



# Our Schools

S P R I N G • 2 0 2 2

## Career Café: Law Enforcement

During a recent Career Cafe session at East Middle, Detective Jeff Coia of the West Seneca Police Department visited with our 6–8th graders. Detective Coia told students about his career path, daily responsibilities, and showed them tools of the trade, such as demonstrating a fingerprinting kit. He also spoke about related careers in law enforcement. Students again asked great questions, shared information about their own family members in law enforcement and talked about their career goals. Career Cafes feature a variety of professionals from different backgrounds. East Middle Counselors, Warren Yokom and Ann



Marie Canaple, base the bi-monthly café guests on students' interest inventories. Next up is a Personal Trainer/Coach/Professional MMA fighter, followed by a civil/wastewater

engineer. Student Brodie Wilson says, "I thought Detective Coia did a great job, and I really enjoyed the fingerprinting demonstration."

## Come Work With Us!

The West Seneca Central School District is a great place to work! We currently have full and part time positions available in several areas such as substitute teachers, teacher aides, bus drivers, cleaners, etc. See our job listings at [wscschools.org](http://wscschools.org) and apply today!

### Top Reasons To Work For WSCSD:

- Rewarding and Clean Environment - Helping Students and Staff
- Great Benefits - Health, Vision, Dental
- NYS Retirement System/Pension
- Promotional Opportunities/ advancement
- Paid Time Off - Sick Days/Personal Days/Holidays



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Most importantly, you can make a positive difference in children's lives through WSCSD!

## Chamber of Commerce Award: Educator of the Year Keith Ersing



A lifelong resident of West Seneca and a teacher in the West Seneca Central School District for 22 years, Keith Ersing joins a long list of talented educators to earn the Chamber

of Commerce Educator of the Year award, including his brother Craig, who was named Educator of the Year in 2020. As a beloved music teacher and choral/drama director, Keith believes that being a teacher is more of a calling than a job.

# A Letter from Superintendent Matthew Bystrak



**Matthew J. Bystrak**  
Superintendent of Schools

## WEST SENECA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Greetings West Seneca Families:

As we gear up to finish the year 2021-2022 school year strong, I want to thank every student, parent, and staff member in the District for your part in helping to get us through the challenges we have faced for the past few years. Your resilience and community spirit have helped to ease the burden on our children in difficult times. We are now enjoying a return to some form of normalcy – musicals without masks, classes without masks, and a full array of sports and activities.

Before the school year is over, we will have several music performances and festivals, celebratory dinners and awards ceremonies, and graduation and moving up days on our newly reconstructed and resurfaced senior high fields. I encourage everyone to see our online calendar and take advantage of our revived togetherness at any or all of our student-centered events.

Please be aware that budget and Board of Education Member voting season is upon us, and your input is both necessary and welcome. Voting will take place on Tuesday, May 17, at East Senior High School, 4760 Seneca Street, from 7:00AM to 9:00PM. As always, much thoughtful work has gone into the formation of our 2022-2023 proposed budget. While we are still utilizing American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds for essentials to enhance student support and acceleration, both academically and emotionally (*See ELA and Math Labs article on Page 3*), these funds are temporary and we will need to continue to maintain our programming and facilities through our regular revenue stream. We are crafting a budget that will support our student's needs as we progress beyond the academic and social/emotional challenges we have faced.

With our ARP funding, we have added a District level Behavior Support Team consisting of a social worker and psychologist. Additionally, we have added another District level social worker whose primary focus is engaging students and families with needs, both in and outside of school. Finally, we have added an additional psychologist so that each of our buildings now has an essential dedicated psychologist.

We are excited about the coming summer for a variety of reasons. Our Capital Project will continue with some of the most notable work taking place at West Middle School this summer. (*See article page 7*). We will double the number of students in our elementary summer program offerings, and will continue to offer essential summer programming to our middle and high school students.

If you haven't joined us on Facebook (West Seneca Central Schools) and Twitter (@WestSenecaCSD), please do so. You will find a wealth of information there, along with a lively community of fellow parents and alumni. Here's to a successful spring semester! Thank you for your continued support of the West Seneca Central Schools.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Matthew J. Bystrak'.

Matthew Bystrak  
Superintendent

# Exciting Education



## Middle School Learning Labs

Imagine you were a middle schooler coming back to full time, in-person classes this past fall. As eager as our students were to be with their peers and get into the swing of school again, it was trying for many. Now imagine hitting a bump in your lesson and being able to go down the hall to a teacher you know, for some one-on-one individualized tutoring to catch up, or move to the head of the class.

In September, the District started planning to create ELA and Math learning labs in both East and West Middle Schools with American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding. The labs are now fully-functional, cozy rooms, chock full of learning tools for every style learner. Teachers Mrs. Danielle Sadler (East Middle) and Mrs. Robin Schreiner (West Middle) run the Math labs, and Mrs. Heather Mundy (West Middle) and Mrs. Nancy Blaszak (East Middle) run the ELA labs. Mrs. Mundy says, “Students come here through teacher referrals and on their own when they need help or want an additional challenge. We can front-load them for an upcoming lesson, help them through a current lesson, or do review.” In addition to traditional English class help, the ELA lab also tutors in Social Studies, as well as Science.

Mrs. Schreiner says, “We have found that one of the best parts about Math Lab is that it has encouraged students to become self-advocates. Students are also

coming to ask for more challenging math tasks once they are comfortable with their current lessons. Students often sign themselves up now, and they come as often as they feel they need to. Many come on a regular basis, and we have seen much success already!”

The proof of success is in the regular classroom teachers’ and students’ praise for the program. West Middle teacher Brett Widman (Algebra I and Accelerated 7) says, “The Learning Lab is the best addition to education in my



Mrs. Robin Schreiner

22 years. Struggling students go to the lab where it’s fun and different. They want to go because they know they can benefit and they have to be ready for the Regents exam. This has been great for pandemic make-up, but it will be just as valuable in a regular year.”

Here are a few quotes of feedback from students about Math & ELA Learning Labs:

- “The math lab has prepared me for what’s to come and also gave me ways that I can remember how to do things.”
- “It helped me get late work done and understand it and my grade went from 76 to a 92”
- “Nobody [in ELA Lab] is going to judge you for getting help, it really does help improve grades or catch you up.”

## Teaching Talent

West Senior music teacher John Hasselback is, and has been, a staple in the Buffalo jazz scene for many years. Each year the JazzBuffalo organization sponsors a poll, seeking nominations for the region’s best jazz performers. Our own Mr. Hasselback has won “Best Trombonist” every year since the poll began. This year he also won “Middle/High School Jazz Educator of the Year.” His students certainly agree with that. John was also a member of the band that won “Most Memorable Performance of 2021” with the George Caldwell Sextet. Our students are familiar with Mr. Caldwell as well because Mr. Hasselback has brought him in several times for masterclasses with our students. Speaking of great musicians Mr. Hasselback knows; his wife, Lisa, won “Best Pianist,” and his son, John III, won “Best Album”. Thank you, Mr. Hasselback, for inspiring our students, modeling greatness, and bringing in fellow prestigious artists.

# Exciting Education

## PTECH

Our P-TECH Route to Automotive Career Excellence (R.A.C.E.) program allows interested 8th graders to enroll in a unique high school experience. Beginning their 9th grade year, students will earn a free Associate Degree from SUNY Erie while benefiting from hands-on learning and mentorship experiences with industry professionals. The R.A.C.E. program is in its 4th year. With 10 slots allotted to us each year, we currently have 28 students in this 5-year program. After year 2, students can choose to pursue an Associate's in either Automotive Repair or Automotive Collision. We offer the R.A.C.E. program in partnership with Erie 1 BOCES, SUNY Erie, and WNY schools. Special Thanks to our industry partners: Basil Family of Dealerships, Gabe's Collision, Auto Collision and Glass, Gerber Collision, West Herr Automotive Group, Northtown Automotive Companies, Fisher Auto Parts, Towne Automotive Group, and Niagara Frontier Automotive Dealers Association. This year's virtual information session took place on February 2nd.



## West Middle ASL Club

The newly-created American Sign Language (ASL) Club at West Middle School consists of 6th through 8th grade students. Teachers Liz Brocki and MaryJo Kempf are the advisors, but the formation of a club was 7th-grader Ellie Klinko's idea. Ellie simply reached out to her school counselor, Katie Kubiak, who helped her to form the club. Interest in learning American Sign Language (ASL) was high and students quickly joined, learning how to sign the alphabet, common words and phrases, as well as holiday-themed words. In February, students learned several words and phrases that related to Valentine's Day and made a craft showing how to sign, "I love you," using their hand as a template. Students particularly enjoyed learning how to sign several words and phrases that represent kindness and love. Kudos to Ellie and her caring West Middle mentors for forming this important club. That's what we love to see.



# Exciting Education

## Academy Program Intern: Sarah Colby



Sarah Colby is an East High senior, enrolled in the Academy of Life Science. Currently, she is interning with Viant, a global medical manufacturing company with 24 worldwide facilities, including two in Orchard Park.

Sarah, in the Academy since her sophomore year, always knew she wanted to pursue a career in the medical field. She was vacillating between Life Sciences and Engineering, both Academies offered in our high schools, when she met a Viant representative at an Academy Advisory Board networking event.

“Figuring out what you don’t want to do is just as important as figuring out what you do want to do,” said Sarah. She applied for an internship at Viant this past summer, going up against college students for the opportunity.

“I was skeptical about bringing in a 17-year-old High School intern, but the fact that she is still with us 6 months later is a testament of her performance and the value she brings to the team!” says Jay Such, Viant Senior Commercial Development Manager and Sarah’s direct supervisor.

Jay says Sarah’s resume showed up on his desk last summer during the company’s search for an intern. “The task at hand was to automate some Excel templates along with creating user’s guides for the same. I felt we needed... more than a 17-year-old high school student,” Such says, “but as I was setting Sarah’s resume aside, two items piqued my interest; her major was Academy of Life Science, and she stated she was proficient in Excel. Working for one of the largest contract manufacturers in the medical device industry, I was very curious about her choice for a major. I decided the least I could do is bring her in for some job interview experience and would then be able to ask about her interest in Life Science at the same time.”

Jay was pleasantly surprised, and the interview that started out as an exercise turned into a symbiotic professional working relationship. As Jay tells it, Sarah earned respect through her confidence, honesty, and familiarity with advanced features of Excel, “that the vast majority of Excel users would not even understand,” Jay says. He adds that in the ensuing

conversation, her infatuation with all things “medical,” specifically around Cardiology & Ophthalmology, amazed him. Viant, after all, produces more than two million ophthalmic devices (cataract treatment) annually, so Ophthalmology is one of Jay’s passions as well. Tried and true, Jay says Sarah has been an integral part of a number of successful projects in the company, and the list is growing with requests for her assistance from others that have seen her results.

“Mentoring an intern takes a lot more time and effort than I ever imagined,” Jay says. “What I didn’t realize is that I would be gaining just as much, if not more, value than Sarah gains during her internship. Sarah is an integral part of our team working on projects and has taken over some of my weekly/monthly responsibilities which include frequent correspondence with Viant’s Chief Commercial Officer, VPs, the over-all commercial sales team, and beyond. In the short time that I have known her she has earned my respect, she’s demonstrated that she is trustworthy, and she continually strives to exceed expectations. The enthusiasm she brings to work each day is contagious.”

Moreover, Jay says, “On a weekly basis, new confidential devices show up that she is getting intimate knowledge of at the earliest stage of their design.”

For Sarah’s part in the intern experience, she says she felt integrated into the company immediately. “When you’re working for a great company--like I am fortunate to be--they really want to be a part of helping you. An internship like this is super beneficial and sets you apart from many candidates in the long run.”

To her fellow students Sarah says, “I don’t know why anyone wouldn’t take advantage of the Academy Programs and internship opportunities. I’m the only kid at an all-adult professional facility. Sometimes I found myself on the phone, talking to someone across the world. While I had to adjust to that, it was great to see how willing everyone was to help.” The bottom line according to Sarah is, “Grab the opportunity for how it looks on paper, and grow from the experience.”

# Connecting with the Community

## Ebenezer Tour



Board President Edmund Bedient, Board Member Janice Dalbo, and Superintendent Matthew Bystrak recently toured the Ebenezer School site at 900 Mill Road. Once an elementary school and then an alternative school, Ebenezer is

being well used as the home of Building and Grounds management under Joe Farr, Internet Technology under Scott Firkins, and the District's print shop, run by Rosemary Godwin. There's something interesting at every turn in this building, whether it's the

carpenter shop, electrical shop, or the chock-full prop room, waiting for the return of our Theatre of Youth partners. We are grateful for all of the good work going on at Ebenezer, and for the cost saving, in-house expertise of the talented staff there!

## West Seneca PD And Winchester Potters Principal Thank an Angel

WSPD writes: We'd like to congratulate resident Jack Zahlhas on his hard-earned retirement from our Crossing Guard team after 20 years. School Resource Officer Ryback and Principal Robyn Brady from Winchester Potters School stopped by recently with a small token of appreciation. Jack has spent the last 20 school years out in rain, wind, sleet, and snow - all while dodging school zone traffic and keeping our kids safe! And he did it smiling and waving the whole time. It's often a thankless job, but one of the most important ones and we're lucky to have had him for so long. Thank you, Jack, for your dedicated service to our community!



# Connecting with the Community

## Capital Project

Our Capital Project with Young + Wright Architectural is on schedule, and we are so excited to see progress. Construction on Phase 2 of the Capital Improvement Project is about to begin, as bids were awarded last month. Sitework at West Middle School will be starting over spring break which includes demolition of the bus loop. Construction

of the music wing addition will begin this spring/early summer, along with renovating the existing music rooms, main office and gymnasium. Roof restoration work will begin this summer as well at West Middle School. Next summer, construction will take place at East Middle School. In the fall of 2023, Phase 3 construction will begin on science labs at both East and West High Schools.



Music Wing addition at West Middle School and the new entry canopy at East Middle School.



# Connecting with the Community

## Buffalo State Teaching Students @ East Middle



Buffalo State College English Education Department members, Dr. James Cercone and Dr. Kristen Pastore-Capuana, brought their English 200 cohort to West Seneca East Middle School for a building tour and presentation regarding

preparation to enter the teaching profession. Many of the students are sophomores in the undergraduate program. Principal Jason Marchioli and 7th Grade EMS English teacher, Alyssa O'Connor, took time to share information with the college students

about a typical day in a middle school setting and what some of the day-to-day activities in an English classroom look like. We will welcome our teaching students, individually, to visit East Middle again this spring for classroom observation hours.

## East & West High: Business & Marketing Honor Society

Congratulations to our new inductees and senior members of the Business and Marketing Honor Society! The primary purpose of the Business and Marketing Honor Society, affiliated with the Business Teachers Association of New York, is to recognize students who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in business education at the secondary level. In Business Education courses, students must carry a minimum of 88 percent, equivalent to a B+ or 3.5 GPA. Students must also demonstrate exemplary Character, Leadership, and Service in the classroom as well as in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Corrin Murphy and Dave Giancola are the East High mentors, and Renee Day and Rio Harden mentor West High students.



**EAST • Front:** Malak Mohamed, Jenelle Alcantara, Leah Radka, Mia Fawls, Ryan Tymorek, Jake Wojtkowiak and Emily Nguyen. **Back:** Ethan McMahon, Hannah Lockwood, Aidan Fawls, Matthew Sarro, Julia Hise.



**WEST • Front:** David Johnson. Leah McKibbin. Eric Stevenson, Alex Kibler, Haley Ellis, Tyler Sieg. **Middle:** Lindsey Kitchen, Abigail Toomey, Josh Lundin, Isabel Dybalski, Rebecca SanGeorge, Abigail Ludwick, Helena Kottas, Rebecca Gilbert, Lydia Grzegorek, Caitlyn Bedient. **Back:** Liliana Hamilton, Nicholas Wichman, Andrew Clough, Nicholas Brodnicki, JR Hasfurter Jr., Michael Pozzuto, Kyle Sadowski. **Absent from photo:** Katie Mruk, Kara Szewc, Abigail Wilczak



# Athletics

## Unified Bowling

25 Unified Bowling Team members from both East and West High Schools eagerly met with students from Clarence this past February 10th for a match. The co-ed, Section VI Varsity team ranges from freshman to 21-year-olds encompassing our 12:1:1 and 6:1:1 functional life skills classrooms. "It is a beautiful program," says Lauren J. Clark, Unified Sports Head Coach. "It allows students in our Special Education programs to be on a Varsity team with student athletes from our General Education setting to form one cohesive team. It bridges the gap between all students! I have

coached multiple levels of volleyball for the District, both male and female, but this experience is by far the most wonderful program I have been a part of." West Seneca has had a Unified Sports Program in the district for four years. Unified Basketball is in its 4th season, and this is the 3rd year for bowling. According to Ms. Clark, the students love interacting with new people, traveling to other schools, and competing. "They enjoy all of the perks such as uniforms, buses to and from contests, referees, Varsity letters, accolades, and recognition!" she says, adding, "The students absolutely adore the program and

love to talk about it with anyone who will listen. It is something so hard to explain; the feeling is electric and you have to see it to believe it." One more reason to love this team: They work throughout the week putting together allergy-friendly treat bags complete with bows and labels, welcoming opposing teams upon their arrival. In this way, they employ their stellar social interaction, conversational skills, and friendships that celebrate common interests. Unified Bowling is a big WIN! And our team did win, fallen pin total: WS 2104 to Clarence's 2016.



# Athletics and Clubs



Raelyn Vadala  
Bluefield State College – Div II Track & Field



Isaiah Simmons  
Stony Brook University – Div I Football



Grace Miltenberger  
Medaille College – Div III Bowling



Noah Petrik – D'Youville College – Div II Volleyball  
Bennett Petrik – SUNY New Palz – Div III Volleyball



Noah Workman  
Hilbert College - Division III Football



Koopler Aiken  
Hilbert College - Division III Football

## International Relations Club

On Wednesday, February 16th, West Senior's International Relations Club (IRC) went to dinner at the West Side Bazaar near downtown Buffalo. The students enjoyed Thai, Ethiopian, Burmese and Japanese cuisine. IRC's events are especially enjoyable when joined by our exchange students. This year, West is fortunate to be hosting four AFS friends from Ecuador, Norway, Thailand and Japan. The students highly recommend the food!



# Photo Gallery

Northwood Elementary Meet & Greet.

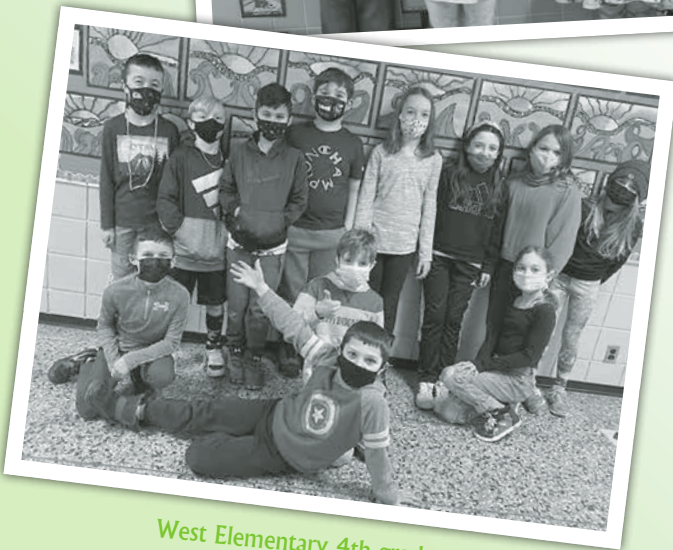


Jack Monson, a life skills student in teacher Laura Tobia's class, drew his favorite Buffalo Bill, Josh Allen.



Snowshoeing at Allendale Elementary

March Madness Tournament of Books at Clinton Elementary.



West Elementary 4th graders.



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