



*Dedication of the Samantha Smith PTSA Volunteer Banner presented at the 2016-17 Volunteer Appreciation Party, May 20, 2017.*

I am completely blown away by our volunteers here at Smith Elementary.

As Volunteer Coordinator I spent a lot of time this year asking for help, appreciative of every minute of time people could spare, but not really comprehending just how much help we were getting until I put this banner together.

It wasn't until I compiled everyone's name that showed up on some electronic list into a single spreadsheet and sorted for unique names that I realized how many Individuals contributed to our school - over 380!!!! There are 380 stars on that banner!!! And a cloud representing those I missed because they work behind the scenes where your name doesn't end up on a list or they didn't sign up online but showed up and helped anyway or they were simply missed because there was sand in my eyes or gremlins in my computer and there are just too many lists to assemble in a the little bit of time I gave myself for this project! At the beginning of the year, I said we were setting a goal to get one hour of volunteer service from every family. Although I haven't put my compilation against the number of families in the school, it seems to me we are at least at 50% if not more. That's HUGE!

It wasn't until I was pasting and decorating those individual stars in a way that could represent all the different ways we volunteer our time that I truly appreciated how many things different people do. There are a few who have every star and glitter I could put on it, but there are others who only do one or two things. I was impressed by the different compositions. Of course, it's not a competition. It's about our diverse passions and abilities and the quality of that time. As I assembled each one, I considered the lives of those people the star represented. For the ones I know fairly well, I marveled that you could do this one activity, knowing full-well what else you have on your plate; for those I don't know well, I wondered what else was on your plates. I was fascinated when I found other family members contributing as well. I remembered when some of us met and the different encounters we've had over the years - and always there was a smile on your face... even if I was asking for more... even if you had to say no.... even if you said yes. I realized how many of you I don't know and won't get the chance to know as your students graduate this year. I appreciated

that despite not knowing each other, you are also part of the lifeblood coursing through this school and I feel honored to have come into contact with you, if only in this small way.

Interestingly enough, despite the size of some stars or the amount of decoration on some, none of that really conveys the magnitude of anyone's gift of time and energy on this banner. There is one reason for the different sizes of stars: so I could nest them if you did more than one thing. As such, a person who has only an ASP star may have been able to give one hour the whole school year or one hour every week for a session or 3 hours a week for all three sessions. A person with an event star may have helped setup chairs at one event or all of them. A watchdog may have come once or several times this year. A classroom helper may have read to multiple children's classes each week or filed papers once in a while or been a chaperone on one field trip. However, the point is that it doesn't matter - your name is up there because you helped in some way over the course of the year - and for that we are truly thankful.

On the banner are represented:

- 152 parents who signed up to monitor at least one After School Program class.
- 149 parents who helped in the classroom or was a chaperone. (Keep in mind I only got lists from about 2/3 of the teachers.)
- 140 parents who brought food in support of a Teacher Appreciation Luncheon
- 133 parents who supported a PTSA event
- 50 dads who were WatchDOGS
- 46 parents who officially served as Room Parents
- 45 parents who taught in the Explore Art program
- 37 parents who headed up a PTSA Committee
- 11 parents who served on the PTSA Board

There were a few shout outs from some of the teachers I'd like to pass along. Please don't be offended if yours did not send a special message - they were kinda busy last week!

- From Miss Hecker: A special shout out to Liz Grant for being an amazing lifesaver and Blessy Binoy, Jenny Pinzur, Julia Nam and Vanessa Contreras for always helping me.
- From Miss Gagnon: Kimberly Wolf does not have a student at Smith! However that does not stop her from volunteering her time every week for me as well as for SEVERAL classrooms AND the library. She comes and reads with students in my classroom for Read Naturally. Gina Kruger has been volunteering (Read Naturally) in my classroom even though her child is in a different 1st grade class.
- From Miss Worrick: Special thanks to Elena, Shuhong, Leila, Betty, Karen, and Diane

- From Miss Woodworth: Gina Krueger is my stand out volunteer! She not only volunteers once a week for my room. She volunteers once a week for Debbie Gagnon and now Michele Plischke to help make sure those kids are getting read to in Read Naturally since those teachers didn't have enough volunteers to run the program. On top of that, she helped me take on the purging and reorganization of the Read Naturally materials in all participating pods. She has been a life saver for me!
- From Mrs Young: A special thank you to Veronica Alcantar for doing an amazing job planning our class parties and a bridal shower for Ryker and I, volunteering for Read Naturally, putting together a special Teacher Appreciation gift, and coordinating our end of the year party. Your thoughtfulness is appreciated!
- From Ms. Chang: Kirsty has been fabulous!
- From Ms. Stanley: Special appreciation to the leaders Lifang Huang, Madalena McAllen and Pat Pitakpaivan
- From Mrs Barber: I am certainly grateful to all our parents for everything they do daily to support our students. Thanks goes to Lei, Nisha, Sambhrama, Xiwen, Thom, Pam, Naveen, Fang, Mrs Fanaru, Li, Shou, Chris and Reetu. Special acknowledgement goes to Tina Kaiser for her tremendous perseverance in helping with our WOW books, cutting numerous U.S. map sections, and much more.
- From Mrs Bracco: Each one of these parents have gone above and beyond to ensure the students in my class had a fifth grade to remember. From amazing art lessons to surprise half birthday parties, these ladies have truly made this year one for the books! A special shout-out to my three art leads (yes, three! That was how lucky we were) April, Alejandra, and Iesha. The kids and I were so lucky to have you!

She hit the nail on the head with that one! All of us at Samantha Smith are lucky to have volunteers like you. You have touched my heart, and the lives of all our children, with your generosity and made our world a better place.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, all.

Your Friendly Volunteer Coordinator,

Jeannette Illsley