

# *El Nido del Águila*

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

December 2022

Vol. 8, Issue 3

## *¡Viva la tradición!*



On Nov. 4, Liberty celebrated our fifth annual *Dia de los Muertos* potluck & party! We had our biggest turnout yet. See story page 7.

**IN THIS ISSUE:** \* “Gifted” services at Liberty (aka Greenway) \* Ice skating night \* Learning to read with the Liberty Community \* Toy drives \* SAP program \* Bundle up in Liberty sweatshirts, hoodies, & hats \* Support LEAF while you shop \* Spanish Vocabulary \* Recipes \* Crafts \* **THANK YOU, LEAF VOLUNTEERS!** \*

## December Calendar

Monthly Liberty Community Meetings: Wed., Dec. 14

*We will meet **virtually only in Dec., Jan., and Feb.** We will go back to hybrid meetings in March.*

Zoom link: see email from Ms. Z!

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

- 1) **6:00 PM: 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.
- 2) **7:00 PM: 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](mailto:president@pghleaf.org)

### ***PPS Public Hearing***

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

**WHEN:** Dec. 19th, 6PM

**WATCH:** <https://vimeo.com/event/2209623>

**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](mailto:lgetty1@pghschools.org). More info: <https://www.pghschools.org/Page/4043>

### ***Liberty Skate Night Wed., February 8, 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 Wed., February 8th 6:30-8:30 pm at Schenley Park Ice skating rink. Admission is free for Liberty students and families! Skate rentals are included!

## **Survey: LEAF would love to hear from YOU!**

We would like to gauge interest in, and barriers to, involvement with LEAF activities. Please fill out a short survey to help LEAF better serve families in our school community.

<https://bit.ly/leafmtgsurvey22>



## **To our bake sale volunteers: THANK YOU!**

To everyone who baked goodies and worked the bake sale table outside the school on Election Day, thank you! The sale raised \$286 for LEAF, our parent-teacher organization!

To sign up to volunteer for a future bake sale, visit: <https://pghleaf.org/volunteer>

## “Gifted” Services at Liberty (aka 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. Average is within the range of 85 to 110, and 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 they 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 they are 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](mailto: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).

→ Working toward more equitable gifted education in Pittsburgh:

The organization A+ Schools is working to ensure every child in Pittsburgh, especially our Black and Brown children, gets the high-quality education they deserve.

- For more information: <http://bit.ly/3tohbjo>
- To get involved with the A+ Schools' campaign to make gifted education more equitable, contact Amie White: [amatson@aplusschools.org](mailto:amatson@aplusschools.org) or 412-697-1298 ext. 113.

→ For more information on PPS gifted services

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

# Learning to read with the Liberty community!

Liberty works hard to make sure *every* child gets the attention and education they need. For some students this means gifted services, and for other students this means the extra support they need in learning to read.

Elementary school is a critical time for learning to read, and a really amazing time for us as parents and families see that process happen. We can support this at home reading to our children. To choose some amazing books, check out your closest library!

<https://www.carnegielibrary.org/locations/>

In addition to our amazing Liberty teachers, we have Oasis tutors, who work with selected students throughout the year. The Oasis tutoring program is an intergenerational experience, pairing volunteers aged 50 and older with our students. Literacy Pittsburgh provides training and connections to help share the wisdom and guidance of the tutors with our school community. The Oasis program is always looking for new volunteers—if you or someone you know might have an hour a week to give, you can get started here:

<https://www.literacypittsburgh.org/oasis-intergenerational-tutoring/>

Reading is Fundamental also helps out, providing books every year for our children. To check them out: <https://www.rifpittsburgh.org/>

It is truly a group effort to help all of our Liberty students learn to read. Lifelong learners and lifelong readers get started right here in our school!

## Toy drives

We are thinking about the holidays now, and presents under the tree. Every year that can be challenging with tight budgets.

If your family needs help getting presents, here are some of the great organizations that support Pittsburgh families, and where you can request help.

- <http://www.playitforwardpittsburgh.com/receive-toys.html> sign up to receive toys, or to donate
- Salvation Army Angel Tree (Call 412-446-1500 to see if you qualify): <https://easternusa.salvationarmy.org/western-pennsylvania/angel-tree/>



to  
by

- Loving Hearts Holiday Tree (call for details/register 412-456-6999): <https://www.pa211.org/agency/4206/4898/>
- Parents and guardians might also find resources close to home by either calling 2-11 or searching online <https://www.pa211.org/>, as many organizations serve specific neighborhoods.

If your budget is feeling a *little* less tight this year, and you would like to help out, you can reach out to the organizations above!

If you have any questions, please reach out to Ms. Portillo: [eportillowein1@pghschools.org](mailto:eportillowein1@pghschools.org), 412-529-8457.

## 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](mailto:eportillowein1@pghschools.org), 412-529-8457.

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



Thank you to everyone who attended our fifth annual *Dia de los Muertos* celebration! We had our biggest turnout yet—by our count, 250 people!

Thank you to our students for your beautiful and lovingly made *ofrendas* and *papel picado* (pictured).

Thank you Ms. Pinizzotto and Ms. Cox, for educating our kids about this traditional Mexican holiday and helping them with their projects.

Thank to our many volunteers for your help with planning, setup, cleanup, crafting, and making the sugar skulls.

Thank you to our potluck chefs, especially Jillian Wein Riley.

Thank you, Mr. John Snyder, for helping us set up.

Thank you, Jessa Darwin and Beth Torrez for helping us get the word out.

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

Thank you, Grandma Sandra Vitone, for your food and decorations.

We'll have more photos on our facebook page soon, courtesy Liberty parent/pro photographer Shannon Konek. (The URL is <https://www.facebook.com/PghLibertyPTO>, but it's also linked from our website, [pghleaf.org](http://pghleaf.org)!)





## Bundle up with Liberty spirit wear & Black history tees



Wear your pride on your sleeve—or, rather, on the front of your shirt! Liberty school-spirit hoodies and sweats may be worn as part of the school uniform. (And BTW, we carry hats, too!)

And: get ready for Black History Month with Liberty gear! (Pictured, left. The front reads, *Because They Did, We Can*; the back: *Black History Matters at Liberty*.)

Sizes are available for both kids and adults!

Orders may be placed online and paid via paypal or credit card. [bit.ly/LibertySpiritWear](http://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](http://bit.ly/pghleaf-teachers), send it (along with your receipt) to [president@pghleaf.org](mailto: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.

## Welcome, new Liberty families!

Liberty community members are working together to ease the transition for kindergarten and transfer students and their families. We call it Linking Liberty!

Are you new to Liberty? Go to the following link to be connected to a current student family: [bit.ly/LinkLibertyNew22](http://bit.ly/LinkLibertyNew22)

Are you a Liberty Veteran that wants to help someone new? Sign up at the following link to be connected to a new family. [bit.ly/LinkLibertyVet22](http://bit.ly/LinkLibertyVet22)

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

## 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

*iFeliz Ano 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

## Have you visited our website?

Check out [www.pghleaf.org](http://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](http://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 holiday 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](mailto:lzwieryznski1@pghschools.org)

## Submit to This Newsletter!

Article deadlines for this year are Nov. 12 (December issue), Dec. 13 (January issue), Jan 17 (February issue), Feb. 18 (March issue), March 21 (April issue), April 18 (May issue), and May 21 (June issue). Send stories to [president@pghleaf.org](mailto:president@pghleaf.org)

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*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](http://www.pghleaf.org)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/PghLibertyPTO/](http://www.facebook.com/PghLibertyPTO/)

Email: [president@pghleaf.org](mailto:president@pghleaf.org)

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