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PSEA Mission
We are members who promote, protect, and advocate for our schools, students, and professions.

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PSEA Mission
We are members who promote, protect, and advocate for our schools, students, and professions.
Bobblehead George

The pandemic-induced shift to virtual teaching caught many educators off guard. Not David Raymond, Mike Graham, and Eric Gimbi, though. The three middle-school teachers from the Northeastern York School District used the opportunity to grow their YouTube channel, Bobblehead George, into a powerhouse of online instruction that puts a fresh spin on history, science, and social studies.
We all know that there’s a substitute teacher shortage in Pennsylvania’s public schools.

But now there’s a new law that makes it easier to become a substitute teacher and support educators, schools, and students.

Do you know someone who has a bachelor’s degree?

Who has a teaching certificate but hasn’t taught in a while?

Who’s a college student and has completed at least 60 credits in a teacher preparation program?

Encourage them to go to www.psea.org/subswanted to learn how they can become substitute teachers.
Social emotional learning empowers students

Students with good social, emotional, and behavioral health are better able to learn in the classroom and be successful later in life.

We know this, and we must bellow it from the rooftops so that our elected leaders hear it loud and clear.

Meeting the mental health needs of students is an absolute necessity if we are going to address learning delays from the pandemic and set students on the path to academic success.

I was thrilled to join Julia Szarko, a PSEA member and the 2021 National School Psychologist of the Year, to discuss the mental health needs of our students during a recent episode of “Pennsylvania Newsmakers,” a weekly public affairs television show.

During the interview, Julia told host Terry Madonna that the mental health needs of students were already increasing well before the pandemic, and that schools are often the only place where students can receive mental health services, especially in rural areas.

This is one very important reason why we need to recruit and hire more school counselors, nurses, psychologists, and social workers. These professionals partner with educators and support staff to teach kids the soft skills they need to be successful in school and beyond.

The growth of social emotional learning programs is the direct result of this critical need. These programs focus on helping students understand their own thoughts and feelings as they interact with others.

Unfortunately, there is a lot of misunderstanding out there about what social emotional learning actually means for students.

As Julia explained it, social emotional learning is really about teaching kids how to understand and manage their own emotions and to understand how other people might think or feel about something. In the process, kids are better able to learn how to problem-solve and make responsible decisions.

And the truth is, this kind of skill-building is healthy for people of all ages.

Julia notes that these skills provide a strong foundation for learning, but it’s more than that.

“Students with better social, emotional, and behavioral health learn better,” she said. “It’s a direct correlation. And it transcends school into their future, into the workforce and their family life.”

Email Rich Askey: raskey@psea.org

Jobs at PSEA
For a list of all PSEA job vacancies, visit www.psea.org/jobs

Connect with PSEA
Do you want to learn about issues that matter to PSEA members? Share a great photo with your colleagues? Tell a story about how a student called you a hero? Join our community today and connect with members just like you.

@PennsylvaniaEA  @psea_org  @PSEA
Vote for pro-public education candidates in the primary election

Up and down the ballot, it is more important than ever to elect people who believe what PSEA members believe about public education and working people.

Here are some of the candidates running for key offices in the May 17 primary election.

Josh Shapiro
PACE’s Democratic recommended candidate for governor

Attorney General Josh Shapiro is PSEA-PACE’s recommended candidate in the Democratic gubernatorial primary. Shapiro has a long record of support for public education. And, when he met with PSEA members on the PSEA-PACE Board, it was clear that his priorities for public education lined up very well with PSEA’s goals.

Why PSEA-PACE recommends Josh Shapiro

✓ Opposes any cuts to school employees’ pension benefits.
✓ Supports increasing the state’s share of public education funding.
✓ Opposes tuition voucher schemes.

In an op-ed Shapiro published in newspapers across the state, he said this:

“When I’m governor, I will fully fund our schools and make our children’s mental health a priority. I will ensure that every school building in the Commonwealth has at least one mental health counselor and expand telemedicine options for mental health so that our kids can access help when they need it.”

For PSEA, Shapiro is exactly the kind of governor we need to support public education. That’s why we’ve recommended Josh Shapiro in the Democratic primary for governor.

No Republican candidates sought PSEA-PACE’s recommendation for governor

We invited every candidate in the Republican primary for governor to go through this process. Unfortunately, none of them agreed to do it. So, we were unable to consider a recommendation in the Republican primary for governor.
Austin Davis
PACE’s Democratic recommended candidate for lieutenant governor
Austin Davis is PSEA’s Democratic recommended candidate for lieutenant governor. A first-generation college graduate, Davis committed to a career in public service early in life, and was elected to the state House of Representatives in 2018. Like Josh Shapiro, he is a pro-public education candidate.

Why PSEA-PACE recommends Austin Davis
✓ Supports efforts to reduce the focus on standardized testing.
✓ Opposes tuition voucher schemes.
✓ Supports establishing a career pathway to help students enter the education profession.

PSEA-PACE decided not to make a recommendation for U.S. Senate
With the retirement of U.S. Sen. Pat Toomey, the campaign to fill this open seat will be one of the most contested, and most watched, in the nation.

Four candidates sought PSEA-PACE’s recommendation in this race, but PACE decided to not make a recommendation. Three of those candidates are still running. Here’s who they are:

Lt. Gov. John Fetterman
State Rep. Malcolm Kenyatta

No Republican candidates sought PSEA-PACE’s recommendation for U.S. Senate
Again, all the Republican candidates for U.S Senate were invited to go through the PACE recommendation process, but all of them declined.
Elections, district maps, and voting by mail

Elections are supposed to be about thoughtful voters making informed choices about which candidates for office best represent their priorities. Unfortunately, sometimes the political machinations that often surround how congressional and legislative district lines are drawn can lead to unnecessary confusion.

To try to keep this all straight, here’s a quick primer.

• Pennsylvania’s congressional districts were finalized on March 7.
  After some court challenges, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court adopted a new set of congressional maps. Some lawmakers appealed this decision to the U.S. Supreme Court, but the justices declined to hear the case. You can see the final congressional maps at www.redistricting.state.pa.us.

• Pennsylvania’s state legislative districts were finalized on March 16.
  On March 16, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court dismissed the last legal challenge to the legislative maps the bipartisan Legislative Reapportionment Commission adopted in February. You can see the final state legislative maps at www.redistricting.state.pa.us.

• Pennsylvania’s vote by mail law is still in effect.
  Some legislators who voted for Pennsylvania’s vote by mail law in 2019 have sued to have it struck down. The Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court, in a surprise ruling, ruled that the law is unconstitutional. But the Pennsylvania Supreme Court stayed that decision and heard arguments in the case on March 8. Right now, voting by mail is still alive and well.

www.PSEA.org/vote

Are you ready for the May primary election?

Visit www.psea.org/vote to access our Voter Toolkit, which has everything you need to help you elect pro-public education candidates running for office in your community.

Primary Election: May 17, 2022
Last Day to Register to Vote: May 2, 2022
Last Day to Request a Mail-in or Absentee Ballot: May 10, 2022
Gov. Wolf proposes ambitious school funding increases

On Feb. 8, Gov. Tom Wolf unveiled his proposed 2022-23 state budget. In his last budget address as governor, he proposed an ambitious $1.77 billion increase in basic education programs and an additional $291 million increase for higher education.

Gov. Wolf’s proposal is the first step in the state budget process.

Here’s a rundown of key funding increases in his plan:

### Pre-K to 12 education funding increases

- Basic education funding: $1.2 billion
- Level Up funding for 100 underfunded school districts: $300 million
- Special education funding: $200 million
- Pre-K Counts: $60 million
- Head Start Supplemental Program: $10 million

### Higher education funding increases

- Community Colleges: $14.9 million
- State System of Higher Education: $75 million
- Hunger-Free Campus Initiative: $1 million
- Nellie Bly Tuition Program: $200 million
About seven years ago, David Raymond, an eighth grade social studies teacher from the Northeastern York School District, started filming random cell phone videos and uploading them to YouTube. Fast-forward to today and his channel, Bobblehead George, has evolved into a slick, four-man operation that has allowed him and his two on-screen partners, science teacher Mike Graham and history teacher (slash former student) Eric Gimbi, to bridge the pandemic learning gap in style.

With the help of Raymond’s son, Alex, working as videographer and editor, the group takes kids on virtual field trips to explore American history landmarks, recreates historical recipes, and presents a smorgasbord of fun, original takes on history, science, and social studies curricula.

“The best thing is to be able to do something like this not just with my son, which is just amazing, but also with really good friends. Eric and Mike have become my best friends. The chemistry is fun, and we get along and we laugh, and we carry on, and all our jokes are bad, and it’s just great.”

Named after the collection of bobblehead presidential figurines that adorn Raymond’s classroom (of which George Washington was first), Bobblehead George consists of seven distinct playlists with names like “Periodic Presidents,” “A ‘Merica Moment with Mr. Raymond,” and a series Raymond and Graham started in 2018 called “Cooking with Lewis and Clark,” where they recreate recipes that the famous explorers would have made during their journey out West in 1804.

But the centerpiece of Bobblehead George, the series that put them on the historical map, as it were, is their virtual field trip concept born out of the pandemic called “Lessons on the Road.”

What began as a one-off virtual tour of Gettysburg after the pandemic canceled the school’s annual field trip there in 2020 quickly blossomed into a collection of increasingly elaborate and well-produced videos documenting key historical sites within a few-hour drive of south central PA.

“I think the biggest jump for us was going from the York County History Center to being invited to George Washington’s Mount Vernon,” said David Raymond. “We realized at that point that we had to be a little bit more serious about what we were doing, a bit more efficient.”

Stepping up their game

The three teachers credit David’s son, Alex, with taking the channel to the next level and giving it a professional polish. Alex was a junior at Kutztown University studying film
when the pandemic brought him back home and almost immediately into the Bobblehead George orbit.

“I noticed that they were making these videos with their cell phones, and I said, ‘Hey, I have a nice camera. Let me make them for you,’” said Alex. “It’s been cool to see the evolution of the quality of the videos as I teach them more stuff about filming and efficiency.”

“I’ve learned not to question Alex’s judgment,” said Graham. “Not that we did a lot, but in the beginning he’d say, ‘We’ll do this this way, and sit this way.’ And to me it felt unnatural. But when we look at the videos, he works his magic,
and it turns out fantastic.”

High production value aside, though, the videos wouldn’t work without the obvious passion and enthusiasm of the on-screen talent. It’s clear these three friends not only have a ton of fun creating these videos, but also genuinely enjoy teaching the material. And while it’s one thing to tell a classroom full of kids stories about George Washington’s famous exploits, it’s quite another to be standing in his house showing them the room where he shaved and dressed, the chair where he wrote his letters, and the bed where he died.

Opening minds and doors
“I can’t believe how welcoming people have been,” Ray-

mond said. “I never in my life thought that I would be walking around in my stocking feet in George Washington’s house at 10 o’clock at night. Or that they would let us into [James Buchanan’s] Wheatland and let us sit on the furniture. I just never envisioned having the access to the things I have.”

Raymond credits that access to two simple axioms that are worthy additions to any teacher’s repertoire: A) You never know what will happen if you just ask; and B) When you do something and you try really hard and you do it well, people respond in kind.

“This whole process has opened up all kinds of different avenues and connections that we never thought were possible,” he said.

David Raymond
Eighth grade social studies teacher

“This whole process has opened up all kinds of different avenues and connections that we never thought were possible.”

Eric Gimbi
Eighth grade history teacher
Onward and upward

This experience of the last two years has lit a fire under Raymond and company to keep generating new content to keep the channel fresh. As they check off boxes closer to home and the invitations to shoot come from further afield, however, their biggest concern is how they’ll continue to pay for it. Raymond reached out to the contacts they’ve made through the channel asking for advice on how to do this on their self-funded, shoestring budget.

Still, it’s a nice problem to have, Raymond said. And for now they’re just happy to have found a new and effective way to reach students, not just in their own classrooms but around the world.

“In history class we cover a lot of topics that, right off the bat, the students might not be interested in,” said Gimbi. “But if they watch a video on YouTube of us saying it, it seems to sink in a lot better for them.”

It has also earned the teachers minor celebrity status among the student body.

“My nickname is ‘the guy from the video,'” said Graham. “The students will come from Mr. Raymond’s class after watching all these videos and then come to my room and say, ‘Hey, it’s the guy from the video!’ And that’s a title I’ll take.”

“Our collaboration with Periodic Presidents came out of mutual admiration,” said David Raymond. “They send us their infographs, we make a video, and they put our videos on their website. And so, it’s just a neat way for us to give each other exposure.”
If you’re looking to earn Act 48 credits, Chapter 14 verification, or postgraduate credits this summer, look no further than PEARL, PSEA’s member exclusive online learning system with 95 courses and counting.

Here are just a few courses you have access to:

- Understanding Students and Trauma
- Formative Assessment Fun with Kahoot
- Time Management and Organization for Online Learning
- Assessment and Treatment of Anxiety
- Schoology in Practice: Essentials for Beginners, Intermediate, and Advanced
- Math at a Distance: Best Practices
- Trauma Informed Instruction
- Using HyperDocs for Learning
- Building and Maintaining a Humanized Classroom
- Understanding Students and Anger

Courses are always open so you can complete them in your spare time! Explore the full course list at pearl.psea.org.

pearl.psea.org
Meaningful work experience plays a significant role in obtaining valuable skills needed to get a job after graduation, but students with special needs do not have as many employment opportunities. Hatboro-Horsham School District has been changing the narrative for eight years through a vocational program that places students with special needs in real jobs.

“We place individualized education plan [IEP] students who may struggle looking for employment in school-based and community-based work experiences,” said Colleen Cram, transition and extended school year coordinator.

Cram took over the program in 2020 and rebranded it STRIVE (Striving to Reach Independence through Vocational Experience) to refocus and market the program’s goal.

“Our goal is to give students a chance to learn how to work so they can transfer those skills in the future. I want people to see the value in STRIVE and create a pool of work opportunities for our students to experience, so they can determine what career they might want.”

Helping students land the job

Hatboro-Horsham’s administration and 10 local businesses currently partner with STRIVE to employ the 40 students in the program. When it comes time to find the ideal position for each student, Cram carefully evaluates what type of work experience is the best fit.

Like a resume, a work plan is created that includes a student’s specific interests, skills, and goals before employment begins. Cram then places the student in a school-based or community-based work setting that matches their work plan and personality. If no current positions are the right fit, Cram contacts new businesses to grow STRIVE’s partner pool.

“Each student has a different work goal,” Cram said. “One student may have a social skill goal, while another student may have a goal related to technology skills. I wouldn’t place a student who has a goal to be a better communicator in an office job that requires a lot of time alone. We take the necessary time brainstorming the perfect placement.”

When it’s time to clock in, a job coach from the school is present on-site to provide support. Students employed in a school-based work setting fill positions in food services or the school district’s administration building filing, copying, and shredding documents. Positions in community-based settings vary and include restaurants, grocery stores, corporate offices, gas stations, and more.

Working through the pandemic

COVID-19 brought unforeseen circumstances for STRIVE as business partners shut down, displacing students from their scheduled hours. Cram knew how vital it was for students to reach their work goals, so she found a new way to keep them on the job.

“I reviewed the types of community-based work experiences students were finding helpful and enjoyable.” Cram said. “I came up with the idea to create various job simulations and kits at the high school.”

Cram created a restaurant job simulation and work kit to mimic restaurant staff positions, teaching students how to take food orders, handle money, and calculate change. She also created a grocery store job simulation and kit. People would act as grocery customers bringing boxes of items for students to weigh, stock, inventory, and bag.

“Our program was cut down for over a full year,” Cram said. “Students have found it easier to transition back to the real work environment because of the background knowledge they were given through the simulations. Continuing the program during the pandemic was probably one of the best things I’ve ever done for the students.”

Hard work pays off

More than 100 students have benefited from STRIVE through the years, preparing them for what it takes to be better workers, communicators, problem-solvers, listeners, and collaborators.

“A student working in a commu-
nity-based worksite recently found an error that could have cost the business $15,000 if it had gone overlooked,” Cram said. “But thanks to his hard work, it wasn’t. The employees love having our students on their team. This student even wants more responsibility and independence on the job.”

Members of the community have also taken notice of STRIVE’s workforce.

“Another student placed at a local gas station works at the coffee station and has become well-known to the coffee regulars,” Cram said. “One regular works nearby and gifted our student a winter jacket from his business to acknowledge the hard work he sees from the student.”

Although STRIVE’s initial goal is not for students to leave school with permanent employment, three students graduating at the end of the school year will stay on board as paid employees with their community-based employers.

“The students feel like they are part of the community. It makes you feel good that people can see the value in them,” Cram said. “They boost the morale and become an asset to the job. They feel wanted. It’s huge.”

STRIVE students gain hands-on job experience at their community-based employers.

Tell Voice about it

We all know there are many good things going on in our public schools. Teachers and support professionals are doing wonderful things, both in schools and in the community. Please pass along items to David Constantin at dconstantin@psea.org.
Putting students’ social emotional learning first

Mel Johnson remembers the moment her whole approach to teaching changed on a dime. It was about four years ago when the sixth-grade ELA teacher from the North Penn School District asked her students the standard “What do you want to be when you grow up?” question. It’s something she’d posed often during her two decades of teaching. This time, when a girl who struggled with anger and other emotional issues said she wanted to own a bakery one day, a lightbulb went off for Johnson.

“I said, ‘Well, you’re going to have a lot of customers. How do you plan on taking care of them? And what if you have a conflict with them?’ She was like, ‘Well, I don’t know. I haven’t thought about that.’

And at that moment I had my own shift in my thinking. I said, ‘You know what? I’m asking them the wrong question.’”

Johnson – who moonlights as a successful R&B singer/songwriter and has written hit songs for the likes of Mary J. Blige – came in the next day with a new question at the ready: “What kind of person will you be when you grow up?” she asked them.

“I said, ‘Are you going to be kind? Are you going to be compassionate? Will you be resilient? Will you have integrity? Will you back down from challenges or will you push through them? I need to know what kind of person you’re going to be.’”

After that, she said, something clicked for her students too. The girl who had struggled with emotional issues began to approach things differently.

“She started saying to me, ‘Mrs. Johnson, you know what? I think I’m going to start working on changing my attitude. I want to get better. I want to work on being nicer to people.’ I was like, ‘Got her. That was it. It was like the magical moment.’”

Planting the seed

Johnson didn’t know it at the time, but that interaction laid the foundation for a book aimed at asking children the right questions in a way that helps build and develop character.

“W. E. B. Du Bois has a quote that says, ‘Education must not simply teach work; it must teach life,’” Johnson said. “This is what we have to start teaching them – life lessons, not just math and science and social studies. All those things are wonderful, but what’s really going to sustain them in life is their character.

It’s an especially valuable skill as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We have to give them coping skills,” she said. “How do you get through challenges? How do you deal with the circumstances that life is going to bring you as a child and as an adult?”

The book

During the pandemic, Johnson started jotting down ideas hoping to create something tangible she could present to her students. “I decided I wanted it to be a 22-day mental detox,” Johnson said. “Why 22? No reason. It’s just that’s the number where I kind of stopped.”

Her graphic designer cousin helped her create a book cover, then she used Amazon’s publishing services to lay out and create the book herself, which she said was remarkably easy as a first-time author. By the end of October she had her first published book, “Quotes & Jokes: A Mental Detox for Tweens & Teens.”

The book is arranged so each page represents one day of the 22-day mental detox. It begins with a short inspirational quote Johnson wrote herself, followed by an applicable inspirational message or story, and then a self-reflective activity that can help kids apply the lesson to their own life.

This is what we have to start teaching them – life lessons, not just math and science and social studies. All those things are wonderful, but what’s really going to sustain them in life is their character.

The jokes are intentionally corny bits of comic relief she pulled from around the internet that are just there to put a smile on the reader’s face (Q: Why was the math book sad? A: Because it had too many problems). Based on the feedback so far, she said, the book seems to be working as intended.

“One of my students said it’s helped her with her anxiety. Another student says it’s made him more responsible. Another student said it really helps her with her emotions. She said, ‘If I’m having a bad day and I read one of the inspiring messages and then I read one of your corny jokes, then I’m in a better mood.’”

She’s even had adults say they bought it for their child and found it helped them too. She’s just happy to spread positivity to anyone who needs it. And really, these days especially, who doesn’t?
With federal funds, Erie and the United Way team up to expand community schools model

Recently, Pfeiffer-Burleigh Elementary School in Erie partnered with a local church to provide a brand-new pair of boots to every student in the school.

The idea was simple. Students need to stay warm and dry on their way to and from school to be in good health and be able to focus on their schoolwork rather than their soaking wet socks.

It is one of many ways that Pfeiffer-Burleigh, as a community school, is going beyond the classroom to meet the broader needs of students and remove barriers to learning.

“A community school becomes a hub where resources from the community are used to improve student success,” said Donna Wall, a teacher and member of the Erie City Education Association. “Programs are offered that focus on health and social services for students and family members that we can offer in school.”

The community schools model was brought to Erie in 2016 by the United Way of Erie County, which viewed it as a strategy to address the root causes of generational poverty.

Pfeiffer-Burleigh was an early adopter, and the district developed a long-term plan to introduce the initiative to every school in Erie over time.

Now, thanks to an influx of federal funding from the American Rescue Plan, the school district and the United Way have expanded the initiative to five additional schools this year. Once fully implemented, every student entering Erie High School will have graduated from a community school.

Culture shift

When a traditional public school is transformed into a community school, a culture shift takes place, according to the United Way. Resources are brought into the school building to address the specific barriers preventing economically disadvantaged students from being successful.

At Pfeiffer-Burleigh, a basic needs pantry was created to provide families with access to clothing, food, diapers, hygiene items, COVID-19 prevention supplies, school supplies, and winter wear. Mental health services have been strengthened, including creating a counseling space within the school to provide services to students and families.

Community schools also provide systems to address chronic absenteeism and improve student safety when traveling to school.

An investment in the community

In a statement at the start of the school year, the United Way said it “believes all students should have the opportunity to succeed in school, and therefore in life. This accelerated expansion of the community school model in the city of Erie will level the playing field for economically disadvantaged children, providing them the supports and resources to excel academically.”

Wall agrees, noting that the ultimate goal of the community schools initiative is to extend services and supports to the entire community.

As for the future of Pfeiffer-Burleigh, Wall is optimistic.

“As we continue to rise to the challenges of the pandemic, we will continue to support removing barriers to daily attendance for students and look for ongoing opportunities for increased parent and family involvement,” she said.
In May 2021, the PSEA House of Delegates overwhelmingly approved a New Business Item adopting the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion statement developed by the Racial Justice and Equity Task Force. The DEI statement will help sharpen the Association’s focus on our long-held beliefs about equity and inclusion, and anchor the work we have ahead of us.

We are currently conducting an equity audit to identify our strengths and weaknesses and provide recommendations to make our policies and practices more equitable and inclusive.

Read our full Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion statement at www.psea.org/DEI.

**Diversity**
ensures a variety of social and cultural identities are represented in our spaces.

**Equity**
promotes justice and fairness within our own procedures, processes, priorities, and resources.

**Inclusion**
creates respectful environments that embrace and foster full engagement of members from diverse backgrounds and identities.

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When the Redbank Valley School District cut all elementary art and music as well as K-12 library sciences programs recently, Kristen Landers felt compelled to do something about it.

As an elementary computer teacher, Landers incorporates many different subjects into her teaching – whether its art, STEM, math, or ELA activities. And as president of her local, Landers is heavily involved in issues that affect the district and in finding solutions to problems. She was on the front lines of the union’s three-and-a-half year run of negotiations that just recently resolved with a new contract. So, when the community voted to drop essential programs that would affect everyone in her school, she sprang into action.

During a PSEA wellness training event she learned about a $1,000 PSEA Education Foundation Book Drive Grant that supports reading outreach.

“They told me about it, and I said, ‘Oh my goodness, this would be so totally cool. I could buy a book for every kid in our school, K-5, with that grant!’” she said.

Landers ordered books through a company called First Book (firstbook.org). She invited local leaders, including New Bethlehem mayor Gordon Barrows – one of her former students – to share their favorite books with the community during Redbank Valley Reads, an event scheduled to take place a few days after this magazine’s publication date.

“It’s kind of like an open house,” Landers said. “The kids and their parents can pop in, and hear whatever stories or readers they want to hear. In our cafeteria, we’re going to have all the books set up. The kids can listen to stories, come in, pick the book that they want to take and have as their own, and stay for all of the reading. Or just stop in, pick up a book, and leave. Whatever they want to do.”

Landers hopes to continue this as an annual event. But for now, she’s just happy to contribute to her students’ continued enrichment any way she can. 

Lancaster EA member wins PSEA T-Shirt Design Contest

Congratulations to Bryan Hower, a member of the Lancaster City Education Association and the winner of PSEA’s 2021 T-Shirt Design Contest.

The contest, sponsored by the PSEA Communications Committee, asked members to imagine designs for a new member T-shirt. The committee reviewed all entries and selected three finalists. PSEA members then had the opportunity to vote online for their favorite design. Hower’s design was the top vote-getter.

“I am honored that my design was chosen by the PSEA members,” said Hower, who teaches computer science at J.P. McCaskey High School. “My design was inspired by my belief that PSEA is stronger when we work together for the common good of the students and teachers of Pennsylvania.”

The winning T-shirt is now available for purchase through the PSEAWear Online Store at www.psea.org/wear
Nominations for ESP of the Year

PSEA recognizes the hard work, dedication, and community service of education support professionals through the Dolores McCracken PSEA ESP Member of the Year Award.

Nominations are now being accepted for the award, which is presented to a PSEA member who demonstrates the many contributions ESPs make to public education and to the community. PSEA’s recipient is then nominated for the National Education Association ESP of the Year Award.

The annual award was renamed to honor Dolores McCracken, former PSEA president, who passed away in November 2018. McCracken was the first ESP member to serve as a state officer.

Please take time to consider all of the outstanding ESPs you know. A nominee must have been a PSEA member for at least three years as of September 2022. Any PSEA member in good standing, any PSEA local, or the ESP Executive Board can make a nomination for the award.

Nominations should be submitted to Candace Kuba at ckuba@psea.org, or mailed to her attention at PSEA, 400 N. Third St., Harrisburg PA, 17101. They should be postmarked no later than Sept. 13. For nomination forms, contact your division or region president, or visit www.psea.org/espoftheyear.

America’s parents believe educators are doing excellent work!

A recent national survey of public school parents from Hart Research Associates and Lake Research Partners has yielded some very positive numbers.

72% of parents say their children’s public schools are “excellent” or “good”

78% of parents say their children’s teachers are “excellent” or “good”

80% of parents say their children’s teachers have made an extra effort to help students during the pandemic

Congratulations! And thank you for everything you do!
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“A membership in PSEA-Retired ensures retirees’ continued involvement in public education and also provides an avenue to advocate for issues affecting retirees. Plus, you get great benefits. I hope every retiring PSEA member joins us.”

– Mary Moran, PSEA-Retired president.

For more information, visit www.psea.org/retired.
Every day, Pennsylvania’s nurses are on the front lines of our health care system, delivering high-quality patient care.

May 6-12 is National Nurses Week, an opportunity for all of us to thank them for what they do.

PSEA is proud to represent nurses in HealthCare-PSEA as well as our school nurses. So, join us to celebrate National Nurses Day on May 6 and National School Nurse Day on May 11.

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Gettysburg in person returns

There is no better opportunity for PSEA members to hone their leadership skills than the annual Gettysburg Summer Leadership Conference, July 24-29.

Training is offered on engagement organizing, negotiations, grievances, building local capacity, communications, leadership, government relations, and professional issues.

Registration and more information at www.psea.org/gettysburg

How your dues dollars are allocated

PSEA operates as a careful and responsible steward of the dues members pay. Member dues fund the PSEA operations that support the Association’s mission to promote, protect, and advocate for our schools, students, and professions.

The largest single percentage of PSEA’s annual budget, 56 percent, goes to support direct services to PSEA members and their local associations. This work helps to secure the salaries, benefits, working conditions, and respect that every PSEA member deserves.

Breaking down your dues

- Direct Services to Members and Locals, 56%
- Education Services/Professional Development, 2%
- Administrative and Business Operations, 20%
- Government Relations and Legislative Advocacy, 4%
- Member Participation and Leadership, 8%
- Information Technology, 6%
- Communications and Public Relations, 4%
In March, PSEA was proud to celebrate Women’s History Month by recognizing amazing women who have made PSEA a stronger Association and who have improved public education for their students and for PSEA members. In case you missed it, here are some of the incredible women we profiled.

**Dolores McCracken** (1953-2018)

Dolores McCracken, a tireless advocate for students and PSEA members, made history as the first education support professional to serve as PSEA president.

**Delores “Dee” Scales**

As a PSEA leader, community activist, borough council member, and Woodland Hills School District paraprofessional for the past 26 years, it’s no wonder that Dee Scales is PSEA’s Education Support Professional of the Year.

**Elizabeth Raff**

“I see the work that you are doing. I see how you are taking moments to place joy and excitement in the heart of your classrooms.” Elizabeth Raff, an English language arts and social studies teacher in Penn Manor School District, is Pennsylvania’s 2022 Teacher of the Year.

**Korri Brown** (1977-2019)

A strong voice for her students and PSEA members, Korri Brown spent her life serving others as a teacher, local and region leader, and PSEA vice president.

**Dawn Bandle**

Dawn Bandle, known as the “voice of ESP members,” served as PSEA’s region president for education support professionals for a remarkable 24 years.
What would you do if a colleague’s young child needed a bone marrow transplant to live? For the members of Pine-Richland EA, the choice was easy: whatever it takes.

Last October, school psychologist Missy Ramirez’s six-year-old son, Jax, was diagnosed with an extremely rare autoimmune disease called IPEX syndrome. Without a bone marrow transplant, the prognosis for the illness is grim. Finding the right genetic match, however, can be difficult, especially in Jax’s case. “The unique thing about Jax is that he is of Mexican, German, and Irish descent, and so his HLA typing is very rare,” said June DiGioia, a special education teacher at Pine-Richland High School and a longtime friend and colleague of Ramirez. “So that’s why we’re almost panicked to get the word out because the chance of him having a successful match is slim. A perfect donor is slim.”

Beth Sipe, who also teaches special education at the high school, is the building rep for the EA. She was thrilled to see her fellow union brothers and sisters spring into action when word of the Ramirez family’s plight got out. They hosted fundraisers and donor solicitation events, raised awareness on social and local media, and rallied others to do the same. “The priority is to find a match for this six-year-old boy and then help raise funds and bring awareness to the need for BeTheMatch.org, which the family has partnered with to find a match,” Sipe said.

DiGioia and Sipe said they’re hoping to raise enough funds to support Ramirez as she’ll have to miss months of work during Jax’s recovery. While the pandemic slowed down their ability to host in-person events, BeTheMatch.org is a national registry so anyone between 18 and 40 in good health can order a swab kit at any time and check if they’re a match for Jax. Just be sure to return the kit. While more than 1,000 have been ordered through Jax’s link, BeTheMatch.org reports that only 40 percent of kits ordered are ever returned.

As the date for the transplant gets closer, which the family is hoping will be later this spring, BeTheMatch.org will start to check for a match frequently. “We want to do whatever we can do to help because we are a family and we need to take care of each other,” Sipe said. “When everything is said and done, we need to be there for each other.”

Learn more or sign up to become a donor
Go to www.facebook.com/bethematchforjax, sign up to become a donor at https://my.bethematch.org/jax, or text “jax” to 61474.
COVID-19 funding to transform rural district’s tech ed program

Ever imagined what you would do with a huge infusion of cash into your classroom? How about a cool $1 million? That fantasy just became reality for two tech ed teachers at the STEM General/CNC lab at Line Mountain High School in the small, rural Line Mountain School District.

When the district announced plans to invest $1 million in COVID-19 relief funding to expand its STEM programming, the high school’s two technology education instructors, Jared Haas and Joe Kahl, were floored.

“To say we were shocked would be an understatement,” said Kahl. “I mean, we were blown away by the offer. The rest of the school is receiving additional funding as well. I know in the science department, they’re getting some new stuff, and some different departments are looking into new equipment too.”

Haas and Kahl had already received an additional room two years ago during an earlier district-wide push for more STEM instruction that was supported by a $10,000 Bayer Fund Grant and the school’s booster organization.

“They’ve been wanting to expand the STEM area a little bit more, and there’s actually a gentleman in our school that’s retiring at the end of this year who teaches an elective. And instead of looking for someone in that area, they decided to expand tech ed so they could incorporate more of the STEM program throughout the building,” said Kahl.

But $1 million is a game-changer for any program.
**A new lab and another hire**

The district estimates that about $400,000 of the funding, which was distributed to Line Mountain through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) program, will go toward new equipment, while the renovations will cost around $600,000. But the district is also planning on hiring a third tech ed instructor for the long haul.

“They just came to us and asked what a three-person tech ed program could look like,” Haas explained. “We currently teach 12 different courses between the two of us. So, in a six-period day, there’s not a lot of time for duplicate classes. Sometimes some of our courses are difficult for kids to enroll in.”

A third instructor could ease Haas’ and Kahl’s burden while also reducing class sizes and giving the students more opportunities to take the classes they want. Plus, the amount of new equipment they’ll be getting takes their program to a whole new level and pretty much requires another set of hands.

In addition to upgrades to existing programs, the funds will allow the department to expand into entirely new fields, like engineering, plastics and polymers, green energy, 3D modeling, automated manufacturing, and robotics, which will also familiarize students with computer coding principles. They’ll convert a maintenance storage room adjacent to their current space to help house the dozen or so new machines they’ll be getting.

**Involving students in the planning**

For Kahl and Haas, the planning process for the expansion was another opportunity to give students some hands-on experience. They had the students begin by measuring the outside and inside of the building to determine total square footage, then they got to work mapping out what equipment they wanted and determining what would fit in that space.

“We actually had several of the kids draw up the machines in CAD software because, believe it or not, the machines that we are looking into are not in a residential architectural software program,” Haas said. “All the machines had to be brought in piece by piece and then imported into the program so we could have an actual visual of what it would look like in that space. It was a pretty neat experience for the kids.”

The tech ed program at Line Mountain has become something of a pillar in the community. Each Tuesday and Wednesday kids can stop by after school for three hours of open lab where they catch up on missed work or just tinker around.

“We have several kids who rarely miss a day after school,” said Haas. “We have a lot of kids who don’t play sports, they’re not in the band, things like that. So, this is kind of their sport.”

The project is expected to start in June with the goal of having the classroom up and running by the 2023-24 school year.

“As far as the opportunities that the kids are going to have, it’s definitely going to be unique,” said Kahl. “Ultimately it’s our goal to continue growing our program and creating an environment that the kids wouldn’t be able to get anywhere else.”

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(left to right) Sophomores Talan Cortelyou, Casey Keiter, Soren Derck, and Jordan Foulds, junior Lois Bijl, and sophomore Paden Swinehart work at various stations in the tech ed lab. Cortelyou, Derck, Foulds, and Bijl were all actively involved in the design for the new classroom.
Students in several high schools across Bucks and Montgomery counties had their art displayed at Montgomery County Community College from Feb. 27 to March 25. The Touch the Future art show, which is celebrating its 35th consecutive year, was in person again after the pandemic made that impossible last year. It featured the works of 287 students from 24 local high schools.

“Coming out of COVID, we weren’t sure what the participation was going to be, but it’s a credit to the 80-plus teachers at the 24 different high schools who stepped up,” said Director Mike Werner, who teaches computer animation at North Penn High School in Lansdale. “The opening did not disappoint. The venue was terrific, and it was very, very well attended.”

“Touch the Future” is a tribute to a quote by Christa McAuliffe, the first teacher in space who perished aboard the space shuttle Challenger. “I touch the future. I teach,” McAuliffe said.

The show is sponsored by PSEA’s Mideastern Region and the Council for the Advancement of Public Schools. Here is a sampling of the winning entries:
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