

HIGHLIGHTS

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ELWOOD UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Empowering Our School Community THROUGH COLLABORATION



Ensuring the health and safety of every student, staff member and family is at the heart of one of our district goals. As we continue to strengthen the systems and supports that keep our schools safe, we are deepening our partnerships with local organizations, students and school leaders. Together, we are building a coordinated approach that not only protects our school community, but also promotes long-term wellness, preparedness and resilience. Through collaboration and a shared commitment to caring for the Elwood school community, we are creating a healthier, safer environment where learning can thrive.

As the calendar page turned to the holiday season, several students have been engaged in healthy efforts to support the needs of our local community. A dedicated team of students at John Glenn High School turned their school spirit toward helping others, collecting an impressive 5,288 items through a friendly food drive competition. Their efforts benefited the Elwood Middle School's food pantry program, which provides vital monthly donations to local families in need. In addition, the

Knights football team led a Stop & Shop food drive to collect canned goods and nonperishable items. In a true bonding experience, coach TJ Brocking and his team filled 12 carts with food donations for local families in need.

As part of an exciting cross-school technology initiative, students from Elwood-John H. Glenn High School's child studies program visited Harley Avenue Primary School to collaborate with a second grade class on a creative digital project. Working side by side, the high school students guided their younger peers in using the Book Creator multimedia tool to design an interactive "All About Me" book, combining technology, creativity and connection across grade levels.

"I had so much fun working on Book Creator with the kids," junior Kennedy Piacentini said. "It was really cool to learn all about them and teach them how to use it."

From work in the community to the classroom, Elwood students and staff continue to remain committed to efforts that support the health and safety of the school community.



Elwood's Knights Win Long Island Soccer Championship



The Elwood-John H. Glenn varsity boys soccer team secured the Long Island Class A championship with a hard-fought 2-1 victory over the defending state champions Floral Park High School. The team displayed extraordinary character throughout the contest. Trailing at halftime, the Knights fought back with incredible spirit. Key plays included Cooper Kassan leveling the score off a perfectly placed cross from junior Jesse Columbo, followed by the decisive late-game goal where a throw in from senior Peter Bell found Jesse Columbo for the go-ahead score in the final seven minutes against Floral Park. Throughout the match, the Knights exemplified the true essence of athletics: grit, sportsmanship, hustle and sheer determination.

"We offer sincere appreciation to every member of the community, parent and student who attended the game," Director of Athletics Dave Shanahan said. "Their presence created an electric atmosphere that fueled the team to victory."



Exceptional Senior Athletes Sign Letters of Intent

Three exceptional John Glenn senior athletes – Laila Daly (soccer, Marist University), Camryn Szokoli (cross-country, SUNY Geneseo) and Nora Truncale (soccer, LIU Post) – officially signed National Letters of Intent, committing to continue their athletic careers at the NCAA collegiate level next fall. Athletic Director Dave Shanahan hosted a special College Signing Day in the school's gymnasium, joined by the students' families, coaches and administrators.



Essay Excellence Earns Four Glenn Students Hispanic Heritage Honors

Four outstanding Elwood-John H. Glenn High School students were honored by the Town of Huntington's Hispanic Advisory Task Force during the town's 31st annual Hispanic Heritage Month celebration. Camila Avila and Kailee Orndorff-Rivera were named Hispanic Heritage scholarship winners, and Kasey Alfaro Contreras and J.J. Milan Espinal received well-deserved recognition as finalists. Each student had submitted a compelling essay detailing the profound impact of their heritage on their lives.



BUDGET FORUM OVERVIEW

The district recently held a Budget Forum to give the community an early look at the 2026-2027 budget development process. The presentation highlighted the major cost drivers being monitored, the current fiscal landscape and the priorities that will guide our work ahead. We also reviewed the 2025-2026 budget and the impact it has had on programs and operations. Community members can view the full presentation and meeting recording on the district website.

CITIZENS FINANCE AND BUDGET COMMITTEE

The district recently adopted Policy #2260.1, establishing the Citizens Finance and Budget Committee. This committee offers community members an opportunity to learn more about the district's budgeting process, ask questions and provide feedback. Its work is intended to support greater transparency and strengthen community understanding of the district's finances and the annual budget development process. Meetings will be open to the public, with the first scheduled for January 21, 2026.



John Glenn Musicians Earn All-State and All-County Honors

Seven talented Elwood-John H. Glenn High School student musicians – Louise Hartough (bass), Aaleshan Jamal (trombone), Olivia LoBue (voice), Kaylee Mossey (voice), Bella Ronai (viola), Angelica Viviani (voice) and Irena Yeung (violin) – were selected by the New York State Council of Administrators of Music Education to perform in this year's All-County ensembles in November. In addition, Mossey earned selection to the New York State School Music Association's All-State Chorus and performed at the NYSSMA Winter Conference in Rochester in December.



Boyd Fourth Graders Shine at PEAK Fest

Five promising young musicians – Aya Blair, Jason Cabasso, Sofia Garcia, Kailey Kim and Aidan Tessier – from James H. Boyd Intermediate School participated in October in the Suffolk County Music Educators' Association's 17th annual Parents, Educators and Kids Festival. This special countywide event for selected fourth graders offers a full day of musical workshops and performances where students, parents and teachers make music together. The Boyd students were chosen for their effort, talent and enthusiasm, consistently demonstrated during weekly music classes and ensembles.

A Season of Science Innovation Across Elwood's Schools

Boyd third graders explored the science behind the cranberry during their annual Cranberry Day celebration, guided by teacher Liz Held. Throughout the morning, students rotated through the various third grade classrooms, participating in cranberry-themed STEM stations that encouraged scientific inquiry, engineering design and mathematical reasoning through engaging experiences. The event's "berry fun" activities included building cranberry catapults, cranberry juice experiments, constructing floating cranberry cargo rafts and making craisins "dance" in cups of soda to test the principles of buoyancy.

"It's amazing how much they can discover from one little cranberry," Held said. "They're building, testing, experimenting and truly thinking like scientists."

Meanwhile, at the high school, students have been diving into fun and exciting science concepts and experiments. Biology classes dug for seeds in elephant dung and from soil samples to determine if elephants help germinate and disperse seeds; materials science students investigated ways to make copper crystals grow via a chemical reaction; and chemistry classes explored the principle behind the Northern Lights, using flame tests to observe the brilliant, unique colors formed when excited electrons fall back to their ground state.



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Parent University **UPDATE**

Elwood's Parent University series of presentations and workshops continue to provide a vital service to the district's parents. To date, the district has hosted events such as "Magnetic Literacy," which focused on the key features and instructional approaches of the district's new K-5 literacy program; "An Examination of the Effects of Substances of Abuse and Behaviors on the Teen Brain," a conversation with Dr. Stephen Dewey emphasizing the dual threats of pervasive fentanyl contamination in street drugs and the rise of behavioral addictions linked to video games and smartphones; and "Positive Parenting Strategies," discussing positive reinforcement, limit setting and building positive parent-child relationships.

In the new year, save the date for these upcoming Parent University events:

Parent University: Understanding Your Child's IEP – Jan. 21, 2026

With annual review meetings beginning in February, the district is inviting parents to come learn about the various components of their child's IEP. Two special education teachers will lead the discussion to review what parents can expect to discuss at their annual review meeting and to help answer questions parents may have about their child's IEP.

Post-Secondary Planning for Students with Disabilities: Parent Training – March 24, 2026

JGHS psychologist Kristen Romanchuk and counselor Carolyn Goudreau will share postsecondary planning information with parents. This training is designed to equip parents with essential information and resources to successfully navigate their student's transition from high school to college or career training. The focus is on the critical differences between K-12 and post-secondary disability services and how to access necessary supports.

Opting In to *ParentSquare* Communications

Elwood parents and community members can now opt in to receive districtwide communications using the communication platform ParentSquare. To sign up, please complete the registration form at:
<https://forms.gle/KjbtCgP7xXpMLadi7>.



Please note, parents/residents who are already enrolled in ParentSquare with current children enrolled in our schools do not need to sign up. This form is only for those who are looking to keep informed of district-level news/events. Regular school communication will be shared with parents/guardians via the buildings' ParentSquare channels.

Elwood Presents **New and Improved Website**

Elwood School District's newly redesigned website launched in November, offering a cleaner, more intuitive user experience enhanced by striking aerial views of each campus. Guided by community feedback, streamlined navigation buttons were thoughtfully placed on every page, ensuring that essential information is always just a click away.

A well-organized, discreetly designed menu provides easy access to department pages, Board of Education information, school calendars, community resources and more. As visitors explore each school's page, they can quickly view building-specific news, upcoming events, calendars and social media updates. Additionally, the site is fully translatable with a single click, underscoring the district's commitment to accessibility and an inclusive digital experience for all members of the community.

"This is more than just a website, it is the new digital front door to our schools, built with every member of our community in mind," Director of Instructional and Information Technology Christopher Onorato said.

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