

PMSD CONNECT ON



Our Mission: To Prepare All Students for Tomorrow's Challenges and Opportunities

Pocono Mountain School District 2016-2017 Issue 3

News Bits

Full-Day Kindergarten Registration Underway for 2017-18 School Year: Contact the Student Registration Center at (570) 839-7121 ext. 40400 to schedule an appointment. Children must be 5 years old on or before September 1, 2017.

Last Day of School: June 8, 2017 is the last day of school for students.

2017 Graduation Dates:

- PM East HS – Friday, June 9, 2017, at 6 p.m. in the stadium
- PM West HS – Saturday, June 10, 2017, at 10 a.m. by lot C

New immunization requirements: The Pa Department of Health is changing the school immunization regulations beginning August 2017. The new requirements go into effect for the start of the upcoming 2017-18 school year. See article on page 4.

Free immunization clinic: The PA Department of Health offers a free immunization clinic for the uninsured and underinsured on the first and third Thursday of every month from 9 a.m. to noon at the Monroe County State Health Center, 1972 W. Main St., Ste. 102, Stroudsburg, PA 18360. The clinic is by appointment only. To schedule an appointment, community members should call the PA Department of Health at 570-424-3020.

Summer Energy Conservation Hours: All Pocono Mountain SD offices and buildings will be closed on Fridays from June 16 through August 18. District employees switch to a 10-hour work day schedule throughout that time period.

First Day of School for 2017-18 School Year: The first day of school for students for the 2017-18 school year is September 5, 2017. The 2017-18 school calendar is available on the PMSD website at www.pmsd.org

PMSD earns second national Music Education recognition

By Wendy Frable
Director of Public Relations

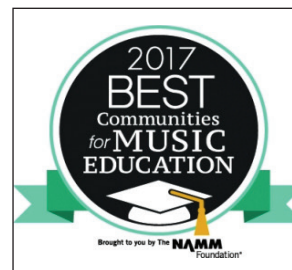
Pocono Mountain School District was named as one of the 2017 Best Communities for Music Education by the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) foundation.

Pocono Mountain SD is one of only 527 school districts across the United States to receive this recognition, out of the nation's 13,515 school districts, placing the District's program in the top 3 percent of school district music programs across the country.

This is Pocono Mountain's second year of being recognized as one of the nation's best communities for music education.

"I am extremely proud of our K to 12 music program here in Pocono Mountain School District," said Dr. Elizabeth Robison, Superintendent of Schools. "Our K-12 Music and Fine Arts programs are thriving thanks to the hard work and dedication of our entire music education team, and the support of our parents, Board of Education, Administrators, community partners, and booster clubs. Most importantly, our students are excelling in these programs."

The Best Communities for Music Education list recognizes outstanding efforts by teachers, administrators, parents, students and community leaders who work together to ensure access to music learning for all students as part of the school curriculum.



East & West High Schools earn Bronze

Pocono Mountain School District's two high schools made the *U.S. News & World Report* list of best high schools in Pennsylvania for the third consecutive year.

The rankings highlight the top performing public high schools at the national and state level, based on the publication's analysis of published data on more than 22,000 schools. *U.S. News & World Report* awards Gold, Silver



Pocono Mountain East and West High School musicians participated in the Marywood University Senior Wind Band Celebration in January. (Photo by Tim Eick, PM East HS Band Director)

"It is an incredible honor to have our K-12 Music and Fine Arts program recognized by NAMM as one of the best," said Dr. Catherine Sweeney, the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum. "While many school districts

have reduced their Music and Fine Arts offerings, we continue to improve and expand these opportunities for our students. Our team of music educators and administrators developed a topnotch Music and Fine Arts curriculum to help our students

grow and achieve artistically and academically." NAMM will formally recognize the Pocono Mountain SD Music and Fine Arts program at the May 17, 2017 School Board Meeting.

and Bronze medals to schools that demonstrate the greatest level of college readiness.

PM East and West High Schools each earned Bronze medals from the publication. Approximately, 17 percent of eligible schools, 148 schools in Pennsylvania, earned Bronze medals based on student performance indicators such as state exams, Advanced Placement course offerings, etc.

From the Superintendent...

By Dr. Elizabeth Robison
Superintendent of Schools

Normally, when I talk to parents about positive parent involvement, I am encouraging parents to get more involved in the planned activities and events at our schools, which can make such a tremendous difference in our schools and for our students.

I still want to encourage that important type of positive parent involvement, but I also wanted to communicate here about a different type of parent involvement. Our schools need all parents to be as actively involved as possible in monitoring their children's Internet and social media use to ensure it is appropriate and constructive. There are so many positive and educational uses of the Internet and social media, but there are also many negative and destructive uses of this type of technology that continues to impact the students in our schools and in schools across the nation.

A growing concern I have is with our students using technology such as smart phones and social media being exposed to inappropriate sexual content and sexting. School administrators across the nation are seeing younger and younger students involved in sexting and viewing material with sexual content on the Internet.

The experiences of school administrators is supported by data from the 2015 Pennsylvania Youth Survey of students in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12, where students were asked to respond to the question "In the past 12 months, did anyone on the Internet ever try to get you to talk online about sex, look at sexual pictures, or do something else sexual?" Our Pocono Mountain students in grades 10 participated in the 2015



PAYS, as did students from two other school districts in the county.

Of concern, 33.2 of 10th graders in Monroe County, higher than the state average of 26.0 percent, answered yes to this question. While our district did not have students in grades 6

or 8 participate in the 2015 PAYS, 9.4% of 6th graders and 20.2 percent of 8th graders across PA reported that someone on the Internet had tried to get them to talk online about sex, look at sexual pictures, or do something else sexual.

More alarming, the Futures without Violence Fact Sheet on emerging issues facing tweens and teens reports the following:

- One in three 14-24 year olds have engaged in some form of sexting. Fifteen percent had sent naked videos or photos of themselves and one-third (33%) had received texts or online messages with sexual text.
- Approximately one half of those who sent a nude photo felt pressured to do so.
- Young persons who have sexted are four times more likely to consider suicide compared to peers who have not sexted.
- Among teens, ages 11-18 years old, 15.9% of boys have received naked/semi-naked pictures of someone from their school in the past 30 days and 8.1% sent naked/semi-naked pictures of themselves to others in the past 30 days.
- One in five teen girls and one in ten younger teen girls (13 to 16) have electronically sent or posted nude or semi-nude photos or videos of

themselves. Even more teen girls, 37 percent, have sent or posted sexually suggestive text, email or IM (instant messages).

The damage caused to our youth with sexting can be quite severe. First, there may be legal consequences for youth involved in sexting. Even more concerning is the emotional damage that can be done when an image the sender intended for one person is then shared with others. The serious social and psychological consequences of sexting can include bullying, social isolation, shaming and severe anxiety, fear and depression.

I need your help. Please actively monitor how your children are using the Internet and smart phone apps such as Audio Manager, Calculator%, Vaulty, Snapchat, Burn Note, Line, Omegle, Tinder, Blendr and KiK Messenger.

Also, please talk to your children about sexting. There is an excellent *Just Talk* video on Respect located on the Weller Health Education Center website (<http://www.wellercenter.org/home/resources/just-talk.aspx>) that encourages parents to talk to their children about sexting and other issues impacting teens.

Another great resource is available on the American Academy of Pediatrics website (<https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/news-features-and-safety-tips/Pages/Talking-to-Kids-and-Teens-About-Social-Media-and-Sexting.aspx>) on "Talking to Kids and Teens About Social Media and Sexting."

In the fall we will seek your permission to allow your children in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 to participate in the 2017 PAYS. We hope you will allow your children to take this important survey, because the data from this survey helps us to better understand any emerging or changing risk behavior of our students. We also use this data to ensure we have the necessary programming and supports in place to meet the needs of our students.

Clear Run Intermediate hosts Social Media: Are Your Children Safe?

Pocono Mountain School District will present a program for Clear Run Intermediate School parents on "Social Media: Is Your Child Safe?" on Tuesday and Wednesday, May 23 and 24, from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., in the school cafeteria.

Doors will open at 5 p.m., and dinner will be provided to attendees at 5:30 p.m. as part of the program. The program will be held prior to the Grade Band and Chorus Concerts each day, which will start at 7 p.m.

Don't Miss - Social Media: Are Your Children Safe? - May 23 & 24, at CRIS

"Social Media: Is Your Child Safe?" is designed to make parents aware of the potential concerns that can arise when youth use digital devices and tools.

Topics to be covered include:

- Potential risks related to digital use,
- Pocono Mountain SD's role in educating students on technology use,
- The role of law enforcement and the courts,

- Managing the digital lives of our children,
- Tips for being a good digital parent or guardian.

Presenters for the program are as follows:

- Dr. Elizabeth Robison, Superintendent of Schools
- Ms. Beth DeLay, Director of Health and Physical Education
- Ms. Regina Schank, Principal of Clear Run Intermediate School

- Dr. Stephen Spengler, Director of Instructional Technology
 - Officer Erica Burke, School Resource Officer/Pocono Mountain Regional Police Department
 - Detective Ryan Venneman, Pocono Mountain Regional Police Department
 - Detective Brian Webbe, Monroe County District Attorney's Office
- District and school officials ask parents to please attend this important digital safety program at Clear Run Intermediate School.

Pocono Mountain School Board enhances senior citizen property tax rebates again

By Wendy Frable

Director of Public Relations

The Pocono Mountain School District Board of Education approved a resolution at the April 5, 2017 School Board meeting to continue enhanced property tax rebates for eligible property owners for the 2017-2018 tax year.

With the enhanced rebate resolution, qualifying property owners will receive their state rebate and up to 200 percent of that amount in a rebate from the school district for the second tax year.

For many years, the District matched the state program established by the PA Senior Citizen's Property Tax and Rent Rebate Program Act. This meant eligible property owners age 65 and older, widows and widowers age 50 and older, and people with disabilities with qualifying incomes can receive up to \$650 property tax rebate and up to a \$650 property tax rebate from the district.

In April 2016, the School Board approved enhancing the property tax rebates to provide additional tax relief above the state rate for qualifying property owners.

Who Qualifies?

The guidelines for individuals to qualify for the state and Pocono Mountain SD property tax rebate programs are as follows:

- Must own and have occupied their home as their primary



Reducing the tax burden...Your Pocono Mountain School Board - (row 1, left to right) Annabella Lastowski, Rusty Johnson (President), Jackie Leonard and Michael Stern; (row 2, left to right) John Davis, Ed Coover, Dawn Wood, John Coyle (Vice President) and Ricky Smith.

residence during the school year of which the tax rebate is being requested, and

- They or their spouse must have been at least 65 years old as of December 31, or
- They were permanently disabled during all or part of tax year, or
- They must be 18 years or older during 2016, and were unable to work because of a permanent medically determined physical or mental disability.
- Also, their total tax year household income, including their spouse's, must have been \$ 35,000 or less. Fifty percent of social security/ railroad retirement income shall be excluded in determining eligibility income limits, and
- They or someone on their behalf must have paid the school taxes in full on the residence for applicable school year by December 31, and

- Only one member of each household may file a claim even if more than one person is qualified to receive a rebate.

The application to apply for a property tax rebate and other information on the program are available to qualifying property owners from Pocono Mountain SD on the school district's website at www.pmsd.org under the Business Office

Individuals who do not have access to the Internet may call the Pocono Mountain business office at (570) 839-7121, extension 10158 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. for more information.

In addition to property tax rebates, the Pocono Mountain SD Board of Education has provided property tax relief through millage reductions of 10 mills over the past four fiscal years, which run from July 1 to June 30.

Debt refinancing move saves PMSD nearly \$22 million

By Wendy Frable

Director of Public Relations

Pocono Mountain School District was able to lock in a final net debt savings, after all costs of issuance, of \$21,768,000 in its latest bond refinancing move.

In September, the School Board approved a general obligation bond debt refinancing plan that had the potential of saving the District as much as \$22 million in debt service payments over the life of the bonds.



That potential savings became a reality when the new bonds were issued on Tuesday, November 1, 2016, just prior to the presidential election and the December Federal

Reserve meeting to discuss interest rate hikes.

This bond refinancing action also reduced the term of the debt repayment by three years.

The financial outlook for Pocono Mountain School District continues to strengthen.

In March 2016, Moody's upgraded the district's underlying ratings from Baa2 to A1 for general obligation unlimited tax bonds, and from Baa3 to A2 for general obligation limited tax bonds.

Budget Update

The Pocono Mountain School District Board of Education has approved a preliminary budget for the 2017-18 fiscal year that holds the line on property taxes, with no tax increase.

Between now and June 30, when the final 2017-18 General Fund Budget for the District must be approved, the School Board and Administration will continue to work on the estimated expenditures and projected revenues for the budget.

Also, District officials hope to receive additional information regarding the status of the 2017-18 state budget, which Governor Wolf proposed on February 7, 2017. The budget has not been approved at this time.

At the School Board meeting on May 3, 2017, the School Board asked the Administration to look for expenditure reductions, with the goal of providing at least an additional 2 mills of property tax relief to District property owners.

The School Board is committed to working to provide tax relief to District property owners, as demonstrated by the following budget actions:

- 2012-13 - Flat/No tax increase
- 2013-14 - 2 mill reduction
- 2014-15 - 4 mill reduction
- 2015-16 - 2 mill reduction
- 2016-17 - 2 mill reduction
- 2017-18 - 2 mill reduction (tentative)

The District's Chief Financial Officer, Joseph Colozza, will present updates to the School Board and community on any changes to the proposed 2017-18 General Fund Budget at the regularly scheduled meetings of the Board of Education on May 17, 2017 and June 7, 2017 at 7 p.m. in the Administration Building.

Gaming revenue allocation set for District property owners

By Wendy Frable

Director of Public Relations

The Pocono Mountain School District Board of Education will vote on a resolution at the May 17, 2017 Board Meeting that will allow Pocono Mountain SD property owners to receive up to \$428 in property tax relief as part of Pennsylvania's broad-based property tax relief from gaming revenue.

As required by law, the Commonwealth's Budget Secretary certified on April 15, 2017, that \$619,300,000 in state-funded local tax relief will be available for 2017-18 in state-funded local tax relief.

The tax relief for approved property owners in Pocono Mountain School District is based on the number of approved homesteads and farmsteads. For the 2017-18 school year, there are approximately 14,470 approved homesteads and farmsteads. The actual amount of tax relief property owners see on their property tax bills could be different based upon the number of approved homesteads and farmsteads each year.

If less people applied for and were approved for the Homestead/Farmstead exclusion than expected, property owners could see slightly more tax relief. If more property owners applied for, and were approved, then individual property owners could see less tax relief.

Rebate checks are not issued for the property tax reduction allocation. Instead, state gaming funds will be remitted to school districts to help offset school property taxes via an approved homestead and/or farmstead exemption. Homeowners with an approved Homestead/Farmstead

Exclusion Application will see the exclusion amount annotated and deducted on their 2017 property tax bill.

Gaming funds dedicated to property tax relief pay for a Philadelphia Wage Tax reduction, Philadelphia Senior Citizen Property Tax reduction, allocation to districts for Philadelphia Wage Credit, expanded Senior Citizen Property Tax & Rent Rebate Program, and the state allocation to the remaining school districts.

This amount of gaming funds dedicated to property tax relief will vary each year, which means the amount of property tax relief for property owners will also vary each year.

Who will receive the tax relief?:

For property owners to receive tax relief, they had to have filed their Homestead/Farmstead Exclusion Application with the Monroe County tax office by March 1, 2017, and received a notice back from the County that their application was approved. Property owners who received property tax relief last year, may qualify and do not have to reapply each year.

What happens to property owners who didn't apply for the Homestead/Farmstead Exclusion?:

For those property owners who have not filed their Homestead/Farmstead Exclusion application, district officials encourage them to do so in order to be eligible for tax relief the following year if funding is available. If they apply today and their application is approved, they will not qualify for this year's tax relief, but will qualify for any future tax relief when available.

The applications and information on how to apply are located on the District website at www.pmsd.org under the Departments, Business Office and the PA Homestead/Farmstead Exclusion page.



Congratulations to the East High School Odyssey of the Mind team - Kristina Rinaldi, Briana Dilger, Nikki Evans, Danielle Kunkel, Samantha Gallo, Matthew Medaugh, and Oliver Bohorquez, and coaches Jill Dorn and Kevin Semian – on qualifying to compete at the World Odyssey of the Mind Competition at Michigan State University, May 24 to 27. OOTM is available to students in elementary and secondary grades.

Great things happening in PMSD

By Rob Melosky

Coordinator of Co-Curricular & Athletic Operations

Research shows that students who are involved in co-curricular and athletics are more likely to attend school regularly, do better in school, and graduate from high school on time.

A quick glance at the photos on the Pocono Mountain School District website (www.pmsd.org) showcases some of the many co-curricular and athletic activities available to students throughout the district to keep students actively engaged in school.

The District offers 95 co-curricular activities and 114 athletic and intramural teams for students. Activities are available to students from elementary through high school, and activities vary based on the interests and needs of the students in each school.

For parents and students who may not have checked out the District website recently, here are just a few highlights of the great things our students are accomplishing through their participation in co-curricular and athletic activities:

Moody's Mega Math Challenge:

The East High School team of Eric Dittmar, Danielle Shermock, Michael Medaugh, Kayla Gerenza, and Matthew Velardi received an Honorable Mention and \$1,000 for their noteworthy solution and mathematical efforts in Moody's Mega Math Challenge.

Science Olympiad: Amanda Gerenza and Michael Medaugh from the East High School won second place in Microbe Mission and first place in Anatomy and Physiology at the Science Olympiad.

Competitive Spirit: Congratulations to our East and West cheerleaders in their big wins at the District 11 Competitive Spirit Championships. The East team placed first in the large division. The West team placed first in the coed group.

Wrestling: West Panther wrestler Greg Bensley, a junior, won the West High School's first state medal in wrestling. Greg earned an 8th place finish at 220 pounds at the state competition in Hershey. Greg also finished 3rd in the District XI tournament and was named to the EPC All-Star First Team

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Don't forget the special 3-hour early dismissal for students Wednesday, May 17!



The West High School Student Council earned the 2017 National Association of Student Councils National Gold Council of Excellence seal for leadership and excellence as a student council.



Thirty-nine students from the East High School, West High School, and East Junior High School competed in the Regional PA Junior Academy of Science earning 24 First Awards, 14 Second Awards, and one Third Award. We also had four students earn Excellence Awards, four receive Perseverance Awards, and three earned perfect scores. First Award winners will join over 3,000 students from all over the state to compete at the PJAS State Meeting held at The Pennsylvania State University on May 14-16.

Activities promote student success

Continued from Page 4

for the 2016-2017 season by the EPC wrestling coaches.

Swimming: West Panther Patrick LaBella earned 4th place in the 50 Freestyle at the District 11 championships. Patrick, a senior, broke his 50 Freestyle record with a time of 21.64 and qualified for states.

Mock Trial: The East Mock Trial team won the Region 10, District 2 Mock Trial competition and represented all of the Monroe County at the Regional Mock Trial Competition against Abington Heights School District in March.

When it comes to the arts, no one can touch Pocono Mountain SD. For the second year, our music program received the National Association of Music Merchants award as one of the Best Communities in Music Education

and our student artists from the East and West have their artwork on display at various art competitions throughout the school year. Some other notable accomplishments of our student artists are as follows:

West High School junior Angelina Kimmins' poster was selected as a grade winner in the PA Liquor Control Board's 2016-17 Alcohol Awareness Poster Contest. Angelina's poster will appear in a special calendar distributed across the state.

East and West High School student artists had their artwork on display at the 6th Annual Arts in the Office art show at the Citizens Savings Bank in Mount Pocono.

West and East National Art Honor Society students partnered to decorate 12 amazing globe ornaments for the Pennsylvania Christmas tree on display at the



The East Cardinals Chess team earned their 3rd consecutive EPC title, adding to their winning streak of 17 consecutive conference titles. The team also was named the 1st Place Team at States for the 7 to 12 Under 1300 section. At the state competition Paul Nyberg placed Third and Harris Bilal placed Fourth. In Divisional competition, Nicholas Malyszko was named the Individual First Place Finisher for the 7 to 12 Under 1000 section winner, and Jacob Escuza tied for 10th Place in this competition. Thomas Fisher and another student in the state share the title for the Top 10th grade player in the state.



The West Panthers Speech and Debate Team (pictured here) had the following students qualify and compete at the State-level competition: Pat LaBella, Nick Opromollo, Abigale Brown, Chris Brazevicke, Phillip Niewiarowski, Faith DeJesus, Jondi Harley, and Jamise Sealey.

Also, three students from West qualified to compete in the National Catholic Forensic League 2017 Grand National Tournament in Louisville, Kentucky, on Memorial Day weekend. Senior Abigale Brown will compete in prose and poetry, while Seniors Patrick LaBella and Nick Opromollo will compete in the public forum debate. Abigale goes into the Grand National Tournament with a state title in hand. She was named Pennsylvania's poetry champion at the Pennsylvania High School Speech League Tournament at Bloomsburg University last month.

National Christmas Tree Display in the Presidential Park on the South end of the White House.

If athletics, music, art and science competitions aren't of interest to your children, the District also offers Walking/Fitness Clubs, Project Purple, Anime, Reading Olympics, Technology Club, Poetry Club, Envirothon, Green Club, Authors In Training, Stage Crew Club, Recycling

Club, Book Clubs, Folk Dancing Club, After School Study Club, TV Studio, Step Club, Leo Club, and many more activities, clubs and athletics for students.

More information is available on the specific co-curricular and athletic opportunities available in each school on the individual school websites and through each school's main office.

New student immunization requirements for 2017-18 school year

The Pennsylvania Department of Health is changing the school immunization regulations beginning August 2017.

The regulations are intended to ensure that children attending school in the commonwealth are adequately protected against potential outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases.

Here are the new PA school immunization requirements for the start of the 2017-2018 school year:

Children in ALL grades (K-12) need the

following immunizations for attendance:

- 4 doses of tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis* (1 dose on or after 4th birthday)
- 4 doses of polio (4th dose on or after 4th birthday and at least 6 months after previous dose given)
- 2 doses of measles, mumps and rubella**
- 3 doses of hepatitis B
- 2 doses of varicella (chickenpox) or evidence of immunity

Seventh through 12th Grade ADDITIONAL

immunization requirements for attendance:

- 2 doses meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV). Note: First dose is given 11 - 15 years of age; a second dose is required at age 16 or entry into the 12th grade. If the dose was given at 16 years of age or older only one dose is required.
- 1 dose of tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis (Tdap)

* Usually given as DTaP or DTP or DT or Td

** Usually given as MMR

PMUSD Annual Public Notice on Special Education

Special Education (CHAPTER 14): The Pocono Mountain School District, either directly or through various other education agencies including Colonial Intermediate Unit #20, provides special education services which may be required by children with special needs.

In compliance with state and federal law, notice is hereby given by the Pocono Mountain School District that it conducts ongoing identification activities as a part of its school program for the purpose of identifying students who may be in need of special education and related services (eligible students).

If your child is identified by the school district as possibly in need of such services, you will be notified of applicable procedures. Individualized services and programs are available for children who are determined to need specially designed instruction due to the following conditions:

1. Autism
2. Deaf-blindness
3. Deafness
4. Emotional disturbance
5. Hearing impairment
6. Mental retardation
7. Multiple disabilities
8. Orthopedic impairment
9. Other health impairment
10. Specific learning disability
11. Speech or language impairment
12. Traumatic brain injury
13. Visual impairment, including blindness

Evaluation Process: Pocono Mountain School District has a procedure in place by which parents can request an evaluation. If you believe that your school-age child may be in need of special education services and related programs, you may request screening and evaluation at any time whether or not your child is enrolled in the district's public school program. Child Find federal regulations also apply to highly mobile children, including migrant children.

Requests for evaluation and screening are to be made in writing to the building principal or to Dr. Mary Beth Gustafson, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education for the Pocono Mountain School District, at 570-839-7121 ext. 10181.

Consent: School entities cannot proceed with an evaluation, or with the initial provision of special education and related services, without the written consent of the parents.

For additional information related to consent,

please refer to the Procedural Safeguards Notice which can be found at the PaTTAN website, www.pattan.net or the Pocono Mountain School District website, www.pmsd.org. Once written parental consent is obtained, the district will proceed with the evaluation process.

If the parent disagrees with the evaluation, the parent can request an Independent Education Evaluation (IEE) at public expense.

Program Development: Once the evaluation process is completed, a team of qualified professionals and parents determine whether the child is eligible.

If the child is eligible, the individualized education program team meets, develops the program, and determines the educational placement. Once the IEP team develops the program and determines the educational placement, a Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP)/prior written notice is issued. Written consent is required before initial services can be provided. The parent has the right to revoke consent after initial placement.

Preschool Children with Special Needs (Age 3 to School Age): Parents whose child has a developmental delay or one or more conditions as listed in the Special Education (Chapter 14) Notice above, and/or who have questions regarding their child's seeing, hearing, learning, talking, moving about, manipulating objects, understanding, showing emotions, getting along with others, playing with toys, taking care of himself/herself, should telephone Colonial Intermediate Unit #20 (CIU #20) at 610-252-5550, which offers Early Intervention, a preschool program for children with special needs. CIU #20 can provide information, screening, evaluation, programs, therapy, parent support, and referral to community agencies at no cost to the parent.

For further information, call CIU #20 at 610-252-5550 or Dr. Gustafson at 570-839-7121 Ext. 10181.

Protected Handicapped Students (CHAPTER 15): In compliance with state and federal law, the Pocono Mountain School District will provide to each protected handicapped student, without discrimination or cost to the student or family, those related aids, services or accommodations which are needed to provide equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of the school program and extracurricular activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the student's abilities.

In order to qualify as a protected handicapped student, the child must be school age with a physi-

cal or mental disability that substantially limits or prohibits participation in or access to an aspect of the school program. These services and protections for "protected handicapped students" are distinct from those applicable to all eligible or exceptional students enrolled (or seeking enrollment) in special education programs.

For further information on the rights of parents and children, provision of services, evaluation and screening, and rights to due process procedures regarding protected handicapped students, you may contact, in writing or by telephone, Dr. Gustafson, at 570-839-7121 Ext. 10181 or any building principal.

Gifted Education (CHAPTER 16): The Pocono Mountain School District provides gifted education services to school-age students identified as gifted who require these services to reach their potential. In compliance with state and federal law, notice is hereby given by the Pocono Mountain School District that it conducts ongoing identification activities as a part of its school program for the purpose of identifying students who may be in need of gifted education services. If your child is identified by the school district as possibly in need of such services, you will be notified of applicable procedures.

If you believe that your school-age child may be in need of gifted education services, you may request screening and evaluation at any time, whether or not your child is enrolled in the school district's public school program.

Requests for evaluation and screening are to be made in writing to the building principal or Dr. Gustafson at 570-839-7121 Ext. 10181.

CONFIDENTIALITY: All information gathered about your child is subject to the confidentiality provisions contained in federal and state law. The school district has policies and procedures in effect governing the collection, maintenance, destruction and disclosure to third parties of this information. Parents have the right to see and obtain a copy of their child's records. Personally identifiable information relative to an exceptional student will only be released with the permission of the parent and/or in accordance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Pennsylvania Rules, Regulations, and Standards.

For information about policies and procedures, as well as rights of confidentiality and access to educational records, you may contact in writing or by telephone, Dr. Gustafson, at 570-839-7121 Ext. 10181 or any building principal.

District receives Colonial IU-20 Crystal Award

Two school programs earn honorable mentions for excellence

By Wendy Frable
Director of Public Relations

The Colonial Intermediate Unit 20 recognized three Pocono Mountain School District educational programs and activities designed to strengthen student performance at the 2017 Excellence in Education Awards & Merit Scholars Ceremony on April 27, 2017.

One District initiative received a Crystal Award and two other initiatives received honorable mentions from the CIU 20.

Crystal Award

Pocono Mountain SD's March Gladness initiative coordinated by Dan Higgins, the Principal of Pocono Mountain East High School, earned a Crystal Award as an educational program activity that is built around active engagement of parents, families and/or the community in school efforts that strengthen or enhance student performance and school success.

March Gladness "has created a positive shift in teacher/parent interactions at Pocono Mountain SD. In the Spirit of 'March Madness,' Mr. Higgins created a game for teachers to play which mirrors the end of the season NCAA basketball tournament. The purpose of the game is to "be the best" at sharing good things about a student with his/her family, according to the March Gladness award nomination package.

During March Gladness 2016, faculty and staff shared 5,308 positive messages with parents from the PM West High School, and faculty and staff shared 5,937 positive messages with parents from the Swiftwater Elementary Center, where the initiative originated. Pocono Mountain expanded the initiative in 2017 to include other District schools.

Honorable Mentions

PM West High School's program "West Stars: A Night to Shine," received an honorable mention from the Colonial IU-20. More than 25 West female faculty and staff members hosted its first West Stars, an all-girls empowerment event for female students in November 2016. More than 100 female students participated in an evening of fun and creative activities designed to empower the girls and foster positive relationships and friendships.

"We are trying to foster a healthy self-esteem and a sense of purpose in each of the girls, so they can each reach their fullest potential," said Jennifer Odom, guidance counselor.

The evening featured empowerment sessions based on the themes of Strength, Sisterhood, Expression, Togetherness, Self-Esteem and



Pocono Mountain East High School Principal, Dan Higgins, and senior, Michael Medaugh, were recognized at the Colonial Intermediate Unit 20 2017 Excellence in Education Awards & Merit Scholars Ceremony on April 27, 2017. Mr. Higgins received a Crystal Award for excellence for his March Gladness initiative. Michael received a certificate for his selection as a Finalist in the National Merit Scholarship Program. (Photo by Dr. Mary Beth Gustafson, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education)

Capturing Joy. More than 25 female faculty and staff members worked together to create this exciting and enriching event for the female students.

The West High School has since held its second successful West Stars event and plans to hold more events in the future.

A new initiative between West High School and Clear Run Intermediate School students called Big Panther – Little Panther also received an honorable mention from the Colonial IU-20.

The Big Panther-Little Panther program is a new initiative this school year between the PM West HS and Clear Run Intermediate School where students from the high school pair up with students at the intermediate school to support, encourage and motivate the Little Panthers to make the right choices.

The Big Panthers visit Clear Run Intermediate once a month and spend the entire day with their Little Panthers to support them academically and behaviorally. They attend classes, eat lunch, and even ride the bus home with their Little Panthers. The older students are guiding the younger students and helping them develop PRIDE in their school.

Excellence in Education Awards are designed to celebrate and recognize exceptional teaching and learning programs in schools and communities.

Merit Scholar Finalist

Pocono Mountain East High School senior Michael Medaugh was recognized as a finalist for the National Merit Scholarship Program at the Colonial Intermediate Unit 2017 Excellence in Education Awards & Merit Scholars Ceremony on April 27, 2017. The National Merit® Scholarship Program is an academic competition for recognition and scholarships that began in 1955.

Every Finalist competes for these single payment scholarships, Merit® \$2,500 Scholarships, which are awarded on a state-representational basis. Winners are selected without consideration of family financial circumstances, college choice, or major and career plans.

The National Merit \$2,500 Scholarship winners will be announced on May 10 and the College-Sponsored Merit Scholarship® Winners on June 7.

Michael has also earned the prestigious 2017 Horatio Alger National Scholarship. These annual scholarships of \$25,000 recognize outstanding students, who, in the face of great personal adversity, have exhibited an abiding commitment to continuing their education and serving their communities.

Each National Scholarship recipient is awarded \$25,000 to apply toward the educational costs of the college or university of their choice.

In addition to the scholarship, Michael traveled to Washington, D.C., on March 30 to attend the Horatio Alger National Scholars Conference (NSC) and participate in college-preparedness and other educational sessions. There, Michael and the other Horatio Alger Scholars learned about the Horatio Alger Association, its esteemed Members and the various support and mentorship programs in which they can participate during their collegiate careers.

Michael was also selected by the Elks National Foundation as a 2017 Most Valuable Students Scholarship Recipient. Michael was nominated for this scholarship by Lodge #319 in East Stroudsburg Pa. Michael was one of 14 other seniors across the country to receive a \$20,000 scholarship that will be awarded in \$5,000 payments over four years. Twenty top awards were presented ranging from \$50,000 to \$20,000 over four years.

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