

The Swanson Anchor



September 2015

From the Principal's Desk

Welcome back Admirals! I hope that your summer was filled with memorable adventures as well as time for rest and relaxation. My husband (Andrew, Director of Bands at Robinson Secondary School), son (Ian, a 9th grader at Robinson) and I spent two glorious weeks at the beach. We also adopted Charlie, a 16 month old, 66 pound German Shepherd/Lab mix full of wiggly love. I am learning quite a lot as a first time dog owner! We have had a great summer and I am excited about the new school year.

The start of a new school year is always filled with anticipation of new adventures and recognition that change is inevitable. Change defines the middle school years and, at Swanson, we strive to support our students and families during this time of transition. As our student population tops 1,050, we are fortunate to expand our Admiral family. We are pleased to welcome the following new staff members:

Ken Campbell – Sea Hawks Social Studies Teacher
Alison Cox – Algebra Teacher
Bridget Falcone – 6th grade Math Teacher
Peter Farrell – HILT Teacher
Nathan Garvin – Sea Hawks English Teacher
Kelly Goodwin – Spanish Teacher
Julie (Anderson) Hutsell – Tropical Cyclones Science Teacher (change from previous assignment as an Algebra teacher)
Meghan Henning – Assistant Principal
Hollie Higbea – Hurricanes English Teacher
Denise Kochersperger – Special Education Teacher
Melissa Meck – 6th grade Social Studies Teacher (change from previous assignment as special education teacher)
Jennifer Palmero – Math 8 Teacher
Kolleena Perry – Special Education Teacher

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From the PTA

Dear Swanson Families

Welcome to the 2015-16 school year. The PTA looks forward to working with you over the coming year. Important dates that are just around the corner include:

- Tuesday, September 15 – 7:00 p.m. – PTA meeting/Middle School Capacity Forum – Library
- Tuesday, September 29 – 7:00 p.m. – Back to School Night

The PTA meetings are a great way to become more familiar with Swanson, to hear from the staff, and to meet other parents.

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September 2015

September

- 15 PTA Meeting/Middle School Capacity Forum – Library
7:00 p.m.
- 16 PTA Meeting/Middle School Capacity Forum – Library
8:15 a.m.
- 17 Swanson Activities Fair – Small Gym
2:30 p.m.
- 28 School Picture Day
- 29 Back to School Night
7:00 p.m.

PTA Board

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From the Principal's Desk *(Continued from page 1)*

Please visit our school often and stay involved in all aspects of your child's education. We are here to work with you. Please join us for the first PTA meeting (Tuesday, 9/15 at 7:00 p.m. in the library) and at Back to School Night on Thursday, 9/29 at 7:00 p.m.

Communication is essential for success. We have a well-established network of voicemail, email, Parent & Student Vue (online grade and student information portals), report cards, progress reports and backpack mail. This newsletter, The Swanson Anchor, is also an excellent way to stay connected with events at Swanson. The Swanson website (www.apsva.us/Page/8155) includes up-to-date information regarding events, activities and homework assignments. We encourage you to use these resources to stay informed of your child's progress during the coming year.

Our mission is to **engage and educate today's students, empowering them to contribute to tomorrow's world.** Our motto, "Service-Spirit-Scholarship", is illustrated by the Swanson Statement:

We are Swanson Admirals.

We are Scholarship, striving to think deeply and open our minds.

We are Service, connecting to one another, our community, and the world.

We are Spirit, celebrating our successes, ourselves, and our school.

We are Swanson Admirals.

Students and staff affirm the tenets of this statement daily. We have a long tradition of academic excellence and high standards and we are proud of all of our accomplishments in academics, the arts, sports and service. There is a place for everyone here and we invite you to join us as we build on these successes. Welcome aboard and have a great year!

— Bridget Loft, Principal

From the PTA *(Continued from page 1)*

There are two important email list serves that you should receive. One is APS School Talk, which is administered by Arlington Public Schools ("APS"). This APS communications tool will send daily announcements from Swanson, school-specific information and any emergency announcements from APS. To sign up for School Talk or modify your profile, visit apsva.us/swanson, click on the "School Talk" logo, and follow directions. The second tool is the Swanson PTA list serve. This will include Swanson-specific information, as well as other information about PTA meetings, volunteer needs and other information that is important to our parent community. To sign up for the PTA list serve, please send an email to swanson-pta-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

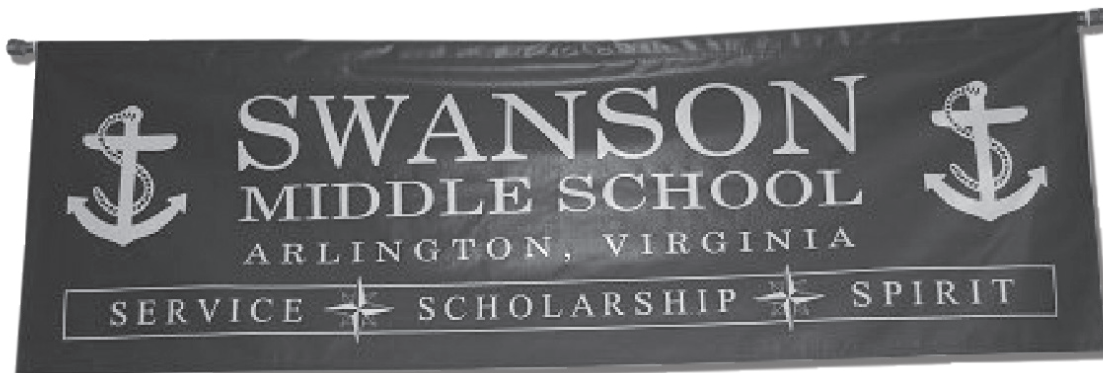
Please visit www.swansonpta.org/ezform to complete the EZForm where you can join the PTA, contribute to the PTA's major fundraiser, sign up for volunteering and complete your school directory information. WE STRONGLY ENCOURAGE PARENTS TO USE THE ONLINE FORM. Donations can be made offline even if you use the online data entry process.

I look forward to a great year with our PTA and Swanson Middle School.

— Noah Simon

Swanson Grows and Grows

It's hard to believe that we are already thinking about the 2016–17 school year. Based on the continued growth of our student body, plans are already underway to house our additional students in the coming years. Please come to the first PTA meeting of the year on September 15 at 7:00 p.m. in the library to learn more about this process. For parents who cannot make that evening meeting, an additional opportunity to hear this information will be held on September 16 at 8:15 a.m. in the library.



Starting the Year Off Right!

The beginning of the school year is an exciting time. It is an opportunity to have a fresh start, try new things, and set goals for the year. Below are some tips for having a productive start to the school year and ideas for how you can support your child's success:

- **Make a plan:** With the many academic and extracurricular obligations that students have, it is important to think through how they can spend their time most effectively. Help your child develop a specific plan for when they will get homework done each night and how they will prioritize their assignments. Students will have homework every night, so establishing a reliable routine is important for making sure it is always completed on time.
- **Set small goals:** Help your child think through how they can break longer-term assignments into smaller chunks that they work on nightly so they are not scrambling to complete big projects at the last minute.
- **Independent time management** is an important skill for middle school students to master. Encourage your child to use their agenda to map out a timeline for when certain components of a project should be complete.
- **Create incentives:** We all know students love to use their phones, iPads, and video games, but screen time can often get in the way of homework time. Establish clear limits for technology use and consider using use of electronics as a reward for completing assignments.
- **Get to know your child's teachers and counselor:**
- **You and the Swanson staff have the same goal:** to help your child succeed. Swanson staff want to work as a team with your family to help your child progress.
- **Use Parent Vue** to track your child's assignments and grades. Reach out to your child's teachers and counselor to find out how they are performing in school and if there is anything you can be doing outside of school to reinforce their academic and personal progress.
- **Encourage self-advocacy:** Middle school is a time when students begin to become more independent and make some of their own decisions. Help your children to foster a realistic understanding of their talents and challenges and the confidence to seek help when they need it. Explain that seeking support and asking for what you need is a sign of strength, not weakness or inability, and can help you tackle problems before they become bigger issues. If your child is experiencing an interpersonal challenge or wants to seek help, consider role-playing



how they will approach the situation. Thinking through how they will articulate their thoughts beforehand can help students feel more confident.

Swanson Spirit!

Parents can help maintain Swanson Spirit by reinforcing the Code of Conduct at home and at school. The student/parent handbook articulates the following expectations of your student.

Students should:

- Be prompt, prepared and participate actively in their classes
- Respect themselves, their peers and all adults in the building
- Use appropriate language
- Dress for respect and for success
- Practice academic and social integrity
- Be respectful of school materials and appropriate use of school equipment
- Work cooperatively with their peers and Swanson staff members in an effective and efficient manner

Please note that students are responsible for any electronic device(s) brought to school (including Smartphones, Tablets, and reading devices). Swanson is not responsible for devices damaged, lost or stolen. Please refer to the Swanson Student/Parent handbook for the entire APS Acceptable Use Policy.

Thank you for supporting your child as this new school year begins. Together, we can show our Swanson Spirit!

— Shannan Ellis, Meghan Henning & Scott McKeown,
Swanson Assistant Principals

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

Counselor's Corner

The Counseling Team at Swanson Middle School works with students, families, and other school staff to support the development and achievement of all students. Our counseling staff is involved in many activities that promote the success of students, including:

- Individual and small group counseling
- Crisis counseling
- Classroom guidance lessons
- Student registration and academic planning
- Career development
- Peer relations
- Consultation with parents, staff, and other professionals
- Student-led conferences
- Grade level transition activities
- Special education meetings

Our counseling staff builds trusting relationships with students as they address their individual socio-emotional, academic, and career development needs. We encourage students and parents to get to know and collaborate with their school counselor. We are available 7:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

This year's counseling staff includes:

Rana Luthra

Director of Counseling Services
703-228-5535; rana.luthra@apsva.us

Judy Jankowski

7th grade Counselor — Captains & Mariners
703-228-5509; judy.jankowski@apsva.us

Michelle Wilkes

8th grade Counselor — Hurricanes & Tropical Cyclones
703-228-5511; michelle.wilkes@apsva.us

Hillary Hawes

6th and 7th grade counselor — Schooners & Voyagers
703-228-2347; hillary.hawes@apsva.us

Laura Goodwyn

6th grade Counselor — Clippers & Sea Hawks
703-228-5519; laura.goodwyn@apsva.us

Chrissy Reardon

8th grade Counselor — Typhoons & HILT/Minority Achievement Coordinator
703-228-5512; christine.reardon@apsva.us

Faye Murphy

Registrar
703-228-5508; faye.murphy@apsva.us

Jackie Torres

Special Education Administrative Assistant
703-228-5502; jacqueline.torres@apsva.us

Swanson also has many Support and Related Services staff that address various important aspects of students' lives at school. They include:

- **Liska Friedman**, Social Worker
- **Dr. Melissa Deichmann**, School Psychologist
- **Dr. Vicky Lyons**, Interlude Psychologist
- **Sara Daidy**, Testing Coordinator
- **Sharen Humann**, Resource Teacher for the Gifted
- **Melissa Stone** and **Elissa Dwyer**, Speech Pathologists
- **Sally Tumolo**, Physical Therapist
- **Sandra Stoppel**, Occupational Therapist
- **Nancy Sheriff**, Vision Specialist
- **Astrid Berk-Scholl**, Audiologist/Hearing Specialist
- **Myrna Gonzalez Rojas**, Bilingual Resource Assistant/HILT Teacher Assistant



Special Education Corner



Welcome to Swanson Middle School's Special Education Corner". Each year we use this section to guide you through the special education process. Our goal is for you, as a participating member of the team, to know what to expect throughout the year. All information will be updated, annually, to reflect any and all changes in the process.

From the APS Office of Special Education

"Arlington Public Schools (APS) provides a continuum of services for students with disabilities, preschool through high school, found eligible to receive special education services. Identifying a student as eligible for special education services is a carefully managed process guided by State and Federal regulations, as well as APS Special Education policies and procedures (25-4.4). Evaluations required to make this determination are completed only with parent permission.

School-based student study committees review available information regarding students who are experiencing problems that adversely affect their education performance. Students suspected of having a disability are referred for evaluation. An eligibility committee at the student's school reviews assessment data from school-based evaluations as well as any information provided by parents to determine if the student has a disability which requires special education services. When a student is found eligible for special education services, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed with the participation of the school staff, the parents and the student (when appropriate). An IEP is a statement of the special education and related services that will be provided to the student which is updated at least annually throughout a student's eligibility for special education."

Please read future issues that will detail the step-by-step process for determining eligibility. You can also view this information in full on the APS Special Education website:

www.apsva.us/site/Default.aspx?PageID=2865

Dropping Off and Picking Up Students

As we begin school and prepare for an increase in vehicle traffic at drop off and pick up time, it is important to remember a few of our traffic procedures:

When traveling south on Patrick Henry Drive, the block between the two driveways is a no parking zone between 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m., as this area is used for student drop-off during that time period.

- When turning into the lot, please pull as far forward as possible to make room for cars behind you.
- When traveling north on Patrick Henry Drive, the block between the main entrance for Westover Baptist Church and the crosswalk is a no parking zone from 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m., as it will also be used for student drop-off.
- Remember to observe school bus stop signs. State law requires that traffic in both directions on Patrick Henry Drive stop when school bus signs are deployed.
- Please be alert to students crossing the street and observe the crossing guard's directions at all times.
- Help reduce traffic. Encourage your child to walk, bike or ride the bus to school. Fewer cars, make for a safer environment for our children.

Thanks for helping us all to keep our students safe.

2015: A Word from Swanson's New Teachers

Ken Campbell

Sixth Grade Seahawks Social Studies Teacher

It is my great pleasure to return to Swanson Middle School, where I first began working in education seven years ago. For the 2015-2016 school year, I will teach U.S. History, Civics, and Economics to 1865 as a member of the sixth grade Seahawks team. I previously taught AP World History and World History & Geography, 1500 to Present at Yorktown High School. Earlier, I served as an instructional assistant at Swanson. The College of William and Mary is my alma mater, and I am currently finishing my master's degree work at George Mason University. My wife and I live in Fairfax, where we enjoy fixing up our new home, running, board-gaming, and watching reruns. Although I am a long way from my birthplace in Ann Arbor, Michigan (Go Blue!) and from Rhode Island, where I grew up, I have come to consider Virginia as my home in the last 15 years. I look forward to another challenging and fun year in education, and to again engaging with Swanson's students and the Swanson community as a whole.

Alison Cox Bio

Math 8 & Algebra Teacher

First, let me just say how excited I am to be a part of this amazing Swanson family! My teaching career began 20 years ago after I graduated from Longwood College in Farmville, Virginia with a BS in Mathematics/Secondary Education. My husband Clint has been active duty Army since 1996. Frequent moves have made it difficult to teach consistently, but I have certainly enjoyed the variety of teaching experiences I've had over the last two decades. I've taught everything from 6th grade to 11th grade in North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and even Germany! We moved to Arlington a little over year ago, and we really enjoy this area! Clint and I have been married for 19 years and have two children, Garrett and Madaline. Garrett is an avid travel soccer player and will be attending Yorktown as a freshman this coming year, and Madaline is a competitive cheerleader and will be a 7th grader right here at Swanson. In my spare time, you can find me cheering on my kids at their sporting events,

spending some time with our two dogs, or squeezing in a workout at my CrossFit gym. I am looking forward to meeting and getting to know all of you over the next couple of weeks.

Bridget Falcone,

Math 6 Teacher

I started my teaching career at Swanson Middle School in 2010. I stayed for four amazing, successful years as a sixth grade math teacher. While I was working, I received my Masters in Math Curriculum and Instruction and pursued an opportunity as an Elementary Math Coach at Barcroft Elementary. It was a great experience, but with limited interactions with students, I realized I wasn't ready to leave the classroom! Now I am back at Swanson, with my admiral family and I am so excited to bring my curriculum knowledge and skills back! Outside of the classroom, I enjoy tennis, drawing and traveling when I can! I hope to travel anywhere in Europe this upcoming summer. I'm so excited to be back!

Peter Farrell

HILT/HILT Resource

I have heard many great things about Swanson and am very excited to be teaching here. I first taught in the Rochester City Schools. I then taught English for 2 years in Spain and 10 years in Japan. I have also taught English as a Second Language in Buffalo and Anne Arundel County in Maryland. I love history, hiking, and many kinds of music. I have a wife, son, daughter and two cats. I look forward to meeting you all and having a great school year.

Nathan Garvin

Grade Six English Language Arts Teacher

I am very excited about the upcoming school year. It will be my first year at Swanson and my tenth year teaching middle school. I spent the last nine years teaching at Walnut Grove Middle School in Texas before my wife got a job in DC, and we, along with our two kids, packed up and moved to Arlington. Other than spending time with my family, my favorite things to do are play guitar, watch and play soccer, read nerdy nonfiction books, and go see live music. I'm looking forward to a great year.

Kelly Goodwin
Spanish Teacher

¡Hola! I am coming to Swanson with experience teaching Spanish at the middle and high school level in the Fairfax County Public School system. In addition to teaching Spanish, I was the sponsor of the student government and leadership development program. I have studied abroad in Spain and Costa Rica and can't wait to share my love of travel and the Spanish language and culture with my students. Go Admirals!

Hassel, Lauren
School-Based Substitute

I am looking forward to supporting the Swanson community this year! I hold a provisional teaching license in secondary school English, earned through the Virginia Department of Education's Career Switcher program, and served as an Arlington Public Schools substitute teacher last year. I come to Swanson with more than two decades of experience in Communications, Public Affairs, and Journalism, most recently managing Outreach and Promotions for Arlington County's WalkArlington program. I enjoy travelling, writing, running, and just being outdoors. As a Swanson parent since 2010, I look forward to seeing—and serving—Swanson from a new perspective this school year.

Meghan Henning
Assistant Principal

I am very excited to be a part of the Admiral community. This will be my 14th year in education, prior to Swanson I was an Assistant Principal and Biology teacher at Yorktown High School. I have been an educator in Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and for the past four years in Virginia. I have to say with all of my experiences in different school systems Arlington is simply the best! I look forward to working with the Swanson community and getting to know all of our students.

Hollee Higbea
8th Grade English Teacher

I am so excited to be joining the Swanson family! I began teaching just a short year ago, after completing a Career Switcher Program at Old Dominion University. My previous teaching experiences include long term substituting in high school, seventh grade English, and I taught sixth grade English last year in Virginia Beach. The beach is my favorite place, but I do enjoy traveling all over. Reading and

crocheting are my favorite ways to relax, as well as enjoying improv comedy - both watching and performing. I am very much looking forward to working with the Swanson community!

Denise Kochersperger
6th & 7th Grade Science Teacher/Special Education Teacher

I am excited to join the staff at Swanson Middle School! I hold a Master's in Special Education, and have certification in Middle School science, math, language arts and social studies. I am relocating from State College, Pennsylvania, where I taught both learning support and regular education classes. I enjoy live music, theater, genealogy, hiking, and romps with our two dogs. But- my favorite activity is hitting the road with my husband to travel, often visiting our adult children and other far-flung family and friends. I welcome the opportunity to connect with the Swanson family.

Jennifer Palermo
7th & 8th Grade Math Teacher

I started my teaching career in Prince William County where I worked as a math teacher at Potomac High School for 4 years. I then taught high school math for 8 more years at Woodson High School in Fairfax County where I was also the math department chair. I am excited to start my first year as a middle school math teacher here at Swanson Middle School! This summer I traveled to Australia and New Zealand for 3 weeks with 38 high school students but also then got to relax for a week on a catamaran in the Caribbean with friends.

Kolleena Perry
6th Grade English/Language Arts & History Teacher/Special Education Teacher

I am thrilled to join the Swanson family and excited to continue my teaching career in the Arlington/Westover community. I began teaching in Cobb County School district just outside of Atlanta and have taught K-8th grade exceptional students math and language arts. For the last 5 years, I have been co-teaching math, language arts, and intervention classes in middle school with the last 3 years in 6th grade in Memphis, TN. I enjoy reading and am fascinated with the crossroads of neuroscience and education and global literacy and its impacts on communities. My husband and I love to travel and we have a daughter starting kindergarten at McKinley Elementary and a 2 -1/2 year old son.

Clubs/Co-Curricular Organizations

Teachers and volunteers offer many after-school programs to meet the varied interests of our students. Students staying after school for enrichment, academic support, clubs, co-curricular organizations, or other activities are required to check in with the activity sponsor.

Have an idea for a great new club? We'd love to help you organize it. Contact Mr. Holland to get your ideas off the ground. Some of our most popular clubs were created by groups of students with shared interests, so don't hesitate!

During the second week of school, we will hold an after school activities fair, where you can explore all of the clubs, sports, and other organizations to see what suits you! For an up-to-date list of clubs with descriptions, please visit our website: www.apsva.us/swanson.

Interscholastic Sports

Sports are available to 6th, 7th and 8th grade students. A current physical examination dated within the calendar year of the sport's season is required for participation in all interscholastic sports. If you are planning on participating in sports at the high school level, they require your physical to be dated after May 1st, 2015. You may want to get the appointment out of the way soon, so you will be able to try out for any sport!

Forms are available in the school clinic or online at www.apsva.us/swanson (click on Athletics, then Forms). To allay some confusion, note that we use the Virginia High School League form in order to facilitate transition to high school sports.

Sports include:

- Co-ed Swimming (No try-outs)
- Co-ed Diving (No try-outs)
- Boys' and Girls' Soccer (Try-outs required)
- Boys' and Girls' Basketball (Try-outs required)
- Wrestling (No try-outs)
- Co-ed Tennis (Try-outs required)
- Co-ed Track (No try-outs)

Practices are usually held Monday through Friday from 2:24 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. However, coaches will distribute their specific practice schedules to athletes at the beginning of each season.

For students who participate in sports, a sports bus is provided following sports events only on game days. This bus also drops off students as close as possible to their regular stops.

Schedule

The following schedule of sports for the 2015-16 school year is tentative. For the most up-to-date information, please check the Swanson website. For additional information, or if you have any questions, please call the activities director, Mr. Holland, at 703-228-5510 or e-mail him at trevor.holland@apsva.us.

- **September:** Tennis, Girls' Soccer, Diving, Cheerleading,
- **October:** Boys' Soccer, Girls' Basketball
- **January:** Boys' Basketball, Wrestling
- **February:** Swimming
- **March:** Track

—Trevor Holland, Activities Coordinator

Swanson students are encouraged to participate in a wide variety of extracurricular clubs, teams, and organizations. These activities are provided for the most part during After-School Period 1 (ASP 1) from 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. At 3:30 p.m., walkers and students being picked up will be dismissed to go home. Bus riders can stay in a supervised open gym setting until the late buses depart at 4:21 p.m. These buses do not follow the regular routes, but transport students as close as possible to their regular stops. Students staying after school may not leave the school grounds and return to ride the late bus.