

COMMUNITY GHOST STORY

WINTER 2021



Makenna Nushart: KHS Class of 2022

FIRST OF MANY

1ST GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS FIND HELP FROM KHS ALUM

Makenna Nushart is a junior at Kaukauna High School who hopes to attend a four-year university following graduation; in enrolling, she will be part of the first generation to do so in her family.

Molly Ruffing ('18) remembers being in the same position before starting her college career at Lawrence University in September 2018. "There were so many unknowns on the path that hadn't been paved before in my family. I had to learn everything as I went through it."

Molly knew there had to be a better way for students like her to be more prepared for the road ahead, and through her work at Lawrence University with the Center for Community Engagement and Social Change, has devised a solution to help those students.

First of Many is a mentorship program that matches first-generation college students at Lawrence University with potential first-generation students currently in their sophomore or junior year at Kaukauna High School. Through this mentorship opportunity, the program seeks to reduce barriers for first-



Molly Ruffing: KHS Class of 2018

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



SUPERINTENDENT'S CORNER

STEADY AS WE GO ...

We've passed the halfway point of this school year that's been anything but boring. And yet, we continue to move forward, doing the work we're meant to be doing, educating our students and helping them find success. I'm in awe of all that we've accomplished. Despite the challenges of a global pandemic, of classroom closures and close contact quarantines and quickly learning how to effectively teach and learn virtually, we are steadfast in our daily routines, our hard work, our achievements and our strength.

Not that I'm surprised by this; nor is it new. Our challenges this year are simply different ones ... unknown and unprecedented and unnatural for what we've known to be "normal" for the last several decades. But here is what I do know: every person within the KASD community works hard to make this the best district; the district that puts students first; the district that learns from mistakes and celebrates success; the district that works for not only our staff and students, but for the betterment of the entire community; the district that defines ourselves by our strength and perseverance; the district that has learned the meaning of success not despite our challenges, but because of them.

Our school community is focused on three essential goals: students success, culture and climate, and fiscal sustainability. Each goal is an essential component to our definition of success, overlapping and working together to continuously improve. As you scan through the rest of this newsletter, I challenge you to recognize and embrace the many successes of this school year. I am proud of our work, and I hope that each of you recognizes the work that you have put in to help make this a successful year for the Kaukauna Area School District. Thank you for your continued support.

LET'S KEEP MOVING FORWARD, STRONGER TOGETHER.


MARK P. DUERWAECHTER
SUPERINTENDENT

The Kaukauna Area School District will educate students to be effective life-long learners who can successfully meet the challenges of their lives and be positive contributors to society.

RETURN TO LEARN

INSTRUCTIONAL UPDATES FROM RIVER VIEW AND KHS

On February 22, 2021, students in grades 5-12 made the move from a hybrid instructional model to four-days-per-week, in-person learning. At the Monday, March 8 meeting of the Kaukauna Area School District Board of Education, the board approved a proposal (by 4-2 vote) for those students to **continue in-person learning 4 days per week**, with a late-start, virtual Wednesday for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year. An all-virtual option remains for those students not interested in returning to school buildings this school year.

The decision to maintain the current learning model for our secondary students through the end of the school year came after much discussion, specifically surrounding the needs of virtual students, who compose nearly 20% of our student enrollment this school year.

We will continue with the mitigation techniques that have been working to keep COVID-19 at bay within our schools, and our teachers and staff will continue the incredible work that they are doing to help all student achieve success during this unique school year.

FIRST OF MANY: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

generation students by providing them with support and resources necessary for applying to and attending college. The mentor and mentee meet weekly over the course of ten weeks to discuss the developed curriculum topics ranging from financial aid and filling out FAFSA forms to finding and applying for scholarships and applying to schools, to experiences that first-generation students can expect once they get to college. The goal is not only to help eliminate the obstacles facing first-generation students during the school application process, but to make genuine connections with other students facing and overcoming those same obstacles.



Last spring, Ruffing, a double major in psychology and English who hopes to become a high school counselor, started working as the Equal Access to Education program coordinator at Lawrence. Part of her job including working with VITAL, a program matching volunteer tutors from Lawrence with students in Appleton. With the educational strains created by virtual learning during COVID, the demand for tutors increased substantially, and Molly's role took on new life, adapting the program to a virtual format and partnering with retired Appleton teachers and Lawrence alumni to fill the tutoring needs of more than 100 students. Seeing the immense need, she started looking at other possibilities to get existing Lawrence students passionate about education, but not necessarily tutoring, involved; and so began *First of Many*.

"It's a chance for me to help students who don't yet even realize the obstacles that may be ahead of them," said Molly. "Acknowledging the barriers early and matching students with someone that has been through the process are key factors for success."

Some weeks, the partners take (now virtual) tours of universities, some weeks they talk about how to write papers for college; it's an experience unique to each set of mentors and mentees.

The first group of *First of Many* students began meeting with mentors in January 2021. Makenna Nushart was excited to be included in the inaugural program.

"I couldn't pass up the opportunity. Applying to college and the process that we go through to do that ... it can be intimidating, and I don't think that we talk about that enough." Nushart said she was grateful for the opportunity and hopes that others continue to take advantage of the program.



Nushart's mentor, Kenneth Peñaherrera, echoed the same gratitude. "I got involved because of the lack of information available to me as a first-generation student. I wish I would have had the resources that we're providing, and I'm grateful that I can provide these tools to other incoming students."

Peñaherrera also emphasized the importance of starting this program during students' junior year, rather than waiting until senior year to start tackling some of the bigger hurdles in the process. He hopes that the students he's able to help choose to "pay it forward" for other first-generation students in the future.

"It's a legacy we're creating; if the program is successful, these students will give back these same resources to other first-generation students, and as these students are given the tools to overcome obstacles, we're helping more students find future success."

The second ten-week curriculum series of the *First of Many* program begins March 15, 2021 at Kaukauna High School. If you are or know a current sophomore or junior interested in taking part in the program this or next school year, please contact KHS School Counselor Matt Binsfeld at (920) 766-6113.

CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE

KHS TEACHER AND STUDENT EARN KOHL AWARDS

Kaukauna High School is proud to announce that **senior Abby Kuehl** has been selected as a Herb Kohl Foundation Excellence Scholarship recipient. Excellence Scholarship recipients have demonstrated excellence in the academic arena and high motivation to achieve, have displayed a board range of activity and leadership outside the academic setting, and have shown strong promise for succeeding in college and beyond. Kuehl will receive a \$10,000 scholarship award.



Additionally, **Band Director Jacob Martin** has been named a 2021 Herb Kohl Educational Foundation Teacher Fellow. Fellowship recipients are educators who have been chosen for their superior ability to inspire a love of learning in their students, their ability to motivate others, and their leadership and service within and outside the classroom. Martin will receive a \$6,000 grant, and an additional \$6,000 matching grant will be presented to Kaukauna High School.



The Herb Kohl Educational Foundation awarded only 317 teachers, students and principals throughout the state of Wisconsin; 200 of those awards were given to high school seniors and 101 were given to teachers.

“Kaukauna High School is proud of the work of our educators and our students and excited to celebrate their success,” said Corey Baumgartner, KHS principal. “Abby is an outstanding student, leader and young adult who has excelled both inside and outside of our school walls.”

Added Superintendent Mark Duerwaechter, “Mr. Martin is a true asset to the Kaukauna Area School District. His love for learning and music are a model for students and staff alike. This award is well-deserved.”

The Kohl Foundation Scholarship and Fellowship program was established by philanthropist and Herb Kohl in 1990. To date, the foundation has awarded nearly \$25 million to Wisconsin educators, principals, students and schools. “Education is the key to the future of Wisconsin and our nation. I am very proud of the accomplishments of these students, teachers and principals and look forward to the great contributions they will make in the future,” Kohl said.

Scholarship and grant recipients are selected by a statewide committee composed of civic leaders and representatives of education-related associations and the program’s co-sponsors: The Wisconsin Newspaper Association Foundation, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin Council of Religious and Independent Schools (WCRIS), regional Cooperative Education Service Agencies (CESAs), the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators and the Wisconsin Parents Association.



Students from the Random Acts of Kindness Club at **River View Middle School** organized a toy drive to benefit the Children’s Wisconsin - Fox Valley Hospital.



Students and staff alike had a great time celebrating Read Across America Week at **Park Community Charter School**.



Kaukauna High School junior Autumn Steffens was one of eight students nationwide invited to serve on the Advance CTE National Shared Solutions Workgroup created to better incorporate student voice in CTE.

As secondary students returned to school for 4 days of in-person learning in February, they were welcomed by members of the **KASD Board of Education**.



As part of Random Acts of Kindness Day and the Great Kindness Challenge at **Kaukauna High School**, National Honor Society students, HOSA and the special education department partnered to show their appreciation for the work and dedication of our teachers.



River View Middle School 7th grader Iris Bass and 8th grader Samee Srinivasan were invited to sing with students across the state as part of the All-State Middle-Level Honor Choir in January.



It was a record-setting year for the KHS Girls Basketball program: Chloe VanZeeland set the all-time scoring record with 1,369, overtaking the record in place since 1989; Graysin Hartjes also joined the elite 1,000 point club, ranks 3rd in career points, and broke the season and career 3-point record; and Maddy McCabe had a record 99 assists this season and a record 262 during her career.

Kaukauna High School donated 27 sewing machines to a small, remote village in Nicaragua to help a group of women continue learning a trade which will help them make money for their families.



LET'S TALK ABOUT ...

FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

with Business Manager Bob Schafer



Despite facing adversities over the past 12 months, the Kaukauna Area School District has continued on a path of financial stability through the strategic use of funds and reinvestment of money into the District for both learning and infrastructure.

Throughout the past five years, the District has been able to continue on its upward track of creating a better learning experience for all. Utilizing available funds, KASD has greatly enhanced its information technology for students and staff; continued a commitment to appropriate levels of staffing by adding an average of 6 FTE positions per year to maintain smaller class sizes and better support the needs of our special education and student services departments; replaced an aged Kaukauna High School gym floor with a state of the art surface; and upgraded classrooms and common areas at all school buildings. These, combined with the effects of a \$50,000,000 energy efficiency upgrade earlier in the decade, have left Kaukauna Schools with an incredible foundation upon which we can continue to build.



Additionally, the District met (and exceeded) the Board of Education directive to add to the fund balance — also known as the amount of money in the checkbook at the end of the year — creating a financial outlook that allows for completion of several large projects without finding additional funding sources.

- The District's 2020-2021 operating budget will allow for approximately \$700,000 in projects to be completed during the summer 2021, including the addition of an elevator at Victor Haen Elementary School.
- The 2021-2022 budget should have funds available to complete new safe and secure entrances at Electa Quinney Elementary School and New Directions Learning Community, as well as at Haen.
- The 2022-2023 operating budget forecast continues in a positive direction, with the District planning for new school entrances at Tanner Early Learning Center and Park Community Charter School, along with parking lot configuration changes at River View Middle School.
- Additionally, the District is forecasting revenues to outpace expenditures in 2023-2024, 2024-2025, and 2025-2026 by at least \$750,000 per year.

The Kaukauna School District has utilized a five-year budget forecast model for the past 10 years (through two projects: the energy efficiency upgrade and the KHS renovation) as a way to create a financial path to educational excellence and fiscal sustainability. While a school district budget is an ever-evolving mechanism that must be modified frequently due to funding from the state and federal governments, the five-year forecast, with relatively conservative benchmarks, creates a long-range model from which large-scale decisions can be made without much fear for long-term ramifications.

As the District begins to build its 2021-2022 operating budget — one that will see quite a bit of change due to the influx of the federally created Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief fund as well as a newly proposed Wisconsin state biennial budget — the five-year forecast shows strong financial stability for KASD.



Finally, KASD is nearing the end of holding long term debt. The final debt service payment on the \$50 million energy efficiency project is slated for March 2027, which means the final tax levy invoice for this will be during the 2026-2027 school year. At present, the debt service payment is about \$2.50 of the \$8.49 tax levy mill rate. While the rate for debt service tax will fall slightly over time down to less than \$2.00 per \$1,000 of value, there will be a large impact on the overall tax levy should nothing change by 2027-2028 (roughly a 25% decrease). The Board of Education has entered into preliminary discussion on long-range mill rate management for KASD.

What about the Tax Levy?

For the 2020-2021 school year, KASD placed a levy of \$8.49 per \$1,000 of property value through the state-imposed revenue limit formula and added debt service. For comparison, the tax levy mill rate in 2015-2016 was \$9.13 per \$1,000 of value with \$8.49 being the lowest mill rate amount set by KASD in the past 10 years. The same forecast model used to predict revenues and expenditures has set tax levy mill rates over the next five years between \$7.63 and \$8.39, all lower than the current 2020-2021 amount. While changes to the State of Wisconsin funding formula could affect the mill rate projections, we remain cautiously optimistic.

STRONG

Kaukauna



Enroll Today: www.kaukauna.k12.wi.us/4k-enrollment

**GROW STRONG
 WITH US**




kaukauna.k12.wi.us

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*****ECRWSEDDM****

Residential Customer

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Meetings are held on the second and fourth Mondays of each month in the Kaukauna Area School District's Board Room: 1701 County Road CE, Kaukauna. Meetings begin at 5:30 p.m. For agendas, minutes and additional info please visit: www.kaukauna.k12.wi.us.

KASD serves all or portions of these communities

- City of Kaukauna
- Town of Kaukauna
- Village of Sherwood
- Town of Buchanan
- Village of Harrison
- Town of Holland
- Town of Vanden Broek
- Town of Woodville
- Village of Combined Locks
- Village of Little Chute

Leadership Team

- Superintendent - Mark Duerwaechter
- Business Manager - Robert Schafer
- Director of Elementary Education - Ty Maki
- Director of Secondary Education - Matthew Smith
- Director of Special Education and Pupil Services - Sarah Newberry
- Director of Human Resources and Legal Services - Eloisa DeLeon

Principals

- KHS - Corey Baumgartner
- River View - Daniel Joseph Haen - Holly Magness
- NDLC - Abbey Frischmann
- Park - Ken Kortens
- Quinney - Stacy Knapp
- Tanner - Elizabeth Thoreson

Contact Us

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