



## KPS STAFF ARE DEDICATED TO STUDENT SUCCESS

**A**t 6:00 a.m. the sky is dark, the air is chilly. Not many have begun their day, but at the Kentwood Public Schools Transportation Department, there is a flurry of activity. Bus drivers are doing a thorough bus inspection, circling the buses, checking tires and making sure each bus is ready and safe. Soon they will greet the Kentwood students and transport them safely to school.

The drivers are not the only ones up early! The KPS grounds crew is clearing parking lots of snow as the custodial staff clear walkways. The sidewalks and parking lots will soon be safe and ready for students, parents, and staff to arrive.

Every KPS staff member is dedicated to student success.

In the schools, the nutrition staff, paraprofessionals, academic interventionists, safety staff, office staff, behavioral specialists, among others, all make up the Kentwood Public Schools Support Staff Team. Each of these individuals plays an important role and ensures that students will be safe, supported, and successful in so many ways. Their work is crucial!



"The age-old proverb 'It takes a village to raise a child' is true

now more than ever," noted Kentwood Public Schools Superintendent Kevin Polston. "Every KPS staff member is dedicated to student success. From a warm greeting as children enter the bus to a nutritious meal made with care, the work of our staff makes a difference. Our team is committed to excellence for every student, every day!"

Kentwood Public Schools Executive Director of Human Resources Jamie Gordon agrees, "All of our staff play an extremely important role in our students' success. Our support staff extend the work occurring in our classrooms. We value their many contributions."

Manager of Transportation Operations, Laura Tanis, points out the level of importance bus drivers have in Kentwood. "The drivers have one of the most important jobs in the district —to transport the students to and from school safely."

The support staff, including the bus drivers, establish genuine and caring relationships with students. Their work is indispensable. They play a foundational role at Kentwood Public Schools.

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"One of many positive things that I can say about my staff is that they care," says Tanis of district bus drivers. "Our drivers treat the students like they are their own babies.

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They will go to musicals to watch them, and attend sporting events, and have been invited to students' open houses. I even had a driver who was invited to a student's wedding."

This issue of Kentwood School News is dedicated to highlighting, honoring, and thanking KPS Support Staff Members. While unable to recognize every person or every position in this issue, KPS is grateful for the service and care they provide. Let's celebrate their importance in achieving the district mission of excellence and equity in education!



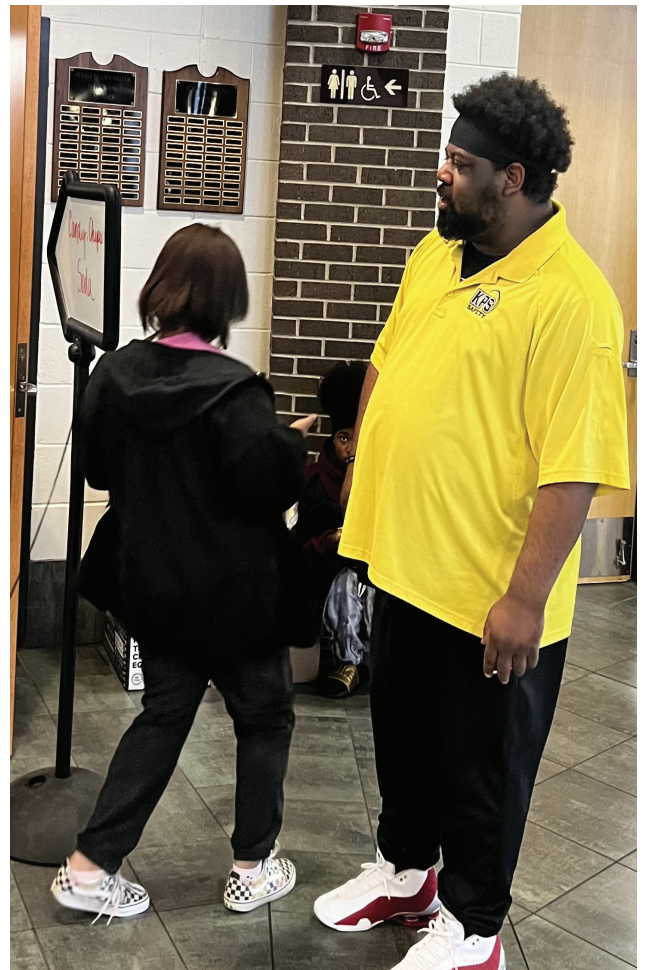
**OUR SAFETY STAFF IS SENSATIONAL!**

Academic excellence is important for the work we do here at East Kentwood High School and an important part of our academic success is the work done by our Safety Department.

The members of our KPS Safety Department put the needs of our students first. For our students to be successful academically and socially, they need to feel safe. Our safety staff strive to create a safe, welcoming, accepting, and supportive environment for students. To accomplish this, there are many roles our staff fulfill during the school day, in the evenings, and on the weekend. Our work doesn't stop when our students head home. Staff are working out in public and behind the scenes 24/7 to support, not only East Kentwood High School, but our entire KPS community.

One thing that makes our safety staff stand out as one of the best, is they understand the importance of building relationships as a foundational part of the work that they do. "The safety staff pride themselves in building relationships" says Director of Safety Chad Songer. "We have been given the gift of having a job that helps others on a daily basis. It is that focus of having a servant's heart that continues to give our safety staff the opportunity to, not only try and make a difference in the lives of our students, but with our parents, staff, and Kentwood community as well."

While on paper many of the roles safety staff members fulfill are "traffic duty, investigating incidents, monitoring, liaison, parking enforcement, etc.", what our safety staff do each day is so much more. Welcoming students as they walk in the door, mentoring and providing support, providing a safe place that students can come to when they need help and referring students for additional mental health support are all examples of some of the other services our safety staff provide in their buildings throughout our district.



## CHILD NUTRITION STAFF TRULY CARE

This month, Valleywood is taking time to recognize our Child Nutrition Staff (CNS) and all they do for our students on a daily basis. Serving over 500 students breakfast and lunch can be quite the difficult task. However, Valleywood's CNS team truly cares about each and every student. They work daily to build strong relationships and prefer to greet students by name when serving them. The CNS team makes a variety of main course options daily and offer unique sides such as, pomegranates, kiwis, and my favorite, brussel sprouts. The head of our CNS team even noticed many students making ramen in the cafeteria microwave. She brainstormed a possible solution and added a ramen bar to the daily lunch options. The dedication of the CNS team makes Valleywood a special place for our students.



## THE GLUE THAT HOLDS US TOGETHER

Some will say, and rightly so, that paraprofessionals are considered the glue that holds everything together during a school day. At Crestwood Middle School, Melissa Cox is part of the paraprofessional team, viewed by the staff as a wonderful professional, colleague, teacher, and overall, person.

Melissa moved into a new role this year as the ASD paraprofessional. While this was a role she didn't have previous experience in, she jumped in with both feet. The relationships that she has developed with students is apparent in her understanding, her willingness to help in any way, and her ability to go above and beyond to meet the needs of each student. While her title might seem limiting to some, Melissa has been able to show that it won't stop her from helping all students when necessary. Melissa has graded countless papers, laminated anything given to her, provided accommodations for too many students to count, and she teaches too! Melissa will take on any role asked of her when the situation calls for it.

Her colleagues recognize her immense value to Crestwood Middle School.

"Melissa has been an amazingly positive and hard-working adult support for students in science class. She is ready to implement new procedures and adjust to meet the needs of the students she works with. (Our second hour science class) would not function as well as it does if she were not there with her amazing support," says John Laponsie, 6th Grade Science Teacher.

"Melissa is the kind of person I'd want to work with my own children," says 8th Grade Resource Room Teacher Karen Gibson. "I am a better person for knowing and working with her."

"Melissa is reliable, flexible, and an easy-going coworker. She is a hard worker and a joy to work with. I'm lucky to have the opportunity to work with her during the day," comments Katie Smith, 7th Grade Resource Teacher.

Eighth Grade Social Studies Teacher Rashawn McClanahan says this about Cox: "Following her service and engagement with students, I have witnessed students being more confident and self-sufficient with completing assignments and learning. They also appear to be in a better mood and feel good about themselves while engaging with Melissa."

Thanks, Melissa, for your caring and dedicated work!





## THANK YOU EKFC PARAPROFESSIONALS!

The Freshman Campus is committed to providing a stimulating learning environment that is clean, safe and orderly with an emphasis on academic achievement nurtured by positive relationships. Our staff also focuses on ethical literacy because our students' success as adults will rely upon their intrinsic honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness. EKFC's goal is for each scholar to feel academically, emotionally, and socially connected to Kentwood Public Schools.

Our building houses three unique Special Education Programs, and we have four extraordinary paraprofessionals that work tirelessly to support our students, teachers, and families in and outside of their classrooms. We often find these benevolent individuals running small groups, assisting scholars with reading and or math, dancing, doing pushups in gym class, or sometimes, just sitting with students working on a puzzle.

This team has shown nothing but compassion and dedication when working with our students. They are ambitious individuals, always willing to step in wherever needed. Each one has their own individual talent in communicating with learners who have disabilities, and they are known for creating genuine connections with their students. We thank this group for their dedication to our scholars and our building and appreciate all they do for East Kentwood Freshman Campus each and every day!



person to represent the dedicated support staff who give it their all every single day at Challenger.

Over the years, Rosemary has helped so many students grow as readers through leading small intervention groups. She makes learning fun. She has an intuitive sense to know what students need academically and emotionally.

In addition to her academic work, Rosemary joins the other paraprofessional staff members ensuring that the day is smooth and successful for students. You can find her at recess duty working with students, and many days see her leading a whole group of Kindergarteners in a spirited game of "duck-duck-goose" or "freeze tag."

You can also find her at the start of the day, greeting students with a smile as they arrive at school, providing students with a warm welcome. Rosemary looks for any opportunity to help students. She participates in student council activities focused on helping others and works with IMPACT students. Rosemary's work, along with the work of the entire support staff team, is so meaningful in helping Challenger students be successful.



## IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Here at Townline, we truly believe it takes a village to be able to support our students and families. Luckily, we have an amazing village! This month, we wanted to show appreciation to the many support staff who help keep our building afloat and make a massive impact on our students.

Each class was assigned two support staff members to surprise with cards of appreciation. Our students took this opportunity to express their gratitude for the adults who help them through the school day each day. The cards were filled with kind words, memories, and drawings. After winter break, the students presented their cards to the staff members. Seeing the joy on both the student's and staff members' faces was priceless!

From office staff, kitchen staff, and paraprofessionals to our behavior specialist, interventionist, and specialty staff members, Townline would not function without the amazing dedication and support of these staff members. You are so appreciated and valuable. Thank you for the amazing work you do!

## KUDOS TO A SPECIAL PARAPROFESSIONAL

Since 2008, Rosemary Dailey has been a paraprofessional at Challenger Elementary. Challenger Principal Teressa Gatz describes her as giving, caring, hardworking, creative, and, most importantly, student-centered. That is what makes her a great



## SOUTHWOOD SUPERSTAR

The staff at Southwood Elementary play such an important role in our school's success and we greatly value what each member of our support staff does for our students to help them be successful. Whether it is greeting them in the morning and working with families in our front office, keeping the building safe and clean, or providing meals for students during the day, our support staff makes a meaningful impact on students.

One great example, of many, of a support staff superstar at Southwood is Young Five's Paraprofessional Kelsey DeWeerd. Kelsey supports our Young Five students academically and emotionally, giving them breaks when needed and working with them in learning those basic skills that are so important to their future success.

"I love that I get to come in every day and it's always different," DeWeerd says. "I love seeing the growth that our kids make throughout the year."

In addition to work in the classroom, Kelsey joins other paraprofessionals supporting students on the playground and in the lunchroom, as well as other parts of the day, making sure those moments are positive and successful for students. Kelsey is in her sixth year as a paraprofessional at Southwood Elementary.

"Kelsey always puts students first," says Southwood Principal Jeff Overkleeft. "That is what we do here at Southwood and why Kelsey represents our school so well."



**Young 5s & Kindergarten  
Parent Information Night**

Thursday, March 2, 2023 at 7:00pm  
at your child's home school

- Young 5s and Kindergarten at all ten elementary schools - all day, every day
- Online registration opens March 1, 2023
  - [www.kentwoodps.org](http://www.kentwoodps.org)

Translate →

## DAN SCHUITEMA: UNSUNG HERO

They say it takes a village to raise a child, but what does it take to keep that child safe in a clean, sanitized environment? It takes an unsung hero like our Mr. Dan (Schuitema), Head Custodian, for Meadowlawn Elementary. COVID presented us with new and complex problems, and required more effort than ever before to make sure our school is a safe place for scholars and adults.

Mr. Dan was one of the first to welcome me to Meadowlawn. His friendly smile, calm, steady presence, and willingness to do anything for anyone at any time, has made him a standout in our building. Fresh off a summer of construction, Mr. Dan has worked tirelessly each day to make sure the little things that need to be fixed don't get overlooked, that our hordes of trash are taken care of quickly, and that our bathrooms, lunchroom, and hallways are stocked, set, and clean.

Whether it's working outside the building to make sure we don't fall on the ice, getting balls and lunchboxes off the roof, helping to keep this building in tip-top shape, or alongside students as they learn important life lessons, Mr. Dan is always willing to go the extra mile. He is an extremely important member of our Meadowlawn family, and we are so proud to recognize him this month!



## STUDENTS CELEBRATE DRIVERS

Endeavor had the pleasure of celebrating our amazing bus drivers on December 13th! This initiative came from two students who wanted to show kindness to the people who are the first school employee to greet them each morning and the last to make sure that they get home safely.

The students brought this idea to the principal and then to the attention of our student council, and it blossomed from there. Our student council invited the bus drivers to join staff and students for donuts and hot chocolate. They also shared some handmade gifts of appreciation and sent donuts to the entire transportation department.

Endeavor wants to thank our bus drivers for all their hard work and dedication. They are making a difference in the lives of our students.



**Play Baseball or Softball  
this summer!**

**Sign Up Now!**

[www.kentwoodbaseballleague.com](http://www.kentwoodbaseballleague.com)

**Girls Softball**  
ages 4-1/2 to 15

**\$95/ single player**  
**\$65/ 4-1/2-6 y/o**

**Boys Baseball**  
ages 4-1/2 to 14

**Family Discounts**  
**\$65/ second player**  
**\$60/ third player**  
**\$55/ fourth + player**



# KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## School Calendar 2022-23

Aug 22 ..... \*First Day of School

- Sep 2 ..... No School
- Sep 5 ..... No School
- Sep 21 ..... Half Day for ALL Students / PD for Staff
- Sept 28..... Middle School Conferences- Evening (Full Day for Students)
- Sept 29..... Middle School Conferences- Half Day for 6-8 Students
- Sept 30..... Half Day for 6th-8th Student & Staff
- Oct 12 & 13.... High School Evening Conferences (Full Day School)
- Oct 14 ..... Half Day for 9th-12th Students & Staff
- Oct 26 ..... Elementary Evening Conferences
- Oct 27..... Half Day K-5 Students / Evening Conferences
- Oct 28 ..... Half Day K-5 Students & Staff
- Oct 31 ..... Half Day for ALL Students / PD for Staff
- Nov 23 ..... Half Day for ALL Students and Staff
- Nov 24 & 25 ... No School - Thanksgiving Break
- Dec 16 ..... Half Day for ALL Students/KEA records day
- Dec 19 - 30 .... Winter Break
- Jan 2 ..... Winter Break
- Jan 16 ..... No School - MLK Day / PD for Staff
- Feb 14 ..... Half Day for ALL Students / PD for Staff
- Feb 20 & 21 .... Mid-Winter Break
- Mar 1..... Middle & High School Evening Conferences / Full Day of School
- Mar 2 ..... Middle & High School Evening Conferences / Half Day 6-8 Students ONLY / Full Day High School
- Mar 3 ..... Half Day 6-12 Student & Staff
- Mar 27 ..... Elementary Evening Conferences / Full Day
- Mar 28 ..... Half Day K-5 Students
- Mar 29..... Half Day K-5 Students & Staff
- Mar 30..... Half Day for ALL Students and Staff
- Mar 31 - Apr 7. Spring Break
- May 26 ..... Half Day for ALL Students / PD for Staff
- May 29 ..... No School - Memorial Day
- Jun 2..... Last Day of School - Half Day for Students & Staff

School	Start	Dismissal	Half Day Dismissal
Elementary	9:00 AM	3:55 PM	11:55 AM
Middle	8:15 AM	3:04 PM	11:20 AM
Freshman Campus	7:30 AM	2:31 PM	10:53 AM
High School	7:30 AM	2:31 PM	10:53 AM
Crossroads	7:37 AM	2:29 PM	10:45 AM

AUGUST							JANUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
28	29	30	31				29	30	31				

SEPTEMBER							FEBRUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3				1	2	3	4
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
25	26	27	28	29	30		26	27	28				

OCTOBER							MARCH						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
2	3	4	5	6	7	8				1	2	3	4
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
30	31						26	27	28	29	30	31	

NOVEMBER							APRIL						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
27	28	29	30				30						

DECEMBER							MAY/JUNE						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3		1	2	3	4	5	6
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	28	29	30	31	1	2	3

No School For Students  
 Half Day \*check left column to see what schools have ½ days