

the western PENNSYLVANIAN



NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

VOLUME 131 #3 SPRING 2018



Students' Battling Bot Brings the Fury!

Pg 5



Special Olympics Inspires Students to Give Their All

Pg 19



PG 6

Celebrating Reading Through the Love of Dr. Seuss



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Supervisions

- 4 CEO Letter
- 5 Students' Battlin' Bot Brings the Fury!

What's Happening?

- 6 Celebrating Reading Through the Love of Dr. Seuss
- 7 Family Learning Weekend Welcomes Special Presenter
- 8 Math Makes the Rounds at WPSD for Pi Day
- 8 Middle School Students Face Off for Math Bee
- 8 Chess Team Students Develop Strategy and Logic Skills
- 9 Students Show Their Creativity for 100th Day of School Celebration
- 9 Frost or Flowers? Students Learn About Groundhog Day
- 10 Snuggling Up for Pajama Day
- 10 Embracing Black History Month Through Dance, Art and Culture
- 11 Commemorating Deaf Culture and History
- 12 Makerspace Encourages Students' Creative and Critical Thinking Skills
- 13 Students Get Up Close With State Government
- 14 Seeing the World
 - 14 Students Explore History and Culture in The Big Apple
 - 14 Girls Fly Toward STEM Careers Through a Visit to The Aviary
 - 14 Environmental Science Students Find Improved Water Quality in Local Stream
- 15 Celebrating the Holidays
 - 15 A Sweet Day for WPSD Students
 - 15 Mischievous Leprechauns Bring Messy Fun to The Children's Center

Athletics

- 16 WPSD Welcomes Student-Athletes for the 86th Annual ESDAA Tournament
 - 16 Pep Rally
 - 16 Boys' Basketball Highlights
 - 17 Cheerleading Competition Results
- 18 Lady Lions Clinch Second Place in ESDAA Basketball Tournament
- 18 WPSD Students Take the Court for Middle School Tournament
- 19 WPSD's Special Olympics Inspires Students to Give Their All

Exploring Pathways To The Future

- 20 WPSD and Local Officials Work to Promote Hiring Opportunities for The Deaf And Hard-of-Hearing Community
- 20 WPSD Hosts Career Day for High School Students
- 21 WPSD Transition Team Helps Students Prepare for Independent Living
- 21 Photography, Work Skills and ASL Come Together in Student-Led Project
- 22 WPSD Recognizes Eat 'N Park for Inclusive Hiring Practices
- 22 New Internship Offers Deaf and Hard-Of-Hearing Students Opportunity In Cancer Research Field
- 23 Students Prepare for Life After Graduation by Experiencing Interpreter Call Practices and Procedures

In The Community

- 24 WPSD CEO Shares School's Mission on KDKA's Showcase Pittsburgh
- 24 Attack Theatre Helps Students Explore Creative Movement Through Art & Sharing Session
- 25 De'VIA Art Project Spotlights Students' Artwork Expressing Deaf Culture and Identity

- 26 Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School Graces WPSD With a Special Performance
- 27 WPSD Students Help Give Animals a Second Chance and a New Beginning

Children's Center Expansion Project

28 We Are Growing!

Spotlight

30 Dr. Tom Stanton,
Chief Academic Officer

Support Our School

- 32 Auction & Gala
- 32 Monthly Giving



Bear Tracks (Opposite Side)

- 1 Celebrating Our Kids: An Evening at The Scranton School
- 2 KIDS Camp
- 3 100th Day of School
- 3 After School Clubs
- 4 2018 ASL Learning Opportunity
- 4 Family Learning Weekend

- 5 Programs of WPSD Board Members Visit SSDHHC
- 5 Dr. Seuss' Birthday
- 6 Welcome to the Team
- 8 PBIS
- 8 PSO



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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.

Supervisions

A note from CEO, Steve Farmer



As I write this, the cold spell is hopefully over. We are sprinting toward the end of the school year.

As I reflect on the school year up to this point, I think of the saying, "Time flies when you are having fun!" As you will see throughout this issue, our staff and students are having a lot of fun teaching and learning. Not only are we focusing on our students, we are also focusing on educating and supporting our students' parents and families (be sure to check out the section about our Family Learning Weekend).

It is fun watching our enrollment grow, grow, and grow! At this writing, we are serving over 360 children and their families! Our Early Childhood Program is growing so much that we are being forced to renovate the "Red Wing," the floor right above the current Children's Center. We anticipate construction to begin in early fall.

It is fun developing relationships with our community partners (including but not limited to legislators, donors, and alumni) through various events: the Gala, visits to the Capitol, field trips, athletic events, fundraisers, and so on. WPSD is doing a good job at "walking the talk" as our teachers continue to teach and students continue to learn.

It is fun watching 100% of our 13th year students go out and obtain employment throughout Pittsburgh. They are utilizing the tools we handed to them during their time at WPSD toward work experience.

It's fun working at a place like WPSD where there are so many dedicated faculty, staff, and administrators working toward one common goal: Creating lifelong learners among our students. You will see evidence of that throughout this issue.

Soon, we will see 15 of our students graduate and go on to college, trade school, postsecondary program at WPSD, and/or into the workforce. It's always fun to watch them receive their diploma.

It is fun to reflect on a successful year knowing that we make a difference in the lives of our students.

Have a wonderful summer!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steven E. Farmer". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Steven E. Farmer, EdD
Chief Executive Officer



Students' Battlin' Bot Brings the Fury!

By John Foust

The WPSD BotsIQ team secured several victories in the Southwest PA BotsIQ preliminary competition in March. The Lions made an impressive showing, effectively out-maneuvering and overpowering several other opponents. "The Fury" - and its talented team - certainly lived up to its name! The team's excellent performances earned these blue and gold warriors a three seed going into the finals competition. WPSD entered a menacing looking robot with a spinning disc weapon. Like all student designed robots, The Fury can be plagued with electrical/electronic problems. The robot was initially dogged by an unknown mismarked motor polarity during the first day of the finals competition. This altered the control of the robot via the transmitter joysticks. Everything was opposite. The team was able to rectify the forward and reverse, but had to compete with a turning malfunction. This did create a disadvantage for our driver, Kendrick R. The team lost its first and only match for day one. Each day is set up as a single elimination. The students spent the evening correcting the steering problem and making modifications to make the robot more competitive. The team never stopped assessing the robot's performance!

Day two began with their opponent forfeiting because of a malfunctioning robot. WPSD's second bout, with Charleroi, was intense! Both drivers battled head to head or weapon to weapon. The Fury flipped Charleroi's robot two times, but The Fury got pinned against the wall in the last ten seconds of the match. The judges voted for Charleroi. Ouch!!!

All losing teams are eligible to participate in a rumble match, where six robots compete in the arena at the same time. The Fury entered the first rumble match and was declared the winner! Nick I. steered The Fury to victory. The team had to wait for two more rumble matches to be completed before entering the arena to battle the winners of those bouts. The final rumble match is dubbed "King of the Ring." WPSD battled against Bedford and Mon Valley CTC. The Fury launched Mon Valley's robot 7 to 8 feet in the air, but was attacked from behind and was flipped on its back. Nick was able to vibrate The Fury to an operable upside down position. The WPSD bot was again flipped, but right side up! The Fury suffered some floor panel damage that prevented it from moving, which ended WPSD's opportunity to take home the "King of the Ring" trophy. What a fun and memorable evening! WPSD is very proud of our student battlebot team, their advisors, and the hard work they have done in the many months leading up to this event. ■



What's Happening?

Latest News Around the WPSD Campus

Celebrating Reading Through the Love of Dr. Seuss

Children's Center

By Michelle Zelei

WPSD Children's Center students celebrated Dr. Seuss' birthday. The day started with Dr. Farmer reading "The Foot Book", followed by the careful and delicate construction of a "Cat in the Hat" cake tower built by Dr. Farmer and Children's Center Director Carrie Rain! Afterward, stories and activities were dedicated to Mo Willems. Those stories included "Pigeon Needs a Bath" and "Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus." The students crafted pigeon headbands and hotdog art and enjoyed a morning snack of Dr. Seuss goldfish and cheese sticks, and the "Cat in the Hat" cake for the afternoon treat! Happy birthday, Dr. Seuss! ■



Elementary School

Elementary school students and staff celebrated Read Across America by learning about Dr. Seuss as a person and as an author of dozens of children's books, enjoying Dr. Seuss stories and animation on the smart board and constructing a "Cat in the Hat" related snack made of marshmallows and fruit. What fun! ■

Middle School

By Mary Noschese

The Middle School students and their teachers and staff honored Dr. Seuss by celebrating READING! There were many prizes up for grabs in the silent auction, including new and trending books and school supplies!! Students earned tickets for the auction by scoring 80% or higher on their Accelerated Reading quizzes or reading a book to a friend. They could also use a ticket to purchase a snack and a drink. The Middle School hall and classrooms were filled with skilled readers and positive role models! ■





Family Learning Weekend Welcomes Special Presenter

WPSD's Family Learning Weekend proved to be a smashing success! 45 families attended the two-day event in March. Friday night, participants enjoyed dinner followed by a fun and energetic performance by Signing Time's Rachel Coleman. Afterward, families had the opportunity to gather information from various vendors and meet Rachel Coleman and her sidekick, "Hopkins." Saturday began with breakfast followed by a presentation by Rachel Coleman to parents and families. Then attendees enjoyed lunch and a parent panel/discussion. The weekend event ended with a Literacy Workshop presented by WPSD Reading Specialist Sheri Morgan and Children's Center ASL teacher Christie Homell. The workshop focused on fostering vocabulary development in both English and American Sign Language with children. Presenters taught strategies for developing early literacy skills and ASL techniques using children's literature. Free books and DVDs were given to those who took part in the workshop. Families from Pittsburgh, Scranton, and beyond enjoyed this very special event. ■



Math Makes the Rounds at WPSD for Pi Day

By Julie Ann Mountain

March 19 was a great day to celebrate math! Younger students were read the story "Sir Cumference and the Dragon of Pi" then used a calculator to find the "magic" number to save the knight. Students carefully & accurately measured the circumference and diameters of various circular objects this year, so for many of our older students, the approximations for Pi came out very close to the real value (3.14159.....). Our Pi champion memorized 60 digits of the irrational number and many people looked up their birthdays to find the place value where it can be found in π !!! Several students were very focused on the circle-related word problems and were determined to figure out all the solutions before checking their work using QR codes. Only after completing various Pi tasks did students EARN some pie. It was a great day and I'm pretty sure we showed everyone just how FUN math can be!! ■



Middle School Students Face off For Math Bee

By Mary Noschese

WPSD students participated in the 2nd annual Middle School math bee on February 26. Kahoot (a game-based learning platform in which students answer the questions on iPads) topics included math vocabulary, numerical expressions, computation skills, geometry and fractions! Defending his title and earning first place again this year was 7th grader Bernie E.! Second place went to eighth grader Caleb H., and third place went to sixth grader, Allison B.! It was a very close competition! Honorable mentions went to Valerie D., Bella D., Makenna H., Dalton D., Spencer A., and Luel H. for earning high scores. Congratulations to our Middle School students! We are very proud of you! ■



Chess Team Students Develop Strategy and Logic Skills

By Donald Mazreku

The WPSD chess team is doing very well and holding its own this season. In their first matchup of the year, WPSD and West Mifflin High School chess teams tied with 2 wins, 2 losses, and 1 stalemate. The WPSD Lions, including two new players, made an excellent showing! It was a great competitive match. In their second contest, WPSD took on the University Prep High School. James C. won in a stunning fashion within the first few minutes. Destiny M., Derek F., and Eddie H. each played close matches and did very well, but ultimately fell to their opponents. A great showing was accomplished by all involved! We are excited to see how they progress throughout the season! ■





Students Show Their Creativity for 100th Day of School Celebration

The WPSD Kindergarten class celebrated 100 days of School on February 1 by dressing as though they were 100 year-olds! The students donned glasses, suspenders, curlers, robes - what fun! Together, they lay on the floor in a pattern forming the number 100! Take a look - how cute! ■



Frost or Flowers? Students Learn About Groundhog Day

WPSD Children's Center students celebrated Groundhog Day by constructing fun artwork and designing hats - all to honor good old Punxsutawney Phil and to learn a little bit about the meaning of this annual celebration. Six more weeks of winter was expected but the chilly temperatures won't prevent these students from having fun in the Children's Center! ■





Snuggling Up for Pajama Day

By Michelle Zelei

Students in WPSD's Children's Center and Children's House took part in Pajama Day on January 25. It was a fun-filled day of wearing PJs to School, reading books including "How Do Dinosaurs Say Goodnight" and "The Snowman" and playing games such as a bedtime relay race and a snowman bean bag toss! The students also put their creativity to the test, crafting their own snowmen made of paper, shaving cream, white glue and glitter. A morning snack of pancakes and sausage was enjoyed by all! The festivities wrapped up with a showing of "The Snowman" movie!▪



Embracing Black History Month Through Dance, Art and Culture

By Dana Dailey

As part of a Black History Month celebration, the WPSD Middle and High School students went back in time to the Harlem Renaissance. They met in the Porterfield Gym, rotating through different stations where they were able to experience the art, history, dance, music and food from that era. WPSD was pleased to welcome Erin Perry - the Executive Director of the Legacy Arts Project, Inc. located in Wilksburg. She taught the students some excellent dance moves that reflected that time period. A great time was had by everyone.▪





Commemorating Deaf Culture and History

By John Gibson

WPSD kicked off Deaf History Month with a gathering in the auditorium. Deaf History Month is celebrated each year from March 13-April 15. It spans two months to highlight three of the key milestones in Deaf history: The American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut opening on April 15, 1817; President Abraham Lincoln signing the charter for Gallaudet University on April 8, 1864; and The Deaf President Now movement on March 13, 1988. It was fascinating to learn of the milestones and highlights of Deaf History. ■

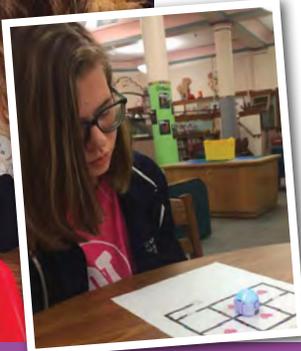


Makerspace Encourages Students' Creative and Critical Thinking Skills

Middle School

By Carolyn Kirkpatrick

WPSD Middle School students took part in a fast-paced, challenging, and educational game called OSMO Words as part of the School's Makerspace curriculum. One can play alone or with another person. First, the player looks at the on-screen clue to try and guess the secret word. He/she quickly moves tiles with letters on them to the play space to spell the answer. Each letter the player(s) get correct appears on-screen, until eventually the entire word is revealed. It can be a noun, verb, or an adjective. If you work in pairs, it is more fun to see who will get their letter in first! When a student reaches 100 points or more, he/she wins the game. ■



High School

By Carolyn Kirkpatrick

A Valentine's Day spin on WPSD's Makerspace Initiative! The tenth graders used markers and Ozocodes to help Ozobot find "L-O-V-E" in the map. Ozobots are ball-shaped "robots." Ozobot detects ozocodes, or different sequences of colors (either 3 or 4 colors). Ozobot is pre-programmed to perform different actions or change behavior, including making a left or right turn, going straight when it reaches an intersection or a "T;" and coding for speed...slow, fast, turbo, or cruise.

In another project, WPSD High School students worked on a K'nex Paddlewheel Boat as part of the School's MakerSpace Initiative. The students were divided into teams, each focusing on a particular section of the boat. Once all teams completed their tasks, each used the product of their efforts to build a paddlewheel boat. They tested different techniques to determine whether the wheel made the axle go around or vice versa. In one instance, the boat will likely go faster, albeit a shorter distance. In another instance, the boat will be slower in speed but will travel a further distance. The students made assumptions on which scenario they believed would occur and then tested their hypotheses. What a fun and unique learning experience! ■



Students Get Up Close With State Government

By Kristi Mosholder

On Tuesday, February 20th, Ryane S., Xiaoli C., and Maleek W. were given the opportunity to attend the Senate Appropriation Hearing at the Capitol in Harrisburg. They were selected as their state Senators were present at the hearing and these students were hoping to formally meet their respective Senators. The students witnessed Dr. Farmer testifying, along with the three other representatives from the Chartered Schools for the Deaf and Blind and the Approved Private Schools, about our programs. The Senators seemed appreciative of the testimonies and of the hard work the staff has done at the schools. The students were attentive during the hearing and represented WPSD very well. Ryane met Senator Baker, who presides over her home district. This was an eye opening experience for the students to learn our government system. They were fortunate to witness this kind of experience up close and in action! ■



Seeing the World

Students Explore History and Culture in the Big Apple

By Kathy Bartholow

In March, our 10th grade class braved the predicted Nor'easter and traveled to the Big Apple-New York City! Our students fell right into the rhythm of the "City That Never Sleeps." Tuesday was filled with several stops. The first was at St. Patrick's Cathedral, where they honored their classmate Dylan Zurawski by lighting a candle in his memory. After a short stroll they were excited to see Rockefeller Center and the skating rink. Next stop was the bright lights of Times Square and shopping. The group enjoyed dinner at Bubba Gump's before venturing to the Empire State Building. What a windy view from the 86th floor! On Wednesday, the group took on the Museum of Natural History,



Central Park, Little Italy, and souvenir bargaining of Chinatown. Due to weather conditions the group had a quick and somber experience at the 9/11 memorial. After dinner, the group returned to the hotel to enjoy the fitness center and the swimming pool. Their final day, Thursday, wrapped up the trip with ferry rides to Ellis Island and Liberty Island with a visit to Lady Liberty. Our students were excited to find their ancestors' names on the walls at Ellis Island. David Z. gave a quick lesson prior to departure about the sculpture from the remains of the World Trade Center and the wall of names. ■



Girls Fly Toward STEM Careers Through a Visit to the Aviary

By Erin McNeil-Mascaro

Ten WPSD middle and high school girls had the awesome opportunity to go to the National Aviary on March 15 through the Carnegie Science Center's Tour Your Future program ([#touryourfuture](#)). This program encourages girls to find careers in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math). The Aviary taught the girls about different veterinary careers. They met many different female educators and scientists with degrees in biology, zoology, and other life sciences. They also had a chance to meet many of the animals at the Aviary and even go behind the scenes in its hospital. What a great day! ■

Environmental Science Students Find Improved Water Quality in Local Stream

By Erin McNeil-Mascaro

The RIT Environmental Science class braved the elements for one last trip to Frick Park in January. Amazingly, the water in the stream was still flowing and they were able to get a sample. The water temperature was less than 1 degree Celsius! This means the dissolved oxygen in the water should be much higher, and our hypothesis was correct. The Dissolved Oxygen test showed it to be at the highest level all year, 15 mg/L! A high level is a good sign. Animals and plants need this type of oxygen for respiration.

The level can fluctuate with temperature, but if it's abnormally low, that could be an indicator of poor water quality. Of course, we had a little fun in the snow too. Frick Park was a beautiful (COLD) place to be! We love our urban parks! ■



Celebrating the Holidays

A Sweet Day for WPSD Students

Children's Center

By Michelle Zelei

On February 14th, WPSD Children's Center students celebrated Valentine's Day in many fun-filled ways. They enjoyed a variety of Valentine's Day games and activities such as graphing candy hearts (to determine how many of each color they had) and an alphabet heart bean bag tossing game! They were treated to a snack of cookies with frosting and sprinkles as well as strawberries and pink milk! Afterward students spent some time passing out their valentines to friends! ■



Elementary School

Love was in the air at WPSD on Valentine's Day! Some of the Elementary students exchanged cards and smiles while others took part in collaborative holiday activities. Some students colored and decorated holiday themed designs while others played Valentine's Day bingo. It was a great day promoting fun, friendship and togetherness! ■

Middle School

By Shari Gerlach & Nicole Borelle

For the last two months, WPSD Middle Schoolers' hearts were put to work by earning their merit points to attend the Middle School Valentine's Day Merit Activity held in the Lion's Den. Middle School Student Body Government officers demonstrated excellent leadership in assisting with fun Valentine's Day games and festive decorations. Students participated in several stations such as making creative valentine cards, coloring valentine doodles, a Candy Guessing Jars contest, dancing, a photo booth, and temporary valentine tattoos. Students enjoyed decorating heart-shaped cut out cookies, which were made from scratch in Alisa Whyson's class. It was an awesome team effort that made this fun event a success! ■



Mischievous Leprechauns Bring Messy Fun to the Children's Center

Leprechauns visited the WPSD Children's Center on St. Patrick's Day and caused quite a mess! The students were greeted with disheveled classrooms, undeniably the work of naughty leprechauns. However, these unruly visitors weren't all bad - leaving a note leading to a pot of gold! The students also enjoyed the story, "The Night Before St. Patrick's Day" and delicious leprechaun munch (Lucky Charms, Chex Mix, M&M's and white chocolate dyed green) as a treat for snack time! Such a fun way to celebrate the holiday! ■





Athletics

WPSD Welcomes Student-Athletes for the 86th Annual ESDAA Tournament

Pep Rally

A high-spirited pep rally on February 9 kicked off the 86th Annual ESDAA boys' basketball and cheerleading tournament weekend, which was hosted right here on the WPSD campus! Eight other schools from across the country traveled to our School to compete. SignShine opened the celebration at WPSD with a moving ASL rendition of the National Anthem. The boys' basketball team, cheerleading squad, and their respective coaches were recognized. The girls' basketball team and their coaches were also recognized, as they were to take part in their own ESDAA tournament the following weekend. The middle school basketball teams were also celebrated as they were gearing up to compete in a tournament on February 21 and 22. No WPSD celebration is complete without the Lion's Song and the School's legendary chant - "Always Remember, Never Forget, WPSD is #1!" The crowd was electrifying! Best of luck to our Lions! ■



Boys' Basketball Highlights

By Val Wojton

The Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf hosted the 86th Annual ESDAA Boys Basketball and Cheerleading Tournament. Seven boys' basketball teams and six cheerleading squads participated. Most of the games were closely contested, including the championship game which was won by American School for the Deaf, 50-48, over Marie Philip. Pennsylvania School for the Deaf took third place over Lexington School & Center for the Deaf, while New York-Fanwood won the consolation game over Ohio. Our own Kyle D. was named to the All-Tournament team. ■



Cheerleading Competition Results

Amazing skill, grace, poise and athleticism were demonstrated by all teams who took part in the ESDAA Cheerleading tournament! High flying excitement was abound as the teams took their turns to impress the judges and entertain the audience. What a great event, filled with spirited competition and budding friendships. Special congratulations to WPSD's very own Xiaoli C. for nabbing an all-tournament squad award. ■





Lady Lions Clinch Second Place in ESDAA Basketball Tournament

The WPSD Lady Lions made an impressive showing at the ESDAA girls' basketball tournament. Ohio School for the Deaf hosted the big event in February. Our blue and gold warriors defeated Marie Philip School by a score of 34-12 in the first matchup of the tournament, catapulting themselves into the championship game.

Although the WPSD Lady Lions fought valiantly against their opponent in the main contest, they fell to Lexington School and Center for the Deaf by a score of 20-19 - a true heartbreaker! All tournament honors went to Olivia L., Danielle F., and Cassie F. We are so proud of our girls! ■



WPSD Students Take the Court for Middle School Tournament

By Val Wojton

Our Middle School teams gave it their all during the Eastern Middle School Basketball Tournament at Marie Philip. Our boys fought valiantly in these two losses (22-27 and 12-14) while winning one easily. We competed in the consolation game and won this one handily. Our girls lost the first two games and were getting ready to take on the team that had a 1-1 record. All the opponent needed was to win and they would have gone on to play in the title game. However, our girls took charge, defeating them and forcing them to play our girls again in the consolation game. They emerged victorious and finished in third place! Wade D. and Sami R. were named to the All-Tournament team. Our girls took the Team Lay-Up award while our boys took home the coveted Team Sportsmanship award. ■





WPSD's Special Olympics Inspires Students to Give Their All

By Sally Wellman

Twenty-six athletes from WPSD participated in the annual Special Olympics bowling tournament in February. The event started with the athletes reciting the Special Olympic Oath..."Let me win. If I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt." The athletes competed, then they returned to WPSD for the medal ceremony. They were all very proud of the medals they earned!! ■



Exploring Pathways to the Future

WPSD and Local Officials Work to Promote Hiring Opportunities For the Deaf And Hard-of-Hearing Community

By Victoria Vitullo

WPSD was pleased to welcome Laura Drogowski from Mayor Bill Peduto's Office, Meg Dippold, PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf and Ben Moonan, Representative of the Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH). WPSD Transition Coordinator Victoria Vitullo met with this group in an effort to begin brainstorming ideas as to how to help businesses in Pittsburgh become more comfortable hiring Deaf, Hard of Hearing,

and Deaf and Hard of Hearing Cognitively Delayed students. The goal of the meeting was to generate an ad campaign in Pittsburgh in which WPSD would receive endorsement by each of the above agencies regarding the School's job shadowing and employment program. The hope is that the end result will be employers contacting our Transition Department to allow students to experience job shadows and work life all over Pittsburgh. The meeting was very positive - we hope to keep the conversation going! Stay tuned! ■



WPSD Hosts Career Day for High School Students

On March 21, WPSD hosted Career Day for all High School students. Four speakers presented: Aaron Bosley of PNC Bank (web designer), Chandler Lyle of Pitt Tool and Die (machinist and former WPSD student and Forbes Student), Meg Dippold, former Deaf Olympic Volleyball player (and RCD for PA OVR) and Ria Kuroki, yoga teacher and chocolatier of Yogis Chocolate. Despite the heavy snow, school closures, and a myriad of circumstances that popped up all morning, Career Day was extremely impactful. Each speaker was engaging, energizing and inspirational - speaking at a level that connected the student with them. The students were left with clear messages that one does not have to be skilled at every single subject to succeed in life. Everyone has talents. Each student needs to tap into his/her own talent and ask others for help in order to make dreams and vocational desires come true. The afternoon ended with a 30 minute yoga class by Ria that was fun and challenging. Students were given a real life opportunity for "registering" for the class



and meeting a deadline to register. Much preparation went into the planning for this day and thanks goes out to the entire transition team, Brian Slavinsky, Cathy Morgan, Joan Stone and all of the teachers who assisted with yoga registration. We look forward to what next year holds! ■

WPSD Transition Team Helps Students Prepare for Independent Living

The WPSD Transition Team held its annual Independent Living Day presentation for high school students on January 10. Representatives from several community organizations including ODHH, Sign Language Interpreting Professionals (SLIP), OVR, Pittsburgh Cares, and Mercy Behavioral Health, discussed topics relating to independence and transitioning into adulthood. Our speakers had a wealth of information to share and the students asked many great questions. ■



Photography, Work Skills and ASL Come Together in Student-Led Project

By Victoria Vitullo

Students Jonathan G. and Zion H. have come together for a most interesting project! Zion's superior photography skills were much needed to capture technical photographs related to bicycle mechanics for Jonathan's employment at Performance Bikes in Bakery Square. Since there are no formal signs for many of the technical words and phrases related to bicycle repair, Jonathan and his ASL interpreter, Cathy Morgan, along with the Transition Coordinator created a way for this problem to be resolved. Zion's photos will be used on a poster that Lion Works will print and then be provided to Performance Bikes so that communication is consistent. Jonathan is in training as a bike mechanic and will be required to repair a certain number of bikes each shift. In order to make communication clear and concise, the employees (who are learning ASL) can use the poster to definitively communicate the bike issue. Some examples are: brakes are rubbing,



derailleur needing repair, too loose, too tight, etc.

Jonathan is a unique student at WPSD. He is attending Forbes Technical School for Warehouse Training and, in addition, goes to work three afternoons a week to learn bicycle mechanics. Jonathan has always been mechanically inclined and has a natural knack for putting things together.

Zion is an award winning student photographer, winning NAACP 2017 Young Entrepreneur Award at the 54th annual Freedom Fund Banquet in Ohio.

WPSD's students are full of talent! Look for more interesting stories related to our students who are making great use of their vocational talents in creative ways! ■

WPSD Recognizes Eat 'N Park for Inclusive Hiring Practices

By Victoria Vitullo

WPSD provided a certificate of appreciation to Edgewood Eat'n Park managers, Jonathan and Marcy, for showing such a dedication to interviewing, hiring and employing students from WPSD. Their commitment to be willing to learn as much as they can, from an employer perspective related to the needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing employees, cannot go without recognition.

Two WPSD students are currently working at this particular Eat'n Park. The store is already thinking of accommodation ideas on their own in order to make work easier for the Deaf employees. For example, they installed



a mirror in an area that allows Isabella to see when people are coming in the store or when people are behind her so that she is not startled. They will be installing a light system so that Montae is aware of the servers' needs, such as: time to bus/clean a table.

Ben Moonan from ODHH accompanied the WPSD Transition Coordinator to provide these awards to the managers and offered to provide a training to their HQ related to Deaf employees in the workplace. This offer was accepted and an "in-service" will be scheduled with Mr. Moonan. ■

New Internship Offers Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students Opportunity in Cancer Research Field

By Victoria Vitullo

The University of Pittsburgh's UPMC Hillman Cancer Academy opened its doors to Deaf and Hard of Hearing High School student applicants in order to work in the field of Cancer Research. The project targeted students with varying backgrounds and experiences. Students chosen for the program could be paid a total of \$2,400 for working eight weeks (Monday-Friday). Students can reside in the dorms if they are not local or if transportation will be a barrier to them attending. Students must complete an application and write three essays in order to be considered for this research work. This applies to students interested in STEM, biomedicine and general research. Although the offering was rolled out to every WPSD high school student, the high school science teachers



selected those students whose science knowledge and background would be a good fit. An informational meeting was held on February 20 in the School's auditorium. WPSD student Jasmine B. was accepted to the program! She will be a cancer research assistant at the Hillman Cancer Academy. She will work alongside doctors and cancer researchers. Since she lives outside of the Pittsburgh area, she will live in a dorm and eat in the cafeteria. She is taking part in an important and unique learning experience while learning about accommodations in college dormitories. ■

Students Prepare for Life After Graduation by Experiencing Interpreter Call Practices and Procedures

By Victoria Vitullo

WPSD students in Ms. Vitullo's 10th grade Push In Classes have been learning to make mock interpreter request calls through the help of Joanne Sharer of SLIP (Sign Language Interpreting Professionals). The activity has been eye opening as the students learned a lot about ADA Law, the difference between the instances in which an agency or business would be expected to pay for interpreting services and when the consumer needs to pay for his/her own interpreter, providing adequate notice time to SLIP, and the cost of interpreting services. The students have had to learn, "on the fly" in many circumstances (ex: when the mock doctor's office asked if they could bring a friend or relative to interpret for them). Much laughter broke out during the planning of a mock wedding for two students! They did a great job clarifying which type of interpreter they were requesting (both ASL and voice - for the hearing guests, of course!) ■



In The Community

WPSD CEO Shares School's Mission on KDKA's Showcase Pittsburgh

Dr. Steve Farmer was interviewed as part of KDKA's "Showcase Pittsburgh" program on January 23. WPSD was thrilled and honored to gain this unique opportunity to introduce the School to new faces. Dr. Farmer discussed our mission, the wonderful students we serve, and who we are as an organization. A truly exciting experience! ■



Attack Theatre Helps Students Explore Creative Movement Through Art

WPSD is pleased to have a wonderful partnership with Attack Theatre. This performance group combines modern dance, original live music, multimedia and interdisciplinary art forms to present work in traditional and non-traditional spaces around the world. Recently, the Attack Theatre branch in Pittsburgh has been working with our youngest learners on a regular basis. An Attack Theatre representative highlights specific movement and creative activities explored by students. During five workshops with Attack Theatre, students in the Kindergarten class and Preschool ASL Language group explored movement textures (e.g. sharp, smooth, fast, soft), new ways to move through space, and unique ways to move their bodies. In this particular workshop, the students and an Attack Theatre staff person read a book together and then performed the happenings in the book through creative movement and expression. What a neat perspective - thinking outside the box! ■



Sharing Session

In front of a packed room, WPSD students demonstrated all they had learned over the course of two months during workshops led by the Pittsburgh branch of Attack Theatre. Students in the Kindergarten class and Preschool ASL Language group explored movement textures (e.g. sharp, smooth, fast, soft), new ways to move through space, and unique ways to move their bodies. This sharing session with the students' families highlighted the creative movements and dances the students had developed in conjunction with Attack Theatre representative, Kaitlin Dann, in January and February. What an enlightening experience! The students, and their parents seemed to really enjoy themselves as creativity and expression came to life. ■



De'VIA Art Project Spotlights Students' Artwork Expressing Deaf Culture and Identity

The amazing artistic skills of WPSD's talented students were on display at the Children's Museum Theatre in Pittsburgh. From Saturday, March 24 through April 15, various pieces from these young artists, depicting children's interpretations of Deaf View/Image Art, otherwise known as De'VIA, wowed the public. This particular type of art examines and expresses the Deaf experience from a cultural, linguistic, and intersectional point of view.

On March 24, a group of WPSD student artists were interviewed on the radio at 88.3 WRCT about their artwork and the display at the Museum. Later that afternoon, an opening reception of WPSD's De'VIA art exhibit, in which ASL interpretation was provided, took place in the Museum that involved staff from WPSD and the Children's Museum, the young artists and their families, along with interested Museum visitors.

This exhibit was created by students at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf with the nurturing support of their art teacher, Jenna Mancini, and the guidance and support of LaRoche professor and WPSD Digital Fabrication Consultant Fran Flaherty. There was a lovely opening reception on Saturday during the Museum's visiting hours. It was awesome to see so many WPSD families and museum visitors enjoying the show and learning together.

"De'VIA represents Deaf artists and perceptions based on their Deaf experiences. It uses formal art elements with the intention of expressing innate cultural or physical Deaf experience. These experiences may include Deaf metaphors, Deaf perspectives, and Deaf insight in relationship with the environment (both the natural world and Deaf cultural environment), spiritual and everyday life" (http://www.deafart.org/Deaf_Art_/deaf_art_.html). De'VIA can be identified by specific components such as contrasting colors and values, intense colors, contrasting textures. It may also include a concentrated focus, with exaggeration or specialized attention on facial features.

What a wonderful project in which to be involved!! ■

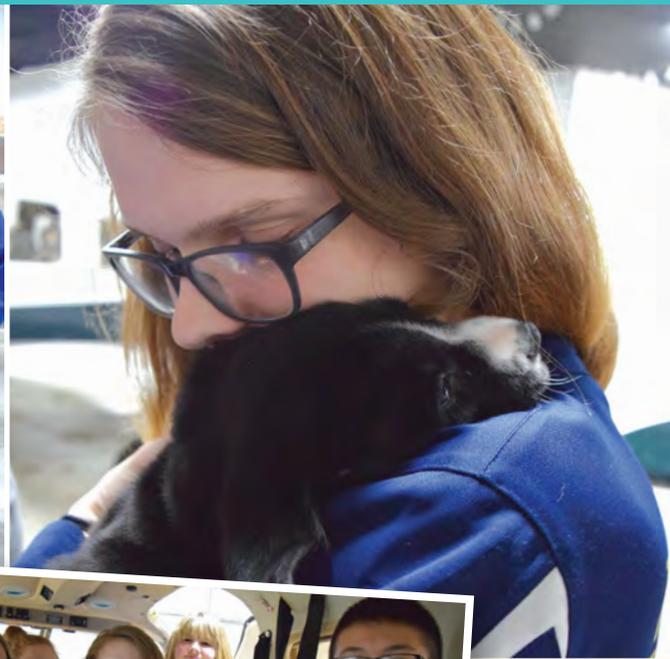




Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School Graces WPSD with a Special Performance

WPSD was thrilled to welcome pre-professional students from the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre (PBT) School to campus on March 7. These talented young dancers performed excerpts from classical and contemporary works, with a focus on Jerome Robbins and his contributions to the art form. The PBT School students performed an excerpt from Swan Lake to showcase the classical style of dance, followed by a contemporary piece to showcase how classical ballet influences modern day choreographers. The program concluded with a piece from the West Side Story Suite, focusing on Jerome Robbins and how he pushed the boundaries of ballet. Several WPSD students had the opportunity to learn various ballet poses with the help of PBT School students. One of these wonderfully skilled dancers, Jonathan, is the brother of WPSD student David B.! What an amazingly visual experience! ■





WPSD Students Help Give Animals a Second Chance and a New Beginning

Two dozen dogs are on new paths to forever homes thanks to the partnership between Pittsburgh Aviation Animal Rescue Team (PAART) and Middle School Student Body Government officers at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf (WPSD).

According to PAART's mission statement, the organization is dedicated to providing animals a second chance by offering free transport from danger to safety. If an animal is in danger of being euthanized by an underfunded shelter, displaced by a natural disaster, or in an abusive situation, the team is ready to help. The organization provides a second chance to thousands of animals in need each year.

The students raised \$350 from their annual fundraiser in December. The group donated this money to PAART for their #NoDogsLeftBehind campaign.

On February 17, PAART recognized WPSD students and staff by naming a special rescue mission in the School's honor. They removed 24 dogs from a crowded animal shelter in Kentucky and flew them to Pittsburgh. Moving these animals out of the shelter gave them a better chance at finding their permanent homes while simultaneously creating space in the shelter so they can help 24 more animals in the region.

Once loaded, the team headed back to Pittsburgh where they met up with four receiving shelters that had open space and a need in their local population for adoptable animals. These dogs went to Pet Search, LaMancha Animal Rescue, Steel City Dog Rescue, and All But Furgotten.



Students from WPSD met their partners at PAART in West Mifflin for the first time, toured the facility and spent some quality time with two of the four-legged friends they helped gain a chance at a new beginning.

WPSD was fortunate to have both the Pittsburgh Post Gazette and WTAE-TV cover the story! Here's one look at an interview with WPSD student Jenna D. during the tour.





The
**Children's
 Center**
 Expansion Project
 Where Great Futures Begin

Our Children's Center provides everything teachers and children could want in a preschool-- and just like our students, the Center is growing! Due to the increasing number of students enrolling in our Early Childhood Programs, we seek to expand into an empty space directly above the Children's Center. By renovating approximately 10,000 square feet of former residential living area, WPSD will create a comprehensive early education center on campus that will serve as a one-stop shop for families with D/HH children.

The expansion will offer additional classrooms, an art room, an ASL classroom, Mini-Macs/multipurpose room, and evaluation offices for audiological and speech services. The renovation will also provide the opportunity to gather existing early education programs and services into one location. Current programming through Choices for Children, Discovery Days, the Children's House, traditional Pre-K, and Kindergarten classes would all be brought together into The Children's Center. This will enable us to serve our families more efficiently and provide our youngest students with new academic and socialization opportunities. You can discover more about our Early Childhood Programs through the Children's Center page at wpsd.org.

We Are Growing!

An exciting new project is taking place at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf! Planning is underway for the expansion of our Children's Center.





The Impact

The Children's Center at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf is building brighter futures for every student that walks through its doors. We are excited about the positive impacts the Center is making in students' lives, and the need to find more teaching space as demand increases for our programs.

As planning and design for The Children's Center expansion begins to take shape, we are seeking gifts from individuals, business, and organizations who would like to partner with us to make the renovations a reality for our kids. Would you consider a gift today? Your financial support will help us create a space that is dedicated to making life-long learners in the earliest years of a child's life.

To make a gift of any amount, please complete the enclosed envelope or give securely online at wpsd.org. Thank you for your generosity and kindness toward our students and their families.



Small class sizes allow for individualized, child-centered instruction.



Student creativity, exploration and appreciation of learning are promoted and encouraged.



Play is the most important process through which young people learn.



Spotlight

Dr. Tom Stanton, Chief Academic Officer

Tell us about your job - Chief Academic Officer - at WPSD.

It is a new position at our School. What are your primary duties and responsibilities? What do you hope to accomplish through this work at WPSD?

I am very excited about this new position. Two of my main responsibilities will involve the accreditation process and looking at the academic programs that the programs of the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf offer to ensure that they meet Dr. Farmer's vision and strategic plan. Accreditation is a process that will ensure that the programs for the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf are continuing to improve and are providing academic programs that are rigorous and have high standards. Two areas of the academic programs that I will focus on will be curriculum and instruction. I will be looking at the curricula that we use to be sure that they align with State standards and prepare our students to be successful at whatever they choose to do after graduation. I will be looking at instruction to ensure that our teachers have the materials, resources, support, and training that they need in order to be as effective as possible. Because the Chief Academic Officer position serves all of the programs of the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, I will work with the staff at Camp Hill, Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, and Scranton. My goal is to find ways to improve and expand on the high-quality educational opportunities that are already being offered at the programs for the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf.

Tell us about your professional background. How long have you been in Deaf Education?

This is my 19th school year working in Deaf Education. During that time, I worked for one year as a one-on-one aide for a student with challenging behaviors at the Tennessee School for the Deaf (TSD), taught for a total of ten years in a classroom for students with challenging social, emotional, and academic behaviors at TSD and in self-contained middle and high school classrooms in Memphis, TN, served for three and a half years as an elementary school Special Education Supervisor in Memphis, TN, and served for a total of four years as a Principal at TSD and the Ohio School for the Deaf (OSD).

What sparked your interest in this field?

My journey to Deaf Education did not begin as early as some others'. After graduating high school, I went into the Environmental Engineering program at the University of Tennessee (UT). However, by my sophomore year, I had decided that I could not continue in the program because I had become so frustrated with many of my professors and I no longer enjoyed myself or looked forward to my future in the field. Although my professors were brilliant men and women, I did not find many of them to be effective teachers. I took a series of interest inventories and learned that my interests most closely aligned with occupations in the field of Education and, more specifically, the field of Special Education. My frustrations with my professors' lack of effectiveness resulted in a determination to become a teacher who would be able to reach all students. The idea of working in the field of Special Education was very intriguing to me and I knew that the Tennessee School for the Deaf (TSD) was near UT. I thought that teaching Deaf/Hard of Hearing students might combine my decision to become a teacher with my interest in the field of Special Education, so I changed my major from engineering to Deaf Education. My first experiences with Deaf Education, sign language, and the Deaf community did not happen until my sophomore year at UT when I took my first steps into an elementary school classroom at TSD. I was so nervous. However, before the end of my first practicum placement at TSD, I knew that I had made the absolute right decision for myself as I immediately began to once again enjoy myself and to look forward to a future in the field.

What are your hobbies? When you are not working, how do you fill your time?

When I have free time or need to recharge my batteries, I choose to be outdoors. I enjoy the peace and solitude of hiking and like to mountain bike. Winter is my favorite time of the year, so I also enjoy skiing and snowboarding. I am married and have four young children. Although my children's interests and hobbies often take precedence over my own, I try to instill my love for the outdoors in them.

Who is/was the most influential person in your life? Why?

I have been influenced by many people during my life. Growing up, my parents taught me the value of working hard and helping others. My first Education Advisor at UT emphasized the enormous importance and responsibility of choosing the teaching profession. A fellow Special Education Supervisor, with nearly 50 years of experience working for the same school system before she retired, taught me about patience, the importance of students' families, and exemplified the quote "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life." My wife and children are now the strongest influences in my life by providing me with motivation and purpose. All of these people have helped shape different aspects of my life, both personally and professionally.

What is your favorite thing about the WPSD/SSDHHC community so far?

So far, one of my favorite things about WPSD/SSDHHC has been the outreach and connection that we have with the communities immediately surrounding the schools and across the Commonwealth. It is important for the communities surrounding the schools to understand who we are, what we do, and how we can benefit and support one another. It is crucial for families, school districts, and legislators across the Commonwealth to understand that we serve as a resource to them and every student who is Deaf/Hard of Hearing across the Commonwealth. The programs for the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf are such a valuable asset and it has been exciting for me to learn how we are collaborating locally and statewide.



"My goal is to find ways to improve and expand on the high-quality educational opportunities that are already being offered at the programs for the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf."



Scan to follow us on Facebook and learn more about WPSD



Join Us for the WPSD
Fall Gala

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2018
5:30 - 9:30 PM

Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf
AUCTION & GALA

**Edgewood
Country Club**

Contact Sarah Bartlebaugh at 412.244.4207
or sbartlebaugh@wpsd.org.

Monthly Giving

An Easy Way to Support Our Students!

Make a difference every 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 credit card. Monthly giving provides a convenient, individual, and affordable way to support the School and its students.

How do I begin to make a difference each month? Simply determine a donation that fits your budget - \$5, \$10, \$20, or more. For the amount of money you might spend on a pizza each month, a lunch date, or a night at the movies, you can impact the quality of the academic and extracurricular programs and services that the students receive at WPSD.

Becoming a monthly donor is simple and easy. Click on DONATE NOW and choose an amount and frequency that fits best within your budget and goals. Every donation is a tax deductible contribution. Your donations can be stopped at any time by contacting Matt Campion - mcampion@wpsd.org. ■

