

BUFFALO PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT—BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOLS



I recently had the pleasure of interviewing Dr. Kriner Cash, Superintendent of Buffalo Public Schools and one of Buffalo Promise Neighborhood's key partners.

We opened our discussion around the New Education Bargain that Dr. Cash and his team designed and tailored toward Buffalo Public Schools data and need. The initiative

focuses on six pillars: rigorous early education, strong community schools, new innovative high schools, extended learning excellence for all students, services for our neediest children and families, and a new relationship with our teachers. According to Dr. Cash, "Every single student has access to an equal and high-quality education. The narrative is changing, but we need to continue to work on achievement – double down on the bright spots and make tough decisions to close the various gaps we've identified."

Among Dr. Cash's signature programs, he highlighted the Community School model stressing the ultimate goal is to achieve greater engagement with children, parents and community members by bringing in hands-on activities and enrichment with strong exposure to literacy programming. Wraparound services include a full range of referral agencies available to families both in and out of their respective school community. High schools now have the addition of parent centers providing many services such as health and wellness, as well as legal and financial assistance.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT—PAGE 1

CALMING ROOMS—PAGE 2

BASKETBALL CHAMPIONS—PAGE 2

COMMUNITY SCHOOL—PAGE 3

PAZ SPOTLIGHT—PAGE 3

BUFFALO BILLS RALLY—PAGE 4

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT—PAGE 4

ABOUT BPN

- ◆ Buffalo Promise Neighborhood is an education initiative aimed at supporting our children from cradle to college and beyond.
- ◆ Buffalo Promise Neighborhood in partnership with M&T Bank also includes community residents and numerous community based organizations as part of our team.
- ◆ We are committed to providing children with access to great schools and strong systems of family and community support.

CHILDREN'S ACADEMY CALMING ROOMS



EduKids in partnership with Buffalo Promise Neighborhood has received a \$15,500 grant from The Children's Guild Foundation for equipment and curriculum pieces to create trauma informed therapy rooms in each of the two BPN Children's Academies.

This project, *Safe Zone: Helping Children Overcome Trauma* will help children that are dealing with the effects of trauma be more successful in school by boosting their social/emotional skills, improving their relationships, and enriching their problem solving abilities. The Children's Guild Foundation shares our mission to impact the lives of children and help them achieve their highest potential. With this funding, we are able to proactively support teachers and children through challenging moments with research based tools, curriculum, and staff development.

We are so grateful to partner with the Children's Guild Foundation and provide these *Safe Zones* to the students in the BPN Children's Academies.

WESTMINSTER BASKETBALL CHAMPIONS

The 7th and 8th grade boys and girls basketball teams at Westminster Community Charter School both finished their season with a bang. These two teams, made up of various 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students finished with a perfect season, and never lost ONE game. They each played over 20 games, were in both the Charter School League and the Buffalo Public School League, and put in hours of work practicing each week. Not only did the students work hard at practice, but their talents were easily noticed on the court as well.

The boys team was led by eighth graders Chase Welch, Michael Wells, and Jordan David-Lewis who acted as the team's unofficial captains. Between Chase's offensive and scoring skills, Michael's defensive talent, Jordan's smooth three-point shot, these boys kept the rest of their teammates pumped up and focused during each game. James Corker, also an eighth grader, came off the bench with great focus and intensity that picked the team up when they needed it, and kept everyone smiling and laughing. Timothy Chatmon, an eighth grader as well, came off the bench as a big man, played with heart and always gave it his all. Shelden Mallory was a huge impact on the team as well, and was a big who kept them in several games with his rebounding and scoring abilities. Seventh graders who were a big impact on the team included: David Washington, Jazier Fluker, Thaizon Trapp, and Jordan Sweet.

The girls team was led by eighth graders Kayla Johnson, Armani Watson, and Paige Dudley. Kayla Johnson served as a solid and talented point guard, and was one of the team's highest scoring players. Armani held it down on defense, and also developed her offensive game, giving the team everything she had. Paige was able to serve as a solid center, improving her game daily, and really rocking out on defense. Seventh graders Za'Niah Andrews, Deja Ferguson were huge impacts to the team as well with Za'Niah being another point guard and leading scorer, and Deja holding it down with her aggressive defensive skills. The team even had two sixth graders and a fifth grader who developed their skills, always brought a positive attitude to the court, and improved drastically: La'Niya Sheppard, Alillyonna McEachin, and Antalia Smith.

Both teams gave this season their all, and their efforts did not go unnoticed by players, coaches, and spectators. They were an amazing group to coach, and Mr. Martin and Miss Andrews of WCCS cannot wait to see what we can accomplish again next year! Thank you to all the parents and staff members who made this year so fun and successful for these kids, we deserved these championships! Go WCCS!



COMMUNITY SCHOOL EVENTS



Basketball 101

Students from Highgate Heights and Westminster Community Charter School had the opportunity to participate in the University of Buffalo's basketball game in March. Students were selected as a result of an annual attendance competition at their schools. Thank you to UB and M&T Bank for coordinating these efforts and congratulations to all of our dedicated students—way to go!

Saturday Academy—Career Job Fair

Our March Career and Job Fair was a huge success! We had over 175 attendees and 30 vendors. Our parents had the opportunity to hear about various college offerings and the chance to learn about available career opportunities. Our students were able to participate in a number of STEM activities as well as cupcake decorating and crafts. Three lucky attendees also walked away with new laptops donated by our Buffalo Promise Neighborhood Parent Achievement Zone team!

Pi Day Activities

Westminster hosted a Family Math Night with Greg Tang Jr. for students and their families. The day began with student assemblies for grades K-5 and math workshops for all the

teachers. Students indulged in fun and effective math activities – including NumTanga, Kakooma, Math Limbo, Tangy Jeopardy and more. Games were distributed to classrooms to be used to continue math instruction. Our teachers worked with Greg Tang Jr. on how to best support students solve math word problems. The day concluded with a one-hour event for families that included 5 math stations proven to get students excited about math. Students and parents rotated through math stations, took part in some fun math competitions to win prizes, and then enjoyed some pizza and pie!

Pizza Palooza is an annual event held at Highgate to kick start the beginning of NYS exam season. Pizza Palooza is one of Highgate's most popular events, where parents and students have the opportunity to learn important information about the NYS ELA and Math assessments while engaging in fun and interactive games and activities. Families also had the opportunity to try a variety of pizza!

PARENT ACHIEVEMENT ZONE—KENDRA CAMPBELL

At Buffalo Promise Neighborhood, we believe that when parents succeed, their children succeed as well. Kendra Campbell is a true success story of the Two-Generation (Parent Achievement Zone: PAZ) work accomplished at BPN.

In 2016, Kendra began the process of achieving her career, education, and financial goals. At that time, Pamela Jackson, Housing Counselor/Financial Coach from Belmont Housing Resources of WNY (a PAZ partner) encouraged her to think about attending a financial education series hosted by PAZ and their partners. After completing the course, Kendra enrolled her son at the Children's Academy powered by EduKids, Inc. while she worked to support her family.

While working and caring for her children, Kendra also enrolled full-time in nursing school. As she identified the need for additional supports, coaching from our PAZ team continued. Courtney Bauer and Booker Piper, Career Coaches at SUNY Erie and PAZ partners, helped Kendra secure a job with a consistent schedule, and scholarships to assist her with education, uniform and book costs. According to Kendra, the PAZ team went above and beyond the call of duty, providing daily check-ins, and help with completing paperwork. Above all, Kendra remembers the many words of encouragement.

"With the help of the entire PAZ team, I was able to graduate, with distinction. I also recently bought my own home. I could not have done it without the PAZ team, I owe so much to them!"

We are so proud of Kendra's accomplishments and commitment despite the challenges that arose. A huge thank you goes to our wonderful partners at Belmont Housing Resources and SUNY Erie. Kendra's story is one of many that continue to inspire us and help to build strong foundations with families in our community!



BUFFALO BILLS RALLY

A group of students from Westminster Community Charter School and Highgate Heights Elementary got the opportunity to train like a Buffalo Bill!

Before they jumped into drills they had the chance to meet Buffalo Bills President, Kim Pegula, Head Coach Sean McDermott and Linebacker Lorenzo Alexander.

All of the students that participated are part of their schools NFL Flag Football team. The program is made possible through a generous grant from the Buffalo Bills Foundation. Coaches O'Hare, Olgin, Martin and Shoemaker have put in a tremendous amount of time helping the students develop their football skills as well as teaching them important lessons about teamwork and dedication.

After the students participated in a question and answer session they got to play flag football with Lorenzo Alexander as well as tossing the ball around with Coach McDermott.

Perhaps we have a future Buffalo Bill in our school ranks! Go Bills!



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT—BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOLS (continued)

Next in line is the importance of rigorous early childhood education, focusing on children 0-5 years of age. The first five years of a child's life are the most critical. Children at this age are the most open because their brains are still forming allowing them to absorb and be introduced to the world and the way it works. Dr. Cash feels that teachers at this level should teach their passion and find a way to love and respect the children unconditionally. Learn who they are, where they come from and adapt your teaching methods to fit the individual child. Teachers are encouraged to reach out to their peers and develop mentorship relationships, so they continue to grow along with the children they educate.

Commitment to our community and the belief that we only do as well as the communities we serve has long been a mainstay at M&T Bank. I asked Dr. Cash how we can continue to actively involve other local businesses and was encouraged to learn that nearly 70 collegiate, corporate, healthcare, not-for-profit, and faith-based organizations and one hundred and fifty community-based organizations are currently working in partnership with our Buffalo Public Schools. Buffalo in many ways is a proof point for the nation recognizing that when a school system improves, the surrounding community will ultimately succeed and prosper.

When asked to share his proudest career accomplishment, Dr. Cash very humbly shared that it was his first wife that helped him set his foundation. Their unique compatibility centered him and allowed him to choose his personal and professional path. His philosophy is to never get in a comfort zone, always be pushing the envelope, learning and moving forward – wise words from a man who leads Buffalo's educational future!



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