

KCIS Connections

Kalamazoo Communities In Schools Newsletter

February 2009

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From the Executive Director

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

Although literacy is important all year long, next month is officially designated by The Rotary Club as "Literacy Month". According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), literacy is defined as: "the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society." It is an essential ingredient for almost any measure of success in the 21st century in the United States and most of the developed world.

For many children, literacy is a challenge and requires a complex set of skills that must be taught by professionals who themselves have been schooled in the particulars of reading instruction.

For those of us who are not literacy "pros," however, there are still many ways to contribute to the success of our community's children.

Read regularly, every day, to children. Share your love of reading so that children are eager to learn the skill that brings you so much pleasure and helps you in your day-to-day world. Take a child you care about to the public library; help them get a library card and introduce them to the excitement of picking out books that interest

them. Show a child that the library is a place of comfort and solitude. Teach them to find reading materials that reflect their interests – sports, science fiction, adventure, mysteries, celebrities, etc.

Instead of buying another video game or movie, buy a book for a young person. Rather than buying another fast food meal, take him or her to a bookstore to pick out a book. When spring comes, make an adventure of going book-shopping at garage sales with a child. Purchase a magazine subscription for a young person that reflects an established or developing interest. If you don't know a child who needs a book, donate a book to KCIS and we will ensure that it reaches a young person who needs one. If you need suggestions of books, consult the KCIS website or the Kalamazoo Public Library website at www.kpl.gov.

KPS Superintendent Michael Rice reminds us that we cannot be the education community without being a reading community. Do your part to make it so. This spring, KCIS will host a variety of literacy events, called "Bagels and Books," at various Kalamazoo Public Schools. If you are able, please volunteer to read a book with a child during the KCIS Bagels and Books events, scheduled to be held on February 10, March 12, March 16, March 17, March 19, March 20, and March 26. For more information, please see the "Bagels and Books Schedule of Events" on p. 2 of this newsletter.

News In Brief

- KPS is again sponsoring a day of activities for all high school students who are not taking the ACT/MME college preparation test on Tuesday, March 10. Among the variety of activities will be an event called **Planning for College**. KCIS will bring college representatives to the RAVE theatre so that high school students can learn more about the possibilities available for them after graduation. A special presentation of the short film "Planning for College" will be shown, describing the steps a student can take to apply to college. The program will run from 10:30-12:30 and **all those who attend will receive a free movie pass from the RAVE theatre staff**. KCIS would especially like to thank Natalie Sherhart, General Manager for the RAVE, for her ongoing support of KPS, The Kalamazoo Promise, and KCIS.

KCIS Welcomes New Director of Integrated Student Services



Eddie Anderson

KCIS is extremely pleased to welcome Eddie Anderson as the Director of Integrated Student Services (ISS). Eddie is from Benton Harbor, Michigan. For the past eight years, he has worked at Lake Michigan College, most recently as the Director of Student Life. Before that he also served as a Pre-College Advisor and an Adjunct Faculty member. Eddie has worked as a principal at the high school level and as an assistant principal at the elementary school level.

Eddie received his B.A. in Business Administration from Siena Heights University and his Master's degree in Educational Leadership from Western Michigan University.

As the Director of ISS, he will be responsible for the management and oversight of a wide range of both school-wide and student-level support services, delivered both during and after school.

Thank You, KCIS Mentors!



January was National Mentoring Month. To celebrate, KCIS presented eight KPS schools with carnations to display in recognition of the work of all those who make such a difference in the education of KPS children. Over 13 dozen flowers from VanderSalm's Flipse Flower Shop were shared among the schools. Mentors who visited the schools were asked to take a flower home with them as a token of our appreciation.

Dentist in School Keeps Kids Smiling



A student exam at Lincoln International Studies School

Over 120 students from Milwood Magnet had a visit with the dentist at school in December and, because the numbers were so high at the school this year, more appointments are set for spring. Most of us don't associate dental chairs and x-ray machines with school but a partnership between Kalamazoo County's Portable Offsite Dental Service and Kalamazoo Communities In Schools brings those much-needed services to nine KPS schools where Site Coordinators help organize the program. For many students, a visit with the dentist at school is their first dental visit. For others it's a way to ensure that they get a regular check up and cleaning.

The program is designed primarily for children who have MICHild and Healthy Child insurance. The County Health and Community Services dental clinic is a primary provider for children with these insurance carriers but issues such as transportation and scheduling often pose barriers for children needing care. Having the service available at school streamlines the process and means many more children will be seen. Parents without dental insurance can also sign their children up for the service and pay on a sliding scale based on income.

Services offered by the dental clinic include x-rays, an exam, sealants and cleaning. When problems such as cavities or abscesses are identified that need follow-up care students are given one of two cards to take home: urgent or emergency with a scheduled appointment. Parents can then take their child to the County dental clinic on Gull Road for treatment, as soon as the next morning in emergency cases.

The program runs smoothly but, like all great productions, there's a great deal of activity back stage. KCIS Site Coordinators work for months ahead of the clinic dates to get the necessary permission slips with insurance information from families. Dental clinic employees work from their end to verify information. On the days the clinic comes to a school two hygienists take x-rays, apply sealants and clean teeth. "It's wonderful to see the smiles on the children who have had their teeth cleaned," said Jessica Chatman, KCIS Site Coordinator at King-Westwood Elementary. "They go away with a new toothbrush and information about brushing, especially after eating candy."

When a follow-up appointment is needed the Site Coordinator makes a call to the family to make sure they get the note that comes home in the backpack and to explain why their child needs to be seen.

Efforts to improve outreach to families, simplifying forms and the follow-up process have resulted in increased numbers of students getting treatment and receiving follow-up care. The bottom line for students means brighter smiles, better overall health and students who are in school ready to learn.

State Farm Insurance Company Supports Literacy Program

Thanks to the generosity of the State Farm Insurance Company's Michigan Operations Center, all KPS students who participate in this spring's Bagels and Books events will receive a free book to take home with them.

Bagels and Books is a literacy event that takes place at seven KPS elementary schools. Volunteers—parents, college students, community members and more—come to the school and are paired up with a student. The student chooses a book, and then reads it out loud with the volunteer. Thanks to the generosity of several local bagel stores, all involved also enjoy bagels, juice and coffee.

Last year, over 160 volunteers read books to students. If you are interested in volunteering, or would like more information, please contact Coco Cook, KCIS Director of Mentoring/Tutoring, at 337-1601 x218 or ccook@kcis.us.

Local Donations Keep Students Warm

Members of the American Sewing Guild made a difference last month by making warm sweatpants for children in grades K-2. Members of the Sewing Guild also made fleece hats and mittens. KCIS thanks this talented group for their continuing kindness and dedication.

Starbucks recently made a donation of wool, to enable Ellie Klemm to knit hats and scarves to donate to KPS students this winter. Every hat contains the trademark Starbucks green color to identify it. KCIS thanks Ellie for sharing her skills, and Starbucks for supplying the yarn to keep students warm this winter.

Volunteers Needed!

Bagels and Books 2009 Schedule of Events

To volunteer to read a book with a child at one of the following events, please contact Coco Cook, KCIS Director of Mentoring/Tutoring at 337-1601 x218 or ccook@kcis.us.

Spring Valley Center for Exploration
Tuesday, February 10, 2:00-3:30 p.m.
Grade 4

King-Westwood Elementary
Thursday, March 12, 9:15-10:45 a.m.
Grade 3

Edison Environmental Science Academy
Monday, March 16, 9:00-10:30 a.m.
Grade 3

Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary
Tuesday, March 17, 9:00-10:30 a.m.
Grade 4

Arcadia Elementary
Thursday, March 19, 9:15-10:30 a.m.
Grades 4 & 5

Lincoln International Studies School
Friday, March 20, 2:00-3:00 p.m.
Grade 3

Milwood Elementary
Thursday, March 26, 9:00-10:15 a.m.
Grades 4 & 5

KCIS Chase Publishing Centers Need Volunteers

This February, KCIS will be launching KCIS Chase Publishing Centers in seven KPS elementary schools. Publishing Centers 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.

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, and Spring Valley Center for Exploration.

Volunteer Job Descriptions:

Volunteers to work with the children at school: In-school volunteers will work on-site at one of the seven Publishing Centers. Children who bring writing from class to the Center for publication will sit down with these volunteers to go over their writing and create a final draft. If there are misspelled words or grammatical errors, you will work with the child to correct them. Your job will not be heavy-handed, and don't feel like you have to be a great writer to be a volunteer. Everything we do at the Center is easy to learn in just a few visits. In order to properly operate the Center, we need at least 2 volunteers in every time slot. This prevents the children from missing out if a volunteer is absent. We are asking for a minimum time commitment of 60 minutes per week for in-school volunteers. This can be divided into 2 30-minute shifts if needed.

Typing Volunteers: Typing volunteers work from home to type out the final drafts of the children's stories. If your busy schedule prevents you from being able to make a commitment to work directly at a school, this is a great way to get involved. Typing is one of the most important aspects of the Center. As a volunteer typist, you will be surprised by the wonderful stories you will discover as you learn about what the children are working on in school. The stories are not lengthy, but there will be a small amount of layout required. You will receive all of the training and instruction you need.

Center Coordinators: This volunteer position requires a serious time commitment. We are seeking one Coordinator for each of the seven elementary schools. You will assist KCIS in running the Center, including scheduling volunteers and maintaining materials. Please contact us for more detailed information about this position if you are interested!

KCIS Student Volunteers Weave Performance and Business



R.E.A.L. members: (bottom row, L to R) Danaeque Yarbrough, Andre Lockett, Daemonique Yarbrough, (middle row, L to R) Laneiha Locke, Zaria Lockett, Saniqua Langford, William Wright, (top row) Rebecca Magett

Two KCIS Edison Environmental Science Academy volunteers are setting an inspiring example for all by founding a group to develop future business leaders.

The volunteers, Danaeque Yarbrough, a junior at Kalamazoo Central High School, and her sister Daemonique, a freshman at Central, developed the vision for the group, called R.E.A.L. (Real Role Models Excited About Leading), in response to a need they saw for more positive activities and leadership for young people in the community.

R.E.A.L., made up of eight KPS students of different ages and from different schools, is a leadership group that literally combines business with pleasure. Graduates of a Minority Business Alliance class, R.E.A.L. leaders have created a business model for a venture that empowers youth through composing, music performance and step. At the 2008 Business EXPO Program, held in October at the Radisson in Kalamazoo, the group's dance performance wowed an influential audience that included representatives from the governor's office, Kalamazoo mayor Bobby Hopewell, Portage mayor Peter Strazdas, representatives from AT&T, Fifth Third Bank, Congressman Fred Upton and State Representative Robert Jones.

The mission of R.E.A.L. is to combine performance with real life skills and values. Every student in the R.E.A.L. group has to be willing to take on the mantle of leadership. The group's mission is to teach young people how to express themselves through composing, step and dance. And they're also planning on running workshops on leadership.

How do they know about leadership? It's something they practice as a group. Every member of R.E.A.L. has an assigned role with a job description that they have created. The business manager is a student at Loy Norrix: they also have a videographer, a photographer and choreographer.

"R.E.A.L. gives me an opportunity to share the gift that God has placed inside of me," said Daemonique, "It also gives me the opportunity to do more community service throughout the city of Kalamazoo."

For Zaria Lockett, who says she wants to make a difference while increasing her leadership skills, R.E.A.L. offers an opportunity for involvement. "When you reach out to other people and change their lives is what R.E.A.L. means to me," Zaria said.

The Business EXPO has already paid off with a couple of exciting opportunities. They're now working with Sid Ellis, Director of the Black Arts and Cultural Center, who has taken on the role of mentor for the group. "They're an innovative group with some very positive ideas and lots of talent," Mr. Ellis said. "They're working toward building leadership in young people their age. I'm working to help get them connected with other individuals and organizations in the community that can help them reach their goals." Mr. Ellis is helping them with their business structure (as a not for profit they need to set up an advisory board) and he's connecting them with the right people to help them with those next steps.

For the future, business looks bright. R.E.A.L. already has a couple of engagements for next summer, including an appearance at a conference hosted by Kellogg. And the Alternative Learning Program at KPS wants the group to present their business plan to students.



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

February First Fridays

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

- *School Supplies
- *Alarm Clocks
- *Small Sweatpants
- *Clothing for High-School Students (to size XXL)
- *Personal Hygiene Items (tissues, sanitizer, sanitary napkins, etc.)

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.



Calling All Math Geeks!

Kalamazoo Communities In Schools is seeking math tutors for students of all ages. Your willingness to share your love of math, or any tricks of the trade that helped you through school, could make a big difference for a KPS student. Having a tutor can help build skills and confidence! Interested? Contact Coco Cook, KCIS Director of Tutoring/Mentoring, at 337-1601 x218 or ccook@kcis.us.



Alysia Johnson, a fifth grader at King-Westwood Elementary, works weekly with a KCIS tutor.

Wraps Grant Expands Scope of Care for Kids

In December, 2008, Kalamazoo Communities In Schools was awarded a \$15,000 grant from Kalamazoo Wraps to expand the scope of mental health services for students in KPS. KCIS Site Coordinators regularly work with Community Mental Health, Positive Behavior Literacy Supports, Family & Children's Services and other partners to provide care for identified students.

The grant monies will be used as last resort funding to provide services to students who would otherwise not have access to needed care. There are a number of barriers that can interfere with a student's ability to access treatment in the community, including transportation, insurance issues and high deductibles and co-pays. The intent of the Wraps grant is to eliminate barriers to care and make counseling services more accessible in the school setting.

"We're really excited about this grant," said Deborah Faling, Senior KCIS Site Coordinator at Kalamazoo Central High School. "I really think it will open up services for students because we're seeing so many families who are losing jobs and insurance right now."

The grant, made possible by a SAMHSA Systems of Care Children's Mental Health Initiative, will fund students age 7 to 17 in elementary, middle and high school.