

The Gecko Gazette

Robert E. Willis Elementary School

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



December 2013-14
Issue #3

PRINCIPAL

Can you believe that winter break is here already? It seems like yesterday that the students were arriving to meet their new teachers.

We will be ending our first semester on January 17th, so look for report cards to follow soon after. There have been many positive things going on both in and outside the classroom during this first half of the school year. Preparation for state testing is ongoing, as well as providing as much individual attention to students as possible. Field trips were taken by most of the grades as enrichment to classroom studies that included dairy farms, nature preserves, and our local theatre.

We held a Science Fair, the Third grade performed "December in Our Town," and we presented our first round of Gecko Awards to those students exemplifying the qualities found in the 8 Keys of Excellence.

We were very pleased to have our new school counselor, Tawyna Mathis, join us in October. She has a wealth of experience, having been with Manatee

County for 27 years in a number of positions. Please read her article below.

The P.T.O. has done a great job this semester, including organizing the Walk-A-Thon which profited over \$35,000. And, I'm sure the students can't wait for me to get "on the lake!" The recent Holiday Fair was a huge success, providing not only a wonderful community event, but helping our teachers to raise money to be used directly for their classrooms. None of these events (and many others) could be possible without our numerous and outstanding volunteers. Thank you to everyone, we are truly grateful.

We wish everyone a safe and enjoyable winter break. Try to keep your children engaged with reading and games of skill. Some of the teachers have great ideas in their articles below. Mostly, enjoy this special time of year with your family and friends to celebrate those special relationships, where ever you may be. We look forward to returning with all of you in 2014!

Bill Stenger, Principal



In order, Mrs. Dixon and Mr. Stenger, Heather Junqueira, and Green Group owners, Janet and Hipolito Diaz.

A special thank you to Heather Junqueira for taking the reins in fulfilling a much needed Willis makeover. Heather recruited two local companies, the Green Group Landscaping and Lawn Service and Burnett's Wholesale Nursery to re-landscape Willis' façade. Thanks to their extremely generous donation, the outside of Willis is as wonderful as what is inside. The Willis P.T.O. has made a financial commitment to work with the Green Group to maintain their labor of love.

If you are in need of new landscaping or lawn services, please consider contacting either of these amazing companies. The Green Group Lawn Service in Sarasota can be contacted at 941-737-8180 or by visiting their website at www.greengrouplawn.com. Burnett's Wholesale Nursery is in Oneco and their phone number is 941-755-4962 and website is www.burnettsnursery.com.

WILLIS ELEMENTARY HAS A NEW WEBSITE!
<http://www.edline.net/pages/sdmcwillises>

P.T.O. PAGE

P.T.O.

It's hard to believe we are already halfway through the Holiday Season. I hope that you all enjoyed Thanksgiving and Hanukah during your week off. Our first Holiday Fair was a huge success and it was so nice to see so many of you enjoying all that it offered. As with all Willis events, it would not be possible without those who worked so tirelessly to create a fun filled day. As you probably have already noticed, Willis received a beautiful makeover. Thank you to the Green Group Landscaping and Burnett's Nursery for their generous donation of new landscape around the front and sides of Willis. With only a week left before the break, I want to wish you all the Happiest of Holidays.

Jillanne Conelias
P.T.O. President

P.T.O. MEETING!

The next general P.T.O. meeting will be Friday February 7th at 2:00p.m. in the Cafeteria.

2013/14 WALK-A-THON RESULTS

Geckos Win! Through the support of Willis students, parents, and staff, the Willis WAT raised over \$41,000. Thank you! After approximately \$6000 in prizes and expenses, Willis has over \$35,000 to go towards technology and curriculum supporting materials.

T-shirts are on their way. Stay tuned for an announcement on when Mr. Stenger will become "Gator Bait" ... whoops we mean will go "On the Lake"!



Student Geckos enjoying the Walk-a-Thon!

SAVE
THE
DATE

Willis Elementary
Annual Evening Fundraiser
supporting Technology

March 8, 2014 from 7 - 10pm

The Grande Clubhouse, Lake Club

*Adult Only Event:: silent and live auction, passed hors d'oeuvres, music, beer, wine and cash bar for premium drinks.

BOX TOPS

Thank you to everyone for contributing to the December Box Top collection! The three winning classrooms will be announced before Winter Break and will be treated to a popcorn party celebration when school resumes.

Please remember to continue clipping and saving. Our next collection will be Thursday, February 20th.

Cathy Dobson
Box Top Coordinator
cathy.m.dobson@gmail.com

P.T.O. Board 2013-14

Jillanne Conelias - President
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www.williselementarypto.com

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

HOLIDAY FAIR

Willis held their first Holiday Fair on December 7th, which proved to be an extremely successful day enjoyed by both young and old. There were so many activities for everyone, as well 35 vendors who came to sell their beautiful products.

A BIG thank you to all the Willis staff for coming out and running their grade level stands. Proceeds from the event will go directly to the teachers and their classroom needs. This event would not have been such a huge success without the support and help from not only our staff members, but from the amazing network of volunteers that we are very lucky to have at Willis.

Thanks again for making Willis such an amazing school!

Liz Combe
Holiday Fair Chair

For those who took photos with Santa, they should be coming home in backpacks this week. If you do not receive your photo, please inquire at the Front Office.



Mrs. Brink (5th) and Mrs. Tomlin (5th) working hard to serve up food!



Mia Jordan (K), Madison Adams (3), and Emma Jordan (1) thoroughly enjoying the holiday fair!



Charlotte Hunn, her brothers, and nanny visit with Santa ... hmmm ... a familiar face!

A special
thank you to all of our
Holiday Fair
Vendors

BellaBlue Monograms
Belle-Fleur Bridal
Bridge a Life
Create Your Own
Discovery Toys
Dress Up Her Hair
Eggcentric Elegance
Healsci Inc.
Jamberry Nails
Jewels by Park Lane
Jess Jewelers
Mary Kay
Maya's Jewels
Mi Tierra Designs
Pampered Chef
Shoo-Pals
Siny Sunshine
Tastefully Simple
Terra
Thirty One
Violette Lace

Bernice Cappozi
Dione Chang
Sharon Dolan
Kerri Hansen
Christy Kirby
Anita Hubley
Toni Perren
The Simpson Family
The Shaklik Family
Jaquelyn Waara
Caroline Winkler
Amy Wood

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

The positive energy at Willis Elementary is contagious! I am exhilarated and grateful for the opportunity to serve the students, staff and parents of this wonderful school and community.

A little about me professionally: I graduated from Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia with a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education and a Specialization in Mathematics grades 5-9. In 1990, I obtained a Master's Degree in School Counseling from the University of South Florida. For the past 27 years, I've worked in Manatee County as a school counselor and teacher at both the elementary and middle

school levels and as an ESE (Exceptional Student Education) Specialist.

My passion is working with children and I'm proud to be working at a school where character and academic development are equally important. "Kindness Matters" is the BIG message I share with kids. I want students to understand that our words and actions carry significant weight and can either fill others up or tear them down. It is exciting to see the students and adults at Willis Elementary truly living the "8 Keys."

Although the role of the school counselor has changed considerably because of our data driven world, my primary responsibility is to promote the

academic and social development of all students. Students can request to meet with me and may be referred by a teacher, administrator or parent. Additionally, I will be seeing students through classroom guidance and groups as my schedule permits.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, concerns, or just to say hello. I can be reached by email at mathist@manateeschools.net or by phone at 316-8245 x 2004.

I'm excited to be here and I look forward to getting to know you and your children!

Warm Regards,
Tawnya Mathis
School Counselor

FRONT OFFICE NOTES

The tardy bell rings at 8:30 and students are expected to be in class, in their seats, and ready to begin at that time.

Q. What happens if I am late for school?

A. If you arrive at school late for any reason, you must report to the office and receive a tardy admit slip. The tardy will be deemed as excused or unexcused.

Q. What is an excused tardy?

A. An excused tardy is when you are late for school due to sickness, injury, death in your family, medical or dental appointments with a note, school sponsored activities, court date, or other reason approved by the school Principal. For elementary students, parents must accompany the student to the office when they are tardy. If an elementary student arrives late and comes into the office unaccompanied by an adult, he/she will receive an unexcused tardy.

Q. What is an unexcused tardy?

A. An unexcused tardy is when you are late to school due to, but not limited to, oversleeping, missing the school bus, shopping trips, pleasure trips, or excessive tardiness due to illness without a physician's verification that the medical condition justifies your tardiness.

Q. How many times am I allowed an unexcused tardy?

A. Habitual tardiness is unacceptable and unfair to other students because instruction is interrupted every time a late student arrives. Every three unexcused tardies within a grading period, or three unexcused early dismissals, or any combination of both, count as one unexcused absence. Please note that five unexcused absences in one month or 15 unexcused absences in a 90 day calendar period may result in Truancy Court for the parent/student. For more information on Student Attendance, please see the Manatee County School District's [Code of Student Conduct \(2013-14\)](#), pages 22-25.

Clinic Notes for Winter

Did you know that most people touch their faces between 200-600 times a day? That is 200-600 times we can possibly put germs inside our bodies! So, as we get farther into the cold and flu season, let's make sure to wash those hands and avoid touching the main areas of the T-zone of our face ... our eyes, nose and mouth.

Hand sanitizers are good when no soap and water is

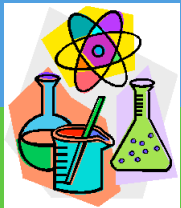
present and use of paper towels are better to use than the blow dryers in public restrooms, as these can "blow" those germs around, where towels can help remove some germs left on hands.

Also, please remember if your child is sick and/or running a fever (over 100*), they need to stay at home until they are 24 hours free from fever without the use of medication to bring the fever down. If your child needs medication at school, we **MUST** have the medication order form

filled out by physician and parent and medication **MUST** be brought into school by an adult- preferably parent. This includes over the counter medication such as Tylenol and cough drops. Forms are available in the clinic. Thanks for letting us care for your children. Enjoy your **HEALTHY** and **HAPPY** Holidays.

Mary Fischer, RN School Nurse
Kris Miller, LPN Clinic nurse

x2010 or x2011



SPECIALS

Science

Happy Holidays from the Willis Science Lab! Fifth grade is starting their unit on properties of matter. We'll begin with finding the mass, volume, and density of different objects. Fourth grade is excited to learn about the habitats of owls by dissecting an owl pellet while we continue examining plant parts with our microscopes in the third grade. Our second graders are finishing up their study of the properties of matter while investigating and having fun with magnetism. Finally, our Kindergarten and first grade students are working hard while learning about the Earth and space.

Amy Ross Bradl
Ext. 2021

Media Center

The students have been doing a great job of returning their library books. The teachers and I have been working with the students that may have forgotten their books at home. Children that are not returning their books will be receiving a record of books that have not been returned. If your child feels he/she has returned a book that has been marked as not returned, please send a note or an email my way. Please remember that there are no late charges for elementary students as long as the books are returned. Thank you for ensuring our books continue to be circulated!



Mr. Sajewski x 2029

SPECIALS (cont.)

Physical Education with Coach Morales!

Here are some ideas to create an active and healthy eating lifestyle:

- 1) Make time for the entire family to participate in regular physical activities that everyone enjoys.
- 2) You can even join with other families in the neighborhood for group activities like tag, touch football or hide and seek.
- 3) Assign active chores to every family member such as vacuuming, washing the car or cleaning their bedroom.
- 4) Limit the amount of watching television.
- 5) Enroll your child in a structured activity that he or she enjoys, such as tennis, martial arts or soccer.
- 6) Implement the same healthy diet (rich in fruits, vegetables and grains) for your entire family, not just for selected individuals.
- 7) Plan a set time for when your child can participate in food preparation and learn about healthy cooking.
- 8) Have snack foods available that are nutritious, such as fruits, vegetables and yogurt.
- 9) Avoid rushing to finish meals because eating quickly does not allow enough time to digest.
- 10) Avoid using food as a reward or the lack of food as a punishment.

Coach Morales/moralesj@manateeschools.net
941-316-8245 x 2080



Total Laps for School: 30,542 = 6,108 miles!

RUNNERS' CLUB PRIZES

- 1) Every 25 laps (5 miles) SMALL FOOT TOKEN
- 2) Lap 75—RUNNERS' CLUB T-SHIRT
- 3) Every 100 laps BIG FOOT TOKEN
- 4) Every 131 laps (26.2 MILES) MARATHON TOKEN
- 5) Lap 150 GLOW IN THE DARK FOOT
- 6) Lap 300 SURPRISE TOKEN (PICK OUT OF THE BAG)
- 7) SPECIAL END OF THE YEAR PRIZE FOR ANYONE WHO RUNS **100 MILES** (500 laps)!

| Grade | TOP RUNNERS | |
|-------|------------------|-----------|
| | Name | # of Laps |
| 5th | Owen Catelett | 339 |
| | Emma DeCastro | 243 |
| 4th | Landon Antritt | 275 |
| | Kaitlyn Smith | 154 |
| 3rd | Marc Ash | 238 |
| | Kaitlyn Duquette | 226 |
| 2nd | Logan Catlett | 230 |
| | Juliana Mattes | 209 |
| 1st | Jake Morales | 170 |
| | Savannah Adams | 171 |
| K | Axon Lemus | 184 |
| | Reese Martin | 138 |

Kindergarten

Wow! Four months have gone by and our kindergarten students are becoming such great readers and writers. It is amazing seeing the growth. During the months of December and January kindergarten will learn about details and how to make topics interesting while bringing stories to life. In Math, we will be discovering addition and subtraction. How exciting! In Science, we will be learning about earth and space. In Social Studies, we will be learning about the importance of celebrations and national holidays, U.S. symbols, timelines, comparing children past and present, primary sources, and secondary sources.

Thank you to the volunteers that helped with the Fall and holiday activities.

1st Grade

First Grade had an exciting Fall season with visits from both Smokey the Bear and local firefighters! The children enjoyed both presentations and showed great interest by asking excellent questions about fire safety. We're currently getting ready for our upcoming field trip to Dakin Dairy by reading informational texts about farms. We are sure to be experts in this area by the time we get there! To learn more about farm life, download the digital book, Farm Fun at www.scholastic.com/discovermore and enter this code: RMHJC6HCG2X7.

This past month the children have been focusing on the "How To" writing genre. In this writing style, students learn to construct clear, sequential instructions about an activity they feel they can explain well.

The holiday season is always a special time for our first graders. We are looking forward to sharing this time with your children! Any opportunity to read and practice math facts during the break will help your child's skills stay sharp. Happy Holidays from First Grade!



Tyler McCoy (K) and Sam Jones (K) as Native Americans.



Michael Merino (K) as a pilgrim boy for Mrs. Turner's class.



Ingrid Pope (K) as a pilgrim girl for Mrs. Turner's class.



Mrs. Peterson's 1st grade students showing off their fall art projects!



Mrs. Peterson's 1st Grade class enjoy a visit with firefighters.



Second Grade students showing off their good behavior trophy from the Cafeteria!



2nd Grade

Second graders have been working very hard! We have been studying our nonfiction text features while learning to read and write like scientists. We are conducting experiments, writing lab reports, and reading to discover more information about our results. Second graders are also becoming experts in addition and subtraction as we solve with two digit numbers. Next, we will be using three digit numbers! Make sure to keep practicing your math facts and reading over the holiday break to maintain fluency. All of second grade wishes you and your family a happy holiday season and much joy in the new year!



3rd Grade

After the holidays 3rd grade will be wrapping up division and beginning fractions. Fractions are conceptually difficult for most 3rd graders. If you are able to relate things around your home to fractional parts that will support your child's learning. Fractions are included on Math FCAT 2.0.

In reading we are reviewing story elements (characters, setting, plot, & theme), main idea & details, & drawing conclusions. In the new year we will be working with more non-fiction and the structures related to informational text. We are still working to build our reading stamina and make sense of complete text.

We hope you enjoyed our Holiday Performance "December in Our Town!"

4th Grade

In November, the fourth graders went to see the play "Androcles and the Lion" at Florida Studio Theater in downtown Sarasota. The play was extremely entertaining and had great lessons for us to learn and discuss. We were fortunate enough to be the only school in the theater. It was truly an exciting trip. This is actually a three part field trip with Florida Studio Theater visiting us at school on Friday, December 6th. We will be watching a play and then welcoming the actors back to our classrooms to help us write class plays. How thrilling! All fourth graders will be eligible to write their own plays and submit them to Florida Studio Theater for review and possible selection in the Under 6 Playwrights competition.



Mrs. Nikla's class on a field trip to Van Wezel to see "The Math Maniac Show" as part of the Classroom Connections program with Samoset Elementary.



Mrs. Ross class celebrating Halloween (above) and the Jump for Fun Field Trip (below)!



5th Grade

The fifth grade students are working hard! We're sure they are looking forward to the upcoming break. As you consider gifts the holidays, keep in mind some board games that are both FUN and educational. Scrabble is a great game for building vocabulary. At this age allowing the dictionary to be used is encouraged. Set a time limit so the game keeps moving, and the kids don't lose interest. This also incorporates some math skills on those double and triple letter or word point squares. Another good game is Blockus - good for spatial awareness. It's easy to learn, but challenging enough to maintain interest. Once Upon A Time is a family favorite, spinning tales that are never the same twice! Whatever you choose, enjoy the time with your child(ren) and keep their brain engaged! Happy Holidays!



Mae Quinn showing her tiny shrimp caught while dip netting on the 5th Grade Emerson Point Environmental field trip.

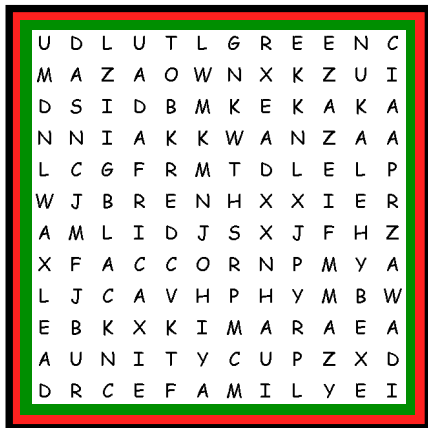
SAVE THE DATE FIFTH GRADE FAMILIES!

- ★ "End of Year Party" on May 28, 2014
- ★ "Recognition Ceremony" on June 4, 2014



Fifth grade girls wishing you a Happy Holiday!

FUN & GAMES!



| | | | |
|--------|--------|-----------|--------|
| Africa | black | corn | family |
| green | kimara | Kwanzaa | mazao |
| mkeka | red | Unity cup | zawadi |

Christmas Tree Maze
Can you find your way from the base of the Christmas tree all the way to the star?



www.ActivityVillage.co.uk - Keeping Kids Busy



Hanukkah
Word Scramble



1. GTSFI _ _ _ _ _
2. ETIHG _ _ _ _ _
3. MRHNEOA _ _ _ _ _
4. CENADSL _ _ _ _ _
5. HHANKKAU _ _ _ _ _
6. DRDLIEE _ _ _ _ _
7. FIYALM _ _ _ _ _
8. GLTE _ _ _ _



www.ActivityVillage.co.uk - Keeping Kids Busy

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

www.ActivityVillage.co.uk - Keeping Kids Busy

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS IN EDUCATION!

Platinum (\$1000+)

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The Godard School
Rodan & Fields Dermatologist, Julie Berry
First Physicians Group, Dr. Nicholas Sutera,
MD.
APC Pediatrics
Primrose School @ Lakewood Ranch
Geckos

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

THANK YOU TO OUR BUSINESS
PARTNERS WHO SPONSORED
SPIRIT NIGHTS!

- ◆ Crispers
- ◆ Square One Burgers
- ◆ Tijuana Flats
- ◆ You Say When Yogurt
- ◆ Jimmy Johns
- ◆ Chick-Fil-A
- ◆ Freddy's

Calendar of Events

December

18 Runners' Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
23 - Jan. 7, 2014: HOLIDAY BREAK!

January

6 NO SCHOOL (Inservice)
7 First day of school for 2014
8 Runners' Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
Dress Down Day (\$2)
(NO Early Release!)
13 Chili's Spirit Night (11:00am - 11:00pm)
14 All Pro Dad Breakfast (7:30am/Cafeteria)
15 Runners' Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
17 End of First Semester
20 & 21: NO SCHOOL (Holiday/Record Day)
22 Runners' Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
23 GECKO AWARDS
28 School Advisory Council (SAC) (6:00pm)
29 Runners' Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)

February

3-11 Spring Book Fair
5 Runner's Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
Dress Down Day (\$2)
EARLY RELEASE (1:15pm)
6 Muffins With Moms
You Say When Yogurt Spirit Night
7 P.T.O Meeting (2:00pm/Cafeteria)
12 Runner's Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
17 NO SCHOOL (Holiday)
19 Runners' Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
20 Box Tops Collection
Progress Reports
21 Spring Pictures ([link here for more dates!](#))

GECKO GAZETTE

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