



Eye of the Tiger

District 879 Newsletter October-November 2020

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11.....Virtual Vets Day program,
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Public Schools PR" on YouTube

12-14.....Fall play, details inside

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23...School board mtg., 5:45 p.m.

25-27.....Thanksgiving break

December

14...School board mtg., 5:45 p.m.

16.....Two-hour late start

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January

4.....Classes resume



Delano High School students went ahead with a modified Homecoming week in October that included a largely virtual coronation ceremony. See Page 3.



Colors of kindness

Delano students observed Unity Day on Wednesday, Oct. 21, with a variety of lessons and activities as part of National Bullying Awareness Month.

Maintaining safe schools

By Matthew Schoen
Superintendent



Through the first quarter of our school year the district has been successful in maintaining safe learning environments for all of our students and staff members.

Per the guidelines of the Minnesota Departments of Education and Health, each school district is to prioritize the health and well-being of our students and staff while maintaining as much in-person learning as possible.

The district remains in regular contact with representatives from MDH and Wright County Public Health to review multiple data points and make sure that we are providing educational excellence while maintaining safety through

our learning models. The situation continues to change on a daily basis, and by the time this newsletter goes to print adjustments could potentially be needed. The fact is that the virus is controlling the time frame and likelihood of learning model changes, not the school district.

As I write this article, we are planning to seek a specific recommendation from our public health advisors again regarding our learning models, which are in-person learning for K-6 students and hybrid learning for grades 7-12.

Maintaining our models has been possible so far because our students and staff members have been diligent in following the safety recommendations we have been given. In terms of school-related cases, our numbers have, so far, remained very low. This is the main reason why public health officials have recommended that we continue in our current learning level models.

As I have stated in previous communications,

**See Schoen
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Fall play proceeds despite obstacles

By Paul Downer
Communications Coordinator

Despite challenges posed by COVID-19, a dedicated group of students from grades 6-12 are proceeding with a fall play that opens this week.

Eleven students, along with Director Jack Neveaux, set designer Mike Stoudt and costume coordinator Kerrie Olson, will present "Jookalorum!" at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday and Friday, Nov. 12-13 and Nov. 19-20, and at 2 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 14.

In-person audiences will be limited to 50 people to comply with health and safety guidelines from the Minnesota Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Tickets are available on the district website at www.delano.k12.mn.us.

Students said that preparation for the series of scenes based on nine short stories by O. Henry has been difficult, since most rehearsals have occurred virtually, but all were glad to proceed with a show.

"It's nice to have some normalcy, especially this year with how everything has turned out," said senior Shelby Stoddard. "We can still have this sense of community even though there are all these obstacles we have to jump over. It's nice to come together and



A small cast has been rehearsing virtually, for the most part, to present a selection of O. Henry's short stories.

have something to do."

Senior Sydney Wuerger said that virtual rehearsals made it more difficult for cast members to interact in terms of movement and body language.

"The other difficulty is that when you are in person you have masks on, so you can never see the other person's facial expressions," she added. "And you have to be distanced, so that's difficult because a big

thing in theater is touch and communication."

Still, there have been some benefits to the unusual rehearsal process.

"I think it's cool that we're still capable of putting on a production," Wuerger said. "The technology aspect, even though it is difficult, means that we can practice every single day. We can do it any time of the day. We can be in

completely different locations and it's still possible."

Because the cast is purposefully small, with only 10 actors available to cover about 35 characters, each student plays multiple roles throughout the varied stories. This has challenged their ability to rapidly shift mindsets and attitudes.

"There are a lot of character studies," said junior Autumn Langdon. "I go from richest lady in New York to a fake rich lady, to an old woman, to a dirt poor homeowner. And in the first scene I'm southern, so there is a completely different energy to each one."

Cast members include Stoddard, Wuerger, Langdon, John Lahlum, Sophie Stevens, Drew Nielsen, Harry Stenback, Kyra Machakaire, Sydney Hintermeister and Lila Ford.

Emily Barron is the student stage manager.

"I've been doing theater since I was 7 or 8 in this school, and I did it a while before school too, but I'm a senior this year so it was super devastating to me when there wasn't going to be a production," said Wuerger. "So I just think it's amazing that we're able to put on a show in my senior year, and I'm super happy to be a part of it."

• For more information, see the Nov. 6 edition of the Delano Herald Journal.

Delano School Board

Gierke to join incumbents after election

The Delano School Board will include one new face when it organizes for 2021 in January.

Jim Gierke will join the group, along with three returning incumbents, after the Nov. 3 general election.

The election featured a four-person race for three available four-year seats, and a special election for a two-year seat.

Among those running for



Amy Johnson

the four-year seats, incumbent Amy Johnson was the top vote-getter with 3,945



Sue Roeser



Jim Gierke

votes as of Nov. 10. Sue Roeser, who was appointed to the board to fill a vacancy



Rachel Depa

in October of 2019, retained her seat with 3,677 votes, and Gierke claimed the third seat with 3,360 votes. The fourth candidate was Regina Lupton, who collected 1,913 votes.

Incumbent Rachel Depa ran unopposed for the two-year seat and earned 4,683 votes.

There will also be one departure in 2021, as current board member Al Briesemeister did not seek re-election.



Crowning royalty

It has been an unconventional school year, but Delano High School students went ahead with a modified Homecoming celebration during the last week of October. Events included a largely virtual coronation of King Colby Kern and Queen Kayla Shoultz on Oct. 30.

Delano posts strong ACT scores

By Paul Downer
Communications Coordinator

College benchmarks

More good news from the ACT results is that average Delano scores exceeded the College Readiness Benchmarks identified by ACT in all four traditional subject areas.

A benchmark number is the minimum score needed on an ACT subject-area test to indicate a 50% chance of obtaining a B or higher in a corresponding college course.

Delano students scored an average of 24.4 in math, compared to a benchmark of 22.

Their 23.5 average score in reading exceeded the benchmark for that subject, which was also set at 22.

Delano's average science score of 23.3 stayed above the benchmark of 23, and the local English score of 20.6 also comfortably exceeded the benchmark of 18.

Delano students posted an average ACT score of 23.1 in 2019-20, well ahead of the state average of 21.3 and the national average of 20.6.

To exceed the state average is noteworthy because Minnesota led the nation in ACT scores among the 17 states where at least 90 percent of students took the test.

The top score possible on the college entrance exam is 36, and Minnesota Department of Education officials noted that most scores were recorded before the COVID-19 pandemic began to affect schools last spring.

In Delano, a record 207 students took the test during the 2019-20 school year. Their average score was half a point lower than Delano's 2018-19 average of 23.6.

Support wellness

By Steve Schauburger
DHS Assistant Principal

We are looking for parents of K-12 students, as well as community members, to serve on our Districtwide Student Wellness Committee.

The committee's responsibility each year is to monitor student health and wellness and to ensure compliance with the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 and the School District's Wellness Policy (No. 533).

Specific areas of focus include school nutrition, health education, physical activities and mental well-being activities. Committee members include district parents, staff and administrators.

We will meet twice this year, on Monday, Nov. 30, 2020, and Monday, May 24,

2021. Meetings may take place by Google Meet. We use a three-year cycle, and 2020-21 will be a district and building goal implementation/monitoring year and an overall district continuing compliance year.

Finally, the DHS (building) Student Wellness Committee is also looking for grades 7-12 students to serve on this important group that meets once every six weeks.

Please encourage your child to join and make an impact in the areas of school nutrition, health education, physical activities and mental well-being activities at our school.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 763-972-3365, extension 1703.

Thanks for your partnership in helping to create a positive total experience for students.

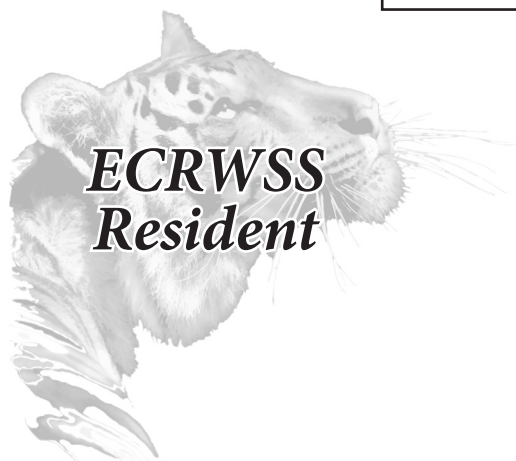


Spreading kindness

Delano students continued their Kindness in Chalk tradition on Oct. 6 and 8 by covering the sidewalks and trails on campus with positive messages. October is National Bullying Awareness Month, and this activity demonstrates how students can have a positive impact on others through words and actions.

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Healthy Halloween

Delano Elementary School adjusted its popular Halloween costume parade this year to reduce the risk of virus transmission, but many students were still able to march past their friends by classroom groups in order to show off their costumes. No other visitors were allowed, and some parades took place virtually from classrooms to include students at home.

Schoen

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we are counting on our community members to be mindful of limiting their own exposure to the virus. This is a major factor in determining how we are able to facilitate educational excellence, since our learning models are determined by local case counts and the number of positive cases that come into our schools.

I can tell you that as of this date, every single positive COVID case in our school was due to exposure outside of the school. There has been no transmission of the virus within our schools. I attribute this to the diligence of our students and staff members in following the guidelines with fidelity.

Our students and staff members are taking precautionary measures such as staying home when they are feeling ill, washing hands on a regular basis, physically distancing when possible, and wearing a mask.

These protective measures allowed the school district to conduct its first quarter without any change in learning models.

However, it is possible that we may need to change our learning models in the future. We are fast approaching the holiday season where get-togethers become more prevalent. This has the potential to impact our learning models moving forward.

So far, in the final analysis, we had a very successful start to the school year, and we have continued to be successful from a safety standpoint.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Delano Public Schools community members for your partnership in working with us to maintain a successful and safe learning environment for all. We can all agree that in-person learning is the optimal method for teaching and learning. It is my hope that one day in the not-so-distant future we are able to fully enjoy in-person learning again.