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2017

SETTING THE BAR

CHANGING FACES

November elections bring change to the School Board

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An outstanding educator touches the lives of thousands, as we learned this fall

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Imagination Lab

When the Town of Plainfield's Parks and Recreation department determined they no longer needed the Clarks Creek Natatorium, school officials began thinking about how to best repurpose the space.

The Plainfield Imagination Lab will be a destination for all K-5 elementary students. It will expand their horizons through imaginative, hands-on experiences. They will learn about concepts that will lead to careers not even in existence yet. And they will stretch their minds by being engaged in their own learning.

The real impetus behind the center came from Superintendent Scott Olinger. "We have excellent students, taught by excellent teachers. We perform well on state tests. But what happened to the joy in learning?"

This is a question, and a challenge, put forth by Scott over the course of the last year. State-mandated standards and tests won't go away anytime soon, but in Plainfield, we want children to be excited about learning.

Did you know? By the time a student reaches 6th grade, they've more than likely labeled themselves as strong or weak in math and science. And yet, Indiana curriculum standards don't introduce advanced science concepts until students reach middle school.

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CHANGING FACES, CHANGING ROLES

After serving as a trustee on the School Board since 2013, Barry Blackwell shared some thoughts on what he learned during his tenure.



"I doubt many people realize the time our employees dedicate to their work," he explained. "Not just classroom time, but professional development, student support, and extracurricular activities."

The Duke Energy executive added, "We have a strong leadership team, with a deep bench. They complement one another, which is part

of the reason our schools perform so well, year after year."



The new face on the board belongs to Katie Chamness, an active school volunteer and mother to daughters at Van Buren and Little Quakers Academy.

Katie decided to run for school board based on her pride in the schools and her belief that she has something to offer an already balanced, strong board.

Katie's background is in Child Development and Child Services.



< PCSC Teacher of the Year for 2017 was a Top Ten Finalist for Indiana. Michelle Burress was honored by Plainfield Rotary with a tree planted in her honor at Friendship Gardens.

From the Superintendent



Scott Olinger
Superintendent

The many successes that we enjoy throughout our Plainfield schools are due in part to the relationships and partnerships we have with local businesses and organizations. While space prohibits much detail, I would like to thank them publicly.

- Electric utilities Duke Energy and Hendricks Power Cooperative are generous with their time, their dollars and their employees.
- The Plainfield Police Department is an integral part of our school safety program.
- Hendricks Regional Health (HRH) provides athletic trainers for the middle and high school, as well as team physicians.
- HRH also funds the Nine13 Sports program that brought, or will bring, a stationary bicycle program to each of our elementary schools this year.
- Chicago's Pizza underwrites our Values Awareness program.
- Plainfield firefighters teach students about fire safety and prevention.
- Plainfield is home to a wonderful library with an exceptional staff, and they support our students in many ways.
- Local businesses Spreetail, OHI and Geo Group are generous

donors of scholarship funds and school supplies

- PHS graduate Dr. David Durell donated to the Hungry Jack fund at Van Buren Elementary. The fund provides lunch to students whose meal accounts have been depleted.
- Civic groups like Rotary, the Optimist, Tri Kappa, Kiwanis and the Legacy Foundation provide financial and human support to our students and teachers

Our community value for December is kindness, and one doesn't have to look far to see kindness shown in many ways. We are grateful for the support of our many community partners.

On behalf of the PCSC family, we wish you a healthy and prosperous new year.



SCHOOL BOARD REPORT

by Scott Flood

Most of us grew up in schools that our parents didn't quite understand. From "new" math to "open concept," they wondered whatever happened to those well-loved three Rs — reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic — their teachers drummed into their heads, often with the help of that trusty hickory stick.

We didn't appreciate their frustration until our own kids went to school, and we struggled to help them with homework. As we tried to show them how to perform long division, they sighed and corrected us, saying that "Ms. Jones doesn't do it your way."

Schools have changed dramatically in recent years, but there's good reason for that. Our world has changed dramatically, too, and the pace of change is accelerating. Some 8th graders carry iPhones to school. That technology didn't exist when those students were in kindergarten, and it may be obsolete by the time they get to college. Many of today's kindergartners will work in careers that don't exist today, performing work we can't imagine, for companies that haven't been started. And somehow, we have to prepare them.



If we educate students for the needs of today's world, we're doing them a disservice. We have to prepare them for a future that becomes increasingly difficult to envision with each technological advance and cultural change. That's why our teachers have shifted from asking students to memorize huge stacks of knowledge, to showing them how to find and evaluate the information that's available. It's why classes emphasize learning how to solve problems and how to work more effectively with fellow students. School will always be about education, but if we're going to help today's students become tomorrow's successful adults and involved citizens, we have to help them become lifelong learners who can make the right choices.

In this issue of *Setting the Bar*, we're sharing some of the steps we're taking to prepare students for what's to come. It's only part of the story, because we believe in educating the whole person. That's why we've also expanded our commitment to the arts, including our new orchestra program. It's why we emphasize the importance of healthy living through everything from elementary-school running clubs to high school athletics. Everything we do focuses on helping students make the most of their adult lives.

If all this makes you feel a little older, we understand. Take solace in the fact that today's students will probably struggle with their kids' homework, too.

PREPARING FOR a new FUTURE



In a time where more jobs and careers depend on science and math, Project Lead The Way (PLTW) has become one of the leading STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) programs nationwide. And Plainfield schools are adding to existing course offerings.

One of the benefits to PLTW is that students have the opportunity, at an earlier age, to determine whether or not they truly have an interest in an area. That, in turn, helps keep them on track to a timely two- or four-year college degree, which makes everyone happy!

PHS currently offers PLTW courses in Bio-Medical Science, Human Body Systems,

Intro to Engineering & Design, Principles of Engineering, Civil Engineering & Architecture, and Engineering Design & Development. More will be added next year.

But not all PLTW courses are taught at the high school. The Middle School currently offers one PLTW course, Technology and Robotics. And at the elementary level, students are clamoring to participate in newly-formed Robotics Clubs and Lego Leagues. In addition, this spring will see the first Math Bowl teams at each grade school.

"We must prepare students for a future that we don't yet understand," explained Dr. Mary Giesting, Assistant Superintendent for Student Learning. "Between the Imagination Lab (page 1) and our PLTW courses, we are well on our way to accomplishing that goal."



DID YOU KNOW? Teachers must take additional courses and pass corresponding exams in order to be certified to teach PLTW courses.

SAYING FAREWELL TO A FRIEND

The death of a colleague is not something we often think about, and certainly not something most of us have had to face very often. And when that colleague has touched the lives of literally thousands of students, parents and teachers, it's heartbreaking.

Heartbreak describes how many in the Plainfield Schools family have felt since the passing of our friend, teacher, principal and colleague, Mike Underwood. With a career in education that spanned 40 years, all of it in Plainfield, his loss is felt in every corner of our community.



Mike loved children, history, being outdoors, being silly, his church, but most of all, his wife and family. He retired from PCSC twice. And both times, he came back. The first time, as the principal at Brentwood when an opening came just before the school year began in 2015, and most recently, as a security aide for Central and Van Buren.

While he was incredibly devoted to his students, it's been said many times that Mike was "a teacher's principal." In fact, one of his "side" jobs was mentoring students while they were doing their student teaching. Because, of course, Mike was always a teacher first.

When asked about his philosophy of teaching, many reported, "Mike would tell us, don't you dare give up on your students. You encourage them, and help them grow and stretch and learn. But you have fun with them at the same time." We can all hear him say just that.

IMAGINATION LAB

(continued from page 1)

Did you know? On average, children born into middle class families, as compared to children born into families living in poverty, spend 6000 more hours being read to by a parent, or visiting museums or zoos, or attending plays or musical programs.

As one person put it, "what if we had something as wonderful as The Children's Museum, right here in Plainfield?" And yet, we're about to have just that.

The dollars have been approved and work will begin this spring. And in the Fall of 2018, students from all four Plainfield elementary schools will experience the benefit of hands-on, experiential learning that encourages creativity and risk.

NATIONAL MERIT COMMENDED STUDENTS named



Pictured here, left to right: PHS Principal Mel Seifert, National Merit Commended Scholars Sidra Ahmad and Bree Hall, Director of Guidance KaNeasha Koebcke

Plainfield High School students Sidra Ahmad and Bree Hall have been named Commended Students by the 2017 National Merit Scholarship Program. Sidra and Bree are being recognized for exceptional academic promise and outstanding performance on the qualifying exam.

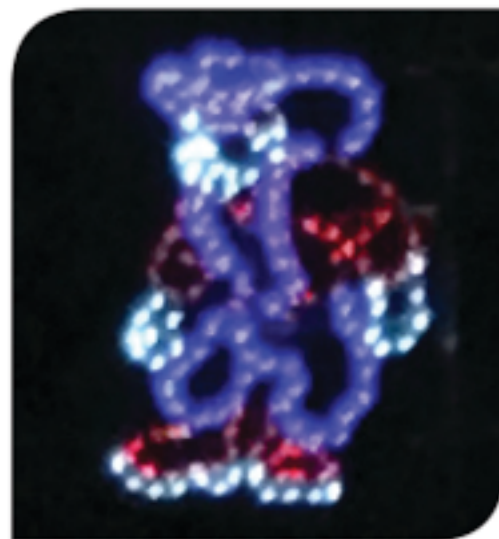
DONATIONS TOP \$32,000

The 2016 annual United Way fund-raising drive saw Plainfield Schools staff reach a new level of support. "So many of our students and their families benefit from the many services and agencies supported by United Way of Central Indiana," explained Plainfield Superintendent of Schools, Scott Olinger. "It is only right that we support the United Way, in return for their support of our school families. And I'm so appreciative of the way our employees have stepped up to the challenge."

More than 1.6 million students nationwide took the 2015 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) in October of 2015. Last spring, the 50,000 highest scorers were identified; 16,000 will go on to compete for Merit Scholarships.

As two of the 34,000 Commended Students, Sidra and Bree placed among the top five percent of students taking the PSAT/NMSQT.

"We are extremely proud of the academic success these two young women have achieved," stated PHS Principal Mel Seifert. "But the true test of their character is reflected in their leadership and involvement in many of our student activities, in addition to their success in the classroom."



Town officials surprised everyone when the new holiday street lights included the Quaker Man at Reeves Road and Quaker Boulevard.



Plainfield
Community
School
Corporation
Administration Building
985 S Longfellow Lane
Plainfield, IN 46168

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LEGACY FOUNDATION AWARDS GRANTS

The Plainfield Community Schools Legacy Foundation exists to support the teachers and students in all Plainfield schools. Each academic year, teachers have two opportunities to apply for grants that can be used in their classrooms.

The Fall 2016 awardees were recently announced, and represent another \$5000 in support by the Legacy Foundation.

BRENTWOOD ELEMENTARY

- Rachel Landis: Brentwood Elementary Robotics Club Team Kits

CENTRAL ELEMENTARY

- Jill Maple: Chris Van Allsburg Author Study
- Diana Cragen: Vex-IQ Crossover Gameboard and Full Field Elements Kit
- Anne Johnson: Versatiles

CLARKS CREEK ELEMENTARY

- Natalie Keating: Equipment for a new Kindergarten Classroom
- Karisa Miller: Building Circuits is a Snap

VAN BUREN ELEMENTARY

- Megan Brouillard: Language Arts Skill Building Activities
- Gail Dixon: Brain Gym Stations
- Abby Ogden: Hands-on Math Activities for Interventions & Differentiated Instructions

PLAINFIELD COMMUNITY MIDDLE SCHOOL

- Kim Young: Engaging Workstations in Middle School Classrooms
- Amy Koch: Flip Book Fun

PLAINFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

- Eddie Schmitt: Junior EarthQuakers Robotics Camp