The Gecko Gazette

Robert E. Willis Elementary School

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



ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

It's hard to believe that we are already into the second quarter of the year. We were excited to see so many of our families at our first quarter report card conference night. We received a lot of positive feedback from teachers, students, and parents in regards to conference night. We feel that it is important for families to have open communication with our school so that we may discuss student's academic success and possible struggles. It is imperative for student success to have an open communication between school and home.

We are excited to share with our families that the results of last years FSA (Florida Standards Assessment) have been released and Willis students ranked highest across the district. We are very proud of our students and staff for their hard work and success. As we move forward into our second year of FSA testing, we encourage you to stay involved and continue to visit the FSA website at http://www.fsassessments.org/ to check for any updates and changes to this years assessment.

Our goal at Willis is to empower students so that they may be successful in our competitive educational system. The Willis staff is committed to educate our students so that they are able to move forward in today's demanding educational environment.

If you have any questions or concerns about how your child is doing academically, his or her teacher is the first person you should seek out for information and guidance. Other resources available include the school Counselor, Mrs. Morales, or either Mr. Stenger or Mrs. Danowski. We are all here to help!

As we approach the holiday season, things will be quite busy at school with class parties, The Holiday Gift Shop, and the Third Grade Holiday performance. We understand that there are many personal plans being made, such as travel and shopping, which add more stress to our lives. Try to help your children get enough rest and eat healthy so that they are able to perform well at school. Winter break is just around the corner and we wish all of our staff, students and families a very safe, relaxing, and memorable time.

Bill Stenger, Principal and Michele Danowski, Assistant Principal

P.T.O. Pages

On Friday, October 23rd, we held our 10th annual Willis Walk-A-Thon (WAT). Although the day started with a few sprinkles of rain, the sunshine quickly broke through. The event was well attended, with over 800 students, staff, and parents who ran/walked together for our largest annual fundraiser. We would like to thank our many parent volunteers for helping make this a great day for the kids and another successful event.

As a result of the humbling generosity and hard work of our entire school community, including our business partners, this year the WAT received over \$65,000 in donations for Willis. We cannot express how appreciative we are to have such support, dedicated to ensuring our students have every opportunity they deserve. The P.T.O. is in the process of working through a prioritized list of projects with Mr. Stenger to ensure that these funds are allocated in ways that will have the most impact to our students.

Each year, Mr. Stenger carefully considers a fun and memorable way to reward the students for reaching our fundraising goal. This year, Mr. Stenger will be spending an entire day suspended "Above the Lake" from a crane! This is sure to be a great event for the students, parents, and staff to witness. We will let you know the date as soon as possible.

We hope that you have had the opportunity to enjoy one of our Spirit Nights, where we have had record breaking attendance. Mr. Stenger, Mrs. Danowski and over half of our Willis teachers attended our Buffalo Wild Wings Spirit Night. The Monster Book Fair was also a colossal success, selling over \$19,000 in books and raising approximately \$3,500 in profit for Willis. Over 500 students and Dads attended Doughnuts with Dad, many stopping by the book

fair afterward. By supporting all of these events, you are making a tremendous impact on all of our children, and we are so very thankful.

Coming up, we have our Holiday Gift Shop event the week of December 7th. This is always a fun event for our Willis families to connect. Finally, if you're able, we would love to see you at our next P.T.O. meeting on Friday, December 4th at 2:00 p.m. in the Cafeteria. Thank you for your continued support and for all you do to make Willis such a wonderful place to learn.

The P.T.O. Board







Sophie, Mrs. Flynn & Mrs. McLaurin and best buds Ryan Shaklik and Cody Crawford at the WAT!

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 nashgril11@gmail.com

P.T.O. website



BOX TOPS

Willis collects Box Tops for Education throughout the year to raise funds for our school. Cut and save those labels to send in to your classroom by <u>DECEMBER</u> 3rd. Top 3 collecting classes wins a popcorn party!

Congratulations to the following classes for winning our first collection of the school year:

Mrs. Rockafellow Mrs. Scherpf Mrs. Tomlin

Thank you so much for your support!



The Yearbook Committee needs your pictures!

To arrange to pick up a flash drive or you can email your pictures directly to Jen Bowles at <u>Jennifer.bowles@aol.com</u>. Thank you!

THANK
YOU TO OUR SPIRIT
NIGHT SPONSOR!



HOLIDAY GIFT SHOP



Santa Claus is coming to Willis!! The popular Holiday Gift Shop is returning to Willis, December 7th thru the 11th. Late shopping will be on Thursday December 10th until 7:30pm. This event gives the students the opportunity to buy gifts for their family

and loved ones. We will have reasonable priced gifts ranging from \$1 - to \$15 for the children to choose from. It is also a fun way for them to understand money and budgeting.

> Thank you, Debra Sharpe, Chairperson



SAVE THE DATE!

Saturday, February 27, 2016 from 7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

The Lake Club Clubhouse 15804 Clearlake Avenue Lakewood Ranch

Questions? Donations? Interested in table sponsorship? Please email Ashley @ ashenderson321@yahoo.com.

BUSINESS PARTNER INFO

A list of our current business partners can be found on the last page of this newsletter. Thank you to all of our wonderful Willis Business Partners! We truly appreciate each and every one. Please help show your gratitude to these businesses by considering them when you need products or services. Below you will see the different opportunities available to you.

If you are interested in becoming a business partner with our school, please contact Courtni Darpino at geckobusinesspartners@yahoo.com.

2015/16 SCHOOL CALENDAR



Everyone is welcome to attend P.T.O. meetings, which are held in the Willis Cafeteria at 2:00 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 4th Friday, Jan. 15th Friday, Feb. 12th





BUSINESS PARTNER OPPORTUNITIES

	FACEBOOK	PARENT COMMUNICATION EMAIL	WEBSITE	NEWSLETTER	YEARBOOK	BANNER
Platinum Sponsors \$1000 or more	√	√	✓	√	✓	✓ 36"x60" color banner
Gold Sponsors \$500- \$999.99	\checkmark	√	✓	√	✓	✓ 24"x36" color banner
Silver Sponsors \$250- \$499.99	√	√	√	√	√	

FRONT OFFICE NEWS

CLINIC NEWS

Cold and Flu season is here. Remember that it is recommended to get the flu vaccine yearly for ages 6 months and older. The best way to prevent getting or spreading the flu and a cold is to cover your coughs and sneezes and wash those hands with soap and water. Students that have had a fever are not supposed to be in school until they are 24 hours fever-free without use of fever reducing medication.

All types of medication for students need to have a medication authorization form completed by a physician and parent to have any medication on school grounds. This includes cough drops, allergy and cold medication, any over the counter medication along with prescription medication. This is school board policy. If you have any concerns or questions about this please call the school health room. We are here to help keep our students healthy and safe!

Also, remember that the clinic still collects can tabs throughout the year to help others in our community get needed medical services

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

Ten Great Tips to Motivate Your Child to Read

- Encourage your child to read aloud. Kids of all ages enjoy reading aloud to their parents, peers and even their pets. It lets them show off their ability and allows parents to spend quality time with their children.
- 2. Take field trips to the library or to the bookstore. Take time to browse through a store and allow your child to pick out their favorite book. Point out books that might be interesting to them.
- 3. Keep books in the car. Children can read while traveling. In a car, on a bus, sailing on a boat or flying on a plane ... a book makes the perfect companion.
- 4. Encourage the reading of a series. When kids fall in love with a series, their next book is easy to find. By the time they are through with a series, they are reading better and have begun to form the habit of reading. Challenge them to get through a new series.
- 5. Connect reading with their favorite activities. Find books that match your child's interest ... such as riding bikes, skateboarding, crafts, dolls, etc.

- Your child will connect reading to their favorite activities.
- Location. Location. Encourage your child to read where he/she is comfortable. A good book knows no bounds; whether it's on the porch, up in a tree house, on the beach or under their bed.
- 7. Books make great gifts. The next time your child is invited to a birthday party, give a gift certificate to the local bookstore.
- 8. Lights out! Before giving your child a lights out time, let him/her read in bed. Your child will feel grown up and reading before bed could turn into a lifelong habit.
- 9. Try not to over commit your child to too, many activities. He/she might be too tired to sit down and relax with a book. Let your child know that lying down on the bed or couch and reading a book is not a waste of time.
- 10. Show your child that you value reading. Parents should spend time reading. Take out the daily paper, magazine or read the same book your child is reading and have a family discussion.

Phyllis Morales, Counselor x2004

MORE FRONT OFFICE NEWS

Improving Children's Handwriting: Tips from Occupational Therapy

By: Cara Putnam, MOTR/L and Janet Kacprowicz, OTS

Many students of all ages have trouble with handwriting. It is a struggle that if ignored, can lead to stress and anxiety within the classroom and with homework. Occupational Therapy focuses on improving the underlying components that contribute to: appropriate grasp on a pencil, forming letters and words correctly, copying from the board, using good seated posture, attending to tasks and sequencing multiple step directions.



Students who have difficulties in handwriting often also have trouble performing daily tasks such as tying shoelaces, using clothing fasteners, and brushing their teeth. The skills needed for such tasks frequently overlap. Hand strength, posture, and eyehand coordination are three factors that influence how a child writes and completes daily life tasks. Hand strengthening uses resistive activities that improve the small muscles in the hand. Good core strength helps a child maintain seated, upright posture at their desk, which is necessary for efficient fine motor and hand skills. Good eye-hand

coordination uses the eyes to guide the hand to form letters, stay within the lines, and use good spacing. When we are able to improve these areas, many times we see significant progress with written schoolwork.

Here are some fun activities to address these skills:

Hand Strength	Posture and Core Strength	Eye-Hand Coorindation
 ✓ hiding and finding small items in silly putty, Play-Doh or therapy putty ✓ using spray bottles and water guns ✓ completing many kitchen tasks (rolling pins, kneading dough, wringing out washcloth and sponges, using cookie cutters) ✓ playing pinch or pick up games with tongs, tweezers and clothespins 	 ✓ playing toss and catch games in tall kneeling position ✓ wheelbarrow walking ✓ hoola-hooping ✓ doing therapy ball exercises ✓ holding yoga poses ✓ playing "Twister"! 	 ✓ popping bubbles with both arms ✓ completing puzzles ✓ making beaded jewelry ✓ completing mazes and hidden picture worksheets ✓ pouring/measuring liquids into containers ✓ playing tennis with balloons

PHYSICAL EDUCATION & MUSIC

Physical Education

During the month of October students in grades 3 - 5 were assessed on their physical fitness. Each of the 5 tests measure different components of fitness. The tests are as follows:

- 1) Sit-N-Reach: Measures mobility/flexibility
- 2) 40 Yard Dash: Measures speed
- 3) Shuttle Run: Measures agility
- 4) Sit-ups: Measures abdominal strength
- 5) Mile Run: Measures aerobic endurance

During November students will be participating in our cup-stacking unit. They will also be a part of the Guinness Book of World Records Cup Stacking Challenge during their Physical Education class. Students will bring home a cup stacking group order form if they would like to purchase their own set of cups. During the cup stacking unit unwanted Halloween treats were collected and sent to our US military serving overseas. Thank you to all that were able to donate in support our military troops!

Miles of Smiles, Coach Morales and Coach Quinn



Music

It has been an exciting opener for the music room this year. The Fourth and Fifth grade students went on a field trip to the Young Person's Concert at the Van Wezel and had a fantastic time.

All the third grade students have been working hard since the first week of October and are nearly ready to perform "Christmas at the O.K. Corral" for you! The performances will be Thursday, December 10th during school hours for students and at 6:30 p.m. for family and friends. They will perform one last time for students on Friday, December 11th during school hours.

There are a few upcoming events that may interest you. On Tuesday, November 17th the Sarasota Opera will come to Willis to hold a workshop for our students as part of their Artist in our Schools Program. All First and Second grade students are invited to attend along with any other teacher who is available at the time to see the show. Lastly, I will be holding auditions for the Elementary All County Music Festival sometime in December, for any Fifth grade student wishing to audition. All students wishing to audition will sing the song "Star Spangled Banner." When I receive additional information, I will notify those interested in the date and time of the auditions. Good Luck!

Christy Isaacs, Music Teacher x2079

This Halloween Willis students sent over 475 pounds of Halloween candy to the troops overseas! Thank you for your help Mrs. Morales and Dr. Michelle Santos, DDS!

SCIENCE & ART

Science

Happy Autumn Scientists! It's been busy in the Willis Science Lab, here's what we've been up to. The fourth and fifth grade students completed their science fair projects and are in the middle of presenting the projects to their classes. I hope that you were able to view the display boards during our evening conference night. The students continue to amaze me, year after year, with what a great job they do.

The third grade is beginning their unit on energy. We've enjoyed building series circuits and investigating the properties of light energy. The second grade is working on the physical properties of matter. They are learning how to properly use a balance as well as determine the difference between mass and weight. The Kindergarten and first grade enjoyed what I consider one of the most important lessons taught ... how to wash our hands correctly and why it is important. Hopefully this will transfer into an uneventful cold and flu season for you and your family!





Art News

Art classes are off to a good start this year. Our upper grade students learned about contemporary artists such as "speed painters" Stephen Fishwick and Tim Decker. The students were also introduced to the elusive British street artist, "Bansky," who recruited other street artists to assemble an impressive art show in Somerset London entitled "Dismaland" which was intended to create a global awareness of the current struggles in Europe, such as the immigration crisis.

Fifth graders are currently working with digital studio and macro photography to create some outstanding images. We will select the best of the black and white prints to be hand colored and featured at the Willis Elementary student display at the Manatee County Fair this winter.

Our younger students have been learning about great past artists and authors, along with a blend of mutli-cultural activities. And, our youngest students have been working hard on improving their

mechanical skills in coloring, drawing, brush control along with their hand-eye coordination with cutting and pasting.

The contemporary artist Nathan Sawaya, a LEGO master builder, has made the biggest impression on the students. Mr. Sawaya was a practicing attorney who decided to put his law career on hold while he creates and builds realistic

and surrealistic LEGO sculptures. The students have expressed a desire to have a student LEGO display this spring in our Willis lobby. Stay tuned for more details!

Roy London
Art Instructor



A life size dinosaur by Nathan Sawaya using over 80.000 LEGO pieces!

Kindergarten

It's been an exciting start of the year in Kindergarten! We celebrated Johnny Appleseed with Apple Day, Fire Safety Month, Walk-a-thon, and had our Fall Parties! We couldn't do it without all of our parent support, volunteers, and donations so THANK YOU!

As the year continues, we will learn about the First Thanksgiving and Timelines. The students will also enjoy exploring Force and Motion! We are diving into Addition and becoming great mathematicians. As we continue to build our word fluency and comprehension, we will work on finding Key Details and Making Predictions.

We want our students to be successful and confident learners. Practice, Practice, Practice! Please keep reading and using flashcards to reinforce these skills at home!

We have so much more FUN ahead!





1st Grade

We had a great start to the school year. From celebrating Johnny Appleseed to a day filled with fall activities, we have had a successful first quarter!

Reading: First graders are decoding long vowel sounds and blends, inflected ending (-ed and -ing), contractions ('s), closed syllables, and high frequency words. The students are also using key details from text and illustrations to describe characters, settings, and major events in a story. They are also asking and answering questions about key details to understand differences between text that tell stories and text that gives information.

<u>Writing</u>: First grade students are learning about explanatory "how to" paragraphs and opinion writing.

<u>Math</u>: Our focus is on addition and subtraction word problems (up to 20).

<u>Social Studies</u>: We are covering American History and Geography.

<u>Science</u>: Our first graders are learning about Living and Non-living things.

Remember our upcoming field trip to Dakin Dairy Farm on December 3rd for Kovacik, Lambertson, Rahn, and Wilkinson; and December 8th for Johnson, Peterson, Tully and Violette. Please turn in permission slips!

Mrs. Schneider's class built wooden Fire Trucks (donated by our local Home Depot).







Mrs. McLaurin's Class

2nd Grade

Second graders are moving right along into the second quarter. We have been learning about animals and their habitats in Reading and Science, so now we are ready to start writing about them. We are writing informational books about animals. Be on the lookout for how our students use text features, like captions and diagrams, in their own writing! In Math, we will be moving into two and three digit addition and subtraction. It is extremely helpful to keep practicing basic facts (up to 20) at home, as students should be very fluent in solving their facts with mental math strategies.

What else can you do at home? Talk about the books that your child is reading at home. You can discuss the main idea and key details, make and revise predictions, analyze the characters actions and personality traits, retell the story, reread to find out more. Remember to always answer "Why?" and "How do you know?" using words like "because" and finding text evidence to support your thinking.

We are having so much fun seeing all of the growth our students are making, and we hope you are noticing it too! We are looking forward to all of the learning that is yet to come. Second grade rocks!

P.S. Don't forget about our field trip on Monday, November 16 to see "Doktor Kaboom Live Wire! The Electricity Tour" at the Van Wezel!

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Fall Fun!



Lily Grigsby "takes the cake" for

the cutest costume!

3rd Grade

It's hard to believe we are already into the second quarter! Time sure flies when you're having fun!

Reading in the 2nd quarter builds upon the skills and strategies acquired in the 1st quarter. Students will be making judgements about character traits, themes, and points of view across multiple texts. We are also carefully examining text structures in fiction (plot) & nonfiction (compare/contrast, cause & effect, sequence, description) and applying those structures to our own writing. We are working on writing expository text, which should help strengthen understanding of main ideas and details. Please encourage your child to always write using complete sentences and stress capitalization and punctuation.

In math we are multiplying and soon dividing. As always, automaticity and memorization of the facts is important. An app called "Door 24" is a fun way to learn math

facts and it's FREE! Following multiplication and division, we will begin fractions, which can be challenging for some students. Get a jump start and start talking about equal parts with your child. Pizza & Hershey bars are fun places to begin, but rulers are also a great way to talk about fractional parts (and you'll get ahead with measurement!).

Much of our science & social studies curriculum is embedded throughout our reading curriculum. We are studying animal classification & heat/light energy in science. Mrs. Bradl is awesome at aligning the science lab with our work in the classrooms, and provides hands-on opportunities for the students. The major focus of social studies in 3rd grade is North American geography, which we will focus on after studying government.

We are looking forward to seeing everyone at the Holiday Performance "Christmas at the O.K. Corral" on the evening of December 10th!

4th Grade

The first portion of the year left us with some good memories. We enjoyed the Walk-athon, the Halloween Parade, and a trip to Van Wezel to hear the Florida West Coast Symphony Orchestra. Additionally, Conference Week allowed us the opportunity to discuss your child's progress, thus far. Recently, we took the first of several trips to the Florida Studio Theater. Our goal is to unlock the artistry of playwriting to our students, and, in turn, to offer them the experience of becoming playwrights themselves.

At present, in Mathematics, we are diligently working to finish our double-digit by double-digit multiplication unit. Some classes have already started tackling our division unit. We are wrapping up a study in Social Studies about Florida and the early Native American tribes in Florida. Our Science curriculum included the topics of rocks and minerals, and non-renewable and renewable resources. Of note, each child also utilized the Scientific Method to hypothesize, to research and to create an investigative display board to share outcomes for the Science Fair Night in October. In Language Arts, we are developing our writing skills with informational writing, while trying to dive deeper into complex texts for understanding. It is very important that your child be reading every night, with a stress on non-fiction materials.

We express our continued thanks for all you do at home to support your child's education. Our partnership, along with hard work from your child, will help to ensure your child's growth.

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5th Grade

Hello from 5th grade! We have had a wonderful start to the year and the students are excited about being the leading role models of Willis! We have had plenty of fun mixed with rigorous instruction so far. We have been fortunate to have visited the symphony at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall and even enjoyed dip netting at the beach. The Walk-a-thon and Fall parade were a great time too.

In Language Arts, students are using reading strategies to synthesize information and make meaning from fiction and non-fiction text pieces. We are focusing in on story elements such as vocabulary, comparing and contrasting, sequencing, theme, and many others along the way.

In math, the students have been working on the base ten number system, order of operations, working with decimals, and rich problem-solving. The students' interactive notebooks are filling up quickly with great study materials. Be sure to ask your child to show you.

In science, we dove right into the nature of science and Earth science, including a variety of space topics and the water cycle. Learning about the Declaration of Independence in Social Studies was a great way to enrich our understanding of our nation's history.

The students will probably tell you that the first quarter has flown by, but we have so much more to learn and experience with our fabulous fifthgraders!







ATTENTION ALL 5TH GRADE FAMILIES

Please save the following dates:

Wednesday, June 1, 2016: Fifth Grade Class trip to

the YMCA water park

Monday, June 6, 2016: Fifth Grade Recognition

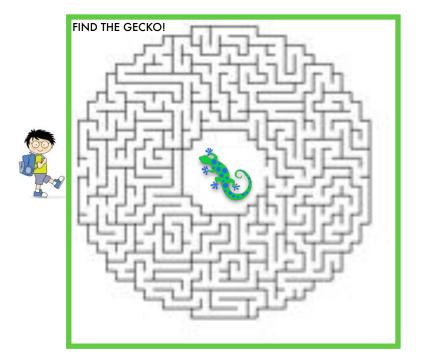
Ceremony

For more information, please contact Christa Nash at <u>nashgirl11@gmail.com</u> or Shannon McCoy at <u>smccoy@att.net</u>.



FUN & GAMES

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



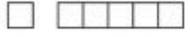
Sudoku 4x4 Puzzle

Every row, column, and mini grid must contain the numbers 1 thru 4.

		2
		4
4		
1		

WILLIS SCRAMBLE

Unscramble each of the clue words. Take the letters that appear in circles and unscramble them for the final message.



FINAL CLUE HINT: WHAT YOU

ARE!

HINTS

- 1. HE KEEPS YOU SAFE AT SCHOOL
- 2. SHE KEEPS YOU ON "KEY"
- 3. SHE STEPS IN WHEN THE PRINCIPAL IS OUT
- 4. WE HAVE TWO OF THESE AT OUR SCHOOL

Thank you to our ...

WILLIS BUSINESS PARTNERS!

Platinum

Arsenault Dermatology
Buffalo Wild Wings
IMG
Jimmy Johns
Jumpin Fun Sports
LWR Family & Cosmetic Dentistry
Primrose School at Lakewood Ranch

Gold

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Eagle Home Mortgage
First Physicians Group
Golf Cart Outlet
Hornback Chiropractic
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Moricz & Varone Orthodontics
Morrish Stewart Orthodontics
PDQ

Premier Sports Campus Riverchase Dermatology Square 1 Burgers & Bar Team Cashi, Coldwell Banker

Silver

Cleaning Plus Cleaning Let's Create Art

FOR MORE INFO ON BECOMING A BUSINESS PARTNER, LINK HERE

Calendar of Events

November

18 Runner's Club (7:30-8:15am/Willis Field)20 EARLY RELEASE (12:30pm)24-27 NO SCHOOL (Thanksgiving Break)

December

- 2 Runner's Club (7:30-8:15am/Willis Field)
- 3 BOX TOP COLLECTION CLASS PICTURES & RETAKES (9:00-12:30pm)
- 4 P.T.O. Meeting (2:00pm/Cafeteria)

7-10 Holiday Gift Shop

- 9 Runner's Club (7:30-8:15am/Willis Field)
 Dress Down Day (\$2 to P.T.O.)
 EARLY RELEASE (1:15pm)
- 10 Holiday Gift Shop Santa Visit (5-7:30pm) Third Grade Holiday Performance (6:30pm)
- 16 Runner's Club (7:30-8:15am/Willis Field)
- 21- Jan. 4 NO SCHOOL (Winter Break)

January

- 4 Teacher Inservice (NO SCHOOL)
- 5 Students Return
- 6 Runner's Club (7:30-8:15am/Willis Field)
 Dress Down Day (\$2 to P.T.O.)
- 13 Runner's Club (7:30-8:15am/Willis Field)
- 15 P.T.O. Meeting (2:00pm/Cafeteria)
- 18 NO SCHOOL (MLK Holiday)
- 20 Runner's Club (7:30-8:15am/Willis Field)
- 22 END OF SECOND QUARTER
- 25 NO SCHOOL (Record Day)
- 27 Runner's Club (7:30-8:15am/Willis Field)

Click **HERE** for more dates ...

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>.