



# Tiger Traditions

March/April - Volume 15 • Issue 5

## Biomedical Science Students Perform Major Exploration



*Demi Mannise, left, and Amy Holland study their chromosome spread under a microscope. When asked what she thought about the experience Amy said, "Really cool... I mean honestly, how many high school students get to see something like this?"*

On Tuesday, February 10, twenty-six Principles of Biomedical Science students at Mexico High performed 'one of the most historically and scientifically significant explorations of their high school careers', according to MACS Science Teacher Christina Scales.

As part of the Project Lead the Way (PLTW) Principles of Biomedical Science class, which is one of only four such classes within a 100-mile radius, the students (broken into two sessions), were given the opportunity to create chromosome spreads using the world renowned HeLa cells which came from the National Institute of Health.

To prepare for this event, every student in the program read the best-seller *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot, which tells the history of the HeLa cells that originated from a cervical cancer biopsy of a 31-year-old, African-American woman in 1951. From this biopsy scientists were able to reproduce (or grow) cells for the first time and to share a common 'cell line' globally. This discovery made history and changed the course of medical research forever.



With this background, the twenty-six MACS Principles of Biomedical Science students, from freshmen to seniors, put on goggles and pulled on gloves, studied their procedure and created chromosome spreads using actual HeLa cells. The students dropped the cells onto slides from one to four feet above, thus allowing both the cell membrane and the nuclear membrane to burst which further allowed for the ability to see the chromosomes under the microscopes.

Following the study of the chromosomes under the scopes, the students were given the option to permount the slides, which meant they would be able to keep them forever as evidence of this exceptional experience.

## Mexico Middle School Performed "Hairspray Jr."



*Above from left to right: Madeline Loomis, Morgan Eastman, Chrissy Seckner, Cassidee Larkin, Tyler Lattenhauer, Josh Washer, Peyton Cory, Olivia Speers, Jake Morgan, and Madelyn Speers. At right: Kierra Webster, Portia David and Bella Cavellier.*



Despite one weather cancellation, Mexico Middle School's production of "Hairspray Jr." was a grand success on Thursday, February 5, and Saturday, February 7. Nearly 50 students were involved in the outstanding, entertaining, and family-friendly musical, all under the direction of MACS Music Teacher Laura Washburn, with the assistance of Tara Wiseman.

For District information including a calendar of events, Board of Education meeting dates and times, contact information and more, visit the District web site at [www.Mexico.cnyric.org](http://www.Mexico.cnyric.org)

# A Message from the Superintendent



## Student achievement versus student opportunity

While some schools pursue strategies that have the singular focus of increasing student test scores (a.k.a student achievement) our staff at MACS has been pursuing strategies that will improve opportunities for students. According to the National Education Policy Center (NEPC) and the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE), schools can promote opportunities for students by:

- Creating and maintaining healthy school culture by providing resources that reduce the instances of bullying and increase civility and respect for others (e.g., at MACS, we promote Dignity for All Students Act instruction and student groups such as Friends of Rachel and Helping Hands Club).
- Broadening and enriching school curriculum and delivering student-centered, project-based instruction that encourages innovation and creativity (e.g., our schools use Project Lead the Way instruction, AP/Honors, and coursework in the fine arts).

## Blended Learning Technology

Two Mexico Elementary third-grade teachers, Lynn Rathbun, back left, and Dianne Barnes, back right, and five of their students shared their most recent Blended Learning for Technology activities with the MACS Board



of Education at the February 11 meeting at Mexico Elementary School. Dianne Barnes, with students Avery Mack and Sage LaFlamm, pictured right and second from right, explained three recent video conferences their class participated in. The first was a monster match-up activity with students from Panama, New York. The second was turkey disguises with the West Genesee School District, and the last was an international conference with a teacher and students in Ghana, Africa. This class has another exciting video conference planned for March 4, with a specialist from NASA during which they will ask questions about the moon. Lynn Rathburn, with students Emily Bennett, Ariona Preemo, and Nico Murabito, pictured left to center, shared about using Schoology to become experts on frogs. The students researched frogs, created trading cards and used a blog to communicate with another school about what they were learning. This class also experienced 'tinkering' - building electronic toys to play with during recess. Mexico Elementary School Principal Robert Briggs stands back, center.

- Providing more and better learning time during the school year and summer (e.g, all of our schools have after-school and summer activities such as Lego League, robotics, Environmental Science Club).

- Ending disparities in learning opportunities created by tracking and ability grouping by encouraging students, regardless of perceived ability level, to enroll in challenging courses (e.g., honors, Advanced Placement, and college credit-bearing courses are open to all students - here at MACS, our AVID program has been instrumental to this end).

- Using a variety of assessments designed to respond to student needs. Our teachers collect student performance data on a daily basis to guide instruction rather than relying upon a single measurement that is taken through end-of-year testing.

- Reassessing student discipline policies through a school-based Behavioral Intervention Team. For us at MACS, this has resulted in a decrease in out-of-school suspension rates and an improvement in overall student behavior.

- Supporting teachers as professionals through a formal mentoring program and professional development that is current to innovative teaching practices (e.g., MACS Blended Learning Academy and increased teacher involvement in the leadership of the school district through Professional Learning Communities or PLCs).

- Providing adequate resources for safe and well-maintained school environments through long-term planning. Over the past several years, we have invested approximately \$50 million in preserving our public assets.

- Addressing key health issues through nutrition, physical fitness, and overall student wellness. Our school district is the recipient of a multi-million dollar physical education grant.

- Expanding access to libraries and the Internet, while using technology wisely - MACS was recently recognized by the National School Boards Association as one of the "top-ten" school districts in the country for technology integration in our classrooms.

Because we live in a world of unlimited wants and limited resources, we must focus our efforts on those educational programs that will provide the greatest opportunities for our students. Thank you all for your continued support of our students' success at the Mexico Academy and Central School District and our aspiration towards becoming a "School of Opportunity."

Sincerely,

*Robert Pritchard*

Robert R. Pritchard, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

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# Proud to be MACS

## Linda Palerino,

Mexico Middle School Special Education Teacher, was selected as the January 2015 Proud to be MACS honoree. Linda grew up in Syracuse and graduated from Solvay High School in 1971. She married Paul Palerino in 1976 and three children soon followed; Andrea, Alexis and Michael. Relocating for her husband's career through the years, the family lived in Chicago, IL, Vicksburg, MS, Slippery Rock, PA, Springfield, OH, and eventually returned to Central New York in 1999.



While in Mississippi Linda began substitute teaching. On her first day as a substitute teacher in a special education classroom, Linda determined that this was what she would do for her career. She began attending college in Mississippi and graduated from Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania, with a dual degree in elementary education and special education. She later earned her master's degree from SUNY Oswego. Linda's first job was therapy work with autistic children. Next she taught 7-8 grade English. Upon moving to East Syracuse in 1999, she was hired to work as a special education teacher at Mexico Middle School. In the fall of 2000, Linda began co-teaching English with Cathy Shawcross, at the fifth grade level, with classes made up of both general education and special education students. She has continued in this position for the past 15 years and as of February 2015 has entered into retirement. Linda speaks highly of both the team arrangement she has had and her co-teacher. About the students, Linda explains that her job entailed building self-confidence in the students while teaching them reading and writing skills. Overall Linda says, "It's been an honor and a privilege to work here in the Mexico School District, with the special education department, and with the fifth grade teachers. The teachers are all so caring and supportive and willing to help everybody, all the time." Linda and her husband make their home in East Syracuse. They are the grandparents of four.

## Kathy (Fischer) Butler,

a third grade teacher at Mexico Elementary, was chosen to be the February 2015 Proud to be MACS honoree. Kathy grew up in New Haven and attended Mexico schools, graduating in 1986. Following graduation she attended SUNY Canton and earned an associates degree in public justice in 1988. Next came employment in the field of daycare, until she began her career in the Mexico School District as a teacher's assistant in 1997. At the same time, Kathy attended SUNY Oswego at night and graduated with a bachelor's degree in public justice in 2001. Two years later Kathy had earned her masters degree in elementary education from the same institution. In the fall of 2004, Kathy started at Mexico Elementary as a second grade teacher. Since that time she has also taught fourth grade and is currently settled in at the third grade level. In 2013 Kathy married Andrew Butler and gained a step-son who is nine years old. A notable fact is that Kathy's mother, Elaine Fischer, is a retired MACS District elementary teacher and her sister, Laurel (Fischer) von Holtz, is currently a teacher at Mexico Elementary. When asked about how she feels about her job Kathy says, "It's definitely a huge part of my life, not only in school but I love to support my students outside of school. I love to go to their sporting events or ballet recitals - whatever they are interested in." Considering the Proud to Be MACS award Kathy says, "I'm proud to be recognized. I have so many colleagues that are equally as deserving of the award." The Butler family makes their home in New Haven.



## Wrestling Team Named Champs

The Mexico High varsity wrestling team became the Section III Dual Meet Champions at the tournament held at Cicero-North Syracuse on Saturday, January 24. The last time this feat was accomplished by MACS wrestlers was in 1998. Pictured, front left to right, are: Dean Shamo, Jake Woolson, Theo Powers, Jay Kisselstein, and Austin Reed. Second row: Coach William Kays (standing left), Austin O'Reilly, Derick Gracey, Jared Gates and Coach Troy Tooley (standing right). Third row: Tylor Allard and Brent Sawyer. Fourth row: Austin Whitney, Curtis Dimon, and Hunter Howland. Fifth row: Mason Larkin, Mitchell Shambo and Brandon Gracey. Sixth row: Volunteer Assistant Coach Andy MacDonald and Trevor Allard.

## New Haven Students Enjoy Skating



The gym floor became a roller skating rink at New Haven Elementary School on the afternoon of January 26. A total of 62 students attended the fun activity that was offered in two sessions - one for pre-K through first grade and one for second to fourth grade students. This event was sponsored by the New Haven Elementary School Parent Teacher Club.



## “PEP Grant in Action”

Ropes and ladders and in-line skating are common terms these days at Mexico High and Mexico Middle Schools thanks to the Carol M. White Physical Education Program Grant (PEP Grant). A look at a physical education class at the middle school in mid-February found the students fully engaged in the PEP Grant Project Adventure ropes and ladders activity. Mexico Middle student Dan Gowans was the first to volunteer to climb a ladder all the way to the gymnasium ceiling. MACS PE Teacher John Hansen held the ladder and several of his classmates held the rope for him. Hansen explained the many benefits of such an activity including: amazing communication skills between the students, the ability to be quality team members, the importance of safety, how to work in large groups, problem solving skills, and the ability to adapt. “They earn this [opportunity] by basically capitalizing on their training. They earn each other’s respect and they are all working toward a common goal,” says Hansen. “One of the biggest things I’m proud of with my students is that they face the challenge.” Student Dylan Pearson agrees saying, “We’re up for a challenge!” Student Kennedy Cahill says, “We are risk takers!” Rock climbing is another Project Adventure activity available at the middle school.

On the same day, a peek into a Mexico High PE class found MACS PE Teacher Lindsay Rodas teaching in-line skating to students in an adaptive PE class. All high school students will eventually have the opportunity to try out in-line skating. Speaking about Project Adventure Rodas says, “I think it’s going well. The students are really taking to it. It’s ‘challenge by choice’ so if there is a skill the students feel they can’t do, they can back down to basics or they can take the challenge and go to the next level.”



The ropes (belay) and ladder crew pose with MACS PE Teacher John Hansen at Mexico Middle School.

*Pictured below, left: Dan Gowans climbs the ladder to the top at Mexico Middle School.*



MACS PE Teacher Lindsay Rodas skates with Meg Sidoti at Mexico High.

## MACS Elementary Schools Experience Aquatic Program



The fourth grade students from all three elementary schools participated in the MACS District Aquatic Program during the month of January. The program brought approximately 85 fourth grade students to the high school pool each week, two times per week, for a duration of four weeks. The classes rotated through to eventually allow all fourth grade students (160 students) to have eight swimming lessons. The swimmers learned water safety/rules, water orientation, stroke technique (freestyle, backstroke and breaststroke), and basic survival swimming skills such as floats and recoveries. “The ultimate goal of the program is to introduce students to the water and pool from a young age,” reports MACS Aquatic Instructor/Coordinator Shawn Parkhurst. “This is so that they can learn the essential life skill of knowing how to swim and being comfortable in the water.” This program was funded by the Carol M. White Physical Education Program Grant (PEP Grant).



# True Beauty Day 2015



*Mexico High School students on True Beauty Day 2015.*

True Beauty Day 2015 was held at Mexico High School and Mexico Middle School on Thursday, February 5, with upwards of 400 students in the high school and approximately 120 in the middle school, as well as numerous faculty and staff, participating. The focus of the day was the message that beauty is more than what one looks like. Girls wore no make-up for a day, and positive character traits were highlighted with various activities.



*Eighth grade students.*



*Seventh grade students.*



## New Haven Readers From Birth

New Haven Elementary School Principal Richard Chapman is surrounded by children during the inaugural “Readers from Birth” story hour held at the school on Wednesday evening, January 21. “Readers from Birth” is sponsored by the New Haven Elementary Parent-Teacher Club to encourage a love of reading from birth on up. The first story hour included “Pete the Cat” books, by author Eric Litwin, “Pete the Cat” music, the making of “Pete the Cat” masks (as pictured), and a snack. “Readers from Birth” story hours will be held monthly at the school.

## Mexico Elementary Jr. First Lego League

Eighteen third grade students at Mexico Elementary School joined the after-school Jr. First Lego League that met twice a week, for six weeks, during the months



of January and February. Fourth grade students, who had participated in the Lego League last fall, acted as mentors to the younger students. The focus of the league was three-fold; building robots, programming the robots, and research - all of which were prepared for a public presentation. Both New Haven Elementary and Palermo Elementary Schools conducted simultaneous Jr. First Lego League sessions as well. Mexico Elementary students pictured, from left to right, are: Joshua Clement, Jacob Poissant, Evan Lenhart (mentor), Lilah Darrow, and Ellee Parkhurst. The students were coached by Mexico Elementary Teacher Lynn Rathbun.





# Mexico High Diver Breaks Records

Mexico High diver Noah Galluzzo broke record after record during the Onondaga High School League Championship Tournament on Saturday, January 31. Noah placed first overall in the tournament with a score of 676.00. He set an OHSL record. He set the Mexico High School 11-Dive record and also the Section III 11-Dive record. He set the Jamesville-Dewitt pool record. And finally, Noah set his personal best record - with an increase of nearly 100 points. Noah is a junior at Mexico High and is coached by Sally Oliver.



## Congratulations!

To MACS Junior Noah Galluzzo who became the Class B Section III Diving Champion and MACS Junior Jason Ray who placed 2nd in Class B Section III Diving on Feb. 10.

# Palermo Elementary School Celebrates Reading



Palermo Elementary School held their 2015 "Readers are Leaders" Celebration of Reading from January 16 - 23. News Channel 9 Anchorman Dan Cummings, of Syracuse, traveled to the school to give a presentation at the kick-off event on Friday, January 16. In addition to encouraging the students to read, Cummings read aloud the book "Oh the Places You'll Go" by Dr. Seuss. The kick-off also included a number of third and fourth students singing the "Leader-in-Me" song about the "7 Habits" highlighted in the school's Leader-in-Me program. Palermo's Celebration of Reading was a week-long experience with special events every day and a school goal of reading 3000 books during the week.



# Mexico Plays Host to OCMEA All-County Band Festival



All-County Junior High School Band

Mexico Academy and Central School District hosted the 2015 All-County Band Concert at Mexico Middle School on Saturday, January 17 with all nine Oswego County school districts participating. The concert was presented by Oswego County Music Educators' Association (OCMEA), and co-coordinated by MACS Band Directors Kevin Upcraft and Brian Carnes. The guest conductor for the All-County Junior High Band was Martin A. Hollister. The guest conductor for the All-County Senior High Band was Robin L. Linaberry. For the final piece by the All-County Senior High Band, "Adoration and Praise", the OCMEA faculty members provided antiphonal brass.

Playing in the Junior High School All-County Band from Mexico Middle School were: Leia Abbott, Kathryn Morgan, Bridgette Petersen, Emily Thompson, Abigail Divens, Victoria Harriger, Thomas Restani, Trevor Brooks, and Dayton Corl.

Playing in the Senior High School All-County Band from Mexico High School were: Hannah Bittner, Taylor Hall, Jane Pritchard, Robert Pritchard, Corrinne Perrotti, Deanna Spencer, Elizabeth Spencer, Courtney Lamb, Nicholas Galluzzo, Brianna Jessmore, Elizabeth Boulais, and Justin Gardner.



All-County Senior High School Band.

## Did You Know That Mexico Middle School Has a School Based Health Center?

Twelve important School Based Health Center (SBHC) facts to know:

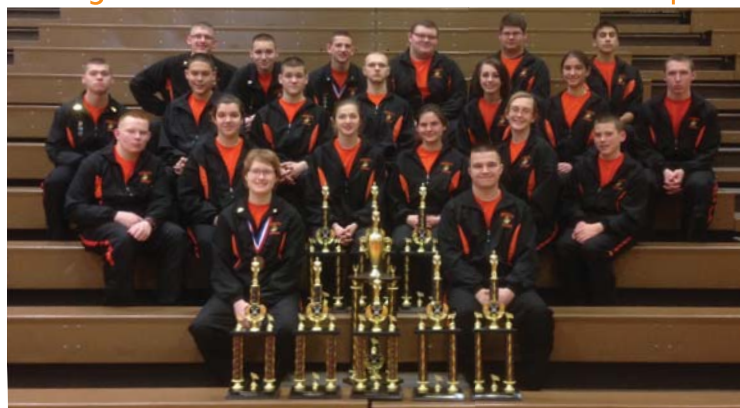
- 1: Mexico Middle School opened the doors of their School Based Health Center (SBHC) in the fall of 2013.
- 2: The SBHC is a full service health center operated by Northern Oswego County Health Services, Inc. (NOCHSI).
- 3: The staff includes: Adrienne Brimmer, Family Nurse Practitioner; Jessica Connors, Behavioral Health Counselor; Diane McDermott, Medical Assistant; and Dr. Megan Pecha, Collaborating Physician.
- 4: The SBHC provides prompt, convenient, quality, health care to enrolled students attending Mexico Middle School.
- 5: The services include, but are not limited to: treatment of illnesses, minor injuries, and chronic illnesses; allergy injections, immunizations; and physical exams.
- 6: Prescriptions, if necessary, can be sent electronically to a pharmacy of choice.
- 7: Behavioral health services, from coping with life's ups and downs to treatment of mental health disorders, are available at the SBHC.
- 8: There is no out-of-pocket charge for services provided at the SBHC - insurances will be billed. If students are without medical coverage, NOCHSI can assist, through outreach coordinators, in obtaining insurance coverage.
- 9: Students do not have to change primary care doctors, or transfer their records, to use the services of the SBHC.
- 10: Enrolling a middle school student in the SBHC, is as simple as filling out a form. Forms are located in the main office, the nurse's office, or on the school website - Mexico Middle School page, under quick links.
- 11: The SBHC is open from 7am -3:30pm when school is in session.
- 12: An appointment at the SBHC may be made by calling 963-8400 x 4208, sending a note with your student, or stopping by.

*The staff at the Mexico Middle School, School Based Health Center from left to right: Jessica Connors,*



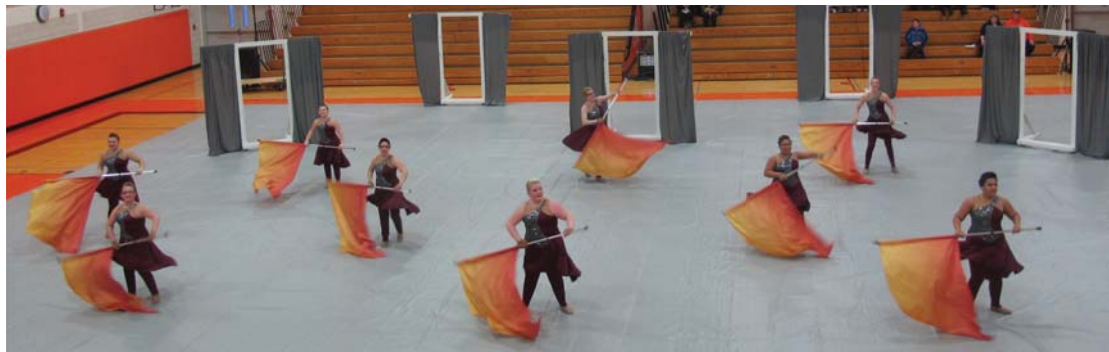
*Behavioral Health Counselor, MS, LMHC (Licensed Mental Health Counselor), NCC (National Certified Counselor), CCPT (Child Centered Play Therapist); Diane McDermott, Medical Assistant; and Adrienne Brimmer, FNP-C (Family Nurse Practitioner-Certified). Not pictured: Dr. Megan Pecha, Collaborating Physician.*

## MCJROTC Overall Champs



*Mexico Academy and Central High School Marine Corps Jr. Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) drill team and fitness team competed on Saturday, January 31, 2015 at Proctor High School in Utica, NY. The teams returned home with five first place, two second place, and one third place trophy as well as the overall championship. The teams, led by Senior Instructor Lt. Col. John Freda, will travel to Philadelphia, PA in March to compete against several nationally ranked teams in a traditional tune-up for the national championship later in the spring.*

## Mexico Takes First in Class at MYCGC Competition



*Mexico High School was the host for the Mid-York Color Guard Circuit (MYCGC) event on Saturday, January 31. Twelve schools participated in the MYCGC and Mexico placed first in their class. George Lawson is the coach for Mexico Winter Guard.*



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## The Circus Came to Town!



MACS Spanish Club President Andrea Ross, left, and Spanish Club Member Alissia Seeberger, right, pause for a photo with a circus employee during the set up of the Billy Martin's Cole All Star Circus at Mexico High on January 26. MACS German and Spanish Clubs hosted the circus as a fund-raiser for the clubs and there was a full house to see a variety of talented acts including lofty acrobatics.

## Battle of the Books 2015



Twenty-five third and fourth grade students at Mexico Elementary School are participating in the 2015 Battle of the Books competition. Under the leadership of Mexico Elementary Teacher Dianne Barnes, the students make up nine teams that read and study 10 chapter books. On March 10, the school competition will be held with the winning team moving to the county level of Battle of the Books. The Oswego County competition will be held on March 24, in Fulton. Both Mexico Middle School and Mexico High School are participating in the 2015 Battle of the Books as well. Pictured from left to right are: Aidan Darrow, Adrianna Denton, Jacob Gates, Samantha Buckley, Ainsley Bigelow, and Dominic Dattolo.



## Calendar of Events

- Mar. 5-7 High School Spring Musical, 7pm
- Mar. 11 MACS Board of Education Meeting, 6pm
- Mar. 12 High School Pops Concert, 7pm
- Mar. 19 Grade 5-8 Band Concert, 7pm
- Mar. 20 High School Variety Show, 7pm
- Mar. 24 Grade 5-8 Chorus Concert, 7pm
- Mar. 30-Apr. 3 Spring Recess
- Apr. 8 MACS Board of Education Meeting, 6pm
- Apr. 10 All-County JH/SH Chorus Festival @ MS
- Apr. 14 French Honor Society Inductions, 6pm
- Apr. 16 HS Celebration of Learning
- Apr. 20 Math & Art Honor Society Induct., 6pm
- Apr. 23 Tri-M Inductions, 7pm
- Apr. 24 Palermo Elementary Royal Ball, 7pm
- Apr. 28 German Honor Society Inductions, 6pm