



RAIDER PRIDE

A State and National Award-Winning Publication

FEBRUARY 2023

IMPACTFUL INTENTIONS

Students at Ryan Gloyer Middle School (RGMS) are giving back to the community in a unique way by contributing to Damar Hamlin’s charity, The Chasing M’s Foundation. After hearing about the unfortunate news of Buffalo Bills’ Damar Hamlin’s recent collapse on the field, RGMS SHOUT (Social Handprints Overcoming Unjust Treatment) club students felt compelled to help.

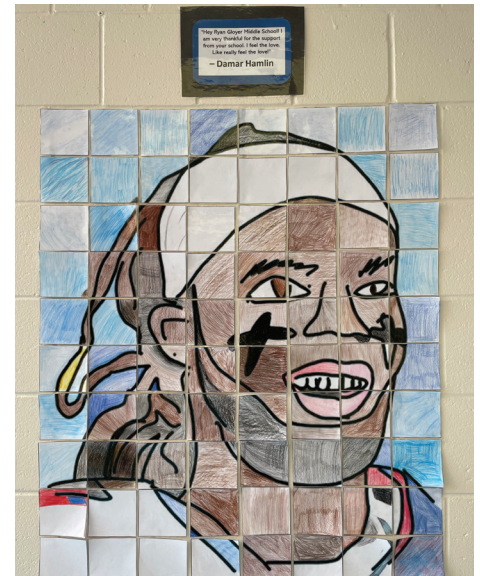
Ms. Gianna Serignese, school counselor at RGMS and SHOUT club advisor said her students felt connected and wanted to support Damar because he is a “Pittsburgher” from McKees Rocks who attended the University of Pittsburgh.

Every Thursday and Friday throughout the month of February, RGMS SHOUT

club students sat outside of the cafeteria selling “Positive Affirmation Bracelets” for \$1. They raised nearly \$250, and the proceeds will go to The Chasing M’s Foundation. Damar Hamlin created The Chasing M’s Foundation to use as a vehicle to bring lasting impact to his community. The foundation supports toy drives, back-to-school drives, kids camps and more. Additionally, eighth grader Abby Huppert drew a Damar Hamlin mosaic that is hanging in hallways of RGMS. Other RGMS SHOUT students divided the drawing into squares, ordered them, and cut them out into over 80 pieces. The students then colored all 80 pieces and hung them on the wall to make up the face of Damar Hamlin.

Ms. Serignese collaborated with eighth-grade English teacher, Ms. Courtney Strieby through a Learn, Explore, Act, Develop (LEAD) activity to help guide students in their fundraising efforts and powerful artwork display.

After Damar Hamlin learned what RGMS students were doing to support him and his charity, he provided a quote that’s proudly displayed above the mosaic that states, “Hey Ryan Gloyer Middle School! I am very thankful for the support from your school. I feel the love. Like really feel the love!”



I am very thankful for the support from your school. I feel the love. Like really feel the love! ■



SV All-School Musical set to open Thursday

There are only a few seats left for the SV All-School Musical, Mary Poppins! Don’t miss your chance to watch this practically perfect musical at the Seneca Valley Intermediate High School Auditorium. Visit the website for more information, [Ticket for SV Mary Poppins in Harmony from ShowClix](#). We hope you will have a supercalifragilisticexpialidocious good time!

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DATES TO REMEMBER

- March 6 School Board Meeting Work Session, IHS Auditorium, 7 p.m.
- March 13 School Board Meeting, Regular Session, IHS Auditorium, 7 p.m.
- March 17 Act-80 Day, No School for Students
- March 20 Snow Make Up Day #2, No School for Students

For more dates, visit: www.svsd.net/WebCalendar

IT’S AN HONOR!

Click here to view the 2022-23 Second Nine Weeks Honor Rolls for grades 7-12



100 DAYS OF FUN

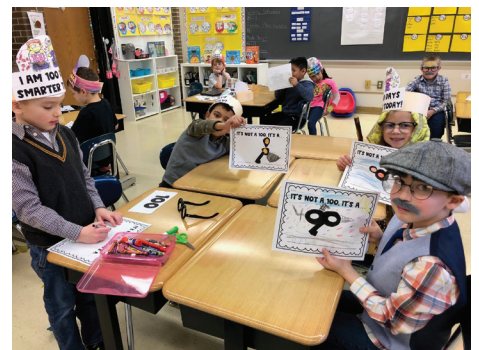
100 Days and Counting!

SV Elementary students recently celebrated the 100th Day of School with fun-filled activities and dressing up as 100 year-olds.

Activities included reading stories about the 100th day, making 100 positive phone calls to families, participating in physical fitness activities for 100 seconds, transforming the number 100 into new creations, building with 100 objects, crafting 100 bead necklaces, solving 100 piece puzzles, and writing around the classroom to make 100 words!

Some students and staff rocked their 100-year-old looks. Everyone had a blast.

One Hundred never looked so good! ■





2023-2024 KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

We are pleased to welcome incoming kindergarten students as they prepare for the 2023-24 school year!

Kindergarten at SV is an engaging, half-day program with transportation that is provided one way. In order to enroll, **children must be five (5) years old on or before September 1 of the enrollment year.**

Online registration opens February 14, 2023. To register, visit Enrollment and Registration at www.svsd.net/23-24KRegistration

Registration at this time is intended to collect pertinent preliminary information, including parent/guardian contact and student records.

Documents that are **REQUIRED** for registration are:

- Two documents as proof of residency (lease/mortgage documents, utility bill, etc.)
- Child's birth certificate, passport, baptismal certificate or other certified birth record
- Immunization records to date



WELCOMING STUDENT SCIENTISTS

Love was in the air during the I Love STEM Elementary Outreach Day late last month. The SV Science Honor Society welcomed 66 elementary students in for two hours of science fun during their annual event held at the high school. Students investigated heart rate, isolated the DNA from strawberries, made slime, crafted lava lamps using Alka-Seltzer tablets, created marbled paper, investigated acids and bases using goldenrod paper and red cabbage juice, and made a “love potion” using vinegar and baking soda. Over 30 Science Honor Society students volunteered their time running the stations and acting as group leaders. The event was planned by junior Shivani Umesh, who serves as the Elementary Outreach Coordinator, and her committee.

“While planning and organizing this event took a lot of effort, it was all worth it for the kids! The last time Science Honor Society hosted the event was before the pandemic, so with the help of our advisor, Mrs. Weston, we were able to bring back this amazing event,” stated Miss Umesh. “Many of us still remember the STEM day events we went to as young children and we wanted to bring it back for the next generation of students.”

The Science Honor Society strategically planned engaging experiments to best represent a



variety of simple science topics, such as density, phases of matter, and acids and bases.

“They have been working since November picking out activities, trying them out, and creating the stations,” said Kelly Weston, Science Honor Society advisor. “I am very proud of this group of students. It was wonderful to see them sharing their love of science with the younger students.”

Parents, students, and advisors alike enjoyed the fun-filled day.

“My stepdaughter has been telling everyone what she learned...and I learned things too! All of the students did such a wonderful job teaching these concepts to the kids and being patient with them,” said parent, Candace Toubou.

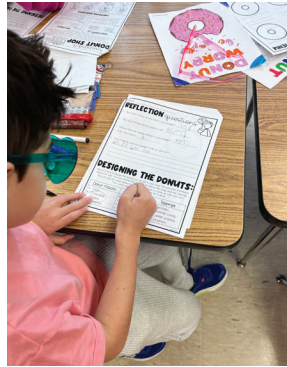
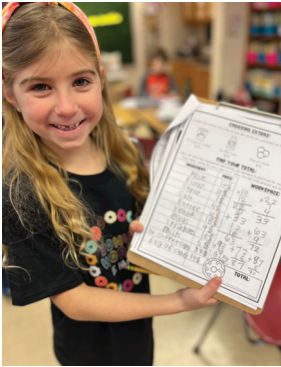
“Curiosity is something that makes learning fun and these kids had lots! It was really rewarding to have volunteered,” stated senior Andy Weisgerber, a volunteer at the event.

“Everyone can agree that the best part about the event was the kids themselves,” said Miss Umesh. “We hope to continue this tradition to expose and inspire a new generation of students to engage in STEM!” ■



SWEET TREATS, CLASSROOM TRANSFORMATION

Second graders in Ms. Bondi's class at Connoquenessing Valley Elementary school celebrated a Dunkin' Donuts themed classroom transformation with their very own donut shop! Students were tasked with creating their own donut shops while staying within a budget of \$150. Each student had to buy all the necessary materials to run their shop and then had to create the donuts they would sell. The class learned about the history of donuts, listened to several stories about the sweet treat, and enjoyed donut-themed brain breaks! ■

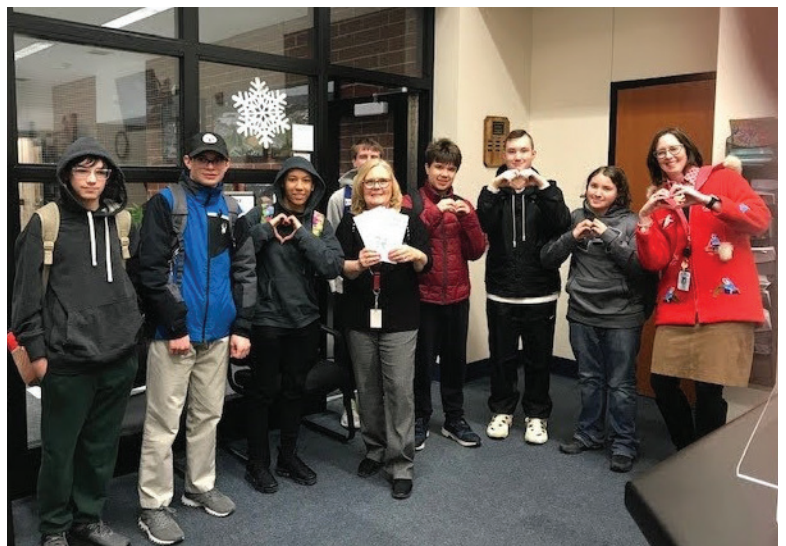


CARDS OF KINDNESS

This month, Ms. Wimer's students at the SHS took a field trip to share cards and encouragement with Ms. Connie Wetzel, for her grandson, Aiden. Ms. Wetzel is an administrative assistant in the District's business office. Her grandson Aiden is nine years old and is receiving chemotherapy for stage four pancreatic cancer. Ms. Wimer's class, which has been displaying random acts of kindness through beautification efforts at the high school campus, wanted Aiden to feel supported and connected.

"I was so truly touched by these students and their random act of kindness. I was brought to tears as I sat afterward and read each card they made for Aiden. Their kind words, support and encouragement will mean so much to Aiden," Ms. Wetzel said.

A spaghetti fundraiser was held on February 18, to help the family with medical and living expenses. ■

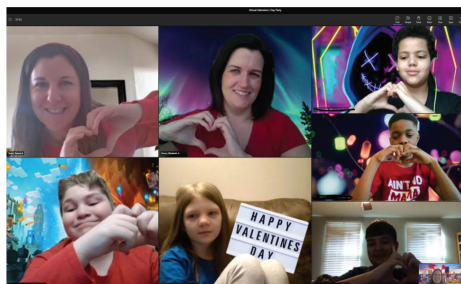


VALENTINE'S DAY FESTIVITIES

Seneca Valley Students really make our hearts smile.

In celebration of Valentine's Day, many classrooms districtwide brought in their most decorated valentine boxes and exchanged cards during class parties earlier this month.

Additionally, students at Connoquenessing Valley Elementary made special valentine cards for residents at Passavant. They were able to deliver hundreds of cards to the residents to brighten their Valentine's Day. How sweet! ■

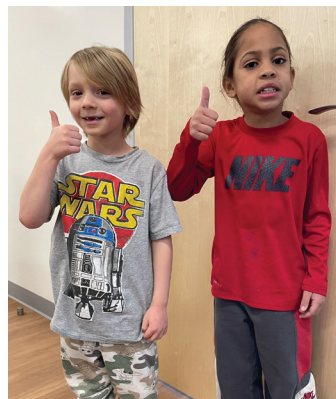


GOING RED FOR HEART MONTH

This month we celebrated American Heart Month and Wear Red Day to raise awareness about heart disease in women.

Cardiovascular disease is a leading cause of death among Americans, especially women.

Students and staff at Ehrman Crest Elementary and Middle School rocked their RED gear to raise awareness and show support. Staff continued the tradition of donating to the American Heart Association to further research of heart related diseases. ■



ADVOCATING FOR HEART HEALTH

Last year, senior Devin Latsko went into sudden cardiac arrest during gym class. This year, he is dedicating his graduation project to sharing his story and being an ambassador for the American Heart Association. Latsko spent a day during the first semester talking to middle school health classes about the importance of CPR. This month, he spent an afternoon at the Carnegie Science Center speaking on behalf of the American Heart Association and advocating for knowledge on heart health. To read more about his project visit [American Heart Association kicks off Heart Month \(wtae.com\)](https://www.wtae.com). ■



THAT'S NEW

ECMS Students Get Creative with CIRC

Ehrman Crest sixth graders had the opportunity to innovate products earlier this month during their Creativity, Innovation and Research Center (CIRC) time.

As shared with the students, these projects should include everything that CIRC represents:

C for creativity; the students created not only the innovation but a technical drawing, presentation for judges, and a commercial to advertise their product.

I for innovation; each group was asked to innovate an existing product. We started with the question, "What bugs you?" From there students developed ideas that would be feasible in today's market.

RC for research center; students were asked to research the innovation to see if something like it is already on the market. They then researched ways to innovate it. They also researched ways to market their products and building a working model.

Some of the creative innovations included:

- A ketchup bottle lid that stirs the ketchup before you use it to mix the liquids
- Waterproof and fireproof gloves for mechanics
- A dignity bib for adults who need to protect their clothing



- Refillable dry erase markers
- An adaptation to one of our pieces of playground equipment to make it safer
- Toothpaste tablets to use in place of the tube
- Sports cones with spikes to keep them in place
- Sneeze Clean a product that includes Kleenex, a mini waste can, and hand sanitizer all in one container
- A butter stick for spreading butter like a glue stick
- A drain for a frying pan to remove grease
- A heating and cooling pillow
- A temperature gauge for disposable coffee cups that gauges when it is safe to drink a hot drink

"I am so proud of our innovators," shared Sandy Thompson, Ehrman Crest Middle School CIRC Teacher. ■

CYBER SUCCESSES

Four Ryan Gloyer Middle School (RGMS) students earned top recognition at the CyberPatriot's National Youth Cyber Defense Competition, the world's largest cybersecurity challenge.

The T-Rollers team of RGMS eighth graders earned the most points of any middle school in Pennsylvania over the first two rounds. They advanced to the state round of the competition placing second overall. The team was also the only middle school in the state to qualify for the National Semifinal Round after scoring in the top third of the nation based on their performance in the first three rounds.

Through a series of six-hour online competition rounds, the team was given a set of virtual operating systems and tasked with finding and fixing cybersecurity vulnerabilities while maintaining critical services. Using a proprietary competition

system, teams were scored on how secure they make the system.

The T-Rollers team, comprised of Albert Pimenov, Sidney Newton, Parker Budney, and Nolan Minder, had a successful inaugural season under the direction of Greg Smolinski, an RGMS gifted support teacher and team advisor.

"The four young men worked well as a team, supporting each other when stuck on a challenging problem. Their knowledge of Windows 10, Server 19, and Linux for people their age is impressive," said Mr. Smolinski. "They definitely taught me a few new things about the inner workings of these operating systems."

The students competed in the Semifinal Round on January 21, and finished the season in 200th place at the nationwide Middle School Competition.

The Cyber Defense Competition challenges teams of high school and middle school



students to find and fix cybersecurity vulnerabilities in virtual operating systems. Teams are put in the position of newly hired IT professionals tasked with managing the network of a small company.

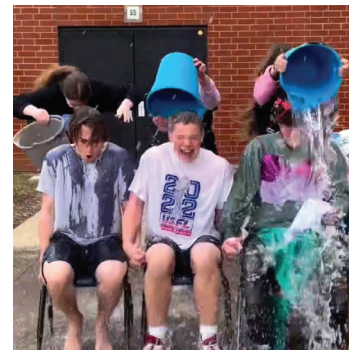
"As the competition rounds progressed, it became apparent how many different complex threats can be used against computer networks. The Air Force Association sponsors CyberPatriot because they see that need to train students to help defend our country's digital assets through logic, knowledge, thought, and commitment," Mr. Smolinski added. ■

READY...SET...POP

We 'POP' for inclusion!

Late this month, Seneca Valley held their third annual Polar Pop event. Students in grades 9-12 and staff participants popped ice-cold water balloons over their heads in the freezing temperatures to show support for inclusion at Seneca Valley. In a world where exclusion and discrimination continue to divide people, the 'POP' is a fun way to include others in our school community.

Seneca Valley's Polar Pop directly contributes to The Pittsburgh Polar Plunge, an event that raises funds and awareness for Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA). Proceeds raised from the event help provide year-round sports-specific training and competition for thousands of athletes with intellectual disabilities, including the Seneca Valley Bocce team and Best Buddies program. ■



SNAKES, TURTLES, AND FROGS, OH MY!

Herpetologist April Claus visited Seneca Valley Intermediate High School Honors Biology classes this month, bringing with her a dozen species of amphibians and reptiles native to Pennsylvania. Students learned about the vital purpose of these animals in our environment and were able to interact with the snakes, turtles, and frogs in a unique, hands-on experience.

Ms. Claus established these interactive environmental programs as a way to introduce native reptile and amphibian species to Pennsylvanians.

“Using live specimens, models, sights, and sounds, these engaging “hands-on” environmental programs are presented to thousands of local citizens from area schools, colleges, parks, nature centers, summer camps and teacher workshops every year,” said Ms. Claus.

Many thanks to the SV Foundation for their generous support in bringing this program into our classrooms! ■



ON TARGET

The Raider Battalion Marksmanship Team participated in the Annual JROTC National Postal competition which gives all cadets who participate in air rifle marksmanship an opportunity to experience a national-level competition.

This year the Raider Battalion Marksmanship team ranked 7th overall and qualified for the Regional JROTC Service Championships that will take place at Camp Perry in Ohio in April. The team was led by junior, Logan Randall who was the team's top shooter, sophomore, Wesley Marks, senior, Lexi Bardos, senior, Gracen Heilman and sophomore, Riley Hubbard. ■



NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP STANDOUT STUDENTS

Seneca Valley seniors Haihan Xu, Peter Ko and Eric Combs have been named finalists in the 68th Annual National Merit Scholarship Program held by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC).

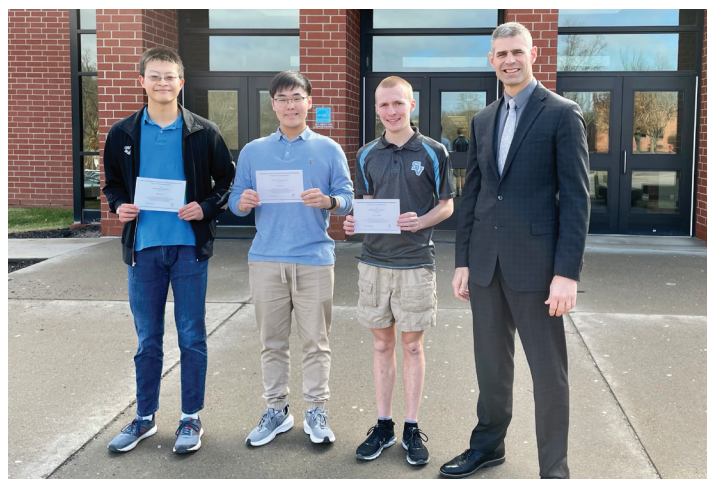
Eric Combs, Haihan Xu and Peter Ko have qualified as semifinalist in National Merit Scholarship which indicates that they are in the top 16,000 high school seniors in the country. Recently, we were notified that they have moved onto the finalist round where they can compete for finalist standing in this prestigious honor. "All these students are currently enrolled in a demanding course load that requires maximum effort to succeed, and all are doing extremely well. We are very proud of all of them and wish them the best of luck as they move further along in the process," said Seneca Valley Senior High School Principal Mr. Bob Ceh.

These SV standouts are three of approximately 16,000 finalists and will now advance to the next level of the program where they have the opportunity to earn National Merit Scholarships and, ultimately, the Merit Scholar® title.

"I am grateful for my incredible teachers and my parents who have inspired me to work hard. Without their support, I would not have been able to earn this great award," said Mr. Combs.

Mr. Xu added, "I feel honored to receive the distinction of National Merit Finalist and represent Seneca Valley with this title."

About 1.5 million juniors in more than 21,000 high schools entered



the 2023 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2021 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®), which served as an initial screen of program entrants.

"I am proud to be a National Merit Finalist and represent Seneca Valley with this title. Being recognized for this reflects both my own hard work as well as the contributions from my teachers here at SV, and I know I will continue to work hard to achieve success in my future endeavors," said Mr. Ko.

For more information on National Merit Scholarship Program, visit www.nationalmerit.org. ■

STUDENT VISIONARIES NOMINATED FOR COMPETITION

SV juniors, Sarah Vescio and Kacy Christensen were nominated by The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) as 2023 Student Visionaries of the Year for their incredible leadership and passion to find a cure for blood cancer and to do so with involvement from the entire Seneca Valley community. Both young women are participating in a charitable seven-week campaign raising funds and awareness of the LLS mission to cure blood cancer and improve the lives of patients and their families.

Miss Vescio and Miss Christensen were motivated to participate in the campaign after their teammate, Virginia Fronk, a senior on the Girls Soccer team, was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma in August of 2022. The students were inspired by Miss Fronk's journey to beat cancer and how her positivity impacted the whole community.



The students' goal is to raise \$30,000 by March 31, 2023. To learn more or donate to the campaign, visit [Student Visionaries of the Year Pittsburgh \(11s.org\)](http://StudentVisionariesoftheYearPittsburgh(11s.org)) ■



AIU3 NAMES SV TEACHERS 'TRANSFORMED FELLOWS'

Nine Seneca Valley teachers were selected to be a transformED Teaching Fellow. The Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU) successfully piloted the fellowship last year as its latest vehicle for providing transformational professional development opportunities. The following educators are one of 36 teachers selected across the region to be awarded a 2022-2023 transformED Teaching Fellowship.

Ms. Halley Alexander – Ryan Gloyer Middle School – Learning Support

Mr. Brian Carson – Seneca Valley Intermediate High School - Chemistry

Ms. Jordan DiBucci – Ehrman Crest Elementary School – Grade 2

Ms. Karissa Lambert – Ryan Gloyer Middle School – Learning Support

Mr. Tom Lavelle – Seneca Valley Intermediate High School - Biology

Ms. Tracey Lowe – Haine Middle School – Grade 5/Science and Social Students

Ms. Kristin Schlemmer – Ehrman Crest Elementary School – Grade 3

Mr. Paolo Tolomeo – Haine Elementary School – Grade 4

Ms. Rebecca Whitney – Ehrman Crest Elementary School – Grade 3

The transformED Teaching Fellowship reflects the AIU's commitment to support the professional development of quality educators, and the AIU is excited to embark upon this next iteration of the initiative that aims to convene teacher leaders interested in instructional innovation to incubate new approaches to teaching and learning. As part of this small community of practice, fellows will learn collectively with their peers in sessions held throughout the remainder of the school year. In addition, each fellow receives a \$1,500 classroom mini grant to purchase technology, subscriptions, maker materials and other resources to support their innovative teaching approaches to be applied in their classrooms.

Mr. Lavelle said, "It is both exciting and an honor to be selected as a transformED Teaching Fellow. The fellowship's goal of customizing educational experiences to better address students' needs is definitely in step with the S.V. Center for Biotechnology's foundational philosophies. I am excited to use the grant to create Ecology-based experiences for students who possess such academic inclinations."

"The S.V. Center for Biotechnology is grateful to the Allegheny Intermediate Unit for supporting revolutionary teaching methods more often associated with university-level learning and training. The grant provided is enabling us to outfit the lab with the most up to date water monitoring equipment. The equipment and sensors will be used with our newly established EcoTech students participating in aquatic biology research scenarios," added Mr. Carson.

Mr. Chet Henderson, Principal of Seneca Valley Intermediate High School said, "Being new to the Seneca Valley School District, there are lots of new faces and many programs I must work to learn more about. That stated, one that stuck out and instantly grabbed my attention was the wonderful work being done in our genetics lab by Mr. Lavelle and Mr. Carson. The partnerships they have built with local colleges and the hands-on learning



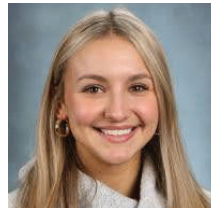
Ms. Halley Alexander



Mr. Brian Carson



Ms. Jordan DiBucci



Ms. Karissa Lambert



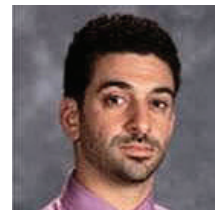
Mr. Tom Lavelle



Ms. Tracey Lowe



Ms. Kristin Schlemmer



Mr. Paolo Tolomeo



Ms. Rebecca Whitney

experiences our students have are outstanding and reflective of what the district envisions for all students."

Ms. Lowe said, "I was honored and excited to be selected for the Teacher Innovation Fellowship. This opportunity allows me to grow professionally by learning from fellow teachers. With the generous grant, I plan to continue to inspire the love of science through modern ways to grow and study plants. We will be creating an outside classroom, planting a flower garden, and studying hydroponics to provide students with authentic learning experiences. We are hopeful this garden will not only support my students but all students K-6."

Dr. Erin Wilcher, Principal of Haine Middle School added, "Ms. Lowe has been an amazing addition to the Haine Middle School staff. This year when she charged with teaching science, she made a promise to her students to provide at least one hands-on lab each week to bring learning to life. This fellowship has awarded her the opportunity to continue her quest in bringing authentic learning to her students in a variety of ways."

TransformED is an initiative of the Allegheny Intermediate Unit that connects educators with the professional learning, technology access, peer networks and grant funding they need to start, scale and sustain transformational change.

This fellowship was made possible through grant funding provided by the Grable and Hillman foundations. Follow the progress of the 2022-23 fellowship on Twitter at @transformED_AIU. ■

RYAN GLOYER MIDDLE SCHOOL REDESIGNATED AS 'SCHOOLS TO WATCH'

Ryan Gloyer Middle School (RGMS) is one of only 10 exemplary Middle Grades Schools in Pennsylvania have been named a 2023 PA Don Eichhorn Schools: "Schools to Watch" (PA STW) as part of a recognition program developed by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. This program is an elite partnership with the Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education (PAMLE), Duquesne University, Edinboro University, Kutztown University, and the Horace Mann Service Corporation. RGMS is receiving this honor this honor as a fourth PA STW redesignation after receiving the initial recognition 12 years ago.

"This recognition is important to us because it reflects our focus on middle level development and our commitment to continuous improvement," said Dr. Tony Babusci, Ryan Gloyer Middle School Principal. "The feedback we receive through this process supports our growth and helps us to set new goals. Achieving re-designation is a reflection of the efforts of everyone in the building including maintenance and custodial staff, cafeteria workers, paraprofessionals, administrative assistants and teachers."

RGMS joined 38 other middle-grades schools recognized over the history of the program during the Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Educations State Conference that took place at the Crowne Plaza in King of Prussia, just north of Philadelphia, on Feb. 26. RGMS will also be recognized nationally with all the other recognized STW schools across the country in Washington, D.C., at the National Forum's National Schools to Watch Conference on June 22-24.

"The entire staff of Ryan Gloyer Middle School should be very proud to be awarded the Don Eichhorn Schools to Watch redesignation," said Dr. Matt McKinley, Assistant Superintendent, grades 7-12. "They have a tireless passion for their students and, through their teaming and collaboration, work to create lifelong learners. I would like to congratulate all of them for their efforts."

PA STW State leaders selected each school for its academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, social equity and organizational structures and processes. In addition, each school has strong leadership, teachers who work together to improve curriculum and instruction, and a commitment to assessment and accountability to bring about continuous improvement.

Bruce Vosburgh, PA State STW Director, stated, "We congratulate these schools for being places that do great things for all of their students. These schools demonstrate that high-performing middle grades schools are places that focus on academic growth and achievement. They are also places that recognize the importance of meeting the needs of all of their students and ensure that every child has access to a challenging, high-quality education. These schools have proven that it is possible to overcome barriers to achieving excellence, and any middle-level school in any state can truly learn from their examples."

The Schools to Watch selection process is based on a written application that required schools to show how they met criteria developed by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform. Schools that appeared to meet the criteria were then visited by a state team, which observed classrooms, interviewed administrators, teachers, students, and parents, and looked at achievement data, suspension rates, quality of lessons, and student work.

Schools are recognized for a three-year period, and at the end of three years, they must demonstrate progress on specific goals in order to be re-designated. Unlike the Blue Ribbon recognition program, "Schools to Watch" requires schools to not just identify strengths, but to also focus on areas for continuous improvement; thus the three year re-designation. The re-designation process is based on the school's continued growth since their last STW recognition.

"Middle school is a time of rapid change and development for our adolescent children.



Pictured L to R: Ryan Gloyer Middle School teachers Ms. Amanda Chaousy, Learning Support; Ms. Kasey Krause, English Language Arts; Ms. Trisha Butschle, Assistant Principal; Dr. Tony Babusci, Principal and Math teacher, Mr. Cam Palmer.

It takes special people who are dedicated to middle level learners to not only work with students ages 13-15 but also who are willing to collaborate with the other adults in the school. That type of collaboration and teaming drives powerful authentic learning for our students," stated Dr. Tracy Vitale, Seneca Valley School District Superintendent of Schools. "We are so proud that RGMS has once again been designated as a *School to Watch*. To be able to achieve and sustain such a milestone, year after year, speaks to the incredible students, staff, and culture in that building."

Launched in 1999, Schools to Watch began as a national program to identify middle-grades schools across the country that were meeting or exceeding 37 researched based criteria developed by the National Forum. The Forum developed a website <https://www.middlegradesforum.org/> that features online tours of schools, as well as detailed information about the selection criteria used in the recognition program. There are now 17 states across the country, which have trained Schools to Watch State Teams, with more than 650 schools recognized across the country.

The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform began as an alliance of 65 educators, researchers, national associations, and officers of professional organizations and foundations dedicated to improving education in the middle grades. ■



SVTV SPONSORS 10TH ANNUAL 24-HOUR FILM CONTEST

On Saturday, Feb. 11, SVTV kicked off its 10th Annual 24-Hour Film Contest with six student teams. This fun, yet grueling contest required filmmakers to write, shoot, edit, and upload a completed film in just 24 hours. The catch was that teams did not know the required elements until the start of the contest, which began at 10 a.m. on Saturday, limiting the time available to plan. Each film had to include a required prop, a required line of dialogue, and a required character, and each team randomly drew a unique genre.

This year's contest requirements included: Julie or Julius Benedict, excessive talker, a ruler, and the line: "There's a lot of things I'd like to say right now, but I'm just gonna be quiet." Genres ranged from horror to coming of age. Nearly 30 students participated in writing, shooting, acting, or editing,



and all teams finished their films on time.

Junior Caleb Magill shared his experience, "Having a limited timeline definitely gave us a sense of urgency and helped us work more efficiently."

The film projects are judged by professionals working in the film and video industries and will be screened in the coming weeks. ■

SV ORCHESTRAS PERFORM AT STRAND THEATER

On Feb. 16, students from the high school orchestras performed a Valentine's Day concert at the Strand Theater in Zelenople. Students learned both pop and classical love songs such as "Can't Help Falling in Love," made famous by Elvis Presley, and Tchaikovsky's "Romeo and Juliet."

Orchestra director Ms. Miller said, "It is so wonderful to see students engaging with the community, and performing all kinds of repertoire." The Seneca Valley Chamber Orchestra will continue to partner with the Strand Theater to bring more community concerts in 2023. ■



PMEA DISTRICT JAZZ AT SRU

This month, 25 Seneca Valley band students were selected by solo audition to perform in the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA) District Jazz Festival, held Feb. 17-18, at Slippery Rock University. The festival consisted of three auditioned jazz ensembles comprised of students from Beaver, Butler, Lawrence, and Mercer counties. Seneca Valley had the most students of any district represented at the festival.

Guest conductors included Stephen Philip Harvey, a Maryland-based saxophonist, educator, composer, and arranger; Joseph Sheller, freelance saxophonist, arranger, composer, and educator in the greater Pittsburgh area; and Lynn Speakman, a highly sought-after saxophonist, composer, and arranger from New York City. The event concluded with a public concert at Slippery Rock University's Miller Auditorium.



Participants included:

Leanne Abel, Maya Anglero, Paityn Armstrong, James Beck, Noah Bracht, Ivan Chen, Elora Dabravalskas, Elizabeth Hixon, Leta Hixon, Isaac Hixon, Maddy Karns, Colton Marley, Peter McHenry, Addison McLane, Bailey Milanovich, Avery Rape, Bridget Scott, Ben Stanton, Brandon Suski, Katie Sylves, Roy Tilton, Zachary Tollerton, Dorothy Vogel, Ray Walter, and Adrian Wrubel.

Students are led by Varden Armstrong and Robert Babick, secondary instrumental instructors. ■

SV THEATER CLASSES AND THESPIAN TROUPE ATTEND WORKSHOP

The Seneca Valley Thespians Troupe and members of the Theater Production and Advanced Theatre classes, attended a workshop in Pittsburgh at the Byham Theater, sponsored by the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust. The students were given an opportunity to learn from theater professionals who currently work in the industry in settings throughout the region.

Learning skills in Stage Combat, Improv Acting, Stage Management, and Scenic Design this year, the students were also offered workshops in Theatrical Costuming, Makeup, Playwriting, and Sound and Lighting Design. The workshops focused on a brief job description, followed by an activity, allowing the students to participate in some element of that particular job.

Amber Hugus, the troupe sponsor, was impressed by the workshop on scenic design. Students were required to design a scene based on an emotion. "It is so valuable for the students to meet and work with individuals who are succeeding in these fields, post-graduate," said Hugus.

Senior, Kaitlyn Mankevich stated, "The workshop was so much fun as we got to flex our creative muscles and work as a team. I have more respect for stage management and set design than before, as now I know just how much work goes into it."

Junior, Meg Hilling added, "I thought the experience and environment of our workshops at the Byham Theater were incredible! They were super inclusive to the students, always making us feel seen, and taught us such good lessons on the field we are all passionate about theater!" ■



PMEA REGION CHORUS AT PINE RICHLAND HIGH SCHOOL

This month, 20 SV Choral students were selected to participate in the PMEA Region I Chorus Festival held at Pine Richland High School. Seneca Valley had the most students participate in the festival from any school district.

Dr. Ryan Keeling from Westminster College brought a wealth of experience as the guest conductor. Student participants were qualifiers from nine counties, including Allegheny, Westmoreland, Greene, Fayette, Washington, Beaver, Butler, Lawrence, and Mercer. The approximately 170 qualifying singers from

western Pennsylvania collaborated to create beautiful music for, "a life-changing experience with choral music," according to Pine Richland host Lee Rickard.

Participants included:

Ayla Alexander, Connor Benson, Josh Cantella, Hunter Connell, Sofia Hartman, Elizabeth Hixon, Isaac Hixon, Leta Hixon, Elia Honeycutt, Jackson Hugus, Graham Logue, Colton Marley, Anya Maschmeier, Natalie Palmer, Christian Schuster, Giulia Siegfried, Madi Tomo, Dorothy Vogel, Callum Williams, and Emma Zelesnak.



Students are led by Bobi-Jean Alexander and Claire Barker, secondary choral instructors. ■

SV JAZZ ENSEMBLES CULTIVATE LOVE FOR JAZZ MUSIC

The 'Jazz Family' at Seneca Valley is a strong one. That sentiment was obvious when members of the Seneca Valley Jazz Ensembles (grades 7-12) met on Feb. 3, to play jazz music, listen to the genre, and enjoy each other's company. It was an informal "hang-out" session meant to increase comradery between the three bands that often only interact during pre-scheduled concerts. Students enjoyed their time together and shared some interesting thoughts.

Senior Andy Weisgerber (trumpet, Jazz Ensemble 2) stated, "It was really exciting to be able to share the stage with my peers for the afternoon outside of a performance. I love hanging out with my friends in the other bands and having the opportunity to inspire younger classmates is really special! It's really important to me to be a good role model for younger students, helping them strive for musical and personal growth."

Eighth grader Imogen Tomo (trombone, RGMS Jazz Ensemble) added, "The jazz hang was a great experience because I got to see all the seniors and upperclassmen. I think there has always been this boundary between grades, but the jazz hang not only blurred that line, but also was a great music experience. I not only learned about different composers and groups, but also how incredible it is when a group of people get together with the same thoughts about music--the same objective."



Senior James Beck (Alto Saxophone, Jazz Ensemble 1) stated, "The jazz hang was a blast! As a senior, it was so cool to get to share my love for jazz with the middle school students and hopefully even inspire them to dive deeper into jazz music!"

With the success of this event, the band department plans to continue to seek ways to build community within the ensembles. It is true that the performance of music, coupled with personal relationships, go hand-in-hand. ■



PMEA DISTRICT ORCHESTRA AT BROOKVILLE AREA HIGH SCHOOL

On Jan. 26-28, 10 Seneca Valley Orchestra students participated in the PMEA District 2, 3, and 5 Orchestra at Brookville Area High School. Students had the opportunity to perform professional-level repertoire under the direction of conductor, David Anderson. Through a rigorous audition process, six Seneca valley students were selected to advance to Western Region Orchestra in March.

Tristan Conrad, junior cellist, said, "District orchestra was super fun. It

was very cool to be able to play with a symphony orchestra!"

Participants in the PMEA District Orchestra included:

Allison Alexander – cello, Ayla Alexander – bass, Tristan Conrad – cello, Charlotte Davis – violin, Gretchen Kellar – violin, Isabella Muthler – viola, Jake Pieszak – violin, Grace Riggle – violin, Zoe Sciallo – violin, and Madeline Shipe – bass.

Students were led by Sarah Miller, secondary orchestra instructor. ■



ALL-SCHOOL MUSICAL READY TO RAISE THE CURTAIN

For the past six weeks, students have been singing, dancing, and acting their way through one of the most beloved Disney stories, *Mary Poppins*. With a cast, orchestra, and crew with numbers of well over 150 students, the energy on stage will surely delight you. There are many magical moments in the show, and yes, *Mary Poppins* herself will be flying! You will enter the storytelling of *Mary Poppins* when you first enter the IHS auditorium lobby, with an immersive experience taking you right onto Cherry Tree Lane. The production team is excited to make this musical a community-wide event, involving many different groups within the Seneca Valley school district to help with the production. The cast started a “Make it Pop” marketing campaign that has featured many diverse groups in the District, including Dr. Vitale with the Central Office employees, various sports teams, elementary classes, art classes, and more!

Follow along on social media:

Instagram: @senecavalleymusical or Facebook: @SenecaValleyAll-SchoolMusical

For younger audience members, an opportunity to meet cast members of the show will take place before the Sunday, March 5, matinee. ■



PMEA DISTRICT BAND AT SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY

The Seneca Valley Band had 20 students selected to participate in the PMEA District 5 Band Festival held on Feb. 9-11, at Slippery Rock University. District Band is a representative festival of all the schools in PMEA District 5. It is the first step in the state-level music festival system, where students have the opportunity to advance to the regional-level. The guest conductor for the festival was Dr. Rebecca Phillips, Professor of Music and Director of Bands at Colorado State University. Based on audition results, nine SV students (Leanne Abel, Nicole Brown, Paityn Armstrong, Peter Ko, Colton Marley, Camyn Meanor, Bridget Scott, Mackenzie Tunstall, and Ray Walter) were selected to move on to the PMEA Region 1 Band Festival to be held in March at Butler Intermediate High School.

Students were led by Varden Armstrong, Robert Babick, Brian Croach, and Sara Snyder, secondary instrumental instructors.

Participants included:

Leanne Abel - trombone, Allison Alexander - euphonium, Ayla Alexander - flute, Paityn Armstrong - clarinet, James Beck - alto saxophone, Noah Bracht - bass trombone, Sydney Brower - french horn, Nicole Brown - bass clarinet, Andrew Golias - percussion, Elizabeth Hixon - clarinet, Leta Hixon - tuba, Isaac



Hixon - french horn, Peter Ko - alto saxophone, Katie Mack - oboe, Colton Marley - trumpet, Camyn Meanor - french horn, Bridget Scott - trombone, Katie Sylves - trumpet, Mackenzie Tunstall - clarinet, and Raymond Walter - trumpet. ■



WINTER SPORTS UPDATES

SWIMMING & DIVING

The WPIAL Diving championships commenced on Saturday, Feb. 25, at North Allegheny. At the time of this writing, the boys have the WPIAL's top-3 highest point totals as follows: Isaiah Clerkley (315.15), Jeremiah Laslavic (293.65), and Sam Hersick (288.10) Teammates Colin Stevens and Miles Miller are currently in the top-15 at eighth and 14th, respectively. On the girls' side, junior Chloe Petersen is sitting in 12th place in the WPIALs most recent listing of top scores. The final top times in the swimming competition will be available the week of Feb. 20. WPIAL Swimming championships will take place the first week of March at Trees Hall at the University of Pittsburgh. PIAA state championships will be held March 17 – 18, at Bucknell University. Good luck to all our swimmers and divers as they conclude their regular season and prepare for their championships.

WRESTLING PREPARES FOR POST-SEASON

With the team dual meet portion of the wrestling schedule complete, the Raider Boys Wrestling team has now turned its attention to the pathway leading to the PIAA Championships on March 9 – 11, in Hershey, Pa. First, will be the sectional qualifiers held the final weekend of February

at North Allegheny. Among the notable top-4 seeds in section weight classes are Connor Smith (114 lbs.) and Tyler Chappell (127 lbs.) We wish all Raider student-athletes the best of luck in their pursuit of Section, WPIAL, and PIAA titles.

The Raider Girls Wrestling team finished its regular season at the Western PA championships on Feb. 19, and is beginning preparation for the Pennsylvania Regional Tournament (March 5) and Pennsylvania State Championships (March 12). Good luck!

BOYS BASKETBALL – PLAYOFF BOUND

Raider Boys' Basketball enters the WPIAL Championship tournament as the seventh seed in 6A and will face off against second-seed, Upper St. Clair, on Feb. 24. A full recap of the postseason will appear in our March issue.

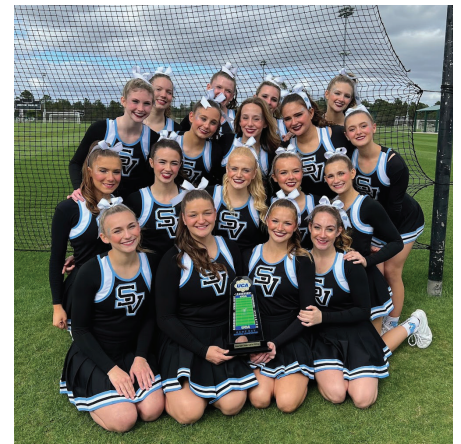


GIRLS BASKETBALL

The Raider Girls' Basketball team missed the WPIAL championships, finishing the season with a record of 5-17. We thank seniors Anna Felitsky and Chloe Leonard for their leadership this season and careers on the hardwood. Best of luck in your future endeavors. The Raiders will return all but two players next season; the experiences gained this year will be an asset to this program in 2023-24. ■

HISTORY WAS MADE!

Congratulations to our Raider Competitive Cheer program that traveled to Orlando, Florida, on Feb. 10-12, to compete in the UCA National Championships in two separate events – Small Varsity DI and Medium Gameday. Raiders set program history by advancing to the semifinal round of Small Varsity DI for the first time. In the Medium Gameday competition, Seneca Valley advanced to the finals for the first time and finished 8th in the nation! Congratulations to coaches Laura Wise, Elaine Duggan, Megan Wise, and Katie Wise on an outstanding performance at UCA National Championships. So much to be proud of! #SVRaiderPride ■



COLLEGE COMMITMENTS – CLASS OF 2023

Raider student-athletes continue to make their college commitment official through the winter months. We congratulate these seniors in achieving their goals of continuing their athletic and academic careers at the next level. Each of you are tremendous representatives of Raider Athletics and we are very proud of your efforts in the classroom, in competition and in the community.



Name	Sport	College/University	Major
Graham Hancox	Football	IUP	Business
Beaux Lizewski	Soccer	Lafayette College	Int'l & Gov't Relations
Kiki Nemcek	Soccer/Lacrosse	LaRoche University	Early Education
Mia Ryan	Softball	Gannon University	Exercise Science ■

FRONK HONORED WITH WPIAL HALL OF FAME CLASS OF 2023 COURAGE AWARD

Senior soccer player Virginia “Ginny” Fronk will be honored Friday, June 2, as a member of the WPIAL Hall of Fame Class of 2023, receiving the League’s Courage Award. Ginny was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s Lymphoma during the preseason and went through grueling chemotherapy treatment. In between cycles of chemo, Ginny found her way back to the soccer pitch, joining her teammates for practice and even playing in a few games this season. She was an inspiration not only to her teammates, but to the entire Seneca Valley community. Her grace in handling the diagnosis was amazing and she attacked her chemotherapy treatment with uncommon courage and tenacity. While she was not on the field each day, Ginny’s leadership was instrumental in helping the Raiders finish as section



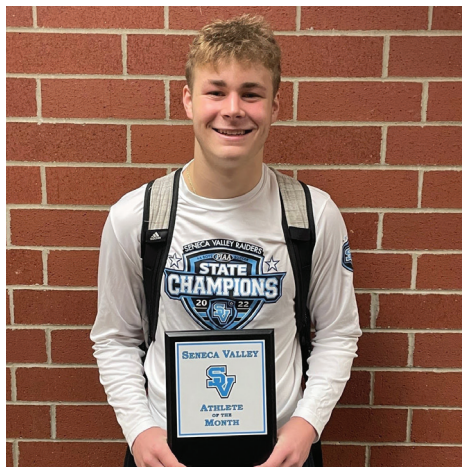
runner-up and reach the semifinals of the WPIAL championships. Ginny will continue her soccer career at George Mason University while studying Environmental

Science. We cannot think of a more deserving person than Ginny to receive this honor in June. Congratulations Ginny – you inspire us all! ■

ATHLETES OF THE MONTH, JANUARY 2023



The **Female Athlete of the Month for January** was girls’ basketball player **Natalie Hambly**. The freshman guard had a stellar month and led her team in scoring with 70 points over seven games while shooting 33.3% from the field. She also tallied 12 rebounds, 11 assists, and four steals. Her standout performance came in a victory over Bishop Canevin, where she scored 21 points while shooting 83.3% from three-point range. For an impressive month, we recognized Natalie as the January Female Athlete of the Month. Congratulations Natalie!



The **Male Athlete of the Month for January** was senior boys’ basketball player **Connor Oros**. A starting guard, Connor averaged 15.5 points, 5.5 rebounds, 3.9 assists, and two steals per game over the month of January. He paced the Raiders to five wins, including big section victories over Central Catholic (13 points and 10 rebounds) and North Allegheny (13 points and 9 rebounds). He also scored a season high 28 points along with six rebounds and four assists against Union. We recognized Connor as the January Male Athlete of the Month. Congratulations Connor! ■

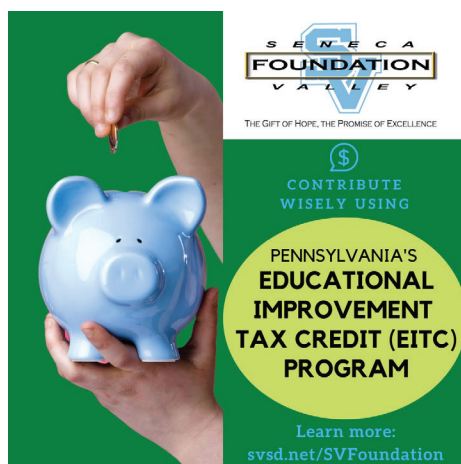
COACH OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to Head Boys and Girls Swimming & Diving Coach Brian Blackwell for being honored by the National Federation of State High School Associations and Coaches Association as the 2021-22 Section 2 Boys Swimming & Diving Coach of the Year. Honorees were selected based on their performance in the 2021-22 school year, lifetime community involvement, school involvement, and coaching philosophy. Section 2 of the NFHS, known as the Mideast Section, comprises eight state associations: Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington D.C., and West Virginia. ■



TAX CREDIT FOR CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS ADDS VALUE TO SVF

The Seneca Valley Foundation (SVF) welcomes donations through Pennsylvania's Education Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program. This statewide initiative enables businesses to make donations to non-profit organizations like the SVF. Enacted by the PA Department of Community and Economic Development in 2001, the program provides credits to businesses against their tax liability for the tax year in which they contribute to supporting education in Pennsylvania. The SVF has been an approved Education Improvement Organization since 2013.



Funds donated through this program support the following courses at Seneca Valley:

- Women in Engineering (a class for high school girls that focuses on engineering concepts)
- Honors Engineering (an enhanced course on engineering exploration and robotics technology)
- Accounting (college-credit accounting class for high school students in grades 10-12)

This year alone, we are grateful to have received \$68,000 through the generosity of the following local businesses:



Pictured from left to right: Steve Fortunato, SVF Trustee; Annie Mersing, SVF Development Director; Sue Kushnereit and Heidi McDowell of NexTier Bank; Dr. Jeff Roberts, SVF Trustee; and Dr. Tracy Vitale, SVF Executive Director and SV Superintendent of Schools

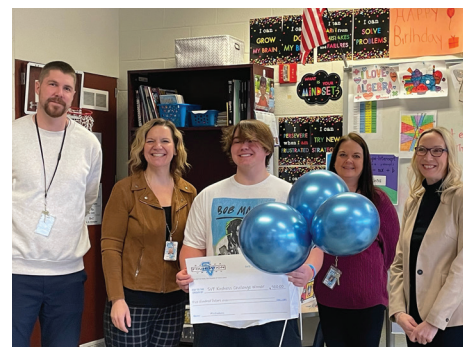
- NexTier Bank - \$35,000
- Waste Management - \$20,000
- The Buncher Company - \$5,000
- Farmers National Bank - \$5,000
- Allegheny Mineral Corporation - \$3,000

We invite businesses to be our partners in public education and strongly encourage you to take advantage of this program. For additional information about how your tax dollars can benefit Seneca Valley schools, click here: [Seneca Valley Foundation / EITC Program/Donations \(svsd.net\)](#), or contact Ms. Annie Mersing at (724) 452-6040 ext. 1638 or by email at mersingam@svsd.net.

KINDNESS WINS

To celebrate National Random Acts of Kindness Day on February 17, the SVF asked staff to nominate students who are spreading kindness throughout Seneca Valley schools. We were blown away by the incredibly kind nominations we received! The stories of students helping each other, sharing smiles and exuding #SVKindness is heart-warming and inspirational. To read all the nominations, check out our webpage, [Seneca Valley Foundation / SVF Kindness Challenge \(svsd.net\)](#).

Through "random" drawing of all nominees, we are excited to announce the winner of this year's SVF Kindness Challenge is Aiden Breitmaier! Aiden showed #SVKindness by helping his peers through challenging lessons and material (without being asked to do so) and is described by nominators, Mr. Erik Carlberg and Ms. Andrea Platt, as being "very kind and polite and helpful to his classmates." Aiden will receive \$500 to use for classroom enhancements like new books, supplies and learning tools, or he will have the option to donate these funds to the SV club/sport of his choice. Congratulations, Aiden! ■



Pictured left to right: Mr. Erik Carlberg, IHS Teacher; Ms. Annie Mersing, SVF Development Director; Aiden Breitmaier; Ms. Andrea Platt, IHS Teacher; Ms. Julia Benson, SVF Secretary

SNOW DAY SURVEY RESULTS

To snow day, or not to snow day, that is the question.

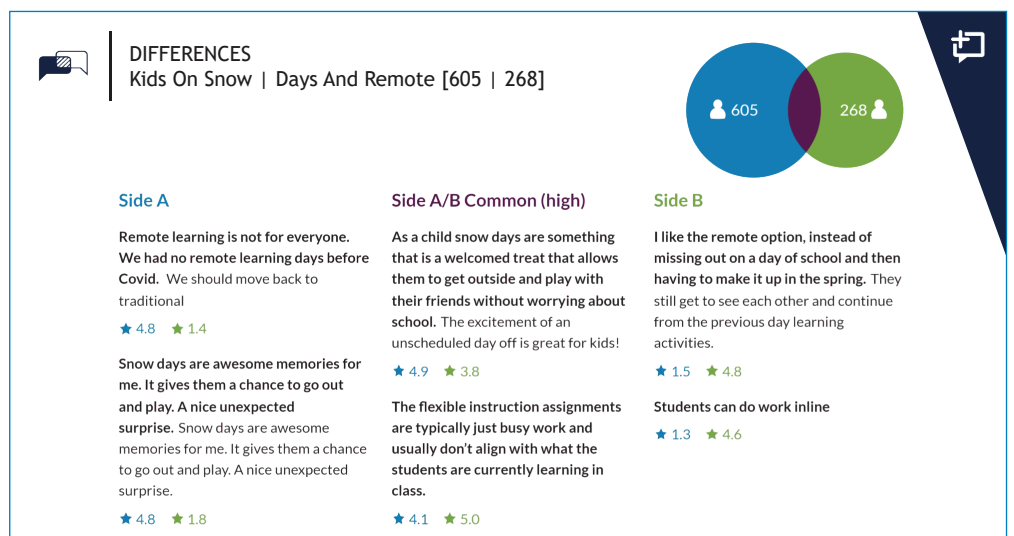
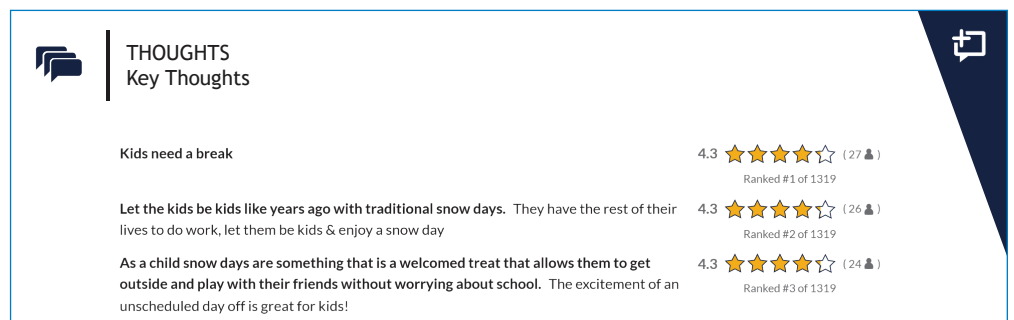
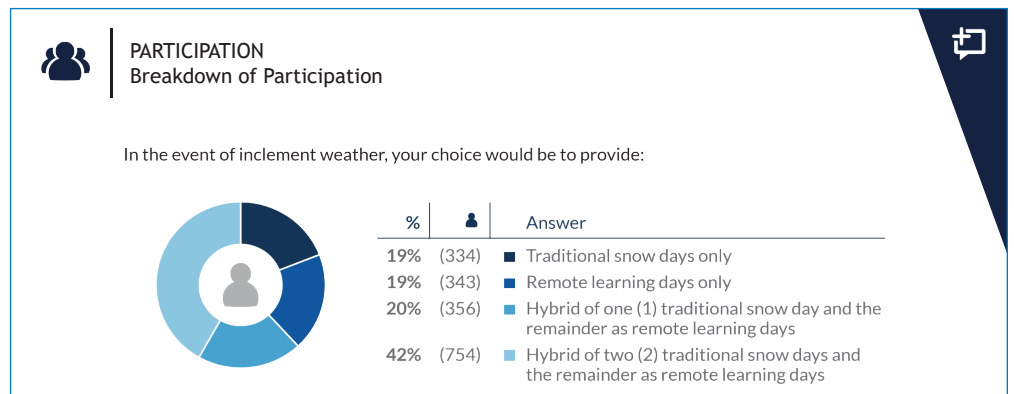
It was one we posed to parents in a recent ThoughtExchange sent out to all families in early February. We utilized the exchange platform to gather input on the use of traditional “snow days” versus remote learning days - or perhaps continuing to offer a hybrid of the two in future calendar years.

The 2022-23 SV Calendar currently features traditional snow days on the first and second inclement weather closure days, which means there is no school with makeup days built into the calendar. For the third and any additional inclement weather closure days, the district moves to a remote learning day that is counted as a school day and provides livestreaming instruction. As families and schools are now more familiar with remote learning, we realized that opinions on the need for traditional snow days may have changed and so we asked.

We had nearly 1,900 participants, over 1,300 thoughts shared and approximately 27,000 ratings given.

In the end, 62% liked having a hybrid option that would allow for a mix of the traditional snow day(s) and remote learning days, with 42% specifically choosing the current model of two traditional snow days and the remainder as remote learning days.

To learn more and read some of the thoughts shared, visit [PowerPoint Presentation \(svsd.net\)](#).



Seneca Valley SD 2023-24 Student/Teacher Calendar

Board Approved 2-13-23

August 2023						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	IS	A80	19
20	A80	FD	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

11 Staff Days; 8 Student Days (10 w/A80)
Aug. 22 - First Student Day

September 2023						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	H	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	A80	26	27	28	29	30

20 Days
Sept 25 - Yom Kippur (Act 80)

October 2023						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	A80	28
29	30	31				

22 Staff Days

November 2023						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	IS	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	H	H	H	25
26	H	28	29	30		

18 Staff Days; 17 Student Days
Nov. 10 - IS/Staff Clerical Day

December 2023						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	H	H	H	H	H	30
31						

16 Days

January 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	H	H	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	IS	13
14	A80	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

21 Staff Days; 20 Student Days
Jan. 11 - End of First Semester
Jan. 12 - In-Service/Clerical Day

February 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	SM	17
18	IS	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29		

20 Staff Days; 19 Student Days
February 19 - IS/Staff Clerical Day

March 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	A80	16
17	SM	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	H	30
31						

19 Days

April 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	H	H	H	H	H	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

17 Days

May 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	A80	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	H	28	29	LD-S	31	

22 Days
May 30 - Last Day for Seniors (Grad. Day)

June 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	LD	IS	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

5 Staff Days; 4 Student Days
June 6 - Last Day for K-11 Students

191 Work Days for Teachers

Snow (Emergency) Makeup Days:
 #1 - Feb. 16, 2024
 #2 - March 18, 2024
 #3 - Remote Learning
 #4 - Remote Learning
 #5 - Remote Learning

District Local Holidays:
 Nov. 22, 2023
 Nov. 27, 2023
 Dec. 25, 2023
 Jan. 1, 2024
 April 1, 2024

KEY

- A80 - Act 80-Prof. Develop. Day (No school for students)
- H - Holiday (No school)
- IS - In-Service Day (No school for students)
- FD, LD & LD-S - First Student Day, Last Student Day & Last Day/Graduation Day for Seniors
- SM - Snow Makeup Day (this day becomes a holiday if no snow make-up days are needed)
- Remote Learning - Flexible Instructional Day/Students engage in remote learning from home

Please note all dates are subject to change

SV ALL-STAR

For February, we are pleased to announce the newest member inducted into the SV All-Star Club, Mr. Dennis Moyer, site supervisor for Seneca Valley's contracted security team.

The SV All-Star Club is an awards program developed by the District to express our gratitude to Seneca Valley classified employees (administrative assistants, paraprofessionals, maintenance, cafeteria, bus drivers and security guards who are often the unsung heroes of our schools. We recognize a new member of this elite all-star club each month.

Officer Jason Young, Seneca Valley Safety and Security Supervisor said, "I asked Dennis to become the site supervisor for our contracted security team shortly after I was hired by the school district. From that day, I've never had to second guess, ask or be concerned that an event wasn't covered by security. Dennis is the type of supervisor that works with his team to ensure that every event from a Saturday SAT event to a 400-person wrestling tournament is covered with adequate security staff. Rarely will you ever see him during the school day in the office sitting at his desk. One of his sayings is 'I won't ask my team to do something I wouldn't do.' That could be an all-day swim meet or standing in the pouring rain to direct traffic."



Mr. Moyer is an Army veteran who served in Panama and is a retired juvenile corrections officer that worked in several maximum-security juvenile detention centers for over 20 years. In his free time, Mr. Moyer enjoys kayaking and participating in mock combat tournaments.

Officer Young added, "Dennis is well deserving of this recognition. He maintains constant foot patrols checking on each of his team multiple times to know their concerns as well as what's going on in their lives. He will humbly tell you the team makes him look like a good leader, and he has a great team. As an SRO I have seen some great security teams and others just get the job done, but no one gels together quite like this group." ■

'I LED THE PLEDGE'

Seneca Valley School District's School Board meetings were held on Feb. 6 and 13. We were pleased to continue the tradition of inviting elementary students from Seneca Valley's K-4 schools to lead the members of the School Board and public in saying "The Pledge of Allegiance."

For the February 6 work session meeting, we were joined by Ehrman Crest Elementary third grader, Jadhelys Perez-Hartling. Jadhelys's favorite subject in school is math, and she plans to be a teacher when she grows up. Her favorite parts of the new K-6 school are the playground and collaboration areas.



Jadhelys Perez-Hartling with, from L-R, Dr. Tracy Vitale, Superintendent and Ms. Kathy Whittle, Board President

For the February 13 regular session meeting, we were joined by Sage Friedt, a second grader in Seneca Valley Academy of Choice.

Sage's favorite subject in school is math and he wants to be a professional rodeo clown when he grows up. ■



Sage Friedt with, from L-R, Dr. Tracy Vitale, Superintendent and Ms. Kathy Whittle, Board President

FINNISH EDUCATOR VISIT

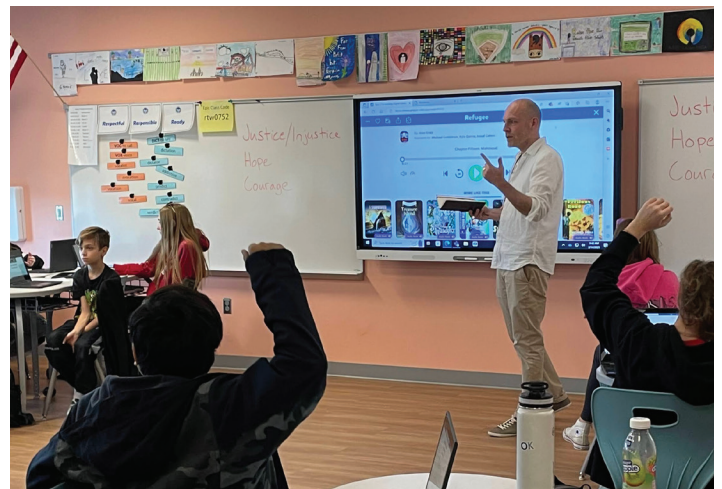
Teachers in grades 1-6 at Ehrman Crest Elementary/Middle School have been meeting virtually with Mr. Petteri Elo, a Finnish educator and international speaker to create and implement phenomenon-based learning units that address real world problems. Mr. Elo visited Ehrman Crest for three days of onsite training to observe, co-teach and provide feedback.

“This was a two-month training program aiming for pedagogical innovation in phenomenon-based learning. Phenomenon based learning is a type of project-based learning that stresses the importance of student pondering and questioning and linking the content to the experiences of the students. The program consisted of online training sessions, online videos, online coaching sessions, co-planning on shared documents and onsite work in the classrooms,” said Mr. Elo.

Fourth grade Ehrman Crest Elementary teacher Mr. Josh Sektan stated, “Collaborating with Mr. Elo was a great opportunity for the staff and students of Ehrman Crest. With Mr. Elo’s support, we created phenomenon-based learning units that allowed our students the opportunity to address real world problems. My students learned about the impacts of flooding, the design features of Ehrman Crest, and created a plan and model to address flooding. Mr. Elo was there to support me as an educator and give feedback to the students on their flooding solutions. Overall, this training has reinforced to me that we are never done learning as educators and that education is developing the next generation of leaders to address real world problems.”

Mr. Elo is CEO, Consultant/Trainer in PedaNow - Educational Consulting. He conducts presentations, workshops and consultations on educational issues such as curriculum development, curriculum implementation, phenomenon-based learning, teacher-student roles and high-quality pedagogy from different viewpoints.

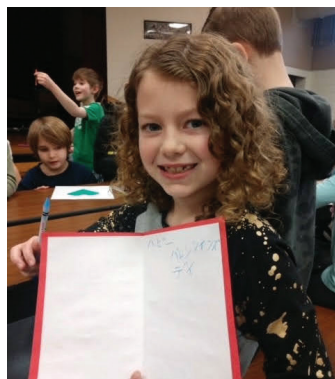
“Needless to say, your school building is quite spectacular. The amount of space and light fascinates me, and I don’t think I’ve



ever been to a school quite like yours,” Mr. Elo added. “I was happy to see that you really take advantage of the collaborative working spaces and was impressed how well your students behave and stay focused.” ■

CULTURAL CREATIONS, A LESSON ON JAPANESE HISTORY

Katsuko Shellhammer, the Education Outreach Coordinator from The Japan American Society of Pa. (TJASP), along with other members of TJASP, visited Rowan second graders to talk about Japanese history, language, and culture. Students were also treated to a lesson in origami Valentine’s cards. ■



LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Several position realignments have taken place in K-6 positions across the District, including:

- Dr. Andrew Teti has joined the Human Resources (HR) Department of Central Office. He will now serve as HR Coordinator.
- Ms. Bridget Miller is now serving as the Acting Principal of Rowan Elementary School.
- Ms. Tesin Amoscato is now serving as the Acting Assistant Principal for both Ehrman Crest Elementary and Ehrman Crest Middle School. ■



Dr. Andrew Teti



Ms. Bridget Miller



Ms. Tesin Amoscato

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Superintendent, regional leaders discuss robust corridor growth

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Tracy Vitale took part in “Corridors of Opportunity Event” hosted by the “Pittsburgh Business Times” on Feb. 16, utilizing the opportunity to detail the District’s continued planning for growth, K-12, and share the success of the new and innovative Ehrman Crest Elementary/Middle School.

Dr. Vitale was joined on the panel by other local leaders and planners from the township and real estate development to share their thoughts on the future of southwest Butler County. The common theme for the morning was about keeping an eye toward the future as construction and development is alive and well, as is the draw for families looking to relocate.

Dr. Vitale also highlighted the growth taking place in areas to north, specifically Jackson Township, reminding the audience that Seneca Valley covers nine municipalities in a 100-square-mile area. A recent demography report noted that the District’s student population is anticipated to peak 8,000 students in the



Dr. Tracy Vitale is joined by other Corridors of Opportunity Panelists, from left: Gregg Broujos, senior vice president of leasing, The Buncher Co.; Nick Francic, managing director, JLL Pittsburgh; and Dan Santoro, manager, Cranberry Township.

next five-to-ten years (current District enrollment is at nearly 7,400).

“It’s why we work with experts in the field of demography and feasibility,” said Dr.

Vitale. “It’s growth, but it’s manageable growth, and we’re fortunate to be one of the few in the Commonwealth who can say we’re experiencing such progress.” ■



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“One of my favorite things about this job is the variety. No two days are the same, and it is fun for me to problem solve and try to help power through the little wrinkles that pop up. I also really enjoy working with all my coworkers, knowing that we are all trying our hardest to make this the best educational experience possible for our students. It is a great job for working moms since we have time off during Thanksgiving, winter, and part of spring break to be home with our kids, and my superiors are very gracious and flexible with my schedule when I have unexpected childcare issues.”

Heather Ruppert, Administrative Assistant
Ehrman Crest Middle School

“Every morning I look forward to coming in to work. Each day brings a new challenge, a fast pace, and an opportunity to work with wonderful staff and students. Administration is supportive, and my coworkers are amazing.

I am still able to be home shortly after my older children get home from school. My schedule is ideal for being present for my family, while providing amazing health care coverage and financial support.”

Emily Ladd, Administrative Assistant
Ehrman Crest Middle School

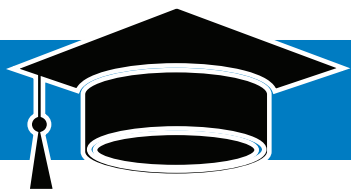
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ALUMNI Q&A

Nathaniel Konieczka, SV '17, is currently working as a Uniformed Division Officer for the United States Secret Service. We asked him to catch us up on what he is doing and how Seneca Valley influenced his life and career.

Q: Catch us up. Tell us what you're doing today:

A: Today, I work for the United States Secret Service Uniformed Division in Washington, D.C. and I am currently assigned to the White House branch.

Q: Please share with us some information about your career.

A: The White House is a very unique place to work. I get to see and interact with people that the general public only sees on TV. For me, the best part of the job is witnessing history up close and personal, watching Marine One land on the South Lawn, and all the different training opportunities I have taken part in and or will be taking part in, in the future.

Q: What might (someone) be surprised to know about you?

A: I am a very big history buff, especially when it comes to military history, politics, and the like. In addition, most people would be surprised to learn that when I am much older, I would like to run for some type of government office.

Q: How did Seneca Valley help you become the person you are today, both personally and professionally?

A: Seneca Valley helped shape me into who I am today through the people I've met and have become close friends with, like Mr. Babusci, the JROTC instructors, and numerous other staff. On the personal front, the types of clubs, organizations, and activities you can get involved in have helped me come out of my shell. The overarching organization I attribute my success to would be JROTC. Seneca Valley helped me the most professionally, in numerous areas.

However, two instances come to mind when I think of this question and they are the experiences I've had and the knowledge I've gained from the two army instructors at Seneca Valley in the JROTC program, as well as my part, and the renaming of the Ryan Gloyer middle school.

Q: What do you think makes Seneca Valley such a special place to learn and grow?

A: The thing that I believe makes Seneca Valley a special place to learn and grow is that the options students have to get involved in are numerous.

Q: Who was your favorite teacher/coach/SV staff member?

A: Wow, picking one staff member or coach from Seneca Valley as my favorite is hard. I had a lot of teachers and staff members that I thought were great, however, two come to mind and that would be Jackson Township School Resource Officer, Jason Young (now



the Safety and Security Supervisor), and Tony Babusci, who is now the principal of the Ryan Gloyer Middle School.

Q: If you had one message for teachers or staff, what would it be?

A: If I had one message for teachers and staff, it would be the following: it's not about what you teach to the students as part of the curriculum that matters, it's how you carry yourself and how you help and teach them in areas outside of what your designated role is. That will have the greatest effect on your students later down the line.

Q: What do you wish other people knew about Seneca Valley?

A: One thing I think is worth noting about Seneca Valley is that they keep in touch with people that have graduated and moved on to their careers or moved out of state. I don't know if other schools do that.

Q: This question is being asked because the 22-23 school year marks the 25th year of SV's Senior/Graduation Project. What was your senior/graduation project and what were the benefits you took away from completing it?

A: So, I could go on for hours about my senior project. However, I will try to keep this answer short. My senior project involved various types of ride-a-longs and job shadows of local police departments. I job shadowed a member of the Jackson Township Police Department as he and fellow officers conducted traffic stops and other calls that law enforcement encounters daily. I also did a job shadow/ride along with the Butler County Sheriff's Office, seeing how guests are welcomed into their facilities and attend court and seeing what the inside of the jail looks like. It was a very unique environment. The reason I chose to job shadow Law Enforcement as my senior project was because, at that time, I was seriously considering a career in law enforcement. However, after doing the ride-along, talking to the officers and deputies, and spending an insane amount of time researching everything there is to know, it only reaffirmed what I thought I wanted to do in life. ■

FYI

February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention Month. As a school community it is important to stay informed about the signs of teen dating violence and know where to turn if you suspect yourself, a friend, or a family member is experiencing dating violence.

If you, a friend, or family member is experiencing abuse, there are resources available to you.

VOICe (Victim Outreach Intervention Center) is a service provider for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or other crime located in Butler County. To talk with a provider:

Call the 24-Hour Hotline 1-800-400-8551 or visit [Home \(voicebutlercounty.org\)](https://www.voicebutlercounty.org).

Keep Kids Safe is a resource offered by the Department of Human Services' Office of Children, Youth, and Families. To learn more visit: [Keep Kids Safe \(pa.gov\)](https://www.pa.gov).

Care Solace is a complimentary and confidential service provided by Seneca Valley School District. If you want to use Care Solace to help you find a mental health or substance-use provider:

Call 888-515-0595. Multilingual support is available 24/7/365.

Visit [Care Solace - Seneca Valley School District](#) and either search on your own OR click "Book Appointment" for assistance by video chat, email, or phone.

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. ■

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5 WAYS TO RESPOND WHEN TECH RULES GET BROKEN

One of THE most challenging things as a parent is knowing how to respond when our kids break rules around screen time. Over the past two weeks, I have been writing about tech time rules, including the importance of [validating our kids](#) for the many times they follow rules and [examples of specific rules](#).

What to do when transgressions happen? That's the focus of today's post.

1. Stop and let your human emotions happen

When we learn that our kids have broken a tech rule, such as the internet being turned off every night, but we realize our child has been downloading shows in advance to be able to watch late at night, emotions will arise in us. It is common to have a mixture of these and other emotions:

- Anger (What the #\$%! I have told them so many times that...)
- Hurt (It feels like they don't respect me)
- Fear (How worried should I be about all this!?)
- And others

As anxiety expert [Lynn Lyons](#) speaks about in *Screenagers Next Chapter*, when we try to avoid emotions that arise, they can get bigger.

I recommend that when you learn of a transgression, buy some time. Tell your child something like, "You've gone around the policy, and I need a bit of time, but then I will be ready to talk about it."

Or perhaps,

"You've gone around the policy, and I am feeling a bit peeved, but I want to let those feelings run their course so I can talk with you from a cool-headed place. So let's talk in a couple of hours."

2. Consult the wise before taking action

It's a beautiful idea that families would have specified in advance all possible consequences that would accompany any tech time transgressions.

For example, if you watch R-rated shows, that means you get such-and-such consequences.

If you say that you are doing homework and we find that you were watching YouTube the whole time, you get such-and-such consequences.

Yes, a beautiful idea, but this is impossible. Don't get me wrong, it is great to have some consequences stated ahead of time. But there will likely be times that something happens, and there is no consequence already in place.

Given this reality, there are times you need to think of a consequence after the fact. This is where a parenting gold-medal move is in order: Consult with one or two wise friends to get their insight on how they would suggest responding. This wise person would likely be a person whose kids are older than yours, or a teacher, a counselor, etc. They won't be swept up in emotions, and they have a wealth of experience.

3. Consequences should be short

Kids and teens don't learn from long and overly punitive consequences. When that happens, they will mainly be focused on being mad at the parent or parents. Short works much better, particularly using the [Nurtured Heart Approach](#), which is about focusing on our kids' strengths even when they disappoint. So when they break a rule, say, sneak their phone into their room at night that you discover the next day, you might say:

"I know you are responsible and usually good at following rules. Tomorrow we are going to hold onto your phone for the whole evening, but then tomorrow, you get it back because we know you are capable of following the family policy."

4. Our kids will be mad at us, and that is OK

It is natural to want to blame others for our pain and our kids will want to blame us. The good news is that by having fair consequences and not overly



punishing, we can feel assured that their frustration with us is not the kind that is relationship-scarring.

5. Don't overly focus on deception

Lying, in all its various forms (not disclosing all key information, staying silent, blatantly lying, etc.), is a part of rule-breaking. It is not about purposely trying to hurt a parent or guardian. Yet, per #1 above, our emotions can get activated by deceit.

Some parents have told me, "I just don't want them to lie, so I really don't have any rules so that we can just talk about things and lying won't happen."

Remember, life is full of limits, and our homes are safe places where our kids can learn how to follow limits. Also, they can negotiate with us when limits feel overly strict.

Don't make the common mistake of overly focusing on any lying that may have happened. Instead, focus on why the rule was broken and how to all move forward with fair consequences and ongoing discussions in which you work together to set policies everyone can live by.

Questions to get the conversation started:

1. What consequences do we as a family have in place for any of our tech time rules?
2. Are these consequences still seem reasonable?
3. If we don't have any, should we try and create some together?

Article provided by [Screenagers](#) ■

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- Want to hear directly from the voices at Seneca Valley on the most current topics and updates? Join us in listening to Voices, a podcast brought to you by the Seneca Valley School District. Our most recent podcast features Dr. Jeff Roberts as he introduces Hope Squad and highlights the School Counseling Program. Be sure to subscribe to SV Voices and listen online [HERE](#)
- Did you know that Butler County Area Vocational-Technical School offers 15 programs of study? Check them out here, [BCAVTS Promo Video - YouTube](#)
- Breakfast is now FREE for all students. Click to learn more: [Food Services / General Information \(svsd.net\)](#)
- SV offers voluntary student accident insurance. To learn more and apply, visit: [Backpack Fliers / Education / Resources \(svsd.net\)](#)
- Effective October 1, Pennsylvania will increase the income threshold for all applicants to 200 percent of the

Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (FPIG). With this change, more than 420,000 additional Pennsylvanians in more than 174,000 households will be newly eligible for SNAP and will receive, on average, \$63 a month. To learn more, visit [Wolf Administration Marks Hunger Action Month by Expanding Eligibility for SNAP Benefits, Securing Food Assistance for More Pennsylvanians](#)

- Seneca Valley residents 62 years of age or older are invited to apply to become a member of the Seneca Valley School District Gold Card Club. Membership entitles card holders to attend home athletic events, music, dramatic and other school productions. To apply for a gold card, please visit [Parents/Community / Gold Card Club \(svsd.net\)](#).
- Reality Tour is an accessible substance prevention program that delivers information to get parent and child on the same page



- [Substance Abuse Prevention for Parents - CANDLE, Inc. \(candleinc.org\)](#)
- [Subscribe to our YouTube Channel!](#)
- [Drive for SV! Sign-up bonuses are now being offered.](#)
- Join the SV Team! [Watch here](#) or visit [www.svsd.net/HumanResources](#) to learn more and apply.
- Visit [Niche](#) to view SV rankings ■

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 **IRS** irs.gov/saturdayhours

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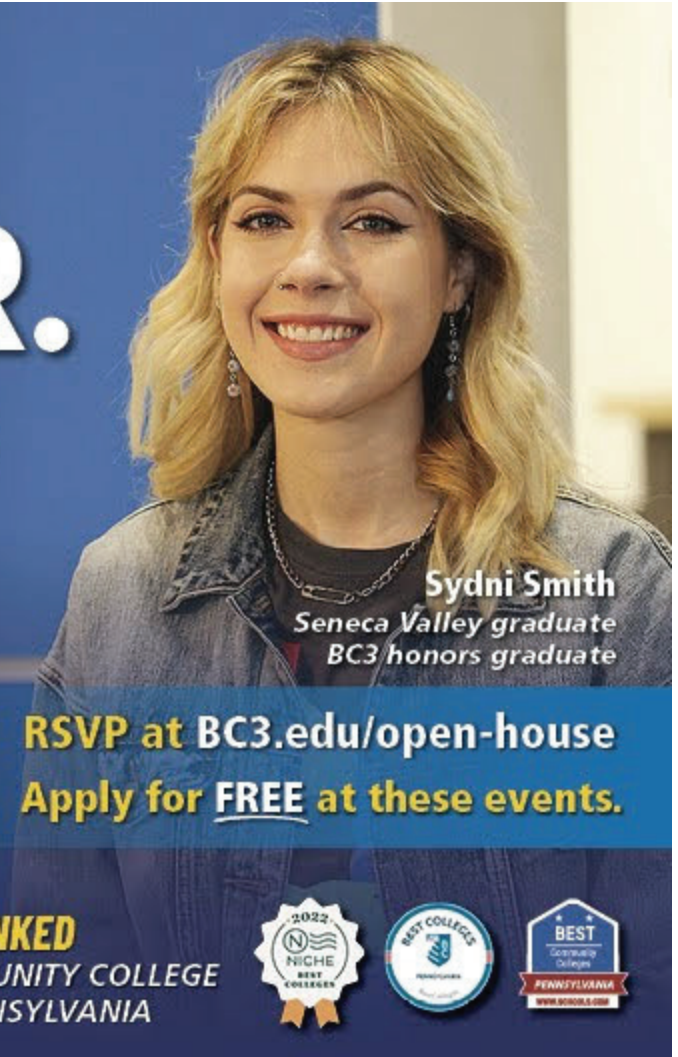


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