

SWEET HOME SOURCE

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE



WINTER 2024
ISSUE 04

HIGHMARK AND BEYOND

For the first time in 10 years, our Varsity Football team fought their way to a Section VI championship, played at Highmark Stadium.

GIVING BACK IN GHANA

A team of teachers visited Ghana over the summer to learn, give back, and immerse themselves in global education.

AUTHOR ALUM VISITS HH

Alumnus and best-selling author Chris Grabenstein returns to his roots.

EVERY STUDENT, ONE COMMUNITY, READY FOR THE FUTURE.

A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



Dear Sweet Home Community,

Sweet Home will always be a District that takes pride in our academic and extracurricular programming while continually working to improve outcomes for our students, now and in the future. As 2025 rapidly approaches, work in the areas of our Strategic Plan, DEI, and planning for our next major capital project is ongoing and showing positive results.

In progressing toward a more rigorous academic program, we are pleased to announce that all students at Sweet Home will have 15 more minutes of instructional time in the 2025-2026 school year. In working with our teachers, we are currently developing the schedule that will result in changes to start and stop times next year. While we are excited to offer more academic time during the school day for our students, we realize that any change in the schedule takes planning on the part of our families. Our goal is to make an announcement in January that will give our families ample time to plan for any change that will occur.

The bus driver shortage and its impact on transportation services continues to be an issue at Sweet Home. Our transportation department, particularly our drivers, are doing an outstanding job of being extremely flexible while dealing with a depleted workforce. We truly appreciate their service and willingness to go above and beyond everyday to get our students to and from school and provide extracurricular transportation so every student at Sweet Home has a chance to participate. Due to the shortage, we are constantly reviewing transportation plans to see if we can improve route times and provide more before- and after-school transportation.

With that said, we are studying the impact of moving the Middle School start time approximately 15 minutes after the High School start time starting in the 2025-2026 school year. This would allow students in grades 6-12 to ride the bus together to maximize the space on the bus. Elementary runs would then be the last runs of the day. This would be very beneficial for several reasons. First, Middle School students would have more time in the afternoon to participate in extracurricular activities. They could also be at home in the afternoon to care for their younger siblings. Since the elementary runs would be the last runs of the day, it would give drivers more time for door-to-door stops and pickups. Finally, we are studying whether this would free more drivers for after-school transportation of students. Please note that if we do recommend this change, we will ensure there is as little impact as possible on current elementary start and stop times.

The Building Use Committee has also recommended to the Board that Sweet Home look to build additions at three of our four elementary buildings to accommodate for growing enrollment and student support services. We have begun a process with the New York State Office of Facilities Planning called Preliminary Review. This process is necessary to obtain approval for building additions. During the coming year, our Building Use Committee will work to finalize the actual scope of the project to meet the needs of our entire Panther Family. This will keep us on track for a late 2025 vote by our community.

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 is in line with our Strategic Plan and supports our mission and vision at Sweet Home. Please stay tuned for more updates as the year progresses.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dr. Michael V. Ginestre". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dr. Michael V. Ginestre
SUPERINTENDENT
OF SCHOOLS

HIGHMARK AND BEYOND

AN IMPRESSIVE REGULAR SEASON PROPELLED OUR VARSITY FOOTBALL TEAM TO HIGHMARK AND BEYOND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN TEN YEARS

For the first time in ten years, our Varsity Football team dominated their regular season and propelled themselves into the Section VI title game at Highmark Stadium.

Boasting an impressive 8-1 regular season and two playoff wins, this marks the most successful season since 2014 for the Panthers Varsity Football program.

The honor of playing at Highmark also allowed five of our seniors to attend Media Day at the stadium. They toured the facility, heard speeches from various coaches and Section VI representatives, and spent time on the field, posing at midfield on the Bills logo.

Two days later, our team fought hard in the rain to beat McKinley 34-0. So many Panther students and families were in attendance to see the team celebrate their big win. The cheers were loud as Coach Zimmer raised the Section VI Championship plaque.

The win at Highmark led to a tough matchup against Brighton, played at SUNY Brockport. Unfortunately, our Panthers didn't come out on top, but we are incredibly proud of their successful run.

Congratulations to Coaches Zimmer, Campolo, Faulks, and Dustan, and all of our hardworking student-athletes for a well-earned championship season.

TONS OF FUN DURING HOMECOMING WEEK

POWDERPUFF

The annual Powderpuff Flag Football game during Homecoming Week is always an exciting rivalry with Juniors (in purple) playing against Seniors (in pink). After spirit week, our students were ready to compete in a little feel-good fun on the turf.

With the Panther Pit in full force and the Varsity Football players on the other side of the lines as cheerleaders, our Seniors grabbed the victory, but everyone had fun!

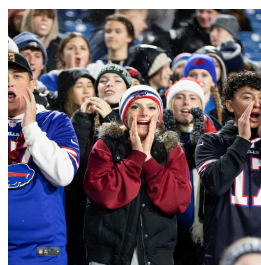
ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME

Part of our Homecoming festivities this year included the inductions of five new members of our Sweet Home Athletic Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame memorializes exceptional, well-rounded athletes and coaches who made an indelible impact on the history of Sweet Home's athletic program.

Congratulations to Jordan Johnson (Football, Basketball, Track; graduated 2012), Liam Callahan (Soccer; graduated 2012), Michael Biggane (Soccer, Hockey, Baseball; graduated 2012), Kelsey Maving (Volleyball, Basketball, Softball; graduated 2009), and Coach Reggie Witherspoon (Basketball) for their induction into the Hall of Fame!

FAMILY CARNIVAL/ FOOTBALL GAME

Homecoming is always a fun event at Sweet Home. This year, we continued our tradition of a family carnival, food trucks, and were lucky to have beautiful weather for the football game. Our team was victorious against Williamsville East, and fun was had by all.





FIELD EXPERIENCE A KEY PART OF READY ACADEMY PROGRAM

AT SWEET HOME'S READY ACADEMY
BIG PICTURE PROGRAM, INTERNSHIPS
PROVIDE ON-THE-JOB EXPERIENCE

**“IT’S DEFINITELY WHAT I
WANT TO DO IN THE
FUTURE.”**

For Sweet Home students at Ready Academy’s Big Picture Program, the traditional classroom environment has not always been the best fit. The administrators, teachers, and staff at Ready Academy work hard to ensure these students find ways to thrive, and an integral part of that is their internship program. Led by teacher Nick Newman and counselor Matt Capriotto, internship opportunities are determined based on students’ unique interests as well as by existing community partnerships. A good portion of the opportunities happen outside of the school building, such as Buddy’s Second Chance Rescue, Aquarium of Niagara, Bob Weaver Motorsports, and many more. There are a number of internal opportunities as well, such as the Ready Cafe, where several students work hard to plan menus, prepare food, sell, and serve their goods on campus while learning about the process of running a successful business.

This internship program was highlighted at Ready Academy’s recent Open House, where students set up tables and gave presentations about their internship assignments.

The common sentiment is - “I love being on-the-job”, and “It’s definitely what I want to do in the future”.

For some students, the internships are exploratory, covering topics they may not have had the opportunity to experience before, but have expressed interest in. For others, it is an obvious transition to work in a field in which they have always pictured themselves. Depending on the business, some of our students are even offered paid summer jobs based on their involvement during the school year. It is wonderful to see our students finding new ways to learn and share their experiences with their peers as they navigate planning their futures.





SHHS NAMED AS AP SCHOOL HONOR ROLL BRONZE MEDALIST

Congratulations to our 2023-2024 school year Advanced Placement (AP) teachers and students for all of your hard work and dedication which has led to Sweet Home High School being selected to as an AP School Honor Roll Bronze Medalist! According to collegeboard.org, "The AP School Honor Roll recognizes schools whose AP programs are delivering results for students while broadening access. Schools can earn this recognition annually based on criteria that reflect a commitment to increasing college-going culture, providing opportunities for students to earn college credit, and maximizing college readiness."

MAPLEMERE ELEMENTARY NAMED TO US NEWS AND WORLD REPORT "BEST SCHOOLS" LIST

We are proud to announce that Maplemere Elementary School was recently named as a "Best Elementary School" by U.S. News and World Report. This recognition places Maplemere in the top 4% of elementary schools in the nation. According to U.S. News, "schools are ranked on their performance on state-required tests, graduation, and how well they prepare their students for high school". Congratulations to all of our Maplemere Panthers for this distinction!



ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT DR. WILSON RECEIVES HONOR



Also recently recognized was our very own Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Toyia Wilson. Dr. Wilson received the prestigious honor of being named as one of the four founders of the house system at Thurgood Marshall Middle School in Rochester, calling back to her time there as the Founding Principal of a College Board School. Dr. Wilson was named the Founder of the Justice House.

We are proud to have Dr. Wilson and her extensive experience and leadership here in Sweet Home, where she has made an incredible impact in a few short years.

Pictured are Walter Larkin, CEO of University Prep for Young Men (Founder of Legacy House), Principal Burrows, and Dr. Wilson (Founder of the Justice House).

ANNUAL HEART AWARDS

EACH YEAR SWEET HOME CELEBRATES STAFF AND FACULTY WHO GO ABOVE AND BEYOND IN THEIR DEDICATION TO STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

The Heart Award is an annual recognition presented to at least one professional and one service related staff who continually embody the Sweet Home Mission of Every Student, One Community, Ready for the Future. The award is peer-nominated, and celebrated at our Superintendent's conference day. We are incredibly thankful for the work of this year's recipients who live and breathe our mission each day. Nominees are considered with the following criteria:

"Every Student"

- Extends themselves for our kids – goes the extra mile
- Makes learning special for our kids; makes things better for our kids
- A true difference maker

"One Community"

- Loves/promotes the Sweet Home culture
- Builds great relationships
- Helps kids connect with each other
- Willing to collaborate with others
- Accepting of all
- Reaches out to connect with kids, families and colleagues

"Ready for the Future"

- Models self-direction; promote self-directed kids
- Has high expectations for our kids and themselves
- Believes that all people can reach high levels
- Always learning and trying to get better

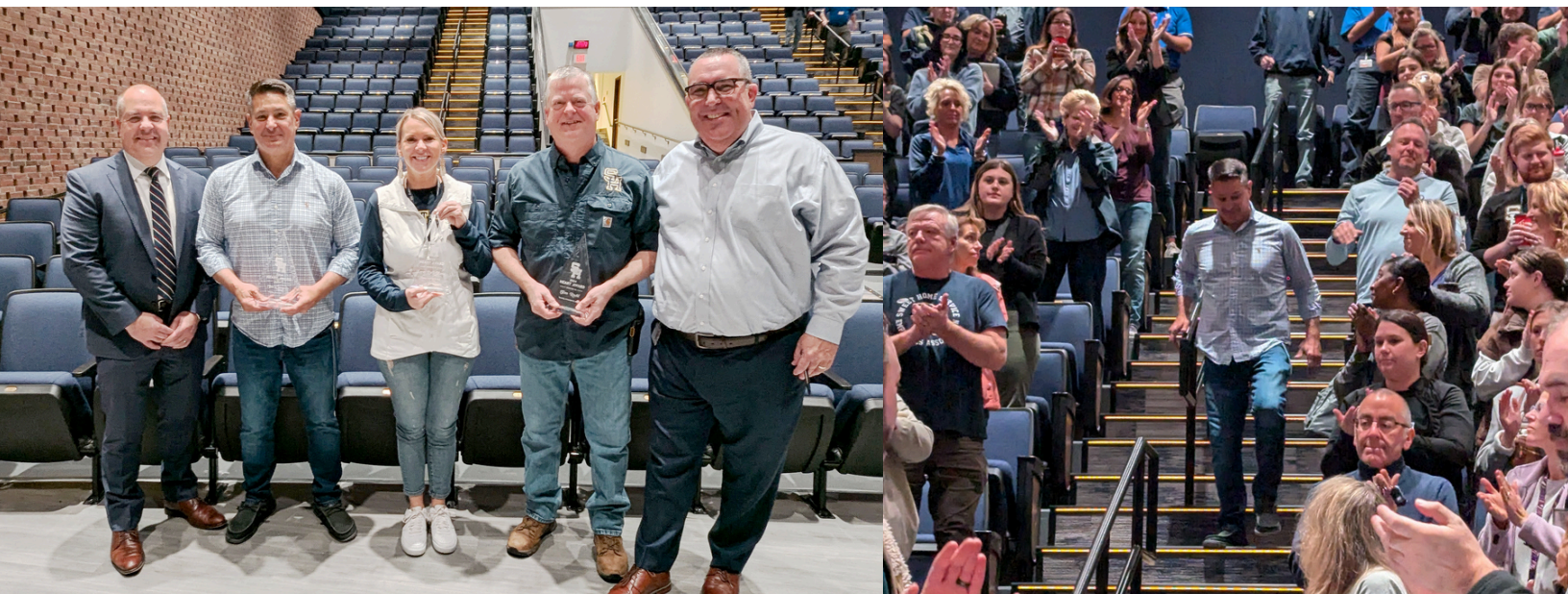
TOM RACKL

HIGH SCHOOL HEAD CUSTODIAN

Tom Rackl has immense pride for his work. He does an amazing job setting goals on how he would like his school to look inside and out. His work ethic is passed on to employees from first shift to third.

His quiet leadership style shines through when they are able to meet the daily building challenges, while keeping staff on schedule and on task. Mr. Rackl embraces training opportunities and keeps on top of all regulations and safeguards and shares superior knowledge and experiences with other building custodial teams. He encourages staff to pursue further education and take civil service exams.

Mr. Rackl deals with sudden changes or additions to the calendar with the utmost professionalism. His vocabulary does not include the word "no" and he has always been cognizant of the important role his team plays in making our students, faculty, staff and visitors feel safe and welcome to our buildings. Sweet Home facilities are some of the finest in Western New York and Mr. Rackl is certainly a big reason why.



ANNUAL HEART AWARDS

EACH YEAR SWEET HOME CELEBRATES STAFF AND FACULTY WHO GO ABOVE AND BEYOND IN THEIR DEDICATION TO STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

KAREN DELAPLANTE

GLENDALE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL

Principal DeLaPlante is a Panther through and through. She began as a teacher at Willow Ridge Elementary and moved to the Assistant Principal position in the high school before becoming Glendale Elementary's Principal.

She always encourages and supports our Panthers to be leaders and engage in school activities. She wholeheartedly supports and promotes the Leader In Me program and looks for all opportunities for our Panthers to embody the leadership spirit. She encourages collaboration between our older and younger Panthers to help create relationships among our students. She takes extra time to console students, connect during lunch bunch, and is always there with a smiling face as they enter or exit the building. Miss DeLaPlante is a constant presence in her own building and throughout the district, supporting current and past students.

Miss DeLaPlante likes to incorporate fun into the school day, whether it's a Bills Day, Swiftie Day or other creative theme, she creates an atmosphere of joy for our young Panthers. She is often seen playing games with students or popping in to classrooms to discover what students are working on. She encourages problem-solving and open-dialogue among Panthers for conflict resolution. The primary goal is to create a safe space for our Panthers to help foster a love of learning, fun and friendships throughout their years at school and she truly cares for each and every student, past and present.

Her door is always open for students and staff alike. Her passion for teaching and engaging with students is evident. The students and families of our district are lucky to have a Principal that cares for them the way that Miss DeLaPlante does.

JON CAMPOLO

HIGH SCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER AND COACH

Mr. Campolo is constantly going above and beyond for his students and families. As tough cases arise in the special education office, or anywhere in the district, this teacher never says no. He truly has the ability to work with every student and make the connections that serve to motivate and support kids. When it comes to students, he is there to lend a kind ear, offer advice, and provide academic and/or social-emotional support. Mr. Campolo finds ways to connect and include students that might not otherwise feel connected to school. He maintains high expectations and helps students to achieve their personal best.

Mr. Campolo is always open to working with others, hear new ideas and perspectives, and offer insightful responses and ideas. He has developed successful relationships as a co-teacher with many different colleagues in the high school. He is often scheduled into an array of classes across grade levels and content areas, provides consultant teacher support in the high school summer school program, organizes accommodations for students taking August Regents exams, provides special education support in the After School Alternative Program (ASAP), and provides home instruction to Sweet Home students with significant medical and/or mental health needs.

Outside of the classroom, Mr. Campolo coaches varsity football and baseball. He devotes himself to these student-athletes by organizing off-season open gym sessions, managing fundraising and chaperoning spring training trips. In addition to teaching student-athletes the skills and plays to succeed on the field, he takes accountability for developing positive character in these young men.

Sweet Home is definitively a better place because of Mr. Campolo.

Correction: In a previous issue we inadvertently omitted the names of some graduates of the Class of 2024. Their names are as follows:

Gianna R. Lewis
Savahanna T. Lewis
Antonio J. Livingston Jr.
Luca A. Longo
Jonathan A. Lopez
Payton L. Lowe
Thalia A. Luna
Dylan Lutz

Robert D. Lymberopoulos
Hannah J. Maciejewski
Maurice J. Mack Jr.
Majed O. Majed
Arjun S. Mankoo
Tearle V. Mann II
Bradley P. Marrantca
Venus S. Martina

Morgan M. McCadden
Qadir A. McGrath
Emily N. McGreevy
Ethan M. McGuire
Corey A. McIntosh Jr.
Daniel D. McKeenan
Jayla D. McKithen
Nathan A. Meginley

Alesha Galina Melnik
Alina A. Melnik
Gianna G. Miceli
Ariana Minhas
Ali S. Mohammed
Ashley A. Moore

TEAM OF TEACHERS VISITS GHANA TO GIVE BACK

A TRIP TO GHANA OVER THE SUMMER PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR TEACHERS TO LEARN, GIVE BACK, AND IMMERSE THEMSELVES IN GLOBAL EDUCATION

It started with an idea...what if a team of Sweet Home teachers could travel abroad to truly live and learn global education? A connection through one of our Panther families made it a reality.

One of our Heritage Heights parents, Evette, helped facilitate the trip through her aunt Dr. Elizabeth Baitie, the CEO of Merton International School in Ghana. Once the trip became a reality, it was time to involve our students and begin collecting donations. The generosity of our Panther families to give back to others was impressive. Boxes and boxes of school supplies and other necessities were shipped to Ghana ahead of the team. The donated items were sorely needed by the students and families our teachers met on their trip.

The team had several major goals:

- Travel to Ghana in June 2024
- Collaborate with Ghanaian teachers
- Share cultural experiences to cultivate an appreciation for diversity
- Teach students and collaborate with teachers at the Merton International School and a local government school in Accra, Ghana
- Extend support by personally distributing all the donated essential supplies and toiletries to the children we encounter

In the months leading up to the trip, students at Heritage Heights learned about Ghanaian culture including music, art, family relationships, schooling, and much more. They displayed their leadership skills by organizing and implementing the donation drives to collect items for the trip.

Once summer arrived, it was finally time to make the trip. Dr. Elizabeth Baitie facilitated all of the educational and cultural experiences during the trip. The team made the most of their time in Ghana by planning several major events, including visits to Merton International School, several Catholic and government schools, and the Merton Award Ceremonies. They also participated in several cultural experiences, visited the opening of a library, and of course, distributed the many supplies donated by our Sweet Home community.

Upon arrival in Ghana, their first stop was to the Merton International School. Merton International and Merton Nursery School are two schools that service students ages 3-18. It is a private school model that works to raise the standard of excellence in their students.

On our first day at Merton, our team was warmly welcomed with a beautiful celebration. They received flowers, enjoyed dances and performances, visited classrooms, and met the students. They also had the opportunity to meet the teachers and learn about the school's philosophy.





TEACHING, GROWING, GIVING

In the days that followed, they had the opportunity to teach lessons to the students at Merton International and work alongside their teachers.

They also visited Merton Montessori school where they educate students who are 3-6 years old. Our teachers noted how interesting it was to see how the teachers facilitated their classrooms, and how focused and well behaved the students were. They quickly noticed how integral music and movement were to learning. At Merton, it was evident that education was a top priority. The faculty and staff were passionate about teaching, and the students were eager and prepared to learn.

“WE WERE WARMLY WELCOMED AND MADE TO FEEL RIGHT AT HOME. IT WAS INCREDIBLE TO SEE A SCHOOL ACROSS THE WORLD THAT CARES SO DEEPLY ABOUT ENRICHING STUDENTS' LIVES.”

- Jill Grugnale, Heritage Heights teacher

Upon visiting Catholic and government schools on their next phase of the trip, our teachers experienced firsthand the need in these institutions. The collaboration between their teachers and ours was incredibly fulfilling for both sides of the partnership. During their time visiting these schools, our team learned about class sizes and teaching models. In many cases, classes were twice the size (or more) of our own, with instructors rotating between classrooms and sometimes leaving children unattended to balance instruction between multiple classrooms. Despite these challenging conditions, our team was impressed by the students' attention and respect to their teachers and studies.

A particularly touching experience was the opportunity to witness the opening of a library in one of the government schools, which consisted of only a few books, gifted by Merton International. The luxury of having books for children to read was something incredibly unique for them, and very moving for our teachers. Our team hopes to send more books to Ghana in the future to build up the library's collection.

Our team was fortunate enough to also participate in many cultural experiences such as African drumming, bead and jewelry making, visits to the Museum of African Artifacts, and performances by students and adults. They were able to do some sight-seeing of the local flora, fauna, and natural beauty of Ghana. They visited Kakum National Park and Boti Falls.

The celebratory dinner on their last night was a wonderful way to cap off the trip. They wore handmade African clothing and dined on delicious food in a festive celebration of global partnership and learning. We are so proud of our Sweet Home teachers for embodying our mission of One Community thousands of miles from home.

THE TEAM INCLUDED: EVETTE, STEPHANIE BICKELMAN, JESSICA SPIESZ, LINDSEY PERRY, PETE RAO, MARY RAO, DEBBIE ZEHLER, BROOKE GRUGNALE, AND JILL GRUGNALE.



FALL SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS

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

Football:

- Section VI Class A Champions
- Finished the season 10-2
- Division A2 Champions
- Graduates 14 seniors

Cheerleading:

- Competed in competitions at Starpoint, North Tonawanda, Amherst, Frontier and Hamburg
- Graduates 8 seniors

Girls' Tennis:

- Team was led by eighth grader Elise McDuffie and senior Haley Starr
- Seniors: Maya Atallah (captain), Aubrey Coogan, Haley Starr (captain), Ashley Lamoreaux, Helen Nguyen and Ava Veneziano

Girls' Soccer:

- Defeated Buffalo Seminary
- Team led by Ja'Lynn Batchelor, Sofia Guadagna, Avery Priamo, McKenna Flatau and Te'a Hammer

Boys' Soccer:

- Defeated Starpoint (x2) and Kenmore East
- Team led by Waseem Ahmad with 10 goals and Evan Korte with 2 goals, 2 assists

Girls' Swimming

- Team led by Rydell Reif, Lauren Silverberg and Addie Willis
- Reif placed 3rd in Section VI for the 500 free and 4th in the 200 freestyle. She finishes the season as a two-time ECIC Division I finalist and two-time Section VI Class A finalist.

Unified Bocce:

- The team earned the top spot blue ribbon at the Section VI culminating event
- Fifteen athletes and partners worked together in Unified Bocce's second season

Boys' Volleyball:

- Finished the season 6-8
- Team led by Eli Hansen, Frankie Bellanti, Tim Slaughter, Gavin Walters, Jacob Brand, Tim Aust, Logan Copenhaver and Jonathan Henel

Girls' Volleyball:

- Finished the year 3-14
- Team stats: Ella Hubert with 122 kills, 41 blocks. Camryn Smith with 39 kills, 26 blocks. Sophia Michalski with 133 digs, 14 aces and Kendall Gaume had 215 assists.

Girls' Cross Country

- Team was led by Taylor Nugent who ran 20:39 at ECIC Championships and 20:58 at Section VI Championship
- Team members: Kendra Kaspuszczak, Kaitlyn Taylor, Tess Kielbasa, Kylie Martin and Taylor Nugent

Boys' Cross Country

- Team was led by Carden Vega who ran 18:44 at ECIC Championships and Alganfud Abdurrahman who ran 18:51
- Seniors: Jared Veal, Alganfud Abdurrahman, Liam Andrews and Dominic Croce

Field Hockey

- Defeated Sacred Heart Academy 2-1
- Brianna Brown had 250 saves on the season
- Isabella Cacheiro, Abrianna Renshaw and Kayla Arcadi led the team in points

Boys' Golf:

- Team was led by Sophomore Joe Surdi who qualified for ECIC Championships
- Strong team performances by Nathan Darling, Owen Coughlin, Ryan Miller, Brayden Vester and Adam Mellerski

Girls' Golf:

- Inaugural season for the Panthers Girls Golf
- Team was led by Adina Bluestein, Cami Runfola and Emily Phillips
- Cami Runfola and Emily Phillips qualified for ECIC Championships

DESIGNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

MICHAEL TOJEK'S HIGH SCHOOL DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT CLASS PARTNERS WITH THE CENTER FOR HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

The Sweet Home Strategic Plan goals set a framework for everything we do. Goal #1, 'Teaching and Learning' focuses on experiential learning while Goal #2, 'Future Focused', focuses on immersing students in real-world experiences. A collaborative unit in Michael Tojek's class has exemplified both of these goals and is redefining hands-on learning.

Through a partnership with The Center for Handicapped Children (CHC) on Eggert Road in Amherst, students in Mr. Tojek's class worked to develop, design, build, and implement adaptive physical education equipment for handicapped children.

This is the second year of the partnership, and this year their designs were focused on a fun way to launch frisbees. For many of the students at the Center, it was their first time ever being able to play frisbee. Mr. Tojek's wife Julie Tojek is a Physical Education teacher at CHC, and developed the adaptive PE program from the ground up. Our students traveled to CHC on a field trip to help implement their devices, so they got to see first hand the importance of the work they had done.

We couldn't be more proud of this example of Sweet Home students learning practical hands-on skills while also impacting the lives of our local Sweet Home community.



“IT HAS BEEN FANTASTIC TO WATCH THE EXCITEMENT AND ENERGY THAT OUR STUDENTS HAVE IN WORKING WITH THE STUDENTS AT CHC. OUR STUDENTS WERE AMAZING IN THEIR SOCIAL INTERACTION WITH CHC STUDENTS AND FACULTY - A GREAT LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR EVERYONE!” - MICHAEL TOJEK



AUTHOR ALUM VISITS HERITAGE HEIGHTS



“IT’S CHRIS GRABENSTEIN!”



BESTSELLING AUTHOR AND SWEET HOME GRAD CHRIS GRABENSTEIN BRINGS BOOKS AND LAUGHS

Walking through the hallways of Heritage Heights Elementary with author and Sweet Home alumnus Chris Grabenstein, it was easy to see his impact on our students. Mr. Grabenstein is a multiple award-winning, #1 New York Times bestselling author of the 'Lemoncello', 'Smartest Kid', and 'Dog Squad' series, among others. He co-authored the acclaimed 'Shine!' with his wife J.J. Grabenstein as well as nearly three dozen fast-paced and funny page turners with James Patterson. In total, he has authored almost 80 books.

Heritage Heights students have been learning about the works of Mr. Grabenstein for over a year in preparation for his visit. When they finally saw him in their hallways and classrooms, the excitement was palpable.

Mr. Grabenstein spoke to our kids about his time in the Sweet Home school district. He spent time signing books, eating lunch with our students, and gave presentations in the auditorium about his life, career, and journey to becoming a successful author. He took questions and our students sang and performed a song written just for his visit by their music teacher Debbie Zehler.

We were happy to partner with local childrens' book shop Alice, Ever After Books, located at 295 Parkside Avenue, Buffalo, NY, to curate and supply books for this special event. They even gave our students the exclusive opportunity to order the latest book in the 'Lemoncello' series before its release date! Visit Alice, Ever After in person or online to support local, women-owned small business in Buffalo. To learn more about the works of Chris Grabenstein, visit his website at chrisgrabenstein.com.





40+ STUDENTS GRADUATE AS ENGLISH-PROFICIENT

At Sweet Home, we are extremely proud of our diverse population and strive to make every student and their families feel welcome. Our teaching staff works hard to prepare students of all ages for the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT), which tests English language proficiency. In October, we celebrated the graduation of over 40 Sweet Home students participating in this program. These Panthers achieved "Commanding" on the NYSESLAT exam and are now considered proficient in English. Thank you to the amazing teachers behind their success, and especially their families for their support.

BUFFALO BILLS LEGEND STEVIE JOHNSON VISITS GLENDALE & HS

It's not every day that a former Buffalo Bills player visits your elementary school! Our Glendale Panthers were thrilled to welcome legend Stevie Johnson, who visited classrooms, hyped up an entire gym full of students, read from his co-authored children's book, and signed autographs. Stevie also spoke to our Varsity Football team before their game that night and asked them all to sign a Sweet Home sweatshirt for him. Stevie was in town for his "Why So Serious Run Fest" with the organization Eager 2 Run, hosted right on our campus the following day. We thank Stevie and his team for spending time at Sweet Home!



FRENCH HONOR SOCIETY WELCOMES 7 NEW INDUCTEES



The beginning of November marked the 47th Annual French Honor Society Induction. Congratulations to students Matthew Arrasjid, Jaevon Coleman, Serai Hendricks, Matthew Kang, Ava Lockridge, Melissa Macleod, and Kaitlyn Taylor for their induction into the society. The ceremony was led by French Seal of Biliteracy Candidates Vice President Maya Atallah, Treasurer & Secretary Adina Bluestein, and President Hailey Fisk. New members lit candles and repeated the motto, "L'homme qui sait deux langues en vaut deux.", which translates to, "The man who knows two languages is worth twice as much."

Thank you to High School French teacher and Honor Society Advisor Julieann Duma for her dedication to our French program and organization of this wonderful event!

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

MILITARY WALL OF HONOR

Do you know an alumnus who is currently serving or has served honorably in the military? This is your chance to sponsor this veteran. The Wall of Honor is located in the HS Main Foyer and is a prominent area for all to view the contributions of those who have proudly served our country. A \$10 donation will cover the cost of the wall plaque for the individual and provide money for a scholarship to a graduating senior whose family member was honorably discharged from the military. For an application please email alumni@sweethomeschools.org.



NOMINATE AN ALUMNUS

If you are interested in nominating someone for the Distinguished Alumni Wall of Fame, please contact Coordinator Nicole Kuss at nkuss@sweethomeschools.org. Applications are due January 24, 2025. The induction ceremony will take place in May 2025. Scan the QR code for the application.




PLANNING A REUNION?

Is your graduating class planning a reunion? Please let the alumni association know by emailing alumni@sweethomeschools.org.

FIND US ONLINE



 Official Sweet Home Alumni Association

 @OSHAA8617

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sweethomeschools.org

FUN FOR A GOOD CAUSE

THE ANNUAL FACULTY/STAFF BASKETBALL GAME RETURNED THIS YEAR TO BENEFIT SHEF

The High School gym was once again packed for the annual Faculty/Staff Basketball game, benefiting the Sweet Home Education Foundation (SHEF). The basketball game is one of SHEF's biggest fundraisers for the year. This event helps the organization fund their many charitable programs like the Prom Dress giveback, Weekend Backpack program, staff mini-grants, and much more. For more information and to donate, visit sweethomefoundation.org.

This year, the two featured games were Willow Ridge/Glendale vs. Maplemere/Heritage Heights, and Middle School vs. High School. Both games were nailbiters with multiple lead changes, and a lot of athletic moves from our players.

Superintendent Dr. Ginestre got in on the action as our referee, alongside Middle School teacher Neal McLoughlin.

Ultimately, Willow Ridge/Glendale and the High School raised the winning trophies!

The night was full of fun for all of our Panther families, including basket raffles, concessions, a free throw contest for the kids, and a raffle of Bills items signed by Dawson Knox. It was a fun, successful night of fundraising.

**THANK YOU FOR
HELPING US RAISE OVER
\$5,000 FOR SHEF!**



DISTRICT LAUNCHES PODCAST TO HEAR FROM STUDENTS

Sweet Home has recently launched a district podcast called 'Sweet Home Speaks'. We talk to young people about what they're proud of and let them tell us, in their own words, what it's like to be a student. Students of all ages are featured, from elementary to high school, and often accompanied by a teacher or staff member who is directly involved in the program or project being discussed.

'Sweet Home Speaks' directly supports Goal 1 of our Strategic Plan, which focuses on amplifying student voice. Listen by scanning the QR code or searching 'Sweet Home Speaks' on Spotify or Apple Podcasts.

SWEET HOME SPEAKS



A PODCAST ELEVATING
THE STUDENT VOICE



MULTI-TALENTED MCGEE RECEIVES BROADCASTING AWARD

Jim McGee, who you may know as the voice of 97 Rock, is also a dedicated bus driver for Sweet Home. Mr. McGee recently received the prestigious NHS Broadcasters Excellence in Broadcasting award for "Outstanding Live On-Scene" for his on-location reporting to help raise money for the Jason Arno Fund in partnership with the Town of Tonawanda and Village of Kenmore Fire Companies. He has been a volunteer firefighter in the Kenilworth Volunteer Fire Company since 2005. We are proud to celebrate Mr. McGee and his dedication to our community and to Sweet Home.

Listen here!



Watch here!



STUDENTS SAY THANK YOU TO OUR BOARD OF EDUCATION

Students of all ages from across the district said thank you in a video celebrating Board of Education Week in October. We extend our thanks to Amy Battaglia, President; Peter Bellanti, Vice-President; Danyelle Anthon; Marianne Jasen; Scott Johnson; Brian Laible; and Dirk Rabenold for their many hours of volunteer work as Board of Education members.

Watch the video by scanning the QR code above.

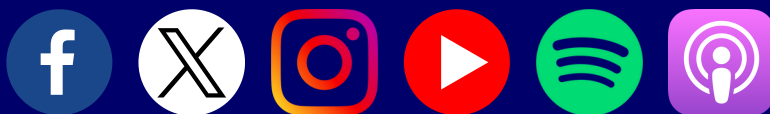
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Stay connected!



sweethomeschools.org

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

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Amy Battaglia, President
Peter Bellanti, Vice-President
Danyelle Anthon
Marianne Jasen
Scott Johnson
Brian Laible
Dirk Rabenold

Student ex-officio member: Mayesha Subaita



Dr. Michael V. Ginestre, Superintendent of Schools
Donald Feldmann, Assistant Superintendent
for Finance & Plant Services
Dr. Toyia Wilson, Assistant Superintendent
for Curriculum & Instruction



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.