



DRAGON NEWS

A newsletter from the Damascus Elementary School PTA

October 15, 2015

LETTER FROM THE PTA PRESIDENT

Damascus Elementary School
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DES PTA BOARD

PTA President:
Melissa North

VP Finance:
Kristin Peake

VP Communications:
Laurie Murtaugh

Treasurer:
Lisa Willis

Recording Secretary:
Christie Kurz

Corresponding Secretary:
Tara Owens

Wow, what a great start we have had to the year! This is my first newsletter as your new PTA President and I cannot begin to tell you how excited I am about being a more active part of this amazing school community. I have 9th grade twins at Damascus High School and a 1st grader. I did not realize how much I had missed Damascus Elementary during the two years I had no children here.

September and October have been full of a lot of great school and family fun activities. We hosted our first family fun event of the year in September – an outdoor movie night. So many families came out to enjoy the beautiful weather and watch Home under the stars. If the blinding light of students wielding glow sticks and bracelets is any indication – it was a huge success!

The Pastries with Parents and annual DES Open House were very well attended. We had over 100 parents enjoy some pastries and conversation in the all-purpose room followed by a visit to the classrooms. It's wonderful to have such a fabulous turnout for events like these. Your presence means so much to the teachers and staff and lets them know that you support them and the school community. More importantly, your kids love showing you how they spend their day in school. I am always so impressed by the caliber of the education our children are receiving.

Our next PTA sponsored event will be the Fall Fun Fest at Char-Lene Farm in Mt. Airy. This family owned farm is such a warm and friendly place to enjoy all of the unique fun that the Fall has to offer. Whether you enjoy a leisurely hayride through the countryside, biting into a gooey s'more, or the challenge of finding all the clues in a corn maze in the dark, this event has something for you!

Our annual Halloween parade and classroom parties are also right around the corner. Super hero costume, \$20; donation for classroom party \$5; watching my son smile as he struts-his-stuff around the DES traffic circle, priceless. I always love helping in my child's classroom during this fun DES tradition.

I would like to thank everyone for all their hard work so far this year. We value and appreciate each and every one of you! Thank you for generously giving your time and talent on behalf of the children and families of Damascus Elementary School. It is truly amazing what we can achieve when we all pull together for our children!

*~ Melissa North
PTA President*

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in service to others."

– Mahatma Gandhi



FALL FUN FEST

Thursday, October 15, 5-8 pm

Char-Lene Farm
2504 Gillis Road, Mount Airy, MD
www.visitcharlenefarm.com

The \$8 entrance fee (children 2 and under free) includes hayrides, corn maze, petting farm, pumpkin patch, obstacle course, barrel train, fire pit, and much more. The fifth grade will be selling s'more kits and glow sticks. If you do not have time for dinner, hot dogs and other snacks will also be available for purchase. Invite your family and friends and don't forget to bring your flashlight and camera. You will not want to miss this event!

READ-A-THON

Our second annual DES Read-A-Thon is quickly approaching. Last year we were more successful than we could ever imagine, earning more than \$9,000 for our school! We are diligently searching for ways to top last year's incentives like taping Mr. Wainright to the wall and having Mr. Collins camp on the roof. We think everyone will be very excited when you find out what we have planned.

One goal of this program is to earn money for our school, by replacing ALL of our traditional fundraisers; however, the main goal is to promote

a love of reading in our students. We look forward to your financial support and in helping your child meet his or her reading goals! Mark your calendar:

November 4
Read-A-Thon Kick Off Assembly
(during school)

November 9 – 20
Read-A-Thon

PTA STUDENT DIRECTORY

The PTA student directory is currently being compiled. It will be printed and distributed with PTA cards soon. The directory is only available to PTA members, so if you haven't joined the PTA yet and would like a copy, please go to the PTA website at www.damascuspta.com to print out a membership form to send in with your child. We only print a limited number of extra directories so hurry to make sure to get yours.

REMINDER:

PTA Directory Ads Due

Anyone interested in advertising their business in the Damascus Elementary School PTA directory must turn in an application by:

Friday, October 23

If you have any questions or need an application, please contact Kristin Peake at peakebling@gmail.com or 301-482-0263.

FAMILY SPIRIT NIGHTS

Would you like to do something good for the school while having fun and feeding your family?

Come and eat at a different restaurant in our area every month. Gather together with friends, other families, teachers and even Principal Collins to eat and enjoy! These generous restaurants have agreed to donate a percentage of all of the meals purchased by our DES community. Just mention that you are a part of Damascus Elementary School.

Watch for fliers announcing each restaurant. Here's a sneak peak of our upcoming Spirit Nights schedule. Mark your calendars!

October 22, 5 – 7 pm

Tom & Ray's Restaurant

Damascus

November 18, 5 – 7pm

Cafe Rio

Germantown

December (all month long!)

Music Cafe

Damascus

PARENTS HELPING TEACHERS WORKGROUP

We have had a great start to our volunteer workgroup with so many parents coming to our Friday workgroup and we have been able to complete so many requests from all the teachers.

We would like to thank the volunteers who came on **September 11:**

Nancy Bailey, Jody Chapin, Christine Derby, Christi Hayes, Nora Hernandez, Alejandra Herrera, Elizabeth Lopez, Linh Nguyen and Gerry McBrinn-Choulas.

We would like to thank the volunteers who came on **September 25:**

Teicher Agosto, Nancy Bailey, Jody Chapin, Christine Derby, Christi Hayes, Alejandra Herrera, Blanca Lovo, Gerry McBrinn-Choulas, Maricella Portillo, Karen Reyes, and Roberta Sherwood.

We would like to thank the volunteers who came on **October 9:**

Estenfani Argueta, Nancy Bailey, Veronique Cuthbert, Christine Derby, Christi Hayes, Blanca Lovo, Gerry McBrinn-Choulas, Tara

Owens, Karen Reyes and Roberta Sherwood.

Thank you so much for taking the time to come and help out, the teachers truly appreciate all of our efforts and help in making the school year a success.

If your schedule permits, please come and join us every other Friday.

Upcoming workgroups are scheduled for the following Fridays from 9:30-11:30 am:

October 23

November 6

November 20

We meet at the front office, will train you on anything you need to know, and look forward to meeting new moms, dads, and grandparents in our school.

~ Gerry McBrinn-Choulas
Co-chair

VOLUNTEER NEWS FOR SEPTEMBER

October has begun, and it has been a great start to the school year! I want to take this opportunity to recognize some of the people who have given time and resources during the month of September. It is truly amazing how many different ways that people contribute to our school, so I am going to highlight just a few.

Thank you to all who were able to help our littlest learners adjust to the new school year. These kindergarten helpers were so appreciated by both the teachers and students in the classroom. Thank you to Christi, Melissa, Laurie, Gerry,

Tara, Kristin, and Christine. Awesome job!

Thank you also to all who have volunteered to help during breakfast and lunch during the school day. It has been a huge help to have extra hands in the cafeteria as meals are served. Thank you so much to Karen, Christine, Mollanda, Beth, Roberta, and Heather. We so appreciate your help!

Each month the PTA collects and submits the volunteer hours performed from the school to Montgomery County. If you have

done any planning or work for DES or the PTA, please let me know at derbyjc@bellatlantic.net so that I can add your contribution. I am currently recording hours for the month of September. I am also happy to answer any questions you may have about how to get involved in different volunteer opportunities at school.

Thank you so much for all that you do to make our school a special place. It makes a huge difference!

~Christine Derby
Chair

CURRENT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Breakfast and Lunch Helpers

This is an ongoing opportunity. We are still looking for helpers, one for breakfast (9:10-9:40 am) and one for lunch (11:40 am-12:10 pm) each school day. You can sign up online at:

**[www.SignUpGenius.com/
go/20FoE49ABA929A31-breakfast](http://www.SignUpGenius.com/go/20FoE49ABA929A31-breakfast)**

or by contacting Christine Derby at derbyjc@bellatlantic.net.

Parents Helping Teachers

This is a workgroup to help teachers prepare classroom materials by copying, cutting, and laminating. We meet Fridays from 9:30-11:30 am, and we always welcome new helpers. The next meetings are October 23, November 6, and November 20.

Open Committee Chair Positions

Chairing a committee is a great way to get involved and there are slots to fit every schedule. Don't be intimidated – the PTA board is here to help you every step of the way and it's a great way to get to know people in the school. If you have any questions about these positions email **desptamail@gmail.com** and we'd be glad to provide more information. Feel free to ask a friend to co-chair with you—the more the merrier!

Kindergarten Orientation:

Work with the kindergarten teachers to plan the kindergarten orientation events for May 2016. The previous committee chair is more than happy to lend a hand to help and share her advice.

Staff Raffle:

Work with the staff to come up with fun activities and organize a raffle to raise funds for our school.

VOLUNTEER CORNER

We had so many wonderful parents who shared their time and talents to help make our school a better place this month.

Thank you to Christine Derby for recruiting volunteers at a moment's notice to help the first two weeks of school in the three kindergarten classrooms. An additional thank you to those parents who were able to jump into the trenches to assist our newest DES students.

Thank you to Tara Owens, Chrystie Kurz, Laurie Murtaugh, Lisa Willis, Melissa North, Nathan North, Pete Murtaugh, Chris Kurz, Jennifer Jacobson, and Michele Hawkins for making movie night such a fun family event.

Thank you to Karen Sherwood, Roberta Sherwood, Rachel Neiberding, Jennifer Jacobson, Laurie Murtaugh, Melissa North, and Tara Owens who made Pastries with Parents a wonderful way to bring the DES community together to enjoy breakfast and conversation.

Thank you to all of the room parents who have planned fun parties

for the students. The Halloween and Valentines day parties are the highlight of the year for many children and the parties wouldn't be possible without the creative ideas and coordination of these parents.

A huge thank you to Kelly Jonas, Melody Brown, Alexis Peterson, and Sheila Roark for planning a great Mexican dinner for the staff on Wednesday, September 16th so they had a tasty meal before Back-to-School Night. An additional thank you to everyone who donated food for this event. The teachers and staff are really grateful for the wonderful things that our staff appreciation committee does each month to make them feel special.

Thank you to Diane Loomis who keeps the school community informed in many ways; by updating the school sign and letting us know what's happening at DES, by creating and updating the website with upcoming events and important information, and by updating the monthly birthday bulletin board to let the school community know who is having a birthday that month.

Thank you to Laurie Murtaugh for

compiling all our membership forms to put together the student directory (coming soon).

Thank you to Kristin Peake for reaching out to businesses in the community to take part in the success of DES by selling ads for the student directory and organizing restaurant spirit nights.

Thank you to all of the parents who take time out of their day to volunteer in the school and in the classroom.

Another thank you to Diane Loomis who also creates our wonderful newsletter each month to keep DES families informed about what's happening at DES.

To Damascus Enterprises, we cannot thank you enough for donating your time and often materials to keeping the grounds of our school looking so beautiful.

Would you like to find out about ways to volunteer in our school? Contact Christine Derby at derbyjc@bellatlantic.net and she can let you know the ways for you to get involved that fit with your schedule.



UPCOMING EVENTS AND IMPORTANT DATES

OCTOBER

Oct. 15: Fall Fun Fest at Char-Lene Farm, 5-8 pm

Oct. 16: NO SCHOOL

Oct. 21: Individual Picture Day

Oct. 22: Spirit Night – Tom and Rays, 5-7 pm

Oct. 23: Parents Helping Teachers Group, 9:30-11:30 am

Oct. 30: Halloween Parade and Classroom Parties

First Marking Period Ends



NOVEMBER

Nov. 2: NO SCHOOL (Professional Day for Teachers)

Nov. 3: PTA Meeting, 7 pm in the Media Center (free childcare provided)

Nov. 4: Read-A-Thon Kick Off Assembly

Nov. 5: Family Math Night

Nov. 6: Parents Helping Teachers Group, 9:30 – 11:30 am

Nov. 9-20: Read-A-Thon

Nov. 11-12: Early Release – Parent Conferences

Nov. 18: Spirit Night at Café Rio, Germantown, 5-7 pm

Nov. 20: Parents Helping Teachers Group, 9:30 – 11:30 am

Nov. 25: Grandparents Day and Early Release

Nov. 26-27: NO SCHOOL

Thanksgiving Holiday

STAY CONNECTED

Are you receiving emails from the PTA? If not, email Laurie Murtaugh at laurie.murtaugh@verizon.net to be added to the list to stay up-to-date about upcoming events and activities.

Did you know your Damascus Elementary School PTA has a Facebook page? "Like" us on Facebook to stay up-to-date on PTA news and activities.



<https://www.facebook.com/damascusPTA>



Send your box tops and labels into your child's classroom. At the end of each month the class in each grade that collects the most will receive a treat!

PAINLESS FUNDRAISING

Many companies and stores offer money and credits for supplies and equipment to schools based on the purchases of customers. THAT'S RIGHT, you can help OUR SCHOOL support OUR KIDS just by doing your regular household shopping – at no additional cost to you!

Box Tops for Education

Labels for Education

Coke Rewards Points

Ink and Toner Cartridges

Amazon Smile

Giant

Safeway

Harris Teeter

Find more information on the PTA website at:

www.damascuspta.com/fundraising/

STAFF APPRECIATION

The Staff Appreciation Committee hosted a Mexican Fiesta meal for the staff on Back-to-School Night in September. We would like to thank the following volunteers for their delicious donations:

Dee Tippett, Brittany Marshall, Erin Luther, Alexis Peterson, Janine Howard, Tanya Bohrer, Beth Walter, Sarah Grimshaw, Jamie Kemp, Melody Brown, Karen Reyes, Rachel Nieberding, Erin Deniker, Gerry McBrinn-Choulas and Lisa Willis.

The DES staff enjoyed every last bite, and were so thankful for your support. Our next opportunity to help the Staff Appreciation Committee comes in November. We will be asking for breads and pie donations to raffle off to the staff before Thanksgiving. We will send out further information as the date gets closer.

~ Kelly Jonas, Chair

Want to see your photos in the yearbook?

If you have taken any photos at school functions or in the classroom and would like to share them in the yearbook, please email your photos to Rachel Nieberding at rachkro@gmail.com.

Please include names and grade levels for those students in the photos.

REMINDER:

All volunteers and visitors to Damascus Elementary School are required to be scanned in. Please don't forget to bring a Photo ID (driver's license) when visiting the building. Thank you!

Have an item for the next newsletter? Send it to diane@loomisdesign.com by November 10.



Come See What's Popping... With the Damascus Elementary School PTA!



- **Get Connected –**
Find out about important school events and issues through PTA meetings, emails, and newsletters!
- **Support DES teachers and staff –**
The PTA provides funding for classroom resources and staff appreciation events to support our teachers and staff!
- **Bring people together and foster friendships –**
We organize many fun family events, such as a family reading night, outdoor movie night, bingo night, and a sock hop to give the school community opportunities to get to know each other better!
- **Enrich your child's education –**
The PTA coordinates and funds numerous educational opportunities and programs such as cultural arts assemblies, reading incentive programs, technology for the classrooms, and enhancements to the curriculum.
- **Be Heard –**
Through local, State, and National levels, PTA members have a voice to improve our school as well as in making decisions that affect the education your children receive.
- **It's Flexible –**
There are many ways to contribute to DES and your child's education. Being a PTA member doesn't obligate you to attend PTA meetings or volunteer in the school (although we hope you will). It simply gives you a voice and a vote to help guide our school in a positive direction.
- **Be a Role Model –**
Being a member of the PTA is a tangible and visible way to show YOUR child(ren) that their education and their school really matter to you.

Parent – Teacher Association Annual Membership 2015/16

Please complete the information below that you would like to have included in the Student Directory

Member Name: _____

Member Name: _____

Mobile Phone: _____

Mobile Phone: _____

Home Phone: _____

Home Phone: _____

Email: _____

Email: _____

Opt out of School-PTA Email Listserv?

Opt out of School-PTA Email Listserv?

Primary Address: _____

Student Name(s): _____ Grade(s): _____ Teacher(s): _____

Individual Membership - \$10 (includes one student directory)

Family Membership - \$15 (includes two student directories)

_____ Additional student directory(s) - \$5 each

Payment Type: Cash Check #: _____ (Please make checks payable to DES PTA)

Credit Card Name on Credit Card: _____ Amount: \$ _____

Please check this box if you would like your child's information to be excluded from the student directory.



Dragon Donations



The Damascus Elementary School PTA runs an operating budget of approximately \$35,000 per year, the bulk of which is raised through fundraisers. Based on feedback from our DES families we have reduced the number of traditional fundraisers. In their place we are trying to find other ways to raise funds to support the PTA budget that directly benefit our school. One such way is by giving families the option to make direct donations to the PTA. Donating directly to DES PTA offers benefits which include:

- 100% of you donation goes directly to the PTA to benefit our children.
- Your contributions are fully tax deductible (we will send you a receipt).
- Your children don't have to sell anything to family or neighbors.
- You don't have to buy products you may not want in order to support the school.

All the funds raised, including your direct donations, are used to provide a wide variety of fun activities and exciting events for Damascus Elementary School including...

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| • <i>Family Story Night</i> | • <i>Bingo Night</i> | • <i>Parents Helping Teachers Group</i> |
| • <i>Pastries with Parents</i> | • <i>Read-a-Thon</i> | • <i>Outdoor Movie Night</i> |
| • <i>Staff Appreciation</i> | • <i>Book Fair</i> | • <i>Reading Incentive Program</i> |
| • <i>Grandparents Day</i> | • <i>Holiday Shop</i> | • <i>Funds to offset field trip expense</i> |
| • <i>Muffins with Moms</i> | • <i>Science Fair</i> | • <i>Sock Hop & Silent Auction</i> |
| • <i>Cultural Arts Assemblies</i> | • <i>Donuts with Dads</i> | • <i>Enhancements to the Curriculum</i> |

And much, much more...

Please consider donating to the Damascus Elementary School PTA. Our hope is to collect enough donations that we will not have to hold a spring fundraiser. Any amount is welcome! Thank you for your support!

Name: _____

Student Name(s): _____

Dragon Donation Amount: \$ _____ Cash _____ Check # _____

Please make checks payable to the DES PTA. You can also donate online at www.damascuspta.com

Please complete this form and return in your child's backpack by Wednesday, October 21



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INCORPORATED

“Your Outdoor Project Experts”

Design & Installation

Landscape Design* & Installation
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Yard Clean Up, Spring & Fall
Pond Clean Out & Maintenance
Lawn Fertilization & Weed Control
Aeration & Seeding
Edging & Mulching
Tree & Shrub Pruning
Tree Removal & Stump Grinding
Mowing & Trimming & Weeding
K-9 Clean Up
Leaf Removal
Gutter Cleaning
Snow & Ice Management
Handyman Services

Estimates are Free!

* Fee for Design Work

301-253-0475

www.damascusenterprises.com