

DECEMBER 2020 | ISSUE NO. 5

# District Newsletter

## A Reflection

Dear CMCSS Employees,

We pursue careers in public education because we are driven to help students succeed. No matter what role you play in each child's educational journey, you give your time, energy, talents, and love to ensure your students flourish. This year has been exceptionally demanding, yet you continue to give because you are purpose-driven. This holiday season, give your mind, body, and spirit time to rest and recharge. Happy Holidays!

*One river gives*

*Its journey to the next.*

*We give because someone gave to us.*

*We give because nobody gave to us.*

*We give because giving has changed us.*

*We give because giving could have changed us.*

*We have been better for it,*

*We have been wounded by it—*

*Giving has many faces: It is loud and quiet,*

*Big, though small, diamond in wood-nails.*

*Its story is old, the plot worn and the pages too,  
But we read this book, anyway, over and again:*

*Giving is, first and every time, hand to hand,  
Mine to yours, yours to mine.*

*You gave me blue and I gave you yellow.  
Together we are simple green. You gave me*

*What you did not have, and I gave you  
What I had to give—together, we made*

*Something greater from the difference.*

Alberto Ríos



# Choosing to Lead

## HOW ONE FORMER STUDENT IS LEADING IN ATHLETICS, BUSINESS, AND THE CLASSROOM.

Nothing motivates educators more than knowing their students are succeeding. For Zavion Williams, he credits much of his extraordinary successes to the dedication of his former teachers. Now, he's back in the classroom with the desire to inspire the next generation.

Williams, a West Creek High alum, uses his natural leadership abilities to encourage the students at West Creek Middle to reach their potential.

From the beginning, Williams appreciated the opportunities school provided. At Hazelwood Elementary, he remembers the assemblies and community exposure. There was always something engaging for the students.

"My favorite teacher was Carol Berry," said Williams. In second grade, Mrs. Berry pushed her students to learn at a fourth-grade level, from complex concepts to their vocabulary. At one point, Williams's mother even began to question the teacher's methods. "Mrs. Berry just told her, 'I want my students to reach for the stars.' She just pushed us, and by the next year, I already felt advanced. From then on, I always made myself learn more and try to be ahead."

Push himself is exactly what Williams did. "I'm blessed to have teachers who were very involved. They cared about me as a student and an athlete." As a member of the basketball team, Williams was naturally in leadership positions. Through his athletic journey, he was able to experience more, including a championship run.

Between his sophomore and junior year, West Creek high opened, and Williams was part of the first group of students transferring to the new school. At first, he was apprehensive about having to switch schools. But eventually, he embraced West Creek High as another opportunity for growth.

After graduation, Williams attended Lipscomb University and Austin Peay State University, earning a degree in sports broadcasting. It was then that Williams connected with the basketball coaches at Northeast High, who encouraged him to consider assistant coaching. While there, Mandy Frost, now Assistant Principal at West Creek High, recognized there was something more to Williams. She noticed the connection he made with his athletes and his natural ability to develop relationships.





At the time, “education was nothing I thought I would be a part of, but [Frost] gave me the confidence and the opportunity,” said Williams. Mrs. Frost told him she saw how the students looked up to him and responded to his teaching. She encouraged him to consider a substitute teacher role.

While serving as a substitute and seeing the impact he made, Williams then decided to take the next step and become a teacher resident.

He feels the decision brought him full circle. “I’m a community advocate. I wanted to come back to the education field and help close the opportunity gap.” As a younger teacher, he feels his current experience is a tangible reminder to students that anything is possible.

“It’s easier for kids to associate themselves with someone who looks like them, acts like them, and is from their community to encourage them to do more,” said Williams. “There are a lot of voids in middle school that need to be filled.” As an African-American male, he feels he has the chance to build a strong foundation for many middle school students.

If serving as a teacher resident and a coach were not example enough, Williams continues to be the embodiment of a strong work ethic through his entrepreneurial spirit. Last year, Williams and a long time friend took a chance and filled out a grant application to open Fat Shack.

“I see the value of this city,” said Williams. Growing up as a military child, he saw the opportunity of the area. “[Fat Shack] is the first of its kind in the South.” The food is ‘late night done right’ with sandwiches, burgers, shakes, and more. Today, he continues to network with other business owners and community leaders. “You never know in the future how [the relationships you build now] will impact your future.” He knows meeting people and working with others is how his business will continue to grow.



The skills and experience Zavion Williams learned while in school have propelled him in life. Now, he is successfully showing the next generation how to do the same.

[WATCH THE VIDEO HERE.](#)

**"I wanted to come back to the education field and help close the opportunity gap."**

*Zavion Williams*



# BRINGING GOOD CHEER

Across the district, employees are finding ways to bring a bit of joy to the work day. Thank you to all of the employees who are bringing good cheer into our schools and buildings!

## HOSPITALITY HOT SHOTS

The hospitality committee at NWHS has been creative this year, coming up with safe, physically distant ways to stay connected.

From a Thankful Tree in the employee break room to theme days each month, the team has definitely put forth extra effort. "They have worked really hard to find creative ways to boost morale in the building."

## WINTER WONDERLAND

The Pre-K and Educational Assistants at Ringgold Elementary have created an immersive Winter Wonderland experience for students and staff alike. "The cheer this has brought to students, and other staff members, is second to none. We are grateful for each of them as they always go the extra mile for their students to feel welcomed & excited about school."

## SIMPLE GESTURES, BIG IMPACT

Mr. Sanders is a special education teacher at West Creek Elementary. He enters the building every morning with a smile. He holds doors for teachers and serves as a mentor for many students.

"His infectious laugh brings cheer to all those around him."

## PURE JOY

The staff at West Creek Elementary are quick to praise Iris Camacho. Ms. Camacho works as a Special Education resource and is "pure joy to be around."

"She volunteers for additional tasks and serves on the school's hospitality/staff morale committee. She brings in treats monthly to spoil teachers and staff members. We are so very fortunate to have Iris at West Creek."

## HAPPY HALLWAYS

Ms. Bean, 7th-grade Social Studies teacher at Kenwood Middle, keeps her team on their toes every day.

From sweet treats to kind words, Ms. Bean brings a positive energy to her hallway that motivates both her co-workers and the students.

## DECEMBER TO REMEMBER

Woodlawn Elementary is going all out this holiday season. Their "December to Remember at the Movies" encourages students and staff to come dressed as a favorite holiday movie each day.

The pre-determined calendar was sent home and included different classics all month long. Examples include "It's a Wonderful Life", where everyone wore a bell, and "Elf" where everyone will dress up as, you guessed it, an elf.





### IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS

Someone at Montgomery Central Elementary put Bath & Body Works hand soap in the restrooms, and the staff are delighted.

"Just that little thing brightens my day, every day!"

### BETTER THAN SANTA'S WORKSHOP

Mr. Joseph "Bubba" Cherry makes every season full of cheer. "He works tirelessly day in and day out to ensure that his construction students have the skills they need to be successful." Cherry and his students have completed two portables this school year to make space for additional students on the Rossview High campus. The work has given his students focus and consistency each week.

"His attention to detail and ability to lead students in completing projects brings cheer to many students and other teachers."

### DISPATCHING KINDNESS

Tracy Goode takes things the extra mile in the Transportation Dept. She is "always helping with extra routes" and bringing in special goodies for the dispatch team.

### DECK THE HALLS (AND FRONT OFFICE)

Trisha Fields, Office Assistant at ROHS, is instrumental in supporting positive cheer. She decorated the front office with holiday ornaments, trees, and wreaths. All of the festive decorations have brightened the spirits of those in the building.

"Daily, she provides a welcoming environment graciously greeting our students, parents, and visitors."

### SETTING THE BAR HIGH

At Montgomery Central Elementary School, they're satisfying their sweet tooth each Friday.

Ashley Stephens, the Academic Coach, is providing hot cocoa each Friday before school.

### THIS ELF MEANS BUSINESS

Cori Rowland and Patsy Rushing have been trying to bring their normal Christmas spirit into Business Affairs, but in new physically distant ways. The Business Affairs Elf, has now made an appearance.

He will hide somewhere on the 2nd floor of Central Services Gracey until December 18. Each day staff can search for the elf. When found, he can be returned for a prize! The best part, staff can then take part in hiding him for the next person.

### SNOWFLAKES AND SMILES

Taylor Kane, NWHs, knows the importance of a mental health break for her students. On the first snowfall of the year, she seized the opportunity for a simple pleasure - catching snowflakes.

"Little things like that spread the cheer and joy needed in a year like 2020."

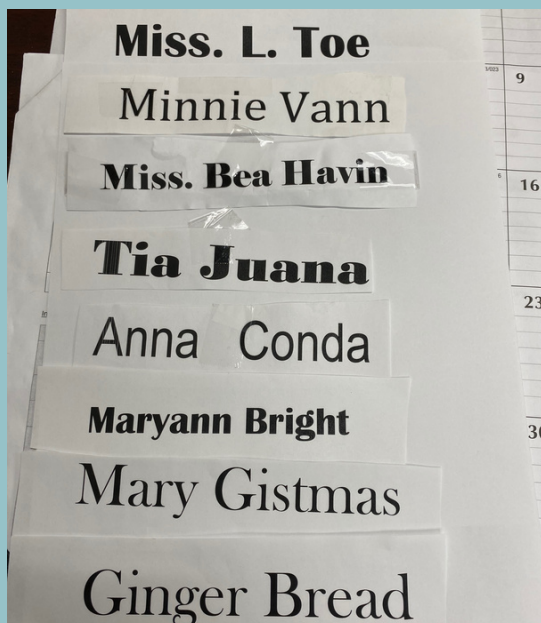
### 23 REASONS WHY

Ms. Woods, a 4th grade Math and Science teacher at Barkers Mill Elementary, is showing each one of her students they are a reason for celebration.

"She has created a poster in her classroom with 23 reasons she is thankful. Each line is specific to her students and their positive attributes."

This simple list shows each student why they're important.





### WHAT'S IN A NAME

Trish Dennis, Admin Asst at RoMS, began changing her nameplate after covering for a co-worker. "My name was Lee MeAlone. It was so funny to interact with people and explain how I got my name." Most of the parents believed that was in fact her real name that day.

"Now students and teachers will stop by just to see who I am today. I am so glad that I can make someone happy in such a small way."

### DOOR DECOR AND MORE

The team at Rossview High, including Mr. Milano, Ms. Wiens, and Ms. Aumiller, worked with a group of special needs students to create a festive holiday display throughout the school. From holiday door decor to kinetic sand snowmen the students enjoyed the activities.

They also created kinetic sand stress balls to share with teachers and staff.



### TEAM UGOTTHIS

Members of an anonymous employee appreciation team in the Technology Department at Central Services Gracey have been up to some good. They will secretly pass out creative messages and goodies for the members of their department.

"They're always encouraging, funny, uplifting and remind us that we are appreciated and valued as a team member. We love receiving them and appreciate them so much!"



# Save the Date

# ENGAGE<sup>21</sup>

## CMCSS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CONFERENCE

July 12-15 and 19-22

## CMCSS Micro-Credentials

### A DIFFERENT KIND OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Professional Learning is thrilled to announce a new type of learning opportunity for CMCSS educators! CMCSS micro-credentials are now open for enrollment on PLAN to certified staff and administrators.

#### WHAT IS A MICRO-CREDENTIAL?

A micro-credential is a digital badge that is earned once a candidate submits the required evidence of proficiency in a particular skill or subject. In CMCSS, candidates not only earn a digital badge for their efforts, they also receive professional learning credit.

[Click here to learn more](#)

#### HISTORY OF THE CMCSS EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION MICRO-CREDENTIAL STACK

Until now, the CMCSS Explicit Instruction Micro-Credential has only been available to CMCSS Site-Based Induction Specialists (SBIS) to strengthen mentoring practices. We would like to highlight the efforts of the initial cohort of Site-Based Induction Specialists who took part in this professional learning opportunity, earning all four Explicit Instruction badges. Congratulations to [these SBIS](#) who have earned the Explicit Instruction stack!

#### WHAT LEARNING IS AVAILABLE?

In addition to the four badges available in the Explicit Instruction stack, we are excited to announce a new micro-credential that focuses on supporting our English learners: Supporting Linguistically Diverse Students - Knowing Your Students.

*Coming in Spring 2021:*

Supporting Linguistically Diverse Students - Instructional Strategies

RTI2 101: An Overview of the Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI2) Framework

[Learn more about CMCSS micro-credentials on the Professional Learning Hub.](#)





## NEW! CMCSS-focused Podcast

HEAR FROM CMCSS PROFESSIONALS AS THEY DISCUSS THEIR LEARNING JOURNEY



### NEVER MISS AN EPISODE

*New podcasts will be added monthly.*

*All episodes are available through the Professional Learning Hub.*

**[LISTEN NOW](#)**

The Professional Learning team is diving into something new this year - podcasts. PL Surge will explore the world of CMCSS educators. Hosts Amanda Nicks and Brian Hampton guide listeners through first-hand stories and information as they connect with educators inside CMCSS.

On December 11, the first episode was released featuring Sam Lipsey. Sam is a second-year history teacher and assistant football coach at Northeast High School. In this episode, he explores the importance of taking a personal approach to building relationships with students. Hear why Lipsey's focused on inspiring the next generation, one student at a time.

Just released this week, Nicks and Hampton are joined by a dynamic team of educators. Whitney Phillips and Tony Taylor, from West Creek High School, along with their Technology Integration Coach, Jamie Wright, share the story of how Whitney and Tony flipped their classrooms months before COVID-19 emerged as a threat, and how this positioned them to continue effectively serving students in traditional, remote, and layered classrooms.

If you have an idea for a story, send an email to [PLSurge@cmcss.net](mailto:PLSurge@cmcss.net).





Education Foundation  
Clarksville-Montgomery County

# THE 2020-21 RECIPIENTS OF THE GREAT IDEA AND BIG IDEA GRANTS

## GREAT IDEA GRANT RECIPIENTS

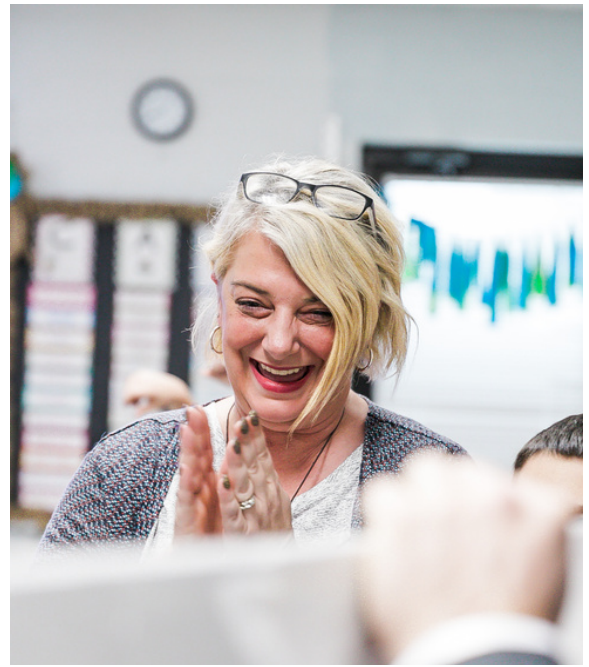
Ashley Stephens Amanda Tarver	Montgomery Central Elementary
Roxanne Morris	Rossville Middle
Elizabeth Bearden Amanda Tarver	Montgomery Central Elementary
Michelle Winters	Carmel Elementary
Yvette Childs	Kenwood Middle
Taylor Kane Sean Kirkpatrick	Northwest High
Kaitlyn Kinslow Vera Hyde	Ringgold Elementary
Andrew Streeter Angel Furcolowe	Central Services South
Kendra Poszywak	West Creek High
Jerita Reese	Kenwood Elementary
Leslie Helmig Jessica Lockett	Northeast Elementary

## BIG IDEA GRANT RECIPIENTS

Amanda Wilson Megan Cunningham	St. Bethlehem Elementary
Lindsey Boyd Smith Harris	Moore Magnet Elementary
Rachel Funderburk Brooklyn Sisk	Kenwood Elementary
Carla Offutt Katie Pece	Glenellen Elementary
Charles Simer	Northeast Middle
Amy Pemberton	Alternative School
Ashley Forbis Elaine Hoffert	Central Services South
Buddi Dean Cindy Adams Lisa Dominiak Brittini Schneider	Oakland Elementary
Christina Ploeckelman Anne Stritzel	Richview Middle

## COVID-19 RELATED GRANT RECIPIENTS

Emily Williams	<i>Minglewood Elementary</i>
Vanessa Paladino	<i>Ringgold Elementary</i>
Lindsey Boyd Smith Harris	<i>Moore Magnet Elementary</i>
Becky Padgett	<i>Rossvie High</i>
Jessica Holden	<i>Barkers Mill Elementary</i>
Michael Johnson	<i>Northwest High</i>
Raven Ketner Shelly Lazowski	<i>Rossvie Elementary</i>
Riley Braem	<i>Northwest High</i>
Kelly Robinson	<i>Northeast Elementary</i>



## CMC EDUCATION FOUNDATION Online TEACHER WAREHOUSE

SHOP FOR SUPPLIES

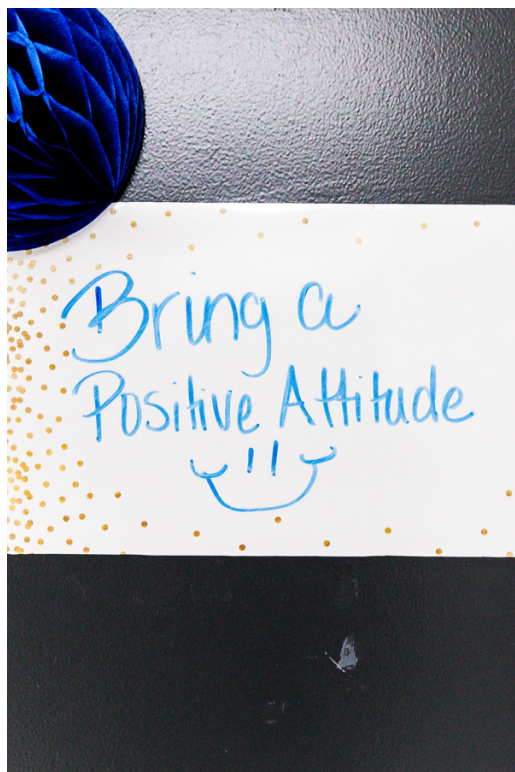
ONLINE

Teacher Warehouse Online opens back up to all schools on January 6 and closes on January 15. Each certified staff member will receive 20 points to spend on supplies that will be delivered right to your school.

Log onto the CMCSS portal and click on the Teacher Warehouse Online app to begin shopping.

Some items have limited quantity, so be sure to shop earlier during the week.

# Human Resources



## 2021 CONTRIBUTION MAXIMUM FOR 401(K) AND 403(B) RETIREMENT ACCOUNTS

The Internal Revenue Code limits the amount you can contribute each calendar year to 401(k) and 403(b) retirement accounts.

**The 2021 limits will remain the same as they were for 2020.**

The federal general limit for 2021 will be \$19,500.

If you are age 50 or older, the general limit contribution amount may be increased by an additional contribution of \$6,500.



## COLONIAL SUPPLEMENTAL INSURANCE AND MEDFSA/DCAP OPEN ENROLLMENT

The open enrollment period for Colonial plans is Nov. 2 – Nov. 30. Colonial provides supplemental insurance plans that include Short-Term Disability (which includes a Maternity Rider), Accident, Critical Illness and Cancer plans. The online enrollment form and instructions will be available on the Employee Benefits web page or [click here](#).

MedFSA & Dependent Care open enrollment will be Nov. 2 – Nov. 30. The 2021 enrollment form is available on the Employee Benefits web page under "Benefits Connection". You may use the following link to access the 2021 **enrollment form**. [Click here for the 2021 enrollment form](#).

## RETIREMENT INFORMATION MEETING

Three retirement meetings are scheduled for 2021. These meetings are very informative and open to all employees. We urge anyone who is considering retirement to attend one of the meetings. The content is the same for all of the meetings. Two of the meetings will be offered via Zoom and one meeting will be an in-person meeting. Information concerning the Zoom meeting links will be provided closer to the date of the meeting.

**Tues., Jan. 26 at 4:30 p.m.  
via Zoom**

**Thur., Jan. 28 at 5:00 p.m.  
held in-person in the Board Room  
at Central Services-Gracey**

**Tues., Feb. 2 at 4:30 p.m.  
via Zoom**



## IMPORTANT PHARMACY INFORMATION

Effective January 1, 2021 there will be changes to the formulary. The formulary is a drug list and contains important information about drug coverage. Our pharmacy benefit manager, EpiphanyRx, regularly reviews the formulary to determine drug coverage. Their most recent review indicated changes to the 2021 formulary are necessary. Members that will be impacted by the changes have received or will be receiving a letter from EpiphanyRx. Members that may have questions are encouraged to contact EpiphanyRx member services at 844-820-3260. The 2021 formulary document will be available, in the near future, on the [EpiphanyRx website](#).

## Need to Update Your Information?

### THE HR BENEFITS TEAM



**Amy Wigington**

E-mail  
P: 920-7810



**Donna McIntosh**

E-mail  
P: 920-7929



**Faye Tryon**

E-mail  
P: 920-7788



# COVID-19 Emotional Support for Educators

PHONE LINE TO PROVIDE  
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR  
FRONT-LINE WORKERS  
EXTENDED TO EDUCATORS



The Tennessee Department of Education and the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS), in partnership with several statewide organizations, announced the COVID-19 Emotional Support Line is now available for all Tennessee educators.

The emotional support line provides free and confidential support from specially trained volunteer mental health professionals to callers experiencing increased anxiety and stress due to the national pandemic. The COVID-19 Emotional Support Line is available to call at 888-642-7886 from 6 a.m.- 10 p.m. CT/ 7 a.m.- 11 p.m. ET daily.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about significant challenges, anxiety, and stressors for many, including those doing the work of educating our kids," said Commissioner Penny Schwinn. "We are grateful to our partners at TDMHSAS for extending access to this resource to all Tennessee educators, who now can get critical supports from trained mental health professionals in a confidential setting."

Specially trained mental health professionals answer incoming calls from the line and provide emotional support through active listening, helping callers identify and address basic needs, and informing callers about tools for managing stress and strategies for self-care.

In May, the COVID-19 Emotional Support Line was created by the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, along with the Mental Health Active Response Team (MHART), the Tennessee Association of Alcohol, Drug, and other Addictions Services (TAADAS), National Association of Social Workers-TN Chapter (NASW-TN), for healthcare workers and first responders who are on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic response.

"When we created this Emotional Support Line with our partners back in May, it was intended for those working on the front lines of the pandemic working in health care and as first responders. Due to the outpouring of support as well as capacity, we are grateful to be able to announce this expansion to offer needed support to educators across the state of Tennessee," said TDMHSAS Commissioner Marie Williams, LCSW.

"We at MHART are so thankful to be able to be a part of facilitating the expansion of this Emotional Support Line to all teachers and educators across the state of Tennessee. The fact that 5 statewide organizations have come together in the span of just a few weeks to support this expansion is a testament to the goodwill of Tennesseans and to the desperate need for a service like this for educators who have been struggling during this pandemic now more than ever. We are committed to being there for our teachers because they are committed to being there for our kids in one of the noblest and oldest professions. The future of our state depends on their success," said T.J. Stone, Executive Coordinator, MHART.

**The COVID-19 Emotional Support Line does not offer mental health treatment and is not intended to replace mental health crisis or suicide prevention services. [Learn more about the COVID-19 Emotional Support Line here.](#) Also available: [CMCSS Ability Assist through The Hartford Read: The Hartford Brochure](#)**



# #Heartwork

## Over 3,700 messages of hope and encouragement have been shared with CMCSS employees

Thank you to everyone who spent the time to send an uplifting message to a CMCSS employee. In just one month, students and staff have sent over 3,700 messages of gratitude and appreciation.

If you have not yet sent a #Heartwork, look for the app on your Classlink.

"Appreciation is a wonderful thing. It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well." - Voltaire

### Top Locations Where Messages Have Been Sent



**Kenwood Middle**

**Rossview Elementary**

**Northeast Middle**

**New Providence Middle**

**Rossview Middle**

#### HOW THE PROCESS WORKS

*Each person plays a vital role in the success of our students. Their hard work is heart work. If you have a specific staff member or group of people you would like to recognize, send a note through #Heartwork.*

- 1 Log on to Classlink.
- 2 Find the Heartwork app.
- 3 Follow the prompts to prepare your message to any CMCSS employee.
- 4 Your message will be reviewed and sent to the intended recipient(s).