

The Gecko Gazette

Robert E. Willis Elementary School

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



May 2016
Vol. 3/Issue #4

ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

It is hard to believe that we are getting ready to say good-bye to the 2015-2016 school year. These past ten months have passed too quickly.

As the end of the year draws near please keep in mind that students must be in their classrooms ready to learn at 8:30 A.M. During morning drop off please be sure to remember our drop off procedures. We appreciate you looking out for all of our student's safety while arriving at school.

The year's end always brings with it a tremendous sense of accomplishment. So many things have been accomplished this year! From our Kindergartener's first day of school to the Fifth Grade Celebration (which is scheduled for June 6th) - 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 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. This year we will be sending home summer packets for all of our students in grades Kindergarten through Fourth Grade. Please encourage your child to work on the packet throughout the summer. Our goal is to make learning throughout the summer fun, while keeping skills sharp.

To our fifth graders - congratulations on your achievement! The Willis staff wishes you all the best as you move on to middle school. We know that each of them has gained a firm foundation for their educational 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 10, 2016.

Happy Summer,

Bill Stenger, Principal and
Michele Danowski, Assistant Principal



Gecko Gala winners of Principal (Reese Swanson, 3rd gd.) and Assistant Principal (Katie Eckstrom, 5th gd.) of the Day.

2016/17 SCHOOL CALENDAR

[Link Here!](#)



It's springtime at Willis Elementary and we can't believe there are only a few weeks left before summer begins. The 2015-2016 year has been amazing at Willis thanks to our volunteers, parents, staff, and sponsors. We can't thank you enough for all of your support, time, partnership, and leadership.

I hope that you have been able to enjoy some of our great events we have had so far, such as the Walk-A-Thon, Holiday Shop, Muffins with Mom, Donuts with Dad, various Spirit Nights, the Gecko Gala, and Staff Appreciation week. But don't worry the fun has not ended yet! We still have the Talent Show, Above the Lake, Father/Daughter Dance, and Field Day to come. Yearbooks will be arriving soon too.

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 \$100,000 this year!

Some highlights of how we used these funds are as follows:

- ★\$16.5K to provide all of the teachers iPads and reading application,

- ★\$5K to fund all of our fabulous community events such as Muffins with Mom, Donuts for Dad, Runner's Club, and Field Day,

- ★\$4.7K to provide an opportunity for 8 teachers to attend training at the FETC conference,

- ★\$4.2K to supplement the school budget to allow teachers to purchase necessary items for their classrooms,

- ★\$3K for landscaping and maintaining the lawn,

- ★\$2.6K to provide science equipment,

- ★\$500 to provide playground equipment,
- ★\$30K has been earmarked to mount the remaining projectors, and

- ★\$5K has been earmarked to purchase and mount ceiling fans in our outside gym area.

We are excited to announce that installation has already begun on the P.E. fans! We also look forward to the hearing the year end feedback on the Fountas & Pinnell reading program we purchased for the iPads which was implemented by teachers in the Fall. We continue to work with the district to have the projectors and sound systems mounted. The funds have been set aside and will continue to be earmarked for this purpose.

Going into next year, we are evaluating opportunities to invest money into the library, purchasing a digital sign for the outside, building out a volunteer work area, and other enrichment opportunities for the students. We would love to hear your ideas and welcome you to join our last P.T.O. meeting on Wednesday, May 18th at 6:00pm in the Cafetorium.

We want to thank each Willis family for making this another outstanding school year. We hope that you have a fabulous summer and we look forward to seeing you in August!

THANK YOU TO OUR SPIRIT NIGHT SPONSORS:

★Chili's ★ Culver's ★ American
Cookie Company ★ Jumpin Fun
Sports ★ Menchie's ★ Blaze



Gecko Gala What a Night!

Saturday, April 9 marked the eleventh year for Willis Elementary's annual fundraiser, the Gecko Gala. Steel drum music greeted over 200 guests who sipped on festive flamingo drinks and nibbled hors d'oeuvres as they viewed more than 120 auction items at the gorgeous Lake Club Clubhouse. There was something for everyone: amazing classroom baskets, golf foursomes, theme park tickets, summer camps,

fishing trips, fun dinners, signed sport memorabilia and more that netted over \$29,000 for the school! A big thank you to everyone who came out to enjoy the evening, all of our bidders, sponsors, donors, volunteers and a special thank you to Neil & Jennifer Hunn for sponsoring us at the Lake Club. Thank you to everyone who helped with this event. Thank you to the room parents for your unbelievable baskets! The Gala would not have been successful without the ongoing efforts of many volunteers. Your help, time and donations were so amazing and we cannot thank you enough!

Ashley Henderson
P.T.O. President and
Gala Chair



A Special Thank You to this Year's Gecko Gala Sponsors

Lakewood Ranch Family & Cosmetic Dentistry
Manasota Roofing
Cooper Creek Dental
Kumon
Brain Balance
Hornback Chiropractic
Golf Car Outlet
Coldwell Banker's Lori & Tami Cashi
Jess Jewelers
PDQ
Blue Skye Lending

Thank you to Tommy Bahama for their
generous donation of the "swag bag"!



Courtnei Darpino,
Willis Business
Partner Chair, with a
Gecko Gala Swag
Bag.

WALK-A-THON

We are nearing the end of the school year quickly, and also finishing up all the Walk-A-Thon prizes. Notes will be going home before each event to let students and their parents know they are eligible to attend an event and details concerning the event.

Scheduled for this month we are having the following events:

May 19th Jungle Gardens visit to Willis

May 20th Above the Lake with Picnic

May 26th Jumpin Fun Outing

We would thank everyone for your support to our school and for making this years Walk-A-Thon a great event.

Walk-A-Thon Special Lunch with Mr. Stenger



Kindergarten through Second Grade



Third through Fifth Grade

Coming this Summer!

June 8th (all day): Menchies Spirit Day (UTC location)

July 27th (all day): Blaze Pizza Spirit Day (UTC location)

VOLUNTEER BREAKFAST

All Willis volunteers are invited to an "Appreciation Breakfast" on June 7, 2016 from 8:30 - 9:30am in the school cafeteria. Come grab a cup of coffee with us!

Please RSVP to williselementarypto@yahoo.com.

P.T.O. Meetings

Our last P.T.O. meeting will be held in the evening on Wednesday, May 18th, 2016 at 6:00pm in the Willis Cafeteria. We hope to see you there!

BOX TOPS

Remember to keep saving Box Tops throughout the summer! Thank you!

BRICKS

School bricks have arrived and will be installed in late May!

P.T.O. BOARD MEMBERS 2015/16

Ashley Henderson - President
ashenderson321@yahoo.com

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

Deb Hossenlop - Vice President
debhoss@gmail.com

Tara Merino - Treasurer
tarabergstrom@yahoo.com

Christa Nash - Secretary
nashgril1@gmail.com

[P.T.O. website](#)

FRONT OFFICE NEWS

CLINIC NEWS!

May is National Physical Fitness and Sports month!

Did you know that regular physical activity increases your chances of living a longer, healthier life? It also reduces your risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, and some types of cancer. Yet most people don't get the recommended amount of physical activity. The goal is to be physically active at least 1 hour a day and most of our children accomplish this just by playing outside.

However, at this time of year when it is getting hotter and the humidity is rising, we need to remember a few things. Putting on sunscreen before you go outside and reapplying it after

swimming or sweating is a must. Wear a hat to help protect your eyes and face from the sun's rays, too. Also, remember to keep hydrated. Water is the best choice for a beverage, but if you are outside for long periods of time you might want to replenish your electrolytes with a Gatorade type of drink in between the water.

Remember water safety and never swim alone. Swimming is fun and great exercise, so stay safe and watch your little ones around water. Swim lessons are offered at many facilities in our area both for young ones and young at heart. Most of all, have a fun and safe summer!

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

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

Summer is Coming - help your child make the most of it!

Since children usually have so much free time in the summer, it is to their benefit that this time be maximized. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- 1) Hire a tutor. During the course of the school year there may have been concepts presented that your child might have not fully understood. You can even ask an older student that you know through family or friends that is interested in helping others.
- 2) Enroll them in a specialized camp such as art, music, sports, cooking or even acting. Children will learn valuable skills and the meaning of dedication. They might even make new friends.

3) Suggest that they volunteer in a community organization. This will help develop their sense of citizenship.

4) Give them daily chores around the house; it will give them a sense of responsibility.

5) For additional activities, some great resource links are below:

<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/>

<http://www.iknowthat.com/FT/index.html>

I would like to take a moment to thank the Willis staff, students, and parents for a wonderful year. The school year has come to an end and the fifth graders will soon depart, but always remember that each and every one of you will always be in my heart.

With Love, Mrs. Morales
x2004



PHYSICAL EDUCATION



NEWS FROM P.E.

Our Physical Education classes have recently completed a unit on Jumping Rope. Along with rope jumping, students participated in a lot of fun and active activities related to jumping such as long jump, hurdles, and Fire Ball. This unit goes along with our Jump Rope for Heart event from the American Heart Association. Willis Elementary raised over \$30,000 in donations, making our school one of the top fundraising schools in Florida. Thank you to all the families that contributed and helped to fund research, programs and education to fight heart disease and stroke in this country. The American Heart Association will provide students in 4th and 5th grades valuable Hands Only CPR training this May because of our success in this event.

Willis Runner's Club will conclude on May 18th this year. We plan to have our Annual Runner's Club party on May 25th in the covered P.E. area. We ask that each family bring a healthy breakfast type item to share for the event such as fruit, muffins, orange juice, granola bars, etc. Parents are needed to help set up and serve students on this morning during the party.

To help insure the SAFETY and SUCCESS of your child in P.E. class, we require SNEAKERS with SOCKS along with a comfortable school uniform. Students wearing unsafe attire will not be able to participate in class, which is a major part of their grade. Your child may also wear a hat, sunglasses and bring a water bottle out to their P.E. class. If your child has any medical problem that may limit or adapt his/her participation in P.E. class, please write a note and/or send a doctor's note.

Miles of Smiles,
Coach Jason Morales and Coach Mary Quinn

2016 WILLIS TRACK TEAM

Congratulations to the students who represented Willis Elementary at the 2016 Elementary Track Championships held on Saturday, April 16th at Bayshore High School. The top 8 athletes received ribbons for their participation in the 400 meter run.

3RD GRADE GIRLS

- 1) ANNALISE MILLER (9th) - 1:24:73
- 2) LAINEY CURTIS (4th) - 1:22:75
- 3) SAVANNAH ADAMS (8th) - 1:23:93

3RD GRADE BOYS

- 1) MICHAEL WAGNER (3rd) - 1:17:40
- 2) JAKE MORALES (5th) - 1:20:14
- 3) BEN SIMSEK (52nd) - 1:35:05

4TH GRADE GIRLS

- 1) SOPHIA LEMUS (4th) - 1:18:13
- 2) MADISON ADAMS (19th) - 1:23:83
- 3) ISABELLA SANCHEZ (5th) - 1:18:90

4TH GRADE BOYS

- 1) NIKO TSAKIRIS (6th) - 1:12:91
- 2) KEAGAN DUQUETTE (24th) - 1:20:10
- 3) NATHAN GREEN (17th) - 1:17:76

5TH GRADE GIRLS

- 1) KAITLYN DUQUETTE (1st) - 1:12:29
- 2) ERIN WEIDEL (31st) - 1:24:16
- 3) GABRIELA TRAVER (17th) - 1:20:76

5TH GRADE BOYS

- 1) JOSEPH VILASI (18th) - 1:14:93
- 2) HUNTER WINEKA (16th) - 1:14:13
- 3) COOPER ROSS (28th) - 1:18:14



SPECIALS



MUSIC

As we are winding up the year, I want to thank all of the staff and the parents for your support for the arts here at Willis. We have had a fantastic year!

In October the fourth and fifth grade students attended the Young Person's Concert at the Van Wezel. In December, the third grade students performed in the holiday musical "Christmas at the OK Corral." In November, the Sarasota Opera performed, in January the Manatee High School percussion ensemble performed at the Gecko Awards, and in March we had Celtic dancers perform at the Gecko Awards (thanks to Mrs. Morales). Also in March, six Willis fifth graders were chosen to perform in the Manatee County Elementary All County Music Festival. Their performance was fantastic and will be remembered for years to come. Congratulations!

April 29th were the tryouts for the Talent show. Everyone who tried out did such a fantastic job. We are all proud of your bravery. The night performance of the Talent show will be on May 24th at 6:30 pm. Everyone is welcome to attend. It will be quite a show! If you are willing and able to help with stage design to make the show more enjoyable for both the performers and the audience, please contact Mrs. Isaacs as soon as possible.

Mrs. Isaacs received a \$300 grant from the Manatee Education Foundation to implement a glow-in-the-dark unit. THANK YOU MEF!!! This will be the best unit your child participates in all year. We have purchased black lights, lava lamps, disco balls, mirror balls, laser patterns, etc. This will be the time when the students can dance, sing, twirl, socialize, and have an all around excellent time after all the recent testing. This unit will run from May to the end of the year.

Have a wonderful summer,

Christy Isaacs, Music Teacher x2079

ART



The fifth grade paper mache faces are completed and are on display on the second floor. This year the faces are particularly impressive as the majority of the students chose to do an original design. Many of those who chose to do a popular character added their own unique twist.

This year in art we covered several contemporary artists in addition to the classic artists. We repeated some old favorite lessons and tried a bunch of new ones. The primary students continued building their eye and hand coordination skills and technique. As I view classroom projects displayed in the halls, I am pleased to see the students' art reflects their understanding and use of design, symmetry and perspective. Especially nice are their drawings of people due to what they learn in my figure drawing lessons.

The great comic book artist Neal Adams told me last summer to encourage my students to draw their favorite characters over and over. Doing so will develop not only their drawing ability but begin to nurture their love of drawing. Eventually this will lead to creating characters of their own. That is how all the greats got started!

Have a safe and fun summer ... and keep drawing!

Mr. London, Art Teacher x2053

Assistance with Art

If there are any Willis parents or family members with an interest in supporting the art program next year, I am looking for assistance to bring better awareness to the program and more opportunities for the students. Please contact me so that we can explore some ideas I am considering. Thank you for any help you can offer in supporting your children through art.

Kindergarten

We end the school year with mixed emotions. We are excited to see our students move on, however, we will miss them tremendously. 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 June 1st and Water Day on 6th. We will need some help for the water day activities, so contact your teacher if you might be able to volunteer.

Don't forget to have your child practice their reading and math over the summer. And, thank you to all our parents for their support this year!

1st Grade

Increasing our love of reading was top priority this spring as our first graders enjoyed reading books by Kevin Henkes, Steve Jenkins, and Mo Willems. The first grade team planned units with books by these authors to coordinate with our curriculum standards for both fiction and nonfiction texts. We saw reading skills blossom while immersing ourselves in these high interest books. Measuring, telling time, counting money, and learning about geometry have also kept our first graders very busy in math!

As our year winds down, we are looking forward to fun activities such as Field Day and Above the Lake with Mr. Stenger.

The children have come so far since last August and our team is proud to send them on to second grade with a solid foundation. Please help your child keep their skills sharp this summer by visiting the library and providing ample reading opportunities. Many board games are also a perfect way to provide practice with both math facts and reading. Just remember to keep it fun! We wish you all a wonderful summer!

2nd Grade

Second grade has had a wonderful year! Our students have grown by 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!

Mrs. Flynn's Class



Mrs. McLaurin's Class





3rd Grade

It's so hard to believe that we are well into the 4th quarter. This year has flown by! It has been such a pleasure watching your children learn and grow this school year. We are looking forward to some fun events between now and summer break.

The third grade Wax Museum will be on display May 31st and June 1st. Students will complete a research project on a famous person from American history. They will put their research on display while posing as their character in our silent Wax Museum. This event is always fun for the students and parents alike! Please check with your child to see what day they are on display. Parents and families are welcomed to attend. Most classes are on display from 1:30 to 2:30 in the afternoon.

Summer work packets will go home with students at the very end of the year. This packet will help keep your child fresh over the summer and avoid the "summer slide!" We also suggest having your child read daily over the summer. We would also suggest your child continue to practice automaticity of their multiplication and division facts. This will be extremely helpful for math success in the 4th grade.

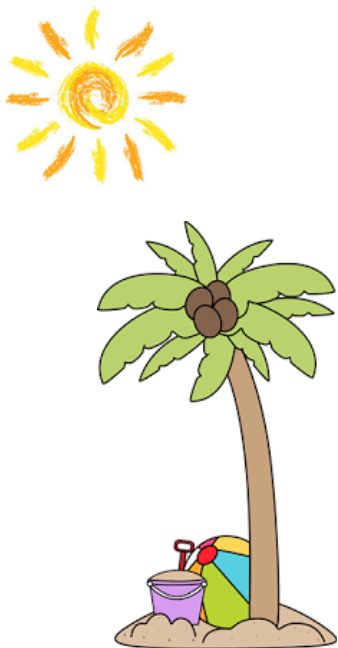
We hope you all have a great summer and look forward to seeing everyone next school year.

4th Grade

What a great year we have had in fourth grade! The students have learned many new skills and strategies in all of their subjects and participated in many fun and exciting projects such as the Tropicana Speech Contest and Project Teach. We have also been on field trips to the Symphony and Florida Studio Theater to enrich our learning.

As your child moves on to fifth grade, there are some things that you can do to help them succeed. Have your child read every day, either on their own or with you. Remind them to ask questions, make predictions, and visualize as they read. Continue to practice multiplication and division facts as a way to be ready for fifth grade math. Give your child the opportunity to develop skills working with appropriate strategies and solving problems independently. Have a discussion with your child about ways to stay organized. Then start practicing over the summer. Encourage your child to write often! Writing stories, letters, journal entries, etc. are wonderful ways to get thoughts organized and put onto paper. Finally, have your child explore "the great outdoors". There are always so many things to discover!

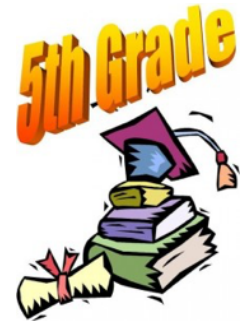
The fourth grade team would like to say thank you for a wonderful year. We appreciate all of the support and open communication with our parents. Have a terrific summer!



5th Grade

Fifth grade is going to have some fabulous fun the last few weeks of school! The Class of 2016 party will be held at the Sarasota YMCA Friday, June 3rd.

Please also save the date for the Fifth Grade Recognition Ceremony which takes place in the Willis Cafetorium on Monday, June 6th at 1:15pm.

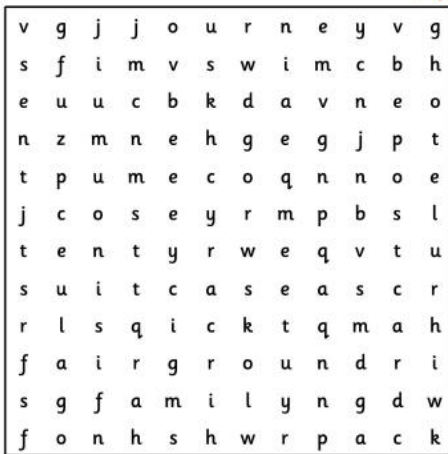


FUN & GAMES

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



Summer Vacation Word Search

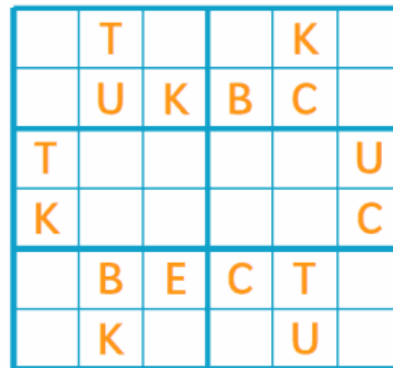


fairground	family	fun	hotel
icecream	journey	pack	postcard
suitcase	summer	swim	tent

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Summer Sudoku

Every row, column and mini-grid must contain the letters B U C K E T.
Don't guess - use logic



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THANK YOU!

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Kumon
Lil Divas and Dudes
Manasota Roofing
Moricz & Varone Orthodontics
Morrish Stewart Orthodontics
PDQ
Premier Sports Campus
Riverchase Dermatology
Square 1 Burgers & Bar
Team Cashi, Coldwell Banker

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

FOOD SERVICE

Parents, please send in money for your child's lunch account so they are paid off at the end of the school year. Thank you!

Calendar of Events

May

13 Father & Daughter Dance (7:00-9:00pm)
18 Runner's Club (7:30-8:15am)
PTO General Meeting (6:00pm)
20 "Above the Lake"
24 Talent Show (6:30pm)
25 Runner's Club Party 7:30am
27 Field Day
30 NO SCHOOL (Holiday)

June

2 Gecko Awards (4th Quarter)
7 Volunteer Breakfast (8:30-9:30am)
District Early Release (1:15pm)
8 District Early Release (1:15pm)
Spirit Day at Menchies (UTC)
9 District Early Release (1:15pm)
End of Quarter/2nd Semester
LAST DAY OF SCHOOL!

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

GECKO GAZETTE

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

I will be searching for a "shadow" volunteer next year looking to take over the newsletter for the 2017/18 school year. Please contact me if you have any experience in writing and/or editing and are interested in helping Willis and its P.T.O. create this publication four times each year. This is a wonderful experience to be involved and informed.