

2016 Volunteer-Appreciation-Week Message

By: Mrs. Erin Mihulka, Liberty Parent/Volunteer and Chair of the Grandparents-Day-Planning Committee

Volunteer. From the Latin word, *voluntarius*. Willing. Of one's free will. Self-constituted. (From Online Etymology Dictionary)

When one thinks of the word, "volunteer" one doesn't typically consider the etymology of the word because it is a familiar English word. But what about unfamiliar words? Words new to one's vocabulary? Nowadays, one can simply "Google" a word on their phone in about 30 seconds...But to those who have studied Latin since kindergarten, their brain IS Google and they can understand an unfamiliar word based on its root and the context.

"Their brain is Google." Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a mind with such a wealth of information? Not at the touch of a keyboard or an electronic search, but while having a conversation, truly knowing history, geography, literature, mathematics, science...Already within your mind. I truly wish I had the education my children are receiving...Culturally literate without the constant aid of an electronic device. This is what our children are so fortunate to be receiving at Liberty Common School and Liberty Common High School. A wealth of knowledge and character...



Character. From the Latin word, *character*, from Greek *kharakter* "engraved mark," also "symbol or imprint on the soul"...(From Online Etymology Dictionary)

Liberty Common is a choice school. All of us, parents of students at Liberty, chose to put our children on the lottery list to attend Liberty. We chose Liberty for many reasons, but all of them amount to one thing: We want the absolute best education and environment for our children. Liberty provides an exceptional curriculum, environment, and character education. Liberty employs the absolute finest educators, administrators, and support staff to educate and guide our children through the formative years of their lives.

All of this is because of parents. Parents founded Liberty Common charter school. Parents fought to make the dream of this exceptional school a reality. Parents

struggled and worked tirelessly to create and perfect this nationally recognized pillar of exceptional American education.

If you have not familiarized yourself with the history of Liberty Common, I recommend reviewing the archived newsletters that have a historical account, in multiple installments, written by **Dr. Maureen Schaffer**. It's a fascinating story. We should all be incredibly thankful to the founders and parents before us that truly battled all odds and adversity to bring this truly incredible, exceptional education to all of us.

I am a parent of 3rd and 6th grade boys at Liberty. I chair the committee that plans and organizes Liberty's annual Grandparents Day event. In honor of Volunteer Appreciation Week, I'd like to put forth huge thanks for all the parents that make such an enormous impact on one of Liberty's biggest and most beloved events.

Five years ago, a parent, **Amy Redstone** had an idea - to have a special event to honor a many times overlooked part of a child's life: Grandparents. It started as an idea, and via an email from a founder and now the upper-school principal, **Bob Schaffer**, a few parents signed up to help.



The first couple years, Amy chaired the committee and we learned and evolved and improved. When Amy was elected to the Board of Directors, she handed the chairperson position to me. Each year, through trial and error, we have improved and perfected the planning, organization, and execution of this event.

Grandparents Day has evolved into a huge, annual, beloved, anticipated event. It could have never have begun or become the success that it has without one thing: Parent volunteers. Every aspect of this event is managed, planned, organized, set up, and executed by Liberty parent volunteers.

I can't possibly list every name of every parent that has contributed to the success of this event. But what I can explain is that there are so many parents who lend a hand, that the enormous event occurs every Tuesday of the week of Thanksgiving seamlessly and professionally.

Planning-committee parents meet every week from the first week of September up until the event. I would like to thank these parent volunteers for committing to meeting every Friday morning for almost three months to plan and prepare:

Cheryl Armstrong
Marie Beck
Trula Berg

Jen Hopkins
Michelle Johanson
Shannon Pavek
Marji Trinen

And also Principal Schaffer for fitting our committee meetings in almost every week for three months.

Parents come in the night before the event to set up a beautiful dining area to seat nearly 600 grandparents complete with linens, centerpieces, and themed decor. Parents arrive the day before the event with food donations for the grandparents.

Parents arrive at 7:00AM or earlier the day of the event to prep food and for final details like balloons and candle lighting. Parents work the event to clear tables, clean up food service equipment, guide and assist grandparents, and break down the entire dining area to prepare for the students' lunch hours.

Parents provide treats and decor for nearly 200 grandparents at the upper school...Parents who own local businesses donate their time, skills, equipment, product, and services, like the **Beck family, owners of Paninos Restaurant**, prepare a hot breakfast of biscuits, sausage gravy, scrambled eggs and, fresh fruit for close to 600 grandparents!



I want to personally thank each and every one of you who contribute your time and effort to this event. I also know that my thanks are not only personal, but I know I speak on behalf of Liberty's staff and administration as well. You are integral to the exceptionalism of this event and this school.

One parent who volunteers her time and skills is **Amy Feist**...She beautifully captures the memories being made on Grandparents Day every year...I'd like to invite you to enjoy the memories she captured this year, both on Liberty's Facebook page and on Amy's photography business page, **Photos by Adell**:

LCCHS Facebook

photos: <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=oa.10153515604377901&type=1>

LCS Facebook

photos: <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=oa.10153515620257901&type=1>

Photos by Adell LCS: <http://www.photosbyadell.com/Other/Liberty-Grandparents-Day/n-inbpwj/>

Photos by Adell LCHS: <http://www.photosbyadell.com/Other/Liberty-Grandparents-Day-LCHS-/n-W85Gjp/>

I would also like to extend an invitation to all families at Liberty to continue to volunteer. If you have never volunteered at Liberty because of work, scheduling, younger siblings, etc... Please consider it in the future. There are numerous ways to contribute to your child's education.

Volunteering not only helps the staff and administrators, it makes a huge impact on your children. A child who knows their parent is actively involved in their school as well as their individual education takes pride in their own development and performs better in school and socially.

Volunteering is also a great social opportunity for parents. It is a great feeling to know other parents in the school and to have a common goal to make the best learning environment for our children. I cherish the friendships I have made amongst Liberty families and the network that has developed with my fellow volunteers.

I feel it is an extension of our family. Having fellow parents I can contact or who can contact me for the infinite things that parents and children may need in the course of their education and upbringing...

Another incredibly important annual event that occurs every spring is the Spring Gala. This event is critical to the school as a fundraiser. It is also planned, organized, and put on by parents. This year, the Gala parent committee and the Grandparents Day parent committee agreed to help one another with our events.

This is an example of Liberty parents working together to create an amazing education for our children. If you have never attended The Spring Gala, please put it on your bucket list! You simply must witness what Liberty parents can achieve when we work together! It is truly a phenomenal event and will give you a great appreciation for the Liberty volunteer community...

I encourage parents to keep up on the Monday Notes newsletters and see how you can help with this amazing event as well as attend. It is a fun, exciting evening that has enormous impact on what we are able to financially provide our children at Liberty.

This Volunteer Appreciation Week, know that, as parent volunteers, you are appreciated more than can be expressed. Just look at your child's amazing learning and

educational growth and be inspired to continue to volunteer for your child, other children, yourself, and Liberty's educators.

From one parent to another, be willing, of your own free will to make an imprint on the soul of the children of Liberty by giving any time you can...and from one volunteer to another, thank you for all you have done to make the event I chair an enormous success, and from one volunteer to Liberty Common, I appreciate the opportunity you have given me to be a part of my child's educational success.

Erin Mihulka
Parent and Grandparents Day Planning Committee Chairperson