



# Isaac Dickson PTO News

## Spring 2019

### INSTALLATION OF OUR NEW SHADE STRUCTURES

### IN THIS ISSUE

You are already a member of the Parent-Teacher Organization. Why not take on a leadership role next year?

Thanks to everyone who has helped us with our social events, fundraisers, construction projects and meetings during this past year. We've had two school-wide potlucks, a Halloween dance (with the Bright IDEAS crew-see page 2!), a big, cold race, some general meetings to learn about things going on at our school and monthly PTO work sessions. Your participation helped make all that happen.

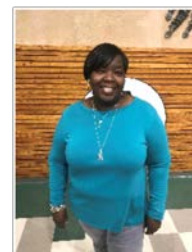
Most recently, thanks to everyone who helped get the shade structures up over spring break and shortly thereafter. Thanks especially to Pepi Acebo for taking on so many of the organizational aspects and being on site during all phases of construction, to Brian Monteleone for providing us with a helpful outline of the necessary construction steps and with good contacts for the hired work, and to Brian Lemmel for his efforts executing "the big dig" and installing the rebar. Thanks also to all the parent volunteers who turned out to install the structures on a Saturday Garden Work Day coordinated by Joan Pinegar.

Over the summer we will have (at least) one more construction project on

our campus as the PTO partners with the local Audubon chapter to install a chimney swift tower like the one pictured at the end of this newsletter. The tower will provide a nesting and roosting space for these unique birds. Stay tuned for more details in the fall.

All of our projects and social events follow directly from input from our great teachers and staff as well as our Dickson families. As we move into summer we still have a number of leadership roles open and we want to reach out broadly and encourage you (or someone you know at Isaac Dickson) to consider taking on a leadership role next year.

There are many ways to help out. Any leadership role can be as big or small as you make it. While there are many official roles to take on, our outgoing presidents will still be at the school to ensure that our major fundraisers take place as planned so these events will not require much effort on your part, but we need new officers to take over the reins of the PTO. This is a great way to learn about our school and school district and work with your fellow Dickson families. You can reach out to us at [isaacdicksonelementarypto@gmail.com](mailto:isaacdicksonelementarypto@gmail.com).



### Teachers of the Year

Marti Sullivan (AIG Specialist) and Keena Proctor (Instructional Assistant) were selected by their colleagues as the 2018-19 Teachers of the Year for Isaac Dickson Elementary.

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### Gray Bats near our Campus

Some Gray Bats have moved in as neighbors

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# Bright IDEAS

## Isaac Dickson Elementary After School

### **An interview with Ms. Penny Lewis, Director**

PTO: What year did Bright IDEAS begin?

PL: *We started with a 6-week trial in the spring of 2012. We had all teacher volunteers offering clubs and a small paid staff.*

PTO: How long have you been teaching in Asheville City Schools and what motivated you to start an after school program?

PL: *This is my 10th year. I saw a need to develop a sense of community after school and a need for a safe, engaging, structured environment for our kids to make new friends, learn, grow, and have fun.*

PTO: Were there any other similar programs in ACS at other schools prior to Bright IDEAS? Was there any resistance to starting an after school program at IDES?

PL: *There wasn't anything similar in ACS. Initially, there was a definite reluctance to allow me to move forward with the idea, maybe because it was uncharted territory. I was put off for more than a year without explanation. Finally, I just went ahead with the plan for the trial to see if it could work.*

PTO: What sorts of things did Bright IDEAS students do after school prior to having an in house option?

PL: *Many were bused around the city to other programs or just went home.*

PTO: How many students participate in the program now?

PL: *About 250 students each year participate in Bright IDEAS through elective clubs and/or Explorers' Club.*

PTO: How does that compare to the first year?

PL: *That first session, we had about 60 students.*

PTO: What is the governing and oversight structure for Bright IDEAS?

PL: *As the director, I make the decisions on programming, scheduling, staffing, and all day to day operations. We have a Parent Advisory Council that oversees the program, helping to set policy and financial decisions, and ultimately, all decisions are approved by Brad Johnson. Monthly financial reports are sent to ACS' central office.*

PTO: Who hires all of the instructors and how do you find them for each session?

PL: *I place help wanted ads at the beginning of each summer and also get recommendations from networking sources. The assistant director and I interview all qualified candidates, and I make the final decision. Then, candidates are background checked through ACS HR department.*

PTO: What sorts of things has the Bright IDEAS program supported in addition to the after school program



(e.g., dances, cob oven, shade structure).

PL: *All of the above plus purchased the new picnic tables, contributed 2 years of our VISTA volunteer, EOG tutors, inflatable for field day, yearbook shortfall, 3D printer, and ice cream for Experience Dickson Night.*

(Note from the PTO: Bright IDEAS is contributing about \$3400 to the overall cost of installing shade. Combined with \$7000 from a grant obtained by the PTO, this allowed for two shade installations)

PTO: Is there anything else about Bright IDEAS that you think would be helpful for parents to know?

PL: *Almost 50% of our daily attendance are students who qualify for free/reduced lunch.*

(Note from the PTO: Students who qualify for free lunch can attend the afterschool "Explorers' Club" every day at no cost).

## Feeding the Family Right - An interview with Ms. Pearly Hampton, Cafeteria Manager

PTO: How many years have you worked in Asheville City Schools?

*PH: I've been with ACS for 13 years now, 9 of them at Isaac Dickson. I started in 2001 part-time at Claxton Elementary.*

PTO: How many students come through the cafeteria in the morning for breakfast?

*PH: We served about 100 breakfasts each day, including for the pre-K classroom, which is about 18.*

PTO: How about at lunchtime?

*PH: We serve anywhere from 170 to 220 students depending on the day. The biggest numbers are on Friday, which is pizza day.*

PTO: How do you plan for each week's menu?

*PH: Our menus are done by the director 2-3 weeks ahead. Orders for the school are placed every Thursday for two weeks ahead.*

PTO: What time do you need to get to school?

*PH: I get here at 6 am and I'm the first one to arrive. Ms. Melissa, who is also full-time, comes in at 6:30 am. Ms. Jakia comes in at 9 and Ms. Carolyn comes in at 10 am.*

PTO: What schools did your daughter go to and what is she doing now?

*PH: My daughter went to Claxton, Asheville Middle and she graduated from Asheville High last year. She's now a student at Mars Hill University*

*majoring in Math, with a minor in Business.*

PTO: What is your favorite part of the job?

*PH: The smiles on the kids' faces, seeing them out in public, and knowing you're making a difference.*

PTO: What is the biggest challenge to your job? And how late do you usually stay?

*PH: Making sure everything is ready in time. We have students come in for lunch by 10:45 am. It takes a lot of planning and paperwork to make sure everything is in place. I try to leave by 3 pm, if possible.*

PTO: Have you noticed any changes over the years in how things are run?

*PH: On the positive side, we have a new Nutrition Director (Janette Broda). She has introduced new menu items. And there are now seasonal foods as part of the new menu items. On the challenging side, we have had a time shift where our Kindergartners now come first at 10:45 am (2 classes). Our protocol is now to offer rather than serve, which means our littlest friends have to make a choice about what options they will take. Unfortunately, we have to ensure that they pick options that cover all of the food groups. They don't necessarily have to eat all of the items, but they do have to be on their plate. Since we are offering rather than serving, it can be time consuming to get the Kindergartners to make the choice and keep the line moving!*

PTO: Are there any other thoughts that you would like to share?

*PH: I do feel like the cafeteria staff get a lot of support from the rest of the Isaac*

*Dickson staff and I feel included in everything.*

As a final note from the PTO--Ms. Pearly was recognized last year with an #THEACSWAY award. Her citation read

*As Isaac Dickson's Cafeteria Manager, Ms. Pearly Hampton goes above and beyond to ensure the school's lunchroom not only dishes up healthy, tasty meals but is a place where students feel welcomed. In fact, according to Ms. Cobb (our former Assistant Principal), "EVERY single day she greets every person who enters the cafeteria with a smile, a hello and a word of encouragement." Indeed, her upbeat attitude and inspiring work ethic have earned her a place in the hearts of all Isaac Dickson students and staff members. Ms. Hampton, thank you for being the perfect team player and promoting a positive environment both in the kitchen, cafeteria and throughout the school.*

### LEADING THE HEART OF THE SCHOOL



*Ms. Pearly Hampton on the last day of the 2017-18 school year = extra special smile?*

## Our Gray Bat Neighbors

The PTO spoke with Dr. Joy O’Keefe of Indiana University about our gray bats. She leads the Center for Bat Outreach at Indiana University ([isubatcenter.org](http://isubatcenter.org)). She and her colleagues have been studying the Gray Bats in this area and on our school campus.

Dr. O’Keefe shared with us that Gray Bats roost in the warm season under bridges and in culverts in and around our school grounds. They returned to the area around our school earlier this spring after overwintering in Tennessee. The bat researchers have tracked the gray bat habits using radio collars. They catch them at their roost and place the collars on the bats, which eventually fall off. They have discovered that our Gray Bat neighbors hibernate during the winter in a cave near Newport, Tennessee and Dr. O’Keefe said that they have been fairing fairly well with respect to white nose syndrome. When they are here in the summer, they eat a variety of insects including mosquitos, mayflies, crane flies, house flies, moths and beetles.

Gray bats are long-lived creatures and may live up to 30 years. They give birth to one “pup” per year. When they forage for insects, they fly low just above the water’s surface. They have been tracked flying from near our campus all the way down the French Broad to Marshall and well south of town upstream on a single outing. They also hunt for insects above the small creek that runs along our driveway, which is why it is important to keep the creek clear of trash and invasive plants like kudzu.

### Are you a Batman or Batwoman?

*Guest Post by Will Harlan*

Bats are often associated with blood-sucking vampires and Halloween horror, but they aren’t the scary creatures they’ve been made out to be. They’re actually some of the most amazing creatures on the planet—and also some of the most endangered.

The forests surrounding Isaac Dickson Elementary are home to several species of bats, including the very rare and endangered gray bat (*Myotis grisescens*). Gray bats are around 3-4 inches long with all-gray fur. They hibernate for most of the winter, and then they emerge in spring and feed mainly on flying insects like mosquitoes.

Still scared of these aerial acrobats flitting overhead? Here are a few things you may not know about bats:

1. **Bats don’t want to suck your blood.** Of the 1,100 species of bats worldwide, only three consume blood, and they usually target cattle, not people. None of the three vampire bat species are found in the United States.

2. **Bats with rabies are incredibly rare.** 99 percent of rabies cases in the United States are from domestic dogs. Most bats do not carry or transmit rabies.
3. **Bats eat mosquitoes.** They can eat up to 1,200 mosquitoes in an hour. They are some of our best and safest non-toxic natural pest controls.
4. **Bats can use sound to see.** Bats often use echolocation to “see” in the dark. They emit high-pitched sounds and listen as the sound waves bounce off rocks, trees, and insects. The sound waves create a mental map to guide them as they fly.
5. **Bats fertilize plants and pollinate flowers.** Bat poop—called guano—is some of the richest fertilizer in the world, and over 300 plant species rely on bats to pollinate or disperse their seeds, including mangos and bananas.
6. **Bats live in colonies.** Baby bats drink milk from their mothers, and they live together in colonies of hundreds to thousands of bats.
7. **Bats are the world’s only flying mammal.** Other mammals can glide or parachute, but bats are the only mammals capable of sustained flight.
8. **Bats need our help.** Deforestation and disease are

wiping out bats. Many species of bats are endangered.

In addition to gray bats, other bats utilize the forests surrounding our school, including tri-colored bats and little brown bats. Here are a few ways to help bats:

1. Install bat boxes at our school or in our neighborhoods.
2. Avoid using pesticides.
3. Keep creeks clean and free of pollution. The creeks on Dickson’s school grounds are choked with debris and invasive plants.
4. Protect bat habitat, especially forests and caves. Encourage the U.S. Forest Service to permanently protect more forests as part of its Pisgah-Nantahala National Forest Plan being written this year. A quick, free, and easy way to be a voice for bats and other endangered species is to join I Heart Pisgah at [iheartpisgah.org](http://iheartpisgah.org).

Most importantly, we can celebrate bats rather than fear them. They spread seeds, eat mosquitoes and other bugs, and keep our ecosystems healthy. And bats are mammals just like us. Now more than ever, we need Batmen and Batwomen like you to help protect them.

# Isaac Dickson Elementary Teachers of the Year!

*From May Castello (our retiring Kindergarten teacher who will be greatly missed!)*

**Keena Proctor** (Ms. Keena) has taught at Dickson for 25 years. She is our 2019-20 Instructional Assistant of the Year. This is the 3rd time she has



*Keena Proctor – Isaac Dickson Instructional Assistant of the Year*

been honored with this recognition. She has worked at every grade level except 4th! Ms. Keena loves the excitement of watching kids learn. She loves seeing little faces work so hard to learn something new and finally get it! Ms. Keena is a familiar beloved face all around the school and town. She sees former students and parents everywhere and is always greeted with a hug and a smile and a "Ms. KEENA!" She works hard every day to help every child be their best self. Ms. Keena is truly a gift to our school community!

**Ms. Sullivan** is in her 21st year of teaching. This is her 14th year with Asheville City Schools and her 11th year serving Isaac Dickson. Prior to becoming an AIG specialist, she was a classroom teacher in grades 3, 5, and

6. In her current role, she serves K-5 students through whole class enrichment, flexibly grouped ELA and math classes, flexibly scheduled lessons/seminars, and advanced reading and math classes for students with an identified need for advanced coursework. She supports teachers and parents with resources and strategies that build intellectual capacity through opportunities for higher level thinking. She is a member of the Dickson Equity Leadership Team and the Culturally Responsive Teaching Team. She is also a

graduate of the Mindful Schools Educator Essentials course. She is currently pursuing licensure in school leadership through Appalachian State as well as renewing her National Board Certification. She is the mother of two children, a sophomore son at UNC-Chapel Hill and a junior daughter at Asheville High. She is married to sci-fi/horror writer, Jake Bible.



*Marti Sullivan - AIG Specialist – Isaac Dickson and Asheville City Schools Teacher of the Year*

**Ms. Keena** was also asked to speak at the N.C. Association of Educators **Day of Action Rally** held on May 1 in Raleigh.

And **Ms. Sullivan** was selected as the **Asheville City Schools Teacher of the Year** on May 6! You can read the [press release here](#).

These are both big honors and we are fortunate to have so many dedicated and talented teachers at our school.



Believe it or not, we are already planning for the 2020 Hot Chocolate Races and we have our new logo. We'll be reaching out early in the next school year for your help with organizing the race. In the meantime, if you have a business or know of one that might want to be a race sponsor for the 13<sup>th</sup> Hot Chocolate 10k, please reach out to us now at [isaacdickson elementarypto@gmail.com](mailto:isaacdickson elementarypto@gmail.com).



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A Chimney Swift Tower like the one pictured above is being built for our campus for installation this summer.

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Please consider helping out next year with our parent-teacher group. This could be helping to organize a social event, working on communications, participating in our fundraisers or filling a need that you see would help build community at our school. We are still (and always!) looking for volunteers to help in these roles.

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