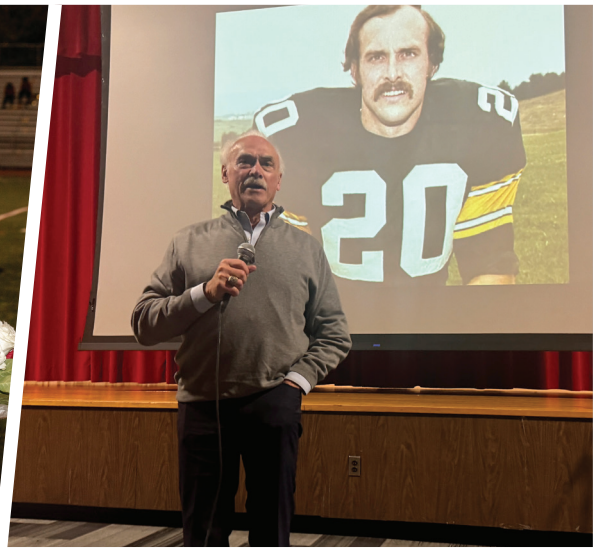


# FOX CHAPEL AREA

## School News



### Fox Chapel Area School District

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Fox Chapel Area Community,

The concept of engagement is a theme for this school year that I shared with the staff in August, and one that I've continued to think about throughout the ensuing months. The district's focus on engagement is not just an emphasis on student engagement. We also want to focus on engagement with all of the stakeholders in our community. We want everyone to feel that they can be involved, to know that we want and value their engagement, and that they belong as important members of our school community. This can refer to learning new things, teaching in new ways, joining a group, volunteering in our schools, partnering for community service, or in other ways that support our larger community.

Our schools are often described as the hub of our communities. Our buildings are not just used for daytime learning. Our facilities are used in the evenings by community groups for adult education, as well as by local sports groups who need space to practice and host games, community groups for performances, and as gathering spaces for meetings.

Our district also makes efforts to invite many to participate through its events and activities. For example, every year, we host district wide events for our senior citizens, including free performances of the fall play and the spring musical. We also host a free senior citizens luncheon. We open our doors to others throughout the year as well. We want to connect with our community members and share the amazing things our students and staff are accomplishing.

There are also many smaller communities that exist within each of our schools. Students collaborate on assignments and projects. Athletes build camaraderie with one another as part of a team. Musicians and actors bring performances to life on our stages through countless hours of rehearsals with one another. Clubs gather to volunteer both in our schools and in our communities to enhance the lives of others.

The administrators, faculty members, and support staff in our schools are involved with many outside groups, such as Remake Learning, the League of Innovative Schools, Leanlab Education, Leading Now, Digital Promise, and the Consortium for Public Education. They share their expertise with others and learn from their peers in neighboring school districts and industries.

On the following pages, you will read about veterans visiting our schools for Veterans Day, helping them to build relationships with our students. Students also recently had the opportunity to hear from four-time Super Bowl champion Rocky Bleier and former Steeler Will Allen as part of the newest LIGHT Center exhibit at Dorseyville Middle School centering on "Community of Champions."

Relationship-building happens every day in our district, and comes naturally, as community is so inherently involved in what we do every day. Building community encourages engagement. And, all of these things exemplify the four pillars of the district's strategic vision – purpose, passion, care, and community.

With the new calendar year upon us, we will continue our focus on engagement of all kinds, and we hope that our residents will extend their rich tradition of giving back and being involved with the district.

Sincerely,

Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac  
Superintendent







## FCASD'S STELLAR REPUTATION ATTRACTS NEW ADMINISTRATOR

**T**he Fox Chapel Area School District's unwavering commitment to students is what attracted Dr. Matthew Patterson to his new role as the executive director of secondary education and instruction.

As a longtime educator, Dr. Patterson had collaborated with Fox Chapel Area School District leaders over the years, and he saw, first-hand, the purpose, passion, and care that they had for students.

"Being given the opportunity to contribute to the cause is humbling, and I am very grateful for the opportunity to learn alongside the best in the business," he says.

Dr. Patterson has been impressed that, despite the amount of success the district has experienced over the years, it isn't a place where educators have become complacent.

"Everyone sincerely wants to continue to define what is next for the district. The level of professionalism, experience, and knowledge, coupled with the genuine pride for the district, is something special," he says.

During the past 25 years, Dr. Patterson has worked in four different school districts, each very different from the other.

"From driving a school bus to serving as an acting superintendent, I have been fortunate enough to professionally and personally develop from a wide variety of experiences. All I have ever wanted to do was make a difference in the lives of children and youths, and the adults who serve them. My goal, going forward, is to fully support the strategic vision of the district with what I have to offer," Dr. Patterson shares.

He has a particular interest in using data to determine the next steps for the education of students.

"Just like a physician who uses data to make informed decisions about a patient's health care, educators make important decisions for student learning based on data," Dr. Patterson says. "I enjoy working with educators and leaders to pull the data together so that learners receive a challenging, meaningful, and relevant educational experience in which they continually grow and achieve."



Dr. Patterson is particularly proud of the work he did in the West Jefferson Hills School District where, among other roles, he served as the assistant superintendent for seven years. The district enrollment increased by nearly 600 students during that time, making it among the fastest-growing in Western Pennsylvania. During his time, students' academic growth ranked No. 1 in several areas locally and across the state.

In addition to the West Jefferson Hills School District, Dr. Patterson served for 16 years as an educator, principal, and central office administrator in the Corry Area School District in Northwestern Pennsylvania. He also worked as an elementary teacher in the Wattsburg Area School District near Erie.

Dr. Patterson received bachelor's and master's degrees in education from Edinboro University. He has a doctorate in organizational learning and leadership from Gannon University.

Dr. Patterson attended the Avella Area School District in Washington County as a young student. His family then moved to Corry when his father accepted a position as an elementary school principal.

A resident of Jefferson Hills, Dr. Patterson and his wife, Bethany, have three children, Amelia, Kathryn, and Luccas. In his spare time, he enjoys traveling with his family, cooking, and the Pittsburgh food scene.

Dr. Patterson replaces Dr. Matthew Harris, who retired in September after 30 years in the district.



# NEW O'HARA PRINCIPAL INSPIRED TO HELP STUDENTS AND STAFF

New O'Hara Elementary School Program Principal Kevin Smetak is no stranger to the Fox Chapel Area School District. He spent the 2023-2024 school year as an intern with Superintendent Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac.

He says he was struck right away by the tone of the district that is set by Dr. Reljac and the administrative team.

"I immediately felt a sense of community and kindness centered on doing what was best for students. Dr. Reljac and her team willingly shared what they do, why they do it, and how they do it, in terms of providing the highest quality education for students," Mr. Smetak says. "I was able to see, first-hand, how passion, purpose, care, and community play a role in every decision and how the community, school board, administrators, and teachers embody those pillars to make Fox Chapel Area one of the premier districts in the state. Through my internship and my experiences, I knew that this was someplace special and a place I would love to work."

Mr. Smetak has found many things that make the district special. He particularly notes the commitment that the educational team brings every day to help students grow and excel in all areas. He also appreciates the district's commitment to educating the whole student and the partnerships the district forms with families to deliver a high-quality educational experience.

Mr. Smetak says his goals are "simple," to come to work each day to help students, families, and staff in any way he can.



"I want them to be able to look up on a graduation stage with pride for the accomplishments of their students who started their journey at O'Hara Elementary," he says of the staff.

Mr. Smetak points out that his former superintendent taught him that the school is the unifying force in a community and that as an educational team, including the board, administration, staff, and families, "We can accomplish anything. The sense of working together each day for the students, giving people value for who they are and what they do, are lessons that have become part of who I am."

Mr. Smetak officially joined the O'Hara Elementary School team in August, replacing former Program Principal Katelyn Toth, who is now the principal at Kerr Elementary School.

Prior to working at Fox Chapel Area, Mr. Smetak taught high school social studies in the Freeport Area School District and then served as an elementary principal and middle school principal in the Yough School District. He is celebrating his 30th year in education.

Mr. Smetak has a bachelor's degree in teaching from California University of Pennsylvania and is also a graduate of Ball State University and the University of Pittsburgh.

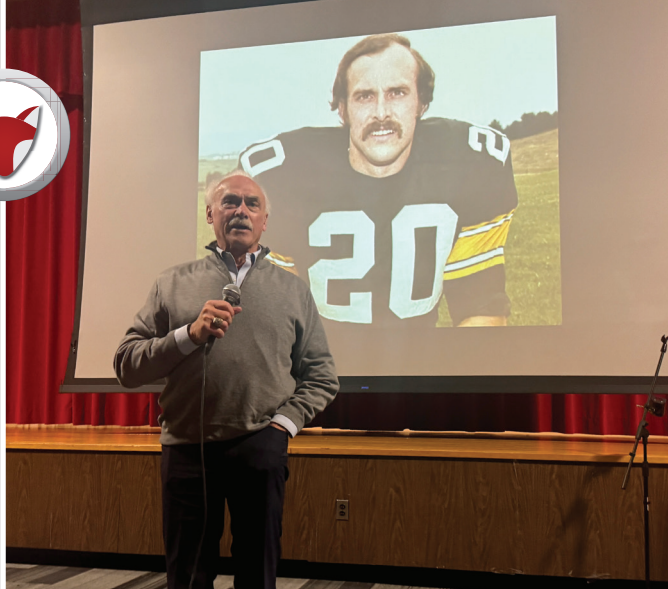
He grew up in Irwin, and he and his wife, Erin, live in Freeport Borough with their four children, Jack, Olivia, Lizzy, and Lily. In his spare time, he enjoys spending time with his family and running mountain races.



"Every day, I come to work inspired to help students achieve their hopes and dreams," he says.

He says he enjoys working with the staff to make them the best they can be for their students every day and encourages teachers to become lifelong learners so they can grow and become leaders that share their expertise to build the best learning environment.





## FORMER STEELERS BRING HISTORY TO LIFE

### *LIGHT Center Hosts 'Community of Champions' Exhibit*

**T**he newest exhibit at the Dorseyville Middle School LIGHT Center paid tribute to some black-and-gold gridiron greats.

Memorabilia marking decades of Pittsburgh Steelers history was on display for students and staff as part of the "Community of Champions" exhibit, and included books, playing cards, helmets and jerseys, souvenir cereal boxes, and, of course, Terrible Towels.

DMS' Light Center is an arm of the LIGHT Education Initiative, a Pittsburgh-based educational outreach program that seeks to inspire, prepare, and empower the next generation of humanitarians.

"The goal of LIGHT is to help build communities within school districts in the region," said Scott Vensel, a DMS literacy teacher and coordinator of the school's LIGHT Center.

As part of the exhibit, eighth-grade students heard from a pair of former Steelers – four-time Super Bowl champion Rocky Bleier and safety Will Allen.

Mr. Bleier, a former Fox Chapel resident who now resides in Mt. Lebanon, has two grandchildren in the Fox Chapel Area School District: Kellan, a senior at Fox Chapel Area High School, and Ella, an eighth-grader at DMS.

During his visit, he talked to students about themes such as responsibility, teamwork, leadership, and persevering through adversity.

"Football is much like life," he said. "Think about it. There is a beginning, there's a middle, there's an end. There's birth, there's life, there's death ... and then there's a renewal. It all creates one word – hope."

He detailed being wounded in Vietnam and working his way back to the Steelers in the early 1970s. He credits a triple-amputee he met while recovering at a military hospital in Tokyo with giving him the motivation to return to football.

"Every day, he'd stop at my bed and he'd say, 'Hey, how are you doing today?'" Mr. Bleier said. "I thought if anyone would be



embittered with their lot in life, it would have to be that young soldier having to live with those atrocities ... but yet, he chose to make a difference, and he chose to have a positive attitude. I thought if he could have that attitude, how about me?"

The plan for the DMS LIGHT Center is to have similar exhibits featuring the Pittsburgh Penguins during the winter and the Pittsburgh Pirates in the spring, along with speakers from those organizations, Mr. Vensel said.

"I look for speakers to come and talk about the power of working with people from different backgrounds in order to be successful, both on and off the field," Mr. Vensel said. "The speakers help to reinforce the importance of community by sharing their athletic and personal experiences."

After speaking with the students, Mr. Bleier toured the exhibit, much of which contained items commemorating his former teammates.

"It is important to be able to see this history, touch it, and keep it in memory," Mr. Bleier said. "Time goes by, and you forget. Like all eras, these are memories, even with the ups and downs."



## 30 SENIORS RECOGNIZED IN NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Seven Fox Chapel Area High School seniors have been designated as National Merit Semifinalists in the 2025 National Merit Scholarship Program: David Black, Anna Delale-O'Connor, Benjamin Fiedler, Rayna Huang, Arnim Kuchhal, Zhana Neumann, and Rohit Velankar. The Semifinalists represent less than 1% of the nation's high school seniors and have the opportunity to advance to the Finalist level and compete for 6,870 National Merit Scholarships worth nearly \$26 million to be offered in the spring. A Semifinalist must have an outstanding academic record throughout high school, be endorsed and recommended by a high school official, write an essay, and earn SAT or ACT scores that confirm the student's earlier performance on the qualifying test. Semifinalists must also participate in school and community activities, demonstrate leadership abilities, and receive other awards and honors.

Additionally, 23 high school seniors were named Commended Students: Omar Al-Bataineh, Murugan Ayyanar, Noelle Dick, Maya DiPasquale, Alaina Hershey, Owen Howell, Moonyoung Hwang, Etash Jhanji, Patton Johnson, Alex Kim, Evan Krieg, Nathan Mackey, Devon McDonald, Noah Miller, Pierce Osterholm, Rachel Pegher, Hyunoh Ro, Caleb Shirk, David Sorisio, Mya Wilson, Caterina Wu, JinLiang Zhang, and Yuqi Zhou. The Commended Students represent the top 5% of the nation's high school seniors and are recognized for their exceptional academic promise.



The Fox Chapel Area High School National Merit Semifinalists are, from left to right, Arnim Kuchhal, Rohit Velankar, Rayna Huang, Benjamin Fiedler, Anna Delale-O'Connor, David Black, and Zhana Neumann.

This year's National Merit Semifinalists and Commended Students were selected based on their 2023 Preliminary SAT/ National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test scores. Each year, more than 1.3 million juniors complete the test and are automatically entered in the National Merit Scholarship Program. Approximately 16,000 advance to become Semifinalists, and about 34,000 are Commended.

## FCASD HONORS VETERANS

Schools across the Fox Chapel Area School District celebrated Veterans Day with assemblies, speakers and special guests, and lessons and activities themed around the holiday. Here are just a few photos showing the ways our students and staff members honored those who have served our nation.









# HOMECOMING FESTIVITIES

Students, families, alumni, and Fox Chapel Area community members came together for a homecoming celebration in September.

For the 12th year, a carnival was held prior to the football game and included student- and community-run booths with games and fundraisers, activities, and food trucks. Live music from the students and faculty was also featured during the carnival.

Fox Chapel Area High School seniors Ava Persichetti and Christian Dantey were crowned homecoming queen and king during halftime festivities. The other senior members of the homecoming court were Isabella Cheatham, Maurena Cilenti, Emma Donovan, Chase Hendren, Nick Ingramm, and Caden Kaiser. This year's crown bearers were homecoming princess Remi Kurzdorfer and prince Vincent Corcoran.

All homecoming activities were coordinated and sponsored by the Fox Chapel Area High School student activities department and the Fox Leadership Council.







The Fox Chapel Area High School National Honor Society officers are, from left to right, Treasurer Brooke Fenton, Secretary Adelyn Bursick, Vice President Ava Persichetti, and President Luca Zgurzynski.

## NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY INDUCTEES

Fox Chapel Area High School held its annual National Honor Society induction ceremony in September. Speakers included the four NHS officers, seniors Luca Zgurzynski (president), Ava Persichetti (vice president), Adelyn Bursick (secretary), and Brooke Fenton (treasurer), who spoke about the four pillars of the organization – scholarship, service, leadership, and character. Superintendent Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac and Lead Principal Dr. Michael Hower also spoke as part of the ceremony.

This year, 94 students were inducted into the Fox Chapel Area High School National Honor Society. Those inducted were seniors Lincoln Burgess, Zoean Chittur, Aniket Mohnot, Alaina OKunewick, and Timothy Ye. Juniors inducted were Maya Agarwal, Marin Airik, Arman Alborzi, Prachi Behal, Maeve Beresford, Thomas Billings, Chanel Brun, Karsten Buchert, Victor Burkardt, Alana Calig, Dylan Calig, Ross Calig, Xing Carlough, Molly Classen, Allie Coen-Reyer, Tobias Conklin, Claire Conti, Catherine Conway, Michael Costello, Michael Didomenico, Atia DiGioia, Samantha Dinh, Greta Erdner, Mikayla Feder, Ori Goldin, Laila Golla, Caroline Grimsley, Eduardo Guirola Diaz, Raina Guzman, Charles Hahl, Elisabeth Hamilla, Priscila Hayetian, Zelia Herald, Vesta Homayoun, Lilly Hunkele, Lyla Jablon, Zinta Jacob, Sophia Jacobs, Auden Jacobson, Alan Jiang, Eloise Johnson, Avery Jones, Nora Kelley,



Colby Koloshinsky, Emily Korczynski, Ulyana Kubini, Emma Kurtz, Akshay Lath, Caroline Leland, Joanna Li, Steven Li, Owen Long, Gavin Lynch, James Manges, Charlotte McLeland, Max Melocchi, Eugenia Mettenburg, August Mierwald, Allison Milgrub, Dayna Mullan, Faye Muller, Gavin Nguyen, Corey O'Toole, Mira Owens, Zehra Ozkaya, Marilyn Pekarck, Sarah Rached, Charlotte Rattner, Joshua Shah, Mason Shelkey-Bray, Joseph Shin, Benjamin Shuttleworth, Rodrigo Silva, Lorenzo Smiraglio, Emma Srodes, Sophia Tai, Theodore Tedesco, Brooke Thiele, Elizabeth Thomas, Umayma Trebak, Morgan Van Kirk, Samantha Van Kirk, Nikolaj Vavpetic, Ryan Wang, Joseph Weber, Ava Weiner, Ian Wellman, Elliott Willison, and Helen Xu.

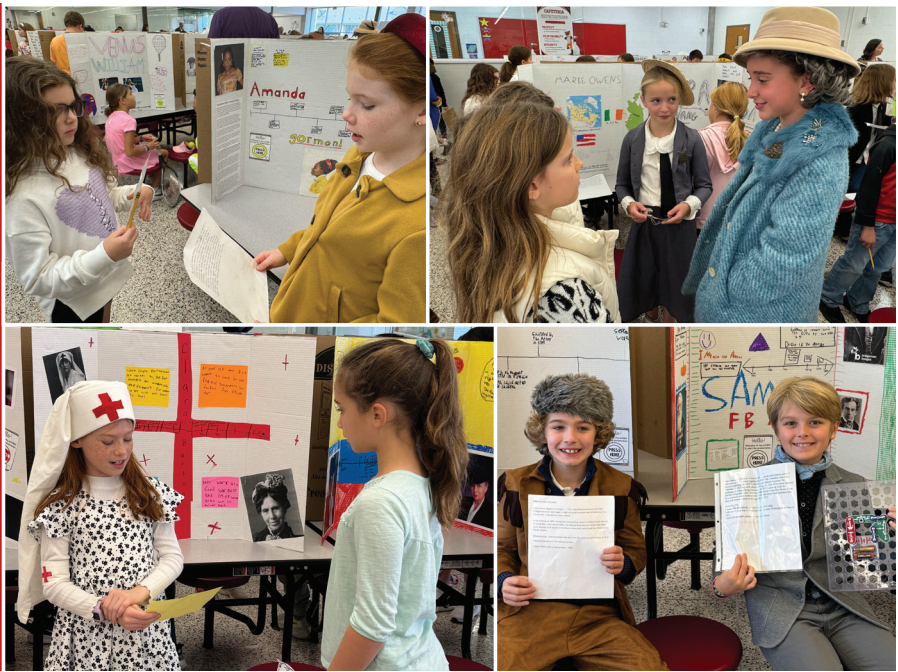
Students in their sophomore year who have an unweighted cumulative Quality Point Average (QPA) of 3.7 or higher are invited to apply for membership. Applicants must also have a minimum of two service activities and be involved in at least two additional clubs and/or groups. They must exhibit leadership qualities and provide character references. Once they are inducted, they must maintain their QPA and continue their community service work through National Honor Society projects and other organizations.





## O'HARA STUDENTS PRESENT LIVING WAX MUSEUM

O'Hara Elementary fourth-grade students presented a living wax museum to the school's third-graders in November. The students were dressed as American historical and modern-day figures, such as George Washington, and even Taylor Swift. As a part of the activity, students gave presentations about their chosen figure's life.



## FCASD SCHOOL BOARD REORGANIZES

The Fox Chapel Area Board of School Directors held its annual reorganization meeting December 3. Marybeth Dadd (president), Ronald Frank (vice president), and Vanessa Lynch (assistant secretary) were all re-elected to their offices.

The board will meet on the following dates in 2025:

- January 13 (Combined Agenda Study Session & Regular Business Meeting) – Fox Chapel Area High School Large Group Instruction Room
- February 3 (Agenda Study Session) – Fox Chapel Area High School Large Group Instruction Room
- February 10 (Regular Business Meeting) – Hartwood Elementary School Gym
- March 3 (Agenda Study Session) – Fox Chapel Area High School Large Group Instruction Room
- March 10 (Regular Business Meeting) – Fairview Elementary School Gym
- April 14 (Combined Agenda Study Session & Regular Business Meeting) – Fox Chapel Area High School Large Group Instruction Room
- May 5 (Combined Agenda Study Session & Regular Business Meeting) – Dorseyville Middle School Auditorium
- June 2 (Agenda Study Session) – O'Hara Elementary School Auditorium
- June 9 (Regular Business Meeting) – Fox Chapel Area High School Large Group Instruction Room
- August 11 (Combined Agenda Study Session & Regular Business Meeting) – Fox Chapel Area High School Large Group Instruction Room
- September 8 (Combined Agenda Study Session & Regular Business Meeting) – Fox Chapel Area High School Large Group Instruction Room
- October 6 (Agenda Study Session) – A.W. Beattie Career Center Student Conference Center



The newly re-elected 2024 school board officers are, from left to right, Vice President Ronald Frank, President Marybeth Dadd, and Assistant Secretary Vanessa Lynch. The school board treasurer is Eric Hamilton. The treasurer position is appointed each year in the spring.

- October 13 (Regular Business Meeting) – Fox Chapel Area High School Large Group Instruction Room
- November 3 (Agenda Study Session) – Fox Chapel Area High School Large Group Instruction Room
- November 10 (Regular Business Meeting) – Kerr Elementary School Gym
- December 2 (Tuesday) (Reorganization Meeting and Combined Agenda Study Session & Regular Business Meeting) – Fox Chapel Area High School Large Group Instruction Room

All meetings are held on Mondays (unless otherwise noted) and begin at 7 p.m. The December 2 reorganization meeting will be followed immediately by the combined agenda study session & regular business meeting.

Treasurer Eric Hamilton, and members Amy B. Cooper, Katie Findley, Adam G. Goode, Dr. Jessica Haselkorn, and Ariel Zych are also members of the Fox Chapel Area School Board.





## FALL ATHLETIC HIGHLIGHTS



### CARSON KITTTSLEY BRINGS HOME PIAA GOLD

Even before the season began, Foxes sophomore Carson Kittsley had established himself as one of the most talented young golfers in Pennsylvania. His consistency, mental focus, and a calm demeanor that belies his age, all meshed at the right time and the right place – the PIAA Class 3A individual championships – to earn him the state’s highest medal. It was the first time that a Fox Chapel Area High School boys golfer won the title since Frank Fuhrer in 1976.

Carson’s journey to the state tournament was marked by outstanding achievements all season. He was the section gold medalist and consistently delivered impressive performances throughout the season. Another of his top highlights was breaking the school’s all-time scoring record set in 2023 by another Fuhrer, David, who now golfs at George Mason University.

“I really wanted to win the state championship, but I knew as a sophomore it would be a tough challenge,” Carson said. “After I got off to a slow start on day two, I kind of figured I was out of the running and had nothing to lose. I just decided to stick to my

game plan and have fun playing. I knew I still had two more years to go out there and win it.”

But Carson’s outlook shifted when he started making consecutive birdies and gained more confidence. At the finish, Carson led by two strokes, capped by consecutive 4-under-par 68s.

“Once Carson started making birdies, his momentum changed, and it became Carson’s match to lose,” said second-year head coach Joe Farrell.

“I was pretty shocked and kind of surprised myself,” Carson said. “I don’t look at the scoreboard when I play to see where I am, or where everyone else is. I really didn’t know where I stood; I was just excited when I found out I won.”

Coach Farrell said Carson is a special player who has the perfect temperament for golf.

“Watching him was a lot of fun, and when you can put your name next to Frank Fuhrer’s state champion plaque, you know it’s a special day.”

The team was also solid all season, capturing its fourth consecutive section title with a record of 10-0 and an overall mark of 16-2. The entire starting lineup qualified for the WPIAL individual playoffs, including Carson, seniors Matt Begg and Davis Kittsley, juniors David DiGregory and Grady Johnson, and freshman Barron Bitar.

With only two seniors graduating from the starting lineup, coach Farrell is optimistic about the future.

“My confidence is very high with the players that we have coming up. With the offseason program that we are implementing, we hope to see a payoff with quick improvement from our younger players, especially with the number of freshmen we have.”



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*“Watching him was a lot of fun, and when you can put your name next to Frank Fuhrer’s state champion plaque, you know it’s a special day.”*

*– Boys Golf Coach Joe Farrell*

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## WPIAL CHAMPIONSHIP FOR BOYS SOCCER FIRST IN NEARLY 30 YEARS

The Fox Chapel Area boys soccer team entered the season rife with talent and aiming for a strong run deep into the playoffs. While there were some external doubts as to whether the Foxes could become contenders for the title, they put an end to that question when, as the underdog, they won the WPIAL Class 4A title over an undefeated Plum Senior High School team, 1-0.

It was the first time the program had claimed the WPIAL title in 29 years. The Foxes' legacy is also marked by former championships in 1964, 1967, 1987, 1991, and 1995.

Right from the start of the season, the players impressed head coach Erik Ingram with their commitment to the program and selfless play. Their self-assurance, grit, mental toughness, and aggressive creativity all season were primary factors in the Foxes becoming WPIAL champions. The team also qualified for the state playoffs, losing to Warwick in the quarterfinals.

"Our team was very well-rounded," said senior all-state player Milo Chiu. "We had technical wingers, smart and tactical defenders, and a great goalie. Throughout the season, our set plays earned us many goals that were key to close game wins for the team. Later in the season, we came up with even more set plays that worked well for us."

Milo, who also was selected Big 56 Section 3 Player of the Year, powerfully orchestrated games from the midfield. Senior Kellan Bleier and junior Rocco Didomenico also created a stronghold in the midfield and were dual threats. Not only were they key contributors in scoring, but they also were instrumental in creating opportunities for scoring from their persistent senior forwards Carson Krushansky and Aidan Stein, as well as junior Nick Squeglia. It was Carson's clutch goal at the WPIAL championship that sealed the victory for the Foxes.

The defense also was solid, thanks to seniors Jonah Kline and Brad Zimmerman, junior Sean Regan, and sophomores Paul



Fitzsimmons and Sharif Zureikat. Junior goalie and first-year varsity starter Brady Matthews was the final line of defense and, according to coach Ingram, is one of the best keepers in the WPIAL.

"We've had some really great teams over the 19 years I've coached here, but this team was really special," said coach Ingram. "They had an amazing year, and the leadership was definitely on point. The players and my coaching staff went above and beyond with their effort, focus, and preparation. The pride I take in having had the opportunity to coach this team is immeasurable."

According to Milo, the team's success was a collective effort. "We gave 100% every game and played as a team, rather than individually. We also encouraged and motivated each other throughout each game. I told the seniors and myself that we cannot have worked this hard to never have won a WPIAL title. We have played together our entire lives, and the connection we had was something special."





## GIRLS SOCCER FINISHES AS RUNNER-UP

After capturing the WPIAL Class 4A championship last season, the Fox Chapel Area girls soccer team made the finals again, this time competing in Class 3A. The Foxes' ability to create problems for opponents earned them the section title with an undefeated record (10-0), and secured them a berth in the WPIAL championship game for the second consecutive year. The Foxes finished as the WPIAL runner-up and advanced to the state quarterfinals before being edged out, 2-1, by Lower Dauphin, the eventual PIAA champion.

"The seniors were amazing leaders on and off the field," said coach Carlo Prati. "They've been such a good group and are a big reason for our success this year and last. Four or five of these seniors have been starters since their freshman year, and they have been part of some memorable games and moments."

When reflecting on the season, coach Prati recalls his team's top ranking in the preseason and how they maintained that spot.

"All year, the girls showed heart," said the coach. "They never gave up on each other and have been such an amazing group of players. They love this program and their teammates, always working on building each other up. They had a target on their backs all year, but they never let the pressure get to them. They were unfazed. They gave it their all."



Sophomore attacker Emily McKee notched her best season, becoming the first-ever sophomore to become a finalist in the WPIAL Player of the Year competition, being named to the all-state team, and leading the team with 35 goals. Her career tally now stands at 59 goals and 21 assists.

## FIELD HOCKEY TAKES WPIAL SILVER

Once again, the Foxes finished the season as the WPIAL Class 2A runner-up, however, perhaps the biggest highlight of the season was the team's semifinals victory over eight-time WPIAL champion Penn-Trafford.

"Our ability to grit out strong results, even when we might not have been at our best, is a testament to the hard work they put in all year," said first-year coach Kellee Cribby, who also helms the girls lacrosse team. "We were very focused on building consistency, developing our skills, and learning how to play cohesively as a unit. I think a big part of our efforts was to

build trust and reliance on each other, and that showed up on the field."

She credits senior captains Ridgley Boychuk, Gina Fitzsimmons, Annie Mohn, and Ava Persichetti with providing steady leadership that fostered a positive environment.

Junior Atia DiGioia recalls how she felt by the end of the season. "We found our flow among the middies and forwards and the whole team worked well together, not just one person. Coming in second again sure is not what we wanted, but next year, we will come back again for the gold."





## GIRLS GOLF FINISHES AMONG BEST IN STATE

Under the leadership of first-year coach Jon Koteski, the Foxes girls golf team won its seventh consecutive section championship and advanced to the postseason team playoffs.

The path to the WPIAL team finals was not easy. The team faced top-ranked opponents in WPIAL Class 3A, including the eventual state champions, Peters Township. Despite a tough schedule, the Foxes finished as the WPIAL runner-up and advanced to the PIAA Class 3A championships, in which they tied for fifth place.



“Our motto this year has been to trust our preparation and seek the challenges,” said coach Koteski. “The girls focused more on the training process than the absolute idea of winning. They believed if they put in the repetitions during organized and self-practices, the winning would come on its own.”

Sophomore Clara Koteski claimed the individual section title, while junior Morgan Monteverde was the runner-up, and junior Ava Calandra earned sixth place. All three golfers advanced to the WPIAL individual championships.

Looking ahead, coach Koteski is optimistic about the team's future. He said, “We are lucky to have such a deep bench of golfers and a dynamic junior varsity team. With 16 players set to return, the Fox Chapel Area program is quite vibrant and strong.”



## CROSS COUNTRY RUNNERS STRONG AGAIN

The Foxes boys cross country team had another successful season. Leading the list of accomplishments was senior Ethan Vaughan, who won the WPIAL Class 3A cross country championship. His victory marks the first time a Foxes' individual racer won the event since 2013, when Colin Martin won the title.

Ethan's successful season established him as one of Fox Chapel Area High School's most prolific cross country racers. In addition to his WPIAL gold medal, Ethan also won the individual section title, finished first at the Tri-State Track Coaches Association meet, and won the Gateway and Kiski invitationals.

“Things didn't exactly go as I had planned,” said Ethan, who bolted out of the start at the WPIAL meet and then had to keep up. “I started to feel fatigue in the second mile, but I knew that was the pace I'd set, and there was no going back. I don't know how I did it, but I did, and I'm really happy. I really wanted it.”

Coach Tom Moul said of Ethan, “Every time I see him run, I am impressed with how effortless he makes it look. There is a smoothness and calmness about him, and he knows himself so well.”

Ethan finished his high school cross country year earning ninth place at the PIAA championships. Senior David Black medaled in fourth place at

the WPIAL championship and joined Ethan at states as an individual qualifier.

Collectively, the boys team won its sixth consecutive undefeated section championship with a 7-0 record, and went on to place third at the WPIAL event. The team also was a state qualifier.

“The boys continuously worked through some obstacles and gutted it out to advance to the state level,” said coach Moul. “It was a thrill watching our guys medaling at WPIALs.”

Members of the state-qualifying team included Ethan and David, seniors Nicholas Clump and Doug Lisotto; junior Michael Costello; and sophomores Nolan Gwin, Nolan Horne, and Harrison Parker.

The girls team also had two individual racers who had notable achievements, sophomore Ceci Ressler and freshman Ella Shevchuk. Ceci was a top-10 finisher at WPIALs, and both runners advanced to the PIAA championships.

“Ceci really took a step forward this year,” coach Moul said. “I was super proud of how she matured, especially racing with the top group in every meet, which is not an easy thing to do. Both Ceci and Ella performed well at their first appearance at the state meet, and with their own personal high expectations, they will be important contributors in the future.”







## GIRLS TENNIS CONTINUES WINNING WAYS

The girls tennis team continued its impressive run of winning seasons, finishing the year with a 6-1 section record. They also won two games in the postseason.

This season produced two notable winning streaks, beginning with five consecutive victories at the start of the season. After one loss, the Foxes quickly rebounded with a six-win streak that secured them a spot in the WPIAL Class 4A playoffs, in which they finished in fourth place.

"We were able to extract everything I wanted from the team and also get the full potential out of each of the girls," said head coach Alex Slezak. "Most importantly, they worked together as a team in what is traditionally an individual sport."

The 2024 singles lineup was composed entirely of seniors – Sienna Siegel, Anna Kintner, and Hannah Parker. The regular season doubles teams featured freshman



Clara Drahnak paired with junior Eloise Johnson, and senior Meg Delaney teamed with sophomore Grace Patel.

In postseason play, Sienna was the individual section singles runner-up. She then switched over to play doubles with Anna. The duo earned second place at the section doubles championships.

## GIRLS VOLLEYBALL RETURNS TO POSTSEASON

This season, the senior-laden girls volleyball team made its second consecutive appearance at the WPIAL Class 4A playoffs.

Hitter Emma DiRocco credits a strong team bond for the Foxes' improvement during the past two years.

Looking back on the season, the junior said, "It felt as if we were not only playing to win, but we were playing to make each other proud. I think the biggest improvement we had this season was our out-of-system setting. Our outsides and right sides adjusted to every set given to them by the libero or defensive specialist, and this dramatically improved the team's overall aggressiveness."



Emma received Big 56 all-section first-team honors. Seniors Claire Feczko and Vanessa Perez Milano were named to the second team, and seniors Adelyn Bursick and Brooke Fenton received honorable mentions.



## FOOTBALL SHOWS CULTURE OF 'HARD WORK'

The Foxes football team won two games and was winning a third when it was canceled at halftime due to lightning. Unfortunately, injuries took their toll on the roster and affected the final four games of the team's season.

Second-year coach Dave Leasure said, "While we are not interested in 'moral victories,' there was improvement from the 2023 season in virtually every offensive and defensive statistical category. I'm very proud of the 17 seniors who continued to build a culture of hard work and toughness."

Four Fox Chapel Area High School football players were named to the Big 56 Class 5A all-conference teams. Senior Kristopher Bandurski (tackle) and junior Harran Zureikat (kicker) were named to the Northeast Conference First Team Offense. Senior Cooper Hendren (at-large) and junior Thomas Billings (tight end) were named to the Northeast Conference Second Team Offense.

## DMS GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY TEAM FINISHES SEASON 10-0

The Dorseyville Middle School girls cross country team was undefeated this season with a record of 10-0. Additionally, the team won all three invitational in which it participated.



## DMS FIELD HOCKEY TEAM UNDEFEATED

The Dorseyville Middle School girls field hockey team was undefeated this fall season with a record of 10-0-3.





May the winter winds  
this holiday season  
usher in good times,  
warm memories, and a  
happy and healthy new year!

FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Holiday Card 2024  
Artwork Created By:  
Jackson Beebe, Tyden Lagnese & Brayden Sadders ~ Grade 2  
Hartwood Elementary School





# NOTICES TO PARENTS OF CHILDREN WHO RESIDE IN THE FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

## **ANNUAL PUBLIC NOTICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES AND PROGRAMS, SERVICES FOR GIFTED STUDENTS, AND SERVICES FOR PROTECTED HANDICAPPED STUDENTS**

### **Child Find**

In compliance with state and federal law, notice is hereby given by the Fox Chapel Area School District that it conducts ongoing identification activities as a part of its school program for the purpose of identifying students who may be in need of special education and related services. Child Find refers to activities undertaken by public education agencies to identify, locate, and evaluate children residing in the state, including children attending private schools, who are suspected of having disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disability, and determine the child's need for special education and related services. The purpose is to locate these children so that a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) can be made available. Identification activities are performed to find a child who is suspected as having a disability that would interfere with their learning unless special education programs and services are made available. These activities are sometimes called screening activities. The activities include: review of group data, conducting hearing and vision screening, assessment of a student's academic functioning, observation of the student displaying difficulty in behavior, and determining the student's response to attempted remediation. Input from parents is also an information source of identification. If your child is identified by the district as possibly in need of such services, you will be notified of applicable procedures. Individualized services and programs are available for children who are determined to need specially designed instruction due to the following conditions: autism/pervasive development disorder, blindness or visual impairment, deafness or hearing impairment, deaf blindness, orthopedic impairment, developmental delay, multiple disabilities, traumatic brain injury, other health impairment, emotional disturbance, specific learning disability, and/or speech or language impairment. We offer a continuum of services for students with disabilities that begins with full inclusion in the child's home school and class, to separate programs within other schools in which peers without disabilities would not participate.

If you believe that your school-age child may be in need of special education services and related programs, or your child (ages 3 to school age) may be in need of early intervention, screening and evaluation processes designed to assess the need of the child and their eligibility are available to you at no cost, upon written request. You may request screening and evaluation at any time, whether or not your child is enrolled in the district's public school program. Requests for school-age evaluations and screenings are to be made in writing to: Special Education and Pupil Services Department, Fox Chapel Area School District, 611 Field Club Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15238. Requests for children ages 3 to school age should be made in writing to: Project DART, Allegheny Intermediate Unit, 475 East Waterfront Drive, Homestead, PA 15120.

### **Potential Signs of Developmental Delays and Other Risk Factors that Could Indicate a Need for Special Education Services**

Some indications that your child may be a child with a disability who is in need of special education are:

- Exhibition of an emotional disturbance over a long period of time that affects your child's ability to learn;
- Consistent problems in getting along with others;
- Difficulty communicating;
- Lack of interest or ability in age-appropriate activities;
- Resistance to change;
- Difficulty seeing or hearing that interferes with the ability to communicate;
- Health problems that affect educational performance, including attention problems;
- Difficulty performing tasks that require reading, writing, or mathematics; and
- When, a child who is at least 3 years of age but before they have started school as a beginner, scores on a developmental assessment device, on an assessment instrument which yields a score in months, which score indicates that the child is delayed by 25% of the child's chronological age in one or more developmental areas, or if the child is delayed in one or more of the developmental areas, as documented by test performance of 1.5 standard deviations below the mean on standardized tests.

### **22 Pa. Code Chapter 14**

The Fox Chapel Area School District provides a free appropriate public education to eligible students. To qualify as an eligible student, the child must be of school age, in need of specially-designed instruction, and meet eligibility criteria for one or more of the following physical or mental disabilities, as set forth in Pennsylvania state regulations:

- Autism
- Deafness
- Visual impairment, including blindness
- Emotional disturbance
- Hearing impairment
- Intellectual disability
- Multiple disabilities





- Orthopedic impairment
- Other health impairment
- Specific learning disability
- Speech or language impairment
- Traumatic brain injury

The district engages in identification procedures to ensure that eligible students receive an appropriate educational program consisting of special education and related services, individualized to meet student needs. At no cost to the parents, these services are provided in compliance with state and federal laws, and are reasonably calculated to yield meaningful educational benefits and student progress.

To identify students who may be eligible for special education, various screening activities are conducted on an ongoing basis. These screening activities include: review of group-based data (cumulative records, enrollment records, health records, report cards, ability, and achievement test scores); hearing, vision, physical, and speech/language screening; and review by a Child Study Team, Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Team, or Elementary Student Assistance Program (ESAP) Team. When screening results suggest that the student may be eligible for special education services, the district seeks parental consent to conduct a multidisciplinary evaluation.

Parents who suspect that their child is eligible for special education services may request a multidisciplinary evaluation at any time through a written request to the director of special education and pupil services.

Services designed to meet the needs of eligible students include the annual development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP), biannual or triannual multidisciplinary re-evaluation, and a full continuum of services, which include itinerant, supplemental, or full-time levels of support. The extent of special education services and the location for the delivery of such services are determined by the IEP team and are based on the student's identified needs and abilities, chronological age, and the level of intensity of the specified intervention. The district also provides related services required for the student to benefit from the special education program.

Parents may obtain additional information regarding special education services and programs and parental due process rights by contacting the director of special education and pupil services at 412-967-2435, or at Fox Chapel Area School District, 611 Field Club Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15238.

### Section 504 – Chapter 15

In compliance with state and federal law, the school district will provide to each protected handicapped student, without discrimination or cost to the student or family, those related aids, services, or accommodations that are needed to provide equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of the school program and extracurricular activities. A protected handicapped student must be school age with a physical or mental disability that substantially limits or prohibits participation in or access to an aspect of the school program. You may request screening and evaluation for Chapter 15 services at any time, whether or not your child is enrolled in

the district's public school program. Requests for evaluation and screening are to be made in writing to: Special Education and Pupil Services Department, Fox Chapel Area School District, 611 Field Club Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15238.

### Gifted Education – Chapter 16

In compliance with state law, services designed to meet the unique needs of gifted students are provided. Students are identified individually based on state law and district policy, and those students who possess superior intelligence scores or meet multiple criteria indicating gifted ability may receive services. If you believe that your school-age child may be eligible for gifted services, screening and evaluation processes designed to assess their eligibility are available to you at no cost, upon written request. You may request screening and evaluation at any time, whether or not your child is enrolled in the district's public school program. Requests for evaluation and screening are to be made in writing to: Special Education and Pupil Services Department, Fox Chapel Area School District, 611 Field Club Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15238.

### Confidentiality

All information gathered about your child is subject to the confidentiality provisions contained in federal and state law. The district has policies and procedures in effect governing the collection, maintenance, destruction, and disclosure to third parties of this information. For information about this, as well as the rights of confidentiality and access to educational records, you may contact, in writing: Special Education and Pupil Services Department, Fox Chapel Area School District, 611 Field Club Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15238.



### FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, or FERPA (20 U.S.C. §1232g; 34 CFR Part 99), is a federal law that is administered by the Student Privacy Policy Office (SPPO) in the U.S. Department of Education. FERPA protects "education records," which are generally defined as records that are directly related to a student and maintained by an educational agency or institution or by a party acting for the agency or institution. FERPA applies to all schools that receive funding under any program administered by the Department of Education.



FERPA provides certain rights for parents regarding their children's education records. When a student reaches 18 years of age or attends an institution of postsecondary education at any age, the student becomes an "eligible student," and all rights under FERPA transfer from the parent to the student.

- Under FERPA, a school or State Educational Agency (SEA) must provide an eligible student with an opportunity to inspect and review their education records within a





reasonable period of time, but not more than 45 calendar days following the receipt of a request.

- FERPA's access provisions apply to education records maintained by educational agencies or institutions, including documents such as academic transcripts. While eligible students have a right to inspect and review their education records, including academic transcripts maintained by their schools, eligible students do not necessarily have a right to obtain a copy of such records under FERPA.
- Under FERPA, an eligible student has the right to seek amendment or correction of their education records that the eligible student believes to be inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of their rights of privacy. However, while a school is not required to amend an education record in accordance with an eligible student's request, a school is required to consider the request for amendment, to inform the student of its decision, and, if the request is denied, to advise the student of their right to a hearing on the matter. If, as a result of the hearing, a school decides not to amend the education records, then the eligible student has the right to insert a statement in the record commenting on the contested information or stating why they disagree with the decision, or both. That statement must remain with the contested part of the education record for as long as the record is maintained and be included whenever the contested part is disclosed.
- Under FERPA, a school generally may not disclose Personally Identifiable Information (PII) from an eligible student's education records to a third party unless the eligible student has provided prior written consent. There are several exceptions to FERPA's general consent requirement, some of which are described below.
  - School officials, including faculty and staff, with a legitimate educational interest. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill their professional responsibility;
  - Other schools to which a student seeks or intends to enroll;
  - Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
  - Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
  - Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
  - Accrediting organizations;
  - To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
  - Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
  - State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific state law.

FERPA also permits a school to disclose information from an eligible student's education records, without consent, when such information has been appropriately designated as "directory information," and the eligible student has not

opted out of the disclosure of such designated information. The FERPA regulations define "directory information" as information in a student's education record that would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. Directory information may include information such as the student's name, address, telephone number, email address, photograph, date and place of birth, major field of study, grade level, enrollment status (e.g., undergraduate or graduate, full-time or part-time), dates of attendance (i.e., the period of time during which the student attends or attended the school), participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, degrees, honors and awards received, and the most recent school attended. Schools must notify parents and eligible students annually of their rights under FERPA. The actual means of notification (special letter, inclusion in a PTA bulletin, student handbook, district website, or newspaper article) is left to the discretion of each school.

If you do not want directory information about your child released, please notify the Fox Chapel Area School District deputy superintendent, in writing, at the beginning of each school year at 611 Field Club Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15238.

### Complaints of Alleged Violations of FERPA

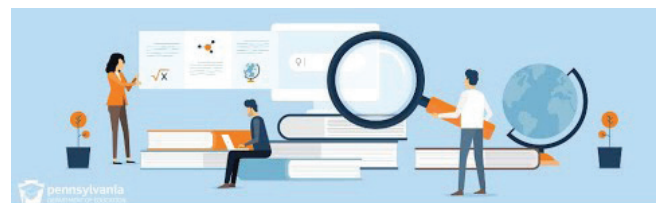
Eligible students who believe that their FERPA rights may have been violated may file a complaint with SPPO at <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/file-a-complaint>. SPPO will review the complaint to ensure that the complaint:

- Is filed, in writing, by an eligible student who maintains FERPA rights over the education records that are the subject of the complaint;
- Is submitted to SPPO within 180 days of the date of the alleged violation or of the date that the eligible student knew or reasonably should have known of the alleged violation; and
- Contains specific allegations of fact giving reasonable cause to believe that a violation of FERPA has occurred.

SPPO will then make a case-by-case determination of the best mechanism for resolving the complaint. Sometimes the action will be an investigation, while for other complaints, consistent with the statute and applicable regulations, other appropriate actions will be taken, such as acting as an intermediary or providing resolution assistance. More information regarding the complaint process is available at <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/file-a-complaint>.

### FUTURE READY PA INDEX

The Future Ready PA Index is a collection of school progress measures related to school and student success. The index





includes a range of assessment, on-track, and readiness indicators to more accurately report student learning, growth, and success in the classroom and beyond. For more information and to view the Future Ready PA Index and all Pennsylvania school results, visit <http://futurereadypa.org>.

### **ARMED FORCES/MILITARY RECRUITERS/MILITARY SCHOOLS**

Both federal public law 107-110, section 9528 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and state laws require that school districts provide military recruiters access to secondary school students. The Every Student Succeeds Act, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002, and Pennsylvania Act 10 (The Armed Forces Recruiting Act) reflect these requirements. They collectively require school districts to provide military recruiters the same access to secondary school students as they provide to postsecondary institutions or to prospective employers. This would include the student's name, address, and telephone number. However, the law also allows parents/students the right to opt-out from this by requesting that the district not release information to armed forces, military recruiters, and/or military schools. The school counseling department offers a "Military Release of Information Opt-Out Form." The completion and return of the form serves as a parent's/student's request to withhold private information. Parental permission is required for those students younger than 18 years of age. Students 18 and older may sign for themselves. For further information, parents/students should contact the Fox Chapel Area High School counseling office at 412-967-2438 prior to the beginning of each school year.



### **ASBESTOS REINSPECTIONS**

In compliance with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act, the EPA requires the district to perform reinspections of asbestos materials every three years. In July 2023, accredited asbestos inspectors performed these reinspections and a certified asbestos management planner reviewed the results. The results of the reinspections are on file in the school district administration office as part of the asbestos management plan. The management plan is available for viewing by the public during regular school hours (Monday-Friday from 8 a.m.-4 p.m.).



### **MEDIA NOTIFICATION**

Our schools are public buildings, and our students, educational programs, school events, and community-oriented activities are sometimes made the subject of recording by video, audio, photography, livestreaming, and the like for use as instructional and informational tools.



In addition, our students' work is sometimes published in print and/or electronic media. The district will allow students to be recorded, interviewed, livestreamed, and/or photographed and students' work to be published for legitimate public purposes. Additionally, our students and their work may be featured on social media.

Throughout the school year, students may be recorded, interviewed, livestreamed, and/or photographed by representatives from newspapers, television stations, and radio stations, as well as district communications office personnel and/or their designees, and these items may be publicly displayed. Students and their work and photographs may also appear in print media and/or electronically in places such as public websites, social media, and through broadcasts.

If parents/guardians object to such publication, a written objection must be filed. The district will not deliberately publish a child if a written objection has been filed. The district will also make a reasonable effort to avoid publication by any third party. It is understood that the district has no control of the news media or others outside of the school organization. Student participation in school activities, especially athletics and other competitive events and extracurricular activities, increases the likelihood of publication of stories and images of those students. Additionally, please note that the written objection does not preclude a child's voice from being livestreamed for instructional purposes.

Written objections must be filed at the beginning of each school year addressed to the Coordinator of Communications, Fox Chapel Area School District, 611 Field Club Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15238, or via email at [bonnie\\_berzonski@fcasd.edu](mailto:bonnie_berzonski@fcasd.edu). If a written objection has been filed in the past, a new letter of objection still must be filed each year. If parents/guardians do not file a written objection, their silence will serve as implied consent.





# FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT DIRECTORY

## District Administration

611 Field Club Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
412/963-9600  
[www.fcasd.edu](http://www.fcasd.edu)  
Superintendent: Mary Catherine Reljac, Ed.D.  
Deputy Superintendent: David McCommons, Ed.D.  
Business Manager: Kimberly Pawlishak

## District Resource Staff

Executive Director of Elementary Education and Instruction: Ashley Constantine, Ed.D.  
Executive Director of Secondary Education and Instruction: Matthew Patterson, Ph.D.  
Director of Special Education and Pupil Services: Timothy Mahoney, Ed.D.  
Executive Director of Instructional and Innovative Leadership: Megan Collett, Ed.D.  
Director of Literacy: Dana Simile, Ed.D.  
Director of Student Achievement and Instructional Verification: Stephen Edwards, Ed.D.  
Director of Ancillary Services: Daniel Breitreutz  
Chief of School Police/School Safety and Security Coordinator: Joseph Kozarian  
Director of Athletics: Michael O'Brien  
Coordinator of Communications: Bonnie Berzonski  
Community Engagement Specialist: Jill Leonard

## FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOLS

### Fairview Elementary School

738 Dorseyville Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
412/963-9315  
Principal: Susan Kreit

### Hartwood Elementary School

3730 Saxonburg Boulevard  
Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
412/767-5396  
Principal: Rachel Fischbaugh, Ed.D.

### Kerr Elementary School

341 Kittanning Pike  
Pittsburgh, PA 15215  
412/781-4105  
Principal: Katelyn Toth

### O'Hara Elementary School

115 Cabin Lane  
Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
412/963-0333  
Principal: Kristy Batis, Ed.D.  
Program Principal: Kevin Smetak

### Dorseyville Middle School

3732 Saxonburg Boulevard  
Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
412/767-5343  
Principal: Jonathan Nauhaus  
Program Principal: Laura Miller, Ed.D.

### Fox Chapel Area High School

611 Field Club Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
412/967-2430  
Lead Principal: Michael Hower, Ed.D.  
Program Principal (A-L): Michelle Young, Ph.D.  
Program Principal (M-Z): John McGee, Ph.D.

## FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL BOARD

Amy B. Cooper (2025 – Region I); Marybeth Dadd, President (2027 – Region III); Katie Findley (2027 – Region I); Ronald P. Frank, Vice President (2027 – Region II); Adam G. Goode (2025 – Region III); Eric G. Hamilton, Treasurer (2027 – Region I); Dr. Jessica Haselkorn (2025 – Region III); Vanessa K. Lynch, Assistant Secretary (2027 – Region II); and Ariel Zych (2025 – Region II).

Region I covers all of Sharpsburg Borough and Wards 2, 3, and 4 of O'Hara Township; Region II covers Districts 2, 4, and 5 of Fox Chapel Borough and all of Indiana Township; and Region III covers all of Aspinwall Borough, Blawnox Borough, Wards 1 and 5 of O'Hara Township, and Districts 1 and 3 of Fox Chapel Borough.

School board meetings are typically scheduled for the first and second Mondays of each month at 7 p.m. The public is invited to attend. For more information and meeting locations, visit [www.fcasd.edu](http://www.fcasd.edu).

## COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

The Fox Chapel Area School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, and/or any other basis prohibited by law, and prohibits discrimination, including harassment, in any employment practice, education program, or activity that it operates. Individuals may report concerns or questions to the Title IX coordinator and/or the Section 504 and Americans with Disabilities (ADA) coordinator. The notice of nondiscrimination is available at [www.fcasd.edu](http://www.fcasd.edu).

Title IX: David P. McCommons, Ed.D.  
(412/967-2456)

Section 504 and ADA: Timothy A. Mahoney, Ed.D.  
(412/967-2435)

Address: Fox Chapel Area School District  
611 Field Club Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15238



# Spreading Kindness

## ONE ROCK AT A TIME

BY NICOLE TAFE





## Fox Chapel High School student Mikayla Feder inspires creativity and kindness with Sharpsburg Rocks.

**A**t only 16 years old, Mikayla Feder—a junior at Fox Chapel Area High School—is already making an impact in her school and community. The daughter of Larry and Jeniffer Feder, Mikayla has combined her passion for creativity, leadership and community service to make a difference as program director of Sharpsburg Rocks—an initiative that blends creativity and community kindness.

Inspired by the program's mission and need for new leadership, Mikayla recently stepped up to revitalize it. "Spreading kindness has a powerful impact on mental health," she explains. "Sharpsburg Rocks unites people through creative expression, bringing positivity to our community."

The initiative hosts monthly events at Roots of Faith's Thursday Night Dinner Table where families can decorate rocks with acrylic paints. Each rock is then placed in a communal garden at Curley Park or left in various locations for others to find. The rocks, which often include motivational messages, serve as tokens of encouragement for those who discover them.



Mikayla has also expanded the reach of Sharpsburg Rocks by starting an Instagram page, @sharpsburg.rocks, where participants can share photos of the rocks they find. "It's a fun way to connect with the community and spread joy beyond the painting events," she says.

"The back of each painted rock invites the finder to check us out on Instagram, encouraging them to send us photos with the rock so we can post their findings."

"I would not be able to do any of this without the help of my friend, and fellow Fox Chapel junior, Fiona McCarthy," she adds.

At school, Mikayla is an accomplished student leader. She serves as the editor of Student Life for the school yearbook and is an active member of several organizations, including the Distributive Education Clubs of America, Future Business Leaders of America, and the National Honor Society. Her achievements have been recognized with the prestigious Business Seal of Excellence.

Outside the classroom, Mikayla is equally dedicated to her community. Among her many accomplishments, she

earned a Bronze Medal for the National Congressional Award and organized a Valentine's Day party for children in Sharpsburg, where she discovered the Roots of Faith program. She also coordinated an event for 30 middle school Girl Scouts featuring a social worker who spoke about healthy social media strategies.

Looking ahead, Mikayla hopes to grow Sharpsburg Rocks by forming partnerships with like-minded organizations. In addition to monthly events at Roots of Faith, she's introducing activities at other locations including Sharpsburg Towers, a senior residential community.

"Spreading kindness in the community, one rock at a time" is more than just a slogan for Mikayla—it's a meaningful mission dear to her heart that she's passionate about.

To get involved or learn more, follow @sharpsburg.rocks on Instagram. The program welcomes participants of all ages and backgrounds to join in making a difference through creativity and kindness. ■