

the western PENNSYLVANIAN



NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF
VOLUME 128 #3 SPRING 2015



2015 WPSD Prom
PG 10



Lady Lion
Honored by
Sports MX/
DNAA

PG 16 ▼



▲
2015 WPSD
Academic Bowl Team

PG 9



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- 13 Classes Resume

The Western Pennsylvanian is a publication of the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf. It is one source of communication with parents, alumni, teachers, friends of WPSD, and other schools for the Deaf.

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SUPERVISIONS

A note from CEO, Don Rhoten

After a brutally cold and snowy winter, spring 2015 couldn't arrive soon enough! You know what I like best about the changing of this season? Even though we were covered in snow just a few weeks back and it seemed impossible that we'd ever see green grass again, here we are enjoying the sights and smells and warmth of a new season.

Goes to show that anything is possible with the right amount of perseverance and patience!

As I write this, our school communities are buzzing with opportunity and promise for our students. A softball tournament is being hosted by WPSD and I find myself sitting outside watching the teams play and rooting for our scholar athletes.

Our kids have been amazingly busy traveling around the state and the country. Within a recent two week span, students from both WPSD and The Scranton School participated in Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama and other students were on the road for great educational trips to Gettysburg and to Washington, DC.

Our Academic Bowl team did incredibly well at their competition held at Gallaudet University. They finished in the top eight teams from schools all over the country. As a matter of fact, our team from WPSD actually defeated the school team that eventually placed second!!

Our BattleBot team did very well in their competition held at California University of Pennsylvania. Our machine beat many huge high school teams from all across Western Pennsylvania. It seems like only yesterday, I recall our BattleBot was lucky to survive its first match!! We sure have come a long way!

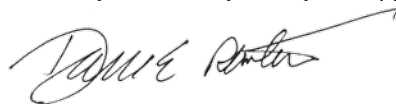
These are just a few of the activities you'll read about in this and future issues.

I strongly believe that one of the strengths of WPSD, The Scranton School and other schools like ours, is that we offer extraordinary opportunities to our students...opportunities that they may have found impossible to experience elsewhere.

I know without a doubt that - when given the chance to compete, on a level playing field, against their hearing peers - our students do very well and always leave a positive impression.

It's our job to provide our students with as many diverse, challenging and exciting activities as we can. Whether it is video production, 3-D printing, a week at Space Camp or throwing out the first pitch at a Pirates game, these are all opportunities to showcase their talents and help them to grow and thrive.

Thank you - as always - for your support of our kids!



Don Rhoten, CEO
Programs of the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Latest News Around the WPSD Campus

Learning About the World We Live In...

The freshman, sophomore, and RIT/NTID Project Fast Forward Environmental Science students continued their work with the Urban Ecostewards program through the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy. In the third of five classes, students walked throughout WPSD's campus and compared our urban ecosystem to Frick Park's forest ecosystem. They wanted to know if our campus contained the level of biodiversity that the parks have. The students found quite a variety of biotic organisms. They found a snail, spiders, a wasp nest, and a variety of plants and seeds. Even though our campus is different than the park in regards to permeable surfaces, temperature, open space, etc., many organisms are able to live and thrive here. ■



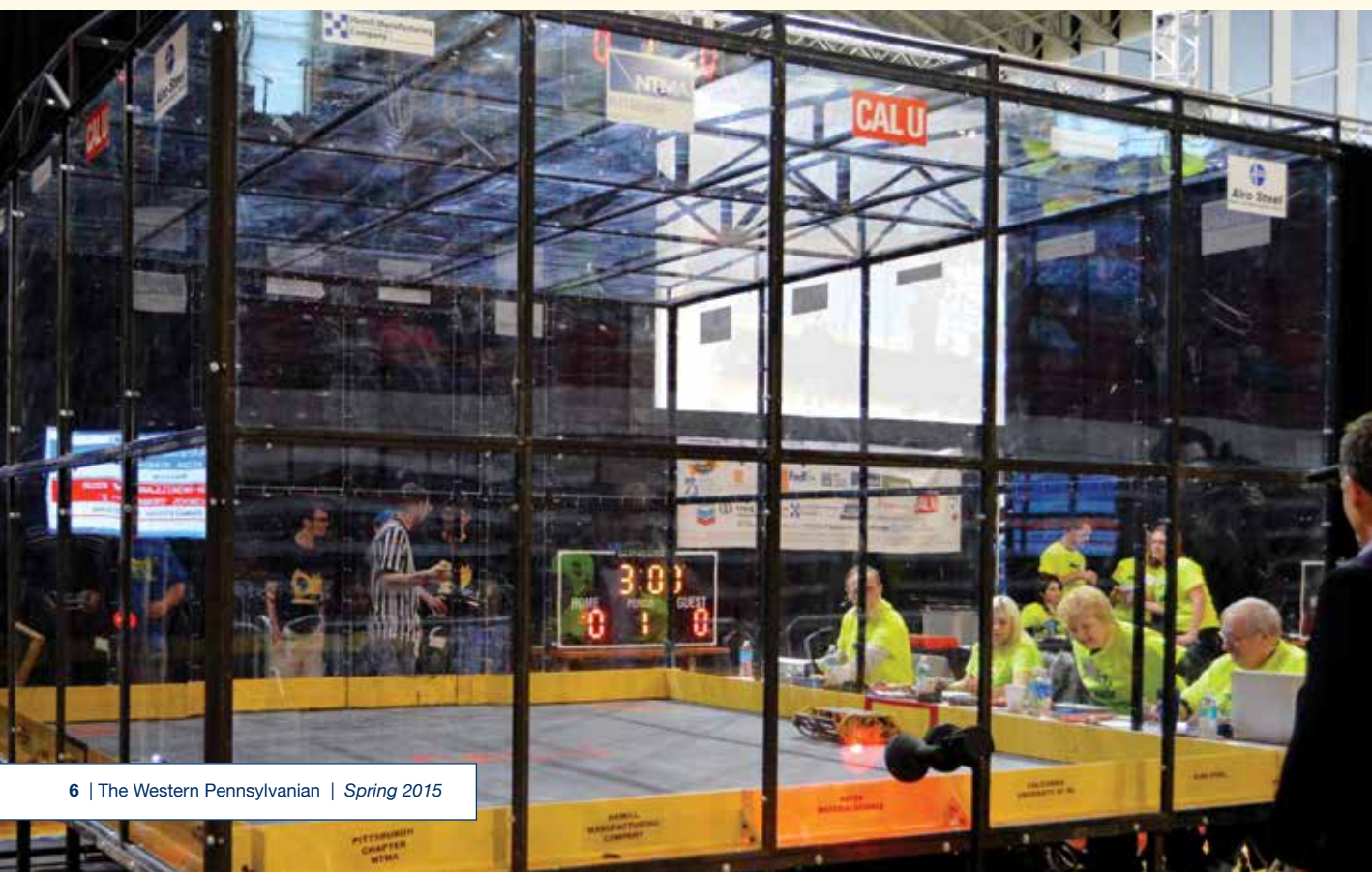
Bots IQ 2015

by John Foust

As always, we enter the yearly Bots IQ competition with high expectations and goals. WPSD Team Rampage is an all new member team and I'm sure that the students had some skepticism and a lot of butterflies in their stomachs; especially for our driver, Kyle D'Amore. After eight years of competition, I still get knots in my stomach prior to each match. We truly do not know how the robot will perform in the heat of battle. In-house practice does have its limitations! There's nothing like the real deal!

During this year's preliminary competition at Westmoreland County Community College, we won three matches and lost two. At the finals competition, held at California University of Pennsylvania, the team put forth a concerted effort and RAMPAGE went down fighting as the team finished 2-2 over two days.

Preparing for the competitions can be overwhelming, but rewarding, also. The students put in many hours designing and building the robot and enjoy the grand opportunity to watch their finished product perform. Whether we finish in the upper placement is not as significant to me as watching the students grow both academically and vocationally. I truly have the best seat in the house!



Ecostewards Go to Work on Earth Day

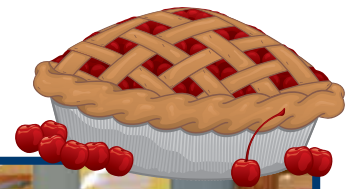
On Earth Day 2015, the WPSD High School Urban Ecostewards were Earth Day Superheroes in Frick Park. We hiked through the park and identified a variety of beautiful native wildflowers, such as the Spring Beauty, Jack in the Pulpit, May Apple, Dutchman's Breeches, Solomon's Seal, and Trillium. We also saw a Northern Dusky Salamander and a variety of insects.

We were introduced to an invasive species, the Garlic Mustard plant. This invasive species is native to Europe and was brought to the United States to be used as an herb. Because of its ability to adapt, it has spread throughout the park, inhibiting the growth of native plants. As Ecostewards (and Earth Day Superheroes), our job was to pull out as many Garlic Mustard plants as possible, breaking the roots so the plants are unable to flower and spread their seeds.

The students worked so hard, tirelessly pulling out TONS of Garlic Mustard. It was chilly and muddy, but they did an excellent job controlling this invasive species and promoting biodiversity in Frick Park. ■



Celebrating Pi Day



March 15th of this year was a very special day, 3/14/15 – the first five digits in the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter, Pi. Staff and students enjoyed some very special activities to celebrate...including eating pie! ■

A Visit to the Pittsburgh Glass Center

Ninth and tenth grade students went on an amazing field trip to the Pittsburgh Glass Center. We watched a demonstration of heat defying acts of art including glassblowing and flame working. We learned about the various ways artists incorporate recycled glass into their artwork. The artists discussed their professions and explained some of the challenges and highlights of pursuing careers in art. After the glassblowing demonstration, the students had a chance to put their own skills to the test. The students showed their own creativity by making individual decorative tiles to bring home. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the "hands on" experience. To top off the day, we toured and played in the "ABC@PGC" gallery. This colorful exhibit features glass sculptures combined with interactive illuminated word building pieces that students can touch, rearrange and wear like apparel. Of course, all the kids wanted to show their WPSD school spirit by donning the letters "WE LOVE WPSD!" It was the perfect ending to an educational, fun-filled day. ■





History Lessons

The 11th grade U.S. History students had the opportunity to visit the Heinz History Center and Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum. They completed a scavenger hunt full of interesting facts about Pittsburgh and the surrounding area as they explored all that the museum had to offer. They hopped aboard a 1940s streetcar, sat inside a Kennywood Racer, and flexed with Rosie the Riveter (whose image was designed by Pittsburgh artist, J. Howard Miller). The tradition of innovation in Pittsburgh became clear to the students as they studied companies such as Carnegie Steel and H.J. Heinz Company. The Neighborhood of Make-Believe was a fun exhibit where the students had a chance to "meet" Mr. Rogers himself. However, the students' favorite by far was the Sports Museum. ■

2015 WPSD Academic Bowl Team

The awesome WPSD Academic Bowl Team advanced to the Elite 8 of the 2015 National Academic Bowl Competition at Gallaudet University in April. Congratulations to Michael Weber, Hannah Fisher, Samantha Gibbs, and Noah McAuley and their coaches Ms. Mountain and Ms. Wing.

Earlier in the school year, approximately 80 teams participated in regional competitions and from those, the top 24 teams were invited to participate in the national competition in Washington, D.C. This year, the Midwest Region tournament was played via videoconference due to snow. WPSD earned fourth place in the Midwest Regional.

In April the team traveled to DC for nationals. The first day, teams were divided into pools; we won three games and lost two, putting us third in our pool. The second day began with each pool's 3-6th seeded teams competing for position against the top 2 seeded teams for the "sweet sixteen" matches.

We survived our first two games in this series of elimination, putting us in the "elite eight," but lost before making it into the top four. Our students played well and answered many challenging questions. The weeks of practice and after-school scrimmages paid off and the students were able to demonstrate just how much they'd learned over their years here at WPSD. We will lose two of our players this year as they are graduating, but have hope in a large pool of potential players for next year. ■





Prom 2015



SignShine

By Casie Beveridge and Amy Dent

SignShine students created their own multi-media show and took it on the road in February! They have performed for students at several elementary schools, daycare centers, North Hills High School and Westmoreland County Community College. Superdeaf is the star of this comic book themed show, where everyone can learn about Deaf culture and American Sign Language. The show includes a video about assistive technology and how advances in technology have improved the lives of so many Deaf people. The main message of the show is "We are the same as you, except we can't hear."

After concluding the performance with a song or two, the students engage in a Q & A session with the audiences. This special time enables the students to clear up misconceptions about deaf people and help build a bridge between the hearing and Deaf communities.

Currently, the group is developing a music video to share at the end of the year performance at WPSD. Also, they continue to secretly practice the mystery graduation song, which will be dedicated to this year's seniors and performed at the commencement ceremony.

The group is also looking forward to performing at the Three Rivers Arts Festival in Pittsburgh on Tuesday, June 9th! ■





Read Across America

Children and adults across the country honor Dr. Seuss' birthday on or around March 2nd. WPSD continued the tradition again this year with students and staff reading in nearly every nook and corner from the Learning Center to the classrooms and even under a desk. The Children's Center got in on the act with stories and special snacks, ending the celebration with Mrs. Rain and Mr. Rhoten building the *Cat in the Hat* cake. ■



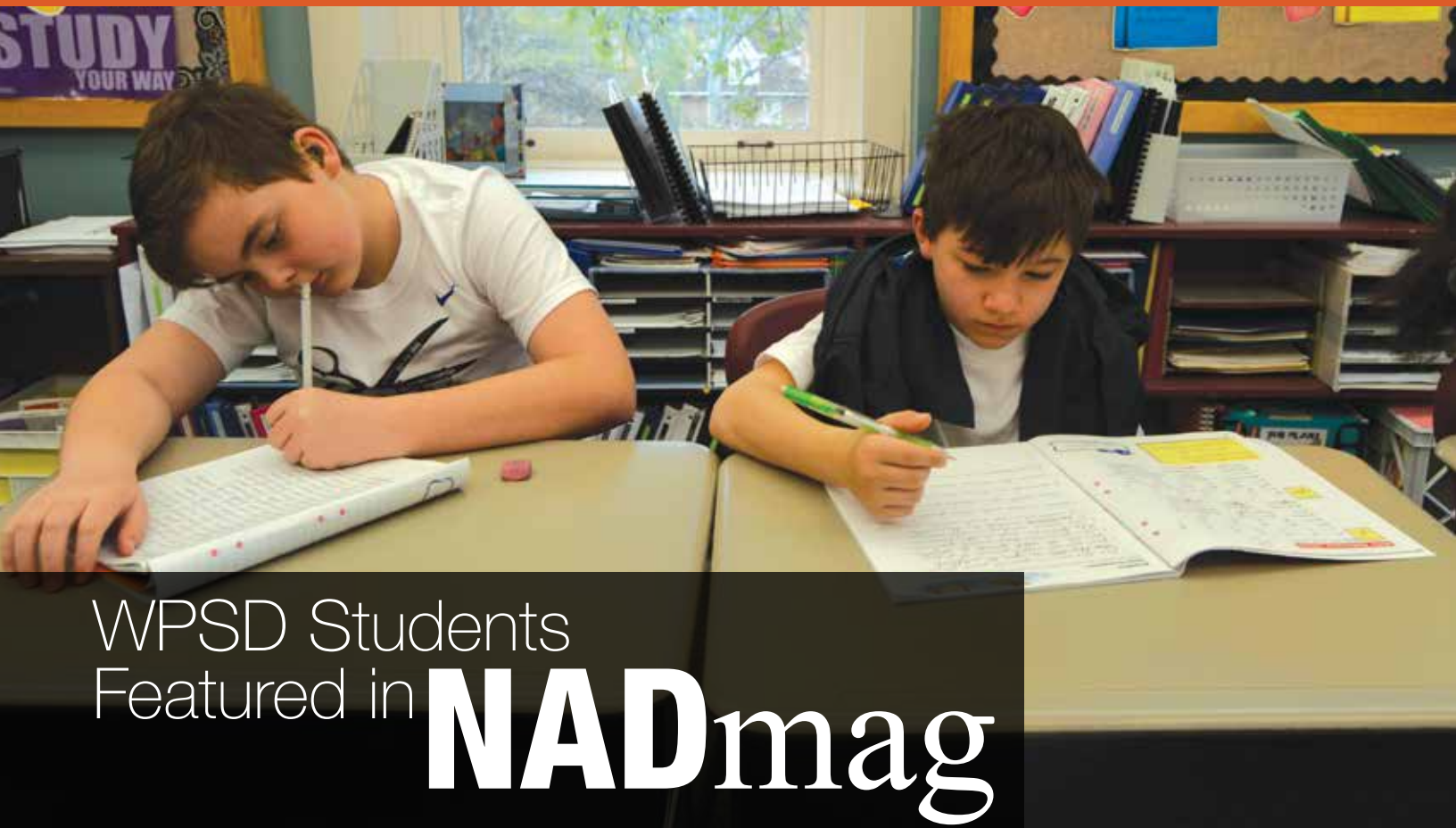
CHILDREN'S CENTER NEWS

Busy Days in the Children's Center

The students in Mrs. Greeno's classroom have been learning about community helpers. They visited the nurses in the Health Center, the dining room staff, the WPSD security guards and the librarian. The learning centers in the classroom are set-up as various locations for community workers: a firehouse, a police station, a dentist office and a pizza shop.

The kindergarten students celebrated the 100th day of school (February 5th) with a full day of counting and reading all about the number 100. Each student made a poster of 100 things at home. ■





WPSD Students Featured in **NADmag**

NADMagazine recently asked WPSD students to answer the question:

“What will the Deaf community look like in 30 years?”

Their answers will be featured in the spring edition of the magazine. Here are just a few of the students' responses:

“I think technology for the Deaf community will be better. Siri on the iPhone will understand ASL. Also you will be able to sign to the Notes app and it will change the signs to sentences to help with communication with hearing people.”

-SAMI RENO, 3RD GRADE

“I think there will be apps of sign language to teach people that don't know sign language. Also GPS will give directions using sign language instead of voice.”

-OLIVIA CLINGER, 4TH GRADE

“In my opinion, in 30 years there will be a robot in every house and it will understand ASL.”

-ZOE AUSTIN, 4TH GRADE

“In 30 years, the hearing school can be on the left and the Deaf school on the right. There will be a social place for both. There will be Deaf workers at the zoos to help the kids understand more about animals.”

-BERNIE ELLIOTT, 4TH GRADE

“What will happen in 30 years? I think hearing aids and cochlear implants will be small and not seen. And maybe there will be amplification technology in clothing.”

-CALEB HAWKINS, 5TH GRADE

“I think a lot of changes will happen for the deaf community. There will be horn alarms in cars. Deaf people can't hear horns so lights should be added and when people beep the horn then a flashing light will let you know.”

-JENNA D'AMORE, 6TH GRADE

“In 30 years, we may have robots instead of teachers and more jobs for Deaf people and hearing people will have technology to understand sign language.”

-BLAKE SWAYNE, 6TH GRADE

“In 30 years, I think there will be more Deaf communication programs, to chat with people. Hearing people will learn more about Deaf people and Deaf culture.”

-OLIVIA LARSON, 6TH GRADE

“I can visualize a Deaf community in 30 years that is as limitless as the skies. As the restrictions on us fade away, we will be able to work at almost every job that exists in the world.”

-MIKE WEBER, 12TH GRADE

“Technology will change so that Deaf people can place an order for food in restaurants on an iPad and videophones will be built into cars.”

-DESTINY MENDEL, 6TH GRADE

“Ideally, in 30 years, we will have accessibility everywhere we go. Videophones interpreters and everything will be available for us just as everything is available for hearing people. Schools nationwide should have sign language classes as an elective.”

-HANNAH FISHER, 12TH GRADE



Lady Lion Honored by Sports MX/DNAA

Kai Miller, WPSD junior and point guard for the WPSD Lions girls basketball team, was selected as the SportsMX/NDIAA Athlete of the Month for February 2015.

As a floor general, Kai led her team with grit and determination despite a tough season but that never stopped her from going all out. Leading her team to the Consolation Championship at the Eastern Schools for the Deaf (ESDAA) Division 1 tournament, Kai had 30 points, 24 rebounds, 10 steals and five assists earning her a spot on the All-Tournament team. During the month of February, Kai averaged 5.1 rebounds per game and 2.6 steals per game. ■



“She gives 100% in every game and refuses to give up until the last second rings. That also applies to all her academic courses she takes and giving her 100% effort, too! She is a definitely positive and encouraging leader in all aspects.”
- Athletic Director Valentine Wojton



Good Workers



Choices for Children Technology in Early Intervention: LENA

By Tara Nikou,
Choices for Children Teacher

Recent brain research indicates that talking with your young child is especially important because a child's brain develops very rapidly in the first few years of life. A child that hears and speaks more words develops more neural connections and pathways in his or her brain, which positively impacts intellect and social-emotional development.

Researchers Hart and Risely (1982) found that the more parents and caregivers talked with their children from birth to age four, the more likely those children were to succeed later in life. In fact, they found a 32 million word gap between the number of words heard by children with lots of early language exposure and those with too little. They showed that this word count gap explains most of the difference in IQ at age 4 and in school success at age 10.

The LENA (Language ENvironment Analysis) Research Foundation developed the compact Digital Language Processor (DLP) to track word counts and turns in conversation. This tool can provide valuable information, which can help parents to improve the language, cognitive and social and emotional development of their children.

Choices for Children has incorporated the LENA system into our program in order to help families of children with hearing loss to track the amount of "talk" that they are using with their child. Parents are able to receive valuable, objective information not only about the number of words



that their child is exposed to, but also about the quality of the listening environment. For example, is the child in a noisy atmosphere all day? We know that children with hearing loss need to be in an optimal listening environment to make the best use of their assistive technology (both hearing aids and cochlear implants).

LENA technology allows families to compare themselves to national norms. Families can see if they are conversing enough with their child, based on normative data. A line graph details the amount of talking that occurs throughout the day and a bar graph indicates the amount of noise in the child's listening environment in one-hour increments.

This highly sophisticated equipment is small and easy to use. The family simply turns on the DLP recorder and places it in a special vest worn by their child. The DLP will record 16 hours of content, providing the computer software information for analysis. The recorded data is transcribed into a series of reports that the CFC teacher will share with the family. The teacher and family will use the data from the LENA reports to create strategies for families to use in order to enhance their child's learning.

The good news is that simply increasing the amount of "words and turns" used with your child can close the 32-million word gap. This strategy can give all children an equal chance at success in school and life. ■

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Agatha Tiegel Hanson - Class of 1887

The first woman to graduate from Gallaudet with a four-year degree was also a WPSD graduate; she is an important leader in both deaf and women's history.

Agatha Tiegel was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1873 and became deaf and lost her eyesight in one eye at the age of 7 due to spinal meningitis. When Agatha realized she could no longer appreciate music and singing the way she did in early childhood, she immersed herself in books and poetry. "I've been denied the sound of music since I was 7," she wrote at the time. "Perhaps that's why I wrote poetry."

Agatha attended a Catholic academy and then a public school until she turned 13, when she transferred to Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf. She entered Gallaudet in 1888, at 15 years of age after the then-University President, Edward Miner Gallaudet, provisionally lifted the ban on female admittance into the college in 1887.

At the time, all female students were required to live at House One and were not allowed to participate in extracurricular activities unless by invitation and accompanied by a male chaperone. Women were required a male chaperone accompaniment to class as well.

Particularly frustrating for Agatha was that female students were not allowed to participate in debates with male students. To remedy this, she established a debate group for women. Members gathered in secret late at night at House One to discuss poetry and literature. Agatha's efforts did not go unnoticed, because in 1889, after seeing how well women were succeeding, Gallaudet permanently revoked the social ban on female students.

During her time as a student, the school's student newspaper, The Buff and Blue, was established and Agatha penned an article conveying

her gratitude for her student experience at the University. "The contact with Dr. Gallaudet and the brilliant and kindly faculty of my time, the entrance to the homes of these men, where courtesy, culture, and hospitality held sway, were blessings indeed."

Agatha knew she was fortunate to receive an education and she used the knowledge acquired to propel women forward. In 1892 she helped to establish O.W.L.S., a secret women's society now known as Phi Kappa Zeta Sorority. In 1893, she noted in her valedictorian address, entitled "The Intellect of Women," that men and women were equally intelligent although stating it was considered heresy in the

1890s. "That such repression and restraint upon mental action are artificial has been demonstrated in all ages by women whose independence has burst ever fetter and won them recognition in the fields of science, theology, literature, politics and art," said Agatha in her remarks.

After graduation, Agatha taught at the Minnesota School for the Deaf in Faribault, MN, for 6 years until she met her husband, Olof Hanson, a noted deaf architect who graduated from Gallaudet in 1886. Agatha was a lifelong learner and wrote several well-known poems, "Inner Music" and "Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet." After they were married, Agatha and Olof relocated to Washington State.

Within the deaf community, Agatha was active at the local and national levels including holding officer level positions with Seattle's Puget Sound Association of the Deaf, the Episcopal Church's deaf mission, Gallaudet College Alumni Association, and the Washington State Association of the Deaf. Her home was a regular social spot for the deaf community and hearing guests with tea, coffee, cake, ice cream, and other foods. When Olof became a minister in the Episcopal Church, Agatha served as his "choir" signing songs and hymns in sign language much to the delight of parishioners.

Continued on page 19.





Agatha died in 1959 at the age of 86. She was survived by her three daughters and 10 grandchildren. Gallaudet University's Hanson Plaza and Dining Hall is named after her.

Agatha was clearly ahead of her time when she made these remarks as this was before the suffrage movement. Being a writer and poet, Agatha helped pave way for the future generations of deaf women

and through her achievements deaf women were given more opportunities.

Her legacy lives on throughout all of the communities she served. Gallaudet is proud to have been home for Agatha, where she paid forward so much of what she gained on this unique campus. ■

Excerpted from Gallaudet University, 2014 Visionary Leaders Series



Board Members Visit

WPSD students recently had the opportunity to meet with Board of Trustee members Barbara Boylan, Grace Emmons and Denise Brown. The Board Members enjoyed visiting with the students and learning more about the day-to-day activities on the WPSD campus.



BOARD SPOTLIGHT

Dean Kartsonas - WPSD Board of Trustees

WPAN recently interviewed Dean Kartsonas, a founding partner and Managing Director of Shorebridge Wealth Management and Vice President and Portfolio Manager at Federated Investors for 19 years. He has been a member of the WPSD Board of Trustees since 2007 and is currently serving as Treasurer.

How did you first become involved with the School?

A good friend and fellow board member, Chris McCrady, introduced me to the school. He thought my finance and investment background would be beneficial to the board. I was already aware of the school since I grew up in Forest Hills.

What is your proudest accomplishment as WPSD board member?

That's easy, the new residence. The old dorm had served a great purpose but the kids were in need of a more modern facility. The fact is that our kids travel from many locations throughout the state to attend WPSD, they deserve a place that feels like a second home. The ability to finance the building without hurting the school's finances made it an easy decision.

Tell us about yourself.

My wife, Katie, and I met in business school at Pitt. We have three children; daughter Sophia (15), son Jack (14) and daughter Emilia (10). My free time is usually spent coaching my kids' sports teams or driving them to activities. I also enjoy golf and paddle tennis.

The Western Pennsylvanian would like to thank Mr. Kartsonas for taking the time to serve on the WPSD Board and to answer our questions. ■



Like us on www.facebook.com/WPSDprograms

INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT

The Giving Tree

Established by alumni Rodney and Vicki Danco, the *Giving Tree* is located in the hallway next to the Learning Center and provides a chance to honor and remember those alumni, who hold a special place in our lives.

The *Giving Tree* offers three recognition opportunities:
a leaf - \$100, a small stone - \$1,000, and a large stone - \$5,000.

Each level provides a thoughtful gift that serves as a long-lasting recognition, honoring or memorializing an alumnus, an alumni couple, or an entire class.

Anyone interested in making a donation to the *Giving Tree* can request information from the Department of Institutional Advancement or visit the "Support Us" page at wpsd.org. ■



Make a Difference Each Month

Investing in the achievement and success of the students at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf is now easier and more affordable than ever through our monthly giving program.

WPSD offers the opportunity to make contributions automatically through a checking account, savings account or with a credit card. Monthly giving provides a convenient, individual, and affordable way to support our students.

How do you begin? Simply determine a donation that fits your budget - \$5, \$10, \$20, or more. For the amount of money you spend on a pizza, a tank of gas or a night at the movies, you can impact the academic and extracurricular programs and services that our students receive at WPSD.

Becoming a monthly donor is simple and easy. Visit the "Support Us" tab at wpsd.org and select "monthly giving." Choose an amount and frequency that fits best with your budget and goals. Every donation is a tax-deductible contribution.

Donations can be stopped at any time by sending an email to Matt Campion - mcampion@wpsd.org or Sarah Bartlebaugh - sbartlebaugh@wpsd.org. ■



2015 WPSD Golf Tournament

Monday, June 22, 2015
at Edgewood Country Club



For more information contact Sarah Bartlebaugh by phone 412.244.3116,
by email sbartlebaugh@wpsd.org or register online at wpsd.org

JOIN US
ON THE



Red Carpet

for the WPSD 2015
Auction and Gala

Friday, October 9th
from 5:30 - 9:30 p.m.
at the Edgewood Country Club

Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf
AUCTION & GALA

Contact Vicki Cherney for more information.
412.244.4207 | vcherney@wpsd.org



We're Sooo Close...

The doors to the new Residence opened to our students last September and have surpassed all our expectations. It is the newest demonstration of WPSD's 145-years commitment to serve deaf and hard-of-hearing students across Pennsylvania. The space is a home-away-from-home for our residential students from Kindergarten through 12th grade. It is a beautiful,

energy-efficient building, designed around the needs of our students.

The fundraising campaign will come to a close at the end of June. We set a goal of \$2,000,000 and have raised more than 75%! We are greatly humbled by the number of gifts we have received through the generosity of so many. Because of this generosity, **We Are So Close** to reaching our goal. Would you consider a donation

to the Residence campaign today? Every gift is important. Every gift makes a difference. You can donate quickly and securely online by visiting the "support us" tab at wpsd.org or mail your gift to: The Residence Campaign, 300 Swissvale Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15218. Will you help us reach our goal? ■



Seen Around Campus

