

AN AUBURN-WASHBURN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT 437 PUBLICATION



SCHOOLnews

Fall
2018-2019



*WRHS Earns
National
Performing Arts Award*

Inside this Issue

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From the Superintendent.....2	Washburn Rural Middle School.....6
From the Board of Education.....2	First WARU Walk Run.....7
Washburn Rural High School.....3	Boys & Girls Club Programs.....8
School Highlights.....4-5	



Dr. Scott McWilliams, Superintendent of Schools

Due to the generous support of the Auburn-Washburn Public Schools Foundation and local businesses, we are publicly recognizing and thanking students and employees for giving back to our community with a free community service t-shirt. When I make school visits,

I hand-deliver free community service t-shirts to students and employees who completed three or more hours of community service. Thus far, nearly 300 students and employees have completed approximately 2,000 community service hours outside of the school day and logged their time on the Google form located on the district's website. I am amazed at the positive difference our students and employees are making in our community. Our students and employees have volunteered in hospitals, humane societies, Harvesters, Doorstep, Habitat



for Humanity, Helping Hands, and Let's Help. They have provided support and resources to senior citizens, veterans, homeless, animals, and many others in need of care or support. Thank you to each student and employee who gave back to our community first semester. Your care and willingness to give was noticed and appreciated greatly!

The "Community Service Free T-Shirt Initiative" has been a no cost initiative to the district due to these generous local businesses that funded the cost of the community service t-shirts:

- Auburn-Washburn Public Schools Foundation
- American Electric Company
- American Family Insurance, Brad Noller, Agent
- Farm Bureau Financial Services, April Kelsey, Agent
- Jock's Nitch Sports
- Phoenix Renovation and Restoration, Inc.
- Pur-O-Zone ★



Tom Bruno, Board of Education President

I hope you have had a productive first semester of the school year. I am very surprised how quickly the school year is passing.

I want to take this opportunity to tell you all how much I appreciate the opportunity to serve as your Board of Education President this year. We have had some amazing things happen. First, to help celebrate our second century, CoreFirst generously donated funds for a new scoreboard for our football field, video boards for the gym, and an informational kiosk in the commons area with a database of alumni. That generous donation allows us to focus our funding on assuring our students

success. Second, Washburn Rural was chosen as the 2018 National Performing Arts School of the year. This is wonderful recognition for all of our students and staff who are involved in the many cultural programs that we offer. The award is presented to one high school every fall as a part of National Performing Arts Activities Week.

I would like to highlight one other area that the board remains focused on, given the current climate. The board continues to make school safety and security a top priority, as a safe learning environment is critical for our entire school community. We have increased our partnerships with local first responders and public safety agencies to ensure our students, including my children, have a safe place to learn. School safety will remain a central tenet of all our decisions. ★

Washburn Rural High School was named as the National Performing Arts School of Excellence

This fall Washburn Rural High School was named as the National Performing Arts School of Excellence by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) and the Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA). This award is given to just one school in the nation each year. The performing arts award encompasses band, orchestra, vocal music, theatre, dance, speech, and debate.

Luke Chaffee, Band Director, said “I’m both honored and speechless about the entire thing. It’s amazing to think we were selected from nearly 20,000 high schools. WRHS is a very special place!”

The KSHSAA was notified in May by James Weaver, NFHS Director of Performing Arts, that Kansas was the winning state to select a National Performing Arts School of Excellence for 2018-19.

The Kansas Music Educators Association (KMEA), Kansas Speech Communication Association (KSCA), and the Kansas Thespians along with the KSHSAA collaborated to discuss numerous high schools that have scored exceptionally high in debate, speech, music, and theater over the past five years. The committee and the KSHSAA chose one winner, three finalists, and 11 commended high schools from across Kansas. Washburn Rural beat out finalists Blue Valley North High School, Blue Valley Southwest High School, and Sterling High School to win the top award.

“We have outstanding performing arts schools in the state of Kansas. Being recognized nationally is a wonderful testimony to our schools’ professionalism and efforts with students,” said Craig Manteuffel, KSHSAA. “Even though this NFHS award is for 2018-19, the KSHSAA has decided to make this an annual state award, as we continue to celebrate our tremendous



performing arts programs in our schools!”

Washburn Rural High School’s administration and performing arts department was officially recognized by Weaver (NFHS) and the KSHSAA at halftime of their home football game on September 28th.

Robert Owens, Speech and Theatre teacher said “What it boils down to is the quality of the kids we

work with and the commitment our administration has to supporting us and our programs. It is due to the hard work and dedication of our students. They are what drives these programs and this award belongs to them and the generations of students who came before who paved the way for this recognition.”★

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Cover photo by Melissa Kasprzyk (www.centerpiecephotography.com)

On the Cover:

1. Melissa Sauls, Band
2. Cynthia Burgett, Debate & Speech
3. Michael Mills, Vocal Music
4. Timothy Ellis, Debate
5. Connie McGinnis, Theatre & Speech
6. Christopher Exum, Band
7. Jennifer Tiller, Dance
8. Robert Owens, Theatre & Speech
9. Qiyao Marcus, Accompanist
10. Luke Chaffee, Band
11. David Ohse, Orchestra
12. Maeghan Bishop, Theatre & Speech

Auburn Elementary

Auburn Elementary wanted to bring awareness to Type 1 Diabetes after realizing that four students in the school have the disease. In early November, the school hosted Type 1 Diabetes advocate Kent Schnackenberg in an assembly for all students. His mission is to educate people on Type 1 Diabetes and raise awareness. He spoke to the students about the disease and also incorporated messages about character and anti-bullying. Schnackenberg purchased a t-shirt for every student and adult in the school that has the symptoms of Type 1 Diabetes written on it.

The Auburn Elementary parent organization does a yearly fundraiser called “The Amazing Race” and gives about half the earnings to a charity each year. This year, they are donating it to Schnackenberg and Type 1 Diabetes research. ★



Farley Elementary

The Positive Action Group at Farley Elementary ballooned from a family book club to a school-wide community service project. The 15-member club was reading the book, *Slacker*, about a boy who learns the value of getting out and helping



the community. The club launched their own community service project and opened it up

to all students in the school. “We had a lot more participation than I expected,” said sponsor and librarian Lindsay Kufahl.

For the project, the school collected personal hygiene products for Doorstep of Topeka. A total of 3,388 items were collected. “The club members came together to sort the items and assemble them into 255 individual packs for Doorstep,” said Kufahl. They even had items leftover they can use for future projects. “This activity teaches students how to give back to the community,” Kufahl said. “If they learn this at a young age it will continue throughout their lives.” ★

Indian Hills Elementary

In November, Indian Hills students in kindergarten through grade 5 were able to experience Body Venture. Indian Hills food service manager Melinda Thomas coordinated the visit.

“It was important to bring Body Venture in to give the students a different and interesting way to learn about nutrition, physical activity, and the way it effects their bodies,” Thomas said. “It makes learning real in a way that text books can’t teach.”

The activity allows students to enter a giant body and rotate through various station presentations. Students learned about food groups, the importance of hand washing, and which foods support strong teeth, bones, muscles, and a healthy heart. The students also learned that why they should wear a helmet when riding a bike or skateboarding.

“My brain is soft,” said one student named Riley.

After the event Connor stated that “You need exercise every day.”

“Eat healthy, clean your teeth, and if you smoke your lungs will turn black,” Brynn said. ★



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Jay Shideler Elementary

Jay Shideler Elementary has a Chess Club that has been the most successful team in the Topeka area for the past few years. The club formed about four years ago and typically has 30 to 40 students participating. They play in Scholastic chess tournaments against other schools all over Kansas. The club meets at the school once a week from September to March.



“The students seem to enjoy spending time with their peers playing chess in the tournaments and at practice,” said Josh Stimpfle, one of the parent volunteers who helps coach the club. “They also enjoy the success of doing well in the team competitions.” Chess is a lifelong game that helps kids develop critical thinking skills according to Stimpfle. “The kids seem to gain self-esteem from being involved in the team,” he added. In addition to Stimpfle, the parents who are key volunteers include Tracy Keddy and Adeela Chaudry. ★

Pauline Central Primary

Since 2016, Pauline Central has had the highest participation of any school in the October Fast Kids Run. The mile run is put on by the Sunflower State Games for students in preschool through grade 6. This year 92 Pauline Central students ran. The participation prize this year earned the school \$500 to use for PE equipment.

Pauline Central PE teacher Shellie Stahly organizes the student participation and helps prepare the students. “I love to go out and cheer them on or run with them when I can,” Stahly said.

Stahly says the event is a great way for students to get exercise and develop healthy habits. “I had a kindergartner the



first year, and he wasn’t able to run the whole time,” Stahly said. “After that he focused on doing better and he has run the whole time and gotten faster.” ★

Pauline South Intermediate

“This fall at Pauline South we had all students, classroom teachers, and paraeducators involved in a variety of activities to benefit the community,” said Principal Chris Holman. Projects included making 100 blankets for children in hospitals (Project Linus), decorating placemats for Meals on Wheels, making cards for our deployed military soldiers as well as children in hospitals, and animal toys for the Helping Hands Humane Society.



“I hope that students learned that volunteering and giving back to our community is very important,” said librarian Lisa Duncan. The project was led by Duncan with special support from teachers Brittany Weber and Jennifer Leever, library clerk Becky Perdue, and technology aide Cory Mulligan. Holman said the motivation for this project came from superintendent Dr. McWilliams’ vision to develop a spirit of giving back to the community. “Our students and staff found this to be such a rewarding experience that we plan to continue it on an annual basis,” Holman said. ★

Wanamaker Elementary

Students at Wanamaker Elementary who want to get involved in extracurricular activities have plenty of opportunities including Morning Book Club and Mustang Choir.



The Morning Book Club was initiated by two fifth graders and has grown to 22 students in its second year. The student-led club for fifth and sixth graders meets monthly to enjoy a breakfast treat and discuss the recent book they have read. “Through book discussions, students develop a respect for other people’s perspectives and opinions,” said sponsor and librarian Alice Reinert.

The Mustang Choir is a group of more than 50 fourth through sixth graders who love to sing. They meet weekly outside of school to practice, and they perform several times throughout the year. “The students gain confidence from performing and can garner satisfaction from their efforts,” said sponsor and music teacher Patty Ahern. ★

Washburn Rural Middle School

This fall, Washburn Rural Middle School has implemented Falcon Hour each Monday during advisory period. “The purpose of Falcon Hour is to build a positive school culture and create a bond among students as well as with a mentor teacher,” said principal Mark Koepsel. “We want students to support each other, and we want them to become better acquainted with a staff member, whom they can communicate openly and honestly about problems or concerns as well as ideas and interests.”

Koepsel said the time provides an opportunity for grade monitoring, study skills, goal setting, character development, interest surveys, and current events. Students will also be getting help in dealing with the many social issues that teenagers face on a daily basis. “To foster an environment in which students feel safe, secure, and confident in sharing opinions and discussing such issues, it’s imperative that students respect each other, listen to one another, and accept each other’s differences,” Koepsel said.

He said that the initiative grew out of a desire to have a mentorship program to support students, who might be struggling academically or behaviorally. “We were also looking for a way to target the social and emotional needs of all our students,” Koepsel said. “As we explored both concepts, we decided to adjust our EO (Expanded Opportunities) to be more of an advisory-based period in an effort to make



the end of our school day very student-centered.” Also, by moving in that direction, the staff felt like they could provide support for all students. Research of what other secondary schools were doing helped guide development of the Falcon Hour.

As of Thanksgiving, they have had approximately six Falcon Hour meetings. “I’m anxious to see how it develops and grows as we work through the process,” Koepsel said. “It’s too early to know what impact it might have, but the potential it has is significant!” ★



First WARU Walk Run Brings Out Over 100 Participants

The Auburn-Washburn physical education teachers had a goal to put on an event for Auburn-Washburn students, their families, and our community. So, at the start of the school year, they brainstormed and came up with an idea for the WARU Walk Run.

“We wanted to do something that would promote health and wellness as well as be a fun experience for everyone,” said PE department chair and Wanamaker Elementary PE teacher Jessica Weil.

The first WARU Walk Run was held November 17 around the district outdoor education center and athletic fields.

“The event was a success for its first year,” Weil said. “It was cold, but that didn’t seem to stop people from participating and having a good time.”

The physical education department worked together as a professional learning community and divided up jobs to make the 5K possible. In addition to planning, they had to get sponsors to provide t-shirts, medals, etc.

Platinum sponsor
Qdoba Mexican Eats

Gold Sponsors
Goodyear
Kelley Construction

Weil said it was a true district event. “We had help from our food service department with the water, fruit, and coffee, our tech department helped with editing images and our website, the district grounds crew worked to help prepare the course, and Shannon Elwell, our district wellness coordinator, got our goody bags put together,” said Weil. Volunteers included students and staff who helped staff the registration table, the refreshment table, the race course, and the end of the race. Superintendent Dr. Scott McWilliams was the honorary starter for the race. Weil expressed a big thank you for everyone who participated, volunteered, or sponsored the event.

Weil said the PE department wants this to be an annual event that the community looks forward to and a time for students and their families to get together and participate in a fitness activity.

“There are some things that we will tweak,” Weil said, “but we definitely plan to do it again.★



Boys & Girls Clubs of Topeka Expanding Before & After School Programs to Four More Elementary Schools

Starting in January, Boys & Girls Clubs of Topeka will offer before and after school programming at Auburn Elementary, Farley Elementary,

Jay Shideler Elementary, and Wanamaker Elementary. These services will replace “Prime Time” offered by the YMCA. There will be no disruption of service as the YMCA’s before and after school program will cease on December 20th and Boys & Girls Clubs before and after school program will begin on January 3rd. BGCT is in its second year of managing similar programs for the Pauline schools.

Boys & Girls Clubs fees will be based on a student’s current meal status.

Before school fees:

- \$25 regular lunch status
- \$10 reduced lunch status
- \$10 free lunch status

After school fees:

- \$35 regular lunch status
- \$6 reduced lunch status
- \$3 free lunch status



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF TOPEKA**

To enroll, please visit the BGCT parent portal at parentportal.bgctopeka.org.

A \$10 processing fee per child will be applied, and you will need to select a program; AM, PM or both at enrollment.

If you are interested in school day out or summer services, your child can attend the Montara program on those days. That facility is located at 6715 SW Westview Rd.

For additional information or if you have questions, please contact the BGCT membership department at membership@bgctopeka.org or visit www.bgctopeka.org. ★

Key Dates for School Year 2019-2020

- August 13 – First Day of School
- September 2 & 23 – No School
- October 4, 17-18 – No School
- November 27-29 – No School
- December 23-January 3 – Winter Break
- January 20 – No School
- February 20-21 – No School
- March 6 – No School
- March 9-13 – Spring Break
- April 10 – No School
- April 13 – No School Unless Snow Makeup
- May 1 – No School
- May 21 – Last Day of School

See complete calendar at www.usd437.net. ★