

# McGinnis Woods Buzz



December 2011, Volume 3, Issue 4



**McGINNIS WOODS**  
Country Day School

*Inspiring Students with  
the Passion to Excel*

## DATES TO REMEMBER

12/16:	Report Cards, Sign & Return by January 3
12/19-1/2:	Winter Break, After-school Only/School Closed 12/26 and 1/2
1/3:	Classes Resume
1/9:	Discovery Clubs Begin
1/16	No School, MLK Day Afterschool Only
1/21	New Student Open House, 11 am to 1 pm
1/24	Family Math and Science Night/PA Spaghetti Dinner at 5:30 pm
2/19:	Discovery Clubs End
2/20	No School, President's Day, Afterschool Only

## 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 lifelong love of learning.*

## The latest buzz...

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## A Message From Ms. Mary

The calendar year is coming to a close and the holidays have everyone bustling about. Our days have been filled with lessons, performances, end of semester assessments and special events!

Our Core Essentials word of the month for December is *generosity*. I want to thank all of the McGinnis Woods families for demonstrating great *generosity*. With everyone's help we were able to lend a helping hand to 9 families through North Fulton Community Charities. These families will have a wonderful holiday season thanks to your amazing outpouring of love and *generosity*.

I also want to thank our amazing volunteers who exhibited *generosity* by giving of their time and patience as they manned the Secret Holiday Shoppe. All of our students were able to participate in the fun and learn about budgeting at the same time. Our volunteers went home happy and exhausted with a greater appreciation for the job that our teachers do each day!

Many students have shown *generosity* through volunteering their time, energy, and financial resources to benefit UNICEF, Forsyth County's The Place, Children's Wish Foundation, and our school. Trick or Treaters collected over \$100 which was sent to UNICEF to buy mosquito nets and immunizations to help children in third world countries. Our Beta Club raised, collected and gave up hours of recess time to count over \$1,000 in mostly coins to benefit The Place. The first graders made their annual visit to Build a Bear Workshop to build 40 bears which they delivered to the Children's Wish Foundation in Roswell. Each of these community service projects provided our students the opportunity to bring their *generosity* to life. We hope that these simple acts of kindness will inspire our students to live lives marked by the spirit of *generosity* toward their fellow man.

On behalf of the teachers, staff and Administration, I wish you a wonderful holiday season. We look forward to seeing you back at school on Tuesday, January 3, 2012!



## Wildcat Chat

### Wildcat Basketball Season Starts off Strong!

The A-Teams have started their season and both teams look to make some real moves in our league, MAAC. The B-Teams have yet to begin their season, so results of their games will be included in the next Newsletter.

#### Girls A-Team

Girls A-Team played well in their first game, but came up short against Faith Lutheran Academy. Led by scorers **Katherine "Rookie" Gall, Courtney "Big C" Stuart, Maddy Sherbert, and Kehisha Johnson**, the team looks to make great progress this season.

Scores:

Dec. 1: Faith Lutheran 28, Girls A-Team, 15

#### Boys A-Team

The Boys A-Team has come right out of the gate with two big wins to begin the season. The wins keep the team on top of the standings in the MAAC league so far.

Scorers **Sam Zoldock and Ryan Field** led the way. Ryan, especially, has been lighting up the court with a 22 points per game average. Keep posted to hear of their accomplishments on the court!

Scores:

Nov. 17: Boys A-Team 43, Cottage 23

Dec. 1: Boys A-Team 24, Faith Lutheran 11



## Super Science Afterschool Discovery Club

One of the Discovery Clubs this fall session was Super Science Club. The club members explored the Solar System through books, videos, interactive whiteboard games and charts. They discussed each planet, the sun and debated whether or not Pluto should be a planet. Their big project for this session was creating 3-D Solar System Models which look "out of this world!"



## Technology Committee in Need of Volunteers

There is a new focus group at McGinnis Woods created to promote and facilitate the use of technology in the classroom – The Technology Committee. This group is made up of teachers, parents and community members who have a genuine interest in the advancement of Educational Technology at our school. The group looks at many facets of Educational Technology including our mission statement for Ed Tech at McGinnis Woods and setting goals. Some other things the group is working on are:

- Providing a forum for discussing issues related to technology
- A sequenced curriculum for Computer/Technology classes
- Integrating technology into the curriculum
- Evaluating software and hardware needs
- Facilitating technology related professional development for teachers

The Technology Group is actively seeking parents and friends in the community who would like to be involved. Anyone interested should talk with Mr. Steve or send him an email [swells@mcginniswoods.org](mailto:swells@mcginniswoods.org).

## PA Board Update

As we wrap up 2011, we want to take a moment to wish you all Happy Holidays. At McGinnis, we take pride in our sense of community and this year was no different. Together, we have been able to accomplish much for our school and extended community. To all those families who donated an item toward our Holiday Wish Tree, thank you. Your generosity will make a difference in another family's holiday. All the gifts were delivered last week. Families in our community were thrilled by your generosity-Thank you!

Holiday Shoppe wrapped up at the end of last week. The kids had a great time purchasing gifts for loved ones. We hope you will enjoy receiving what they choose for you. A special thank you to the following people for their help through the week: Elise Hutchins, Sandy Tepper, Kira Mesi, Elysia Gallivan, LaDonna Scott, Heather Capell, Bryan Houston, Dena Patel, Sharmila Munamala and the PA Board.

The proceeds from this year's fundraisers have been earmarked as teacher grants, for both classroom teachers and Specials teachers. This is a summary of the expenditure to date. For full details please visit our webpage on Renweb.

Teacher -Specials	Grant Description
Ms. Jen Evangelista - Counseling	Speak Up Be Safe School Wide Program and Web Training.
Ms. Cassandra Hulett - Spanish	Various items to aid classroom teaching such as music, books, hands on activities and games.
Ms. Jackie - Library	10 Digital Readers w/ Follett Subscription
Kristen- Remedial/Enrichment	The Alphabet Series Starter Set
Xylina- Chorus	Various Chorus Performance Items such as Canes/hats

Teacher-Regular Classroom	Grant Description
Pre-K4/5	Sand tables and double hanging easels with various accessories
Kindergarten	Subscription to A-Z Reader and Writer
1st Grade	Various classroom teaching tools
2nd Grade	Elmo Document Camera for classroom
3rd/4th Grade	Franklin Spellers & BigIQkids Subscription
2nd thru 5th	Various Science teaching tools for 2nd-5th grade students
5th thru 8th	Maps for Social Studies, Electricity & Magnetism classroom kit, and Various classroom teaching tools

We wish you a happy holiday season and we are looking forward to a great new year at McGinnis Woods!

## Field Trip of the Month: Carlos Museum

Where is the only place in the western hemisphere where you can see a 5,000 year old mummy? The middle grades students discovered it's just down the street at the Carlos Museum at Emory University! The Carlos Museum is one of the Southeast's premier ancient art museums. The students had the privilege of viewing two exhibits: Divine Intervention of African Art and Religion and Old Kingdom Mummy Artifacts. The 7<sup>th</sup> graders were excited because this field trip tied in perfectly with their recent studies of Egypt and mummification. The 6<sup>th</sup> graders have been studying world cultures, art, and religions. The museum displayed many artifacts that coincided with their current learning about various cultures and religions. We had a wonderful time at the museum and enjoyed the opportunity to enhance learning beyond the classroom.





# A Little About our Teachers: Featuring the Second Grade

Meet the amazing second grade team. They are having a wonderful time teaching second graders this year!

Ms. Kim Kershaw and Ms. Sonia Walker make up the Second Grade Fish. Ms. Kim grew up outside of Rochester, N.Y., and graduated with her undergraduate degree in Elementary Education and Sociology from SUNY Brockport. She married her husband of ten years, Brad, and moved to Atlanta. Ms. Kim completed her Masters in Early Childhood Education at Georgia State University while working at McGinnis Woods. This is her thirteenth year at the school, and she has taught everything from PreK up to 6th grade. She is feeling very at home teaching second grade as this is her seventh year at this grade level. She has two precious girls, Tori, who is in the 3rd grade and Julianna, who is in kindergarten. Outside of school, she loves to go to the movies, listen to music, and catch up on favorite TV shows, read and scrap-booking. Her husband, Brad, works as a homicide detective in Dekalb County, and they love spending their weekends playing with the girls and being with friends and family.

Ms. Sonia has lived in Georgia all of her life. This is her first year at McGinnis Woods. She obtained a degree in Early Childhood Education at Gainesville State College in December 2010. She has been married to her husband, Jeremiah, for almost four years. He also has a degree in education and teaches tenth grade English. During her free time, Ms. Sonia and her husband enjoy a variety of outdoor activities including running, hiking, fishing, swimming, and taking their dog to the lake.

Mr. Josh Reiter and Ms. Michelle Stephens lead the second grade Crabs. Mr. Josh is an up-beat, creative mastermind. He has been teaching at McGinnis Woods for nine glorious years. Mr. Josh holds a Bachelor's Degree in both English Literature and Human Communication. He obtained his undergraduate degree at Fredonia State University in New York and completed his Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education at Mercer University. Mr. Josh and his wife, Jill, have two children. Their daughter, Violet (3), and son, Ben (1), come to school everyday with Mr. Josh where they learn plenty in the McGinnis Woods Preschool Program

Ms. Michelle Stephens was born and raised in Augusta, Georgia. She graduated from Georgia Southern University in 2005 with a degree in Early Childhood Education. She decided to stay at Georgia Southern University to continue her education and obtained a Master's Degree in Teaching and Learning. Last year, Ms. Michelle taught second grade in Richmond County. She recently married and moved to Cumming to continue her teaching career at McGinnis Woods. She and her husband enjoy going out to eat, seeing movies, and spending time with friends and family.



## Classroom Spotlight: 4th Graders Explore Valuable Family Items

The students in the 4th grade brought a valuable item to class that belonged to someone in their family. We have been reading stories about African Americans "A Place Called Freedom" and "Going Back Home" where people valued family, education, music, food, and many other symbols as being important. It helped bring people together and keep the good memories of others forever in their hearts. Objects like pictures, jewelry, watches, candle holders, paintings, cups, rings, musical instruments, bears, and other items had been passed down in the children's families and they brought them in to share with our class. The students told wonderful stories about who the item first belonged to and who it was going to be passed down to next. These are treasures that the students have learned to appreciate and will never forget.



# Preschool Corner (Infants through Pre-K3/4)

No matter our circumstances or children's ages, December always seems to creep up on us, bringing with it all kinds of preparations and celebrations! In the midst of our busyness, it is easy to lose sight of what we are all about, as people, as families, or even as a school community. Here at McGinnis Woods, we make up a very large, diverse community! Our children spend time together each day, learning about what makes them unique, but also what draws them together as friends.

In the preschool, our students have the wonderful opportunity to learn about different cultures in a fantastically fun way—through celebrating holidays in various cultural traditions. During December, the children will explore the history, traditions, and joy surrounding Kwanzaa, Christmas, Hannukah, Diwali, St. Lucia's Day, Boxing Day and many more special holidays. Listen for your child's description of how he played the Dreidel game, or how she created a Kinara or Menorah...you may be surprised at what you learn from him or her.



At home, you can support your child's development by asking him or her questions such as:

“Which of your friends celebrates Kwanzaa (or other holiday) at home?”

“Which country would you most like to visit during the holidays?”

“What different kinds of pretty lights did you learn about in school today?”

Throughout the hallways, you will notice the children's beautiful creations. The little ones have finger-painted Christmas lights, made a Christmas tree with their footprints, created reindeer and angels out of handprints and clothespins, made snowmen-faces with tops of Pringles cans, and even baked sugar cookies! Don't miss further artwork as they continue their journey around the world...

Our Teacher of the Month for December is Ms. Amy Hunt. Ms. Amy has been working with children in various capacities for more than ten years! She has a passion for teaching, and holds degrees in both Psychology and Education.

We wish you all a happy holiday season, filled with wonderful memories to cherish for a lifetime!



## Holiday Band and Choral Concert

The McGinnis Woods Band and Choral Concert kicked off the holiday season on Tuesday, December 6th, at the Lord of Life Church. The band began the show with a mixture of seasonal and traditional tunes, and the beginner to intermediate students looked festive in their Santa hats! Next up in the concert was the chorus, and the 4th through 8th grade students did a fantastic job too. Ms. Xylina led the show

filled with different holiday tunes including costume changes, dancing and speaking parts. The performance was called *Christmas at Broadway in New York*, and we all felt that we had visited that great venue during the show! Ms. Deborah and Ms. Xylina did a great job preparing the band and chorus students for this holiday performance!





## ***Hola Amigos!***

### **“Specials” Program: Featuring Ms. Cassandra Hulett, Spanish Teacher**

Ms. Cassandra Hulett moved to Atlanta from Los Angeles in 1994 and has felt at home ever since. Although, she misses the beach and her family and friends, she feels this has been an amazing place to raise her fabulous boys, Ryan and Colin. Ms. Cassandra has been teaching Spanish at McGinnis Woods for the past three years and enjoys every minute of it. Cassandra has taken the Spanish program to a new level of excellence and the students are flourishing under her instruction. She has a BA in Spanish and is completing her Master's in Spanish Education at Georgia State University. Ms. Cassandra feels very blessed to be doing what she loves every day and that her boys have the opportunity to share the experience with her as they attend McGinnis Woods.



Eventually, Ms. Cassandra would like to obtain a doctorate degree and live in a Latin American country or Spain when the boys are grown. She enjoys the Latin culture, as it is filled with so much family and love for family and life. Ms. Cassandra lives in Sandy Springs, walking distance from Chastain Park, and loves to get to the park as much as possible. During her free time, Cassandra enjoys running, getaways at the beach, trips to California, scrapbooking, camping, hiking, movies and popcorn, alone time with her girlfriends, listening to all different genres of music, going out for Mexican food and attending Buckhead Church.

## **Getting Involved: Volunteering at McGinnis Woods**

*By Leslie Criden*

My son, Jeremy, started MWCDS six years ago. Since we first started I have been involved as a room representative, served on the PA Board and helped wherever else I was needed, including the library. I have always loved the opportunity to volunteer. It gives me a chance to see my son, as well as, some of my young friends. It's always nice to see the smile of a child and give or receive a hug!

One of the things I really love about McGinnis Woods IS the opportunity to volunteer. I find it very rewarding knowing I am doing something to help my son and the teachers and staff of the school. I would encourage and challenge all families to volunteer on one of the many rewarding projects. McGinnis Woods welcomes the help while benefitting your child and all those other smiling faces.

Our school gives so much to our children, won't you consider volunteering? Make it a New Years Resolution.

Happy Holidays!



## Scholastic Book Fair

This month was full of exciting activities and events. One of our annual winter activities is our Scholastic Book Fair. This year the theme was "To the Book Fair and Beyond!" Our out-of-this-world week activities included students dressed as aliens, Pajamas for Pluto, and a Salute to Our Stars (teachers)!

Students visited the book fair to make wish lists and purchase books for classroom book swaps, too. Parents helped support the book fair by purchasing books for classrooms from teacher wish lists and books as gifts for students.

We would like to thank you for all you do to encourage your child to love reading! Due to your overwhelming support, our school has successfully put more than 2000 books into our students' hands.

Thank you again for your continued support and be sure to read lots over winter break!



## Students Participated in Guinness Book of World Records Event

McGinnis Woods' students in 5-8<sup>th</sup> grades participated in a Guinness Book of World Records event last year! Here is the official write up as it appears at [www.guinnessworldrecords.com](http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com):

*The largest virtual aerobics/exercise class consisted of 2,288 students, organized by the Atlanta Falcons Football Club (USA), at The Georgia Dome in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, on 7 December 2010. The students were joined by Falcons players Andy Strickland, Christopher Owens, William Moore, Erik Coleman, Stephen Nicholas, Antone Smith, Gartrell Johnson III and Harry Douglas, who exercised to a virtual workout program provided by HOP-Sports Training Systems.*

Great job students!

## Annual Spelling Bee

How do you spell bee? No, not "bee" as in insect, rather "bee" as in Spelling Bee. It's hard to believe our school Spelling Bee is just around the corner. In late November, all students in PreK-8<sup>th</sup> grades received copies of their classroom Spelling Bee lists.

Students studied hard to compete in their classroom spelling bee. This year our middle grades students (4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades) competed written classroom spelling bees. Students were well prepared for their first experience with a classroom written bee.

All classroom spelling bees were conducted before students were dismissed for holiday break. The top two spelling winners from each class will represent their class in the school Spelling Bees in January. Each class will also have an alternate. In the event a class representative is absent or ill, the alternate will assume their place in the school Spelling Bee.

All classroom Spelling Bee representatives will be featured in the school yearbook and recognized on Awards Day in May. Congratulations to our Classroom Spelling Bee representatives and alternates!

Happy Spelling!

