



Montgomery Blair High School Parent ♦Teacher ♦ Student ♦ Association

# BLAZER

Volume 14 Issue 1

September/October 2008

Dear Blair Families:

We are off to another exciting school year at Montgomery Blair. On Thursday, August 21, we had approximately 350 freshmen and parents attend the ninth-grade barbeque and parent meeting. On Friday, August 22, approximately 450 freshmen attended the ninth-grade orientation where they met staff, Student Government Association staff, and administration, and participated in a tour. We ended the ninth-grade orientation with an ice cream social in the Student Activity Center before boarding the school buses. Ms. Verdejo, administrator; Mrs. Blaha, ninth-grade academy lead teacher; and the ninth-grade team leaders and staff designed an informative orientation for students, which should have made the transition to high school a little easier.

It was a noticeable difference just having ninth-graders in the building, but we have this practice as a way to lessen the anxiety for many of our new students. In addition, we held an orientation for students new to Blair. These students met Ms. Johnson, resource counselor, and Mr. Tulay, academy coordinator, and participated in a tour of the building. We hope to continue this practice for all students new to Blair.

Once again, a special thank you goes to the Parent-Teacher-Students Association and the parent volunteers for preparing for the opening of the school and the work that was done during the pre-service days with staff. We appreciate the work of the volunteers who assisted us with the summer mailing, student schedules, IDs, and parent handbook. We could not complete the work that we do to open school without your assistance, and we thank you for your acts of kindness. In addition, we appreciate the annual breakfast that you prepare for us during the pre-service week. This is one of the highlights during the week.

On Tuesday, August 26, it was great to see the return of students who appeared to be focused and ready for the challenge of a new school year. There were a lot of hugs, high-fives, screams, and other expressions of excitement—what a nice way to start the school year. On Thursday, August 28, our visitors were Dr. Heath Morrison, community superintendent; Ms. Bronnda Mills, director of school performance; and Ms. Chrisandra Richardson, director of the Department of Academic Support Initiatives. We visited classes and talked about the many successes and accomplishments of our students and staff.

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**Montgomery Blair High School on the Web at [www.mbhs.edu](http://www.mbhs.edu)**

## PTSA Presidents Corner: Welcome Back to Blair

As we begin the school year, I would like to welcome you back to Blair. I am sure that you have already begun to fill your calendar with school-related activities, but I encourage you to make time for the PTSA. The PTSA offers many opportunities to get involved with the Blair community, and I hope that you will take advantage of them.

There are many issues that we as a community need to be concerned with this year. For example, over the summer the issue of Blair's graduation venue came up again. Although at this moment it seems that Blair will be allowed to hold its graduation at Comcast Center, we need to watch future developments. In addition, Blair is in the second year of a monitoring program due to its failure to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals. (At the time that I am writing this, we do not know if Blair made AYP last year). Finally, the tight MCPS budget has made meeting these and other challenges much more difficult.

To meet these challenges, Blair needs the help of the entire school community, especially the parents. Here are some of the many activities parent volunteers did last fall:

- Served as "unchaperones" at the Blair homecoming dance, checking coats and guarding external doors to ensure our students have a safe and fun dance
- Stuffed envelopes for multiple mailings to Blair families regarding interims, AYP, MSAs, Back-to-School Night, and the various grade-level meetings
- Answered phones in the office
- Brought food for staff appreciation days
- Attended meetings at Blair, MCCPTA, the BOE, and other venues and reported on issues of interest to the Blair community
- Helped on the many PTSA liaison committees

There are many more opportunities. We especially need volunteers to help with Painless Fundraising and to chair the After Prom and pedestrian safety committees. For further information see Beth Martin's article on page 3 of this issue, or contact her at elizbmartin@gmail.com.

Again, welcome back and please consider making time for the PTSA. Both Blair and your families will be better for it.

*Bob Gillette, PTSA Co-President*

## MBHS PTSA Officers 2008-09

### Co-Presidents

Robert Gillette	301-706-0230	debandbob2@verizon.net
Pete Lafen	301-439-9709	pmlafen@aol.com

### VP Administration

Howard Kohn	301-270-8187	kohn@erols.com
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### VP Academic Achievement

Ron McClain	301-891-3650	rmccclain@parkmont.org
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### Recording Secretary

Sudha Murthy	301-610-1429	smurthy55@gmail.com
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### Treasurer

Walter Mulbry	301-270-0472	wmulbry@starpower.net
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### MCCPTA Delegate

Chih Chow	301-793-6221	chihchow@aol.com
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### Cluster Coordinators

Bladimir Duenas	301- 593-8383	d_bladimir@hotmail.com
Susan Fleck	301-270-1960	susan_fleck@yahoo.com

## Critical Gaps in Volunteer Corps: Painless Fundraising, After Prom, Pedestrian Safety

Blair has a huge gap in its otherwise impressive volunteer corps. For the past two years MCPS has recognized Blair for reporting the most volunteer hours of any high school in the county—and we're well on our way to winning that recognition again this year. But right now we need chairs for Painless Fundraising (Safe-way, Giant, etc.), two additional After Prom co-chairs (we have one of three), and a Pedestrian Safety chair.

It's not unusual for PTSAs to struggle to find parents who can commit to these kinds of important positions. That's especially true in a community like ours, where most of the parents work fulltime and already have family schedules crammed with carpool commitments, extra-curricular activities, and community events. The Blair community's commitment to the school is evidenced by the hundreds of volunteers who commit thousands of hours every year. Those numbers include a cadre of a dozen *alumni* parents who staff the PTSA tables at Back-to-School Night each year so the parents of current students could attend classes. Now *that's* commitment!

But the gaps we're looking at this year are significant:

**Painless Fundraising** — Last year our long-time and very successful painless fundraising chairman (whose son transferred to Northwood this year) helped the Blair community raise \$14,000 through the various programs she oversaw. That money allowed the PTSA to give unplanned end-of-the-year grants to each of the academies and still end the year with a comfortable surplus that will go a long way toward funding this year's initiatives. This position can be divided among several chairs.

**After Prom**, of course, is one of the PTSA's most significant projects. This truly grass-roots effort provides a safe, drug- and alcohol-free, and close-to-home venue for our juniors and se-

niors to celebrate after the prom. We're not only preventing risky behavior by our kids, we're probably saving lives by staging it. But pulling it off "takes a village" and right now we need two co-chairs to join the one we already have.

**Pedestrian Safety** is the committee that brought us *two* drop-off points for our students: the original one on Colesville Road plus the new one on University Boulevard. Having two drop-off points not only makes life more convenient for the parents, faculty, and students who come to Blair every morning; it also enhances the safety of everyone who drives through Four Corners. This year the committee's priorities include lobbying the county to clear the brush and debris from the side of campus next to the Beltway. This has been an eyesore as well as an area of attraction for the homeless for several years.

I won't sugarcoat the jobs. All require huge commitments of time and energy tempered with a dose of tact and patience. But the good news is that new After Prom co-chairs will be joining a veteran who will mentor them in all aspects of the planning. The new Painless Fundraising chair or chairs, as well as our new Pedestrian Safety chair, will be mentored by the old chairs, who still live in the community.

If you can step up to fill one of these positions, please contact me at [elizbmartin@gmail.com](mailto:elizbmartin@gmail.com) or 301-587-8404.

*Beth Martin*

*MBHS PTSA Volunteer Coordinator*

### Silver Chips Online

<http://silverchips.mbhs.edu/>

The best source for Montgomery Blair High School news, as well as national and local news stories, from the students' viewpoint.

*Mr. Williams' letter, from page 1*

We ended our week with some additional excitement when we experienced a power outage on Friday, August 27, at the beginning of A-lunch. We were able to feed all students during both lunches, and the cafeteria staff members were incredible during this emergency. Also, the students responded to this emergency in a very mature manner, and the number of staff volunteers in the cafeteria, hallways, and stairways really assisted us to maintain a calm atmosphere. I cannot tell you how many students asked me when I was sending everyone home early. The power returned around noon that day.

Back-to-School Night (BTSN) was held on Tuesday, September 9, and 1,021 parents and guardians attended. Although BTSN is a long night for staff and parents, we look forward to meeting all our parents and guardians and continuing the home-school partnership. To prepare for BTSN, there was a demand from staff to participate in the training sessions on the Promethean boards on Monday, September 8, and we will continue to train staff on the new technology that exists in our building. We are still learning how to operate the Promethean boards, a type of technology that will enhance the teaching and learning in the classrooms.

Our athletics program already has a lot to celebrate and students have been in many wonderful activities, such as the Katrina 5-K Run, the design of the new Silver Spring Library, and the National Merit Scholars program. We are very optimistic about this year but recognize that we all are doing more with less. By the time you receive this newsletter, I hope to have last year's results on the High School Assessments/Adequate Yearly Progress, and I hope we can celebrate our successes for the hard work that students, parents, and staff demonstrated over the years. We continue to need your support for the success of Montgomery Blair.

Continue to stay involved!

*Darryl L. Williams, Principal*

**Fine Arts High Notes**

The Fine Arts Department is off to another high-energy year! Marching Band, Jazz Band, and choruses have performed at various venues; InToneNation, our student-run a cappella group, entertained parents in the halls at Back-to-School Night; and art classes are hard at work on projects. Our two new departmental offerings for 2008–2009, Art and Culture, taught by Mrs. Crowder, and The Business of Music, taught by Mrs. Josey, are generating lots of enthusiasm. Be sure to check the showcases around school in the near future for student work displays.

Congratulations to Christopher Hsing for winning an Honor Award, the top prize for high school students in the Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Institute of Architect's Art+Architecture Contest. Not only is Christopher a budding artist/architect, he is also an outstanding cellist in Blair's symphonic orchestra.

**Instrumental Music News**

Welcome back to school. Our instrumental music staff, Mr. Dustin Doyle and Ms. Michelle Roberts, and our wonderfully talented music students are working hard. Our parent group, the Blair Band and Orchestra Patrons (BBOPS), is busy offering staff and students both muscle power and financial backing.

Work started early for our instrumental music program students, who began practice with marching band co-directors Ms. Roberts and Mr. Doyle at marching band camp in August. The theme of this year's halftime show is "Performance Spectacles," and the marching band will be performing songs from Cirque du Soleil, *West Side Story*, and Riverdance.

The marching band welcomes Matt Stover as the new color guard instructor and Joe Viviano as the new percussion instructor. Matt has ex-

*continued on page 5*

*Instrumental Music, from page 4*

perience working with competitive color guards in western Maryland, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Joe comes to us from Tennessee and has helped Blair create a pit percussion section for the marching band.

The Marching Band performed at the Town of Kensington Labor Day Parade on Monday, September 1. The Color Guard looked especially polished in their brand new uniforms. A tremendous "Thank you" goes to Ms. Sally Taber, who helped transport instruments to the parade and who also provided bottled water.

Later in the year, all of our bands, orchestras, and ensembles, will perform at concerts in school and at festivals and other venues throughout the county. Come and hear them play! Please visit the Blair music department website at <http://finearts.mbhs.edu/musicdept/musicindex.htm> for a full calendar and other information.

Our parent volunteers play a vital role in the success of our music program. The Marching Band has an immediate need for parent volunteers to help with equipment, uniforms, and transportation.

BBOPS volunteers and students have already started running a concession stand at FedEx field during Redskins home football games. Thanks to their efforts, we were able to raise over \$10,000 last year. Contact Dorothy Lee at [dlee@dedekind.net](mailto:dlee@dedekind.net) or (301) 270-4879 for more information.

The Blair community is looking forward to another strong year for our instrumental music program.

## **CAP Tenth-Graders Named 'O Ambassadors'**

The tenth-grade CAP students were chosen to represent Oprah Winfrey's O Ambassadors Club, a new global philanthropic initiative

focused on raising money and awareness for various regions of China. Students are encouraged to plan and host fundraising events throughout the year to help combat poverty and aid in education, health, and sustainable development projects.

Throughout the school year, students will also be posting blogs and video feeds on the O Ambassadors website (<http://oambassadors.org/global>). CAP is joining forces with the SGA and Students for Global Responsibility in its efforts.

For more information, or to help CAP with this project, please contact Anne Cullen at [Anne\\_W\\_Cullen@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Anne_W_Cullen@mcpsmd.org).

## **Casting Call for Blair Drama Boosters**

Many of you know that for many years John Kaluta has sponsored the Stage Crew at Blair. Mr. Kaluta has recently informed Kelly O'Connor, director of the Blair Players, that he will not be sponsoring the stage crew this year. Ms. O'Connor has already begun actively recruiting within the Blair staff for one or more people to fill Mr. Kaluta's shoes.

Whoever replaces him as Stage Crew sponsor will likely need lots of support from the Blair community. The Blair Drama Boosters will work with Ms. O'Connor and the new Stage

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### **Montgomery Blair PTSA Blazer**

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for the November-December issue.

***Casting Call, from page 5***

Crew sponsor to identify places where interested volunteers can help.

The Drama Boosters met in late September to discuss supporting the drama program at Blair. If you could not make the meeting or would like more information, please drop me a note at [sij1@cornell.edu](mailto:sij1@cornell.edu). Thanks for your support.

*Steve Jackson*

**Smart Sacks Club Fights Childhood Hunger**

Smart Sacks is a program that gives a backpack full of kid-friendly nutritious snacks to elementary school children at risk of hunger, so that they have food to eat over the weekend when there is no school lunch or breakfast. Each backpack contains 10 to 12 nutritious and easy-to-prepare items.

The Smart Sacks Club meets every Wednesday at 2:30 p.m. in the Media Center. We fill backpacks with snacks and take them over to our designated elementary school. Every Monday the elementary students return the empty backpacks and the cycle begins anew.

I have requested gently used backpacks (in order not to draw attention to the elementary student) and received a few. I could really use some more backpacks. I am in partnership with Manna Food of Rockville, which supplies most of the food, but I always need more. Items that I could use: canned tuna, crackers (Ritz, Saltine, or others that come in a "sleeve"), peanut butter, macaroni and cheese, oatmeal (individual packets), pudding cups, fruit cups, individual applesauce cups, juice boxes, granola bars, soup, rice, raisins, and nuts.

We are also going to add school supplies as the year goes by, so if you have extra pens, pencils, erasers, etc., please donate them as well. One last request: We would like to occasionally include a paperback book; if you have any gently

read elementary-level books please send those in too. Thanks.

*Ilene Catzva, Media Assistant*

**Painless Fundraising Via Shopping at Snider's**

Please continue saving the receipts from Snider's Super Foods that you have been saving over the summer and keep saving through this school year. Snider's, a wonderful family-run grocery store just inside the Beltway off Georgia Avenue (1936 Seminary Road, Silver Spring, 301-589-324, [www.sniderfoods.com](http://www.sniderfoods.com)), gives Blair cash for 1% of the total cash register receipts we submit.

Just drop your receipts in the Snider's grocery bag at a PTSA meeting, or send them to the Blair main office. All 2008 Snider's receipts have to be turned in by February to count toward our total. Last year the Blair PTSA earned more than \$1,000 from Snider's. See the link below for more information on the Snider's receipt program and Painless Fundraising through Giant, Safeway, etc.

Learn more at <http://ptsa.mbhs.edu/committees/fundraising/painless.shtml>.

Thanks in advance for your support of Blair!

*Carol Muskin, [cmuskin@gmail.com](mailto:cmuskin@gmail.com)*

*Ernest Weisman, [ernieweisman@hotmail.com](mailto:ernieweisman@hotmail.com)*

*Co-coordinators for Painless Fundraising through Snider's Receipts*

**Why Join the Blair PTSA?**

By joining the PTSA you show that you believe in quality education. When parents are involved, students perform better in school. They achieve higher grades, test scores, and attendance rates, and they are more likely to graduate.

Did you know that the Blair PTSA funds a "mini-grant" program to support student-

*continued on page 7*

*Why Join? from page 6*

teacher-designed projects that benefit the school? It raises money to support school improvements, such as the water fountain for students on the athletic fields and translation equipment for non-English-speaking parents. Blair PTSA leaders advocate before the Montgomery County Council and school board for improved staffing and funding for Blair, and for other policies that affect our school and community.

Every member of the MBHS community is a potential PTSA member and, together, we can and will create a nurturing, healthy community at Blair to improve our children's education and future! Membership applications, in English and Spanish, can be found on the following pages and at [http://ptsa.mbhs.edu/committees/membership/%2020082009\\_MBHS\\_PTSA\\_ENG.pdf](http://ptsa.mbhs.edu/committees/membership/%2020082009_MBHS_PTSA_ENG.pdf). For more information, call Maureen Turman at 301-270-0895.

**Blazer Fans: Save Money With an Athletic Event Season Pass**

Available at the concession stand during home games, or email [BlairBoosters@aol.com](mailto:BlairBoosters@aol.com)

**Lend a Hand to Blair Boosters**

The Blair Athletic Booster Club is an enthusiastic group of parents interested in supporting all Blair's athletic programs. Our need for volunteers is great—especially in the concession stand during home games. Please watch for our weekly announcements on the Blair email list and answer the call for volunteers. Helping in the concession stand provides a great opportunity to meet other parents, and it is a major source of funds that support all athletic teams and programs at MBHS.

One of our goals is to increase the visibility of athletics and encourage attendance at

home games. Season passes, team websites, parent liaisons, and home-game announcers are some of the enhancements we hope

will bring Blazer fans to the stands. For more information about the Blair Athletic Boosters, please contact Patsy Hedrick at 301-681-7325 or [BlairBoosters@aol.com](mailto:BlairBoosters@aol.com).

**Blair High School PTSA Annual Citrus Sale Fundraiser / Gran Venta de Frutas Cítricas: Recaudación de Fondos**

THE CITRUS SALE offers fresh Florida Indian River citrus: Navel oranges, red grapefruit, tangelos, and Hamlin (juice) oranges. You can order two-fifths of a bushel (about 20 pounds of fruit) or four-fifths of a bushel (about 40 pounds of fruit).

FRUIT FOR SHEPHERD'S TABLE: You can help our community by buying fruit for Shepherd's Table in Silver Spring. Indicate the number of boxes you would like to donate to Shepherd's Table and the PTSA will deliver them for you.

DISTRIBUTION: Fruit will be available for pickup on Saturday, December 6, 2008, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., at the Blair stadium concession stand on University Boulevard.

**ORDER DEADLINE: Monday, November 10, 2008**

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Annie Rohlin 301-270-8235, Amy Wasserstrom 301-270-8022, Becky Smith 301-431-4355, or [BlairCitrus@gmail.com](mailto:BlairCitrus@gmail.com). Download an order form at <http://ptsa.mbhs.edu/committees/fundraising/citrus.shtml>.

TIPO DE FRUTAS: Todas son cítricas frescas de Florida. Naranjas de ombligo, toronjas rosadas, tangelos (toronja-mandarinas) y naranja Hamlin (para hacer jugo.) Están disponibles en cantidades de dos quintales (20 libras) o cuatro quintales (40 libras.)

FRUTAS PARA LAS PERSONAS SIN TECHO (HOMELESS): Ud. puede ayudar a las personas sin techo comprando una caja de frutas para el comedor "Shepard's Table" en Silver Spring. La PTSA se encargará de entregarlos al comedor para personas sin techo.

DISTRIBUCIÓN: Las frutas se entregarán el sábado 6 de diciembre 2008 de las 9:00 a.m. hasta las 3:00 p.m. en el estadio de Blair.

**ULTIMO DÍA PARA ORDENAR FRUTAS: lunes 10 de noviembre de 2008**

PARA MÁS INFORMACIÓN: Jeff Hopkins 301-431-4355 o [BlairCitrus@gmail.com](mailto:BlairCitrus@gmail.com). Para el formato al lado: <http://ptsa.mbhs.edu/committees/fundraising/citrus.shtml>.



# BLAZER

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Silver Spring, MD 20901-2451

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**Welcome, new MBHS families!**

## PTSA Calendar

- October 6 • PTSA Board of Directors meeting; 7:00 p.m., Teachers' Lounge
- October 9 • Yom Kippur—NO SCHOOL
- October 17 • MTSA Convention—NO SCHOOL
- October 21 • PTSA Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Media Center
- October 29 • Informational meeting about applying to Magnet, 7:00 p.m, Gym
- October 31 • End of first marking period
- November 3 • Professional Day—NO SCHOOL
- November 4 • Election Day—NO SCHOOL
- November 7 • Homecoming game
- November 10 • Citrus orders due
- November 11 • Report cards distributed
- November 18 • PTSA Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Media Center (Board of Directors, 7:00 p.m.)
- December 1 • PTSA Board of Directors meeting, 7:00 p.m., Teachers' Lounge
- December 6 • Citrus Sale distribution, 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m., Blair Stadium concession stand
- December 16 • 16 PTSA Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Media Center

## Blazer Home Games

- October 10 • Football v. Sherwood, 6:30 p.m.
- October 11 • JV Football v. Sherwood, 10:00 a.m.
- October 13 • Field Hockey v. Walter Johnson, 3:30 p.m.  
JV Field Hockey v. Walter Johnson, 5:00 p.m.
- October 14 • Boys Soccer v. Walter Johnson, 5:00 p.m.  
Girls Soccer v. Walter Johnson, 7:00 p.m.
- October 15 • Field Hockey v. Northwood, 3:30 p.m.  
JV Boys Soccer v. Walter Johnson, 3:30 p.m.  
JV Field Hockey v. Northwood, 5:00 p.m.  
JV Girls Soccer v. Walter Johnson, 5:30 p.m.  
JV Girls Volleyball v. Walter Johnson, 5:30 p.m.  
Girls Volleyball v. Walter Johnson, 6:30 p.m.
- October 16 • JV Boys Soccer v. Wheaton, 5:00 p.m.  
Boys Soccer v. Wheaton, 7:00 p.m.
- October 17 • Field Hockey v. Springbrook, 3:30 p.m.  
JV Girls Volleyball v. Churchill, 5:30 p.m.  
Girls Volleyball v. Churchill, 6:30 p.m.
- October 21 • Girls Soccer v. Northwood, 7:00 p.m.
- October 27 • Girls Volleyball v. Kennedy, 6:00 p.m.
- October 30 • JV Football v. Damascus, 5:30 p.m.
- October 31 • Football v. Damascus, 6:30 p.m.