

► Connections

Community and Staff Newsletter - February 2015



It's that time of year where budgeting for the next school year becomes one of our District's primary activities. As many of you know, things will be challenging once again this year with the Governor's proposed budget that, if passed, will decrease funding to public schools.

While this proposed budget will certainly have an impact on us here in Neenah, we are proud to say that our District is still in sound financial shape heading into the 2015-16 school year. We plan to continue to provide staff with pay raises and stipends for performance and our starting salary remains one of the highest in the Fox Valley. We also have been able to make significant investments in technology to continue working toward providing all students with an iPad or a Chromebook.

Our District has the lowest health insurance costs of any Fox Valley district and we currently have no long-term debt. We have the lowest class sizes at the elementary level in our area and we are investing in the implementation of a four-year-old kindergarten program this fall.

All of these accomplishments have come while keeping our mill rate significantly lower than any other Fox Valley district. Our academic success continues to prosper as our ACT scores are the highest in the Fox Valley and every one of our schools is meeting expectations on the state report card with several schools surpassing that mark.

So while the next few months will provide plenty of challenges for all Wisconsin public schools, rest assured we will continue to make financial decisions in the best interests of our students, staff and local taxpayers here in Neenah.

Neenah With Pride!

Dr. Mary Pfeiffer
Superintendent of Schools

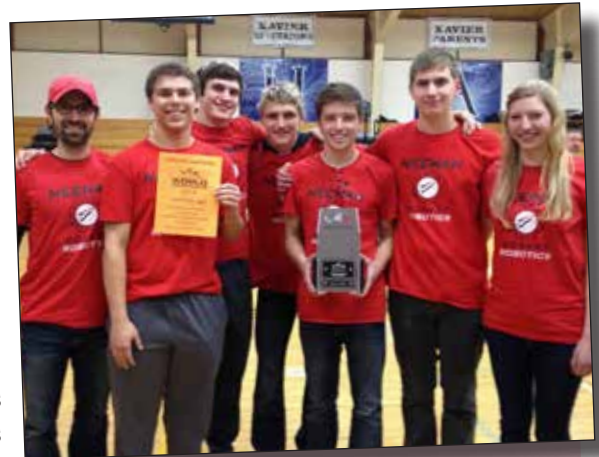
► Neenah VEX Robotics Teams Qualify for National and World Competitions

Neenah High School's VEX Robotics team had two impressive performances last week, including a winning team at the state championship meet that qualified for the world championships April 15-18 in Louisville, Ky.

The team of Alex Mootz, Jordan Altekruise, Evan Dujardin, Mareena Franke, Sam Hintz, Alex Schramper and Marissa Bredesen won the "Tournament of Champions" award at the state meet to earn its world championship invite. Neenah had three teams competing among the 52 qualifiers for the state meet, which was held Feb. 21 at Xavier High School in Appleton.

In addition, the team of Adam Burkett, Andrew Belot, Erik Metz, Angela Butke, Rob Schmidt and Matt Karrmann won the Fox Valley VEX Robotics Competition League title at UW-Fox Valley and qualified to compete in the U.S. Open Championships April 7-9 in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

Every robot in these competitions was designed to play a game called VEX Skyrise. Students use building and programming strategies to create the best robot possible. After competition, the teams redesign their robot to improve game play or increase their robot's capabilities. Many of these skills are learned through Project Lead The Way classes at Neenah High School.



Neenah's VEX Robotics team will compete at the World Championships. From left, Advisor Mr. Adam Hendries, Sam Hintz, Alex Mootz, Evan Dujardin, Jordan Altekruise, Alex Schramper and Mareena Franke



Senior Reilly Donnellan (right) became Neenah's first WIAA state champion in a boys swimming event when he captured the 50-yard freestyle at the state meet in Madison on Feb. 21 in a school-record time of 21.00 seconds. Donnellan tied for the title with Alex Peterson-Weber of Madison Memorial.

► *Around the District*

► *Digital Electronics Classes Collaborate With Bemis, Inc.*

Students in Neenah High School's digital electronics classes teamed with representatives from Bemis Company, Inc. to learn career success strategies on how to get and keep a job in high-growth industries.

The collaboration was part of Bemis' involvement with Junior Achievement's new program. The program covers key topics such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity. It also teaches strong soft skills, work priorities and insight on high-growth industries, while providing personal brand and job-hunting tools such as building resumes, cover letters, interviews and digital profiles.

The Neenah students met with Bemis employees in eight separate sessions. The sessions were followed by a mock interview where students brought their revised

resume and cover letter and dressed accordingly. Five human resources employees from Bemis came to Neenah High School and conducted the mock interviews. Afterwards, they reflected with the students on how they performed in their interviews.



Lakeview Elementary students shared their best writing of the year with fellow students as part of the Lakeview Writing Celebration. Students in all grades split into different classrooms and read their best writing samples from the past year to each other.

► *Tullar Students Team With NHS Students for "Play Day"*

Students at Tullar Elementary joined with Neenah High School students for a day of fun and games in a Global School Play Day Feb. 5 at Tullar.



The Global School Play Day was an event held around the world to promote the importance of regular play for the best development of children. The day was inspired by the book "Free to Learn" by Dr. Peter Gray and the idea that today's children do not grow up playing which has negatively impacted them in many ways. Students were asked to bring toys or games to school and simply play with no interference from staring at screens or their teachers and other adults.

Kindergarten and fifth grade students at Tullar participated in the event with students in the Neenah High School Arete (project-based learning) classes. Kindergarteners from Ms. Sara Preston's class spent the day in the gymnasium with Ms. Desiree Luloff, while fifth graders from Ms. Chris Gardner's class played games in their classroom. Neenah High School teachers Ms. Suzy Weisgerber and Mr. Gregg Goers helped coordinate the event.

Following the event, teachers and students reflected on their experience and what they learned from a day of unstructured play.



In honor of the 100th day of school on Feb. 3, Coolidge Elementary students reported 100 acts of kindness observed in other students and displayed them in "candy messages" in the main hallway.

► School-by-School



Neenah placed eighth of 44 teams in its first appearance at the Wisconsin High School Ice Fishing Championships last weekend in Chetek. The team caught five different species among its 15 fish limit and totaled 179.16 points, which was 10 points out of the top five. Bradley Gumtow and Nick Holman shared top prize for catching the largest pumpkinseed.



Shattuck's VEX Robotics club took five teams into its first live competition in Appleton on Feb. 14. One of the teams placed fourth overall and the team of Evan Pilzak and Trevor Oneacre won the STEM Research Project Award. Each team played six times as other Shattuck teams placed 11th, 21st, 22nd, and 23rd overall.



As part of Music in Our Schools Month, Horace Mann will be showing off the musical talent of its students with daily performances in the school lobby from 7:30-8 a.m. between March 2-20. All students were given an opportunity to sign up to perform.



Students at Alliance and Roosevelt recently completed two weeks with artist-in-residency Jennifer Stevens. She taught the students a bit about her Oneida heritage and also focused on fine arts and visual arts. The students did some creative writing and then had the opportunity to make a clay pinch pot.



Clayton students learned about nature during the past week as the fifth graders took a field trip to Bubolz Nature Center on Feb. 24 and the second graders visited Heckrodt Wetland Preserve on Feb. 25. Third graders took a field trip on Feb. 18 to the History Museum at the Castle in Appleton.



Coolidge kindergarten students took some time recently to share their favorite book. Stories might have been an "old familiar book" or a new book enjoyed together this year at school. The titles are displayed on a "Hats Off to Reading" display board in the hallway.



After-school activities have been popular this winter with Hoover students. A running club has had students running through the gym and the hallway every Thursday and a math club has had full sign-up sheets every week. The goal is to have every student participate in at least one math club lesson.



Lakeview is holding a graphic novels event on March 3 in the library from 5:30-7:30 p.m. The purpose is to read, create and experience the artistic process of graphic novels. Over 80 students are registered to attend. This is the second year of the event and several teachers are helping to run the sessions.



Fifth grade students have been learning about internet safety, cyberbullying and how to stand up for others online. After the unit, students were given two scenarios. To complete the assignment, students needed to understand both good and poor online choices. They worked individually and in pairs to create comics and photographs.



Spring Road families are taking part in Donald Driver's challenge to promote healthy nutrition and activity choices from Feb. 15 through March 13. There are different nutrition goals every week and the class with the highest number of points earns free activity time in the gym.



Taft held a Spirit Week Feb. 16-20. Dress-up days included team sports day, pajama day, crazy hair or hat day, inside-out day and Taft spirit wear day. The week concluded with a family dance on Friday. Numerous Taft families took part in the first-time event to help get to know other families in their new school.



Tullar students celebrated the 100th day of school on Feb. 3 by dressing as 100-year olds. They also ate healthy snacks that resembled the number 100. Students wrote what they will be doing when they are 100 years old and predicted what will be happening in Neenah, Wisconsin and the United States.



Washington families took part in a "Healthy You" parent event on Feb. 13 that provided ideas on making better food choices and fitting in quality exercises for the family. Free YMCA passes were given to all participants.



Wilson held its annual school carnival and basket raffle event on Feb. 21 in the school gym. The school also held its Jump Rope for Heart fundraising event on Feb. 6.

► *What's Happening*

► **“Little Mermaid, Jr.” Coming to Shattuck March 12-15**

The middle school musical, “Little Mermaid, Jr.” is set for five shows March 12-15 at the Shattuck Middle School Auditorium. Show times are 7 p.m. on March 12-14 and there will be 2 p.m. shows on March 14 and 15. Students from both Horace Mann and Shattuck Middle Schools are participating under the direction of Mr. Jason Fridley.

Tickets are \$5 each and may be purchased in advance at the Shattuck office. They will also be available at the door.

The show is based on the 1989 Disney movie and a classic story by Hans Christian Andersen about a mermaid who dreams of the world above the sea and gives up her voice to find love.



Hoover Elementary students recently participated in a STEM Day. Neenah High School students coordinated the activities, which provided hands-on problem solving skills, engineering design process and teamwork in seven different stations throughout the day.

► **Rocket “Blast-Off” 5K Run Set for March 7 at Memorial Park**

The Neenah High School boys track and field team will host the eighth annual Rocket Blast Off 5K on Sat., March 7 at Memorial Park in Neenah.

Registration for the event begins at 9 a.m. in the Appleblossom Drive pavilion and the race starts at 10 a.m. Online registration is also available at www.active.com. Cost is \$25 per participant and individuals may register the day of the event.

All participants in the chip-timed event receive a t-shirt and awards will be presented to the top three finishers in four age group categories. Proceeds benefit the Neenah High School boys track and field program and Special Olympics of the Fox Valley.

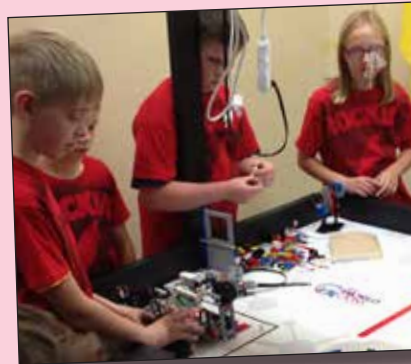
Upcoming Events

Feb. 25 ... Parent-Teacher Conferences, Grades 6-12, 4-8 p.m.
26..... Early Dismissal - All Levels (Parent-Teacher Conferences)
26..... Parent-Teacher Conferences, All Levels, 12:30-8 p.m.
27..... No School - All Levels (Parent-Teacher Conferences)
27..... Parent Teacher Conferences, Grades K-5, 7:45-11:45 a.m.
Mar. 3..... No School - Grades, 9, 10 and 12 (Gr. 11 ACT Test)
4..... No School (a.m.) - Grades 9, 10 and 12 (Gr. 11 ACT Test)
10..... Spring Road School Concert (Pickard Aud.), 6:30 p.m.
12-14 Middle School Musical (Shattuck Auditorium), 7 p.m.
14-15 Middle School Musical (Shattuck Auditorium), 2 p.m.
17..... NHS Wind Symphony (Pickard Auditorium), 7:30 p.m.
19..... Young People's Concert (Pickard Auditorium), 9 a.m.
20..... Early Dismissal - All Levels (Professional Learning Day)
23-27 No School - Spring Break

► **Rockin' Red Robotics Team to Demonstrate at Mann**

Members of Neenah's FIRST Lego League Rockin' Red Robotics Team will demonstrate their hard work to the parents and community during Parent-Teacher Conferences on Feb. 25-26.

The 10-member team will be in the Horace Mann Middle School lobby from 4-7:30 p.m. on Feb. 25 and from 12:30-7:30 p.m. on Feb. 26. Parents and community members are welcome



to come see the team and robots in action.

Students use basic programmable robot modules to accomplish tasks, like open a door, navigate through several obstacles and fetch a key from the other side of the table.

► **Dates Set for End-of-Year Employee Celebrations**

Join other Neenah Joint School District staff in celebrating the 2015 Retirees and Employees of the Year during early May.

The retirees will be honored at a social at the Holiday Inn Riverwalk on Fri., May 8 from 4-6:30 p.m. with a program at 4:45 p.m.

The Employees of the Year will be recognized at a social at Bridgewood Best Western Resort on Wed., May 13 from 3:45-5 p.m.