

YOUR SCHOOLS

2020

Aurora City School District

From the Superintendent

By MIKE ROBERTO
Superintendent of Schools



It seems as though I have ended more sentences this year with, "...we are in the middle of a pandemic" than any other statement. It is not meant to provide an excuse but rather to offer

comfort and peace of mind to those who struggle with our current state of affairs. Students, parents, and staff members alike have all wrestled with how 2020 is not your typical school year. If you think back to July, we didn't even know if we were going to be in school come November, and many thought there was a low chance that young people were going to be able to compete in Fall sports. However, as the school year approached, we came together as a school community to offer two safe and effective methods of learning to the young people in Aurora and have successfully completed a fall full of activities ranging from sports to the fine arts.

We are now approaching the midpoint of the second quarter, as a district, we have approximately 75% of the young people in Aurora coming to school for in-person learning (Plan A) five days a week with the other 25% learning through an online option at home (Plan B). These percentages vary based on the various grade bands. As an example, approximately 70% of our K-5 students are coming to school while 30% are working from home. The middle school, grades 6-8, mirror the district average of 75/25, while at Aurora High School

See Superintendent p. 7



ACSD 2008 Bond Refinancing Saves Taxpayers Over \$1,269,000

The Aurora City School District's Treasurer, Bill Volosin, reported that the school district recently refinanced a portion of its 2008 bond issue. This refinancing will reduce taxpayer contributions to the debt service by more than \$1,269,000 over the remaining life of the bonds. The bonds have a final maturity date of December 1, 2033.

The 2008 bonds were part of the March 2008 bond issue that voters approved totaling \$19,251,000. The funds were used for capital improvements throughout the district. Thanks to the current historically low interest rates,

the district was able to take advantage of the opportunity to refinance the bonds at lower rates which will reduce debt service on the bonds by about \$90,000 annually. The newly refinanced bonds carry an interest rate of 1.42%, whereas the original bonds carried an interest rate of approximately 5.05%. This transaction refinanced \$6,665,000 of the \$13,845,000 that is outstanding.

Volosin explained, "The original issue was split into two issues in 2008 and 2009 to take advantage of federal exemptions for

Bond Refinancing p. 8

Meet New Leighton School Principal Michelle Nizen

Leighton School has started the 2020-21 school year off in unprecedented times with a new principal leading the way. Michelle Nizen, replaced former Leighton School Principal, Mike Janatovich, who returned to the Cuyahoga Heights City School District as a middle/high school principal. Nizen has been on the job here in the district since last August. At the time she said, "I am extremely excited to be joining the Leighton staff this year and meeting the wonderful educational community and welcoming 'our' children back to school this fall. I am committed to fostering a positive school culture and climate through a strong positive behavior

supports program and continuing to capitalize on the upward trends of our educational gains here at Leighton. I am very much looking forward to working with my outstanding team of educational professionals to foster a school climate that encourages our young people to continue to thrive and that inspires excellence through the six competencies of our strategic vision. I am looking forward to getting to know all of my families as we learn and grow together this year!"



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ACSD Superintendent's Secretary of Personnel, Linda Arnold, Retires After 31 Years In District

The Aurora City School District (ACSD) started the new 2020-21 school year without the familiar face of longtime Superintendent's Secretary of Personnel, Linda Arnold, in the district. Arnold, who has worked in that position for the district for 31 years, officially retired on July 1, 2020.

Arnold began her career working as an office manager at Kent State University in a department that assisted K-12 public school districts that were court-ordered to desegregate. She resigned to stay home with her son and after five years at home, Arnold went to work at Maplewood Career Center (JVS). She then resigned that position as the Superintendent's Secretary in 1989 to accept the same position with the ACSD.

The personnel job evolved through the years and Arnold explained, "In 1999 both staff and student populations had grown and additional duties including, student registration and processing substitutes,

were brought into the superintendent's office. The superintendent's secretary position was split into "Business" and "Personnel" and I chose to stay with the personnel duties." Arnold described a typical day in the personnel department by saying, "In addition to documentation and reporting requirements, each day was filled with endless emails and phone calls; appointments and walk-ins. Never a dull moment." Arnold added, "The hardest part of my job was dealing with all the technology over the past three decades."

Looking back on her career, Arnold said her favorite thing about working in the Aurora City Schools was that, "I am a people person and I loved working with all the many (many!) staff members over the years. We all worked hard to make the Aurora City Schools one of the best in the State and I am proud to have been a part of that success."

Arnold decided to retire last year and explained, "To retire is a difficult decision

and three of my set retirement dates had come and gone but I had a personal checklist and the last item was checked off. It was time." What she misses most about working in the ACSD Board of Education Office, Arnold said, is that, "I miss working with my friends in the Board Office and I regret that I will not get the opportunity to work with Mr. Roberto in his new role as Superintendent and Dr. Milcetic in his new position as assistant superintendent. I think both will do a great job for the District."

As for her plans after retirement, Arnold explained, "As for all of us, COVID-19 has affected our plans. Jerry [her husband] and I had hoped to travel and to visit our son and his family more frequently but those plans have been put on hold for now. I am enjoying being at home, seeing my mother when I can, outdoor picnic lunches with friends, and cleaning out the "stuff" we have accumulated over 44 years of marriage."



AHS Community of Readers Event

AHS held its 2nd annual Community of Readers event on Friday, September 11, 2020. The Community of Readers format has taken the place of the high school's summer reading assignments. Students at AHS were able to select from 57 book titles to read over the summer months and then discuss them in a book club format during the event. Staff, student and community member volunteers were invited to participate and facilitate the discussions with a wide range of topics, genres and reading levels available. English Instructor Melissa Lindley and the English Department were instrumental in hosting this event.

Aurora City School District Board of Education of President, Jerry Kohanski, facilitated a discussion and said, "My group of sophomores did a good job analyzing *Fahrenheit 451*, and I really enjoyed getting back in a classroom again...I would like to mention that one student, Mitchell Curtis, particularly impressed..."



Melissa Lindley

He was well-prepared for the discussion and obviously spent time analyzing the meanings behind Bradbury's writing. His comments were very mature and helpful in moving the discussion along."

AHS Principal, Mike Hayes, stated, "Thank you to Melissa, the English Department and all the staff and stakeholders that took part in this process to connect with our students in a meaningful way." He added, "This assignment and the book discussions that follow are a great way to promote empathy as many of these stories provide an alternate lens in which to view our world."



YOUR SCHOOLS

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Your Schools is a publication of the Aurora City School District. Its purpose is to keep residents of Aurora informed of current events and progress in the Aurora City Schools and to foster pride and a continuous communication link between the schools and the community.

Your Schools has been awarded the "Mark of Excellence" and "Best of the Best" Awards by the Ohio Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association for service as a school district newsletter. *Your Schools* is a quarterly publication, mailed to all residents of Aurora. For information, comments, or story ideas, e-mail Editor Stacey DeAnna at: yourschools@aurora-schools.org.



AHS Sophomore Kate Liang Shining Star CLE Top 10 Finalist



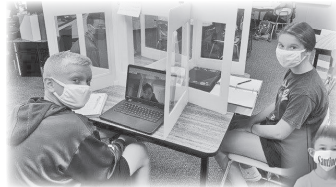
Congratulations to Aurora High School Sophomore Kate Liang who was chosen as a Top 10 Finalist in the 2020

Northeast Ohio Shining Star CLE solo singing competition sponsored by Montefiore of Menorah Park. The unique solo competition is a benefit

for the memory care programs at the Menorah Park facility with students competing for college scholarships. Unlike past years, the finals competition was held virtually on September 13, 2020. Every audience member got to vote with judges selecting the top four winners and, along with the audience, chose the order of the winners.

Off To A Different Start to the 2020-21 School Year

The social distancing rules, signs to follow, student safety shields, new lunch procedures, and the wearing of masks have now all become part of the new routine at school.



Students in Class



Summer School

Nizen - Continued from p. 1

Nizen is a graduate of John Carroll University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education and Reading Endorsement. Nizen then went on to earn Master's degrees in Curriculum and Instruction and Educational Administration from Ashland University.

Nizen was most recently the principal at Jordak Elementary in the Cardinal School District from 2018-2020. Prior to that position, she spent 14 years in the Fairport Harbor School District as an assistant principal. She was active in teacher, building and district leadership teams and created innovative resources and programming to support student's needs, such as sensory integration and systemic educational constructs. Nizen was also heavily involved in refining the Response to Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) which earned gold medal recognition from the State of Ohio.

At the time she was hired, then

Superintendent, Pat Ciccantelli, said, "We are excited to add Michelle Nizen to our administrative team. She is an outstanding administrator, with educational experiences that have prepared her for her role at Leighton. She is knowledgeable and student-centered, and her visions for Leighton aligns well with the district initiatives. We are thrilled to welcome her to Aurora and Leighton Elementary."

When asked about the beginning of this school year, Nizen explained, "It is hard to believe we have completed our first quarter of the school year! It has been such a wonderful start to the year as our students and staff have worked tirelessly to create safe, supportive, nurturing, and academically sound learning environments. I am looking forward to continuing to build strong relationships with our students, staff, and parent community at large as we work to capitalize on our upward educational trajectory and preparing our students to be well rounded, future ready learners and citizens."

Arjun Lokesh Wins 1st Place In Great Composers Series Competition

Arjun Lokesh, an Aurora City Schools' Harmon Middle School student, has been named as the Great Composers Competition Series 1st Place winner in the 2020 International Music



Competition Salzburg Grand Prize Virtuoso Event. After being chosen to perform at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall in New York for the American Protégé International Competition 2020 in June, Lokesh received an invitation from the Great Composers Competition to participate in the Music of America competition. He has been under the tutelage of Cynthia Crotty who then enrolled him into the International Music Competition Salzburg Grand Prize Virtuoso Event 2020.

Lokesh said winning the event, "Was a big surprise. I was honored and thrilled to win 1st place." As the 1st place winner, Lokesh received a certificate and medal in the mail. He was also invited to perform at the winner's recital held in Germany on August 30-31. Unfortunately, he was unable to attend the performance due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Lokesh, who is currently in the 8th grade, has also participated in the American Protégé International Competition and has played at Carnegie Hall. He said, "I have participated in Music of America (2nd prize), and Artist of the Year 2020 (3rd place) which is organized by the Great Composers Competition."

Lokesh explained, "I was 5 years old and was in first grade when I started to learn the basics of the piano. I had a couple of friends who were learning piano and I slowly became more and more interested." He has been taking piano lessons from Crotty for three years. Lokesh said, "I practice piano for at least an hour, but I like to spend a lot of time playing my favorite tunes and learning new tunes." He added, "Playing the piano is like a stress buster for me." As for performing live, he explained, "I really do enjoy performing, however, I am also very nervous."

"Other than piano," he said, "I love outdoor sports, especially baseball. I am also a 3rd degree black belt in Taekwondo." When asked about his family, Lokesh explained, "I have one younger brother at Leighton Elementary School and he also plays the piano very well. My dad is a pain management physician at Mercy Health Hospital and my mom is a dentist at a private practice."

As for his future endeavors, he stated, "I aspire to become a doctor. I haven't decided my specialty yet. My college is still undecided."

Who's Who & What's New



Jeff Cole

Congratulations to **Community Focus' Executive Director, Jeff Cole**, who retired from the broadcasting company after almost 40 years of serving the community. Cole was instrumental in

transforming the hometown television station commonly known as Cable 9, into the nationally recognized and regionally respected local television station now known as Community Focus. The station's programming can be seen on Spectrum channel 1021. The Aurora City School District's Board of Education recognized Cole with a resolution and certificate for his dedication in serving the local community.

The Aurora Schools' show, *Spotlight on Aurora Schools*, can be found on the **Community Focus Spectrum Channel 1021** each month and features timely topics and guests.



Cynthia Curry

The District would like to wish Leighton School Counselor, **Cynthia Curry**, good luck as she has moved on to other endeavors. Thank you to Cynthia for all of her caring and help with our young students. She

has been replaced by Miller/Craddock Guidance Counselor **Tami Mazzella**. Congratulations go out to Ms. Mazzella as she begins her new position.



The Harmon High PTO donated individual **Plastic Cutlery Dispensers** similar to ones found at many restaurants, for the Aurora High School

cafeteria. These additions to the cafeteria serving line will greatly help to keep the serving utensils sanitary and lower the chances of contamination.

AHS Junior, **Matthew Cieslak**, has been selected as a member of the **Ohio Attorney General's Teen Advisory Board**. The Board consists of high school students from around the State of Ohio.



The Board's mission, "is to provide Ohio's future leaders with an

inside look at Ohio law and government." Congratulations!

HOMECOMING KING AND QUEEN

The AHS 2020 Prom King and Queen were announced. Congratulations go out to Prom King **Ricky Reynolds** and Queen **Lauren Miller**.



AHS Homecoming Court 2020



Paige, Ashley, Alana, Mason, Jack, Aiden and King Ricky and Queen Lauren

HARMON/HIGH PTO LAUNCHES ONLINE SPIRIT WEAR STORE

The **Aurora Harmon High PTO** has announced the launch of their new online **Spirit Wear Store**. Official Aurora Greenmen Gear can now be purchased online at: <https://Harmonhighpto.company.site>. Please be sure to check the store often for new arrivals. 100% of the proceeds are given back to our schools, students, and staff.



C. Logan (left) and B. Bindus (right) worked on a poster to hang up in school as part of a Leighton Leader (student council) project to promote #maskup #backup #washup.

YEARBOOK

It's time to order the AHS 2021 **Aurora Borealis yearbook**. Use the link provided on the district website main webpage under News to order this year's yearbook for your student. Please place your order before December 30, 2020 as the price will increase the first of the year. The AHS Order Number is **5066**.



Free School Lunches Offered To All Aurora School Students

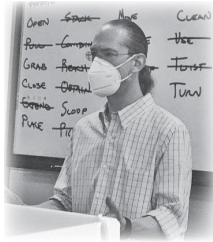
When the Covid-19 pandemic first hit, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provided free school meals to areas of high poverty. Then the USDA recognized that during the current public health crisis, households in areas that do not meet the criteria for poor economic conditions may also be facing financial hardship. They also understood that a "one size fits all" approach is not an effective approach to feed children, particularly during the current coronavirus pandemic challenges. The USDA is now extending flexibility to allow free lunch to be available to all students throughout the entire 2020-21 school year. This program flexibility allows schools to operate a meal service that best meets the needs of their community.

As a result, the Aurora City School District has implemented a USDA waiver that allows the district to serve the quality of school lunches with the variety of choices the district was previously offering students. This allows the offering of free lunches to all students in grades K-12.

The free lunch being offered is the "Type A" lunch which is the lunch listed on the weekly menu. The lunch consists of milk, a main entrée, vegetables, fruit and a portion of bread. All parts of the lunch must be taken for it to be free. Students can also purchase extra items, such as ice cream, or purchase parts of the lunch, for example, just a piece of pizza, ala carte. The waiver allows the Aurora Schools to feed Plan B students; however, the rules state that the student must eat the lunch on school grounds. The free lunches for students will be provided by the district for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year.

CLASS ACTS

AHS Math Instructor **JOSH RAKOW** engaged his students by having them attempt to program “**ROBOT RAKOW**” to be an amazing sandwich maker.



Thank you to our **ACSD PTO's** for their commitment to support our Aurora students. They have volunteered their time and efforts to our school community in so many ways including, running the first AHS 2020 Drive-Thru Schedule Pick-Up, Spirit Wear Sales and Community Fundraisers. They are very much appreciated throughout our district.



Our **CUSTODIAL** and **MAINTENANCE TEAMS** did an outstanding job of preparing for the return of our students and staff for the 2020-21 school year. The district commends them for all of their hard work, diligence and extra efforts in getting our buildings ready during this coronavirus pandemic. They have taken many extra steps to help ensure our students and staff are safe.



Aurora High School held its first ever **VIRTUAL FINANCIAL AID** and **SENIOR PLANNING INFORMATION NIGHT** on September 17, 2020. The **SENIOR CLASS ADVISORS**, AHS Vice-Principal, **BRIAN BROOKHART**, and the **AHS GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT**, partnered with the **LAKE/GAUGA EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION (LEAF) FINANCIAL AID ADVISOR, RENEE MORGAN**, and the **HARMON HIGH PTO**, to share numerous resources for families as they prepare to plan for their post-secondary educational experience.



The **AURORA ULTIMATE BOOSTERS** annual campaign is currently underway. Although this school year looks different from years past, the Aurora Ultimate Boosters group is still in need of assistance. With your

donation, you can choose which booster group(s) to support. Your donation aids students in multiple ways to include, but not limited to, thousands of dollars in scholarships for seniors, subsidizing the cost of uniforms, assistance with school projects and student awards. The Aurora Ultimate Boosters Board is committed to supporting and promoting Sports, Bands, Orchestra, Choir and Alumni Associations. The Boosters thank the Aurora Community for their overwhelming monetary contributions and continued support to this program year after year. Please consider donating to this unique program which runs through December 31, 2020.

Aurora High School Math Instructor **JOSH RAKOW** has received \$25,000 to be used to purchase new computers for the high school's Advanced Placement Computer Science Class. An **ANONYMOUS AURORA PARENT** made an extremely generous donation of \$15,000 for the new computers after hearing about the need and the **AURORA SCHOOLS FOUNDATION** very generously donated the remaining \$10,000.

AHS VIRTUAL ACADEMIC LETTER AND PINS RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED

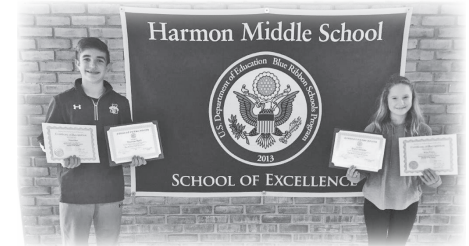
The first ever **VIRTUAL ACADEMIC LETTER AND PINS RECOGNITION** was announced by Aurora High School. In order to qualify for the Academic Letter recognition, students must have attained a 4.0 GPA in each semester of the previous school year. Students are awarded an Academic Pin for each additional school year in which they complete this immense task. To view the **ACADEMIC AWARDS SITE** featuring all of this year's recipients, please go to the Aurora City Schools' website under the News section. Congratulations to all of this year's recipients for such distinguished honors.



The **AURORA HIGH SCHOOL GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT** has developed a **YOUTUBE PLAYLIST** to acquaint students and families with the **COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS**. It is recommended that juniors and their

parents watch these videos together as this is essential information if they are planning to apply to college next fall. Several of the many topics include: Graduation Requirements, Junior Year Checklist, Naviance College & Career Planning Website, College Entrance Exams (ACT, SAT) What Colleges Look for in Students, What Students Look for in a College, Campus Visits, College Admissions Process, College Cost, Financial Aid, & Scholarships and Parent's Role in the College Admissions Process.

The video can be found on the District website.



Congratulations to Harmon School 8th Grade October 2020 Rotary Students, **THOMAS HACH** and **BRYNN WINKLER**, the first ever ACSD Virtual Rotary Students.



State of Ohio Report Cards 2019-20 Impacted by Coronavirus

The 2019-20 Ohio School Report Cards were released by the Ohio Department of Education on September 15, 2020. The state's education community experienced unprecedented impacts during the 2019-2020 school year due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Ohio Department of Education explained on their website that, "Due to the ordered school-building closure, limited data exists compared with prior years..." The website then stated, "Ohio's ordered school-building closure and subsequent emergency legislation (House Bill 197 of the 133rd General Assembly) have had substantial impacts on the state's accountability system and Ohio School Report Cards for the 2019-2020 school year. Therefore, updated spreadsheets reporting the letter grades or ratings are not available for the 2019-2020 school year."

SPORT REPORT

The ACSD won the **SUBURBAN LEAGUE ALL SPORTS TROPHY** for 2019-20. Suburban League teams include, Aurora, Barberton, Copley, Highland, Revere, Roosevelt and Tallmadge. The trophy will be displayed until next year. Previous Superintendent, Pat Ciccantelli, said, "Congratulations to our coaches, student-athletes and to Paul Powers for administering a successful and competitive set of programs. When I came to Aurora High School we only had a couple of competitive programs. It is great to see the improvements in our overall program and the fruits of the hard work of many. Congratulations to all! Former AHS Principal, Paul Milcetic, stated, "Congratulations are in order for all of our hard working student-athletes and coaches who embrace the grind and develop young people leading to some excellent results! Well done!"



ALL SPORTS BOOSTERS LIVE FACEBOOK AUCTION

The **AURORA ALL SPORTS BOOSTERS** held their annual fundraiser which ran from July 27-31, 2020. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this year's fundraiser was held as an on-line virtual auction and was said to be very successful. They are happy to accept donations throughout the year and the organization holds fundraisers, including a senior yard sign sale.

Several members of the **GIRLS VOLLEYBALL TEAM** earned **SUBURBAN LEAGUE AWARDS** including, **1ST TEAM - MAGGIE BRADLEY**; **2ND TEAM - LAUREN VONDERHAAR** and **HONORABLE MENTION - ALAYNA FROMWILLER**



The **AURORA GREENMEN FOOTBALL TEAM** and their **COACH BOB MIHALIK** ended the shortened 2020 fall football season after a loss to

New Philadelphia in the playoffs on Friday, October 23, 2020. Congratulations on a fantastic season!



Congratulations to the **BOYS GOLF TEAM** and **COACH DAVE MUNSON**. The team was named the **SUBURBAN LEAGUE AMERICAN**

CHAMPIONS. Well done!

The **OHIO HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION** and **SPECTRUM NEWS 1**



Abigail Kimes/Sam Logalbo

announced the 2020 Spectrum Sports Scholar-Athlete Program which was designed to honor, highlight, and celebrate the best and brightest students in our local schools. The program launched this school year wherever viewers watch 24-hour Spectrum News 1 in Ohio. In conjunction with an Aurora football game telecast on Spectrum News 1, **ABIGAIL KIMES** and **SAM LOGALBO** were each honored with a \$500 award. Congratulations to both AHS students.



The **AHS CROSS COUNTRY TEAM** was able to utilize their new race day "Home" at the

Harmon Farm in Aurora at 325 Townline Road for home action this season.

Congratulations to **BOYS CROSS COUNTRY** runner **ANDREW PLOSKUNAK** who kept the Aurora program's streak alive to send a runner to the State meet for the 7th straight season. This is Ploskunak's first trip to the State meet.

The **SUBURBAN LEAGUE AMERICAN CONFERENCE** recognized Aurora **GIRLS GOLF MEMBERS: FRESHMAN BROOKLYN MILLARD, CONFERENCE PLAYER OF THE YEAR; JUNIOR ANJALIE MISHRA, SECOND TEAM ALL CONFERENCE** and **JUNIOR KAYLA TEJADA, HONORABLE MENTION ALL CONFERENCE**.

The **AURORA GIRLS SOCCER TEAM** (9th seed) ended their post season play with a district tournament loss to fourth seeded Mentor Lake Catholic in the Division II Northeast region 5

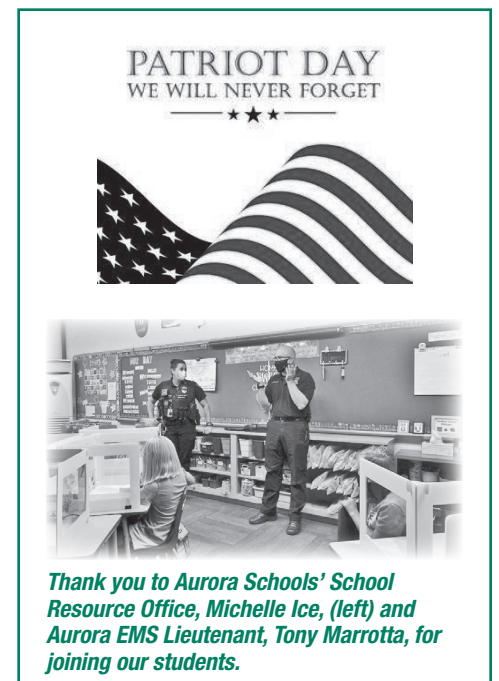
District Semifinal on October 26, 2020. Congratulations to the team and **COACH DOMENICA MCCLINTOCK**.



Senior Cheering (Left to Right): ALLY, ALANA, LEAH and DEANNA

Congratulations to the **AURORA GIRLS GOLF TEAM**, and coaches **GEORGE SNIDER** and **TIM BACZKOWSKI**, who qualified for the **DISTRICT GOLF TOURNAMENT** this season.

The **AURORA BOYS SOCCER TEAM**, under the new direction of **COACH RYAN CONNER**, ended their season with an overall record of 14-3-3. They ended their season with a 4-0 loss in the **DIVISION II DISTRICT FINAL** against Howland.



Thank you to Aurora Schools' School Resource Office, Michelle Ice, (left) and Aurora EMS Lieutenant, Tony Marrotta, for joining our students.

Superintendent – Continued from p. 1

approximately 80% of the young people come into AHS five days a week while 20% are working virtually. The point here is that we are fortunate to be able to offer the plan that best fits each student's needs demonstrating that in Aurora, even during a pandemic, "kids come first."

Part of the reason for this success is due to the structures we have in place. All schools are taking a multi-layered approach to safety which includes but is not limited to: the use of masks, social distancing, hand sanitizing, student safety shields, use of signs, and use of one-way hallways when able. In grades K-5, young people in online learning follow the same basic ELA and math frameworks that those students follow for in-person learning which ensures a similar learning experience. In grades 6-12, the addition of new technology such as webcams and blue-tooth headsets are used in combination with Chromebooks and SMART boards so Plan B students can virtually be part of each classroom discussion at Harmon and AHS. These structures help to build toward a successful learning environment, but the main reason for our success doesn't come from the structure as much as it does from the people in our district.

The students seemed to have come back this year with a new appreciation for school. They have shown so much resilience in adapting to the new routines that were required to be in place and really have approached this school year with all of its challenges with an impressive outlook. The staff's approach to their own work has also set the tone for the year as well. New cleaning protocols put in place by the custodians, safer transportation routines set up by the bus drivers, increased communication from the secretarial staff in the offices, the addition of full-time nurses in each building, and even a new free lunch plan from our food services have all contributed to our success this fall. However, the group contributing the most to our current success in my mind has to be the teachers. They have done a great job of adapting to new learning environments and on some occasions even reinventing lessons and activities in order to meet the needs of their students. Some of our K-5 teachers are teaching only online which was one of the major shifts taking place this fall. We also introduced a new online platform called See Saw in grades K-2 to help with the online learning process. In grades 6-12, all teachers have not only been working with the young people physically in front of them but also with those who are listening in via Google Meet from

home. Teachers at Harmon and AHS have collaborated to come up with the best practices to help balance each of these learning environments while at the same time offering an enriching curriculum. Whether you have a kindergartener, a senior, or anyone in-between, I think you will agree with me that the teachers have done an amazing job of helping young people learn in this pandemic. To the teachers' credit, they have not focused on the curriculum as their priority, but instead on the needs of the young people in the classroom. They have worked to develop relationships with your child first and then allowed the learning to develop from there. This is also a key element of our new strategic vision which is being rolled out for the 2020-2021 school year.

You might think that rolling out a new strategic vision in the middle of a pandemic would be a terrible idea. However, I can't think of a more important time to make the shift to focus on the whole child and to emphasize the importance of what we call "nurturing the roots" of young people. It all starts with building relationships in order to have a better understanding of what young people know and are able to do. As a reminder, the strategic vision can be found on our district website. When you visit this site, I suspect the first thing you will notice is the paragraph in the center of the homepage. This is the WHY statement or purpose of the strategic vision. Specifically, the second sentence which emphasizes our goal of preparing young people to be successful LEARNERS in an ever-changing world is the focus and can be boiled down to the mantra "AURORA LEARNERS-FUTURE READY."

The definition of learner can mean different things to different people, so we wanted to be clear in the strategic vision that the term "LEARNER" for the Aurora City School District carries with it some key characteristics including the importance of continual growth. Learning, through the lens of this vision, is less about gaining knowledge through curriculum transfer and more about being able to build on that knowledge and apply it so a young person is better prepared for life. Although developing LEARNERS is the main focus of our strategic vision, we are also targeting six competencies to nurture within young people attending the Aurora City Schools. These six competencies are WHAT the stakeholders in our community have stated are important for young people to develop in grades PK-12.

I encourage you to read more about each of these six competencies in our strategic vision located on our website. However, I did want to at least share

the competencies and touch upon why they are important for us to nurture in each young person attending the Aurora Schools.

Empathy - We all know relationships matter and the first step in building relationships is empathy. As one becomes more empathetic, an awareness of others begins to develop which helps to make those relationships stronger.

Critical Thinking - In an ever-changing and complex world, one has to be able to take in information, analyze it, and decide what to do with it. One of the hallmarks of a critical thinker is the ability to stay objective.

Balanced - Being objective also means keeping things in perspective. As all people develop the social-emotional ability to form positive relationships while being self-aware, they walk that balance and lay the groundwork to be lifelong learners.

Resilient - Just as balance equates to perspective, resilience is analogous to persistence. When all people can be put in situations that cause productive struggle, they begin to develop the ability to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. This leads to being more resilient rather than giving up when one doesn't know the right thing to do, but instead starts to think of what is the next best thing to do.

Collaborative - We all understand the power of collaboration and learning from each other's experiences. The importance of collaboration can be summed up by the African proverb "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Innovative - To be innovative doesn't necessarily require cutting-edge technology, but instead it means looking at things in a different way. As all people, both young and adult, begin to bend what they know, break from what is typically done, and blend ideas from different perspectives, they become more innovative in their approach.

With this new strategic vision, the structures and safety protocols we have in place, and most importantly the people who work and learn in each of our school buildings at all grade levels PK-12, I am confident that we will be able to design and support learning environments that meet the needs of all young people...even in this crazy year of 2020 which, after all, is in the middle of a pandemic.

Have a great rest of 2020 and

GO GREENMEN!

Mike Roberto
Superintendent

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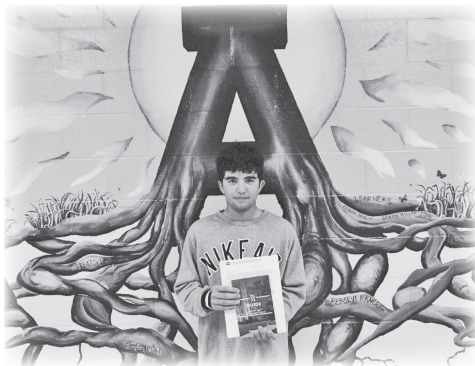
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Danny Abbass Named 2021 National Merit Scholarship Program Semifinalist



The Aurora City School District would like to congratulate the Aurora High School Class of 2021 National Merit Semifinalist and Commended student, Danny Abbass. The National Merit Scholarship Program has been in existence to recognize students who are high performers on a state and national basis. The top performers are determined by the junior year PSAT. Last fall, over 1.5

million students participated in the 2020 Preliminary SAT/PSAT at over 21,000 high schools. Of those students, 50,000 (1.5%) are recognized as Commended scholars, and only 16,000 are named Semifinalists, representing the top .5% of test takers in each state. Semifinalists have the opportunity to apply and compete for approximately 7,600 scholarships worth more than 30 million that will be offered next spring with 15,000 students expected to become Finalists.

Aurora High School Principal, Mike Hayes, said, "We are so proud of Danny and wish him nothing but the best of luck as he continues in this process. Congratulations to Danny, his family, and his teachers, peers and community that have helped fuel his success."

Bond Refinancing - Continued from p. 1

banks that buy school district and other municipal debt, which resulted in lower interest rates. With this refinancing the District has now refinanced each of the issues twice resulting in a total savings to the of taxpayers of more than \$2,862,500. The District will continue to monitor interest rates to determine if any future refinancing is economically feasible."

Aurora School Board President, Gerald Kohanski, stated, "The vigilance of Treasurer Bill Volosin in constantly seeking ways to reduce school district expenses and saving taxpayer dollars has been a key factor in the long-term financial stability of the Aurora schools. Mr. Volosin's efforts are often overlooked when the success of the Aurora schools is recognized, but he is a very valuable member of the senior administration team."

The district was assisted by its financial advisory firm of Sudsina & Associates, LLC of Aurora. The Cleveland office of Squire, Sanders served as the district's bond counsel.