

# McGinnis Woods Buzz



December 2014 Volume 9, Issue 3



**McGINNIS WOODS**  
Country Day School

*Inspiring Students with  
the Passion to Excel*

## ***The latest buzz . . .***

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## **DATES TO REMEMBER**

12/19	Report Cards
12/22-01/02	Winter Break **After school available**
01/06	Classes Resume
01/06	Signed Report Cards Due
01/16	PA Coffee
01/19	MLK Day (After school only)
01/21	100th Day of School
01/26	Box Tops Due

## **McGinnis Woods Mission Statement**

*Our mission is to provide superior academics through hands-on approaches, which foster self confidence and self esteem that inspire a life-long love of learning.*

## **A Message From Ms. Mary**

What a wonderful December we have enjoyed at McGinnis Woods. The students and staff have worked hard to wrap up their first semester as they packed each day with lessons, tests, trips, guest speakers, shopping, performing, and celebrating the season with one another. So many wonderful opportunities filled this month that we couldn't even feature them all in this edition of The Buzz.

One event that was extra special was the Middle School and Gym Ribbon Cutting that took place on December 4. Members of the Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce came to the school to help us celebrate this momentous event. Jaclyn Anderson, Parent Association Secretary, shared a few thoughts about the growth of the school and significance of the new academic space. Brandon Beech, Senate Member of the Georgia General Assembly also shared with the students and guests about the importance of excellence and School Choice. The ribbon was cut by student council officers MJ Yassine, Jay Isaacs, Tori Kershaw, Tayler Evangelista and me after they shared what the new building means to them and the other Middle Schoolers. The ceremony, although brief, marked the culmination of many years of hard work and perseverance on the part of the Administrative Team, Parent Association Board Members, both past and present, staff, and McGinnis Woods' community members.

As we begin our Winter Break, we wish you and yours special memories and safe travels. We look forward to welcoming you back to school in 2015!

Happy Holidays,

Ms. Mary



# Parent Association Update

Happy Holidays McGinnis Woods Family!



It seems like yesterday we were sitting together as a board to map out our calendar and make plans for the upcoming school year, and now we are moments away from closing the first half of the year! And what a first half it has been...friendships have formed, community has been built and dollars have been raised!

We hope you had a chance to experience a little holiday spirit with us this month. Your first opportunity was to donate to the NFCC (North Fulton Community Charities) tree project. We are grateful to *all* the families that gave from their hearts and pockets to make this holiday special for another family! The giving was generous, and we were able to fulfill the wishes of all the families we were assigned and to sprinkle some extra gift cards to further the holiday spirit. Hopefully your child was impacted by the experience!

Our next opportunity to celebrate the holidays, was the fabulous Secret Holiday Shoppe! Did you see the ginger-

bread door that welcomed all? From the set up to the gifts, our lead elves created a perfect venue for our children to select special gifts for those they care about. We certainly hope that the smiles continue when presents are opened over the holidays! Thank you to all who volunteered to make this event a success. As with all events that we plan, it is best when we come together as a community to make it happen.

We also had a chance to visit and network at the PA Coffee Hot Cocoa! It was such fun to see parents drop in, some with shoppers, to check out the shop and enjoy a hot beverage. We love feedback and appreciate all who took a moment to stop and chat. We have more coffee events scheduled in 2015—perhaps it can be your resolution to make one of our coffees in the spring!

Speaking of 2015 and New Year resolutions, we hope that another resolution can be to volunteer in the coming months. We need your participation, as many hands make light work! We'd love for more parents to join us and offer their time. You may think you do not have enough time or can't be available during the school day, but rest assured that not all of our work happens on McGinnis Woods time. We have opportunities big and small! We'd love to give you some options and add more to our ranks! As you reflect on 2014 and plan for 2015—please consider spending more time with us! You will not regret it!

*We wish all in our McGinnis family a Happy Holiday season and a restful break. May your travels be safe, your laughter plenty and your hearts full! See you in January!*

## *Wildcat Chat*

December 4th was a very exciting day for the Wildcats, as we played our first ever home game in our new gym. It was a standing room only as the girls took to the floor to show off their skills against the Atlanta Girls School. Our cheerleaders made spirit shakers and banners for our players to run through. Everyone was thrilled to be playing or watching in our new gym.

The Girls B team won 12-8 and our A team lost, but they put up a good fight. It did not matter if we won or lost as there was excitement in the air!

Our boys played their first home game in front of a good crowd on December 9th against Atlanta Academy. They walked away with a victory and were so proud. Our leading scorers for the game were Ethan Montgomery and Nirvan Parikh. We are proud of all our players and look forward to a great season.

GO WILDCATS!!!



## *New Discovery Clubs Options in January*

Another successful session of Discovery clubs end the week of December 15. Our next session will begin again the week of January 12. This six-week session will end the week of February 15 for most clubs. It is wonderful to see the students so excited and participating in learning great extracurricular skills in a fun environment!

We will once again offer Jr. Robotics, Cooking, Cheerleading, Band, STEM and Drama. We are pleased to offer Chess Club this session with Mr. T (Tyler Driskell.) Some of the cheerleaders were able to attend a few home basketball games. It was great to have them with their spirit shakers they made! If you haven't gotten your spirit shaker yet, there are a limited number available for sale at the concession stand during home games.



## *Preschool Corner*



Happy Holidays for the Preschool! This month's Preschool star is the 3TA Transitional class. Our busy 3TA students are growing at an amazing rate and learning about their world each day. They are especially enjoying this festive season and all that the holidays bring.

Ms. Jasmine has been teaching in the 3TA classroom since 2005. Ms. Jasmine applies her CDA knowledge each day as she nurtures the little ones and encourages their learning. She is an extremely talented artist as is shown

throughout her colorful classroom. Her endless energy and love of finger plays and songs is put to good use each day. Ms. Jasmine's philosophy is to teach the children through fun activities. Ms. Jasmine also has two boys of her own, ages six and nine.

Assisting in the 3TA class is Ms. Nikki. Ms. Nikki is new to McGinnis Woods, recently moved here from Virginia. Her own children are grown, so she finds spending time with her little ones enjoyable and energizing. Ms. Nikki is a very hard worker and shows her love of children in all that she does. If you have not had a chance to meet Ms. Nikki yet, please stop by and introduce yourself to this wonderful McGinnis Woods team member.

One of the special activities that the 3TA students have been enjoying is using their new iPads during center time. This has been a great addition to the already strong curriculum, as the apps reinforce classroom learning.



## *Second Graders Enjoy Puppetry Arts Workshop and Show*

The Second Graders went to The Center for Puppetry Arts this month! When they arrived, they were escorted to a fun puppet workshop where they created their own Rudolph shadow puppets. This workshop taught the students about the secrets of shadow puppets including how light will not pass through construction paper, but can pass through material that is transparent. The workshop also helped the Second Graders practice their listening skills as they had to listen carefully to each step in the process of making their shadow puppet.

After the workshop, the students mingled while eating lunch and patiently waiting on the next event. After lunch, the group entered the theater where they enjoyed the puppet show of the holiday classic, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. At the end of the show, the puppeteers came out and showed the audience about how they used rod puppets and body puppets for the performance. This field trip was a special time for all.

## Robotics Team Competition



The Robotics Team had their first competition of the year this past Saturday. We received many compliments, and achieved great scores across the board. Teamwork, robot design, a science research project with presentation, and the robot obstacle course were the main components of the competition. This was the first year for most of our team members, and we competed against many older, seasoned teams. I, Mr. T, am very proud of our teams performance!

Ms. Ruth, the Jr. Robotics teacher, joined us for the competition, and she was very impressed by the attitude of everyone on the team. She had two judges compliment our team's behavior! This is quite usual since the judges tend to only communicate with the children. It was a great day overall, and we did an excellent job working as a team and having smiles on our faces all day long! Now we will start preparations for our

LEGO SUMOBOT competition next semester!



## January's Word of the Month: Commitment

The Word of the Month for January is *commitment*. Commitment is defined as making a plan and putting it into practice. In January, we will be looking for students who are showing excellent commitment to their studies, sports and extra-curricular activities. Some of our students who work to master this character trait will be recognized on the morning announcements during January and will receive a Chick-fil-A coupon.



## *Student Council Update*

The student council has been hard at work. We had our first order in day of the year from Chick-fil-a. Everyone seemed to really enjoy the lunch. We also made appreciation bags for the teachers during our rep meeting this month. As we move toward the third quarter, we will focus on Candygrams, another order in day, and other treats.

## *Beta Club Update*



We are hard at work in the Jr. Beta Club. Each Beta group is planning or taking part in running their events. The students supporting the Kazakhstan Orphanage held a toy drive where they collected more toys than we ever imagined possible. Thank you so much for your support. Students will be sponsoring an ice cream day in January to help offset the cost of shipping the items to the orphanage.

We also held two ice cream days for the Humane Society and Dogwood Forest Senior Residence. A group of students visited Dogwood Forest to sing carols and bring treats to the residents on December 17th. The

Humane Society team will begin making items for the dogs and cats at the shelter when we return from break.

This year the students in Jr. Beta picked different organizations that they would like to support. The Jr. Beta Nursing Home Group went to visit residents at Dogwood Forest Assisted Living Home on December 17th. During their visit students sang Christmas Carols with the residents and sat down to talk with them. The students were able to learn interesting things about the residents. For example, one of the residents was originally from Chicago while most of the others were from the Atlanta area. The students also learned it was a resident's birthday and made sure to wish her a Happy Birthday. The students are looking forward to visiting again and hope to start having monthly visits.



## *Jr. Beta Team Spreads Cheer at Dogwood Forest Assisted Living Home*

The Jr. Beta Nursing Home Group went to visit residents at Dogwood Forest Assisted Living Home on December 17th. During their visit students sang Christmas carols with the residents and sat down to talk with them. The students were able to learn interesting things about the residents. For example, one of the residents was originally from Chicago while most of the others were from the Atlanta area. The students also learned it was a resident's birthday and made sure to wish her a happy birthday. The students are looking forward to visiting again and hope to start having monthly visits. This group of students did a wonderful job of representing McGinnis Woods and living out our word of the month, generosity, as they gave of their time and hearts!





## *Third Graders Design Book Report T-Shirts*

Third graders recently completed a book report about a book written by their favorite author. After reading the book, the students designed a t-shirt which featured the book's theme, plot, and characters. The unique t-shirts turned out amazing! Each student also completed a write-up about the t-shirts which was shared with the class.



## *Falcons Gatorade Junior Training Camp Success!*

We were so excited to have the ATLANTA FALCONS GATORADE JUNIOR TRAINING CAMP at McGinnis Woods on Monday, December 15th from 10:30-11:30 in the gym for students in 3rd - 5th grades. The camp is a program that stresses the importance of proper football technique, promotes physical activity and proper hydration. The students rotated through 5 football stations similar to what the Falcons use in their training. The camp began with a brief pep talk and had fun activities for everyone involved. The students threw footballs, did agility activities with David Quiroga, as well as, a fun dance station with Chris Millman of the Falcons. Students worked at a station with former All-Pro Falcon linebacker, Mr. Buddy Curry, who played for the Falcons in the 80's.

Thank you to our teachers and parent volunteers: Chris Aber, David Miller and Mike Shah. We couldn't have done it without you!





# *STEM Club*



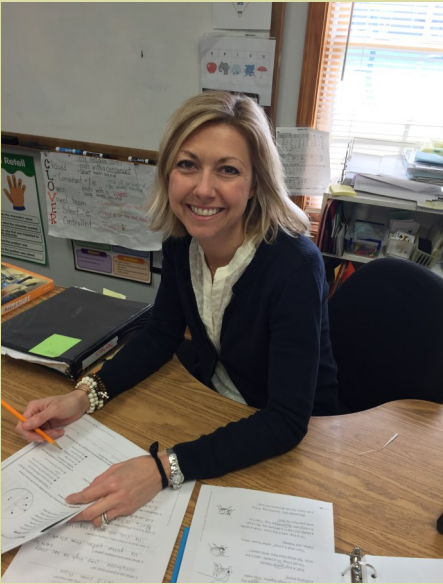
Members of the STEM Club have had an amazing time with several though provoking projects this session! Our first unit was on bats, so we learned all about them through technology and books. We focused on science vocabulary and learned meaning of words like hibernation, nocturnal and mammal. Then each student picked a bat to research and make a sculpture of using our engineering skills. We also used our math skills to play a bat game and we also acted out how echolocation works, too!

Next we learned about boats and how they are designed. We learned about buoyancy. The last part of that class we designed boats and tested to see their buoyancy. We got a little wet, but it was fun to see how much weight our boats could handle!

Our last project of the session was "The Gingerbread House Challenge." Parents were invited to join us for this seasonal STEM project on December 18th. Each student was given the same supplies. The challenge was to make a gingerbread house using the materials given that could hold a stuffed animal reindeer for 15 seconds without the house falling apart! Each team designed their house first and then moved into engineering mode after. What a fun and educational way to end our STEM club session!



## *A Note from the Enrichment Teacher: Kristen Craig*



I am thrilled this is my fourteenth year of teaching and my fourth year as the Enrichment and Academic Support teacher at McGinnis Woods. I am a graduate of the University of Alabama and a big Alabama fan, Roll Tide! I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Early Childhood and Elementary Education and am an Orton-Gillingham tutor.

My husband and I moved to Suwanee from Buckhead three years ago and found McGinnis Woods to be a great fit for our family. We have a six year old son named Houston, a three year old daughter named Calista and two Golden Retrievers. When I am not teaching, I enjoy spending time with my family, decorating, and making crafts.

I currently work with about twenty-five PreK-8th grade students each week. In addition to working one-on-one with the children, I also provide support to different classroom reading groups. This year my focus has been on strengthening the students' skills in phonics, reading, math, writing and vocabulary. My lessons are designed to be fun, engaging, and to support the student's particular learning style and needs. I incorporate a variety of multisensory techniques into my lessons to give the students a greater understanding of the concepts they are being taught. I always strive to meet the individual needs and learning styles of my students, as well as push to develop their academic skills and knowledge to their fullest potential.

The remainder of the year will be one full of fun, learning, and challenges. I look forward to working together with you and your child. Please contact me if I can be of any support at home or at school to assist with your child's success. I can be reached at [kcraig@mcginniswoods.org](mailto:kcraig@mcginniswoods.org).

## *students Create Digital Art*

The 7th and 8th graders have been creating digital art projects during their computer lab class with Mr. T. The inspiration behind this project was the work of Andy Warhol. Each student chose a picture as the subject of their collage and then the picture was changed by adding or adjusting filters, altering color levels, skewing perspectives or through the use of digital drawing





## Band and Chorus Concerts Serenade the Season



Mc Ginnis Woods loves the Arts and we are always eager to showcase our students' and staffs' talents. Last week audiences enjoyed Band, Chorus, and Recorder concerts that filled the gym with beautiful sounds of the season.

The Band Concert under the direction of Dean Wolinski, McGinnis Woods Band Director, included the 4th and 5-8th grade bands. Each of the groups entertained the audience with a variety of numbers which included duets, solos and special percussion sound effects from an iPad. Students performing these special selections included: Yashmitha Surapaneni, Nathanael Hazard, Kunal Talreja, Andrew Dinasan, and Molly Hamann. Nicky Leonard's solo on his Alto Saxophone of *Hatikva* was beautifully haunting and showed skill well beyond his years.

The recorder concert featured our 3rd graders who have just begun to read music in preparation for their introduction to band class which they will be participating in during the second semester of the year. They did a great job and were so very pleased with themselves!

The chorus directed by Xylina Stamper, McGinnis Woods Music and Drama Teacher, performed a delightful musical entitled *The Elves' Impersonator*. The chorus students lit up the stage dressed as elves, reindeer and Elfis! Mj Yassine stole the show with his portrayal of Elfis the Elf, who becomes the target of the other elves insults because he looks and acts differently. Elfis eventually sings *He's So Blue* and runs away from Santa's Workshop. Kaitlin Marro beautifully sang the solo, *Arm and Arm*, and reminded the elves and the audience of the importance of accepting differences and caring for one another as we live each day with understanding and acceptance. The students wrapped up the night with a rousing chorus of the classic *We Wish You a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!*



## *Bridget Gallivan Named Georgia State level 2 Gymnastics Champion*



Many at McGinnis Woods have seen Bridget's love of gymnastics. She shared some of her talent with her friends at the Talent show last year and all who see her during recess watch her diligently perfecting her skills on the playground! Bridget loves the sport of gymnastics!

This year Bridget competed in USAG level 2 gymnastics with her gymnastics team from All Around Gymnastics. She competed in all four gymnastics events of floor exercise, vault, uneven bars and beam. Her season was incredible as she took first place in her age category at all of her meets. Her scores from the meets qualified her for the Georgia State Meet, which this year was held in Roswell the weekend before Thanksgiving.

Bridget's hard work paid off and she realized her dream of becoming State Champion with an All Around score of 37.2. Bridget received medals in all four events, and is also State Beam Champion! Her team placed second in the State as well. We are so proud of

Bridge, and she is now training for the next level and will compete again in the Fall.

## *Madison Aber Competes in the USATF National Junior Olympic Cross Country Championships*



Madison Aber is a member of the Great Strides Track and Cross Country Club in addition to competing on the Cross Country team here at McGinnis Woods. She traveled to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina on December 13th to compete in the USATF National Junior Olympic Cross Country Championships. She had to qualify at the state level and the regional level in order to attend the national competition. There were 450 girls in the 11-12 age group that qualified from across the United States.

Madison, pictured in blue, ran the 3K in 13:36 and finished in 365th place. We are very proud of her and all of her hard work this season!



## *1st Grade Teachers are Amazing!*



We have a fabulous and talented team in first grade this year! Mr. Josh and Ms. Wendy are the lead teachers and classes while Ms. Laura and Ms. Megan are the awesome assistants!

Wendy Hamann teaches the 1st Cats, and this is her eighth year of teaching at McGinnis Woods. Overall, she has 18 years of teaching experience with elementary and preschool students. She has two children: Molly (12) and Benjamin (6). They both attend McGinnis Woods! She is from Virginia, graduated from Virginia Tech (B.A. in Music) and University of Richmond (Masters in Education). She enjoys gardening, reading and music! Her favorite subject to teach is science!

Josh Reiter has been a teacher at McGinnis Woods for 13 years. He has his Masters degree in Early Childhood Education from Mercer. He has taught a number of grade levels including Kindergarten, 2nd, and 1st. His all-time favorite grade level is 1st grade, and he loves his current Falcons because he loves to inspire and challenge the students to think creatively and to hone their problem solving skills. Mr. Josh is married to Jill, also a teacher. They have three children: Violet (6), Ben (4) and Baby Max. In his free time Josh enjoys music, traveling, Football and spicy food.

Megan Spann is the first grade Cats assistant teacher for the 2014-2015 school year. She graduated from Valdosta State University with a bachelor of Fine Arts in Art. She enjoys working with the students supporting all of their learning and also likes teaching them to make crafts and art work. Megan has lived in the Atlanta area her entire life and currently lives in Dunwoody. She has a large interest in dogs, including her Cocker Spaniel/Australian Shepard mix that she adores. In her free time she enjoys painting dog portraits, using bright color pallets.

Laura Woolbright is the Falcon's assistant teacher. She is originally from Long Island, New York. She attended St. Joseph's College in Patchogue and received a B.A. in Early Childhood Education. She taught Pre-K for three years at a private school in Setauket before leaving to start her family. She has three children: Daniel (21), Tyler (17) and Riley (13). Her family decided to move to Suwanee in 2004. She is a NY Giants fan, but she has become a Falcons fan in recent years. She loves to read and her guilty pleasure is Reality TV shows. Her favorite vacation spot is Disney World. If she wasn't a teacher, she thinks she'd work for Disney.

The 1st grade team does an amazing job with our students. They recently had the children build bears at Build-a-Bear workshop which they then gave to children suffering from long term illnesses. This learning opportunity taught the children to always give back and share!

## *Pictures from Around the School*

