



# STAFF NEWSLETTER

## A MESSAGE FROM DR. WELLS

As January is coming to close, we are more than half way through the school year. I want to thank each of you for your hard work and dedication to the students of ACPS. Although there have been challenges, you have been able to stay focused on our primary objective of providing caring and supportive learning environments for our students. I encourage you to maintain that focus as we move into the second half of the year.

We are currently working on the budget for the 2024-2025 school year. We are basing our budget off of Governor Youngkin's biennial budget, which has limited funding for schools. We have been told that the Virginia House and Senate budgets will be more favorable for the schools but until those budgets are presented we have to base our budget off the funding that was outlined in the governor's proposal. I am presenting my budget to the school board on February 22 and will have more information for you once that budget has been presented.

Construction for the new auditorium and dinning commons at Amherst County High School is in full swing. The majority of the grading work for the addition and the parking area has been completed and the contractors anticipate that work on the footers will begin within the next two weeks. It will not be long before we start seeing the walls of the new auditorium beginning to take shape. From a timeline perspective, we anticipate being able to occupy the new auditorium and commons around this time next year.

Additionally, we have been finalizing plans to replace interior doors and hardware at MMS and MHES. We are also planning to replace exterior doors at each of the elementary schools. Finally, we will be replacing windows and exterior doors at ACHS as part of the renovation project.

Mother Nature has been providing us with plenty of moisture and a little snow. With an active storm track and temperatures that have been cold enough to support wintry weather, we anticipate a few more days where we will be delayed or closed. So you are aware, we do our best to communicate with VDOT, the Sheriff's Office, and the National Weather Service in addition to consulting with our internal team when making decisions regarding delays or closures. On mornings when there is a chance of inclement weather, we begin checking roads between 4:00 and 4:30 AM. Due to our bus schedule we need to make a decision by 5:40 AM. As a result, we have to make decisions based on the information we have at the time. Please know that we have the safety of our students and staff at the forefront of every weather related decision.

There is a possibility that we will operate remotely when we need to "close" due to the weather. We will do our best to notify you of the possibility of a remote day in advance. We try not to use remote learning for single day events but to use them more if we anticipate being out of school for multiple days. However, if we have multiple single day events we may need to begin utilizing remote instruction on days when schools are closed.

The "Community Dinner" was a great success as we had 120 community members and families participate in the event. I would like to thank our Show Up Amherst team, Iron Lives, and the Amherst County Public Schools Education Foundation for all they did in the planning and execution of the event. I would also like to thank Glad/Clorox for their financial support of the Education Foundation and the Show Up Amherst initiative.

Speaking of Show Up Amherst, we have our next division wide Show Up Day scheduled for March 29. We have asked school administrators to work with their faculty, staff, and students for feedback and support when planning this event. Please reach out to your school administration if you have any ideas for the Show Up Day. We need to do everything we can to build positive relationships with our students and encourage them to attend school.

I thank you again for all you do for your students, ACPS, and the Amherst County community. Let us all try to remember our "WHY" and continue to keep the students at the forefront of your decisions. I hope February is a great month for each of you. Please feel free to contact me if I may be of assistance.

Sincerely,

*William*



# UPCOMING EVENTS

---

## **February 19**

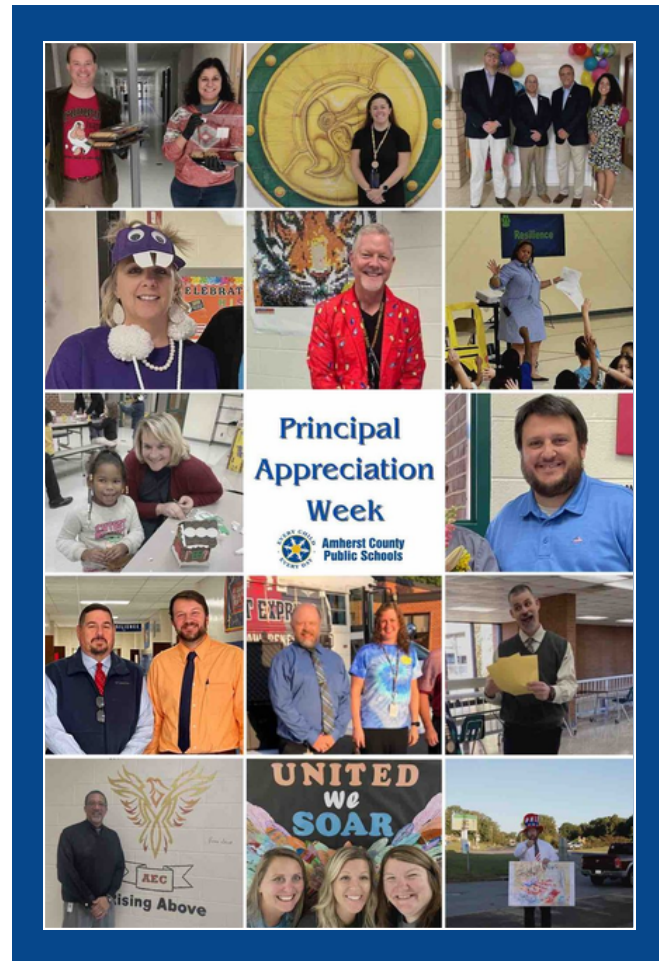
Professional Development Day  
No School for Students

## **February 20**

Interim Report Distribution

## VIRGINIA PRINCIPAL APPRECIATION WEEK

During the week of January 14-20 has been designated as Virginia Principal Appreciation Week. Please join us in recognizing our amazing principals across all of our exceptional schools in ACPS! We are grateful for their focused leadership, intentional efforts to support our staff, students, and families in Amherst County, and their unwavering dedication to providing an excellent education to Every Child, Every Day!

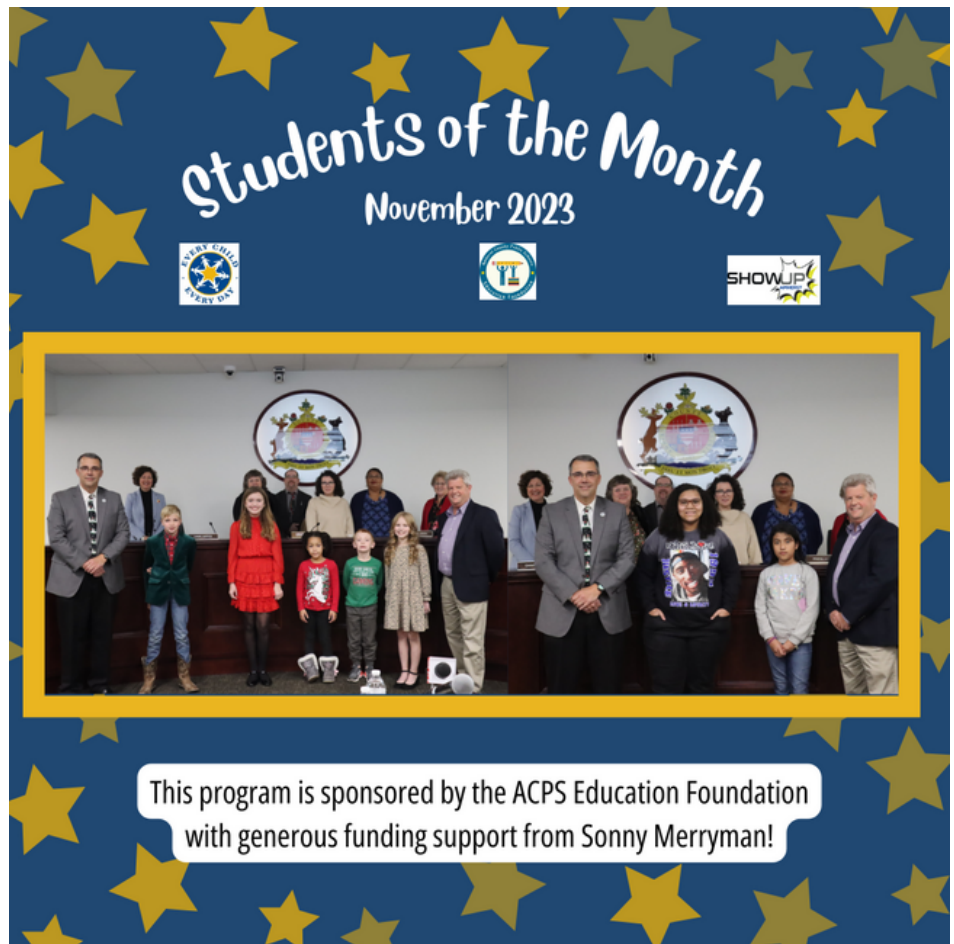




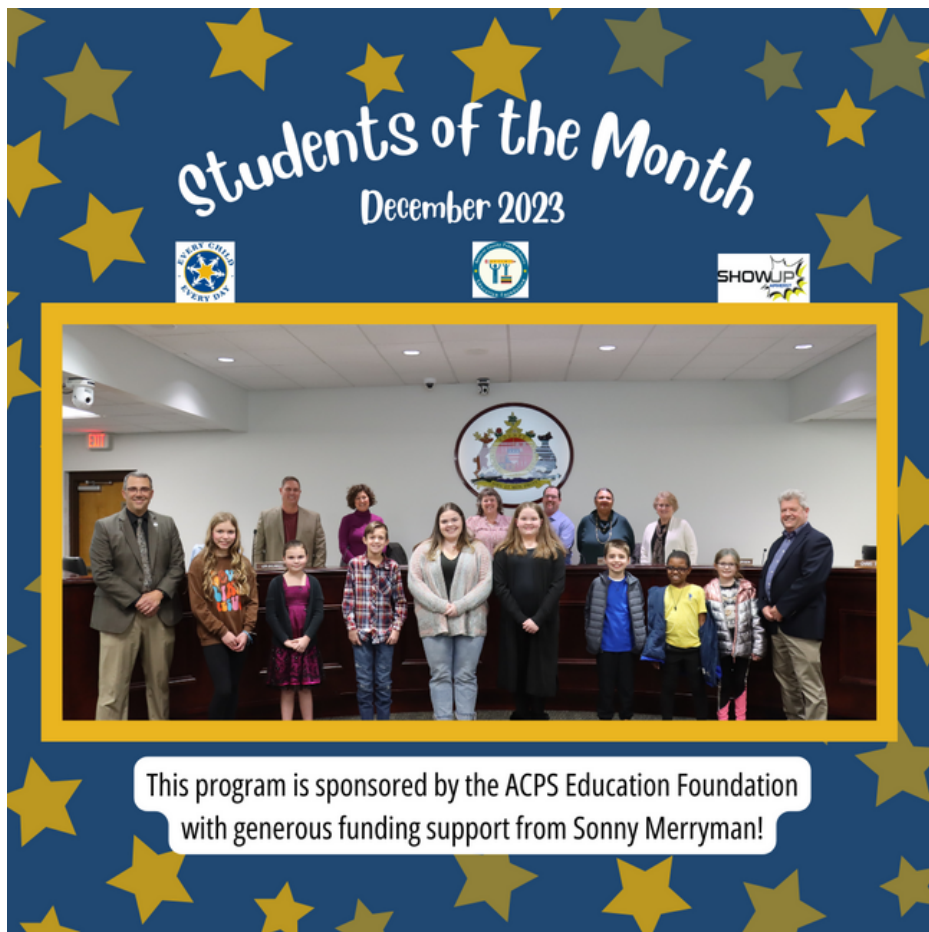
## >>> NOVEMBER STUDENTS OF THE MONTH

Congratulations to our  
November Students of the  
Month!

ACHS - Alyiah Winfield  
AEC - Noah Rees  
AMS - Robert Hamilton  
MMS - Mason Cariaga  
AMEL - Viridiana Altunar  
AES - Josie Wright  
CES - Tenley Tomlin  
EES - Mazi Thomas  
MHES - Berkley Peters  
TES - Karlym Fitzgerald



## >>> DECEMBER STUDENTS OF THE MONTH



Congratulations to our  
December Students of the  
Month!

ACHS - Reagan Tyree  
AEC - Jazmine Walkes  
AMS - Lilyanna Fickle  
MMS - Kaelynd Ramsey  
AMEL - Grayson Harrell  
AES - Maurice Banks  
CES - Wyatt Lloyd  
EES - Evelyn Meador  
MHES - MyKayla Clements  
TES - Lila Stinnett



# HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

**Presented by: Law Enforcement  
and Horizon Behavioral Health**

## **WHAT EVERY PARENT, CAREGIVER & PROFESSIONAL NEEDS TO KNOW**

Join parents, teachers, coaches, and other caring adults for an immersive experience designed to give you the skills needed to recognize and address risky behaviors in young people.

In this presentation, you will learn:

- The latest drug trends, including how to recognize items that may be contaminated with fentanyl
- Common items found in a teens room that may indicate risky behaviors
- Signs of mental health challenges
- Technology risks
- Available resources
- How to get help

**MOCK  
TEEN  
BEDROOM**

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5TH  
MADISON HEIGHTS LIBRARY  
200 RIVER JAMES  
SHOPPING CENTER,  
MADISON HEIGHTS, VA**

**6PM – 7PM**

**FREE NARCAN AND OTHER  
GIVEAWAYS PROVIDED!**



**HORIZON**





# HAPPY NATIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELING WEEK

FEBRUARY 5-9, 2024

SCHOOL COUNSELING:  
STANDARDS-BASED,  
STUDENT-FOCUSED



**NATIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELING WEEK 2024 (#NSCW24) IS FEB. 5-9, 2024, TO FOCUS PUBLIC ATTENTION ON THE UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS WITHIN U.S. SCHOOL SYSTEMS.**

NATIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELING WEEK, SPONSORED BY ASCA, HIGHLIGHTS THE TREMENDOUS IMPACT SCHOOL COUNSELORS CAN HAVE IN HELPING STUDENTS ACHIEVE SCHOOL SUCCESS AND PLAN FOR A CAREER. NATIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELING WEEK IS ALWAYS CELEBRATED THE FIRST FULL WEEK IN FEBRUARY. THE 2024 THEME IS "SCHOOL COUNSELING: STANDARDS-BASED, STUDENT-FOCUSED."

WE APPRECIATE THE HARD WORK OF OUR SCHOOL COUNSELORS WHO ARE CHAMPIONS FOR OUR STUDENTS. THEY ARE ADVOCATES AND POSITIVE CONTRIBUTORS TO THEIR STUDENTS' LIVES AND SCHOOL COMMUNITIES.



## VIRGINIA KINDNESS WEEK

What is Virginia Kindness Week?

The purpose of Kindness Week is to recognize that simple day-to-day acts of kindness enable our schools, communities, and state to be a kinder, safer, healthier and more inclusive place to live, work, learn and play.

### WHY KINDNESS?

The purpose of Kindness Week is to recognize that simple day-to-day acts of kindness enable our schools, communities, and state to be a kinder, safer, healthier and more inclusive place to live, work, learn and play.

Why Kindness?

- Kindness has proven that kindness helps us to form meaningful connections with others, which are reported to be a strong factor in increasing happiness. Kindness has been proven to boost serotonin, reduce stress, increase positive affect, release endorphins and the hormone oxytocin in numerous scientific studies.
- Teaching and recognizing kindness in schools and communities fosters empathy, builds community, reduces bullying and nurtures a safe and welcoming environment ([Currie, 2015](#)).
- By promoting kindness, we are promoting inclusivity by extending an opportunity for grace, empathy, dignity and acceptance across Virginia ([Layous, Nelson, Oberle, Schonert-Reichl, Lyubomirsky, 2012](#)).

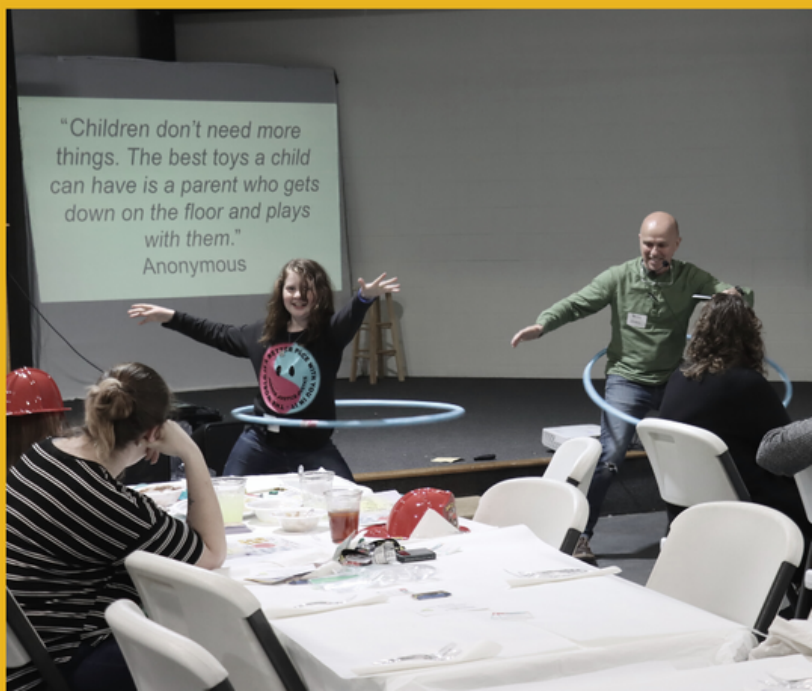




# Community Connections Dinner



2024





# Margaret's Deception



**WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY**

**PATRICIA EMMERT**

**(MYSTERY THRILLER, BLACK BOX THEATRE)**

**FEBRUARY 7TH-10TH**

**LIMITED SEATING**

**PURCHASE TICKETS [HERE](#)**

**\*SNOW DATES 15TH-18TH\***

**\*CHILDREN UNDER 13 NOT RECOMMENDED\***

**HOUSE OPENS AT 6:30PM, SHOW STARTS AT 7PM**





# The wonders of walking for wellness



Walking does more than help us get from one place to another. It also helps keep us healthy — physically and mentally. Two of the best benefits of walking for fitness are that you don't need to be athletic, and it's free. All you need are comfortable clothes and sneakers.

## 10 reasons why you should walk more. Walking can: **Staying motivated**

1. Boost your energy.
2. Burn calories.
3. Fill your body with feel-good hormones.
4. Improve sleep.
5. Keep your heart strong.
6. Lower the risk of disease.
7. Melt away stress.
8. Strengthen muscles and bones.
9. Support the immune system.
10. Tone your legs.

The beauty of walking is that there are so many ways and places you can do it. You can follow the same routine every day or mix it up. To keep boredom at bay:

- Chat on the phone.
- Listen to a podcast or audiobook.
- Look for trees, flowers, or animals along the way.
- Meet up with a friend.
- Savor the silence.
- Snap photos and post what you see on social media.
- Try going in the opposite direction.
- Vary your pace, from medium to brisk.

## Getting started

When you're first starting out, it helps both physically and mentally to break your walks into smaller ones. Shorter walks are also a good way to fit exercise into a busy schedule.

Aim for 150 minutes of exercise a week. Start with 10–15 minutes once or twice a day, then slowly increase your time and distance.





## Sneaking in more steps

Hitting 10,000 steps can seem overwhelming, even if you're already fit or have loads of free time. Whether you're walking for weight loss or more energy, here are ways to sneak extra steps into your day:

- Park farther away.
- Take your dog or a neighbor's dog for a walk.
- Take the stairs.
- Walk every time you talk on the phone.

### At work, you can:

- Have walking meetings.
- Use the restroom or break room furthest from your work station.
- Schedule a walking workout with a friend.
- Walk over to your co-worker to ask a question.

### If you're busy raising kids:

- Sneak in a walk around the block after the bus comes.
- Take a family walk after dinner.
- Walk around the field or court at sports practice.
- Walk in place while you cook, wash dishes, or fold laundry.

Once you start putting one foot in front of the other for exercise, soon you'll be walking your way to better physical and mental health.

## Article

### The Wonders Of Walking For Wellness

## Resource

### Fitness and Nutrition Toolkit

Sources:  
American Diabetes Association: *The Benefits of Walking (and Solutions!)* (accessed May 2023); diabetes.org.  
Prevention: *12 Major Benefits of Walking, According to Experts* (accessed May 2023); prevention.com.  
The Heart Foundation: *The Top 10 Excuses for Not Exercising* (accessed May 2023); theheartfoundation.org.

Sydney Health is offered through an arrangement with Celon Digital Platforms, a separate company offering mobile application services on behalf of your health plan.

Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield is the trade name of: In Colorado: Rocky Mountain Hospital and Medical Service, Inc. HMO products underwritten by HMO Colorado, Inc. Copies of Colorado network access plans are available on request from member services or can be obtained by going to [anthem.com/co/networkaccess](https://www.anthem.com/co/networkaccess). In Connecticut: Anthem Health Plans, Inc. In Indiana: Anthem Insurance Companies, Inc. In Georgia: Blue Cross Blue Shield Healthcare Plan of Georgia, Inc. and Community Care Health Plan of Georgia, Inc. In Kentucky: Anthem Health Plans of Kentucky, Inc. In Maine: Anthem Health Plans of Maine, Inc. In Missouri (excluding 30 counties in the Kansas City area): RightCHOICE® Managed Care, Inc. (RIT), Healthy Alliance® Life Insurance Company (HALIC), and HMO Missouri, Inc. RIT and certain affiliates administer non-HMO benefits underwritten by HALIC and HMO benefits underwritten by HMO Missouri, Inc. RIT and certain affiliates only provide administrative services for self-funded plans and do not underwrite benefits. In Nevada: Rocky Mountain Hospital and Medical Service, Inc. HMO products underwritten by HMO Colorado, Inc., dba HMO Nevada. In New Hampshire: Anthem Health Plans of New Hampshire, Inc. HMO plans are administered by Anthem Health Plans of New Hampshire, Inc. and underwritten by Matthew Thornton Health Plan, Inc. In 17 southeastern counties of New York: Anthem Healthchoice Assurance, Inc., and Anthem Healthchoice HMO, Inc. In these same counties Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield HP is the tradename of Anthem HP, LLC. In Ohio: Community Insurance Company. In Virginia: Anthem Health Plans of Virginia, Inc. trades as Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, and its affiliate HealthKeepers, Inc. trades as Anthem HealthKeepers providing HMO coverage, and their service area is all of Virginia except for the City of Fairfax, the Town of Vienna, and the area east of State Route 123. In Wisconsin: Blue Cross Blue Shield of Wisconsin (BCBSWI), underwrites or administers PPO and indemnity policies and underwrites the out of network benefits in POS policies offered by CompCare Health Services Insurance Corporation (CompCare) or Wisconsin Collaborative Insurance Corporation (WCIC). CompCare underwrites or administers HMO or POS policies; WCIC underwrites or administers Well Priority HMO or POS policies. Independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. Anthem is a registered trademark of Anthem Insurance Companies, Inc.



**For extra motivation or guidance,**  
try the Walk Your Way to Wellness Action Plan on  
our SydneySM Health mobile app or **[anthem.com](https://www.anthem.com)**.



Join us at the Amherst Library for  
Pirate Palooza:

A Family Friendly Event

Saturday, February 3rd in Amherst  
from 10:30am to 11:30am

