Commencement Ceremony Honors 2019 Graduates

Mattawan’s graduating seniors accepted their diplomas during the 108th annual commencement ceremony at Miller Auditorium on May 24, 2019.

The ceremony opened with Mattawan graduate and choir member Edward Ferran singing the Star Spangled Banner. The graduates were then welcomed by Class of 2019 President Isabelle Hoffman. Following Superintendent Dr. Robin Buchler's greeting, Alexandria Sills, Brianna Smith and Trevor Schantz offered commencement addresses. Principal Tim Eastman recognized the graduating class of 2019 and the presentation of diplomas took place.

Following a long-standing tradition, the new graduates filed outside and tossed their caps in celebration of their achievement.

The Mattawan High School Class of 2019 celebrated 37 Summa Cum Laude students this year. Students who achieve this status must graduate with a grade point average of 4.0 or higher.


Please turn to page 10 to view the lists of students who graduated Magna Cum Laude and Cum Laude and to view additional photos from the commencement ceremony.
Dear Classes of 2019 and 2032,

Class of 2019, you did it! You have walked through all of the grades of your formal K-12 years, gathering lessons, experiences and coping with all the ups and downs that come with living fully. And now you are off. For all the ups and downs that come with lessons, experiences and coping with your formal K-12 years, gathering the tools, skills, and experiences you have sought more education. The workforce. Others will continue your time in school as you head into living fully. And now you are off. For the memories, memories, memories! You are now on your next journey. It is your journey, meant just for you. Take hold, keep your chin up, and enjoy every moment. And at the end, you will say, “I have done well.” You are the only one who can. I wish you the very best, Class of 2019.

Class of 2032, this is it! The beginning of your exciting K-12 journey! There is so much ahead and we are excited to be walking right beside you cheering you on all the way! Ahead of you lies learning to read, write, understand our history, and those fun, fun science experiments! There will be field trips, Makers Night, Winter Family Night, 4th grade Tech Day, 5th grade carnival, 6th grade camp, teams to join, teams to cheer for, talent show, homecoming, prom, and graduation!

Oh, the friends you will make and the memories, memories, memories! We are ready to help you experience as much as you want to fill these 12 years. We already believe you will live fully on your K-12 journey! Welcome aboard!

Empowering the Future...
With Mattawan Pride,
Superintendent Robin K. Buchler, PhD
Mattawan Consolidated School

From the Desk of the Superintendent

Important Dates To Consider And Save

Please mark your calendars for some important and exciting events happening at Mattawan Consolidated School and in the Mattawan community during the summer and early fall.

Check www.mattawanschools.org for continual updates as details, exact times and other information is posted.

Early Elementary School:
- Kindergarten Screening:
  July 29-30, 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
- Summer Reading Program:
  July 9-August 13 on Tuesdays, 9 a.m.-12 p.m. and 3-6 p.m.
- Jump into Kindergarten:
  August 5-16, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
- Open House:
  August 28 (Time TBA)

Later Elementary School:
- New Student Orientation:
  August 22, 10:00-11:30am
- Open House:
  August 28, 5-7pm

Middle School:
- Open House:
  6th Grade, August 26
  Last names A-K from 6-7 p.m.
  Last names L-Z from 7-8 p.m.
  7th & 8th Grade, August 27
  Last names A-K from 6-7 p.m.
  Last names L-Z from 7-8 p.m.

High School:
- Wildcat Bash:
  August 29, time is TBA
- Open House: Date/Time is TBA
- Band Community Performance:
  August 28 at 7:00 p.m.

District & Community:
- Senior Citizen Picnic:
  July 17, 12 p.m., Mattawan Memorial Park
- 2nd Annual Food Truck Festival:
  August 28th from 5:00-9:00 p.m.

The Wildcat Connection is a quarterly Mattawan Consolidated School publication

MCS District Contacts:
District Telephone: 269-668-3361
Superintendent, Dr. Robin K. Buchler
rbuchler@mattawanschools.org
Board of Education President, Scott Sylvester
mcs_school_board@mattawanschools.org
Early Elementary Principal, Becky Moore
bmoore@mattawanschools.org
Later Elementary Principal, John Berlin
jberlin@mattawanschools.org
Middle School Principal, Chip Schuman
cschuman@mattawanschools.org
High School Principal, Tim Eastman
teastman@mattawanschools.org

Wildcat Connection Editor & Photographer,
Carolyn Greer; cgreer@mattawanschools.org

Horace said, “Whatever hour you have been given, take it with a grateful hand. Don’t postpone your joys from year to year, so that in whatever place you have been, you may say that you lived happily.”

Along the way, you will stumble. Count on it. Be ready for it. Grow from it. But remember, adversity is not a detour; it is part of the path. You will encounter obstacles. You will make mistakes. Be grateful for both. Your obstacles and mistakes will be your greatest teachers. And the only way not to make mistakes is to do nothing, which is the biggest mistake of all.

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Keep a growth mindset and view every experience as nothing more than an opportunity to learn and to help you grow stronger. When you lay your head down at night, ask yourself, “Have I lived fully today?”

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Alumnus Is Guest Speaker At PALS Conference Following University Commencement Address

Alex Fruin's accomplishments are many. The 2014 Mattawan High School graduate completed his studies as a Musical Arts major at Roosevelt University in Chicago this spring. On May 10, Fruin was invited to address his fellow graduates during the commencement ceremony. His message: “Believe in our ability to bring about change.”

Alex Fruin, above, graduated from Mattawan High School in 2014.

Fruin dedicated his speech to his late brother, Nathan Fruin, who encouraged him to go to college and pursue his passion for music. Alex Fruin, who is the first in his family to graduate from college with an undergraduate degree said, “My brother was a model for what it means to be compassionate and hard-working, and he certainly has inspired me in what I do today.” Nathan was a Peer Assistant Leader (PAL) who graduated from Mattawan High School in 2011.

Among his achievements while in college, Fruin was a trainee with the Obama Foundation Community Leadership Corps in Chicago, received the Theodore Presser Undergraduate Scholarship, received the Make Music Chicago's James Weging Memorial Internship, earned a Yamaha Fellowship to attend the Eastman School of Music’s Leadership Academy and was the sole student winner of Roosevelt’s inaugural Presidential Social Justice Award.

Roosevelt Assistant Professor of Music History Thomas Kernan said, “It is difficult to identify another student who has taken more thorough advantage of every opportunity that Roosevelt provided him.”

As a Mattawan student, Fruin was actively involved in both band and choir, as well as PALS, where he proved to be a leader on all fronts. Mattawan choir director and Fruin’s first voice teacher, David Hook, encouraged him to explore the opportunity of college with a degree in music.

Retired Mattawan Band Director Mark Greer was Fruin’s band instructor for seven years. “Alex’s positive attitude was infectious,” Greer said. “He inspired everyone around him with his absolute positivity. He was, and is, mature beyond his years. The day after his brother Nate passed away, 185 band students gathered in the auditorium to be together.

As a school-wide crisis response was being implemented, Alex, who had just lost his dear brother, took charge, letting everyone know it was okay to grieve and cry and to ‘Be like Nate.’

Right on the heels of giving his inspiring college commencement speech, Fruin was invited to appear as the guest speaker at the Annual PALS Conference held at Mattawan High School on May 14. PALS Program Facilitator Roberta Flachier reminisced about Fruin’s years as a PAL, noting, “Alex changed the school culture here for the better. He helped other students to understand that school is a safe environment in which to seek help and acceptance.”

Diploma in hand, Fruin now hopes to become a leader of a performing arts organization and carry out the strategic planning and adherence to social-justice principles that he outlined in his award-winning thesis.

Students Enjoy Indoor Farmer’s Market

Director of Dining Services David Rose and his staff worked with the third grade teachers to create an indoor farmer’s market on April 30, 2019. Rose said, “It was a produce feeding frenzy as more than 130 students purchased their produce with school dollars that they earned from doing classroom assignments as instructed by their teachers.

During the event they made up shopping lists for those produce items that they wished to purchase with their school dollars, learned about important life skills, purchasing from local farmers, nutrition education, controlling food waste, and how to prepare some of the more unique and unusual produce that we had available.

They also had the opportunity to take recipes and nutrition activities home with them to prepare with their families.

It was a wonderful experience to see so many students get excited about fresh produce.”

Shoppers Beckett, Lucas, Isaiah and Brayden are pictured from left to right.

Clubs Work To Ensure Bee Survival

As soon as weather permitted, members of Mattawan Middle School’s Bee Inspired beekeepers club and the Conservation Club set out to plant bee-friendly plants and shrubs in the Middle School courtyard.

From left, Chloe Crandell, Ainsley Markham and Sophia Crandell work in the courtyard planting shrubs.

A slight drizzle of rain did not stop the students from digging in and completing their task. The outcome was a beautifully arranged array of plants that are all friendly to bees and will encourage bee pollination.

Bee Inspired Club Advisor Eric Hayner and Conservation Club Advisor Brian Newman, both Middle School teachers, wrote a grant to purchase the plants and the two worked alongside the students to get the courtyard job done. Students dug holes, hauled mulch, set the plants and watered them. A group of boys even decided to give their plants names like, Kenneth, Susie, Jimbo, and Bob Ross. Clearly, the students and their teachers enjoyed the entire project.

Christopher Asselin finishes planting a shrub for the bee pollination project.
Middle School Art Project Serves Those In Need

Students in Mr. Kevin Hamman's seventh and eighth grade art classes used their talents to raise money for organizations that help at-risk or homeless children in the area. According to a 2018 WWMT news report, data showed that Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS) has the most homeless students of any district in Michigan.

The Mattawan Middle School students decided to raise awareness about the issue and devoted several weeks to creating paper-collage portraits out of magazine clippings. Each project featured a celebrity who experienced homelessness at some point in their lives. The art pieces have been auctioned off and Hamman said all money raised would be donated to the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Kalamazoo, Mattawan Supplies for Success, Mattawan Food Packs and Mattawan Area Pantry.

The students chose to create portraits of celebrities including Halle Berry, Chris Pratt and Jennifer Lopez. Halle Berry learned of the fundraiser and took to Twitter to share her feelings by tweeting, “This feeds my soul.”

Pictured with their paper-collage portraits are, back row from left, Landis Mills, Grazyna Przybocki, Alexis Wild, Ava Brown and Sarah Hakala. In the front row from left are Caitlin Eliuk and Tessa Podd.

Award Winning Author And Illustrator Visits Mattawan

By all appearances, it was as if a rock star had descended upon Mattawan Later Elementary School (LES) during a regular school day on May 17. And by all appearances - from the cheering to the rapt attention to the hallway receiving lines - that is exactly what happened when author and illustrator Chris Van Dusen made his appearance.

Sponsored by Bookbug independent bookstore in Kalamazoo, Van Dusen visited the LES cafeteria much to the delight of his young audience. The presentation was live-streamed to the rest of the building as well as the Early Elementary School, (EES) so no child would miss out.

Van Dusen is widely known for his Mercy Watson book series illustrations which he collaborates on with Newbery Medal winner and author, Kate DiCamillo. Van Dusen has penned many of his own picture books such as the Mr. Magee series, The Circus Ship and others.

During his presentation, Van Dusen shared his love of writing and drawing with the children. He read aloud the first Mercy Watson picture book and demonstrated how he draws several of his characters and why they look the way they do. He took time to answer questions and to visit the EES as the children lined the hallways for a chance to shake Van Dusen’s hand.

A love of reading has been cultivated and instilled at Mattawan’s elementary schools, and Van Dusen added even more inspiration through his visit. Before he left for his next speaking engagement, this beloved author and illustrator signed stacks of preordered books for his young fans.

Author and illustrator Chris Van Dusen signs his books during a visit to Mattawan Later Elementary School.

Expanded Second Annual Food Truck Festival Is Scheduled

The second Annual Food Truck Festival has been scheduled for Wednesday, August 28, from 5:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Both elementary schools will hold their open houses that evening and the Mattawan Marching Band will present its community night rehearsal.

Calvin Hinds will perform during the dinner hour of the Food Truck Festival and currently a live band is being sought to provide music for dancing in the parking lot.

Additional food trucks, including a gluten-free truck have been added to this summer’s festival. Any group or organization who would like to have a table at the festival is encouraged to email Ashley LaVanWay at alavanway@mattawanschools.org. Typically, one table and two chairs will be provided per group, as well as a sign. Additional requests should be made to LaVanWay.

Donna Coles and son Tim Coles relax after enjoying dinner at the 2018 Food Truck Festival.
Catalyst University Expands, Launches High School Catalyst

In 2011, Southwest Michigan First launched a powerful leadership event called Catalyst University, bringing in leaders from all walks of life for a day filled with inspirational, world-class speakers. For the past two years, Mattawan has found the funding to send a group of six high school student leaders and a few staff members to Catalyst University.

This year, Southwest Michigan First introduced High School Catalyst, fulfilling a dream of Mattawan’s leadership as well as Southwest Michigan First, to expand this opportunity to teens across Kalamazoo and Van Buren counties.

According to www.catalystuniversity.me, “By popular demand and after studying a careful, targeted approach, Southwest Michigan First has identified key areas impacting our youth’s ability to thrive as they reach higher education opportunities. New in 2019, we’ll be offering a special day event for Fall 2019 high school sophomores, juniors and seniors that is intentionally designed to engage, inspire and prepare youth in a way that complements their education and spurs them to strive toward achievement. This transformational experience will share tangible lessons, tools and inspiration for pursuing a college education and preparing to contribute meaningfully to the world for years to come.”

The Mattawan Administration wishes to thank donors, Scott and Lisa Sylvester, Dr. Teresa Seim, the Mattawan Business Association, Sharon Seelye, and the Mattawan Public Education Foundation, along with a Kalamazoo Foundation, who generously donated the funding to send 48 Mattawan sophomores and juniors to the first High School Catalyst this June.

Superintendent Dr. Robin Buchler said, “We are so excited for this opportunity for these young leaders and cannot wait to see where this experience will lead them.”

 Presidents On Parade Delights Children And Their Families

President on Parade is a collaborative program between the classes of second grade teachers Deborah Milka and Ashley Johnson. Each spring the students spend several weeks learning five traditional American patriotic songs and an individual portion to memorize. With the help of parents, classmates, teachers and other classroom helpers, the children learn and practice their parts. Prior to presentation day, the classes rehearse together twice in the classrooms and once on the stage.

Milka said, “On the day of our presentation we dress in red, white and blue and perform for parents and family members on our stage. This is a wonderful way to teach the children the importance of patriotism, the history of the presidents and public speaking while also having a little fun. At the end of our presentation our families join us for punch and cookies.”

Johnson added, “Our wonderful custodial staff set up and cleaned up our performance area, on top of their regular breakfast and lunch schedules, which helped make the day a success.”

Six Bond Projects Are Taking Shape And Moving Forward

After a busy spring of meetings, planning, budget forecasting, and implementation, several projects are underway. The following is a condensed summary of those projects for the months of March, April and May, 2019, as presented by Project Manager Tom Kloosterman of TowerPinkster:

1. Technology and Safety - Much of the equipment and installation work has already been bid. Many new devices have been ordered and are being integrated into student and staff activities already. Most of the work will be completed by Labor Day, 2019.

2. Roof Replacement - The extensive work needed at the middle and high schools will largely be accomplished during the summer of 2020. Some immediate work will be accomplished during the 2019 summer months to address current problems.

3. Pavement Replacement - The construction documents are out for bid, with the bid opening on May 23. Most of the pavement replacement and curb/sidewalk repair will occur in two phases.

4. Athletic Team Building - The construction documents are being completed with bidding to follow. Completion of the project is expected to be ready for use during spring 2020 sports.

5. Remodeling of Former Later Elementary School Building Into Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC), District Administration Offices, and Community Connection Spaces - The project is being designed currently with the release for bids expected in August. After bid award and permitting, expect site activity to begin in the fall. Completion of construction and occupancy will not happen before the Fall of 2020.

6. East Campus Demolition & Redevelopment - Survey work has been completed and analysis and design continue. Redevelopment of this part of campus will not be complete before late fall 2020.

A full construction update as well as other information on the 2018 bond may be found on the District’s website at www.mattawanschools.org.

Regarding the project process, Superintendent Dr. Robin Buchler said in a message to staff and community last month, “As the vision of this bond issue starts to come to life, the District hopes that the community will be as excited as we have been during the planning stages. But we also ask for your patience during this process and your cooperation in maintaining a safe environment for all during construction. We will be trying to keep you informed of progress over the next several months. As questions arise, please allow us to respond as best we can. This is an exciting time for Mattawan Consolidated School. Let’s enjoy it together!”

A conceptual drawing provided by TowerPinkster illustrates the proposed athletic team building.
District Abounds With Recognitions, Honors And Awards

Melinda Boydston, right, receives the Paul Blewett Friend of Education Award.

Mattawan Educator of the Year Karen Ivens was nominated by her colleagues and selected as this year’s Partners in Education (PIE) Award winner. Along with other teachers from local Michigan Education Association units across Kalamazoo County, Ivens was honored on May 6 at the Fetzer Center of Western Michigan University.

Ivens’ colleagues Nicole Eddy and Jolene Davey had these words to say about their friend:

“Teaching can be challenging. One of the things that makes it easier is the opportunity to work with colleagues who bring joy everywhere they go. When you get a friendly smile or kind word from another teacher, it can make your day so much better. For many years, our school community has been blessed to have that type of teacher.

We are here tonight to honor our good friend and colleague, Karen Ivens, for the Partners in Education Teacher of the Year.

Karen has guided and taught many grade students who won first place in sixth and seventh grade, second place in eighth grade and first place overall for the tri-county area.

The sixth grade team, pictured at left, is comprised of Lauren Fitzgerald, Aubrey Headapohl, Andy Blomeke, Hayden Deming and Zachary Schining. Seventh grade team members are Jaxon Engels, Sarah Hakala, Megan Zoltowski, Bridget Dorman and Jonathan Mazelin. The eighth grade team consists of Jacob Waterlander, Emma Coleman, Katie Blomeke, Samantha Sobol and Maxwell Scott.

Public Education Advocate Melinda Boydston was among three Michigan Education Association (MEA) members who received the Paul Blewett Friend of Education Award this spring. According to the MEA brochure Awards for Human Rights & Excellence, “This monetary award honors individuals who in the previous year did the most to improve the lives of teachers, to further the goals of the MEA or to further the cause of public education. Anyone, either inside or outside of the Association, is eligible to receive the award, as long as they are from Michigan.”

Boydston is a technology teacher at Mattawan Middle School and vice president of the local education association. She is best known for her dedication to the District’s Homecoming Hot Dog Sale and other fundraising efforts which provide money for several scholarships for students. In addition, Boydston drove the technology curriculum development of three grades and is a voice for student and staff technology needs. She has students over her years of teaching at the Early Elementary and she is proudly retiring after this year with 38 years in education. She has made countless connections with students and families in our district as well as with her fellow teachers and co-workers.

A commitment to the profession is another characteristic of our honoree. Karen has been a very active member of our teachers’ union for over two decades, performing various roles. She has assisted countless teachers with care and has always been helpful to everyone as well as being an invaluable link between teachers and administration.

We appreciate her knowledge of teaching young children and her support and care for others.

It is our privilege and honor to thank her for her years of service to all.”

Educational Hero Award Winners

Rebekah Hoffman and Barb Cooper (Later Elementary School Special Education team), and Elise Ripmaster (High School Band Booster President) received Mattawan’s Educational Hero Award this spring.

Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) Award Winner Lindsey Dorman, an Early Elementary School parapro, received the 2019 PAC award this spring. PAC members serve as a voice for families whose children receive special education programs and/or services within Van Buren County. PAC members are recommended for appointment by their local school district board of education and approved by the VBISD Board of Education.
Third Annual Makers Night Provides Fun And Enlightenment

The third annual Makers Night was held in April at Mattawan Early Elementary School and the event’s popularity seems to grow each year.

Makers Night is an evening of fun packed with activities where students can demonstrate their Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM) skills. Everyone who attended could also enjoy Blushberry Smoothies, made by the Dining Services staff using the Discovery Kitchen Blender Bike. Students and parents alike sampled the smoothies and took home nutrition stickers and a recipe card. For those who missed the event, the recipe is provided here:

**Blushberry Smoothie:**

**Ingredients:**
- 1 cup Jellied Cranberry Sauce
- 1 cup 100% Apple Juice
- 4 cups Low Fat Vanilla Yogurt
- 1 tsp. Orange Zest

**Directions:**
1. Chill cranberry sauce and apple juice.
2. In a large bowl, or blender, mix together the yogurt, cranberry sauce and apple juice.
3. Top with orange zest.

**Portion size:** 8 fl. oz.
**Servings per recipe:** 6
**Calories per 8 oz. serving:** 235.4

Teacher Jason DeLille whips up a batch of Blushberry Smoothies using the Discovery Kitchen Blender Bike with help from Shelly Currier, Elementary School Production Lead.

MPEF Provides Scholarships And Funding For Many

The Mattawan Public Education Foundation's (MPEF) scholarship program reached new heights as its very first $2,000 scholarship was awarded, courtesy of Charles River Laboratories. Below is the list of all scholarships awarded by MPEF this spring:

- Charles River Scholarship: William Soltész
- Caleb J. Kerwin Scholarship: Olivia Chalenko
- Taylor E. Grainger Scholarship: Grace Bonnema, Ashley Brush, Isabelle Hoffman and Daniel Pirbhai
- Lydia and Norman Moyle Memorial Scholarship: Madison Bird and Alex Sills
- Robert C. Cretsinger Scholarship: Kyle Van Liere
- Western Diversified Plastics, LLC & Mol-Son, Inc., LLC Scholarship: Alex Boyd
- David Hinkel Memorial Scholarship: Kyle Van Liere
- Jackson Peebles Memorial Scholarship: Alison Thorpe
- Jon-Miguel Porn Memorial PALS Scholarship: Grace Barnett
- Renee Dubs Scholarship: Abbi Ryder
- Mattawan Little League Scholarship: Rachel Murphy
- James Arnold Scholarship: Mary Fergus

On the list of unprecedented growth and giving was MPEF’s bold decision to give its largest-ever single gift of $25,000. This gift kick-started the very first capital campaign to renovate the Mattawan High School Media Center. Donations are still rolling in for this campaign as the steady climb of reaching the organization’s goal of $125,000 continues.

An MPEF member recently stated, “When the Foundation set out to transform the media center space into a 21st-century learning environment, we had no idea the amount of enthusiasm and support that this project would generate. We are so close to our goal of $125,000; our current donations total $102,000. Please help us meet this goal by donating today. Details about the renovation and how you can give are featured on our website at mpef.org.”

In other MPEF news, the organization invites the community to join in the 11th annual Charity Golf Classic on Friday, June 28th, 2019 at Heritage Glen Golf Course. The entry fee is $100 which includes 18 holes with a cart, a box lunch, drinks, dinner and fun! A portion of the registration is tax-deductible.

In addition to the golf outing, registration for the Wildcat Track and Trail is now open so mark your calendar for Saturday, August 3rd, 2019. Last year this event, with the help of the local community, raised $6,500 for MPEF.
**Program Helps Students Build Positive Relationships**

The Later Elementary supports positive relationships through use of the Bucketfillers program. Each fall, Intervention Specialist Mrs. Amy Smith-Owens, kicks off the year with a presentation to third and fourth graders. She offers information about what it means to ‘fill a bucket’, suggestions of how students can offer kindness to others, and role-plays examples of bucket filling and bucket dipping. Fifth grade students enjoy a video to review the concepts. The Bucketfilling program relates to subsequent lessons in the classrooms to define and offer strategies addressing conflict resolution and bullying.

In December, the group served lunch to senior citizens at their holiday dinner, as well as sorted and loaded the canned goods for the school’s community food drive. The Bucketfillers Bunch also make up the video production team, teaching appropriate social skills for global Play Day, offering information about the new playground Buddy Bench, as well as creating the Bucketfilling review shown to the fifth grade.

An additional component to the Bucketfillers Bunch is being part of the morning announcements with Principal John Berlin. Smith-Owens organizes a rotation of the students, who visit in partners to use the PA (or video filming) and showcase their public speaking skills. Berlin says, “I have loved working with the Bucketfillers on announcements this year. It gives me an opportunity to get to know them and better understand what is happening in their lives. It is a great relationship builder for all of us.”

Spring Bucketfillers Bunch member, Alya Lewis, shares an important message from Nelson Mandela about why filling others’ buckets is critical in our world: “Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.” She adds, “To me, this quote feels like somebody offered support to their friend, who may be being bullied and helped them to feel comforted.”

Another connection with Bucketfilling is the fourth grade leadership program, appropriately named, The Bucketfillers Bunch. Smith-Owens asks for teacher nominations both in the fall and spring. Two delegates from each fourth grade classroom meet with Smith-Owens on at least a monthly basis. Opportunities are facilitated for these leaders to plan ways to build positivity and connections throughout the building for staff and students.

This school year, the Bucketfillers have accomplished many projects, including creating positive posters, sharing teacher appreciation surprises, planning and executing a mid-winter spirit week, assist in making root beer floats for the fifth grade Safety Patrollers, and organizing a surprise musical guest (the school’s own Mr. Brian Pickrell, Elvis impersonator) for the fourth graders.

**Meet Up And Eat Up Program Offered Again**

The “Meet Up and Eat Up” Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) will take place again at Woodland Estates, June 24 – August 16.

“Meet Up and Eat Up” is a Child Nutrition Program that provides free nutritious meals to children up to age 18 and living in low-income areas, where 50 percent or more of the students qualify for free or reduced-price school meals.

According to the Michigan Department of Education website, “After school lunchrooms close for summer break, SFSP helps prevent more than 500,000 Michigan children from going hungry each year. Filling the summer hunger gap is vitally important because it can reduce summer learning loss, also known as summer slide, for children. Visit michigan.gov/mde for details.

**Variety Show Supports Inclusion With Entertainment**

Peer to Peer (P2P) took to the stage for its second annual Variety Show this spring. P2P is an elective class that helps support inclusion in the general education classroom. The main focus of the class is on students making connections with each other and forming friendships that help support individual student needs within the classroom.

This year’s acts involved singing, a ski video, the telling of jokes and magic, a video game design presentation and a Taekwondo demonstration. The program opened with a surprise dance routine by P2P teachers Mrs. Madeleine Jackson and Mrs. Melia Phelps.

From left, Kara and Melody participate in a Bucketfilling activity.

Peer to Peer teachers Mrs. Melia Phelps left, and Mrs. Madeleine Jackson made a guest appearance to start off the P2P Variety Show in April, dancing to Crank That (Soulja Boy).
Grandparents Enjoy A Special Occasion With Grandchildren

Mattawan Early Elementary School was filled with smiling grandparents and their excited first and second grade grandchildren on a special day in May. The occasion is celebrated every other year at the EES, giving grandparents or special grand-friends the opportunity to spend some fun and quality time at school with their little ones.

Above, Anna Alzner is pictured sharing the day with her grandma.

Autumn Faith Goodrich celebrates the special day with her grandma.

Sawyer Brewster’s grandparents join him for Grandparent’s Day.

Abby DeVisser is pictured chauffeuring Misty and Kade Messamore and Kade’s grandparents from the parking lot to the Early Elementary School.

Heroes Are Ever-present In Our School Cafeterias

School Lunch Hero Day was celebrated at Mattawan Consolidated School on May 3, 2019. As part of the School Nutrition Association, the 7th Annual School Lunch Hero Day is a chance to showcase the difference school nutrition professionals make for every child who comes through the cafeteria. The day provides the perfect opportunity to recognize the hardworking professionals in school cafeterias.

The School Nutrition Association (SNA) is a national, non-profit professional organization representing more than 57,000 school nutrition professionals across the country.

An edited version of a press release submitted by Director of Dining Services David Rose follows.

Between preparing healthy food, adhering to strict nutrition standards, navigating student food allergies, and offering service with a smile, Mattawan Consolidated School District nutrition professionals have a lot on their plate. “School Lunch Hero Day provides the opportunity for the community to thank these hardworking heroes,” said Rose. Lunch heroes provide healthy meals to 30 million of America’s students each school day.

School nutrition employees must balance many roles and follow numerous federal, state and local regulations to ensure safe and healthy meals are available in schools. The importance and nutritional value of school meals are well documented. For many children, school breakfast and lunch are the most important and nutrient-rich meals of their day.


From left, elementary kitchen staff members Gail Schroeder, Monica Barber and Kim Dragicevich open cards given to them in honor of School Lunch Hero Day.

One of the many cards made by Mattawan students is pictured here honoring lunch heroes.
Magna Cum Laude Graduates (3.80 to 4.09 GPA) are:

Cum Laude Graduates (3.50 to 3.79 GPA) are:
Lauren Alsvig, Madison Balow, Seth Bunce, Chad Burkeen, Kincaid Devenport, Mason Federmeyer, Troy Fillenworth, Marisa Florinchi, Nolan Foster, Nolin Friend, Heather Hageman, Cameron Hansen, Olivia Helmholdt, Kirstin Kievit, Jennifer Masztak, Kenneth Oliver, Adalynne Pastor, Luke Pelak, Manistee Schroeder, Jake Urbain, Morgan Walker, and Logan Wenke.
Mattawan Consolidated School says good-bye (as of this publication date) to 16 employees who made the decision to retire at the end of this school year. With a combined 380 years of experience, these teachers, administrators, secretaries and paraprofs will undoubtedly be missed. They are featured below in appreciation of their time, service and commitment to the children of the Mattawan Consolidated School District.

Karen Farthing - EES Dean of Teaching & Learning - 34 years

Amy Ludwig - LES Special Education - 12 years

Melissa Snyder - MS Dean/Student Services Secretary - 17 years

Steve Bradstreet - HS Science/Fitness Teacher - 35 years

Karen Ivens - 2nd Grade Teacher - 29 years

Lorna Holler - LES Art Teacher - 25 years

Judy Mickley - MS Office Clerk - 4 years

Sue Rosenhagen ("Safety Sue") - HS Security - 19 years

Lynn Yanna - Special Education Teacher - 30 years

Betty Sundling - MS Math Teacher - 17 years

Laurie Hogan-McLean MS ELA Teacher - 27 years

Judy Eager - Student Services Department Support - 29 years

Jamie Whitledge - EES Parapro - 29 years

Ward Helakoski - MS Counselor - 18 years

Karin Fender - MS Science Teacher - 26 years

Randy Holler - Director of Transportation - 29 years
Sophie Paquin graduated Magna Cum Laude and attended Mattawan from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Sophie’s accomplishments include:
- Founding member of LEO Club
- President, Public Relations Officer and Teen Leader for Almena Happy Helpers 4H Club
- Saint John Bosco Altar Server and Senior Life-team member
- Volunteer, SW Michigan Land Conservancy
- Recognitions: MHS Outstanding Student in the Sciences; MHS LEO Club Service Award Honor
- Teen Creative Writing Challenge and Van Buren County Fair award recipient
- Scholarships: Mattawan Lions Club Irving O’Leary, Van Buren Voyagers 4-H Club Fine Arts; Lake Superior State University Philip Hart Memorial

Sophie noted, “Mattawan’s AP environmental science and biology classes inspired my love of science. I feel very much prepared for college and going into a science major.” She added, “My involvement in my church and 4-H especially, have played a big role in making me who I am.”

Chris Lin participated in the Mattawan Band program for seven years, beginning in sixth grade. His determination to pursue music performance as a profession has paid off. This spring, Chris auditioned for a spot to study euphonium under the instruction of tuba and euphonium professor Dr. Fritz Kaenzig at the University of Michigan. Chris’s performance of Fantasia for Euphonium by Gordon Jacob landed him the spot he had dreamed of earning.

Auditioning well was one major achievement. The next one came when Chris learned he had received the Jean Fairfax Scholarship, a full tuition, 8-term scholarship funded by the University of Michigan.

Chris was excited to share his feelings on receiving the acceptance and scholarship. “I can’t even put into words how this feels. It’s unbelievable that I’ll be doing my schooling at Michigan and studying with Dr. Kaenzig. My parents freaked out when they heard the news and they are obviously thrilled for me. My long term goal is to earn a spot in a major symphony or military band and to eventually teach at some level.”

Kyle Van Liere achieved academic and athletic excellence at Mattawan. Kyle scored 1360 on the SAT, earned a 4.21 weighted GPA and was an all-around top athlete.

The road was not easy for Kyle, however. A shoulder injury and subsequent surgery at the end of his sophomore year put athletics on hold for nine months, but a determination to recover earned him the starting quarterback spot for the 2018 football season. Then, midway through the season, Kyle dislocated his thumb and again, faced surgery. As before, perseverance won, and Kyle returned to the baseball field for the 2019 season, where he led the team in RBIs (he held a .458 batting average at the end of April).

Athletic Director Chad Yager said, “Kyle went through a lot of adversity and he could have easily given up, but he didn’t.” Baseball coach Joe Clifford added, “To come back in such strong form and maintain his grades is just more impressive than anything.” Kyle shared, “Being out for almost two years was very tough but it was also the best experience of my life, knowing I can overcome something like this and fall in love with the process at the same time.”

Madison Balow, Matt Barton and Mason Jasensky were enrolled in the Emergency Medical Technician Program at the Van Buren Technology Center. These three individuals excelled in the program and ultimately earned the Tech Center’s EMT Squad of the Year award.

Madison became a certified and licensed EMT as a high school junior. She will attend Central Michigan University in the fall and pursue a pre-med program with a biology major and neurology minor. “I was always interested in medicine and decided that the Tech Center would be a good and cost effective way to meet my goals. Both of my parents were paramedics.”

Matt took advantage of the Tech Center’s offerings and earned his certification for Michigan Firefighter 1 & 2 Hazardous Materials Operations. A visit to the Mattawan Fire Department as a youth sparked Matt’s interest in becoming a firefighter and he said, “I thought it was cool and I learned the Tech Center would be a good and inexpensive way to get certified.” Matt is now a member of the Mattawan Fire Department and intends to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Nursing at Western Michigan University this fall.

Mason decided to attend the Tech Center in order to pursue a program in the medical field. This fall, Mason will begin working on his associate degree at Kalamazoo Valley Community College before heading to the University of Michigan for pre-med studies. When asked about the Tech Center award, Mason noted, “It felt good to be recognized for all of our hard work.”

Collectively all three students believe they received the award based upon their work ethic and participation. The three said, “We were the first to come and the last to leave.”

From left, Matt Barton, Madison Balow and Mason Jasensky received the EMT Squad of the Year award.