Pirate Pride

The Newsletter of the
Merrillville Community School Corporation
March 2020

A Message from the Superintendent

Dear MCSC Parents and Guardians,

Governor Holcomb announced on March 19 that all Indiana schools have been ordered closed until May 1st. Schools in the Merrillville Community School Corporation will continue with current learning and student meal plans and provide you with updates as necessary. As we all adapt to a new temporary normal, Merrillville school board members and administration want to take a moment to thank parents for their support, understanding and efforts at home to keep their kids learning. Our board and administration also want to thank our teachers and staff and shine a spotlight on their dedication and hard work over this past week. Within days, they had to completely change programs and procedures in order to keep students on track. That wasn't easy.

Teachers changed in-class programs, activities and lessons to create remote and online learning experiences for students. Tools are now available on our website www.mvsc.k12.in.us to help your children with their home studies. Additionally, staff in our technology department is standing by to help with any device issues you may have. Please feel free to call the helpdesk with your questions between 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, 219-650-5376.

Thanks to our committed and enthusiastic food service staff, our breakfast and lunch distribution will continue for our children. Children cannot learn without food to fuel their bodies and minds; so parents, make sure they continue to have the nutrition they need for their remote studies by taking advantage of these meals. Distributions run Mondays and Thursdays from more than a dozen locations. The schedule is included as the last page of this newsletter. Check our website for the latest updates, www.mvsc.k12.in.us.

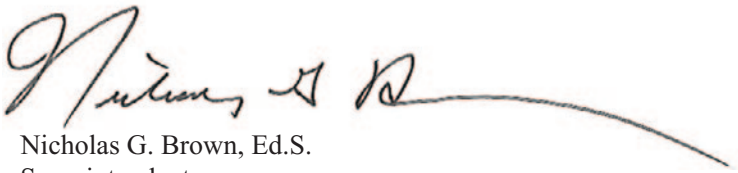
Lastly, staff will be at the administration building ready to answer any questions you may have during this time. We are here to help between 8 a.m.-4 p.m, Mondays through Fridays. Over Spring Break, March 30-April 3, the building will be closed, but staff will be here to answer questions via phone, 219-650-5300.

For all of us here at the Merrillville Community School Corporation, there is nothing better than the daily interaction with our students. We miss them already. However, it is imperative to follow the guidelines the state and federal governments have stressed, which means practicing social distancing and staying home.

Until we can once again resume a regular schedule, we all appreciate your continued patience, understanding and support. We know it isn't easy to keep children engaged with their schoolwork at home, and we appreciate all of your efforts with keeping your children on track. We will get through this together.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter, the most recent celebration of our amazing students and a showcase of all of their hard work and accomplishments.

Please stay safe and healthy.



Nicholas G. Brown, Ed.S.
Superintendent

INSTRUCTIONAL CALENDAR THROUGH MAY 1

The extension of the closing has created a need to determine an instructional calendar. We want to keep some consistency of learning with our students and at the same time not burn them out. Starting with the week following Spring Break, we will alternate between instructional days and waiver days.

There is no planned instruction on a waiver day for students. Students will not receive any new assignments on waiver days. Teachers are not expected to plan instruction for waiver days.

Purple = Instructional Elearning Day
Yellow = Waiver Day
Green = Planned Recess

Instructional Calendar - NEW (3 Days/ Wk - MWF after spring break)				
MON	**TUES**	**WED**	**THURS**	**FRI**
March 16	March 17	March 18	March 19	March 20
March 23	March 24	March 25	March 26	March 27
March 30	March 31	April 1	April 2	April 3
April 6	April 7	April 8	April 9	April 10
April 13	April 14	April 15	April 16	April 17
April 20	April 21	April 22	April 23	April 24
April 27	April 28	April 29	April 30	May 1

Click the image below for additional web resources:



Please complete your 2020 Census!

You can make a difference in the lives of everyone here in Merrillville by completing the 2020 Census.

Residents should have received the Census mailer or they will receive it soon.

Please remember that underrepresentation hurts communities: 1) we could lose representation in state and federal governments; 2) our state could lose federal funds, as much as $10,000 per person; 3) our access to valuable resources such as housing, jobs, equitable education and healthcare for families and children could be limited.

Each and every one of us counts here in Pirate territory. We want as much representation as we are entitled, and we want to make sure we get our "fair share" to make our community the best it could be.



On April 1, the nation will recognize Census Day to earmark the commencement of the new decennial census count of the total residing population as of this date.

The U.S. Constitution requires that the federal government count all persons living in the country every 10 years, regardless of age, race, ethnicity and citizenship status.

For the first time ever, the 2020 Census survey will be available to complete online, as well as by phone or paper form to be returned by mail.

It is vital that everyone take part in this civic duty; the survey is easy to complete, and every response is confidential! Why is completing the survey important to Indiana residents and the K-12 school community? Here's the scoop:

1. The Census determines the apportionment to the states of the number of congressional seats. Survey information will be used for redistricting of the congressional and state legislative districts.

2. The count is used by the federal government to determine allocation of approximately $883 billion in federal funds, with $160 billion for programs to support children. This year Indiana will receive about $18 billion in federal funding with approximately $1 billion for K-12 programs.

3. An accurate count of young children in the 2020 Census will be critical to the child's and family's access to resources such as housing, jobs, equitable education and healthcare.

BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

Thomas G. Bainbridge
President

Judy C. Dunlap
Vice-President

Mark S. Lucas
Secretary

Linda C. Jonaitis
Member

James Donohue
Member

SUPERINTENDENT
Nicholas G. Brown, Ed.S.

We hope you've enjoyed this edition of Pirate Pride. If you have story ideas, questions or comments, please contact the Corporation's Public Information Officer at dstuckert@mvsc.k12.in.us or 219-650-5477.

Poets take second place in Chicago contest



MHS poets of Permanent Ink took second in the prestigious Gwendolyn Brooks Regional at Hancock High School in Chicago.

Seniors Rebecca Saluska and Haylee Rangel each earned perfect 10s from judges, as Permanent Ink took second in qualifying then advanced to the Haiku Death Match Final Four, where senior Jewel Williams came up with the fifth-round winning haiku to put Permanent Ink into the championship round.

Click here to order your spirit wear to show off your PIRATE PRIDE!

Dual credit classes give students a jump on college

MHS juniors and seniors recently earned college credit by taking the dual credit AP Physics course at Merrillville High School.

This was the first year MHS offered AP Physics, an algebra-based physics class that covers the first physics college semester for those not majoring in physics or engineering.

"Please congratulate my AP/dual credit physics students that earned college credit through Purdue Northwest," said MHS Physics Teacher Ronda Waters. "All of them have received the credits for Physics 220. I am proud of how hard they worked."

The class is one of a vast number of opportunities MHS offers its students to not only meet the requirements for completing high school, but to get a jump start on their college careers.

This year, MHS students are on track to earn more than 1,400 college credits.

During the 2018-19 school year, 317 students earned 1,049 college credits, up from the 2017-18 school year when 222 students earned a total of 912 college credits.

Physics, chemistry, anatomy and physiology, biology, Spanish, drawing, U.S. history, construction, radio and television, marketing, entrepreneurship, culinary arts and hospitality, education, fire and rescue, and automation and robotics are examples of the wide variety of MHS courses that offer dual credit.

According to Michelle Wilson, MHS guidance coordinator, the majority of students who register for dual credit classes will earn college credit, as long as they complete all of the requirements, which may include minimum GPAs, online registration with the associated colleges, or even minimum test scores on the SAT or PSAT.

Not only do students save time by not having to take the college course, they save money. Credits earned in the dual credit classes offered through the school's partnership with Ivy Tech are completely free and transfer to any Indiana public college or university through the Indiana Core Transfer Library. Through partnerships with Indiana University and Purdue Northwest, college credits are $25 each; for students on the free and reduced lunch program, credits are FREE.



MHS students earned college credit through Purdue Northwest by taking AP Physics, the first time this class has been offered.

Aside from the dual credit courses, AP tests can also provide college credit when scores are high enough. Students are encouraged to take AP tests. So test costs aren't a barrier for students, a state grant pays for the costs of the tests for all STEM plus English AP exams. In addition, Merrillville High School was awarded a grant this year to pay for AP tests that do not fall under that STEM plus English umbrella.

Pierce student represents county in Indy

Pierce Middle School student Nomi Green (left in photo) joined a Lake Station student to represent Lake County for the VOICE Youth Day of Action last Monday at the Indiana State House.

They were among students from across Indiana that got to speak with Governor Holcomb, Indiana State Health Commissioner Dr. Box, Senator Melton, Actor Moses Jones and a host of other legislators and community leaders.

Participating students like Nomi learned what's being done to address tobacco use and vaping among students, how to help dispel the myths related to vaping in Indiana and how to recognize what they can do in their local communities to educate peers and advocate for change!



Corporation fosters teachers' professional growth

Teachers in Merrillville schools hoping to take their careers to the next level have the support of the Merrillville Community School Corporation.

The administration annually invites its educators who have completed the groundwork to becoming administrators to participate in the "Grow Our Own" Administrative Preparation Program.

"We want people far enough into the process that they could be an administrator next year," said Executive Director of Personnel Dr. Reid Amones. "We want to help people get to where they want to be."

According to Dr. Amones, teachers will get to see what it's like to be an administrator in the school corporation.

He said the advantage to helping educators further their careers within the same school district is they already have a familiarity with it.

"They know the families, expectations, administrators, teachers; they have fewer hurdles to overcome than someone new coming into the corporation," Dr. Amones said.

Though only in an informal existence for a few years, the program has grown and helped elevate many throughout the corporation. Last year, five out of the eight participants rose to leadership responsibilities.

"After this program, I was able to apply for and become the Dean of Students at Merrillville Intermediate School," Nicole Laird said. "This program gave me the opportunity to gain experiences that were necessary for me to step up into this position."

Ms. Laird previously served as an instructional coach at Wood Elementary School and MIS. She has been with the corporation in other capacities as well, for a total of 13 years.

"The program offered me the ability to see what happens in the school outside of individual classrooms," she said. "I was able to see the impact a principal can have during key times of day, especially more unstructured times."

Grow Our Own participants cover an array of topics at monthly meetings, including curriculum, finances, discipline, staffing, and new laws that will impact the corporation. In addition, participants are invited to become substitute administrators when necessary or offer relief for the building administrative team.

"During our time substituting, we would often supervise lunches, investigate small discipline scenarios or help out in any ways necessary," said Ms. Laird.

This year eight teachers, including MHS educator Chyamiah Martin, are participating in Grow Our Own.

"I have completed my administrative coursework, and I am preparing to take the licensing exam soon," Ms. Martin said. "After completing the program, I hope that district leaders will see me as a serious candidate who is prepared to fill future leadership roles within the corporation."

Celebrating Pi Day!



Iddings Elementary School fourth grade teachers decorated cookies to celebrate Pi Day on March 13, as close to 3.14 as they could get!

MHS students help the Chicago homeless



MHS students traveled to the Chicago Loop Feb. 1, for the Windy City Warmth Project. Students received training from WCW representatives before walking the city with college guides in search of homeless people in need of clothing/blankets, which they carried with them. Students then invited the homeless to lunch at a public restaurant to have conversations with them regarding their situations.

Advisory Team assists Superintendent



The Superintendent's Advisory Team meets monthly during the school year and is designed to provide input, feedback, and guidance to the superintendent about the operation of Merrillville Community Schools and the implementation of the strategic plan. The group is made up of appointed members of the school board, administration, staff, community, along with parents and students.

MHS, Pierce students take top essay honors

Four students took top honors in the 2020 Martin Luther King Jr. Essay Contest, sponsored by the Northwest Indiana Ecumenical Committee.

Merrillville High School senior Isaiah Vorice took first place in the high school category of the 2020 Martin Luther King Jr. Essay Contest, winning $500.

Pierce Middle School students won all three places in the contest's middle school category: first place, $300, eighth grader Ta'Lisa McDowell; second place, $100, seventh grader Jalaya Teamer; third place, $50, eighth grader Nariah Williams.

The contest required entrants to write their essays based on this MLK quote "Give us the ballot, and we will no longer have to worry the federal government about our basic rights."

The winners accepted their awards at the New Mt. Moriah Missionary Baptist Church in Gary on the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.



Pictured at the church front from left: Jalaya Teamer, Ta'Lisa McDowell, Isaiah Vorice, Nariah Williams; back row: Merrillville Community School Corporation Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction Marnita Taylor, MHS Principal Michael Krutz and Pierce Middle School Principal LaFonda Morris.

Box Tops help our schools

Traditional Box Tops clips are being phased out, but may continue to be found on many products throughout stores. Clip and send them to school.

Scan your receipts with Box Tops merchandise using the free app you can download from the app store. You'll earn money for your school! All Merrillville schools participate, except the high school.

The app will find participating products purchased at any store and instantly add cash earnings online.



GET ENGAGED!

Support Merrillville schools with Major Saver purchase

The Merrillville Education Foundation offers Major Saver discount cards for sale as a fundraiser through the Merrillville schools and online.

The $10 card offers savings with more than 20 local BOGO or discount offers at businesses in Merrillville. Once the card is purchased, thousands of offers become valid nationwide by downloading the free Major Saver app to an Android or iOS device.

Major Saver cards can be purchased online at www.majorsaver.com. The online sale can be credited back to a particular student and school. All cards purchased online will be mailed directly to the customer.

All of the money generated from this fundraiser goes back to supporting Merrillville Education Foundation programs for Merrillville Community School Corporation children.

Since its inception in 2002, the Merrillville Education Foundation has given nearly $370,000 to the Merrillville Schools in the form of grants and Major Saver fundraising.

For more information, visit the foundation website merrillvilleeducationfoundation.org



FOLLOW US!

Merrillville School Superintendent @MerrillvilleSu3
Merrillville High School . . . . . .@MerrillvilleMHS
CTE Program . . . . . .@MerrillvilleCTE
Clifford Pierce Middle School . . .@PIERCEadmn
Merrillville Intermediate School . . .@mis_principal
Fieler Elementary School . . . . . .@FielerPirates
Iddings Elementary School . . . . . .@IddingsElem
Miller Elementary School . . . . . .@miller_elem
Salk Elementary School . . . . . .@SalkNews
Wood Elementary School . . . . . .@PrinPetralia

Download the 2020-21 School Calendar here!

DOWNLOAD OUR NEW APP

Merrillville school information is available at your fingertips.

See all the events in the district or select an individual building.

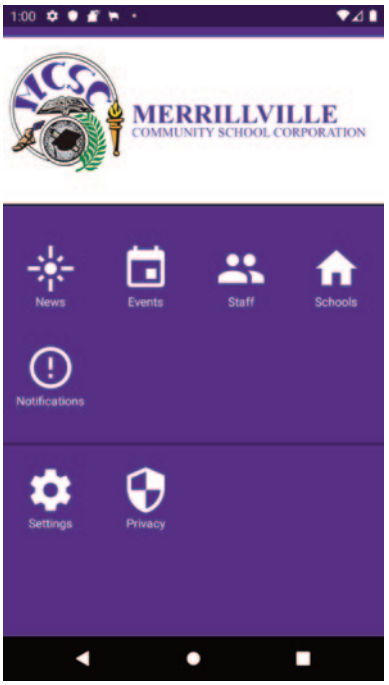
Find out what bus your student rides and the rules and regulations of Transportation.

Get links to Family Access, Food Services, District Calendars and more!

The app can be downloaded at the Apple and Google Play stores.

Available on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play



Automotive education works for career or hobby

Whether students are searching for their career passions, pursuing hobbies, or just trying to acquire some common knowledge and everyday skills, Merrillville High School's automotive classes can answer their call.

MHS advanced automotive students are now job shadowing in the Merrillville Schools' bus barn and at businesses like Bozak Motors.

"There aren't enough workers in the trades," said MHS Automotive Teacher James Johnston. "Years ago, schools started doing away with these classes; as people retired, no one had the skills to replace them."

Now businesses want to hire students and in some cases will even pay for tech school and certification, he said.

"There's funding out there for high school programs in Career and Technical Education (CTE), and there is real community-backed support for them here in Merrillville," he said.

While advanced students may eye a profession in the auto industry, Mr. Johnston admits it's not every student's dream to become an ASE Certified Automotive Professional.

"Society has changed," he said. "We have become a throwaway society. If the lawnmower stops working, throw it away!"

The lawnmower operates on the same basic principle as a car, he said. In most cases, the mower just needs a simple inexpensive repair that automotive students can ultimately learn to tackle, he added.

"Don't throw it away because the pull cord breaks," he said. "It's a simple fix."

Most students plan on owning a car, he said, so being knowledgeable and learning routine maintenance would help them save money and headaches.

Mr. Johnston said one of his former students used her automotive knowledge to manage a string of Jiffy Lubes while she was going to college, doing something she enjoyed to help fund her education.

"She also worked with a toolbox out of her dorm to do side work for other students and teachers," Mr. Johnston said.

Mr. Johnston hopes to connect with Napa Auto Parts to get students experience working at parts counters to develop an understanding of auto parts and learn responsibility.

The goal is to provide students with hands-on training, no matter what their goal is in taking these classes.

"They need to use equipment, learn safety rules, dangers, and learn to respect things," he said. "It's not a game."

Mr. Johnston said years ago educators relied on computer simulations to train students. In auto class, they were building engines on a computer; in welding class, they were using computers to simulate welding, he said.

"That's OK to have in a beginning class, but they should learn to use the real stuff," he said. "Physically, you have to respect the tools because they could burn or hurt you," Johnston said.

"Give them some real tools," he said. "Have the kids figure out how to use a wrench."

MHS recently renovated its welding lab and added a four post alignment rack in the automotive shop using CTE funding.

"We are here to show kids something that parents haven't or can't," Mr. Johnston said. "Perhaps we can help them find their passion."



Advanced automotive students spend some time job shadowing in the school bus barn.

Mock Trial Team makes top 10 at State Contest



The Mock Trial Team had a stellar performance at the State Championship, finishing ninth out of 24 teams from around the state. Ariel Riley won an award for best attorney, while Deverieux Coleman and Courtney Davis were recognized as best witnesses. All of the team put in top-rated performances and won many compliments from judges and parents. *Photo by MHS Yearbook Staff.*

Air Force JROTC takes second at Feb. 1 contest

Congratulations to the Air Force JROTC Drill Team.

The team traveled to Howell, Mich., Feb. 1, to compete in an Air Force JROTC Drill Meet. The team placed second overall.

- The Advanced Color Guard Team placed first.
- The Unarmed Exhibition Team placed second.
- The First Year Unarmed Team placed second.
- The First Year Armed Team placed third.

In addition, three cadets placed in the individual competition.

- Cadet Renk placed third.
- Cadet Dean placed fifth.
- Cadet Milton placed sixth.





Senior named Indiana Youth of the Year

MHS senior Azariah Avery, in the photo being congratulated by her father, was named Indiana State Youth of the Year! She will receive a $2,500 scholarship from Boys & Girls Clubs of America; a four-year, full-ride scholarship to St. Mary of the Woods College; and a one-year scholarship to Ivy Tech. She now moves onto the Midwest Regional Youth of the Year Competition.

Last month Azariah was named Youth of the Year for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Northwest Indiana. She was among candidates from the 10 Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Northwest Indiana. Candidates gave a prepared speech and were interviewed by local judges. In addition to three essays, they prepared an application that included their academic successes, community service and life goals. She received a $5,000 post-high school scholarship.

MIS students help to make a difference in women's lives



Merrillville Intermediate School 5th and 6th grade honors students collected purses for their Act of Kindness Project. Seventy-three purses were collected, which the students filled with toiletries, wallets or cosmetics bags and donated them to a women's shelter.

They saw a Pirate Power presentation called the "Butterfly Effect," very similar to paying it forward, and decided to collect items to help others. They also collected stuffed animals for a children's hospital and supplies for an animal shelter.

Superintendent's Faith-Based Advisory Committee

This group of local religious leaders meets regularly to support the schools and each other to strengthen our community. The group's goals are to create an ongoing support for all children in our community, to strengthen the relationship between Merrillville School Corporation and the community, and improve the ability to communicate with the community when there is a need.



MIS hosts first Black Expo and schoolwide competition



Fifth Grader Tristan Thomas won first place with his display "The Life of Barack Obama, 44th U.S. President."

Merrillville Intermediate School students and their families came out to view hundreds of student-created displays celebrating the lives of famous African Americans Feb. 28. They enjoyed food and student entertainment as well.

Congratulations to the winners of the display board competition:

5th Grade

1st Place: Tristan Thomas, The Life of Barack Obama, 44th U.S. President; 2nd Place: Kamrin Hilson, The Life of Mary Church Terrell, Educator; 3rd Place: Caleb Ayres, The Life of Sammy Davis, Jr., Entertainer; Honorable Mentions: Aria Johnson & Kimara Newman.

6th Grade

1st Place: Shelby Smith, The Life of Kenny Washington, 1st to sign with NFL; 2nd Place: Londyn Durham, The Life of Daisy Bates, Civil Rights Activist; 3rd Place TIE: Miranda Henderson, The Life of Marian Anderson, Classical Singer; 3rd Place TIE: Leyiah Camphor, The Life of Hank Aaron, Baseball Player; Honorable Mentions: Greenlee Haynes & Noah Martin.

Culinary students earn certifications

Four MHS culinary students recently earned their ServSafe Managers Certifications through the National Restaurant Association. Congratulations to Isis Jones (from left), Jesse Williamson, Shawnte Crenshaw and Jaimie Ali. The certification verifies that a manager or person-in-charge has sufficient food safety knowledge to protect the public from foodborne illness. The ServSafe Manager Certification is accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) under the Conference for Food Protection Standards.



Theater experience leads to college opportunities

At the recent State Thespian Competition, Merrillville High School's Myia Dickerson took a leap of faith.

Her theater teacher Thomas Mackey encouraged her to participate in the college audition. Since she was a junior, she hadn't planned on it and wasn't prepared; so Myia hesitated. There was a piece she knew, though, but she hadn't done it in a while.

"What's to lose?" she thought.

So, she leaped. While she was really nervous and said she messed up, her college audition resulted in acceptances from nine colleges, much to her surprise. Two of them offered scholarships, which she obviously couldn't consider because she's a junior.

"They said they would love to have me in their program and would give me money because they saw potential and raw talent," she said.

One college even encouraged her to pursue directing, of all things, she said.

"I never thought about that," Myia said. "I like the idea of helping people and taking their talent and seeing what they could do with it."

The MHS theater program has provided Myia with skills and opportunities for her future. She is now considering pursuing theater at the college level, perhaps minoring.

"I really didn't think I had the talent before, but this recent audition really opened my eyes," she said.

"It's not my job to make students go into theatre in college," said Mr. Mackey. "But if that's their passion, my job is to help them to be ahead of the game compared to students of other schools."

He said it's not unusual for MHS theater students to be accepted into colleges or be offered scholarships even before their senior years.

"We do a good job of training students for that moment and building that skillset," he said. "They are confident and aware of what they need to do to impress the colleges and judges."

While his classes fall under the arts requirements high school students need to fulfill for graduation, Mr. Mackey says that many people don't realize that theater is a viable career path.



Theater teacher Tom Mackey (from front left) with junior Myia Dickerson and sophomore Lauren Molenda were recognized at a February School Board meeting for their appointments as State Thespian Officers. In the back are Merrillville School Board members from left James Donohue, President Tom Bainbridge, Secretary Mark Lucas and Linda Jonaitis.

"There is a lot of money to be made in that industry," he said. "In Chicago alone, there are around 250 theater companies. Some don't pay, but a lot of them do."

Outside of theater, there is the entertainment industry, including tradeshows, events, conventions, concerts, conferences, halftime performances. Mr. Mackey said a lot of skills for those jobs can be learned in the theater world.

As a student who arrived as a freshman at MHS not knowing a soul, Myia has come a long way. She did not go through the Merrillville schools, so she said she was initially influenced by the only fellow student she knew, who begged her to audition for a play with her.

That first audition resulted in Myia being cast as the understudy for one of the lead roles. Her theater career just bloomed from there, she said.

Next year, her senior year, she'll serve along with sophomore Lauren Molenda as State Thespian Officers, representing the State of Indiana. To become an STO, students are presented with a rigorous interview and application process. Merrillville has had 10 STOs in seven years.

"If I told myself three years ago that I'd be doing this, I'd say no way!" Myia said. "It's amazing how far I've really come. I would not be the person I am today without being in my Thespian group. Theater is really my life."

This year, Myia serves as the club historian, helping the group to achieve the level of Gold Ranked Honor Troupe for the second year in a row by documenting all of their participation, community service and outreach over the year.

"The standing ovation is the best thing for me," Myia said. "I love seeing people clap knowing they enjoyed the show. I love that part.

"I love seeing people's happy faces," she said. "I'm so happy I put myself in this moment in your life. I'm glad I've made a significant mark on you today. I love making people's days. That's awesome."

Download reasons to complete the Census

Choral students earn state ISSMA awards



MHS choir members shined at the state contest. A total of 82 gold medals were earned by 30 choir members; 64 of those were "With Distinction," meaning they were within 1-1/2 points of a perfect score, and two events earned silver medals---one by only 1/2 point.

Of the 12 soloists who competed, 11 earned gold medals. Of the 11 gold, six were "With Distinction": Andre Burns (score of perfect 9), Jarius Newman (9),Tyrese Cooper (9.5), Erin Escobar (10), and Andrew McKnight (10).

Of the seven ensembles who earned gold, six were "With Distinction": Escobar (9), Davenport (9.5), Choralteens (9.5), VocalteenMen (10), Skokal (10), and Walker (10).

MHS musicians take home state awards

Thirty-four high school orchestra students qualified for recently held state solo and ensemble contest.

Many players felt they had peak performances, including gold medal soloists Faith Garrett (with distinction award), Soji Oduneye, and Trinity Edwards, as well as gold medal senior violin trio Javonne Spivey, Aminah Samba and Royale Miller.

MHS band students also had tremendous success at the ISSMA State Solo/Ensemble Contest.



MHS had one woodwind ensemble and one alto saxophone solo make the trip.

Both events earned GOLD! Members of the ensemble are: Elijah Walker; Keili Cruz; Lea Patterson; Beah Corrales; Gavin Lipsky; and Darius Lewis. The alto saxophone soloist is: Jovon Davis

The MHS Jazz Ensemble earned a gold! Four of the students were recognized as "Outstanding Soloists" as well: Flute, senior Ashanti Castleberry; trumpet, sophomore Brice Sanford; tenor sax, junior Deveon Lipson; baritone sax, senior Jovon Davis.

Theater students recognized at state contest

Members of the Merrillville High School Thespian Troupe #1692 were recently recognized at the State Thespian Competition in Franklin, Ind.

Last, but not least, congratulations to these students who were recognized in their individual event competitions:

Superior

- Zhanvie' Edmond, Scenic Design
- Jarius Taylor Newman, Solo Musical Theatre
- Ja'Leah Walker, Solo Musical Theatre

Excellent

- Kaitlin Bowens, Monologue
- Amia Giddens, Monologue
- Sade' Daniel & Kaitlin Bowens, Duet Acting
- Hunter Frangis & Danai Nixon, Duet Acting
- Aaliyah Perry, Amia Giddens, Miracle Davenport & Jarius Newman, Group Acting



MHS senior wrestler wins prestigious award

Jacob Maldonado received the 2020 Ward E. Brown Mental Attitude Award in wrestling.

Each year the IHSAA Executive Committee selects a senior who was nominated by his principal and coach and was determined to have best demonstrated mental attitude, scholarship, leadership and athletic ability.

Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance, the corporate partner of the IHSAA, presented $1,000 to Merrillville High School's general scholarship fund in the name of Jacob Maldonado. The award is named in honor of the IHSAA's fourth commissioner who served from 1969-76.

Jacob placed 6th in state. He has served as the MHS wrestling captain since 2018, won the 2019 MHS Wrestling Leadership Award and the 2018 MHS Wrestling Sportsmanship Award.

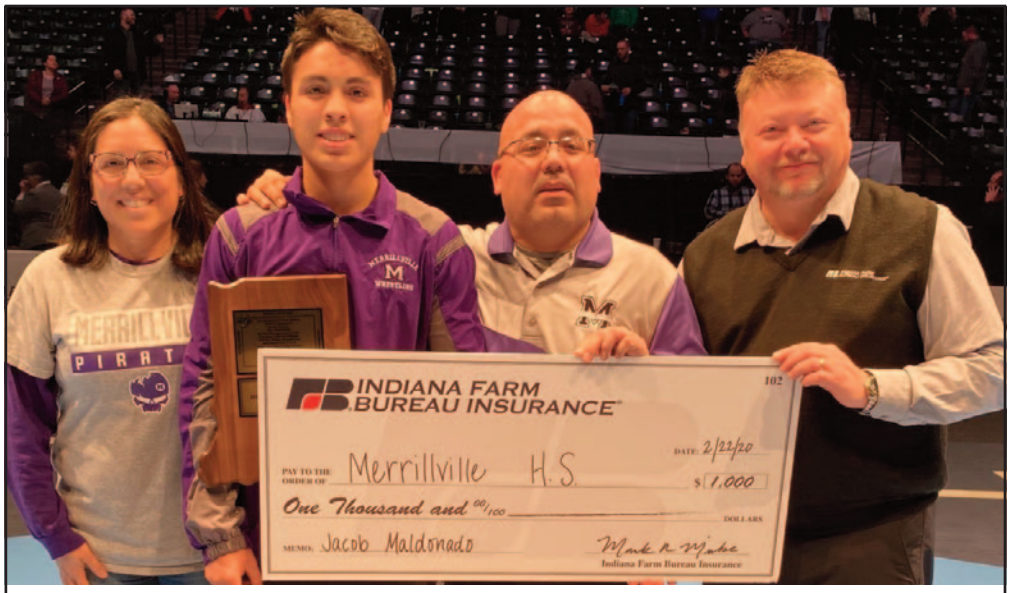
Other achievements in wrestling include: two-time state qualifier, freshman-sophomore state champion, semi-state runner up and three-time conference runner up, among many others.

Jacob is active in school organizations and is an award-winning soccer player and team captain since 2018.

"While Jacob is an outstanding athlete, most importantly, he excels in the classroom with a 3.942 on a 4.0 GPA sale and is currently ranked 4th in his class of 500 students," wrote MHS Principal Michale Krutz in his nomination letter to IHSAA Board members.

"Jacob certainly fits the bill of being a standout student while participating in two sports during his high school career," Mr. Krutz wrote.

Jacob plans to attend Wabash College to major in Accounting and minor in Spanish and digital media.



Jacob Maldonado (second from left) accepts the award with his mother, Veronica, and father, Dave, the MHS head wrestling coach, from a representative from Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance.



Khris Walton placed 4th at State (right); Jacob Maldonado placed 6th and won the IHSAA Mental Attitude Award. For the 2019-20 season, Khris earned All-DAC (182 lbs.) and Jacob earned All-DAC (145 lbs.).



Fourth grader begins writing career

Miller Elementary School budding author Hannah Wilburn decided to write her first book about good hygiene. The fourth grader wrote "Need to be Clean!" with some great tips about wearing clean clothes, brushing your teeth and more. Her teacher Ms. Pulphus asked her to share it with her class. Hannah said she is thinking about being an author when she grows up. She reads a lot of books and loves "I Survived" and mystery books. She said she hopes to write mystery books and also write about things to keep people safe.

MHS athletes honored at winter sports banquet

MHS celebrated the accomplishments of its winter sports athletes at a recent banquet.

Award winners included: Girls' Basketball — MVP: Torri Miller; Leadership: Amani Alvarez; Sportsmanship: Destiny Walker; Most Improved: Cailynn Dilosa.

Boys' Basketball — MVP: Keon Thompson; more TBD.

Boys' Swim — MVP: Mason Martisauskas; Leadership: Jaydon Wilbon; Sportsmanship: Kamryn Outlar; Most Improved: Anthony Cruz.

Girls' Swim —MVP: Carmen Garcia; Leadership: Andrea Tapia; Sportsmanship: Paige Raspberry; Most Improved: Iysis Perez.

Wrestling — MVP: Khris Walton; Leadership: Jacob Maldonado; Sportsmanship: Anthony Rivera; Most Improved: Aleksandar Pejovski.

Gymnastics — MVP: Briana Thomas; Leadership: Briana Thomas; Mental Attitude: Mindie Cuozzo; Most Improved: Abreia Harbin;

Cheer —MVP: Zaria Lucious; Leadership: Latrece Blair; Sportsmanship: Jariah Runde; Most Improved: Irelin Fulton.



Scholar athletes were recognized at the awards banquet. These students hold a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or above.

6th Letter Plaque – Earned 6th Varsity Letter: Amaya Kirk; Marissa Ford; Destiny Lilly; Khris Walton.

Blanket Award Winners – Earned 8th Varsity Letter: Latrece Blair; Sydney Jackson; Zaria Lucious; Jacob Maldonado; Anthony Rivera; and Aaliyah Wright.

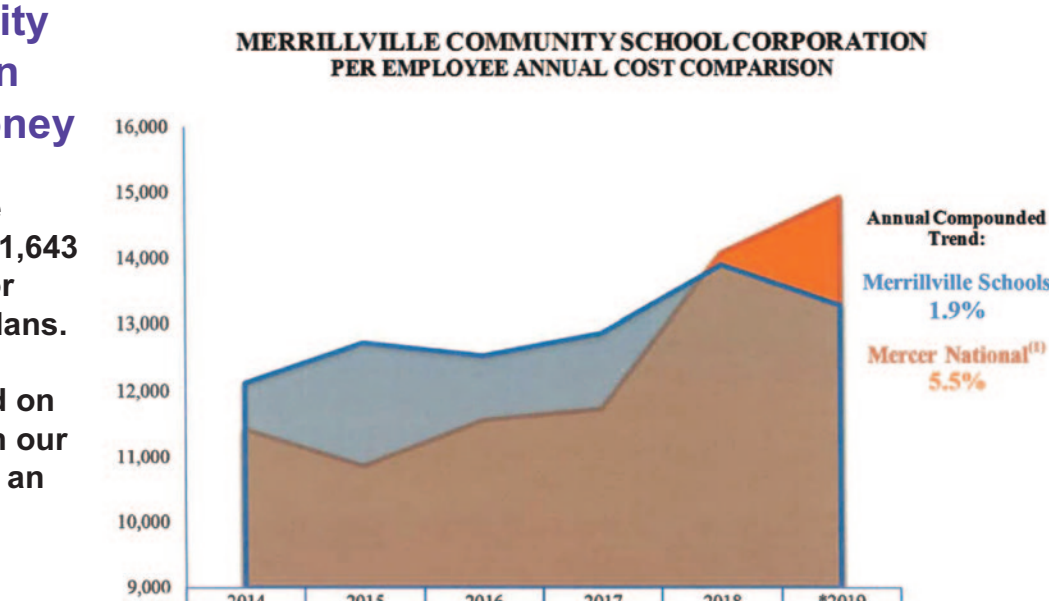
Scholar Athletes: Amani Alvarez; Azariah Crosby; Rayonna Grady; Alanna Sabbath; Trinity Allen; Aniya Hill; Mya-Lee Jackson; Ryell Sandifer; Alec Cunningham; Taylor Jackson; Aleksandar Djukic; Jariah Runde; Briana Thomas; Emily Jimenez; Emilee Thomas; Mason Martisaukas; Ricardo Palomo; Iysis Perez; Andrea Tapia; Mikayla Holden; Adeleke Igbasanmi; Jacob Maldonado; Ma'Shyia Coates; Sania Williams; Caleb Carter; Cesar Franco; Leah Peloza; Caleb Robinson; Daniel Bravo; Lucas Clement; Samuel Franco; David Maldonado; and Cassidy Ward.

Merrillville Community School Corporation continues to save money

The cost per employee for the corporation health plan was $1,643 less than the national trend for employer-sponsored health plans.

Based on this information and on the number of employees with our health insurance, this reflects an avoided cost of $826,429.

5 Year Lookback



	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	*2019
Mercer National	11,403	10,859	11,554	11,724	14,079	14,924
Merrillville Schools	12,106	12,731	12,538	12,858	13,895	13,281

(1) Mercer National Survey of Employer-Sponsored Health Plans 2018
* 2019 Mercer National estimate projected at 6%



Merrillville Schools Student Meal Distribution

During school shutdown, through May 1, 2020

updated March 24

Mondays & Thursdays, times vary per location

DISTRIBUTION NOW INCLUDES SPRING BREAK

Through May 1, breakfasts and lunches will be distributed to students from school cafeteria entrances and from buses at listed parks and churches.

These locations and times include:

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

* 73rd & Bigger Streets
* Stefek Park, 70th & Harrison St.

11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

* Tan Tar Apartments, 5850 Pennsylvania St.
* Wirtes Park, 5860 Roosevelt St.
* Wood Elementary School, 6100 E. 73rd. Ave., Door C

11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

* Fieler Elementary School, 407 W. 61st Ave., Door C
* Iddings Elementary School, 7249 Van Buren St., Door L
* Merrillville High School, 276 E. 68th Pl., Door J
* Merrillville Intermediate School, 1400 W. 61st Ave., Back door west of Door F
* Miller Elementary School, 5901 Waite St., Door A
* Pierce Middle School, 199 E. 70th St., west of Door 3
* Rethink Church, 2920 W. 73rd Pl.
* Salk Elementary School, 300 W. 77th Ave., Door B

12:30 to 1:30 p.m.

* Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 5375 Harrison St.

On Mondays, students will receive breakfasts and lunches for three days; on Thursdays, they will receive breakfasts and lunches for four days.

Please check www.mvsc.k12.in.us for the most current information regarding meal distribution and school closings.