



Tiger Territory

Delano High School Newsletter March 2022

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Dates to remember

- March**
- 13....Daylight Saving Time starts
- 14.....HS PIE meeting, 6 p.m.
- 16.....Two-hour late start
- 25.....End of Quarter 3
- 28-31....Spring break, no school
- April**
- 1.....Spring break, no school
- 9.....Prom, grand march at 4 p.m.
- 11.....HS PIE meeting, 6 p.m.
- 15.....Good Friday, no school
- 20.....Two-hour late start



Dancing to state

Members of the dance team share a laugh during a pep fest in their honor on Feb. 17. The team qualified for the Class 2AA state meet and finished ninth out of 12 teams at the Target Center. See Page 9 for more photos from the pep fest.

Excellence as an end result

By **Barry Voight**
Principal

Greetings, DHS families. This month is the conclusion of my series reclaiming The TIGER Way.

As mentioned at the conclusion of my last article, our guiding acronym should probably be translated to the Spanish "TIGRE" - putting Excellence at the end. I came to this realization over the past several months through a reflection on each of these terms. Teamwork, Inclusion, Grit and Respect all infer actions. They are specific skills or strategies or attitudes we can embody as individuals or as a collective organization.



Barry Voight

Excellence is a different term entirely. Excellence is the result of our Teamwork, Inclusion, Grit and Respect.

There is a quote hanging in my office from Pat Riley. It says, "Excellence is the gradual result of always striving to do better." I find this quote poignant in that it speaks to the concept of excellence as achievable without a defined endpoint.

Similarly, our district's vision statement is "Systemic Growth Towards Educational Excellence for EVERY Learner." All of our collective efforts, as community partners in educating our youth, are working TOWARDS excellence. We have continuous improvement in mind.

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Johnson named Teacher of the Year

ELL instructor works with students across the district

By Paul Downer
Communications Coordinator

Nothing is more foundational to learning than the ability to communicate, so it is fitting that English Language Learner instructor Ashley Johnson has been named Teacher of the Year for Delano Public Schools.

Johnson serves roughly 40 students from kindergarten through high school, spending time at all three schools on a regular basis. Her students come from a variety of backgrounds and speak Russian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Spanish, Hmong, French and Thai.

“Ashley continually looks for ways to support her students,” said a nomination submitted by DHS language arts teacher Rachel Holmes. “She works to provide her students with skills that will help them beyond the school walls. She manages a variety of skill levels and accommodates to the ever-changing schedule of adding new students. She is such a valuable asset to our district and our students.”

Each year a handful of teachers are nominated, and the entire district teaching staff votes on a winner. Johnson said the recognition was such a surprise that she felt it must have been a mistake when she learned she had been nomi-



Ashley Johnson works with about 40 students in all three schools. Their native languages include Russian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Spanish, Hmong, French and Thai.

nated, and her selection as the finalist was even more surreal.

“I feel very humbled, but also undeserving because of everyone else who should be getting it,” she said. “With how difficult things have been in the last three years, this feels like a reward that every teacher deserves. I’m the lucky one. I feel so lucky to work with a staff that is so dedicated to their profession and to my students and my program. I just want them to know how grateful and

thankful I am, because they’re part of why I love my job.”

Foundation

The seeds of Johnson’s career were planted during her high school years in Buffalo when she volunteered to tutor a student from Africa. She enjoyed the process so much that she began mentoring in the English Language Learner (ELL) program as a senior.

“I became very close with some of the students. Some were new to country, some had been in the program for three or four years and had acquired more English skills. I just really loved it,” said Johnson. “I felt I had a passion for that. I’ve always loved languages. I took French all through high school and took Spanish and just loved learning about new cultures and people and where they were from.”

After high school Johnson attended St. Cloud State University, intending to pursue a career as a French teacher.

“I didn’t realize at the time that you could become an ELL teacher – that there was an

actual license for that specifically,” said Johnson.

When she found out, however, she did not hesitate to shift majors. The pathway involved obtaining a degree in English with a concentration in linguistics and a minor in second language acquisition.

So great was the need for English language services that Johnson actually returned to Buffalo before her graduation to work part-time while finishing up her degree. After she graduated, Delano was her first opportunity for full-time employment.

“EL programs look a lot different depending on where you are,” Johnson said. “I knew I liked being in a community and school that was big enough to allow opportunities for my students, to provide what was necessary to be successful with my program, but was also small enough where you feel like you’re part of a family. Because I have a smaller population of students I am incredibly close with them. The relationship I’m



Johnson enjoys building relationships with students over their years in the ELL program.

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Trujillo chosen for All-State Orchestra

By Paul Downer
Communications Coordinator

One of the top young trumpet players in Minnesota represented Delano during a concert by the All-State Orchestra at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis on Saturday, Feb. 19.

Senior Karson Trujillo, who last year qualified for the All-State Concert Band, was one of only three trumpet players selected to the orchestra ensemble. As far as is known, he is also just the second Delano musician chosen for the group after clarinetist Maddie Meland in 2020 and 2021.

“Getting into All-State Orchestra is a lot more difficult for certain instruments than it is to be in All-State Band,” said Delano High School band director Jason Koets. “There are two bands and they each have a trumpet section of about eight trumpets. But in orchestra there are only two or three trumpets, so you have to be really good.”

Trujillo said last year’s All-State Band experience was all virtual, based on Zoom meetings and recordings, so the chance to gather with his peers for a week-long summer camp at the College of St. Benedict, then to reconvene in February for two days of rehearsals and an in-person performance, was thoroughly enjoyable.

“I really enjoyed the summer camp, hanging out with the other trumpet players and other people from the orchestra. They were all super nice and fun to be around,” said Trujillo. “Most of the day was filled with band rehearsal, but when we weren’t rehearsing we played a



Karson Trujillo performed with the All-State Orchestra on Saturday, Feb. 19, at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis.

lot of board games. It was just fun.”

His fellow trumpet players in the group were from St. Paul and Apple Valley, and aside from the music, Trujillo said the personal interactions were the highlight of the experience.

“The thing I enjoyed most was just meeting new people,” he said.

Trujillo picked up the trumpet for the first time in fifth grade.

“I just always kind of wanted to play it when I was little, and when I started playing I had a lot of fun,” he said, adding that he has focused on trumpet rather than exploring other instruments along the way.

Regular lessons with Delano band teacher Mike Dailey and former college band instructor Del Lyren have challenged Trujillo to excel, and he is also a past member of the Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies. Outside of school, Trujillo said he practices nearly an hour each day.

Why has he poured so much time and effort into music?

“It’s just a good form of expression,” he said. “It’s a good, relaxing thing, but also something you can see progression in.”

Koets said that having a player of Trujillo’s caliber expands horizons for the entire DHS ensemble.

“It opens up a wider range of music that we can play. Knowing I can count on this student to play a part and not have to school them too much on how to play it or what to do, that makes it a lot easier,” he said.

It also gives fellow trumpet players a high standard to match.

“The other students in the section are always paying attention to what he’s playing and how he’s playing it,” said Koets. “Whether they consciously know it or not, they’re emulating how he plays.”

Koets took no credit for Trujillo’s success, or that of past all-state performers, but said their achievements were the result of hard work and individual initiative.

“It’s a lot of independent work on their parts to achieve these levels that they get to,” he said. “It’s a rare occasion for us to have an all-state player. I’m just super proud of him.”

Trujillo is still considering a number of colleges and hasn’t settled on a definite destination yet. But a career in higher-level music education, possibly at the college level, is one potential pathway he plans to explore.

“Right now, that’s kind of the dream,” he said.

• Meland is the only other Delano band student to have played in the All-State Orchestra. Former students who played in the All-State Band include Sarah Anderson (1993-94), Anjanet Kalinowski (1994-95), Anders Eckman (2001-02), Makenzie Krause (2022-12) and Stephanie Almquist (2015-17).

DHS PIE group meeting teacher needs

Delano High School Partners in Education aims to raise funds to support and promote educational excellence and a sense of community in the high school.

Remaining meeting dates this year include March 14, April 11 and May 9. Meetings are held in the high school office conference room at 6 p.m. All are welcome to attend. So far this year the group has granted the following teacher requests:

- Maria Menz (speaker for PE classes) \$150
- Kellie Makela (microphones for LA classes) \$350
- Mike Stoudt (shop vac for science classes) \$65
- Tori Spanier (Vex equipment for PLTW) \$2,000

In addition, the senior graduation yard sign fundraiser will begin in March. Watch for details in an email from the high school.

History Day projects challenge students

By Paul Downer
Communications Coordinator

The annual History Day competition on Wednesday, Feb. 9, had a more typical flavor this time around after COVID restrictions led to a hybrid event last year.

Students and almost all judges were present in person, a welcome change from the 2020-21 experience.

"We were excited to hold in-person judging again, as this is the only competition that will be conducted that way this year," said Gifted and Talented Coordinator Heidi O'Donnell. "The regional, state and national competitions will be virtual, so receiving live feedback and having the opportunity to present their projects in person was invaluable to our students."

Singly or in groups, sixth- and eighth-grade students in the accelerated language arts program conducted historical research and presented their findings via documentary videos, websites or exhibits during the local competition. A total of 27 projects focused on the theme "Debate and Diplomacy: Success, Failures, Consequences," and 17 of those projects will advance to regional competition against projects from other schools in March.

"The judges were impressed by the wide variety of topics for this year's theme," said O'Donnell, adding that judges also remarked on the overall quality of the presentations. "The day ran as smoothly as possible and students did an amazing job presenting to the judges!"

Building skills

Eighth-graders Luke Gilliland, Jack Hausladen and Hayden Rue worked together to research the Tiananmen Square massacre and created a website to present their findings.

"We wanted to study a protest and a government response to that. We just felt like that fit our theme really well this year,"



MaryBeth Redinger, left, and Sarah Halme share their exhibit 'Tesla vs. Edison: Debate Between the Powers,' during the History Day competition on Wednesday, Feb. 9.

said Gilliland. "Protests, they're asking for something; that's the debate. And the government response is diplomacy, or in this case a lack of diplomacy."

Students used a class trip to the Minneapolis Public Library to find a number of sources, and online information also aided their efforts.

"We had to really dig into the archives of Google," said Rue. "We didn't want to use information that we just found once. We wanted double sources to back up our information."

The students also encountered active state censorship in

their research.

"We looked on what is basically the Chinese equivalent of Google to see what can be accessed by the Chinese citizens," said Hausladen. "Like we talked about in our project, the only thing we could find there was something saying it was a myth."

The team agreed that getting to dive deep into a topic of their choosing, and seeing the final product of their efforts, were the most enjoyable aspects of the project. The whole experience was a growing process.

"We gained better organizational skills," said Rue. "You have to be really organized. And we gained better presentation skills and researching skills. Those are really big aspects of History Day."

Growth opportunity

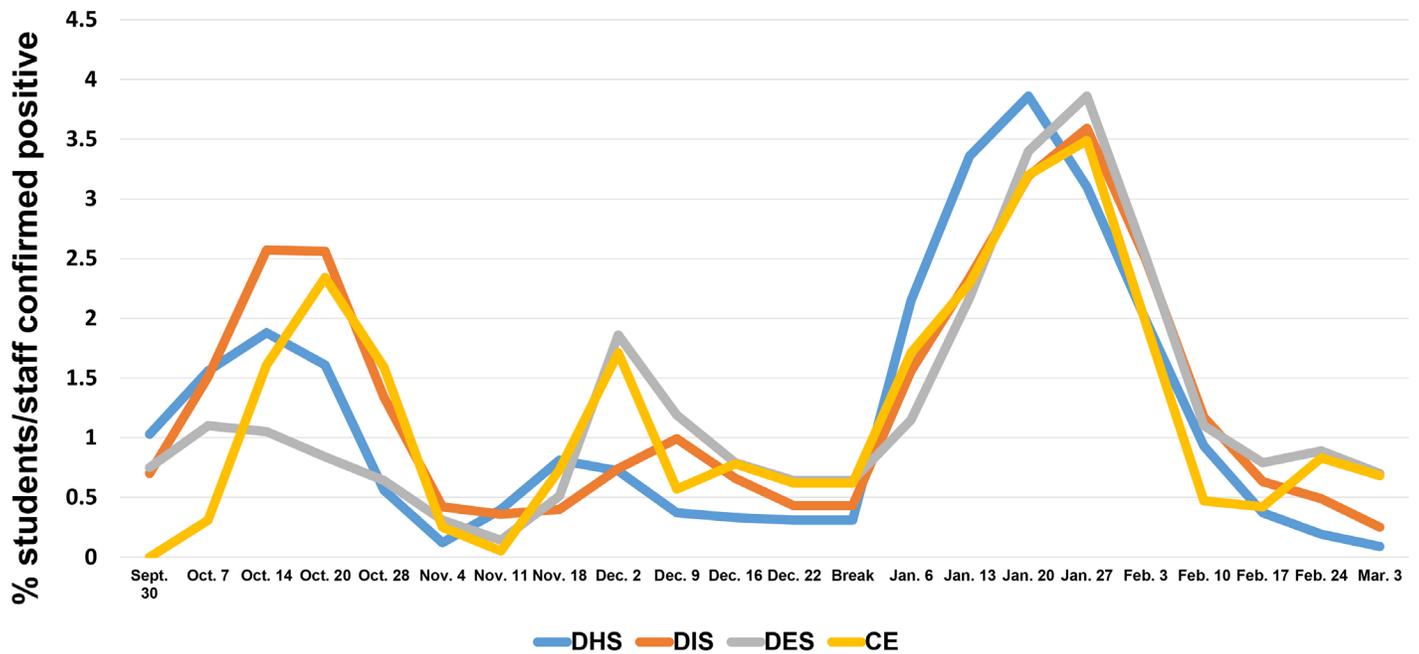
O'Donnell said that allowing students freedom to choose an area of focus under the umbrella of a broad theme is one of the many benefits of History Day. Research began in October.

"They can build on their interests in addition to learning a new skill, or build on their previous knowledge at a deeper level," she said. "Working in groups on an extensive project also gives them real-world learning experiences in collaboration and compromise. I'm sure by the end of the project they are ready to be done, but they get to reflect back on how far they have come in the process from start to finish and feel a sense of accomplishment. It's great to see that growth from beginning to end, but also from sixth grade to eighth grade. We are so proud of them!"



Luke Gilliland, left, and Jack Hausladen present their website about the Tiananmen Square Massacre.

COVID cases 2021-22 (14-day case rate)



Expanding the management toolbox

By **Steve Schaubeger**
Assistant Principal

Greetings from Delano High School! The first semester is already in the books and it is hard to believe that mid-quarter conferences are already behind us as well!

As we head into spring, our students and staff are working very hard at balancing the preparation for the spring MCA Assessments with maintaining strong relationships and promoting positive behavior. To accomplish this, our team of administrators, staff, students and parents need a big toolbox to manage student behavior (student discipline).

The primary goals of student discipline are to teach, coach, prevent poor future behavior, change habits, change behaviors, and finally change beliefs. Learning through natural, automatic consequences is also very important, but it is too often equated with perfunctory punishment and may often lead to repeated offenses.

Take, for example, the simple example of a student with excessive tardies or unexcused



Steve Schaubeger

absences. If I can help a student change their habit (leave earlier, grab more books out of their locker, visit less) that may lead to the student's behavior of fewer tardies and eventually lead to the student's belief that punctuality is a trait that their future employers will value.

Bullying is another area of concern that I would like to clarify. I often use the following definitions to explain the progressive difference between the following student behaviors. Being rude is unintentionally doing or saying something

that hurts someone else. Being mean is intentionally doing or saying something that hurts someone else. Bullying is intentionally doing or saying something that hurts someone else repeatedly, and the balance of power is unequal. Therefore, an act is considered bullying if it meets all four of the following criteria: hurtful, intentional, repeated and the balance of power is unequal. On occasion, there may be a one-time act where circumstances may define it as bullying or, more likely, harassment.

There are discipline practices in place which recommend a standard consequence (i.e., detention, suspension) for the offender. But there's an old expression, "If your only tool is a hammer, then every problem looks like a nail." Therefore, the majority of behavior offenses often require a bigger toolbox.

Below are only just a few examples of past and present practices/tools used to support student behaviors:

- Crohn's Above the line/ Below the line
- Informal and formal restorative justice – making

impact statements and a plan moving forward

- Restitution – work, time, money, resources, etc. paid back.
- Develop a written fix-it plan
- Repairing the damage with the target/victim
- Parent/student/administrative meeting
- Discipline with dignity
- Progressive discipline
- Vaping/tobacco curriculum (intervention/instruction)
- Teaching through deposit – build up enough credit ("money in the bank") in order to make a "withdrawal" for future restoration of privileges
- The TIGER WAY behavioral expectations writing assignment.

Finally, as a general rule, we need to meet students where they are and help them get to where they need/want to be. We don't all learn at the same pace, and it takes flexibility and collaboration to reach the goal. Thank you for allowing us to serve your students. It is an exciting time to be a Delano student, educator, parent and community member!

Unified sports build relationships

Unified Sports joins people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team. It was inspired by a simple standard: training and playing together is a quick path to friendship and understanding.

The standard for Delano's Unified team is supporting our TIGER WAY: Teamwork on and off the court, Inclusion of everyone, Grit by strengthening understanding, Excellence by support, and Respect by cheering for all teams and players we encounter.

Unified is a place for everyone to feel a part of a team, make lifelong friends and be a participant in showcasing meaningful inclusion within our school and community.

The Delano Unified Basketball team consists of athletes, players and coaches, with the support of staff members. If you and a friend want to be a part of Unified, please reach out to Matt Nohner, Marie Techam, or Katie Zander for more information.

Special Olympics of Min-



Members of Delano's Unified Basketball team take a moment for a photo after a recent game. The sport combines teams of students with and without intellectual disabilities.

nesota hosts a Polar Plunge every year. This event is to help fundraise for Special Olympics and Unified. This year the event was planned for Friday, March 4.

Team participants

Athletes: Kevin Gonzalez (gr. 7), Kent Peterson (8), Mary Grgas (12), Cohen Lofstedt (12), Dillion Mrnak (12).

Players: Sicily Knisley (7), Saydee Knisley (10), Courtney Loecken (10), Lauren Scanlon

(11), Allison Semeizer (10), Livia Loecken (12).

Coaches: Dimitry Guralnik (10), Trent Techam (12), Michael Krueger (12).

Staff members: Matt Nohner, Marie Techam and Katie Zander.



Winter Activity Day

Seventh- and eighth-graders enjoyed the annual Winter Activity Day at Powder Ridge on Feb. 15. Snow tubing, skiing and snowboarding served as a refreshing break from the regular classroom routine.

College fair

DHS hosted a large College Fair on Thursday, March 3, that featured 89 colleges from the Midwest to Alaska, and even one from London, England.



Johnson

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able to have with each one is truly unique and individual because of how much time I can spend with them, and how they stay with me as they move through our buildings.”

Forging connections

Although one might not think of Delano as an international destination, it has become home to many nationalities.

“There is a wide variety,” said Johnson. “That’s something that continues to surprise me since we’re a small town, but their families come from all over.”

How does she go about connecting with students who speak languages she doesn’t know?

“We use Google translate if we need to, but I try my hardest to learn something in their language to make that connection with them, because it makes a huge difference,” Johnson said. “I think that builds rapport.”

Non-verbal communication is also key to establishing a friendly and welcoming atmosphere.

“You have to make it fun for them, because they might be in a position where they understand 10-15% of what I’m saying, but if I use different body language and facial expressions to make things understood, it really helps,” said Johnson. “I have a ton of fun with my newcomers. Those are some of my most challenging days, but also some of the most rewarding.”

Good relationships are essential to enabling progress when students find themselves in unfamiliar surroundings.

“A lot of students come from situations where classrooms were not white walls

with posters. It was different, or maybe they didn’t go to school, or school was outside,” said Johnson. “In order to learn language you need to be able to take risks, and to take risks you need to be comfortable. I’ve had students who are very anxious and don’t feel comfortable doing that right away, and that makes it very difficult to learn English. I just make sure my classroom is a very welcoming and open space, and a space where they can take language risks and start the language acquisition process to be proficient in English.”

From the point when those initial connections are made, English instruction commences with the basics of the alphabet, letter sounds, vocabulary and conversational English. Although there are a many variables in how quickly a student progresses, a typical timeline for new students to fully acquire English proficiency is five to seven years.

“You start with some of those things that almost seem like kindergarten basics and go from there,” said Johnson. “At the end of the day I just want to make sure I fulfill all the needs of my students. Whether that’s academic, linguistic, social-emotional or any other need they may have, I just want to make sure that I am there for them.”

Broader learning

English language learners spend more or less time with Johnson depending on their needs, but they also participate in many other classes with accommodations that Johnson establishes with their regular education teachers. When she is not directly engaged with students herself, she is often providing support to other teachers who have English language learners in their classroom.

“A lot of my students come to Delano

and they’re smart. In their native language they do well in school, so it’s just the language that needs to be modified,” said Johnson. “So it’s important to re-frame our thinking to say that EL is enrichment, not intervention. Modifying for language takes time and can be difficult, but when we focus on that we can really see them do well and succeed.”

World traveler

When she isn’t in the classroom, Johnson’s affinity for unfamiliar cultures naturally leads to a lot of travel.

“If I could spend every weekend on an airplane to somewhere new and uncomfortable for me, pushing myself, that would be my dream,” she said with a laugh.

Some of her favorite trips have been to South Africa, Croatia and Egypt. In addition to travel on her personal time, Johnson has led spring break trips for Delano students to Washington, D.C., and New York. She also organizes international ventures to China or, later this year, Costa Rica.

“Every time I take a trip I learn something new about the world and I can bring it back to my students,” she said. “I’m not saying I can put myself in their shoes because I absolutely cannot. But it changes my perspective of this small town. The people out there in the world – even if you can’t speak the same language – you can still have meaningful interactions.”

And when she’s not traveling herself, Johnson said that engaging with her students and their varied backgrounds is her favorite aspect of the job.

“I’m continually learning from my kids because of the experiences they bring into my classroom, and the perspective that they give,” she said. “It has made me a better teacher, and a better person.”

Every Meal provides assistance with food

Delano Public Schools is fortunate to partner with Every Meal to offer a free weekly food program to all students.

Every Meal is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission to fight child hunger through community and school partnerships. Every Meal strives to make a difference in children's lives by focusing on food gaps like weekends, school breaks and summer, when students can't receive food in school.

Details

- Free for all families.
- No enrollment qualifications.
- Students enrolled in the program will receive a bag of nutritious, nonperishable food each week.
- Every Meal does not collect information from families; privacy is protected.
- Families may enroll in the program anytime throughout the school year.
- Families may choose from a variety of different weekend meal bag options.

More info

For more information, or to sign up, contact your school social worker or counselor.

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Festival of voices

Delano High School hosted a regional large group festival on Feb. 14. The Delano Varsity Choir, shown here, led off ahead of ensembles from Orono, Mound Westonka, Waconia and Hutchinson, as well as the DHS Concert Choir.



Winter athletes go to state

In addition to the dance team, a number of other individuals have qualified for state during the winter sports season.

Avery Lommel and Gabby Stoudt competed at the state gymnastics meet in the all-around and vault event, respectively, in late February.

Delano wrestler Cael Olson, pictured here, qualified for the state wrestling tournament at 132 pounds and was scheduled to compete on Friday, March 4.

• Hans Anderson competed in diving on Thursday, March 3, at the University of Minnesota. Swimmers scheduled to compete on Friday, March 4, were: 200 Medley Relay - Nick



Black, Tyler Winter, Joe Coyle, Sam Daniels; 200 IM - Gentry Nuytten, Tyler Winter; 100 Free - Kaden Georges; 500 Free - Tyler Winter; 200 Free Relay - Kaden Georges, Will

Merten, Tyler Winter, Gentry Nuytten; 100 Back - Nick Black; 400 Free Relay - Kaden Georges, Will Merten, Gentry Nuytten, Nick Black.



Dancing off to state

A pep fest honoring the state-bound dance team, gymnasts Gabby Stoudt and Avery Lommel, the Unified Basketball team, and Science Olympiad participants was held on Feb. 17. Here are some of the moments from the event, which was highlighted by the dance team's performance of its routine.





COMPASS students and staff organized the annual Suicide Prevention and Awareness Day on Tuesday, March 1. Here, they display a banner signed by hundreds of students in the activity and education area.

A focus on mental health support

By Paul Downer
Communications Coordinator

Students and staff members at Delano High School held their annual Suicide Prevention and Awareness Day on Tuesday, March 1, as part of a larger Inclusion Week.

The day, focused on mental health issues and equipping students to avoid the worst outcomes, featured presentations, student activities, and information booths. It has become a regular tradition in the high school, and is organized by students in the COMPASS class (Character, Opportunity, Mentorship, Perseverance, Academics, Service and Success), along with advisors Marie Techam and Shalyn Tordeur.

A highlight of the event was a pair of presentations by Sam Eaton, a music teacher in Wayzata and author of “Recklessly



Guest speaker Sam Eaton, a teacher in Wayzata and the founder of ‘Recklessly Alive,’ spoke to students.

Alive.” Eaton gave separate presentations to students in grades 7-9 and those in grades 10-12, varying the content for age. He shared about his own struggles, causes of depression, signs to watch for in oneself or others

and resources for getting help. “You’re really lucky to be in a school that has a program like COMPASS, with students who are invested in getting this information out,” Eaton told the assembly for grades 10-12.

Eaton said that students should give one another the benefit of the doubt, and engage with their friends or other who seem to be struggling.

“Every day you walk in this building you have a choice to help someone who might have a home life like I did. You do not know what they are dealing with,” he said. “Choose to be that kind person in this school. You really can make a difference just by saying ‘hi’ to someone.”

At the close of the presentation DHS Principal Barry Voight encouraged students to support one another, and know that they are valued.

“All of the adults in this building care very deeply for each and every one of you. If

See Prevention
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At left, students sign the support banner. Above, the mental health question wheel was a popular feature.

It's a good time to become a substitute teacher

Have you ever thought about serving as a substitute teacher? Delano Public Schools is seeking substitutes to help cover gaps in staffing.

Teachers on Call is the agency that provides substitute teachers in Delano. You can apply with Teachers on Call by visiting www.teachersoncall.com, or calling 952-346-1656.

Substitute teachers can:

- Choose their own schedule.
- Choose to work close to home or experience many different schools and districts.
- Find jobs through easy online job scheduling.
- Work short- or long-term positions.
- Explore a variety of classroom settings, from primary to secondary levels.

The hiring process is relatively simple, and free training is provided to new substitute teachers.



Students of the month

Delano High School recently announced its Students of the Month for February. Congratulations to all of these students for their outstanding attitude, effort, energy and dedication. They represent the best that Delano High School has to offer. Those honored included, front from left, MacKay Hoglund (language arts), CJ Roeser (math), Aubreyanna Moua (math), Owen Fink (special education) and Aidan Alvarez (science). In the middle, from left, are Marshall Thorstad (Project Lead The Way/Tech Ed.), Sergio Navarrete (language arts), Parker Roskowiak (language arts), Ari Langdon (Tiger Way) and Michael Simons (social studies). In the back row, from left, are Presley Pawelk (language arts), Jake Stoudt (choir) and Lexi Ives (Tiger Way). Not pictured are Abby Main (PE/health), Morgan Engelmann (science) and Colin Lommel (language arts).

Prevention

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you ever feel like you need some assistance, please talk to somebody," he said.

Activities and education

In addition to Eaton's presentations, the COMPASS class created a walk-through activity and education area in the high school's Digital Commons. Students were able to sign a "Living One Day at a Time" banner of support, play a "spin the wheel" game with mental health questions, and seek out answers at information booths.

A video collage of about 200 students holding positive post-it note messages ran on a loop. There was a "shred your worries" station for recording worries and disposing of them. There were also bracelet giveaways with crisis contacts, and more.

The Best Buddies and Unified Basketball clubs also had pledge cards and prize give-



Informational displays were posted.

aways as part of a broader general kindness theme for the week.

"It was positive overall," said senior Chase Ankrum. "There was positive feedback and it seemed like people were having fun."

"I honestly just hope that kids take out of it that it's a really serious topic," said sophomore Genevieve Chapman. "We tried to make the best of it spread some sort of awareness for it, because a lot of

people struggle to talk about a topic like this."

"We're just trying to bring some light to it," said sophomore Morgan Belin.

"Yes, making a dark day a little lighter," agreed sophomore Kendra Corbin.

Caring Community

Over the years, the objective of the day has been to confront a difficult situation head-on and provide tools for students to deal with it.

"The big goal of ours is to end the stigma of mental health. I think we're headed in that direction," said Techam, who serves as the high school social worker.

"We just want students to know that there are adults here in our building who care about them and who they can turn to, for any reason," said Tordeur. "The last two years have been difficult as far as mental health, for everyone. So we want to let them know that we are here and we see them and we recognize them."

NHS blood drive addresses critical need

By Paul Downer
Communications Coordinator

At a time when blood supplies are critically low nationwide, National Honor Society students at Delano High School are doing their part to help.

The American Red Cross declared a “national blood crisis” in January, citing its worst blood shortage in over a decade, so the school’s annual blood drive on Wednesday, Feb. 9, was well-timed.

NHS students partnered with the Red Cross in a collection effort that was open to students, staff members and families of staff members.

“The supply is really low right now, so signing up 92 people for the blood drive, that feels pretty good,” said junior Wynn Russek, one of the event’s organizers along with junior Liam Barta and seniors Nick Black and Amber Peterson.

A total of 74 pints of blood were collected during the day. The NHS organizers helped by signing up donors in the weeks before the event, arriving early on the day of to help set up, running the check-in station and answering donor questions. They also enlisted other NHS members to staff the snack and recovery area.

“There are a lot of people who are really excited to donate. It’s really fun to see that,” said Russek on the day of the



From left, National Honor Society students Liam Barta, Amber Peterson, Wynn Russek and Nick Black run the check-in station at the Delano High School blood drive on Wednesday, Feb. 9.

event. “They’re very excited to help out other people that they don’t know at all.”

Black explained that the four organizers were participating in their independent service project for NHS, and that they were recruited by Russek and Barta’s older siblings who had organized previous blood drives.

“It just kind of fell into our hands,” said Peterson. “I think it’s a good experience to be able to recruit people in order to help others.”

The service project actually involves two blood drives, one in the summer that is open to

all community members, and another during the school year that is limited to the school population.

“It’s nice to do something to help the community in a bigger way,” said Black. “It’s cool that we have the opportunity to do a service project that is a little bit bigger than just Delano, and to help save lives at the same time.”

Barta said he appreciated the opportunity to assist an organization that aids the wellbeing of others worldwide, and added that individual donors truly do make a difference.

“One donation can save up

to three people, so it’s really a helpful thing for people everywhere,” he said.

Donating students also said that it just made sense to do what they could to help.

“I’m capable and it will help the less fortunate, so why not?” said senior Josh McMahan.

Fellow senior Chase McClay agreed.

“I’m doing this because I have (the most common blood type). I don’t need it all right now and I’m healthy enough that I can give, so it’s worth an afternoon or two of just feeling tired,” he said. “I don’t see a negative to it.”

Voight

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I believe it is essential to always look to what is possible, how our programs and procedures can get better so we can achieve a better result for our students. I fear that if we ever get to a point where we believe

that “we made it,” we will unconsciously lose the pursuit of improvement.

That’s not to say we shouldn’t ever take moments to appreciate the successes we’ve achieved. We absolutely should, but in the proper context. These milestones honor the progress made and are

reminders of what continues to be possible.

Students, parents and school staff working interdependently in a welcoming and accepting environment, with perseverance and respect, will lead to great things.

I was fortunate to join this community of learners almost

seven years ago. My enthusiasm for what is, and what is possible, here in Delano is as high as it has ever been during my time here. I look forward to partnering with all of you as we strive for Excellence through Teamwork, Inclusion, Grit and Respect.



This e-newsletter is published by District Communications Coordinator Paul Downer. Contact Paul at 763.972.3365, x1911, or paul.downer@delanoschools.org. For more information, see www.delano.k12.mn.us, or find Delano Public Schools on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

