

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**APRIL 4, 2016**

## **HARFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS EARNS \$900,000 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER GRANT**

*Vikings After School Team (VAST) now in place at Magnolia Middle School*

Magnolia Middle School, in partnership with the Y of Central Maryland, now offers the Vikings After School Team (VAST). The afterschool program, which includes 60 students from grades six, seven and eight, runs Monday through Thursday during the school year from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m.

The Magnolia Middle School community is committed to the “whole child” and understands that academic success is related to enriching the mind, body and spirit of each child. The VAST afterschool program builds academic success while also strengthening the entire child by providing age- and developmentally-appropriate programming in the areas of social, emotional and youth development.

The program is funded through the Maryland State Department of Education’s 21st Century Community Learning Center grant. The purpose of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers is to create community learning centers that provide students with opportunities to complement their regular academic program. The awarded grant is over \$300,000 per school year, for three years.

Students in the afterschool program are engaged in a variety of activities, including reading and math intensives and other cultural and socially enriching projects. Activities focus on character education, with an emphasis on respect, caring, honesty and responsibility. At the start of the school year, students select an interest-based service learning project that they plan and implement over the year. Through bi-weekly reflection sessions, students are able to fine-tune skills for civic engagement.

“Anything we can do to extend opportunities for our students is a benefit,” said Laurie Namey, Harford County Public Schools supervisor of equity and cultural proficiency and the Century Community Learning Center Grant manager. “What the team at Magnolia Middle School did to maximize and amplify the program just made it that much better. It’s been a pleasure watching the students get engaged and excited about learning!”

To maximize opportunities for the students, partnerships have been established with numerous agencies who are committed to providing staff, resources, and equipment to ensure the success of the program.

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Among the special afterschool activities planned for the school year are trips to the Ward Y Center, where students will have the opportunity to swim, climb the rock wall, and participate in gym activities. A trip to Chesapeake Therapeutic Riding is also scheduled to allow for students to participate in teambuilding and empowerment workshops.

In addition, several parent workshops will be held this spring for participating families. Two of the workshops, "Roadmap to Success" and "Rethinking Summer," will be held at the Windsor Valley Community Center. The other, "Who are you anyway? Understanding Your Child's Personality to Minimize Conflict," will be held at Magnolia Middle School.

"Already, we have seen a positive impact for our students and our families," said Magnolia Middle School Principal Melissa Mickey. "Recently, I asked a student how he was able to improve his grades. He immediately attributed the improvement to the VAST program!"

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