



Mount Rainier Elementary School Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MRES PTO AWARDED \$7,000 GRANT FOR ENTRYWAY INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

MOUNT RAINIER, MD — The Mount Rainier Elementary Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) has been awarded \$7,000 in grant funding from the Prince George’s County Redevelopment Authority Community Impact Grant program. The grant funding will be used to improve the school’s entryway infrastructure, including new signage and potentially, the addition of an awning at the entrance, bike racks, benches to create a social space, among other improvements. Currently there is no cover to shelter students and parents from weather elements-nor benches for parents and caregivers to use and socialize during dismissal. The school recently installed bike racks for teachers and students to use during the day.

“As we increase our efforts to be a more sustainable school, the PTO added Victory Gardens at the Gazebo, and we’re in the planning stages for pollinator gardens and edible forest gardens, but we must also address the entrance of our school,” PTO President Shonin Anacker explained, “Especially after a pandemic, the entrance must be a place that communicates a welcoming school community and addresses societal ills.”

In 2018, the PTO engaged the Neighborhood Design Center (NDC), a nonprofit organization that facilitates the development of healthy, equitable neighborhoods through community-engaged design and planning services, to think through redesigning the school to reflect a strong arts community, make the school more appealing inside and out to parents, and meet goals for sustainability, active education, inclusion and more. With the plan in hand, the PTO set up a Grounds Committee, comprised of parents, teachers, staff and community members. In 2019-2020, the Committee focused on improving entryway infrastructure as well as increasing the sustainability of the school.

Jennifer Till, Principal of Mount Rainier Elementary, described how well the PTO and her staff have worked together this year. “The Grounds Committee pitched in to help with our successful Maryland Green School application and our Growing Green with Pride event in the fall was one of the best attended events. Improving our entrance to school is a pressing project, and I’m happy to see it moving forward via this grant.”

“I am so proud of the Mount Rainier Elementary School PTO Grounds Committee,” said Pamela Boozer-Strother, District 3 Board of Education member. “By engaging Neighborhood Design Center, working with the school community to develop a tangible plan, and working to make it happen – it really shows how we can bring Prince George’s County schools and communities closer and get outcomes that enhance schools.”

Allie O’Neill, Program Manager for the Neighborhood Design Center, remarked, “It has really been thrilling to see the progress the Mount Rainier Elementary School has made on its grounds this past year.”

“Successful school partnerships require hard work and creativity from educators, administrators, students, families and communities,” said Dr. Monica Goldson, Prince George’s County Public Schools CEO. “I commend the Mount Rainier PTO on its collaboration with the school community and I look forward to welcoming parents alongside Principal Till at the new entryway.”

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***About the Mt. Rainier Elementary School Parent Teacher Organization (PTO).** Mount Rainier PTO is a volunteer group of parents, guardians, and teachers of students at our school. We are a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with a mission to promote the welfare of children and youth, enhance and support educational experiences at school, develop a close connection between home, school, and community through parental involvement; and improve the environment at school through volunteer and charitable support. In 2018 and 2019, the Mount Rainier PTO established its grounds committee – a committee comprised of parents, teachers, school administrators, and community members – working to make sure that the school’s physical presence reflects the strong arts community it is located in, is an appealing school inside and out for parents and community members, and meets the goals for sustainability, active education, inclusion and more.*

***About Mount Rainier Elementary School PTO Grounds Committee** Mount Rainier Elementary School sits in the heart of the Gateway Arts District, an area rich with collaboration between area businesses, organizations, sponsors, and resident artists that sits within four municipalities including Hyattsville, North Brentwood, Brentwood and Mount Rainier. Art is central to this community. Art is the highest form of hope and good design is key to the roots for social justice. The Mount Rainier Elementary School PTO Grounds Committee, comprised of parents, teachers, and community members, is a standing committee of the PTO implementing strategies to make Mount Rainier Elementary School the best possible environment for learning and beyond.*