

Superintendent's Student & Staff Accomplishments

November 15, 2023

National Education Support Professional's Day: I sent an email out to our Support Staff Members this morning thanking them for their service to the district. However, I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity in public to again thank our Support Staff Members for their commitment to our district. Today is National Education Support Professionals Day, a day when we thank our Support Staff members for their service and dedication to our students and school community. Our Support Staff members serve as a positive role model for our students and have an important role in making each school day great for our students. The services they provide for our students are invaluable, and they are essential partners in the educational experience of each child who attends Pocono Mountain schools. Thank you to our Educational Support Professionals for all you do to keep our schools running smoothly, and Happy National Educational Support Professionals Day!

Veterans Day: Last week, all of our schools honored our Veterans with activities and ceremonies dedicated to our Veterans and Veterans Day. I know board members and many of our school district veterans were able to attend some of these wonderful ceremonies. I am very proud of our students, teachers and administrators for their efforts in honoring our veterans and observing Veterans Day. On behalf of the district and board I want to thank all of our veterans for their service and sacrifices, so we can enjoy the freedoms we have.

Farm to School Grant: I am pleased to announce that four of our schools were awarded the Farm to School grant. Clear Run Elementary Center, Clear Run Intermediate School and Swiftwater Elementary Center will each receive a grant of \$1,676. Tobyhanna Elementary Center will receive a grant of \$872. The Farm to School grant funds will be used to purchase produce from Pocono Organics Farm to cook and serve to students in the cafeteria, provide nutrition education ("Discovery Kitchen") events at the grant-awarded schools, and to produce marketing materials for this outreach.

Swiftwater Elementary Center Update: Swiftwater Elementary Center is PROUD to announce the success of its Veterans Day Assembly held last

week at SEC. Several veterans enjoyed a wonderful breakfast with the school staff followed by a very informative session held by Mr. Siglin, a school community member and honored veteran. Mr. Siglin showcased many pieces of military equipment and allowed an array of students to participate in the assembly. The wonderful music department practiced a touching rendition of the song, "THANK A VET" for several weeks prior and sang it live in harmony for the school's visitors. Each year, the SEC Veterans Day Committee led by Mr. Harry Amato, and school counselor, plan for successful programming to benefit our local veterans and students.

Chick-fil-A Student Leadership Program: Swiftwater Elementary Center is PROUD to announce that SEC and East High School partnered with the *Chick-fil-A Student Leadership Program*. The high school students, who are part of this program, presented 150 gift bags filled with free books to first grade and life skill students at SEC as part of Chick-fil-A "One Million Book Giveaway." The mascot (a large black and white cow) from Chick-fil-A, as well as the owners of the franchise in Bartonsville, attended this school community event. We are thankful for local businesses who take an interest in our student population at SEC. This initiative was coordinated by Mr. Robert Pagotto, from East High School, and Ms. Leslie Daidone, from SEC. We are thankful for this partnership on the East Campus.

CRIS Veterans Day 2023: On Wednesday, November 8th, Clear Run Intermediate School hosted a "boot camp" where CRIS students were able to participate in some physical activities such as jumping jacks, sit ups, and pushups that help prepare young soldiers to be physically fit, as well as view and learn about various pieces of military equipment. The boot camp stations were run by some veterans, including Mr. Brett Agostini, 5th Grade Teacher, and Mr. Benjamin Bray, Energy Specialist at PMSD. The students were also taught some common military terms, like "attention," "about face," "in cadence," and "fall out." Additionally, Mrs. Jen Limani- 4th Grade teacher, secured vehicles from the Tobyhanna Army Depot for the students to "touch a truck."

The students were encouraged to dress up in patriotic or camouflage clothing for the day and bring in a monetary donation. Along with letters and cards for the veterans, a donation was made to the VA Hospital in Wilkes Barre as a way to show the school's appreciation for those who have worked so hard to secure our freedoms. CRIS was excited and proud to be able to give back to the community.

Swiftwater Intermediate School Update: Swiftwater Intermediate School is celebrating anti-bullying week this week from November 13th through November 17th. Monday was Fill a Bucket Day and Wear Crazy Socks to “Sock It to Bullying.” Students wrote notes on how they will fill someone’s bucket with kindness. The notes were put in a bucket in the lobby where names are being randomly chosen from it throughout the week to be read on the announcements, earning the student a pencil and DoJo point. Tuesday was Wear Spirit Wear to show that “We’re All on the Same Team.” Today was Wear Boots to “Stomp Out Bullying.” Thursday is Wear Gym Attire to “Take an Active Stance Against Bullying.” Friday is Wear a Hat to “Put a Lid on Bullying.”

Weller Center Partnership: The Weller Center partnered with SIS to provide educational programs to students that target concepts and skill development that are important in developing a healthy lifestyle.

- Grades 5 and 6 participated in the Vaping 101 Program, an introduction to vaping and the associated health risks. Students learned about the harmful short and long-term effects of vaping, including how vaping can impact academic and physical performance
- The Grade 4 presentation was Bully Busters, an interactive anti-bullying presentation in which students learned how to recognize, prevent and respond to different forms of bullying.

SIS PTO Tricky Tray: The SIS PTO is hosting their annual tricky tray this Saturday, November 18th in the SIS cafeteria. Doors open at 12 PM. Basket calling starts at 3 PM. The PTO has over 300 baskets. There are special raffles including Polar Express tickets and a trip to Cancun.

West Junior High School Update: On Tuesday, November 14th, West Junior High School recognized 10 Students of the Quarter for exhibiting PRIDE behaviors and serving as leaders in the building. Students and special guests were treated to a pancake breakfast by Dr. Vaughn and the PRIDE committee. A special thank you goes out to Ms. Jackie Ludka for organizing the event and another thank you goes out to Dr. Robison, Dr. Sweeney and our board members, Mr. Watto, Ms. Grape-Garvey and Ms. Lopez, for joining us in our celebration as well.

West Junior High Veterans Day: The WJHS Veterans Day Committee came together to celebrate Veterans Day which included recognizing family members and school board members who have served. Mr. Byrd was part of the ceremony by leading everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance. The presentation included the "White Table Ceremony" where students and staff learned about all of the components of the table and their meanings. Choral members and the 8th grade band each performed a selection in honor of Veterans Day. The entire presentation was live streamed throughout the school. Students also made cards which were delivered to a local Veterans Center. Thank you to everyone who helped to plan the event and to all of the school's special guests who attended the event.

East High School Update: Both East High School Red & White Esports Teams are officially undefeated in the Super Smash Brothers Ultimate (SSBU) High School Pennsylvania Scholastic Esports League (PSEL) Fall Season in our Region.

The Pocono Mountain East High School Red Team and Pocono Mountain East High School White Team competed against Nazareth Area High School, Parkland High School, Pocono Mountain West High School, Jim Thorpe High School, and Selinsgrove High School.

Congratulations to the East High School Esports Teams for their undefeated regional play and good luck in the State Quarterfinals beginning November 15th.

Melee on the Mountain: East High School hosted Melee on the Mountain on Saturday, November 11th. Students from many area schools enjoyed the high level of competition they experienced while playing Super Smash Bros. Ultimate. Congratulations to East High School sophomore, Vincent Tumminia, for winning the tournament championship.

Band Cavalcade: On Saturday, November 4th, the PME Marching Band traveled to New Oxford to participate in the Cavalcade Championships for the first time in over a decade. They performed their best show to date. They received third place and were awarded the Bronze Finalists arriving home at 1 am. On December 9th, the Marching Band will travel to the Sherman Theater with select chorus members to participate in "A Very Merry Country Christmas" program with NYC resident and Country

recording artist Jessica Lynn, for a benefit for Toys for Tots. Tickets are available on the Sherman Theater website.

East Junior High School Veterans Day: The East Junior High continued its tradition of students inviting any family member or friends who are Veteran to a breakfast and assembly at the school on November 9th. This year, the school hosted almost 30 Veterans. Following the breakfast, East Junior High students attended an assembly in the auditorium meant to educate students about Veterans Day and honor Veterans. Student readings, demonstrations and band and choir performances made the assembly wonderful. The Student Government Association (SGA) did the work involved to make this happen, and it was a job well done.

Disabled American Veterans Field of Flags: This year the East High School, East Junior High School and West High School participated in the Disabled American Veterans Field of Flag service learning program to recognize veterans and raise critical funds to support our nation's ill and injured heroes. Each donated flag represents a special veteran in someone else's life, with proceeds helping DAV to provide free, life-changing services for veterans in need and their families. Through this program, the East High School and East Junior High School combined raised \$1,104 for DAV. The West High School raised \$995 for DAV. We hope you were able to see the Field of Flags displayed at the schools last week to honor Disabled American Veterans and all Veterans.

Toys for Tots Toy Drive: Pocono Mountain School District is holding its annual district-wide Toys for Tots toy drive at all of our schools. Community members wishing to help Toys for Tots provide holiday toys for children in need in Monroe County may do so by dropping off new, unwrapped toys at our schools or the Administration Building from now through Friday, December 1st. Monroe County Toys for Tots provides toys for more than 2,000 children in Monroe County each holiday season.

PASBO Professional Certification: Congratulations to Dr. Jeremy Sawicki, the Director of Technology Services & School Safety & Security Coordinator, on earning the status as a Pennsylvania Certified School Business Administrator. This certification demonstrates Jeremy's continued dedication to professional growth and commitment to excellence in school business operations.

Appreciation & Best Wishes: On behalf of our administrative team and the entire Pocono Mountain School District, I want to thank Mr. Rusty Johnson for his many years of service as a school board director on the Pocono Mountain Board of Education.

Mr. Johnson is a life-long Pocono Mountain School District resident and a Pocono Mountain School District graduate. His children are also graduates of Pocono Mountain School District. As a student in the district, Mr. Johnson was a dedicated student athlete, playing both football and baseball. He brought his passion for sports to the Board and continues to strongly support expanding athletic opportunities for our students.

Mr. Johnson was first elected to the Board in 2011, and has worked tirelessly on behalf of the students, employees and taxpayers of the district ever since. Mr. Johnson's priorities as a school board director since his first day on the Board have been to provide the very best educational, co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for our students in a way that is responsible to district taxpayers. He supported restructuring the district based on a decreasing student enrollment, but without sacrificing quality and opportunities for students. As a leader on the Board's Finance Committee, he was instrumental in ensuring PMSD held the line on property tax increases, with no property tax increases for 10 years and a property tax reduction of 12 mills.

During his time on the Board, Mr. Johnson has served in many important roles including as President of the Board from December 2015 to December 2021 and as Board Vice President from December 2014 to December 2015. Mr. Johnson was appointed as the district's primary representative to the Monroe Career and Technical Institute Joint Operating Committee in December 2015 through 2017, and from December 2020 through 2023. He also served as the President of the JOC for several terms, and has been an alternate JOC representative for his entire time on the board, and has been a strong supporter of MCTI and its programs.

Mr. Johnson, it's been an honor to serve with you as the Superintendent of Schools. You have remained steadfast in your dedication to our students and the taxpayers of this district. Your support for our student athletic programs and MCTI has been unwavering. You partnered with the Administrative team to form a Board Athletic Committee, which has worked

with our athletic directors to improve district athletic facilities and develop stronger relationships between the youth sports feeder programs and our K to 12 programs. You have always treated the administrative team with courtesy and respect. You will be greatly missed. My team and I wish you the very best with your future plans.