OPCSD Wraps Up Parent Information Series on Mental and Social Emotional Health

The Orchard Park Central School District recently concluded its three-part Parent Information Series on Mental and Social Emotional Health. The series was designed to raise awareness around suicide, anxiety, and other social emotional issues impacting youth through student support, staff development, resource coordination, and parent involvement. Members of Orchard Park's pupil personnel services staff were present at all of these events to answer parent questions and concerns and to help them get the proper resources if necessary.

“The sessions were well attended and I was pleased with the number of people who are clearly prioritizing mental health. The health and well-being of our students is so significant and that includes our students’ mental health,” said Superintendent Matthew McGarrity. “I would also like to thank Asst. Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction & Pupil Services Dr. Lisa Krueger and her team for organizing the Parent Information Series.”

A panel of local experts (from left to right) Dr. Amanda Wolfley, Dr. Nichol Eaton, Dr. Colleen Mattimore, Officer Kristen Mazur and Officer Brian Lukowski shared their perspectives on technology, screen time, and their effects on youth following the "Screenagers" movie.

The free parent information series kicked off with two presentations of More than Sad: Suicide Prevention for Parents in January and February. Guest speaker Missy Stolfi, who is the director of the Western New York branch of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, discussed how parents can stay informed on this important mental health issue. She spoke about signs of depression and other mental health problems, concerning behaviors, how to initiate conversations with your child, and how to get your child help.

The second installment in the series was a community screening of the IndieFlix Original Documentary, Angst. The film raises awareness around anxiety by exploring its causes, effects, and what we can do about it.

Finally, the award-winning film Screenagers: Growing Up in the Digital Age was presented in late March. After the screening, results from a district-wide fifth grade survey conducted by D.A.R.E. Officer Kristen Mazur were shared. Half of the 297 students in the survey have a cell phone and 83% use at least one social media account daily, with the two most widely held accounts being YouTube and Snapchat. Bearing these results in mind, a panel of local experts including Licensed Psychologist Dr. Nichol Eaton, Pediatricians Dr. Colleen Mattimore and Dr. Amanda Wolfley, and Orchard Park Police Officers Kristen Mazur and Brian Lukowski engaged in a question and answer session that offered insights on how we can help kids navigate the digital world while maintaining healthy relationships. Suggestions

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Third Grade Students Create Live Wax Museums

Third grade students at Eggert Elementary and Mrs. Besecker’s class at Windom Elementary recently put themselves on display by creating live wax museums. The students pretended to be wax sculptures of historical figures as their parents and guests walked through and viewed the museum. As the guests visited the “wax sculptures” they could scan a QR code to watch a pre-recorded video that the students had created. The videos showed the students dressed up as if they were the figure they were representing and the students shared biographical information about their figure.

The students had to select a historical figure that they wanted to know more about and do research on that person’s life by reading a biography. They then put together a presentation sharing facts about their historical figure’s life. Mrs. Holler recorded each student’s presentation and tied it to a QR code. The QR code allowed users to scan the code using a smartphone app and be taken to a link to access the student videos. Letters were sent home inviting the students’ families to come in and check out the museums.

The days the live museums took place students were dressed up in character and stood still as guests watched their work. The museums took place in the Eggert cafeteriorium and in the Windom library.

Parent Information Series Cont.

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included adopting a screen time contract that outlines device usage and expectations. A sample contract can be found on the FMS Psychology website. Also, designate tech free zones in your house or on certain days of the week. Finally, we must realize that as parents and caregivers we set an example and are responsible for our children’s screen time use and abuse.

At the conclusion of the Parent Information Series presentations, a survey was conducted to gather feedback on the series, as well as suggestions for topics in a future parent information series. Based on the responses, the top areas of interest are social media/internet safety, anxiety, resiliency & coping skills, and mental wellness.

According to Dr. Lisa Krueger, “The response and feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. The Parent Information Series will continue in the 2019-2020 school year, and our topics will be based on the feedback we received. We will announce the dates and topics in the fall, and look forward to continuing to work with the families in our community to support the mental well-being of our children and youth.”
Orchard Park Varsity Basketball Team Plays on Cleveland Cavaliers Home Court

The Orchard Park Varsity and JV Basketball teams participated in the High School Hoops experience at Quicken Loans Arena, home of the Cleveland Cavaliers.

The Orchard Park Boys Varsity Basketball team experienced the thrill of a lifetime when they played on an official NBA court on December 14th, 2018. The athletes traveled to Quicken Loans Arena in Ohio, home of the Cleveland Cavaliers, to participate in the High School Hoops experience.

This fan experience package offered through the Cleveland Cavaliers organization gives two high school teams of equal playing ability the rare opportunity to compete on the Cavaliers court either before or immediately after an NBA game. Coach Chris Frankowski reached out to the organization about a year ago to schedule a basketball game for his Varsity team. They were matched up against the Northstar Christian Academy Knights, a private high school from Section V in New York State. The Boys JV team also went along for the trip, allowing them to see what it’s like being courtside.

This high school experience allows participating teams to have full access to an NBA locker room, the PA system, the scoreboard, and a game on the court itself. They can bring along players, families, coaches, and spectators to sit courtside during the event and obtain Cavaliers game tickets as well.

As an additional perk, the OP basketball teams had a meet and greet with Cleveland Cavaliers players Channing Frye and Kevin Love, among others, and were on the court with the players before the NBA game. OP teammates also participated in an autograph session with the Milwaukee Bucks and the Cavs. To round out their visit, the boys walked away with a surprise “gift bag” in the locker room as a thank you for participating.

This event has certainly proved to be a memorable experience for both the student athletes and their families who attended.

D.A.R.E. Graduation

Eggert and Ellicott Elementary fifth grade students graduated from the 15 week D.A.R.E. program on Tuesday, January 8, 2019 and Friday, January 18, 2019, respectively. The students spent the 15 weeks of the program meeting with Orchard Park Police Officer Kristen Mazur learning and discussing ways to appropriately make decisions that could affect their lives.

The fifth grade students were so thrilled to be graduating from D.A.R.E. and to share the information they had learned. A student was selected from each of the classes to recite their D.A.R.E. essays. All of the students that spoke proudly displayed the information that they had learned including the D.A.R.E. decision making model and different side effects that could come from making bad decisions especially regarding drugs and alcohol. Matthew McGarrity, Superintendent of Schools was the guest speaker at Eggert Elementary and Kelsey Anderson from Channel 4 spoke at Ellicott Elementary.

Officer Kristen Mazur states, “It is such an honor teaching D.A.R.E. to the 5th graders. They are an amazing group of kids that are so excited to learn and be a part of this. We are teaching them so much more than just saying no to drugs. We are teaching them life skills to help them make good choices everyday and how to be a good citizen in our community. I love being a part of each of their lives and am so fortunate to be in this position.”

According to Superintendent Matthew McGarrity, “D.A.R.E. is an integral part of our 5th grade curriculum and another way to help keep our students safe. We are continually thankful for the relationship we have with the Orchard Park Police and their support and guidance to ensure the continued safety of our students and staff.”

D.A.R.E. is truly a community program and would not be possible without the support of the Orchard Park Police Department, the District, the town and the local PTO’s and businesses.
OPMS Celebrates Kindness

During the week of January 28th through February 1st, the Orchard Park Middle School participated in The Great Kindness Challenge. The goal was to complete as many acts of kindness as possible in one week. The Middle School held five themed days to promote kindness in different ways. They prepared for the week of kindness with a homeroom Olweus activity that involved each student writing his/her name on a half-sheet of paper and taping it to their backs. Everyone walked around and wrote kind adjectives or compliments with their initials beside it on each classmate’s paper. After five minutes students took the papers off their backs and read what others had written about them. The students discussed with their classmates how it felt to share and receive kindness in this way. These “kindness papers” were posted in students’ lockers as a reminder of the upcoming Kindness Challenge Week. The students also created commercials for morning announcements to get the school excited about the week ahead.

The Great Kindness Challenge began on Monday, January 28th as scheduled but due to weather-related school closings, the Challenge continued into the following week. This experience was a great way for OPMS students to show how they can be kind to one another.

“It’s kind of like weight training. We found that people can actually build up their compassion ‘muscle’ and respond to others’ suffering with care and a desire to help.”
– Dr. Ritchie Davidson, University of Wisconsin

The Great Kindness Challenge at the middle school was dedicated to the late Rosemary Jafarjian Billquist, sister of middle school social studies teacher, Al Jafarjian.

Eggert Recognizes Bus Drivers

Eggert Elementary recognized over 50 Orchard Park Central School District bus drivers at an assembly held on Friday, January 18th. This year at Eggert, the Character Education committee planned to honor people who consistently demonstrate good character traits and go above and beyond what is necessary. The bus drivers in Orchard Park were an obvious example of these positive attributes.

The drivers were invited to attend a breakfast provided by Eggert’s PTO prior to the assembly. At the assembly they received t-shirts and a bag filled with goodies along with pictures, letters and stories from the students. Second grade teacher Mrs. Anne Noe read “Precious Cargo,” a short story from Chicken Soup for the Working Woman’s Soul. The story was written about an Orchard Park bus driver who went above and beyond.

The assembly was a wonderful opportunity for Eggert Elementary students to recognize how much their bus drivers really do. According to Mrs. Noe, “It was the best day ever.”

OPMS students participated in The Great Kindness Challenge at the end of January. Pictured are 6th graders: Kathleen Moran, Abigail Henning and Claire Kosmosinski.

OPMS students do an Olweus activity, writing kind words about their classmates to prepare for the Great Kindness Challenge.

Orchard Park bus drivers were recognized onstage at Eggert Elementary for consistently demonstrating good character traits and going above and beyond.
100 Days Smarter

Mrs. Vuich's class at South Davis celebrated being 100 days smarter by dressing up as if they were 100 years old. Throughout the day, the students participated in activities based on the number 100. The class tested their STEM skills by circulating around different centers with 100 objects each and tried to build a structure that would withstand the "grandma shawl" (aka a wind test) test. The students enjoyed skip counting to 100, responding to writing prompts, and drawing self portraits of themselves as 100 year olds.

Work Based Learning Students Prepare Breakfast

Students from the Orchard Park High School Work Based Learning Crew in grades 9-12, planned, prepared, and served breakfast on January 9th at District Office for the members of WNY C.I.D.E.L. (Committee for Identifying and Developing Educational Leadership).

OPHS STEM Takes Second Place at Tech Wars

Fifty-two Orchard Park High School STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) students took part in the annual Tech Wars competition at Niagara County Community College on January 8th. The students were selected to attend based on quality and readiness of their STEM projects. This is the sixth year Orchard Park students have participated in Tech Wars.

Orchard Park placed second overall in the high school division of the Outstanding Technology Education Program category. Ryan Albert, Jason Hanania, and David Cappello swept the photography event for Orchard Park by placing first, second, and third, respectively.

Orchard Park placed second in the video contest with their submission produced by Isaac Johnson, Sami Detwiller, David Cappelo, and Jenna Crean.

In the Architectural event Jake Janus brought home first place. Nick Descovich placed third in the 3D CAD contest, and Heidi Stravrevski placed third in the T-shirt design contest.

Tech Wars is a competition that brings together students in grades 6 through 12 to face off in a variety of technological and engineering based events. This year, more than 700 students from 26 school districts participated.

Petitions for Candidacy on the Board of Education Due April 22

Petitions for school board candidates in the Orchard Park Central School District are available in the Office of the District Clerk, 2240 Southwestern Blvd, West Seneca, Monday thru Friday during normal business hours.

To be a qualified candidate for the Board of Education you must be a resident of the district for at least one year prior to the election, a citizen of the United States, at least 18 years of age, able to read and write, and cannot be an employee of the district.

The terms of two trustees on the seven-member school board are up for election, Mr. Dwight Eagan and Mr. Robert Mahany. Each term is for three years, July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2022. Candidates must obtain at least 25 valid signatures. Petitions are due in the office of the District Clerk by 5 p.m. on Monday, April 22, 2019.

Public voting on the budget and Board of Education candidates will be held on Tuesday, May 21, 2019 from 7 a.m. - 9 p.m. in the Orchard Park High School Gymnasium. Please use the Freeman Road entrance.

For more information, please visit the Board of Education page at https://www.opschools.org/Page/35.

OPHS STEM Takes Second Place at Tech Wars

Fifty-two Orchard Park High School students attended the Tech Wars competition in January at Niagara County Community College.
Thirteen Orchard Park High School seniors signed their national letters of intent to play their sports at the college level. The seniors signed their letters at a ceremony at the Orchard Park High School on Wednesday, February 6th. Listed below are their bios in alphabetical order by last name.

Victoria Cottrell plans to attend Buffalo State College in the fall to play ice hockey. She has been playing the sport for 12 years and first became interested in it after watching her brother play. Victoria is a goalie for the Buffalo Bisons in addition to the Frontier, Lakeshore, Orchard Park (FLOP) girls hockey team. She loves the support and camaraderie from her teammates and feels that her work ethic and determination to be a stronger player is what makes her successful. It’s been a dream of hers to play at the college level. Victoria chose Buffalo State based on her intended field of study, which is early childhood education, and for its hockey team. She hopes to teach kids and be a coach someday.

Trevor Hoch plans to attend the University of Rochester in the fall to swim. Trevor was introduced to swimming by his parents at a very young age and has swum competitively for 13 years. In addition to being Captain of Orchard Park’s Varsity swim team, he also swims for the Town Wreckers Swim Team and Hickory Hill. Trevor loves everything about swimming, especially the supportive community and competitive nature of the sport. With his older brother as his inspiration for swimming at the college level, Trevor is eager to meet fellow athletes in college that love the sport equally as much. He chose the University of Rochester for its academics and its swim team. Trevor plans to major in electrical engineering in the five-year GEAR program. Trevor credits his success in swimming to his family and teammates who always encourage him to do his best.

Thomas Evans plans to attend Niagara County Community College in the fall to play baseball. He has been playing since he was about four years old. He also plays for the WNY Prospects in addition to Orchard Park. His favorite aspect of the game is hitting, but he also takes pride in playing defense. He loves the work, preparation, and effort that goes in to every game. Thomas feels that what makes him successful is his motivation to grow as a player by always working hard. Thomas has aspired to play college baseball since he was very young. He chose NCCC for their baseball program and hopes to eventually attend a Division 1 school to continue playing the sport. He plans to major in accounting.

Kasey Hollins plans to attend St. Bonaventure University in the fall to play soccer. She has been playing soccer since she was four years old. She also plays for Western New York Flash Academy ECNL. Kasey loves the simplicity of the sport and feels that what makes her successful is her motivation to continue improving herself both on and off the field. She chose St. Bonaventure based on its core values and its student pride. Kasey plans to major in marketing.

Madigan Humiston plans to attend Niagara University in the fall to play Division 1 tennis. She first stepped onto the court when she was seven years old and then began playing competitively at USTA tournaments when she was 14. Madigan feels that playing tennis has taught her to be dedicated and

Get Your Gold Card Today!

Gold Cards entitle district residents age 60 and over to half-price admission to district-sponsored events such as plays, musicals, operettas, and home games. If you or someone you know is 60 or older and is interested in obtaining a Gold Card, please call 209-6222.
Abigail Lillis plans to attend Utica College in the fall to play ice hockey. Abigail has been playing the sport for 12 years and first became interested in it after watching her brother play. She currently plays for the Buffalo Bisons in addition to the Frontier, Lakeshore, Orchard Park (FLOP) girls hockey team. Abigail feels that what makes her successful in hockey is her conscious effort to try her best and work hard. Her humble assumption that playing at the college level wouldn’t be a possibility changed when college coaches began contacting her. She knew immediately that she wanted to continue. She chose Utica College based on its academics and her intended field of study, which will be criminal justice. She hopes to become a criminal investigator or a detective.

Adam Riter plans to attend St. John Fisher College in the fall to play baseball. Adam was first introduced to the sport at age five when he joined Orchard Park Little League. He currently plays for Full Circuit Athletics in addition to Orchard Park. He feels that what makes him successful in baseball is his work ethic and his desire to improve his game. He has always aspired to play baseball at the college level and chose St. John Fisher for its baseball program and its academics. Adam plans to major in accounting and become a CPA.

Joseph Roward plans to attend LaRoche College in the fall to play baseball. Joseph has been playing since age five when he joined Orchard Park Little League. He has also played for the Orchard Park Heat, Buffalo Wings, and the WNY Prospects. Joseph loves the team aspect of the game and wanted to continue playing in college. He became interested in LaRoche College while visiting Pittsburgh for a baseball tournament. He plans to major in business. Joseph is grateful for his parents and coaches who taught him that hard work leads to success.

Joshua McTigue plans to attend Hilbert College in the fall to play baseball. He has been playing since he was four years old when he joined Orchard Park Little League. He has also played on the Orchard Park Thunder and KC Curve travel teams in addition to Orchard Park. Joshua’s main position is pitcher. As one who likes to lead, Joshua loves playing this position because it allows him to have complete control over the game. Joshua has always known he wanted to continue playing baseball in college since it’s been such a big part of his life. He attributes his success in baseball to the support from his dad since he was very young. He chose Hilbert for his intended field of study and its baseball program. He plans to major in criminal justice.

Isabel Sapio plans to attend Canisius College in the fall to swim. She has been swimming since she was eight years old and is currently on the Orchard Park Varsity swim team as well as the Town Wreckers Swim Team. She loves being with teammates who push her to perform better every day and is looking forward to swimming at the college level for the same reason. She says she owes her success in swimming to her coaches and teammates who have always been extremely supportive. She chose Canisius based on her field of study and for its swimming & diving team. She plans to major in psychology.

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OPMS Students Build and Test with STEM Activity

Orchard Park Middle School students in the Phoenix base had some fun building recycled racers during their physics unit in science. Teachers Mr. Dan Braunscheidel and Ms. Christin Brown encourage and challenge their students with thought-provoking questions and hands-on activities to reinforce their learning. A recent project they worked on was creating racers out of recycled material. By connecting this activity into their physics unit on forces, motion, friction, and calculating speed, students were able to witness practical applications from their studies. It also allowed them to discover non-conventional ways in which materials could be used, and that designing a moving vehicle often requires retesting and redesign in order to improve results.

Freshman Boost Classes Work on Soft Skills

In December, Freshman Boost classes at the Orchard Park High School were visited by presenters, Lindsey and Beau Riggs through the “Heads Up” program. The program is in its third year at the high school and is a collaboration between the Orchard Park Foundation for Academic Excellence, Bryant & Stratton College, Orchard Park Chamber of Commerce and the Great Erie Federal Credit Union. The title “Heads Up” comes from the desire to get people, specifically students, out of their devices and into the present. The programs’ training focuses on soft skills; the ability to know how to use a proper handshake, making eye contact while speaking and overall good listening skills. Lindsay and Beau Riggs were trained to present to students through Bryant and Stratton College. Lindsay works for the United Way and Beau works for Northwest Bank. They demonstrated the different types of handshakes that are used in society then honed in on the proper handshake to use in an introduction or at a job interview. The students were able to work on asking and answering open ended questions and the presenters also spoke a little about themselves and their careers while checking in with the students to ensure they were using their close listening skills.

The freshmen were actively engaged and interested in the presentation. Staff at the Orchard Park High School are grateful to the Riggs’ for donating their time to our students to help the students grow in the use of their social skills.

The Freshman Boost program is held one day per six day cycle during the first semester of the school year. The students participate in activities that help prepare them for the adjustment to high school. They have the opportunity to go on a scavenger hunt to help them learn their way around the building. The students also learn study skills, technology tips, college preparation, career planning, stress reduction and a variety of other topics designed to help them along their high school path. Freshman Boost is both a character-building program as well as a program that helps students achieve success in high school. The freshmen meet the Administration, Social Workers, Media Specialists, and the Counselors. The goal of the class is to make connections and allow students to interact in a different forum where they feel safe.
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Lillian Sullivan plans to attend St. Lawrence University in the fall to play tennis. She was introduced to the sport by her father and has been playing for seven years. Lillian loves the competitive aspect of the game and feels that her work ethic and determination are what has made her successful. She chose St. Lawrence for its team, coaches and campus. She plans to major in psychology and has aspirations of becoming an elementary school teacher.

Phillip Vance plans to attend Daemen College in the fall to play tennis. Phil has been playing since he was 12 years old and currently plays competitively at United States Tennis Association (USTA) tournaments. He loves that tennis is a self-reliant, individual sport that allows him to be very competitive. Phil feels that what makes him successful in tennis is his athletic ability, work ethic, and determination to improve his game. He wanted to continue playing in college because he enjoys competition and being on a team. He chose Daemen for its close proximity to home, its size, and its business program. Phil plans to major in business administration and eventually run his own business.

Alex Westcott plans to attend American International College to play football. Alex has been playing football since he was in third grade. He is currently captain and a lineman on the Orchard Park Varsity team. Alex enjoys the camaraderie of being part of a team and always hoped to play at the college level. When schools started reaching out, he knew it would happen. He plans to major in marketing and minor in sports management. After being a sideline assistant for the Buffalo Bills during the 2018 season, he has aspirations of working for the NFL someday.

The Orchard Park Central School District Athletic Department is seeking nominations for the 2019 Hall of Fame class. Selected recipients will be inducted at a breakfast during Homecoming 2019. The nominees will take part in the 2019 parade and will be recognized during half-time of the Homecoming football game.

If you feel there is an athlete, coach or member of the support staff personnel who you would like to nominate, please do so by June 1, 2019. Visit www.opschools.org/athletics, click the “Hall of Fame” tab, and either submit your nomination form online or print it out and send it in to the Athletic Office. For nomination questions, please call the Athletics Office at 209-6280.

Those nominated will be reviewed for current good standing within their respective community and then asked to complete a more detailed resume to be returned for further consideration. Each resume returned will be considered for five years.

If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Orchard Park Central School District Athletic Office at 209-6208.
Hats Off To Our Student Performers!

Eggert Road Elementary students performed “Seussical KIDS” in the Eggert Cafetorium on February 12th-13th.

Ellicott Elementary students performed “Junie B. Jones the Musical JR.” in the Ellicott Cafetorium on February 12th-13th.

South Davis Elementary students performed “Roald Dahl’s Willy Wonka KIDS” at the Middle School on February 13th-14th.

Windom Elementary students performed “The Jungle Book KIDS” in the Windom Cafetorium on February 7th-8th.

Orchard Park High School Drama Club performed the hit Broadway musical “42nd Street” at the High School from March 14th-17th.

A scene from the Orchard Park High School Musical, “42nd Street.”

A scene from the Orchard Park High School Musical, “42nd Street.”
Students in 8th grade Advanced Technology classes worked with Mr. James Roland to design, cut, and finish genre signs for the OPMS Library. Students learned about manufacturing practices and concepts to create computer models, produce toolpaths, and machine their designs with a CNC router.

Office Depot Office Max arranged an in-store collection drive of school supplies to benefit Windom Elementary. Pictured with store representatives are fifth grade students Delaney Rodgers and Thomas Bailey who accepted the generous donations.

Ellicott Elementary Student Council supported the Warm Up Western New York Blanket Drive in early February by collecting dozens of blankets for patients at John R. Oishei Children’s Hospital.

Pictured are some members of the Senior Class of 2019 who sponsored the annual Senior Citizen Spaghetti Dinner at the OPHS on Thursday, February 28th. Dinner was provided by the Olive Garden and desserts were provided by the High School PTO. The OPHS Quartet provided music following the meal.

In January, third, fourth and fifth grade students at South Davis had an opportunity to go snowshoeing with Earth Spirit. The fourth graders even got to use traditional snowshoes (because of their study of the Iroquois). The third and fifth graders used modern snowshoes. Students learned about animal habitats, adaptations and winter survival from the Earth Spirit staff.

Eggert Elementary celebrated Read Across Eggert Day with a 20 minute reading block in the hallway! Students read independently, with partners, and with teachers.
OP Section VI Champions!

The 2018-19 school year has been record breaking with eight section VI team titles in the fall and winter seasons alone.

The Girls Varsity Swimming & Diving team won for the third straight year.

The Boys Varsity Swimming & Diving team