

# *the western* PENNSYLVANIAN

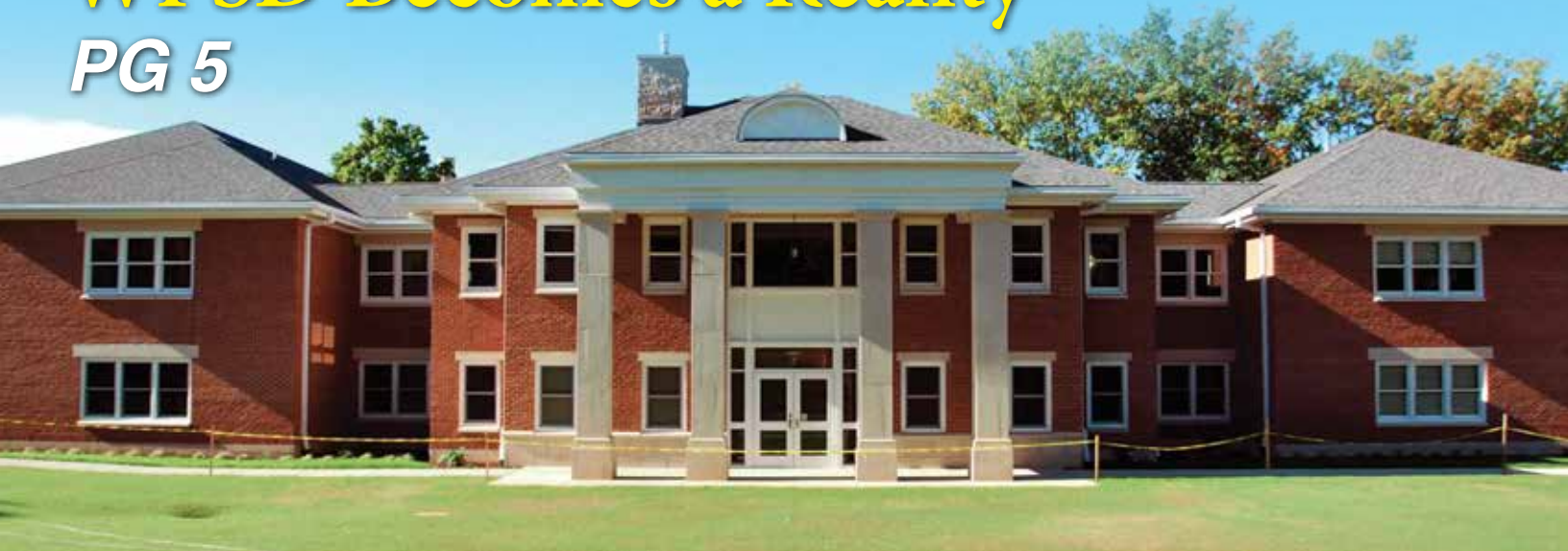


NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

VOLUME 128 #1 FALL 2014

## The New Residence at WPSD Becomes a Reality

PG 5



## AN OAKLAND LEARNING EXPERIENCE

PG 10



## THE BIG READ IN PITTSBURGH

PG 6



# the western PENNSYLVANIAN

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



# WPSD DATES TO REMEMBER

<b>FEBRUARY</b>	<b>APRIL</b>
<p><b>16</b> President's Day – No Classes Residential Students Return</p> <p><b>17</b> Classes Resume</p>	<p><b>2</b> Students Dismissed at 12:30 PM</p> <p><b>3</b> Spring Break Begins</p> <p><b>12</b> Residential Students Return</p> <p><b>13</b> Classes Resume</p>
<b>MARCH</b>	
<p><b>16</b> Long Weekend – No Classes Residential Students Return</p> <p><b>17</b> Classes Resume</p>	

**Editor**  
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# SUPERVISIONS

## A NOTE FROM CEO DON RHOTEN



This issue of the Western Pennsylvanian/BearTracks, features two new exciting additions to our schools. At WPSD, after an 18 month effort, our residential students have a new home. They moved into the new Residence on September 7 and have been loving it ever since. The Residence offers a more homelike environment than the previous dorms which were built in the 1960's. The students enjoy a greater degree of privacy and a family-like environment.

The Residence utilizes geothermal heating and cooling which makes for a more energy efficient operation resulting in a savings in our energy costs.

The Residence is the idea of our board of trustees, something they have wanted for a long time. The \$9.7 million project is funding by donations, grants, loans and endowment funds. Because the WPSD board wanted this project to happen quickly, our fundraising efforts were somewhat hindered because foundations aren't interested in supporting something that is already in the process of being built. The board didn't want to delay the project but rather wanted students to benefit from the residence NOW!! We still expect to meet our goal of \$2 million dollars thanks to the amazing generosity of foundations and friends.

In Scranton, our new Director, Jon (JK) Konzelman, has hit the ground running and the school has not missed a beat. Although only an administrator for two years, he is functioning way beyond his years and has won over the hearts and minds of the students, staff, parents and the community. Recently, the Northeast PA Business Journal named JK one of the "20 under 40" in recognition of outstanding young community leaders. A most deserved accolade.

Joining the Scranton administrative team of JK, Mary Ann Stefko, Doug Boersma and Lou Vitale will be Cindy Ward. Cindy will assume the position of Principal on February 2. She brings a wealth of experience to the school and, most importantly, puts the concerns of the students as her highest priority. She will be a fabulous addition to our school.

Lot's of great things are happening. Come visit!!!

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Don Rhoten". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

# WHAT'S HAPPENING?

LATEST NEWS AROUND THE WPSD CAMPUS

## The New Residence at WPSD Becomes a Reality

On Sunday, September 7th, after 18 months of construction the WPSD residential students moved into the new residence. The looks on their faces as they entered their new “home away from home” for the first time made all of the planning, inconvenience and expense worthwhile.

More than 225 WPSD students, staff and friends attended the official dedication ceremony on October 15th to hear presentations by the Student Residence Council President, Samantha Gibbs, WPSD Alumni President, Robert Maher, WPSD Board of Trustees member, Melissa Scheffler and WPSD CEO, Donald Rhoten. Following the ribbon cutting ceremony, the Residential students and staff welcomed guests and local media to tour the new building.

Serving 40% of WPSD’s students, residential life at WPSD provides a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment, while offering each student full access to the School’s programs, regardless of their home address.

The new Residence has six living suites, each with bedrooms, bathrooms, a study area, and a kitchen. The building also offers a large central common area for socialization. With features such as state-of-the art wireless and information technology networks and a geothermal heating and cooling system, the building operates with increased efficiency and promotes sustainability.

The Residence is the newest demonstration of WPSD’s 145-year commitment to serve deaf & hard-of-hearing students throughout the Pennsylvania.



### WHAT THE STUDENTS HAVE TO SAY:

“I can’t believe I get to live here!”

“The spaces are so open and deaf friendly.”

“I have my own room...”

“This is like living at home!”

“When I’m here it’s the same as being with my family.”

“Thank you! Thank you so much...”



# WPSD Honors Local First Response Teams on 9/11

Middle and high school students gathered in the WPSD auditorium on September 11th to honor our local community police officers and firefighters during a short ceremony to recognize their service to our communities. As part of the assembly, WPSD Boy Scout troop 802 conducted a symbolic flag retiring ceremony. SignShine then lead the audience in the Star Spangled Banner.



## The Big Read in Pittsburgh

Ms. Beveridge and her AP English and Honors English students joined with students across Pittsburgh (and the country) for the national 2014 Big Read Event. This year's reading assignment was "Fahrenheit 451," by Ray Bradbury.

In addition to reading and discussing the book, the WPSD students hosted students from an English class at Woodland Hills High School to discuss government bans from books to electronic media. Senior Michael Weber won an award from the Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) Big Read at the closing ceremony for his poem, "Censorship."



Congratulations to everyone involved for a job well done!

### CENSORSHIP BY MICHAEL WEBER

These days, people hide and moan,  
Moaning in distress from extreme desolation.  
Once, once in time, the world was filled with thriving glory,  
No fear, the mind freely wandered all over full of imagination  
That such vision has become extinct.  
The world has gone dark and seamed altogether with flame.

Promise us that it would go away, we said.  
Such lies, lies, lies not even a single letter permitted.  
Any letters go into the eyes stitching along with fire,  
Only letters can be heard, they screamed and stitch and burn.  
The Dark ages has come, fools they are!  
The Dark ages has come, fools we are!

# WPSD Students Participate in CMU Research Study

On July 24th, several WPSD students participated in a Carnegie Mellon University research study exploring the motivational effectiveness of educational computer games for practicing English literacy skills. In short, WPSD students played fun computer games and practiced their English literacy skills at the same time! The games were developed by CMU students and are part of a larger research project called TechCaFE (Technology for Customizable And Fun Education). The TechBridgeWorld research group at CMU leads TechCaFE.



WPSD students had the option to choose from several game themes, all of which featured English literacy content provided by teacher Joyce Maravich. Students could choose to play “Jump,” a scrolling game where the player has to jump over or duck under obstacles; “Dream Explorer,” a virtual exploration game where the player moves through a dream world looking for their friends who have turned into scary characters; or “Rapid Frames,” which is a series of mini games.

TechBridgeWorld thanks all of the students who participated in our study as well as the parents, teachers and the many staff members who made this possible. During the summer, researchers also tested TechCaFE games with adult refugees in Pittsburgh. They are planning to test TechCaFE games with other English language learners in Doha, Qatar. Based on WPSD’s feedback and feedback received from other partners, the researchers will enhance the TechCaFE project to maximize benefit for teachers, students and game developers.

For more information on TechCaFE visit <http://techbridgeworld.org/programs/techcafe.html>.

The students then recorded their thoughts about the games and their experiences in their personal “TechCaFE Journal.” They also shared their opinions with the researchers in paper surveys and a focus group session at the end of the study. Overall, the students had a lot of fun playing the TechCaFE games. They even requested tougher content and harder games!



# Visiting Artist Shares Tips with 8th Grade Art Class



Baron Batch, accomplished artist and former Steeler, spent time with our 8th grade class, giving insights, suggestions, and encouragement to the group of young artists. Baron took time to review previous work by the students and discuss their individual style and inspiration. During class the group worked with Batch on a collaborative piece while he gave suggestions on topics like the use of the brush, mixing colors, and the right amount of paint. It was an amazing experience for the students!!!

# Dan Emerick 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Fitness Walk

Students and staff participated in a 20-minute walk around campus to reinforce the importance of scheduling time for exercise in our lives fitness in our lives



# WPSD STUDENTS ENJOY SPECIAL OLYMPICS BOCCE TOURNAMENT





# WPSD Students Visit the Pennsylvania State Capitol!

A group of fifth & sixth grade students left the School bright and early on the morning of September 23rd to make the annual trip to Harrisburg. Prior to their trip, these students had been corresponding with their state legislators and learning about our state government in the classroom.

After a few pictures at the fountain in front of the East Wing, the students walked to the House of Representatives and were seated in the gallery to watch the start of Session. They were even introduced to the entire chamber by the Speaker of the House to the entire chamber! Some of the state Representatives who met the students included Rep. Paul Costa, Rep. Jim Marshall, Rep. Brian Ellis, Rep. Eli Evankovich, and Rep. Ted Harhai. In the Senate, the students were able to walk among the Senators' desks on the Floor. Senators, including Sen. Fontana, Wozniak, Sen. Hutchinson, Sen. Vogel and Sen. Kasunic, took time from their busy schedule to meet the students and answer questions. The students had insightful questions and were excited to see first-hand where these public officials work when they are in the Capitol. By the end of the day, the students had crisscrossed the Capitol building many times and boarded the bus home with less energy but more memories.

WPSD is very grateful to Senator Jay Costa and Representative Paul Costa, and their staffs, for their work every year to ensure that our students' day at the Capitol is filled with fun and a full schedule.



## WPSD Students Learn Through Doing in Frick Park

The WPSD High School Urban Ecostewards explored the area of Frick Park that our school is "adopting" for the year. They discovered a plethora of organisms including deciduous and evergreen trees, animals and interesting fungi. They then helped to remove privet, an invasive species of plant. Finally the students planted native trees in an effort to re-balance the local community and improve the health of the park. We'll return a few more times this year to study our adopted ecosystem and help even more!

# An Oakland Learning Experience

The students in the modified high school program took advantage of the local government's support of free admissions to various venues in the Oakland area. The first visit of the day was at Phipp's Conservatory where the students learned about various plants from around the world and why many of the plants are important in our daily lives. After taking a walk and having lunch on the lawns of the Schenley Oval on the University of Pittsburgh campus, the students toured the Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum. Inside the museum, the students were able to see a large collection of Civil War equipment, photos, maps as well as mementos that were donated by veterans and their families. The social studies classes had been studying the Civil War & Reconstruction so this was a great opportunity to reinforce learning.



## RIVERQUEST!

The seventh grade and high school environmental science classes took a trip to RiverQuest. They traveled the three rivers by boat and learned about water quality and how to test the water quality of our rivers. The students then tested the chemistry of the water, found the macro invertebrates that live there, and also looked at microscopic plankton. The conclusion was that the rivers around Pittsburgh are healthy. Two thumbs up! What a fun and educational trip!



# Learning From The Past...

The American History students had the opportunity to visit the Carrie Blast Furnaces, which were once part of the Homestead Steel Works. Our guide, a former US Steel employee, took the students through the process of making iron and shared his personal experiences with us. At one time, the furnaces and steelworkers produced 1000 tons of iron per DAY! The students had a real sense of what a difficult and dangerous job it was to work there, and the tremendous effect it had on Pittsburgh when so many of the mills shut down.

## 6th Grade Students Visit the Outdoor Classroom

Mrs. Gerlach's 6th Grade Science class participated in a one-day field trip to the "The Outdoor Classroom" in Boyce Mayview Park. The hands-on activities and experiments in "Habitats, Land, and Water" reinforced their knowledge about the Earth's water systems such as wetland systems and watersheds.



## TechNight for Middle School Girls

WPSD middle school students take part in TechNight at CMU throughout the school year. Recently the topic was "Smashing Computers." The WPSD students got to see some items that "went back in time" like Apple IIGs floppy disks, 3"x 5" data disks, vacuum tubes, and old transistors. They saw a movie about how the computer uses electrical impulses to process information, and finally they opened old computers and labeled the more significant parts. They even got to take a part home! They truly enjoyed seeing inside the computer and learned a little about how computers actually function.



# SPOTLIGHT

MEET WPSD GRADUATE ROBERT MAHER, JR.

GRADUATE OF THE CLASS OF 2006  
PRESIDENT OF GREATER PITTSBURGH COMMUNITY CENTER FOR THE DEAF AT PITTSBURGH  
ASSOCIATION FOR THE DEAF  
PRESIDENT OF WPSD ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Robert “Bobby” Maher grew up in Blue Knob, near the Altoona area. He comes from large family of WPSD graduates, his dad, Robert Sr. (1980), mother Nancy (Dysard) (1984), his uncle James, (1966), aunt Rita, (1972), aunt Betty (1975), and aunt Louise (1978).

Robert was enrolled at WPSD as a residential student at age four and graduated in 2006. After graduation he worked for 5 years in the auto body and then construction industry before joining WPSD on the night shift housekeeping staff. After a a year and half, he transferred to the maintenance department. He says that being on the WPSD maintenance staff was one of his dream jobs when he was a student at WPSD. He is proud to be part of the WPSD staff.

Robert has been the president of Greater Pittsburgh Community Center for the Deaf at Pittsburgh Association for the Deaf for two years and recently was elected as the president of WPSD Alumni Association. He was also a major contributor to the planning and building of the new Alumni Pavilion that was built on the WPSD campus in 2011.

A self described work-aholic, he can be found working on the rental properties he owns in the area or at one of his

several other jobs, when he is not at WPSD. In his free time he enjoys spending time with his wife, Angel and collecting antique vehicles.

Robert thanks WPSD for all the experiences that helped prepare him for life, challenges and opportunities that showed him what he could achieve! His advice to future generations of WPSD students:



“Figure out what you love to do, then follow it through and choose a career around that. If you love what you do, you will never really work a day in your life. Look at me...I love what I do and I am always busy and happy. You see it as work... I see it as my passion!!

‘Get your hands dirty’... Meaning do not just sit back and learn from others, get involved in what ever activity will help you learn! There are many ways to learn, best way is to participate in the process. Don’t wait for it... do it.

Always try your best to find ways to be a leader. That doesn’t always mean telling people what to do, it means listening to others, getting feedback, promoting teamwork and communication. When you act in this way... many things can be accomplished!”

# Melissa Scheffler

PITTSBURGH BRANCH  
MANAGER

CHUBB GROUP OF  
INSURANCE COMPANIES  
BOARD MEMBER SINCE 2010



*Tell us a little about yourself:*

**Melissa Scheffler:** I am the Branch Manager for Chubb Group of Insurance Companies here in Pittsburgh. My husband and I live in Fox Chapel with our three daughters, Julie-13, Emily-12 and Lindsay-9. I'm currently very involved with an organization called Younglife, an international Christian ministry that reaches out to middle school and high school kids.

**The Western Pennsylvanian recently interviewed WPSD Board of Trustee member Melissa Scheffler about her involvement with WPSD:**

*How did you first become involved with the School?*

**Melissa Scheffler:** I attended one of the 'Fall-In' Auction events several years ago and following the event, the current Board President, Chris McCrady, invited me to tour the school. I remember walking through the Children's Center that day and watching the children interact with the staff and I was hooked!

*What is the most amazing or surprising thing about WPSD?*

**Melissa Scheffler:** The staff and administration are amazing! All across the state, the people who work for WPSD always put the kids first. They give countless hours to make sure that WPSD is the best it can be.

*What is your proudest accomplishment in regards to your board participation?*

**Melissa Scheffler:** Helping to make the decision to build the new dorm. During one of our board meetings, we had the chance to take a tour of the old boy's dorm. We all agreed that it was time to make a significant investment in the campus and provide the kids with superior living facilities. It has been exciting to watch the new Residence take shape and it is awesome to see the kids living there.

*What do you tell friends and associates about WPSD?*

**Melissa Scheffler:** I tell them that WPSD is a special place and one that you have to come see to really appreciate.

Thanks Melissa for agreeing to speak with us and for your continued support of our School and our students!

## The Family Learning Series

Don't miss the opportunity to meet these nationally renowned professionals at our Family Learning Workshops!

Childcare is provided; all sessions will be held at the WPSD, 300 East Swissvale Avenue.

For more information, please contact Martha Hutchinson at (412) 244-4235 or mhutchinson@wpsd.org

### Language

**February 7, 2015**

**9:30 AM - 12:00 PM**

**Nancy Kelly-Jones, M.A.**



Ms. Kelly-Jones has experienced it all: oral training, mainstreaming (without support services) and finally, a school for the deaf where she learned signs for the first time at age 17. She credits her mother for her academic success: a "language planner ahead of her times!" She earned B.A. and M.A. degrees at Gallaudet University, Washington, D.C. After 35 years of teaching, she's currently "rewired" as a consultant on language planning to include both American Sign Language and English in daily experiences.

**March 21, 2015**

**TBA**

**Claudia Pagliaro, Ph.D.**

### Mathematics



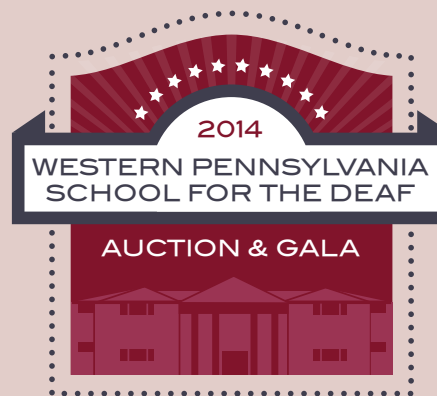
Dr. Pagliaro is a Professor in Specialized Education Services and Coordinator of the B-12 Deaf and Hard of Hearing Teacher Preparation Program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, with more than 25 years' experience in Deaf Education. She holds a B.S. in Deaf Studies and Ed.M. in Education of the Deaf from Boston University, and a Ph.D. in Deaf Education (Curriculum) from Gallaudet University. Prior to earning her doctorate, she taught deaf and hard-of-hearing students at the elementary level. Dr. Pagliaro's research agenda focuses on the mathematics instruction and learning of students who are deaf/hard of hearing, most recently understanding pre-school children's development of numeracy and the influence of parent mediation. Dr. Pagliaro has more than 50 publications and has presented both nationally and internationally.

# DEVELOPMENT

LATEST EVENTS AND FUNRAISING EFFORTS

## The 2014 WPSD Auction & Gala

Thanks to everyone who participated in this year's Gala. Whether a sponsor, donor, attendee or buyer it was with your support that we were able to raise over \$50,000 for the new Residence project. THANK YOU! The 2015 Auction & Gala will be held on Friday, October 9th. See you there!



### *A Special Thank You to the Sponsors of the 2014 Auction & Gala*

#### **GOLD**

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Lighthouse Electric Company, Inc.

#### **TABLE**

VITAC

## Memorial and Honorary Gifts

A charitable gift can be made to the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf to remember and celebrate the lives of our friends and family members. Recognizing anniversaries, birthdays, and other milestones in life are also opportunities to honor and acknowledge those we love and cherish.

These gifts establish a living tribute within the School that allow one to recognize someone special and support the mission, vision, and work of WPSD, changing the lives of deaf and hard of hearing students throughout the Commonwealth. Making a gift in memorial or in honor of someone can be made in any amount and is easy to accomplish.

Simply click **DONATE** and answer a few short questions, including a note that designates the type of gift. The person you identify will receive a letter from WPSD informing them of your gift. You will receive a tax receipt letter acknowledging your tax deductible contribution to the School.

Depending on the nature of your gift, there are a variety of ways we can recognize your generosity and honor your loved one. If you have questions or need more information, please contact Matt Campion, Director of Institutional Advancement at 412.244.4250 or [mcampion@wpsd.org](mailto:mcampion@wpsd.org) or Sarah Bartlebaugh at 412.244.3116 or [sbartlebaugh@wpsd.org](mailto:sbartlebaugh@wpsd.org) at your convenience.

# Amazon Smile

Shop and support WPSD at the same time! The Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf is now participating in the AmazonSmile program offered through one of America's largest online retailers.

AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com) is a website operated by Amazon that allows you enjoy the same wide selection of products, low prices, and convenient shopping that you find on Amazon.com. The difference is that when you shop through smile.amazon.com, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the price of all eligible purchases back to WPSD.

When first visiting AmazonSmile, you will be prompted to select a charitable organization. Simply find the Western Pennsylvania School for Deaf in the list of participating organizations and select the School. It is that easy. Donating to our School and to our students has never been more fun. Don't wait! Follow the link below and start shopping today!  
<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/25-1095386>

*The AmazonSmile Foundation is a 501(c)(3) private foundation created by Amazon to administer the AmazonSmile program. All donations amounts generated by the AmazonSmile program are remitted to the AmazonSmile Foundation. In turn, the AmazonSmile Foundation donates those amounts to the charitable organization selected by the customer. Amazon pays all expenses of the AmazonSmile Foundation. They are not deducted from the donation amounts generated by purchases to AmazonSmile.*



# Community Block Party

The 8th Annual Community Block Party, Car Show and Community Talent Show was held on the WPSD campus and on the Lutheran Church for the Deaf property on September 20th. Our thanks to all of our friends and neighbors who came out to spend the day with us!



# SPORTS

RESULTS, SCORES, HEADLINES FROM THE LIONS

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WPSD SOCCER AND VOLLEYBALL TEAMS.



WE ARE SO PROUD OF THE SPORTSMANSHIP AND TEAMWORK YOU DEMONSTRATED THROUGHOUT THE SEASON. **GO LIONS!**



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2014 HOMECOMING KING & QUEEN:

MICHAEL WEBER & MEGAN MAJOCHA