

# KCIS Connections

Kalamazoo Communities In Schools Newsletter

November 2008

## From the Executive Director

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

The challenges of the national and state economy make for some unique challenges at the local level. At a time when charitable giving is most challenged just to maintain the status quo for the local helping network, the demand for essential supports is increasing. The number of families seeking food assistance from our partner, Loaves & Fishes, is growing at disturbing rates. With unemployment rates edging upward, we know that the economic and emotional stress for families is also climbing. Research tells us that socioeconomic stressors contribute to the incidence of alcohol abuse, serious mental health problems and domestic violence. These adult issues affect our community's children, and likely their focus on school.

We as members of the local community cannot have an immediate impact on the global economic crisis but we can make a positive impact here on our friends, neighbors and fellow residents. With children and families in mind, we can make certain that we give to the Greater Kalamazoo United Way campaign so that its member agencies are less likely to have to turn families away from important support services. We can control our fears about the fate of our own retirement savings and stretch to give extra to a food drive or make a contribution to Loaves & Fishes. We can tune in more carefully to neighborhood children or the friends of our own children or grandchildren and offer extra opportunities for dinner at our homes or exceptionally sensitive ears for listening.

KCIS has appealed to the community for the past few years for help in addressing students' basic needs--- socks, underwear, hats, mittens/gloves, hygiene products (shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste and tooth brushes, etc.) and school supplies. Those items are especially important in very tough economic times. Families working minimum-wage jobs or who find themselves without jobs, are forced to choose between buying a tank of gas, shopping for groceries, getting to a medical appointment, or paying the rent or a heating bill. Buying underwear, socks, mittens or toothpaste may not be possible.

The residents of Kalamazoo have been extremely generous in helping us maintain the dignity and basic physical comfort of students so that they can focus on learning. National City Bank has been among the most generous corporate partners, offering their branches as convenient collection sites for donations of the items children need. If you are among the kind citizens who have dropped items off at a National City branch or at the Kalamazoo Public Schools Administration Building, on behalf of the hundreds of children and youth who are able to pay more attention to learning because of your good deeds, we thank you. We hope you can continue to help us help our kids. Being in this together is part of what makes Kalamazoo such a special place to live.

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## News In Brief

- As of October 1, 2008, the Department of Human Services (DHS) will count all out-of-pocket child care expenses when determining eligibility for food assistance. This could result in an increase of food benefits (for current food assistance recipients) as well as an increase in the number of families eligible for the program. For more information, please call the **Food and Nutrition Helpline at 1-800-481-4989**.
- On Sunday, October 26, Miller Auditorium helped KCIS gather books for a spring literacy event. Miller offered those attending the 3:00 performance of *The Magic Treehouse, The Musical* the opportunity to donate new books to KCIS. All those who donated were given a \$5 gift certificate to another children's performance. KCIS received 50 books, thanks to the help of Miller Auditorium and its generous patrons! All donated books will be used by KCIS for our spring Bagels and Books event.

## Call for Donations



As part of an ongoing needs assessment, Kalamazoo Communities In Schools has identified several high-priority items required by KPS students. These items have been identified as Level I (school-wide) needs.

If you are able to donate any of the following items, please contact Coco Cook at 337-1601 x218 or ccook@kcis.us. Please note that donations should be new, not used.

- English Reference Materials (*dictionary, thesaurus*)
- Spanish/English Dictionaries
- Books that have an engaging story (high-interest) suitable for upper elementary/middle school students with a low reading level (*list available upon request*)
- Math Flash Cards
- Clocks (*analog*)
- Play Money
- Calculators
- Air Mattresses

## KCIS is Going Green!

Please consider the environment and sign up to receive this newsletter and other exciting KCIS promotions via e-mail. Submit your e-mail and request for e-copies to Helen Walls at hwalls@kcis.us, or through the "Contact Us" section of our website—[www.kcis.us](http://www.kcis.us).

# Milwood Magnet Teachers Meet with Biotechnology Leaders



At Milwood Magnet (left to right): Jennifer Clark, KCIS Director of Community Relations & Partnerships; Jerry Colca, Ph.D., President and Chief Scientific Officer, Metabolic Solutions Development Company; Coco Cook, KCIS Director of Mentoring & Tutoring

Last spring, the Milwood Magnet Center for Math, Science and Technology received a grant enabling the school to focus its programming on the field of biotechnology. The new curriculum, launched this fall, encompasses many of the fastest-growing and most exciting career fields in the country.

On October 7, the school, in partnership with KCIS, invited community leaders in the field of biotechnology to a "meet and greet," in order to introduce them to the school's mission and to offer ways that they can get involved. The meet & greet was led by Tamela Brown, Curriculum Integration Teacher, and Atiba McKissack, Technology Integration Teacher.

Nearly 20 community members, representing a wide variety of biotechnology professions including veterinary science, technical writing, and chemistry, attended the meeting.

Milwood Magnet Principal Kevin Campbell started the meeting by providing background information on the decision to apply for the funding to become a magnet school – meaning a school can choose a curriculum based on a theme and a unique method of instruction, and that the school is open to students throughout the district. Milwood serves a high number of low-income students – nearly 80% of the student body is eligible for free and reduced lunch – and school leaders recognized the need to find a new way to engage students with learning.

Milwood's biotechnology curriculum aims to engage students accustomed to high-tech entertainment and communication with real-world learning. The innovative curriculum uses a different theme during each of the 6 marking periods. Each theme is integrated into every class so the students continue to apply the theme in different ways during the course of the day.

Milwood's 6 biotechnology themes are: **Technological Innovations, the Global Food Chain, Bio-Fuel, Medical Biotechnology, Environmental Biotechnology, and Sustainable Systems.**

Brown and McKissack encouraged the community partners in attendance to think about ways that they can give back to students – such as creating a school advisory board, offering students a chance to visit job sites, speaking in a class, or developing an individual relationship with a student.

For additional information, please contact Jennifer Clark, Director of Community Relations & Partnerships with Kalamazoo Communities In Schools at 269-337-1601 x213 or jclark@kcis.us.



KCIS Edison Site Coordinator Deb Yarbrough

## Edison Site Coordinator Takes on Health Clinic Responsibilities

This year, KCIS Site Coordinator Deb Yarbrough moved from Milwood Elementary to the Edison Environmental Science Academy. She now spends an additional five hours per week doing outreach for the Edison School-Based Health Center (ESBHC). Her outreach work has three goals - to increase enrollment at the Center, to increase the number of students using the Center who are already enrolled, and to increase Medicaid enrollments. Deb is working closely with the ESBHC staff and the Edison school team to make sure that all students have access to health care.

## Around the State: News from Other Michigan CIS Affiliates



Communities In Schools is a national organization, with 200 local affiliates in 27 states. There are 7 affiliates in Michigan, working at 176 school sites in and around Detroit, Saginaw, Mancelona, Adrian, Tecumseh, Kalamazoo and Holland. There were 91,791 students enrolled in schools in which CIS has a presence during the 2006-07 school year, 80,827 of whom were directly connected with services through CIS. Michigan students who were connected with CIS services:

- **Remained in School.** 96% of the 148 students tracked as potential dropouts remained in school.
- **Improved Attendance.** 88% of the 284 students tracked for attendance problems showed improvement.
- **Improved Behavior.** 92% of the 158 students tracked for behavior problems showed improvement.
- **Had Fewer Suspensions.** 90% of the 148 students tracked had fewer suspensions.
- **Improved Achievement.** 92% of the 510 students tracked for academic performance showed improvement in achievement.
- **Promotion Rate.** 96% of the 205 students tracked for promotion risk were promoted to the next grade.
- **Graduation Rate.** 92% of the 26 eligible seniors graduated.

## Awards & Recognition

### KCIS Spring Valley Site Coordinator Receives Peace Award



*KCIS Spring Valley Site Coordinator Martha Serio with Spring Valley students Aurora Oviedo and Kyra Sherer*

Martha Serio, KCIS Site Coordinator at the Spring Valley Center for Exploration, was recently recognized for the incredible work she does every day. She was given the Westminster Presbyterian Church's Peace Prize, which is inspired by the Nobel Peace Prize and recognizes those who go above and beyond to provide opportunities for peace.

"I appreciate the award," said Serio, "But the main thing is that it's about providing what the students need. It's about the relationships with the kids, not just the services. I think positive relationships are something a lot of kids really need."

### Lincoln Teacher Recognized

Congratulations to Heather Russell, a fourth-grade teacher at Lincoln International Studies School, who was recognized for her outstanding teaching. She received the "A Day Made Better" Award for the Kalamazoo Area on October 1.

"A Day Made Better" is sponsored by Office Max, in partnership with Adopt A Classroom. Adopt A Classroom enables community members to give needed supplies to classrooms. Four of Lincoln's sixteen classrooms have been adopted through the program this year.

### Nathaniel McCaslin Scholars Honored

The Nathaniel McCaslin Early Incentive Scholarship Program was established in 1994 by the McCaslin family and friends.

The scholarship is in honor of the late Nathaniel McCaslin's contributions and commitment to improving the quality of life in the Kalamazoo community, his support of efforts to insure a quality education for all students, and his belief in promoting educational opportunities for minority students. Nathaniel McCaslin, Professor Emeritus of WMU, served as a member of the Kalamazoo Board of Education and was an activist in the greater Kalamazoo community.

McCaslin Scholars are identified in the 8th grade and the committee maintains contact with them throughout four years of high school. They are assured a scholarship of at least \$500 upon graduation, provided scholarship criteria are met.

On Saturday, October 18, the Nathaniel McCaslin Scholarship Advisory Committee and KCIS hosted a gathering of past and present McCaslin scholars and their parents at the Park Club.

For more information about the scholarship, please contact Coco Cook at [ccook@kcis.us](mailto:ccook@kcis.us) or 337-1601 x218.

## Thank You, KCIS VISTAs!

Three outstanding Americorps VISTAs who held positions with KCIS are coming to the end of their service this year. We would like to take this opportunity to recognize the value they each brought to KCIS and to the students of KPS. You will all be greatly missed!

**Laila Gourma** has been with KCIS for 3 years. She has worked at King Westwood, Arcadia Elementary, and in the summer school program. One of Laila's great strengths is her ability to speak Arabic. Arcadia has 25 Arabic-speaking students this school year, 13 of whom are in PEEP or kindergarten. "Laila serves as a liaison between students and teachers on one hand, and teachers and parents on the other," said KCIS Arcadia Site Coordinator Gulnar Husain. "I don't know what we are going to do when she leaves!" Although a traditional VISTA service term is 2 years, Laila was offered an extension in recognition of her invaluable link with Kalamazoo's Arabic community, and her term will end this December. "Laila is a great asset when it comes to working with second-language kids," said Mr. Aleman, a kindergarten teacher at Arcadia. "They respond well to her, and she is always there to help out with a smile."

**Niki Richards** has been with KCIS for 2 years. She began at Milwood Elementary and most recently worked at Edison Environmental Science Academy. Beyond her

accomplishments in the school, Niki has also served as an important liaison between faith-based groups and KCIS. She has also actively worked with the Friday Food Pack program and has assisted in data reporting for the Edison School-Based Health Center. "It has been a pleasure to work with Niki," said Deb Yarbrough, KCIS Edison Site Coordinator. "She is a dedicated worker and has made a difference in providing services to the families in our schools. Niki will be missed—her attitude about serving our families went far beyond the call of duty."

**Chris McGuire** has been with KCIS for 1 year, at King-Westwood Elementary. She has a Master's degree in Social Work, and has brought great skills and caring to her work with students. Thanks to her leadership, the school has started a student-led recycling program. She also recently received a grant to create raised garden beds for students to grow food and create interactive science projects. "Chris has been instrumental in supporting the day-to-day needs of our students," said KCIS King-Westwood Site Coordinator Jessica Chatman. "There are many individual children whose lives she has touched. Her kind smile, gentle words, and listening ear have helped many of our students make it through tough days. Chris is an incredible leader in our building. We are forever grateful for every minute she has contributed to King-Westwood. Things just won't be the same without her!"

### November First Fridays

Starting on the First Friday of November, KCIS is collecting donations of **new**:



- \*Winter Coats (sizes XS—XXL)
- \*Boots
- \*Mittens/Gloves
- Hats
- Scarves

Your donation will help KCIS ensure that KPS students have the clothing they need to stay warm this winter.

**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](http://www.kcis.us)), or contact Brooke Nobis Buys at [bnbuys@kcis.us](mailto:bnbuys@kcis.us) or 337-1601 x209.

\* Note: These donations supplement the provisions of coats and boots given by Warm Kids.



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We're on the Web!  
[www.kcis.us](http://www.kcis.us)

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## Upcoming Events

### **November 3: Family Success Night, Spring Valley Center for Exploration, 6:00-7:30 p.m.**

This event for Spring Valley students and parents will feature videos of individual students and classrooms reciting creative writing projects. Parents attending the event will receive items to work on homework with students, including notebooks, books, math games, and more. There will also be raffle prizes. A pizza dinner will be served. For more information, please contact Kirsten Jennings at 337-1601 x205 or [kjennings@kcis.us](mailto:kjennings@kcis.us).

### **November 7-14: Promise Week**

Please join KCIS at Promise Week, a series of informative events celebrating The Kalamazoo Promise. For more information, contact Bob Jorth at [bjorth@kalamazoopromise.com](mailto:bjorth@kalamazoopromise.com) or (269) 337-0037. Please see sidebar for event details.

### **November 18: Thanksgiving Fall Fest, Edison Environmental Science Academy**

On Tuesday, November 18, the Thanksgiving Fall Fest will be held at Edison. The event will feature student art work. For more information, please contact Patrice Hillsman, Edison Parent Leader, at 269-267-3365.

### **November 18: Holiday Bazaar & Gift Sale, Hillside Middle School**

For more information, contact Hillside Parent Leader Lisa Hamilton at 269-270-3803.

## ***Event Highlight: Promise Week***

### **KPS Artist Showcase at Art Hop » Friday, November 7, 5:00 p.m. 125 W. Exchange Place**

Artwork from KPS students, staff and alumni will be showcased at the home of Kalamazoo Communities In Schools and The Kalamazoo Promise located downtown Kalamazoo at 125 W. Exchange Place (within steps of the walking mall). Please join in the celebration!

### **Marketing Kalamazoo and its Promise » Tuesday, November 11, 7:30-9:00 a.m. Radisson Hotel**

A panel discussion of how area businesses and organizations can leverage The Kalamazoo Promise to support their mission or goals, featuring speakers from WMU, Convention and Visitors Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Southwest Michigan First, KPS, and Allen Edwin Homes; Blaine Lam (moderator).

### **Roundtable of Arts Organizations » Wednesday, November 12, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Site TBD**

Organizations that are aligning their activities with the broader goals of The Kalamazoo Promise will be featured.

### **Children's Literature Seminar » Thursday, November 13**

Evening event with more specifics on time and location to follow.

### **Business/Education Roundtable » Thursday, November 13, 7:30-9:00 a.m. Radisson Hotel**

A discussion around what businesses are doing to connect with education, including speakers from Monroe-Brown internship program, Pfizer's Partners in Education, B.A.S.I.C., Eaton Corp's Big Brothers Big Sisters in Business program, and a small business representative, Ron Kitchens (moderator).

### **Children's Literature Seminar » Friday, November 14**

All day event with more details on time and location to follow.