

WILLIAM CRAMP

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Picking up trash.



Illustration by Aloe Colon

There are many ways to volunteer and help your community.

Volunteers also benefit from helping other people

Several teachers at William Cramp Elementary School spend time outside of school helping others, according to recent interviews with *Fit Flyer* reporters. “I like helping people because it’s good for the community,” said Ms. Cabeza, William Cramp math school-based teacher leader (SBTL).

Volunteering is not just good for the community, it’s good for the volunteers as well, according to the Mayo Clinic Health System, a group of U.S. hospitals that also

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How to make healthy connections

“Making connections is more important than anything I learned in medical school,” said Dr. Dan Taylor, pediatrician and Drexel College of Medicine associate professor, in a recent interview with *Fit Flyer* reporters.

Social connections are when kids have healthy relationships and feel as though they belong, feel comfortable and cared for, and can talk to each other, according to the Wisconsin Office of Children’s Mental Health. Positive social connections can reduce your risk of heart attack, boost your immune system, and lower depression and anxiety, said Dr. Taylor.

Kids can make social connections by coming to school, talking to others, and making friends. Below are some *Fit Flyer* questions and answers from Dr. Taylor about the importance of healthy connections. His answers have been lightly edited.

Q: What is a social connection?

Dr. Taylor: The most important thing is to have a connection with somebody with what’s called respect and keeping an open mind, not making assumptions

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Volunteering can help your health

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do research. Volunteering helps you make new friends and can make you feel less lonely, said the Mayo Clinic.

It “improves your physical and mental health,” and “reduces stress and increases positive, relaxed feelings,” according to the Mayo Clinic. Volunteering can also reduce your risk of illness, heart disease, depression and anxiety. “Volunteers report better physical health than non-volunteers,” said the Mayo Clinic.

Ms. Cabeza said she coaches cheerleaders in her second job. Because of this, she has many opportunities to get involved with helping others. She got involved with an Alopecia Areata Walk to raise awareness for the health condition because her brother has had it since he was 5 years old, according to Ms. Cabeza, and because organizers of the event asked for volunteers. Alopecia Areata is a “disease that causes hair loss on the scalp, face, and elsewhere on the body,” according to the National Alopecia Areata Foundation. Ms. Cabeza said she also has volunteered for the Bucks County Challenger program, teaching football and cheerleading to athletes with special needs. Ms. Cabeza said you should enjoy volunteering.

Mrs. Gates, ELA (English/Language Arts) SBTL said she started volunteering as a kid at clothing drives. She said everyone should get involved and help their communities. “About 10 years ago, a couple



Illustration by Fit Flyer reporter

of moms got together to help families in need of food,” Mrs. Gates said. So, they started a food drive. She recommends volunteering because she thinks everyone should help support people in their communities.

Ms. Tooley, math intervention teacher, said she was a volunteer as a kid in sixth grade. She said she used to help younger students who had special needs and she would help first graders get on the bus. This is why she became a teacher, she said. Now she said she helps food banks and helps her neighbor’s animals, by feeding and taking care of them when their owner is not home. These experiences have been very meaningful to her, she said. “Find something that you’re interested in and try finding a way to help people in need,” Ms. Tooley suggested.

—By Fit Flyer staff

Ideas to get away from screens

Too much time on screens can lead to feelings of anxiety and depression and make it hard to fall asleep or focus in school, according to “Above the Noise,” a Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) show that looks at research on different topics.

Fourth graders in Room 311 recently learned that people who spend more than three hours each day on their devices are more likely to experience those kinds of problems.

Here is a list of ideas they came up with of ways to spend time that don’t include screens.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Color | Go to the park |
| Clean your house | Make bracelets |
| Go to the beach | Play in your backyard |
| Go to a carnival | Meet family members |
| Help your mom | Play with siblings |
| Help with dishes | Go to the store |
| Play with your pets | Paint |
| Chill with your family | Put groceries away |
| Go to a friend’s house | Play board games |

Volunteers enjoy helping in library

Two volunteers at William Cramp School say they enjoy helping students in the library. They recently spoke to *Fit Flyer* reporters about how they help out at school.

“When you volunteer, you get to meet new people,” said Ms. Liad. “One way to feel good about yourself is by helping others.”

Ms. Liad told *Fit Flyer* reports that her job at school is to help the library, help kids find books, put books back on the shelves, and help kids read. She volunteers every Wednesday along with Ms. Getzen, another volunteer librarian. Ms. Liad said she comes to help because it’s important for kids to learn how to read, to use books, and to see a library. Kids can think about what they enjoy doing and then “find out how to help” with those things, she said.

“Volunteering is fun because you can meet older and younger kids,” said Ms. Getzen, the mother of fourth-grade teacher, Ms. Hill. Ms. Getzen’s role is to keep the library clean so that kids can use the books. “It’s important for kids to read,” she said.

If you want to volunteer at school, Ms. Getzen said you should talk to your teacher. You can also talk to Mr. Elias, school community organizer, or to Principal Rodriguez.

—By *Fit Flyer* staff



Illustration by *Fit Flyer* reporter

Small ways to connect with others

Pediatrician and professor Dr. Dan Taylor knows it’s scary for kids to meet new people, but says it’s important for everyone to reach out, no matter how uncomfortable it is.

“Reaching out even though you might be scared is so important,” he said in an interview with *Fit Flyer* reporters.

“You can reach out to teachers who taught you in an earlier grade, reach out in the hallway, say thank you,” Dr. Taylor continued.

He described how one of his daughters uses an “algorithm” for making connections. “Are you scared to make the connection? If not, make the connection. If yes, make the connection ... Sometimes you have to do things that are a little uncomfortable,” he said.

Welcome new students, Dr. Taylor advised, and he told students to remember that they “were probably nervous and scared when you first started school. Someone else can feel that way too.”

He gave some tips on the little things you can do to make connections.

“If you think of somebody, reach out to them right away,” he said. “Social connections don’t have to be a long talk. You can wave at someone. Smile at someone, pat someone on the shoulder.”

Dr. Taylor said smiling is contagious. “If you smile at somebody, they’re more likely to smile at someone else. If your head is down, it makes other people not feel connected to you.”

Adults can do something nice by letting somebody go in front of them when they are driving, Dr. Taylor said. “That person that you just let in feels good. They might do it for someone else.

“Opening the door for someone may lead to them do it for someone else,” he continued. “It makes them feel good. The person that you let ahead of you feels great and you’re a model for those who see it.”

—By *Fit Flyer* staff

Spend time connecting with others

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about people, really listening to what they have to say without coming up with how you're going to respond. Taking it all in. If you think of responding while they're talking, my grandparents used to say that's why we have two ears and one mouth because we should be listening more than we talk.

Q: What does a social connection look like?

Dr. Taylor: It can look many different ways. I'm having a social connection right now and I already feel better than I did. If you think about somebody, you should reach out to them. If you thought about somebody in another class, touch base with them and say I was thinking about you and wanted to know how you're doing. Then you know there are lots of people out there who want to know how you're doing.

Q: What is an unhealthy social connection?

Dr. Taylor: One that's really not even. Meaning one person dominates the conversation. You probably have family members or friends who are talking about themselves. You wonder why you're even in the room. Starts a conversation without checking in to see if you're OK. Get a feel for how someone is doing. Having equal conversation. Feels like someone's taking advantage of the conversation.

Q: Why is connection important for our health?

Dr. Taylor: If you go back in time, there were dinosaurs and no humans. Then the dinosaurs died out and humans started evolving (changing). We didn't have homes, didn't know how to make homes, so we lived in caves. If you lived in a cave and had to search for food to survive, who felt safer? One person all alone? Or 20 people protecting each other? If you are with 20 people, you feel safer. Your body evolves to make sure you survive. Survival of the fittest means that the people who survived were in the best shape and also made the best social connections. They felt safer, they could get food and protect each other. Our mind and body are set up to survive—to connect to other people. When we feel isolated, we feel unsafe—even if you don't know you feel unsafe.

Q: Why do you think there's less social connection now than when our teachers were kids?

Dr. Taylor: The internet. Back when I was a child, we would ask someone else a question, but now we



Illustration by Aloe Colon

can sit alone and look on our phones. Just to find out information, we had to make a social connection.

Q: How do you think the lockdown affected the current students' ability to make connections. Do you see kids getting better?

Dr. Taylor: Initially it was really scary, we closed the clinic and we were just at home. The first thing I did when I got home was take a shower to make sure I didn't bring any germs to my kids. That fear from 2020-24 led to an understanding that we did it and we survived. But when we were alone, we realized how much we missed being around other people. It was one of the few times that everyone on the planet was connected because we all had the same fear. But now we are more connected in the recovery. Internet and Covid caused more isolation.

William Cramp Fit Flyer

The *Fit Flyer* is a publication of William Cramp Elementary School in the School District of Philadelphia. Fifth-grade staff members include Aiden Brown, Aloe Colon, Elias Gonzales, Zoey Gonzales, Amauri Huggins, Cataleya Rivera, Leynamys Rivera, and Jayceon Rodriguez. The *Fit Flyer*'s faculty advisor is Ms. Morales and the school principal is Dr. Rodriguez.

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