

# COMMUNITY *Connections*

News of Cheney Public Schools



*For our children, our world, our future*



# LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff, and Community Members,

The last few weeks leading up to Winter Break have been very rewarding. I have had the privilege of witnessing the amazing teaching and learning taking place in our classrooms and attending multiple district events showcasing our students' hard work and skills.

In the classroom, our elementary students are learning through all sorts of activities. To name a few in the last week, at Betz, Miss Trotter's third-grade class learned about the similarities and differences of parallelograms, quadrilaterals, and rhombus, while at Snowdon, Mrs. Piddington's first graders explored the writing process through narrative writing. At Windsor Elementary, all grade levels participated in a Stop for STEM activity, an engineering project that aligns with the Next Generation Science Standards. At the middle school level, students are engaging with a new curriculum that has a wider focus than just solving equations but includes problem-solving and application as well. This helps students develop critical thinking skills.

Our middle and high school students have shined in the performing arts, with concerts for choir, orchestra, and band at both levels, not to mention A Charlie Brown Christmas performance from Cheney High School Drama. The CHS Future Business Leaders of America highlighted the season of giving with the Third Annual Santa's Trailer Gift Drive and Shopping Day, a wonderful opportunity for our students to engage with and give back to our community. Winter sports are also well underway, and both CHS girls and boys wrestling have had spectacular starts to the season, while our girls and boys basketball teams competed in the Railroad Rumble basketball game against Rogers. It was a spirited competition, and I am thankful that our students have the opportunity to perform on such a great stage.

I would like to thank our community once again for your support of the District's \$72 million bond. Now, we are getting to work planning and executing the elements of the bond. With such a project, we will be setting up a Bond Advisory Team, comprised of district community members who are interested in providing input for the implementation of projects funded by the bond. This team will support transparency, accountability, and the effective use of bond funds to meet the District's capital improvement needs. If you are interested in learning more, [click here!](#)

I look forward to what the New Year will bring! I wish all of you a happy and healthy holiday season.

We are Cheney Public Schools!

Take care,



Ben Ferney, Ed.D.  
Superintendent | Cheney Public Schools



Ben Ferney, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
bferney@cheneysd.org

## IMPORTANT DATES

**December 23-January 3**  
Winter Break – No School

**January 8**  
School Board Meeting – 6:30 PM  
Cheney Public Schools  
Administrative Site

**January 17**  
End of Semester/2nd Quarter

**January 20**  
Martin Luther King Jr. Day – No School

**January 21**  
Semester Break Day – No School

**January 22**  
Emergency Make-Up Day



**On the Cover:**  
Students at  
Salnave  
Elementary  
read a book  
with Assistant  
Principal Claire  
Soulek



Mark Scott  
School Board President  
District 1



Liz Winer  
School Board Member  
District 2



Henry Browne  
School Board Vice President  
District 3



Bill Hanson  
School Board Member  
District 4



Mitch Swenson  
School Board Member  
District 5

## MISSION STATEMENT:

Cheney Public Schools exists to guarantee a safe and caring environment where ALL students learn at high levels and graduate with options for post-secondary education, careers, and civic engagement.



# Cheney High's FBLA Serves Over 200 Families with Santa's Trailer & Gift Drive



This year, the gift drive ran from Nov. 20 through Dec. 6 with gift drop-off locations at five local Cheney and Airway Heights businesses and every school within the Cheney Public Schools district. Over 800 gifts were donated to the cause, and the shopping day served over 200 local families in need. The shopping day featured toys, books, blankets, stuffed animals, and more, with a gift for every age. Free gift wrapping and hot chocolate were available, along with the opportunity to visit with Santa.



Top: FBLA students pose before the start of the shopping day; Bottom Left: Community children take a photo with Santa; Bottom Right: Community children browse available gifts at the Santa's Trailer Shopping Day

For the third straight year, the Cheney High School Future Business Leaders of America (FLBA) club organized and managed the Santa's Trailer Gift Drive and Shopping Day. The FBLA service project concluded with the community shopping day on Friday, Dec. 13.

Santa's Trailer began in 2022 in response to a void left when Cheney Outreach Center's holiday gift drive and shopping day dissolved as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Originally, FBLA planned to run a parallel gift drive to help provide additional gifts for Cheney Outreach Center's event, but when students reached out, they learned the gift drive and shopping day were no longer active. Amelia Gubler, head advisor to the CHS FBLA, suggested to her then-club president that they pick up the project.

"When we finally got ahold of [Cheney] Outreach, they let us know that they weren't doing that anymore," Gubler said. "So, I just suggested [to the FBLA president], what if we do it? We could do it here."

So, that's exactly what they did, and Santa's Trailer was created.

Gubler's role as FBLA advisor is to oversee the project, but planning and execution of the project falls to the students. Phone calls to community members requesting participation, coordination of gift box drop-offs and pickups, scheduling and planning the shopping day, everything is student-led.

"They really shine and take leadership roles, especially this year," Gubler said. "We've had a lot more involvement with more kids. It's really been a community effort within our FBLA club."

"I knew this was happening, and I thought it was an amazing opportunity to help families in need," said CHS sophomore Sydney Day. "I've learned some leadership skills, and all the time and effort that has gone into this project is a great thing. I've been looking forward to this all week."

"This was eye-opening to see how much we could really do," added CHS sophomore Jordyn Belarde. "It's really cool to be able to bring our knowledge in helping people and bring it to others, and give them a good Christmas."

"I think it's one thing to see this event on paper or in a presentation, but to actually experience it is a completely new thing," said CHS FBLA President Rylan Rajewski. "Some people explain to you that they would not have gifts otherwise during the holiday time... So, to be able to host an event where we can help people such as this is really truly inspiring."

Following the conclusion of this year's Santa's Trailer, FBLA found some areas of opportunity for improvement.

"We were able to serve over 200 families in our community, however there were some families who were not able to attend our event," Gubler said. "We are taking care of those families, and we will be making changes to the organization of the shopping day...so that everyone has a positive experience being able to leave with a gift that evening. We are being thoughtful about how to make things better each year for our community members."

To take a look at additional photos from the event, check out [this social media post](#).





## Cheney Public Schools Bond Advisory Team: Call For Participants!

Thank you, community members, for your support of the District's \$72 million bond. Now that the measure has been voter approved, it is time to begin planning and executing the projects outlined in the bond. As part of that process, the District will be creating a Bond Advisory Team. This team will be made up of district community members who are interested in providing input for the implementation of projects funded by the bond for Cheney Public Schools. The team will support transparency, accountability, and the effective use of bond funds to meet the District's capital improvement needs. If you are interested in learning more, [click here](#).



## Three Springs High School Counselor Nominated for LifeChanger of the Year Award

Three Springs High School counselor Travis Weese has been nominated for National Life Group's 2024-25 LifeChanger of the Year award. Sponsored by the National Life Group Foundation, LifeChanger of the Year recognizes K-12 educators and school district employees across the nation who are making a difference in the lives of students by exemplifying excellence, positive influence, and leadership.

Weese was nominated anonymously for making a lasting impact on his community through his dedication to youth mental health, access to opportunities, and workforce development.

Weese has been instrumental in advancing the school's counseling mission, which focuses on supporting students' academic, social/ emotional, and career-related goals. By partnering with stakeholders in the community, he has helped to create a



*Travis Weese, TSHS Counselor*

comprehensive program that fosters successful habits and mindsets, ensuring that all students are prepared for life after high school.

"His passion and commitment have been truly life-changing for the students he serves," said his nominator.

Winners of the LifeChanger of the Year award are chosen by a selection committee comprised of former winners and education professionals and will be announced in early 2025. [Click here](#) for more information!

## Betz Elementary Students Team Up with EWU for Pen Pal Program

For more than 15 years, Betz Elementary students have been teaming up with students in the Asia University America Program (AUAP) at Eastern Washington University as pen pals. Soon after third-grade teacher Debra Triplett arrived at Betz 15 years ago, she took over the established program.

Third graders are paired with an AUAP student each semester, so Betz students interact and work with two students per year. Elementary students practice letter writing with pen pals, while Eastern AUAP students practice English writing. There are typically three to four correspondences each semester for each pair of students. Then, at the completion of the AUAP semester, the pen pals come to Betz for an in-person visit.

"We have done all sorts of things when they come [to visit], but they almost always have some sort of book they will either read to our students or make for our students, teach

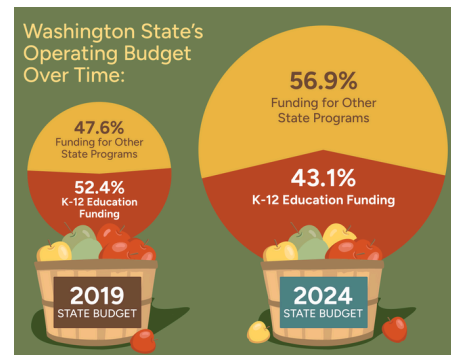
them how to use chopsticks, teach them how to write their name in Japanese and teach us origami," Triplett said. "It is a great partnership that really helps us learn about other cultures, practice writing, and communication skills, and learn social skills."



*Betz Elementary students read with EWU AUAP students*

## Statewide School Funding Explained on New Website

Are you interested to learn how the state funds public education here in Washington State, and the issues that are creating financial pressure on K-12 school districts? The Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA) has launched a website to help better explain the intricacies and nuances of state funding of public education. For more information, please visit [www.waschoolfunding.org](http://www.waschoolfunding.org).







# District Snapshots



Sunset families & Airway Heights community members gather for Turkey Bingo on Nov. 21.



Homeworks! students create their own gingerbread houses as part of Winterfest on Dec. 19.



Salnave Elementary's Mrs. Peplinski helps her student through the Morning Greetings in her 2/3 combo classroom.



Cheney High School FFA members working their booth at the Cheney Blackhawk Boosters Craft Fair on Dec. 7.



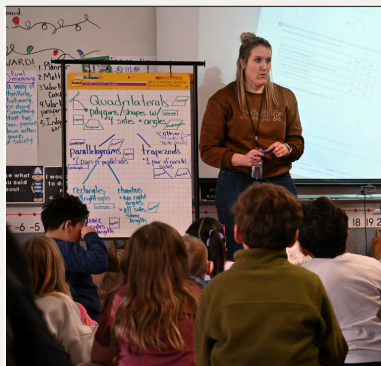
Mrs. Kennedy, a 1st grade teacher at Windsor Elementary, works with this student on reading skills.



Westwood Middle School students in Mr. King's math class listen as he introduces a new story problem, part of the new math curriculum introduced in Spring 2024.



This Snowdon kindergartener is all smiles in Ms. Garcia's class.



Betz Elementary 3rd grade students in Miss Trotter's class learn about quadrilaterals, parallelograms and rhombuses.



Superintendent Ferney reads to local children at the Airway Heights Recreation Center Pancake Breakfast on Dec. 7.