



# Tiger TRADITIONS

*Inspiring Excellence and Leadership in All!*

September/October 2018 - Volume 23 • Issue 5

## OPENING DAY 2018



## WELCOME BACK

### Stuff-A-Bus Provides Supplies for Hundreds of Students

Supplies were in demand during Mexico Academy & Central School's annual Stuff-A-Bus distribution day, and hundreds of students benefitted.

In the first hour of the distribution alone, more than two hundred students were able to collect supplies, including 180 backpacks, pens and pencils, binders, notebooks and more.

The event was held in the Mexico Middle School gymnasium, and several district staff members volunteered their time to the cause.

"Today was very successful," said teacher Laurel von Holtz, who helps coordinate the event. "Now our focus will turn to supplying the schools with supplies they may need."





## A Message From The Superintendent



Welcome to the 2018-2019 school year at Mexico Academy and Central School District!

First, I would like to publicly thank all our operations and maintenance department, building secretaries, transportation department, building administrators, central office staff, and all who have worked diligently this past summer to ensure that our District is ready for another great school year!

Second, it is with tremendous pride that I inform you of some wonderful accolades our District has received. Niche is a company that provide information, so people may research U.S. colleges, schools, neighborhoods, and companies. On their website, they state, "Every month millions of people use our easy-to-read and comprehensive reports cards, rankings, and reviews to choose the right schools or neighborhoods for them. Niche claims it conducts rigorous cleaning and analysis on large data sets and combines them with feedback from our community for nuanced insight that can't be found anywhere else."

Their analysis has ranked us in the upper echelons both statewide and nationally in several categories.

On a national level, we are ranked 3,006th of 10,758 districts across our country as Best School Districts in America:

- 473 Of 11,705 districts across our country as Districts with the Best Teachers in America
- 413th out 10,828 districts across our country as the Best Places to Teach in America.

State-wide, we are ranked:

- 255th of 675 The Best School Districts in New York State
- 74th of the 689 school districts ranked state-wide with the Best Teachers in New York State.
- 19th of the 40 upstate school districts with the Best Teachers in New York State.
- 130th of 688 statewide school districts ranked as The Best Places to Teach in New York State.

These accolades are the result of the collaborative hard work, commitment, dedication, perseverance, cooperation, and support of our students, staff, parents, community members, and our MACS Board of Education. Thank You!

In our quest to be number one in every category, we are continuously improving and providing equity and opportunities for our students. You will find several examples in this edition such as our 1:1 technology initiative and our countywide commitment to improving student literacy.

There is nothing quite like a new school year. It is a time of great enthusiasm, energy, and promise. All things seem possible at the opening of school, and it is a perfect time to rededicate our learning community to the challenge of high levels of learning for all students. I look forward to meeting that challenge with you and begin what I hope to be our most successful year to date!

As always, please know that I am always available to you. In addition to contacting me in person, you may also contact me through my email address: [sbruno@mexicocsd.org](mailto:sbruno@mexicocsd.org), my office number: 963-5400 ext. 5403, or my cell number: 315-200-9542.

**May this be the best year yet!**

Sincerely,

Sean C. Bruno

## Motivational Speaker Provides Life Lessons to Mexico Middle School



**Former professional wrestler turned motivational speaker Marc Mero recently visited with students at Mexico Middle School to provide his story of successes, failures and overcoming adversity.**

A former professional wrestler with ties to central New York recently visited with students at Mexico Middle School to discuss the importance of making good life choices and the negatives associated with bullying.

Former wrestling champion Marc Mero, a graduate of Liverpool High School, shared his life story, which featured a combination of motivational and emotional moments.

"When I was young, I was the victim of bullying. We didn't have money, so my mom would get my clothes at yard sales," said Mero. "But I realized that just because you can't afford nice clothes doesn't mean you're less than anyone else."

Mero said that everyone faces adversity at some point in their lives, but by making the right life choices, students position themselves for success.

"We are defined by our choices," said Mero. "Life isn't about winning the race. Life is about finishing the race."

## New Haven Breaks the Ice with UPK Students



New Haven Elementary recently welcomed its newest crop of Universal Pre-Kindergarten students during an ice cream social. The event served as an opportunity for the students to meet their teacher Cheryl Barbeau, Principal Jennifer Granholm and tour their new classroom. And of course, to eat some ice cream!

# MACS Rolls Out New 1:1 Laptop Program

After years of preparation, including training 75 percent of its teachers in blended learning, Mexico Academy & Central School District recently began the roll out of its 1:1 Laptop Program.

The district recently distributed laptops to students in grades two through 12 as part of the program, which is designed to combine the traditional classroom setting with more digital assignments.

According to Superintendent Sean Bruno, the district's commitment to the program is sparked by the changing digital climate, both nationally and globally.

"In order for us to achieve our mission to educate and motivate students to be respectful citizens, we must continually monitor and adjust to our national and global landscapes," said Bruno. "We must provide opportunities and resources in our classrooms so that our students may utilize digital tools to effectively communicate, collaborate, to think critically and to be creative problem solvers."

Students in grades two through four have a device assigned to them in their classroom and they may utilize it for any necessary classroom switching. Fifth- through 12th-graders, however, are permitted to bring the laptops home for flexible studying, research time and completion of class assignments.

Students in grades pre-kindergarten through first-grade will have a classroom set of iPads for age-appropriate digital literacy development.

The program works in conjunction with the district's commitment to blended learning, which Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction Mary Beth Horn said will allow students to actively determine aspects of their learning, such as the pace in which they learn.

"The combination of hands-on and engaged learning will increase technical skills and support student interaction, creativity and critical thinking skills," said Horn.

MACS Director of Technology Steve Roux said one concern parents may have with the program may be related to students having too much screen time with the laptops. Roux said he believes the district has addressed this concern via its blended learning practices.

"Blended learning is not about the technology. It's about the students working collaboratively with their peers, taking ownership of their learning and using technology tools to support their learning," said Roux. "We feel this approach will engage students, provide digital literacy skills and better prepare students for their future."

Roux said after years of training and supporting teachers and integrating technology in the classrooms, the district is excited to finally distribute the laptops to students.



## MACS Celebrates Staff Receiving Tenure

During the first Superintendent's Day of the school year, MACS recognized its staff members receiving tenure. Pictured from left are Kathleen Pallotta, Christina Loomis, Kelly Cullen, Alexandra Scorzelli and Nicole Virdone. Not pictured are Molly Bryant and Shawn Parkhurst.



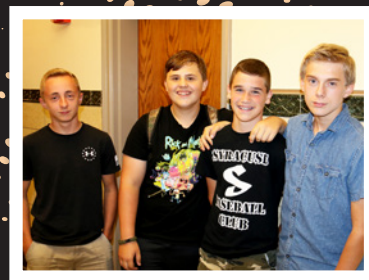
## Class of 2022 Tours Mexico High School

Although they have four years to go, Mexico Academy & Central School's Class of 2022 recently learned what it will take to make it to graduation day.

During a recent freshman orientation, Principal Ryan Lanigan welcomed students to the school, and provided helpful tips on how to navigate through their first year of high school. During a brief presentation, Lanigan discussed topics such as the bell schedule, graduation requirements, attendance policies and the importance of participating in extracurricular activities.

"We really suggest joining a sport or club during your four years here," said Lanigan. "Extracurricular activities really give you those great memories to look back on."

Following the presentation, students toured the building to get a feel for their new environment, including stops at their lockers. Mexico Academy & Central School District's first day of school was Wednesday, Sept. 5.





## Proud to be MACS



### September Proud to be MACS Honoree

### Dolores "Dee" Brooks

Dolores Brooks, Mexico Elementary School teaching aide, was chosen as the September 2018 Proud to be MACS honoree. Dolores grew up in Mexico and is a 1972 graduate of MACS. After spending time away from education, in 2000 she took a teaching assistant course at Oswego County BOCES. While her location and classrooms within the district have changed over the years, what has not changed is her commitment and passion for the UPK program.

Her nominator, Shannon Bigelow said, "Dee is an empathetic, nurturing, optimistic educational leader who is an advocate for her students. She provides the foundation for school etiquette - respectful, responsible and safe - for the first time as our littlest students learn to navigate the "school world," which is often very new and very different from home. It is a special (and, most of us would probably agree, brave) person who can teach preschoolers, and do it well, with the important balance between firm and tender, and the balance between holding students to a standard and graciously helping them to learn from their missteps. Dee does all of these things."

When asked about her favorite part of the job, she replied that it is working with the students and the way that they can bring a smile to her face no matter how bad her day is going.

As for her favorite moment, it is getting hugs from past students, which was highlighted by Bigelow: "Older elementary and middle school students, now confident, run back to greet her; they may not yet really understand the depth of her influence, but they remember that she made them feel loved, and that is really the most important thing."

## Hundreds of New Haven Grandparents Attend Annual Luncheon

More than 200 grandparents and family members brought love and laughter to New Haven Elementary School's annual Grandparent Luncheon.

"It really shows how special the community is when 220 grandparents showed up for this event," said Principal Jennifer Granholm. "And it really shows how important grandparents are to our students."





## MACS Excited to Participate in Oswego County Literacy Initiative

Leaders and educators at Mexico Academy & Central School District are thrilled to be a part of the new Oswego County Literacy Initiative (OCLI), a collaboration between school districts, the CNYOC Teacher Center, CiTi BOCES and the highly acclaimed Reading League.

The initiative is the result of discussions between area superintendents, district administrators and BOCES leadership on how to best address the ever changing needs of Oswego County students, especially in the area of literacy.

The result of these discussions led to a partnership with the Reading League, whose mission is to build educator knowledge of how to teach reading using evidence-based, highly effective methods of reading instruction and assessment.

"Mexico's elementary teachers are fortunate to have worked closely with Maria Murray and Kris Munger from SUNY Oswego last year. What we realize now is that reading instruction should be deeply rooted in brain research and not on the pedagogical beliefs of individuals, which may vary from person to person," said MACS Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Mary Beth Horn.

Horn said the district's work with the OCLI will focus on what early reading instruction should encompass, including explicit and systematic phonics instruction until a child knows how to master the alphabetic code.

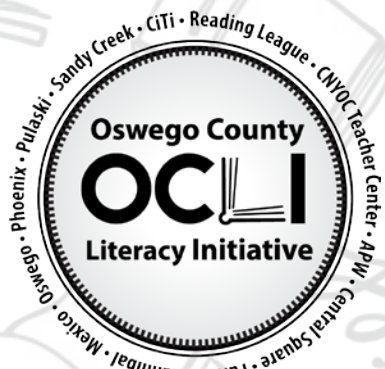
"This is fundamental to the equally complex skills needed to derive meaning from the written word," said Horn.

As part of the OCLI, regular, job-embedded coaching by Reading League trained coaches will support teachers as they seek to implement reading strategies in their classrooms throughout the school year.

Data collection will also be an integral component of the initiative. Tools such as teacher surveys, pre-post questionnaires, administrator and teacher interviews, assessment data, attendance/behavior data will be used to measure changes in teacher practice, attitudes and beliefs about effective reading instruction and the learning outcomes of the students.

Work through this initiative started over the summer when elementary principals and district representatives gathered for a two-day administrator overview and introduction to OCLI. In addition, nearly 40 professionals from all nine districts, CiTi BOCES and Reading League coaches attended a six-day LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) training sponsored by the CNYOC Teacher Center. Lastly, approximately 180 Oswego County teachers, administrators, superintendents and Reading League coaches were present for a full-day introductory event held at the Pulaski Junior-Senior High School in July.

All county-wide PreK-3, special education, and intervention teachers of reading will begin working collaboratively on this initiative on the upcoming November 9th Superintendent's Conference Day.



*Mexico Academy & Central School District recently announced Andrew Gates as its new Athletic Director. Gates said one of his main goals is to make sure athletes excel both on the field and in the classroom.*

## New AD Seeks Balance Between Athletics and Academics

With the goal of creating a positive balance between athletics and academics, Andrew Gates will lead the Mexico Academy & Central School District's sports programs as its new athletic director.

Gates has more than a decade of experience in education, including time spent as a physical education teacher, athletic director and middle school principal at Walton Central Schools. Gates noted that Mexico's facilities and opportunities attracted him to the district.

"The new facilities here are amazing," said Gates. "I've been able to attend several games already, and it's really nice to see the orange and black in the stands."

Gates said he looks forward to meeting community members and creating relationships with the community that will provide students with the best experience possible.

"The more the community gets involved, the better," said Gates. "Support from our community members is always going to be key to the success of our programs."

Gates said winning will always be a goal for Mexico's athletic programs, but noted that winning isn't everything.

"At the end of the day, we love to win. But I'll never be disappointed if our student-athletes competed to the best of their abilities," said Gates. "Did you do everything you could out there? Did you play with class and respect your opponents, the referees and the fans?"

Gates said one of his biggest goals as athletic director is to make sure students succeed in their athletics and their academics.

"They are student-athletes, meaning they are students first," said Gates. "I want them to excel in the classroom and in their competitions."



## MACS BOE Student Board Member for 2018-2019 School Year

Mexico High School Senior Sheila Wallis has been named the MACS Board of Education (BOE) Student Representative for the 2018-2019 school year.

In addition to be named the BOE Student Board Representative, Sheila is the president of the Math Honor Society and Student Council, the vice president of Spanish Club, and participates in Drama Club, Varsity Cheerleading, National Honor Society, Tri-M Music Honor Society, Conference All-State and Select Choir.

Sheila is the daughter of Kevin and LyndaAnne Wallis.



*Sheila Wallis: MACS BOE Student Representative*

## Mexico Middle School Students Get Scientific With Water



*Pictured from left, students Emily Bennett, Alyssa Bresnahan and Amanda Guerra are all smiles while studying water quality.*

Tasked with being stewards of the area's natural resources, students at Mexico Middle School have plunged knee-deep in their newest science assignment.

Students recently visited Little Salmon River to assess water quality, catch and study invertebrates and determine how the river's resources can have an impact on Lake Ontario.

The visit is one of four different locations the science department will embark on this school year, which will also feature trips to Mexico Point State Park, Selkirk Park and Black Creek behind Mexico High School. According to teacher Alicia Archer, the field trips allow students to step out of the classroom and right into hands-on learning.

"The students really enjoy this and get a lot out of it," said Archer. "It's good to get the students outdoors and into the water."

Throughout the year, students will test water chemistry, including pH, nitrate and phosphate levels, participate in a beach cleanup and learn about the dangers plastic plays on the environment.

"We're just very thankful for these opportunities," said Archer. "We thank the district for supporting these trips."

Archer also thanked the owners of Yogi's Jellystone Park for granting the students access to the river and for their continued support of the science department's endeavors.

## MACS Congratulates Staff Reaching 25 Years of Service



Mexico Academy & Central School District honored staff members who have reached 25 years of service to the district during the first Superintendent's Day of the 2018 school year. Pictured from left, Cathy Shawcross, Tracey Reynolds, Tammy O'Neil, Sherry Ladd, Brian DeLola and Dianne Barnes.

## Elementary Schools Host Well-Attended Open Houses

*New Haven, Palermo and Mexico Elementary Schools recently opened their doors and welcomed families during recent open houses. Pictured below are photos from the events!*





## Two Students Selected For Conference All-State Choral Ensemble

As freshman, students Sheila Wallis and Josh Washer set a goal for their high school chorus careers. Fast-forward four years, and that goal is now a reality.

The two were recently named to the Conference All-State Choral Ensemble in Rochester Nov. 29 to Dec. 2. It is the first time in years that a student from MACS has been selected to participate in the conference.

According to the NYSSMA website, each year there are approximately 900 students from throughout the state selected to participate in the conference. Last year, more than 6,500 students auditioned for the honor. With such a limited amount of space, teacher recommendations, adjudicator recommendations, and the NYSSMA solo festival score are all considered.

"We've worked really hard for this the past four years, so it's exciting that all the hard work paid off," said Wallis.

Washer was selected to sing Tenor I, while Wallis was selected to sing Soprano I in the Mixed Chorus, which will be conducted by Dr. Janet Galvan, Director of Choral Activities at Ithaca College.

"We couldn't have done this without our teachers. Having someone believe you can do it really makes it happen," said Washer. "They were really the push we needed."



*For the first time in years, MACS has students who have been selected for the Conference All-State Choral Ensemble. Pictured, Sheila Wallis and Josh Washer received perfect scores in their auditions and were selected out of thousands of students from across the state! The conference is scheduled for Nov. 29 to Dec. 2 in Rochester.*

## Palermo Elementary Students Get a Treat During D.E.A.R



Students at Palermo Elementary School are getting to participate in hands-on activities as part of their Drop Everything And Read (D.E.A.R) initiative.

This year, each classroom throughout the school has been tasked to read "The Year of Billy Miller," which tells the tale of a second-grader navigating through the school year. As classrooms read through the book, they also participate in activities featured in the book, such as learning how to use chop sticks.

After reading about how a character in the book used chopsticks in her hair, the students practiced using chopsticks to pick up marshmallows.

According to the D.E.A.R website, the program is a celebration of reading designed to remind students to make reading a priority activity.



## BOARD OF EDUCATION

James Emery - President  
Darlene Upcraft - Vice President  
Chad Bigelow  
Dennis Brooks  
Connie Douglas  
Amy Shaw  
Susan Teifke  
Sheila Wallis - Student Representative

## SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Oct. 17** MS Early Dismissal 2pm
- Oct. 18** HS Fall Concert HS Aud. 7pm
- Oct. 22 to Oct. 26** School Board Appreciation Week
- Oct. 23** Mexico Idol 7pm
- Oct. 24** MS Fall Concert MS Aud. 7pm
- Oct. 25** NH Fall Festival 5-6:30pm
- Oct. 30** HS Picture Day & Senior Class Photo
- Oct. 31** Elementary Halloween Parade
- Nov. 2** EL. All-County @ Hannibal
- Nov. 2** HS Fall Play 7pm
- Nov. 3** HS Fall Play 7pm
- Nov. 4** Daylight Saving Ends
- Nov. 5** ME Picture Retake Day
- Nov. 6** Election Day
- Nov. 8** BOE Meeting 6pm
- Nov. 8** 10 Week Marking Period Ends
- Nov. 8** MS Musical MS Aud. 7pm
- Nov. 9** MS Musical MS Aud. 7pm
- Nov. 9** No School - Superintendent's Conference Day
- Nov. 10** MS Musical MS Aud. 7pm
- Nov. 12** No School Veterans Day
- Nov. 14 to Nov. 16** Early Dismissals
- Nov. 16** 10 Week Reports Go Home
- Nov. 19** NHS Induction Ceremony
- Nov. 21 to Nov. 23** Thanksgiving Break

## Tim Conners Spreads Positive Vibes at Mexico Elementary



*Fulton native Tim Conners recently visited with Mexico Elementary students to spread his story of adversity and triumph. Pictured, Conners walks the halls with Principal Bob Briggs and his guide dog, Lang.*

After climbing the highest mountain in Africa despite being blind, Fulton native Tim Conners recently visited with students at Mexico Elementary School to discuss the importance of perseverance and hard work.

Principal Bob Briggs introduced Conners as a special man who displays the leadership qualities the school looks for in its students.

Conners then discussed the obstacles he's had to overcome during his life, including being diagnosed with cancer and losing his vision. Now a college graduate and motivational speaker, Conners detailed how he didn't let those setbacks stop him from following his dreams, which included climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro, which sits more than 19,000 feet above sea level.

"Climbing a mountain is just like working in the classroom. If you don't get up every day and work hard, you might not make it to that big moment," said Conners.

Conners said by working hard, being kind to others and never giving up, he knows students can reach their dreams as well.

"You can all go on to great things," said Conners. "You can all live your impossible."

