

Freeport Secondary Schools Newsletter

SMALL WINS CAN GO A
LONG WAY

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**A “Small Win” is any positive and helpful step forward. It doesn’t matter how small it may seem, if it shows effort, growth or resilience
—it’s a WIN!**

**Over the next half of the school year, begin to try to look for the
“Small Wins” you experience day to day.**

It could look like....

Trying something new, asking for help, turning in an assignment that you were struggling with, making it to school on time, telling a friend how you feel, focusing on what you need, staying in class when you wanted to leave, taking responsibility for a mistake, participating even when you felt nervous, practicing a new habit, trying again after making a mistake, showing patience with others

Recognizing these “Small Wins” is important—they help reduce stress, build confidence and self-advocacy, and remind us that

Remember: Growth happens in steps, and every effort counts—even on hard days.

— The Counseling Department

Freeport Area High School Bands Share Music During Day of Giving

On December 4, the Freeport Area High School Bands took their music beyond the classroom and into the community as part of their annual Day of Giving. Throughout the day, student musicians performed at the Aspinwall VA Medical Center, Robinson Town Centre, and made a special appearance live on 96.1 KISS FM for their annual Stuff-a-Bus Toy Drive Event.

The Day of Giving is a meaningful tradition for the band program, centered on sharing the gift of music with members of the community as a small way to give back during the holiday season.

Performances are designed to spread joy, gratitude, and connection—especially to those who may need it most during this time of year.

The Freeport Area High School Bands are deeply thankful for the many blessings and opportunities they receive throughout the year and are proud to use their talents to uplift others. Through these performances, students demonstrated not only musical excellence, but also the spirit of service that defines the Freeport community.



Freeport Area High School Bands Present Inspiring 9–12 Grade Winter Concert

The Freeport Area High School Bands showcased the depth of their talent during the recent 9–12 Grade Winter Concert, featuring performances by the 9th and 10th Grade Concert Band and Jazz Band, as well as the 11th and 12th Grade Concert Band and Jazz Ensemble. The evening highlighted students' musical growth, versatility, and dedication across multiple styles and ensembles. Each group presented a thoughtfully programmed selection of music, allowing younger and upperclassmen alike to demonstrate their technical skill and musical expression. From traditional concert band literature to energetic jazz selections, the performance reflected the strong foundation and continued development of Freeport's band program.

The concert concluded with a powerful and memorable finale: a combined 9–12 grade “surround sound” band positioned throughout the audience seating. Encircling the crowd, students performed Do They Know It's Christmas Time, creating an immersive musical experience that brought performers and listeners together. The unique ending served as a reminder of the unifying power of music and captured the spirit of the holiday season, leaving a lasting impression on all in attendance.



Phipps Environmental Justice Challenge

Middle school gifted students took part in the Phipps Fairchild Challenge, which centers on environmental justice. Each student created a zine—a mini, hand-drawn magazine—highlighting a youth environmental activist. Through original illustrations and writing, students explored the missions and accomplishments of activists they connected with, including Licypriya Kangujam, Mitzi Jonelle Tan and Nkosilathi Nyathi. Students that participated in this challenge: Aaron Belasco, Jacob Bender, Louis Crytzer, Quinn Crytzer, Tyler Deacon, Kenneth Dorian, Emmett Eyler, Ethan Kapp, Marion Lindsay, Liliana McGaughey, Charlotte Palmiter, Logan Rafferty, Leonardo Ronge, Zachary Shoupe, Gavin Smith, Giuliana Urik, Jackson Valetta and Elijah Vorse.



Live to Give Month at FAMS

Freeport Area Middle School's Live to Give Month showcased the compassion and generosity of our students and staff through a variety of meaningful service projects. During advisory periods, students created heartfelt holiday cards for patients at Rosebrook and Concordia, spreading cheer and connection during the season. In addition, members of the Craft Club made festive holiday crafts specifically for the patients, adding a personal and creative touch to brighten their days. Our student ambassadors proudly delivered the cards and crafts to both Rosebrook and Concordia, giving students the opportunity to see firsthand the impact of their kindness.

Live to Give Month also focused on supporting families within our community. The staff got into the swing of things by competing in an Ugly Sweater Contest. Students voted for the "ugliest" sweater by placing money and loose change into the staff members' buckets. Money was donated to local families for the holidays. FAMS also hosted a Games Day featuring a fun-filled Minute to Win It fundraiser station run by Care Club and Student Council, with proceeds benefiting families in need. Students enjoyed friendly competition while contributing to an important cause. To further extend our outreach, the school teamed up with the United Way to collect nonperishable food items, which were then distributed to support local families. Through these collective efforts, Freeport Area Middle School truly lived out the spirit of giving, reinforcing the importance of empathy, service, and community.



Student Ambassadors Take on a Leadership Role During Parent-Teacher Conferences

In November, Freeport Area Middle School student ambassadors played an important role during parent-teacher conferences by presenting to parents and guardians. The ambassadors addressed questions and topics that emerged from a parent survey completed at the start of the school year, helping to provide clarity and open communication between families and the school. They also shared information about projects and learning experiences students in grades 6–8 are currently working on in their classes. This presentation highlighted student leadership and gave parents valuable insight into classroom learning and school initiatives.



Friendsgiving at FAMS

Our Life Skills Support and Autistic Support programs organized and hosted a Friendsgiving with their typical peers. The students planned the menu, shopped for groceries, made placemats and nametags in their adapted special-area classes, decorated the classroom, set up tables, and prepared the meal. Not only did everyone enjoy a warm, delicious lunch together, but they also shared conversations, games - and lots of smiles.

FAMS Holiday Band and Choir Concerts

In December, the Freeport Area Middle School band and choir brought the holiday season to life through their winter concerts. Students showcased their hard work and musical growth by performing a variety of festive and seasonal selections for families and community members. The concerts highlighted not only students' developing musical skills, but also their dedication, teamwork, and confidence on stage. These performances helped create a joyful atmosphere and served as a wonderful way for the school community to come together and celebrate the season.



Turkey Trot

Just before Thanksgiving break, Freeport Area Middle School hosted a festive Turkey Trot and bake sale that brought students and staff together for fun and fellowship. The Turkey Trot encouraged participation, school spirit, and physical activity, while the bake sale offered a variety of homemade treats to enjoy.

Together, the events helped build community and added excitement leading into the holiday break, making it a memorable way to celebrate the season at FAMS. Congratulations to James Kramer who won the overall trot with the fastest time/pace.

FAMS Door Decorating Contest

Adding to the festive spirit of the season, Freeport Area Middle School held a door decorating activity just for fun. Hallways were transformed with creative, colorful, and cheerful designs. Door-winning homerooms were:

- 1) Miss Franceschi
 - 2) Mrs. Zollinger
 - 3) Mr. Phillips
- Honorable Mention) Ms. Ferraro



Toys for Tots

Freeport Area Middle School proudly participated in the Toys for Tots Stuff-a-Bus toy drive, demonstrating the generosity and giving spirit of our school community. Students, families, and staff donated new toys to help bring joy to children in need during the holiday season. Members of Student Council helped deliver the collected toys to Kiss FM 96.1. This effort provided students with a meaningful opportunity to give back and make a positive impact beyond the school walls.

FAMS Holiday Theme Days

Candy Cane Day



Top It Off



Ugly Sweater



Santa vs. Grinch Day



Upcoming STUCO EVENTS at the MS:

Carnation and Lollipop Sales Begin January 14th and end on the 23rd!

Send someone a sweet Valentine's day message to brighten their day.

8th graders wishing to attend the Kennywood Trip must turn in their permission slip with payment by January 27th. Information packets went home with all 8th graders.

FAMS Upcoming Events to Remember

February 6 Ski Club Trip

February 13 Career Day

February 16 No School - Teacher In-Service Day

Welcome to New Staff Members at FAMS



**Mrs. Caitlin Mitchell -
Long-Term Substitute**

**Mrs. Emily Szitas -
Building Substitute**



**Mr. Matthew Wass -
Building Substitute**

Career Day at Freeport Area Middle School

Freeport Area Middle School will host Career Day on Friday, February 13th. During the morning, students will have the opportunity to learn about a variety of careers through presentations from community members and professionals. In the afternoon, students will attend a career-related movie screening in the auditorium, allowing them to continue exploring future career paths in an engaging way.

The Freeport Area School Counseling Department is committed to strengthening workforce development by building meaningful connections between educators, employers, and the community. One of our goals is to support student achievement by aligning education with career preparation. Career Day provides a valuable opportunity for students to explore potential career options, learn from real-world experiences, and begin thinking about their future goals.



Student-Athlete Advisory Council Visits Concordia Residents

Members of the Freeport Area Student-Athlete Advisory Council visited residents of Concordia in Cabot prior to Christmas vacation. FAHS student-athletes created greeting cards to provide to the residents, as well as sang Christmas Carols with the residents. Our student-athletes did a wonderful job raising the spirits of the residents while spreading holiday cheer!

Celebrating a Historic Academic Achievement at Freeport Area High School

Freeport Area High School is proud to share that we have received our official building score from the state and it is the highest score in our school's history!

Building scores are based on multiple measures, including achievement and growth on standardized assessments (Keystones, AP, SAT, etc.), attendance rates, graduation rates, and progress toward career readiness.

Out of a possible score of 100, Freeport Area High School earned an outstanding 93.4.

**To put this achievement into perspective:
32nd out of 2,736 schools statewide (top 1%)**

6th out of 741 high schools in Pennsylvania (top 1%)

This accomplishment reflects the collective efforts of our students, staff, and families. We congratulate and thank our families for being such an important part of the Freeport Area educational community. Your support, partnership, and commitment to student success play a vital role in helping our students thrive.

We are incredibly proud of what we have achieved together and look forward to continuing this work in support of every student!

2nd Place Award by Middle School Students during the City of Pittsburgh's Annual Gingerbread House Contest

8th grade Art Club and 6th-8th grade Adapted Art students at FAMS participated in building and displaying unique gingerbread house creations at the City-County Building in downtown Pittsburgh during the holiday season. We had a total of 7 houses that represented FAMS, with a 2nd place winner in the Middle School division. The winning entry, entitled "GingerDREAD Manor" was created by 8th graders Ella Boyd, Ashlyn Thomas and Katie Fichorn.



FAMS Jackets Closet & Craft Club Donations

If interested in donating to our free supply closet, Jackets Closet, please [click here](#).

If interested in donating to our PBIS Craft Club program, please [click here](#).

Showcasing Real-World Tech Skills

Congratulations to these students who earned their Microsoft Excel certification: Avery Henry, Jenna Kanya, Jocelyn Johns, James Crawford, Sophia Patton, Caleb Davis, and Cecilia Selinger. The Microsoft Office Certification exam is a nationally recognized credential that demonstrates strong, real-world spreadsheet and data skills. It covers a wide range of practical skills students use both in school and beyond. Students are tested on their ability to create and format spreadsheets, use formulas and functions, organize and analyze data, create charts and visualizations, and manage worksheets and workbooks efficiently. They also demonstrate problem-solving skills by applying Excel tools to realistic scenarios. Congratulations to all students who earned this certification—we're proud of the hard work and dedication that led to this success!



Congratulations to Mrs. Fello



Mrs. Fello welcomed her first grandchild, Colson James Greece, on Saturday, January 10, 2026. Colson was born weighing 8 pounds 3 ounces and measured 21 ½ inches. Congratulations to the entire family!

6th Grade Hieroglyphic Writing

Students in Mr. Cartiff's social studies classes recently explored the ancient Egyptian writing of Hieroglyphics. After studying the history and symbols, they researched and then wrote their names in Hieroglyphics on cardstock. They then transferred this to a papyrus bookmark. This fun project brought history to life by giving students a hands-on experience. The students took their bookmarks home and now have a nifty historical bookmark!



75th Annual PA DECA State Career Development Conference

The DECA State Career Development Conference will be held February 18-20 at Hershey Lodge in Hershey, PA. The conference brings over 80 DECA chapters from Pennsylvania together in one location with over 3,800 students attending. The students take a test in the event they have chosen and then they will participate in role play that is made up of a real life scenario. This year six students will be participating.

DECA District Conference

The District Conference for DECA was held at Duquesne University in early December. There were over 350 students competing from 9 different schools. Jacob McClymonds & Calvin Lindsay placed second in the Business Law & Ethics category, Natalie Wallisch placed First in the Accounting Applications category and Himani Harrell placed second in the Marketing Communications category. These students have the opportunity to compete at the PA DECA State Career and Development Conference that is held at the end of February.



Point Park University's Third Annual

POINT
PITCH

Members of DECA participated in Point Park University's Third Annual Point Pitch in November. The members had an opportunity to work with marketing professionals to develop a high-level marketing campaign for Dick's Sporting Goods. After creating the campaign, the students then presented their pitch. Freeport had 33 students who participated, they were broken down into six groups and one of our groups made it to the final round. The students really enjoyed the experience and look forward to returning next year.

Jackets Nest

Our Free Clothing Store, the Jackets Nest, is running low on supplies, and we could really use your help! This store provides students and families with access to essential clothing and hygiene items at no cost, and every donation makes a meaningful difference. To make giving easy, we've created an Amazon Wish List with the items that are most needed right now. –thank you in advance for your generosity and support in helping us keep this resource available for those students who need it most.

[Click Here to Support](#)



Let Learning Grow - 6th Grade ELA Classroom Gardyn's

We're excited to announce that Gardyn—a compact, automated indoor gardening system—has been added to our 6th-grade ELA classrooms this year thanks to the Freeport Area School District Foundation! Students will use the Gardyn to observe plant growth, record data, and connect real-life observations to reading, writing, and research projects. The hands-on learning supports lessons on ecosystems, nutrition, responsibility, and vocabulary development while encouraging curiosity and collaboration. Stay tuned for updates and pics of our Gardyns!