



LAUREL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Spring NEWSLETTER

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THIS YEAR WAS CERTAINLY A GOOD TALE

The 2020-2021 school year was consumed by policies, procedures, mitigation strategies, quarantine and the like associated with COVID-19. In the end, the Laurel community survived and persevered. While I was watching our latest musical, I came to realize that the performance was symbolic of the year we have had. Our musical this year was Godspell. In old English, Godspell means a good tale. This year certainly has a good tale to tell.

Godspell is a story about the development of faith. The story line shows how a group of young people rely on each other, grow with each other, and become a community following the lessons of their teacher.

The musical shared stories about love, joy, gratitude, tragedy, judgment and redemption. These emotions were shared by the students and particularly the seniors during the 2020-2021 school year. The opportunity to do athletic events, dances, or even tractor day provided opportunities to show our

love, demonstrate our joy, and be grateful for things that we would consider normal. This year was not without tragedy, small and large. Our students, our seniors dealt with the lows that tragedy brings. At the end of the musical and during our whiteout, we wore white to show our faith and demonstrate our perseverance.

The community group in Godspell became desperate and banded together with a common purpose facing challenges and obstacles. I'm sure no one could have imagined the challenges and obstacles that these seniors have had to face over the last 15 months as the COVID-19 pandemic changed the way they lived, went to school, and even the way they worshipped. They too have had to band together. Their journey to this day of commencement has been like no other class before them and God-willing, no class after them.

Just as the followers of the teacher in Godspell experienced redemption,

so do we. As we sit here at commencement we are experiencing our own redemption. Our collective sacrifices and efforts over this past year have allowed us to redeem ourselves and reach the pinnacle of an experience that took 13 years to create.

So class of 2021, what are you feeling right now? Can you feel a combination of love, joy, and anxiety? Do you feel redeemed by the fact that you are here after all you have been through? Have you hungered and thirst for righteousness only now to be satisfied? I hope you feel all those things and more. I hope you enjoy the depth and breadth of human emotion that is associated with this day.

If we take but one lesson from this good tale, let it be that through faith you can persevere. You are now ready to go out into the world and share your love for your fellow man and the faith you have in yourself and one another. Congratulations!!!

Leonard A. Rich, Superintendent

THE LAUREL HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2021

This year's commencement ceremony is set for June 4th, 2021, at 7:00pm at the Leonard S. Rich Complex. Ninety nine students make up the 2021 cohort, and all will be going in different directions after that evening. For future endeavors, sixty students will be attending a college or university while fifteen other graduates will be going into the trades or apprenticeship programs. Fifteen students will also be attending a two year program such as nursing or radiology, and eight students will directly enter the workforce. Lastly, one student will enlist in the United States Navy. The Laurel School District and community wish all of the 2021 graduates a bright and successful future.

2021 SENIOR CLASS OFFICERS REFLECT

In an extraordinary year, extraordinary seniors have had to rise above the punches thrown at them and continue their education. Laurel's amazing senior class officers got together to talk about their favorite memories from the last 13 years and what they are going to miss next year.

First, let's meet these amazing officers. Emily Ruggieri is the class president. She is involved in danceline, musical, TRU, NHS, and Student Council. Her plans are to attend IUP this fall to double major in Speech Language Pathology and Musical Theater.

Next up, is our Vice President, Shawn Redmond. He is in marching band, concert band, musical, TRU, NHS, and Student Council. He will be attending Westminster College for Music Performance with a focus on the oboe. The Secretary is Alyssa Cumpston, who is involved in danceline and NHS. She plans to attend Robert Morris University for Political Science. Last but not least is our Treasurer Lauren Mengel. She is the NHS Secretary, Tech Ed President, and in the Student Council. Her plans are to attend Slippery Rock.

When this outstanding group of kids came together to discuss the last 13 years, many memories and moments were made. Shawn Redmond exclaimed that his time at Laurel was spent making lifetime friendships and getting education from top notch teachers! His favorite memories will always be those made when he didn't even know they were being made. Shawn is going to miss the amazing students



and staff next year. When asking Lauren her favorite memories, she said that they came from making lifelong friends and having opportunities to do fun and exciting things like dissecting cats in Biology. She is thankful for learning through these amazing teachers and how much she loves Science and English. Alyssa mentioned that she loved how close she got with her teachers as well as the community. She loved

being with the band and watching our teams. Alyssa will miss being on danceline the most but she can't wait to come back and watch next year! Lastly, Emily talked about how she has loved all of the staff and students over the last 13 years. She has made such great friendships and memories with her classmates. Emily is going to miss performing with her best friends and getting to hang out with her close friends everyday.

Over the past year, students at Laurel have learned the importance of taking things day by day and appreciating every second they get to spend together because they never know when it will be taken away. This year has left a lasting impact on everybody and it's one we will never forget!

Class Motto: You didn't come this far to only come this far.

Class Song: Remember You Young by Thomas Rhett

Class Colors: Green and White

Class Flower: Tulip

Class Food: Mac & Cheese

Class Theme: A celebration of success

Class Dance: Teach me how to Dougie

FINISHING UP ANOTHER TOUGH SCHOOL YEAR

To say the 2020-2021 school year, along with the end of 2019-2020 school year, were difficult would be an understatement. Students, teachers, and parents have had to face multiple challenges working to ensure students receive the education they need. Not only did we have to follow mitigation efforts by wearing masks and social distancing, we were also forced to be completely virtual for parts of the school year. However, despite all the obstacles, too numerous for me to name, everyone still made progress and grew. The students worked hard to learn new skills and complete tasks, whether the instruction was being delivered in-person or virtually. The parents supported their efforts and helped in any way they could. Teachers used the resources they had to deliver quality instruction and support to both the students in the classroom and those learning from home. What we were able to accomplish, collectively, this year is something to be proud of! With that said, there seems to be a light at the end of the tunnel as the state begins to

lift some of the required mitigation protocols. Loosening the required mitigation has allowed us to have an in-person 6th grade graduation ceremony, which was not possible last year. Also, PTO was able to provide some fun activities and cool treats for the students during recess. The happiness during these activities tells me we are ending the school year on a positive note and provides hope for a more normal school year for 2021-2022.

By Dan Svirbly



HIGH SCHOOL BAND

Laurel Middle High School junior and clarinet player, Natalie Alfera, participated in the Pennsylvania Music Educator's Association (PMEA) All-State band festival this spring. This year's festival was held virtually with online rehearsals, educational sessions, and recording opportunities. To get to this point, students had to pass a rigorous competitive audition process through various festivals. Auditions were held virtually this year. Natalie auditioned through Honors Band, District Band, and Region 1 band which includes high school students from District 1 & District 5: Beaver, Butler, Lawrence, Mercer, Allegheny, Fayette, Greene, Washington and Westmoreland counties to earn a spot as an All-State Musician. This is the second time Natalie Alfera has achieved this prestigious honor.

All of this comes just months after she also participated virtually in the All-Eastern festival. Based on her accomplishments through the PMEA circuit last year as an All-State clarinet player and another virtual audition process, she qualified for the 2021 NAFME (National Association for Music Education) All-Eastern Honors Ensemble. This unbelievable statement places Natalie in an elite category as one of the best clarinet players in the music circuit's Eastern Division which includes CT, DC, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, RI, PA, VT, and Europe. Natalie studies private clarinet lessons with Mrs. Becky Yoho.

The Marching Band will be sporting brand new uniforms this upcoming season! These new uniforms will be made of the highest quality material with specially designed features for a long-lasting professional look. Thank you so much to the Laurel School District and Board of Education for their incredible support and investment in the Laurel Spartan Band Program.

By Mr. Brian Croach



LAUREL ELEMENTARY BAND CONCERT



The Laurel Elementary Band returned to in-person performances on May 11, 2021. More than 40 fifth and sixth grade students, directed by Mr. Nate Daubenspeck participated in the concert, which was held in the Laurel Elementary Gym. Students performed "Union March," by Mekel Rogers, "Banana Boat Song," arranged by Ryan Nowlin, "Koala Rock," by Russell Bauer, and "Aftershock," by Larry Clark. It was exciting to perform a live concert in front of a live audience.

By Nate Daubenspeck



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HATS OFF TO MIDDLE SCHOOL HOUSE

Laurel Middle School is committed to meeting the academic, social, and emotion needs of our Grade 7 & 8 students. To achieve these goals, a house system continues to be implemented. The purpose of the house culture is to instill teamwork, friendship, cooperation, and leadership into our middle school community. The house system also offers a supportive transition from our elementary for incoming 7th graders and builds a team and competitive spirit among our middle school students.

Students are randomly divided into six groups, referred to as "houses." Houses are based on mythological characters in Ancient Greek culture. The houses, named after Greek mythological creatures, are a nod to our Spartan connections. Additionally, teacher mentors are randomly assigned a house. Once a student joins the house, he/she remains in that house throughout middle school. Houses compete in both academic and athletic challenges, as well as in other competitions. A very important component of our house system is a service learning project. While competition amongst houses is an integral part of the process, our staff's goal is to build a more supportive, engaging, responsible, and socially aware learning environment at Laurel MS. 8th graders Mara Bartley, Pegasus house, and Tyler Shearer, Sphinx house, agreed that being a part of a house is a good way to get to know class-

mates they are not typically around. Tyler added that it "helps you work on your social skills" and "we are teammates."

Because of pandemic restrictions, house events were limited this year, but activities and competitions were implemented in the spring. Activities included a house reveal event for the 7th graders and an end of the year recognition and field day for all students. Middle school students also concluded the year with their service project, a community work day where students cleaned up the buildings and grounds on the Laurel MHS campus. On May 27th, students spend time cleaning the press box, trimming bushes, weeding, sweeping dugouts, and more. Tyler and Mara shared that the service day teaches students responsibility for the future and "what you need to get done and keep on top of." The afternoon concluded with house team competitions like being the first to get two pennies out of the bottom of party house and a timed dance competition where students danced until they could knock ping pong balls out of an empty tissue box strapped to their backs. Students then enjoyed a movie and snacks to celebrate the year's end.



Throughout the spring, students in each house could also earn tickets for being kind, safe, or responsible and for meeting attendance and grade goals. The house with the most tickets and points earned a house luncheon during the last week of school. The middle school staff plans to start off next year by reestablishing the full house environment created early last school year. Featured below is information on two of our middle school houses.

Phoenix House: The Phoenix house is mentored by Mrs. McClelland, Mrs. Buckner, Mrs. Clingerman and Mrs. Ranbo. The 8th grade captain is Alyssa Sherman, and the 7th grade captain is Jacob McBride. Phoenix is a Greek mythological creature that is a long-lived majestic bird which dies in a show of flames and then is reborn from the ashes. It symbolizes renewal, rebirth, and freedom. The Phoenix house color is red to represent the flame of fire which ties into their motto "through fire we walk, from ashes we rise."

Sphinx House: The Sphinx house is mentored by Mrs. Morzek, Mrs. Nimmo, Mr. Skerbetz, and Mr. Wysocki. The 8th grade captain is Reid Ketzler, and the 7th grade captain is Henry Perdue. The Sphinx is a mythological creature that has a lion's body and a human head. It symbolizes strength and wisdom. The Sphinx house color is yellow, and their house motto is "mind is stronger than matter."

MAY THE 4TH BE WITH YOU



The elementary cafeteria held a Star Wars themed day on May 4th. Students were treated to the image of Baby Yoda on their toast at breakfast and had lucky tray Star Wars prizes. Lunch featured Ewok salad and the serving lines were decorated in Star Wars themes.

The cafeteria continued our mission of serving nutritious meals to both students who chose to learn virtually and to students who attended classes in the school building. We expanded our program to add meals for weekends for those students not learning virtually. We are continuing our meal distribution throughout the summer please visit the district website www.laurelspartans.com to register. Distributions will be every Wednesday from 4 to 6 pm starting June 23. These meals are available to every child under 18 years of age.



THE LAUREL CONSERVATION CLUB MAKES THE MOST OF 20-21



This year's Laurel Conservation Club officers (pictures above) are: President - Jacey Shevitz, Vice President - Savannah Palmer, Secretary - Sebastian Shaffer, Treasurer - Abagale Stone, and Executive Council - Caden Richards & Matt Buchowski.

The Laurel Conservation Club would not be denied its commitment to the outdoors this year. After careful consideration and an anxiousness that grew over the first semester of the school year, students were determined to have sign-ups and appoint officers. They did just that in March, a time when they usually would be excited about how they did with their fundraising event, Sportsman's Night Out. Unfortunately, S.N.O. like so many events the past

year did not happen. Students (especially seniors) missed out on another memory, but the Conservation Club gave some of them opportunities to get out and make new memories while fulfilling its commitment to be good stewards of this beautiful home on Earth. These opportunities included the Big Green Clean-Up and several Trout Stocking trips this spring. Whether Conservation Club members were performing roadside clean-ups, floating

canoes down the Slippery Rock Creek stocking the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission's trout, or bucketing trout from their own Cooperative State Nursery in Plain Grove, they felt good to be out-and-about and together with friends.



LOAT STOCKING CREW (APRIL 7TH, 2021): Front - Autumn Drespling, Samantha Shultz, Sarah Jenkins, Emma Strohecker, Savannah Palmer, Tamra Miller, Georgia Jellyman, Kylie Maine, Mitch Miles, Cam Caldararo, Ethan Houk, Brayden Morgan, Caden Richards, Adam Cline, Braydin Lewis, and Caleb Miller. Back - Mr. Shevitz (Club Advisor), Marissa Hart, Kristen Frew, Bailee Patton, Paige Harding, and Madison Maine.



Congratulations to this year's "Bob Miles Conservation Award" winner, senior, Jacey Shevitz, pictured above with Mr. Miles before the last trout stocking May 27th, 2021.

FBLA NATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE



Seven members of Laurel's Future Business Leaders of America competed at the FBLA State Leadership Conference that was held virtually from April 7-10. There were almost 4,000 students from across the state of Pennsylvania in attendance at the conference. If a competitor places in the top four in his/her event, then he/she qualifies to compete at the national level. Laurel has two national qualifiers: Ian Herr placed first in the Cyber Security event and Sebastian Shaffer placed second in the Networking Infrastructures event. Both of these seniors earned the honor to compete virtually in FBLA National Conference to be held in June. By competing at the national level, they will have the opportunity to earn scholarship awards.

The other state competitors for Laurel were: Natalie McCosby in the Advertising event and the team of Bailey Hill and Chelsea Stewart in the Sports and Entertainment event. Congratulations to all who competed for a job well done and good luck to Ian and Sebastian at the national competition.

Article submitted by Annmarie Santini

ART ON DISPLAY

This year Laurel's High School Art Department placed first in the Lawrence County Student Art Competition sponsored by the Arts + Education at the Hoyt. The first place winner was Vanessa Dicks with a mixed media piece titled "Deep Wounds" receiving a \$500.00 cash prize. Vanessa has been accepted to the Cleveland Institute of Art to pursue drawing this fall. Merit Awards were given to "Art of Masquerade" by senior Nora Paraska, "Wig of Thendarier" by senior Shawn Redmond and "Poppy Flowers" by junior Mackenzie Miles. Each of these students received a cash prize of 50.00 dollars. All of these winning works along with Laurel's other entries were on display at The Confluence in downtown New Castle from March 30-June 3. Admission to the exhibit was free. "Despite the pandemic and remote instruction, the students rallied with a wonderful display of emerging talents," said Hoyt executive director Kimberly Koller-Jones.



Shawn Redmond, "Wig of Thendarier"



Mackenzie Miles, Merit Winner "Poppy Flowers"



The first place winner was Vanessa Dicks with a mixed media piece titled "Deep Wounds"

Merit Winner, Nora Paraska



Ellie McKissick's clock was on display



Andrea Gardocky, Wedding Dress Made entirely out of foam

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