

The Gecko Gazette

Robert E. Willis Elementary School

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



ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

WELCOME BACK GECKOS!
We are happy to welcome you to the 2015-2016 school year! We are looking forward to a productive partnership with you to ensure our children can achieve their highest potential in a safe environment. We recognize that in order to be successful in school, our children need support from both parents and staff. Research shows that a strong partnership between parents and schools make a great difference in student's education. As partners, we share the responsibility for our children's safety during school drop off and pick up. We would like to take a moment to highlight some procedures in regards to car drop off and pick up.

There are a few keys procedures that can make the car drop off and pick up process run more smoothly. First, if you are in the drop off or pick up line, please remain in your vehicle and keep in the right hand lane. Please do not exit your vehicle at any point while in the line. When your vehicle reaches the designated spot, a staff member will assist your child in exiting or entering the vehicle in a

safe manner. Second, at pick up time be sure to have your hanging car rider tag in a visible location so staff may quickly identify and call your children. Third, PLEASE, do not use your cell phone while driving on school grounds as cell phones can be a distraction while driving. Lastly, in the morning if you wish to drop off your child by parking in the parking lot, please park in an appropriate parking space and remember you must escort your child across the crosswalk. Please be sure to use caution while walking through the parking lot. If you are visiting the school at any time, please remember you must sign in on our front office computers. A new visitor pass must be obtained every time you visit the school.

Let's work together to ensure the success and safety of our students. Please be reminded that District policy requires all visitors to sign in at the front office. Following these few procedures will help to ensure the safety of every Willis Elementary student.

Warmly,

**Bill Stenger, Principal and
Michele Danowski, Asst. Principal**

September 2015
Vol. 3/Issue #1

**MANATEE COUNTY
SCHOOL
CALENDAR
2015/16**
[Link Here!](#)

CONTACTING THE SCHOOL

Main Office
(941) 316-8245

Dial #8 for
Attendance Messages

School Website
[Link Here!](#)

If you are new to Willis Elementary, WELCOME! If you are returning, welcome back!

On behalf of the Willis P.T.O., we would like say how excited we are about the 2015-16 school year. At Willis, we are very fortunate to have a terrific Principal, a wonderful Assistant Principal, and an amazing faculty and staff who are 110% dedicated to educating our children. Willis is an amazing place!

The P.T.O.'s mission is to support our teachers, administrators, staff, and students in providing a top quality education to our students. We achieve this through financial support, organizing community events and enrichment activities, and so much more. We look forward to working with you to bring new energy and ideas to make the P.T.O. a valuable resource for the school community. In addition to the Board members, the P.T.O. is reliant on the tremendous assistance and involvement of the P.T.O. Committee Chairs and Volunteers who inspire us with everything that they accomplish. We couldn't do our job without their help.

Fundraising is a crucial part of what the P.T.O. does for the school. The funds raised by P.T.O. are used to purchase important

classroom tools and equipment, provide technology and educational programs, and make improvements to our school. As the district continues to pull out of financial hardship, the P.T.O. is dedicated to ensuring that the quality of education at Willis does not suffer.

This fall you will see the results from last years' fundraising. We are excited to announce the NEW iPad Reading Program! Each classroom teacher received an iPad to run the [Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System](#), an investment from our P.T.O. funds of \$16.5K. This system enables teachers to determine students independent and instructional reading levels, select texts that will be productive for student's instruction, identify students who need intervention, document student progress across a school year and across grade levels, and provide detailed information for parent conferences. This is a highly regarded assessment tool used frequently in education throughout the nation.

Our children will be feeling the breeze soon at P.E.! Fans will be installed in the P.E. area to keep the students and staff cool thanks to another \$5K of P.T.O. fundraising. New sports equipment for recess for each grade level has also been ordered, a commitment of \$1K

from last years budget. This summer we provided a much needed "extreme staff lounge makeover". "Bland" turned into "grand" thanks to many volunteers who designed, painted, and created wall art over the summer to keep the renovation cost to only \$3K. Be sure to stop by and take a peak!

Last, we are negotiating with the District to continue mounting the remaining classroom projectors, which is expected to be a \$30K investment, but an important ongoing commitment. We are also purchasing a student badge printing system for \$5.5K.

The P.T.O. will continue to host our two main fundraisers this year, the Walk-a-Thon in October and the Gecko Gala in March, to help support the needs of our school.

We also plan to hold many fun activities, such as Spirit Nights, Muffins for Moms, Donuts for Dads, and Field Day.

We encourage you all to attend our monthly P.T.O. meetings to voice your opinion, ask questions, find out what is planned, meet new friends, and find that perfect volunteer opportunity.

Here's to a great year at a great school!

The P.T.O. Board



P.T.O. Fundraiser	DESCRIPTION
Uniforms	Willis has a wonderful assortment of branded merchandise for Willis enthusiasts to enjoy. Willis merchandise is available throughout the year and can be ordered either online or at the front desk.
Box Tops	Several times a year School Box Tops and Campbell's Soup Labels are collected and are redeemed for cash for Willis
Book Fairs	Twice a year Willis has a Book Fair where the students make their "wish list" and then "shop" for their books.
Gecko Gala	This event is Willis's second biggest fundraiser. Both Willis families and staff come together to raise money for Willis by gathering silent and live auction items including class baskets, donation baskets and services/goods from local businesses
Gingerbread Shoppe	A store is set up for Willis student's to do their holiday shopping for their families during the school day with their teachers. There is also an evening session for parents to join their child(ren) for a wonderful Willis community event.
Walkathon	This is our largest Willis fundraiser. Willis student, teachers, and staff walk to raise money for Willis. Based on the amount of money each student raises, they win valuable prizes like "no homework", "free ice cream", Willis Walk-A-Thon t-shirts ... And, if we meet our school target, Mr. Stenger will reward the kids by doing something outrageous, like sleeping on the roof!
Target	If you link your Red Card to Willis Elementary, Willis will receive 1% cash back on your purchases.
Amazon	If you use a special link to conduct your Amazon shopping, Willis will receive 0.5% cash back on your purchases.
PIE	Local businesses donate cash, products, and/or services to the school in exchange for promoting their businesses through various Willis events and publications.
Spirit Nights	A Spirit Night is a fundraiser where Willis families eat at local establishments (Chili's, PDQ, Chick-Fil-A, etc) on specific nights where Willis receives a percentage of the proceeds.

P.T.O. BOARD MEMBERS

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](#)

P.T.O. Meetings

Everyone is welcome to attend P.T.O. meetings, which are held monthly in the Cafetorium (Willis Cafeteria) at 2:00 p.m. Meeting dates for the 2015/16 schools year are:

Friday, Sept. 4th
 Friday, Oct. 2nd
 Friday, Nov. 6th

Friday, Dec. 4th
 Friday, Jan. 15th
 Friday, Feb. 12th
 Friday, Mar. 11th
 Friday, Apr. 15th
 Friday, May 13th

We look forward to seeing you!

If you are unable to attend the meeting/s, please find minutes posted [here](#).



Shopping on Amazon?

Use the below link or simply log in to [smile.Amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) and select "Robert E. Willis Elementary P.T.O. Inc." as your charity of choice and then shop as you normally would. Amazon will donate 0.5% if your purchase to Willis P.T.O. You only have to select Willis as your charity once. It is that easy.

DONUTS FOR DAD!!!



Please come enjoy a special morning Thursday, October 8th from 7:30a.m. - 8:30a.m. Mark your calendar, bring your kids to school, share a donut and juice or enjoy a coffee, and then walk your child to class. You can also visit the Book Fair that will be open during this time. All Dads, and those filling in for Dad, are welcome to this wonderful event designed to honor our Willis' fathers.



Help Target help Willis

If you already have a Target REDcard (debit or credit), you can select Willis Elementary as your school and Target will donate 1% of your REDcard purchases at Target stores in the U.S and at target.com. For more information [link here](#).

Anyone can designate a school and help us raise funds. Don't forget to ask family, neighbors, and friends to participate ... spread the word!

A BIG thanks to those who are already doing their part to make a great school even better.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPIRIT NIGHT SPONSOR FOR SEPTEMBER:



Box Tops Competition

Do you have Box Tops for Education sitting around your house hiding somewhere? Maybe you have some in your pantry or stuffed in a drawer waiting to be cut out? Well, what are you waiting for? Send them in with your child to their classroom!

Every quarter Box Tops are collected and are redeemed for cash for Willis. Our first collection date is Thursday, Sept. 10 and the top 3 classrooms with the most Box Tops will win a popcorn party! Ask your relatives and neighbors to collect Box Tops for us!

Box Top Collection Dates:

Sept 10, 2015
Dec 3, 2015
Feb 18, 2016
May 5, 2016



Friday, October 23, 2016
Willis' largest fundraiser!

On Friday, October 23rd, Willis students, teachers, and staff will walk to raise money for the school. Based on the amount of money each student raises, they win valuable prizes like "no homework" passes, "free ice cream", Willis Walk-A-Thon t-shirts, movie parties, and more. Best of all, we all get to see Mr. Stenger, to do something out of the ordinary like hang out on the school roof or go out on the lake for a day! What will he do this year???! We can't wait to find out!

FRONT OFFICE NEWS

CLINIC NEWS

The clinic is up and running. We are here to help take care of our students when they are not feeling well, get hurt, or need medication here at school. We would REALLY like to stress the importance of hand washing and keeping those germs away. Students with a temperature of 100 or more will be sent home and are NOT to return to school until they are fever-free for 24 hours without any fever reducing medications. Also, if your child has been running a fever or vomiting at home prior to school or the night before, it is best to keep them home to rest so when they return to school they are at their best to learn. This will keep other students at Willis healthy too.

Medications which need to be administered, including those that are over the counter medications (Tylenol, cough drops, antihistamines, etc.), must have a physician's order and parent permission form completed, which is turned into the clinic by an adult. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to stop by the clinic or call us at (941) 316-8245 ext. 2011.

We are looking forward to a FANTASTIC and HEALTHY school year here at Willis Elementary!

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

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

Welcome back! I hope you had a relaxing summer.

I would like to take a moment to introduce myself to our Willis students, families and friends. My name is Phyllis Morales and I am your child's school counselor here at Willis Elementary. This is my 13th year as a school counselor and I am available to help you and your child have a successful school year. I will be facilitating individual and group counseling sessions throughout the school year to promote the development of strong, positive character traits for those in need. The groups will revolve around the nine pillars found in the state statute, which are Patriotism, Responsibility, Citizenship, Kindness, Respect, Honesty, Self-Control, Tolerance, and Cooperation.

In addition, I am the Test Coordinator, Intense Support Team Chairperson and part of the Best Practices for Inclusion Education (BPIE) Team. I



Mrs. Morales and her sons, Max (K) and Jake (3rd Grade).

look forward to working with a fabulous staff this year and if you have any questions, concerns, or an interest to refer your child for counseling, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Thank you,
Phyllis Morales
Certified School Counselor
Willis Elementary School
(941) 316.8245 at x 2004

SCIENCE & MUSIC

SCIENCE

Welcome back scientists! We've been busy getting reacquainted with the science lab and will be reviewing the scientific method of investigating our world for the first few weeks. The fourth and fifth graders are starting to think about the problem, research, and hypothesis for their science fair project. In case your student needs help or guidance for this project outside of their regular science lab period, there are several opportunities they can take advantage of to find more information:

1. Visit our science lab online at www.willissciencelab.weebly.com.
2. See Mrs. Bradl between 8:00 and 8:30 as she stands at the front door of our school greeting the students.
3. Leave a note for Mrs. Bradl in the white mailbox just outside the "In" door of the science lab.
4. Contact Mrs. Bradl by e-mail at bradla@manateeschools.net or phone at (941) 316-8245 x2021.

We will be working during class on as much of our project as possible, so please remind your fourth and fifth grader to bring their Science Fair Research Plan packet to every class. The completed boards will be on display during evening conferences on Thursday, October 29th.

Our Kindergarten through third graders have been busy too! Kindergarten is learning how to use their five senses to make observations about their world. First graders have been exploring force (push and pull) with cars they make out of Legos while the second grade has been making and recording observations in and around our lab. Our third graders are learning about the scientific process through a group project for the science fair. We are busy trying to figure out if the distance a glider will travel has anything to do with its design. We hope you'll take a look at our display board during the science fair to find out.

As always, if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions on how to make your child's science lab experience even better, please contact me. Have a great year, Geckos!

[Mrs. Bradl](#), Science Teacher x2021

MUSIC



Greetings! My name is Christy Isaacs and I am the music teacher here at Willis Elementary. I have so many fun activities planned for your child this year. All grade levels will sing, move/dance, improvise, compose and play instruments this year.

Please check out the music room website. This can be found at <http://www.edline.net/pages/sdmckillises>. On my website you will find upcoming events, any forms or applications needed, pictures of students in action, upcoming events and a new page with music games your child can play at home.

I am here to help with any music questions you may have. I can help you find a private music teacher or even help you select an instrument for your child to play. Also, if you are available in December or May to help create simple stage designs or costumes please contact me at anytime to volunteer.

[Christy Isaacs](#), Music Teacher x2079



Third Grade Scientists!

MEDIA & CAFETERIA

FOOD SERVICE

Please find some interesting information to help navigate the cafeteria and food service at Willis:



Menus can be found [HERE](#).

Cost for Meals:

- ★ Elementary Breakfast is Free
- ★ Elementary Lunch: \$2.25
- ★ Adult Lunch: \$3.25

Payment Process:

★ CASH: If you wish to pay cash, please be sure to have your child's lunch money in an envelope with his/her name on the envelope as well as the teacher's name.

★ ONLINE: You can also pay online [here](#). You can contact [Jeff Cardarelle-Hermans](#) at (941) 316-8245 x2014 to get your child's ID # if you are setting up an account online.

Class Parties:

If you would like to treat your child's class for a special occasion like a birthday or holiday, we can take the worry and work out of it for you with a Celebration Basket. All Celebration Baskets include a choice of a snack, treat and prizes. To order a Celebration Basket [link here](#) or go to the <https://manateeschools.catertrax> website, create an account, go to Student catering and select Celebration Basket. Complete the form on the website and send a check into Jeff Cardarelle-Hermans, Cafeteria Manager. Please notify your teacher in advance to coordinate the day of the celebration. Baskets are delivered around 1:45 on the requested day. Please try to order the baskets two weeks in advance to ensure availability of ordered items.

Volunteers:

Volunteers are needed in the kitchen for when an employee is absent. Contact [Jeff](#) to get more information at the number above.

MEDIA CENTER

Greetings from the Media Center!

This year, we have the goal of reaching 10,000 total items in our Media Center. We need to add a little more than a 1,000 books this year to accomplish this feat. The Fall Book Fair will be our first opportunity to make this goal a reality. The "Monstrous" Book Fair will be here Monday, October 5th and end on October 12th. The proceeds of the Book Fair will be used to purchase more books for our students and teachers to utilize in the Media Center. Also, if you are looking to volunteer in the Media Center or Book Fair, please feel free to contact [Mr. Sajewski](#).



Kindergarten

The Kindergarten students have been making new friends and working hard to learn classroom schedules, rules, and procedures. During the next three weeks in Language Arts we will begin learning how to hold a book, parts of the book, and how to get more information out of the pictures. After we get information out of the pictures it helps us to read the words.

In Math we will begin learning numbers 1-5, and digging deeper to what they mean and then begin comparing numbers.

During the next couple weeks in Social Studies students will learn about our school community including rules and laws, how they can be responsible citizens, and how to resolve conflicts fairly and justly.

In Science during the 1st quarter students will explore the nature of science, our 5 senses, the tools scientist use, and observe properties.

We will celebrate Johnny Appleseed's Birthday and are excited to have parents join us for our Apple Day Celebration on Friday, September 25th.

We look forward to an exciting year with our youngest students!

1st Grade

Reading will include (1) Foundational Skills, which include decoding short vowel sounds, initial blends, inflected blends, inflected ending (-ed), plurals, and high frequency words; and (2) Comprehension Skills, which include determining key details from text and illustrations to describe characters, settings and major events in a story. We will be asking and answering questions about key details to understand the differences between books that tell stories and books that give information. Students will also be writing narratives and including 2 or more sequenced events.

First graders will address addition and subtraction word problems up to 20 in math.

In Social Studies students will learn how to be good citizens. They will explore their school community including rules and laws, how they can be responsible citizens, and how to resolve conflicts.

Finally, in Science students will learn how scientists observe the world around them and how to record movement of objects. They will also explore the nature of science, the tools scientists use, and force and motion.

It's going to be a GREAT year in first grade!





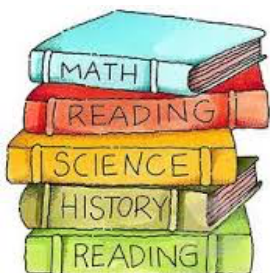
Mrs. French's
2nd Grade Class



Mrs. Flynn's 2nd
Grade Class



Mrs. McLaurin's 2nd
Grade Class



2nd Grade

Welcome to Second Grade! We are excited for a new school year and are already off to a great start!

In Math, we are learning about place value: understanding various ways to write numbers and how each digit has different values depending on its place in the number. We will be moving into addition and subtraction in a few weeks, so keep practicing your math facts!

In Reading, we are digging into our Reading Series and focusing on analyzing and writing about the texts we are reading. Speaking of reading, make sure your child packs a book in their backpack to read in the hallway before the morning bell.

Also, don't forget to collect Box Tops for your class!

We are looking forward to a great year in second grade!

3rd Grade

Welcome to Third Grade! We have had a great beginning to the 2015-2016 year. The third grade team is very excited about a big year of growth and development for your child. There are a lot of firsts in third!

Third grade is a hallmark year for developing independent habits and responsibilities. You can support your child by helping them create routines at home and school. The daily agenda and homework are great places to start. We encourage you to help your child with homework as needed, but also give them opportunities to problem solve and work out frustration. It's okay to make mistakes!

Parents often ask "What can we work on at home?" Memorizing multiplication facts is extremely helpful. In the upcoming months we will begin teaching multiplication and division. You will see your child using different strategies to solve problems using the operations, but automaticity of the facts is still the most efficient. Flash cards in the car, on the fridge, on the bathroom mirror, or other frequently seen locations are all great ways to learn multiplication! Modeling a reading life is also important as a parent. If your child sees you reading and the value of it, they are more likely to read themselves. You can also encourage reading by making sure your child has a book in their backpack. Every morning from 8:00 - 8:25 a.m. the students are in the reading hallway. The expectation stands that each student is silently reading. This is a great chance to get that 20 minutes of daily reading in!

Thank you for all of your support at home. We are confident that with your support this can be the most productive year of learning and growing! Thank you for sharing this journey with us!

4th Grade

The fourth grade team is excited to welcome you and your fourth grader to Willis Elementary School as we begin our 2015-2016 school year! We are thrilled to share with you our scheduling approach to your child's school day. We have structured our grade level to better meet our students' needs by pairing certain teachers.



Each fourth grader will begin their day with their homeroom teacher for their morning routine and writing instruction. Next, your child will collect the necessary materials and go to the paired teacher for either math/science or reading/social studies. They will then go to specials and lunch/recess with their homeroom teacher. After lunch/recess, your child will remain with their homeroom teacher for either math/science or reading/social studies and will also be dismissed from their homeroom class. The fourth grade team used a similar approach last year and had significant success.

We are looking forward to an excellent year!



5th Grade

We are so excited to begin another year of school. It was great to meet so many of you at Open House. The first few weeks of school have gone very smoothly.

Our fifth graders have been busy at work learning about the scientific process, strengthening the concept of place value in our base 10 number system, applying various reading strategies, and working on writing in an expository format. Please ask your child to share a bit about what they learn each day. Also, encourage him/ her to write down all assignments in their agenda, and we ask that you sign this daily.

We look forward to working together with you to make this year an enjoyable and successful learning experience for your child.

5th GRADE COMMITTEE

All 5th grade parents are invited to be part of the 5th Grade Committee. This committee plans 5th grade events such as the Recognition Ceremony and the 5th Grade Party, and any fundraising required for both of those events, such as Dress Down Days which support the 5th grade events.

For more information please contact Christa Nash at nashgirl11@gmail.com or Shannon McCoy at smccoy@att.net. Be sure to turn in your consent form to join the 5th Grade Communications Group if you would like to be informed of the special events that will take place this year.

Thank you!



FUN & GAMES

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

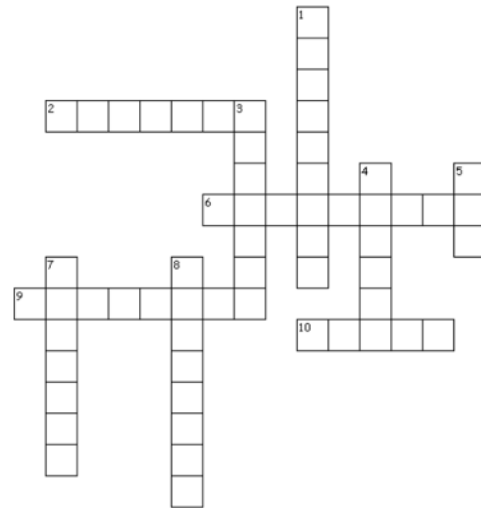
School Supplies

N R C B S S A P M O C O H
S O R D A B I N D E R I B
N T E O I C P U C Y G L S
O A R J T E K L Q H J K D
Y L Q E N C R P L A O K I
A U I C L F A I A O X R V
R C I P F P G R B C E B I
C L U A R H A E T S K P D
S A C P T U T T A O E G E
B C H E K O L R S N R F R
E Y R R N G E E S K E P S
U S S R O L O C R E T A W
R E U L G S C I S S O R S

BACKPACK	ERASER	PENS
BINDER	GLUE	PROTRACTOR
CALCULATOR	HIGHLIGHTERS	RULER
COMPASS	NOTEBOOKS	SCISSORS
CRAYONS	PAPER	STAPLER
DIVIDERS	PENCILS	WATERCOLORS

Copyright © 2004 [Livewire Puzzles \(www.puzzles.ca\)](http://www.puzzles.ca)

Willis Elementary Criss-Cross



Across

2. BIGGEST CLUB
6. WHERE WE LIKE TO SEE MR. STENGER
9. LIBRARY FUNDRAISER
10. SCHOOL MASCOT

Down

1. FALL FUNDRAISER
3. PRINCIPAL
4. WHERE TO GO WHEN SICK
5. SCHOOL INITIALS
7. COACH
8. ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Created by [Puzzlemaker](#) at DiscoveryEducation.com

TEACHER LOUNGE MAKEOVER!

Before ...

After ...



WILLIS BUSINESS PARTNERS

Platinum

APC Pediatrics
Cooper Creek Dental
IMG
Jimmy Johns
LWR Family & Cosmetic Dentistry
Moricz & Varone Orthodontics

Gold

Arsenault Dermatology
Eagle Home Mortgage
Golf Cart Outlet
Hornback Chiropractic
Jess Jewelers
Kristin M. Culliton, Atchley International Realty
Lil Divas and Dudes
Steiner Law Offices
Team Cashi, Coldwell Banker
The Spice & Tea Exchange

Silver

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

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

Calendar of Events

September

11 Room Parent Training (2:00pm)
16 Runners' Club (7:30-8:15am/Willis Field)
23 Runners' Club (7:30-8:15am/Willis Field)
30 Dads Take Your Child to School Day
Runners' Club (7:30-8:15am/Willis Field)

October

2 P.T.O. Meeting (2:00pm/Cafetorium)
5 - 12 Book Fair (Library)
8 Donuts for Dads (7:30-8:30am)
7 Runners' Club (7:30-8:15am/Willis Field)
14 Runners' Club (7:30-8:15am/Willis Field)
Dress Down Day (\$2 to P.T.O.)
EARLY RELEASE (1:15pm)
19 Buffalo Wings Spirit Night
21 Runners' Club (7:30-8:15am/Willis Field)
23 WALK-A-THON (Willis Field)
End of 1st Quarter
26 NO SCHOOL (Record Day)
28 Runners' Club (7:30-8:15am/Willis Field)
29 1st Quarter Report Card Night
30 Halloween Parade (9:00-10:00am)
EARLY RELEASE (12:30pm)

November

4 Runners' Club (7:30-8:15am/Willis Field)
6 P.T.O. Meeting (2:00pm/Cafetorium)
11 Runners' Club (7:30-8:15am/Willis Field)
18 Runners' Club (7:30-8:15am/Willis Field)
20 EARLY RELEASE (12:30pm)
23 - 27: NO SCHOOL (Thanksgiving Break)

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.