

# **FOX CHAPEL AREA**

# **School News**





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## A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Fox Chapel Area Community,

It is hard for me to believe that the 2022-2023 school year will be coming to an end in a few short months. We have been through so much together, including a worldwide pandemic. During that time, it was hard to see much beyond the next few days, let alone a few years ahead. But, here we are, and to say we have grown as a community and as a district would be an understatement.

One of my goals when I arrived was to focus on the everyday learning that takes place in our classrooms day in and day out. There are so many components to what we do. We are educating young people - children with different backgrounds, thoughts, capabilities, and needs. Meeting all of these children where they are and helping them to grow and succeed is an important part of what we do each and every day. We want our students to grow, of course, academically, but we also want them to be successful socially and emotionally. We want them to be civic-minded, caring about the needs of others and their community - seeing where there are needs and then addressing them.

We are currently working diligently on the district's strategic plan. Many of these facets of education will be addressed in that plan. We have involved the larger community in the planning process, including through a survey, focus groups, and committee meetings. From those, we will find out what is important to the community to include in our plan. What do we want our students to become? What are the skills we want them to have? What are the needs we want them to be able to fulfill for our communities? What do we want them to be able to know and do?

In these pages, you will see that our students are not just academically talented, but that they are caring individuals who want to help others to reach their fullest potentials. I hope that you feel a sense of pride when you read this magazine. I know that I am proud of what our students, staff members, and community are doing to make our corner of the world a better place. I know that our students are change-makers and that they are growing and learning in a healthy and positive atmosphere with caring adults to guide them.

Sincerely,

Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac Superintendent







# **EXPLORATORY TIME RETURNS TO DMS**

fter a nearly 10-year hiatus, Exploratory Time has returned to Dorseyville Middle School. Exploratory Time, or ET, gives students a chance during the school day once a week to pursue an interest or try a new hobby that falls outside of the standard curricula. ET sessions are held three times a year for five weeks at a time. Among the activities offered are skateboarding, yoga, board games, guitar playing, and candy making. Every faculty member at DMS oversees an ET session.

The decision to bring ET back was prompted, in part, by the district's added emphasis on social-emotional learning during the past several years, according to DMS principal Jon Nauhaus. Mr. Nauhaus says the goal of ET is threefold: to expose students to peers in other grades, for them to meet new staff members, and to foster schoolwide engagement.

"Some students say it's the best time of their week," Mr. Nauhaus says.

Dr. Laura Miller, DMS' program principal, says ET provides valuable socialization that students missed out on during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It provides interaction that they were used to having and more of a return to normalcy," she says. "The kids are also excited to see their teachers in a different light."

Eighth-grader Joe Yoshikawa selected pingpong, card games, and polyhedron building for his ET activities during this school year. He says ET is popular among his peers because they get to choose an activity of their liking, adding that his favorite part of ET is making new friends.

"Before the pandemic, in sixth and seventh grade, I was socially awkward," he says. "Now, talking to different people makes me feel a lot more confident about myself."





# 'JARED BOXES' BRING JOY TO ILL CHILDREN

aving a daughter who has endured numerous hospital stays, Dorseyville Middle School counselor Breane DeComo understands how stressful the experience can be for sick children and their families.

Through discussions with a couple of colleagues, Ms. DeComo came up with the idea to create "Jared Boxes" for several health care facilities in the area and enlisted students to help during their Exploratory Time. Jared Boxes are plastic, shoe-sized storage boxes filled with small gifts, toys, games, crayons, coloring books, and other fun activities that are given to children in the hospital to provide a diversion during what can be a scary time. Started by students at Our Lady of Victory Catholic School in State College, they are named in memory of 5-year-old Jared McMullen, a classmate who was diagnosed with an incurable brain stem tumor in 1999 and passed away a year later. According to The Jared Box Project, nearly 1 million boxes have been donated to 400 hospitals in the country since that time.

"Helping kids is near and dear to my heart," Ms. DeComo says of the DMS initiative. "Hospital stays are so hard on the kids and parents. The items in a Jared Box help get their mind off why they're there."

Ms. DeComo spearheaded the drive among students, staff members, acquaintances, and others, and students helped to pack the boxes. Along with toys, games, and inspirational notes for each recipient, the boxes contained tic-tac-toe boards made in DMS' makerspace.

Charlotte McKibben, a DMS sixth-grader, designed the boards and oversaw their production, along with school librarian David Snyder.







Charlotte says she took an interest in the project by following the example of her parents, who both have a background in health care.

"I know that when I'm older, I want to do something for sick kids," Charlotte says. "I put a lot of love into those tic-tac-toe boards."

Each tic-tac-toe board contains the quote, "Look into the future, not the past." Charlotte says that's a sentiment that she tries to

keep in mind, and she hopes to inspire pediatric patients to do the same.

"I hope that they can be happy and live by that saying, too."

Thanks to the generosity of the DMS community and beyond, 127 Jared Boxes were delivered to three local facilities: AHN Harmar, ACMH Hospital in Kittanning, and the Children's Home of Pittsburgh.

Ms. DeComo hopes that for the students, the project reinforced lessons that they'll continue to practice.

"Giving back and helping others in need is so important," she says. "For those who have never had a hospital stay, I hope it opened their eyes to that reality and what a difference they can make."







# **FCAHS & DMS POLAR PLUNGE TEAM** TOPS IN STATE

t was a toasty 32 degrees on February 24 when a group of Fox Chapel Area High School and Dorseyville Middle School students took to the pool to raise money for the 2023 Cool Schools Polar Plunge at Acrisure Stadium. In the end, thanks in part to a matching donation from the Kramer family, the Fox Chapel Area team raised \$30,558 for the Fox Chapel Area School District Special Olympics Unified Sports teams, which promote inclusion through competitive experiences. The Fox Chapel Area students raised the most of any school in Pennsylvania.

This was the first time DMS students participated in the Polar Plunge. Sixth-grader Miles McCarthy said he enjoyed being part of the event.

"I liked jumping in the water and helping friends," Miles says.

Seventh-grader Ruby Rowley agrees. "It's important to participate in fundraising events like this to spread awareness of the cause, raise money for it, and create a community of supporters."

Sixth-grader Adelynn Hunter encourages her friends to take advantage of these fun opportunities while they can.

"You are only in sixth grade one time, and before you know it, you are in college, and then an adult, so take the opportunities to have fun and help others while you still can," she says.





This was Fox Chapel Area High School sophomore Marin Cusano's second year to take the plunge. She prepared by wearing her Batman mask and cape. After jumping, she jokingly told her friend, junior Sydney Schutzman, "That was terrible!", referring to the brutally cold water, following up by saying she would be jumping again next year.

Like her friend, Sydney agrees that the water was cold, but says it's worth it to raise money for Unified Sports.

"All kids should be able to feel the joy of competing and training hard for a sport," Sydney says, recalling the times she's seen Marin succeed in Unified Bocce and Unified Track. "Sports are something I believe all kids should be able to compete in, and as someone who loves to play any sport, I want to do my best to allow everyone to participate in the sports I love, which is what we accomplish each year by fundraising and participating in the Polar Plunge."









# **EARLY GRADUATES** CELEBRATE FUTURE

ox Chapel Area High School graduated its first official Class of 2023 during its annual early commencement ceremony in January.

During the ceremony, Lead Principal Dr. Michael Hower urged the students to look around them at those who came to support them.

"You officially have the first standing-room-only graduating class," he said with a smile. "Everybody is here to celebrate you."

Superintendent Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac was also on hand to formally accept the class, and she said that doing so is one of the most exciting things that she gets to do as a superintendent.

"We are really proud of you. We are also proud of what you will do in the future," she said, and then reminded them that, "You will always have a home in the Fox Chapel Area School District."

The plans for Fox Chapel Area's first graduating Class of 2023 include furthering their education, beginning their careers, traveling, and, as one student said, "just getting a jump start on life."

Perhaps new graduate Jack Visco summed up the day perfectly by saying, "It's a little rainy out, but it's a great day to graduate!"

The early graduates were Roman Agurs, Halina Bell, Grace Coleman, Thomas De San Martin, Ella DiClaudio, Collin Donaldson, Zachary Friedberg, Keeley Graham, Kayin Grisham, Ashlee Johnson, Tyler Lawton, Nathaniel Merriman, Nabeel Raza, Rabia Shay, Colten Snow, Giavona Spadafora, Zachary Sullivan, Persefanie Teaderman, Jack Visco, Emma Vlahos, Faith Wheeler, and Addison Wong.







# O'HARA ELEMENTARY STUDENTS HONOR SCHOOL BOARD

'Hara Elementary School students honored the Fox Chapel Area School Board during School Director Recognition Month in January.

Seven student council members put together a presentation that included a recording of third-grade students singing a winter song. In addition, each board member was presented with a mini canvas featuring a heart painted by the students.

Prior to presenting the mini canvas art gifts, fifth-grader Owen Kampner told the board that 28 members of the O'Hara student council worked together on the project, inspired by artist Jim Dine. Fourth-graders painted the hearts on the canvases, and the fifth-graders outlined them.

"We painted the backgrounds and used a dry-brush technique to paint around a heart to make it pop. We are so thankful for the heart you put into FCASD," Owen told the board.

Third-grader Eavan Felker thanked the school board for making important decisions for the district.

"We appreciate all of the time you take to support us," she said. "We know you volunteer your time, so we wanted to show our thankfulness."

Third-grader Quinn Filipek added, "You make a difference in schools and make them special."

Other presenters included fifth-grader Brian Xu and third-graders Mayar Aladsani, Lillian Haselkorn, and Sarah Mobley.













# O'HARA STUDENTS CRACK THE CASE OF ZERO THE HERO

t was the 100th day of school, and some O'Hara kindergarten students did not know what great mystery awaited them. When they arrived, they found out they had to find Zero the Hero, who was kidnapped by Agent 99. But where could he be?

In looking for a new way to celebrate the milestone day, teacher Kaylee Krepps came across the idea of a spy mystery. Classrooms were magically transformed into spy labs, and, in true detective fashion, some of the students donned hats, mustaches, and trench coats. Some carried magnifying glasses. There was even a ransom note. In order to rescue Zero the Hero, they had to complete missions all revolving around the number 100.

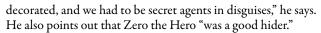
How would the students find Zero the Hero? By bowling to 100, using invisible ink to write numbers to 100, using engineering skills to build a structure using 100 cups, counting by 10s to 100, and drawing what they would look like in 100 years. Clues were all around the school, and the students had to put the clue words they found together in order to find where Zero the Hero was hiding.

Kindergarten student Eliza Boy says she and her classmates had to work hard to find Zero the Hero.

"We didn't think he was anywhere! We had to work on top-secret missions to find out where our next clue was," Eliza says. "It made us proud when we found Zero the Hero because we worked so hard. He was saved because of us! When the class found Zero the Hero, we cheered and shouted 'Hooray!' "

According to kindergartner Jian Kim, all of the 100th day activities were "really fun."

"The whole classroom was



"The kids absolutely loved this experience," says kindergarten

teacher Emily Suchevich. "The students were engaged throughout the entire day and enthusiastically completed the hands-on, collaborative activities. They could hardly wait to crack the case!"

The best part, according to Ms. Suchevich, was seeing the students learn in such an engaging way.

"They learned the value of collaboration and persistence while working in groups to complete many of the missions, and they became engineers when they worked in teams to build a structure," she says. "Most importantly, they were able to experience first-hand how rewarding and fun learning can be."

And, yes. Zero the Hero was rescued and the students rated the day a perfect 10!







# STUDENTS' EFFORTS AID AFRICAN VILLAGES





nspired by a novel, fifth-graders across the Fox Chapel Area School District recently completed a project to make life better for a nation halfway around the world.

After reading "A Long Walk to Water" in their enriched English language arts (ELA) classes, students, their classmates, and their teachers embarked on the Iron Giraffe Challenge to benefit Water for South Sudan, a nonprofit that helps to ensure sustainable access to clean water and hygiene training for villages in the war-ravaged country. The novel, by Linda Sue Park, intertwines the real-life experience of Water for South Sudan founder Salva Dut, who escaped civil war in South Sudan in the 1980s, and the fictional story of Nya, a young village girl that spends hours each day fetching water for her family.

Through a series of fundraising activities spearheaded by the enriched ELA students, the elementary schools raised more than \$2,200 districtwide to support Water for South Sudan.

"Students immediately wanted to participate as soon as we watched a TED Talk and live-stream video of Salva Dut and Linda Sue Park during culminating activities to the novel," says Kerr Elementary gifted support teacher Carli Hackett. "The students went on the website on their own and started sharing collection ideas. They remained excited the whole way through the planning process and into the collection. They were even willing to give up recess to see their vision through."

"I was very moved by the enthusiasm of the Hartwood fifth-grade teachers and students to participate in our cause," adds Erin Wetherill, gifted support teacher at Hartwood Elementary. "The enriched ELA students created a slideshow and presentation that showcased the hardships and the reality of the people that live in South Sudan, thus making it real and relatable for our students, many of whose lives are very different from the characters in the novel. Our goal was \$250, and I was blown away by the amount of support that poured in from families, students, and staff. Fox Chapel is a very special place where generosity, kindness, and compassion are abundant."



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– Erin Wetherill Hartwood Elementary School Teacher

At least one student realized a benefit in addition to helping those in need 7,000 miles from Pittsburgh.

"Sometimes helping other people can help yourself," says Hartwood fifth-grader Sarah Sejvar.



# HIGH SCHOOL HOSTS BLACK MALE LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

n honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Fox Chapel Area High School's Black Student Union (BSU) hosted a Black Male Leadership Summit on January ■ 19. The speakers, all influential Black community leaders, included past Fox Chapel Area High School assistant principal Howard Bullard, former University of Pittsburgh football player Cameron Saddler, and Aliquippa Mayor Dwan Walker. Fox Chapel Area High School graduates William Generett III (who helped found the Fox Chapel Area High School BSU) and Carrington Vaughn also participated in the event.

Topics addressed included the unique strength of Black male leaders, the Black male perspective, and developing a sense of community.

According to junior Safiyyah Muhina, the BSU executive chair, activities such as this are important because they allow everyone of all backgrounds to be exposed to Black excellence.

"I hope students, especially Black males, gained a sense of pride," she says. "But as for everyone, I hope they learned new things about what it means to be a Black leader."

Senior Roman Mason, student government president who also served as the event moderator, hopes the forum was impactful for students.

"A lot of us are privileged, and many don't even realize it," he says. "The speakers opened up my eyes to how other people live and to understand that there's another world out there."

According to Fox Chapel Area High School's BSU sponsor, teacher Shannon Finley, it is important to build awareness of students' broad array of career opportunities.



"I hope the students are inspired to use their gifts and talents to lead the charge in whatever it is they are called to do. There are so many students with talent



and knowledge, and I hope this allows them to see how this will help them become successful leaders. There were businessmen, politicians, coaches, athletes, students, and social justice activists sitting in the room, all sharing how they can come together from different backgrounds and lead. I hope my students are able to one day do the same."

# DISTRICTWIDE TELETHON RAISES NEARLY \$96,000



ox Chapel Area School District held its 33rd annual telethon December 22, raising \$95,863. This brings the total money raised by Fox Chapel Area students and staff to more than \$1,121,493 for various local and regional charities.

The telethon raised money for the local organization Fox Families Care and involved students from all six schools in the district. Student, teacher, parent, and community representatives participated in the telethon by making donations. A broadcast of the telethon can be watched on the Swift Fox Media YouTube Channel at <a href="https://www.youtube.com/@SwiftFoxMedia">www.youtube.com/@SwiftFoxMedia</a>.

The telethon was coordinated by the Fox Chapel Area High School Student Government and the digital media production students of the high school, who plan and produce the event.

Fox Families Care is an organization that works to bridge the gap between the needs and resources of children and families in the Fox Chapel Area School District. The group invests in the needs of local children and works directly with the district in conjunction with other strategic community partners.

Donations were generously matched through December 23 by JENNMAR, Tamco Inc., Norman Ray Trust, and the Cleveland Family Foundation.









## UNIFIED HACKATHON BOLSTERS INCLUSIVI

hanks to the efforts of a Fox Chapel Area High School senior, inclusivity opportunities are continuing to extend beyond social and athletic events and into the realm of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

"For my generation, computing skills, including basic computer operation, computational thinking, and programming, have become a necessity," says Arvind Seshan, who organized a Unified Hackathon held at the Carnegie Science Center in December. The hackathon joined students with and without disabilities in competition. "The program teaches the basics of computer usage to those who have not been exposed to computers. Those who are more familiar learn computational problem-solving and programming/mechanical skills. By appealing to and engaging kids at all skill levels, a Unified STEM program also creates a valuable collaboration opportunity because it allows more skilled students to instruct and communicate concepts to others. It helps students who start with less technical skills realize that they, too, can contribute in meaningful ways."

More than 55 students and volunteers from 13 schools in Western Pennsylvania registered for the event. Volunteers included undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty members from Carnegie Mellon University; graduate students from the University of Pittsburgh; staff from the Allegheny Intermediate Unit; and Adam Goode, a member of the Fox Chapel Area School Board who is a site reliability engineer at Google.

When students arrived in the morning, they were introduced to the theme of "smart homes" during the keynote address by Dr. Hope Chidziwisano from Carnegie Mellon University, who spoke on the use of technology in the home to solve societal problems, as well as some unintended consequences of the technology. Students then split into groups, selected a problem, and built and programmed a prototype using micro:bits, which are pocket-sized computers with an LED light display, buttons, sensors, and input/output features that, when programmed,



allow it to be interactive. Entries were judged based on problem selection, coding, prototype, presentation skills, and teamwork/ inclusion.

"Inclusion was worth just as much as other categories on the rubric, as the goal of the event was to make sure that all students contributed to a team," Arvind says. "Projects ranged from detecting intruders to automatic plant watering systems to automatic night lights."

While he will be moving on from Fox Chapel Area upon graduation in June, Arvind says the Unified Hackathon is here

"With our pilot year now over, the goal is to host a Unified Hackathon at the Carnegie Science Center annually," he says. "The collaboration with the Carnegie Science Center provides Fox Chapel Area with the unique opportunity to grow both the Unified Hackathon and Unified Robotics programs, and get more traction for them. We now have all the equipment needed in the district to successfully run both in future years. With collaboration, attention, and adaptation, we can make STEM for everyone."

# FOX CHAPEL AREA STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

ork continues on a new strategic plan, and the state-required comprehensive plan, for the Fox Chapel Area School District, with input from multiple stakeholder groups.

Several steps in the process have already been completed, including:

- In January, the district surveyed members of the school community to gather information regarding the district's current vision, mission, values, core values, and beliefs, as well as other major areas of focus.
- Also in January, the district established four subcommittees that met in January, February, and March to inform the process.
  - The overall Steering Committee engaged in dialogue regarding mission, vision, and values.
  - The Learning and Teaching Committee explored induction and professional development to support the staff and curricular outcomes.
  - The Supports for Students Committee provided information to inform the district's work with special education and intervention and enrichment, as well as school counseling.
  - The Community Engagement Committee discussed district communication and how to help students, families, staff, and the community to be involved in the district.

• The district hosted 90-minute virtual focus groups throughout the month of March to further elaborate on the concepts that emerged from the district's strategic plan survey and subcommittee meetings. The focus groups engaged a wide variety of stakeholders and voices from the community at large, and will further inform the development of the strategic plan. The focus groups were

open to all residents and business representatives in the community, as well as all parents/guardians and staff members.

> • The district will use the information from the survey, subcommittees, and focus groups to determine major areas of focus for the next 3-5 years.

The district will create goals in each of these major areas for the first year of the strategic plan and outline possible future directions. The district will regularly report on its strategic plan and set new goals to continue its progress.

Work for the state-required comprehensive plan is being completed along with the strategic plan. The Pennsylvania Department of Education requires all school districts to complete a comprehensive plan every three years. Due to some changes in the law and new requirements for school districts, the district's comprehensive plan deadline was extended to the fall of 2023.

For more information about the strategic plan/comprehensive plan, including the survey data results, please visit www.fcasd.edu/2023-comprehensive-plan.





# VYING AT NATIONALS LEAVES CHEER SQUAD WANTING MORE

rom the moment the Foxes' varsity cheer squad started practicing in August, they were singularly focused on one goal: becoming the first group in school history to participate in the most prestigious high school cheer competition in the country, the National High School Cheerleading Championship. Months later when they got the nod to contend, there wasn't a dry eye in the room.

For senior Kathryn Billings, preparing for and then making the trip to Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Florida, for the February 10-12 competition, was the high point of her four years with the team.

"When we first started practicing with this group of girls in the summer, I could tell everyone was willing to put in the work to accomplish some of the hardest stunts we have ever tried," Kathryn says. "We practiced many hours and competed at many competitions to get the most experience we could since most of our team had never competed before. We all had the same end goal and worked together as a team and as friends to achieve it."

They put that energy to work, starting off with the basics and then continually adding more difficult stunts, jumps, and pyramid formations throughout the year. They hit some of their most difficult aerial tricks, the kind that draw more points, just two weeks before nationals. Some of those step-up maneuvers, a single leg elevated liberty stunt in an extension, and the full up, a stunt in which the flyer executes a 360-degree turn, were additions this season. The girls credit their success to not only many extra hours of practice and repetition, but also because more cheerleaders are spending time in the weight room to gain strength.

Sophia River, a junior side base who was previously a flyer and has filled four different positions at one time or another, says, "Our team's stunt groups have grown so much since the beginning of the school year. It amazes me to see the significant changes and improvements in stunts since my freshman year. There is always room for growth and learning, so I am excited to see what we have in store for next year!"

For flyer Trista Jackson, her freshman year with the squad was better than she imagined. "When I found out we made it, it made me realize that all of the things you feel are impossible, are possible, if you want it enough to put in the hard work. This experience has inspired me in many ways. It has made me want to work even harder."

That seems to be the sentiment of the entire team, as well as their coaches, Aleta Balcer, assistant Shelley Zottola, and volunteer Krista Zottola.

"Everyone is already super excited for next year," says coach Balcer. "Watching other really good teams compete was a good experience for us, and we learned a lot. Now we want to work on more advanced stunting earlier in the season, expand upon the stunts we are doing now, and then add more longer stunt sequences.

"I'm really proud of what we're doing. We never had been able to do this level of difficulty in the past and I hope we continue to grow like this. I am so proud of them!"

Members of the 2022-2023 Fox Chapel Area High School competition squad are seniors Kathryn Billings, Anna Li, and Isabella Stipetich; juniors Fiona Brown, Mia Pietropaolo, and Sophia River; sophomores Maurena Cilenti, Mary Ann Frauenholz, Gretchen Shelestak, and Alexandra Vita; and freshmen Catherine Conway, Trista Jackson, and Emma Kurtz.

# MENTAL FITNESS A FOCUS ALONGSIDE PHYSICAL READINESS

randon Peifer has been instructing students for 19 years now, both in the classroom and as a nationally recognized strength and conditioning coach known for his innovative approaches to youth fitness. In those settings, students have opened up to him. He's had conversations about the issues they believe are preventing them from reaching their goals in sports, school, and everyday life, such as anxiety, expectations, perfectionism, and a lack of self-confidence and focus, to name a few.

When Mr. Peifer heard about the Little
Bets grants funded by the Pittsburghbased Grable Foundation, he knew the
mental training and peak performance
sessions would help students and athletes alike overcome the
many challenges they face.

"All of this is really about building relationships with kids and providing a safe environment for them to try new things and learn from those experiences," Mr. Peifer says, while stressing that the program is open to the entire student body of Fox Chapel Area High School.

It focuses on three approaches to holistic wellness – weight room and fitness through the ongoing school-sponsored strength and conditioning program, nutrition counseling, and positive mental training.

Donato Fanelle, a mental training and peak performance specialist for KPEX Consulting, is conducting five sessions as part of the program. The intent is to give students the tools they need to develop positive habits and decision-making skills that will help them become more resilient and prepared for life. Each open discussion session is based upon the topics the students identified as being most important to them: relaxation and energy management, concentration and focus, self-talk, and visualization.

Nutritionist Leslie Bonci, formerly a consultant to the Pittsburgh Steelers who now works with the Kansas City Chiefs, also talked to students about their nutritional needs and requirements to achieve optimal mental and physical success.

Junior Ben DeMotte, the Foxes' starting quarterback and a standout baseball player, says he is learning how much of an edge nutrition can give him in performance on the field and the weight room, and how important his thoughts are when he's on the field.

"I learned from Mr. Fanelle to have a neutral mindset," says Ben. "Everyone always says, 'Just stay positive,' and there is good to that, but really staying neutral and having the mindset that, 'Here is our goal, what are we going to do to accomplish it?' is most important. I also learned about 'flushing it,' something to



help with adversity. It's part of every sport, but how you respond to those mistakes and adversity, and moving on from them is what's important."

Junior Lucy Rygelski is a member of the girls golf team. With golf being such a game of the mind, she has done a lot of reading on her own about mental toughness.

"I am interested in anything that would strengthen my game," Lucy says. "It isn't just about the good days. In golf, you lose more than you win, so you learn early to enjoy the journey. Coach Peifer has taught me the importance of being a good athlete and a strong and balanced athlete, both physically and mentally. Strength is as important as nutrition, which is just as important as mental health."

For Ben, the efforts to help students reach peak performance and mental awareness is about getting an edge and "trusting the process." He adds, "It's about having the same mindset going into every workout, practice, and game, and being able to perform to the best of my abilities."

Mr. Peifer reports the sessions have received positive feedback from students and athletes. Coaches at the high school are also very supportive of the program because it reinforces and expands upon important topics that they cannot address as thoroughly or expertly as the professionals, he says.

Mr. Peifer and Fox Chapel Area School District Athletic Director Michael O'Brien hope to repeat the series next year.

"When Brandon approached me about this concept, I immediately thought it was a great idea," Mr. O'Brien says. "Of course, we always want our athletic teams to be very successful competitors, but our first priority isn't always the number of wins and losses. High school athletics is about so much more than that. A big part of our job is to teach our student-athletes the life skills they need to be mentally prepared both on the field and in life. This program will help our students become more well-rounded individuals."



All Fox Chapel Area School District families and residents welcome!

# Community Safety Event

Saturday, April 22, 2023

10 a.m. - 2 p.m. **Aspinwall Municipal Parking Lot** 241 Freeport Road, Aspinwall



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(while supplies last)

**Bike helmets** Bike rides with police Bike repairs Car seat checks Food

Sponsored by the Fox Chapel Area School District & its school resource officers; the boroughs of Aspinwall. Blawnox, Fox Chapel & Sharpsburg; Indiana & O'Hara townships; and all local municipal police departments

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For more information:

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Officer Joseph Kozarian (412) 967-2448 joseph\_kozarian@fcasd.edu

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# SCHOOL DISTRICT TAX BILLS GET NEW LOOK

he Fox Chapel Area School District has updated its tax collection software, and tax bills will have a new look this summer.

Another difference is that the initial tax bill will

Another difference is that the initial tax bill will not come with multiple copies for those wishing to pay in installments. Anyone wishing to pay in installments will pay their first flat-rate payment, and they will then receive a reminder

in the mail with their additional payment coupons. The tax bill will still have one coupon to mail in, and one coupon for residents to keep for their files.

The due dates for the tax bills will remain the same. As a reminder, if paying the bill in full, the due dates are: August 31, 2023, at a 2% discount; October 31, 2023, at the flat rate; and December 31, 2023, at a 10% penalty.

Bill #: 0123 Tray #: 1 Bundle #: 1 Sequence #: 123

DISTRICT TAX COLLECTOR 456 COLLECTOR ST PITTSBURGH PA 12345-6789 PRESORTED FIRST - CLASS MAIL U.S. POSTAGE PAID READING, PA PERMIT NO. 221

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

\*\*\*\*\*\*\* 5-DIGIT 12345

#### ՖիլմաՍեիլի||իլի||իլիՍերկ|||իլիՍերկ||Սեհիիլդ

PIN: 12-3456-78-90-1234-

JOHN DOE TAXPAYER 123 SAMPLE ST PITTSBURGH PA 12345-6789

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO:

DISTRICT TAX COLLECTOR 456 COLLECTOR ST PITTSBURGH, PA 12345

PROPERTY INFORMATION: PIN: 12-3456-78-90-1234-CLASS: R-RESIDENTIAL

123 SAMPLE ST .34 ACR XX 1234 Y 5678

TAXPAYER: JOHN DOE TAXPAYER 123 SAMPLE STREET PITTSBURGH PA 12345-6789

FOX CHAPELAREA SD - DISTRICT 2022 SCHOOL REAL ESTATE TAX BILL BILL # 0123 TWP BUILDING: 456 COLLECTOR ST, PITTSBURGH OFFICE HOURS: 20.42880 Mills 120,000 Property Tax \$2,451,43 Tax Relief Exclusion Information Homestead 108,32 Net Assessment Bill Date 07/01/2022 2% Discount Flat 10% Penalty DURING THIS PERIOD PAY THIS AMOUNT ==> 2.168.77 2,213.03 2,235,16 electing Installment Pla or if selecting Installment Plan ==> FIRST INSTALLMENT 737.67 August 31, 202



#### **INSTALLMENT INSTRUCTIONS**

1. The installment option allows for the payment of the flat tax rate in three (3) equal installments, with the payment amounts due on or before the dates as listed:

First Installment	737.67	August 31, 2022
Second Installment	737.68	October 31, 2022
Third Installment	737.68	November 30, 2022

- 2. Payment of the first installment must be made on or before August 31, 2022, to indicate your intention to pay the taxes on the installment plan.
- 3. After receiving the first payment on or before August 31, 2022, the remaining installment coupons will be mailed to you.
- 4. Installment payments are made in the same manner as if paying the bill in full (either mailed or in person).
- 5. Failure to make any one of the installment payments by the due date stated above will result in a penalty of ten percent (10.00%) on each such late installment.
- 6. A taxpayer who is delinquent by more than ten days on more than two installment payments shall be ineligible for the installment payment option in the following school fiscal year.
- 7. Payment of all installments prior to August 31, 2022 **DOES NOT** entitle you to the two percent (2.00%) discount.



## 2022-2023 FACTS & FIGURES

#### 2022-2023 STUDENT ENROLLMENT

#### **ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS (K-GRADE 5) SECONDARY SCHOOLS (GRADES 6-12)** Total District Enrollment . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 4,158

#### CLASS OF 2022

The total number of graduates in the Fox Chapel Area High School Class of 2022 was 330. The percentages of 2022 graduates entering some type of postsecondary education were as follows:

Four-Year Colleges	235 or 71%
Two-Year Colleges/Other	. 36 or 11%
Total Continuing Education	271 or 82%

#### **AVERAGE SAT SCORES**

	Evidence-Based		
	Reading & Writing	Math	
Class of 2022	608	. 613	
Class of 2021	611	. 618	
Class of 2020	617	. 619	
Class of 2019	608	. 616	
Class of 2018	604	600	

A total of 249 members (75%) of the Class of 2022 took the SAT during their junior or senior year. The national average scores for all 2022 graduates taking the test were 529 in evidence-based reading and writing and 521 in math.

#### PROFESSIONAL STAFF STATISTICS

NUMBER OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF
Elementary
Secondary
Total
MASTER'S OR DOCTORATE DEGREE OR
EQUIVALENT
Elementary
Secondary
AVERAGE YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE
Elementary
Secondary 22 Years

#### THE COMMUNITY

The Fox Chapel Area School District is located in a dynamic suburban community about 11 miles northeast of downtown Pittsburgh. The district includes six municipalities (the boroughs of Aspinwall, Blawnox, Fox Chapel, and Sharpsburg, and the townships of Indiana and O'Hara) representing a wide range of social, economic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. The schools provide a comprehensive array of educational opportunities to serve the needs of this diverse population and to meet the high expectations of its residents. The district encompasses an area of about 36 square miles with approximately 29,000 residents.

#### THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Fox Chapel Area School District is a nationally recognized, award-winning school district that produces high achievement in students, with a motivated and professional faculty and an involved and caring administration. There are six schools in the district.

#### VISION

The Fox Chapel Area School District will be recognized as one of the top-performing public school districts in the nation. Toward that end we will:

- Challenge each student to reach their maximum potential level of achievement.
- Provide scholarly experiences that deepen understanding, creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, innovation, and collaboration.
- •Provide an environment that promotes inclusiveness and embraces diversity.
- •Foster a culture that encourages student involvement in the community and raises awareness of civic responsibilities.
- •Build relationships with postsecondary institutions, businesses, and industry to create and sustain programs that prepare students to excel beyond high school.

#### MISSION STATEMENT

The Fox Chapel Area School District exists to maximize student learning, achievement, and development.

#### **CORE VALUES**

- Respect
- Responsibility
- Integrity

## 2023-2024 Fox Chapel Area School District Calendar

August 2023				
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
		I	I	I
14	15	16	17	18
P	15 <i>FC</i>	P/C	P	P
21	22	23	24	25
<i>FC</i> 28				
28	29	30	31	

September 2023				
				(4)
X				(8)
4	5	6	7	8
				(13) <b>15</b>
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	(18) <b>22</b>
$\boldsymbol{X}$				(22) <b>29</b>
25	26	27	28	29

	October 2023					
			_	(27)		
2	3	4	5	6		
		<b>E</b> /+		(32)		
9	10	11	12	13		
				(37)		
16	17	18	19	20		
				<i>E/C</i> (42) 27		
23	24	25	26	27		
30	31					

November 2023					
				<b>R</b> (47)	
		1	2	3	
E/CONF	CONF/+			(51)	
6	7	8	9	10	
				(56)	
13	14	15	16	17	
		E/+(59) 22	$\boldsymbol{X}$	$\boldsymbol{X}$	
20	21	22	23	24	
$\boldsymbol{X}$					
27	28	29	30		

December 2023				
				(63)
				1
	_		_	(68)
4	5	6	7	(70)
	40	40	4.4	(73) <b>15</b>
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	(78) <b>22</b>
18 <i>X</i>	X	X	X	X
25	26	27	28	29

January 2024				
<i>X</i> 1	2	3	4	(82) <b>5</b>
8	9	10	11	(87) <b>12</b>
<b>P</b> 15	16	17	(90) <b>18</b>	<i>FC</i> 19
22	23	24	25	<b>R</b> (95) <b>26</b>
29	30	31		

February 2024				
				(100)
			11	(105)
5	6	7	8	(105) 9
12	13	14	15	(110) <b>16</b>
<u>P</u>	10	17	10	(114)
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	

	March 2024					
				(119)		
				1		
				(124)		
4	5	6	7	8		
				(129)		
11	12	13	14	15		
				<b>E/C</b> (134)		
18	19	20	21	22		
$\boldsymbol{X}$	$\boldsymbol{X}$	X	$\boldsymbol{X}$	$\boldsymbol{X}$		
25	26	27	28	29		

April 2024					
1	2	3	4	<b>R</b> (139) <b>5</b>	
8	9	10	11	(144) 12	
15	16	17	18	(149) <b>19</b>	
22	23	24	25	(154) 26	
29	30	•			

May 2024					
				(159)	
		1	2	3	
				(164)	
6	7	8	9	10	
				(169)	
13	14	15	16	17	
				(174)	
20	21	22	23	24	
X		K/E			
27	28	29	30	31	

June 2024					
			<b>E/C</b> (182)	FC	
3	4	5	6	7	
P	P/C			R	
<b>P</b> 10	11	12	13	14	
17	18	19	20	21	
24	25	26	27	28	

1 <sup>st</sup> Grading Period – October 27 – 42 days
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grading Period – January 18 – 48 days
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grading Period – March 22 – 44 days
4 <sup>th</sup> Grading Period – June 6 – 48 days
November 6 – Elem/Sec Early Dismissal 8
Parent Teacher Conference Day

November 7 - Parent Teacher Conference Day (No School for Students) June 6 - Last Day for Students = 182 Days (unless makeup days are required) June 11 - Last Day for Professional Staff = 195 Days (unless makeup days are required)

8/16-18 New Teacher Induction Days 8/21, 24, 25 Professional Development Days 8/22 & 28 Full Clerical Days Professional Development/Clerical Day 8/23 8/29 First Day for Students 9/4 Labor Day 9/25 Fall Break 10/11 Elem/Sec Early Dismissal Elem/Sec Early Dismissal & Clerical Day 10/27 11/6 Elem/Sec Early Dismissal & Parent Teacher Conference Day Parent Teacher Conference Day 11/7 11/22 Elem/Sec Early Dismissal

Thanksgiving Break

Martin Luther King Jr. Day & PD Day

Winter Break

11/23-27

12/25-1/1

First Semester

Second Semester Full Clerical Day 1/19 2/19 Presidents' Day & PD Day Elem/Sec Early Dismissal & Clerical Day 3/22 3/25-29 Spring Break 5/27 Memorial Day Kennywood Day (Tentative) & 5/29 Early Dismissal 6/6 Last Day for Students Elem/Sec Early Dismissal & Clerical Day 6/7 Full Clerical Day 6/9 Commencement

6/10

6/11

New Teacher Induction Day Clerical Day Full Clerical Day (No School for Students) Professional Development (PD) Day (No School for Students) Elem/Sec Early Dismissal Holiday/Break/No School  $\boldsymbol{X}$ Act 80 Day **CONF** Parent Teacher Conference Day Kennywood Day (Tentative) K

Report Cards Available

R

April 22-May 3 shaded areas indicate PSSA testing windows. January 3-17 and May 13-24 shaded areas indicate Keystone Exams testing windows. Refer to the FCASD website (www.fcasd.edu) for specific grades tested in each time frame.

Professional Development Day

Professional Development/Clerical Day

Makeup days, if necessary, will be added on to the end of the school year, beginning June 7, 2024. Please consult building and website calendars for building-level early dismissal dates, school activities, and other special events.



# FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT DIRECTORY

#### **District Administration**

611 Field Club Road Pittsburgh, PA 15238 412/963-9600 www.fcasd.edu

Superintendent: Mary Catherine Reljac, Ed.D. Deputy Superintendent: David McCommons, Ed.D.

Business Manager: Kimberly Pawlishak

#### **District Resource Staff**

Executive Director of Elementary Education and Instruction: Ashley Constantine, Ed.D. Executive Director of Secondary Education and Instruction: Matthew Harris, Ed.D. Director of Special Education and Pupil Services:

Timothy Mahoney, Ed.D.

Executive Director of Instructional and Innovative Leadership: Megan Collett, Ed.D.

Director of Literacy: Dana Simile

Director of Student Achievement and Instructional Verification: Stephen Edwards, Ed.D.

Director of Ancillary Services: Daniel Breitkreutz Chief of School Police/School Safety and Security

Coordinator: Joseph Kozarian Director of Athletics: Michael O'Brien

Coordinator of Communications: Bonnie Berzonski Community Engagement Specialist: Jill Leonard

#### FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOLS

#### Fairview Elementary School

738 Dorseyville Road Pittsburgh, PA 15238 412/963-9315 Principal: Susan Kreit

#### **Hartwood Elementary School**

3730 Saxonburg Boulevard Pittsburgh, PA 15238 412/767-5396 Principal:

Rachel Fischbaugh, Ed.D.

#### **Kerr Elementary School**

341 Kittanning Pike Pittsburgh, PA 15215 412/781-4105 Principal: Paul Noro, Ed.D.

#### O'Hara Elementary School

115 Cabin Lane Pittsburgh, PA 15238 412/963-0333

Principal: Kristy Batis, Ed.D. Program Principal: Katelyn Toth

#### **Dorseyville Middle School**

3732 Saxonburg Boulevard Pittsburgh, PA 15238 412/767-5343 Principal: Jonathan Nauhaus Program Principal: Laura Miller, Ed.D.

#### Fox Chapel Area High School

611 Field Club Road Pittsburgh, PA 15238 412/967-2430 Lead Principal:

Michael Hower, Ed.D. Program Principal (A-L): Daniel Lentz, Ph.D. Program Principal (M-Z): John McGee, Ph.D.

#### RESOURCE PLANNING ADVISORY MEMBERS SOUGHT

The Fox Chapel Area School District is seeking residents interested in serving on the Resource Planning Advisory. This group is a financial planning advisory panel for the school district and meets two to four times a year. The group reviews financial information and advises the administration and school board. Interested residents should send a résumé via email to kathleen anuszek@fcasd.edu by May 1, 2023.

#### FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL BOARD

Kimberly Joi Andrews (2025 – Region III); Amy B. Cooper (2025 – Region I); Marybeth Dadd, President (2023 - Region III); Katie Findley (2023 - Region I); Ronald P. Frank, Vice President (2023 – Region II); Adam G. Goode (2025 – Region III); Eric G. Hamilton, Treasurer (2023 – Region I); Vanessa K. Lynch, Assistant Secretary (2023 – Region II); and Ariel Zych (2025 - Region II).

Region I covers all of Sharpsburg Borough and Wards 2, 3, and 4 of O'Hara Township; Region II covers Districts 2, 4, and 5 of Fox Chapel Borough and all of Indiana Township; and Region III covers all of Aspinwall Borough, Blawnox Borough, Wards 1 and 5 of O'Hara Township, and Districts 1 and 3 of Fox Chapel Borough.

For more information, visit www.fcasd.edu/schoolboard.

#### **COMPLIANCE STATEMENT**

The Fox Chapel Area School District is an equal rights and opportunity school district. The school district does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, creed, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ancestry, national origin, or handicap/disability. The district shall make reasonable accommodations for identified physical and mental impairments that constitute disabilities, consistent with the requirements of federal and state laws and regulations.

Additional information pertaining to civil rights, school district policies, and grievance procedures can be obtained by contacting the compliance officers listed below between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday-Friday. This notice is available from the compliance officers in large print, on audiotape, and in Braille.

Title IX: David P. McCommons, Ed.D.

(412/967-2456)

Section 504 and ADA: Timothy A. Mahoney, Ed.D.

(412/967-2435)

Fox Chapel Area School District Address:

> 611 Field Club Road Pittsburgh, PA 15238

# 50 Years of Star Power

The Fox Chapel Area High School musical celebrates 50 years.

BY NICOLE TAFE



ox Chapel Area High School celebrated the 50th year of wowing audiences with an annual school musical as the curtains rose on "Guys and Dolls" March 2-5.

In 1974, Fox Chapel Area High School held its first spring musical, "Bye Bye Birdie." Kathy Strohl Sutcliffe was the first producer and musical director at the school. She was the high school choir director at the time and wanted to bring one of her own high school experiences to the students of Fox Chapel Area. After speaking with the principal about the idea, she formed a production team that included other teachers and they worked to put on the first show.



Though the first production started with a sizable cast and student orchestra, the program has only continued to grow. "In the past 10 years, we've had as many as 150 students involved in a production," says current producer and musical director Benjamin Murray. "This year, we had about 130 students involved in the cast, pit orchestra, stage crew, hair, makeup and costume committees."

Murray has been the FCAHS choir director for the past 10 years, and for the past four years has been the musical's stage director as well. There is a large production team that assists him in making the magic happen, including production manager Stephanie Reilly, pit orchestra director Dennis Emert, choreographer Kathleen Fischerkeller, assistant director Cara Coulter, costume and props director Anne Englert, set designer/painter Mary Jo Montgomery, set builder Joe Gass and lighting director Eric Amsden.

Over time, the spring musical became a long-standing tradition at Fox Chapel Area. "One of my favorite memories from the past several years was when we did "The Music Man" in 2016, which follows the story of the character Harold Hill," Murray recalls. "It was the fifth time that Fox Chapel Area High School had performed this show. During the two-month rehearsal process, each of the four previous people who played Harold Hill in past productions reached out to me with a letter or words of congratulations to that year's students. The spring musical clearly had a profound impact on all these folks and the fact that after several years they still felt it necessary to reach out demonstrates the value that their experience had on their lives."



Lilly Adamo, senior stage manager for this year's production of "Guys and Dolls," also has fond memories of the special annual event. "I enjoy every part of the production, from the first day we find out what the musical is to the very last second of the last show," she says. "The relationships that we form are some of my strongest friendships. I participate because musicals are a huge part of my life and being a stage manager is something that made me appreciate them more."

Mia Lynch was this year's dance captain. "As a cast, we have had the opportunity to form a community in which we prioritize inclusion, hard work and friendships," she says. "I enjoy the week of the show the most because it is the single time where the entire production team comes together to create a work of art. Whether it be karaoke in the dressing rooms, dancing at the cast parties, or giving teary-eyed hugs on closing night, the musicals at Fox Chapel Area High School are something I will forever cherish."

Throughout the run of "Guys and Dolls," more than 100 FCAHS alumni attended the show, including two of the previous directors. On Saturday, March 4, a small reception was held prior to the evening show—about 40 alumni were in attendance.

"Every show has great memories!" says Murray. "I love the excitement that each group of students has after months of practice, and they finally see the show come together with every aspect." ■

FCAHS currently has several students pursuing musical theater and other theater-related fields, and has had former cast members in off-Broadway productions.

- Michael O'Steen (1980) "Meet Me in St. Louis" and "Starlight Express"
- Michelle O'Steen Vivona (1982) "Sweet Charity," "Anything Goes," "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying" and "Thoroughly Modern Millie"
- Gaeland Gilliland (1992) "Wicked," "Legally Blonde," "9-5," "Honeymoon in Vegas" and "SpongeBob"
- Anisha Nagarajan (2002) "Bombay Dreams" and "Company"
- \*Michael Mitnick (2002), Film and Stage Playwright -Stage: "Scotland, PA" (Roundabout Theatre Company), "Fly by Night" and "Mysterious Circumstances" (The Geffen Playhouse); Film: "The Current War" (dir. Alfonso Gomez-Rejon) and "The Giver" (dir. Phillip Noyce)
- Kirsten Bracken (2003) "Hairspray," "Jersey Boys," "Follies" and "Big Fish"
  - \* Michael Mitnick performed in many FCA musicals—starting as a middle school student. Although he's never been on the Broadway stage, his plays have been, and several of his movie scripts have appeared on the "big screen."



**FUN FACT:** 

"Guys and Dolls" and "The Music Man" have each been performed five times, tied for most frequent.

## **50 YEARS OF MUSICALS AT FCAHS**

1974 Bye Bye Birdie 1975 Guys and Dolls 1976 The Music Man 1977 Oklahoma! 1978 Hello Dolly 1979 Camelot 1980 Where's Charley? 1981 Bye Bye Birdie 1982 Babes in Arms 1983 No No Nanette 1984 The Music Man 1985 Oklahoma! 1986 Anything Goes 1987 Guys and Dolls 1988 Flower Drum Song

1989 Babes in Arms 1990 Plain & Fancy 1991 Bye Bye Birdie 1992 Annie 1993 Guys and Dolls 1994 The Boyfriend 1995 The Music Man 1996 Oklahoma! 1997 My Favorite Year 1998 No No Nanette 1999 Good News 2000 How to Succeed in Business Without **Really Trying** 

2002 Anything Goes 2003 Bye Bye Birdie 2004 Wizard of Oz (RSC) 2005 Seussical the Musical 2006 The Music Man 2007 My Favorite Year 2008 Thoroughly Modern Millie 2009 The Sound of Music 2010 Funny Girl 2011 Anything Goes 2012 How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying

2001 Fiddler on the Roof

2013 Guys and Dolls 2014 Beauty and the Beast 2015 Kiss Me, Kate 2016 The Music Man 2017 Into the Woods 2018 Shrek the Musical 2019 Les Misérables 2020 Legally Blonde the Musical 2021 Songs for a New World 2022 Seussical 2023 Guys and Dolls