

**Mt. Lebanon School District**  
**School Board President Report – November 21, 2016**  
**Lawrence M. Lebowitz**

Good evening. I have now been preparing and delivering my President's Report for nearly two years. On perhaps all but one occasion (which was actually my first one in January of last year), I have prepared my remarks just a few days before our meeting. This evening's report, though, is different. After attending our community's annual Halloween Parade on October 29, I was so inspired that I needed to go home right then and start writing. Besides it being a beautiful day, that parade and everything going on around it once again made me realize just how fortunate we all are to live in such a great community. Any why do most people come to live in Mt. Lebanon? The answer, as we all know, is our outstanding School District.

That fact came shining through even more that morning when I saw just how many young families and young children live in our community. The faces of these children—obviously (and understandably) extra happy because of the candy they were receiving—also made me realize just how important and in fact how awesome a responsibility it is for all of us on this School Board. It is us who, in conjunction with and in support of the administration, the teachers and the parents, are responsible for doing everything that we can to ensure that these young minds are given what they

need to grow as both students and people. This is, in fact, not only a responsibility but a privilege. When people ask me (as they often do) how I find time to be on the School Board let alone serve as President, all I need to do is think back on that morning a few weeks ago seeing all of those children. We truly are fortunate to live in a community where education is so important, and we—the nine of us on the School Board—are equally fortunate to be such an important part of it.

Talking about important parts, I would be remiss if I did not thank our outstanding Mt. Lebanon High School Blue Devil Marching Band for their participation in the parade. They truly were right in the middle of it and both looked and sounded fantastic. Again, the amazement and excitement in the eyes of all of their young fans watching the band as it walked by was something to see. Thanks to Mr. Cheskawich, his colleagues and each of the members of the band (including both my son and Mr. Beal's daughter, Annie) for adding to what was indeed a memorable day in Mt. Lebanon.

Another memorable day in our District occurred on Veteran's Day, i.e., Friday, November 11. Celebrations in honor of our community's military heroes were held throughout the District and attended by students, teachers and many people in the community. My thanks to all who organized these very important tributes and, even more, to those who have served our country.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate our High School Model UN Team which won first place at the Penn State University Model UN Tournament held that same weekend (November 10-13) in State College. This was, in fact, the fourth year of the Penn State Model UN Tournament, and our students have won first place every single year. In addition to this team award, four students—namely, Jacob Dale, Eion Wilson-Manion, James Perotti and Grace Brown—won first place honors and four others—Ben Akhtar, Jenny Yu, Marley Howell and Antonio Carapella—received second place honors. Model UN faculty advisors are High School Social Studies teachers George Savarese, Adam Lumish and Pete DiNardo. We both thank them and congratulate the entire team on their success.

Happily, our students are not the only members of the District to be recognized for their achievements. Instead, and this month alone, two Mt. Lebanon High School faculty members were honored with teaching awards from outstanding universities. First, Mrs. Susan Meers, High School Chemistry teacher, was the recipient of the 2016 Yale University Educator Award which recognizes teachers and counselors from around the world who inspire and support their students to perform at high levels and to achieve excellence. Mrs. Meers was nominated by Nancy Lu, Mt. Lebanon Class of 2016 and a freshman at Yale University. Next, Mr. Robert Vogel was honored by Stanford University with their award for Exceptional

Teaching. Mr. Vogel was nominated by Class of 2016 graduate and Stanford University student, Jerry Meng. In his nomination of Mr. Vogel, Jerry wrote as follows: “Mr. Vogel is a devoted music educator and an inspiration to all orchestra students offering world class experiences . . . . Mr. Vogel personalizes the orchestra experience for all students . . . . and his personality is always open and cheerful, which makes it easy and pleasant to work with him.” Congratulations to both Mrs. Meers and Mr. Vogel for these much-deserved awards and thanks to both of them for their continuing efforts on behalf of our students.

Turning now to some not-so-exciting news, and despite what appeared to be an excellent opportunity to do so, the Pennsylvania Legislature again failed to pass pension reform before closing its final session for the year late last month. This is indeed disappointing given the incredible need for reform so as to fix—finally—our state’s broken pension system. We see this, in particular, every budget season and unfortunately will again over the next several months as we work on next year’s budget. A very considerable percentage of our taxpayers’ dollars continue to go toward our PSEERS obligation, and those numbers will unfortunately continue to rise until and unless this problem is finally solved. Mrs. Birks will, I am sure, keep us all closely posted but I again urge each of you to contact your local representatives in support of much-needed pension reform.

As many of you know, a very unwelcome result of the recent election has been numerous incidents of bullying, intimidation and harassment of students around the country. Unfortunately, our District has not been immune from such behavior. Rest assured that the administration, fully supported by this Board, has zero tolerance for this type of behavior and will take any and all necessary measures to ensure that our students are able to learn in an environment that is both supportive and welcoming to all.

It is now time to turn to our selection of this month's Extra Mile winner—Ms. Pam Wagner, our High School Campus Manager. Nominated by High School Unit Principals McGinty, Dirda and Thompson, Pam is responsible for being the “eyes and ears” of the administration throughout our High School buildings. Her genuine interest in our students and staff is obvious as she works tirelessly to ensure a safe school environment. Pam takes a proactive approach with students by building relationships that lead to positive outcomes and welcomes students into the building each and every morning with a smile so as to create a warm and caring environment to start the day. As a result, students trust her and go to her with their problems which is just one example of the positive impact which she has made on our High School student body. So, and on behalf of the entire District and the Board, I want to congratulate and thank Pam Wagner for being this month's Extra Mile winner.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone in the District a happy Thanksgiving. This is most certainly a time to reflect on the things for which we are thankful of which there are many. One, for me, has been the opportunity to serve the District as the School Board President for the past two years. It has indeed been my great honor to lead the Board and work directly with our incredibly talented Superintendent and administrative team and want to thank each of them for all of their support. Good evening.

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