

# SCHOOL BELL

Publication for the Watervliet Public Schools Issue 02 Spring 2022

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## All School Reunion

Back Cover



"How is that tree still standing?" asked Tiny Dragon  
"During better times," said Big Panda,  
"it grew deep roots. Now it can weather any storm."

## WPS Thrives In Spite Of The Storm

March 16, 2022, marks a significant milestone in public education in Michigan: the two-year mark of school closures due to the arrival of COVID-19.

The ensuing pandemic stretched our resiliency in ways none of us could have imagined only a couple of years ago. For example, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Feb 2022), there are a staggering **567,000 fewer** educators in

American public schools than there were before the pandemic. At the same time, enrollment in Michigan teacher preparation programs has **fallen by two-thirds** since 2010. This is just one example of how the echo of this pandemic may resonate for some time to come.

However, at Watervliet Public Schools, our teachers, support staff, custodial staff, nutrition staff, bus drivers, school board, and administration chose not to lament the losses and disruptions of the pandemic - but rather to focus on the **opportunities** that lie before us!

Consider the following:

- During the pandemic, Watervliet Schools voluntarily closed one or more school buildings, due to circumstances related to COVID-19, a combined total of eight (8) days.
- We've added a full-time School Nurse, a full-time School Social Worker, a full-time Dean of Students at the MS/HS, and additional counseling resources to assist our students who are experiencing emotional and social trauma.
- We added a full-time English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher to assist our vulnerable migrant and ESL students with in-school and out-of-school learning support.
- We built a thriving partnership with YDC-PAL to provide our students with after-school and summer learning opportunities, and our working families with a safe place for their children to go and grow.
- We implemented a one-to-one computer program for every WPS student and enhanced our network to handle the increased load.

(continued on page 2)

# SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE (continued)

Superintendent of Schools: Ric Seager Email: [rseager@watervlietps.org](mailto:rseager@watervlietps.org)  
Telephone: 269-463-0300

- We renewed our commitment to the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) program at WMS, and to constructing plans for a K-12 STEM effort in the coming years.
- The Watervliet Foundation for Excellence in Education launched and began providing critical support, raising money for “wifi hotspots” for students without internet access.
- After briefly pausing, our Strategic Plan is back at the forefront of our work.

And, with regards to our students, consider the following:

- Enrollment in college courses by WHS students (Dual Enrollment or Early Middle College) **increased 173%** over the past two years and our vocational course enrollment stayed consistent.
- Over that same period, the pass rate for the college courses taken by WHS students **increased from 81% to 100%**.
- While all schools in Berrien County (and most in Michigan) experienced enrollment losses during the pandemic. WPS had the **lowest decline** (-1.8%) in enrollment of the comprehensive districts in Berrien County.
- According to MiSchoolData, over the two-year pandemic, WHS had the **lowest aggregate 4-year dropout rate** in Berrien County, among the comprehensive high schools.
- This fall, the WHS Marching Band earned State Runner Up for Marching Band Performance. As well, our Vocal Music program continues to earn top ratings.
- Our WHS Quiz Bowl Team won the conference championship this year.
- Our athletic teams have thrived in spite of the pandemic, earning multiple conference, district, regional, and other championships. Individually and collectively, our students and athletes have shown amazing determination, grit, and resiliency.

It has not been without challenges, but our Watervliet Public Schools have made it through the pandemic and are positioned to launch an even better future. This is an outcome of the support we have enjoyed from our school community and the Panther Pride that is stronger and deeper than any crisis we have or may face.



As the tree is home for the panther, and as our tree stands still because of the deep roots of pride, support, hard work, and commitment, we believe our tree can weather any storm. By *Working Together To Keep Us Together*, Watervliet Public Schools stand ready to meet the challenges of the future, while staying true to our traditions.

We thank you for your continued support and thank you for choosing Watervliet Public Schools.

With Panther Pride,

Ric Seager

Superintendent  
Watervliet Public Schools

# District Calendar 2022 Spring Dates to Remember

Fri	Apr 1	End of 3rd MP - Secondary
Wed	Apr 6	2 hr- Early Release - Building Professional Development
Fri	Apr 15	Good Friday - No School
Wed	Apr 20	2 hr- Early Release - District School Improvement
Fri	Apr 29	Mid Trimester Progress Report - Elementary
Wed	May 4	2 hr- Early Release - Building Professional Development
Fri	May 6	Mid Marking Period Progress Report (MS/HS)
Wed	May 18	2 hr- Early Release - District School Improvement
Mon	May 30	No School-Memorial Day
Tues	June 7	1/2 day all Students- HS/MS Exams, Elem End-of-Year Parent meetings
Wed	Jun 8	1/2 day all Students- HS/MS Exams, Elem End-of-Year Parent meetings
Thur	Jun 9	1/2 day all Students- Last day of School; End Semester 2 (Secondary)

## 2021 - 2022 School Building Contact Information

Building	Address	Phone (269)	Grades	Principal	Building Secretary
High School	450 E. Red Arrow Hwy.	463-0730	9-12	Christina Powers	Teri Richcreek
Middle School	450 E. Red Arrow Hwy.	463-0780	6-8	Dave Kindt	Nuria Villegas
North School	287 Baldwin Avenue	463-0820	3-5 & Preschool	Bill Tiefenbach	Dana Morris
South School	433 Lucinda Lane	463-0860	K-2	Sherry Wheeler	Shannon Llamas
Watervliet W-A-Y	450 E. Red Arrow Hwy.	463-0897	9-12	Jason Oetjens	N/A
Central Office	450 E. Red Arrow Hwy	463-0300	Superintendent Ric Seager / Executive Assistant Deah Muth		

Thank you, School Resource Officer Thornsburg for arranging for the donation of free-to-students formal wear. And thank you to *Back on the Rack* and also students and staff members who have donated dresses and men's wear. Items from the collection have been worn by students for Homecoming, Winterfest, and area pageants already. Now students are "shopping" the rack for the HS prom clothing and also for some upcoming middle school dances. What a great way to help students who cannot afford to buy a dress, and even those who just happen to find something on the rack that they love! Officer Thornsburg plans to have the formal wear available every school year. Thank you!



# LEARN BY HEART



We are celebrating our team! Introducing the Learn by Heart Campaign!

Each day, our school staff make a difference in the lives of children. They teach them how to read, serve them lunch, safely transport them to and from school and make sure their learning environment is clean and welcoming. They prepare our students for successful careers and life after the classroom. They challenge students to reach their greatest potential and support them every step of the way. These superheroes make a tremendous difference, and for that, our community would like to say, "Thank you!" Join us as we celebrate the hard work and dedication of everyone on our staff by supporting the Learn by Heart campaign.

The Learn by Heart campaign is designed to increase the awareness of the dedication of Berrien County educators and foster continuing public support through a countywide campaign. The focus of the campaign will be to highlight relationships between educators, students, parents, and community members through stories. In the coming months, we will be sharing those stories with you to showcase our educators, who serve as the lifeblood that makes the district beat. Do you have a story to share? Simply send your story background, participant names, relevant pictures and any pertinent information including quotes and specific story elements to Nancy Scowcroft at [nscowcroft@watervlietps.org](mailto:nscowcroft@watervlietps.org).

The Learn by Heart campaign is part of a countywide initiative in partnership with Berrien RESA. Over the next 6 months, school districts across Berrien County will be celebrating their school staff as part of the project. It is our hope that this activity will become a part of our community's culture – celebrating and appreciating our school personnel today and every day!

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## NEW DEAN OF STUDENTS MR. KEVIN SIMMONS

Watervliet High School and Middle School are pleased to announce the addition of a Dean of Students who will serve students in both the HS and MS buildings. Mr. Kevin Simmons has joined the staff in this role and will deal with both student service and discipline issues.

Simmons has an abundance of experience as an educator. He began his career as a PE and Science teacher in Georgia before moving to Michigan. He has held positions as the Athletic Director in Covert, MS Principal in Benton Harbor, HS Principal in three different Michigan Public School districts and most recently Superintendent of Battle Creek Public Schools.

Mr. Simmons is the spouse of WMS 8th grade English teacher Carolyn Simmons. The two met when they were both teachers in Georgia. He brings with him an abundance of enthusiasm to WPS, and we are excited to have him onboard!



Earlier this school year, Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund dollars received by Watervliet Public Schools made it possible to upgrade many of the student Chrome Books to touchscreen models. Purchasing educational technology that aids in regular and substantive educational interaction between students and their classroom instructors is one of several school district needs that the ESSER grants are designed to fulfill.

Some of the Chrome Books which were replaced are finding a new home at City Hall with the staff members at the City of Watervliet.

Tyler Dotson, Watervliet City Manager, says the city had not been able to provide personal laptops or Chrome Books for employees in the past. Now more employees will have their own personal devices on which they can securely store data and documents. Personnel will have easier access to email and electronic document sharing as well. Ideally, this will translate into less need for printing and copying. Dotson is hopeful that in the long run it will help to save the city money in paper and ink costs.

Watervliet Public Schools is delighted to be able to donate these Chrome Books to the city and contribute to our community in this way. #Panther Pride!



*Left: WPS Superintendent Ric Seager Presents Chrome Books to Watervliet City Manager, Tyler Dotson.*



With an abundance of books, the Parental Engagement Committee is looking for volunteers to help build **Little**

**Free Libraries** in Watervliet. We are also looking for community partners to help fund the building materials. If you are interested in helping, please contact [pec@watervlietps.org](mailto:pec@watervlietps.org)



Watervliet Middle School Red Ribbon Week poster contest winners McKaylen Laws, Brooklyn Smith, Natalaya Desjardin, and Abby Klopp

**Watervliet Public Schools' Return to Learn plan is available on our district website, [www.watervlietps.org](http://www.watervlietps.org), under the District heading.**

### WPS School Bell

Editor: Nancy Scowcroft  
Watervliet Public Schools  
450 E. Red Arrow Highway  
Watervliet, MI 49098

### Mission Statement

Watervliet Public Schools empowers Panthers to adapt and grow intellectually and socially to be achievement-focused, successful, lifelong learners in an ever changing world.

### The School Bell

is issued free of charge and provides information about the Watervliet Public Schools to the community.



## Partnership with Berrien Community Foundation Announced

The Watervliet Public Schools Foundation for Excellence is pleased to announce that it has partnered with The Berrien Community Foundation to help best utilize funds raised towards enhancing the school experience for students and staff. The WPS Foundation will benefit from the Berrien Community's many years of experience in managing endowment funds.

The Watervliet Public Schools Foundation for Excellence Classroom Grant Endowment Fund has the goal of raising \$50,000 to provide classroom grants for teachers and began by investing \$1000 initially with the Berrien Community Foundations in November.

A separate Watervliet Class of 1965 Classroom Grant Endowment Fund also shares the WPS Foundation for Excellence in Education's goal of providing classroom grants for teachers and hopes to raise \$12,500 for the effort. Class of 1965 member Barb Schofield represented the Fund at the WPS Foundation for Excellence in Education meeting to present a check for \$4,900 to the Berrien Community Foundation to invest.



Pictured, from the left, are Foundation members Angelene Conkin, Sarah Busick, Rebecca Oliphant, Lisa Cripps-Downey (president of the Berrien Community Foundation), Barb Schofield, Mary Andres, and Greg Krell.

The Watervliet Public Schools Foundation for Excellence continues their goal of assisting the students of the Watervliet Public School system.

Simply, our Mission Statement is this: Watervliet Public Schools Foundation is an independent non-profit organization working to raise, steward, and distribute resources to enrich the education of students in the Watervliet Public Schools.

Anyone interested in being a part of the Foundation may go to [www.wps-foundation.org](http://www.wps-foundation.org) to sign up or to get more information about the organization.

The Foundation would like to extend a sincere "THANK YOU" to former Chair, Barry Nilson. His leadership from the inception has been invaluable. Much of his guidance was behind the scenes, and it has been greatly appreciated. While Barry has traded his Chair hat for a Director hat, he is still very much involved. Again, THANK YOU, for your insight in making this Foundation what it is and what it will become in the future.

# SOUTH SCHOOL SCOOP

Principal: Sherry Wheeler Email: [sherry.wheeler@watervlietps.org](mailto:sherry.wheeler@watervlietps.org)

Telephone: (South School Office) 269-463-0860

I am so excited to have this opportunity to write my very first School Bell submission and to be able to share with everyone some of the incredibly amazing things that have been happening so far this year at South School. In the Fall when I stepped into the role of principal, I had high hopes and lofty expectations for the year ahead. I must tell you that these past 6 months have been so much more incredible than I could have imagined.

I want to start by saying “thank you” for welcoming me into this community with such kindness and grace. I am encouraged daily by the involvement from parents and community members that see the importance of supporting our Mighty Panthers, our staff, and the school.

The staff at South School believe in our mission of **Joyful Learning** and work together to provide every South student with positive learning experiences that meet them

where they are and challenge them to be all they can be in a loving and supportive way. It has been a privilege to become part of the dedicated, knowledgeable, and caring educational South School team.



The 100th day of school is always an important day at South School. It is a chance to celebrate all of the hard work that has been accomplished so far and how every student has grown 100 days smarter. This year we challenged staff and students to dress like they were 100. I am not sure who had



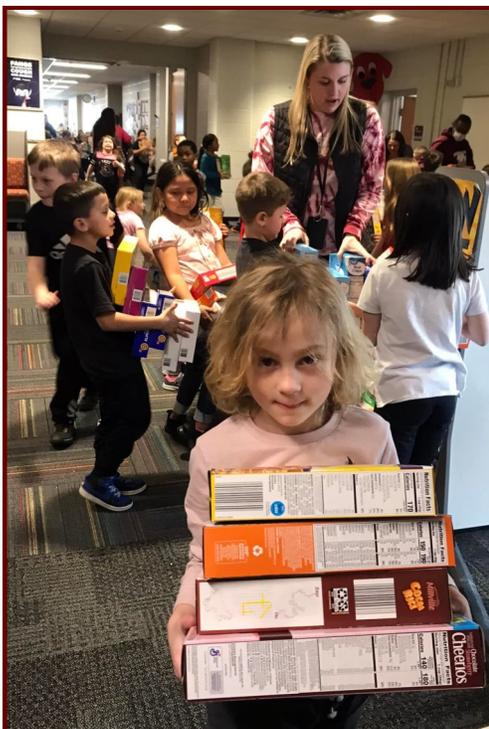
more fun with this challenge, the students or the staff. Our usual visitor Zero the Hero was unfortunately unavailable to attend due to a mission in outer space but he sent Grandpa and Grandma Zero to take his place. They shared a video of them reading Zero’s favorite story and then visited South School to lead students in the 100th day parade. The parade was a bit slower this year with all the walkers and canes but it was still a whole lot of fun!

# SOUTH SCHOOL SCOOP (continued)

## PTO

We are very fortunate here in Watervliet to have such a supportive and engaged PTO. Their team has planned numerous events that have worked this year to provide students and families with a sense of normalcy. In the Fall the PTO organized the Panther Dash. Students ran laps around the playground track and earned bracelets for each lap. In October, the PTO hosted the Halloween Dance. Students and their families dressed up for a night of dancing, games, and snacks. Here at school, we have been able to host movie nights, Donuts with Dudes, monthly Spirit Days, the Scholastic Book Fair, and the Santa Shop already this year. The hard work the PTO puts into fundraising enables them to support our Elementaries in so many ways.

Most recently, the PTO provided a Book Vending Machine for the students of South School. We held grade level reveals to kick off March is Reading Month and every student was given a token to select their first book from the machine. Seeing the excitement students had over using the machine and selecting a book was magical. What an amazing way to support our efforts to help each of our Mighty Panthers develop a love of reading.



South Elementary did it again! Our Mighty Panthers spread “Heartprints” throughout the community by collecting and donating full boxes of cereal. “Heartprints” are like fingerprints; they are the impression left behind by a deliberate act of kindness. Last year South School collected 650 boxes of cereal. This year, we went above our goal and collected a whopping 1,094 boxes. Students lined the halls as cereal boxes were set up like dominoes. Excitement and joy spread as the cereal boxes fell, helping our students understand the domino effect of kindness leaving a “Heartprint” can make. All students helped and joyfully learned about what a community can do when they come together. The cereal was donated to four local charities. P.K Hallinan, author of Heartprints, even read the story to South Elementary and challenged the kids to speak kindness and leave heartprints as they go about their day, everyday!

# NEWS FROM NORTH

Principal: Bill Tiefenbach Email: [wtiefenbach@watervlietps.org](mailto:wtiefenbach@watervlietps.org)  
Phone: 269-463-0820 / Facebook @WatervlietNorthElementary  
web page: [www.watervlietps.org/o/north-elementary](http://www.watervlietps.org/o/north-elementary)

The 5th graders at North School are using technology to learn how to research and write persuasive presentations. They have been hard at work using Inquiry Space, an interactive component of the Wonders reading curriculum. The students have learned how to find and evaluate information, take notes, outline, and cite their sources. When the kids finish their research, they write a persuasive speech that they present to their classmates using visual aids such as a Google Slide show or a poster. When asked about how they feel about technology in the classroom, the kids had lots to say.

"I am grateful for the technology we have because some schools don't have the options we have." - Roman A.

"I enjoy it because you can research, read, learn, and do things that need to be done, but are fun at the same time." -Alexis E.

"I think technology is helpful for finding research and studying for projects or assignments. I like being able to have the resources to help me get a better grade. An example of a time I used my Chromebook is when I had to do a project on an ecosystem. I got a lot of my research from technology." - Sophia R.

Fifth grade in 2022 looks very different from when the North School teachers were in elementary school, but the North School students are preparing for the future.

## North School PBIS

Through environmental changes and reinforcement of adaptive behaviors, individuals can reduce problem behaviors. Coping mechanisms such as relaxation can take the place of the problem behaviors. PBS minimizes the need for punishment or restrictiveness such as restraint, seclusion, or removal of privileges.

## Panther Pride Tickets

**BE Safe**  
**BE Responsible**  
**BE Respectful**  
At North School, we are working hard to promote our three positive behaviors. Our focus for the winter months is outside recess; showing positive behaviors while playing in the snow!



Goal Gauge

## Panther Pride Lunch



Throughout the year, as staff members see students showing positive behavior, they hand out Panther Pride tickets. Mr. Tiefenbach pulls one ticket per grade level every Friday, and those lucky students are treated to a special lunch. Mrs. Adams goes all out and creates something delicious just for the group. This month, the winners were treated to sloppy joes, fresh fruit and ice cream!



# MIDDLE SCHOOL MATTERS

Principal: Dave Kindt

Email: [dkindt@watervlietps.org](mailto:dkindt@watervlietps.org)

Phone: 269-463-0780

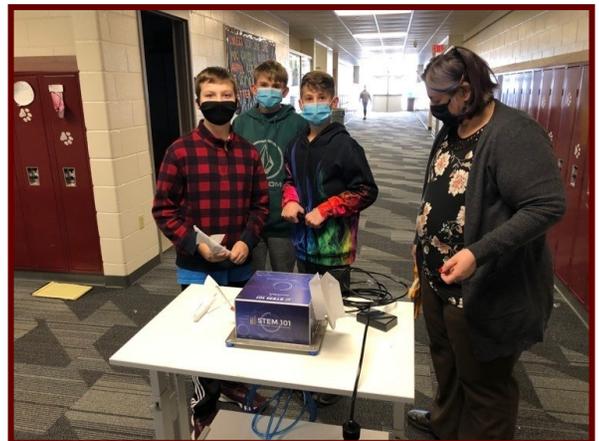
The Middle School has covered quite a bit of ground this school year. Over one third of our staff is new and we have adjusted well. We look forward to the cultivation of learning and growing as a building and our culture. The Middle School has much to be proud of and is constantly finding ways to stretch the learning and growth of our students AND staff! It feels like we are turning a page on the pandemic and can now really focus on learning, our culture and each other! We really need to commend our parents as they too have been patient and cooperative while we navigated the 21-22 school year.

Our athletic programs have flourished this year and have maximized participation with several teams at each grade level. It is great to watch them as they get better with each practice and performance and show great sportsmanship along the way! Thank you to all the supportive parents and staff who attended games/contests and cheered on our MS Panthers!



We all know that our Fine Arts department is second to none! Our MS programs continue to impress and even snow days nor the pandemic slowed down the quality and performance of this department! Our Marching Band finished 2nd in the state and our most recent choral performance received Division 1 ratings which is the highest you can earn! Way to go! Kudos to Mrs. Brush and Mrs. Hollandsworth who lead such successful programs.

We also saw our first MS Robotics competition as a solo competitor. We learned quite a bit about what it takes to compete at this level and will continue to build and strengthen as we move forward. Thank you to Mrs. Oetjens for taking this on.



We are slowly putting winter in the rear view mirror and getting closer to spring and all the "busy-ness" that happens with this season. We are currently in Reading Month and have spring break right around the corner as well as the state assessments, field trips, and spring sports. Yes, you heard it right, Field Trips! They are back on the venue after a 2 year hiatus! It is really nice to be able to print those words.

March finds us appreciating Reading Month! This is our version of March Madness! The MS has responded to our reading contests!! Our goal for the month was 1 million words through an online reading program called Readworks in which students read articles to increase their vocabulary and comprehension. As of this article (March 6th), we are over 700,000 words!! Conner VanLente(6th) is leading the way with over 37,000 words and the 6th grade is at 340,000 as class! The 8th grade (189,000 words) is in second and the 7th grade is very close with 170,000! It is just amazing to see how our students have responded! Winners for the past week will be announced on Monday and prizes will be awarded each week.

Just a quick reminder that Spring Break is earlier this year and is set to begin on March 18th.



## MIDDLE SCHOOL MATTERS (continued)



About the 2nd week of April we will begin our state assessments and we will be preparing students with your help to plan on doing their best so they can “show what they know”. Beginning April 13th and during the rest of April, students will be sitting for : PSAT (8th grade) and the MSTEP (6th through 8th).

We also have more good news with some upcoming Field Trips!!! We have the 6th grade going to the Garden Ice area in St. Joseph on March 31, Honor Club going to Louisville in May as well as Student Council going to Six Flags!! How exciting to be going on Field Trips again!!

Mrs. Simmons, 8th grade ELA teacher is also in charge of our MS Yearbooks and if you are interested in purchasing one, see our Weekly Newsletter for more information on how to order!



In conjunction with the High School, we have a Panther Hotline in place for students to report on each other in the event someone may be in harm's way of another or themselves. This is anonymous and the information is received instantly. This is not replacing OK2Say but merely running alongside as a means to respond as quickly as we can to any information presented to us concerning our students, staff or community.

Looking ahead, the MS is embarking on implementing a PBIS(Positive Behavior Intervention System) which is a schoolwide framework for helping students learn and follow behavioral expectations in the classroom, hallways, lunchroom, and throughout the building. We hope to have the first stages of this in place starting next school year.



Again, thank you for all of your support and cooperation as we continue to navigate this year and carry out the guidance of our district's strategic plan.

Sincerely,

David Kindt  
Watervliet Middle School Principal

# You Are Amazing!



Thank you to Patty Van, for your tireless work with teir 2 and teir 3 interventions. You are amazing!  
(Lisa Graffenius)

I would like to thank all of the guest readers that helped make my reading bracket happen. The students loved hearing from everyone! (Amy Iliff)

The Athletic Boosters wish to thank Dylan Raucci for his donation of a microwave oven for the concession stand. Thanks, Dylan!

Thank you to Pizza Hut, Soularads, and Big C Lumber for supporting our Middle School Robotics Team with your donations. (Amy Oetjens)

Thank you, Peter Cook from the Berrien County Historical Museum, for coming to teach our 5th graders about the fur trade in Michigan.  
(Beth Morse)

A huge thank you to The Well Church in Benton Harbor for providing new clothing for a young student in need, including a winter coat. (Shannon Llamas)

Kudos to the MS and HS Science Olympiad students who worked hard for months to prepare for the competition in early March. (Sarah Crowe)

Thank you, Sue Sweet, collaborative pianist, for your commitment to our students and to our choral program. We appreciate you so much! (Tami Brush)

# HIGH SCHOOL HEADLINES



Principal: Christina Powers

Email: [cpowers@watervlietps.org](mailto:cpowers@watervlietps.org)

Telephone: (High School Office) 269-463-0730



## Orientation to WHS for the Class of 2026

THURSDAY, APRIL 7th  
Informational session in  
all 8th grade English classes.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1st  
8th graders visit WHS for periods  
1, 2, and 3.

THURSDAY, JUNE 2nd  
In person and virtual parent  
orientation to WHS 6 pm  
Media Center

### WATERVLIET HIGH SCHOOL PRESENTS



WATERVLIET HIGH SCHOOL NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY

# BLOOD



# DRIVE

## MARCH 29



SCAN ME

Go to the link  
below or scan  
the QR  
code here.

## PANTHER HOTLINE

*Anonymously report concerns of potential  
violence/fighting, self harm, harassment, and/or bullying.*

[tinyurl.com/pantherhotline](https://tinyurl.com/pantherhotline)

ALL REPORTS ARE ANONYMOUS AND GO DIRECTLY TO YOUR  
BUILDING PRINCIPAL AND THE SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER.

IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING.

IF YOU KNOW SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING.

SCHOOL SAFETY IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERY  
PANTHER.

Thank you to our High School Secretary, Teri Richcreek and our Guidance Secretary, Jessica Tyler for everything you do to support our students and teachers. We truly could not overstate the contributions you make to our school every day.



# HIGH SCHOOL HEADLINES (continued)

## IMPORTANT DATES FOR SENIOR PARENTS!

Please send a variety of pictures of your Senior to:

[Classof.2022@yahoo.com](mailto:Classof.2022@yahoo.com)

Please include your name in the subject line

The deadline is April 30th, 2022

Please work to complete a poster board collage of pictures of yourself to hang in the Senior hallway starting May 2nd, 2022

FAFSA DEADLINE--Tuesday, March 1st  
Decision Day Assembly-- Friday, April 29th 10:00AM  
Senior Scholarship/Academic Awards Assembly--Wednesday, May 18th 6:00PM  
Class Trip to Great America--May 21st  
Semester 2 Exams--May 25th, 26th, 27th  
Last official school day for Seniors--Friday, May 27th  
Car Parade--May 27th 4:00PM  
Baccalaureate--Wednesday, June 1st 6:00PM  
Class Picnic--Thursday, June 2nd 2:00PM  
Graduation Practice--Thursday, June 2nd 3:30PM  
Graduation--Friday, June 3rd 6:30PM



In February, these WHS students were inducted into National Technical Honor Society at the Van Buren Technology Center: Hannah Hart, Alexa Warren, Brianna Hoy, Kyrsten Long, Olivia Sutherland, Jadyn Emery, Bryce Priebe, Dakota Andreson, Javier Gutierrez, Royce Daugherty, Damien Thornsbury, and Nathan Brewer. In addition, Hannah Hart was selected as a NTHS President. Congratulations to all!



The WHS Quiz Bowl Team swept all meets, and tournaments and took 1st place for the season. Great job, David Koshar, Jake Kroepel, Kaitlynn Cockrun, Jonah Wise, and Advisor, Deah Muth!

# HIGH SCHOOL HEADLINES (continued)



**Congratulations to our choir students and Director Tami Brush** for their awesome performances at the District 6 MSVMA Choral Festival in March! Both Treble Choir and Concert Choir received high Division 1 ratings, qualifying them for State Choral Festival! All choir students represented our school well with their respectful behavior, in addition to their top notch performances on stage and also in sight reading. Concert Choir members received a PERFECT score! Way to go, Choir!

It's nothing new for Jennifer Hollandsworth to lead the WHS Marching Band to the MCBA State Championships — they consistently qualify for the honor. This fall the Panther Band really shined with an outstanding performance of their show "Egypt" at Ford Field earning them State Runner-up honors! Congratulations, WHS Marching Band!



Then in March, our WHS Concert Band followed up by receiving straight ones from all judges in the MSBOA District 6 Band and Orchestra Festival at LMC to earn a Division one rating! Outstanding! We couldn't be more proud!



*Left: Marching Band Competing in Jenison*

**Each month, Watervliet High School teachers select two students from each grade level as Students of the Month. Students nominated for this honor may be excelling, going above and beyond, or they may be showing improvement and exceptional effort. Congratulations to the students selected from among those nominated so far this school year:**

**September:** Riley Preston (9), Austin Smith (9), Michael Pruitt (10), Wyatt Epple (10), Jennifer Garcia (11), Jorge Mendez (11), Dominick Klein(12), TJ Fisher (12)

**October:** Logan Schaefer (9), Gabby Wisdom (9), Ian Coleman (10), Hailey Yerington (10), Dakota Andreson (11), Kyersten Long (11), Keimarri Jackson (12), Madison Hagood-Saunders (12)

**November:** Angel Nearpass (9), Makena Edelberg (9), Elsa Perez-Cruz (10), Aleigha Jackson (10), Dameon Bell (11), Kameron Bultema (11), Aleah Scroggs (12), Nathan Isbrecht (12)

**December:** Zack Gruszcyk (9), Tyler Asakevich (9), Tony Velasquez (10), Mikey Fee (10), Kristine Preston (11), Brody Emery (11), Courtney Essmeyer (12), Brenda Romero-Chairez (12)

**January:** Lilly Summers (9), Hector Salguero (9), Demarcus Wade (10), Hailey Hutchins (10), Alysse Angelo (11), Adriannah Crofts (11), Alyssa Melcher (12), Luna Ramirez (12)

**February:** Clorisa Worley (9), Hayden Arnosky (9), Trevor Tavalacci (10), Taylor Woollett (10), Jeremy Frank (11), Ella Shaffer (11), Olivia Sutherland (12), Tony Isbrecht (12)

# THE WORD FROM W-A-Y

Principal: Jason Oetjens

Email: joetjens@watervlietps.org

Phone: 269-463-0898

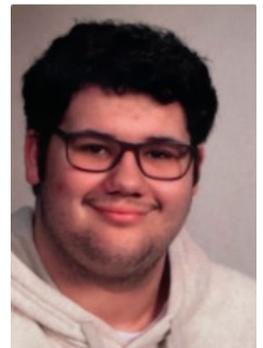
## January & February Students of the Month



Sumner Robbins is a junior and attends the Van Buren Tech Center where he is studying Fire Science. Upon completion of the program he will be eligible to take the Michigan Firefighter 1 & 2 Hazardous Materials Operations Exam for state certification. "The Fire Science course allows me to learn how to work as a team, exercise leadership and do what my family has done for two generations - serve the community. When I complete the course and exam I will be the third generation to do this important role." Sumner also shared, "I enjoy the WAY program because everyone there is willing to help you and wants to push you to be better." Sumner plans to join the military after graduating and work as a diesel mechanic. His advice to others is, "You should always try to push yourself and be the best at what you do - never give up no matter how hard it seems!"

Karsen Langston is a senior who has been busy earning credits. When he entered the WAY program in September 2021, he set a personal goal to graduate early. His determination and work ethic have him on track to do just that, with a projected graduation date set for June 8, 2022.

A career as a Computer Technician is something he is considering because he enjoys building and fixing computers for people. When he was asked what he enjoys about the WAY program he stated, "I enjoy being in the WAY program because everyone is nice and helpful. They know what they're doing and how to fix situations. There are also very fun moments with everyone that attends the lab." Three words that describe Karsen are nice, helpful and friendly. His advice to other students is, "Just do your work, get it done and keep working. Don't just do one project or module...do more!"



Corbin Peterson is a junior and is growing his love for learning both at the WAY and the Van Buren Tech Center. Corbin is in the Auto Technician - Electrical & Engine Performance program at the Tech Center. "The WAY program is the best thing I could have ever asked for. The non-traditional setting saved me from dropping out of high school and the Tech Center allows me to interact with others who are passionate about auto mechanics, like me." Corbin plans to pursue a career in trades with special interest in carpentry and auto mechanics. He is working towards becoming a certified auto mechanic. His advice to other students is, "Find something motivating to you. Don't give up because if you do, you're going to have some troubles. Don't stop - keep working toward what you want to accomplish."

### UPCOMING COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

Students at WAY have the opportunity to participate in the following community service projects. Volunteer service hours is a required component for their graduation portfolio.

**Blood Drive:** March 29th at the Watervliet High School Gymnasium.  
**Spring Community Clean Up:** April 29th location to be determined.

Service projects already completed this year:

- Bus wash for the Watervliet bus drivers
- Filled food baskets for the local food pantry
- Planted mums on the grounds of Watervliet High School and Middle School.



# THE WORD FROM W-A-Y (continued)

**Congratulations** to the 15 students who graduated from Watervliet WAY High School on December 1st, 2021. These students met the academic requirements as well as created and presented their portfolios to a panel of educators and Mayor of Watervliet, Deah Muth. This is WAY's largest graduating class to date.

*Pictured graduates: Alyssa Kay Coulson, Natalie Michelle Knight, Dylan Guess, Breana Marie Tillotson, Brianna Brooke Laratta, Evan William Porphir, Daphne Alora Martz, Madison Nearpass, Jorge Guzman, Erika Ann Gunn, Jared Michael Edwards, Carly Robin Zavoral*  
*Not Pictured: Brendon Allen Petty, Nicholas James Orlando*



Thank you, Mark & Joe Isbrecht, for keeping the area in front of the W-A-Y building plowed and the steps shoveled, and to Rosemary Prillwitz and her team for keeping the W-A-Y students fed. (Heather Winter)

Thank you, Silverstone Gardens, for your generous donation of mums for the W-A-Y students to plant and beautify the HS & MS grounds for a community service project. (Amy Seager)



## PANTHERS GET INVOLVED

The Watervliet Public Schools' Community Outreach Committee, newly formed this year, is working to build bridges between our school system and our community. At the Homecoming football game this fall, a free book fair was a hit—especially with the children. Panther students and staff also got involved in the Watervliet Community's Hometown Christmas celebration, helping to make decorations for the downtown and performing as live mannequins in store windows.



# Curriculum & Technology

## WPS Receives Grants to Improve Opportunities for Our Students

We at WPS are always looking for ways to better our opportunities for students. This year we received two grants that we'd like to celebrate:

### Casey's Cash for Classrooms

Casey's Cash for Classrooms is a Grant from Casey's "General Store" and gas stations corporation. According to Casey's: "At Casey's, our purpose is 'to make life better for communities and guests every day' — and we make sure it shows." Districts can apply for grants from Casey's for physical improvements, material needs, teacher support, and community engagement.

This year, Paul Stinemetz, our District Library Media Specialist, applied for the grant, and we received it! WPS will receive \$12,000 in order to update and improve some of the library collections in our buildings. This is an excellent opportunity for our district to make some improvements in the materials available to students so they can improve their literacy and enjoy literature. A big thanks for Mr. Stinemetz for stepping up to apply for the grant and his ongoing vision for our libraries.



### Title IV Computer Science Competitive Grant



This year, the federal government created a competitive grant that districts could apply for. The Title IV Computer Science Competitive Grant is intended to not only provide districts with materials, support, and guidance in creating a computer science course, but to also develop each district's capacity to grow a K-12 computer science program.

Our instructional technologist, Amy Oetjens, has been a critical part of bringing this grant to WPS. She has designed a summer program that will allow any WPS students in grades 3-5 to learn computer science through robotics.

We received \$20,000 to create the summer program that includes training for teachers as well as age appropriate robotics kits for students to use. As well, trained experts will have sessions with a WPS team to help develop a K-12 program for computer science. We at WPS strongly believe that by creating this opportunity for our students, we are opening doors to modern careers and

exposing them to experiences that will benefit them for a lifetime. We hope to have more details out to parents and students soon regarding this opportunity.

A big thank you to Amy Oetjens for working on this grant project and to Mrs. Mary Sibley for being the teacher that has worked diligently to bring computer science experiences to our students through her AP Computer Science course.



# SPECIAL EDUCATION

Director: Molly Van De Wege      email: [mvandewege@watervlietps.org](mailto:mvandewege@watervlietps.org)  
Phone: 269-463-0754

Watervliet Public Schools partners with many community resources to provide students and families of children who have a disability with services. During the year a student turns 16, the school staff work with the students and their families to develop a transition plan. The development of this plan is essential for student's success after high school.

Some of the agencies Watervliet works with include: Michigan Rehabilitation Services, Berrien RESA, Riverwood, Community Mental Health and Disability Network.

## Spotlight on Disability Network of Southwest Michigan:

The goal of Disability Network of Southwest Michigan is to assist people who have a disability reach their individual goals of living independently, being a productive community member and removing barriers to a happy and sustainable life.

Watervliet Community members with a disability have access to the following services Disability Network of Southwest Michigan provides:

### Information & Referral

- Connecting people to resources in the community
- Assistance in obtaining or completing documentation to connect to needed services
- Assistive technology

### Independent Living

- Developing advocacy skills
- Employment essential skills training
- Financial literacy
- Social Security Disability benefits planning
- Travel training
- Ramp building coordination

### Community Transition Services

- Youth with disabilities transitioning to employment or post-secondary education
- Transitioning from nursing facility to community-based living

### Advocacy & Community Education

- Disability Rights advocacy
- Volunteer-led advocacy groups
- ADA compliance
- Presentations & workshops
- Peer Support
- Peer support groups
- Social and interactive events

## Disability Network has two convenient locations near Watervliet!

- Kalamazoo Location: 517 E. Crosstown Parkway Kalamazoo, MI 49001 (269) 345-1516
- St. Joseph Location: 2900 Lakeview Avenue St. Joseph, MI 49085 (269) 985-0111



Please feel free to reach out to Molly Van De Wege, Watervliet's Special Education Director for more information or if you need assistance with connecting with Disability Network of Southwest Michigan. 269-463-0754 or [mvandewege@watervlietps.org](mailto:mvandewege@watervlietps.org)

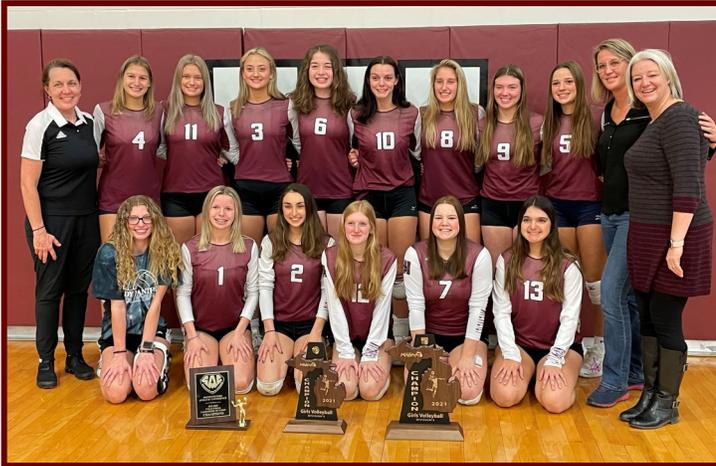
# PANTHER ATHLETICS



***"Passion Changes Everything" 2021-2022***

Ken Dietz, Athletic Director [kdietz@watervlietps.org](mailto:kdietz@watervlietps.org) 269-463-0758

Nancy Scowcroft, Assistant [nscowcroft@watervlietps.org](mailto:nscowcroft@watervlietps.org) 269-463-0733



## **Panther Volleyball - Regional Champions!**

The Panther Varsity Volleyball Team defeated the Bridgman Bees to clinch the 2021 Division 3 District Championship title in three straight sets. The Panthers followed up the District win by beating both a tough Bronson High School and Kalamazoo Christian to bring home the Regional Championship—the first since 2006. The Panthers finished the season with an overall 31-9 record and were SAC Conference Champs with a 6-0 league record.

**The Panther Boys Soccer Team refused to be denied the District Championship.** The Panthers and the Dowagiac Chieftains tied in regulation on a cold, wet late October night but it was too dark to finish the contest. The score was tied at 3-3, Nathan Isbrecht having scored all three for Watervliet. Neither team scored the following day in two 10-minute halves and the game came down to a shoot-off with Alex Mejia, Brennan Bornas, Andrew Chisek, and German Casiano scoring and with Zach Hastings making some impressive saves to clinch a dramatic win and the Division 3 District Championship for the Panther men. The team had already wrapped up the SAC League Championship with a perfect 10-0 Conference record on the season.

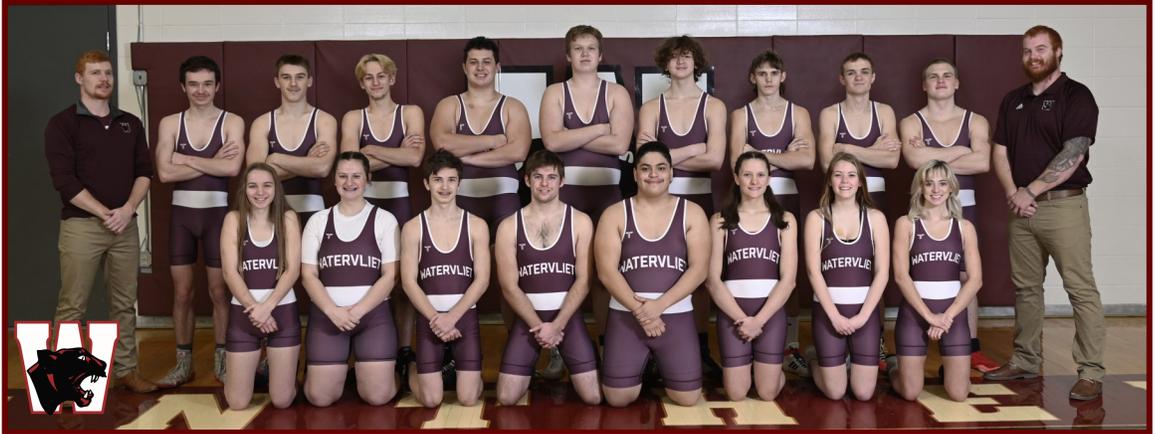


## **Panther Cross Country Sends Two to State**

German Casiano finished 11th at the regional meet this fall and Camdon Geisler finished 12, earning them both an opportunity to compete at the state finals on November 6th at the Michigan International Speedway. Congratulations, Panther runners!

# PANTHER ATHLETICS (continued)

**PANTHER  
WRESTLING  
WINS TEAM  
DISTRICT TITLE  
AND  
SENDS FOUR  
WRESTLERS  
TO THE  
INDIVIDUAL  
STATE MEET**



Panther wrestlers started the post season with vengeance. The wrestlers started the night against the comets of Coloma and ended the match with a 60 to 12 victory. In the championship match the panthers wrestled against the rams of south haven. Watervliet started in a little bit of a hole but the team stayed focused and fought tooth and nail to edge the rams 46 to 36.

Four Panther Wrestlers had outstanding showings at both their District and the Regional individual meets to Advance to the State Meet at Ford Field on March 4th: Eli Marshall, Ayana Marshall, Taylor Woollett, and Annabel Farlow.



The Panther Boys Basketball Team defeated Bridgman 49-41 and then bested Buchanan 57-51 in a hard-fought contest to capture the **2022 District Championship**, capping a season in which they earned a 19-3 over-overall record and 11-2 Conference record. This is the WHS Boys Basketball team's first District Title since 1996 and just the fifth in the program's history. Following the District win, the Panthers decisively defeated Bronson in the

Regional tournament semi-final and made it as far as the Regional final before their season finally came to an end. Congratulations on your winning season and your District Championship, Panthers!

**Athletics website: [www.wpspanthers.com](http://www.wpspanthers.com)**

Thank you to Angela Warren for all of the time and work you have put into revitalizing the Athletic Boosters this year. We appreciate you and all of the Athletic Boosters! (The WHS Athletic Department)



Thank you to Middle School Wrestling Coach Shane Delong for the many hours you put in with both the MS and HS teams. You have had a positive impact on our wrestlers. (Tom Isbrecht)

# PANTHER ATHLETICS (continued)



Both the Panther Boys Basketball Team and Girls Basketball Team were crowned SAC Lakeshore Division winners this winter. Nice work, Panthers!



## Sam Dietz and Andrew Chisek Both Surpass 1000 Point Milestone



Sam Dietz is averaging 17.4 points and 13.3 rebounds per game this year, and she's the sixth girls basketball player at Watervliet to eclipse 1,000 career points.

Andrew Chisek's production this season includes 13.4 points, 4.9 rebounds, 3.6 assists and 1.3 steals per game. He's the third 1,000-point scorer on the boys side in Watervliet history.

Congratulations to Sam and Andrew, newest members of the WHS Panther 1000 Point Club!

## PANTHER ATHLETICS HALL OF FAME

Congratulations to newest members elected to the WHS Athletics Hall of Fame!

The class of 2022 will include:

**Coach: Jeremy Andrews**

**Community Leader/Volunteer: Donna Strine**

**Athlete: Jon Hinkelman (1977)**

**Athlete: James McVay (1975)**

**The 1979 State Runner-up Football Team**

The Hall of Fame Class of 2022 members will be inducted on September 2nd at the Panthers football game vs. Dowagiac in Panther Stadium.

Athletic Director Ken Dietz asks that anyone who was a part of the 1979 State Runners-up football team please send your email address to [kdietz@watervlietps.org](mailto:kdietz@watervlietps.org) so that we can keep you up to date on details for our Induction event. If you have contact with members of this team who live outside of the area or who may not see this, please ask them to contact us or share their contact information with us.



# NUTRITION SERVICES

“Nurturing Children from the inside out”

Nutrition Services Director: Terry Adams Email: [tadams@watervlietps.org](mailto:tadams@watervlietps.org)

Telephone: 269-463-0799

## Greetings Panther Families

Dear Parents or Guardians,

For many children, summertime means food, friends, and fun. For families who count on school breakfast and lunch, however, the summer months can be stressful and family food budgets have to be stretched even further. Free summer meals, funded by the USDA, are available to children and teens ages 18 and younger at summer meals sites across our very own Watervliet, MI.

Many summer meals sites offer fun learning and recreational activities so kids and teens can eat a healthy meal while staying active and being with friends. Sites are also registered with the USDA and are held at safe local places like schools, churches, and community centers.

### Free Summer Meal Program Details:

Meals are **FREE to children and teens ages 18 and younger** who come to a summer meals site. Free summer meals will help our families **save money** and stretch their already tight food budgets.

Food served is **healthy and follows USDA nutrition guidelines.**

Our Summer meals sites are at fun, safe places for kids and teens to be active and visit with friends.

No application or proof of income is needed. You just bring your child to a summer meals site in our community. If you or someone you know is interested, go to our **WEBSITE** or email Terry Adams at: [tadams@watervlietps.org](mailto:tadams@watervlietps.org).

**Short or tall, big and small, we are here to nurture one and all.**  
*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*

Sincerely,

**Terry E. Adams**  
**Watervliet Public Schools Nutrition Service Director**



# NUTRITION SERVICES (Continued)

## Nurturing Students From the Inside Out



Breakfast is better when shared together! Watervliet Nutrition & our PTO promote a happy healthy breakfast at “Donuts with Dudes.” Look for “Muffins in the Morning” coming in May.



## Serving Up Smiles - One Little Panther at a Time

Over the course of this past year we have increased our breakfast participation by a staggering 35%. That means we are now serving 80 to 85% of our students each day a happy healthy breakfast. In doing so, we are actively supporting the academic achievement in the classroom. “Wow” what a difference a happy healthy breakfast makes. Oh, and did I mention, our breakfasts are free? That’s right, all students at Watervliet Public Schools eat for free.



Breakfast is available at South & North Elementary from 7:40 till 8:00 AM. Middle & High School breakfasts are available from 7:45 till 8:05 AM.

## ALLERGIES

Students with allergies? No problem! We offer a large variety of nutritional options. Students with food allergies or other dietary issues now have a better option for choosing meals. Our website and mobile app help you choose your meal. Visit [www.watervlietpschildnutrition.org](http://www.watervlietpschildnutrition.org) and click on menus. If you have questions we have answers, please email Terry Adams at: [tadams@watervlietps.org](mailto:tadams@watervlietps.org)

**EAT BETTER. PLAY HARDER.  
LIVE HEALTHIER. LEARN EASIER.**  
**WELLNESS IS A WAY OF LIFE!**



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## **Watervliet All-Class Reunion Scheduled for August 20th**

The Watervliet All-Class Reunion (formerly known as the Watervliet 40 Year Club), will be held Saturday, August 20, 2022. Anyone who graduated from or attended school in the Watervliet Public School System is welcome to attend.

In recent years, the range of attendees has been from the late 1930s through the 2010s. Former "Maroons" and "Panthers" share time together, reminiscing about their time spent in the Watervliet schools.

The event will be held in the Watervliet Middle School gymnasium (as long as Covid-19 guidelines allow). Social hour begins at 11:00 a.m. with lunch beginning at noon. The cost is \$15 per person, payable in advance. The deadline for paying and securing a reservation is Friday, August 12, 2022.



Additional details may be found on Facebook, on the "Watervliet All Class Reunion (formerly the Watervliet 40 Year Club)" page. Access to the registration form may be found on the page.

If you need more information, please contact committee members Marsha Stennecke Cole at 269-463-3712 or Donna Gillard Curtis at 269-463-6680.

*Submitted by Greg Krell - Watervliet All Class Reunion Committee Member,  
and 1977 Watervliet High School graduate*