



RAIDER PRIDE

A State and National Award-Winning Publication

FEBRUARY 2025



PAINTING WITH A PURPOSE

Seneca Valley students promote mental health through art

Seneca Valley Hope Squad members, grades 7-12, recently created dynamic, uplifting messages through their Positive Painting Project event held in the senior high library.

The Positive Painting Project is a community based non-profit organization that uses visual art to promote positive mental health and suicide prevention.

Todd and Alisa Whysong founded the organization in loving memory of their daughter, Katie Whysong, a talented artist who battled depression and anxiety and tragically lost her life to suicide. Katie was a strong advocate for mental health awareness and inspired the organization's mission: to use visual art to spread positive and encouraging messages in schools and communities.

The goal of the event was to create opportunities for individuals to express their thoughts and emotions through art, raise awareness about mental health, and help break the stigma surrounding mental illness and suicide.

Nearly 150 Hope Squad members came together to create their own unique works of art. Each brushstroke brought to life one-of-a-kind paintings featuring pre-printed messages promoting mental health awareness, positivity and support. Completed paintings were displayed in the hallways, spreading hope and

encouragement throughout the schools on Seneca Valley's secondary campus.

Funding for this event was generously provided by a donation from the Rotary Club of Zelenople.

About Hope Squad

Hope Squad is a peer-to-peer suicide prevention program aimed at reducing youth suicide through education, training and peer intervention. Hope Squad members are nominated by their peers as being easy to talk to, great listeners and naturally supportive of struggling students who are in need of a friend. This important suicide prevention program trains and mentors Hope Squad members to perform intentional outreach with fellow students. Hope Squad student members do not provide counseling or therapy, they instead serve as a connection to the help that is needed.

In its third year at Seneca Valley, nearly 100 students (grades 9-12) have been selected to be on the Hope Squad for the 2024-25 school year. In addition, the



Hope Squad expanded to grades 7-8 at Ryan Gloyer Middle School (RGMS) in the spring of 2024, which has about 40 members. To learn more about Hope Squad, visit our [website](#). ■

THERE'S STILL TIME TO CATCH THE ALL-SCHOOL MUSICAL!

Tonight, "The SpongeBob Musical," takes the stage for an exciting night of high-energy fun! Don't miss your chance to be a part of the sea sensation at the Seneca Valley Intermediate High School Auditorium. Visit the website for more information, <https://www.showclix.com/event/svspongebobmusical>. Don't forget that this year will also feature a Sensory-Friendly Spectacular on the March 1 matinee! ■

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DATES TO REMEMBER

- March 3 School Board Meeting, Work Session, SHS Auditorium, 7 p.m.
- March 10 School Board Meeting, Regular Session, IHS Auditorium, 7 p.m.
- March 21 School Makeup Day #2, No School in Session
- March 24 Act-80 Day, No School for Students

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

IT'S AN HONOR!

Click here to view the 2024-25 Second Nine Weeks Honor Rolls for grades 7-12.



PAINTING WITH A PURPOSE *continued*

Seneca Valley students promote mental health through art



SENECA VALLEY PRESENTS “REACHING NEW HEIGHTS”

Join us as we celebrate past accomplishments and set our sights on “Reaching New Heights” in the months ahead.

The Seneca Valley 2024 Annual Report is now available, highlighting the dedication, growth and collaboration that make SV a thriving community. More than just numbers, this report tells the story of our collective success and the impact we’ve made over the past year.

Your support has been instrumental in our journey, and we’re excited to share these achievements with you. [Click here to explore the 2024 Annual Report!](#)



IN THEIR WORDS

TOP FAN
Jodi Thompson Fulmer
We had so much fun! Thank you for doing this! We love Best Buddies and look forward to doing this again next year.

Rae Bosnyak
Outstanding! Thank you for caring and serving others.

Reid Moon
Congratulations to this crew for continuing a proud tradition of making wonderful music! Your community is so proud of each of you!

Renee Kuneman Mirilovich
Congratulations, Class of 2024! Behind you, all your memories. Before you, all your dreams. Around you, all who love you.

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MAKING A MEANINGFUL IMPACT

MAKING A MEANINGFUL IMPACT

“Thank you for everything you do!”

You make a difference in many lives, and your impact really creates a lasting impression.”

– Alex Karika SV '12

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SPOTLIGHT ON THE STARS

Lights, applause and proud moments! Last month, Ryan Gloyer Middle School (RGMS) teacher Ms. Halley Alexander rolled out the red carpet to celebrate her ELA and math students with a special awards ceremony for their growth in their STAR testing scores. Students greatly enjoyed cheering on their peers and giving celebratory acceptance speeches. Special thanks to Ms. Alexander and RGMS paraprofessional Mr. Elliott Pater for creating such a positive and motivating experience! ■



HAPPY LUNAR NEW YEAR

This month, kindergarteners at Haine Elementary School embarked on an exciting exploration of the Lunar New Year, celebrating the Year of the Snake! Students combined coding and teamwork using Bee Bots, programming their bots to travel across a colorful mat filled with Lunar New Year symbols. With each spot, they named the symbols and explored their cultural significance – making learning both interactive and impactful! ■



HELLO, こんにちは!

Second grade students at Rowan Elementary School recently welcomed special visitors from the Japan-America Society of Pennsylvania (JASP) to share insights about Japanese life, customs and education. The Japan in the Schools (JIS) program introduces students to the rich culture and traditions of Japan, providing a unique global learning experience. Through the program, Ms. Katsuko Shellhammer, JASP Educational Outreach Coordinator, and her team of volunteers visited classes to present an engaging slideshow about elementary schools in Japan. Students also had the opportunity to compare their own school experiences with the children of Japan.

To conclude the visit, Ms. Shellhammer guided students in making origami hearts which were included in their Valentine's cards to someone special.



Second grade teacher Ms. Angela Cardillo said, "It was a wonderful opportunity for students to connect with another culture in a hands-on, meaningful way!" ■



100 DAYS, ALL THE WAYS!

This month marked the 100th day of school and Seneca Valley elementary students celebrated with creative projects and exciting activities!

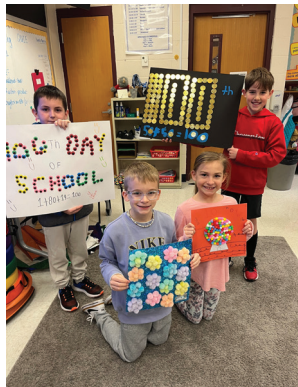
The day's fun included transforming the number 100 into new creations, stacking 100 cups, crafting crowns and making equation posters! Everyone had a blast!

Many students recognized the milestone by dressing up as 100-year-olds. Others rocked their best "100 Days" shirts. One hundred never looked so good!

Continued on page 6



100 DAYS, ALL THE WAYS! *continued*



2025-2026 KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION



**We are pleased to welcome incoming kindergarten students
as they prepare for the 2025-26 school year!**

Kindergarten at SV is an engaging, half-day program with transportation that is provided one way. In order to enroll, **children must be five (5) years old on or before September 1 of the enrollment year.**

**Online registration is now open.
To register, visit
www.svsd.net/25-26KRegistration**

Registration at this time is intended to collect pertinent preliminary information, including parent/guardian contact and student records.

Documents that are REQUIRED for registration are:

- Two documents as proof of residency (lease/mortgage documents, utility bill, etc.)
- Child's birth certificate, passport, baptismal certificate or other certified birth record
- Immunization records to date



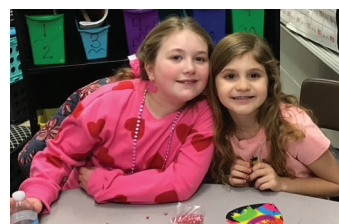
SWEET CELEBRATIONS

Seneca Valley students always make our hearts smile!

In celebration of Valentine's Day, many classrooms districtwide brought in adorable valentine's boxes and exchanged cards during classroom parties. Ehrman Crest Middle School students have been refining their cardboard cutting skills in CIRC (Creativity, Innovation & Research) specials and enjoyed trying out new techniques on their Valentine's Day boxes!

At Ehrman Crest Elementary School, students enjoyed spreading kindness and building connections with the Hart Cart, a gift made possible by the Hart family mini-grant through the Seneca Valley Foundation. Students build upon their language and social skills, all while spreading heartfelt kindness and sharing a smile!

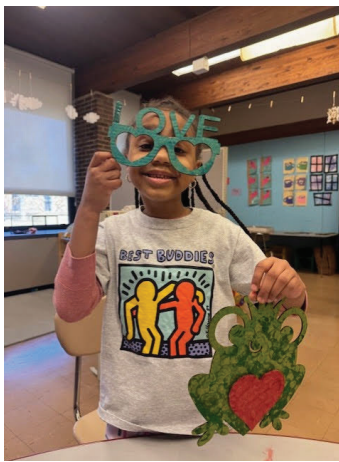
View the gallery of Valentine's Day photos at [Valentine's Day Fun! - Seneca Valley School District.](#)



VALENTINE'S DAY WITH BEST BUDDIES

Haine's Best Buddies chapter had a sweet Valentine's Day celebration! Elementary students enjoyed painting and crafting during their Integrated Special, small-setting time for building classroom skills! The chapter organized a jeans day and fudge fundraiser, allowing staff to donate in exchange for wearing jeans and enjoying fudge delivered to their classrooms by Best Buddies students.

Thanks to the incredible support from staff, the event raised \$400, which will support Haine's Best Buddies chapter. The delicious treats were from Spectrum Fudge, a family-run business whose son has Autism Spectrum Disorder. ■



IT'S HOW WE ROLL

Students at Ehrman Crest Elementary and Middle School recently welcomed the SV Unified Bocce Team to demonstrate the sport, share and celebrate what makes us unique, and encourage inclusion! Physical education classes colored paper chains that demonstrated peer connectedness and also enjoyed learning the fun of bocce.

Special thanks to the SV Unified Bocce Team and Ehrman Crest Physical Education teachers for collaborating on this special activity! ■



WIRED FOR SUCCESS

Ben Feath, a seventh grader at Ryan Gloyer Middle School, competed with his robotics team, Band of Steel, in the FIRST LEGO League's (FLL) Western Pennsylvania Championships. Band of Steel not only claimed the prestigious Grand Champion award but also secured first place in robot design, showcasing their exceptional skills and teamwork.



Pictured: Ben Feath and Mrs. Allen-Boyle at the 2022 FLL Western Pennsylvania Championships

The FLL is a global science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) program that focuses on robotics, coding, research building and core values.

Mr. Feath was wired for success in robotics, thanks to his second-grade teacher, Mrs. Beth Allen-Boyle, who introduced him to robotics, nurtured his interest, and ultimately connected him with the coaches who formed his first FLL Team (the Nifty Ninjas) and now Band of Steel.

"My favorite part of robotics is being able to design something to solve a problem," said Mr. Feath. "It's fun to identify and create solutions that work."

Mr. Feath's team has taken on the mission of educating children around the world about the importance of healthy oceans. As part of this year's innovation project, themed "Submerged," the team focused on ocean conservation and has already reached over



3,000 children globally in the United States, India, and Korea through in-person presentations, their website and a YouTube video.

Following their first-place finish at the FLL Western Pennsylvania Championships, Band of Steel prepared for the state finals that took place on February 15. The team earned first place in Core Values at the Pennsylvania State Competition.

Mr. Feath added, "Since I like to design things to solve problems, I'm thinking about a career in engineering or architecture. I think my robotics experience will help me there since it's teaching me how to analyze problems. Our coaches also teach us that iterations are important, so applying that iterative process to how I think about solving problems is also valuable."

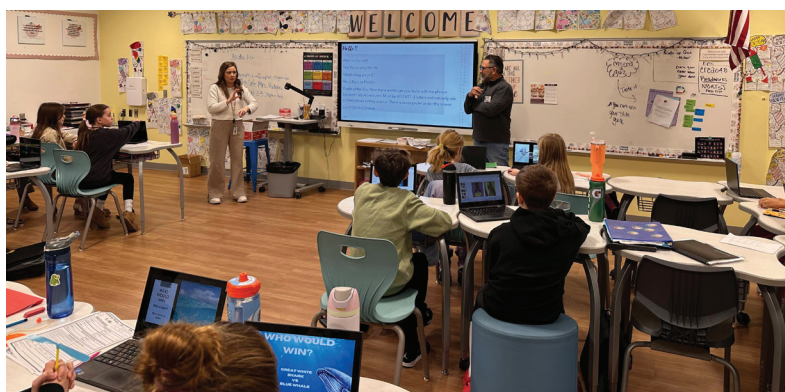
Band of Steel is comprised of 10 students from five school districts, including Seneca Valley, North Allegheny, Fox Chapel, Sewickley Academy and Winchester Thurston.

Read the Cranberry Eagle article here: [Local middle school student flourishing in FIRST LEGO League – Cranberry Eagle.](#) ■

ECMS WELCOMES CHILDREN'S BOOK AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

Ehrman Crest Middle School (ECMS) recently welcomed special guest Mr. Ralph Masiello, acclaimed author and illustrator. His works include alphabet books such as "The Icky Bug Alphabet," and "Extinct Alphabet." He also has a series of How-To Drawing Books and has worked with numerous authors such as Pamela Munoz Ryan and Jerry Pallotta.

Students were fascinated with Mr. Masiello's drawing abilities and some even enjoyed a lunch with him for special tips and drawing tricks! ■



CLIMBING WITH CONFIDENCE

Ehrman Crest students are reaching new heights – literally! In a collaborative climbing wall unit, Mr. Mullet and Ms. Coon's Physical Education classes took on new challenges—building strength, balance, coordination, and confidence along the way!

For some, the wall tested endurance; for others, it was a chance to support and uplift their peers. No matter the approach, students embraced the challenge and had a blast while learning the importance of teamwork and perseverance.

This unit wasn't just about climbing—it was about recognizing that we are all stronger when we support one another! ■



STUDENTS CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY MONTH WITH RENOWNED HISTORIAN

In honor of Black History Month, students at Seneca Valley Intermediate High School gathered to hear from renowned historian and author, Dr. Edda L. Fields-Black on Friday, Feb. 7.

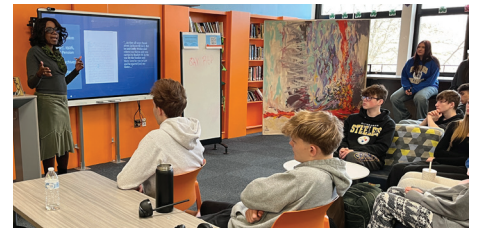
Dr. Fields-Black is a Professor in the Department of History and Director of the Dietrich College Humanities Center at Carnegie Mellon University, as well as a Classrooms Without Borders Scholar.

Through a powerful and engaging presentation, Dr. Fields-Black brings her own family history to life. As a direct descendant of a formerly enslaved man who played a pivotal role in the Combahee River Raid during the Civil War, she offers a uniquely personal perspective on the past. Her ancestral roots trace back to the rice plantations of Colleton County,



South Carolina, where her forebears endured—and ultimately overcame—the brutal realities of enslavement.

Dr. Fields-Black shared details about her latest book, “COMBEE: Harriet Tubman, the Combahee River Raid, and Black Freedom during the Civil War.” Dr. Fields-Black uncovers a little-known chapter of Harriet Tubman’s extraordinary life, revealing her pivotal role in the Union Army’s operations in South Carolina.



After the presentation, students were able to ask questions about Harriet Tubman, human rights during that time period, and additional questions pertaining to her book. ■

MUSIC WITH A MISSION

In honor of Black History Month, students at Ryan Gloyer Middle School (RGMS) made a difference with their unique fundraiser “Control the Cafeteria,” to remember the late Charles Person, an African-American civil rights activist who was the youngest Freedom Rider of the 1961 Freedom Rides.

The Freedom Rides aimed to challenge segregation practices in interstate travel, despite earlier Supreme Court decisions declaring such segregation illegal. At age 18, Person was the youngest civil rights Freedom Rider in 1961 and was one of the first 13 riders to encounter violence as his Trailways bus entered Alabama.

Mr. Person co-founded the Freedom Riders Training Institute to educate individuals on peaceful demonstration principles and First Amendment rights. The Freedom Riders Park Non-Endowed Fund was established with the Community Foundation of Northeast Alabama to support the development of a space for reflection, appreciation, and public education on Civil Rights.

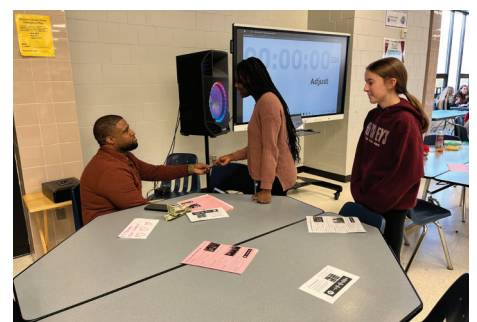
Guidance Counselor Mr. Stephens and Gifted



Support teacher Mr. Smolinski traveled to Georgia and Alabama with Classrooms Without Borders where many educators met the late Charles Person and gathered for an impactful journey through the foundational stages of the “long civil rights movement” and contemporary activism.

During their trip, Mr. Stephens and Mr. Smolinski were truly inspired by the brave men and women of the Freedom Riders, whose courage and determination helped challenge injustice and pave the way for civil rights progress. They also learned about the importance of music in Black History, especially during the Civil Rights Movement, which led them to organize this amazing fundraiser.

The fundraiser took place during all lunch periods on Feb. 14 & 28, allowing students to “Control the Cafeteria” by playing music that they like (from an approved playlist).



Students could donate \$3 to play a song, \$2 to stop a song, and \$5 to skip a song and play their song next.

Seventh and eighth grade students raised \$250, which was matched by the RGMS Student Council Community Service Committee, resulting in a total of \$500! This money will go to support The National Voting Rights Museum and Institute and The Freedom Riders Park Fund. ■

Seneca Valley SD 2025-26 Student/Teacher Calendar

APPROVED FEBRUARY 2025

August 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	IS	16
17	IS	IS	IS	FD	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

11 Staff Days; 7 Student Days
Aug. 21 - First Student Day

September 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	H	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				

21 Days

October 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	IS	A80	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	

23 Staff Days; 21 Student Days (22 w/A80)
Oct. 2 - In-Service Day

November 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	IS	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	H	H	H	29
30						

17 Staff Days; 16 Student Days
Nov. 11 - IS/Clerical Day

December 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	H	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	H	H	H	27
28	H	H	H			

16 Days

January 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				H	H	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	IS	17
18	IS	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

20 Staff Days; 18 Student Days
Jan. 16 - IS/Clerical Day
Jan. 19 - In-Service Day

February 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	SM	14
15	IS	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

19 Staff Days; 18 Student Days
Feb. 16 - IS/Clerical Day

March 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	SM	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	H	H				

19 Days

April 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			H	H	H	4
5	A80	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

19 Staff Days; 18 Student Days (19 w/A80)

May 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	IS	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	H	26	27	LDS	29	30
31						

20 Staff Days; 19 Student Days
May 22 - In-Service Day
May 28 - Last Day for Seniors (Grad. Day)

June 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	LD	6
7	IS	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

6 Staff Days; 5 Student Days
June 5 - Last Day for K-11 Students
June 8 - IS/Clerical Day

191 Work Days for Teachers

In the event of an inclement weather closure, SV may call for either a traditional "Snow Day," or a Remote Learning Day. If it is a traditional "Snow Day," the following are two makeup days that will be utilized:
Feb. 13, 2026
March 16, 2026

District Local Holidays:

Nov. 26, 2025
Dec. 1, 2025
Dec. 24, 2025
Dec. 31, 2025
April 3, 2026

KEY

A80 - Act 80-Prof. Develop. Day (No school for students)

H - Holiday (No school)

IS - In-Service Day (No school for students)

FD, LD & LD-S - First Student Day, Last Student Day & Last Day/Graduation Day for Seniors

SM - Snow Makeup Day (this day becomes a holiday if no snow make-up days are needed)

Remote Learning - Flexible Instructional Day/Students engage in remote learning from home

Please note all dates are subject to change



SV BAND STUDENTS ATTEND CLARINET DAY

On Feb. 2, The Slippery Rock University (SRU) Clarinet Studio under the direction of Dr. Amanda Morrison hosted its annual Clarinet Day. This year's event featured guest artist Dr. Jackie McIlwain, professor of clarinet at the University of Southern Mississippi. Clarinetists from area high schools and colleges were invited to attend this free event featuring all things clarinet. Dr. McIlwain gave masterclasses while local music vendors displayed clarinets and accessories. The event culminated with a clarinet choir concert by all of those in attendance. Current SV Band members Lauren Nowak, Jennifer O'Neill, Dahlia Marcin and Aaron Hardy attended, along with SV Alumni and SRU Clarinet Choir members Bekah Heltzell, Alex Owen, and Paityn Armstrong. ■



SV JAZZ ENSEMBLE SHINES AT PMEA DISTRICT FESTIVAL

This month, 27 Seneca Valley band students were selected by solo audition to perform in the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA) District Jazz Festival, held February 14-15 at Slippery Rock University. The festival consisted of three auditioned jazz ensembles comprised of students from Beaver, Butler, Lawrence and Mercer counties. Seneca Valley had the most student representatives of any participating district!

Guest conductors included Alan Baylock, arranger, composer and director of the highly respected University of North Texas One O'Clock Lab Band; Chris Coles, Akron-based freelance saxophonist and faculty member at Oberlin Conservatory and The University of Akron; and Clint Bleil, Pittsburgh-based freelance saxophonist and assistant professor of music at Seton Hill University. The event concluded with a public concert at Slippery Rock University's Miller Auditorium.



Participants:

Camden Armstrong, Noah Bracht, Jordan Courtney, Elora Dabravalskas, Colton Frankovich, Quintin Hixon, Autumn Holmes, Caroline Holmes, Benny James, Maddy Karns, Rileigh Karns, Daniel Kennaday, Sam Luszik, Lily Maschmeier, Peter McHenry, Braedon McNally, Stone Oechslein, Noah

Ponchek, Avery Rape, John Rieger, Eli Scanlan, Jack Schaar, Brendon Shick, Brandon Suski, Imogen Tomo, Mackenzie Tunstall and Adrian Wrubel.

Students are led by Varden Armstrong and Robert Babick, secondary instrumental instructors. ■

LOCAL BLUEGRASS BAND SHARES TALENTS WITH SV ORCHESTRA STUDENTS



Late last month, 60 musicians in grades 4-12 came together to learn and make music with members of The Grass Gals. The Grass Gals are Pittsburgh's first all-female bluegrass band, featuring bass player Trish Imbrogno and fiddle player Stephanie Green. During the school day, SV high school bassists had the opportunity to learn about playing in the bluegrass style from Ms. Imbrogno. After school, violin and viola players gathered for a collaborative workshop led by fiddle player Ms. Green where they learned the traditional fiddle tune "Old Joe Clark." This event provided an excellent opportunity for younger musicians to learn from high school and middle school orchestra students, guest artists and Seneca Valley string faculty. Following the workshop, The Grass Gals put on a concert featuring traditional bluegrass and folk tunes and invited SV student musicians to play alongside them for "Old Joe Clark." ■



A CHORUS OF CONGRATULATIONS

Over the week of Feb. 5-7, the Pennsylvania Music Education Association (PMEA) District Chorus was held at Rochester High School. More than 50 school districts participated, and 19 Seneca Valley Chorus members attended, proudly representing the District. Dr. Mark Boyle of Seton Hill University was the guest conductor. The choir received thunderous applause and a standing ovation as the full-house audience enjoyed the uplifting song selections, even joining in for a rendition of “It’s You I Like” by Mr. Rogers. Students from Beaver, Butler, Lawrence and Mercer counties collaborated for an experience they will never forget.

“Dr. Boyle did an outstanding job of making the students feel important and comfortable and helping them to grow,” said Ms. Bobi-Jean Alexander, SV Choir Director.

Based on audition results, 10 SV students (Ayla Alexander, Aydan Danylo, Addison Grassa, Isaac Hixon, Maddy Karns, Shayla Kemp, Jacob Maietta, John Rieger, Madelyn Tresky and Madeleine Tomo) will be moving on to the PMEA Region 1 Chorus Festival to be held in March at Waynesburg University.

Participants:

Ayla Alexander, Bernardo Casimiro Vilas Boas, Colin Berger, Nathan Capizzi, Aydan Danylo, Addison Grassa, Jacob Harding,



Isaac Hixon, Maddy Karns, Shayla Kemp, Jacob Maietta, John Rieger, Zoe Scullo, Parker Spence, Keith Summers, Madelyn Tresky, Madeleine Tomo and Layne Vandenburg.

Students are led by Ms. Bobi-Jean Alexander and Ms. Claire Barker, secondary choral instructors. ■

LOVE IN THE AIR...AND THE MUSIC!

On Feb. 18, students from the Seneca Valley Chamber Orchestra performed a love-themed concert at The Strand Theater as a part of their Pops Concert series. The chamber orchestra performed 14 pieces in celebration of Valentine’s Day, ranging from classic love songs like “Moon River” and “Can’t Help Falling in Love,” to music from modern day love stories such as “La La Land.”

“Our Pops Concerts at The Strand Theater are among some of our favorite events of the year,” said orchestra director Ms. Sarah Miller. “It is so fun to get to play pop music for our community in this unique venue.” ■



BAND COLLABORATION DAY

On Feb. 11, the secondary band department welcomed nearly 140 fifth grade band students from Haine Middle School (HMS) and Ehrman Crest Middle School (ECMS) to the intermediate high school for a collaborative day of making music with members of the Wind Ensemble, grades 9-12. After a brief morning greeting, the students broke into sectional groups where they met high schoolers from the wind ensemble as well as fellow fifth grade band students from a different building.

Haine Middle School student Tim Stickle said, "When I was playing, it wasn't just the teachers helping me, but the older kids helped me too." A fellow Haine student also mentioned that it was cool to play with students from Ehrman Crest.

These sectionals then came together in the high school band room to rehearse as a full group of nearly 200 musicians! ECMS trombonist Addie Fatur and French Horn player Ella Wilson said, "Music is more than just notes on a paper. It's about making friends, working hard and getting better and better!" HMS instrumentalist Max Zolatarev added, "I feel like they motivated me a lot, and I made a lot less mistakes."

ECMS flute player Sofia Kerbauy mentioned that "Band is more than tubas, saxophones and clarinets. It's what you learn from them that matters." All of the students worked together incredibly well to bring to life music that the fifth graders will perform at their spring concerts. The event concluded with a group lunch where students



continued to make new friends while sharing stories about the day and their experiences in band. One HMS student mentioned that it was "really cool to eat lunch with and talk to the high schoolers."

The fifth grade students worked diligently in preparation for the successful collaboration day. Their success in preparation was thanks to middle school directors Mrs. Kelly Levere (HMS) and Mrs. Tracy Glass (ECMS). Thank you to these fantastic directors for their hard work in addition to the hard work of the fifth grade band students. Special thanks to the parent volunteers that assisted throughout the event.

Throughout the day, the fifth grade instrumentalists were able to meet and work with the secondary band directors, current student teachers, and our SV Academy of Choice (SVAOC) percussion artist in residence. All directors were so impressed with the students and really enjoyed working with them throughout the day.

ECMS Clarinetist Mila Arvay mentioned how "Mr. Armstrong said that the more you practice, the better you'll get, and the



more fun you'll have!" ECMS Trumpet player Logan Monteleone added, "Mr. Croach taught us a new way to count, and it helped me understand a song better."

Secondary Band Directors include Mr. Varden Armstrong, Director of Bands 9-12 and Performing Arts Coordinator; Mr. Robert Babick, Director of Bands 9-12; Mrs. Sara Snyder, Director of Bands 7-8; Mr. Brian Croach, Director of Bands 7-12; Mr. PJ Gatch, Percussion Artist in Residence; Mr. Hunter Karenbauer, SV Student Teacher; and Ms. Rose Obergefell, SV Student Teacher. ■



A NOTE-WORTHY EXPERIENCE

Students in grades 7-9 traveled to Greenville High School to participate in the Junior High District Chorus Festival held late last month. Dr. Stacy Paparone from Grove City College directed the grade 7-8 choir and Dr. Chris Kiver from Penn State University directed the ninth grade choir. Two SV students, Miss Hannah Callender and Mr. Quintin Hixon, were selected as soloists for the ninth grade choir!

Grade 7-8 Participants: Ava Beaudoin, Hunter Burgh, Anna Cerra, Connor Cogley, Michael D'Appolonia, Graysen Hundertmark, Isaac Kose, Shayne Mason, Dylan Och, Xander Olsavsky, Trent Popp, Zachary Sypien, Emerson Tomko, Gavan Traugh, Christian Wary, Nico Wheeler, Leilana Zurrica.

Grade 9 Participants: Hunter Beal, Kyla Biertempfel, Hannah Callender, Matthew Cirqueira da Silva, Matthew Cornely, Andrew Foster, Zeke Hardy, Emily Harmanos, Anthony Hernandez, Sam Herrem, Quinton Hixon, Caleb Karns, Jacqueline Matchett, Trent Meiers, Aiden Newman, Jaydyn Schar, Gavin Sperry, Nolan Warden, Mark Zoelle, Marcus Zurrica.

Students are led by Chessa Crum and Claire Barker, secondary choral instructors. ■



TRI-M HOSTS GUITAR NIGHT

The Tri-M Honor Society recently hosted an event on Feb. 13, called "Guitar Night." The event welcomed seven local guitarists who play in a variety of styles. Following each performance was a question-and-answer component for the audience to ask questions regarding guitar equipment and stylistic technique choices from each diverse artist.

"Our chapter wanted to be more active this year," said Tri-M chapter President Ayla Alexander. "We decided to reach out to more of our student musicians. The elected officers decided, then, to host 'Guitar Night!'" Tri-M Music Honor society members include students from SV Band, Chorus and Orchestra. Local artists who performed were Oscar Adrian, John Alexander, Dave Flodine, Jacob Glath, Dan Hayton, Terry Sabo, and Waldo Young.



Senior Fin Keinath said "There should be more events like this! This was the coolest thing I've ever seen at Seneca Valley!" Tri-M thanks these community volunteers for supporting this free event to enrich our programs here at SV!

TRI-M Officers/Committee:
Ayla Alexander – President
Colin Berger - Vice-President

Addison Grassa – Secretary
Zoe Sciuillo – Treasurer
Isaac Hixon – Historian
Mackenzie Tunstall – Sargeant
Madeleine Tomo - Parliamentarian ■



WINTER SPORT UPDATES

Boys Basketball

Raider boys basketball returned to post-season play, tying for third place in their section standings with a mark of 8-6. As the eighth seed in the WPIAL 6A bracket, Seneca Valley hosted section foe



Woodland Hills, whom they split with during the regular season. In a packed William Paul Gymnasium, the boys' defensive effort held Woodland Hills to 43 points, but scoring proved to be the challenge all night long. At times it appeared there may have been a lid on the rim as shots were simply not falling for SV. Despite their defensive intensity, the Raiders were unable to overcome a cold-shooting night and fell 43-32 in the first round of WPIAL playoffs. We congratulate this team for their postseason appearance, and we thank them for their effort and play all season long. The 2025-26 squad will return all but one player – senior Tyler Pepin. The future is optimistic, but we thank Tyler for his leadership and four outstanding years in a Raider uniform.

Competitive Cheer

Raider competitive cheer had an outstanding year, having qualified for both the WPIAL and PIAA championships. At the PIAA state championships, the squad advanced straight to finals following



their preliminary routine and finished the weekend sixth place in the state – their highest state placement in program history. The squad capped off their season competing at the National High School Cheerleading Championships (NHSCC) in mid-February at Disney World in Orlando, Florida. The squad “threw zeros” (had a clean routine) and finished 15th in the country in their first year competing in the Large Varsity Division. Congratulations on another outstanding season!

Ice Hockey



At the time of this writing, Raider Ice Hockey has two games remaining in their regular season and are currently atop the PIHL 3A standings with an overall record of 13-3-2-0. The team will close out its regular season with games against playoff contenders North Allegheny and Central Catholic. Following those contests, the team will set their sights on capturing the 2025 Penguins Cup! Good luck, Raiders!

Swimming & Diving

Raider swimming and diving is in the final preparations for their WPIAL and PIAA championships. The regular season has ended, and the boys team finished section runner-up with an overall record of 8-4 and 5-1



in section meets. The girls finished third in the section, finishing 10-2 overall and 4-2 in section competition. With eyes focused on the postseason, Ali Waters currently sits in the third spot and Cooper Burcham in the eighth spot for top scores heading into the WPIAL Diving Championships and Katelyn Bookwalter is top three for the 100-yard breaststroke. We will recap postseason performances in March. Good luck to our swimmers and divers!

Wrestling

It is that time of year again where our boys and girls wrestling teams are singularly focused on the upcoming individual championship season.

Girls wrestling competed at the WPIAL championships on Feb. 15 and came away with five medalists and qualifiers



for the PIAA West regional. Medalists and PIAA West regional qualifiers were: Everly Harrell (3rd, 100 lbs.), Adele Shih-Calabro (4th, 106 lbs.), Maddee Fischer (3rd, 130 lbs.), Kaeleigh Tuell (4th, 155 lbs.) and Hannah Hornick (4th, 170 lbs.) Good luck to our Raiders as they look to advance to the PIAA championships in Hershey in early March.

On the boys' side, the Raiders competed in sectional championships with a WPIAL berth on the line. The following three have advanced to the WPIAL championships: Riley Smith (5th, 107 lbs.), Bryce Berekstazi (5th, 114 lbs.), and Zach Hill (runner-up, 139 lbs.). They, too, are competing for a spot at the PIAA championships in early March in Hershey, PA. Good luck boys! A final season recap will be provided in March. ■



WHAT DOES DETERMINATION LOOK LIKE?

The answer is in the picture. It has been 48 seasons since Raider girls basketball won a section title – since 1977 to be exact – and the 2024-25 squad was determined to place their names on the banner. Not only will the banner reflect this year as section champion, but the history books will note they did so going undefeated in section play with a mark of 10-0. Not only does the photo reflect determination, but it is the very definition of what a TEAM looks and plays like. The 2024-25 team is selfless in

their play, supportive of one another and strong in their mindset. They have approached each day as an opportunity to get better, they never looked too far ahead, and they have been focused on learning from every opportunity – good or bad. We can all be proud of the 2024-25 team and its coaches, for they embodied the essence of “Wearing the SV” – good humans, great competitors, and even better teammates. As the No. 3 seed in the upcoming WPIAL playoffs, we wish the girls luck in pursuit of a WPIAL title. ■



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 in 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 proud of your efforts in the classroom, in competition, and in the community. ■



Name	Sport	College/University	Major
Kathryn Morrison	Track & Field	Slippery Rock	Exercise Science/PA

ALL-CONFERENCE SELECTIONS ANNOUNCED IN BASKETBALL

The Big 56 Conference recently announced its basketball honorees, and the Raiders were well represented. The following Seneca Valley student-athletes were recognized for their excellence on the court this season.

BOYS BASKETBALL

2nd Team

Owen Congdon

Tyler Pepin

GIRLS BASKETBALL

1st Team

Gracie Cato

Brooke Dufford

Natalie Hambly

2nd Team

Legacy Joseph-Short

Coach of the Year

Head Coach Dorothea Epps ■



ICE HOCKEY ANNOUNCES ROSTERS FOR ALL-STAR WEEKEND

The Pennsylvania Interscholastic Hockey League (PIHL) announced their 2024-25 All-Stars for their annual All-Star weekend at the Robert Morris Sports Center on Neville Island. Congratulations to the following Seneca Valley Raiders who represented the District in the 3A All-Star game.



3A All-Stars:

Tyler Garvin, Forward

Carter Hoehn, Def/For

Andrew Malichky, Forward

Jimmy Murtha, Forward

Chris Nichols, Goalie ■

ATHLETES OF THE MONTH, JANUARY 2025

The Female Athlete of the Month for January was girls basketball guard Gracie Cato. The senior was a key contributor to a Raider team that won its first WPIAL section title since 1977. Her 18.8 points over a 10-game stretch paced the Raiders to an 8-2 record and the No. 3 seed in the WPIAL 6A playoffs. Gracie shot a team high 45.3% from the field and 35.1% from 3-point range. She also added 4.3 assists, 2.9 steals and 2.1 rebounds over those same 10 games. Gracie's stand out game came in a win over Pine Richland where she scored 27 points, including a buzzer beating half-court shot. Her efforts on the court were recognized by section coaches as she was named to the Big 56 6A Section 1 First Team. We recognized Gracie as the January Female Athlete of the Month. Congratulations, Gracie!



The Male Athlete of the Month for January was sophomore boys wrestler Riley Smith. Riley has had a stellar year wrestling at the 107 lbs weight class despite being only 100 lbs. His current record stands at 23 and 10, going 12-5 over the last month in section and tournament matches, a remarkable improvement after only seven wins last year. Riley's stand out performance came at the Brooke Classic wrestling tournament in West Virginia. He went 4-0 on the day and won the championship match 15-0 by technical fall to secure first place and his first tournament championship win. Riley will hope to make a run to Hershey for the state tournament. For an impressive month, we recognized Riley as the January Male Athlete of the Month. Congratulations, Riley! ■



ANNUAL SUPPORT CAMPAIGN SUCCESS

With your support, the Seneca Valley Foundation's Annual Support Campaign was a huge success! Through many generous contributions, we raised nearly \$27,000! These funds will be used to continue our important mission of inspiring academic success throughout Seneca Valley School District. Thank you to the following individuals and businesses for your generous gifts!

Platinum Level (\$1,000+)

Baird Foundation, Inc.
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Mr. & Mrs. Brian and Amanda Kile
Mr. & Mrs. Randy and Chris Miller – *In memory of Marcie Peaco*
Mr. & Mrs. Dustin and Jamie Thompson
Dr. Tracy & Mr. Gregory Vitale
Mr. & Mrs. Jason and Tammy Young

Gold Level (\$500 - \$999)

Dr. Cynthia Davenport
Mr. John Demkowicz
Eckles Construction Services
Dr. Mallory Eyles
Ms. Heather Lewis
Mr. & Mrs. Fredrick and Cecelia Peterson
Ms. Claire Zovko Anonymous

Silver Level (\$200 - \$499)

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Ms. Anne Bernacki
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Mr. & Mrs. Bob and Erin Ceh
Dr. Chet Henderson
Ms. Kristen Kress

Ms. Holly Lingenfelter
Ms. Cathy Mowery – *In memory of Jason Wehrle*
Dr. Bridget Miller
Ms. Christine Roe – *In memory of Ashley Roe-Snyder*
Ms. Amy Seelbaugh
Mr. & Mrs. Nii and Lauren Sowa-Doku
Mr. Dean Walker
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Ms. Elizabeth Williams
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Ms. Tesin Amoscato
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Mr. Kenneth Cahall
Ms. Kimberly Capozzi
Ms. Beth Clegg
Ms. Sara Coon
Ms. Whitney Corrigan
Ms. Yvonne Dobranski – *In memory of John Vrana*
Dr. Cassandra Doggrell
Mr. Tim Eiler
Mr. Logan Ellsworth
Ms. Celeste Foley
Ms. Lisa Fornadel
Ms. DeeAnn Graham – *In memory of Barbara Secunda*
Mr. & Mrs. Jeff and Jodi Hassen – *In memory of Beau Barclay*
Ms. Darlene Howley – *In memory of Richard Duggan*



Ms. Jessica Jacobs – *In memory of Michael Reback*
Ms. Jessica Kerr
Ms. Dana Kirk
Dr. Lindsey Kisucky
Ms. Elana Kriess
Ms. Elizabeth Lahm – *In memory of Isabelle Christenson*
Mr. Thomas Lavelle
Ms. Meagan Loewy
Dr. Jaclyn Macioce
Dr. Kathleen Mahon
Mr. Michael Manipole
Dr. Thomas McKelvey
Ms. Jenifer McMurray
Ms. Tammy Micco
Ms. Faye Nelson – *In memory of Arron Jones*
Ms. Madaline Nowak
Mr. Michael Ozdinec
Dr. Marie Palano
Ms. Rosemary Piso
Ms. Casey Ridgley
Dr. Jeffrey Roberts
Ms. Jennifer Ruck
Ms. Terry Shulsky
Ms. Sara Snyder
Dr. Andrew Teti
Dr. Kristen White – *In honor of Haine Elementary Staff*
Mr. & Mrs. Jeff and Joan Widdowson
Mr. Steve Wolfe
Ms. Chrystal Zinkham
Anonymous – *In honor of SV Marching Band Directors*
Anonymous – *In honor of Classrooms Without Borders Initiative*
Anonymous
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STUDENTS EARN NATIONAL ACCOLADES

Seneca Valley seniors Eric Chen and Ophelia Crano have been named finalists in the 70th Annual National Merit Scholarship Program held by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC).

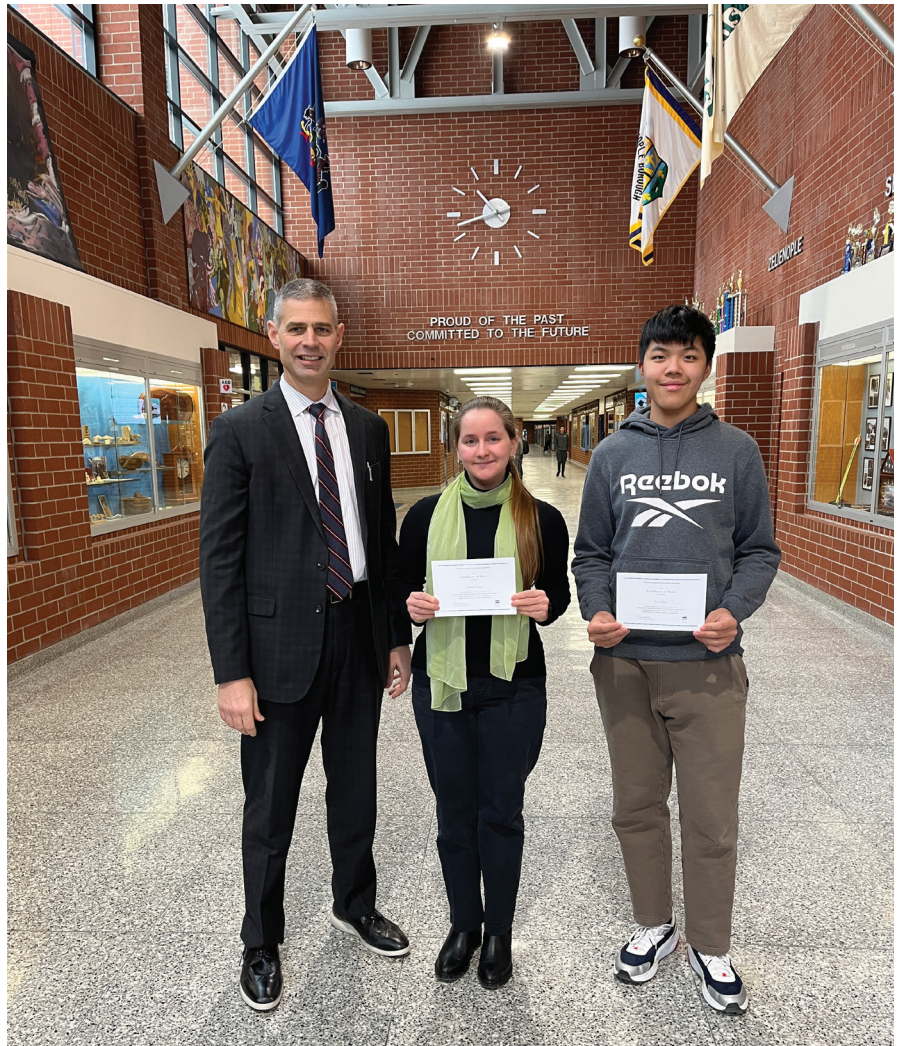
“We were recently notified that Eric and Ophelia have advanced to the finalist round of the National Merit Scholarship Program,” said Seneca Valley Senior High School Principal, Mr. Bob Ceh. “Both students are enrolled in a rigorous course load that demands exceptional effort to succeed, and they are excelling in their studies. We are incredibly proud of them and wish them the best of luck as they continue through the process.”

These SV standouts are two of approximately 15,000 finalists and will now advance to the next level of the program where they have the opportunity to earn National Merit Scholarships and, ultimately, the Merit Scholar® title.

“It’s an incredible honor to be selected as a National Merit Finalist, and it reflects my dedication to hard work and excellence,” said Mr. Chen. “This achievement inspires me, and as I continue working toward my future endeavors, I will never forget the support that brought me to this point.”

Over 1.3 million juniors in more than 21,000 high schools entered the 2025 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2023 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®), which served as an initial screen of program entrants.

“I am excited and honored to be selected as a National Merit Scholarship Finalist,” said Miss Crano. For more information on the National Merit Scholarship Program, visit www.nationalmerit.org. ■



Pictured, L-R: Seneca Valley Senior High School Principal Mr. Bob Ceh, Ophelia Crano and Eric Chen

SV ALUM, FORMER NFL PLAYER NAMED HEAD FOOTBALL COACH

The Seneca Valley School District is pleased to announce that Don Barclay, a member of SV's Class of 2007, has been selected as the new head football coach. The Seneca Valley School Board made the appointment official during the Feb. 3 action meeting with a unanimous vote.

Barclay, a former NFL player who spent eight seasons in the league, brings a wealth of experience and hometown pride to his new role. After years of playing professionally and attending college in West Virginia, Barclay has returned to his roots, where his ties to the community run deep. "Seneca Valley has always been home for me," Barclay shared. "Growing up here gave me opportunities, from the school system to the facilities. I'm excited to pass on my knowledge and give back to the place that shaped me."

Barclay's connection to Seneca Valley extends beyond the football field. He and his wife have chosen to raise their three children in the district, all of whom attend Ehrman Crest Elementary/Middle School.

"I'm a fan of the public school system," he added, "and I want my kids to experience the same opportunities I had growing up."

During his time at Seneca Valley, Barclay was a multi-sport athlete, playing baseball until ninth grade and basketball through his sophomore year before focusing on football. His dedication to the sport earned him a scholarship to West Virginia University, where he graduated with a degree in business management. After a standout collegiate career, Barclay's NFL journey began, leading him to play for the Green Bay Packers and other teams.

Now, as head coach, Barclay is eager to build a strong football program that emphasizes more than just athletic performance. "Every year, you want to get



better," he said. "Whether it's improving participation or helping players take the next step in college, it's about setting a foundation for long-term success." Barclay plans to prioritize speed, quickness and agility, alongside a strong emphasis on academics. "Success in the classroom represents success on the field," he noted.

Barclay also recognizes the importance of community involvement. He plans to engage youth programs and build connections between varsity players and younger students. "It's important for kids to come around, see what's going on, and build relationships with their older peers," he said. His vision includes community outreach initiatives, such as hospital visits, to instill a sense of service and pride in his players.

Heather Lewis, Seneca Valley's athletic director, expressed her enthusiasm for

Barclay's leadership. "I think he'll be a tremendous role model for our kids," she said. "Don embodies the investment and commitment necessary to be the best version of yourself, whether it's on the football field or in the classroom."

On a lighter note, Barclay revealed a unique experience from his playing days: a cameo in the movie *Pitch Perfect 2*. "I had a small part as a beatboxer," he laughed. "It was only 20 seconds, but it's a fun memory."

As Barclay prepares to lead the Raiders, he brings a combination of professional expertise, community spirit and a commitment to developing well-rounded student-athletes.

Welcome home, Coach Barclay! ■

FINANCIALLY FLUENT

The Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic League (WPIAL) recently announced its school and student winners of the second annual Financial Trivia Challenge powered by First National Bank, the largest subsidiary of F.N.B. Corporation (NYSE: FNB). A total of 97 schools and 1,909 students competed in the challenge over 11,000 times, with the top three high schools and 10 students qualifying for monetary rewards.

Seneca Valley student Gianni Varlotta earned \$250 for finishing third.

“Financial education is foundational to FNB’s work throughout our communities, and we know it is especially influential among younger generations,” said Ronald Donatelli, President of FNB’s Pittsburgh Region. “The more that students understand these concepts now, the better equipped they are to make financial decisions and set goals that will positively impact them in the future.”

In addition to a third-place finish, Seneca Valley student Julian Varlotta finished in seventh place, earning a \$100 award.

The Financial Trivia Challenge was held from Oct. 23-Dec. 6, 2024. Participants had 90 seconds to answer as many financial-related trivia



Gianni Varlotta



Julian Varlotta

questions as possible. They could improve upon their score by participating up to 30 times, while comparing their results with others across the WPIAL on the leaderboard. ■

VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL STUDENTS RECOGNIZED

Congratulations to the following Butler County Area Vocational-Technical School (BCAVTS) students who were recently recognized on the 2024-25 National Technical Honor Society roster!

Noelle Angel	Health Assistant	Grade 12
Midnight Braun	Welding	Grade 11
Nathaniel Butschle	Automotive Technology	Grade 12
Madee Fischer	Welding	Grade 12
Riley Hubbard	Automotive Technology	Grade 12
Christian Magerl	Machine Technology	Grade 12
Isaac Parkinson	Automotive Technology	Grade 11
Odessa Quinlan	Cosmetology	Grade 11
Marcus Stewart	Collision Repair	Grade 11
Ivy Stopchick	Cosmetology	Grade 12
Nathan Taylor	Graphic Design	Grade 12
Blake Vogel	Collision Repair	Grade 12

Congratulations to the four Seneca Valley Vo-Tech students who placed at this year’s SkillsUSA District 10 Competition, a program offered through the Butler County Area Vocational-Technical School (BCAVTS). Students throughout the region traveled to the New Castle School of Trades to participate in a variety of skills and leadership contests.

Gold medals were awarded to the top competitors in each skill category, recognizing their outstanding performance and precision. All four Seneca Valley competitors earned gold this year! Those who placed include:

Tucker Ray	Promotional Bulletin Board	Grade 10
Elizabeth Semenenko	Photography	Grade 10
Nathan Taylor	Ad Design	Grade 12
Gavin Uber	TeamWorks	Grade 11



Pictured L-R: Gavin Uber, Tucker Ray, Nathan Taylor and Elizabeth Semenko

The SkillsUSA is a partnership of students, teachers, and industry representatives working together to ensure America has a skilled workforce. SkillsUSA helps each student to excel. This national organization serves teachers and high school and college students who are preparing for careers in technical, skilled and service occupations, including health occupations and for further education.

These gold medalists have earned the opportunity to advance to the SkillsUSA Pennsylvania State Competition in Hershey from April 2-4, where they will compete for a chance to represent the state at the national level. ■

SENECA VALLEY NAMES JEREMY WOMER AS 2025-26 PRINCIPAL FOR CVE

Seneca Valley School District is pleased to announce that Mr. Jeremy Womer has been selected as the next principal of Connoquenessing Valley Elementary (CVE), succeeding Mrs. DeeAnn Graham upon her retirement later this summer.

Mr. Womer, currently serving as Assistant Principal at Haine Middle School, brings a wealth of experience in educational leadership. His tenure at Seneca Valley began in 2017, and he has since served in multiple administrative roles, including Assistant Principal and Acting Principal at Haine Elementary School, Acting Assistant Principal at Rowan Elementary School, and a fourth-grade teacher at Haine Elementary. Prior to joining Seneca Valley, Mr. Womer worked as an administrator and educator in Wood County Schools, West Virginia.

“It is with great honor and enthusiasm that I embrace the role of principal at Connoquenessing Valley Elementary,” said Mr. Womer. “Serving the Seneca Valley community has been a privilege, and I am excited to continue building meaningful relationships with the dedicated staff, incredible students, supportive families and engaged community at CVE. I look forward to working together to nurture an environment where every child grows, learns and thrives.”

Mr. Womer holds a Master of Education degree from California University of Pennsylvania and a Bachelor of Science in Education from Clarion University of Pennsylvania. His professional achievements include being named Pennsylvania’s National Outstanding Assistant Principal for 2025 by the PA Principals



Association. He is now in contention for the esteemed National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) Outstanding Assistant Principal of the Year award.

Beyond his leadership in education, Mr. Womer is actively involved in his community, having volunteered as a youth sports coach and mentor. His commitment to student success, both in and out of the classroom, aligns well with Seneca Valley’s mission of providing excellence in education.

“We are excited to welcome Mr. Womer into this new leadership role,” said Dr. Tracy Vitale, Superintendent of Schools. “His passion for education, student-focused approach and dedication to cultivating strong school-community relationships make him an excellent choice for CVE.” ■

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SENECA VALLEY DESIGNATED AS A GREAT PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL

Seneca Valley School District was recently designated as a **Great Pennsylvania School**. The Great Pennsylvania Schools (GPS) designation recognizes Pennsylvania public schools that provide students with access to rigorous programming, are community-centric, demonstrate financial well-being and display resilience.

To receive this designation, districts must meet the criteria established in each of the four categories. Districts that provide students with academically rigorous programming must confirm that 100% of their teachers are certified and that students have access to career and technical education, gifted education, advanced placement or international baccalaureate courses, and JROTC programming.

To demonstrate a district's position as the centerpiece of the community, it must exemplify innovation in school programming, regularly celebrate the successes of students and staff, and provide academic and extracurricular offerings for the benefit of students.

"We are so honored to be chosen as a Great Pennsylvania School," said Dr. Tracy Vitale, Superintendent of Schools. "This designation is an affirmation to our hard-working staff who have an unwavering commitment to our students and their families. Public schools are the great equalizer in our democracy and should be propped up in our Commonwealth where all students are welcome to pursue their dreams and aspirations!"

The final criteria – resilience and fiscal health – measure a district's planning efforts that ultimately lead to successful academic programming. To meet the resilience criteria, a district must implement an emergency preparedness plan and provide mental health supports to students.



Pictured, L-R: Superintendent of Schools Dr. Tracy Vitale, SV Communications Specialist Ms. Morgan Waag, SV Content Marketing Specialist Ms. Tiffany Hernandez, PSBA Western PA Member Outreach Manager Ms. Lena Hannah and SV School Board President Mr. Eric DiTullio

A district meets the financially healthy criteria by having an elected or independent auditor conduct a financial audit annually, making the final district budget available for public review prior to adoption, and following School Code requirements for bids and quotations when purchasing goods and services.

"This honor recognizes schools that demonstrate a commitment to academic rigor, community, resilience and financial health," said Ms. Lena Hannah, Member Outreach Manager, West for Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA). "We applaud you for your dedication in all areas. Your students are both successful and challenged by the district's curriculum, which drives student engagement."

In addition to the GPS designation and success stories from schools across the state, the campaign website also houses information about the role and responsibilities of a school board, how to run for a position on a local school board, and a collective vision for the future of public education in Pennsylvania.

To learn more about the great things happening in the Seneca Valley School District, visit the district's website at www.svsd.net.

SV ALL-STAR

For February, we are pleased to announce the newest member inducted into the SV All-Star Club, Ms. Natasha Cumba-Gonzalez, paraprofessional at Haine Middle School.

The SV All-Star Club is an awards program developed by the District to express our gratitude to Seneca Valley classified employees (administrative assistants, paraprofessionals, maintenance, cafeteria), bus drivers and security guards who are often the unsung heroes of our schools. We recognize a new member of this elite all-star club each month.

“Ms. Cumba-Gonzalez is a paraprofessional in our Short-Term Enhancement Program (STEP) classroom; however, she is so much more,” said Dr. Erin Wilcher, Principal of Haine Middle School. “She consistently goes above and beyond in her own professional development and strives to support our students, including translating for those in need.”

As a result of her remarkable commitment, Ms. Cumba-Gonzalez recently completed her 40 hours of Applied Behavior Analysis training, enhancing her ability to support students.

Additionally, on several occasions, Ms. Cumba-Gonzalez further demonstrates her dedication by comforting new English as a Second Language (ESL) students who need help as they transition to our school culture and procedures.

Dr. Wilcher added, “Her calming presence during a student crisis is invaluable, and her commitment to our school community



Pictured from L-R: Mr. Eric DiTullio, Board President, Ms. Natasha Cumba-Gonzalez and her son and Dr. Tracy Vitale, Superintendent of Schools

is truly inspiring. Just the other day, she comforted a new ESL student who missed the bus, ensuring the student felt safe and helped coordinate with their guardians to get them home safely.”

Ms. Cumba-Gonzalez is such an asset to our District. Her kindness, compassion, dedication and diverse skill set make her truly deserving of this recognition. ■

‘I LED THE PLEDGE’

For the sixth year, elementary students from Seneca Valley’s K-4 schools are appearing at School Board meetings, leading the members of the School Board and public in saying “The Pledge of Allegiance.”



Piper pictured with, from L-R: Superintendent of Schools Dr. Tracy Vitale and School Board President Mr. Eric DiTullio

For the Feb. 3 work session meeting, we were excited to welcome Piper Micon, a fourth grader at Seneca Valley Academy of Choice (SVAOC). Piper’s favorite subjects are art with Mr. Shorr, where she loves exploring her creativity; and math, which she finds both challenging and rewarding. When she grows up, she dreams of becoming a preschool teacher because she loves working with younger children and helping them learn. Piper is a bright and talented student with a passion for learning and creativity.

Grant Morley, a Haine Middle School sixth grader, led the Pledge at the Feb. 11 Seneca Valley School Board meeting. A bright and curious learner with a passion for science, Grant dreams of becoming an engineer or architect. Outside of school, he loves reading, playing video games and spending time with his playful puppy, Margo. ■



Grant pictured with, from L-R: Superintendent of Schools Dr. Tracy Vitale and School Board President Mr. Eric DiTullio



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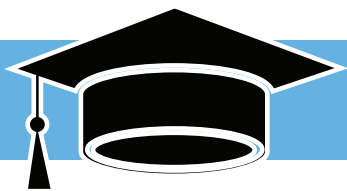
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Emma Woodard, SV '20, is a recent college graduate working full-time for a leading software company. We asked her to catch us up on what she is doing and how Seneca Valley influenced her life and career.

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

A: I attended West Virginia University where I received a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (B.S.B.AD.) in Marketing from the John Chamber Business School. I graduated this past May and have been working for Neya Robotics since January 2024. I started as a Marketing Intern, which then led to my full-time role as Marketing Generalist this past summer. I have been at Neya for a year now and have thoroughly enjoyed this period of my life working at Neya Systems.

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

A: My parents now live outside of Myrtle Beach in a little town and are (slowly) on their way to retirement. My father, who is also an SV alumni, spends his mornings walking the beach and seems to have befriended some seagulls along the way. My mother continues to work from home with a view of their pond and a nice day in the sun.

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

A: I think someone may be surprised to know that I went into the robotics/STEM field. I originally started in fashion and thought that's where I would make my career. However, that plan changed, and I couldn't be happier or more grateful for where I ended up.

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

A: I attended Seneca Valley K-12, so I experienced all my childhood and early adolescent growth within the school district. SV gave me a wide outlook and perspective, which I didn't realize until I had gotten to college. I will always remember what my second and third grade teacher Mrs. Lintelman, who is now retired, taught us: to do random acts of kindness for others. We would write these acts down and share them with the class at the end of the week. I think that is a lesson everyone could learn and appreciate, no matter what age. Looking back, this is an exceptional way to encourage positive behavior in children and should be implemented in every classroom. Mrs. Lintelman didn't just create a sharp group of students, but a group of kids who would become better adults.

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

A: I wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for the education I received at SV and West Virginia University. Having the opportunity to take advanced and college-level courses in high school gave me more time to take on opportunities that other peers were passing by. I was able to go to classes, keep good grades, work a part-time job, and complete my internship while in my senior year of college due to the work I had put in during my earlier years. I wouldn't have the job or role I have now without the ability to take those opportunities. Going to a larger school growing up enabled me to be outgoing with others in situations I may be unfamiliar with. Seneca Valley is such a special

place to learn and grow. The level of education students receive is above the bar. With the new buildings and available classes, I can only imagine how the students and school will grow!

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

A: Other than Mrs. Lintelman, some stand-out teachers during my time at Seneca Valley were Mr. Hanlon, my high school history teacher, and Ms. Skwortz, who taught accounting.



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: When I think back to some of my best moments at Seneca Valley, obviously the big moments come to mind. Though I was a 2020 graduate and did not receive the same type of graduation as classes in prior years, I think about the effort faculty, staff, parents and students put into making our graduation the best it could be. Teachers from what seemed to be a distant past, traveled to our houses to remind us that they were still there even if school looked much different. A more lighthearted time that meant a lot to me was our Team Olympics in eighth grade. I was on the Eagles team and our homeroom with Mr. Sample won. It was so fun to play like "little kids during field day" one last time.

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

A: A lasting message to the teachers and staff would be: Thank you and what you do matters. Education is one of the greatest investments you can make in yourself, but it simply cannot be done without the talent, time and patience that SVSD teachers and faculty offer. You don't realize the sacrifices behind a positive environment until you grow and understand the challenges others face.

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

A: I wish all educators could see the level of care and consideration teachers at this school put into their work and, in turn, equal effort into the students. I never felt like any of the teachers at SV were at "work." It was as if they appeared in front of us every day with full plans that they magically prepared the night before. Having been a working individual since I could get my permit and now post graduation with a full-time job, I understand what it is like to have to go to work and all the preparation that goes into it. Thankfully, my job is amazing, and I am extremely grateful for the time and opportunities Neya has given me. I am extremely excited for my future, wherever it may take me. Thank you, Seneca Valley! ■



MAKE HEART HEALTH PART OF YOUR SELF-CARE ROUTINE

February is recognized as Heart Month, a time for increased awareness about heart disease, the leading cause of death in the country. Devoting a little time every day to care for yourself can go a long way toward protecting the health of your heart. Simple self-care, such as taking a moment to de-stress, giving yourself time to move more, preparing healthier meals, and not cheating on sleep can all benefit your heart.

And that's a good thing, because heart disease is largely preventable and focusing on improving your heart health has never been more important. Heart disease is a leading cause of death for women and men in the United States, and many Americans remain at risk of getting it, according to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI).

"Studies show self-care routines, such as taking a daily walk and keeping doctor's appointments, help us keep our blood pressure, sugar, and cholesterol levels in the healthy range and reduce our risk of heart disease and stroke," said Gina Wei, M.D., NHLBI's acting director of cardiovascular sciences.

It may be easier than you think to "put your heart" into your daily routine. Each Sunday, look at your week's schedule and carve out 30 minutes daily for heart-healthy practices. Take a yoga class, prepare a heart-healthy recipe, schedule your bedtime to get at least seven hours of sleep, or make a medication checklist. Then seek out support from others, even if it's online or via a phone call, to help you stick to your goals.

Here are few self-care tips to try every day to make your heart a priority:

Self-Care Sunday

Find a moment of serenity every Sunday. Spend some quality time on yourself.

Mindful Monday

Be mindful about your health and regularly monitor your blood pressure or blood sugar if needed. Keep an eye on your weight to make sure it stays within or moves toward a healthy range. Being aware of your health status is a key to making positive change.

Tasty Tuesday

Choose how you want to approach eating healthier. Start small by peppering up your meals with a fresh herb or spice as a salt substitute. Get adventurous and prepare a simple, new, heart-healthy recipe. Or go big by trying a different way of eating, such as the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension ([DASH](#)) eating plan, which is scientifically proven to lower blood pressure. DASH is flexible and balanced, and it includes plenty of fruits and vegetables, fish, poultry, lean meats, beans, nuts, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products.

Wellness Wednesday

Don't waffle on your wellness. Move more, eat a fruit or vegetable you've never tried, make a plan to quit smoking or vaping, or learn the signs of a heart attack or stroke. Signs of a heart attack include

Talk to your healthcare provider about your heart health.



chest and upper body pain or discomfort, shortness of breath, cold sweats, nausea, or lightheadedness. Signs of a stroke include numbness in the face, arm, or leg; confusion; trouble talking or seeing; dizziness; or a severe headache.

Treat Yourself Thursday

Treats can be healthy. Try making a dessert with fresh fruit and yogurt. Then stretch your imagination beyond food. Host a family dance party, take a few minutes to sit still and meditate, go for a long walk, or watch a funny show. Laughter is healthy. Whatever you do, find a way to spend some quality time on yourself.

Follow Friday

Follow inspiring people and pages on social media, or text a friend to help you stick to your self-care goals. Remember to take care of your mental health, too. Two of the main hurdles to self-care are depression and a lack of confidence, according to a study published in the *Journal of the American Heart Association*. If your mental health gets between you and your fabulous self, take action to show your heart some love. Reach out to family and friends for support, or talk to a qualified mental health provider.

Selfie Saturday

Inspire others to take care of their own hearts. Talk about your self-care routine with loved ones or share a selfie on your social media platforms. Having social support and personal networks can make it easier to get regular physical activity, eat nutritious foods, reach a healthy weight, and quit smoking. Learn more in this [Self-Care Tips for Heart Health](#) fact sheet and visit www.hearttruth.gov to learn more about heart health.

Article provided by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute ■



- SVAOC Summer School Registration is Open! Exciting news! Summer School is now available for students currently in grades 8-11. Secure your spot by registering at <https://www.successfund.com/SVsummerschool>. Seats are limited—enroll today!
- The Seneca Valley Academy of Choice (SVAOC) summer camps registration is now open! This program offers a variety of exciting experiences for every interest – from artistic masterpieces to culinary delights, LEGO adventures to sports thrills. Register **today** for a summer filled with creativity, fun and confidence-building!
- Take a look at the [Dramatic Play Program launch event](#) held at Haine Middle School last month! In partnership with The Andrew Effect, Seneca Valley unveiled Dramatic Play Centers for full-day kindergarten students that are equipped with supplies that foster imaginative play and incorporate situations that develop cognitive and social skills. The Andrew Effect creates meaningful opportunities for children to learn through play using engaging activities and quality educational toys. We are excited to offer these structured play opportunities for our youngest learners!
- 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 \(svsd.net\)](#).

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. ■



- 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. \(candleinc.org\)](#)
- [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. ■

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SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

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