

Diamond Gems

Volume 11, Issue 6

Diamond Elementary School
4 Marquis Drive
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

PTA Website: despta.org



Dear Diamond Community,

As we begin the new academic marking period, we would also begin Black History Month, for which you'll find some resources enclosed. This year's commemoration is particularly significant, as we also celebrate the election of the country's first Black, first South Asian and first female Vice President. What an amazing moment for so many of our Diamond students to see themselves reflected for the first time in the highest offices in our nation! Change is often slow and hard-won, but it is one thing that can be counted on.

In place of our regular PTA meeting this month, we are sharing the invitation to all DES parents and staff to join the Ridgeview MS PTSA's panel discussion on school resource officers. There is a pending resolution within the Montgomery County Council of PTAs to change the current policy of having law enforcement officers in MCPS schools based on the documented disproportionate impacts that these officers have on students of color, LGBTQIA students, and students with disabilities. Please consider joining this panel discussion and reading up on the resolution (the link is enclosed). Additionally, please share any feedback that you may have with me at president@despta.org so that it may inform our PTA response to the resolution.

Wishing you all the best on behalf of the PTA Executive Board,
Alyson Kozma, PTA President



Diamond's Annual Food Drive

Every year, the Diamond community participates in a food drive to support Gaithersburg families struggling with food insecurity. While this year's event may be a bit different, the need is greater than ever.

We are currently working through the details of the food drive with Mr. Walder. Once plans are finalized, they will be communicated through the PTA's Facebook page, Remind, and the PTA email. In the interim, start collecting food from the [Gaithersburg Help Wish List](#) now!



Please consider supporting our community. If your family needs assistance, please reach out to [Gaithersburg Help](#).

DES PTA Links

- [Diamond ES PTA Website](#)
- [DES PTA Spirit Store](#)
- [DES PTA Membership Form](#)
- [DES PTA – Get Involved!](#)

DES School Links

- [School Supply List](#)
- [MCPS Classroom/Canvas](#)
- [ParentVue](#)
- [StudentVue](#)

MCPS Links

- [Meal Service Program](#)
- [Zoom Tips & Best Practices](#)
- [MCPS Digital Backpack](#)
- [Chromebook Troubleshooting](#)

Calendar of Events

February

- 9 – Ridgeview Middle School PTSA Meeting (7pm)
- 12 – No School (Prof Day)
- 15 – No School (Presidents Day)
- 17 – NAACP Parent Council (6:30pm)

March

- 12 – Early Release (11am)
- 17 – NAACP Parent Council
- 29-31 – No School (Spring Break)

April

- 1-5 – No School (Spring Break)
- 16 – No School (Prof Day)
- 21 – NAACP Parent Council





Andy S

Teacher & Grade: Mr. O'Connor – 2nd

What's your Superhero name and what powers do you have? Captain America and my super power would be flying!

What do you want to be when you grow up? I'd like to work in the Navy driving battleships

What makes your friends so awesome? They are nice and they like to play outside

Who is your role model? My role model is the Incredible Hulk because he is strong

How would you change the world? I'd make sure people vote in elections!



Ms. Serlo

What do you do here at Diamond and how long have you been at our school? I'm a 4th grade teacher and I've been teaching at this amazing school for 9 years! 2 years in fourth and 7 years in second.

If you could be an animal, what would you be? Why? Hands down, I would be a sea otter because they are a highly intelligent, active and adorable species.

What is your dream vacation? It would love to go on a vacation to pretty much ANYWHERE at this stage of life, especially after quarantine is over. I really enjoy exploring new places and learning about new cultures. I think my next trip would be somewhere in Central America or Europe.

Where did you grow up? What elementary school did you attend? I was born and raised in Damascus, MD! I went to Woodfield Elementary and have very fond memories of my childhood.

How would you change the world? Luckily, our world is changing and history is being made with Vice President, Kamala Harris! Additionally, I try to change the world by emphasizing the importance of empathy, love, and compassion with my students. My hope is the young people of our world can grow up to help provide access to clean water, nutritious food, and education to people in need globally.



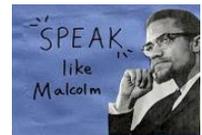
Black History Month

This month, please join us in celebrating the accomplishments of Black Americans!

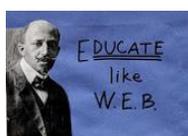
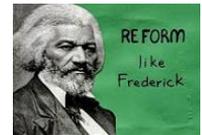
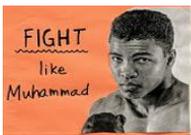


What is Black History Month?

Black History Month was created by Carter G. Woodson to celebrate the achievements of African Americans who have helped shape the United States. The purpose was to showcase those individuals in history who did not receive the recognition of their work to help build America, including the work of politicians, writers, inventors, educators, entertainers, artists, athletes, architects, philosophers, and leaders.



This year's theme for Black History month is: ***"The Black Family – Representation, Identity and Diversity"***. The history of Black families show that they have been spread apart across states, nations and continents under the pressure of slavery, poverty and inequality. Thus started the tradition of family reunions in the Black community. Reunions are a way to get together, preserve family culture and traditions, share information and celebrate the importance of each family member. The Black community has always exhibited a steady understanding of family as a source of comfort, strength and survival.



As we celebrate Black History Month this February, we recognize that everyday history is being made. In the context of the Black Lives Matter movement, we have witnessed the historic inauguration of Kamala Harris as Vice President. Not only is she the first woman vice president of the U.S., but also the first African American and first South Asian American vice president. She has been placed in the history books following many African American greats who have dedicated their lives to changing the face of the United States of America. We applaud the excellence that Madam Vice President represents and the continued progress that our country demonstrates in making strides toward fulfilling the dream of a "more perfect union".



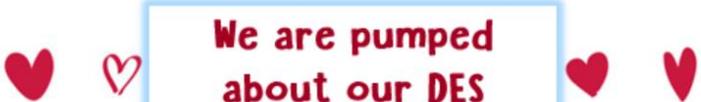
Diamond Gems

Diamond Elementary School
4 Marquis Drive
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

PTA Website: despta.org



Weekly WOW Wednesdays



**We are pumped
about our DES
Staff!**

**Thank you from the
bottom of our
hearts!**

Spread some cheer with *heart-filled shout-outs* for our DES Staff! Let's keep the momentum going in February! Submit *heartwarming* posts every Wednesday on the DES PTA Facebook page. Each month we will select one of the nominated staff members to win a prize!

Recent winners are:

- November – Ms. Tokarz
- December – Mrs. Trego

Big thanks to Bruster's Ice Cream (@ 18519 Frederick Ave, Gaithersburg) for their donation!

PTA Meeting Alert!!



February PTA has been cancelled!

In place of our regular PTA meeting, all Diamond families and staff are invited to participate in a **special meeting hosted by the Ridgeview MS PTSA on School Resource Officers and the [proposed MCCPTA resolution](#)**. We encourage you to join to learn more about this important topic:

- **Tuesday, February 9th at 7pm**
- Click here for the [Zoom Link](#)
- Meeting ID: 818 8433 2471
- Passcode: Bobcats!

5th Grade Recognition

Every year Diamond ES celebrates the hard work of our 5th graders with end of year recognition events. While we are still enduring the ongoing pandemic, we still want our 5th graders to feel the love and we cannot do it without your support.

Please send \$20 by Fri, Feb 5th to cover the cost of the recognition activities - class t-shirt, yard sign, goodie bag at clap out, and balloon decorations. If this is a hardship, please send whatever you can.

Please include your child's name and "5th Grade Recognition" in the memo with your payment:

- PayPal: [PayPal.Me/AllisonFisher](https://www.paypal.com/payto?username=AllisonFisher)
- Venmo: @Allison-Fisher-60713
- Make check out to Allison Fisher:
 - Drop off at box in school office
 - Mail to: 6 Acline Ct, Gaithersburg MD 20878

Questions: AllisonFisher16@gmail.com



Cash for Diamond Dolphins

Here are some of the ways you can help earn money for Diamond Elementary PTA!
Take a look at some of the partnerships we have. Thank you for your support!



AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know! Same products, same prices, same service, and you can even use your current Amazon account. To get started, **go to smile.amazon.com and select Diamond Elementary School PTA as your charitable organization.** Then, every time you shop at smile.amazon.com. Amazon will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases back to the school.

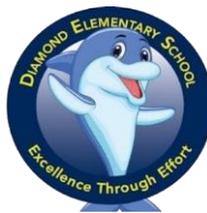


Box Tops for Education is going digital!

Download the new Box Top mobile app and scan store receipts for instant earnings. Traditional clip tops are being phased out, but are still found on some packaging. If you find a clipped Box Top, keep together and mail to the school.

PTA - Box tops

4 Marquis Dr, Gaithersburg MD 20878



Make a direct donation to the Diamond ES PTA!

Navigate to the [PayPal](https://www.paypal.com) page on the PTA website



When you shop Harris teeter brands, a percentage of your purchase is donated to the school that your VIC card is linked to. There is no limit to how much we can earn! **Link or Re-link your VIC card for 2020-2021 today! Re-linking is required every August. CODE:7261**
Or e-mail irene.chan.sf.331@gmail.com with your VIC number.



There are **codes found under the bottles caps or inside cardboard boxes of Coke products** that can be entered online for cash value. You can mail the plastic bottles caps and/or codes from cartons to school. If you prefer to enter the codes yourself, visit <https://us.coca-cola.com/give/> for more information.



Become a PTA Member Today!

We start the second half of the year with routines we've established and a great hope that we'll be back to school for in-person instruction as soon as it is safe to do so. As a reminder, we still need YOU to join the Diamond PTA!

Our PTA is more important than ever to keep us all connected this year, as we continue to navigate in a world where virtual engagement is the only way for our community to come together.

PTA dues this year are unchanged: \$20 for a single membership, a discounted \$35 rate for a 2-member family, \$15 for grandparents or other community members, and \$10 for Diamond teachers and staff. Remember, dues go directly back to Diamond students and teachers!

What does Diamond PTA do?

- We are brainstorming creative ways to engage the Diamond community virtually, including virtual events!
- We reimburse Diamond teachers for supplies they need to make your child's virtual learning experience great.
- We support staff appreciation to thank our amazing teachers for all their hard work.
- We advocate for Diamond and for all of our children, at the county, state, and national levels. **This includes advocacy around school boundaries and COVID decision making!**
- We connect parents, sharing information and building community and friendships (all virtually for now!)
- We are busy parents, teachers, and staff just like you who want the best for Diamond's kids!

Joining is easy on our website: despta.org/join. We are encouraging everyone to sign up online rather than providing paper membership forms this year. But, if you are having issues with online signup or would like a PDF form emailed to you, please contact Elizabeth Petraglia at membership@despta.org.

Catch the wave – join the PTA TODAY!



Diamond ES PTA Calendar 2020-2021

February

9 – Ridgeview Middle School
PTSA Meeting (7pm)
12 – No School (Prof Day)
15 – No School (Presidents
Day)
17 – NAACP Parent Council
(6:30pm)

March

12 – Early Release (11:30a)
17 – NAACP Parent Council
29-31 – No School (Spring
Break)

April

1-5 – No School (Spring
Break)
16 – No School (Prof Day)
21 – NAACP Parent Council

May

13 – No School (Prof Day)
19 – NAACP Parent Council
31 – No School (Memorial
Day)

Diamond Gems

Diamond Elementary School
4 Marquis Drive
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

PTA Website: despta.org



Click the links to **Stay in the Know**
and to **Connect with Us!**

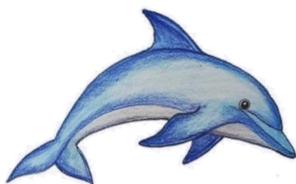


Get Involved!

Joining the PTA is a quick and easy way to support our school. Simply fill out the online [PTA Membership Form](#).

Becoming an active member ensures that your child (or grandchild!) has lots of fun activities to participate in throughout the year. There are several ways to help:

- **Volunteer for a PTA sponsored event.** Be on the look out for volunteer requests (especially when we return to in-person activities!) on Facebook, Twitter, Remind and all our social media outlets
- **Become a Committee Chair.** Lead one-time or recurring programs. Pick one that requires a brief commitment or one that puts you in charge of a team. With so many committees, there is one that is right for YOU! Check out the full [Committee List](#). **Let us know asap if you're interested in any of these Committee Chairs:**
 - **Readathon**
 - **Diversity and Inclusion**
 - **Website**
- **Join the PTA Board.** Help us set the tone and trajectory for the PTA. Reach out to our current [Board Members](#) with any questions.
 - President: [Alyson Kozma](#)
 - VP - Community: [Chuck Clapper](#)
 - Treasurer: [Jennifer Gribskov Panackal](#)
 - Secretary: [Oksana Agba](#)



PTA Meeting Info

Virtual meetings will take place every other month. We will discuss PTA activities and get updates from school Administration

- Join us remotely by clicking the [Online Link](#) (sign in first!)
- Join us by phone: 605.562.0400 (enter access code 239 3963#)
- Review notes, slides, audio recordings and related materials from previous PTA meetings: [PTA Meeting Records](#)



The PTA Needs YOU!

Been wanting to support our school but you're not sure how? Think your skills aren't useful for the PTA? Think again!! We've got something for everyone!

Your Passion	Committee Match
Social causes	Diversity and Inclusion
Athletics and exercise	Dolphin Dash
Food security	Food Drive
Love of reading	Readathon
Proud to be a Dolphin	Spirit Wear
Tech savvy	Website
Parents & student fun	Pastries for Parents (21-22)
Money	VP of Fundraising

Do you have an idea or feedback for the Diamond Gems Newsletter? **We'd love to hear from you!** Send your requests and comments to the [Diamond Gems Suggestion Box](#). We'll get back to you asap.



2020-2021 PTA Board, Committees, & Chairpersons

Board Position	Member	Email
President	Alyson Kozma	President@despta.org
Vice President – Community	Chuck Clapper	Community@despta.org
Vice President – Fundraising	Need replacement	Fundraising@despta.org
Treasurer	Jennifer Gribskov Panackal	Treasurer@despta.org
Secretary	Oksana Agba	Secretary@despta.org

Committee	Chair(s)
After School & Extracurricular Activities	Dipesha Shah
Andrea Virga Winter Coat Drive	Shannon Phelan Nazzi Kholdebarin
Back to School Social	Kristy King
Book Fair	Elsa Flores Mílva Simões
Box Tops & Giant A+	Irene Chan
Bulletin Board	Elsa Flores Luisa McFate
Cluster Rep – Northwest	Andrea Richardson
Cluster Rep – Quince Orchard	Bonnie Cybulko Allison Fisher
Cultural Arts	Ranjini Iyengar Kristina Sracic Lisa Weinstein Mina Yoo
Curb Appeal	John Rouse Jayson Simmkoveak
Diamond Gems Newsletter	Mílva Simões
Directory	Pegah Borzognia
Diversity & Inclusion	Purvi Desai (Need a co-chair)
Dolphin Dash	Jass Gosal (Need a co-chair)
Facebook Moderators	Executive Board
Family Fun Finn-Go Night	Nazzi Kholdebarin
Family Fun Movie Night	Elsa Flores
Family Fun Valentine Dance	Allison Fisher
Fifth Grade Recognition	Allison Fisher Asawari Ketkar Megha Bavarva
Food Drive	(Need a Chair)

Committee	Chair(s)
Fundraising – Readathon	(Need a Chair)
Girls on the Run	Joanna Crandall Elizabeth Petraglia
Group Moderator	Shannon Little
Group Piano	Bonnie Cybulko
International Night	Nazzi Kholdebarin Reza Emtiaznoori
MCCPTA Delegates	Alyson Kozma Chuck Clapper
Membership	Elizabeth Petraglia
NAACP Parents Counsel Representative	Melanie Jones
Nominating Committee	Billy Newson
Pastries for Parents	(Need a Chair – 2021/22)
Principal's Coffee	Richard Burton
Restaurant Nights	Bonnie Cybulko Luisa McFate
Room Parent Coordinator	Sarah Burton
Social Justice and Community Service	Erin Vaughn
Special Needs Representative	Dave Stevenson Maggie Stevenson Coni Nepomuceno
Spirit Wear	Dave Stevenson Adynda Fara (Need a co-chair)
Staff Appreciation	Jamila Denney Swati Dadhich Corrine Lake Luisa McFate
Website	Dave Stevenson (Need a co-chair)