

MCAS Communicator

an e-newsletter for the staff of the Michigan City Area Schools

October 2011

(Please post for/share with those employees who do not have email!)

State of Our Schools

MCAS Superintendent Dr. Barbara-Eason Watkins delivered a "State of Our Schools" address for Board members, parents, staff, and community members at Joy Elementary School on September 28. The theme? "MCAS - On the Move!" The presentation can be viewed daily at 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. through October 11 on MCAS Cable Channel 98 or via the stream on the MCAS web site. For links to slides shown at this presentation and other info, visit:

http://mcaswiki.mcas.k12.in.us/Communications/State_of_Our_Schools

MCAS Makeover

MCAS has a new logo! The logo and tagline (opportunity - excellence - pride) was designed to reflect our community and our district's mission statement. Special thanks to our student and teacher focus groups who gave input on the design! In order to be as eco-friendly and cost-conscious as possible, we'll continue to use existing materials printed with our "apple" and "lighthouses of our community" logos, however any new materials should carry our new mark. If you need a .jpg file (or other format) of our new logo, please request from Allison Ruffing at aruffing@mcas.k12.in.us. Work is beginning on a new web site for MCAS, too...watch for more information on this in the next edition of "Communicator."

Flu Shots

Flu Shots will be administered by Working Well at two of our schools this month. The shots are \$21.00 and available to all staff and their families. The dates and locations are: Tuesday, Oct. 18 at

Michigan City High School in the Teacher's Lounge and Friday, Oct. 21 at Elston Middle School in the Nurse's Office. Shots will be given from 2:00 - 5:00 p.m. both days. See your building's school nurse (or secretary) by October 13th to sign up. Questions? Contact Linda Bechinski at lbechinski@mcas.k12.in.us.

Support United Way - and WIN!

The 2011 United Way Campaign kicks off in our schools this week! Representatives from United Way will be making presentations at all schools and buildings - and pledge forms will be distributed. Please consider making a pledge this year; all funds remain here in LaPorte County and serve many of our students and their families. Safe Harbor, Hours for Ours, and Open Door are among the agencies that benefit! Last year, 114 of our employees donated \$18,771. This year the need is greater than ever - can we exceed our goal of \$20,000? Plus: This year, all employees who make a donation of any amount will be entered to win prizes, including: a wolves wear gift basket, a gift basket from

United Way, a "Day with the Superintendent," and a lunch or dinner with the Superintendent. Special thanks to Dr. Eason-Watkins for helping with these extra special incentives for the campaign this year!

Have a Principal (or Administrator) Wash Your Wheels!

It's true! MCAS principals and central office administrators will WASH YOUR CAR this Friday, October 7 from 3:00 - 6:00 p.m. at the Ad Building. Suggested donation is \$5 per car; all proceeds will benefit the United Way. Tell your friends and neighbors - this is going to be a great event! Rain date: Friday, October 14.

Red Ribbon Week Contest

Red Ribbon Week is approaching (Oct 24-28) and it's time to plan for the THIRD ANNUAL RED RIBBON WEEK DISPLAY CONTEST! Staff members from all MCAS buildings (including schools, central office, Mullen, plant planning, and the transpo/food service building) are invited to make a display that encourages students to stay drug- and alcohol-free. Displays must be created by building staff and must be ready for judging by the Celebrity Mystery Judge on October 24. Lake Hills has won for two years in a row -- CAN anyone unseat them and win the coveted traveling trophy? Ask your school principal or building administrator for more details.

Lights on Afterschool Event

McDonald's and WIMS Radio (AM 1420) are teaming up with Safe Harbor and Hours for Ours to host a "Lights on Afterschool" celebration at the McDonald's Play Place on Franklin Street on October 20 from 4:00 - 8:00 p.m. Be sure to stop by to see students from our after-school programs as they perform, present art projects, read poetry, and more. McDonald's will donate 15% of all sales during this event to Hours for Ours and Safe Harbor. Don't miss it!

Better World Books

Do you know about Better World Books? This Mishawaka-based, eco-friendly company offers a number of programs for educators and schools, including discounted books, used book fairs, collection drives, swap meets, "u-pick cartons" of books, and much more.

Visit their web site for information on the many services they offer:

<http://www.betterworldbooks.com/>

Barker Mansion and Lighthouse Museum

Barker Mansion has announced several fall and winter field trip opportunities (MCAS students may tour the mansion at no charge during the school year.) Call [873-1520](tel:873-1520) for reservations. The Old Lighthouse Museum (located in Washington Park) also invites MCAS school groups to tour at no charge. Exhibits include fresnel lenses, Lake Michigan shipwrecks, the Lincoln Funeral train, Indiana history and more. Contact Laura Shields at [872-6133](tel:872-6133).

Lilly Endowment Grants - a GREAT opportunity!

Lilly Endowment will offer up to 120 grants at \$8,000 each to Indiana teachers, guidance counselors, library/media specialists, principals, and asst. principals for projects of the individual's choice. This is the 25th year Lilly has offered this competitive program; the Endowment believes that engaged teachers, principals, and assistant principals help produce engaged students. Personal renewal and individual intellectual growth are the goals of the program. For information, visit

lillyendowment.org or teachercreativity.org. Deadline for proposals is November 4, 2011.

Clean Up with a Clorox Grant

Clorox's "Power a Bright Future" school grant program is offering grants of up to \$50,000 to help fund new or ongoing programs in one of three categories -- Play, Create, or Explore. Nominations will be accepted until October 17, 2011. For more info, visit: <http://www.powerabrightfuture.com>

Be SPAM Savvy!

Our current systems are actively blocking thousands of SPAM messages every day, but unfortunately occasional unwanted emails do slip through. Even more unfortunately, several of our MCAS employees recently were tricked into giving their user names and passwords in response to an email from (anyone)**@host.org**. Outsiders were then able to use these accounts to send mega amounts of SPAM from MCAS accounts. This was frustrating for everyone at MCAS because we were put on internet blacklists that took days to clear, resulting in email delays and bounce-backs. Moral of the story: **NEVER** give out your user name or password via email. Our technology department would only ask for this information via the phone or in person. MCAS is also installing a more proactive anti-spam system to prevent this from recurring.

Boo! Volunteers Needed

Wanted: A few staff members who would be willing to pass out candy for MCAS at the October 22 "Boo at the Zoo". A fun opportunity to dress up in costume and give treats to kids in our community! Candy is provided. (Advisors/coaches: This could also be a great community service opportunity for your middle or high school club/team/organization.) Contact Betsy Kohn asap - by this Friday, October 7 - if you are interested!

NIESC Newsletter

The fall issue of the Northern Indiana Educational Services Center newsletter is now available online. Click the link below for information on the latest news and resources NIESC has to offer -- including professional development, purchasing, media resources, and more:

<http://www.niesc.k12.in.us/Newsletters/>

Technology Work Orders

If you have technology issues that warrant a work order, e-mail support@mcas.k12.in.us. In the subject line, please provide your building name, room number, and computer number. In the body give a complete description of the problem you encountered. You will receive a return e-mail with a hyperlink to access the status of your work order.

Trine University

Trine University (Angola, Indiana) offers online, self-paced continuing education courses for educators. Click the link below for more information about fall classes:

<http://www.virtualeduc.com/e-announcements/trine.htm>

New Wellness Center Discount

The IU Health Laporte Hospital Wellness Center now offers a discount to MCAS employees (\$5 off per month). Show a school ID or recent paycheck statement to receive your discount. The Wellness Center is located in The Crossing, at the old RipCo site, 1203 Washington St., La Porte. (Note: Several clubs and facilities in our area offer discounts to MCAS employees, including the YMCA and Northwest Athletic Club. Be sure to ask your facility if they participate in a discount program.)

Way to Go!

Congrats to MCAS employees **Brian Logman, Ricky Santana Jr., Paul Papp, and Jeff Williamson**, who were honored last week by the Michigan City Fire Department for their help in coordinating the 9/11 memorial service at Ames Field. Each was presented with a special 9/11 flag and certificate of commendation for their actions.

Community Announcements

- **HBO DEF Poet Kevin Coval** will appear at Writing Out Loud at the Michigan City Public Library on October 22 at 7:30 p.m. Coval is the author of ALA "Book of the Year" finalist "Slingshots: A Hip-Hop Poetica" and "Everyday People." He is co-founder and Artistic Director of "Louder Than a Bomb: The Chicago Teen Poetry Festival," and is the subject of an award-winning documentary of the same name airing on the Oprah Winfrey Network this Fall. A regular contributor to Chicago Public Radio, and a four-time HBO Def Poet, Coval teaches at the School of the Art Institute and in high schools around Chicago.
- Don't miss the legendary **Harlem Ambassadors this Wednesday** at Elston's Wolf gym at 7:00 p.m. This very entertaining team will play a Michigan City "community action crew" team - and who knows what the outcome will be?! Tickets are \$8 for adults, \$5 for seniors/students, under age 5 free. Proceeds benefit the North Central Community Action Agencies. Call [\(219\) 872-0351](tel:2198720351) or [\(219\) 872-1201](tel:2198721201) for information.
- For children currently in Grades 2-5, the La Porte County Symphony Orchestra is forming the **LCSO Children's Chorus** for the 2011-12 school year. The chorus will perform at a community holiday event and for The Nutcracker at the Star Plaza in Merrillville. Rehearsals are on Tuesdays from 6:00-7:00 p.m. at The Agape Church, 1601 "I" Street, La Porte. Contact Matt Nelson for more information at chorus@LCSO.net.
- The **Coolspring Branch Library** (Johnson Rd. and 400 North) has two fun programs coming up: On Tuesday, October 11 at 6:00 p.m., national award-winning therapy dog Abby and his feline friend Baggins will be on hand to present a program for animal lovers of all ages; and on Wednesday, October 19, the Cat-in-the-Hat will make an appearance at 6:00 p.m. - young children are invited to wear their pajamas and check out the library's new literacy computer, which has multiple programs for early learners to practice language learning, math, science, writing skills, art and more.
- The **Merrillville Community Planetarium**, located at Clifford Pierce Middle School, was renovated this past summer. They are offering a new fall program entitled "The Planets" that runs Oct 7-29. Admission is \$3 for adults,

- \$2 for children. Visit www.mcpstars.org for show times and much more information.
- The **Little Wish Foundation** will hold its 2nd Annual Hog Roast fundraiser on October 15 at the Coolspring Fire Department. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children ages 6-11 (under 5 free). Email littlewish@comcast.net for more information. Little Wish grants small wishes to children in our area suffering from cancer; it was founded by MCHS senior Liz Niemiec, who has been recognized nationally for her volunteerism and community service.