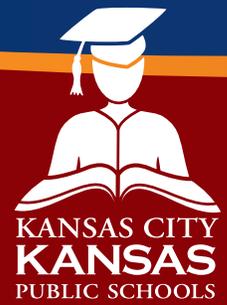


EDUCATION CONNECTION



NEWS FROM THE KANSAS CITY, KANSAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WINTER 2015

LISTEN TO THE POEM

STUDENTS PARTICIPATE
IN DISTRICT-WIDE
POETRY SLAMS

KCKPL MOBILE
LIBRARY COMING TO A
NEIGHBORHOOD NEAR YOU

THIRD GRADERS GIVE
EACH OTHER *REASONS
TO BELIEVE*



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MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



Dr. Cynthia Lane
Superintendent of Schools

“Nothing changes until something moves”
(Albert Einstein).

We understand Mr. Einstein was speaking to the laws of motion; however his words have great meaning to the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools, a school district that is

known for innovation and system-wide educational reform. We have learned that meaningful change happens when we are all working toward a clear goal supported by a thoughtfully developed plan.

A Clear Goal

In KCKPS our goal is clear. We are preparing *“each student to exit high school prepared for college and careers in a global society.”* To make the promise of “college and career prepared” a reality, the Board of Education established a focused plan that includes rigorous achievement targets for our schools. Our schools have, in turn, established growth and college ready targets for each student. Setting targets allows us to know if our students are on track and on time for success. When students are on track, we celebrate and push them forward. If a student is lagging behind, we work to provide the supports necessary to address the challenge.

Each Student Prepared

Researchers at Georgetown University have found that by the year 2020 in Kansas, 70 percent of good paying jobs will require training and credentials beyond a high school diploma. Today we are encouraging our high school students to take college classes and/or to complete industry-recognized technical credentials. Last year, 36 percent of our students graduated with college credit. For the graduating class of 2021, we are moving from “encouraging” to “expecting.” By 2021, KCKPS students are expected to graduate with their high school diploma plus at least one year of college completed, or an industry-recognized certification or credential, or at least a 21 on the

college entrance exam, the ACT. We refer to our plan as Diploma+. Our world is moving and changing. KCKPS students will be prepared.

Diploma+ Begins in Early Childhood

We begin Diploma+ with our youngest children who are preparing for kindergarten by developing pre-academic, language and social skills. Elementary students are advancing with rigorous academic studies, and will soon be participating in “capstone” projects to demonstrate academic and social preparedness for middle school. Middle school students are developing visions and plans for their futures by participating in college campus tours, visiting industries around the metro area, and learning about high demand careers through activities like “Career Jumping.”

Commitment and Collaboration are Essential

Imagine the power we have to impact life outcomes as we surround our children and youth with a unified message about the importance of graduating Diploma+. **We invite you to be part of Diploma+.** Here’s how:

- Become a mentor.
- Become involved in the “Caring for Kids” adopt-a-school program.
- Join our literacy movement, “Read Today, Lead Tomorrow.”
- Participate in “Career Jumping” or serve as a guest speaker during career days.
- Host students for a visit to your business or sponsor a college campus visit.
- Join our Diploma+ Advisory Board.
- Sponsor an intern, or provide real projects that our students could complete for your business.

To learn more about how to become involved, contact Lori Hewitt, Diploma+ specialist at lori.hewitt@kckps.org, or Tina Richardson, Student Services program specialist at tina.richardson@kckps.org.

Check out Dr. Cynthia Lane’s
blog, “It’s Up to Us” at
blog.kckps.org

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COMMUNICATIONS RESOURCES

Website www.kckps.org

Facebook [Kansas-City-Kansas-Public-Schools](https://www.facebook.com/Kansas-City-Kansas-Public-Schools)

Twitter [Twitter.com/kckschools](https://twitter.com/kckschools)

Superintendent's Blog, "It's Up to Us." Blog.kckps.org

KCKPS TV-18 Channel 18 or 98.18 on Time Warner Cable (in Wyandotte County)
Or Channel 145 on Google Fiber.

YouTube www.youtube.com/KCKPSTV

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WATCH FOR THE MOBILE LIBRARY COMING TO A NEIGHBORHOOD NEAR YOU!



If it's big and yellow, and you see it in different places in your neighborhood, it's probably a school bus. But what if it's big and lavender? Well, if you're lucky, it's the newest addition to the Kansas City, Kansas Public Library (KCKPL), the new Mobile Library! On October 1, 2014, KCKPL introduced the Mobile Library, a key component of the library's mission of connecting members of the community with information, tools, resources, and welcoming spaces to enrich their lives.

The Mobile Library serves individuals who have difficulty reaching a library branch. It extends current library services to the larger community, and helps to lessen the digital divide by providing an on-site wireless connection and a mobile computer lab. In other words, it brings books and materials to people across the community.

The Mobile Library stops at 24 locations throughout the community, coming back to each location once every two weeks. At some of the locations, patrons are standing outside, waiting for the bus to pull up.

Sandra Findley, Mobile Library librarian, and Jessica Devon McClanahan, Mobile Library associate, serve as librarians on the bus once it arrives at each site. But since their library is mobile, in between stops, they serve as bus drivers! Neither of them had ever driven a large vehicle before beginning this job, so they both received three weeks of training through the district's Transportation Department in order to learn to drive the Mobile Library.

"I never thought I would be driving a bus," McClanahan said. "But I have gotten used to it. The other day, I was driving my own vehicle, and making a turn, and for a split second, I thought: 'Wait, I didn't check my back end!'"

Once the Mobile Library is on location, patrons have access to all the services of a bricks and mortar library. They can check out books and movies, and they

can use the computer to check e-mail and access the Internet.

At the Westgate Towers/Westgate Villa stop on a cold Thursday morning, patrons John Mendez and Timothy Platt were thrilled to have the Mobile Library pull up to their front door.

Mendez was checking out copies of current movies, including "Batman" and "Gravity," and also picking up a copy of *One Day at a Time* by popular author Danielle Steel. He is a regular, making sure to come

out every time the Mobile Library stops. While he has always been a reader, the nearest library, West Branch Library, is

four miles away. It had been eight or nine years since he had last renewed his library card.

"I have been coming since the first time it stopped here," Mendez noted. "I am here every time it comes."

I get kids' movies for my grandkids to watch when they are with me, and books to read with them. I am able to find what I want, when I want it.

— Timothy Platt
frequent patron of the
Mobile Library

Platt is also waiting every time the Mobile Library arrives. While he has also used the West Branch and downtown libraries, he says that the mobile library gives him everything he needs.

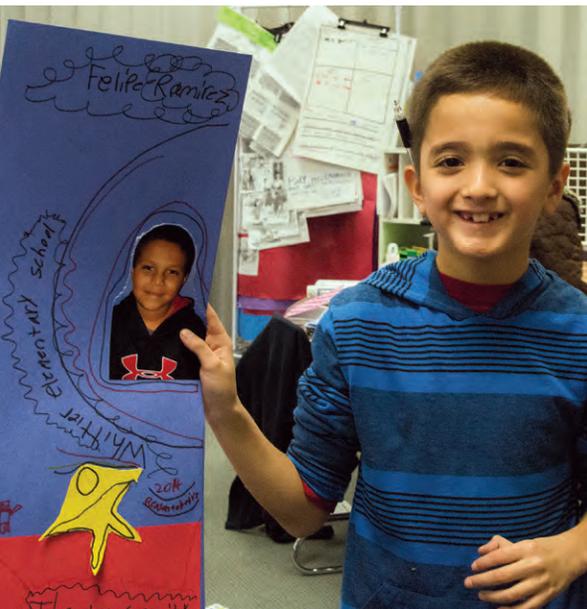
"It gives me access to reading books and getting movies, and using the computer," he noted. "Since the mobile library is here, some of the elderly folks who live here come out of the building and use it. I get kids' movies for my grandkids to watch when they are with me, and books to read with them. I am able to find what I want, when I want it."

Platt wants everyone to know about the Mobile Library.

"We need to put the word out. The library is a world all to itself," he said. "A book will take you into a world you have never been in. With a book, you can go anywhere in life."

Information about the Mobile Library, including a schedule of stops, is available on the library website at kckpl.org. Click on "About KCKPL" and choose "Mobile Library."

THIRD GRADERS GIVE EACH OTHER REASONS TO BELIEVE IN THEMSELVES



When the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools launched the *Reasons to Believe* program in 2002, one of the goal was to inspire students to reach for their dreams and believe in themselves. Through the program, successful graduates are recognized and inducted into the *Reasons to Believe* Alumni Honor Roll. They are showcased as reasons to believe in the impact of a KCKPS education.

The reach of the program continues to grow each year. This year, third graders in the district nominated each other for a "Third Grade *Reasons to Believe* in KCKPS" honor. Using questions from the actual *Reasons to Believe* nomination form,

the students paired up and interviewed each other and wrote nomination essays. Here's an example from a student at Whittier Elementary School:

Felipe Ramirez is a third grade student in Mrs. Haught's class. He will graduate in 2024. He will graduate from college in 2028. I believe Felipe should be considered for the Third Grade Reasons to Believe in KCKPS because he is a good artist in school. He also works hard in school.

He has been involved in school, sports and after school activities. He plays soccer and

baseball. His dad coaches him to play better.

He received honors. He received an award for helping his community. He helps his family. He helps his dad to clean his room. He helps his mom by taking care of his brother and sister. He believes this makes him a reason to believe.

The project was created by teacher leaders Teri Fulton and Jennifer Ferguson. It is a performance task for the Social Studies Standard that states: "societies are shaped by beliefs, ideas and diversity." Students were introduced to the *Reasons*

to *Believe* initiative and the accomplishments and ideas of the Alumni Honor Roll members. They had the interview process modeled for them prior to conducting their own interviews.

The students created *Reasons to Believe* banners using the district's template design, complete with photos of themselves. They presented their nominations orally in class or at special events involving parents. Many have displayed their *Reasons to Believe* essays and banners in their buildings. The displays serve as a daily reminder of their goals and their belief in their classmates and themselves.

WATCH THE 2014 REASONS TO BELIEVE CELEBRATION ONLINE AND ON KCKPS-TV

The 2014 *Reasons to Believe* Celebration was captured on video and is airing on KCKPS-TV. It also has been posted on the KCKPS YouTube channel. Several members of the 2014 *Reasons to Believe* Alumni Honor

Roll also sat down for one-on-one interviews to talk about their memories of growing up in the district, and the individuals who gave them reasons to believe in themselves. Those videos are also being aired on

KCKPS-TV and are posted on YouTube.

KCKPS-TV is available to Time Warner subscribers in Wyandotte County (channel 18 or 98.18) and to Google Fiber subscribers in Wyandotte County

(channel 145). The network also is streamed on the district's website, www.kckps.org. The district's YouTube channel is www.youtube.com/kckpstv.



Twelve outstanding alumni were inducted into the 2014 Reasons to Believe Alumni Honor Roll on November 20. The alumni are: (back row, from left) Lloyd Freeman, Sumner Academy Class of 2000; Marcus Newsom, F.L. Schagle Class of 1988; Dr. Jayson Strickland, Washington High School Class of 1989; Wesley G. Burt, Sumner Academy Class of 1999; Norman Brown, Wyandotte High School Class of 1982; (middle row, from left) Drue Jennings, Argentine High School Class of 1964; Phil S. Dixon, Wyandotte High School Class of 1974; Harold L. Simmons, Wyandotte High School Class of 1965; Dr. LeeRoy Pitts, Sumner High School Class of 1951; (front row, from left) Dr. Simone Ellis, Sumner Academy Class of 2001; Nedra Bonds, Wyandotte High School Class of 1966; and Dr. Christi Walter, J.C. Harmon High School Class of 1976.

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Kansas Association of School Boards**

*Thank
You*



**...to our KCK
Board of Education!**

DISTRICT-WIDE POETRY SLAMS

“LISTEN TO THE POEM”

*When they relay their fears
They'll bring you to tears
And no two are alike*

*It's a form of expression
The best kind of lesson
With a pen, a stage and a mic*



district's high schools have been invited to perform and compete against each other in district-wide poetry slams. A total of six slams (or competitions) will take place. While the students receive scores from judges in the competitive format, the final scores are secondary to the intent of the slams, which is to unify the students while fostering a community of poets.

The ultimate goal for all students would be to advance to the Louder Than a Bomb (LTAB) poetry slam competition in Chicago. Held each spring, it brings together more than 70 teams of youth from throughout the world. But first, the KCKPS students would need to qualify for the 2015 local LTAB competition, which will be held in Kansas City, Missouri.

Listen to the Poem

Katrina Saccucci, F.L. Schlagle High School senior, began participating

in poetry slams this year and said it has helped her to “be a better me.” She doesn’t think of it as a competition.

“We’re there to get together as a family – to make USD 500 a whole,” Saccucci said. “We’re really not there to be judged. We’re there to express ourselves.”

Students present their poems individually and are scored by a group of judges – with a point range of 1 to 10 (10 being the best). While it’s a thrill for students to earn a “10” for their performance, the responses from the audience are just as impactful. “Listen to the poem!” the audience will often shout, when the judges read the scores. This means they think the scores are too low. And when the poet on stage reaches into the depths of the souls of students in the audience, the unified snapping of fingers can be heard throughout the room, as a way of saying, “We *feel* you. We understand.”

Schlagle poetry club sponsor Amelia Grissom said the power of the words is the ultimate reward.

“When they (the students) get up on stage and the audience snaps for them and the audience claps for them or people go silent – it’s the power of the words. The students realize, ‘Hey, I wrote that.’ It’s wonderful to see,” Grissom said.

Listen to the Poem

Students gain valuable life skills and academic skills from participating in poetry slams. They begin to become more focused on public speaking, presentation skills and body language. And their writing and thinking skills are enhanced.

Stauffer believes one of the most important qualities of a good poet is his or her ability to listen.

“I think that is something we don’t value enough – listening to other people and developing an idea of what’s going on in others,” he explained. “All good poets have an extremely fine tuned eye and ear to what’s going on in the world and what’s going on within themselves, and that comes from listening.”

Poetry? Boring? Not at All!

What about the stereotype of poetry as boring and difficult to understand? Stauffer said if that’s what students think, then he hasn’t done something right.

“We’ve messed up if they think it’s nerdy or boring. I think we’ve just been giving them bad poetry. Maybe it’s because we’ve been teaching it the wrong way and we’re more focused on meter and rhyme as opposed to presence and poise and the power of the words,” he said. “Maybe the stuff we’ve given them is from older, dead, white guys. Poetry isn’t boring because it’s about us, and we’re not boring.”

Poetry comes in all forms, he said. This school year, he used American rapper Kendrick Lamar’s “Good Kid, M.A.A.D. City” album for his poetry unit. The students analyzed the songs on the album not only for poetic devices, but also for how Lamar developed his message in the course of the text.

Jh’ayla Clark has been writing poetry since she was six years old, and she said she’s never going to stop. She finds it easier to write than to speak. It enables her to get her feelings out – to share her story without fear or judgment. It’s all about expressing herself.

The Wyandotte High School senior is one of a number of high school students in the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools who have been engaged in poetry slams. Poetry slams bring students together to perform their individual poetry in a competitive but supportive environment.

The goal of slams is two-fold:

- To give young people a voice.
- To break down barriers that exist in the community and city.

“We try to design the slams to be events where young people can share how they feel,” said Tim Stauffer, English teacher at Wyandotte and co-sponsor of Wyandotte’s poetry slam group, W. Dotte Poets.

This school year, teams from all of the

GIVE VOICE TO YOUNG PEOPLE

“Reading music is as good as poetry,” Stauffer said. “I mean, there’s so much poetry out here every day and a lot of people don’t look at it. So if I tell the kids to look at music as poetry it kind of shifts that debate in their mind.”

Why Poetry?

Abe McDonald, a junior at Wyandotte, joined W. Dotte Poets this school year. He said he heard about the club on the school announcements. An avid writer since age seven, he thought he would check it out, and he fell in love with it right away.

“Poetry for me is a way to express myself in ways that I’m really not comfortable talking about. I was a very shy kid and was really uncomfortable with talking about my feelings,” he said.

His poems focus on everyday life – both happy and tragic experiences. He likes to tell stories with his poems as well.

Wyandotte senior Jacob Michel joined W. Dotte Poets last December and he still has vivid memories of the first meeting.

“I remember sharing my ideas and everyone was listening,” he recalled. “Everyone was just listening to everyone’s ideas. They understand where people are coming from and they respect each other’s views.”

Teaching Poets to Be Poets

Many of the students involved in the poetry slams agree that their poems come from something they experience or feel or observe. Some of the poems are raw and uncomfortable to hear, but that enhances their power.



Jachai Hill, a senior at Schlagle, said she began to experience the impact of poetry when her freshmen English teacher gave the class an assignment to write a poem about their lives.

“I’ve been writing ever since,” she said. “There’s freedom in writing. I’m a whole different person when I write.”

Stauffer said he sometimes provides his W. Dotte Poets club students with prompts, to give them practice in starting a poem or getting in touch with their emotions or surroundings. Here’s an example he gave them:

Make 5 lists. List everything you:

- heard last night
- saw last night
- touched/felt last night
- tasted last night
- smelled last night

Then using only the words generated from these lists, create a sensory poem about what happened to you last night.

From Tears to Laughter

Sharing poetry is a very personal experience. The slams provide a forum for sharing, listening and accepting. This gives voice to young people.

Grissom said the emotional impact is everything from tears to laughter.

“Frequently my hair stands up,” she said. “It’s a physical connection almost with these kids who are really sharing deep inside themselves.”

While she receives no monetary payment for being Schlagle’s poetry club sponsor, she is rewarded constantly by the words of the students.

“I love my poetry club kids,” she said.



WHAT IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE BY MARLOWE UNDERWOOD F.L. SCHLAGLE HIGH SCHOOL

I wish it were what it's supposed to be.

I feel like the system's controllin' me.

Pinning and holdin' me down,

Now listen closely,

Rounds bust in the open,

And clowns laughin' and jokin'

But my society's broken.

Schools are teachin' and coachin'

While kids are cheefin' and chokin',

Drinkin' and smoking...

Concentration easily broken.

But I just gotta do different

Gotta break from my division,

Instead of mobbing and crippin'

I chose to sit and I listened.

I had a vision that I would fit the position

of a high school graduate.

Gotta finish the mission.

I gotta right to write about what is right,

Instead of causing a fight.

Because you can kill with a knife

but it can also get you life.

Thrown in the cell – no lights,

No sun, no son, no wife.

Reminisclin' about what life was like.

But life's not a joke to me...

I just wish it were what it's supposed to be...

Watch a video about the KCKPS
Poetry Slams online at
www.YouTube.com/KCKPSTV.

WORKING TO GRADUATE PREPARED FOR COLLEGE AND CAREERS

Often, when people are about to begin a task, the question that is heard is: "Are you ready?" This is also an important question that needs to be asked of every student who graduates from the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS): Are you ready? Are you prepared for college and careers in a global society?

This past spring, the district introduced a new benchmark for what it means to be "prepared for college and careers." It is called Diploma+ (see graphic). Recently, a group of Wyandotte High School students were asked about how enrolling in college classes fits into their preparation to graduate "college and career-ready."

All of the students began taking college classes the second semester of their sophomore years. For each of them, the transition to the rigor of "college-level" classes was an eye-opener.

Marcellus Brown, a junior said, "I had to learn to manage my time and scheduling, to make sure I got my work in. The more rigorous classes really helped me learn to be on task."

Diego Ramos, a senior, agreed, and also noted that the students taking college classes are all focused.

"You don't have any of the fooling around that we have in school," Ramos said. "The college classes really helped us to mature."

Erykah Jackson, a junior, said that when she first began taking college classes, "it wasn't good" because the teacher expected her to be organized, prepared, and self-motivated, and she wasn't. But she has grown.

"This year I am doing well," Jackson said. "I have totally stepped it up, and learned how to schedule and prepare myself. College classes take you out of your comfort zone, and really push you, and help you get ready for college."

These students have been able to take

a wide variety of classes, from Introduction to Literature to College Spanish to College Biology and Physics. For some, the classes allow them to earn both high school and college credits, while exploring various interests and career options. For others, including Ramos, they allowed them to get necessary college courses completed while still in high school.

"Money has always been an issue at my house," Ramos said. "I don't want my parents to spend that much. When I saw this option [college classes] I thought I would take advantage of it.

My plan is to take classes at the community college this summer and fall, and I will be done with

all of my pre-nursing classes, and then transfer to a four-year college to finish the last two years of my degree. I will have more than 50 college credits when I graduate from Wyandotte!"

For Victoria Littlejohn, a junior,

the biggest challenge has been adapting to the expectations of college teachers.

"It is difficult to adapt to different teaching styles," Littlejohn said. "My teacher is from the community college, and they don't stand over and babysit you. I think kids need to experience real college-level teaching."

Kimberly Escobar, a senior, took two years of college classes, and now is enrolled at the Technical Education Center at the Kansas City Kansas Community College, where she has already earned her Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) certificate.

"I wanted to earn my certificate the



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first semester, so that I could work in a real job second semester, and save money for college," she said. Escobar eventually wants to go on to medical school, and to become a pediatrician.

Monica Dirks, a senior who will graduate with more than 40 college credits, also wants to go into a profession where she can help others. "I want to be a food chemist," she said, "and use my knowledge to reduce the prevalence of obesity and diabetes in our community."

For all these students and many more, Diploma+ is giving them a real taste of what college is like, while moving them down the road of preparation for college, careers and life.



2014 Battle of the Books



KCKPS STUDENTS GET CONNECTED ON THE BUS

High school students who ride the bus gained more study time this year thanks to the installation of WiFi units on school buses.

Two-thirds of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools' bus fleet is now equipped with Cradlepoint wireless routers, allowing students to access the Internet and check email on the district's laptop computers.

"The installation of these units extends the instructional day for students," said Joe Fives, director of technology and

information services for KCKPS. "And this was one of our original goals when we started our one-to-one laptop initiative in 2007."

Through the district's laptop initiative, every high school student is provided with their own laptop computer to use during the school year. The goal is to ensure that KCKPS students have the same access to computers as students in more affluent districts, and to foster a more creative environment for students and teachers.

Fives said since the laptop initiative began, he has witnessed students trying to get WiFi access on several occasions during their travels to and from school. Some have disembarked the bus near an elementary school with their computers open trying to connect to the school's Internet. Others have stopped in the parking lot of the Central Office looking for access. And many spend their afternoons at McDonald's on Wednesday early release days to take advantage of the free WiFi there.

The district piloted the WiFi connection on buses last school year to evaluate its effectiveness and to see how readily students would engage in using it. Early

on, bus drivers reported that a number of students were getting online and seemed engaged and focused.

Installation of the WiFi units began in the spring of 2014 and was completed at the start of the current school year. A total of 100 of the district's 150 buses

are equipped with the technology. The district focused on all the buses that transport high school students. These same buses are ones that are used for field trips and as activities buses, which transport students home later in the school day, after they finish after-school activities.

The technology is connected to the bus engines so it activates when the buses are started. Like all district Internet access, this access is filtered to keep students in appropriate and safe environments.

KCKPS is one of only a few local districts to provide this type of service to its students.

"We want to provide any opportunity we can for our students to engage in instruction both inside and outside of our buildings," Fives said.



2014-2015 DISTRICT CALENDAR

February

- 4 Early Release/
Family Advocacy
- 5 Family Advocacy
Day/No School for
Students
- 10 Board of Education
Meeting
- 16 Holiday/
Administrative
offices closed
- 24 Board of Education
Meeting

March

- 10 Board of Education
Meeting
- 12 Last Day of Third
Quarter
- 13 ½ Day Records
Prep/ ½ Day
Inservice
- 16-20 Spring Break
- 24 Board of Education
Meeting

April

- 14 Board of Education
Meeting
- 16 Kindergarten
Roundup
- 17 Teacher Non-Duty
Day/No School
- 22 District ACT
Testing Day
- 28 Board of Education
Meeting

The full district calendar is accessible from the homepage of the website, www.kckps.org (click on "calendars").

Don't Miss

RAPTOR DAYS

AT WYANDOTTE COUNTY LAKE

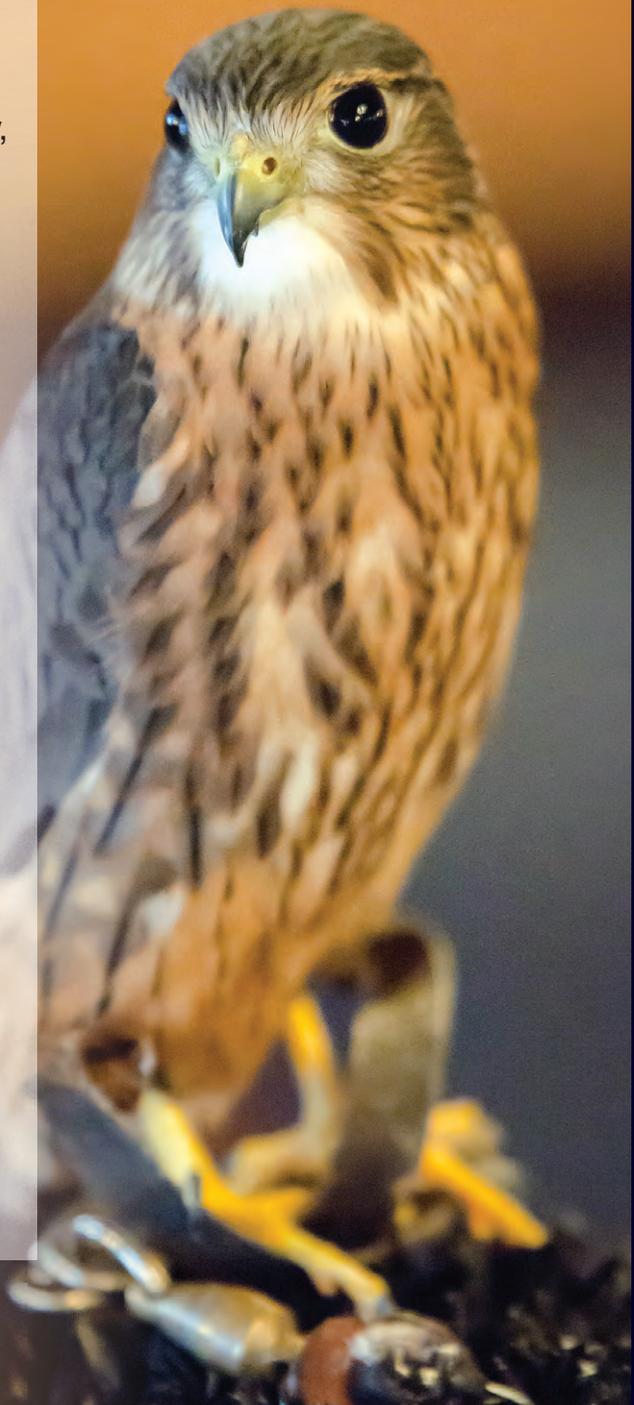
Saturday, January 24 and Sunday, January 25, 2015
Mr. & Mrs. F.L. Schlagle Library and James P. Davis Hall

Hours and activities at the FL Schlagle Library:

Saturday, January 24,
9 a.m. – 4 p.m. and Sunday,
January 25, Noon – 4 p.m.
Operation Wildlife
volunteers will have live
birds of prey on exhibit
(including owls, hawks and
falcons) and will talk about
the birds and their natural
history. A craft area will be
available for children and
eagle/water birds viewing
will be available outside.

Hours and activities at James P. Davis Hall:

Saturday, January 24,
10 a.m. – 4 p.m. and
Sunday, January 25,
Noon – 4 p.m.
Operation Wildlife
volunteers will have live
birds of prey on exhibit
(including owls, hawks and
falcons) and will talk about
the birds and their natural
history. It's a perfect photo
opportunity!





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REGISTRATION FOR THE 2015 SEASON
Begins February 15th

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