

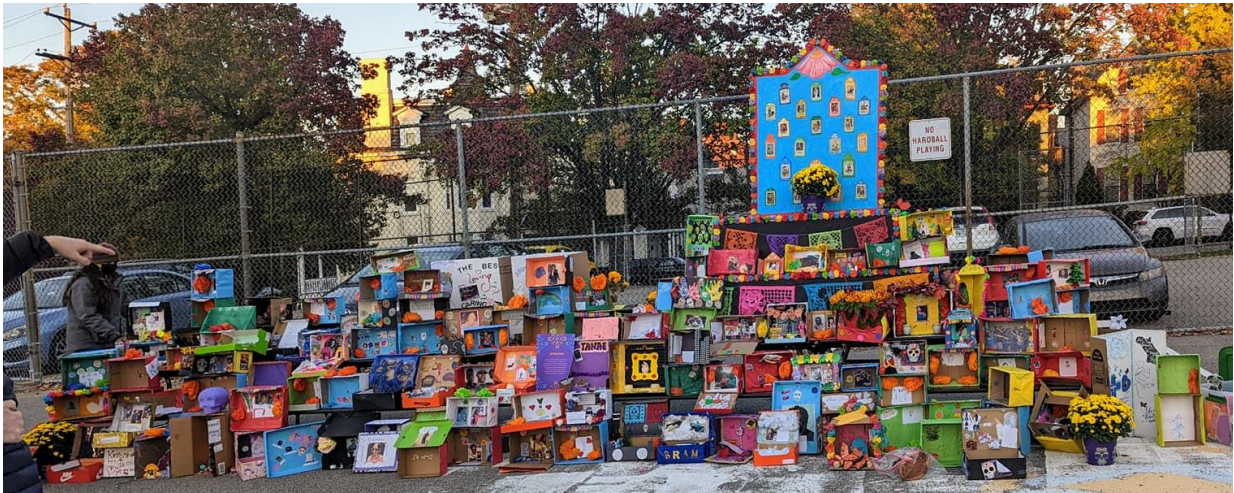
El Nido del Águila

"THE EAGLE'S NEST," THE COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER OF PITTSBURGH LIBERTY K-5

December 2021

Vol. 7, Issue 3

¡Viva la tradición!



On November 5th, Liberty celebrated the return of a beloved school tradition: our in-person *Dia de los Muertos* party! See story page 6.

December Calendar

Monthly Liberty Community Meetings: Wed. Dec. 8, 6 PM (VIRTUAL)

<https://tinyurl.com/LibertyPSCC>

Liberty holds these two meetings back-to-back one evening each month of the school year:

- 1) **Parent School Community Council (PSCC):** Led by our principal, this meeting serves as our school district's primary way to engage families at the school level. Topics for the year include: defining the school's mission; analyzing assessment data; setting goals; and developing school improvement action plans.
- 2) **Liberty Elementary Academic Fund (LEAF):** Led by parents and guardians, LEAF (Liberty's parent-teacher organization) is a nonprofit organization founded to support our students, teachers, and families through fundraising, volunteering, and community events. LEAF funds classroom

supplies, supplemental educational tools, cultural celebrations, extracurriculars, and scholarships for advanced learning opportunities. For info: president@pghleaf.org

PPS Public Hearing

Monthly opportunity for citizens' comments on our school board agenda items and other district matters.

WHEN: Dec. 20, 2021, 6:00 pm

WATCH: <https://www.pghschools.org/calendar#calendar1/20211228/event/20348>

TESTIFY: Write your comments in advance, and they will read them aloud for you.

First, you must 1) register (deadline is noon, on the day of the hearing) by calling 412-529-3868; then 2) email your testimony to Laura Getty at

lgetty1@pghschools.org. More info: <https://www.pghschools.org/Page/4043>

Liberty Skate Night Feb. 16th, 2022, 6:30-8:30pm

Mark your calendars for a night of family fun this February! Our annual Liberty Skate Night, sponsored by LEAF, will be February 16th, 2022, 6:30-8:30pm at Schenley Park Ice skating rink. Admission is free for Liberty students and families! Skate rentals are \$3 (cash only, please), or bring your own skates.

Liberty community toy drive

Liberty staff and families are partnering to organize a small toy drive/giving tree among our school community. For info, contact our school social worker, Ms. Elisa Portillo: eportillowein1@pghschools.org

New teacher feature: Mrs. Brandt

Mrs. Kathryn Brandt is our new first grade teacher and our FACE coordinator along with Mrs. Gehring. She has been teaching for 25 years. For the first 19 years, she taught at Sto-Rox elementary. She came to PPS in 2016 and started teaching at Westinghouse, then was at Roosevelt for 5 years before coming to Liberty. She loves to bake, because she finds it to be relaxing. Her class hashtag is #OtherPeopleMatter, because she believes in teaching kids skills to build good relationships with others. She thinks that this will help them to become successful in life.

She has been married for 26 years, and has two daughters. A few of her favorite things are: the color green, the book *Alex Cross*, Fall, football, reading, baking, Target, snickerdoodles, Dove dark chocolate, and listening to ballads.

Liberty is glad to have such an awesome teacher. Welcome, Mrs. Brandt!

“Gifted” Services At Liberty (a.k.a. Greenway)

Every Tuesday, a group of Liberty students take a bus to Pittsburgh Gifted Center (a.k.a. Greenway), a school campus in the West End, to participate in what's known as Gifted and Talented Education Services.

Per their website, the overall aim is to provide educational opportunities and experiences to help high-achieving students extend their learning, develop individual potential, enhance their self-concept, and become life-long, independent learners. “PPS is committed to providing differentiated activities and opportunities,” the site states, “through which students can discover and develop their unique and individual needs, interests, talents and abilities.” In addition to the instruction students receive at Greenway, students also receive gifted services at Liberty through differentiation in their classes.

→ What is "gifted?"

In this context, it means higher-than-average IQ. If average is within the of 85 to 110 range, gifted is 115, 120, 130, and so on. (For perspective: Einstein was 147!)

Some signs that your child may be gifted: The child is a quick study and absorbs new knowledge fast. The child just somehow knows things, and you wonder, “When did she learn that?” The child might be bored at school. There are misconceptions surrounding IQ: It’s important to keep in mind that it is absolutely possible to have a learning disability and a higher-than-average IQ. And sometimes, the reason a child is misbehaving is because she or he is bored—and truly could benefit from the gifted program.

→ A few things to keep in mind if you’re planning to have your child tested for gifted:

- Barb Bradley, a Gifted Center faculty member, suggests: First, talk to your child's teacher regarding the student's progress through the lens of gifted education. “Most conversations are around progress in the regular curriculum,” she says. “When considering testing you would ask questions more around what types of differentiation have been needed for your child. Is your child going beyond what is expected on assignments regularly? Has the teacher needed to enrich the assignments to meet the child’s needs? How often is this needed? Does the child have a strong desire to find out additional information on a topic being studied and bring that information back to their peers?” If you decide to have your child tested, contact Liberty’s social worker, Ms. Elisa Portillo (eportillowein1@pghschools.org), to request a form. It will be provided within

10 days—the child will then be scheduled within 60 days of submission of your completed form. (The clock may be paused during the summer.)

- There's good reason to not tell your child what the test is for; it can lead to a lot of anxiety, stress, and potential heartache.
- It is possible to have students tested as early as kindergarten; however, the district strongly discourages this, for several reasons: PPS students do not start going to Greenway until 1st grade. Additionally, waiting gives the children time to settle into school, and also allows their teachers to get to know them and make the best recommendations possible to the gifted center. And in the meantime, the faculty will accommodate the children, enriching their learning onsite as needed—talk to your child's teacher if you have questions.

→ What to expect after the test

- If a student has an IQ of 130, they are automatically admitted into gifted services.
- If the child is within the range of 120-129 (or maybe 115), the gifted team will do a review. When there is a need for additional information, they will ask the school social worker to request a portfolio of the student's work. Then the Gifted Center makes the determination. In those situations, it is very helpful for our school social worker to sit down with parents and discuss the big picture for the child, because the department is aware that there are many things that can affect IQ testing score: any history of trauma, poverty, grief, loss, feeling unsafe in their neighborhood, etc. It's important to share any factors that should be taken into consideration; this information will be kept confidential.

If a child is not admitted to gifted services, it is by all means not the end of the world! The reason the service is run by the Department of Special Education is because it's an exceptionality. These kids need more services (they do have IEP plans).

→ Equity in gifted services

In recent years, media outlets and education advocates have raised important questions and dialogue about racial bias in gifted services:

- “Who gets to be considered ‘gifted’ in Pittsburgh schools? Too few black girls.” PublicSource, March 16, 2017.
<https://blackgirlspgh.publicsource.org/education/gets-considered-gifted-pittsburgh-schools-black-girls>
- “If everyone got screened, gifted education in Pittsburgh could be more equitable. School officials aren't sold.” PublicSource, March 17, 2017.

<https://blackgirlspgh.publicsource.org/education/universal-screenings-can-increase-equity-gifted-education-work-pittsburgh>

• "Keys to Expand Access to the Gifted Program in the Pittsburgh Public School District"
An issue brief by A+ Schools that examines identification processes used by PPS and nearby districts; compares the demographic profile of the district compared to those students identified as gifted; and highlights steps that other districts have taken to be more inclusive, as well as ways to expand enhanced learning opportunities to all students.

<https://files.constantcontact.com/111fdbca001/29734e26-1167-4324-9641-007c090e47a2.pdf>

→ For more information on PPS gifted services

Visit the district website: <https://www.pghschools.org/giftedandtalented>

Student Assistance Program (SAP)

At Liberty, we want to support our students' social and emotional growth in addition to their academic growth. PPS has developed the Student Assistance Program (SAP) to help with this effort. Our Schools' SAP Care Team works together to develop ways to meet our student's individual needs and improve academic performance. Our school SAP Team consists of teachers, the principal, social worker, and school nurse. Our goal is to assist students who may be experiencing difficulties that interfere with their academic success.

SAP can include classroom-wide presentations, on-going small groups, social-emotional support, and referrals to outside community-based agencies. SAP is designed to support, educate, and empower students socially and emotionally. The information provided is designed to help students make healthy and positive decisions in their lives as well as to heal from trauma, cope with anger or grief, and much more.

If you are interested in learning more about the SAP program or if you would like to refer your child to SAP, please contact your child's teacher or our school social worker, Ms. Elisa Portillo: eportillowein1@pghschools.org, 412-529-8457.

Gift idea: Liberty spirit wear

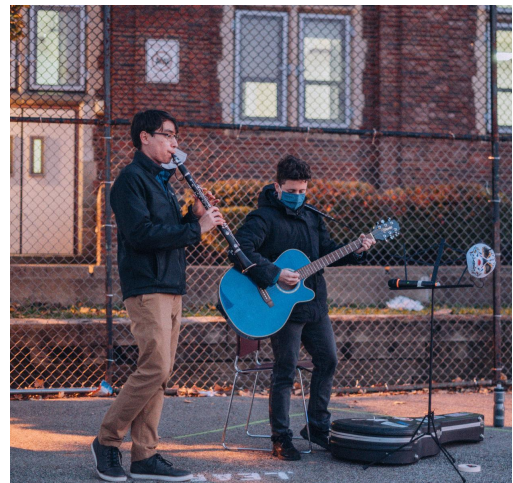
Wear your school pride on your sleeve! (Or, rather, on the front of your shirt/hoodie/sweatshirt!) Liberty Spirit wear may be worn as part of the school uniform. Orders may be placed online and paid via paypal or credit card. Deadline to receive orders before the holidays is December 10th. Note: Sweat pants are on backorder.

bit.ly/LibertySpiritWear

Attention, Liberty Teachers!

Does your classroom need a facelift that doesn't fit in the budget? Is there a special training you need? Or special equipment, supplies, or costumes for Liberty events? Please fill out the form at bit.ly/pghleaf-teachers, send it (along with your receipt) to president@pghleaf.org, and get reimbursed by LEAF, our parent organization. The check will then be delivered to you shortly after the monthly LEAF meeting.

To our mighty *Dia de los Muertos* event volunteers: THANK YOU!





Photos: Shannon Konek

On November 5th, Liberty celebrated the return of a beloved tradition: our in-person *Día de los Muertos* party! Families braved the cold for our outdoor event, full of food, crafts, dancing, and music.

Thank you to our students for your beautiful and lovingly made *ofrendas*.

Thank you, Ms. Yoli Pinizzotto and Ms. Brenda Kistler, for educating our kids about this traditional Mexican holiday; for leading the kids in dancing *la Cumbia*; and for facilitating our kids in putting together the biggest and most beautiful school-wide *ofrenda* to date (see cover photo).

Thank you to all of our wonderful parent volunteers for your help with the setup, cleanup, food-serving, crafting, and planning, especially Mr. Shawn Foster, Mr. Cameron Edwards, Ms. Jennifer Edwards—LEAF president and Queen of Crafts—and Ms. Sarah Starr.

Thank you, Mr. Corbett and Mr. Maroon for the lovely duets.

Thank you, Ms. Keri Cox, for the ice treats and *Coco* movie screening.

Thank you to Dr. Maria Guyette and Dr. Frank Guyette, who volunteered to sit at a table that night and answer questions that any of us had about COVID and vaccines.

Thank you Mr. Dylan Vitone for spearheading the event-planning this year and figuring out solutions to the (many!) logistical challenges of throwing a winter party outside, after dark, in the middle of a pandemic.

Last but not least, thanks to his mom, Grandma Sandra Vitone, caterer extraordinaire, who came out of retirement to pull this off. She made sure that, even though we couldn't do our traditional potluck meal because of COVID, we still had a heck of a spread that was both beautiful and delicious.

Thank you, Ms. Shannon Konek, for photographing the event. Catch her beautiful shots on LEAF's facebook page at bit.ly/LEAFmuertos21; and additional snapshots from that night on LEAF's facebook page: bit.ly/libertymuertos21.

Speaking of beautiful photos: Our Muertos celebration was featured on the local publication *KidsburghPgh!* Read more about the event and how parents are staying involved at schools across the Pittsburgh region at bit.ly/kidsburgh-muertos.

Lección De Español: DICIEMBRE

campanas: bells

vela: candle

baston de caramelo: candy cane

villancico: carol

Navidad: Christmas

tarjeta de Navidad: Christmas card

dia de Navidad: Christmas day

decoraciones navidenas: Christmas decorations

Nochebuena: Christmas Eve

luces navidenas: Christmas lights

arbol de Navidad: Christmas tree

duende: elf

chimenea: fireplace

regalo: gift

hombre de jengibre: gingerbread man

¡Feliz Año Nuevo!: Happy New Year!

dias festivos: holidays

medianoche: midnight

adornos: ornaments

reno: reindeer

Papa Noel: Santa Claus

Felices Fiestas: Season's Greetings

Noche de Paz: Silent Night

copos de nieve: snowflakes

estrella: star

media: stocking

pavo: turkey

guirnalda: wreath

Inspirational Quotes from the 2nd Grade Newsletters

Stand tall. Be proud. Be yourself. You are amazing.

It always seems impossible until it is done. —*Nelson Mandela*

Try to show kindness in all that you do.

Be the change you want to see in the world. —*Mahatma Gandhi*

Welcoming New Families To Liberty

Liberty community members are working together to ease the transition for kindergarten and transfer students and their families. It's a new effort we're calling Linking Liberty!

Are you new to Liberty? Go to the following link to be connected to a current student family: <https://tinyurl.com/LinkingLibertyNew>

Are you a Liberty Veteran that wants to help someone new? Sign up at the following link to be connected to a new family.

<https://tinyurl.com/LinkingLibertyVet>

Reach out to Vicki Potter (vicki.potter78@gmail.com) for more info.

Have you visited our website?

Check out www.pghleaf.org for info on:

- Gifted Services at Liberty
- Extracurriculars at Liberty
- Communications (making sure you're receiving all announcements from the district, the school, your teachers, and LEAF)
- PDFs of LEAF's newsletter, *The Eagle's Nest* (current and archive issues)
- Childcare (extended day, summer camps, etc)
- Kindergarten families' section (orientation video)
- 5th grade families' section (middle school magnet application processes)
- Fundraising opportunities for our teachers and students

Support LEAF while you shop!

If you do any of your shopping on Amazon, there's an easy and automatic way to support Liberty students at the same time. Amazon's nonprofit arm supports a site called AmazonSmile--which is virtually identical to Amazon in terms of pricing, selection, and convenience. When you check out, 0.05% of your purchase price will be donated directly to the charity of your choice. Simply use your usual login credentials, but via the AmazonSmile address instead (smile.amazon.com). Then, when the site prompts you to select your charity, type "Liberty Elementary Academic Fund" in the search bar.

Craft: handprint santa

→ You will need:

- white or red construction paper
- crayons, markers, or paint.

→ Directions:

On the paper, trace your hand. Turn the paper upside down. If you used the red paper, you can color the top of the thumb white like the ball on Santa's hat. If you used the white paper, color the thumb red and leave the other fingers white to represent his beard. For the red paper, you will need to color the fingers white. Add a face on the middle part of the hand. Cut it out if you choose and add a ribbon, so that you can use it as an ornament.

Craft: Mexican Star

→ You will need:

- a paper plate
- bright colored markers or crayons

→ Directions:

Draw a big star in the middle of the paper plate. Make it as big as the plate, if possible. Color in the star using bright colors. Make a pattern using different shapes. In Spain, bright colors and patterns are used when celebrating Christmas.

Craft: Paper chains

→ You will need:

Different types of paper: construction, scrapbook, even wrapping paper that isn't too thin will work.

→ Directions:

Cut out strips of paper. Loop them together using glue, tape or staples to keep them together. Hang them from the mantle, the tree, in the window or on the door.

Recipe: Santa's reindeer feed

→ You will need:

- 1 cup of oats (any type rolled or steel cut)
- 1 teaspoon of ground cinnamon
- 1/4 cup of white sugar
- 1/4 cup of red or green sugar crystals or sprinkles

First, combine all the ingredients in a resealable plastic bag or container. Seal and shake until well combined. When it is dark before bed on Christmas Eve, sprinkle the magic food on your front lawn to help Santa and his reindeer find your house. This makes enough for all of Santa's reindeer! The oats are a reindeer's favorite food. Cinnamon is their favorite smell, and sugar crystals reflect the light from Rudolph's nose so Santa can find your house. This is a magical "recipe" for kids to make on Christmas Eve in preparation of Santa's visit, and it won't harm any small animals that might take a bite. Another variation of this recipe uses arts and crafts glitter which can be harmful to animals. Sometimes, we add different Holiday sprinkles instead of the colored sugar crystals.

Recipe: whipped Christmas shortbread

This quick and easy recipe can be ready in less than 30 minutes for a good cookie recipe ready fast. You can use sprinkles and candy-coated chocolate candy, or any toppings of your choice. Try using a whole pecan, a Hershey's kiss, or drizzle them with chocolate, add some crushed candy canes, or leave them plain. If making ahead of time, wait until they completely cool and then freeze. These cookies can last for two months in the freezer. When you are ready to eat them, let them come to room temperature for about 20 minutes before eating.

→ Ingredients:

- 1 cup butter, softened (salted or unsalted will work)
- 1/4 cup corn starch
- 1 1/2 cups all purpose flour
- 1/2 cup confectioner's sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup toppings of choice (sprinkles, nuts, candy, etc.)

→ Instructions:

- 1) Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat. Set aside.
- 2) Add the butter to a bowl and using a hand-held mixer, whip until light and fluffy-about 3 minutes.
- 3) Add the flour, corn starch, confectioner's sugar, and vanilla. Blend together until fully incorporated-about 2 minutes.
- 4) Portion about 1 teaspoon of the dough (a small ice cream scoop helps).
- 5) Roll the dough into small balls and place on the lined baking sheet. Leave a good 2 inches between each ball.
- 6) Next, dip a fork into the confectioner's sugar to keep the dough from sticking to the fork, and push the fork down into the ball to flatten it to 1/2 inch or so.
- 7) Top the dough with sprinkles, candies, or nuts.
- 8) Bake for 14 minutes. Remove from the oven. Allow to cool for 2 minutes on the baking sheet before transferring to a wire rack to continue cooling.

Parent Advisory Council (PAC)

PAC is our school district's mechanism for ensuring that parents are informed and can help develop programming and policy. If you're interested in representing Liberty at this monthly district-wide meeting, contact Ms. Z:

lzwieryznski1@pghschools.org

Submit to This Newsletter!

Submissions are due on the 20th of each month of the school year. Send them to president@pghleaf.org

This newsletter is produced by the parent-teacher organization known as LEAF (Liberty Elementary Academic Fund), a nonprofit organization. LEAF's mission is to support the students, teachers and families at Pittsburgh Liberty K-5 through fundraising, volunteering, and community events.

Website: www.pghleaf.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/PghLibertyPTO/

Email: president@pghleaf.org
