

The Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award

2008 Award Programs



Choose Your Seat.
Get Involved.



The **Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award** 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.

The first state-wide annual award program of its kind in the nation, the program is a collaboration between the Maryland State Department of Education and Comcast. The program was created to highlight the positive impact parents have on public schools and to encourage all parents to get involved in whatever way they can. Parents from across the state are nominated for demonstrating significant, positive impact on public education in their communities.

“Parents can have such a critical impact not only on their child’s educational success but on the school’s success as a whole.” said Dr. Nancy Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools. “And while the contributions of each parent being honored are so different, together they are spectacular in what they have been able to accomplish in Maryland schools. Maryland is incredibly fortunate to be able to recognize these heroes.”

The 2008 Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Awards event was held in April 2008 at the Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts in Annapolis, Md. The celebration recognized 23 parents from school systems across the state of Maryland. Six semi-finalists and one overall state winner were selected from the 23 local winners for their exemplary contributions to public education.

2009 Nomination Deadline: January 16, 2009

Nomination forms can be found in English and select foreign languages on the program’s website:

www.MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/audiences/parents/pima

Nominees:

- are a parent/legal guardian of a child in a Maryland public school.
- must be a consistent advocate of public education.
- demonstrate involvement in one or more of the following areas:
 - Communication; Volunteering; Learning; Decision Making; and/or Community Collaboration.



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In the first year of the award, 137 nominations were submitted. Reviewers for the application process were overwhelmed at the many varied ways parents are involved in education. This booklet provides a very small snapshot of what 23 parents from around the state are doing to help their child's school and public education succeed.

Larry Walker

State Winner
Howard County

Mt. Hebron High Parents of African-American Students (PAAS) group; comprehensive parent involvement activities

A true leader, Larry's key involvement activity was serving as president of the Parents of African American Students (PAAS) group. While leading the group, Larry was able to reach out to the Asian and Hispanic parent populations and help them form their own parent groups. Since then, Larry and other parent group leaders have worked with the school's Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) and Booster Club to create subcommittees within the PTSA. This has led to eliminating duplicate programs and providing for more diverse representation in all programs at the school.



Erin Delong

Allegany County

**Allegany High
Academic Endowment Fund**



For over 10 years, Erin has strived to open the minds and eyes of Allegany's students, and help them reach far and wide into their future. Erin helped found the Allegany High School Academic Endowment Fund, an organization that raises money to support academic excellence and creativity in the classroom. As the Academic Endowment Fund's vice president, Erin has led a number of projects that support the school, such as an annual Honors Reception to orient students and parents to the Honors and AP programs, and College 101, an event for all area parents and students to learn about the college application process, financial aid, and more.



Lisa Eliot

Anne Arundel County

**Crofton Middle and Arundel High
Comprehensive parent involvement
activities**

Lisa's school involvement is two fold as she has children at Crofton Middle School and Arundel High School.

At Crofton Middle, Lisa created Bypass the Backpack, an email communication program to keep parents and faculty informed of school news and upcoming events. She also created the CanDo-Card incentive program that rewards honor roll students with incentives from local businesses. At Arundel High, Lisa has increased parent involvement and improved parent-school communication by forming and co-hosting a bimonthly Coffee with the Principal meeting.

Susana Barrios

Semifinalist
Baltimore City

Patterson Park Charter School
Comprehensive parent involvement
activities



Susana's strong leadership and recruitment skills serve Patterson Park Charter School well. A speaker of Spanish, Susana translates school documents for parents and interprets during meetings, clubs, and other school gatherings. She also serves as the Spanish Speaking Liaison to the school's organized parent group, Hands on Patterson Park Charter School. She is often heard telling parents, "Things will happen whether or not you are involved. If you want things to be a certain way, you need to participate!"



Judy Jefferson-LaFlame

Baltimore County

Pleasant Plains Elementary
Comprehensive parent involvement
activities

Judy has worked closely with staff members and other parents at Pleasant Plains Elementary to create a school that is committed to supporting involvement of all parents. She communicated often with other parents and made special efforts to reach out to parents of English Language Learners by creating a special Parents Night for them to meet and bond with each other. Baltimore County Public Schools recently recognized Judy for volunteering 1,000 hours to the school!



Eileen Hudson

Calvert County

**Plum Point Middle
Comprehensive parent involvement
activities**

Eileen's involvement is fueled by taking initiative. Eileen is at her school nearly every day, always on the hunt for

projects or tasks that need to be done. The short list of her activities includes running the beloved Swamp Shop, helping teachers in the classroom, chaperoning field trips, assisting with book fairs, helping with year book sales, making copies and filing, and chaperoning dances. Eileen's enthusiasm and her random acts of kindness make Plum Point Middle a place every kid wants to be.

Kelli Nelson

**Semifinalist
Carroll County**

Advocate for children with disabilities

A leading advocate for the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program, Kelli has developed positive relationships with state and local policymakers who make decisions about funding. She has testified before the state legislature on issues concerning children with disabilities, and she has led numerous county and state councils and committees. In addition to serving on the State Interagency Coordinating Council's Legislative Action Committee and her work in Carroll County, Kelli has also volunteered for Baltimore County's Special Education Citizen's Advisory Committee and Local Interagency Coordinating Council.





Jesse Cloud

Cecil County

**Thomson Estates Elementary
Literacy programs; comprehensive
parent involvement activities**

Students at Thomson Estates aren't afraid when they see a tiger roaming the halls because they know it's Jesse

delivering a new Reading is Fundamental (RIF) book to them. Through the RIF program, every student receives a new book three times a year. Jesse has also initiated and runs a monthly book exchange to make sure students have regular access to fresh reading materials.

Shellee Stine

Charles County

**North Point High
Established Parent-Teacher-Student
Organization; comprehensive parent
involvement activities**



Shellee established and continues to lead the Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO) at North Point High School for Science, Technology and Industry. She developed a Web-based tool that teachers can use to post key information for parents, and parents can use to respond. The tool has proven so popular that it has set the stage for a countywide system. Shellee also identified a new priority—keeping teen drivers safe. She is now working to establish a countywide committee to improve safety among teen drivers.

Michelle Nichols

Dorchester County

COGATE Summer Learning Program

Michelle co-founded and continues to lead COGATE (Children On Guard Against The Enemy), a summer program at Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church. The program provides children a safe and fun place to learn. Transportation is available at points across the county, and while learning, children are treated to nutritious, homemade breakfasts, lunches, and snacks. Over 600 children have benefited from COGATE in the past 12 years.



Kathy Meagher

Frederick County

Frederick County Career and Technology Center
Comprehensive parent involvement activities; Grant writing and marketing

Kathy uses her real-world skills and expertise to write grants, raise funds, and support marketing projects for the Career and Technology Center. She takes those same skills and expertise to the classroom, teaching a well-received lesson on job interviews not only to help students keep engaged and motivated but to help prepare them for the real-world. Kathy is also a valued, active member of the school's Advisory Board and her efforts are crucial to the school, which must recruit its own students and supplement school system funding with grants and other funding sources.

Crellin Corps of Discovery Parent Group

Garrett County

Crellin Elementary
Restoring land and building the
Environmental Education Laboratory
and playground



Starting with simple questions from Crellin Elementary School students about dirty water and black dirt, the Crellin Corps of Discovery Parent Group created an Environmental Education Laboratory for the school. The lab includes a trail, boardwalk over natural wetlands, and amphitheater. The Group's accomplishments are made all the more impressive given that the plot of land the lab is built on was once a mining site and had been serving as an unofficial dump, covered with coal gob and lumber debris from the mining era. Parents banded together, recruited volunteers, and worked with a number of agencies to obtain the land, clear the area, and bring their plans to fruition.



Sue Rattman

Semifinalist
Harford County

Harford County Educational
Partnership Initiative (EPI)

As a parent of a disabled child, Sue's motivation for creating the Educational Partnership Initiative was to help other parents of students receiving special education services become more knowledgeable in IEP process so they could be effective advocates for their children. Through a series of training sessions and events, parents gain knowledge, build self-confidence, and practice skills that will help them become equal partners with the school system and an effective advocate for their children. Sue designed EPI to be parent-driven; the program's current facilitators are program graduates, and a key outcome of the program is parents helping other parents.



Robert Ortiz

Kent County

**Henry Highland Garnett Elementary
Family Matters Spaghetti Night;
comprehensive parent involvement
activities**

Bob is a consummate communicator and leader who regularly corresponds with parents, maintaining an e-newsletter on education, interpreting for Spanish-speaking families when needed, and speaks at community events as a school-community liaison. One way he has been instrumental in increasing parent involvement is through the annual dinner at the school where fathers prepare their own spaghetti sauces and serve a special dinner to parents, children, and friends.

Ralph Nelson

Montgomery County

**Cabin John Middle and Cold Spring
Elementary
Student directories and parent guides;
nationally competitive chess club;
comprehensive parent involvement
activities**



Ralph is known as the dad with the hat and between his involvement at Cold Spring Elementary School and Cabin John Middle, he has worn many hats. Ralph has led a popular, prize-winning chess club and contributes to the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) newsletter. Ralph has committed himself to researching the nature of middle school children and de-mystifying the pervasive trend of a lack of parent involvement in middle schools. A major project of Ralph's is organizing and developing the student directories and parent guides for both schools, which include staff information and photos, a school event calendar, pickup and drop-off safety information, and school policies.



Annette Jackson-Jolly

Semifinalist
Prince George's County

Hyattsville Elementary
Affordable after-school child care program; campaign for building renovations; student uniforms

Annette has instilled a new sense of unity and pride at Hyattsville Elementary by setting goals and making sure they stay in focus until they get done. Some of Annette's major accomplishments include organizing a successful campaign to renovate the school's gym, leading the effort (with overwhelming parent support) to establish a policy requiring uniforms, and helping to establish an affordable after-school care program for parents with multiple children.

Karen Catron

Queen Anne's County

Grasonville Elementary
Engineering clubs; spelling and geography bees



A professional aviator, Karen is the driving force behind the Grasonville Elementary School Engineering Clubs.

Wanting to share her passion for engineering, aeronautics, and the physical sciences, Karen worked with school staff and other volunteers to create Engineering Clubs for third through fifth graders. Students in the clubs have since built a working theme park ride and a race car that would protect an egg during a crash scenario. She has also brought national spelling and geography bee competitions to the school. Karen's dedication and the more the merrier attitude have enriched the school and she has generated a fun, friendly competitive spirit in the learning experience.

Comcast Parent Involvement Matters Award 2008 Local Programs



Lynn Cullins

Semifinalist
St. Mary's County

**Dynard Elementary
Family Safety and Wellness Program;
comprehensive parent involvement
activities**

Lynn saw a need for safety awareness and education for parents and students, particularly students who are home alone after school and during the summer, and came up with a solution -- the Family Safety and Wellness communication program. Working with the school principal, nurse, and counselor, Lynn planned and recruited community agencies to participate in the two-part program. Part I involved sending students home for the summer with backpacks full of safety resources and prevention materials on topics such as staying safe when home alone, sun exposure, fires and medical emergencies, and navigating the Web. Part II was an Open House the following fall. The Red Cross, local fire and police departments, animal control, hospitals, and other community agencies attended the event to provide information and free health screenings. The program has reached out to over 400 families.

Stephanie Kayhan

Somerset County

**Princess Anne Elementary
Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)
activities**



With the mission of filling all the seats around her with other parents, Stephanie has been a collaborator, a volunteer, a decision-maker, an academic advocate, and an excellent communicator. Stephanie co-chairs the Parent Teacher Organization at Princess Anne Elementary School, where she has worked to strengthen academic programs, support teacher morale, and motivate other parents to be involved. She helped parents understand the impact they could have on decisions at the school, held meetings earlier in the evening and arranged for babysitting and food to increase parent participation.

Molly Groton

Talbot County

**Easton High
Accreditation for Growth from Middle
States Association; comprehensive
parent involvement activities**



Every principal needs a strong advocate for parent involvement and at Easton High, Molly is that advocate. During the school's re-accreditation process, Molly spent a semester meeting with community businesses, elected officials, and parents so that she could truly represent the "voice" of parents in school discussions. Molly has helped college-bound students and parents navigate the application and financial aid processes, and she is an integral part of Easton High School's thriving engineering, drama, and character programs.



Kristy Sollenberger

Washington County

**Bester Elementary
Comprehensive parent involvement
activities**

Kristy has helped reinvigorate pride in Bester Elementary School by organizing the Bester Boosters, a group of parents and community members engaged in fundraising activities. Working with local businesses and organizations, the Boosters hold fun, family-friendly events like community bingo, community yard sales, and family skating, and proceeds have been directed to updating the school's playground equipment as well as helping family members in the community.



Kathy Sterling

Wicomico County

Pinehurst Elementary Comprehensive parent involvement activities

Kathy is Pinehurst Elementary's go-to parent. When the PTA was only two weeks away from a major fundraiser and down a person, Kathy stepped in and helped pull the event off. When she found out some children wouldn't be able to go on a field trip because of lack of funds, Kathy found the money. As a leader and advocate, Kathy identified a security concern with portable buildings behind the school, Kathy gathered other parents' support, and successfully advocated at the local board of education for new security measures that would ensure student safety.

Gary Williams

Worcester County

Created a digital camera lab for Buckingham Elementary

As President of Buckingham Elementary's School Improvement Advisory Committee, Gary Williams noticed a mobile, digital lab for students in the school's budget plan. He then set about acquiring used digital cameras, battery packs, and software, fixing any equipment he purchased, and donated the entire collection to the school. His efforts and generosity saved the school money, allowing the principal to drop the \$3,500 budget request for the camera lab and direct resources to other areas.



Local School System Family Involvement Coordinators

Allegany County	Mia Perlozzo	301-759-2092
Anne Arundel County	Teresa Tudor	410-222-5414
Baltimore City	LaVerne Sykes	410-545-1871
Baltimore County	Nicole Tucker-Smith	410-887-6489
Calvert County	Bridget Kluwin	410-535-7203
Carroll County	Karen Ganjon	410-751-3047
Cecil County	Cynthia Ward	410-996-5458
Charles County	Judy Estep Michael Pheulpin	301-934-7369 301-934-7412
Dorchester County	Jodi Coleman	410-221-1111 ext. 1003
Frederick County	Shari Ostrow Scher Susan Lindstrom	301-696-6852 301-644-5275
Garrett County	Debbie Woods	301-334-8928
Harford County	Michelle Shaivitz	410-588-5331
Howard County	Jean Lewis	410-313-6794
Kent County	Nina Wilson	410-778-7167
Montgomery County	Deirdria Roberson-Hudnell Denise Stultz	301-279-3100
Prince George's County	Wanda Grant	301-925-2531
Queen Anne's County	Michelle Carey	410-758-2403
St. Mary's County	Mary Bradford	301-475-5511 ext. 145
Somerset County	Christy Scott	410-968-1295
Talbot County	Sherry Sutton	410-745-0330
Washington County	Marie T. Martin	301-766-8777
Wicomico County	Faye Wilson Beth S. Sheller	410-677-4529 410-677-5810 ext. 1309
Worcester County	Stephanie Zanich Wynnette H. Morris	410-632-5041 410-632-5091



James H. DeGraffenreidt, Jr., *President, State Board of Education*

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