



# Eye of the Tiger

District 879 Newsletter February-March 2020

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## Dates to remember

### February

19.....Two-hour late start  
24.....HS conferences, 4-8 p.m.  
24.....School board mtg., 5:45 p.m.  
25.....Grade 4 concert, 7 p.m.  
27.....Grade 2 concert, 7 p.m.  
29.....Leap Day

### March

2.....HS band concert, 7 p.m.  
3.....End of ES 2nd Trimester  
3.....K Round-Up, 5:30 p.m.  
5.....Delano Jazz Festival  
5.....K Round-Up, 5:30 p.m.  
9-13.....Spring break, no school  
16.....School board listening session, 7 p.m.  
17.....ES PIE meeting, 7 p.m.  
18.....Two-hour late start  
23.....School board mtg., 5:45 p.m.  
28.....Tiger Fun Fair, 12-4 p.m.  
31.....Take Note Concert, 6 p.m.



See Page 3 for info about artists visiting at DES in recent weeks.

## Koets is Teacher of the Year



DHS band teacher Jason Koets, shown here playing tuba with the pep band, is the Teacher of the Year.

By Paul Downer  
Communications Coordinator

Pursing his passion for music has led Jason Koets to a career that perfectly harmonizes his interests and aptitudes.

In recognition of the Delano High School band director's outstanding work with students, his fellow faculty members have named Koets the Delano Public Schools 2019-20 Teacher of the Year.

Koets said he greatly appreciates the respect of his peers across the district, but that the honor is ultimately a reflection on his pupils and the other teachers who have given them the skills needed to succeed as musicians.

"Winning this award lets me know that there are people who see what I'm doing and what the music department is doing, which feels good," Koets said. "But I can't take all the credit for what the students are doing, because there are teachers out there who taught kids how to count and deal with fractions, and other music teachers who taught them to read the rhythms and the pitches and all the things we deal with in music. There are speech pathologists who have worked with some kids so they can make the proper 'T' sound in their instruments. So it's really a collaborative effort here."

### Choosing music

After 22 years as a band director, including the last 15 in Delano where Koets has taught students from fifth grade

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## Flex learning days on the horizon

By Matthew Schoen  
Superintendent

We are already in the process of preparing for the 2020-21 school year, and I would like to share some updates that will affect the school calendar.

During this school year a task force has undertaken the job of preparing for the possibility of

holding flex learning days next school year. These days would be implemented in lieu of make-up days due to cancellations for weather or other situations.

For example, instead of cancelling a school day and making it up either during a break or at the end

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# Help for hearts

DHS celebrated Heart Week Feb. 10-13, and along with a variety of fun activities and dress-up days, one feature was the annual blood drive. A total of 89 students volunteered to donate blood, and 68 total units were collected. 'It's important because blood banks are low right now,' said junior Gretchen Barta, who helped organize the event.



## Koets

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through 12th grade, it might be difficult to imagine him doing anything else. But teaching was not part of Koets' original plan.

After his 1991 graduation from high school in Pipestone, where he played the tuba and was a three-sport athlete in football, wrestling and tennis, Koets set course for Bemidji State University and its industrial tech program.

Midway through his sopho-

more year of college, however, it became clear to Koets that he needed to change directions.

"Music was just my thing," he said. "I realized that I wasn't in the shop room as much as I should have been. Instead, I was performing with all these small ensembles and with the band in the music department. That's when I sort of realized it was a switch I needed to make."

Over the years Koets has honed his teaching approach to emphasize skills in his students that apply to studying for other subjects, and will eventually

translate to the workplace.

"The process matters more than the product," he said.

"I decided that I needed to teach students not just about music, but about practice and the process of learning. That's really where what I do in the classroom means just as much as what students do in math or English or science or any of the other subjects that are tested."

Since music is not tested by the state in the same way other subjects are, how does Koets articulate the value of a musical education?

He said the question applies more broadly to all humanities and arts courses.

"I can tell you that there are students who are better off in life because they are taking music classes or theater or whatever it might be," Koets said. "I don't necessarily have data to prove it, but we all know that's the case."

• *This is an abridged version of a full feature on Koets, which is available on the district website at [www.delano.k12.mn.us](http://www.delano.k12.mn.us).*

## Schoen

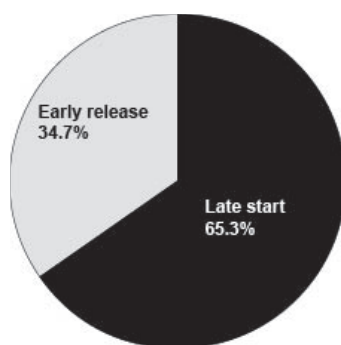
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of the school year, the district would facilitate what the state calls an "e-learning day."

These days count as regular instructional days, but are directed remotely from home. Current Minnesota statute allows districts to facilitate up to five e-learning days in a school year.

Delano calls these "flex learning days" due to the fact that not all learning activities at all grade levels will be conducted digitally.

Currently, the task force is in the process of researching, designing and developing alternate learning activities for flex learning days.



**The district received 827 responses to its survey regarding late starts or early releases. Of that total, 540 voted for late start and 287 voted for early releases on the third Wednesday.**

More information will be coming, with a complete roll-out of the program at the beginning of the 2020-21

school year to the entire parent community.

The time frame for the remainder of this school year includes completing all learning activities and establishing appropriate expectations for students, staff and parents. The school board will receive completed information regarding flex learning days at its April work session, and is scheduled to take action to implement the new program in May.

### Late Labor Day

In addition to incorporating flex learning days, the calendar committee has decided to map out a school calendar that starts after Labor Day on Sept. 7, 2020.

We do not have permission from the state to start before

Labor Day, and the district would like to establish a calendar for our staff, students and parents so they can plan appropriately. A board-approved calendar will be available after the March school board meeting.

In addition, the district has surveyed both our staff and parent community to see whether two-hour late starts or early releases are preferred on the third Wednesday each month for professional development purposes.

The results are in, and 65 percent of respondents favor a late start, while 35 percent preferred an early release. This information will be shared with the calendar committee and the school board as those groups develop the 2020-21 school calendar.

# Elementary hosts author, opera singers

**By Paul Downer**  
Communications Coordinator

Students at Delano Elementary School have had the opportunity to learn from a pair of unique visitors in recent weeks.

Thanks to two artist-in-residence programs, they have enjoyed an introduction to opera and some tips on the process of writing and illustrating books.

## *Intro to opera*

Minnesota Opera singer and teaching artist Pablo Siqueiros visited the week of Jan. 27-31 to meet with each class, explain what opera is, how he became an opera singer, how opera differs from musical plays, and more.

"Opera is a way that we can tell a story through music," he told students, explaining that an opera performance is all singing with no speaking (as opposed to a musical that has songs interspersed with regular dialogue).

Siqueiros also explained that opera singing differs from other genres in its volume and style, since opera singers generally do not use microphones to carry their voice over the sound of an accompanying orchestra.



**Minnesota Opera singer and teaching artist Pablo Siqueiros reads and sings a story to DES students on Jan. 28.**

Siqueiros also read each class a humorous children's story about an opera singer who tames wolves and outlaws in the Wild West through the power of music. The story incorporated operatic passages sung by Siqueiros so that students could hear portions of opera songs in both English and Italian.

The visit culminated in two 30-minute performances for elementary students by Siqueiros and partners from the Minne-

sota Opera on Friday, Jan. 31, in the DHS Performing Arts Center.

## *Author on hand*

As someone who debuted as a children's author and illustrator just after her retirement as a teacher, Debbie Hoven had a message for students when she visited DES on Monday and Tuesday, Feb. 3-4.

"You're never too young, you're never too old," she said. "Don't be afraid to challenge



**Visiting author Debbie Hoven speaks on Feb. 4.**

yourself and step outside your box."

Hoven, now the author of three children's books, spoke to students in kindergarten through third grade about her writing and illustrating work as part of the school's "I Love to Read Month" festivities. She also shared a few tips about getting started.

"As a teacher I always wanted kids to get into art and words and drawing," she said. "Then I decided that instead of just getting everyone else excited about it I wanted to do it myself."

• See [www.delano.k12.mn.us](http://www.delano.k12.mn.us) for more on this story.

## Announcements

### *Kindergarten Round-Up*

Delano Elementary School invites you to attend Kindergarten Round-Up on Tuesday and Thursday, March 3 and 5, for children entering kindergarten in the fall of 2020.

Families with last names beginning with A through K should attend on Tuesday, March 3, and families with last names beginning with L through Z should attend on Thursday, March 5. If you have a conflict on your assigned evening, please come on the alternate evening.

Registration begins at 5:30 p.m. and special activities will begin at 6:05 p.m. The evening will include an informational meeting for parents while children participate in classroom activities, and concludes around 8 p.m. Children and parents will have the opportunity to meet the exceptional and caring DES staff, tour the school, participate in fun activities, and learn about the kindergarten program.

Those who have not received a kindergarten registration packet, or who are new to the area, can contact Delano Elementary School at 763.972.6200.

### *Book drive to benefit classrooms*

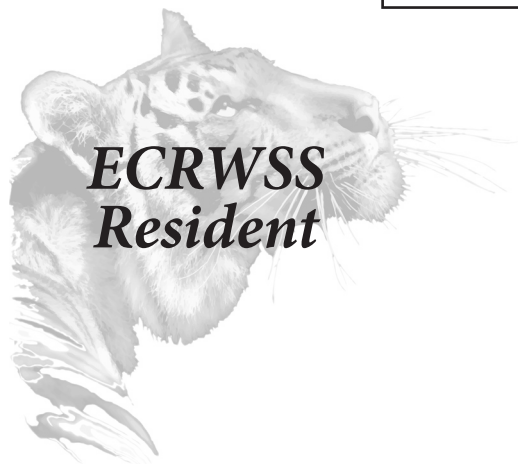
In an effort to bolster classroom libraries, Delano Public Schools is holding a book drive during the month of February, which is "I Love to Read Month."

What can be donated? New or gently used books that are appropriate for K-8 students; books that are classics, are well-loved, or have a copyright date of 2010 or later; or money for book bins and shelves to support classroom libraries.

Why are donations needed? Research indicates that K-8 classrooms should have about 350 books within each room to support a literature-rich experience for young readers. This year's literacy initiative, and the adoption of the new K-4 language arts curriculum, rely heavily on this concept.

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### **Delano Public Schools Vision**

*Systemic growth toward educational excellence for every learner.*

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**Finishing in first place were, from left, Thomas Depa, Blake Nemec and Isaiah Depa.**

## **Depas, Nemec win book contest**

After four days of competition featuring 61 teams and 177 students, Thomas Depa, Isaiah Depa and Blake Nemec took first place in the DIS Battle of the Books on Thursday, Feb. 13.

"The last three days have been hectic for us," said sixth-grader Isaiah Depa. "I have been reading non-stop."

The trio edged out two other teams in the final round of a fun contest that tests readers with questions about a long list of books. Second place went to the team of Blake Merritt, Harry Stenback and Alexis Zens, and third place went to the team of Emma Ristau, Lydia Holman and Landon Lundquist.

## **Three sign letters of intent to play on**

Grace Glasrud, Max Otto and Tate Pappas have had memorable athletic careers at Delano High School, but their stories won't end at graduation this spring.

All three signed national letters of intent in front of family, friends and coaches on Wednesday, Feb. 5, to play at the college level next fall.

Glasrud, a goalie, will play Division I hockey for Post University in Connecticut. Pappas, a longtime soccer player who also began running late in his high school career, will run Division I cross country and track at the University of Illinois Chicago. Otto, a quarterback in the fall and a pitcher or infield-

er in the spring, will play Division II football and baseball at Northern State University in South Dakota.

"This is a big moment for these students and their families. A lot has gone into this," said DHS Activities Administrator Ryan Tool, adding that less than 7 percent of high school athletes keep playing in college, and less than 2 percent make it to the Division I level. "We're very proud to call them Tigers."

• A full feature story with additional details about each of these student-athletes is available on the district website at [www.delano.k12.mn.us](http://www.delano.k12.mn.us).



**Tate Pappas**



**Max Otto**



**Grace Glasrud**