

PMSD CONNECT ON

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

2022-23: Issue 2

10 teams advancing to state Odyssey comp

The results are in, and 10 teams from Pocono Mountain School District are advancing to the PA Odyssey of the Mind Competition.

The 10 district teams that qualified to compete at the state competition April 1 at Lock Haven University are as follows:

- Two Pocono Mountain East Junior High School teams earned 1st place in Pirates and the Treasure, Division II and 1st place in The Most Dramatic Problem Ever!!!, Division II.
- Two Pocono Mountain East High School teams earned 1st place in Pirates and the Treasure, Division III, and 3rd place in The Most Dramatic Problem Ever!!!, Division III.
- Two Pocono Mountain West Junior High School teams earned 1st place in Classics... The Walls of Troy, Division II, and 2nd place in Where's the Structure?, Division II.
- Pocono Mountain West High School team earned 3rd place in Because iCan, Division III.
- Swiftwater Intermediate School team earned 2nd place in The



Pocono Mountain East Junior High School's Odyssey of the Mind team performs its solution to "The Most Dramatic Problem Ever!!!" during the NEPA Region Odyssey of the Mind tournament. The team's solution earned a 1st Place finish and a chance to compete at the state competition.

Most Dramatic Problem Ever!!!, Division I.

- Two Tobyhanna Elementary Center teams earned 2nd place in Where's the Structure?, Division I, and 4th place in Where's the Structure? Division II.

For those community members who

may never have heard of Odyssey of the Mind, it is a creative problem-solving competition where teams of students have to think outside of the box to solve problems.

The program for students in grades K to 12 emphasizes teamwork and quick thinking, and promotes STEAM

(science, technology, engineering, art and math) skills. Students work on teams for months to prepare their solutions to the problems, which change every year. Students work very hard to qualify to compete at the state competition.

At states, teams compete to qualify for the World Competition, where they will test their skills against teams from across the United States and other countries.

The NEPA Region tournament included 350 students comprising 50 teams. Thirty-four teams from 19 area schools qualified for states.

The NEPA region includes Bradford, Carbon, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, Schuylkill, Susquehanna, Wayne, and Wyoming counties.

Last year, four teams from Pocono Mountain School District advanced from states to the Odyssey of the Mind World Finals, finishing 5th out of 27 teams, 11th out of 32 teams, 14th out of 48 teams and 20th out of 59 teams.

Pocono Mountain's 2023 teams are working hard to beat the records of the district teams from last year.

EHS/EJHS student scientists earn awards & chance to compete at states

Pocono Mountain East High School and East Junior High School students earned recognition at the 62nd PA Junior Academy of Science (PJAS) Regional Competition at Wilkes University on March 4, 2023.

The East High School had three students earn perfect scores, four students earn Excellence Awards, and one student earn a University of Scranton Scholarship.

East Junior High had 100 percent of their student participants earn first awards.

In addition, Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD), won the Large School Award, based on the combined efforts and results of the East Junior High and High School students. This recognition is awarded to the school/district with the largest percentage of its students earning a first award -- between the East Junior and Senior Highs PMSD had over 77 percent of its students competing in PJAS earning first awards.

Congratulations to the following East Junior High students who earned First Awards: 8th graders Sophia Ardizoni; Cole Clifford who also earned a Perfect



Pocono Mountain East Junior High and East High School students show off their science research skills at the regional PA Junior Academy of Science competition.

Score and an Excellence in Physics Award; Finn McGovern; and Sheena Patel; and 7th graders Jasper Shelton, who also earned an Excellence Award in Earth & Space; and Miriam Thomas.

Congratulations also go out to the following First Award winners: Freshmen Frank Palmenta, who also earned a Perfect Score and Excellence in Microbiology, and Ryan Sanon; sophomores Lila

Shelton, Nicholas Ingrassi, and Connor Straub; and seniors Jessica Rinaldi, who also earned a Perfect Score and Excellence in Behavior Science, Alexa Petroff, Daniella Erlanger, Katherine Gude, Alyssa King, who also earned an Excellence in Senior High Zoology, Madison Rios, who also earned a Perfect Score and an Excellence in Senior High Earth and Space, Katelyn Ingrassi, and Alexandra Bock. Freshman Kailey Clifford, junior Gloria Gonzalez, and senior Edward Lockie earned Second Awards at PJAS. In addition, senior Emily Farley who earned a Third Award and a Scholarship to the University of Scranton.

First Award winners have earned the chance to compete at the state PJAS competition against students from across Pennsylvania.

Mr. Keith Walters is the advisor of the East High School program and Mrs. Maureen Elswick is the

From the Superintendent...

With spring right around the corner, it's time to shake off those winter blues.

A great way to jump start your way into spring is by taking advantage of the great opportunities available to students and families at our schools.

Children of all ages usually love to dance. Clear Run Intermediate School officials understand that children of all ages usually love to dance, so the school offers a dance class for students on Tuesdays at 4 p.m. This club is a great way for students to burn off some energy and have a lot of fun.

Families won't have to travel to New York City to see a play or musical on Broadway this spring. Several of our schools will present musicals and plays in the upcoming weeks.

- Pocono Mountain East High School will perform the musical "Mamma Mia" on Friday, March 24, 2023 at 7 p.m., Saturday, March 25, at 7 p.m. and Sunday, March 26 at 2 p.m.
- Pocono Mountain West High School will host its 19th Annual Dinner Theater, "A Night of Sweet Music," on March 24 and 25, 2023. Doors will open at 6:30 p.m. Seating begins at 7 p.m. Contact the West High School for ticket information.
- Swiftwater Intermediate School students will present their school play, The Music Man, on March 31, at 6:30 p.m. and April 1 at 2 p.m. You won't want to miss this talented cast.
- Stay tuned for more information on the TEC school play under the direction of Ms. Aragona-Young this spring.

If you love to go to concerts, families don't have to look any further than our schools to enjoy great choirs and bands.

- The East High School also has a Music/Arts Food Truck Fest scheduled for Saturday, April 15, from 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Stay tuned for more information on this new event.

- The East High School spring chorus concert will take place on Friday, May 5 at 7 p.m., followed by the spring band concert on Thursday, May 11, at 7 p.m.
- Swiftwater Intermediate School's 4th grade chorus will hold its spring concert on May 9, 2023, at 7 p.m.; the 5th grade chorus will perform on May 16, at 6 p.m., and the 6th grade chorus at 6:30 p.m. The school's grade 5 and 6 band will hold its spring concert on May 23 at 7 p.m.
- Clear Run Intermediate School's 4th grade chorus will hold its spring concert on May 16 at 7 p.m. The 5th grade chorus and band concert on May 17, at 7 p.m.
- Tobyhanna Elementary Center's 4th grade chorus will hold its spring concert on May 16 at 7 p.m. The 5th grade band and chorus will perform their spring concert on May 17, at 7 p.m., and the 6th grade band and chorus concert will take place on May 18 at 7 p.m.



If trade shows and expos are one of your interests, Monroe County offers a trade show and expo type experience with the Monroe County Children's Roundtable Community Night. Pocono Mountain School District partners with the Children's Roundtable on Community Night and its other initiatives.

Community Night is scheduled for Tuesday, May 2, 2023, from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Northampton Community College – Monroe Campus. The theme for Community Night is *Hope for Trauma*. The event features interactive displays, free activities for kids,

and useful information for families from service organizations, county schools, law enforcement, etc. There is something there for everyone.

Community Night is free and open to the public. This is a great event to attend to learn more about the various services and opportunities available throughout Monroe County and to network and connect with others who share your interests or want to help. It's also a great way to find an organization that matches your interests and needs your help as a volunteer.

For our sports fans, don't forget that spring sports are getting underway. I can't think of a better way to enjoy warmer spring afternoons and early evenings then to sit outside and cheer on your favorite school team and athletes in baseball, softball, tennis, soccer, track, and unified outdoor track. If you prefer an indoor sport, boys volleyball competition will be heating up this spring.

Our schools are also busy planning family night activities to keep parents and students involved in and connected with their schools. For more information on upcoming events at our schools, please check out the school and district websites, school events calendars, your school's ClassDojo messages, and announcements and flyers sent home with students. The district also has a Facebook page at @Poconoeast.west that provides updates on the many great events and activities available at our schools.

If you haven't been able to attend the events at your child's/children's school this year, it's not too late to start now.

Editor's Note: Dr. Robison highlights student, staff, school and district accomplishments in her report to the School Board and public presented at School Board Meetings. To learn more about the noteworthy accomplishments of our students, staff, schools and district, check out the PMSD website (www.pmsd.org), under the Our District tab, Superintendent section, on the District Accomplishments page.

School board elects new officers/committee reps

Each year school boards in Pennsylvania are required to hold a reorganization meeting to elect the board's president and vice president and to appoint board directors to various important committees.

The Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD) Board of Education held its annual reorganization meeting on December 7, 2022, and elected Mrs. Marion Pyzik, Region 2, as the board president for a second consecutive year. Mr. Nathan Strunk, Region 2, was elected as the vice president for a one-year term through a vote by the majority of the board.

Ms. Christina Grape-Garvey, Region 1, will service as PMSD's representative to the Monroe Career and Technical Institute (MCTI) Joint Operating Committee (JOC) for a one-year term, joining Ms. Jackie Leonard, Region 3, and Mr. Rusty Johnson, Region 2. Mr. Johnson was appointed to serve as the Chairperson for MCTI. Mr. Ronnie Byrd, Region 3; Mr. Strunk; Mr. Stephen Watto, Region 1; Mrs. Pyzik; Mr. Bert Rinehimer, Region 2; and Mrs. Anna Lopez, Region 3, will serve as alternate representatives to the JOC. Mr. Jeffrey Snyder was appointed to represent PMSD as a member of the MCTI Authority Committee for the term of 2022 to 2027.

Mrs. Lopez was appointed as the PSBA Liaison

to the Pennsylvania School Board Association to represent PMSD as a legislative representative to keep the board informed of developments in the PA General Assembly on educational issues impacting schools.

The board also approved its meeting schedule for 2023. Upcoming board meetings are as follows:

- April 12
- April 19
- May 3
- May 17
- June 7
- June 21
- July 19
- August 16
- September 20
- October 4
- October 18
- November 1
- November 15
- December 6
- December 20

Board meetings are held in the Administration Building on the Swiftwater Campus, unless otherwise advertised, and begin at 7 p.m.

PJAS builds young scientists

...continued from Page 1

advisor of the East Junior High program. Also, the district would like to thank Sue and George Croll for all of help they provide to Pocono Mountain students competing in PJAS each year.



PJAS is a statewide organization of junior and senior high school students designed to stimulate and promote interest in science among its members through the development of research projects and investigations. Students design and execute their own experiments, and then present the findings to the judges.

(Courtesy of Dr. Kathy Fanelli, Principal of Pocono Mountain East Junior High School; and Team Advisors, Mrs. Elswick and Mr. Walters.)

District teams qualify for state Science Olympiad tourney

Students from Pocono Mountain's two junior highs and two high schools tested their science knowledge at the Northeast Regional Science Olympiad Tournament held on March 8, 2023 at Penn State Wilkes Barre.

More than 600 students from 27 high schools and 15 junior high/middle schools from northeast Pennsylvania competed in the day long interscholastic competition to earn a spot in the state tournament.

Pocono Mountain East High School's team finished in 5th place and Pocono Mountain East Junior High School's team finished in 6th place earning their spots at the state tournament at Penn State Altoona on April 22.

Medals were awarded to the top 4 finishers in each category of the competition, as follows:

Division B (Jr. High)

- Bio-Process Lab - 1st place – East 8th grader Julian Rivera and 7th grader Jasper Shelton
- Disease Detectives - 3rd place – East freshman Nelson Figueroa and 8th grader Samuel Oh

- Forestry - 3rd place – East freshman Jake Merritt and 8th grader Julian Rivera
- Dynamic Planet - 4th place – East 8th grader Samuel Oh and 7th grader Owen Gower
- Solar System - 2nd place – East 8th grader Valerie Cooper and 7th grader Julian Rivera
- Storm the Castle - 4th place – East 8th grader Valerie Cooper
- Flight - 4th place – East 7th graders Alissa Gilliland and Owen Gower
- Codebusters - 4th place – East 7th graders Connor Hartman, Alissa Gilliland and Jasper Shelton
- Write it Do it - 4th place – East 7th graders Jasper Shelton and Miriam Thomas

Division C (High School)

- Cell Biology - 2nd place – East sophomores Emily Forlizzi and Lila Shelton
- Forestry - 4th place – East seniors Chris Fisher and Suki Shephard
- Dynamic Planet - 2nd place – East seniors Lauren Waldstein and Alexandra Bock



The West Junior High School Science Olympiad team of Jarrett Smith (8th); Alexandra Gazdecki (8th); Derian Rumer (8th); Joseph Keys (8th); Penn State Nittany Lion; Emma Corvino (7th); Lillianne Williamson (7th); Galiana Hess (8th) competes at the Northeast Regional tournament at Penn State Wilkes Barre.

- Remote Sensing - 4th place – East senior Chris Fisher and sophomore Emily Forlizzi
- Detector Building - 4th place – East Sophomore Connor Straub and freshman Mahi Patel
- Codebusters - 4th place – East sophomores Lila Shelton and Connor Straub, and freshman Mahi Patel
- Fermi Question - 3rd place – East seniors Lauren Waldstein and Edward Lockie

While the West Junior High and High School considered this a rebuilding year for their Science Olympiad programs, due to the impact of COVID-19 on their programs, their students didn't let that hold them back. Both teams had a strong showing at the tournament.

The West High School Science Olympiad team finished in 12th place this year out of 23 teams. The West Junior High School's Green Generation team came in 6th Place, missing 5th Place by one half point. Also, West Junior High's Anatomy & Physiology and Wheeled Vehicle teams each earned 9th Place.

The West High School team also scored some personal bests at the competition:

- Juniors Adam Manowski and Dylan DiPasquale earned 7th Place in Remote Sensing, 8th Place in Scrambler, and 9th Place in Detector Building and Environmental Chemistry
- Junior Javier Rodriguez Espinal and sophomore Tiffany Pfirman-Slocum earned 8th Place in Flight
- Sophomore Mikhail Ragoobee and junior Nicole Bessmertnov, earned 9th Place in Cell Biology

Science Olympiad is an international nonprofit organization devoted to improving the quality of science education, increasing student interest in science and providing recognition for outstanding achievement in science education by both students and teachers.

(Courtesy of Dr. Fanelli, Principal of PM East Junior High School, team advisors Mr. Keith Walkers, PM East HS, Mr. Jamie Hewitt, PM East Junior HS, Ms. Corinne Long, PM West HS, and Ms. Terri Miles, PM West Junior HS, and Penn State Wilkes Barre.)

MONROE COUNTY'S
CHILDREN'S ROUNDTABLE
PRESENTS

COMMUNITY

Hope for Trauma

TUESDAY
MAY 2, 2023
6-8:15PM
NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE
MONROE CAMPUS
KEYSTONE & POCONO HALL

FREE
KIDS ACTIVITIES
WORKSHOPS
RESOURCES
ADMISSION

OVER
100+
VENDORS

Spring Recess

April 6, 7, 10 – No School
(subject to change)

West High School PAWS program hits the ground running

By Michael Jones
Principal

West High School AthLIFE academic advisors have been working with student athletes this year to launch the Promoting Athletes with Success (PAWS) program with great success. The team of Mrs. Chrissy Wile, Mrs. Marcy Behr, Mr. Brian Cusatis, Mrs. Kelsey Petriefesa, and Officer Jason Wile are working to define the roles of athletic academic advisors in a manner that best serves student athletes.

During their initial weeks, they demonstrated that there was more to a student athlete than athletics by emphasizing community involvement, academics, and extracurricular involvement. As this initiative was just getting underway, the PAWS program was working with boys basketball, girls basketball, football, and softball. In the future, they plan to add additional teams to their roster.

There are multiple areas of focus through PAWS including academic performance and growth, community service, nutrition, strength and conditioning, and college recruitment.

This particular program is sponsored by the AthLIFE Organization which is focused on student athlete development and support. Through this partnership, coaches receive training and resources



Pocono Mountain West student athletes attended an AthLIFE leadership conference in early January, along with their coaches.

that are focused on supporting student athletes and their success. Student athletes and coaches attended an AthLIFE leadership conference in early January.

The conference was in conjunction with St. Luke's University Health Network and was held at the St. Luke's Sports Rink in Whitehall, PA. The day was filled with workshops pertaining to the development of transferable life and leadership skills. Athletes were able to come up with a game plan to return to West and strengthen their

existing student-athlete support and development programs. The students attended three sessions and listened to student-athlete development industry leaders, Dr. Emmett Gill, Dr. Nilzarrel Townsend and Christopher Williamson who provided expertise throughout the day. Athletes were also given the opportunity to speak to athletes who attended school in the Lehigh Valley and are now playing sports in college.

During the winter, the PAWS program organized a "Pack the Pantry" event for the West High School food

pantry and in a different outreach effort, athletes volunteered to gather supplies and make gingerbread houses with fourth grade students at CRIS.

During halftime of select games in the second marking period, academic advisors recognized the players on the JV and Varsity teams that had the highest grade average. This public celebration of their hard work in front of their families, coaches, and peers is an important piece of the PAWS program. For personal development, PAWS athletes completed questionnaires that targeted personal, athletic, and academic goals.

One of the collective goals of the team was managing their smartphone screen time. In achieving this goal, a "Smartphone Challenge" was developed where advisors shared daily tips, questions, or tasks on smartphone use through their Google Classroom. The end result was a personal evaluation of the positives and negatives associated with smartphone use and establishing personal rules and limits. Students that completed the "smartphone challenge" were awarded with snack packs.

PAWS athletes also recognized WHS staff that they felt have made a positive impact on their life. Students nominated staff and presented certificates to those individuals during a January faculty meeting.

District's award winning music ed program showcases student talent

By Amy L. Buffington
Director of Curriculum, Instruction
& Federal Programs - Social
Studies & Humanities

Winter is that time of year when it is a little colder and a little darker. Throughout the winter season, the award winning Pocono Mountain School District art and music departments were busy finding ways to keep our schools and community a little warmer and a little brighter.

Our students, teachers and families have been doing a great job with all of their efforts!

Recently, our music programs have kept music alive and well at parades, conventions, concerts and tree lightings. Some highlights were the Pocono Mountain East High School Marching Band's participation in the televised Philadelphia Thanksgiving Day Parade and the PM East Show Choir performing at PASA/PSBA School Leadership Conference!

Our art departments have participated

in contests, hosted shows, decorated bank windows and adorned library shelves to help share some of PMSD's artistic creations.

There is more to come as we approach the spring months from both of these departments featuring kindergarten through grade twelve students.

Please check the school Facebook page and school home pages for more information. We would love to see everyone at our events and share our many talents with you!

Top Right: Pocono Mountain East High School's Show Choir was selected to perform at the Pennsylvania School Board Association's School Leadership Conference. This is a great honor as only a small number of choirs and bands are selected to perform as the featured student talent for the conference. The East Show choir performed before the leaders of school districts from across the state.

Bottom Right: Pocono Mountain West Junior High School students displayed their acting and musical talents when they performed Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat.



East HS earns accolades - stands out among peers

By Tamala Toleno, Principal
PM East High School

Pocono Mountain East High School started off the 2022-2023 school year strong, and our students and staff have already received the awards and accolades to stand out among their peers.

I wanted to share with you some of the numerous accomplishments from the first half of the school year that demonstrate our Cardinal Pride and commitment to excellence, service and our community.

East High School Cheer Team Receives Awards at NCA Cheer Camp

Herkie Team Award: The Herkie Team Award is the most prestigious award given by NCA. The Herkie TEAM Award, named after NCA founder, L.R. Herkimer, is awarded to squads who exemplify the qualities upon which the NCA was founded. These qualities are leadership, values, and teamwork. This award is voted on by the other teams in attendance at camp.

Super Spirit Stick: The top team for spirit voted on by the NCA staff.

Superior Performance Ribbons:

- NFHS Team Credential
- Technical Excellence Award for Stunts
- Stunt S.A.F.E Award
- Nationals Championship Bid
- 11 All American Nominees

EHS Senior Carly Reed Received the Following Awards

Top All American: Carly tried out and made the All-American Team. She also scored the highest out of all the athletes at camp who tried out.

Pin it Forward Recipient: Carly received the Pin It Forward Award for demonstrating leadership, responsibility, character, kindness, hard work, spirit and leading by example.

Pocono Mountain East High School Show Choir

Pocono Mountain East High School Show Choir performed at the 2022 PASA-PSBA School Leadership Conference Student Showcase on October 31 at Kalahari Resorts & Convention Center.

Pocono Mountain East High School Concert Choir, Show Choir, and Women's Choir performed at the Harvest Festival in Mt. Pocono on September 24.

Pocono Mountain East Marching Band

Pocono Mountain East High School Marching Band attended the First Flag Over the United Colony Festival in Easton on September 26. The band came home with the only Superior rating of all 8 bands in attendance and won awards for most outstanding music, most outstanding marching, and most outstanding visual effect.

Women's Empowerment Assembly

Pocono Mountain East and West Female Student Athletes attended a presentation sponsored by St. Luke's Sports Medicine. Nationally ranked weightlifter, former Division 1 athlete, and athletic trainer Jillian (Seamon) Hall presented an engaging discussion about female empowerment. Topics included how to develop a path to success, how to break barriers, why strength training and nutrition are so important, creating habits, building confidence, and how girls can live their best lives.



PM East High School's Reading Competition Team organized a school-wide book giveaway. The team raised enough money through fundraising activities to purchase 1,500 books to share with fellow students. Thank you to Beth Bresser, EHS Librarian and Reading Competition Advisor, for organizing this wonderful event for the East High School students.



Congratulations to the Pocono Mountain East Field Hockey Team for defeating Southern Lehigh to claim the District XI Field Hockey Title.

East Stroudsburg University VIP Field Trip

Forty-five East High School senior students were escorted to ESU on the official Warrior Bus on October 4. Students toured the campus and listened to presentations given by the Director of Admissions and University President. Students then met in small groups with the Dean representing majors they were interested in. All students were given ESU string bags and provided with lunch. About 15 students applied through the instant decision process and were accepted on the spot.

East High School Football Team & Adaptive Physical Education Football Game

Students in Ms. Gregoire's Adaptive PE classes played a football game with PME High School Football Players.

East High School Bonfire

Students and community members enjoyed the opportunity to gather at a bonfire in preparation for the annual Bucket Game against Pleasant Valley.

East High School Future Health Professionals Club

Thirty-three members of the East High School Future Health Professionals Club visited ESU on November 21. Students learned about the technology in the virtual anatomy lab.



The Cardinal Cheer Team stood out at the NCA Cheer Camp, earning numerous awards.

Wawa Grand Opening

Pocono Mountain East Marching Band juniors and seniors participated with Pocono Mountain West Cheerleaders in the grand opening of the new Wawa on Route 940 in Mt. Pocono.

Aerospace Engineer Guest Speaker

Ben Minchhoff, Aerospace Engineer with the US Army, was a guest presenter at East High School. Students in Mrs. Sankey's Intro to Engineering and Principles of Engineering classes enjoyed learning from Mr. Minchhoff.

East High School/ MCTI Student Wins

Landscaping Team Career Development Event

Congratulations to East High School Junior, Connor Smiley, for taking First Place during the Landscaping Team Career Development Event and Second Place in the Individual Landscaping Event while competing at the FFA Career Development Conference in Bloomsburg, PA on September 26, 2022.

Philadelphia Thanksgiving Day Parade

Congratulations to the Pocono Mountain East Marching Band for their fabulous performance at the Philadelphia Thanksgiving Day Parade. Not only were they a big hit with the spectators at the parade, they received national coverage on ABC. Well done PME Marching Band.

Tobyhanna’s chorus/band made the holidays bright & cheery

By Dr. Anastasia D’Angelo,
Principal
&
Dr. John Kevra, Vice Principal
Tobyhanna Elementary Center

As the year 2022 quickly faded into history, Tobyhanna Elementary Center (TEC) marked the last month with an incredibly busy and exciting holiday season.

Our three choruses provided faculty, staff, students, and parents with everything anyone needed to create the warmth and generosity that defines this joyous time of the year.

Beginning with the Toys for Tots Kickoff on December 2, 2022, the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Grade Choruses, under the direction of Ms. Carrie Stein and Ms. Daphne Cortes, showcased their creative abilities at TEC. However, when word spread to the local community that some of our talented students were willing to take their show on the road, they were invited to perform on Camelback Mountain. So, while Santa lit a nearby Christmas tree that was so big a bucket truck was necessary to place the star on top, our Fifth Grade chorus performed several lively holiday selections!



Tobyhanna Elementary Center’s 5th grade Chorus performs holiday songs for the Camelback Tree Lighting Ceremony.

As the month progressed it just got busier and busier!

On December 6, 2022, TEC’s Fourth Grade chorus performed for their fellow students during the day and then for their parents that evening.

On December 8, 2022, the Sixth Grade band, under the direction of Mr. Doug Raboci, and the Sixth Grade chorus performed their final holiday concert at TEC during the day for their peers. That same evening their parents were delighted in their rousing renditions of various multicultural songs that were also respectful of the various beliefs of our eclectic student body.

Finally, on December 13, 2022 the Fifth Grade chorus performed during the day for fellow students and in the evening for parents. All of these colorful performances were made even better as the backdrop for each was TEC’s beautiful, new stage curtains.

Following such a busy performance schedule, you would think the students would need a hiatus to regroup; however, at Tobyhanna Elementary Center, we are always looking to the future!

The Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Grade chorus students are already planning to work with Ms. Jeralyn Aragona-Young

as they prepare for the TEC all student play. This year, Ms. Aragona-Young has selected “The Lion King” as TEC’s performance of choice. Everyone is excitedly anticipating the upcoming performance of the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Grade choruses as they bring “The Lion King” to the Pocono Pines stage at TEC. We’re sure that Simba, Mufasa, and Nala will approve!

We are also looking forward to the Spring performances of the Fourth and Fifth Grade choruses and for the first performance of the Fifth Grade band under the direction of Mr. Doug Raboci.

Finally, with mixed emotions the Sixth Grade chorus and band will begin their preparation for their final concert held at the Tobyhanna Elementary Center.

Sooner than we’d like, they will be departing the building that has provided such a safe and steady foundation for each of them. However, until they leave us, we will enjoy every moment of their youthful exuberance in each of their voices and songs.

Please look for more details of the upcoming performance of all our student performances of “The Lion King” as well as the band and chorus presentations during the month of June.

CRIS adopts trauma-informed approach

By Amy Haynes, Principal
Clear Run Intermediate School

According to Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), the goal of an SEL program is to foster the development of five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. As a Trauma-Informed school in training, Clear Run Intermediate School is committed to developing these skills in their students beginning with self-awareness and self-management.

In the beginning of the school year, classroom lessons and discussions were held to teach students how to recognize and identify their emotions. Students are sometimes unaware of their feelings, or how to express them and how to manage them; especially students who have been impacted by trauma. Students were taught how these emotions may affect their ability to perform daily tasks and socialize appropriately and positively with others.

Each morning, CRIS students participate in a daily morning check in as part of their “homeroom” block. Students “check-in” using a Chromebook. They enter a rating from 1-5 indicating their mood or feelings at that time. They also have the option of writing a comment or requesting to speak to a counselor or a preferred adult.

Data is collected, analyzed and monitored via a confidential Google sheet that is shared with the

SEL (Social Emotional Learning) Check-In

5

OUT OF CONTROL/Angry
I can't stand this and I'm ready to explode. I want to hit or kick someone, or throw something. I need help from an adult.

🔴

4

Annoyed/Frustrated
Loss of some control. I will talk to an adult.

🟡

3

Worried/Sick/Sad/Bored
I will tell an adult. I will take some deep breaths.

🟢

2

I'm Feeling OK
Nothing is wrong and I am just feeling okay.

🟡

1

HAPPY
I am doing great! I feel good about myself and what is going on around me.

🟢

team teachers, school counselor and administration. Teachers check with students who rate themselves as a 3, and school counselors review the sheet and meet with all students who check-in at a 4 or higher rating. Patterns in self-rating and results of any interventions are noted for individual students.

SAFE SAY SOMETHING

Submit a Tip

Call The Hotline

What to Report

Review / Update Existing Tip

Emergency Options

Logout

24/7 Crisis Hotline
(844) 723-2729 • www.safe2saypa.org

PMSD hosts family virtual literacy night

By Stacy Kulics

Director of Reading & English Language Arts

Pocono Mountain School District hosted a Virtual Family Literacy Night on Thursday, November 17, 2022, for students in PreK, Kindergarten, and 1st grade to promote literacy at home.

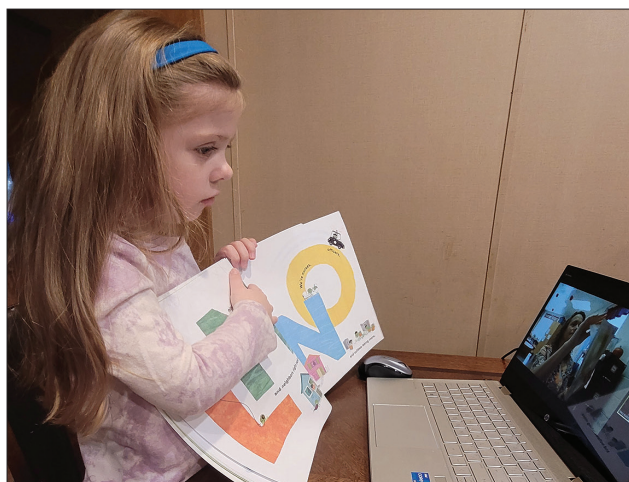
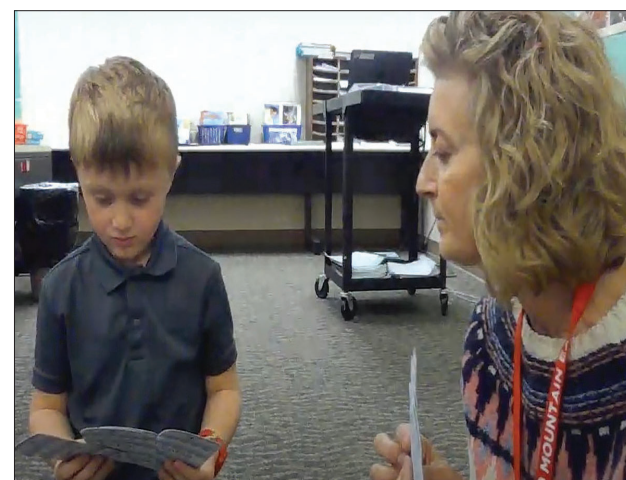
The theme for the event was letters and letter sounds. Families who registered for the free event received 11 different children's books and various

activities including a deck of Go Fish Alphabet Game Cards, a Dot and Learn Alphabet Journal, and a box of dot markers.

Students listened to several PMSD teachers reading books aloud as they followed along in their own copy of the book. They also learned how to utilize the activities at home.

Following the virtual event, all registered families received an interactive Google Slide with read alouds of each book they received, links to online activities, and a recording of the virtual event.

PMSD looks forward to hosting another Virtual Family Literacy Night on Thursday, April 13, 2023.



(Top) Children in Pre-K, Kindergarten and 1st Grade participated in the virtual Family Literacy Night held in November. (Right) Swiftwater Elementary Center Reading Teacher, Amy Berman, works with a student on literacy skills. Pocono Mountain School District has another virtual Family Literacy Night Event planned for district families in April.



The books and activities pictured are from the Fall 2022 Literacy Night. Families will receive different materials for the April 13, 2023 virtual event.

Hosted by Stacy Kulics, PMSD Director of Reading & ELA, along with PMSD reading specialists and teachers.

PMSD Family Literacy Series

Families of PMSD students in **Pre-K, Kindergarten and 1st grade** are invited to attend the PMSD Family Literacy Series. Each family who registers will receive free materials, books, & activities to promote literacy at home.

The Spring 2023 PMSD Family Literacy Event will be held **virtually** on **Thursday, April 13, 2023 at 6:00pm.**

Register online by scanning the QR code with your phone or by going to:
<https://forms.gle/ySzBBAE1C7pUERSz5>
Please register by March 31, 2023.



Auntie Claus's Closet returns to Clear Run

By Heidi Donohue, Principal
&

Dr. Jessica Loverdi, Principal
Clear Run Elementary Center

As a child, you most likely have memories of shopping in elementary school for members of your family in the days leading up to the holidays – a coffee mug that says “Greatest Dad,” a ring with a fake gem in it that resembles that of a diamond for your mom, a pot holder for your grandmother, etc.

Many organizations contract out with a company to provide these types of small items that are priced anywhere between \$1 to \$20 for this annual tradition. However, with many families falling within the



guidelines of low socio-economic status, even the cheapest items to buy are often not attainable for many of our students.

With monetary assistance from our Super Paw Committee and the PTO, as well as new or gently used items from the staff and community, students are given the ability to use their Dojo points to purchase gifts for their friends and family.

The goal is to provide students with a more equitable opportunity to shop. Similarly, by using their hard-earned currency received by means of our school-wide positive behavior system, students take pride in the gifts they are purchasing. It is a truly heartwarming experience for everyone involved!



Staff and students at Clear Run Elementary Center were excited to have Auntie Claus's Closet return to their school.

LEADERSHIP = S.W.E.A.T

(SHOW WHAT EXCELLENCE & ACHIEVEMENT TAKES)

You are a LEADER and we want to celebrate you! Please be our guest of honor at one of our CREC Physical Education classes so we can see you shine! This will be a memorable experience for our students that can make a lasting impression!!! We want to see you S.W.E.A.T., or as we like to say,
 ✨ sparkle! ✨

Here are the exciting details:

WHAT: Share a brief story about what your leadership role is and what it took to get you there. This will be followed by a 35-40 minute workout ALONGSIDE our students (the workout is modified for ALL levels and abilities.)

WHEN: There are four timeframes to choose from:
10:00-10:45 12:30-1:15 1:50-2:35 2:40-3:25

WHERE: CREC Gymnasium

WHY: To celebrate YOUR success and to motivate OUR STUDENTS to work hard, build leadership skills and do their best!

HOW: Schedule a time with Ms. Lengel
tlengel@pmsd.org
(570)-839-7121 ext 28440

Pictures for our webpage will be taken at the end of the workout.

Cultivating meaningful connections at SEC

By Dr. Krislin Ofalt, Principal
&
Karen Doughton, Principal
Swiftwater Elementary Center

Swiftwater Elementary Center students in Mrs. Valerie Szulborski's class along with Mr. Benjamin Bray, Pocono Mountain School District's contracted Cenergistic energy specialist, collaborated with our building level administration to create and present a video entitled, "SEC Cultivating Meaningful Connections" at the November 16, 2022 school board meeting.

The video outlines how an unlikely connection between Mr. Benjamin Bray and Mrs. Valerie Szulborski was created several years ago as Mrs. Szulborski's students wrote letters to troops overseas on Veterans Day. Mr. Bray was the recipient of the students' letters when he was serving in Iraq and he corresponded back and forth with the class. Recently, Mrs. Szulborski found these letters and invited Mr. Bray to speak about his experiences in Iraq with her students.

This collaboration has now become a tradition each Veterans Day as students write letters yearly. PMSD school board member, and US Veteran, Mr. Ronnie Byrd has become part of our SEC team as he has recently coordinated an exchange of over 150 letters written by SEC students to be sent via military transport out of Dover, New Jersey to Poland. The video showcasing this meaningful connection between our school community members can be seen on our district website.



Veteran Benjamin Bray, the district's contracted Cenergistic energy specialist, visited Mrs. Valerie Szulborski's class to discuss Veterans Day. Mr. Bray received letters from Mrs. Szulborski's students when he was deployed several years ago.

Learning about Elk conservation

Swiftwater Elementary School in collaboration with the Keystone Elk County Alliance the Swiftwater Elementary Center third grade students participated in an interactive, live streamed presentation with their teachers, Mr. Matt Loring and Mr. Brian Marchese in collaboration with the Keystone Elk County Alliance located in Benezette, PA.

Students were mesmerized by the beautiful landscape photos along with live action shots of the Pennsylvania Elk population presented by KECA, a non-profit wildlife conservation organization. Students learned through this conservation educational program about natural resources, the elk habitat in the PA woods and the life cycles of our PA elk population.



SIS celebrates & honors our Veterans

By Daniel Higgins,
Assistant Principal
Swiftwater Intermediate School

The students at the Swiftwater Intermediate School honored our Veterans with an assembly featuring guest speaker, Staff Sergeant Earl Granville, an award-winning motivational speaker and Army Combat Veteran.

SSG Granville shared his experiences with 4th, 5th and 6th grade students including his deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. He spoke of the great pride he felt serving his country and the challenges that came with that service.

SSG Granville lost his lower left leg following a roadside bomb incident. His journey back to civilian life was full of trials for him and his family. The lessons he presented to students were motivating and inspiring.

He now competes in obstacle courses, marathons and triathlons as a member of Achilles International, an organization which empowers the disabled community to compete athletically. His message centered on having a purpose, and using that purpose to create drive and resiliency.

Many of SSG Granville's competitions are run as part of a team. During his presentation, he showed




Staff Sergeant Earl Granville, an award-winning motivational speaker and Army Combat Veteran, who was awarded the Purple Heart, spoke to students at Swiftwater Intermediate School, about the his experiences serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

students the cinder block which he carries during many of these races.


He explained how he and his teammates share the weight of the block – passing it around during the race. His message was to not be afraid to share what burdens you in your journey. Find others who you can lean on and are willing to take the weight from your shoulders when needed.

The students enjoyed this assembly and learned a great deal from this Purple Heart recipient. The program also featured performances by the 6th grade band and 5th grade chorus.



PMSD Multicultural Night

K-12 Students and Families



Tuesday, April 4, 2023 5-7pm

Pocono Mountain East High School

Atrium

(outside of the auditorium)

Join the ESL and World Language Departments in our inaugural celebration of cultures and languages! Come paint, read, dance, learn, and create with us in the celebration of various cultures!

We hope to see you there!

Students making the grade at West Junior High

By Dr. AnnMarie Vaughn,
Principal
PM West Junior High School

Here at Pocono Mountain West Junior High, we are focusing on recognizing students who exhibit PRIDE behaviors and increasing family and student engagement here within our school. One way we have initiated this is through recognizing students who stand out amongst their peers by demonstrating that they are Prepared, Respectful, Involved, Dependable, and Empathetic.

In order to identify students for this recognition, Ms. Jacqueline Finno-Ludka, Special Education Teacher and Administrative Intern, took on this special venture.

First, teachers were sent a Google form where they were able to nominate a student and write an explanation as to why that student should be recognized as a Student of the Quarter. Then, our

PRIDE team looked at the nominated students, identified students who were recognized by multiple teachers and staff members.

Our PRIDE Team then identified the 4 students from 7th grade, 4 students from 8th grade, and 2 students from Related Arts for our first recognition celebration.

The following students were recognized as Student of the Quarter for Marking Period 1:

Rhiann D., Sofia L., Mikaela R., Lizzette W., Ivani J., Galiana H., Alexandra G., Shawn B., Jaelyn R. and Jade V.

In order to make the event special for our students, students were invited to a breakfast where they were treated to pancakes and more from Dr. Vaughn and teachers.

Students were also able to invite their parents or a special guest.

Ms. Ludka spoke about each of the students and shared accolades



Pocono Mountain West Junior High School recognizes its Students of the Quarter.

and positive affirmations that were contributed for the students by their teachers.

Students also received special gifts and certificates which had all of their teachers' comments on them. A great time was had by all!

We look forward to continuing our

Student of the Quarter Recognition following each Marking Period, and we have already started preparing for next Marking Period!

Thank you to Ms. Finno-Ludka for all of your hard work and putting together this special event for our students and their families.

West Junior High talks attendance

By Aliya Grindle, Assistant Principal
Clear Run Intermediate School

West Side PRIDE is in full effect at West Junior High School!

Our school along with the other buildings in our district follow 5 PRIDE expectations as the foundation of PBIS: Prepared, Respect, Involved, Dependable, and Empathy.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a framework for teaching and supporting positive behaviors and meeting the needs of ALL students.

"In the 2020-21 school year, at least 10.1 million students nationwide were chronically absent. We estimate chronic absence has more than doubled from the more than 8 million students, pre-COVID-19, who were missing so many days of school that they were academically at risk. Chronic absence — missing 10 percent or more of school days due to absence for any reason—excused, unexcused absences and suspensions—can translate into students having difficulty learning to read by the third-grade, achieving in middle school, and graduating from high school." (The problem. Attendance Works. (n.d.). Retrieved December 15, 2022, from <https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/the-problem/>)

In October, West Junior High partnered with West High School for an Attendance Challenge. This challenge was hosted by both schools' PRIDE committees to emphasize the importance of being dependable and involved students.

Students were reminded of the importance of being in school everyday, and its correlation to academic success.

Students who had perfect attendance during the



Pocono Mountain West Junior High School is working to improve student attendance at school. In order to learn, students need to attend school regularly. Overall, the West Junior High attendance was 93 percent.

month of October entered their names in a drawing for various prizes such as, a Hover Board, Beats Headphones, a Robot, and Gift Cards.

Overall attendance for West Junior High in October was 93 percent.

Congratulations to our drawing winners: Christian Stiehler, Lucas Smith, Izaria Green, Natalia Hillmeddo, Jabril Greggs, Eliza Straukus, Izabella LeBron, Daviana Adams, Simone Williams, Xavier Cruz, Johnia Grubbs, Allison Stackewicz and Stephanie Antonyuk.

**Clear Run Intermediate Teachers vs.
The Harlem Wizards**
Wednesday, March 29, 2023 @ 6:30 pm
Doors Open @5:30 pm
PM West High School Gymnasium
Advance Tickets - \$7.00/person
At the Door - \$10.00/person
For Tickets or Additional Information contact Jason Smith
—jsmith@pmsd.org

Clear Run Intermediate holds 'basic training'

By Amy Haynes, Principal
Clear Run Intermediate School

On Wednesday, November 9th, Clear Run Intermediate School hosted a "basic training" mini camp where our CRIS students were able to participate in some physical activities such as jumping jacks, sit ups, and push ups 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 for PMSD. The students were also taught some common military terms, like "attention," "about face," "in cadence," and "fall out."

Additionally, Mr. Joe Limani, husband of Mrs. Jen Limani- 6th Grade teacher, secured vehicles from the Tobyhanna Army Depot for the students to "touch a truck."

The CRIS music department pre-recorded a "mini-concert" for the Veterans that was posted on the



(Top) Students at Clear Run Intermediate School participate in a Veterans Day "basic training." (Right) CRIS students learned more about military vehicles and equipment during Veterans Day activities.

school website and ClassDojo for our families.

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 our appreciation for those who have worked so hard to secure our freedoms. We were excited and proud to be able to give back to the community!



East Junior High is gobbling up math

By Dr. Kathleen Fanelli, Principal
PM East Junior High School

Mrs. Nalesnik's 7th grade math students used a symbol of the season to review Order of Operations to solve math sentences with positive and negative integers. Students were asked to create addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division sentences, ensuring they use a mixture of positive and negative integers.

They then placed them on the feathers of the turkey, decorated them, and we displayed them in the hallway.

The students did a wonderful job creating a variety of math problems and had fun showing their creative side with coloring, cutting, and pasting.

Sharpened their skills (or gobbled up those math facts) AND brightened the halls for everyone!



2023-2024

WELCOME

Kindergarten Students

Parents/Guardians you can schedule your appointment NOW!

If you have a child who meets the eligibility for the 2023-2024 school year Kindergarten class, please contact the Pocono Mountain School District Central Registration Office at 570-839-7121 ext. 40400 to schedule an appointment. The child must be five (5) years of age or more, on or before September 1, 2023.

- ✓ The required documents are available on-line at www.pmsd.org
- ✓ It is strongly recommended that you complete all required documents prior to your scheduled appointment.
- ✓ After the registration process has been **completed**, your child will be scheduled for a Kindergarten orientation session sometime in August at their respective school building.

2ND ANNUAL MUSIC & ARTS COMMUNITY DAY

COME AND JOIN US FOR A FUN FILLED DAY!

SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 2023

11AM-5:30PM

(RAIN OR SHINE)

POCONO MTN. EAST HIGH SCHOOL

SWIFTWATER, PA

FOOD TRUCKS!

DEMONSTRATIONS!

TRICKY TRAY!

LIVE MUSIC!

CRAFTERS & VENDORS!

Games!

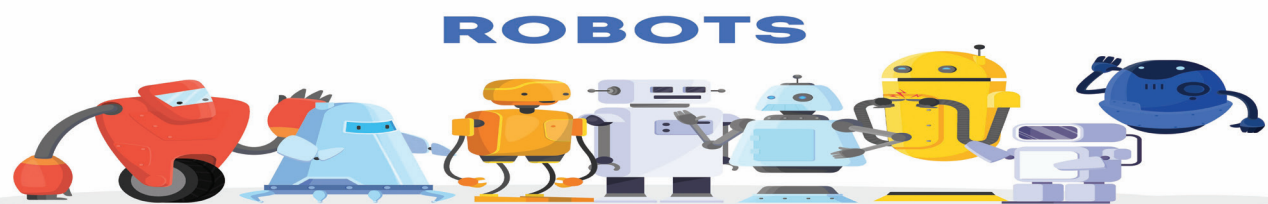
Exploring robotics at Swiftwater Intermediate

By Victoria Scavo, Librarian
Swiftwater Intermediate School

The Swiftwater Intermediate School Robotics Club is a 4-week program where students in 4th, 5th and 6th grade meet after school with Mrs. Scavo and learn how to code and create robots using the Hummingbird Bit Kit. Ninety students will participate in this program over the course of the school year and during each 4-week session.

Students will also participate in a CodeJoy class which is a live and fully interactive virtual meeting to learn about robotics. CodeJoy uses humor, special effects, and narrative storytelling to engage and educate students about robotics and coding.

This allows students to control real robots in real



time during the sessions. Students in each session will learn how to create a tiny drummer that reflects their own personality and can drum to the beat of a song.

Students at CRIS and TEC in 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th grades also have the opportunity to work in similar afterschool programs at their respective schools. Students will work with CodeJoy and create their

own robots as they learn to code and design. Students in the elementary robotics club have the opportunity to explore and learn about engineering as they design robots and share their creations.

The district is excited to start this district-wide program for elementary students to help create future scientists, engineers and creators in an ever-changing, global society.

Swiftwater Intermediate School
Presents:

HEREDITH WILLSON'S
THE MUSIC MAN KIDS

Swiftwater Intermediate School Auditorium
Friday, March 31, 2023 at 6:30pm
Saturday, April 1, 2023 at 2pm
Tickets to be sold at the door: \$5 for adults, \$2 for students

Sign up NOW for
PMSD Alert Message

Go to www.pmsd.org, Helpful Links
PMSD Alert Text
& Email Messages

Yearbook Club



Swiftwater Intermediate School offers a Yearbook Club for students who are interested in photography, writing, and page layout and design.

By Daniel Higgins, Assistant Principal
Swiftwater Intermediate School

The Yearbook Club at SIS meets every Tuesday before school. The Yearbook Club specializes in planning, collaborating, and drafting the 2022-2023 yearbook.

The Yearbook Club is made up of nine fifth-grade students and nine sixth-grade students. These students dedicate their own time to make this year's edition extra special.

During Yearbook Club, the students learn many new skills. They learn to use all of the settings on the professional cameras. After taking pictures, they are responsible for uploading and editing.

Once edited, the students will design the individual pages for the yearbook and lay them out with captions and other information.

Along with using their creativity, these students are also responsible for managing the cover contest, poetry contest, superlatives and fundraising.

A lot of lessons are occurring while putting together memories which our students will carry with them long after leaving SIS.

NOW HIRING

for the 2022-2023 school year

❖ **Substitute Teachers - \$150 a day**

❖ **Substitute Para Professionals - \$14.50 an hour**

❖ **Substitute Administrative Assistants - \$12.50 an hour**

❖ **Substitute Custodians - \$12.50 an hour**



Flexible Schedule – Extra Income – Ability to Make a difference

Apply today: www.pmsd.org by clicking the Employment tab

It takes our entire team to keep schools safe

By Dr. Jeremy Sawicki

PMSD School Safety and Security Coordinator

Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD) school safety efforts include school-based threat assessments to help keep students, staff and schools safe.

While school safety experts state that there is no profile of a school shooter, the experts agree that “students display a variety of observable concerning behaviors as they escalate toward violence (2021 Averting Targeted School Violence, a U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools, page 3).”

A very important aspect of any successful school-based threat assessment program is educating the entire school community how to recognize possible at-risk behaviors and knowing how to report concerns.

School safety and threat assessment experts advise schools to educate the entire school community on what they call observable behaviors “which may not be normal and are out-of-character for most students.” Such behaviors may possibly lead to acts of targeted violence.

Research into school violence shows that many times if the observable behaviors are noticed early and reported, then school officials may be able to intervene and assist the student before violence occurs.

Some observable, at-risk behaviors include:

- Unusual social distancing and isolation of the individual(s) from peers and family members
- Sullen or depressed behavior from an otherwise friendly and positive person
- Out of context outbursts of verbal or physical aggression
- Increased levels of agitation, frustration and anger
- Confrontational, accusatory or blaming behavior
- An unusual interest in weapons
- Fixation on violence as a means of addressing a grievance
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness or suicide
- Unusual, bizarre, threatening, or violent communication
- Planning behaviors such as researching prior school or public attacks, documenting plans, creating a hit list, acquiring weapons, manufacturing bombs or other incendiary devices.
- Concerning communications that expresses an interest in violence, hate speech, suicide or self-harm, homicidal thoughts, an interest in weapons, threats to others, drug use.
- Heightened interest in violence, school attacks

or attackers, mass attacks and other types of violence

- Inability to deal with setbacks, losses, relationships ending, etc.
- Being bullied or cyber bullied.
- Intimidating or aggressive acts or statements

Students are best positioned to identify and report concerning behaviors displayed by their classmates.

Parents, families and community members also have an important role in recognizing and reporting concerning behaviors to school officials and/or law enforcement authorities.

It’s important to note, the student assistance program (SAP) teams and referral process PMSD already has in place in all of its schools is an integral part of the threat assessment process followed throughout the district.

Students, parents and community members can help keep PMSD schools safe by continuing to report possible threats or concerns about school safety to their children’s principals, the police, or through the Safe2Say Something program.

(Information compiled from U.S Secret Service Report on Averting School Violence, and K-12 Threat Assessment in Virginia: A Prevention Overview for Staff, Parents, and Community Members)

Parents & students are key partners in school safety

What do we mean by a ‘Threat’?

- A concerning communication or behavior that suggests a person may intend to harm themselves or someone else
- May be expressed or communicated behaviorally, orally, visually, in writing, electronically, or through any other means
- A threat regardless of whether communicated directly to the target or to a third party
- A threat can be deduced **through an individual’s behavior**



What do we mean by a ‘Threat’?

- Could be:
 - Direct or indirect threats of violence...
 - ... statements – spoken or written...
 - ... gestures...
 - ... acts...
- ... that a reasonable person would interpret as threatening, unusual or bizarre behavior that would cause a reasonable person to fear injury or harm
- Communications or behaviors indicating suicidality
- Behavior which is atypical for the person or situation and causes concern for the safety or well-being of those involved
- **Caution! Implicit bias – Threat Assessment seeks to eliminate subjectivity and issues associated with implicit bias and equity**



The importance of reporting possible threat warning signs to schools/authorities

- Identifying individuals or situations of concern depends upon the willingness and ability of the school community to communicate with the Threat Assessment Team...
- ...and the **ability to recognize warning signs**
- Early intervention to manage threats is best achieved when the whole school community are encouraged to report **any threats or other behavior that they find troubling or upsetting**



Reportable behaviors: Examples

- Physical violence toward a person or property
- Direct or indirect threats of violence
- Bullying that continues after interventions to stop the behavior
- Possession of weapons on school grounds or school events
- Any statements or behaviors indicating suicidal thoughts or behaviors
- Any behaviors or communications that suggest the individual has engaged in:
 - Research or planning related to carrying out a targeted attack
 - Efforts to acquire the means to engage in an attack
 - End of life planning



Report school threats to school officials, to the Safe2Say Anonymous reporting system or call 9-1-1

Reportable behaviors: Other concerning behaviors

- Any act, gesture or statement that would be interpreted by a reasonable person as threatening or intimidating, such as:
 - Overt physical or verbal intimidation
 - Throwing objects or other gestures intended to cause fear
 - Making contextually inappropriate statements about harming others
- Unusual or bizarre behavior that would cause a reasonable person to fear injury or harm due to its nature and severity, such as:
 - Stalking
 - Erratic or bizarre behavior suggestive of mental disturbance or substance abuse
 - Fixation with mass murder, weapons, or violence generally
 - Fixation with hate group, terrorist, or extremist material



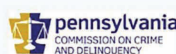
School Threats - Fact or Fiction?

- Many attackers felt bullied, persecuted or injured by others prior to the attack
 - Fact:** Almost *three-quarters of the attackers felt persecuted, bullied, threatened, attacked or injured by others* prior to the incident
- Most attackers had access to weapons and experience using them
 - Fact:** *Experience using weapons and access to them was common for many attackers.* Nearly two-thirds of the attackers had a known history of weapons use



School Threats - Fact or Fiction?

- Attackers act alone and without the involvement of others
 - Fiction:** Most *carried out* their attacks on their own, *but many were influenced or encouraged by others to engage in the attacks.* Nearly 50% were influenced by others in deciding to mount an attack, dared or encouraged to attack, or both
- Most incidents are stopped by law enforcement
 - Fiction:** Most attacks *were stopped by school administrators, educators and students* or by *the attacker stopping on their own*



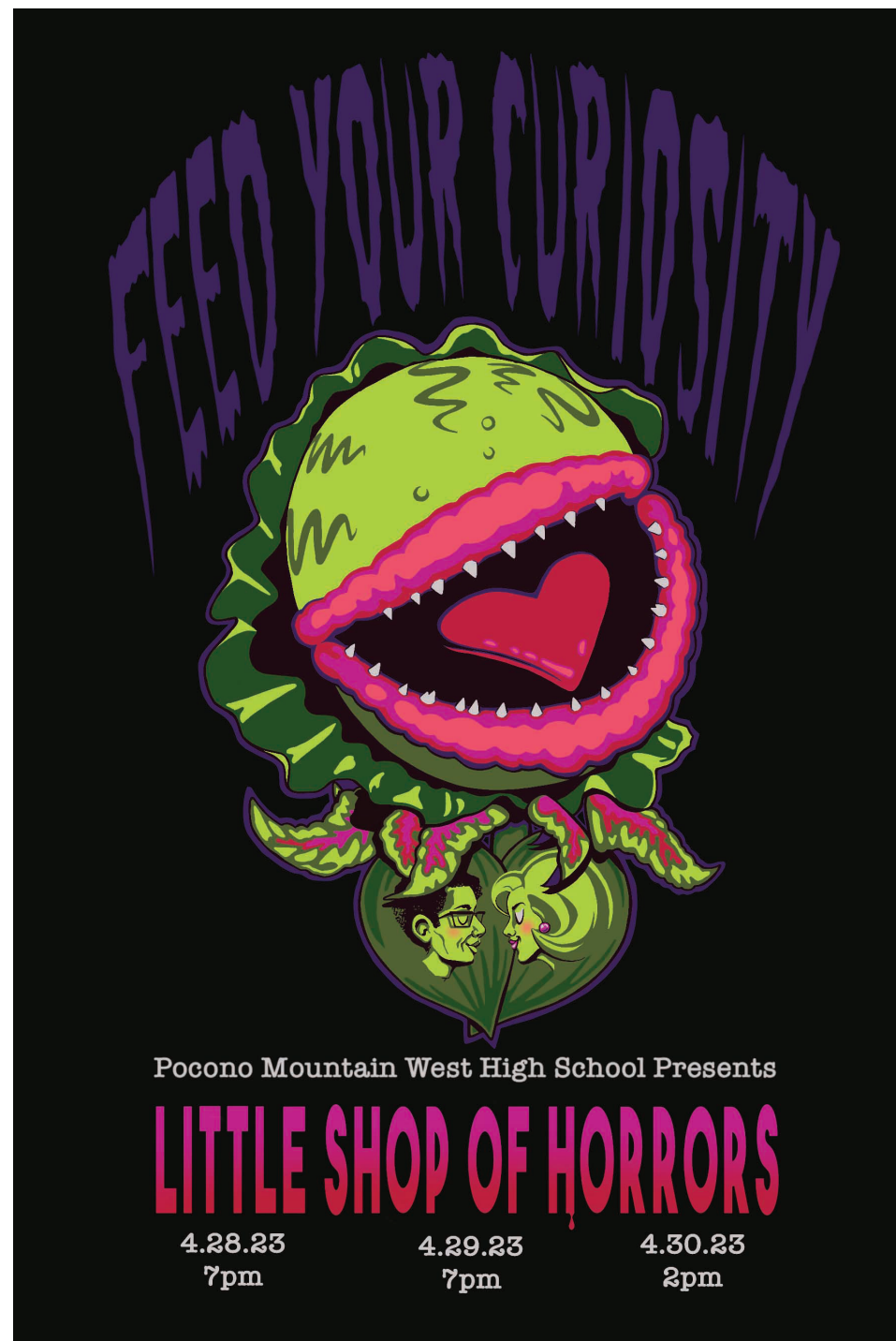
School Threats - Fact or Fiction?

- School attacks are often sudden, impulsive acts
 - Fiction:** They are *rarely impulsive*; attackers typically don't "just snap"... *they decide*
- People often have no idea of the attacker's ideas or plans
 - Fiction:** In most cases, *other people knew about the attack* before it took place
- Most attackers threatened their target directly prior to the attack
 - Fiction:** Majority of attackers *did not make direct threats to their target(s)* beforehand
- Most attackers were "under the radar" showing no indicators they were in need of help
 - Fiction:** Nearly all *engaged in behaviors, prior to their attacks, that caused concern or alarm* to at least one person



School Threats - Fact or Fiction?

- Most school attackers are suicidal or at a point of desperation prior to their attack
 - Fact:** Most attackers appeared to have difficulty coping with losses, personal failures or other difficult circumstances and, in many cases, *desperation and suicidal ideation was certainly manifest.* Most attackers *exhibited a history of suicide attempts or suicidal thoughts at some point prior to their attack*
- Potential school attackers can be identified by certain physical characteristics, personality traits and school history
 - Fiction:** There are *no set of traits that described all – or even most – attackers.* The demographic, personality, school history, and social characteristics varied substantially



PA State Assessment Opt-Out Dates

PSSA

- The 2023 PSSA testing window begins Monday, April 24, 2023.
- Tests can be viewed from April 10-21, 2023.
- No opt-outs will be accepted after April 21, 2023.

Keystone Exams

- The 2023 Keystone testing window begins Monday, May 15, 2023.
- Tests can be viewed from May 1-12, 2023.
- No opt-outs will be accepted after May 12, 2023.

PMSD Cyber helps students stay connected

By **Nora Wandolowski, Director**
PMSD Cyber Program

Keeping Pocono Mountain School District students connected and engaged in the learning community is a primary goal of the Pocono Mountain School District Cyber Program.

Students in grades Kindergarten through 12th Grade have options beyond the traditional classroom because of the PMSD Cyber Program.

Students attend live instruction provided by Pocono Mountain School District teachers across the curriculum. While attending live sessions, students are able to and encouraged to make connections with their peers. These connections go beyond the online classroom and are enriched during social activities hosted by the Pocono Mountain School District Cyber Program Staff!

Our secondary teaching staff set the tone and welcomed back students in grades 7 through 12 with outdoor games and a picnic lunch on September 23rd. The elementary teachers held the 2nd Annual Fall Festival on October 20th featuring oversized outdoor games, arts and crafts activities, face painting, a pumpkin patch, and a snack of donuts and apple cider.

As winter approached, teachers continued to encourage both academic and social interactions. In November, PMSD Cyber Program hosted an Art Show on the 10th and 11th featuring a variety of student submissions. A free movie event took place on November 18th to help secondary students catch the holiday spirit. The elementary students were also invited to a movie and build-a-snowman event. While watching the movie *Frozen*, students stuffed their own snowman to take home.

This spring PMSD Cyber Program hosted our 2nd Annual Book Fair and Read Across America event on March 13th. Students were encouraged to dress as their favorite book character, participate in read-alouds, and create individual bookmarks.

We will continue with a Spring Festival on March



PMSD Cyber held its second annual Fall Festival to connect students with their school and teachers through fun activities.

31st as the weather breaks and students continue to build connections with peers. PMSD Cyber Program will end the year with the 2nd Annual Carnival on May 26th. Please check the PMSD Cyber Program website for additional information and join us to celebrate another successful year.

Meeting individual student academic needs while keeping them connected to the Pocono Mountain education community is the goal of the PMSD Cyber Program. The opportunities for core course completion, recovery of course credits, enrichment beyond the school day, and access to face-to-face teachers is what sets PMSD Cyber Program far above and apart from all other cyber schools.

If you are a district resident looking for the best Cyber Program for your student, or want to learn more



The PMSD Cyber Fall Festival is a big draw for cyber students and their families.



(Above) Everyone loves snowmen, so what better event to host than a build-a-snowman event for PMSD Cyber students. (Left) It takes a lot of stuffing to build a proper snowman.

about the full-day and hybrid programs for students in Kindergarten through 12th grade offered by PMSD Cyber Program, please contact Nora Wandolowski at nwandolowski@pmsd.org, 570-839-7121 extension 75400 to schedule an appointment.

PMSD Cyber Program is Always Open For Learning!

PA State Assessments Section 4.4 of Title 22, Chapter 4 - Guidelines for parent opt out

By **Dr. Catherine Sweeney**
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction

A school's participation rate in the PA state assessments can potentially have a negative impact on the school's accountability status, leading to the school needing an improvement plan.

Participation rates on the PSSA must show at least a 95% student participation rate. Student subgroups, including students with disabilities and those with limited English Proficiency, must also have a participation rate of at least 95%. Where participation rates fall below 95%, each subsequent non-tested student is designated as non-proficient.

Therefore, it is important that your

child/children participate in the PA State Assessments.

Chapter 4 Guidelines for Parent Opt Out from State Assessments Section 4.4 of Title 22 provides for the right of any parents/guardians to excuse their child from state assessments if, upon inspection of the testing materials, they find the assessment to be in conflict with their religious beliefs.

This is the only basis for which a parent/guardian can excuse his/her child from the PA statewide assessments.

In compliance with this statute, parents/guardians are required to follow the process below when requesting their child be excluded from statewide testing (PSSA/Keystone Exams):

- Two weeks prior to the testing window, parents/guardians should

contact the child's school to request to review the statewide assessment in question. The school will schedule a time for the review to occur in the presence of district personnel.

- Parents/guardians must sign the Parent Confidentiality Agreement, which will remain on file with the school. By signing the agreement, parents/guardians agree not to photocopy, write down, or in any other manner record any portion of the exams, including directions. Parents/guardians also agree not to discuss the contents of the test with any other individuals.
- If, after reviewing the test, parents/guardians find the test to be in conflict with their religious

beliefs and wish to request that their child be excluded from the assessment, the parents/guardians must submit a written request to the Superintendent stating their objection.

- Parents/guardians will be notified of the district's decision regarding their request. This process must be completed for each assessment and for each child for which parents/guardians wish to submit a religious objection to the child participating in a PA statewide assessment.

The process established by the PA Department of Education, does not allow for a general exemption request from all assessments across all grades and subjects by a parent/guardian.

Maintaining mental health is important at every life stage

By Dr. Beth DeLay

Director, Health/Physical
Education, Guidance & Nursing
Services

What Is Mental Health?

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. Over the course of your life, if you experience mental health problems, your thinking, mood, and behavior could be affected.

Many factors contribute to mental health problems, including:

- Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry
- Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse
- Family history of mental health problems

Mental health problems are common but help is available. People with mental health problems can get better and many recover completely.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is now...
988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline



Early Warning Signs

Not sure if you or someone you know is living with mental health problems? Experiencing one or more of the following feelings or behaviors can be an early warning sign of a problem:

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Pulling away from people and usual activities
- Having low or no energy
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless

- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Yelling or fighting with family and friends
- Experiencing severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Having persistent thoughts and memories you can't get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming yourself or

others

- Inability to perform daily tasks like taking care of your kids or getting to work or school

Learn more about specific mental health problems and where to find help.

Mental Health and Wellness

Positive mental health allows people to:

- Realize their full potential
- Cope with the stresses of life
- Work productively
- Make meaningful contributions to their communities

Ways to maintain positive mental health include:

- Getting professional help if you need it
- Connecting with others
- Staying positive
- Getting physically active
- Helping others
- Getting enough sleep
- Developing coping skills

Get Help

Learn how to talk about mental health or how to get help for yourself or someone you care about.

Source: <https://www.mentalhealth.gov>

Why children should read more over spring break

By Dr. Catherine Sweeney

Assistant Superintendent for
Curriculum & Instruction

Reading is like just about everything else in life, the more you do it the better you get.

If your children stop reading for extended periods of time, they often take a few steps backwards in their reading improvement. For this reason, it is important to encourage children to keep reading during spring break despite the distraction of friends, relatives and other events. Remember that joining a library is free, and it also costs nothing to take out a book to read.

Suggestions to Consider

It is important that 'down time' takes place when the hustle and bustle and jovial interaction of spring break is in process.

Listed below are a few ideas to increase your children's holiday reading.

Create a Holiday Tradition of Reading

One of the best ways to keep your child interested in reading during spring break is to create holiday traditions of reading fun books during these special times. By picking interesting books with holiday themes and making it



Students from Clear Run Elementary Center celebrate Read Across America. The students create their own "Horton" crowns to wear while reading "Horton Hears a Who!" written by Dr. Seuss.

a family experience, they develop positive thoughts about holiday family reading traditions. Making sure that they get at least one book as a holiday gift is another way of providing a natural opportunity to read.

Don't Overdo It

While it is wise and very effective to provide fun holiday reading experiences, it is important to not

overdo it. It is easy to have children experience burn-out during a time when they should be enjoying their holiday break from formal schooling. It is better to keep the holiday reading tradition short and leave your children begging for more than to take so long that they are begging for a break. Let them enjoy adequate social time as well.

I believe that reading is important

because it helps each person grow mentally, emotionally and psychologically. Every book gives the reader an opportunity to learn new things and explore new ideas. Reading books increases knowledge and makes the reader smarter.

Reading helps you discover yourself

Every good book opens new dimensions of thoughts for the reader. When you read a book, you somehow try to connect the events, emotions, experiences and characters in the books with yourself. This not only keeps you engrossed in the book, but it also makes you realize how you would react and feel to those situations that have not yet occurred in your life.

It helps you broaden your dimension of likes and dislikes and things that would please you. So, with every page that you read, you have a chance to discover a new part of yourself!

Reading imparts valuable lessons from years of experiences

Books are not written in a day. For an author, it takes a lot of hard work, understanding, experiences, knowledge and in many cases lots of pain to come up with a single book. We as a reader get to read them in just weeks or days

See **SPRING BREAK..Page 16**

PMSD Cyber core classes meet NCAA initial eligibility requirements for student athletes

By Nora Wandalowski, Director
PMSD Cyber Program

Pocono Mountain Cyber Program is Always Open for Learning, but now the core high school classes are also Always Open for Playing!

Working closely with the secondary teaching staff, Director Nora Wandalowski was able to successfully submit and have approved the core courses in ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies to be used in the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) initial-eligibility certification process for student-athletes.

So what does this mean? Students who are enrolled in the Pocono Mountain Cyber Program and are interested in competing in college sports will be able to select Pocono Mountain Cyber Program core courses from the list of requirements in the NCAA Eligibility Center.

In order to meet amateurism standards and demonstrate academic preparedness, an athlete must complete all core courses and meet all Pocono Mountain School District graduation requirements.

Pocono Mountain Cyber Program has highly qualified teachers dedicated to providing daily, live instruction and support as students work on Imagine



The PMSD Cyber Administrative and Teaching team are excited to announce that PMSD Cyber core courses now meet NCAA initial eligibility standards for student athletes who want to apply to play college sports.

Edgenuity content.

Many of these teachers are also coaches throughout the district, both for East and West Athletics. These teachers and coaches understand the need for a flexible curriculum and schedule to support all students; and now with all Pocono Mountain Cyber Program core courses cleared and approved for NCAA eligibility our program is Always Open for Playing!

*Always Open for Learning
& Now Playing Sports Too!*



Spring Break is a great time for families to read together...continued from Page 15

thereby living years of experiences in considerably less time.

Reading improves your Focus and Concentration

The Internet has revolutionized our world, but there's a huge drawback too. For many of us, a large part of our day is spent surfing, chatting, watching videos, reading unnecessary memes and articles online. No wonder people are growing more impatient and losing focus.

However, reading books is one of those constructive habits that help us improve our concentration power. It helps us to train our brain to focus our attention and live in the present.

Reading improves your emotional health

Books are full of emotions. Sometimes they will make you cry with every turning page and sometimes they will just keep you smiling. Books can make us happy, sad, jealous, loved, betrayed and so on! Books are thus an amalgamation of different mixed emotions that ultimately help us grow emotionally!

Reading helps you develop your memory

There are a lot of things that we need to remember while reading a book. Name of the characters and their features, name of the places, plots



Tobyhanna Elementary Center celebrates Read Across America.

and sub-plots, the sequence of events, important conversations etc., are some of the key information we need to keep in mind while reading.

The ability to retain this information keeps improving with the number of books that you read.

As your brain learns to remember the information from the story-line, it also becomes better at remembering other things of your life. So, by reading books, you are also indirectly training your brain in improving your memory.

Reading is a great source of motivation

Life is tricky. Sometimes there are

moments in our life when we feel down and discouraged. We may lose our hope and interest in life and just want to give up. In times like this, sometimes all we need is a little motivation, a little push in the right direction.

Reading a good inspirational book during such period can change our way of thinking and give us hope and motivation and help us transform our lives positively.

Reading expands the readers knowledge and makes them smarter

Books are a very rich source of information. With every book you read, you get to learn new things. The more

you read, the more you know about different people, their behaviors and experiences, different places, different cultures and facts that otherwise you would not have known.

Reading broadens your imagination and enhances your creativity

"It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen". This is the famous opening line of the novel 1984 by George Orwell.

How do you interpret this line? We hardly experience conditions like this. A standard clock strikes a maximum twelve times. Similarly, we rarely have a day both bright and cold simultaneously.

A line like Orwell's makes you think, and that is the beauty of books! They make you imagine things beyond possibility – things that would not come to your mind normally.

Books give you a lot to think about. They also give you the opportunity to have your own perspectives and imaginations into play!

A good book can help you escape the stress and chaos of daily life. This makes reading all the more essential during school breaks.

