

WO girls' cross country team finishes 7th in state

The West Ottawa High School girls' cross country team entered the MHSAA Division 1 state competition at Michigan International Speedway on Nov. 2 feeling confident of its goal of finishing in the top 10 in the state.

By the end of the race, the WO runners had reached their goal and earned a seventh place finish.

This is the highest finish ever for a West Ottawa girls' cross country team at a state meet. Furthermore, freshman Arianne Olson blazed through the course to a second place finish, while Abby Olson came in 16th place. Both Arianne and Abby earned All-State Honors for the competition.

The WOHS girls were coached by Kyle Barnes and assisted by



West Ottawa High School girls' cross country team

Danielle Barnes. The team members include: Arianne Olson, Abby Olson, Lucy Groothuis, Megan Postma, Lillian Reiner, Abby Bonnema, Emily Laird, Lizzy Arner, Lily Bartels, Natalie Blake, Emmah Bloemers, Paige Bomhof, Sophie Bonnema, Hannah Broersma, Kaia Denhof, Caitlin

Derby, Abby Green, Andrea Kennedy, Rachel Kennedy, Ava McBride, Clarissa Mendez, Claire Miller, Leslie Perez, Elisabeth Salazar, Allison Teav, Anna VanderWege, Claire Vellinga and Presley Whitaker.

Congratulations and Go WO!

This year continues to be one of the best ever!

Dear Friends:

This school year continues to be one of the best in recent history. We are excited to begin the planning phases of the Athletics Stadium and PAC made possible by the passing of the May 2019 bond. These are very extensive projects and will take time to design and plan. The most current project will be the complete remodel of Harbor Lights. Bids will be opened this fall with construction starting next spring. This is also a very extensive project and will take about 30 months to complete. More information will be forthcoming in the months ahead.

If you haven't yet heard, it is with great pride that I share with you the recent announcement that West Ottawa Public Schools' Lakewood Elementary School has made the list of prestigious 2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools! Every year the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program, which is part of the U.S. Department

A letter from...



Supt. Tom Martin

of Education, recognizes the best schools in the U.S., and this year Lakewood was identified as one of

just 13 recipients in the state of Michigan for "exemplary high performing schools."

Now in its 37th year, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program highlights schools based on their academic excellence, or ability to close achievement gaps among different student subgroups. While we are proud of Lakewood for this achievement, it's important to recall that other schools throughout our district previously received this designation, including Lakeshore Elementary in 2014 and Waukazoo Elementary, who earned the award each year from 2005 to 2010.

The National Blue Ribbon Award isn't the only honor the district has received recently. Earlier this school year, our entire school district was recognized as one of Michigan's top 25 school districts by Niche, a well-respected website that ranks high-performing schools across the
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North Holland students get hands-on ecosystem lesson

The fifth graders at North Holland Elementary took a field trip to nearby Hemlock Crossings Park on Oct. 22.

The trip comes as part of their recent Project Based Learning Unit, focused around Michigan Ecosystems and creating educational resources for the new outdoor classroom space that recently began at North Holland Elementary School.

Forty-one fifth graders braved the elements, spending the day outside identifying native plants, learning about the forest and meadow ecosystems in Michigan, as well as taking part in a stream study, funded and staffed by WMEAC's "Teach 4 the Watershed" Educational Program.

The trip served as an incredible hands-on learning experience, as well as a chance for the students to gather ideas for what types of resources they might create to educate North Holland Elementary students in the years to come.



Fifth-grader Jayce Marroquin takes part in the stream study.



Enjoying the outdoors - a learning experience

North Holland Elementary students were able to enjoy the outdoors while also learning and creating educational resources for their new outdoor classroom.

Flexible seating aids learning at Lakeshore

Adults have the luxury of getting up from their seats to take a walk, can turn back and forth in swivel chairs as they think or stand in the back of the room when their backs hurt. But for most kids at school, sitting just doesn't work like that.

It's hard for children to sit for long periods of time, and when they do, their focus can actually shift away from learning and onto sitting still itself. Lakeshore Elementary teachers have decided to do something about that.

Through the help of creative teachers, and the support of the school's PTO, Lakeshore has included the use of flexible seating and technology to keep kids focused on learning, not on sitting. Exercise/yoga balls, wiggle pads, wobble chairs or lap desks can be found in almost every room at Lakeshore.

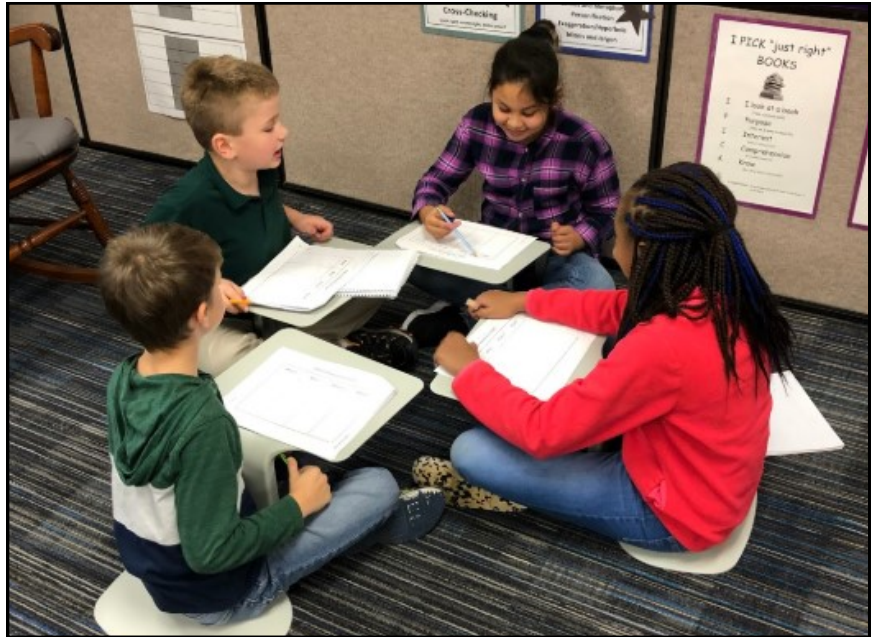
"Flexible seating gets the wiggles out, lets our students change position, and makes for deeper conversation as students are focusing on their interactions vs. thinking about sitting still," said Principal Kristine Jernigan.

Fourth-grade teacher Kim Alston said she uses differentiated seating and allows students to make choices about where and how they learn best.

"I have low sitting tables, a high top table, floor lap desks, seat cushions, and stools," Alston said. "The kids like choosing where they want to work, and it gets them out of their regular desk seat for part of the day."

Lakeshore teachers often pair flexible seating with the use of technology or other unique opportunities to enhance the seating further. Second-grade teacher Jessica Rios uses her Qball (part microphone, part rubber ball) in conjunction with alternative seating arrangements to give all students a voice.

"QBalls have been a game-changer in my classroom," Rios said. "We use them in our connection circles as talking pieces when students are sharing. We use them to explain how we solve math problems or equations, and to share about what we are working on in writing. The QBall amplifies their voices so we can all hear them no matter where they're sitting in the room."



Lap desks make collaboration easy in Kim Alston's classroom.



Students in Jessica Rios' classroom use a Qball so they can be better heard no matter where they are sitting in the room.

Third-grade teacher Scott Follett had two members of the Hope College men's baseball team use flexible seating in the hallway to play math games one-on-one with his students.

First-grade teacher Melody Holmes has the team help with reading.

"I have students eager to extend learning and my friends provide the support needed" Holmes said, while bouncing on a yoga ball alongside her students.

Woodside enjoys annual Dads and Donuts event

How do you fill a school cafeteria with lots of love, laughter, and sweets before the busyness of another day begins? You give fathers an opportunity to share a donut with some of the most important little people in their lives: their children.

This is exactly what happened at Woodside Elementary on the mornings of Oct. 17-18 at the school's annual "Dads and Donuts" event. During the course of these two mornings, more than 360 students and adult males (dads, grandpas, uncles, family friends) were able to come together to enjoy some breakfast, conversation, fun and laughter.

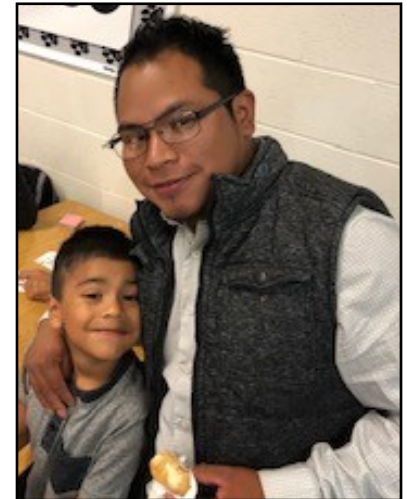
Through the combined efforts of Woodside's PTO and several Woodside staff members, the school was able to continue working with Tim Horton's, as in previous school years, to help offset the cost of the delicious menu items. In addition, every child/adult partnership that

attended received a new deck of playing cards, along with a packet of directions that included simple math fact card games to learn and play together that morning. Families could then bring these home for additional family fun. This was done as a way to help address one of the school-wide goals of increasing math fact fluency.

In a survey that was completed by the grown-ups in attendance, one adult wrote "Thank you!!!! It's a blast spending mornings with the kiddos."

Another grown-up shared, "I love the message of spending time with kids and not letting technology rule."

Not only did this annual Dads and Donuts event at Woodside Elementary help to create a home/school connection with a focus on math, but it also increased the bond between many children and



First grader Gaspar Ramirez and Mr. Ramirez.

the special adult males in their lives.

"Every school should have a cafeteria that is filled with love and laughter, because that alone makes life just a little more 'sweet.'" said Principal Gregory Rutten.

Great Lakes meets its new therapy dog

Great Lakes Elementary students and staff got a chance to meet Milo, a pure bred Labrador Retriever, on Oct. 22.

Milo is a gift from the 2019 Senior Class and is currently in training to be an Emotional Support Dog for Great Lakes. As a building, the staff at Great Lakes has continued to learn about new ways to support students when they are in need, and the goal is to have Milo be another part of the team that comes together to support all students.

The 2019 Senior Class used Brighton Public Schools as an example of a large district that has successfully worked therapy dogs into the fabric of their culture. Brighton has 12 dogs currently working in their school district and seniors took a trip to visit Brighton last year to see their dogs at work.

"Our job as a school and organization is to meet kids where they're at and support them" stated Principal
(Continued on Page 5)



Great Lakes students meet Milo and his trainer Kristy Green.

Waukazoo celebrates 20th Veterans Day

Waukazoo Elementary students and staff welcomed more than 60 veterans and their loved ones to the building to commemorate Veterans Day on Nov. 8.

This year was also a Veterans Day with a national historic significance, as it marked the 100th anniversary of Armistice Day. Armistice Day, the first anniversary of the end of World War I, was the nation's first veterans commemoration. Combined with the evolution of Veterans Day, from a Congressional resolution in 1926 to its place now as a national holiday, Veterans Day allows all Americans, including all of Waukazoo, to pay tribute to all American veterans.

On top of the nationwide centennial importance, Waukazoo also celebrated a special anniversary in regards to Veterans Day. This year's event marked the 20th anniversary of celebration at Waukazoo. While 20 years may be only a fraction of the nation's remembrances, it is significant to an elementary school as it nearly doubles the age of any of the school's students. Additionally, as teachers and administrators have come and gone, the Veterans Day assembly and event has stood the test of time and serves as a point of pride for all of Waukazoo.

To commemorate the event, students and staff worked tirelessly to prepare the building with decorations

and photo displays that outlined the contributions of veterans, related to Waukazoo, across the nation's service branches.

Waukazoo students, ranging from kindergarten through 5th grade, and staff introduced family members, loved ones, and friends who served in the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, National Guard, and Navy to the entire school population. The amazing service men and women in attendance also represented a cross section of America's history ranging from deployments in the 1940s through the current day.

"It was humbling to be in a room with veterans who have protected the rights and freedoms of America's citizens for the past 75+ years," said Principal Samuel Lemmon.

The event also included a presentation of colors from the Scout group that meets at Waukazoo, as well as several musical numbers. The 475+ students in attendance sang, under the direction of music teacher Chris Loughrin, the "Star Spangled Banner," "All American - Me and You," "Thank You Soldiers," and "This is My Country" and even offered a short, multi-student thank you to those veterans in attendance.

"The event, which was uniformly appreciated by all the attending veterans, is a great tribute and serves as one more way Waukazoo can



Fourth grader Charlotte Moore introduces her grandfather Omer Racine, a Korean War veteran. In front is teacher Chris Loughrin.

connect with its community, honor its past, and teach its students about where their opportunities come from." Lemmon said. "Thank you veterans."



Waukazoo students and staff prepared the building for Veterans Day by putting up photo displays that outlined the contributions of veterans related to Waukazoo.

Great Lakes meets new therapy dog

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David Stefanich. "We want to do everything we can to help students find success at school, and I believe Milo will play a part in the success of some of our students."

Milo will be making a few more visits to Great Lakes this year, but the plan is for him to start working with staff and students during the 2020-21 school year.

During Milo's visit, almost all students got a chance to meet him and ask his trainer, Kristy Green, questions about what it takes to train a therapy dog.

"It was an awesome visit, but our students and staff are more excited for when Milo is here every day walking this elementary journey with us."



Mrs. Pyrett's class wins Academy Olympics at Mac Bay, taking Mackie the Panther back to its classroom until the next school-wide celebration.

WO middle schools building positive cultures

The teachers and support staff at both West Ottawa middle schools acknowledge that an exceptional education goes far beyond academic skills. So, both middle schools have implemented an Academy time during their schedules to support social-emotional learning and build positive cultures.

Macatawa Bay and Harbor Lights have partnered with The Positivity Project to provide weekly social-emotional development lessons and strategies to teach character strengths and develop relationships in their buildings. Ranging from bravery and forgiveness to integrity and gratitude, these character strengths are the foundation of The Positivity Project's model. Making children aware that every one of them has all 24 character strengths, provides the foundation for genuine self-confidence grounded in self-awareness.

At the same time, it helps children better understand why everyone is different and how to appreciate those differences. Unlike our height, weight, or skin color, character is something that can't be seen with the naked eye. Therefore, understanding and valuing it, especially in other people, requires a framework of consistent reflection and discussion.



"The Positivity Project lessons help kids pull out the best qualities of themselves and share that with others," said Theresa Ziegeler, an Academy teacher. "I've already seen some students sit a little taller in their seats and be more accepting of peers, and that has made my teacher's heart even bigger."

Le'Anna Zavala, sixth grader at Mac Bay said, "The P2 videos give a good example of the character traits and how it can make a difference when we use them."

The Positivity Project empowers students to build positive relationships by seeing the strengths in themselves and others. Daily lessons show video, give examples and allow genuine discussion to take place in Academy groups.

"We do P2 lessons so our school can be more happy, respectful, and nice to each other and have a safe learning environment," said sixth-grader Ali Sem.

In addition to this curriculum, Mac Bay is also working to build a positive culture with quarterly school-wide celebrations. During the month of October, Mac Bay celebrated with Academy Olympics during homecoming week. Throughout the week students were encouraged to show their school spirit and earned points for their Academy team by dressing the part during spirit days. On Friday students traveled to the soccer stadium to relay race, kick soccer goals against their teachers and other competitions to earn points for their Academy teams. Mrs. Pyrett's class reigned supreme and took home "Mackie" the giant stuffed Panther for their classroom.

In November, Mac Bay will be celebrating a "Month of Caring" and students will bring in goods for Community Action House, earning points for their Academy class by their donations. To celebrate the top contributors to the food drive, a school-wide staff/student basketball game and assembly will be celebrated in December just before the holiday break.

Sheldon Woods creating 'Positive Beehavior'

It's 9 a.m. on a Friday at Sheldon Woods Elementary and students are waiting patiently in their classrooms to hear who will be the 'Positive Beehavior' winners of the week.

Principal Dennis White's voice comes over the intercom, "Sheldon Woods students and staff, it's time to announce our Positive Beehavior Winners of the week. Every week a student from each grade level is chosen for going above-and-beyond in being respectful, responsible, and ready to learn."

When students hear their name, they eagerly head down to the office to choose their prize.

This is all part of Sheldon Woods' effort to promote and reward positive behavior.

Behavior Specialist Pam DeHare believes that "PBIS supports and creates a positive school environment where kids can feel safe. It strengthens social skills; therefore, improving relationships between peers and adults in schools. PBIS works for ALL students. It is based on a positive approach – 'The behavior you attend to the most is the one you will see more of in the future.'"

Sheldon Woods' PBIS theme this year is "A Great Place to Bee!"

"To begin the year, we have dedicated a significant amount of time focusing on building a positive culture throughout the school," White said. "Teachers have worked on establishing procedures in their classrooms and building positive relationships with their students. They also reviewed the building expectations of Respect, Responsibility, and Ready to Learn and students took part in activities that emphasized how our expectations are practiced in different areas of the building. These initial efforts help pave the way for academic success throughout the year."

White noted that it is important that students be recognized when they follow building expectations. Therefore, when students go above and beyond in being Respectful, Responsible, and Ready to Learn, teachers give them a Positive Beehavior ticket. Students turn these in at the front office and at the end of each week; a student from each grade is rewarded.

The proactive approach has



Sheldon Woods fifth graders take part in the Marshmallow Challenge during PBIS Reward Day.

helped foster a positive culture in which students feel they have a safe place to learn. Sheldon Woods also recognizes students at the end of each month with a PBIS Reward Day. Students who receive two or less minor behavior infractions or zero major infractions participate in a fun activity that is based on our Bee theme.

Fifth-grade student Annabelle Schelske likes getting Positive Beehavior Tickets because, "It means I'm doing a good job and staying focused."

She said that winning the weekly reward "is exciting because I get rewarded for being excellent in class."



First graders take part in the Marshmallow Challenge.

Ten new staff members join WO schools team

Ten new staff members have joined the West Ottawa Public Schools' team.

Kelli Boes is the new physical wellness/health teacher at the high school. Boes was a STEM teacher at Zeeland Public Schools during the 2018-19 school year and did her student teaching at North Holland, Pine Creek and Harbor Lights. She graduated from Hope College, where she majored in physical education.

Heidi Draft is the autism spectrum disorder teacher for grades K-2 at Lakewood Elementary. Draft was a preschool teacher at Zeeland's Innocademy and was also a long-term substitute teacher at Zeeland schools. She graduated from Hope College where she majored in special education/learning disabilities and is continuing her master's degree education at Western Michigan University.

Livingston Garland teaches English at the high school. Garland was an English language arts teacher at Oakland Christian School in Auburn Hills, MI and has a bachelor's degree from Spring Arbor College and master's degree from Wayne State University.

Tessa Hart is a second-grade teacher at Great Lakes Elementary.

Hart did her student teaching at Grandville's West Elementary. She graduated from Grand Valley State University with a major in elementary education and English language arts.

Lindsey Hicks is a speech pathologist at Pine Creek Elementary. Hicks worked at Massachusetts General Hospital's Speech Language and Swallowing Disorders Clinic before providing speech and language services at Dearborn Academy High School in Newton, MA and Joshua Eaton Elementary School in Reading, MA. She has a bachelor's degree from Hope College and a master's in speech-language pathology from MGH Institute of Health Professions in Boston, MA.

Renee Nibelink is the autism spectrum disorder teacher for grades 3-5 at Lakewood Elementary. She was a special education teacher at Holland Public Schools and a career readiness instructor at Michigan Career and Technical Institute in Plainwell, MI. She has an elementary teaching certificate from Calvin College and a master's of education in school counseling from Grand Valley State University.

Cody Ryan teaches social studies at the high school. Ryan taught

at Riverside Middle School and did his student teaching at Grand Rapids Innovation Central High School. He earned his bachelor's degree from Grand Valley State University.

Amber Saur is a fourth-grade teacher at Great Lakes Elementary. Saur was a long-term substitute teacher at Pine Creek Elementary and Zeeland and Jenison Public Schools. She graduated from Ferris State University where she majored in elementary education.

Cristina Schreur teaches Spanish at the high school. Schreur was a teacher leader and organizer for international travel in various countries and studied abroad at the University of Guadalajara and University of Seville in Spain before earning her bachelor's degree from Grand Valley State University. She also has a master's degree from GVSU and previously taught at Eagle County Schools in Colorado, Jenison Public Schools and West Ottawa Public Schools.

Shannon Witvoet teaches social studies at the high school. Witvoet taught at Black River Public Schools in Holland and North Stafford High School in Virginia. She has a bachelor's degree from Hope College and master's degree from GVSU.

This school year one of the best ever

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country. This ranking reaffirms our district's dedication to preparing students to be College, Career and Life Ready.

We continue to be grateful for the partnership that we share with our community and families. We are honored to be chosen to share in the preparing of students for a future that will maximize each student's potential.

Best wishes for a great holiday season,

Tom



Tom Martin, Superintendent of Schools; Aba Kumi, U.S. Department of Education Director of National Blue Ribbon Schools Program; Mike Ghareeb, Lakewood principal; and Carrie Johnson, Lakewood fifth-grade teacher, at the National Blue Ribbon ceremony in Washington, D.C.



Teachers Nancy Kleinheksel (left) Amy VanAllsburg (right) with Lakewood students.

Lakewood practices Mindful Mentoring

Lakewood Elementary is in its second year of an after school group called Mindful Mentoring, a small group of children who meet once a month after school to connect with other students in a mentoring situation.

During their time together, students read carefully chosen books to build self-esteem, practice mindfulness activities, create art projects, mentor each other, and brainstorm ways to make a difference in the community.

"That may seem like a tall order of business for an hour session that meets only once a month, and it is definitely a lot to pack in, but they do it," said Principal Michael Ghareeb. "The time spent together is all about creating relationships, learning from one another, and seeing the potential they have to help support others at school."

The idea started two years ago when fourth-grade teacher Amy VanAllsburg had an idea for a program where students could connect with one another after school, when the busyness of the day had slowed down.

"Everyone needs a place where they feel like they belong, are appreciated, and valued. I wanted this after-school group to have a unique vibe where students could see their importance and value within a community," VanAllsburg said.

She then wrote the grant highlighting the purpose of the group, the activities the group would take part in, and a list of materials they would need to get it up and running. The West Ottawa Educational Foundation grant committee saw the potential and donated some money to buy the books and art supplies to keep the program sustained for three years.

If you were to sit in on a meeting, you would see both VanAllsburg and kindergarten teacher Nancy Kleinheksel sitting in a small circle with a group of eager students ready to talk about their successes and areas of need. You might catch them making encouraging signs to hang in others' lockers or posters to spread kindness around the school. You would witness students reading stories to build up each other's self-esteem, practicing mindfulness activities to help promote positive thinking, and making lists of places where they might be able to offer a helping hand.

Last year, they took an after-school field trip and stocked shelves at the Community Action House Food Pantry.

"These small acts of kindness are what we believe is time very well spent," Ghareeb said.

WOEF funds projects to enhance learning

The mission of the West Ottawa Educational Foundation is to enhance and strengthen student learning through financial support of innovative programs and activities for which general school operating funds are not available.

The WOEf accomplishes its mission through fundraising to provide grant support of new projects to equip and empower teachers as they strive to remain on the forefront of best practices in instruction, curriculum and student support. This may include project development, innovative programs, learning events and supplies.

Several of the grants funded by the WOEf in 2019 addressed teachers' desires to help students regulate their emotions and behavior with positive interventions. For instance, one grant provided the materials to create a Sensory Room at Waukazoo Elementary. According to Erica Knebl, the teacher who applied for the grant, "Different children crave different sensory inputs/outputs that are available to them in this room." Knebl reports that Willem, a kindergartener, "loves the Sensory Room and thinks it is



WOEF-funded Oaki suits keep students dry while learning outside.

fun to go there."

Another exciting grant went to North Holland Elementary to support the first outdoor classroom in the West Ottawa school system. The classroom includes a sensory trail installed by former North Holland student Christian Gilligan as his Eagle Scout project.

The innovative learning environment also includes three hut structures built by Eagle Scout Matthew Jump, whose aunt, Gail Bell, is a kindergarten teacher at North Holland. The outdoor classroom is available for all students. Afternoons are reserved for the kindergarten classes to continue their traditional curriculum in a nontraditional way.

The WOEf funds also helped purchase "Oaki suits," one-piece foul-weather gear for kids, as students are outside learning and growing in sunshine, rain or snow.

North Holland Principal Kevin Westrate said he is "excited to offer this new classroom environment to the students of North Holland Elementary. Our teachers have embraced the opportunity to share the benefits of outdoor learning with our students."

To help the WOEf continue its mission, please donate at woef.org. It is tax-deductible, and you'll feel good about doing your part for the next generation.



Becca VanWeerdhuizen

West Ottawa High School librarian named state librarian of the year

West Ottawa High School librarian Becca VanWeerdhuizen has been named Michigan Librarian of the Year by the Michigan Association for Media in Education.

VanWeerdhuizen said she was honored and humbled by receiving the award at the MAME's conference on Oct. 10.

VanWeerdhuizen noted that she actually tries to be out of the library as much as possible so she can partner with teachers to help support student learning. She said she spends a lot of time reading so she can connect students with the right books and help project-based learning classes connect with the print,

digital and human resources they need.

VanWeerdhuizen, who has a master's degree in school librarianship, said just eight percent of Michigan schools employ a certified librarian. But three bills in the Michigan House of Representatives would make certified school librarians a mandatory employee, make school libraries required in all schools and ensure the library can be staffed if a certified librarian is absent.

West Ottawa has a school library in each of its elementary buildings and has certified librarians at the middle and high school levels.

Harbor Lights robotics class 'weird but awesome'

When school started this fall at Harbor Lights Middle School, a number of 7th graders in a new nine-week exploratory class with teacher Scott Stevens did not know what to expect. The course title, Robotics and Automation, had them wondering.

As one student shared about his first impression of the class, "It was weird but awesome too."

Most of these students had taken another STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) course in 6th grade called Apps Creator. That class involves a good deal of introductory coding, so many had some sense of what was in store for Robotics. The twist this year was then building something from scratch that worked with the code that students had written.

Seventh-grader Caleb Bomhof pointed out that, "it's like building with Legos, but you're coding them, and there's no instructions."

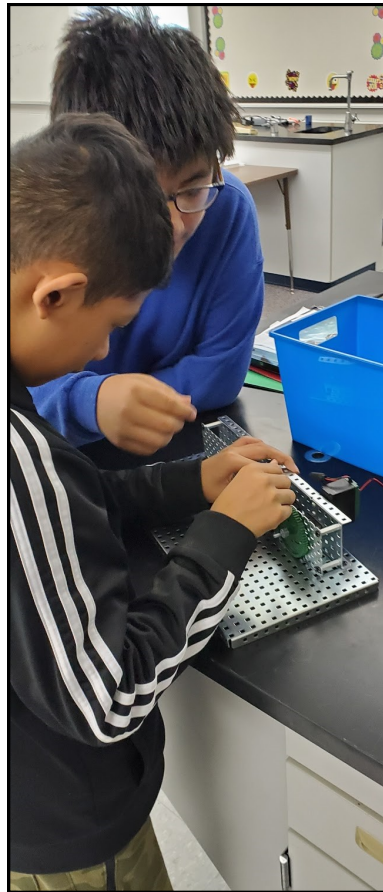
But this challenge was also a fun and engaging one. Motors, Allen wrenches, cogs, and wiring are all at students' disposal to build their creation and solve their problem or task as set out for them by Scott Stevens, their Robotics teacher.

"In teaching the material, for the first time, it was so cool to see so many 'ah-ha' moments from students each and every day," Stevens said. "They were excited to learn each new thing so they could apply what was learned toward the next project."

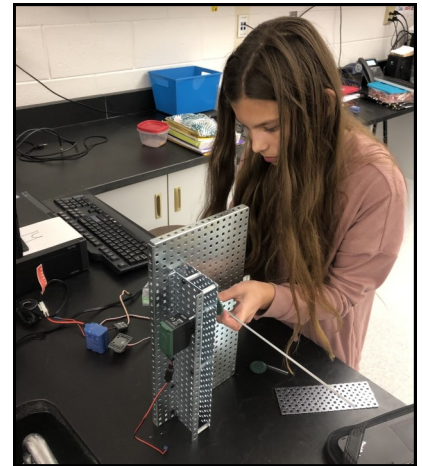
And there is plenty of application of learned skills to go around in Robotics. While some students enjoyed building their new creation more than coding it to perform a certain task, they all agreed on the importance of coding and completing that task first.

"Building was more fun because coding takes forever," said student Corbin Vanderwal. "But you need to code first so that you know that it's going to do what you want it to. To get the right speed, the right way, you have to test it."

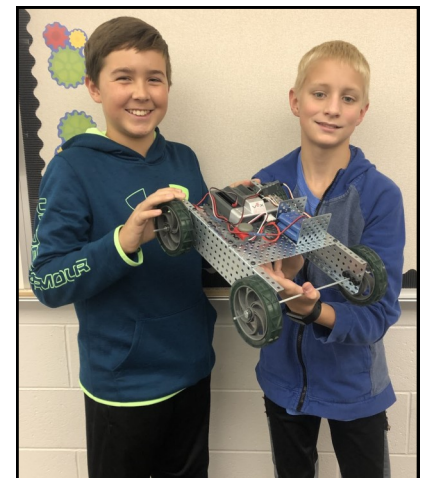
Put another way, you have to begin with the end in mind. Student Taryn Reimink noted that learning how to write code well was the most challenging part of the entire class, but a rewarding one at the same



Odilio Diaz-Perez and Axel Trejo (above) are busy at work in class while Corbin White and Caleb Bomhof (right) show their finished product.



Heather Cicholski works in Robotics and Automation class.



time.

"Programming the motor to do certain things and then making sure the motor fit in a car or a certain build that we were making was hard," Reimink said. "We had to build around the motor. That was a challenge."

To top it all off, the benefits of being in Robotics this fall went even beyond the stated goals of introducing students to basic engineering, coding, and robotics concepts. Many students learned a lot just from the teamwork Stevens encouraged in class.

"It was great to see students at different learning levels and types helping each other in being successful toward one goal," Stevens said. "Students were seen going out of

their comfort zones to accomplish the specific task given to them."

Reimink summed it up by explaining that the truly best part of the class for her was, "working with other people and getting all of their ideas and then creating something cool, something that we thought we could never create."

Principal Bre Bartels said, "That type of outcome for students: technical and people skills acquired over the duration of a course, is valuable on so many levels. Not surprisingly then, we at Harbor Lights are excited about how this first marking period went for students in Robotics, and are looking forward to the opportunity that it presents for many more students as the class develops into the future!"



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Residential customer

Award-winning author visits Pine Creek

Award-winning author Carmen Agra Deedy shared her stories with Pine Creek Elementary students on Nov. 13.

Herrick District Librarian Adrienne Baker, who helped with the organization of author visits around West Ottawa schools, said Deedy captured the hearts and funny bones of students with her animated, interactive storytelling.

"She wove personal elements of her upbringing as a Cuban refugee in the south with colorful and fanciful folktales," Baker said. "Her deep passion for bringing stories to life for young people is inspiring, and it's sure to stay with these learners for a lifetime."

Deedy had kindergarten through fifth-grade students' attention for more than 45 minutes.

"That is no easy task today in the age of technology," noted Principal Krista Visser. "She stayed and talked with students and encouraged them with writing. We hope to bring her back next year!"

Deedy's visit was made possible by The Little Read Lakeshore program, an annual month-long community-wide reading program that creates and fosters a culture in which reading matters to children, families and those who support, advocate for and work with children.



Author Carmen Agra Deedy has an animated storytelling style.