Pirate Pride

March 2021

www.mvsc.k12.in.us * 219-650-5300

The Newsletter of the Merrillville Community School Corporation

New board member hopes to inspire other parents

The Merrillville Community School Corporation Board of School Trustees welcomed its newest member in January.



DeLena Thomas

DeLena Thomas, a 15-year Merrillville resident, wife and mother of two children who go to school in the district, won her position in the November election.

The two-year PTO president describes herself as "a parent highly motivated to ensure all the students in the Merrillville School District benefit from all of the opportunities set in place by the school corporation.

"I am a hard worker who is ready to engage with our community and learn from the existing policies set in place, she said. "I'm dedicated to continue to help lead the students of the district forward."

She is a registered respiratory therapist who has worked in the healthcare field for nearly 20 years.

Mrs. Thomas said she ran in the election because it was important to her that a parent who currently has

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Educational & worker training grants expand student learning experiences

Merrillville High School recently installed some new equipment for graphic arts and will also be receiving a new machine for its welding classes, thanks to funding supplied by the Educational & Worker Training Grant Program through the Redevelopment Commissions of both the Town of Merrillville and City of Hobart, respectively.

"We appreciate the partnerships our local municipalities offer to help us prepare students for the next level," said Mrs. Marnita Taylor, executive director of curriculum and instruction, Pre-K-12 and grants administrator.

The high school's new press equipment, a Titan automatic screen printing press with dryer and Thunder manual printing press, replaced old, worn-out equipment installed during the 1992 renovation. The total cost of the new equipment was more than $51,000.

According to Mr. Kenny Smith, MHS graphic arts educator, both presses

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WELCOME BACK!



In-person learning started Feb. 1 for families that chose to send their children to school. Everyone at Merrillville Community School Corporation is thrilled to have students back in the buildings. Wood Elementary School Principal Alison Petralia (photo above) and Director of Federal Grants Debbie VanSlyke welcome students as they arrive off the bus.

Support Merrillville schools with Major Saver purchase

The Merrillville Education Foundation will offer Major Saver discount cards for sale as a fundraiser to help support Merrillville Schools.

Students will receive sales packets starting April 8, and the sale will last approximately two weeks.

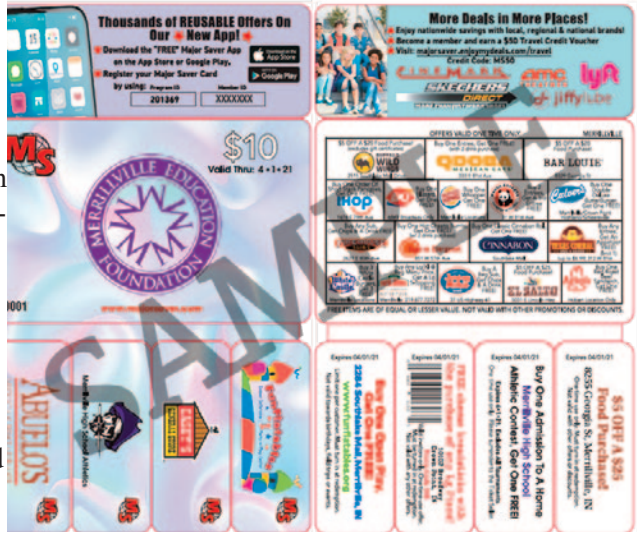
The $10 card offers savings with more than 20 local BOGO or discount offers at businesses in Merrillville.

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 via cash, check or 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 customers.

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 $378,082.66 to the Merrillville Schools in the form of grants and Major Saver fundraising. For more information, visit the foundation website merrillvilleeducationfoundation.org.



BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

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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.

APPLY FOR FINANCIAL AID THROUGH APRIL 15!

With more than $350 million in state financial aid available, as well as billions of dollars in federal aid, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education reminds Hoosiers that filing the FAFSA by April 15, is imperative for securing money for college.

Promotion spotlight

MHS graduate works her way up to food service director

The corporation's new food service director is not only a graduate of MHS, she has worked her way up through the Merrillville food service ranks.

"I am proud to be a Merrillville Pirate, and I look forward to serving our community," Angelica Claiborne said. "As a Merrillville parent and employee, I will strive daily to make the best decisions for the Merrillville Food Service Department."

Mrs. Claiborne, who took over the reins of the department last month, actually started as an assistant kitchen manager in 2009. Prior to Merrillville schools, she had already worked in food service for five years.

She moved up into a role as kitchen manager, serving at two schools and managing the summer feeding program for a short season. She also worked numerous banquets. Mrs. Claiborne was promoted to assistant food service director in June 2019.

"When I became the assistant director, I worked really hard to learn what I could as quickly as I could," she said. "Moving my way up through the ranks is what prepared me for this job, and my experience in the kitchens is my greatest resource."



Angelica Claiborne

With Covid, Mrs. Claiborne admits Food Service has gone through so many changes, some more welcomed than others.

"I wanted the department to have the smoothest transition possible," she said. "The students are our number one priority, and we want to keep the ball rolling.

"My immediate goal is to continue serving delicious and nutritious meals to our students," she continued. "Other goals include increasing participation, speeding up serving lines and keeping an eye out for new food items."

New staff spotlight

Phelps heads technology, CTE programs

Merrillville Community School Corporation welcomed a new director of the technology and career & technical education (CTE) in December.



Bob Phelps

Bob Phelps joined the Pirate Family, bringing with him years of experience as a CTE instructor. He taught broadcasting and media in Porter County since 2006.

"I am thrilled to join the staff at Merrillville Community Schools as the director of technology and CTE," said Mr. Phelps. "I am a proud father, husband and educator that believes all students should graduate high school with the technical and employability skills necessary to be successful."

He said the positive reputation of the students, staff, and leaders in the Merrillville community inspired him to join the Pirate Family. His goal is to provide all teachers and students the resources and confidence they need to be successful.

"The position of director of technology is unique because it deals with instructional technology and preparing students for their careers," he said. "I want to encourage educators to embrace technology and use it as one of the many tools we have to teach, train and mentor our students.

"My priority as an educator has always been to prepare students to be successful members of their community and to support themselves with a career they enjoy," he said.

Mr. Phelps received his bachelor's and master's degrees and director of CTE license from Ball State University and previously served as director of CTE at the Gary Area Career Center.

Click here to order your Piratewear TODAY!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

March 5
Fourth Grading Period/ Trimester 2 ends

March 9
No School for all students, teachers

March 29-April 2
No school/Spring break

April 23
Fifth Grading Period ends

New staff spotlight

Former Challenger Center flight director heads MCP



Josh Elder

Merrillville Community School Corporation welcomed a new director of the Merrillville Community Planetarium.

Josh Elder took over the reigns in January, saying that space exploration and understanding our universe have always been fascinating to him.

"I have been teaching in many different capacities for over 20 years," Mr. Elder said. "Throughout that time, I have had the opportunity to teach students in classrooms ranging from third grade to undergraduates at Indiana University in Bloomington. Most recently in Porter Township, I taught sixth and seventh grade science."

He said beyond the classroom setting, one of his most unique experiences was working as flight director/mission commander at the Challenger Learning Center of Northwest Indiana.

"There, I led thousands of students through simulated space science missions related to studying comets and exploring Mars," he said.

At the MCP, he hopes sharing their knowledge and presenting memorable experiences of space science will spark the interest of students and members of the community.

Due to Covid-19, the Merrillville Community Planetarium has been closed. Mr. Elder hopes to be able to welcome everyone back at the beginning of the 2021-22 school year.

The new planetarium director grew up in Crown Point where both of his parents were teachers. He said from a very young age, they instilled in him the desire to be a lifelong learner.

"My family would spend a week-long vacation in northern Minnesota," Mr. Elder said. "During those trips, we shared outdoor experiences such as looking at stars and the aurora borealis at night, exploring the forests on hikes, learning about the plants and animals that lived there, fishing, and seeing first-hand the ancient exposed bedrock of the area.

"These experiences created a curiosity about nature that has led to my interest in science," he said.

New board member

From page 1

children in the district be represented on the board.

"My close proximity to parents gives me a unique outlook to examine issues concerning parents," she said.

She said she feels she can make a positive impact on the community as a whole and be a bridge to any existing gaps.

"I am driven to hopefully inspire more parents to step up and be more involved with all aspects of their children's education," she said.

"I encourage and urge all parents to work together and find a way to add to the positive growth of the community," Mrs. Thomas said. "To have great schools in a thriving community, we need the efforts of all who live and work there. Let's all step up and work hard to be the change we want to see."

She plans to continue to champion the existing policies set in place making sure each student represented in the district has a clear plan for success.

She also says she wants to ensure the dynamic teaching staff has what they need to continue to encourage, uplift, and guide the great minds of the students in the district.

"I want to promote improving technology and ensuring all families have access to it," she continued. "Our vision should always be students first, and I want to work together with our board to make sure we advance practical guidelines for maintaining policies set in place.

"I want to make sure we are always listening and responding to any and all community concerns," she added.

Mrs. Thomas said Merrillville is a thriving community, and she looks forward to being involved in all aspects of its growth.

2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR SCHEDULE

	START	2-HOUR DELAY START	DISMISSAL	EARLY RELEASE THURSDAY DISMISSAL
Elementary Schools & Merrillville Intermediate School	7:55 a.m.	9:55 a.m.	2:15 p.m.	1:15 p.m.
Pierce Middle School	8:35 a.m.	10:35 a.m.	3:20 p.m.	2:20 p.m.
Merrillville High School	8:30 a.m.	10:30 a.m.	3:15 p.m.	2:15 p.m.

Teacher Feature

Educator brings the joy of music to her students

"Music is essential to being human, and I truly believe that what I do makes a difference in students' lives," said Barbara Timmerman.

Mrs. Timmerman has been helping Merrillville Community School Corporation students make music for 33 years.

"I am inspired by the kids," she said. "I love to see the joy that making music brings them. I love the sound of children's singing voices! I have seen kids move to a beautiful piece of music and then spontaneously clap when it ends."

Mrs. Timmerman is a music teacher at Wood Elementary School, and she also teaches kindergarten music at Salk Elementary School.

She started with Merrillville Schools in 1988 as the orchestra director for the entire corporation, teaching students to play string instruments in grades five to 12, plus she taught a few elementary music classes at Iddings.

When Merrillville switched to middle schools, she taught orchestra in grades six to 12 at Pierce Middle School, Harrison Middle School and MHS.

"When I started, there were only about 35 students in the orchestra program," Mrs. Timmerman said. "At the end of 10 years, I had around 175. I am happy that the program continued growing, and now there are three orchestra teachers!"

In the fall of 1998, she transferred to teaching elementary music at John Wood Elementary. In addition to teaching all the students at Wood, she traveled to Iddings for some classes through 2015-16.

"I started traveling to Salk in 2015-16, and that is what I do currently," she said.

One of the things Mrs. Timmerman likes best about working here is the people.

"Our teachers, administration, and staff are always working hard to help kids," she said. "Every day is different, and the years have flown by! And I really love purple!"



Barbara Timmerman

Though she's been teaching here for so long, she has no firm plans to retire.

"I still like teaching music!" she said. "I enjoy attending workshops and learning new things."

When she thinks about retiring, she hopes to have time to play her instruments more, learn to quilt, and work on her family history. She also wants to travel.

Teacher Feature

MHS grad returns as teacher and stays

Linda Zorich remembers the day she began her teaching career by walking into the building she once attended as a child.

Ms. Zorich attended Merrillville schools from kindergarten through 12th grade, returning to teach, a career already lasting 32 years.

During her career, she has taught kindergarten, first and second grades before becoming an instructional coach at Fieler Elementary School, her current position.

An instructional coach works one-on-one and in small groups with teachers, providing guidance, training, and other resources as needed. Together, they focus on practical strategies for engaging students, improving their learning, and improving student achievement.

Ms. Zorich said she enjoys the family atmosphere that is shown throughout the schools.

"Merrillville is a terrific school system," she said. "Everyone cares for our students and goes far beyond for them."



Linda Zorich

She says she continues to work here because "Merrillville School Corporation is always looking to the future to better our students and the teachers. It is a great place to teach!"

Ms. Zorich says she has no plans to retire yet because she enjoys her job and students.

Share your experiences and get a chance to win

Have some great news to share about our schools? Have a great experience or a fabulous teacher that needs some kudos?

Please share that on our **NICHE page!** We really appreciate your feedback; in addition, every month each person who participates will be entered into a drawing to win $1,000!

NICHE conducts this drawing, so

- alumni,
- parents,
- PTO members,
- high school students,

please share your good news and success stories **HERE** and get your chance to win!



Class feature

Class taps students' interests to build computer skills

It seems to be all fun and games in Bonita Gray's classes at Pierce Middle School.

From producing and editing their own videos, to recoding a version of the game Minecraft, to creating their own games, her seventh-grade students are expanding their computer skills using some of the media in which they are already familiar.

"In my lesson plans, I take into consideration what interest the kids have in a subject and how can I reach them," she said.

Ms. Gray teaches computer science, which is a required class. Her goal is for students to become familiar with skills they can use for entrepreneurship or a career.

Students learn how to program/code, get an in-depth use of Google Suite products and learn basic skills on solving algorithms.

"The children experience how to solve for solutions to problems," she said. "I hope that they gain confidence in knowing skills that can land them jobs making $50,000 a year."

Ms. Gray said most of her students have used a computer before, but not to the extent they are now. She's only been teaching the class for a year and a half.

"This class before me emphasized careers," she said. "I like to introduce the children to what it takes to pursue the career.

"Most of my students are interested in some type of computer careers, like game designers or becoming a gamer," she said. "I introduced them to Google Doodle where they could use their creativity as well as win a $30,000 scholarship."

During the third trimester, Ms. Gray plans on building a hovercraft with each class.

"This project will cover math, science and coding combined," she said. "Last year before COVID, I taught the classes how to take a computer apart and fix problems that kept the equipment from working."



For her public service announcement video assignment, Pierce Middle School seventh grader London Durhan rapped about heading back to school safely! **Click here to view it.**

Ms. Gray is teaching virtually as well as in-person. She said COVID-19 has prevented her from having more hands-on activities.

"Collaboration is essential in computer science, but we can't partner up as much," she said. "My original vision was to take the standards and actually produce some of the projects from vision to product more like a STEM class."

She said her final for each trimester is for students to produce portfolios to showcase their skills.

"This project can be updated for the next five years, and they can use their portfolios to apply for colleges or use it for job applications or interviews," she added.

Locations have changed!

BREAKFASTS & LUNCHES FOR ALL KIDS AGES 18 AND UNDER

DISTRIBUTIONS ON MONDAYS & THURSDAYS

DAY PICKUPS, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at the following locations:

- **Merrillville Intermediate School,** 1400 W. 61st Ave., between loading dock and Door F at the back of the school.
- **Pierce Middle School,** 199 E. 70th St., west of Door 3
- **Salk Elementary School,** 300 W. 77th Ave., Door B

EVENING PICKUPS, 5-6 p.m. at these schools:

- **Pierce Middle School**
- **Salk Elementary School**



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Student Spotlight

8th grader helps teachers start their days on positive 'note'

LaMonte Baker takes great pride in making a difference in the lives of others.

Every morning, the eighth grader at Pierce Middle School sends emails to his teachers, so they can begin their days with a friendly, personal note. Some of his emails contain inspirational or heartfelt messages; some offer insights on reducing stress; still others highlight COVID safety and statistics.

Once in a while, LaMonte shares funny things that happened to him the day before.

He said the idea of personal emailed messages came out of his own experience with the pandemic.

"When COVID hit, it kind of took a toll on my academics," he said. "I was new to the online setting, and I wasn't yet used to things. Then my grades started to plummet.

"I've always been really hard on myself about my grades," LaMonte added. "The stress from trying to bring my grades up, and on top of that I have really bad anxiety; it was really messing with my mental health."

After virtual learning improved for him, he quickly realized his experience probably wasn't unique, and he wondered how his teachers were doing.

Inspired by a video that talked about compassion for others, he pondered his next move and started prewriting his first good morning message. It was a test, he said, to see how many would respond, did they enjoy it, and did his inspirational note help them.



LaMonte Baker, according to Social Studies Teacher Ms. Heather Walker, "puts a big smile on my face each morning."

At the beginning, he sent one every other day, and he said to his surprise, his teachers all told him how much it helped and how they look forward to them.

Now he sends one every morning!

Going above and beyond seems to be a way of life for this straight "A," 100% virtual student, who said he loves to help in general. He draws upon the inspiration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his family which has ties to the Civil Rights Movement.

"My great, great, great grandmother was the vice president of the NAACP, and she is one of the reasons why I continue to fight for what I believe in no matter what," he said. "She fought to desegregate schools, and in her efforts, she contributed in the making of the Head Start Program, which has been around now for over 50 years.

"I have always been very open about the history of my race and the struggle many before me went through, so that I have the opportunities I do today," LeMonte continued. "Their efforts to have equality for all was a chance they took for us. As the next generation, they envisioned us to have a better future that they didn't have, so they fought for civil rights. I am proud to say my great, great, great grandmother was a part of that fight."

LaMonte's service to others can also be seen in his participation in Student Council and a variety of school clubs and extracurricular activities, including: Yearbook; Science, Newspaper; Planetarium, Choir and Drama stage crew and cast.

He said he comes from a long line of Gospel singers.

"My family is very religious, and my great uncle's brother-in-law was in "Hamilton"; his name is Donald Wedder, Jr.," LaMonte said. "I try to venture out and do all things, 'cause the more you know is what I say."

He currently has one of the leading roles in the school's upcoming play "An Absolutely True Story (As Told by a Bunch of Lying Liars)."

LaMonte hopes to continue his family's legacy in making a difference in the lives of others once he graduates school.

He plans to attend college and major in law with a minor in political science. He is also interested in attending business school and running for political office.

Don't be surprised if you see his name on the ballot in a future election, maybe even for the office of President of the United States!

DOWNLOAD OUR APP

School information 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.

App Store Google Play

Science class earns 'visit' from special guest

Pierce Middle School seventh grade science students were rewarded with a visit by a special guest Feb. 19, for all of their hard work during the first weeks of in-person learning.

According to their teacher Joseph Traina, "I can confidently say almost every single one of those students in that class has shown some sort of improvement since returning to in-person learning. I've been really satisfied with their performance and engagement in the first two weeks back."



MHS graduate and Seahawks' Safety Ryan Neal made a guest "appearance" in Mr. Traina's seventh grade science class as a reward for the students' hard work during the first weeks of in-person learning.

The educator arranged a Google Meet for his class with 2014 Merrillville High School graduate and Seattle Seahawks safety Ryan Neal.

Students spent their class time listening to the NFL player's background and experience, and Mr. Neal offered them some inspirational words.

"It's not cool to be cool," Mr. Neal said. "It's too hard to be like everyone else. It takes too much energy. The coolest thing you can do is be you!

"I was just like you," he said. "I was in your shoes. Take your time and slow down. Anything worth having is not easy."

Mr. Neal, who said football was actually the last sport he tried in high school, talked about the ups and downs of his career, including getting cut from multiple teams.

He said he was about to give up and quit football, but decided to give it one more try.

"When Seattle called, I didn't have a job," he said.

"It's better to be prepared for an opportunity and not get one, then to get an opportunity and not to be ready," he said. "You never know when it's your time. It's coming.

"If you're not ready, you'll miss it," he said. "Always be ready. I stayed ready. For my first NFL game winning pick, I was ready."

Mr. Neal referred to his end-zone interception that sealed the Seahawks' victory in the September game against the Dallas Cowboys, the first day he had ever played defense in the NFL.Mr. Neal moved from practice squad third-string safety to hero in merely 24 hours.

"Keep working, believing and loving," he said.

Mr. Neal shared that NFL players are tested every day for COVID-19. Players are also required to wear special wristbands that are used for contact tracing, he said. The bands monitor the players' locations and the duration of time they spend within the proximity of certain people.

During the second half of the class, individual students were given the opportunity to ask Mr. Neal questions.

From "was it difficult to avoid COVID at practices?" to "do you wear a mask under your helmet when you play?" to "how much do you get paid?" and "what is your favorite song to listen to before or after the game?," students enjoyed engaging with Mr. Neal as a reward for their class successes.

Mr. Neal ended his visit by giving students some food for thought: "What is your best asset? What are you good at? Work on that."

Lady Pirates celebrate Sectional Championship



Congratulations MHS Girls Basketball Team for becoming sectional champions with their win over Lake Central 72-58. It's their first sectional trophy since 2017. We are Pirate Proud!

Grants expand learning experiences for students

from page 1

had served the schools well for nearly 20 years, and it was time for newer, more efficient technology.

"Our students will have up-to-date equipment that they can benefit from," Mr. Smith said. "We'll also be able to produce more jobs for our corporation."

Mr. Smith and his graphic arts students print signs, banners, sportswear and promotional materials for the corporation.

Down the MHS hallway, Mr. Joseph Sokol, welding educator, said his students will benefit from a new piece of welding equipment they can use to complete a fabrication project at the end of the year and use in future classes.

The new welding machine and replacement parts cost approximately $6,500.

The redevelopment commissions make funds available for programs that prepare individuals to participate in a competitive and global economy.

The Town of Merrillville and the Merrillville Community School Corporation are in the process of completing a five-year grant program, which ultimately resulted in $325,000 per year since 2015.

"We value the partnership we have with the schools, and we plan to continue that cooperation to help young people," said Merrillville Councilman Shawn Pettit.

In addition to upgrades to Career & Technical Education programs like graphic arts and welding, Mrs. Taylor said money from Educational & Worker Training Grant Programs has helped to fund things like Advanced Placement (AP) testing; college and factory trips and activities to expose students to advanced education and career opportunities; tutoring; boot camps for juniors to prime them for senior year and teach them how to draft resumes and letters of interest for jobs, how to dress for interviews, questions to ask, and how to complete the FAFSA; major conferences for teachers; WorkKeys that help identify students' interests; programming for test preparation; college and career nights; and much more.

Hobart's grant program has also supported the purchase of supplies and equipment related to the construction trades and urban farming in the past.

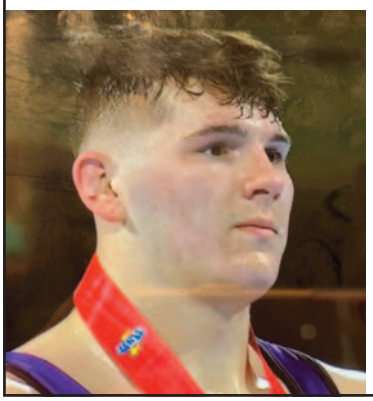
"The Redevelopment Commission appreciates the opportunity to partner with the schools on these important projects, which provide valuable learning experiences to students and prepares them for college and future careers," said Dawn Hostetler, assistant to the director of development for the City of Hobart.



Senior Donavan Mills helps to make silk-screened shirts on the new manual printing press.

Wrestlers win Regionals, Streck is State Runner-Up





MHS Wrestlering Team became the 2021 IHSAA Regional Champions. It's their third consecutive championship! Senior Jason Streck, left, went down to wrestle in the state finals and became the 220 lb. IHSAA Wrestling State Runner-up! Congratulations on a great year!

TECHNOLOGY HELP DESK

If your children have any tech problems, please have them contact the helpdesk at 219-650-5376 or email helpdesk@mvsc.k12.in.us.

First graders participate in unique March Madness

Fieler Elementary School first graders in Miss Talian's class are experiencing their own March Madness through reading!



Miss Talian set up a bracket with 16 books, and each student gets to choose the winning book in each bracket.

A virtual bracket posted in their Google Classroom has a read aloud for each book linked to the document, so students can listen to stories before they cast their votes on Fridays.

All 16 books are "battling" the first week, but students are getting time during class to read on their own or Miss Talian will feature it as a read aloud!

The second week, the final eight will battle; then the following week will be the final four.

The last week of March will be the championship!

Miss Talian created a Google Form made with the book covers that are versing each other, so students can pick their favorites. The one with the most votes tallied will move on to the next round!

Each time the students "predict" right, they get a point. Whoever has the most points at the end will win a prize!

Miss Talian said she will dress up in college basketball gear for the championship!

Enjoy streaming 'Little Shop' and support the Arts in Merrillville

Merrillville High School's Spring 2020 production of the musical "Little Shop of Horrors" was set to open March 13, 2020, before the pandemic closed the world.

One year later, audiences can see a streamed version of the production from the comfort of their own homes on Saturdays, March 13 and 20.

Help support the Performing Arts at Merrillville and enjoy a scheduled stream of Little Shop of Horrors. **Click here to buy tickets to view these private events.**

This streaming service is sponsored be Music Theatre International and all profits from the stream will support our Performing Arts students and their future productions.





MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Socially Distanced in
REINHART AUDITORIUM

Friday, April 16 at 7:30PM
Saturday, April 17 at 7:30PM
Saturday, April 24 at 7:30PM
Sunday, April 25 at 3PM

For reservations and tickets, call 219-650-5307 ext 7012

SUPPORT THE PERFORMING ARTS IN MERRILLVILLE!

Click here to order your Piratewear TODAY!

Foundation awards relief grant to Thespian Troupe #1692

The Educational Theatre Foundation's (ETF) new Thespian Relief Fund has awarded Merrillville High School Thespian Troupe #1692 a grant of $1,500 to support theatre education and production during the 2020-21 academic year.

Merrillville High School's grant will help pay the induction dues for new members into the Thespian Troupe. The grant will also offset lost revenue from various productions in the spring and fall due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We've lost out on a lot of revenue from shows being cancelled or only being produced in a virtual format," says Tom Mackey, Merrillville High School Thespian Troupe Director. "It's not just the ticket sales that we lose, but also revenue from concessions and fundraisers."

The Performing Arts Department at Merrillville was forced to cancel the annual One Act Festival and postpone its spring production of Little Shop of Horrors until the fall. Attendance was limited due to health regulations.



MHS Thespians Terry Thomas, from left, Danai Nixon, and Leah Mallon in the fall production of "Swagger" by Eric Coble. The group safely performed the play using social distance, recorded it and streamed it online.

The fall production "Swagger" was performed virtually. The relief grant will help cover licensing and production costs.

"Even though we're in the midst of a pandemic, our students are still eager to be on stage and create art," said Mr. Mackey. "We've been able to safely produce theatre so far, but there are still costs involved."

The relief grant will also allow up to 20 new Thespian Troupe members to be inducted without having to pay the associated dues.

"A lot of families have not fully recovered from the economic impact of the pandemic," said Mr. Mackey, "so this grant helps our students earn the recognition they deserve without putting a financial strain on their families."

The Performing Arts Department and the Thespian Troupe will continue planning for the spring musical and a 10-minute play festival. More information on these events will be announced.

The Thespian Relief Fund was established to help school theatre programs facing financial losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a recent survey from the Educational Theatre Association, about half of responding schools lost between 26% and 50% of their revenue last season when schools were shuttered and productions canceled.

Congratulations, Thespians!

Some members of the Thespian Troupe competed virtually in Thespian Nation Live in January. Congratulations to the following students for their outstanding achievements:

- **Ember Wolstenholme (freshman)** - Scenic Design - Superior
- **Lauren Molenda (junior) & Leah Mallon (senior)** - Duet Acting - Excellent
- **Ambree Dawson (senior) & Daniel Dorado (sophomore)** - Duet Acting - Excellent

State Thespian Officer

Lauren Molenda was re-elected as a State Thespian Officer, marking eight consecutive years that an STO has been elected from MHS (11 total). She is the first MHS STO to serve two terms. To become an officer, students go through a rigorous interview and application process. STOs represent students across the state and help plan competitions and leadership conferences.

Gold Honor Troupe

The MHS Thespian Troupe was also recognized as a Gold Honor Troupe for the third year in a row for its participation, community service and outreach.

Scholarship News

Senior **Jarius Taylor-Newman** received more than $50,000 in scholarship offers from several schools across the country.

Senior **Myia Dickerson** was recognized as a Distinguished Senior and has received a full ride scholarship to University of Indianapolis.

Merrillville High School Thespian Troupe #1692

MHS Football Virtual Awards Banquet celebrates athletes

The MHS Football Awards Banquet became a virtual event again this year. We are Pirate Proud of the season our athletes had and celebrate their DAC, Sectional and Regional Championships.

Scholar Awards

Scholar certificates are awarded to an athlete/manager/student trainer/cheerleader who has a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or better during their season. Patches are awarded beginning the athlete's junior year, to a team member who has a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or better (only one academic patch is awarded per athletic career).

Cheerleaders: Senior Destiny Lilly, 3.58; Junior Taylor Jackson; 3.60, who earned a patch; and Sophomores Breonna Jordan, 3.70, and Jariah Runde, 3.90.

Players: Seniors Leon Garrett, 3.50, and A'veyawn Madry, 3.80; Caleb Carter3.77, who earned a patch; and sophomore Jeremiah Roberts, 3.60.

Managers: Seniors Jordan McGee, 3.63, and Shania Williams, 3.67.

Student Trainers: Junior Rayonna Grady, 3.74,who earned a patch; and Senior Hailey Moss, 4.11.



Click the image above to view the virtual event.

Blanket Award

This award is presented to an athlete who has earned eight (8) varsity letters: Senior Ashley Williams, Fall Cheer 9 - 12, Winter Cheer 9-11, Track 10, 11.

Special Team Awards

Lineman of the Year: Senior Avery Kirk; Leadership - Mr. Zip: Senior Armani Glass; Most Valuable Player: Senior JoJo Johnson; Most Improved Offense; Senior RJ Donald; Most Improved Defense: Senior Edward Akins.

Cheerleader Awards

Emblem is awarded to a varsity letter winner who has already received a varsity "M": Seniors Marissa Ford, Destiny Lilly, Sydney Jackson, Ashley Williams; Juniors Cameryn Darrell, Taylor Jackson, Devyn Walters; Sophomores Branae Bradley, Mikayla Green, Irelin Fulton, Taylor O'Hara, Jariah Runde, Gabby Swanson.

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MCSC
Merrillville Schools
Kindergarten Preregistration
Your child must be age 5 by Aug. 1, 2021
Visit www.mvsc.k12.in.us starting April 5
- Enter the requested information.
- Check out the video!
- Learn next steps to complete the registration process.

For more information, call the Merrillville Community School Corporation, 219-650-5300.

KINDERGARTEN

Miller celebrates Read Across America & Beyond



Jennifer Griffin, principal of Miller Elementary School shows fourth grader Nathan Johnson how to access stories on the bulletin board that was created to mark Read Across America Day, March 2.

The map on the bulletin board contains QR codes linked to volunteer readers in various geographic locations.

Students, staff and school visitors can use their electronic devices to access videoed read aloud stories created by these volunteers who are located across the United States and beyond, as at least two volunteers live abroad.

Mrs. Griffin said in addition to celebrating the day, students will get lessons in geography and careers, as readers share their livelihoods with their audiences.

She hopes to expand the map and increase the number of volunteer readers in the future. Mrs. Griffin also envisions readers signing their books to use as prizes and giveaways to children.

Miller Elementary School Read Across America & Beyond stories by guest readers are also accessible for a short time **using this link**!

MHS Football Virtual Awards Banquet celebrates athletes

From previous page

Varsity M is the first award for an athlete earning a varsity letter (athletes will receive only one actual "M" in sports during their high school careers): Sophomore Breonna Jordan; Freshmen Zoey Lucious, Sunseray Peterson, LoRean Williams.

Pirate Head is the first award for an athlete on a junior varsity team: Sophomore Breonna Jordan; Freshmen Zoey Lucious, Sunseray Peterson, LoRean Williams.

Student Trainer Awards

Emblem is awarded to a varsity letter winner who has already received a varsity "M": Senior Hayley Moss.

Varsity M is the first award for an athlete earning a varsity letter (athletes will receive only one actual "M" in sports during their high school careers): Senior Naomi Griffin.

Trainer Certificate is awarded to an athlete who already has pirate head but did not earn a varsity letter: Sophomore Alyssa Renk; Junior Rayonna Grady; and Senior Trinity Jenkins.

Freshmen Player Certificates

Awarded to an athlete who already has pirate head but did not earn a varsity letter: Alex Arteaga, Brady Barnett, Antoine Brown, Morgan Castro, Wiley Creal, Cameron Crisp, Diego Diaz, Elijah Flournoy, Kemon Holmes, Raymond James, Dion McNeal, Mauricio Mendez, Xavier Miller, Derrick Nelson, Israel Recio, DeShawn Rhule, Tremayne Sanders, Andre Scott, Landen Thomas, Xavier Trevino, Carson Ulrich Donaven Warnell, Zechariah Whittinghill, Matthew Williams, Kavon Wright.

JV/Varsity Player Awards

Emblem is awarded to a varsity letter winner who has already received a varsity "M": Seniors Edward Akins, Devon Davis, RJ Donald, Mikel Evans, Kenyai Fuller-Smith, Armani Glass, Jaqai Gray, Deonte Holbrook, JoJo Johnson, Dierre Kelly, Avery Kirk, A'veyawn Madry, Andrez Malo, Donovan Mills, Anthony Mitchell, Breijon Peters, Austin Pupek, Leon Roberts, Brendan Rogers, Devin Sanders, Messiah Selby, Jason Streck, D'Andre Taylor, Shad Ulrich, Cameron Williams; Juniors Caleb Carter, Kenneth Grant, Jordan Magee, Angel Nelson, Taijon Span, Theodore Sparks, Kanye Wright.

Pirate Head is first award for an athlete on a junior varsity team: Seniors Phyllip Gunn, Marcus Hardy, Paris Hewlett, Julian Justice, Rondell Latiker; Juniors Lavarion Logan, Aaron Facen, Markel Gaines; Sophomores Adonnis Rodgers, Jeremiah Roberts, Trayvale Abron, Yancey Anderson, Kenyon Brown, Demetrius Calhoun, Darein Lewis, Frederick Retic, Jaylen Scoggins, Elijah Shirrells, Morris Smoot, Jaylen Thomas, Sean Wade, Tyler Wheaton, Aavion Wiley, Isaiah Wofford; Freshmen: Roshaun McGee, James Veal.

Varsity M is the first award for an athlete earning a varsity letter (athletes will receive only one actual "M" in sports during their high school careers): Seniors Leon Garrett, Phyllip Gunn, Marcus Hardy, Ruben Harris, Paris Hewlett, Julian Justice; Juniors Allen Akins, Caleb Dulla, Tyrese Frazier, Kenneth Gresham, Rondell Latiker, Lavarion Logan, Zac Lucious, Silas Mathis, Jay Powers, Aaron Thompson; Sophomores Phillip Roche, Adonnis Rodgers, Jaylen Scoggins.

JV Certificate awarded to an athlete who already has pirate head but did not earn a varsity letter: Juniors Kenneth Sharp, Torius Cargle, Azurian Durant-Horton, Jordan Warnell, Keith Wofford.

Manager Awards

Emblems awarded to Seniors Iman McElroy, Joardan McGee; Varsity "M" awarded to Senior Shania Williams; Certificate awarded to Junior Makayla Boleware; and Pirate Head awarded to Junior D'Vaya Milton.