

BELLEFONTE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT ISSUE NO. 46

RED RAIDER

magazine

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Editor's note: Information in this edition of Red Raider magazine was made in the fall to accommodate the late-November deadline. Other school-related information after can be found in the "School News" tab on the district's website, www.basd.net, and on its social media accounts.

*Cover photo by Tracy Houser



Message from the board

By Jon Guizar

#2020...Need we say more?

While uncertainty seems to be the new normal, let us reflect on the words of Winston Churchill who reminds us, "The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."

In that spirit, our students, staff and volunteers have worked tirelessly to look past the difficulties of the day and reveal new opportunities for learning. Unlike the spring of 2020, we have developed opportunities to leverage the internet for hybrid learning models, identified areas to enhance and bring remote access to every student in our district, and have found ways to synchronize at-home learning so students that may have been quarantined have had seamless access to the same learning material as their peers in the classroom.

On a different front, our district has embraced an opportunity to continue our commitment to equity. We strive to be a district that is welcoming to all students – one that is committed to identifying opportunities to allocate resources needed to address disparities in one's access to learning and success. We hope that our community will participate, learn and grow with us as the newly formed Inclusiveness, Diversity and Equity committee helps us navigate these sometimes-sensitive topics.

Be safe. Be kind. Be patient.

**At the time of magazine deadline, Guizar was Bellefonte Area school board president and Jeff Steiner was vice president. A reorganization meeting was held Dec. 1. You may find more information on the school board website, here: www.basd.net/domain/30*

Student board representatives

Bellefonte Area High School senior Rianna Morris and junior Claire Topper are student board representatives. They represent the student body at school board meetings. To learn more, visit this link: www.basd.net/Page/15228

Rianna Morris Class of 2021

"I wanted to be a school board representative because I wanted to be the voice for those who are too scared to come forward and for those who don't know who to contact. I also think it's important to learn about local government."



Other activities: Academic decathlon; FBLA; golf (co-captain); jazz band; Key Club; marching band, Model UN (president); National Honor Society; Raider Revolution; student council (secretary); swimming and diving; track and field;

and Business Opportunities Summer Session and Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership representatives.

Claire Topper Class of 2022

"I wanted to represent Bellefonte Area High School by serving on the school board to speak on behalf of the students regarding important decisions that are made in our school community."



Other activities: B the Change, Drama Club, Key Club, lacrosse, Model UN, National Honor Society, Raider Revolution and student council.

DID YOU KNOW...?

www.basd.net

Issue No. 46

Another pandemic impacted the Bellefonte football season more than 100 years ago

Looking back more than 100 years ago, different epidemics and pandemics were sweeping across the country - that of polio in 1916 and the flu in 1918.

According to information from the Bellefonte Area High School alumni directory published in 2015, the Bellefonte football team, as well as their opponents, postponed the beginning of the

football season in 1916 as requested by the health department due to the epidemic of polio. Two seasons later, in 1918, games were canceled due to an influenza outbreak known as "Spanish flu."

"In a striking decision, the traditional game of football at Bellefonte High School was voted down by parents after

reviewing letters sent out by the athletic council," said local historian Patti Hillard, whose work has been published. "After just a one-year hiatus, the (team) took the field once again."

Fast-forward to 2019-20, a new pandemic started, known as COVID-19 or novel coronavirus. Before the 2020 football season started, there was more than 330 confirmed cases and 10 deaths in Centre County, according to the state Department of Health. By the time the season ended in October, Centre County reported 4,272 confirmed cases with 18 reported deaths.

While the Pennsylvania Intercollegiate Athletic Association allowed high school sports to start for the fall 2020 season - unless otherwise directed by the state - it came with strict guidelines, including distancing and wearing face coverings, while also following return-to-play plans created by the district's athletic department.



*One of the earliest photos of Bellefonte High School football. Its oldest members would have missed the 1918 season, by just two years. (Photo by LaBelle yearbook staff)

Bellefonte band

It's not very often music is arranged specifically for the Bellefonte Area High School marching band that only they have the rights to perform. And this school year, its members had the chance to showcase the tune, which will eventually be part of a show called "Goin' down the bayou" that previews what they hope will be in full swing next school year with a set of New Orleans-style music.

It includes an arrangement of "The Bear Necessities;" "Gonna Take You There," from Disney's "Princess and the Frog;" "The Mandalorian;" and "Centerfold." "Gonna Take You There" was arranged by local musician Rick Hirsch specifically for the Bellefonte band, making it the only group in the country allowed to play this specific piece for the next three years.

And with a mindset that's all about showing what the bands can do, rather than what they can't, Band Director Caleb Rebarchak said the program is still able to provide the best entrainment possible despite limitations from the COVID-19 pandemic – it just comes with distancing, face coverings and shorter playing times. What remains the same, however, is the passion the band has to perform and the passion its supporters still have for their musicians.

"It's different, for sure, so we're looking at it as a way to continue to build skills while being as safe as possible," Rebarchak said. "We're doing the

most we can given our limitations and shifting the focus from thinking what we can't do to what we can do. At the end of the day, we're still making music."

Rebarchak said the marching band began practicing in August, a few weeks later than usual. This came after a study was commissioned by several institutes and organizations about how novel coronavirus could spread through the use of instruments. Research supported that bands and choirs should limit playing and singing time to 30 minutes, which Rebarchak said he follows. It also allows music teachers to work on skills with students, while teaching them music history and theory type lessons in class when they're not performing.

The high school's band program consists of concert band, jazz band and marching band. Concert band is curricular, while jazz and marching bands are extracurricular activities. And while there are not any formal concerts the public can attend physically this school year, the goal of the music department is to bring more virtual concerts to the community.

"What we wanted to do is some kind of virtual performance where students will be given a piece of music and record it, and we put the pieces together," Rebarchak said.

As for the marching band, they still played their show at football games

before kickoff instead of at half-time. However, if things changed, then they were set with a back-up plan. After all, they worked with the district's technology department to provide a prerecording of their show conducted on Aug. 13 to play during livestreamed games on YouTube.

"We knew this was going to be a year of unknowns so we wanted to make sure we had a backup (plan)," Rebarchak said.

You could find the marching band at home football games on the south side of the stadium in the D-Zone behind the goalpost. Unable to wear their usual uniforms, they instead wore matching pants and Bellefonte marching band sweatshirts – distanced at least six feet apart and wearing face coverings with slits by the mouth, so students could still play their instruments.

**Photos by Tracy Houser*



Andy Caruso: Dean of students, Bellefonte Area High School



Andy Caruso spent just eight days last school year at Bellefonte Area High School before the COVID-19 pandemic shut down buildings for the remainder of the school year. At the time, he was helping fill a void in administration as Vice Principal Becky Michaels was on maternity leave.

This year, he's back fulltime filling a different role as dean of students. And the longtime educator said it was a smooth transition into the new position where he works with students, handles attendance referrals and other disciplinary matters primarily with the freshman and sophomore classes.

"The staff here is wonderful to work with," Caruso said. "They're welcoming and polite, and I've known some of them before, so I feel comfortable. I just want to be useful and help out in any way I can and be there for the school where I can."

He also knows many of the students. Caruso was an eighth-grade science teacher at Bellefonte Area Middle School for nearly 20 years before making the move to the high school. "My approach is just to talk with them and talk with parents, and keep it as straightforward as possible and see where we can make progress," he said.

Caruso received his undergraduate degree in occupational environmental safety where he worked in the environmental and safety field based in Pittsburgh. He later received his teaching certificate from Lock Haven University and principal certificate in 2019 from California University of Pennsylvania.

"I worked for a couple years in the environmental field," he said. "There was a lot of travel and I kind of felt disconnected from what I was used to. I didn't really want to do that and thought teaching was something I'd enjoy, so I gave it a try."

He first worked as a teacher at an inner-city high school in Charlotte, North Carolina. A year later, he moved back to Central Pennsylvania and landed a job at Bellefonte Area Middle School as a science teacher, where he spent the next nearly two decades – in the same classroom – before transferring to the high school.

Caruso was officially approved as the dean of students at a school board meeting on Sept. 8.

Fun facts

- Caruso has participated in eight marathons, with a goal to someday qualify for the Boston Marathon.
- His wife, Anita, is a teacher at Bellefonte Elementary School and is currently helping with Bellefonte eLearning Academy.
- He is a graduate of Bald Eagle Nittany High School. The school in Mill Hall, Clinton County, closed in 1999 when it was merged with Lock Haven and Sugar Valley high schools to form Central Mountain High School.

Slay the Dragon

The Bellefonte Area High School Slay the Dragon team received prizes and a trophy in the fall from their tournament win last school year.

Team adviser Melissa Duckworth said that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre County Youth Service Bureau was unable to hold its annual banquet, which is why YSB's Prevention Services Director Ian Marquez stopped by the school to honor the team.

BAHS has won the title for six consecutive years.



To see the original story about the team's win, visit this link:
www.basd.net/Page/14917

Tractor restoration

There's a saying, "One man's trash is another man's treasure."

It's true for Bellefonte Area High School senior Trevor Mauk who finds old tractors and restores them to their former glory – some, which he has found in junkyards. It's a hobby he's been exposed to since he was a child as his dad has a similar interest.



"I got into restoring tractors with my father when I was little and have really enjoyed it," Mauk said. "I decided to restore this (1952 John Deere Model

50) as an FFA project and took it down to the (Pennsylvania) Farm Show (last year)."

He won best presentation and best record book in the antique tractor restoration contest and narrowly missed best overall project after adding a chrome stack exhaust, which wasn't original. Corrected to include a muffler, he entered the same tractor into the Delo Tractor Restoration competition sponsored by Chevron and took home honors for best presentation. Normally the competition would be held in Indianapolis at the National FFA Convention and Expo, but was

held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I first got interested in competitions when my teacher Mrs. (Myken) Poorman introduced me to it," he said. "I started doing the restorations and figured I'd enter it in other competitions while it's still fresh."

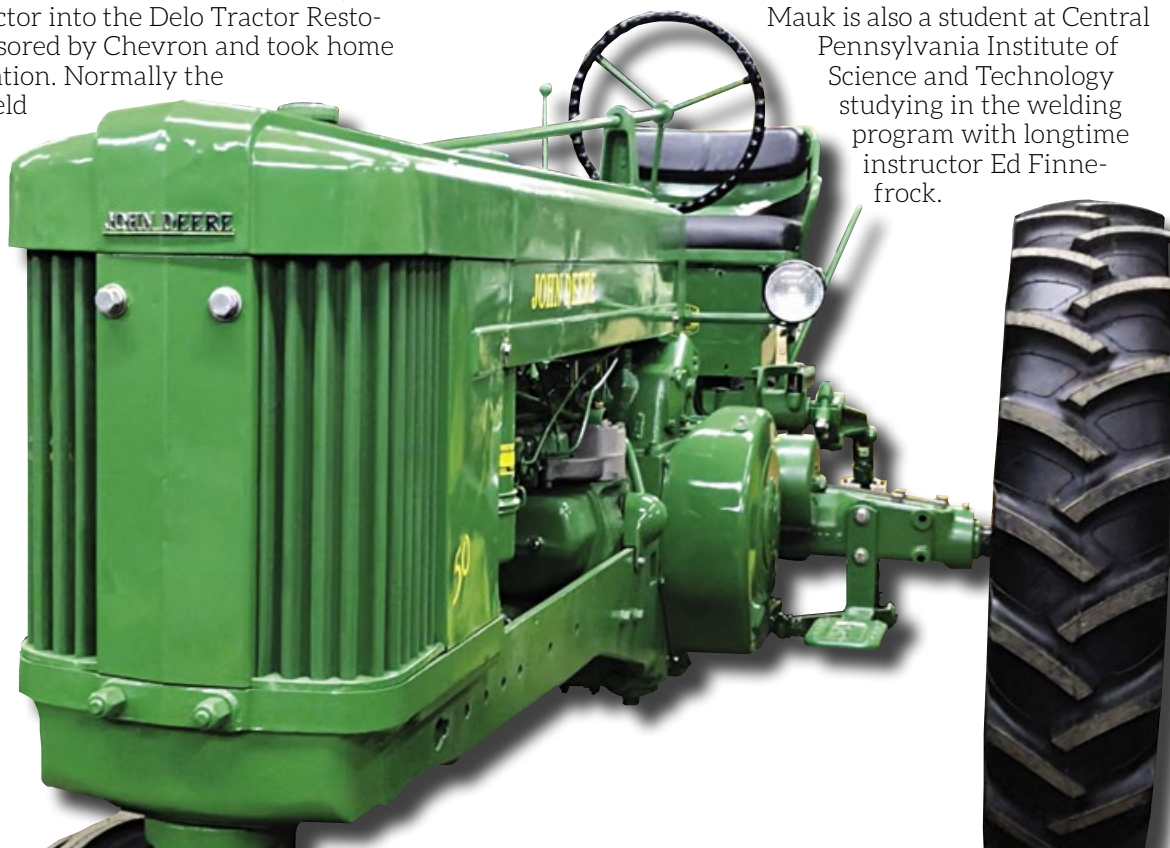
Poorman is the agricultural sciences teacher and FFA adviser at BAHS. FFA, once known as Future Farmers of America, but now just goes by its acronym, is a youth leadership organization promoting business and agriculture education, and other STEM-related careers such as that in science, technology, engineering and math.

Mauk has restored three tractors himself – two Cub Cadets and the 1952 John Deere Model 50. He helped restore about five more with his father and is currently working on another for this year's Delo competition.

But his favorite is the 1952 John Deere Model 50, because it's the one he said he put in the most time and money – more than 500 hours of work and more than \$8,800, which he worked three jobs to pay for.

"It's something I've always done and something I'll probably do forever," Mauk said. "I didn't grow up playing video games; you could always find me out in the garage."

Mauk is also a student at Central Pennsylvania Institute of Science and Technology studying in the welding program with longtime instructor Ed Finnefrock.





Homecoming

Even during a school year under COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, Bellefonte Area High School still found a way to hold homecoming activities.

Student council worked with alumni to create a video about favorite homecoming memories. Additionally, seniors David McAndrew and Alexia Mishock were named homecoming king and queen during a ceremony on Oct. 17 at Rogers Stadium. They were among a group of other seniors on the homecoming court that included Haley Cameron and Isaiah Nadolsky; Conner Bernier and Morgan Goodman; Maddie Morelli and Nathan Taylor; and Chris Paloskey and Kira Watson. Underclassmen homecoming royalty were juniors Nick Pacella and Ava Seigworth; sophomores Nate Fisher and Haley Rogers; and freshmen Madison Berry and Owen Pettina.

Because the homecoming parade was canceled, student council found a way to make up for it by working with class advisers and other members of each class to hold a bleacher-decorating contest. Teacher and student council adviser Heather Huntsinger said this competition replaced class floats that would have typically been seen during the parade throughout Bellefonte.

This year's theme was "Netflix series,"

which judges awarded places for each class as they would have if decorating a float.

- **First place:** Sophomore
- **Second place:** Freshman
- **Third place:** Juniors
- **Fourth place:** Seniors

And of student council's most memorable activities during homecoming each year, includes its dedication. Each year, the group chooses someone or a group of people from the community to honor. This year, they decided to honor all essential workers that the council said in a statement have tirelessly and unselfishly continued to work for the community, despite the pandemic.

"Being an essential worker during the COVID-19 pandemic meant potential exposure to COVID-19, while performing their job duties," the statement said. "Essential workers continue to deal with the new stresses ... all while serving our community during this stressful time. We want to take a moment to thank all of the dedicated essential workers that are keeping us safe and functioning."

For the dedication, teacher and co-adviser Jen Richardson wrote a note of thanks to those who have served as essential workers during the pandemic. The dedication was printed in the program and read at the Oct. 17 ceremony. Student council created a list of local businesses with essential staff and had window and yard signs made, which could be seen around school grounds and in the community to recognize those businesses and individuals.



National Honor Society

National Honor Society at Bellefonte Area High School inducted its largest student membership with 115 representatives. It came during a virtual ceremony on Oct. 28.

Teacher and NHS adviser Chris Morris said that in order to be eligible to apply for membership into the BAHS chapter, students must have at least a 93-grade percent in academics – on the 4.0-GPA scale. The first round of invites goes out before their junior year. Students are also eligible to join before their senior year.

Morris added that the end goal is for students have at least a 93 percent at the end of all four years, in addition to continuously participating in community service events and upholding academic excellence.

Aviles, Angelina	Miller, Ryan
Bechdel, Caitlyn	Mussett, Daniel
Bringer, William	Neff, Emalee
Bryan, Hannah	Nelson, Domenic
Cappellini, Dale	O'Shea, Aidan
Carey, Liam	Pacella, Bria
Christopher, Lilly	Przybys, Lee
Clouser, Victoria	Rankin, Zoe
Corl, Amber	Reichert, Tori
Culp, Emily	Reiter, Sophie
Dermota, Abigail	Ripka, Shaylin
Fishburn, Julia	Rockey, Alexia
Fisher, Kaley	Royer, Victoria
Frantz, Kayle	Seigworth, Ava
Fritz, Kathryn	Sette, Dillon
Gardner, Lily	Smith, Lindsay
Gettig, Logan	Smith, Nathaniel
Hopkins, Corinne	Smoyer, Rachel
Johnson, Leah	Taylor, Grace
Kellogg-Long, Abigail	Tooker, Quinn
Kephart, Paige	Topper, Claire
Koller, Gabe	Tyson, Kerrigan
Korman, Madison	Uchneat, Matthew
Kroell, Ty	Underwood, Ella
Lauck, Ava	Way, Nicholas
MacAfee, Elizabeth	Weaver, Nolan
Marsh, Megan	Weikel, Joshua
	Wichert, Lily

“Who Was...?” History Bee



It wasn't a surprise to many students and teachers who know Brady Wynkoop when they heard he made it to the national final of a reading and history contest that would have eventually taken him on an all-expense paid trip to New York City. It made him among just 10 student finalists of more than 25,000 participants with the chance to win a \$10,000 scholarship.

After all, the current sixth-grade student at Bellefonte Area Middle School is a lover of reading and a little bit of a history buff.

“Brady is a voracious reader with so much passion and curiosity for learning, and I'm not at all surprised that his hard work and dedication to this endeavor has paid off,” said fifth-grade teacher Colleen DeFonzo, who had Brady in class at Marion-Walker Elementary School.

Last school year, Brady participated in a History Bee through the “Who Was...?” reading series by Grosset and Dunlap publishing house – a branch of Penguin Random House publishing company. The books, sometimes also titled “Who Is...?” “Where Is...?” “What Is...?” and “What is the Story of...?” are aimed at providing youth readers with history-themed fun and comprehensive information about various topics.

When Brady heard about the contest while perusing the “Who Was...?” section at Barnes and Noble, he brought the idea to school librarian Danielle Mock who set up class and schoolwide competitions. To compete, students must have read books in the series and answer questions about

facts in the books.

“I thought it would be a great thing to bring to our school as so many of the students love the ‘Who Was...?’ book series, so I signed our school up to participate in the bee,” Mock said.

Brady was named the school winner, and, by the spring, he and his family were notified he was among the top 10 students from across the country to move on to the national contest.

“I was honestly shocked and I had a loss for words, but it was a really good feeling,” Brady said, also adding that he read nearly all the books in the series. Because he loves sports, particularly basketball, his favorite is the one about Michael Jordan.



The national competition was originally scheduled for last May but was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It would have been hosted by Jeff Kinney, author of the children's book series, “Diary of a Wimpy Kid.” The organization still recognized Brady with a \$2,000 monetary prize, a \$500 donation to the organization of Brady's choice and an additional 50 “Who Was...?” books for the library at his former school. That shipment came in the fall.

Brady donated \$500 to Pixie Dust Wishes and is “saving the rest for college.”



Fall fun

The life skills class at Bellefonte Area Middle School participated in a variety of fun fall activities in October. Teacher Jeff Rager said the students made pumpkin custard and doughnuts, and also decorated pumpkins.

To see the photo gallery, visit this link:
www.basd.net/Page/15244

Teacher of the Year

Dave Gregor, a sixth-grade science teacher at Bellefonte Area Middle School, was named one of State College Magazine's Teachers of the Year. Each year, the publication features its four TOTY finalists in its issue that's all about education. Gregor was nominated by two students.



Last year, Rebecca Roos, kindergarten teacher at Marion-Walker Elementary School, was recognized for the same honor.

FIX-IT FRIDAY



The COVID-19 pandemic put a wrench in plans this school year for Bellefonte Area Middle School technology education teacher Jordan Eccher, but he found a way to make up for a part of his curriculum that had to be cut.

Now, he's doing something called Fix-It Friday with sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students in his engineering and Project Lead the Way classes.

"Fix-It Friday came about when the whole non-sharing of school items came about, and it's just a fun way to get away from the computers, and out of the norm and into some excitement," he said.

Projects conducted on Fridays include cutting steel,

circuitry, electricity, drywall, plumbing, welding and more.

"I kind of want to keep it relatable to what they might experience at home," Eccher said. "So far, the kids have absolutely loved it. They've come up with great ideas, and comments and questions, and are having fun and getting away from the same old routine."

To see a video of Fix-It Friday activities, visit the "videos" link in the "school news" tab on the district's website, www.basd.net/Page/13985.

Eccher explains more about the projects his classes participate in.

Crossing guard Dick Houtz



From about 7:30 a.m. to 8:15 a.m. on school days, you can find Dick Houtz monitoring the crosswalk on

the corner of North Allegheny and East Linn streets with a goal to make sure all students – and any family member walking with them – make it to Bellefonte Elementary School safely. He said he also aims to bring smiles as students head to school.

It's something the 81-year-old has been doing for more than 10 years, along with his wife Joan, who can be found at the opposite end of the crosswalk on West Linn and North Spring streets. The students call her "grandma."

After working for 34 years at the post office, driving school buses for State College Area School District and often being a substitute van driver at Bellefonte Area School District, Houtz said he began working the crosswalks as a way to keep busy in the mornings. He said he started on Lamb Street and made his way around the block to his current post.

"If we wouldn't be doing that, what else would we be doing?" he said. "I like getting to know people and I want the kids to like me."

He often calls the students "sweetie pie" or "bud" and encourages them to have a "super day at school." He also said he enjoys talking with the parents of students and getting to know others who live in the area.

**Photo taken during the 2019-20 school year*



Pandemic lessons SOAP VS. GERMS

That was the battle during an activity in Amy Wilson's second-grade class at Bellefonte Elementary School. At the beginning of the school year, she led a series of kid-friendly lessons that allowed her students to learn and understand about why it's important to do their part to keep healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

And with at least one experiment, soap won every time, which proved Wilson's point that washing hands with soap and water helps to deter the germs. They partook in a demonstration that included water, pepper and soap.

1. Put some ground black pepper in a cup of water.
2. Lather one hand with soap while the other is without.
3. Put a finger without soap into the pepper-water mix and watch the pepper attract to the finger.
4. Then try it with a soap-lathered finger. The pepper will immediately move away from the finger.

"What does the soap do?" Wilson enthusiastically asked the class during the activity. They responded, "Make the germs go away!" One student even compared germs to "bad guys" and the soap to a "superhero."

Wilson continuously provided her class with age-appropriate lessons on what to expect during the school year under pandemic guidelines. That included encouraging students to wash their hands; regularly use hand sanitizer, which the class called "germ juice;" wear their face coverings and masks; and assured them that it's OK to talk about emotions during a time that may come with some uneasiness.

She also read and shared books with them that stressed those same messages, such as "I'm Happy-Sad Today," "Lucy's Mask," and "Billie and the Brilliant Bubble." Her students also learned that it's OK to have a variety of feeling such as "s-angry" – sad and angry – or "scar-cited" – scared and excited. It's something "I'm Happy-Sad Today" was also about.



A 7-year-old student said she was feeling excited to go back to school on the first day, but was a little scared about some of the changes she might face. By the end of the day, the little girl said she conquered the day and was "so happy!"



Morning announcements



One of the goals for a group of fifth-grade students at Pleasant Gap Elementary School is “to go down as the best class ever to do morning announcements.” At least that’s what Sophia Parsons said, while the other six students were excitedly in agreement.

“This year is different because we all have to wear masks and some people may feel down about the school year, so I just want to make them happy for the day, and I also want to express how I feel about going to school through how I’m saying it,” Sophia said. “I hope it wears off on others because I love school.”

Classmate Eli Martin was the first student this school year to do morning announcements during the second week of class. He said each student announcer brings “excitement to the mic,” which, for Eli, it began with a tagline – “Good morning, Pleasant Gap” – in similar fashion to actor Robin Williams in the 1987 film “Good morning, Vietnam.”

“We introduce ourselves and do a random fact, tell them the day of the month and the school day for specials and stuff, give birthday shout outs and get them going for the day,” Eli said.

The campaign has been a tradition at the school for more than 15 years. It was an idea that started with another teacher at another school, which sparked inspiration to bring it at Pleasant Gap. Now, teachers Adam Gearhart, Stacey Miller and Jen Roth

work with the fifth-grade students on their scripts.

“They’re really enjoying it,” Roth said. “Some kids are quiet, but it’s allowing them to break out of their shell.”

Student Brooklyn Garman said try-outs were held during the first week of school for any fifth grader interested in being a morning announcer. Those students were given a sample script, practiced their lines and then presented it to Roth in front of the rest of the class as they would in a live situation. From there, seven students were selected, which Brooklyn said “confidence and enthusiasm” were the two biggest traits that helped them make the cut.

But it can also sometimes come with nerves. To shake those off, Maddie Smith said she takes a deep breath and then “just rolls with it.”

For Addie Burn and Ty Jackson, they both said being a part of morning announcements is just something special they’ve been wanting to do for their last year at the school.

Calling it a “rite of passage,” Roth said the opportunity is only open for students in fifth-grade. And for Trevor Campbell-Tubbs, he’s been waiting for the chance since he was 7.

“I was new here in second grade,” Trevor said. “I had gone to three other schools in three years before that, and they didn’t do (announcements). So, when I came here, I thought this was finally my chance.”

Recharge room



At one time, the room next to school counselor Ashley Hamilton’s office at Marion-Walker Elementary School was a former vice principal’s office and then a conference room. For a while, it was also vacant – until late in October, when Hamilton and Principal Karen Krisch turned it into what’s called a “recharge room.”

With comfy chairs, essential oils, books and magazine, adult fidgets and other amenities, the purpose of the space is to provide a place for teachers to relax – or, rather, recharge.

“Students can have a break where they can reset in my office,” Hamilton said. “We talk a lot about self-care and what that entails ... and one day I said to Karen, ‘What if we allow teachers to have a break?’ We do it for our kids because we want our kids to do well, but if our teachers aren’t doing well, then our kids aren’t going to thrive.”

Teachers are given a pass to use the space, at which time Hamilton or Krisch will watch their classrooms. The passes don’t expire.

“We say, ‘Go down there; we got your class,’” Hamilton said. “They know they need it, they hear us talk about it, but they say they don’t have time to do it. Self-care shouldn’t be a job or something that adds more stress, but it’s offered if they want it.”

Calling it a “mask-on-first” approach, the goal is to better care for professional staff that trickles down to how students are cared for.

“It’s just a nice place to recharge whether you want to crack open your laptop or just take a moment for yourself,” Krisch said. “You can shut the door and give yourself 10 minutes however you want. If you take the time for yourself, then you can feel better and be more productive.”



Dan Park: Vice principal, Bellefonte Elementary School

Growing up, Dan Park imagined he'd run the family business – a trucking company in Snow Shoe. But his parents had different plans for the now

longtime educator who was named this school year as vice principal of Bellefonte Elementary School.

"I didn't have a clear path my senior year of high school, and I give all the credit to my parents and father who was a business owner," Park said. "He worked seven days a week, and I grew up in that environment. My intention was to do that – own trucks and have a trucking company, but my parents said, 'Go to college. If you want to still do it, then you can do it after graduation.'"

Instead, he found a career in education – first in the classroom as a technology education teacher. He started in the middle school at Huntingdon Area School District, followed by getting a teaching job two years later at Bellefonte Area High School. Seven years ago, former high school Principal Jen Brown hired Park as vice principal of the high school, working together to help oversee building operations.

"I like working with my hands and I like people, and I found tech ed was the perfect fit," Park said. "I could work with kids and do something I enjoyed, and have had a phenomenal career, but I got into (education) because my parents wanted more for me."

Now, he's working again with Brown who has been the principal of Bellefonte Elementary for four years.

"I see it as a partnership," Park said about working with Brown. "There are different matters here as opposed to the high school. It's more about being a role model and fatherly figure, and making sure you're there when they need you."

Responsibilities include supervising staff, handling disciplinary issues, taking part in committees and more.

"I love little kids and thought I haven't been in elementary school professionally yet and it was a good opportunity," Park said. "I have a daughter in 10th grade and a son (in) kindergarten, so I'm living it as a father and in my career, and think it will be cool to chronicle what he does starting in kindergarten."

He also has personal and professional goals to be accessible and approachable with staff and families, and be there when and where needed to help make sure staff and students are successful.

"We're all doing the best we can in the circumstances we have, and it's refreshing to see so many teachers go out of their way for the kids," Park said. "There are things we all don't want to do, but everyone is coming together to make good things happen."

Fun facts

- Park is a Class of 1997 graduate of Bald Eagle Area High School.
- He graduated from California University of Pennsylvania in 2001 with a bachelor's degree in technology education. He also received his master's degree and principal certification from Cal U.
- The 2020-21 school year marks his 20th year in education.
- In his free time, Park enjoys spending time with family, camping, fishing and hunting.

Kids Heart Challenge

When Benner Elementary School physical education teacher Eric Cyone challenged the fourth- and fifth-grade classes to see what students could jump rope for the longest time, classmates Braydyn Grove and Aiden Swentosky were the last two. Braydyn just barely edged out Aiden by half a jump.

The boys were with a group of other students outside during a phys ed activity, called Kids Heart Challenge that aimed to promote heart health among youth. It was formally called Jump Rope for Heart. The jump roping event is the culmination of curriculum that teaches second- to fifth-grade students about ways to stay healthy while also helping to raise money for the American Heart Association.

Cyone said the goal for this school year was to raise \$3,500, which they exceeded by more than \$500. In the 13 years the school has participated in the event, more than \$48,000 has been raised.

"It's just that overall idea of how to take care of your body and exercise and eat right," Cyone said. "And it's not just for a healthy heart, but also a healthy body and a healthy mind, and I feel like jump rope is a really great skill for them to get involved in and have an appreciation for because it's fun and there are endless challenges that come with it."

Students were divided into two groups – second and third grades, and fourth and fifth grades. Following COVID-19 guidelines, each



participating class was provided space within their own grid in an area outside where students could line up on a marked X that was at least six-feet apart from the next. All jump ropes were also sanitized between sessions.

By participating in the activity, Cyone's PE class is also provided funding by the AHA that he annually puts toward updating equipment and purchasing new equipment.



Unity Day



Bellefonte Elementary School was filled with faculty, staff and students wearing orange on Unity Day, the official color of bullying prevention. It even extended outside the building with students and their families from Bellefonte eLearning Academy who also participated in the day that was all about anti-bullying, inclusion and acceptance.

Brought to the school for the first time by school counselor Janelle Reese, she said the goal this year is to promote a variety of antibullying initiatives that also include kid-friendly lessons on acceptance, diversity and inclusion. Unity Day set the foundation for that, which will continue throughout the school year.

"It's all about linking together to support other students," she said.

Incorporated into class lessons and other curriculum, students also learned what bullying is, what it looks like, how to prevent it and more. In kindergarten through second-grade, students learned the "stop, talk, walk" strategy, which teaches them how to handle being bullied, bothered or teased. In third through fifth grades, students learned how to be an upstander or someone who Reese said "doesn't just stand by when they see bullying happening."



According to PACER, Unity Day was started by its National Bullying Prevention Center as the signature event of National Bullying Prevention Month and celebrated annually on Oct. 21. Other elementary schools within Bellefonte Area School District also celebrated the day.

Normally, Evan, Hannah and Ryan Edwards would attend Bellefonte Elementary School in kindergarten, second- and fifth-grades. This school year, the siblings are enrolled in the district's BeLA program that provides students with fulltime online learning. That, however, didn't stop them from also participating in Unity Day.

"Even though we're doing BeLA at home, we're still showing our support and trying to be unified against bullying," said their mom Natalie Edwards.

For those students who physically attend school, they were able to contribute a leaf to the Unity Tree that included what they would do when faced with bullying or someone who appeared to be bullied, with positive tips to help in its prevention.

Employee Spotlight randomly features faculty and staff from Bellefonte Area School District. Organized by district Public Relations Director Brit Milazzo, in partnership with the human resources department, the goal is to promote the people who make the district what it is. Each season, an employee from the district's administration, professional staff and support staff are randomly chosen for the feature.

You may find more features, here: www.basd.net/Page/14058



Aaron Barto: Director of physical plant, and school safety and security coordinator

When Aaron Barto started at Bellefonte Area School District in 2000, he was the only administrator with a cell phone. Fast-forward more than 20 years and the longtime director of physical plant said technology is one of the biggest things that have changed.

"Everyone has phones and everything is online," he said. "It seemed like a simpler time back then, but one thing I've always been able to say is you never have a routine day. There's always something that throws a wrinkle in your day, so you learn to expect the unexpected and make it work."

Barto oversees 38 employees on the custodial and maintenance team, and works with custodial supervisor Jason Berni, who is tasked with supervision. This helps Barto put focus on his other district job, as well. In 2018, he was named the district's school safety and security coordinator – a position all public schools are required to have under state law and who must be an administrator.

That requires him to oversee all school safety and security efforts throughout the district from building and grounds maintenance that follow certain protocol, to making sure the about 450-person staff is up to date on trainings. He also works closely with Safe Schools and Safe2Say Something help-lines, which allow those in need to utilize an application to anonymously make reports.

As for facilities, those responsibilities encompass everything from in- and outside of buildings and grounds, to overseeing construction and renovation, and all other building maintenance and updates. He also purchases furniture for the district, while keeping up with various other changes. More recently, Barto has been instrumental in working with the district's pandemic coordinator to purchase personal protective equipment for employees, and other disinfectant products to help keep schools sanitized.

His job, along with those in his department, is considered "essential," meaning they often work when others are off.

To de-stress, Barto said he enjoys fishing, hunting, spending time on the boat at Raystown Lake with his wife, and visiting his two adult sons who live in Pittsburgh and San Antonio. A native of State College, Barto graduated from Penn State in 1989 with a degree in agricultural business management. Upon graduation, he took a job as a farm manager for the United States Department of Agriculture and later became a facilities coordinator. As he got more interested in the facilities aspect of the job, he worked as the building engineer for AccuWeather and then hired by BASD.

Jamie Beard: Third-grade teacher, Benner Elementary School

Jamie Beard aspired to be a marine biologist. It came in second grade when her teacher at Park Forest Elementary School sparked an interest in her for the ocean. And then she took a biology class – figuring out that it wasn't what she actually wanted to do.

"I'm a third-grade teacher now and my very favorite teacher was my third-grade teacher Mrs. (Tina) Schultz, so I think I decided to become a teacher when I realized my hopes and dreams of marine biology weren't going to work out, and all of the inspiration I had was really from teachers in my life who've done great things for me, and I wanted to do that same thing for kids," Beard said.

Beard has been teaching at Benner Elementary School for more than 11 years. She started as a long-term substitute in second-grade, followed by a majority of her time in first-grade. Two years ago, she transferred to third-grade, which Beard said has allowed her to reconnect with some of the same students she had once before just two grade levels prior.

"My biggest focus each day is to build relationships with my students," she said. "The more I get to know them, the easier it is to connect with them in the classroom, and that enforces their eagerness to learn and do well for you, but my ultimate goal is also helping make them want to work for themselves."

Attributing some of her teaching style to Shultz, Beard said she provides her students with some educational freedoms, brings genuine care to class, builds positive relationships with students and families, and finds ways to add fun to class.

"Everything was a game in her class, which perhaps speaks to my competitive side," said Beard, also adding that she regularly partakes in recess activities with her students, such as foursquare, kickball and racing games during field day at the end of the school year.

Beard, a State College native, graduated from Juniata College with a bachelor's degree in elementary and early childhood education. She also has a master's degree in educational development and strategies from Wilkes University.

When she's not in the classroom, Beard said she enjoys being outdoors and spending time with her husband and two children – Camden, a second-grade student in Nicole Harris' class at Benner Elementary and Cadence, 3. They spend a lot of time outside, camping, hiking, mountain biking and more. She also enjoys reading and finding good books to bring back to the 8- and 9-year-old students in her class in an effort to help spark a love of literature among them.





Trina Davidson: Personal care aide, Bellefonte Elementary School

When Trina Davidson first started working at Bellefonte Area Middle School, she was mistaken for a student. It's one of the funniest stories she said she has during the past five years working as a personal care aide at Bellefonte Area School District.

It came when she went to use the faculty and staff bathroom, but was told by a teacher monitoring the hallway not to because the "girls' room" for students was down the hall. Davidson was only at the middle school for one year following a year at Bellefonte Elementary School working with a fifth-grade student who moved to the life skills classroom in sixth grade. When that student left the district, it provided Davidson the chance to go back to Bellefonte Elementary where she said her heart lies.

"I love it – I love what I do," she said.

For the past three years, Davidson has worked with autistic support teacher Ashley Sterbank and a group of other PCAs and students assigned to that classroom. Together they work to support the five students in need of special services.

"I think some of my qualities are patience and understanding, and I think a lot of it goes back to my mom," she said. Her mother, Brenda, is a first-grade paraeducator at BES. "She's worked here for 20 years, and we both just love what we do. My brain never stops for this kind of work, so I'm willing to take on the challenge because I feel like I'm helping them."

After high school, Davidson began college at Mount Aloysius with a sign language interpreting background. She later transferred to Lock Haven University and graduated in 2016 with a degree in disability and community services, which allowed her to learn about special education and social work.

Just a week before earning her degree, Davidson accepted a position at BASD, which she's been at ever since. And it was something she always wanted to do after also participating in the National Autism Conference since she was 12 years old and spending time during her senior year at Bald Eagle Area High School shadowing a former speech pathologist at the school she now works at.

But her passions don't settle there. Davidson said she enjoys baking; cheerleading; spending time with family, especially her 4-year-old nephew; and going on walks with her puppy. She also aspires to one day continue her education in the special ed field.

Sandy Houser: Cafeteria worker, Bellefonte Area Middle School

When Sandy Houser first applied for a job at Bellefonte Area School District, she was hoping to be a paraeducator at the middle school. Unfortunately, there weren't any more positions in that field at the time, but former Food Service Director Dorothy Houtz told her she needed help in the kitchen.

The next day, Houser began working at the Bellefonte Area Middle School cafeteria and kitchen – and 32 years later is still there.

"It's kind of funny," she recalls. "I came in to interview for a paraeducator. The person in charge said there were no openings anymore, but that I could instead start in the kitchen tomorrow, so I started the next day. And then she was like, 'we could use you next week, too,' so I just kept coming back, and I'm still here."

Houser has mainly operated the register. But she also felt nostalgic for the past when remembering a time when they would make food from scratch. She was in charge of baking tea rolls before getting them from a bread company.

"Back then, we'd make all those from scratch to go with the spaghetti (and sauce)," she said. "I still sometimes hear, 'Hey, Houser! You remember when you made them good rolls?' and I say, 'yeah, they sure were good.'"

Now, she said students seem to like pizza, French fries, hot dogs and tacos the most.

Hoping to retire in the near future, Houser said the past three decades have been a pleasure, working with at least two colleagues who have been there about as long.

"It's not coworkers when you come to work; it's kind of like a family," she said.

Houser, a Bellefonte native, graduated from Bellefonte Area High School in 1971 and was part of the second class ever to have attended BAMS when it was built in 1964. She now has two grown children who also went through the district and still currently live in the area with her three granddaughters. Houser said she also enjoys camping, decorating her home for the holidays and being involved in church activities.



April Mix: Second-grade teacher, Bellefonte Elementary School

When April Mix walks into her second-grade classroom at Bellefonte Elementary School, she becomes more than just a teacher – she also acts like a doctor, friend, mentor, mom and nurse.

"I'm not just a teacher," Mix said. "You become so much more in that short amount of time each day. There are so many different roles we play, and I think that's why I love being a teacher."

Mix, a Bellefonte-area native, has been teaching in the district for 12 years – 11 of which have been at Bellefonte Elementary and one year at Benner Elementary School. She has also taught fourth grade.

Saying she always imagined teaching since she was a child playing "school," Mix also grew up in a family of educators. Her father was a longtime health and physical education teacher at BES and her mother was a longtime second-grade teacher at Marion-Walker Elementary School.

"I love the enthusiasm of the kids," she said. "I love knowing they can be independent at this age, and balance how much they need you and how they can lead independently."

Mix graduated with a bachelor's degree in education from Lock Haven University, and has a master's degree in elementary math and reading from Walden University. With all her education and hands-on teaching experience, she knows just how to adapt to any kind of educational setting. This school year with the COVID-19 pandemic is no exception.

"I started realizing just how hard things got last year," Mix said. "I started reassuring parents that things were going to be fine, and when they come back to me in the fall, whether in-person or virtually, I'm going to do my job to get them where they need to be."

Excited to be back physically to see her students, Mix added that she's also excited about sharing the school year with her son Cayden, who's in kindergarten at Bellefonte Elementary. Calling him her "pride and joy," Mix said the two are active together at school and in the community.

"He's been waking up every day and saying 'we get to go to school together, mommy!'" she said. "He's always felt like he's been a part of Bellefonte Elementary School even when he hasn't started. I'm grateful for this district and community and school, and my heart's happy knowing this is where he'll be."

Opening Day

Attitudes are infectious. That was a message artist, author and motivational speaker Sam Glenn had for Bellefonte Area School District employees during the annual opening day event. Aug. 17 marked the first official day back to school for all employees and was followed by a week of more professional learning and training, extra time for teachers to prepare classrooms for the school year and finalize curriculum, and more.

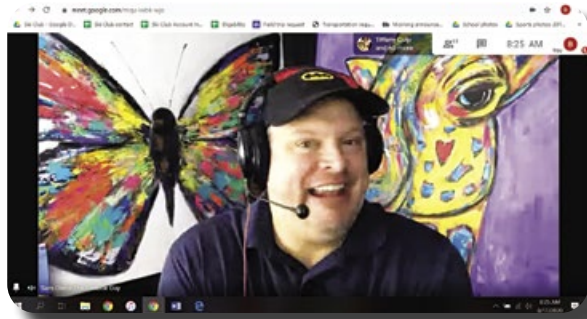
Knowing that things can change in an instant, interim Superintendent Tammie Burnaford first addressed faculty and staff via Google Meet with a message of “attitude is gratitude.”

“It’s going to be different, but it’s going to be OK,” she said, while using quotes from the author known as Dr. Seuss as motivation and a little lightheartedness.

The past two years started with opening day events in partnership with Bald Eagle Area School District and Central Pennsylvania Institute of Science and Technology. Due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, Bellefonte Area

held its own activities and events in-house, which included a virtual meeting with Glenn, who also helped the district ring in the new school year last year.

Glenn encouraged faculty and staff to work on positivity, be aware of the attitude each employee demonstrates in front of others and be cognizant to the things within control. This, he said, will allow individuals to “demonstrate an attitude others will replicate.” And for those working directly with students, he encouraged what he called the “Three Es” – example, encouragement and empathy.



The district also welcomed Sam Richards as a guest speaker during the second part of opening day activities. Richards is a teaching

professor of sociology at Penn State who talked about inclusiveness, diversity and equity topics with district employees.

According to the Penn State College of Liberal Arts website, Richards is “the instructor of the largest race, gender and cultural relations course in the United States.” With more than 760 students each semester and a 25-year legacy, the course was the subject of an Emmy Award-winning television broadcast called, “You Can’t Say That.” The course is streamed live every Tuesday and Thursday.

New Teacher Induction

Bellefonte Elementary School Principal Jen Brown described the passion of teachers and those in professional staff roles at Bellefonte Area School District as “passionate” about the work they do to help students achieve their highest level of success.

“The power you have for making a difference for kids is like nothing else,” she explained. “It’s the greatest thing in the world.”

Brown organized this school year’s New Teacher Induction event, which welcomed new teachers and other professional staff members to the district. It’s an annual tradition similar to an orientation that allows new faculty to get more acquainted with the district. The three-day event included a general introduction and overview; information about human resources, professional learning and safety measures; a tour of Bellefonte, led by two high school history teachers; technology overview; meeting mentors; and more.

Some faculty are new for the 2020-21 school year and others have already started in the 2019-20 school year – or before – but after last year’s orientation.

New professional staff

- Susan Chyczewski, Bellefonte Area Middle School
- Anthony Fortuna, district orchestra teacher
- Drew Funk, Pleasant Gap Elementary School
- Gina Grambling, Bellefonte Area Middle School
- Jeff Hodgson, Pleasant Gap Elementary School
- Aaron Jones, Bellefonte Area Middle School
- Anne Maddox, Bellefonte Area High School
- Marissa Metric, Bellefonte Elementary School
- Kayla Meyers, Bellefonte Area Middle School
- Chelsie Miller, Marion-Walker Elementary School
- Alex O’Brien, district school nurse
- Janelle Reese, Bellefonte Elementary School
- Lisa Reitz, Bellefonte Area High School
- Lee Szymkiewicz, Bellefonte Area Middle School
- Hannah Tibbott, Bellefonte Area Middle School



**Bellefonte Area High School social studies teachers Matt Maris and Chris Morris take new professional staff members on a tour of Bellefonte.*

School Resource Officers



**Photos taken prior to the COVID-19 pandemic*

Normally, rules at Bellefonte Area Middle School include no running in the hallways. There was an exception, though – when indoor track practice was in session and students were sprinting down the hall. School Resource Officer Shawn Luse even got in on the action that brought a lot of fun and laughs to the activity.

Luse is a longtime SRO at Bellefonte Area School District along with fellow Bellefonte police officer Mike Lyons. Together, they work to bring safety and security efforts to the district at all building levels. However, administrators said it's their unparalleled relationships with students, staff and the community that makes the biggest difference.

"Something they're too humble to talk about that is perhaps the most important is the relationship they're building with kids," high school Principal Mike Fedisson said. He was among a group of principals who spoke about the SROs at a board meeting earlier this school year.

"In turn, what those relationships translate to is with families and in the community," Fedisson added. "I can say whenever we're at football games or basketball games (or elsewhere), there are students with them because they want to see and talk to them and there is a familiarity. I think as principals when we see some of the horrific things that (can) happen in schools, most of that comes back to a feeling of connectedness that those students don't have, and we have two gentlemen we're blessed to have that provide that."

On any given day, the two SROs can be found at buildings within the district providing law enforcement and safety and security checks by making sure doors are locked, providing employees and students with resources they need to feel and stay safe, and making sure things are in order. They facilitate drills such as ALICE training – alert, lockdown, inform, counter and evacuate – and handle arrests, citations and home visits. They also often attend sporting events,

pep rallies, senior awards and graduation, school assemblies and dances, and participate in in-service days with teachers during professional learning. Professional learning at the district provides education for professional staff facilitated by other district employees in their areas of expertise.

Luse and Lyons also provide added value to the classroom with efforts such as internet safety, alcohol and drug awareness, DUI, suicide awareness and more, and sit on district taskforces such as Schoolwide Safety, Student Safety, Risk Assessment and Crisis Team committees. They're also among the first people in the district to get alerts through applications Bellefonte Area is partnered with such as Safe2Say Something and Safe School helplines.



"A lot of things we ran into the last couple years is a trend of citations and arrests have gone down, and that's our goal," Luse said. "We talk about (philosophies) and help mentor elementary school students, so when they get to the middle school, they're starting to make a lot of decisions that impact them in the long term that affects their lives."

Calling it a "dynamic" among students and the SROs is also what administrators said makes the program an important part of the district.

"If you stop into officer Luse's office, there is a giant whiteboard covered in student signatures, and that's because when students stop by to say hi, they all want to sign it," middle school Principal Sommer Garman said. "That speaks to a huge testament to the relationships they built with students. They're going through the halls giving high-fives and saying hello, and that's part of the environment through and through, and there is nothing that could convince me we shouldn't have SROs in our buildings."

The SRO program started at the district in the 2008-09 school year with Sgt. Jason Brower.

Jennifer Butterworth: Director of special education



Jen Butterworth has many passions, which include her family, Pittsburgh sports, traveling abroad and education – specifically special education. In fact, the district's new special education director said she can't think of any other career she'd rather be in.

"I never really wanted to do anything else," she said. "If that wasn't an option, I don't know what else I'd be doing. This is it for me."

She found inspiration to pursue a career in special education because of her mother who was a special ed teacher and a close cousin with Downs syndrome who she "loved spending time with."

"I think it was sometime in high school where I realized I wanted to work with people with disabilities," Butterworth said. "I never thought about anything else and had a lot of great experiences working with all types of programs – emotional support, life skills. I'm really fortunate."

The longtime educator has been in the business for 28 years working at school districts and intermediate units. She graduated in 1992 with a bachelor's degree in special education from Penn State, where she also received a master's degree in educational administration. She then received her superintendent letter of eligibility and principal certificate from California University of Pennsylvania.

After graduation, Butterworth started at Philipsburg-Osceola Area School District and, after teaching for a couple years, transferred to Central Intermediate Unit 10 where she spent a majority of her career as a teacher, educational consultant, special education supervisor and director of special education. She also worked at Intermediate Unit 17 in Williamsport as its director of student

services that allowed her to get broader experiences. She comes to Bellefonte Area School District from Westmont Hilltop School District in Johnstown, where she was the director of student services for two years.

While she's new to the district, it's a place Butterworth said she's very familiar with, as she was a longtime consultant with schools within BASD. Now, she hopes to work closely with fellow new administrator Jamie Smith, special education liaison, to establish positive relationships with faculty, staff and families they serve. The two were unanimously approved by the Bellefonte Area school board last spring.

"We want to understand how Bellefonte does things and get to know teachers and the programs we offer," Butterworth said. "We want to have a good relationship with them and get to know parents and continue to build those relationships. I want them to trust our department."

And with a unique school year during the COVID-19 pandemic, Butterworth is reassuring families that they will constantly have the best interest in mind for students.

"One of the first things we asked families is what their concerns are," Butterworth said. "Sometimes education isn't always their No. 1 concern. I want families to know we'll be flexible to meet their needs and work with their concerns. Now, more than ever, we're being creative to work on the best solutions and programming for the child."

Fun facts

- Butterworth and her husband have four grown children and two grandchildren who they enjoy spending time with.
- She is an avid Pittsburgh sports fan, going to as many Pirates and Steelers games as possible.
- She aims to travel to Ireland to visit family and explore the culture. She has been there once before about 10 years ago.
- Butterworth is also active in her church's music program by singing in the choir, and playing the bells and piano.

Award of Merit

Public Relations Director Brit Milazzo is an Award of Merit recipient through the Pennsylvania School Public Relations Association for her work in school communication. This is



her fourth school year serving Bellefonte Area School District in the role that was created as a way to help foster a relationship among the schools and communities the district serves and beyond — by providing educational and engaging information affecting the district, employees, residents, students and more.

On Jan. 4, Milazzo shipped out with the U.S. Navy for a 36-week deployment, preventing her from finishing the remainder of the 2020-21 school year in her current role. She plans to be back with the district next school year when she returns. As a reservist, Milazzo said she has a

passion for the military and serving her country — saying she joined because of a long military history in her family that she didn't want to end with her generation.

While Milazzo is on military leave, not all Bellefonte Area PR will be put on hold. High school teacher Jessica Lloyd's journalism students might pick up some of the slack with features you may find, here: www.basd.net/Page/15260

Leslie Elder, administrative assistant to the superintendent, also received recognition through the same organization for her work with Milazzo on Red Raider magazine. Milazzo attributes much of the proofreading to Elder and said it wouldn't be possible without her selfless help.

To learn more about public relations at Bellefonte Area School District, visit this link: www.basd.net/Page/13401

**Due to conflict of interest with Milazzo, who organizes Red Raider magazine, this brief was edited by Bellefonte Area High School journalism student Lily Wichert, a senior.*



Bellefonte Area School District has worked with LinkedIn to promote ways for students, recent high school graduates and members of the community to find jobs using the professional networking site. You can find a variety of blogs catered to the Bellefonte community.

- It's who you know
- Find your earning potential
- The power of ProFinder
- Learn something new with LinkedIn
- Road map to job search success

According to Brittany Dorner, a research marketing associate with LinkedIn, her team put together a blog

series that covers several different job search tools LinkedIn offers that are intended to be shared by Bellefonte Area School District so students, recent high school graduates and members of the community can easily click the links to the various tools, bookmark the information for later use and watch videos that accompany other information.

To see the LinkedIn blog series, visit this link: www.basd.net/Page/13921

*Logo provided by LinkedIn and used with permission



Inclusiveness, Diversity and Equity

Bellefonte Area School District has a continuous goal to educate faculty, staff, students and the community on human differences – and the acceptance of those – through inclusiveness, diversity and equity, with efforts such as enhancing district curriculum, creating an IDE committee, offering professional learning opportunities for district employees and working with professionals who are experts in the mission. It's an initiative started by former Superintendent Michelle Saylor and is an ongoing effort.

Learn more about the initiative, here:
www.basd.net/Page/15143

What is the IDE initiative?

Inclusiveness, diversity and equity focuses on identifying and removing barriers that are placed upon marginalized and underserved groups of people. The students that we serve come to us with many different life experiences and challenges, and may view the world through different lenses. Our ultimate goal is to increase our capacity as a district to be able to remove these barriers for our students and their families. Our work is really all-encompassing, and will help to support and empower students regardless of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, language ability, disability, mental health diagnoses and other identities. It is important for everyone to know that equity addresses all of these topics, not just one or a few.



Michelle Simpson



Mike Baughman

Who oversees the initiative?

** District Human Resources Director Michelle Simpson and Bellefonte Area Middle School Vice Principal Mike Baughman coordinate the district committee.*

We are working to help expand current efforts as a district. We have an awesome group of core people from all levels and all buildings at Bellefonte Area School District to help us. Their support, feedback and hard work has been invaluable to us. Ultimately, we all report to our superintendent for final direction. (Interim Superintendent) Mrs. (Tammie) Burnaford has been extremely supportive of our work and is willing to help however she can.

Who makes up the committee?

The IDE committee consists of administrators, members of the board of school directors, and both professional and support staff from all levels and all district buildings. Expanding our committee to include students and community members is very important to us, however, it is part of a process and may not happen right away. We are intentional about making sure that we are growing at a sustainable rate and not rushing into anything that we are not ready for.

What makes you right to help lead this campaign?

We are both passionate about this topic and share an interest in working to improve the way we support all of the members of our school community. We are not experts and will not claim to be, but are excited to grow and willing to learn along with committee members.



Why is this work important for our schools and community?

These are important topics for a lot of reasons. Most notably, we need to be able to provide all of our students and adults with an environment that allows them to feel supported and have their individual needs met. Additionally, information and news about topics such as poverty, mental illness, race and so on come to us from a lot of sources like social media and politics. Information from these sources is not always helpful or accurate. As a school system, being able to provide education in these areas will help to develop an accurate understanding of these topics. In doing so, we will produce empathetic students who are culturally sensitive and able to understand these matters from different perspectives.

Are there any misconceptions?

There can be many misconceptions about these topics, most of which come from a lack of understanding about what equity and diversity truly mean. One of the most common misconceptions is that movements to address equity and diversity are trying to push one side of a political agenda, and this could not be further from the truth. Our committee and the work we do is strictly and very intentionally nonpartisan and nonpolitical. We are focused on meeting the different needs of our students and creating an educational system that works to remove barriers and all forms of bias and racism. The best interest of all of our students is not a political issue. As with anything, it's important to ask questions and look for information from quality, fact-based sources if you have questions.

When was the initiative created?

This particular initiative emerged this summer when Mr. Baughman presented the desire to work on a curriculum review relating to equity and diversity, and it expanded from there. The groundwork for equity in general was in place already as equity began to emerge nationally and Dr. Saylor provided professional learning opportunities for all district staff, and updated policies. The board of school directors supported taking the next step and identified this as a goal for the district. This is not new work for the district; we are just taking the necessary next steps to move forward.

How does the district plan to work with employees to help bring them a better understanding of these issues?

The district will offer a variety of professional learning opportunities for employees multiple times each year during our professional learning days. The morning of our February professional learning day will focus completely on inclusiveness, diversity and equity. Our committee is also working to provide additional opportunities for the employees of our district throughout the school year. A group of teachers are participating in an antiracist book club led by members of our committee. We've also worked on plans for a 21 Day Equity Challenge. Plans are also in place to develop a platform for staff to be able to guide learning independently.

What resources is the district using to help make the IDE initiative a success?

Dr. (Seria) Chatters, the director of equity and inclusivity at State College Area School District, has been a huge help for us starting off. She has helped us build multiple connections with true experts in this field at Penn State and within our community, some of which have already offered professional learning sessions for us. We are also participating in a Centre County equity workgroup comprised of members from schools across the county. The more that we can rely on experts and bring in multiple perspectives to help our district grow, the more meaningful our work will be.

Where do you see this going in the future?

This is work that will be ongoing; there is no end in sight. Ultimately, we are working towards a culture shift to one of mutual respect where individuals can freely express themselves and have equitable access to resources and support. We hope to be able to bring our district to a place where we look at all systems and practices through an equity lens and remove systematic barriers that may exist. It's going to be a lot of work and a continual learning process, but it's our responsibility to our students to continue to learn and improve the way we address these issues.



Girls' golf

The Bellefonte Area High School girls' golf team was undefeated in the 2020 season, and wrapped up in October with other team and individual accomplishments.

According to Coach Jayme Zimmerman, the team's overall record was 20-0 and ended as Mountain League champions. The team also boasted four Mountain League All-Stars.

- Riley Clute
- Bella Corman
- Sara Rados
- Sam Shaw

Zimmerman also said several girls made the top 5 at each match throughout the season, however, Riley Clute was a medalist with a personal record, breaking 45 – meaning lowest score overall – at the Hollidaysburg match on Sept. 15 at Scotch Valley Country Club. Each girl also shot their personal best scores this year in competition.

During the District 6 tournament in October, the team placed second with individual placeholders and medal-winners.

- Riley Clute: Third place
- Sam Shaw: Fifth place
- Sara Rados: Eighth place
- Bella Corman: 14th place

"We have six returners coming back next year – and, hopefully, some new talent – who are eager to keep working in the offseason and continue our drive next year," Zimmerman said.

Soccer camp

Each year, the Bellefonte Area High School girls' soccer program partakes in a summer soccer camp to help hone skills before the season officially begins. The past two years they attended camp at Shippensburg University that allowed them to work with college coaches and scrimmage other high school teams that attended the camp. Before last season, they were scheduled for a four-day camp at California University of Pennsylvania – until the university canceled summer programs.

According to the Cal U athletic department, "Following a directive from the Chancellor of Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, the decision was made in late March to cancel all face-to-face events that have been scheduled during the 2020 summer months. This (included) the annual summer camps hosted by the Cal U athletic programs."

Under direction of longtime coaches Stacey Miller and Bob Litten, an in-house summer soccer camp was created instead during the week of

July 20 at Rogers Stadium. It included daily workouts with trainers from Kinetik Fitness and guest coaches to work with the about-20 student athletes. Guest coaches included Chris Freidhoff, Andrew Weigold and Jonathan Virgilio who are also all teachers at the high school.

Under strict mandates from the state and athletic department, the team followed distancing guidelines and the use of face coverings. The team also held optional summer sessions on Sunday, Monday and Wednesday nights leading up to the season, following those same guidelines.

Mountain League All-Stars

For the third consecutive year, the girls' soccer team played Hollidaysburg in the District 6 final. Senior defender Leigha Schrader was named a first-team Mountain League All-Star and teammate Mia Johnson was named a second-team All-Star.

The boys' soccer team also boasted league All-Stars with Zach Copertino, Dan Persiko and Hayden Walker making first-team, and Shea Chapman and Nate Taylor named to the second team.



**Players with guest coach Andrew Weigold*

Boys' golf

The boys' golf team at Bellefonte Area High School wrapped up its season in the fall, ending second in the Mountain League. They additionally had team and individual accomplishments, which included recording its lowest team match score in 10 years, qualifying for the sectional tournament and boasting Mountain League All-Stars.

- Isaak Bloom was a medalist at the Mountain League match at Skytop Mountain Golf Club. Keith Hamilton placed second.
- Bloom, Hamilton, Evan Braughler, Joey Bruni, Davis Corman and

Gavin Fravel qualified to compete at the sectional tournament. Bloom placed eighth at sectionals and qualified for districts.

- Bloom finished third and Hamilton tied for fourth in All-Star points.



Football highlights



The Red Raiders football team dropped to Juniata in the District 6 Class 4A championship game, but they still had a season of highs, including setting a series of county and school records. Coach Shanon Manning also noted a group of standout players during the season.

In its game against Huntingdon, the Bellefonte Area High School football team set a county and school record with 635 yards of offensive play. They also set a series record with Huntingdon by scoring 62 points – 24 points in the second quarter tied for fourth on the school list for that quarter. Manning added that 490 yards rushing against Huntingdon is the fifth most in school history.

With a seven-game winning streak against Bald Eagle Area, it tied for the longest in school history among the series. They played the Eagles on Oct. 16 with a 17-7 win.

Standouts this year also included Nick Capparelle, Jalen Emel, Logan Houser, Jacob Hummel, Chris Palosky, Dan Persiko, Ethan Rossman and JJ Saunders. Hummel and Saunders are underclassmen.

- Capparelle finished with 431 career rushing yards on 55 attempts and three scores and finished with 12 receptions for 63 yards.
- Emel ended with 927 career rushing yards, 11 career touchdowns and 26 career receptions. He also finished with 346 career receiving yards and 1,983 career all-purpose yards. In the game against Juniata, Emel tallied 218 rushing yards, which is the second most by a BAHS quarterback and third most by a quarterback in the county. It also recorded as the third most rushing yards in county playoff history.

- Houser finished the season with 335 career yards rushing on 44 attempts and four scores. His career passing numbers are eight completions on 16 attempts for 132 yards and three scores.
- Hummel has 276 career rushing yards on 18 carries and one score.
- Palosky finished with 178 career rushing yards on 24 carries and two scores.
- Persiko's 56 career extra points is third best in school history and seventh best in county history. He additionally had 68 career kicking points, which is third most in school history. His 42-yard field goal in the game against Huntingdon is a school record, and his career field goals is tied for fourth most in school history.
- Rossman ranks second best among Bellefonte quarterbacks and is third best in county history, ending his career with 1,150 rushing yards. In the 2020 season, he had 365 rushing yards that put him in the top 10 among quarterbacks at Bellefonte. Rossman's 107 career completions and 1,550 career passing yards is also among the 10 best in both categories of school history. Additionally, his 19 career touchdown passes are ranked for fifth best at Bellefonte Area High School.
- Saunders had 300 yards rushing yards in the game this season against Huntingdon, making it the third most in school history. He also has 687 career rushing yards on 75 carries and two scores.



**Photo provided by CDT and used with permission*

**Information and statistics provided by Manning*

College commits

- **Bobby Marsh:** Baseball, Florida Atlantic University
- **Lexi Rogers:** Softball, James Madison University
- **Max Rogers:** Baseball, U. Pitt-Bradford
- **Seth Shuey:** Baseball, U. Pitt-Johnstown
- **Zach Swanger:** Baseball, Garrett College

XC District 6 results



Four runners on the Bellefonte Area High School cross-country team were medalists at the District 6 meet on Oct. 31, and two qualified for states held Nov. 7. The girls team placed fourth and the boys' team placed second at districts.

Medal winners were Chase Ebeling, Mia Elmore, Austin Melius and Caleb Vinnedge. Ebeling and Melius qualified for states, which they finished 51st and 45th respectively out of 133 runners.

Volleyball: District 6 champs



The volleyball team from Bellefonte Area High School became Division 6 champions at the title game Nov. 11 against Hollidaysburg. It was held in Tyrone. The Red Raiders beat the Golden Tigers, 3-1 (20-25, 25-19, 25-23, 25-16).

According to Coach Monica Smith, the team was 7-10 leading into the set. That win count was more than double the team's wins from the prior season. Freshman Carlee Pepperman also recorded a triple-double against Huntingdon – a feat that Smith said is "super rare." In that game, Pepperman's triple-double included 10 aces, 13 kills and 12 digs.

The team finished fifth in the Mountain League, and three athletes were named to the first-team All-District roster – Pepperman, Alexia Mishock and Makenna Port.



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