



RAIDER PRIDE

A State and National Award-Winning Publication **DECEMBER 2024**



SOUNDS OF THE SEASON

Festive holiday melodies filled the air at the 26th Annual Senior Holiday Event, welcoming nearly 300 attendees to the Intermediate High School on Dec. 19.

During their time at this free program, guests were entertained by the Seneca Valley Jazz Ensemble, Chamber Orchestra and Senior High School Madrigal Singers.

At the conclusion of the performances, members of the National Honors Society

served a sit-down holiday meal in the school's cafeteria. The day concluded with special cafeteria performances and a take-home treat.

We'd like to extend a heartfelt thank you to our event organizers, performers, as well as the JROTC cadets who greeted and helped guests to their seats along with National Honor Society members who decorated and assisted cafeteria staff. ■

Photos courtesy of Bill Paterson



Photos continued on page 2.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Wishing you warm and thoughtful greetings this winter season and happiness throughout the coming year! The Seneca Valley School District will be on winter break (no school for students and staff) from Dec. 23, 2024 - Jan. 1, 2025. Students will return to school on Thursday, Jan. 2, 2025. ■



GET THE INSIDE SCOOP: PLANNING AHEAD MADE EASY!

Watch as Seneca Valley Senior Isaac Hixon walks us through the [District's Program of Studies \(POS\)](#) for grades 9-12. Learn how students can best utilize the POS website, register for classes and prepare their schedule for success! Check out this video offering helpful tips and advice from senior high principal Mr. Bob Ceh, and school counselor Dr. Rebecca Rocky. ■

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Service taking root	5
SV Plans for inclement weather.....	8
Athletics.....	11
Smart Corner: Tech Gift Guide	22

DATES TO REMEMBER

Dec. 23 - Jan. 1	Winter Break, No School
Jan. 6	School Board Meeting Work Session, SHS Auditorium, 7 p.m.
Jan. 13	School Board Meeting Regular Session, SHS Auditorium, 7 p.m.
Jan. 16	End of First Semester, Grades 7-12
Jan. 17	Staff In-Service Day, No School for Students
Jan. 20	Martin Luther King Jr. Day, No School for Students
Jan. 24	Release of Report Cards, Grades 7-12

For more dates, visit: www.svsd.net/WebCalendar

JANUARY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

SOUNDS OF THE SEASON *Continued from page 1.*



CRAFTING HOLIDAY MEMORIES

Haine's Best Buddies chapter hosted their winter group activity where students made festive holiday ornaments to adorn the Best Buddies tree on display at the Cranberry Municipal Building. Teacher-nominated third, fourth and fifth graders teamed up with students from Haine's Multiple Supports classrooms for a fun and heartwarming collaborative experience. Everyone had a great time making these colorful and unique ornaments while building friendships and spreading holiday cheer.

Best Buddies International is a nonprofit organization consisting of volunteers that create opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. At the elementary level, it's about promoting inclusion and friendship among students with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities through group activities. ■



BALLOONS OVER EHRMAN CREST

Just days before the famous Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade kicked off in New York City, students at Ehrman Crest Elementary School (ECE) took part in their own special tradition, staging their own parade to celebrate the holidays. The hallways of ECE were filled with smiles, laughter and many balloons during the school's third annual Balloons Over Ehrman Crest.

Third grade classes read the book "Balloons Over Broadway," by Melissa Sweet. After learning about the history of the Macy's Day Parade, students designed their own balloon displays and proudly presented their creations in a parade for kindergarten, first, second and fourth grade students along with their parents. Special accompaniment was given by Ehrman Crest Middle School band students! ■



TURKEY TIME

Students in Ms. Sara Coon's Physical Education class at Ehrman Crest Elementary celebrated the Thanksgiving holiday with activities like ice skating, "pardon" the turkey tag and Dress the Turkey relay games. In addition to the festive fun, our young athletes learned the importance of working toward a common goal, collaborating as a team and effective communication. ■



CREATIVITY DISPLAYED IN A PARADING PRODUCTION

Last month, students in Haine Elementary School and Rowan Elementary CIRC classes created their own version of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade by designing their own "balloons" using different materials. These student innovators first learned the history of the parade and then integrated technology and robotic coding to plan a parade route and vehicle in which the balloons would be displayed. Completed floats were paraded around the classroom and students had a great time learning more about the parade and technology that goes into this grand production. ■



SERVICE TAKING ROOT

Dozens of students and teachers at Ryan Gloyer Middle School (RGMS) got their hands dirty this November, as they set off to beautify Cranberry Township through their second annual Tree Planting Blitz and Leaf Collection field trip. This collaborative effort, involving Cranberry Township, FirstEnergy, Penn Power, and the school district, highlighted the strength of community partnerships in making a positive impact.

Over 150 trees were planted across Cranberry Township neighborhoods, including along the winding tributary of Brush Creek, where a multimillion-dollar streambank restoration project is helping to combat erosion and preserve vital animal habitats. The initiative extended beyond environmental stewardship, as students also visited nearly 50 senior citizens' homes—raking leaves and assisting residents in areas such as Oak Springs Mobile Home Park.

This day of service not only transformed the community but also fostered a spirit of teamwork, mentorship, and gratitude among students, school administrators and special guests. As part of the ongoing "Community Grown" initiative, the project exemplifies how RGMS empowers its students to give back to the communities that support their education, creating a legacy of service and connection. ■



CULTURAL EXPLORATIONS

No passport was needed for this exciting global experience! Haine Middle School fifth graders recently hosted their exploratory Cultural Day on Friday, Dec. 6. During this event, students enjoyed presentations about different cultures and countries that included South Korea, France, Japan, Poland, Africa, Venezuela, Mexico, Ecuador and more! Students went on a worldwide adventure as they learned about a variety of cultures through interactive presentations, engaging activities and guest speakers. ■



WHEN I GROW UP...

Professor, Flight Nurse, Musician, Graphic Designer, Engineer, Physician, Fireman and Visual Effects Artist.

Those are just a few of the 40 presenters at Ryan Gloyer Middle School's (RGMS) Career Day.

Students had the opportunity to explore different careers and unique demonstrations. During the presentations, students asked engaging questions and completed structured prompts. They

learned more about the aspects of each career such as skills/education needed, as well as a typical day in each role.

Thank you to all of the presenters who helped RGMS students discover what they might want to do in the future. ■



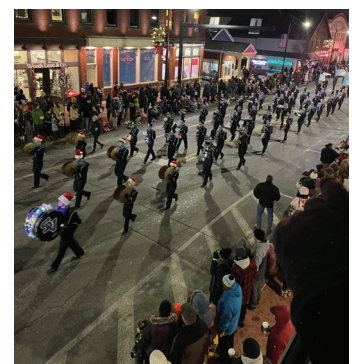
SHARING SWEETS AND OUR SUPPORT

Throughout the month of November, the Seneca Valley Academy of Choice (SVAOC) partnered with the Senior High School, Ryan Gloyer Middle School, Ehrman Crest Middle School and Rowan Elementary to support the Military Connections program by collecting candy for our troops. This initiative encouraged students, staff and families to donate sweet treats, which were packaged into 17 boxes and sent to military personnel serving overseas. We're proud to be part of such a meaningful community effort, showing our gratitude and support for those who serve. ■



PARADING SV SPIRIT

Seneca Valley was well represented at Zelenople's Miracle on Main Street Parade that took place Thursday, Dec. 5! Following a wonderful holiday performance from the Madrigal Singers, students from the SV Marching Band, Eighth grade chorus and JROTC proudly paraded down Main Street. Staff members from Connoquenessing Valley Elementary School (CVE) also waved to fans from their festive, handmade float! Great job, SV, cheerfully sharing your time and talents with our local community! ■



SV PLANS FOR INCLEMENT WEATHER

As winter begins to make its presence known, we want to take this opportunity to share our plans for inclement weather closures—more commonly known as snow days—for the 2024-25 school year.

New this year, closure decisions will be made in real time based on the specific weather conditions at the time. This means the first closure day may not be a traditional snow day; it could be a remote learning day instead. For instance, an ice storm or extreme cold might result in a remote learning day rather than a traditional snow day.

If we opt for a traditional snow day, there are two makeup days built into the school calendar. Should the first snow day occur before Feb. 14, 2025, the makeup day will be Friday, Feb. 14, 2025. If a second snow day happens before March 21, 2025, the makeup day will be Friday, March 21, 2025.

When the District chooses a remote learning day, it will be a **livestreaming day with a two-hour student delay start time.** Students will be expected to **log on to the SV Portal and access the teacher-provided livestreaming link(s) in the Announcements section.** Students can access meetings through their calendar on Teams. Inclement Weather School/Class Announcements will be made available for student/parent viewing via the SV Portal after **9:30 a.m.** on the day of the closure.

Here are the schedules for remote learning days:

K-6 Schedule for inclement weather CLOSURE days:

10:55 a.m. - 3:25 p.m. - Remote Synchronous Instruction with Students (teachers will post classroom schedules in the announcement section of the portal)

Modified A.M. Kindergarten:
10:55 a.m. - 12:43 p.m.

Modified P.M. Kindergarten:
1:37 - 3:25 p.m.



7-8 Schedule for inclement weather CLOSURE days:

10 a.m.- 2:30 p.m.
Remote Synchronous Instruction with Students

Period 1 - 10 - 10:25 a.m.
Period 2 - 10:30 - 10:55 a.m.
Period 3 - 11 - 11:25 a.m.
Period 4 - 11:30 - 11:55 a.m.
LUNCH - Noon - 12:30 p.m.
Period 5 - 12:35 - 1 p.m.
Period 6 - 1:05 - 1:30 p.m.
Period 7 - 1:35 - 2 p.m.
Period 8 - 2:05 - 2:30 p.m.

9-12 Schedule on inclement weather CLOSURE days:

10:01 a.m.- 2:33 p.m. - Remote Synchronous Instruction with Students
Period 1 - 10:01 - 10:26 a.m.
Period 2 - 10:30 - 10:55 a.m.
Period 3 - 10:59 - 11:24 a.m.
Period 4 - 11:28 - 11:58 a.m.
Period 5 - 12:02 - 12:32 p.m.
Period 6 - 12:36 - 1:06 p.m.
Period 7 - 1:10 - 1:35 p.m.
Period 8 - 1:39 - 2:04 p.m.
Period 9 - 2:08 - 2:33 p.m.

The schedule and closure information will be made available via the homepage of the District website (www.svsd.net) anytime the District announces a school closure.

As we have learned, livestreaming can sometimes be disruptive to optimal learning in both the traditional and remote environments. Therefore, we want to ask for your assistance when students are livestreaming:

- **Learning environment** – Students should be ready and prepared to learn. Students should be seated at a table or desk **free from distractions. The student should not be traveling in a car or livestreaming in a loud environment. Please have student supplies readily available.**
- **Laptop Cameras** must be turned on (students are permitted to blur their background for privacy).
- **Laptop Microphones** should stay muted until the student needs to speak.

Students unable to livestream due to childcare needs or illness will be given assistance when they return and time to make up the day's assignments.

If you have any extenuating circumstances, you may reach out to your child's individual teacher(s). ■



CRESCENDO OF TALENT: SV TOPS HONORS BAND SELECTIONS

On Oct. 17, auditions were held for the 2024 Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA) District 5 Honors Band at Grove City College. Over 200 students auditioned for a band of 125 musicians. This year, Seneca Valley had 36 students earn a position in the Honors Band, more than any other school! District 5 comprises all school districts in Beaver, Butler, Lawrence, and Mercer counties. To audition, students must be in at least ninth grade and prepare a piece from a predetermined solo list for each school year. These college-level solos are selected by the directors of District 5.

This year's Honors Band was guest conducted by Dr. R. Tad Greig, Retired Director of Bands and Professor of Music at Westminster College. The three-day festival culminated with a concert in Ketler Auditorium at Grove City College on Dec.14. Seneca Valley secondary band instructors include Mr. Varden Armstrong, Mr. Robert Babick, Ms. Sara Snyder and Mr. Brian Croach.



Participants:

Maya Anglero - Baritone Saxophone

Camden Armstrong - Alto Saxophone

Noah Bracht - Tuba

Ivan Chen - Trombone

Jordan Courtney - Trumpet

Joseph Cuchapin - Bass Clarinet

Elora Dabravalskas - Trumpet

Emma Gallie - Clarinet

Allison Gillett - Percussion

Madeline Heere - Clarinet

Josh Heere - Baritone Saxophone

Sylvia Heilman - Clarinet

Isaac Hixon - French Horn

Caroline Holmes - French Horn

Benny James - String Bass

Raleigh Karns - French Horn

Maddy Karns - Alto Saxophone

Emelyn Kaye - Clarinet

Ella King - Clarinet

Chloe Lewis - Trumpet

Anna Livorse - French Horn

Nathan Lui - Euphonium

Braedon McNally - Trombone

Lauren Nowak - Clarinet

Niko Papakirk - Clarinet

Steven Patterson - Clarinet

Avery Rape - Trumpet

John Rieger - Trumpet

Gio Salgado - Alto Saxophone

Eli Scanlan - Trombone

Lola Schwendemann - French Horn

Claire Thompson - Flute

Imogen Tomo - Trombone

Mackenzie Tunstall - Clarinet

Adrian Wrubel - Trumpet

Autumn Zacherl - Flute ■

PREPARATION AND COLLABORATION

On Thursday, Dec. 12, students in the SV Chamber Orchestra and String Orchestra collaborated with Seton Hill University string faculty in preparation for upcoming performances. Mr. Patrick Forsythe, Seton Hill University Orchestra conductor, led rehearsal while SV students had the opportunity to play in sections with viola string faculty Mr. Stephen Weiss, violin string faculty Ms. Cara Garofalo, and bass string faculty Mr. George Elliot. Miss Ava Platt, senior violist commented, "The violist played so well, it was so awesome to have them in rehearsal."

It was a great experience having the Seton Hill faculty contribute their time and knowledge to our music program. ■



THE MOST TUNEFUL TIME OF THE YEAR!

This holiday season, the SV choirs were busy performing and spreading holiday cheer. The Seneca Valley Madrigal and Show Choir ensembles, as well as the Barbershop and Beautyshop Quartets have performed around Seneca Valley at Connoquenessing Valley Elementary and Ehrman Crest, as well as throughout the community including Passavant and Sherwood Oaks Retirement Community, Seven Fields Light-Up Night, Zelenople's Miracle on Main, a local remembrance service, a girls volleyball match, a Music Festival at St. Paul's Church and Kennywood Park!

Madrigal Singers Director Ms. Bobi-Jean Alexander stated, "The students and I are always grateful to be able to serve our community through music!" ■





By Heather Lewis,
Seneca Valley Athletics & Activities Director

WINTER SPORTS SEASON UNDERWAY

The PIAA winter sports season officially began on Friday, Nov 29, 2024. The following is a brief recap on the start of the respective seasons.

Boys Basketball (Head Coach Kevin Trost): Boys basketball opened their season at Franklin Regional, participating in the 21st Annual Mike Rettger Memorial Tournament. The Raiders fell to host Franklin Regional, 43-37, but picked up their first win of the season in double overtime versus Avonworth, 72-61.



Next up was the North Catholic Tip-Off tournament where the Raiders dropped two contests to Archbishop Spalding and Cuyahoga Valley Christian. The Raiders finally returned home to face a tough Peters Township squad. SV, with a depleted roster, fought valiantly but came away on the short end of a 63-47 game. At the time of this writing, the Raiders had four players averaging double figures points per game (ppg) – all underclassmen: Andrew Omasits (12.0 ppg), Nico Santapau (10.8 ppg), Owen Congdon (10.5 ppg) and Jaxon Householder (10.0 ppg).

To finish out the month, the Raiders travel to South Fayette for a nonsection contest, and then open section play at Fox Chapel, North Allegheny, and at home versus North Hills. Over the holidays, the Raiders will face Shaler and Plum at the Plum Holiday Tournament.

Girls Basketball (Head Coach Dorothea Epps): Raider girls basketball opened the season at the Woodland Hills Play 4 Mae Tournament with a split, falling to Penn-Trafford (56-40) and beating Imhotep Charter (53-39.) Their nonsection slate continued with two tough road contests at Upper St. Clair and Shadyside Academy. The team played hard but were unable to secure wins in either contest. At the time of this writing, the girls were getting ready for their first home game against Neshannock and will then hit the road, traveling to the Washington, D.C., area for the annual She Got Game Classic. SV is scheduled to compete against Freedom (Virginia) and Conwell-Egan Catholic (New York). To



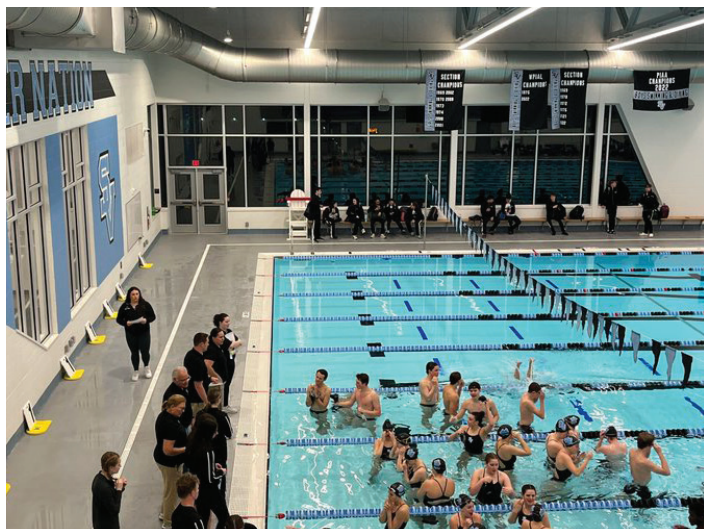
close out the month, the girls return home to open section play, hosting North Allegheny on Dec. 19, and will finish the year at the Shadyside Academy Holiday Tournament with games against Mt. Lebanon and Plum.

Ice Hockey (Head Coach Tyler Mesisca):

At the time of this writing, Raider Ice Hockey is off to another great start, currently in second place PIHL AAA standings with 19 points. The Raiders opened the season winning the St. Margaret Fall Face-Off tournament with a 4-2 win over Mt. Lebanon. Following that title, the Raiders rolled off seven straight wins to open the PIHL schedule, including two in overtime. Following a tough 4-3 loss to South Fayette, SV will face Pine-Richland before a break in their schedule over the holidays.



Swimming & Diving (Head Coach Brian Blackwell): At the time of this writing, Swimming & Diving hosted Riverside and came away with decisive wins for both the boys and girls teams. The Raiders will close out 2024 hosting Northgate prior to Winter Break.



Boys Wrestling (Head Coach Kevin Wildrick): Raider boys wrestling opened the season with a nonsection loss on the road at West Allegheny and followed that with three dual match wins at the JMI Invitational at John Marshall High School. To close out the month of December, the boys will go on the road to Pine-Richland for their opening section match and to Mt. Lebanon for a nonsection match. Between the two away games, SV will compete at the Panther Classic at Mount Aloysius.



Girls Wrestling (Head Coach Jess Leighty): At the time of this writing, Raider girls wrestling had not yet opened their season. Upcoming dual matches on the road include Pine-Richland, Canon-Mac and Mt. Lebanon. Over the winter break, the girls will compete in the prestigious Powerade Tournament at Canon-Mac. This tournament annually hosts some of the top wrestlers in the country.



In addition, all sub-varsity teams have started their seasons and are off to great starts. As always, I am so appreciative of our coaches and grateful for all they do for our student-athletes. As we pause for the winter holidays, may we cherish the time with family and friends. The Seneca Valley Athletics Department wishes all #SVRaiderNation a Happy Holiday Season. ■

ADDITIONAL HONORS ANNOUNCED FOR FALL SPORT RAIDER STUDENT-ATHLETES

While the fall season is in the books, the awards continue to arrive for Raider student-athletes and coaches.

We congratulate boys soccer players on the following honors:

Nathan Prex – Senior Midfielder

- 2024 United Soccer Coaches Association High School All-American
- 2024 United Soccer Coaches Association High School Regional All-American
- 2024 Butler Eagle Boys Soccer Player of the Year
- 2024 Post-Gazette Boys Soccer Player of the Year



- 2024 Trib-Live Boys Fab 15 Soccer Team
- 2024 WPSCA Boys Soccer All-Star Game

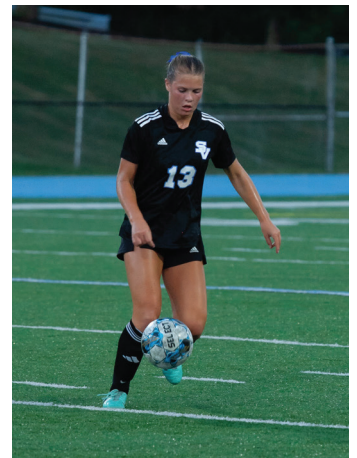
Zach Garma – Senior Forward

- 2024 WPSCA Boys Soccer All-Star Game

We congratulate girls soccer players on the following honors:

Karly Majeski – Junior Midfielder

- 2024 PA Soccer Coaches Association All-State Team
- 2024 Post-Gazette Girls Soccer All-Area Team
- 2024 Trib-Live Girls Fab 15 Soccer Team
- 2024 Butler Eagle All-Butler County Girls Soccer Team



Bella Gianfrancesco – Junior Midfielder

- 2024 Butler Eagle All-Butler County Girls Soccer Team

Cassidy Stopchick – Senior Defender

- 2024 Butler Eagle All-Butler County Girls Soccer Team ■

ATHLETES OF THE MONTH, NOVEMBER 2024

The Female Athlete of the Month for November was girls soccer midfielder Karly Majeski. The junior was a key contributor to the Raider team that won their first section title since 2018, finished runners-up in the Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic League (WPIAL) 4A Girls Soccer Championships, and made a quarterfinal run in the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) playoffs. She had 10 goals and six assists along with countless defensive actions in the midfield to break opposing attacks. Karly's efforts on the season were recognized by area and state coaches as she was named to the All-Section, All-WPIAL, and All-Big 56 first teams along with being named Big 56 Section Player of the Year and tabbed to the Pennsylvania Soccer Coaches Association (PSCA) All-State team. We recognized Karly as the November Female Athlete of the Month. Congratulations, Karly!



The Male Athlete of the Month for November was senior boys soccer midfielder Tyler Prex. A captain, Tyler led the team in points with 20 goals and 12 assists and several multi-goal performances including four each in key section wins against Fox Chapel and North Hills. His all-around play led to recognition in not only western Pennsylvania and across the state, but also nationally. Tyler was named to the All-Section, All-WPIAL, All-Big 56 and PSCA All-State first teams along with being selected Western Pennsylvania Soccer Coaches Association (WPSCA) 4A Player of the Year. Lastly, Tyler was one of 40 senior boys soccer players named a Prep Soccer All-American and will represent Seneca Valley on the East Team in the All-American game in December. We recognized Tyler as the November Male Athlete of the Month. Congratulations, Tyler! ■



COLLEGE COMMITMENTS – CLASS OF 2025

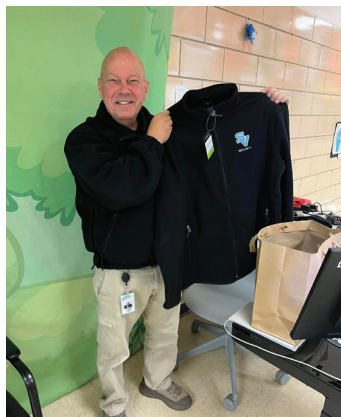
Many Raider student-athletes made their college commitment official with the early signing period starting in mid-November. We congratulate these seniors for achieving their goals of continuing their athletic and academic careers at the next level. Each of you are tremendous representatives of Raider Athletics and we are immensely proud of your efforts in the classroom, in competition, and in the community. ■

Name	Sport	College/University	Major
Wes Conville	Baseball	Pitt-Johnstown	Business & Enterprise
Lauren Folino	Softball	Allegheny College	Biology
Aedan Fowler	Baseball	Gannon University	Psychology
Nathan Lemke	Baseball	Westminster College	Finance
Sadie Reese	Volleyball	Pitt-Johnstown	Psychology



GIVING BACK THIS GIVING TUESDAY

Each year, the Seneca Valley Foundation (SVF) likes to kick off the giving season by giving back to SV employees. This year, we acknowledged and thanked the fine members of the SV Security Team for their hard work and dedication by surprising them with new jackets and candy. These amazing people are truly “Lifesavers” and fierce as fleece when it comes to keeping our buildings safe. Thank you, SV Security! ■



LOCAL CHURCHES DONATION BOOSTS NO COST TO SHOP

The Seneca Valley Foundation received a generous \$2,500 donation for the high school’s No Cost to Shop from Zelianople-Harmony Lutheran Ministries (ZHLM), a partnership of St. Paul Lutheran Church and Zion Lutheran Church. This impactful contribution will support the store’s mission of providing clothing and hygiene products to students completely free of charge.

Located in the senior high school, the No Cost to Shop serves students in grades 7-12, offering brand-new and gently used clothing, shoes, outerwear, and a wide selection of hygiene products. Whether preparing for a special event, formal occasion, or simply needing everyday wear, the store has been a vital resource since its establishment in 2021.

Run entirely through donations, the store’s success is driven by the founder Ms. Michelle Eppinger, Job Coach-Paraprofessional, along with a committed team of students and teachers (Ms. Alicia Scopellite) who are making a meaningful difference.

In addition to the monetary support, ZHLM also donated several boxes of personal hygiene items, which is the store’s biggest

need. A hygiene-drive is being organized for mid-January – stay tuned!

For more information about No Cost to shop or how to donate, visit their [website](#). ■



STRENGTHEN THE FOUNDATION – MAKE YOUR YEAR-END DONATION TODAY!

There is still time to make a contribution to the SVF’s STRENGTHEN THE FOUNDATION Annual Support Campaign! Your gift will allow us to continue enhancing the educational experience at Seneca Valley Schools.

Still in need of the perfect gift for your favorite SV employee? Consider the gift of a Seneca Valley Tribute! As part of our year-end giving campaign, we are offering an opportunity to give a gift in honor or memory of your favorite SV employees. Your gift will not only show your love and appreciation to a deserving employee, but it will leave a lasting impact on the SV Foundation.

All donations, no matter the size, will be recognized in our annual report, on our website and communicated to the honoree/family through a certificate of recognition. Donations can be made through the QR Code below, at <https://www.zeffy.com/donation-form/6a3dd4a8-38f3-49a1-a79f-0bba5d8a8763> or by mailing a check payable to the Seneca Valley Foundation to the district’s central office.

The SVF is a private, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Contributions are tax-deductible to extent allowed by law. ■




STRENGTHEN THE FOUNDATION

Annual Support Campaign

2024

The SVF is building a strong future for students & staff. Join us to **Strengthen the Foundation** of educational excellence at SV!



\$50,000



GOAL!

\$25,000

\$10,000




Donate Today



Your gift impacts student growth & staff empowerment through solid academic programs, meaningful professional development, advanced technologies & well-equipped classrooms.

ART WORKSHOP

Pittsburgh street artist Max Emiliano Gonzales, known by their artist name “GEMS,” hosted a special workshop where students had the chance to create their own spray-painted canvas art pieces. Students explored new techniques and transformed their designs into vibrant

artworks. Afterward, several student groups gathered for a reception at the Intermediate High School’s art room and BIG art gallery, featuring a display of Max’s work alongside the students’ newly created pieces. ■



STUDENT ART SELECTED FOR REGIONAL ART EXHIBITION

Eleven talented Seneca Valley students earned their place in the spotlight with their artwork selected for Slippery Rock University’s (SRU) 2024 annual Regional High School Juried Art Exhibition.

Awards juried by the SRU Art Department included Best of Show, four honorable mention awards, SRU Art Students’ Choice Award and the SRU Potters Guild Ceramics Award. Senior Caelyn DiPietro received an honorable mention for her ceramic piece.

Submitted pieces from students in Mr. Jason Woolslare’s drawing, painting and senior career art classes include seniors Cortlan Harrell, Alexa Hudak, Steven Patterson, Brenna Vassallo and Scarlett Woolslare; juniors Carly Byrom and Madeline Zimmer; and sophomore Bella Landy. Submissions from Ms. Megan Bonistalli’s pottery



classes include seniors Caelyn DiPietro, Natalie Dolan and Sidney Gordon.

The exhibit featured artwork by students from 17 local high schools which culminated with a reception and award presentation on Thursday, Nov. 14, at SRU’s Martha Gault Art Gallery. ■



SENECA VALLEY TEACHER HONORED FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATION WORK

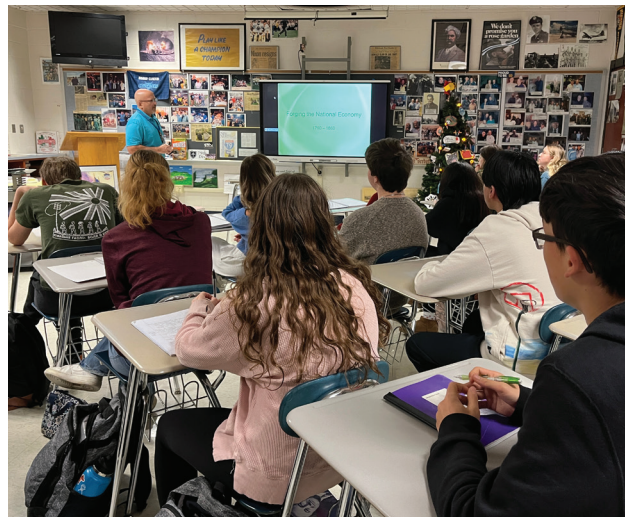
Jim Lucot named a Righteous Among the Neighbors honoree

The Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh has named James Lucot, a Seneca Valley Senior High School teacher, among this year's Righteous Among the Neighbors honorees.

Mr. Lucot, recognized as the Holocaust Center Educator of the Year in 2020, is being celebrated for his many years of exceptional teaching on the Holocaust and his dedication to Holocaust education.

"I am extremely humbled and grateful to be recognized as Righteous by our community; just thinking about it becomes an emotional experience for me," said Mr. Lucot. "I think of all my friends who were survivors and the promise I made to them, that I would continue to pursue my study and teaching of this subject and share their stories for the rest of my life. I so wish they were here to share this with me."

Lucot joins 10 other individuals in the second class of Righteous Among the Neighbors, an award that honors non-Jewish Pittsburghers who have demonstrated dedication to uprooting antisemitism and supporting the Jewish community. This year's additional honorees include Dr. Joshua Andy, Terri



Baltimore, Arlene and Jeff Berg, Josiah Gilliam, Bill and Mardi Isler, Bill Peduto, Lynne Ravas and Selina Shultz.

"This year's 11 honorees have demonstrated their dedication to uprooting antisemitism and helping the Jewish community to thrive," said Emily Loeb, director of programs and education at the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh. "We are grateful for their friendship and are thrilled to recognize them as Righteous Among the Neighbors."

The 2024 honorees will be celebrated at a public event on Feb. 6, 2025, at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh.

The Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh connects the horrors of the Holocaust and antisemitism with the injustices of today. Through education, the center seeks to address these injustices and empower individuals to build a more civil and humane society. It is a program of The Tree of Life. ■

SV STUDENTS ENGAGE IN THOUGHT-PROVOKING ROUNDTABLE

Seneca Valley Senior High School students from Jim Lucot's advanced history and U.S. Government and Politics courses attended a recent roundtable discussion led by Avi Ben-Hur, a Classrooms without Borders Scholar-in-Residence. The discussion revolved around the Israel-Gaza conflict, a subject Mr. Ben-Hur understands well as an Israeli educator who specializes in the Land of Israel studies, the history of Jerusalem, the Arab-Israeli conflict and Holocaust studies. "It was very successful and an amazing opportunity for my students," Mr. Lucot shared. "I was so proud of their questions, maturity and composure." ■



REMEMBERING THROUGH GENERATIONS: A HOLOCAUST EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

About 120 students at the Seneca Valley Intermediate High School (IHS) recently attended engaging presentations by the Generations Speakers from the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh.

Generations Speakers are the children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors and develop presentations about their survivor relative's story.

Organized by Ms. Michele Russo, IHS English teacher, students listened intently to the stories about the Holocaust, fostering a deeper understanding of history and its lasting impact on humanity.

One example included Ms. Alison Karabin who spoke about her grandmother's (Elizabeth Brown) experience of growing up in Hungary before the war, her life in captivity in the camps, surviving a death march, and her life after the war in America. ■



NEXT GENERATION SCIENTISTS TACKLE WATER QUALITY

Thanks to a generous grant from Berkshire Hathaway Energy Gas Transmission and Storage, students in the SV Center for Biotechnology Research will gain invaluable experience through research efforts aimed at safeguarding water quality. The \$2,600 grant will be used to purchase a HOBO data logger system to measure stream health of the Little Connoquenessing Creek, which flows around the secondary campus in Jackson Township. The Bluetooth data logger will take continuous measurements of water

conductivity, temperature and dissolved oxygen. The data will be downloaded from the logger for use in student projects and will also be shared with Three Rivers Quest (3RQ). 3RQ is a program of the West Virginia University Water Research Institute whereby waterways covering 25,000 square miles in five states are monitored for health. The program brings together academic researchers, citizen scientists, and conservation groups to collect, analyze, and monitor important water quality data. With the newly acquired water logging system, students from the SV Center for Biotechnology will play an important role in contributing to real world research related to protecting water quality. ■



Pictured with the grant award are two Seneca Valley Biotech Research Center students (center) with Karen Tarullo, Berkshire Hathaway Energy GT&S Senior Land Agent/Grant Committee, and Tom Lavelle, Seneca Valley Intermediate High School Science teacher.

DRIVING KINDNESS FORWARD

Heartfelt thanks to Seneca Valley bus drivers and monitors from ABC Transit, Inc. for their incredible generosity in recently collecting children's bikes, toys, games, backpacks and blankets. These thoughtful donations supported children in need across Western Pennsylvania through the Every Child Inc. organization in Pittsburgh. ■



SV WELCOMES SARAH PARISH

The Seneca Valley School District is pleased to announce that Sarah Parish will join the district in January 2025 as the new assistant principal of Seneca Valley Academy of Choice (SVAOC).

“Ms. Parish brings a broad range of educational and leadership expertise to her role,” said Dr. Tracy Vitale, Superintendent of Schools. “She understands the importance of creating connections and building a learning environment, which aligns seamlessly with the SVAOC team. We’re excited to welcome her to Seneca Valley.”

Ms. Parish’s professional experience includes serving as the principal at Crafton Elementary School, co-elementary school principal for Insight PA Cyber Charter School and a middle school art teacher in Titusville Area School District. In addition, she has contributed as an assistant education coordinator, STEAM teacher and spent over a decade as the head cheerleading coach at Westminster College.

With a background in education and administration, Ms. Parish holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts and Communications and a Master of Education from Westminster College. She also earned a K-12 Master of Science in Art Education from St. Joseph’s University and her Principal Certificate from Westminster College. She is currently pursuing her Doctorate in Administration and Policy at Slippery Rock University.

Ms. Parish expressed her excitement about the new role, stating, “I am truly excited and honored to join the team at Seneca Valley.

This opportunity is particularly meaningful to me both professionally and personally, as the district holds a special place in my heart—my father worked here, and it’s a privilege to have the opportunity to contribute to a community that has always been a part of my family’s story. Joining Seneca Valley represents not only the chance to be part of its rich traditions but also an opportunity to embrace its forward-thinking vision for education.”



Ms. Parish went on to say, “Professionally, this role aligns with my passion for fostering student success and building collaborative relationships with staff, students and families. Personally, it feels like coming full circle, as I now have the chance to carry on a legacy of educational excellence that has inspired me throughout my life.”

SVAOC is a full-time comprehensive cyber program for grades K-12. At SVAOC, students can create a flexible, personalized educational model that allows them to thrive academically while exploring unique opportunities in either a hybrid or full-time cyber setting. ■

SV BOARD REAPPOINTS LEADERSHIP FOR 2025

The Seneca Valley School Board recently held its annual reorganization meeting, reappointing its incumbent officers to their respective roles through 2025.

Eric DiTullio was unanimously reselected as Board president, a position he has held multiple times since joining the Board in 2009. Representing Forward and Lancaster Townships (Region 8), Mr. DiTullio is a proud Seneca Valley graduate and an active volunteer on various education-related boards, including the Public School Employees’ Retirement System (PSERS). Reflecting on his tenure, he describes his school board service as the most rewarding community work he has undertaken, providing invaluable insights into education, government and the people who make up the district.

The Board also reappointed Jeff Widdowson as vice president. Representing Callery and Harmony Boroughs and Jackson Township (Region 9), Mr. Widdowson has 20 years of dedicated school board service to the District. A 1970 graduate of Seneca Valley, he remains passionate about the importance of education and ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all students. ■



Eric DiTullio



Jeff Widdowson



STAFF OF SV

"The best things in life happen unexpectedly. The best stories begin with "and all of a sudden..." The best adventures were never planned as they turned out to be." – The Mind Journal

August 2019 changed our family's story unexpectedly, and for the better. If you know anything about Adoption, you never know when, who or how someone may come into your life. We had been called a few times before to get prepared, a baby is coming, and then they didn't. But each of those moments were leading to Megan. I got a phone call at school one day in August from our Case Worker at Adoption Connection and this time she said "This is it. Have a car seat in your car, she'll be home to you tomorrow." 24 hours' notice, we had things "ready" at our house for months in anticipation but now we knew we needed some girl clothes! "She" will be here tomorrow. Thank goodness for an amazing family and close friends who helped us finish getting everything we needed that night!

She was just 8 months old at the time, and from the moment she arrived, she filled our lives with so much love and happiness. The process of adoption, however, was not without its challenges, especially given the fact that shortly into our journey the pandemic began. With courthouses closing and many procedures moving online, the path to finalizing Megan's adoption was filled with delays and uncertainties. Despite these hurdles, we remained full steam ahead in our commitment to making Megan a permanent part of our family.

Megan's adoption was finalized just before her second birthday, on December 11th, 2020. The day was a culmination of over a year of waiting, hoping, and navigating the complexities of the adoption process. It was a moment of immense relief and joy, knowing that Megan was officially and forever our daughter.

During this extended time, we also became pregnant and welcomed our son Easton to the family, in October 2020. The

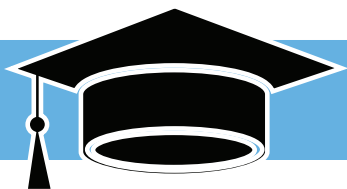
pandemic may have brought a tremendous number of emotions and adjustments but also so much joy to the Womer Family. I always must point out that the support from Adoption Connection through all of this was out of this world for anyone considering fostering or adopting.

Reflecting on this journey, we are filled with gratitude for the resilience and love that have defined our family. Megan has grown into a bright, curious, and loving little girl who brings joy to everyone she meets. Watching her bond with her younger brother Easton has been one of the greatest rewards. The sibling relationship they have is strong!

Adopting Megan has taught us the true meaning of patience, perseverance, and unconditional love. It has also highlighted the importance of community and support systems, as we could not have navigated this journey alone. The support Jeremy and I received from SV and our building families was just one of many reasons we saw how blessed we are!

We are excited to continue watching Megan and Easton grow and thrive. Our adoption story is a reminder that even in the face of adversity great things can happen with love and determination. We are eternally grateful for the opportunity to be Megan's parents and to witness the incredible person she is becoming. ■





Bryn Carney, SV '22, has taken her education across the globe to Scotland where she studies Neuroscience and finds time to immerse herself in European culture. We asked her to catch us up on what she is doing and how Seneca Valley influenced her life and career.

Q: Catch us up. Tell us what you're doing today:

A: Currently, I am in my third year at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland studying Neuroscience. I have assisted in research studies such as long-term COVID cases in vulnerable populations and lung cancer biomarker review as well as volunteering at the Evidence-Based Early Diagnosis medical conference. I like to balance my studies with exercising on the triathlon team and traveling throughout Europe.

Q: Please share with us some information about your family.

A: I have a twin sister, Eva, who is at Virginia Tech and a younger brother, Liam, who is a senior at Seneca Valley and applying to colleges. My mother owns a small business in Zelienople and my father is a civil engineer. Both my parents are very supportive, and I learn so much from them. I miss my family very much when I am away, but we FaceTime so much that I don't miss out on too much.

Q: What might (someone) be surprised to know about you?

A: Someone might be surprised to know that I have lived in Scotland before. My family lived here when I was 7-12 years old



because my dad was building a bridge in Edinburgh. We lived in a small town called Dollar in the foothills of the Ochils - that's part of the reason that I came back here to study.

Q: How did Seneca Valley help you become the person you are today, both personally and professionally?

A: Seneca Valley has a wide range of opportunities that I felt I could explore my interests through. Socially and scholastically, I grew a lot through experiences I had on the cross-country team, swim team, student council and student government.

Q: What do you think makes Seneca Valley such a special place to learn and grow?

A: Seneca Valley is a special place to learn and grow because it offers amazing opportunities for students to challenge themselves. From rigorous AP (Advanced Placement) classes to competitive sports teams, there's always a chance to push your limits. The supportive environment and diverse programs ensure that everyone can find their path.

Q: Who was your favorite teacher/coach/SV staff member?

A: My favorite teacher was Mr. Matt Durst from the Ryan Gloyer Middle School Bobcats team in seventh grade. He was my homeroom and science teacher. His class was always so much fun - from events



like salsa day to our everyday mornings when he played the song "Easy Street" in homeroom—it still gets stuck in my head sometimes!

Q: What is one of your favorite memories from your time at Seneca Valley? We'd encourage you to recall a moment or event that had a particularly strong influence on your life.

A: One of my favorite memories from Seneca Valley was making the swim team my junior year. Coming from a triathlon background, I only knew front crawl and had failed to make the team the year before. I spent the next year training in club sessions with younger, faster swimmers, pushing myself to improve. When I finally made the team, I really understood just how much hard work and perseverance can help me reach my goals. Even more special, that was the year the Aquatic Center opened!

Q: If you had one message for teachers or staff, what would it be?

A: One message I have for teachers would be thank you very much for all of your work. I appreciate how much you care for us as students, and it is helpful to be learning in such a supportive environment.

Q: What do you wish other people knew about Seneca Valley?

A: I wish other people knew how talented the kids are at SV. Many of my friends have strengths in many different areas. Seneca Valley is a place that lets these strengths grow in opportunities of arts, STEM, sports and leadership. ■



TECH GIFT GUIDE: TIPS FOR PARENTS INTRODUCING NEW TECHNOLOGY AT HOME

Is your family unwrapping new technology presents this holiday season? It's a popular time for gifting new devices like tablets, smartwatches, gaming consoles and phones.

A shiny new gadget can be exciting, especially for kids. But it can also feel overwhelming. You may be asking yourself, "What can I do to keep my child safe when using one of these devices?" or "How can I set appropriate media use limits?"

Here are some simple tips to help you introduce new tech devices into your home.

1. Setup device control settings

- Enable parental controls: Turn on [parental controls](#) to block access to risky or inappropriate content, based on your child's age. This will help create a safer online experience. For example, you can add website content filters to iPhones, iPads, laptops and other devices that use Apple iOS. Gaming consoles like the Nintendo Switch often have parent control apps available to help you set limits based on your family's preferences.
- Learn more about the [5Cs of media use](#) to better understand what content and boundaries are appropriate for your child based on their age.
- Ensure a good night's sleep: Many devices have specific restrictions for nighttime, such as Apple's Downtime, to prevent devices from getting in the way of [sleep](#) routines.
- Set time limits and reminders: Use built-in tools or downloadable apps such as Google's Family Link to limit your child's time on their devices and set reminders to help them manage device use effectively.
- Encourage screen breaks: Apps such as Time Out offer useful reminders to step away from the screen.
- Learn the digital landscape: AAP's [Glossary of Digital Media Platforms](#) provides detailed information (including control settings) about social media, video sharing and gaming apps that might be available on your child's new device.

2. Talk about online privacy and security

- Set up privacy settings: Make sure privacy settings are turned on to protect personal information.
- Know what data apps collect: Walk through the various app settings together so you know what data they are collecting and how it is being used. Some devices such as smartphones offer the option to review or change an app's permission to track your data.



- Take a digital citizenship class: Consider learning about online safety and responsible internet use together. Find more information on [digital citizenship](#) classes and resources you can explore with your teen [here](#).

3. Set initial boundaries and check in on a regular basis

- Establish rules around media with input from your child. (See "[Make a Family Media Plan.](#)")
- Have regular check-ins: You can ask things like: "What's working well?" or "What could I be doing better to role model healthy technology use?" Check out these [conversation starters](#) for more tips on how to talk with your teen about media use.

4. Learn about social media

- Stay up to date about different social media platforms and trends. In addition to information about device controls, the [Glossary of Digital Media Platforms](#) covers customizing your feed, advertising policies and notification settings. Together you and your child can decide which social media apps may be worth downloading versus others.
- As you explore technology together, [be open to learning from your kids](#). They may have valuable insights or tips to share!

Article provided by [HealthyChildren.org](#) and the American Academy of Pediatrics Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health ■



- Teacher Nominations - WTAE-TV is launching a Teacher of the Month recognition program for the 2024-25 school year. Each month, from September through May, a teacher will be selected from the many deserving submissions that they receive. The selected Teacher of the Month will receive a \$1000 credit to donorschoose.org, a crowd-sourcing page for classroom project/program funding. In addition, Pittsburgh's Action News 4 will feature that teacher and their story (and possibly a surprise school visit) during a news broadcast, as well as social media. Nomination information can be found at [WTAE Teacher of the Month](#).
- All students in Pennsylvania public schools, including Seneca Valley, have access to **free breakfast for the 2024-25 school year**, regardless of family income. Encourage your student(s) to stop for a full breakfast or various grab-and-go items. If you think you might be eligible for Free and Reduced-Price School Meals, we encourage you to fill out a Free and Reduced-Price School Meals Application as many programs are connected to your child[ren]'s eligibility. Please return it to the Seneca Valley Administration Office with attention to Faye Nelson. Applications can be found at www.svsd.net/FreeandReduced.
- SV Backpack Flyers - Flyers are updated frequently and feature information on student and community events/activities. Learn more at [Backpack Flyers / Backpack Flyers \(svsd.net\)](#).
- Healthy habits - SV's Health Services Department would like to remind everyone to eat well, sleep well, stay hydrated and wash hands frequently. Additionally, they ask that you please stay home or keep your child home when sick, and for 24 hours after fever is gone without medication or 24 hours without vomiting/diarrhea. Thank you!
- Seneca Valley residents 62 years of age or older are invited to apply to become a member of the Seneca Valley School District Gold Card Club. Membership entitles card holders to attend home athletic events, music, dramatic and other school productions. [To apply for a gold card, please visit Gold Card Club \(svsd.net\)](#).
- Reality Tour is an accessible substance prevention program that delivers information to get parent and child on the same page.
 - [Substance Abuse Prevention for Parents - CANDLE, Inc. \(candleinc.org\)](#)

FYI

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the national Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. ■



- [Subscribe to our YouTube Channel!](#)
- [Drive for SV! Driver incentives are now being offered.](#)
- Join the SV Team! Visit www.svsd.net/HumanResources to learn more and apply.
- Visit [Niche](#) to view SV rankings. ■

988

SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

A PLACE FOR THE WHOLE

FAMILY

WE OFFER...

- Sports Programs
- Swim Lessons
- Art Classes
- Community Playground
- Summer Camp
- & MORE!



ROSE E. SCHNEIDER FAMILY YMCA

2001 Ehrman Road, Cranberry Twp., PA 16066

BE WHAT YOU WANT TO BE.



Thiel students come from across the country and abroad and from small towns and big cities. What they have in common is the desire to achieve success in graduate and undergraduate programs, on athletic fields and courts, in clubs and organizations and in their communities as they create a better world through learning, leadership and service.

This is what Thiel is all about -
students having an exceptional college experience at an affordable price.

It's the **TOMCAT WAY**



THIEL[™]
COLLEGE



Where your **JOURNEY** *begins*

CRANBERRY TOWNSHIP WATERPARK

CAMP CRANBERRY

Happy WATERPARK!

A New Year calls for a NEW Waterpark Membership!
Purchase before April 1, 2025 and be automatically entered into a drawing to win VIP Parking at the Waterpark!

SEASONAL HIRING!

golf course
waterpark
camp cranberry

public works
parks
internships

Seasonal Job Fair
Jan. 17, 2025