

# Widener

Winter/Spring 2019



## Opening Letter

*Here we have another future graphic artist...Please thank Zameir Scott for designing this editions front page heading.*

**CONGRATULATIONS ZAMEIR!!**



Greetings Widener Community!! It's been quite a while since the last newsletter edition was printed. Much has occurred since then, so there are many things to report. Most notably is the annual Widener Heroes holiday celebration. It is an event that can't be glorified enough.

Other events include Black History Month, Career Day, and Philly Goat Project therapy. Of course, there are always great classroom assignments on which to write about. The basketball team is several games into the season, and Ballroom Dancing resumed.

We've endured a long stretch of cold winter days; let's put them behind us and look forward to spring and—with a little luck—some nice weather. Hopefully some of the beautiful weather will arrive in time for Widener Day, Spring Recess and Memorial Day. Shortly afterwards, the school year will come to an end until Widener's Summer Program which will run from June 10 – July 2.

So, there is much to await, and not much time before many of our wonderful young adults move on for good. Use the time to enjoy while you can and make the most out of this phase.

*The CTE 12+ Group*

## Important Dates

### MARCH

- 26- Spring Title I Meeting for Parents
- 27- Transition Fair 1:00 – 3:00 PM

### APRIL

- 3 - 5- Report Card Conferences- Early Dismissal
- 18- 22- Spring Recess No School

### MAY

- 8- Youth Leadership Conference
- 10- Prom

### MAY

- 13- Spirit of Philadelphia
- 15- Widener Day
- 16- Senior Luncheon
- 27- Memorial Day No School
- 31- Graduation

### JUNE

- 4- Last day for students
- 5- Last day for staff

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Career Day was held on February 27th in the morning. We had representatives from 14 businesses and places of interest for our students to experience presentations from different career paths. Our presenters included: Vicki and Charlie Ard, bakers from Fill a Bagel, Nicole DeLuca, a 1st year student at Holy Family University, Lt. Mary Preston and co-workers from the Philadelphia Fire Department EMT division, Megan Kite, an after-school worker at the Free Library of Philadelphia (Megan and her friend Tim are former WMS students) Laura, Bree, and Katey from All About Events, an event planning company at Reading Terminal, Samantha Price, an educational lawyer, Widener's own Jessica Ruiz, a makeup artist, Stacy Krubsack from Mobility Works presenting with Ken Perry, another former WMS student.



Additional participants were Mrs. Cass Celebre, a nurse anesthetist, members of Philly Pups for Independence representing The Seeing Eye (dogs have careers too!), Sgt. Hayes, Ofc Willis, and Ofc. Caserta from Philadelphia S.W.A.T., Lt. Warren Green and coworker from the Philadelphia Fire Department, and Mr. Jim Scanlon, our former Aquatic director in the capacity of a teacher and coach. It was an amazing experience for our students. Students picked 4 presenters that appealed to them and we were able to fulfill every request. The morning ended with a special presentation with former WMS teacher, Kathy Protenic, who was accompanied by 3 former students to speak with our high school classes about independent living. Next year we would like to open this event up to parents and friends of our students to present their careers.

....submitted by Mrs. Leonard



**LOWER/ MIDDLE SCHOOL**



Room 18 and Room 26 spent a wonderful day at Penn Charter on December 6th! Our classrooms have enjoyed the semester long service learning project and partnership with our Penn Charter friends! We have developed friendships, participated in sensory projects, and toured each other's schools.

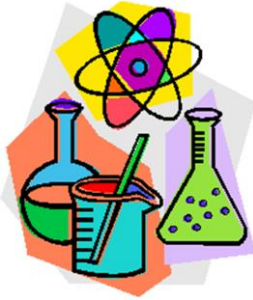


We truly enjoyed seeing their school and making bags for the homeless shelter, playing a new game in the gym, and making crafts! We will miss our Penn Charter buddies until we see them next time!

...Martha Dacons



Mijail Alameda breaking open a geode during our study on minerals



*Recent lessons in Mrs. Cuarezma's Middle School science class....*



Shamiyah Thomas and Kayla Calvert using the scientific method to mix up variables hypothesize the outcome of making slime.



Tatiana Herbert using the scientific method to make slime



Angelese Massey and Jaden Murphey showing off their alligators and the top teeth "overbites" after learning to compare alligators from crocodiles!



Here's the class Showing off the different snout shapes and positions of teeth of their "scary" alligators and crocodiles after our reptile lesson.



Jordan Owens and Sarina Delacruz experimenting with variables and the scientific method in order to make slime



## HIGH SCHOOL

Just a room 106 shout out to a very special assistant who is the teacher's right hand woman!!! I'm not sure what I would do without Ms. Green!



Room 106 was celebrating the 100 day of school in the Life Skills Support class by counting by 10s! Pictured in order: Malik, Nadjalys, and Tyshean



....106 news reported by Mrs. Vagnozzi

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**Annual Trip to Central High School, December 18, 2018:** The trip to Central High School was a great success! Widener students were treated like VIPs by their Central buddies. They enjoyed a wonderful show and delicious lunch as well as a tour of the school.

.... Mrs. Emore

### Academic Career Exploration

Our ACE students have been interning at both the Mutter Museum and ACCT Philly. James Madallo a senior this year, has been volunteering at the Mutter Museum by educating the museum goers to the fantastic story of Dr. Cevalier Jackson, the Father of Endoscopy.

Dr. Jackson invented the endoscope, very similar to the one still used today, to retrieve object caught in the throats of his patients. He did not charge for his services; he simply asked to keep the object he retrieved. Dr. Jackson created a collection of over 2000 items, which he donated to the Mutter Museum. The display includes



the original endoscope and thousands of items intricately placed and displayed in drawers at the exhibit. James shows the items to the museum guests and gives a little history behind Dr. Jackson's work. The most popular item are safety pins that mothers used in diapering their babies; one pin on the diaper and the other between their lips,

many of which became stuck in their throats. There are also pieces of jewelry, keys, and toys. The exhibit is called "Cevalier Jackson's Foreign Body Collection."

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Johnny, Dante, and Alicia are volunteering at ACCT Philly, doing wash for the animals. They run 7 washers and dryers each visit and fold and put away the items so that the animals of Philadelphia have clean bedding. Once the laundry is done, the crew heads to the Cat Room, giving some play and sensory experiences to the cats by playing with pipe cleaners and other toys through the cage doors. Studies show that animals become stressed in shelters and may not be able to show their true nature under those circumstances. By giving the cats play time, the stress can be reduced therefore giving the cats an edge to be adopted

.....Mrs. Leonard

## SCHOOL-WIDE EVENTS

### African American Heritage History Month Activities & Presentation!!

On Tuesday, February 26, 2019, after lunch, we were treated to a performance no one at Widener Memorial High School will soon forget. "Sistah MAFALDA" and her group, "The \*KUUMBA Performers," (an Afro-American Caribbean drum and dance family troupe), shared a rich and very diverse African American History assembly program.

Sistah Mafalda an accomplished performer, dancer, dance instructor, storyteller, cultural ambassador and griot, wowed her



audience with her stilt walk dancing as well as a historical account of an Africa related voyage across the ocean from here to there and back again. Totally engaging all who came to witness this event, Sistah Mafalda's energetic presentation was extremely well received.

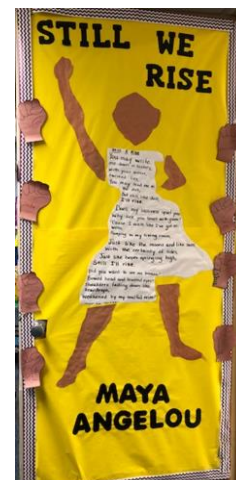


### African American History Door Contest

In celebration of African American History month, the teachers of Widener were asked to decorate their door. The results were astounding. From honoring the great Martin Luther King, Booker T. Washington, and Maya Angelou, to our own Widener staff, African American culture was portrayed through the artistic talents of our teachers and students. Our judges Mijail, Leandro, Zania, and Daniel, spent their morning working hard to determine which doors were the most creative and well-constructed. In third place with 92 points was room 22. In second place with 93 points was room 101. Finally, in first place was room 112 with an almost perfect score of 96 points! Room 112 decorated their door and surrounding wall in theme with Marvel's movie *Black Panther*. This film is described as a "groundbreaking celebration of black culture." Congratulations to room 112 and to all the classrooms that participated!

*Cheerfully submitted by Lynnette Coleman-Martin, Guest Counselor & Olivia Brock, Social Worker intern*

*Door pictures contributed by Mrs. Cuarezma and C. Markowski*



Doors are in order of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>—and a couple notables.

### Shayla L. Gaither... "Keep Pushing Forward"

On the afternoon of Thursday, February 14, 2019, we were graced with the presence of a young college student named, Shayla L. Gaither. She is a sophomore at Albright College. Her expected graduation date is May 2021. She is an activist, speaker, volunteer mentor, social media manager and board member (CITE-C).

The entire high school population was treated to a very professional presentation

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about the value of "pushing forward." She was very transparent in her delivery of her life story and showed many milestone pictures and videos, depicting what happens if you "keep pushing forward." A lively presentation that I am sure will stay in the hearts and minds of those who were treated to this event. I forgot to mention, she has a physical disability and is seated in a wheelchair.

Lynnette Coleman-Martin



....more on African-American Month

**Joann Frasier Dasent aka Auntie Jo Jo "The Storyteller"**

Joanne Frasier Dasent, more fondly known as "Auntie Jo Jo" (A Master Storyteller or \*Griot), visited our school on Thursday, February 14, 2019. Her target audience for this presentation was our middle school students. They were awed by the stories and fables told so enthusiastically by "Auntie Jo Jo." She was accompanied by a percussionist, Joe, that played the conga for our student's enjoyment.

"Auntie Jo Jo" utilized puppets and students in her presentation. **\*Griot** - A griot helps keep the past alive by remembering and articulating it for others. A griot sings, praises, celebrates, announces, as well as many other things, but most of all, a griot remembers. Griots were the storytellers and entertainers in Ancient Africa traditionally.

Lynnette Coleman-Martin



When you start working at Widener Memorial School it becomes your family. Two teachers are a part of Widener's family and are family. Some of our Widener Community may not know this but we have sisters that work at Widener. Together they have been teaching Philadelphia students for a combined 73 years. Yes you read that right! That is not a typo they have been enriching the lives of children for 73 years! Throughout their time at Widener they have taught many exceptionalities. No matter what they are teaching they give their BEST. We would like to recognize Mrs. Green and Mrs. Liburd for their amazing teaching with our students and many other students across Philadelphia. Thank you for everything YOU do.

.....M. Rogers

**Career & Technical Education.....current projects (besides this Newsletter).....**



We have another pineapple! (right pic) Its crown appeared on Jan. 22 and now measures 4". Spike, left, arrived last Sept. and now is 13" tall! Spike would be ready for harvest had he not spent the winter indoors.

We also have teamed up with Art Therapist Marissa from Settlement/ Kardon Center for Arts Therapy. She does an awesome job with the students—THANK YOU MARISSA!

During art therapy the slats and rails are painted and then our CTE students assemble them. Pictured is Zania using a cordless trim-nail gun to attach the pickets to the rails; last pic is one of the finished fences.



**Goats for the Greater Good-- Providing the Greater Philadelphia Area with Exciting Experience & Ecological Opportunities**

The Philly Goat Project comes to our school twice a month. Volunteers who assist in the program pair up with our students and the goats to encourage independent walking, talking and social engagement. Students enjoy the interaction and it brings smiles to all their faces each week they come! Our high school helper Brianna is enjoying the goat visit! Brianna is doing her community service hours with us in the Life Skills classroom this semester! We love all the help she provides our students!!

**COMMUNITY PARTNERS**



**Location:**  
**Awbury Arboretum's Agricultural Village**  
(<http://awbury.org>)  
**6336 Ardleigh Street**  
**Philadelphia PA 19138**

<https://www.phillygoatproject.org/>

..submitted by Mrs. Vagnozzi



## Community Based Vocational Training (CBVT)

A big part of community education is learning how to use public transportation. We have established repetitive routes to reinforce skills using SEPTA buses and the subway. Our Chestnut Hill sojourn starts with a shop bus ride to the Woodmere Museum at the top of the hill. We can tour the museum at no cost before we return. We catch the L bus coming from the Plymouth Meeting Mall, then transfer to the 18 double-bus. The bigger bus usually provides a less congested ride and a stop at the entrance of the school.

We train on the Broad Street Subway from the Olney Transportation Center navigating elevators to travel to the SEPTA Access Center at the Suburban Station. Once there we can strategize moving around in a mock bus to locate and practice accessing preferred seating. We often tour the mall for refreshments then return using the Market Street/Frankford line. Students improve their skills and -more importantly- learn how to self-advocate while using the system.

.....Richard Aldrete Vocational Itinerant Teacher



Maison on the L bus



Angelo on the 18 bus

## SPORTS & ACTIVITIES

### Ballroom Dancing

Widener students have been very busy in our Ballroom Dance Program. This amazing program is led by Melinda Kremer, executive director and founder of American Dance Wheels Foundation. Our students participate in this wonderful program every wed from 9:15- 10:40.

The mission of this program is to make a significant contribution to the lives of individuals with Ambulatory Disabilities by providing the social, rehabilitative, and activity of wheelchair ballroom and Latin dance to partnerships comprised of one seated and one standing dancers.

This semester we have over 20 students participating. Our standing partners are students from Central High School and Temple University. Also for the first time ever some of our standing partners are Widener bus attendants. They have been a wonderful addition to the Widener Ballroom Dance Program.



**Basketball** The Widener Wildcats Basketball team is having a phenomenal season. The players are really starting to gel as a cohesive unit. The teamwork that our players have demonstrated throughout the season has been amazing.

Another aspect of this year's team is the sportsmanship that they have demonstrated throughout this season. At no time was this more evident than during our second 2<sup>nd</sup> staff game in which we lost a thrilling game by only 4 points. I was so proud of the way this team stayed positive after losing such a hard fought game. They came right back the next game with a victory over academy.

The season will continue until the end of the school year. We still have scheduled games against Central, Girls High, Penn Charter, Roman Catholic, and Father Judge high schools. Special shout out to the Widener Cheerleaders for cheering the team on every game listed. Thank you to the wonderful students here at Widener who support the team and cheer us on.

*Sports & Activities contributed by K. Millman.*



The Widener Memorial School  
1450 West Olney Avenue Philadelphia Pennsylvania 19141  
215-456-3015  
[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 117<sup>th</sup> year!!

Ms. Roz Talley is a police officer that started the Widener Heroes program for the middle and high school students at Widener Memorial. The program has gone on for 8 years, and it is run by Ms. Roz with officers from around the city. In October every year, forms are passed out to each student so that they can write down a list of three different gifts that they want. Then the lists are given to the officers so that they can fulfill the students' Christmas wishes. Before the Christmas break, Ms. Roz along with the other officers come in and setup the gifts in the library.



Each classroom is called one at a time to receive their gifts from their hero officers, and then pictures are taken with the student, their officer, and Santa Clause.

Next the students go into the gym, where they have a pizza lunch. A DJ, elves, and a snowman are also there for the afternoon of fun. They even have news reporters and photographers taking pictures for the evening news. It is a fun event for the Widener students, the staff, the teachers and the parents and everyone else who is involved. We look forward to this event every year.



*Submitted by Roc*



Room 14 loved their first experience with the Widener Heroes Program! We thought of descriptive words to describe our wonderful day together! We are very thankful for the Police Officers from the 35th District who made us have the best day ever!

- Taisha - magical
  - Sarina - amazing & excited
  - Angelese - happy
  - Jordan - exhilarating and joyful
  - Kyarra - happy and thankful
  - Jaden - "happyful" - a word made up by Jaden
  - Shakur - cheerful
  - Shamiyah - thumbs up, really good
  - Tatiana - thrilled
  - Kayla - kind, very happy, excited
- Mrs. Dacons

Spring Message from Principal Gaffin

Dear Widener Family,

Spring officially began March 20 and here at Widener Memorial we are in full Spring Swing! Our dedicated teachers are working diligently moving each and every student toward success. This month we have been focusing on the PASA testing which will be completed very soon.

We had several Read Across America celebrations honoring Dr. Seuss' **"You're never too old, too wacky, too wild, to pick up a book and read to a child."** Dr. Seuss Reading with your children can be as beneficial for you as it is for them!

In April we are looking forward to our Transition Fair on the 10<sup>th</sup>, and of course, spring break, Thursday April 18<sup>th</sup> through Monday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>. We are also in the midst of planning for our annual Spring Concert, Widener Day, Move-Up Day, and our High School Commencement Ceremony, all taking place in May.

Regards,  
Harris R. Gaffin, Principal

