



Written by Gail V. Tucker, 410.767.0482

2012 Parent Involvement Matters Award Local Honorees

Stephanie McCoy – Flintstone Elementary School, Allegany County Public Schools

Flintstone Elementary School has benefitted from the unwavering volunteerism and support of Stephanie McCoy for the past five years. She is an invaluable resource for the administrators, teachers, support staff, as well as the students at Flintstone. From dazzling in the “Sparkler Store” to rewarding students for positive behavior and promoting literacy through the Accelerated Reader Program, Ms. McCoy is preparing students with the skills they need for a successful and vibrant future.

Ambareen Jafri – Nantucket Elementary School, Anne Arundel County Public Schools

Ambareen Jafri is Nantucket Elementary School’s great communicator. Answering a “call for help,” she sprung into action for ESOL students to serve on the Diversity Committee as an Urdu interpreter. Ms. Jafri’s communication and liaison skills with parents, teachers, and students; her ability to engage the English Language Learners community; and her positive attitude make her indispensable at Nantucket Elementary School.

Mark Atkinson – The Historic Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Elementary School, Baltimore City Public Schools

With a keen awareness of the high percentage drop-out rate and the increasing number of persons without a high school diploma in Baltimore City, Mark Atkinson sought to make a difference in his community. He presented a plan to teach GED prep and GED classes “at no cost” to the citizens in the community, specifically targeting the parents of children who attend The Historic Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Elementary School. Because of his dedication and commitment to his daughter and to the school, and his giving of his time and talents to help Samuel Coleridge-Taylor families, he is changing the lives of many families in the community forever. Further, he now serves as President of the Parent Teacher Organization Executive Board.

Keyne Giesler - Warren Elementary School, Baltimore County Public Schools

Keyne Giesler is the Co-Coordinator of the Community Outreach Program at Warren Elementary School – a program aimed at welcoming new families to the school and providing assistance to families in need of support. Last year alone, 12 families benefitted from a Thanksgiving basket, and 20 families received support during Christmas to include clothing, food, and gifts. Ms. Giesler’s collaboration with the school community also carries over to her church community to provide services and resources to the school. Her mission to help people get back on their feet and secure resources to become stable demonstrates that giving back to the school community benefits all Warren Elementary School families in the long run.



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Dee-Dee Shirley - Huntingtown High School, Calvert County Public Schools

To say that Deanna (Dee-Dee) Shirley is actively involved in a variety of organizations in Calvert County is an understatement. For 10 years, Ms. Shirley has been a regular volunteer at Huntingtown High School, where her son currently attends, and at Plum Point Middle School where her daughter attends. She has assisted the PTSA members for numerous years at three schools and is a member of the Naval Junior ROTC unit. Ms. Shirley is also a member of the school's Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) team. Her volunteerism extends beyond the halls of Calvert County Public Schools – she serves on the Citizen Advisory Committee to the Calvert County Board of Education and was named “Volunteer of the Year” twice for her dedicated service at Plum Point Elementary School *and* Plum Point Middle School.

Cassandra Smith – Colonel Richardson High School, Caroline County Public Schools

Cassandra Smith provides immeasurable involvement and dedication to Colonel Richardson High School. Through her tireless efforts, the school has been able to reorganize and reinstate their Parent Teacher Student Association after a five-year hiatus. As president of the Parent Teacher Student Association, she organized a parent workshop that focuses on post-secondary education to help parents navigate through the college process at each grade level in high school. This mother of three is also actively involved in the PTAs of Colonel Richardson High School's feeder schools where her other children attend.

Anna Letaw – Linton Springs Elementary School, Carroll County Public Schools

A constant advocate for outdoor learning, Anna Letaw is an outstanding representative of a parent who knows and lives the belief that education matters. Ms. Letaw's impact on the school goes well beyond a single project and she has helped change the way science education is viewed by more than 800 elementary school students because she connects science to life. Established three years ago, The Green Team afterschool club, spearheaded by Ms. Letaw, provides habitat reclamation, invasive weed eradication, public awareness campaigns, native plantings, Earth Day activities, and a myriad of ways to improve the water quality of the school and reduce the carbon footprint. She has become the driving force behind much of what is accomplished at Linton Springs Elementary School.

Karen Cornieles – Bohemia Manor High School, Cecil County Public Schools

Through the vision and leadership of Karen Cornieles, the *first* After Prom Project in Cecil County was a huge success not only at Bohemia Manor High School, but also now in two other high schools. Three years ago, and new to the State of Maryland, Ms. Cornieles encouraged a small group of parents to join her on a planning committee to convince the school's administration of the value of adding yet another event to the already busy school calendar. She saw an opportunity to mitigate the potential for unhealthy behaviors and poor decisions made by students after their prom. Even on a shoestring budget, Ms. Cornieles implemented the supervised, alcohol and drug-free, fun-for-all, event to keep the students of Bohemia Manor High School safe.

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James Tabourne – Eva Turner Elementary School, Charles County Public Schools

Eva Turner Elementary School’s Chess Club has been the “brain child” of James Tabourne, for which he has been the driving force for the past five years. The hugely successful club provides critical thinking and enrichment opportunities for students in grades 2 through 5. This parent of three Charles County students works earnestly to mentor students, and to help them to understand the importance of committing one’s self to learning. His tireless dedication and volunteerism demonstrates how parent involvement lays the foundation for future success.

Becky Ruffennach – Sandy Hill Elementary School, Dorchester County Public Schools

Although Becky Ruffennach is the proud parent of two students at Sandy Hill Elementary School, her concern for the success of other students extends beyond the scope of her immediate family. A natural leader, Ms. Ruffennach draws people to the Parent Advisory Council efforts and communicates effectively with all stakeholders – school administration, teachers, staff, parents and community members. In addition, she also serves as Parent Teacher Organization secretary. Her commitment to the vision and mission of the school is, without a doubt, a contributing factor to its upward momentum.

Nikki Moberly – Rock Creek School, Frederick County Public Schools

Nikki Moberly is called an “Agent of Change” by many. She worked tirelessly to change the way the Alternative Maryland School Assessment (Alt-MSA) is delivered to children with severe and profound disabilities. Although she was originally motivated by advocating for her own child at Rock Creek School, in the process she realized that her daughter was the spark that lit the flame of change that could benefit many children not only in Frederick County, but also across the State. Ms. Moberly is also a member of the Frederick County Workforce Development Board where she is responsible for bringing the Johns Hopkins Engineering Innovation program to Frederick County each summer to challenge high school students with college-level STEM curriculum to build the workforce of the future. She is also working to bring a Maryland Summer Center to Frederick County providing STEM enrichment to students in grades 4 through 7.

Angela Paugh – Kitzmiller Elementary School, Garrett County Public Schools

Angela Paugh is known as a pillar of support for Kitzmiller Elementary School, a school that serves as the foundation of the community. Ms. Paugh has devoted a wealth of time, energy, and creative intelligence to the well-being of the citizens of Kitzmiller. She served as homeroom parent, Parent Teacher Organization secretary and treasurer, member of the Parent Advisory Committee, and member of the Kitzmiller Empowerment Group, which provides healthy and fundamental programs to educate the community about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. In addition, through a letter-writing campaign, Ms. Paugh inspired the community in a successful battle that kept Kitzmiller Elementary School open for another year.



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Carmen Kifer – Youth’s Benefit Elementary School, Harford County Public Schools

It is because of the pioneering efforts of Carmen Kifer that Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) education is thriving in Harford County. Ms. Kifer, the parent of two students at Youth’s Benefit Elementary School (YBES), is a true STEM Ambassador. Her role in the school’s first STEM Night last year, designed to promote science and technology to students at YBES, led to the creation of the school’s FIRST[®] LEGO[®] League Program, co-directed by Ms. Kifer and included the creation of six 1st - 5th grade teams. She has also worked with public school and government personnel to offer a joint program “STEM and Beyond” at four middle schools in Cecil and Harford Counties. She is now working with the STEM Student Pipeline Subcommittee and YBES to implement another “Beyond” initiative, a flexible STEM after school club that will give parents and kids an opportunity to explore a variety of STEM activities together.

Jacqueline Weinberg – Oakland Mills High School, Howard County Public Schools

Jacqueline Weinberg is the consummate volunteer and through her leadership, Oakland Mills High School has been recognized as having one of the strongest daytime parent involvement programs in the county. As coordinator of the 100 percent parent run College and Career Center, Mrs. Weinberg recruits, trains, and manages the cadre of parent volunteers who open the center during the two hour lunch period during the school year. She has also served as Parent Teacher Student Association treasurer and is an active Howard County library volunteer.

Sally Futty – Galena Elementary School, Kent County Public Schools

Sally Futty is a dynamic legal guardian for her two grandchildren at Galena Elementary School. She provides extensive support to not only her grandchildren, but to all of the children at Galena. While others her age might be looking forward to retirement, she serves as the room parent for the fifth grade classrooms and shares room parent responsibilities with others for the second grade classrooms. She is also an active volunteer during numerous school events and activities. Her tireless work and constant enthusiasm for volunteerism and decision-making are contagious.

Tawnya McKee – Washington Grove Elementary School, Montgomery County Public Schools

Dr. Tawnya McKee exemplifies the positive impact that parent involvement can have. Since 2008, Dr. McKee has volunteered countless hours to develop a Science Extras Program at Washington Grove Elementary School. The goal of this program is to put a supplemental hands-on science lesson into every Kindergarten through 5th grade classroom twice a year. The principals and teachers benefit from the additional lessons that enhance their scientific curriculum. As an extension of the Science Extras Program, Dr. McKee worked with the school and University of Maryland’s Cooperative Extension Service to develop plans for and the installation of a butterfly garden in the school’s courtyard.

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Barbara Fisher – Carrollton Elementary School, Prince George's County Public Schools

Hailed the “Heart & Soul of Carrollton Elementary School,” Barbara Fisher’s personal involvement and commitment to the school and the community can be measured by the material contributions she has made and procured from the community as well as by her kindness and compassion. From helping needy families and planting flowers for “Beautification Days” at the school to preparing special occasion lunches for more than 70 staff members and opening her home to host the end of the school year gala, Ms. Fisher is a positive role model for the students and parents. Her grandchildren blissfully share their “retired” grandmother with over 600 students on a daily basis.

Jennifer Bone – Kennard Elementary School, Queen Anne's County Public Schools

Jennifer Bone is the mother of two children in Queen Anne’s County Public Schools and leads Kennard Elementary School in innovative fundraising events, and exemplary classroom participation, as she also volunteers for students in need of weekend meals through “Backpacks for Kids,” provided by United Methodist Church in Centreville. Although Ms. Bone does not hold an elected office, the PTA is a successful organization due to her leadership and “can-do” demeanor as she serves as Chair, and coordinates multiple programs and school activities.

Jeania Lankford – Greenwood Elementary School, Somerset County Public Schools

Winning the trifecta each and every day by parenting third-grade twin daughters and a son in kindergarten at Greenwood Elementary School, Jeania Lankford also serves on the School Improvement Team. In addition, she enlists community members’ support to translate her ideas into community programs. Ms. Lankford’s steadfast dedication stretches beyond her children’s classrooms and extends throughout the halls of Greenwood Elementary School.

Shana Taylor – Park Hall Elementary School, St. Mary's County Public Schools

In an era of economic despair, many children struggle to focus on learning and a positive future, and so Shana Taylor remains tireless in her efforts to make a difference in the lives of children at Park Hall Elementary School. She not only participates in numerous PTA events, but she also facilitates an after-school program titled “Creative Minds.” In addition, Ms. Taylor collaboratively worked with the school’s first-ever “Job Readiness Program” to assist unemployed parents with job training, interview preparation, dress-for-success workshops to help parents ready themselves for interviews, and a culminating Job Fair – in which local business leaders attended to interview prospective employees for vacancies.



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Cynthia de Guzman – Easton Middle School, Talbot County Public Schools

As the parent of three children in Talbot County Public Schools, Cynthia de Guzman has experienced a wide range of levels of parent involvement – serving as co-president of the PTO at Chapel District Elementary School for three years prior to her 2-year PTO presidency at Easton Middle School. Ms. de Guzman spearheaded several unique fundraising projects at Easton Middle School to cover costs for students to experience academic and cultural enrichment experiences. In addition, she is a powerful model of a positive parent-leader. She is an exceptional communicator, decision-maker, builder of community partnerships, volunteer, and role model who “walks the walk.”

Jo Bradford – Hickory Elementary School, Washington County Public Schools

Jo Bradford is on a mission to develop a love of reading in students and their families at Hickory Elementary School. Ms. Bradford writes activities which accompany take-home instruction to offer students a fun and meaningful relationship with books. By inspiring the passion of reading, she is creating a sphere of influence, surrounding the children with a common belief – reading is paramount with lifelong rewards!

Lauralyn S. Geiser – Fruitland Primary School, Wicomico County Public Schools

Lauralyn Geiser is not merely a parent in action at Fruitland Primary School, she is the founding member of the group “Parents in Action of Wicomico County.” She wears many more stylish hats as a mother of three sons, Chair of the Parent Advisory Committee, Chair of the 2011 Scholastic Book Fair, and PTA Treasurer – just to name a few. Mrs. Geiser strives to live in a community that values public education and she is dedicated to *all* children of Wicomico County.

Sanji Ramnarain – Showell Elementary School, Worcester County Public Schools

“We can always do more,” is the mantra of Sanji Ramnarain, a Showell Elementary School parent. Ms. Ramnarain is a dedicated member of the Showell Elementary School’s Volunteer Program, which assists with enhancing the academic and social growth of students in a variety of ways, as well as a member of the School Improvement Advisory Committee. In addition, Ms. Ramnarain volunteers in classrooms, serves as president of the PTA, as well as reinforces mathematical concepts via games that are fun, and works one-on-one with students on a weekly basis to support the mathematical instruction applied in the second grade classroom.