



**UNION SPRINGS**  
CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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# SPRING BOARD

FALL/WINTER 2021

**Dear Community Member:**

As fall quickly turns to winter, and the Thanksgiving and holiday season is upon us, I wanted to take a moment to say, "thank you." Thank you for your support, your encouragement, and your commitment to our students and district. The past year and a half or so, has been challenging on so many levels, and yet, as our students take the field, the court, and the stage, and classrooms that once were silenced by the pandemic reemerge as places of inquiry, discussion, and learning, my heart is full. While we have learned much about our need to improve our technological infrastructure, to build our capacity to pivot our instructional models to more authentically engage our students, and to foster better outreach to those who need support, our constant has remained the same: your children are the reason for our existence, and the best part of who are as a district.

The work ahead of us will require additional efforts to continue our progress as we fully reopen the district. While some students are thriving, others require additional help and support as academics step back into a more dominant daily focus. The district has extra help available for students and I would strongly encourage any student who needs additional supports in doing their best work, to reach out to their teacher or principal to access those services. Additionally, our counseling staff (Ms. Wittchen at AJ Smith, Ms. DeWolf at the Middle School and Ms. Cole and Ms. Darnell at the High School) are available to support students who need additional supports in navigating school or working through other social/emotional concerns.

The district also faces ongoing labor shortages. The rapid changes in the labor markets and the global pandemic, along with the ability of our district to compete with for-profit corporations for labor at various price points, has made the reopening of school a unique challenge. We are currently looking for substitute teachers and substitute bus drivers, and we have many open full-time positions in our facilities and maintenance department (such as cleaners, custodians, groundskeepers). While we have managed the opening months of school with the labor shortage, the coming snow, the increase use of the building for athletic competitions, and our desire to keep our facilities in good shape, requires us have a fully staffed maintenance and facilities department to be at our best. As with most organizations, delays in getting certain products have also presented us with some unique challenges: copier toner, electronic replacements and computer repairs, foodstuffs for school lunches, all have been on backorder or delayed. We are quickly finding alternates and we appreciate your understanding as we navigate these supply chain disruptions.

All in all, however, we are getting back on track, and diligently working to provide your students and our community with a strong educational experience. It is my privilege to be a part of this community and to work alongside all of you as together, we support our students in their pursuit of excellence. I wish you all a wonderful holiday season.



Sincerely,

**Jarett S. Powers, Ed.D.**  
Superintendent

*More Photos Inside*



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# Halloween Parades at AJ Smith Elementary



## Mrs. Wittchen Sets Up 'Positive Affirmation Teller Booth'

Looking to tie in positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) with some Halloween fun, AJ Smith Elementary School Counselor Laura Wittchen set up an exciting "Positive Affirmation Teller Booth."

"During a PBIS committee meeting, we were discussing various ways to promote PBIS in the community and have students spend their "wolfbucks" during Halloween," Wittchen said. "The thought came to me that I could be a fortune teller named "Madam W" that gives students positive affirmations during lunch."

Initially, Wittchen thought her new character would come once a year during the week of Halloween. However, the teller booth was a huge hit with students, so future appearances seem likely.

"In the hallway, students asked me if Madam W will come back soon," said Wittchen. "And, some students told me they want Madam W to come back with her Magic 8 Ball."

"Spreading positivity, joy, and kindness is incredibly important to me. I believe we begin healing when we are surrounded by love, laughter, and optimism," Wittchen said.



## A Message From AJ Smith Principal Sheila LaDouce:

### Hello AJ Smith Community!

As we near the end of our first marking period of school, I once again would like to thank our entire community for your continual support as we navigate through the fall season. I can honestly say we are in a good place here at Andrew J. Smith Elementary. Students have settled into day to day learning and teachers are beyond thrilled to have classrooms full of students as they develop a steady routine.

Our Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework for all teachers and students is in full swing again this year. Through this evidence-based systems approach, students achieve improved social and academic outcomes. Our **Way of the Wolf** ("WOW") motto works to get student buy in to behaviors that in turn target academic success.

Supporting AJ with our PBIS program is our new guidance counselor, Laura Wittchen. Laura comes to us with an extensive counseling background and some serious positive energy. We look forward to Laura sharing her positivity with our school community.

Our holiday concerts will be slightly modified this year, the good news is that concerts will take place for grades K-3. However, the delivery of each will look a bit different than concerts in past years. Fourth grade students will have a stand-alone band and chorus concert this spring. A letter will be sent home after Thanksgiving to share the logistics and times of each concert event.

From all of us at AJ Smith Elementary- Happy Holidays!

**Mrs. Sheila LaDouce**  
Principal of Special Programs  
Andrew J. Smith Elementary



## AJ Smith Elementary Students Build Their Own Tricycle

Students in Gretchen Gilmore's first grade class at AJ Smith Elementary School showcased impressive teamwork while recently building a tricycle.

Gilmore said over the summer she was researching different Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) activities and stumbled across Omagles, which are sets of plastic tubes, joints, wheels and clips that can be used to build a variety of objects.

"There are about 40 options of what to build. We started with a vote to decide what we would like to build first, and the tricycle was the winner - beating out a wheelbarrow and a car," said Gilmore.

A digital instruction manual was provided with picture instructions, making it easy enough for a younger student to follow along step by step. After some hard work and revisions, the class completed their project.

When asked what they liked best about the tricycle, students said they were happy to work together and enjoyed riding the tricycle. One student, Rosa, mentioned that the class accidentally forgot to add a part while building the tricycle, and worked together to fix their mistake and complete their project.

Gilmore said the project was perfect for the class to work on during a rainy day, and that the class intends to build a jungle gym next.

## A Message From MS Principal Mrs. Mullen:

### Happy Autumn, Middle School Families,

This year, the Middle School Wolf Pack has hit the ground running! We have celebrated our Way Of the Wolf students of the month for September and October, planned homeroom competitions and various activities through our Student government, welcomed families at our Open House, and celebrated incredible accomplishments of our students! I will hope to cover most of these exciting events here in this letter, but please follow us on Twitter as there is so much we celebrate each week: @UnionSpringsMS

Our Middle School Wolf Pack has begun this year dedicated to standing up to bullying. October was National Bullying Prevention Month and to unite together, we wore blue as part of the National #BlueUp anti-bullying campaign. Students made posters encouraging all to be upstanders against bullying in our school community. Homerooms also participated in a door decorating competition to feature this theme and to celebrate Red Ribbon Week. Our school spirit is strong and we have much more planned as the year goes on!

We have celebrated the accomplishments of our students in the classroom, in athletics, and in theater in these first few months. Twenty-six students were inducted into the National Junior Honor Society this fall! We are so proud to have welcomed so many exemplary students as members of this prestigious society. Our athletes have brought so much joy and spirit to our school this season! Whether they play on our campus or travel to merge with other districts, our student athletes are dedicated role models of our school in the classroom and in play. We are excited to be starting our winter season of modified sports and to continue to cheer on our Wolves!

The cast and crew of Matilda Jr. put on a fantastic performance for our entire school community! We were overwhelmed with the generosity of volunteers, donors, and families who came out to support our students. "Thank you" does not nearly begin to express the gratitude we have for the hard work and dedication that went into these performances, but thank you all just the same. The talent of our students is exceptional and we cannot wait to see what more the future holds!

As the first quarter of academics ends, we encourage students to continue to stay 10th period for extra help and to enhance your knowledge in your classes. Our students are bringing back many beloved activities and inspiring the creation of many more! We want everyone to be academically eligible and participate in these activities so please: keep on track with your studies, stay 10th period, and stay after for our Academic Help from 3-5PM, Monday through Thursday.

In Wolf Pack Pride,  
**Mrs. Breana Mullen**  
 Middle School Principal



## 26 Students Inducted into National Junior Honor Society

By showcasing service, scholarship, leadership and character, more than two dozen Union Springs Middle School students were recently inducted into the National Junior Honor Society.

Principal Breana Mullen, who served as Master of Ceremonies for the induction, noted how proud she was of the dedication and commitment each student displayed by being inducted into the Frontenac Chapter of the NJHS.

As NJHS President Tyler Lutkins led the tapping ceremony, Mullen was joined by NJHS Co-Advisers Mrs. Coppola and Mrs. Hoadley in the presentation of certificates. Mullen then led the students in the reciting of the NJHS pledge, signifying their official membership status.

## Middle-Schoolers Participate in Red Ribbon Week



For the month of October, middle school students participated in Anti-Bullying Month, Unity Day, and Red Ribbon Week (which is the largest drug-abuse prevention campaign in the United States). Students wrapped up the month by holding a door decorating contest featuring messages about anti-bullying, unity, kindness and more.

## A Message From HS Principal Jason Dentel:

### Hello High School Families,

As I sit to write this letter, we are entering our third month of school. We have completed our fall sports season and we begin preparations for the winter season. The prom, which was delayed from last school year, was held in November also. We continue to plan our traditional events while maintaining COVID protocols.

The third marking period will start on December 6th, and our staff continues to work with our students to help them be successful. We honored some students at our National Honor Society induction and Fall Sports Awards nights.

Here is some other important information for our High School families:

**Thankfulness** - In November, we took an opportunity for our students to recognize staff members they were thankful for. Our teachers have said that these tiny moments have made their days. Staff will be doing the same in the coming months.

**After-School Opportunities** - I have observed that many of our students do not utilize their resources after school. We have two different intervention periods.

**Monday through Thursday 2:20- 3PM** - Our teachers are available for extra help.

Good times to stay:

- Before an upcoming test.
- When I missed a class
- When I am struggling with an assignment.
- When I am ineligible for a class.

### **Tutoring Monday through Thursday from 3-5PM:**

These are subject-specific, and there are signs and announcements about the locations. This time is good if a student is struggling with multiple concepts in a subject. As the year moves on, we will target some Regents preparation with these times.

**English 11 Regents** - Our juniors will be taking their English Regents in January. A letter went home to families on this decision.

I have met many families, and the support that is given to the High School is remarkable. We, as high school staff, continue to work to help our students pursue excellence.

As always, don't hesitate to get in touch with me if you have any questions.

**Mr. Jason Dentel**  
High School Principal



## Seventeen Inducted into National Honor Society

Seventeen Union Springs High School students were recognized for their academic success and community service during a recent National Honor Society (NHS) Induction Ceremony.

By showcasing the four pillars of the organization – service, scholarship, leadership and character – students joined the school's Aquilifer Chapter of the society.

Current National Honor Society member Hannah Morehouse started the ceremony by leading the pledge to the flag. NHS Adviser Stephanie Berry then explained of the selection process of new members.

Berry then introduced guest speaker Mary Burtless, a community member, educator and businesswoman. Burtless provided an endearing speech to the students, noting how proud they should be of their induction.

A tapping ceremony was then held to welcome the new members to the NHS. Berry was joined by Superintendent Dr. Jarett Powers to present the new members with certifications and pins.

High School Principal Jason Dentel concluded the ceremony by reciting the NHS pledge with the new members, officially signifying their membership into the organization.



## High School Students Enjoy Research on Seneca Lake



Students at Union Springs High School were able to take what they're learning in the classroom and apply it on the waters of Seneca Lake.

Students in Roberta Palmiotto's class were able to participate in "Science on Seneca," a program sponsored by Hobart and William Smith Colleges that allows students to do water testing on Seneca Lake.

"The student results are added to the database at Hobart and William Smith Colleges. They have over 25 years of data about the dissolved oxygen, chloride concentration, pH and types of algae and plankton that are present," said Palmiotto.

Palmiotto said the experience is a unique opportunity for students to do "real" science that will be part of a permanent database.

"Accuracy is very important of course, so students practice some of the chemical testing before the trip," said Palmiotto. "I have done this trip for about 12 years with retired teacher Mr. John Murphy."

## Thank You Nurse Jane!



Students at AJ Smith Elementary School surprised Nurse Jane Bacon with a poster each student signed to thank her for everything she does for the school!



## Fall Athletes Honored During Awards Ceremony

Fall athletes and teams were recently honored during an Awards Ceremony. Coaches from each fall sports program recapped their seasons and handed out individual awards. Pictured above, individual winners from each program proudly stand with their awards.

## Staff Honored for Their Service on Veterans Day

For Veterans Day, students wanted to surprise staff members who served in the military. Union Springs CSD thanks all military personnel for their service!



Pictured above, Mr. Palmiotto's class built and delivered a custom wooden flag to Mr. Salls. Pictured left, Mr. Landers poses with his custom wooden flag, as well as a sign created by students and staff at AJ Smith Elementary School. Students also thanked Mr. Lang and Mr. Crehan from the Transportation Department.

## Hrycko Joins BOE as Student Representative

Looking to be a voice for the student body, Steven Hrycko was recently sworn in as a student representative for the Union Springs Board of Education.

Hrycko's opportunity reinforces that the Board of Education sees the value in the voice of each student throughout the district.

"I am proud that Steven has this opportunity," said Principal Jason Dentel. "Selfishly, I love the time Steven and I will get discussing the Board agenda and the questions a student might have with items discussed."

Hrycko said he is excited for the opportunity and is looking forward to working with the district and board for the remainder of the year.



## Open Houses Welcome Families to MS/HS

The hallways were recently buzzing with activity at Union Springs Middle School and High School as families and students stopped by for open houses.

Students and parents had an opportunity to talk with teachers, tour the building and explore some of the vendor tables set up throughout the building. For middle school principal Breana Mullen, open house is a great opportunity to meet with families and welcome them to the school.

"Open House is a great way to build the relationships between home and school which are integral to our students' success," Mullen said. "I loved watching students' faces light up as they showed their families a special project they worked on, a bulletin board they helped to create, their locker, and all of their classrooms."

High school principal Jason Dentel said the open house provides families and teachers the platform to have meaningful and important conversations.

"Open house is an opportunity for families to meet the people working with their students. I overheard some great conversations and myself got to meet many of your families," he said.

## Students Use Shutter Speed to Capture Incredible Photos

Students in Lindsay Spaziani's class recently captured breathtaking photos after studying different camera settings, such as ISO, shutter speed and aperture.

Some students photographed the popping of balloons, which required the use of a fast shutter speed. Other students took close up photos of cupcakes, which required adjustments to the camera's aperture (or the size of the lens opening).



# Mark Your Calendars

Dec. 1	AJ Smith Picture Retakes
Dec. 9	AJ Smith Winter Concert (K&1)
Dec. 13	Board of Education Meeting
Dec. 14	AJ Smith Winter Concert (2&3)
Dec. 16	MS/HS Holiday Band Concert
Dec. 20	MS/HS Holiday Chorus Concert
Dec. 20	Board of Education Meeting
Dec. 21	Senior Citizen Holiday Luncheon
Dec. 24-31	Holiday Recess
Jan. 10	Board of Education Meeting
Jan. 17	No School - MLK Jr. Day
Jan. 18-21	MS/HS Mid-Terms
Jan. 24	Board of Education Meeting
Jan. 24-28	MS/HS Mid-Terms & NYS Regents

**FOR A FULL LIST OF EVENTS, VIEW OUR  
CALENDAR ON [WWW.UNIONSPRINGS.ORG](http://WWW.UNIONSPRINGS.ORG)**

## MS Students Shine During Matilda Jr. Performances



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