



News & Notes

A Newsletter for Employees of Missoula County Public Schools

December 6, 2013

Forward Thinking, High Achieving.

'One Class at a Time' grants awarded weekly



Each week, during the school year, Allegiance Benefit Plan Management and KPAX awards \$250 'One Class at a Time' grants to provide additional funding for resourceful classroom projects and additional supplies for the classroom. Missoula educators are all eligible and are encouraged to apply. To access a grant application, please [click here](#).

Over \$3,000 has already been given out this year. To date, ten MCPS educators have been the recipients of the 'One Class at a Time' grants.

Teacher/Classroom	Site	Project
▪ Extended Resource Dept.	Hawthorne Elementary	New learning tools including working headphones.
▪ Big Sky Technology	Big Sky High School	Assistance with students to attend class via iPad.
▪ Angela Opitz	Rattlesnake Elementary	"Draw it Book" for each 4 th grader.
▪ Rhonda Krause	Hawthorne Elementary	Lighting system for growing plants indoors year-round.
▪ Molly Kast	Rattlesnake Elementary	iPad apps for assisting students and kid friendly covers.
▪ Kathryn (KaCee) Ballou	Meadow Hill Middle School	Purchase new books for reading club.
▪ Maureen Loewenwarter	Rattlesnake Elementary	Purchase new weather station.
▪ Erica Zins	Russell Elementary	Purchase Kelso's Choice posters for all Russell classrooms and hallways.
▪ Barbara Higgins	Chief Charlo Elementary	License for reading based fluency program.
▪ Kevin Cashman	Chief Charlo Elementary	Purchase of non-fiction books to supplement curriculum.

Chief Charlo staff winners of Thank Montana Teachers Initiative

In October 2013, Farmers Insurance launched its University of Farmers Education Foundation. As part of the foundation opening, Farmers sponsored the Thank Montana Teachers Initiative. The public was asked to thank their favorite Montana teacher via their website and social media. Each Montana teacher "thanked" was given the opportunity to submit their name and proposal to win one of ten \$2,500 grants.

In November the teachers' proposals were posted and voted upon. Chief Charlo's Sydney Stauffer, Laurie McHugh, and Tiffany Hobbs were three of the top ten teachers selected as winners of the Thank Montana Teachers Initiative. Each teacher will receive \$2,500 for use in their classroom. *Congratulations!*

Nearly 72 student holiday musical events and performances scheduled



Missoula County Public Schools will celebrate the holidays with nearly 72 student musical events and festivities.

Holiday concerts and performances include students in grades K-12 and are held throughout the Missoula area and at Seeley-Swan High School in Seeley Lake. The district estimates that approximately 20,000 parents and community members attend these events during the holiday season.

Below is a list of school-based events for this week. For additional information, please contact Fine Arts Supervisor John Combs at 728-2400, ext. 5021 or via email at jcombs@mcps.k12.mt.us.

Event	Date	Site	Time
▪ Sentinel Spartanaires at Festival of Trees	December 7	DoubleTree Inn Atrium	11:00 a.m.
Annual Christmas Clarinets	December 9	Southgate Mall	7:00 p.m.
▪ Annual Revenge of the Thunder Tongues	December 9	Southgate Mall	7:00 p.m.
▪ Paxson Kindergarten Holiday Program	December 10	Paxson Elementary	12:15 p.m.
▪ Russell 4-5 Grade Holiday Program	December 10	Russell Elementary	2:00 p.m.
▪ Big Sky Winter Choir Concert	December 10	Big Sky High School	7:00 p.m.
▪ Washington 7-8 Grade Holiday Concert	December 10	Washington Middle School	7:00 p.m.
▪ Hellgate Wind Ensemble & Jazz Band Concert	December 10	Hellgate High School	7:30 p.m.
▪ Cold Springs Kindergarten Program	December 11	Cold Springs Elementary	1:45 p.m.
▪ Franklin 1-3 Grade Holiday Program	December 11	Franklin Elementary	2:00 p.m.
▪ Big Sky Orchestra Concert	December 11	Big Sky High School	7:00 p.m.
▪ Porter 7-8 Grade Band Concert	December 11	C.S. Porter Middle School	7:00 p.m.
▪ Hellgate Symphonic Band, Concert Band & Percussion Ensemble Concert	December 11	Hellgate High School	7:30 p.m.
▪ Chief Charlo K-3 Holiday Program	December 12	Chief Charlo Elementary	9:00 a.m.
▪ Chief Charlo 4-5 Holiday Program	December 12	Chief Charlo Elementary	1:00 p.m.
▪ Meadow Hill Honor Band Holiday Program	December 12	Missoula Alliance Church	7:00 p.m.
▪ Porter 6 th Grade Band, Orchestra & Choir Concert	December 12	C.S. Porter Middle School	7:00 p.m.
▪ Washington 6 th Grade Band, Orchestra & Choir Concert	December 12	Washington Middle School	7:00 p.m.
▪ Cold Springs Kindergarten Concert	December 13	Cold Springs Elementary	1:45 p.m.
▪ Franklin 4-5 Grade Holiday Concert	December 13	Franklin Elementary	2:30 p.m.
▪ Tuba Christmas	December 13	Southgate Mall	7:00 p.m.

Porter hosts Humanities Montana Speakers Bureau program

C.S. Porter Middle School will host the Humanities Montana Speakers Bureau program “Introducing Native American Literature” with Dorothea M. Susag (Dottie) on December 9-11. The program will be presented in 6th and 8th grade classrooms throughout the day. The presentation is free and open to the public. Partial funding for the Speakers Bureau program is provided by a legislative grant from Montana’s Cultural Trust and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Using a study guide, video, oral recording, supplementary books and poems, Susag leads a discussion in the 6th grade classes on the impact of American Indian Boarding Schools on the life and culture of Indian children and their families. These schools operated from 1893 to 1933 and forced families to part with their children, often at a very young age, for years at a time. As part of a general policy of assimilation, children were stripped of nearly all vestiges of their native culture and “educated” to the ways of the dominant white culture.

In 8th grade classrooms, Susag will lead an examination of the poem, “For Those Who Hate,” by Jennifer Greene, especially in relation to the current unit of study on Juvenile Justice and teenagers’ “Coming of Age”

process. The accompanying literature circle novels (The Outsiders, Unwind, Monsters, Sold, Geeks, The Giver) involve characters making decisions, finding their own identities and growing up. This poem relates to those characters, and 8th grade students themselves, in getting to the heart of why they make the choices they do.

Dorothea Susag, of Fairfield, Montana, is a retired language arts and Heritage Project teacher, a 1992-93 Christa McAuliffe Fellowship recipient, author of *Roots and Branches: a Resource of Native American Literature Themes, Lessons, and Bibliographies*, as well as several secondary-level units for the Montana Office of Public Instruction Indian Education. She conducts workshops for teachers and students across the state.

Those interested in attending, should contact Maeta Kaplan at ext. 4611 or Allie McFarland ext. 4624, for specific information. (*Special thanks to C.S. Porter for submitting this article.*)

2014-2015 Sabbatical leave information

At the regular meeting of the MCPS Board of Trustees on November 12, 2013, the Board took action that Sabbaticals granted for 2014-2015 will be on a cost neutral basis. When a Sabbatical is cost-neutral, the Sabbatical teacher is issued their contract as usual. The District pays for the monthly health insurance premium, minus employee contribution. When the replacement teacher is hired, the cost of replacement salary and insurance is deducted from the Sabbatical teacher's 2014-2015 salary. Any remaining dollars will be paid to the Sabbatical teacher over the 2014-2015 school year.

To be eligible for semester or full-year sabbatical leave, an individual must have been employed for at least seven (7) full-time continuous years of service in the school district. Any teacher who has been employed by the District for seven (7) continuous years, at half-time or more, may apply for mini-sabbaticals.

As February 15, 2014, is a Saturday, the deadline for applications is Friday, February 14, 2014.

- **Article 8-6 D Sabbatical Leave:** *"Applicants for sabbatical leave shall be submitted in writing on a 'Sabbatical Leave Form' to the Superintendent no later than February 15 of the year preceding the school year in which the leave is sought...."*
- **Sabbatical Leaves: Article 8-6 G -** *"When funding for sabbaticals at two-thirds (2/3) of the applicant's annual salary is exhausted, or in cases of declining budgets, the board of trustees may grant sabbatical proposals which are cost neutral...."*

Teachers interested in applying for Sabbatical Leave for the 2014-2015 school year must forward a completed 'Sabbatical Leave Form' to the Human Resource Office, attention Val Crumbley, no later than February 14, 2014. The application form may be requested from building secretaries, the Human Resources Office, or can be accessed on the District's website www.mcpsmt.org (Human Resources Department under Helpful Forms). The applicant should answer all questions on the form and provide support material the applicant wishes the Screening Committee to review in determining the merits of the sabbatical leave.

For more questions or more information, please contact the Human Resources Dept., ext. 1035.

Early notification of retirement information

Once again it is the time of year when staff members begin to contemplate retirement. We recognize the decision to retire is a difficult one which sometimes results in prolonging the decision. However, if the District knows which positions will be vacated in a timely manner, the information can be factored into the budgeting and staffing processes which occur in the months of February, March, and April. The District has the ability to identify vacant positions available to eligible staff members whose position may be cut because of budget constraints.

In order to encourage early notification of retirement from the District, an employee who submits a letter of retirement to the Human Resources Office between December 2, 2013 and February 28, 2014 resulting in retirement from the District and the State retirement system (TRS or PERS) with a retirement date that is effective between the last day of the 2013-14 school year and June 30, 2014 for the ensuing 2014-2015 school year, will receive a one-time payment of \$500.00, less appropriate deductions to be paid upon retirement.

PLEASE NOTE: This is not—nor is it intended to be—a retirement incentive. This is an incentive for employees who know they will be retiring at the end of the school year to let the District know in a timely

matter instead of waiting until June to submit his/her retirement letter. Furthermore, should the District entertain a retirement incentive later in the year, any employee who participates in this early notification incentive and who otherwise qualifies for the retirement incentive will be automatically eligible for the retirement incentive.

In order to qualify for the incentive, **employees must:**

- (1) Submit a typed or hand-written, signed letter of retirement to the Human Resources Office, 215 S. 6th St. W., between December 2, 2013 and February 28, 2014.
- (2) The letter must include the position from which the employee is retiring and must state a retirement date that is effective on a date that is between the last day of the 2013-14 school year and June 30, 2014.

This notification must be received in the Human Resources Office no later than February 28, 2014 at 4:00 pm. Please understand this deadline is firm. In the past, employees have requested consideration for this incentive after the deadline because of new information received after the fact. However, the purpose of this deadline is to allow the District to use the information in a timely manner for budgeting and staff planning purposes. **The resignation letter must include the effective date of retirement and the position from which the employee is retiring.**

Guidelines for TRS and PERS retirement eligibility are as follows:

TRS

1. 25 years service, regardless of age
2. 5 years service and at least 50

PERS

1. 30 years service, regardless of age
2. 5 years service and at least 60

PERS (early retirement)

1. 25 years service, regardless of age
2. 5 years of service and at least 50

This incentive is available to **all employees** who retire from the District who have met the above qualifying criteria. *Thanks to Val Crumbley, Certified Technician-Human Resources Dept., for submitting this article.*

Special Announcements

- Principal David Rott is proud to announce that Chief Charlo is now a robotics school. They will start in 4th grade this year. *Congratulations!*

Human Resources & Benefits Corner

Holiday Pay Schedule: With the holidays (shorter work weeks), year-end obligations and input for new elections – flex, charitable contributions, new insurance coverage, new vision coverage, etc., payroll will not have time to track down missing or incomplete timesheets. If the timesheet reaches payroll after the dates below the employee will not be paid until the following week. If the timesheet is incomplete, the employee will be paid only the hours indicated on the timesheet.

Winter Break

- **High School:** Timesheet due date: **Dec. 13** for pay date Dec. 20 and **Dec. 27** for pay date Jan. 3
- **Elementary:** Timesheet due date: **Dec. 19** for pay date Dec. 27 (all paychecks will be mailed)

Hourly employees must be in a paid status their last scheduled day before the holiday and their first scheduled day after the holidays in order to receive holiday pay. Employees can use vacation for those days if they are eligible. They must have been hired on or before June 19, 2013, to be eligible to use vacation time on December 20. Every year there have been several new employees that take leave without pay before the holidays and lose the holiday pay. Questions? Please contact payroll at ext. 3034 or ext. 3026.

Retirement Plans: As an employee of MCPS you may have the opportunity to save for your future in a 403(b) or 457(b) tax-deferred retirement savings program or you may elect to save through a Roth 403(b) program which is an after-tax retirement savings program. These plans are *optional* retirement plans to assist you in meeting your retirement goals. Contributions are made solely via employee payroll contribution withholding. Employer contributions or matching funds *are not* available. All employees are eligible to participate (no exclusions). [Click here](#) for more information.

Judicial Leave: If you have been selected for jury duty, you must make the necessary arrangements to request a substitute and notify your principal or supervisor in a timely manner. Jury trials are sometimes settled at the last minute. If you call after 5 p.m. the night before you are to report for jury duty and find out that the trial has been cancelled, you are expected to report to work with next day. Please cancel your substitute if the court cancels the trial the night before it is to begin. If you report for jury duty and are not selected for the trial, you are expected to work as soon as possible.

Employees must report absences to the Human Resources Office if: employee has been absent during the week due to injuries, surgeries, extended illnesses, or to provide care for an ill relative; or will be absent a week due to injuries, extended illnesses, or to provide care for an ill relative. Notification is required by Human Resources for the following reasons:

- HR must notify employees, in writing, of the employee's eligibility for FMLA and other leaves.
- HR must notify employees of requirements for a physician's release prior to return to work.
- Lack of notice increases the liability risk of the District.
- Lack of notice may result in a lapse in insurance coverage for an employee, depending upon the employee's eligibility for leave.

Report absences to the Human Resources Office at (406)728-2400, ext. 1035.

Sick leave donation requests: Staff seeking donations of sick leave from fellow District employees due to extended illness or medical emergency must complete an official sick leave donation request form. Official posting notices will be issued via email from Human Resources, MMCEO, or MEA-MFT to building secretaries for posting on established employee information bulletin boards and announcement in the MCPS Newsletter. For questions, please contact the Human Resources Dept. Staff members currently in need of donated sick leave are Mona Bennett, Wendy Gay, Darlene Hofeldt, LeAnn Schaff and Brooke Worthen.

MCPS employees now have the ability to update their vital contact information online to ensure they continue to receive important district information and messaging alerts. Employees that experience a change of address, drop or add a landline based telephone, or change cell phone numbers will now access the Employee Contact Information Update form to update their information as these changes occur. [Click here](#) to access the form on the MCPS staff webpage. For questions, please contact Mischelle Thomas in the Human Resources office at ext. 1035.

MCPS Bulletin Board

Please join the staff and students at Willard Alternative High School on First Friday, December 6, from 5-7 p.m. at 901 South 6th Street West. The event will feature block prints inspired by the students' visit to the Randolph-Moon Homestead along with additional Willard student art. For more information, please contact Vanessa Nie at altflagship@mcps.k12.mt.us.

The C.S. Porter Family Resource Center is planning a Potlatch Sale and is seeking gently used or new donations. Porter students will have the opportunity to purchase inexpensive holiday gifts for their families. The sale will be held Dec. 10-11 during the lunch hour. Proceeds from the sale are used to provide holiday meal boxes for Porter families in need. (Additional donations of food items are gladly accepted for the meal boxes.) Anyone interested in donating items or is interested in volunteering their time during the sale; please contact Erica Ramsey at ext. 4613 or via Outlook.

Volunteers needed! The Indian Education for All Dept. is seeking volunteers for their annual **Mini Ho Ho Ho** event scheduled on Saturday, December 14 in the Big Sky High School cafeteria. The event begins at noon with a lunch of chili and bread. Throughout the afternoon there are games and a visit from Santa. Anyone interested in volunteering, please contact Gisele Forrest at ext. 1064.

The Missoula Robotics Team is selling raffle tickets! The winner of the raffle will get their choice of a Polaris Sportsman 570 ATV or 2014 Polaris Indy 550-144 Crossover Snowmobile. Tickets are \$20 with a maximum of 1000 sold. The

drawing is scheduled for January 8, 2014. Please contact Chris Jacaruso via Outlook for ticket sales locations.

Donations are needed! The Title I office is once again coordinating a District-wide toiletries drive to support the many MCPS families in need. Rosauer's has donated brown paper bags that have been placed in the buildings for donation collections. Suggested toiletries are: diapers, feminine products, lice removal kits, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toilet paper and more! For questions, please contact Sindie Kennedy at ext. 1080 or via Outlook.

As part of a growing American phenomenon, TubaChristmas will take place here in our fair city on Friday, Dec. 13 – our 24th of this 40 year tradition. It will feature local tubists and euphoniumists – students of all ages, amateur enthusiasts and professional artists. The performance will include traditional Christmas carols specially arranged and a tuba decorating contest! Registration and rehearsal will be held in the Missoula Sentinel High band room, 901 South Ave., on Friday, Dec. 13, from 3:30 – 5:30 p.m. (park in the lot off of Bancroft Street, walk to the blue building on the left). Performances will be at Southgate Mall Center Clock Court from 7 – 8:30 p.m. For more information, please call Gary Gillett at ext. 7041.

Get ready to shop for the holidays! The Chief Charlo Parent Teacher Organization is hosting its second annual Holiday Craft Fair on Saturday, Dec. 14 from 9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. in the Chief Charlo gymnasium. The craft fair will host over 65 local vendors. Chili and hot cocoa will be available for purchase. In addition, ornament crafts and Letters to Santa will be available for children. This fundraiser is a great way to finish your holiday shopping while supporting local artisans and crafters. For more information, please contact Sindie Kennedy at ext. 1080 or via Outlook.

A reminder to MCPS employees – all volunteers working with students need to be registered with the Volunteer Resources office in the MCPS Administration Building. In addition, if the volunteer works with students while not in the presence of an MCPS employee (or other individual who has passed a criminal fingerprint check), then the volunteer will need to go through a **criminal name-based background check** before spending “unsupervised” time with students either during or after the school day. More than 2,600 volunteers were registered with the Volunteer Resources office last school year and more than half went through background checks. These volunteers do NOT have to re-register. If you are unsure if a volunteer is registered or has gone through a background check, the District has posted a searchable list of MCPS volunteers, which identifies the names of volunteers who are registered in the district and whether each volunteer is approved for supervised or unsupervised access to students, on its [Volunteer Resource webpage](#). *The data is only viewable to MCPS administrators and teachers who are logged into the district's website.* Administrators and teachers can log into the website by using their district-assigned username and password (i.e. what is used to log into a computer). The link to the data will then be viewable. Anyone who does not have access to the data and believes they should is asked to contact, Tracy Long, at ext. 1026 or talong@mcps.k12.mt.us.

Staff looking to publish items for sale should not use Outlook. Staff is encouraged to utilize the MCPS **Online Bulletin Board**. [Click here](#) to view the board, designed as a way for staff to publish items for sale or notice events. The link is also on the staff website, under “Staff Links.” We’ll include the link in each newsletter. Please email your posts for the Online Bulletin Board to talong@mcps.k12.mt.us.

Classroom Opportunities

Teachers think spring! Travelers’ Rest offers a diverse program of field trips focusing on Lewis & Clark and the Corps of Discovery, Native American culture and natural history. Field trips are available in the spring for grades K-12 and cost just \$2 per person with adult chaperones free. To learn more, please contact Executive Director Molly Stockdale at (406)273-4253.

General News Briefs

Bob Ward and Sons will be hosting their annual Educator Appreciation Night on Wednesday, Dec. 11 from 7-10 p.m. Receive 25% off everyday pricing in athletics, camping, hunting, fishing, clothing, footwear and ski departments. Educators must provide their current and valid school ID at the time of purchase. For more information, please call (406)728-3220.

Big Sky Resort will host its sixth annual Educator Appreciation Weekend on Dec. 20-22. The resort will provide free skiing for educators and staff with proof of employment for those staying in the Big Sky Resort Lodging including half-price tickets for immediate family. (Lodging specials are available.) Half-price lift tickets will be available for educators and immediate family who are not staying at the resort. [Click here](#) for more information.

The Martin Luther King (MLK) Essay/Art contest is now accepting entries. All students in Preschool-12th grades are eligible to enter. This year's theme is based on a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, "If you can't fly, run. If you can't run, walk. If you can't walk, crawl. But by all means, keep moving." Students may use either a written submission or creative art submission. Entries may be mailed to: MLK Essay/Art Contest, Missoulian, P.O. Box 8029, Missoula, MT 59807. [Click here](#) for complete contest rules or contact Debby Florence at (406)541-6891.

Could you use a grant for up to \$8000 for an innovative classroom project? If so, check out the Plum Creek "Montana Great Classroom Awards". The grants are designed to provide K-12 teachers with additional resources to enhance the learning environment in the classroom. The application deadline dates are December 1, 2013, and June 1, 2014. [Click here](#) for the application and information or call Renee Erickson at (406)892-6227 for further details.

In The News

We have started this section in the employee newsletter to highlight the week's media features on Missoula County Public School's staff, students, and events.

- [Vicki Wallace: Missoula County Public Schools Staff Spotlight](#)
- [Meadow Hill art teacher helps students express themselves](#)
- [Willard students find First Friday art inspiration at Missoula homestead](#)
- [Missoula guidance counselor helps Lowell kids sort out problems](#)

In Appreciation

If you have a donor that deserves recognition, please forward the donor's name, donation type and/or amount, and other details to Tracy Long in the Supt's Office (email preferred).

- Chief Charlo staff would like to thank the Chief Charlo PTO and Heather Baker for all their efforts on the Thank Montana Teachers Initiative.

Professional Development

The Montana Asthma Control program has partnered with OPI to provide free online trainings for school staff and coaches worth 1 OPI renewal unit. Participants will learn:

- General asthma knowledge
- How to identify common asthma triggers
- How to identify signs and symptoms of an asthma episode
- How to help students avoid asthma exacerbations at school
- Steps to take during all stages of an asthma attack

Please visit the website <http://asthmamontana.com/> and click on the "School and Coaches" tab. It is recommended that you do the training in one session and it will take about one hour. For more information, please contact Linda Simon at ext. 1073 or via Outlook.

Anyone interested in technology related Professional Development? If so, [click here](#) to view the most recent course selection.

MONTANA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PORTAL HINT:

Searching for courses on the Montana PD Portal? (www.pd4montana.com) Try this.. 1) Enter Course ID in the Course ID search box

2) OR Click on the date on the calendar of the first day of the Course

3) OR Enter a word of the Title in the SEARCH BY TITLE box.

Looking for OPI renewal, PIR opportunities or university credit? The WMCSPD FALL CATALOG is now available. Go to www.wmcspd.org and click on the FALL CATALOG link. Lots of classes are starting up in the next few weeks. Check back often as it is updated as courses are being offered.

MCPS Courses Approved for PIR Credit... Check out the new search box called DISTRICT APPROVED on the Montana PD Portal. You can search for courses that are pre-approved for MCPS PIR credit.

Looking for OPI renewal or University Credit? Click to [JOIN the WMCSPD MAILING LIST](#) Have this newsletter come to you (Link also found at www.wmcspd.org). Some courses are also approved for MCPS- PIR credit. To check, click on the Info link to view and print course details or SEARCH for District Approved; MCPS

The Montana Professional Development Portal (PIR website) has a new URL. Please bookmark the new link www.pd4montana.com.

To update or review your account visit www.pd4montana.com. Go to “My Records” and verify that your personal and contact information are correct. In addition, be sure your School (location) and Supervisor are selected, especially in the event you have changed schools. Questions? Contact Nancy Marks at nancymarks@wmcspd.org.

Public Meetings

Agendas for these meetings are available online at www.mcpsmt.org.

Tuesday, December 10 – Superintendent’s Cabinet Meeting, 8 a.m., Business Building, Board Room

Tuesday, December 10 – Regular Monthly Board Meeting, 6 p.m., Business Building, Board Room

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