

FEATURED

Celebrating Lakota Teachers and Staff

Schools Host Teacher and Staff Appreciation Week Activities

It's Teacher and Staff Appreciation Week, and all across the district Lakota's teachers and staff are being celebrated for the energy and passion they bring to work each day.

"Because I spend a lot of time in the community, I know how much our staff is appreciated by others," said Superintendent Karen Mantia. "Over and over when I'm talking to community members, someone tells me about a great teacher or bus driver or custodian or principal, who has made some positive mark in their child's life. All those extra things that are done for our kids are noticed and valued, and it is wonderful to have a week like this where all of us can stop to pause and say thank you."

Those 'thank you's' have been taking place in creative ways all week at Lakota schools, and are most often headed up by parent-teacher organizations. Here are just a few examples of the celebrations that took place this past week:

At **Heritage Elementary**, the week included yummy breakfasts, potato and salad bars, a Mexican fiesta, and lots of desserts.

At **Woodland Elementary**, the PTO treated the staff like Hollywood stars each day, with activities such as a "VIP Luncheon," snack cart for the stars and a popcorn bar and raffle.



Cherokee Elementary celebrated their "All Stars" with a snack cart, a breakfast of champions, concession stand snacks, a coaches' time out (luncheon), daily raffles and player awards.

On Monday, the staff at **Freedom Elementary** was greeted with sidewalk chalk messages created by students, and a paper cup display in the fence at the front of the school. And the special daily treats included Monday's coffee bar themed "We'd like to ESPRESSO our thanks for all you do" day (coffee bar and Wednesday's theme of "Thanks for QUENCHING our kids' THIRST for knowledge" day (water bottles and bottle fillers). They concluded with box lunches Friday which was proclaimed "Thanks for thinking outside the box (lunch)" day.





Students at **Shawnee Early Childhood School** showered their teachers with cards, pictures, hugs, books for the classroom, flowers and special treats. Other activities for staff included a luncheon, chair massages and a snack cart with cake pops.

Independence Elementary kicked off the week of celebrations with a “thanks a bunch for taking care of our munchkins” theme. The staff lounge was filled with bananas with funny messages written on them, “thanks a bunch” bottled water and plenty of munchkin donuts. Parent volunteers also set up appreciation stations during the students’ lunchtime so that students could write thank you notes to staff members.



Celebrations weren't limited to just this week. **VanGorden Elementary** celebrated teachers in March, and **Liberty Early Childhood School** will be honoring staff with a super hero theme next week. Events planned include a snack cart and luncheon, and students will bring in school supplies, favorite

recipes, sweet treats, and draw pictures or write letters for their teachers. On Friday, the students will honor their local heroes (the staff) by dressing up as a super hero.

Thank you to all Lakota teachers and staff members for all you do!

Bond Refinancing Yields Taxpayer Savings

Overall Bond Savings Up to \$6.9 Million



Lakota's recent efforts to refinance its bonds will save local taxpayers a total of \$900,000.

"Since we saw the benefit of refinancing our bonds a few years ago and made this a recurring process, the overall savings is up to \$6.9 million over the last few years," said Lakota Treasurer Jenni Logan.

"When you're dealing with a \$149.5 million annual operating budget, it might not seem like much," Logan continued, "But every savings we can manage on something like debt service payments gives us that much more latitude to put our resources against opportunities for students."

The bonds originated in January 2006 after the community voted to approve a bond levy. Bonds allow school districts to borrow funds, at a fixed interest rate, to help pay for immediate, high-cost expenses, without depleting its cash reserve. These have been used primarily to finance construction of new schools.

Local tax collections tied to the bond levy cover Lakota's annual debt service payments on those bonds. Now that the district's payments are lower, taxpayers will see a correlating difference in their own local tax payments.

"We are proud of the fact that we are operating on balanced budget and have been for quite some time now," Logan said. "These kinds of savings will help us extend that trend."

Lakota Superintendent Dr. Karen Mantia added, "This move is no different than what we do to keep costs low in our own homes. I appreciate Ms. Logan making this type of maintenance to our debt a priority."

Contech Employees Beautify Schools for Earth Day

Company's Mission of Service Helped Several Lakota Schools



As part of their corporate values, Contech Engineered Solutions focuses on collaboration and responsibility. The company, which is headquartered in West Chester, encourages their employees to engineer solutions that help build, support and sustain land development projects while protecting the land. And recently, Contech employees shared their expertise with several Lakota schools as they completed landscaping and other on-site projects.

In mid-April, Contech employees visited Shawnee Early Childhood Center, Union Elementary and Liberty Junior, assisting with a wide range of tasks, including weeding and mulching flower beds, planting flowers and bushes, and even creating flower pots at the school entrances.

"This is the second year that Contech has sent their employees out to the schools to provide the labor and supplies," said Angie Brown, who helps coordinate community outreach opportunities for Lakota. "What a wonderful way to observe and honor Earth Day while also supporting our district. We so appreciate their ongoing involvement with our schools, especially as they tackled projects that bring such joy and beauty to the schools."

Principal Eric Bauman agreed, "I really appreciate the time, effort and resources that Contech put toward making the front entrance to Liberty Junior beautiful and inviting."

SCHOOL SPOTLIGHTS

Elementary Schools

HOPEWELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Hopewell Elementary Celebrates New Rain Garden

Space Benefits Student Learning, Local Water Quality

A new rain garden at Hopewell Elementary is doubling as an outdoor classroom for student learning and a storm water management system for improved water quality in a neighboring creek that feeds into the Ohio River.

The project, dedicated with a school and community ribbon cutting on Friday, April 29, filters and slows large amounts of storm water flowing from the school parking lot and soccer fields into the East Fork Mill Creek. The three new landscapes, planted by Hopewell students last spring, help lessen erosion, reducing sediment pollution and protecting the stream's habitat and water quality.

Students filled the gardens with native plants, flowers and prairies, providing a "treatment train" for water entering the stream. The project has since served as a student laboratory for studying healthy ecosystems and learning about native plants and wildlife. Students have used the space to calculate storm water run-off, among many other experiments.

"This project was a perfect match for the Hopewell community," said Principal Christina French. "In addition to beautifying our school grounds, it has so much potential for hands-on student learning. Plus, it has the added benefit of serving a larger community need."

Project partners included the Butler Soil and Water Conservation District, the Mill Creek Watershed Council of Communities, and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, which funded the project through a surface water improvement grant.

[Click here to view a brief video](#) from the ribbon cutting ceremony produced by West Chester Township.



Above, students fill the gardens with native plants, flowers and prairies, providing a "treatment train" for water entering the stream. The project has since served as a student laboratory for studying healthy ecosystems and learning about native plants and wildlife. Students have used the space to calculate storm water run-off, among many other experiments.



A community dedication ceremony was held on Friday, April 29, 2017. Hopewell Elementary students, Soledad Gerlaugh and Principal Christina French joined the community to celebrate the new rain garden.

High Schools

LAKOTA EAST & WEST HIGH SCHOOL

Final Signing Days Honor Student-Athletes

Lakota East and West high schools recently held their spring athletic signing days, honoring student-athletes who will continue their athletic careers at the college level.

The two ceremonies were attended by family, friends, administrators, coaches, teachers and other Lakota staff.

Lakota East



Photo courtesy of Trim Photo.

Morgan Smith (Beach Volleyball – University of Alabama)

Devin Singh (Soccer – University of Findlay)

Taylor Best (Soccer – Bluffton University)

Spenser Parks (Volleyball – Alabama A & M University)

Brad Barren (Swimming – Wittenberg University)

Alex Nucерino (Swimming – John Carroll University)

Lakota West



Photo courtesy of Jenny Walters Photography.

Kelly McCord (Softball - Thomas More College)
Shane Harris (Baseball - Wittenberg University)
Dallis Schaefer (Baseball - Tiffin University)
Simone Henderson (Track - Hanover College)
Maya Andrews (Track - Morehead State)
Lucas Tohill (Lacrosse - Hanover College)
Andrew McEwen (Soccer - Capital University)
Luc Gendreau (Football - Centre College)
Reagan Stone (Golf - Capital University)
Madison Stone (Golf - Capital University)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Student Fees Due By End of School Year

Annual student fees are charged to help defray the costs of materials and supplies that support the curriculum. These fees are standardized in grades K-6, with all students paying the same amount (\$35.) Student fees in grades 7-8 have a \$50 baseline, and may vary above that based on the specific courses a student is taking. Fees in grades 9-12 vary based on the classes being taken.

In the interest of fairness to all students and families, Lakota requires that the fees be paid by the end of the school year. A student's fourth-quarter report card will not be released until the fees have been paid. As the report cards are available via Home Access Center (HAC), a student's HAC account will also be turned off until the fees are paid.

If your child's fees have not yet been paid, please contact your school office to make arrangements for payment. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Lakota Schools Closed June 28 through July 8

Summer School Office at Ridge Junior Open to Help with Summer Programming

For parents' convenience, the main offices at all Lakota schools will only be closed to the public for two weeks out of the summer, from June 27 through July 8.

Lakota's Summer School office will be open during this time and available to assist with summer programming questions. Please direct all inquiries to the Ridge Junior Summer School Office at 254-0426.

School office staff will respond to all inquiries after July 8. All other urgent inquiries during this time period may be directed to Lakota's Central Office at 874-5505.

Open Enrollment Begins for 2016-17 School Year

The Lakota Board of Education renewed the approval of Lakota's open enrollment policy for the 2016-2017 school year. [Under Board Policy 5113](#), students residing in other Ohio school districts can apply to attend Lakota.

Current open enrollment students receive first priority and can renew their status immediately. These families are guaranteed to maintain their current status if they return their completed application to the Enrollment Center by May 13. Applications will be mailed home to every family currently participating in open enrollment.

Open enrollment for new open enrollment students begins May 16 and will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis. Applications and a list of required documents will be available by May 16 on the [Enrollment Center website](#) and are due May 31.

In an effort to keep classes at their standard size, the district places a cap on the number of open enrollment students it can accept each year. New applicants may not always receive their first school of choice, depending on the school's base enrollment for students residing within its attendance zone.

EVENT SPOTLIGHTS

High Schools Host 'Relay for Life' Events

Over the next two weekends, Lakota high school students will hold their fifth annual 'Relay for Life' events, bringing the community together to support those affected by cancer.

Lakota West Relay for Life
Lakota West Track
May 6-7 from 4 p.m. - 8 a.m.

Lakota East Relay for Life
Lakota East Track
May 13-14 from 5 p.m. - 6 a.m.

During the 'Relay for Life' events, students camp out overnight around the school track and participate in fun activities. Students form teams, soliciting donations from sponsors to raise funds for the American Cancer Society. At least one participant from each team walks around the track at all times, representing the fact that cancer never sleeps.

Last year the two schools collectively raised over \$90,000 for the American Cancer Society. In fact, last year Lakota West won the All-American Award from the American Cancer Society for how they embodied the spirit of the 'Relay For Life' movement, showed growth, and united the community in the fight against cancer. Shown below are this year's committee members for West's Relay for Life.



The Relay For Life of Lakota West was one of three award winners in the Cincinnati area and the only youth event winner in the state of Ohio.

Please consider supporting the Relay for Life events at both high schools. For more information, click on the links below:

[Lakota East's Relay for Life](#)
[Lakota West's Relay for Life](#)

East vs. West Senior Girls Powder Puff Football Game Next Saturday

Proceeds Support Youth in Philanthropy Grants

Youth in Philanthropy's fourth annual East vs. West senior girls powder puff football game will take place at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 14 at Lakota West High School.

Tickets are \$5 at the gate and all proceeds benefit the YIP fund held at The Community Foundation of West Chester/Liberty. YIP provides high school students with hands-on experience in philanthropy and community involvement. Students create fundraisers to enable the group to provide grants that benefit youth in the community.

Rotary Club's Buckeye BBQ Fest Set for May 20-21

The Rotary Club of West Chester/Liberty will host the annual Buckeye BBQ Fest on May 20-21 at the Square at Union Center. The event will feature two nights of non-stop blues from 11 top bands, a classic car show, and food vendors (20 BBQ, 15 dessert, kettle corn, and more). There will also be a kids zone with inflatables and a petting zoo on Saturday. The Buckeye BBQ Fest will run from 5 – 11 p.m. on Friday and noon to 11 p.m. on Saturday.

A one-day pass is \$5 per person and free for children under 12. [Click here for more details.](#) The Rotary Club is a group of entrepreneurs, experienced business leaders and community advocates—all dedicated to providing “service above self” to friends and neighbors—near and far. The group supports many Lakota community causes.

OPPORTUNITY

Youth in Philanthropy Applications Due May 13

The Community Foundation's Youth in Philanthropy Committee is currently accepting applications for the 2016-2017 school year.

Youth in Philanthropy (YIP) is a program designed to introduce local high school students to philanthropy and community development. The program provides hands-on experience that benefits both the participating students and local charities. By their involvement with the Youth In Philanthropy program, students work in the community to raise money, build endowment funds and make grants to non-profit organizations working to improve the lives of youth in our community. Engaging youth in philanthropy is an opportunity to prepare young people to be active, lifelong community citizens.

Applications are due to the Community Foundation office by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, May 13. Applicant interviews will be conducted following an informational meeting on Monday, May 16 at 7:00 p.m. [Download an application](#) or visit the [Community Foundation's website](#) for details. For questions or more information, please contact karen@wclfoundation.com or call 513-874-5450.

E-FLYERS: What's New 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.

Community-Sponsored Flyers:

- [British Elite Summer Soccer Camps](#)
- [Community Foundation's Kids2Kamp Open House/Registration \(free week of summer camp\) - May 4/5](#)
- [May Volunteer Opportunities from Community Volunteer Force \(All ages\)](#)
- [Summer Programs at the Boys & Girls Club \(Ages 7-15\)](#)
- [Young Rembrandts Summer Camps for Kids \(Ages 4-12\)](#)

To view all of the current flyers, please [click here to go to Lakota's E-Flyers page](#). For flyers specific to a school, please visit that school's website.

PHOTO OF THE WEEK

Heritage Elementary: Egypt Day



While it may look as if time-travelers from ancient Egypt took over Heritage Elementary, it is really the culmination of sixth grade students' "Living History" project.

The students worked for two weeks preparing for the big day, which was filled with various student-led learning components. They participated in hands-on activities that allowed students to experience life as an Ancient Egyptian, with stations such as an explanation of mummification, writing Hieroglyphics and learning the game of Senet. Students then participated in a 40-minute skit recapturing the life of a pharaoh and its citizens. The final activity consisted of an Egyptologist sharing Egyptian history.



UPCOMING DISTRICT EVENTS

Monday, May 9

[Lakota Board of Education Meeting - Central Office - 7 p.m.](#)

Thursday, May 12

[Write Challenge Reception - 6:30 p.m.](#)

Thursday, May 19

[Early Release for Students](#)

[Lakota West Graduation - Cintas Center - 7 p.m.](#)

Friday, May 20

[Early Release - Last Day of School for Students](#)

[Lakota East Graduation - Cintas Center - 8 p.m.](#)

Monday, May 23

[Lakota Board of Education Meeting - Central Office - 7 p.m.](#)

More district events...

LAKOTA 'IN THE NEWS'

Today's Pulse

[Schools update policies to address social media threats](#)

Journal-News

[Lakota teens design system to help food pantry save time, money](#)

[Lakota bond changes save taxpayers \\$900,000](#)

[Looking for a job? Butler County school districts hiring support staff](#)

IMPORTANT LINKS

[Lakota's Homepage](#)

[More District News](#)

[District Calendar](#)

[Lakota on Facebook](#)

[Archived Newsletters](#)