SWEET HOME SOURCE

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE

SPRING 2026/BUDGET
ISSUE 08

REAL MEDIA, REAL STORIES

Students in HS Media classes learn what it takes to work in the industry from local experts and alumni.

FAMILY SUPPORT

The Sweet Home Family Support Center goes above and beyond to help connect students and their families to comprehensive mental health and wellness resources.

DISTRICT BUDGET

Learn about the 2026-27 proposed District budget and Board of Education candidates.

THE 2026-27 BUDGET ISSUE

Cover photo by student Lovell Sauter of Sauter Studio

EVERY STUDENT, ONE COMMUNITY, READY FOR THE FUTURE.

A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT AND BOARD OF EDUCATION



On behalf of the Board of Education and the entire District, we are pleased to present the proposed 2026-2027 Sweet Home Central School District annual budget to our community. This has been a challenging year in terms of preparing a budget that meets the needs of our students while remaining fiscally responsible to our valued taxpayers. Inflationary pressures and unfunded mandates on the expense side of the budget continue to outpace our revenues. However, we are confident that the budget presented in this newsletter continues to advance our mission of "Every Student, One Community, Ready for the Future."

The proposed 2026-2027 Sweet Home Central School budget totals $108,608,147, representing a 2.87 percent increase from the 2025-2026 school year. This increase is primarily driven by inflationary pressures in the areas of special education, transportation, utilities, health care costs, and building operations. Despite these challenges, the budget fully supports our Strategic Plan; the continued implementation of new curriculum in literacy, math, and science; and the social and emotional needs of our students.

This was not an easy budget season. The process to build our budget begins in January when the Governor releases the first draft of the Executive Budget proposal, which includes state aid projections. In that proposal, we learned that the District would receive only a 1.5 percent increase in Foundation Aid, significantly less than the increase we have received during the past four budget cycles. This equated to $417,000, a modest increase that does not keep pace with inflationary pressures in areas noted above. Combined with the limitations of the New York State tax cap, the District faced a $2.5 million budget deficit heading into next year.

Over the past three months, we have worked together nearly every day to identify savings to close this deficit, as required by state law. First, we are working to control high-cost out-of-district tuition expenditures at the elementary level by opening two new exceptional classrooms in the District. Additionally, we will be hiring our own occupational therapists and physical therapists, as agency fees have risen to a point where it is now fiscally responsible to employ these professionals directly.

Further adjustments in curriculum and instruction, BOCES participation, summer school programming, technology purchases, and operational expenses allowed us to close $1.9 million of the $2.5 million deficit, without significant impacts to student programming.

To close the remaining gap, we examined enrollment numbers across the District and made recommendations for consolidation. Through attrition resulting from retirements, the District will absorb 2.2 faculty positions while consolidating four elementary sections. These important steps mean we will not have to lay off any employee, which was a major goal of the Board of Education and the District administration.

We must credit our district and building administrators for the countless hours they devoted to ensuring that this budget plan minimizes impacts on programming while retaining every employee for the 2026-2027 school year.

Of course, Foundation Aid is just one revenue source at Sweet Home. Our tax levy allows the District to provide the resources necessary to meet our mission and vision. This budget includes a 3.3 percent increase in the tax levy, which brings us to the tax cap limit and enables the District to purchase 10 buses to maintain a reliable and safe transportation fleet. This increase generates approximately $1.8 million in additional revenue, allowing us to close the remaining budget gap.

We encourage all residents to participate in our vote on May 19, 2026, at the Vergils Community Center at the District Office, 1901 Sweet Home Road in Amherst. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. that day. In addition to the budget vote, the community will also elect one Board of Education member, as the term of Peter Bellanti expires at the end of this school year. Please come out and vote on May 19.

As always, we thank the Sweet Home community for its unwavering support of our schools. Our community values education, and we take tremendous pride in working together to ensure our students receive the best possible education in a safe and supportive environment. We often say "the world is in our corridors," and the support we provide to our highly diverse school community is made possible because of you. Together, we make "Every Student, One Community, Ready for the Future" a reality at Sweet Home.

Sincerely,

Superintendent Dr. Michael V. Ginestre,
Board of Education President Peter Bellanti, Vice President Brian Laible, members Danyelle Anthon, Amy Battaglia, Marianne Jasen, Scott Johnson, and Dirk Rabenold.



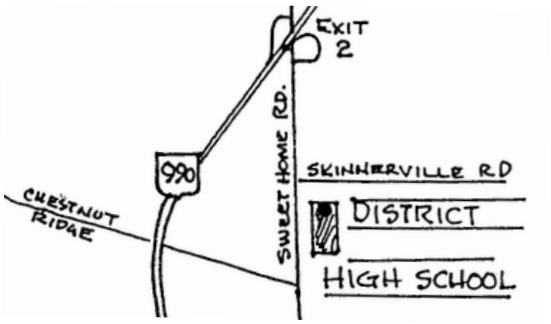
2026-27 BUDGET VOTE

SWEET HOME HIGH SCHOOL, MAY 19, 2026 7AM-9PM

WHEN & WHERE?

Voting on the 2026-27 budget will take place between the hours of 7 AM - 9 PM on Tuesday, May 19, 2026, in the Norman C. Vergils Community Center of Sweet Home High School, 1901 Sweet Home Road in Amherst. The Vergils Center is on the north end of the building located adjacent to the District Offices and on the corner of Sweet Home and Skinnersville Roads.

NORMAN C. VERGILS COMMUNITY CENTER
1901 SWEET HOME ROAD
CORNER OF SWEET HOME & SKINNERSVILLE ROADS
ENTER DOOR #6



WHAT WILL YOU NEED?

TO VOTE, YOU MUST:

- Provide proof of residency
- Be a resident of the district for at least 30 days
- Be at least 18 years old
- Be a U.S. citizen

YOU NEED NOT:

- Be a registered voter
- Be a homeowner

PROOF OF RESIDENCY REQUIRED TO VOTE:

All eligible voters will need to provide proof of residency in order to cast their ballots at the Budget Vote on Tuesday, May 19, 2026. According to Chapter 775 of the Laws of New York, voters must present one form of proof which testifies to their legal address.

- Board of Elections card
- Post-marked mail
- Driver's license
- Rental/lease receipt
- Non-driver Identification card
- Utility bill

ABSENTEE BALLOTS

The Sweet Home Central School District allows for the use of Absentee Ballots at all district votes and elections.

1) Request an absentee ballot application by calling (716) 250-1402 or emailing District Clerk Falon Derion at fderion@sweethomeschools.org. The ballot will be included with the application.

If returning the application and ballot by mail, make your request no later than 4:00 PM on Tuesday, May 12, 2026. If returning the application and ballot in person, make your request on or before May 18, 2026.

2) Completed applications and absentee ballots will not be accepted after 5:00 PM on Tuesday, May 19, 2026, to the District Clerk's Office.

Any questions regarding voting policy should be directed to the District Clerk's Office at 250-1402 between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM.

2026-27 BUDGET VOTE

SWEET HOME HIGH SCHOOL, MAY 19, 2026 7AM-9PM

During its voting meeting on Tuesday, April 21, the Board of Education of the Sweet Home School District approved the adoption of the proposed budget for the 2026-27 school year.

The proposed $108,608,147 budget includes the spending of $1,668,385 for four (4) 70-passenger electric buses, three (3) 70 passenger diesel buses, one (1) 30 passenger gasoline bus and two (2) small passenger gasoline wheelchair accessible buses.. The District has been awarded $800,000 in grant funding to aid in the purchase of the electric buses, bringing the cost of those buses under a similar sized diesel bus.

The total budget will see a 2.87% increase over last year. The proposed budget represents a 3.3% tax levy increase which falls within the New York State imposed tax cap for the District. Because the budget stays within the property tax levy limit, it needs only a simple majority to pass.

The District used 2025 assessed values from the Town of Tonawanda and Amherst Town Clerk to estimate tax rates. While tax rates and tax bills will be officially established in August, estimated homestead tax rates for the 2026-27 District budget are $10.01 per thousand for the Town of Amherst and $47.30 per thousand for the Town of Tonawanda. On a home in Amherst assessed at $250,000, residents can expect a tax bill of $2,477. On a similar home in the Town of Tonawanda, residents can expect a tax bill of $2,483. Basic STAR savings are not included in the figures. Basic STAR savings for the Town of Amherst is $336 and $331 for the Town of Tonawanda. Once again, please note that these are estimates based on current year assessments for the Town of Tonawanda and the Town of Amherst.

In the school board election, Jessica Stephens and Peter Bellanti will seek election to the Board's one open seat. The top vote-getter will be elected to a five-year term expiring on June 30, 2031. The term of Peter Bellanti expires on June 30, 2026.

The Annual District Budget Vote & School Board Election will be held Tuesday, May 19 from 7 AM to 9 PM in the Vergils Community Center of Sweet Home High School, 1901 Sweet Home Road in Amherst.

2026-27 PROPOSED BUDGET

$108,608,147

- **Election of one Board of Education member -** The term of Peter Bellanti expires on June 30, 2026. Two candidates seek election to the one open board seat: Jessica Stephens and Peter Bellanti. The top vote-getter will be elected to a five year term expiring on June 30, 2031.
- **Within the Property Tax Levy Cap** - The proposed budget seeks an increase in the overall tax levy of 3.3%, falling at the State imposed Tax Cap for the District and well below the rate of inflation.
- **New Busses and Capital Outlay Project** - Proposed budget authorizes the spending of $1,668,385 for a total of ten (10) new busses and $100,000 for a capital outlay project to replace starting blocks in the High School pool and various interior doors on the High School Campus.

SH EDUCATION FOUNDATION CHICKEN BBQ

Tuesday, May 19 from 4-7 PM
Sweet Home Vergils
Community Center

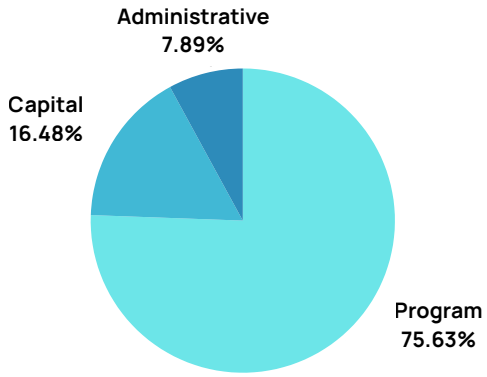
- BW's BBQ chicken dinner with two salads, a roll, & butter
- Tickets are $14
- Take-out only, walk-ups welcome
- All proceeds will support SHEF programs
- SHEF will also sell desserts

SUMMARY OF REVENUES

ACCOUNT NAME	2025-26 BUDGET	2026-27 BUDGET
REAL PROPERTY TAXES	$54,486,662	$56,283,605
APPROPRIATED FUND BALANCE	$2,420,000	$2,420,000
USE OF RETIREMENT CONTRIBUTION RESERVE	$50,000	$50,000
USE OF UNEMPLOYMENT RESERVE	$0	$0
USE OF EMPLOYEE BENFITS LIAB. RESERVE	$220,350	$0
USE OF WORKERS COMP. RESERVE	$75,000	$75,000
USE OF TAX CERTIORARI RESERVE	$0	$0
USE OF DEBT SERVICE RESERVE	$300,000	$0
PAYMENT IN LIEU OF TAXES	$557,000	$750,000
NON-PROP TAXES-SALES TAX	$5,450,000	$5,800,000
COMM ED TUITION & FEES	$75,000	$75,000
TUITION-OTH DIST-FOSTER	$50,000	$50,000
TUITION-OTHER DISTRICTS	$300,000	$200,000
INTEREST	$505,000	$650,000
RENT REAL PROPERTY-BOCES	$520,000	$539,542
STATE AID-BASIC FORMULA	$26,250,000	$27,320,000
STATE AID-BUILDING AID	$3,600,000	$3,600,000
ST AID-EXCESS COST	$6,450,000	$7,019,000
BOCES AID	$1,720,000	$1,800,000
STATE AID-CHAPTER STUDENTS	$50,000	$50,000
TEXTBOOK AID	$225,000	$227,000
COMPUTER HARDWARE AID	$54,000	$52,000
COMPUTER SOFTWARE AID	$65,000	$67,000
LIBRARY AID	$28,000	$30,000
STATE AID-OTHER	$1,200,000	$600,000
Other Receipts	$925,000	$950,000
DISTRICT TOTALS	**$105,576,012**	**$108,608,147**

2026-27 PROPOSED SCHOOL BUDGET

The following budget information has been modified to comply with the Budget Reform Legislation of 1997. Under this legislation, the budget must be presented in three (3) parts: **ADMINISTRATIVE, PROGRAM, AND CAPITAL.**



PROGRAM

2025-26 Budget: $80,293,511
2026-27 Budget: $82,137,674

The instructional component accounts for the instruction and educational support for the district's 3700+ students. Salaries of teachers, guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers, coaches, therapists, teachers aides, computer technicians, and related clerical/support staff are included, as are their fringe benefits. Transportation (including contracted transportation), instructional computers, supplies, and textbooks, special education services, and expenses for summer school are included in this component.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES

Summary of Expenditures	2025-26 Budget	2026-27 Budget
Administrative		
Superintendent & Board of Education	$334,900	$330,660
Business Administration	$710,955	$702,075
Legal Services	$313,000	$300,454
Human Resources	$328,880	$339,583
Education/Community Services	$8,900	$8,900
Central Services & Other	$1,922,339	$2,179,257
Instructional Administration	$2,916,622	$3,055,581
Employee Benefits	$1,560,131	$1,649,757
Total Administrative	**$8,095,727**	**$8,566,267**
Program		
Legal Services	$0	$0
Teaching-Regular Schools	$34,054,004	$33,594,069
Special Education	$11,704,322	$12,105,885
Occupational Education	$1,162,740	$1,336,688
Teaching Special Schools	$202,820	$150,820
School Library & AV	$30,898	$30,898
Computer Instruction Services	$2,018,718	$2,122,858
Attendance & Support Services	$3,117,578	$3,159,811
Extracurricular Activities	$911,040	$951,953
Transportation	$7,290,480	$7,918,460
Employee Benefits	$19,640,911	$20,606,232
Interfund Transfers	$160,000	$160,000
Total Program	**$80,293,511**	**$82,137,674**
Capital		
Operations & Maintenance	$6,353,091	$6,877,225
Refund of Real Property Tax	$85,000	$85,000
Transportation-Bus Purchase	$1,077,000	$1,668,385
Civic Activities	$47,500	$47,500
Employee Benefits	$1,727,204	$1,852,399
Debt Service	$7,796,979	$7,273,698
Interfund Transfers	$100,000	$100,000
Total Capital	**$17,186,774**	**$17,904,207**
TOTAL BUDGET	**$105,576,012**	**$108,608,147**

ADMINISTRATIVE

2025-26 Budget: $8,095,727
2026-27 Budget: $8,566,267

The administrative component of the budget provides for the overall general support and management activities including the Board of Education, superintendent's office, curriculum and staff development, printing and publishing, and supervision and support in each of the six schools. Also included are expenses for legal services, liability and property insurance, and salaries and benefits for the administrative staff.

CAPITAL

2025-26 Budget: $17,186,774
2026-27 Budget: $17,904,207

Includes buildings and grounds salaries, equipment, vehicles, repairs, rentals, contracts, and supplies for all the custodial, grounds, and maintenance of all district buildings. Includes judgments and claims and refund of prior year property taxes due to reassessments and/or town clerical errors. Includes debt service principal and interest and interfund transfers for existing capital projects. Includes all fringe benefits for above employees.

TAX BILLS WITH EQUALIZATION RATES

Based on Average Assessed Value Using 2025-26 Assessed Values for the Town of Tonawanda and the Town of Amherst.

The Sweet Home School District and its residents benefit from a strong commercial and residential tax base. Sweet Home homeowners realize further tax reductions through a lower tax rate called a homestead tax rate. Sweet Home's application of this concept, known as homesteading, serves as the model for successful tax differentiation programs across the state. These factors, combined with strong fiscal management by the Board of Education, allow the district to provide a first rate education for one of the lowest costs in Western New York. The impact on an average home is displayed below.

School Tax on an Average Assessed Value Home				
	Amherst		Tonawanda	
	2025-26	2026-27	2025-26	2026-27
Equalization Rate	99.0%	99.0%	21.0%	21.0%
Assessed Value	$247,500	$247,500	$52,500	$52,500
Tax Rate	$9.69	$10.01	$45.79	$47.30
Calculated Tax Bill	$2,398	$2,477	$2,404	$2,483
Estimated Increase		$79		$79

Basic STAR savings for the Town of Amherst is $336 and $331 for the Town of Tonawanda.
Equalization rates used for this application: Town of Amherst is 99% and 21% for the Town of Tonawanda.

PROPERTY TAX CAP - HOW IS IT FIGURED?

Chapter 97 of the Laws of 2011 (Part A - Property Tax Cap) established a tax levy limit ("property tax cap") that affects all local governments, most school districts in New York State, except New York City, and a host of other independent taxing entities such as library, fire, and water districts.

Under this law, the growth in the property tax levy begins at the lesser of 2% or the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The CPI for this year is 2.63%. However, this rate can be increased by several local factors including:

- Local tax base growth factor
- Pension costs above a 2% increase
- Court orders/judgments above 5% of levy in prior year
- Capital expenditures related to construction or local expenses
- Changes in payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT)

The 2026-27 Sweet Home Tax Cap after consideration of all local factors is $56,283,605 or a 3.3% increase from 2025-26.

The proposed tax levy for the 2026-27 budget of $56,283,605 falls within the state imposed property tax cap of 3.3% for Sweet Home Central School District requiring only a simple majority of voters to pass. The 2026-27 tax levy increase in the proposed budget is 3.3%.

2026-27 DISTRICT BUDGET VOTE

SWEET HOME HIGH SCHOOL, MAY 19, 2026 7AM-9PM

MEET THE CANDIDATES

FOR THE SWEET HOME BOARD OF EDUCATION



JESSICA STEPHENS

I'm Jessica Stephens and I'm running for the Sweet Home Board of Education. I believe that music and art are important pieces of our children's education, and that those programs should never be cut. I also believe that our teachers should be heard. I would like better transparency and a healthy working relationship between administration, staff, and parents in order to give our children the tools they need to succeed.

I was educated in public school, and attended the University at Buffalo for Environmental Geography/Chemistry. I worked as a technical writer/environmental scientist before starting a family with my husband. Together we have two children in the Sweet Home School District, including a daughter in Middle School, and a daughter in High School.

I have been volunteering for our district in various ways since my youngest was in preschool. I have served in various board positions in the district's PTO/PTSAs. During those terms I've helped to run many school events. I brought Science Night and Multicultural Night to Willow Ridge Elementary. In 2021, I was awarded the Leon C. (Sid) Oberacker Award, presented annually for "Outstanding Voluntary Service to School and Community," and was a finalist for the WNY InfoTech Good Neighbor Award. I served on a sub-committee for the district's 2020-2021 Re-Opening Plan, and on the June 2021 Re-Opening Committee as a parent representative. I served on the Willow Ridge Building Leadership Team (BLT), as well as the Remote Academy BLT (during remote learning). I also served as a board member on the Sweet Home Education Foundation (SHEF).

In 2021 I officially started my own business, giving part time work to community members, and offering donations for every local non-profit that reaches out.

I believe we should strive to learn better, do better, and be better.

PETER BELLANTI



My name is Peter Bellanti, and it is with much enthusiasm that I have declared my interest in running for a second term on the Sweet Home Board of Education. I have lived in the Sweet Home School District for most of my life. I grew up in the Maplemere neighborhood and when my wife, Erin, and I decided to start our family, we settled in the Sweet Home District. We are the proud parents of two extraordinary children, Frankie (2025 graduate) and Paige (9th grade). As a resident of the district, a former student, a current parent, and a high school special education teacher at Erie 1 BOCES, I am confident that I can provide the background and educational experience to be a contributing and effective decision maker on behalf of our residents and students at Sweet Home.

I have worked as a special education teacher for 21 years. During that time, I have served on many committees including a search committee for interviewing and hiring members of the District Administration, working with local lawmakers to establish funding and policies for districts, developing and implementing training courses for teachers as Director of the WNY Teacher Center, and establishing both district and building budgets and policies.

Outside of my educational career I have previously served as a youth hockey coach with Amherst Youth Hockey and a youth baseball coach with Mel Ott Little League. I have also previously served as a Board Member acting as Board Secretary and Director of Travel Baseball for Mel Ott Little League.

I am confident that I can continue to work together with the other members of the Board of Education to create and maintain a positive and lasting impact on the students and the district. I am fully committed to helping our students reach their full potential educationally, emotionally, and physically.

REAL MEDIA, REAL STORIES

STUDENTS IN HS MEDIA CLASSES LEARN HOW TO NAVIGATE THE CURRENT MEDIA LANDSCAPE AND WHAT IT TAKES TO WORK IN THE INDUSTRY

When it comes to media consumption, we certainly live in a world that changes often. Students in Lisa LaBrake and Brian Koziol's Media classes at Sweet Home High School are learning from the best about how to verify what's real, advocate for their potential professions, and what it takes to be active in the industry.

Throughout the year, our High School Media classes have welcomed a variety of guest speakers. During each visit, students listen closely, ask questions, and take notes. What they have been learning in class is often echoed by the media professionals they are learning from. In most cases, those guests are Sweet Home alums as well. The real life connection helps our students see a path from our halls to a career.

They also had the unique opportunity to speak to state leadership about the media profession. Earlier this year, Sweet Home High School welcomed the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) President Melinda Person and her media team, along with WGRZ - Channel 2, Buffalo and Spectrum News 1 Buffalo.

This opportunity started with an invitation from our Media teachers, who saw a chance for our students to take the lead discussing media literacy, broadcasting, AI, and planning for their futures.

It was a great chance to highlight our Media Program to state officials and bring together the real-world lessons our Media students have experienced throughout the school year.







GUEST SPEAKERS THIS YEAR INCLUDE...

Lindsey Taylor
Founder, Beau Fleuve

Melissa Holmes
Anchor/Reporter, WGRZ-TV, Channel 2

Michael Reid
Director of Communications
for Erie Co Executive Mark Poloncarz

Nick DelNuovo
Assistant Director, Personal Touch

Shannon Ross
Asst. News Director, WKBW-TV,
Channel 7

Christine Lyle
Sweet Home Coordinator of PR



CAPITAL PROJECT USER GROUPS SHAPE DETAILS OF UPCOMING CONSTRUCTION

After a successful vote this past December, our district is making steady progress on the Capital Improvement Project, with an early focus on the classroom addition at Maplemere Elementary School.

With help from the valuable input of our user groups comprised of staff, administrators, Board of Education members, and our architectural partners, the interior footprint has been finalized. Next steps will focus on interior design, furnishings, and finalizing the building's exterior.

Work is also advancing on the district's athletic fields, with the Sweet Home Athletic Council helping guide design and layout decisions.

Construction at Maplemere is expected to begin in April 2027 and athletic fields to follow in June 2027. We appreciate our community's ongoing support and look forward to sharing more updates soon.

EAGLE SCOUT ORGANIZES FOOD DRIVE TO BENEFIT SHEF

As an Eagle Scout project, Sweet Home High School student Alex Burmeier organized a "Soup-er Bowl" food drive to benefit the Sweet Home Education Foundation, Inc. Alex designed flyers and solicited support from many associated groups to get the word out.

Alex then led his Scout group in a group effort to organize the many items donated. Thank you, Alex, for working so hard to benefit Panther families!



DISTRICT MUSIC FESTIVAL FEATURES ORCHESTRA STUDENTS



This year's annual Music Festival, hosted at the University of Buffalo's Center for the Arts, featured Sweet Home orchestra students from grades 5-12. The Festival celebrates the hard work of nearly 200 student musicians, representing a wide range of grade levels and musical abilities. The afternoon of music showcases the talent, dedication, creativity, and collaborative spirit of our students.

We are grateful to our outstanding music educators, whose expertise and dedication make events like the Music Festival possible: Cory Morrow, District Music Coordinator; Jessica Bridon; Stephen Budnack; Kelly Gravel; Kimberly Harrison; Ryan Kaminski; James Marone; Joseph Quader; Jason Scheer; Melissa Udy; Daniel White; Jackie Wzientek; and Deborah Zehler.





Photo by student Lovell Sauter of Sauter Studio





WINTER SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS

CONGRATS TO ALL OUR STUDENT-ATHLETES AND COACHES FOR THEIR HARD WORK THIS WINTER SEASON

Girls Basketball:

- Finished the season 7-14. The team was led by Samya Walker who averaged 18 points per game. Elise McDuffie averaged nearly 10 points per game and 11 rebounds per game.

Boys Basketball:

- ECIC II Champions. Led by Player of the Year, Shaun McGrath. McGrath averaged 18 points per game.

Boys' Swimming:

- The team was led by Senior Finn Crowther who broke the Sweet Home school record in the 50-meter freestyle time at the Section VI Championship. Finn qualified for the NYSPHSAA State Championships.

Boys' Indoor Track & Field:

- The 4x200-meter relay team of Alex Jamison, Jayden Leonard, Fritz Theodore, and Moe Karzoun qualified for the NYSPHSAA State Championships in Staten Island.

Girls' Indoor Track & Field:

- Ellana Hall placed 20th at the NYSPHSAA State Championships in the field event of pole vault.

Boys' Wrestling:

- The team finished 2nd overall at Section VI Division I championships. Panthers had seven athletes place in the top six at Section Championships.
- Abduali Mukumov - 8th place finish at the NYSPHSAA Wrestling State Championships.

Girls' Wrestling:

- Captain of the team Sofia Guadagna qualified for the NYS Girls' Freestyle State Tournament. Guadagna achieved her 100-career win during the Section VI Championships hosted at Sweet Home.

Cheerleading:

- Lana Stinson was named team MVP. Sarai McDuffie received the Coach's Award.
- ECIC All-Stars consisted of Adriana Webb and Tea Hammer.
- The team won first place at the Quaker Cheer Challenge.

Boys' Ice Hockey:

- Finished the season 5-13-1.
- Sweet Home's leading point scorer was Junior Guiseppe Surdi with 17 points.
- Anchored by Junior goalie Max Battel.

WINTER SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS

CONGRATS TO ALL OUR STUDENT-ATHLETES AND COACHES FOR THEIR HARD WORK THIS WINTER SEASON

Girls Ice Hockey:

- CASH won the Regional Championship game over Webster.
- The girls were Section VI Champions after defeating LIDA.
- Team led by Haylie Yourston, Alexandria Reed and Rafaela Ventura.

Unified Bowling:

- 18 student-athletes participated in Unified Bowling.
- Placed 3rd in Section VI tournament. Roman Escalera won the “Heart of a Champion" award.

Boys’ Bowling:

- The team was led by Dylan Lomas with a 167 average and Justin McNett who had a 154 average.

Girls Bowling:

- The team finished the season with a perfect 12-0 record. Led by Gianna Papero who earned a 203 average ranking her as one of the top bowlers in Section VI. Papero had a high series of 667.
- Abbey Rellinger had a 184 average (630 high series), Jamie Mitsopoulos with a 179 average (627 high series) and Erika Mitsopoulos with a 176 average (607 high series).

Photo by student Lovell Sauter of Sauter Studio



CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR’S SCHOLAR ATHLETES

At the end of each sports season, the NYS Public High School Athletic Association honors those teams and individuals that excel in the classroom. Those student-athletes, teams, and schools work very hard throughout the year and deserve to be recognized for their academic success. Our scholar athletes have averaged 90 or above in their prior 6 semesters. We are incredibly proud of the students' academic and athletic accomplishments from the Fall 2025 season.

WNY SCHOLAR ATHLETES

Kendall Gaume - Volleyball
Jenna Freda - Cheerleading

WNY SCHOLAR ATHLETE HONORABLE MENTIONS

Dylan Hariaczyi - Boys Soccer
Rasool Al Ani - Boys Volleyball
Cayla Mallory - Cheerleading
Te'a Hammer - Cheerleading
Morgan Brennan - Cheerleading
Gabriella Mancino - Field Hockey
Abrianna Renshaw - Field Hockey
Haylie Yourston - Field Hockey
Isabella Cacheiro - Field Hockey
Landon Paul - Boys Golf
Rylee Goodwin - Girls Soccer
Avery Priamo - Girls Soccer
Jordan Williams - Girls Soccer
Sofia Guadagna - Girls Soccer
Massarra Faek - Girls Swimming
Georgia Zorich - Girls Swimming
Lauren Silverberg - Girls Swimming
Vivian Veneziano - Girls Tennis
Brinlee Greco - Girls Volleyball

CELEBRATING OUTSTANDING TEACHERS

OUR TALENTED EDUCATORS CONTINUE TO REACH NEW MILESTONES AND ELEVATE THEIR PROFESSIONS



Congratulations...

BACZKIEWICZ AWARDED NYS OUTSTANDING EDUCATOR AWARD

Alan Baczkiewicz (pictured above with our Board of Education and Superintendent Ginestre), Grade 6 Science teacher, was named this year's Outstanding Educator Award by the Science Teachers Association of New York State. He is also a New York State Master Teacher.

IZYDORCZAK NAMED NEW YORK STATE MASTER TEACHER

Mark Izydorczak, High School Math teacher, has been selected for the prestigious New York State Master Teacher Program (NYSMTP) and will join the Western NY cohort based at SUNY Buffalo State.

DR. ENGLISH RECEIVES AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

Dr. Sarah English, High School Chemistry teacher, was selected as the recipient of the 2026 Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting (MARM) Chemical Education Region Award for Excellence in High School Teaching. In addition to this recognition, Dr. English will receive a $1500 Award which she will be donating to the Sweet Home Chemistry Club.

COACH WOODS NAMED COACH OF THE YEAR

Brandon Woods, Boys Basketball coach and Middle School Counselor, was named 2026 Erie County Interscholastic Conference (ECIC) Coach of the Year for Boys Basketball.

BAVISOTTO EARNS INSPIRATIONAL TEACHER AWARD

Dean Bavisotto, High School English teacher, is the 2026 recipient of the Buffalo State English Education Inspirational Teacher Award. This award recognizes a middle or high school English teacher who serves as an inspiration to students in our program. Mr. Bavisotto was nominated by colleague Carolyn Freeman.

SUPPORT BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

THE SWEET HOME FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER CONNECTS STUDENTS AND FAMILIES TO COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORTS

At Sweet Home, supporting students means supporting the whole family. That is where the Family Support Center plays a vital role. While school counselors and social workers do the critical work to focus on students' needs primarily during the school day, the Family Support Center extends that support beyond the classroom by serving as a bridge between families and community-based resources.

The Center helps families navigate challenges so students can thrive. Whether facing academic concerns, mental health needs, or barriers such as housing, food access, or healthcare, staff connect families with trusted outside agencies and providers who can offer specialized support. This connector role is what sets the Center apart—ensuring services are not only available, but accessible and coordinated.

The team behind this work is central to its success. Coordinator Anne Nowak leads the effort, continuing to shape a program that supports the whole child and family. Kim Panepinto provides essential administrative support, helping ensure families have a smooth and welcoming experience, especially during central registration. Nagham ArRawi plays a key role in supporting families with language and cultural barriers, ensuring all families have equitable access to services and feel connected to the school community. Together, the team creates a welcoming, responsive environment for every family they serve.

That welcoming experience begins from the very first interaction. As the home of central registration, the Family Support Center is often the first stop for new families, making it a natural entry point to build relationships and ensure families feel supported from day one.

This year, Coordinator Anne Nowak was recognized with the School Based Professional Impact and Leadership Award at the SMART Youth Mental Health Summit—an acknowledgment of her leadership and the Center's impact. Under her guidance, the program has also inspired other districts to develop similar supports and departments.

In every sense, the Family Support Center is a hub of connection, linking families to resources, schools to community partners, and students to the support systems they need to succeed. Learn more about their efforts on our website. You can also support their mission through donations or volunteer work.



From L to R: Anne Nowak, Nagham ArRawi, Kim Panepinto

"I am incredibly grateful for the amazing people in the Family Support Center. They didn't just provide a service, they genuinely cared and helped me navigate the hardest parts of my year. I used to think asking for help was a sign of weakness. Counseling at the Family Support Center taught me that taking care of my mind is just as important as taking care of my body."

Anonymous student,
Grade 10

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER:



HERITAGE HEIGHTS STUDENTS SELL BRACELETS TO SUPPORT PTA

Heritage Heights fifth grade students recently had the opportunity to showcase their creativity and entrepreneurial spirit at the Sweet Home Dollars for Scholars craft show. Thanks to the organization's generous donation of a vendor table, students proudly displayed and sold their handmade bracelets, gaining real-world experience in planning, pricing, and customer interaction.

Led by Heritage Heights' PTA President Krista Dietrich, the students raised approximately $250 through bracelet sales. Beyond the funds generated to support their end-of-year celebrations, the experience provided a meaningful and fun learning opportunity that left a lasting impression. With such a positive outcome, this initiative may become a new and exciting tradition for future fifth grade classes.

MARCH MADNESS IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Our Middle School PE teachers Jadon Wegrzyn and Meadow Wittman brought some excitement and energy to our building with a March Madness mini-hoops bracket. Students competed by homeroom, and the competition was FIERCE! It all culminated in a championship tournament, with the following results:

6th grade: Williams Homeroom won over Hattersley
7th grade: Stephans/Miller Homeroom won over Ehman
8th grade: Engl Homeroom won over Corcoran

Congrats to our winners and thank you to our teachers for making this such a fun event!



STUDENT & STAFF VOICE FEATURED AT MENTAL HEALTH SUMMER ACADEMY



The 4th Annual School Mental Health Summer Academy, hosted by the Mental Health Association in New York State in Albany, brought together more than 1,000 participants from across the state to focus on Mental Health Equity and Resilience in Schools. Dr. Keli Koran Luchey, Sweet Home High School Crisis Counselor and MHANYS Board Member, contributed her expertise as a panelist, leading discussions on youth vaping and substance use.

Senior Summer Mack, Vice President of our Student Government, served as a student panelist, sharing valuable insights during a session centered on youth perspectives and mental health. Summer has been involved in many different advocacy and leadership events this (and prior) years, including volunteering at a recent Sweet Home professional development session (pictured), working alongside our staff to discuss Portrait of a Graduate and advocate for her peers.

We are proud of Dr. Luchey and Summer for their continued advocacy around these critical issues that impact our students each day, both in and out of the classroom. Their commitment to raising awareness, sharing expertise, and supporting student well-being reflects the kind of leadership and compassion that makes a meaningful difference in our school communities.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL MUSICALS HIGHLIGHT TALENT ON AND OFF THE STAGE

The Sweet Home tradition of excellent musical productions continued this year at our Middle School with 'High School Musical, Jr.' and at our High School with 'The Spongebob Musical'.

Primary cast, crew, & pit orchestra members for 'The Spongebob Musical':

Abbey Canfield, Georgia Zorich, Makena Leshinskie, Adeline Martinez, Grace Lysek, Milan Hill, Anastasia Grover, Hunter Bluff, Morgan Brand, Bella Beal, Isabella Rainey, Natalie Annesi, Brianna Brown, Ivy Saeran, Norah Afolabi, Brooke Bluff, Jaxon Leshinskie, Amanda Afolabi, Carson Ziccardi, Joey Leshinskie, Penelope Perez, Charlotte Kern-Potter, Joseph Miceli, Peyton Webster, Damien McGilveary, Kaitlyn Biddlecombe, Sarah Aseri, Delanie Fleming, Kalel Collymore, Savannah Near, Drew McNelis, Katie Koons, Sydni Willams, Essence Robinson, Landon Reed, Tommy Shadle, Genevieve Banas, Lovell Sauter, Trinity Mann, Elijah Zeigler, Madison Miller, Zamyah Adams, Justice Hoskins, Aarohi Khanal, Alex Theodore, Amber Dole, Bella Scime, Emily Keller, Fritz Theodore, Haylee Stevens, Jamie Mitsopoulos, Jordan Worley, Lilly Adams, Naliaka Masika, Savannah Farr, Ujjval Dixit, Andrew Arrasjid, Lauren Silverberg, Caleb Riley, Leo Grupp, Cora Stephens, Luis Montalvo, Delaney O'Brocta, Matthew Arrasjid, Ezra Elliott, Matthew Samulski, Hanna Suleiman, Tessa LoBue, Jacob Olewnik, Xavier Hogue, Jonathan Henel, Yug Patel, Kaelyn Ezak, Isabella Collado, Keagan Brookshire, McKenzie Hilliard.

Primary cast, crew, & pit orchestra members for 'High School Musical, Jr.':

Sophie Vaughan, Caleb Melson, Mia Rogers, Teddy Mason, Tristan Hale, Molly Russ, Amelia Annesi, Legend Chapman, Elena Schnell, Bryce Ginestre, Lili Kern-Potter, Giovanni Nichols, Annabel Piwtorak, Evan Ferguson, David Foster III, Zoe Korniczky, Melanie Clark, Meara Manhardt, Olivia Imerese, & Brandt Martin.

Special thanks to High School Director/Co-Choreographer Bobby Cooke & Producer/ Music Director Kimberly Harrison as well as Middle School Co-Producers Sarah Pechulis & Jacquie Stablewski, Director Sarah Pechulis, Music Director Ryan Kaminski, Choreographer Jacquie Stablewski, Costume and Set Designer Tabitha Darrah, Stage Crew Director Kelly Gravel, Technical Directors Sami Grawe & Diana Hyland.



















CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING ALL-COUNTY MUSICIANS

SENIOR HIGH ALL COUNTY

Matthew Arrasjid - Clarinet, Caleb Riley - Trumpet, Keagan Brookshire - Tuba, Delaney O'Brocta - Violin, Kaitlyn Biddlecombe - Chorus, Sarah Aseri - Chorus, Masarra Faek - Chorus, Delanie Fleming - Chorus, Adeline Martinez - Chorus, Tali Perry - Chorus

JUNIOR HIGH ALL COUNTY

Thomas Hall - Bari Sax, Thomas Hall - Alto Sax, Ralphael Manning - Violin, Ethan Kornacki - Double Bass, Piper Hein - Viola, Matthew Rickert - Bb Clarinet, Eric Riley - Bb Clarinet, Lila Steinberg - Trombone, Endiyah Fairclough - Chorus, Anisa Maxwell - Chorus, Hayden Fromm - Chorus, Addison Dziamski - Chorus, Anna Sung - Chorus, Jayla Worthy - Chorus, Olivia Immerese - Chorus, Emma Commeau - Chorus, Siena Galante - Chorus, Brandt Martin - Chorus, Molly Russ - Chorus, Caroline McMillan - Chorus, Kelsie Brand - Chorus, Ryder Lane - Chorus, Anna Ando - Chorus, Alex Yousey - Chorus, K'Jon Davis - Chorus, Carson Ziccardi - Chorus, James Biddlecombe - Chorus, Greyson Imerese - Chorus, Morgan Brand - Chorus, Penelope Perez - Chorus, Abbey Canfield - Chorus, Madison Miller - Chorus, Lily Huggins - Chorus

ELEMENTARY ALL COUNTY

Melanie Clark - Chorus, Devyn McCarly - Chorus, Aurora Murrett - Chorus, Kane Doyle - Chorus, Lacey MacVittie - Chorus, Emily Rellinger - Chorus, Angie Kuss - Chorus, Owen Guagliano - Chorus, Charlotte Tawse - Chorus, Mackenzie Barbeau - Chorus, Mia Broomfield - Chorus, Cecelia Whetstone - Chorus, Brayden Dehn - Chorus, Reagan Hein - Chorus, Juliette Kloch - Chorus, Madelyn MacVittie - Chorus, Fiona Wilkinson - Chorus

Sweet Home Central School District
1901 Sweet Home Road
Amherst, NY 14228

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
BUFFALO, NY
PERMIT NO. 4095

#WEARESWEETHOME

Stay connected!

sweethomeschools.org

2026-2027 DISTRICT BUDGET VOTE
SWEET HOME HIGH SCHOOL
MAY 19, 2026 7AM-9PM

DISTRICT PHONE NUMBERS

District Office	(716) 250-1400
Central Registration	(716) 250-1600
Family Support Center	(716) 250-1228
Transportation	(716) 250-1434
Athletic Director	(716) 250-1207
High School	(716) 250-1203
Middle School	(716) 250-1452
Glendale Elementary	(716) 250-1500
Heritage Heights Elementary	(716) 250-1525
Maplemere Elementary	(716) 250-1550
Willow Ridge Elementary	(716) 250-1575

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Peter Bellanti, President
Brian Laible, Vice President
Danyelle Anthon
Amy Battaglia
Marianne Jasen
Scott Johnson
Dirk Rabenold
Jaevon Coleman, ex officio student member

Dr. Michael V. Ginestre, Superintendent of Schools
Donald Feldmann, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Plant Services
Dr. Toyia Wilson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction

SNAP! MOBILE
SWEET HOME PANTHERS ATHLETICS
Download on the App Store
ANDROID APP ON Google play