

VOLUNTEERING IN THOMPSON

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Community in our Schools

Inside this issue:

You Wanted to Know	2
Centennial Elementary Success Story	2
Court-Ordered Volunteers	2
In the Limelight	3
Handling Conflict with Positive Approach	3
Celebrating Special People	3
Contact Us	4
Valentine Message to our Volunteers	4
Join the Family & Community Engagement Team	4

Providing opportunities for community members to be involved in our schools is a win-win situation. Students get to meet and interact with adults from outside of their homes and their schools. Schools benefit from the skills and talents that the community volunteers bring to the table. Community volunteers not only have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children, but they gain new friends in the process.

We encourage members of the community to volunteer at all school levels. Some volunteers are college students needing to fulfill class requirements. Some are retired teachers missing student contact. Others are senior citizens working off a portion of their property taxes or wanting to stay connected. Community volunteers have one thing in common. They are all interested in helping our students learn.

Most community volunteers contact the VITAL office to find out how to become involved in our schools. They complete the Community Volunteer Application indicating their volunteer preferences. Based on their requests, the VITAL office contacts the appropriate school/staff. A copy of the volunteer application is sent to the staff member and school volunteer coordinator once a community member is placed.

Welcome these special volunteers to your school. Meet with them personally and show them around the building. Introduce them to staff and give them a copy of the Handbook for School Volunteers. They will appreciate your support.



Look for Valentine hearts around town thanking our school volunteers.

Important Dates:

* Feb. 1	Valentine postcards due back to VITAL
* Feb. 6	Call in January hours
* Feb. 8	Kindergarten Registration
* Feb. 14	Valentine's Day
* Feb. 16-17	No School
* Feb. 20	President's Day No School



February Planner

- Borrow one of several books available from the VITAL office for tips on planning classroom Valentine's Day parties.
- Begin compiling a list of your volunteers and their addresses for mailing invitations to your school's recognition event this spring.
- Are your hours up to date? We'll need an alphabetized list of all your volunteers and their hours at the working meeting in March.
- Host non-academic social events to draw parents to school to see students' work.
- Research shows that one of the best ways to get parents involved is simply to ask them and to tell them what you'd like them to do.
- Check on the date of your school's volunteer recognition event.
- Consider prizes to attract parents to your next parent meeting. Encourage parents to bring a friend to the next meeting.

You Wanted to Know

What is the district doing towards sustainability—recycling, disposables, etc.?

The district recycles materials through a single stream process. All recyclable materials—paper, plastic, cardboard, aluminum, and glass—are collected in one container and consolidated into one dumpster.

Recycling correctly is critical to the success of the program. Audits are jointly conducted by Facilities Services staff and our recycling service provider. District recycling has increased 31 percent over the last year and trash has decreased 16 percent.

Our students are actively involved in the recycling program.

- Thompson Valley students developed training materials and presented the information to school staff and are now monitoring recycling in the cafeteria.

- Turner students are participating in the only Styrofoam recycling program in the state.
- Big Thompson students are composting.
- Cottonwood Plains students painted a recycling mural.



A district-wide student competition will be held this year to create a mascot for recycling and sustainability activities.

For a copy of the recycling brochure, contact Trudy Trimbath at 613-5381 or trudy.trimbath@thompsonschoools.org.

For more information, visit ThompsonSchools.org. Click Departments & Divisions > Facilities Services > Sustainability Management System.

Centennial Elementary Success Story

Centennial Elementary PTA recognizes volunteers with a special bulletin board. After volunteer hours are tallied for the month, the names of all the volunteers who helped that month are displayed on the board. Regardless of whether a volunteer worked 30 minutes or 40 hours, his or her name is printed on a brightly colored, laminated handprint and posted on the bulletin board. It's PTAs way of thanking volunteers for "lending a hand."

Stacey Kersley, Centennial's volunteer coordinator, says it's been a success and the volunteers really like seeing their names on the bulletin board. She adds that it's a fun way to let volunteers know that they are appreciated.

Last month the board was overflowing with names thanks to all the volunteers who helped with the Holiday Shop and classroom holiday parties.

At the end of the school year, PTA plans to highlight those volunteers who will have donated a total of more than 50 hours for all to see!



Court-Ordered Volunteers

You may occasionally get requests from people wanting to perform their court-ordered community service by volunteering in your school. Only managed work groups, such as Workenders, who are supervised by Larimer County Sheriff's Department staff and are covered by a program-specific insurance policy are allowed in our schools. The purpose of this decision is to eliminate the cost of district administrative resources—evaluation of the offense and determination of work site placement, task assignment, supervision and paperwork—without losing the value of the work being performed by these individuals.

An individual requesting to perform his or her community service at any of our sites should be told that the district works directly with the Larimer County Sheriff's Department to coordi-

nate community service opportunities. Refer questions to the VITAL office or the Benefits and Risk Management office.

This procedure does not affect current students in our district. We want to continue to work with our students who have the opportunity to perform community service as part of a disciplinary action, for a class, or to expand their resume for college entrance applications or job opportunities.

"Only managed work groups...supervised by Larimer County Sheriff's Department staff...are allowed in our schools."

In the Limelight

Jade DeSotel is in her first year as VITAL coordinator at Van Buren Elementary School. Jade has been volunteering at the school for two years. She says that she loves to help in the classroom and show support to her children by being a part of their education and helping to make their school a great place to be enrolled. Jade was a member of the committee that worked on the school's first walk-a-thon. She reports that it was a success and that the Van Buren school community met their goal.

Jade is the mother of twins, Aidan and Alexis, who are in the first grade at Van Buren. Before the twins started school, Jade volunteered at Thompson Valley Preschool where she was involved with the Loveland Classic 5K/10K fundraiser.

For four years Jade worked at Lollilocks Kids Hair Salon as the full-time manager. She is currently a student at the University of Northern Colorado and doing her student teaching in the fifth grade at Garfield Elementary. Jade will graduate in May and

plans to become a teacher – her dream job!

In her spare time, Jade likes to do anything that includes her children, other family or friends. She enjoys walks, long talks, or just relaxing with some coffee. Jade says she likes to do anything she can to help others and acknowledges she has a very hard time asking for help. She admits she would rather forfeit a good night's sleep in order to get a head start on achieving her goals for the day rather than letting herself or anyone else down.

Jade, we truly appreciate you and your dedication to the students and staff at Van Buren. We wish you continued success after graduation!



Handling Conflict with Positive Approach

Within even the most successful volunteer program problems will occur from time to time. You may encounter the following:

- Volunteers overstepping their boundaries.
- Teachers not having clearly defined duties for volunteers.
- Volunteers complaining about staff or other volunteers.
- Volunteers violating the Code of Ethics.

Handling problems immediately and maintaining a positive attitude can help limit the negative behavior of others. Follow these tips for remaining positive and reducing conflict:

- When people disagree about how something is being done, remind them of the common goal and primary objective that they are trying to achieve.
- Allow people to vent, but discourage them from gossiping or badmouthing others. Suggest that they bring their concerns to the principal, if you are not able to help.

- Promote teamwork and cooperation.
- Your positive outlook can be contagious so maintain a can-do attitude.
- Communication is the key to problem solving. Talk about the problem in a non-threatening manner.
- Without making light of others concerns, remember that a little laughter can go a long way in diminishing conflict.

Handling conflict can be unpleasant and may be out of your comfort zone. If you need help, remember you are not alone. Talk with your principal or contact the VITAL office. And above all, remember to remind everyone that we are all here for the same reason - the students!

“Handling problems immediately and maintaining a positive attitude can help limit the negative behavior of others.”

Celebrating Special People

Clarissa Norris Feb. 9
 Terri Johnson Feb. 10
 Amber Cherry Feb. 19



Kathy Peden Feb. 20
 Carrie Kahle Feb. 25
 Karen Dufour Feb. 27



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ThompsonSchools.org



VITAL— Same name, same spelling, only the words have changed!

Volunteers **I**n **T**hompson **A**ssisting **L**earners

Join the Family & Community Engagement Team

Who we are: We are a group of Thompson School District employees and community members dedicated to promoting family and community engagement in all of our schools.

What we do: We are currently meeting once a month to create a Family Empowerment Cohort to pilot. Our new pilot program is designed to create a grade level support system for all families. Through this support system the cohort leader will engage families in academic, emotional, and parental development conversations.

We also provide Family Connection Events once a month to facilitate amazing dialogue with families on topics of interest.

What we want: We are looking for family members to join us in creating and implementing true engagement in our schools. We want open and honest communication and enthusiasm for improving current practices.

To get involved or for more information:

Please contact

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