



Cover Photo by Lara Beth Photography



Sandshore Does More To Spread Kindness & Give Back

By Cheryl Conway

When it comes to kindness and helping the community, students at Sandshore Elementary School have got it covered.

In its second year, the Kindness Ambassador Team is currently teaming up with Trex to collect plastic materials. Known as the Trex Recycling Project, the purpose

is to collect unwanted plastic materials. The Trex company then recycles the plastic to create environmentally responsible outdoor products like decks, furniture, fencing and railings.

Since it began collecting plastic on Oct. 3, the Kindness Ambassador Team has collected more than 170 pounds so far. Items being collected include grocery bags, bread bags, case overwrap, dry cleaning bags, newspaper sleeves, ice bags, wood pellet bags, Ziplock & other resealable bags, produce bags, bubble wrap, salt bags and cereal bags.

"The kids are thrilled," says Sandshore School Counselor Elena Melekos, creator and advisor of the Kindness Ambassador Team. "Our Kindness Ambassador Team is a very hard-working group of kids. Together we can truly make a difference and help encourage our students to spread kindness and help any chance they get." From collecting plastic to preserve the environment, donating unused Halloween candy to American Troops, hosting food drives for local families in need during the year as well as for Thanksgiving and the holidays, and participating in a giving tree to gather clothing and toys for families during the holidays- the Kindness Ambassador Team at Sandshore Elementary School is on a mission to help others in Mt. Olive.

In its second year, Melekos started the team at Sandshore when she first started working there as a way to get students involved in spreading kindness.

"I chose to do it," says Melekos. "I created the group" for students in grade fourth and fifth "just because they are a little older" and can serve as "leaders. At this age they are setting an example in this school and the community."

Students have to apply to join the group, says Melekos.

In considering their applications, Melekos says she is "looking for students who are passionate about kindness and helping others and being a positive influence in our school and within the community."

There are currently 83 leaders on the Kindness Ambassador Team; there were 80 students involved last year.

"Our mission is to give back to the community, give back to the environment and spread kindness," says Melekos. "We all have a purpose here; if we give back to the community, we have the connectedness."

On their application, students had to provide some ideas on how they can share kindness in the community and give back.

When reviewing the students' applications for the team, which just organized itself three weeks ago, Melekos noticed a few students mentioned recycling as one of their ideas of giving back.

Fond of the idea, Melekos turned to her colleague at Mountain View School in Flanders, who is participating in the Trex Recycling Project. Melekos decided this project would be a good one for her Kindness Ambassador Team to take on as well.

"My goodness the support we received," says Melekos. "If we can do something-our Kindness Ambassadors were up for the challenge to make a difference in our environment."

Trex Recycling Project

Schools throughout the nation compete against each other throughout a six-month period. The school that collects the most plastic receives a bench created out of Trex material.

Official start date for the Trex Plastic Film Recycling Challenge is America Recycles Day on Nov. 15 but schools were invited to start collections early. Final tallies are due April 15 and winners are announced on Earth Day, April 22.

To encourage participation, the Kindness Ambassador Team offers announcements "to encourage everyone to bring in plastic," says Melekos. It also provides facts as to why it is important to recycle plastic "and how we are making a difference in collecting the plastic."

Students are getting a better sense of "how much plastic is being used in our community," says Melekos. Teachers at Sandshore are incorporating science lessons about the environment and usage of plastic.

As stated on the Sandshore school's flyer for the Trex competition: "It is our goal to provide our students with a better understanding of the importance of recycling, giving back to the community and protecting our environment."

According to information provided by the Trex company: "When you donate your unwanted plastic materials to Trex, not only are you helping to keep thousands of

pounds of waste out of landfills, you're also helping us to continue to create beautiful and environmentally responsible outdoor products.”

During the sixth month challenge, “each month we weigh the bags,” says Melekos. “We have so many garbage-bags full of plastic bags.” Melekos drives the garbage bags to Target weekly, and then Target provides the bags to Trex. During its first week, Sandshore collected six large bags with 87 pounds of plastic, says Melekos.

“We are all here to make a difference and teach the importance of giving back,” says Melekos. “We are helping our environment; everything we are using is somehow impacting the environment.

“Everything we do is to understand how we give back,” says Melekos. “We are giving back to our environment; we are protecting our environment.”

Anyone can drop off plastic bags, grocery bags, bread bags, Ziplock bags and any forms of plastic film at the Sandshore school. There are drop off boxes provided by Trex, that students from the Kindness Ambassador Team put together, located inside the doorway of Sandshore School, before entering the lobby.

For questions or more information, contact Melekos at elena.melekos@motsd.org, or call (973) 691-4003 ext. 3306. Also follow her posts on Twitter @SScounselormsm.

OTHER PROJECTS

The next upcoming project being spearheaded by the Kindness Ambassador Team is Halloween Candy Give Back. From Nov. 1 through Nov. 6, students at Sandshore will be collecting unwanted wrapped candy. The Kindness Ambassador

Team will then be handing over the collected candy to Operation Gratitude, which then donates the candy to American troops, veterans and first responders. Later in November is the Thanksgiving Food Drive. Students bring in canned foods, donate turkeys, milk, bread and other items to give to families to enjoy

over Thanksgiving. Last year 14 families in Mt. Olive were recipients of Thanksgiving meals, says Melekos.

The Holiday Giving Tree and Winter Wonderland Toy Shoppe follows. Families provide lists of needed items, which are then placed on ornaments on the tree displayed inside the Sandshore school.

"Anyone can come take an ornament off the tree," says Melekos, to purchase the item for the local family. Last year, eight local families were recipients of toys, clothing and food for the holidays, adds Melekos.

Then in the spring, the Kindness Ambassador Team organizes the Spring Food Drive. Details to come.

"A lot of parents are extremely supportive which makes this so successful," says Melekos. "Kids are excited about it."

When the community sees the flyers or hears talk about these efforts, they too donate throughout the year, she adds.

"It's the community working together," says Melekos. Four turkeys were donated from the Roxbury Diner last year, she adds.

For the Holiday Giving Tree, "The word gets out; people are so generous and so kind, that's why we are so successful."

While the leaders from the Kindness Ambassador Team run the program, all of the students donate and contribute, as well as the teachers.

"Everything we do is a school-wide project," stresses Melekos. "Fourth and fifth graders are overseeing it" by spreading the word, sharing the flyers, making the announcements.

Melekos is proud that the township and community has also taken an interest.

"One of my Kindness Ambassadors parents had shared the flyer and Councilwoman Labow had seen it," says Melekos. "She reached out to the parent who shared my information with her. She asked if she could help us collect plastic bags at the town hall.... which is wonderful because this is helping us spread the

word of this amazing project that is helping give back to our community and environment."

the Kindness Ambassador Team Photos

Welcome readers to the 31st issue of Mt. Olive Online. Get MO news online today! Advertise with us

Grade Alerts Eliminated/PowerSchool Closed During Hours

By Cheryl Conway

Parents who monitor their kids' schoolwork will have to take it upon themselves

to check PowerSchool from now on but do so after school-day hours.

PowerSchool is a web-based student information system which manages grades, attendance, schedules and courses. For the past seven or eight years, parents have been alerted during the school day as to when their child fails a test or quiz or has a missing homework assignment.

But as of this school year, parents are no longer being alerted, and the PowerSchool portal is closed during the school day at the high school level.

School officials decided to make these changes to decrease stress and anxiety by both students and their parents during the school day.

“We want students to focus on their studies during the school day without being sidetracked or overly concerned,” explains Mt. Olive High School Principal Kevin Stansberry. When students are in school, they “don’t need to be on the edge of their seats and checking their grades” instead of focusing on what is happening in the classroom.

The PowerSchool portal will be closed to all parents and students at the high school level from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. The PowerSchool portal remains open to students and their parents in the middle school during these hours.

Based on feedback from parents and students, receiving grade alerts and checking grades on PowerSchool during the school day caused anxiety and stress to students and their parents.

“We wanted to free the students up,” says Stansberry, from that stress, and rather have them focus on what is important during the school day. He says there is a “time and place to have that discussion” with their families if they fail a test or forget to turn in a homework.

“Let’s worry about what’s important now so we can follow and track our progress,” he says. “We just want to reduce stress and anxiety. We work hard and play hard.”

PowerSchool is open after 3 p.m. during the school day so students can follow up on their grades in each class.

“When PowerSchool is open they have access,” says Stansberry. “They can track their performance.” But having it open while students are in school and parents

are trying to work or go about their day, that's "just a feature we can do without." School officials explain the reason grade alerts were eliminated altogether. The district wanted "to look at ways we are providing information to the students and the times," explains Stansberry. "Everything is right at their finger-tips at PowerSchool to look up."

Dr. Robert Zywicki, superintendent of Mt. Olive Schools, says "while teachers were having lunch," they were putting students' grades in on PowerSchool. Grade alerts were then issued to the parents via email; parents were then calling and texting their children while they were in school questioning why they failed a test or did not turn in an assignment.

"Kids are not supposed to be using their cell phones," says Zywicki. The alerts were also "causing stress."

Editorial/Opinion

Under the current policy, students only have a few days to make up a test or quiz in order to bring their failed grade up to a 70 percent. With the elimination of the D grade years ago in the Mt. Olive School district, under the leadership of former Superintendent of Schools Dr. Larrie Reynolds, a failed grade is anything below a 70 percent.

When a grade alert was issued, many parents reached out to their children to advise them of their failed grade so they had enough time to react and take immediate steps to make up their grade by retaking a test or quiz, or turning in corrections. While it was stressful by both parents and students, the alert was a reminder to take the initiative to try to pull up one's grade before the allotted time expired.

Without the grade alerts, parents need to remember to check PowerSchool regularly so they can help keep their child on track.... just remember to check it before 7 a.m. or after 3 p.m.

Doors Open Up For Mt. Olive Seniors' Requests

By Cheryl Conway

opening doors will not be necessary at the Mt. Olive Senior Center moving forward as the community building recently received new ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) doors.

Earlier this month, the front doors of the Mt. Olive Senior Center received a new hydraulic opener so doors will open and close by pushing a button. The building remained open during the installation.

The new mechanism will make entering and exiting the senior center much easier for those in wheelchairs or who use walkers or canes. The building is also used by the Recreation Department, so automatic doors opening can be beneficial to other residents who use the building for parties or exercise, having to carry trays of food or physio balls for exercise.

"The township is always looking for ways to increase accessibility to its facilities," says Mt. Olive Twp. Business Administrator Andrew Tatarenko. "We recently installed the same product to the main doors at townhall. It was important to us that our seniors had easy access to a public building that is used on a regular basis."

The request for ADA doors was made during the 2019 budget process, explains Tatarenko.

"The ADA doors were approved as part of the 2019 capital budget and there were no objections," he says. "The doors will remain the same. A new hydraulic opener will be installed on top of the door which will be controlled by a wireless push activator."

Cost for the ADA doors came to \$10,500 with monies included in the 2019 Capital Budget, he says.

The Senior Club, which has 150 to 175 members, requested the ADA doors a few months ago.

"It was a request for those who needed it," says Dorothy Tull of Budd Lake, secretary of Mt. Olive Seniors and former president. For "those in wheelchairs," the automatic opening of the doors do come in handy.

"A lot of people come to the club and nutrition program," she says, that welcomes residents Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, "that come in wheelchairs and sticks."

Involved with the Mt. Olive Seniors for the past six years since she has lived in

town, Tull says "it's a very vibrant club. It's a very good club for seniors; only \$15 a month to join; just had a Halloween party."

Residents aged 55 and older are invited to join Mt. Olive Seniors. The group holds its general meetings every first and third Tuesday of the month at 11 a.m., except in November with election day, meetings are every second and third Tuesday.

Tull is happy with the township and their willingness to meet the requests of local seniors.

"They're pretty good," says Tull. "When we asked for handicapped spaces, there's a whole row of them."

The new doors were not working properly this past week, she mentions, but the township is open to fixing the situation.

While the new opening mechanism for the Senior Center Doors were installed, "the motor has malfunctioned and we are getting a new one at no cost," notes Tatarenko. "New motor has been ordered, so it will be soon," he adds regarding fixing the doors.

"The Senior Center is also used by our Recreation Department for township events, it is rented out to residents for private parties, used for various workshops and is an election polling site," adds Tatarenko.

For more information about Mt. Olive Seniors, contact Sandy Lasklee, Mt. Olive Senior president, at 973-691-2653; or Marcy Merola, senior coordinator with Mt. Olive Twp. at 973-691-0900 ext. 7331.

Local Library News

Library Events Covered This Fall Like Leaves

Birds And Prey Up Close- The MOPL plans to host the Delaware Valley Raptors on Tuesday, Oct. 22, at 6:30 p.m. in the Gathering Room for its educational program "Close Encounters with Birds of Prey." It will be bringing an American kestrel, red-tailed hawk, peregrine falcon, great-horned owl, saw-whet owl and an immature bald eagle. The program is for adults and children over 6 years old only. Registration requested.

You Don't Have to Pay the Full Price for College- a "College Funding Seminar" is set for Wednesday, Oct. 23, at 7 p.m. in the Gathering Room. This free seminar, presented by Alvin G. Newell, vice president of Solutions for College Funding, Inc., will discuss how parents of college-bound high school juniors and seniors can: Make sure to not over-value your home on financial forms; try not to save money in child's name as it weighs more heavily than parent's savings; don't be afraid to negotiate with the college for a better financial aid package. Registration requested.

Come See the Real World Birthplaces of Gothic Horror- The MOPL plans to host "Strange Tales in Stone" on Wednesday, Oct. 30, at 7 p.m. in the Gathering Room. Join horror artist, Steve Gale and experience a unique blend of original artwork, Gothic literature, macabre history and European travel in this family-friendly presentation. Exhibition of his artwork opened on Wednesday, Oct. 16, in the Gathering Room to view for those unable to attend the presentation. Registration requested.

Library Offers Workshops On Medicare, Finance & Healthier Eating

The Mt. Olive Public Library plans to host "Medicare Made Clear" on Monday, Nov. 4 from 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. in the Gathering Room. This free Medicare educational event is presented by Craig Lordigyan, president of The Lordigyan Insurance Agency, LLC.....No Selling, Just Telling!

A free financial workshop, "Women & Money," is set for Wednesday, Nov. 6, at 7 p.m. in the Gathering Room. Join Ruby Sanders, representative, and Suzanne Troiano, regional vice president, with Primerica and learn about the Rule of 72; Debt Stacking, Revolving Debt Traps and How Life Insurance Works.

Trying to eat healthy and still enjoy all the “goodies” of the holidays? A workshop titled, “Healthy Holiday Eating,” is set for Thursday, Nov. 7, at 7 p.m. in the Gathering Room. Join Kate-Lyn Snare, retail dietitian from ShopRite of Flanders, as she teaches us to make better choices and focus on a healthy balance of food, activities and fun. By implementing a few simple steps, begin and maintain a healthy lifestyle! There will also be a Q & A session following the presentation so bring questions!

“Movies at the Library” will be offered on Tuesday, Nov. 19 at either 1 p.m.-3 p.m. or 6 p.m.-8 p.m. for the movie “Red Joan,” inspired by an extraordinary true story about one of the most influential spies in living history. The movie brings to life the conflicts between patriotism and idealism, love and duty, courage and betrayal. Rated R - Restricted: No one under the age of 17 admitted!

Interested in **learning to speak Spanish**? Join Dr. Paul Reilly for a 10 week class, which will emphasize spoken conversational Spanish in travel situations as a tourist.

Classes are set for Thursdays through Nov. 21, from 6:30 p.m.-8 p.m. in the Career Room. If someone misses more than two classes, they will forfeit their space. Limited to 10 adults.

Registration required for all programs. Call 973-691-8686 Ext. 106 or go to www.mopl.org to register.

Local and county news

County Celebrates 25 Years Of Open Space & Farmland Preservation

Morris County recently celebrated 25 years of the Morris County Open Space Trust Fund.

More than 17,000 acres of open space has been preserved since 1994. Mt. Olive’s

Turkey Brook Park was among one of the first projects, and Fire Tower Ridge in Mt. Olive was the largest.

Voter approved, the fund has resulted in preservation of thousands of acres of open spaces across the entire county, helping to maintain the county's high quality of life, since the first grant was awarded in 1994.

The Liffy Island preservation project in Jefferson received the first county open space grant, approved by the county governing board in 1994, 25 years ago in November.

The 136-acre Giralda Farms tract at the county Park Commission's Loantaka Brook Reservation was the county's most expensive and one of its most important preservation projects, receiving a \$10 million county open space grant for this now heavily used public space.

Joining members of the current Freeholder Board at the celebration held Friday, Oct. 17, were current and former county, state and local officials, members of the current and previous county Open Space Trust Fund Committee and representatives of nonprofit land preservation groups.

"We are indebted to the people who had the foresight to guide the county towards this great preservation endeavor and to the public officials and the score of volunteers who made our preservation effort a great success over the past 25 years," said Freeholder Director Doug Cabana. Think of what this county might look like today without that foresight."

"Each of you who were involved in this great preservation effort should be proud of the role you played in helping Morris County preserve our green spaces. Congratulations and thank you behalf of all Morris County residents," said Freeholder Stephen Shaw, a one-time member and vice-chair of the county's open space committee.

"The open space and parks in Morris County are critical to making Morris County a great place to live, work, play and raise a family and are critical to the economic vitality of the region," Shaw added.

A recommendation by the non-profit Morris 2000 planning group convinced a freeholder board in 1992 to put a question on the ballot, asking voters if they would like to create an open space and farmland preservation trust fund. to be

financed by a dedicated tax. County voters approved it by a two-to-one margin.

Turkey Brook Among First Project/Fire Tower Ridge Largest

A special committee was formed, which in November of 1994 made its first grant recommendations to the Freeholder Board for preservation projects at Liffy Island in Jefferson, Turkey Brook Park in Mt. Olive, and Knuth Farm in Denville.

Twenty-five years later, the county and its municipal and nonprofit partners have awarded open space grants for projects in 38 of Morris County's 39 towns, preserving 17,475 acres, which is more acreage than the size of Parsippany and almost as large as Chester Township.

Since its inception, 474 grants have been awarded for projects in 38 towns ; 403 projects have been completed; 17,475 acreage preserved; \$289.7 million in grants awarded.

The largest project was Fire Tower Ridge in Mt. Olive at 613 acres.

For detailed data about all facets of the Open Space Trust Fund, visit:

<https://planning.morriscountynj.gov/divisions/prestrust/>.

The current County Open Space Trust Fund Committee is preparing to make its 2019 grant recommendations to the Board of Freeholders in November.

join Mount OLIVE walkers

Step into shape with a new walking program, Mt. Olive Walkers- a new class on Fridays through the Mt. Olive Exercise program. Get Lean At Lunch is held at 1 p.m. Walk-Ins are welcome.

Free to members; \$5 fee for non-members.

This new class will bring local residents together to walk with weights, core toning and stretch.

Email cherylc6@optonline.net for more details and to sign up.

College News

CCM To Present Films And Lectures At Morris Museum

Described by the Village Voice as more than a film, the documentary “Karl Marx City” will be the first of three presentations held at the Morris Museum’s Bickford Theatre by the County College of Morris (CCM) Legacy Project this academic year. “Karl Marx City,” co-directed by the award-winning filmmaker Petra Epperlein and Michael Tucker, “is a fascinating conversation about history itself, the very act of forgetting and the persistence of memory,” according to the Village Voice. The film explores the suicide of Epperlein’s father and the life of her family behind the Iron Curtain.

The documentary will be shown as part of this year’s Legacy Project series focusing on “War, Peace and Healing.”

Free and open to the public, “Karl Marx City,” followed by a Q&A with Epperlein, will be shown at the Morris Museum Bickford Theater in Morristown, on Friday, Nov. 1, from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. To guarantee seating, RSVP to leagacy@ccm.edu.

The Legacy Project will offer two additional presentations at the Bickford Theatre in the spring. Specific dates have yet to be scheduled.

In March, poet Seema Reza, will introduce the documentary film, “We Are Not Done Yet,” and then participate in a discussion after the screening.

Directed by Sareen Hairabedian and produced by Jeffrey Wright (Emmy winner for

HBO's Angels in America and two-time Emmy nominee for HBO's Westworld) and David Holbrooke (HBO's The Diplomat), the film profiles a group of veterans and

active-duty service members as they share their experiences and seek to combat their traumas in a United Service Organizations writing workshop.

The project was inspired by the writing workshops for veterans led by poet Reza, chair of Community Building Art Works, a charitable organization that develops arts programs for veterans and their communities.

In April, Eugenie Mukeshimana, a survivor of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, will give a lecture on "Surviving Genocide." She will share her experiences, discuss forces in Rwanda that fomented the genocide, and educate listeners about the dangers of hatred, inflammatory language, violence and the dehumanization of others.

For additional information on this year's Legacy Project programs, go to www.ccm.edu/legacy-project

Gloria Andrich Life Insurance Sales Broker

If you're living large in your "New Jersey Dream Home" Protect it!
Life insurance can pay off your mortgage & protect your most valuable assets!
Call today to hear about "Term Life Insurance coverage **without an Exam**" 908-684-0023
or click here <https://andrichbrokerage.com/request-a-quote> & we will reach out to YOU!

Events around town

Subscribe

Sign up to get each issue delivered straight to your inbox.

Email Address

Sign up

About Mt Olive online

Managing Editor/Publisher

Experienced journalist since 1990, living in Flanders for 21 years and covering Mt. Olive Township for the past 11 years.

Contact Us

Schools, Sports, Business, Government, People....MO on the GO!

Have a story idea for us or want to advertise? Call for pricing?
Send us a message and let us know what's happening today in Mt. Olive.

Mt. Olive Online

Mount Olive, New Jersey, United States

(973) 577-6618

Editor@mtoliveonline.today

phone calls 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Today **Closed** 

Send Message

 **Get directions**

Copyright © 2018 Mt. Olive Online - All Rights Reserved.

Powered by [GoDaddy](#)