MACS Pen Pal Initiative Helps Students Understand Homelessness

As part of the Homeless Children's Education Fund's Conscious Caring Curriculum project, Lauren Fouse's fifth grade class wrote to pen pals in seventeen shelters across Pittsburgh and donated school supplies that will be part of 2500 back packs.

“The class was remarkable,” said Susy Robison, Manager of Outreach and Volunteer Services for the Fund. “Most of us wept when we read the cards.” The Fund’s project is designed to raise awareness in elementary age children about the circumstances of others, particularly those displaced by homelessness.

“It’s not only about homelessness, it’s about building compassion,” said Robison who found MACS students extremely receptive to the project. According to Robison the class is now poised to begin thinking critically about how to help others, how to be kind to those whose life experiences are different, and how to recognize a friend in need.

Welcome from Mr. Scoumis

Hi, Everyone.

It’s hard to believe we are already into October and even harder to believe that MACS is now fifteen years old—WOW. We have done some amazing things, had some super highlights, learned along the way and—most importantly—built relationships that will last a lifetime. So many things go into the makings of a great school—and so much work. We owe many thanks.

We should thank Drs. Betty (Gram) & James (Rev) Robinson the founders of MACS and MYDC, but they would be upset about the recognition so we won’t. I think about all the parents that became part of the framework of MACS and all of the board members that have volunteered countless hours in hopes of making a difference—a thank you to both of these groups.

We thank you all. We would like to gather your memories, pictures, accomplishments after leaving MACS, and anything else you would like to share. We look forward to celebrating throughout the year so stay tuned.

What makes thinking about our past so wonderful is that our future has such potential. We should all be proud of our past and excited about the future. Here’s to another 15 years, may they be as fulfilling as the first 15.

Vas Scoumis, Chief Executive Officer
GO PITT!

November is National Youth Homelessness Awareness Month.

The McKinney-Vento Act defines a homeless youth as one that lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Additionally, the Act declares that a child has the right by law to be bused to his or her home school. For more information contact the Homeless Children’s Education Fund at www.homelessfund.org.
**A WORD FROM MS. MCCASKEY**

Welcome back! We are excited to have everyone back and want to welcome our new students and families. It is MACS 15th anniversary and I am proud to say that I have been here since the beginning. I have seen a lot of exciting changes over the years—a new building, a growing enrollment, a growing staff, curriculum changes, community partnerships flourishing, increase in student activities to name a few.

As we continue to grow and expand over the next few years, it is my hope that we can continue to connect with our students and their families in a positive way. Here at MACS we count on parental involvement in and out of the classroom. There will be many events to look forward to this year—family nights, field trips, Saturday PSSA classes and MACS 15 anniversary celebration. Look for more information to follow.

Beth McCaskey, Deputy Chief Executive Officer

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**High School Fair Helps Students Prepare for Next Phase of Education**

As part of a comprehensive plan to bolster ninth grade performance, MACS held a community-wide High School Fair on September 24. The Fair brought together students, their families and High School representatives in an effort to ensure families have the information they need to make choices that will ensure a successful transition into the ninth grade. Representatives from The Barack Obama Academy of International Studies, The Neighborhood Academy, City Charter High School, Pittsburgh Creative and Performing Arts High School, Sewickley Academy, Shady Side Academy, and Urban Pathways all attended.

Jeremiah J. Jackson, Director of Diversity for Sewickley Academy spoke about the importance of planning for high school early in a student’s middle school career. “No one school is best for everyone,” said Jackson. “It's important that families be aware of the great number of opportunities open to them.”

“We have been thinking about high school since 6th grade,” said MACS Middle School parent Farrah Little who attended with her daughter Syanne Duell. “We were pleased to be invited to the Fair this year.”

For more information about MACS High School Fair please contact Mrs. Anna Marie Rainey, Social Worker/Home School Visitor.

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**Let’s Meet and Welcome New Teachers**

**Mrs. Clinetta Jackson**
First Grade
Favorite Book: The Coldest Winter Ever by Sista Souljah
Favorite K-8 Subject When You Were a Kid: Reading
Favorite Ice Cream Flavor: Vanilla

**Ms. Lauren Fouse**
Fifth Grade
Favorite Book: The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren
Favorite K-8 Subject When You Were a Kid: Science
Favorite Ice Cream Flavor: Mint Chocolate Chip

**Ms. Amanda Donovan**
Middle School Enrichment and Support
Favorite Book: The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath
Favorite K-8 Subject When You Were a Kid: Reading
Favorite Ice Cream Flavor: Mint Chocolate Chip

**Ms. Brittney Bush**
First Grade Teaching Assistant
Favorite Book: Holes by Louis Sachar
Favorite K-8 Subject When You Were a Kid: Science
Favorite Ice Cream Flavor: Vanilla

**Mr. Michael Reid**
Fifth Grade Teaching Assistant
Favorite Book: The One Year Uncommon Life Daily Challenge by Tony Dungy
Favorite K-8 Subject When You Were a Kid: Math
Favorite Ice Cream Flavor: Cookie Dough
Memorization of data is no longer the most needed skill for today’s learners. Students now need to understand how to process the mass of data available. MACS engages its students in opportunities for Project-Based Learning—a process in which they experientially engage data to gain understanding. This issue of the MACS newsletter will highlight some of these opportunities—Future City and the Homelessness Project. We believe these experiential learning initiatives give MACS students a competitive edge and build skills needed to succeed in today’s higher education and career markets.

The MACS “hands-on” experience can expand beyond the school’s walls.

Here’s what parents can do:

1. Participate in MACS Family Nights:
   Thanks to the many parents who attended our October 18 Math Night. By joining your child in playing math games and completing fun activities you’ve reinforced our approach and gained tools for engaging your youth in hands-on learning at home.

2. Look to MACS Partners:
   Carnegie Museum of Natural History
   Discover Carts & Exploration Stations
   Wednesday–Saturday, 11am–1pm and 2–4 pm, Sunday, 1–4 pm

Learn with your hands by investigating real and replica specimens and artifacts in natural history museum galleries. Let museum educators and experts answer your nature and science questions.

MACS students are learning the importance of city infrastructure and management through Future City, a project-based learning experience for 6th, 7th and 8th graders. Participants use computer software to develop and manage their own virtual cities in order to explore and resolve an engineering problem.

MACS Social Studies teacher, Dennis Henderson, leads students as they conduct research, share ideas and develop a collective scale model of their imagined city. MACS students will present their solution and model at a competition. The 14th Annual Pittsburgh Regional Competition will be held January 19, 2013 at Carnegie Music Hall. The first place team from each Regional lead students as they conduct research, share ideas and develop a collective scale model of their imagined city. MACS students will present their solution and model at a competition. The 14th Annual Pittsburgh Regional Competition will be held January 19, 2013 at Carnegie Music Hall. The first place team from each Regional Competition wins a trip to Washington, D.C., to compete in the national finals during National Engineers Week in February.

Future City is part of the MACS strategy for integrating hands-on Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) opportunities across the curriculum that boost student interest in STEM learning and high-paying STEM careers. United States Department of Labor projects that by 2018 there will be 1.2 million job openings in STEM fields.

The United States Department of Commerce Economics and Statistics Administration finds that STEM occupations are growing by 17% compared to 9.8% in others. A 2011 Harris Interactive study found that 1 in 5 students studying STEM in college decided to pursue STEM higher education in middle school.
**Our Mission:**
We foster the dreams of all children by providing an outstanding and dynamic education in a nurturing environment.

**Our Vision:**
We will continue to be an educational center of excellence and become a community pillar of support where students excel, families are engaged, teachers are empowered, and alumni flourish.

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**Our Consecutive Years of Making AYP!**

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**Donor Listing**

MACS Students, Staff and Board of Directors would like to thank the following donors for their generous contributions to the 2012-2013 School Year. We make every effort to provide accurate acknowledgement of our contributors. We appreciate your patience and assistance in keeping our lists current. To advise us of corrections, please call 412.322.0585.

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**Give To MACS**

There is a giving envelope attached to this issue of the MACS Newsletter….why?

It costs MACS $17,103 per student to provide free, quality education.

While a MACS education is free, only **2.8 percent** of the MACS annual expense is covered by government grants. To make the difference we need your help. No gift is too small.

Parents and Alumni know better than anyone the importance of MACS to the community. Please send your tax-deductible contribution today or give online using a credit or debit card by visiting the MACS website: www.macsk8.org.