

# MUSTANG JOURNAL

MEDINA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWSLETTER



Exemplify Excellence in Education

Winter 2025

## What's Inside?

"Aspiring Voices" .....	1
Elementary Chorus .....	2
Santa Visits 2nd Grade .....	2
"Finding Nemo" .....	3
Food Science .....	4
Book Vending Machines..	5
STEAM Students .....	6-7
Gratitude & Gobbles .....	8
Black History Month .....	9
A Cappella Choir .....	10-11
Students of the Month	12
Dynamic Duo .....	13
St. Peter's Pantry .....	14

## Vision Statement

Exemplify excellence  
in education.

## Mission Statement

Educate to inspire all to  
reach beyond the expected  
and positively impact their  
communities.



## Medina Students Shine in the Buffalo Philharmonic "Aspiring Voices" Program



One hundred forty-five lucky Western New Yorkers had the exciting opportunity to participate in a prestigious music program with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra (BPO) and the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO). The program, which aims to seek out high-level talent, invited students who have proven themselves musically.

The director of the BPO chorus reached out to chorus directors from Erie, Niagara and Orleans counties and invited them to recommend two gifted singers, one female and one male. From there, a panel associated with the program selected the students they deemed ready to participate.

The selection process was diligent and selective. To be considered, each student was asked to submit an essay explaining why they should be chosen for the program. Given that all participants were already part of a cappella groups—some of the most advanced musical ensembles in their schools—it was clear that these students were already highly accomplished performers.

Following the submission of essays, Rachel Trillizio, Choral Director of Medina Junior-Senior High School, nominated four candidates from the school. Four students were ultimately chosen. Riley Tompkins and Ava Blount were sent to RPO, and Emily Geiger and Ryder Jones were sent to BPO. "I am lucky that students were selected for both programs as so many were not selected," says Trillizio.





## Elementary School Chorus

Performance at St. Mary's Church with High School A Cappella Choir



Concert at Oak Orchard Primary School



## Santa Visits 2nd Grade



The second grade got to tell Santa what they want for Christmas and hear holiday stories about life at the North Pole.





## Medina Middle School Performs “Finding Nemo”

By Tom Rivers, Orleans Hub



A cast of 91 fifth and sixth-graders at Clifford Wise Intermediate School performed *Finding Nemo KIDS*, a musical, on December 5th and 6th.

The musical is based on a beloved Pixar film from 2003, *Finding Nemo*. The musical is designed for elementary school-aged performers. The cast is led by Anna Ferlito, Morgan Janese, Renee Copperthite, Demerise Eadie and Jeanette Sheliga.

“This is the event that most students look forward to each year!” said Ferlito, a Medina music teacher and the musical director. “It is so exciting to watch them put together a show from start to finish and be proud of their production. It’s amazing to be a part of a community that supports the arts and encourages students to explore their musical abilities!”

“Over the past two years we have seen tremendous growth in the High School Musical Theater program as a result of equipping students with theatrical fundamentals in the younger grades,” Ferlito said. “The kids love when high school students come and work with them on singing, stage presence, choreography, etc., and we love when the kids already feel connected to the vocal program when they enter high school.”







## Fifth-Grade Scientists at Clifford Wise Take on Food Science Challenges!

By Jason Klein

Fifth graders at Clifford Wise Intermediate are diving into science with *Amplify Science*, exploring the mysteries of food dyes and salad dressings in hands-on lessons. This amazing journey is taking them deep into the heart of the culinary world, where they are unraveling the mysteries of matter in ways that would make even the most seasoned scientists proud.

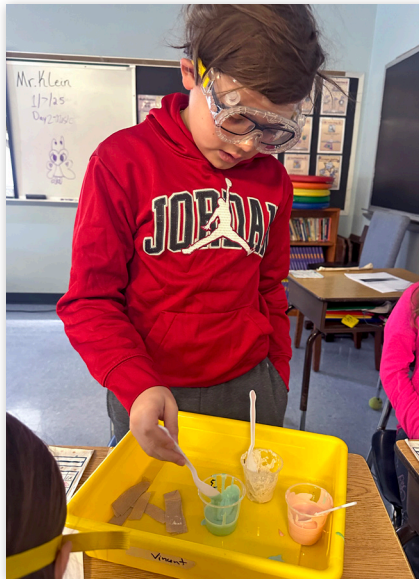
### ***Decoding the Secrets of Food Dyes!***

Imagine being a food scientist for a day, delving into the intricacies of food coloring, and discovering why it separates into different dyes. Using paper chromatography, students investigated why food coloring separates into different dyes. By experimenting and creating models based on the particulate nature of matter, they became experts in solving this colorful puzzle.

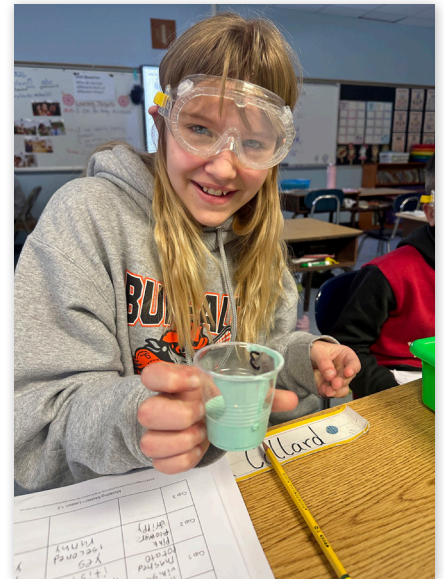
### ***Mastering the Perfect Salad Dressing!***

Why do some salad dressings separate while others stay mixed? Students explored this question through experiments, reading, and interactive simulations. They discovered how emulsifiers help ingredients blend and crafted scientific explanations to showcase their findings. Their journey led them to understand the intricate balance of ingredients, revealing the secrets to crafting a dressing that stays perfectly mixed. The unit will conclude with our young scientists crafting scientific explanations, showcasing their newfound understanding of how different molecules behave and influence the observable world.

Under the guidance of their teachers, these young scientists are building critical thinking skills and uncovering the wonders of matter. With their curiosity and creativity, the future of science looks bright!



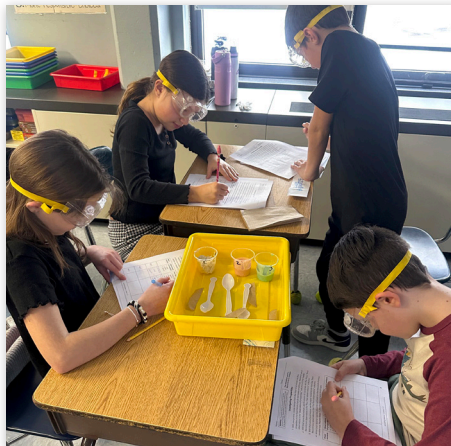
**Kayden Brigham.**



**Sophia Dier.**



**Kellan Bensley, Ryder Maxwell, Fiona Oakes, Grey Potter.**



**Lily Haist, Izabella Eaton, Bryson Heiligenthaler, Baylian Atkinson.**



**Destiny Cherry.**





## New Book Vending Machines Inspire Positive Behavior and Promote Reading in the Medina Central School District

By Julie Webber

The Medina Central School District is thrilled to announce the installation of brand-new book vending machines in all three school buildings, thanks to Title V Rural Schools funding. These innovative machines are part of an exciting initiative to promote literacy while encouraging students to embody the values of the Mustang Mission: respect, responsibility, honesty and kindness.

Students earn special tokens by demonstrating these core values. The tokens can then be used to "purchase" books from the vending machines, allowing students to take home a tangible reward for their positive behavior.

"This program is a wonderful way to inspire our students to read and demonstrate the traits of a good person", said Julie Webber, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction. "We're proud to integrate this creative approach to fostering a love for reading and character development, while also getting books in the hands of our students."

The book vending machines are filled with a diverse selection of books suitable for various ages and reading levels, ensuring that every student can find something they'll enjoy. By connecting positive behavior to tangible rewards, the program is designed to motivate students to embody the values of the Mustang Mission both inside and outside the classroom. Students will have the opportunity to help select future titles to include in the machines.

The district believes this initiative will have a lasting impact on both the academic success and personal growth of its students.



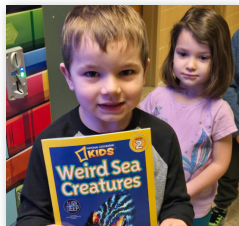
*Students and staff celebrate the first books retrieved from the machine at the Medina Junior-Senior High School. Pictured left to right is: Anna Saj, Carrielynn Schlegal, Mrs. Sara Kyle, Teacher, Mrs. Mollie Mark, Assistant Principal, Mrs. Beth Dickhut, Teacher, Esmeralda Guzman Gonzalez, Mr. Michael Cavanagh, Principal, Cameron Kenward, Madeline Mark, and Grace Goodrich.*



*Senior Cameron Kenward selects a title from the Book Vending Machine at the Medina Junior-Senior High School.*



*Tokens that students earn to redeem for books.*



*UPK student, Liam Boyce, shows off his book choice while another UPK student, Vivienne Randolph, waits to select hers next.*



*Oak Orchard Primary School Principal Jennifer Stearns helps kindergartner, Skylar Houseknecht, retrieve her selection from the machine.*



*A secondgrader, Joziah Mortenson-Chamblee, ponders which book to select from the machine.*

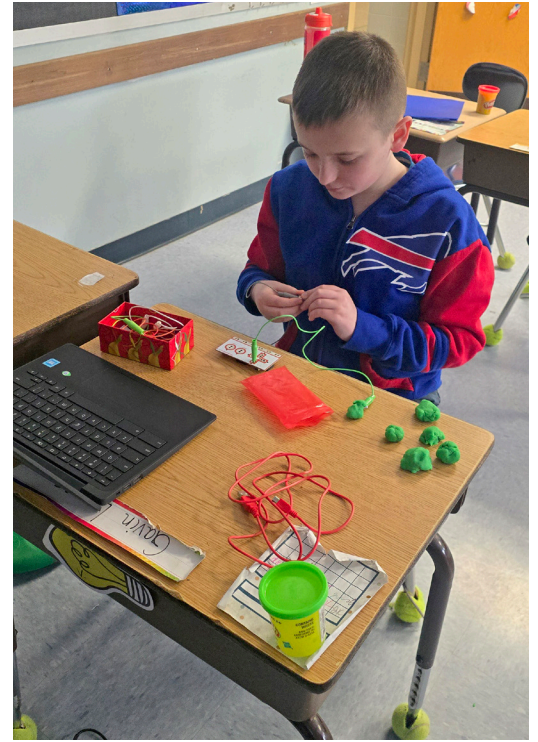




## Clifford Wise STEAM Students Make Music with Play-Doh and Code with Robots



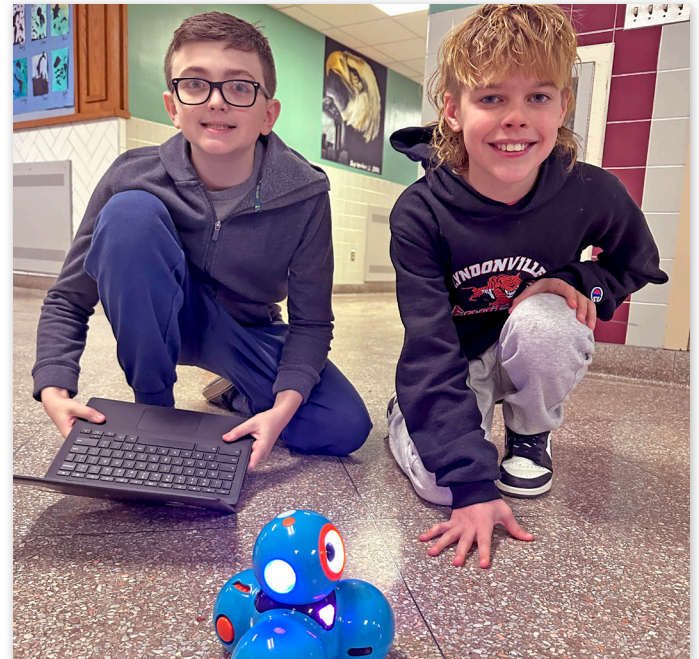
*Lily Haist, Jason Klein and Lydia Callard smile for a photo.*



*Gavin Lamar works on his circuit project.*



*Bella Eaton makes music with her circuit.*

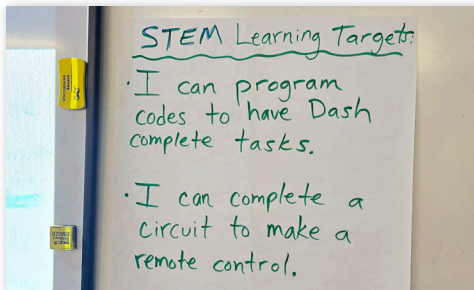


*Jack Buondonno and Landon Rath show off their robot.*





**Luke Hungerford and Damareon Shine are pictured.**



**STEM learning targets: I can program codes to have Dash complete tasks. I can complete a circuit to make a remote control.**



**Anna Brooks and Aria Cleveland practice coding.**

In Jason Klein's class, students got the opportunity to learn about STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) using robotics and coding in an engaging way.

The first part of the lesson involved students working with Dash robots to introduce the concepts of coding. They learned to create simple commands that made Dash move in various directions and perform different actions. By adding, connecting, and deleting coding blocks, students learned the concept of programming as a sequence of steps or an algorithm. They also explored pre-programmed sound effects, experimented with colored lights, and even edited light patterns.

The next session involved MaKey MaKey, an invention kit designed to transform everyday objects into touchpads that can connect to the internet. Designed for both beginners and experts, the tool encourages exploring art, engineering, circuits, and everything in between.



**Bella Eaton and Fiona Oakes smile together.**

Using the MaKey MaKey kits, students connected circuits, electrical wiring, and Play-Doh to their laptops to create musical projects. They even crafted drums and pianos from Play-Doh, learning how to interact with technology in unique ways. Using an audio sampler app, students also discovered how to mix sounds and music, much like DJs. The combination of art, technology, and sound helped students to relate STEAM to real-life projects.

Dash robots and MaKey MaKey kits support STEAM education by providing interactive learning experiences. As Klein explains, "I can support students' futures by integrating the latest technology into the curriculum, when possible, to teach essential skills like coding, data analysis, and problem-solving. By using robotics and innovative platforms, students gain hands-on experience with real-world applications, fostering critical thinking, adaptability, and digital fluency—skills vital for success in an era driven by technological advancements."



**Anna Brooks making music.**





## Gratitude, Gobbles, and Good Times: Medina Elementary Shares Thanks and Snacks

Students at Medina Elementary got into the Thanksgiving spirit to celebrate with their classmates before the long holiday weekend. They expressed their gratitude for the many blessings in their lives, including their teachers and the friends they've made throughout the year. Each class was organized and settled next to their special artwork, proudly displaying colorful drawings that captured the feeling of the season. After everyone was in place, the students sang their "Thankful Song" in unison:

*"Thank you for the world so sweet,  
Thank you for the food we eat,  
Thank you for the birds who sing,  
We thank you for everything!"*

The celebration didn't end there. As a special treat, teachers handed out bags filled with snacks, and the students eagerly dug into their goodie bags, excited to share their favorite candies. The event was a wonderful way for the students to share in the joy of Thanksgiving, giving thanks for their families, their school, and the many things they're grateful for.







## “To Honor Our Past and Prepare Our Future” -Medina Celebrates Black History Month

Daniel Doctor, Medina's Director of Community Partnerships, hosted a special event at the Clifford Wise Intermediate Auditorium to celebrate Black History Month. This evening featured powerful musical performances and inspiring words from local leaders, providing reflection on the prominence of the month.

Musical performances were headlined by a lineup of talent, featuring Char Hamilton, Jaylee Marsh, Kylee Howard, Natasha Hill, Ephesus Ministries, and Walter Kemp III.

The evening also included powerful messages from Pastor Jeff Carter, Elder Renee Map, and Assistant Pastor Shannon Carter, who offered words of wisdom and encouragement. Their reflections served as a reminder of the past and present, and the journey towards equality, justice, and community.

The night kicked off with the Black National Anthem. Written by James Weldon Johnson in 1900 and composed by his brother John Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954), the hymn has become a symbol of Black pride and resilience:

*Lift every voice and sing, till earth and heaven ring,  
Ring with the harmonies of liberty;  
Let our rejoicing rise, high as the listening skies,  
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.  
Sing a song full of faith that the dark past has taught us,  
Sing a song full of hope that the present has brought us;  
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,  
Let us march on till victory won.*







## Medina's A Cappella Choir Brightens Holidays for Senior Citizens

*Reprinted with Permission: By Ginny Kropf and the Orleans Hub*

MEDINA – Senior citizens packed the Senior Center of Western Orleans in Medina on Monday for their annual Christmas dinner and entertainment by Medina High School's A Cappella Select Choir.

Following the business meeting, director Kelly Shaw handed out \$40 gift cards to Tops to 10 seniors whose names were drawn. Concluding the meeting, president Lynn Creasey presented Shaw with a check in appreciation of all she does for the center and its seniors.

Dinner was potluck with beef on weck provided by the center and an array of Christmas cookies.

A highlight of the Christmas dinner every year is a visit from the A Cappella Select Choir, under the current leadership of Rachel Trillizio.

"Their visit is an annual tradition," Shaw said. "I've been here 20 years and they were coming here back then. They've never missed a year."

The choir sang a number of old favorite Christmas carols, including *Silent Night*, *Oh Come all Ye Faithful* and *Joy to the World*, along with several praise and gospel tunes, such as *Alleluia Madrigal* and *Nanita Lullaby* in Spanish.

"I'm the luckiest person in the world to work with these kids, who give 99.9% of their time to being in the musical program, including choir, marching band and plays," Trillizio said. "Some of them want to go to college to study music, but those who don't still show the same amount of pride, passion and dedication to the Music Department."

Student Riley Tompkins was among the members who sang for the senior citizens on Monday.

"It is always a very enjoyable experience to share our music with people who have been a part of the community for years," Tompkins said. "It is always a blast to sing in front of them, as they are a very fun audience who love hearing us sing. It means so much knowing that our hard work is recognized with grace. Performing in the Medina community means the world to me, and the people involved are always the highest of excellence."

Another member of the Select Choir is junior Ava Blount. This is her second year in the choir and Select ensemble.

"A Cappella has been a safe space for me these past two years," Blount said. "No matter what kind of day I'm having, it never fails to brighten my day. Performing for my community has been an experience I will take with me for the rest of my life-seeing all the little kids' faces light up when we sing our Christmas carols, and seeing proud parents and siblings watch their babies carry on family traditions. And to those at the Senior Center, I value this experience because I admire carrying on the legacy that was created so many years ago. Yesterday was special, watching everyone's reactions and faces as we sang songs they once sang. Carrying on this legacy and seeing everyone in the community enjoying our art, no matter what their age, truly makes our hard work worthwhile."

Trillizio praised her forerunners who built and maintained the A Cappella Choir, namely the late Robert Conner and Lisa Roessler. Trillizio said they have sang every year, even during the Covid pandemic when they had to stand three feet apart and wear masks.









# Medina Central School District

## Medina Students of the Month

The Medina Teachers Association, the Medina Central School District (CSD) and the Medina Area Partnership are proud to announce the selections for Students of the Month. This award is a joint effort between the organizations to recognize students who go above and beyond to help teachers and fellow students succeed and enjoy school.

### November winners were:

- Oak Orchard: first-grader Barrett Root nominated by Shannon Markarian.
- Wise Intermediate School: fourth-grader Paris Gordon nominated by Karen Pane.
- Junior-Senior High School: senior Roger Ribbeck nominated by Sara Kyle.

November's business sponsor was **Filomena's Favorites**.

### December winners are:

- Oak Orchard: kindergartner Cadence Marciano nominated by Andrea Busch.
- Wise Intermediate School: fifth-grader Fiona Oakes nominated by Jason Klein.
- Junior-Senior High School: eighth-grader Jacob Farley nominated by Joe Byrne & Collin Scheiber.

December's business sponsor was **Blissetts**.

### January winners are:

- Oak Orchard: first-grader Leah Hungerford, nominated by Mrs. Tran and Ms. Flugel.
- Wise Intermediate School: sixth-grader Jaxson Cochrane, nominated by Mrs. Webster.
- Junior-Senior High School: junior Aurora Owczarczak, nominated by Mrs. Kyle.

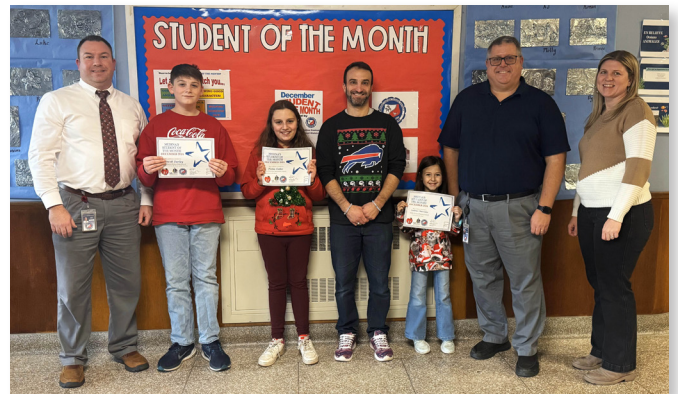
January's business sponsor was  
**Baxter Healthcare**.



Congratulations to all our winners!



(LtoR) MTA President Joe Byrne, Paris Gordon, Roger Ribbeck, Danette Oakes of Filomena's Favorites, Barrett Root, and MCSD Superintendent Dr. Mark Kruzynski.



(LtoR) Medina Teacher Association President Joe Byrne, Jacob Farley, Fiona Oakes, Fifth Grade Teacher Jason Klein, Cadence Marciano, Medina Central School District Superintendent Dr. Mark Kruzynski, and Blissetts Sara Flansburg.



MTA President Joe Byrne, Aurora Owczarczak, Leah Hungerford, Jaxson Cochrane, Ryin Moriarty, the Supply Chain Coordinator for Baxter Healthcare, and MCSD Superintendent Dr. Mark Kruzynski.





## Dynamic Duo: Medina Students Craft a Story to Remember

At Clifford Wise Intermediate School in the Medina CSD, two talented fifth-graders, Iszabella Eaton and Fiona Oakes, are making waves with their creative storytelling. Both students in Mr. Klein's class have discovered a shared love for writing, a passion that has sparked not only their individual creativity but also an inspiring collaborative effort.

Medina Central School District, an AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) school district, emphasizes "A Portrait of a Graduate," a vision to equip students with 21st-century skills, character traits, and social-emotional competencies needed for success in college, career, and life. Iszabella and Fiona exemplify this vision as they channel their creativity, teamwork, and determination into a shared writing project.

Fiona's passion for storytelling began in third grade, where journaling became a daily habit, "I have always loved making up stories and imagining things. In third grade, my teacher had us write in a journal every day, and she gave us feedback that helped me improve. This past summer, I even wrote a whole play! My idea for a Christmas story came to me this past holiday season. It's about a girl trying to get home who meets unexpected friends on the way. I knew I needed help, so I asked Iszabella to join me. We've been friends forever, and she makes writing even more fun. She always has great ideas, and our story is turning out amazing. It's a book that will make you laugh, cry, and cheer for the characters as they make their journey home. I hope one day it gets published. I might want to become a writer when I grow up!"

Iszabella, who has been crafting stories since she was seven, shared her journey,

"Hello! I'm Iszabella Eaton, and I love to write stories and books. Ever since I was seven years old, I made little children's books. They were at least two pages long! But when I got older, I wrote better books. In fourth grade, I shared a story about a family of five with my teacher, and he encouraged me to keep writing. That encouragement made me a better writer. Now, in fifth grade, I'm working on a Christmas story with my best friend, Fiona Oakes. She has amazing ideas and always makes me laugh. Writing together is really stepping up our friendship. I hope Medina will love our book—it's a story you can enjoy all year round. One day, I'd love to become an author!"

Their shared story, which combines humor, emotion, and the spirit of friendship, is a testament to their creativity and collaboration. Both girls credit their teachers for inspiring them and hope their work will one day reach a wide audience.

As Medina CSD continues its mission to develop well-rounded, future-ready graduates, Iszabella and Fiona's story shines as an example of what can be achieved when young writers are encouraged to dream big and work together. Keep an eye out for this duo's work—it's bound to be something special!



*Fiona Oakes (Left) and Iszabella Eaton (right) join forces to write their novel "The Christmas Miracle".*





#### MEDINA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

One Mustang Drive  
Medina, N.Y. 14103  
Phone: 585-798-2700  
Fax: 585-798-5676  
[www.medinacsd.org](http://www.medinacsd.org)

Dr. Mark B. Kruzynski, Superintendent

#### BOARD OF EDUCATION:

Mrs. Alissa Mitchell, *President*  
Mrs. LuAnn Tierney, *Vice President*  
Mrs. Annette Allis  
Dr. Steven Blount  
Mrs. Jennifer Buondonno  
Mr. Donnell Holloway  
Mr. Scott Robinson

#### DISTRICT OFFICE (585)798-2700

Dr. Mark B. Kruzynski  
Superintendent

Mr. Marc P. Graff  
Assistant Superintendent for Operations

Mrs. Julie Webber  
Assistant Superintendent for Instruction

Mrs. Alexandra DiLaura  
Assistant Superintendent for Special Programs

Mr. William Fischer  
Director of Technology

Mr. Daniel Doctor  
Director of Community Partnerships

Mr. Mark Klotzbach  
Transportation Supervisor

Mr. Kevin Czaja  
Director of Facilities

#### MEDINA JUNIOR-SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL (585) 798-2700

Mr. Michael Cavanagh  
Principal

Mrs. Mollie Mark  
Assistant Principal

#### CLIFFORD H. WISE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL (585) 798-2700

Mr. Christopher Hughes  
Principal

#### OAK ORCHARD PRIMARY SCHOOL (585) 798-2700

Mrs. Jennifer Stearns  
Principal

# Medina High School Students Help Fill St. Peter's Pantry

Thanks to the efforts of 35 Medina students, some community members had food on their table over the holidays. The Medina Junior-Senior High School's Student Association collected over 1,600 non-perishable food items for the St. Peter Evangelical Lutheran Church Food Pantry. The church is located at 1355 West Avenue in Medina and provides emergency food once per month to residents of Medina in need.

Student Association co-advisor Sara Cinquino says she was thrilled with what the students and staff were able to achieve this year. "We doubled what we collected last year, and we have to thank the Medina Teacher's Union for swapping drives with us. They are collecting essential items, which we normally do, to make it more affordable for the students to participate in this event. I have to also thank fellow teacher Joe Byrne who helped me to oversee the food drive while my co-advisor is out on maternity leave."

The Student Association collected, counted and sorted the food every day the week of November 18-22. Lieutenant Steve Cooley and other members of the Medina Fire Department volunteered on their day off to come to the school and collected the boxes from the students who carried them out to their vehicles. "Every year, we as a club are so thankful that we can do something at the Junior-Senior High School and give back to the community," says Cinquino. "It takes just a small effort on our end, but we can make a difference and impact for so many people in this community."

