



WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA
SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF



THE SCRANTON SCHOOL
for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Children



A NEWSLETTER OF THE PROGRAMS OF WPSD



A New School Year Begins!

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An Important Note

Dear Friends,

The start of the new school year has come and gone - we've had an exciting fall full of new beginnings and cherished traditions. Now, we have entered the holiday season, a time for reflection and gratitude.

We have so much to be thankful for throughout the Programs of WPSD. Our teachers and staff inspire students to reach their full potential within classrooms that promote critical thinking, creativity and academic rigor. Our residential and after school programs allow our students to engage in meaningful social and athletic opportunities. Our families actively engage with our staff to create a community that is singularly focused on supporting our students. Our administrators are committed to maintaining an environment where staff and students are supported, innovation is encouraged and collaboration is valued.

We are most grateful for our students. They remind us each day that their potential is limitless when they have full access to language and quality educational programs, and can participate in all aspects of student life, without barriers.

As we reflect on the first months of school, we are inspired by all of the accomplishments of the students and staff. Some highlights in this issue include: WPSD Homecoming; a visit from Secretary Dunn of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources;



a visit from the Gallaudet football team; the celebration of Deaf Awareness Month and ASL weekend, hosted by the American Society for Deaf Children.

As the calendar year draws to a close, please consider a gift to one of our programs. WPSD, The Scranton School (SSDHC), The Children's' Center, and Choices for Children depend and thrive on the generosity and kindness of so many.

We wish you all a wonderful holiday season and a happy, healthy New Year.

Sincerely,

Kevin McDonough
Superintendent

Carrie Rain
Executive Director

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Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf



WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

Providing Bright Futures for our Students

Backpack Season Has Returned!

Ready to Welcome Our Students Back to Campus

Our staff have worked hard to prepare for the start of the 2023-2024 school year.

Everyone was VERY excited to welcome all of our students back to campus for another great year! ■



PSO Hosts Annual Back to School Picnic

By Angel Maher, PSO President

Our back-to-school picnic was an absolute blast! This wonderful event was held on the WPSD campus. A big shoutout to all who made it a fantastic day of fun, food, and friendship. Looking forward to more memorable moments ahead! Don't forget, we invite you to join the PSO to stay connected and be a part of our vibrant community. Together, we can make this year extraordinary! ■





WPSD

Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf



A New School Year Begins!

The first day of the 2023-24 school year was the start of something great. How wonderful it was to see all of our students again, ready to take on new and exciting challenges. It's always a joy to see them reconnect with staff and their peers, ready to embrace a fun, fresh start to the new year! ■



School-Wide Highlights

WPSD Hosts 24th Annual Homecoming Weekend!

The Crowning

A pep rally kicked off this wonderful event. Members of the Homecoming Court were recognized and the King and Queen were crowned! Congratulations to Sami R. and Spencer A.! The WPSD volleyball and soccer teams were recognized in front of a packed gymnasium. The celebration kicked off a weekend of fierce competition, excitement, fun, and camaraderie.





The Competition

Our soccer and volleyball teams battled Delaware School for the Deaf, Illinois School for the Deaf and Rochester School for the Deaf. It was a wonderful two days of intense competition, excitement and fun!



Senior Recognition

During this fun and exciting weekend, WPSPD took time to honor the accomplishments of our senior soccer and volleyball student-athletes, and recognize the families for their support and commitment throughout the years. Congratulations to our seniors for their hard work and dedication to academic and athletic excellence! Onward and upward! ■



Life and Legacy of Former WPSD PE Teacher Celebrated with Fitness Walk

By Kathy Bartholow, Physical Education Teacher

On October 12th, the WPSD Physical Education and Counseling departments hosted the 11th annual Dan Emerick Wellness Walk in conjunction with the High School PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports) kickoff event.

This Wellness Walk honors a great teacher, mentor, and deaf advocate - Dan Emerick. He was always a vital part of PBIS and always said "keep them moving." Dan was a Health and Physical Education teacher at the school 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 good health among the students and staff at WPSD. We thank everyone who enjoyed the beautiful weather and walked with us. Thank you, Dan, for keeping us moving!!!! ■





Medals and Smiles All Around at Special Olympics Bocce Ball

By Shelly Ryan and Wendy Auden

Students in the Life Skills classes enjoyed an afternoon of Bocce Ball as part of the Special Olympics. It was the perfect day for them to practice their Bocce skills, cheer on teammates, and earn a medal at the annual fall event. Students displayed great effort and sportsmanship. ■



It's a Deaf, Deaf World

By Molly Estes, ASL Coordinator

"It's a Deaf, Deaf World" event was held at the Portersfield Gym on campus in September for all students.

The purpose of the event is in an attempt to simulate the problems deaf/hoh people experience in the environment designed to meet the needs of hearing people only. We established a new community that is "It's a Deaf, Deaf World." Within this activity, the tables are turned as you are entering the world of the deaf where sound is of little use and where formal and informal body communication is necessary to succeed.

The rules are as follows:

- 1) No speech is allowed. Must be sign language, gestures, reading, and writing.
- 2) Those who are caught using speech will be placed in an ASL Zone for a period of time. While they are there, they are given ASL Handshake activities.
- 3) Warnings, signals, and emergency announcements must be heeded and followed in order to get points.

All in all, our students did outstanding, and most important of all, they had fun! It was a learning experience for many. ■



What's Happening Around Campus? - Elementary School Highlights

The Learning Never Stops at WPSD!

By Marla Johnstein, ESY Teacher

Math + Music = Fun

WPSD students in this summer's ESY program kicked off their morning routines with songs that reviewed the days of the week, fun facts about the month and the challenge of counting to 100. We also played several tunes including, "If You're Happy and You Know It," "Hokey Pokey," and "Make a Silly Face." These musical activities involved shapes, colors, and some math concepts, helping the students to get ready and excited to learn!



Communicating Emotion Through Creativity and, Of Course, Food!

WPSD students in this summer's ESY program had a blast learning about all emotions - both negative and positive feelings. They learned how to distinguish between various 'emoji' faces - and then subsequently match their personal emotions with the corresponding emoji faces. For example, if they were feeling happy, sick, sad, or angry, they then displayed the emoji faces that matched their emotions. This is a useful and appropriate tool to help calmly communicate their feelings to their teachers, staff and their peers during school hours, and in a public setting.

The students also enjoyed two related sensory activities involving drawing and crafting with shaving cream and whipping up a delicious snack! During the shaving cream project, the students created pictures of emoji faces, while also learning how to properly write their names and numbers. During snack time, the group constructed different emoji faces on rice cakes, involving marshmallows and twizzlers!

Effectively communicating through art, creativity, and food is a wonderful thing! ■





Elementary Students Up Their Reading and Writing Game

By Margi Jo, WPSD Resource Teacher

In the beginning of the school year, the elementary students in Kindergarten-5th grades came together to review and launch our Daily 5 literacy framework that will be used during ELA classes. Daily 5 is a framework that promotes students to become independent readers, writers and learners.



To begin, we reviewed the five reading and writing choices that are part of Daily 5 including; Read to Self, Word Work, Work on Writing, Read to Someone and Listen to Reading. Students were then given time to decorate a book box to hold their books and a journal to use during Daily 5 in their classrooms.



Finally students, staff and teachers discussed and practiced the expectations and structure for Read to Self. It was a great opportunity for adults to show their love of reading right alongside the students. ■



Up Close and Personal with Furry Friends at Living Treasures Animal Park

Shelly Ryan, Elementary School Teacher

On September 20th, the elementary Life Skills classroom spent the day at Living Treasures Animal Park in the Laurel Highlands. It was the perfect day for the students to see so many different animals. Chickens and turkeys greeted them immediately upon arriving. The kids got to feed horses, ponies, pigs, monkeys, deer, alpacas, goats, sheep, and more animals. It was a fantastic experience! ■

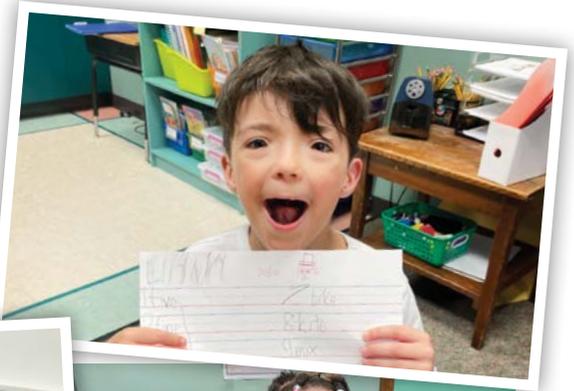




Spelling Superstars

By Rachel Rose, Elementary School Teacher

The second grade class has been hard at work with their spelling words! They all scored 100% on their spelling test two weeks in a row! They are so proud of their hard work and so am I! We celebrated with cupcakes! ■



Exercise and Learning Make a Perfect Equation for Success

By Emily Mitchell, WPSD First Grade Teacher

Our first graders have been hard at work using their bodies and working together to make bar graphs, measure, and continue patterns. Pairing kinesthetic activities with higher level concepts helps with retention of information and keeps students engaged. Keep it up, 1st grade! ■





Apple Festival Delights

By Amy Fenicle, Elementary School Teacher and Apple Festival Host

WPSD's Second Annual Apple Festival, held at the end of September, was a roaring success! Students and staff in the elementary department gathered at the Alumni Pavilion and began the festivities! They were involved in many different apple-related activities, including constructing a wooden apple ornament, apple themed worksheets that meet all elementary students' needs, and the Apple Bingo Game with candy corns used as the markers! The students were so focused and excited during the event. The perfect weather was the cherry on top of a great event! We are so thankful to our parents who attended! Enjoy these snapshots capturing some fun moments during the festival! ■



Learning How to Make Healthy Choices

By Terry Schriever, WPSD School Counselor

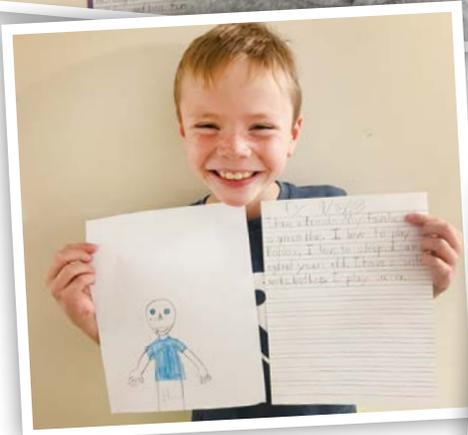
In October, our Elementary School students were introduced to Red Ribbon Week, where they learned about making healthy choices! Students learned about making healthy choices related to safety, such as wearing a helmet when bike riding. They learned about making healthy choices related to food, such as drinking water and eating fruit. Students also were able to share what they knew about making healthy choices and some shared ideas such as getting enough sleep at night. The activity they completed included using pictures to identify healthy or unhealthy choices. Students did a great job and we saw some students discussing healthy choices in the lunchroom! ■



Bubble Maps Lead Students Through the Writing Process

By Rachel Rose, Elementary School Teacher

The third grade ELA class has been hard at work learning about the writing process. They started by using a Bubble Map from Thinking Maps to come up with descriptions about themselves. Next, they used the Bubble Map to develop a rough draft of their About Me writing passage. They then learned about what things to look for during the editing process and fixed their mistakes. Finally, they wrote a final draft and drew a picture to accompany their writing passage. The students were very proud of their final product! ■





What's Happening Around Campus? - Middle School Highlights



Summer Reflections

By Mary Noschese

Middle School Ends the Year with Fun, Laughter, and Competition

The Middle School ended the last school year in typical middle school fashion! Fun, competition, honor, and happy tears! During the last week of school, the students participated in:

- Test Your Teachers - while the teachers remain undefeated, this group gave us a run!
- Our 10th Spelling Bee! White division champion Isabella M., runner up Calvin L., and 3rd place Clinton P. Our Blue division champion Trevor Y., runner up Angela F., and 3rd place Raelee M. Our Gold division runner up Jericho S. and 3rd place Kalilah D.! Our grand champion Paityn G.!!! Our Most Valuable Speller went to Raelee M. for her efforts with studying, helping others study, following all of the expectations, never giving up, and showing tremendous sportsmanship.
- Yard Games and Shaved Ice provided by our very own Tom Gentile
- Yearbook Social where many memories and laughs were shared
- Awards Ceremony - congratulations to all of our winners and our WONDERFUL 8th grade class of 2027! We are so proud of all of your accomplishments and achievements! Come visit!

Continued on page 20.





By Mary Noschese

Making Lasting Memories

As the 2023-2024 school year is now in full swing, the Middle School staff can't help but look back on our fun and exciting Kennywood memories from last year!

On June 7th, the Middle School students stamped their tickets to Kennywood, the last merit activity of the year! It was a beautiful day filled with laughing, spinning, flying, coasting, and zooming through the historic park! There was so much laughing! ■





The Learning Never Stops at WPSD!

By Shari Gerlach, Middle School Teacher

Review, Reinforce, and Persist: the Cornerstones of Middle School's ESY Program

This WPSD's Extended School Year (ESY) 2023 was productive and fun in Mrs. Gerlach's Middle School classroom. Her students began each day with interactive Google Slides to view and discuss the calendar, weather, World's Current News for Kids, and Math and ELA Daily Agenda. Once each student received their agenda, they immediately worked on reviewing their vocabulary, reading, writing, and math skills for the remainder of the morning. They even participated in several mini-activities to reinforce and practice their Math and ELA skills. To name a few: Bingo Vocabulary, Whack a Word, "KNOCKOUT" math game rolling two dice for addition/subtraction, Summer Weekend Writing Journal, Interactive Notebook-Sentence Writing/Paragraph Writing. They had a mid-morning ten-minute brain break to do their own 100 Piece Puzzle, Air Clay Craft Kit - Make 3D Ladybug and interactive simple logic riddles. They planned what T-shirt to wear weekly with their peers on Thursdays to improve their team-building skills. One week was a Hawaiian T-shirt; another week was a tie-dye T-shirt, and another was a superhero T-shirt demonstrating their persistence and hard work throughout the ESY session! ■



Back to It!

By Amanda Espin, WPSD Speech-Language Pathologist and By Lauren Diesenberg, Middle School Teacher

Communication is the Key to Team Success

During the first week of school, middle school students took part in a team-building game where they were tasked with moving cups with only strings attached to a rubber band. They learned to communicate well with their team using the best communication method for each member, recognized each other's strengths, discovered how to work as a team and determined the best ways in which to lead. They were so patient and smart with their strategies, and were very excited when they won. Everyone celebrated!



Middle School Students Learn About the Importance of 9/11

While commemorating the 22nd anniversary of 9/11, the WPSD middle school students were able to view a short film highlighting first-person accounts of the attacks and their aftermath. Through this film they were transported back to 2001. Even though our current students had not yet been born, the importance of this day in history, national patriotism and the belief of one's community is significant. The middle school students ended the lesson by making origami cranes as a sign of national healing. We will never forget. ■





A Capitol Visit

By Lauren Diesenberg, Middle School Teacher

On October 17, WPSD 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students and their teachers, Ms. Diesenberg and Ms. Remis visited the Capitol for the day. We are so thankful to Senator Costa and Representative Dunbar for taking extra time and making the extra effort to welcome our group.

The students were recognized on the House and Senate floors and several students were able to meet with their senators and representatives. The students also had the opportunity to visit the Lieutenant Governor's office and meet with his staff. We were so proud of them for asking many good questions of the senators and representatives they met that day.

The trip to the Capitol concluded with a visit to Representative Benham's office, where they had the opportunity to meet Ravi the office cat. What a fun, action-packed day!



A Student's Perspective

By Bella W., 6th Grader at WPSD

Is that real gold on the walls? On October 17, 2023 some WPSD middle school students traveled to visit the state capitol building in Harrisburg and to learn about our government. First, we rode the new bus for three outstretching hours and when we pulled up to the Capitol building, we saw a pink water fountain in honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

After that, we were introduced on the floor of the House of Representatives. I even met my representative who had a hearing aid and tried to trade me for mine. It was quite silly. Next, we caught glimpses of a lot of paintings and rode a mini elevator. We had to all squish in there. Representative Dunbar showed us his office, answered our questions and explained about how he has helped to write bills into laws for Pennsylvania.

Later we visited the Senate room and were introduced there as well. Everyone clapped for us by waving their hands the Deaf culture way.

At the end of our day we made our way to see Rep. Beham's cat, Ravi. His fur is gray and white and very wavy and soft. We thought it was cool that a cat got to be in the office.

Finally, we took a hike to the activity center and completed activities like mock voting, state information games, and read facts about Harrisburg. It was a very merry day and we got to learn about Pennsylvania politics. Fun fact: the walls were painted with real 24k gold leaf. A follow up highlight is that some of us received responses to the letters we wrote to our Senators and Representatives before our trip. Thank you, Senator Costa, for writing back to me!



A Pleasant Surprise in the Mail

Just days after the visit, one of our students on the trip, Isabella W., received a letter from state Senator Jay Costa. She was so excited and felt very important that Senator Costa took the time to write her a personalized letter. Bella said she can't wait to hang it in her bedroom, exclaiming, "Wow, even the inside of the envelope is fancy!" ■

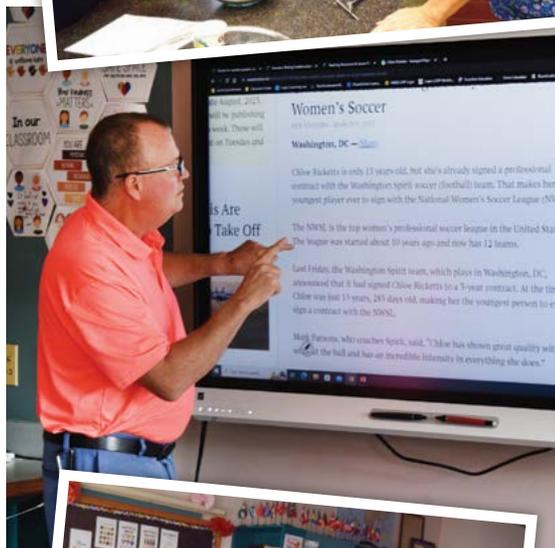
What's Happening Around Campus - High School Highlights

The Learning Never Stops at WPSD!

By Pauline Dunbar, Transition Teacher and Lily Giancola and John Gibson, ESY Teachers

Ingredients for Achieving Success

During ESY this summer, high school students had the opportunity to practice their independent living skills such as working in the kitchen-- following recipes, preparing small meals, baking, and cleaning. During this particular session, the group was working together to make sugar cookies. Yum!



Chloe Ricketts Sparks Learning and Discussions in School

Some high school students in this summer's ESY program were studying and catching up on current events. The group discussed an article featuring Chloe Ricketts - the youngest player in U.S. Pro Women's Soccer. Then students took a reading comprehension quiz to make sure they fully understood the article with at least 80% or above as part of their reading goal. We also had an engaging conversation as to whether it was a good idea for someone like Chloe to start playing at a professional level at a young age - Chloe was 15 years old when she began her professional career - and how this decision may impact a young athlete's academics, growth, friendships, and family. We ended with an interesting discussion about students many years ago being introduced to playing sports for the first time. ■





Oh, Deer - Studying the Balance of an Ecosystem

By Gary Freilino, Environmental Science Teacher

The best way to learn Science is by doing, so the Environmental Science classes collaborated to experience "Oh, Deer!" This is a simulation that demonstrates the balance of nature in an ecosystem. Two rows of students lined up, facing each other. One group portrayed the deer--playing the role of being hungry, thirsty or cold. The other group stood as resources--food, water or shelter. If the deer were successful in meeting their needs, the deer reproduced--taking from the resource group. If the deer were not successful, they died, decomposed and became resources. After many rounds, the deer population exploded while there were almost no resources left. Then the predator was introduced--a wolf! As the wolf was successful in obtaining its prey (the deer), students previously as deer, became wolf cubs. After several short rounds, the deer population was gone, leaving a very large, very hungry pack of wolves.

While it was a simple game that focused on basic tenets of how an ecosystem functions, huge concepts discussed in the classroom were now palpable thanks to the effect of experiential learning. Through these simple actions, students incorporated higher-level thinking skills, synthesizing data and information from not only what was acquired in the classroom, but drawing on their own background knowledge. Raw data was converted into graphs, interpreting the graphs led to in-depth discussions utilizing scientific terminology, questions sparked debate among peers regarding hunting laws and practices, scientific study of ecosystems, biospheres and communities at the local, national and international level, and what has happened to different populations over time and what role humans play in the whole scheme. All in just 82 minutes! ■



Effective Communication is Necessary for 'Personal Development'

By Amanda Espin, WPSD Speech-Language Pathologist

In the 'Personal Development' class, High School students were learning about the importance and value of teamwork and communication. Their mission was to build the tallest tower out of just paper, tape, and scissors! They needed to communicate with their team to develop a plan and then work together to craft their towers. Both teams finished before the timer ran out and then reassessed their plans to build the towers to stretch even taller! All the students were supportive of each other, patient, intelligent, and tenacious. ■



Setting the Tone for Speech Class

By Amanda Espin, Speech-Language Pathologist

WPSD's Speech-Language Pathologist, Alyse Royba, and I visited the High School Life Skills room at the start of school to kick-off speech class in a fun way for the year. We played Jeopardy. The students worked on many of their goals while also learning about communication along with reviewing information about the school. These pictures capture the many modes of communication our students are using to answer the question. One student is voicing, another is signing, and another is holding up his communication device. ■





Breaking News - The WPSD Broadcasting Class is Ready to Roll

By Brian Slavinsky, Media Coordinator

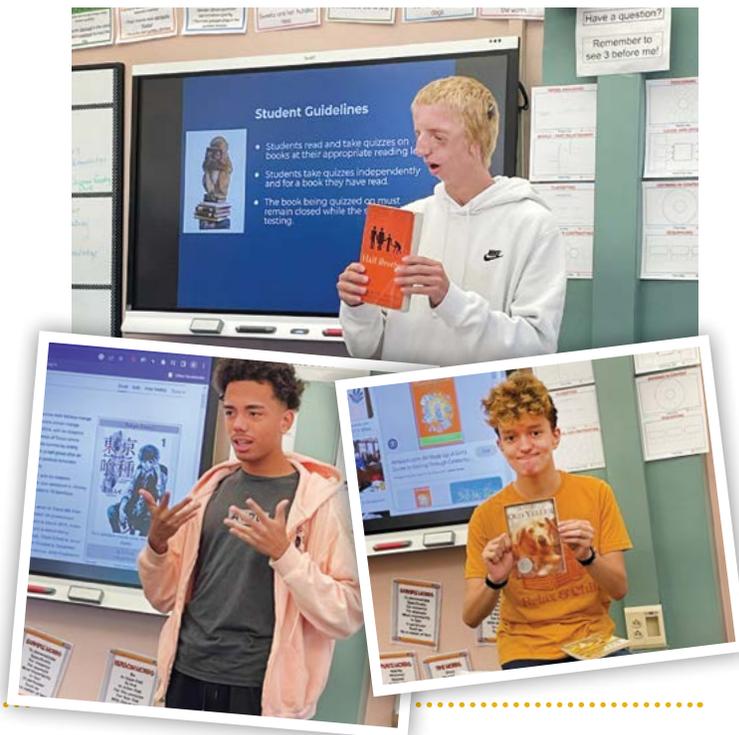
The 2023-24 TV Broadcasting class is in full swing at WPSD! After being instructed on various equipment such as the switcher, teleprompter, character generator, camera controller, and recorder - the kids were geared up to take a crack at their first WPSD News production. By September, the students were familiar with the TV equipment and their assigned roles, so they prepared for and produced their premier episode. In the control room, Sebastian led the team as director and technical director, Addison added graphics and text to the production, and Angela ran the teleprompter. In the studio, Tahjay served as floor director while Elsie and Jared anchored the news and reported the weather and sports. The news is shown during lunch and throughout the day on the campus TVs. The students not only get technical experience from the class, but this course builds ASL and English communication skills, knowledge of current events, and teaches the students how to work together as a team. We are so proud of our news producers! ■



Summer Reading Comes to Life Through Student Presentations

By Dana Dailey, ELA Teacher

As the new school year dawned, excitement filled the air as WPSD's ELA (English Language Arts) students returned to school, ready to share their summer reading projects. Each student took their turn to present their carefully crafted projects, showcasing their literary discoveries and creative interpretations. Projects included writing a book review, creating a new book jacket, writing an alternate ending, and writing a letter to a character from the book. The presentations mark a promising start to another enriching academic year. ■



How to Make Your Photo Pop!

By Dana Dailey, ELA Teacher

The yearbook students have recently completed a unit on photography, with a focus on the intricacies of shutter speed. Their recent hands-on lesson involved capturing the moment when water balloons burst into a thousand droplets of liquid art. Through this captivating exercise, they've learned how adjusting the shutter speed can freeze or blur motion, transforming mere moments into snapshots frozen in time. This newfound skill is poised to be a game-changer for the yearbook team, as it equips them with the ability to expertly freeze the athleticism and dynamism of our school's athletes in action. ■





Exploring Pathways to the Future



Spending Summer on the Farm

By Kallie Mendenhall, Work Experience Transition Teacher

WPSD student, Emma Z., worked over this past summer and made the school proud with her dedication and effort! Emma worked at Hope Springs Farm along with three other student-workers and a job coach. Emma shared with us that there were a lot of animals on the farm including alpacas, pigs, chickens, goats, ducks, mini horses and sheep. Emma was responsible for cleaning the animal stalls and providing them with fresh straw and animal food. Emma filled water buckets for the animals, and watered the outside garden, which includes vegetables and flowers, in the greenhouse. Emma's favorite part of working on the farm was petting and spending time with the animals. Her favorite animals were the pigs. She truly loved working on the farm. Way to go Emma for taking advantage of this great opportunity and making WPSD proud with your hard work! ■



High Schoolers Have a Blast Learning Skills for the Future Through Fun and Adventure

By Alyse Royba, WPSD Speech-Language Pathologist

A group of our high school students headed to the Waterfront to do a functional scavenger hunt. They had a great time finding the costs of different items, finding contact information for stores, and finding their store hours. They even had a chance to ask Starbucks workers their favorite drink! We had a wonderful time learning important communication skills for the future. ■



In the Community



Continuing to Build Community Partnerships

On August 3, Edgewood Borough Volunteer Fire Department conducted a training exercise, in conjunction with Stat Medevac, using our soccer field as a landing zone. Neat stuff! Prior to the exercise, the fire department invited our very own Carrie Rain, Kevin McDonough, and Tom Stanton to have dinner with them! We were proud to host the emergency preparedness team and the Edgewood Borough Volunteer Fire Department. What great partners! ■



Supporting and Celebrating Our Neighbor's Milestone Anniversary

WPSD was thrilled to sponsor and take part in Swissvale's 125th Anniversary Parade on July 29th. The hard rain stopped just in time for the start of this wonderful event. Residents lined the parade route cheering and graciously accepting lots of candy that was being thrown - just like the old days! Swissvale police and fire departments participated in this fun event, as well as elected officials, Scouts, local dance troops and baseball teams. WPSD was proud to be part of this wholesome, community-oriented event. We value, and depend on, our partnerships with our surrounding communities. Congratulations, Swissvale!! ■





In the Community



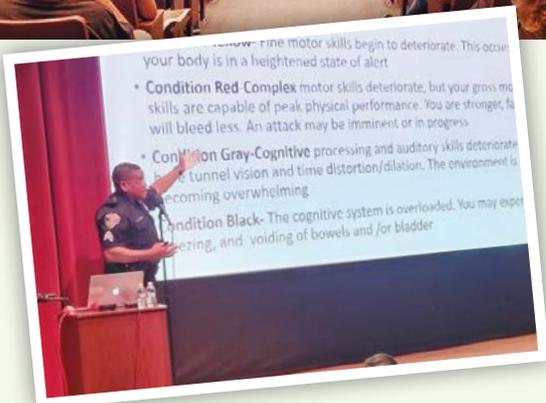
Joining Our Community in Celebration

WPSD was thrilled to be a part of Edgewood Community Day this summer. The weather was picture perfect, allowing the maximum amount of fun to be had by all! Local police and fire departments were in attendance along with the Woodland Hills Marching Band, area businesses and organizations. We were proud to work with kids and adults, helping them to spell their names using American Sign Language letter cards. Music, food, games and community togetherness - what a wonderful day! ■



Edgewood Police Department Continues to Keep WPSD Safe

Before the new school year started, staff members were hard at work during in-service week taking part in multiple trainings to best prepare for our students' return. The safety of our students and staff is always our top priority. To that end, the Edgewood Police Department conducted a presentation, helping to train and prepare new and old staff alike in the event of an active shooter situation. Chief Robert Payne and Sergeant Fred Livingston discussed different potential scenarios that could happen, shared preventative and protective measures should a situation occur, and answered a variety of questions from staff. We are thankful to have the Edgewood Police Department as partners and supporters of WPSD. We will continue to work with them to ensure our students are the safest they can possibly be at all times. ■



In the Community



Community Braves the Weather to Enjoy Fun and Friends at WPSD's Annual Block Party

Another great Block Party is in the books!! Even though Mother Nature was not on our side, we still had an amazing September day! The afternoon was filled with fun activities for the whole family. From the petting zoo, face painters, animal exhibits from the Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium, balloon artist, WTAE anchors and reporters on hand talking with the community, to the food, music by DJ DiMenn, and the many kids' games, there was something for everyone!! WPSD is pleased to offer the block party as a part of its Commitment To the Community initiative and desire to make positive investments in our neighborhoods all year. Enjoy these scenes showing the excitement and smiles that were seen throughout the afternoon! ■





In the Community



DCNR PA Outdoor Corp Alum Shows Off WPSD

In September, WPSD was pleased to welcome Secretary Cindy Dunn and Deputy Secretary Mike Walsh with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) on campus. DCNR employs students in the summer with their PA Outdoor Corp, and that includes an ASL crew.

WPSD's Walker R. has participated in this immersive experience. He provided Secretary Dunn and Deputy Secretary Walsh with a tour of our school and showcased our drone program as well as Environmental Science Classes. We are so proud of Walker!

Thank you, Secretary Dunn, for taking time out of your busy schedule to visit our school and see some of the exciting things that are happening on our campus! ■



Discover more information about DCNR's Corps Program:



Athletics



The Hounds Make a Special Stop at the Home of the Lions!

By Kallie Mendenhall, WPSD Athletic Director

WPSD was thrilled to welcome the Pittsburgh Riverhounds to campus in October! Team members, Pat and Burke, presented to our Middle School and High School students about their professional soccer experience. Our students also had the opportunity to ask questions about the players' soccer careers. Pat and Burke gave our soccer team an encouraging pep talk to help our Lions get ready for the upcoming ESDAA Soccer Tournament in Framingham, MA that weekend. At the end, our student-athletes had the opportunity to teach Pat and Burke some signs related to soccer terminology and signed with us, "Always Remember, Never Forget, WPSD is #1!" It was great having both players on campus for our students! Thank you Riverhounds!!!!

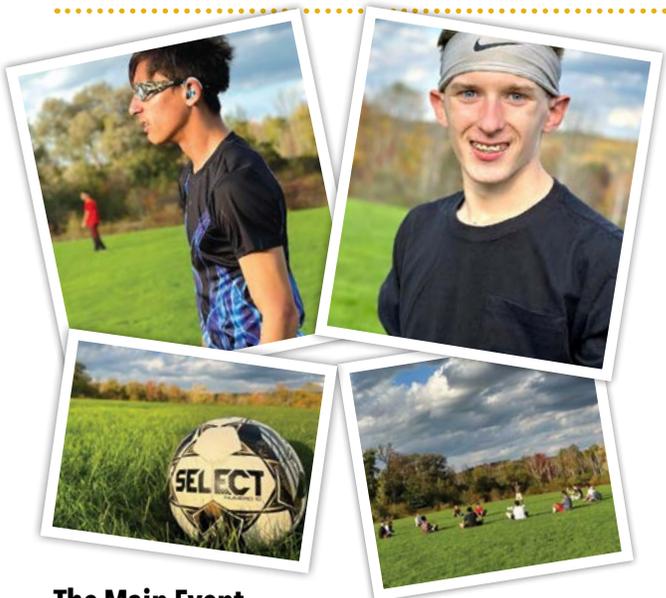




Student-Athletes Gear Up for the Fall Sports Season

By the WPSD Athletic Department

Our student-athletes were back in action in August for their Fall Sports Camp. We were excited to get ready for the upcoming volleyball and soccer seasons! Our players have been working hard on getting back in shape, developing different skills on the court and on the field, and bonding with their teammates. The coaches and staff worked hard to ensure our student-athletes had a successful Fall Sports Camp. ■



WPSD Soccer Team Makes the Journey to Compete in ESDAA Tournament

By Kallie Mendenhall, WPSD Athletic Director

Prepping for Competition at Our Home Away from Home

In October, our Varsity Soccer Team stayed at The Scranton School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children as they made their way to Framingham, MA to take part in the ESDAA tournament at the Marie Philip & Walden Schools (MPWS). Take a look at these photos capturing the beauty of campus and some snapshots of the team's game preparation.

The Main Event

After their departure from The Scranton School, the soccer team finished the final leg of their journey and arrived at MPWS. The other teams that participated in the tournament included: American School for the Deaf, Lexington School for the Deaf, New York School for the Deaf, Ohio School for the Deaf, Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, Rhode Island School for the Deaf, Marie Philip & Walden Schools, and of course - us - WPSD! After defeating the American School for the Deaf by a score of 3-1 in our first matchup of the weekend, we came up a bit short when battling Rhode Island School for the Deaf. It was a close one with WPSD losing by a score of 0-1. Don't ever count our Lions out! They came back swinging against Lexington School for the Deaf in their last matchup of the tournament - clinching 3rd place! Along with this victory, some of our individual players were recognized as well. Jared P. earned Co-Goalie of the tournament while both Jared P. and Luel H. earned All-Star honors! We are so proud of our players for their hard work and good attitudes! ■





Mighty Mites Soccer Team Gains Competition Experience and Makes Friends in Backyard Matchup

By Michelle Vigliotti, Director of Youth Programs

Our WPSD Mighty Mites soccer team took on the Plum Area Youth Soccer team in October. The competition was intense - but both teams had a great time playing against each other and socializing with one another. Special thanks to our referees - who are also the children of WPSD staff member Gina L.! They did a great job! This type of competition is an excellent opportunity for both teams to gain experience, build character, and make friends. It was also wonderful to see the parents come out and cheer whole-heartedly for their children! We can't wait to do this again! ■



E-Sports Expands Our Athletic Department

By Coach Dr. Kent Schafer

E-Sports is well underway! WPSD and Scranton are collaborating remotely. We are learning the value of teamwork and problem solving. There is benefit in embracing the student's passion for competitive gaming and then fostering collaboration and creativity. ■





WPSD Volleyball Team Gives Their All in ESDAA Tournament

At the end of October, our Varsity Volleyball Team traveled to West Trenton, NJ, for the Eastern Schools for the Deaf Athletic Association (ESDAA) Volleyball tournament.

Eleven schools took part in this fun event, including American School for the Deaf, Delaware School for the Deaf, Lexington School for the Deaf, Marie Katzenbach School for the Deaf, Marie Philip & Walden Schools, New York School for the Deaf - Fanwood, Ohio School for the Deaf, Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, Rochester School for the Deaf, St. Mary's School for the Deaf, and of course - us - WPSD!

WPSD came up just a bit short after going up against Rochester School for the Deaf for their first battle of the tournament - on Friday. But the team rallied, defeating their next two opponents - Pennsylvania School for the Deaf and Delaware School for the Deaf. On Saturday, WPSD's winning streak continued, coming out on top over American School for the Deaf and Marie Katzenbach School for the Deaf. After a tough loss to the Ohio School for the Deaf, WPSD was out of the tournament. We are so proud of their hard work and great attitudes during the weekend! Special congratulations to our own Sami R. - who earned All-Tournament honors! ■



Residential Life

Guess Who's Back?

Our Residential students officially returned to campus! Staff warmly welcomed each one with smiles, hugs, high fives, and fist bumps. Friends were beyond excited to see each other after a restful summer break. We were so happy to have them back! Looking forward to a wonderful year! Let's go! ■



Reconnecting and Enjoying Time Together Again

By Venita Smith, Dean of Girls

Shortly after the first week of school had wrapped up, the residential students took full advantage of being together as a group - a family - once again. A favorite activity is gathering in the Lion's Den to play ping pong, pool, a variety of other games, and spending time with each other - socializing, relaxing, chatting and just catching up. So nice to see their friendships continue to be strong after the summer break. We look forward to more fun evenings like this as the days and weeks go on. ■





Legendary Retirees Honored with Plaque at Residence

On October 20th, we celebrated Connie Stepien and Gregg Bowers at a plaque dedication ceremony at the residence. It was nice to see so many familiar faces, including past and present staff, retirees, alumni, and community members. Don Rhoten, our former CEO, Tom Halik, current Dean of Boys, Kevin McDonough, our Superintendent, and Carrie Rain, our Executive Director, shared their memories of Connie and Gregg. It was great to hear all of the stories of Connie's and Gregg's fierce commitment to the students of WPSD and the high standards they set for themselves and for all of us.

Sadly, Connie passed away two years ago. As Gregg said in his speech, "Over time, Connie and Gregg became one word. While it can only be Connie and Gregg in our memory now, it is most fitting that Connie and Gregg will be side by side together, on this plaque of honor, for as long as there is a WPSD." Unveiling the plaque that night were Gregg, and WPSD employee Carrie Poilucci, Connie's daughter. WPSD is deeply grateful for their dedication and service to the students in WPSD's residential program through the years. Always Remember, and Never Forget, WPSD is #1!! ■

Watch the full ceremony here:



Deb Miller Expands Our Teachers' Knowledge of Our Students

By Kathy Bartholow, Instructional Coach

In September, Deb Miller (Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI) Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist (COMS) presented to the Specials PLC on Low Vision and Visual Impairments. The group was able to experience - first hand - the visual complexities of some of our students. What an enlightening and helpful activity. We are so grateful to Deb for this experience! ■



Support Our School!



Another Successful Auction & Gala in the Books!

WPSD's annual Auction & Gala, held in the beginning of October, was a rousing success! The school is deeply grateful for our sponsors, attendees, donors and volunteers to help make this goal a reality! WPSD's student group - Signshine - kicked off the event, bringing the house down with their ASL performances of 'Celebration' by Kool and the Gang and 'A Million Dreams' by Pink. We were thrilled to have Pittsburgh's Action News 4's Mike Clark as our emcee for the evening - bringing a neighborly, warm vibe to the event. He even sang part of a Fred Rogers' song - "It's You I Like." Guests enjoyed lots of fantastic items up for bid, and delicious food and drinks in the elegant, relaxing atmosphere of the Edgewood Country Club in Churchill. What a wonderful feeling of togetherness and community! ■



Join Us!



**WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA
SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF**

Sporting Clay Shoot

Benefiting the Academic, Athletic, and Extracurricular Programs of WPSD

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The Scranton School for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children



Educating Deaf and Hard of Hearing students in Northeastern PA



THE SCRANTON SCHOOL FOR DEAF & HARD OF HEARING CHILDREN



Canines on Campus

The Scranton School was pawsitively excited to welcome Compassionate Canines therapy dogs to campus. They will visit our campus monthly. We look forward to sharing some fun Monday afternoons together. ■





Mummification Lesson

By Mrs. Hilburn

What could be more exciting than becoming an embalmer? Students in Mrs. Hilburn's social studies class got to work embalming a skeleton while learning about the process of mummification used in ancient Egypt (don't worry, it is just a Halloween decoration!). Students reviewed this ancient process by creating name tags indicating the "team of embalmers", removed the "brain", salted and sprayed essence on the body to prepare it for the after-life, and then wrapped the mummy. Lastly, students added a mask to the mummy of our "pharaoh" and released its spirit to the Egyptian afterlife as part of a celebration the Egyptians called, "The opening of the mouth ritual". ■





Gallaudet Football Visit

By Lexi Pientack

The Gallaudet University Football team and their coaching staff, including Coach Chuck, and their coaching staff visited our school for a pep rally where we cheered them on and wished them luck for their big game against Keystone College.

Students got a special end of day dismissal send off and some of our kiddos stuck around for a fun social event after school. Our Sign Connection performed the National Anthem at the college game. ■





The Scranton School Hosts ASL Weekend

By Mary Ann Stefko

The Scranton School was thrilled to host the American Society for Deaf Children ASL Weekend! We welcomed parents, teachers and ASL students from a number of states. It was so exciting to share our school with so many. We appreciate ASDC partnering with us to offer this unique learning opportunity to our part of the country! ■

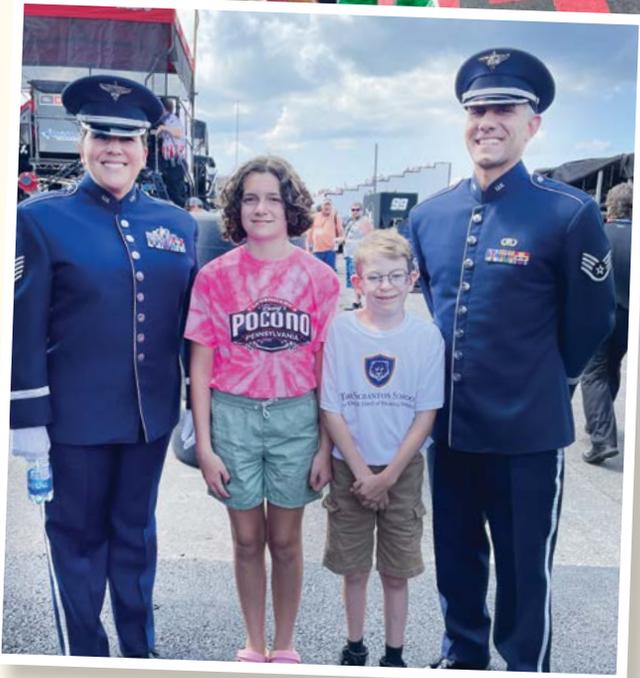




Pocono Kids Day!

By Mary Ann Stefko

The Scranton School was fortunate to participate in the Pocono Kids Day! We shared information about our school and had the opportunity to sign the National Anthem at the NASCAR weekend. David and Taylor represented our school well and we appreciate the support of everyone at Pocono Raceway in giving our students this "once in a lifetime" opportunity! ■





Barnyard Friends Take Part in Fishing Derby!

By Mary Ann Stefko

Our Barnyard Friends kicked off the summer by participating in the "Forever Young" fishing derby! We learned SO MUCH about fish and fishing and even caught a few fish! We had SO MUCH fun! It was great to join in on this wonderful community event! ■





Penguins Win!

Scranton middle school students attended the 2nd Annual STEM Day Game at Mohegan Sun Arena. Students performed the National Anthem before the game and watched the WBS Penguins beat the Hershey Bears. ■



ABC Bootcamp

By Lexi Pientack

ABC Bootcamp is a fun new kindergarten tradition for Mrs. Somers and her classroom. ABC Bootcamp is a fast-moving, intensive study of the alphabet, one letter and one day at a time.

Our kindergarten students are now more confident with their letters and the Bootcamp promoted student engagement, family and staff participation, but most of all a whole lot of fun!

The finale of the Bootcamp is the Fashion Show! Students were assigned a letter and asked to construct a vest covered with objects or pictures corresponding to their letter. Our group walked the red carpet and proudly displayed their fashion vests!

Great job kindergarten and way to work the carpet! ■

Apple Volcanos

Ms. Janssen's preschool class along with SLP, Christine Rossi, experimented with apples, dish soap, food coloring and vinegar to create apple volcanoes for a recent Science project. This project provided a wonderful opportunity for vocabulary and learning.

They have been learning about apples and even taste tested some apples at the end of their learning week. ■

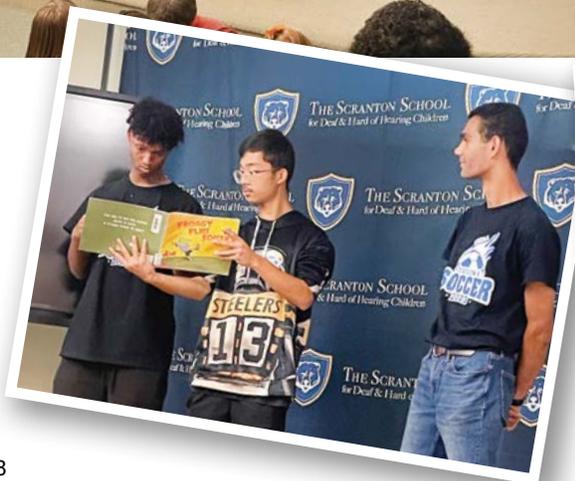


WPSD Soccer Team Visits Scranton

By Lexi Pientack

The WPSD soccer team made a stop in Scranton on the way back from one of their tournaments. The team spoke to our students about soccer and their positions and then read a story called Froggy Plays Soccer.

We always love visits from the WPSD soccer team. Go Lions! ■





Golf Tournament

By Lexi Pientack

Our Annual Golf Tournament was a huge success this year with perfect weather. We are incredibly grateful to all of our sponsors and volunteers who ensured a successful event and to everyone who came out and golfed with us and supported our event.

We can't wait to do it again next year! ■



The Children's Center



Educating Our Littlest Learners

Celebrating Deaf Awareness Day

By Christie Homell, ASL Teacher

The Children's Center proudly recognized its annual Deaf Awareness Day during the month of September. We cherish our school. The school-wide motto for this year is - Always Remember and Never Forget, WPSD is #1! The teachers, paraprofessionals and students in each classroom worked for a couple of weeks creating a performance representing our school, our mascot - the Lion, and our traditional school colors - Gold & Blue. The day was an exciting day for everyone!

Each group from the Children's Center was so eager to show their performances! The 3 year old students used ASL Rhyme & Rhythm to show their school pride using blue and gold pom poms. The Pre-Kindergarten class did a skit using ASL rhyme and rhythm called "Lion Hunt." There were two separate Kindergarten classes, one of them performed a skit about going to school everyday. The other kindergarten class shared their skit using ASL Rhyme & Rhythm representing our mascot, the Lion. The Children's House students also participated, they showed us a beautifully drawn picture of a lion and they described what a lion looks like. The students truly showed their confidence in participating in front of an audience! They all did a fantastic job performing! We all look forward to continuing this tradition in the years to come! ■





Our Threes are Learning All About Trees!

By Anissa Moriarty, Children's Center Teacher

The three-year-old classroom had great fun learning during our Tree Study! Some of the classroom investigations about trees were: What do trees need to grow? What are the parts of a tree? Who lives in trees? What grows on trees? The students walked our beautiful campus to observe various trees during our study.

Families shared pictures of their students with trees at home. The teaching staff did, too! The pictures were on display and enjoyed throughout the study. We learned about trees throughout the day in play centers, art projects, tray work, story time and group games and activities! We are so proud of the students' learning! ■





Pumpkin Patch Field Trip

By Julie Repak, Children's Center Teacher

October 24th was the PERFECT day for a pumpkin patch field trip. The Children's Center and Toddler Group took advantage of the gorgeous weather and all the fabulous activities that were offered at Simmons Farm. We started the day with a fun hayride out to the pumpkin patch. Students were able to pick from the large assortment of pumpkins and could even pick an ear of corn. They also had the opportunity to play in the enormous play area. Some of their favorite activities included the human hamster wheel, the large innertube slides, tricycles, and the fire truck slide. The students took a break to recharge with a great lunch from Five Star and then headed out to spend some time with the animals in the petting zoo. Simmons Farm not only provided us with an amazing day, but they also provided us with the most amazing apples and apple cider that we enjoyed before heading home for the day! We are already looking forward to going again next year! ■





Local Legend, Andy Warhol, Comes to Life in the Children's House

By Julie Repak, Children's Center Teacher

While studying the continent of North America earlier this fall, the Children's House students completed a unit on Andy Warhol and POP art. The students learned that Andy Warhol was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and eventually moved to New York City. Unfortunately, he was very sick as a young boy and his mother often fed him soup when he was feeling ill. As Andy Warhol grew, he used his sharp eyes to observe familiar objects (such as those soup cans from his childhood) and famous people. He then turned those common, yet popular, objects into a new style of art, Pop Art. The students were amazed to learn that Andy Warhol was bald and had over 100 wigs. They also thought it was comical that he had 25 cats and named all of them Sam!

The students not only had the opportunity to learn fun and interesting facts about Andy Warhol, but they were also able to create their own Pop Art inspired by many of the works created by the famous artist. ■



Children's Center of Central Pennsylvania

Back to School Study

We started the year with 15 students and have quickly moved to 19 students! We began with the Back to School Study from the Creative Curriculum. During this study the focus is on learning school routines and becoming accustomed to the classroom. Many of us are in a new room this year and this study helped us feel safe and confident in the classroom. We went on a name hunt and found our names all around the room helping provide a sense of community and belonging. We really love to find our pictures, too! We use Thinking Maps to create flow maps of our entry routine, hand washing routine, and our daily schedule. We also used a Bubble Map to learn about adjectives to describe a friend. We used circle maps to discuss prior knowledge of the classroom and class rules. Our rules at The Children's Center of Central PA are Be Safe, Be Kind, and Listen to your teacher. All other rules can fall under these three categories! We were really excellent when we worked on identifying examples and nonexamples of our rules. We were all excited to jump back into the school routine and can't wait to see what else we can learn! ■





Boxes Study

One of our favorite Creative Curriculum studies is the Boxes study. We have worked hard learning about box features, community helpers that use boxes, and different 3D shapes. We have matched what we see in environmental print to what we can find inside of a box. Our dramatic play area has been transformed into a box wonderland and on any given day you might find robots, racecars, or rocket ships! ■





Parent Involvement: Back to School Night and Field Trip

We have had some great opportunities for parent involvement including our annual Back to School Night event and our fall field trip to the Pumpkin Patch. This year, our students and their siblings were invited to attend Back to School Night on September 7th with their parents. Parents were able to have an individualized class presentation introducing them to the Creative Curriculum, Thinking Maps, and overall classroom schedule. Children were able to enjoy playing in the gym with our paraprofessionals. Then families were reunited to complete a school scavenger hunt so that they could see all areas of our school. A favorite place to find was our new sensory room! We ended the evening with refreshments and parent networking.

On October 6th, we went to our local farm market, Risser Marvel. Many families joined us for the fun event! We had a presentation from Farmer Joe where we learned about different kinds of pumpkins and gourds. We went walking through a huge corn maze, but we managed to find our way out. Then everyone hopped on a hayride to go pick our own pumpkin right off the vine from the field. We had free time with our friends including: a bike trail, corn pit, and lawn games. We finished our morning with a sip of cool apple cider and sand tarts. ■





Reverse Inclusion

One of the amazing things about The Children's Center of Central PA that sets us apart from local preschool options is our reverse inclusion program. Twice a week, we welcome community friends into our school! They have become part of our school family and we are thrilled each Wednesday and Thursday to know they will be joining us. During our time together at school we have the opportunity to play at centers, read a book, complete an activity related to our study, and play outside! They also join us on field trips and for special events. Already this year, we have had 10 children across 8 families participate in our programming. These relationships are incredibly sweet and the experience is positive for all students in our classrooms and from the community. We are so lucky! ■



Children's Center of PennWest

Three Little Pigs

In Edinboro, we have been enjoying a truly fantastic fall season. In mid-October, we talked all about buildings and what materials they are made of. We've paid special attention to what they are made of in our story, *The Three Little Pigs*! We have gathered sticks and checked out brick buildings (and tried to blow them down)! We retold the story with felt pieces, alongside the 1933(!) animated version of the story! ■





Fall Fun

To celebrate the season, we went to the pumpkin patch nearby, called Port Farms. We picked out a pumpkin, went on a hayride, and "swam" in a giant box of corn kernels! At the end of October, we were thrilled to welcome a new student. His name is Lincoln! On Halloween, we went trick or treating throughout the building. We had a ghost, Ironman, and Wonder woman in our crew! We carved a pumpkin, too! Our jack o' lantern has three eyes! If that weren't enough excitement during this fall time, we are welcoming another new student to the bunch next week! ■



Choices for Children



Early Intervention Program



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 Tara Nikou, Choices for Children Coordinator at tnikou@wpsd.org

Great Start Conference

By Mary Ann Stefko

The Great Start Conference returned this year and the Choices For Children program was well represented! Many of our families took the opportunity to attend the conference and gathered information to help them on their journey. We are grateful to our state EDHI partners for offering this awesome opportunity for families to support each other! ■



CHOICES FOR CHILDREN





Learning the Finer Points of Golf at a Young Age

By Mary Ann Stefko

Our Choices For Children "Littles" got an early start learning the finer points of golf! We were there to cheer on the golfers as they moved through the course. We gave lots of "high 5s", learned how to swing a golf club and had a blast keeping the golfers entertained as they waited to take their turn! ■





Fun at the Hartford Fair

By Mary Ann Stefko

We had SO MUCH fun at the fair! Our Choices for Children families ventured out for a fun day at the Hartford Fair! The animals were a huge hit! We enjoyed the rides and, of course, tasted the fair food! We even had a winner in the Baby Contest! It was a great experience for our youngest learners!! ■





Celebrating Fall with a Trip to the Pumpkin Patch

By Mary Ann Stefko

You know fall is in the air when our Barnyard Friends and Choices for Children families venture to the pumpkin patch! We are so grateful that our friends at Kim and Andrew's Farm Market invited us for a fun day at the farm! We learned about the produce grown on the farm, played in the pumpkin patch and picked out our favorite pumpkin to take home and decorate. We ended the visit with some very tasty treats! ■



