

# Widener

SPRING

2018

WIDENER MEMORIAL SCHOOL

**Opening Letter...** Well spring is finally here, even though the weather outside seemed like it would be cold and breezy forever; we're out of April 2018 and the school is finally moving forward into the month of May 2018.

The Widener Memorial School Summer Program is opening up this June 2018 and summer school is coming into action.

A lot of fun and exciting events are coming up this year.

The class of 2018 is graduating from Widener Memorial School; June will mark the end of the final year for seniors.

The Widener students are also very excited about returning to Widener Memorial School for job employment shadowing and college transitioning which is due to begin during Fall of 2018.

Widener Day is also coming up., that's an event that Widener classmates are really excited about, also people in this school are retiring as well and heading onto the adventure of new job employments next year.

The Widener Memorial Prom of 2018 is also coming up, that's an event we are really happy about.

This year's prom will be a fun night full of partying, school amusement and adventure.

I'm really thankful to be a part of Widener Memorial School, it's not only a school, it's something that will be a part of our hearts forever, I love it here, even though we are heading into the future we will always remember our lives here at the fun wonderfully amazing Widener Memorial School.

*Contributed by Roc*

Before you turn the page, please acknowledge the following students who have worked very hard on this newsletter: The students from Room 103 for Teachers with Guns, interviews, and ballroom dance reporting; Charles Dorival & Room 107 for graphic design, Roc for his touching opening letter and Evan Easterling, the best Journalism major ever from Temple University!



**WIDENER DAY!**

**MAY 16<sup>th</sup> !!!**

**Phillies ball girls, blow up games, game room, horses, First Tee, basketball, arts & crafts, and MUCH more!! DON'T MISS IT!!!**

## Important Dates

May 10- Spring Musical/ Board Meeting

14- Senior Class Trip

15- No School- Election Day

16- Widener Day

17- Senior Awards Luncheon

18- 12:09 Dismissal- Prof Dev

22- 1812 Performance

25- B-Ball Team and Cheerleaders

Trip – FDR

May 28- No School Memorial Day

June 8- High School Graduation

12- Move up day

12- Last day for students

13- Last day for staff

25- Summer Program begins

July 19- Summer Program ends

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## NEW segment... What do **YOU** think??

This is the start of a new series where we send a couple reporters out to get opinions on current hot button issues... your opinion counts!! For this issue, Dante G and Johnny H hit the halls and asked:

**Since the shooting in the school in Florida, many people have voiced polarizing opinions after President Trump recommended that teachers carry firearms. In one sentence, please give me your opinion on this.**

The replies.....

"I believe that people who are untrained with guns may cause more accidents than protection." *Anonymous*

"I believe that teachers should not be armed because it is not their duty to defend [the students] with weapons." *Anonymous*

"I don't think that they should have firearms; they're there to teach the students—point blank!" *Ms. Baron*

"I'm not for the teachers getting guns because if you give them guns you have to give guns to every employee in the building so if he's not prepared to arm all of us then I think none of us." *Ms. Manteen*

"I do not think teachers should carry firearms at all; I wouldn't trust any teacher with a firearm." *Mrs. Blankemeyer*

"Under no circumstances should teachers be made to carry a gun in a classroom" *Ms. Bluestein*

"My opinion about teachers carrying firearms is that they shouldn't because not all teachers are trained properly to carry firearms and that's an added responsibility that they might have to carry instead of watching students and taking care of the students." *Mrs. Emore*

"I do not think that teachers carrying firearms is a way to stop violence in school with guns. ...I think it would be more dangerous for teachers to have guns with all the many different things that could go wrong with that." *Mrs. Leonard*

### Transition Fair

On March 15th Widener Memorial School hosted a transition fair for their high school students and families. There were over 10 post-secondary partners present, from colleges to adult day programs, to adult residential programs. These partners were on hand to hand out information about their programs and to start getting students registered for the program of their choice.

*Mr. La Rocco*



## LOWER SCHOOL



### **Crazy, Cool Crystals**

Written by: Mahd,  
Naijae, Douglas,  
Heavenly,  
Mung, Nasir, Alonna,  
Maria, Miss Jill



In science, we grew our own crystals. It was an experiment. When we do an experiment, we use our 5 senses to explore the world around us. We used water, rocks and crystal dust. We mixed everything together in a container. We checked the containers each day for a week to see how it changed and grew. We noticed that all the crystals were different and lots of colors. "My crystal was yellow," said Maria. "Mine was purple," said Heavenly. Naijae said, "The crystals dried. They were sparkly!" Douglas noticed that the crystals are a solid because they can break. Lastly, Mahd said, "I learned that the water went away. It evaporates and shows the crystals!" **"IT WAS SO COOL!"** Nasir shouted!

Would you grow your own crystals, too?

## HIGH SCHOOL

### **High School Happenings!**

The whole high school was able to view the newly released movie WONDER. This was a great movie for many to see. So many of us are not alone in our disabilities and that kindness goes a long way! It is our hope that each student chooses to be kind...

Mrs. Vagnozzi

### **Room 103, 2nd Period Senior Capstone:**

The Seniors are very busy this time of year- if they have senioritis, they are not letting it show! Johnny, Azriel, Alicia, and Dante are working intently on their Senior Projects.



The third Thursday of every month are a extra fun when our class gets together with Mrs. Bign some yers class. Recently we had a story about ice cream and then made our own. It was fun! SYUEEING

The baount! The ice formed! We topped it off with some syrup and pushed over cookies YUM! TYshedn Thongus



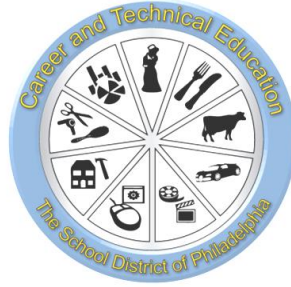
Room 106



The Senior Project involves writing a research report, completing 20 hours of community service, and a culminating presentation project demonstrating what they have learned in the process. Roc, Keith and Greg are active members of the Yearbook Committee. Some of their responsibilities include planning various sections and selecting photos for the 2018 Yearbook. Go Seniors!!!

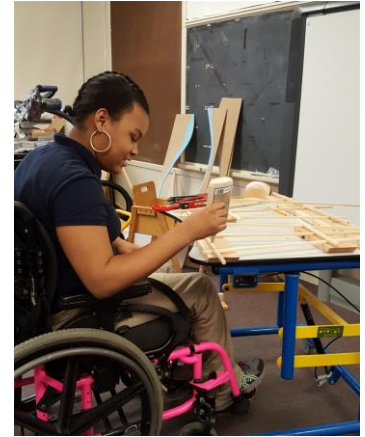


## Career & Technical Education



Shamiah preps a pineapple top for rooting

All of the plants, which are all in various stages of growth, are more than enough to keep us busy. We are eager to start moving some outside and even planting some permanently. We also have some small scale wood projects coming up...think "arts and crafts".



Zania making a trellis



Keith arranges some plants on our 2<sup>nd</sup> plant bench



White spots are spider mites! Use a spray bottle and water to squirt them away!!



Taisha inserting plant food spike

### Ms. Tracey

By Dante Gilliam-Burton

**If you had a chance for a "do-over" in life, what would you do differently?**

*I was offered \$750,000 to sell product that I designed to a football player and declined.*

**What do you feel most proud of?**

*My children and becoming a nurse*

**What was one of your most defining moments in life?**

*I jumped off of a one hundred and fifty foot tower*

*bungee jumping.*

**If you could witness any event of the past, present, or future, what would it be?**

*Nicola Tesla re-creating St. Elmo's fire and the glowing butterflies in Colorado*

**Why did you choose this profession?**

*I wanted to get more involved with patients and have more tools to work with than social work affords.*

## STAFF INTERVIEWS

### Mr. Gaffin

By Destiny Hatten & Azriel Henderson

**Where did you go to college?**

*I went to Arcadia University where I got my Master's Degree and then I also went to the college of New Jersey.*

**Did you always want to work in a school?**

*I always wanted to be a teacher I knew ever since I was a little kid*

**Why did you decide to come to Widener?**

*I decided to come to Widener because I was very excited for the opportunity to be the principal of a very special school. The opportunity came and I was very excited to take on that responsibility.*

*Continued next page.....*



**What's it like to become the new principal in the middle of the year?**

*It's a wonderful experience talk to get to know everybody and to build those relationships with parents, students and staff.*

**What do you want to accomplish at Widener?**

*I want to make sure that Widener has all of the resources it needs so that students can do the best they can, they have all the materials that they need, and that Widener grows.*

**How do you like working at Widener so far?**

*I love working at Widener.*

**How did you feel during the interview to be the principal at Widener?**

*I felt very confident during the interview I thought the questions were a great. I thought Azriel did a good job with her question, I remember that question very well about high school seniors and activities. It was a great interview and I'm truly honored to be here.*

**You said on the back of the Winter Newsletter, "Reading is the key to academic success." Why do you think that?**

*Reading [is] the key, learning to read, being able to read better is more knowledge for everybody. Reading is one of our anchor goals and literacy is one of our anchor goals in a school district. We want to make sure to incorporate a literacy block in our reading program every day.*

**How would you describe your leadership style?**

*Very transparent, very visible, always all around the school right all around the school. I believe in being an effective communicator so when an issue comes up I work with my leadership team to resolve the issue and make Widener a better place*

**When dealing with difficult students, at what point do you involve parents? How would you communicate with them?**

*All parents are partners so we talk to our parents and involving the counselor like Mr. La Rocco it's very important to keep parents in the loop of what's going on*

**How would you increase Widener's involvement with the community?**

*By getting the word out about Widener this wonderful, wonderful school that we have here, inviting parents to come in. One of our special events is Bring Your Special Person Day which is April the 25th.*

**Have you ever worked at a school for disabled kids before? If so, how was that one compared to Widener?**

*Yes I have, it was different in a way [that] the students had different programming at the school. A student that had a disability had a different kind of programming, that's how it was different.*

**SPORTS & ACTIVITIES**



**The Harlem Globetrotters**

visited Widener on February 26<sup>th</sup> to show off some skills, meet our students and play a game of wheelchair basketball. Swish and Zeus showed the crowd with dribbling skills, trick shots and even taught students to spin a ball on their finger. The globetrotters also autographed our globetrotter ball that is displayed in our showcase.



## >>> SPECIAL FEATURE <<<

### Ballroom Dancing

The Ballroom Dancing students are trained by the generous volunteers from American Dance

Wheels (<http://www.americandancewheels.org/>). The Widener competition was held on April 25<sup>th</sup>, and it was spectacular as usual. The results are to the right. Congratulations!!

First place - **Chanell & Borys**  
Second place - **Jermaine & Jasmine**  
Third place - **Kiessence & Meg**  
Best standing duo - **Keith & Meg**  
Most improved - **Kyran**  
Outstanding duo - **Khalid & Tracy**



**Alyse Einbender**, who has been in a wheelchair since 2004, is a dancer at American Dance Wheels, which is an organization that uses dance in ways that can help people with disabilities. She talked [with **Kiessence Rone**..thank you!] about some of her accomplishments and her favorite parts of dancing.

**Describe the most creative work-related project you have completed for dance?**

*Going to Toronto, Canada Aubree [Marchione] choreographed a dance to perform at the Pan American Games of 2015. We were an exhibition team...got to dance at a city park in front of hundreds of people.*

**Tell me about an assignment that was too difficult for your dance. How did you resolve the issue?**

*Doing the quick back and forth from left to right mostly because of problems with left hand gripping the wheel... I would wear a leather glove because it sticks to the rim.*

**What is your favorite part of teaching dance?**

*Watching the light in students' eyes and the smiles on their faces when they get it*

**What is your favorite style of dance to teach?**

*I think I like the Latin, fast paced dances with lively music.*

**What made you want to start dancing?**

*I saw Melinda and Aubrey and Rob doing a demonstration at Temple University Rec Day. I wanted to meet new people and have fun.*



The group in Toronto (above) and Alyse & Mike



American Dance Wheels By Alicia Rodriguez

As a dance instructor, **Melinda Kremer** has to consider how much to expect out of dancers and how perfect she wants routines to be. The main emphasis is making students' experiences enjoyable. "If you take the fun out of it, then what's the point of dancing at all," Kremer said.

Kremer is the Executive Director of American Dance Wheels, which is a dance program that provides "the social, rehabilitative, and competitive activity of Wheelchair Ballroom and Latin Dance to partnerships comprised of one seated and one standing dancer," according to its website. American Dance Wheels teaches Salsa, Tango, Rumba, Merengue, Bolero, Hustle, Foxtrot and Waltz to students at Widener Memorial School.

Salsa is a dance that was created fairly recently with the mixture of many different style and musical techniques that all came together in Cuba, land that was home of the many Latin dances and music style.

In the late 19th and 20th century, Tango was one of the most famous partner dances. It emphasizes the vibrant



and playful style of movement, rich expressions and improvisation. It requires close connection and passion between dancers. Dance variations were created in Argentina and many other countries.

Kremer teaches the dance class for American Dance Wheels. She has been a dance teacher for many years. Some teachers and therapists use dancing as part of their therapeutic program, Kremer said. The course is taught in a way so everyone learns the same thing.

“We’ve been able to actually touch a lot of people’s lives with the dancing.”

\*\*\*Editors note: Please thank the American Wheels volunteers when you see them and let them know how much we appreciate their efforts!



## Spring Birthdays

### APRIL

Ross, Tanya  
Thomas-Shine, Jared  
Watson, Khalid  
Escobar, Leandro  
Holloman, Johnny  
Jones, Aalaya  
AUFFANT, Heavenly  
Millen, Jamir  
Chen, Tracey  
Carter, Daejon

Henderson, Azriel  
Williamson, Dequain  
Quiles, Kassidy  
Antoine, Robert  
Steriotis, Michael  
Hoang, Ausher  
Harris, Trinity  
Parker, Josenia  
Veras-Gomez, Warne  
Manning, Matthew

### MAY

Emerson, Joshua  
DEIH, Mung  
Camarata, Samantha  
McNeill, Wayne  
Brady, Shifir  
Gilliam-Burton, Dante  
Johnson, Raymond  
Rodriguez-Adames,  
Adayris

## WIDENER HEROES

### JUNE

Baker, Isaiah  
Dockery, Naijae  
Bah, Keiba  
Walker, Chanell-Rene  
TEJADA-Genao Emelie  
Taylor, Emmanuel  
Sutton-Hinson, Minar  
Edwards, Ashton  
Rayfield, Jymere  
Calvert, Kayla  
Truax, Jheovani  
Jordan, Gregory



On April 25th Widener hosted our first annual Special Persons Day. We had close to 30 of the special people in our students lives come in and participate in a planting activity, after watching a show put on by the lower school students. After the planting activity lunch was eaten and was enjoyed by all. To end the event 2 TVs were raffled off! The event was a huge success and we hope to build it even larger next year.

*Mr. La Rocco*



The Widener Memorial School

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[www.philasd.org/widener](http://www.philasd.org/widener)

The Widener Memorial School is a Special Education Center School for students in age-appropriate grades from kindergarten through twelve plus. Individualized programs provide superior instruction for pupils with various physical and mental disabilities. This year we celebrate our 116<sup>th</sup> year!!



Dear Widener Family,

After a long winter and many cold days, I am happy to finally be able to say, Happy Spring!

I am pleased to share our Spring / Summer Edition of The Widener News with all of you. As we begin our transition towards the end of the year, Widener will be a very busy place with many exciting happenings for all. I am especially looking forward to our annual Widener Day, The Widener Spring Show, class trips and our graduation activities for our seniors.



Please remember to plan to send your youngster to our anticipated 14 day Summer School Program. The program runs from June 25-July 19, 2018. EVERY student can benefit from extra time devoted to academics. Please make sure your child is registered. If you have any questions, kindly contact the school.

Finally, I want to thank you for your continued support to provide the BEST for our students!

Regards,

Harris R. Gaffin

Principal

