



THE WOLVERINE

A regular publication from the Woodland Hills School District



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WOODLAND HILLS CLASS OF 2023!

The anticipation was simply too much to bear. Before the Woodland Hills Class of 2023 could be officially presented to the audience for graduation, cheers rose to a crescendo and hats flew into the air. Before long, a classic “Double-U, Double-O, D-Y” chant broke out amongst the latest Woodland Hills graduates.

Woodland Hills’ annual commencement ceremony was a full-on celebration. The program honored a class that received over \$7.1 million in scholarships to colleges and universities throughout the country. Co-Principal Mrs. Shelly Manns lauded the seniors for their refusal to accept defeat in the face of a series of challenges.

“I am proud of the fortitude you have exhibited, not just in your academic pursuits, but in every aspect of your lives,” she said. “You have learned that setbacks are not roadblocks, but mere detours that redirect you toward greater accomplishments.”

Co-Principal Mr. Berchman Grinage shared some of the future destinations of the Class of 2023, including a number of schools throughout Pennsylvania, as well as Ivy League and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Mr. Grinage noted that 34 of the students attending college are first generation college students.

More from commencement on page 8.

NEWS FROM DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

A ROBOTICS SHOWDOWN FOR DISTRICT ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

To celebrate the end of the first year of the partnership with VEX Robotics, the district held a competition for 3rd, 4th and 5th graders. Each school hosted a battle of the homerooms, with a winner from each grade level facing off against their peers from the other district elementary schools in a showdown at the district administration building.

Every team had the same task - navigate a board and complete a series of tasks with their vehicle in two 2-minute sessions. The first two minutes were done via coding. The second two minutes were done via driving. The teams could earn points for clearing debris, moving a solar panel, positioning a rocket ship for launch, and more.

In third grade, Vex Girls Go! from Turtle Creek won with nine points. Wilkins Warriors scored seven points and Vex Go Kids scored six points. In fourth grade, King Creek Robots from Turtle Creek won with seven points. Winning Wolverines scored four points and Vex Masters scored three points. In fifth grade, Vex Vaults from Turtle Creek won with 14 points. Jellybeans and Vex Flexers tied for second with seven points apiece. A special shout-out to Ms. Tina Dietrich, Ms. Danielle McCoy, and Ms. Desiree White-Price for their hard work and guidance in putting together this event.

NEW FACES IN NEW PLACES

During the May legislative board meeting, the Woodland Hills Board of School Directors approved the hiring of a number of new employees. These new hires are filling open positions or replacing recent retirees. Several of the hires also specifically address targeted areas identified during the 2023-24 budget proposal presented by superintendent Dr. Daniel Castagna and business manager Jill Regan.

- Leah Sylvis, Director of Special Education
- Garrett Reid, Transportation Coordinator
- Brian Johnson, Supervisor of Custodial Services
- Daniel Bridge, Supervisor of Maintenance and Construction
- Ty-Meer Brown, Director of District Activities, Athletics and Sponsorship
- Jullian Turner, Assistant to the Director of District Activities, Athletics and Sponsorship
- Brian Tarrant, Academics/Athletics Liaison
- Jared Zych, boys basketball coach

Welcome to all of the new hires!



OPPORTUNITY CAMP RETURNS

The Woodland Hills Opportunity Camp is underway for its third year at Dickson Preparatory STEAM Academy. The six-week long program hosts district students who have completed grades K-8. It has grown from approximately 200 students in 2021 to over 500 students this summer. The blend of academic curriculum and enrichment activities extends their learning and also supports their social-emotional development in a school setting.

The district is able to extend its partnership with Carnegie Libraries, Communitopia, and Adagio Health, who work with students in the buildings during the school year. Students are also continuing their use of the VEX Robotics program during camp. New providers include Queen's Gambit (chess), Stem Coding Lab, Spark Training Pittsburgh (basketball), and Pittsburgh Flag Football League. The wide range of activities and field trips helps open the campers' mind to possible future careers, hobbies, and skill sets. The program runs through July 28.

NEWS FROM WOODLAND HILLS HIGH SCHOOL



LEVITICUS MCGRAW-SAPP RECEIVES GATES MILLENIUM SCHOLARSHIP

Senior Leviticus McGraw-Sapp has been awarded a Gates Millennium Scholarship through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The scholarship is designated for students from historically underrepresented groups who showcase an outstanding academic record, demonstrate leadership ability, and exceptional personal success skills.

Ideal candidates have an outstanding academic record in high school, demonstrated leadership ability and exceptional personal success skills. McGraw-Sapp was recognized for his work both within Woodland Hills and within his neighborhood.

“Had you known 11th grade me, my biggest struggle was being punctual and being on time in submitting stuff before the deadline,” McGraw-Sapp said. “I turned that around this year. I was ecstatic to know that I received the scholarship.”

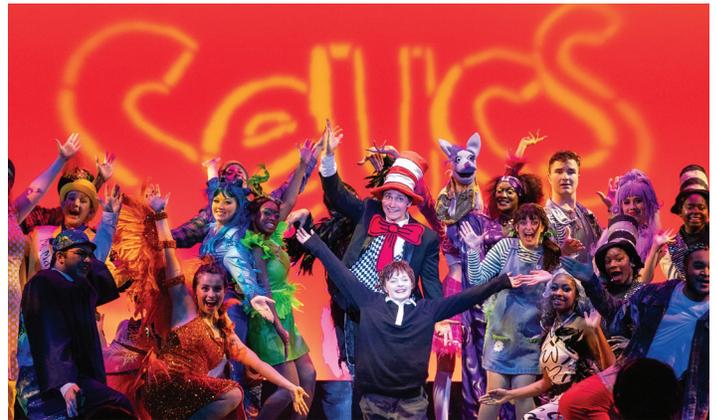
McGraw-Sapp will be attending the University of Pennsylvania in the fall.

A LITANY OF AWARDS

Woodland Hills always has strong community support for its scholars, especially those who are preparing for the next stage of their lives. This year, the Class of 2023 received a wide range of academic and athletic scholarship awards from community and regional partners at the high school’s annual athletic and academic awards banquets. Thank you to all of the generous donors who provided awards to students.

SEUSSICAL: THE MUSICAL NOMINATED FOR SIX GENE KELLY AWARDS

The wacky, wild and wonderful world of Seussical: The Musical delighted audiences who ventured into the Thomas G. Crone Auditorium over the course of two weekends in late April. The energetic production celebrates all things related to Dr. Seuss, with some of his characters taking center stage as part of a journey through the imaginary world of the Jungle of Nool.



The Woodland Hills Performing Arts Department once again earned recognition from the Gene Kelly Awards, as the cast and crew hauled in six nominations. The annual awards honor excellence in high school musical theater.

Seussical earned nominations for Best Scenic Design, Best Costume Design, Best Lighting Design, Best Dance Ensemble, Best Crew/Technical Execution, and Best Supporting Actress for Annelise Hanson’s performance as Mayzie Labird.

Congratulations to everyone who contributed to another fantastic Woodland Hills production!



NEWS FROM DICKSON PREPARATORY STEAM ACADEMY



DICKSON CELEBRATES 8TH GRADE WITH PROMOTION CEREMONY

The Woodland Hills Class of 2027 is ready for its next adventure. Eighth graders at Dickson Preparatory STEAM Academy received their promotion certificates during a ceremony at the high school on May 30. Along with their promotion certificates, several students were recognized for their academic excellence in specific categories.

Amelia Kautza and Jayden Jones were recognized for excellence in Geometry and Math; Shawn Saunders for Science, Zyla Clark for Algebra I, Nayvi Edwards for U.S. History, Alaya Sullivan for Honors English, Cora Spear for Science, Niyah Brown for French I, Noelle Brubaker for Spanish I, Olivia Safran for Chorus, Aubree Alton for Band, Sanai Hamilton for Orchestra, and Diarah White for Literary Studies.

The ceremony's guest speaker was Trey Edmunds, a former football player with Steelers. The students are the authors of their own stories, he said, and they will be the ones to determine what their futures hold.

A DAY WITH NATURE

Dickson students celebrated the end of the school year with a trip to Buffalo Creek Nature Park, where they learned about various plants and wildlife that inhabit the area. They also learned a bit about the people who once lived in the region, saw some of the tools they used, and explored the grounds. Buffalo Creek Nature Park is managed by the Audobon Society of Western Pennsylvania and features a wide range of activities and resources for students to utilize to expand their knowledge of the great outdoors.

TEACHER TIMOTHY HAUENSTEIN NAMED 2022-23 K-8 EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

Dickson Preparatory STEAM Academy sixth grade science teacher Mr. Timothy Hauenstein has been recognized by the Spectroscopy Society of Pittsburgh as a 2022-23 K-8 Educator of the Year.

This prestigious award is given to any educator that demonstrates a commitment to science and students in western Pennsylvania, eastern Ohio, and northern West Virginia. The Spectroscopy Society of Pittsburgh partners with the Society for Analytical Chemists of Pittsburgh to support science education in the region. Together, they sponsor Pittcon, the largest annual conference on laboratory science in the world.

The Woodland Hills School District is immensely proud of Mr. Hauenstein's work with the students at Dickson and congratulates him on this much deserved honor.



NEWS FROM EDGEWOOD ELEMENTARY STEAM ACADEMY

EDGEWOOD'S GOT TALENT, PLENTY OF PLACES TO GO, AND A COLORFUL FINALE

If there was any doubt about the talent that walks through the halls of Edgewood Elementary STEAM Academy on a daily basis, those doubts were erased by the awesome display during Edgewood's Got Talent. The talent show was a chance for students to showcase their skills and they absolutely wowed their friends and families.



The talent show was just one of several end-of-the-year opportunities that Edgewood students were able to enjoy. Second graders made a trip to Heinz Hall to listen to the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, kindergarteners explored Round Hill Farm as well as the C.C. Mellor Library, while fifth graders took a trip to nearby Frick Park.

Fifth graders also took part in the first "color wars," which saw them divided up into teams that competed against each other in a series of language arts and STEM challenges. Communication and collaboration were the key for the winning teams.



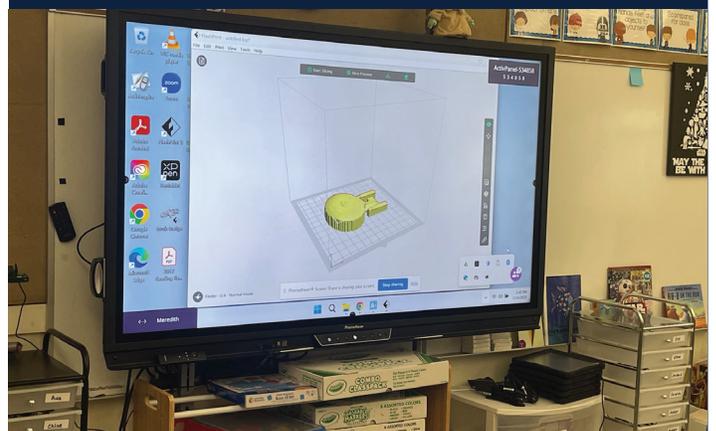
STEM FESTIVAL BRINGS STUDENTS, FAMILIES TOGETHER

Thanks to the hard work of the Edgewood PTA, staff and volunteers, Edgewood was able to host a STEM Festival that enabled students and families to explore a variety of science related activities. All sorts of STEM concepts were on display, from experimenting with different chemical reactions to exploring the VEX Robotics kits to even learning more about how your taste buds work. Thank you to everyone who stopped by and we hope you had as much as we did!



TOOLS OF THE FUTURE

Mr. Erik Meredith's class spent some time learning about how a 3D printer works and explored how to use the software attached to it. They designed a model by using the interface, built supports for it, scaled it to fit the printer, and then began the printing process. They were able to check on the progress throughout the day as the printer worked away. They were also able to design and print additional models as the year came to a close.



NEWS FROM TURTLE CREEK ELEMENTARY STEAM ACADEMY

TRIPS AND ADVENTURES HIGHLIGHT FINAL MONTHS OF SCHOOL YEAR

Turtle Creek students weren't just finishing up their classes in the final couple of months of the school year. They were also taking advantage of nicer weather and some cool opportunities to go on a number of field trips. The second grade took off for a show with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, while a group of third and fifth graders enjoyed a Pittsburgh Pirates game.



First graders spent a sunny day at Round Hill Farm, fourth grade spent a beautiful day at the Pittsburgh Zoo and Aquarium as well as some time underground at the Laurel Caverns, and fifth grade wandered through the woods on a hike at Keystone State Park.

Turtle Creek also had its end of the year breakfast for fifth graders, where a number of students received awards. There was also the third grade spelling bee, which finished with Kyra S. as the runner-up and Miles M. as the 2023 champion.



MULTI-SCHOOL VEX DAY

Turtle Creek has had a lot of fun integrating the VEX Robotics kits into the curriculum. Ms. Tina Dietrich and her third graders hosted fourth graders from Edgewood, fifth graders from Wilkins, and fourth graders from Penn Hills Charter for a special VEX Day. The students worked through a bunch of VEX related stations, including Mars Math Competition, Soccer, Hungry Hungry Hippos, Castle Crashers and a Maze. The students had a blast working together, making new friends, and utilizing the kits.



AILA LANGSTON WINS LIGONIER VALLEY WRITERS STUDENT POETRY CONTEST

Turtle Creek Elementary STEAM Academy student Aila Langston earned first place for her nature haikus as part of the annual Ligonier Valley Writers Student Poetry Contest. The contest is open to all students in grades 4-12 in southwestern Pennsylvania. There are nine categories poets can submit poems to, as well as overall winners for each grade. Aila (middle row, far right) joined her fellow poets at the Greensburg Barnes and Noble in early May to read her winning haikus.



NEWS FROM WILKINS ELEMENTARY STEAM ACADEMY

SCIENCE FESTIVAL RETURNS FOR ANOTHER YEAR OF EXPERIMENTATION

Students and their families had the opportunity to visit 13 different science stations throughout the school as part of the 2023 Wilkins Science Festival. Each station shared information and experiments about different areas of science - chemical reactions, energy science, new technology, biology, and engineering/maker.



The Science Festival is made possible by the Wilkins PTA along with Wilkins faculty and staff.

Students launched Alka rockets, where they could take a tablet of Alka Seltzer, drop it in water in a tiny capsule, close it off, and watch the pressure build to launch the capsule into the air. They experimented with the Beebots, 3D printer, and VEX Robotics kits in the library. They made lemon volcanoes and lava lamps, learned how to make ice cream, lip scrub and silly putty, and much more.



A DELICIOUS PIZZA PARTY

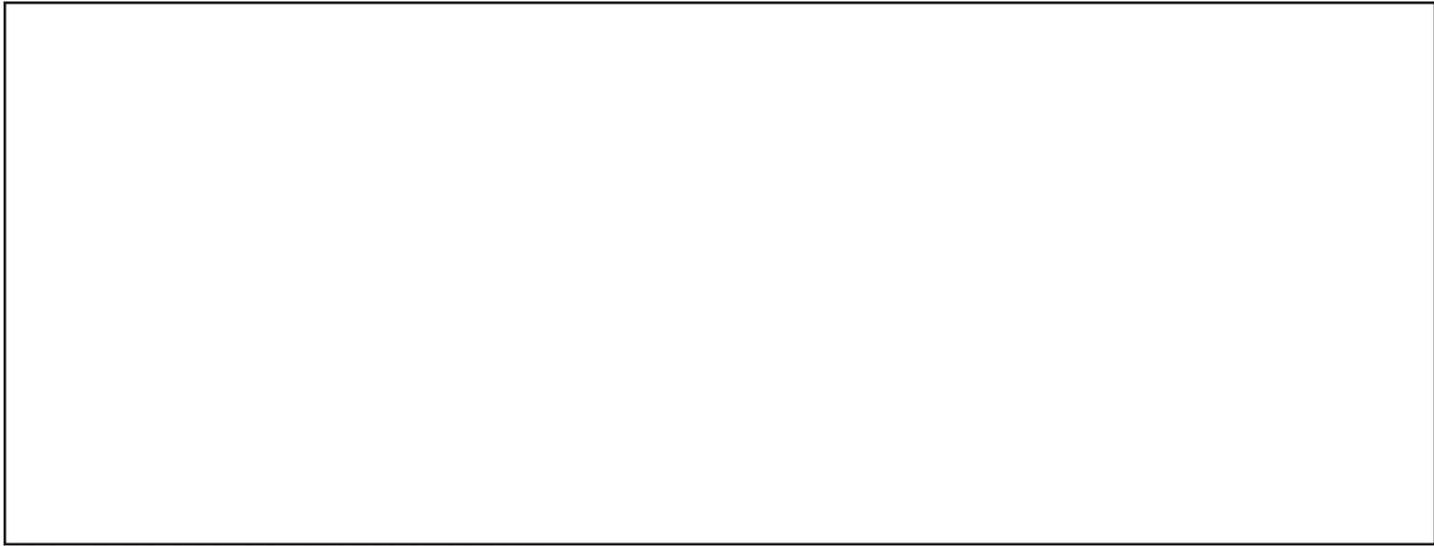
The entire school was treated to a pizza party in mid-May by The Caring Place in recognition of Wilkins' participation in the organization's annual poster contest. Seven Wilkins students were recognized for their posters during an assembly. Noelle Williams was a finalist, while Abdul Johnson, Adrianna Pezzanno, Abree Calloway, Avi Levine-Armes, Ty'leia Page and Dominic Copeland received honorable mentions.



CELEBRATING FIFTH GRADE'S PROMOTION TO MIDDLE SCHOOL

Wilkins Elementary STEAM Academy held its annual promotion ceremony for 5th grade students on May 31. Families joined the festivities to celebrate all of the students' hard work throughout the year. Students received their promotion certificates along with special individual awards and certificates for academic achievement, positive behaviors, attendance, and completion or participation in various programs.





MORE FROM COMMENCEMENT...

Ryan Powers, president of the National Honor Society, said that amidst his classmates' academic pursuits, they also found something more.

"We learned a love for our community that can't be taught in other places," he said. "Wherever it was, somewhere we learned a sense of pride that is unique to Woodland Hills."



Class president Abigail Mroz shared the numerous challenges the Class of 2023 has had to endure, from a gutted school building deep in a renovation process when they entered as freshmen, to the uncertainties and constant disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, to the individual challenges many faced.

"If you come back and visit, hopefully you'll have new things to share and new things to see," Mroz said. "Whatever your reason is for coming back, or just remembering Woody, remember the love we felt here and the school that grew with you."

A HISTORIC DISPLAY OF STUDENT ART

Young artists, families, educators and friends gathered inside the Hall of Architecture at the Carnegie Museum of Art on Saturday, May 13 to celebrate art created by Woodland Hills students. The gathering was part of the Woodland Hills Art Show, which ran from May 10-20 at the museum.

The pieces consisted of art created by students in grades K-12, all of them from the Woodland Hills School District. The first of its kind, the show was made possible by high school art teacher Saige Wagerman and Sean Beauford of the Carnegie Museums, as well as through the work of district art teachers Craig Mehalik, Jaison Pascuzzi, Erin Muffi, Bethany Wagner, Nina Buzzeo and Matthew Serechin.

Some of the artwork was done as part of the district's various art classes. Other pieces were created outside of school and submitted by the students. The art featured a wide range of styles and mediums, and the opening reception featured live music from students.

