

The Gecko Gazette

Robert E. Willis Elementary School

14705 The Masters Avenue, Lakewood Ranch, Florida 34202 (941) 316-8245



PRINCIPAL

Dear Willis Families,

Daily, I am reminded of what a special place Willis is. The students and staff consistently work hard and our parents are incredibly supportive. This has never been truer than the support we have received for our recent change in dismissal procedures. Change is always difficult and we appreciate the way you have worked with us. Please know that as we approach dismissal time, we are constantly checking weather and if necessary, looking at radar by cell phone, television, and the internet. If we are experiencing light rain with no lightening or thunder, we will proceed with dismissal as usual. Do understand that if it is lightening and thundering, we may delay the dismissal of students until we feel it is safe to do so. Should you desire to change your child's transportation home from a walker or bike rider to car rider due to the weather, you must still call the school and speak to your child's teacher or an adult in the office. If, due to inclement weather, you desire to pick your child up early, it must be done before 2:20 PM. Also, as a reminder, we are still seeing a large number of parents using cell phones while picking their children up in the pick up line. This is very dangerous and we strongly discourage this for

the safety of our students and staff. Please also remember, whether rain or shine, please stay with your vehicle. Again, we appreciate working together with you in the best interest of our students and thank you for your support.

On another note, thank you to all who attended the Gecko Gala! We saw many happy families picking up their beautiful baskets that they won. We had some very creative and interesting baskets this year and there was a lot of competition in the bidding. It was a great evening and as a result the money raised will support technology at Willis. We have very generous parents and continue to be grateful for your support.

Finally, testing season is upon us. Our students are ready and we are proud of all we are seeing out in the classrooms. Mrs. Mathis, our Guidance Counselor and Test Coordinator, has included an article about reminders in this newsletter that you may find helpful. As a reminder, your 3rd, 4th, or 5th grader has been learning a great many things since Kindergarten and we know that the FCAT 2.0 is simply an opportunity to "show what they know", and boy, do they know a lot!

Until next time, "Go Geckos",

Bill Stenger, Principal

P.T.O.

I hope everyone enjoyed their week off for Spring Break and are ready to officially start the last quarter of the school year. I want to personally thank Carrie Montague and her committee for all their hard work on a wonderful Gecko Gala. We have already begun purchasing white boards for our classrooms with the funds raised at the Gala. The PTO has allocated WAT dollars in our budget for the mounting of the overhead projectors based on the needs of the teachers, but we are still waiting for the county to provide us with the bids to complete this process. Looking ahead, we will celebrate our teachers the first week of May during Teacher Appreciation week. Look for details in the upcoming weeks. Our annual Field Day is planned for Friday May 16th. Get ready for some friendly team color competition! Lastly, I wanted to let you know that election ballots for next year's PTO board will be distributed soon. Please touch base with any of the current PTO board members if you have any questions about this great opportunity.

Jillanne Conelias
P.T.O. President

P.T.O. PAGE



GECKO GALA HUGE SUCCESS!

What can we do to make our children's day a little brighter? The answer for each of us may be different. However, in the end, we all do what we can to make positive changes in our children's lives.

Together, the Willis Elementary School community helped to make this year's Gecko Gala a huge success! The total profit from the event was \$19,000, which will be used for new technology at the school this year.

We all did what we could to help make this event a huge success. Some helped by: donating items for the baskets; purchasing "chance" tickets; attending the event; purchasing silent auction item(s); sponsoring a table and/or donating time to be auctioned off. We want to thank everyone who helped with this event in whatever fashion you were able to help.

This year for the first time, we tried a chance auction and an online silent auction. The Willis community seemed to really enjoy the change. The chance auction allowed all parents and children to participate with a chance to win. The online auction was another great success, and participants reported that it was fun to see all the bids on their mobile devices.

Finally, this event would not have been successful without the ongoing efforts made by our family of volunteers on the Gecko Gala committee. Please take a few moments out of your day to say "Thank You" to Tricia Eckstrom, Shannon Masera, Shelly Steiner and Barbara Wahlstrom for taking time from their families and jobs to help make this event so successful and the night so enjoyable.

Thank you, all of you, for your help, time and donations. Working together in various ways, we will make our children's days a little brighter. Together, we can change the lives of our children!

Carrie Montague, Gala Chair
carrie@fraudpractice.com

P.T.O. MEETINGS

The next general P.T.O. meeting will be Friday, April 11th at 2:00 p.m. in the Cafeteria. The last meeting for the year will be held Friday, May 9th at 2:00 p.m., also in the Cafeteria.



GALA COMMITTEE: From left, Shannon Masera, Shelley Steiner, Barbara Wahlstrom, Tricia Eckstrom, and Chair, Carrie Montague. Thank you ladies!



Rhonda Lieberick, Kathleen Catlett, Lain Wagner, and Tracy Stubbins enjoy the Gala!

P.T.O. Board 2013-14

Jillanne Conelias - President
jillanne67@verizon.net

Liz Combe - Vice President
liz.combe@hotmail.com

Heather Harris - Treasurer
hharris@veribooks.com

Shelly Steiner - Secretary
shellyrsteiner@yahoo.com

www.williselementarypto.com

P.T.O. PAGE ... continued!

BOX TOPS

A big congratulations goes out to the winning classrooms for the February Box Top collection. The following winning classrooms will enjoy a snow cone party to celebrate:

Ross (4)
Sherpf (4)
Tomlin (5)

Please remember to keep clipping those Box Tops! Our final collection for the school year will be Friday, May 2nd, and the winning classrooms will celebrate with snow cones! Help us reach our goal of earning \$5000 for our Geckos!

Cathy Dobson
BoxTop Coordinator
cathy.m.dobson@gmail.com

THANK YOU
TO OUR BUSINESS
PARTNER WHO
SPONSORED
SPIRIT NIGHT:

"YOU SAY WHEN
YOGURT"

YEARBOOK

The deadline to purchase a yearbook was last week. If there are any extras available, it will be on a first come basis. Yearbooks will be distributed at the end of the school year and teachers will provide specific signing days.

Our Staff enjoying the Gecko Gala - let's show them how much we value their hard work and dedication!

MOVIE NIGHT!

"FROZEN"



Friday, April 11, 2014 at 7:15pm

proceeds to benefit the 5th grade students

STAFF APPRECIATION WEEK

May 5 - 9, 2014

Our Staff are our everyday Superheros, so during this week we plan on showing our Superheros just how much we appreciate them for all they do.

With the help of the students and parents we plan on making this week a fun filled week for all the teachers and staff. There will be many volunteer opportunities during the week that we will need help with from our parents such as staffing a breakfast or lunch. Also, I am looking for someone to help me with decorations that week. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Deborah Hossenlopp at either debhoss@gmail.com or 941-544-0589.

Thank you in advance for your participation!



Clinic Notes for April

Spring is here and along with it has brought quite a few sniffles and itchy eyes. With the warmer weather quickly approaching and things blooming, the pollen count is high and the insects are starting to buzz around and sting. Wasps, hornets and yellow jackets can sting multiple times, as they have a retractable stinger. Honey bees have a barbed type stinger with a venom sac. To remove this

stinger you should swipe a credit card over the area stung. Do not pinch or squeeze where the bite is. Approximately 3% of the population has an allergic reaction to a bee sting. Most people just have a localized reaction, which can have some discomfort for up to a week. Wash area, apply ice and apply an antihistamine cream if necessary.

Don't forget your sunscreen also, as we spend more time in the warmth of the sun. It is said that 80% of sun exposure

occurs before the age of 18. Start good habits of skin care early with routine application of sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher, as recommended by American Academy of Dermatology. Sunburn hurts, so let's help prevent it and help prevent skin cancer.

Here's to your Health!

Mary Fischer, RN School Nurse
Kris Miller, LPN Clinic Nurse
x2010 or x2011

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

Dear Students, Staff, and Families of Willis Elementary:

Our yearly standardized testing is just around the corner. As you know, our third, fourth, and fifth graders will be taking FCAT.

In addition, our kindergarten, first and second graders will be taking the SAT 10. A change has been made in the SAT 10 schedule; the new dates are Monday, May 5, 6, 8, 9. If any of you are able to help us proctor this test, we could really use the help. Please contact Connie Dixon at 316-8245 x 2002 or Tawnya Mathis at x 2004 if you are available to help. THANK YOU!

A few items to think about and review with your child before testing:

- (1) Get a good night's rest.
- (2) Eat a healthy breakfast.
- (3) Show up on time and be ready to do your best.
- (4) Stay calm and focused. You've got this!

An article on test anxiety that I thought may be helpful:

http://kidshealth.org/teen/school_jobs/school/test_anxiety.html#a_What_Can_You_Do_.

Warm Regards,
Tawnya Mathis, School Counselor
mathist@manateeschools.net or x2004.

Date	Test	Grade/s
Monday, April 14 - Thursday, April 17, 2014	FCAT	3 rd , 4 th & 5 th
Tuesday, April 22 - Thursday, April 24, 2014	Computer Based Math FCAT	5 th Grade Only
Monday, May 5, 6, 8 and 9, 2014	SAT 10	K, 1 st & 2 nd

COMMUNITY SERVICE

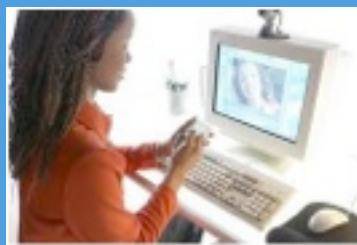
I would like to thank all the family's who brought their children to our Gecko Gala Babysitting event. We had a great time playing games and eating pizza. We even raised \$150 for the Manatee County Humane Society which goes for food and medical treatment for area animals.

Finally, we have placed a Yellow bin in the main entry of the school for the Manatee County Food Bank. Families need assistance year round not just during the holidays. Willis is now a permanent collection station for the food bank. Every Monday my son and I drop an item in the bin and talk about the family we are helping that we will never meet. It is truly an amazing feeling when I see and hear my son express empathy for people in need. Thanks to all the students and families who have helped feed the hungry in our community.

People helping people ... not because we have to ... because we want to.

A sincere thank you,
Jon H. Green

Manatee Virtual Instruction Options



Manatee Public Schools provide three virtual program options for students in grades K through 12 to take online courses. These programs include: eTech of Manatee, Florida Virtual School, and K12 Florida LLC. Students can take courses full or part time through these programs. Enrollment dates for the fall are April 17th to July 18th. Visit the District website at <http://www.edline.net/pages/sdmcetech> for additional information or contact the District Support Department at 941-708-8770 Ext. 2178.

2014/15 SCHOOL CALENDAR!

The county has published the calendar for the next school year.

[Link here!](#)



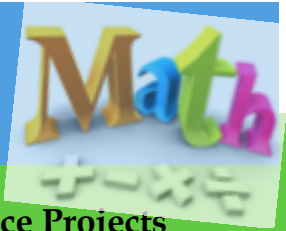
FOOD & NUTRITION SERVICES

GET THE SCHOOL LUNCH APP!

School menus are now available by app! Search "School Lunch by Nutrislice" or link [here](#) for App Store or [here](#) for Google Play. Both lunch and breakfast menus may be viewed on your iPhone/Android or iPad.



SPECIALS



Music

It is time for the Talent Show! This year all students are eligible to try out for the Talent Show. The try out date is Friday, April 25th during school hours. Any student wishing to audition must have the Talent Show permission slip turned in by April 25th. You can find the permission slip on the PTO website. It is very important that you read the document before signing it. Make sure to have all music, props and your act learned by the tryout date. Good Luck Geckos!

Christy Isaacs, Music Teacher

Ext. 2079



Math Lab & Community Service Projects

In the math lab we have been working diligently on Geometric shapes, area, volume, perimeter, and also elapsed time for fifth graders. Kindergarten is working on 2 digit addition, First grade is working on measurement, second, third, and fourth grade are also working on Geometry.

We also have some community projects going on. So far we have recycled 1488 pounds of paper. That equates to 24 trees that we have saved from being cut down. It also has profited Willis Elementary \$30 as the waste management company pays us \$5 for every 250 pounds of paper we recycle. We also have helped keep the school from having a second trash pick-up each week which saves the district \$4000 per year by removing the paper and plastic from the trash bin. If you happen to be near the math lab look for the graph on the wall showing the current data from our efforts. Soon we will be able to recycle water bottles in the cafeteria during lunch time. We also have placed recycling bins in each grades hallway for plastic bottles, glass and cans.

Jon H. Green, Math Lab Teacher

Ext. 2076

Science

The third grading period has been very busy in the science lab. The fifth grade has been talking about how force and angle effect the trajectory and distance a rubber band will travel when launched from a rubber band cannon. The students collected, graphed, and analyzed their data collected. The fourth grade has been working on identifying properties of metamorphic, igneous, and sedimentary rocks. We investigated several rock samples for color, streak, cleavage, chemical reaction, luster, and hardness. We've been studying properties of matter in third grade. We've practiced using a balance, graduated cylinder, and thermometer. Second grade has been busy studying human body systems. Your

second grader should have brought home their skeleton picture and is currently working on putting together a paper model of our body systems. Characteristics of living and non living things has been our topic in first grade. We'll also be discussing the difference between wants and needs. Kindergarten has been enjoying our unit on sound by making and playing different instruments while thinking about vibration.

Happy Spring to all our Gecko Families and good luck to our fifth graders as they prepare to take their FCAT Science assessment. Please feel free to contact Mrs. Bradl with any questions or comments you may have regarding our science program

Amy Ross Bradl, Science Teacher

Ext. 2021



SPECIALS (cont.)

Art

The fifth graders began a Paper Mache mask project in January, right after winter break. The students eagerly waited to begin this project, only to learn that much time is necessary between steps to complete it. The project turned out to be more of a lesson in patience and determination, rather than just becoming familiar with the process of Paper Mache!

The students learned that the process involves many layers of paste and paint that need time to dry. Certain details on their masks required smaller size brushes, for example, that couldn't be applied until the prior surface had already dried, which in most cases meant waiting a week for the next class. If the students didn't succeed in one or more of the steps, they had to go back and repeat the step/s. After quite a few

trial and errors, the students' efforts have produced wonderful pieces of art. Now that it is April, the masks are in their final stages and the students should be exceptionally proud, as I am, of the results.

Further, we have been invited to display the masks in a countywide art exhibit at the Manatee Art Center on West Ninth Street. The exhibit will run for a full month in May. It will be a very difficult task to choose just the few for the art exhibit, as each mask came out quite extraordinary.

Please look for the masks to be display during April on the second floor of the Willis elementary school by the art room.

Roy London, Art Teacher
Ext. 2053

Media Center

With standardized testing on the horizon, we have changed our Media Center into a computer lab. In the meantime, Mr. Sajewski will be visiting classes and teaching lessons on Internet safety and avoiding plagiarism. Please make sure the students are returning their overdue books. These books all need to be accounted for by the end of the year. Thank you,

Mr. Sajewski, Media Center
Ext. 2029



WILLIS ELEMENTARY HAS A NEW WEBSITE!

<http://www.edline.net/pages/sdmcwillises>

Kindergarten

Wow, three quarters down and one to go! Kindergarten has had a wonderful time getting ready for the last quarter! During the this time, we will learn all about Geometry, measurement and data in Math. In reading and writing, we will be focusing on taking journeys with characters, digging deeper into a topic, and immersing ourselves in research to teach others. In Science, we will learn all about sound and living things. In Social Studies, we will learn about things we need, want, buy and do.

Please help your student by going over the work that comes home to make sure they understand the concept taught. Remember to study the sight words!

Please mark your calendar for these upcoming events:

April 24 Field Trip to Sarasota Jungle Gardens

May 5-9 SAT Testing

May 23 Water day (in the morning). More details to follow, volunteers needed!

May 30 Kindergarten End of Year Program (tentative time 9:00a.m. - early release day). More details to follow.

1st Grade

In March, our first graders participated in a program offered by Manatee County Mosquito Control. It is a free public outreach and educational program designed to meet grade level benchmarks and get kids excited about science and how mosquitoes affect our lives here in Florida. Ms. Marsicano brought thousands of little mosquito friends in various stages of life, well contained for our students to observe using magnifying glasses! To learn more visit: www.manateemosquito.com.

2nd Grade

Second grade has been fun-filled! We enjoyed a presentation from Manatee Mosquito Control teaching us about mosquitos and their life cycles. The students were able to observe various living things with magnifying glasses, getting up close and personal with some insects!

We have also loved receiving our Flat Stanley letters back in the mail and sharing them with our classmates. We are charting Stanley's various world wide travels on our maps and look forward to seeing and hearing all of the places he will travel before the end of the year.

The fun will continue in April as we gear up for our field trip. We will be visiting the Embracing Our Differences art display at Sarasota's Island Park followed by an afternoon collection of plays at Florida Studio Theatre. It is sure to be an exciting and memorable day for our students!



First Graders exploring mosquitos!





FCAT TESTING DATES for 3rd and 4th Grade

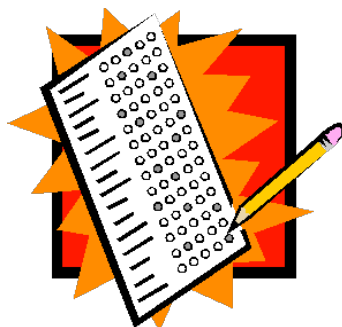
- ★ Monday, 4/14
- ★ Tuesday, 4/15
- ★ Wednesday, 4/16
- ★ Thursday, 4/17

Friday, 4/18 - NO
SCHOOL

Make-up Dates:

- ★ Monday, 4/21
- ★ Tuesday, 4/22
- ★ Wednesday, 4/23

Please contact your
teacher if your child
needs to make-up any
portion of the FCAT.



3rd Grade

Third grade has been busy preparing for Reading and Math FCAT 2.0. We "Expect Success!" on the FCAT and know that our students are well prepared. You can expect to receive your child's scores over the summer break.

After the FCAT, 3rd graders will begin novel studies and applying their reading skills to complete texts. We will also begin some bridge to 4th grade math, including reviewing perimeter and beginning area. As we make the transition to fourth grade it is important that your child continue to read independently for at least 20 minutes a day. Reading stamina is critical in 4th grade, as are independent work habits. Automaticity with multiplication facts will also be important in 4th grade as students begin to multiply and divide larger numbers.

Good luck on the FCAT 3rd graders!!"

4th Grade

Whew ... Fourth Grade has already taken the Florida Writes test in February, but we still working and studying very hard for the upcoming FCAT tests. Now we need your help. We all know that studying and hard work play an important role in how well a student does in school. But there are some basics beyond paying attention in class and doing homework. Fundamentals like good nutrition, plenty of sleep, and enough exercise really matter. These tips will help get children off to a strong start and ready to perform all day. This is especially important with FCAT testing right around the corner. Here are a few other tips:

- ★ Discuss with your child any test review materials that might be sent home.
- ★ Realize that your child may seem more tired than usual after each day of testing.
- ★ Remember to express your support and confidence in your child to do well on FCAT.
- ★ Help your child understand that testing is a part of the instructional process, and there is nothing to be feared.
- ★ Lastly, please make sure your child is here on time and is not absent on the testing days!

With Spring here and as your family's schedule gets more hectic, you might be tempted to cut corners by skipping breakfast, staying up late, and forgetting to get plenty of exercise. But the benefits of these healthy habits will make it all worthwhile, especially during FCAT week. Following these tips will not only help your children during test time but they are also very important throughout the school year.



Muffins with Mom Fun!



Carrie Montague with son Andy (5th), daughters Sara (3rd), and Isabella (1st).



Mrs. Herrera with son Caleb (5th) and daughter Anna (1st).



Jennifer Bianchini with sons Johnny (5th) and Joey (3rd).

FUN & GAMES!

5th Grade

The fifth grade students are READY to take on the FCAT! Please be sure your child gets plenty of rest and eats well during test weeks. Also, this is the time to reassure your child of what they CAN do. We want to help them understand the importance of the test, but NOT stress them out over it. Thank you for your support in this.

The fifth grade class has LOTS of important dates to remember. Please mark your calendars!

April 14-23 FCAT

- 14 (M) Reading 1 (Blue AM, Green PM)
- 15 (T) Reading 2 (Green AM, Blue PM)
- 16 (W) Science 1 (Blue AM, Green PM)
- 17 (Th) Science 2 (Green AM, Blue PM)
- 22 (T) Math 1 (Blue AM, Green PM)
- 23 (Th) Math 2 (Green AM, Blue PM)

April 29 (T): School Speech Contest (4th and 5th grades first and second place class winners).

May

- 21 (W) Marauders Baseball Game
- 28 (W) YMCA Party
- 30 (F) Kickball Game (Blue team vs Green team)

June

- 4 (W) Recognition Ceremony 1:30PM

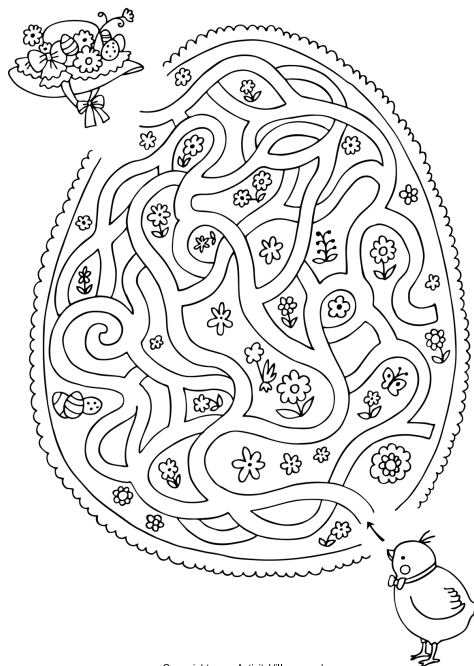


Spring Word Search



d	s	u	n	s	h	i	n	e	p
a	g	m	w	m	s	m	r	r	b
f	r	b	i	c	e	e	a	a	l
f	o	r	l	g	e	l	i	i	o
o	w	e	b	r	d	t	n	n	s
d	t	l	q	e	s	i	b	d	s
i	h	l	s	e	h	n	o	r	o
l	m	a	v	n	f	g	w	o	m
p	u	d	d	l	e	n	i	p	z
t	u	l	i	p	s	z	l	s	o

- blossom daffodil green growth
- melting puddle rainbow raindrop
- seeds sunshine tulips umbrella



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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES CAN BE FOUND ON THE PTO WEBSITE [HERE](#).

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS IN EDUCATION!

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Keller Williams Realty, Holly Pascarella
SmileWorks Kids Denistry
The Goddard School
Rodan & Fields Dermatologist, Julie Berry
First Physicians Group, Dr. Nicholas Sutera, MD.
Coldwell Banker, Tami Cashi & Lori Cashi-Haught
APC Pedicatics
Geckos
Let's Create Art
Nerium International

**FOR MORE INFO ON BECOMING A BUSINESS PARTNER,
LINK [HERE](#)**

Calendar of Events

April

- 11 P.T.O. Meeting (2:00pm/Cafeteria)
Movie Night - "Frozen"
- 14-17 FCATs for 3rd, 4th & 5th Grades
- 16 Runner's Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
- 17 Friday T-shirts permitted!
- 18 NO SCHOOL - Holiday
- 22-24 FCATs for 5th Grade Only
- 23 Runner's Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
- 28 School Advisory Committee (6:00pm)
- 30 Runner's Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)

May

- 1 Progress Reports
- 2 EARLY RELEASE (12:30pm)
Box Tops Collection!
- 5-9 Staff Appreciation Week
- 7 EARLY RELEASE (1:15pm)
Dress Down Day (\$2)
Runner's Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
- 9 P.T.O. Meeting (2:00pm/Cafeteria)
- 12 Chick-Fil-A Spirit Night
- 13 All Pro's Dad Breakfast
- 14 Runner's Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
- 16 Willis Field Day
- 20 Gecko Awards
- 21 Runner's Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
- 22 Talent Show!
- 26 NO SCHOOL (Holiday)
- 27 Chili's Spirit Night
School Advisory Committee (6:00pm)
- 28 Runner's Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
- 30 EARLY RELEASE (12:30pm)

June

- 4 5th Grade Recognition Ceremony
- 9 LAST DAY OF SCHOOL
You Say When Yogurt Spirit Night

([link here](#) for more dates!)

GECKO GAZETTE

For 2013/14, The Gecko Gazette will be published in Aug., Oct., Dec., Feb., April & June. For questions concerning the publication, please contact P.T.O. Newsletter Editor Christine Shaklik at shaklik@me.com.