

FALL/WINTER 2019

inTOUCH

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION FROM OTTAWA HILLS LOCAL SCHOOLS



in THIS ISSUE

- Superintendent's Letter 1
- Meeting Our Mission 2
- Green Bears On The Go 3
- Teacher Feature 4
- District Download 5
- Upcoming Events 6



Students and chaperones in Italy
November 2018

From the Superintendent's Desk

Agora 2018 is now a memory for our staff and students, but the memories have a depth and permanence that are difficult to duplicate. Agora is a longstanding tradition at Ottawa Hills High School. Named for the Greek marketplace where people would meet to exchange goods and ideas, Agora has always existed to provide a forum for students to experience ideas outside the traditional classroom. During the week of Agora (November 12-16), bells are turned off, the concept of the classroom disappears, students become teachers, teachers become students, and many amazing and inspiring things take place.

Agora literally opens up the world for OH students. Nothing exemplifies that more than the opportunities juniors and seniors are given to travel abroad. This year's trips included adventures in Italy, Spain, France, Germany/Switzerland, and Costa Rica.

Students who stayed on campus for Agora took part in one of 15 workshops. A sampling of the offerings included: "The Climb," which taught basic mountain-climbing skills; "Forever Home," which combined marketing skills with service to the Toledo Area Humane Society; and "Project Playhouse," where students built playhouses for distribution by Habitat for Humanity. While most workshops featured common elements such as field trips, artists-in-residence, hands-on collaborative projects, and community service, each was unique and designed to appeal to a variety of students' interests and passions.

As you can imagine, Agora is a tremendous undertaking that is only possible because of continued community support. Major financial supporters of this year's Agora were the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation and the Ottawa Hills Schools Parent Association.

Agora is an educational tradition unique to our district. This innovative event helps to make our district's vision a reality: "Ottawa Hills Schools will be the school of choice by providing innovative learning experiences that have an enduring impact on each child."

Yours in Education,
Dr. Kevin S. Miller, Superintendent



FOUR OF A KIND FOR OH!

Ottawa Hills Local Schools received all A's on the 2018 Ohio Department of Education's Local Report Card for a fourth consecutive year – a recognition earned and shared by thousands of students, parents, faculty, staff, and community members. *Ottawa Hills is the only Ohio district (from more than 600 reviewed) to receive the grade of "A" in all six categories for four consecutive years.* The categories in which data are collected and measured are Achievement, Gap Closing, K-2 Literacy, Progress, Graduation Rate, and Prepared for Success. The Ohio Department of Education issues the results of its Local Report Card annually each fall. ■

Our Mission:

In partnership with our community, Ottawa Hills Local Schools will challenge and inspire each student to realize his or her unique potential; to embrace learning as a lifelong process; and to become an active, responsible citizen.



LIFELONG LEARNER

Matthew VanTine ('76)

- Harvard College, AB. Cum laude 1980
- Boston University School of Law, JD. Magna cum laude 1983
- Boston University Law Review: staff 1981-82, executive editor 1982-83
- Law clerk to federal district court judge in Rhode Island; attorney – large law firms in Boston and Chicago; assistant corporation counsel, City of Chicago Department of Law; attorney – boutique litigation firms in Chicago

"My experiences as a parent have made me appreciate OHHS all the more. The quality of instruction, opportunities, and individual attention I received at Ottawa Hills are comparable to elite private schools here in Chicago. Ottawa Hills gave me the tools and self-confidence to succeed in college and law school."

meeting our MISSION

UNIQUE POTENTIAL

With invention, Sam Julius climbs the 'ladder' of success

What do you need to fix a ladder? At Ottawa Hills, just a second grader and 3D printer. Well, not any second grader. Someone with creativity and persistence. Someone like Sam Julius.

By using 3D software to design and the school's new 3D printer to create, Sam succeeded where other students (and adults) had not. "It's satisfying to watch something print," said Sam, whose inspirations include the famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

The challenge: Repair the ladder used in the elementary school library. The ladder is extra sturdy and has hand rails to make it safer for students to climb. But over time, the caps protecting the end of its four legs wore away and broke off. The ladder was no longer easy to move and it was damaging the carpet.

Rebecca McLean, the building's librarian, designed and printed a solution. But after her first prototype, she came up with a better idea: present the repair challenge to elementary school students. "Rather than tweak my design, I thought it would be cool to have the kids improve upon it," she said.

With the help of his mom Carrie, Sam dove into the challenge. He watched how-to videos, taught himself how to use the 3D software, and noodled through ideas. He used Tinkercad, a kid-friendly application, available free on his school-issued Chromebook.

His first prototype was too rectangular and small; the second a bit closer but still not the answer. On his third attempt, he had the solution. The successful piece fit more like a cap, instead of being inserted into the ladder's leg. And he curved the edges to allow the ladder to drag more efficiently across carpet. "He's just a lover of science and inquiry," said Mrs. McLean.



Sam spent about five hours on various designs. "I just never gave up," he said. For his efforts, he gets a free book from the district. A budding architect, Sam has designed model homes using Tinkercad and created custom birthday presents using the 3D printer.

Sam's workshop to solve the challenge was Makerspace, a technology and crafting area inside the elementary library. Long a dream of Mrs. McLean, Makerspace opened this fall after village resident and parent Praveen Tamirisa, through Promedica, donated \$2,500 to make it a reality. Mrs. McLean's funding proposal, co-written with computing teacher SueAnn Peete, described the equipment needed and how the space and tools would be used. With the money, she purchased snap circuitry (youth-friendly devices that teach electronics), two workbenches, a drone – and the 3D printer. She also purchased shelves, supplies, and storage kits. ■

ACTIVE CITIZENS

Elementary school students and their families contributed nearly 1,000 cans of food and other non-perishable food items to a local church and its food pantry this fall. The beneficiary of the annual fund drive is Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church on Hill Avenue. All grades in the school participated; when the cans were counted, girls had outraised the boys, 487-470.



Green Bears ON THE GO!



The Ohio Academy of Science selected 61 Ohio schools and 672 teachers to receive The Governor's Thomas Edison Award for Excellence in STEM Education and Student Research for accomplishments in 2017-2018. Congratulations to these OH teachers: Tim Adkins, Gerry Davis, Patty Dowd, Diane Drabek, Daniel Feuerstein, Paul Genzman, Mary Kate Hafemann, Joan Keckler, Michael Leeds, Jeremy Nixon, Liz Puskala, Nicole Silvers, and Tony Torio. Our Junior/Senior High School has received this award six times in the last seven years.

The elementary school fifth-grade classes proudly hosted their Fifth Annual Veterans Day Program. The program featured songs and poetry, as well as student artwork. This year's keynote speaker was Glenn Cousino (right), a Northwest Ohio resident and Korean War veteran. Guests and veterans were greeted outside by a banner that read "Welcome Veterans!" and inside by flag-waving students as they made their way through the building to the assembly.



Congratulations to our teams and athletes from fall sports. Varsity teams winning Toledo Area Athletic Conference (TAAC) titles were boys' and girls' cross-country (girls advanced to regionals); boys' golf (finished fifth in the state); boys' soccer; and girls' soccer (girls won first state tournament game in school history). Junior high teams winning TAAC crowns were football and eighth-grade volleyball.



Bravo to the cast and crew of *Next to Normal* for their outstanding production this fall. In addition to incredibly moving acting and singing, the performance raised awareness about mental health issues surrounding grief, anxiety, and drug abuse, and the impact these issues have on families. The theater department partnered with OH21, local radio host Eric Chase, the Lucas County Suicide Prevention Coalition, and the Toledo chapter of NAMI to provide resources and support materials for audience members. (photo by *Village Voice of Ottawa Hills*)



To encourage non-Village residents to enroll in our district as tuition students, Ottawa Hills hosted its first "Student Shadow Day" this fall. The half-day event was open to current fourth through 11th graders and their families. Attendees met teachers, students, and administrators; learned about curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities; toured facilities; and were treated to an informational luncheon.

Pickering Lee

Celebrating 50 years of teaching Chinese to local students

Chinese language teacher Pickering Lee is celebrating 50 years as a northwest Ohio educator. And it started by chance in a mailroom at Columbia University.

Underemployed with two college degrees, Mr. Lee found himself in 1968 sorting and delivering mail at the New York-based Ivy League school. One day, he overheard a professor talking about an open job for a Chinese language instructor in Toledo, Ohio.

"I introduced myself and asked about the position," Mr. Lee recalled. "He said, 'Do you have a master's degree?' I said, 'I do.' He said, 'Do you have a linguistics degree?' I said, 'I do.'"

Mr. Lee applied for and was offered the position at DeVilbiss High School in the Toledo Public Schools (TPS) district. A Chinese-Russian Study Center – the first of its kind in Ohio – had been established at DeVilbiss through a federal grant. The position made him the second Chinese language instructor in the state. "I remember flying into the area and looking out the window," Mr. Lee said. "From the sky, Toledo looked like a jungle."

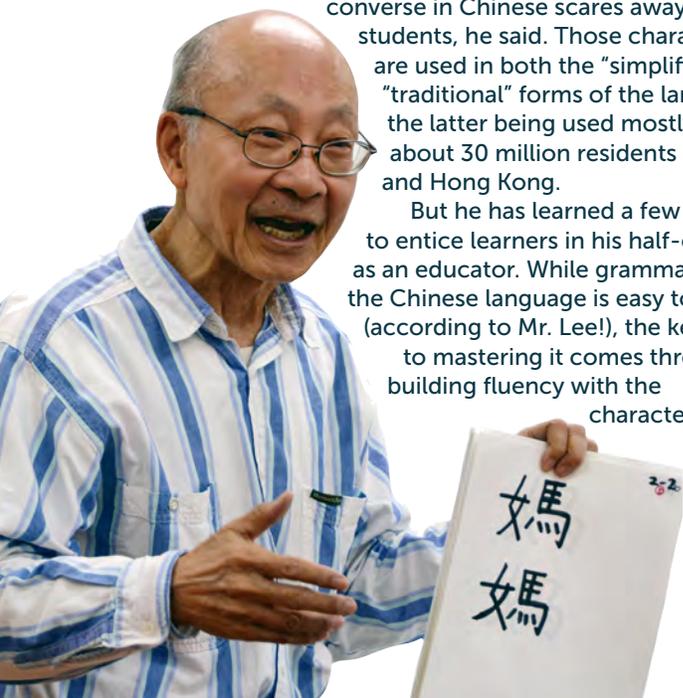
Fifty years later, he has not left the area nor retired from teaching. And he wonders if he ever will – or can. "For the last five years, I've said I was going to retire," said Mr. Lee, who turns 78 in March 2019. "My colleagues don't believe what I say now."

"I'm just afraid of retirement. I don't have many hobbies," he said. "I don't know what I would do."

He joined Ottawa Hills Local Schools in the fall of 2009 and has taught part time here ever since. Nearly all his students are in high school, although junior high students can be admitted with special permission. He offers four sections (Chinese I, II, III and IV); currently, 14 students are enrolled. In the past decade, he has seen enrollment rise and fall, with as many as 36 students.

Learning the 3,000-plus characters needed to read and converse in Chinese scares away many students, he said. Those characters are used in both the "simplified" and "traditional" forms of the language; the latter being used mostly by about 30 million residents in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

But he has learned a few tricks to entice learners in his half-century as an educator. While grammatically the Chinese language is easy to use (according to Mr. Lee!), the key to mastering it comes through building fluency with the characters.



Mr. Lee works with students on "character" development.

The more students know about the unusual meanings behind the hash marks and shapes that comprise the character, the quicker they comprehend.

"Learning the characters and tones are both hard," said Andrew Helgren, a sophomore in Mr. Lee's Chinese II course. "But he teaches the stories behind the characters, which makes it easier to learn." Added senior Bella Iorio: "The characters make the language more fun."

Mr. Lee was born in Japanese-controlled Taiwan in 1941 as Lee Changshou (first and last names are switched in Chinese). Changshou means "long life." But upon his arrival at graduate school in the United States, non-native speakers often mispronounced his name. The word they spoke instead roughly translated to "beast." Being called "Beast Lee" became a running joke among his fellow students at Kansas State University (KSU), from which he eventually earned his master's degree in linguistics. (He earned an undergraduate degree in Taiwan.)

One day in drama class at KSU, students were reading lines from the stage play "My Fair Lady." That story contains a character named Colonel Pickering who, like Mr. Lee, is a linguist. After some back-and-forth teasing regarding their friend the "beast," the group decided upon a new name for him: Pickering. The name stuck.

Years later, he legally changed his name in the United States to Pickering Lee. Home in Taiwan, he is still Lee Changshou. (He is a dual citizen of the United States and Taiwan.)

He taught at TPS from 1968 to 2003 as a Chinese language and history teacher. Since 2002, he has taught Chinese at the University of Toledo. And he taught one year at St. Ursula Academy before coming to Ottawa Hills.

Whatever comes next, the classroom remains his passion. "Teaching makes me happy," he said. "I just love the kids here. I want to teach another 50 years." ■

DISTRICT DOWNLOAD

Financial Forecasting

District looks ahead to 2023 to prepare for the future

Financing 101

Information about district finances can always be found on the district website. Click on the "About" tab at the top of the home page and select "Treasurer" on the pull-down menu. Documents related to district financing can be found on the right-hand side of the page. URL: ottawahillsschools.org

Sign of the times

While it's not exactly Times Square, a new digital sign is on and flashing outside the Junior/Senior High School. The money for the sign and reconstruction of its masonry came from the district's Permanent Improvement Fund. That fund is used for items that cost more than \$1,000 and have a lifespan of at least five years. The sign replaces a decades-old structure that featured plastic letters and numbers slid manually into place. Messages are now controlled electronically. The Class of 1967 built the original sign as a fundraising project.



Do you and your family create a household budget looking ahead for the next five years? Do you do such planning twice a year?

If you are a public school system in the state of Ohio, the answer to both questions is yes.

To comply with Ohio law, Ottawa Hills Local Schools compiles and presents its annual "Five-Year Financial Forecast" to the Board of Education. The forecast presented in October covers the fiscal years 2019 through 2023. (The district's fiscal year begins July 1; therefore, we are in the 2019 fiscal year.)

In summary, the district is projecting revenue to total \$14.9 million this year, rising to \$15.8 million by 2023. Expenses are projected to be \$15.7 million this year, rising to \$18.3 million in 2023. Cash balances available on June 30 of each year are projected to drop from \$7.7 million this year to \$1.2 million in 2023.

Treasurer Bradley Browne presented the information during the board's monthly meeting. "The intent is to provide the district's financial trend over time and a roadmap for decisions aimed at encouraging financial sustainability and stability," Mr. Browne said. The report is created by his office and the process will be repeated again in May.

The state Department of Education requires the forecast and uses the results to help school districts accomplish a big goal: better engaging local boards of education and voters in long-range planning and budget discussions. The forecasts also help the state identify districts with potential financial problems so corrective actions can be taken.

The Ottawa Hills forecast was created using historical spending and revenue trends and currently known factors.

That data was placed into formulas that "predict" future budgets.

The variables used in those calculations – such as how much state aid is coming – can change multiple times throughout the course of a forecast. And while ongoing cash-flow monitoring helps to identify unexpected differences



between revenue and expenses, no data or formula can guarantee results with precision and absoluteness.

Last year (FY 2018), district revenue exceeded expenses. But this year (FY 2019), expenses are expected to exceed revenue – and do so for the next five years. To offset that operating loss, the district expects to use some of its carryover-cash balance.

Fiscal year 2016 was the last in a five-year stretch where revenue exceeded expenses. That period came after a four-year stretch (fiscal years 2008-2011) where expenses exceeded revenue. (Expenses again exceeded revenue in fiscal year 2017.) Such is the nature of predicting income and expenses, which is why school districts are encouraged to carry cash balances much larger than what households tend to set aside.

The forecast covered revenue in eight categories, including property taxes and state funding; and expenses in eight categories, including salaries and benefits.

Since the early 1970s, Ottawa Hills has asked voters to approved operating levies usually once every three years. The last operating levy was presented and approved in 2013. The five-year forecast projects that the district would not have to consider an operating levy request until about 2020. ■



Ottawa Hills Local Schools

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2019 Stage Shows

Beauty and the Beast

Feb. 8-10, 2019 | Rated G

The classic story of Belle, a young woman in a provincial town, and the Beast, who is really a young prince trapped under the spell of an enchantress. The Broadway show ran 13 years and received nine Tony Awards, including Best Musical.

Newsies

April 26-28, 2019 | Rated PG

Newsies is the rousing tale of Jack Kelly, a charismatic newsboy and leader of a band of teenaged "newsies." Based on the 1992 motion picture and inspired by a true story. Packed with non-stop thrills and a timeless message.

Join the fun. Become a member of the Ottawa Hills Music & Theatre Association today!

Upcoming events:

FEB. 9, 2019: The Board of Education is honoring two decades of success by teacher, coach, and mentor John Lindsay by naming the district's main basketball court in his honor.

The board's decision honored a request by Pete and Amy Kadens, two Ottawa Hills alumni who recently made a generous donation to the Ottawa Hills Schools Foundation. The Kadens requested the court be renamed as a tribute to Mr. Lindsay for the impact he had on Mr. Kadens' life. The dedication ceremony of the "John Lindsay Court" begins at noon at the high school gym.



April 12, 2019: All Village of Ottawa Hills residents are invited to attend the Legacy Luncheon to celebrate the community's support of our students and schools.

The free event gives students and staff the opportunity to honor Village residents for establishing and supporting a legacy of excellence in our district. The meal and entertainment are on us. Look for more information this spring.