

Together, inspiring students to think, learn, achieve and care in a global community.

Shamrock Connection

2ND QUARTER HIGHLIGHTS

2021-2022 Newsletter Volume 11, Issue 3

Berrien Springs Public Schools

Firefighting, EMT, Construction Trades, Law Enforcement, Business Management, and Accounting

CTE courses use hands-on experience to give students the knowledge necessary for a successful career

By Adam Carr
BSHS Assistant Principal
and CTE Director

At Berrien Springs Public Schools, our commitment and care for student's post-secondary success is at the forefront with the opportunities the district offers through Career and Technical Education (CTE). CTE programs are offered to all high school students, affording the opportunity for high wage, high need, and high demand employment experiences and opportunities upon completion of their program. These programs are rigorous, preparing students for the ever evolving demands and challenges of industry and providing the necessary employability skills. Successful completion of CTE courses will prepare students for vocational mastery necessary for entry level work. Classes incorporate real world, hands-on experiences that are invaluable, developing the whole student while gaining the technical know-how and first hand experiences necessary to have a successful career. Berrien Springs is proud to host six programs on campus: Firefighting, Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), Construction Trades, Law Enforcement, Business Management, and Accounting.



Medic 1 critical care paramedic and instructor Brandi Narregan provides instruction as students Alex Reybuck & Lizzie Lee check "patient" Tanner Albers.

Business Management, and Accounting. In addition, students have 59 additional options around the county.

CTE programming inspires students to think, learn, achieve, and care in a global community in both relevant and meaningful ways that prepare students for their future. February is CTE month, and we celebrate the dedication of our CTE staff members, Rich Albers, Brandi Narregan, Tom Hall, Jen Natzel, and Jeff Mitchell, and the success of all of our students enrolled in these life-changing programs.

Medic 1 critical care paramedic and instructor Brandi Narregan provides first aid instruction to Gwiza Mutimura and Haley Scott.



SCAN ME



Principal Dee Voss and students Kate Schuler, Jase Markle, Claire Schuler, Addison Terry, Delaney Helmke, Benny Rosales, Josiah Florvilus, and Restorative Justice Coordinator Kimberly Godush display items they collected to help the dogs and cats at the Humane Society.

[Caring is demonstrated through community projects](#)

Sprouting Shamrocks at Mars Elementary learn to share and listen from the heart each week in their classroom “Circle”

By Dee Voss
Mars Elementary
Principal

The Mars Elementary staff is dedicated to teaching students about caring through individual, small group, and whole group instruction. Mars Elementary defines caring as displaying kindness and concern for others and implements this definition daily. Caring becomes more than words on paper as staff provides lessons and interactive opportunities for students to show how they care.

Students begin each morning by being welcomed to the school by

the entire staff. Students are then provided a morning routine that focuses on the **ROCKS** (Respect, Ownership, Compassion, Knowledge & Success) values and how they can be implemented during their day. The caring staff continues to nurture students by acknowledging individuality and promoting kindness through our social and emotional program **True Success**. These lessons are reflected upon in their homeroom classes and the entire building.

Each week classrooms meet for “**Circle**.” Based on indigenous

practices, this meeting places a strong focus on relationship building. With this year’s implementation of a Restorative Justice Coordinator, Kimberly Godush, the students and staff have been engaging in the practice of listening and sharing from the heart. As students share and listen with their whole body, they gain empathy and practice the skill of showing support to one another. When conflict does occur, students are able to meet and collaboratively solve their conflict and restore that caring relationship they have been working so hard to grow.

Caring is also shown to the community from Mars students and staff by participating in activities that support various needs. Participation in a food drive, sock collection, and gathering of pet food for the Humane Society are just a few examples. The students have also been given the opportunity to provide letters to veterans and perform festive music for all to enjoy.

Mars Elementary strives to develop each of our sprouting Shamrocks to be outstanding citizens who care about themselves, others, and the community.





Fourth grade teacher Nicole Dudley is surrounded by her IXL “Smart Scores” Rock stars who have “gone above and beyond” academically.

“Growth Getaways” and “Proficiency Parties” help celebrate academic advancement of students

By Amy Williams
Sylvester Elementary
Principal

At Sylvester Elementary, students and staff embrace the **ROCKS** values (Respect, Ownership, Compassion, Knowledge, and Success) as foundational to all of our work.

At the beginning of this school year, Sylvester Elementary students began utilizing IXL, an online personalized learning platform, to extend students’ learning in Reading, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Since the implementation of IXL at Sylvester, we have seen an increase in students taking “**OWNER-SHIP**” of their learning.

Sylvester Scholars take the IXL diagnostic assessment and are as-

signed a “Smart Score.” A student’s assigned smart score is likely a 3-digit number with the first number representing the grade level content the student is currently working to master and the next two numbers represent the percentage of mastery for that particular grade level. For example, an on-level student in Third Grade for this time of the school year should have a “smart score” of 340-360. The first digit, a “3”, indicates the student is working on mastering Third Grade material. The next two digits are between “40” and “60” indicating that this particular student is demonstrating mastery of 40-60% of the grade level expected proficiencies which would be appropriate since we just started the

second semester of Third Grade.

In our preliminary work with IXL, we have found there to be a strong correlation between IXL “Smart Scores” and the NWEA-MAP RIT scores that students receive three times a year during benchmark assessments. We utilize the NWEA/M-STEP Norming Study to make predictions around which students are projected to score proficient on the M-STEP already and which students may require additional instruction and support to close achievement gaps. Using IXL regularly in our classrooms has allowed students and teachers to have more frequent data points to determine whether or not students are making adequate progress. When we

are better equipped with real-time data we believe that we are able to respond in high-leverage ways that ultimately will make an impact on student achievement.

Sylvester scholars are being celebrated for both their growth in IXL as well as their demonstrated proficiency. In December, just over 70 Sylvester Scholars were invited to our “Growth Getaway” where students were recognized for achieving above grade level average growth in both Reading and Math. In January, just over 50 Sylvester Scholars were invited to our “Proficiency Party” where students were recognized for achieving above 340 (3rd), 440 (4th), and 540 (5th).

GO SHAMROCKS!





PBIS instructor Luke Antvelink is proud of the members of the eighth grade Student Senate and its officers which include Leah Misungwi, secretary; Melody Kertawidjaja, vice president; Ella Eckerley, class advisor; Ivett Kalchev, class advisor; and Abby Frantz, class advisor; and back row: Gabrielle Gittens, secretary; Philip Seo, president; Brianna Arroyo, treasurer; and Kenadie Sutton, class advisor.

Spreading **JOY** is a goal of the Student Senate and its officers at BSMS

By Luke Antvelink
PBIS Instructor

"The Shamrock Way" starts with our Student Senate and our Student Senate officers at the Middle School. President Phillip Seo, Vice President Melody Kertawidjaja, Treasurer Brianna Arroyo, Secretary Gabrielle Gittens, and Press Secretary Leah Misungwi all have important roles in creating a positive school climate.

Each year, a new group of student leaders pick up where the last officers left off. For two years, the Student Senate has had to be innovative with how they communicate with their fellow students and impact day-to-day life at the Middle School. This year, our officers began to build a school culture and climate that supported student achievement in

the midst of a two-year worldwide pandemic and quarantines. They started revamping our student newsletter to seek input from fellow students to share relevant reminders such as sports schedules, lunch menus, surveys, and important weekly information.

"We make sure to listen to everyone's input on the things we do," Melody said. She goes on to explain, "Every month, all of the Student Senators come together and discuss the big events coming up and talk about what our classmates have been saying...it's a good way for the whole school to be a part of whatever decisions are being made."

One of those decisions Melody and her team have been working

on is how we can innovate Student Rewards through our **UROCKS**. The Student Senate has taken feedback from students about what they would like to see sold for **UROCKS**, and has implemented innovative ways to encourage student participation. One of their first initiatives was the "Middle School Secret Santa." This program allowed students to "purchase" items in the Shamrock Shop with their earned **UROCKS**. These items would then be wrapped and delivered to lockers. They found items that all students could afford in an effort to include as many students as possible. The Student Senate also purchased random items, wrapped them, and delivered presents to random lockers throughout the building.

"I was happy to see how happy students were to get presents and have some positivity in their lives," Phillip said. Spreading joy is something Phillip and the other student officers are very passionate about—from hall decorating to friendly door decoration competitions, our Student Senate is actively making a positive impact on our school.

Looking towards the future, the Student Senate plans on adding flowers & candy to the Shamrock Shop that students will be able to buy for each other similar to our Secret Santa Program. Fostering students who do good deeds for each other without the expectation of receiving something in return is how Berrien Springs Middle School students live "The Shamrock Way."

Parent Partnership Learning Opportunities

Elective subjects offered to expand horizons, increase self-reliance & self-improvement

By Sharon Haynes
Director of Parent Partnership

Most of the time, the word 'care' invokes a picture of the definition in our minds: one person or entity providing what is necessary for health, welfare, maintenance, and protection. Our district boasts numerous examples of such care. In

the Parent Partnership, we think of caring as providing opportunities for students to better learn to care for themselves and others by offering elective subjects that increase self-reliance, self-improvement, self-awareness, and expand horizons. Students learn from experts in the field, then demonstrate their new skills and mastery of content

through physical demonstration or items they produce in class. These hands-on skills and focused learning translate into broader subject appreciation and real-world application through the research and presentation of projects to family and mentor teachers.

A wide range of subjects is offered, such as various classes under Life

Skills, Phys Ed, Vocational Education, Nature, and more. These learning opportunities are available to all BSPS students. Please visit our website, found under the Schools tab on the District website, and then click on the Classes tab to learn more. Contact Sharon Haynes with any questions.

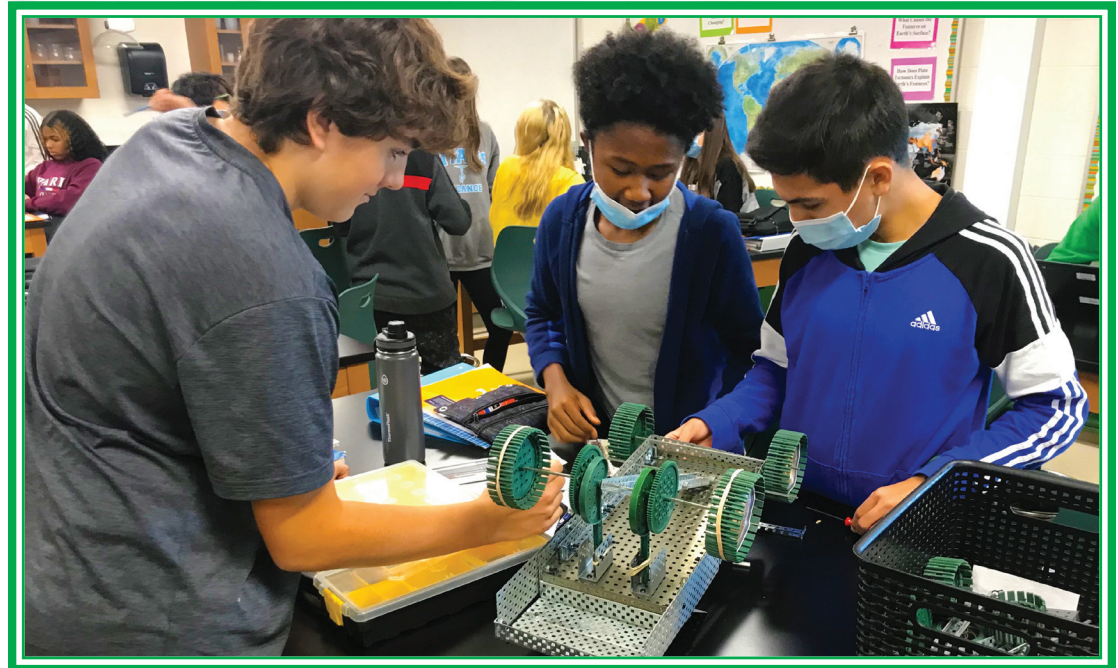
PLTW students practice perseverance and creativity in solving engineering challenges

By Beth Boven
8th Grade
PLTW Teacher

Project Lead the Way's mission statement is to "empower students to thrive in an evolving world." The eighth grade PLTW Automation and Robotics course strive to do just that. Students were introduced to mechanisms used in the technology around them, from cars to cuckoo clocks. The eighth graders learned about gear ratios and built devices that manipulated speed and torque to accomplish a task.

One highlight of the semester-long class was our pull-toy project. Students learned to use mechanisms to design a pull-toy with multiple moving parts. After the projects were designed and constructed, students put on a pull-toy parade for the students of Mars Elementary. In addition to designing and building, PLTW students learned to code various devices to perform simple tasks. They worked in teams to figure out how to program communication between computers, sensors, and building parts on a project of their choice.

One of the most valuable lessons learned in the PLTW Automation and Robotics course was that resilience and perseverance are vital in the field of engineering. Students learned to rely on team members



Jacob Constable, Joda Herivonjy, and Nicholas Bairagee work at tweaking the gears on their pull-toy car.

to solve problems and rethink their designs. When a line of code or a piece of equipment didn't work as planned, students focused on the task of problem solving and not on their frustrations. Through PLTW Automation and Robotics, students have been empowered to learn new skills and practice perseverance and creativity in engineering challenges. These eighth graders will utilize these skills as they find their roles in our school and community.



Ivet Kalchev, Abby Frantz, and Kenadie Sutton display their completed pull-toy, and they are ready to show off their cam and follower mechanism and decorations

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Visit our website at:

www.homeoftheshamrocks.org
or contact us at (269) 471-2891

VanDenburgh: Student success is developed behind the curtain, not on the stage

By Carrie VanDenburgh,
Choir and Drama Director
and David VanDenburgh

Community takes many forms—living in the same town, attending the same school—but the best community is one that not only comes together purposefully and works cooperatively to achieve a common goal, but one that *builds* community within and around it.

Even as the past two years have tested and strained community across the nation, the Berrien Springs Drama Department students brought a much-needed infusion of community spirit this past November with four fantastic performances of *Little Women: the Broadway Musical*.

As opening night approached, the cast and crew waited expectantly, hopeful for a good turnout but unsure what to expect. Their worries were for naught. Saturday night, November 20, opened before a large, energetic crowd. The production gained momentum through the weekend performances and concluded with the fourth and final show Monday night before a full house brimming with palpable excitement—both onstage and off. By all measures, the cast and crew delivered a spirited, polished, and emotionally-stirring production. The outpouring of support both during and after the production attests to the importance of community and the ability of the Arts to bring out the best in our students—and us.

We are deeply indebted to the support of the BSPS community and would like to offer just a few examples of the many who gave generously of their time and talent on behalf of our students.

Special thanks to the maintenance crews for replacing stage lights, transporting old props and set materials to storage, arranging the lift to make a few last-minute lighting tweaks. We also express sincere gratitude to **Tom Townsend**



Sofia Pate portrayed Amy, Jonathan Clough was Laurie, & Emilie Kurtz was Jo March in the presentation of “*Little Women*.”

and **Jennifer Schaus** for running sound, offering technical support, and sourcing mics. Many thanks to the inimitable **Susan Roth**, our fabulous costumer, for her support and expertise. We also want to thank the amazing orchestra that brought the music alive and gave our students a chance to sing with a small orchestra. Thank you to board members who sponsored rehearsal dinners during the busyness of tech week! You fed our stomachs and our spirits. And thank you to faculty, staff, and administration who attended the show (or several). Your support is felt. We also had two alumni helping run backstage and run lights for our show, **Tabitha Nelson**, class of 2021 and **Darrin Kurtz**, class of 2013, who gave generously of their time and talents.

Each one of these contributions was impactful and contributed to our students’ success. And while their success might be measured on the stage, it is developed behind the curtain. Community and cooperation among the cast and crew—i.e., learning to navigate interpersonal



Ayana LeBlanc portrayed Aunt March in the Broadway musical.

relationships—is one of life’s biggest challenges, and theater offers a rich opportunity to grow those skills: communication, respect, vision, commitment, and humility. Naturally, some days and moments are tough, and some lessons are learned the hard way, but this group of 15 students did more than just present

a successful show; they worked together, planned together, struggled together, learned together, and persevered together. In short, they built community. The Arts at BSPS is about community. We thank you for your part in supporting that, and we look forward to next year.

Educators build emotional literacy skills among students to support academic progress

By Valerie Carr
Virtual Academy
Director

Think of the following everyday, conversational exchange:

“How are you doing?”

“Good.”

But is the person really good? Is the person answering honestly, thoughtfully, or reflectively?

Dr. Marc Brackett, Founding Director of Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, has determined the top predictor of academic success is one’s ability to communicate and regulate their emotions; therefore, it is imperative that children, young adults, and adults are educated in emotional literacy. Emotions drive a person’s thinking, decisions, and behavior; however, this is a challenging skill to mindfully

recognize, understand, label, express, and regulate appropriately both in the classroom and outside of school.

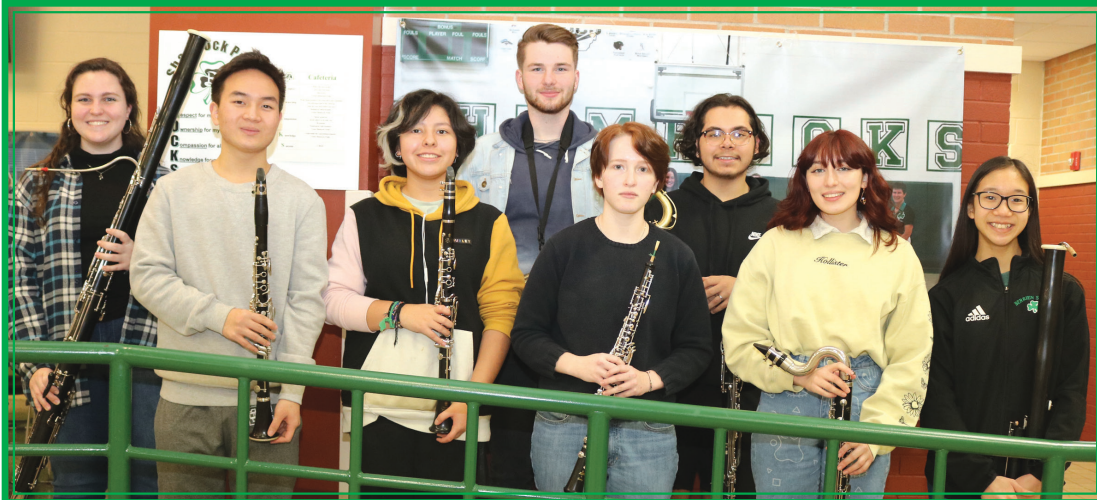
By reflecting on one’s energy level on the y-axis in conjunction with their pleasantness level on the x-axis, students and staff are able to recognize and understand how a student is **really** feeling that day by labeling and expressing their mood. With the flexibility of the lab environment, teachers have been able to help students regulate and make decisions using the mood meter by setting more intentional social and academic goals based on mood. For example, if a student is **EXHAUSTED** because they could not fall asleep the night before, why would lab teachers have a student test at that point in time? Instead,

the student and staff member can make a plan to help that involves specific goals, more breaks, additional check-ins, and teachable moments. If a student identifies as **STRESSED**, teachers can help the student determine the cause, make a cognitive, academic, and affective game plan that still validates the **CONCERN** but puts the student **AT EASE** because they have a goal based game plan. If a student identifies as **EXCITED**, it creates an opportunity to find out why and learn about the student on a greater level. If a student identifies as being behind because they are **BORED**, the student and teacher can discuss real world connections or strategies to keep the student engaged. Clearly, an “I’m good,” response is vague, mindless, likely untruthful,

and gives staff members no actual intel on how to best serve students. The follow up question is, “Are you **really** good?”

Also, the Mood Meter is a tool families can choose to use in order to improve communication at home.

Within the lab setting and via Zoom, the Berrien Springs Virtual Academy wants to ensure that staff are in tune with the emotional needs of all students. Through intentional conversation via the mood meter, building emotional literacy skills has been an important component that shows students how much teachers care about a student’s personal and academic success. The goal is to help build a student’s capacity to recognize and self-regulate in a way that supports academic progress, and emotional literacy skills for life.



BSHS SOLO & ENSEMBLE MUSICIANS EARN MEDALS

Earning medals at the Solo and Ensemble competition recently held at Southwestern Michigan College and St. Joseph High School were, pictured Left: Lauren Geates, Aldrich Mongkai, Anizbeth Contreras-Ramirez, Jeffrey Blakeman, Klay Raschke, Anthony Ibanez, Izzy Constable, and Aileen Mongkai, and pictured left: Aubrie Demler, Soe Kublick, Daniel Moler, Luke Morrison, Javier Contreras, Jeremiah Leitz, Collin Craig, and Aiden Geates.



Berrien Springs to join Buchanan, Brandywine, Benton Harbor, and Dowagiac in Lakeland Conference

By Joe Stephens
High School
Athletic Director

Our Shamrock athletes have been working hard through the long winter to get ready for postseason play. As of February 1, our Competitive Cheer team is battling with Buchanan for the top spot in the BCS. The boys' varsity basketball team is exciting to watch, and they are tied with Brandywine for the top spot in the conference with one more contest to play against the Bobcats. Our wrestling team has become a more competitive group as it has filled more weight classes on its roster than it has in recent years. The girls' basketball program has broken a long losing streak and is looking forward to the home court advantage that it will have in a very balanced MHSAA District.

In the 2022-23 school year, Berrien Springs will be leaving the BCS conference. As it stands, our division of the BCS will be dropping from five teams down to three in many sports. The remaining teams in the BCS red (Buchanan and Brandywine) will be joining us along with Dowagiac and Benton Harbor to create a five member Lakeland Conference. This conference will provide student-athletes the opportunity to continue to compete for championships and receive all-conference recognition for their efforts in and out of the classroom. We are excited about the local rivalries that will be strengthened with a group of schools similar to us in enrollment. So far this school



Berrien Springs Shamrock guard James York flies high to score a basket against Dowagiac.

year, some of our best attended and most exciting contests have been against these local schools. Our student-athletes will continue to compete in very exciting environments and make many great memories.

The MHSAA has found Berrien

Springs a desirable destination for its postseason tournaments. In the fall, we hosted two district football games because of our team's play-off seeding. Our game workers will be very busy this spring and our first-class facilities will be filled with

spectators from around the state. We have been fortunate to be selected as the host facility for all of the following MHSAA tournaments. We truly have a reputation for being one of the best hosts in this part of the state.

| Sport | Dates |
|---|--|
| Girls Basketball District 46 (Division 2) | Mon 2/28, Wed 3/2, Fri 3/4 |
| Softball District 43 (Division 2) | Pre-District Tue 5/31, Finals Fri 6/3 or Sat 6/4 |
| Girls Soccer District 33 (Division 3) | Various Games Between 5/25-6/4 |
| Girls Tennis Regional 25 (Division 4) | Wed 5/18 or Thur 5/19 |
| Track and Field Regional 14 (Division 2) | Friday 5/20 |

\$22 million Arts and Athletic Center nears completion

By Ron Bartz
Maintenance
Coordinator

The new \$22 million dollar Arts and Athletics Center addition to Berrien Springs High School, which features a 750-seat auditorium, a competition gym, band, choir rooms, and a fitness center with weight room, has been under construction for the past 14 months and is nearing the end. The majority of the work will be completed at the end of March, except for the auditorium seating, which has been delayed in the manufacturing process and pushed back a couple of months.

Several milestones have been met over the winter months. The new gym floor has been completed, including the layout and painting of lines and graphics and the polyure-

(Continued on page 10)



The installation of the 22,000 square foot gym floor has been completed.



The auditorium, which will seat 750 people, is currently under construction.



Berrien Springs Transportation Department collects food and toys for Christmas Care program
 In December 2021, the Berrien Springs Public Schools Transportation Department hosted its annual *Stuff-A-Bus* event, Transportation Director John Legus reported. The staff collected toys, non-perishable food items, and other items from all of the school district buildings in addition to having two community collection sites at Apple Valley and Harding's. They collected enough toys and non-perishable food to fill an entire school bus. The staff delivered all of the items to the Christmas Care site located at the Berrien County Youth Fairgrounds. Christmas Care serves and helps people who are in need during the holiday season. "This is just one of the many ways our transportation staff cares for our community," Director Legus said. Pictured above: Bus drivers Tami Paquette and Erik Nieman display some of the toys they collected for the Christmas Care program during their "Stuff-A-Bus" event.

\$22 million Arts and Athletic Center nears completion

(Continued from page 9)

thane coating applied on the floor. Bleachers, scoreboards, and divider curtains are slated to be installed beginning in mid-February to wrap up most of the work in the gym.

The auditorium and lobby have seen a significant transformation in the past couple of months. Workers installed 146 ceiling hung sound clouds, house lighting, and fire protection devices over three weeks in the auditorium before the excavating and concrete companies began the task of transforming the flat ground into tiered areas for the seating. In the lobby, which will serve both the gym and the auditorium, most of the drywall work has been completed, and painting of the space will begin soon. The lobby will feature a con-

cession stand, built-in trophy cases, perimeter benches, and floor to ceiling glass at the entrance.

The next couple of months will see the installation of flooring in the four locker rooms, the band and choir rooms, and cabinet installation in the band and choir rooms. Several areas of the building will have polished concrete floors. The stage rigging will also be installed along with all the lighting.

It is anticipated that the new building will be open for activities in July. While most of the work will be completed before then, state inspections, the placement of new furnishing, and other small detail work are expected to take several weeks to complete.



Choir Director Carrie VanDenburgh smiles as she looks at her new choir room that is in the process of being completed at the new Arts and Athletic Center.



Congratulations, Discovery Academy graduates!

Graduation is one of the most important times in a student's life, Discovery Academy Director Bill Bergan said. On December 15th, 2021, the Discovery Academy staff watched six hard-working students walk across the stage towards their future. "The staff offers encouragement and support to every student, letting the students know that we believe in them and that they can overcome any obstacle in their way," Bergan said. "With hard work and dedication, each of our graduates rose to the challenge to achieve their goals and graduate." Bergan emphasized that at the Discovery Academy, the staff cares for their students. "Our dedicated staff goes over and beyond to help every student succeed," Bergan said. "This is the Shamrock Way, which sets us apart from any other school across the state." Pictured are, front row: Liam Jones, Deborah Cardoso Carvalho, Cemmi Rane, Keren Italia Acosta, Ta'Nya Ahnece Williams, and Tristian Sebastian Freemyer; and back row, staff members Frank Gonzalez, Andrew Radenbaugh, Rick Ruhl, DeVonte' Jones, Gail Lovelady, Eunice Triantafilo, and Director Bill Bergan.

#SHAMROCKPRIDE CARE: Students interviewed by Lyrica Gee

"You have the chance to care when you meet a lot of different people in high school of all shapes and sizes. It doesn't matter where you come from because Berrien Springs is very accepting." --Kiera Suarez, 9th grade

"The school shows they care by providing opportunities to grow in all the different classes. They make sure you're ready for the future." --Aubrey Ransom, 10th grade

"I see caring when the people salt the roads or the sidewalks so when people walk to school they don't have to worry about slipping. Or when people walk around and pick up after themselves and others." --Elena Bailey, 10th grade

"Caring in the high school is from the teachers at this time of year. They're always caring about the students who aren't doing as great or need help in time for finals." --Pedro Lopez-Lara, 11th grade

"I see caring in the classroom when someone doesn't understand the assignment. I always see caring in the classroom, people are willing to help each other." --Jakyrah Palmer, 12th grade

"I think having a good mentality helps you care about others. If you're mentally sound you're not going to be bringing other people down." --Austin Fraumbach, 12th grade

ECRWSS
Residential Customers

Despite the many challenges of Covid-19, “CARE” continues to grow in and outside of the classroom among staff and students

By David Eichberg
Superintendent

Each quarter throughout the school year, the district publishes the “*Shamrock Connection*.” For the past two school years, the theme for each quarterly newsletter comes directly from the school district’s vision statement: “Inspiring students to think,

learn, achieve and care in a global community.” The theme for the second quarter newsletter focuses on the “Care” element of our vision statement but also includes articles from the district’s “*Rocks Values*” (our behavior expectations for all students) and includes what our schools are currently celebrating. The Berrien Springs Public

Schools staff continue their resolve to provide the highest quality learning opportunities possible for all students in spite of numerous challenges created by the ongoing impact of COVID-19. There are many remarkable examples of how our staff continues to care for students.

I hope you find a deep sense of this care presented in the articles



David Eichberg

published in this edition of the *Shamrock Connection*. Thank you for your continued support—**Go Shamrocks!**



Sylvester Elementary staff and students recently gathered supplies to donate to the Humane Society.

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