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A MESSAGE FROM MARK

Welcome to our December newsletter. We hear a lot about giving at this time of year, and we are glad to be part of it! However, (as is often the case in West40) the story goes far beyond a season or time of year. There are many many ways that our programs and systems are involved all throughout the year.



Did you know that we have a program that supports teen parents? We are actively involved early on and support soon to be parents in medical needs, training, preparation and supplies. We love giving to these new parents to get this journey off to a great start.

One significant way that the West40 team gives to families is weekly distribution of food items and meals. Every week, all year long, numerous families are provided support in the way of free food. Additionally, our team is finding new ways to support our students and families each week by connecting them to needed services, providing information and access to resources. Frequently, we find ways to incorporate a bit in the way of festivities and celebrations.

Our Heart 2 Heart Program provides brand new items to our needy families, primarily through the Heart 2 Heart Store in our Lexington location. Each week, students in our programs, their families and their advocates access the store for clothing, essential items (Toiletries etc.), shoes, coats, pillows, blankets and even furniture. All of the items are free of charge. The Heart 2 Heart Program operates all year long serving hundreds of families.

Finally, there are some additional ways we enjoy giving to our communities throughout the year. In addition to providing resources, knowledge, and expertise, we give our 41 districts, 152 schools, educators, students and families a voice across the state, with ISBE, the executive branch and the legislature. We will always give by:

- Meeting you where you are
- Being what you need,
- Walking further with you and
- Standing strong with you

Mark

PHOTO ESSAY

A Visual Walkthrough of Memorable 2023 West40 Giving Events



HOW WEST40 AT LEXINGTON IS HELPING TO GIVE BACK

We purchased and renovated the former Lexington School as a way to give our Regional Safe School Students a respectable space. And now that the construction of the main office space is nearing completion, we are able to give back to our district partners in so many different ways.

West40 has been fortunate to host several professional learning and educator events at our new home in Maywood. This facility is for all of you!

"At West40, our training room, think tank, and two conference rooms stand as pillars of collaboration and innovation. Equipped with cutting-edge technology, these spaces serve as a central hub for empowering educators in our districts," said Dr. Sonya Spaulding, West40 Director of Professional Learning. "It's a privilege to offer these resources, enhancing our commitment to supporting our community's growth and development."

PROSPECTIVE TEACHER AND MENTOR SHINE LIGHT ON EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION CONCERN

Are Illinois teacher certification exams discouraging some prospective teachers before they get a chance to begin student teaching? The answer could be in data made public by the state. In the case of some subjects, including math, only about a half of the examinees passed on their first attempt in administration year 2022-23. During the same time period, 64% passed the math test in cumulative attempts. West40 spoke to a prospective teacher who said she feels "stuck" due to the math content exam. Click here for the [VIDEO](#).



HOT COCOA & PAINT AT WEST40 PEACE CENTER

Engaging students with activities and rich discussions go hand-in-hand with West40's mission to support youth. This fall, teachers and student advocates at the West40 PEACE Center have connected with students through the arts, literacy, environmentalism, and health and wellness. One of the activities was the "Hot Cocoa & Paint" session, in which professional artist and Chicago native Yusef Hood, Jr. guided PEACE Center students in painting wreaths and shared his expertise on essential art techniques. Organizer Angell Campbell said the event exemplified the PEACE Center's commitment to holistic learning and fostered a sense of community among its students.



LICENSURE REMINDER
Professional Educator Licenses (PEL) and Educator License w/Stipulations (ELS/CTE) issued prior to July 1, 2023, that have not yet been registered will lapse on Jan. 1, 2024. Licenses must be registered to be valid for employment.

TARGETED VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM PREVENTION GRANT OPPORTUNITY
The West40 Safety and Threat Assessment Team (STAT) would like to bring your attention to an opportunity that will benefit all West40 school districts starting in January, 2024. The Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) grant will provide all West40 school districts up to 5 hours of training in areas such as the following:

- Suicide and Violence Prevention through Social Media
- Threat Assessment Plan Assistance
- Behavioral Warning Signs of Violence
- De-escalation Training
- Building Stronger Relationships and Safer Schools

We would be happy to discuss this opportunity with you whether you are currently under contract with STAT or not. The process to receive 5 hours of training is quick and easy. Please don't hesitate to reach out to Phil Abraham, Director of Comprehensive Education Services, with questions or inquiries via email at pabraham@west40.org. Stay tuned for more updated information from the West40 Grants Team in January.

SPRING 2024 EDUCATOR JOB FAIR
More than 30 West40 partner school districts are coming together to offer opportunities to prospective teachers, paraprofessionals, support staff and substitute teachers on Saturday, February 24, 2024 from 10am - 2pm at West40 at Lexington (415 Lexington St., Maywood, IL 60153).

UPCOMING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES
[Declutter My Digital Life](#) - January 17
[Hey Google, What's New?](#) - January 18
[Game On! Esports at Your School](#) - January 24
[Multimedia-Project-Based Learning](#) - February 1

We love sharing stories of how lives have been changed in partnership with your school or district. Want to join us in inspiring others? [Please send your story our way.](#)



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