



# Pirate Pride

March 2022

[www.mvsc.k12.in.us](http://www.mvsc.k12.in.us) \* 219-650-5300

The Newsletter of the Merrillville Community School Corporation

## Black History Month celebration grows bigger, better

At the Merrillville Community School Corporation, Black History Month provides a great opportunity to celebrate one of the corporation's best features: diversity.

Last month, Merrillville schools incorporated lessons on Black history, introducing students to notable figures, events, music, art, and literature.

This year, student lessons spilled over school borders and into the public eye when the Merrillville Town Council invited students to share some of their Black History Month projects at both of their February meetings.

At the Town Council's first meeting of the month, the Merrillville High School Vocalteens performed African American spirituals such as "Wade in the Water" and "Every Time I Feel the Spirit."

At the Town's second meeting, nine students from Merrillville Intermediate School presented their research and projects on famous figures in Black history.

MIS student Christen Crayton led the presentation with some opening remarks: "Why spotlight and study the history of Blacks in America?" and for that excellent question, I have several good answers."

She continued, talking about how African Americans have taken an active role in the development of the United States along with other races and nationalities.

"But the contributions of Blacks have been largely ignored or, in many cases, misrepresented," she added.

In addition, she pointed out America has a rich legacy of literature, music,

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MIS students from left Christen Crayton, Dionnah Peterson, Ciara Pittman, Rayelle Morton and Nasir Watkins get ready to present their projects at the Feb. 22 Merrillville Town Council meeting.



Pierce Middle School art students created pieces inspired by famous Black artist Reggie Laurent.



# Head Start Preschool to hold enrollment event



It's already time to plan for the 2022-23 school year!

Families living in Ross Township, which includes Merrillville and parts of Crown Point and Hobart, are invited to attend open enrollment for the Merrillville Community School Corporation's Head Start Preschool.

The event will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and also from 3 to 6 p.m. Thursday, March 17 at the Merrillville Community School Corporation Administration Center, 6701 Delaware St.

Parents should bring the following

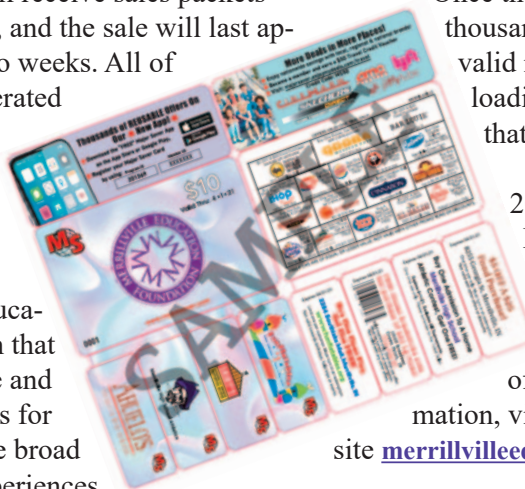
documents to this event: valid state issued ID, child's official birth certificate, insurance card, child's shot records, income records for the last 12 months, child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)/Individualized Education Program (IEP), and proof of Merrillville schools' residency (utility bill or lease/mortgage).

Children must be ages 3 to 5. For more information, visit [www.mvsc.k12.in.us](http://www.mvsc.k12.in.us) or call 219-756-5940.

## Support Merrillville schools through foundation fundraiser

The Merrillville Education Foundation will offer Major Saver discount cards for sale as a fundraiser to help support Merrillville Schools. The \$10 card offers savings with BOGO offers at many local restaurants.

Students will receive sales packets starting April 5, and the sale will last approximately two weeks. All of the money generated from this fundraiser goes back to the schools and the activities of the Merrillville Education Foundation that fund innovative and creative projects for students to have broad educational experiences.



Major Saver cards can be purchased via cash, check or online at [www.major-saver.com](http://www.major-saver.com). The online sale can be credited back to a particular student and school. All cards purchased online will be mailed directly to customers.

Once the card is purchased, thousands of offers become valid nationwide by downloading and entering a code that accesses the deals.

Since its inception in 2002, the Merrillville Education Foundation has given \$389,281 to the Merrillville

Schools in the form of grants. For more information, visit the foundation website

[merrillvilleeducationfoundation.org](http://merrillvilleeducationfoundation.org).

### BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

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### 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](mailto:dstuckert@mvsc.k12.in.us) or 219-650-5477.*

## Strack & VanTil receipts due

Strack & VanTil will help our schools by providing free education equipment during the school year.

Collect your receipts from Strack & VanTil and submit them to one of our participating schools:



- Wood Elementary School
- Merrillville Intermediate School
- Miller Elementary School
- Iddings Elementary School
- Fieler Elementary School

Receipts must be dated Sept. 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022, and turned into the schools by April 4.

# Kindergarten preregistration for 2022-23 school year to begin April 4

Merrillville Community School Corporation will hold kindergarten preregistration online beginning April 4.

Parents with children age 5 either on or before Aug. 1, can preregister by visiting the corporation website

[www.mvsc.k12.in.us](http://www.mvsc.k12.in.us) and entering the requested information. The last day for kindergarten preregistration is May 30.

Once parents preregister their children online, school staff will contact parents to schedule an appointment to come in and complete the registration process.

Parents will need to bring the following documents to their appointments:

Certified birth certificate (exceptions for foster children); DCS foster information if applicable; immunization records; proofs of residency (refer to next page); parent/guardian current license or state ID; any or all documents that affect your child's educational placement (Example: IEP, 504 or Psychological Evaluation);

copy of last report card or transcript, withdrawal grades, and ISTEP scores; Special Needs Transportation form (SNT) if applicable; and any legal or custodial papers, if applicable.

In order to attend Merrillville schools, families must live within the boundaries of Ross Township, which includes Merrillville and portions of Hobart and Crown Point.

Information on registering children older than kindergarten age is available on the school corporation website.

For more information, call 219-650-5300.



Fieler Elementary School kindergarteners celebrate their 100th day of school.

## School Trustees recognize mechanic/bus driver



At a recent meeting, the Merrillville Community School Corporation Board of School Trustees recognized Kurt Scheuerman, mechanic who also drives buses when necessary, for going above and beyond the call of duty. One afternoon when he was scheduled to drive, he learned another driver had returned a student back to Iddings Elementary School when no one was home to receive the child, and the parents couldn't get to school to pick her up. Mr. Scheuerman knew the older sibling rode his bus. When he made his run, he picked up the younger student at Iddings, dropped the siblings off at the doorstep and watched them safely enter their home together. In the photo with Mr. Scheuerman, back row: Board Member James Donohue; Board Secretary Linda Jonaitis; Board President Mark Lucas; and Board Member DeLena Thomas. Not pictured Board Vice President Judy Dunlap.

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

**March 24**

Grades 9-12  
Parent/Teacher Conferences,  
3:30-6:30 p.m.

**March 28-April 1**

No School/Spring Break

**April 15**

No School/Good Friday

**April 28**

Grades 7-8: Parent/Teacher  
Conferences, 3:30-6:30 p.m.

**May 3**

Election Day/E-Learning Day

**May 30**

No School/Memorial Day

**June 3**

Last Day of School

**June 5**

Class of 2022 Graduation



# What can your school nurse do for your family?

Merrillville School Corporation employs registered nurses at all school buildings. School nurses hold various roles within their schools that benefit students, parents/guardians.

The National Association of School Nurses identifies seven core roles that the school nurse fulfills to foster child and adolescent health and education success.

- Direct care to students
- Leadership for the provision of health services
- Screenings and referrals for health conditions
- Promoter of a healthy school environment
- Promoter of health
- Leadership for health policies and programs
- Liaison between school personnel, family, health care professionals and the community.

After the child's home, their school represents the second most influential environment in a child's life. The role of the school nurse encompasses both health and educational goals.

Some students may face family crises, homelessness, immigration, poverty, and violence, which increases both their physical and mental health needs. School nurses need to be available to address these major health problems experienced by children.

Nurses provide preventive and screening services, health education and assistance with decision-making about health and immunizations against preventable diseases. In addition, school nurses may provide interventions for acute and chronic illness, injuries and emergencies, communicable diseases, obesity, substance use and abuse, adolescent pregnancy, mental health, dental and visual screening, nutrition, and sexually transmitted diseases.

Studies have shown improved student outcome results in schools with full-time nursing professionals.

The school nurse functions as a leader and the coordinator of the school health services team. The team may also include a licensed practical nurse, health aides, clerical staff, school counselors, school psychologist, and other professionals.

School nurses, as part of a coordi-

nated school health program, contribute to meeting the needs of the whole child, supporting their success in school.

Merrillville school nurses are here as an additional resource to assist parents and guardians and close that gap between home medical management and school medical management.

Please reach out to your child's school nurse for any questions or educational material you may need. Find out more on the nurse website on the district webpage under health services.



## Work to begin on program audit

The Merrillville Community School Corporation will partner with Global Consulting Solutions (GCS), a local firm, to embark on a program audit.

A program audit is a comprehensive process that collects and analyzes data to determine the status of equitable practices in a school district.

The program audit will allow the school corporation to establish a baseline to create and build measurable strategic goals for improvement, plans of action, enhanced policies and practices, and establish mechanisms to consistently monitor and assess educational programs.

Milton Reed, GCS engagement and program manager, will help steer the process through the school corporation.

"I applaud district leadership, and I'm excited to embark on this journey with Merrillville Community School Corporation," said Mr. Reed. "For school districts to continue to make progress, it's important for the board and administrators to understand where things stand right now.

"From that vantage point, we can celebrate/magnify the wins and also address the challenges," he continued. "This work will be characterized by detailed data reviews, anonymous surveys, focus groups and interviews with all stakeholders represented. We know everyone will bring different backgrounds, information and perceptions to the table."

The audit is the first step in

developing the school corporation's strategic plan that will determine the priorities, goals and objectives for the next five years.

The audit will take approximately six to eight weeks and include, among many other things:

open and consistent communication with students, families and staff; site visits; focus groups; classroom walk-throughs; policy reviews and other forensic data analysis.

A random selection of families and students will receive invitations for participation and/or permission slips in the near future.

Mr. Reed said his company will generate a final report that will include findings, opportunities for growth, recommendations, commendations, resources and next steps for the school board and administrators to consider.

In closing, Mr. Reed said, "I look forward to meeting everyone and being a part of the team helping Merrillville schools chart the best path for their students over the next several years."



**Milton Reed**  
GCS Engagement  
& Program Manager

# MHS juniors win overseas learning experience

Four MHS juniors may have exciting summer experiences, thanks to the Indiana University Honors Program in Foreign Languages (IUHPFL).

David Maldonado, Precious Moore, Kaliyah Brown, and Monica Valladares were

chosen to travel to Spain where they can spend six weeks in a highly immersive linguistic and cultural program to learn what it's like to live in a foreign country.

They will stay with host families and speak and hear only Spanish during their entire experience.

"The application process was in-



**Kaliya Brown**



**David Maldonado**



**Precious Moore**



**Monica Valladares**

tense, and we put in a lot of work!" said MHS Spanish Teacher Angela Escobedo. "Thank you to all that were involved and helped these students achieve this prestigious honor. This is such an amazing opportunity for these students!!"

While abroad, these students will

take classes in culture, grammar, literature, communication and linguistics and participate in activities, such as sports, choir and theater, and community-based activities and events. The program will also include excursions to historical and cultural sites, led by program instructors.

## Enchanted Backpack donates school supplies to Miller



Miller Elementary School was the second school in the Merrillville Community School Corporation to benefit from a donation of school supplies from Enchanted Backpack. The organization arrived at the school with two van loads of supplies totalling nearly \$7,000. Enchanted Backpack is a 501(c)3 organization in Illinois that was started with the belief that all children deserve to have the tools they need to learn and excel and that all teachers deserve to have the support and materials to make their classrooms exciting learning centers. Last October, two vans from Enchanted Backpack arrived at Pierce Middle School filled with \$8,500 worth of supplies.



# Black History Month Celebration



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statesmanship, courage, patriotism, art, philosophy, and aviation.

“And let us not neglect to mention our inspiring cowboys and settlers, along with courageous men and women who have led our military,” she said.

“No study of American history would be adequate or complete without acknowledging the role that Blacks have played in the making of America,” Christen said. “Finally, most textbooks and social studies programs do not include enough information about African Americans and other minorities.

“Yes, as we dedicate the month of February to recognize African American achievements of the past, present, and future, we will all continue to gain knowledge and benefit because we dared to add a new dimension to the study of American History!”

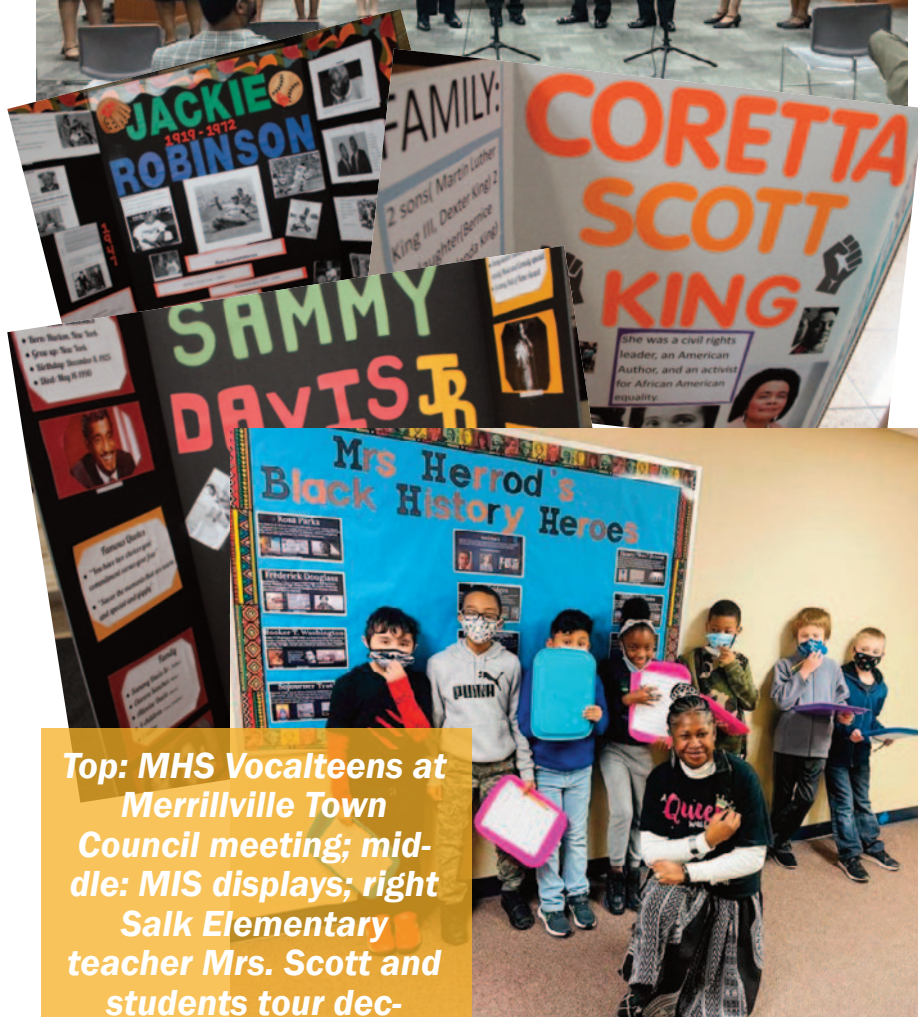
The Black History Month projects of dozens of MIS students were on display just inside the school’s entrance. Classes spent time visiting and viewing each others’ projects to learn more about famous figures in Black history.

Before COVID-19, the school would host an enormous Black History Month Expo, inviting families and the public to enjoy these projects and much more.

Many other schools and classes worked on projects for Black History Month. Merrillville elementary schools decorated bulletin boards and toured the bulletin board art of their neighboring classrooms displayed in the hallways.

Miller Elementary School would normally hold its popular Black History Month Wax Museum

*cont’d next page*



**Top: MHS Vocalteens at Merrillville Town Council meeting; middle: MIS displays; right Salk Elementary teacher Mrs. Scott and students tour decorated bulletin boards.**



## Black History Month kicked off with some terrific news!

Merrillville Intermediate School sixth grader Ryan Lewis won the 4th-6th grade category of the Martin Luther King Jr. Essay Contest, sponsored by the Corydon Capitol State Historic Site, in partnership with the Leora Brown School.

Ryan wrote an essay on how Martin Luther King Jr.’s civil rights work affects him today. He will receive \$100 toward the college of his choice. He entered the contest at the end of last year.

In the photo, Ryan is being congratulated by MIS Principal Bonin.



# Black History Month Celebration

## from previous page

event in-person, drawing hundreds of people; however, due to COVID-19, the Wax Museum was presented virtually via video links in a newsletter. In each video, students portrayed famous figures in Black history.

Iddings Elementary School also created two videos with students describing the famous subjects of their bulletin board projects.

At Pierce Middle School, art students worked on a reproduction of a Reggie Laurent painting that they displayed in the hallway. Mr. Laurent is a self-made artist from Chicago. They also worked on collages of famous people and mosaic face posters.

Merrillville High School Student Government was very busy, again sponsoring its very popular Black History Month Door Decorating Contest, motivating students in classes to work together to create inspiring art that hundreds of passersby can admire. Student Government also sponsored "21 Days of Black Authors," introducing writers and their works to students and staff.

MHS Orchestra Program held its annual Black Composer Exposure, introducing audience members to music written by Black composers.



**Top: Miller Elementary virtual wax museum; middle: Iddings Elementary videos; left top: MHS 21 Day of Black Authors; left bottom: MHS Orchestra Black Composer Exposure; MHS Black History Month Door Decorating Contest.**



# MHS PERFORMING ARTS

**JOIN US!**

## Upcoming Shows



**REVUE 2022**  
**All-School Talent Show**  
**April 20, 7 p.m.**



Choir students perform in the Revue 2021.



MHS Band Holiday Concert

**MHS BAND**  
**SPRING**  
**CONCERT**  
**May 10, 7 p.m.**

Ticket prices: Adults \$6.



**MHS ORCHESTRA**  
**CONTEST CONCERT**  
**April 7, 7 p.m.**  
**FREE**

**SPRING STRINGS**  
**May 12, 7 p.m.**

Ticket prices: Adults \$4 (\$6 at the door); school age children \$2 (\$4 at the door); Seniors \$2 (\$4 at the door).



Black Composer Exposure String Recital last February

**Choir & spring musical performances in Reinhart Auditorium,  
located through Door M of Merrillville High School, 276 E. 68th Pl.**



## Clean Sweep for MHS Choir at ISSMA State

Choir students won gold medals on all seven ensembles (three scored "With Distinction") and all nine solos (six scored "With Distinction").

The MHS senior ensemble judge said, "Your sound is extraordinarily mature...best vocal production I have heard today. Excellent ears...tuning is spot on because you produce great vowels and let the resonance guide you. It is honestly shocking how good this was."

Another judge stopped the students after a performance and said it was lunch time and she just heard the most

musical performance of her day. She was actually teary as she spoke to the Richardson Ensemble about their blend, musical nuances and the beauty of their craft.

The last judge of the day complimented the MHS program as a whole...great solid singing, well-prepared for competition.



## Thespians earn accolades at state conference

Members of the Merrillville High School Thespian Troupe #1692 earned accolades at the recent Indiana Thespians State Conference, held at Indiana Wesleyan University.

Junior Precious Moore became the 12th MHS student in the last nine years to be elected as a State Thespian Officer. To become an officer, Moore experienced a rigorous interview and application process. STOs represent students across the state and help plan competitions and leadership conferences.

Senior Lauren Molenda earned the Distinguished Senior Award as the most outstanding senior in the State of Indiana.

Troupe #1692 earned the Gold Honor Troupe rank, the highest possible rank, for the fourth year in a row. Senior Leah Peloza, troupe historian, created the portfolio presentation to earn that award.

Seniors Priya Hildebrand and Merci Tan earned nearly \$60,000 in scholarship offers from four different universities.

The results for the Thespy Competition (individual events) included: Junior Genesis Williams and Senior Faith Henderson both ranked superior in Solo Musical Theatre.

Students who ranked excellent in their Thespy Competitions included: Sophomores Adenike Zannou, Makeup Design; Hailey Nolan, Costume Design;



Ember Wolstenholme and Cam Chavez, Scenic Design; Ash Best and Nomi Green, Sound Design; junior Precious Moore, short film; and seniors Andrew McKnight, Monologue; and Na'Riyah Richardson, Solo Musical Theatre.

Ranking excellent in Thespy Duet Acting Competition were seniors Merci Tan and Priya Hildebrand; junior Jour-

ney Pleasant and senior Precious Moore; and senior Christon Williamson and sophomore Terry Thomas.

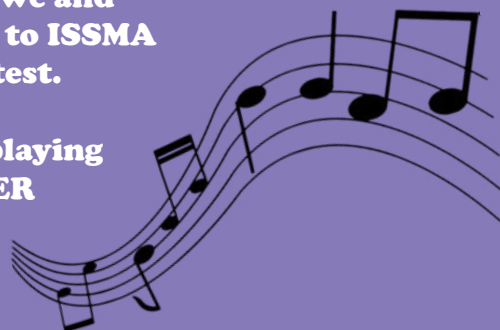
Ranking excellent in the Thespy Competition of Group Acting were seniors Andrew McKnight, James George, Lauren Molenda, Merci Tan, Danai Nixon, Priya Hildebrand, and junior Christon Williamson.

## CONGRATULATIONS!

**MHS Seniors Kiersten Stowe and Peter Wujek both made it to ISSMA State Solo/Ensemble Contest.**

**Kiersten earned a GOLD playing bass; Peter earned a SILVER playing tuba.**

**PIRATE PRIDE!**





## Teacher Feature

# Fieler third grade teacher also helps in adult education

This teacher calls Merrillville schools her home, and says she'll finish her career here.

For the last five years, Debbie Czazasty has taught third grade at Fieler, the school where she began her Merrillville career as a computer aide nearly 28 years ago.

She was then hired as an eighth-grade computer teacher, where she stayed for six years, then transferred to fifth grade, where she stayed for 17 years.

Ms. Czazasty also works for Merrillville Adult Education two nights a week as an English/math teacher and takes care of a host of other duties, like keeping track of attendance for both students working toward their high school equivalency diplomas and those taking their certification classes in child development; setting up pre and post testing for students to monitor their progress; and proctoring tests.

One of her favorite Merrillville career memories was of a team trip she experienced while she worked at MIS.

"I taught on the fifth-grade yellow team with Mrs. Falls and Mr. Kosior," she said. "My team took our students and their parents to Washington, D.C. in 2005. We raised all the money by doing car washes, selling candy, etc.

"Everyone bought matching Merrillville pullovers, so we would stick out in the crowds," she continued. "The flu hit our bus the last day, and we all pulled together and helped those that needed help. Mrs. Rose-Ann Wilson went with us because she had EMT experience, and boy, did she help!

"That year, we built a fabulous team spirit," Ms. Czazasty added. "I'd like to think that we provided an unforgettable experience for our students and parents. I would do it again in a heartbeat."

She loves the kids, but says her co-workers inspire her and are the main reasons for her long tenure in Merrillville.

"We have the most incredible staff who is there for kids and each other," Ms. Czazasty said.

She doesn't have plans to retire, but when she does, she'll spend time travel-



**Debbie Czazasty**

ing with her family, including her dogs.

"I also plan to spend more time volunteering at Erin's Farm in Hobart and catching up on some reading," she added.

## Alumni Connections

Read their stories  
on our website  
[www.mvsc.k12.in.us](http://www.mvsc.k12.in.us)

Share your story, inspire  
others & make a difference.

Send an email to  
[mcscmedia@mvsc.k12.in.us](mailto:mcscmedia@mvsc.k12.in.us)



**Eric Jackson**  
2014 MHS Graduate



**Adam Serros**  
2016 MHS Graduate



**Stephanie Wilson**  
2009 MHS Graduate

# Once a Pirate, Always a Pirate!





## Staff Feature

# Mrs. Wilson plans to retire this summer

This staff member has literally worked at every school in the corporation and in many different capacities. Even before she was officially hired, she spent four years as a substitute cafeteria/playground aide between all the elementary schools and also subbed as a paraprofessional at the high school.

When her 26-year MCSC career finally started, Rose-Ann Wilson was hired as a cafeteria aide at Harrison Middle School in 1996. With the help of others and her ability to learn new skills, she was able to work her way up and hold many interesting roles within the corporation.

Some of the duties and positions she's enjoyed along the way have included: study hall/detention monitor; technology coordinator at Harrison Middle School and MIS for more than 18 years; summer positions like clerk, teacher aide, and secretary at a number of schools; clock/scoreboard operator at middle school athletic events for more than 22 years; MIS webmaster; scoreboard operator at MIS for concerts, plays and programs; PowerPoint technician for the middle school Spell Bowls and high school Academic Super Bowls; photo contributor to local newspapers and yearbooks; and school nurse volunteer/helper, since she is a licensed emergency medical technician.

Mrs. Wilson even found herself in somewhat unusual situations.

"I would wear my scuba suit with fins and mask when I was in the dunk tank for many MIS field days," Mrs. Wilson added.

For the last seven years of her MCSC career, Mrs. Wilson has been the principal's secretary at Pierce Middle School. It will be the last position in the corporation she holds, as she's counting down the days till her retirement: July 18, 2022.

Once her days are free, she has plans to travel to all the National Parks and tour Alaska. In addition, she will be "visiting more with family and friends; and

having more time to take pictures, walk/hike, paddle board, bike ride, and sew.

"I live in the community," she said. "My home is here, and my children grew up here attending Merrillville Schools."

The soon-to-be retiree moved to Merrillville in 1990 for her husband's new job. She is a 1980 graduate of the Academy of Our Lady/Spalding Institute in Peoria, Illinois, and a Veteran, serving four years in the United States Air Force, three of those years in England.

Mrs. Wilson said working at the schools provided her with a way to make a living and still be able attend her children's activities.

"I was able to chaperone many field trips," she said. "One to Washington, D.C., with the MIS fifth grade Yellow Team class."

Mrs. Wilson said she was inspired to use her God-given talents to make a difference in the lives of the people she meets and has enjoyed her work because of the people (students, staff, and parents), the friendly work environment, and the lasting friendships she has made over the many years at the school corporation.

Of the things she will remember most, Mrs. Wilson said it will include,



**Rose-Ann Wilson**

"The smiles on the students' faces when they see what they can accomplish; seeing pictures of themselves in the local newspaper article I had sent in; hugging their parents after receiving an award or certificate I had printed out for awards day; and my special students who I made books for with their pictures about their school day.

"They would read the sentence, point to the picture and say, 'this is me' with a big smile on their faces," she added.

## Purple Reign takes second place



The Purple Reign Step Team came in second place at their recent competition at Yorkville Middle School in Illinois.



## Thirty-four juniors inducted into National Honor Society



Thirty-four juniors were honored for their scholarship as they were inducted into the MHS chapter of the National Honor Society. In order to be inducted, each junior must have an unweighted GPA of 3.5 or higher and a clean disciplinary record.

The new inductees included:

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Trinity Allen          | • Precious Moore         |
| • Cesar Avila –Contreras | • Kejuan Nelson-Reynolds |
| • Wisdom Chandler        | • Anisa Newman           |
| • Lucia Cruz             | • Alyzandra Nunez        |
| • Alec Cunningham        | • Sincere Peterson       |
| • Taliyah Dean           | • Angela Primm           |
| • Aleksander Djukic      | • Kenvar Pujoe           |
| • Bria Ealy              | • Tamaria Reavley        |
| • Brooklyn Edwards       | • Hannah Robinson        |
| • Allen Evans            | • Paige Simpson          |
| • Aniyah Hill            | • Diamond Sims           |
| • Saniya Hoskins         | • Monica Valladares      |
| • Breonna Jordan         | • Vincent Velasquez      |
| • Kayla Mabon            | • David Walton           |
| • David Maldonado        | • Kamyra Williams        |
| • Alicia Marquez         | • Diamond Wright         |
| • Haylee McDonald        | • Folasade Zannou        |

## Junior David Maldonado placed 7th at Wrestling State Finals



*This is the 19th straight year a Pirate has earned a medal at the IHSAA State Finals.*



## Food Service director represents Region 1 schools

Merrillville Community School Corporation Director of Food Service Angelica Claiborne has been named the Region 1 representative for the Indiana School Nutrition Association (ISNA).

Mrs. Claiborne, a 2006 Merrillville High School graduate, will be the liaison between all school food authorities in Northwest Indiana (Lake, Porter, LaPorte Counties) and the ISNA.

She will be responsible for making sure everyone is kept up-



**Angelica Claiborne**

to-date with communications from the ISNA.

"I will be able to make the voices of Northwest Indiana heard from a school nutrition standpoint," said Mrs. Claiborne. "ISNA works very closely with the Indiana Department of Education which is a positive in the work we do to make meals better for our students."

Mrs. Claiborne has been a member of the ISNA since 2009. She earned her Level 2 certificate last year, and is working towards obtaining her Level 3 and 4 certificates.

She has served as the school corporation's food service director for more than a year.

Prior to her current position, she served as the corporation's assistant food service director for more than a year and also held different roles in the Merrillville school kitchens for 10 years.

## Deputy treasurer is Region 1 Treasurer of the Year

Amy Tarr, Merrillville Community School Corporation deputy treasurer, has been named the Indiana Association of School Business Officials (IASBO) Region 1 Treasurer of the Year.

IASBO Region 1 members voted for Mrs. Tarr to receive this honor. She has been a member of IASBO for 10 years, attending regular meetings and workshops. Region 1 includes school corporations in Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties.

As deputy treasurer, Mrs. Tarr, a 1975 Merrillville High School graduate, oversees all expenditures and revenue

for the school corporation. She stays up-to-date with all state reporting and audits to make sure the corporation is compliant with all requirements for reporting the corporation finances.

She has served as deputy treasurer for six years. Prior to her current position, Mrs. Tarr worked in the school corporation's business department for 10 years.

Mrs. Tarr has worked in accounting for her entire career. She has also held various positions in the corporation at schools like Iddings Elementary, Harrison Junior High, and John Wood Ele-

mentary.

Prior to the school corporation, she worked for a certified public accountant and also held the position as chief deputy for Ross Township.



**Amy Tarr**



### Practicing safety procedures

The Transportation Department spent a week practicing emergency evacuations with bus drivers, aides and students to make sure everyone knew how to exit the vehicles in case of an emergency.



# Athletic director headed for Indiana Sports Hall of Fame

Janis Qualizza, athletic director at Merrillville High School for 40 years, will be the first IHSAA athletic director to be inducted into the Indiana Sports Hall of Fame.

Ms. Qualizza, along with 1966 Merrillville High School graduate Gregg Popovich, a fixture in the National Basketball Association, and many others, will be inducted at the Inaugural Indiana Sports Hall of Fame Induction Banquet on May 14 in Evansville, Indiana.

"I am very humbled to have been chosen to be inducted into the Indiana Sports Hall of Fame," said Ms. Qualizza. "The State of Indiana certainly has many deserving winning coaches, administrators and most importantly exceptional athletes who are very worthy of being selected into the Hall of Fame. I am blessed to be a 2022 inductee."

"There are many elite individuals who far surpass anything I have done throughout my career to be deserving of this honor," she continued. "I am proud to represent the Merrillville School Corporation, our present and past coaches and the thousands of athletes that I have had the pleasure to work for during my 44 years as an athletic administrator at Merrillville High School. I thank the Indiana Sports Hall of Fame committee for selecting me to be a proud member."

Though she's been athletic director for 40 years, Ms. Qualizza has been at Merrillville High School since 1978, starting her lengthy career as the assistant athletic director.

Ms. Qualizza was the first female athletic director of a Class 5A high school and the third female athletic director in the state of Indiana. She was also the first female to be voted onto the Indiana High School Athletic Association Board of Directors as a representative of a large school. She served on the IHSAA board for 20 years, the longest term ever held, and she also served on its financial committee.

Ms. Qualizza has been recognized extensively over her career. In 2017, she was named both the Athletic Administrator of the Year and Athletic Director

of the Year by the Indiana Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association.

Other recognitions over the years include District 1 Athletic Director of the Year in 2010, 2002, and 1991; recipient of the National Federation of State High School Associations Spirit of Sport Award, 2009; and National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association Distinguished Service Award, 2005.

"Janis is an amazing leader in her field, and she is very deserving of this wonderful honor," said Superintendent Nick Brown. "MHS has been blessed to have had her at the helm of its athletics program for so long. Being that March is Women's History Month, you can say she is a large part of Pirate athletics history, making a positive and lasting impact on the program."

Over the years, she developed many aspects of Merrillville High School's athletic program, including the Athlete and Coaches Halls of Fame; handbooks for athletes, coaches and trainers; the Merrillville Pirate Athletic Council; parent brochure; and more.

From 1988-1993, she was heavily involved in the \$55 million building proj-



Janis Qualizza, MHS athletic director, will be inducted into the Indiana Sports Hall of Fame in May.

ect at Merrillville High School that resulted in the school's state-of-the-art athletic facilities.

Ms. Qualizza was certified as an athletic administrator in 1998 and received her Indiana State principal's license in 2002. Prior to her athletic director roles, she spent a number of years teaching physical education/health and coaching at schools in Gary. She continued to coach at Merrillville through 1982.

Ms. Qualizza received her master's in secondary education from Indiana University Northwest and her bachelor's in physical education and health from Purdue University.

For more information on Inaugural Indiana Sports Hall of Fame Induction Banquet, visit [www.inshof.com](http://www.inshof.com) or call 812-430-2725.

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# New CTE online tour showcases MHS programs

Merrillville High School has launched a new online resource for parents and students to learn more about the variety of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs that are available:

<http://tinyurl.com/MerrillvilleCTEtour>

CTE programs are designed to prepare students for post-secondary success and the workforce by teaching employability and technical skills.

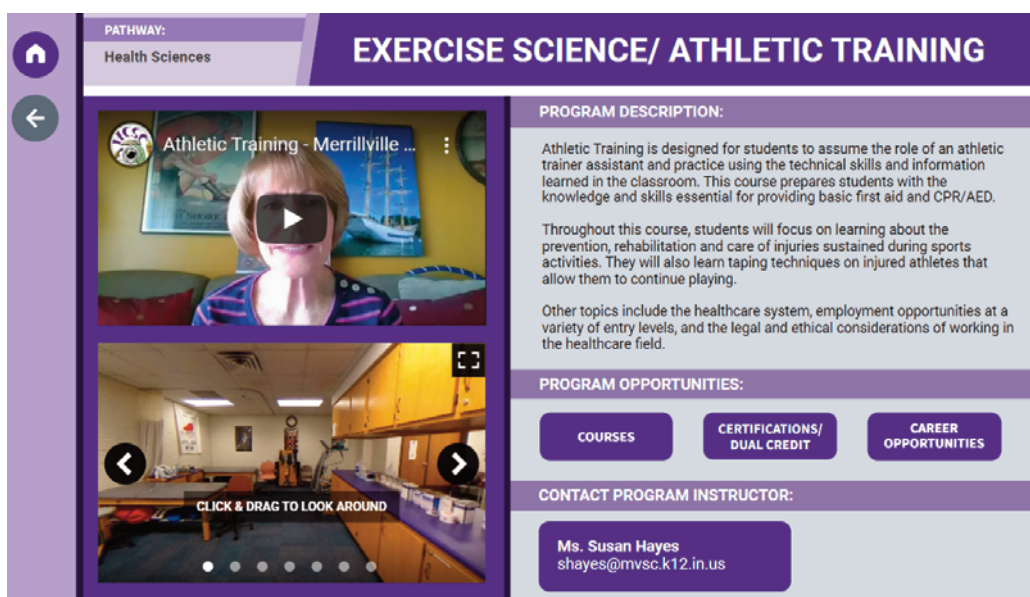
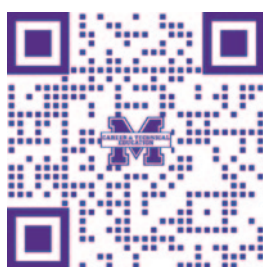
The new web pages take visitors on a tour of the school's programs featuring enhanced descriptions, course listings, certifications and dual credit opportunities, potential career opportunities, photos and videos.

"We are excited to launch the new Virtual CTE tour that showcases the variety of career clusters, dedicated staff, and outstanding facilities available to Merrillville students," said Bob Phelps, director of technology and CTE. "At MHS students have an opportunity to learn the technical and employability skill needed for success after high school."

"It's important for parents and students to see the space, hear from the instructor, and understand what goes on in each program," he continued. "Taking CTE courses is an important and beneficial decision that can impact a student's future."

In order to be a CTE concentrator, students must complete a three-course sequence in one pathway. Mr. Phelps said the new Virtual CTE tour helps parents and students visualize what that means and how completing the pathway can lead to industry certifications and dual credit opportunities.

"In addition to showcasing our programs to students and parents, I hope the Merrillville community, local businesses, and industry leaders can see the impact our programs and students will have after high school," Mr. Phelps added. "This is also a great opportunity for new partnerships with our programs."





# MHS Environmental Club makes a difference

Merrillville High School cafeterias have both moved to using reusable meal trays, thanks to the persistence and efforts of the MHS Environmental Club.

On the very first day of the change, the amount of trash collected from meals went from 10 to three bags! MHS administrators estimate that the change to reusables will reduce waste by 50%.

The high school cafeterias had been using single-use Styrofoam meal trays for years. With all of the other schools in the corporation using reusable meal trays, Environmental Club members decided it was time to ask the school corporation's Food Service Department if the high school could use reusable meal trays as well.

"I was excited and scared at the same time," said Food Service Director Angelica Claiborne. "Of course not using Styrofoam is better for the environment, but the high school has not used reusable trays in more than 10 years!"

With Food Service in agreement with their plan, Environmental Club members made a presentation to the Merrillville Community School Corporation Board of School Trustees in January to get their approval to make the change.

The benefits of using reusable trays include saving money, reducing waste, saving the environment and protecting wildlife.

According to their presentation, the school corporation already spent \$16,389 on foam trays this school year alone; meanwhile, 2,150 reusable trays were purchased for \$8,512.42, already saving money.

In addition, the corporation will create less garbage and save additional money on waste hauling.

Styrofoam is not recyclable in Northwest Indiana, and it takes around 500 years to decompose.

In addition, the process to make the Styrofoam produces hazardous waste and air emissions, and there is evidence that the material itself leaches toxins in hot food and drinks, according to the stu-

dents' presentation.

In order to educate their fellow students on the new lunch procedures, Environmental Club members posted signage

in the cafeterias and created announcements and an educational video on the Pirate News Network.



Sophomore Destiny Givens and freshman Dominich Comanse participate in an educational video to show the MHS student body new meal tray procedures.



From left, MHS Environmental Club sponsors Betty Jordan and Veronica Maldonado; seniors and club members Jaelyn and Jade McDuffie; Annie Mehay, Cargill environmental specialist and MHS Class of 2002 alumna; and Sherrie Stupic, Mehay's mom and Food Service administrative assistant gather after their presentation at the January school board meeting. Mrs. Mehay was a guest speaker who helped to provide important environmental statistics for the group's presentation to the school board.



BASEBALL



SOFTBALL



GIRLS' TENNIS

# MHS PIRATE ATHLETICS SPRING SPORTS



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