



LEYDEN

HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 212

100th anniversary special edition



Homecoming 2024: What a weekend!

Leyden's choir students (above) and Nineteen Twenty-Four, a Leyden staff band (left), open the 100th anniversary community concert.

Story on pages 4-5

Superintendent's Corner



Dr. Nick Polyak
Superintendent

After two years of planning, it's finally here - **Leyden's 100th Anniversary** - and we couldn't be more excited to celebrate with our communities! I'd like to give a special "thank you" to our event sponsors, our donors, and the steering committee for their ongoing support.

On the very first day back after summer break, we kicked things off with an all-staff dance party video that is available on our Leyden YouTube channel and is sure to bring a smile to your face. We had banners and balloons welcoming students to the buildings in August. We introduced a new mascot costume and a name for the Eagle: Vega (it means "soaring eagle," one of the brightest stars in the northern constellation of Lyra). And we "rolled out" a freshly painted activity bus so that our students can arrive to competitions in Leyden Pride.

Earlier this fall, more than 1,300 students, parents, alumni, staff, and community members packed the Rosemont Dome for a community concert featuring some of our most famous Leyden musicians. It was amazing to see the energy, enthusiasm and love associated with Leyden during that event. The next day, the stadium was packed yet again for the Homecoming game against Morton. We included

a special alumni section featuring a traveling exhibit. That exhibit, Leyden: Making History, will be visiting the Schiller Park, Franklin Park and Northlake Public Libraries throughout the year for all of our residents to experience.

Next up is Leyden's 100th Anniversary Gala, the most formal of our events this year. It is scheduled for February 8, at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center. This will be the ultimate reunion and a night to remember for sure! Dinner, dancing, raffles and live and silent auctions items that are shaping up to be pretty spectacular! Tickets are available for purchase on the website with all proceeds going to the Leyden student scholarship fund. We'd love to see everyone out at this event, connecting with us, with each other, and with Leyden.

And finally, this spring, Leyden will host a community picnic for all, especially our current and future eagles and their families. Save the date: May 17th and stay tuned for more details soon.

Thank you to our entire community for the support now, and over the past 100 years. We couldn't have done it without you, and we are grateful to be in service to these very special communities! There are great things ahead as we kick off the next 100 years!!

With Leyden Pride,
Dr. Nick Polyak





Leyden presents a traveling exhibit featuring the 100-year history of the district which will travel to local community organizations throughout the 2024-25 school year. Celebrate 100 years of Leyden Pride by learning more about the traditions, innovations, and achievements that create the legacy. From the beginning as "Leyden," to the addition of "West," and the combining of athletic teams, colors and mascots... this is Leyden Pride!

Traveling exhibit features **Leyden's** history



Schedule

November: Schiller Park Public Library

January: Franklin Park Public Library

March: Northlake Public Library

The exhibit is open to the public during the organization's business hours.

GALA

Leyden's 100th Anniversary

Saturday, February 8, 2025

Dinner, dancing, cash bar, silent & live
auction and other special surprises



Sponsored by Sloan Valve
All proceeds will help support scholarships for
current and future Leyden students.
Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, 6 p.m.
\$100/ticket -->



Homecoming 2024:



In honor of Leyden's 100th anniversary, the weekend of October 4-6 packed a lot of parties! Leyden kicked things off with a special community concert, featuring the Leyden choir, a staff band called Nineteen Twenty-Four and famous alumni Jonathan and Tommy "Mugs" Cain with their Family Affair at the Rosemont Dome. Attended by a crowd of 1,300, the vibe that night was pure fun for alumni, students, staff and the community!



What a weekend!



Next up, the Eagles beat Morton in their homecoming game, which featured a newly designed mascot costume for "Vega," (see story on page 9), the debut of the traveling historical exhibit (see story on page 3), along with a special section and announcements for alumni.

Students danced the night at the West Leyden fieldhouse to the theme of Under the Big Top, to celebrate the win.

Sunday morning, Leyden students marched in the Franklin Park fall fest parade where the community got a look at the newly refreshed Leyden Pride Inside activity bus. One of Leyden's oldest living alumni and staff members, Dolores Hanson, rode like a queen in a convertible, and donned a pageant sash that read: "Class of 1944."



100 YEARS Leyden: Making History



Early Years (1913-1927)

1913: A two-year high school is established in a portable building on the present Hester Grade School grounds.

1918: Enrollment reaches 20 students.

1924: Voters approve a four-year high school, establishing Leyden Community High School as Cook County District 212.

1927: The 16-room main building is completed and occupied.

Growth & Expansion (1930-1959)

1930: District population is 4,000 with 246 high school students.

1940: District population grows to 10,000 with 600 high school students.

1950: Rapid post-war growth brings the district population to 45,000 and 1,100 high school students.

1954-1955: Over 60% of East Leyden's building is completed.

1957-1959: Construction of West Leyden begins.



Modernization & Challenges (1985-2019)

- 1988:** Alumni Wall of Fame established.
- 1991-1992:** Massive soundproofing project at West Leyden.
- 2003:** Successful referendum increases education fund tax rate.
- 2009:** District purchases additional land for parking and athletic fields.
- 2010:** Leyden High School District 212 achieves District Accreditation status.
- 2012-2013:** Students issued Chromebook computers.
- 2014:** Leyden named National Advanced Placement School of the Year.
- 2015:** Leyden selected as E-Learning pilot school.
- 2016:** Updated mission and vision statements created.
- 2017-2018:** Major construction projects at West and East Leyden.
- 2018:** E-Learning pilot ends successfully.
- 2019:** New law allows schools to use E-Learning days.



Consolidation & Recognition (1978-1985)

- 1981:** Athletic and fine arts programs combined for both schools.
- 1983:** East Leyden recognized as one of the state's finest high schools.
- 1984:** Both East and West Leyden named National Blue Ribbon Schools.



Division & Expansion (1959-1977)

- 1959:** West Leyden opens, relieving overcrowding at East Leyden.
- 1962:** First graduating class from West Leyden.
- 1965-1969:** Triton Junior College is housed at West Leyden.
- 1972:** Three-story addition to East Leyden housing media center, social studies department, and EL support.
- 1974:** Leyden celebrates 50 years of excellence.
- 1977:** East Leyden wins state championships in wrestling and football.

What's Next @Leyden



What's NEXT for Leyden (2020 and Beyond)

2020: Speaking of those E-Learning days, in March, COVID-19 brings a global shut-down, and schools go into remote learning for more than a year.

2021: Students and teachers return to in-person learning in the spring.

2022: Board of Education crafts a statement on Equity.

2024: Students vote on a name for the Eagle mascot: VEGA

2024-25: Leyden celebrates its 100th anniversary!

Starting this school year, students are required to place cell phones in holders at the door during every class. Research shows the phone needs to be out of reach in order to lessen distractions. Teachers cite improvements in focus.



What's next for Leyden:

The pandemic brought change in schools, in our communities, and globally. Even as everything returned to "normal," it was a new normal. Four years later, we are still feeling the effects of the pandemic, from student attendance rates to mental health support.



Did you know? The Leyden Eagle finally has a name! This fall, students voted and the Eagle's name is.....drum roll.....VEGA!



The threshold of every classroom has a sign in English, Spanish and Polish that says either "We are glad you're here," or "Everyday," highlighting the importance of being present in both senses of the word.



As we look to the next hundred years, we take our first steps into that new era thinking about equity and inclusion, school safety and security, new grading practices and how technology has shaped and continues to shape our society, and thereby, our students.



Leyden students name eagle mascot

On September 30, the Leyden eagle mascot finally got a name! After a process of student and staff nominations, then a popular student vote on finalists, the name "Vega" emerged as the winner. "Vega," a name generated by current students, is a constellation that translates into 'Soaring Eagle,' and it is the brightest star in the northern constellation Lyra.

"I think that naming the eagle was an important move because it is the symbol of Leyden - for example Benny the Bull is so iconic and instantly represents the Bulls franchise. In a way, Vega the Eagle is representing Leyden in our community and to other schools," said Senior Student Board Representative Adriel Carrera. "I am glad that the naming process was given

to the students because it gave me and other students to come up with and vote for their own mascot name. I also think that Vega being the brightest star in the Lyra constellation represents how Leyden is important to so many people and how we shine in the Chicagoland area, especially in our sports and activities."

While East and West Leyden have been collectively known as the Eagles since 1981, the mascot itself remained nameless and was often just referred to as "Eagle."

"By giving the mascot a name, we can strengthen school spirit, particularly during major sports events, and create a more unified sense of identity," said Junior Student Board Representative Jonathan Guerrero. "A named mascot helps students feel a deeper connection to the school, enhancing their high school experience. It adds personality to our symbol, making it more memorable and engaging, and encourages greater involvement and pride among the student body."

Also, with the launch of the mascot name, a new costume debuted this year and will make appearances at upcoming events such as homecoming, games and events.

"As Leyden celebrates its 100th anniversary, it presented a timely opportunity for current students to name the mascot, which will carry on for future generations of Eagles," said Superintendent Dr. Nick Polyak.

Leyden produces five-part documentary series

Leyden: Making History a five-part documentary



As part of its 100th anniversary celebration, Leyden produced a five-part documentary series, available on YouTube, to commemorate the people who have made this school district what it is today. Leyden: Making History, features community leaders, families and icons, telling their unique stories and perspectives, as we move from the past, to the current, and set the course of the future for generations to come.

Part 1 - Getting to know one of our oldest alumni and staff members

Part 2 - Leyden Legends: Coaches Farina, Goodman, Leese

Part 3 - Graduates who lead in community service

Part 4 - Families of Leyden, multi-generational and multilingual

Part 5 - The culmination of it all, current students, and where Leyden is headed next

Alumni Wall of Fame



In 1988, Leyden established its Wall of Fame, when it inducted its first honorees. As of 2023, there are more than 120 noteworthy alumni whose pictures line the halls of both East and West Leyden.



Top: Inductee Justyna Kedra addresses the audience during the Wall of Fame ceremony in 2023.

Right: The Cain brothers pose with the West Leyden culinary students.



How many do you know?

Score:

1-10 = A Little Blue

11-20 = Leyden Lite

21+ = Soaring Eagle!

Swag Alert:

Post a picture of you with a Leyden Wall of Famer and tag **#leydenpride100**.

We will send a 100th anniversary tee shirt to the first 10 entries.

Name	Class	Field
Rich Agness	1963	College Coaching and Administration
Karen L. Alber	1982	Business
Carl Amari	1981	Business and Communications
Arthur Arriaga	1966	Business Enterprise
Maria Ann Atkins	1985	Osteopathic Medicine
Brenda Barnes (Czajka)	1971	Corporate Management
August F. Battaglia	1970	Architecture
Joseph Belback	1977	Electrical Engineering
Suzanne Belish (Elliott)	1969	Education
Mark Benedetto	1973	Higher Education
John Bingham	1966	Music
Ruth Blaha (Bradof)	1968	International Business and Marketing
William Bookless	1970	Physics and Scientific Research
Major Richard F. Boubek	1951	Military and Commercial Aviation
Dr. James Bradof	1966	Oncology
Connie Bretz (Frybarger)	1945	Writing and Storytelling
Karyn L. Brown (Fritz)	1985	Communications
Jonathan Cain	1968	Music
Tommy "Mugs" Cain	1971	Music
Katherine Callahan (Edwards)	1970	Government Service
Vadm. James C. Card	1960	Military Service and Engineering
Barbara Cascio	1976	Law Enforcement
Cheryl Chavarrie Francl, J.D.	1986	Law
Dr. Peter D. Chemello	1978	Dentistry
Donald Chmielewski	1987	Engineering
Ned Colletti	1972	Professional Sports Administration
Patricia Cupuro	1984	Trauma Medicine
Melanie Cyganowski	1970	Federal Level Litigation
Daniel Czyz	2000	Science
Carol Ditchkus	1966	Business and Marketing
Diane Doll	1970	Computer Programming and Music
Tom Dore	1975	Sports Broadcasting
Allan Eckert	1948	Writing
Douglas Eden	1963	Government Science
Diane Eden	1964	Business and Computer Sales
Laura Erickson (Farley)	1969	Ornithology
S. Penny Feldmann (Wagner)	1978	Midwifery
Dr. Karen Fitzner	1966	Healthcare
Manuel Flores	1990	Government
Jim Fredrickson	1981	Gymnastic
Paul Froehlich	1968	Community Service
Brian Fruits	1998	Education and Theatre Direction
Frank Fultz	1969	Health Education and Professional Baseball Coach
Ronald Gibbs	1964	Public Policy
Glen Grunwald	1976	Business and Sports Law
Janet Guill	1971	Writing
Richard Heckinger	1966	Finance
Jeff Hernandez	1962	Business Administration
Dr. Donald Hester	1960	Career Diplomacy
Harry "Chick" Jagade	1944	Professional Football
Matt Janz	1988	Cartooning
Dr. Donald M. Jerina *	1958	Biomedical Research
Jim Johnson	1962	Broadcasting
Janet Kamien	1966	Museum Administration
Lucia Kamm-Steigelman	1965	Nursing
Thomas J. Kapusta	1972	Architecture
Justyna Kedra	2010	Entrepreneurship
Beverly Kedzierski	1971	Computer Science
Harold Kelley	1954	Business Management
Dr. Pam Kibbons	1984	Education

Name	Class	Field
John Kozlowski	1968	Chemistry
Mary Kozy	1967	Social Work
Anita Kuhnle (Dilillo)	1977	Veterinary Science
Rebecca Kuntz (Dawson)	1979	Finance
Lou Kurzeja	1965	Veterinary Science
Lt. Col Richard Lavergne	1977	Military Service and Engineering
Mr. Robert Leeper	1956	Business and Entrepreneurism
Michael Leiding	1992	Medicine
Tom Lynch	1968	Watercoloring
Dr. John D. Markese	1963	Business and Finance
Dr. Daniel Martinez	1986	Medicine
Dr. Ricardo Martinez	1982	Family Practice Medicine
Robyn C. McCluskey (Chavarrie)	1984	Business
Clifford L. Meacham	1963	Law
Ruben Melesio	1955	Business
Dr. Karenmarie Meyer (Lauresen)	1976	Medicine
Deborah A. Miller	1970	Higher Education
Richard Mork	1953	Business Management
Richard Nardini	1952	Advertising and Public Service
Mary Anne Navratil (Barcellona)	1974	Music and Drama
John Nester	1964	Art Education
Daniel Netzel	1953	Scientific Research
Reid M. Paxson	1964	Local Government
Robert L. Perry	1962	Sociology and Education
Judge John Phillips	1965	Law
Dr. Dennis R. Pietrini	1963	Dentistry
Terry A. Piper	1963	Business
Cezary Podkul	2002	Journalism
Guy Porfiro	1977	Illustration
Laura Porro	1999	Biomechanics and Paleontology
Daniel B. Pritchett	1965	Public Service
Bruce Pugeseck	1969	Research Biology
Louis Rende	1947	Television Production
Kelle Reynolds (Zech)	1985	Wildlife Biology
Tracy Rizzo	1989	Law
Mary Ann Ruzecki	1951	Meteorology and Computer Science
Diane Ryndak	1970	Special Education
Paul Sacco	1971	Law
Kimberly Schonert-Reichl	1976	Education
Tim Setnicka	1964	National Park Service
Michael Shanahan	1970	NFL Coaching
Mayor Jeffrey T. Sherwin	1971	Public Service and Law
James Slowiak	1973	Theatre Arts and Education
Don Smarto	1964	Restorative Justice
Bradley Stephens	1981	Public Service
Donald Stephens	1952	Business and Politics
Steven C. Tanner	1982	Aviation
Nola Ilchene Theiss	1964	Public Service
Nancy Tobin	1963	Education and Community Service
Marian Thompson (Leonard)	1947	Public Service
Carlos X. Treto	2003	Animation
Mario Treto Jr.	2003	Law
Lori Truitt (Drummer)	1981	Biology and Engineering
Aguinaldo Valdez	1977	Corporate and International Law
Joan Vercillo	1978	Air Traffic Control
Eric Wasowicz	1975	Business and Computer Science
James R Weigand	1973	Business
Linda Wiatr (Lemieux)	1974	Literature
Floyd M. Yager	1985	Actuarial Science
Richard E. Zielinski	1965	Television Production and Education

Back in Time

What else was going on back in 1924-25, when Leyden was founded?

In the U.S.:

- Calvin Coolidge won the presidential election in a landslide.
- The Harlem Renaissance was a cultural revolution in New York City's Harlem neighborhood.
- The year saw the introduction of many new consumer products, including Wheaties cereal, Bit-O-Honey candy bars, Kleenex facial tissues, and iodized table salt.
- Automobiles were the mainstream form of travel, with the Ford Model T being one of the most popular vehicles.
- Airmail service also began in the U.S. in July 1924, allowing mail to be transported between New York and San Francisco in less than 35 hours westward and 32 hours eastward.
- The 1924 Summer Olympics were held in Paris.
- The Boston Bruins became the first US hockey team to join the National Hockey League.

In Chicago:

- Soldier Field opened
- Goodman Theatre established
- Chicago railway station opened
- The Tribune Tower was completed on Michigan Avenue.

Where did the name "Leyden" come from?

This area was first established in 1850 under the name Monroe, and it was mostly prairie. Since there was another town by the name of Monroe, they selected a new name, Leyden, which has both Irish (Lydon) and Dutch (Van Leyden) roots as a family name.

Leyden High School District 212 is an equal opportunity institution, committed to compliance with all applicable state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination. This includes prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, order of protection status, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, homelessness and marital/parental status, including pregnancy.

As required by S.B. 898, you may go to Leyden's website to view our budget at: www.leyden212.org

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Thank you to those who contributed photos to this edition of the newsletter.



Leyden District 212 Board of Education

Board of Education meetings are in the East Campus Board Room



Mr. Gregory T. Ignoffo
President



Mrs. Gloria Murawska
Vice President



Mr. James A. Lima
Secretary



Mr. Joseph Trevino
Member



Mrs. Lisa Anthony
Member



Mrs. Sandra Boehm
Member



Mr. Cesar Garcia
Member



Adriel Carrera
Student Member (E)



Jonathan Guerrero
Student Member (W)