

# The Gecko Gazette

Robert E. Willis Elementary School

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



## PRINCIPAL

The school year is always busy and we are in full swing. However, it seems that these days are even busier as we move into the second half of the school year.

The students and teachers continue to work hard towards mastery of grade level skills and benchmarks. We see this hard work every day as we visit and observe the classrooms.

Fourth grade students will be taking the writing portion of FCAT 2.0 on February 25<sup>th</sup>. In April, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students' learning will be measured by the FCAT 2.0 in Reading and Math and in Science for 5<sup>th</sup> graders. The testing window for the FCAT 2.0 will be April 14<sup>th</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup>. During this time, we are in need of proctors to assist the teachers while they administer the FCAT

2.0. If you interested in proctoring, please contact Mrs. Dixon at [dixonc@manateeschools.net](mailto:dixonc@manateeschools.net) or Mrs. Mathis at [mathist@manateeschools.net](mailto:mathist@manateeschools.net).

On another note, parents please remember that supervision for students is **not** provided prior to 8:00 AM. We have had an increasing number of students over the last few weeks dropped off before 8:00 AM. Please do not drop off your children prior to the time we provide supervision. We want our children to continue to be safe and appreciate your help with this.

Thank you for all you do to support Willis and for all you do to make Willis a great place to learn!

Bill Stenger  
Principal

## P.T.O.

With the holidays over and the start of a new year, we are looking forward to our next big PTO event. The Gecko Gala, which is themed "Spring into Action" will be held on Saturday March 8<sup>th</sup> at the Lake Club. This is an adult only event that will include silent and live auctions, food, drinks, and live music. Please mark your calendars for a fun night out.

We hope you continue to participate in the many Spirit Nights we offer. A percentage of the funds come back to Willis.

We are now offering a new shirt for girls to wear on Fridays. Purchases can be made at the front desk or through our Gecko store on the PTO website. Adult shirts are available, but because they are special ordered, may take more time to receive.

Muffins for Mom is set for February 6<sup>th</sup>. Please join your child for a muffin and coffee between 7:30-8:30am. Don't forget to get your photo taken as well.

I also wanted to update families on the status of the money we raised during Walk-a-Thon held in the fall. We will be continuing to mount the overhead projectors into the classrooms, as well as provide those classroom teachers with a wireless microphone and sound system. We are currently waiting on bids from the county on performing this work.

Jillanne Conelias  
P.T.O. President

# P.T.O. PAGE



Every year Willis Elementary School holds an annual fundraising event called the Gecko Gala. This year the Gala will be held on Saturday, March 8, 2014 at the Lake Club Clubhouse in Lakewood Ranch, and the theme is "Spring into Action". Proceeds will go towards piloting interactive white boards and hand held devices to be used in the classroom. Tickets are \$45 per person and include admission, live music, hors d'oeuvres, beer and wine, as well as one sheet of tickets for chance auction items.

We will have both silent and live auctions during the event. New this year: bids on the silent auction will be made via your mobile device! There will be representatives from "Auctions By Cellular" on site to help with bidding and providing tablets when needed. This is going to be a new experience that will allow parents who cannot make the event able to bid on items from anywhere. In addition, if you can't come, you can still participate by paying \$20 for a sheet of tickets for a chance to win the lobby auction items the week prior to the event by placing your tickets in the box next to the item you want to win. Tickets will be randomly pulled and winners will be notified after the event. Details on purchasing tickets and bidding will be sent via email in the next couple of weeks.

Finally, we are looking for donations for the chance, silent and live auctions. If you would personally like to make a donation or if you have a business or know of a business that would like to make a donation, please fill the appropriate form [here](#) and return it to your child's teacher by February 10<sup>th</sup>. In order to make this gala the best possible, we need to receive all donations no later than February 20<sup>th</sup>. We look forward to seeing you there!

Carrie Montague, Gala Chair  
[carrie@fraudpractice.com](mailto:carrie@fraudpractice.com)

## P.T.O. MEETING!

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

## BOX TOPS

A big congratulations goes out to the winning classrooms for the December Box Tops collection! The following winning classrooms will enjoy a popcorn party to celebrate:

Mrs. Grigsby (K)  
Mrs. Rahn (1)  
Mrs. French (2)

Please remember to keep clipping those Box Tops! Our next collection will be Thursday, February 20th, and the winning classrooms will celebrate with snow cones.

Cathy Dobson  
BoxTop Coordinator  
[cathy.m.dobson@gmail.com](mailto:cathy.m.dobson@gmail.com)

## P.T.O. Board 2013-14

Jillanne Conelias - President  
[jillanne67@verizon.net](mailto:jillanne67@verizon.net)

Liz Combe - Vice President  
[liz.combe@hotmail.com](mailto:liz.combe@hotmail.com)

Heather Harris - Treasurer  
[hharris@veribooks.com](mailto:hharris@veribooks.com)

Shelly Steiner - Secretary  
[shellyrsteiner@yahoo.com](mailto:shellyrsteiner@yahoo.com)

[www.williselementarypto.com](http://www.williselementarypto.com)

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

BRICKS

FOR

SALE!

You can recognize your child's enrollment at Willis by purchasing a 4" x 8" engraved brick for \$50 that will be laid in the school courtyard. Please fill out this [form](#) or purchase directly from the [Gecko Store](#).

BRICKS

FOR

SALE!

## COMING SOON ... MOVIE NIGHT!

Friday, April 11, 2014

proceeds to benefit the 5th grade students

### THANK YOU TO OUR BUSINESS PARTNERS WHO SPONSORED SPIRIT NIGHTS!

- ◆ CHILI'S
- ◆ CHICK-FIL-A
- ◆ TREEUMPF! ADVENTURE COURSE (month of January)

### Muffins with Mom

Thursday, February 6th  
7:30AM to 8:30AM



## HEALTH CLINIC

### Clinic Notes

February is when we think of flowers, hearts and candy and Valentine's Day. Hearts should remind us about our heart health. Are you getting enough rest and exercise? Are you eating more fruits and vegetables and less high fat and sugar foods? Eating right also helps keep our teeth healthy, and eating too much "candy" can lead to dental problems. So, are you remembering to brush at least twice a day? Floss daily?

Visit your dentist twice a year for checkups. Here is to keeping you in good health!

On another issue, please know that the clinic staff can help you with many questions regarding health issues in school; together we have over 30 years of experience just in the school setting. Some issues such as head lice can cause a "sense of panic". PLEASE DO NOT panic . . . it is ok! Having lice is nothing to be ashamed of, as lice have been around since the beginning of time. It is not

uncommon for children to come into contact with lice at some point, and it is in no way a reflection of how clean you are or how clean your home is. Simply put, it is a "lousy" thing to deal with!

We can help you get through it, if it happens to your child. Just call or stop by and ask.

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

x2010 or x2011

## COUNSELOR'S CORNER



Mrs. Mathis  
presents  
2nd quarter  
G e c k o  
Awards!

The "testing" season is quickly approaching and we want to make sure you are aware of the dates so you can place them on your calendar. It is extremely important that your child be in attendance and on time during testing. In the April newsletter, I will include some testing tips and strategies to use to alleviate test anxiety.

We are in need of volunteer proctors during the dates listed below. Thank you in advance for considering this much needed service. Proctors assist with needs such as broken pencils, delivering tissues, and basically just providing an additional set of eyes in the classroom. During the FCAT days, we will need

proctors from approximately 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. daily. The FCAT Writes is a one day only test. However, if you proctor for the main FCAT (Monday, April 14 - Thursday, April 17<sup>th</sup>), we would really appreciate the same proctor being in the same class all four days. If four days is too much of a commitment, helping two days (M/T or W/TH) would be greatly appreciated as well. You will be given a quick 20 minute training to go over expectations and questions the day you arrive. Additionally, SAT 10 proctors will be needed from approximately 8:30 a.m. to 10:15 a.m.

If you can help us, please contact Connie Dixon at 316-8245 x2002 or Tawnya Mathis at x2004.

Warm Regards,  
Tawnya Mathis  
School Counselor,  
[mathist@manateeschools.net](mailto:mathist@manateeschools.net)

## 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.



## FRONT OFFICE NOTE

### Kindergarten Round Up

Can you believe it's that time already? The Willis Elementary Kindergarten Round-Up has been set for Tuesday, April 8, 2014. The first session is from 9:00am - 12:00pm and the second session is from 4:00pm - 6:00pm.

Parents are encouraged to bring rising Kindergarten students for a visit to the school to meet prospective teachers for an evaluation. Parents can also complete registration materials and bring required documents for review (e.g. original birth certificate, proof of residency, immunization record, and proof of physical evaluation).

For further questions, please call the school at (941) 316-8245, x2009.

Date	Test	Grade/s
Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2014	FCAT Writes	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Only
Monday, April 14 - Thursday, April 17, 2014	FCAT	3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> & 5 <sup>th</sup>
Tuesday, April 22 - Thursday, April 24, 2014	Computer Based Math FCAT	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Only
Monday, April 28 - Thursday, May 8, 2014	SAT 10	Kindergarten 1 & 2

# SPECIALS



## Music

I want to congratulate the 3rd graders for a fantastic job with their holiday musical "December in Our Town"! I couldn't have asked for a better group of students to showcase in my first performance here at Willis.

Auditions were held on January 14th for the Manatee County Music Festival chorus for any 5th grader wishing to try out. The following students will represent Willis Elementary on May 13th at Manatee High School: Kristen Barbarito, Emma Correia, Charlie Curry, Katherine Kelly, and Elisa Moscone. Back up students are Andy Montgue and Hope Miller. Congratulations!

I've had a lot of questions about the upcoming Talent Show. Auditions will be sometime in April. Before Spring Break, I will send home audition information. Just be aware that this year, any student, any grade level may audition!

Christy Isaacs, Music Teacher  
Ext. 2079



## Math Lab

In the math lab we are working on practicing the skills that are being taught in the classroom. We use computers, manipulatives, work in groups, and do real world applications of math concepts.

The Math Lab isn't just about math. Currently the whole school is participating in recycling paper products. Each classroom collects their scrap paper and brings it to the math lab for collection. Each Wednesday 3 fourth grade students gather, weigh, and bring the scrap paper to the recycle bin outside of the school. So far we have recycled over 800 pounds of paper since November.

Jon H. Green  
Math Lab Teacher  
Ext. 2076

## Science

The Science Lab is off to a great start to the new grading period. First, please save your 2 liter empty soda bottles for our annual soda bottle rocket project. While we usually only do the project in a few grades, it's been such a hit in the past that it would be great for all the students to be able to participate. That's a lot of soda bottles! There are baskets outside my room for the collection and rinsing out the bottles first is always appreciated. Also, thank you to all the fourth grade parents who donated sandwich cookies for our phases of the moon activity. A fun and delicious time was had by all!

Fifth grade finished their exploration of what density is and how it is calculated. There were plenty of math and science skills involved. They did a great job! Third grade finished up their unit on plants by viewing and diagramming the parts of a flower, while the second grade reviewed the difference between basic needs of living things and wants. The first grade has started their space unit while the Kindergarten just finished space. It's always busy in the Willis Science Lab!

Amy Ross Bradl, Science Teacher  
Ext. 2021



# SPECIALS (cont.)

## Physical Education with Coach Morales!

[moralesj@manateeschools.net](mailto:moralesj@manateeschools.net)

Ext. x 2080

Grade	RUNNERS' CLUB TOP RUNNERS Name	# of Laps
5th	Owen Catelett	528
	Emma DeCastro	361
4th	Landon Antritt	425
	Kaitlyn Smith	212
3rd	Marc Ash	356
	Kaitlyn Duquette	434
2nd	Ethan Traeger	335
	Juliana Mattes	309
1st	Jake Morales	252
	Savannah Adams	250
K	Jaxon Lemus	279
	Reese Martin	201
Grade	RUNNERS CLUB TOTAL LAPS/MILES	
5th	9,539/1,908	
4th	6,048/1,210	
3rd	6,399/1,280	
2nd	10,504/2,100	
1st	4,869/974	
K	3,983/797	

Total Laps for School: 41,342 = 8,268 miles!



in the Media Center

February 3 to 11th, 2014

Daily 8:45am - 2:45pm

Purchase Days: Feb 6, 7, 10 & 11  
Open for Muffins for Mom at 7:15am!

To volunteer for "Book Fair Fiesta" sign up [here](#).

If you wish to volunteer at times other than for the Book Fair, the library can always use a few good parents! [Link here](#) to see days and times for general library assistance.

Mr. Sajewski, Media Center  
Ext. 2029



## Kindergarten

We are beginning our third quarter of kindergarten. The Kindergarten teachers are amazed at how much the students have grown physically and academically since the beginning of the school year. We are very proud of their accomplishments and look forward to the second half of the school year. Please help your child be successful by having them practice their reading skills and sight words every night.

In Math, we are finishing up with exploring addition and subtraction of numbers 0 through 10. We will move on to understanding numbers 11-19. During Language Arts, students are learning how storytellers use details to bring stories to life. Science has provided the opportunity to learn about energy and motion. In Social Studies, we will learn how to use and create a timeline.



Kenzie Carlino (K) is showing off her wreath made during the Holiday Craft day while visiting Mrs. Vandergraff's



Michael Merino (K) showing off his fine holiday artwork!



Reese Martin (K) is very proud of her snowman she made at her Holiday Party.

First grade Field Trip to Dakin Dairy Farm.



## 1st Grade

First grade had an amazing Winter season with a visit to Dakin Dairy Farm. The children enjoyed making homemade butter, tasting white & chocolate milk, watching the process of cows being milked, and our favorite part was feeding baby cows.

This past month the children have been focusing on addition and subtraction relationships in math. We will be moving into writing with opinion and persuasive letters. The children will also take a journey exploring more with characters and their feelings in stories. First graders are also working hard in the cafeteria with good manners and excellent lunchroom behavior.

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



Mrs. Nadeau's Class



Mrs. French's Class

## 2nd Grade

Second Grade is keeping busy as we transition into the second half of the school year. Students have had the opportunity to learn about the impact of various cultures in the United States, and to even learn more about their own culture and heritage.

We have also spent almost four months reading, writing, and studying non-fiction books. We are now switching back to fiction for a while, even though we know that great readers are always reading a mix of all genres. Lastly, we have been adding, subtracting, and even regrouping like crazy as we moved to three digit numbers! Our next unit practices time and money concepts which is a great hands-on skill to practice at home; however, don't forget that fluency of our basic facts is always important as continued practice!

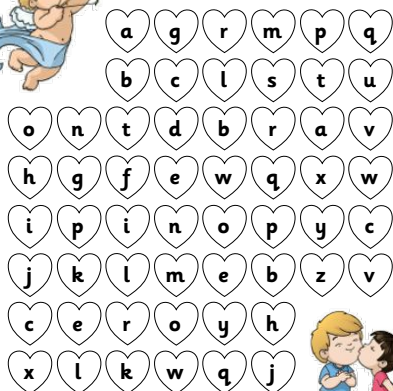
## 3rd Grade

Our third graders sure are working hard! In reading we are studying non-fiction text. We are paying close attention to the structures & features associated with scientific and technical texts. In math we will be moving from fractions to geometry & measurement. These units are rich with vocabulary. In science we are still studying plants, and we will be moving on to stars in our upcoming unit. Our writing units apply the elements we have learned in reading to our writing. As we prepare for the FCAT 2.0 in April we continue to build our reading stamina. FCAT 2.0 is a bit lengthier than most assessments that your child has taken in the past, and will require extended concentration. Please encourage your child to read every night for at least 20 minutes to help build their reading endurance!

## FUN & GAMES!

### Valentine Alphabet

Help Cupid's arrow find its way by coloring in the alphabet path through the hearts.



Copyright © www.ActivityVillage.co.uk - Keeping Kids Busy

### Valentine's Day Maze

These children want to meet up on Valentine's Day, but first they have to find a path through the maze. Can you help?



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### Valentine's Day Sudoku

Every row, column and mini-grid must contain the letters HEARTS. Don't guess - use logic!



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



Fourth Grade Students studied Native Americans of Florida by creating a Native American Mall project where they designed businesses such as a toy store, hardware store, housewares store, restaurant and a cinema. Come see their artwork which is on display in the 4th grade hallways!



Indian business posters from Mrs Santello's class.



Menu from Mrs Scherpf's class.

## 4th Grade

What an exciting month the 4th grade classes had in December! All the classes had a great time at their holiday parties and we would like to thank all the parents who helped out in each classroom to make them huge successes.

As we gear up for the coming FCAT Writes 2.0, it is important to point out the connection between reading and writing. One way some of our classes have done this is to begin to look at novel studies. Both Mrs. Santello's and Mrs. Scherpf's class enjoyed reading Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and have now begun The Lemonade War. In Mrs. Hartwig's class, the students are reading Frindle, and in both Mrs. Georgas and Mrs. Ross' class, the students have read Because of Winn Dixie. These novels give the students an opportunity to explore character traits and figurative language embedded in a real reading experience. One additional way the students are learning about their texts is through the opportunity to discuss them in Book Clubs, just like adults would do in theirs. (Think Oprah's Book Clubs!).

## 5th Grade

In math, the fifth grade students are currently working on adding and subtracting fractions with unlike denominators in math. You can support this by exposing them to fractions in the world around them (e.g. cooking, parts of a mile, tools, measurements). In science they are learning about forms of energy. Finally, in reading, the students continue to work on topics such as main idea, details, cause and effect.

Please be sure to talk to your child about what he/she is learning and reinforce the skills at home. Thank you for your support!

### SAVE THE DATE FIFTH GRADE FAMILIES!

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

WILLIS ELEMENTARY HAS A NEW WEBSITE!

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

## **THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS IN EDUCATION!**

### **Platinum (\$1000+)**

**Burnett's Wholesale Nursery, Inc.  
Coldwell Banker, Tami Cashi & Lori Cashi-  
Haught  
Green Group  
Hornback Chiropractic & Wellness  
Maslar Renovation and Design  
Moricz & Varone Orthodontic**

### **Gold (\$500+)**

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PostNet  
TFN Financial Consulting Network, Mike  
Traver, CFP  
Keller Williams Realty, Holly Pascarella  
SmileWorks Kids Denistry  
The Godard School  
Rodan & Fields Dermatologist, Julie Berry  
First Physicians Group, Dr. Nicholas Sutura,  
MD.  
APC Pediatrics  
Primrose School @ Lakewood Ranch  
Geckos**

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

### **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](mailto:shaklik@me.com).

## **Calendar of Events**

### 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 (7:30-8:30am)  
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 (Uniform NOT required)
- 24 SAC Meeting (6:00pm)
- 25-26 FCAT Writing (4th Grade only)
- 26 Runner's Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)

### March

- 4 All Pro Dad's Breakfast
- 5 Runner's Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)  
Dress Down Day (\$2)  
**EARLY RELEASE (1:15pm)**
- 7 P.T.O Meeting (2:00pm/Cafeteria)
- 8 GECKO GALA
- 9 Daylight Savings (Spring Forward!)
- 12 Runner's Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
- 17 SAC Meeting (6:00pm)
- 19 Runner's Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
- 20 Tijuana Flats Spirit Night
- 21 End of Third Quarter
- 24-28 Spring Break (NO SCHOOL)
- 31 Records Day (NO SCHOOL)

### April

- 2 Runner's Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)  
Dress Down Day (\$2)
- 3 Gecko Awards
- 4 **EARLY RELEASE (12:30pm)**  
Crispers Spirit Night
- 8 All Pro's Dad Breakfast  
Kindergarten Round-up (9-12 and 4-6pm)
- 9 Runner's Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
- 11 P.T.O. Meeting (2:00pm/Cafeteria)

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