SWEET HOME SOURCE

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE

FALL/WINTER 2023
ISSUE 01

STUDENT VOICE

Students represent Sweet Home at State School Board Convention & lend their advice to administration through student advisory boards

BAKE FOR GOOD

Middle School students find a unique way to give back to the community during the holidays

ONE COMMUNITY

Fundraisers, events, and community partnerships keep our Panther family strong

EVERY STUDENT, ONE COMMUNITY, READY FOR THE FUTURE.



A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Sweet Home Community,

I am delighted to introduce the inaugural edition of Sweet Home Source Magazine, a dynamic and innovative re-branding of the Your Schools newsletter. This magazine represents a significant step forward in our ongoing efforts to enhance the district's communication practices and strategies.

As we embark on this exciting journey, our aim is to not only keep you well-informed, but also to foster a sense of unity and pride within our community. The Sweet Home Source Magazine will serve as a comprehensive resource, featuring stories that highlight the achievements of our students, faculty, and staff, as well as providing insights into our district's educational initiatives, events, and community partnerships.

Much of our work moving forward as a district focuses on our upcoming capital improvement project. As you know, we are soliciting input from all stakeholder groups, including utilizing the Thought Exchange platform earlier this year. We thank the 756 school community members that participated in the ThoughtExchange. You provided 635 unique thoughts about our facilities, and also provided 20,413 ratings on those thoughts. Our goal in the planning phase is to ensure that everyone who wants to share an idea about our facilities is heard. We are now in the process of holding focus groups with key stakeholders to unpack the data and build the scope of the next capital project. We recognize that our facilities play a crucial role in shaping the educational experience of our students, and we are committed to investing in infrastructure that supports our mission.

We encourage you to engage with the Sweet Home Source Magazine, as it will serve as a valuable bridge between our District and our community. Thank you for your ongoing support as we work together to shape the future of the Sweet Home Central School District. Together, we can build a community that thrives on collaboration, communication, and a shared commitment to educational excellence.



Dr. Michael V. Ginestre
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS







BACK IN THE SWING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

EVENTS AT EVERY BUILDING CAPTURED THE EXCITEMENT OF THE BACK TO SCHOOL SEASON

Throughout the district, our year started off strong, with exciting events to make everyone feel welcome.

During the day, our teachers capitalized on the beautiful weather by bringing their classes outside. Our sixth graders took a trip to ArtPark and it was a perfect fall day to incorporate lessons with a little sunshine.

After school, the fun continued with events like the Glendale Pumpkin Run & Trunk or Treat, Fun Runs at Willow Ridge & Heritage Heights, and several open skates at the Rainbow Rink.

At Maplemere's Fall Fest, our community gathered to meet new friends, catch up with old ones, and even to meet a live baby kangaroo, who was certainly the center of attention.

We had great attendance for our annual Community Day Carnival followed by the Homecoming football game vs. Hamburg. Nine different food trucks were set up serving delicious local food, and students and families could enjoy a free day of fun, including bounce houses, cotton candy, a rock climbing wall, games, snow cones, popcorn, and so much more. Even better - we capped off the night with a 41-18 win against Hamburg!

Many thanks to our Sweet Home PTAs, PTSAs, and PTO for their partnership and hard work ensuring all of our students and adults enjoyed the back to school season. These fun traditions would not be possible without you!



STUDENTS ACT TEAM PRESENTS AT STATE CONVENTION

DEI IS FOCUS FOR SWEET HOME STUDENTS AT STATE SCHOOL BOARD CONVENTION IN BUFFALO

What happens when you ask a group of students how they can create change amongst their peers and school community? They establish a group called Students ACT - the Alliance for Cultural Transformation.

The ACT team, comprised of students from grades 4-12, is already making waves at the state level. Sweet Home's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts were noticed by the New York State School Board Association (NYSSBA). Four of our students, alongside JoAnn Balazs, our Assistant Superintendent for Talent & Equity, Brandon Woods and Wendy Januchowski, School Counselors, were invited to present to school board members from across the state on the efforts Sweet Home has made in the area of DEI. Their topic was "DEI: Student Voice IS the Initiative".

Attendees listened intently as our students led the discussion, first outlining the work that has already been done in our district, as well as plans for the future.

They gave practical advice, teaching participants how they as board members can implement some of the same efforts in their own districts.

Not only did our student panel give an engaging presentation, but they also took questions from a large audience, providing thoughtful and insightful answers. Many participants said it was the best session they had attended all week.

When our students returned from their trip, they were recognized by our own Board of Education for their good work.

Congratulations and thank you to Lily Fisher (11th), Summer Mack (10th), Thomas Hayter (7th), & Muhamed Diedhiou (5th) for their courage to speak to this group of board members, superintendents, & district leaders from across the state.

WATCH THE FULL PRESENTATION ON OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL, @SWEETHOMECSD







JUNIOR LILY FISHER FEATURED ON NYSSBA PODCAST AT CONVENTION

As well as presenting on the panel, junior Lily Fisher was asked to be a part of the President's Gavel Podcast, which was recorded live on the showroom floor at the NYSSBA Annual Convention. Lily and Superintendent Dr. Ginestre talked about the importance of prioritizing the student voice in the DEI process. You can listen to their podcast episode by scanning the QR code below.

"FIRST AND FOREMOST, IT'S AS EASY AS, AND AS COMPLEX AS, LISTENING TO THE KIDS."

- Lily Fisher, Grade 11

FUTURE EFFORTS

Our students are proud of the achievements they have already seen as a result of their work in DEI. However, they know there is still much to do.

Under the leadership of JoAnn Balazs, Assistant Superintendent for Talent & Equity, our Students ACT team meets regularly throughout the year to continue to learn as well as plan for ways to enact change in our school community.

One way they support these efforts is through the annual Challenge 2 Change event. Last year, Challenge 2 Change was designed and launched as a way to gather, promote, and learn from peers and guests on a number of topics related to DEI. The event features guest speakers and hands-on activities for students grades 4-12. We look forward to sharing more information soon about this year's upcoming Challenge 2 Change event, and hope to see many new faces in attendance! To learn more about DEI at Sweet Home, visit our website, sweethomeschools.org.

DEI MISSION:
CULTIVATING A COMMUNITY WHERE ALL MEMBERS EXPERIENCE A SENSE OF BELONGING

HANDS-ON LEARNING





HANDS-ON EXPERIENCES GIVE STUDENTS MANY WAYS TO LEARN

There has been no shortage of opportunities for our students to engage in hands-on learning this school year. In alignment with our Sweet Home Strategic Plan, which encourages experiential learning and engaging educational experiences, our teachers across the district take every opportunity to provide students with a chance to dive into their curriculum.

At Ready Academy, students visited Akron Farms to learn about the process of farming and caring for animals. Ready students also participate year-round in a variety of internship experiences; some internal, some with external partners like Gabe's Collision and 26Shirts, among others.

At our elementary schools, hands-on learning can take on many different forms. Students in Stephanie Bickelman's classroom at Heritage Heights learned math concepts through building structures out of cupcake wrappers, and science through visiting the Herschell Carrousel Factory Museum.

Our English as a New Language (ENL) students in Melissa Erikson's classroom at Willow Ridge practiced vocabulary by building snowmen. Our ENL students also took a field trip to Becker Farms earlier this year.

In Sarah Nowak's classroom at Maplemere, students blended art and math, creating colorful displays to learn with grid paper.

At Glendale, our Panthers learned the basics of lacrosse during a clinic lead by members of the Buffalo Bandits and our own Sweet Home lacrosse teams from the High School.

Lisa Floreano's students in the High School have continued their tradition of cooking delicious soups on a weekly basis and delivering them to staff who place orders. Their classroom spends time shopping for all the necessary items, following a recipe, and interacting with adults as they deliver the soup and manage payment.

These are just a few examples of the creativity our teachers show throughout the district in tailoring lessons to ensure all students can learn.

BAKE FOR GOOD

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS LEARN TO BAKE LOAVES OF BREAD TO SHARE WITH THE COMMUNITY

What's better than a little hands-on learning and a lesson of giving?

Students in Ashlee Lipka's Middle School Family & Consumer Sciences classroom spent the month of December participating in the King Arthur Baking Company's Bake for Good program. This program teaches students the science and process of baking bread. All of the ingredients are donated by King Arthur Baking Company.

First, students watched instructional videos. Then, it was time to get their hands dirty. It was a fun atmosphere in the classroom as students learned the importance of each step, watched the yeast work, and collaborated to mix their dough.

Each student produced two loaves - one to keep, and one to share. Mrs. Lipka's classes partnered with the Sweet Home Education Foundation, Inc. to distribute the loaves to Sweet Home families who receive food donations.

Thank you to King Arthur, the many adult volunteers who helped in the classroom, and Mrs. Lipka for applying for this great program for her students.











#BAKEFORGOOD WITH KING ARTHUR FLOUR

LEARN

The King Arthur Flour Bake For Good program teaches students grades 4-12 the science and math behind baking, while also instilling the values of community giving. Students bake one loaf to keep, and one to share with someone in need or as an act of kindness.

BAKE

Students worked through the steps of baking, including mixing, proofing, and kneading the dough. When their dough was ready to be shaped, they divided and prepared each loaf for the loaf pans. After baking, students were able to sample their work as they also packaged up their spare loaves with custom labels for donation.

SHARE

Our students partnered with the Sweet Home Education Foundation (SHEF) to donate their loaves to families in need. SHEF delivers food weekly via their weekend Backpack Program, and were excited to be able to add some freshly baked bread to their deliveries. It was a wonderful way for our students to give back to their peers and community.







ALL-STATE SHOWING

JUNIOR HIGH & SENIOR HIGH MUSICIANS SHOWCASE THEIR WORK AT ALL-STATE COMPETITION

This November, Sweet Home musicians from grades 8-12 participated in the NYSSMA Zone 1 Area All State Conference, held at the State University of New York at Fredonia. It was a fantastic opportunity for our students to showcase their talents both vocally and instrumentally.

THE ROAD TO STATES

The process for selection to the all-state competition is a rigorous one. It begins in the spring, when students prepare a solo and perform an audition in front of an adjudicator. Students are then selected based on their score and recommendation. Top scores are chosen from all area schools across Western New York. Each year, around 1000 students audition for the conference on various instruments and in voice. After eight hours of rehearsal working with a guest conductor, students perform a concert at the two-day festival.

SWEET HOME TEACHER PRESENTS AT NYSSMA CONFERENCE

Congratulations to Jessica Wheaton-Bridon, music teacher at Willow Ridge Elementary, for being invited to present at the NYSSMA Annual Winter Conference in Rochester in December.

Jessica and her husband Marc Bridon were co-presenters for a clinic session geared toward collegiate students. Their session was titled “I’m Still Standing - Navigating Your First Job”.

The NYSSMA Conference is a four-day event of clinics, workshops, performances, and the All State Festival.

We are so proud of Jessica for sharing her knowledge at a state level with future generations of music educators!

SENIOR HIGH AREA ALL-STATE PARTICIPANTS:

String Orchestra - Delaney O’Brocta (10) Concert Band - Matthew Arrasjid (10); Treble Choir - Erica Chan (12); Mixed Chorus - Derek Woodford (12), Ariana Minhas (12), Megan Henel (12), & Kaitlyn Biddlecombe (10)

JUNIOR HIGH AREA ALL-STATE PARTICIPANTS:

Keagan Brookshire (9), Delanie Fleming (9), Brianna Brown (9), Bella Beal (9); Jayden Ventura (8), Caleb Riley (8), Charlotte Kern-Potter (8), Natalie Annesi (8), Sarah Aseri (8), & Grace Lysek (8)

STUDENTS IN ACTION



STUDENTS SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS & IDEAS WITH ADMINISTRATION

SUPERINTENDENT STUDENT ADVISORY BOARDS CREATED

When it comes to understanding what is going well in our buildings, and also how we can improve together, what better way to find out than to ask students?

This year, our Superintendent Dr. Michael Ginestre, along with Assistant Superintendents JoAnn Balazs, Donald Feldmann, and Dr. Toyia Wilson, have begun meeting with student advisory boards from each school building.

Initial meetings have been extremely informative, with students sharing insights about their overall experience in their buildings, as well as their thoughts on topics such as upcoming capital improvement projects, the impact of schedule changes, transportation, playgrounds, class subjects, and school menus, just to name a few.

Each building's advisory board will meet several times throughout the year so that the District Office can provide updates to our students and seek more specific feedback.



NEW MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER DESCRIBES ‘AMAZING EXPERIENCE‘

LAUREN LEWIS HAS IMMERSED HERSELF IN THE PANTHER FAMILY, TEACHING ELA AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL AND COACHING CHEER

Not only is Lauren Lewis new to Sweet Home, but new to teaching as well. She has fit right in to her team, teaching Middle School English Language Arts (ELA). Lauren is also a Sweet Home Varsity Cheer Coach, and has loved connecting with students at the Middle and High School levels.

Lauren’s classroom is bright, engaging, and full of books. She has fun dressing up for holidays and spirit weeks alongside her students. When she isn’t teaching, you can find her supporting her students and student-athletes at concerts, competitions, and games. We caught up with Lauren to ask her about her first year of teaching.

Q: Tell us a little about your experience before you came to Sweet Home.

A: Prior to coming to Sweet Home, I worked at M&T Bank in the Mortgage department for 8 years.

Q: How do you want your students to feel in your classroom?

A: I want my students to feel comfortable and safe. I feel like that is an important component that students need in order to want to learn.

Q: What is something you’ve learned from your students?

A: I feel like I learn something new everyday from my students, but one thing that stood out to me is that it is okay to laugh. As a teacher there is this notion that we have to be stern and strict all of the time, however it is okay to laugh with your students.

Q: What made you decide to coach cheer, and what do you enjoy most about it?

A: I love cheerleading. I started cheering at the age of six and continued all the way through to college. Once my journey ended with actually being able to cheer, I still somehow wanted to be a part of that world. I was offered to coach little league back in 2012, and stayed there for 4 years. I then had the opportunity to coach at my alma mater, Williamsville North. My favorite part about coaching is the relationships that I am able to build with my athletes. Not only do I coach my athletes, but I try to get them ready for what life is like after high school.







Q: How would you sum up your first year so far at Sweet Home?

A: I have learned so much just in these short four months, I am forever thankful for the teachers that I work alongside with. I am constantly learning something new every single day. It has been an amazing experience to work with my students, and get involved in community activities. I cannot wait to see how the rest of the year shapes out, and watch my students continue further in their education.

We couldn't be happier to have Lauren as a member of the Panther Family, supporting our students inside and outside the classroom!

"TEACHING HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY PASSION SINCE I WAS YOUNG GIRL AND I AM VERY EAGER TO BRING THAT ENERGY INTO THE CLASSROOM."

- Lauren Lewis

WELCOME NEW TEACHERS TO THE PANTHER FAMILY:

Evelyn Watson: Social Worker
Simran Singh: Social Worker
Samantha Kio: School Psychologist
Lauren Hearn: School Psychologist
Michael Morse: ELA (Ready Academy)
Melissa Minorcyk: Business (HS)
Dean Bavisotto: English (HS)
Carolyn Freeman: ELA (HS)
Elaina Davis-Givens: Science (HS)
Izeal Bullock III: Technology (HS)
Danielle Hughes: Living Environment (HS)
Sarah Kosloski-Reed: ENL (HS, MS)
Lauren Lewis: ELA (MS)
Samantha Herrmann: Special Education (MS)
Rachael Semrau: Math (MS)
Joseph Bennett: Social Studies (MS)
Rachel Campbell: ENL (MM)
Thalia Shatah: ENL (MM)
Brooke VanGorden: Elementary (MM)
Claire Mullane: Elementary (MM)
Julia Trabert: Elementary (MM)
Ashley Walsh: Elementary (MM)
Carly Hardick: Elementary (MM)
Kelsey Kendzia: Elementary (WR)







FALL SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS

CONGRATS TO ALL OUR STUDENT-ATHLETES AND COACHES FOR THEIR HARD WORK THIS FALL SEASON

A FEW HIGHLIGHTS

Football
- Tied for the top spot of the A2 division
- Finished the season 6-3

Girls' Tennis
- Team was led by 7th grader Elise McDuffie
- McDuffie won 8 out of 10 matches

Field Hockey
- Girls Field Hockey had three athletes earn postseason honors led by Senior Amanda Thorpe who earned All-WNY Honorable Mention

Cross Country
- Zephrym Grover finished 55th at ECIC Championships and top 25 at Sectionals
- Taylor Nugent finished 36th at ECIC Championships and 9th at Sectional Championships, Kendra Kapuszcak finished 41st at Sectionals

Unified Bocce
- 2nd place in their division at the Section VI tournament

Boys' Soccer
- Team finished 7-10-1
- Defeated Hutch-Tech in first postseason game before falling to Williamsville North
- Team had five student-athletes earn postseason honors

Golf
- Team was led by Senior Quinn Burgess who ranked #24 in ECIC and qualified for the ECIC's postseason event
- Looking to create a girls golf team for 2024

Girls' Swim
- Team was led by Rydell Reif who placed third overall in Class B in the 200 and 500 freestyle

Girls' Volleyball
- Finished the year 13-6
- Made it to the Sectional Championship before falling to Frontier

Boys' Volleyball
- Defeated Lancaster and Williamsville South



STUDENT-ARTISTS PLAN FOR UPCOMING SHOWS

OUR PANTHERS ARE SHOWING OFF THEIR TALENTS IN THE STUDIO AND IN UPCOMING GALLERY SHOWS

The art hallway at Sweet Home High School is always evolving with innovative projects on display from our talented student-artists.

This school year, Dominique Mediak-Pirigyi's 3D Mixed Media students created origami paper fashion pieces using full size mannequins. They also created large gingerbread house sculptures around the holidays as they learned about different architectural styles.

Carol Kamph's adaptive art class is currently finding fun in the winter chill by working on watercolor iceberg paintings.

Kristen Piurek's Photography students recently completed their unit on macro photography, finding beauty in the details of everyday objects.

As well as the work being done in our art studios, our students have had the opportunity to visit the newly renovated AKG (formerly Albright Knox) as well as the Burchfield Penney Art Center. For many, it was their first chance to visit a gallery.

Students' work will be featured in upcoming shows at Daemen College's All High Exhibition and "Great Expectations": the University of Buffalo's WNY Regional High School Art Exhibition. Thank you to our dedicated art faculty for providing these opportunities to our students!

To follow along with more of the work our students are doing, check out @shhs_art_dept on Instagram.





Carleigh Pulver



Antonio Andretta



Samara Brown

VITAL CONNECTIONS TO OUR COMMUNITY

NORTHWEST AMHERST COMMUNITY CENTER OPENS

This fall, the Northwest Amherst Community Center held its grand opening. This brand new space is the result of a partnership between the Town of Amherst Youth & Recreation Department and Sweet Home CSD. The Center is used as a multipurpose space to provide events and activities for adults and children in the community. Students can spend time there after school, and adult programming provides free and low cost opportunities to those who may not otherwise be able to attend classes and events. The Center has a full schedule of events for the community and our students, like student rec nights. Check out their website, amherst.ny.us, for more!

SHEF FUNDRAISERS MAKE THE HOLIDAYS WARM FOR ALL

SHEF (Sweet Home Education Foundation) is a non-profit foundation (501c3) which supports all Sweet Home students and their families. This fall, their annual Thanksgiving drive supported the collection of full Thanksgiving meals for over 40 Sweet Home families. The food was organized and delivered by staff volunteers. Among the many efforts SHEF makes throughout the year, this drive ensured a warm holiday for all involved.

ONE COMMUNITY

FUNDRAISERS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS KEEP THE PANTHER FAMILY STRONG

Community involvement is at the heart of our mission at Sweet Home. The start of this school year has been a great time for fundraisers, community events, and partnerships which support that mission.

MAKING STRIDES

Pictured below, members of the Sweet Home Education Association (SHEA) and their friends and families came together to support the American Cancer Society with the annual Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walk in October. This is the 23rd year that Sweet Home staff have been involved in this important cause.

Over $3700 was donated to the American Cancer Society on behalf of our SHEA Striders Team. Thank you to all who so kindly and generously supported their efforts!

MEAT RAFFLE ALWAYS A HIT

The Sweet Home Annual Dollars for Scholars Meat Raffle this fall raised over $9,000 (a record!) which directly funds scholarships for our graduating seniors. Last year alone, Dollars for Scholars awarded over $100,000 in scholarships.

Thank you to everyone who attended!



ONE COMMUNITY

WILLOW RIDGE STUDENTS SET NEW RECORD FOR THE WARM HEARTS SERVICE PROJECT

Each year, Willow Ridge Elementary students participate in the Warm Hearts Service Project, a coordinated effort between the district and the New Beginnings Food Pantry. Students collect food and warm clothing to donate to their community, and the goal each year is to collect more items than the year before.

The energy was high as students gathered in the gym to see the unveiling of the total number of items collected, and cheered as they heard the final totals.

This year, Willow Ridge beat last year's total by 250 MORE donations, with a grand total of 2,313 items donated.

Students also helped pack and load all the items into vehicles to be delivered to the Pantry. Amazing work, Panthers! Thank you to all of our students and their families who donated items.

Thank you also to Amanda Cole, Jessica Jenkins, Maureen Gorenflo, Brooke Bainbridge and Ashley Bell, as well as student Grace Laible and Kathy Miller from Amherst Youth & Rec. What a team effort to bring joy to others during the holiday season!









CONNECT TO OUR SWEET HOME ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

CONSIDER DONATING TO SCHOLARSHIPS

The Sweet Home Alumni Association proudly awarded graduating Seniors with close to $40,000 in scholarships in 2023. If you would like to sponsor an alumni scholarship, please email alumni@sweethomeschools.org.

COME TO A MEETING

Our next Alumni meeting will take place on March 4th in the Vergils Center at 5:00 PM.

All Sweet Home alumni are welcome to attend.

FIND US ONLINE

Official Sweet Home Alumni Association

@OSHAA8617

officialshhsalumni

sweethomeschools.org/domain/1066

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Stay connected!

sweethomeschools.org

**Sweet Home High School presents...
the Addams Family - A New Musical!
March 15, 16, 17**

Scan the QR code to purchase tickets beginning **February 26**.



DISTRICT PHONE NUMBERS

District Office	(716) 250-1400
Central Registration	(716) 250-1600
Family Support Center	(716) 250-1228
Transportation	(716) 250-1434
Athletic Director	(716) 250-1207
High School	(716) 250-1203
Middle School	(716) 250-1452
Glendale Elementary	(716) 250-1500
Heritage Heights Elementary	(716) 250-1525
Maplemere Elementary	(716) 250-1550
Willow Ridge Elementary	(716) 250-1575

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stopfinder

Track your student's bus schedule and receive updates via the Stopfinder app. Contact our Transportation Department at businfo@sweethomeschools.org to activate a Stopfinder account for your family.