May Message

Mr. Gillespie changed my life! He was my sixth grade teacher. I started school at four years old and I was ten when I first entered Mr. Gillespie’s class. Mr. Gillespie looked very much like Mr. Kotter from “Welcome Back, Kotter” the popular television series of the 1970’s. I was no Vinnie Barbarino (played by John Travolta); instead, I was a round, introverted, average student with little or no confidence. Mr. Gillespie saw something more in me. He encouraged me to get involved in school activities and to take leadership roles. He also encouraged me to enter a public speaking competition! More than anything else, Mr. Gillespie’s support and encouragement to enter and win the local competition changed the trajectory of my life. I am forever grateful to Mr. Gillespie for seeing something in me. Many teachers impacted me over the years, but none more than he.

I hope that everyone reading this message has a similar story. Our teachers, our assistants, our aides, our drivers, our coaches, any member of our school staff could have had the impact on you that Mr. Gillespie had on my life. Any person that works with a student is an educator. The first week of May is an opportunity for each of us to thank our teachers, mentors, and life changers. Please take the opportunity to reach out to that person who impacted you so positively; please encourage your children to thank their teachers for their dedication to serving and to changing lives. Thank you educators! Thank you, Mr. Gillespie!

It would be great if we were able to vote on our local, state and national budgets. Unfortunately, we cannot vote on these budgets directly, but you do get the opportunity to vote on our school budget. Please vote on Tuesday, May 16 between 1pm and 8pm at our elementary school cafeteria. The budget newsletter will soon be in your mailbox and you can learn much more about the school budget by attending the May 9 public hearing on the budget that will be held at 7PM in the high school auditorium. The board of education has approved a budget that contains costs, includes no tax levy increase, and improves program.

The 2017-2018 school budget of $25,735,423 reflects a 1.78% increase over the 2016-2017 budget. The budget maintains all current programs while strengthening academic programs in technology, pupil personnel, and mathematics. The budget restores the agriculture education program and continues to provide opportunities for our students to enjoy site-based employment skill development. The agriculture education budget was included after a four month study conducted by a committee that included community members, students, teachers and administrators. Two public forums were held and the committee met with area legislators, local farmers and business owners before making a recommendation to the board to reboot the program at the high school. Importantly, the budget will not raise the local tax levy! Please vote on May 16!

May is Prom month! As a parent of three, I can admit that Prom brings mixed emotions. As an educator, I have those same mixed emotions; however, I am overwhelmingly positive about the opportunity for our students to celebrate the horizon of their high school careers. As parents, as always, we must provide limits and set clear standards and expectations for Prom expenses, opportunities, activities, and outcomes. As educators, we support all of the fun and lasting memories that can be created in the comfortable surroundings of friends and faculty members. The Prom and After-Prom advisors go WAY above and beyond to plan the evening and early morning activities. Many local companies and organizations donate funds and prizes to make After-Prom special. I am grateful to them all. I hope and encourage that every student attending prom also attends the After-Prom party! Doing so guarantees fun and eliminates the need for decisions that in some cases can be life changing. Together, let’s make Prom season memorable for all of the right reasons!

As we near the end of the school year, we have another opportunity to recognize people who have dedicated some or most of their career to Mount Markham and our students. On behalf of the Mount Markham Board of Education and our school community, I would like to express thanks and well wishes to: Deborah Barrett; Susan Carney; Sheri Feldman; Ann Jakubowski; and Peggy Zurn. Each will retire at the end of the school year. In addition, I’d like to share thanks and gratitude to Carol Lewis for her seven years of service on the school board. It has been an honor and a pleasure to work with each of these remarkable school community members.