



JANUARY 2022

MT. VERNON

# Mainstream

STEWARDSHIP



## Superintendent's Note

### FUTURE GROWTH PLAN ON TRACK

Thanks to considerable public input, the first part of our Future Growth Plan is on track. During our June Board of Trustees meeting, we reaffirmed our need to

construct a new elementary school that will replace Fortville Elementary as it will once again be used as a grades 5 & 6 intermediate school. Additionally, we are adding on to the current Fortville Elementary School (FES) as we will need the capacity when the grades 5 & 6 return to that building in 2023-2024. This is a plan that was developed by the Mt. Vernon Community Champions in the 2019-2020 school year and approved by the board in March of 2020. Additionally, we have the ability now to move the transportation center to a new property to the north/east of our main campus. Our current bus barn is woefully inadequate, small, and outdated. This will provide additional room that our middle school will need as we make vast improvements to traffic flow and parking in and around our main campus in Fortville.

While we delayed our expected grade reconfiguration (and subsequent new elementary school) to the 2023-2024 school year, we are fast tracking our addition to the future intermediate school (current FES). This is due to the fact that our community

**"OUR CONSTANT PLANNING AND COLLABORATION IS TO ENSURE THAT WE PROVIDE THE BEST POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR COMMUNITY AS WE ARE EXPECTED TO GROW FROM OUR PRESENT ENROLLMENT OF 4,552 STUDENTS TO 6,000 STUDENTS BY 2029."**

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## Investing in Our CommUNITY

SEE INSIDE ►



## Digital Learning Pathway Brings Best Practices for Blended and Virtual Classrooms

Students, staff and parents would all agree that the pandemic has heightened everyone's appreciation of in-person classroom learning. And yet, schools – like businesses – have also learned that virtual and blended formats have their place and that everyone's best interests are served by making those formats as effective as possible.

Against that backdrop, MVCSC partnered with the Central Indiana Educational Service Center (CIESC) and has been named a recipient of the Digital Capacity Building Grant from the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE).

As a grant recipient, MVCSC has created a professional development opportunity called the Digital Learning Pathway. This program is designed to help educators

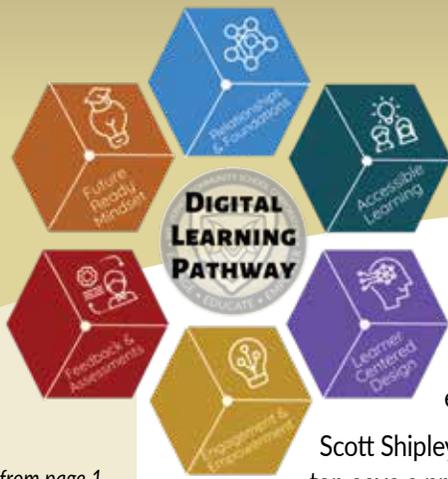
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**MT. VERNON**  
COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION

**"Engage, Educate & Empower Today's Students"**

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DIGITAL LEARNING Continued from page 1

develop and translate in-person teaching and learning best practices for use in blended and virtual classrooms.

The pathway has six modules that articulate a common MVCSC vision to provide an engaging, robust and personalized learning environment.

Scott Shipley, director of curriculum, and Misty Hall, curriculum integration coordinator, gave a presentation on the success of the Digital Learning Pathway at the August MVCSC Board of Trustees meeting, congratulating the first MVCSC cohort with certificates.

**“THIS PROGRAM IS DESIGNED TO HELP EDUCATORS DEVELOP AND TRANSLATE IN-PERSON TEACHING AND LEARNING BEST PRACTICES FOR USE IN BLENDED AND VIRTUAL CLASSROOMS.”**

All topics are designed to help teachers gather information and learn skills that create a more immersive and inclusive classroom experience for students, regardless of whether the student is in-person or virtual. The Digital Learning Pathway curriculum includes six pillars: Relationships and Foundations, Accessible Learning, Learner-Centered Design, Engagement and Empowerment, Feedback and Assessments, and Future Ready Mindset.

The first Mt. Vernon cohort consisted of 21 teachers and administrators. Plans call for three future cohorts, with anticipated increased numbers of participants each time. MVCSC is thankful to be a recipient of the IDOE's Digital Learning Capacity Building Grant as it enables faculty who participate in the program to be paid for their time as they learn these best practices.

Although this professional development opportunity focuses on how the instruction translates to the digital environment, the program also builds and enhances the teacher's instruction for in-person learning. The Digital Learning Pathway (DLP) gives teachers the tools to surpass any virtual instruction barriers and create a learning experience that strengthens the students' understanding of the concept, whether they are in-person or virtual.

Through the DLP course, teachers learn how they can create a space where all learners can do their best, such as changing the style of notes and giving options based on what works best for the individual student. Helping teachers broaden their application of classroom technology can enhance student engagement and learning, which is crucial to student success. Participants from the first cohort have shared that the Digital Learning Pathway course helped them both in technology as well as in their everyday teaching for in-person students.

SUPERINTENDENT Continued from page 1

continues to grow, resulting in the current Fortville Elementary School being at capacity. All of this planning and sequencing is to provide space for the future growth in our community, while ensuring that we do not construct facilities before they are needed.

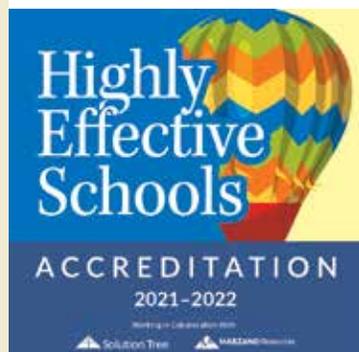
Our constant planning and collaboration is to ensure that we provide the best possible opportunity for our community as we are expected to grow from our present enrollment of 4,552 students to 6,000 students by 2029. Taking care of what we have, and conservatively building facilities only when we need them, is our way to be the best stewards of our community's resources and your tax dollars.

We're very fortunate to be able to do all of our construction without increasing your tax rate. There are other financial considerations unrelated to construction that we're working on, **please see the Investing in Our Community—Growing Stronger Together article on page 4 for further details.**

*Jack*

Dr. Jack Parker, Superintendent

**FUTURE GROWTH PLAN:**  
www.mvcsc.k12.in.us/FGP



## All MV Schools Earn Highly Effective Schools Accreditation

All five schools in the Mt. Vernon Community School Corporation have earned a Highly Effective Schools Accreditation from Solution Tree. This accreditation is a significant achievement that reflects all five schools' commitment to reaching and maintaining the highest

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## Teachers Honored for Excellence and Dedication

### DEB THOMAS

Mt. Vernon Middle School teacher, Deb Thomas, recently was awarded the **INDIANA MIDDLE SCHOOL GEOGRAPHY TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARD** from the Geography Educators' Network of Indiana (GENI). This award is given each year to a middle school and a high school teacher in Indiana who promote the value and significance of geography.

"It has been a privilege to guide my students along a part of their educational journeys for over thirty years. Although some of them may never scale the heights of Mt. Kilimanjaro or tour the Taj Mahal, many will now live and learn alongside others who possess diverse customs and beliefs," said Ms. Thomas. "Students must prepare for a world that has become exponentially smaller, so history, geographic literacy, and cultural awareness are more critical than ever."

Only a year ago, Thomas was recognized as a Top 10 finalist for the 2020 Indiana Teacher of the Year Award through the Indiana Department of Education. She has exemplified the use of student engagement, cultural awareness, and community learning in her classroom, helping to instill a love of learning in each of her students' lives each year.

### JAMES COCHRAN

James Cochran, MVHS Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) teacher, was selected as a **CLAES NOBEL EDUCATOR OF DISTINCTION** by the National Society of High School Scholars (NSHSS). He was nominated for his outstanding dedication and commitment to excellence in his profession. He shows passion and inspiration and this award is a testament to the impact and critical role that he has played on his students' lives.

"Dedicated educators who exhibit a commitment to excellence deserve our highest praise and appreciation," said NSHSS President James W. Lewis. "Through our Educators of Distinction program and the grants we provide, we hope to acknowledge and encourage the vital work of the teachers, counselors and administrators who are shaping the intellect and character of our young scholars."

Teachers are the core of our schools and are truly committed to our students' best interests. Mt. Vernon extends gratitude to our exemplary teachers for fostering an environment for students to flourish as well as being outstanding role models.

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levels of educational quality. Mt. Vernon High School, Mt. Vernon Middle School, Fortville Elementary School, McCordsville Elementary School, and Mt. Comfort Elementary School earned this accreditation by maintaining and growing identified areas having the biggest impact on student learning and growth. These areas are directly aligned to the Professional Learning Communities at Work® (PLC) process and the High Reliability Schools™ framework.

## Employment Opportunities!

### LOOKING FOR WORK? MVCSC IS LOOKING FOR YOU

You've heard this before, but we'll repeat it because it's still the case: MVCSC could use your help, time and talents. Community members who are looking for work or know someone looking for a rewarding position are encouraged to consider MVCSC



employment opportunities. **The district is hiring food service workers, custodians, instructional assistants and bus drivers** — all offering competitive wages and all playing a vital part in the Marauder school family.

Details and applications for all employment opportunities may be found at [www.mvcsc.k12.in.us/employment](http://www.mvcsc.k12.in.us/employment).

**Come and be a part of the Marauder Family!**



## Cost-Cutting Corner

The East Central Indiana Natural Gas Consortium (ECINGC), which Mt. Vernon is a member of, has agreed unanimously to purchase natural gas at current market rates, stockpiling supplies for winter 2021-2022. With gas rates expected to increase rapidly, this early purchasing will save MVCSC 58% in anticipated costs.

For more information on the ways in which MVCSC provides the best educational opportunities for our students and uses taxpayer dollars in the most effective and responsible manner possible, please see Cost-Cutting Corner on the corporation's website: [www.mvcsc.k12.in.us/Content2/1050](http://www.mvcsc.k12.in.us/Content2/1050)

Superintendent Dr. Jack Parker shared, "The staff at all five Mt. Vernon schools work tirelessly to provide a top-quality educational environment where all students can learn and thrive. This accreditation demonstrates the dedication our staff and school leaders have to continue their mission to help students become successful in and out of the classroom. We are so proud of the continuing efforts our staff has made to provide a positive academic experience where students develop a lasting love of learning."

# Investing in Our CommUNITY

## GROWING STRONGER TOGETHER

**“DUE TO THE LOSS OF REVENUE THAT BEGINS IN 2024, OUR OPERATIONS FUND WILL NOT BE FULLY FUNDED. OUR OPERATIONS FUND IS CRITICAL AS IT PAYS FOR TRANSPORTATION, UTILITIES, MANY STAFF POSITIONS, MAINTENANCE OF OUR FACILITIES, AND MUCH MORE.”**



### **MT. VERNON'S CURRENT OPERATIONS FUND CHALLENGES ARE A RESULT OF SEVERAL FACTORS:**

- In 2012, Mt. Vernon experienced financial duress that manifested in staff not receiving raises 5 years in a row. Those financial challenges resulted from three primary difficulties: property tax caps were implemented which limited school revenue, the state took over school funding statewide in 2009 and distributed less money. In addition, a recession at about that same time slowed the growth of MVCSC's projected enrollment, also resulting in lower funding.
- As a result of this financial duress, Mt. Vernon received special legislation that allowed us to use dollars created from refinancing bonds that netted up to \$3.4 million for 10 years. These funds were called the Increment and have been a substantial source of revenue for the Operations Fund.
- In 2023, Mt. Vernon will no longer receive the Increment Funds, resulting in a significant loss in Operations Fund revenue.
- In addition, Mt. Vernon has an extremely large property tax cap loss in our Operations Fund, to the tune of \$3.5 million in 2021 and \$3.8 million in 2022.
- A third financial loss to our Operations Fund that began in 2021 was an additional \$1.1 million annual loss for the new fire territory. Although the school district fully supports the necessary expansion of fire protection for our community, it has had a substantial negative impact on our Operations Fund.

Mt. Vernon has implemented many cost savings and reductions to help offset some of the lost revenue in our Operations Fund. Due to the loss of revenue that begins in 2024, our Operations Fund will not be fully funded. Our Operations Fund is critical as it pays for transportation, utilities, many staff positions, maintenance of our facilities, and much more.

Although the Operations Fund will be running a significant deficit, the Education Fund is sustainable at current levels and the Debt Service Fund is very healthy because of community growth and rising property values. However, there are strict laws guiding schools and most school funds cannot be mixed with one another. Thus, our growing enrollment and tax base that affects the Debt Service Fund will allow us to construct new brick and mortar facilities without impacting the property tax rate. We do not have room in our Operations Fund to provide funds for increased costs in utilities, maintenance, custodial services, and other operational expenses that come with new construction.

### **WHAT EFFORTS HAS MT. VERNON MADE AND WHAT IS BEING DONE TO KEEP THE OPERATIONS FUND SOLVENT?**

- In the past three years, MVCSC has made many cost savings reductions that include: staff reductions through attrition, eliminating some contracted services, and utilizing a temporary tax cap waiver.
- At the December 13 MVCSC Board of Trustees meeting, the school board voted to add a question to the May ballot asking the community to support an Operations Fund referendum. This referendum is asking the community to support a \$ .17 referendum for eight years, meaning a \$200,000 house would be asked to make an investment of \$14 per month (\$168 per year) to support our Operations Fund that pays for transportation, staff, utilities, and more.
- The referendum funds will support a more competitive pay scale for our teachers and classified staff, in an effort to retain and attract the best candidates, providing an optimal learning experience for this and future generations of students.

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# Stewardship Projects Improve Learning Environment and Preserve Community Assets

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- Currently, our base teacher salary ranks the lowest of the other Hancock County schools that are similar in size.
- Additionally, non-teaching staff are essential to the operation of our schools. The job market is much more competitive and we must provide all classified staff members at least \$15 per hour pay.
- **These referendum funds would also support additional security so that each school would have a dedicated School Resource Officer in their building for the entire school day.**

## IF THE REFERENDUM DOES NOT PASS, WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

- Our teachers and staff salaries will not be as competitive as they need to be in comparison to similar districts.
- Class sizes will increase as the student to staff ratio grows through attrition and a hiring freeze.
- In addition to staff being decreased through attrition, additional cuts will need to be made within the Education Fund and Operations Fund.
- Additional security measures for the benefit of our students and staff will not be added in the near future.

Please join a **Virtual Traveling Talks** to talk to Superintendent Dr. Parker directly about the upcoming referendum (see back page). These are designed for the community to engage, ask questions, and learn as many details as desired about school operations. Visit [mvcsc.k12.in.us](http://mvcsc.k12.in.us) to sign-up to attend.

The first phase of MVCSC's Stewardship Projects was nearing completion as the January issue of Mainstream went to press, with work on the next phase about to begin. The Stewardship Projects are a series of infrastructure upgrades that represent how MVCSC is a good steward of tax dollars and to take care of and extend the useful life of existing facilities.

This initiative began in 2019, when MVCSC contracted with Emcore to assess priorities for repairing critical infrastructure districtwide. Several school roofs and HVAC systems were among the most critical to address to prevent any further necessary repairs and to make energy system upgrades throughout the district. The first phase involved **installing new roofing sections** on the most urgent areas at Mt. Vernon High School, Mt. Comfort Elementary and Mt. Vernon Middle School. The work also involved **replacing chillers and boilers** at Fortville and McCordsville elementary schools and at the high school. In addition, crews have **replaced fire dampers and upgraded HVAC controls**, which offer enhanced efficiency and the ability for maintenance staff to adjust settings easily.

Derek Shelton, MVCSC director of operations, noted that the District saved \$411,000 over expected costs during the first phase of this work. The corporation is utilizing this savings to complete initial phases originally scheduled for two years in only one year. This allows the district to proceed now with improvements originally scheduled for the third year and to do so within the original budget.

Shelton shared that the next phase will include **extending pipe from new chillers to boilers and existing pipe to a planned expansion** of Fortville Elementary School. In addition, crews will **replace rooftop units** at athletic facilities. They also will **install air purifiers** in all buildings, which, Shelton noted, will provide the cleanest air possible and an optimal learning environment for students and staff.

In 2019, MVCSC identified approximately \$21 million of needed work for all of our buildings and is financing the effort through the sale of construction bonds, which are repaid through the debt services fund. Constituents' tax rate did not increase from this new debt. Approximately \$5 million of funds were appropriated toward expanding the performing arts, fine arts, and cafeteria spaces at the middle school, with an additional \$16 million allocated for repairing and replacing roofing and mechanical systems district-wide.

Greg Elkins, chief financial officer, has previously explained that MVCSC refinanced two existing bonds, saving the corporation \$560,000 in 2020 and \$7 million over the life of the debt. In addition, MVCSC utilized a short-term financing option to generate up-front cash for this project, saving \$500,000 in interest payments.

Elkins said, "MVCSC has a commitment to our taxpayers to make conservative and transparent financial decisions that provide our students and staff with the environment they need to thrive and learn each day."



## ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE REGISTERED TO VOTE?

Did you know over 700,000 voters were removed from the state's 2017 voter database? Scan the QR code or to go to [www.indianavoters.in.gov](http://www.indianavoters.in.gov) to verify your voter registration.



## FEATURED MT. VERNON SCHOOL: Mt. Comfort Elementary School Snapshot



- Has been an Indiana Department of Education Four Star School for 18 years total
- STEM Certified by the Indiana Department of Education
- Part of an “A” Rated district
- 2019-2020 Attendance rate – 97%
- IREAD-3 Results – 2020-2021 – 92% passing rate
- Strong community, PTO and outreach partnerships
- Each student has a touchscreen Chromebook
- 2 playgrounds, 3 softball/baseball fields, outdoor track
- Classrooms have interactive whiteboards, document cameras, projectors and Apple TV’s
- Resource officer on site daily
- 7 club opportunities
- Frequent programs and guest presentations
- Almost 14,000 books in the media center, meeting the needs and interests of all students
- Video surveillance and high-tech safety features
- English Language Learners (ELL) assistance program
- Speech/language, special education and sensory room, high ability programs



**ALISSA LOCKWOOD, PRINCIPAL**  
**5694 W. 300 N., IN 46140 (317) 894-7667**  
[www.mce.mvcsk.k12.in.us](http://www.mce.mvcsk.k12.in.us)  
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## Lilly Scholarship Awarded to MVHS Senior Maitlyn Griner

Mt. Vernon High School (MVHS) senior **Maitlyn Griner** was one of two Hancock County seniors to receive the coveted Lilly Endowment Scholarship, which means full four-year tuition at an Indiana college or university. Also noteworthy, MVHS senior, **Hayden Kovell**, was named a finalist in the competition.

Maitlyn’s involvement in MVHS clubs and activities includes student government, Marauder Mob, Marauder Mentoring and varsity softball. An activity that sets her above the curve is her role in Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) where she is the exclusive Youth Advocacy Board member for Indiana. Her role is to advocate for D.A.R.E.’s mission of teaching students to lead safe and healthy lives by facilitating and spearheading a variety of activities. She plans to attend Butler or Purdue and pursue degrees in Civil Engineering and Forensic Science.

MVHS senior Hayden Kovell earned the honor of qualifying as a Lilly Scholarship finalist. To be considered, Hayden and Maitlyn had to demonstrate academic excellence by placing in the top 15% of their graduating class while also displaying outstanding involvement and service to the community.



## Mt. Vernon Community Rallies Around MVHS Football at State

With the Mt. Vernon High School (MVHS) football team entering the history books with their success in winning the school’s first state football championship, the Mt. Vernon community supported them every step of the way. As the team departed via police escort for the semi-state competition, the business



community, students, residents and fans lined the streets cheering the motor coaches as they left to achieve the “dub” (win)!

The Mt. Vernon community did not disappoint with their incredible display of support at Lucas Oil Stadium for the state competition. Approximately 9,000 Mt. Vernon fans filled the seats, cheering the team on to become the first Mt. Vernon 4A State Champions in school history!

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# MVEF Black & Gold Gala

APRIL 23, 2022 | JW MARRIOTT INDIANAPOLIS



Join other Mt. Vernon supporters for the **2022 Black & Gold Gala** on April 23, from 6 p.m. to 12 a.m., at the JW Marriott Indianapolis, located at 10 S. West Street in Indianapolis. This is a chance to support students by participating in the Mt. Vernon Education Foundation's (MVEF) annual signature fundraising event. Highlights include honoring Mt. Vernon's Teachers/Staff of the Year and Distinguished Alumni Awards.

Cost is \$100 a person and beginning in March, tickets may be reserved at [MtVernonFoundation.org](http://MtVernonFoundation.org).

Since its founding in 2007, MVEF has awarded more than \$900,000 in teacher grants and has proven itself adaptable in meeting current student needs.

The MVEF, led by its Board of Directors, with the help of many generous volunteers, seeks to inspire students with innovative educational programming that prepares students for a successful life journey. The organization works to facilitate through business and education partnerships, the fostering of programs, alliances, and resources to impact student learning and assist educators within the public school system. The foundation supports these areas through programs, partnerships, and advocacy initiatives.

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## FEATURED MT. VERNON SCHOOL: McCordsville Elementary School Snapshot



- Attendance rate: 2019-2020 -97%
- STEM Certified by the Indiana Department of Education
- IREAD-3 Results: 2018-19 -93%
- Indiana Department of Education Four Star School -2020-2021, 2019-2020, 2018-2019
- Indiana Department of Education has rated MES an "A" every year since 2017
- Strong community and PTO partnerships
- Each student has a touchscreen Chromebook
- Outdoor track, soccer/football field, baseball/softball diamond, 2 full playgrounds
- 3D printers
- Classrooms have whiteboards, projectors and Apple TV's
- Resource officer on site daily
- Strong character education taught throughout the school year
- 7 club/extracurricular opportunities available
- Multiple school programs and activities
- Media Center – Almost 13,000 books, meeting the needs and interests of all students
- English Language Learners program
- Speech/language, special education, high ability & social worker programs



**STEPHANIE MILLER, PRINCIPAL**

**7177 N. 600 W., MCCORDSVILLE, IN 46055 (317) 336-7760**

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# MT. VERNON

COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION

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## Celebrating Veterans Day



All Mt. Vernon schools celebrated Veterans Day, honoring those who lost their lives in service to our country, and those who are currently serving. A few schools

celebrated in-school gatherings with limited attendance that were broadcast into classrooms for all students to enjoy. MVCSC would like to thank our staff that have served, as well as our community veterans and those currently in the military.



# 2022 VIRTUAL Traveling Talks

with Superintendent  
**Dr. Jack Parker**

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Dr. Parker invites the community to join him for an open-forum discussion in Virtual Traveling Talks sessions. Traveling Talks are a mutually beneficial opportunity for the community to connect with the school district, and for school leadership to get to know more members of the community. Community members can engage directly with Dr. Parker to share their hopes, questions, and/or concerns about Mt. Vernon schools. Join Dr. Parker and hear the latest updates on MVCSC.

### UPCOMING VIRTUAL TRAVELING TALKS DATES ARE:

TUESDAY, JAN 11: NOON-1 P.M.

WEDNESDAY, FEB 9: 6-7 P.M.

TUESDAY, MARCH 8: NOON-1 P.M.

TUESDAY, MARCH 29: 6-7 P.M.

TUESDAY, APRIL 12: NOON-1 P.M.

TUESDAY, APRIL 26: 6-7 P.M.

**Community members may register to participate by visiting [mvcsc.k12.in.us](http://mvcsc.k12.in.us).**  
The zoom link will be emailed to registrants on the day before each Virtual Talks meeting.

See Inside!!  
Investing in Our Community