

# NILES NEWS

[www.nilesschools.org](http://www.nilesschools.org)

March 2019

## A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

In past newsletters, I've bragged about our students and their successes in the classroom and on stages, fields, and courts. It is just as easy to boast about Niles Community Schools staff going above and beyond to support our students on their journeys to success. Lately, I have found myself singing praises about parents showing up in droves to our athletic, club, and PTO events. In this newsletter, I have a new group of individuals that I want to brag about – our community.

In the past few years, we have held forums on important topics and the community's citizens and service organizations attended and expressed their willingness to support our school. Over the past few months, we have had many more community members offer assistance in several unique and important ways.

In February, we assembled a committee of parents, staff and local emergency personnel to discuss the school district's communication tactics during crises and threats. The ideas generated from that committee helped to frame our next steps toward improving communication.

In March, the Niles Education Foundation hosted a Mystery Dinner to bring awareness to the arts and fundraise for a new stage at the high school. Our volunteer board members put a lot of energy into bringing innovation into the classroom through their fundraising efforts.

Each of our career technical programs have local advisory professionals who donate their time to meet with teachers and ensure the skills emphasized in the curricula match the expectations of the field our

students will be entering. Our advisory boards are filled to capacity with knowledgeable locals generously offering their valuable time.

Both local community colleges have reached out to our secondary and curriculum departments to ask how they can serve our students and families better. Niles District Library has partnered with us in offering evening adult education classes at their location. Lakeland Hospital and the Niles-Buchanan YMCA have fostered employee and student physical and mental health by sharing their expertise at our professional development days. Numerous organizations are creating or increasing their scholarships to support students bound for trade schools.

There are many, many other individuals and organizations

that volunteer a large amount of their time so our students can be successful. We make sure the students notice and give back through community services and other gestures that support the community as a whole. Please read this newsletter to learn about the exciting things happening in our schools and the successes our students have had. Know that Niles Community Schools appreciates all that you do to help our students become successful and dynamic learners.

*Dr. Daniel Applegate  
Superintendent*

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## READING MONTH CELEBRATION AT BALLARD

Deb Burkhard, 1st Grade Teacher

While most people were preparing for their holiday celebrations, a team at Ballard was already planning for March—National Reading Month! Some staff members had noticed that Ballard had not celebrated Reading Month in several years and wanted to change that this school year. They began brainstorming and plans fell into place. This year's theme book is *If You Give a Pig a Pancake*. A kick-off assembly introduced a challenge to the students: read books all month long and fill out a book log for every 15 minutes spent reading. When the log is full, students turn it in to their teachers and receive a paper cut-out pig. Students sign their names on their pig and place in the showcase in the front of the building. When the

showcase is full, our principal, Mr. Blood, will kiss a pig in front of the entire school!

Along with the challenge, teachers are decorating their classroom doors to look like book covers and several dress-up days are planned: wear a hat for Cat in the Hat Day, wear a t-shirt with text, dress like a book character, and wear relaxed reading clothes. Students will have pancakes for lunch the day before Mr. Blood kisses a pig. Staff members have had their pictures taken holding their favorite books and posted them in the library to encourage students to discover a new book this month.

Excitement is growing at Ballard. Hopefully, a love of reading is, too!



## BALLARD HOSTS SCIENCE OLYMPIAD

Susan White, 4th Grade Teacher

Students from Ballard and Howard-Ellis Elementaries combined for an exciting event on March 5<sup>th</sup>. Sponsors Susan White from Ballard and Sara Grishaber from Howard-Ellis teamed up to organize an enjoyable day where students competed in fun events, like Egg Drop, Catapult, Marshmallow Shooting, and more. Curious Kids had nine tables filled with activities for the students to explore. The Gem Society brought gems and fossils for students to

examine. One of Ballard's former third grade teachers and Science Olympiad coaches, Deborah Okeley, visited from St. Joseph to run the catapult event, and Mrs. Arlene Richardson, retired Ballard librarian, helped PTO member Mrs. Wyant run the Egg Drop event. The combined teams from Ballard and Howard-Ellis had help from 15 parent volunteers. It was a fantastic event that everyone enjoyed!



Above: Ballard Science Olympiad team, with sponsor Ms. Susan White.

Below: Blossomland Gem & Mineral Society at Science Olympiad



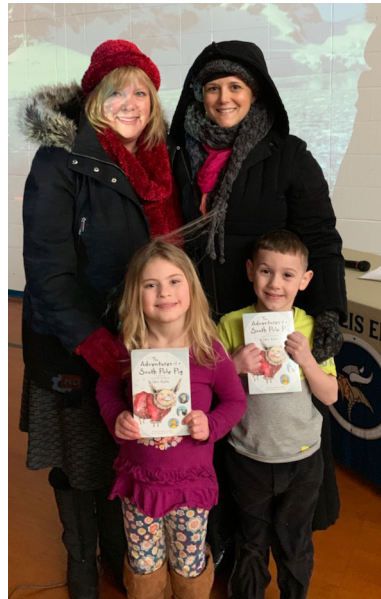


# HOWARD-ELLIS: ONE SCHOOL, ONE BOOK

For the second year, Howard-Ellis Elementary is celebrating National Reading Month in March by participating in One School, One Book. This year's book, *The Adventures of a South Pole Pig* by Chris Kurtz, was revealed at a school-wide assembly on Monday, March 4<sup>th</sup>. That afternoon, every family received a copy of the book and a reading schedule that guides all families to read the same chapters at the same time. Our support and kitchen staff, custodians, bus drivers, board members and central office administrators also received a copy of the book. Each morning, students answer trivia questions or listen to a book chat from Principal Asmus that ties in with the previous night's reading.

Children and adults alike have fallen in love with Flora, the main character, who is a pig with desire for adventure. She is curious, courageous, and we will soon find out that she is resilient, too.

"Flora goes after what she wants. She doesn't hesitate," said fifth grader Jayla. Ava, also in fifth grade, was similarly impressed with the book's characters. "I like to read about the emotions and the feelings of the animals. Flora doesn't take no for an answer." Jacobo is enjoying the action in the book. "I like to hunt, so I am really enjoying this book about Flora's adventures." Mrs. Zimmerman, a fourth grade teacher, believes that reading about characters with



Above: Principal Asmus and Assistant Principal Rough celebrate Reading Month with students.

positive traits sets a good example for students.

Our goal is to create a culture of literacy in every home by promoting the habit of reading on a regular basis. Children who have been read to at home come to school better prepared and become better readers themselves—their comprehension and vocabulary develops more fully.

The next time you see a Howard-Ellis student, ask them what happened in the latest chapter of *The Adventures of a South Pole Pig*. They can't wait to tell you about it!



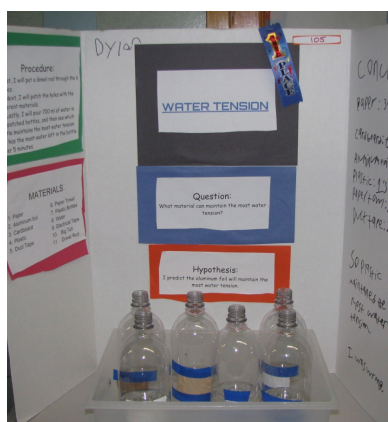
## SOUTHSIDE SCHOOL

**Science Fair**  
Southside students recently showed off their talents at the school science fair. They researched and worked on their projects for several weeks before displaying them at Parent-Teacher Conferences in February. Science teachers from Niles Community Schools judged each project. This year's winners are pictured above from left to right: Dylan Gleason, Chatten Curtis, Jacob Scally,

Brittney Watson, Tonya Turnock and Alex Clingenpeel.

### Read Naturally

Read Naturally is a research-based program that helps students become better readers, with a focus on comprehension and vocabulary. Three or four times a week, students spend a half hour reading with Mrs. Barton. Southside students' reading skills have been improving since beginning this program.



## READING FUELS OUR HUNGER AT RING LARDNER

March is Reading Month and Ring Lardner has been celebrating everything reading! Students and staff have been celebrating their favorite books through book talks posted on RLTV, book giveaways, daily reading challenges, and a "bookstore" that gives students a free book of their choice. At Ring Lardner we emphasize Reading Month because when students understand why they are being asked to complete an activity, they are more likely to be invested and try harder. Educators explain why reading is important and use those reasons to motivate students. Some students will be motivated to disappear into a fantasy or science fiction world and wonder about things only possible in their imagination. Some will find solace in reading about flawed characters with whom they identify, or heroes and heroines they aspire to be. Whatever the motivation, the "why" has to transcend passing a test or getting ready for the next grade.

This month, Ring Lardner held its "March Madness of Fruits and Vegetables" contest. We have paired several types of produce against each other to determine which one will be the champ! In this competition, students are introduced to healthy eating habits, and the bracketing challenge introduces foods that some kids hadn't heard of before. In addition, the Van Buren ISD has been giving lessons in nutrition. Students learn about new foods, ways to prepare them, and why to eat them. The health committee is currently planning an end-of-the-year field day activity in June.

Ring Lardner Middle School has had a successful first semester, and has a very promising second semester lined up with the Michigan Model for Health Curriculum. Healthy habits will be beneficial for students they prepare for PSAT, MSTEP, and NWEA assessments beginning after spring break. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade window for PSAT and MSTEP is April 8 – May 3 and 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade MSTEP will take place April 29 – May 24. NWEA for all grades is April 16 – May 9. Ring Lardner will provide families with a testing calendar as soon as it is finalized.

Ring Lardner is also continuing our push to promote healthy habits. Research has found strong evidence that students who make good health-related decisions do better in school.

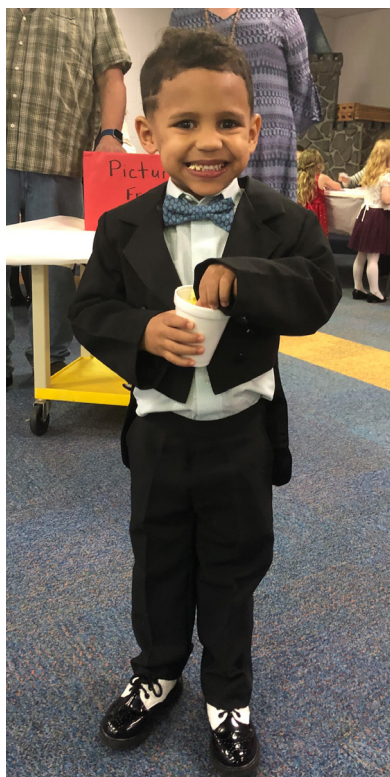




# NEWS AT NORTHSIDE SCHOOL



**Sweetheart Dance**  
 Northside school held their annual Sweetheart Dance on February 7<sup>th</sup>. Families had their pictures taken at the photo booth, made crafts, had snacks and danced the night away. It was wonderful to see so many families in attendance and to see everyone dressed up!



## Quest for a Million Pennies

Northside participated in the B100 Quest for A Million Pennies, which benefits St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Students brought in pennies and were happy to know that they were helping sick kids. The school raised \$244.71.



Above: Representative from B100 picks up donated pennies.

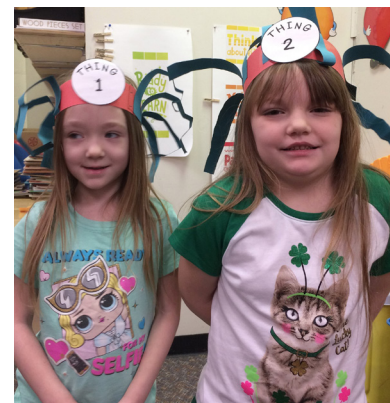


Above, Below: Northside students deposit their pennies.



## March Reading Month

Northside Child Development Center is celebrating National Reading Month with events each week of March. The month was kicked off with Ann Bingham, curriculum director, reading to the students and dancing to "Toody Ta." On March 7<sup>th</sup>, Mayor Tim Shelton read to the school and enjoyed singing and dancing with the students, as well. Northside will continue Reading Month with Dr. Seuss Week, firefighters reading to the students, Drop Everything And Read Day, and Kinder Connection students acting out books.



Above: Northside Students dress up as their favorite Dr. Seuss characters.

Below: Principal Jennifer Shabazz and Ann Bingham, Curriculum Director, read to students.



Below: Niles Mayor Tim Shelton shared his time with students by reading a book to them.







Left: Lunchtime basketball in the gym. Right: Holiday Helpers prepare a gift package for a neighborhood family. Pictured from left to right — Dustin Marsiglio, Trinity Holmes, Alex Smith, James Zulas, Katalina Green, Ty Lindsley, and Morgan Morrow.

## CEDAR LANE CELEBRATES SUCCESS

At a recent town hall meeting, Niles Cedar Lane students were given feedback in the form of some impressive numbers worth celebrating. Through the first semester at our new home in the former Oak Manor building, 84 percent of students attended at least 85 percent of their classes (approximately half attended 90 percent or more). Those students passed 92 percent of their classes. Most impressively, suspensions are down 56 percent from last year with approximately the same number of students enrolled.

These statistics illustrate the three pillars of success at Cedar Lane: attendance, academic achievement, and positive attitude and behavior.

These are three areas in which many students struggled prior to attending our school. This year's attendance and achievement numbers are similar to the standard we have maintained over the last several years. Our school has small classes where strong relationships and focused support are key factors in achieving those goals.

We believe that our new facility is helping us create a calmer learning environment, resulting in better behavior and a dramatic decline in suspensions. Students have worked together to model the positive qualities they want to see at school. Many say they feel much safer with the new building's structure and secure entryways. The

layout of classrooms and hallway allows for much better supervision between classes. Lockers secure personal items. Our large breakfast and lunch space gives each student ample personal space. Lunchtime basketball in the gym lets players burn off energy when it's too cold to go outside. Fitness instructors from the YMCA have led cardio drumming, hip-hop cardio, and zumba sessions in the gym. Students appreciate having classrooms with new technology and furniture.

Students are also enjoying new community service opportunities in the Oak Manor neighborhood. Students formed a leadership team to organize projects that help some of our neighbors in need. So far, we

have adopted two elderly neighbors and helped them with yard work. Students have learned they can come together, grab their tools, clean up a yard, share some kind words with a grateful neighbor and be back in the classroom in under an hour. Around the holidays, students put together a gift package for a single mother with four foster children. They gathered donations of toys, food and other necessities, then wrapped them and gave them to the family. Our students enjoy discovering the positive impact they can have on the people and neighborhood around them. They also take pride in knowing that those acts of kindness reflect positively on their school.

## NEW HORIZONS AT NILES NEW TECH

Our district provides many opportunities for students to experience careers and academia while in high school. Niles New Tech juniors and seniors have many choices in their coursework: dual enrollment classes at Lake Michigan College and Southwestern Michigan College, vocational classes on the Niles High School campus, and certification and degree programs through both colleges and NHS.

When a learner dual enrolls at one of the area colleges, he or she earns college credit that is also counted toward their high school completion. It is even possible for enrollees to earn a degree before graduating. This strategy has obvious benefits, including free tuition. Senior Alexa Vota states, "Having the opportunity to take

college classes before actually going to college has saved me from the stress of wondering how different college will be from high school. I have friends who are not taking dual enrollment classes and I know that they are very worried about how different college will be. I don't have that worry because I have been able to experience that difference already." Another learner, Audriana Ganus, believes dual enrollment has given her a head start. "Being a college student takes hard work, time, and commitment. I am prepared for my future and feel like I am starting ahead." Dual enrollment is a popular option at New Tech.

Vocational education opportunities abound on the Niles High School campus and partnering colleges. These courses allow learners to try

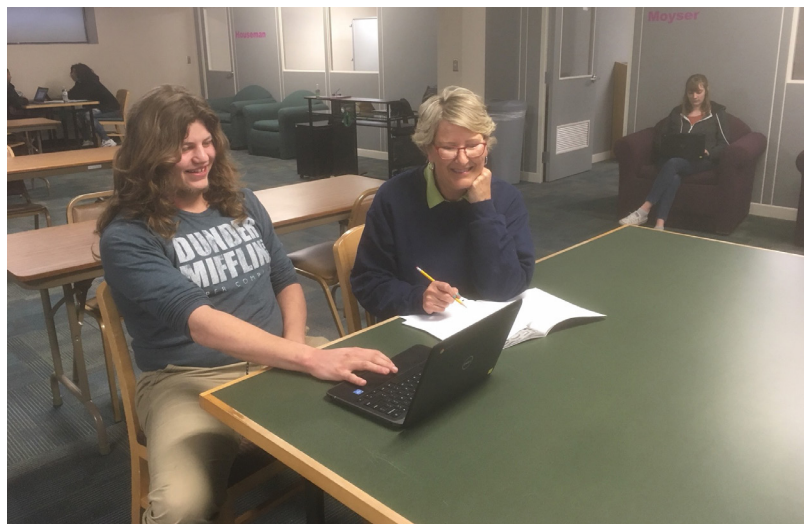
out a career and develop job-specific skills. In many cases, students can work towards a degree or certification. Jackson Lyden, a New Tech junior, has taken advantage of CTE on both high school and college campuses. "I really enjoy the CTE programming at Niles because it provides exposure to future pathways for students who may not be the college bound type. It is also a nice change to have more hands-on education rather than day-to-day classwork. Many of the opportunities I have had because of CTE have majorly impacted my life in the most positive way." Many sophomores, juniors, and seniors take advantage of the CTE courses offered, including graphic design, culinary arts, agriculture, automotive technology, and allied health.

Of course there are many more options on campus, such as AP class and online courses. Junior Erin Thomas, shared her thoughts: "Taking AP classes while in New Tech has given me the opportunity to learn in a traditional environment, but still lets me learn in the PBL way." She believes her AP courses will benefit her in college, as well.

There are many options available to students, and oftentimes there is not a single right path. Each opportunity offers exposure to careers or college and a chance to explore personal interests. Niles is truly a district of many options and our learners benefit from our diverse services and partnerships!







## NILES ADULT EDUCATION MOVES TO THE LIBRARY

We are excited to announce that Niles Adult Education has found a new home in the heart of downtown at the Niles District Library. This move puts our program in a position to better serve the community’s educational needs and form partnerships that support our adult learners. The newly renovated lower level of the library now provides an accessible, inviting and comfortable space for our adult learners to complete a high school diploma or GED and pursue the next steps toward better employment, career training, and education. Now a single parent can study for the GED exam in the evening while his or her child enjoys a game night, pajama story time, or Lego building challenge in the children’s area.

The Niles District Library is a family friendly environment that has become the city’s hub of community information, learning, enrichment, and support services. The library offers social workers and social work interns who can help patrons with emergency and social services, family matters, and other issues. Michigan Works! Visits the library every other Wednesday afternoon to assist job seekers. Their talent development specialists help people register for unemployment, evaluate their strengths and skills, create or update a resume, sharpen their interview skills and take their next steps in career training and education. The Jobs for Life program helps people overcome barriers to employment related to prior legal difficulties. Positive parenting classes, addiction recovery support groups, and tax services are available, along with

many more activities that inform, entertain, and enrich all ages.

Our sincere thanks goes out to Library Director Nancy Studebaker and the Library Board for their perseverance, collaboration and vision in making this partnership a reality. It is truly a perfect fit for Niles Adult Education, the library and the community.

For information, please call or stop by to see us at our new location.

Niles Adult Education  
Niles District Library  
620 E. Main St. (Lower Level)  
Niles, MI 49120  
(269) 262-5121

Office hours (public/walk-in):  
Monday - Thursday, 12-8 p.m.  
Classroom hours:  
Monday - Thursday 3-8 p.m.



Top (left to right): Justin Cooper (student), Patty Eycleshymer (teacher), and student Chloe Ferrel (student).

Above: A new home for Niles Adult Education.

## THE W.A.Y. PROGRAM

Happy Spring! We at the WAY program are excited about seeing the sun more often. As the days brighten, we would love to share with the community our spotlight student: Gabrielle Sheets.

Gaby (as she prefers to be called) has been a student with the WAY program for a little over a year. She came to us as a junior and is working towards graduation in the next couple of months. Gaby is always smiling and positive. She was recently awarded a scholarship from Southwestern Michigan College because of her high GPA of 3.8.

She shared how the program has helped her. “The Niles WAY program has made completing my education so much easier and without it I would still be struggling to finish high school. At my old school, I had a hard time getting to school because of family emergencies and I had a hard time keeping up with my grades. With the WAY program, I can do my classes at any time for any time period which is so helpful with my crazy schedule. I have been more successful with this program, my



grades and GPA are a reflection of that. I received a \$1,000 scholarship that covers all four quarters of my first year of college solely because of my GPA, and I thank the WAY program for helping me achieve my academic goals.”

We are proud of Gaby and the many other students in our program that have taken full advantage of our program to achieve success.

## NILES EXTENDED SCHOOL COMMUNITY UPDATE

Gail Bliss, Home School Liason

It is never too early to set goals for next year. NESC (Niles Extended School Community) provides electives that allow students to learn and develop a variety of skills. The goal of NESC courses is to individualize instruction and promote excellence in personal growth. NESC electives are available to any student registered with Niles Community Schools. Our class list for the 2019-2020 school year will be posted soon on [www.nileshsp.com/courses](http://www.nileshsp.com/courses). These virtual courses include the option of working hands-on with a community expert to supplement online education.

Azariah takes elective P.E. courses with a community expert to try a new skill: Crossfit. His goal is to become the “fittest teenager on earth” in the world of crossfit.

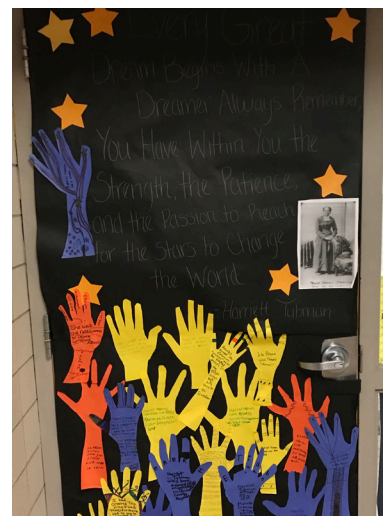
He is well on his way — Azariah is currently ranked 16th in the United States in his category. This is quite an accomplishment! The discipline he has learned through study will serve him well in his career.

According to The Balance Careers, the top skills that employers seek in their prospective employees are:

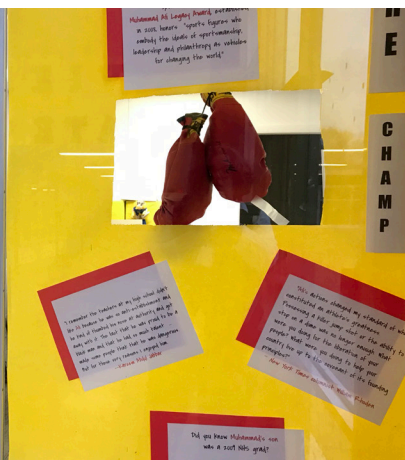
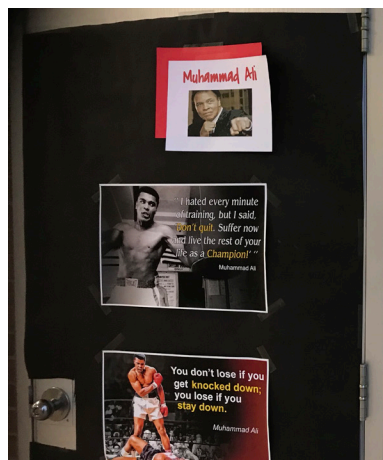
1. Analytical Reasoning
2. Communication
3. Interpersonal Skills
4. Leadership
5. Positive Attitude
6. Teamwork
7. Technical Skills.

Source: Do You Have the Top Skills Employers Want? Alison Doyle - <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/top-skills-employers-want-2062481>.





Door decorations in recognition of Black History Month. Clockwise from top left: "Look Inside Black History Month"; George Washington Carver, agricultural scientist; Guion Bluford, astronaut; Harriet Tubman, abolitionist; Duke Ellington, jazz musician; and Muhammad Ali, boxer.



## NILES HIGH SCHOOL HAPPENINGS

The Class of 2019 is counting down graduation, and at the time of writing, there are about 60 days to go. With the high number of snow days this year, many activities and events occurred late, so every grade is incredibly busy catching up.

### Black History Month: Opening Doors Campaign

During the month of February, classrooms decorated their doors in honor of a prominent African-American figure whose accomplishments they had chosen to research. The doors were AMAZING, and so many different areas of expertise were showcased. The event culminated with prizes for the winning classroom door. The three overall winners were Mrs. Isabel's class, who featured Harriet Tubman, Mrs. Rogers' class, who showcased George Washington Carver, and Mrs. Culbertson's class, who made a collage dedicated to a variety of trailblazers.

### Godspell

The Vocal Music department of presented the musical Godspell in early March. Over 50 cast and crew members were involved in the

production, which they had been preparing for since December.

### Carry the Love

Students Against Destructive Decision Making (SADD) sponsored a school-wide assembly in March called Carry the Love. Recommended by other schools across the state and country, the assembly focused on caring for others and challenged our students to express kindness in many different ways.

### Career Pathways Day

In February, the entire freshman class headed off to Lake Michigan College for Career Pathways Day, the first of many real-life experiences our students will have before graduating from high school. They learned about specific careers, trade schools, colleges and universities. The information will be helpful as career planning becomes a larger focus of their education.

### Competitive Clubs

Our national award-winning **Future Farmers of America (FFA)** chapter advanced from regional competition in the Agriculture

Issues and Parliamentary Procedures competitions. Both teams advanced from the first round of state competition. Although not repeating as state champions this year, the Parliamentary Procedures (a.k.a. Parli Pro) earned third and a gold rating, and Agricultural Issues (Ag Issues) earned a silver ranking. Congrats to all our members!

Our **HOSA** group, formerly known as Health Occupations Student Organization, also advanced to state competition. Seven members will compete in a variety of areas in the medical field against 3,000 other Michigan students. They recently presented to the NCS Board of Education about their achievements. Mrs. Angie Mann advised the group. She is a registered nurse and leads our Professional Health Careers Academy and Allied Health programs.

**Business Professionals of America (BPA)** is also competing at the state level in March. Mr. Bill Prenkert, who teaches marketing, advises our BPA chapter.

The newly-formed **Model United Nations** club will be heading off to their first state competition

in March, as well. Model United Nations, also known as Model UN or MUN, is an academic simulation in which students can learn about diplomacy, international relations and the United Nations.

### Band Competition

Both our concert and symphonic bands competed at the spring MSBOA competition at the Mendel Center and walked away with the ratings of 1 in sight reading. The symphonic band received a Division 1 overall, and concert band received a Division 2. Mr. Doe is extremely proud of both bands for their excellent performances!

### Guest Artist

Our AP 2D Studio Art students were treated to a day-long event with guest artist, Clint Krueger, who specializes in 3D art. Mr. Helm's students worked with the artist creating clay masks.





## NILES EDUCATION FOUNDATION NEWS

The Niles Education Foundation has been a busy bunch the past few months! We have recently awarded close to \$20,000 to teachers who applied for grants to invigorate their classrooms in new and innovative ways that help students achieve their academic goals.

Joseph Morsaw, a high school math and science teacher, received funds to purchase magnetic levitation vehicles to help students better comprehend concepts like aerodynamics, physics, magnetics, and vehicle design.

At Cedar Lane, Dawn Green and Angelecque Thornton will use funds to attend "Why Try?", a webinar focused on helping at-risk students with bullying and dropout prevention, changing behaviors, improving academics, drug and alcohol prevention, improving decision making, and truancy reduction.

Scott Morgan, an art teacher who rotates throughout the district, received funds for equipment to help his students create digital art and research artists. Be sure to look out for future events where you can see student art on display!

Paula Rose, a kindergarten teacher at Eastside, received \$1,000 for kits intended to help students connect their learning between school and home. These kits have hands-on that children and parents can do together.

At Northside Child Development Center, Jennifer Duis will be using her funds to create fine motor development activities, which are essential to bolstering her students' ability to master skills needed in kindergarten and beyond, like holding a pencil properly and using scissors.

Ballard Elementary first grade teacher Debra Burkhard will be exposing her students to "An Ant's

Life." First graders will get to observe, read about, and report on their the fascinating lives of ants and their complex social behavior.

Ring Lardner eighth grade teachers Alicia Kuntz and Cody Armstrong, along with their students, will participate in an activity called "What's Your Word?" Students will choose a word that is important to them and stamp it onto a metal washer to make a bracelet, which will be a daily reminder to help them stay focused and engage in self-reflection.

Finally, on March 1st, over 60 community members came together at the Niles Elks Lodge for a rootin' tootin' good time at our third Murder Mystery event. These events have already raised thousands of dollars that are earmarked to improve the high school auditorium. We would especially like to thank Niles Elks Lodge #1322, Jim's Smokin' Café, Jim Leister and the Murder

Mystery Company for helping us with this fun event!

Mark your calendars for our next event, the annual Legendary Evening Gala, which will take place on August 9 at Fifty 5 at the Grand LV, 104 S. 3rd Street in Niles. The gala will honor "Exemplary Vikings," and the Foundation is currently seeking nominations for the distinction. Exemplary Vikings must be graduates of Niles High School and have made a positive impact in society. Nomination forms are due April 15 and can be found at [www.nileseducationfoundation.org](http://www.nileseducationfoundation.org). Stay up to date by visiting our website and Facebook page.

## EASTSIDE CONNECTIONS: BUILDING STRONG SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL FOUNDATIONS

This semester, a new specials class has kicked off at Eastside Connections School. In addition to art, music, gym and media, K-5 students will now participate in social-emotional learning (SEL) workshop. SEL workshop is a weekly 45-minute class that teaches interpersonal skills and introspection.

In this class, students learn to use a tool called the "mood meter." The mood meter helps students identify their emotions based on levels of pleasantness and energy. Keera Morton-Hayes, Eastside's student affairs specialist, leads the class. She explains, "through students learning to identify different emotions and growing their feeling words vocabulary, the ability to process and explain their own emotions allows for greater ability to empathize with others and manage conflict when it arises."

Conflict resolution skills are also a focus during SEL workshop. The curriculum helps students learn which problems they should try to solve on their own and when they should ask an adult for help.

Morton-Hayes explained her goals for the new class. "I want students to walk away from my class having shifted their perspective from 'grown ups are the best problem solvers' to 'I am the best person to solve my problems and grown ups are there to support me whenever I need help.' Experiencing unpleasant emotions and facing conflict is inevitable. Both of these things can be challenging for adults, which is why seeing students learning to pause, process their own feelings, then effectively communicate with peers when conflict arises is so impressive and inspiring."

Students and teachers are seeing the benefits of SEL workshop.

Fifth grader McKenna Albright said, "SEL Workshop has helped me understand that each feeling is okay and it's helping me solve my own problems. I'm learning to be more kind and accepting of everyone. I have started sitting at different lunch tables and am becoming friends with people that I haven't been close with before."

Rhonda Belcher, a second grade teacher, has also noticed a positive impact from the new class. "I have noticed a huge need for the social-emotional learning in my classroom. I'm so excited about the lessons my students are learning in regards to how to communicate their thoughts and feelings effectively. I have witnessed many students solving their own problems and even encouraging others to use their "I" statements to solve their problems. Just today I heard one student ask another if the problem was big or small. They

worked out their disagreement on their own and I did not hear any tattling! Happy Teacher!"

Morton-Hayes is planning to expand the program into middle school. "I have been so thrilled with how well-received the program has been. Now that it is up and running, I look forward to beginning classes with our middle school students, as well. My hope is to incorporate digital citizenship in middle level lessons to instill a strong understanding that whether face to face or behind a screen that showing strong character and respectfully handling disagreements should look the same. I look forward to continuing to get feedback from students, staff and families as we work to build a strong program that evolves with our students needs."