

# IC The Creek

Indian Creek Local School District Newsletter

February 2024

## Unified Sports Scores Big at Basketball Game

Unified sports players hit the hardwood at Indian Creek High School as teens and deputies with the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office squared off on Feb. 16.

It was all in good fun as students from ICHS and the School of Bright Promise joined sheriff's officials in the gym for a special game. Unified sports combine individualized education (IEP) students with traditional students on blended teams with to promote inclusivity in such activities as flag football, basketball and soccer.

In the end, the unified sports team won by an impressive score of 44-37, but the cheers and smiles made it all the more enjoyable.

Tom Mort, school intervention specialist and unified sports advisor, shared his excitement over the matchup.

"That was just as good as the football game [the ICHS team played in November]," said Mort. "I'm so happy that people came to support them and the sheriff's deputies and School of Bright Promise students were contributing and making shots."

The ICHS team also had a chance to show off their new jerseys following a recent donation from the Cleveland Browns. The NFL team is a sponsor of unified sports in Ohio and supplied red and gold uniforms for football, basketball, soccer and track.

Deputy Matt Morgan, the school resource officer and captain of the ICHS team for the game, worked with Sheriff Fred Abdalla Jr. and helped his players practice each day to get ready for the event. Among Creek's players were MVP Brayden Stewart, who scored an impressive 16 points during the game, along with David Howell, Aiden Howard, James Donaldson, Ethan Starr, Jace Nett, Jomar Johnson, Timmy Christian, Hunter Allen and Sal Barcalow while Lucian Howell and Darian Starkey represented SBP. JCSO officials on hand were Capt. Tommy Koehnlein, Lt. Aaron Ellenberger and Deputies Brian Driscoll, Eric Lulla, Doug Viola and Zack Stackhouse. ICHS student



Indian Creek High School's Brayden Stewart goes in for a shot during a unified sports basketball game with the School of Bright Promise and Jefferson County Sheriff's Office on Feb. 16. ICHS' unified team ultimately won by a score of 44-37 with Stewart earning an impressive 16 points and the title of most valuable player. Also pictured looking on are, clockwise from left, Deputy Doug Viola, Lucian Howell, Aiden Howard, Darian Starkey, Deputy Zach Stackhouse, David Howell, Deputy Eric Lulla and Deputy Matt Morgan, the latter who is the school resource officer and captained the unified sports team.

Emma Castillo also rallied for the team along with cheerleaders Trista Simeral, Cara Vandeborne, Blissani Locke and Tessa Irwin.

*"That game energized everybody—the teachers, students and the kids that played. The feedback I've gotten has been one of the most positive things in my career and we want to keep building on it."*

**-ICHS Principal Louie Retton**

The sheriff's office led at halftime by a score of 25-19, but the unified sports team

eventually gained up on them and both teams tied at 37-37 before the Creek kids surpassed the JCSO team and won. But everyone involved saw the activity as a major win in the name of inclusivity and acceptance.

"We want to get our kids involved to the maximum extent that we can," said Dr. Georgia Pavlic-Roseberry, children's service director for the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities and School of Bright Promise. "This is very exciting for them and they've been counting the days. We're thankful to Steve Forte and all of the districts. It gives the kids an

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# ICMS, Hills Elementary Earn PBIS Awards

Two Indian Creek schools have been recognized for their achievements with Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.

Indian Creek Middle School and Hills Elementary received accolades from The Ohio Department of Education's PBIS Network and State Support Team 12 (SST-12). ICMS gained a Silver Award while Hills obtained a Bronze Award for 2022-23. The schools had to submit applications and provide evidence on a rubric under each category for consideration.

ICMS Principal Dr. Holly Minch-Hick said the school received the Bronze Award for 2019-20 and it was exciting to be recognized again.

"I am very proud of our staff for their hard work and implementation of our PBIS program over the last nine years. They deserve this recognition," she said. "Through the collaboration of the staff and our PBIS/Culture Team, we have been able to establish common and con-

sistent expectations throughout the building and teach the students the building expectations in a positive manner."

At Hills, teachers Alyssa Lollini and Erin Alloggia coordinated efforts and said they were thrilled to gain kudos from the state.

"We feel proud of this accomplishment and are excited for our stakeholders to have knowledge of the hard work and dedication that our staff puts into the positive culture and climate within our building," Lollini commented. "We are incredibly thankful to our PBIS team and very much appreciative of the staff support throughout the year long process."

She added that officials created a digital binder of photos, classroom and building rules and expectations, documentation of interventions and supports, meeting agendas, social-emotional learning lesson plans and other information to the state, plus they worked with the Jefferson County Educational Service Center to complete the Tiered Fidelity Inventory for Tier I sup-

ports.

"We would like to thank Ron Sismondo and Amber Fomenko [of JCESC] for spending their day at Hills Elementary to complete the Tiered Fidelity Inventory Walkthrough Tool and giving the PBIS team feedback on our interventions and supports. We would also like to thank Scott Eldredge and Charles Tucker from SST Region 12 for the training opportunities (both in person and virtual) and their availability to answer any and all questions throughout the process," Lollini said.

School representatives were recognized during the annual Ohio Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports and Ohio Leadership Advisory Council Showcase in January. The state awarded 42 gold awards, 98 silver awards, 299 bronze awards and 17 district awards for quality and fidelity of PBIS implementation. Meanwhile, the awards may be given by SST officials during a future Indian Creek Board of Education meeting.

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opportunity to be with their home districts."

Forte, who serves as activities coordinator for JCBDD and coordinator for the Jefferson County Special Olympics, agreed.

"It's more than I imagined," he added. "The significance of this is the sheriff's office and Bright Promise kids are at the home school. Our hope is one day the kids will come back to their home districts. This is the beginning."

Even team member Lucian Powell was pleased.

"It was good and I won," Powell said.

"It was really good," added Brayden Stewart.

ICHS Principal Louie Retton was thankful to Mort, the JCSCO and everyone involved for making it so successful.

"The timing of the Unified Sports basketball game couldn't have been better," Retton continued. "That game energized everybody—the teachers, students and the kids that played. I want to give a huge thanks to Bright Promise and the sheriff's office and all of the officers who participated. Our students were fantastic on the court and in the stands and Emma and the cheerleaders cheered and danced at halftime. The feedback I've gotten has been one of the most positive things in my career and we want to keep building on it. Special thanks to Mr. Mort because his passion for this has been the engine behind it and is what's making it go."



ICHS student Emma Castillo rallied the crowd as a unified sports cheerleader and performed a halftime dance with her group during the game.

"It went pretty well," said Deputy Morgan. "Our kids played hard and it was exciting to see them play. We're fortunate to have people who can make it happen."

And Sheriff Abdalla was grateful to Indian Creek for the opportunity.

"What wonderful event," he said. "This is a perfect example of getting students out to support the athletes, and I thank the Indian Creek School District and Tom Mort for providing this."

This marks the second time the school hosted a unified event, with Creek kids taking on Steubenville Big Red High School this fall for a Turkey Bowl flag

football game. Plans are to hold at least three basketball games and more football games, plus there are hopes to have track and eventually bocce ball events. Mort has been organizing the program with collaboration from Steve Forte as well as Kristi Peters of Unified Champion Schools.

"We hope to have four or five games for football and also play football, basketball and track and collaborate on bocce ball with the School of Bright Promise. I can't wait for track and to go full on with football next year," Mort concluded. "This is the most kids we've had involved and we're going to keep it going."

# ICBOE Discusses Stadium Improvements

The Robert Kettlewell Memorial Stadium will be getting some upgrades after the Indian Creek Local Board of Education advanced plans on Feb. 15.

Officials took action during the session at Indian Creek Middle School in Mingo Junction and entered into an agreement with SoL Harris/Day Architecture of North Canton to oversee the project. Assistant Superintendent John Belt said the site will add retaining walls, some new sidewalk and other improvements and work should get underway this summer.

"We'll be working with SoL Harris/Day, the architects who designed all of our buildings," Belt said. "We will push the hillside behind the scoreboard back because it's encroaching upon the track and put in a retaining wall and sidewalk, then the dirt near concession stand No. 2 will have a concrete pad. We will do another retaining wall to go behind the stands and replace fencing in the stadium."

He said the architectural firm will handle the construction bids for the project and the timeline is to have it completed during the summer. However, walkers will not be able to use the track during construction. Belt noted that later plans are to resurface the track, which has not been done in nearly a decade.

In other news, officials heard from Indian Creek Education Association President Karen Lloyd and OAPSE President Judy Johnson about the need to add nurses and student programs. Lloyd said the teachers and nurses were doing all they could but would love to expand programs, plus people would seek grants to help defray costs.

"If funding is available, we would like to add programs for students," Lloyd said.

Johnson said more nurses were needed in the buildings to ensure students had adequate care.

"The need is there. We're hoping we're going to get funding somewhere so you

can possibly hire an LPN to have in the buildings at all times."

The board also heard from Ashley Turnbull, a parent and teacher in the district, about altering policies to allow students from other schools to attend dances at Indian Creek. Turnbull said she spoke with administrators and conducted a survey seeking input from teachers, staff, students and parents. The questionnaire resulted in overwhelming support for a rule change and she said people were willing to volunteer as chaperone. She also provided copies of permission slips from other school districts and suggested adding an extra charge for those bringing outside students to dances and the fee would help cover costs for extra security, if necessary. Officials took no action at the time but said they would discuss it further.

Among other action, the board:

--Approved a contract for district Treasurer Denise Todoroff;

--Accepted a \$555 donation from Amanda Mancuso for the district's lunch program; Association for the 2024-25 school year;

--Passed a resolution supporting the Fair School Funding plan and authorize payment of the requested amount to become a member of the Fair School Funding Plan Inc. for calendar year 2024;

--Approved a memorandum of understanding with the ICEA establishing supplemental positions of STEM Club advisors for grades 5-6 and 7-8 with Wesley Lewis and Michael Minor later named to the respective roles in one-year limited contracts;

--Approved ICHS Marching Band bus trip to Florida to perform in Universal's parade "Universal Stars" from April 2-6, 2025. Students will fundraise for the cost of their trip;

--Hired both Nicole Jarvis as cook/cashier and Lisa Scovronski as a paraprofessional at Cross Creek Elementary; accepted the

resignation of paraprofessional Amber Tester for personal reasons, effective Jan. 19, 2024. Tester would like to be added to the classified substitute list for paraprofessional; approved supplemental contracts for Jayson Daugherty as ICHS head track coach, Chad Allen as ICHS assistant track coach, Nick Dondzila as ICMS head wrestling coach and Sam Robinson as ICMS assistant wrestling coach effective Feb. 15; awarded continuing contracts to custodian Caeleb Gardner and bus driver Kimberly Robinson, both effective Feb. 17; hired Lorrie Jarrett as part-time reading teacher at Jefferson County Christian School; and added Ann Margaret Downard as cafeteria, secretary and paraprofessional on the classified substitute list.

--Recognized Gavin Pownall and Luke McMillion as Buckeye 8 wrestling champs with the team placing fourth overall as well as ninth overall at OVAC and third at AAAA. Individuals at OVAC included Ethan Llewellyn, third; Ethan Starr and Gavin Pownall, each earning fourth; Ian Starkey, sixth; and Luke McMillion, eighth;

—Highlighted the ICHS swim teams with girls and boys each being named an OVAC 4A runner-up, while seven girls and four boys qualified for the district swim meet. Girls basketball was named OVAC 4A champs and runner-up at the Buckeye 8 Conference;

—Lauded district spelling bee winners were all ICMS students, led by eighth-grader Keeley Johns, first place; fifth-grader David Reaume, second; sixth-grader Matilda Bartley, third; fifth-grader Kaden Haddox, fourth; and fifth-grader Avery Peckins, fifth. The Jefferson-Harrison Regional Spelling Bee will be held March 9 at Buckeye North Elementary School for a chance to attend the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C.

## *NJHS Members Collecting Socks for Seniors*

The Indian Creek Middle School National Jr. Honor Society is pairing up with the Jefferson County Women's Club to share the warmth with local seniors.

Members are taking part in the "Socks for Seniors" collection to provide one new pair of adult women's or men's socks that will be donated to residents at The Laurels of Steubenville. The ICMS group has already surpassed its goal of collecting 100 pair but is always looking for more. Advisor Cathy DiBenedetto said the drive will continue until March 1.

"We have 110 pairs of socks so far," DiBenedetto said. "The NJHS are planning to go to The Laurels to deliver them."

Officials are seeking the warm footwear, particularly those with



grippers for added safety. Flyers have been distributed throughout the school as part of the drive and DiBenedetto said it was the first time the student organization was involved in the program.

The NJHS has contributed to a variety of causes to benefit the community in the past, including an annual holiday food drive. The organization has gathered thousands of nonperishable items and acquired ham and turkeys to feed families during Thanksgiving and Christmas. Items have been given to the Wayne Township Food Pantry and Mingo Social Services to the Urban Mission Ministries in Steubenville while school families were also invited to obtain food in the ICMS cafetorium.