



# WC Wildcat Connections

Wheatland-Chili Central School District

Fall 2023

★ Welcome Back, Wildcats! ★



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## Capital Improvements Move Forward

Wheatland-Chili is making great progress on its capital improvement projects.

When T. J. Connor students returned for the start of the school year, they were delighted to find a new playground. Work on the project began at the end of June and was completed in August.

The playground's transformation involved a complete redesign with all-new equipment. The upgrades, which also include a new solid surface, perimeter sidewalk and sidewalk path to the building, have greatly increased accessibility, so all students are able to enjoy playtime.

The playground project is part of the \$5.8 million capital project approved by voters in May 2022.

At the Middle/High School, work is nearly complete on a new secure front entrance and main office.

The project includes a secure vestibule, similar to the one at T. J. Connor, that leads into the main office. The District is utilizing federal pandemic relief funding to help pay for the work.

Additionally, construction on the MS/HS's new cafeteria and kitchen, which will include a new serving line, additional seating and a new senior lounge, is set to begin this spring. Projects to upgrade the MS/HS nurse's suite and repave the bus and drop-off loops at T. J. Connor and the MS/HS as well as to install new classroom doors and locksets with secure key fob access at both schools will also begin this spring.

The District is planning for another capital project vote to coincide with the 2024-25 budget vote in May. Stay tuned for details.



## Feeding Minds, Fueling Futures: Wheatland-Chili Serves Up Free Meals for Every Student

Wildcats are eating up free meals!

Over the summer, the District announced that all Wheatland-Chili students could receive free breakfast and lunch each day of the 2023-24 school year.

Since then, the number of students opting for school meals has increased remarkably. Breakfasts and lunches served by the District in September and October are up 44% compared to the same period last school year.

The District is able to offer free meals to all students after qualifying for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), a program funded by a partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and New York State that allows schools in low-income areas to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students.

While CEP eliminates the burden of collecting household applications to determine eligibility for school meal programs, the District strongly encourages families to complete a Free and Reduced Meals Application as it will help the district continue to qualify for the program. The application is also tied to other important benefits for students, such as fee waivers for Advanced Placement (AP) exams, dual-credit tuition assistance, state funding and more.

Families can complete the application online at [wheatland.k12.ny.us](http://wheatland.k12.ny.us).



## New Addition to Board of Education



The Wheatland-Chili Board of Education has a new member.

Keith Nicolosi began his tenure as trustee in July. The District resident was elected in May to fill the seat vacated by Beth Nolan.

Nicolosi graduated from Wheatland-Chili in 1999. He and his wife Tiffany began dating in their senior year of high school. They have three children and six nieces and nephews who currently attend, will attend or have attended school in the District.

Nicolosi's three-year-term on the Board of Education will run through 2026.

## Board of Education Honored

Wheatland-Chili celebrated New York State Board Recognition Week October 16-20.

Board members were recognized for their commitment to students, staff and families and the countless hours they devote to the Wheatland-Chili school community during the Board of Education meeting on October 23.



(L to R) Board members Greg Berl, Cindy Dawson, Courtney Panek, Keith Nicolosi, James Musshafen (President) and Shanna Fraser (Vice President) (Not pictured: Kim Snyder)

## Once a Wildcat, Always a Wildcat: Alumni Return to Work at Wheatland-Chili



Joe Bordonaro

Two more Wheatland-Chili graduates have returned to the District, this time, as staff members.

Joe Bordonaro, who graduated from Wheatland-Chili in 2018, is T. J. Connor's new physical education teacher.

As a student, he played soccer and basketball and received the Mike Skivington Memorial Award in his senior year. An active member of the community, he also worked for the Town of Wheatland Recreation Department.

Bordonaro earned his teaching certification at SUNY Brockport, where he was selected for the Dr. Eugene F. Orbaker Award for Excellence in Student Teaching & Engagement in 2022. The award recognizes teaching candidates who go above and beyond expectations during their student teaching placements.

Before being hired as a full-time teacher, Bordonaro worked as a substitute for the District during the 2022-23 school year.

He says he is eager to return to Wheatland-Chili because he wants to help make a positive impact in his hometown.

Chad Annis is the High School's new business teacher. A member of the Wheatland-Chili Class of 1999, he was on the school's soccer and basketball teams and played football for Caledonia-Mumford.

Annis is currently finishing his teaching certification at Roberts Wesleyan University. Before becoming an educator, he worked in business and finance and even played semi-professional football in Las Vegas before returning home to Scottsville.

Annis, who is also coaching this year's Girls Varsity Basketball team, is excited to share his passion for business and sports with the next generation of Wildcats. He is also glad to be back in the District because his daughter, who is a student at the Middle School, is getting the same great education that he did.

Annis and Bordonaro join several Wheatland-Chili alumni who are now employed by the District.

*Welcome back!*



Chad Annis

## Welcome New Staff

### T. J. Connor Elementary

**Joseph Bordonaro,**  
Physical Education Teacher

**Allie Freestone,**  
Contract Substitute

**Brittany Hickel,**  
Teacher Aide

**Korrine Minster,**  
Second Grade Teacher

**Elizabeth Muniz,**  
Teacher Aide

**Kelly Peck,**  
Teacher Aide

### MS/HS

**Chad Annis,**  
Business Teacher

**Angela Cain,**  
English Teacher

**Megan Coryell,**  
Spanish Teacher

**Andrew DiMaria,**  
Chemistry Teacher

**Susan Fregoe,**  
Biology Teacher

**Taylor Hrovat,**  
Social Studies Teacher

**Natalie Mignemi,**  
Social Worker

**Brianna Palazzolo,**  
Teacher Aide

**Paige Scholand,**  
Nurse

**Alaina Tooley,**  
Teacher Aide

### School Nutrition

**Tracy Allen,**  
Food Service Helper

### Transportation

**Karen Ahrens,**  
Bus Driver

**Marielle Barney,**  
Bus Attendant

**Helen Bogue,**  
Bus Attendant

**Colleen Meisenzahl,**  
Bus Attendant

### Facilities

**Matthew Schmalfuss,**  
Maintenance Mechanic

# Spirit Week



## Indoor Track & Field Comes to Wheatland-Chili

It's not even spring yet, but the Wildcats are lacing up their racing flats. That's because Wheatland-Chili is offering a new sport this winter: Girls and Boys Varsity Indoor Track & Field.



Student athletes will compete in runs, dashes, relays, hurdles and more. They practice after school at the Middle/High School and will travel to local colleges for meets.

Brian Glass will coach the inaugural team. The Middle/High School social studies teacher also coaches Boys and Girls Cross Country in the fall and outdoor Track and Field in the spring.

The District launched Indoor Track & Field in response to popular demand from the school community.

## T. J. Connor has Dance Fever

T. J. Connor danced its heart out for a good cause.



The Friday before Halloween, students and staff put on their boogie shoes and gathered in the cafeteria, which was transformed into a disco complete with bumping music and gleaming lights.

The big dance party was put on by the Wheatland-Chili Parent Teacher Association. Wildcat Dance Fever is the group's largest fundraiser of the year. The money raised helps to support events put on by the PTA throughout the year, including Field Day.

The two-week fundraising event kicked off in mid-October and culminated with the danceathon. Students pledged to dance for a certain number of minutes in exchange for donations from sponsors. Prizes were awarded for participation and most donations raised.

Dance Fever raised more than \$5,000 in total.



## Fall Sports Senior Nights

*Celebrating our athletes in the Class of 2024!*

### Boys Varsity Cross Country



Senior Kyle Otto (third from left) with teammates (L to R) Anton Teeter, Colden Young and Katya Miller

### Boys Varsity Soccer



Coach Garhett Varin with seniors (L to R) Camdyn Cremaldi, Owen Alquist, James Nolan, Loudon Thrush, Gianluca D'angi, Humza Muhammad, Benjamin Allen, Jakob DeSalvo and Ethan Hallock

### Girls Varsity Soccer



Seniors (L to R) Julia Lynch, Alison Farrell, Andreyaliz Miranda, Marena DeBruyne, Emily Parker, Chylene Whitcomb, Tera Milazzo

### Girls Varsity Volleyball



Seniors (L to R) Malia Sainpaulin and Madison Baird

## Gaming Club Embarks on a Legendary Quest

Wheatland-Chili is entering the pixelated arena of high school esports with its brand-new Gaming Club.

The club, launched at the beginning of the school year, offers students the opportunity to become true masters of the gaming universe. Equipped with state-of-the-art gaming PCs, players will vie against their peers and rival esports clubs and teams from school districts across Greater Rochester.

During the fall semester, members will focus on mastering Rocket League, a 2015 video game described as “soccer, but with rocket-powered cars” — talk about a turbocharged kickoff! But the Wildcats will not stop there. Eventually, the club will seek to conquer additional games, including Minecraft Survival and League of Legends.

Competitive gaming as a high school and college sport and extracurricular activity has surged in popularity in recent years. Wheatland-Chili joins

a growing number of local districts offering esports. Proponents say esports enables students to tie their passion and commitment to gaming to success in academics and future career opportunities. It is also a chance to get more students involved in the school community. According to the High School Esports League (HSEL), 80% of students who participate in high school esports have never engaged in an extracurricular activity.

The Gaming Club meets after school Tuesday through Friday in the District’s new esports room. The revamped space is equipped with 12 gaming stations, each including a desktop PC, a 26-inch monitor for pixel perfection, headsets to keep players in the zone, controllers for precise command, keyboards and mice for swift maneuvers, and ergonomic chairs to ensure comfort during epic gaming marathons.

The Wildcats are ready to level up!



## Guitar Class Strikes a Chord

A new sound is coming from Wheatland-Chili Middle/High School: the vibration of acoustic guitar strings as they’re plucked and strummed by students in beginner guitar.

Taught by veteran music teacher Steven Zimmerman, this new class is designed to be accessible and engaging to students of all musical abilities, even if they’ve never picked up a guitar.

Zimmerman teaches the essentials that all beginners need to know: how to hold and tune a guitar, how to position fingers to create notes, and how to combine those notes to make chords. But instead of focusing on complicated music theory and repetitive exercises, the class is diving in headfirst by listening and playing along to classic songs made up of three chords. As the semester progresses, students will build their repertoire and tackle more complex songs with four and five chords.

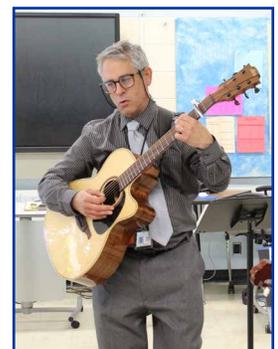
“It’s a really calm environment. We’ll go over the song together or play with a recording. And then, Mr. Zimmerman will let us work on our own so we can learn at our own pace,” said student Josephine Pfenninger. “He doesn’t want us to rush through the process. He wants us to take our time and really learn it.”

The guitars used in class had been tucked away in the Middle/High School for quite some time. Over the summer, the District brought

in a specialist to restring the instruments so they were ready for the budding guitarists to play.

Beyond teaching chords and melodies, the beginner guitar class provides a safe space for students to express themselves, collaborate with peers and discover their unique musical talents. It’s also a shining example of Wheatland-Chili’s commitment to the performing arts.

The District is one of the NAMM Foundation’s Best Communities for Music Education, a designation awarded to school districts that demonstrate outstanding achievement in efforts to provide music access and education to all students.



## Fourth Graders Showcase Photo Essays

T. J. Connor fourth graders were hard at work on a special project during the first month of school. Mrs. Emelson, Mrs. Prince and Mrs. Yare's students were tasked with creating their own photo essays.

A photo essay is a series of images that work together to tell a story. First, students picked the subjects of their stories, then they got to work gathering photos and writing captions. The essays covered a wide range of topics, including autobiographies, families, summer vacations and animals.

For their first writing celebration of the year, the students invited the rest of the school community to their classrooms to share their completed creations.



## Kindergarteners Have a Ball During Fall

It was a festive fall for T. J. Connor kindergarteners.

Throughout October, the students took part in several fun activities, including a Fall Festival.

The autumn-themed celebration was put on with the help of staff and family volunteers. Students painted trees with fall leaves, made paper plate pumpkins, decorated sweet treats and tossed bean bags through giant jack-o'-lanterns.

The kindergarteners' October fun didn't end there. They also climbed aboard a real fire truck as part of a field trip to the Scottsville Fire Department and swayed, shimmed, twirled and whirled during the Wildcat Dance Fever dance-a-thon.



## T. J. Connor Salutes Veterans

T. J. Connor students and staff honored local military veterans during a special event.

Students invited the veterans in their lives to school on Nov. 9. The guests of honor were treated to a coffee reception, where they received cards made by students. The festivities then moved to the cafeteria for a celebratory ceremony. Students and staff burst into applause when the honorees entered.

Students spent weeks learning and rehearsing a lineup of patriotic songs that they performed for their guests. At the end of the ceremony, the veterans lined up in the hallway so students could greet them individually and show their appreciation with high-fives.

T. J. Connor hosts the event every year near Veterans Day. It's a wonderful opportunity for the school community to express its gratitude to all those who served and sacrificed.



## Wheatland-Chili Central School District

13 Beckwith Avenue  
Scottsville, NY 14546  
585.889.6247

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### Board of Education (2023-2024)

James Musshafen, *President*  
Shanna Fraser, *Vice President*  
Gregory Berl  
Cindy Dawson  
Keith Nicolosi  
Courtney Panek  
Kim Snyder

### Superintendent

Lynda Quick, Esq.

### Contributors

Julia Mazzota  
Megan Melville  
Abbey Noble

### Graphic Design

Shannon Nobles

## Upcoming Events

### December

1-3	HS Conference All-State	
1	Grade 6 Early Dismissal	10:40 a.m.
	T. J. Connor Early Dismissal	11:20 a.m.
7	HS Winter Concert	7 p.m.
8	T. J. Connor Report Cards Mailed	
11	Communications and Engagement Committee Meeting	6 p.m.
	Board of Education Meeting	7 p.m.
14	PTA Meeting	6:30 p.m.
	MS Winter Concert	7 p.m.
19	T. J. Connor Winter Concert	7 p.m.
21	MS/HS Progress Reports Mailed	
22-Jan. 1	Holiday Recess	

### January

8	Audit Committee Meeting	6 p.m.
	Board of Education Meeting	7 p.m.
12-13	MCSMA Senior High Instrumental Solo Festival	
15	Martin Luther King Jr. Day — District Closed	
19-20	MCSMA Junior High Instrumental Solo Festival	
22	Board of Education Meeting	
26-27	MCSMA Elementary Instrumental and Jazz Solo Festival	
29-Feb. 2	PreK and Kindergarten Registration Week	

### February

1	International Club Spaghetti Dinner	5:30 p.m.
2	MS/HS Report Cards Mailed	
5	Finance Committee Meeting	6 p.m.
	Board of Education Meeting	7 p.m.
6	Grade 8 Parent Night	6 p.m.
8	PTA Meeting	6:30 p.m.
19-23	Winter Recess	
26	Communications and Engagement Committee Meeting	6 p.m.
	Board of Education Meeting	7 p.m.

## WE'RE HIRING!



### OPEN POSITIONS:

Bus Driver  
Substitute Teacher  
Teacher Aide  
And more

Apply today at [wheatlandchili.k12.ny.us](http://wheatlandchili.k12.ny.us)