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FRAMINGHAM

After-school program expands to Wilson Elementary, seeks volunteers

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By Matt Rocheleau, Globe Correspondent

A federally-funded after-school program, now in its seventh year and running in all three of Framinghamîs public middle schools, expanded to Woodrow Wilson Elementary School this year.

Because of the expansion, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program is in need of volunteers for the program which began on Monday at Wilson Elementary.

Managed by the state education department and by the townîs Community Resource Development office, the program is designed to level the playing field for low-income and minority students.

With about one staff member for every 10 students, the program is designed to ñreinforce academic skills, increase aspirations and engage youth in activities that develop excitement and purpose for their education and a sense of belonging in the community,ò said a press release about the program.

Students can get help with homework, participate in hands-on activities and join educational clubs such as Fun with Foods, Lego Robotics, CSI Framingham, Astronomy, Crocheting, Science Club and Rocketry. Transportation for students is provided free of charge.

ñOur programs need volunteers to help these students achieve even more,ò said volunteer coordinator Sybil Schlesinger.

She said the number of available volunteer positions is unlimited and that volunteers do not have to begin when the program begins.

Volunteers make a minimum six-week commitment to work the same day each week for one hour with middle school students or one-and-a-half hours with elementary students.

People can volunteers as aides or club partners.

Aides support classroom teachers by providing one-to-one and small group support to encourage students to stretch, experiment, learn from mistakes, and stay on task. Aides establish a closer relationship with one to three students, encourage conversation, offer praise, help with snack and homework, and/or support students' participation in enrichment club activities.

Club partners work with a classroom teacher to develop and run a 12-week enrichment club or to provide a specific activity during the course of a club. Those with a professional skill or hobby that may intrigue middle or elementary school students are encouraged to consider this option. Middle school clubs incorporate a mathematics component; elementary clubs include a vocabulary enrichment component.

This fall, the after-school programs run Monday through Thursday, until Jan. 21. Spring activities run Feb. 22 though May 20. Four-week summer sessions

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