

Three Local Foundations Partner With Ashland City School's 5th and 6th Graders for Digital Wellbeing

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 23, 2024

ASHLAND – Ashland City Schools is pleased to announce a historic partnership with the Samaritan Hospital Foundation, Ashland County Community Foundation and Ashland City Schools Foundation in a partnership to educate and empower families with children in fifth and sixth grade with **Project Pavise** for internet safety and digital wellbeing.

Project Pavise was created in response from anonymous student surveys collected November in 2023, as Ashland City School students grades fourth to twelfth grade heard presentations from National Internet Safety speaker, Mrs. Jesse Weinberger. Her presentations were a wake-up call to students and parents alike. Ranging from tech based true crime stories, social media issues and current mental health discoveries, highlighting the immense amount of pressure impacting pre-teens and teens in American culture.

According to Weinberger, higher device time corresponds with higher anxiety and depression for all users. That trend is well-documented, with multiple studies linking increased screen time with greater rates of depression, anxiety, body image issues, loneliness, self esteem issues and less emotional connection with others.

"Life is more than followers, likes, shares and comments on social media. We have an opportunity to "build in" safety online now, not bolt it on later," said John Teevan, Ashland City Schools Board of Education President. "This mutual partnership with the Samaritan Hospital Foundation, Ashland County Community Foundation and Ashland City Schools Foundation all share the passion and conviction to serve the next generation in our public schools to make better decisions and live with fewer regrets with their digital lives. We believe this project can and will benefit them today and in the future. Our collective hope is that these wonderful gifts will inspire other community members to join in supporting these important initiatives. Together, we can better serve our Ashland community."

Project Pavise is a privately funded grant with the focus on internet safety and digital wellbeing of students at Ashland City Schools. This initiative was made possible from the generous contributions from the Samaritan Hospital Foundation, Ashland County Community Foundation and the Ashland City Schools Foundation. The focus of this project is with students in 5th grade at Taft Intermediate and 6th grade students at Ashland Middle School, starting September 30 through November 22, 2024.

Historically, a pavise was an oblong shield, large enough to cover the entire body, that was used during the mid-14th to early 16th centuries. The pavise shield was used by archers, crossbowmen, and other infantry soldiers on the battlefield. Project Pavise was named specifically around the idea that the project will give students some resources to shield themselves from internet

dangers. This project is a reality because of the generosity of three local organizations who also believe in the mission of Project Pavise.

The Samaritan Hospital Foundation serves the people of Ashland County and the surrounding area. It is committed to offering the highest quality care with compassion, respect, and integrity.

The Ashland City Schools Foundation is a non-profit, independent organization not directly affiliated with the Ashland City Schools or the Board of Education. Foundation trustees work closely with school officials to determine what types of educational materials and programs deserve to be supported by the Ashland City Schools Foundation. All contributions from the Ashland City Schools Foundation are designated to provide educational opportunities for all students and educators in the Ashland City School District.

The Ashland County Community Foundation pools resources from community members, invests them and then uses them to make grants for the betterment of the entire community. They exist to serve donors, nonprofit organizations and the community as a whole. The ACCF sets the vision for Ashland County while ensuring charitable gifts are used effectively to meet the community's present needs and to build a brighter future.

Project Pavise will be strategically investing in the students and parents of current fifth and sixth grade students with their digital wellbeing. The campaign will start for the fifth grade students at Taft intermediate on Monday, September 30 and conclude on October 27. The goal is to establish a dialogue between parents and their children about digital and device health during time out of school. Ashland Middle School students will be given the opportunity to engage in the Pavise content with their parents and guardians for a 4-week campaign from October 28 to November 23.

Ben Spieldenner, Chief Innovation Officer for Ashland City Schools, says, “The two part project aims to reset the devices and the way students think about their online footprint. Our goal is to give students the opportunity to create a digital presence now that their future self will thank them for.” Project Pavise serves alongside parents, students and staff within the Ashland City Schools corporation and community leaders to better understand the needs of the class of 2030 and 2031 as parents and students navigate their digital wellbeing. “This is the first time an educational institution has taken on anything like this at the digital level. We aren’t going to tell parents not to get their kids cell phones, we aren’t going to shut off our wifi, and we aren’t going to condemn social media so our best line of defense is to bombard kids with positive messages and ways to improve their online footprint,” said Ashland City Schools Superintendent Steve Paramore. For more information, visit projectpavise.org.