

# *El Nido del Águila*

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

December 2023

Vol. 9, Issue 3

## *¡Viva la tradición!*



On Nov. 3, Liberty celebrated our annual *Dia de los Muertos* potluck & party! We had our biggest turnout yet. See story page 8.

### *In This Issue*

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# December Calendar

## Monthly School Community–Wide Meetings: Tues., Dec. 12

These two back-to-back meetings will be held **virtually for the rest of the school year.**

Zoom link: see email from Ms. Garcia

- 1) 6:00 PM: PSCC (aka Parent School Community Council): Led by our interim principal, Ms. Garcia, and our Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Coordinator, Ms. Gehring, this meeting serves as our school district's primary way to engage families at the school level. **See agendas & minutes at [bit.ly/LibertyPSCC23](http://bit.ly/LibertyPSCC23)**
- 2) 7:00 PM: LEAF (our parent-teacher organization): Led by parents and guardians, LEAF supports our students, teachers, and families through fundraising, volunteering, and community events. **See agendas & minutes at [pghleaf.org/meetings](http://pghleaf.org/meetings).** And if you can't make a meeting, your voice is still welcome and needed! Write us at [president@pghleaf.org](mailto:president@pghleaf.org). Our ears are open for ways we can best help our school thrive—all of our students, teachers, staff, and families at Liberty K-5!

## Fundraiser: Honeygrow on Tues., Dec. 5th

🍴 Dine, Donate, and Make a Difference! 🌟 Visit honeygrow at 105 S. Highland Avenue on Tuesday, December 5th between 10:30 AM - 10:00 PM to enjoy a delicious meal while supporting Liberty Elementary Academic Fund. Use code GIVE119 in store or online at [honeygrow.com](http://honeygrow.com). With 20% of your orders being donated, you can savor every bite knowing you're giving back! RSVP & get all the details here: <https://grouprai.se/s260365> 🎉 Code not valid on 3rd party delivery sites.

## Fundraiser: White Whale Bookstore, Sun., Dec. 17, 7–9PM

White Whale Bookstore, 4754 Liberty Ave. Pittsburgh PA USA, 15224

Tackle your holiday shopping list, support a locally owned business, snack/drink/mingle with other parents, and raise funds for our kids at the same time! Shop between 7 and 9PM, and LEAF will receive 15% of the proceeds.

## Fundraiser: Minted (year-round!)

LEAF is partnering with Minted, an online source for independent design (holiday cards, gifts, stationery, art, home decor, and more). When you shop on their site, you'll receive a 20% discount, and Mint will donate 15% of your order back to LEAF! Visit <https://www.minted.com/holiday> and use our code, **FUNDRAISEPGHLEAF.**

**PPS Public Hearings (Virtual): Pittsburgh Board of Public Education**

Monthly opportunity for citizens' comments on district matters.

**DATE:** Mon., Dec. 18th at 6:00pm

**TO TESTIFY:** Write and submit your comments in advance, and then read them aloud at the Zoom meeting. Comments can be no longer than three minutes/about 400 words. First, you **MUST** 1) register (deadline is noon, 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). OR, If you are unable to read your own testimony, you may submit it to Laura Getty, and it will be forwarded to the Board of Directors.

**MORE ON REGISTRATION:** <https://www.pghschools.org/Page/4043>

**SPEAKERS' TECH INSTRUCTIONS:** [bit.ly/hearingzoom](http://bit.ly/hearingzoom)

**WATCH:** <https://vimeo.com/event/2843465>

**Liberty Family Skate Night: Sat., Jan. 20, 6:30-8:20 @ HUNT ARMORY**

Mark your calendars for a night of family fun! Our annual Liberty Skate Night will be Sat., Jan. 20, 6:30-8:20 at Highmark Hunt Armory Ice Rink (324 Emerson St. Pittsburgh, PA 15206). Admission is free for Liberty students and families! Skate rentals are included! A waiver is required for each on-ice participant.

**Family Friday: March 15**

(\* This will only occur if the COVID level is low.) Several times each school year, on half-days, 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.

**Liberty family directory: sign up today!**

We are creating a directory for each grade at Liberty Elementary, so families can more easily contact one another, arrange playdates, etc. Our earlier attempt to collect this information from the PPS database was not successful due to the timing of a staff change.

**To be included in this directory so that other families in your child's grade can contact you**, please provide any information you would like to share, using the google form at this link: <https://bit.ly/liberty-family-directory>

**Deadline to sign up is Dec. 14.**

By submitting your contact info here, you give us permission to share your contact info with other Liberty families in your student's grade; we will not use your contact info for any purpose other than the family directory.

## Make a tax-deductible donation to LEAF

Did you know LEAF is a 501c3 nonprofit organization? Donations are tax-deductible. **To give to LEAF, visit <https://pghleaf.org/give>**

LEAF is our school's parent-teacher organization (a.k.a. Liberty Elementary Academic Fund). Throughout the year, LEAF supports our school community with:

- **fun events**, like Skate Night, Fun Fair, & *Dia de los Muertos*
- **enrichment for our kids**, like field trips, extracurriculars, classroom books/supplies, & scholarships for advanced learning opportunities
- **teacher appreciation**, like meals, gifts, & professional development
- **communications**, like this school newsletter, & our website, <https://pghleaf.org/>
- **summer playdates & uniform swaps** at Liberty's school playground

## “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/gifted>

## 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 to see that process happen. We can support this at home by 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!

## Teacher appreciation

Teacher appreciation is central to LEAF's mission. On Dec. 15th, we will bring them a special holiday meal, one of several gifts we are funding throughout the year! If you are interested in helping to organize teacher appreciation for LEAF, contact us at [president@pghleaf.org](mailto:president@pghleaf.org).

## Toy drives throughout the city

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/>
- 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.

## ***Día de los Muertos event: ¡Gracias!***

Our sixth annual event was held November 3rd. Thank you to our amazing Liberty community for making this beloved school tradition possible! For photos: [www.facebook.com/LibertyPPS](http://www.facebook.com/LibertyPPS)

Thank you, Liberty students, for your beautiful creations on our school-wide ofrenda.

Thank you to Ms. Pinizzotto & Ms. Cox, for teaching our kids about the cultural traditions around this delightful Mexican holiday, and for helping them with their ofrendas.

Thank you to our parent volunteers, especially event planners: Beth Torrez, Teresa Pizzella, Jillian Riley, and Sarah Starr, and the Vitone family.

Thank you to our teachers who donated to our student raffle.

Thank you to all the parents and guardians who helped with setup, cooking, running tables, and making sugar skulls.

Thank you to Highmark Caring Place, a center for grieving children, adolescents and their families, for engaging with our families at the event.

**This year's celebration felt especially important due to the recent passing of Ms. G (Lisa Gonzalez, pictured),** who was a devoted and beloved volunteer in our school community for many years. We were honored to have Ms. G's family join us at the event, where we celebrated the amazing woman who had worked closely with scores of Liberty kindergarteners and loved them like an auntie. Liberty Parent Joshua Pollard offered remarks, in both Spanish and in English. And at the end of the night, Ms. G's family took home with them a special ofrenda decorated with notes from more than a hundred students and their families—notes of remembrance and gratitude that are a testament to her legacy:

**Thank you, Ms. G,** for supporting our children in learning to read. Thank you for going out of your way to meet their every need, from teaching them to tie their shoes to making sure they weren't going hungry. Thank you for showing all of us unconditional love.







## DID YOU KNOW WE HAVE A WEBSITE?

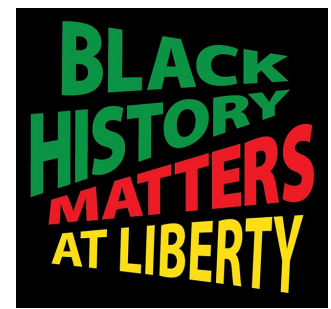
LOG ON TO [PGHLEAF.ORG](http://PGHLEAF.ORG) FOR:

- Extracurriculars
- "Gifted" Services (a.k.a. "Greenway")
- Back issues of this newsletter
- Childcare (extended day, summer camps, etc.)
- Kindergarten families' section (orientation video)
- 5th grade families' section (middle-school magnet application processes)
- Making sure you're receiving all announcements from the district, the school, your teachers, & LEAF—your friendly parent-teacher organization!



## Liberty spirit wear and Black history tees

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!) Also available year-round: Liberty's Black History gear (pictured, below). 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. **Order by Dec. 8th for delivery before the holidays!** [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.

## 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.

## 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!  
*días 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

## 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.)



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→ **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.

## Submit to This Newsletter!

Article deadlines for this year are 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)

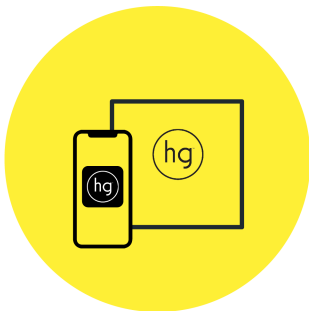
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/PghLibertyPTO/](https://www.facebook.com/PghLibertyPTO/)

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

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**Pittsburgh!**

**Eat to support Liberty Elementary Academic Fund**



Use promo code **GIVE119**  
on the honeygrow app,  
at honeygrow.com,  
or in-store at the kiosk  
before checking out.



**12.05.23**  
**10:30 AM - 10:00 PM**  
we'll donate 20% of all orders placed  
by supporters to your organization.



**honeygrow.**  
**105 S. Highland Avenue**  
**Pittsburgh**

MINTED'S FUNDRAISING PROGRAM

# Holiday shopping that gives back

We're partnering with Minted, the go-to destination for independent art and design. We're excited to share an exclusive discount of 20% off all Minted holiday cards and gifts. They'll donate 15% of every order back to us. Now that's embracing the holiday spirit!

Use code: **FUNDRAISEPGHLEAF**



Scan to shop now



mintedfundraising.



**WHITE WHALE  
BOOKSTORE**

**PRESENTS**

**HOLIDAY PARTY**

**X**

**PTO FUNDRAISER**

**DECEMBER 17, 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM**

**4754 LIBERTY AVE**



Come to snack, drink, mingle with other parents, and get some holiday shopping done!

**15% OF BOOK SALES SUPPORT**

**Pittsburgh Liberty K-5**





SAT., JAN. 20, 2024

6:30-8:20 PM

LEAF PRESENTS

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# Family Skate Night

HIGHMARK HUNT ARMORY ICE RINK  
324 EMERSON ST, PITTSBURGH, PA 15206

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Admission & skate rentals are **FREE**  
for Liberty students & families!

Waiver required for each on-ice participant.