

# COMMUNITY CONNECTION

A PUBLICATION OF THE CHEEKTOWAGA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

DECEMBER 2018

## Warrior Pride All the Way

The Cheektowaga Warriors Varsity Football team won the New York State Section VI Class B Championship beating the Pioneer Panthers 14-7 at New Era Field. This season marks the fifth consecutive year the Warriors have played in the championship game.

Unfortunately, the Warriors lost Nov. 10 to the Batavia Blue Devils in the Far West Regionals, finishing their season at 9-2.

Congratulations to the team and the coaching staff led by Head Coach Mike Fatta for a thrilling season.



## Emphasis is on Writing in Every Classroom

— Maureen George, Director of Learning

Writing is a pivotal form of communication. Most academic institutions make writing an important part of the curriculum; and in the classrooms at Cheektowaga Central, the story is no different. We know that improving students' writing skills helps them succeed inside and outside of the classroom. One of the district's academic goals for the 2018-19 school year is to improve the quality and quantity of writing in each classroom. Our aim is for all of our students to become competent readers and writers by the time they graduate.

To ensure all students are ready for success after high school, the Common Core State Standards establish clear, consistent guidelines for what it means to be a literate person prepared for success in the 21st century. The skills and knowledge captured in the ELA/literacy standards help prepare students for life outside the classroom. They aim to develop students' higher order and critical-thinking skills. The act of writing "helps students get their thinking out in the open where it can be assessed and refined" (Silver, Dewey, Perini, 2012, p. 50).

Over the summer, a group of K-8 teachers began the process of assessing the District's writing curriculum and identifying the specific strategies that writers undertake to carry out components of

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## Sweet Tour for FACS Teachers

Teachers from Cheektowaga Central's Family and Consumer Science Department toured Platter's Chocolates at the Wurlitzer Building in North Tonawanda. The late-November event was part of the Western New York Family and Consumer Science Share group. Twenty-five area teachers participated in a tour and education about the making of sponge candy and other wonderful chocolate selections. "We learned through tasting that chocolate should 'melt in your hand' before reaching your mouth," said Dawn Preston, one of three FACS teachers from Central who attended.



Shown here enjoying the Platter's experience are (left to right) Dawn Preston, Kate Dempsey-Newell and Lauren Wild.

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## Message from the Superintendent

### Learning and the Whole Child at Central

As we swing into winter at Cheektowaga Central, our three priorities continue to gain momentum at the staff and student level. Every decision we make must address one of these three priorities: inspiring a high level of learning for all; the development of the whole child; and creating opportunities to enhance 21st century skills.



Superintendent  
Mary Morris

### Inspire a High Level of Learning for All

Reading and writing remain a constant focus in all buildings. We are continuing our work with Dr. Harvey Silver, Dr. Jim Knight and Dr. Marcia Tate in providing teachers with engaging instructional strategies to increase student learning and academic rigor.

Our partnership with Buffalo State College to move instruction in mathematics K-12 to a higher level has benefited students and teachers this fall.

Erie 1 BOCES, Instructional Coaching, teacher mentors and building based coaches continue to support and improve instruction. We are getting better!

### The Whole Child

The District Pupil Personnel Services team has begun the process of working with the University at Buffalo Institute on Trauma Informed Care in Schools. One of the primary focus areas at our March Professional Learning Day will be on mental health awareness and the social / emotional development of the whole child.

A weeklong Institute on Restorative Practices was offered to administrators and teachers this summer, and training continues throughout the school year. You may see restorative circles implemented at the Elementary School, conversations about repairing the harm at the Middle and High schools. Already discipline referrals have decreased.

### 21st Century Skills

Chromebooks have been rolled out to every K-12 teacher as phase one of our 1:1 technology initiative has been completed.

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## Community Circles Promote Positivity



On Monday, the first day back from Thanksgiving break, Union East Elementary School teachers were back in the routine with their daily Community Circles. Students eagerly shared their feelings ratings and special stories. Community Circles are another way teachers at Central build positive relationships and help cultivate a positive learning environment.

Middle School teachers also conduct Community Circles. Recently Mr. Skierczynski used a Community Circle for a math lesson with his fifth-graders. Every student participated in a group discussion and collaborated to solve a word problem. In Mrs. Braddock's sixth-grade classroom, a daily Community Circle took the form of a quick check-in on each student after returning from lunch. Students discussed specific respectful behaviors that they had demonstrated so far that day and additional ways that they could show respect throughout the rest of the day.

These are some of the many ways that we continue to cultivate an environment that promotes positive behaviors and opportunities for learning for all of our students.



Mrs. Tonsoline listens as a student shares during the daily Community Circle in her Grade 3 classroom at Union East Elementary School.



A student in Mr. Quigley's pre-K class at Union East Elementary School uses pictures to help describe feelings as she shares a story in Community Circle.

*(Above photos by Nicole Kerner, District Project Positive Coordinator)*

### Assemblywoman Visit



Students in Mrs. Howard's third-grade class at Union East Elementary School had a great visit Nov. 14 with New York State Assemblywoman Monica Wallace. Ms. Wallace, whose district includes the towns of Cheektowaga and Lancaster, is shown here reading the book "Grace for President" by Kelly DiPucchio.



## Project Positive:

# Promoting the Positive

– Nicole Kerner, Project Positive Coordinator

Project Positive is our district-wide initiative that focuses on creating and cultivating a positive learning environment for all students. Over the years, great things are continuing to happen in each building to promote and encourage positive behaviors, thereby increasing opportunities for learning.

Union East Elementary School has incorporated Community Circles into their daily classroom routines. During this time, students share their “feelings rating” and have the option to share the reason for their rating. This allows the teacher each day to get a good sense of how all of their students are feeling and insight into why they may be feeling that way. Students have the opportunity to provide each other a little extra support when needed and to celebrate each other as a class community. In these Community Circles, students learn important social skills, such as how to greet their peers respectfully, make eye contact when communicating, and actively listen to others.

At the Middle School, the PTA runs a school-wide Warrior Way Store every other week near the cafeteria. Students bring Warrior Way tickets they earned for following the 5Bs to the store and spend them on up to three items each time they shop. The store is stocked with school supplies, water bottles, toiletries, backpacks, books, stickers, lanyards, coloring books, holiday themed items, and small gift items. Oftentimes students think of others and purchase items for friends and family members when they want to give them something special.



The High School acknowledgement system now includes three tickets. In the past students would receive a “Solid as a Rock” ticket from a teacher for demonstrating any of the 5Bs. Now high school students can earn three tickets. White tickets may be earned for following the 5Bs at a more advanced level; red for monthly Pop-Up Contests rewarding demonstrating the monthly target behavior or participating in the monthly character activity; and blue tickets are for meeting the Universal Scholar Menu criteria, which includes turning in assignments on time, improving a class or overall average, and not being tardy.

These are just a few examples of the many ways as a district we are “promoting the positive.” As the school year progresses, and in the years to come, as a district we will continue to promote and encourage positive behaviors to increase opportunities for academic success and personal growth for all students.



## Music Man Jr. Delights Audiences



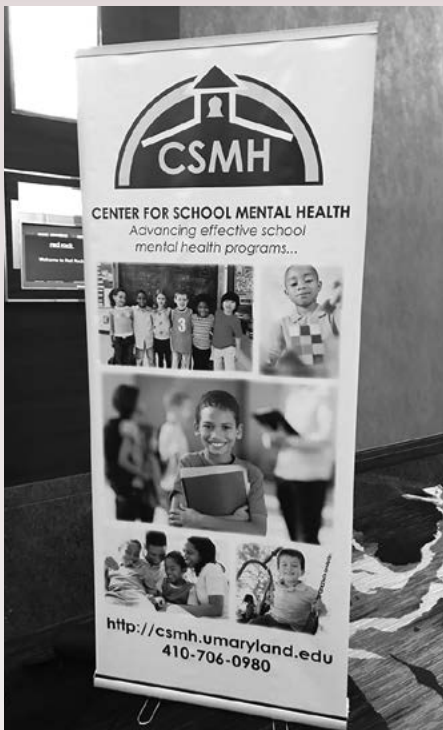
River City, Iowa, and all its fascinating residents – and one memorable visitor – came to life at Cheektowaga Central Middle School on Nov. 30 and Dec. 1 when students presented “The Music Man Jr.” to enthusiastic audiences. Shown here dancing to “Shipooi” are Jocelyn Tracey as Marian Paroo and Jalon Rainey as Professor Harold Hill, along with other cast members (left to right) Ryann Rogers, Brianna Rohrer, Amyla Jackson, Trinity Parker, and Victoria Graziano. Elizabeth Franklin directed the musical production, with Vocal Director Kimberly Harrison and Technology Director Shawn Christman.





## Staff Learns More about Mental Health

Members of the Cheektowaga Central School District Mental Health Team in October attended a conference on Advancing Mental Health in Schools. The conference, held in Las Vegas, was sponsored by the University of Maryland. Gretchen Sukdolak, director of Pupil Personnel Services, called the educational experience a great opportunity for District staff to acquire knowledge. "There is so much work to do in this area, but it is so needed," she said. In addition to Mrs. Sukdolak, also attending were (left to right) Joseph Mondo, Middle School psychologist; Nancy Kean, Middle School social worker; Laurie Ferry, High School counselor; Kelli Cookfair, Union East Elementary School social worker; Joan Conti, High School social worker; and Reuben Owens, High School counselor.



## Blue Bridges Brings Police and Community Together

The Junior Challenge Club of the Cheektowaga Central Middle School in November joined with the Blue Bridges program to raise money for the Blue Mittens Project, a holiday fundraiser that treats deserving area children to a shopping spree and lunch. Members of the Cheektowaga Police Department and their spouses worked with staff and students at the Middle School to raise money for this worthy cause, which puts a smile on the faces of children at holiday time. Police spouses held a bake sale at the Middle School on Nov. 19, and on Nov. 20 students gathered in the gym to watch a "cutthroat" game of volleyball between Middle School staff and police officers. Buffalo Sabres mascot Sabretooth delighted the crowd at the volleyball game by making a guest appearance. He is shown here greeting fans in the stands and posing for a photo with members of the Cheektowaga Police Department. (Photos by Kate Barbati)





# Joan Conti Named New York State Social Worker of the Year

Joan Conti, social worker at Cheektowaga Central High School, on Nov. 2 received the New York State School Social Worker of the Year Award at the Crowne Plaza in Syracuse. Joining Mrs. Conti as she was honored in Syracuse were (left to right) CIO Steven Wright, Superintendent Mary Morris, Mrs. Conti, Director of Pupil Services Gretchen Sukdolak, and High School Counselor Claudia Rodems.



## Parachute Volleyball Fun

Seventh-graders (left to right) Jordan Smith, Julius Elston, Wylmel Gonzalez Pachecho and Saniyah Johnson set up on their side of the net in a parachute volleyball game during physical education class. The sport is a big hit with Middle School students. (Photo by Kate Barbati)



## Parent Workshops Offered at Union East

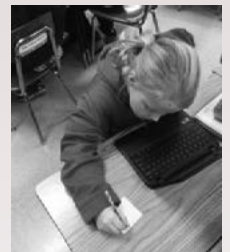
Parents and guardians are invited to attend free workshops on parenting children in prekindergarten, kindergarten and first grade. Dinner will also be served. The workshops will be held at Union East Elementary School, 3550 Union Road, Cheektowaga. Topics include Making a Connection! on Jan. 9; Why Do They Do What They Do? on Feb. 12; and Facing the Challenge on March 11. Dinner will be served at 5:30 p.m., with the workshops and parent discussion from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

More information will be sent home with students. For more information or to RSVP, contact Audra Cyrulik at 686-3616 or [acyrulik@ccsd-k12.net](mailto:acyrulik@ccsd-k12.net).

## Writing Initiative

*Continued from page 1*

the writing process. The team structured a plan to carry out the recommendation to explicitly teach strategies for the writing process, including planning and goal setting, drafting, evaluating, revising, and editing. This is just the beginning of our task to guide our students to write more effectively.



Superintendent Mary Morris has charged every teacher districtwide to improve the quality and quantity of writing in each classroom. She invites parents and guardians to ask their children to share their writing, and continue to encourage them to make visible their thinking using whatever writing format or tool they choose. Don't hesitate to ask your child's teacher for tools or strategies to increase the support of writing in and out of the classroom.

To guide our work, district teachers and administrators are studying "The Core Six: Essential Strategies for Achieving Excellence with the Common Core" (Silver, Dewing, Perini, 2012). Any parent or guardian who desires a copy of the text may request it by emailing [mgeorge@ccsd-k12.net](mailto:mgeorge@ccsd-k12.net).

# Veterans Day Breakfast is a Great Success

Union East Elementary School celebrated Veterans Day in a very special way. Approximately 70 veterans were honored for their service to our country by being served breakfast, watching students perform, and receiving a certificate recognizing all that they have done for us and our country. "The turnout was incredible!" said Mrs. Rogers, who helped coordinate the celebration.



America's White Table, honoring those who did not return from war, was explained to begin the ceremony. Two of Mr. Dolan's Middle School students played "Taps" and the song recognizing each branch of the military. Mrs. Robinson and the fourth-grade chorus performed two patriotic songs. The halls were decorated in red, white, and blue, and student work was displayed recognizing our veterans. PTA volunteers and Union East faculty and staff helped welcome and seat guests and clear plates while the presentations were going on. The veterans were very appreciative. This was the seventh time an event of this magnitude has taken place at Union East, and it definitely will not be the last.



# District Appoints Steven Wright to IT/CIO Position

Steven Wright, former principal of Pine Hill Education Center, has been appointed to the position of director of Instructional Technology/chief information officer for the Cheektowaga Central School District.

As chief information officer (CIO), Mr. Wright serves as the liaison between the District and the State Education Department regarding data reporting. He will oversee our student management system and coordinate the process for ensuring accurate data is being reported from other District data sources. Furthermore, he will assist in the collection, visualization, and analysis/interpretation of data to improve the day-to-day operations of Cheektowaga Central.

As the director of Instructional Technology, Mr. Wright will administer the implementation of 21st century skills in Union East Elementary School, the Middle School, and the High School. Technology is an excellent tool to facilitate each of these 21st century skills, often referred to as the 4 C's: creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking. He will also assist administrators and teachers in leveraging technology to increase student engagement. It is the expectation that our students will be prepared for college and/or the workforce as they graduate from Cheektowaga Central.



Steven Wright

An employee in the District since 1991, Mr. Wright has served as a math teacher, coach, assistant principal, principal and director of pupil services. He is a certified trainer in Youth Mental Health First Aid, Restorative Practices, Nonviolent Physical Crisis Intervention, and Microsoft Educator. He earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Elmira College and a master's degree in education from Canisius College. We welcome Mr. Wright to his new position.

# Celebrating Kindness in School

Students in Mrs. Ernst's kindergarten class at Union East Elementary School loved celebrating World Kindness Day on Nov. 13. They each got a book about kindness and a special message.



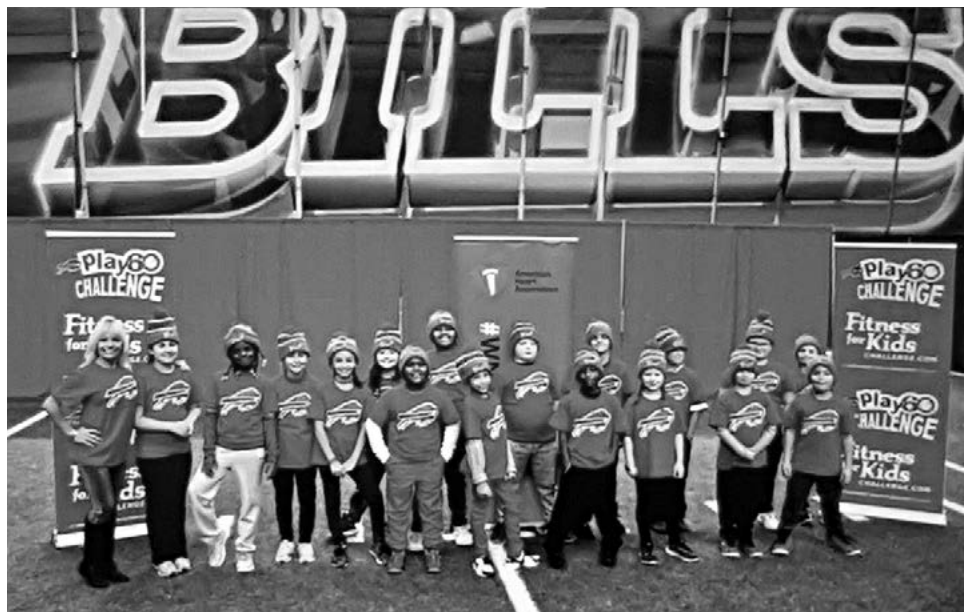




## Mrs. Reeb's Class Rewarded for Being Active

The lucky students in Leslie Reeb's fourth-grade class at Union East Elementary School attended the Nov. 25 Buffalo Bills game vs. the Jacksonville Jaguars as guests of the team. Mrs. Reeb's class was selected from more than 300 participating classes as the grand-prize winner in the Buffalo Bills NFL Play 60 Challenge, a fitness competition for youth sponsored by the Buffalo Bills and Independent Health. Students had to complete 60 minutes a day of physical activity for the month of October.

Each student received a free ticket to the game, plus one for a parent or guardian, for theater-style seating indoors in the Buffalo Bills Goal Line Clubhouse. The game-day experience also included a catered lunch, pregame activities in the Adpro Sports Training Facility, a parking pass, Bills t-shirt, hat, and gloves, some other souvenirs, and a secret gift sent at Christmas. Mrs. Reeb says besides the exciting Bills victory, students said the highlight was having their class picture displayed and announced on the Jumbotron.



## Message from the Superintendent *continued from page 2*

Soon we will be looking at a plan to get a device in the hands of every student, every day, all day. Keep in mind that a Chromebook or iPad in your child's hands doesn't make a 21st century learner. It is about the four Cs: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity and innovation. We are committed to creating an environment that embraces these four Cs. Check out this link to learn more: [www.nea.org/assets/docs/A-Guide-to-Four-Cs.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/A-Guide-to-Four-Cs.pdf).

### Parent Engagement

In our relentless pursuit of the District's vision and mission "To Inspire a high level of learning for all," I am encouraging our parents to take an active role in your child's education and the educational community at large. Your input is vital to the District moving forward towards a brighter future for all. Consider volunteering, joining a focus group, joining the PTA, accessing the Parent Portal or the remind APP or the district APP on a daily basis. With you on our side supporting our work, we can accomplish it all!

## Fall Scholar Athlete Teams

Congratulations to the fall Scholar Athlete Teams. Athletes who earned a grade point average of 90 percent or higher will receive a pin.

Girls Volleyball - 96.063 (9 athletes)  
 Girls Swimming - 96.599 (18 athletes)  
 Girls Tennis - 95.413 (11 athletes)  
 Girls Soccer - 94.093 (15 athletes)  
 Boys Soccer - 92.70 (10 athletes)  
 Boys Volleyball - 91.527 (5 athletes)  
 Football - 88.06 (11 athletes)

**CHEEKTOWAGA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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**Cornerstone 1**

Establish procedures that  
clarify expectations &  
enhance learning

**Vision**  
**To inspire****Cornerstone 2**

Build meaningful  
relationships with staff,  
students and community to  
promote learning

**Priority 1**

Utilize the four cornerstones  
to improve student learning

**Priority 2**

Focus on the  
whole child

**Priority 3**

Create opportunities for our  
students that incorporate  
21st-century skills

**Cornerstone 3**

Develop a culture of  
thinking & learning

**Mission**

Inspire a high level of  
learning for all students

**Cornerstone 4**

Motivate staff and students  
to do their best work &  
inspire the love of learning

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School Board meetings are generally held the second Tuesday of the month at the District Office, 3600 Union Road, Cheektowaga, at 7 p.m.  
Those planning on attending are encouraged to verify meeting date and time by calling 686-3606.