



# CAREER WHEELS

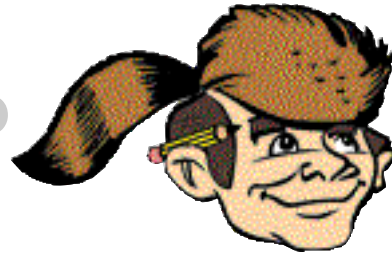
Students check out exciting rides  
**SEE PAGE 4**

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# THE ELYRIA SCHOOLS Pioneer



# Press

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AMY HIGGINS

'The Great 28' life skills posted in hallways throughout Franklin Elementary guide students in behaviors and practices to build communication skills and encourage good decision making.

## Lessons for living Franklin youth follow 'The Great 28' in all they do

**Amy Higgins**

Communications director

If the entire world could get a primer in what the students at Franklin Elementary learn each year, it would be a grand world indeed.

In every corner of the earth, people would say "please" and

"thank you."

They would resolve problems peacefully, and they would never bully or show disrespect. They would not brag, nor would they complain.

They would offer kind words of encouragement, and they would be positive, honest and fair.

In short, the world would be learning about The Great 28.

"We observe what we call The Great 28," said Lisa Licht, principal at Franklin Elementary. "We started this many years ago. They're life skills — if they're successful doing these in the classroom and in the school environ-

ment, they'll be successful later in life."

So what sort of things are we talking about? Random acts of kindness; manners; positive thinking; honesty; resolving issues in a peaceful manner.

In a visit to Franklin

See **GREAT**, 8

## Elyria High gets an 'A'

**Shane Newark**

Associate principal at EHS

When you walk into Elyria High School these days, you will see a banner that reads "Achieving Success, and Nothing Less."

This is the motto that motivates our students and staff each and every day.

It is not just a slogan on a wall, but an actual belief that we can all achieve when we work together as a team.

The recent release of the state report card by the Department of Education showed that Elyria High School passed 9 out of 10 academic Indicators on the state report card equaling an "A."

This is a huge accomplishment not only for the Elyria High School community but all of Elyria. It shows that if you set a goal and put a plan in place, the goal can be achieved.

To highlight this wonderful achievement, new banners are placed at different entrances in the building to remind students of their "A" accomplishment and provide motivation for the current

See **ELYRIA**, 8

# A new look for Army cadets at EHS

## Amy Higgins

Communications director

There's an old adage: To appreciate the present, or even the future, you have to understand the past.

There's no better place to put this in practice than in Army Junior ROTC, where a fascinating bit of military legend can help you understand why you'll see ROTC cadets wearing new uniforms this year.

In years past, you would have seen cadets wearing all-green uniforms. Nowadays, they're wearing dark-blue jackets with light-blue pants, gray berets, gray shirts and spit-shined black shoes.

Why the different colors for the pants and jacket?

According to retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Roy Jenkins, the senior Army instructor of Elyria High School's ROTC program, the story goes something like this:

After the Civil War, the U.S. Army's frontier regiments, including the 7th, 9th and 10th Cavalry, were formed for expeditions across the Western plains. A soldier would get hot while riding horseback, so he'd take off his jacket and stuff it in his saddlebag. Over time, a soldier's pants would fade to a light blue from exposure to the elements, but the jacket would remain dark blue.

Jenkins recounted this piece of military history on a recent fall afternoon, as he oversaw drills involving about two dozen ROTC cadets outside Elyria High School.



MARTY YADON

ROTC cadets march in step at Elyria High School. The cadet in the foreground is wearing the 'blues' that are now standard in the U.S. Army.

The students were undeterred in their zeal for perfection — they marched in lockstep and reacted quickly to commands.

Jenkins, the high school's ROTC leader, expected nothing less.

"They're always sharp and always crisp," observed Elyria Schools Superintendent Paul Rigda, who stopped by to check out the new uniforms. "All programs are as strong as the person

in charge of them. You've done a great job — it's a great partnership between the schools and government."

Jenkins said the ROTC program motivates the students to become better citizens.

"It teaches personal discipline and order," Jenkins said. "I want them to make their mistakes here, so that when it counts — when they've got to get that job, or get

that person to marry them — they get it right."

Elyria High's ROTC program is represented at many festivals, ceremonies and community events all year long, as well as events organized to honor veterans.

The ROTC cadets are not required to enlist in the service after graduation, although those who do stand to benefit: They'll enter the service at a higher rank,

earning significantly more money.

Elyria is just one of 22 high schools in Ohio with an Army Junior ROTC program. There are about 3,000 such programs in the U.S.

Elyria's ROTC cadets also have an air rifle team, whose members are gearing up to take safety exams. Before they can ever fire a weapon, they must earn 100 percent on the exam, Jenkins said.

## Here we are, on the road again in Elyria Schools

These days, everybody is busier than ever. We're pressed for time, tethered to our phones, running to appointments, juggling home and work, and mastering the fine art of doing more with less.

Through all the bustle, we still want to stay close to what matters: family, friends and, of course, our children, who spend a huge portion of their young lives in school.

Elyria Schools wants to do more than just keep you up to speed on the happenings in your child's school — we want to give you an inside look at the programs and people who guide your child's educational development.

It takes an army of teachers, support staff, administrators, students, parents and community members to make a school district thrive.

There are fundamental elements we are all familiar with — reading, writing, arithmetic and core subjects of academia. But Elyria Schools is also rich with programs, courses and special offerings that define "value added."

Through these pages, you'll read about some of these programs, which are also featured in "On the Road with Superintendent Rigda," a program that airs on the district's



AMY HIGGINS

website and its educational access station, Time Warner Channel 95.

The entire package aims to put you in the front seat for an exciting tour of our district. This month, I joined Superintendent Paul Rigda as he visited a program that aims to introduce youngsters to careers at Franklin Elementary School. We also stepped inside the brand-new

preschool program there, made possible only by the generosity of The Stocker Foundation.

We spent time learning how Franklin Elementary helps instill good manners, values and character in our youngest residents, and then we headed down the street to Elyria High School to see how the big kids are achieving success.

Elyria High School earned a grade of A on Ohio's report card. Visible signs of this success are peppered throughout the school, including bold banners that boast, "Achieving Success, Nothing Less."

Beyond academics are the

pieces that add depth and meet the needs of every child. High school students with special needs are learning life skills in new and unique ways, while the ROTC cadets are giving us a dose of living history as they don new uniforms for their activities.

It is indeed a busy, bustling world out there.

But sometimes that's a good thing, because it means there's a whirlwind of activity in every school in the district.

And we'll tell you all about it.

*Amy Higgins is communications director at Elyria Schools.*

## WHERE THEY ARE NOW

# No stopping Elyria High School alum

At 95, Joy Oldfield still going strong — and just inducted into Elyria Schools Alumni Hall of Fame

**Amy Higgins**

Communications director

When Joy Oldfield graduated from Elyria High School in 1964, she had already completed her freshman year of college.

Sure, there are students who accomplish the same nowadays, but you'd be hard-pressed to find one who did it like Mrs. Oldfield: at age 45, and as a parent of four adult children.

"Moxie" is a word that comes to mind when you talk about Mrs. Oldfield.

In her youth, she left Elyria High School to marry her sweetheart, Wayne Oldfield, who supported their family by working at a manufacturing company in town. They had four children together.

In a 1969 story in The Chronicle-Telegram, Mrs. Oldfield told a reporter, "I

never dwelled on the thought of going back to high school because the opportunities just weren't there at the time."

After her children grew into adulthood, she decided it was time to seek out those new opportunities. In 1953, she enrolled in a typing class, which landed her a job as a secretary.

She could have stopped there. She didn't.

In 1962, in her early 40s, she went back to Elyria High School to attend night classes. She completed a year of studies, then decided she wanted to get a leg up on college while finishing the high school curriculum. Kent State University allowed her to take a high school equivalency test, which opened the door for college enrollment.

See **OLDFIELD, 8**



AMY HIGGINS

Elyria resident Joy Oldfield was inducted into the Elyria Schools & Friends Alumni Association Hall of Fame on Oct. 18.

## NEW CHOIR DIRECTOR STARTS AT ELYRIA HIGH SCHOOL



MARTY YADON PHOTOS

Elyria High School choir director Kalee Bondzio is seen instructing girls' choir at the high school recently. Bondzio — a graduate of Baldwin Wallace University — is new to Elyria Schools, replacing retired choir director Mark Jessie.



AMY HIGGINS PHOTOS

# Careers on wheels

## Vehicle day sparks future job interests for kids

**Amy Higgins**  
Communications director

If it's got a horn and a set of wheels, you can make a career out of it.

That's right — the wheels on the bus aren't the only ones that turn 'round and 'round in this town. Fire trucks, tow trucks, police cars and an armada of emergency and work vehicles are on the streets every day, serving the community in endless ways.

A fleet of these vehicles descended on Franklin Elementary recently for a special "Careers on Wheels" day, where students got to learn all about the jobs associated with these fascinating rides.

Franklin students of all grade levels hopped, skipped and jumped from one vehicle to the next in

the large parking lot behind their school. They lined up to take their turn behind the steering wheels of a fire truck, a military vehicle, a police car, a dump truck, a tow truck and a homeland security unit.

They even got an up-close look at a jet-fired dragster, and they plugged their ears when the engine roared to life.

The day came to life by the efforts of Franklin Elementary teacher Kia Piggot, who contacted the owners of the vehicles — including local businessmen and law enforcement and emergency services workers — and invited them to drop by the school to show off their rides.

The event was a hit on every level. "Best day ever!" shouted the kids.





AMY HIGGINS PHOTOS

**ABOVE:** A Franklin third-grade student studies independently on a LearnPad.

**BELOW:** Franklin third-grade teacher Jackie Keressi demonstrates how students load lessons from the SMART Board onto their LearnPads using the device's internal scanner.



## Tablets tailor learning to students' specific needs

**Amy Higgins**  
Communications director

With innate know-how and nimble fingers, kids today are mastering technology at the earliest of ages. They've been raised on it, and they are quite at ease with navigating highly sophisticated programs and devices.

Their casual, comfortable skills move easily between home devices and school computers, tablets and SMART Boards. There is no more perfect example of this than at Franklin Elementary School, where technology flourishes and children as young as 4 years old are thriving in their digital curriculum.

Relatively new to the technology toolbox at Franklin Elementary are LearnPads. LearnPads look like standard tablets but they are specifically wired for school use. With LearnPads, teachers can individualize classroom lessons so the work students do on their tablets meets their specific learning needs.

The way it works is slick and students enjoy programming their individual tablets for their daily lessons as much as they enjoy navigating the technology in class.

"Learn pads give teachers complete control over the lesson for each student," said Jackie Keressi, third grade teacher at Franklin.

During a LearnPad lesson, teachers create assignments on the SMART Board and students are able to use an embedded scanner on the LearnPads to download the assignments.

"It's just like a store; they hold their LearnPad up to the SmartBoard, scan a code and load their lesson," Keressi said. "I can have multiple lessons loaded (on the SMART Board) at once. The students love to scan and the technology makes it possible to individualize lessons.

"I can also see everything they're working on and if they get off task, I can send a message to them on their LearnPad."

See **FRANKLIN**, 8

# Bringers of joy

Students reunite lost items with worried owners

**Amy Higgins**

Communications director

They are bringers of relief, erasers of worry and makers of happiness.

They are the expert administrators of a new and burgeoning offering at Elyria High School: The Lost and Found.

High schooler Tim White puts it plainly: "We find the stuff that's lost, so we put it on the cart and take it to their rooms."

In truth, Tim is being a little humble, because it's more complex than that.

The first question is certainly this: How big can Elyria High's Lost and Found collection really be?

Answer: Huge.

"Usually there's a mountain of lost and found," said intervention specialist Kevin Corp. "And we're turning it into a molehill."

"Every week in fourth-period class, we take a photo of every lost item (and) we put a description," Corp said.

The students in Corp's class then categorize and organize the items in a list. They've also gone

electronic, placing the bulk of the data — picture and all — in an Excel-like table. They then print the pages they produce and place them in a three-ring binder, which is placed by the Lost and Found area.

Students and staff can swing by the Lost and Found to examine the binder, checking if any of their items have been inventoried.

The Lost and Found administrators also scan the material for names or other identifying features that might lead to an item's owner. If the students can ID an owner, they'll personally return the item in timely fashion.

This past week, the students in the class returned six items to worried owners.

Elyria High School has 2,000 students and about 200 staff members, so you can imagine the volume of material that passes in and out of the Lost and Found.

At least one student serves in a managerial role for the Lost and Found, which is standard



MARTY YADON

EHS intervention specialist Kevin Corp uses projects like baking and cataloging to reinforce life skills and teach curricular lessons like mathematics, writing and reading through hands-on practice.

procedure for most projects in Corp's class. Whether they're working on baking, recycling, Lost and Found or a litany of other programs that help the students grow their communica-

tions and professional skills, they always have a chosen leader for each program.

The classes work academic curriculum into the mix through practical, hands-on life experi-

ences. The Breakfast Nook is a prime example — the students make the food, portion it out and then sell it to students on Thursdays in the Wi-Fi Cafe.



AMY HIGGINS PHOTOS

## MCKINLEY UPGRADES BOOST SECURITY



**LEFT:** McKinley Elementary Principal Virginia Fitch stands at the new entrance on the East River side of the building. The entrance was changed and upgraded this year and the principal's office relocated, all to improve security. With the new entrance, visitors can

only enter the building by reaching the office first and signing in. **ABOVE:** McKinley Elementary Principal Virginia Fitch shows a new display in the visiting area, where guests can catch updates on school events, district news and other happenings.



AMY HIGGINS

# Let's go to the movies

**Amy Higgins**

Communications director

Remember the days when “serials,” cartoons and feature films were a popular way for kids to while away a Saturday morning?

The ever-popular weekend favorite is becoming a staple at the Elyria High School Performing Arts Center. Once a month, the district will host “Movie Saturday,” where the feature films will include old-fashioned westerns, family classics and today’s big-bud-

get animation favorites.

The format will borrow a page from history: Each show will kick off with a kid-centric icebreaker, like a sing-along or a cheer, followed by a movie short or cartoon and then the feature presentation.

Moviegoers who attend all shows this season will be entered into a grand prize drawing at the end of the school year.

Go to [www.elyriaschools.org](http://www.elyriaschools.org) for show listings or contact theatre director Jim Nichols at [nicholsjames@elyriaschools.org](mailto:nicholsjames@elyriaschools.org).

## PAC performances put the happy in holidays

- Dec. 1 LCMT Festival of Carols\* — 7:30 p.m.
- Dec. 3 Prospect Winter Concert — 7 p.m.
- Dec. 4 Northwood Band and Choir Concert — 7 p.m.
- Dec. 8 McKinley Holiday Concert — 7 p.m.
- Dec. 9 Crestwood Winter Program featuring grades 1, 3 and 5 — 7 p.m.
- Dec. 10 Franklin Winter Program — 7 p.m.
- Dec. 11 Oakwood Winter Program — 7 p.m.
- Dec. 14 EHS Concert Choir and Chorale Concert — 3 p.m.
- Dec. 17 EHS Band Concert — 7 p.m.
- Dec. 18 Ely Holiday Concert — 6:30 p.m.
- Dec. 21 EHS A Cappella Concert — 3 p.m.

\*admission fee

## Saturday Morning Movies

New this year! Titles listed at [elyriaschools.org](http://elyriaschools.org) and subject to change.

- Oct. 18
- Nov. 22
- Dec. 13 (hosted with EHS “Santa’s Workshop”)
- Jan. 17 (tentative)
- Feb. 28
- March 21
- April 11 (tentative)
- May 16 (tentative)
- June 20

## PRESCHOOLERS AT FRANKLIN ENJOY NEW DIGS



AMY HIGGINS PHOTOS

Franklin Elementary preschool teacher Jill Henes reviews the types of vehicles students saw during a recent “Careers on Wheels” program at the school. The preschool program, made possible by a \$1.25 million grant from The Stocker Foundation, is in its third month. The program has two classrooms and two teachers using a host of new technology, teaching equipment and furniture, including the ergonomic chairs pictured alongside the computers. Franklin students in all grade levels have longer school days and are enjoying many new educational practices.



## FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL AT PROSPECT



AMY HIGGINS PHOTOS

Parents and students wait with nervous excitement outside Prospect Elementary for the doors to open on the first day of school.

## GREAT

From 1

Elementary, Elyria Schools Superintendent Paul Rigda found many of the goals resonated with him.

"The idea is to get as many of the Great 28 skills and traits under your belt as possible," Rigda said. "The more you have, the more successful you'll be in life."

Said Licht: "One thing we're always working on is No. 12."

No. 12: Transition will be swift, quiet and orderly.

"Things are swift, quiet and orderly so we get time on task," Licht said, referring to students doing the required work rather than allowing time to slip by unused.

The Great 28 program falls in line with an Ohio Department of Education initiative called Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, or "PBIS." It aims to promote programs or opportunities that encourage positive choices and behaviors in all students.

Rigda said he especially likes No. 27 — "It's OK to make mistakes; just give it a try" — and No. 28, "Do your best."

"That's hard for kids," Licht said. "They always want it right the first time."

## ELYRIA

From 1

school year.

This wonderful announcement has energized the students and staff to continue on that path of success.

In addition to the large overall goal of being rated an "A," the building forms smaller goals for the students to climb toward each grading period. The goal to

start the year for the whole student body: earn 3,823 "A's" for the first grading period report cards.

I am proud to say that the students are currently on track to meet this goal for the first grading period.

In addition to succeeding academically, many programs are in place at Elyria High School to help keep students involved. A new initiative underway this school year is "Monday Funday."

This program is coordinated by LINK crew, a peer mentoring program that works with new freshman each week during lunch periods.

LINK crew is a successful mentoring program that has been in place at Elyria High School for four school years. Throughout the school year they plan fun interactive activities for freshman to help them feel connected with the high school.

Four years ago the "Pioneer Pack" was formed to encourage students to cheer together to support our athletic teams. Each year this group has grown larger and their support has traveled to away games with a strong contingent of students to cheer on the football team and band.

This group takes having fun to a new level with their enthusiastic cheers and creative costumes that they put together each week.

## OLDFIELD

From 3

End result: She earned her Elyria High School diploma in 1964, at age 45. At that point, she had also completed her first year of college.

Three years later, she graduated cum laude from Kent State University with a bachelor's of science in education.

She could have called it a day. She didn't.

She was hired by Elyria Schools, where as a teacher specializing in reading, she taught at-risk youth. At the same time, she continued her studies at Kent State, and in 1969 earned her master's

*"I never dwelled on the thought of going back to high school because the opportunities just weren't there at the time."*

Joy Oldfield

degree. She was also in the national honor society for women in education.

Her unique experiences caught the interest of The Chronicle-Telegram, which featured her in a story on Aug. 24, 1969.

In her interview with the newspaper reporter, Mrs. Oldfield offered up six attributes she believes are needed to attain success in education: self-discipline; self-confidence;

effective communication; imagination; intellect; and common sense.

At age 95, she still lives in her Foster Avenue home in Elyria, and she's still disciplined, confident, smart, sensible and full of wonder. These days, her favorite pastime is watching the birds from her backyard gazebo, built by her grandson. She also enjoys a weekly outing for Sunday dinners to that same grandson's home.

## FRANKLIN

From 5

Tablets like the LearnPad and other handheld devices help students become skilled at using technology for more than entertainment; they are using technology for learning.

"When my students see the technology cart in here they come running in and they tell their friends," Keressi said. "They love it."

The LearnPads were purchased with funds granted by The Stocker Foundation as a result of its five-year, multimillion-dollar commitment to supporting preschool and new educational strategies at Franklin Elementary School.