

Brandon Pride

A Newsletter for Parents/Guardians and friends of Brandon at the suggestion of the parent advisory council

Upcoming Events

Every Wednesday-

School Field Trip

Every Thursday-

Resi Summer

Intramurals

July 8th-

State House

July 15th-

Fenway Park tour

July 22nd-

Higgins Armory Museum

July 25th-

Deep Sea Fishing

July 29th-

New England Sports Museum

August 9th-

Whale Watching

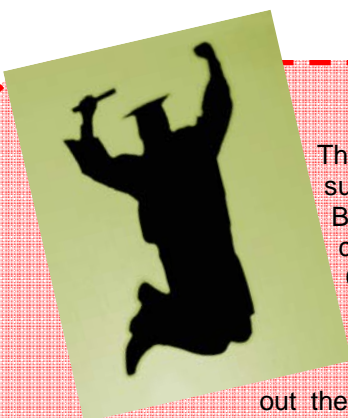
The boys are excited for MANY Friday afternoon trips for mini golf, beach, hiking, fishing & more! Also, we are pleased to welcome several guest speakers this summer!!



Student Activist



In October of 2008, Natick became the second town in Massachusetts to pass a by-law that requires an individual to be 18 to buy a lighter, and the first town mandating that lighters be kept off the counters where they are more accessible to children. A Brandon student, Ronald, initiated this bylaw by working with Lt. Arena at the Natick Fire Department. At the Natick town meeting Ronald received a standing ovation, a multitude of praises and since that time the story has had some press coverage. An article was printed in a local newspaper and Ronald was interviewed for a television story about novelty lighters. More recently Brandon was again contacted about our famous student as there is a law on the state house floor to ban novelty lighters statewide. Ronald was asked to write testimony to support the passing of this legislation. On June 25th Ronald attended the hearing where he was again recognized for his efforts to make our community a safer place. Ronald got to see the Mayor of Boston, the State Fire Marshall and met Brandon's friend, Sgt. Zipper, in addition to a number of other state representatives. What an inspiring message Ronald has shown us: with a little effort anyone can make a big difference. We are so proud of you Ronald!!!



Another Graduate!

The Brandon high school staff are proud to announce that Eric D. successfully completed his senior year while attending school at Brandon. Throughout the 2008-09 school year, our high school cluster leader, Melissa Perry, worked closely with Manchester, CT public schools to ensure that the appropriate standards set forth by the CT Dept of Education were addressed through his coursework and instruction at Brandon. In order to demonstrate this, Eric participated in a portfolio assessment throughout the school year which was submitted to Manchester, CT public schools for review. Eric worked hard to demonstrate his knowledge in the core content subjects while earning the required number of credits for graduation. After submission of the portfolio and a credit review, Eric was officially granted his high school diploma by Manchester, CT public schools in June. He worked diligently toward this goal and should be proud of this accomplishment. We are thrilled to welcome him among the ranks of high school graduates and wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

Here is Ronald's written testimony...

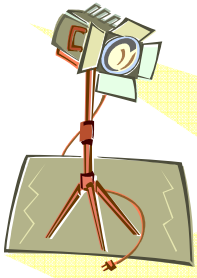
June 22, 2009

Dear Committee Chairs of the Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security,

My name is Ronald. I am a 12 year old and I've been living at Brandon Residential Treatment Center in Natick, MA for two years and a couple of months. One of the issues I've been working on is firesetting. I used to set fires because of anger, sadness, and because of some of my life situations. As part of my treatment I worked on a bylaw in Natick with Liz from Brandon and Lt. Arena from the Natick Fire Department. This bylaw which passed in October of 2008 prohibits kids under the age of 18 from buying a lighter and puts lighters behind counters, not on them. This is important because youngsters can think that lighters are toys and they can get hurt. Kids shouldn't have lighters because they could cause a big fire which might put a family out of their home and it can mess up their lives.

When kids can get lighters easily adults aren't doing a good job keeping them away. If there is a law to get rid of novelty lighters than there should be less lighters in kids' hands and then less fires.

I am in support of the bill "An Act to Prohibit Novelty Lighters in the Commonwealth" filed by Representative Alicea. I am asking you to please pass this bill to keep Massachusetts safer.



Student Spotlight

I am Shawn and I am 16 years old. I am from outside of Boston. Growing up was kind of difficult because my mom was asking a lot of responsibilities of me. I was the oldest and she had to take care of my youngest brother and she had a lot to do by herself. My dad was in New Hampshire with my step-mom and I would see him on visits. About a year ago I ended up at another program because of things I was doing that were endangering other people. At the other place I was pretty much sitting around doing nothing, and I wasn't getting the help that I needed. I stayed there for eleven months before coming to Brandon. At Brandon I've been getting the help that I've needed. I started doing family therapy with my dad. Our relationship wasn't really that strong but by doing therapy it's been getting stronger. When I was at other programs I started having a lot of anxiety which was a major problem. Here I'm start-

ing to work on it, learning ways to cope with it and things like that. The staff here make me more comfortable to talk to them, I don't feel like they make me feel like there is something wrong with me. I'm more open now and I'm learning how to trust people. I have a lot more confidence in myself. People are really proud of me because I am doing what I need to, I'm on the highest level at Brandon and I haven't gotten any consequences. My stage work I'm doing it kind of fast, but I'm also learning from it...doing it the right way. I'd say to other kids who start at Brandon, "Come in here and do what you have to do. Don't do anything stupid...it effects your work." In the future I want to leave Brandon, probably to go to a foster home for a couple of months. I'm planning on finishing school and going to college. I don't know what I'd like to be yet. While I'm at Brandon I'm going to try to do drivers ed so that I can drive when I get home. I thought that being in programs would be bad but in the end it's helped me with a lot of things.

Summer Program Jump Start

A big thank you goes out to our Brandon boys for updating and improving the Challenge Course for this summer. We have been able to add several new 'elements' to it for our Outdoor Education programming! We now have a teeter-totter platform called the "whale watch" with help from Adam, and Shawn. We have a new camp site thanks to Omar, Dayshawn, and John.



Our "nitro-crossing" is new and improved thanks to Jake's tireless efforts with the handsaw. Nick was unstoppable digging holes for setting our lumber. Our "spider-web" has an all new web and is ready to go. Our "storm the castle" wall is updated with new steps and hand holds. We now have a new "blind maze" thanks to the tireless raking efforts of AJ and Devon. We have paths that are clean and clear of debris and litter with help from middle school's F group, spending their PAYA period to help out the school.



We have re-routed our pathway to a safer location, moving large rocks and logs and setting new steps with Ernesto, Mario, Jim and Morgan. Ron and Xavier spent their free time, raking and moving materials to the building sites. Our boys learned about leveling, digging post holes and pouring quick cement. They learned how to safely use tools to make all these projects possible; "to measure twice and cut once." We are incredibly grateful and so proud of their efforts. Our boys have left their mark on Brandon in a great positive way. They've created something they can enjoy and continue learning team building skills that will last them a lifetime.