



# FREEPORT SECONDARY SCHOOLS NEWSLETTER

## What is Resilience?

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from challenges, adapt to difficult situations, and keep going in the face of adversity. It's like a rubber band that stretches but doesn't break – instead, it returns to its original shape, often stronger than before.

Resilience is vital for students both academically and personally. It helps them view challenges as opportunities for growth, navigate social pressures, and build problem-solving skills. By developing resilience now, students prepare themselves for future obstacles in college, careers, and life. Remember, your teachers and school staff are here cheering you on. If you're struggling, reach out - we've got your back!

Here are a few ways to foster resilience and self-esteem

**Encourage healthy risk-taking:** Support teens in trying new activities or challenges that push them slightly out of their comfort zone.

**Teach problem-solving skills:** Guide teens through breaking down complex issues into manageable steps.

**Promote a growth mindset:** Help teens understand that abilities and intelligence can be developed through effort and learning.

**Foster independence:** Allow teens to make age-appropriate decisions and learn from their mistakes.

**Teach positive self-talk:** Help teens recognize and challenge negative self-talk, replacing it with more balanced thoughts.

**Promote physical health:** Encourage regular exercise, healthy eating, and adequate sleep.

**Celebrate strengths:** Help teens identify and develop their unique talents and abilities.

**Model resilience:** Share your own experiences of overcoming obstacles and bouncing back

Remember, resilience is like a muscle – the more you use it, the stronger it becomes. Embrace challenges as opportunities for growth, and watch your resilience and self-esteem soar!






## Sr. High Key Club

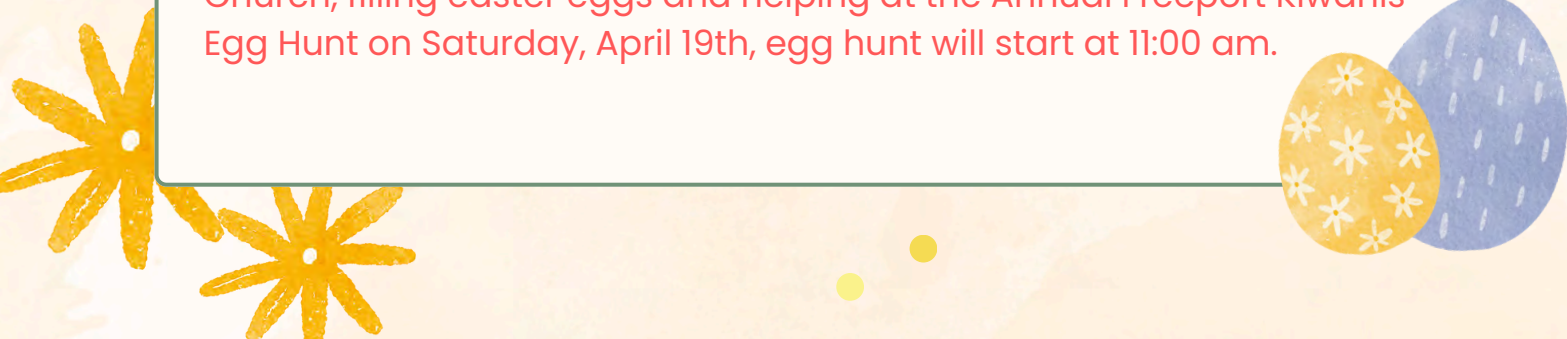
During the month of February, we collected over 400 children's books which were donated to the South Buffalo PTO's Book Cart.

Many members of the Key Club volunteered for the Valentine Snowball at Zion Church. They assisted with setting up on Friday Evening, doing nails, serving food and dancing with the Special Needs guests. A great time was had by all, our students enjoyed themselves as much as the Special Needs guests did. What a great event, a huge thank you to the organizers!



We held a Game Night from 6 pm to 10 pm, member's played board games, basketball, kickball, ping pong and had a great time. We collected a total of \$575, which included a donation from Next Home Dynamic and also collected 55 items from Orphans of the Storms Wish List.

Upcoming events include a Reading Night at South Buffalo, Turkey and Biscuit Dinner on March 29th, from 4 to 7 at the Freeport Methodist Church, filling easter eggs and helping at the Annual Freeport Kiwanis Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 19th, egg hunt will start at 11:00 am.





## Students Interested in Medical Careers Attend Healthcare Summit

During On Monday Feb 24, Miss Sanders and Mr. Mikolay chaperoned 24 students from Anatomy and Honors Biology II to Lenape's Technical School, where it hosted its first: "Healthcare Education and Learning Pathways Summit." There, students from around the region first heard a keynote address given by Pitt professor Joseph Yun on the impacts AI is likely to have on various career paths, noting that medical careers will likely remain stable for the foreseeable future. After that, students spent the rest of the day traveling to various classrooms to attend workshops of their choosing. Sessions ranged from various nursing pathways, pediatrics, intensive care, EMS, etc., and were hosted by Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, local university professors, as well as an assortment of healthcare professionals. A worthwhile experience for everyone involved!



## Jackets Nest

We are running low on snacks for our Jackets Nest. Please refer to the QR code below for ways to contribute. Your support is greatly appreciated, as these snacks provide essential nourishment for students participating in after-school activities or needing a boost before lunchtime. Thank you for your generosity!







## Valentines Day

Students visited Mrs. Koedel's office to create Valentine's Day cards for the residents of Rosebrook Senior Home. The seniors were delighted to be remembered and appreciated during this special holiday.

## 2025 Alle-Kiski Valley Honors Band

A group of talented young musicians proudly represented Freeport Area Senior High School at the 78th Annual Alle-Kiski Valley High School Honors Band Festival, held at Deer Lakes High School on January 17th. (Front) Abby Bentz, Grace Laboda, Hannah Altman, Avery Vorse, Nirvan Harrell, (Back) Jeremy Fuhrman, Jacob Franks, and Krosby Halleran's outstanding scores not only secured acceptance into the festival but also positioned them highly within their respective sections. This achievement highlights the hard work and commitment of the students, setting the stage for an exciting showcase of their skills at the upcoming event.

Under the expert direction of internationally renowned conductor Dr. Karin Hendrickson, the students participated in auditions and intensive rehearsals, culminating in a grand concert at 7:00 PM. The performance, guided by Dr. Hendrickson's masterful baton, showcased the students' dedication and musical excellence. Congratulations to all the Freeport performers on their outstanding achievement and a memorable evening of music! Go Band!!!



## PMEA District 3 Honors Jazz Band

Congratulations to the 14 talented students from Freeport Area Senior High School who represented our district at the PMEA District 3 Jazz Band Festival on February 14, 2025! These 14 students rehearsed and auditioned to get into the festival against 100 other students! Freeport Band students captured 14 out of the 54 available positions! The event was even more special with guest conductor Dr. Chaz Shipman, our very own Freeport High School Assistant Principal, as he directed the Blue Jazz Band!!!

Front: Wendy Hietsch, Alana Josefczyk, Maura Maloney, Logan Check, Nirvan Harrell, Abby Walsh

Back Row: Natalie Wallisch, Jacob Franks, Cody Stebbins, Nick Parenti, Krosby Halleran, Noah Lindsay and Nick Emeloff

Huge congrats to the 14 Freeport HS students who earned spots at the PMEA District 3 Jazz Festival on Feb 14! They secured 14 of 54 spots against 100 competitors! Extra special with Dr. Chaz Shipman as guest conductor!



## 2025 Armstrong County Junior Band Festival

We are so proud of the 16 incredible students from Freeport High School and Middle School who represented our district in the Armstrong Junior County Honors Band! These dedicated young musicians showcased their hard work and talent at Apollo Ridge High School on January 29, 2025, and gave an amazing performance!

Thank you to everyone who supported them on this journey—what a fantastic achievement!

Front Row: Makayla Matson, Annabelle Geist, Emma Charlton, Tessa Ladouceur and Cheyenne O'Neill

Middle Row: Millie Zacherl-Cornman, Tyler Deacon & Wyatt Jack

Back Row: Braden Rakowski, Stella Burd, Brianna Rakowski, Eli Magness, Alex Claditis, Josh McClymonds, Gabe Sutej and Mason Feick



## PMEA District 3 Honors Band

Congratulations to these eight students that represented Freeport Area Senior High School in the PMEA District 3 Honors Band! This festival was hosted at Indiana Senior High School on January 23-25 and was under the direction of Ms. Cassie Nalepa of Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

A special shout out to Maura Maloney for auditioning for and being accepted into PMEA Region 2 Honors hosted in March.

(Front) Rachel Blose, Jeremy Fuhrman, Hannah Altman & Avery Vorse

(Back) Ari Jones, Nick Parenti, Abby Jack & Maura Maloney.

**Go Band!!!**



## Microsoft Office Specialist News

Silas Conner placed tenth in the state in the Microsoft Word state championship competition. The competition is based on the Microsoft Word certification test score and the time it takes to complete the test.

Congratulations to Silas!



JJ Nicolls passed the Microsoft Office Access expert exam. This exam validates an individual's proficiency in using Microsoft Access, a database management tool within the Microsoft Office suite, by testing their ability to create and manage databases, build tables, design queries, forms, and reports, demonstrating practical skills to effectively develop custom database applications within a real-world context.

## Congratulations to Mr. Walters

Mr. Walters and his wife, Alex, welcomed their second child on January 22, 2025. Archer Walters was 7 pounds 12 ounces and 20 inches long! Mr. Walters is excited to have another future Yellowjacket at home!!



## FAMS Career Day



Career Day is an exciting event where students have the opportunity to explore various professions and learn about different career paths. Guest speakers from diverse fields, such as medicine, technology, arts, business, visited Freeport Area Middle School to share their experiences, insights, and advice. This event helps students discover potential career interests, ask questions, and gain a better understanding of the skills and education needed to pursue their dream jobs in the future. It was a fun and informative day!



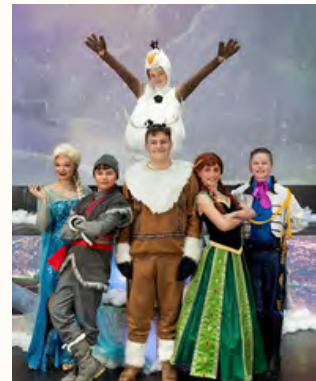
## Cyber Threat/Bullying Assembly

The Cyberbullying Assembly, conducted by Ms. Durand, highlighted the importance of online safety and kindness. High School Senior Ambassadors shared their personal experiences with cyberbullying, offering valuable insights on how to handle difficult situations and support others. The assembly provided students with tips on how to protect themselves and others in the digital world, encouraging a safer and more positive online environment.



## FAMS Presents Frozen Jr. to Sellout Crowds

The Middle School's production of Frozen Jr. was a tremendous success, drawing sell-out crowds for every performance. The students involved in the production of the musical brought the beloved story to life on stage. Our young performers captivated the audience with their heartfelt acting and powerful singing. The production showcased the incredible talent and hard work of the students, as well as the dedication of the staff who helped bring it all together. The nightly crowds brought young community members to the school dressed in their favorite characters' costumes and allowed them the opportunity for photo ops with their favorite characters!





Thank You!!  
School Counseling Week February 3 - 7, 2025

Thank you Ms. Durand and Mrs. Trettel  
for all of your guidance at FAMS!



A huge shoutout to Mrs. Fulton, Mr. Hanna  
and Dr. Dorogi! We appreciate everything you  
do for our students here at the high school!  
You make our building a better place!

School Resource Officer Day  
February 15, 2025

Thank you Officer McKillop for  
protecting us and caring about  
our safety at FAMS!



Thank you to Officer Veselicky and Officer Slagle!  
It's because of you that attention can be focused  
on what is important. We appreciate both of you  
keeping our high school safe!



## TRU Group

During lunchtime, the TRU (Tobacco Resistance Unit) group raised important awareness about the dangers of tobacco use through an informative table with engaging activities. Along with student ambassadors and Mrs. Gladziszewski, they educated students on the harmful effects of smoking and vaping, providing facts about the risks to health and the environment. Their efforts sparked meaningful conversations among students and allowed them to win prizes for their participation. The goal is to empower students to stand up against tobacco use and promote a healthy lifestyle.



## Coach Swiergol

For all of those past and present athletes that Mr. Swiergol has coached and mentored, we collectively thank him for all of his dedication and years of service! Thanks Coach Swiergol!!







## FAMS Honored with the Schools to Watch Designation

On February 23, members of our Freeport Area Middle School staff attended the PAMLE, Pennsylvania Association of Middle Level Education, conference in Pittsburgh to accept the Schools to Watch Designation Award. Schools to Watch recognizes middle schools across the country for their excellence in academic performance, leadership, and commitment to meeting the needs of all students. Schools like Freeport Area Middle School were honored because they serve as models of best practices, showcasing innovative teaching methods, community involvement, and a culture of continuous improvement. Being named a School to Watch is a prestigious recognition that highlights a school's dedication to providing a high-quality education and fostering student success.



## DECA Club

Thirty-eight DECA members attended the District III conference at Duquesne University in December. Eighteen of those students placed in their event had the opportunity to compete at the 74th Annual DECA Career and Development Conference held in Hershey, PA at the end of February. There were over 3800 students from Pennsylvania who attended the state conference this year. Twelve students participated from Freeport. Calvin Lindsay placed in the Logistics Event and he also received a medallion for his high exam score. This gives him the opportunity to attend the International Conference that will be held in Orlando, FL at the end of April.



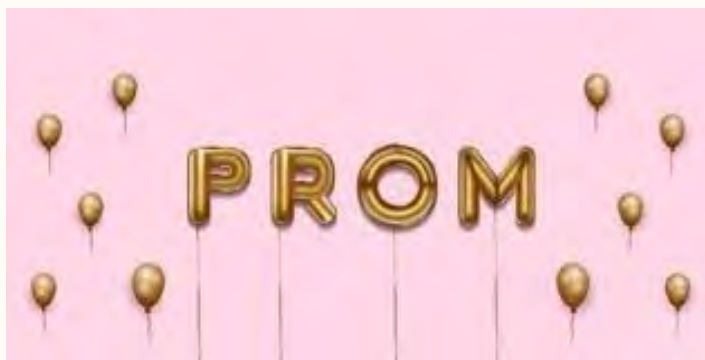


## ¡La clase de español!

Twenty-two Spanish students embarked on an unforgettable nine-day adventure to Costa Rica alongside their teachers. This immersive trip gave them the opportunity to practice their Spanish skills in real-world settings while experiencing the country's rich culture, stunning landscapes, and vibrant wildlife. Throughout their journey, students participated in cultural activities and explored breathtaking destinations like rainforests, volcanoes, and pristine beaches. From trying traditional Costa Rican cuisine to engaging with locals, this trip was an incredible educational and personal growth experience. We are excited to share their stories and photos from this amazing journey!



There will be a Prom Information meeting for all juniors and seniors that plan to attend during WIN on Thursday, March 20th!



Here are some general details available now:  
FHS Prom Friday, May 2nd Syria Shrine, Cheswick 6-10pm  
Dinner Provided Ticket Price \$75/person Ticket Sale Dates: 4/15-4/17  
Questions can be directed to Mrs. OShell at [boshell@freeport.k12.pa.us](mailto:boshell@freeport.k12.pa.us)





## 12 Students attended the PJAS Region 9 Annual Meeting

The PJAS students participated in the PJAS Region 9 Annual Meeting at Slippery Rock University on Saturday, February 22. All students received 1st place and will go on to the state competition at Penn State University in May. The following students participated: Pavana Bhat, Emma Charlton (also won the Don Orlovski Special Award), Andie Ehalt (also won Directors Award in Microbiology), Jacob Franks, Eli Magness, Marcy Mattivi, JJ Nicolls (also won the SRU Department of Biology Special Award and the SRU Foundation Scholarship), Caleb Passarelli, Alexis Reesman, Madison Ronge, Scarlett Sather, and Elizabeth Schwarz



## Congratulations Coach!

Coach Phillips has the honor of being selected to coach the Pennsylvania Middle School All-Star Volleyball team in Philadelphia this June. He also is being inducted in the Butler County Sports Hall of Fame. This is his 3rd induction in 2 years as last year Coach was inducted into both the Alle-Kiski and Armstrong Sports Hall of Fame. In 2022, Coach Phillips was chosen as PIAA Coach of the Year.





## La Manie Musicale commence!

Students in Mme Chounet's French classes have officially reached their favorite time of the school year: Manie Musicale! Manie Musicale is an annual competition of songs modeled after the NCAA March Madness basketball tournament in the U.S. Students fill out brackets to try to predict which of sixteen French songs will win the "championship". Then, once the tournament starts, students vote for their favorite songs to see who wins. Songs include a variety of contemporary Francophone artists and music genres from around the French-speaking world giving students the opportunity to learn more about the French language and different cultures that may be unknown to them when they begin their French journey.

More information can be found on the Manie Musicale website, linked [here](#). This year, voting begins on March 5th, and the championship vote coincides with the men's NCAA championship, usually in early April.



## Winning Design

7th grader Ashlyn Thomas designed the t-shirt that will be worn by Freeport Teachers as they take on the Harlem Wizards in a basketball game on April 7th. Her design, which was voted on by Buffalo Elementary students, was one of 6 finalists. The shirt is also available for purchase!





## Empowering Students Through Community-Based Instruction

Community-based instruction (CBI) at the Freeport Area School District is an educational approach that takes learning outside the traditional classroom, helping students with disabilities gain real-world skills in their local community. This method focuses on integrating students into environments where they can practice life skills, vocational skills, and social interactions. By using community resources, such as grocery stores, public libraries, and local businesses, CBI offers a hands-on learning experience that prepares students for the challenges of independent living and employment.

Moreover, CBI helps students develop important social skills that are vital for future success. It encourages interactions with diverse groups of people, allowing students to practice communication, problem-solving, and teamwork in authentic settings. Whether it's learning to ask for assistance in a store or collaborating with others on a volunteer project, students develop the interpersonal skills necessary to thrive in the adult world. These experiences break down social barriers and promote a sense of belonging within the community.

During this past year Mrs. Pollino, Mrs. Signorella, Mrs. Ferraro and Mrs. Ketterer's classroom have had the opportunity to visit the Museum of Illusion, J&S Pizza, Walmart, Lowes, Freeport Meals on Wheels, Eat 'n Park, Pittsburgh Mills, Villa Grana, Altitude Trampoline Park, and a local bowling alley

As we continue to embrace community-based instruction, it is clear that this approach provides invaluable life lessons that extend far beyond the classroom. By integrating academic learning with real-world experience, CBI empowers students to envision and achieve a future of greater independence and success. Community-based instruction is more than just a teaching method; it's a bridge to a brighter, more inclusive future for all students.



empower



## Grand Lodge Americanism Contest

During the 2nd nine weeks, Freeport Area Middle School 6th graders prepared to submit essays to the 2024-2025 Grand Lodge Americanism Essay Contest. The theme of the essay was "What Does Patriotism Mean to Me?" The contest started with the Local Lodges, in which the Freeport students submitted to the Leechburg Elks. It then progresses through District and State levels, and ends with the naming of our National Winners at the Grand Lodge Session in Kansas City, Missouri in July 2025.

Over the course of a couple of weeks, students dedicated 15-20 minutes each day to crafting their essays, allowing them to explore their personal interpretations of patriotism deeply. Throughout this process, students honed their writing skills by proofreading and editing their drafts, ensuring their final submissions were polished and articulate. Their hard work culminated in the selection of school-wide winners in early January. The top three authors at FAMS were Wyatt Blythe, Adalyn Bodily, and Siara Slanicka. Following this, the district winner was chosen in early February, showcasing the exceptional talent within our student body.

We are proud to announce that Wyatt Blythe's essay will now advance to the state contest, providing an exciting opportunity for recognition at a broader level. This contest not only encouraged students to express their views on patriotism but also fostered essential skills in writing and critical thinking. We commend all participating students for their dedication and creativity in sharing their perspectives on such an important topic, and we wish Wyatt all the best in the state contest! (Pictured: Slanicka, Blythe, Bodily, and Anthony Shea, Americanism Chairman from the Leechburg Elks)

