

# HEALTHY HIGHLIGHTS

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## Showing gratitude helps you too

Gratitude can change your mindset in a positive way, said Dr. Deminico, director of CCSA middle school.

In a recent interview with the *Healthy Highlights*, she told reporters what she is grateful for and how she shows gratitude.

Showing gratitude can be beneficial for a person's physical and mental health, according to researchers at UCLA. It can reduce depression and anxiety. It also can improve a person's ability to deal with stress and help them sleep better, the researchers wrote in an article on the university's website.

The UCLA researchers say 15 minutes a day of practicing gratitude can make a difference in a person's health.

## School staff find ways to connect with others

CCSA staff members say they participate in chess, cooking, kickball, and other group activities to reduce stress and have fun, according to recent interviews with the *Healthy Highlights*.

Mrs. Piroso, a fifth-grade teacher who is the faculty adviser for *Healthy Highlights*, has formed friendships by playing chess online.

"It allows me to play with people ... all over the world whenever I want," Mrs. Piroso said. "I like doing this because it's challenging and I like seeing how others play."

Chess helps Mrs. Piroso feel like she is part of something, she said.

Connecting with others can help people deal with stress and improve their quality of life, according to experts at the Mayo Clinic, a large, well-known health organization. For instance, you may go to a

The following questions and answers from the interview with Dr. Deminico have been lightly edited.

**Q: Describe an experience you had recently where you felt grateful.**

**Dr. Deminico:** I was grateful to sell my mom's house that she had lived in for the past 70 years. Her neighbor who helps people buy and sell houses helped her. I appreciated that the neighbor was patient with my mom during the process.

**Q: How did this experience affect you?**

**Dr. Deminico:** It was sad because my mom had lived there so long. It was my childhood home. But I was

*(Please see Dr. Deminico on Page 2)*



Illustration by Tajah Freeman

*(Please see **Group** on Page 3)*

# How to spend less time on screens

Most students in Ms. Lopez's homeroom say they spend more than 11 hours a day looking at screens, according to a recent class survey.

About half the time they are using smartboards and computers at school. The rest of the time they are scrolling TikTok, watching videos, playing video games, and connecting with people on apps, they said.

The amount of time you spend in front of a screen seems to be less important than what you are doing on the screen, according to the video, "Screen Time: How much is too much?" which was produced by KQED Learn, a PBS station. Passive screen time is associated with negative feelings and behavior like laziness, the video says.

However, active screen time can be beneficial for physical and emotional health, according to the video. For instance, it can help you stay connected to a friend or relative.

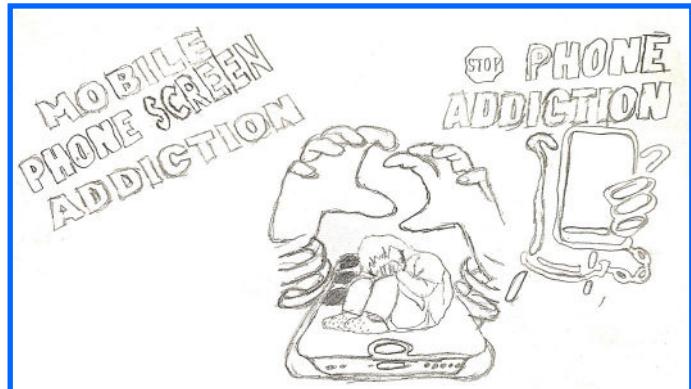


Illustration by Kone Henson, CCSA sixth grader

Ms. Lopez's students offered ways to spend less time on screens: Go outside. Catch up on sleep. Draw or color. Do schoolwork that doesn't involve screens. Connect with friends. Play a sport. Read a book. Spend time with your family.

## Dr. Deminico shares what she is grateful for

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also happy because my mom will now be safe and closer to me.

**Q: How do you show gratitude to others?**

**Dr. Deminico:** I like to express myself by writing a letter, sending an email or text, or just say face-to-face how grateful I am for them.

**Q: How do you like others to show gratitude?**

**Dr. Deminico:** I receive gratitude through people's actions like hugs or a smile.

**Q: How does it make you feel when others express that they are grateful for you?**

**Dr. Deminico:** I feel cared about and that I matter. It brings me joy. And I feel valued.

**Q: What are you grateful for?**

**Dr. Deminico:** I feel grateful that I have a job with teachers and children whom I learn from. That brings me joy. So do my own two daughters.

**Q: Is there anything else you would like to add?**

**Dr. Deminico:** It is important to show gratitude by being kind and caring. You can wake up every day and find something to appreciate. I try to show grati-

**Read what *Healthy Highlights* reporters say about gratitude on Page 4. What are you grateful for? Share your reflection with us. We may publish it in our next issue.**

tude every day. You can keep a journal to remind you about what you are grateful for.

**CCSA Healthy Highlights**

The *Healthy Highlights* is a publication of Chester Charter Scholars Academy in Chester, PA. Contributing fifth-grade reporters include Jayden Alonzo, Ava Berry, Rhyan Campbell, Moise Delevry, Tajah Freeman, Amarisa Frimpong, Carl Gethers, Sekou Jarbah, Parker Jones, Khasir Mills, Mia Padilla, Albert Payne, Damien Robertson, McKenzie Salmon, Lailah Saunders, Kendall Shaw, Isa Sims, Cedar Tibbels, Kaseem Walker, Layanni Watson, Na'Kai Weldon, and Mehkiyra Wilson.

The *Healthy Highlights*'s faculty advisor is Mrs. Piroso. The director of the middle school leader is Dr. Deminico.

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Healthy NewsWorks partners with elementary and middle schools to empower students to become researchers, writers, critical thinkers, and confident communicators.

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# Reporters share favorite activities

My mom and dad encouraged me to do cheer! The reason why I did it was because I needed to get out of my social bubble and make new friends. It also taught me how to dance and learn things faster.

—Ava Berry

I love soccer and I just have a perfect spot for it in my heart. This is how it happened. My classmates were playing soccer at recess and I wanted to join. So I asked, and ever since I've loved soccer. I play this game with passion.

—Carl Gethers

A group activity I participate in is soccer. I usually play soccer at recess with my friends and brothers. I enjoy playing soccer because it's very competitive and enjoyable. I play soccer because it's a very popular sport and you can make a living out of it and become one of the best soccer players ever. Soccer is good for my health because it makes me energetic and happy.

—Kaseem Walker

I play football and basketball with my friends during recess and sometimes on the weekends. I play football because when I was growing up, I saw my brother playing. I started playing basketball because I saw my sister play at CCSA. At first I didn't want



Illustration by Mia Padilla

to, but it grew on me, and I started liking it when I was around like 8 or 9. Football and basketball are good for me because they keep me active and moving throughout the winter and the summer.

—Khasir Mills

## Group activities can benefit your health!

(Continued from Page 1)

class or an event if you know people you care about will be there too.

Group activities include playing sports like soccer, but they also can involve participating in knitting clubs, art classes, choruses, community cleanups, and food drives.

Mrs. Ellis, a high school science teacher, connects with others at CCSA by being part of the school calendar committee. "I want people in the high school to know what's going on."

Mr. Jackson, a one-on-one teacher, said he played soccer, baseball, and basketball in high school. He was the captain of his varsity soccer team.

He said being on a team taught him about leadership, gave him a sense of belonging, and motivated him to keep improving. It also helped reduce stress and gave him a more positive outlook on life, he said.

Mrs. Henriquez, a special education teacher, said she connects with others through her role as a CCSA mentor teacher. She helps new teachers by answering questions and following up with them to help them feel comfortable in their jobs, she said.

Mrs. Shubert, a high school social worker, said she cooks and does outdoor activities with her sorority sisters. "Cooking is fun," she said, and helps her connect with other people.

"I think every adult can play a sport," said Mr. Merlino, an ELA support teacher, who plays kickball. His brother-in-law encouraged him to get involved.

Mr. Merlino said he likes to compete and meet new people. He also offered some advice: "It's okay to try new activities because it lets you have more friends."

—By Healthy Highlights staff

## In essays and letters

# Reporters express their gratitude

I am grateful for my family, my classmates, and the teachers that provide me insight.

I'm grateful for my family because they gave me the gift of having a home, a life, and people I can rely on. They buy the things I desperately want when I ask. And they care about me. They help me with my physical and mental health in ways I can understand.

I'm grateful for my teachers because they're the reason I can read, write, explain, and possibly get a job. They give me something I can do after I get home and they help prepare me for the outside world. They help me with my mental health because I'm always using my brain.

I'm grateful for my classmates. They do sometimes get on my nerves; but because of them, I have people I consider friends. Those are the three things I am grateful for. Without them, I don't know where I would be in life.

—Isa Sims

Dear Mrs. Piroso,

I want to give gratitude to everybody around me and I am thankful for you because you are a good teacher. You taught me to understand things better and do better in my sentences.

I think you, Ms. Westermann, and Ms. Bertha are all good teachers. You tell a lot of facts and talk a lot about theme and text structure and how the authors organize the text. You also taught us about the Arctic region and other regions like the Woodlands.

Sincerely,  
Na'Kai Weldon

Dear Ms. Watson,

I am appreciative of the way you taught me when I didn't understand something. You make me feel better when I am down or sad. The reason I wrote this letter is because I wanted to show you that I am grateful for you. I love how you are thoughtful and caring. I am grateful for the relationship we built.

When I wrote this letter it made me feel even more thankful and caring for you to be in my life. The things you do for me shows me what a healthy relationship looks like and makes me see what positive things look like when you do it for someone. Thank you for everything you do for me

Sincerely,  
Kendall Shaw



Illustration by Lailah Saunders

I am grateful for many things. We as humans take so many things for granted. I am thankful for life. Even if you take away your phone, tablet, and fancy food (for people who have that), we all still have a life. Life is everywhere. All the times you live, you have life. Everyone alive has a life. I express gratitude by breathing and praying.

I am appreciative of family and friends. No matter where you are or who you are, you still should have someone you can count on to help you through life.

I am grateful for our facilities. For example, the schools provide an ample education. Some facilities provide food. I think of the people who make what you get. It helps others to know you think of their hard work.

I am thankful for a shelter to live in. All my family lives there with me. It is in Chester where everyone is sort of a family.

—Cedar Tibbels