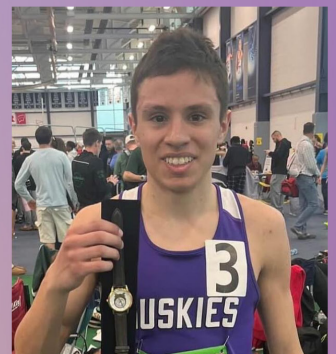
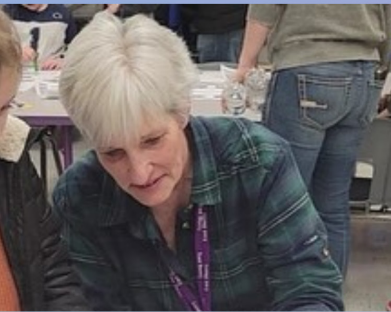


# THE PAWPRINT

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2



KEEPING TRACK OF THE PACK IN MCSD



# WELCOME TO THE spring issue

## FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



Vance S. Varner

“When there is true collaboration between the children, families and staff; there is the potential to create exceptional educational opportunities for students.”

Welcome to another publication of the PawPrint. In this edition, the PawPrint will showcase some of the special achievements of our students and staff this year. MCS D students continue to find success in the classroom, in their activities, and through athletic competitions. MCS D staff members are excelling as well; one has been selected as the 2024 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year, and others have presented at state conferences on topics such as STEM instruction and online education. You will also find an article about our students and their incredible performance of the *Wizard of Oz*. I have attended many MCHS Drama Club productions across the years, but in my opinion, this production may have been one of the best ever. Included as well is an article about the district’s efforts to have parents engaged in their student’s education. When there is true collaboration between the children, families, and staff, there is the potential to create exceptional educational opportunities for students. The multiple hands-on learning opportunities for the students at MCS D are highlighted inside this issue, too. Students find success when they are engaged, and one of the most effective ways to engage students is through hands-on learning. Please take time and read about some of the great things happening at MCS D for all students, kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Vance S. Varner  
Superintendent

## WHAT’S INSIDE



**STATE OF EXCELLENCE**  
BY MINA PHILLIPS  
*Across MCS D, teachers, staff, and students are achieving incredible things. From presenting at conferences to competing at nationals to earning state titles, the Huskies are clearly in their Excellence Era!*

**MCS D GETS HANDS ON**  
BY GAVIN MICKEY  
*Learning comes to life when education leaves the textbooks behind. Throughout MCS D at every school, there have been many opportunities for students to directly engage with hands-on learning. Check out a few of these features and look forward to more in our next issue!*

**IT TAKES A VILLAGE**  
BY LIV SUYDAM

*Educating a child is no small feat, and it takes the dedication of all involved. Schools in MCS D make intentional efforts to include families in their children’s education.*

**FOLLOWING THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD**  
BY CAMERON MARSH

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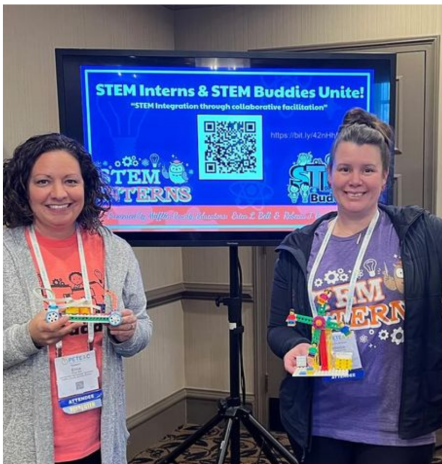
# STATE OF Excellence



PAGE DESIGNED BY  
**MINA PHILLIPS**  
CLASS OF 2024

*Across MCSD, teachers, staff, and students are achieving incredible things. From presenting at conferences to competing at nationals to earning state titles, the Huskies are clearly in their Excellence Era!*

## TEACHERS SHARE STEM PROGRAM

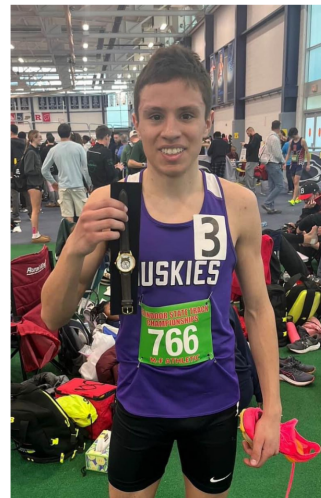


On February 7th, MCHS technology teacher Mrs. Becky Conner-Miller and technology coach, Mrs. Erica Bell, presented at The Pennsylvania Educational Technology Expo and Conference (PETE&C).

PETE&C is a statewide event that provides quality programs focused mainly on effective instruction in the educational field. MCSD's presentation was titled "STEM Interns and STEM Buddies Unite." This presentation highlighted a collaborative knowledge transfer program that the pair facilitate in the district. By presenting at the conference, MCSD not only got to showcase their methods but also was able to hear from other schools and gain knowledge and ideas from other teachers and administrators.

## CARTER SMITH EARNS BID TO NATIONALS

Mifflin County added another state champion to its ranks as sophomore Carter Smith won the 800m at the PTFCA Indoor State Championship, held at Penn State in February. He finished the race with a time of 1:52.83 which earned him a new school record and an 11th place national ranking heading into the national meet. Carter competed in the New Balance Indoor Nationals just two weeks later. The meet was held in Boston, taking the best runners in the country to compete against each other. At nationals, Smith ran alongside 104 other athletes, finishing with an impressive 16th place. His time was less than one second from a top ten finish in the race. Congratulations Carter Smith!



## CROSSON NAMED PENNSYLVANIA TEACHER OF THE YEAR FOR 2024



On December 11th, the Pennsylvania Teacher Of The Year was selected in Hershey PA. Against 12 finalists, Ashlie Crosson, an English teacher at Mifflin County High School was selected as the 2024 recipient. Miss Crosson teaches 10th grade English, AP Language and Journalism I, II, and III. Miss Crosson completed three rounds of evaluations to ultimately earn this year's title. Miss Crosson has shown tremendous leadership and dedication throughout the process and is very proudly taking on the duties and honors that come with the title. She will serve as an advocate for teachers statewide over the next two years and represent PA in the national competition next fall. Her obligations include a trip to Google headquarters and to Washington DC to discuss educational policies with the nation's legislators.



## TSA HEADS TO STATES

On Saturday, February 3, the MCHS Technology Student Association participated in the annual PA-TSA Region 8 Conference. The TSA membership submitted competition pieces in thirty career-focused events ranging from Animatronics to Fashion Design. Out of these thirty submissions, eleven individuals and teams qualified for the State Competition, which will be held in April at Seven Springs Mountain Resort. Every single member dressed for success, represented Mifflin County with pride, cheered on their competitors with gracious professionalism, and made memories that will last a lifetime! The competition was fierce! PA-TSA Region 8 includes many local school districts, including State College. Congratulations to Ethan Sunday, Wade Eichhorn, Isaac Curry, Nathan Banks, Ben Snyder, Alex Snyder, Ian Clark, Tatum Miller, Hannah Jones, Gabbi Swanger, Emily Banks, Reina Citrota, Andi Miller, Ender Colyer, Evvy Cramer, Emily Eddinger, Cameron Marsh, Luke Foltz, Eddie Pollitt, and Oak Yeater for their success in this rigorous club.

## ACADEMY STUDENTS STAND OUT AT COMPETITIONS

On February 22, the AACA Automobile Museum in Hershey, PA held the 4th annual "Skip Wagner" Automotive Competition. Automotive Mechanics students from the Academy Blake Simonton and Brett Zook were in attendance and placed 4th. Simonton and Zook were up against 137 other students from 18 different schools throughout the state.

On Wednesday, January 17, after being postponed due to inclement weather, 19 students from the Academy traveled to Blair County Convention Center to participate in SkillsUSA District 7 competitions. Multiple students from the Academy were in attendance and many were able to place in their respective events. Jack Hart, Cooper Adair, and Jaxon Yoder were pre-qualified for states, meaning the events they compete in don't require district competitions so they moved on to states automatically. Austin Anderson, Derek Rice, Tyler Mateer, and Cole Morrison also qualified for states. The state competition was held on April 3rd through April 5th and Jaxon Yoder, a junior Electrical Installation student, earned second place honors in the competition.



## ALPHA RECOGNIZED FOR ONLINE LEARNING PROGRAM



Recently the MCSD Alpha program was commended for its commitment to the success of online learning programming within the district. Alpha has been offered to students grade six and up since 2013. Currently, 509 of the 2466 secondary students take at least one course through Alpha. Along with that, 133 of those 509 students are enrolled in the Alpha program full time, meaning they take all of their classes through the online learning platform. Suzie Bender, the Alpha Learning Management System Educator, and Chris Gill, the Alpha Administrator, had the opportunity to present at the recent CAOLA Conference where the MCSD Alpha Program was showcased to school districts across the state. There were a total of 137 schools in the state that attended this conference; however, only two were named model schools, those two being MCSD and Manheim Township. The award is given for "Ongoing dedication to building an exemplary online learning program."







**GAVIN MICKEY**  
CLASS OF 2024

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## TROUT RELEASE PROJECT

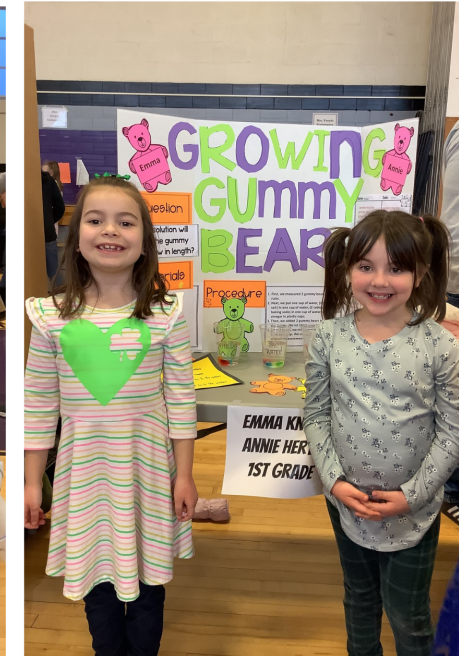
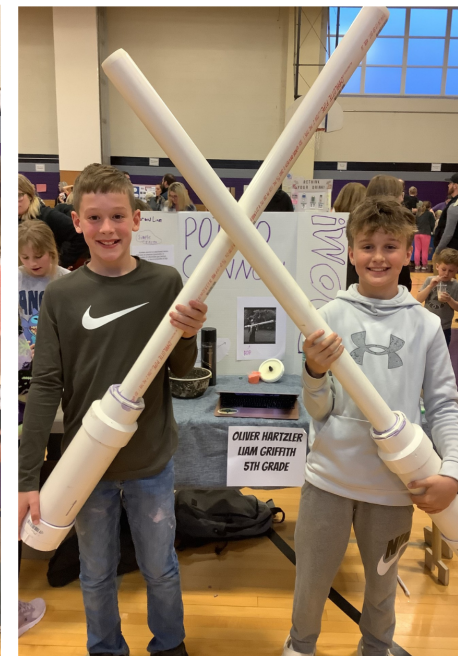
Spanning across LIS and SMES, the trout release project has been a great opportunity for students to become actively involved with the local ecosystem. “The students maintain, observe, and journal about their discoveries of the trout,” explained LIS 5th grade teacher, Mrs. Mix. “Our students feed the fish as well as observe the fish throughout the life cycle, documenting the changes they see in the fishes’ actions, growth and much more. When a fish dies, we use microscopes to view the fish and see the characteristics that we have read about for Rainbow Trout.” The students have the opportunity to directly participate in the caretaking of the fish and gain real-world experience. They are able to view the fish grow and scientifically track their progress!

The schools acquire the animals through the PA Fishing Commission in State College. “We usually get the eggs around the second week of January,” Mrs. Mix explained. “We will try to release the trout sometime in May, down at Rec Park. It is thanks to Gary Parzanese, who is my representative with Trout Unlimited, who works with me and my classes on the trout project. Their support with this program is awesome, and we love doing it every year.”



## LES WELCOMES GUESTS

In the past few months, LES has welcomed a handful of visitors to their school. The MCHS varsity wrestling team made a special visit for Read Across America week. “The boys read a story to every classroom. The students at LES loved listening to their stories and asking our local athletes some questions,” LES Library Media Specialist Mrs. Aurand explained. Additionally, the LIS STEM Buddies have been studying the Lego robotics lessons designed by the STEM Internship program. The STEM Buddies train with the interns then travel to other schools to help assist the younger generation. Thanks to the STEM Buddy collaboration, STEM education in Mifflin County is growing!



## STEAM FAIR AT IVEC

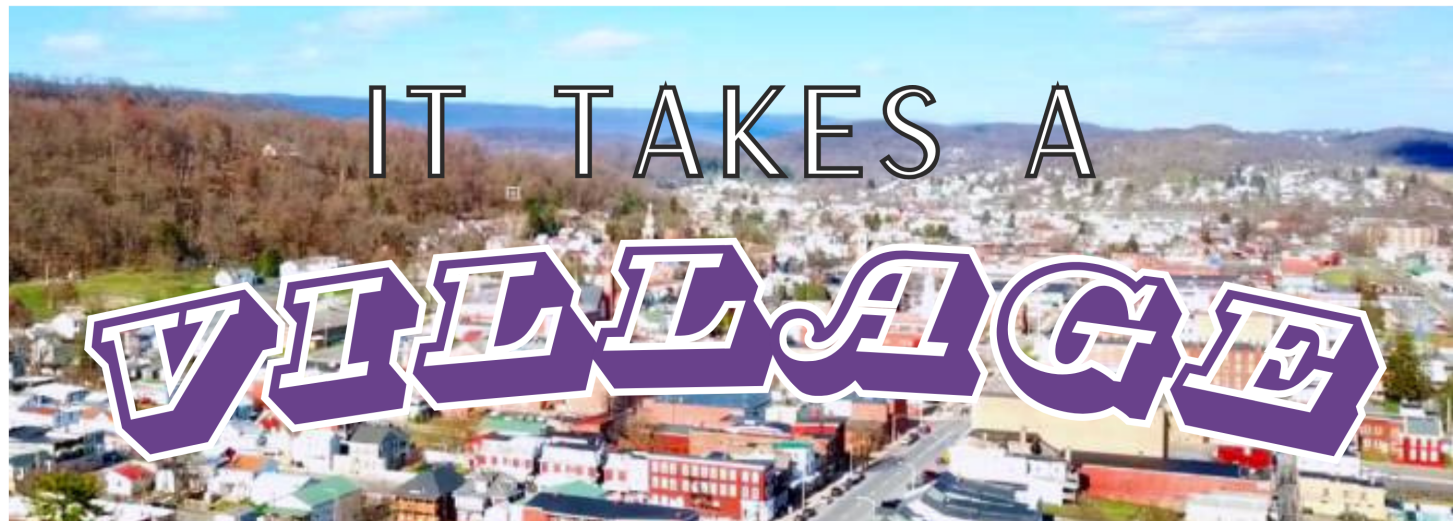
The Indian Valley Elementary Center STEAM fair was held March 18 in the Indian Valley gymnasium. Students gathered to display their projects and educate their peers. “We had 51 student exhibits, many of those being group projects. We also had six community groups who came to share their STEAM exhibits,” Mrs. Kenepp, Library Media Specialist at IVEC, explained. The students lined the table with their interesting findings. Students Payson Ross and Eleanor Parkes said that their favorite part of the STEAM fair was “helping people understand our project.” The students loved being able to express their findings about their personal interests. The experiments allowed for the kids to explore a topic individually from their class while still building their collaboration skills by having a partner.

## MCJH SEES SCIENCE IN MOTION

Mrs. Schomaker, science teacher at MCJH, certainly knows how to make class memorable for her students. “I borrow a lot of Science in Motion materials for labs, and I have them come to my classroom twice a year for special demo days. In November, Science in Motion was in my classroom doing fire demos as we had been learning about types of chemical reactions,” Mrs. Schomaker informed. “The kids were quite impressed, and the pictures turned out great. I took a picture of every student holding fire bubbles and sent them to each student’s email so they could share them with people at home.” No doubt, the opportunity to hold fire is pretty exciting for students, and actively engages them with the class, but it’s not the only way students were exposed to hands-on sciences. “The 8th grade science department received iPads and Happy Atoms this year which allow students to use augmented reality via a digital app along with physical modeling kits to work through a unit on chemical bonding,” explained Mrs. Schomaker.







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**LIV SUYDAM**  
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*Educating a child is no small feat, and it takes the dedication of all involved. Schools in MCSD make intentional efforts to include families in their children's education. At the high school, these events help students plan for their life after graduation; at younger grade levels they celebrate student learning and give families useful tools for at-home engagement. Through these opportunities, MCSD supports the villages necessary to giving each child a strong foundation for their future success.*

## EVENING EVENTS HELP FAMILIES PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

When students reach high school, there is the constant question of "Where do I go from here?" Even sophomores have to start thinking and planning what they want to do after high school and the classes that would prepare them for adulthood. To help students make sense of all their options, the junior high and high school offers a Course Registration night at the end of February each year. The evening event is a great opportunity for students and their parents to get a preview on what the next fall could be like. The Guidance Counselors provide details about graduation pathways, new courses, dual enrollment options, and Academy programs as well as answer attendees' questions.

For upperclassmen preparing for college, the guidance office also hosts Financial Aid Night and FAFSA Completion Night. At Financial Aid Night, the guidance counselors review all of the information pertaining to the FAFSA in preparation for the upcoming completion night. They also review PA Grants and answer families' questions. FAFSA Completion is hosted in the computer labs with parents so that families can complete the FAFSA form in live-time. Typically about six financial aid officers from schools around the area come to help families fill out the tedious application. This year's events were held on October 2 and February 5. FAFSA Completion Night is scheduled around federal deadlines.



## BOOK BINGO AT LES

On March 19th-21st, LES hosted their Book Bingo Family Night, a tradition they've held near and dear for many years! Every spring, Lewistown Elementary invites all students, staff, and family to the Heritage Fire Company. Each night, guests play bingo, and with each winning bingo the kids can choose a free book to take home with them and no child ever leaves empty handed. The event also includes food and chances to win cool door prizes for students and their parents to make sure everyone is having fun!

## MCMS CELEBRATES FINE ARTS

### DAY OF THE ARTS

This year Day of the Arts will be held on May 25 in the Mifflin County Middle School main lobby. The event will feature 2 & 3-dimensional works, digital pieces, literary works, live musical performances, creative stations and more including light refreshments.

All middle school students and their families are invited to attend, and a student-made invitation will be sent home with each student. Day of the Arts is an event held to display artwork done by students and to bring together the families in a fun, celebratory gathering.



### SPRING EVENTS

Art shows and concerts will be happening all throughout the district this spring. Check out the district calendar for each school's specific dates.

### CHOIR

MCMS has two choirs- one for sixth grade (pictured below), and one for seventh grade. Students learn to perform a variety of music including classical, folk, spirituals, and contemporary songs. The vocalists are working hard to refine their singing abilities and to add new skills and knowledge. Choir in middle school is a scheduled class which they have once every six day cycle for about 45 minutes, as well as extra lessons. All of this rehearsal leads to concerts that are held three times during the school year, in December, March, and May. All of the community is invited to attend, and it is an opportunity for families to see their students' talent take center stage.



## SMES BUILDS FAMILY LITERACY

For the past two years, Strodes Milles Elementary has been doing their "One School, One Book" event throughout the month of February. The collaboration ends with a family night in coordination with Read Across America Week.

Voting forms were sent home in the fall and families voted for one of four books. This year's books were *Gooseberry Park* as well as *The Master Plan*. Every student was given a book at the beginning of February, a reading calendar, and trivia questions. Various SMES staff recorded themselves reading a chapter and families could choose to click on the link provided on Dojo and listen. Even MCSD Superintendent, Mr. Varner, graciously recorded a chapter! Students were able to answer a daily trivia question and submit their answer. If their submission was chosen and they had the correct answer, they won a free ice cream from Harshbarger's Sub and Malt.

The SMES Family Night was held on Tuesday, March 5, and more than 100 families attended the event. During the evening, families could make a *Cat in the Hat* mask, make an owl in the third grade section to help with *The Master Plan*, visit habitats created by second grade, see what adventures first grade and kindergarten had with Stumpy that they photographed and wrote about, grab a snack, visit the Scholastic Book Fair and PSA basket raffles, and have a chance at winning their own weather station, stuffed Stumpy or stuffed Kona. It was a fun-filled family evening!





# MIFFLIN COUNTY FOLLOWS THE *yellow brick road*



PAGE DESIGNED BY  
**CAMERON  
MARSH**  
CLASS OF 2024

The Mifflin County Drama Club recently showed off another series of magical performances. Coming off of last year's *Shrek: The Musical*, this year the group followed the yellow brick road in the American classic, *The Wizard of Oz*.



## DRAMA CLUB CELEBRATES COLLECTIVE SUCCESS

It was a packed house at each of the MCHS Drama Club's four performances of this year's musical-*The Wizard of Oz*.

The shows garnered high praise from attendees, and it's evident that this is due to the hard work the set-crafters, designers, actors, and advisors put into producing the show. Every year, the production is a true team effort.

"Drama club really brings people together," reflected Sandra Vermeulin, a senior who worked on the creation of the set. "I've seen and have had so many new friendships come from the meetings and the late nights. I believe it is really great for having people connect."

While the faces seen front and center are always the stars of the show, the Drama Club knows their efforts depend on the strength of their backstage crew.

Sophomore Luke Gill emphasized the relationship between cast and crew and how important team work was to the value of the finished product. "The crew members are the backbone of the Drama Club and truly put in the work to make the show as flawless as possible," he praised.

Senior actress Katey Riden, who performed the role of Dorothy, agreed with this sentiment, admitting, "Without a crew there is no show. You could be Judy Garland herself, but without cooperation from the cast and crew, you haven't got a chance." Faculty volunteer Mrs. Echard noted the strength of the show is proven by the community's appreciation of the actors and crew. Each performance enjoyed a near-sold out crowd. Adviser Mrs. Riden agreed, "It brings the community together. It is one of the few activities people still look forward to seeing every year." The cast included students in grades six through twelve, and elementary schools enjoyed special appearances by Dorothy and her friends. Echard said, "Our elementary students were able to experience the magic of theatre, and our drama club students were able to experience the importance of giving back and being role models for others."

The *Wizard of Oz* was the Drama Club's seventh musical in just as many years. Students, families, and the local community will surely look forward to what comes to the MCHS stage next winter.



## MEMORIES FROM THE MUNCHKINS

**Juliona Ritter:** "Working with older students was awesome. I got people to look up to."

**Cam Demi:** "I learned that the process of creating a musical can take awhile."

**Alexa McChesney:** "It takes teamwork to make magic happen."

**Addi Weaver:** "I loved performing with my sister."

## CAST GOES ON TOUR

To drum up excitement around the show, the cast members visited Indian Valley, Strodes Mills, and East Derry elementary schools to participate in *Wizard of Oz*-related activities. At IVEC, a scavenger hunt was held all over the school. There was a tornado-themed STEM activity and art projects for students to get involved in. The cast participated in Q&As for the kids to learn more about who they are, and for them to learn about theatre.



All production photos courtesy of Mike Goss



