



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Superintendent Shafer Leaves With A Splash

Sitting on a seat rigged to give out beneath her when the trigger was hit by a ball, Superintendent Shafer was the first up in the dunk tank. Central Office personnel were timid at first, until she went into the water for the first time. On Thursday, June 29th, Paterson Public Schools Central Office held its Annual District End Of the Year Barbeque at the Garrett Mountain Reservation in Woodland Park, N.J. There were softball games, cornhole games, volleyball and plenty of food. The event was organized and hosted by the Central Office Culture and Climate Committee (COCCC), a collection of office employees ranging from directors to maintenance personnel dedicated to creating events throughout the year that promote a healthy work environment and teamwork.

Superintendent Shafer, along with her assistant superintendents Luis Rojas and David Cozart Jr., volunteered for the dunk tank. Employees paid for the opportunity to dunk their leadership, with the money going towards the COCCC's fund for next year's events.

The COCCC is not part of any official initiative of the Paterson Public Schools district, but is a response to the stresses that face office workers who provide guidance and assistance to the District's 46 schools. While the schools have Social Emotional Learning services (SEL), counselors, and Student Assistance Coordinators (SAC) that help students and school staff, there are no full-time employees dedicated to the emotional support of Central Office workers. Throughout the 2022-2023 school year, several initiatives were introduced to address the growing stress of working in a post pandemic work environment. Superintendent Shafer approved mandatory Conflict Resolution Training events, scheduled periodically during the second semester of the school year. The District's Supervisor of Student Support Services Laurel Olson led a project to cover travel spaces, such as elevators and staircases, with SEL mottos and affirmations. She also provides a monthly self-care calendar that is shared with all District staff. Other events that took place in support of a positive culture at the Central Office were the short-term display of a SEL tree, which was an interactive display that allowed workers to write affirmations on paper cut-out leaves to be posted on a large paper tree in the lobby, and a college mixer in which employees would wear their alma mater attire.

"The importance of having an emotionally and mentally healthy work environment can't be emphasized enough," Superintendent Shafer said. "We are all working hard for the benefit of

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the students and faculty of our schools. Yet, while loving our students is a great part of the motivation to do well at our jobs, it's not enough to get a person through the day. We have to love our selves too, and that might mean taking a break or allowing ourselves to recognize when there's something wrong inside."

Noting that today was her next to last day working for the District, she stated that she was proud of how responsive the Central Office staff were to the SEL initiatives. "I loved working at the Central Office and care a great deal for the staffers there. It makes me happy to know that they will continue to do well for others, for themselves, and for each other."

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