

the Maury Messenger

Monthly Newsletter of the Parent / Teacher Association

Home of the Cougars



December 2014

A Saturday to Help

by George Blackmon

Saturday! The day many people devote to settling down after a busy work week.

However, some of the Maury community used a recent Saturday (Nov. 15) to benefit the school.

Early that morning, a pancake breakfast was held in the multipurpose room. This was sponsored by Maury's basketball and cheerleading teams. Those who attended were treated to delicious breakfast delights made by Maury parents and staff such as pancakes, sausage and fruit. Proceeds from the breakfast will go towards new uniforms (hint, hint...basketball season starts in mid-December).

If you were looking to work it off, you didn't have to go far. Just outside in the front yard, several parents gathered for the Fall Clean-Up Day. This was led by the School Improvement Committee of the Maury PTA. To get the yard ready for the winter months, bags of mulch were spread around the trees and small plants. Pesky weeds were pulled. Leaves were raked and added to the garden space, which is cared for by students in the Garden Club.



Both endeavors received tremendous support from the Maury committee.

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December Winter Concert

by George Blackmon

Thursday, Dec 11 will be the first of the winter “informances.” This is a change from the traditional concert format over the past few years. This year we will have a participatory event where the whole family can come in and walk around to different stations and experience what the kids are learning in music class. You will also get the chance to interact and be involved.

The Dec. 11 event will focus on the PK-3 through kindergarten classes. The following Thursday, Dec. 18, will focus on the 1st grade through 5th grade classes. Both events take place at 6pm. For more information, please contact Mr. Rogers or Ms. Bomba.



Mindfulness Coming to Maury!

by Subrat Biswal

At the November PTA meeting, a Minds Inc. instructor, Fred Persi, spoke about mindfulness and provided an opportunity for parents to experience mindfulness exercises. Minds Inc. brings mindfulness programming to an entire school community: students, parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators. Mindfulness creates space, changing impulsive reactions to thoughtful responses. Scientific research on the positive effects of mindfulness has exploded in the last decade with contributions from neuroscience, cognitive psychology, and medicine. By using simple, fun, engaging, and age-appropriate tools, students / parents / educators are empowered with enhanced resilience (grit), emotional regulation / awareness, attention, and reduced stress among other benefits.



By effectively giving students a pause button, mindfulness will naturally complement the empathy related programs at Maury and the important social-emotional skills taught by Maury teachers. For more details about the presentation at the PTA meeting, see the minutes which are in this newsletter. You can also find additional information about mindfulness in

schools at <http://mindsincorporated.org/about/> and in a recent Washington Parent magazine article at <http://www.washingtonparent.com/articles/1410/1410-meditation-at-school.php>.

Future plans at Maury include Minds, Inc. training targeted to staff in December and to parents in January. In addition, Minds trainers will work with the third grade classes to implement curriculum on mindfulness beginning in January.

A working group is forming to coordinate the various social-emotional learning initiatives at Maury, including Ashoka Changemakers, Roots of Empathy, Minds Inc., and teacher-led programs such as Ms. Bomba’s collaborative art projects, Think Tank, etc.

For further information, please contact Adrienne Alcantara, Subrat Biswal, Max Kieba, or Ben Powell.

Instructional Coach's Report

By Norah Rabiah

Roots of Empathy

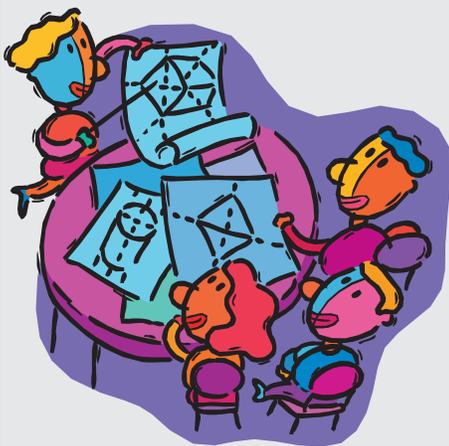
Roots of Empathy is in full swing in Maury's fourth grade classrooms! Norah Rabiah, Maury's Instructional Coach, recently traveled to Toronto to be trained as a Roots of Empathy Instructor and has begun delivering the program in the fourth grade. Through nine baby visits and 18 additional lessons, our students will learn about empathy through our babies. They will observe how Baby Lucia and Baby Joan grow and develop over nine months and discuss issues ranging from soothing a crying baby to reflecting on our own temperament levels. A huge thank you to the Barsi Family and the Gresh-Nolan Family for lending us our "Tiny Teachers" for the year!



4th graders practice holding our Roots of Empathy doll

School-Wide Morning Meetings Are Here!

On November 19, we held our first ever school-wide morning meeting at Maury! The meeting, which consisted of a greeting, activity, and share, was full of singing, movement and celebrating. We recognized our 5th graders for their efforts to raise money for Space Camp, named the top ten students in First in Math, and celebrated the efforts of individuals who showed empathy. A huge thank you to Two Rivers PCS for assisting us in planning for our first school-wide morning meeting! Our next meeting will take place on Wednesday, December 17 at 9:00 am in the multi-purpose room. Maury family members are invited to attend and join in on the fun!



Ms. Rabiah to Present at National Conference

As a partner in the DC3 Collaborative, Maury has the opportunity to team up with nine DC Public Schools from across the city for professional development.

Ms. Rabiah and other coaches from the DC3 created a unique professional development model that they will present at the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development's annual conference in Houston, TX in March.

This model consists of inter-school labsites that allow teachers to study a topic by visiting classrooms across the nine DC3 schools. Topics have ranged from engaging students in accountable talk to assisting students in creating personal learning goal for themselves.

Capitol Hill Community Foundation Grants

by Donny Kirsch

For many of us, the holiday season begins in November (though as Costco shoppers can attest, some retailers started MUCH earlier), filling our minds with rich traditions, even richer foods, and festive gatherings of friends and family. The season also ushers in the spirit of giving and receiving, and this November, Maury PTA became the recipient of many gifts in the form of grants from the Capitol Hill Community Foundation (CHCF).

For those of you unfamiliar with this amazing foundation, it was founded in 1989 with the goal of supporting activities, projects, and organizations that enrich the lives of Capitol Hill residents and celebrate the history of our community. They have since directed over six million dollars to a range of projects and organizations, including community service programs, neighborhood beautification, arts and culture, schools and extra curricular programming.

This year, CHCF awarded Maury PTA over \$5500 in grants to support various projects. Specifically, \$2500 was given to support the Fifth Graders' trip to Space Camp. \$2000 will go towards the Roots of Empathy program. In addition, a grant of \$350 was issued to purchase supplies for the Singapore Math program, and two additional grants of \$350 were given to help cover costs for Ms. Rabiah and Ms. Bomba to attend conferences in their respective fields. These grants, together with a grant of almost \$800 from ANC6A to purchase supplies for our new math resource room, go a long way toward supporting our school's staff and initiatives.



A special thank you goes out to our PTA's grant writing team and particularly to grant writers Kirstin Erfe, Corinne Cannon, Brad Greenfield, and Ms. Bomba who wrote these grants along with support from Antonio Evans, Ms. Ford, Principal Albert-Garvey, and Ms. Rabiah.

On a sad note, Steve Cymrot, one of the founders of CHCF, passed away in November following injuries sustained in a traffic accident. Please keep the Cymrot family and friends in your thoughts this season. They have given much to our community and schools over the years.



Upcoming Events

Winter break – Dec. 22-Jan. 2

School Spelling Bee (grades 3-5) Jan. 16

MLK Jr. Day – Jan. 19 no school

Open House – Jan. 20 9am and 6pm

End of Term – Dismissal @ 12:15 Jan. 23



Representatives From Eliot Hine

There was a presentation from four representatives from Eliot Hine. Eliot Hine (EH) is Maury's Feeder school (even if you are out of bounds). Open Houses are on certain Tuesdays, and the next is Dec. 9th. You can call the school and make an appointment to take a tour if you can't make the open house. Dec. 16th will be designated buddy day for 4th and 5th graders. You can also do a shadow day where you can drop your kid off for a day to shadow a 6th grader.

EH is a candidate school in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. IB is an educational program geared to help develop the intellectual, personal, emotional and social skills to live, learn and work in a rapidly globalizing world.

If you'd like more information, feel free to contact: Dana.watson@dc.gov

There are a number of interesting events/programs available to EH students such as the Young Playwrights' Theatre Group and a gardening club. After school clubs include: sports clubs such as soccer, swimming and rowing. Tutoring is also available.

Info about EH will be in the front office.

Principal's Report

Literacy Lab: The literacy lab is a PTA funded program towards advanced reading. This year it will focus on science and it will serve 50-60 kids. There will also be two parent workshops. These are really great whether your kid is an advanced reader or struggling.

Parent Staff Basketball Game: Polite Piggy's is sponsoring. Great event to raise funds for aftercare programs. It's really a lot of fun. If you don't want to play, come and cheer on Dec. 4th!

Musical Informance Program: We aren't doing a traditional winter concert this year. We are having a participatory event where the whole family can come in and walk around to different stations and experience what the kids are learning. There will be two evenings: PS3-K on Dec. 11, then upper-grades on Dec. 18.

Security: We installed 17 new security cameras -- mostly in the historic building. They record and store for up to two weeks. We now have much more coverage from a security perspective. We've been working to get these for 6 years, so this is great!

Notes from Mr. Spradley:

EdFest: Saturday is the DC Edfest at the Armory, highlighting schools and initiatives. If you have any pictures from former Maury events that you'd like to share, please let us know.

Nurse: Nurse Martin resigned. Our new full-time nurse starts next week.



Announcements

SOS: Elizabeth Nelson is selling sweaters to support SOS. They make great holiday presents. We have 153 members and we are at about 19K (our goal is 25K). If you know any families who haven't joined PTA, please encourage them. Don't forget we're non-profit and SOS donations are tax deductible. SOS is going toward providing aides for all of the upper grades this year.

Grants: All of the grants we've written so far got funded. (Yay!) \$5,500 total

- \$2,000 toward roots of empathy
- \$2,500 toward space camp
- Professional Development Conference for Ms Rabia (and she'll get to present)
- \$350 for supplies for Singapore math
- Funds toward an art conference for Ms. Bomba
- \$800 for new math resource room

Fundraising:

- Maury at the Market: March 28th but there is so much work that needs to be done now. Getting sponsors is one of the most important parts of organizing at this point. We just secured our first big sponsorship for \$5K. If you have a business/ know anyone who has a business who might be interested in sponsoring, please let us know. We could use all the help we could get. For anyone who doesn't know, it is a silent auction, adult only event with great food and drinks, prizes, raffles, etc -- very fun.

Hospitality:

- The Coat Drive was a big success -- thanks to everyone who donated. Ms. Coleman allowed kids who really needed a new warm coat pick first in the office. There are extras coats in the hall that anyone should feel welcome to take. If you can, swap out your kid's coats for a different size.
- Thanksgiving Baskets: Kudos to Shannon Von Felden for doing an amazing job collecting all we need and more. We are providing thanksgiving baskets to 37 Maury families.

Maury Newsletter: The November issue is available online on the Maury website <http://mauryelementary.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/maury-newsletter-nov-2014.pdf>. If you'd like to write for the next newsletter (coming out around Dec. 5) email Dinkar Mokadam at dmokadam@yahoo.com.

School Improvement: If you have an interest in joining, contact Scott Douglas.

- Fall Garden Day was well-attended. We put down 100 bags of mulch and raked leaves and provided them to the Maury garden club.
- We still want to remain active over the winter in the form of advocating for our addition. Contact Scott Douglas if you'd like to help out.

Healthy Schools Program: Maury was chosen to be part of the Healthy Schools Program. First order of business is to create a wellness council (teachers, parents and student representatives). This is a great opportunity for Maury. The council will meet once every other month to discuss goals and the wellness assessment. This includes the health of not just students but the entire community. Please email Lindsey if you'd like to join. lindsey.raymond2@dc.gov.



Announcements (continued)

Entire School Morning Meeting: We held our first morning meeting for the entire school and it was a huge success. We are going to continue at least once a month -- but it was such a success, we think we might do it every other week. Parents are invited to attend.

Open Housing Season is Starting: First is Dec. 2. If you know neighbors who are interested in Maury, spread the word.

Eastern is playing in a championship at 2pm on Saturday. Check it out.

December's meeting is canceled.

MINDS Presentation

MINDS Inc. is a non-profit that works to bring mindfulness to our schools. This practice helps bring calm, compassion and empathy. We will start with training and then we will consider possibly bringing it into certain classrooms in January (possible beginning with 3rd grade) – and there was a suggestion that this practice might be a great way to start the big school morning meeting.

Practicing Mindfulness:

At a basic level, it is awareness and concentration -- taking a quiet moment to pause and think and process what they are feeling. This improves your ability to respond to situations by being less reactive and more responsive. Focus on what is happening, observe it, and let it go. If you are having a hard time, that momentary pause, will allow you to respond in a way that is less harmful, and it is important to give kids these tools. Kids tend to do much better when they are more focused -- and run into trouble when there are distractions. Being in the present can be more productive. This practice reinforces that it is OK to be in the moment rather than worrying about what happened before/after.

We participated in two quick group exercises to demonstrate how the mindfulness practice works.

Mindfulness helps kids focus and be attentive. It helps with emotional regulation. It helps with stress reduction. It helps with resilience (being able to practice these things when situations arise). Helps develop empathy -- even empathy towards yourself / being able to forgive yourself. The other area is executive function. You can learn in an efficient manner with this practice.

On Dec. 8th we have some time scheduled for staff to participate in the mindfulness practice. CAG would like to get an idea of how parents feel about expanding this. We haven't really mapped out how we'd use this yet.

Anecdotal story from 3rd grade mom -- recalls another school that used mindfulness found that taking those brief moments to focus made the entire classroom run more smoothly. Kids were more focused and there was less conflict.



In Attendance

Elsa Huxley, Emily Paterson, Jessica Gardner, Chantese Alston, JR Ford, Principal Albert-Garvey, Asst. Principal Spradley, Amanda Mentzer, Scott Douglas, Diane Douglas, George Blackmon, Amy Weedon, Joe Weedon, Lindsey Raymond, Vanessa Ford, Heather Schoell, Erica Martin, Linda Whitted, Franny Decker, Christina Porche, Sarah Alcorn, Anne McFadden, Aaron Chaletzky, Ana Chaletzky, Jen Walsh, Elizabeth Festa, Michelle Phipps-Evans, Antonio Evans, Shannon Warren, Brad Greenfield, Tracy Gerstle, Dinkar Mokadam, Subrat Biswal, Wendy Putnam, James Roberts, Teronica McDonald, Donny Kirsch

Next Meeting

1/15/2014 6:00 PM, Maury Multipurpose Room - THERE WILL NOT BE A MEETING IN DECEMBER



Official 2014 Maury Christmas Ornament

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STOCKING
STUFFER!**



The Maury School Store has just released its Official 2014 Christmas Ornament! There are 3 designs to choose from!

Have a Maury Christmas!

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