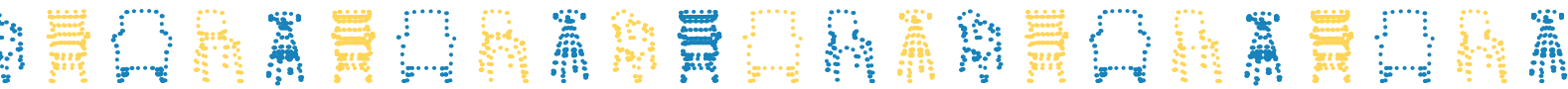


2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award Winners



Choose Your Seat.
Get Involved.



The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award



A Message from Nancy S. Grasmick State Superintendent of Schools

The Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award program is all about honoring and recognizing the outstanding accomplishments of parents who are involved in public education. Those accomplishments are directly related to the success of our students, schools, school systems, and statewide education system, and is why we should all take great pride in Maryland's recent ranking as #1 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.

And this award program would not be possible without Comcast's tremendous support. MSDE has partnered with Comcast 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.

Collaborating again with Comcast to recognize our best and brightest, Maryland has taken the lead on a national level with the Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award. 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.

MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

James H. DeGraffenreidt, Jr., *President*

Blair Ewing, *Vice President*

Dunbar Brooks

Rosa M. Garcia

Donna Hill Staton, Esq.

Charlene M. Dukes

Richard L. Goodall

Kate Walsh

Mary Kay Finan

Karabelle Pizzigati

Ivan C.A. Walks, M.D.

D. Derek Wu, *Student Member*

Nancy S. Grasmick, *Secretary-Treasurer of the Board*

Governor Martin O'Malley





The 2009 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



2009 Semifinalists

Stephanie Turbin
Allegany County

Carolyn Fiume
Anne Arundel County

Tracie Martin
Baltimore City

Mark Lewis
Baltimore County

James Carroll
Calvert County

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

Christine Brenneman
Garrett County

Mark Daghir
Harford County

Sandra Holt
Howard County

Kiki Jones
Kent County

Ann English
Montgomery County

Kristen Ruiz
Prince George’s County

Wendy Panor
Queen Anne’s County

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 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

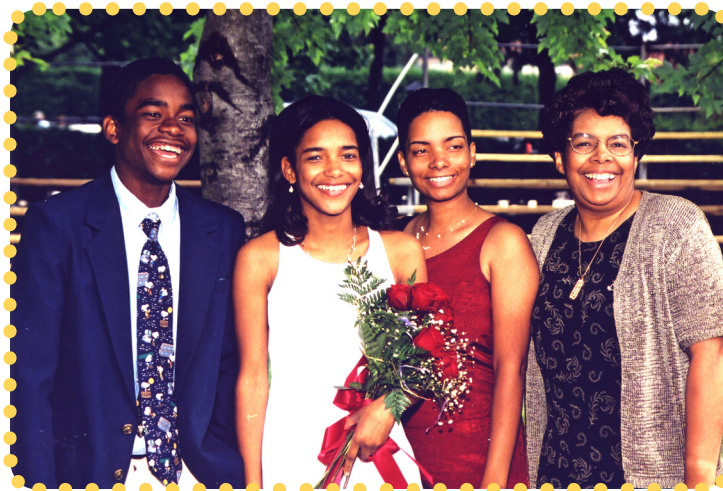
The JoAnne L. Carter Memorial Award

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 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

STEPHANIE TURBIN - Allegany County



Stephanie Turbin goes beyond just volunteering. She acts as a mentor to new parents and works to increase the parent activity throughout the year.”

- Angela Fentress
Media Specialist
Flintstone Elementary School

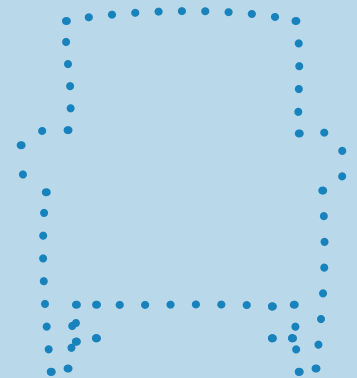
Part of the mission at Flintstone Elementary School is to “prepare students for life-long learning” and to Stephanie Turbin that means helping to create an environment that has a positive atmosphere, challenges students to excel academically, and promotes community involvement – not to mention a lot of fun. Of the many activities that Stephanie helps organize, including dances, talent shows, fairs, and teacher appreciation activities, three stand out the most because they are closest to her heart.

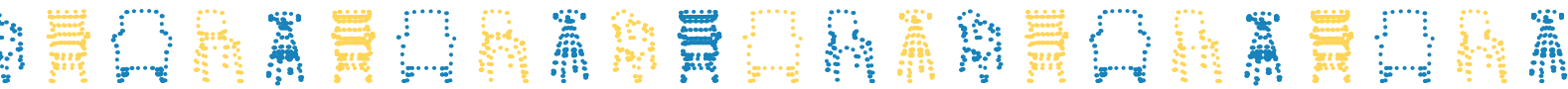
Stephanie’s volunteer experience has provided her with a behind-the-scenes view of Flintstone Elementary, allowing her to get to know the school’s structure, education and extracurricular programs, and school personnel. As a result, she is able to serve as an active and informed member of the Parent Advisory Committee for Allegany County and the Flintstone Student Achievement and School Improvement Teams. Stephanie’s vision, creativity, and insight to bring innovative ideas into the school has been a true asset at the local school system and school levels because she has the information and experience from both, and is a strong voice for what is needed to ensure student achievement.

However, if there was a particular area that stood out for Stephanie, it is literacy. There is not one missed

opportunity for students and staff at Flintstone Elementary to have access to reading materials. As a result of Stephanie’s leadership as PTA Vice-President and President, everyone at the school has opportunities to select books throughout the year, including through the Kindergarten Book Dedication program, and at the Scholastic Book Fair and Accelerated Reader Program events. Stephanie’s dedication to supporting and funding this initiative has made Flintstone Elementary a bona fide reading zone.

Finally, there is a sense that Stephanie likes to shop, just a little. Not only because it is exciting to have the opportunity to buy something new, but also so students feel a sense of reward and accomplishment for their hard work. From the Sparkler Store, where students can use their earned sparkles for positive behavior, to Santa’s Shop, Stephanie can be found making sure there are special items for students to choose from and helping them select those items. She is Flintstone’s own sparkling gem!





The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

CAROLYN FIUME - Anne Arundel County

One of Carolyn Fiume's favorite memories from school was reading *Little House on the Prairie* books in the library. That pioneering spirit from those books had a great influence on Carolyn as her son, Thomas, was diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum at an early age. As Carolyn and her husband, Greg, sought help for Thomas, they faced many new experiences and environments that parents of children with disabilities face, including a sense of the vastness of information, knowledge, and services they needed to learn to stake their claim on Thomas' future education.

As Carolyn, Greg, Thomas, and oldest son, Daniel, forged ahead, they met many other families who were experiencing similar challenges. It was during these meetings that Carolyn and her family found opportunities to share information and bond with others. Carolyn discovered there was a commonality among families, particularly with one of the most difficult times these families experienced — the gap between the Birth to age Three community and the ages Three to Five community. As Thomas made progress in pre-school at age three, Carolyn felt she could make the most difference by creating a community resource organization that provided support, information, advocacy, and assistance to parents of children with disability from ages Birth to Five. With the help of the Anne Arundel County Infants and Toddlers Program, Carolyn and her fellow moms, Dawn Dixon, Sonja Bradley and Eugenia Guardia formed the Friends of Early Childhood Intervention program.

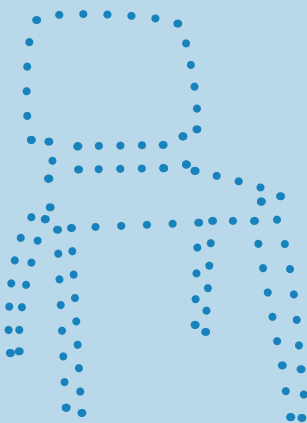
Under Carolyn's leadership, this network of parents has provided a critical support to families of a child with one or more disabilities in Anne Arundel County. The organization has provided monthly informational meetings on a wide range of topics, including how marriages are affected by having a child with disabilities; provided one-on-one and group support to parents of newly diagnosed preschool students or new to Anne Arundel County; sponsored special events and trainings for teachers and therapists; and held fundraising events that supported many additional activities and events to bring together families and the education community.

Another favorite of Carolyn's is the quote by Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world." Indeed, Carolyn has embodied that quotation entirely.



"It is clear that Mrs. Fiume has galvanized the Birth to Five community by her commitment to the creation of a new infrastructure of support and information for young children with disabilities, their families and that staff that serve them."

- Edward Feinberg, PhD
Coordinator
Infants, Toddlers and Special
Education Programs
Anne Arundel County





The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

TRACIE MARTIN - Baltimore City



“[Tracie] shows that no matter what your background may be in this life, your positive choices can change any hard situation.”

- Robin Marshall
Educator

Inner Harbor East Academy

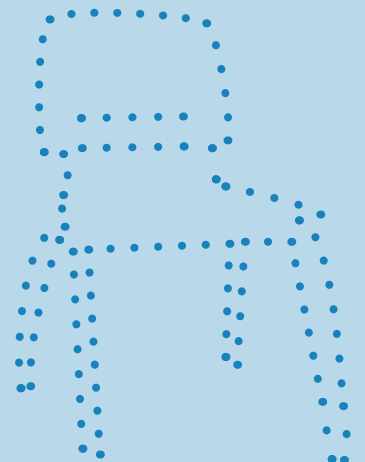
There is something about Tracie Martin that when you meet her, you cannot help but smile. It could be the huge smile she is beaming right back at you, or the warmth and openness you sense coming from her, or the way she faces the day with zeal and joy to be part of this world. Tracie shares that zeal and joy with every student, parent, teacher, and staff person at Inner Harbor East Academy, through a helping hand, a kind word, or a giant hug because she knows, no matter what, a positive action or influence can help a person to a better day and life.

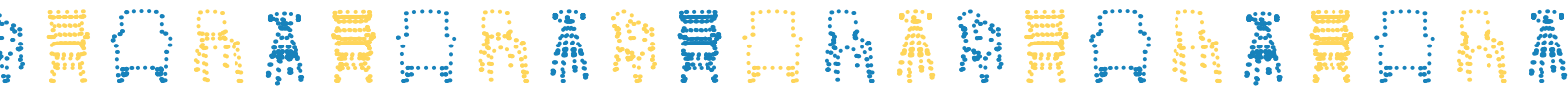
A single mother of a 2nd grade boy, Tracie is keenly aware that achievement and success are largely dependent on having good role models and positive relationships with others. She felt that the young boys at the Inner Harbor East Academy deserved the opportunity to learn the importance of honoring themselves and their country. To make that dream a reality, Tracie attended training to become a Program Specialist for the Boy Scouts of America so that she could start a chapter at the school. She then recruited students, contacted parents, and held an information workshop. Tracie not only provided her own son but many other young, inner-city boys experiences like camping and field trips, and life-skills learning opportunities that earn each scout a badge. But most importantly, Tracie is providing a positive, enriching outlet where ‘her boys’ can learn a sense of loyalty, honesty, and integrity, because each scout is one of her boys.

Actually, each student at Inner Harbor East is one of Tracie’s own because that is how she sees them and treats them. Whether it is her motherly way of disciplining, ensuring their safety, getting extra school supplies, or giving them the hugs to get them through the rest of the day, she lets them know that she cares.

One of Tracie’s favorite school memories is of recess. That certain something you get from her definitely includes a sense of fun and playfulness. Whether she is reading to a student, monitoring lunch, chaperoning field trips, assembling bulletin boards, or helping with craft activities, Tracie has that *Peter Pan/Tinkerbell* glint in her eye that students see and want to be near because they know, whatever it is, it will be good.

Tracie’s encouragement, strong relationships, and enriching experiences have been vital to the success at Inner Harbor East – Scout’s Oath!





The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

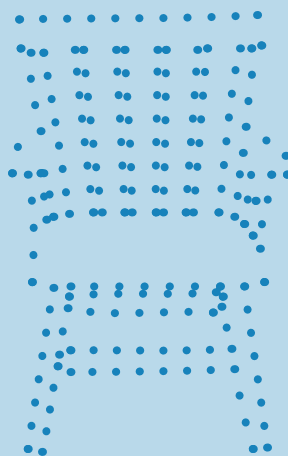
MARK LEWIS - Baltimore County (FINALIST)

Even before Mark Lewis' son Jimmy entered Patapsco High School and Center for the Arts, Mark was attending the school's music events and getting involved in the boosters and PTSA. Since then, Mark has been like a conductor, setting a tempo that brings together dedication, respect, understanding, communication, and joy that reverberates among the students, parents, the school staff, and the community. Taking his inspiration from the song *Climb Every Mountain* from **The Sound of Music**, Mark has inspired the beautiful music made by the students and staff at Patapsco High School and Center for the Arts.

Mark clearly understands that a good ensemble needs all its members and at Patapsco High School, no student gets left out. As president of the Vocal Music Boosters, he has solicited community businesses, washed cars, unloaded fruit trucks, sold refreshments, and ran booths to ensure students get the uniform pieces they need, travel to New York City to attend Broadway or Metropolitan Opera performances or go on the annual spring trip. Mark's relentless efforts have set a strong example for students. By showing up to every event, working hard while having fun but demanding nothing but the best from himself and everyone else, he has become a model and mentor.

Mark has also been a galvanizing force with other school groups, encouraging the PTSA and all the booster groups to work in harmony to strengthen the school. The result has brought unity among parent groups as they work, organize, and communicate together as well as increased parent involvement.

You may think that after four years and Jimmy graduating that Mark might be ready to hang up his uniform but he has already told Ms. Fishell Krich, the music teacher, that he will be back to help build the sets for next year's musical and help with the annual basket bingo. And that is music to our ears!



"Mark Lewis has gone above and beyond what would be expected of any parent, to see that not only his son, but the entire student body...has the opportunity to make the most of their high school experience."

- Emily Fishell Krich
Music Teacher
Patapsco High School and
Center for the Arts





The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

JIM CARROLL - Calvert County (FINALIST)



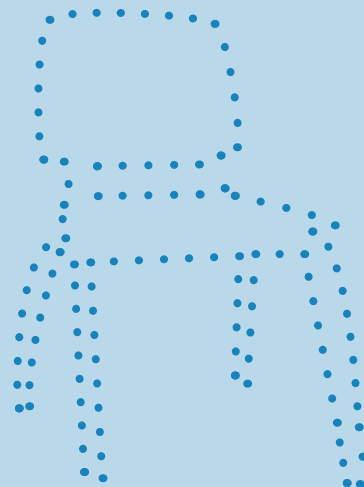
"I have witnessed firsthand the benefits that occur when a parent and a teacher form a partnership to enhance the lives of students."

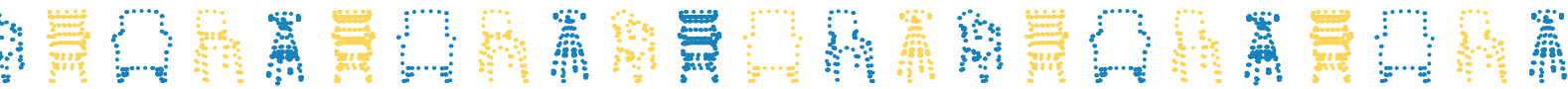
- Karin Stewart
Math Teacher & STEM Teacher
Specialist

Dedication and commitment is something Jim Carroll learned early from his high school teacher. When Jim had taken all the engineering and mechanical drawing classes his school had to offer, his teacher created an advanced class just for him. That teacher's insight into not only knowing Jim's talents but making the extra effort to help encourage them is exactly how Jim approaches each student in the Lego Leagues at Barstow Elementary and Calvert Middle Schools.

The areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) have received a great deal of attention in education. With an enormous amount of patience and laughter, Jim has brought the world of STEM and robotics to life through real-world applications. With the deftness of a seasoned teacher, he has provided students with a team learning environment as well as individual teaching opportunities for each student. Through his kindness and ability to know when to let students experience and learn on their own and when to step in and help, Jim has allowed each student to experience success and develop self-confidence through a very complex activity. (Ms. Short, a Barstow 4th grade teacher, has even tried to recruit him to the profession.)

While he is particularly good at being a sage on the side, his energy and enthusiasm have opened a window to the future potential and possibilities for students, teachers, and the community. In the words of 8th grader Emily Beavers, *He helped me understand how much engineering is part of our world and that engineers can always be used. It's funny that he is very anxious during our competition and he always jokes that he is going to have more grey hair at best, and no hair at worst when it's all over. As you can see by his slightly greying hair – Jim is Calvert County's best-case scenario!*





The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

JEMIMA CLARK - Caroline County

Jemima Clark was raised to work hard and give 100% to whatever she did or don't bother at all. This credo and her drive lead Denton Elementary School toward a monumental project of replacing the school's old, rusty, and unsafe playground with an expanded new playground that is handicapped accessible. Jemima launched into the effort by rallying the troops and developing a plan for renovating the current space as well as replacing the old playground equipment. Working with the PTA, and the Caroline County Parks and Recreation Department, County Commissioners, and Board of Education, Jemima organized and led meetings, made many phone calls, and cut yards of bureaucratic red tape. In the end, Jemima had a comprehensive plan in hand so she could write a grant to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Program Open Space Community Parks and Playgrounds Program. The school was awarded a \$280,000 grant! Today, you will see children from Denton Elementary and the community happily playing on a new, safe playground.

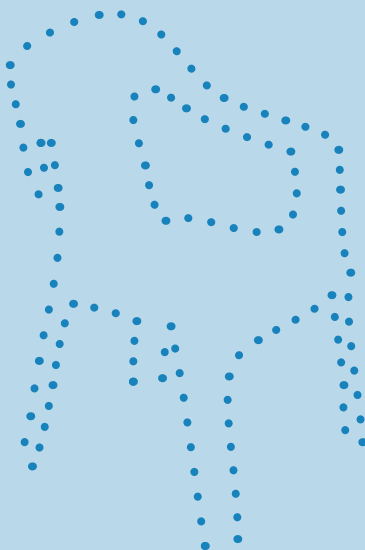
While the playground project was enormous, Jemima is not one to sit idle. Her energy and generosity are given unconditionally and in return, Denton Elementary is a place where all students, parents, and staff feel welcomed and cared for. As PTA President, Jemima has brought many other parents into the school for a variety of events and activities through her warm and friendly presence. She has organized activities that "spoil" staff like soup and bread day, taco day, or Thanksgiving dinner to make sure the teachers and school administration are supported so they can give their best to the students. She also helps organize a slew of family nights. And for the school's major fundraiser, the Harvest Festival, Jemima is brilliant at using every human resource available in the school and community to make the day spectacular (just ask Marilyn James from Worcester County, it's one of her fondest memories).

Two things that inspire Jemima on a daily basis: 1) there is always hope and 2) it is important to keep your mouth closed and your mind open long enough to hear what other people have to say, unless you need to laugh - that is the one thing Jemima loves to do most.



"My hope is that other parents and guardians will be inspired by [Jemima's] story, and become as involved with and committed to their child's school, knowing that their time and effort can make such a difference."

- Sandi Barry
Board Member
Caroline County Board of
Education





The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

LAURIE LONG - Carroll County



“Laurie has created an environment where parents and families, community members and business partners are welcomed and appreciated in their community school.”

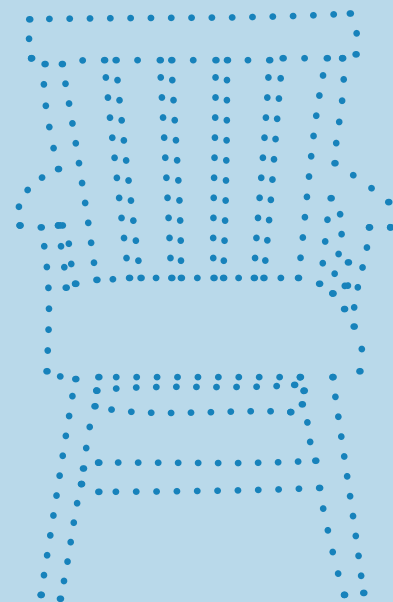
- Jane Farver
Coordinator
Carroll County Public Schools
Volunteer Program

Laurie Long is definitely in the right place considering the motto for North Carroll High School is ***Whatever It Takes*** because that is the attitude she has whole-heartedly embraced with her school involvement the past fourteen years. And it is precisely how she has tackled her role in the six years she has volunteered as the North Carroll Volunteer Coordinator for the countywide Volunteer Program.

Laurie has a knack for knowing not only what needs to be done but how to do it without missing a beat. As Volunteer Coordinator, Laurie is the hub for all parent involvement activities that happen at North Carroll. With her global perspective, communication skills, and friendliness, Laurie has developed her own personal approaches to reaching out to the school community. The result has been an increase in parent involvement from 89 volunteers to 336 for a total of over 14,000 hours this year. No other school Volunteer Program in the county comes close to North Carroll.

Laurie doesn't just lend her talents to the school's Volunteer Program but the school system as well. Her insight from working with the program has been a tremendous help to updating and refining the Volunteer Program Handbook and Guidelines, which is used for parent volunteer trainings throughout Carroll County. And somehow, she finds time to support the Carroll County Education Foundation, a non-profit organization that facilitates school-business partnerships to help the Carroll County school system achieve its goals.

But Laurie doesn't need a cheerleading squad to get her going. She might even recruit you to chaperone the squad at a game or get you to work alongside her at the concession stand –Whatever It Takes!





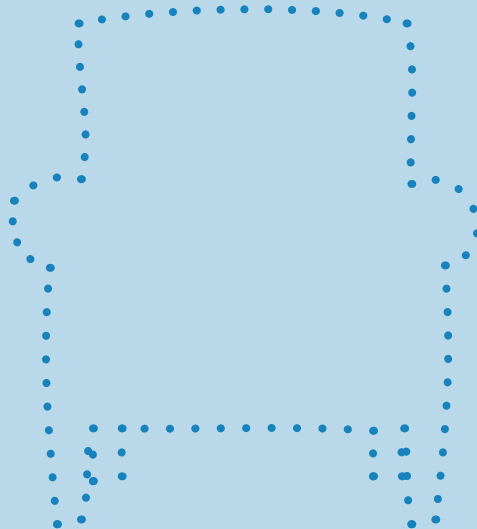
The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

KATHY ANN JOSEPH - Cecil County

Regalo (gift) is the perfect word in Spanish to describe Kathy Ann Joseph, who got her start as a parent volunteer at North East Elementary reading to third graders from their language arts anthologies and helping translate words in the books from Spanish. Kathy Ann expanded her involvement at the school supporting students during math lessons not just in the classroom but working at home to compile anecdotal notes about each student's progress and offering follow-up suggestions. Through her kindness, encouragement, and communication skills, Kathy Ann has been a gift to the staff and students at school.

And it is Kathy Ann's communication and problem-solving skills, resourcefulness, and drive to provide strong learning opportunities to students that have helped her resurrect a once defunct group, the Cecil County Gifted and Talented Parent Advisory Council, and turn it into a model parent workgroup that firmly believes that the best practices for gifted children are the best practices for all children. In her leadership role, Kathy Ann has served as designer, implementer, and chairperson, bringing together school system and school staff, and parents to develop creative methods to address and advance student's intellectual needs. As a result, a multi-grade level instructional model has been implemented for grades three, four, and five students; and the Gifted/Talented Kids Book Club has shown great success.

Kathy Ann has said, *"My goal is to create an organization that can perpetuate itself, and when I start to see glimmers of this, it is exciting."* Ella es un padre fantástico! (She is one fantastic parent!)



"[Kathy Ann's] passion for organization and meaningful dialogue offered parents, teachers, and administrators a safe forum for addressing topics and concerns that...impact not only the instructional programs of the gifted students, but pave the way for parents and school representatives to work together to create a better system for all."

- Georgia Soltis Clark
Principal

North East Elementary School





The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

KRISSY GOZZI - Charles County



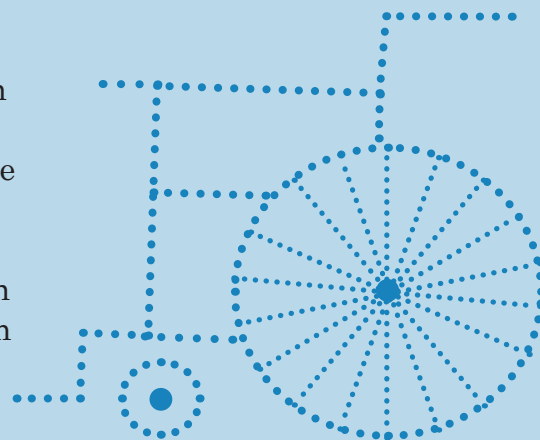
“Parents like Ms. Gozzi inspire me, as an educator, to strive to look for ways to make J.P. Ryon the best school it can be.”

- John Brooks
1st Grade Teacher
J.P. Ryon Elementary School

What do you get when you cross a Tickle Monster with a Noodle - an amazing parent named Krissy Gozzi and her beautiful daughter, Skye. Skye is in a wheelchair but you would never know it because now, not only does Skye go to class, participate in school activities, and generally behave like a typical 1st grader at J.P. Ryon Elementary, she also swings and uses the school's new, accessible playground equipment alongside her friends. And it is all due to Krissy's perseverance, patience, and persistence. Over the course of 18 months, Krissy researched other playgrounds; proposed a design that included safety considerations and equipment recommendations; attended numerous meetings; made countless phone calls; and penned letters in order to ensure not only Skye but all children at school and in the community had access to a safe, fun playground.

From the day Skye first entered kindergarten, Krissy has been in the classroom to answer any questions students may have about Skye's physical limitations as well as works with staff to make Skye's classroom transitions as smooth as possible for all the students. You can definitely see characteristics of her mother in Skye through her independence, compassion, sense of responsibility, trustworthiness, and hard work. And like her mother, Skye is a truly joyful child who has a positive influence on so many others.

Krissy is a welcomed presence at the school. Her activities as “Room Mom,” helping with the Fall Festival and annual Thanksgiving Feast, and coaching the Destination Imagination Team not only help the school and community be better but it proves that one person can make a tremendous difference in the lives of others, which is exactly what a Tickle Monster does!





The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

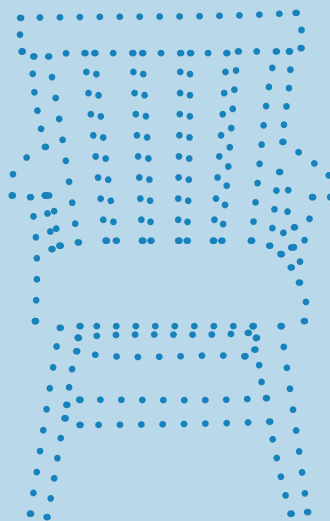
VALERIE JORDAN - Dorchester County

For 20 years, Valerie Jordan has been a strong presence in Dorchester County schools. From Sandy Hill Elementary to Maces Lane Middle to Cambridge-South Dorchester High School, Valerie has taken on a myriad of projects, volunteered countless hours, and helped numerous students, teachers, and staff with whatever they needed. Her son would tell you she is everyone's mother. And while it may not be acknowledged every day, Valerie's kindness, generosity, and dedication radiates from those she has helped.

Looking back at Valerie's involvement, the topic of literacy comes into particular focus. The dismay she felt by the number of kindergarten students at Sandy Hill Elementary who struggled with reading prompted her to get involved with the Reading Is Fundamental program and the one-on-one reading program where parent volunteers were paired with students who did not have a parent at home to read to them. Valerie has also coordinated Book Fairs at all three schools! While at Maces Lane Middle, Valerie attended Parent Advisory Council trainings, which gave her ideas on how to get parents, students, and teachers to work together for the betterment of the school. Some of the activities she helped organize included weekly parent/child art programs, homework-project nights, ice cream socials, and movie nights.

Valerie currently volunteers at the Cambridge-South Dorchester Media Center, although most students assume she is a full-time staff person. Helping students complete their assignments, talking to them about books she has read or new books available in the Media Center, listening to their personal problems, or saying a simple "*Hey there*" is what makes Valerie an unassuming yet awesome presence.

Twenty years is a long time to be a spark that electrifies an idea, a feeling, or an action, yet there are few sparks as bright as Valerie. She has lit up the entire school community through her encouragement, caring, and devotion to student learning and personal growth. Shine on Valerie, shine on!



"You don't even have to hear (Valerie's) voice or see her behind the counter, there's just a different energy in the Media Center when she's there; you feel satisfied, inspired, and cheerful."

- Kimberleigh Albites
Senior
Cambridge-South Dorchester
High School





The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

BRIAN BARRON - Frederick County (FINALIST)



“My daughter has learned ASL skills from Mr. Barron that she enthusiastically teaches to her father and me. I believe that ASL is such a valuable skill to possess, not only in learning a second language, but also to cement learning in other areas through kinesthetic reinforcement.”

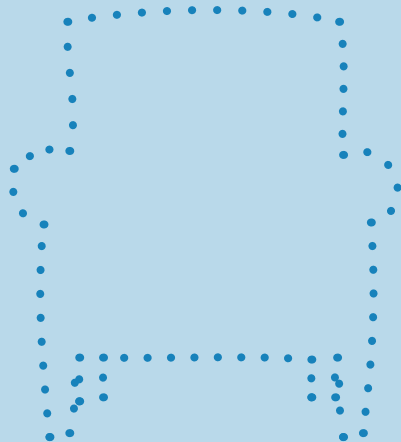
- Leta Brown
Parent of a 3rd Grade Myersville
Elementary student

In the Myersville Elementary grapevine, nothing has gotten lost in the translation when it comes to Brian Barron. A profoundly deaf parent, he began volunteering in his son Spencer's first grade class to help Spencer's peers better understand deafness and deaf culture. Brian's visits started to include classroom instruction as he began teaching the students American Sign Language (ASL). As word spread about his teaching and its positive impact on student learning and behavior, other teachers began asking him to teach their students.

Five years after he first walked into the classroom, Brian has increased his teaching to 17 classes, or approximately 357 students, at Myersville Elementary. Now if you visit Myersville Elementary, you will see students freely communicating using ASL. As his son moved up in grades, Brian moved up and expanded to the high school level. Partnering with the ASL teachers at Middletown High, Brian's elementary school students have the opportunity to interact with high school students using ASL.

Brian is also an avid photographer and uses this passion to help layout the annual yearbook as well as fuel afterschool discussion meetings aimed at strengthening ASL skills. His positive attitude, unwavering devotion, and his willingness to share his knowledge of ASL and deaf culture have been an inspiration to the community.

Research has proven that ASL has many benefits to learning not just for the deaf but for those who hear as well, from phonemic awareness and memory to vocabulary and literacy skills. At Myersville Elementary, the biggest benefit is having Brian at the school everyday, teaching, making students laugh, and showing them the only difference in being deaf is the way you communicate. We hear you loud and clear!





The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

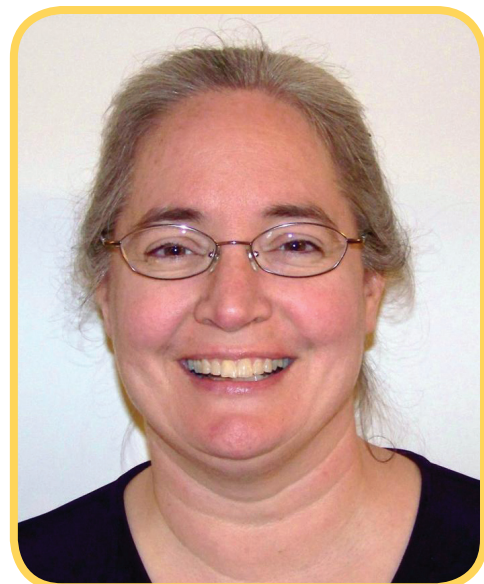
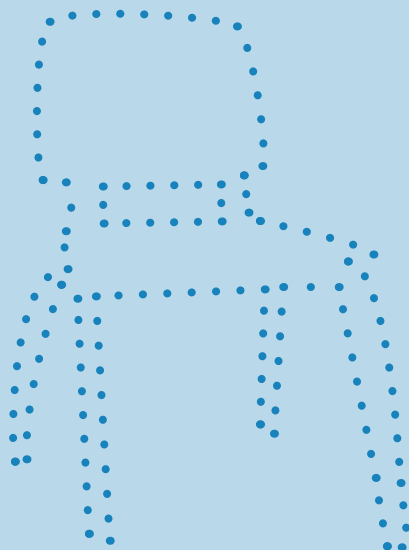
CHRISTINE BRENNEMAN - Garrett County

What one Grantsville Elementary student remembers when she attended the school was how encouraging Christine Brenneman was to all the students. Fourteen years later, the student is now a fifth grade teacher at the school and fully appreciates all the things Christine gives to the school, particularly the love she has for all children.

Christine's support reaches far and wide and you can find her at school, every day. As a member of the school's Moms in Touch program, she helps provide support to staff through snacks, cards, meals, and random acts of kindness. Christine has also been invaluable to the Reading First program by helping administer the Scholastic Reading Inventory to students and has helped plan and prepare resources for the summer reading camp for early readers.

One of the most notable programs Christine coordinates is the Parent Volunteer Program. This dynamic group of parents meets every Wednesday to help the school any way they can. And these volunteers have done it all, from mundane tasks like copying papers, filing, typing, completing bulletin boards, and making posters, to helping students with Accelerated Reader tests, and creating packets for the kindergarten orientation to help incoming students and their parents come to school ready to succeed.

A part of Christine's favorite quote from PBS's Mister Rogers says, *"...the greatest thing we can do in life is to help our neighbors come to know that they are lovable and capable of loving."* Christine and her family took this to heart by adopting two children (a niece and nephew) who now attend the school. We are grateful to know Christine is part of our neighborhood!



"Many of the good things occurring at Grantsville Elementary School are, in part or solely, related to Mrs. Brenneman and her volunteers."

- Matthew Eggleston
Principal

Grantsville Elementary School





The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

MARK DAGHIR - Harford County



"As a parent of a student participant, I have seen the awesome effect of this program. My dining room has been transformed into a 'lab' so that my daughter can explore what she has found outside or during a walk in our local State park."

- Lisa Hyle Marts
Parent (Ellie's Mom)
Darlington Elementary School'

At Darlington Elementary School's May Day celebration, you are likely to hear the words "*Dude, I really gotta' Hurl... Mega Hurl!*" Contrary to what you might expect, youngsters are gathered around a giant sling shot, precisely weighing eggs and pouring over multivariable graphs to select the perfect elevation angle to paste a target a hundred yards away. This is how Mark Dagher hooks the students of Darlington into learning science. For the past three years, Mark has been mixing science learning with fun at the afterschool Darlington Science Club for 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders.

A former Navy helicopter pilot, Boeing aerospace engineer, and the grandson of a German physical chemist, Mark is naturally drawn to science. Separating water into hydrogen and oxygen using a battery was one of his favorite elementary classroom experiences, especially when his teacher visited each child's beaker with a smoldering splint of wood. That bright flash of flame in oxygen and small explosion of hydrogen ignited Mark's unquenchable scientific curiosity.

Mark seeks to ignite a similar spark of curiosity in all of the students enrolled in the Darlington Science Club. Through dramatic hands-on experiments and projects like piloting a hovercraft, electroplating quarters in copper, building and racing steam-powered boats, and hunting for the "wee beasties" held in a drop of pond water, Mark has helped students experience and understand the natural world. The Darlington Science Club has also made trips to meet NASA astronauts, toured museums and science fairs, and hosted astronomy nights. At Exelon's Conowingo Dam Generating Station, students even walked through the inside of a spinning hydroelectric turbine and generator unit, and then counted hundreds of shad helped over the dam on their spawning migration.

Believing science and technical study are an important part of early education, and that professionals in technical careers can provide the greatest inspiration to younger students, Mark has implemented a mentorship program with students from the Aberdeen Science and Mathematics Academy. Mark's dedication to providing early science education is not just for his students, but also for the parents and staff of Darlington Elementary School, who Mark works with to plan the science club activities.

You are still thinking about Mega Hurl aren't you? Mark has you hooked as well!





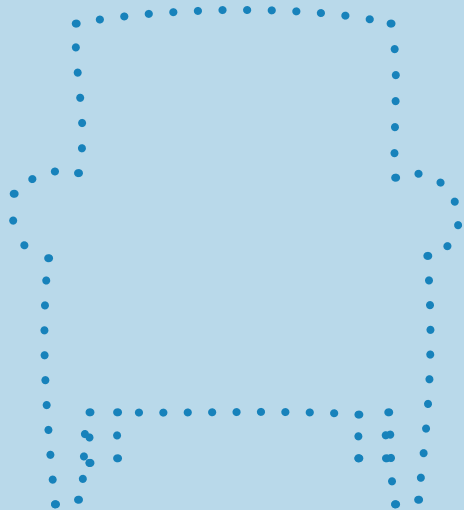
The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

SANDRA HOLT - Howard County

A good motto for Sandra Holt would be “Ask and you shall receive” because by taking the simple action of asking for help, Sandra has created new partnerships which have improved the Bollman Bridge Elementary environment. Almost intuitively, Sandra notices things that may not be amiss but could be made better. So when students were coming in from playtime sweaty and hot with no relief from the sun, she asked about the possibility of getting trees. With no money in the school budget, Sandra made a call to Arbor Nursery, a local tree and plant supply center, about getting a discount on some trees. The nursery agreed and a few phone calls later, Sandra had the local Cub Scouts and a number of Bollman Bridge volunteers planting them. In a similar situation, Sandra noticed the school’s Butterfly Garden would be a great place for staff to eat and meet. A call to the local Home Depot and Sandra was able to get two picnic tables donated. Then with the help of parent volunteers, the tables were painted and the courtyard has become a peaceful place for the entire school.

Sandra brought her “green” eye inside Bollman Bridge as well. One communication tool at the school is the Friday Folder which contains flyers for a wide variety of information at the school and in the community. Sandra spearheaded the Green Dot program. Each family participating in the program has a green dot on their folder indicating they will go to the PTA website to find all the flyer information which has been scanned and posted. Green Dot has saved a great deal of paper, money, and volunteer time that can now be focused directly on the students.

When she is not out making Bollman Bridge the best place to be, Sandra is an attorney, as is her husband. Again recognizing an opportunity to make things better, they held a free community legal clinic. That experience opened Sandra’s eyes even more to the good she can do for others at the school and in the community. And we can’t wait to see how it turns out!



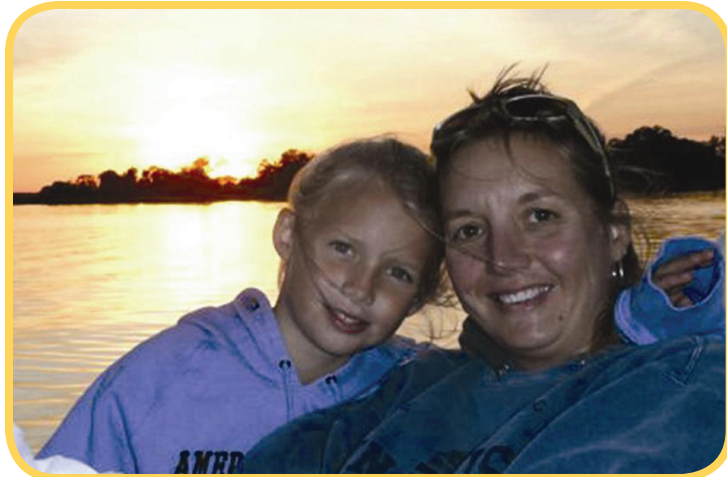
“Ms. Holt has been extremely busy...around Bollman Bridge and she continues to be such an asset to the students, staff, and parents.”

- Alison Stumpf
2nd Grade Teacher
Bollman Bridge Elementary



The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

KIKI JONES - Kent County



"The most important part of what [Kiki] contributes is her energy, spirit, and ability to rally other parents and individuals in the community to contribute to the growth and education of all our children."

- Bob Ortiz

Community-based Leader/Parent
2008 Comcast PIMA Local Semifinalist

When Garnett Elementary PTA Executive Board first met this year, Kiki Jones began the meeting by simply asking members and administrative staff, "What would you like us to do?" If you know Kiki, that can be a loaded question because she will take an idea and run with it before you even have a chance to think about it.

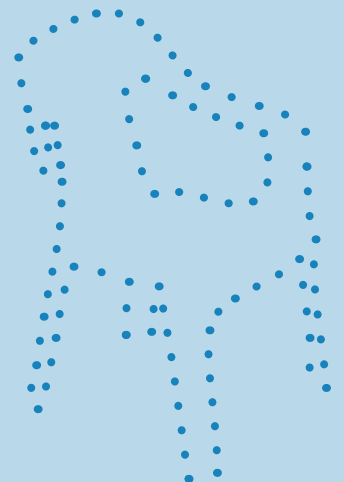
A good case in point is when a voluntary school uniform program was first proposed at the school. Kiki took off in support of the program by speaking to parent groups and the school board. She also researched companies that could supply the uniforms, including getting samples for parents and the school board to view. And when it came time to implement the program – **ZINGA** – Kiki was right there making it all happen.

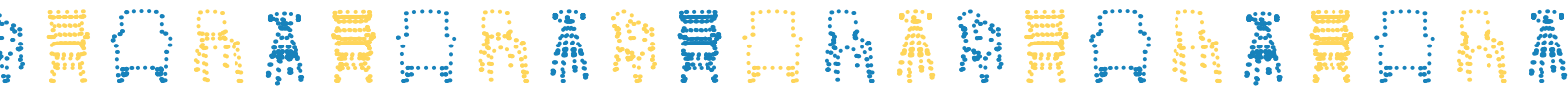
But Kiki's job is never done as she sprang into action taking over the Sneaker Creeper Foot Race for children preschool through 8th grade. This annual community event has been held for the past 20 years in a field on the outskirts of town until Kiki got involved. Establishing a partnership with Washington College, Kiki worked to get the race moved to Kirby Stadium on the college campus and – **KAPOW** – the event exploded into a Garnett Elementary spring mega-fundraiser! Hundreds of parents and children came not only from Garnett Elementary, but from across the county and from

several other regions to participate. Each child received an awesome tie-dyed t-shirt, a canvas bag of goodies, a ribbon for crossing the finish line, a bottled water, and a Frisbee plate with a hot dog, granola bar, and drink served on it!

While there is only so much time in a day, a week, and a year to soar to new heights, that does not stop Kiki from promoting school spirit by launching a school store for students and parents to purchase anything from squishy balls to growing creatures. But this is no ordinary store, it's a "store on wheels" which Kiki organizes by coordinating the committee that monitors the store and supervising the 4th graders who run it. And with Kiki's quick thinking – **SHAZAM** – the store is also tied into the reward incentives for the newly adopted PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) program!

Kiki is no average citizen, but an innovator of tremendous proportions. Someone needs to come up with a cool superhero name for her!





The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

ANN ENGLISH - Montgomery County (FINALIST)

One of Ann English's favorite sayings is "*where others see problems, we see opportunity*." That is an understatement for the horticulture project Ann took on at Rockville High School. The floundering greenhouse and horticulture class needed a good dose of sunshine, which Ann amply provided. As a landscape architect, Ann was able to make recommendations to revitalize the greenhouse; help the new horticulture teacher write lesson plans for hands-on activities as well as a grant to purchase a GROWlab so classes could begin seedlings that would then be moved to the greenhouse; develop material '*kits*' students would use for horticulture labs; and monitor the greenhouse and classroom projects, giving assistance whenever needed.

In two years, the greenhouse and horticulture class have grown not just in the number of plants cultivated at the school, but also in the number of hands-on experiences the class can offer, the number and diversity of students enrolled, and, through student-grown plant sales, the funds it has raised to help keep it thriving. If that isn't enough growing for you, visit the other two projects Ann has headed up — the campus rain garden and the courtyard landscaping. For these projects, Ann connected the school to the community through a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, a donation of equipment from the City of Rockville Horticulturalist, and bulbs from the American Horticulture Society. Now, not only does the campus look beautiful, but it is helping preserve the environment.

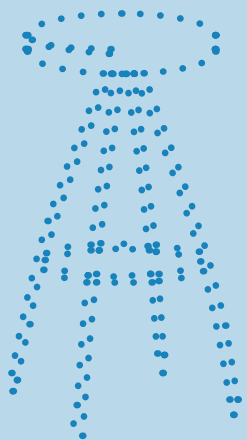
Shifting her leadership skills to serving as Booster Club President, Ann strongly believed that the club should embrace the entire school community. As President, she was able to not only increase the number of student activities the Booster Club supported, including the journalism academy and music department, but she also increased the number and diversity of parents involved.

And remember those kits Ann developed? She really likes them, so much so she created ones for the After-Prom Party parent committee. Under Ann's leadership, not only did the students have a Pirates of the Caribbean themed event but - ***shiver me timbers*** - it was built in half the time as in previous years – complete with an 18' replica of the Black Pearl! Aye – Ann English is more valuable than Spanish gold!



"[Ann] is proof that one person, working well with others, can accomplish a great deal in a short period of time both for academic excellence and community building."

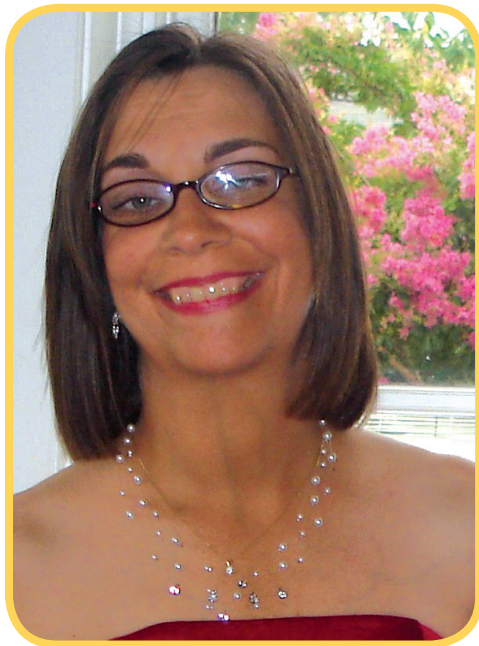
- Debra Munk
Principal
Rockville High School





The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

KRISTEN RUIZ - Prince George's County (JoAnne L. CARTER MEMORIAL AWARD)



"[Mrs. Ruiz's] selfless acts have directly related to numerous accomplishments for our students, our staff members, our parents, and our school as a whole."

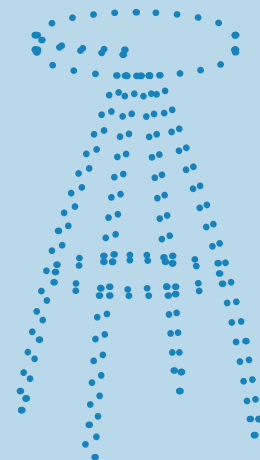
- Justin FitzGerald
Principal
Bond Mill Elementary School

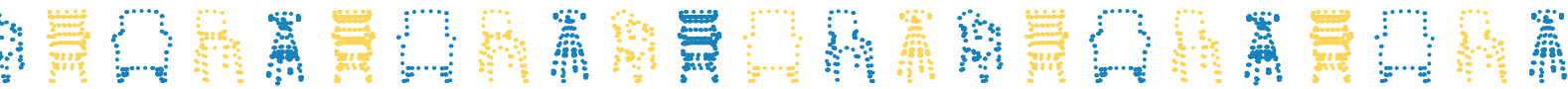
Triple Threat – that is Kristen Ruiz to a tee! Not only because she has three children in three different schools - Bond Mill Elementary, Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle, and Laurel High - but as PTA President at each of these schools (yes, all three) she also strives to ensure that students have the best educational, social, and cultural experiences the schools can provide.

Kristen got her start and has spent the most time at Bond Mill Elementary where her leadership has been nothing short of extraordinary. The PTA/PTO membership at the school has held steady at 90-99% over the years, and parent involvement has touched every staff person and every program in the school. PTA/PTO coordinates many of the school's committees and programs, about 20 in all, that range from school grounds landscaping, recycling, the school yearbook, and staff luncheons, to International Night celebrating ethnic and cultural diversity in the school. Kristen also started a Drama Club, where she serves as director/coordinator. PTA/PTO fundraising efforts have provided every teacher and specialist has a new visualizer as well as stipends to purchase classroom supplies and educational materials and books. There is also a new sound system for the school, audio listening centers for classrooms, and support for school programs such as physical education, music, art, safety, the monthly cultural arts performance, as well as funds for the media center. Kristen is there to support every art auction, spaghetti dinner, ice cream social, luncheon, raffle, bake/treat sale, book or craft fair, and carnival.

While Kristen's time at Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle and Laurel High has been shorter, it has been no less significant. She has tackled tough issues like school boundary changes with sensitivity and always keeps an open line of communication among all those involved. At Laurel High, she has even opened new communication avenues through an e-schools newsletter as well as launched a new fundraiser, the LHS Discount Card that includes 26 participating businesses and 500 online offers.

Now here is the twist, since 2002 Kristen has undergone two kidney transplants (the most recent in 2008), a pancreas transplant, and an emergency appendectomy, but please don't tell her – it might get in the way of her parent involvement.





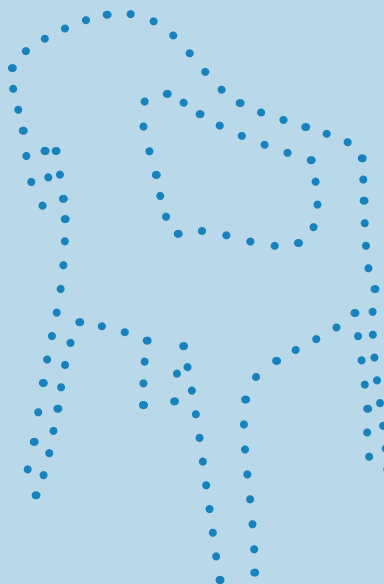
The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

WENDY PANOR - Queen Anne's County (STATEWIDE WINNER)

By keeping an open mind to new ideas and programs, Wendy Panor has been able to provide new solutions not just for her son John, but for the entire Queen Anne's County education community. John has apraxia, a speech disorder that prevents a person from saying what he/she wants correctly and consistently. Wendy's quest to find help for John uncovered the DuBard School of Language Disorders in Mississippi which developed *The Association Method*, a specialized, multi-sensory teaching-learning strategy found to be successful for language-deficient children.

Beginning with small steps, Wendy studied about The Association Method through a partnership she fostered with the DuBard School. She then worked with the Queen Anne's Director of Special Education to have staff at both Centreville Elementary and Kennard Elementary receive the first level of training in The Association Method. Wendy then took the leap, asking the Queen Anne's Board of Education to send local school system staff, including speech pathologists and special needs professionals, for more advanced training at the DuBard School in Mississippi. Today, there are many doors in Queen Anne's County that Wendy has helped open, not only for John but for school system staff, children with speech disorders and their parents, and children with autism and their parents.

Wendy's involvement has spilled over to many other school and community activities such as Bay Days, a three-day event at Kennard Elementary to focus on the Chesapeake Bay and environmental issues; Character Counts; Family Fun Night; Cub Scouts; and Chess Club. And while you may be trying to catch your breath, Wendy is not only able to keep up with the pace but is also able to stop and enjoy all the good things happening around her.



"Wendy brings...a vibrant and unique energy that translates into stimulating, educational opportunities for (Kennard Elementary) students."

- Lee Franklin
Enrichment Specialist
Kennard Elementary School



The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

MARIA SCOTT - St. Mary's County



"Without a doubt, Maria Scott's tireless devotion to our school, that staff and most importantly, the children of Park Hall Elementary School instills pride in all of us, making us want to do our very best every day."

- Kathy Norton
Principal

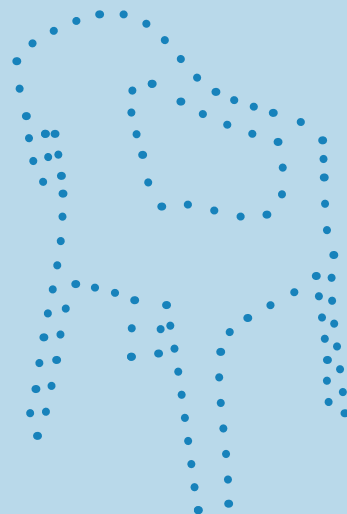
Park Hall Elementary School

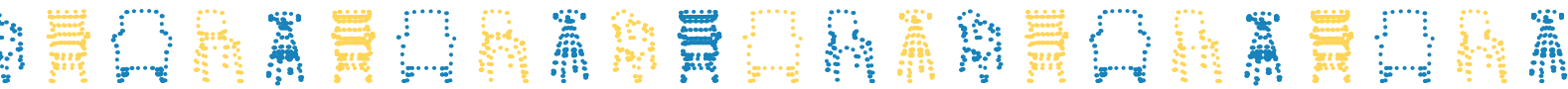
Imagine coming in from recess and finding your classroom in complete disarray after two of Santa's elves had been there. And as you and your classmates cleaned up, you began to discover little surprises the elves left behind. At Park Hall Elementary School, you find surprises big and small, including Maria Scott, who was one of the students visited by elves years ago.

In the spirit of big and small surprises, Maria knows success comes in many shapes and sizes, and is what motivates her to create, plan, and organize so many activities and events at Park Hall Elementary. From organizing PTA events like the Fall Festival, a sell-out this year, to launching the Eagles Nest Store which supports the Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports Program at the school (Park Hall is recognized as a PBIS Exemplar School), Maria's "can do" attitude and dedication ensures that Park Hall students, parents, and staff have what they need to achieve.

This year, Maria acted as one of Santa's elves herself, concocting another surprise for every student at the school just before holiday break. Knowing that many of the families in the school face economic difficulties, Maria made sure there were 600 goodie bags ready for the last day before Christmas break so that each student would have their own special discoveries over the holidays.

Whether Maria is coordinating donations, ordering materials, designing parent and teacher volunteer schedules, decorating, helping staff, or just listening to the story of a child like she is their #1 confidant, Maria is giving to the school in so many ways. And one of the biggest surprises is that Maria's children do not even attend Park Hall Elementary! Her oldest daughter, Jordan, goes to another school in the county, where Maria also volunteers. What a wonderful little elf she is!





The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

ROBERT WELLS - Somerset County

Bobby Wells' grandfather once told him *"find something you like doing, do it well, and stay with it."* For Bobby, that meant instilling the importance of education not only in his twin daughters but his community. Through this principle, Bobby has had tremendous impact on Deal Island Elementary School.

Bobby has created an incredible sense of community among the students, parents, and school staff at Deal Island Elementary. And while everything he has done has been on behalf of the school and the community, Bobby has never lost sight of the fact that the community is filled with individuals. His ability to simultaneously see and understand the big picture while also seeing the many details within the picture is an inherent quality of a true leader. For three years, Bobby served as President of the PTO and during his tenure, he was able to double the amount of time parents volunteered at the school, has presided over fund-raising events that have amounted to raising over \$20,000, and has provided enriching experiences and opportunities to students that might otherwise go without.

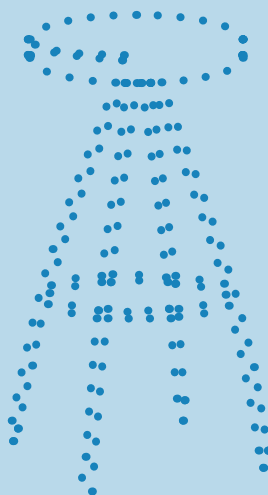
Take, for instance, the annual May Day/Sports Day event. Bobby's goal was to ensure there were sufficient funds so that the entire event would be free to students and staff. Not only was that accomplished and students got to experience activities like rock climbing, but Bobby added a detail that is typical Bobby, different colored shirts for each grade! His vision also included field trips for all students. One trip in particular was to Assateague Island, where students got to explore the visitor's center but because of rain, couldn't play on the beach. Knowing that some students had never seen the ocean, Bobby made sure the buses went down to the beach, even if it was for just a glimpse. And though he had worked all night, the day the 4th grade attended the water safety class at the YMCA, Bobby was right there on the side of the pool ready to jump in!

To this day, Bobby finds that his grandfather's advice is true and he has stuck with being a volunteer at the Deal Island Elementary. Not only is he the epitome of the word volunteer, but he is a role model and example for us all.



"I really saw how dedicated he was to mak[ing] sure that he did what he could to touch the lives of all of these students."

- Kimberly Mills
PTO Member/Parent
Deal Island Elementary School





The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

JENNY SCHMIDT - Talbot County



“As a Title I school...the meadow planting project brought a wonderful enrichment to all our students, especially those who would never have the opportunity to participate in this type of experience otherwise.”

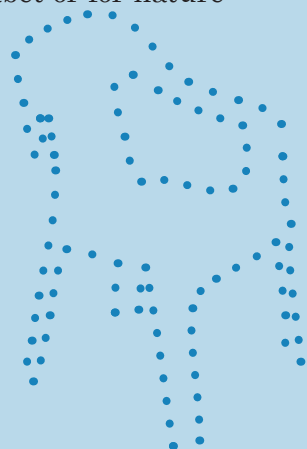
- Emily Moody
Family Liaison
Easton Elementary School

Environmental stewardship is something that has received greater prominence around the world over the years, but at Easton Elementary it has danced its way right to the top of the list with the help of Jenny Schmidt. During early discussions about adopting a Green School initiative at Easton Elementary, Jenny planted the seed of creating a meadow planting project and outdoor classroom. That seed grew under Jenny's attentive and supportive guidance.

Jenny began with a subcommittee of school and school system staff, and local Board of Education members, and enlisted the resources of the Newton Marasco Foundation, where she works to promote environmental stewardship. The team put together a grant to the Chesapeake Bay Trust, receiving \$1,900, and Jenny was able to secure additional funding through the Foundation. These funds allowed the school to form a unique partnership with a number of community organizations, including Environmental Concern, which trained school staff on meadow planting and provided seeds, supplies, and lesson plans about meadows and native plants for teachers. The organization also came to the school to teach Easton Elementary kindergarteners about how to plant and care for seedlings for the Meadow Planting Day. These kindergarteners then taught the first graders and so the stewardship process began to take root.

Planning and coordination continued under Jenny's leadership as she recruited the help of Easton Utilities to prepare the meadow planting site at no cost. Jenny then worked with parent volunteers and school staff to organize the actual Meadow Planting Day, which the entire school participated in. No detail was left unattended on May 6, 2008 as students were given a cup of soil, seeds to scatter, and were instructed to “dance” the seeds into the ground while the song ***Walking on Sunshine*** played. Today, teachers take their classes to the meadow for an ABC Walk so students can find things in the meadow that start with each letter of the alphabet or for nature journaling. And students have watched their plants turn the school campus into a beautiful natural environment.

Hopefully now, whenever you hear ***Walking on Sunshine***, you will think of Jenny, the other parent volunteers, and the Easton Elementary teachers as they watch their children joyfully dance around a meadow, planting seeds. And maybe you'll be inspired to do a little dancing yourself!





The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

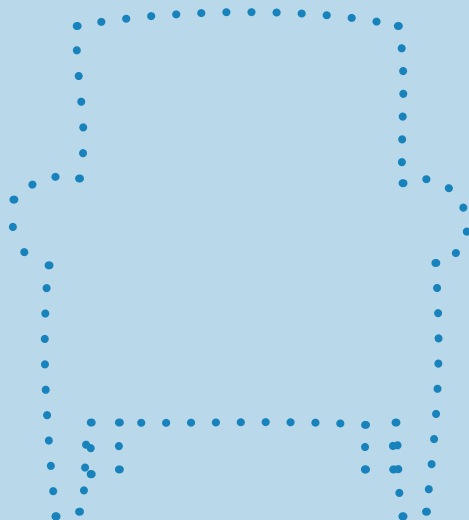
STEVEN O'FARRELL - Washington County

After starting the re-development of the Fountaindale Elementary School entrance, someone asked Steve O'Farrell, *"Have you seen the courtyard?"* He replied, *"What courtyard?"* After walking around the space, Steve could see potential in the 10,000 sq.ft. of unused, unkept space but also knew the challenges would be daunting. Yet it was the challenges that enticed Steve as he assumed the leadership role to realizing the potential of the courtyard space.

Steve mounted the ambitious and monumental Fountaindale Courtyard Project that would transform the overgrown and dismal empty space into a beautiful, fully handicapped-accessible courtyard featuring an outdoor theater, outdoor classrooms, connecting sidewalks, lawn area, and ornamental landscaping. He has put in countless hours to attend meetings, work with consultants, and make calls, and managed a legion of school staff, students, parents, Board of Education members, city and state officials, architects, contractors, and other volunteers. When the project is complete, it will be the centerpiece of the school's magnet program for the arts.

And while Steve prefers to acknowledge the many others who have given to the project, many of whom do not have children at Fountaindale, his drive and initiative have brought together the school and community to ensure that the students at Fountaindale have the opportunity to learn, thrive and soar.

What inspires Steve?
"...practical, effective problem solving that pulls a community together, real people doing good things is enough for me." We couldn't agree more!



"Steve's perseverance on this project is a testament to his commitment to improving the student life at Fountaindale."

- Kristine Bezanson
Fountaindale PTA President





The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

GINNY STEUART - Wicomico County



“[Ginny] creates opportunities for volunteerism where none may have previously existed, and she speaks not only on behalf of the loving bond she has for her own children, but for all children in our county.”

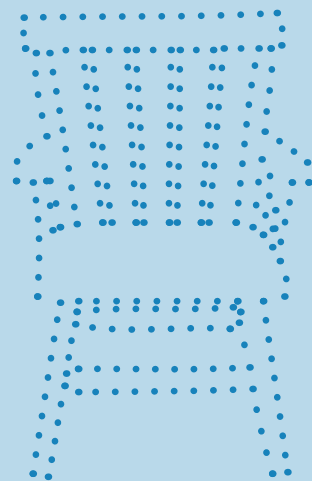
- Robin H. Holloway
President
Wicomico County Board of
Education

One year for the Chipman Elementary winter carnival, Ginny Steuart got the largest bouncy machine she could find – it was so big it filled the entire gym. What a perfect metaphor for someone whose personality and heart are so big she fills a whole room. And Ginny has been in a lot of rooms in Wicomico County.

Ginny's start as a volunteer was being the classroom mom for her son, Patrick's pre-kindergarten class. Things got popping, literally, in the third grade when Ginney popped popcorn for his reading group. Being in the school, working with staff, and getting to know the students inspired Ginny then and still does. Three children and a few years later, Ginny is constantly and consistently involved in and promoting activities and programs at every school level: elementary, middle, and high.

A belief Ginny holds deeply is that supporting the entire family is the best way to support the student and the school. With a population of 72% of students from low-income families, Glen Avenue Elementary wanted to establish a relationship with a faith-based partner to help these students and families with their needs. Through her church, Ginny coordinated the Cozy Christmas/Hit the Streets campaign which delivered pajamas and books to low-income students for the holidays and organized the school's canned food drive. Given her particular knack for knowing what is needed in the community, you will also find Ginny at sock hops, skate nights, spaghetti dinners, Instructional Leadership meetings, and local school board meetings, making sure students, parents, and staff have what they need.

A former banker, Ginny measures quality of life by the strength of the relationships she has with the people and the community around her, which explains why she loves to share the book **The Secret Blend** by Stan Toler with everyone she knows. With her own secret blend of popcorn, laughter, and compassion for all, Ginny is a priceless commodity!





The 2009 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

MARILYN JAMES - Worcester County

One of Marilyn James' first volunteer opportunities at Ocean City Elementary School came shortly after her family moved to the area. Soon after checking off a number of activities on the PTA volunteer list that she was interested in, including the Halloween Carnival, she got a phone call. The person asked Marilyn if she would be chairperson of the carnival. Being new to the area, Marilyn's response was *"Oh no, I have never attended the carnival, I wouldn't know where to begin, but I will be happy to help in any way I can."* Three weeks before the carnival, Marilyn got another call, this time from the PTA President, wondering when flyers were going out, what was being organized, etc. The person who had originally called had since moved away and left Marilyn's name as chairperson!

Not only has Marilyn graciously served as chairperson of the Halloween Carnival at Ocean City Elementary for the past nine years, but she is also chairperson of the School Improvement Advisory Council, and coordinator for the Teacher MSA Luncheons. And as a cancer survivor, Marilyn's compassion toward others stems from the caring and compassion she received from students, parents, and school staff during her illness. If there is a faculty member with health problems or a family in need, Marilyn is there with a kind, creative solution to help them through difficult times.

One of her favorite inspirational quotes is *"Don't pray for an easier life – pray to be a stronger person."* Marilyn's strength and devotion to ensuring that students received exceptional curricular and extracurricular experiences has taken her far and wide. Marilyn has spoken at public venues throughout Worcester County and solicited donations from area businesses. She even arranged for the Assistant Secretary to the U.S. Secretary of the Department of Education to visit Ocean City Elementary to observe the tremendous programs and hard work staff, parents, and students have put in to reaching the goal of 100% Proficient or Advanced on the Maryland School Assessments in 2008. *(OCES was the only school in the state to achieve that status.)*

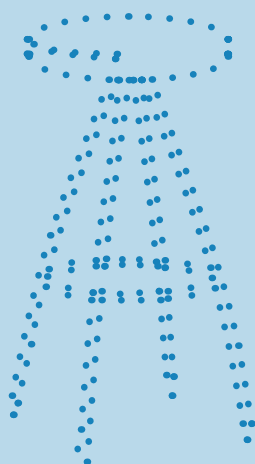
There is no haunted house that could scare Marilyn from giving it her all and no fortune teller that wouldn't foresee great things for Ocean City Elementary under Marilyn's influence. She's the black cat's meow!



"Mrs. James approaches every new opportunity for involvement with a positive attitude, a tireless work ethic, and a determination to make a positive impact on our school, our students, and our families."

- Irene Kordick
Principal

Ocean City Elementary School





The 2009 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



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.

