

Brandon Pride

A Newsletter for Parents/Guardians and friends of Brandon at the suggestion of the Parent Advisory Council

Upcoming Events

April 2nd

3rd Quarter grades due

April 10th

No School for Day Students

April School

Vacation

20th-24th

Teachers'

Wish List

If you can help please donate the following item to the box in the lobby. They are being used for upcoming art projects!

- Washable Markers



Come to Your Senses

Coping with the stresses of school, friends, family and routines can be tough for many Brandon students. When feelings of anger or sadness emerge some students respond with withdrawal, aggression or unsafe behaviors.

Brandon's goal is to help every student grow better coping skills to manage their emotions and behaviors. *Sensory Modulation* is another strategy being added to their repertoires. *Sensory Modulation* is the internal or external 'stimulation' or 'calming' of the senses of smell, touch, sound, to achieve increased attention, diffused tension, inner balance, or other treatment and behavioral goals.

"Sensory Stations," with items like balance balls, fidget toys, noise-cancelling headphones, sound machines, resistance bands, scented canisters, push-up bars, body socks,

weighted dogs (stuffed animals filled with rice) are being established at every house, in the school and in the therapy space. Staff are helping kids experiment with the sensory items to find out what might help them self-soothe, de-escalate or become more alert.

All Brandon departments have been trained by Jane, OT Expert and President of Occupational Therapy Associates (OTA) in Waretown, MA. Staff will receive ongoing workshops and coaching on how best to implement Sensory Integration tools into student's treatment plans at Brandon.



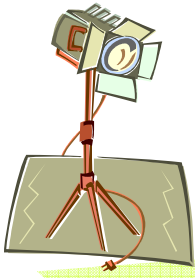
In regards to a body sock... "It's like a big hug!" -R.H.

Bulldogs Softball Beginning

With the basketball season coming to an end the students at Brandon will now have the opportunity to join the Boy's Softball Team! Coaches Collin and Jon are excited to put together a collaboration of healthy competition and good sportsmanship. While the boys will be encouraged to try their best, the focus of this team will be team play, academic diligence and a positive attitude. The coaches are hoping to schedule between 10 and 15 games this spring, all of which will be played off campus. As with Bulldogs football and basketball, the players will be held to a high standard of accountability for their school work and behavior. Students must attain a level of 2-1 or higher in order to play in games and practice after school. All work must be completed for each class in order to participate. We encourage all staff, students, and parents to support the team in both attendance and spirit. Please know that our students work very hard to participate in competition and appreciate any positive feedback from the Brandon community. Games and practices will begin in early April. A formal practice/game schedule will be released as soon as the games are solidified. Thanks for all your continued support!

Juvenile Firesetting Conference

Did you know that Brandon sponsors a yearly conference in Worcester, MA for social services, fire fighters, educators, mental health and juvenile justice professionals? As one of the nation's leading programs in the assessment and treatment of firesetting behaviors, Brandon, along with Department of Fire Services, MA Property Insurance Underwriting Association, and MA Association of Safety & Fire Educators, put together a line-up of well-known speakers from across the US and from Canada. This year's conference has the theme of "The Kids Behind the Crisis: From Confusion to Clarity" and is scheduled for May 14th and 15th. Some session's highlights include new research and programming for the youngest kids who have used fire inappropriately, evidence-based assessment practices, interviewing techniques, overcoming firesetting myths, and addressing fire safety risks in the home. This forum provides an amazing opportunity for learning and collaboration. **Check out the Brandon website for more information: www.brandonschool.org.**



Student Spotlight written by a Brandon Student

Hi, I am currently living at Brandon Residential Treatment Center. I meet with an Advocates therapist and have used P.E.S before when in crisis. About two years ago I was in and out of hospitals; I was sick of life's obstacles. I was extremely sad and depressed.

Then, after coming to the realization that Brandon was not going to give up on me, I said "Enough's enough".

When I moved off campus to Nobscot, a group home, I experienced *wellness* for the first time in a long time. I felt like I was able to work for something, like there was a light at the end of the tunnel. Wellness to me means feeling good about yourself and also being in the right state of mind.

I then became very strongly attached to a staff member who has helped me become more active. Being attached to a male is good because I never had a positive male figure in my life. It feels good trusting a male after a

long history of not trusting any adults. I didn't trust adults because I didn't feel as though they would help me and keep me safe.

Now I feel like I can not only trust adults but I can trust *myself*. I trust myself because I feel good: I'm going to the YMCA, I'm on the sports team, and I work with the maintenance department. I'm almost done with high school and I want to go to school to do chef training. I feel like my self-esteem and self-confidence have increased do to being more active.

I know I am experiencing wellness because I haven't been in the hospital for almost two years. What has changed now is that I've learned to be more flexible. When things don't go my way, I accept the word "no" and cope with it. I think by coping and dealing better with life's obstacles is how I found *wellness* again. Now that I accept life's obstacles and take them head on it feels great! In conclusion, *wellness means never giving up on yourself*.

February Staff of the Month: Gillian Ahern



Gillian's ability to communicate information with Brandon team members as well as family members and collaterals is always pro-active and incredibly thorough. Even when the information to be shared is somewhat contentious, Gillian presents it in such a way that she is heard and respected; this is a rare skill! Gillian's strengths in verbal communication are complimented by her ability to produce exceptionally clear and well-written reports, letters and basic documentation. Gillian has so many strengths to be recognized for on an on-going basis. However, it should be noted that she went above and beyond during the holiday season with boys who were having dif-

icult times. Even though many of the boys were struggling with the holidays it was not due to a lack of effort by Gillian who scheduled mini teams and tried to brainstorm and collaborate with team members and the boys themselves on a daily basis. Gillian's hard work and dedication are truly appreciated!

Bulldogs Basketball

The season has finally come to an end! The J.V. team ended its season with a resounding win and saw its players develop over the year and improve on a daily basis. The JV team did not fear any team it played, despite matching up in several games as a much younger team. The varsity team did not end with the victory the players were hoping for, but the young men who earned the privilege to play in the GBBL tournament had more fun than any team before them. The Brandon Bulldogs lost 54-44 in their semi-final game, and suffered a tough loss in the consolation game for 3rd place. The players played through injury and fatigue to work together and see how their hard work all season paid off in the end. At the awards ceremony, players were honored for their performances. Derek won the Sportsmanship Award for being their all year and taking the responsibility of being a great teammate on and off the court. Steve and Omar won the All-Star awards for their play on the court. Omar was the player the team relied on to give them a boost and rebound, and Steve was the team leader who coaches could count on to be there day in and day out. The coaches want to thank everyone for their support and most importantly make sure the players know their hard work was appreciated! Thanks, Coaches Jon, Akil, Kareem, and Pat

