



# LIFE'S LESSONS

Teacher realizes kids are her calling  
**SEE PAGE 4**

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# THE ELYRIA SCHOOLS **Pioneer** **Press**

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## Networking with class

**Amy Higgins**

Communications director

Before Mark Zuckerberg, there was Shirley Messaros.

She was finding friends and “liking” statuses well before Facebook.

Shirley’s social networking genius traces back 61 years, when she graduated from Elyria High School in 1954.

For the past six decades she’s been chairman of her class reunion, and chronicler of her class’ history and information. She’s the official historian for the Class of 1954, meticulously noting, clipping and recording facts and life details of her social group and arranging their large and small get-togethers from one year to the next.

Her home office is a haven of information where stacks of photos, books, newspapers and writings are neatly organized and readily accessible. Over many, many precious hours, Shirley has traced her life and the lives of her classmates from elementary school to high school and into adulthood. In her basement museum of history, she’s compiled this memorabilia into a pictographic timeline spanning 90 poster boards. She even has a clever plan for displaying the somewhat unwieldy boards in a fashion her classmates can enjoy.

“I’d like to tack them up using holders like they use in carpet stores to display different carpet samples,” she said. “Then people can page through them easily.”

She’s also hard at work on a video version.

Shirley’s classmates will get a look at her labor of love on Aug. 19 at their 61st class reunion. These friends skip the arms-length style of Facebook networking, opting instead to keep their friendship close, personal and face-to-face. They meet every summer for a casual luncheon and every five years for a big



PIONEER PRESS

Shirley Messaros points to herself as a young girl at Franklin Elementary School.

tadoo. Of the original 282 students in the Class of 1954, 186 are living and many reside in the area, Shirley said.

Elyria High School holds a special place in Shirley’s heart, but poignant memories of growing up on the south side of Elyria and early school years spent at McKinley and Franklin tell a tale of lifelong love for Elyria Schools and the friendships it yielded.

Her own writing says it best. “My love for Elyria High School and my classmates began during elementary days. Kindergarten through second grade I attended McKinley school. Looking back, three of us girls from Charles Court ended up later in years as chairmen of our class reunions.

Third grade through high school were spent at Franklin and Elyria High School. We lived at 348 5th Street until

the school board took the homes on the south side of 5th Street by Eminent Domain. Our home was saved and for years it was home to the Elyria Board of Education.

As a child I spent many hours in the high school gym watching basketball practice and helping decorate the gym for the dances (proms) or sweeping the Technical Building halls and erasing the blackboards while helping the janitors. During prom night, the music flowed from the gym into our home and I looked forward to when I would be attending those dances.

After graduation the class officers went away to college or joined the service. I remember asking the class president if I could start our class reunions and I’ve been chairman ever since.

See **CLASS**, 6

## Tom Jama named chief of schools

**Amy Higgins**

Communications director

He’s known around these parts by one name. Jama.

He’s the larger-than-life personality of Elyria High School, always recognizable in a baseball hat emblazoned with the big red “E,” always present at any and all events where his 2,000-some students are showcasing their talents.

He’s a mainstay at athletic events — baseball, basketball and football games, just to name a few — and he’s always a familiar face at plays and musicals at the state-of-the-art Performing Arts Center.



**Jama**

Hope he’s got a lot more time on his hands in the years ahead, because his student base just more than tripled.

In August, Dr. Tom Jama becomes superintendent of the 6,800-student Elyria City School District.

He has all the necessary credentials for the top spot — 27 years in education, a long list of leadership roles and professional accomplishments, and the staff and community support an educational leader needs to pilot a school district and prepare students for the future.

While his successes in school leadership are well documented, how about the things that reveal a more personal side?

One might be surprised to learn he keeps a list of “Jama’s kids” in his office — kids who he personally mentors in life’s decisions, each and every week.

It’s not unusual this time of year to find an evening gown hanging in his office with all of the accessories for a spectacular night on the town.

See **JAMA**, 2

# Inspiring stories surprise and delight

I love learning new things about people. Especially people I happen to know personally.

How many times have you chatted with a friend or an acquaintance, only to have them drop a whopper of a discovery that stops you in your tracks and inspires a shove to the shoulder and a surprised, "Get out!"

That's how this issue of Pioneer Press shook out for me.

A month ago I wrote an email to Molly Knight, a math teacher and veteran employee with Elyria Schools. I wanted her to tell me about what Westwood staff members were doing to strengthen relationships with kids and turn those ties into academic success. Westwood's been making the grade for some time and the staff is unified in its philosophies and practical ways of connecting with students.

Truthfully, I expected a typical story in return: "We do this. They do that. We're successful."

What I got was Molly's personal story of career indecision, life-changing moments and inspired way of thinking that drives her teaching and her leadership as Westwood's teachers' union representative.

From the first sentence, I was hooked.

I had several, "Get out!" moments while reading it. I'm sure you will, too. The editor in me fretted a bit about the article length. Word economy is critical in a paper this size, especially when there are so many good stories to report. After several read-throughs and a few pass-arounds to my office mates who hail from the education biz, we decided it was too important a story not to tell in all its glory.



AMY HIGGINS

Don't miss Molly's story inside — it's a page-turner.

When you have a big story to tell, you give it good placement.

Front-page news in this issue is the new chief of Elyria Schools, Dr. Tom Jama.

Jama is a longtime educator and school administrator and an Elyria resident who raised his children in Elyria. He now guides the city's youth through Elyria High School as head principal.

His professional qualifications are well documented in the news, so the Pioneer Press decided to take a more personal approach in its report. We asked him for five

quick-hit bullet points about himself that might surprise our readers. Raging Ohio State fan was no surprise to us, but a horror flick fan? Get out!

Finally, we look at a remarkable lady named Shirley Messaros.

She also shares the front page, and deservedly so. I first met Shirley 10 years ago when I began attending meetings for the Elyria Schools Alumni and Friends Association.

She lives and breathes Elyria Schools, and regularly rolls up her sleeves to help its students even today. This is a lady who began a winter coat drive on her own and to this day donates hundreds of new and gently worn coats to our students every year. She also organized a community-wide forum addressing drug abuse. She helps coordinate important activities for the women's league of the

American Legion, including an essay contest for students.

As a member of the Elyria Schools Alumni and Friends Association, Shirley works on fundraisers to raise money for scholarships to help Elyria High School students go to college.

She's a spunky gal, to say the least. A random conversation with Shirley recently revealed her true devotion to the city of her birth and to the school district she adores. As we talked, I listened with fascination to her family history and the links to Elyria Schools.

The "Get out!" moments are plentiful in this issue of Pioneer Press.

Hope you enjoy the read.

*Amy Higgins is communications director at Elyria Schools.*

## The kindness of children

Heather Durdil

Administrative assistant

The room was quiet as students sat in a circle and waited for their chance to meet this day's special guest: Moses, the three-legged dog.

Moses traveled to Windsor Elementary School with Sister Mary Berigan of The Blessing House in Lorain. They had been invited to Windsor by teachers Kathy Pero and Andy Menner to collect concept books that were created by their students. The books offered colorful illustrations of concepts like near and far, and shapes, colors and numbers. The books will live in the library at the Blessing House for the children who reside there. The Blessing House is a respite care center for children. Windsor students and staff also presented Moses and Sister Berigan with a large box of nonperishable food and personal care items for The Blessing House, which Sister Mary gratefully accepted on behalf of the facility.

This service project was funded by the Elyria Schools Endowment Board.

## JAMA

From 1

A dress? Well, it's for any one of the many young ladies at EHS who'd like to go to Prom but can't afford the expensive gown.

His coworkers can tell you about his most signature attribute: positivity. It's a trait on display each day when he sends out an email recognizing a student, employee, sports team or any group who has accomplished something noteworthy.

If someone in the community sends a high school staffer a compliment, Jama is apt to forward it to the whole building.

To boil it down to the essentials: Dr. Tom Jama is a team-builder whose can-do attitude permeates the district and imbues people with a sense of pride.

Here are five things you may not know about this Elyria Schools superintendent in the waiting:

- He's an Ohio State Buckeyes fan, through and through, but he's not a graduate of his beloved university. He graduated from Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania. While there, he earned a national Judo championship as a junior while on the Judo team. He also played football for Slippery Rock and was a member of the Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity.

- He can be found in the Dawg

Pound at Cleveland Browns Stadium during home games though you might not recognize him under his orange and brown wig, dog mask and painted face.

- He loves listening to Bruce Springsteen and has attended 12 of his concerts in two different states. This past fall, he was honored to have the Elyria High School Pioneer Marching Band play "Born to Run" by The Boss, and allow him to participate in the half-time show.

- He's an avid fan of horror movies and has seen them all. He is particularly fond of the series' "Halloween," "Jaws," "Lake Placid," "Friday the 13th," "Tremors" and "Child's Play," aka "Chucky." He also loves the classic flicks like, "Creature from the Black Lagoon," "Dracula," "The Mummy," "Frankenstein," "The Blob" and "The Wolfman."

- He wasn't the best student in grade school and high school. In fact, his counselor told his parents that college wasn't going to be an option. He took that as a personal challenge and also a lesson in what *not* to tell a student. Being an educator is a calling for him, one that comes with a tremendous responsibility: To believe in every child and to do everything in one's power to make each child believe in themselves.

## FIVE THINGS ABOUT RIGDA

As the community readies for its new school superintendent, folks must also ready for the inevitable departure of a longtime leader who has made a tremendous difference in Elyria City Schools.

Superintendent Paul Rigda has guided the district through great times and some of its most challenging times, including building closures.

Most notably, he oversaw the successful passage of a bond issue that paved the way for the new Elyria High School. He was at the helm during the EHS project, from beginning to end. He balanced the district's budget when the school finances in Ohio and the nation were at their worst levels in decades, and he also improved academic performance while building strong ties with the community.

We could go on for quite some time about Paul Rigda's credentials and accomplishments over his 40-some years in education. But instead, we'll keep with the theme of these articles and focus on five things that you may never have known about this outgoing superintendent.

- He attended Kent State University and graduated in 1970, the year National Guard



Rigda

soldiers fatally shot four students during the Vietnam War protests.

- In his younger years, he worked various places and multiple

jobs at once. He has been a UPS delivery driver, an insurance salesman and a laborer for Fruehauf.

- In his late teens, he played in a band that opened for The Yardbirds and The Temptations. His band almost signed a recording contract, but the parents of one band mate refused to allow it, insisting they get real jobs instead.

- Rigda always wanted to be a teacher. As a young boy, he jotted down in a notebook all the jokes he heard his teachers tell, so he could use them in the future.

- He has three children and five grandchildren. They're all on this earth for one reason: He fell in love with his wife decades ago, when she showed up at one of his performances and tried to hire him for a gig. She had no money, but Rigda and his band did the gig anyway. The rest is history.

# Special honors signal spring at EHS

**Shane Newark**

EHS associate principal

Spring is finally here! In addition to warmer temperatures and more time spent outside, spring also signals a busy time at Elyria High School. This is when we prepare to honor students who have excelled during high school. As a proud Elyria High School graduate, it is truly a rewarding experience to see so many students honored and recognized for their hard work and commitment. Each graduating class is special and has made an everlasting impression on the long history of Elyria High School.

The first students to be acknowledged are the juniors and seniors who will be inducted into Elyria High School's chapter of the National Honor Society. This program honors not only those students who excel academically, but those who have served their community and shown exceptional character and leadership.

The celebration of success continues for the annual Scholastic "E" awards program. The recipients of this prestigious award have maintained at least a 3.75 cumulative grade point average for seven semesters. Later this month, the Senior Awards will be held in the Performing Arts Center. This special evening awards seniors with different scholarships from various community organizations who serve as strong partners with the Elyria City Schools. A culminating event for students who have embodied the spirit of "Achieving success and nothing less" is the graduation ceremony at Elyria High School on Friday, May 29, at Ely Stadium. It is truly an exciting and momentous occasion to witness 450 students dressed in red and white gowns lining the field to receive diplomas from Elyria High School. Even though their time as students at Elyria High School is over, they will forever be alumnus of EHS as they journey into the world and continue to make us proud.



AMY HIGGINS

Tom Jama, principal of EHS, congratulates a student for earning high honors.

# 5-year-olds: Ready, set, go to kindergarten!

**Amy Higgins**

Communications director

When you're about to begin a 13-year project, it's important to get off on the right foot.

Welcome to kindergarten!

Children who will be five years old by Sept. 30 should begin kindergarten in the fall. In Elyria Schools, kindergarteners attend school all day, five days per week, and there is no extra cost for the full-day experience.

It's important for parents and children to register as early as possible for a fall-start to kindergarten so they can begin preparing for this crucial first step in education.

Early registration also helps the district plan class sizes and fulfill staffing needs.

Elyria's kindergarten classrooms are located in neighborhood schools and at the Elyria Early Childhood Village, 42101 Griswold Road.

Aside from telltale tiny chairs and low-profile tables, it's hard to distinguish kindergarten rooms from any other classroom. They are teaming with computers, SMART-boards and a host of other tools to give these little learners a technological edge in preparing for their future.

Registering for kindergarten is as easy as 1, 2, 3.

The Elyria Schools Central Registration Office at Elyria High School is open every day, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and is located at 601 Middle Avenue. Registers are available to assist parents and to get all of the necessary documents in place.



HEATHER DURDIL

Technology abounds in kindergarten classrooms across the district.

To enroll, parents will need their child's birth certificate, immunization records, two proofs of residency and proof of custody, if necessary. To speak to a register, call (440) 284-8220.

Kindergarten is a busy place and children learn basic school skills, like following directions and working alongside other children, but they also gain knowledge in age-appropriate curriculum that readies them for their primary years in school. Highly qualified early education teachers lead the lessons and guide them in "learning school."

If you're wondering if your little learner is ready for school, here are some questions to

ask yourself about your child's basic skills. This excerpt is taken from the "Kindergarten Readiness Checklist" by the Ohio Department of Education and is available in its entirety at <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Early-Learning/Guidance-About-Kindergarten/Kindergarten-Readiness-Checklist>

## Physical skills

- Does your child ...
- enjoy outdoor play such as running, jumping, and climbing?
- draw and trace basic shapes?
- cut with scissors?

- bounce a ball?
- ride a tricycle?

## Health and safety needs

- Has your child ...
- had required shots?
- had a dental exam?
- had a vision exam?
- learned own first and last name?
- learned first and last name of parent?
- learned to watch for cars when crossing the street?
- learned to not talk to strangers?
- developed a set routine for going to bed?
- follow rules for safety?

## Personal needs

- Without your help, can your child ...
- use the bathroom?
- wash hands?
- brush teeth?
- use tissue to blow nose?
- button and zip up shirts and pants?
- put on and take off coat?
- tie or velcro shoes?

## Social and emotional skills

- Does your child ...
- play well with other children?
- separate from a parent without being upset?
- share with other children?
- care about the feelings of others?
- follow routines?
- put toys away when asked?

# Life's surprises teach teacher precious career lessons

**Molly Knight**  
Westwood teacher

I still remember the outfit I wore to the interview. Blue pants and a yellow shirt.

I was interviewing with Principal Greg Horace at Westwood in April of 2000 for a seventh-grade math teaching position. I showed up wearing Michigan colors to an interview with an Ohio State fanatic! That's when I knew to expect the unexpected in teaching.

I had bounced around from job to job since graduating from college in 1989, including a teaching stint that lasted five years. It hadn't gone well and I gave up on teaching altogether.

I went to work at a slaughterhouse where I spent my days opening and washing pig stomachs. Sadly, it paid more than teaching.

My career path was varied and colorful, to say the least.

I was a job coach, helping youth-at-risk.

I cut grass at a campsite campground.

I earned a captain's license and piloted a parasail at Cedar Point.

At 30 years old, my dad said it was time to get a "real" job, and my brother handed me an ad seeking a part-time teacher at a correctional facility. I applied and landed the job, where they seemed more interested in my parasailing experience than my teaching.

The job was great. I was promoted and eventually became director of operations. While there, I saw former students entering as convicted felons. When they recognized me as their former teacher, they hung their heads in shame. I realized then I was in the wrong profession. I needed to return to teaching, where I believed I could make a difference in kids' lives.

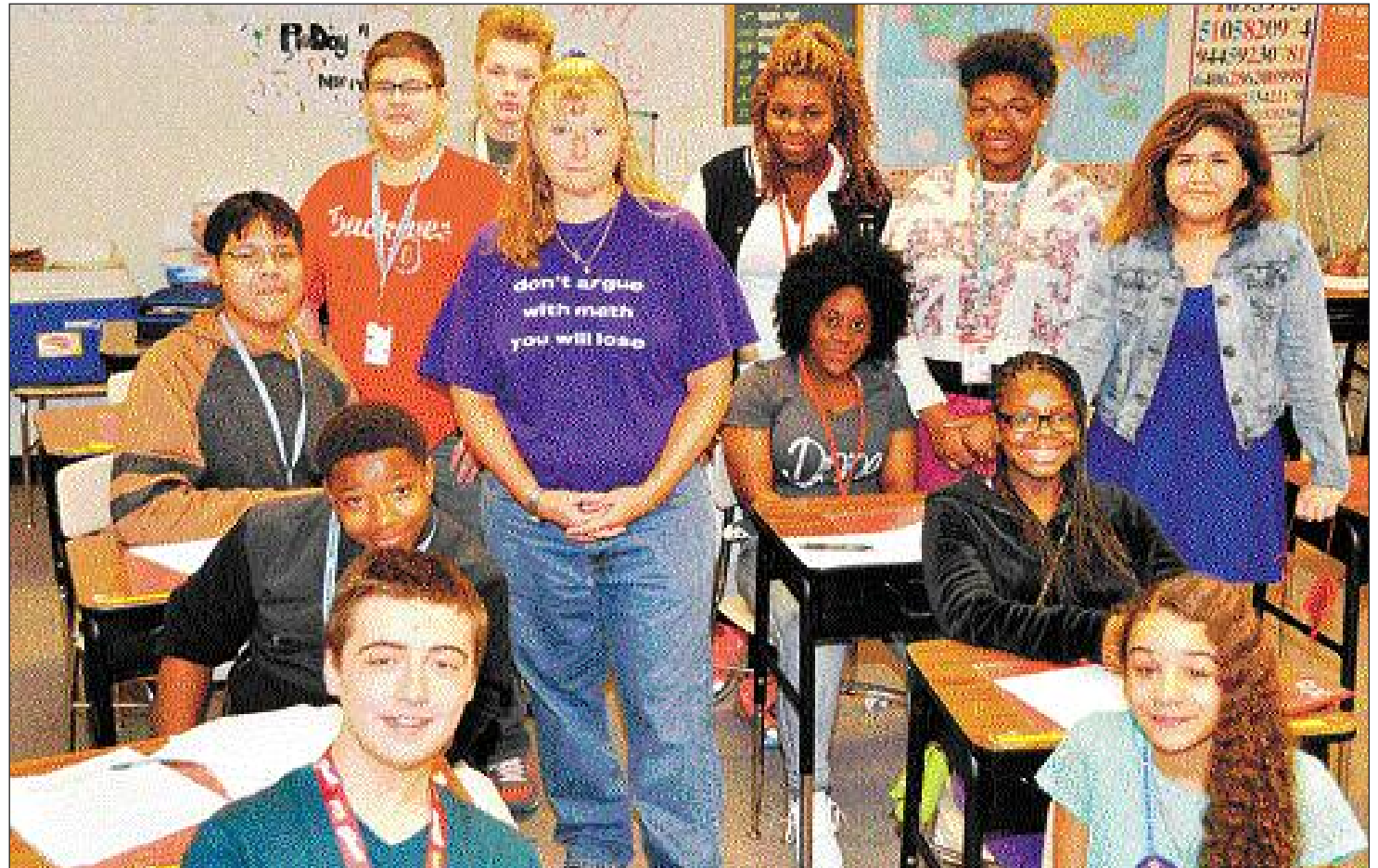
## Tough as nails

Michigan colors and all, I was hired at Westwood Junior High School to teach seventh-grade math. The interview team was focused on my corrections experience. They wanted someone who was "tough," and I was.

At that time, Westwood's test scores and reputation were horrendous. It was the worst-performing school in the district and it seemed nothing better was expected. From the "older" teachers, newbies like me heard stories of how great it used to be.

Then an experience with a former student changed me as a teacher and a person.

Admittedly, I was a tough teacher, a



AMY HIGGINS

Molly Knight has seen her career path take many turns but today, she is right where she wants to be: teaching a subject she loves to students who make her proud.

stickler for the rules. This student was often absent and, when in class, usually unprepared, not even bringing a pencil for the math work that was inevitable in my class.

"You dare come to my class without a pencil?" I thought. Yes, I was tough, and as it turns out, out of touch.

The family moved, and the student transferred to another school within the district. Maybe by fate, I was assigned to provide home instruction to this student, who was now a year older and enrolled in a different school.

I arrived at the home to a broken doorframe and a screen door that wouldn't close, and to a family doing the best they could to make ends meet. There were siblings, too, and like all kids after a long day of school or play, they came home ready to eat. But this home had no snacks, and in fact, even the basic food items were scarce. The cupboards offered no hidden goods.

I began taking snacks with me while on my weekly visits. In time, the snacks led to

basic food, school clothes and supplies, things for the home, and holiday meals and gifts.

The family eventually left the district, but our friendship and my concern for them carried on for years. As I learned, the broken doorframe that met me when I first arrived at the home had been caused by a person attempting to break in for insidious reasons. The ailments that had kept that student from regularly attending my classes while a student at Westwood were caused by anxiety and worry about the family's home life.

The pencil that was always missing when that student was my student in class never existed, because the family had been homeless and what little possessions they had fit inside a car.

I faced a cold, bitter truth about that student's life and the lives of many others who've passed through my classroom.

How does having a pencil for math class rate in importance when you're homeless?

I learned my reality is not necessarily the reality of our students. How I was raised and what I go home to each night is not the same for my students. As teachers, we need to know this.

I believe I became a better teacher from this experience, and certainly a more compassionate soul.

The desks in my classroom now have trays that hold supplies like pencils, pens, markers and the like. My rule is: If you need it, take it. I don't care if my students write in pencil, pen or crayon, as long as they're putting forth the effort to complete their math assignments. There are other things I am a stickler about, like giving their best try at the homework. But pencils and supplies? No. Not anymore.

## Making strides

Teaming in teaching means grouping teachers and students together to help build strong bonds and more accurately target students' needs, and it's a practice

## KINDNESS AT THE DOOR

Jelly is to peanut butter like Schatz is to Westwood.

Diane Schatz is the unmistakable voice and wide, bright smile that greets students and visitors each and every day at Westwood Middle School.

The sign above her desk reads, "To the world you may be just one person but to one person, you are the world." Diane makes this kind of an impact on the lives of everyone she meets but especially the students who travel in and out of Westwood day-in and day-out. She's been the office mainstay for 20 years.

"Diane knows the needs of our students and she keeps us informed, and we step up to meet those needs,"

said Molly Knight, math teacher. Her consideration is well known and has even earned her the title of "Woman of Compassion," an award she received in 2011 from the Community Foundation of Lorain County.

Diane's effervescent personality and comfortable ease with the students and their families instills immeasurable trust and confidence, particularly when times are tough.

"One of our parents was battling a life-threatening illness and Diane purchased a card that the entire staff signed while another staff member who had experienced the same illness visited the parent at home," said Knight. "Diane further headed up a collection to purchase gift cards for

the family.

"She attends afterschool functions to cheer our students on in their extracurricular activities, and she's like a rock star. Kids are yelling her name and running up to her," said Knight.

"Former students visit her to let her know how they are doing. I joke with my students they need to fill out an application to eat lunch with us!" Diane exudes warmth, kindness and compassion, and her positive ways are a boon to Westwood's success, said Knight.

"She is a 'ray of hope' in discouraging or frustrating times, and a positive voice that helps us continue building relationships and inspiring trust with our students."



HEATHER DURDIL

Diane Schatz is a familiar face at Westwood, having served as the main office secretary for 20 years.

that was put in place at Westwood to help motivate kids and keep them on task. The teams would compete against one another during spirit weeks and offer weekly and quarterly incentives. And it was working — we were making improvements — but not enough.

Then it happened. Teammate Cindy Tobel and I taught seventh-grade math and we hit 70.5% passing rate on the Ohio Achievement Test. No one at Westwood had ever gotten 70% before and we even outscored our sister schools, Northwood and Eastern Heights.

Everyone wanted to know, how did we do it? We were no longer on the bottom. We mattered, and people were paying attention.

Concurrently, in the larger world of school business the district was carrying out a round of budget cuts that forced changes in our building. I

began teaching eighth-grade Pre-Algebra and Algebra. By now it was December 2010, and despite small steps and improvements in achievement, we weren't seeing enough growth. We needed new ideas.

Once again, family opened my eyes to new opportunities.

My uncle, a school principal in another city, and I had had an opportunity to chat at my nephew's football game and my uncle spoke of the great things happening in his school, a national blue ribbon award-winning school. He invited me to visit, and so Cindy and I took him up on his offer.

We returned to Westwood as believers and with lots of ideas. One practice we learned there and implemented at Westwood was to let students pick the teacher they felt most comfortable testing with and take the state tests in their preferred teacher's room. It sounds too simple to matter but what

a difference it made!

What we were really doing at Westwood that was really mattering to kids and making a difference academically, was building relationships with our students.

Staff morale and school spirit have skyrocketed and our scores are following suit. We climbed to "Excellent" on Ohio's Report Card and earned back-to-back "A" ratings in 2013 and 2014.

While writing this, I've reflected on my time at Westwood and with the Elyria City Schools and I'm grateful to work with talented, motivating, supportive and inspiring people, and honored to teach math to outstanding students. I don't have to go to work each day, I get to go to work each day, and I love it.

*Molly Knight is a math teacher at Westwood Middle School where she's taught for 15 years. She has been in education for 25 years.*

## PHILOSOPHIES, PRINCIPALS AND PRACTICES TO LIVE BY

There are no gimmicks or quick-fixes in education but Westwood teachers and staff have worked long and hard to inspire trust among students, build relationships and in turn, boost academics. Read on for more about Westwood's way of life.

■ **High expectations.** Students are expected to graduate and go on to college and careers and Westwood staffers recognize their roles in helping students achieve their goals. "Our students can and will reach whatever expectations we ask of them: behaviorally, academically and socially," said Molly Knight, math teacher. "We just need to give them the tools, direction and support, and be models for them."

■ **Involvement.** Students receive support in and out of school and the staff makes itself available during school and off-hours to be present at student events and to offer helping hands when students and their families need it most.

■ **School positivity.** Students are recognized and rewarded for demonstrating good character, making positive choices and displaying earnest study habits. The school has established a fun zone, of sorts, called The Reward Activity Center with games, crafts, books and casual space for students to unwind and relax. Students who meet expectations in grades and behavior can use the room during study hall or free time. The school also established a student climate committee to bring students and school staff together to discuss school happenings and concerns.

■ **Public positivity.** "It may come as a shock to our students, but we, as teachers, have lives outside and away from school and when we are in the public, we need to be positive about our students and work," said Knight. "I love what I do and am happy to tell anyone who will listen how awesome Westwood Middle School is. My students tell me that if I stopped talking about Westwood all of the time, I might have more than three friends!" Knight also stressed the importance of teachers being visible and accessible and keeping up regular communication with parents. "It's nice for parents to see teachers outside of the classroom, where we can have a conversation that is not about their student, grades, or behavior."

■ **Staff buy-in, then student buy-in.** "If we want our students to believe their education is important and they should work hard, we must do the same," Knight said. "I believe I should be at school every day and prepared with my papers graded, copies made and lessons ready on the SMARTboard. Only then can I expect my students to be there every day and to be prepared."

■ **Make connections.** Whether it's chatting over breakfast, playing a friendly game of chess over lunch, teaching good citizenry and social behavior through community service or rewarding students for model behavior in school, staff members take extra care to build strong relationships with students and show they care.

■ **Be a role model.** "As teachers we are role models and what we do and say matters. I've forgotten this at times until in a casual conversation, a student recalls what I said," said Knight. "What we say sticks with them forever. Teachers have students only for a short time in class and we must make our time with them count."

# CLASS

From 1

Every five years I call everyone to be sure they're where they should be and any returned mail from bulk mailings gets worked on until it's resolved. Over the years I kept a separate calendar logging everyone's birth date. At age 70, each classmate received a birthday card, which was a surprise to be remembered at that age and much appreciated.

For our 50th reunion, I made red schoolhouse centerpieces displaying kindergarten and first grade on the roofs. Our reunions have always been well attended. The days of cliques are gone and we are an extended family. The speech from our 50th reunion starts our life journey, "many of us were roommates in the nursery at Elyria Memorial Hospital."

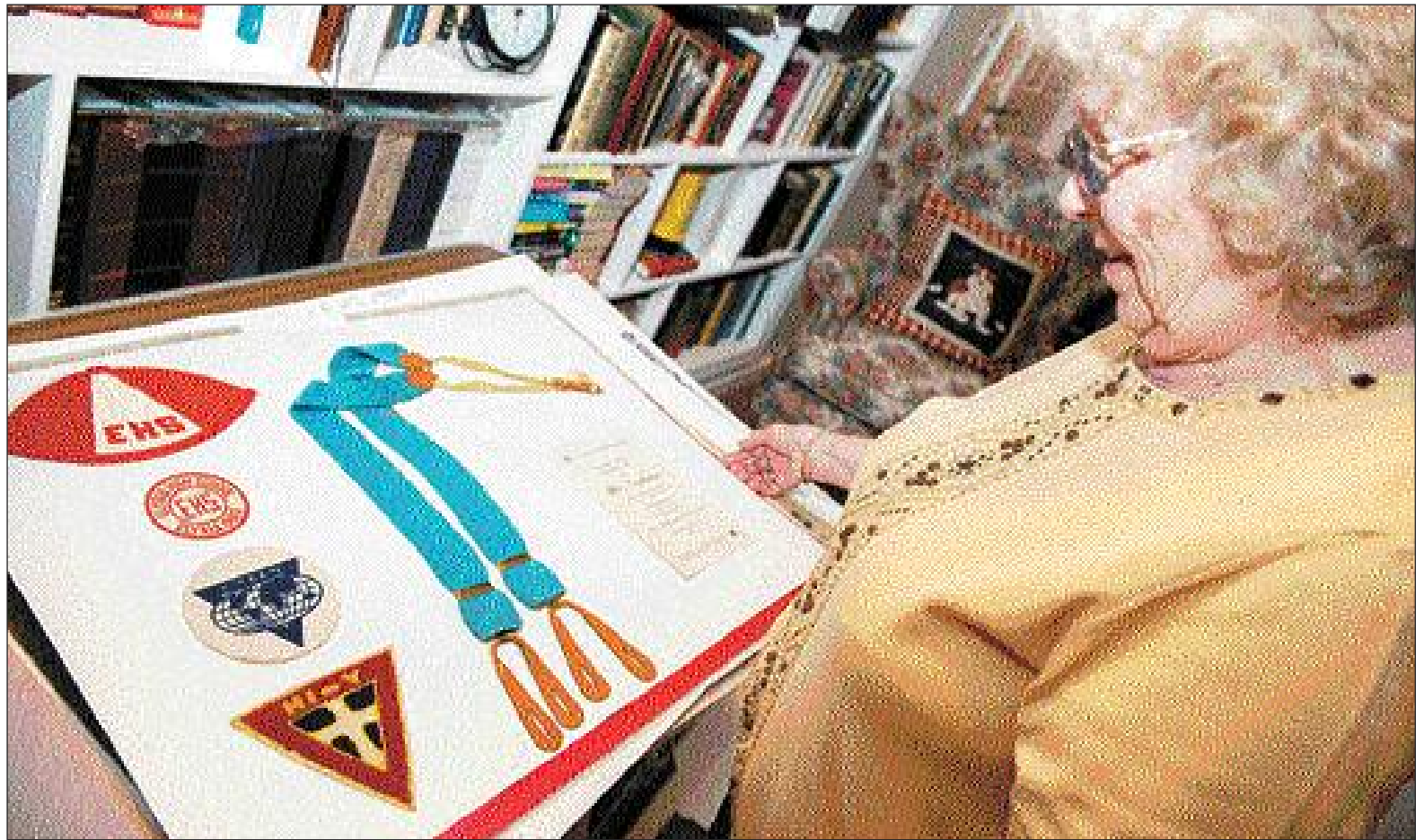
Since I am a packrat and have saved many items from school-days, and with the donations and help from classmates, I have been able to put together over 90 poster boards filled with memorabilia.

(The poster boards show) class pictures from the 16 elementary schools (which were kindergarten through eighth grade at that time,) and ninth through 12th grade pictures and many snapshots, articles, etc., plus the five-year (reunion) class pictures. We are now at the stage of in-between luncheons, (in the meantime) and then the big five-year reunions.

Dan Messaros (Messaros Photography, Elyria) is in the making of a DVD of our poster boards and the originals are being donated to the Lorain County Historical Society. (I also have created) many large books from each reunion containing correspondence and photos with many memories."

Shirley's passion for her alma mater and for the people who have shared it with her is palpable. After so many years, through misty eyes and trembling voice she still gets emotional reminiscing about her youth in a home just doors away from Elyria High School.

"I'll always feel part of me is still attached to Elyria High School because when I go down 5th St. and turn into the drop off driveway, or walk on the sidewalk (and) look east of that sidewalk, it brings back my childhood, as that was our property."



PIONEER PRESS PHOTOS

**ABOVE:** The suspenders pictured here represent the yellow and turquoise colors of the Class of 1954.

**BELOW LEFT:** Messaros pieced together more than 90 posterboards of memorabilia from the Class of 1954.

**BELOW RIGHT:** Page upon page of photos, clippings and artifacts tell the life stories of Messaros and her classmates.





# The Herald

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ELYRIA HIGH SCHOOL, ELYRIA, OHIO

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## Wrestling to success

**Chloe Blaser**  
The Herald

After 12 years of concentrated practices, long car rides to tournaments, several broken noses, intense weight loss and too many medals to count, comes success.

Elyria High's junior student athlete, Ben Darmstadt, has dedicated his life to wrestling and is now going to Cornell University, with financial help from the Ivy League school, to continue wrestling.

Ben said, "Seeing your hard work pay off is the best part about wrestling."

Ben participates in practices, "sometimes twice a day," he said, and has not taken a break for the past 12 years. He's passionate about his sport.

"It's a part of my life," Ben said. "I feel really weird if I'm not wrestling."

From starting his freshman year unknown to now being ranked number one in the state and number seven in the nation makes him happy and his fans proud.

His No. 1 fan and girlfriend, Karen Holland, travels to his tournaments from places as close as Elyria High School to as far away



CHRONICLE FILE

EHS junior and wrestler Ben Darmstadt is ranked No. 1 in the state and No. 7 in the nation. He's also a top scholar and has already committed to Ivy League Cornell University.

as Columbus to be in the stands cheering Darmstadt on and being a stat girl.

"Before I met Ben I knew absolutely nothing about wrestling," Holland said.

"Because of Ben, I've decided to help out the wrestling team and become a stat."

Being a wrestler is a lot of hard work and takes an extreme amount of dedication. Darmstadt admits that his least favorite part

about wrestling is cutting weight.

"I usually only see him outside of school one to three times a month" Holland said. "He has lifting right after school and then practice after that, and he won't get out until 7p.m. Then he drives 25 minutes home, showers, eats and then does his homework.

And then on the weekends, there are usually tournaments and if not, he usually practices with the college kids at Cleveland State."

To top it off, Ben has kept up good grades and shows he is a great person to look up to especially for his teammates.

Teammate and sophomore Cameron King said Ben helps motivate him and gives him great tips to improve.

With great wishes and undying dedication, you can always achieve what you dream, just like Ben.

## Students hitting music scene before graduation

**Samantha Rainey**  
The Herald

Making your group known in the music scene is not an easy thing to do. There are, however, some dedicated musicians walking the halls of Elyria High School producing and performing music that you may have never heard of.

"I've been doing it since the seventh grade," said William Lampley, who is an Elyria High senior and producer.

Will isn't the only musician in his family; his father is a DJ and his sister sings.

He is currently working on a project called "Lumiere," producing beats for other artists, which often can be quite time consuming. "Adding new beats under vocals and completely remixing the song could take a few hours," Lampley said.

Did I mention he does all of this in his bedroom?

"It's kind of like a TV series, dropping new stuff every couple of days," said Lampley, who said he hopes to one day become a journalist and interview other artists.

Other EHS senior musicians, Julian Borrelli and Joey Schill, are in a band, Half Pace.

"Our genre is 'nu metal,'" said bassist Borrelli. Some of Borrelli's musical influences include Chris Motionless, Tyler Dennen and Tyler Joseph.

Half Pace recently played a show at the Agora in Cleveland, and made it to the finals at the Battle of the Bands in April.

"Together, Julian and I have been making music for two years," said vocalist Schill. Both plan to

See **MUSIC**, 8

## The next football star out of Elyria?

**Zackary DeMarco**  
The Herald

As senior graduation approaches, it is many athletes' last year of sports. For others, it is just the start. For one student in particular, it is his dream to play football at a higher level. That student is Michael Church.

Michael has played organized football for 11 years, pretty much devoting half of his life so far to the sport. Has it paid off for him? As of the January 28, Michael Church committed to Ashland University for Division II football. His former coach, Coach Fell, says what sets Michael apart from the crowd is that he "was very serious about college and (some) others

are just talk. They never put in the work necessary to achieve that goal."

Is there a trend that most star athletes follow? Fell said, "The people that go on to a higher level of football have a burning desire to get what they want."

Competition is fierce in the world of sports so many players have to have the passion and drive to get what they want.

Michael's thoughts about playing football with other college athletes is that he's "excited to play with people who want to achieve the same goal" as him. College athletes are there to achieve goals and make themselves better people.

Michael's choice of Ashland was founded in research of its programs and successes.

"I could pretty much go to any Division II school I wanted," Michael said. "Ashland is the closest to a Division 1 school (and all of the) coaches are very successful and the facilities are up to date."

When asked what he plans to major in at Ashland University, Michael said Business but, "I also have a backup plan of law enforcement."

Michael knows what he wants out of these upcoming years: new friends, new environment, and most of all, to improve at his favorite sport.



ALEX MOEN

## It's been a journey

It's my final year at Elyria High School. By this time next year I will be well into the next chapter of my life.

All through high school I have participated in many things but the one constant has been the school newspaper, *The Herald*.

Since I joined the *Herald* in my freshman year we have grown substantially to include not only our yearly "Super Senior" print edition of *The Herald*, but we have also added a website ([www.ehsherald.org](http://www.ehsherald.org)), and are regularly published in the *Pioneer Press*. In the beginning we were still a print paper, but we lost our place of printing. This loss plowed the way for our digital future.

During my sophomore and junior year the *Herald* staff and I worked hard on our goal of going online. By the end of my junior year the website was up and running.

At the beginning of senior year we were at a loss as to what we wanted to do. What else was there to do with the paper?

We decided to go on a trip to a journalism convention in NYC at Columbia University. It was a perfect trip for our little club. After lots of paperwork, we made it happen.

The *Herald* has accomplished so much in these past four years. We have a website, have become regular writers in the *Pioneer Press*, been interviewed by the *Chronicle Telegram* and have gone to the home of Journalism: New York City.

It's hard to say what is in store for *The Herald* in the coming years but if the past is any indicator, it will do big things.

*Alex Moen is a senior at Elyria High School and is editor of The Herald.*

## MOVIE REVIEW

# 'Cinderella': The new old tale

Michaela Slone  
The Herald

With so many different kinds of movies out these days, it seems Hollywood needs a little bit of magic to get a hit. So it's a good thing *Cinderella*, starring Richard Madden as the Prince and Lily James as our beloved princess, has just enough "Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo" to put it ahead. With Kenneth Branagh directing the screenplay written by Chris Weitz, this movie is sure to warm your heart and bring back nostalgia of your childhood.

This film follows a young girl named Ella through her life and fairy tale story. When the film opens, young Ella is enjoying life with her mother and father in their lovely country house.

Ella's mother tells her to "always have courage and be kind." When tragedy leaves Ella in the care of her wicked stepmother, portrayed by Cate Blanchett, Ella heeds her mother's wise words and keeps her courage and unfailing kindness. Ella's character is truly inspiring.

Ella's stepsisters Anastasia and Drisella, portrayed by Holliday Grainger and Sophie McShera, respectively, are just as mean as their mother. When Ella willingly gives up her room and moves into the drafty attic for her new sisters, she has to lay near the dying embers of the fire to keep warm. Drisella dubs her, "Cinderella," from the ash left on her face.

One day, Cinderella takes a horse ride and runs into a man named Kit, whom she believes to be an apprentice. Kit is actually the prince and after just one meeting, he is smitten. I really like how Cinderella meets the Prince in the woods and doesn't know his identity, showing her heart is open no matter a person's social standing.

The kingdom is about to throw a ball in the hopes of getting the Prince a wife but she must be a



HERALD STAFF

Michaela Slone, right, and Stephanie Rodriguez take in the blockbuster film "Cinderella" while in Florida with the Elyria High School Pioneer Marching Band.

princess, according to the King. In hopes of seeing Cinderella, Kit opens to ball to the general public. When Cinderella's stepmother forbids her to attend the ball, she's crushed. As luck would have it, Cinderella's fairy-godmother comes to her rescue.

Cinderella is able to go to the ball without her family recognizing her where she meets the prince and they fall in love. However, the spell only lasts until midnight so Cinderella rushes out of the ball and back home. Determined to find Cinderella again, the prince sets out to find her with only the glass slipper she left behind. Does he find her? You'll just have to watch and see.

All of the actors did a fantastic job. Lily James captured Cinderella's innocence and kindness

and was quite believable. Helena Bonham Carter's portrayal of the fairy godmother and voiceover tied together the fairytale "feel" of the film. The stepmother and sisters were wickedly brilliant as well. Cate Blanchett pulled off a distasteful woman but also gave her a bit of humanity. There are scenes in which moviegoers feel sorry for the stepmother, if only for a moment. Quite impressive.

The visual of this film was breathtakingly beautiful. The sets and props were jaw-dropping and gorgeous. The scene where Cinderella's dress is transformed was amazing and her dress was truly wonderful. The familiarity of the old tale wrapped in new sets and actors gave it that extra something the makes movies so special.

The lesson from this film has

held true since the first animated production of *Cinderella*; be kind to all no matter what. A person's position does not make them better or worse than someone. We're all people and *Cinderella* understood that better than most. She even treated the mice nicely.

I believe everyone would enjoy this film. An older audience will love seeing a childhood favorite on screen and the young viewers will be entranced with the beautiful filming and the lure of a "happily ever after." This PG-rated film is magical.

I give this film five out of five glass slippers!

*Michaela Slone is a 17-year-old junior at Elyria High School. She plays the flute in marching band and aspires to be a published young adult author by the time she graduates college.*

## MUSIC

From 7

make music their careers, and both have been involved in band since middle school.

They even have a plan for when things don't go perfectly on

stage.

"Make it look like you didn't mess up at all," Borrelli said. It's easy to become carried away in the music and become a whole new person on stage.

From creating a sick new beat to performing in front of a crowd, one thing is sure, these artists are

passionate about what they do, and they use music to express themselves.

"It's a weird feeling because I have stage fright," Schill said. But performing brings him out of his shell. "My favorite part is after we play, you get this (rush from) just pure excitement."

Just like the legend Bob Marley once said, "One good thing about music, when it hits you, you feel no pain."

Creating and performing in any circumstance allows musicians to free their mind and allow them to travel down a creative, bright path.