



# LAUREL SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

Fall

"Come back with your shield – or on it" • www.laurelspartans.com • Winter 2021

## WHY DO WE DO THIS?

The last normal school day in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was March 13, 2020. Since that time schools have been closed to in-person learning, reopened following guidelines established by the Department of Health, closed again due to local outbreaks, attested to instructional models while in the substantial phase of community spread of a pandemic. To say the least, the last 9 months have been exhausting for everyone.

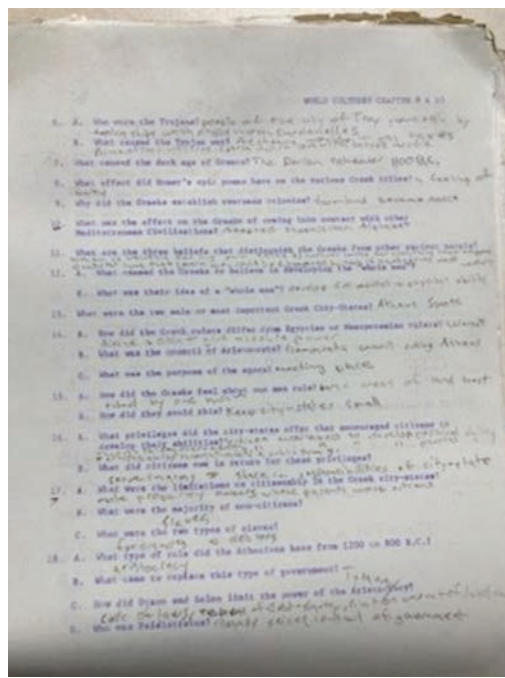
First and foremost, the students have suffered. The damage is to be determined. What have our children lost by way of academic deficits? No instructional model currently being used is as effective as the instructional models that were being utilized prior to last March. In addition to academic deficits, what damage has been done to our students mental health? How are our students handling depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues? How many students are silently suffering in abusive situations with no one to turn to, no one to listen, no one to hear the sometimes silent calls for help?

Parents are frustrated. They were the first teacher their children ever had, but the school was to pick up the torch once the child became of age. What day-care issues have schools caused families? Has the school added to the economic stress placed on families by

a suppressed economy? Have families had to make decisions about going to work to feed their families or staying home to watch their children attend virtual classes?

Teachers are frustrated. Everyone became a first year teacher all over again. What mode of instruction will be used? How are they supposed to teach some students in-person while at the same time navigating students who are participating synchronously? And for good measure, throw in some students who need asynchronous as well. It has been a challenge to say the least.

So why do this? I am sure that students, parents, and educators had to have that thought. As the educational leader of the district, I am aware of the problem and have been restricted at implementing the solution. We need stu-



dents in front of teachers.

Often in moments of despair I find that the Almighty speaks to us and provides us with an answer. As I was doing some clearing out of the storage closets I came across my 10th grade social studies folder for world history. Yes, I still have it. Some may be wondering why the purple color? They called it a ditto. To me it was more than a ditto. To me it was an

inspiration.

Let me explain.

It was the fall of the 1985-1986 school year. I had world history period 2. I sat in the middle row, toward the back. I wanted to take it all in. I not only wanted to hear about the Greeks and Romans, but I wanted to do my best for the teacher in front of me. One of my idols. One of my role models. His name was Mr. William Young.

Mr. Young was about 33 years old at the time and one of my mothers' all-time favorites. He had graduated from Laurel, received a scholarship at Penn State, and finished his football career as an honorable mention all-American at Westminster College. The passion with which he once played football transferred to his teaching. I could not wait for second period. I was always reluctant to leave.

Fast forward 35+ years later and I still have not left 2nd period. When I touch that old notebook, I remember the feeling of that classroom. I remember and become re-inspired. I remember thinking that when I get older I want to teach social studies and coach football. I want to make a difference like Mr. Young made a difference.

So in the midst of despair trying to educate in the midst of a pandemic with everything that it brings, I have the answer to why we do this? We do it because teachers have an unbridled passion to inspire and make a difference. What students are sitting in front of us? What are their dreams? What are their aspirations? How are we helping them get there?

Thank you Mr. Young for inspiring me in 1985 and reminding me why we do this in 2021.

Leonard A. Rich, Superintendent

## OUR STUDENTS ARE COMING BACK



It has been over 2 months since the students have graced the halls of Laurel Elementary School and they have been missed. We knew that the students were going to return, it was just a matter of when and how. The teachers have been working very hard to maximize teaching and learning during a Pandemic. They have provided a blend of in-person and synchronous learning happening simultaneously, then went completely virtual, and now we are back to the blend of in-person and synchronous. The teachers kept driving instruction forward and did their best to ensure students were learning and they did a great job. However, there is no replacement for live, in-person instruction and it is this knowledge that has pushed us to get the students back in the classrooms as safely and as soon as possible. We have taken new measures to increase our mitigation efforts, which include; converting the gym and lobby area into a second cafeteria, tightening up the masking policy, and removing large items from classrooms to allow for more social distancing. Change is not easy and the school experience for students this year is anything but normal. They will miss out on some things and many others will look and feel different, but we need to make the necessary adjustments to keep student learning as our focal point. It has been and will continue to be a difficult school year, but with the school staff, parents, and students all working together we can make it the best it can be.

Dan Svirbly

## THE LAUREL BAND STUDENTS CONTINUE TO EXCEL!

We had a number of students audition for the Pennsylvania Music Education Association Honor's Band this year through a virtual process. Students had to diligently prepare and record challenging solos on their specific instruments. These recordings were submitted to PMEA and judged against other student recordings from schools in Beaver, Butler, Lawrence, and Mercer counties. We had eight students qualify for Honor's Band! That is the most out of any Lawrence County School. Most of these students did so well that they were even accepted into the next level bands with District and Region Band.



### Results:

- Natalie Alfera**, Clarinet ..... (Honor's, District, and Region Bands)
- Sydney Alfera**, French Horn ..... (Honor's, Auditioned high enough but too young to be selected for District or Region)
- Laura Bowden**, Flute ..... (Honor's, District, and Region Bands)
- Jaden Boyer**, Trumpet ..... (Honor's and District Band)
- Riley Miller**, Clarinet ..... (Honor's and District Band)
- Shawn Redmond**, Oboe ..... (Honor's and District Band)
- Ryleigh Shearer**, French Horn ..... (Honor's, District, and still awaiting results for Region Band)
- Molly Young**, Clarinet ..... (Honor's, District and still awaiting results for Region Band)

**DAN JACOBS**  
HEATING AND COOLING, LLC.  
724.924.2190

Slippery Rock  
**Dominos**

**KELY** | educational staffing  
Now hiring substitute teachers!  
Apply today:  
teachpittsburgh.com

**MCCURLEY • INDUSTRIAL • HOUSTON**  
Commercial • Industrial • Residential  
2429 Eastbrook Road  
New Castle, PA 16105  
Office: 724.652.9371  
Fax: 724.654.5122

**NEW CASTLE TRUCK**  
"Maximum Performance with Minimum Downtime"

Justin Petro  
724-770-0777  
**State Farm**  
SPARTAN PRIDE

**SAGER'S AUTOMOTIVE**  
Antibody Collision Repair  
724.924.0104

**Howard Hannan**  
Go Spartans!  
Renee Dean  
724-730-6909  
724-654-5555 x236

**DIRECT IMAGE**  
Copy Systems, Inc.

**D.J. HANNON & SONS, INC.**  
PLUMBING & HEATING

**PONTIUS INSURANCE**  
AUTO / HOME / BUSINESS / LIFE

**BOWSER**  
CHEVROLET  
HYUNDAI

**Nick's AUTO BODY**  
"Trust Your Body In Our Hands"



# LAUREL SCHOOL DISTRICT *Winter* NEWSLETTER

"Come back with your shield – or on it" • www.laurelspartans.com • Winter 2021

## Thank You

Cafeteria staff have been very busy during the school closure preparing meals for students while they were attending school virtually. They cooked and packed individual portions of students' favorite entrees while adding the addition of bulk portions of fruits, vegetables and milk. Twice a week they braved the cold, rain and even a snow storm to distribute 300 or more meal bundles to Laurel families. Each prepared bundle contained enough breakfast and lunch meals for 3 to 5 days depending on the distribution date. Knowing the community's need, the staff even worked the Christmas holiday break to pack and distribute meals to families. They will continue providing meals to learners who remain virtual as well as any child under the age of 18 free of charge every Wednesday and Friday from 4 to 6 pm.



### 2021 PA FARM SHOW

Though not physically in attendance this year, the Laurel FFA members got involved in annual efforts to reach goals at the PA Farm Show. A complete virtual experience for the Farm Show in 2021 presented it's share of challenges, however more than a few of the Spartan FFA members can be proud of their achievements despite the untraditional setting.

9 first year Laurel FFA members received their FFA jackets through the annual jacket campaign. Those students were: Logan Parsons, Caleb Miller, Corey Wilson, Collin Wilson, Alexys Akins, Alexis Brua, Skylar Anderson, Adam Cline, and Joseph Duncan. Students were required to submit a written application responding to various questions about FFA and Ag Education to be considered for a jacket. The campaign

awarded 483 FFA jackets to first year FFA members this year through generous sponsors across the Commonwealth.

4 Laurel FFA members can boast their Keystone Degrees. Savannah Palmer, Tamra Miller, Gabriel McKnight, and Nathan Fulton round up Laurel's applicants for the highest FFA degree to be earned at the state level. "These four students have put the time in as active and involved FFA members, are outstanding Ag students in the classroom, and all have excellent SAE projects at home; this was an incredible group of individuals to present for Keystone Degree evaluation," said advisor Mr. Randy Harrold.

Due to the virtual experience, there were no square dance or demonstration teams in those respective competitions this year.

### LAUREL FFA 2020 AMERICAN DEGREE RECIPIENT

The Laurel Spartan FFA proudly announces one American degree recipient for 2020: Grace Houk. Only 1% of all FFA members earn the coveted American degree - the highest degree to be obtained within the National FFA Organization. Mr. Harrold shared these words about Laurel's lone recipient this year: "Grace is a dedicated young woman, who through much adversity, put her mind and energy toward earning this prestigious milestone. I could not be more proud and honored to be her advisor." Grace's projects stemmed from many agriculture based jobs throughout her high school career and most recently has started a successful show goat breeding business. Grace joins an elite list of FFA members who have earned the American degree from Laurel.

### LAUREL FFA SPRING PLANT SALE

In the current climate of Covid-19, the Laurel Spartan FFA is happy to announce a spring plant sale will occur but will be scaled down. Students will grow common plants and vegetables and expect to fill the greenhouse to 50% capacity compared to normal years. The Laurel FFA would like to thank New Castle Agway for their partnership last spring when the pandemic left the FFA spring plant sale in limbo. Agway's generosity and willingness to help sell and distribute our plants at their store while schools were shut down speaks volumes of the relationships the agricultural family holds in our community. The plant sale will begin on May 1, 2021.



### LAUREL SD TECHNOLOGY DEPT. UPDATE

As we continue to push forward into the unknown during this unprecedented time in education, I am happy to report that while not perfect by any means, the solution that was put in place provided opportunities for direct instruction. This has not gone on without challenges along the way, but our staff has embraced those challenges and have done their best to adapt to maintain the continuity of education. In an effort to support staff and students I wanted to remind our community that the best way to have any issues related to technology is by submitting a help ticket. You can do this by simply sending an email to help@laurel.k12.pa.us. Please be sure to explain your problem with as much detail as possible. This will allow us to

resolve the issue in a timely manner.

Lastly, I'd like to address some of the issues we have had with our current mass notification system and inform our community that we will be migrating to a new solution in the very near future. This will provide the opportunity to receive texts, calls and emails. This should improve communication.

Once again, I want to thank our community for your patience and understanding as we navigate through the challenges that this time in education is facing. I want to assure you that we will do everything in our power to respond and resolve all issues as quickly as possible.

**Mr. Robert E. Lee Jr**  
Director of Administrative Services

### DECEMBER GIFTED STEM

While virtual learning is by no means an ideal situation for hands-on learning, the Elementary Gifted Program has been able to successfully complete online Stem Activities. During the month of December the students were given the task to use tape and newspaper to create a new chair for Santa's workshop. Each chair had to be free-standing and needed to be able to support a small toy or stuffed animal. This challenge allowed the students the opportunity to explore engineering and problem-solving skills. The students worked hard designing and creating their chairs. They each persevered despite many initial difficulties and chair failures. All final projects were shared virtually. It was amazing to see what the students were able to create!



**DAN JACOBS**  
HEATING AND COOLING, LLC.  
724.924.2190

Slippery Rock  
**Dominos**

**KELLY** | educational staffing  
Now hiring substitute teachers!  
Apply today:  
teachpittsburgh.com

**MCCURLEY ELECTRIC** HOUSTON  
Commercial • Industrial • Residential  
2429 Eastbrook Road  
New Castle, PA 16105  
Office: 724.652.9371  
Fax: 724.654.5122

**NEW CASTLE TRUCK**  
"Maximum Performance with Minimum Downtime"

Justin Petro  
724-770-0777  
**State Farm**  
SPARTAN PRIDE

**SAGER'S AUTOMOTIVE**  
Auto Body Collision Repair  
724.924.0104

**Howard Hannan**  
Go Spartans!  
Renee Dean  
724-730-6909  
724-654-5555 x236

**DIRECT IMAGE**  
Copy Systems, Inc.

**D.J. HANNON & SONS, INC.**  
PLUMBING & HEATING

**PONTIUS INSURANCE**  
AUTO / HOME / BUSINESS / LIFE

**BOWSER**  
CHEVROLET  
Beaver Falls  
724-946-2600  
bowserchevrolet.com

**HYUNDAI**  
Chippewa  
724-947-1703  
bowserchippewa.com

**Nick's AUTO BODY**  
"Trust Your Body In Our Hands"