

# IC The Creek

**Indian Creek Local School District Newsletter**

**February 2025**

## Creek Squad Updates School Board on Program

Students ruled the school during the Indian Creek Board of Education session on March 20.

Indian Creek High School Career-Tech Education Department Head Dave Moffat and Creek Squad members Issac Thornton, Ethan Dyrdek, Markus Beisel and Nathan Pemberton gave a presentation about their successful program during the meeting at Indian Creek Middle School in Mingo Junction and discussed how it is making a difference in the district. About a half-dozen, tech-savvy students spend time at ICHS, ICMS and Hills and Cross Creek Elementary schools repairing Chromebooks and helping teachers troubleshoot issues within their systems, and to date they have completed well over 300 repairs. Moffat explained that he, district CTE Coordinator Dan Hartman and Superintendent Dr. T.C. Chappellear wrote an Ohio Career-Tech Education grant and received \$150,000 to help develop the Creek Squad as well as acquire two FANUC robotic arms.

“Dr. Chappellear said the school had this need and I was running the tech support services program. The grant helped expand the program and focus on new fields we’d see in Ohio,” he continued. “We also do programming for the FANUC robotic arm, which is the same one used at the new [Form Energy] battery plant in Weirton. [The students] can get certified and get a job.”

Drone aircraft certification will also be offered next year, which he added is utilized in a multitude of fields. For now, Moffat said the tech leaders provide an exceptional support and service within the community and he only hopes to see it grow with at least 12 members and more opportunities.

“They earn industry credentials now such as CompTIA Plus and it’s projected that in the next few years there will be 1.5 million jobs with drone technology,” he noted. “It includes freshmen to seniors, but we’re trying to make it so the juniors and seniors can be released to come to the



**Indian Creek High School student Knowledge Wright repairs Chromebooks at Indian Creek Middle School as part of his duties with the Creek Squad tech support program. Student tech leaders updated the school board on the pilot program during the March 20 meeting and said they are gaining the tools they need to help the district and eventually join the workforce.**

buildings.”

Moffat said his role was more as oversight while the tech leaders take it upon themselves to work at the four schools. Additionally, they earn 250 work-based hours which is required for graduation. During discussion, the board learned that the tech leaders service hardware 80 percent of the time with the remainder spent on software. The students said many were a five-minute fix, but they really enjoyed interacting with the faculty and pupils. Several noted how they and the schools have benefitted.

“It’s been so impactful that without it, we’d be so far behind. I think helping at all

of the schools is the best thing we could do—to help everybody,” said Markus Beisel.

“Since I’ve been in the program, I’ve been coming to school almost every day,” added Nathan Pemberton. “I want to go to Kent State to study technology.”

Moffat said officials wanted to ensure the students took more ownership of the technology they service. Another goal is to conduct a Tech Tuesday where the students train the teachers.

“The students and teachers like the Creek Squad students. This has been a game

**(Continued on Page 3 as SQUAD)**

# ICHS Hosting Hellbender Partnership Meeting

Indian Creek High School's Natural Resource program, in collaboration with the Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District, will hold its 2025 Spring Hellbender Partnership Meeting this Thursday.

The session is set for 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the school and includes representatives from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, The Wilds Safari Park, Ohio University, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Columbus Zoo, Toledo Zoo, Purdue University, Penta Career Center and other key conservation stakeholders.

The organizations formed a partnership to protect the Eastern Hellbender salamander, which then led to a pilot program at the high school where students in the Natural Resources pathway observe and maintain one adult and 18 two-year-old Hellbender salamanders in the hopes of bringing the species back from the brink of extinction.

Organizers said environmental leaders, educators and conservationists will discuss ongoing efforts to protect the vital yet endangered species native to Ohio's waterways. The Hellbender--which is considered the largest salamander in North America--has

deep roots in the Jefferson County area including the Cross Creek region within the school district, but time and environmental changes led to a decrease in the population. The meeting will feature presentations on the latest research, habitat restoration projects and educational outreach efforts and attendees will have the opportunity to hear from experts in the field and collaborate on new strategies to support the species.

"We are thrilled to continue this critical work alongside our dedicated partners. We have been a part of the partnership for a couple years now and the partnership meets every fall and spring," said Natural Resources instructor Crystal Fluharty, adding that the previous session was conducted at The Wilds in Cumberland, Ohio. "This is our opportunity to learn."

She added that the school was asked to host the meeting during its "Healthy Creek, Healthy Hellbender" aquatic event last spring and she was excited to share what has been happening with the Hellbenders in the students' care.

"The endangered species program is going great. Our goal is to inspire the next genera-

tion of conservationists while actively contributing to the preservation of the Hellbender and its natural habitat. We have 18 two-year-old Hellbenders in our biosecure room and about 15 students in the Natural Resource pathway at this time. The students will be presenting their update on our Hellbenders and sharing data collected since the fall meeting."

She continued that the juveniles will eventually be released into local waterways to repopulate, but that will be at the discretion of the ODNR. Meanwhile, Hellbender Ambassador Chief remains on display in a separate habitat and has become a fixture at the school.

Indian Creek Superintendent Dr. T.C. Chappellear said the session was a great way to showcase the program and the district's students.

"We're excited to host the Hellbender meeting," Dr. Chappellear concluded. "This is just another example of a program that is providing opportunities for kids that wouldn't be possible without these new facilities. The students involved are very impressive and the work they are doing is fantastic."

## FCCLA, Safety Forces Unite for Drunk Busters Program

The Indian Creek High School Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) organization teamed up with local safety forces for a Drunk Busters program on March 21.

Freshmen through seniors visited eight stations where they donned simulation goggles mimicking intoxication and fatigue and completed a series of tasks. Officials from the Wintersville Post of the Ohio State Highway Patrol, Jefferson County Sheriff's Office and Wintersville Police Department were on hand to assist with the obstacles, which included performing a field sobriety test, picking up items, reading a board, writing, texting, playing hopscotch, placing small balls into cups and kicking a soccer goal.

Advisor Julie Robinson said the student organization recently gained a \$1,250 Families Acting for Community Traffic Safety (FACTS) grant and conducted the event during the students' flex period to help address the dangers of distracted driving.

"We got a FACTS grant last year and bought simulation goggles and created an obstacle course. This year gave prizes for people who participate," she said. "Students wrote the grant and put it together with the Ohio Highway Patrol, sheriff's office and Wintersville Police. The kids also signed a pledge and we had drawings for gift certificates. We wanted to do more with texting and reading, things they would usually do."

The goggles simulate effects of drunkenness, drug use and fatigue and alter student perceptions, which in turn impacted their



**ICHS sophomore Tristan Kallay takes a field sobriety test with simulation goggles.**

reactions during the tasks.

"It was fun but hard," said sophomore Jordan Hines. "It shows that it's not safe to be drunk driving. I give it 10 out of 10 stars. It's a great program."

"I learned not to drink and drive," said freshman Abigail Reighard.

"It was hard but pretty cool," said freshman Alex Bomersheim. "I learned you should not drink and drive."

"You don't think you're as drunk as you are, but you can still cause trouble for other people," said freshman Domanic Zrinyi.

FCCLA members Katelynn Daugherty and Lakin Burch, who helped organize the event, said it gave students a real lesson in a unique

way.

"We wanted to bring awareness to what takes people from their families," said Daugherty. "We wanted to show people what it's really like and the dangers of what can happen."

"It teaches the consequences of your actions and of being impaired while driving," added Burch. "With prom and graduation coming up, we want to make students aware so they don't make bad decisions. I think this is a great cause and more schools should bring awareness through a Drunk Busters program."

Law enforcement representatives agreed it was an informative program.

"It teaches them how difficult it is to maneuver under the effects of alcohol and drugs," said Patrolman Eric Harshbarger.

"The kids have understood that it's very disorienting with the goggles and try to overcompensate with a lot of stuff. We're seeing this on the road and here they're not intoxicated," explained Trooper Josh O'Donnell of the OSHP.

JCSO Deputy Matt Morgan, who also serves as school resource officer, said similar events were conducted last year and the students realize the results of bad choices.

"The kids learned a lot, such as if they were beyond the legal limit and the consequences of drinking and driving," Deputy Morgan concluded. "We just wanted to get the message out there since prom and graduation are coming up so the kids know about the bad things that could happen."



# ICMS Students Listen and Learn about Disabilities

Students at Indian Creek Middle School heard all about differences as they took part in the Listen and Learn Speaker Series.

The Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities and Special Connections, the latter a community group which includes JCBDD, Special Needs Parents of the Ohio Valley Facebook Page and Crossroads Christian Church, have sponsored sessions at schools throughout the county for National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month and representatives have travelled to Steubenville, Winterville and Mingo Junction to spread the word about diversity. Speakers Alycia Clark and Kristina Gabel had visited fifth graders with a similar program last year and were back on March 21 to share their message using the book, "The ABC's of Disabilities."

Clark and Gabel questioned students about how they would treat someone who had limitations and said people learn and function in different ways. The purpose of the lecture was to help kids understand others who may have physical or learning disabilities.

Clark said people may eat or communicate differently and students were asked about alternate methods of speaking. Responses included sign language to Morse code, while she said smiling and waving were kind gestures.

"When somebody smiles at you, doesn't it feel good to smile and wave," she asked, and noted her son Oliver used an alternative communication device (ACD) that



**Speakers Alycia Smith, left, and Kristina Gabel address fifth graders during National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.**

was similar to an iPad and enabled him to speak. "There are different ways of communicating other than words."

Gabel took questions from the audience about autism spectrum disorder, which she said can affect people differently, and discussed how Braille is found throughout the community to assist the blind, even at ATM machines and around the school. She added that having such amenities also indicates accessibility for those in need.

Students were asked how they could help someone with a disability.

"Be kind," one student replied.

"Sometimes it's easier to communicate slower," Gabel added. "Ask to help out of respect; it's to show respect to others. We believe everyone is capable...and some people do things in their own way. The biggest thing you could do is be kind."

Clark then commented that even people

with disabilities can play sports and such groups as the Miracle League and Special Olympics exist for that reason.

"All of the athletes have developmental or physical challenges and activities are made more accessible to them," she said, while Gabel interjected that people can get involved by playing in co-ed leagues such as Unified Sports and taking part in inclusive events.

The speakers also asked for letters of the alphabet which corresponded with physical or developmental challenges within the book, then explained what they meant. After more discussion, Clark said they hoped to return next year.

"Make sure advocating and raising awareness. I think it's important to know everybody's different and can be a friend."

Principal Dr. Holly Minch-Hick then questioned students on what they learned and said consideration should also be given to others with challenges.

"When we talk about disability, it just limits your ability to do things the same way as other people," Dr. Minch-Hick added.

Students said they took away some valuable lessons from the program.

"It was very inspiring," said Aubrey Johnson.

"I learned you should respect everybody," added Kaylee Messerly.

"I learned a lot about different disabilities," commented Lucy Phelps.

"I learned other people can have disabilities but it doesn't make them different from anybody else," said Kayla Renner.

## Squad

## (Continued from Front)

changer," he added. "There's no other school district [I'm aware of] that has students serving the schools. As this goes on, we will focus on Chromebooks but they will be servicing a lot more technology."

"The vision is to have academics in the morning and Creek Squad activities in the afternoon," Dr. Chappelle commented.

Assistant Superintendent John Belt said Moffat and the Creek Squad members also made a presentation that week to 40 members at the Local Professional Development Committee (LPDC) meeting.

"All of the people were really engaged, so it's pretty obvious we're doing something unique," Belt said.

In related matters, the board recognized coach Steve Eft and members of the ICHS girls' basketball team for a successful season, which concluded last month at the OHSA Division IV regional semifinals. The season also included 100 wins for Eft

and the second district win in the school's history. Officials lauded the team for their hard work.

"We appreciate the effort the coaches and players have put forth, and hopefully we'll be seeing more to come. Congratulations," said board President Dr. John Figel.

"With determination, pride and grit, you were successful and made everybody in the community really proud," added board member Stephen Cowser of the three-time OVAC champs.

Among other matters, the board:

--Learned that the food service program has seen increased participation and ala carte sales and was conducting activities for faculty, staff and students, plus officials were preparing for upcoming reviews;

--Heard student achievement reports praising the girls' basketball team while spring sports was starting. Dr. Chappelle mentioned that 11 teams will take part in a track

meet at ICHS on March 29. Meanwhile, the sports boosters held a spring meeting on March 12 and were attempting to start a boys' soccer program this year and may have a reserve team, for now. Further talks centered on developing a weightlifting schedule into seventh and eighth periods to benefit student athletes;

--Belt said the district buses were updating their 911 radio systems and the replacement should occur this summer, while the phone systems were also being moved to a Cloud platform during Easter break;

--Accepted resignations Diane McAfee and Dawn Carson, both for the purpose of retirement; approved a resignation from custodian John Wardle, effective May 26; and accepted classified substitutes Pamela Dodds, cafeteria; Matthew Hawk, bus driver; Ashley Rager, cafeteria/custodian/secretary; and Dan Shaffer and Holli Carney, cafeteria/secretaries.



Deputy Ben Swoyer leads students in a game of “Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Cones” as the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office visited Hills Elementary for a PBIS reward activity on March 21. Officials said the event engaged youth in some fun with the safety forces and more events were set for the near future.

## *Hills Students, JCSO Engage in Some Good Fun*

Jefferson County Sheriff’s officials spent the day engaging with students at Hills Elementary in a show of support and fun.

Deputies led games with the youth and even Sheriff Fred Abdalla Jr. briefly joined in on the fun as part of the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program for the third nine weeks of school.

Their visit was a reward and kids spent their specials time in the gym playing Duck, Duck Goose, dodgeball and more for some lighthearted pleasure. Principal Erin Alloggia and intervention specialist Alyssa Lollini first discussed the idea last year with sheriff’s officials and efforts got underway to plan activities.

“It went really well,” said Alloggia. “The kids loved it because they get to see the deputies in a fun way. This was our first time

doing it for PBIS and we met with them to discuss celebrating the program. Sheriff Abdalla said they would love to partner with us because they had done an outreach with the summer youth program, and I asked if we could do something like that.”

“We reached out to them to bring the sheriff’s office into the schools and build relationships with the students and the community,” said Lollini. “It was part of our PBIS activity and they planned everything with the kids.”

Sheriff’s officials also spoke to pupils about being prepared for upcoming state testing and played a variety of games from “Head, Shoulders, Knees, Cones” to a ball toss. Capt. Tommy Koehnlein said the JCSO was pleased to take part and has visited other schools throughout the county to build fur-

ther rapport with kids.

“We have lunch with kids once a month [at Hills] and may have a kickball game and we also go to East Garfield [in Steubenville] for Badge Buddies and John Gregg [in Bergholz] for a luncheon,” said Capt. Koehnlein. “If schools reach out, we’ll do the best we can do. It shows we’re not just officers but people, too.”

Alloggia said the deputies were actively involved with the Lunch Bunch program and everyone was involved in the PBIS activity.

She said the JCSO was scheduled to participate in a kickball game in mid-May and she also hoped to continue the PBIS activity.

“The students loved it and it was a good, positive interaction. Our goal was to show they are here to help and it’s been really good for the kids.”

## **Cross Creek Elementary Kids Learn about Neurodiversity**

Kids at Cross Creek Elementary learned all about differences with others for Neurodiversity Week on March 17-21.

Neurodiversity includes autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia, Tourette’s Syndrome and others and similar events were also conducted at Hills Elementary to bring awareness to students in grades PreK-4 by conducting fun and educational activities. Cross Creek Elementary School Counselor Brittany Shank said students took part in reading activities to gain an understanding and celebrate differences.

“We shared resource books that teachers could utilize in the classroom and tie into learning,” said Shank. “Each day there was a story and we shared a PowerPoint presentation to teach students about neurodiversity.”

Each day classes focused on a different theme with dyslexia on Monday, ADHD on Tuesday, autism on Wednesday, anxiety on Thursday and World Down Syndrome Day on Friday. Among the stories they read were “A Walk in the Words,” by Hudson Talbott, “Mrs. Gorski, I Think I Got the Wiggle Fidgets,” by Barbara Esham and “All My Stripes,” by Danielle Royer and Shaina Rudolph. Friday featured “Rock My Socks,” where kids wore fun footwear.

Shank said she had previously led activities with third graders and had been approached by teachers to provide social-emotional lessons, and the students enjoyed the events.

“They loved listening to the stories and doing the activities,” she added. “They are more aware, empathetic and able to celebrate differences.”