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News from January 2018

Dear Parents, Guardians and Community Members,

I would like to begin my newsletter this month emphasizing the importance of talking to your children about the dangers of using vape pens and e-cigarettes. Many of you have either received an [email](#) on this topic from AHS Principal Matthew Janger or OMS Principal Eileen Woods, or read the excellent article in the *Arlington Advocate*. We are seeing an increase in this behavior among our teens. The 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey reported that 21.6 percent of high school students report they have tried some form of e-cigarette. There are incidents of middle school students engaging in vaping as well.

Many people are unaware that the aerosols produced by e-cigarettes and vape pens often contain nicotine and other secondary chemicals. These are addictive and dangerous substances, and because these products are relatively new, the long-term effects of usage are not understood. Arlington Public Schools and the [Arlington Youth Health and Safety Coalition](#) are working hard to spread the word that this is risky behavior that may have serious consequences. Your children are receiving information about the dangers of vaping as part of our tobacco education programming. We are fortunate to have the third most active high school [84 Club](#) (a chapter of [The 84](#)) in the state, and the group is working on an informational program for AHS, OMS and social media. The [Ottoson Cares About Prevention](#) Club created messages and made information about the issue available to students during National Drug and Alcohol Awareness Week this month. If you have not already done so, please take the time to click on the links in the previous paragraph, understand the risks, and have conversations with your children on this important issue.

Spread the news that it is now possible to [donate unwanted clothing](#), shoes, accessories, linens, stuffed animals and more in support of Arlington Public Schools. Collection boxes are now located outside Ottoson, Brackett, Peirce, Stratton, Bishop and Thompson schools, ready to accept your clean, dry and bagged donations. [Bay State Textiles](#), our partner in this venture, pays a rebate back to us based on the weight of donations. Nearly 100% of donated items are recycled for reuse in some manner, with usable clothing being donated around the world. Please click [here](#) to see the list of acceptable items. You may contact our School Sustainability Coordinator Rachel Oliveri at [roliveri@arlington.k12.ma.us](mailto:roliveri@arlington.k12.ma.us) for more information.

During January, our students and families continued to remember the needs of others through collections and fundraising, and I want to share a few examples. The [Arlington Food Pantry](#) was supported by the AHS girls basketball team and Bishop fifth grade students. Both the AHS girls and boys basketball teams took part in the annual Middlesex League Coaches vs. Cancer game, raising money to fight this deadly disease. We had a wonderful example of how our school communities come together to offer support when one of our elementary families faced a medical crisis this month. I am proud of the way service is an important part of the educational experience of all students in Arlington Public Schools.

You will find information about this month's AHS Building Project Community Forum in the first article of the [Department News](#) section of this newsletter, and I want to take a moment here to emphasize that more forums are scheduled for February 13 (rescheduled from February 7), March 5 and April 4. Each forum will run from 7:00-9:00 pm. The February and April forums will be held in Town Hall; the March forum at the high school. Tours of the high school are scheduled during the first hour of the March forum.

Additionally, the School Committee is holding the following school Budget Information sessions: February 7, 8:00 am at Ottoson; February 14, 8:15 am at Bishop; February 14, 6:30 pm at Peirce; February 26, 7:00 pm at the high school, sixth floor School Committee Room; and, March 14, 7:00 pm at Thompson. All are open to the public and I hope that many of you will be able to attend one of the sessions. There is also an open hearing on the budget prior to the March 1 School Committee meeting at 6:30 pm.

I want to close by reminding everyone that Arlington Standing Committee [Vision 2020](#) annually requests community input on a variety of topics that involve aspects of town life. The information gathered informs town government officials about the priorities, goals and visions of Arlington residents. This year you have the option of taking the survey online at [arlingtonma.gov/vision2020survey](http://arlingtonma.gov/vision2020survey), or picking up a paper copy at the Robbins Library Reference Desk, the Fox Library or the Senior Center on Maple Street. Please respond before March 1. Taking the survey is a wonderful way to make your voice heard on a variety of issues.

I hope you will enjoy reading the following articles and learning more about the wonderful things going on in the Arlington Public Schools.

Best regards,

Kathleen Bodie, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

### **Headline View**

#### **Safe & Supportive Schools**

##### ***Diverse Texts Contribute to Development of Cultural Proficiency, Recognition and Respect***

Literature that both reflects students' cultural identities and provides a window into others helps all students feel valued, fostering equity and access for all. [Read more>](#)

##### ***Ottoson Combats Bullying with Annual Observance of "No Name Calling Week"***

A day to wear pajamas to "Give Name-Calling a Rest" and other activities engaged the OMS student body during a week designed to raise awareness and combat bullying. The [Queer Straight Alliance](#) leads this annual event, created by the [Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network](#). [Learn more>](#)

##### ***AYHSC Survey Respondents Do Not Want Others to Supply Alcohol to Their Children***

It is heartening to know that the vast majority of respondents to the [Arlington Youth Health & Safety Coalition](#) Parent Norm Survey would be upset if another parent gave their child alcohol. [Read more>](#)

### **Department News**

##### ***AHS Project Community Forum Shares Information, Collects Ideas and Concerns***

Community members heard from key players involved in the Arlington High School renovation/rebuild project and spent time in small group discussions that allowed everyone to share their thoughts, hopes and concerns at the first of four Forums designed to solicit and gather input during the Feasibility Phase of the project. [Read more>](#)

##### ***Hardy Elementary and Gibbs Sixth Grade Building Projects Move Forward***

Construction to add classrooms to the Hardy is planned to begin in March, and the Gibbs renovation project is on schedule for September opening. [Learn more>](#)

##### ***Hardy and Ottoson Principal Searches Coming Down to Final Candidates***

Many strong candidates came forward to be considered for the two open principal positions in the district. We expect to select the Hardy finalists and make a final decision on the Ottoson Principal in February. [Read more>](#)

### ***Arlington Community Education SummerFun! Registration Opens on Valentine's Day***

Start reviewing the [Arlington Community Education SummerFun! 2018 catalog](#) now so you are ready to create a dynamic summer program for your children when registration opens on February 14. Learn more>

### **Grants**

#### ***Eight AEF "Innovations in Education" Awards Enhance Student Learning Experiences***

Thanks to the generosity of the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) (AEF), APS students will have creative ways to learn history, review mathematics, understand the rocket design process, create quick engineering prototypes, experience choice-based art education, and much more as they experience projects funded by [Innovations in Education](#) grants. Learn more>

### **Awards & Distinctions**

#### ***Dallin Fifth Grade Cellist Performs in Chamber Trio on "From The Top"***

A ten-year-old Dallin student is a member of Trio Giocoso, one of the youngest chamber music groups that has ever performed on *From The Top*, NPR's show featuring talented young classical musicians. Read more>

#### ***OMS and AHS Students Receive Prestigious Scholastic Art Awards***

Congratulations to the 14 Arlington High and Ottoson Middle School students whose work was recognized for originality, technical skill and the emergence of a personal voice or vision in the [2018 Scholastic Art Awards](#) in the Massachusetts Art Region competition. Learn more>

#### ***Four AHS Students Selected to Perform at MMEA All-State Festival and Concert***

Congratulations to the four talented vocalists that have been selected to join students from across the state in the [Massachusetts Music Educators Association](#) (MMEA) [All-State Festival and Concert](#) that includes a performance in Symphony Hall. Learn more>

#### ***Artworks from Fifty AHS Students Included in Regional Art Exhibit***

It is wonderful that the work of 50 Arlington High Students was included in the 22nd Annual Regional High School Artist Show at the [Lexington Arts and Crafts Society](#) this month. Read more>

#### ***Thompson Fourth Grade Teacher Publishes First Novel***

Congratulations to Sarah Marie Jette on the upcoming publication of her first book, [What the Wind Can Tell You](#), which relates the story of two siblings, their love for each other, and a magical world where the boy no longer has to cope with epilepsy. Learn more>

#### ***AHS History & Social Sciences Teacher Shares Thoughts in an Article about Teaching Slavery***

Kevin Toro, *Modern World History and Race, Society & Identity* teacher, was one of four educators sharing their experiences and ideas in [Teaching Hard History](#), an article produced by [Teaching Tolerance](#). Read more>

### **Academics & Enrichment**

#### ***Exploring Identity and the World through Different Voices is a Priority for English Language Arts***

English classes tackle questions of identity and responsibility as students hear, appreciate and understand the different voices in our world and uncover ideas through reading and discussion. Learn more>

#### ***Bishop Intergenerational Listening Day Project Focuses on Superheroes and Superpowers***

This year's Listening Day project asked third through fifth grade students to interview an older family member or friend and find out about their real-life superhero, the special talents the hero possessed, and the way that person has influenced their life. Learn more>

### ***Love of Science Comes Through When Comics Author/Illustrator Visits Hardy***

Energized science comics writer [Maris Wicks](#) shared her evolution from art student to author/illustrator with Hardy third, fourth and fifth grade students this month. [Read more>](#)

### ***Continent Study Leads to "Worldfest" Research and Celebration of Countries at Thompson***

*Worldfest* gave family and friends the opportunity to ask questions and view the beautiful posters that were created by second grade students during their annual research project. [Read more>](#)

## **Creative Highlights**

### ***Ottoson Media Group Ready to Record School Events, Produce French Cooking Show***

The twenty members of OMG have been busy learning film techniques, creating videos of the winter [instrumental](#) and [choral](#) concerts and producing new episodes of their French cooking show, [Teens Cook](#). [Learn more>](#)

### ***Ottoson's Eight Choral Groups Shine During Winter Concerts***

Approximately 300 students take part in our dynamic [middle school choral program](#), and it was wonderful to see them take the stage over two nights, performing songs that ranged from Vivaldi to Broadway and much, much more. [Read more>](#)

### ***Second Quarter OMS Art Exhibit Celebrates Recent Work of All Visual Arts Students***

Every student participating in Visual Art classes at Ottoson during Second Quarter had at least one artwork on display at the exhibit held on January 18. [Learn more>](#)

### ***Sonic Voyages IX Brings the Audience into the Hearts and Minds of AHS Composers***

Music Technology students who have been exploring songwriting, music theory and audio engineering presented an exciting and immersive evening of original compositions, sharing their musical visions through creative videos and live performances. [Learn more>](#)

### ***AHS Directors Present Evening of One-Act Plays at Sold-out Performance***

A totally student-driven process produced an evening of wonderful theater, as four young directors treated their audience to three one-act plays. [Read more>](#)

## **Athletic Highlights**

### ***AHS Winter Athletes Set Records, Reach Milestones and Work on Service and Pride***

The boys indoor track team won its first meet in three years and the wrestling team earned the 300th win in its 22-year history, while our MIAA ambassadors worked on district-wide service ideas and the Captains' Council focused on increasing Ponder Pride this winter. [Read more>](#)

## **Continue to read the full News from January 2018 newsletter**

## **Safe & Supportive Schools**

### ***Diverse Texts Contribute to Development of Cultural Proficiency, Recognition and Respect***

A safe and supportive learning environment is one where all students feel valued and understood. As educators, we have the responsibility to go beyond perceived differences and foster equity and access for all, regardless of race, gender identity and orientation, physical limitations, religion or cultural, ethnic, and racial background. As I have reported in previous newsletters, our teachers, staff and administrators have had the opportunity to gather in workshops and discussion groups to reflect upon the issues of social identity, social bias and social justice. We have explored the achievement gap and the need to be more culturally responsive and proficient if we are going to create a culture that serves all students.

We are committed to creating an environment where personal characteristics do not define human potential, and where all students feel represented and seen. There are many efforts going on to improve

cultural awareness among our students and educators, both within individual classrooms and across the school communities. We want our students to see their cultural identity represented, and we want them to develop a disposition toward tolerance that they will take into the wider world. The work being done at Dallin is a good example of how our elementary schools are working to increase their cultural proficiency to achieve these goals.

Efforts are ongoing to understand the cultural identities of Dallin students, determine which voices are not currently represented, and fill these gaps. Every classroom is creating a library with books that both reflect the identities of the students and give them a window into others that are unknown to them. A staff member from the Robbins Library has been assisting with this, and as books are discovered, teachers use their Professional Learning Communities to share them. A professional library for teachers is also being created. Additionally, parents come in, review diverse book selections, and share their thoughts on the topics and themes that they find difficult to discuss with their children.

The work at Dallin crosses grade boundaries as well. For example, all students read the picture book [Lovely](#) by Jess Hong. In this book, colorful illustrations highlight differences between people. Each student was asked to describe what made them "lovely", and this served as a starting point for discussions around how "lovely" isn't just one way of looking or being. In spite of, or maybe because of our differences, we are all lovely. Where it was appropriate, the concept of stereotyping was introduced, and discussions centered on how to evaluate a stereotype to understand whether it leads us in a positive (respectful) or negative (intolerant) direction.

Dallin Principal Thad Dingman emphasizes that creating a culturally proficient school doesn't happen overnight. It takes time to weave a culturally responsible lens into discussions, planning, curriculum and school culture. For those families wishing to find diverse texts to use at home he suggests [diversebooks.org](#), [mrschureads.blogspot.com](#) and <http://www.leeandlow.com> for recommendations, reviews and even trailers.

Reading and discussing literature that reflects and honors the lives of all young people helps them develop the cultural competence necessary for them to feel safe and supported, and to flourish in the global world. I thank our teachers and administrators at all levels for their commitment to helping our students see themselves and hear the voices of others. To learn more about the ways diverse texts are exposing our young people to different voices at Ottoson and Arlington High Schools, please see the article, *Exploring Identity and the World through Different Voices is a Priority for English Language Arts in the Academics & Enrichment* section of this newsletter.



### ***Ottoson Combats Bullying with Annual Observance of "No Name-Calling Week"***

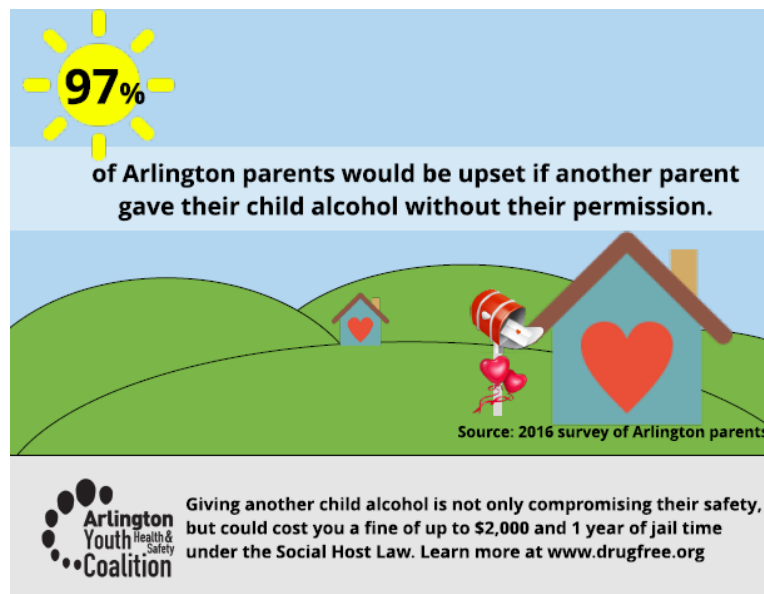
It is a simple, yet powerful idea: raise awareness and combat bullying with a different activity every day. This is the essence of [No Name-Calling Week](#), celebrated at Ottoson every January. The program, held in schools across the country, was created by the [Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network](#) (GLSEN). The group works to improve school climate and champion LGBTQ issues in K-12 education. This year

marked the tenth anniversary of this important and fun way to remind everyone to practice and encourage tolerance and kindness as a school norm.

The Ottoson activities were designed to engage the student body in a variety of ways. The first day called for the wearing of sports, team or club related clothing to illustrate that "We're All on the Same Team Against Name-Calling". Next day, students wore pajamas in order to "Give Name-Calling a Rest." Students were then encouraged to wear a hat so that they could "Put a Lid on Name-Calling." Dressing crazy or in neon colors ended the week because "Name-Calling is Wacky". Both students and teachers enjoyed dressing up and having the chance to talk about both bullying and name-calling.

To raise funds for [The Trevor Project](#), members of the [Queer Straight Alliance](#) (QSA) were on hand every day at lunch selling silicone bracelets that said "No Name-Calling Week Ottoson Middle School". The pledges to "not name-call" taken by the approximately 250 students who purchased a bracelet were prominently displayed. The sale raised \$154 that will go toward crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ young people ages 13-24. Anyone wishing to make a donation can do so on The Trevor Project [website](#).

Ottoson was among the first middle schools in the state to have an after school club that provides a safe place for individuals of all gender identities and orientations to discuss issues and take part in activities that promote a safe environment. QSA, facilitated by Guidance Counselor Nanci Siegel and Science teacher Lisa Lambert, meets Mondays from 2:30-3:15 pm in Ms. Lambert's classroom 356. I want to thank Ms. Siegel, Ms. Lambert and all the members of the QSA who were involved in creating and executing this meaningful week.



### ***AYHSC Survey Respondents Do Not Want Others to Supply Alcohol to Their Children***

The [Arlington Youth Health & Safety Coalition](#) (AYHSC) Parent Norm Survey conducted in spring 2016 has increased our knowledge of parental awareness and attitudes around youth substance abuse. The graphic above highlights one of the many positive findings from the survey. This month we are sharing the fact that a vast majority of respondents do not want others exposing their children to alcohol. It is heartening to know that Arlington families understand that this is not acceptable. Giving alcohol to minors not only compromises their safety, it is breaking the law and can lead to fines and even jail time. We are grateful that families understand this important issue, and are ready to join Arlington Public Schools and the AYHSC in safeguarding our children.

## **Department News**

### ***AHS Project Community Forum Shares Information, Collects Ideas and Concerns***

On January 10, community members joined town officials and members of the AHS Building Committee to share their thoughts and ideas on the Arlington High School renovation/rebuild project. Committee Chair and School Committee Chair Jeff Thielman opened the meeting with some general remarks, and then introduced a representative from our Owner's Project Manager, [Skanska SA Building, Inc.](#), and one from [HMFH Architects, Inc.](#), the design firm for the project. These individuals talked about the activity that takes place during the current Feasibility Phase, the overall process, their responsibilities and those of the [Massachusetts School Building Authority](#) who will partially fund the project.

The bulk of the evening was dedicated to small group discussions, centered around four questions: What do you like about AHS now? What do you dislike about AHS? What challenges do you see with the renovation/rebuild project? What are the major opportunities you see with the project? The meeting ended after each group had a chance to share the key thoughts that came from the conversations. There were many points of agreement on issues such as making certain that the sense of community and educational excellence of the school does not suffer during the process, the importance of creating strong spaces for both visual and performing arts, and making certain that alternative energy and sustainability are strongly considered.

All speakers stressed the importance of community input in order to create a sense of shared ownership and pride among residents, students and teachers. Additional AHS Project Community Forums are scheduled for February 7 (rescheduled to February 13 due to snow), March 5 and April 4. . Each forum will run from 7:00-9:00 pm. The February and April forums will be held in Town Hall; the March forum at the high school. Tours of the high school are scheduled during the first hour of the March forum. .

In addition, a 60-member AHS Educational Visioning Committee that includes educators, students, parents of children of all ages, town officials, AHS Building Committee members and others from the community will meet three times in January and February to delve deeply into creating the Educational Vision for the high school.

To learn more about the AHS project, and to sign-up to receive updates by email, visit [www.ahsbuilding.org](http://www.ahsbuilding.org). You may also follow the progress on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/ahsbuilding/](https://www.facebook.com/ahsbuilding/). For specific information about the Feasibility Phase of the project, visit <https://ahsbuilding.org/blog/feasibility-study-overview/>. You may wish to read this [article](#) from the *Arlington Advocate* that includes additional information about the content of the first AHS Project Community Forum and comments from participants.

### ***Hardy Elementary and Gibbs Sixth Grade Building Projects Move Forward***

Most of you are aware that the AHS renovation/rebuild project is not the only building project going on in the district. We are also enlarging the Hardy Elementary School and renovating the Gibbs to house the sixth grade. The Hardy School Council has set up a new [webpage](#) that consolidates all of the information about the classroom additions and playground changes being undertaken there. Links to a timeline, an FAQ section and a contact page are provided so that members of the community can follow the progress, send feedback and ask questions. We expect construction to begin in March and finish around Thanksgiving. I want to thank the Hardy School Council for creating this webpage making it easy to keep up to date on the project.

I am happy to report that the Gibbs renovation project is on time, and we should be ready to welcome students to the new building in September. Incoming Gibbs Principal Kristin DeFrancisco has sent out her first communication to the families of rising sixth grade students. In her email, she answers inquiries about issues that range from how the new school library will be stocked to how the PTO will work, when course descriptions will be available, how after school activities will be handled and much more. We are in the process of creating a new Gibbs page on the APS website where the letter will be posted, and I will share

the link as soon as it is available. Monthly construction updates and other information about the project can be found on the [Gibbs School Renovation webpage](#).

### ***Hardy and Ottoson Principal Searches Coming Down to Final Candidates***

As you know, we are currently engaged in the hiring process to choose a principal for the seventh and eighth grade Ottoson, and to select a replacement for Hardy Principal Kristin DeFrancisco who is moving to the Gibbs in September. We are very fortunate to have had many talented educators come forward to be considered for both positions and I look forward to announcing the final choice for Ottoson this month and for Hardy this spring.

Community members had an opportunity to see and hear from the three finalists for the Ottoson position at an open meeting this month. The finalists are Donna Martin, Assistant Principal of the McCarthy Middle School in Chelmsford, Brian Meringer, Assistant Headmaster of the Dover-Sherborn Middle School, and Elizabeth Golden, Assistant Principal of the Collins Middle School in Salem. We are completing the site visit portion of the interview process, and we intend to make a final selection before February vacation. We expect to select four finalists for the Hardy position before February break and then move forward with site visits. I will keep you informed of our progress as we move through the hiring process.

### ***Arlington Community Education SummerFun! Registration Opens on Valentine's Day***

It's not too early to begin planning a summer full of fun, creativity, adventure, and learning for your children in grades 1-9. [Arlington Community Education](#) (ACE) has just announced that the [SummerFun! 2018 catalog](#) is available for you to review. Formal registration opens February 14 at 11:00 am, but in the meantime, you can look at over 100 full and half-day programs that are available from July 9-August 10.

One of the exciting elements of ACE's programming is the number of amazing opportunities for middle school students. This year's line-up includes a new Summer Stock Musical Theater production, the return of Mr. Zierk's Great Maine Adventure, a series of daytrips, coding, 3D printing, cooking, LARP, language study, guitar and ukulele, filmmaking, babysitting basics, and much more! There are arts and crafts, fitness programs, fantasy and games, language studies, literature and drama, explorations of nature, and lots of STEM for all ages. I know you will be amazed by the choices. I want to thank the team at ACE for putting together such an incredible collection of summer opportunities.

### **Grants**

#### ***Eight AEF "Innovations in Education" Awards Enhance Student Learning Experiences***

Twice a year, the [Arlington Education Foundation](#) (AEF) honors our school community with [Innovations in Education](#) grants to support creative projects that enrich the educational experiences of our students. I am happy to announce that eight Fall grants have been awarded, adding up to nearly \$17,000.

- **Math Anytime**--Supports creation of 15 mathematics tutorial videos that can ease the academic transition of students from fifth to sixth grade, provide topical reviews for elementary students, serve as content for teachers who wish to present material in a different voice and assist parents and guardians who want to help young people at home.
- **KerbalEdu**--Delivers hands-on learning for AHS Astronomy students (and others) as they experience the design process through [KerbalEdu](#), an orbital mechanics and space exploration game that has them designing, building and flying a virtual rocket.
- **3D Printing for All**--Provides funding for a 3D printer housed in the AHS Makerspace that will be available to any student for quick prototyping in engineering and robotics studies or creating contemporary art projects, and will become an essential resource to support the AHS Innovation and Design Thinking certificate program to be launched next year.
- **Cold War Pinball**--Engages ninth grade World History students in learning about the Cold War as they create a pinball game on some aspect of the topic using a [Pinbox3000](#) kit.



- **Teaching Artistic Behavior**--Supports an afterschool club at Peirce where students will experience [Teaching for Artistic Behavior](#), a choice-based, personalized approach to art education that, as the website describes, "...regards students as artists and offers them real choices for responding to their own ideas and interests through the making of art."
- **Story Box Library**--Provides twenty story boxes containing real-life items that illustrate objects or ideas that are important in a story, enhancing the understanding of the story for students with visual impairments in the same way pictures would.
- **The Colors of STEM**--Enables the creation of a rotating poster exhibit at Brackett that profiles prominent American STEM individuals of color that will inform, provide role models, spark curiosity and promote dialogue around the positive role diversity has played in STEM and the fabric of American history.
- **ChillVille**--Facilitates creation of the first sensory room at AHS for students on the Autism spectrum who participate in the REACH program, providing a supportive and relaxing environment that helps maximize their readiness to learn.

It is wonderful to see the range of exciting projects that our teachers and parents bring forward each season. The district is grateful to AEF for their thoughtful consideration of these ideas, and for the funding they award that makes these projects possible.

### **Awards & Distinctions**



#### ***Dallin Fifth Grade Cellist Performs in Chamber Trio on "From The Top"***

I am delighted to share the news that Dallin fifth grade student Oan Woo Park appeared on *From The Top*, the NPR program devoted to showcasing talented young classical musicians. *Show 346*, filmed in Boston's Jordan Hall, featured the amazing Trio Giocososo from the New England Conservatory Preparatory School. Oan plays cello in the group that includes a 12-year old violinist from Wayland and a 12-year old pianist from Chestnut Hill. Trio Giocososo was first on the program and is one of the youngest chamber music groups that has ever performed on the show.

Oan introduced their piece, *Beethoven's IV. Finale. Presto from Piano Trio in E Flat Major*, describing the lively number as being like "a kid on a sugar rush." During the group's interview following the performance, Oan described how he became interested in playing cello at the age of three. To hear the group's remarkable performance, and listen to their comments, go to [Podcast Directory](#), scroll down to *January 1, 2018, Show 346* and click on *Listen*.

Trio Giocososo also collaborated with [Canadian Brass](#) in a fun [performance](#) of *You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch* that I'm sure you will enjoy. Congratulations Oan and we look forward to hearing you play cello in the future.

#### ***OMS and AHS Students Receive Prestigious Scholastic Art Awards***

The [2018 Scholastic Art Awards](#) for the Massachusetts Art Region have been announced, and I am happy to tell you that 14 artworks created by Arlington High and Ottoson Middle School students have been recognized for their talent and creativity. These awards date back to 1923, and they have grown to

become the longest running recognition program for creative young people in the United States. Panelists look for works that best exemplify originality, technical skill and the emergence of a personal voice or vision. Art teachers submit the student work to this competition, one of the most prestigious at the state and national levels.

The recognized works include digital photography, mixed media, paintings, drawings and sculpture. Three of our students were awarded Gold Keys, three received Silver Keys and eight were awarded Honorable Mention. Gold Key award-winning works are automatically considered for national awards, and they will be on display for viewing at Tufts University in March. Additionally, Gold and Silver Key award winners are invited to attend an award ceremony at Tufts the same month.

Congratulations to all of the AHS and OMS students who have been honored this year and to the talented and dedicated Visual Art teachers who supported their efforts: AHS teachers David Moore, Annie Rebola-Thompson and Nikki McCulloch and OMS teachers Alecia Serafini, Kayla McKenna and Polly Ford.

### ***Four AHS Students Selected to Perform at MMEA All-State Festival and Concert***

Congratulations to the four talented vocalists who have been chosen to take part in the [Massachusetts Music Educators Association \(MMEA\) All-State Festival and Concert](#). As members of the Chorus, Joey Dalton, Ella Simring, Ben Horsburgh and Hannah Alton will perform in Symphony Hall on March 3. The four students took part in the MMEA Northeastern District Senior Festival this month, and were among those from across Massachusetts who were given the opportunity to audition for All-State participation.

It is a great honor to be chosen to meet, rehearse and perform with singers from across the state, and I know that the experience will be a memorable one. It is gratifying to see our young people recognized for their skill and dedication to music. I commend all of the AHS students who participated in the competitive All-State auditions.



### ***Artworks from Fifty AHS Students Included in Regional Art Exhibit***

I am pleased to tell you that the work of fifty Arlington High School art students has been on display as part of the 22nd Annual Regional High School Artist Show at the [Lexington Arts and Crafts Society](#) Parsons Gallery this month. The art forms represented include sculpture, digital photography, painting, drawing, mixed media and embroidery. Burlington, Bedford, Lexington, Winchester, Waltham, Lexington Christian Academy, Concord-Carlisle and Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical high schools are the other schools taking part in the show. It is wonderful to have our student work shared in this way, and I congratulate the young artists and their teachers on being part of this exhibit.



### ***Thompson Fourth Grade Teacher Publishes First Novel***

We are all looking forward to the May release of Thompson fourth grade teacher Sarah Marie Jette's first Middle Grade book, [What the Wind Can Tell You](#). The story revolves around Isabelle and her brother Julian, who has a severe form of epilepsy, and the emergence of the magical world of Las Brisas where Julian has no physical limitations. The idea for the book came to her after visiting friends who had just welcomed their second child home. The elder boy in the family has epilepsy, and as she thought about the love that was going to exist between the two children, the idea for the book took form.

Ms. Jette has always enjoyed writing. In elementary school, she looked forward to indoor recess so she could sit at her desk and write. She majored in English in college, taking creative writing and a one-on-one seminar to learn more about the craft. During her stint in the Peace Corps, she filled up many writer's notebooks. She wrote the first draft of her novel in three months, but work and family kept her so busy that it was not until the summer of 2017 that she signed her book deal with [Islandport Press](#).

One thing that is clear from talking to Ms. Jette about the book publishing process is that it requires perseverance and multiple individuals who will support and encourage you. As she worked her way along, Ms. Jette used coworkers and her mother as readers. She entered contests and sent out queries that described her book, herself, and why her book was special to many, many agents. Often there were no replies, but sometimes she got rejections. Determined to make the book the best she could, Ms. Jette attended four writing conferences where she read to an agent or editor and received feedback. She met her final editor, Melissa Kim, at her first conference. Ms. Kim contacted Ms. Jette after six months and asked if she was willing to make revisions. She was, and the final steps of her journey began.

Ms. Jette always stresses the importance of revision with her students. It took years to complete the revisions on *What the Wind Can Tell You*, and she believes that the process helped her grow as a writer. Her advice for adults who hope to be published is to read books in your writing genre, share your writing with others and accept that it will take time.

Ms. Jette understands the importance of young people being able to find themselves in literature. As a Mexican-American growing up in Lewiston, Maine, it was rare to find books with characters that looked like her. In her Thompson classroom, she has seen her students connect with books where they can find a shared experience. She remembers one story that included a mother who was spreading coconut oil on her child's hair. A student called out to say that this is what her family uses in her hair when it is combed. Having diverse books in her classroom is a priority, and she is grateful for organizations such as [We Need Diverse Books](#) and [A Mighty Girl](#) who promote representation of under-represented groups.

I congratulate Ms. Jette on becoming a published author, and I am happy to tell you that she is currently working on another Middle Grade (ages 8-12) book. The long process will begin again, but I know it will be worth it for the author and her readers.

### ***AHS History & Social Sciences Teacher Shares Thoughts in an Article about Teaching Slavery***

It is always gratifying when one of our talented educators is chosen to share his or her views on teaching with the wider community. I am pleased to tell you that Arlington High School History & Social Sciences

teacher Kevin Toro is one of four individuals sharing their thoughts on teaching slavery in [Teaching Hard History](#), an article produced by [Teaching Tolerance](#). This organization provides free resources to educators in an effort to "...reduce prejudice, improve intergroup relations and support equitable school experiences for our nation's children." The topics they cover include race and ethnicity, ability, class, immigration, gender and sexual identity and orientation, bullying and bias and rights and activism.

In the article, the four teachers share their views and ideas on how to approach teaching slavery in a predominantly white classroom. Mr. Toro discusses his experiences thoughtfully and clearly, and his comments help the reader understand how he sets the groundwork for the topic, is sensitive to his audience and makes the connections between the past and the present.

Mr. Toro has been a part of the AHS community since 2016. In my November newsletter, I reported on the innovative, collaborative *FACES* project that the students in his *Race, Society & Identity* class completed. The project was designed to help everyone understand that, in his words, "...we are all made of the same material and who we really are goes beyond the prejudices associated with our outward traits." Mr. Toro also teaches *Modern World History*.

## **Academics & Enrichment**

### ***Exploring Identity and the World through Different Voices is a Priority for English Language Arts***

Who am I? What is/should be my responsibility to my local/national/global community? What are my social ignorances and what can I do to become better educated?

These three questions are from the course description of twelfth grade elective *Missing Voices & Other Cultures*. While they are specific to this class, they are also representative of the way English Language Arts classes are structured and taught. They are courses of discourse, designed to examine and uncover ideas through reading and discussion. All types of literature--traditional and graphic novels, plays, poetry, essays, short stories, biography--are explored.

Part of this exploration is hearing, appreciating and understanding the different voices in our world. Authors uncover things for us, and it is important that students hear from writers whose experience is similar to their own and from those whose background is very different. These voices must come from authors and characters speaking from a different race, religion, gender, culture, ability or economic experience.

English Language Arts K-12 Director Deborah Perry indicates that using diverse texts that expose our young people to multiple voices is a thread that runs throughout all grade levels. Work is underway to improve in-class libraries at Ottoson and all the elementary schools to ensure that books are available that both reflect (mirror) our students' own cultural identities and give them a window into cultural identities they have never encountered.

In middle school, hearing from many voices is an important way for students to begin to understand their own personal identities. This age group struggles with who they are and whether they belong. The questions OMS students explore in their English classes are designed to help them with this. In the eighth grade, for example, the major books they read have much to do with the "outsider" in terms of voice, and how one works to find a way to be themselves.

It is important for all students to develop the cultural competence necessary to feel safe and supported in the school environment and beyond. Reading and discussing literature that reflects and honors the lives of all young people is a powerful way to help them understand the beauty of our diverse world and the responsibilities of being a global citizen. Thank you to our teachers and administrators at all levels for the commitment they have made to help our students discover themselves and hear the voices of others. To learn about the ways diverse texts are exposing our young people to different voices in the elementary schools, please see the article, *Diverse Texts Contribute to Development of Cultural Proficiency, Recognition and Respect* in the **Safe & Supportive Schools** section of this newsletter.

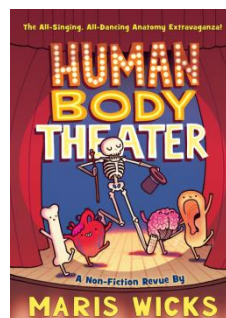
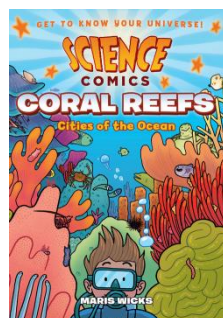
### ***Bishop Intergenerational Listening Day Project Focuses on Superheroes and Superpowers***

What does it mean to have a "superpower"? Is this something that everyone has? Can everyone be a "superhero"? These are among the questions that Bishop Library Coordinators Alison Vaishnaw and Justine Bloch asked third, fourth and fifth grade students to consider over the fall as they prepared for this year's Listening Day project. Through discussions and readings, it became clear that "superpowers" are the special talents that everyone has the ability to develop through practice. Some of these skills are evident early in life, such as being a good friend or being kind to others. Some develop as we grow and learn new things, such as driving a car. Young people may not yet understand what special skills they have because there is still so much for them to experience and learn.

The two teachers used a variety of books to help illustrate and develop the superpower theme. Several selections focused on girls who have a special interest in developing STEM skills, including *Rosie Revere, Engineer*, *Ada Twist, Scientist* and *Iggy Peck, Architect*. Books about real women in science included a biography of Temple Grandin, the famous autistic animal welfare scientist. This led to discussions of the special skills that students with different abilities might have, and *Isaac's Superpowers*, a book about a boy with Asperger's syndrome, was helpful here. *The Girl Who Never Made Mistakes* was useful in pointing out the stresses that come from concentrating too much on high performance and outcome. Barack Obama's book, *Of Thee I Sing*, presents a range of famous Americans and their special talents, and this helped the students see notable adult role models.

Prior to Thanksgiving, everyone received a worksheet to use as they interviewed an older family member or friend to learn about that person's real-life superhero, the superpower that the hero had and how the superhero had influenced their life. The students were also asked to identify their own superhero and superpowers. Face-to-face, phone, FaceTime and Skype interviews were all encouraged. The students were able to work on their interviewing through December. This month, the students started writing-up and illustrating their interviews, which will be combined into books.

This is the sixth year that Ms. Vaishnaw and Ms. Bloch have engaged grades three through five in a Listening Day project, inspired by the National Day of Listening initiated by Story Corps in 2008. They vary the theme annually since most students will complete the project three times during their time at Bishop. The value of Thanksgiving, favorite books from childhood and favorite holiday traditions are the topics from the last three years. The project is a beautiful way to encourage intergenerational conversations and is an opportunity for the teachers to talk about primary sources and the oral tradition in storytelling. Thank you Ms. Vaishnaw and Ms. Bloch for spearheading a project that brings people together in a rich learning experience.



### ***Love of Science Comes Through When Comics Author/Illustrator Visits Hardy***

Hardy third, fourth and fifth grade students were treated to a visit from local comics author and illustrator [Maris Wicks](#) this month. Ms. Wicks is the author of *Science Comics: Coral Reefs*, and the 240-page graphic novel *Human Body Theater* where a skeleton on a velvet-draped stage presents the wonders of the body in eleven informative acts. During her time with the children, she talked about how she went from art school to EMT, New England Aquarium community outreach educator, and then to the creator of

colorful, fun children's books. Ms. Wicks is highly energized when it comes to sharing her love of science and adventure, and she was well received by her audiences.

The students have been working on non-fiction writing, so this was an especially good time for them to meet and hear from Ms. Wicks. Her current projects have her drawing and writing several books due to be published over the next couple of years. I want to thank Library Specialist Margaret Muirhead for hosting Ms. Wicks and the Hardy PTO for supporting the visit.



### ***Continent Study Leads to "Worldfest" Research and Celebration of Countries at Thompson***

At the end of the Social Studies unit on continents, second grade Thompson students are asked to choose a country they want to understand better. This can be an ancestral country or just one that interests them. The students dig in, completing a one-page research report and a poster. They share their work with their classmates, and then everyone comes together to present what they have accomplished to family and friends in a *Worldfest* celebration.

Since many of the children choose their ancestral country, *Worldfest* is an opportunity to celebrate the diversity in the Thompson community, as well as share the wonderful research work that has been completed. Visitors walk around the cafeteria to view the posters, ask questions and admire the traditional clothing that some students wear to highlight their heritage. This year, one of the Music teachers taught the students a song that was presented at the event.

This is the sixth year that Thompson second grade classes have done this project, and the teachers always hear how much the families have enjoyed working on it with their children. Every other year, the school community holds an International Festival, and the posters are displayed there. I want to thank teachers Lynne Dichter, Jeanne Orlando, Alison O'Mahony and Claire Basham for spearheading the *Worldfest* project--one that the students remember long beyond second grade. I also thank Music teachers Valerie Becker and Rebecca Muranaka for making sure that a song was part of the festivities.

### **Creative Highlights**



### ***Ottoson Media Group Ready to Record School Events, Produce French Cooking Show***

The first five months of school have been very busy for the Ottoson Media Group (formerly known as the Ottoson News Network.) First, members brainstormed together to create the new logo that you see at the

top of this article. Then it was time to get the new members up to speed in different filming techniques so they would be ready to record significant school events and produce shows of their own. Members attended workshops at *ACMi* Studio B and Ottoson to understand how to film with professional equipment and cell phones. Working in teams, the students created their own stop motion animation, and used this to learn about editing.

The training prepared the group of 20 students to film the Ottoson Cares About Prevention club Dodgeball tournament and the winter concerts. Two concerts are currently available for viewing: The [Ottoson Band and Orchestra Winter Concert](#) held on December 13 and the [first Ottoson Choral Concert](#), held on December 19. We are fortunate to have such skilled and dedicated students available to film these events.

The group has been working on Season Two of *Teens Cook*, a wonderful collaboration between OMG and Françoise Matte and Cecile Penot-Dietrich of [French in the Kitchen](#). Eight episodes from Season One are posted on their very own [ACMi website](#), and the new ones will be coming soon. It is great fun to watch the students work with professional chefs to make everything from crepes to apple tarts, madeleines and pistou soup. I know you will enjoy this show. I want to thank OMS Librarian and Media Assistant Edith Moisand for her leadership of OMG.

### ***Ottoson's Eight Choral Groups Shine During Winter Concerts***

The two Ottoson Winter Choral Concerts, held on December 19 and January 9, are a wonderful testimony to the vibrancy and popularity of our [middle school choral program](#). With approximately 300 student singers, it makes sense to hold two evenings of vocal music, and an appreciative audience filled the AHS Lowe Auditorium each night.

The three groups conducted by OMS Performing Arts teacher Greg Condakes performed the first evening. It was clear as soon as the Show Choir took the stage in their white gloves that this was going to be a very special night. Over 20 singers dazzled the audience with *Magic To Do* from *Pippin*, choreographed by Special Education teacher and fellow Show Choir Director Randi Flynn. Up next was the Boys' Chorus. Their set began with a beautiful rendition of *The Water is Wide*, presented by the 17 members who would be auditioning for Junior District Chorus in late January. The full chorus, almost 60 boys strong, came next, enthusiastically brandishing their rolled "newspapers" as they delivered *The World Will Know* from the Broadway musical *Newsies*. The 8th Grade Chorus, a mixed group of almost 90 students, followed. Their 4-number set began with Vivaldi's *Gloria* and ended with the seasonal favorite *Jingle Bells*.

The five groups conducted by Performing Arts teacher Cori Smith performed in the second concert. The 6th Grade Chorus, with over 80 students, got things going with a 4-song set that included a folk song, spiritual and a number sung in Hebrew. I suspect that *Be Kind to Your Parents* from *Fanny* was a special favorite of the parents in the audience. Over 40 young women are part of the next group, the Girls Ensemble, whose set included a song by Billy Joel and Charles Tindley's inspiring and spirited *The Storm is Passing Over*. Up next was the 27-member *Keynotes*, whose American-themed set included a poem by Robert Frost and Pete Seeger's *If I Had a Hammer*. Slightly smaller at 20 members, the acapella group *Acoustics* followed with two numbers, including one arranged by the group.

The evening closed with the 7th Grade Chorus delivering a set ranging from a traditional Zambian song complete with percussion, to Vivaldi, and then to the Irving Berlin favorite, *Putting on the Ritz* featuring seven dancers performing choreography by Ms. Flynn. It was a wonderful way to warm a winter evening! I want to thank Mr. Condakes, Ms. Smith, Ms. Flynn, accompanists Barry Singer and Aril Allard and all the wonderful OMS singers for bringing us these beautiful winter concerts. I share the teacher's gratitude for the tremendous support the program receives from parents and families. The Ottoson Media Group was working hard both nights as well, and the December 19 concert [video](#) of is ready for viewing. The second video is still in editing and will be available shortly.

## **Second Quarter OMS Exhibit Celebrates Recent Work of All Art Students**

The amazing artworks being created by Ottoson Middle School students were shared with the community during the Second Quarter art show held on January 18. Four times a year, OMS Visual Art teachers install an exhibit that displays at least one artwork created by each student who participated in art classes during the quarter. These visually exciting displays demonstrate how the art program at Ottoson provides students with opportunities for personal expression and creative problem solving.

The evening reception was very well attended by student artists, parents and friends, and I look forward to the remaining shows of this school year: Third Quarter, April 4 and Fourth Quarter, June 12. Please click [here](#) to see examples of the beautiful work that was on display. I want to thank OMS Visual Art teachers Alecia Serafini, Kayla McKenna and Polly Ford for the ways they help our young artists discover their artistic voices.



## **Sonic Voyages IX Brings the Audience into the Hearts and Minds of AHS Composers**

This month's *Sonic Voyages IX*, the second concert presented by our talented Music Technology students this school year, was a feast for both the eyes and ears. Over forty students have been composing and mixing music on computer workstations during hands-on classroom lessons where they explore songwriting, music theory and audio engineering. These talented young people have also been using the new AHS recording studio to add vocal and instrumental tracks.

Twelve video and four live performances of original music were presented on January 18. Each one was unique and special, with the composer's vision for his or her work on full display. Some videos pulsed with color, swirling with the sound or throbbing to the percussive beats, like this one called [Shaft](#) created by Ethan Hall. Others included live actors who invited us into their homes, took us on reflective travels around town or brought us into the world of lost love. One video was presented as a symphony for sailors, using rich sounds and romantic views of old sailing vessels to take us to sea.

The live performances ranged from a lone singer presenting a piece that harkened to the fifties, a guitarist illustrating the extended range that comes from an eight string guitar and a quartet consisting of drums, bass guitar, guitar and trumpet playing two jazzy numbers. There were two fun surprises in the latter performances: Music Technology teacher John DiTomaso as the brass player and a video background of cartoon arachnids behind the group as they played a number titled *Spider*.

The real world, applied learning that happens in the Music Technology classroom extends to the concerts as well. As was true for last November's combined Choral Concert, *Sonic Voyages IX* was entirely produced by the students who collaborated in teams: sound crew, stage crew, lighting, video, programs,



emcee talking points and promotion. The beautiful poster used to promote the concert, shown above, was created by Advanced Music Technology student Crystal Zhu who is studying *Music and Sound for Film*.

Two more Music Technology concerts are planned this year: a combined concert with AHS instrumental groups on April 11 and the Spring Showcase on May 16. Both will be rewarding evenings of creative, original music that you won't want to miss.

### ***AHS Directors Present Evening of One-Act Plays at Sold-out Performance***

Twelve actors took their direction from fellow classmates as they performed three one-act plays this month: *I Dream Before I Take the Stand*, *Hidden in this Picture* and *Candid*. The performances mark the culmination of a process that began last June, when the aspiring directors submitted detailed applications for consideration. Once chosen, the directors got to work holding auditions, choosing the cast, and assembling a creative team that included costume, prop and set coordinators and a stage manager.

Two seniors and two juniors tried their hand at directing this year (one play was co-directed). All were chosen based upon their descriptions of why they had selected the plays they wanted to direct, what they believed the play was about both literally and metaphorically, and the themes or visual pictures that they would use throughout the production. Three students provided stage management. Although three performance nights were planned, winter weather interfered. Snow days dropped the schedule to only one evening, which was sold out.

It is important to note that the entire process--from application, through casting, rehearsals and final performances--is completely student-driven. The wonderful evening of theater that results is a testimony to the talent of our young people, not only to perform, but also to conceptualize, lead, and be part of a group working toward a common end. Thank you to Arlington High School Drama teacher Michael Byrne for providing our students with this opportunity to challenge themselves and share their gifts with the community.

### **Athletic Highlights**



### ***AHS Winter Athletes Set Records and Milestones, Work on Service and Pride***

It is hard to believe that the Arlington High School winter season is well underway and that we will soon be thinking about tournament play. All our athletes are working hard to make the season memorable. Girls gymnastics, working with new coach Erica Nahass this year, has seen some exciting performances, and stands at 2-2 as of this writing. Girl's hockey has a 6-4-1 record thus far, and while girls indoor track has not won any meets, they are working hard to improve in their sport. Girls basketball stands at 6-6. Both the boys hockey and basketball teams are having exciting seasons, with hockey at 8-3-1 and basketball at 12-2. I will report on the end of the season and the teams that have made it into tournament play in my next newsletter.

There have been some very special highlights this season that I want to report. First, the boys indoor track team earned their first team win in over three years. The relay team, consisting of Jeff Candell, Adam Elyounssi, Roger Buckley and Ryan Oosting ran the 4K meter race in 10:28 to set a new Division 2 meet record and beat the Division 1 time as well. This performance qualifies the team for Nationals that will take place on Friday, March 9 in New York City. Another record was set at the Indoor Track and Field Invitational meet, when Ryan Oosting ran the 1-mile in 4:14:98. This is another sterling accomplishment for Ryan, who always focuses on team success rather than his individual achievements.

The AHS wrestling team, almost 30 members strong, added another milestone to their long history of growth and accomplishment with their 300th program win this month. Coach Kevin Cummings, who started the team with eight wrestlers 22 years ago, and Assistant Coaches Kafrissen and Covell, have overseen 12 Sectional Champions, four State champions, and one All-State Champion. Congratulations to all.

Our Student Ambassadors continued their collaboration with athletes from across Massachusetts at the MIAA Winter Huddle. The Ambassadors, who serve on the MIAA Leadership Committee, have been learning about service projects that other school communities have undertaken. They are working on ideas for department-wide service initiatives that bring the AHS program together to make an impact. Additionally, members of the Captains' Council are working on ways to increase spirit and pride at athletic events. They are sharpening their leadership skills as they explore ways to make sure a strong and supportive crowd is in the stands at all events.

Thanks to the efforts of the coaches who volunteer their time, the AHS Fitness Room is open from 5:00-6:00 pm on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday this season. Permission slips are required, and all student athletes must sign in and out. A workshop on optimizing performance through hydration is being planned that will be open to all athletes.

[IMPACT testing](#) session [registration](#) for the spring season is open on the Athletic Department website, and team registration opens on February 12. The [spring league game schedules](#) are also posted, but non-league games are not yet listed and there are additional commitments that include April vacation still to be included.

It isn't too early to talk about some important events coming up this spring. This year, the Athletic Department is partnering with the [Positive Coaching Alliance](#), a national group dedicated to creating positive sports experiences. Representatives will be at AHS to make a presentation that focuses on the demands and opportunities associated with participation in educational athletics. Topics to be included are stress management, the development of life-skills and how to practice time management. This event will be free and open to athletes, parents, coaches and community members. Additionally, the department will welcome prospective student athletes and their families at *Incoming Freshmen Athletic Night* on May 1, and the *Ponder Family Fun Run* 5K road race will take place on May 12. Click [here](#) to register for the *Fun Run*.