







A NEW SLETTER OF THE PROGRAMS OF WPSD





Soap and Food Coloring
Help Make for a Cool Science
Experiment...Elephant
Toothpaste! **PG 30**

Barnyard Friends Club

PG 50





PG 66
Field Trip to the Pumpkin Farm



Supervisions

A note from CEO, Steve Farmer

As I write this letter, we are back to Virtual Learning after several weeks of in-person instruction. Hopefully, we will return to inperson instruction in early January.

We are grateful for services and opportunities provided by The Programs of WPSD that are so vital to Deaf and Hard of Hearing children in Pennsylvania. As you will see in this issue, we were not deterred by the pandemic that continues to press against us. We have an excellent group of dedicated faculty and staff who are focused on our students. Robust teaching and active learning continue despite the challenges presented to us by the restrictions surrounding COVID-19.

Please take some time to go through this issue -- you will find how we make teaching and learning fun for our students. We even started up an Esports team in Scranton and are in the process of setting one up at WPSD. Transition is a big component of our programming -- you will see how our students are succeeding.

We have made some adjustments to what many of our readers would have known as "The Western Pennsylvanian." The goal of this new format is to highlight the 4 programs that directly serve our children: Children's Center, WPSD, SSDHHC, and Choices for Children and demonstrate our growing impact across the Commonwealth. While the appearance of the magazine may have changed, the content remains the same. In article after article, you will read how we continue to make positive impacts on the lives of our students every day.



None of these would have been possible without the support of our Board of Trustees, legislators, alumni, donors, parents, administrators, staff, and friends who believe in our mission and making our students' dreams achievable.

Happy reading and Happy New Year!

Steve Farmer

Sincerely,

Steve Farmer, CEO

Programs of the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf

PROGRAMS OF WPSDOT WPS

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This is a publication of the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf and its affiliated programs.

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Online Instruction to In-Person Instruction During COVID-19

All over the country, teaching and learning have looked very unusual these past several months. For the Programs of WPSD, it was no different. In response to the challenges presented by COVID-19, to begin the school year, we launched a robust online educational and instructional platform for our Deaf and Hard of Hearing students throughout Pennsylvania. We roared into our first week of distance learning beginning on August 24. Even though the teachers and students were unable to be together on campus, the connection between them was undeniably strong.

In-person instruction began on September 21. Students and their families were offered two options: - full time, in-person learning or full time, remote learning. COVID-19 safety precautions are in place on campus complete with temperature checks, social distancing and mask wearing. What a joy it was to see our students' faces after the long six-month hiatus. We were so excited and grateful to have them back on campus! The snapshots you will see throughout this magazine capture the very important and productive interaction taking place between teacher and student, as they transition from being apart to coming together once again.







The Children's Center



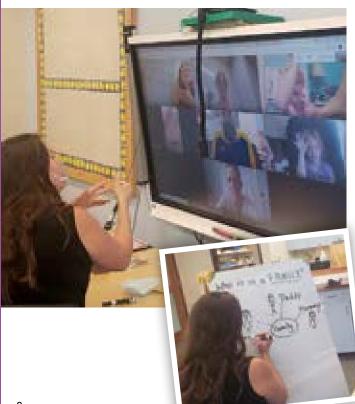
Educating Our Littlest Learners

Sharing a Piece of Home with Our Friends

By Zan Moore, Kindergarten Teacher

In Kindergarten, during the second week of school, we shared our All About Me bags. Students collected family photos and favorite toys and then shared their treasures with their friends in class. We learned about each other's hobbies and families. We also worked on sight words. Students are beginning their steps into learning how to read. Today, they read the word "I". They also matched word cards to words on their paper. Our kindergarten students are excited to build their reading skills!





Learning About the Importance of Family at School

On September 3, we stopped by Miss Katherine's class. She and her students were discussing the importance of family and the people in our lives who make up a family. The students were enthusiastic and excited to learn and share more about the people they hold close to them. What a fun and meaningful activity!







Fun Cooking Activities Promote Hands-On Language Experiences

By Beth Anderson, Children's Center Teacher

Every Friday, three -year-old WPSD students engage in various cooking activities related to the current study at school. In September, we made play dough. At the beginning of the week, the parents are provided a list of things they will need. The children can follow the steps with their family along with the video. Cooking experiences provide wonderful hands-on language experiences. During Distance Learning we constructed a pencil snack with cheese, ham, Bugles and raisins, and created a school bus using graham crackers, icing, chex cereal and oreo cookies. Fun and creative learning is always a priority in the Children's Center at WPSD!

Growing Students' Vocabulary

We visited Miss Katherine's room to see what the kindergartners are learning about! New sight words are introduced to the students. Their story of the week is "Please, Puppy, Please." The class is searching for, and recognizing the word 'the' as they read the story, along with learning about the importance of taking good care of pets. This week the students have their own individual sight word flash cards to practice at home and school everyday. Multi-faceted learning is always going on at WPSD!





Brain Breaks Prove to be a Fun Way to Get Re-Energized and Focused

By Shelley Zelei, Children's Center Teacher

Each day the kiddos in the Pre-K class have brain breaks throughout the day where we practice Yoga or enjoy some music, movement and dancing. We love to do Yoga especially when it involves our favorite characters such as the ones from Paw Patrol showing us how to do the tree pose or triangle! After one of our brain breaks we went straight to story time as we were ready to watch the story being read. Last week, we read "Mouse Paint" and enjoyed learning about mixing primary colors. Afterwards we were able to get messy and finger paint and mix colors









Caring For The Environment, Exercising, and Learning - A Perfect Recipe for Success

By Julie Repak, Children's Center Teacher

Some lucky Children's Center students had the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors while raking leaves at the Children's Village on campus. There are many reasons that raking leaves is a part of our Montessori Practical Life Area in our curriculum. The Montessori approach encourages students to work with real materials, especially in nature, as often as possible. While raking leaves, our students were learning independence, self-discipline, increasing concentration/focus, and the ability to increase their intrinsic motivation. Not only that, but it allows for students to enjoy the outdoors, learn to care for the environment, get some fresh air, and receive some much needed physical exercise!







Using Nature as an Art Canvas

By Michelle Zelei, Children's Center Teacher

The four-year-old WPSD students have been busy bees! Recently, they have been studying all about Autumn including trees and the colorful leaves that fall from them during this season. Twice a week we make sure to include an outdoor experience in which the students have a chance to be outside and enjoy the fall weather. Our class had the opportunity to paint outside - using the trunk of the tree as an easel (paper was taped to the trunks). The students enjoyed painting and mixing fall colors while creating their works of art: red, orange, yellow and green!

What is Daily 5? Ask a Kindergartener

By Zan Moore, Kindergarten Teacher

Kindergarteners at WPSD have been learning about Daily 5. Daily 5 is a literacy framework that instills behaviors of independence, creates a classroom of highly engaged readers, writers, and learners, and provides teachers with the time and structure to meet diverse student needs. So far, we have learned how to read to ourselves, reading pictures and reading words that we know. We are also learning how to do Word Work. We look at our schedule each day to find out which station we go to first. We are learning how to follow directions and work independently.

If we keep working hard, we are going to become great readers and writers!













Growing ASL Vocabulary and Concepts

By Shelley Zelei, Children's Center Teacher

Once a day throughout the week, American Sign Language Teacher Christie Homell visits the four year old preschool students for ASL class. She helps teach vocabulary and concepts related to each classroom's theme. In October, Miss Christie read "Apples and Pumpkins" by Anne Rockwell to the group and invited the students to practice vocabulary using the pictures from the story. Timely and hands-on learning plays a key role in the high quality education we provide to our students. #wpsdproud!



Farm Trip



By Zan Moore, Kindergarten Teacher

The WPSD Children's Center was not able to go to the farm this year, so we brought the farm to the Children's Center. Two large hay bales were set up for the kindergarten students to climb on while three small hay bales were just the right size for stacking. Students dropped apples in water and observed whether the apples sank or floated. They let farm animals graze in their soil field and plowed with their toy tractor. After snack, the students worked on shucking corn and snapping the ends off of beans. They raked leaves into piles to jump in. After a fun day "on the farm," students came back to the classroom to write about their day by drawing pictures.

Celebrating the Fall Season at WPSD

Tasting the Flavors of the Season

By Beth Anderson, Children's Center Teacher

A welcome sign to the fall season is the leaves changing colors and the weather is turning cooler. The threeyear- old students at WPSD are experiencing this change in season by tasting different types of apples. We gathered red, green and yellow apples. Each student was given the opportunity to taste each of the different apples. Some were feeling adventurous and tried all three kinds of apples and others decided if they liked the apples based on how they looked. We talked about how some apples are sweet and some are sour. Learning the vocabulary that goes along with this lesson is an important part for our little learners. After taste-testing the apples we added different toppings to the apples and decided which ones we liked the best.



Book Walking Instead of Trick or Treating

By Julie Repak, Children's Center Teacher

The WPSD Children's House has been learning all about fall. We decided to have a Fall Celebration in lieu of trickor-treat this year. On a chilly October day, we braved the misty weather, and went on a book walk. The students were looking for PUMPKINS! First, we came to a hay bale. We couldn't go through it, so we had to climb over it. Next, we came to a corn maze. We couldn't go around it, so we had to march, march, march, to the other side. Then, we came to a muddy barnyard. We couldn't walk across it, so we rode, rode, rode, to the other side. Finally, we came to a pond. We couldn't jump over it, so we had to paddle, paddle, to the other side. And guess what we found? Our PUMPKIN treat bags!





Taking in the Beauty of Fall

The WPSD Children's Center, Children's House, and Elementary School students had the opportunity to hop aboard a hay filled wagon and enjoy a leisurely ride around campus. Even though the weather didn't cooperate for some rides, students and staff made the best of it, smiling and laughing through the cold and rain. Despite the unfortunate weather conditions, the magnificent colors of the leaves were prominent, reminding us of the beauty of the season!









Best Overall and Best

Overall Runner Up

The Difficult Task of Pumpkin Judging

WPSD CEO Dr. Farmer served as the master of ceremonies over the pumpkin judging contest in the Children's Center. This year's theme was Halloween. Each class had its own unique character - our students' works of art were impressive! All were very creative and artistic. What a tough decision! The winners of the different categories are as follows:

Best Overall: Mrs. Dumblosky's class (vampire pumpkin)

Best Overall - Runner Up: Mrs. Repak's class (green monster with four eyes)

Cutest: Ms. Zelei's class

Most Original: Ms. Moore's class Most Creative: Mrs. Moriarty's class Spookiest: Mrs. Anderson's class Silliest: Mrs. Gracey's class

Kudos to all who participated!





Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf



Providing Bright Futures for our Students

Ciao! City-States of the Italian Renaissance!

In WPSD's High School World History class, students were studying the Italian Renaissance. In one particular lesson, the group was learning specifically about city-states. For their assignment, the students were responsible for a map activity,

which included students dragging and dropping the Italian city-states into their correct locations on the map. History is alive at WPSD!









Bodies in Motion

In early September, WPSD's high school physical education class reviewed a variety of physical activities in which they could participate during their self-led personal fitness plan. During the class, Ms. Bartholow led a group warm up and cool down demonstration. Always in motion - exercising in distance learning style!





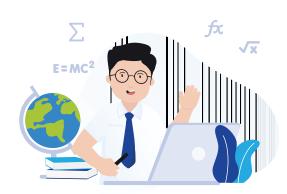






It's Radical to Learn Virtual!

Square roots and radical numbers were the focus of WPSD's Algebra 1 at the beginning of September. Teacher Nick Catalano gave a visual presentation centering on ordering numbers and placement of radicals and decimals on a number line. High quality learning is always present at WPSD!





Driving 101 - Students Learn the Ins and Outs of Driving!

In WPSD's high school drivers education class, students were introduced to regulatory, warning, and guide signs. The students then needed to demonstrate that they have the ability to identify and interpret the meanings of many different regulatory signs used in traffic control. Our future drivers are getting to know the technical aspects of life on the road!



A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

By Dana Dailey, High School Teacher

Recently, WPSD students in the Intro to Photography class were given the task to research an important photo from history, describe the impact that it had, and the emotional response that it creates. Check out these snapshots of students presenting their research. Neat stuff!











Thank You Very Much, Mr. Roboto!

By Lily Giancola, High School Technology and Math Teacher

In September, lots of fascinating learning was going on in WPSD's High School Robotics class, centered around VEXcode VR. VEXcode VR allows students to code a virtual robot using a block-based coding environment powered by Scratch Blocks. VEXcode VR is based on VEXcode, the same programming environment used for VEX 123, GO, IQ and V5 robots. We all know that robots make Computer Science (CS) come to life with real-world applications. Now STEM learning can continue while at home for students, teachers and mentors with no access to their VEX robots.

Students got to choose different virtual 3-D playgrounds to take advantage of the virtual robot's features. They control their point of view as the robot runs their code. The goal of this session's activity was for the students to code utilizing a block-based coding to make a simple shape. Students use problem-solving skills to figure out if their code is correct by looking at their virtual playground as their robot runs their code.



Nearpod Brings Innovative Insight and Participation to Both Teacher and Students

In September, WPSD's fifth grade reading class utilized Nearpod, which is an online student engagement tool that can help teachers learn more about students' insights and boost student participation. Mrs. Noschese and her class discussed story elements including characters' thoughts, actions and words and learned how the setting can help visualize the story and affect the characters about which they read. What a wonderfully interactive and innovative activity!

Mission to Mars

By Kallie Mendenhall, High School Applied Studies Teacher

During WPSD's Functional Reading Class in September, we focused on recent real-life events including the launch of the new Mars Rover - also known as the Perseverance Rover. Students learned about this new Mars Rover mission and how long it will take to land on Mars! As of right now, its estimated time of arrival is in February of 2021! This particular topic is integrated with our Language Arts, Math, Social Studies and Science from Unique Learning System and we love using this curriculum in our class!







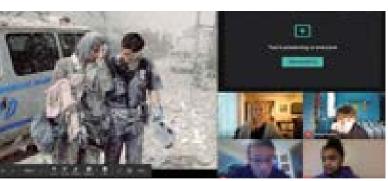
Learning to Protect Our Rights to Free Speech, Religion, Assembly, Press and Right to Petition

By Mary Agnes Behanna, High School Teacher

The WPSD 9th graders eagerly learned about Civics and how our government system works! We learned about the First Amendment, the freedoms this Amendment provides to the American people, and how we use these freedoms in our daily lives. We also reviewed and shared some examples of the First Amendment. Our examples included Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech to depict freedom of speech, and the freedom to create a petition to potentially install traffic lights at a dangerous intersection. Very interesting and important topics!

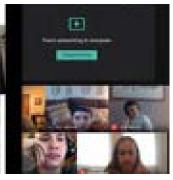














Never Forget the Events of 9/11

By Dana Dailey, High School Teacher

WPSD High School Social Studies students were not yet born on 9/11/01. The students reflected on the events of that tragic day. They reviewed the sequence of events of this terror attack, analyzed images and discussed the impact that this horrific act had on the United States and the world. We remember those who were killed, lost loved ones and of course, our first responders, who rushed to the scene risking their own lives to help the wounded. We will never forget.



and answering open ended comprehension questions. The learning never stops at WPSD! -





Diving into Splash Learn-Fun Math Practice for Fifth Grade

We stopped by the fifth grade math class with Mrs. Noschese in September. The students were studying the order of operations. More specifically, the class was learning to simplify and evaluate expressions with grouping symbols using Splash Learn. The students earned coins when they answered questions correctly. Mrs. Noschese uses the coins toward a group reward at the end of the unit. What a great way to make learning fun!





"Knock, Knock. Who's There?" It's Shakespeare and Other Renaissance Writers!

By Dana Dailey, High School Teacher

Tenth grade WPSD World History students finished up their Renaissance Unit by discussing the works of Erasmus, Sir Thomas More, Shakespeare, and Cervantes. The students were surprised to learn that many common phrases still used today first appeared in Shakespeare's writing, such as: "Break the ice", "Dead as a doornail", "Love is blind", and "Knock, knock. Who's there?" Who knew? Fun and interesting - the best kind of educational knowledge!









No Plot Twists Here! High School Students Learn English and Literature Basics

By Cassie Beveridge, High School ELA Teacher

WPSD high school students complete a Bell Ringer at the beginning of English and Literature class everyday. These activities include grammar corrections, creative writing, making connections, supporting arguments and other critical thinking skills. Ninth grade students recently finished reading the short story "The Most Dangerous Game" by Richard Connell. They reviewed plot elements, practiced identifying figurative language in a text and analysed the author's literary techniques. Soon the students will begin a class novel!



Photography Students Use the Great Outdoors as a Learning Tool

By Dana Dailey, High School Teacher

WPSD High School photography students took advantage of the beautiful weather and headed outside for their lesson. The students are working on a unit about photo composition. The students identified objects in the background of a photo that could be distracting and draw the viewer away from the main subject and message of the photo. Gaining knowledge and enjoying the outdoors is always a winning combination!









By Nancy Livorio, Middle School Teacher

WPSD fifth and sixth graders worked on putting words in alphabetical order. This is a skill I hope to use with them throughout the year as a practice for their vocabulary and/or spelling words. We began by having only three words with different beginning letters. We moved to four words in the same way. After that, we discussed what to do when two of the words have the same beginning letter. We practiced this concept a few times. In the last ten minutes of class, we used their weekly sight word cards and each student individually put a variety of combinations of those in alphabetical order.



By Mary Noschese, Middle School Teacher

WPSD fifth grade students applied their knowledge to the writing process in September. After brainstorming summer memories together, each student chose the memory they felt they could write about the most. Next, they made a list of personal narrative writing features to fill out their planning paper. Following that activity, the students organized their ideas from their memory onto a scaffold to help them with their draft.



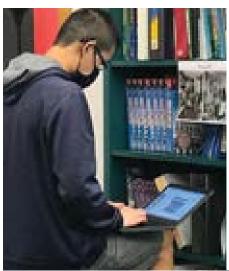


Supporting our Friends and our **Library - Even from Afar**

By Deborah Remis, Middle School Teacher

At the end of September, WPSD's 7th grade English Language Arts class took a few minutes to check in with one of our classmates who continues to participate through distance learning. As we moved forward with in-person instruction, some students continued to join from home through Google Meet. Later in class, the students learned how to search and choose books to borrow from our library. We miss visiting and browsing the shelves, but we are practicing important research skills. We search the database for the genres and topics of interest then complete an online form to request the books. Later, the books will be ready for "shelfside" pickup in the library. The learning never stops at WPSD! -









The Industrial Revolution and its Impact on America

By Dana Dailey, High School Teacher

WPSD 11th grade US History students completed a gallery walk around the classroom in late September. During this walk they analyzed pictures that showed the effects that industrialization had on working and living conditions in the late 19th and early 20th century. This was a great activity in which they could learn a lot, and had a chance to get out of their seats and still stay six feet apart!







History and Religion Collide

By Dana Dailey, High School Teacher

As students in World History class began learning about the Reformation toward the end of September, they took some time to complete a map activity. During this exercise, the students identified the major areas in Europe during the 1600s, the religions that spread throughout Europe at that time, and learned more about the history behind, and influential people connected to, these religions.







Future Scientists in the Making

At the end of September, WPSD Middle School fifth grade Science class worked on scientific process skills. The students learned how to think like scientists using observation, classifying and measuring. During this particular class, the group conducted an activity to hone observation skills and check accuracy using, and comparing, the naked eye and a magnifying glass. First, each student drew a penny using only the naked eye. Then each student drew a penny using a magnifying glass. The results were very interesting! Many students' drawings showed drastic differences between each other. Great stuff!













Making Language Fun with Charades

By Deborah Remis, Middle School Teacher

Charades was the name of the game one October morning in the 7th grade English Language Arts class at WPSD. Students practiced using subject-verb agreement and verb tenses, but with a twist. In an effort to get students moving and engaged in the lesson, we changed it up with charades. This helped to give the kids a break from their computers while still including our at home, distance learning classmates. We all got to move around and have a few laughs while writing and practicing grammar. It was a fun way to start the week and test our creativity.



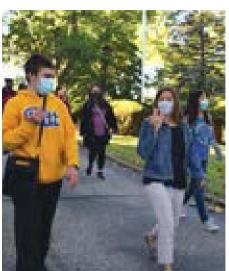
Honoring a Friend and Leader with Annual Fitness Walk

By Kathy Bartholow, Michael Hand, and Caitlin Mosholder

On October 8, the WPSD Physical Education department hosted the seventh annual Dan Emerick Wellness Walk.

Although it looked a little different than in past years due to social distancing guidelines surrounding COVID-19, the heart of the event remained the same. This Wellness Walk honors a great teacher, mentor, and deaf advocate - Dan Emerick. He always said "keep them moving." Dan was a health and physical education teacher at WPSD for 34 years. He was a son of two deaf parents, was a gentle giant and always had a positive spin on life. Dan dedicated his time to the deaf senior citizens group and supported many WPSD fundraising events. He was a fabulous husband to his wife, Nancy and a proud father of his daughter, Shannon. Dan loved WPSD as well as the University of Pittsburgh.

The walk is also a way to promote physical well being and health at WPSD. We thank everyone who enjoyed the beautiful weather and walked with us.













Building the Dream One Robot at a Time

By Lily Giancola, High School Technology and Math Teacher

The WPSD Robotics class jumped into action in October! After doing the self-survey based on their skills each student was split into groups based on the level at which they excelled – Programmer, Builder, Designer, Writer and Driver.

Students were split into groups so the skills could be evenly utilized for their roles within the groups. The class then learned about the challenge in which they will virtually participate in January of 2021. Each group discussed which robot would work best for their group during the competition. Once they agreed on their robot of choice, they started the building process immediately.



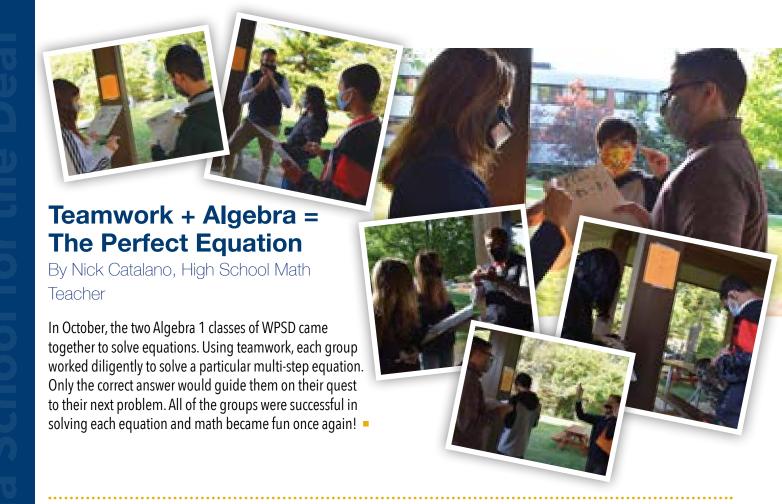


Our Citizen Scientists Develop Hypotheses After Visit to Local Watershed

By Erin Mascaro, High School Teacher

On a beautiful fall day in October, the 9th grade students in Environmental Science class took a short trip, just one mile down the road, to Frick Park. While they were there, they observed the creek and discussed watersheds and the different parts of a creek that allow it to be a healthy ecosystem. They took samples of the water and completed a variety of tests to assess the water quality such as dissolved oxygen, alkalinity, temperature, pH, turbidity, etc. This data will be uploaded to a database through Creek Connections with Allegheny College. Our students are citizen scientists! We will continue to monitor this creek monthly.





Every Vote Counts! Studying the Electoral Process.

By Dana Dailey, High School Teacher

It was an exciting day in October for some of our high school students - they registered to vote! In 9th grade, the students learn about the election process in detail, but this year, students discussed Election 2020 in many of the classes. When students turn 18, we walk them through the process of registering to vote if they choose to do so. We discussed how every vote counts and how important it is for them to exercise their right to vote!













Fifth Grade Finds the "Big Idea"

By Mary Noschese, Middle School Teacher

Finding the theme in literature; THAT was the goal during one session for this motivated group of WPSD 5th graders. After reading a story from their classroom magazine about two characters experiencing the lockdown due to COVID-19, the students were placed into teams to closely analyze the story's events to find the theme of the story. After answering guiding questions about characters' thoughts, emotions, and actions at the beginning and end of the story, they were able to develop a "big idea" statement about the story: Hard times become easier when people connect with and help each other. That is certainly a theme we can learn from and connect to; even while practicing social distancing.







By Julie Ann Mountain, Science & Math Teacher

Exciting stuff is happening in WPSD's High School Chemistry class! In October, students finished their investigation of physical and chemical changes. They used iodine to observe two of the less common phase changes: sublimation, when a solid changes to gas and deposition when a gas changes to solid. They then used the periodic table to discover similarities and trends in elements' properties. Students conducted a flame test using metal-halogen compounds. The heat causes electrons to become "excited" and jump to a higher energy level; when they return to their ground state, visible photons are emitted. Take a look at the spectrum of colors that were produced!







Soap and Food Coloring Help Make for a Cool Science Experiment...Elephant Toothpaste!

By Erin Mascaro, High School Teacher

During ISP one day in October, WPSD students had an opportunity to see how a catalyst can speed up a reaction by making "Elephant Toothpaste"! Potassium lodide when added to Hydrogen Peroxide can VERY quickly speed up a reaction of Hydrogen Peroxide decomposing into oxygen and water. We mixed a little dish soap and food coloring in there to make the reaction a little more colorful and fun! Students observed the steam after the reaction was completed. This type of reaction is called exothermic because heat is released. Great observation high school students! We hope you enjoyed learning about Elephant Toothpaste!



WPSD elementary students in Social Studies class recently studied a unit titled "Where I Live." The group reviewed pertinent vocabulary words including country, continent, state, border, city, and globe. After this refresher, the students took part in a bingo game specifically highlighting the United States. While playing, the group simultaneously learned the signs for each state in the country. A creative, hands-on activity that helped make learning fun!











Reading Transports Our Minds and Souls

By Carolyn Kirkpatrick, Coordinator of Library Services

This school year, our library theme is 'Reading Gives Us Someplace to Go When We Have to Stay Where We Are.'

Our students and teaching staff have access to our library's Google Classroom where they can receive updated news about the library including new book arrivals, Google slides of specific genres or areas, and videos on how to use a variety of databases and subscriptions. We have MackinVIA, Tumblebooks, TumbleMath, Teen Book Cloud, MyOn, just to name a few.

Our students and staff can request books from the library through a Google form that can be found in the library's Google Classroom. When our Middle and High School students receive an email from the library staff, they can pick up their book(s) from our Shelfside Pickup Area. For Children's Center and elementary students, we personally deliver their books to their classroom using our "book mobile." When the students return their books to the library, we quarantine the books for three days. Our library staff members are the only ones who can collect books from the shelves and restock the books (after being quarantined for three full days).

Our On-The-Job Trainer, Deanna F., is working in the library five days a week for a total of 7 hours a week. Her responsibilities include working as a team with the library staff in preparation for the change of the fiction area, doing computer work and organizing books before putting them on the shelves. Right now, our fiction area is for all chapter books at any content level. We are in the process of splitting the fiction section into three different groupings: Junior Fiction, Fiction, and Young Adult.



Residence

Students Return to the Residence!

WPSD residential students were welcomed back on September 20th - the day before in-person instruction began - after a six-month closure. The students were so happy to see their home-away-from-home ready and waiting for them once again. The staff members were so excited to have them back!















Students Enjoy a Halloween Party - Social Distancing Style

On October 29, the students enjoyed a socially distanced Halloween party. They took part in pumpkin carving, a "paper, rock, scissors" contest, and dressed in costumes. They had so much fun! Many thanks to PSO for their donation of pizzas for the party!



Residential Students and Staff Give Thanks

By Marybeth Lauderdale

November 12th was the Residential Thanksgiving dinner, expertly run by Dean Halik and the Residential staff. We had to make several COVID-19 modifications, but as usual, WPSD rose to the challenge! The plexiglass dividers were decorated with autumnal garlands, and the tables were decorated with gourds, giant acorns, and candy corn party favor baskets. The students and staff looked festive in their best outfits, and Dr. Farmer led us in grace, recalling how thankful we are for our blessings. We made videos of every table, with staff and students telling Dean Ennis-Blahut how much we miss her and want her to get well! Thank you to Five Starr for another delicious Thanksgiving dinner!















Investing in the Future of WPSD Students!

WPSD has enjoyed the opportunity to participate in the EITC program that was created by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and gives area businesses the chance to invest in local schools each year. EITC contributions are directed to classes on campus such as BotsIQ, Raster/Vectors, and Digital Fabrication just to name a few. Over the years NexTier Bank has generously contributed to WPSD through the EITC program and this year was no exception! The kindness provided by NexTier has allowed WPSD to provide top-quality academic programs in the STEAM fields to its students. We would like to offer a heartfelt 'thank you' to NexTier for their financial support!





Southwestern PA Company, Heeter, Donates Clear Masks to WPSD!

WPSD was pleased to recently receive a donation of clear masks from Heeter in Southpointe, located in Canonsburg. During these times of COVID-19 and the need to wear face coverings, clear masks, which permit the entire face to be seen, have played a vital role to provide better communication for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Clear masks have been a critical resource for WPSD. The clear masks were offered to WPSD staff and to the students, when they returned to campus. A big 'thank you' to Heeter for their kindness and generosity!



Thank You to Our Brave **First Responders!**

WPSD would like to thank the Edgewood Fire Department, Swissvale Fire Department, STATMedEvac team and ALL first responders for everything they do to protect our communities. Their jobs are extremely difficult. These brave men and women play critical roles in our communities that help save lives. It was a privilege to catch a glimpse of a training that provides this response and care to those in need. On September 17, a STATMedEvac helicopter landed on our field! Fortunately, this was all part of a training exercise for the Edgewood Fire Department. Swissvale Fire Department was in attendance as well. It was an amazing thing to witness! -



WPSD Hosts Annual Breast Cancer Awareness Fundraiser

The Girls' Athletic Association at the WPSD hosted its breast cancer awareness fundraiser at the end of October. 100% of the profits made from this fundraiser will go directly to an organization that supports breast cancer awareness and to two staff members who are breast cancer survivors. Due to COVID-19 gathering restrictions, our usual group picture on the front steps was not feasible. However, students and staff still showed their support in a big way. Smaller group pictures were taken throughout the day - the color pink was prevalent all over campus that day.



















Exploring Pathways to the Future By Victoria Vitullo, Transition Coordinator



Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) promotes career development for students and job seekers with disabilities through job shadowing and hands on career exploration. DMD is in its 25th year and is celebrated all across America with regard to youth with disabilities. This milestone is occurring in conjunction with the 30th anniversary of the ADA (Americans with Disability Act)!

On this special day, high school students with disabilities all across America took part in a variety of employment settings and learned first hand about different types of careers. WPSD has been working with PNC for the past three years as our employer partner. Angelina B., a senior at WPSD, spoke at the employer Kick Off event on October 19th. She is one of several high school students who were invited to share a bit about themselves and how the services they have received along their life's journey has impacted them. Angelina discussed how attending WPSD has impacted her life in such a positive way.

Transition Coordinator Victoria Vitullo presented Angelina with sunflowers (Angelina's favorite) for a job well done. (Photo credit for that picture goes to Lily F.) You will soon read, nine WPSD iuniors and seniors attended Disability Mentoring Day, virtually, on October 21.

What an exciting and hopeful time as we look toward the futures of our students! =

Disability Mentoring Day Helps College Bound Students Prepare for Future in the Workforce

The annual Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) that takes place every October was moved to a virtual platform this year. WPSD's business partner, PNC, did a bang up job with planning a fun and memorable event this year for our juniors and seniors who are college bound. Our students answered questions in the chat feature which kept them engaged! Also on the videoconference was Steel Valley High School and Elizabeth Forward High School. It was interesting for our students to see non Deaf students learn about the use of an ASL interpreter who was provided by PNC. Our students walked away with excellent tips and strategies to not only figure out what they want to become in their future work life but also about three types of interview questions and wonderful things you can do to make yourself ready for a job interview. WPSD even

had one junior participate in the conference from at-home learning! WPSD's Transition Department is most appreciative of our technology department who has been extremely busy with all of the events going on this current school year. There have been incredible programs for our students to attend this school year despite the pandemic. WPSD departments have been such team players, working together for the good of all of our students!

Getting Hands-On Experience to Prepare for the Future

Hello! I am Valerie, a WPSD High School junior and I am taking an online class at The University of Pittsburgh from the Society of Women Engineers (SWE). I decided to take this class in order to experience different types of engineering, to help me better determine which type I like best. During the class, we do hands-on activities. For example, I had to brainstorm and build an artificial hand (see picture) from any household supplies. This activity pertained to Bioengineering. I was able to get my "fingers" to move! I could not get them to grip, however. After doing the hands-on activities for approximately 45 minutes, we were able to ask a panel of engineers questions that relate to engineering or questions related to college. So far, I learned about bioengineering, chemical engineering, civil and environmental engineering. This is a very cool experience for a student considering engineering as a college major and I have learned a great deal. I am very glad that I am

taking the Pitt SWE online class! I am also thankful for the PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for supporting my ASL interpreter as this is a Pre Employment Transition

Activity for me. I am also

appreciative of my teacher, Erin Mascaro, for pointing out this opportunity for me and for my Transition Coordinator, Victoria Vitullo, for helping me to become connected with my OVR counselor.



Exploring the Possibilities of the Future

High school student Maggie G. is pictured here doing a vocational interest inventory to prepare for her 10th grade IEP. A vocational interest inventory are question-based activities to which students respond. Upon completion, their responses indicated types of careers in which students would enjoy working. These inventories are typically accurate and can be helpful to students, their families, and WPSD staff.



WPSD Student Makes Impressive Showing at Art Show

WPSD Junior, Sam P., participated in his first, "Evolve's Annual Evening of Arts for Autism" art show and fundraiser in October. Evolve Coaching is a non-profit, private organization dedicated to providing three main functions for young adults on the Autism spectrum (ASD):

1. College Coaching (Evolve's coaches assist students to navigate college life. They help with things like: organization, time management, self-advocacy, and socialization.)

2. Employment Coaching (Job searching and making connections, resume development, interview practice, self-advocacy, job shadowing, and on the job supported employment.)

3. Arts for Autism (both film and fine arts)

The theme for this year's show was inspired by the Coronavirus pandemic. Sam's witty sense of humor made his cartoon an obvious choice for the judge's selection, along with Sam's newest rescue cat, Bendi. Bendi provided much comfort to Sam and his family during those long virtual school days prior to Sam returning to in-person instruction at WPSD.

This is Sam's 2nd art show in the Pittsburgh area. Sam's artwork has been receiving quite a bit of attention as of late and his works can be viewed on Instagram at: Wintergreen Wolf.



Savoring the Next Steps in the Culinary Arts!

WPSD Senior Cam'Ron B. is learning food preparation at a neighborhood restaurant called Joe & Pie. He is working three 2-hour shifts per week. This is a Paid Work Experience (PWE) funded by PA OVR. Cam'Ron has high hopes of landing a job in food preparation. Food service is in Cam'Ron's blood according to his mom. She is proud he is following in her footsteps! Congratulations to Cam'Ron for taking the next step toward your future!



A hidden treasure found inside the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, LionWorks Printing & Graphics is a full service printing and copy center for schools, small businesses, community partners, and corporate customers. Our digital printing facility provides high quality products and services. LionWorks takes a hands-on approach to student learning and on-the-job training. WPSD students actively work on commercial print jobs that are designated for community customers! For example, the students you see here in the pictures are demonstrating the various jobs needed to complete these jobs - folding and cutting materials, packaging and shipping preparation and folder stuffing and gathering.

LionWorks is proud to continue to offer printing education and services on our campus – a tradition that has been part of the School since 1892. Our mission is to provide excellent service and quality results. Check out WPSD for more information!



LIONWORKS

PRINTING & GRAPHICS AT THE WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

- > BANNERS
- > BOOKLETS
- > BOOKMARKS
- > BROCHURES
- > BUSINESS CARDS
- > CALENDARS
- > CATALOGS
- > DISPLAY GRAPHICS
- > DOOR HANGERS
- > ENVELOPES
- > FLYERS
- > FOLDED POSTCARDS

- > GREETING CARDS
- > HANG TAGS
- > LETTERHEAD
- > MENUS
- > NEWSLETTERS
- > NOTE PADS
- > POSTCARDS
- > POSTERS
- > RACK CARDS
- > SALES SHEETS
- > TABLE TENTS
- > VEHICLE GRAPHICS



LionWorks Printing & Graphics is a full-service, environmentally-friendly print and copy center committed to bringing you the best service, quality and price.

LionWorks specializes in services for non-profit organizations, schools, communities, and businesses. Our facility is a resource for graphic design, 4-color offset digital printing, large format specialty printing, and full bindery capabilities.

Located on the campus of the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf in Edgewood, PA our printing facility continues WPSD's legacy of print services. Plus, through our on-the-job training program our deaf and hard of hearing students acquire first hand experience and skills for the printing industry - a tradition at the school that dates back to 1892.









Setting the pace as a leader for the education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students in Pennsylvania and throughout the nation!

It is an understatement to say that 2020 has presented new challenges to our administrators, teachers and staff. All of our programs have had to navigate several exciting months this year.

In March, we were ordered by the Governor to close the school due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We quickly switched to distance learning for the remainder of the school year. Although our students missed many end-of-the-year activities, we were able to conduct an innovative version of our in-person graduation ceremonies in Pittsburgh and Scranton. We also virtually recognized our preschoolers in Scranton, Erie, Hershey, and Pittsburgh.

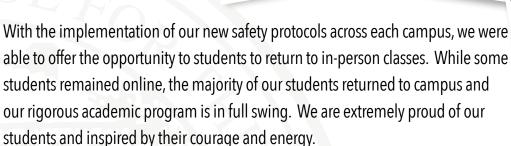
During the summer, the administrators worked hard to improve distance learning for our teachers and students and made plans for a safe and healthy return. We were able to adapt and persevere during this COVID-19 pandemic by never losing focus of our students and their needs. Our faculty, staff, and parents are to be commended for their resilience to overcome these challenges to ensure that our students received the best education possible.











As 2020 comes to a close, would you please consider a tax-deductible donation to one of our many programs with the enclosed envelope or online at wpsd.org or thescrantonschool.org? Every gift is important to us and essential in our efforts to provide the highest quality education for our students.

Thank you for your kindness, generosity, and support. May your holiday season be filled with joy and peace. Best wishes for a safe and Happy New Year.

Sincerely,

Steve Farmer

Steven E. Farmer, Ed.D.

Chief Executive Officer Programs of the Western

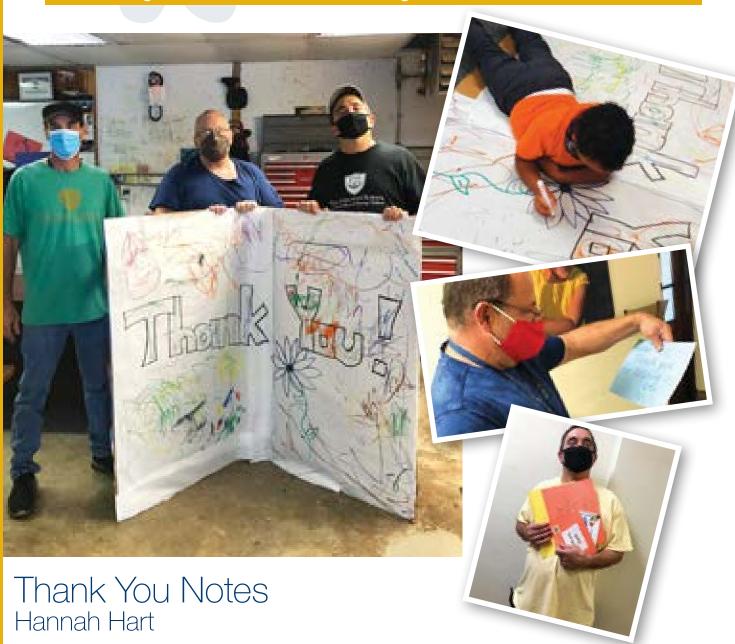
Pennsylvania School for the Deaf



You Can Help Us to Continue to Make our School a Better Place to Learn, Work, Play and Grow.

The Scranton School for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

Educating Deaf and Hard of Hearing students in Northeastern PA



The pieces of paper that were stacked on the desk were all different shapes, sizes, and colors. But the messages written on them were all the same: Thank you! Our students at The Scranton School have noticed all of the extra work that the housekeeping and maintenance staff has done over the past few months to keep their school clean and safe and wanted to show their gratitude. A card drive was organized and the students got straight to work with creating their artistic signs of appreciation! On Thursday, October 22nd, students presented their thank you cards to a very surprised and grateful housekeeping and maintenance staff.

On behalf of all staff and students at The Scranton School, we would like to thank the entire housekeeping and maintenance staff for their ongoing dedication to keeping the building clean and fostering a safe learning environment for our students. Thank you for living out our school's motto every day: "Where kids come first"!





1st Grade Adventures

In Social Studies class, Elizabeth Nati's 1st grade class practiced voting. They put their votes in the ballot box and then wore "I voted" stickers on their shirts.

The first grade class went outside for an Autumn Nature Scavenger hunt. Students found a pinecone, twigs, rocks, colored leaves, and a small spider! It was wonderful to get outside in the fresh autumn air and experience nature.



It is the vision of our school to be a **Total Learning Environment**

for our students.

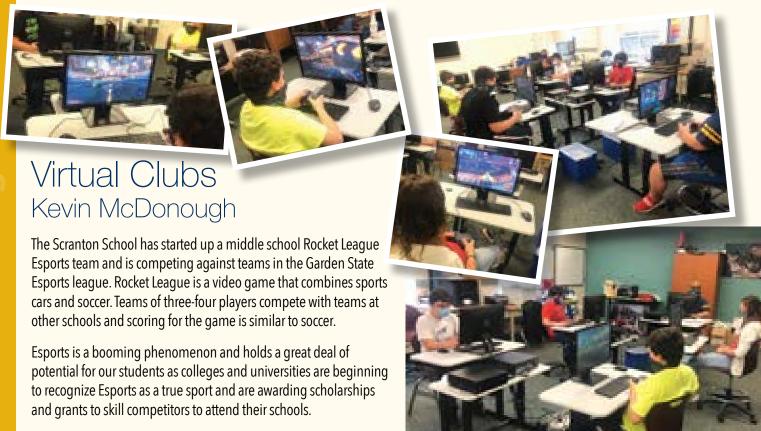
The Scranton School for
Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Children is a special place
where...

- Our students achieve at the same levels as other children in our society.
- Our students reach their highest potential in academics and citizenship.
- Our students achieve independence, high personal aspirations, and pride.

The Scranton School for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

537 Venard Road Clarks Summit, PA 18411 (570) 585-1000 V/TTY (866) 978-1886 VP www.thescrantonschool.org







of Legends.

Future Esports expansion possibilities include Minecraft and League

Snowball Shuffle

On your mark...get set..... WAIT FOR IT!!!!!

The Scranton School is sponsoring our first "Snowball Shuffle". This year's 5K and 1 mile FUN RUN and WALK will be virtual. Registration information will be posted soon. Look for more information and how you can become involved in this event to support our school during the month of February!

Get out, get healthy and get some awesome "Snowball Shuffle swag" - More info coming soon to Facebook and thescrantonschool.org web page.



Camp-Hill First Day Students Return





The COVID 19 pandemic began at the time students from The Scranton School were planning their annual 4-H projects. We knew we would need to make some adjustments, but we were determined that our projects would get done! With the school's move to distance learning, we did the same. 4-H became an online club meeting Fridays from 3:00 – 4:00 pm. With the help of our families, we were able to do so much. Kase, Lexi, Michaela, Ethan, Taylor, Raelee, Carlene and Jacob built garden boxes (just like we had at school) to grow seeds and plants. They grew carrots, watermelon and flowers. Everyone grew some tomatoes and some REALLY BIG pumpkins!

We learned about animals and taking care of our pets. We drew pictures of our pets and kept a chart of how we take care of them. We had a virtual field trip to the farm where we saw Ruthie and Leif (the goats) play and watched Rachel (the sheep) get sheared. We were excited to learn how wool becomes a sweater. We even brought our sweaters to show each other and wear on a cool July afternoon! Throughout the summer, everyone worked on 4-H books, in addition to projects, learning as much as they could while having some fun!

While we could not participate in our county fair this year and show our projects, we had our own display at school. Flower boxes, posters and our project books were displayed with some pumpkins. Ms. Sandi Graham from the Lackawanna County 4-H office visited us at school and judged our projects. She awarded a blue ribbon and 4-H sweatshirt to each student for hard work and commitment. While this year was a new experience, we followed the 4-H motto and "made the best better"! We look forward to continuing our learning through 4-H now that we are together again.





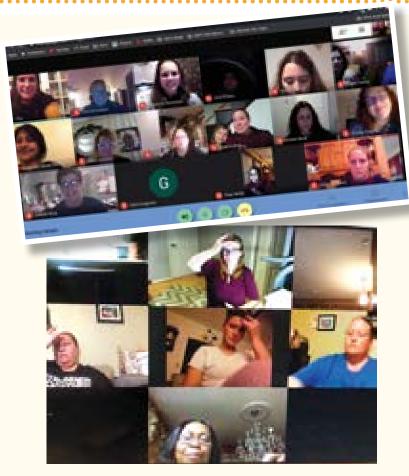


Dan Emerick Walk Lexi Pientack

This year, Scranton joined WPSD for the Dan Emerick Wellness Walk. Dan was a Health and Physical Education teacher at WPSD for 34 years. He was a CODA, born to Deaf parents and a strong advocate for the Deaf community, ASL and fitness. Students and staff got outside on a beautiful fall day, to walk in honor of Dan Emerick, while fostering the importance of health and physical well-being. We look forward to making this a new annual tradition.







ASL Classes Go Virtual

Due to COVID-19, the world has had to get creative in making a new "normal" and The Scranton School's community ASL class has had to do the same. The ASL teachers worked hard to modify the curriculum to accommodate a virtual teaching environment. Excitement from the community was evident as we had more first time attendees than ever before! We even had participants from different states join our classes.

We will be holding two more sessions of ASL classes in the winter and spring. Our winter session will be held January 20th until March 10th and our class in the spring will be April 14th until June 2nd. If you or someone you know is interested in registering for this session, please contact Hannah Hart at hhart@thescrantonschool.org for more information.



Barnyard Friends Club Mary Ann Stefko

The Barnyard Friends Club never stops learning! During COVID, our group met virtually to complete our Pets and Plants 4-H project. Since we have been back on campus, we continue to learn about our animals and how to care for them.

Leif (the goat) and Sweetpea (the bunny) came to school to help kick off our fall session of learning. We were excited that the November weather cooperated and we were able to have Dr. Maral Avetian, from North Winds Veterinary Services come to school. Dr. Maral gave our animals their "Fall Check Up" and showed us her mobile veterinary truck. She talked to us about the different animals that she takes care of at her office and on the farm. We can't wait to visit her new clinic and farm.

We learned so much and enjoyed interacting with Leif and Sweetpea.

We are looking forward to the winter and our visit from Lily and Rachel (the sheep). We will be watching to see how their wool is growing after they were sheared this summer. We will be learning to make yarn from their wool!







Fire Safety Video

To celebrate Fire Safety month, The Scranton School partnered with the Chinchilla Hose Company to provide a video presentation about fire safety for our students. The presentation went over a variety of things including setting up a family meeting spot outside of the house, how to text 911 if there is an emergency, and what to do if you cannot get out of your room.

Students were also given a tour of a fire truck as well as an ambulance! We are very grateful to the Chinchilla Hose Company for being willing to give us their time in this project. Through their kindness, our students have a deeper understanding of what to do in case of an emergency and they were shown exactly how our first responders serve our communities.





October is Fire Safety Month, but it is important to practice fire prevention year round. We conduct fire drills monthly at SSDHHC to ensure all of our students and staff know how to get out of the building calmly in the shortest possible time and without confusion. It is also helpful to familiarize our students and staff with the sound of the alarm and corresponding flashing lights.

A quick response to a fire alarm is key in staying safe in the event of a fire. What sort of challenges do the deaf and hard-of-hearing face when it comes to fire safety? Even the high frequency sounds from an alarm can be lost on an individual who is deaf or has hearing loss. Smoke alarms sound an alarm at 3 kHz and fire alarm horn strobe devices sound an alarm between 2-4 kHz. These high-frequency sounds are often the first to be lost to a person with hearing loss. Fortunately, there are fire safety devices designed specifically for the deaf and hard-of-hearing such as fire alarm strobe lights, vibration notification appliances, and mixed pitch alarms.

Here are some tips for keeping your home safe and preventing fires:

- Install smoke and carbon monoxide alarms on every level of your home and in all bedrooms.
- Be sure to test your alarms regularly.
- Remember to replace your alarms at least every 10 years.

- Plan and practice an escape route with your family.
- Unattended cooking is the #1 cause of fires in a kitchen.
 Be alert while cooking.
- If your smoke or carbon monoxide alarm sounds, leave your home immediately for fresh air and call 911.
- Consider a power failure night light that can assist in the event you lose power
- Deaf or hard of hearing persons can contact their local fire departments for information about obtaining a flashing or vibrating smoke alarm.
- The Red Cross also installs a limited number of specialized bedside alarms for deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals. To request a free installation, visit getasmokealarm.org.







Kevin McDonough
On Friday, September 25th, The Scranton Sch

On Friday, September 25th, The Scranton School hosted its annual golf outing at Stone Hedge Golf Course in Tunkhannock, PA. The weather was perfect with temperatures in the low 70s and sunny skies. Ninety-three golfers showed up for this event. A big thank you to the golfers and the golf outing's sponsors. Without them, this event would not be possible. Proceeds from the golf tournament will be used to fund the construction of an on-campus outdoor learning space.







The Scranton School and Prudential entered into a collaboration following a very successful "Employee Wellness Day." Last Spring, SSDHHC provided hearing screenings on site for Prudential employees in Scranton. What emerged, was a strong employee desire to learn ASL specifically tailored to the workplace to enhance the ability of colleagues to interact. Prudential hosted middle school students from The Scranton School at their Scranton site. Thomas Chappell and Diane Hettinger presented to the students on topics like technology and workplace accommodations.

The collaboration expanded from the initial sign language series ("An Introduction to Hearing Loss") and Prudential offered a second workplace professional development course where employees were able to use their lunchtime to learn more information about hearing loss, amplification, communication options, technology and sign language. "Communication in the Workplace" is a course co-facilitated by Mary Ann Stefko and Thomas Chappell, and is designed to give Prudential employees the skills to make communication in the workplace more accessible for all. Currently, The Scranton School and Prudential offer three courses virtually allowing employees to select the course that fits their work schedule to develop their skills and increase their knowledge related to Deafness, Hearing Loss, ASL and the Deaf Community.

Middle school students were recently invited to participate in Prudential's Annual Disability Employment Awareness Month event, "Increasing Access and Opportunity "WebEx presentation. Haben Girma was the keynote speaker. Ms. Girma is the first Deaf, blind, woman of color to graduate from Harvard Law School. She is currently a civil rights attorney and advocate for people who are differently abled. Our students had the opportunity to do research about Ms. Girma's life journey and submitted questions which she very thoughtfully answered during her presentation. What an amazing opportunity!

Prudential and The Scranton School look forward to continuing to grow our collaboration and working together to ensure opportunities and accessibility for all!







It's The Most Frightening, Scary Spooky, Creepy, Ghastly, Ghoulish, Wonderful Time of The Year!!!

Lexi Pientack

No tricks! Just treats, costumes, bingo and fun as we celebrated Halloween 2020 like we never have before. This year we held a virtual Halloween parade and saw some really creative and cool costumes. Staff and classes (including our students at home) connected virtually to show off their costumes and play some Halloween interactive Bingo. Treat bags were prepared for each student and additional bags donated by PSO filled with Halloween stickers, coupons and activity books were also provided to all of our SSDHHC ghouls and gals. At the end of the day, all students received their very own pumpkin donated by Cavage's Country Farm Market & Mary Ann Stefko and family.





Mrs. Flanagan's 2nd and 3rd Grade Class is on a Roll



Election 2020

Mrs. Flanagan's 2nd and 3rd grade class has been learning about what it means to be a good citizen as well as the process of the American election. They learned about each candidate and discussed why it is important for every American to vote. The students also learned about each branch of the government and their job within the country. The class discussed the qualifications for becoming the president of the United States as well.

Landforms and Bodies of Water

After spending several weeks learning about plate tectonics, earthquakes and volcanoes, Mrs. Flanagan's class has moved on to different landforms and bodies of water. They have discussed how each is formed and where they can be found on our planet. Their hard work and learning is proudly displayed in the hallway outside of the classroom.









Chance of Fun with PE

Josiah Mantz-PF & Health Teacher

Students at SSDHHC are off to an excellent start in Physical Education classes. They start out each class with a fifteen to twenty minute workout that leaves everyone tired and sweaty (including the staff!). I've really been impressed with how hard they're working, whether they're with us at school or with us virtually. Keep up the great work, BEARS!

Our students have also been taking advantage of the beautiful campus. They have been enjoying a lot of outdoor activities. They've enjoyed learning new vocabulary through observing things in nature, collecting sticks to build mini teepees, competing in nature scavenger hunts, and even constructing slingshots with the older students! One of our students even found a frog the other day!



Needless to say, they have been loving the fresh air and are learning to enjoy being active outside as they witness the beauty of nature that we have all around us. •

The NEPA Professional Learning Community Mary Ann Stefko

The NEPA Professional Learning Community (PLC) continues to work on improving and expanding services for children with a hearing loss in our region. This dedicated group of doctors, audiologists, early intervention professionals, educators, parents, Department of Health representatives and EITA staff have continued to meet virtually. We have expanded our group to include new community stakeholders and formed two work groups. The first work group focuses on continued outreach and professional development to the medical and audiological communities while the second work group focuses on the social/ emotional development and family engagement of

children with a hearing loss. Members of the PLC had a very successful meeting with the Newborn Services team from Geisinger Medical Center in Danville to discuss ways that we could support each other and the families in our region. Members of the PLC will be serving as panelists on the Roundtables being offered throughout the state by PATTAN beginning in November. We look forward to continuing our work together while eliminating barriers to care and expanding services and resources for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children and their families.

Alannah Sullivan Paraprofessional

Your start date at SSDHHC: September 21, 2020

Where were you born? Scranton, Pa

Where do you live now? Montrose, Pa

Tell us about your family: My family is made up of my two amazing parents, Dr. Robert Sullivan and Rebecca Sullivan, and my younger brother Lee John.

What are some of your hobbies or what do you like to do for enjoyment? I love to travel and learn about new cultures.

What did you do before SSDHHC? Before SSDHHC, I was a full time student at Kean University studying Psychology and American Sign Language.

What do you enjoy most about working at SSDHHC? The thing I enjoy most about working at SSDHHC is the work environment. Between working with the kids and having the most caring and compassionate coworkers, I could not think of a better place to work.

What's something that has surprised you about your chosen career path? The fact that we never have two days that are the same. Every day is truly so different but in the best of ways.

Something most people don't know about you: I am currently



working towards getting my Master's degree in Global Communications and Conflict Resolution.

I never leave the house without: My phone and Chapstick.

Favorite place to eat: Colarusso's Pizza

Who would you most like to switch places with for a day? I would switch places with a Disney World Cast Member because I love Disney and would love to work there.

What is something you saw recently that made you smile?
The way in which the students at school are making the best of everything! Even though they have a mask and maintain social distancing, the younger students still come with a positive attitude and are ready to take on the world.

Kira Uber Paraprofessional

Your start date at SSDHHC: August 2019

Where were you born? Kingston, Pa

Where do you live now? Scranton, Pa

Tell us about your family: Nothing to tell...but I'm working on my family history/tree and found out that I am the 4th generation to be in the USA on my mom's side. I have a few Deaf family members, I am sure most of y'all knew my great uncle, George Petrick, who graduated from WPSD, class of 1946. We aren't blood-related but he married my great aunt Doris Scott, who is also Deaf and my great grandma's youngest sister.

What are some of your hobbies or what do you like to do for enjoyment? Art & Crafts, puzzles and video gaming.

What did you do before SSDHHC? Worked at Wal-mart for 2 years.

What do you enjoy most about working at SSDHHC? Doing arts & crafts with the students.

What's something that has surprised you about your chosen career path? That moment when I got a job as a paraprofessional, it made me so excited because working with students is my dream...But becoming an art teacher is my major dream and I am working on it!



Something most people don't know about you: I'm a Rusyn and I grew up in mainstream school until I went to Scranton State School for the Deaf, September 26, 2007 to June 2009 then SSDHHC for a year and transferred to WPSD & graduated there in 2012 and Forbes CTC in 2013.

I never leave the house without: a coffee! LOL!

Favorite place to eat: Texas Roadhouse, their steak is so tasty!

Who would you most like to switch places with for a day? A star in the universe! What? It's a living organism!

What is something you saw recently that made you smile? Seeing students smiling and happy.



Senoy King Paraprofessional

Your start date at SSDHHC: September 13, 2019

Where were you born? Atlanta, Georgia

Where do you live now? Dunmore, Pa

Tell us about your family: I have 5 sisters.

What are some of your hobbies or what do you like to do for enjoyment? I love coaching elementary through high school level basketball.

What did you do before SSDHHC? I worked at California School for Deaf helping with after school activities, the residential program, coached boys' and girls' basketball and was the Assistant Coach for flag football.

What do you enjoy most about working at SSDHHC? I enjoy working with students and staff.

What's something that has surprised you about your chosen career path? I worked for UPS for 20 years and retired early. I wasn't expecting to work with children or for a deaf school, but this is where my path lead me.



Something most people don't know about you: I'm not sure I have anything shocking to share.

I never leave the house without: My favorite bracket and iPhone.

Favorite place to eat: The 16th Ward in Scranton.

Who would you most like to switch places with for a day? I wouldn't trade with anyone.

What is something you saw recently that made you smile? Watching the students working hard in class •

Pauline Lopez

Your start date at SSDHHC: September 8, 2020

Where were you born? Ontario, Canada

Where do you live now? Easton, Pa

Tell us about your family: I come from a big family - I have one sister and three brothers!

What are some of your hobbies or what do you like to do for enjoyment? I enjoy playing tennis with my friends during my free time!

What did you do before SSDHHC? Before I worked at SSDHHC, I lived in Notre Dame, Indiana, working as an CF-SLP in mainstream school districts.

What do you enjoy most about working at SSDHHC? The one thing I enjoy most about working at SSDHHC, thus far, is learning how to better serve my students, especially through the improvement of utilizing sign language to the best of my ability.

What's something that has surprised you about your chosen career path? With the career I have chosen, it has been more fulfilling that I ever thought it would be.

Something most people don't know about you: One of the things that most people don't know about me is that I grew up in Canada, but I don't enjoy being in cold weather.

I never leave the house without: I can never leave the house without gum.



Favorite place to eat: One of my favorite places to eat is a restaurant in Carmel, Indiana called, The Cake Bake Shop by Gewndolyn Rogers. It's like being present in a storybook!

Who would you most like to switch places with for a day? If I could switch places with anyone in the world for a day, I would choose Joanna Gaines. I aspire to create various avenues of modern art, especially in interior design, as she has done.

What is something you saw recently that made you smile? Seeing students present every day at school has been putting a smile on my face daily!

Earl VanWert Security Guard

Your start date at SSDHHC: April 6, 2021

Where were you born? I was born in Scranton, but moved a lot as a result of my father's military career including six years in Germany.

Where do you live now? I live in South Abington Township (about three minutes from the school).

Tell us about your family: I'm married. My wife's name is Lisa and she is a special education teacher. I have two daughters, Anna and Meghan. Anna is in her junior year at the University of Scranton and Meghan is a junior at Abington Heights High School. We also have a pet, a little yorkie dog named Gwen!

What are some of your hobbies or what do you like to do for enjoyment? I enjoy spending time with my family and have always been very involved in my daughters' sports, especially softball and field hockey. I also enjoy the outdoors, sports, I play guitar, and I love the beach.

What did you do before SSDHHC? Prior to working at SSDHHC I was working for the Lackawanna County Sheriff's Office as a Deputy Sheriff. I'm fortunate that the Sheriff has allowed me to maintain that job on a part time basis and continue as a member of the Sheriff's Mounted Unit. (I get to work with horses!).

What do you enjoy most about working at SSDHHC? What I enjoy most about working at SSDHHC is absolutely the people. Since the time I started in this position everyone has been so kind and helpful. Thank you everyone!

What's something that has surprised you about your chosen



career path? Something that surprised me in my career path would be the extent to which I developed a love of learning and education. That was not the case during my adolescence!

Something most people don't know about you: Something that no one knows about me would be that I cried when the Boston Red Sox won the World Series in 2004! (Well, I teared up anyway).

I never leave the house without: Something I never leave the house without would be my sense of humor. Important survival gear for our times!

Favorite place to eat: I would have to say my favorite place to eat would probably be the Texas Roadhouse.

Who would you most like to switch places with for a day? If I could switch places with anyone for a day it would be Sammy Hagar!

What is something you saw recently that made you smile? Something that made me smile recently was a photo I was lucky enough to see of a co-worker's beautiful new born baby!

Our Unsung Hero Lexi Pientack

It was a school nurse who first discovered the H1N1 also known as swine flu back in 2009. The role of school nurse is playing a bigger role than ever and sadly 25% of US schools do not have a school nurse and that was before the pandemic. School nurses serve as the professional connection between the education sector and public health. When preparing to return to an inclass education model and keeping up with current infection numbers and guidelines, most of us look to one person for guidance-our school nurse. School nurses play a paramount role in maintaining student health. Now, in addition to our school nurse's daily responsibility of tending to sick students, administering medications, bandaging scrapes and cuts and maintaining immunization and physical records, she is also screening for COVID-19 symptoms' she helps determine whether

a student or maybe even a staff member should stay home or be tested for the virus.

We are grateful each and every day for our wonderful front line school nurse, Mary Butler, whose responsibilities have expanded since the start of the pandemic. The support school nurses provide during outbreaks like the current Coronavirus, benefits not only our staff and students, but whole communities. Mary is constantly working with teachers and staff at The Scranton School to ensure proper hygiene and disinfecting procedures to maintain student and staff health and safety.

I had a few questions for Mary to help us all get a better sense of what life in the health center looks like and how the novel coronavirus has changed her role.



1. What were some of the challenges you faced when Scranton went remote back at the start of the COVID pandemic?

Like everyone else, I was not prepared for the sudden closure of schools and not being able to return to the building. Routine activities such as chart reviews and planning for student health needs were halted abruptly, but by working with other staff members we were able to call and check on students and their families regularly. Once we were able to return to the buildings, there was a lot of catch-up work to be done.

Challenges during the time between March and September included keeping up with daily reports related to COVID-19 infection transmission rates in our local counties, the ever-changing recommendations for preventative measures, quarantine, isolation, and contact tracing from the CDC and local health departments. I was responsible for collaborating regularly with health personnel from WPSD and Dr. Sitoski, our school physician, and communicating with parents who had particular concerns for their children related to the COVID-19 virus. There were frequent meetings and coordination efforts by staff members from all departments from both Scranton and WPSD campuses to find and secure needed PPE and supplies to allow us to return to our buildings safely. Information gathered from all participating staff members was shared for the development of the schools' safety plans, revisions in sick policies, planning for classroom accommodations, and meal planning that would meet safety recommendations.

2. How has the pandemic affected your responsibilities/role as school nurse?

The same responsibilities remain, but there is a different focus on illness and absence monitoring this year. There is more time spent looking into reasons for student absence and follow-up education regarding the importance of communication related to illness and adherence to the sick policy.

3. What do things look like now in the health center and what are some of the precautions being taken?

When new safety measures were instituted throughout our school buildings, the daily flow of many routine activities changed. One part of the safety plan includes keeping cohorts of students together as much as possible to minimize exposure to other groups. In keeping with this approach, planning for routine health services such as vision and growth screenings has changed. Previously, larger groups of students may have been screened in a single day if time allowed, but currently, we're limiting screening groups to one class at a time on a single day, to allow for adequate cleaning and ventilation in health center rooms between groups. There are daily reminders given regarding the importance of handwashing, face coverings, and



staying home when sick, PPE is a regular part of any assessment now. There is a designated isolation room within the health center and defined procedures for managing students or staff who become ill and must be separated from others until they can go home.

The process of assessing students for minor issues has also changed. The teaching staff has been very cooperative in contacting the health center before sending students to be seen, so a decision for where the student will be evaluated can be made depending on what is happening in the health center. Thank you!! Thank you!!

4. What would you like people to know about school nurses?

Many of us have worked for years in hospitals and other clinical areas where there is a great deal of serious illness and suffering, so being able to work in a school where young people are happy, curious, and thriving is a gift. School nurses are responsible for the healthcare and safety of each student on campus. Taking care of scrapes and mild illnesses is the easy part. The rest entails managing each one of their health records, ensuring state mandated screenings, medical evaluations, and immunizations are current and making sure that all legally required documents and medical supplies are in place to care for our medically fragile students. This is all necessary to catch the kids who might otherwise fall through the cracks without follow up from their schools.

I can't speak for all school nurses but can say that I love working with the students and watching how they respond to all of the hard work the entire teaching staff and administration put out there every day!!!





Hershey Preschool Update

We were happy to begin preschool in Hershey this fall with twelve students! Although we had to begin our year virtually, we were able to drop off a whole basket of materials for the students at their homes so they could use them during all of the lessons. Because of this, we saw a huge level of participation by students and families. We started this year with the Creative Curriculum Clothing Study. When we were able to return to in-person learning, we were excited to have the students experience a new location for our classroom. Even more exciting was that now we have a full-day program. We have been able to socially distance with outside learning

areas and using our much larger space inside for smaller groups. Our students are in the routine of mask/shield wearing and frequent handwashing and are really so happy to be back with their friends. We are just finishing our Back to School Study with more intense lessons on community helpers. For the students who do not nap, we have been focusing on enrichment to the curriculum which has included cooking, science, and sensory play so far! We have quickly added three more students to our roster and now we have a total of 15 students in the class.









Hershey Preschool Relocation Update

Due to the growing numbers in Hershey, we had to relocate our classroom to a larger space. We were able to secure a new location (still in Hershey) with St. Joan of Arc School located at 305 W. Areba Ave.

Also, an added benefit to this change, we can now offer a full-day program to the children. We will continue to offer our current half-day program (either 5 days or M/W/F half-days), but for those interested, we offer the afternoon as well.







Preschool has been studying all about roads! We are learning how to cross the road safely, what roads are made of, who uses roads, and traffic signals that accompany road use. Preschool also continues to learn their letters! We have traced our letters in shaving cream, done letter rubbings, and so much more! Let's see what else we can do..."Oh, the places we'll go!" •





Mrs. Hillburn's Class

Lexi Pientack

There has been a lot of fun and a lot of learning happening in our Children's Center. The students in Mrs. Hillburn's class have been hard at work, but work in this classroom is always fun!

The students have been getting creative with boxes. They have been working on building a classroom robot made out of boxes, but I'm sure we can all recall the vast amount of creative joys that can be brought to life with simple boxes. Students built a train and a house from boxes and as you can see, they had tons of fun. They talked about how they could use boxes to make an obstacle course and just had to give it a try. First, they drew a rough draft of their obstacle course and how they wanted it to look. The students then painted their obstacle draft to create a mural of their interpretation of what an obstacle course is and hung it outside of the classroom in the hallway so everyone could see what they created. After that, it was time to bring their obstacle course to life. They took their boxes and followed the draft to construct their very own real life obstacle course! Amazing!!

Once the boxes and obstacle course was over, this group moved on to texture, discovering that it means "how something feels". They learned about words that can describe textures and related them to different floors we have in our homes. They looked at different kinds of carpets, tile, and hardwood and practiced covering an area with different sensory floor rectangles that they made. Students counted and compared how much "flooring" was needed for a big square floor and a little square floor.





Field Trip to the Pumpkin Farm Kelly Somers

After learning all about pumpkins in the classroom...... blue skies, a warm, gentle breeze, and pumpkins galore greeted the SSDHHC kindergarten class on their field trip to Roba's Pumpkin Farm in Clarks Summit on October 15th. First, the students enjoyed feeding some hungry goats, llamas and pigs. They then cheered on pigs in the pig races, jumped on the big pumpkin pillow, and raced each other down the tall slide! Next, they jumped aboard the hayride and rode out to the pumpkin patch to choose their pumpkins. Finally, they headed back to school, tired, but smiling ear to ear! We all had a wonderful time enjoying a beautiful fall day.



Outdoor Classroom

Kevin McDonough & Lexi Pientack

Over the past two years, The Scranton School has been raising funds with the goal of constructing an outdoor learning space near the soccer field behind the school. We are inching closer to reality and hope to begin initial construction in 2021 with the funds currently raised.

Recent new studies show that outdoor learning helps students focus better and be more attentive when they return to the classroom. A 2018 study at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, led by Ming Kuo, showed that "when the students received outdoor biology lessons, they were significantly more engaged in their next instructional period on all measures than if they'd received biology lessons indoors. This held true for different teachers, different times of day, and different times of year."

We plan to use our outdoor learning space for all classroom subjects across all grade levels. The benefits to having a space like this are countless and offer more than just



educational advantages like better test scores and GPA averages. Spending time outdoors is known to lower blood pressure, decrease stress, elevate moods, increase motivation and boost immune systems.

Although we are proud of our fundraising accomplishments through events like our Annual Gala and Golf tournaments, we are only just beginning. Be on the lookout for information about our upcoming virtual 5k. If you would like to make a contribution to our outdoor learning space and become part of making this vision come to life, please visit thescrantonschool.org or contact Lexi Pientack at 570.585.7034.



Choices for Children Child





Early Intervention Program

Parent Cafes Offered at the Scranton School

Mary Ann Stefko

The Scranton School received a grant from the Center for Schools and Communities to begin to provide virtual Parent Cafes to families in the Choices for Children and Early Childhood programs. Our Parent Cafe Team (Lisa Lopatofsky, Johnine Bickauskas, Cyndy Ward and Jackie Bailey) successfully completed an intense 3 day training offered by the Be Strong Foundation. Parent Cafes are designed to provide a safe, supported opportunity where individuals are able to share and grow while strengthening themselves and their family. Our team has offered three cafes

to date, encompassing the themes of "Change", "Gratitude" and "Jingle All The Way". Each cafe included structured

discussion that utilized the principles of adult learning and family support. At the conclusion of the cafe, participants shared "...it felt good to talk to someone else who is going through what my family is going through. I feel like I'm not alone anymore." Another participant commented, "...it was really great to be able to connect with other families who are on the same journey - especially during the pandemic..." Our Cafe Team is looking forward to continuing to offer virtual cafe experiences to our families in the northeast region and hopefully throughout the state in the new year.





The Choices for Children program has provided early intervention services to families of Deaf and Hard of Hearing infants and toddlers throughout Pennsylvania for over 30 years. The experienced, certified teachers provide comprehensive and objective information, advocacy and training in language, audition, and speech to families. Early access to language, whether spoken or signed, is essential for your child to communicate successfully and meet important developmental milestones. For more information about Choices for Children or to connect with one of the program's trained therapist, contact Carrie Rain, Director of Early Childhood

Programs at crain@wpsd.org

Family & Friends Learn to Sign Mary Ann Stefko

COVID-19 brought many challenges but it also gave us the opportunity to "reevaluate" what we were doing and take a closer look at improving and expanding what we offer to families. The Choices for Children program initiated a virtual ASL class for families in the birth to three program. We meet weekly and parents have the opportunity to learn some new signs and connect with each other - something we are not able to do in the traditional way.

Theme-specific classes are offered and the content revolves around routines that families engage in daily with their child. Because the classes are offered virtually, extended family members have the opportunity to participate strengthening the communication that families can enjoy with their child – even if they live further away. One parent commented "...it feels like I miss so many things, but it's good to know I still have sign classes.." While we are all aware of the impact of the pandemic, "Family & Friends Learn to Sign" could be considered a new "COVID POSITIVE".

