

Mantua PTA Alert News for April 22, 2008

This week's PDF version of the Alert News is available at the Mantua PTA web site, www.MantuaPTA.org.

Please be sure to use the address AlertNews@MantuaPTA.org when submitting items to the Alert News.

Table of Contents

1. Important Air Quality Information
2. Art Room Supplies Needed
3. Donations to Soldiers Very Generous
4. Camp Invention at Fairhill This Summer
5. Administrative Professional and Nurse Week is This Week!
6. FAIRGRADE Information

1. Important Air Quality Information

Fairfax County and Northern Virginia are part of the metropolitan area designated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as not meeting the federal standard for ozone. One of the major contributors to ozone formation is vehicle exhaust. The exhaust contains carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, particulate matter, volatile organic matter, and more than 21 kinds of air toxins, which, by definition, are hazardous to human health.

You can help improve our air quality and lower the amount of ozone formed during ozone season, from April through October. An easy way to do this is to not let your car idle for more than 30 seconds

after you reach your destination. Unnecessary engine idling can be a significant source of air pollution, particularly for people near the vehicle. The best example of this is when you're waiting to pick your child up from school. The EPA has

performed tests and determined that cars burn more fuel and create more exhaust emissions from idling over 30 seconds than if you turn your car off and restart it. You can follow this same practice when waiting at a drive-in bank, restaurant, etc.

Air pollution affects the health of everyone. The average person breathes 35 pounds of air a day. Children are even more at risk because they breathe faster than adults. In addition to health effects, vehicle exhaust emissions contribute to environmental damage such as smog, global warming, and acid rain. Everyone can make a difference, and together we can improve the air quality in our community.

If you have any questions or would like further information, call the Fairfax County Health Department's Air Quality staff at 703-246-2300.

Remember, when you idle, you get ZERO miles per gallon.

2. Art Room Supplies Needed

The art room needs large baby food jars that have been cleaned in hot soapy water with the labels removed. Please drop your baby food jars at the front office or the art room with Ms. Watkins.

3. Donations to Soldiers Very Generous

Brownie troop 2416 would like to thank everyone that sent in donations for the soldiers. It was an overwhelming response! Some of the highlights were: 60 granola bars, 56 packages of crackers, 46 packages of fruit snacks, and over 10 pounds of candy! We made a difference! Thank you.

4. Camp Invention at Fairhill This Summer

www.campinvention.org

Camp Invention comes to Fairhill July 28-August 1 from 8:30am-3:00pm. The Camp Invention® program enhances children's teamwork, inventive-thinking skills, and creativity during this weeklong summer adventure for those entering grades 1-6. Children have the opportunity to create miniature amusement park rides, study and design safety features in automobiles, and explore life on an alien planet! Children participate daily in five activity-oriented modules that foster science literacy, math, history, and the arts.

Scholarships and tuition assistance are available. Contact Peggy Einhorn at Peggy.Einhorn@verizon.net or (703) 560-0304 for more information.

5. Administrative Professional and School Nurse Week is This Week!

Visitors to the school often encounter any one of six ladies in the front office, all of whom are courteous, *patient*, helpful, *patient*, knowledgeable, *patient* and pleasant. Oh, did I mention they are also *very patient*? Drop in just about anytime of the school day and one of the ladies will be assisting a parent on the phone, another will be taking notes about who has an early dismissal for a doctor's appointment while yet another will be getting ready to rush down to a copy room to attend to a temperamental copy machine on the lower floor. And they do it pleasantly day in, day out. Just for the sake of our children.

So few of us know who these women really are. We hear their names mentioned by our children as the ones who gave them money when lunch funds ran low, or the ones who contacted parents when homework got left behind on the breakfast table. Here is a little personal information about each of these fabulous ladies who help look out for our children every school day.

Karen Levin, a Mantua resident for 21 years, is the epitome of professionalism. She dispenses with questions and concerns with confidence and common sense. She holds a Ph.D in German and has been an educator for 25 years. She finds

relaxation in gardening and playing tennis, and is also a tour guide at the Kennedy Center. A big Red Sox and Celtics fan, Karen has been married to Bob for the past 33 years. They have two children, Annie, 25, and Tom, 22.

If Jan Beckman is smiling a lot more than usual these days it could be because she is about to become a grandmother for the fifth time. Jan found her niche in the Fairfax County Public School system in 1975, first as a volunteer, then as an employee in 1981. A mother of four daughters (all of whom attended FCPS), Jan unwinds on the volleyball courts. In her quieter moments she enjoys puzzles and cross stitching. “Now that my husband is retired, we spend a lot of time on the road,” she says.

Patty Knight possesses a smile and a demeanor that would put you at ease the instant you enter the front office. Her dedication to duty is well noted among regular visitors to the front office. Though Patty has worked for Mantua for the last eight years, her connection with the school extends over 20 years. Both of her grown sons got their elementary schooling at Mantua. In her free time she volunteers at Wolf Trap Park, but what brings her joy these days is spending time with her “three sweet grandchildren.”

Lorri Fowlkes, another conscientious staffer, has worked at Mantua Elementary for the past 10 years. Her twin sister (bet you didn't know she has a twin!) also works in the education system, in North Carolina. Lorri enjoys reading, going for long walks and attending plays and concerts at Wolf Trap. She unwinds by playing and walking with her dog, an Australian shepherd mix named Mojo. She has two children, a 19 year old son and a 16 year old daughter.

Mergie Kakouras loves her job and it shows. She is always quick with a greeting or to offer advice. She has been at Mantua since October 1994 and described her time at the school as wonderful. Mergie is also an amazing cook and enjoys making traditional Greek dishes (her husband is Greek) and well-known dishes from the Phillipines (she was born there). She is the mother of twin girls and one boy, all of whom are currently attending college.

Becky Powers, Administrative Assistant to Principal Jan Marie Fernandez, ensures the smooth running of information to and from the principal. Becky has been an administrative assistant for 20 years, 18 of those at Mantua Elementary.

Married for 37 years, Becky and her husband have three grown children and eight grand-children. The couple unwinds on the golf course.

Neita Lindholm who is fondly known as “the school nurse” possesses a manner that is as comforting as a Band Aid. Soft-spoken and mild mannered, she calmly tends all the children who come through her door with ailments real or imagined. Neita was born and raised in New Orleans. She’s been living in Northern Virginia with her husband, a pastor, and their son, for the past 12 years. Her son is a first year medical school student at Uniformed Services, Bethesda. He is in the US Air Force. In her free time—and she uses the term loosely—she enjoys outdoor activities like going for long walks and hiking.

Tomorrow/Wednesday, April 23rd, Administrative Professionals Day, offers a great opportunity for you to stop in and thank them in your own way for all they do for you, your child, the school and the community as a whole.

6. Fairgrade Information

FAIRGRADE is a parent-driven research/advocacy group that was created in January 2008.

Its origins began with a December 2007 Washington Post article that highlighted the disparities between Fairfax and Montgomery County grading policies. After months of research, FAIRGRADE has determined that the differences in these grading policies put FCPS students at a disadvantage with respect to college admissions and impact our students’ opportunities for merit scholarships, Honors programs, NCAA athletic eligibility, and car insurance “good-driver” discounts.

In the last month, FAIRGRADE has presented its research findings to over 300 parents at McLean High School and Langley High School. Audience members quickly contacted Superintendent Dale and School Board members and requested that FCPS revise its existing grading policies to be more in line with other nationally recognized public high schools. In addition, both Langley and McLean

PTSA's have voted to publicly endorse FAIRGRADE's recommendation that both the FCPS grading scale and weighting policies for Honors and AP courses be revised.

Compared to 45 nationally recognized school districts, Fairfax County has punitive and unfair grading policies. In the last three years, 15 other school districts, which previously used a tougher grading scale, have determined that it hurt students and have switched to the standard 10 Point Grading scale. Adopting a 10 Point Grading Scale and increasing the weight for Honors and AP courses will benefit FCPS students. It will encourage students to take more challenging courses, and it will allow students to receive the fair grades they deserve.

**If you believe this is a concern, please sign the FAIRGRADE on-line petition to make your voices heard by FCPS officials. The web link is:
www.ipetitions.com/petition/fairgrade.**

If you'd like to view an in-depth presentation, FAIRGRADE will be presenting its research findings on May 7th at 7 pm at Herndon Middle School Auditorium. If you are unable to attend the Herndon presentation and would like to schedule a presentation for your pyramid schools, please send an e-mail to Sara Schneider at: FairgradeNews@aol.com

For more information on this issue, please visit these sites for news video and press articles:

**To view the April 3, 2008, WUSA Channel 9 news video, go to:
<http://www.wusa9.com/video/player.aspx?aid=58183>**

To read news articles about this issue, go to:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/story/2007/12/27/ST2007122700228.html>

<http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/article.asp?article=312664&paper=68&cat=104>

FAIRGRADE hopes to have its website available in the near future. If you wish to learn more, please contact FAIRGRADE at: fairgrade.fcps@gmail.com

FAIRGRADE urges you to contact Superintendent Dale and your School Board representatives at the following e-mails addresses to share your concerns:

Superintendent Jack D. Dale: Jack.Dale@fcps.edu

Daniel G. Storck, Chairman, Mt. Vernon District: daniel.storck@fcps.edu

Kathy L. Smith, Vice Chairman, Sully District: Kathy.L.Smith@fcps.edu

Elizabeth T. Bradsher, Springfield District: elizabeeth.bradsher@fcps.edu

Brad Center, Lee District: brad.center@fcps.edu

Stuart D. Gibson, Hunter Mill District: stuart.gibson@fcps.edu

Martina A. Hone, Member At Large: Martina.Hone@fcps.edu

Kaye Kory, Mason District: kaye.kory@fcps.edu

Ilryong Moon, Member At Large: ilryong.moon@fcps.edu

Phillip A. Niedzielski-Eichner, Providence District: pneichner@fcps.edu

James L. Raney, Member At Large: james.raney@fcps.edu

Jane K. Strauss, Dranesville District: jane.strauss@fcps.edu

Judith (Tessie) Wilson, Braddock District: tessie.wilson@fcps.edu

Information on Unsubscribing

This email version of the Alert News is available to all Mantua families. If you do NOT want to receive the Alert via email, please use our Parent Database to modify

your listing: Go to the PTA web site at www.MantuaPTA.org , and click the "Parent Database" tab.

Miss an Issue?

If you don't receive your regular email Alert News by the end of Tuesday of any school week, drop a line to alertnews@mantuapta.org, and we'll forward you a new copy.

Alert News Contributions

Send via email to alertnews@mantuapta.org.

Submissions are appreciated on the Friday before distribution.
