



WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA  
SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF



THE SCRANTON SCHOOL  
for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Children



A NEWSLETTER OF THE PROGRAMS OF WPSD



# WPSD Hits the Road with Penndot!

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WPSD High School  
Robotics Team Compete  
on Land and in the Air

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Shop with a Cop Event  
Keeps Our Students Warm  
and Cozy









# A Note of Introduction

Dear Friends,

We are excited to share with you another edition of our magazine that details the activities and accomplishments of our students throughout our programs. There is so much happening across our organization that it is very difficult to decide what to include!

Students at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf were challenged by STEM assignments such as robotics competitions and were invited to the National Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) to demonstrate Aerial Drones and to perform in ASL for the conference participants. Boys' and girls' basketball teams faced off against opponents far and wide and enjoyed a variety of tournaments. Our student-athletes at every age developed sportsmanship and character during the season.

Community engagement remains a priority as local leaders visit our programs and enjoy time with our students. The Scranton School for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students recognized local veterans and welcomed a county commissioner to campus. WPSD honored local first responders and spent some quality time with local police at a community outreach event.

Fun was in full swing across our programs as students dressed up in their favorite costumes for Halloween, visited a pumpkin patch, and enjoyed the beauty of fall on a hayride. As December arrived, students celebrated



the holiday season with a focus on the importance of giving. WPSD produced its annual holiday commercial that aired on television stations throughout western Pennsylvania.

This edition is filled with stories about our students that we hope will entertain and inspire you. Our students are truly amazing. We are deeply grateful for the help and support provided to us by our board, donors, families and friends in local, state, and national governments. Your investment in our programs is key to the success of our students.

Sincerely,

Kevin McDonough  
Interim Superintendent

Carrie Rain  
Interim Executive Director

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# Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf



WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

Providing Bright Futures for Our Students

## WPSD Hits the Highway with PennDot

By Jen Morris, Coordinator of Operations

During the month of October, our High School Art and Safety & Driver's Education classes under the supervision of teachers Jenna Barkey and Kathy Bartholow, took part in the "Paint the Plow" project sponsored by PennDOT. The goal of the project was to raise awareness of safety and school art programs. The students were required to come up with a design that fit with this year's theme, "Seatbelts Are Always In Season." Once the design was approved by PennDOT, the students got to work! With the help of our resident painting expert, Mr. Tom Walton, the students determined what kind of preparation and paints were needed to get their vision from paper onto the plow. After sanding, painting and clear coating, the plow was ready for pick up. Our new friends, Joe Corso and Ken Metcalfe, from PennDOT were impressed with our final product and very interested to learn about our whole process.

There were two awards involved: Judge's Pick and Fan Favorite. For the "Fan Favorite," an online voting system was set up allowing community members to vote for their favorite plow. GREAT NEWS! WE WON the Fan Favorite Award!

More than 80 schools participated in the competition statewide and nearly 29,000 votes were cast!





We were thrilled to host Yasmeen and Stephanie from PennDOT on campus on February 14th. They were here to meet the students and staff that worked on the snow plow and to deliver our certificate for winning "Fan Favorite"! The students have already been discussing plans for the competition next year. We are so proud of the hard work that these students put into this project and we are thankful for all of you that voted for us.

Thanks, also, to PennDOT for this awesome opportunity! ■



# School-Wide Highlights- Happy Fall Y'all

## Quality Time with Furry Farm Friends

In the middle of October, students from our Choices for Children program, Children's Center, and Elementary School enjoyed a beautiful fall day to its fullest! We were thrilled to welcome the Barnyard Petting Zoo to campus along with its multitude of furry farm animals. The students and staff loved every minute of feeding and cuddling the animals. What a fun addition to the school day! ■





# PSO Trunk or Treat is a Monstrous Success

By Angel Maher and Tara Nikou

Another fantastic Trunk or Treat event is officially in the books! This year, we had our largest turnout of trunkers yet, and it was an absolute blast to see all the smiles and fun everyone had. Kudos to all those who put together clever and fun themed trunks and costumes.

Let's give a big round of applause to this year's winners for the best DIY Trunk or Treat: the UFO car and the Pumpkin Head car! It was a tough decision, as there were so many amazing entries, making it hard to choose the winners.

A massive Thank You goes to Junior NAD students and everyone who contributed to making this spooktacular event a success. We can't wait for next year. Get ready for more spooky fun in the future! ■



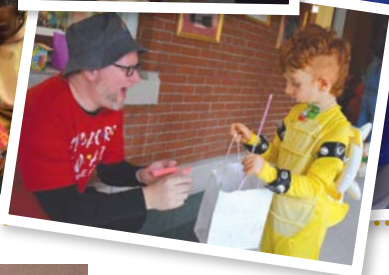
## Students Strut their Stuff on the Spooky Catwalk

On October 31, Elementary School students took part in a runway style Halloween costume fashion show of sorts. Each child showed off his or her spooktacular attire to their classmates, parents, and staff. A game of limbo ensued at the close of the show! Smiles and laughter were shared by all. ■



## Trick-or-Treating Fun on the WPSD Campus

On Halloween, Children's Center and Elementary School students took part in trick-or-treating fun around campus. Children and some staff, dressed up in a wide variety of costumes, including princesses, superheroes, monsters, and much more. Each one was so excited to receive his or her Halloween treats from WPSD staff, older students and volunteers. Smiles shared and candy cravings satisfied. What a wonderful activity for all! ■



## Our Youngest Learners Enjoy a Crisp, Fall Day While Taking a (Hay)Ride Around Campus

On Halloween, students from the Children's Center and Elementary School enjoyed a cloudy, but beautiful fall day to its fullest! The kiddos had the opportunity to take part in hayrides around campus - enjoying the breathtaking fall colors and crisp, autumn air. ■





## A Celebration of Thanks and Togetherness

By Shelly Ryan, Life Skills Teacher

On November 9, our incredible Life Skills students came together for a heartwarming Thanksgiving celebration! They enjoyed all the traditional foods that make this holiday so special.

The administration and support staff served not only our students but also our dedicated teachers, paraprofessionals, and related services team, and even had the honor of hosting Edgewood Borough police officers, including Chief Payne and Sergeant Livingston.

This gathering was a beautiful way to show thanks and appreciation for all the incredible individuals who contribute to our community. ■



# School-Wide Highlights

## WPSD Raises Funds for and Awareness of Breast Cancer

The Girls' Athletic Association hosted its breast cancer awareness fundraiser this month. Students and staff showed their support in a big way as evidenced by the school-wide 'Pink Picture.' The color pink was prevalent all over campus that day as a show of solidarity to honor and remember all those courageous individuals in our lives who have faced breast cancer. ■





## Deaf Magicians Bring Amazement and Wonder to WPSD

By Molly Estes, ASL Coordinator

Magic Morgan and Liliana visited in November to demonstrate their amazing magic performance to our students. These Deaf magicians have been traveling around the world to show off their magic. They provided workshops to our students in Children’s Center, Elementary, Elementary Life Skills, Middle School and High School explaining the behind the scenes ‘magic’ to make their tricks work. Our students were very curious, asking many excellent questions about the inner-workings of the tricks. They had a blast all day with Magic Morgan and Liliana! ■



## Winter Wonderland Showcase

WPSD students from Kindergarten through fifth grade took part in our annual holiday musical production on December 15 - 'Winter Wonderland Showcase' - in front of a packed auditorium. The kids worked hard on perfecting their parts both on the stage and behind the scenes. The performances were truly amazing. Congratulations to everyone who was a part of this outstanding production!! ■



## Math 24 Game Computes to Healthy Competition, Bravery, and Fun

By Julie Ann Mountain, Gary Freilino, Stephanie Pennetti, Shari Gerlach, Mikaela Shimko and Nicole Borelle

Our middle and high school students gathered to celebrate and continue the long-standing tradition of the Math 24 competition - this year, the teachers humorously referred to it as the 2024 24 game.

Math 24 is a mental computation game that uses cards containing four single digit numbers. Players must perform basic operations (add, subtract, multiply and/or divide) using each number exactly once to get a result of 24. They must perform the calculations in their heads then explain the steps used to arrive at 24 in order to earn that card's points (1, 2, or 3 depending on difficulty).

This fun game promotes computation practice, pattern recognition, and strategy building techniques.

Since December, students have practiced both in and out of class and reported their results; 17 students qualified to participate in the preliminary rounds. Four students at a time bravely sat at the front of the auditorium for 7 minutes viewing a game card displayed on a screen; the first student to correctly find the solution earned the card's point(s) then the group was presented with a new card.

At the end of competition, Isabella W. earned third place honors, Morkos Y. took second place, and Spencer A. came out on top! He earned a small prize and will have his name added to our school's plaque. Although we can only have one official winner, we'd like to recognize all participating students for their efforts to develop math skills and their willingness to showcase their skills by playing this game in front of their peers. That takes guts! ■





## PSO Takes to the Ice

By Angel Maher, WPSD PSO President

We had an amazing time ice skating at South Park! It warmed our hearts to see the smiles on the kids' faces, especially those trying it for the first time and becoming pros! Big thanks to all the brave families who joined us despite the snowstorm - your enthusiasm made the event even more special! ■



## Ice Cream and Smiles Shared at PSO Event

By Tara Nikou and Angel Maher, WPSD PSO

Thank you to everyone who joined us for the very first ice cream social party hosted by WPSD's PSO in February! We were thrilled to see about 30 families come together for a sweet and fun-filled evening. Special shoutout to the amazing parents who generously volunteered their time to scoop ice cream for everyone! With lively music, dancing, crafts, and coloring, it was a smashing success! ■



# What's Happening Around Campus? - Elementary School Highlights

## Flag Football Helps Keep Elementary Students Active

By Michael Hand, WPSD Physical Education Teacher

On October 24th, our 3rd, 4th and 5th grade students came to the gym for their weekly enrichment class for Flag Football. All equipment was provided generously to the school by the NFL in conjunction with their Flag Football Program. The students engaged in a game of "Battleships." Students were split into teams of 3 and given a "Battleship" as their base. Students had the job of being a thrower, protector or runner and the goal was to protect their pins, their ship, while trying to knock down the pins of the other teams. Students actively practiced their throwing, catching and ball carrying skills in order to accomplish a team goal. Smiles were everywhere and the game was such a hit that the students kept asking to play it again. ■





## Writing Skills Open Doors of Opportunity

By Rachel Rose, Elementary School ELA Teacher

The second grade class has been working hard on their writing skills in ELA class. Recently, the students got to practice their research skills for their informational writing pieces. Each student selected an animal they wanted to research. The library staff assisted the kids in choosing two books to use as their primary sources. The students answered questions with information they found in the books. They then practiced turning questions/answers into sentences. They then worked with the teacher on editing their sentences and rewriting them. They then drew a lovely picture of the animal they researched. They're very proud of their hard work! ■



## Elementary Students Make Their Case During Their Exploration Into the Argumentative Writing World

By Abby Cochran, WPSD Fifth Grade ELA Teacher

Exciting news! Our fifth graders are diving into the world of argumentative writing! They got the chance to explore persuasive techniques and ways in which to use them to convince their audience. They then constructed a Thinking Map, including all of the criteria needed for persuasive writing!

Next, each student picked what they think is the best place to visit! They took time to carefully research their locations and then organize the information they had planned to

share that they believed would convince their reader to visit their chosen destinations. After they had gathered all pertinent information, they began writing their essays!

Lastly, each student created a presentation of all of the fun things to do at the location of their choice. Some examples included restaurants, museums, and even simply the beautiful scenery at their locations! We are so proud of all of their hard work and can't wait to see how they use their new skill of argumentative writing in the future! ■

## Responsibility is the Name of the Game

By Terry Schriever, WPSD School Counselor

Some of our elementary students worked on Responsibility in November by building boats (that hopefully floated)!!!

Students worked on "Individual Responsibility" by building part of the boat on their own. Once individual pieces of the boats were complete, students worked on "Responsibility With and To Others" by putting the parts of the boats together!

Most of the students worked so well individually and together and their boats did indeed float!! For those that tipped a bit or flipped, students did some problem-solving together to adjust their boats until they did float.

It was great fun to see the results, but even more fun to work together on Responsibility! ■



## Taking STEM Skills to New Heights

By Amy Fenicle, Elementary School Teacher

In November, the third grade class enjoyed a fun and innovative activity that directly correlated with National STEM Day. The students discussed various ways in which to build the strongest and tallest tower that would successfully support an apple. Their first design came up a bit short. The group then implemented their second design as a team. They made it! ■





# Turkey Trouble

By Emily Mitchell, Elementary Teacher

The first grade class read a story called "Turkey Trouble." It was about a turkey that keeps disguising itself as other things to avoid being eaten for Thanksgiving. The first graders each took home a turkey and were tasked to disguise it with their families. Check out their awesome turkeys! ■



# Student Scientists Make Enlightening Discoveries

By Melinda Crawford, Elementary School Teacher

At the end of December, our fifth grade scientists were happy at work using various details to try to determine which organism was in their microscope slides. The students studied insect wings, animal fur, and plant stems/petals. What an enlightening experience! ■



## Santa's Helpers Share Holiday Joy With Our Students

Officers from Edgewood Police Department made a special delivery to WPSD in December. Sgt. Fred Livingston and Officer Mike Ferguson came bearing wonderful gifts for some of our very lucky students. What a truly heartwarming gesture for all involved. We are so appreciative of our continued partnership with Edgewood Police and their ongoing support of WPSD and our students! ■





## WPSD Girls' Athletic Association Hosts Annual Holiday Party

In December, before the winter break, the Girls' Athletic Association (GAA) hosted their annual Holiday Party with the younger elementary students. They provided a fun craft activity of wreath-making with pipe cleaners for the kids. After the crafts were completed, GAA members shared "Santa's Gotta Go!" by Derrick Barnes with the group. The students then enjoyed a surprise visit by Santa, Mrs. Claus, and the elves. Santa graciously provided gifts, and the elves and other GAA members offered a snack to all the good boys and girls in elementary school at WPSD. The Girls' Athletic Association would like to thank everyone for their support and donations this year. ■



## STEM + Holiday Spirit = Magical Creations

By Mary Miller, Elementary School Teacher

Before winter break, 4th graders practiced their STEM skills and holiday spirit by building gingerbread houses. All the students worked hard and had fun designing the house the way they liked it. The students showed patience when the buildings started to fall, resilience to keep trying, and added more icing to make them stay upright. The students did a great job sharing the icing and waiting their turn to build the next piece. For many of the students, this was their first time to build a gingerbread house. All the students had a fun time and a nice treat to bring home with them! ■



## Shenanigans and Virtue Join Forces to Bring Holiday Cheer to WPSD

Right before the holiday break, WPSD elementary students were visited by two infamous Christmas characters - Santa Claus and Mr. Grinch. Santa - as always - was very jovial. And even though the Grinch was up to some of his usual mischievousness, it appears our students made his heart grow! The two visited each classroom handing out treats and holiday cheer to every boy and girl. What a fun break in the school day! Thank you to them both for spreading happiness to all! ■





## Elementary Construction Crew Celebrates 100th Day of School

By Shelly Ryan and Wendy Auden, Elementary Applied Studies Teachers

The construction crew was on hand for special activities for the 100th day of school. Elementary Life Skill students were suited up to build in various ways to 100! They had materials for a special snack, made a necklace using 100 pieces of construction materials, hammered 100 nails, played with a construction site of 100 vehicles and construction workers, found 100 job tickets and matched them to the job chart, counted construction materials and documented them on their clipboards, and built with 100 blocks, Legos, cups & popsicle sticks. All workers earned their construction certificate and no injuries were reported on the job site and completion of the projects were on time! ■



# Perseverance Gets the Elementary School to the 100th Day of School

By Mary Miller, Elementary School Teacher

To celebrate January's trait of the month "perseverance," our elementary students had a ROARS celebration. It was also the 100th day of school! The students took part in different activities like bingo games, stacking 100 cups, setting up 100 dominoes, and finishing 100-piece puzzles. The students had to practice their perseverance skills in a variety of situations such as when the cups or dominoes would fall, when they didn't win at bingo, or when they got stuck trying to solve the puzzle. The students had a blast celebrating their accomplishments through the first 100 days of school. ■



## LeAp DaY Fun!

By Michele Ryan and Margi Jo Patton

The Elementary students made the most of the bonus day in February and had a morning filled with fun LeAp DaY activities. Students rotated through four stations to celebrate. They counted by 4s as they leaped their way like frogs through the hall and did actions 29 times (29 jumping jacks, 29 hops, etc). Students made Leap Day headbands, colored pictures, and set goals to be completed within the next 4 years. They enjoyed a trail mix made with 4 ingredients. Students also played Connect 4. It was a fun day for all! ■



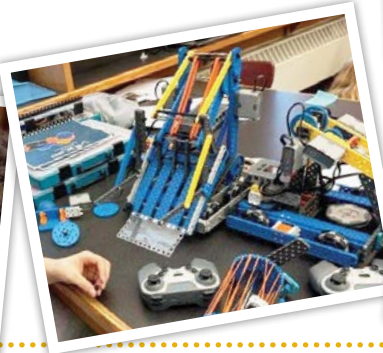


# What's Happening Around Campus? - Middle School Highlights

## STEM is Everywhere!

By Mary Ennis, Middle School Teacher

The Middle School celebrated STEM Day in a really neat way! Students learned about the Spirograph and the hand movements needed for it to work properly. A spirograph is a geometric drawing device that produces mathematical curves and designs. They also tried to construct 3-D pictures. Others focused on building robots. STEM is everywhere you look in the Middle School department! ■



## Middle School Race for the Presidency

By Lauren Diesenberg, Middle School Teacher

The Middle School Student Body Government (SBG) elections were in full swing this year. We had six of our eight 8th graders campaign for SBG president. Everyone gave amazing, persuasive speeches to their fellow peers. Promises of field trips, community events and even bowling were some of the items on the docket. Students gave it their all and we are so proud of them. The middle school is looking forward to all the exciting events and impact this year's SBG will bring to WPSD. ■



## Geography Bee Faceoff

By Lauren Diesenberg, Middle School Teacher

Our middle school students participated in the 23-24 Geography Bee in November. We had many competitive students who worked incredibly hard leading up to this event. Let me tell you, it was competitive, coming down to the last few points! Anya O. swooped in at 1st place with Isabella W. right on her heels in 2nd place. Trevor Y. came in 3rd and Clinton P. was nominated for honorable mention. Thank you to the middle school staff for making this event such a success for our kiddos. ■



## WPSD Team Gives Their All in Battle of the Books Competition

By Deborah Remis, Middle School Teacher/Battle of the Books Chaperone

In November, the Middle School Battle of the Books team competed in the preliminary competition sponsored by Gallaudet University. They had three tough matches. While they missed making the finals, we are proud of the girls and all of their work. They read three novels in six weeks and worked together to prepare for competition. Great job, Lions! ■





## Middle Schoolers Earn a Special Holiday Treat

By Deborah Remis, Middle School Teacher

In December, middle school students took a field trip to downtown Pittsburgh as their PBIS merit activity. It was a wonderful day in the city! First, they visited the amazing Gingerbread house display at the impressive City/County building. Then they traveled to the PPG ice rink. Some students gave skating a try while others stayed warm at the "Santas Around the World" displays. The group learned the names and traditions of many cultures. Great job, Middle School! ■



## WPSD Retiree Shares Knowledge and Talent with Student ASL Performance Group

By Deborah Remis, Middle School Teacher and SignShine Advisor

In December, Mr. Chris Noschese, a retired teacher from WPSD, visited the SignShine performing group to share his knowledge and talent. Chris presented the history of The Star Spangled Banner poem written by Francis Scott Key - otherwise known as our National Anthem. In addition to teaching the historical significance of the poem, Chris performed his own version in ASL and impressed the students with his use of drama and facial expressions to convey the meaning and emotion of the song through ASL. We are very thankful to Mr. Noschese for continuing to make a positive impact for our students. ■



## WPSD Middle School Robotics Teams Make the Long Journey to Tennessee to Compete

Four middle schoolers and their coaches journeyed to Tennessee School for the Deaf to take part in the NRSC (NTID Regional STEM Center) Deaf and Hard of Hearing VEX IQ Tournament. Twenty-six schools for the Deaf competed in this wonderful event totaling 38 teams and 100 students. Lots of learning happened which is ALWAYS a wonderful thing! One of our teams, Sassy Bots, made it to the playoffs! They formed an alliance with Kissfist Robotics hailing from Katy, Texas. Our Lions tried their best to score as many points as possible but came up just a bit short.

The days were long and intense, but the students maintained positive attitudes and learned to communicate with other teams and themselves. Our Lions demonstrated great troubleshooting skills...and that will help them achieve success now and in life after graduation. We are so proud of their hard work and efforts! ■





## A Healthy Dose of Truth Juice Shows the Importance of Honesty

By Terry Schriever, WPSD School Counselor

In February, our WPSD middle school students took part in an experiment related to "honesty" and mixed a little science in with the lesson! Students listened to a story about a child that was not always honest. The child was represented by a container of clear water. Every time the child was not honest, a little dye was mixed into the water. The water became murkier every time the child was dishonest. The students discussed how to help the child feel better and decided that being honest and apologizing might help. Every time the child apologized to someone they had lied to, "Truth Juice" was added to the container of murky water. Over time, as the child apologized to more people, the water became more clear. ■

## Middle School Math Team Shows Their WPSD Spirit at Regional Competition

By Stephanie Pannetti, Middle School Math Teacher

In the beginning of March, our middle school math team traveled to Massachusetts to compete in the Northeast Regionals of RIT's NTID Youth Programs Math Competition for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students!

Students worked hard in both team and individual rounds, solving complex math problems. They also had fun solving challenging math puzzles with other teams in the new "Roar Your Way Out" portion of the competition.

We were honored to have placed within the top 10 teams and also receive the Ben Hall Spirit Award! This award is given to the team that shows the most team spirit and sportsmanship during the competition. It is a memorial award for a former math competition student, Ben Hall, who died of cancer. Every year in his honor the judges look out for who is most supportive of other teams, has a positive attitude, is friendly to others, and shows best overall sportsmanship. Congratulations to our students and all of the teams that participated! ■



# Middle School Robotics Teams Navigate Their Way Through New Territory

By Coach Mary Ennis Blahut

Our middle school robotics teams made the short journey to Woodland Hills High School to take part in a fun and exciting competition in February. Our students jumped right into forming alliances with teams from other schools around the area. Interpreters were on-hand, allowing our teams full access to all information available during the matches as well as all peer discussions. Coach Lily Giancola and I are so proud of our blue and gold warriors. Even though they had to work through some issues with their bots from time to time, they gave 100% effort and tried their very best to earn the maximum amount of points during each match. At the end of the qualifications round, Sassybots (Calvin L. and Kalilah D.) ranked 4th while Slay team (Anya O.) ranked 9th. The Slay team was down a player, so we recruited help from another school. They stepped up and helped us with driving. After the final round, Sassybots placed third while Slay placed 5th. Amazing collaboration among the students! What a great experience for us!

As an added bonus, Woodland Hills School District shared some wonderful photos with us that we are now sharing with you! We love watching our students in deep thought, strategizing and having fun. Thank you to Woodland Hills for capturing these moments in time! ■



Photo Credits: Woodland Hills School District





## Reading Goals Realized!

By Deborah Remis, WPSD Middle School Teacher

The Middle School celebrated National Reading Day with fun and excitement. Students read a total of 105 books!

They demonstrated their thinking and comprehension by completing Thinking Maps or passing Accelerated Reader quizzes for each book they read. Students showed determination, focus and collaboration. To add to the excitement, they earned tickets for prize drawings. Everyone celebrated when we hit 100 books and each went home with a souvenir from the day.

Great reading, Middle School! ■



# What's Happening Around Campus? - High School Highlights

## Scouts Reach New Heights and Conquer Fears

By Gary Freilino, Scout Advisor

In October, members of Scouts BSA troop 802 from WPSD made the trek back to Camp Guyasuta for their annual Fall Octoberfest! After much anticipation, four students had the opportunity to overcome the COPE (Challenging Outdoor Personal Experience) course.

Testing their coordination, tenacity and determination, the Scouts first climbed the 50-foot tower to the zipline platform, from which point they each, in turn, zoomed to the receiving area. Upon returning to the COPE course, our Scouts traversed the ropes, platforms and cargo net of the obstacle course--without touching the ground! After lunch, they practiced their aim and form at the archery range. The archery instructor was so impressed with how the Scouts cooperated, encouraged each other, and cleaned up after themselves, they were all allowed to shoot an extra round of arrows at the "giant spider eggs"! WPSD was well represented! ■





## High Schoolers on the Hunt for Fun, Knowledge and Adventure!

By Alyse Royba, WPSD Speech-Language Pathologist

A group of 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. ■



## Students Add a Touch of WPSD to the CASE Conference

By Greg Mendenhall, Middle and High School Principal

In November, several WPSD students were able to attend the National Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) conference to perform ASL renditions of the Star Spangled Banner and "A Million Dreams." Kudos to Deborah Remis and students Gabe, Kalilah, Paityn, Anya, and Bella for their beautiful performance! Mary Ennis Blahut and Lily Giancola also worked with one of our students, Luel, who provided a demonstration of our Aerial Drones program. It was well received. Thank you to all involved! The attendees of the CASE Conference were impressed and were recording students during the performance and demonstration. Enjoy the pictures! We are #WPSDProud! ■





## WPSD Jr. NAD Students Develop Leadership Skills and Connect with Peers

By Angel Maher and Tony Dumblosky, Jr. NAD Advisors

Our Jr. NAD students and advisors took part in the Jr. NAD conference held at the Maryland School for the Deaf in November. Day 1 was fantastic! The students explored engaging workshops at Gallaudet University, met the inspiring NAD CEO Howard Rosenblum, and dove into an exciting debate workshop – absolutely loved it!

We toured Gallaudet University to get a taste of campus life and what it's like to become a college student. It's the first deaf university in America, adding an extra layer of significance to the experience! Plus, we made a special stop at Signing Starbucks, founded in 2018 by deaf individuals in Washington, DC – a powerful experience! Ended the day with a thrilling victory as Gallaudet's Bison women's volleyball conquered the Volt Division, defeating Lancaster Bible College 3-0, and advancing to the United East championship. The game was hot, and the gym echoed with Deaf way spirited energy!

On Day 2 of the Jr. NAD conference, we kickstarted the morning with a workout led by the inspiring Deaf trainer Jason Coleman- a perfect start to a memorable day! We explored the captivating Maryland School for the Deaf campus, steeped in a rich history. The Jr. NAD Pitch Competition was extra special for Ellie! Though she didn't make it to the top 5, she represented WPSD with pride, showcasing her public speaking skills and confidence.

Leading the short show was a huge deal for her—every moment was a rich experience. We cheered her on with enthusiasm - Way to go, Ellie!

Our students had a blast wrapping up the Jr. NAD conference. Sami and Spencer's proposals made it to the top 10 for NAD. Samantha proposed the creation of a one-stop website in American Sign Language for all school-related information, while Spencer suggested a split-screen layout between an ASL interpreter and a federal officer on the media screen.

Meeting local and state deaf leaders, our students absorbed invaluable lessons on advocacy and accessibility such as "How to Write Bills," and "Keys to Successful Organizational Development." The Jr. NAD conference is a stepping stone for young advocates and leaders, fostering creativity and pushing boundaries.

It was so exciting to witness the growth of our students as they developed leadership skills and connected with peers from 23 different deaf schools! A big "thanks" to NAD Youth Programs for this unforgettable experience! Let's continue breaking barriers and leading outside the box! ■

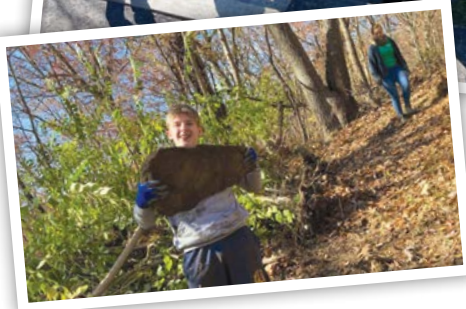




# WPSD Ecostewards Continue Hands-On Learning at Frick Park

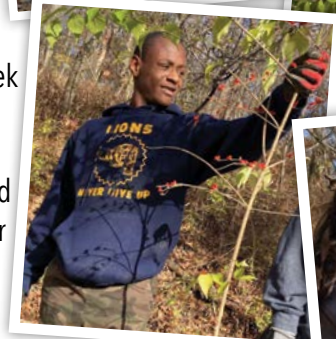
By Julie Ann Mountain, High School Science Teacher

This year, students in the Biology and Environmental Science classes have taken part in several off-campus experiences that focus on local habitats, watershed, and biodiversity. We will be partnering with ecologically-focused organizations such as The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, Frick Environmental Center, Creek Connections and Nine Mile Run Watershed Association. Each field trip and/or program has a specific focus that ties in with our curriculum and provides hands-on opportunities unavailable in the classroom. In addition to our science objectives, students will develop skills in observation and communication as they are led on hikes and engage in service projects in a local park and/or our neighborhood.



## Food Chains, Food Webs, and Invasive Plant Species

On our November trip, students participated in a fascinating lecture and classroom pre-teaching activity about food chains, food webs and invasive species--specifically plants. Of course, one big advantage of Science is that students can learn by doing, so next they headed out to the Park area where Honeysuckle Brush trees were the target. By partnering up with fellow classmates and our ecosteward guides, students were able to remove over twenty invasive trees! After lunch, students hiked the beautiful trail to a creek that feeds Nine Mile Run. There, water was tested for clarity, temperature, phosphates, alkalinity, etc. Data was recorded, then later uploaded to Allegheny College's Creek Connections program, where schools from around the area input valuable data as part of a larger, regional effort to monitor our waterways. These trips are valuable experiences that we refer to again and again, as we cover Environmental Science topics throughout not only the semester, but the students' careers here at WPSD.



## Studying Our Feathered Friends

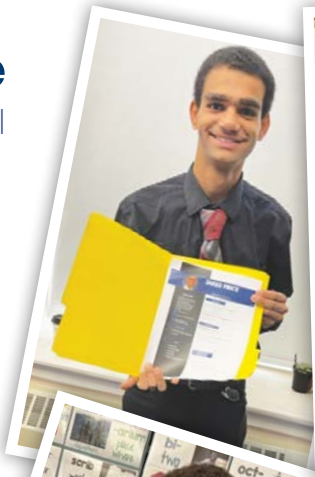
As the second installment of our Urban EcoStewards field trips ensued in February, students engaged in learning about adaptations, specifically related to birds. Using the powers of observation and inference, students identified, labeled and deduced possible advantages several bird species had in regard to their physical attributes. For example, a red-bellied woodpecker, with its elongated beak, short, powerful feet and sturdy tail feathers, can easily access juicy termites and other insects inside dead trees; meanwhile the red-tailed hawk has large eyes, long talons, and a short beak for locating, catching and eating prey. Outside activities had two teams of staff and students, each assigned a specific species of bird, going on a scavenger hunt to piece together clues and earn points for their team. After lunch, we met Laura, from Creek Connections, who helped lead students through testing the water from Fern Hollow Creek, a tributary to Nine Mile Run, for various components such as phosphates, salt content, clarity, etc. All the students were engaged, asked great questions, sparked further interest and represented WPSD very well! ■



## Preparing for the Future

By Kristi Mosholder, WPSD High School English Teacher

The high school English class has been focusing on the best ways in which to complete a job application and efficiently develop resumes and references. The students and I then conducted mock interviews in an effort to introduce the group to real-world responsibilities and occurrences, including proper dress and etiquette. They were very well prepared and did a fantastic job! I am so proud of them! ■



## WPSD Students Celebrate the Joys of Reading

By Cassie Beveridge, Dana Dailey, Kristi Mosholder, Annie Van Nosdale, Amy Wing - High School ELA Teachers

Our incredible students have been on a literary journey and those who earned a specific number of points were in for a treat - quite literally! Students were able to spend time with their peers playing board games as well as choosing between an ice cream cone or gum. The students had a great time celebrating their literary accomplishments together. For the students who didn't make it to Game Day this time, they had the perfect opportunity to catch up on their AR points.

It was a great day to celebrate the joy of reading! ■





## Building Bonds at Bella Terra Stables

By Amy Wing and Cassie Beveridge, Personal Development Teachers

On December 19th, WPSD's personal development class had the amazing opportunity to visit Bella Terra Stables. It was an eye-opening experience! The students delved into the fascinating world of horses and discovered some incredible insights. One major takeaway was understanding the importance of trust between horses and humans. Horses, much like us, thrive on trust, and it was truly heartwarming to witness the bond between the horses at Bella Terra Stables and WPSD's students.

Observing their behavior was like reading a novel – the students noticed so many details! From the way they moved to how they stood still, each horse had its own unique story to tell. The students learned how quickly people make assumptions about things they see in the environment and how they need to take time to assess what is truly happening.

One fascinating fact the students learned was that horses have an incredible field of vision around them, but they can't see what's directly below them. It was so cool to understand how they perceive the world! In essence, the day was not just about horses; it was about life lessons. Our students soaked in the importance of trust.

Thank you Bella Terra Stables for the warm welcome and the invaluable lessons! ■





## WPSD High Schoolers Enter into a Bot Battle

In February, four high school teams prepared their robots for battle as they got ready to compete in the 6th NRSC VRC for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing tournament. Our students have been working hard since the beginning of the school year to create their own designs and craft the most innovative and efficient robots they could. This game looks easy but the numerous obstacles present challenges for which the teams needed to develop strategies to emerge victorious. It was a pleasantly challenging year for our Blue and Gold warriors. Our students always look forward to collaborating with other deaf schools during the tournament.

The teams faced some challenges, especially in the beginning, but learned so much as the matchups progressed, gaining more knowledge about the game, their strategies and steps to quickly and efficiently fix their bots on the fly. Maybe even more importantly, our teams learned to communicate with students from other schools and build partnerships and friendships. Two teams, out of the four, made the first round of playoffs, but were unable to advance to the quarter-finals.

We are so proud of their hard work, perseverance, and good attitudes throughout the weekend.

Their experiences during this wonderful event helped these students prepare for next year's competition, where they'll be stronger and better than ever! The future is brighter than ever! ■





# WPSD High School Robotics Team Compete on Land and in the Air

By Lily Giancola, Robotics Coach

Two of our high school robotics teams geared up to head into battle at the end of February.

Our Lions took part in two separate competitions at the Texas School for the Deaf - Underwater ROV (remotely operated vehicle) robotics and Aerial Drones.

## Preparation

Our students worked so hard over the course of many months perfecting their creations and developing and predicting effective strategies that they had hoped would be successful.



## Underwater ROV Competition

First up - underwater robotics in a tournament called the NRSC (NTID Regional STEM Center) ROV. The competition included two in-pool courses - 1. The Obstacle Course; 2. The Mission Course. The Obstacle Course tests high-speed maneuverability and requires the bot to navigate the course as quickly as possible. In The Mission Course, teams must complete a mission that is related to Deep Sea Exploration (which is the theme of the tournament). This course simulates the tasks and environment that an ROV might encounter while exploring the harsh environments that surround hydrothermal vents.

The 2024 International SeaPerch Challenge was inspired by the wealth of information that can be gathered by exploring these deep-sea geysers (hydrothermal vents).

Students had to enact their time management skills, working to construct their underwater robots during ISP time, at the dorm and at home. The teams practiced driving the bots in two portable folding frame tanks filled with water.

On the first day, our Lions encountered a few hiccups with the underwater bots, but they worked hard to identify the

problems and use their critical-thinking skills to make improvements on their ROVs. They were very determined not to give up and maintained a positive mindset throughout the day. When they weren't competing, the teams were also interviewed by the judges, answering lots of questions including what they felt their greatest achievements were leading up to this point, obstacles they had to overcome this year, and the ways in which they applied the engineering design process to their build modifications.

On the second day, all teams had a second opportunity to improve their timed run and accrual of points in each course. Our Lions made huge improvements due to developing and implementing different strategies and making some necessary changes to their ROVs. They also learned valuable skills such as teamwork, commitment, and dedication that they will be able to carry with them all through their lives. We are so proud of them for their resiliency, grit, and perseverance.

*Continued to page 42*



### Aerial Drone Competition

After the underwater robotics competition was over, the Aerial Drone competition took place.

In the Teamwork matches, two drone teams competed as an alliance in 90-second matches, working together to score points. The object of the game was to score as many points as possible, clearing balls from chambers, moving balls into goals, removing balls off of pillars, and landing. During the last 30 seconds of the match, the Eclipse began and teams had the opportunity to complete a Total or Partial Eclipse to earn additional points.

In the Autonomous Flight Skills Mission, drones were programmed by students to operate entirely independently. Each team competed alone to score as many points as possible in a 60-second match.

Our teams made it to the playoffs and formed alliances with Alabama School for the Deaf and Arkansas School for the Deaf. Unfortunately, they were unable to advance. However, Geb and Luel won the Inspire Award, which is an award that recognizes a team who shares experiences, enthusiasm, and knowledge with others in the Aerial Drones Competition community. The team also displayed passion and positive attitude at the competition. Kudos to Geb, Luel, Sarah, and Logan for their hard work all week long. We are proud of you! ■





# Lions Roar Into Action at Battle of the Books Competition

By WPSD High School ELA Teachers

In February, our WPSD Lions roared into action at Quaker Valley Middle School for the much-anticipated Battle of the Books competition, and boy, did they give it their all.

Out of 21 competitive teams, WPSD proudly presented two fierce squads: The Bookies and The Book Slayers.

While our teams didn't snag the top spot in the overall standings, they sure left their mark.

The Book Slayers dominated the night with an impressive 52 points, while The Bookies held their ground with 44 points. These dedicated readers didn't just breeze through the competition; they devoured eight books to prepare for the competition, memorizing authors' names along the way. Talk about bookworm brilliance!

But hey, it's not just about the numbers – it's about the experience, and both teams had an absolute blast! Two of our stellar students even walked away with book raffle prizes - talk about a sweet bonus. We couldn't be prouder of their hard work, sportsmanship, enthusiasm, teamwork, and passion for literature.

Keep shining bright, Lions – you make us proud! ■



# PJs and Page Turners - A Perfect Combination

By WPSD High School ELA Teachers

On February 29th, the high school celebrated the magic of reading in the coziest way possible: pajamas all day and reading by flashlight during student's ELA classes. Snacks and drinks kept their energy high as they immersed themselves in stories of all kinds.

However, the excitement didn't stop there! For every book the students read, they attempted to pass a corresponding quiz. If they passed, students earned raffle tickets for a chance at amazing prizes: Amazon or Starbucks gift cards. The chance to win added an extra layer of excitement to an already fantastic day of reading. The students made this day a roaring success. Let's keep the love for reading alive every day!! ■



# Exploring Pathways to the Future

## Sage's Army Shares Valuable Knowledge and Information with Our Students

By Pauline Dunbar, Transition Support Staff

At the end of October, Carmen Capozzi stopped by WPSD to visit with our high school students. Mr. Capozzi is the founder and executive director of Sage's Army, a non-profit Recovery Community Organization (RCO). This organization was founded in 2012 after the tragic death of Carmen's son, Sage, as a result of a fatal overdose. During his visit, Mr. Capozzi shared a video and spoke with the high school students. Thank you, Mr. Capozzi, for sharing your story and expertise with us. ■



Discover more information about Sage's Army:



## Area Organizations Help Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students Unlock the Doors to their Futures

By Pauline Dunbar, Transition Support Staff

Allegheny Intermediate Unit and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation hosted an event for high school students: Access Your Future.

Presentations were given to deaf and hard of hearing high school students from surrounding schools, including WPSD! Several OVR staff talked about their roles and self-advocacy and disclosure. Danielle Filip from SLIP covered accommodations in school, work and the community. A deaf and hard of hearing panel of professionals shared their experiences and answered questions from the student audience. ■



# Exploring Pathways to the Future

## Connecting the Deaf Community to the Outdoors

By Pauline Dunbar, Transition Support Staff

Emma Bixler, CorpsTHAT Co-Founder and Program Director, talked with our WPSD high school students in February about the PA Outdoor Corps / CorpsTHAT programs. CorpsTHAT's mission is to connect the Deaf community and the outdoors through education, recreation and careers. Three WPSD students, who have worked with CorpsTHAT during the summer months, shared their experiences. What a wonderful event! ■



### What is a Conservation Corps Crew?

- Work training program
  - Prepare for their career futures
  - Provide hands on educational experience
- Community service
  - giving back to the community and the environment.



# Exploring Pathways to the Future

## Transition Experiences - Our Students' Perspectives

Compiled by Pauline Dunbar, Transition Support Staff

### **Kierra O. - Golden Bone Pet Resort**

My name is Kierra Oyler. I'm a senior and will graduate this year. I have worked at Golden Bone this and last school year. My duties there consist of looking after dogs, cleaning, and breaking up fights when needed. I am usually in the daycare which is an area that has a variety of dogs. Sometimes there are around 20 dogs. The people I work with are amazing and very understanding. I always come in with a smile on my face because I believe having a good attitude leads to a good day. When someone is trying to tell me something, I ask them to repeat themselves or to wait so I can get closer to hear better. They are also very accommodating, especially this year with all the breaks I have and trips due to being a senior.



### **Morkos Y. - Chick-fil-A, Monroeville**

My name is Morkos Youssef. I'm a PFS student this year. I have been employed at Chick-fil-A in Monroeville for 6 months. My duties include food preparation and deep cleaning. I enjoy working with my hearing co-workers and teaching them ASL. We all work together as a team for clear communication. I want to thank my managers and Johnny Carr for giving me the opportunity to gain employment experience at Chick-fil-A.



# Exploring Pathways to the Future

## On the Job Training

*Aniya W. (Prep for Success):* Each day I work with the Five Starr cafeteria staff. I help with the food prep for student lunches. I have learned different ways to prepare food and how to work more quickly with serving food.

*Elsie O. (Junior):* I work with the kindergarten group in the Children's Center. I support the teacher and students. I help the students with math, reading, and vocabulary. I enjoy working with the students!

*Ellie H. (Senior):* I assist the librarian in the Learning Center with a variety of duties to help keep the library organized. I also work with the four year old group activities during their library time. I also work in the Children's Center where I assist the teachers with activities.

*Adam F. (Junior):* In the Learning Center I work with different classes for one period each day. I work with first through fifth grade students in a group setting and 1:1. I provide support through hands-on activities and reading.

*Jeremy B. (Junior):* I work in the Lionworks printshop completing a variety of different duties. I have new tasks each day. I learn how to use the different machines.



# Exploring Pathways to the Future

## Industrial Arts Workshop Welding Lab

*Logan W. (Sophomore):* I enjoyed the initial class where we introduced ourselves and talked in a huddle. The instructors are great; they check on us often and make sure we are doing well. I enjoyed learning about stick welding.

*Elisha Q. (Sophomore):* I enjoy interacting with my peers and the instructor. The instructors are friendly, helpful and they challenge us.



## Volunteer Work Experience at the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank

As a group, we worked at the end of the assembly line: closing, taping and labeling boxes of non-perishable food.

Pictured: Jeremy B., Ashley R., Johnny G., Yaribell M., and Addison D.

## Humane Animal Rescue Pittsburgh / Humane Health Coalition

*Sarah V. (Senior) and Carlene M. (Junior):* We worked with the volunteers and those who visited with their pets. We learned more about the mission of HARP and HCC on how they help both the client and their pet(s).



## Mosser Art Studio

*Ashley R. (Junior):* I am working on art projects at Mosser Art. I enjoy freehand drawing. Painting is new to me. Tom Mosser is teaching me about painting and he challenges me to try new things.



# Exploring Pathways to the Future

## WPSD Students and Local Deaf-Owned Business Continue Sweet Collaboration

By Kallie Mendenhall, Work Experience Transition Teacher

The Transition Department and Bumbleberry Farms have formed a collaborative partnership, which is very exciting! WPSD has brought two students to Bumbleberry Farms' warehouse to gain some valuable work experience by labeling products, boxing products, pouring delicious honey in jars, and labeling boxes to be shipped. Our students work alongside Bumbleberry Farms staff, all of whom are Deaf or Hard of Hearing and communicate through American Sign Language, which supports our students' need for direct communication at their very first job site.

In the spirit of giving during the holiday season, Bumbleberry Farms donated Bumbleberry Farms Peppermint Spread to all WPSD staff. The owner of Bumbleberry Farms, Jon Mosholder, collaborated with the Transition Department and gave labels to allow some of our students to practice labeling the products on campus, providing students with the opportunity to learn transition and employability skills while on campus. These students not only labeled products, but also tagged the products and delivered them to all staff on campus.

Thank you, Bumbleberry Farms, Jon, and his staff for the wonderful partnership and for the delicious donation! Discover more about Bumbleberry Farms by visiting [www.bumbleberryfarms.com](http://www.bumbleberryfarms.com)

### The Students' Perspective on Working at Bumbleberry Farms Warehouse

*Aniya W. (PFS) and Maddie L. (Junior):* We work alongside other employees with a variety of tasks involving labeling and packing of the Bumbleberry brand products. ■



# In the Community



## WPSD Students and Staff Work Some Holiday Magic!

Some exciting behind the scenes moments on location in November as students and staff came together to film scenes for our holiday commercial! What a fun day! The finalized commercial ran on local networks and Comcast channels. Special shout out to Monroeville Mall for allowing us to use their Santa display! Visit the QR Code to see the commercial in its entirety. Enjoy! ■



Scan me



## Life Skills Get in the Holiday Spirit

By Michele Ryan, Life Skills Teacher

Our Life Skills students and staff had a great time at the Holidays in Harmony lunch at the Carnegie Museum of Art!

The kids saw the beautifully decorated trees, enjoyed jingling bells along to the music played by the orchestra, and ate lunch. It was a fun day! ■



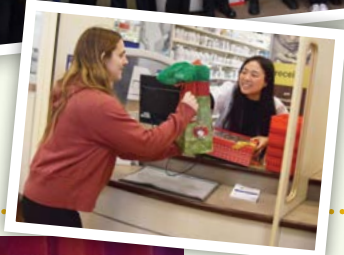


# In the Community



## Peer Mentors Deliver Holiday Cheer to Our Community Partners

In December, our Peer Mentors made a special effort to thank those in our community who protect us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The high school students made stops at the Edgewood Police and Fire Department, Wilkinsburg Police Department, Swissvale Police Department, and the Rite Aid Pharmacy in Forest Hills, bringing with them some delicious holiday cookies. All have been wonderful partners to WPSD. They truly care about the well-being of our students and staff on a daily basis. We thank you for your unfailing service, commitment and friendship! ■



## Continuing an Important Connection with VITAC

WPSD was thrilled to welcome VITAC to campus on December 15! The company recognized five students who created amazing artistic designs for the company's 2023 holiday card. The ceremony began with a recorded ASL performance of A Million Dreams by Signshine. Of the five finalists, one grand winner was chosen. Congratulations to Chris B.! VITAC and WPSD have partnered for this project for more than three decades. VITAC or VITal ACcess provides closed captioning for national television programming and presented a generous donation to the school's Art Department. All five finalists received certificates and awards for their achievements. Congratulations to every student-artist, who participated this year! ■



# In the Community



## Shop with a Cop Event Keeps Our Students Warm and Cozy

At the end of November, a group of students and staff were thrilled to take part in a "Shop with a Cop" event at the Waterfront Target.

This wonderful event was sponsored by Edgewood Borough Police, Senator Jay Costa, private donors, and Giant Eagle. Officers from Edgewood Borough, Allegheny County Police and Pennsylvania State Troopers were on hand to help shop with the students. Our kids loved their brand-new coats, gloves, hats, and scarves that kept them warm and cozy this winter season!

A special shout out to Sergeant Fred Livingston, from Edgewood Borough Police Department, who organized the entire event. We are so appreciative of their continued kindness, generosity, and support! ■





# In the Community



## Honoring Our First Responders With Nourishment and Appreciation

On November 30th, we hosted an appreciation luncheon for our local first responders, who serve the WPSD community. We are so appreciative of their dedication to the safety of the community and our school.

A very special thank you to the Edgewood Police Department, Swissvale Police Department, Wilkinsburg Police Department, Swissvale Fire Department, Edgewood Fire Department, and our very own security team at WPSD, for their commitment to service.

We are forever grateful for the support, protection, and sense of security they provide on a daily basis to our students and staff. The school takes great comfort knowing they are just a phone call away in times of trouble and uncertainty. ■



# In the Community



## WPSD Spends Some Quality Time with Local Police

In January, the Edgewood Police Department held a "Coffee with a Cop" event at the Edgewood Club. Local residents were able to meet and talk with the police officers who serve and protect their community every day while enjoying a delicious cup o' joe from Pittsburgh Coffee. The school's Director Campus Safety & Security Mike Del Cimmuto, Board Member Barbara Boylan, and Security Supervisor Dan Weissert, stopped by to share in some great conversation and spend some quality time with Sgt. Fred Livingston and other officers on the force along with a few borough council members. We are so grateful for the continued support and partnership of the Edgewood Police Department and were happy to be a part of such a wonderful event! ■



## WPSD Hosts Commitment to the Community Meeting

At the end of January, the school held its second Commitment to the Community meeting of the school year. We were thrilled to have representatives from POWER (PA Organization of Women in Early Recovery) and the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank as our keynote speakers. POWER discussed their mission and vision, and their purchase and renovation of the former Word of God school in Swissvale. They have transformed it into a campus to house all of their services and resources. The campus opens this summer! The Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank discussed the critical need for donations, especially after the holiday season. Local officials shared updates from their respective communities. Neighbors got to know each other better. It was a wonderful meeting! ■





# In the Community



## Enrichment for Dogs!

By Michele Ryan, Life Skills Teacher

On January 29, some of the students from the Class of 2026 traveled to the Humane Animal Rescue of Pittsburgh (HARP) to volunteer. While there, the students toured the facilities. They enjoyed time seeing the animals and getting a behind the scenes look at what it takes to keep HARP running and caring for the animals. They really couldn't do it without volunteers, so the students were excited to roll up their sleeves and get to work. Students were tasked with two projects for dog enrichment time. First, they filled Kong balls with peanut butter and milk bones that would be frozen later for yummy treats! Next, they helped craft a few lick mats that would be used to hide treats for dogs to enjoy. After cleaning up, the students were rewarded with a waggy HELLO from Sorbet. She is a sweet girl ready for adoption, and she loved our students so much! It was hard to say goodbye to her, but the Class of 2026 is looking forward to returning! ■



# In the Community



## Life Skills Students Cook Up Sustenance and Love for Deserving Families

By Alyse Royba, WPSD Speech Language Pathologist

The Life Skills Program had a wonderful time grocery shopping at Aldi's followed by cooking food for the families at Ronald McDonald House (RMH). The students made a delicious meal including salad, pasta, garlic bread, and a variety of desserts. They were able to interact with the families who stay at RMH and got a tour of the facilities! They saw the lounge areas for kids staying there and the toy forest where kids staying at the hospital are able to pick out a toy for free. After we were done, students were able to use their communication skills to order lunch at Chipotle. Overall we had a great trip and hope to do it again soon! ■





# Athletics

## Mighty Mites are Dynamite!

By Michelle Vigliotti, Director of Youth Programs

In October, our Mighty Mites team battled the Dynamo teams, from Pittsburgh Sportsplex. The players displayed great sportsmanship. The Lion Cubs played their hearts out, ending in tied scores respectively, 1-1 and 2-2 for the first round of games. When the Cubs had the opportunity to battle the Dynamo teams for the second round of games, they came out fighting, winning both games by a score of 2-1 and 4-0. We were excited to see the skills of these young athletes really start to emerge during the matchups. Congratulations, Little Lions!

In January, the Mighty Mites basketball team took on Edgewood Elementary School. Our blue and gold enjoyed home court advantage and gave their all, hustling every minute of the game. Watching our players sink shots and jump for joy was very rewarding for the coaches, staff and parents who attended. It was so nice to see the kids playing as a cohesive team. When the buzzer went off, the score was 8-6 with Edgewood inching out a win over WPSD. Then, in an exciting twist, the coaches decided to add 10 more minutes for the teams to play for fun. The final score was 16-6. Even though we may have lost, our Lions have improved so much since the start of the season in November! Go Lions!

At the end of January, our Mighty Mites faced off against Edgewood in a thrilling basketball match! It was an intense game, but we managed to secure a hard-fought victory by a score of 12-10. Our Lions showed remarkable improvement throughout the game, and their sportsmanship was truly admirable. After the game was over, in a heartwarming gesture, our opponents signed 'Good Game' to us in ASL! ■





## Pitt Women's Basketball Team Jump Starts the WPSD Season

By the WPSD Athletic Department

The Athletic Department kicked the basketball season into high gear with a special visit from the University of Pittsburgh's Women's Basketball team at the end of November. Liatu King #2, Jasmine Timmerman #3, Bella Perkins #10, and Marley Washenitz #11 came to the school to speak to our students about their experiences on and off the court as a basketball player and a student at the college level. Liatu King is a CODA, which is Child of Deaf Adults, so it was very exciting for our students to see a local college-level hearing basketball player communicate in the same language as them, have awareness of their culture, and to be involved in the same community. She shared her experiences growing up with deaf parents, her immersion in the deaf community, and how powerful it is to have knowledge of deaf culture! ■





# WPSD Ballers Putting in the Work!

By Kallie Mendenhall, WPSD Athletic Director

The WPSD basketball clinic took place on campus from December 1-3 to provide our varsity basketball players the opportunity to help hone their skills on the court and to continue building their team cohesion. Various skills such as, dribbling, shooting, offensive, defensive, game strategies, and plays were the key focus. The athletes also participated in team building activities to ensure that the players trusted each other, and respected each other, so all of the players can bring their A game on the court. We concluded Basketball Clinic weekend by attending the ASL Deaf Awareness event at the Pitt Women's basketball game at the University of Pittsburgh. Pitt players and students interacted and socialized after the game. What a fun evening! ■



# WPSD Hosts Annual Lions' Classic

The Lions' Classic took place on campus in the beginning of December. Three other schools for the Deaf took part in this exciting event including Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, Atlanta Area School for the Deaf, New York School for the Deaf - Fanwood.

In their first matchup of the weekend, the girls' basketball team came out swinging against Pennsylvania School for the Deaf. Each player enjoyed lots of playing time, worked hard, and gave it their all. In the end, our blue and gold warriors emerged victorious!

The boys' basketball team was also ready for battle as they took on Pennsylvania School for the Deaf in their first matchup of the Lions' Classic. Both teams fought hard. Our blue and gold warriors came out on top. We are proud of our team for their hard work and efforts.

In their second games of the Classic, the girls' and boys' basketball teams continued their winning streaks against Atlanta Area School for the Deaf.

The girls' and boys' basketball teams finished out the Lions' Classic strong, defeating their opponent - New York School for the Deaf - Fanwood. We are proud of the teams for their hard work, efforts, commitment to winning, and great sportsmanship. Go Lions! ■





## WPSD Seniors Recognized for Their Hard Work and Accomplishments

The Senior Recognition Night for our basketball senior student-athletes took place on December 9th. During this special ceremony, WPSD honored these players and their accomplishments, and recognized the families for their support and commitment throughout the years. Congratulations to all of them for their hard work and dedication to academic and athletic excellence! Enjoy these photos celebrating some of our seniors. Onward and upward! ■



## Big Honors for Our Student-Athletes

The Athletic Department is proud to announce our very own student-athletes earned awards from the National Deaf Interscholastic Athletic Association 2023 Fall Sports Honors.

NDIAA Volleyball - Division II Honorable Mention (Volleyball): Samantha R.

NDIAA Soccer 11-Man First Team (Soccer): Spencer A. and Luel H.

Well-deserving awards for our WPSD student-athletes! ■





## Boys' and Girls' Teams Compete in Fuller and Miller Donatucci Classic

Our boys' and girls' basketball teams were at the Kansas School for the Deaf during the second weekend in January to take part in the Fuller and Miller Donatucci Classic! Aside from WPSD, seven other Schools for the Deaf around the country competed in this fun event including Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf, Kansas School for the Deaf, Rochester School for the Deaf, Oklahoma School for the Deaf, Iowa School for the Deaf, Arkansas School for the Deaf, and Marie Philip & Walden Schools for the Deaf. Wow! What a group!

The boys' and girls' teams made an impressive showing during their first matchups of the Classic. The competition was fierce in both games. The boys defeated Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf by a score of 50 - 42. Our girls fell to their opponent - Rochester School for the Deaf - losing by just a basket - in a true nailbiter of a game. The final score was 36 - 34.

In their second matchup of the Classic, the girls' team emerged victorious against Iowa School for the Deaf by a score of 28-22. The boys' team suffered a tough loss to Marie Philip and Walden Schools, falling to their opponent by a score of 65-28.

We were lucky enough to receive some wonderful snapshots that captured all of the action on the court. Special thanks to photographer Whitney Riney for highlighting some of WPSD's exciting moments in time during the Classic. Enjoy these snapshots! ■



Photo Credits: Whitney Riney



# The Battle of I-76 Makes a Long-Awaited Comeback!

At the end of January, WPSD brought back the tradition of having the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf (PSD) and WPSD facing off against each other in basketball games - fittingly named "The Battle of I-76." The match was long overdue, and we're so glad it's returned! About 200 people attended two very close games. Our Lions came away with the victories for both matchups. We are so glad to have the Pennsylvania community join together to bring back this tradition, and hope to see a rematch next year! ■





# School-wide Celebration Puts Pep in Our Student-Athletes' Step

By Kallie Mendenhall, WPSD Athletic Director

In early February, WPSD held a school-wide pep rally. We all came together to support many different groups who were doing great things during the winter season. We introduced our Mighty Mites boys' and girls' team, Middle School boys' and girls' basketball teams, VEX Robotics and Drone teams, E-Sports teams and Varsity boys' and Varsity girls' basketball teams. Every student, teacher and staff member showed their pride, celebrating each and every team. We also hosted a friendly and fun competition of "Dizzy Ball" between Children's Center students and Elementary students (which involves spinning around 3 times and then immediately after attempting to shoot and make a basket). We wrapped up the pep rally with a "Dizzy Ball" competition between High School and Middle School students. What a fun celebration honoring our student-athletes who represent our school so well! ■





## WPSD Boys' Basketball Team Competes in ESDAA Tournament

The Lexington School for the Deaf in New York hosted the 90th annual ESDAA Boys' Basketball Tournament & 45th ESDAA annual Cheerleading Competition during the second weekend in February. In their first matchup of the tournament, our Lions emerged victorious against Pennsylvania School for the Deaf.

In their second matchup of the tournament, our varsity boys' basketball team lost a tough one to Lexington School for the Deaf.

In their third battle of the tournament, our boys' team suffered another tough loss - this one to Ohio School for the Deaf - but still made an impressive showing clinching 4th place overall. Special congratulations goes to Caesar T. for earning all tournament team honors. We are so proud of our team for their hard work and good attitudes! ■

## WPSD Girls' Basketball Team Travels to Interstate Rival to Take Part in ESDAA Tournament

The girls' basketball team traveled to Pennsylvania School for the Deaf to compete in the 46th annual ESDAA tournament. In their first matchup of the tournament, they came away with the "W" against Lexington School for the Deaf.

In their second battle of the tournament, our Lions took on New York School for the Deaf - Fanwood. We lost a heartbreaker of a game - New York School for the Deaf - Fanwood eeked out a victory against our team by one point!

Our girls got up and dusted themselves off, wrapping up the tournament with a victory against Delaware School for the Deaf. This big win clinched 3rd place honors for our Blue and Gold. As a cherry on top of sorts, two of our Lions earned individual All-Tournament team honors. Congratulations to Anae B. and Ava P.!! We were thrilled with our team's hard work and never-give-up attitude! Go Lions! ■





## We Are the Champions... We Kept On Fighting to the End

The winter season for E-Sports ended in February. Using remote technology, teams were able to accelerate language learning and problem solving skills as they worked together in a team based format across Scranton and WPSD. The Hybrid team did not make it into the playoffs. The Valkyrie team composed of an all female-squad was undefeated as they entered the playoffs as the #1 seed.

The Garden State E-Sports Winter Championship was hosted at Brookdale Community College on February 24th. Check out this wonderful description of what transpired written by WPSD/Comets Hybrid Esports Coach Dr. Kent Schafer:

*If there ever was a time to dare, the time was now. With the computing power and support from The Scranton School for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Children, Abington High, and the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, magic was created.*

*Six girls across the keystone united through the use of Google Meet, battle.net, and discord to develop a team to travel the road less taken as Valkyries deciding their fate in the field of Overwatch2.*

*As warriors in an electronic battle, they developed an understanding on how to craft success by overcoming numerous technical difficulties and having the deck stacked against them. With a good attitude, they overtook the communication barrier and technology hiccups after losing their first two games in a best of five (0-2).*

*Facing sudden death and the need to win three straight in order to achieve the championship, it was time to put those*

*keyboards and controllers to work. Being down 0-2 and one game from losing the entire championship, there was a need to structure effectively using different techniques. The third game, flashpoint, requires our team to capture and hold a space on the map 3 out of 5 times. This requires flexibility in our approach and adapting our tactics to different situations on the map.*

*In recognizing the importance of controlling the emotional atmosphere during game four, they were able to secure their second win of the day after decimating their opponent in the game of Push. In this game, two teams fight over control of a robot who can move a barricade for each team similar to tug of war. Now that the games were tied at 2-2 and the final game was for all the marbles in sudden death, the ladies turned their adversity into a strength. They recognized triggers to guide their mood to put the game to our advantage, emerging victorious.*

### CHAMPIONS OF THE VALKYRIE OVERWATCH UNIVERSE.

*Moral of our championship run...What works in one scenario may not be as effective in another, so being able to adjust strategy is crucial to gameplay (and life).*

*Thousands witnessed the magic of influence. Using American Sign Language, barriers were deconstructed via livestream on the main Garden State Sports channel as ESports is blazing an inclusive trail. History was made with the debut of an ASL scholastic sportscaster and the first deaf Technical Director of a Live Streamed Scholastic event. ■*



## Middle School Student-Athletes Make WPSD Proud in Hoops Tournament

By Michelle Vigliotti, Director of Youth Programs/  
Mighty Mites

Our middle school girls' and boys' basketball teams traveled to Massachusetts at the end of February to take part in a tournament being held at Marie Philip and Walden Schools (MPWS).

The other schools who participated in this fun and exciting event included Kendall Demonstration Elementary School, Maryland School for the Deaf - Columbia, and of course, MPWS. We are so proud of our blue and gold warriors for their hard work and great attitudes! Both the boys' and girls' teams took home fourth place. Our boys' team earned the highly covered Sportsmanship Award!

Special congratulations go to Christian B. and Kalilah D. who earned All-Star honors! Way to go, Lions! ■



# Residential Life

## Super Bowl Party is All Fun and Games for Residential Staff and Students

By Russell Sloan, Residential Supervisor

The Residential Advisors hosted the annual Super Bowl Party at Lion's Den on February 11th. Students and staff were able to take in the big game between the Kansas City Chiefs and San Francisco 49ers. We had a great time feasting and socializing among our peers. Football pool and other related games made this event even more fun and kept all of our students involved and excited. Everybody had a blast! ■



## Residential Students Celebrate Black History Month with a Taste of Soul Food

By Venita Smith, Dean of Girls and Oyamo Caracci, Residential Advisor

Black History Month kicked off on the first day of February. The theme was, "African Americans and the Arts." Many Black Americans and Black Deaf Americans became leaders in visual arts, music, American Sign Language performances and much more.

On Monday, February 12th, we served up the 'Soul' dinner which included Belgian waffles, crispy chicken tenders, maple syrup, apple pie with ice cream, mashed potatoes and corn. The students and staff loved eating and asked for seconds!

Thank you, Chef Bill Estes for being willing to whip up the Belgian waffles and serve for the 2nd year in a row.

Oyamo and I want to thank the Director of Student Affairs, Bill Estes, Dean of Boys, Tom Halik, Residential staff, Five Starr and cafeteria workers- Angela Cristina, Peggy Patterson and Dennis F. for all your support of this wonderful event and of our students. ■





# Support Our School!

## WPSD's Annual Clay Shoot Hits the Target

The weather was picture perfect for the school's annual Clay Shoot at Pike Run Club and Lodge on March 1st! Brisk mountain air and the sun shining brightly in the blue, nearly cloudless sky - couldn't ask for anything better! We want to extend our deepest appreciation to all of the shooters who took part in this wonderful event.

Special thanks to our Corporate Sponsor - A. Martini & Co. We are also very appreciative of our Lunch Sponsor - Gridiron Partners And a huge thank you to our Ammo Sponsor - Fisher Phillips. We are so grateful for their support and kindness.

Thanks also goes to our Shooting Stand sponsors - Alera Group, AndCo Consulting, Commonwealth Investment Management, Davis-Fetch Corporation, Ruthrauff Sauer, and IBEW #5. We truly appreciate their support to make this event a success and their generosity to our students and school.

All proceeds support the academic, athletic, and extracurricular opportunities the school offers to Deaf and Hard of Hearing students on campus. Thank you again to everyone involved! We look forward to seeing everyone next year! ■



For more information, please email Sarah at: [sbartlebaugh@wpsd.org](mailto:sbartlebaugh@wpsd.org)

Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf



# An Evening

in edgewood



Save the date

a garden party featuring heavy hors d'oeuvres & refreshments

Friday, June Twenty-first

under the lights on WPSD's scenic campus

# WPSD Summer Camp

## June 17-21, 2024

The Western PA School for the Deaf will offer one week of camp that is co-ed and open to deaf and hard of hearing youth ages 10 to 18. Campers can choose between an Overnight Camp or Day Camp program. There are a limited number of spaces! Registration ends June 7, 2024.

### Activities

**Baseball, Robotics, Pickleball, Video Production, Paddle Boarding  
Hiking, Art, Swimming and much more!**



SCAN ME

Contact Tara Nikou  
tnikou@wpsd.org  
or 412-244-4268  
for more information

\$200 for Overnight Camp    \$150 for Day Camp



WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA  
SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

## 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](mailto:mcampion@wpsd.org). ■



# 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



## PBIS Fall Fest

By Lexi Pientack

Fall Fest has become a new annual tradition to when students and staff look forward. There were many fun activity stations, like soft ax throwing, face painting, pumpkin painting, corn search and more. However, the biggest hit is always our alpaca friends who come to visit. Special thank you to the Alpacas of Windy Haven Farms. ■

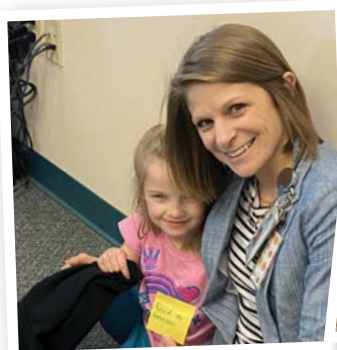
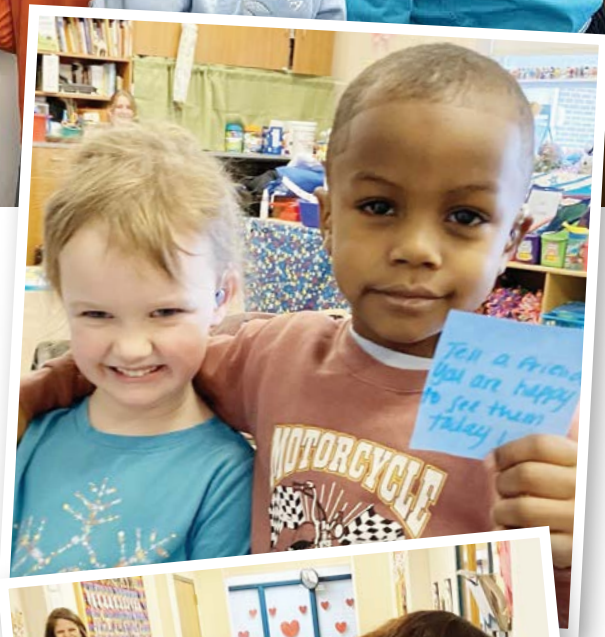




## 100 Acts of Kindness

By Sarah Briggs

On February 2nd, we celebrated our 100th day of school for the 2023-2024 school year. We celebrated in many different ways on the day, but we also wanted to celebrate as a whole school. So, throughout the month of February our students were challenged to complete 100 Acts of Kindness! We started the month with 100 sticky notes with different acts of kindness on a bulletin board and completed all 'acts' by February 27. Students did things like let a friend go in front of them in line, wrote thank you notes for teachers and staff, partnered with someone who has a hard time finding a partner, and taught someone a new game/skill. It was so fun to see our students getting excited to spread cheer and kindness throughout the building. We hope that the kindness and care will continue throughout the rest of the year! ■





# Commissioner McGloin Visit

By Lexi Pientack

We were honored to have had County Commissioner Matt McGloin recently visit The Scranton School. After touring our campus and learning about our incredible program, he read the book "Trying" by Kobi Yamada to our middle school students. He answered several great questions and shared some truly inspiring stories about his life, his accomplishments and never wanting to look back with regret.

Commissioner McGloin is a Scranton native, a Penn State walk-on quarterback and former NFL quarterback. It's safe to say our students learned a lot from him today and we hope they feel inspired to pursue their dreams and never let anything stand in their way! ■





## Spirit Week

Spirit Week 2024 brought all of the fun this year as the school split into two teams dressed in blue and gold. Each competed daily challenges to earn points for their team.

At the end of the week, points were totaled and the winner of this year's Spirit Week with bragging rights was the Blue Team! ■





## Building with Maintenance

By Lexi Pientack

Ms. Janssen's preschool class has been learning about buildings. They have been focusing on who constructs the buildings and the various tools used.

It only makes sense that they take a field trip that is within walking distance and visit our school's maintenance shop, where they learned from the very best. Our school is so lucky to have a one of a kind group of hard working and talented people running our maintenance department.

Students got a hands on experience today and even left with their very own levels. ■





# Halloween

By Lexi Pientack

The Scranton campus was transformed into a spooky scene this Halloween. The beautiful weather allowed us to hold our annual parade outside for the first time in years. After the treats were distributed, students and families headed indoors where they walked our spooky maze and enjoyed a dance party and limbo in the gym.

Mrs. Burke from Abington Community Library joined us on campus to read a story and sing songs with our Music, Movement, and Me group who also joined in the Halloween fun! ■





## Veterans Day

Mrs. Wilson's 1st grade class delivered handmade cards from all of the students at SSDHHC to the veterans at Gino J. Merli Veterans' Center. The residents talked about where and when they served and were thrilled to have student visitors.

Thank you to all who sacrificed and served on behalf of our nation. ■



## AAC Awareness Month

By Lexi Pientack

Did you know that October is AAC awareness month?

AAC is an acronym for Augmentative and Alternative Communication. Here at The Scranton School, we are dedicated to promoting effective communication for all our students. We proudly incorporate AAC devices to achieve this goal. These devices serve as invaluable tools that support both sign language and spoken language for our students. AACs reduce communication breakdowns, while simultaneously increasing vocabulary development and our students' ability to express themselves. It is our commitment to inclusivity and accessibility that drives us to embrace these technologies, ensuring that every student can communicate effectively and thrive in our educational environment. ■

# Vet Visit for Barnyard Friends

By Mary Ann Stefko

Our Barnyard Friends had their yearly visit to Northwinds Veterinary Center! Dr. Maral and Amelia showed us around the center, taught us about caring for our pets and we had a special visit with Mickey! It is always so much fun to learn about the animals and how to be good pet owners! Thank you to everyone at Northwinds who always support our students and our school. ■



# Kabuki Syndrome Awareness

Students and staff wore green on October 23rd to support Kabuki Syndrome awareness and our very own Kabuki Warrior! Kabuki Syndrome is a rare genetic disorder and diagnosed in about 1 in 32,000 births. To learn more you can visit [www.allthingskabuki.org](http://www.allthingskabuki.org). ■





# Trim-a-Tree

By Lisa Everswick

The 6th and 7th grade students at SSDHHC entered a "Trim-a-Tree" challenge hosted by The Electric City Trolley Museum in Scranton. The Trolley Museum provided artificial trees for students to decorate based off of a theme. This year's theme was "Classic Comic Books" and our students chose to create ornaments with a classic comic book superheroes theme!

Mrs. Eileen Cosgrove, librarian at SSDHHC, discovered the event and coordinated a field trip for our students. During art class with Ms. Lisa Everswick, students learned why community art is important and explored community art projects created by Pennsylvania school districts.

To create the ornaments, students conducted research, sketched their ideas, and then built their own unique ornaments. After students finished making their ornaments, they took a trip to The Trolley Museum and decorated our school tree. They were able to see trees that other districts decorated and learned a little bit about the Trolley museum while they were there. ■





## A Sweet Day of Learning for Our Barnyard Friends

By Mary Ann Stefko

Our Barnyard Friends went to visit Burke's Maple Farm! Mr. Burke showed us how to tap a maple tree in the woods and the process to turn it into maple syrup! Mrs. Burke was waiting for us with a tasty, sweet snack - maple popcorn and candy! We could not ask for a "sweeter" day of learning! We appreciate our friends in the community supporting our students!! ■





# Holiday Cookies



THE SCRANTON SCHOOL FOR DEAF & HARD OF HEARING CHILDREN

# The Children's Center



Educating Our Littlest Learners

## A Perfect Day for the Pumpkin Patch!

By Julie Repak, Children's House Teacher

October 24th was the PERFECT day for a pumpkin patch field trip. The Children's Center 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 Starr 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! ■





## Our Youngest Learners Trim the Tree

By Anissa Moriarty, Children's Center Teacher

The WPSD Children's Center students participated in our annual tree decorating celebration in December. Each student made two ornaments to hang on the tree in our entryway. The students shared their ornaments before finding the perfect spot on the tree. The ornaments were so cute and creative! Lastly, the Santa tree topper was placed on the tree by one of our kindergarten students. We continued our celebration by gathering in Miss Christie's ASL classroom for a story, "How To Catch a Snowman." The students enjoyed the story very much! We ended our celebration by decorating Christmas cookies. It was a wonderful event enjoyed by all! ■





## A Visit from Jolly Ol' St. Nick Delights Students and Families

In December, our students, their families, and staff enjoyed a delicious breakfast including French toast and bacon as they awaited the arrival of Santa Claus! Some of our youngest students and their families were able to spend some quality time together over the delectable feast. All of a sudden, Santa made his big entrance! As he rounded the corner to the dining room, the children had their faces pressed against the window, wondering what Santa had in his pack. As he entered the cafeteria, Santa was greeted by a roomful of excited children. He made his way through the crowd, greeting several children. Santa took his seat of honor and started to call up each student by name. Each lucky kid received a present from good ol' Saint Nick. Such a fun event! ■





## He's Not Done!

After Santa visited with some of our students in the WPSD cafeteria, he traveled to the Children's Center play room to greet a few more of our youngest learners. More gifts were delivered and more students were filled with joy. What a magical event! ■



## Naughty and Nice Come Together to Bring Some Holiday Cheer

On the last day of school before winter break, Children's Center students were visited by two well-known characters, one famous – Santa Claus, and one infamous – Mr. Grinch. Santa - as usual - was very jolly and kind. And even though the Grinch was up to some of his usual shenanigans, it appears our students made his heart grow! The two visited each classroom handing out treats and holiday cheer to every boy and girl. What a fun break in the school day! Thank you to them both for spreading happiness to all! ■



## How Many 10's Make 100?

By Amy Antoniono, Children's Center Teacher

The four-year-old classroom participated in the 100th Day of School celebration by counting sets of ten! They counted sets of ten different snack foods, and counted the sets to make 100! What a delicious way to celebrate! ■



## Three-Year-Old Classroom Celebrates Friendship and Togetherness on Valentine's Day

By Anissa Moriarty and Katie Lee, Children's Center Teachers (Three Year Old Classroom)

On Valentine's Day, the three-year-old classroom celebrated with special activities, crafts, snacks, music and exchanging Valentines with our friends! We had a wonderful day together! ■





## Three-Year-Olds Learn Getting Dressed Isn't Just About Fashion!

By Anissa Moriarty, Children's Center Teacher

The WPSD three-year-old classroom had fun learning all about clothes in our recent study! We learned features of clothing, such as fasteners and sizes. We sorted clothes for hot weather and cold weather. The children enjoyed dressing up in snow gear and having indoor snowball and sledding fun in our winter center! Laundry baskets were used in so many fun ways to aid learning! Friends took turns pushing each other across the floor in the laundry basket to gather clothing for a scavenger hunt! During our morning gathering, we described details of our clothing. Who has buttons? Who is wearing red? Who has velcro on their shoes? We had fun learning about clothing with various art projects from painting with mittens and shoes to making snowmen with hats, buttons, and scarfs!

To end our study, we made a special trip to our school's laundry room to wash a basket of dirty clothes. It took great teamwork to carry the basket, load the washing machine, and add the detergent. It was fun to see the water fill the washing machine tub! Later in the day, we returned to the laundry room to move the wet clothes into the dryer. Once the clothes were dry, we carried the basket back to our classroom and folded the clothes together. Our learning continues everyday when the children share details of what they are wearing to school! ■





## Kindergarteners Explore All the Ways to Celebrate 100 Days - of Learning!

By Anissa Moriarty, Children's Center Teacher

Kindergarten celebrated the 100th day of school!! We have been learning in kindergarten for 100 days!! First, we counted to 100; it took a LONG time. Then we thought about what it would be like to have 100 spiders or 100 toys or 100 chores to do. Later in the day, we made necklaces with 100 fruit loops. During math, we added 100 items to a 100 chart. ■





# We Will Read About the Snow, We Will See How High It Goes!

By Gina Leskovic (Speech Pathologist) and Julie Repak (Children's House Teacher)

Read Across America was started many years ago to encourage children and families to engage in reading and to get excited about books. This year, the Children's Center celebrated Dr. Seuss' birthday and Read Across America on Thursday, February 29th.

The weather may be warming up outside, but inside the Children's Center, things were looking wintry as we celebrated Read Across America Day. We kicked off our fun day with Carrie (appropriately dressed in her winter gear!) reading "Snow" by Roy McKie and P.D. Eastman.

After the kids enjoyed the story, we were thrilled to bring back an old tradition - stacking a "Cat in the Hat" cake. The students cheered as Carrie and Kevin took turns stacking the layers of the cake higher and higher.

They then spent the rest of the day experiencing the fun things they had read about in the book. They built snow forts out of packing peanuts, constructed a powdered sugar donut snowman for snack, and painted a snowman that had melted in the warm sun. They even made sensory snow and had fun rolling and stacking mini snowballs into snowmen. The students then ended their day enjoying the tasty and festive "Cat in the Hat" cake! ■



# Children's Center of Central Pennsylvania

## Halloween Trunk or Treat

Our second quarter was a blast at the Hershey Preschool. We started with our "Halloween Trunk or Treat" event at school - a favorite for the students, staff and families. The weather was absolutely perfect! We had many families join us in the parking lot, with decorated cars and Halloween snacks, for a fun-filled morning complete with a parade of costumed cuties! ■



## "Signs" in the Community

We started the second quarter with the "Signs" study from the Creative Curriculum. This incorporated instructional material about community helpers, emergencies, and signs you would see in the community. This led perfectly into walking around our Hershey neighborhood to find varied signs to label! Our culminating activity was a walking field trip to Duck Donuts, a brisk three block walk was all it took! ■





## Thanksgiving Feast

Our second family event was our Thanksgiving Feast. Our families donate all of our lunch meals and we get to enjoy the food extravaganza together. We had all but one family join us for the feast - we filled the tables in the room!. We have so much to be thankful for each year at the Hershey Preschool! ■



## Christmas Brunch with Signing Santa

Our final family event was our Christmas Brunch with Signing Santa. What a special time for us to treat our families to a morning brunch so that they could enjoy time with their child and network together. The icing on the cake was our special gifts and visit with Santa who spent 1:1 time with each student as well as a read/sign aloud by Santa himself and Carrie Rain. ■



## Pet Study

The "Pet Study" is a favorite of ours! We went on virtual field trips to a shelter and a pet store. We also had our very own pet store here at preschool and were able to purchase (toy) animals and items they needed for care. We learned all about what is required to take care of a pet, the different types of pets, and different types of food needed. In our dramatic play centers we had a pet store, pet grooming, and a veterinarian - complete with an x-ray machine!

We were able to use a real razor and shave stuffed animals to learn about the sounds and feelings of cutting the hair of a pet.

Our favorite book was, *This Book Just Ate My Dog!* It was so silly.

During this study we learned a lot about attributes and how to use words to describe things.

We loved when our parents sent in pictures of our pets and we were able to show them off to our peers! We have dogs, cats, hamsters, guinea pigs, and an ant farm at home.

We were lucky enough to have guinea pigs and a therapy dog visit during this study thanks to our two speech therapists! ■





## Welcoming Fun Visitors to Our Preschool

Throughout this quarter, we have had many special visitors. Carrie Rain and Kevin McDonough came to meet our students, watch our exciting lessons, and of course, have some fun on the playground together. They both made a special visit again before Christmas break, for our Christmas Brunch with "Santa".

The Scranton School's Director Dean Pettinato and Assistant Principal Sarah Briggs came for a full day of fun and were able to see our reverse inclusion program complete with baking apple muffins!

With our proximity to Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, we had two audiologists from Penn State Health come for a read aloud and special craft for all of our students. A continued collaboration is planned between our program and Penn State Health.

We have begun another collaboration with the Capital Area Intermediate Unit and their high school deaf and hard of hearing program. They will be coming monthly with their "Swift Snax" program which allows our students the opportunity to purchase snacks, drinks, and their lunch meal from the high school students. The students stay for the entire morning so that they can observe lessons and participate in structured activities with the students. ■



## Read Across America

We welcomed our 22nd student and then spent a week in March celebrating Dr. Seuss' birthday as part of Read Across America. We began with learning about apples, sorting them, their parts, and even printing with them! We read the book *10 Apples Up on Top*. Then we moved on to the book, *Green Eggs and Ham*, and even got to taste them! Most of our students did not like the look of those green eggs, but loved the tasty ham! We read more books by Dr. Seuss, like *The Cat in the Hat*, *Hop on Pop*, and *One Fish Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*. The whole week we rhymed, played with balloons and tried not to pop them, and made patterns with GoldFish crackers. So much fun! But the most exciting thing was that that tricky Cat in the Hat came to visit us one day and wreaked havoc on the classroom (just like the house in the book!) ■





## Learning All About Bread

We started our Bread Study in March. Can you even imagine all of the learning that can happen when talking about bread? Not only are our students learning the names for several bread products and building their vocabularies, they are also working on sequencing skills, measuring skills, and learning to bake! We have already made bread out of playdough and our own homemade apple muffins. We are learning to look for measurements in a recipe and even the difference between hard and soft, sweet and savory, and fresh and stale. A weeks-long science experiment will see which bread grows mold the fastest, using various types of washed/cleaned hands! Eww! We might have to end our study with another trip to Duck Donuts to celebrate! ■



# Children's Center of PennWest Edinboro

In the fall, we went on a field trip to a place called Port Farms. The weather was absolutely ideal for our day! We took a hay ride, picked out our own pumpkin (and saw pumpkins in various stages of growth as we searched), went down some slides, pet farm animals, and buried ourselves and each other in a corn kernel pit! What a perfect day!

We had new students join us this fall, too! First came Lincoln and we were thrilled to add a boy to our gang of girls! Then came Ruthie. Fun fact! Ruthie's cousin, Christopher, is an alumni of CC Edinboro!

As fall turned to winter, we talked about buildings; their shapes, what they have in common, and types of buildings. We focused on The Three Little Pigs and what buildings can be made of; specifically straw, sticks, and bricks! Our school is made partially of bricks!

As February rolled around, we spent some time talking about jungle animals! We read the story, Hug, by Jez Alborough. In this story, a baby chimpanzee is looking for her mama. She is helped, on her search, by an elephant mama and her calf. They encounter many different jungle animals on their search! Next, we read Head to Toe! by Eric Carle. What a visual book and experience! The children imitated jungle animals like monkeys, parrots, and gorillas. They also waddled and slid on their bellies like penguins, bent their necks like giraffes, and clapped like seals! We made some cute crafts, too, and have worked very hard on both our fine and gross motor skills.

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At the end of March, into February, we came out of our slumber after reading about hibernation in *The Bear Snores On*. We learned about various woodland animals; talked about the category word, "animal"; acted out being a sleeping/snoring bear; made fun fine motor crafts related to the story, etc!

Most recently, we have talked about clothing from head to toe! We tried on clothes, talking about sizes big and small. We washed our clothes, literally, and dried them on a line. We sorted them on a tree map. We also read *The Paperbag Princess* and talked about her choice of clothes before and after the dragon came around.

We have had an absolutely lovely year and look forward to what comes next! ■



# 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](mailto:tnikou@wpsd.org)

## Our Youngest Learners Join in on the Halloween Parade Fun

By Tara Nikou, Coordinator of Child Services

Our Choices for Children families took part in a Halloween parade at the end of October. Toddlers and their parents strolled up and down the WPSD Administration Wing in the main building showing off their very creative costumes. The administrators passed out treats, which was a huge hit! This was the first time many of them had been "trick or treating." So much fun was had by all! ■





## Celebrating the Spooky Season for an Entire Month!

By Mary Ann Stefko

We celebrated Halloween ...and we celebrated...and we celebrated!! It took us a whole month but we had so much fun! Our Choices for Children families, as well as the medical students from the Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, joined our Music, Movement and Me friends, to enjoy everything that the holiday had to offer!! ■





## Enjoying the Magic of the Holiday Season

By Mary Ann Stefko

Our Choices for Children families were once again invited to share in the magic of the holiday season by the Ballet Theater of Scranton. We were in awe of the talented dancers and the beautiful scenery. We enjoyed meeting the dancers and spending time together! We are so appreciative of the collaboration we have with Ballet Theater - they make learning so much fun! ■





## Focusing on the Importance of Giving During the Holiday Season

By Mary Ann Stefko

Our Barnyard Friends kicked off the holidays by making holiday swags - one to keep and one to share! We created our "one of a kind" swags and then picked someone special to share them with. We delivered the swags with a holiday smile. It's so much fun to share with those who are special to us!! ■



## A Fun Holiday Tradition Continues

For our Barnyard Friends, the holiday tradition continues... our trip to the Holiday House! Mr. and Mrs. Culkin welcomed us to the holiday house for a special behind the scenes adventure! We saw Ruthie (the goat) and Lily (the sheep) along with the geese among the amazing holiday displays. We each got an ornament to take home to remember the evening. We are so lucky to have such awesome neighbors who make learning exciting! ■



# Master Gardeners are Back at It - Even During the Winter Months!

By Mary Ann Stefko

Our friends from the Penn State Master Gardeners returned to Mrs. Nati's class for some winter planting! We made planters from recycled bottles and planted seeds that can grow OUTSIDE - during the winter! We are watching our seeds carefully - taking good care of them - we can't wait to see how they grow!! ■



## Sharing in Love, Creativity, and Laughter on Valentine's Day

By Angela Glass, Choices for Children Teacher

Our Choices for Children toddler group is offered to 1-year-olds and 2-year-olds with hearing loss and their caregivers. Teachers focus on the unique language, listening, and learning needs of our toddlers with hearing loss. Families have an opportunity to make friendships and learn from each other during our time together.

During one session in February, Miss Christie taught ASL vocabulary for Valentine's Day. We sang and signed "Pass the Heart" with Miss Angie while practicing our turn-taking skills. During art time, we created "Love" paintings. ■





# Compassionate Canines Bring Our Students Joy

By Mary Ann Stefko

Our friends with paws - the Compassionate Canines - continue to visit us every month! We are always excited to see our friends Adele, Gus, Murphy and Tux. We have a new friend joining our group - Maureen Manzano's dog, Duke, recently became a certified therapy dog. He joins our "pack" for fun visits with our students! ■



