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WINTER 2024

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Service Above Self
INTERACT CLUB
MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Looking for a way to improve your teen’s health and well-being? According to a recent study published by the American Medical Association, volunteering might be one of the most impactful things a young person can do – not only for others, but for themselves. Experts say that volunteering is not only associated with better overall health and wellness, it also “helps kids feel a sense of purpose and connection to those around them.”

For students at Souderton Area High School (SAHS), the Interact Club offers a multitude of volunteer opportunities. Sponsored by local Rotary Clubs, Interact brings together more than 150 community-minded Souderton students who, following the Rotary International Club’s motto of “Service Above Self,” commit to a minimum of 15 hours of service in a wide range of activities.

GENIUS BAR

One of the more innovative activities this school year has been the implementation of a student-run “Genius Bar” at a local retirement community. Modeled after Apple’s help desk where customers can go to get tech support, students offer assistance to local retirees.

Connecting with the residents at the Peter Becker Community has become a favorite for students. The Genius Bar pairs students with senior citizens who have questions or need assistance with their tech devices. Some of the questions include simple ones such as how to start a text, or perhaps how to download pictures of

Continued on next page

their grandchildren so they can make a photo book, or how to link an iPad and computer. Twice a month students visit and provide help for the residents for whatever tech issue they may experience.

“We’re seeing a camaraderie develop that far exceeds the tech assistance, as the seniors stay just to visit with the students,” shared Interact Club advisor and SAHS Math teacher, Jennifer Detwiler. “It’s great for the residents to see kids in a different light than what is being shown on TV and the media.”

ANNUAL VETERANS’ BRUNCH

Souderton Area High School’s annual Veterans’ Brunch has become a signature event for Interact, as students take the lead in every aspect of the day.

“The students are so excited to see their hard work come to fruition, and to have the chance to show the veterans how much we appreciate their service,” shared Alison Kircher, School Counselor and one of the two club advisors.

Among the 120 attendees at this year’s event was guest of honor, 104-year-old WWII veteran Erick Wisenhutter, a resident of the Peter Becker Community. As a combat photographer, Wisenhutter was behind the camera at the D-Day invasion.

“He’s got a series of pictures that will knock your socks off. It’s not Hollywood; they’re actual combat pictures,” shared Peter Gallagher, a veteran himself, who spoke on Wisenhutter’s behalf.

After the war, Wisenhutter remained in the army reserve before becoming a chief warrant officer. In recognition of Wisenhutter’s military service, the Interact Club presented him with a donation made in his name to the National World War II Museum in New Orleans.

THE DESIRE TO SERVE

Students may join Interact at any point in time in their high school journey. The only requirement is a desire to serve. The leadership model allows older students to mentor the younger club members, so there is always a steady stream of trained leaders to step up each year.

Students in Souderton Area High School’s largest school group have put in 1,400 volunteer hours in 83 school and community events in just the past six months. It’s hard to believe the club started just 8 years ago with only 8 students. “We are the definitive ‘go to’ for community organizations seeking student volunteers,” Detwiler said.



Above: Veteran Larry Kratz and student Addison Iannetta (President of SAHS Interact Club).



Above: Retired Chief Master Sergeant Daniel Gallagher who is also the President of the Peter Becker Veterans Club. Mr. Gallagher shared the history of WWII veteran Eric Wiesenhutter as the Interact Club honored Mr. Wiesenhutter for his service to our country.

Many local organizations are dependent on Interact to make their events possible. A grateful vendor from this year’s Fall Fest shared this perspective: “I wanted to let you know the kids who were helping Friday night were totally awesome! As soon as we pulled up, a young man came up to the car and offered to help and stayed with us until the car was completely unloaded...As a 70+ year old vendor with a bad back and disabled husband, I truly appreciated the help!” ★

The Interact Club is always looking for new volunteer opportunities and ways to help the community. If your organization is in need of volunteers, please feel free to contact Jennifer Detwiler at jdetwiler@soudertonsd.org.

INDIAN VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL AND FRANCONIA ELEMENTARY GET A FACELIFT

Major renovation projects are underway at Indian Valley Middle School and Franconia Elementary

FRANCONIA ELEMENTARY

Walk through the halls of Franconia Elementary and you will feel the historic charm of a school built in the 1940's. Franconia is undergoing a full renovation that will also preserve the character of the 83-year-old school. Renovations began the summer of 2022 and will be completed this winter. All classrooms in the original section of the building are being renovated, and spaces will be modernized to meet today's educational needs. Floors, ceilings, and walls are being updated with fresh surfaces and paint, new windows, insulation, lighting, bathroom, and kitchen/cafeteria upgrades. New HVAC, generator, and fire alarm systems will also be added to the school. To maintain some of the school's historic look and feel, windows were replaced with ones of a similar size and look as the originals, copulas and weather vanes were rebuilt and restored, and the original interior doors were repurposed and used as accent décor throughout classrooms.

INDIAN VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL

Indian Valley Middle School is entering the final stage of a two-year renovation that includes an addition housing new classrooms, small group instruction space, and some office space, as well as providing a new secure entry. The renovation will help to modernize the 60-year-old school, bringing it into compliance for accessibility, adding an elevator, renovated bathrooms, renovated classrooms, new lockers, and a general 'refresh.' The library will receive an upgrade, as will the school's auditorium and main office. Renovations should be complete in summer 2024 with a repaving of the school's parking lots. ★



Left: The weathervane and cupola on Franconia Elementary is one of the many features being preserved as the school undergoes a much-needed renovation.

Right: The renovation at Franconia Elementary included replacing windows with ones similar in style and size to the originals from the 1940's.



Above: A new wing and new science labs are part of the Indian Valley Middle School renovations.

SCIENCE FAIR CLUB

Inquiring Minds Want to Know!

Have you every wondered if water can be extracted from humid air? Or maybe you are really curious about the effects of music while you're studying. You might be asking yourself if eggshells can make plants grow faster. The Science Fair Club at Souderton Area High School (SAHS) provides an opportunity for students to not only ask these and many other questions, but also to search for and find the answers.

The key to any successful project is identifying an area that is of interest to the individual student. Mrs. Karen Wolfe, SAHS Science teacher and Science Fair Club advisor, is in her 30th year in this role and has seen some fantastic projects during that time.

The premise is simple: Students determine a problem they want to solve using scientific research and experimentation, develop a hypothesis on what they think the answer will be, then do the research using a variety of sources. Students conduct experiments or testing, collect all of the data, and create a PowerPoint or display board to present all of the information.

Mrs. Wolfe shared an interesting project that one of her students presented last year, which focused on current environmental concerns by using a bioremediation to reduce microplastics from the environment. Another unique project from last year was a statistical analysis to predict airline delays.

The most meaningful projects may develop when a student seeks to solve a more personal problem, such as the student who completed a series of experiments over the past three years seeking to improve the life of physically disabled children (his siblings) through engineered tools that he designed.

"I continue to be impressed by the level of enthusiasm each new group brings to the table," Wolfe said. "The topics for projects really vary according to the interests of each student. The kids are so engaged in the scientific process, and they love the chance to compete."

Throughout the year, there are a number of opportunities for Science Fair Club members to participate and compete. This year, SAHS will host the first competition of the school year when the Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science (PJAS) Montgomery County competition comes to Souderton on

Top: Roman Guagnozzi participated as a freshmen in last year's science fairs. Bottom: Adelina Cutrona (left) and Sophie Dubois (right) participated as freshmen in last year's science fairs.



February 24th. The high school will welcome over 300 students from across Montgomery County schools to the SAHS campus and share its enthusiasm for this event. Students who are successful at the local level will be invited to move on to the PJAS state competition at Penn State University, and possibly earn an invitation to the International Science and Engineering Fair later in the year.

Additional opportunities include the Montgomery County Science Research Competition and then the Delaware Valley Science Fair.

Participation in all of the competitions in each school year can cost each student more than \$300. If you or your organization would like to make a donation to support these students, please send your check in any amount to the Souderton Area High School, earmarked for the "Science Fair Club". With your help, we can continue to inspire students to develop their skills and talents as they explore the exciting world of STEM. ★

If you have questions about the club, please feel free to contact Mrs. Karen Wolfe, the club advisor, at kw Wolfe@soudertonsd.org.

43 YEARS OF SERVICE

Oak Ridge's Own "Night Owl"

The kind of dedication to a job that you'll find in Oak Ridge Elementary custodian John Ferguson is extremely unique in today's world. To Mr. Ferguson, who has been working in the Souderton Area School District since 1981, it's just a matter of enjoying his work.

Night custodian John Ferguson, age 60, began working part-time at Lower Salford Elementary at the age of 15, in between working at his autobody co-op as a student in the Souderton Area School District.

"At night it's so quiet, and I do enjoy that," Ferguson said. "But I also really enjoy when the kids are there." Ferguson says the Souderton community is friendly, kind, and feels like home. "I enjoy the people, and this job has been good to me."

Ferguson worked at Oak Ridge Elementary School and Souderton Area High School, as well as Lower Salford Elementary and Salford Hills Elementary. "I've always been a night owl," he said. The overnight hours suit his lifestyle.

When he's not cleaning the schools, Ferguson likes to attend car shows and tinker with his 1967 Chevelle. He took 11 years to restore it. At the age of 60, he plans to work several more years and says he appreciates the community atmosphere that embodies the Souderton Area School District. ★



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Ashley Paturzo

By all accounts, Ashley Paturzo is a star. SAHS Athletic Director Dennis Stanton describes her as "one of the best student athletes I've ever been around. The way she does anything is the way she does everything."

A serious ACL tear kept Paturzo on the sidelines for the entire field hockey season of her junior year, but the injury didn't keep her from showing up at every practice and every game, serving as a student assistant coach. After a full year of intense rehab, Ashley returned to the field this fall for her senior season, and was named the **Souderton Fall Female Athlete of the Year** for her outstanding play and leadership.

That excellence and leadership are on display in the classroom as well, as Paturzo is enrolled in Honors and AP classes, carries a 5.2 grade point average, scored 1550 on the SATs, and holds multiple leadership roles in the school. Paturzo has committed to continue her education and field hockey career at Brown University next year. She will be majoring in Biology with the goal of becoming a doctor. With the resilience and commitment she has already demonstrated, we're betting Ashley can do anything she sets her mind to. ★



JOIN OUR TEAM!

SASD is hiring full-time and part-time staff.
Be part of a Community Where Character Counts!

INDIAN VALLEY EDUCATION FOUNDATION



The Indian Valley Education Foundation (IVEF) is on a mission to enrich and expand the educational experiences of every child in the Souderton Area School District. For the past 32 years, the Foundation has accomplished this by leveraging the resources within our community. These resources can take many forms, such as an Eagle Scout project creating an outdoor space at one of the schools, community groups and volunteers donating a full day of service, or businesses and organizations taking time to talk with students about what is needed in today's working environment. Every year, the IVEF donates approximately \$150,000 to the District in programs and resources. These programs are as varied as the many students who benefit from them:

★ ENGINEERING LAB

Univest Financial funded a state-of-the-art Engineering Lab at Souderton Area High School. The lab features cutting-edge CAD (computer-aided design) technology that will benefit students interested in the fields of architectural design and drafting, engineering, HVAC design, interior design, and many more!

★ INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING

Teacher Grants for Innovative Programming – over the past year this has included Immersive Learning through field trips, new art display panels for the Art & Soul Fest, and PocketLab Physics sensors for the middle school science fair!

★ CUSTOM GREENHOUSE

Providing funding to support the design and construction of a custom greenhouse that is used for multidisciplinary purposes in SASD. This 2,500 square foot space accommodates an aquaponics system, a traditional growing area (raised metal tables), and a classroom area. It is a point of pride for our students, teachers, and community. There is always something “growing on” in the greenhouse!

★ MUSIC FOR EVERYONE

Music for Everyone is an initiative created to ensure all students have the opportunity to participate in instrumental music programs. Watch for the upcoming announcement of our drive to collect lightly used instruments, which will be refurbished for student use.

★ SASD NATION

SASD Nation connects with more than 15,000 Souderton alumni, including providing support for reunions.

★ EDUCATIONAL TRIPS

IVEF provides financial support to offset educationally based trips, especially for those students who come from low-income households.

These are just a few of the multitude of programs and projects supported by IVEF. We want all of our students to have access to opportunities and resources that support a top-notch education to ensure the future success of our community. With your help, that is what IVEF does! ★

There are endless ways you can be involved. Visit the IVEF Web site at www.indianvalleyef.org to learn more.

High School Student Center

CREATIVE SPACES FOR LEARNING TO THRIVE



Many of us have a vision of a school library that includes a very quiet space filled with books and computers, where students can conduct independent research or study for a test. The Souderton Area High School library and the expanding Student Center it houses includes all of that - and so much more.

One of the most innovative and exciting projects supported by the Indian Valley Education Foundation (IVEF), the Student Center has already become a destination for students to take their learning to the next level.

“The goal is for this area to become the main hub of the high school, allowing us to continue to expand programming opportunities for students,” shared RuthE Potter, Executive Director of the IVEF.

With multiple meeting spaces, the Student Center is being used as a Career & Collaboration Corner for students. Peer counseling, “Restorative Practices” sessions with students and faculty members, and training sessions on Executive Functioning are just a few of the events already happening in this space. Faculty members also have the ability to reserve space to work with students during the “Red Zone” (the first 40 minutes of every morning when students may seek some extra help from teachers).

“The beauty of this space is it can be used for such a wide variety of activities,” said Potter. The newly installed glass walls give the area a wide open appearance while allowing multiple events to take place at the same time.

The IVEF has been working with community partners to develop and expand the Student Center. In 2022, the Almac Group, a global company that is headquartered locally, provided the funding for the development of the initial area. Almac provides international services and support for the drug development industry.

Through Almac’s financial support, the IVEF was able to outfit the initial section of the space with new furnishings and technology to foster collaboration, small group opportunities, and speakers. Additional funding from an SAHS Alumni, the Wendy K. Gallagher Memorial Fund, SAHS Class donations, and support of Alderfer Glass have allowed the development of other areas within the center.

A wonderful outgrowth of the partnership with Almac has been a hands-on career exploration experience with students, enabling them to visit the company’s North American headquarters in Souderton; film, edit, and produce video interviews featuring Almac employees and their firsthand career experiences; and create a digital tool for their peers that maps Almac’s career opportunities to the school’s Pathway 360° program. Since the original installation in the Student Center, Almac Group has expanded its offerings to students in the form of mentorship opportunities.

The IVEF plans to continue to expand the Student Center, bringing in more community partners to follow Almac’s lead in providing opportunities and services for students.

“Almac has shared resources and a commitment to our school district in a unique and impactful way,” said Potter. “We hope this will light a spark with other area businesses to consider their role in positively supporting public education. Creating tomorrow’s workforce begins today.” ★

20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

From the moment you enter the parking lot, there is no mistaking that something special is taking place at Vernfield Elementary School. Banners hanging from lamp posts demonstrate the school's pride in celebrating its 20th Anniversary.

Vernfield kicked off its anniversary celebrations in September when the Vernfield Chorus sang the National Anthem at the Lehigh Valley IronPigs baseball game. More than 400 Vernfield Elementary students, parents, and faculty members came to watch the students perform.

The Vernfield Home and School Association (HSA) has been the school's greatest supporter. This year, with the HSA's support, the school was able to launch a 20th anniversary mobile school store. The "Vernfield Smart Mart" (named in a school-wide vote) visits each pod throughout the school year, where students can purchase 20th anniversary Vernfield gear.

The school's stage got a big 20th anniversary upgrade, thanks to the support of its Home and School Association. New safety padding has been added to the front of the stage, helping to protect students who use the space during physical education. The main lobby also has a bit of nostalgia, with framed photographs of Vernfield Elementary through all phases of construction. The new stage padding proudly displays Spirit, the school mascot, and the school name in a large font! The shovel and pickax used during the groundbreaking are also on display in the main lobby, along with a special display case highlighting the years of service by members of the faculty and staff.

Spirit's Buddy Classroom 20th Anniversary Trivia Challenge is a school-wide competition that allows "buddy classrooms" (a primary classroom paired with an intermediate classroom) to compete to answer trivia questions related to Vernfield Elementary. A total of 20 interesting trivia questions will be presented throughout the year during morning announcements. The first classroom to call the office with the correct answer wins a point for both their classroom and their buddy classroom. The buddy classrooms with the most points at the end of the school year will win a special 20th anniversary party complete with a visit by Spirit, the Vernfield Elementary School mascot. ★



In the fall, more than 90 students entered a 20th anniversary t-shirt design contest. Fifth grader Alice Wesley captured the festive nature of the 20th anniversary with her balloon-filled design.

School Board Recognition Month

January is designated as School Board Recognition Month by PSBA, and we want to thank our dedicated Souderton Area School District Board of School Directors who make a difference in our community and for our students. They are volunteers who spend countless hours helping to provide oversight for our school system and representation for the members of our community.



Rear: Michael Taylor (Board Secretary), Andrew Landis, Stephen Nelson (Board Vice President), Ken Keith (Board President), Michael Barnacz, and Elisa Ball (Board Treasurer). Front: Kimberly Wheeler, William Brong, Janet Flisak, William Formica, and Nicholas Braccio.

RECORD-BREAKING SEASONS

for Football and Cross Country



2023 was a historically memorable season for the Souderton Indians football team. For the first time in the 101-year history of Souderton football, the Indians completed a perfect 10-0 regular season and won 11 games in a season. The Indians won the Suburban One League Continental Conference for the second time in four seasons with a perfect 6-0 conference record. ★

Faster Than Ever...

Without question, the Boys Cross Country fall 2023 season goes down as the greatest in school history. The team captured its first ever League Championship title in program/school history for boys or girls in Cross Country or Track & Field. The boys also made it to the PIAA State Championship for the first time in school history as a team.

The seven varsity runners, Aiden Maue, James Kuduk, Aidan Kearns, Stephen Keller, Ben Wright, Tommy Fedesco, and Lance Midboe, placed 4th as a team at States. Senior Maue placed fourth overall individually, the best individual place of a Souderton runner at State Championships in school history. The team qualified for the state finals at the District One Championship where the boys placed third (best district championship team finish in history) and ran the fastest 5k team average for 5 men (15:56) and 7 men (16:12) in school history. Aiden Maue also set the 5k school record that day with a time of 15:16. ★



C3 CHALLENGE Service to Our Community



While many in our nation pause to participate in service projects on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the theme of service to community is prevalent throughout the entire Souderton Area School District, year-round.

The Indian Crest Middle School Community Challenge, known as C3 Day, is a day of caring, kindness, service, compassion, and fun. The foundation is laid early in the year with the administration and staff setting the tone in the building. Students know they are cared for and supported, and look forward to engaging in service projects and activities.

The concept for this day was born 10 years ago when some significant life events affecting Indian Crest families – a house fire and the death of the only wage earner in a student's home – necessitated a quick response from the school and the community. In an effort to be proactive and prepared to help in any future situation, a group including teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors came together to brainstorm ideas to raise funds while engaging the school and local community.

The outcome of these meetings was the creation of the Crest Community Challenge (C3 Day) – a daylong celebration of community. In the morning, students and staff participate in community service activities, working alongside community members. Sixth graders work on campus, while seventh and eighth graders venture into the community. Partners include nonprofit organizations, local nursery and elementary schools, and churches. The afternoon includes fun activities and

contests which are sponsored by a wide variety of individuals and groups. This year's Mud Run raised \$11,170, funds that will be used to support students and families experiencing need throughout the school year.

Staff and administrators believe C3 Day contributes to an increase in student kindness and empathy.

While many people are involved in the planning and execution, Lauren Murawski, an Indian Crest Math teacher, has the responsibility of coordinating many of the activities for C3 Day.

"I believe our students will always remember this day," she said. "Whether it is a long walk with friends to their community service destination, playing bingo with an elderly resident at a local living facility, preparing a meal for the homeless, or planting a garden and watching it grow over time, these moments are indelible." ★

The following organizations contributed to C3Day 2023: Generations, Indian Creek Foundation, The Bean Bag Program, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Zion Mennonite Church, Indian Valley Nursery School, Franconia Township, Lower Salford Township, Souderton Borough, The Care and Share Thrift Shops, The Peter Becker Community, MCC Material Resource Center, Indian Valley Boys and Girls Club, Calvary Church of Souderton, The Garden of Health, Souderton Area High School, EMC Elementary, Franconia Elementary, West Broad Street Elementary, and Transportation Services Inc. (TSI).

If you/your organization would like to be a part of C3 2024, reach out to Lauren at lmurawski@soudertonsd.org.

SAVE Club Promotes ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

For more than 25 years, Souderton Area High School students interested in protecting the environment have come together to volunteer and learn about the planet and how best to protect it.

“Students Against Violating the Earth,” or ‘SAVE’, draws more than 100 students each year to participate in events and activities designed to raise environmental awareness.

Students visit regional botanical gardens like Delaware’s Mount Cuba Center and Kennett Square’s Longwood Gardens. They also host activities like trash collection on West Broad Street, and an annual community-wide appliance and battery recycling event.

In early December, more than 350 people turned out for SAVE’s largest fundraiser, Santa in the Greenhouse, featuring crafts, food, music by students, and of course, photos with Santa. In early January, the club also hosts a Christmas tree recycling event at Franconia Park, where residents can take their trees to be chipped and then spread in community parks. More than 400 trees are typically brought to the event.

Science teacher and SAVE club co-advisor Kimberly Wilson says the club helps students learn how to become good stewards of their communities. ★



EXPLORING THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Lifelong physical activity comes in many different forms, and at Souderton Area High School, students have a new kind of physical education class in which they can participate.

The school’s new Outdoor Adventure Course is the brainchild of Michael Bergey, Health and Physical Education teacher. The class aims to facilitate the beginning of lifelong fitness and healthy habits.

Students participate in a wide range of activities throughout the course, which is offered first and fourth quarters. Hiking, navigating, rucking (hiking with weights in their backpack), survival techniques, water sports, disc golf, and archery were all extremely popular with students.

The open space and woods near SAHS and the flexibility of the school’s block scheduling allowed Bergey to create numerous learning opportunities for students. When they aren’t venturing outdoors, students have the opportunity to hear from a wide variety of guest speakers.

Students also hone their research skills in the class, presenting information to classmates about where they can participate in outdoor activities in the region.

Bergey is always looking for community partners to expand the experience for students. “My goal is to expose kids to as many ways to enjoy physical activities as possible,” he shared. If you are interested in connecting with this class, please e-mail mbergey@soudertonsd.org. ★