

KCIS Connections

Kalamazoo Communities In Schools Newsletter

March 2009

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Volunteer Opportunities!

This newsletter is **full** of opportunities to get involved!

Are you good at math? See the Executive Director's column on p. 1

Love reading and writing? Be a part of this year's Bagels and Books events (p. 2) or volunteer to help children publish their own books (p. 3).

From the Executive Director

by Pam Kingery

KCIS has been focused on supporting literacy—primarily reading—for KPS students for several years. This year the addition of the KCIS Chase Publishing Centers has placed writing support clearly on the menu (see p. 3 of this newsletter for more details).

But let's not forget about math! Bring up the subject in any group of adults regardless of profession or social group, and someone is likely to claim their own insecurities or challenges with math, followed by nods and recounting traumas of long ago.

Fortunately, there are also those adults, across the age spectrum, who can "tsk, tsk" the math war stories and face down "new math", "old math" and any math at all. We are looking for those adults—from those who can help eight-year-olds learn their math facts and simple story problems to those who can decode the mysteries of Algebra for fourteen-year-olds. As Uncle Sam says so well: "We need YOU!"

KCIS is "getting back to the basics"—reading, writing, and math. If you can manage an hour or more per week to tutor math at any level, please contact Coco Cook, KCIS Director of Mentoring/Tutoring, at ccook@kcis.us or 337-1601, x 218.



Students at Milwood Magnet School—Back row, left to right: Molly Jo Liford, Emily Bodiker, Shelby Pringle, Terrehl Williams-Kelley, Troy Mills. Front row, left to right: Daj'Anae Wilson, Akelah O'Neal

March First Fridays

This March, the First Fridays program is requesting donations of new clothing and winter wear for later-elementary, middle-school and high-school aged children.

We are especially in need of winter wear, including coats, hats, and boots.

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.

It May Be Cold, but Communities In Schools is One Hot Nonprofit!

From a press release distributed by Communities In Schools

Communities In Schools, the national organization with which KCIS is affiliated, has been recognized in a new book as a leading case study in effective nonprofit business operations through its use of data-driven decision making. *The Charismatic Organization: 8 Ways to Grow a Nonprofit that Builds Buzz, Delights Donors, and Energizes Employees*, by Shirley Sagawa and Deb Jospin, highlights best practices in non-profit business operations.

"While ... vision had shaped the organization's mission and built a passionate network of supporters, the organization's shift to using data for decision making increased CIS's social capital exponentially."

—The Charismatic Organization

Beginning with a description of CIS' history, *The Charismatic Organization* tells how employing data in its decision making process helped the nonprofit work more effectively and draw supporters to its cause. As a result, CIS has become one of the country's preeminent youth-serving organizations.

Communities In Schools was founded in 1977 and is headquartered in Alexandria, Va. 1.2 million young people annually receive direct services through more than 200 Communities In Schools local affiliates in 27 states and the District of Columbia. Between 80-90 percent of Communities In Schools' tracked students show improvement in academic achievement, attendance, behavior and promotion to the next grade level.

KCIS' shift to being data-driven is centered on the use of the Integrated Student Services (ISS) model. A five-year independent evaluation being conducted by ICF International has shown that the ISS model, when implemented fully, increases the on-time graduation rate, decreases the drop-out rate and results in a higher percentage of students reaching proficiency in 4th and 8th grade reading and math. The use of the ISS model helps KCIS focus resources and more clearly align our efforts with the Kalamazoo Public Schools.



Bagels and Books Volunteers Needed!

Bagels and Books is an event that both volunteers and students look forward to every year! The Bagels and Books events aim to encourage literacy, bring community members into the schools, and send new books home for children and their families to enjoy together. During the event, each participating KPS school (see list below) will have a number of books available. Each child will choose a book, and then will be paired with a volunteer. Together, the child and volunteer will read the book while enjoying bagels. After they finish reading, the student takes the book home.

Last year, Bagels and Books connected 160 volunteers with 500 children in 7 elementary schools. The program is supported by a grant from the State Farm Insurance Company and by funding from the State Farm HEROES group. Many books were provided through donations from the Kalamazoo Rotary Club, and were made available for purchase at the Michigan News Agency. **Bagels and Books still needs volunteers!** Please contact Coco Cook, KCIS Director of Mentoring/Tutoring, if you are interested at 337-1601 x218 or ccook@kcis.us.

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|---|--|
| King-Westwood Elementary
Thursday 3/12, 9:15-10:45 a.m. (3rd grade) | Arcadia Elementary
Thursday 3/19, 9:15-10:30 a.m. (4th & 5th grades) |
| Edison Environmental Science Academy
Monday 3/16, 9:00-10:30 a.m. (3rd grade) | Lincoln International Studies School
Friday 3/20, 2:00-3:00 p.m. (3rd grade) |
| Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary
Tuesday 3/17, 9:00-10:30 a.m. (4th grade) | Milwood Elementary
Thursday 3/26, 9:00-10:15 a.m. (4th & 5th grades) |



Volunteer Dave Lipowski of State Farm Insurance Company reads with Destiny Sakho, a student at Spring Valley Elementary, at Bagels and Books on February 10.

KCIS Distributes Computers to Students

In December, 2008, an anonymous donor gave more than 100 lightly used desktop computers to KCIS. Since that time, KCIS has distributed many of the computers to KPS families.

Those who have received computers were chosen based on an internal needs-assessment process. The computers have been an exciting addition to the homes of many families.



January 22 2009

Martha Serio, Site Coordinator
c/o Kalamazoo Communities In Schools

Dear Martha,

My grandson attends Spring Valley School in the 1st grade. He was recently selected to receive a computer, anonymously donated, to the Kalamazoo Communities In Schools organization. We just wanted to write and thank the person/persons who made this donation and to let them know that he loves it.

When he was in the Headstart program and again in Kindergarten and 1st grade, working on the computer was one of his favorite activities. He is so proud to have his very own computer and lets everyone know. He looks forward to when he gets to spend time using it. He has reading challenges in school and we hope this will be a tool to help him accelerate his reading accomplishments. We found a "jump start" computer program at a local thrift store on reading and spelling similar to the programs he was using in Headstart. He seems to be comfortable in its use and gets excited when he gets the answers correct.

Since this was an anonymous donation, I wondered if you would please pass this on and let the people who made the donation know what a great gift they have made. We could have never afforded a computer and this gives him the opportunity of another step forward to achieve the great things he can do. Thank you so very much.

Upcoming Events



Milwood Magnet School's Literacy Night events will focus on a book called *Uglies*, by Scott Westerfeld, that students, teachers and staff are reading together.

This March, all KPS elementary and middle schools will be hosting a Literacy Night—a celebration of student achievements in reading and writing.

Some of the elementary school classrooms will feature books created in the KCIS Chase Publishing Centers.

KPS Literacy Nights:

March 11—Elementary Schools

March 12—Middle Schools

News In Brief

Henkel Corporation will be providing \$3,825 to supply grade-appropriate reference materials to classrooms at Spring Valley Elementary School. Materials will include encyclopaedias, dictionaries, science reference books, and thesauruses. The goal is to expand the range of research and reference materials available to Kindergarten through 6th grade students in the classroom. Grant funding was made possible by the efforts of Rob Hilliard, an employee of Henkel and member of First United Methodist Church.

KCIS Chase Publishing Centers Open in Five Schools



Volunteer Chris McGuire listens to King-Westwood student Keontae Ember-Hobbs read his story

KCIS Chase Publishing Centers are now up and running in five KPS elementary schools. By mid-March, Publishing Centers will be operating in seven schools. The goals of the Publishing Centers are to develop a love of writing in students and prepare them for the writing portion of the MEAP test by engaging them with a fun approach, supporting teachers who are integrating writing into their literacy focus, and helping students get more comfortable with editing their work.

Students come to the Publishing Centers with a draft of a story, report, or poem written in class and work one-on-one with a volunteer for basic editing. The student's edited and illustrated work is typed by a volunteer and bound, complete with dedication and "about the author" pages, at the Publishing Center. Students so far have been enjoying every step of the process.

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.

Volunteers Needed!

The Publishing Centers encourage parents, businesses, community members, and college students to get involved as volunteers. **Currently, committed, reliable editing volunteers are especially needed** at Milwood Elementary, Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary, and Edison Environmental Science Academy. Editing sessions last one half hour, so a volunteer working a two-hour shift would work one-on-one with four students. Publishing Centers are typically open four days per week, for two to three hours per day.

As an editor, children who bring writing from class to the Center for publication will sit down with you 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—you don't have to be a great writer to be a volunteer. Everything we do at the Center is easy to learn. 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.

Interested in volunteering? Please contact Coco Cook, KCIS Director of Mentoring/Tutoring, at 337-1601 x218, or at ccook@kcis.us.



An Arcadia Elementary student illustrates her published story.

Americorps VISTAs Bring Innovative Programs to Schools



KCIS Americorps VISTAs (clockwise, from bottom left): Robynne Myles, Renee Brown, Amolia Moore and Elissa Slason

Kalamazoo Communities In Schools employs Americorps VISTAs to work at our school sites, helping to connect students with needed community resources. Our VISTAs are an important asset to our organization, and there are many programs that would not be the same without them. We wanted to take the opportunity to highlight some of the interesting and innovating programs our current group of VISTAs are developing, implementing, and involved in.

Renee Brown is working at Spring Valley Elementary school. She helped coordinate the launch of the Publishing Center there, and is continuing to help oversee the Center and train volunteers. She will be helping with the school's upcoming Dental Clinic. She also works out of the KCIS administrative office, supporting basic needs programming and KCIS marketing and publicity efforts.

Amolia Moore is working at Lincoln International Studies School. At Lincoln, she has launched a Friday Food Pack newsletter, including information about KCIS services and fun facts about food, and has helped to ensure a record number of students were able to participate in the school's Dental Clinic this year. In addition, she is forming a Lincoln Garden Committee to oversee the development of a school garden.

Robynne Myles has developed a Kinship Care program for Relatives Raising Children at King-Westwood Elementary, which is a free workshop, including a meal and child care provision. At Edison Environmental Science Academy, Robynne is working with the STORM leaders on recycling more and developing a deeper understanding of recycling.

Elissa Slason is working at Arcadia Elementary. She leads the development and implementation of the school's Publishing Center, and is continuing to help oversee the Center's operations and train volunteers. Elissa is also publishing an Arcadia newsletter. In addition, she works in the KCIS administrative office to assist with the KAAAP scholarship program.

If you are interested in applying to work as a VISTA with KCIS, please visit the "Employment" section of our website (www.kcis.us).

KCIS Welcomes New Site Coordinator

KCIS is extremely pleased to welcome Jesse Herron as the part-time Site Coordinator at Washington Writers' Academy. As Site Coordinator at Washington, Jesse will be focusing most immediately on connecting students in need of health services with the Edison School-Based Health Center.

Jesse is also currently serving as Pastor at the New Life Fellowship Church. He previously worked for more than twenty years with General Motors, in a variety of administrative and engineering positions.

Jesse received his B.A. from Western Michigan University, and his M.A. in Educational Leadership also from Western.



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

Looking Grief in the Eye



KCIS Partner:
Hospice Care of Southwest Michigan

sixth grade students at Edison Environmental Science Academy are now better equipped to deal with the grief that has cast a shadow over their young lives, thanks to the work of Hospice Care of Southwest Michigan therapist Cate Jarvis and Family and Children's Services therapist Deb Imbrock, who joined Cate in her work at Edison.

"When we think about grief and loss we tend to think about death of a loved one," said Cate, "and for some children that is the case. But many children suffer feelings of loss because of a parent who is in prison, a divorce in the family, loss of the family home, many moves or illness."

For the past three years Cate has been conducting Grief and Loss sessions with groups of 6 to 8 students in a number of KPS elementary, middle and high schools. Cate works with Kalamazoo Communities In Schools site coordinators who identify students in their schools who have suffered a loss, contact parents with information and permission forms, and schedule sessions.

Therapist Deborah Imbrock said that Cate was able to normalize what a typical response to grief is for the children in the group. "It doesn't always come out as sadness. It might look like anger or come out in dreams. They learn that the sadness is going to be there whether you talk about it or not. They get some good tools in the group, like journaling, drawing and putting their feelings to music. Cate brings in a musician who plays background music on a guitar and the students can rap their feelings. They can also write poems and put their poems to music."

Cate Jarvis, who will offer thirteen grief groups in KPS schools this year, says that one of the exercises she has children do initially is to identify who the safe people are in their life that they can talk to. "Some children are able to identify a number of people," said Cate, "others only a couple. It's often the children with the most traumatic losses who have the fewest people to turn to. Some children have multiple losses – they've moved house, grandma has died and either Mom or Dad is no longer part of their life."

The group can provide a powerful place for healing for many children as they learn to express their feelings in words, music or art. "Over and over I hear children say 'I'm glad I'm not the only one.' They're part of a club that no one wants to be part of," Cate said, "but being in the group lessens that sense of loneliness for them. It doesn't take away the pain, but when children see that everyone in the group has suffered a loss, it equals the playing field a little. They gain a sense that they're not so isolated in their grief. They are able to develop coping mechanisms and to use the tools they practice in the group."

Loss and sadness are difficult topics for children to understand. When grief and loss become a part of their lives many children struggle with how to talk about it, feel about it, even think about it. A group of fifth and

Planning For College

Tuesday, March 10
10:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.

Location:
RAVE Movie Theatre

This event is free and open to
all parents and students!

Featuring:
College Presentations
Stanley Steppes and
Warren Fritz,
'Dollars and Sense',
and Bob Jorth,
'The Kalamazoo Promise'

Students that attend will
receive a free movie pass and
will be eligible for great
prizes! (Bring student ID to
be eligible.)

Questions?
Contact Coco Cook at
337-1601 x218