



THE COUNSELORS' CORNER

The McMurray Elementary Counseling Department Newsletter

Volume 6, Issue 1

Fall 2016

MEET THE MCMURRAY COUNSELING DEPARTMENT!

McMurray Elementary

*Peters Township
School District*

Inside this Issue:

Meet the Counselors	1
Red Ribbon Week	2
HERO & Murray McStar	3
Supporting Grieving Children	3
Upcoming Events	4
Career Day: Help Needed!	4
Student Planners	4
The Counselors Can Help You With...	4



We hope everyone had an exciting and relaxing summer and have had a successful start back to school! We would like to extend an extra welcome to our incoming fourth graders and families new to Peters Township! Welcome!

There are two School Counselors at McMurray Elementary. The fourth grade and 5A counselor is Mrs. Brenda Gruhn. This is her eighth year at McMurray. She previously worked for the Elizabeth Forward and Woodland Hills School Districts. Mrs. Gruhn has a B.A. in Psychology from Point Park University and a M.A. in Counseling from The University of Pittsburgh. In addition to holding a certification in School Counseling, she is also a Nationally Certified Counselor (NCC) and a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) as well. Mrs. Jamie Recker joined the PTSD family last fall. She is the 5B and sixth grade counselor. Mrs. Recker comes to us from the New Brighton School District. She earned her B.A. in Psychology from Duquesne University and her M.S.W. in Social Work from The University of Pittsburgh. She is a Licensed Social Worker (LSW) and holds her Home and School Visitors certification in addition to her School Counseling certification. Mrs. Recker has quickly become an integral member of our team and we are so happy she's joined us!

New to the McMurray family this year is Mrs. Stephanie Blasch, our Counseling Department Secretary. Mrs. Blasch is a PTSD alumni and currently has two children in the district where she lives with her husband and children. She holds a B.A. in Art Education from California University of Pennsylvania and Carlow College. Formally an investment processor, she is excited to be working in an elementary school!

We look forward to working with you and getting to know your children throughout the school year! Please let us know if you need anything to help your child have a successful year!



Mrs. Gruhn, Mrs. Recker & Mrs. Blasch

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MCMURRAY CELEBRATES RED RIBBON WEEK!



During the last week of October, students and staff at McMurray celebrated Red Ribbon Week. Red Ribbon Week is a nationally recognized week dedicated to raising awareness about drug and alcohol abuse and addiction. McMurray students all had the opportunity to sign a Pledge to Stay Drug-Free. Copies of their pledges are displayed throughout the school and copies were sent home so parents can see the pledges the children made. All students received packets filled with fun worksheets that help raise awareness to the dangers of drugs and alcohol as well as provide ideas about how to say, "No" to drugs and live a healthy lifestyle. Classes also participated in the annual Door Decorating Contest. The doors were judged on theme, originality, creativity and student participation. The top two doors from each grade won a prize bin from the PTA! Fourth Grade had so many amazing doors, there were three winners: Mrs. Hemmingson's, Mr. Lovetti's & Mrs. Stark's classes! Fifth Grade winners were Mr. Bratetich's and Mrs. Noel's classes. Finally, the Sixth Grade winners were Mrs. Goldbach's and Ms. Kys's classes. Students were also encouraged to participate in daily dress theme days, each day being dedicated to making healthy choices. This year's themes included "Neon Day" because "Futures are brighter without drugs" and "Pajama Day" since "Dreams come true when you are drug free!"

Research shows that children of parents who talk with their teens regularly about drugs are 42% less likely to use drugs, yet only a quarter of teens report having these conversations. For more information on how to talk to your kids about drugs, go to www.drugfree.org (Partnership for a Drug-Free America). For information about Red Ribbon Week, visit www.redribbon.org. Red Ribbon Week is sponsored by the McMurray Elementary Counseling Department and McMurray PTA.

RED RIBBON PLEDGE

I pledge to stay in school and learn the things I need to know.
I pledge to make the world a better place for kids like me to grow.
I pledge to keep my dreams alive and be all that I can be.
I pledge to live a healthy life and to keep myself drug free!



Futures are brighter without drugs!

It's NEON Day!



Dreams come true when we are drug free!

It's PAJAMA Day!



THE HERO PROGRAM & MURRAY MCSTAR!

We are excited to have our school-wide positive behavior program, HERO, at McMurray again this year! HERO stands for Helping Everyone, Respecting Others. All of the students in the school are encourage to participate in the program by trying to go above and beyond what is expected. Students are rewarded for their positive behavior, good deeds, and showing improvement in oneself with Murray Bucks. Bucks are put in the Murray Bucks Boxes and at the end of each month, four students from each grade level are chosen as the HEROs of the Month! The HEROs have their names read on the McMurray Morning News, have their pictures taken for display in the HERO Display Cabinet, located in the main corridor of McMurray just outside the MPR, and win a shopping trip to the McMurray School Store! The more Murray Bucks a student earns, the more chances they have to win! At the end of the school year, all of the Murray Bucks from the entire year will be put into a drawing for a special end-of-the-year prize!

All students also participate in classroom meetings and HERO lessons. The HERO lessons are co-taught by homeroom teachers and another staff member or school counselor on topics including anti-bullying, bus safety, friendships & acquaintances, and ALICE training.



The final piece to our HERO program is our school mascot, Murray McStar. Murray attends events at McMurray and makes surprise visits to help encourage and reward the students for showing positive behavior.

SUPPORTING GRIEVING CHILDREN



The death of a loved one is difficult for any child and The Highmark Caring Place, based out of Pittsburgh, has many programs dedicated to helping grieving children and their families. They provide peer support groups for children and adolescents of all ages as well as referral information, adult phone support and resources, and educational outreach programs. The Caring Place provides tremendous support to grieving children and their loved ones. Many McMurray families have found solace and support through their programs.

On Thursday, November 17th, students and staff are encouraged to wear blue to show their support for grieving children. Started in 2008 by The Highmark Caring Place, "Children's Grief Awareness Day" is a day set aside to recognize and show support to grieving children. It is observed the third Thursday of each November, the start of a particularly difficult time for children who have lost a loved one, the holidays. In addition to wearing blue, students can bring in loose change, all of which will be donated to The Caring Place. Students are also encouraged to dedicate a "Hope" butterfly, the symbol of Children's Grief Awareness Day, to a loved one who has died. The butterflies will decorate a "Wall of Hope" in the counseling hallway. Students can stop by The McMurray Counseling Office to dedicate a butterfly.

In the spring, Student Council, the Counseling Department and the Sixth Grade Student Ambassadors will join forces to hold a fun and festive Color-Run benefiting The Highmark Caring Place! Watch for more information about this exciting event in the upcoming months.

Don't forget to have your child wear blue on Thursday, November 17th and send in loose change for The Caring Place. For more information about The Highmark Caring Place or Children's Grief Awareness Day, please visit their website at: www.highmarkcaringplace.com.





A LOOK AHEAD: UPCOMING SCHOOL COUNSELING EVENTS

Children's Grief Awareness Day: November 17
 Character Counts/Anti-Bullying Week: February 13-17
 Career Day: March 24

Counseling Lessons- 2nd Marking Period

4th Grade: Anti-Bullying, Part 2
 5th Grade: Introduction to Careers
 6th Grade: Goal Setting

CAREER DAY

PRESENTERS NEEDED!



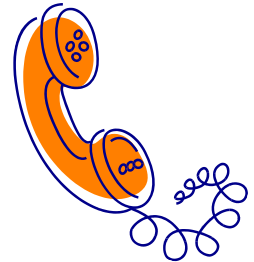
Do you have an exciting or interesting career? If so, we need your help! We are in need of parents to volunteer as our Guest Presenters at our annual Career Day! Students are thrilled when their parents are presenters! This year Career Day will be held the morning of Friday, March 24, 2017. If you are interested in speaking with students about your career, please contact either Mrs. Gruhn or Mrs. Recker for more information!



STUDENT PLANNERS: Make sure you check out the front pages of your child's planner! There's lots of extra McMurray information for you and your child including the Dress Code, Non-Edible Treats Policy, Anti-Bullying Information and Stress Reduction Techniques!

Contact Your Child's School Counselor For Information About...

- ◆ Local Counseling/Therapy & other Mental Health Services for your child or family, including grief counseling, psychiatric evaluations, behavior management & wrap-around resources
- ◆ Lunchtime Friendship Groups
- ◆ Short-term Individual Counseling in the school setting
- ◆ Bullying concerns and resources or to report bullying behaviors
- ◆ Class placement letters (Please note: we cannot honor requests for specific teachers.)
- ◆ Requesting a 504 Plan, or special education testing, including gifted support, for your child
- ◆ Tutoring Referral List
- ◆ Financial Resources including applications for Free/Reduced Lunch, CHIP and The McMurray Scholarship Fund



McMurray Elementary

Where a good mind and a good heart always make a great combination!

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