

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

All of us at the Woodland Hills School District hope that you and your loved ones have a wonderful holiday season and a joyous start to the new year. We are excited for what is in store for the rest of the school year and cannot wait to have everyone back in January!



'23 REGISTRATION

Kindergarten early registration will begin on January 17, 2023. Each of our three elementary schools will host a registration night from January 24 through January 26. Registration forms are available to fill out in advance on our website at whsd.net.

THE WOLVERINE

A REGULAR PUBLICATION FROM THE WOODLAND HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT

CONGRATULATIONS TO NEW BOARD PRESIDENT CARLTON SCOTT
AND NEW VICE PRESIDENT MICHAEL RENSLAND



HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM
WOODLAND HILLS

NEWS FROM DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION



VEX ROBOTICS ADDS NEW DYNAMIC TO CLASSES AT ALL GRADE LEVELS

When the Woodland Hills School District entered into a partnership with VEX Robotics over the summer, the hope was that it would not only expose district students to additional STEM learning, but for the kits to become valuable tools in other classes.

Ms. Tina Dietrich's third grade class at Turtle Creek Elementary STEAM Academy has been up to the challenge and has found creative ways to use Vex to reinforce concepts taught in other classes.

In the fall, the third graders learned about the parts of plants in science. Previously, students showcased their grasp of the content by using pipe cleaners, felt, construction paper, and other art materials to create a plant and label the parts.

This year, they used the VEX kits. Working in teams of three, they constructed mechanical versions of plants with all the traditional parts - flower, leaves, stem, and roots. Not only must every plant part be included, but it needs to be free-standing without support.

By working in teams, the students learn how to collaborate, problem solve, explain their ideas, listen, and compromise. The hands-on learning keeps them engaged and helps reinforce the important foundational concepts that are so critical for young learners.

In December, the entire district participated in "Flex Your VEX" as part of a celebration of Computer Science Education Week. Students at every grade level coded and created with VEX Robotics at events in all of the district's buildings. Check out some of the individual school pages in this edition of The Wolverine to see some of the projects that the students worked on as part of "Flex Your VEX."



SCHNEIDER ELECTRIC PRESENTS \$25K TO WOODLAND HILLS AS CONTEST WINNER

Schneider Electric has awarded the Woodland Hills School District \$25,000 as the winner of the APC K-12 Makeover Contest. The award allowed the district to relocate its data center and make several upgrades to its IT infrastructure.

Dr. Daniel Castagna, Superintendent, Woodland Hills School District said, "The Woodland Hills School District is truly grateful for the recognition from Schneider Electric and the APC K-12 Makeover Contest. Infrastructure is a challenge for every school district, especially one of our size. The updates to our IT department through this award will improve our efficiency and security. It is partnerships like these that help school districts thrive, and we could not be more appreciative of everyone involved."

With the upgrades, WHSD's new equipment is now protected from environmental conditions and vulnerabilities and will provide more reliable power to connected devices. The improved battery back-up capacity will supply power through outages or shut down systems before anticipated failure, while an advanced dynamic battery management enables them to replace batteries before the unit fails.

"Like a lot of districts over the last couple of years, our focus has been on making sure our students have access to the technology they need in order to learn from wherever they need to be," said Johnathan Kim, Director of IT, Woodland Hills School District. "But we also needed to be able to make sure the programs and services our students and staff need to access remotely are safe and reliable. The generosity from Schneider Electric means we're able to provide a more secure location for our data center, gives us much more reliable power to our networks, and has helped us modernize the entire system."

NEWS FROM WOODLAND HILLS HIGH SCHOOL



WOODLAND HILLS HOSTS STUDENT LEADERS TO PREP FOR STUDENT SUMMIT

Approximately 80 students from multiple districts gathered at Woodland Hills High School on Tuesday, Nov. 8 to begin planning for the annual Woodland Hills Student Summit in the spring.

The upcoming Student Summit will be the fourth held at Woodland Hills High School. It has grown from first featuring only Woodland Hills students to a virtual multi-district session to now feature eight different school districts from around the region.

The planning session was the latest expansion to the Student Summit from English teacher Ms. Erin Wall, who organizes the Summit every year. Like past years, students have selected specific topics to discuss with the full summit. These topics include racial and social injustice, women's rights, climate change, LGBTQ, animal welfare, mental health, and gun violence.

Each group worked to determine a more specific focus for their group discussions. The conversations were earnest and honest, with some students sharing heartfelt, personal stories as to why they were getting involved in a particular topic. They also had guidance from experts in their particular fields.

WOODLAND HILLS STUDENTS SET RECORDS, ACHIEVE NEW HEIGHTS

Students at all grade levels are flourishing in the first few months of the school year.

- Senior Levi McGraww-Sapp made it to the second round of the Gates Scholarship, which is a very prestigious national scholarship competition.
- Freshman Annabel Johnson finished 7th at the WPIAL Cross Country championships and became the first girl from Woodland Hills to qualify for the state cross country championships in 20 years. Annabel finished 31st at the state meet.

JOSIAH ANDERSON NAMED COCA-COLA SCHOLARS FOUNDATION FINALIST

Senior Josiah Anderson has been named a Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation semifinalist, making him one of 1,500 students nationwide in the running for one of the program's \$20,000 college scholarships. "It's very exciting to know that out of all those people, I was chosen to be a semifinalist," he said.

Josiah said the initial application featured an essay, and the second round features additional writing. The essays fit right into his passion for creative writing. "I love writing. I want to go to college to be a script writer," he said. "What I'm going to have to learn to do, though, is fit all of my words into a 300 word essay. So that might be a challenge, but I'm a creative writer, so I'm OK with that."

Part of the application also featured information about his impact in the community. Josiah has been a volunteer with the Pittsburgh NFL League, an official flag football league through the NFL, and is active in the First Baptist Church of West Mifflin, where he works with younger members of the congregation.

Josiah will submit the next part of his application and learn about his status later in the school year.



- The Woodland Hills High School Marching Band and Images Visual Ensemble was named region champion and earned a gold rating during its final performance at Penn-Trafford High School.
- A group of Woodland Hills High School students took part in the National Day of Concern and Student Pledge Against Gun Violence on Wednesday, October 19. The students held an open discussion on how gun violence impacted their lives and took part in several activities dedicated toward spreading awareness and remembering the lives lost to gun violence.

NEWS FROM DICKSON PREPARATORY STEAM ACADEMY

MIDDLE SCHOOL SWIMMING TEAM MAKES A SPLASH IN ITS DEBUT

This school year marked the debut of a new athletics opportunity for Dickson students. Seventh and eighth graders were able to join the middle school swimming team for the first time and they immediately made their presence felt in the pool.

One of the top meets this year was at Mt. Pleasant, when the team captured eight first place, four second place and three third place finishes. They were able to then finish the season with a really strong performance at Derry. Congratulations to all!



FLEX YOUR VEX AT DICKSON

As part of Computer Science Education Week, Dickson students across all grade levels were busy utilizing their VEX Robotics kits. During Flex Your VEX Day on Monday, Dec. 5 students used their Library Media Arts Classes to go through a program called Coral Reef Clean-Up.

The activity utilizes virtual reality to drive an ocean cleaning robot through an underwater scene to collect as much trash as possible from the coral reef. Students are tasked with navigating through several challenges, including balancing speed with battery life, driving the appropriate distance and direction, and much more, all utilizing code through the VEX program.

Besides introducing students to robotics, computer science, programming, and coding, the curriculum also emphasizes collaboration, listening, compromise, and helps the students learn how to work together as part of a group.

Dickson students will have additional opportunities to work with the VEX Robotics curriculum through a newly approved competitive robotics team. The team will be coached by Mr. Timothy Hauenstein, who is a sixth grade teacher at Dickson.

NEW MENTORSHIP PARTNERS, HOLIDAY FUN HIGHLIGHT FIRST FEW MONTHS

The holiday season featured two outstanding concerts performed by the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade bands, orchestras, and chorus groups. Dickson families were also able to stop by Barnes & Noble at the Waterfront on Dec. 5. The store hosted a family night that featured crafts, tattoos, karaoke, and free gift wrapping for items purchased during the event.

Students who earned the PBIS incentive in the fall were able to do something many students have dreamed of - they pied their teachers in the face!



Thanks to the teachers who bravely volunteered to take part!

Dickson has introduced a handful of new partner organizations this fall, too. 1Nation Mentoring is providing one-on-one and group mentoring throughout the year. The mentoring includes character coaching, academic support and advocacy.

Project G.A.M.E. is working with students to reduce suspensions, provide coping mechanisms and raise self awareness about mental health. Woodland Hills graduate Wes Lyons is also returning to the district to help provide tools to make better choices through his Pursuit With Patience program.



NEWS FROM EDGEWOOD ELEMENTARY STEAM ACADEMY

FALL FESTIVAL, GOBBLER GRIND HIGHLIGHT FALL PBIS REWARDS

Edgewood students earned opportunities to participate in some really spectacular events through the Edgewood PBIS program during the first few months of the year.

The Fall Festival was held on October 28. This was a PBIS reward recognizing students for meeting behavior expectations in the school and classroom. Students participated in a spooky hallway, mystery boxes, a maze, yard games, a mummy contest, craft, pumpkin decorating, seasonal stories and a scarecrow contest.



To celebrate Thanksgiving, the PBIS team whipped up the Gobbler Grind as a reward for December. The Gobber Grind was held Nov. 22 and Nov. 23 and featured an obstacle course for students - and some ambitious teachers - to navigate. Kindergarten through fifth grade students competed as homeroom teams as they raced through the obstacle course to try to win the Turkey Medal.

The Gobbler Grind was made possible through the hard work of the PBIS team, the Edgewood PTA, HUGS Volunteers, Mr. Seitzinger and Mr. Turnball.



READ-TO-ME SERIES UNDERWAY WITH SPECIAL GUEST READERS

Mrs. White Price, first grade teacher, is incorporating monthly reading events for all the first graders at Edgewood. The first event was held on November 4. Dr. Castagna, Dr. White, Dr. Bigney, Mr. Willson and Ms. Gather came to read to our first graders.

Author Karolyn Denson Landrieux also came by to read to the students. She also gave them all a copy of her latest Maxine and Beanie Book. In December, students from the high school came by and read with the first graders.



FLEX YOUR VEX AT EDGEWOOD

As part of Computer Science Education Week, Edgewood students across all grade levels were busy utilizing their VEX Robotics kits. Younger students learned basic concepts of how to move their little bots, while older students went to work building astronaut capsules or free-standing structures.

Besides introducing students to robotics, computer science, programming, and coding, the kits also emphasize collaboration, listening, compromise, and helps the students learn how to work together as part of a group.



NEWS FROM TURTLE CREEK ELEMENTARY STEAM ACADEMY

COMMUNITY EVENTS, FAMILY FUN HIGHLIGHT THE FIRST FEW MONTHS

In October, Turtle Creek enjoyed its PBIS reward that included a fall themed obstacle course and pumpkin carving. Students and staff had a wonderful time at the event. Turtle Creek also celebrated Unity Day on October 19th by wearing the color orange and enjoyed a visit from the high school cheerleaders, who greeted the students as they entered the building. Families enjoyed the Scholastic Book Fair evening that included treats, books and crafts.



The students at Turtle Creek participated in World Kindness Day and received notes and messages from the high school students. On Thursday, November 17th, the students and staff participated in Children's Grief Awareness Day. The staff and students wore blue and took time to remember loved ones.

During the Swissvale community Veterans Day celebration, students from Turtle Creek were present to lead the Pledge of Allegiance and present poems, drawings and pictures of thanks to local Veterans. Kindergarten also hosted a veteran, who read to the students.



FLEX YOUR VEX AT TURTLE CREEK

As part of Computer Science Education Week, Turtle Creek students across all grade levels were busy utilizing their VEX Robotics kits. Students in Ms. McGee's class, Ms. Miller's class, and Ms. Dietrich's class built vehicles they then connected to batteries. They then utilized software to move the vehicles in different directions. Besides introducing students to robotics, computer science, programming, and coding, the kits also emphasize collaboration, listening, compromise, and helps the students learn how to work together as part of a group.



PITCHING IN TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND RAISE AWARENESS

Turtle Creek students not only got into the Halloween spirit this year, but also the conservation spirit. As much as they enjoyed their Halloween candy, they made sure to save their wrappers so they could be recycled as part of the Unwrap the Waves Project. Sponsored by the Loggerhead Marinelife Center, the project raises awareness about the single-use waste produced by the holiday.

Turtle Creek students and their families did an amazing job by collecting almost 28,000 candy wrappers as they did their part in trying to preserve marine life and spread conservation awareness.



NEWS FROM WILKINS ELEMENTARY STEAM ACADEMY

BBQ LUNCH PROVIDES PERFECT START TO THE SCHOOL YEAR

The Wilkins PTA and Title I Committee teamed up to sponsor an amazing BBQ lunch for Wilkins students and their families to start the year. The fantastic staff from The Nutrition Group manned the grill and served up some delicious food for the students and their special guests.

Each grade level had their own special time to eat and be with their family members. Through the Title I Committee, Wilkins was also able to provide students with a goodie bag and other materials for families to go along with the lunch.



FLEX YOUR VEX AT WILKINS

As part of Computer Science Education Week, Wilkins students across all grade levels were busy utilizing their VEX Robotics kits. Some were learning how to input commands into a computer to move a vehicle through an obstacle course, while others tested to see how far a vehicle could travel.

Besides introducing students to robotics, computer science, programming, and coding, the kits also emphasize collaboration, listening, compromise, and helps the students learn how to work together as part of a group.



NOVEMBER FILLED WITH FUN FIELD TRIPS AND THE WILKINS TURKEY TAKEDOWN

Fifth graders who earned their PBIS award in October received a special treat in November when Mrs. Veltre-Miller and other Wilkins staff took the students to a University of Pittsburgh women's basketball game. The students met Roc, the Panthers' mascot, and a few caught t-shirts thrown into the stands.

Later in November, second graders took a field trip the Children's Museum on the North Side of Pittsburgh. They were able to get hands-on with STEAM activities through the various exhibits and activities.



They were also able to create, draw, build, work with circuits, climb, race, explore, and discover all day long.

To celebrate Thanksgiving, the entire school took part in the Wilkins Turkey Takedown Tournament during their gym classes. Each grade competed against each other to determine a finalist, with the final classes competing against each other to determine overall champions. Congratulations to Mrs. Spurduto's first grade class, Ms. Smith's third grade class, and Ms. Reininger's 4th grade class for emerging as the Turkey Takedown champions.



PARENTS AS ALLIES DESIGN TEAM HOSTS FIRST EVENT

The Parents as Allies Design Team, made up of two parents from each Elementary school, Mrs. Leas (kindergarten teacher at Wilkins Elementary STEAM Academy) and Mrs. Zurisko (school social worker at Wilkins Elementary STEAM Academy), hosted their first event in November at the Wilkins Twp Fire Department #3. The Kindergarten Fall Festival was well attended by Kindergarten students and their families from all three elementary schools.

Students enjoyed playing games and meeting the Wilkins Twp. police, fire fighters, and Woodland Hills EMS. Kindergarten students also were able to get their faces painted by Cynthia from Face Paint Pittsburgh. Balloon Artist Kim, from Airheads Balloon Art put smiles on their faces as well.

The event was made possible through funding from Kidsburgh and The Grable Foundation. The Parents as Allies Team will continue to work together over the next year to increase parent engagement and collaboration within the three elementary schools. The next event will be held in the spring. Keep an eye out for details!



SCHOOL BOARD SETS 2023-24 LEADERSHIP AT REORGANIZATION MEETING

The Woodland Hills School District Board of Education completed its annual reorganization during a December 5, 2022 meeting prior to the final legislative meeting of the calendar year. Mr. Carlton Scott will continue as board president. Mr. Scott has served in that role since May 2022. Mr. Michael Rensland was appointed as board vice president, succeeding Ms. Bridgett Creach, who has served in that role since May 2022. Along with Mr. Scott and Mr. Rensland, the board features Ms. Laura Arthrell, Mr. Mike Belmonte, Mr. Robert Clanagan-Bey, Ms. Bridgett Creach, Ms. Terri Lawson, Dr. Tammi McMillan, and Ms. Darnika Reed. The board also approved the 2023 board meeting dates which can be found at whsd.net.

