

Instilling Pride. Igniting Passion. Infinite Possibilities.

November 23, 2016

Leading the Way



Above is a screen shot from the "Giving Back to Our Community" video, which highlights the many community service projects that happen at the school and district level. Such activities



There were plenty of options in the serving line during the recent Thanksgiving lunch across the district. Family members were invited

not only support the community, they also complement the academic program and foster compassion and engagement in our students.

to share the special day with their student, celebrating the season and all they are thankful for.

Newest 'Inside Your Schools' Videos Zoom in on Communications, Service

The next two chapters in Lakota's new eight-part video series, "Inside Your Schools," are now available. Please take a moment to learn more about two more priorities guiding our work at Lakota: [Communications & Customer Service](#) and [Giving Back to Our Community](#).

This week, we take a look at all the ways we are stretching ourselves to better engage the larger community in our work. That includes a whole host of efforts ranging from new monthly [coffee chats](#) with the superintendent and treasurer to the school board's continued "[Community Conversations](#)" listening program to ongoing interaction with our business community. We are also enhancing other tools like our [website](#), [social media](#) presence, and [printed](#) and [electronic](#) communications to more proactively share information.

The seventh video emphasizes our commitment to giving back to a community that does so much to support our work. From the perspective of one of our school counselors, it features a range of service activities that complement Lakota's academic program and challenge both students and staff to consider the needs of others – sometimes right here in our own community and even worldwide.

Each part in this new series focuses on different priorities shaping the educational experience we strive to create for every single Lakota student.

Stay tuned for the final video in our series next week, in which we'll recap the values that guide our daily work. The complete series is available at www.lakotaonline.com/insideyourschools

Lakota Hosts Record-Setting Thanksgiving Meal

Lakota students and their families literally got their first taste of Thanksgiving last week when schools across the district opened their cafeteria doors for a special Thanksgiving lunch.

Parking lots were overflowing with family members excited to spend time together to celebrate all they are thankful for.

Students made centerpieces and other artwork to decorate the cafeterias, while extra volunteers pitched in to help serve the record-setting meal.

"The Thanksgiving meal has become so popular that we had to spread it out over two days," said Chris Burkhardt, Lakota's Director of Child Nutrition. "This was the largest Thanksgiving meal we have ever served in the district. It took a lot of planning and many extra helping hands, but we are so happy that we were able to invite family members to join their students for this special meal."

Fun Food Facts

What Lakota Served for Thanksgiving Lunch

3,000 lbs. of turkey

250 gallons of gravy

2,000 lbs. of green beans

2,000 dozen dinner rolls

Equivalent of 15,000 potatoes for mashed potatoes

24,000 servings of stuffing

2,200 lbs. of sliced warm apples

Around Lakota

School Spotlights

Lakota's Logan Named Ohio's 2016 Outstanding Treasurer/CFO

Lakota Celebrates Third School Business Leader Honor in Five Years



Lakota's Jenni Logan (second from right) was named Outstanding Treasurer/CFO of the Year by the Ohio Association of School Business Officials' (OASBO) Foundation for School Business Management. Logan, along with other honorees pictured here, was honored Nov. 16 at the organization's annual conference.

Lakota Local Schools Treasurer Jenni Logan was named the 2016 Outstanding Treasurer/CFO of the Year by the Ohio Association of School Business Officials' (OASBO) Foundation for School Business Management. Logan, a 20-year veteran of school business, received her award Nov. 16 at the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA)'s Capital Conference in Columbus.

Logan was nominated for the honor by Lakota's Chief Operations Officer Chris Passarge.

“(During the last levy campaign), Jenni laid out a vision of financial stability and a plan of sustainability through the implementation of strong financial principles,” Passarge wrote. “She has backed up her vision and plan, as evident in the district’s current financial status.”

Lakota Acting Superintendent Robb Vogelmann added his support to Logan’s nomination. “She has initiated countless changes that have resulted in our financial forecast changing from a deficit spending budget in 2012 to a balanced budget beyond 2019,” Vogelmann wrote. “One of the most important outcomes of her actions is that our students are able to have greater opportunities.”

Logan’s nomination packet referenced a myriad of accomplishments happening under her leadership and contributing to Lakota’s financial turnaround in recent years. That includes a passed levy (after three failed attempts); a balanced budget, paired with a rising cash balance; a consistently high bond rating; frequent bond refinancing; legislative advocacy efforts for state funding; a new and more sustainable compensation model for teachers; a

reorganization of Lakota's data collection process for maximized state funding; and many others.

[Click here for more of the story.](#)

Lakota Schools Honor Our Veterans



From lunches with special guests to assemblies featuring patriotic songs, Lakota schools honored local veterans in a variety of ways this Veteran's Day. Some schools hosted lunches and receptions for their guests, while others held more of an assembly-type event, complete with special readings and performances. At some Lakota schools, student artwork welcomed their guests while others posted photos of their veterans on a Wall of Honor. Regardless of the details, the district-wide intent was a shared one: a time to honor and thank those who have served our country.

At the left, a veteran is greeted by Union Elementary students as part of their celebration. Go to the [district Facebook page](#) to view more photos from around Lakota showing how our students celebrated this special day and these special people.

'Grow Tower' Ties Science, Social Studies Learning for Independence Students



There's an unusual machine in the front office of Independence Elementary – something that looks straight out of a science fiction movie. Yet, despite the strange look, students are flocking to it, eager to see what changes are occurring.

The item – a hydroponic tower garden – combines water, air and special lighting to quickly grow vegetables and fruits. The school launched the garden in early October and fifth grade classes have already begun harvesting fast-growing plants, such as lettuce.

According to Chris Burkhardt, director of Lakota's Child Nutrition and Wellness, the tower garden is a gift from JTM Food Group. "I was working with JTM on another project and they asked me if there was a school in Lakota which could use a garden," he explains. "I learned that classes at Independence Elementary had just finished reading a book about a community garden and I knew we had a perfect match."

"Our fifth grade students read the realistic fiction book *Seed Folks* as part of their social studies curriculum," said Independence Principal Greg Finke. "The story revolves around the start-up of an urban garden and how it builds community among those in the neighborhood."

*Fifth-graders **Kate Law** and **Ethan Kmieske** proudly show some of the vegetables they're growing, thanks to a new hydroponic grow tower courtesy of JTM. The project reinforces language, social studies, math and science concepts, illustrating the interconnectedness of the classes.*

Finke sees another match for fifth-graders at the school. "The tower garden is a perfect way to tie in many of our curriculum lessons as it is an example of the interconnectedness of all the disciplines," he states.

Healthy eating through fresh, naturally-grown vegetables and the thrill of seeing how plants grow are other benefits. In addition, students are honing their science and math skills as they tend the plants. Finke states, "We've seen how the students are so interested in the growing process and the excitement they have in sampling the plants that they've grown. We plan to expand on these concepts by building a school garden in the spring."

Lakota East Holds Anti-Texting, "Drive to Stay Alive" Campaign



Lakota East senior **Sarah Strack** talks about the dangers of distracted driving as one of the presentations during the recent "Drive to Stay Alive" campaign. Sarah, along with her mother Kathy, seated above, shared how texting while driving has impacted their family. Below is the logo for "2 Eyes, Just Drive," the non-profit that Sarah formed to help spread the message.



Lakota East senior **Sarah Strack** knows firsthand the devastation that distracting driving can cause as her 45-year-old uncle, Mark Sevilla, was killed by a driver who was texting. Loss and the hope to prevent others from going through a similar tragedy led her to spearhead the school's "Hawks Drive to Stay Alive" campaign.

During the week-long program, Sarah and her mother, Kathy Strack, shared how distracted driving has impacted their family, especially appropriate for student drivers.

"It is our goal this week to help our students understand how dangerous distracted driving can be for everyone and how they can actively work to prevent this devastation," states Suzanna Davis, Lakota East principal. "Ultimately, our goal is to raise awareness and save lives by bringing attention to this growing problem."

In addition to the presentations, students had the opportunity to take part in a driving simulator that shows them just how dangerous texting and driving can be. Keychains with the "Hawks Drive to Stay Alive" motto were handed out as a visual reminder to stay safe, courtesy of the school's PTSO. And National Honor Society members wrote and posted notes on every locker, helping to spread the word about the dangers of distracted driving.

A parents meeting was also held, which focused on the role parents and guardians have as role models.

"We wanted parents to consider their influence on their student driver and to dialogue with their child throughout the week, regarding the distracted driving events," explains Davis. "As parents we have the biggest impact by being good role models and refraining from using our cell phones while we are driving. As adults we must remember that our students are watching us.....what do they see?"

To conclude the event, students had the opportunity to sign the "Hawks Drive To Stay Alive" banner pledging their commitment to avoid distracted driving.

Sarah is so committed to spreading the word, she has also formed a non-profit called "2 eyes, Just Drive." The organization works to educate all drivers - not just teenagers - about the dangers of distracted driving.

"There are many people who helped make this campaign a reality," states Sarah. "Without their support, we would not have been able to so successfully reach the students with this crucial message."

Strack noted thanks to: the administration and staff of Lakota East; Barb Goff for the banner; Liz Lyons and the Ohio Department of Transportation for lending the driving simulator; Steve Silberberg and Omni

Printing & Promotions; Butler County Safety Council for donating magnets.

"I also thank our family and friends who have been there to hold us up through this journey," added Sarah. "And we also thank the Boone County Sheriff and Prosecutor's Office for making sure justice was served. If we can prevent another family from going through it, it's worth the effort of sharing the dangers of distracted driving."

Champions for Change' Learns from Non-Profit Experts



Professionals from local non-profits recently shared their insight and expertise with Lakota's "Champions for Change," helping the group better understand the unique needs of the diverse families they serve. The panelists shared about the services they provide and strategies for teachers and individuals.

Lakota's newly-formed "Champions for Change" staff group is charged with helping build a stronger culture of inclusiveness that supports high achievement for students of all different backgrounds. And part of being able to work toward that goal means that the champions must first understand Lakota's changing demographics and know what resources are available.

At the group's Nov. 14 session, a panel of non-profit professionals shared insight into the specific audiences they serve and how the demographics of those populations are changing.

Panelists included: Jessica Allshouse, community outreach liaison; Rhonda Benson, NAMI (National Alliance for Mental Illness); Sharon Bogan, Family Promise of Butler County; Kimberli Huston, community outreach liaison; Scott Osterfeld, Butler County Developmental Disabilities; and Lynda Theiler, Lakota's executive director of Special Services.

According to facilitator Dr. Monique Johnson, the six panelists covered the types of services their organization offers and how they interact with schools. They also shared some of the greatest challenges they see facing their clients and strategies school staff might use to complement their work.

Johnson states, "It's important that champions feel empowered to serve our students. One of the ways that we are facilitating that is by learning about resources available in the community and developing a greater understanding of the needs within our district."

The session continues the cultural proficiency work of the champions, who meet on a monthly basis. The program acknowledges a demographic trend at Lakota defined by steady changes in the cultural, racial, socioeconomic and even cognitive make-up of the district's students and families.

The "Champions for Change" program is designed to offer staff the skills and strategies they can use in the classroom to better understand potential barriers and partner with families for the best possible outcome for all students.

Led by Johnson and Aisha Moore, a Lakota teacher on special assignment, a “champion” from every Lakota school and administrative building are meeting regularly throughout this year for practical training provided through reading, open dialogue and even expert visitors on topics like cross-cultural communication, understanding poverty and barriers to the achievement gap. Beginning next year, these leaders will be charged with sharing their learnings and strategies with the rest of their colleagues, in a format that can be applied to their work.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the new program and to view the “Champions for Change” video.

Successful 'Lakota's Got Talent' Showcases Students, Supports Schools



*Congratulations Lakota East seniors **DJ Cleavinger** and **Kat Eroskey**, whose piano and flute duet won the recent Lakota's Got Talent. Thanks to their winning, the school will receive a \$2,000 grant from Youth In Philanthropy.*

It was an evening full of talent as individuals and groups took to the stage for the annual Lakota's Got Talent. Sponsored by the Community Foundation's Youth in Philanthropy, the Nov. 15 event featured performers from seven Lakota schools with many in the audience to cheer on their friends.

According to **Justin Kelley**, a senior at Lakota West and one of the event organizers, “We want to give all who came to watch and those who participated a huge thank you! Because of them, the schools are benefiting greatly.”

Congratulations to Lakota's Got Talent winner Lakota East, who was represented by seniors **Kat Eroskey** playing flute and **DJ Cleavinger** playing piano on the song Swiss Shepard. The school will receive a \$2,000 grant from Youth In Philanthropy.

The creative dance by the Lakota Plains Junior cheerleaders earned them the Peoples' Choice award and merited the school a \$1,000 Youth In Philanthropy grant.

Thanks to the following for their participation in this year's Lakota's Got Talent: **Nolan Meister**, eighth-grader at Lakota Ridge Junior, piano performance of his original songs; sixth-grade Woodland Elementary student **Brady Bierman**, and his assistant **Katie Loftus**, card tricks; Liberty Junior School seventh-grade students **Audra McCullough** and **Jenna Proffit** and eighth-graders **Lexi Granda** and **Brennan Postich**, group singing; seventh-graders at Hopewell Junior School **Kamalpreet Kaur** and **Maci Tracy**, duet; and Hopewell Junior eighth-grader **Josh Sewak**, piano; sophomore **Adrienne McGaha** of Lakota East High, dance; and Lakota West staff Susan Bauer and Laura Dobrozsi, duet.

“We’re very pleased with this year’s success and encourage more students and schools to participate next year,” adds Kelley. “It is always a fun event which helps the schools and showcases the talents of so many.”

[View All District News](#)

New Business

Announcements & Opportunities

Lakota West Swing Dance on Dec. 9

Lakota West bands will hold their annual Swing Dance on Dec. 9 from 7:30 - 10 p.m. in the Lakota West Jazz Club (cafeteria). The whole community is invited to this fun evening that will include old favorites and holiday classics.

In addition, guest dance instructors will be on hand to teach swing dancing, and there will be an opportunity to compete in a dance-off near the end of the night. Tickets will be sold at the door for \$10 (children 3-10 are \$5.00, those under 3 are free).

Approximate performance times are:

7:45 p.m. – West Freshman Jazz Band

8:35 p.m. – West Jazz Combo

9:20 p.m. – West Jazz Ensemble

[Click here for a flyer with more details.](#)

On The Radar

Quick Links & Reminders

No School for Students Nov. 23-25, Dec. 19 - Jan. 3

There will be no school for students on Wednesday, Nov. 23 in lieu of conferences and the district will be closed on Thursday, Nov. 24 and Friday, Nov. 25 for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Looking ahead, students will have no school beginning Monday, Dec. 19 for the winter holiday break. Students return to school on Wednesday, Jan. 4. (Staff will report for professional development on Jan. 3.)

**Next Coffee Connections
is Nov. 30**

Lakota East Baseball Hosts Spaghetti Dinner on Dec. 9

There is no need to make dinner on Friday, Dec. 9 -- just head over to Lakota East for a yummy spaghetti meal!

The Lakota East baseball team is hosting this fundraiser from 4:30 to 7 p.m. in the Lakota East cafeteria. Tickets are just \$5 per person and can be purchased from any baseball player or by contacting Michelle McDonough at 513-235-0373.

[Click here to see the spaghetti dinner flyer.](#)

Lakota's Acting Superintendent Robb Vogelmann and Treasurer Jenni Logan are making it easy for community members to share their comments and insight through monthly informal coffee chats. For an hour, both will be available for drop-in conversation with parents and residents at local coffee houses as part of a new initiative called Coffee Connections.

Mark the following dates on your calendars, enjoy a coffee and make connections as you learn about your school district. The next Coffee Connection will be held Wednesday, Nov. 30, from 2- 3 p.m. at Cappuccino Depot, 9157 Cincinnati-Columbus Road, old West Chester.

Note that there will not be a session in December due to the holidays, but you may want to mark your calendar for upcoming dates in the New Year:

- Wednesday, Jan. 25 from 10-11 a.m.
- Coffee Beans and Brew, 7051 Yankee Road, Liberty Township
- Wednesday, Feb. 22 from 2-3 p.m. –
location to be announced

**MLK Contest Deadline is
Nov. 28**

Students have just a few days to finalize and submit their entries in the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., contest as the deadline of Monday, Nov. 28 is quickly approaching!

The 18th annual *Live the Dream: Our Declaration of Unity* event to honor the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. will take place on Jan. 16, and includes a contest for all students in grades K-12 who reside within the Lakota Local School District.

This year it focuses on Dr. King's idea of the "Beloved Community." Students in junior high and high school are encouraged to submit in writing the equivalent of a two-minute speech. Elementary students may respond through the artistic medium of their choice or through writing. Groups are also invited to enter with skits, songs, artwork or videos that can be presented within the two-minute time limit.

[Click here for more details and an entry form.](#)

Photo of the Week



Recent Community Conversation Gathers Input from Liberty Junior Students

As part of the district's continuing "Community Conversations" program, the Lakota Board of Education heard from about 25 eighth-graders at Liberty Junior School last Thursday. The gathering was the latest in a string of community listening sessions, and the only one so far this year specifically targeting Lakota students.

In its fifth year, the program has previously engaged high school students, but this was the first involving students at the junior high level. Through a mix of small

and large group discussion, students helped the school board and other district leaders better understand their interests and anxieties when it comes to their education.

“Community Conversations” continues to give parents, students, staff and residents an open forum for sharing their ideas and concerns with district leaders to help shape the Lakota experience. Visit our [Community Conversations webpage](#) for upcoming meetings and program information.

Upcoming Events

Event Spotlights

- [Wednesday, Nov. 23](#)
No School for Students (in lieu of conferences)
- [Thursday, Nov. 24 - Friday, Nov. 25](#)
District Closed for Thanksgiving
- [Wednesday, Nov. 30](#)
Coffee Connections with the Superintendent, Treasurer - Cappucino Depot
2 - 3 p.m.
- [Monday, Dec. 12](#)
Lakota Board of Education Meeting - Central Office
7 p.m.

[See Full Calendar](#)

Lakota In The News

Community Coverage

Journal-News

[Lakota, barbershop team up to help improve student literacy](#)

[Deadly texting: Lakota teen's grief transformed into public campaign](#)

[Lakota teacher wants students to see the best in their work](#)

Cincinnati.com

[In Butler County, a student's idea to cure HIV/AIDS](#)

Latest E-Flyers

What's News This Week?

As a reminder, E-Flyers is Lakota's way of distributing information about programs, classes, events and opportunities happening in our schools and around the community. Rather than sending flyers home with students, we are now posting all approved information on the E-Flyer page, making it easy for families to access all current opportunities. Here is a listing of all of the new district and community-sponsored flyers for this week.

District-Sponsored:

- [Lakota West Swing Dance \(Dec. 9\) - All ages](#)
- [Potbelly Fundraiser for East Bands: 4-8 pm \(Dec.2\)](#)

Community-Sponsored Flyers:

- [Youth Ballet Holiday Performance \(Dec. 9-11\)](#)
- [West Chester Soccer Club Spring Regist. \(Ages 4+\)](#)
- [OESA Vapors Soccer by Ohio Elite \(U5-U8\)](#)

- [Lakota West Swing Dance \(Dec. 9\) - All ages](#)

**All Current
E-Flyers**

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