The Gecko Gazette

Robert E. Willis Elementary School

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

Feb. 2015 Issue #3

ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

Third quarter is moving right along and everyone is working hard. These days will get 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 standards. We see this hard work every day as we visit and observe the classrooms. This year 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students will be taking a new assessment, the FSA (Florida Standards Assessment), which will replace the FCAT.

Our 4th and 5th grade students will be taking a <u>writing</u> portion of the FSA on March 3rd. Our 4th and 5th grade teachers have been working hard to implement a new writing curriculum to help our students be successful on the new writing assessment.

Third, fourth and fifth grade students' learning in <u>Reading and Math</u> will also be measured by the FSA. The testing window for 3rd and 4th grade FSA Reading and Math will be March 23rd through March 26th. Our 5th grade students FSA Reading and Math testing window will be April 13th to May 8th.

<u>Science</u> mastery will be assessed in 5th grade using the Science FCAT 2.0. Fifth grade FCAT 2.0 Science assessment will be given on April 20th and 21st.

As students and teachers prepare for the new standardized assessment there are many questions as to how the FSA will compare to the FCAT 2.0. You can learn more about the FSA by visiting FSAassessments.org.

Please ensure that your child receives several good nights of sleep prior to testing dates and during the testing window. Proper sleep and a healthy breakfast can make a difference in your child's performance. Also, be sure that your child arrives at school on time every morning during testing. A stressful morning can be a huge distraction for students. If your child is ill during testing it is best to keep them home, make-up dates are built into the testing window.

We are in need of proctors to assist the teachers while they administer the standardized assessments. Proctors are needed in 3rd-5th grade. If you are interested in proctoring please contact Mrs. Catena at <u>catenak@manateeschools.net</u> or Mrs. Bradford at <u>bradfordc@manateeschools.net</u>.

On another note please remember that supervision for students is not provided prior to 8:00am. We have had an increasing number of students over the last few weeks dropped off before 8:00am. 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 and Michele Danowski, Assistant Principal

P.T.O. Corner

The 2014 Holidays at Willis concluded with the school lobby being transformed into a winter wonderland! The Gingerbread Shop was an outstanding success and families enjoyed having their picture taken with Santa! The children enjoyed purchasing many treasures to share with their families and friends, resulting in a wonderful \$3,000 contribution to our school. Thank you to each and every volunteer who worked and gave his or her energy, time, and creative ideas.

In January, we were able to send eight teachers to the Florida Educational Technology Conference! The teachers attended numerous workshops regarding integrating technology into the curriculum. They are now sharing their ideas with colleagues at Willis and have already implemented some innovative technology lessons in their classrooms. We are thrilled they were able to attend this inspirational professional development opportunity. To pay for the conference, \$10,000 from the Walk-A-Thon funds were used, out of the almost \$50,000 raised by wonderful students during that event. We believe that investing in our teachers is one of the most impactful ways to use our funds.

Our next big annual fundraiser, The Gecko Gala, is right around the corner! Please "Save the Date" for the evening of Saturday, March 14th, 2015. Information about the event will be coming home soon. Please see the article included here for additional Gala details. The funds from the Gecko Gala, along with remaining funds from the Walk-A-Thon, will be used to pay for mounting the projectors in the Kindergarten Wing, which will cost approximately \$35,000.

Friday, February 6th will be our next P.T.O. meeting. We look forward to seeing you at 2:00p.m. in the Cafeteria. The Willis Elementary P.T.O.'s mission is to help raise funds to provide our children with the best educational experience we can offer them. This school year, a majority of P.T.O. funds are being used to for the FETC teacher training, as noted above, and mounting the projectors in the Kindergarten wing. The P.T.O. also funds items like landscaping, purchasing essential classroom supplies, Muffins for Mom, Teacher Appreciation Week, Donuts for Dad, Back to School Night, Kindergarten Play Date, and many other events that make our school a fabulous place for our children. The P.T.O. board relies heavily on its parent community to make these events a success.

We couldn't do all these wonderful events without YOU. Thank you for supporting Willis Elementary and enhancing each and every child's education.

<u>Shannon McCoy</u>, Vice President <u>Tara Bergstrom-Merino</u>, Treasurer

P.T.O. MEETING

Please join us for the next P.T.O. meeting on:

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2015

at 2:00p.m. in the Cafeteria.

We look forward to seeing you there! Please contact <u>Ashley Henderson</u> for more information.

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. Turner (K) Mr. Violette (1) Mrs. Piper (3)

Please remember to keep clipping those Box Tops! Our next collection is coming up and the winning classrooms will celebrate with sno-cones! Please submit your Box Tops by:

FEBRUARY 19, 2015

Thank you for your support!

THANK YOU TO OUR SPIRIT NIGHT SPONSORS:

★ JUMPIN FUN★ CHICK-FIL-A



Mark your calendars and watch out for the Florida flamingos!

This year's Gecko Gala will be held on <u>March 14th</u> <u>from 7:00 -10:00pm</u> at the amazing Lake Club's Clubhouse. This is an adult only event that will include a silent auction, food, drinks, and live music.

So far we have some great auction items in addition to the incredible classroom baskets, including (4) One Day Magic Kingdom Park Hoppers, as well as Sea World Orlando passes and Aquatica passes. We also have a week at IMG Summer Camp! Fabulous photography sessions, golfing foursomes, jewelry, spa and restaurant gift cards and so much more will be available to bid on.

Great news! Once again, you will be able to bid on silent auction items via your mobile device on the day of the event. Representatives from Auctions by Cellular will be on site to help with bidding. This will also allow those who cannot make the event to bid on items from anywhere. More info to come!

Gala corporate sponsorship opportunities are also available! If you own, work at, or know of a business that would like to make a donation towards the Gala, please contact Bianca Lawrence at <u>richandbianca@verizon.net</u>.

This is a great fundraiser to help support Willis and our children's education. It is a fun evening so we hope that you will attend. For more information please visit <u>www.williselementarypto.com</u>.



Willis Teachers Attend FETC 2015

In mid January, one teacher from each grade level, as well as the media specialist and tech lab manager, were able to attend the Florida Education Technology Conference in Orlando. This annual conference specializes in professional development for educators desiring to learn about integrating technology into the curriculum. There were literally hundreds of sessions to choose from, multiple keynotes, access to industry-leading experts, and an ed-tech-specific exhibit hall that gave our teachers new perspectives on their classrooms.

Our teachers came back with fresh ideas and innovative strategies to share with their colleagues and implement in our classrooms. The P.T.O. was thrilled to help send our teachers to such an outstanding professional development opportunity.

P.T.O. BOARD MEMBERS 2014-2015

Yazzie Bruss - President yazziebruss@gmail.com

Shannon McCoy - Vice President <u>smccoy@att.net</u>

Bianca Lawrence - Vice President ablaw@netzero.net

Tara Merino - Treasurer tarabergstrom@yahoo.com

Ashley Henderson - Secretary ashenderson321@yahoo.com

P.T.O. WEBSITE

CLINIC NEWS!

We are off to a Healthy Start for 2015! Have you heard of the **9 5 2 1 0** campaign? It is a new way to help you live a healthier lifestyle. There are some fabulous ways to make us think more about improving our lives and creating some new healthy habits.

- ★ 9 Hours of sleep per day. (Adults should get 7-9 hours).
- ★ 5 Servings of fruits and vegetables per day. Are you doing this?
- ★ 2 Hours of screen time per day. How much computer game time or TV time are you doing after work or school?

- ★ 1 Hour of physical activity per day.
- ★ O Sugar added beverages per day. Read those labels for "hidden sugars."

What small change can you add now to your daily routine to get to a better lifestyle for you or your family? To learn more about the 9 5 2 1 0 plan you can visit <u>www.95210forhealth.com</u>.

And of course ... remember to wash those hands to prevent the spread of germs!

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

Do You Think Your Child is Gifted?

A gifted child is:

- Someone who has the potential for an exceptional level of performance in one or more areas of expression
- + About 5% of the student population
- + 3 million children, nationwide

For more information on the School District of Manatee County's Gifted Program, plan to attend an **informational seminar** for parents provided by staff from the Exceptional Student Education and Student Services Department as part of the Exceptional student Education Parent Night and Agency Fair. For more information <u>click here</u>.

Thursday, February 26, 2015 6:15 to 7:30 p.m.

The seminar will be held at the MTI Main Campus, Wagner Auditorium located at 6305 State Road 70 East, Bradenton, FL 34203. For additional information and questions, call Susan Faller at 941-751-6550 ext. 2283 or email fallers@manateeschools.net.



CAN YOU HELP?

The Clinic is in need of small size underwear (size 6 and 8) for both boys and girls. Please drop donations off at the front desk. Thank you!

> ALL PRO DAD Monthly Breakfast

Feb. 12th at 7:30am Willis Cafeteria

Guest Speaker: Clint Hurdle, Manager Pittsburgh Pirates

> Dads & Kids invited! <u>RSVP</u> here.

FOR THE LOVE OF ART

If you visit the Willis Elementary School between now and April, please stop and admire the watercolor art display on the second floor foyer outside the art room. It took the fourth graders several weeks from rough sketches to final detailing to complete. Four themes were chosen, food, musical instruments, animals and flowers. The paintings really came out nice. I would like to hold onto the paintings here at school because, in April a small local art gallery/ restaurant has offered to display them for the month of April.

The owners of "<u>The Arts & Eats Restaurant and</u> <u>Gallery</u>," saw a few of the paintings and immediately offered to sponsor an exhibition, which will include an opening celebration on an upcoming Sunday afternoon. Their restaurant is located at 1114 12th Street W. in Bradenton in the Village of the Arts. The Arts & Eats Restaurant and Gallery is highly rated and features live music nightly, with the owners occasionally joining in to play and/or sing. Willis students who are aspiring musicians will be invited to bring their instruments for a jam session at the opening celebration.

In addition, the fifth grade has completed the first part of their paper mache faces. We are now in the process of creating and painting the faces. When the faces are complete they will also be part of the art exhibit at The Arts & Eats Restaurant and Gallery. I will post more details when they become available.

On a separate note, I am seeking a family or

business that

would like to sponsor a photographic exhibit of our a n n u a l H all o w e e n parade, which will be displayed along our cafeteria hallway. The sponsor(s) will be asked to cover the cost of printing and framing the

MUSIC

I want to say congratulations to all of the third graders for their performance of Snow Jubilee! They all worked so diligently to make it a fantastic show.

Coming soon is the 2015 Manatee County Elementary All County Music Festival. Willis Elementary entered five choral students and fifteen Orff/Drum ensemble students, all from the fifth grade! The show will be held at Manatee High school February, 25th at 6:30 PM.

As you are aware, the state has mandated that all students enrolled in a music class K-12 must take the End of Course (EOC) Music Assessment. Students are in the process now of taking their second quarter music test (during class) to help them prepare for the EOC in May. When your child has some extra time in their schedule please go to my Willis Elementary website (on the Willis Elementary page "Staff," "Special Areas," "Music, Christy Isaacs," and "Sample Tests") to study for the test by grade. There are two tests for each grade level, one for quarter 1 and a PowerPoint for quarter 2. Also, if you look at the "Study Guide" page, I have some tips to help prepare for the tests. Just working with your child once a month for 10 minutes will be beneficial for them.

> <u>Christy Isaacs</u>, Music Teacher x2079



Physical Education with Coach Morales!

<u>moralesj@manateeschools.net</u> Ext. x 2080

Grade	RUNNERS' CLUB TOP RUNNERS Name		# of Laps
5th	Landon Antritt Mckenzie Schmucker		346 220
4th	Bryce Brielmann Kaitlyn Duquette		344 286
3rd	Logan Catlett Sophie Lemus		331 356
2nd	Jake Morales Savannah Adams		288 304
1 st	Jaxon Lemus Morgan Cunningham		383 196
К	Davis Hunn Averie Gaines		190 192
Grade		RUNNERS CLUB TOTAL LAPS/MILES	
5th		4,393	
4th		5,887	
3rd		7,683	
2nd		5,593	
1 st		5,943	
К		2,162	

Total Laps for School: 31,661 = 6,332 miles!



Dear Parent/Guardian,

We are thrilled to be supporting the American Heart Association to help teach our students and families how to take care of their hearts through the Jump Rope For Heart and Hoops For Heart program. What does your child get out of participating?

YOUR CHILD learns about the importance of the heart—how it works, and how to take care of it.

YOUR CHILD reaches out to friends and family.

YOUR CHILD feels good for making a difference in people's lives! Funds raised support the heart association's research and education initiatives that save lives in our community.

We hope you are as excited as we are to support our students in this important experience. If you have any questions or would like to volunteer, please let me know. Visit <u>www.heart.org/jump</u> or <u>www.heart.org/hoops</u> to get started today!

EVENT DATE: Week of March 2nd, 2015

DONATION DATE: March 20th, 2015

FOR MORE INFORMATION LINK HERE!



2nd grader Andrew B. (L) learning about properties and matter - mixing cornstarch and water which takes on the properties of both a liquid and a solid. Other 2nd graders (R) dissecting owl pellets.



K student, Amari J., learning about "Forces and Motion" by testing Newton's laws of gravity. Regardless of volume or mass of a sphere, the rate of speed remains the same.

SCIENCE



Here's what we've been doing in the Science Lab the past few weeks

Fifth grade worked on the properties of matter and is moving on to measuring force, distance, and the amount of work that is done. Fourth grade has been learning about space by simulating the phases of the moon and the lunar surface. Third grade has started their unit on mass, weight, and volume. Second grade will be moving on to their unit on living things after a brief review of the stars and sun. First grade is starting space while the Kindergarteners explore force and motion.

Thank you to the parents and students who think of me when they find something interesting in their home or yard to share with my classes. The students are always excited when they get to see something like a wasp nest, a snake skin, or a bird nest up close. I appreciate your interest in the science lab and look forward to more of these shares. As always, if you have any questions or comments regarding our science program, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Mrs. Bradl, Science Teacher x2021

Kindergarten

We are beginning our third quarter of kindergarten. The kindergarten teachers are amazed at how much the students have grown physically and academically. We are very proud of their accomplishments. We 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 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.



1st Grade

Our first grade classes attended a wonderful field trip in December to Dakin Dairy Farm. The children enjoyed homemade butter, tasting white and chocolate milk, watching the process of cows being milked, and their favorite part were the pig races.

Our first grade classes will be traveling to Sarasota in January to attend another field trip at Van Wezel Performing Arts Theatre. They will be watching Fly Guy and other amazing stories.

February will have our first graders moving into comparing numbers in Math through greater and lesser than. So many exciting things happening at Willis in First Grade!

2nd Grade

Our second graders have been eager and excited learners this past quarter. We have come to this year's halfway mark. This turns our students from "new second graders" to "almost third graders" and we are ready to dig deeper into our curriculum.

Moving forward with Math, we will be switching gears to money, time, and measurement. Money and time have proven tricky to students in the past, considering the digital age we live in. Some excellent ways to reinforce these skills at home can be as simple as bringing out the piggy banks and analog clocks, plus there must be "an app for that!" These are great units for kids to see real world application first hand. It is important to continue to review addition and subtraction to keep these skills fresh.

In Reading, we will continue analyzing informational texts to identify the main idea by using key details as evidence to prove our thinking. When you are reading with your child at home, you can practice this skill by identifying the main idea of individual paragraphs along with the main idea of the entire text. We will carry this over into our writing, as we write our own informational texts. Students will be required to include text features, such as diagrams and captions, into their own writing.

Our students have really been enjoying receiving all of their fabulous Walk-a-thon prizes! We are looking forward to the upcoming spring book fair, in which all students will receive a \$5 book of their choice for free! This is possible because the teachers voted to donate a portion of their A+ recognition money from the state to the students. We are looking forward to another great quarter and second half of the school year. Thank you for all of your continued support in your child's education.



Dakin Dairy Farm Fun!



Mrs. French's 2nd grade class at the annual Fire Safety presentation.





3rd Grade

Third grade is rolling into the 3rd quarter on all cylinders! We are gaining momentum as we prepare for the FSAs and watch our 3rd graders take off!

Our reading is focusing on a variety of skills from fiction to nonfiction and test-taking strategies. We are also working with words, especially taking a look at some common prefixes, suffixes, and root words. A solid foundation in phonics skills and vocabulary is critical to comprehending complex text. Please make sure your child is putting in some high-quality reading time every day.

Math is steamrolling through fractions and into measurement. The FSA will cover all of the topics addressed in math this year. Review place value, data, and of course multiplication facts to help prepare your child for testing.

We will be visiting Felts Preserve in May to do some bird-watching and see some native Florida wildlife. We are looking forward to to this trip to reward all of our hard work!

If you have any questions about how you can help prepare your child for the FSA please contact your child's teacher.

The Third Grade Team

4th Grade

In math, we are continuing to work on fractions, and heading towards decimals and percentages.

In social studies, we are continuing to study and analyze Florida's role in the Civil War and Reconstruction period.

In science, we are now studying how the environment impacts plants, animals, and humans. Then we will begin studying Earth, space and seasonal changes.

All fourth graders are continuing to work hard on preparing for our upcoming FSA writing test. Keep up the great work fourth graders!

Keli Georgas, Terri Holbrook, Emily Ross & Lisa Scherpf



MUFFINS FOR MOMS!

Muffins for Moms was a huge success! Thank you to our volunteers and to Tropicana for providing free orange juice and First Watch providing coffee and muffins at cost. About 800+ people attended and we served over 1,000 muffins! Lots of sales followed at the book fair as well. Thank you for your tremendous



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5th Grade

The fifth graders have been very busy in math class. The students have been learning about fractions and gaining a deeper understanding of what fractions are, as well as learning how to add, subtract, multiply and divide fractions. They have also been working on test taking strategies, and learning the format of the new Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) test.

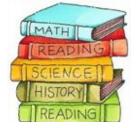
In science, students have been learning about force and motion. They also were engaged in a learning experience about our environment and living things in our area. We were lucky enough to go to Coquina Beach in Bradenton to learn about sea creatures with a dip netting activity. We took a nature walk and identified trees and plants. The guides taught the students about creatures found in the estuaries. It was a little chilly, but still a great learning experience.

In reading we have been studying folktales and realistic fiction. We are learning to synthesize information and quote accurately from the text to support their answers. This also connects to our writing program.

An area that parents can help at home is by teaching your child computer keyboarding skills, as some of the end of school exams will be completed on a computer. Examples of things they should know: how to make a capital letter, how to use spell check, how to indent a paragraph, and using the shift and tab keys.

We also ask that you be sure your child comes to class prepared daily with notebook paper, pencils, agenda, homework, as many children are out of paper and pencils, and our classroom supplies are nearly diminished. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

The Fifth Grade Team



Nolan Middle School e-STEAM Academy Informational Meeting*

<u>Feb. 10th</u> <u>5:30-6:30pm</u>

Nolan Cafeteria 6615 Greenbrook Blvd. Bradenton

* a technology program for rising 6th graders

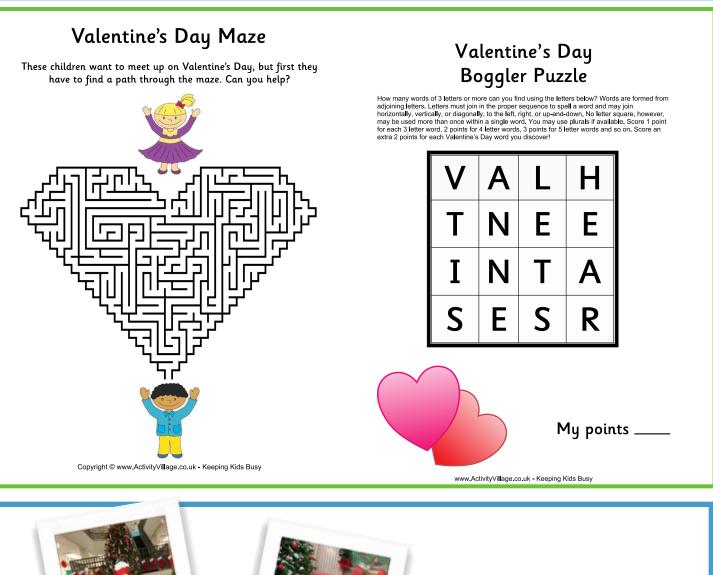
MEDIA CENTER - BOOK FAIR!

Our Under the Sea Book Fair continues through Monday, February 9th. This is such a great event to add to your child's home library, raise funds for the school, and allow your child the opportunity to independently select books they will love to read.

We look forward to seeing you there!

FUN & GAMES!

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES CAN BE FOUND ON THE PTO WEBSITE HERE.





A fun time was had by all, but especially the children, being able to make purchases at this years Gingerbread Shop. Thank you to all who made it possible!

2014 Gingerbread Shop

THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS IN EDUCATION!

Platinum (\$1000+)

APC Pediatrics

Ian Cutmore, Keller Williams Realty Lakewood IMG Hornback Chiropractic & Wellness Kumon Moricz & Varone Orthodontics

Gold (\$500+)

Kristin M. Culliton, Atchley International Realty Dermatology Specialists Eagle Home Mortgage Florida Mediation & Conference Center Gallagher & Hagopian Jess Jewelers Lakewood Ranch Family & Cosmetic Dentistry Lil Divas and Dudes LWR Main Street Nerium International Primrose School at Lakewood Ranch Spice Exchange Steiner Law Offices

Silver (\$250+)

First Physicians Group Let's Create Art Markowski Investments Monsters Lacrosse Academy PostNet

FOR MORE INFO ON BECOMING A BUSINESS PARTNER, LINK <u>HERE</u>

GECKO GAZETTE

For questions concerning <u>The Gecko Gazette</u>, please contact P.T.O. Newsletter Editor Christine Shaklik at <u>shaklik@me.com</u>.

Calendar of Events

<u>February</u>

- 2-9 BOOK FAIR (see details within)
- 6 P.T.O. Meeting (2:00pm in Cafeteria)
- 11 Runner's Club (7:30-8:00am) Dress Down Day (\$2) EARLY RELEASE (1:15pm)
- 12 All ProDad Breakfast (7:30am)
- 13 Brick Orders Due
- 16 NO SCHOOL- President's Day
- 18 Runner's Club (7:30-8:00am) Freddy's Spirit Night
- 19 Box Top Collection Due Date
- 23 SAC Meeting (6:00p.m.)
- 25 Runner's Club (7:30-8:00am)
- 26 Parent Information Seminar/Gifted Children (6:15-7:30pm) at MTI

March

- 4 Runner's Club (7:30-8:00a.m.)
- Runner's Club (7:30-8:00am)
 Dress Down Day (\$2)
 EARLY RELEASE (1:15pm)
- 14 Willis Elementary Gala
- 17 All ProDad Breakfast (7:30am) Spring Pictures
- 18 Runner's Club (7:30-8:00am)
- 23 SAC Meeting (6:00p.m.)
- 25 Runner's Club (7:30-8:00am)
- 26 End of Third Quarter
- 27-April 6: NO SCHOOL (Spring Break)

<u>April</u>

- 8 Runner's Club (7:30-8:00am)
- 10 EARLY RELEASE (12:30pm)
- 15 Runner's Club (7:30-8:00am)
- 22 Runner's Club (7:30-8:00am)
- 27 SAC Meeting (6:00p.m.)
- 29 Jumpin Fun for4th and 5th Grade (6-9pm)

May

- EARLY RELEASE (12:30)
- 4-8 Staff Appreciation
- 6 Runner's Club (7:30-8:00am)
- 7 Box Tops Collection
- 8 P.T.O. Meeting (2:00pm in Cafeteria) For more information please link here.