

El Nido del Águila

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

October 2022

Vol. 8, Issue 1

Welcome back, Liberty Eagles!



In This Issue

- * Volunteering in the school * Say hello to your PTO **
- * Meet the teachers * Planning Dia de los Muertos **
- * Vaccine resources * RAD Days * Welcoming new families **
- * Mental health resources * Check out our website * Fundraising opportunities **

Calendar

Monthly Liberty Community Meetings: Wed., Oct. 12, virtual (link TBD); for updates, visit www.facebook.com/PghLibertyPTO/events

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

PPS Public Hearing

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

WHEN: Monday, Oct. 24th at 6 PM, Virtual Meeting

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

Restaurant Fundraiser at Chipotle, East Liberty: Nov. 2, 4-8PM:

Chipotle: 5986 Centre Ave, East Liberty, Pa, 15206. Be sure to mention the LEAF Fundraiser when you pay at the store, or you can order on the Chipotle app for pickup during this time, and use this code: Z8MDH2F

Dia de los Muertos School-Wide Party & Potluck Nov. 4, 6-8 PM ***(Rain Date: Nov. 5, 6-8 PM)***

As a Spanish language magnet, every year Pittsburgh Liberty K-5 celebrates this delightful Mexican holiday, a lively and joyous celebration of beloved friends and family who are deceased. Celebrants build ofrendas (altars) with the departed loved ones' photos, momentos, and favorite foods, and gather together for food and fun. We're planning an in-person event on Liberty's campus—complete with our giant schoolwide ofrenda! Volunteers are needed to help plan in advance; cook (or just bring food/drinks); set up and run the event on the day-of; and clean up after. To volunteer, use our new online signup form: <https://pghleaf.org/volunteer>

Family Fridays: *Oct. 28, * March 24

(* These will only occur if the COVID level is low.) On these PPS half-days throughout the school year, Liberty invites students to bring a family member or other beloved adult to school! It's a chance to see the great work our kids are doing, meet the faculty and your fellow Liberty families, and join our children for activities in the classroom.

Say hello to our teachers and staff!

There were some staffing changes at the beginning of the year, but we are set with a great team at this point. You can find contact information for all teachers on our school's PPS website (<https://www.pghschools.org/liberty>) or in the Student Handbook that was

available in paper copy at back to school night and sent home by Ms. Z in our Welcome email.

Kindergarten team: Mrs. Michelle Gehring and Mrs. Kara Matthews

1st Grade team: Mrs. Ithania Hawes and Mrs. Stacey Black

2nd Grade team: Mrs. Sabina Berger and Mrs. Halley Skiff

3rd Grade team: Mrs. Antonella Gabriel and Mr. Louis Berry

4th Grade team: Mr. Howard Michie and Mrs. Kate Brandt and Mrs. Keri Cox

5th Grade team: Mrs. Kelli Lowe and Mrs. Jaiquette Dennison

Autistic Support Classroom: Mrs. Dannielle Cash and Mrs. Heather Malingowski

Spanish: Mrs. Yoli Pinizzotto (K/1/2) and Mrs. Keri Cox (3/4/5)

Science: Mrs. Tracy Theobald

Learning Support: Mrs. Erin Colbert and Mrs. Brittany Periello and Mrs. Megan Zirkel

Specials: Mrs. Julie Fuerst (Physical Education), Mr. Robert Zehmisch (Art), Mrs. Hayley Plauger (Music), Mr. Adam Katz (Instrumental Music)

Library: Mrs. Tamara Roach

Coaches: Mrs. Jennifer Caprara (Instruction Coach) and Mrs. Michele Kelly (Literacy Coach)

Speech Therapist: Mr. Joe Ashenden

Front Office: Mrs. Louann Zwierzynski (Principal), Mrs. Meiko Garcia (Lead Teacher), Mrs. Ashley Murray (Secretary), Mrs. Brandi Ellington (SDSS), Mr. John Snyder (Custodian), Mrs. Elisa Portillo-Wein (Social Worker), Mrs. Alysha Dobbs (Nurse)

Who's in the building this year? You are!

Volunteering at Liberty: How does this work?

Step 1 - Get your **clearances** (PA State Criminal History Report, Child Abuse Certification, FBI Criminal History Report) and turn them in to the Liberty office. See the link below with required forms.

Step 2 - **Reach out** to your child's teacher to ask what they need help with and if there is a volunteer opportunity in the classroom. Let them know you are available and what you can help with.

Step 3 - **Schedule** your volunteer time with the teacher. Only scheduled visitors to the school are permitted in the building. Volunteering does NOT require a regular, ongoing time commitment, per Ms. Z. (However, coming in on a regular schedule "is appreciated, because in some instances teachers need help with a specific project.")

Step 4 - **Sign in** at the main office when you arrive for your volunteer time. Please note that volunteers will only be permitted in the building if the district's health and wellness protocols permit.

To keep our students safe, any volunteers who have direct volunteer contact - care, supervision, guidance or control of children **MUST** have clearances.

Roles that do not require background checks include attending school-wide events (Family Fridays!), volunteering at school-wide events (Dia de los Muertos!), assisting teachers or staff with clerical duties or assisting with a birthday party when the teacher/staff is present the entire time.

For more information, go to the district website with links to the required forms.

<https://www.pghschools.org/Page/3958>

Hello, hello, from your PTO (LEAF)!

We are your parent-teacher organization, a nonprofit known as Liberty Elementary Academic Fund (LEAF)! We support our entire school community with:

- fun events, like Skate Night, Fun Fair, & Dia de los Muertos
- enrichment for our kids, like field trips, extracurriculars, classroom supplies & tools, & scholarships for advanced learning opportunities
- teacher appreciation, like meals, gifts, & professional development
- communications, like this newsletter, as well as our facebook, & website (see last page for links)
- faculty-led efforts, like Black History Month
- uniform stand with gently used & new items

And last year, we bought 920 new books featuring characters of color and stories from historically marginalized voices. As part of our ongoing efforts to keep equity front & center, we updated every classroom library in the school!

At our September meeting, we elected the following LEAF officers for the 22-23 school year: Co-Presidents Jennifer Edwards & Maria Guyette; Vice President Tatum Clemons; Treasurer Sarah Starr; and Communications Team Jessa Darwin, Kim Neely, Maribeth Torrez, and Elaine Vitone.

Throughout the year, we need input from families to know what to prioritize to help everyone thrive—*all* our students, teachers, and families at Liberty K-5.

- **Contact us** at president@pghleaf.org

- **Come to our meetings** on the second Wednesday of each month, Sept. through May. For details: facebook.com/PghLibertyPTO/events

LEAF volunteer opportunities

Some cars run on gas, some cars run on electricity—we run on parents, grandparents, and guardians. All the adults who love and care for our Liberty students are welcome to participate in LEAF. You do not need to commit to every week or every month. Any time you can give is appreciated!

- **Questions:** president@pghleaf.org
- **Sign up online:** <https://pghleaf.org/volunteer> → → →



Current volunteer opportunities include:

- **Communications:** Help with LEAF's newsletter, Facebook page, and flyers.
- **Dia de los Muertos:** A fun event/Liberty tradition! See pg. 2 for more details.
- **Teacher appreciation team:** Plan meals and gifts to show our amazing faculty our appreciation for the great work that they do every day for our kids.
- **Fundraising:** We're open to new ideas! In the past we've done restaurant nights, bake sales, candy sales, Facebook, and online campaigns.
- **Taking notes at meetings:** 1 hour/month

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 an effort we call 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.

RAD Days

RADical days is an annual thank you to the public with free admission, tours, performances, and family activities offered by the organizations and attractions that are

funded by RAD. RAD Days will run until October 16th. The complete schedule is available online: <https://www.radworkshere.org/events>

Lección de Español (Spanish Lesson)

Pittsburgh Liberty K-5 is a school-wide magnet school with an emphasis in Spanish; teachers routinely use Spanish throughout the day in addition to providing direct instruction in the language. Students learn about the culture of many Spanish speaking countries throughout the year. Classrooms "adopt" a country for a semester, learning about its geography, history, and culture. As a culminating activity, students, teachers and staff share their knowledge with each other and their families.

In each newsletter, we introduce basic Spanish words, numbers, phrases, and some introduction to basic conversation. Here are a few intro words and phrases to kick off this year:

Popular Spanish words

<i>gracias</i>	thank you
<i>a</i>	to
<i>ir</i>	to go
<i>estar</i>	to be
<i>bueno</i>	good
<i>de</i>	of, from
<i>su</i>	your, her, his, or their
<i>hacer</i>	to make
<i>Amigo</i>	friend

Common Phrases

<i>Buenos dias.</i>	Good morning
<i>Buenas tardes.</i>	Good afternoon
<i>Buenas noches.</i>	Good evening,
	greeting
<i>Hola, me llamo Juan.</i>	Hello, my name
	is John
<i>Como se llama usted?</i>	What is your
	name?
<i>Como esta usted?</i>	How are you?
<i>Estoy bien.</i>	I am fine.
<i>Mucho gusto.</i>	Nice to meet
	you.
<i>Adios.</i>	Goodbye.
<i>Hasta luego.</i>	See you later.
<i>Con permiso</i>	Excuse me.
<i>Por favor.</i>	Please

Vaccination Resources

This summer and fall we welcomed some new updates to COVID vaccines!

Novavax was approved as another alternative for the initial COVID vaccination series (2 shots). Novavax uses a more traditional technology for vaccines.

The bivalent COVID vaccine has arrived for boosters! It provides protection against Omicron, as well. Get yours when you get your fall flu shot!

To find a vaccine appointment, check out:

- <https://apps.health.pa.gov/pavaccineprovidermap/>

Locally, you can schedule at (among others)

- <https://www.ahn.org/coronavirus/vaccine/schedule>
- <https://www.upmc.com/coronavirus/covid-vaccine>
- <https://www.gianteagle.com/covidvaccine>

Do you have questions about the vaccines? What's in them? Are they safe? Are they effective? Find answer at:

- <https://www.greatherthancovid.org/theconversation/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/keythingstoknow.html>

Mental health resources: Student Assistance Program

Getting back to the classroom has been a real joy this fall! The opportunity for our students to be in the Liberty building to learn with their teachers and laugh with their classmates feels good as we make our way through the third year of a global pandemic that upended life for all of us.

But the return to school hasn't come without some worries, and each Liberty family has a unique set of worries: job loss, grief for lost or sick loved ones, injustice in our institutions or simply the uncertainty of living in 2022.

Since the beginning of the pandemic the number of children seeking mental health care is up by 30%. Mental health care is important for many of us who are struggling through this year. WESA story: <https://bit.ly/mental-health-story-wesa>

At Liberty, you can find the help your child needs by reaching out through the Student Assistance Program (SAP). You can call:

- Your child's teacher <https://discoverpps.org/liberty/staff>
- Our school nurse, Nurse Dobbs (412) 529-8458
- Our social worker, Ms. Portillo-Wein (412) 529-8457

There are four phases to the student assistance process: (Thanks to PPS Obama for this excellent description of the program!)

Referral: Anyone can refer a student to SAP when they are concerned about someone's behavior—any school staff, a student's friend, a family member or community member. The students themselves can even go directly to the SAP team to ask for help. The SAP team contacts the parent for permission to proceed with the SAP process.

Team Planning: The SAP team gathers objective information about the student's performance in school from all school personnel who have contact with the student. Information is also collected from the parent. The team meets with the parent to discuss the data collected and also meets with the student. Together, a plan is developed that includes strategies for removing the learning barriers and promoting the student's academic and personal success to include in-school and/or community-based services and activities.

Intervention and Recommendations: The plan is put into action. The team assists in linking the student to in-school and/or community-based services and activities. The team might recommend a mental health assessment.

Support and Follow-Up: The SAP team continues to work with and support the student and their family. Follow-up includes monitoring, mentoring, and motivating for academic success.

Have you visited LEAF's 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

Donate via Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/PghLibertyPTO/>

Post a Facebook Fundraiser:

<https://www.facebook.com/fund/PghLibertyPTO/>

Amazon Smile: If you do any of your shopping on Amazon.com, 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.

Spirit Wear

Support Liberty's parent organization, LEAF, and show you Liberty SPIRIT by purchasing some Liberty gear--which is considered part of our school uniform! (And BTW, we carry hats, too!) Sizes are available for both kids and adults! Orders may be placed online and paid via paypal or credit card. bit.ly/LibertySpiritWear



Submit to this newsletter!

Article deadlines for this year are Oct. 17 (November issue), 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

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