

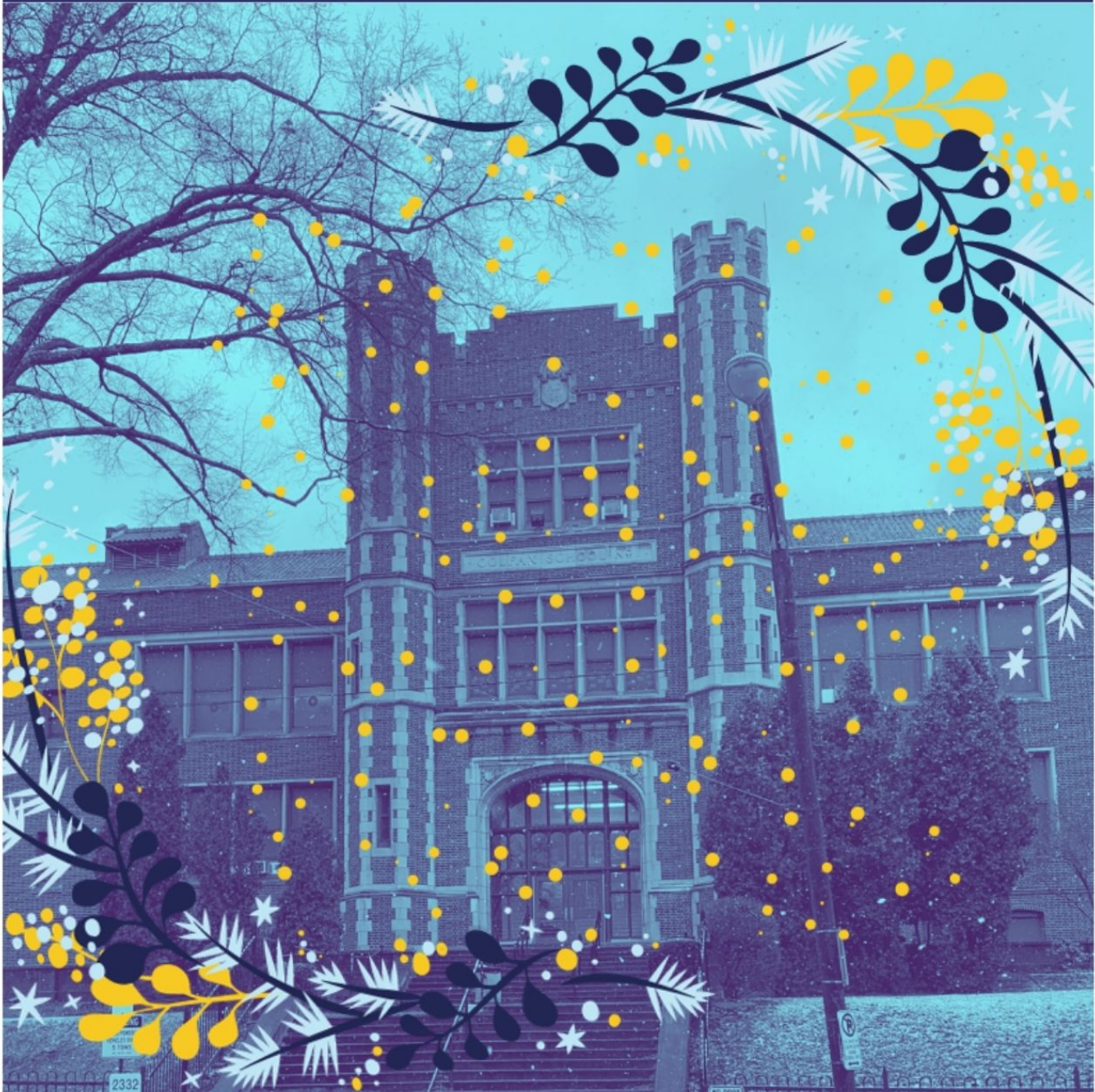
JANUARY 2024

VOL. 17, NO. 2



# THE COLFAX COMMUNICATOR

THE MAGAZINE OF THE COLFAX K-8 PTO



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# President's Note



Happy New Year!! I hope you enjoyed a restful winter break. We are taking our renewed energy and charging into 2024 with some strong PTO momentum.

The Ask Drive was a huge success!! Thank you to our NINETY-FOUR families that donated nearly \$19,000 during this fundraiser. Your tremendous generosity makes it possible for the PTO to support our school and students. We have already begun budget planning for next year, and I look forward to hearing your thoughts about the programs and activities we fund.

Thank you to Ghazal Tajdini for organizing a fantastic luncheon to celebrate our teachers and staff before the winter break, and to the volunteers who helped contribute food, money, or effort to make this event a success. We so appreciate our Colfax teachers and hope they felt the love that day!

Did you make it to the PTO meeting this month? If not, you may have missed the announcement about our Spring Fundraising Party! Mark your calendars and line up your childcare for Saturday, April 20 – see the flyer on page 7 for more information. And don't forget that if you are unable to attend our bimonthly PTO meetings, you can download the presentation on the PTO website. But please consider joining us Wednesday, March 13 for the next one!

We hope you enjoy this second issue of our PTO magazine – I personally appreciate hearing from so many contributors, including student voices. Please let us know what content you would like to see in future issues, or if you would like to join our editorial team!

Stay warm!

Sincerely,

Kelly Anderson  
PTO President



## 2023-2024 PTO BOARD

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# Principal's Letter



Greetings,

Can you believe that we are nearing our 100th day of school?! Our *k-2* team consistently reminds us when this time of year approaches as they begin to plan classroom 100th day projects and celebrations.

Our 3-5 students are really getting into the swing of things with our new ELA Curriculum. The resources for small group instruction for every lesson and skill, online component, and included phonics (which is often missing in 4th and 5th grade ELA curriculum) have been some of what the teachers love about Open Court.

*Middle school students* are excited about Shakespeare Monologues, Musical planning, winter sports practices/ games, and the announcement of our middle level Masquerade Dance! Please standby for more detailed information about this year's musical and dance.

There is always something going on for and with our students at the Fax! That being said I would like to extend a huge thank you to our teachers and families who continue to support the social and learning events that take place outside of the classroom.

This winter has brought us many cold weather delays and closures. The decision to delay or close schools is not an easy one. And it is never a decision that is made at any building level; however, we make every effort to notify you as soon as we get the district message to do so. There are multiple factors that weigh when making this call.

Those factors are not limited to but include:

- Cold weather issues with buses
- Temperature
- Road conditions across ALL our city neighborhoods
- Staff call-offs due to the road conditions in their neighborhoods or the availability of childcare for their own children if their schools have a delay/closures

As a reminder we utilize Talking Points *and* our building social media pages as our primary means of mass communication of weather delays and closures. Remember to immediately update Mr. Peluso at 412.529.3525 with any address or telephone number changes. Despite a district announcement, I always encourage you as a parent or guardian to make the best decision for your child(ren). We do excuse these days as weather-related; however please remember to include this reason on the excuse.

In closing I would like to share with you a quote from my favorite author, poet, actress, and civil rights activist Maya Angelou: "*People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.*" Be intentional with every interaction that you have with others.

Take care,

Dr. Woods

## Stay Informed

### PTO WEBSITE & EMAIL SIGN-UP

<http://www.colfaxpto.org>

### COLFAX FACEBOOK

<facebook.com/ColfaxK8>

### COLFAX TWITTER & PPS TWITTER

[@PPSColfax](https://twitter.com/PPSColfax)

[@PPSNews](https://twitter.com/PPSNews)

### PTO FACEBOOK

<facebook.com/pghcolfax>

### PPS FACEBOOK

<facebook.com/PittsburghPublicSchools>

### PPS CALENDAR

<http://pghschools.org>

# PTO Events

## TEACHER AND STAFF APPRECIATION

BY GHAZAL TAJDINI

PTO SPECIAL EVENTS AND TEACHER APPRECIATION COORDINATOR

During the month of December, we had a chance to show our appreciation to all the hardworking teachers and staff at Colfax. With the help of our Colfax families, who volunteered their time, money, along with their delicious meals and desserts, the PTO held its annual Teacher and Staff Potluck Luncheon on December 15. It was a huge success! There was a wide assortment of salads, appetizers, mains and desserts! Thank you to our supportive Colfax families for helping make this happen!

The PTO also collected donations from our generous Colfax families to purchase gift cards for all specialist teachers and staff (Homeroom Representatives helped collect donations for homeroom teachers - thank you homeroom reps for your work!)



There's a lot that happens behind the scenes at Colfax! We have custodians, lunchroom staff, social workers, ESL and speech therapists, counselors, substitute teachers, and other positions that aren't always noticed by those outside the building. With your contributions, we were able to purchase 49 Target gift cards of \$60 each! That's one for every specialist teacher and staff member! As the coordinator of this event, I had the fortune to hand out some of these gift cards to their recipients. Every person was genuinely so touched to be thought of and recognized. Thank you Colfax families for your thoughtfulness and generosity!

# PTO Events

## COLFAX'S FIRST FAMILY FUN RUN

BY OLIVER BARRY, COLFAX STUDENT

Everyone was stretching and getting ready for the Fun Run.



As I kept running, I noticed signs on the edge of the path, saying things like "go Cobras!"



As I ran up the driveway to the finish, I noticed that they were handing out certificates. I wasn't the first to complete the path, but that didn't matter to me.



Once we started, I noticed chalk arrows on the ground indicating where to go. Parents and kids were either walking or running down the street.



There was a water station for if you were thirsty on the side of the trail. All the families were cheering us along as we entered the woods. We had a great view of Frick Park, and all the other trails. On some parts of the path it was dirt and others it was concrete. We went in a loop around the woods, and then passed by Blue Slide again. We turned back onto the street. It was the final stretch.

I was done. I noticed that there was a bake sale, selling cookies and brownies. Some eighth graders were doing it as a fundraiser. There was also a free lunch table with lemonade or coffee. You could get a sandwich and some fruit. I also got a balloon. My sister and mom decided to walk the path. I wanted to run it again, just a short lap this time though. After I got back for the second time, it was time to leave. It was a great day.

We went past Blue Slide and into Frick Park. We started down the path to the woods.



# PTO Events

## ICE SKATING NIGHT

BY SARAH GRUBB, VP OF SPECIAL EVENTS

We had such a wonderful time at the PTO-sponsored Family Ice Skating Night at the beginning of December. We hosted the event at the Hunt Armory Skating Rink in Shadyside for the first time due to the closure of Schenley Park Skating Rink this season. It was a balmy 57 degrees outside, but luckily for us Hunt Armory is an indoor rink and the ice stayed nice and solid. It was fun to see skaters young and old take to the ice, many for the first time. There were plenty of wipe-outs, but everyone seemed to get back up with a smile on their face. The kids, and a few grownups, stayed out there circling the ice until they had to kick us out.



**COLFAX PTO**

SPRING 2024  
**PLAYGROUND**

**MEETUPS**

MEET OTHER FAMILIES AND  
BUILD COMMUNITY

**FUN! SNACKS!**

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

SUN MAR 17 1-2:30 BLUE SLIDE PARK	SAT APR 27 11-12:30 MELLON PARK
SAT MAY 11 1-2:30 BLUE SLIDE PARK	SUN JUN 2 3-4:30 WIGHTMAN PARK

## MORE UPCOMING PTO EVENTS!!

**PTO Meeting**  
Wednesday, March 13

**Spring Fundraiser Party**  
Saturday, April 20

# Save the Date

COLFAX ELEMENTARY PTO PRESENTS



## *After Dark Affair:* Funding The Future



A SPECIAL FUNDRAISING EVENT

SAT — APRIL 20TH — BEGINNING PROMPTLY @ 7PM

MATTRESS FACTORY

509 JACKSONIA ST. PITTSBURGH, PA 15212



**Volunteers needed! Contact [fundraising@colfaxpto.org](mailto:fundraising@colfaxpto.org) to find out how you can help make this event a success!**

# NEW FACES AROUND COLFAX

BY GEOFF HILSABECK, COLFAX PARENT



We have three new teachers at Colfax: Gabby Johnson, a paraprofessional; Amy Wooler, 4th and 5th grade language arts; and Celia Werner, 8th grade communications. The *Communicator* had the chance to ask Ms. Wooler and Ms. Werner a few questions. (The conversations have been edited for length and clarity.)

## Ms. Wooler:

### What drew you to teaching?

Originally, I didn't want to be a teacher! Growing up, I didn't like school and I struggled significantly at times. However, I had a few teachers along the way who not only challenged me to grow academically, but showed me that teachers genuinely care about their students - something I had been lacking before walking into their classroom. That changed my perspective on school entirely. I decided I wanted to be a teacher to push students to reach their fullest potential both academically and personally.



Amy Wooler



Celia Werner

### What's your favorite book and/or what are you reading right now?

A favorite book I have is called *The First Rule of Punk* by Celia C. Pérez. It focuses on Malú as she moves to a new state and a new middle school. Pérez tells a fantastic story about embracing who you are and finding the people who love and support you.

### What do you like to do when you are not at work?

When I am not in the classroom, I like to be outside more than anything. I am an avid climber and am currently testing my love for the outdoors against my dislike of the cold to learn how to ski!

## Ms. Werner:

### What drew you to teaching?

I chose to become a teacher because I am passionate about making a difference in the lives of young people. My hope is to provide students with a positive and meaningful classroom experience.

### What's your favorite book and/or what are you reading right now?

I am currently reading *The Illustrated Man* by Ray Bradbury.

### What do you like to do when you are not at work?

In my free time, I enjoy painting, trying out new coffee shops, and spending time with my friends and family.



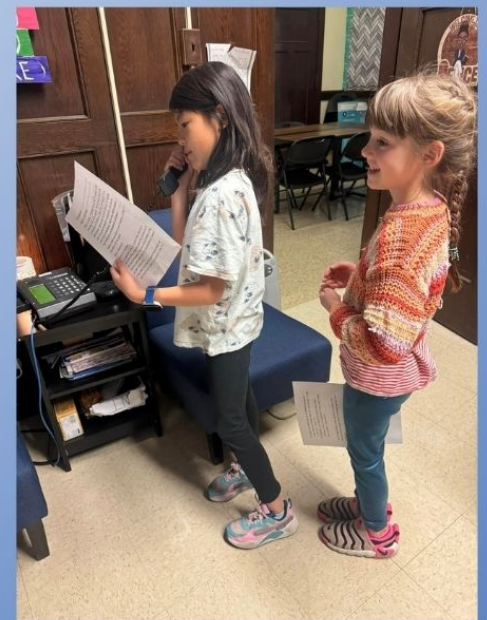
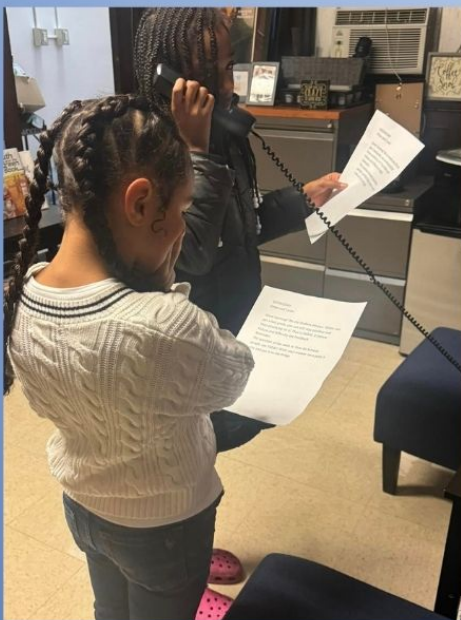
# STUDENT ENVOY- GRADES 3-5

BY GREYSON MILLER, EMMY BLACKHURST AND CARTER DAVIS,  
COLFAX STUDENTS

In student envoy we teach other people about the 5 secrets. We try to make our school a better place by teaching them the strategies of the secrets. We meet up every Wednesday. At meetings we talk about what we're going to do, what we are doing, and what we've already done. Our favorite thing about envoy is when we plan our projects and do them well.

Our first project was a lunch with new students in grades 2-5. We were trying to help them feel welcome. We ate lunch together and then played board games. Our second project was to explain the secret - Failure and Difficulty are Feedback - on the announcements. We broke into groups and wrote our announcements. Each day we would explain FADAF differently. Some days there would be quotes and other days there would be examples. All students in the school were asked to answer the question "How do celebrities use FADAF?" Then we shared their answers with the school on the morning announcements.

The next project that we are working on is to share the Strong Side/Weak Side secret. We are writing skits to record and send to the teachers so they can share them with their homerooms.



Student Envoy representatives leading morning announcements.

# WINTER GARDEN UPDATE

## Greetings Garden Friends!

As winter blankets our garden, let's reflect on the theme of nourishment—for our bodies, our minds, and our spirits.

## Winter Nourishment

While the garden may rest, the soil beneath is alive with potential. The second grade students have had the opportunities to plant and harvest from our garden while in first grade and kindergarten. Starting the last week of January, Farmer Ian will be working with second graders to create culinary dishes that feature foods grown in the Colfax Garden, explore the science of seeds, and create art to celebrate our garden.

## Why We Love Snow

Did you know that snow is good for our garden? While snow travels to the ground, it can pick up trace elements of different elements. It can add nitrogen and sulfur to our soil, which are needed for healthy plant growth. Farmer Ian also loves to sled, ski, and watch snow fall! Do you? These activities nourish my body and my spirit. Also, we think that the garden looks really lovely with small snow piles on top of last year's stalks. Farmer Caroline thinks they look like little snow hats!

## Speaking of last year's stalks...

Most of our garden isn't growing during the winter, but that doesn't mean that there is no life in the garden. We leave the stalks from last season's plants in the garden over the winter as they provide shelter and food for birds, bees, and other beneficial insects. If you spend time in our winter garden, you will see birds picking at the coneflower and sunflower heads as they nourish their bodies with the little seeds within.

We hope that you are enjoying winter in whatever ways nourish you!

Happy New Year,

Your Garden Team - Farmer Ian,  
Farmer Caroline, and Farmer Sarah



# COLFAX FAQ LOST & FOUND EDITION

## **Where is the Colfax Lost & Found located?**

The Lost & Found is located inside the glass door entrance along the windows.

## **When can students access the Lost & Found?**

Students can ask their teachers for permission to look for items in the Lost & Found at any time.

## **How long does my child have to claim lost items?**

The Lost and Found is emptied periodically (approximately 1-2 times per semester). Watch for Talking Points messages about when the Lost & Found will be emptied and donated to make sure your child looks for lost items prior.

## **Can I access the Lost & Found?**

The PTO provides access to the Lost & Found for families at some events throughout the year. Family members can look through the Lost & Found after school hours (3:15-4:00pm daily). Please call Mr. Peluso (412.529.6711) ahead of time to confirm his availability. Family members may not access the Lost & Found during the school day unless they have specific permission from the Colfax administration.

**Have more questions about Colfax? Send them to [communications@colfaxpto.org](mailto:communications@colfaxpto.org), and we'll try to answer them in a future issue of the Communicator.**



# A Successful Ask Drive!

**Thank you Colfax community for another great Ask Drive! We ended the fundraiser with \$18,995 from 94 families. For the 23-24 school year, our donation total, including corporate matching, is nearly \$40,000! These funds will set us up for another fun-filled year of enrichment and activities.**

**We appreciate everyone (especially the Colfax Homeroom Reps) who helped to promote and share the Ask Drive. Many thanks to our Ask Drive donors:**

Joshua Adelman  
Allyson Aldous  
Shannon Allen  
Kelly Anderson  
Linda Arnade  
Daniel Bain  
Aimee Baumiller  
Jeffrey Bigham  
Beth Blackhurst  
Martha Boak  
Nicole Caparanis and Lou Klein  
Erin Casci  
Cindy Chepanoske  
Jeffrey Chrabaszcz  
Kathryn Christman  
Kimberly Clemens  
Taya Cohen  
Itzhaq Cohen-Karni  
Jo Conrad  
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Christina Dixon  
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Alex and Sarah Grubb  
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Simi Padival

Dolores Patton  
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Justin Schell  
Bee Schindler  
Marc Schwartz  
Jessica Sedgewick  
Rebecca Stallings  
Matthew Steinhaser  
Annett Sullivan  
Ghazal Tajdini  
Robin and Aaron Taylor  
Donnese Tyler  
Kara VanHoudnos  
Lan Wang  
Stephanie Weinstein  
Jennifer Whiteside  
Johana Winant  
Thomas Wise  
Stephen Wittek  
Arthur Wolfson  
Anna Wukich  
Kristina Wygonik  
Charlotte Yano  
Susanne Yoffe  
Lisa and Ilan Zur

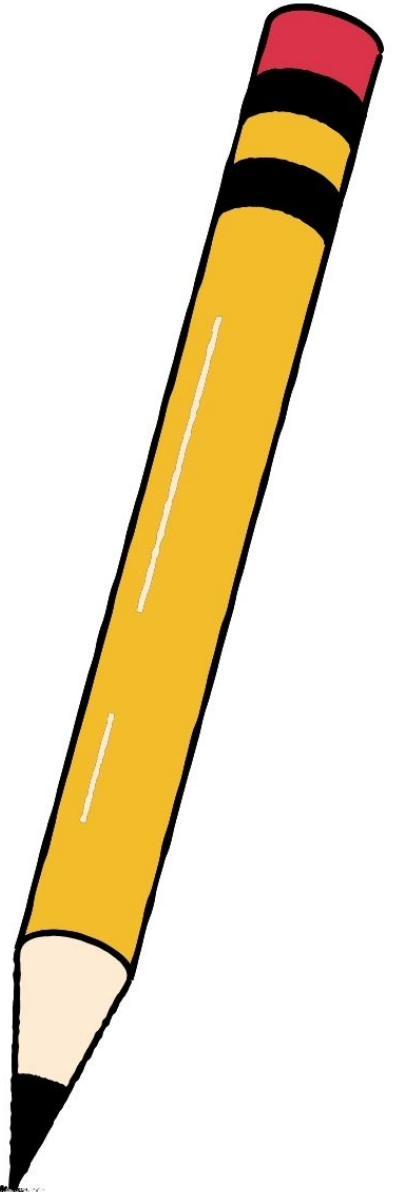
THANK  
YOU

# **STUDENT WRITERS NEEDED**

**Colfax PTO is looking for student writers to be featured in the Colfax Communicator quarterly magazine! We welcome fiction and nonfiction.**

**Please speak with Mrs. King in Room 210 or email [communications@colfaxpto.org](mailto:communications@colfaxpto.org) if you are interested!**

**We can't wait to hear what you have to say!**



# Community Spotlight



## CELEBRATING OUR VALUED VOLUNTEERS

BY ASHLEY INGRAM, PTO VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

We have so many wonderful volunteers here at Colfax! Whether it's helping out in the classroom, at grade-level events or field trips, behind-the-scenes work of creating eye-catching flyers, or being a recess volunteer, we have lots of options to volunteer! We're going to meet one of our recess volunteers, Jo Conrad, who has a flexible schedule so dedicates her time to being with students during recess.

Meet Jo Conrad!

Jo is the grandmother of 3rd grade student Greg Taylor, who is in Mrs. Lasek's homeroom. Jo decided to volunteer at recess because she is semi-retired and has the time and energy to do so. When asked what her favorite part of being a recess volunteer is, she said it's observing the behaviors of our future leaders. 😊 Outside of school, Jo and grandson Greg like to do everything together - outdoor time, biking, kayaking, going to Frick Park, traveling, visiting Greg's cousins, reading, arts and crafts, and playing. And in terms of her favorite genre of books, Jo loves to read adventure and fantasy books.

So if you're at recess and see Jo, stop and say hello! Thank you to Jo for taking time to volunteer at our school!



# PARENT SCHOOL COMMUNITY COUNCIL (PSCC) RECAP

**BY GEOFF HILSABECK, COLFAX PARENT**

The Parent School Community Council met online on January 10. The meeting focused on social and emotional learning, with presentations from the support services staff as well as Mrs. Mason, assistant principal K-4.

Candace Johnson, one of the social workers on site, presented on the Student Assistance Program (SAP). SAP provides support to students experiencing difficult life events, including divorce, death, bullying, and secondary trauma. Ms. Johnson described the protocol for engaging SAP, including referral from a teacher, staff, family, or community member, team planning, interventions and recommendations, and support and follow up.

Kaylee Keefe, another social worker on site, shared some of the many mental health resources available outside the school, including family doctors, therapists and psychologists, service coordination units, and crisis services. Ms. Keefe highlighted the work of resolve Crisis Network, which provides free support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, over the phone and will also respond on-site to crisis situations when called.

Ms. Montgomery, school counselor for the Middle School, told parents about the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, part of a broader effort to identify barriers to learning for students and to leverage the resources of the school and county to remove those barriers. Families are encouraged to reach out to the support staff with any questions or concerns.

Mrs. Mason presented on school culture. She celebrated the work of the School Culture Team, teachers and staff who volunteer their free time to work on this crucially important part of school life. Mrs. Mason walked parents through the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports matrix with its HISS acronym: Helpful, Involved, Safe, and Scholarly. Signs posted throughout the school remind students about the expectations for behavior in the different spaces on campus (arrival/dismissal, classroom, bathroom, hallways, cafeteria, recess, bus). Mrs. Mason also highlighted the Student Envoy Project, a student leadership program that empowers select students to serve as active partners in improving school culture, and the use of restorative practices. Colfax is a leader in the district in these areas.

## **What is the PSCC?**

Monthly opportunity for parents to engage with school administration and staff on topics related to the school and district.

## **When is it typically held?**

2nd Wednesday of the month, 5-6PM on Microsoft Teams, some also in person

## **When is the next one?**

1st Wednesday in February - Feb 7, 2024, in person in the Colfax Library

## **What is the topic in February?**

Curriculum Review - Math & English Language Arts

## **What if I can't make it?**

Meeting minutes are posted on the Colfax webpage <https://www.pghschools.org/colfax> (under School Materials/PSCC)



# VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR NEXT YEAR

The PTO operates only through the hard work of parent volunteers! Please consider filling one of these roles so we can continue to support our Colfax Community!

FOR  
NEXT  
SCHOOL  
YEAR

2024  
-25

ASSISTANT TREASURER  
(BECOMING TREASURER IN  
2025)

SPECIAL EVENTS PLANNER

VP FUNDRAISING

EDITOR OF COMMUNICATOR  
MAGAZINE

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**A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO ALL  
THE CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:**

**Kelly Anderson, Ian Bonnet, Sarah Grubb,  
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Gina Lasek, Dr. Tamara Sanders-Woods,  
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Oliver Barry, Emmy Blackhurst,  
Carter Davis, and Greyson Miller**

