



2005 Fairfax County Volunteer Service Award Narrative Statement

WEST*GROUP is a full-service real estate development, construction, brokerage, and management organization with over four decades of experience in the D.C. metropolitan area. The firm is highly acclaimed for pioneering the first quality mixed-use office parks in the region.

Starting in the 1960's when the principles of WEST*GROUP stepped in to help Fairfax County purchase Burke Lake Park as well as Westgate Park in McLean, to the 1970's when WEST*GROUP principles provided the office space and funding to help build Wolf Trap Farm Park for the Performing Arts, to the 1980's when WEST*GROUP was instrumental in saving both the Claude Moore Colonial Farm at Turkey Run and McLean Project for the Arts from extinction, to the 1990's when WEST*GROUP started its partnership with Westgate Elementary School, the owners and employees of WEST*GROUP have developed strong ties to the community through their business and through their service.

WEST*GROUP encourages their employees to serve the community in a volunteer capacity and they have been generous in allowing employees to form partnerships with charitable organizations. Last year WEST*GROUP supported over 100 community groups with financial contributions. WEST*GROUP reaches out extensively to their community and one of the ways they have demonstrated this commitment to community relations is by supporting Westgate Elementary School in many different ways.

The partnership between WEST*GROUP and Westgate Elementary is exemplary. The employees at WEST*GROUP know many of our staff and students personally and employees often come to the school to meet with the teachers and to volunteer for the programs WEST*GROUP coordinates. There is constant communication between WEST*GROUP and Westgate Elementary throughout the school year.

WEST*GROUP supports our character development by sponsoring luncheons twice a year. At two different times during the year, our students (two from each grade level) who have shown that they follow the 'Westgate Way' (our code of conduct) go to WEST*GROUP for a special pizza lunch. While visiting WEST*GROUP, the students tour the building, meet with the CEO and Vice

President, learn about their neighborhood which WEST*GROUP developed, and complete a hands-on architectural project. This is a very positive experience for our students.

WEST*GROUP works closely with our art teacher and displays student art work in the halls of the WEST*GROUP building. New art work is displayed every six weeks. The Vice President of Administration, Keith Turner, attends our end of the year awards assembly where he distributes a certificate and art book to every student who had work exhibited through the school year. Throughout our partnership, WEST*GROUP has also sponsored art contests and given prizes to the winning artists.

WEST*GROUP has made sizeable financial donations to our school so we can purchase much needed materials to increase student learning. Last year, our school purchased a SMART Board for the computer lab, a much needed addition to our technology program. WEST*GROUP donations have also funded additions to text sets in our book room and our modular playground. Last year WEST*GROUP donated computers and tables for our computer lab. In addition to the landscaping projects they have already completed at Westgate Elementary, WEST*GROUP is currently working on a new landscaping project that will add stone walls, planters, trees and shrubs to the front of our school, and create a butterfly garden on the side of our school. This project will cost approximately \$16,000.

WEST*GROUP provides volunteers during our after school Reading Club to help our students read. WEST*GROUP has two volunteers come each week to help students read. They read out loud to the 'reading buddies', talk about the book, and provide support to students as they read. The teachers often have the same students approaching them at the beginning of each reading club meeting to ask, "Can I have a reading buddy today?" The kids really love the one-on-one attention.

WEST*GROUP annually publishes the Westgate literary magazine and student directory. During the school year, teachers collect samples of good writing for the school literary magazine. Every single student submits a piece of writing for the magazine, and WEST*GROUP puts them all together into a book with a color cover designed by a student. WEST*GROUP publishes enough books for EACH student to receive one free of charge. It is a wonderful way for students to see their writing in a published format. They look forward to receiving their literary magazine each year, and we also have enough to keep copies in our classroom libraries.

During the holiday season, WEST*GROUP supports six needy Westgate families. They purchase and wrap gifts for all the children as well as a special gift for the

parents. When the parents are coming to pick up the presents, there are many who give our Principal hugs and are in tears showing their appreciation.

A successful business partnership takes leadership, commitment, inspiration, and vision. WEST*GROUP demonstrates all these attributes as they work to support our students and develop a strong relationship with the community. WEST*GROUP is constantly looking for other ways to help, and letting us know that they are open to any ideas or suggestions. We have enjoyed working with WEST*GROUP, and look forward to continuing the positive relationship between Westgate Elementary School and WEST*GROUP.



FAIRFAX COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WESTGATE ELEMENTARY

7500 Magarity Road
Falls Church, VA 22043

February 4, 2005

Dear Keith,

I want to share a wonderful story told to my first grade class by Meena Naimee, our representative to the WEST*GROUP Westgate Way luncheon. Meena is normally shy and timid in the classroom. As an emigrant child from Afghanistan she often seems fearful and hesitant. She left somewhat nervously for the big event on Wednesday but she returned like a mini executive back from a board meeting. Proudly strutting into the room sporting her spotless white safety helmet, Meena took the speaker's chair at the front of the room with more confidence than I have ever seen. The students gathered on the rug and eagerly asked her all the familiar questions: "What did you have for lunch? Did you get to play games? Did they give you any candy or toys?"

Meena looked at the group seriously before she answered. The room got very quiet. Then in a sincere voice she explained that WEST*GROUP is a company that builds tall buildings and does nice things for people. She told us that in 36 years Tyson's Corner will be a big city. She said a train will be built from Washington DC to Tyson's so people can come to shop and visit. One of my better math students said, "Gee, I'll be 42 years old!"

Meena went on to describe what the city would look like and she conveyed the feeling that this trip to WEST*GROUP had included her in the plan. For once she had experienced something no one else in the room could imagine. When she announced she had ridden in a teacher's car to arrive at the luncheon everyone was impressed. After she answered all the familiar questions, she proudly displayed her WEST*GROUP certificate to the envy of all.

This was a very positive experience for Meena and something she will never forget. I am grateful to WEST*GROUP not only for their generous support to Westgate Elementary but to the special attention they give to individual students. It's making a difference!

Sincerely,

Sharlie Schmidli
First Grade Teacher

WEST*GROUP Westgate Way Luncheon



Westgate Elementary Student Artwork Display at WEST*GROUP



