

MIDDLETOWN TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION

59 Tindall Road
Middletown, NJ 07748
Phone (732) 671-3850
Fax: (732) 615-9351
www.middletownk12.org

Contact: Karen L. Bilbao, Superintendent
Phone: 732-671-3850; ext. 1002
bilbaok@middletownk2.org

Marianne Kligman
Media Relations,
mariannekligman@gmail.com
732-758-9089; 732-586-1232 (cell)

Press Release FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Photo OP—The carnival begins at 5:30 PM, with the car raffle taking place at 7 PM at the High School South football track and field, at Nut Swamp Road, Middletown, NJ.

Middletown School District Raffles New Car in “Driven to Excellence” School Incentive Program

Middletown: On Friday, June 11, in the midst of a carnival atmosphere, one lucky Middletown High School student will win the keys to a new Hyundai Accent. The car raffle is the culminating event of a unique student incentive program, entitled *Driven to Excellence*, which has operated all year at the district’s two high schools. The event will take place at the Middletown High School South stadium. Runners-up in the raffle will receive Dell laptop computers. The raffle is open to all high school students, not just those with a driver’s license. For that reason, parents are encouraged to attend the drawing, as they may be driving home the winning car for their child’s use when he or she is able to drive. Attendance at the event is anticipated to exceed 3,500, representing the student population at both high schools and some of their parents or guardians.

Middletown High School South’s principal, Dr. Anthony Shallop, who initiated the program this September, states its purpose, “The program is not about the car, but the process of getting there. We hoped to identify and reward positive behavior and accomplishments throughout the school year, stimulate personal and academic improvement and increase school spirit. Sometimes students are not motivated to work for a letter grade and may need more tangible reinforcement. The program was designed to last long enough that a student may discover, ‘Wow, it isn’t that hard to do well in school’, and positive behaviors may continue long after the car is raffled off.”

Dr. Shallop discovered the program during a conference he attended at Harvard University last summer. Other school districts had successfully engaged student interest and increased motivation with a coupon/ticket program. A plan was devised to operate the program in a way that sustained interest throughout the year, building up momentum to the fateful day when a car would be raffled off. Thirty coupons per month were distributed to all staff, (administrators, teachers, secretaries, aids, custodians, etc.) who were instructed to present students with a coupon for any positive behavior or accomplishment. The discretion for rewarding the coupons was left up to the issuers. They were asked to identify their name on the ticket and the reason the coupon was granted. On the day of the raffle, the identified teacher who presented the winning coupon to the student will also be given a Dell laptop, along with the three runners-up. In all, well over 15,000 coupons were given out for reasons that varied



Pictured above are flip sides of the 2010 Hyundai Accent, which will be raffled off to one lucky Middletown high school student on Friday, June 11. One side is decorated in High School North’s orange and black with Lion symbols, while the other side sports the High School South blue and silver Eagle motif. The car raffle represents the culminating event of a year-long student incentive program meant to reinforce positive behavior, reward accomplishment, promote student personal and academic improvement and increase school spirit.

from a staff member catching a student performing a random act of kindness or for displaying significant academic improvement. While other positive programs and procedures were introduced at the high school this year, in evaluating any tangible measures of the program's success, Dr. Shallop notes that disciplinary incidents are down and overall school involvement is up.

Middletown Township Superintendent of Schools, Karen Bilbao, is an avid supporter of the program, explaining, "The science bears out this motivational approach, which is known as positive behavioral support. This is very important because often we focus on the negative behavior and, except for the top students, most students do not receive enough recognition for the good things they do and achieve. With this program, we hope to reward and promote good behavior."

Dr. Shallop has kept a record of the reasons for which he distributed over 200 coupons to students. In one instance, he rewarded students who participated in the *Underground Event*, where students read poetry or sang solos. He personally visited their drama elective class to distribute the tickets.

He explains, "These were not the drama-track students who were accustomed to public performances. They clearly went out of their comfort zone to put themselves out there, and, in some cases, overcame stage fright." He adds, "Their drama teacher told me that he was originally skeptical of the incentive program, but when he saw the impact the coupons awards had on his students, he was quickly a convert to the program."

Procuring the car was a major priority, which Dr. Shallop undertook last summer. He notes the particular challenges to securing a donated car during the worst financial year the automotive industry has experienced in recent history. However, Circle Hyundai was very generous and provided the car at a substantial discount. High school parent organizations donated the remaining cost of the car. Circle Hyundai also supplied car kits which were raffled off monthly at student lunch hours to help build momentum for the program and the raffle. The car was decorated with removable decals. On one side it sports High School North's orange and black signature colors and Lion mascot motif, while the other side is adorned with the High School South blue and silver Eagle designs. The car was a visible symbol at many major events throughout the school year, including the traditional High School North and South Thanksgiving Day football game and the individual school Powder Puff games.

High School North's principal, Dr. Patricia Cartier, remarks on the program, "I believe that the *Driven to Excellence* program was a great motivator for our students to transcend the limits of mediocrity. I personally used the raffle tickets to recognize people who went "above and beyond" during the normal course of the day. It was my intent to recognize actions that were out of the ordinary, whether it was a student who went out of his/her way in the pouring rain to open a car door for a teacher who had an armload of books, or someone who volunteered to help out at Spirit Day, or an athlete who set a new school record, or a student who earned honor roll status for the first time. From my perspective, the raffle contest brought out the best in the majority of the student body and may have incited some of our more gifted students to excel even further."

Both schools have chosen the raffle event to stage a joint high school carnival, which will begin at 5:30 PM and features booth games, fundraising tables and entertainment by popular high school rock-n-roll bands. The momentum will be sustained to the end. At 7 PM, all festivities will cease and an escalating drum roll will preface the much anticipated announcement of four names drawn from the coupon raffle bin. Each student named on the ticket will be presented with the keys to a car, but only one will open the car door. Runners-up will be given laptops, donated by the Dell Corporation. The staff member who distributed the winning coupon will also receive a free Dell laptop. Paul and Robert DeFelice, owners of Circle Hyundai and a representative from the Dell Corporation will be at the raffle presentation.

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The press is welcome to attend this first-time event, which promises to be one of the major events ever held in the school district. Please contact the media relations specialist if you intend to attend.