



HCMS Cougar News

Harper's Choice Middle School
5450 Beaverkill Road, Columbia, MD 21044

Mr. Stephen Wallis, Principal Mr. Keith Bevans, PTA President

Website: <http://www2.hcpss.org/hcms>

PTA Email: hcmsptanews@comcast.net

Office: 410-313-6929

Fax: 410-313-5612

Guidance: 410-313-6931

December 03, 2007

"The News that Roars"

Volume 6 Number 4

Principal's Corner December 3, 2007

6th Grade Community Service: Our community service activity on November 14 was a nice success. English teacher Andi Kelly and parent Geri Rollow accompanied selected sixth-graders for the Howard County Office on Aging's Thanksgiving Dinner for Senior Citizens, at Ten Oaks Ballroom, in Clarksville. Students were well dressed and served dinners to several hundred senior citizens from throughout the county. This is among the annual activities that involve our cherubs and "older Americans" in an inter-generational activity.

Geography Bee: This year's 6th and 7th grade classroom bees will take place 12/6-12/7. Our combined 6th-7th grade contest will occur on December 18, the winner from which will take the qualifying test on December 19. 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.

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 our school-wide spelling bee competition in the Cougar Café on January 28th, 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 Library's 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!

Kudos to our Wonderful PTA: Much appreciation to parent Mrs. Judy Center, who facilitated our November Parent-Teacher Conference dinner on Monday, November 19. Thanks, as well, to Sandra Dunn and Rachel Lefors for their major assistance at the dinner. Special thanks to those parents who contributed tasty dishes for staff, so that they could remain at school for evening conferences; the meal and desserts were delicious and most appreciated. Speaking of conferences, we appreciate that so many parents were able to schedule their conferences on-line again this year. Your presence and support highlight the importance that we place on a "shared partnership" in the education of this community's youngsters.

Student Kudos: Congratulations to students Kara Murphy; Cristal Mills; and Mazbura Rahman, who have their art work on display at the school system Seventh Grade Visual Arts Curriculum Showcase, held through January 31, 2008, at the Faulkner Ridge Gallery, 10598 Marble Faun Court, Columbia. Congrats to these students and their families, as well as the students' art teacher Ms. Jones.

First Marking Period Principal's Message to Parents:

You recently received your youngster's first marking period report card for this school year, and we just completed our Fall Parent-Teacher Conferences. Teachers try to recognize where your child places on the continuum, and they do their best to support students. Where there are academic and/or behavioral areas that need improvement, we suggest that you take the time to confer with your youngster and discuss strategies that might be used to shore up those areas. The first set of grades is your barometer that provides an indication of what might be needed from the home (or from the home and the school). Recognizing the importance of a shared partnership, we know that only working together can we ensure the lasting success of your child. Please do call upon us to provide any feedback or assistance that you believe will bolster your youngster's success. Here's to a successful academic year!!

Cultural Arts---7th Grade Cougar Café Mural: Thanks to our generous PTA and a grant from the Howard County Arts Council, we have secured Artist-in-Residence Abby Futter (former HCMS parent of Josh and Jessie) to work with our 7th grade team. Mrs. Futter started working with our students from November 5, and they completed the project a few days ago. She took pictures of 30 actual Harper's Choice students and chose ten to use as our models. "The project mimics Andy Warhol and his style of Pop Art; colors are bright, bold, and will make a funky statement" said Mrs. Futter. Look for our 17' x 6' mural to be installed after the holidays. Much appreciation to technology education teacher Mr. Pancerman, who generously shared his room with our future artists. I thank the 7th grade teachers, as well, for their flexibility and enthusiasm for the project. I extend thanks to parent helpers Deb Jones, Laleh Alemzadeh, Deanna Newkirk, Iris Chao, Kristy Virostek, Judy Pelletier, as well as to lead parent facilitator (without whom our cultural arts initiative would not have the quality that it does each year), Kathy Eckley.

Kudos to 1st Marking Period Distinguished Students: Special congrats to all those students earning all A's or all A's and B's on their 1st quarter report cards. Be sure to view your youngsters' names on the walls of the school, outside their grade level team areas.

Kudos, as well, to those sixth-graders so honored at the November 14 Distinguished Student Celebration, held in the school gymnasium; much appreciation to Mrs. Friend and her team for their time and coordination of this activity, as well as to those parents/grandparents who were in attendance.

Winter Concert: Please try to attend our school winter concerts, Part I on Thursday, December 18, 7:00 p.m., in the HCMS Cougar Cafe; Part II on Wednesday, December 19, 7:00 p.m., at Wilde Lake High's Rouse Theatre. I'm certain that it will be an opportunity to enjoy a festive beginning to the holiday season. Sincere thanks to our music department staff, students, and parents for their time and effort in making these concerts so successful.

HCMS Debate Club: As you may know, we've a talented debate team that recently competed against Clarksville Middle School on the issue of social networking web sites (e.g., MySpace, FaceBook, etc.) and whether or not individuals under the age of 18 should be prohibited from using such sites. Our students lost the debate by two points, but the judges commented our students' "strong arguments backed up by credible sources, presence, and good sportsmanship."

Debate activities benefit students, because they learn how to use language well, how to make good opening and closing statements, how to rebut another's issue position, understand content and develop knowledge of an issue, and how best to make logical arguments that are effective and persuasive, so that their performance is solid and executed with class and dignity. I appreciate the time and effort of GT Resource Teacher Ms. Gorkiewicz in working with and preparing our young debaters. Congratulations to the following students: 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.

PTA Fundraisers: Much appreciation, once again, to parent Raquel McLaughlin, who facilitated our inaugural "Market Day" fundraising effort, as well as the parents who volunteered time to organize and deliver purchased items. Participation was great, and we're looking forward to this monthly activity throughout the school year. Any questions, feel free to contact Ms. McLaughlin at raquelmclaughlin@gmail.com. My thanks again to parents Crystal Konney and Ann Dohler, who coordinated our Joe Corbi's Cookie Dough fundraiser. We're hosting an ice cream party for 44 students, who sold enough cookie dough for this activity; four students own the Limo ride prize, because of their stellar salesmanship: Darcy Costello, Jordan Harvin, Kat Mackey, and Alina Taylor. They will join the winners of our earlier magazine drive and travel by limo to Ledo's Pizza in Clarksville, who is providing us discounted pizza and beverages. The top seller was 8th grader Darcy Costello, who won two Raven's jerseys and tickets to the Cleveland Browns game; the winner of the raffle for two additional jerseys and tickets to the Cincinnati game was 7th grader Taylor Venizelos. Congratulations one and all for your enthusiasm and great work in these fundraising drives, which provide much for our students, staff, and classrooms!

HCMS Security Cameras: A reminder that we have on site interior and exterior cameras, DVD, and television monitor, courtesy of an earlier completed U. S. Department of Justice grant. This enhances our goal of providing a safe, warm, and inviting atmosphere for consistent student academic and extracurricular involvement. We are delighted to provide this feature to our school community.

American Education Week: The week of November 13 was celebrated with the theme, "Great Public Schools: A Basic Right and Our Responsibility," A number of parents took the opportunity to visit classes to observe instruction and student performance in action. We're appreciative of those who were able to find the time to visit us. Do know that you are welcome anytime to stop by the school for a visit.

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.

HCPSS 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 Weekly/Monthly Awards: FYI.....thanks to business partners Eggspectations Restaurant and Harper's Choice McDonald's, I am able to distribute weekly and monthly awards. We have our Students of the Month, whereby we recognize students exhibiting HCMS PRIDE (**P**unctuality, **R**espect, **I**nitiative, **D**ress for Success participation, and those who do their best to Excel everyday). We also recognize those students who receive "Positive Office Referrals," resulting in their posing for a group picture with an administrator and enjoying an ice cream get-together at the end of a school day. We acknowledge those students who participate in our weekly Wednesday "Dress for Success," and I present either McDonald's meal certificates or Eggspectation Restaurant "You're a Good Egg!" awards to those students (names randomly drawn) having received "Gotcha" awards, recognizing those students "caught" doing kind and thoughtful things for others or are recognized for having accomplished something positive.

High Quality Teaching: As you may know, one of the three parts of our school mantra focuses on providing solid teaching to your youngsters. As an FYI.....above and beyond any of the various meetings that faculty regularly attend, they are also involved in monthly professional development meetings that focus on high-leverage strategies that enhance our efforts to accelerate student performance and strengthen instructional delivery.

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 and technical director reading teacher Mrs. Whaley. We've a good number of our cherubs involved, and everyone is excited. Much appreciation to Mr. Mitton and Mrs. Whaley, as well as to English teachers Ms. Marshall and Ms. Brenner, who have offered their assistance as time allows.

Season's Greetings: I will be spending the Christmas season with family and friends. Given what our country and others have experienced ----, the continuing war on terrorism, the war in Iraq, and the unrest/violence that continues in the Middle East and elsewhere throughout the world, it will be a special time to remember all those who have given their lives for love of family and country. Each of us has his/her own celebrations, but no matter how each of you observes this holiday season, I wish everyone your share of warmth, love, and goodness. May the New Year bring a renewed sense of hope and commitment to improving the lives of those around us. We have some wonderful students; you are the reason for that gift. I feel fortunate to work with them, their teachers, and all of you parents. Happy Holidays!!

Sincerely,

Stephen Wallis
Principal

PORK TENDERLOIN WITH GARLIC CREAM SAUCE A MARKET DAY RECIPE

Preparation Time: **5 minutes**

Cooking Time: **20 minutes**

Servings: **6**

Ingredients:

1 1/2 pounds	#1108 Market Day Whole Pork Tenderloins
2 tablespoons	vegetable oil
1 teaspoon	grilling spices
1/4 cup	sesame seeds
1 tablespoon	butter or margarine
1 clove	garlic, crushed
3 ounces	light cream cheese
1/3 cup	1% milk
1	green onion, thinly sliced

Preparation:

1. Preheat grill or broiler for 5-10 minutes.
2. Cut pork into 12 slices. Between sheets of plastic wrap or wax paper flatten each pork slice into ½ inch thickness.
3. Brush pork slices with oil. Sprinkle each piece with grilling spices and sesame seeds.
4. Broil/grill pork slices for 4 to 6 minutes on first side, turn and broil/grill additional 5 minutes. Pork slices should be slightly pink in the center. Remove from heat and keep warm on a platter.
5. Melt butter in skillet over medium heat. Cook garlic in butter about 2 minutes stirring occasionally, reduce heat. Add cream cheese and milk. Cook, stirring constantly until sauce is smooth and hot. Stir in green onion.
6. Serve sauce with pork slices.

Serving Suggestions: Market Day Broccoli Florets or Market Day Prince Edward Medley.

For other great recipe ideas from Market Day, visit today at www.marketday.com

WILD LAKE HIGH SCHOOL CONCERT

Come hear musicians who got their start at Harper's Choice Middle School! On Wednesday, December 5, Wilde Lake High School presents its Winter Band Concert featuring the Concert Band and Wind Ensemble. The performance takes place at the Jim Rouse Theatre at WLHS at 7:00 PM. Tickets are \$4 and can be purchased at the door. This will not only be a great evening of music, but also a great way to support your high school band program and see what's in store when you get to Wilde Lake!

HCMS WINTER CONCERTS

December 18 at 7:00pm HCMS Winter Concert Part I (6th Graders) will take place in the Cougar Café here at Harper's Choice.

December 19 at 7:00pm HCMS Winter Concert Part II (7th and 8th Graders) will take place at WLHS in the Rouse Theatre.

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 1st – 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

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 3rd –through Wednesday, January 16, 2008.

A special reception is planned for students on Wednesday, December 12, 2007

*** 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.

There has been recent media attention regarding the bacteria, Staphylococcus Aureus, often referred to as Staph and MRSA. Many healthy people carry Staph, including MRSA in their nose or on their skin and do not know they are carrying it. Routine cleaning procedures reduce the transmission of MRSA in the school setting. The following have been shown to be effective in preventing the spread of infection:

- 1) Clean hands regularly with soap and water or alcohol based gel.
- 2) Maintain good general hygiene with regular bathing.
- 3) Keep wounds that are draining covered.
- 4) Do not share items that may become contaminated such as towels, clothing, bar soap, razors and athletic equipment.
- 5) Launder clothing that has come in contact with wound drainage.
- 6) If wounds are uncovered refrain from contact sports.
- 7) Use a towel between skin and shared gym equipment.
- 8) Clean equipment and other environmental surfaces which multiple individuals have contact with using appropriate disinfectants.

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!

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.

GT SCIENCE FAIR

January 23, 2008, 6:30-8:30pm
Harper's Choice will be hosting the GT Science Fair. All 8th Grade GT science students will be exhibiting and explaining their projects to judges and visitors. 7th grade GT 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.

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>

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/. The service is available seven days a week from 2 p.m. through 1:00 a.m. Eastern time. Students in 4th-12th 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.

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.

GUIDANCE NEWS

On January 2nd and 3rd, your 8th grade student will be bringing home High School Registration

Packets. The 2007-2008 Harper's Choice Middle School High School Registration Schedule is attached and will be your guideline on how to successfully register your student for High School.

DEBATE TEAM NEWS

The Debate Team competed against Clarksville Middle School on November 20th. The teams debated 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 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!

HOLIDAY BOUTIQUE

Harper's Choice Middle School Staff and Community Holiday Boutique, December 12th and 13th, from 3pm - 5pm in the Media Center. Featuring crocheted items, jewelry, crafts, skin care products and more.

IMPORTANT DATES

December 05 - WLHS Winter Band Concert \$4.00
December 12 & 13 - Holiday Boutique
December 18 - HCMS Winter Concert Part I
December 19 - HCMS Winter Concert Part II
December 24 thru
January 01 - Schools Closed for Winter Break
January 02 - Schools Reopen
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 28 - Spelling Bee