

## LAST EDITION OF THE YEAR

We hope you enjoy this last edition of "This Week at Lakota" for the 2015-2016 school year, which celebrates our Class of 2016 and still more student achievements.

A bit of housekeeping: Lakota is upgrading its mass notification system for next school year. **If you wish to continue receiving school and district communications in the form of email, phone calls and/or text message, please pay special attention to the "Announcements" section below. We ask that all parents, guardians, staff and community members take action.**

Enjoy your summer!

## FEATURED

### [Celebrating the Class of 2016](#)



The sea of confetti at Xavier University's Cintas Center was a fitting way to celebrate the end of last week's ceremonies for the 1,220 graduates of Lakota East.

During the commencement ceremonies, several graduates addressed their peers and the thousands of family and friends there to support them. They reflected on their journey and talked about the future.

Each school's valedictorian shared very different insights and advice with their fellow graduates.



At Lakota West's ceremony Thursday night, valedictorian **Nick Zahneis** took his peers and the audience on a journey through elementary school, junior high, and high school. The journey included Crocs, Aeropostale, awkward school dances, and wearing the Lakota name with pride, popular songs, and finding true friends. Through the years, Nick said that they were not always the same but there was always one thing that they could count on to stay the same: "chicken nugget Tuesday."

Nick said that West's Class of 2016 has also changed a great deal since the beginning, but still embraces the core values of the school: respect, compassion and responsibility. He concluded by saying the time they had at Lakota was an adventure, and when the time came, they were ready to start a new one.

Phoebe discovered this for herself at a young age and wanted to find some part of life that brings a sense of purpose and to be alive in the moment. "No matter what happens, you genuinely excited to be here."



On Friday night, Lakota East valedictorian **Phoebe Tremper** began her speech this way: "Letting go of who other people think you are. In that moment you become the most genuine person you can be. This is exhilarating."

Phoebe discovered this for herself at a week-long government camp last summer, and her wish for her classmates was to find a sense of contentedness regardless of what is expected or what others might say... to be happy no matter what this entails, no matter what the sacrifices may be, no matter how far you may have to go.

## Lakota's Top Students Deliver Speeches, Advice for Younger Students

Lakota's valedictorians and salutatorians are taking much more than a high GPA with them as they leave Lakota to go on to college. Over the past four years, they have learned many lessons, some of which they shared during their speeches at commencement. Here's a little background on the Class of 2016's top students.

Lakota East salutatorian **Chris Pitaniello** will be attending Purdue University in the fall to pursue a degree in engineering. "Chris has shown a quiet dedication to excellence. Through his commitment to a rigorous academic program as well his involvement with the instrumental music program, Chris has shown excellence. His attention to detail is evident in all that he does."

While in high school, Chris was a member of the percussion section of the marching band, and took part in the Procter & Gamble engineering internship. Chris opened up his mind to the different types of engineering, and he looks forward to applying his love of math and the sciences to solve real world problems in the future. He is excited to be providing him with lots of interesting opportunities, and encourages younger students to use their high school experience to make connections. Another piece of advice is to be easy and to not get too stressed – just do the best you can.

Lakota East valedictorian **Phoebe Tremper** plans to attend The Ohio State University and will most likely go into a field that is biology-related. She likes the research programs at OSU will give her the opportunity to explore a number of fields. During high school, Phoebe was in Mu Alpha Theta (math honors society), the yearbook editor. "I think the best advice for younger students is to strive for success because it is what YOU want – it goes much farther that way."

Principal Davis feels that Phoebe Tremper embodies academic achievement. "Through her commitment to her studies to her involvement in the instrumental everything she does with a quiet confidence, leading by example."

**Annika Yardy**, salutatorian at Lakota West, is going to McMaster University in Ontario. Annika will be part of a unique program at McMaster where she will be a chemical and biomedical engineer.

While at Lakota, Annika has participated in band, the National Honor Society and peer counseling. She states that her teachers have been phenomenal because of their welcoming nature, have helped her excel. Her advice to younger students: Don't be afraid to ask questions of peers and teachers. "Annika could be seen before and after school in order to enhance her understanding of classroom content," said Principal Elgin Card. "She serves as an exemplary representative of academic achievement."

Lakota West valedictorian **Nick Zahneis** will be attending the University of Maryland to study chemical engineering. Nick began in Lakota as a preschooler, and Lakota for providing him with opportunities for enrichment both inside and outside of the classroom. He has been on the leadership team for the peer council, treasurer for the National Honor Society and worked on a district-wide book drive. As a junior, he participated in the P&G Internship Program, and the experience was as his career choice.

Nick's advice to incoming freshmen: Be well-balanced in your activities (both inside and outside of school) and remember that grades in your freshman year matter. Principal Card states that "Nick's teachers speak highly of him not only for his academic achievements, but for his ability to lead and help others. He was a fine representative of the all-around students we have at Lakota West."

### Fast Facts about the Class of 2016

**1,220:** Total graduates  
(616 - East, 604 - West)

**97 percent:** Graduation rate

**82.4 percent:** Attending a 2- or 4-year college or university this fall.

**35:** Graduates serving their country in a branch of the armed forces.

**23 percent:** Earning an Honors diploma, signifying they maintained a 3.5 average GPA and earned a 27 or higher on the ACT, among other academic qualifiers.

**\$19.7 million:** Scholarships for the pursuit of higher education.

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**To view Facebook albums of the graduation ceremonies,  
click on the links below.**

[Lakota East's Graduation](#)  
[Lakota West's Graduation](#)



## Congratulations to the Class of 2016!

### Federally-Funded Summer Feeding Program Now Has Wheels

#### *Lakota Rehabs Buses to Provide Free Meals to All Eligible Children*



*Carol Adkins, Lynn Gilkey, Laurie Straub and Emma Humrichouser are prepped and awaiting local children as part of the summer food program, that provides free lunches to Lakota students. The re-purposed bus lets the food easily be taken to the youth, especially those who otherwise could not partake due to lack of transportation.*



Looking for a way to provide convenient, nutritious meals to area youth, Lakota Schools decided to repurpose a couple of buses that otherwise would have gone to auction due to their age.

"We determined that these buses were no longer suitable to transport our students, but they still had a lot of life left in them," said Passarge, Lakota's chief operations officer. "By removing several rows of seats, we can take the buses to various neighborhoods, reaching kids who might otherwise not have been able to participate due to lack of transportation."

The program, which is a collaboration between the Faith Alliance, the Butler County Success program, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Any Lakota student up to 18 years old (21 if disabled) can participate. Students on Lakota's free and reduced lunch program get proper nutrition over the summer, too.

This is the second year that Lakota has been involved to help expand the summer food program. The program has been running for several years ago.

"We think more students will take advantage of the program, thanks to the visibility of the bus program," said Chris Burkhardt. And word is spreading, [through such articles as this recent one](#) by Michael Cla...

This year, thanks to the buses, several sites have been added, with the free lunch program now available at:

Deer Run/Mill Creek Apartments  
7846 Mill Creek Cr., West Chester  
Monday-Friday: Noon -12:40 p.m.

Countryside Village  
5126 Hamilton Middletown Rd., Liberty Twp.  
Monday-Friday: 11-11:40 a.m.

Princeton Village  
8953 Princeton Glendale Rd., West Chester  
Monday-Friday: 1 -1:15 p.m.

Meadow Ridge Apartments  
5270 Aster Park Dr., West Chester  
Monday-Friday: 11:40 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Lakota Lakes Apartments  
6757 Lakeside Dr., West Chester  
Monday-Friday: 12:30 -1:15 p.m.

Gettysburg Estates

*Various food stations inside the mobile kitchen include fresh fruit, healthy drinks and even a hot food selection. A second bus goes into the neighborhoods too, so kids can have a place to eat, socialize and participate in fun, yet educational activities.*

8600 Cincinnati-Columbus Rd., West Chester  
Monday-Friday: 11 -11:15 a.m.

Liberty Jr. High School  
7055 Dutchland Blvd., Liberty Township  
Monday-Friday: 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

According to Burkhardt, last summer there was one site with about 100 children, totaling just over 300 meals. This summer, projections are for about 600 kids to be fed, or about 30,000 meals.

"By removing the seats, we created in effect mobile kitchens, so the students can walk through the neighborhood and offer a hot meal item, which for some of the kids may be the meal of the day," Burkhardt said. "We're even able to offer a hot meal item, which for some of the kids may be the meal of the day."

Students who were eligible for free and reduced school meals during the 2015-2016 school year are still eligible for the program. Volunteers are still needed to support the program; [visit the Faith Alliance's website](#) for more information.

## **Ukulele Art Project Supports Cincinnati Children's Hospital**

*Ridge Junior Students' Artwork Raising Funds for Music Therapy Program*



*Students at Ridge Junior took part in a unique art project benefiting Cincinnati Children's Hospital music therapy program (left to right): Marialinda Roblero Escalante, Brielle Brown, art teacher Amy Panfalone, Ronit Hiryr, and Stephanie Trejo.*

Art has been known to impact lives in many ways and now, thanks to Ridge Junior students, there's one more way in which original artwork is positively helping others.

Students in Amy Panfalone's art class decided to share their talents to create ukulele art with special themes, focusing on empathizing with children facing chronic or terminal illness. The school district was approached by True Joy Acoustics to have students paint four ukuleles in total. Their purpose is to attract sponsors and ultimately donate a much larger set of new ukuleles to the music therapy program at Cincinnati Children's Hospital.

The 27 designs created across Amy's art class students were inspired by four themes: the range of emotions that accompany illness; the ripple effect of a caring heart; how music can soothe the soul and help with healing; and children helping children through recovery. Then a panel of 12 judges, comprised of music and art therapists working in pediatric hospitals, as well as a professional children's book author and artist, reviewed the designs. Many sent notes in with their votes praising the incredible work of the students. The panel also included a special guest, the mother of an honorary Cincinnati Children's Hospital patient who painted her ukulele with the help of her music therapist.

Each ukulele artwork was unique and included a personal statement from the artist, creating even more insight and inspiration. Narrowing the field to four designs for actual instrument painting was a difficult task. The artists selected were: **Ronit Hirzur, Brielle Brown, Stephanie Trejo, and Marialinda Roblero Escalante.**

"It has been great to see a teacher inspire her students to take the lessons well beyond the classroom through this community outreach project," said Greg Huntington, founder of True Joy Acoustics. "Instruments donated from this project will touch hundreds of hospitalized children for years to come. It is obvious that the final painted ukuleles, as well as the entire set of artworks captured in a PowerPoint gallery, have been created with an abundance of heartfelt talent."

The initiative has several components, including a display at Midpointe Library of the four student-painted ukuleles, plus two other instruments painted by professional artist Johanna Wright. The display, which runs June 1-30, will also include images of the ukulele painted by Kenna, the honorary patient who passed away after a long battle with cancer. Kenna's ukulele resides with her family in Montana.

More than \$1,500 has already been pledged by local individuals in honor of this work.

According to Huntington, "The fundraising now shifts to a second phase via online CrowdFunding, with the goal of supplying a total of 20 new ukuleles for Cincinnati Children's Hospital. The ukuleles are innovative and rugged in design, enabling them to last a long time in the hospital. They retail for about \$200 each. The campaign will be stretching and hopefully support the donation of a similar set for music therapy at Seattle Children's Hospital. The latter is a 'sister city' beneficiary for True Joy Acoustics ukulele donations."

The online campaign launches in June, concurrent with the public library display. Anyone interested in seeing all of the student artwork and desiring to support the initiative may do so by visiting the website [www.truejoyacoustics.com](http://www.truejoyacoustics.com).

"Kenna passed away five years ago and would have turned 14 this coming August. She would be around the age of the students who participated in this project," stated Huntington. "Somehow, I feel it's more than coincidence that Amy and her students stepped forward to bring this project to life without knowing her story beforehand."

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## **Hopewell Inventors Take on National Competition**

*Students Compete Against 300+ Youth*

Thanks to their strong placing in the regional qualifier, eight students from Hopewell Elementary ventured to Washington D.C. last weekend for the National Invention Convention and Entrepreneurship Expo (NICEE). The event, which is by invitation only, was the first ever national Invention Convention and featured about 300 student inventors from across the United States who displayed their critical thinking skills through innovative and entrepreneurial activities which apply solutions to everyday problems.

According to Carrie Murray, fifth-grade teacher at Hopewell and advisor for the school's Invention Convention teams, the experience itself was full of learning opportunities. She explained, "We had a great time and the kids were able to see parts of Washington, especially the Air & Space museum. They heard from different inventors including a NASA engineer and a speaker who works with the patent office."

The Hopewell students were invited to the event based on their placement at the southwest regional event held in April at Central State University, bringing home more awards than any other school attending. This includes the top award possible, the Edison Award with a \$2,500 prize, which fifth-graders **Hamza-Alex Hmeidan** and **Zain Hanieh** received for their "EWatch," an invention that helps with fire safety and locating lost items.

Other Hopewell students placing at the regionals were:

- **Caitylyn Spaulding** and **Magdelana Huss** for their Charcoal H2O project, earning second place in the "Beyond the Bean" award in the environmental category
- **Jaelyn Reid** for her helmet pocket 0.1 invention, meriting a second place superior award in the organization category
- **Tennel Bryant** and **Bryce Pearce** for their BOY 2.0 project, receiving a third place superior award in sports category; and
- **Ella Bills** and **Shelby Shah** for the Sheila Shield, earning a seventh superior award in the sports category

The students' journey began March 23 at the school's first Invention Convention event when dozens of fifth grade students shared their inventions during an open house ([covered in the April 8 edition of This Week at Lakota](#)). From there, 52 projects moved on to the southwest regionals.

"Both the variety of and creation behind all of the students' invention is very impressive," said Christina French, Hopewell principal. "This being our first year to be involved, I'm so pleased at the participation and interest all of our fifth graders have shown. They truly like using their creativity to address real-life problems and I'm certain such interest will continue to grow."

Murray added, "I could not be more proud of the effort and dedication that my students and their families had making sure they could attend Nationals. I wish I could tell you that a Hopewell project or two were awarded an honor. However, I don't think you can say that anyone who left Nationals without an award was a loser. In my book they are winners for the risk they took and their hard work."



*Hopewell Elementary students, Hamza-Alex Hmeidan and Zain Hanieh, at the National Invention Convention and Entrepreneurship Expo in Washington, D.C. Another student was not able to attend.*



*At Hopewell's Invention Convention on March 23, Hamza-Alex Hmeidan is seen with his E Watch project, explaining his concept to a visitor.*



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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Lakota Receives Financing Evidence for Pending Boys & Girls Club Lease Agreement

At the May 23 school board meeting, the Lakota Board of Education received evidence of the financing that the Boys & Girls Club of West Chester/Liberty needs to begin building its new facility in place of the old Union Elementary school.

The implementation of a long-term land lease for this use is contingent on the club presenting by June 1, 2016 what the school board considers “satisfactory evidence” of financing. The board will review the evidence before delivering a final decision at a special meeting this Thursday, May 26 at Lakota’s Central Office. The meeting will begin with executive session at 6 p.m.

“This is an important business decision and we need to exercise our due diligence in reviewing the documentation we’ve been provided,” said Board President Lynda O’Connor.

“The deliberation over the actual lease agreement with the Boys & Girls Club took place two years ago,” O’Connor continued. “This is a good business decision for the school district, and now, we are simply following through with our promise to review the validity of the financing.”

For more information about the collaboration agreement between the Lakota Board of Education and the Boys & Girls Club of West Chester/Liberty, please view these [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

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### New Notification System Offers Convenience, Customization

*Action Required by July 1 to Continue Receiving Lakota Communications*

**If you wish to continue receiving Lakota notifications, please pay close attention to this update. All parents, guardians, staff and community members are required to take action.**

Lakota is upgrading its mass notification system for delivering important school and district messages via email, phone and text message. Effective July 1, all Lakota communications will be disseminated from our new communications platform, providing these improved benefits to you:

- **Customize your notification preferences.** Choose which phone numbers and email addresses should receive which types of communications – emergency, weather-related or general school/district news and announcements.
- **No more annual updates.** The new system automatically recognizes your associated school(s), grade level(s) and even language preference, and will update as this information changes in our student and staff databases.
- **Manage your sign-ups from a single platform.** While we still ask that parents and guardians keep their information in Home Access Center updated for one-on-one communication needs, all mass notification sign-ups will happen in one location now.

**Please take action before July 1, 2016** to ensure you continue receiving important communications from Lakota in the manner you wish to receive



them.

## For Parents, Guardians & Staff...

[Please log into Info Center](#) to make sure the phone numbers and email addresses being automatically pulled from our systems are accurate and up-to-date.

- Click on "Sign Up" and access your account using the email address associated with Home Access Center (parents/guardians) or your Lakota email address (staff). To set up and access your account, you will need to create a new password.
- On your first login, you will be able to specify if you wish to be emailed, called and/or texted for emergencies, weather-related notifications and/or general district/school news. You will also have the opportunity to add additional phone numbers and email addresses that are not shown, by clicking on "Preferences."

In the future, use this portal to update your settings and review an archive of Lakota messages. You might also consider downloading the mobile app for easy, on-the-go access. [Click here for step-by-step instructions](#) for using Info Center.

## Everyone Else...

If you are not a Lakota staff member or the parent/guardian of a current student, [please log into our self-sign-up portal](#) to quickly subscribe to district news, weather-related notifications or bid opportunity e-alerts for businesses.

**No current subscribers who are not current staff, parents or guardians will be retained in the new system. You must sign up to continue receiving Lakota news.**

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## 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.

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## 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:**

**[VOA Museum Summer Fundraising Concert \(June 4\)](#)**

**District-Sponsored Flyers:**

**[Thunderhawk Summer Theatre Camp \(June 20-24\)](#)**

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.

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## **UPCOMING DISTRICT EVENTS**

**Monday, May 30**

**[Memorial Day Holiday - District is Closed](#)**

**Tuesday, May 31**

**[Summer School Begins](#)**

**Monday, June 13**

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

**Monday, June 27**

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

**Monday, July 18**

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

**Monday, August 8**

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

**Tuesday, August 16**

**First Day of School for Students**

**More district events...**

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## **LAKOTA 'IN THE NEWS'**

**Journal-News**

[Lakota students in need to get meals on wheels this summer](#)  
[Ohio school, township simulating active shooter for training](#)

[WLWT - Channel 5](#)

[West Chester PD running school shooter drill Wednesday](#)

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## **IMPORTANT LINKS**

[Lakota's Homepage](#)

[More District News](#)

[District Calendar](#)

[Lakota on Facebook](#)

[Archived Newsletters](#)