

IC The Creek

Indian Creek Local School District Newsletter

May 2024

Brayden Stewart Awarded for Making Strides at Creek

Indian Creek High School sophomore Brayden Stewart has made great strides over the past few years, earning him the R.A. Horn Award from Ohio State Support Team Region 12.

He was recognized during a school assembly on May 3 and will be officially honored during a banquet in Byesville on June 11, where he will be joined by his family, intervention specialists Tom Mort and Kaylee Schubenski and district Superintendent Dr. T.C. Chappellear. The R.A. Horn Outstanding Achievement Award, which was established by the Ohio Department of Education, is given to one exemplary special education student from each of the SST's 16 regions in recognition of their remarkable performance, while Brayden was among 15 nominees for Region 12.

Brayden, the son of Jeff Stewart of Mingo Junction, has high-functioning autism and attended the School of Bright Promise since preschool but joined ICHS last year. He had mainly communicated through an iPad device but has since found his voice, which speaks volumes to how far he has come. He also has made many friends—at least 80 by his count—and can be seen cheering on school sports teams, helping to create sets for theater productions, working in the ICHS Spear-It Store, drawing and reading. He also has been greatly involved with the formation of unified sports teams through Unified Champion Schools, which has led to flag football, basketball and track activities with much more coming down the pike. Brayden was the most valuable player of the basketball game this winter, which included mixed teams with typical students, students from the School of Bright Promise and the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, plus he was running in a unified track meet at Edison High School with EHS and Buckeye Local High School members this month.

To say he is a success story would be an understatement and he has gained plenty of respect at the high school. Mort presented a framed certificate to Brayden during the assembly and said he was tremendously proud of the teen.



Indian Creek High School sophomore Brayden Stewart received the 2024 R.A. Horn Award from Ohio State Support Team Region 12 for outstanding student achievement after overcoming verbal communication obstacles and successfully integrating himself within his school. Brayden has high-functioning autism and previously used devices to speak, but he has since triumphed and found friends and great experiences in a traditional school setting. He is pictured with, from left, Assistant Superintendent John Belt, Superintendent Dr. T.C. Chappellear, district Director of Special Education John Rocchi, intervention specialist Tom Mort and ICHS Principal Louie Retton after being honored during a recent school assembly and will be officially recognized at a banquet in Byesville this June.

"[District Director of Special Education John Rocchi] asked me about nominating Brayden last month, then he got the call from SST Region 12 that he had won," Mort said. "The biographies of the other nominees were really impressive and this

"Brayden has taught us way more than we have taught him and he is truly an inspiration for all of us."

—ICHS Principal Louie Retton

was a really nice thing for Brayden. His greatest achievement was how well he integrated himself into the school and improving his speech, but I think what put him over was his involvement with the unified sports team. He had communicated through his cell phone apps and started his experi-

ence at school and made friends, and I think the state recognized all of that."

Brayden said he was excited about the honor makes and feels like "an MVP."

He also delights in his school experience and cannot wait to take part in more sports activities. He truly enjoys football and will get a chance to participate in a Red & Gold scrimmage on Aug. 30, plus he hopes to play soccer.

"It's good," he added, saying he and his family were very proud and he especially loved how the crowd cheered during the assembly.

Mort continued that Brayden is also on the school's Lighthouse Team and will say the Pledge of Allegiance during school broadcasts each week, and the teen has already been practicing

"He works hard and goes to the Steubenville Library once a week and reads sports books," Mort added. "He reads the books to different teachers and coaches."

(Continued on Page 4 as AWARD)

Indian Creek Celebrates Students at Scholars Banquet

It was a time to celebrate students who strived to succeed during the annual Indian Creek Local School District Scholars Banquet on May 5.

About 176 students were honored, many of whom attended festivities at St. Florian Hall in Wintersville with family members and the educators who inspired them. The event was sponsored by the Indian Creek Board of Education and Indian Creek High School Principal Louie Retton welcomed the crowd, saying the honorees were being recognized with a gold key for obtaining a 3.5 GPA or better for seven consecutive semesters; a silver key for earning a 3.5 GPA or higher over five consecutive semesters; a bronze key for obtaining high marks over three consecutive semesters; and certificates for one semester.

Seniors Madeline Ujcich and Carson Copeland respectively led the invocation and benediction and Superintendent Dr. T.C. Chappelle introduced guest speaker U.S. Army Capt. Abby Wilton.

Capt. Wilton, a 2015 ICHS alumna, received a bachelor's degree in mathematical sciences at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., and will earn her master's degree in information systems management-business intelligence and data analytics from Carnegie Mellon University as part of the Army's Artificial Intelligence Scholar Program. She was previously assigned as a military intelligence officer in Ansbach, Germany, and participated in several multinational exercises. She was also deployed to Kosovo to serve as an intelligence representative during the Afghanistan withdrawal and served as a headquarters battery executive officer. Additionally, she has been published in peer-reviewed journal, "Involve, A Journal of Mathematics," and has received a bevy of awards including the Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Armed Forces Service Medal and the Army Service Medal.

She addressed the students about taking risks that take them out of their comfort zone. Capt. Wilton said her personal choices included playing tuba in the ICHS Marching Band despite her small frame, which ultimately led her to continue playing in college and meeting her now-husband, Tyler; attending West Point, which took her miles away from home and placed her in a strict environment; and living abroad in Germany and learning about different cultures and cuisines. She said one setback was completing air assault training as a requisite for graduation at West Point, which led to an injury and delayed her graduation. Still, she never gave up and trained, finally passing a year later. Now, she awaited her master's degree and will enter a brand-new career through the Army.

"This program is so new that there's no next step in the career. As a planner, that's terrifying to me, but I don't think I made the



U.S. Army Capt. Abby Wilton addressed the crowd as guest speaker during the Indian Creek Local School District Scholars Banquet on May 5 at St. Florian Hall. Students were honored for earning a 3.5 GPA for one to seven consecutive terms and were joined by their families and influential educators.

wrong choice. I wouldn't change it," she added. "One of the big reasons I've been able to do what I do is because I took risks and got uncomfortable. Take risks and major in what you want to do. I studied math because I love it. I encourage you to try and find things that make you uncomfortable because you learn a lot in those moments."

She encouraged the youth to join clubs, try a sport and take advantage of opportunities to broaden their horizons, but also to remain true to themselves.

"Someone will try to put you in a mold. Be you and think about what you want," she concluded. "I challenge you...[to] take time to learn from the challenges that come from being uncomfortable. Seek guidance, embrace discomfort and enjoy your journey."

School board members Daniel Bove and Steve Cowser then distributed the awards, which included the following:

--Gold Key: seniors Carson Copeland, Kaitlyn Donahue, Kiersten Dorsey, Caitlyn Hager, Tyler Martin, Nicholas Maurer, Leah Parks, Landon Pownall, Victoria Robertson, Reese Scott, Arnesa Shoshi, Alexis Smith and Madeline Ujcich.

--Silver Key: Seniors Abigail Kopras, Raegan Rusyniak and Wyatt Scheel and juniors Caleb Bodo, Tyler Borham, Shiloah Connell, Noah Crane, Emma Doerr, Ericka Gibbons, Kyleigh Haines, Emily Hanlin, Charlee Henry, Jerlyn Hirschfield, James Houser, Raeni Kerr, Melia Lane, Hannah Long, Allison McGraw, Ava Paterra, Destiny Ratkovec, Allison Rawson, McKenna Scott, Kyle Schultz, Briggs Taylor, Caleb Zifzal and Marlee Zook.

--Bronze Key: Seniors Gabrielle Buchanan, Angelo Delguzzi, Brooklyn Reid, Logan Shane and Josie Watkins; juniors Jade Casey,

Elijah Gilman, Colton Giusto, Luke Gosney, Caila Higgins, Aubrey Duggan, Lucianna Pietro, Xander Mazak, Emma Vok and Knowledge Wright; and sophomores Madelyn Adams, Delaney Bates-Dallman, Gabriella Boyuk, Anna Bradley, Jaymes Chandler, Chelsea Channels, Ava Christian, Abigail Dennis, Emily Dennis, Ava Dowdle, Aaliyah Duke, Brooklyn Evans, Noah Forrester, Aubrie Hanlin, Ava Hooper, Bryson Kamarec, Brody Kurner, Kaleb Manion, Leah McFarland, Luke McMillion, Kolton Norris, Christopher Parks, Abbey Pendleton, Jackson Pitts, Taryn Redfern, Trevor Reese, Gavin Rheinhardt, Riley Sadler, Colin Schrupf, Shayne Scott, Trista Simeral, Valli Snyder, Marek Speece, TyLee Spencer, Ian Starkey, Brayden Stewart, Cooper Sweeney, Gabriella Taylor, Cara Vandeborne, Xavier Vines, Logan Wedlake, Katie Wells, Emma Westfall and George Zadanski.

--Certificates: Seniors Kylie Anderson, Matthew Barnes, Avery Barrett, Kevin Campos, Autumn Carmichael, Ryden Corona, Jada Creech, Madison Dayton-Dodd, Bonnie Frattini, Keller Guskea, Kaelyn Hayes, Sadie Heldreth, Lanie Hess, Grace Marinacci, Dianna McClelland, Ariaahna Mills, Nathan Mills, April Moffo, Noah Moore, Jason Nutter, Brian Orin, Mercedes Painter, Jaggar Woodbury and Kyla Wright; juniors Jacob Andresen, Alyson Hunt, Lilly McElroy, Nicolette Richards, Ivory Spencer, Jayce Nett, Hannah Sherbondy, Angelina Sutton and Amya Wood; sophomores Libby Berthot, Jacob Crosby, Marcus Corona, Madison Geary, Toby Hague, Kayden Hanle, Ashlynn Hess, Tessa Irwin, Macy Jordan Alexa Morris, Dalton Price, Maddox Simmons, Penelo-

(Continued on Page 4 as SCHOLARS)

Young Entrepreneurs Galore at ICMS Market Day

Indian Creek Middle School fifth graders will be peddling their wares during the annual Market Day on May 23.

The event will be open to the public from noon to 1:45 p.m. in the school gymnasium and will include 120 student vendors selling handmade products. Teacher Jaime McCumbers said it was a valuable lesson on entrepreneurship and takes that learning out of the classroom.

“Students have been researching all sorts of ideas on products to create and sell, such as magnets, food items, tie-dye clothing, keychains and so much more,” she said. “Economics is an Ohio learning standard for fifth-grade students. This is a project-based learning event that gets teachers, students and the community involved.”

“This project teaches across the curriculum because it includes

new vocabulary, writing, math skills with money, brainstorming product ideas and creating them and learning how the economy works.”

She noted that pupils have been learning about economics, business, customer service and more and will put those tools into practice on Market Day, plus they are required to participate as part of their grade.

McCumbers added that this was her third year with the program but it has been held in the past. Additionally, students and parents can purchase goods using Market Day bucks.

“Students will be able to earn Market Day bucks each day to use [at the event] and parents will exchange real money for Market Day money to spend. The proceeds will go to a local charity that parents will vote on that day.”

Cross Creek Holds Autism Acceptance Month Activities

Cross Creek Elementary students are learning about acceptance and understanding as part of Autism Acceptance Month for April.

First-grade teacher Erin Moffat, who organized efforts with intervention specialists Rachel Bodo and Amber Scott, said the school is highlighting the month with activities from decorations to presentations.

According to statistics, one in every 36 children has been identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and it reportedly occurs in all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups. They are often extra sensitive to lights, sounds, tastes and other senses and may react by stimming. This includes rocking back and forth, flapping their arms to yelling or making sounds when they are overwhelmed. Some may be non-verbal and require a device or use sign language to communicate while other indicators include challenges handling unexpected changes in their routines. However, they also may excel in their studies and learn to read faster.

Despite the differences, officials said they also seek friendship and acceptance from the people around them. Moffat said promoting events throughout the month gives students perspective and lessons about inclusion.

“We have decorated our building with Autism Acceptance Month posters [and] provided each homeroom with a packet of coloring pages, writing prompts and discussion points that teachers can use with their students to address questions about Autism,” said Moffat. “We also have provided online libraries that can be uploaded to Google Classroom platforms for independent student use to listen to books about Autism.”

She added that a PowerPoint presentation was also shared to help students understand more about individuals with Autism



Students at Cross Creek Elementary saw red for a good reason after donning the crimson hue on April 19 as part of Autism Acceptance Month observance. The school is marking the month with decorations, lessons, dress-up days and integration to showcase the importance of embracing differences and spreading understanding.

and each Friday includes a free dress-down day to highlight different aspects of Autism awareness and acceptance. They include lighting it up in blue on April 12 since the color represents calmness and acceptance; donning red on April 19 to show support for Autism, and wearing tie-dyed or rainbow garb on April 26 to show that all individuals are different and beautiful.

“All students and teachers are encouraged to participate by completing the activities in the packet and displaying them in classroom and pod areas, and by wearing the colors for the dress down days. Our purpose is not only to bring awareness, but acceptance of individuals on the Autism Spectrum and the value they add to our lives,” she added. “We traditionally have celebrated neurodiversity and Autism during the month of April. Rachel Bodo, Amber Scott and I have coordinated the activi-

ties for this month.”

She continued that the annual event also addresses neurodiversity, ADHD and other conditions. Moffat noted that Bodo and Scott have been instrumental in assisting students with needs at CCE and school counselor Brittany Shank has been incorporating tools of acceptance within her social-emotional learning lessons.

Bodo and Scott said they have been involving their students in recess and special classes so they can interact with others and establish friendships.

“We are building up community and awareness,” Bodo said. “We’re trying to promote it by following what [Moffat] had planned.”

“We provide the supports the students need and build rapport and trust,” Scott added. “It’s important to build relationships with the kids and we all work together.”

Hills Elementary Students Present Chemo Care Bags

Hills Elementary students showed their kindness once again by distributing 200 Chemo Care Bags for the Tony Teramana Cancer Center on May 20.

Colorful totes full of snacks, cards, journals and more were given to officials from the Trinity Foundation during a presentation in the school gym. Organizer Sarah Hibbits, who serves as the Orton Gillingham specialist at the school, said it was a labor of love and an annual service-learning project. About 60 second graders filled the room and cheered on as they supported the benefactors of those gifts: cancer patients undergoing treatment at the Steubenville facility.

"We packed 203 bags this year and have several boxes of extra items," Hibbits said. "Of those, 200 bags went to the Tony Teramana Cancer Center and three bags went to loved ones of Hills staff members."

She added that the project was inspired by her late mother, who passed away in 2016, and created out of love, kindness and curiosity.

"My mom [who was undergoing treatment at the facility] uttered the question, 'Who is taking care of them?' and it created a snowball. She was fortunate to have an army of people around who were taking care of her and making sure she was all right," she continued. "Not everyone has that resource. This project was created because we want people to know that even in the toughest of times, when it feels like you are all alone and that you will never climb out of the valley you are in, that there are many people who love and care for you and will do everything possible to lift you out of that valley. Cancer is lonely, both physically and metaphorically.



Hills Elementary second-grade students presented 200 Chemo Care Bags to assist patients undergoing treatment at the Tony Teramana Cancer Center.

"We hope that these bags help the patients realize that they are not alone and are very loved."

However, this year's event has a more personal purpose for Hibbits.

"In the past, I could only sympathize with this project. I know how it felt watching my loved ones go through cancer, chemotherapy and other treatment. This year, unfortunately, I am able to empathize. Our project got pushed back a bit compared to previous years because I have been going through some health problems. On Friday, I received my own cancer diagnosis. Presenting the bags on Monday and discussing the project was incredibly challenging. Pretty soon, I will be seeing things from the other side. I plan to continue this project next year. I hope to be cancer-free by then and will be able to do this project with new eyes and a fresh perspective so that we can make this project better and more meaningful."

The project has helped distribute thousands

of bags over the past nine years, and this year Hibbits worked with second-grade teachers and their classes to collect a variety of items from snacks, Gatorade and bottled water to journals, puzzle books and games. Additionally, sponsorships were available for \$20 each to cover the expenses for each bag. Sponsors' names are included in the bags, if they wish, with a personal card or note.

She said the schoolchildren also realize the importance of the project to those who receive the items.

"The children unfortunately never get to see the patients' reactions to the bags. However, they do receive thank you cards from the patients and they are able to hear the impact the bags made on the patients. This helps them realize the importance of the project and how those simple bags made a lasting impact on the individuals who received them. I as well as the other teachers get to see the reaction of the staff members when we take the bags to Teramana. They are the frontline of the care bags and they are able to see the reaction to our care bags. The staff get very emotional when we do this project because they see firsthand the smiles that we are able to put on their faces. We do not complete this project to get recognition or to pat ourselves on our backs. This project is to spread love, kindness and smiles on the faces of those who gave and those who receive."

Trinity Health System Foundation officials noted that it has been a blessing because it gives the patients assurance that they are not alone.

"It's exciting to see the patients because their faces light up," said foundation Director Catherine Poludniak. "It means the world to them."

Award

(Continued from Front)

That hard work also paid off by earning him a Bronze Key at the district's recent Scholar's Banquet for at least three consecutive semesters of obtaining a 3.5 GPA or higher.

Additionally, school officials concurred that he was a true success story.

"On behalf of the high school, I would like to congratulate Brayden on winning this award," said Principal Louie Retton.

"Brayden is a breath of fresh air every day at ICHS. Brayden has taught us way more than we have taught him and he is truly an inspiration for all of us."

"Brayden transitioned from the School of Bright Promise to Indian Creek High School last year and has absolutely thrived. He has injected positivity throughout our building and uplifts the staff and students on a daily basis," said Rocchi. "I

am so proud of Brayden and all of his accomplishments. He is well deserving of being the R.A. Horn award recipient and we are looking forward to seeing Brayden continue to learn and grow at Indian Creek."

"Brayden has been a great addition to Indian Creek High School," concluded Dr. Chappelle. "He brightens your day with a fist bump whenever he sees you. Brayden makes ICHS better."

Scholars

(Continued from Front)

pe Taylor, Madison Tolman, Joshua Wells, Kennedie Wells and Kamryn Wood; and freshmen Blake Archer, Landon Bonar, James Brothers, Damien Bruno, Summer Campbell, Tatum Campbell, Emma Castillo, Adrian Cornish, Sophia Doerr, Kylie Dray, Preslie Ewing, Jace Fankhauser, Dakota Forster, Corey Frey, Natalia Gombor, Trinity Greene, Brayden Hamilton, NyRobie Harmon, Hailee Hixenbaugh, Nina Householder, Ruby Howell, Madelyn Keener, Gabriel Kuruc, Emma Lamp, Max Lane, Kendra Lotrean, Morgan McCumbers, Lukas McVicker, Gianna Minch-Hick, Lei'Azjah Moore, Donovan Morris, Meghan Paolomilio, Bradley Paulman,

McKenna Puskarich, Payton Rath, Caden Saffle, Jocelyn Saltsman, Alexis See, Ethan Starr, Skielor Truax, Kaydence Walker, Grace Wiley and Ilsa Zinsmeister.

Meanwhile, district Assistant Superintendent John Belt announced the Gold Key Scholars' influential teachers and staff members. Among the educators recognized during the festivities were Mary Jo DiPietro, Lorrie Jarrett, Michael Minor, Joe Dunlevy, Renee Brothers, Ginny Pawelczyk, David Kell, Gary Ryan, Dave Moffat, Staci Copeland, Amanda Taflan, Crystal Hammack and Katie Padden.



Scholars Banquet Scenes

**Top Left: Senior Gold Key recipients.
Top Right: Junior Silver Key recipients.
Middle Left: Junior Bronze Key recipients.
Middle Right : Senior certificate recipients.
Lower Left: Junior certificate recipients.
Lower Right: Crowd scene at St. Florian Hall.
Bottom Right: Indian Creek Superintendent Dr. T.C. Chappellear addresses the crowd during the banquet.**