

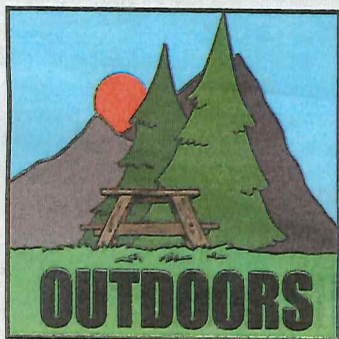
# The MANASSAS OBSERVER™

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## Manassas school chief Magouyrk is leading revolutionary, free, pre-K learning in English and Spanish for every child in city

By **BENNIE SCARTON Jr.**  
Manassas Observer

The City of Manassas and the Manassas City Public Schools have taken a major step toward improving early learning among young students, starting them towards academic success.

A transformative approach to early learning that will increase literacy for all four-year-olds in the city was launched at a press conference last week.

"It is the goal of our schools to accelerate early learning, close the literacy achievement gap, and support our English Language Learners," said Catherine Magouyrk, superintendent, at the press conference at the Harris Pavilion in Old Town.

"This goal is taking shape through a new partnership with Footsteps2Brilliance. In the next few weeks the program will be available free of charge to all pre-K children in the city," she said.

Footsteps2Brilliance is an in-



Bennie Scarton Jr./Manassas Observer

Catherine Magouyrk, superintendent, Manassas City Public Schools, explains at a press conference a new program, Footsteps2Brilliance, the city school system has launched that will help children succeed in school and life.

teractive, mobile literacy program that has been proven to increase academic vocabulary, comprehen-

sion and critical thinking skills in young students. All residents of the city will be able to download the

curriculum app for free on their smartphones and tablets, or use the program on their traditional computers

"With the increase in rigor, a new reality exists for young students," said Melissa Saunders, director of curriculum and instruction. "Kindergarten has become yesterday's first grade, and pre-K is now yesterday's kindergarten. Due to budgetary and space restrictions, however, our school system, like many other districts in Virginia, does not have the capacity to serve all the pre-K students in its jurisdiction. The Footsteps2Brilliance platform will allow us to create a blended pre-K model for all pre-K children—not just those enrolled in our schools.

"Magouyrk is leading Virginia and the nation in creating a transformative preschool model that will level the playing field for all children," said Ilene Rosenthal, CEO of Footsteps2Brilliance, Inc. "

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## Nationally recognized "Breakthrough" principal taking reins at Metz

By **BENNIE SCARTON Jr.**  
Manassas Observer

The Manassas school system has a new principal.

Kimberly Buckheit was appointed the principal of Metz Middle School last week by the Manassas School Board.

She will begin her new position on July 1.

Buckheit says she has a genuine love and appreciation for students and an understanding of their unique needs as well as the needs of those who educate them.

She is currently principal of

Troy Howard Middle School in Belfast, Maine, a position she has held since 2004.

During her tenure at the school, she has led it in consistent improvements in student academic performances in all areas and is known as a leader in school improvement practices.

"I am excited to have Mrs. Buckheit join the Manassas City Public Schools family as the new principal at Metz," said Catherine Magouyrk, superintendent. "Her solid leadership and focus on school improvement and student success will be an asset to our

school community."

Prior to her current position, she served as an elementary school principal for five years. Additionally she has experience as director for the Gifted and Talented program and as an Affirmative Action Officer for the school district.

Buckheit also has eight years' experience as a behavior specialist in Baltimore and a behavior resource teacher for two years in Baltimore County Public Schools. She also has experience as an adjunct graduate professor at Goucher and New England colleges.

A sought after presenter, Buckheit has shared her passion for education at conferences across the nation, focusing on the best practices for school improvement.

She has received national recognition for her leadership in education, having been named the 2014 Breakthrough School Principal by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the 2013 National Distinguished Principal by the National Association of Elementary School Principals. During the 2014-15 school year she served as the president of the Maine Principals Association.

## "One of the greatest things to happen to our city schools

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By leveraging mobile technology and traditional computers that parents already own, Magouyrk will be able to provide every pre-K child in her district with hundreds of books, songs, and learning activities that have been shown to increase vocabulary and literacy in young children regardless of their socio-economic status."

### Info expo on aging

Transitions, an informational expo on aging gracefully, will be held on Tuesday, June 16, from 2 to 7 p.m. at the Continental Event Center, 9705 Liberia Avenue, Manassas. The event is sponsored by the Prince William Chamber of Commerce.

"Through the Footsteps2-Brilliance partnership, we will provide a springboard for all students, whether or not there is the physical capacity to bring them into the pre-K classroom," said Magouyrk.

"When kindergarten students come to school with a strong literacy background, they have more opportunity to be successful academically as they progress through school."

The Footsteps program contains more than 1,000 interactive books, songs and learning activities that can be downloaded through a single app. The curriculum is available in both English and Spanish. It uses game-based methodology to engage both parent and child and studies show that users of the program significantly outperform control groups.

Tim Demeria, chairman of the school board, told the gathering "that everyone wants to improve our children's education—that's dear to my heart. If a child can't read or write it will be a long struggle for him or her. This program is one of the greatest things to happen to our city schools because this is where education starts."

Mayor Harry J. Parrish II said "We want the best possible education for our children and we are bringing great leaders into our school system to start such programs to help our students become better."

Art Bushnell, school board member, said "This is the most exciting and innovative thing the city has ever done. This is a program that impacts every child to help them learn to read at an early age."

Coleman G. Rector, co-founder, EDGE: Manassas, said area businesses and organizations have contributed finally to support the program.

Gov. Terry McAuliff, Senators Mark Warner and Tim Kaine and Congressman Barbara Comstock sent letters praising the city for the start-up program.

## Homecoming BBQ for Vietnam veterans on June 6 at VFW Post

VFW Post 7589 and its Ladies Auxiliary are putting on a Homecoming celebration for Vietnam Veterans and all members of Post 7589 on Saturday, June 6 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The barbeque is open to all veterans and their immediate families. It is the 69th Anniversary of VFW Post 7589.

The Post is located at 9304 Centreville Road (Rt. 28) in Manassas next to the fire station. Plenty of free parking.

Major combat involving the United States began in Vietnam 50 years ago and many Vietnam veterans have still not been welcomed back home. Post 7589 plans to remedy this on Saturday, June 6. There will be exhibitions of Vietnam memorabilia, music, movies, and plenty of food and war stories!

For more information contact Peter MacLeod, Senior Vice Commander, Francis Cannon VFW Post 7589, Manassas, Va. 703 220-4545, at 703-361-5554, jeanandpetermacleod@verizon.net or go to [www.vfw7589.org](http://www.vfw7589.org).

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