



# HCMS Cougar News

Harper's Choice Middle School  
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"The News that Roars"

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## Principal's Corner January 7, 2008

**Welcome to a New Year..... and Stay Healthy!** I hope everyone enjoyed a warm, relaxing, and wonderful winter and New Year's holiday. Know that the flu season is on top of us, so take the precautions outlined periodically in the health asst. section of these newsletters, please. Special thanks, by the way, to our wonderful PTA and parents, who provided holiday goodies to staff prior to the winter break. We love and appreciate so much the support that you show these hard-working educators.

**Business-HCMS Partnerships:** We continue to appreciate the meaningful business-education partnerships with members of our business community. Among our fine partnerships is the one we have with the Howard County Office on Aging. It's a senior citizen mentoring initiative, conducted every Tuesday, which sees some 10-12 retirees working with our students on their reading skills. Last year's efforts resulted in improved academic performance of those cherubs involved in this activity. We acknowledge and appreciate the fine efforts of these folks, who have energy, smarts, and a passion for service. Thanks, as well, to HCMS staff members Marlyn Oatts, Regina Hall, Kathy Biscardi, who facilitate this weekly effort.

**Safe Routes to School Grant:** Congratulations, once again, to Swansfield Elementary School and Harper's Choice Middle School parents and staff, who participated in the grant writing and deliberations, which resulted in both schools receiving grant funding for pedestrian safety initiatives. We now have a crosswalk and traffic signal control at the corner of Harper's Farm and Beaverkill Roads. Please remind your youngsters of the importance of using crosswalks when walking about the community. Previous years have seen children-vehicle mishaps, resulting in injury, so we make it a point throughout the school year of emphasizing the importance of observing safe practices to and from school. Much appreciation extended to Jennifer Toole, Jodi Dzuray, Kathy Eckley, and the various other staff and community members for their time, effort, and dedication to pedestrian safety.

**HCMS Science Fair:** The 8th Grade GT Science Fair will be held on January 23rd, 6:30-8:30 p.m. All 8th grade GT science students are expected to attend the fair. Please come and support the great work the students are doing. Don't be surprised if you learn something new! 8th Grade GT students will be explaining their experiments, data, and conclusions during the fair. Science Fairs give students the opportunity to apply the scientific method in practical ways. Any questions can be directed to science teacher Ms. Berman.

**Student Kudos:** Congratulations to the following students, who won positions in the school system Middle School Gifted and Talented Chorus: Emma Boone, Laura Golian, Erika Klatt, Russell Rollow, and Kit Winner. Congratulations, as well, to students Maddie Brown and Sarah Newkirk, both of whom were accepted in the All-State Junior Band. Such fine musicianship takes a great deal of time and effort; much appreciation for the support and teaching expertise of these accomplished students' parents and teachers.

**Drama Club:** As mentioned earlier, this year's drama production, *Alice in Wonderland* (which will be performed in March), is directed by English teacher Mr. Mitton. We've a good number of our cherubs involved, and everyone is excited. Much appreciation to Mr. Mitton, Ms. Marshall and Ms. Brenner for their generous time and effort!

**Debate Team:** The debate team competed against Clarksville Middle School on November 20th to debate on whether social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook should be banned for individuals under the age of 18. HCMS lost narrowly to CMS 21 to 23. Judges commented, however, on HCMS's strong arguments backed up by credible sources, presence, and good sportsmanship. We're proud of the hard work our debate team put into this debate and will be rooting for them next time! Congrats to the following: Julia Singleton - 8th grade captain, Andrew Fritz - 8th grade captain, Michael Reed - 8th grade captain, Harlan Dupree - grade 8, Nataliya Taylor - grade 7, Aieshah Rashada - grade 7, and Becca Fritz - grade 6.

**End of Marking Period:** FYI.....Thursday, January 17, marks the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marking Period. Report cards are slated to be issued on Wednesday, January 30.

**HCPSS Middle School Promotion Standards:** In order to be promoted from Grade 6 to Grade 7, from Grade 7 to Grade 8, or from Grade 8 to high school, middle school students must accomplish the following: 1.) Pass all courses; 2.) Receive a final grade of "C" or better in English, mathematics, reading, science, and social studies. *Students who do not meet this requirement will automatically be considered for retention and be recommended to attend summer school.* Academic eligibility standards will apply to ninth-graders beginning with the first marking period of their freshman year, at which time they will be expected to maintain a 2.0 grade point average and have no failing grades in order to participate in extracurricular activities. These rules govern academic eligibility for student participation in all extracurricular activities, including but not limited to: athletic teams, cheerleading, school plays and

musicals, school clubs, running for or serving in an elected school office, and non-required trips by performing groups (i.e. bands, choirs, etc.). Feel free to pick up a copy from any school's administrative office.

**HCPS Local Assessments:** As you know, we administer to all students end-of-quarter "local assessments" in mathematics, English, science, and social studies. Additionally, assessments are given to students in health education classes, as well as in 7th and 8th Spanish and French classes in marking periods 2 & 4. Teachers work hard to ensure that appropriate material is completed for each marking period's assessments. While reading skills/tasks are embedded in these assessments, there is considerable writing involved. Individual and group assessment data are used to provide feedback for teachers to target student areas of weakness and strength, allowing intervention strategies to improve student learning. The relevant feedback on instruction and learning is also used to inform future instruction and modifications to curricula. FYI.....these county-wide school system assessments are given each grading quarter throughout the school year.

**Student Community Kudos:** Congratulations to Ethan Eckley and Michael Shaham who ran at the AAU Cross Country National Championships in December in Virginia Beach. Over 2000 boys and girls competed for their age groups from 10 years old to 15. Ethan finished 81st and Michael close behind in 84th position. Both boys ran personal bests for 3000 Kilometers and finished 5th in the Nation for the team competition for their age group. Congrats again on such great running performances!

**HCMS Student Spelling Bee:** Again this year teachers Helen Kinigopoulos and Kathy Biscardi are leading our school spelling bee, sponsored by the Howard County Library's "A + Partners in Education" and [The Baltimore Sun](#). Our English classes are participating, and we will conduct a January 28 school-wide spelling bee competition in the school's Cougar Café for the 25 or so classroom winners. Our teacher sponsors welcome any assistance from our parents; those of you interested should communicate with Ms. Biscardi or Ms. Kinigopoulos. Winners of school bees will advance to the March regional bee, and the winner from that contest will go on to compete in the National Spelling Bee next June. How cool would it be to see the 2007 national winner be a HCMS student! Okay.....repeat after me....**oleaginous**....close your eyes, spell it, and use it in a sentence!

**Geography Bee:** Sincere thanks to teachers Joan Ellen Lasota and Leighanne Vader, who sponsor our participation in National Geographic's school Geography Bee competition. I appreciate the work of our 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade social studies teachers, who facilitated these classroom bees. The combined 6th-7th grade contest occurred on 12/18, the winner of which was 7<sup>th</sup> grader Will Paulus, with 6<sup>th</sup> grader Max Schwind coming in second. We wish all of our students well and know that these kinds of activities provide great experiences that will enrich their academic standing as they matriculate through high school.

**High School Mentoring/Boys and Girls Groups:** As you will read in this issue of [Cougar News](#), we have a combination Wilde Lake High-Harper's Choice Middle mentoring program that sees successful high school students working with our middle school students on ways to be successful in school. Additionally, we have on-going meetings conducted separately with our middle school boys and girls, who exhibit difficulties in adapting to successful behaviors that would otherwise lead them to improved academic and social performance in and out of the school setting. HCMS staff and volunteer professionals throughout the community participate in the effort to effect a positive turnaround in these youngsters' lives. Such topics as school academic preparation, interpersonal relationships, human sexuality, substance abuse, and positive citizenship are among those that are discussed with our youngsters. My sincere thanks and appreciation to Mr. Bob DeAngelis, our school Pupil Personnel Worker, as well as staff members Mrs. Eastland-Lerner, Mrs. Gough, Mrs. McMillion, Wilde Lake's Ms. Amberlee Rust, and our Instructional Intervention Team, which monitors and coordinates these kinds of activities.

**2008-2009 Scheduling Cycle:** FYI.....this is the time of year when we review staffing and student course schedules for next school year. Ms. Murray and I meet this month with relevant scheduling team staff to take a look at the master schedule process for the following academic year. FYI.....WLHS representatives (administration, staff, and students) made their annual presentation/orientation to the class of 2012 in the HCMS Cougar Cafe, before the winter break, to talk about the high school scene, registration process, coursework, and extracurricular involvement. Also.....again this year current sixth-graders will receive a letter stating that they have the "option" of taking French or Spanish in seventh grade. This letter will be sent home shortly to all sixth-grade parents. The foreign language program at the middle school level is a two-year program, preparing students to take French II or Spanish II in the ninth grade. Of course, the ability of the school system to offer foreign language to all interested students is dependent upon funding and the availability of qualified teachers. Do consider this option carefully, as it would give your youngster a sixth academic class, and such a student will need to possess strong academic skills. Read the letter and feel free to contact your youngster's teachers, guidance counselor, or one of our foreign language staff.

**Winter Concert Kudos:** Everyone enjoyed wonderful school winter concerts last month, the 18<sup>th</sup> in our Cougar Café and the 19<sup>th</sup>, at Wilde Lake High's Rouse Theatre. As expected, it was a festive beginning to the holiday season. Sincere thanks to our music department staff (Ms. Brisco, Ms. Miranda-Valladares, and Ms. McKay), students, and parents for their time and effort in making these concerts so successful. Special thanks, as well, to our school Music Boosters Foundation and their invaluable time and effort given to our music program.

**Happy New Year:** Once again, I wish everyone good health, love, and goodness. May the New Year bring a renewed sense of hope and commitment to improving the lives of those around us. As I have mentioned on occasion, we have some wonderful students; you are the reason for that gift. Happy New Year to all!

Sincerely,

Stephen Wallis  
Principal

## **HCMS - HIGH SCHOOL MENTORING PROGRAM**

Once again Wilde Lake High School and Harper's Choice Middle School are teaming up to support and promote the academic achievement of HCMS students. This High School Mentoring Program (HSMP) pairs high achieving Wilde Lake upperclassmen with HCMS students who have been identified as underachieving in a portion of their core academic courses.

The HSMP is an after-school program that meets once a week. The program is supervised by Wilde Lake and Harper's Choice staff. Mentoring sessions are designed to duplicate the classroom environment. The program differs from a pure tutorial support in that the classroom behaviors and work ethic characteristics of the student are also assessed. The high school mentor can then begin to help replace classroom maladaptive behaviors with positive and constructive ones.

The HSMP is a support offered by HCMS that can help youngsters improve their grades. If you would like to have your child considered for participation, contact their school counselor or the school psychologist, Mrs. McMillion. You will then be provided full details of the HCMS High School Mentoring Program.

### **HCMS – BOY'S GROUP**

Harper's Choice Middle School offers an on-going Boy's Group designed to address a wide range of personal development and school related issues. The program is for boys who have exhibited some past difficulties in adapting to the expectations and standards of middle school. There will be additional emphasis on behavioral preparation for high school. The group meets twice a week during (non-academic) school hours. The group is facilitated by the school Pupil Personnel Worker (PPW), who utilizes the resources of school and community based professionals. Specific issues will include self-esteem, communication, interpersonal relationships, human sexuality, substance abuse, positive citizenship, and most importantly, the learning of behavior skills that will allow one to thrive in a school environment.

Contact guidance staff or Pupil Personnel Worker Bob DeAngelis at 410-313-6645 for full details about this program.

### **HCMS – GIRL'S GROUP**

Harper's Choice Middle also offers a girls group, similar to the above boys program, which enables staff to meet with and discuss with our female youngsters identical topics to those covered with our middle school males. Currently, nine girls make up the group, and they meet every Thursday during the Academic Enrichment block with Alternative Education staff members Mrs. Eastland-Lerner and Mrs. Gough. Thus far, the girls have heard speakers from HCMS staff members, Howard County Health Department, Howard Community College, Howard County Domestic Violence Center, Howard County Police Department, Wilde Lake High staff, and the Howard County STARR Center. We are working with Principal Wallis on additional community female members, who may wish to work with our girls this year, as well. The students find the sessions informative, and they have indicated a desire to continue the activity throughout the year; we are delighted to do so and wish all of our students their share of successes.

### **ART NEWS**

#### Seventh Grade Visual Arts Curriculum Showcase:

The following student's 2-D work is on display at the Faulkner Ridge Gallery in Columbia, Maryland.

Kara Murphy, Cristal Mills, and Mazbura Rahman

The exhibit runs from Thursday, November 1<sup>st</sup> – Thursday, January 31, 2008.

#### Tempest in a Teapot Exhibit

On exhibit you will see teapots in many forms functional and non-functional. The following eighth grade students will have their work on display:

Katherine Garcia Mendez, Mariana Garay, Matt Flyr & Elisa Ponce

## HEALTH AWARENESS DURING FLU SEASON

This 3-D exhibit is located in the Department of Education Gallery at the Howard County Board of Education on Route 108. This show is scheduled to run from Monday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> –through Wednesday, January 16, 2008.

\*\*\* All exhibits are free\*\*\*

### FROM THE HEALTH ROOM

Please make sure you fill out the extended day field trip forms. We will use the needed information for all field trips! If your child takes medication regularly or needs to take medication on an extended day field trip, please have the doctor fill out their portion of the form.

Please remember to update new phone numbers ASAP. If an emergency arises the emergency contact information you provide to us is our only lifeline to you.

If your child's medical condition or medications change, please notify the Health Room ASAP (remember the first thing the paramedics ask is what medications is this child taking, are there any allergies to medication, or do they have asthma). This updated information could save your child's life!

Not sure if you should send your child to school? If your child has a temperature of 100 degrees or higher, the student needs to stay home. They need to be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school. The isolation of ill students at home can prevent the spread of illness in the school.

If you are in need of health insurance for your child.....you may be Eligible for the Maryland Children's Health Program. Call 1-800-456-8900 for more information. Remember, a physical exam is needed for every child who attends a Howard County Public School.

Symptoms of influenza include fever, headache, chills, body aches, tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, and nasal congestion. Flu is spread from person to person through the air by coughing and sneezing. It is also spread by direct contact with infected people. Symptoms usually start 1-3 days after exposure. If you get the flu: rest; drink plenty of fluids such as juice, water or hot tea. Most persons feel better after several days but cough and tiredness may last two weeks or more. Stomach cramps and diarrhea are not typical symptoms of influenza. Do not give over the counter medications to a child without first consulting your pediatrician. If a fever lasts more than 3 or 4 days, consult a physician. Do NOT come to school with a fever or when taking medication to reduce a fever. A physician may also prescribe certain antiviral medications. These medications may make symptoms milder if taken within 1 to 2 days of when symptoms begin.

### Always remind children to:

**Cover their mouth with a tissue when they cough or sneeze** – have them throw the tissue away after they use it. If they do not have a tissue, they should cough or sneeze into their upper sleeve, not their hands.

**Wash their hands often with soap and water**, especially after they cough or sneeze, before eating lunch and after using the bathroom. If water is not near, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.

**Not to touch their eyes, nose or mouth.** Germs spread this way.

### MEDIA CENTER NEWS

**Book Fair:** Thank you to all of the wonderful parents who helped to make our Fall Book Fair a success. This was our best Book Fair ever. Many of you donated books to our classroom teachers through their Wish Lists while others gave Gift

Certificates for them to select their own titles from the Book Fair and they thank you. All teachers that participated received a book or two. Our students raised \$154.00 for *One For Books* with 7<sup>th</sup> grade raising the most. With these funds and our profit from the books you purchase we were available to purchase \$1,800.00 worth of books for the Media Center. Some of these books were given to students for winning our *One For Books* Contest.

Our Spring Book fair will run from May 9 – 19, 2008. Our Family Night will be held on May 14, 2008 in conjunction with the GT Fair.

We could not have been as successful without the help of our wonderful parents who assisted the students with their purchases and the cooperation of the students. A special thank you to the HCTV Crew for reading ticklers each morning.

Marlyn Oatts  
Media Specialist

### **GIFTED AND TALENTED (G/T) NEWS**

Parents interested in having their children considered for G/T content area classes are encouraged to contact the G/T resource teacher, Ms. Gorkiewicz, at Megan\_Gorkiewicz@hcpss.org.

Students wishing to participate in G/T seminars must have a permission slip turned into Ms. Gorkiewicz. Seminars offered include: Movie Makers, Book Club, Debate, Black Saga, HCTV, Digital Photography, and Independent Research. Students need not be enrolled in G/T classes to participate in seminars. Contact Ms. Gorkiewicz for more information or visit her website at:

<http://teacherweb.com/MD/HarpersChoiceMiddleSchool/Gorkiewicz/index.html>

### **G/T SCIENCE FAIR**

January 23, 2008, 6:30-8:30pm  
Harper's Choice will be hosting the G/T Science Fair. All 8th Grade G/T science students will be exhibiting and explaining their projects to judges and visitors.

7th grade G/T science students are strongly encouraged to attend this event. This is truly a wonderful opportunity for parents to see the great work that our students are doing, so please mark the event on your calendar and plan to attend.

### **CELL PHONES**

Please remind your children that Harper's Choice Middle School is a cell phone free building. Cell phones may be brought into the building but have to remain off and in their locker during the school day. We also request that parents not use cell phones in the building. Your cooperation is appreciated.

### **HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY**

The Library is offering FREE live on-line homework help. Check it out at [www.howa.lib.md.us/](http://www.howa.lib.md.us/). The service is available seven days a week from 2 p.m. through 1:00 a.m. Eastern time. Students in 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades, as well as college freshmen, can use the service as often as they wish and receive help in math, science, social studies and English. A Howard County Public Library card is necessary to access this free service.

### **SIXTH GRADE TRIP**

REMINDER - The second payment of \$30 for the sixth grade Environmental Education field trip is due on January 25, 2008.

### **NEWS FROM THE HCMS GREEN COMMITTEE**

Thank you to everyone who has been bringing their paper to our ABITIBI paper recycling dumpster! During the month of October, HCMS earned \$17.30 from the 1,988.77 lbs of paper you brought here to be recycled. This has saved 3.12 cubic yards of landfill space!

The ABITIBI dumpster is located near the basketball courts at HCMS, behind the building. Please bring any recyclable paper to help our school earn money.

## **BOOK DRIVE**

It's time for Howard County's Annual Book Drive and Harper's Choice Middle School is helping! We're coming together as a community to collect books for local schools, teachers, and students. The collected books will be donated to school Media Centers, classroom teachers' libraries, and individual students for home. Anyone can donate! Just look for the Book Drive boxes located around the school in the front lobby, the Media Center, room 910 – Ms. Hall's room, and in each reading classroom starting on Wednesday, January 2, 2008, and continuing through Wednesday, January 16, 2008. Donate books to benefit other schools and students around Howard County!

## **STUDENTS OF THE MONTH**

Harper's Choice Middle School is proud to continue the second year of recognizing outstanding students each month. The students are nominated by the individual teams for displaying the three characteristics focused on throughout the school year: Respect, Responsibility, and Relationship Building. When stopping by the front office, take a look at the pictures of the students as they are recognized each month. We are proud of their efforts. Keep up the good work!

### **November Students of the Month**

#### **8th Grade**

Brian Takovich  
Emmania Fleurizard

#### **7th Grade**

Kara Murphy  
John Jlopleh

#### **6th Grade**

Avon Greene  
Darcy Rollow  
Thomas Logue

### **Related Arts**

Nicholas Smith  
Stefany Ticas

### **December Students of the Month**

#### **8th Grade**

Erica Hatcher  
Derek Pratt  
Naomi LaVeist

#### **7th Grade**

Brandy Scott  
Daniyyel Howard

#### **6th Grade**

Michael Moore  
Rebecca Fritz  
Douglas Williams

### **Related Arts**

Alyssa McDermott  
Gabriel Smith

## **IMPORTANT DATES**

January 17 - Schools Close 3 hrs early  
End of Marking Period  
January 18 - Schools closed for students  
Professional Work Day  
January 21 - Schools Closed  
Martin Luther King Jr. Day  
January 25 - 2<sup>nd</sup> payment of \$30.00 is due for the  
Sixth Grade Environmental Education  
Field Trip.  
January 28 - Spelling Bee  
February 06 - Schools Close 3 hrs early  
Conferences  
February 07 - Schools Close 3 hrs early  
Conferences  
February 08 – Schools Closed  
Conferences