Amesbury Public Schools Newsletter asked students, "What is Kindness?"

Here are some of their responses:



This newsletter's cover page represents the KINDNESS GARDEN and flowers were constructed on a Saturday, by Pia Froncki and her children, Brayden and Eliza.

The Fronckis are true examples of "KINDNESS" and they continue to model thoughtfulness. Thank you so much for all of your hard work!

All of the "kindness" flowers have been affixed on a banner which will travel from school to school. Please be on the lookout...although it is pretty hard to miss!

Parents should be very proud of their children and the wonderful responses they had to the question, "What is Kindness?"









Edition 10 - February 10, 2021

The Valentine's Edition

This edition of our newsletter is dedicated to **Kindness**. Amesbury Elementary, Middle School and the Amesbury High School's Life Skills and Post Grads are devoting time to thinking about "Kindness" and this logo "Be Kind" Valentine was created by one of the Life Skills members. These wonderful students disseminated these "Be Kind" messages to downtown businesses as a surprise to their patrons. Thank you to "Team Luz" for helping to facilitate this project!

Mrs. Kristin Lynch, the AES nurse, shared heartfelt cards she received from Mrs. Harney's class as a "Thank you" to first responders! So very thoughtful and Mrs. Harney is modeling "kindness" for her students.



And this is Mrs. Lynch "responding" to a booboo of Noah Holt...a little ice pack and he's all better!



One of our teachers wanted to be kind and acknowledge some of her colleagues, so please see the following "anonymous" message as a valentine to them:

"Thank you to our district's special education facilitators, the people who ensure that each school building's special education process runs smoothly (as possible). Without facilitators, our jobs as special educators would be much harder! Most of us are aware that facilitators run special education eligibility meetings and answer staff and parent questions about special education law and practice. But many of us don't realize that a lot of their tremendous workload happens behind the scenes (for example: ugly amounts of paperwork, long meetings and phone calls to address parent concerns, and all the "mental load" that comes with planning and organizing a smooth meeting process). Thank you for doing these things, facilitators! Your work is appreciated!"



Katie Gately - AMS



Nicole Loveland - CES



Rae Pritchett - AES



Michelle Poirier - AHS



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When you have recently moved to Amesbury and learn that there is an opening on the school committee that piques your interest, you run for it, are elected and shortly after you are sworn in, a worldwide pandemic strikes that turns everyone's lives upside down! Well, please meet School Committeeman Melvin K. "Mel" Webster and see how he has fared during this unprecedented experience and see his answers to:

"The Top Ten Questions to Ask a New School Committee Member Who is Riding Out a Pandemic!"

Could you please give me some background information.

I was born and grew up in Haverhill. I initially went to Emerson College for a semester, then transferred to Northern Essex Community, where I attained my Associates Degree. I then transferred to Umass and attained a BA in English/Journalism. I worked for 5 years as a reporter/editor, 3 of those with the Haverhill Gazette. I then jumped to public relations and eventually started a PR/marketing firm with 3 good friends. I have been married to Kathleen Sullivan, also a Haverhill native, for 39 years and we have 2 children, Elisabeth, who lives in Durham, NC and is in the music industry, and Thomas, who lives in South Boston and works in the financial world.

What drew you to Amesbury?

We honestly had no intention of moving to Amesbury. We had finally decided our house in North Reading was far too big for us, and started looking around. We always wanted to be near the water and focused in on Newburyport. My wife saw an ad for Hatters Point and we instantly fell in love with the location. A few months later we spent more time here at the 350th anniversary and then the Open Studio tour, and we were 100 percent in.

What do you see as the City's biggest drawing card?

There are just so many — The trails, the great restaurants, the fabulous micro-breweries, the little shops and their friendly owners, the interesting history, the architecture, and of course, the mighty Merrimack.

Why at this stage of your life, did you want to run for school committee? And are you happy you did?

I served on the North Reading school committee for 15 years, but when we moved here, I had no intention of running for office. I was contacted early on by a group of concerned citizens who knew of my past experience and thought I might be able to help the Amesbury school district. After much thought, and after only having lived here 3 months, I decided to throw my hat in the ring. I am passionate about public education and believe that my experience can be an asset to the schools.

What do you see as the best things about the Amesbury Public Schools?

The teachers are incredible...they go above and beyond to meet the needs of their students, and have found a way to work around infrastructure issues that have gone unaddressed for too long. I never hear a complaint about teachers, and that is rare. Another impressive aspect of the schools is the resilience everyone has shown during the Pandemic from teachers, to students, to families, to administrators and the rest of the staff. Everyone's commitment has been outstanding.

Are there some things that pleasantly surprised you?

This is a difficult one. I was pleasantly surprised to see the quality of the colleges our high school students are accepted to. It's impressive. The positive spirit of the teachers and staff at all schools is also a pleasant surprise given the turnover the district as seen in senior leadership over the last 5-10 years.

(Please continue on the next page)



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What are the things about our schools that concern you the most?

I've spoken about this many times — the building and technology infrastructure. It's great, and thanks to COVID-19 relief funds and an outstanding new city IT director, we are getting a good start on fixing the tech problems, but there is still a long way to go. As for the buildings, there currently is more than \$4 million in outstanding projects that need to be completed, led by a new roof at the middle school, and an overhaul of the HVAC system at CES. Great buildings and technology do not make for a great education, but they certainly make it a lot easier.

What part do you think the social media plays in your role as a school committee person?

As a former reporter, I have never gotten out of my blood that urge to find the news and let others know about it. That's what I see as my role on social media. Whether good or bad news, it is important that our community be informed of what is happening in the district. Along with colleague Maryann Welch, I like to inform about upcoming meetings, key issues, and what happens at meetings. From time to time, I also like to post general articles about education or other related topics that might have an impact on our students, staff and families. I believe social media is a great avenue to spread the word on the Amesbury school district.

Is there something you would change about the role of a school committee person if you could?

No. In general, I think the school committee already plays a critical role in how a school district is managed. If you asked me what I would change as a result of the pandemic, I would say that I do not think local school committees should be in the position we are now, which is basically to have all the responsibility regarding whether schools are remote, hybrid, full in-person, etc. Or, whether we should be allowing our athletes to compete against other schools in various sports. I feel the state has let down local districts by failing to provide consistent guidance and direction.



When life returns to normal...after COVID magically disappears...what would a perfect day for Mel Webster be?

First, does anyone know what normal is anymore or what it will be? I certainly don't. I really don't have a perfect day in mind, but seeing live music while hanging with my wife and friends, and drinking good craft beer is a start. Live music, mostly rock, has been a big part of my life, and the Pandemic has cruelly stolen that from us. That's one of the things I most look forward to when we get out of this mess. After the fun is done, just sitting on my deck watching the Merrimack slowly meander by is a great way to end the day. I'm a pretty simple guy!



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NURSES' NOTES:

Our District School Nurses have been busy giving of their time in our regional community helping to fight the Covid-19 virus by being vaccinators!

Last month several of the nurses volunteered at a clinic held at the Newburyport Senior Center to vaccinate First Responders from the surrounding area. As vaccinators, they were also given the *Moderna* vaccine and will be receiving the 2nd dose this month.

Last Spring when the schools went remote, the Nurses assisted the Amesbury Board of Health with contact tracing of the positive Covid-19 cases in our town. This practice is an important tool in fighting the virus as well as face covering and social distancing.

After helping to keep our schools safe, advising all of our school community as to the proper guidelines to follow, and supporting students and families, they have found time to reach out to our broader community with pleasure.

Much information on Covid-19 guidelines and precautions created by the nurses can be found on our schools websites.

Also, stay tuned for further information on future vaccination opportunities as the process moves forward.

Stay safe and healthy!



Our socially distant, protocol appropriate District Nurses!

The Great Kindness Challenge 113 Style!

Students challenged each other to small acts of kindness throughout the week. They were also all given a Top Secret Kindness Challenge to complete without anyone finding out because the point of being kind is not for the glory, but to make others feel good! Head to Vermette's or the Bakehouse to collect a "Be Kind" heart made by our class and follow us @rockingaroundamesbury



Valentines and kindness projects take a lot of planning and work.







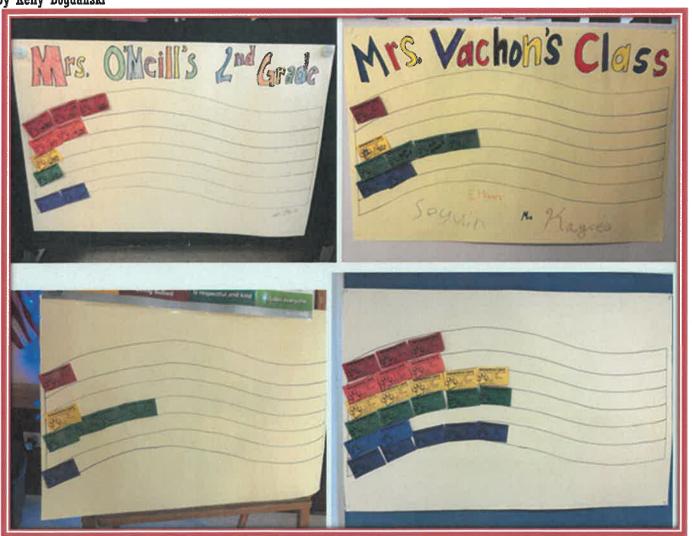
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"Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud"... Maya Angelou

CES students are spreading brightness and joy as they work collaboratively demonstrating "SKR" behavior. Cashman Elementary is in their third year of implementing PBIS, which stands for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, and focuses on the school's core values: Safe, Kind, & Responsible. In January, all classes started the Rainbow Project to help bring our cohorts, classrooms, grade levels, and school together as a community. Students work to earn different colored PAW cards to fill up their classroom rainbows. The PBIS team has been excited to see students coming together to be recognized for going above and beyond in their synchronous work, asynchronous work, and their behavior. Thank you to all of our "PAWsome" teachers and staff at CES for supporting our students' efforts to come together as a community. Check out some of the classroom rainbows filling up!!!

By Kelly Bogdanski







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It is with great sadness that we acknowledge the passing of former AHS employee, Linda Bernier who worked as a secretary in the Guidance Department until her retirement. The, then Linda Brown, was a graduate of the AHS Class of 1965 where she was on the baton squad and a member of the "Pep Club" which totally makes sense.

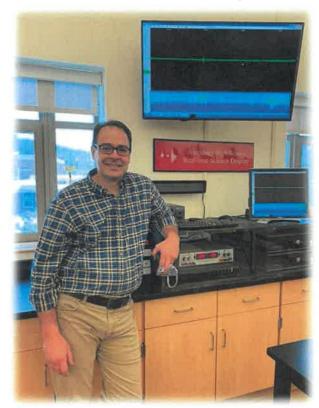
Linda's huge laugh and infectious smile would brighten up a room and make anyone she met know that they were in the presence of someone truly special. She loved her job, especially working with the students and adored anything that was AHS related. Every year she and her family hosted a Thanksgiving Breakfast before the Amesbury Newburyport football game and then she would meet up with former AHS classmates and former football players and cheerleaders and root for the Red & White!! She loved her Indians!

The next time you go to the AHS promenade at the gazebo please think of Linda who was one of the originators of the whole promenade ritual way back in 2001 when her daughter Melissa and her friends thought it would be "cool" to have an event like this at AHS! Linda decorated it every year, even coming by the night before to make sure it was cleaned up to her satisfaction! She will be sorely missed by many!



Our condolences to her husband Louis, son Tim, daughters Marci and Melissa, their significant others and grandchildren who were her world! Also to her sister Brenda Ray and her niece, our Shari Dupra. Heaven has a really bright star shining down on all of them!

"I feel the earth move under my feet...."



Mr. Mark Casto, AHS Science Teacher, wrote and received grant funding for 2021 in the amount of \$10,000.00 from the Toshiba America Foundation for continued support of the seismic recording station at Amesbury High School and support for future senior research projects as part of Amesbury High School's CAPSTONE option. A significant portion of the grant will be used in the acquisition of the CertimusTM next generation seismic station which allows for information to be shared via Wi-Fi, Ethernet and Bluetooth connections (a first of its kind, AHS will be the first school in the United States to employ this device). Funding has also been set aside to support the development of website and possible mobile APP to access current recordings. Future work and research will be conducted by senior students as potential CAPSTONE projects. Additional grant funds are being pursued to support a small solar array to allow the instrumentation to operate independent of an electrical power supply.

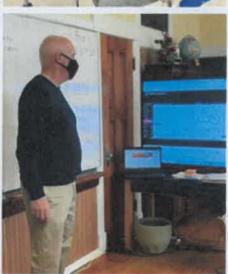
A TRIP AROUND THE SCHOOLS ON A SNOWY DAY!!























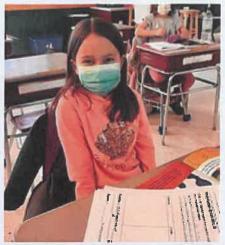














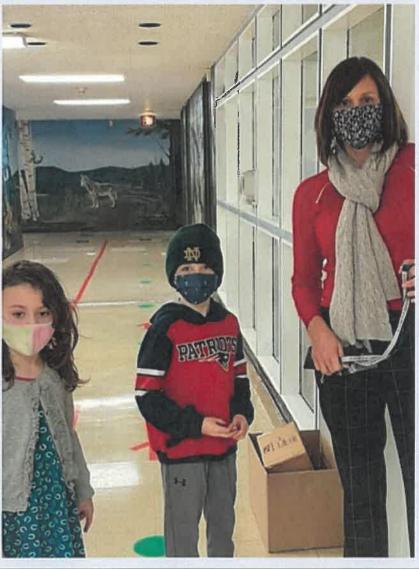














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Our spotlight on retirees continues with a salute and best wishes to Mrs. Connie Wall, AMS Social Studies teacher who left us in December.



1. Connie, where did you grow up?

The North Deering section of Portland, Maine was where I grew up.

2. Where did you go to school, including colleges?

I walked to the Harrison Lyseth Elementary School and Lyman Moore Jr High, then graduated from Deering High School (Go Rams). My undergraduate degree is from the University of Maine in Farmington. It took me 7 years to get my Master's Degree in Reading from Salem State; with 2 patient children and working as a new teacher, but I did finally finish! I went on to take many classes in American History, but did not accumulate them into an additional degree.

3. What did you do after graduating from college?

The summer after graduation I travelled through several countries in Europe with a friend, carrying a backpack, staying in hostels, and using a EuroRail pass. Then as many of my friends did back in the day, I got married in the late summer. We moved to Reading, Ma. where I worked at Converse, Inc. as an administrative assistant in National accounts customer service and had many part time jobs in the evenings and weekends until I was pregnant with my first son. One of the jobs was working at New England Memorial Hospital per diem on the child psychiatric unit. That job and later working at John D's Deli in Amesbury deepened my understanding of life.

4. How did you decide to become a teacher in Amesbury?

Mr. Atkins, the principal at Cashman and Mr. Tiezzi, the principal at AMS, encouraged me to follow my dream of being a teacher and offered me a job.

5. What was your career path to get here?

The path that led me to teach at Amesbury Middle School was long and winding. I started working as an assistant in a Summer Science Program on Peaks Island, Maine when I was a teenager. I taught dental health in the elementary schools in the city of Portland while attending college. Jumping ahead to Amesbury, when my oldest son started school, I volunteered in the schools, then enjoyed working as a substitute, and occasionally a part time science teacher, then had a really fun position as tutor in the 3rd Grade, and also as a part time administrative assistant at Cashman Elementary. Next, I was moved to the Middle School to work in the tutor position as an assistant to the librarian, then briefly was a reading tutor, then hired as a fifth grade teacher when an opening developed.

6. What is the BEST thing about being a teacher?

I loved so many parts of being a teacher. I liked the challenge of getting to know a whole team of students. I enjoyed creating materials, games, and activities, then using them with the classes. Seeing someone learn something new or gain an understanding was a terrific experience.



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Connie Wall Interview:

- 7. Most memorable colleague or mentor? Too many to name! I learned so much from so many people along the way. Marybeth Hoehn and Kristin FitzGerald were the two teammates that guided me through the tough days and celebrated the good days with me. Susan Kakides encouraged me to take history classes, we worked well together, and to this day, she is the editor of almost everything I write!
- 8. How long have you taught here?

All 20 years of actually being a teacher were in Amesbury Public Schools.

9. What will you miss most about teaching?

I will miss working with all my colleagues, the first days of school each year, and planning activities for students.

10. Tell me about your family? Children? What do they do?

My husband of 40 ½ years, (really at this point, who is counting) is now retired. My son Matthew is attending law school at Northeastern. My son Michael, has an 8 year old daughter, lives and works with a technical support company in the state of Washington.

11. What do you plan to do now that you are retired?

Well, like everyone else in the world, my plans have changed or have been put on hold! I plan to get a part time job that helps people in some way. I plan to see my granddaughter when I can travel during off-peak times!

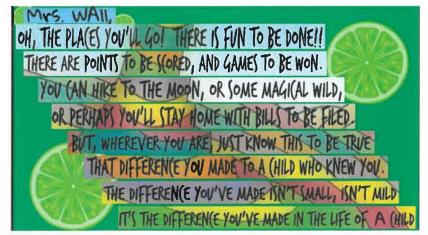
12. What do you like to do when you aren't working?

I like to read, work in my herb garden, walk with friends, work on group sewing projects (quilts). I like going new places and learning about how other people live.

Connie, please see some parting wishes from just some of your friends!

Thank you for all of your help and advice when I started as a long-term sub the 5th Grade! Tia Costello
Thank you for getting me my "volunteer job" at the Superintendent's Office 29 Years ago—they said it might be permanent some day!!
Carol Bartlett

And thank you for starting the volunteer program which got so many of us (including me) involved! Susan Olsen



Ashlev Osborn

Connie -- I always enjoyed all the classes and committees we were on together! Wishing you a wonderful retirement! Hope Abramson

Connie-congratulations! We had a lot of laughs in fifth grade together. Especially putting little books together! I hope your enjoying your retirement so fur. Sue O'Hala



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Students are Learning to Program in Elementary School By Mr. Bruce McBrien, AES Technology Teacher



I grew up with computers....the first computer I saw, I was actually able to walk inside! My father was a computer teacher...the first one to ever teach computing at Boston University, and the first to bring computers to ski racing, ultimately serving as chief of scoring in the Alpine Events for the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid. I literally grew up around computers, but was never into programming myself.

That all changed when I began teaching a little over two decades ago, when I realized early on that I needed to find a way to show my students that computers were not magic...that somebody had created the commands that made the smallest thing happen on the screen, like a cursor moving or the color of a Web link when clicked. I first taught simple HTML to my fourth graders, so that they could build simple Web pages...and they loved modifying the code and seeing the change that it made to the screen. Later, I brought in Logo programming to teach geometry. It really showed me how powerful coding was in helping students process, and think through challenges. Then along came Scratch, a block coding language from MIT. It was free, fun and easy to use. I began using it as soon as it was available, getting as much training at MIT as I could.

Now, it is something I do with all of my students starting in Kindergarten. You would be surprised at how quickly they pick it up, and how much they are able to do! I gradually add more and more depth to the lessons as students progress through the grades, and now in fourth grade, my students learn to code interactive multi-player video games.

That was our project for the month of January, creating an original catching game, where two characters compete to catch objects as they fall randomly from the top of the screen. Students start with a blank screen, then choose the game environment, design the characters and then fully code the movement, the scoring, the timer and even the announcement of a winner.

The Hybrid environment has actually made teaching this easier, since I now create video tutorials of my lessons, I post those videos along with step-by-step directions, and lead them in a live lesson, meaning my students can have my help in person but they can also work independently on projects when not with me. It really does not matter to me whether or not they pursue coding as a career, I expect that most will not, but helping them to understand computational thinking in itself will help them. I believe that it is a life skill because it will help them to see how they can deconstruct a challenge, problem solve and think critically in any situation life throws at them. They will likely forget that they coded these games by the time they get to high school, but if this can help them to think in ways that will help them in life, then it's a good thing!





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It's Valentine's Day and you haven't bought a card? Well now you can make one just like Cashman School's Mrs. Elizabeth Peterson's 3rd grade class is doing! The link is inserted below. Have fun!!



https://youtu.be/Np40szT39bU

Congratulations to Amesbury Innovation High School's Senior, Alyssa Lee Hitchings who graduated on January 29-2021. Alyssa will attend Northern Essex Community College to study Early Childhood Education. We certainly wish her all the best.



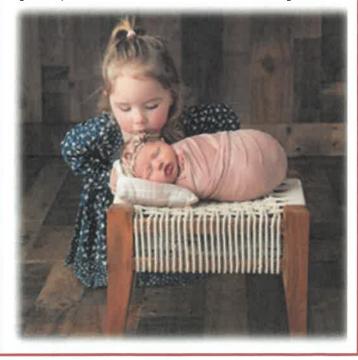
(The dog is Finn, the AIHS Mascot)

Principals Shannon Nolan of AES and Karina Mascia of CES accept a \$5,000 check on behalf of the Amesbury Public Schools for the 3rd & 4th Graders to help with their math skills.

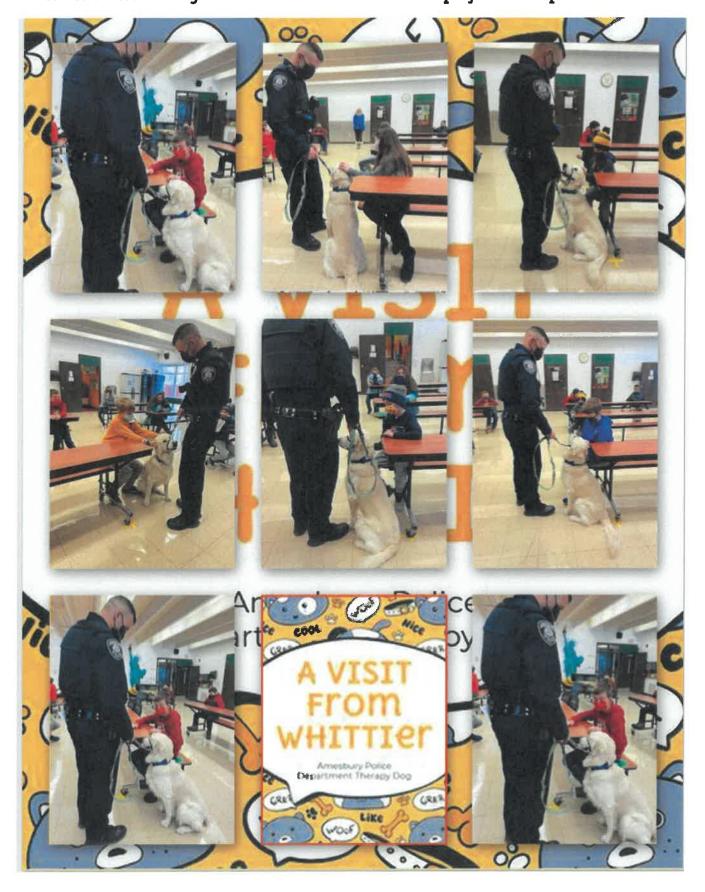
Presenting the check was Bob Thomas, President of Amesbury Youth Funding and Sam Wilmot its Vice-President and Treasurer. Thank you Gentlemen for your generosity!



Congratulations to AES Teacher Jessica Ladd and her husband, Tom on the birth of their daughter Madelyn, weighing in at 6 lbs. 4 ozs. and 18.5" long. It seems like big sister, Charlotte is in love! What a beautiful picture!



Officer Peters brought his therapy dog Whittier to meet the AES students. Whittier was a big hit!!! Thanks to Mrs. Cara Ripley for the photos!!!





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STAFF STUFF!!

We have new people in our halls and I thought you might like to meet some of them! (There will be more next edition.)



Taylor Spinney
AHS Paraprofessional



Ashley Godjikian AHS Paraprofessional



Hannah Schalck AHS Math Long-term Sub



Emily Chmielewski AMS Paraprofessional



Sarah Morris
AMS Paraprofessional



Katie Conneely CES Speech Pathologist

Still more....



Adele Ward
CES Paraprofessinal



Brittany Pratt AES Paraprofessional



Carolyn (Carrie) Pulichino AES Long-tern Sub



Julie Larrivee will be filling in for AES Secretary Farah Bixby when she goes out on maternity leave. Julie is not a stranger to the AES family, as she had been a para there before she left to work at the Recreation Program.

Welcome back Julie!



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Amesbury
Educational
Foundation, Inc.

AEFI Has It In The Bag — Computer Bags, That Is!



Since awarding innovative grants to teachers proved impossible in 2020, the AEFI Board of Directors asked Lyn Jacques if there were other ways that AEFI could provide financial support for urgent necessities. She suggested that the chrome books, laptops, and iPads that the district purchased would be better protected with computer covers. Board member Maryann Ivers contacted a company that designed computer bags that are embossed with APS and AEFI identifications; AEFI invested over \$15,000 to purchase these bags for 800 chrome books, 169 teacher Chromebooks and 337 plastic cases for iPads.

The best part of this investment? It benefits staff and K-12 students, just the people who need our support.



This student in Mrs. Gonthier's class is using a new iPad case.

Thank you AEFI for your generosity!

"Not throwin' away my shot...."

Hamilton

It's beginning to happen. Vaccine rollouts are coming....



Para at CES Michael Healey, Cathy Jackson AMS Teacher and AHS Dean Danielle Ricci were volunteering and getting their shots!!



Acting Superintendent Elizabeth McAndrews was also volunteering at the vaccine clinic at Page School.

No chair/no problem...just pull up a piece of the gym floor! She is also using one of the AEFI iPad cases!

Thank you all for volunteering your time!



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High School Happenings! Spotlight on Ms. Sarah Luz



We would like to give a shout out to Sarah Luz and her class as they have taken on the **Kindness Challenge** in their own classroom and the community!

Every year throughout the country there is a week where students, teachers and any individuals take part to spread kindness. Our class has created acts of kindness for one another in the form of compliments, small tokens of appreciation, and being helpful.

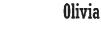
During these times, Sarah and her students hope to bring light and smiles to one another and the surrounding community by these acts of kindness!

There have been many challenges though, with technology, quarantine and uncertainty; but Sarah has made sure that her students always have a fun, safe, stimulating and loving environment no matter what is going on in the outside world.

We love you Miss Luz!!

Ashley, Diane, Michelle & Students!!







Nazita

Congratulations



Congratulations to Kyle Donovoan as he signs his "National Letter of Intent" to play football at Stonehill College.

And Congratulations to others who have recently signed their "National Letters of Intent":

Ben Ayotte - UMass Lowell - Track Maddie Sanchez - UMass Lowell - Track Alyssa Pettet - Holy Cross - Soccer Brianna Morel - Franklin Pierce - Field hockey

And speaking of sports:

A huge congratulations and Whoo Hoo! to AHS student Olivia Massa who scored 6 points in J.V. Basketball this year!!





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Problem Solving the Amesbury Public Schools Way!



 Mrs. Marshall and her students would like to have the book, <u>The Mitten</u> read to their class. So they called up a guest reader.



- 2. The only problem is that the "guest reader" can't penetrate their class bubble!! Oh COVID!!
- 3. What to do? We need to problem solve!!
- 4. Let's see....they want to have the book read "TO" their class not necessarily "IN" their class!
- Let's call up the Amesbury Cable TV men, Patrick Clifford and Russ Munroe to see if THEY can film it in their studio. And they can!



- 6. Not only can they film the story, but they can put it on the internet so ALL the kindergarten classes can see it. YEAY!
- 7. But the "guest reader" really needs an assistant...Hmmmmm??!!
- 8. I know!! Harry Dobbs is visiting his Mom, Rachael and his Grandmother, Lisa Wile at AHS. Harry is in Mrs. Marianne Curry's class sat AES. He would be perfect. Maybe he will do it.



9. Harry agrees and does a fabulous job putting all of the animals in the mitten.



10. Now all the students can watch it on Wednesday when they are remote—just like Mikey!!





Thank you so much to all the people who contributed to this newsletter. It couldn't happen without all of the staff input, suggestions and photos.

If you have any ideas or concerns, please contact me at my email bartlettc@amesburyma.gov

Have a wonderful, relaxing, healthy vacation!!

Valentines Day!

K G F N G R R W A P N F G Y A C Y B P B M L A T G J X V A H L G G T 7 S G X U G B R D 0 V X 7 C J F R A N I -1 M D J 17 K M TI M X 11 I A R A R R 1 I V F M G N X Z F A H A 5 G I V J IJ K W N A Y S E X U R L 1 R R M P D Y II P T T M A A G R Y V S I X Y T 1 A N L М S IJ IJ A F A T H B S Y 17 I T M P V F R F Y S S J A H R Tal H V K P W H F M A R

1 think youre:

AMAZING AWESOME COOL FABULOUS



FANTASTIC FUN MAGNIFICENT SMART



SPECTACULAR SUPER TERRIFIC WONDERFUL