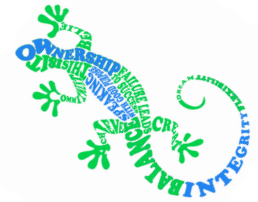


The Gecko Gazette

Robert E. Willis Elementary School

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



May 2015
Issue #4

ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

It is hard to believe that the end of the school year has arrived! Ten months have passed very quickly!

The year's end always brings with it a tremendous sense of accomplishment. So many things have been accomplished this year! From the Willis Walk-A-Thon near the beginning of the year to the Fifth Grade Celebration (which is scheduled for June 2nd), our students have been involved in an extraordinary number of activities. Of course, we should not forget the tremendous amount of learning, which has taken place during the year. Our students and staff worked extremely hard to embrace the new Florida State Standards. Throughout all of these activities and learning our students have demonstrated great character.

Although summer is time away from school, it is important to continue to support your child so they maintain the gains made throughout the school year. Please encourage your child to read daily, either reading a favorite book or a favorite comic strip. Reinforce students writing skills by encouraging them to write about summer adventures. Students may write about a special trip, a day at summer camp, or maybe about how they explored nature in the backyard. Whenever they write ask them to site specific examples of that particular adventure. Practicing math facts is equally important, using

flash cards and explaining how they know the answer to a mathematical problem are fun ways to keep those skills sharp.

To our fifth graders - congratulations on your achievement! The Willis staff wishes you all the best as you move to middle school. We know that each of them has gained a firm foundation for their education life while at Willis. We hope that our students have embraced the Eight Keys of Excellence and carry those values forward in their lives.

Parents, the staff would like to thank you for your support and for the guidance that you have provided for your child(ren) all year. Please take a moment this summer to celebrate your child's(ren's) academic achievements.

We wish everyone a safe summer break! Most importantly, relax and enjoy your family and friends this summer. We look forward to seeing our returning Gecko's on the first day of school, August 24, 2015.

Happy Summer,

Bill Stenger, Principal and
Michele Danowski, Assistant Principal

[2015/16 SCHOOL CALENDAR](#)

[Link Here!](#)



It's springtime here at Willis Elementary and we can't believe there are only a few weeks left of this school year. As we all reflect on the past year, we hope everyone was able to enjoy some of our fabulous events our volunteers made possible this year. Highlights include our largest fundraising event Walk-A-Thon, holiday magic at the Gingerbread Shop, special memories at Muffins with Mom and Donuts with Day, our various Spirit Nights, a very special evening at the Gecko Gala, a weeklong celebration of our fabulous staff with Staff Appreciation, and of course the Talent Show and Field Day that are always student favorites.

The P.T.O. Board would especially like to thank all of our Committee Chairs who volunteered so much of their time, energy, and talents to our children and school. These events, activities, and fundraisers would not be possible without these amazing volunteers.

Our fundraising events netted a profit for our school of over \$85,000 this year, which has really helped our school and students blossom. Some highlights of how we used these funds are as follows:

- ★ \$7K to provide an opportunity for 8 teachers to attend training at the FETC conference
- ★ \$6K went to supplement the school budget to allow teachers to purchase necessary items for their classrooms
- ★ \$5K to fund all of our fabulous community events such as Muffins with Mom, Donuts for Dad, Runner's Club, and Field Day
- ★ \$3K to purchase new library books
- ★ \$2K on landscaping and maintaining the lawn
- ★ \$30K has been earmarked to mount the remaining projectors
- ★ \$10K has been earmarked to purchase and mount ceiling fans in our outside gym area

★ \$3K has been earmarked for a special training for Ms. Isaacs.

During the summer, the projectors will be mounted in each of the downstairs classrooms so that each classroom in the building will have an interactive white board and projector/sound system installed to enhance instruction. We will be sending several teachers to incredible training sessions, as we continue our mission to provide development opportunities. In addition, Ms. Isaacs, our incredible music teacher will have an enriching music training filled with ideas to bring back to our students. We also look forward to our landscaping being maintained throughout the rainy season so there will be less maintenance required in August.

Be sure to take a stroll in the front walkway of the building. The commemorative bricks have been installed and they look fabulous!

Also, your P.T.O. is already starting to plan for next year! We encourage you to take a look at the opportunities available and see what may spark your interest. There is something for everyone. Click [HERE](#) to see some of the volunteer committees. We also encourage you to reach out to any member of the P.T.O. Board if you are interested in getting involved, but aren't sure where to start!

We want to thank each Willis family for making this an outstanding school year. Savor your summertime and we look forward to seeing you in August!

[Shannon McCoy](#), Vice President
[Tara Bergstrom-Merino](#), Treasurer

THANK YOU TO OUR SPIRIT NIGHT SPONSORS:

- ★ CHICK-FIL-A
- ★ FREDDY'S
- ★ JUMPIN FUN SPORTS &
- ★ MENCHIES

10 YEARS OF GECKO GALAS!

The year 2015 marks the ten year anniversary of Willis Elementary's annual fundraiser, the Gecko Gala. This event has seen many themes and venues over the years, but has always remained true to its character to raise funds for the school, students and the faculty.

From the start, the Gecko Gala has always been a fun and fabulous event. With its different themes, and changing venues, the entire Willis family looks forward to the Gala every year. You may not know this, but the inaugural event was an evening gown/black-tie affair at the Lakewood Ranch Country Club. Other years it has been held at the Polo Grill, Gold Coast and even in the school lobby with themes such as Denim and Diamonds and Spring into Action. Regardless of the theme or location, the Gecko Gala has always brought the Willis Community together to raise money for the school in a fun and festive environment.

This year's Flamingo themed Gecko Gala was another huge success. Not only because we netted over \$18,000 for the school, but we had so many wonderful companies sponsor us. Thank you to Lakewood Ranch Family & Cosmetic Dentistry, Golf Car Outlet, Arsenault Dermatology, Coldwell Banker's Lori & Tami Cashi, Jess Jewelers, and Cleaning Plus Cleaning. We had over 100 items this year on our on-line auction, comprising of 40 Classroom Baskets and 60+ auction items that were auction to the highest bidder. There was something for everyone: golf foursomes, theme park tickets, summer camps, exclusive dinners, signed memorabilia and much more. A big thank you to everyone who came out to enjoy the evening, all of our bidders, sponsors, donors and a special thank you to Neil & Jenny Hunn for sponsoring us at the Lake Club.

The funds from this Gecko Gala will be used to purchase and install fans for the outside gym area, purchase instructional books for our teachers, and to send several teachers to training over the summer. A small portion will also go to purchasing replacement recreational equipment for the playground and to help pay for special events like Staff Appreciation Week, Field Day, and the Talent Show.

Thank you to everyone who helped with this event. The Gala would not have been successful without the ongoing efforts made by those who volunteered. Your help, time and donations were so amazing and we cannot thank you enough!

[Ashley Henderson](#)

P.T.O. Secretary & Gala Chair



BOX TOPS

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

Mrs. Ouelette (K)

Mrs. Scherpf (4)

Mrs. Richards (5)

Please remember to keep clipping those Box Tops over the summer. Thank you for your support!

VOLUNTEER BREAKFAST!

All volunteers are invited to an "Appreciation Breakfast" on Thursday, June 4, 2015 from

8:30 - 9:30am in the school cafeteria.

Please RSVP to Shannon McCoy at smccoy@att.net.

On the Lake!

"On the lake! On the lake!" is a favorite expression you may have heard our students chanting recently as our Walk-a-thon (WAT) celebrations came to a conclusion last week.

Early morning on May 8th, Principal Stenger and Coach Morales boarded the hand-built raft to spend the day "on the lake" behind the school. Every student in the school was able to lob tennis balls via potato launchers at them during lunch. This fulfilled their pledge for reaching our Walk-a-thon fundraising goal of \$50,000. Over 100 students earned a special picnic held at the same time, with priority lake viewing. Hamburgers, cheeseburgers, hot dogs, and snow cones were prepared and served by our dedicated volunteers.

The day prior to "on the lake," we had approximately 80 students earn a special movie and snack for raising funds for our annual WAT. K-3rd grade students enjoyed watching Rio while 4-5th grades viewed Big Hero 6.

Congratulations Geckos on your incredible fundraising efforts!

Staff Appreciation

Thanks to the many incredibly generous Lakewood Ranch businesses and parents, Staff Appreciation Week 2015 was a huge success!

The Willis Staff enjoyed delicious salads and sandwiches donated by Shane Catlett at Jimmy John's and Chris Waldron at Chili's on Monday. Morrish and Stewart Orthodontics so kindly donated lunch for our staff on Tuesday. "Sweet Treat Day" on Wednesday couldn't have been any sweeter, thanks to the yummy cookies from Mark Dennis at PDQ and a beautiful cookie cake from Julie Katchen at Great American Cookies. Moricz and Varone Orthodontics even sent an ice-cream truck over to Willis with free treats for the entire staff, and Margarita Valenzuela at Culver's provided free treat coupons for all of the staff! Finally, the O'Neill Family at Dunkin' Donuts started the day off right with hot coffee for the entire staff at Friday's breakfast.

Every day of the week, 5 staff members' names were drawn, and the winners received a gift card to one of their favorite places. The wonderful parents who donated sweet treats, healthy snacks, breakfast items, gift cards, and their time and energy deserve a huge "THANK YOU" as well.

We have such amazing teachers and staff at Willis, and they deserved a special week. They were all very appreciative and thankful. Thanks again to all who contributed!



Mr. Green assists Kaitlyn Danowski, Grade 3, as she launches her tennis ball toward Mr. Stenger and Coach Morales - getting some advice from her mother and our Assistant Principal, Mrs. Danowski!



Alec Henderson, Grade 3, getting ready for some Gecko fun "on the lake"!

FRONT OFFICE NEWS

CLINIC NEWS!

Did you know skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the U.S.? It is also the most preventable cancer. Most sun damage occurs from day-to-day activities when we don't think about spending time in the sun. We might just be playing or doing yard work and not realize how much sun exposure we are getting. When we plan to spend a day at the beach or go on a boat for the day, we are more likely to think about being in the sun and putting on sunscreen.

We need to use sunscreen *daily* to prevent sunburn and exposure to the UV rays that

damage our skin. Select a sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or above that is broad spectrum. Don't forget to apply sunscreen to your feet, ears, neck; to reapply often; and that even if there is not direct sun, the water reflects the sun rays, giving you an "extra dose" of sunshine.

So, slip on a shirt, slop on some sunscreen, slap on your hat, sport some sunglasses to protect your eyes and **STAY SAFE and HEALTHY!!!**

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

FSA and FCAT Testing Complete

Our students have worked very hard this year. Our teachers and staff have also worked hard to do everything they could to help the students be prepared for state-wide testing and all other year-end assessments. I believe we have created the best possible testing environment for our students.

I would especially like to thank all of the parents, family members, school staff, and District staff who proctored for our tests this year. We appreciate the help of this group of volunteers. You are a critical part of our team.

[Christine Bradford](#), Testing Coordinator

GECKO Care Registration

Enrollment for the 2015-2016 Before School and After School Program has begun. If you would like to register your child for next year's Gecko Care program, please contact the front office for registration forms.

Our program is staffed by certified teachers and trained paraprofessionals. Morning care is offered from 7:00am to 8:05pm, and after care is provided from school dismissal until 6:00pm.

If you have any questions about our program, please contact Christine Bradford at x2003.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Congratulations to our Robert E. Willis Elementary Track Team that competed in the Elementary School Track Championships held at Bayshore High School on April 25th, 2015. They participated in the 400 meter run against other schools in Manatee County. Only three boys and girls from third, fourth, and fifth grades were permitted to compete from each school. Shown here with coaches [Mary Quinn](#) and [Jason Morales](#).



2015 Willis Track Team



Slime City!

2015 TRACK TEAM RESULTS 400 METERS		
	3rd Grade	Times
GIRLS	ISABELLA SANCHEZ (1st)*	1:19.42
	SOPHIA LEMUS (3rd)	1:21.76
	BRANDI MASLAR (4th)	1:22.21
BOYS	GABRIEL JUDY	1:23
	KEAGAN DUQUETTE	1:24
	KYLE VAUGHN	1:25
	4th Grade	
GIRLS	KAITLYN DUQUETTE (2nd)	1:17.56
	GABRIELA TRAVER (15th)	1:23.91
	KATIE ECKSTROM (26th)	1:29.64
BOYS	JUSTIN MILLICAN (5th)	1:13.55
	COOPER ROSS (15th)	1:18.24
	JOSEPH VILASI (22nd)	1:19.76
	5th Grade	
GIRLS	HALLIE MONSEREZ (1st)	1:13.97
	JAYLA DAOUST (2nd)	1:14.44
	CAITLYN HALES (20th)	1:20.86
BOYS	BRYSON ROBERTSON (2nd)	1:05.78
	GARRETT BENSON (23rd)	1:17.01
* Denotes finish place if available.		

JUMP ROPE FOR HEART!

We want to thank everyone for all the support with Jump Rope for Heart this year.

Two years ago we raised \$19,600 and this year our goal was \$22,500. This year ... WE CRUSHED IT by raising \$27, 660! We were the #1 school in the state of Florida and #4 in the southeast. Amazing!

Congratulations to Mrs. Rahn's class by earning the most ducks. They will get a snow cone party and Mrs. Rahn will receive a \$25 Target gift card. In addition, 180 students earned the privilege to "slime" Coach Morales and Coach Quinn by raising at least \$50. That's a LOT of slime!



RUNNER'S CLUB

Regarding runner's club our last day to run is May 20th. May 27th will be our runner's club party. We ask that those that come to the party bring a healthy snack or breakfast item to share. We could also use things like small plates, napkins, and forks.

We will also recognize our top runner's at this party. Hope to see our runners there!

SPECIALS

SUMMERTIME SCIENCE

The year has raced by in the Willis Elementary Science Lab! We've enjoyed investigating the different branches of science and I hope that your child will continue to investigate science over the summer. Below please find some websites that you and your child might enjoy:

www.learner.org
www.askdruniverse.wsu.edu
www.brainpop.com
www.extremescience.com

www.ftexploring.com
www.billnye.com
<http://www.pbskids.org>



Your Willis student will be filling out a short survey asking their favorite science topics and activities in our science lab this year and ask their suggestions for next years' curriculum. If you have any ideas that you would like to share with me, please feel free to e-mail, write, or call.

Have a great summer and I will see you in August!

Mrs. Bradl, Science Teacher x2021



MUSIC

As the year winds down I can't help to look back on all the beautiful music the students at Willis created this year. We have sung songs, performed dances, composed and created music on instruments and much, much, more.

The Third graders performed in the Holiday Musical "Snow Jubilee!" Five of our fifth grade students auditioned and made the All County Chorus. Fifteen of our Fifth grade students auditioned and were accepted into the All County Drum Ensemble, AKA "The Groovin' Geckos!" We had Keyboards and More come out to have a instrument petting zoo for our fifth grade students. We also had the Japanese Taiko Drummers come to perform for our entire student body. Lastly, over 100 students participated in the Second Annual Willis Elementary Talent Show.

What a year! I look forward to making more music with you next year. Have a great summer!

Christy Isaacs, Music Teacher x2079



Talent Show 2015!

Kindergarten

Wow! The end is almost over. We end the school year with mixed emotions. We are excited to see our students move on, however, we will miss them tremendously. The kindergarten teachers would like to thank all the parents for their support this year. The students have worked hard and we are proud of their accomplishments. In the upcoming weeks we will end our year with our Kindergarten Program on May 29th and Water Day on June 3rd. We will need some help for the water day activities.

This final quarter the students learned all about "data collecting and measurement" in Math, "wants and needs" were the focus for Social Studies, a review of the five senses along with plants and animals were the focus in Science. While in Reading and Writing the focus was on reviewing characters, setting, and "immersing ourselves in research to teach others".

Please have your child practice their reading and math over the summer. Again, thank you to all our parents for their support this year!

1st Grade

Spring has been a very busy, productive time in first grade! The children have been working diligently to strengthen their reading and math skills. Our first grade team is so proud of their accomplishments and growth since the beginning of the year. We feel our students have a strong foundation to be ready for second grade.

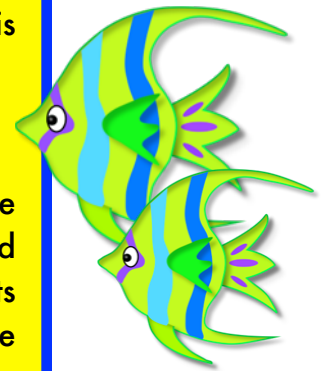
Parents can help keep these skills sharp over the summer months by building in fun opportunities to read and practice math. You can also visit the Willis website and go the [technology link](#). This would be a great activity during those rainy, summer afternoons!

2nd Grade

Second grade has had a wonderful year. Our students have grown leaps and bounds and are ready to show off all of their learning to their third grade teachers!

It would be beneficial for all students to review their math facts and continue reading at their independent level throughout the summer.

Thank you for all of your support throughout the school year and all of your extra love during Teacher Appreciation Week. We wish all families a fun and safe summer vacation. See you in August!





Silly String Fun!



3rd Grade

As the third grade year draws to an end, we are sad to let go of the bonds built with our classes, but excited for our students as they move on to new challenges!

Our May highlights included a bird watching field trip to Felts Audubon Preserve in Palmetto. Students learned about and observed birds in their natural habitat. They were taught how to use binoculars and loved spotting birds, butterflies, dragonflies, and even turtles!

An upcoming event this month is our very popular American History Wax Museum. Each student has chosen an American they would like to learn about. They research and write about that person. The activity culminates with students presenting the information they learned and dressing up as that famous person. We know how to make American history fun!

Field Day, Gecko Awards, the Talent Show, and end of the year celebrations will round out our outstanding third graders' year!

The Third Grade Team

4th Grade

What a busy end of the year we've had in fourth grade! We had field trips to South Florida Museum and Florida Studio Theatre, a visit from members of the business community for Project Teach, and participated in our first Tropicana Speech Contest.

On Monday, April 27, the fourth grade teachers were covered in Silly String by the Gecko Gala raffle winners. Then the teachers surprised fourth grade students by covering THEM in silly string. They definitely weren't expecting that!

What a wonderful school year this has been! We hope that everyone has a safe and enjoyable summer! See you next fall!

Keli Georgas, Terri Holbrook, Emily Ross & Lisa Scherpf

5th Grade

It is hard to believe this year is almost over. Fifth grade has a number of events in May and June as we wind down the school year. Please mark your calendars!

- Friday, May 22nd: Field Day (school wide event)
- Wednesday, May 27th: Marauders Baseball Game (field trip)
- Monday, June 1st: YMCA 5th Grade Celebration (field trip)
- Tuesday, June 2nd: 5th Grade Recognition Ceremony (1:15pm)

Please try to have your child keep his/her brain engaged through the summer. Here is a [link](#) to some possible book choices. Please encourage your child to read a couple of books. Also, any math pages remaining in the math workbook would be great for review over the summer.

The Fifth Grade Team



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FUN & GAMES

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



Seaside Word Merge

Can you find two full words in each of the following jumbles? The letters are in the right order, and you must use all the letters up.

We have done one to show you how.

CSRAHELBL

= Crab and Shell

Now try these:

1. BTOOWOKEL

(Two things you may have in your beach bag)

2. SBUPACDKEET

(Two things you play with on the beach)

3. SSHUANDE

(Sometimes you sit in the ____, sometimes the ____)

4. DIRCEICRNEKAMS

(You can usually buy these near the beach)

www.ActivityVillage.co.uk - Keeping Kids Busy



Summer Vacation Word Search



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

fairground

family

fun

hotel

icecream

journey

pack

postcard

suitcase

summer

swim

tent

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Summer Sudoku

Every row, column and mini-grid must contain the letters S U R F.
Don't guess - use logic

F			
			R
S			
			U

www.ActivityVillage.co.uk - Keeping Kids Busy



**THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS IN
EDUCATION!**

Platinum (\$1000+)

APC Pediatrics
Cooper Creek Dental
Ian Cutmore, Keller Williams Realty (LWR)
IMG
Hornback Chiropractic & Wellness
Kumon
Jimmy Johns
Lakewood Ranch Family & Cosmetic Dentistry
Moricz & Varone Orthodontics

Gold (\$500+)

Kristin M. Culliton, Atchley International Realty
Dermatology Specialists
Eagle Home Mortgage
Florida Mediation & Conference Center
Gallagher & Hagopian
Golf Cart Outlet
Jess Jewelers
Lil Divas and Dudes
Nerium International
Primrose School at Lakewood Ranch
Spice Exchange
Steiner Law Offices
Team Cash, Caldwell Banker

Silver (\$250+)

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

GECKO GAZETTE

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

Calendar of Events

May

20 Runner's Club (7:30 - 8:00am)
22 Field Day
25 NO SCHOOL (holiday)
26 SAC Meeting (6:00pm)
27 Runner's Club Party (7:30 - 8:00am)
29 EARLY RELEASE (12:30pm)

June

1 5th Grade Field Trip (YMCA)
2 5th Grade Recognition Ceremony
(1:15pm)
3 EARLY RELEASE (1:15pm)
4 EARLY RELEASE (1:15pm)
Volunteer Breakfast (8:30 - 9:30am)
5 EARLY RELEASE (1:15pm)
LAST DAY OF SCHOOL!!!

August

24 First Day of School for 2015/16

Click [HERE](#) for more dates ...

**P.T.O. BOARD MEMBERS
2014-2015**

Yazzie Bruss - President
yazziebruss@gmail.com

Shannon McCoy - Vice President
smccoy@att.net

Bianca Lawrence - Vice President
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Tara Merino - Treasurer
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