

2010 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award Winners



Choose Your Seat.
Get Involved.



The 2010 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award



A Message from Nancy S. Grasmick State Superintendent of Schools

I am truly honored to be able to collaborate for a third year with an amazing partner, Comcast, to bring you the Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award program. This program is all about honoring and recognizing the outstanding accomplishments of parents who are involved in public education. Every student, family, and school in Maryland's 24 local education systems has been touched by an involved parent, and so many people have told me that it was because of a parent that they were able to achieve success in their lives. In fact, for a second year in a row Maryland public education has been ranked #1 in the nation by *Education Week*, the nation's premier education publication. This achievement would not be possible without the enormous support and dedication of the parents,

teachers, principals, superintendents, State Department of Education staff, board members, and elected officials.

MSDE has a long-standing relationship with Comcast, partnering on numerous community and education initiatives, including the *Comcast Leaders and Achievers Scholarship Program*, recognizing the best and brightest high school seniors; *Maryland Teacher of the Year Program*, recognizing the best and brightest teachers; the *Blue Ribbon Schools Program*, recognizing high-achieving schools; and *PRIDE: Maryland Public Schools* program, applauding the outstanding accomplishments of students, parents, educators, and businesses.

The Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award program was just a natural extension of the Comcast/MSDE repertoire of programs recognizing excellence in Maryland public education. In fact, the program has put Maryland in the lead on a national level by championing what is a well-know fact – parent involvement might well be the single most important factor that leads to student success. Comcast and MSDE hope to show all parents and guardians that they can make a difference in public education.

Without the support of Comcast and the entire education community, Maryland could not reach such magnificent heights in educational achievement. I encourage you to join this year's parents and take the program's slogan – "*Take Your Seat. Get Involved.*" – to heart to help keep Maryland education at the top of the nation.

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The 2010 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

About the Award

The Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award, the nation's first state-wide award program of its kind, is an annual award for parents (and others with legal responsibility for a child) whose exemplary contributions to public education have led to improvements for Maryland's public school children, teachers, schools, programs, and/or policies. A collaboration between Comcast and the Maryland State Department of Education, the program highlights the positive impact parents have on public schools in the hope of encouraging all parents to get involved in whatever way they can.

The award nomination process outlines five areas of involvement, based on a nationally-recognized framework for family involvement, where parents might demonstrate involvement, either in one area or in multiple areas, but the parent will have made a significant, positive impact on public education

for students, parents, and schools. The five areas of involvement are communication; volunteering; learning; decision making; and community collaboration. Parents can be nominated not just by school or administrative personnel but other parents, community supporters/representatives, or students.

There are three levels of Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Awards. In the first level, twenty-four local semifinalists are chosen, one from each local school system. At the second level, five finalists are chosen from the semifinalist level for their outstanding involvement. The final statewide winner is chosen from the finalist level for their exemplary contributions to public education.

The slogan is "*Choose Your Seat. Get Involved.*" because there are as many ways to become involved as there are parents and guardians

2010 Semifinalists

John Holt, Allegany County

Jeffrey Macris, Anne Arundel County

Donna Hager, Baltimore City

Jay Wolf Schlossberg-Cohen, Baltimore County

Brian Dolan, Calvert County

Carol Cruikshank, Caroline County

Laura Graf, Carroll County

Tara Price, Cecil County

Julie Chapman, Charles County

Gary Mills, Dorchester County

Janice Spiegel, Frederick County

Emily Friend, Garrett County

Amanda Shaffer, Harford County

Kayle Simon, Howard County

Sabine Harvey, Kent County

Earle Barnes, Montgomery County

Eileen Collins, Prince George's County

Whitney Covington, Queen Anne's County

Rachel Feddersen, Saint Mary's County

Sue Hahn, Somerset County

Sharon Rieck, Talbot County

Tina Carrazco, Washington County

Lori Gilliss, Wicomico County

April Adams, Worcester County



The 2010 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

The JoAnne L. Carter Memorial Award

On February 25, 2009, Maryland families lost a paramount champion, supporter, and warrior for their children. JoAnne L. Carter, Deputy State Superintendent, Office of Instruction and Academic Acceleration at the Maryland State Department of Education, lost her courageous and lengthy battle with cancer.

JoAnne's lifelong dedication to providing the very best education to ALL children was more than a professional commitment – it was her heart and soul. She was unquestionably the consummate advocate for very young children; economically disadvantaged students; those in danger of dropping out and those aspiring to be leaders; students with disabilities and those with health issues (physical and mental); juveniles who are incarcerated; and those who need programs to provide a safe learning environment after school.

JoAnne knew all of these children and held every single one of them near and dear to her heart. She also knew the common thread to helping all of them achieve success was parent involvement. JoAnne recognized that parent involvement is not a luxury, but a necessity, and it became her professional and personal mission to raise awareness of the tremendous difference each and every parent can make by being involved in public education.

JoAnne herself was a single parent of three incredible children. She never made excuses and always responded to requests for assistance from their schools. Being an involved parent was the very essence of who JoAnne Carter was. While she was very involved and committed when her children were students, her involvement didn't stop there. JoAnne always found time not only for her family but her community. She was a Boy Scout leader until just last summer; she took youth from her church to visit prospective colleges; she mentored students in city schools; and she encouraged her own staff and community to be more involved with children.



There is no better way to honor JoAnne, the educator and the parent, than by creating the **JoAnne L. Carter Memorial Award**. The award will be given annually to a parent that exemplifies all that JoAnne held dear.



The 2010 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award



John Holt Allegany County

Through the entire [playground] process, Mr. Holt kept the community involved and informed. He established and maintains a good working relationship with the Allegany County Government...just let me say that without Mr. Holt's help and involvement in the Parkside Elementary POS grant that the project would not have been the very successful school and community project it has become.

John G. Braskey
Western Maryland
Regional Administrator
Program Open Space (POS)

John Holt's wife, Renae, might think twice if she ever has the opportunity to sign him up for a project at Parkside Elementary School. She had no idea that signing him up for playground committee chair would turn into a 5-year campaign to not only rebuild the playground but also install a walking track and fitness equipment for students and the community. John's tireless efforts and countless hours organizing the committee, working with the school system, MD Department of Natural Resources, Program Open Space, and KaBOOM, and raising funds have not only resulted in the new playground but also created opportunities for families to be involved. The *Dreaming and Design Party* is just one example, where students and parents worked with markers, clay, and popsicle sticks to create equipment they would like to see on the playground. The satisfaction that John felt in helping facilitate those interactions fueled his drive to do more, becoming the PTA President for Parkside. He then began collaborating with another parent on the Environmental Committee that after only 2 years of forming has already held a charity auction to fund environmental awareness activities at the school, planted a rain garden, and organized field trips to the Allegany County Recycling Center and the Carnegie Science Center in Pittsburgh, PA. As John rounds the bases on his stint as PTA President at the school, we don't see him slowing down a bit.



The 2010 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

Jeffrey Macris **Anne Arundel County**

Jeffrey Macris is not someone who backs down from a challenge so when he planned on moving to Annapolis but was told the public schools, particularly the middle schools, were less than desirable, not only did he take it as a personal affront, he instantly pledged to change that perception. Rolling up his sleeves, Jeffrey began his work coordinating the Annapolis Cluster Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) to identify the needs of Annapolis and Bates Middle Schools. To move the CAC's three-pronged agenda for the two middle schools - bring in world-class academic programs, establish order and discipline, and provide high-quality teachers - forward in the community, Jeffrey then helped formed the Ad Hoc Group of Annapolis Parents. Under his leadership, the group began to address the three CAC goals, lobbying the county school board and school administrators; the mayor and city council; county elected officials; the city alderman; PTA; and parents within the two school's borders to adopt changes that would help reach the goals. Walking into either school today, not only are you impressed, but you might even consider joining the line to get your child admitted. Annapolis Middle is now an International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme school and Bates Middle is an Arts Magnet school offering both performing and visual arts programs. Both schools also have a school uniform policy, which immediately brought down disciplinary referrals by 80% which both have maintained over time. There are many more things that can be said about Jeffrey, but what he would prefer is to listen to parents talk about how they hope their students will be able to attend one of the Annapolis area middle schools. Through true leadership, determination, and dedication, Jeffrey was able to tilt windmills – turning two of the lowest performing middle schools in the county into thriving institutions of academic excellence!



[Jeffrey] Macris took it upon himself to speak for all and became a key stakeholder in getting parents together and making sure local government officials and local schools system understood the major concerns of the local community...Mr. Macris is a shining symbol in the community of how one person could make a difference.

- Enrique Melendez
School Board Member
Anne Arundel County
Public Schools



The 2010 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award



Our school, our students and families, local community, and the city of Baltimore reap the rewards of a volunteer as capable and giving as Ms. Donna Hager. Midtown has become a beacon to guide other schools in Baltimore and beyond.

- Kathy O'Hanlon
Principal
The Midtown Academy

Donna Hager Baltimore City

If you asked Donna Hager thirteen years ago (when she didn't even have children) where she would be – serving as President of The Midtown Academy in Baltimore City may not have been at the top of the list, but the students, staff and community of the school are grateful it is now. As a member of the founding committee for the public charter school, Donna has not only seen transformation but has been an instrumental part of The Midtown Academy's rise in academic achievement and cultivation of exceptional students and thriving, young citizens. Many would say her presence is the foundation for the school, given that she is so much a part of both the vision and the day-to-day operations. She can be found at every Back-to-School night event, meeting and greeting families, and helping them find their place at the school. Having attended every graduation at the school, Donna can proudly say that every graduating student in Midtown's Class of 2009 was admitted to the high school of their choice. She also brings Midtown alumni back to share the importance the school has had in their success. The importance of giving back to others is a value that Donna holds tightly to and at The Midtown Academy, it shows from the inside out.



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Jay Wolf Schlossberg-Cohen Baltimore County

Jay Wolf Schlossberg-Cohen has many adages regarding art, but two that best fit his involvement at Cromwell Valley Elementary Magnet School of Technology are “*Transforming places and people through art*” and “*Everyone is an artist.*” With those ideas as his driving force, Jay has taken the entire Cromwell Valley community on an artistic journey that traverses classrooms, hallways, the school gym, and the cafeteria. Beginning with *The Hello Cello Orchestra Project*, he helped tie a kindergarten field trip to the BSO *Circus of the Animals* concert to each student’s individuality and imagination. As he encouraged students to envision themselves as musicians, he was busy sketching a portrait of them holding an instrument, which each child then took and painted. The small mural that culminated from the project was a remarkable piece of art that each child and other parent volunteers could see themselves in, literally and figurative, from the collaborative effort Jay facilitated. The next stepping stone on the artistic path was the cafeteria mural, *A Portrait of Cromwell*. Through a school-wide survey, Jay gathered ideas from the community. Then, almost like the Yellow Brick Road (we’ll get to that), he laid a path of drawing and painting classes, design workshops, and team collage and painting sessions for students, siblings, parents, teachers, and staff that lead right to the cafeteria doors where there is now a two-walled, folk art mural that matches the vibrancy and color of the school. And in true wizard form, Jay’s most recent effort working on the school’s 2010 production of *The Wizard of Oz* has again brought the school’s community together for another artistic creation that everyone can take pride in. Because of Jay, second to home, there’s no place like Cromwell.



[Jay] has a gift but it runs far deeper than that of an artist...He values the human spirit. He wants to give back. He wants to involve as many people in a project as possible...Mr. Jay is a man who lives to honor others...

- Dorothy Smith
Teacher
Cromwell Valley
Elementary Magnet
School of Technology



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In all of his activities, he remained cognizant of children...Mr. Dolan's strengths in the areas of communication, volunteering, learning, decision-making, and community collaboration [show] he is a definite role model...and a pleasure to work with.

- Katherine Jenny
Thompson
Past PTA President
Beach Elementary School

Brian Dolan Calvert County

By the looks of Beach Elementary School, you could definitely say Brian Dolan has been a busy bee. After working with the school's principal to improve lighting in the school parking lot, he shone a whole new light on the school grounds by serving as the chair of School Improvement Committee. Under Brian's leadership, new spaces and a drop-off area were added to the school's parking lot, new sidewalks around the school were included as part of the Chesapeake Beach community's Town Streetscape project, and new playground equipment was picked out by students and installed. Then came the real beautification project – organizing volunteer parents, students, faculty and community members to clean up and landscape the campus with new plantings. Once he finished with the outside, Brian turned the spotlight on the school's inside with a wetlands mural for the cafeteria. Garnering funds from the PTA, Brian enlisted the artist and organized volunteer help from the 4th and 5th grade students at Beach Elementary to help paint in the details of the mural. Not only is the mural a beautiful piece of art but the entire school uses it as an environmental education tool. Brian's environmental consciousness spilled over to Earth Day where Brian coordinates an environmental education program at Andrews Air Force Base for students in the region, including 2nd graders from Beach Elementary. Brian has ensured that the Beach Elementary motto is true to its word – A Great Place for Students and Staff.



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...affectionately referred to as “The Fish Lady”... [Carol] demonstrates great endurance and patience in doing [the PBIS program] every week. Carol is a wonderful volunteer who truly does these things because she feels they are worthwhile.

- Jessica Swann
5th grade teacher
Ridgely Elementary School



Carol Cruikshank **Caroline County**

In one year, Carol Cruikshank caught 13,000 fish for Ridgely Elementary School in Caroline County. This is no whale of a tale — Ridgely Elementary uses paper fish for their Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (PBIS) program, which focuses on teaching and supporting positive behaviors in all students. Carol heads up the program for the entire school (that’s 24 classes, 512 students and 57 staff) first by collecting and counting the fish students earn each week for the twice-weekly *Fish Day*. She then enters the data and distributes the results to the appropriate teacher and school staff person in order to track how students are doing in the classroom and school. Her next task is to stock the treasure chest with games and prizes, then Carol keeps track of *Fish Day* results to ensure that each student has won at least two prizes by the end of the school year. PBIS is only one of Carol’s fishing expeditions. She can also be found casting her lures throughout the school organizing and setting up centers and coordinating classroom activities with other parents. Carol is worth her weight in Spanish gold to us!



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Laura Graf's volunteer work at New Windsor Middle School has made a significant difference for our school. She has always been willing to do whatever is asked of her and never fails to impress us with her dedication to detail and the quality of her efforts.

- Donald Bell
Principal
New Windsor Middle School

Lara Graf Carroll County

It didn't take Laura Graf long when she first started volunteering at her children's schools in Carroll County to realize how overwhelmed teachers and staff can become at school. In response, Laura began volunteering for as many tasks as she could to ease the staff's workload, including coordinating after-school dances or other school activities, and organizing the school newsletter. Then, Laura took it one step further, becoming the center of the volunteer program for New Windsor Middle School. This is no small feat in Carroll County, where there is a county-wide parent volunteer training program. Laura attended and brought back what she learned to train others at the school. Between her efforts as recruiter and coordinator, she is paying it forward by helping other parents understand the importance of their involvement at school and plugging them into the many tasks that need to happen every day at the school, as well as the activities that help enrich the educational experiences for all the students.



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Tara always has the welfare of our students in mind...Her efforts, enthusiasm, positive attitude, and energy have done so much to help our students and encourage other parents to become involved in the activities here at school!

- Joan Frampton
Family Involvement Advisor
Bay View Elementary School



Tara Price Cecil County

There seems to be a parallel at Bay View Elementary given that the Chesapeake Retriever is the school mascot and Tara Price is their premier parent volunteer. That's because Tara is exceptional at retrieving information and resources wherever she goes and bringing it back to Bay View Elementary to share with the staff and families at the school. And Tara goes far and wide as the school's representative on the Cecil County Title I Parent Involvement Committee and the county's Alliance of Students, Teachers, and Parents (ASTP). The amount of time Tara has dedicated to learning about best practices; state and federal guidelines; and exemplary programs has truly benefitted Bay View Elementary, particularly through the school's Parent Involvement Policy, Parent Involvement Plan, and Compact. She has also been instrumental as Homeroom Parent and School Store, volunteering in making sure students and staff have the support and supplies they need, whether it's helping students with assignments, distributing books for the Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) program, or bringing in bags of pumpkins for a science project. Her dedication to providing a place where students can excel on a daily basis is tremendous. We agree with Tara Price's youngest son, Legend – SHE ROCKS!



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Julie Chapman Charles County

Elizabeth Hair was absolutely right when she started her nomination letter supporting Julie Chapman with “*I don’t know any words to describe such an extraordinary woman.*” But the words that followed were eloquent, heart-felt, poignant, and most importantly, inspiring, all of which are at the core of everything Julie does. For over 15 years, Julie has been involved in schools in the Cobb Island community, Dr. Higdon Elementary, Piccowaxen Middle, and LaPlata High Schools, assuming the various roles in the PTA including President, as a member of the Charles County Parent Advisory Committee, Girl Scout Troop Leader, and the 4-H Club to name a few. She has raised funds, organized events, has offered her expertise and knowledge to committees, and has been a sounding board for anyone who needed someone to listen. What makes Julie so special is that she truly believes that it only takes one person to make a difference in a child’s life, and sometimes, that means becoming a surrogate parent so that a child whose parents may be sick or have died still has a sense of love and security so they continue to grow into a responsible adult. Julie has opened her heart and home to any child in need – she even has an extra bunk at her house – and treats them with the same kindness, love, and high expectations she has for her own children. So when Julie hears someone calling out “*Momma*” in the high school cafeteria, she knows they are talking to her and just turns to give them a big hug.

As we watched over the years, it was amazing to see the impact Julie has had in the entire community. She has supported teachers and parents...She feeds children...She offers help to staff members...She is always caring and willing to help. That is what makes her so special.

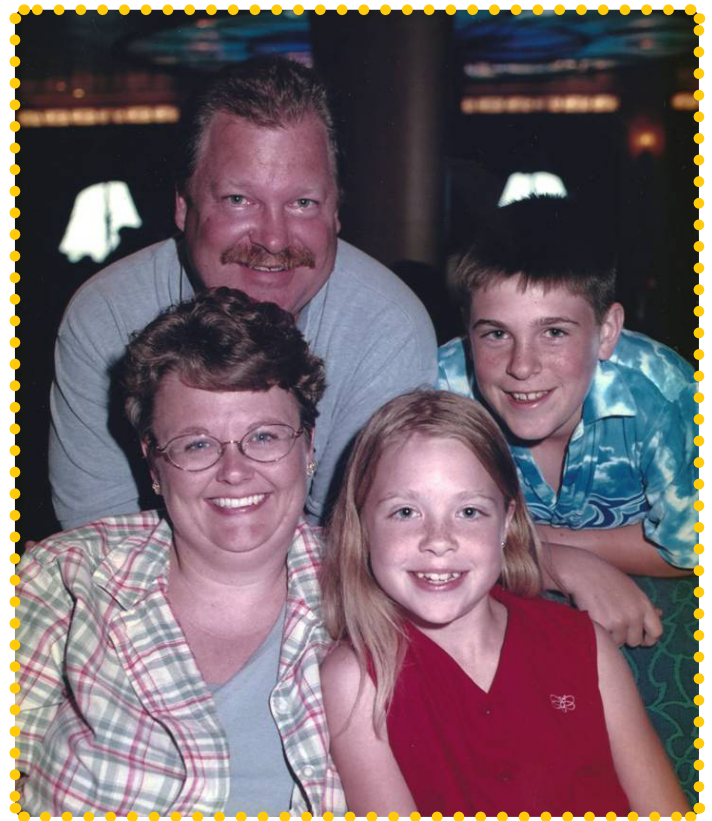
- Peggy Mertes
Principal
Dr. Thomas L. Higdon
Elementary School



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I believe we are...on the verge of a unique transformation and it's because of the overwhelming support of our Viking Sports Boosters organization...Gary Mills is the greatest influence in this transformation and Cambridge-South Dorchester is extremely fortunate to have a volunteer of his caliber who is willing to devote so much time to the job.

- Sandra Woolfolk
Media Specialist/Athletic Director
Cambridge-South Dorchester High School



Gary Mills Dorchester County

Extra-curricular programs, like athletics, play a very big role in motivating hundreds of students at Cambridge-South Dorchester High School to maintain good grades and stay on the right track. Luckily, the Sports Boosters organization at the school is headed by Gary Mills, where son, Jonathon, and daughter, Kaitlyn, both attend. With his easy-going manner and quick jokes, he makes day-long concession work fly by and parents enjoy working under his leadership, even after their kids graduate. Maybe it's because Gary has taken the Sports Boosters to a whole new level, not only ensuring that all teams benefit from having concessions, and the funds raised, but that the food served has also been notched up, particularly Gary's now-famous breakfast sandwiches, which people drive across the Eastern Shore to try. His dedication and support of the students, and his presence at the school will far outlive the games played on the fields.



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Janice Spiegel Frederick County

Janice Spiegel's children, Jason and Sarah, have very different descriptions of their mom, but it's all good because what it really boils down to is that she is an involved parent. And that means paying attention to what is going on and how it is affecting her children. So when Janice's daughter was in a class of 32 fourth graders, she just had to recall a class she took in high school that had only two students, and the level of learning and fun it provided her, to realize the importance of class size on a student's learning experience. At that point, Janice became a passionate advocate for limiting the number of students allowed in a class, not just in her daughter's school, but all of Frederick County. Because of Janice's efforts, Frederick County is the only county to have a law that limits any new housing development based on school enrollment. You could say this is the pinnacle of Janice's work, but it's just a piece of the much larger picture of her involvement in her children's schools. Janice is also President of the PTA Council and participates in *Sailing through the System* and *Raising the Sails*, two initiatives in Frederick County's family involvement programs that help encourage parents to get involved. We hope she always has the wind behind her to keep going.

I cannot think of anyone who has become more synonymous with speaking out for the needs of ALL of our students than Janice. I would have to say that out of all the people in Frederick County who have worked on behalf of children, Janice is definitely at the top of the list for her tireless efforts and never ending activities.

- M.C. Keegan-Ayer
Legislative Issues Chair
PTA Council of Frederick
County



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Every student benefits in some way from Mrs. Friend's generosity...Through her acts of kindness and donation of time, talent and resources, Emily has made a difference for our students and our community.

- Janet Gregory
Principal
Friendsville Elementary School



Emily Friend Garrett County

Even though her children have moved on from Friendsville Elementary School, Emily Friend has a lot to do with the smiles on students' faces at the school. For over 10 years, she has organized and administered the *Fluoride Mouth Rinse Program*, including following up with students to ensure they are maintaining good dental hygiene practices as well as their weekly rinse routine. And her volunteer efforts to support the school don't stop there. Whether she's meeting up with her kindergarten lunch buddy, managing the school's field day competition, or dropping off homemade goodies, students and staff delight at seeing Emily come through the door. In addition to all this, Emily's efforts coordinating Santa's Workshop, the Fall/Spring Festivals, Box Tops for Education, and many other fundraising activities, have provided critical financial support for the school's playground equipment and multimedia needs. At Friendsville, Emily is better than the tooth fairy!!



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Amanda Shaffer Harford County

Amanda Shaffer may look like a “*pretty princess mommy*” to her daughter, Emily-Jane, but her daughter, Anna, nailed it on the head when she said, “*It’s kind of like, you’re always there. Involved, I guess.*” Having five children, spanning four schools, it’s hard to imagine how she does it, but without a doubt, Amanda is always there - involved. Whether she is tackling goals like getting more men involved through the *All-Pro Dad Breakfast* or bringing the school community together with *Movie Night, Reading Night, or Fix It Up Day*, Amanda is all S.M.I.L.E.S. (Service Makes an Individual’s Life Extra Special), another program she volunteers for in the community. She has also spearheaded initiatives like Internet Safety Night and an information sharing session on gangs for the entire community. But probably one of her most talked-about events is the basketball fundraiser pitting teachers from the four community schools against the Harlem Wizards, “one of the greatest basketball show-team organizations.” Amanda arranges the lodging, publicity, ticket sales, concessions, volunteers, and school assemblies so everyone has an opportunity to see the players. With Amanda on the team, it’s a slam dunk for Havre de Grace schools!

One would be hard pressed to find another person who has impacted so many facets of the Havre de Grace School Community. Her ability to create, orchestrate, and execute so many school activities is in itself awe inspiring, but the fact that she is also the mother of five children makes her success all the more impressive.

- Elizabeth Nemeth
Harford County Public Schools



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Kayle Simon Howard County

As a new high school parent, Kayle Simon wanted to be involved so she would know what was going on at school and be part of the school community, but didn't necessarily have the time to attend meetings or be involved in traditional ways. Luckily for both her and the PTSA, she is an awesome graphic artist and web designer, and chose to use her techno-artistic skills to refurbish the organization's website and newsletter. If you visit the site today, you'll be able to easily navigate through countless resources, such as parenting tips, weekly and monthly calendars of events, community outreach activities, and much more. As a result of Kayle's upgrade, the PTSA website now gets between 300-400 hits per week and the organization has seen an increase in participation in activities and events at the school. Kayle also helps produce *The Raider News*, the PTSA's monthly newsletter, which under Kayle's efforts has grown to a 30-page online document that can be accessed by the entire Atholton community. With Kayle taking technology that one step further, parents, students, staff, and others can track school-related events and activities on their computer, cell phone, and/or PDA calendar. Finally, Kayle's tech-savvy skills have opened up new possibilities for raising funds through the PayPal account she set up and posted on the website. Kayle has the Atholton High community plugged in so no one feels left out.



[Kayle] contributes selflessly because she feels passionately that there is something to be done for our school and just runs with it. Her high-quality results and tireless dedication have produced resources which we never could have imagined.

- Caryn D. Lasser
Past PTSA President



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Sabine Harvey Kent County

While there are likely many things Sabine Harvey's family would say she is "obsessed with," Chestertown Middle School is happy that education and parent involvement are at the top of the list. From an early age, Sabine has loved gardening and she has brought this passion as well as her skills as a master gardener to help in a wide range of school initiatives and activities. Using the basic principal that plants need light to grow, Sabine felt students needed light to grow and began the initiative to improve the learning environment through natural lighting. Most of the school's classrooms, which in the past were primarily located in the interior of the building, are now "rooms with a view" after being moved to the exterior of the building. Working with Ed Stack, social studies teacher, the school will also have a victory garden that will help supply the local food pantry. Sabine lobbied the local U.S. Department of Agriculture for help and with seeds, potato cuts, and volunteers, the project is taking root on the 30 x 60 yard plot. Sabine has also brought her creativity indoors with fun activities, such as *Pi (3.14) Day* where she organized fun math-oriented activities including a pie-making contest and staff pie-in-the-face, and *Junk Box Wars* where parents, students, and staff worked together on experiments using only what they were given, just to name a few. Overall, Sabine has cultivated an environment where the community feels welcomed and encouraged to participate, and students have been given lots of room to grow.

Since her first day, [Sabine] has had a vision...that Chestertown Middle School will be a place where parents will want to send their children. She has worked consistently in all of her efforts to see that vision come to fruition. Mrs. Harvey continually reaches out to parents and the community to share and celebrate the successes of students at Chestertown Middle.

- Joseph Wheeler, III
Assistant Principal
Chestertown Middle School



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[Mr. Barnes] gives us ideas about how we can respect our teachers and how to use self-control. Now when my friends are acting up, I know how to stay out of it and not follow them...His volunteering has changed my life for the better and has helped the whole school.

- Shariff Jones
Student
Shady Grove Middle School



Earle Barnes Montgomery County

The motto for Shady Grove Middle School is “*Give your best every day and your best will come back to you,*” which makes you immediately think the school must have consulted Earle Barnes, who spearheads the school’s SWAG (Students with Attainable Goals) mentoring group. Mr. Barnes is no ordinary mentor and his key to success is communication and commitment to everyone associated with the school. When he leads SWAG discussions about academic achievement, behavior modification, changing perceptions and attitudes, and improving relationships, he demonstrates an openness and honesty that the students can appreciate and want to emulate. He uses the same approach with parents and staff, earning him the respect and cooperation he gives them as they work together on creating a strong and supportive education community. And through his contributions as a graphic designer, not only does the SWAG team have *fly* t-shirts, but Earl has also transformed the school website into a modern, eye-catching, and sophisticated site that shows off the school’s rich diversity and pride. We are looking forward to seeing what hat he will wear next.



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...because of her leadership in building a safe playspace at her son's school and for involving other parents and community members in the process...Eileen lead her school and community to build two playground structures and enhance the school's overall playspace in one day!

- Amanda Bernard
KaBOOM Grants Manager

Eileen Collins Prince George's County

Two things Eileen Collins takes seriously – play and the power of positive thinking. You may wonder “how serious can a person can be if they live by those two things?” Well, just ask the community of Laurel Elementary School and the city of Laurel. When Eileen took it upon herself to spearhead an effort to replace the outdated playground equipment at the school, she got on a rollercoaster ride of challenges and obstacles. But rather than close her eyes and wish the ride was over, she took every turn and dip in stride and at the end – KaBOOM! – to everyone's delight, the long hours of meetings and grant writing, raising funds, and coordinating volunteers turned into a playground! Always one to keep the play going and getting others in the game, Eileen went back to the city of Laurel to encourage them to apply as a KaBOOM! Playful City USA. And when the city won the award, she chaired the celebration planning committee. In September 2009, the *Celebration of Play Day* was attended by over 300 people and included Raven LeRon McCain, outdoor games and, of course, Eileen, who was right in the thick of it, playing. In her recent position as PTA President, Eileen's sense of play has resulted in events like the Popcorn Fridays fundraiser to support an afterschool arts program and the school's spring musical “*We Haz Jazz.*” With Eileen at the lead, there's never a rainy day where she's not signing “*The Sun Will Come Out Tomorrow.*”



The 2010 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

The [Sister School Initiative] to bring cultural and environmental awareness to Sudlersville Elementary School would not be the success it is without Mrs. Covington's dedication to education, ability to collaborate and communicate, leadership qualities, and energy!!

- Alison Vooris
Enrichment Specialist
Sudlersville Elementary School



Whitney Covington Queen Anne's County

Three is a lucky number at Sudlersville Elementary School because that's how many projects Whitney Covington helped lead this past year as part of the *Sister School Initiative* with a school in Veracruz, Mexico. Whitney was instrumental in gathering support for the program from parents, students, and staff; developing environmental and cultural-awareness materials about the sister school; butterfly planning, raising funds, and building a habitat for butterfly migration between Maryland and Mexico. Whitney also organized the school's Multicultural Fair to promote broader awareness of the program to the community. The event turned out to be the largest community event ever at the school with 420 people attending from both the school and surround community. Whitney's involvement is not limited to three as she has also volunteered to help teach a first-grade class on African animals, with all the appropriate grossly outrageous facts, and participated in the after-school enrichment program at the school. We think Whitney está muy en la onda! [Whitney is really cool!]



The 2010 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award



Rachel Feddersen St. Mary's County

I am consistently impressed with [Rachel's] dedication in wanting to make a difference in the lives of our students and in the life of our school community. She has spent a significant amount of time working in classrooms with small groups and individual students, leading school improvement projects, and representing her neighborhood on school and county committees.

- Elizabeth Servello
Principal
Greenview Knolls Elementary
School

There are three words that are continually used in the Greenview Knolls Elementary School community to describe Rachel Feddersen – creative, resourceful, and prepared. At a school, those words, together with commitment, mean things get done, and with Rachel in particular, done well. Rachel organized the *GreenUp Greenview Knolls* environmental improvement day to work on re-landscaping the school grounds after a school construction project was completed. Having no funds or resources would seem like an obstacle to most, but in a matter of weeks, Rachel was able to secure funds for plantings, new saplings from the Department of Natural Resources, and mulch at a discounted price. With volunteers at the ready, she organized a cleanup and planting day, then spent the following evenings and weekends making sure the beds were tended. Rachel also arranged for a local carpenter to build picnic tables for an area of the school which has now been turned into a beautiful outdoor classroom for lessons and activities. Rachel is also the go-to person when it comes to harnessing students' energy. No matter what is asked of her, Rachel's response is always, "where should I be and what should I bring?" Whether working with frustrated students learning new concepts, teaching students with limited skills and coordination to paddle a canoe, or acting as a bridge for non-English speaking students, Rachel's patience and compassion turns what could be a challenge into an adventure. She has also bridged the school with the community, securing matching funds or volunteer time from local organizations to benefit the school. Rachel is a true Greenview Knolls SAINT (School Improvement Needs Team)!



The 2010 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

[Sue Hahn] can be counted on to be the person who will stand behind any goal you make and do whatever she can to ensure that goal is reached. Her dedication to our school is a snapshot of the type of person she is.

- Lea LaRue
Music Teacher/Choral Director
Greenview Elementary School



Sue Hahn Somerset County

At Greenview Elementary School, students and staff alike sing the praises of Sue Hahn, particularly for her involvement in the Choral Parent Association. Not only does Sue help the chorus teacher prepare and set up for the afterschool school chorus program, she has also served as chaperon the last several years for the chorus' overnight trip to Washington, D.C. to participate in the Cherry Blossom Festival Parade. During these trips, Sue makes a special effort to provide character and life lessons to her group of girls, making the trip that much more exceptional. Sue has also provided students with unique learning experiences via her Green Gate Farm, where she uses horse therapy to help people overcome personal challenges. Having seen first-hand the breakthroughs people have made in developing a sense of trust and self-esteem, Sue has brought her horses to the school to teach students character lessons and team building skills. Finally, her work as a member of both the Parent Involvement Committee and School Improvement Team, and as PTA Treasurer have been invaluable to Greenview Elementary and Somerset County.



The 2010 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award



Sharon Rieck Talbot County

As the coordinator of St. Michael's Elementary School's DestiNation Imagination program, Sharon Rieck gets to act on her love of The Wizard of Oz to help students let their imaginations run wild. Before Sharon, the program was at risk of having a house dropped on it due to lack of volunteers but after developing a parent communication campaign and holding many workshops and recruitment meetings, Sharon has brought DestiNation Imagination into full Technicolor vision with more children than ever participating in teams at the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade levels. Under Sharon's leadership, four teams used their problem-solving skills and teamwork to participate in last year's regional competition, and two of them qualified for the state competition! Sharon has also taken on the role of Santa's personal photographer for the school's annual Santa's Workshop, where she takes photos of students with Santa and sends them to families free of charge. On the more serious side, Sharon has served on the School Improvement Team as a member of the Reading Committee and the Citizens Advisory Committee, which meets with the local Board of Education. Her commitment to advocating for education has had an influence not just at St. Michael's Elementary but throughout Talbot County.

Sharon approached me... to volunteer as a team manager for DestiNation Imagination...I attended her recruitment meeting for parents and students, and was instantly hooked. Sharon's enthusiasm was contagious.

- Amy Downey
3rd Grade Teacher
DestiNation Imagination Team
Manager
St. Michael's Elementary
School



The 2010 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

Tina Carrazco Washington County

While Tina Carrazco has four children of her own, she considers all the children at Hickory Elementary School her own, and impresses upon them the same expectations and values she has for Porter, Corbin, Jackson, and Corrine, particularly one mentioned by her son Porter, *"She doesn't let me settle for less than my best..."* Tina's belief is that everyone has a purpose and the power to make a positive impact on others, and her purpose is to help others, particularly children, to recognize their own inner confidence. Whether she is volunteering in a classroom, helping parents of special needs children learn and work through the IEP (Individualized Education Program) process, or teaching art to the kindergarten classes, Tina is encouraging confidence in the children she touches. As a bilingual parent, Tina has also touched many parents who might otherwise feel left out by helping translate information and interpret meetings so everyone at the school is connected. And when she took on the job as President of the school's PTA, she brought a lot of new energy and ideas to encourage and recruit parents to become involved in education.



[Tina] encourages everyone to be involved in school events and promotes new ideas. She assists in the organization of fundraisers conducted by the PTA and always steps forward to make sure that the minor details of any project are handled...I admire the way she balances her devotion to her family, her job, and a variety of volunteer efforts.

- Amy Norris
Principal
Hickory Elementary School



The 2010 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award



Lori has a very special knack about her, which gives her insight and drive to come up with ways to raise money and involve the students and community at the same time. [She] is one of the most enthusiastic, fun-loving, dependable parents whom I have worked with.

- Debra Hearn
4th Grade Teacher
Glen Avenue School

Lori Gilliss Wicomico County

Lori Gilliss' daughter, Madison, wrote, "she lets me do whatever I dream." But that statement doesn't just apply to Lori's family, it ripples out. Her vision and actions have brought the entire Glen Avenue School community together in support of the school and each other so that students, families, and staff can realize their dreams. With the attitude that anything can be done, she has volunteered in classrooms and at events; organized PTA meetings and functions like *Dare to be Drug Free* and *Red Ribbon Week*; and coordinated numerous fundraisers, including the Spaghetti dinner/talent show and candle fundraiser where she spent days tallying, counting, then distributing orders. Principal Collins remarked, "Money might not grow on trees, but I sure do believe that money grows on Mrs. Gilliss." Her knack of knowing what needs to be done and her drive to get it done, coupled with her compassion to make sure everyone is taken care of is truly a testimony to her mantra, "Together, we create a better tomorrow." And Lori has done much to ensure the Glen Avenue community has a better tomorrow.



The 2010 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award



April Adams Worcester County

April Adams' outstanding contributions to public education stem from her tireless dedication and active involvement in PTAs at the school, county, and state levels. [Her] love of being a parent volunteer and child advocate make her an inspiration for everyone.

- Jane Chisholm
Extended School Administrator
Pokomoke Middle Schools

There is no chance of boxing April Adams in when it comes to being an involved parent in Worcester County! What started out as an opportunity to keep up with her kids and their friends has turned into so much more both for April and the Pokomoke schools community. Through April's leadership at Pokomoke Middle School's PTA, the school has a slew of family events and activities that not only bring the community together but provide funds that helped purchase SmartBoards, laptops, and wireless mobile computer labs for each grade! April notched it up when she took on the leadership of Worcester County Council of PTAs, where she fought to bring the group back into good standing with Maryland PTA and has been tireless in her efforts to strengthen parent involvement across the county. She is also involved at the state level with Maryland PTA as a member of the Nominations Committee and Elections Committee, as well as serving on the Board of Directors. April's belief that it takes more than the teachers at our schools to teach our children drives her actions to work collaboratively with students, parents, teachers, and staff and participate in the decision-making process to positively impact children and their education across the state.



The 2010 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

2008 Awardees

Erin DeLong, Allegany County

Lisa Eliot, Anne Arundel County

Susana Barrios, Baltimore City (Finalist)

Judy Jefferson-LaFlame, Baltimore County

Eileen Hudson, Calvert County

Kelli Nelson, Carroll County (Finalist)

Jesse Cloud, Cecil County

Shellee Stine, Charles County

Michelle Nichols, Dorchester County

Kathy Meagher, Frederick County (Deceased)

Crellin Corps of Discovery Parent Group, Garrett County

Sue Rattman, Harford County (Finalist)

Larry Walker, Howard County (Statewide Winner)

Robert Ortiz, Kent County

Ralph Nelson, Montgomery County

Annette Jackson-Jolly, Prince George's County (Finalist)

Karen Catron, Queen Anne's County

Lynn Cullins, St. Mary's County (Finalist)

Stephanie Kayhan, Somerset County

Molly Groton, Talbot County

Kristy Sollenberger, Washington County

Kathy Sterling, Wicomico County

Gary Williams, Worcester County

2009 Awardees

Stephanie Turbin, Allegany County

Carolyn Fiume, Anne Arundel County

Tracie Martin, Baltimore City

Mark Lewis, Baltimore County (Finalist)

James Carroll, Calvert County (Finalist)

Jemima Clark, Caroline County

Laurie Long, Carroll County

Kathy Ann Joseph, Cecil County

Kristina Gozzi, Charles County

Valerie Jordan, Dorchester County

Brian Barron, Frederick County (Finalist)

Christine Brenneman, Garrett County

Mark Dagher, Harford County

Sandra Holt, Howard County

Kiki Jones, Kent County

Ann English, Montgomery County (Finalist)

Kristen Ruiz, Prince George's County (JoAnne L. Carter)

Wendy Panor, Queen Anne's County (Statewide Winner)

Maria Scott, St. Mary's County

Robert Wells, Somerset County

Jenny Schmidt, Talbot County

Steven O'Farrell, Washington County

Ginny Steuart, Wicomico County

Marilyn James, Worcester County



The Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award, the nation's first state-wide award program recognizing parent involvement in public education, is a collaboration between Comcast and the Maryland State Department of Education.

