



THE FALCON PRESS



Westosha Central High School's
Community Newsletter

Closing Out a Successful Year

John Gendron, District Administrator

As we come to the close of another academic year, I am filled with an overwhelming sense of pride and gratitude for the incredible journey we have shared together. This past year has been nothing short of extraordinary, and I am thrilled to reflect on the many successes and achievements that have made this such a memorable year for our school community.

From the first day of school, our students have demonstrated remarkable hard work, determination, and enthusiasm for learning. They have embraced new challenges with courage and curiosity, and their growth and development throughout the year have been truly inspiring to watch.

I want to take this opportunity to thank our dedicated team of teachers, staff, and administrators for their unwavering commitment to our students' success. Their passion for education, creativity in the classroom, and tireless efforts behind the scenes have been instrumental in creating a supportive and nurturing learning environment to promote success for every student.

Together, we have achieved so much this year:



- We opened up a state-of-the-art high school that is a celebration of our community.
- Our students have excelled academically, achieving significant milestones and mastering new skills and concepts.

- We have fostered a building culture that is centered on respect and belonging, where every student feels valued, trusted, and supported.
- We have embraced innovation and new instructional strategies and programs to enhance teaching and learning, ensuring our students are prepared for success in an ever-changing world.



I want to express my gratitude to you, our parents and guardians, for your unwavering support, partnership, and dedication to our school community. Your involvement and engagement have been instrumental in our success, and I am truly grateful for your continued support.

In closing, I want to wish each and every one of you a safe, happy, and relaxing summer break. May it be filled with laughter, love, and memories with family and friends.

Thank you for an incredible year, and I look forward to welcoming you back for another exciting school year in the fall!



Thank You and Best Wishes to Our Retirees

As we bid farewell to another academic year, we also take a moment to honor and celebrate the incredible contributions and lasting impact of our retiring educators. These individuals have dedicated their careers to shaping the minds and hearts of our students and supporting our school community. Their unwavering commitment to excellence has left an indelible mark on all the people, students and staff alike, with whom they have come in contact over the years.

Please join me in extending our heartfelt gratitude and best wishes to the following retiring staff members:

Paul Schimelfenyg, English Teacher

- Paul is completing his 32nd year at Westosha Central.
- Mr. "Schim" is one of those teachers that every student loves; he has built amazing relationships with students by creating a classroom that is safe to take risks and a willingness to grow without the fear of failure.

Debra Nicolo, English Teacher

- Debra is completing her 19th year at Westosha Central.
- Ms. Nicolo has inspired many students to reach their highest potential; she pushed students to set goals and work hard, but always provided support to ensure student success.

Vince Kuepper, Art Teacher

- Vince is completing his 28th year at Westosha Central.
- Mr. Kuepper will long be remembered for his positive relationships with students and for encouraging them to take chances with their artwork and showcase their talents. The artwork created by students, under his guidance, is absolutely amazing.

Rob Clark, Choir Teacher

- Rob is completing his 10th year at Westosha Central.
- Mr. Clark has directed multiple choral groups during his tenure; these groups have all been highly successful due to Mr. Clark's attention to detail and continued positive feedback. Under his direction, Mr. Clark's choral groups have performed at the highest level, earning countless awards.

Nancy Switalla, Principal Secretary

- Nancy is completing her 17th year at Westosha Central.
- There may not be a more helpful person at Westosha Central than Mrs. Switalla. She always puts the needs of students and staff at the front of her work. Her positive style and willingness to help everyone have made our building a fun place for students, parents, and staff.

John Stollenwerk, Custodian

- John is completing his 25th year at Westosha Central.
- "How can I help?" is the cornerstone of Mr. Stollenwerk's work. His patience, hard work, and willingness to do whatever is needed for students and staff have set a great example for all to follow. He is always upbeat and has a smile on his face.

These remarkable individuals have touched the lives of countless students, colleagues, and families throughout their tenure: their dedication, passion, and leadership have helped shape our school into the vibrant and positive learning community it is today.

*We wish you
all
the
Best*



Thank you to our retiring educators for your unwavering dedication, passion, and commitment to excellence. Your impact will be felt for generations to come, and you will always hold a special place in our hearts. Please join us in celebrating their achievements and wishing them a well-deserved retirement filled with joy, relaxation, and new adventures.

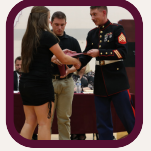
*Thank
you*

Class of 2024 Scholarship Awards

We are excited to celebrate our seniors next week at the annual Scholarship Ceremony. During this event, we will celebrate the outstanding achievements and remarkable talents of our students. The event is a testament to the dedication, hard work, and perseverance of our scholarship recipients, and we are extremely proud of their accomplishments.

Here is some key information about the night:

- We will celebrate the accomplishments of 74 students who have demonstrated exceptional academic achievement, leadership, and service to their community. They will be recognized for their unique talents and contributions, and we applaud their commitment to excellence.
- In total, over 100 awards totalling over \$115,000 in scholarships will be given next Wednesday night.
 - This includes 3 Wisconsin Academic Excellence Award recipients and 3 Wisconsin Technical Excellence Award recipients.
- We have many generous donors, organizations, and community members who have made these scholarships possible. Their investment in our students' futures is truly transformative, and we are deeply grateful for their support and commitment to education. In total, over 40 school groups, community organizations, local businesses, and individual families have donated money to this event.



As we think ahead to next week's scholarship ceremony, we are filled with pride and optimism for the future. Our scholarship winners are shining examples of the incredible potential within our school community, and we are confident that they will continue to achieve great things in the years ahead.

Once again, congratulations to our 2024 scholarship winners, and thank you to everyone who has played a part in making this event a success. Together, we are shaping the future leaders and change-makers of tomorrow.

Southern Lakes Academic Excellence

Congratulations to our scholars who were honored with the Southern Lakes Conference Academic Excellence Award at the Southern Lakes Conference Academic Honors Banquet on April 17.

This year's recipients include:



- Coren Bracey
- Adam David
- Blake Lardinois
- Petar Minic
- Vuk Minic
- Emmy Parks
- Chloe Rausch
- Gwendolyn (Gwen) Sheen
- Rachelle Talbert
- Travis Verhaalen



Westosha Central's 2024 Southern Lakes Academic Top 10

Principal's Thoughts

Kevin Kitslaar, Principal

The school year has gone by fast. As we are in the final stretch of the school year, I want to say thank you to all the staff, students, and families. The staff works really hard each year to support all of our students, and I appreciate all the support we get throughout the year from all the families and the community.



As I wrote in one of my first newsletters, my goal is to continue to make this the top school not only in this area but in the state. This will always be my goal and I will continue to grow as a leader to be the best I can be for the staff, students, and families. I will continue to review and increase programs and opportunities that support and align with students' career and college post-secondary plans. The staff and I will continue to work together to ensure all students are college and career ready, and that they all have the support and opportunities to achieve at high levels. This not only includes academics in the classrooms, but also the opportunities they have outside the classroom in performance arts, clubs, activities, and sports. I want all students to have a positive learning experience at Westosha Central High School, one that pushes them and provides the support to achieve whatever they want when they graduate.



This school year the staff did a lot of professional development and learning around teaching in a 70-minute class period. I realize that 50-minute classes going to 70 minutes is a big change for everyone, but as a staff, we have focused the learning on the benefits of the instruction and opportunities in a longer class period. Students will be able to focus and spend more learning in the 4 to 5 classes they will be taking each trimester. The new schedule also provides Falcon Time, a daily block of time that will allow all students to ask questions or get any support they need in their classes. With any change people are nervous, but the staff and I have worked hard over the course of this school year to make the transition positive for the students as they return in the fall.



As one school year comes to a close, I am excited about the school year ahead. I will miss all the seniors that I have gotten the chance to know over the past two years. They are an amazing group of students who have a bright future ahead of them. I am excited to hear from them in the future as I know they will make an impact wherever they go. Congratulations to all of them!

Class of
2024



I hope everyone has a wonderful summer!

The Story Behind the Return of the Falcon

This article was written by Kaitlyn Hill, Class of 2019, to thank those responsible for the return and refurbishment of the Falcon.

In 2014, the carved Falcon sculpture was removed due to decay and the need to expand the visitor parking in front of Westosha Central High School. A cherished part of Central's history since 1998, the Falcon's origin dates back to an oak tree on the north side of the school since 1952. The oak tree, estimated to be over 100 years old with a trunk measuring close to 14 feet, served as the foundation for the school mascot.

Following its removal, the Falcon found a temporary resting place at Complete Tree Service, owned and operated by the Weis family - proud Westosha Central alumni. Eager to contribute, the Weis family facilitated the Falcon's return to its rightful place on school grounds. However, extensive repairs were necessary due to rotting; one eye was lost and sections of the carving were missing. Kevin Snyder and John Curby of Arbor Forest Products and Landscaping Supply in Burlington undertook the restoration, breathing new life into the Falcon.

The project continued as the Falcon required a new perch, given the absence of a tree trunk. Jay Menarek, owner of Menarek Stamped Concrete created a stamped concrete pad for the Falcon to rest upon.

Special gratitude extends to those instrumental in the restoration and return of our cherished Falcon:

- Kaitlyn Hill, Laura Shoopman, Adam Simmons, and Rebecca Tondi - Class 2019 Officers
- Westosha Central Class of 2019
- Kevin Snyder and John Curby of Arbor Forest Products and Landscaping Supply
- Jay Menarek of Menarek Stamped Concrete
- Mike Weis for the continued support and use of his skid steer
- Kay Sorensen and the Sorensen family for financing the shelter

Your dedication has ensured the enduring presence of our beloved Falcon, symbolizing resilience and unity within the Westosha Central community.



Student-Athlete Leadership Team

Student-athletes attended one-day conferences in the past, but there was no long-term plan or goal for student-athlete leaders. That recently changed when Athletic/Activities Director Jon Lindh and Principal Kevin Kitslaar held the first Student-Athlete Leadership Team meeting (SALT), a student-athlete leadership team created to build student leaders in the building and on the field/court/pool. Student-athletes who attended the first meeting were in grades 9-11 and selected by their coaches. Mr. Lindh and Mr. Kitslaar shared some initial information at the meeting, but student-athletes did more of the talking and discussion. This was purposeful as the mission/vision and the goals came from the students.

Some of the discussion points included:

- What are the norms of the group?
- Build more school spirit
- Get more students to attend events
- Recruit more students to get involved in the athlete programs
- Leadership opportunities in the building
- Leadership opportunities in the community



Mr. Kitslaar then shared the next steps for plans for the student-athletes, which included:

- Setting up another meeting
- Formulating goals and plans and action steps for the goals
- Creating an advisory group among this team to help run and create agendas for future meetings
- Sharing with Mr. Kitslaar the names of other students who should be included as part of the team
- Involving coaches who want to be involved

The meeting ended with Julian Swartz (former UW-Madison basketball player and college basketball coach) talking and sharing a message with the students. He focused his message, quotes, and personal experiences around these words: Recognize, Choose, Evaluate, and Attack. At the end, students could share their takeaways from his message with him and ask questions.

Mr. Kitslaar talked with students after that meeting and the students are really excited about the Student-Athlete Leadership Team and what can come out of it. They also really liked meeting and Julian's shared message.

STEM Aviation Program

This article was submitted by James Senft

The Westosha Central STEM Aviation Program was recently given the unique opportunity to visit the Milwaukee Airport Control Tower. This visit allowed students to explore careers as Air Traffic Controllers. This nationally recognized program is just one of the offerings exclusive to Westosha Central High School students. It is supported by the non-profit organization Eagle's Nest Projects Wisconsin (ENP WI). Students in the program have the opportunity to build a real, flying aircraft and also learn to fly. To date, the program has produced eighteen pilots.



Eagle's Nest Project Wisconsin (ENP WI) is planning to build a STEM Aviation Center at Burlington Airport. The STEM Aviation Center isn't just a building; it is a launchpad for dreams. As students explore, tinker, and collaborate, they discover their passion for flight, engineering, and innovation. Whether they become pilots, engineers, or air traffic controllers, this center propels them toward the skies and beyond.

The Youth STEM Aviation Center at Burlington Airport is designed to inspire and educate the next generation of aviators, engineers, and scientists. This state-of-the-art facility, nestled within the bustling environment of the airport, provides an immersive experience that connects young minds directly with the world of aviation.



Spring Sports Wrap Up

Jon Lindh, Athletic Director

As we wrap up the 2023-2024 school year, it is that time when we reflect on the past year. This was an exciting year with the opening of our new facilities and the upgrades that we have made both indoors and outdoors. The investment made by our community is very appreciated and will serve the needs of our student body for many years to come.

Baseball and Softball



This has been one of the most challenging springs ever due to the constant rain. If we did not have turf infields on the varsity baseball and softball fields, I am confident that we would have been forced to cancel many more games. This has also allowed our varsity teams to practice outside on many more occasions than in previous years.



To date, both baseball and softball are sitting at the top of the Southern Lakes Conference with less than a week left in the regular season. Softball kicks off their tournament run in Regionals on May 21. Baseball follows them a week later on May 28.

Lacrosse



2024 was also the inaugural season for our boys and girls school-sanctioned lacrosse teams. Prior to 2024, the WIAA did not sponsor lacrosse as an official sport. With the change, we were able to convert our two club teams to school-sponsored programs.



Both programs have grown tremendously over the season and we look forward to many successful seasons in the future. Lacrosse is currently the fastest-growing sport in America.

Girls Soccer, Boys Tennis, and Boys Golf



Girls soccer, boys tennis, and boys golf are all in contention for Southern Lakes Conference Championships with only a couple of weeks left in the regular season.



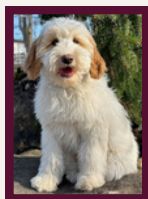
As I write this article, we are preparing to host the Boys Tennis Conference Tournament. It looks like it will be a beautiful spring day for an all-day tournament. Good luck to all the spring sports as they navigate through their respective tournament series.

Thank You Seniors

Lastly, I would like to thank each and every one of the seniors who are set to graduate in a few weeks. Students are the heart of any school. I truly believe that we have some of the best students.

Remember Class of 2024: Once a Falcon, Always a Falcon!

Meet Winnie, Our New Therapy Dog



We are excited to introduce Westosha Central High School's Therapy Dog, Winnie. We had been anxiously awaiting the pairing of our school to the perfect match for our therapy dog while working closely with Ultimate Canine, an award-winning dog training academy that specializes in training therapy dogs through extensive puppy selections/litter evaluations, temperament testing, and training. Winnie will be joining WCHS beginning in the fall of 2024. She will be joining the Student Services Team, and we are excited about the services she will be able to provide for all.

The WCHS Therapy Dog Program is designed with the intent to support a variety of individuals and entities within the school building and community. The Therapy Dog Program will help support and promote WCHS' Strategic Plan to further build connections with students, faculty, and our community.

What is a Therapy Dog?

- A dog that is specifically trained to provide affection, comfort, and support
- A dog that has been evaluated, has gone through extensive training, and is certified by a recognized therapy dog organization
- A therapy dog can be used in multiple ways: assisting with grief or anxiety, improving reading skills, de-escalation, rewards, encouragement, and much more

You can follow Winnie's journey and the amazing work she will be accomplishing here at WCHS via [her webpage](#) and on WCHS social media accounts. For additional information regarding WCHS's Therapy Dog program, please contact Conner Olsen at olsenc@westosha.k12.wi.us or Kortnie Ruth at ruthk@westosha.k12.wi.us.

Fine Arts

Choir

The choir participated in the Solo and Ensemble Contest held at Westosha Central on Saturday, February 24, where every performer received an "Outstanding" ranking. We had three performers qualify for the State Solo and Ensemble Contest that was held at the end of April:



- Aden Valerin and Lily Lovas qualified for Musical Theater
- Amareli Arias qualified for a Classical Solo

The choir also competed in Festival Disney and returned home with a "Superior" rating. Jackson Homulock received a special "Outstanding Soloist" award.

The choirs held their final performances of the year with **After Dark** featuring CSI, our show choir, on Friday and Saturday, May 10 & 11. The Concert Choir performed on Monday, May 13. The Seniors within each group were honored at the performances.

Drama

Westosha Drama produced its spring production "Above Average Man" last month. This was one of our best selling non-musicals, featuring a cast of 35 and a 50-member production team. The comic book style show featured colorful costumes, sets, and lighting, and slapstick stage fights in the tradition of the Batman TV series. Westosha Drama wrapped up their year with their annual Oscar Night on May 15 recognizing outstanding achievements this past year and the induction of 20 new members into the International Thespian Society.



Florida Trip



The WCHS Band traveled to Orlando, Florida, over Spring Break and participated in the Festival Disney competition. The band received a rating of Superior and First Place in their division. The WCHS Band also received the Golden Mickey Award, which is awarded to the band with the highest overall score. This is the second trip in a row that the WCHS Band has received the award. While in Florida, the band visited all four Walt Disney World theme parks, Universal Studios theme parks, and Cocoa Beach.

National Award

The WCHS Music Department received the 2024 Support Music Merit Award. There is a large amount of criteria that each school must complete and only 120 schools in the nation receive this national award. This is the fifth consecutive year the WCHS Music Department has received the award.

District Solo & Ensemble



The WCHS band program had 130 students participate in 46 different events. Students who received a starred first (*1) rating earned a performance at State Solo & Ensemble held at UW-Parkside on April 27.

The WCHS band had 52 students participate in 15 events that earned performances at State Solo & Ensemble. Overall, 98 students in 32 events earned gold medals for their performances. In addition, 31 students in 11 events earned silver medals for their performances.

State Solo and Ensemble

The WCHS bands had 52 students perform in 13 events at State Solo & Ensemble. The event was hosted by UW-Parkside on Saturday, April 27.

Congratulations to the following students and ensembles for receiving a 1 rating (gold medal):



- Jazz Central
- Brass Ensemble
- Trombone Choir
- Saxophone Choir
- Noah Burnett - Trumpet Solo and Piano Solo
- Gavin Burnett - Piano Solo
- James Noonan and Wyatt Shaffer - Trumpet Duet
- Kenny Broadway - Tuba Solo
- Karen Pisano - Trumpet Solo

Congratulations to the following students and ensemble, who received a 2 rating (silver medal):

- Percussion Ensemble
- Reid Hansche - Trombone Solo
- Gavin Burnett - Tenor Saxophone Solo
- Rachel Erich - Trumpet Solo



Middle School Math Meet

Submitted by Math Teachers Lisa Carnahan and Rebecca Kettler



On February 27, 2024, Westosha Central High School's math honors society, Mu Alpha Theta, sponsored a middle school math meet for the first time since 2017. Teams of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders from Salem, Bristol, Trevor-Wilmot, and Wheatland participated in a written individual test, a written team test, and a hands-on event consisting of several challenges. Mu Alpha Theta members worked countless hours to create the tests and challenges, schedule the events, and organize volunteers for the meet.



On the day of the event, our high school students escorted their middle school guests to their events, proctored the exams, graded the tests, and ran the awards ceremony. The middle schoolers had fun and felt accomplished! Chaperones and middle school coaches were excited to see the high school students in responsible leadership positions. The middle school students got a preview of the building where they may attend high school and were also given a glimpse of what they could accomplish when they become high school students.

CTE/Electives



Congratulations to FCCLA (Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America) National Competitive event qualifiers who will advance to the National Conference in Seattle, Washington this summer:

- Dani Dreher in Culinary Arts
- Safyire Guthrie in Early Childhood Education

Westosha's ProStart teams had a very successful State Invitational in March. The Management Team of Grace Emerson and Aubrey Reeves took home the State Championship Trophy and competed in Baltimore at the National ProStart Invitational at the end of April. For their event, they developed a restaurant concept that included a menu, interior design, marketing plan, and much more.

The Culinary Team cooked their way to third place with the help of chef mentor Casey Merrill by developing an original starter, entree, and dessert. The team was composed of Dani Dreher, Chloe Rausch, Madi Rafenstein, Alannah Upchurch, and manager Gabe Ruffalo. Both teams were guided by FCS (Family & Consumer Sciences) instructor Cheryl Halladay.

New This Fall - Direct Admit Wisconsin

The Direct Admit Wisconsin website shares: *"Together the Universities of Wisconsin provide a place for all Wisconsin high school students to access a world-class public education. The Direct Admit Wisconsin program is partnering with hundreds of school districts throughout the state to provide a simple and seamless admission experience for students beginning with the Class of 2025."*

Direct Admit Wisconsin is a new program that begins this fall that partners the Universities of Wisconsin and school districts throughout the state, and Westosha Central is one of over 200 Districts that are participating in the program.

Our counselors first learned about this last fall at the state counselors conference. Westosha Central's counselors and leadership team are excited about the program as it will allow students to be directly admitted to the UW universities that participate in the program. The universities will review the student's GPA, math courses taken, credits earned, and courses students have taken through our shared agreement and our student management systems (Infinite Campus). Based on this information the participating universities will send a letter to students who meet their requirements that they have been accepted, provided the student maintains their GPA and completes the necessary coursework for high school graduation. The UW universities currently participating in the program include:



More information from Direct Admit of Wisconsin will be provided to the high schools and forwarded to our eligible students and their families. [Access the Direct Admit Wisconsin website using this link.](#)

