Celebrating the Class of 2018

During Wyomissing Area Senior High's 94th commencement ceremony, 167 graduates received their diplomas on Friday, June 2. Student speakers included Valedictorian Matthew Driben, Salutatorian and President of the Class of 2018 Joseph Cullen, Secretary of the Class of 2018 Samuel Botterbusch, and Treasurer of the Class of 2018 Lauren Gechter.

Matthew Driben shared the story of the Quiz Bowl Team's last regular season match, where he had to recruit new team members because overlapping of extracurricular activities pulled regular team members away from the Quiz Bowl Team.

“Sometimes, life lessons reveal themselves in the least expected places,” Matthew told the audience. “I didn’t think Quiz Bowl would teach me more than random trivia this year, but that day I learned a much broader lesson that applies to all of us graduates here today—that overcoming the challenges we will all face in the real world will be impossible to do alone.”

Matthew concluded by saying, “Comparing life to a Quiz Bowl match may be a bit over dramatic, but the lessons Quiz Bowl teaches, like knowing one’s own limits, asking for help, aiding others, and working as a team, will ultimately guide us graduates to successful futures, regardless of the paths we take.”

Besides being salutatorian and president of the graduating class, Joseph is a runner, and he opened his remarks with the saying “Life is a marathon, not a sprint.”

“I’ve always been told we are to treat life like a marathon, and not a sprint. Of course, as a distance runner, this analogy has always made sense to me,” Joseph began. “At Wyomissing, there’s the momentary comfort of knowing where to go today, and tomorrow, and the day after that… But there are also the nerves that accompany any meaningful race: What’ll happen after that… But there are also the nerves that accompany any meaningful race: What’ll happen once I’m on my own? Will anyone be there for me when I stumble? For so long, one thing has remained constant in our lives: structure. But not anymore. Now we run our own races, on our own paths, and at our own paces. While life may be a marathon and not a sprint, do not be afraid to “sprint” in these final moments together and make lifelong memories. The advice of treating life as a marathon and not a sprint, though applicable to most situations, is designed to allow us to sprint at the most meaningful moments.”

In his speech, Samuel reminded his classmates that while they have grown a lot to get to where they are today, they are not nearly finished.

Continued on page 2
Taking on the Spartan Challenge

With a clear blue sky as the backdrop, this year’s athletes proudly displayed their school’s banner as they made their way down the track at Flannery Field to open the 2018 Spartan Challenge. After the playing of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” 29 students with special needs, representing kindergarten through 12th grade, were ready for competition.

The athletic events held at Flannery Field and in the JSHS gym included the 40-meter dash, the 100-meter dash, the 400-meter dash, the long jump, and a softball throw. An introduction to yoga was provided by Maggie Barnard from Building 7, and All Abilities Fitness of Exeter provided the athletes with the opportunity to try various pieces of athletic and adaptive equipment.

“Today is easily one of my favorite days every year,” commented Director of Special Education Mrs. Jessica Lengle. “The excitement our student athletes exhibit and the presence of so many families, school board members, administrators, and staff makes the day just perfect. Our committee worked hard to plan this year’s event, and the time spent was well worth it.”

Mrs. Jeanette Fotis’ son, Hank, is in the second grade. This is his third year participating in the Spartan Challenge. “He loves participating.” Mrs. Fotis says. “It gives him a huge sense of pride and a connection to his peers.”

The athletes wore T-shirts that were donated by Pediatric Dentistry of Reading and designed by Assistant Principal, Dr. Robert Kucharczuk. The planning committee spent hours organizing the Star Wars–themed event, ensuring that the day would be as inclusive as possible and would allow for opportunities for family members to interact with their children and school employees.

As part of Wyomissing Area JSHS’ Best Buddy Club, eighth-grade students Kate Kotula and Semaj Delgado gets a little help from a friend to make it over the hurdles

Morris Delgado gets a little help from a friend to make it over the hurdles

Wyomissing Area High School senior Hunter Niedrowski represented the school in the javelin event at this year’s Penn Relays. It is believed to be the first time in the history of WAHS that the school was represented at the annual national track and field competition.

The Penn Relays is the oldest and largest track and field competition in the United States, hosted by the University of Pennsylvania at Franklin Field in Philadelphia each year since April 21, 1895.

While skill with the javelin runs in the family—Hunter’s father was the District III Javelin Champion in 1992, with a school and PIAA State Javelin Champion in 1992, with a school and county record throw of 227’ 11”—Hunter didn’t join the track team until his junior year. He went on to state competition that year, placing 17th.

Before joining the track team, Hunter played baseball and football for WAHS. He hung up his baseball glove to join the track team, saying that he wanted to switch things up.

Hunter didn’t do as well as he had hoped at the Penn Relays; he finished in ninth place with a throw of 180’ 11”. However, he did win in the Class 2A event at the District II Track and Field Championships with a throw of 199’ 8”. He also set a school record.

Hunter plans to continue competing at West Chester University.

Seniors Represent Wyomissing Area at Penn Relays

Wyomissing Area High School senior Hunter Niedrowski represented the school in the javelin event at this year’s Penn Relays. It is believed to be the first time in the history of WAHS that the school was represented at the annual national track and field competition.

The Penn Relays is the oldest and largest track and field competition in the United States, hosted by the University of Pennsylvania at Franklin Field in Philadelphia each year since April 21, 1895.

While skill with the javelin runs in the family—Hunter’s father was the District III Javelin Champion in 1992, with a school and PIAA State Javelin Champion in 1992, with a school and county record throw of 227’ 11”—Hunter didn’t join the track team until his junior year. He went on to state competition that year, placing 17th.

Before joining the track team, Hunter played baseball and football for WAHS. He hung up his baseball glove to join the track team, saying that he wanted to switch things up.

Hunter didn’t do as well as he had hoped at the Penn Relays; he finished in ninth place with a throw of 180’ 11”. However, he did win in the Class 2A event at the District II Track and Field Championships with a throw of 199’ 8”. He also set a school record.

Hunter plans to continue competing at West Chester University.

Celebrating the Class of 2018

“The future for each of us holds millions of new experiences, new lessons to learn,” Samuel said. “If people were to look today at the people who are going to walk out the doors of this building as graduates of Wyomissing, are far from the same people we will be 10 years from now, or 20 or 30… May each of our futures be as interesting and exciting as the last six years have been. Tonight, let’s celebrate all that we’ve accomplished and all of the gifts Wyomissing has given us, but tomorrow, let’s accomplish something new, not as Wyomissing students, but at Wyomissing graduates.”

Lauren Gechter recapped the 2017-18 academic year for her fellow graduates, ending her speech by saying, “I do not think all of the realities of graduation have hit me yet. We will never again walk the halls of Wyomissing High School as students. We will never again be all together as a class. We will never again have food confiscated from us in the halls or be restricted from wearing ripped jeans. Today, we part ways of Wyomissing High School as students. We will never again be all together as a class. We will never again have food confiscated from us in the halls or be restricted from wearing ripped jeans. Today, we part ways of Wyomissing High School as students. We will never again be all together as a class. We will never again have food confiscated from us in the halls or be restricted from wearing ripped jeans. Today, we part ways of Wyomissing High School as students. We will never again be all together as a class. We will never again have food confiscated from us in the halls or be restricted from wearing ripped jeans. Today, we part ways of Wyomissing High School as students. We will never again be all together as a class. We will never again have food confiscated from us in the halls or be restricted from wearing ripped jeans. Today, we part ways of Wyomissing High School as students. We will never again be all together as a class. We will never again have food confiscated from us in the halls or be restricted from wearing ripped jeans. Today, we part ways of Wyomissing High School as students. We will never again be all together as a class. We will never again have food confiscated from us in the halls or be restricted from wearing ripped jeans. Today, we part ways of Wyomissing High School as students. We will never again be all together as a class. We will never again have food confiscated from us in the halls or be restricted from wearing ripped jeans. Today, we part ways of Wyomissing High School as students. We will never again be all together as a class. We will never again have food confiscated from us in the halls or be restricted from wearing ripped jeans. Today, we part ways of Wyomissing High School as students. We will never again be all together as a class. We will never again have food confiscated from us in the halls or be restricted from wearing ripped jeans. Today, we part ways of Wyomissing High School as students. We will never again be all together as a class. We will never again have food confiscated from us in the halls or be restricted from wearing ripped jeans. Today, we part ways of Wyomissing High School as students. We will never again be all together as a class. We will never again have food confiscated from us in the halls or be restricted from wearing ripped jeans. Today, we part ways of Wyomissing High School as students. We will never again be all together as a class. We will never again have food confiscated from us in the halls or be restricted from wearing ripped jeans. Today, we part ways of Wyomissing High School as students. We will never again be all together as a class. We will never again have food confiscated from us in the halls or be restricted from wearing ripped jeans. Today, we part ways of Wyomissing High School as students. We will never again be all together as a class. We will never again have food confiscated from us in the halls or be restricted from wearing ripped jeans. Today, we part ways of Wyomissing High School as students. We will never again be all together as a class. We will never again have food confiscated from us in the halls or be restricted from wearing ripped jeans. Today, we part ways of Wyomissing High School as students. We will never again be all together as a class. We will never again have food confiscated from us in the halls or be restricted from wearing ripped jeans. Today, we part ways of Wyomissing High School as students. We will never again be all together as a class. We will never again have food confiscated from us in the halls or be restricted from wearing ripped jeans. Today, we part ways

For an in-depth look at the graduates, see pages 4 and 5.

The Wyomissing Area School District newsletter is published by the Wyomissing Area School District. For questions or comments regarding this publication, please contact Kristine Parkes, MA, CFRE at kparkes@wyoarea.org.
Students Spread Messages of Encouragement

When walking around Berks County, if you look carefully, you just might find a rock colorfully painted with whimsical pictures or with inspirational words carefully hiding in plain view. It is likely that the painter was a student in the Wyomissing Area School District, and that written on the back of the rock will be either “Berks County Rocks” or “The Kindness Rocks Project.”

Both projects encourage individuals to paint rocks with inspiring messages and pictures and leave them around the community for others to find. When they find one, people in the community are supposed to take a picture of the rock and post the picture to either group’s Facebook page.

This spring, Mrs. Lindsay Rada’s ninth-grade reading class read The Outsiders, a novel by S.E. Hinton, as well as “Nothing Gold Can Stay,” a poem by Robert Frost. Mrs. Rada and her class discussed the reference to Frost’s poem in The Outsiders and how it set up a theme in the story. In the novel, just before Johnnie dies, he tells Ponyboy to “Stay gold.”

Focusing on the theme of what is meant by staying “gold,” the students learned that it means to stay innocent and true to oneself, keeping committed to values and life goals.

In order to carry this message into the community through art, the students painted rocks for “Berks County Rocks.” Working with art teacher Ms. Laura Zamperini, the students painted “Stay gold” on their rocks accented by their own unique designs. Each painted one rock for him or herself and one to contribute to the community, then chose a location to place the rock where someone would benefit from the motivation/reminder to “Stay gold.”

Austin Pinder chose to place his rock outside of Reading Hospital. “Most people who go to a hospital are going through emotional things,” Austin explained. “I hope that my rock brightens someone’s day.”

Ciara Torres enjoyed reading The Outsiders and thought the book’s message was relevant to today’s generation. “I left my rock outside of the school because everyone in the school goes through a tough time at some point.”

At the West Reading Elementary Center, the Art Club brought Berks County Rocks to the residents of Spruce Manor Rehab Center during one of the club’s monthly visits. Joined by their peers in Student Council, members of the Art Club helped residents sketch out a design for their rocks before dipping their brushes into the bright paint colors. After the rocks dried, the students distributed them throughout the community.

“The residents love having the kids here,” says Helen, an activity assistant at Spruce Manor Rehab Center. “They are always asking when are they coming back.”

For the Art Club and the Student Council, visiting Spruce Manor Rehab Center raises the level of the school’s involvement in the community.

A Strong Tradition of Athletic Excellence

The banners touting county, district, and state championships that hang in the new gym, like the trophies standing proud in the archive room, reflect a tradition of athletic excellence and student-athlete participation at Wyomissing Area JSHS.

Tradition built success. These are the words athletic director Mr. Frank Ferrandino uses when he is asked to describe the school’s athletic program.

“Wyomissing Area JSHS has a strong tradition of excellence,” says Mr. Ferrandino. “The expectations are that our student-athletes will try their best to compete at the state level each year.”

The Wyomissing Area School District believes that the purpose of an interscholastic athletic program is to provide learning experiences that will contribute to the personal, physical, and psychological development of the individual student-athlete. In partnership with athletes, coaches, and parents, it is the Athletic Department’s mission to create an environment that will complement and enrich the educational experience for all students.

According to the annual High School Athletics Participation Survey (2016–17), conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations, Pennsylvania continues to rank sixth in the nation in sports participation, with 319,53 students participating in high-school athletics. The national number reached an all-time high of 7,963,535. The number of female participants also reached an all-time high, with the largest increase since the 2000–2001 report.

Wyomissing Area JSHS offers 15 boys’ varsity sports and 13 girls’ varsity sports. While there were several district championship teams in the 1970s, it wasn’t until the mid-1980s that the varsity teams became competitive. Mr. Ferrandino was a student at the time, and he remembers athletic director Mr. Matt Ecker working hard to make athletics important to the student body. The success of his efforts spilled over into the community. And in the early 2000s, Wyomissing Area Senior High began to dominate.

To date, the Wyomissing Area JSHS has:
• 21 team state championships across nine different sports;
• 6 individual or relay state champions across 8 different sports;
• 74 district championships across 12 different sports; and
• 122 county championships across 13 different sports.

“I am most proud that our championships are spread out across many sports,” says Mr. Ferrandino. “We don’t have one or two dominant sports, and this is due to strong coaching, strong community and parental support, and strong administration support.”

Yoga & Story Combine for Classroom Fun

For many adults, yoga is an escape from the stresses of everyday life. It quiets the mind and gently stretches the muscles. Yoga also has recognized benefits for children, including developing motor skills on both sides of the body and increasing balance, coordination, concentration, focus, and attention span.

Understanding these benefits, first-grade teacher Dr. Toni Wengerd was excited when Mrs. Sara Smith, the parent of one of her students, approached her about offering yoga sessions to the class.

“Mrs. Smith visited our class five times this past year,” Dr. Wengerd explains. “Each time, she tied the yoga poses to a storybook with a theme relating to the time of year.”

For example, at Halloween, Mrs. Smith read Room on the Broom; in the winter, she read The Mitten. In honor of Dr. Seuss’s birthday, Mrs. Smith taught poses named for popular Seuss books or characters.

If giggles and smiles are any indication, Mrs. Smith’s yoga sessions will stay with the first graders for quite some time.

Mrs. Meredith Caldwell’s kindergarten class proudly shows off their kindness rocks.

A similar community action project called The Kindness Rocks Project was a highlight of the school year for kindergarten students in Mrs. Meredith Caldwell’s class. Students painted rocks with inspiring messages and left them for someone to find.

Lila Kaufmann painted a ladybug on her rock, and she hid it by a tree close to her home. The rock was found; she checked.

“I hope that the person who found my rock knows that it was painted by a kind person and that it is a very special rock,” Lila says.

Her classmate Julia Wickstrom wrote “happy” on her rock, and she drew a happy picture on it, as well. She hopes that the person who finds her rock feels happy to have found it.

Whether in high school or kindergarten, each of the students participating in a painted rock activity discovered that creating the rocks and leaving them to inspire others gave them a warm and fuzzy feeling that could only be replicated by finding a rock.
A Spotlight on the Class of 2018

Our Wyomissing Area High School graduates have worked hard and will continue to make a difference in the world. To give you a glimpse into the lives of our graduates and the paths they will take, we would like to introduce you to the following students, who represent this year’s graduating class.

Trevor Jackson is a dedicated student-athlete who proudly became the first Wyomissing Area student to apply and be accepted to the Massachusetts Maritime Academy. Trevor received high honors every quarter in high school and had a grade point average above 4.0 in his junior and senior years.

Trevor chose the Massachusetts Maritime Academy for its regimented lifestyle, as well as the opportunity to travel and access to incredible job opportunities the Academy provides after graduation. He explains that classes are assigned to all students, and he can expect early mornings and long nights. While Trevor will be trained as a military officer – tailored to the Coast Guard and Navy – there is no service commitment upon graduation. He will major in marine engineering and is looking forward to playing club basketball.

Trevor leaves August 18, for his two-week boot camp/orientation.

Abby Goldberg has always been intellectually curious and interested in a variety of subjects. This curiosity comes through in the diversity of her activities throughout high school.

Abby was a member and student director of the Drama Club, served as vice-president of the Math Team, played violin and served as librarian for the orchestra, and was the treasurer of the Cooking Club. She also was a member of the Service Club and Environmental Club and taught technology classes at the Jewish Community Center.

Abby’s academic honors included being named an Advanced Placement Scholar with Distinction, a National Merit Finalist, and Berks Best in Mathematics. She has also received numerous scholarships and awards.

Abby credits Mrs. Kristin Allen for teaching him how to learn and participate effectively in class discussions, and Mr. William Dramby, for encouraging and her stepfather for always pushing her to make good academic choices. Her preferred media are fine-tipped pens and markers, and she loves to travel. Abby plans to attend the Pennsylvania College of Art and Design in the fall. She has yet to decide if she will pursue either medical school or graduate school.

Patrick Mahon, a well-rounded student-athlete, is headed to Georgetown University in the fall, where he will be an economic/social justice major. He says he chose the school because of its proximity to Washington, D.C., where he will be able to apply what he is learning through internships.

Patrick’s athletic pursuits included soccer, swimming, and volleyball, while his academic extracurricular interests included student council, Science Olympiad, and Spanish Club. Patrick was also a member of the National Honor Society and the Spanish National Honor Society and was awarded the Principal’s 4.0 Award in his junior year.

Patrick wishes to thank his Student Council advisor and Honors American History/Advanced Placement World History teacher, Mr. William Dramby, for teaching him how to learn and participate effectively and correctly, saying, “He placed an emphasis on communication and critical thinking.”

Patrick is looking forward not only to continuing his education but to continuing to develop as a person at Georgetown University.

Leah McAvoy is ready for the next chapter. A devoted student-athlete, member of the National Honor Society and recipient of the Principal’s 4.0 Award, Leah will continue her education at the University of Michigan. She will major in neuroscience, which she sees as the perfect combination of her two favorite subjects, biology and psychology.

After earning her bachelor’s degree, she plans to pursue either medical school or graduate school.

During her time at Wyomissing Area JSHS, Leah was a member of the tennis, basketball, and lacrosse teams. She was named to the all-county team for basketball in her junior and senior years and for lacrosse her junior year. In tennis, she was the district doubles champion in her junior and senior years and the county champ in her senior year.

Leah was named 2018 Berks County Athlete of the Year by the Reading Eagle.

In addition to athletic pursuits, Leah was involved with the Environmental Club, served as the vice-president of both the Latin Club and Student Council, was a member of Math Club, and participated in Big Spartan, Little Spartan.

Leah credits Mr. Peter Beck for having an impact on her: “He always supported me, whether academically, sports, or volunteering. I know he will always be there if I need him,” she says.

Grace Keefe has always found happiness in art. In fact, she can’t remember a time when she didn’t have a brush or pen in her hand.

Her talent has been recognized by others, as she has been awarded the Berks County Secondary Art Exhibit Award, the Vocum Institute Juried Art Exhibit Award, and the Promising Artist Scholarship from Pennsylvania College of Art and Design.

Grace will be attending the Pennsylvania College of Art and Design in the fall. She has yet to decide on a major—animation and illustration are her two choices. Her preferred media are fine-tipped pens and watercolor. However, she is looking forward to exploring other media at college. She loves drawing people, especially the female figure, and explains that she wants to break the myth that all women must be stick-thin.

She thanks her mother for being supportive and encouraging and her stepfather for always pushing her to be her best.

When she is not drawing, Grace enjoys watching horror films (Stephen King is her favorite), watching Netflix series (Black Mirror gets her thinking), and playing video games.

Following in her father’s footsteps, Carly Tomczak will be continuing her education at Temple University.

“When not only have I grown up hearing his stories,” Carly says, “but I love Philadelphia. The atmosphere, activities, and the relative closeness to where I live all played a role in my decision.”

Carly will major in early childhood education,
with a focus on special education. Over the years, she has grown very close to the girl she babysits, who is autistic. Carly has also shadowed her swim coach, who is a special education teacher, and in her junior and senior years has been a volunteer teacher assistant in the autistic classrooms at the Wyomissing Hills Elementary Center and at the Wyomissing Area JSHS.

Carly’s dedication to teaching is evident in her extracurricular activities. She is a Sunday-school teacher and nursery leader at Calvary United Methodist Church and has been giving swim lessons since 2015.

Additionally, Carly is a member of the National Honor Society and the National Society of High School Scholars. She is on the swim team and was the team’s captain in her junior and senior years. She has been awarded the Advanced Placement Scholar Award, the Principals’ 4.0 Award, the President’s Award for Educational Excellence, and a Polish-American Board of Education Scholarship.

Carly is looking forward to swimming with the Temple club team and possibly becoming a tour guide.

When Quinn Hogue steps onto the campus of Elizabethtown College in the fall, the general engineering major will already have college credits on his transcript. Quinn attended Berks Career and Technology Center’s Mechatronics Engineering Technology program, which is a pre-engineering program with a planned sequence of secondary and postsecondary technical courses.

Quinn explains that it was his mother who suggested he try the program in tenth grade, and he ended up really liking it. He is looking forward to continuing his engineering education with a concentration in mechanical and electrical engineering. Quinn will also wrestle for Elizabethtown College.

At Wyomissing Area JSHS, Quinn played football, wrestled, and was a member of the track and field team. He was awarded the Bert Moore Memorial Scholarship for his performance on the football field and the District III Wrestling Coaches Association’s Scholarships for Books. Quinn went 24–12 during his senior year, placed fourth in the District III Class 2A Tournament, and qualified for Southeast Regional. He was voted to the Berks County II all-division team.

Quinn also participated in the Big Spartan, Little Spartan program in his junior and senior years. He grew close to a boy who had recently moved to the United States and spent time mentoring him each month through his senior year.

Matthew Driben is nothing if not driven. The valedictorian

Class of 2018: After Graduation

In addition to the list of the colleges and universities that the Class of 2018 will be attending, below you will find other paths that the members of the Class of 2018 will be pursuing:

American University
Arcadia University
Berk’s Technical Institute
Boston College
Brandeis University
Brown University
California University of Pennsylvania
Coastal Carolina University
Columbia College Chicago
Danish Army
Drexel University
Duke University
Duquesne University
Electrician
Elizabethtown College
Elon University
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University - Prescott
Emerson College
Employment
Fashion Institute of Technology
Florida Atlantic University
Florida International University
Georgetown University
Georgia Institute of Technology
Gettysburg College
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
James Madison University
Jefferson University
Kauai Community College
Keystone College
King’s College
Kutztown University of Pennsylvania
Lee University
Liberty University
Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania
Massachusetts Maritime Academy
Millersville University of Pennsylvania
Music Education and Harp Performance
Neumann University
New York University
Ohiopyle University
PA School of Art & Design
Pennsylvania College of Technology
Pennsylvania State University - Berks
Pennsylvania State University - Reading Area Community College
Reading School of Health Sciences
Rhode Island School of Design
Ringing College of Art and Design
Saint Joseph’s University
Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania
St. John’s University - Queens Campus
Temple University
Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology
The George Washington University
The Los Angeles Film School
The University of Alabama
United States Air Force
United States Army
United States National Guard
Universal Technical Institute of Pennsylvania Inc.
University of Michigan
University of Mississippi
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
University of New Mexico
University of North Carolina at Asheville
University of Pennsylvania
University of Pittsburgh
University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown
University of the Sciences in Philadelphia
University of Vermont
University of Virginia
Volunteering Abroad
West Chester University
West Virginia University

Quinn also participated in the Big Spartan, Little Spartan program in his junior and senior years. He grew close to a boy who had recently moved to the United States and spent time mentoring him each month through his senior year.

Matthew Driben is nothing if not driven. The valedictorian has played piano since kindergarten; has written for and edited the school’s newspaper, the Chariot; has been a member of the Quiz Bowl team; and has been a member of the track and field and cross-country teams since seventh- and eighth-grades, respectively.

Matthew was a member of the cross-country state championship team in his senior year. Off the track, he set the record for the number of student newspapers published in one year, was a member of the county championship Quiz Bowl team in his junior and senior years, and was his school’s first-ever qualifier for the US National Chemistry Olympiad in his junior year.

Academically, Matthew was named a Justice Brandeis Scholar, a National AP Scholar, and an Advanced Placement Scholar with Distinction. He was also awarded a merit scholarship from Brandeis University.

Matthew will attend Brandeis University, where he will be a member of the cross-country and track and field teams. He is also looking forward to continuing his Quiz Bowl career.

Matthew credits his coaches, Mr. Tim Hetrich and Mr. Erik Uliaasz, the advisor of the Chariot, Mr. Christopher Stanchek; and his Quiz Bowl advisors, Ms. Jodie Ostrich and Mr. James Comford for imparting a strong work ethic, giving him the drive to work through obstacles and challenges, teaching him about the freedom of the press, and challenging him to think critically and form his own opinions.
In the Makerspace, the students were challenged to make a droid using only the materials found in a paper bag at their place. Items included a plastic cup, half a paper towel holder, a small Styrofoam ball, wires, and two plastic bottle tops. Available for everyone’s use were markers, tape, and scissors. Also on the table for inspiration were pictures of famous droids, such as C-3PO and BB-8 from the Star Wars movies.

A wee bit smaller than a Dash robot, an Ozobot is a pocket-sized robot that students can code using markers or stickers for a screen-free coding experience. For the activity the students were challenged to use a Sharpie and colored stickers to create a line for their Ozobot to follow. Each color represented a different command: for example, the sequence red/green/red/green tells the Ozobot to perform a “tornado trick.” When it rolls over that code, it will acknowledge the command with a blink and then perform the maneuver.

“The goal of today’s event was to give the students a chance to engage with different areas of STEAM,” explains Dr. Rob Kucharczuk, assistant principal. “For many of the students this is their first experience with STEAM. Today’s activities allow them to interact and let their minds run wild.”

This activity was sponsored in part by the Wyomissing Area Education Foundation.
Model Senate Program Provides Real-Life Experience

With intense curiosity and open minds, six Wyomissing Area High School juniors jumped at the opportunity to participate in Senator Judy Schwank’s fifth-annual Berks County Model Senate program.

Maggie Ferrandino, Vittoria D’Addesi, Erin Drebushenok, Chloe Gebert, Sarah Fleischood, and Emily Weidner are members of Mr. Joe Alcaro’s AP US Government and Politics class.

“I have been involved in politics since the 2016 election,” Vittoria explains. “Mr. Alcaro’s class helped me understand our government better and this program sounded very interesting.”

Emily explains that one of her friends participated in 2017, so she knew what to expect. “Not only did I learn more about politics,” she says, “it was a good experience that helped me open up.”

The Berks County Model Senate program is broken into three sessions. During the first session, students met at Senator Schwank’s office to elect a governor and caucus leaders and appoint committee chairs. At this session, Vittoria D’Addesi was elected governor. The students then decided which bills would be introduced and brought up their own proposals for debate.

Throughout the next month, the students discussed their bills outside of school in preparation for the second session. The students’ bills addressed legalizing cannabis, teachers’ right to carry firearms, and single-use plastic bags.

During the second session, students met with experts in the fields in which the proposed bills were grounded to ask questions and finalize their bills.

The final session brought the students together in Harrisburg. This daylong session included a brief tour of the State Capitol building, as well as a formal introduction from the floor by Senator Schwank. After watching the Pennsylvania Senate debate legislation, the students engaged in their final debate and voted on their three pieces of legislation.

Emily says that engaging with her peers on the final day was her favorite part. She explains, “It wasn’t till that last day that we knew what the other caucus was thinking.”

Maggie comments, “Watching the Senate debate legislation, I was surprised at how unorganized it actually is.”

At the end of the day, the girls were grateful for the experience and were disappointed that they couldn’t do it again next year.

Safe Schools Advisory Committee

In the spring, the Wyomissing Area School District administration held three meetings (one at each school) of the Safe Schools Advisory Committee. Co-chaired by Director of Building and Grounds Michael Cañoncelli and Wyomissing Police Department Lieutenant and parent Thomas Endy, the objectives of this committee are to:

- Review information to fully understand current safety/security measures at the Wyomissing Area School District
- Seek additional information through presentations and guided facility tours
- Collaborate and discuss information with respect to various opinions and viewpoints of stakeholders
- Make informed recommendations for school board/administration consideration

The result of these meetings was the development of priority recommendations and additional suggestions, which were presented to the Board of School Directors by the committee co-chairs. The administration is now working to research and discuss the priority recommendations as well as the other recommendations.

“What we know from these meetings is that we have a safe school district,” says Superintendent Robert Scoboria. “I am confident that, working with the stakeholder group and experts that we have convened, we will be able to address the recommendations that were identified.”

The Safe Schools Advisory Committee will meet again in Fall 2018 and continue to serve as a district resource to provide ongoing support of school safety measures.

Walk with WYO Exceeds Fundraising Goal

Walk with WYO is a walk like no other. Starting at Pinwheel Lane, the students at the Wyomissing Hills Elementary Center have a blast walking around the outside of the school, enjoying activity stations such as Hanging Pool Noodles, Flamingo Way, Candy Land Walk, and Watch D.O.G.S. Dad Row along the way.

“Walk with WYO serves as the Wyomissing Area PTAs primary fundraiser,” explains Mrs. Heidi Crowley, Walk with WYO 2018 event chair. “It is an opportunity for the students to work together with the community to raise funds that go directly back to the students of the Wyomissing Area School District.”

This year’s Walk with WYO raised $31,452. These funds will be used by the Wyomissing Area PTA to sponsor mini-grants, assemblies, movie nights, back-to-school events, book fairs, career day, staff appreciation events, and many other activities.

Walk with WYO is a major event, and is only successful because of the help of numerous volunteers and sponsors. Mrs. Tracey Weiss, West Reading Elementary Center Liaison and Walk with WYO volunteer, loves the event because it gets all the students involved.

“Walk with WYO gets the students outside and promotes school and class spirit,” Mrs. Weiss adds.

Fellow volunteers Mrs. Sara Smith and Mrs. Quinn Kaufmann agree that Walk with WYO is a fundraiser that is easy for parents to support.

In addition to parent volunteers, student athletes from the high school were on hand to assist at each station, as were Wyomissing Hills Elementary Center’s Watch D.O.G.S. Dads who were cheering the walkers on as they entered the homestretch.

The Walk with WYO committee would like to thank the sponsors, as well as business and individuals who provided in-kind donations, for helping to make this year’s event amazing.
Making Math Fun and Games

The Math Carnival is one of the days that fifth-grade students at West Reading Elementary Center look forward to all year.

Created more than five years ago by math teachers Mrs. Erika Homan and Mr. Keith Arnold, the Math Carnival is designed to inspire excitement for math. The daylong event is broken into three sections—the outside carnival-like atmosphere, with 15 fun games; guest speakers; and fun math activities in non-math classes.

On the playground, the students race around the outdoor carnival, testing their math skills at as many game tables as possible. Parent volunteers are stationed at each game to explain the rules and record top scores.

One game, called Decimal Double Down, asked the player to choose a “Decimal Dare” from the table. These cards presented the student with a math problem. Once the student answered the math problem, he or she then had to complete a challenge using the answer, such as doing that number of jumping jacks in 30 seconds. Upon completion of that challenge, he or she chose a “Decimal Card.” This card presented the student with a math equation to be solved as quickly as possible.

Another game, called Fill in the Blanks, had the player draw a card that only had numbers on it. The player then had to determine which operation—addition, subtraction, division, multiplication—was needed to complete the equation. The catch? The player had to figure this out in less than a minute. “This is a terrific way for kids to use the skills they have learned during the year,” says Mrs. Amy Smedley, a parent volunteer. “It really makes math fun.”

Three guest speakers donated their time to explain how they use math every day in their job. Eli Peters, from Mastercraft Woodworking Company, demonstrated how he uses math to develop an estimate to tell a potential client the cost to install kitchen cabinets. He showed the students a video of a machine that requires a person to key in the X and Y axes.

Minal Patel, PA-C, a gastroenterologist, explained to students how their doctor uses a growth curve and showed them the two formulas that can be used to calculate body mass index. She worked through an example with them.

Bill Gartner, director of research and development for Penske Racing Shocks, was a big hit with the students. His interactive presentation demonstrated how math is used to calculate speed and other factors needed to produce high-quality shock absorbers.

In the afternoon, students were treated to hands-on math lessons in their non-math classes, such as restaurant and shopping math, probability, and coding.

It takes many hands to organize a successful Math Carnival. However, the look on a student’s face when they beat the high score at a game table is well worth the effort—especially when you know that they’re utilizing math knowledge without realizing it.

Budget Overview: Fiscal Year 2018–19

As the District developed the 2018–19 budget, we had uncertainties and challenges to overcome. These included increases in enrollment, pensions, healthcare costs, charter-school tuition, special-education costs, and safety and security costs, as well as decreases in assessed property values. Taking these variables and the long-term forecast into consideration, the District had to make difficult decisions—including a potential tax increase. The Act 1 index (the limit on how much a school district can raise taxes, set by the state) was set at 2.4%. The Board of School Directors decided to raise taxes for the 2018–19 school year to 30.668 mills, which amounts to a 2% increase. For example, a 2% increase will raise taxes by an estimated $90 on a home assessed at a value of $150,000.

Challenges and Uncertainties

One of the biggest challenges for any school district is assessed property values, which are the Wyomissing Area School District’s biggest source of funding, making up 82.61% of local revenues. More than 78% of the District’s total revenue is derived from local sources. Local sources include real-estate property taxes, the earned income tax, the business-privilege tax, and transfer taxes. Real-estate tax revenue is based on the assessed property value of the District, which is currently $789 million. Since the 2011–12 school year, the assessed property value has decreased by $27.5 million, or 3.36%. At the current millage rate of 30.668, this amounts to an estimated $843,370 in lost revenue. The chart below illustrates this loss.

Another challenge is that the District’s student enrollment has been steadily increasing over the past eight years. By using student enrollment projections, including forecasting tools, the District follows enrollment changes very closely throughout the year. An increase or decrease in enrollment can affect class sizes, which will have an impact on staffing and District expenditures. The chart to the right displays the growth of the District’s enrollment overlaid with the decline of assessed property values.

The overall expenditures budgeted for fiscal year 2018–19, passed by the Board of School Directors on June 11, 2018, total $36,426,467. The largest expenses are personnel, which account for 71.43% of total budget expenditures; this was an increase of 0.79% over last year. The increase is a result of increases in salaries and wages, the employer contribution to the state retirement plan, and the cost of health insurance. The remaining 28.57% of budgeted expenditures are for supplies, student services, facilities, and debt-service payments (see pie graph at right).

State Funding

The total State funding that the Wyomissing Area School District receives is about 19.36% of the total budget. State funding is a combination of Basic Education Funding, Special Education Funding, Transportation Subsidy, and PSERS and Social Security Subsidy. The Wyomissing Area School District receives the lowest amount of Basic Education Funding when compared to the 17 other school districts located in Berks County. Even with the new Basic Education Funding Formula, which allocates all new money allocated to education by the Commonwealth in a fair funding formula that takes into consideration several different statistics, we are still lower than our peer school districts.

The graph to the right displays the disparity between basic education funding and total enrollment of 16 of the 18 school districts located in Berks County (the Reading Area School District and Boyertown Area School District were removed due to the amount of Basic Education Funding received).

Jazmine Moran works to find the correct math operation to complete the equation.