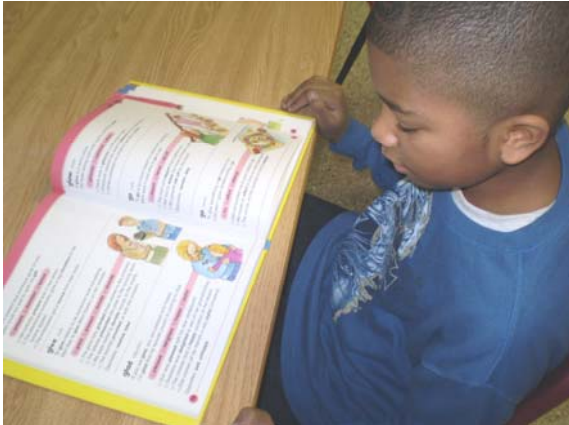
KCIS Expands Services to Washington Writers' Academy

In January, 2009, KCIS will begin providing services at Washington Writers' Academy (WWA). KCIS' expansion to WWA is made possible by grant funding provided to KCIS by The Marquez Fund.

For the remainder of the 2008-09 school year, the KCIS presence at WWA will be specifically focused on working with WWA parents to enroll students in need of access to physical and mental health services at the Edison School-Based Health Center. KCIS will also focus on basic needs during the remainder of this school year, ensuring that WWA students have the resources they need to succeed.

KCIS will expand services at WWA during the 2009-10 school year, providing the full range of Level I and Level II services.

With the expansion to WWA, KCIS will now be at thirteen KPS school sites. Please visit the "Our Locations" page on the KCIS website (www.kcis.us) for a full list.



A fifth grader at Lincoln International Studies School reads an illustrated thesaurus.

Spotlight: Donations

Many generous donations made to KCIS are gifts of basic needs items—coats, boots, hygiene items, clothing, books, school supplies, and so much more. KCIS' vision is of an engaged community where every child fulfills his or her promise. These donations are helping each child who receives them along that path.

Often, these are given anonymously, and so go without direct recognition. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who donated anonymously during 2008—to all of those who took the time to shop for a child they didn't know, to reach out and make sure that someone else's needs were being met.

We wanted to share just a few stories of recent donation drives and group donations that have inspired us:

- A Kalamazoo resident who recently turned 4 years old came up with an inspiring way to celebrate his birthday. Instead of birthday presents, he asked family and friends to give winter wear to KPS students in need through the KCIS First Fridays program. Thanks to his generosity, more than 75 winter items were collected, including mittens, coats, boots, scarves, hats and more.
- In December, 2008, an anonymous donor gave more than 100 lightly used desktop computers to KCIS for distribution to KPS families. The families who will receive computers are determined by an internal needs-assessment process. The computers are an incredible gift to KPS students who will now have home access to word processing software and potentially to the internet. This access will assist them with homework projects, as well as increase computer literacy and typing skills for the student and family.
- Employees of Prima Communications, a technical communications company with offices in Portage and Schoolcraft, donated several dozen beautiful hand-knitted scarves, hats and other winter gear to KCIS, to ensure that KPS students stay warm this winter. Thank you, Prima employees, for sharing your time and talents!
- Employees at the Stadium Drive branch of National City decided to donate money to wear jeans on a Friday, and used the proceeds to buy winter wear for the KCIS First Fridays program. The money they raised enabled them to purchase a variety of mittens, hats, scarves, jackets and boots to give to KPS students.
- The First Day Shoe Fund donated several dozen new shoes to KCIS, for distribution to KPS students.
- The Edison Business Association gave a new dictionary to every third grade student at the Edison Environmental Science Academy, with the goal of assisting students in becoming good writers, active readers and creative thinkers.

January First Fridays

The January First Fridays collection is focused on items determined to be high-need for KPS students.

***Reference books (including Spanish/English dictionaries)**

***Children's khaki pants and jeans**

***Socks and underwear**

***Hand sanitizer (large bottles and personal bottles)**

Where to donate: Items can be donated at the KPS Administration Building (1220 Howard) or at the following Kalamazoo area National City branches: **Crosstown, Downtown, Gull Road, Oakland, West Main, Stadium, or Oshtemo.**

For more information, please visit the "Give to KCIS" section of our website (www.kcis.us), or contact Helen Walls at hwalls@kcis.us or 337-1601 x212.

RENDALEX Announces KCIS Partnership

RENDALEX, a Kalamazoo-based provider of construction and industrial equipment and services, will be partnering with Kalamazoo Communities In Schools in 2009, to support KCIS' mission to help young people successfully learn, stay in school and prepare for life.

RENDALEX will donate 15% of their rent from a number of specially labeled 19' electric scissor lifts. The Genie brand 1930 scissor lifts have been fitted with a special decal kit featuring the KCIS logo.

KCIS asks you to consider renting local in 2009—by keeping these special aerial lifts in mind for your future projects, you will be helping RENDALEX support our community. Call RENDALEX today at 269-978-9700 or visit them online at www.rendalex.com and ask for one of the KCIS scissor lifts.

If you are involved with a local business and are interested in developing a partnership with KCIS, please contact Brooke Nobis Buys, KCIS Director of Development & Business Engagement at 337-1601 x209.



A RENDALEX scissor lift featuring the KCIS logo.

KCIS Launches JPMorgan Chase Publishing Centers

In early 2009, the launch of **JP Morgan Chase Publishing Centers** in seven KPS elementary schools will give children the gift of seeing their own writing made into “published” books, complete with dedication and “about the author” pages.

With the support of their teachers, students will be able to go to the Publishing Center during designated hours, to work with a volunteer to turn their writing projects into finished products. The final product will be typed by volunteers and subsequently published and bound for the students.

Publishing Centers are an Integrated Student Services (ISS) Level I service, made possible by grant funding from JPMorgan Chase. They will address the essential need of writing support for elementary school students within the Kalamazoo Public Schools system by supporting and enhancing the work students do within their classrooms.

The seven Publishing Centers will be located at Arcadia Elementary, Edison Environmental Science Academy, King-Westwood Elementary, Lincoln International Studies School, Milwood Elementary, Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary, Spring Valley Center for Exploration, and Woods Lake Elementary.

For more information, contact Helen Walls at 337-1601 x212 or hwalls@kcis.us.



A volunteer reads with a student at the 2008 Bagels and Books event at Lincoln International Studies School.

Spring Valley Family Success Night

On November 3, Martha Serio, KCIS Site Coordinator at the Spring Valley Center for Exploration, organized a Family Success Night for students and parents.

The event featured dinner, prizes, and classrooms reciting creative writing projects. It was a huge success. More than 400 people attended the event, including 168 Spring Valley students. Some of the prizes given out to families attending the event included wipe-off boards, donated by KCIS; dice and game markers, donated by the KPS math department; Spring Valley notepads and pencils; and magnetic book marks, donated by KPS. Each student also received a new book and math games and flash cards.

Volunteers helping with the event included members of the Sunrise Kiwanis Club and the First United Methodist Church.

KCIS Welcomes New ISS Coordinator

KCIS is extremely pleased to welcome Melissa Holman as the Integrated Student Services Coordinator. Melissa is currently pursuing her M.Ed. in Educational Leadership through Western Michigan University’s Higher Education Student Affairs program. Most recently, Melissa worked for the Socio-Cultural Learning and Retention (SCHOLAR) Peer Mentor Program at Ferris State University.

As ISS Coordinator, she will work closely with the after school program site coordinators in implementing the Integrated Student Service Model within our partner schools in KPS, and will also work with the site coordinators within the after-school program in monitoring grant funding and providing quality service to the kids within the Kalamazoo community.

Upcoming Events

January 11—WMU’s MLK Day Celebration Includes KPS Students

This year, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebration at WMU is going to be an open-house for Kalamazoo-area students and their families. The event, targeted at middle- and high-school students, will feature a dinner served at the Bernhard Center and the opportunity to gain hands-on experience looking into the career opportunities at a wide variety of colleges. Transportation will be available from area churches.

Coordinated with the Northside Ministerial Alliance, students and families are invited to come to WMU’s campus starting at 1:00 p.m. on Sunday, January 11. To pre-register for the event, please contact WMU’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion at 387-6313. For more information, please visit WMU’s MLK Day website—www.wmich.edu/mlk.

January 26—Free Literacy Trainings for Tutors!

The training will cover the role of the reading tutor, the importance of reading, recent research on reading, strategies for reading aloud with K-6 students, and more. Two trainings will be held on Monday, January 26. The first will be from 9:00-11:00 a.m., and the second will be held from 1:00-3:00 p.m. Both trainings will be held at KRESA, 1819 E. Milham. The presenter will be Diane Bussema, Educational Consultant. Registration is required. For more information, please contact Coco Cook, KCIS Director of Mentoring/Tutoring, at 337-1601 x218 or ccook@kcis.us.

2009 Bagels and Books Dates Announced

Bagels and Books is an exciting annual program. During the events, KPS students in select grades are able to choose a new book, which they are able to take home with them after the event. They then share the book with a volunteer during one-on-one reading time while enjoying snacks and beverages together. The Bagels and Books program will be supported for the second year in a row by a grant from the State Farm Insurance Company. If you are interested in volunteering to share a book with a KPS student, please contact Coco Cook, Director of Mentoring/Tutoring, at 337-1601 x218 or ccook@kcis.us. The 2009 Bagels and Books dates and grade levels are:

| <u>School</u> | <u>Date</u> | <u>Time</u> | <u>Grade</u> |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Spring Valley Center for Exploration | Tues., Feb. 10 | 9:15-10:45 a.m. | 4th grade |
| Edison Environmental Science Academy | Fri., March 16 | TBD | 3rd grade |
| King-Westwood Elementary | Thurs., March 12 | 9:15-10:45 a.m. | 3rd grade |
| Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary | Tues., March 17 | TBD | 4th grade |
| Arcadia Elementary | Thurs., March 19 | 9:15-10:30 a.m. | 4th & 5th grades |
| Lincoln International Studies School | Fri., March 20 | TBD | 3rd grade |
| Milwood Elementary | TBD | TBD | TBD |



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We're on the Web!
www.kcis.us

Uninsured Michigan Children May be Eligible for MICHild Insurance

On Tuesday, January 13, on WWMT, KCIS will join forces with local media outlets and with public and private medical services to promote increased health care coverage for southwest Michigan children. If you are seeking health insurance for your children or interested in learning more about the state of insurance in Michigan, tune in to WWMT between 5:00 a.m. to midnight on January 13.

The program, called "Caring for Kids," will be an all-day phone-a-thon aimed at encouraging parents to sign up to MICHild, a low-cost state health insurance program that provides medical, dental and vision coverage to eligible children 18 years old and younger. MICHild offers comprehensive coverage, including emergency care, doctor's office visits, prescription drug coverage, behavioral health services and immunizations to children of working families who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to afford private insurance.

According to the Kalamazoo Family Health Center, 160,000 children in Michigan are currently uninsured. Many of these uninsured children would likely be eligible for MICHild. MICHild is part of the State Children Hospital Insurance Plan (SCHIP) that serves young people throughout America. Since SCHIP began, the number of children living without health insurance has dropped. More than six million children in the U.S. (90,000 in Michigan) are enrolled in SCHIP.

Who Qualifies for MICHild?

To qualify for MICHild, children must be: citizens of the U.S. (some legal immigrants qualify), living in Michigan (even for a short time), under 19 years old, with no health insurance, and limited monthly income: a family of two with monthly income under \$1,800, a family of three with \$2,300 income, a family of four with \$2,800, or a family of five with monthly income of \$3,200. Other family circumstances may be considered for qualification.



Michigan CIS Names 2008 Champion

On December 1, Michigan Communities In Schools (MCIS) honored Representative Dudley Spade from Tipton with the Inaugural Champion for Children award, in a ceremony featuring a gathering of local and state officials.

Representative Spade, Chair of the House Appropriations Department of Human Services, understands the vital role his local CIS affiliate plays in helping students reach success in school. He was instrumental in securing state funding for CIS to be used in his district site and around the state.

MCIS works to stop the crisis of dropouts. MCIS has six community affiliates—including Kalamazoo—serving 225 school sites with 87,786 students enrolled. CIS is the nation's largest dropout prevention organization whose mission is to champion the connection of needed community resources with schools to help young people successfully learn, stay in school, and prepare for life.

"I am honored and humbled to receive this award from Michigan Communities In Schools," said Representative Spade. "The children of Lenawee County have long benefited from two excellent Communities In Schools programs, and I am grateful that I was able to bring the opportunities to children in other communities around our state. With the challenges our children face today, they need and deserve all the help we can give them. The genius of Communities In Schools is connecting students with needed community resources."