



GENERATIONS

Family, Elyria Schools go way back
SEE PAGE 6

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Hot off the shelf

Elyria firefighters wrap kids in new coats

Amy Higgins

Communications director

If two heads are better than one, then four heads are twice as good.

That's the theory that proved successful in bringing 500 new winter coats to Elyria elementary students last month.

Elyria firefighters partnered with the charitable organizations Firefighters Coats for Kids Foundation, Operation Warm and the nationally recognized Coats for Kids Foundation to outfit every first- and second-grade student at Franklin, Oakwood and Crestwood elementary schools with a brand-new winter coat.

"All the coats are American-made," said Dean Marks, 18-year veteran Elyria firefighter and president of Elyria Firefighters IFF Local 474. "It was one of the stipulations we had as members of the International Association of Firefighters when we voted to adopt Operation Warm as one of our charities at our last international convention."

In Elyria, two out of every three students qualify for free or reduced-priced



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS PHOTOS

ABOVE: "Gimme an E, gimme an F, gimme a D!" These Franklin Elementary students cheer for their new coats from Elyria firefighters and Coats for Kids.

BELOW: Smiles were plentiful at Franklin as students were fitted with new coats.

school meals based on their family's income level.

"Clearly there is a need for assistance in our hometown, so pursuing Operation Warm was a no-brainer," Marks said.

Even though Marks nonchalantly shrugged off the work involved in making such a tremendous gift possible, the task was no small feat. It involved nearly every firefighter in the department, including Chief Richard Benton.

Through the hustle and

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Each issue of Pioneer Press features an Elyria Schools graduate, looking at where they are now and their road to getting there. This month we catch up with EHS graduate Vanessa McClaine, class of 2013, through her father, Mark McClaine, vice president of the Pioneer Club, a booster organization for Elyria Schools athletics.

Dead Shot McClaine earns her nickname

Amy Higgins

Communications director

October 9, 2013

Hi Daddy,

Thank you so much for sending those "OPEN WHEN" cards. I am having the most difficult time of my life at boot camp so please keep them coming.

When Mark McClaine read these words from his daughter, his heart broke.

"When she called me the first time, she said she wanted to come home. Inside I was crying but I told her, 'This is what you wanted. Now you need to tough through it.' We talked it out and she thanked me for motivating her. It was so hard, though," McClaine said.

Vanessa Nicole McClaine graduated from Elyria High School last year. She had decided a year earlier that she would enter the U.S. Navy upon graduation.

"I asked her, 'Where did this come from?' It was such a big decision and until then, she had never



McClaine

See **MCCLAINE**, 7



AMY HIGGINS

Daily dose of joy

A few weeks ago I was standing, camera ready, in a school gymnasium amid a few hundred children. The students were lined up neat as pins, holding what looked like little gingerbread men. On the gingerbread cutouts were their names and their coat sizes.

They were getting new coats that day — brand-new coats from their new friends at the Elyria Fire Department (see story on Page One.)

Some of the students were shy and a little cautious about the gift. Others had smiles from ear to ear and bounded into the room with exuberant joy. Still others were so in awe of the firemen and the impressive fire trucks they arrived in, they had trouble staying focused on why they were there.

It was a great moment to be a spectator and an even better moment to be a photographer.

There are a lot of photo moments working in a school district. Let's face it: Kids have a knack for making ordinary events seem extraordinary, simply by being kids.

This strikes me every time I cover a school event that brings students and community together. Children are curious and they have great imaginations. They say the unexpected, and they always seek approval. They laugh from their bellies and they cry when they're sad. They are real, and anyone who comes in contact with them is impacted by their sincerity and candor.

You'll see it in these pages of the Pioneer Press — honest moments between Elyria students and the community members they meet. Where young and old connect over smiles and kindness, and where the act of doing good and delighting others serves as a universal language of humanity.

We at Elyria Schools thank our students and community for moments like these and for the daily dose of joy we receive in serving as your public school system.

Happy holidays!

Amy Higgins is communications and marketing director for Elyria Schools.

Voters approve first of three vital school renewal levies

Amy Higgins
Communications director

While voter turnout was lower than expected in the November general election, support for Elyria Schools was strong.

More than 66 percent of voters approved Issue 31, a crucial renewal issue for day-to-day operating expenses such as utilities, transportation, school building maintenance, classroom materials and staffing.

This particular levy has existed as part of the district's operating resources for 15 years. It alone represents more than \$4 million of the district's general fund budget.

This is the first of three renewal issues voters will see this school year, because of expiring terms on the levies. In May 2014, the district will place two renewal issues on the bal-

lot representing \$13 million. These again are used to pay the school district's everyday expenses.

"Renewal issues like these are our lifeblood," said Paul Rigda, superintendent of Elyria Schools. "It's sometimes difficult to generate interest in them during an election because there's nothing flashy about them. They aren't being used to build schools and they're not asking taxpayers for additional money.

"They are simply renewals of existing levies that are expiring — without costing taxpayers anything more — but there's nothing modest about their impact on a school district," Rigda said. "They are indispensable and absolutely crucial to our district's ability to operate and provide quality educational and extracurricular programming.

"We are sincerely grateful for our community's support, not just during an election cycle, but on a daily basis," Rigda continued. "We see it every day, in every way from our parents, supporters and partners, and our children are the greatest beneficiaries."

Echoing that sentiment was Elyria School Board member Mike Gebhardt, who also serves as treasurer of the Elyria Citizens Committee for Quality Education.

"I'm so pleased with Elyria's support of school issues over the years," Gebhardt said. "Our residents continually put education first, and as a parent and resident, I'm proud to live in a community that values its schools and the work they do to prepare students for college and careers. Good schools are good for the entire community. Thank you, Elyria."

Life is a stage for technical crew

PAC team hones tech theater skills while learning life lessons

Amy Higgins
Communications director

As the holiday season ramps up, so does the concert season at the Elyria High School Performing Arts Center. Elbow-deep in the holiday hubbub is a special squad of students from Elyria High School who make up the PAC team.

"This is a unique group of students who are as dedicated as anyone I've ever met in this business," said Theater Director Jim Nichols, Elyria High School Performing Arts Center.

This all-female technical crew operates the lights, sound and backstage needs of every show, from school performances to high-paid rentals.

"The equipment is all computerized and digital," Nichols said. "The students attend many hours of training in the different technical areas before they are certified to operate the equipment.

"To become a PAC team



EHS PAC team members, from left, are director Jim Nichols, Sierra Coon, Katie Panic, Maddy Massey, Emily Briner, Bridget Kuehne, Sierra Mortier and Mary Dorsey. Not all members are pictured here.

COURTESY REINKER PHOTOGRAPHY

member, students go through an interview process and have their teachers sign off, indicating that they are doing well in class," Nichols said. "They also need their parents' permission

because they spend a lot of time working at the theatre.

"Once they're trained on the technology, they can begin working the events," he said. "As the students hone their skills

and reach 16 years of age, they are eligible to work the rentals, and for those gigs they are paid."

Count Elyria High sophomore

See **STAGE**, 5

KIDS HONOR VETERANS



November is a special time to honor our country's veterans, past and present, and Elyria's schools do so in many ways. Here, students at Windsor Elementary join their veteran relatives for breakfast and a special program hosted by the students.



Safety starts at door

Dawn McCready
Pupil services director

School security is serious business.

A number of safety enhancements were introduced in all Elyria school buildings last year, and new visitor procedures were also put into practice.

The district continues to find ways to bolster security.

This year, employees at Elyria Schools are focused on the 10- to 15-minute period at the beginning of the day, when doors are unlocked as students enter the buildings. While staff members monitor the comings and goings of visitors during this time, it's important to establish a consistent visitor procedure across the district.

With the return of students in January, the following practices will be enforced in all school buildings in the district.

- Parents and caregivers will be asked to say farewell outside the doors, and students will independently enter the building on a daily basis.

- If parents and caregivers need to enter the building with their children for a prearranged parent conference or other business, they will be asked to sign in at the front office and wear a visitor badge while in the building. Staff will monitor visitors.

- Visitors must sign out at the front office upon leaving a building.

Most school buildings in the district already use this process, as it has proven effective and useful.

We certainly appreciate the cooperation and understanding of our parents and school visitors in this important matter. The safety of our students is always a primary concern and the district will continue to assess procedures for areas of improvement.

Questions may be directed to mccreadydawn@elyriaschools.org.



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS

Elyria firefighters initiated Operation Warm in Elyria Schools when they delivered close to 500 new coats to elementary children at Franklin, Crestwood and Oakwood. Here, Crestwood students take a moment to pose in their new coats with Elyria firefighters.

COATS

From 1

bustle of applying to become a distribution site in Ohio, working with Elyria Schools to determine locations most in need, sizing 500 individual students and arranging the distribution of coats in three locations on one day, Marks and his team had their work cut out for them.

The behind-the-scenes finagling paid off on Nov. 18, when 500 little people excitedly donned their stylish, durable and brightly colored new coats, fitted specially by their local heroes and friends, Elyria firefighters.

“Their faces say it all,” Marks said during the flurry of fittings and bubbling enthusiasm.

Franklin Elementary Principal Lisa Licht couldn't agree more.

“What an awesome event,” she said. “It was so great to see the kids' smiling faces.”

Marks and his fellow Elyria firefighters hope to continue the program in Elyria.



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS PHOTOS

Students enjoyed the personal attention they received as Elyria firefighters fitted them with coats. All first- and second-grade students at Franklin, Crestwood and Oakwood received new winter coats from Elyria firefighters and Coats for Kids.

SPECIAL THANKS

Elyria Schools also wishes to extend sincere gratitude to the American Legion Women's Auxiliary, Elyria, Lorain County Correctional Institution and Lorain County Metropolitan Housing for donating coats and cold-weather accessories such as hats, gloves, scarves and boots to the students of Elyria Schools.

If your child is in need of a winter coat, please contact your school building principal. Supplies and sizes are limited and not guaranteed.

Your Vote Counts

THANK YOU, ELYRIA
for approving Issue 31
on Nov. 5 and keeping
our schools strong!



STAGE

From 2

Audrey Bauer among the young specialists.

"I am currently trained on sound and follow spots," Bauer said. "The PAC team has taught me important skills such as efficiency, careful planning and how to think quickly when something goes wrong."

Another team member, EHS junior Katie Panik, values the experience she's gained on lighting, sound and stage management.

"The things we do backstage are what make the show or concert complete," Panik said. "The PAC team is a great program that I plan to continue throughout high school."

EHS senior Sierra Coon said their small group works hard, but she has no complaints.

"PAC team is really fun to be part of. There are a lot of events and only a few of us," she said. "Our advisor (Nichols) is great to us. He makes sure we get the jobs we need to do done, and we help him by actually doing it."

EHS junior Amanda Worcester believes her work on the PAC team is helping her build skills that will carry through any situation in life.

"An important part of doing anything in the PAC is being able to work with other people and take direction. Those are skills needed in any type of profession," Worcester said. "I learned very quickly that in order to get anything done I had to be organized. I have noticed that my organizational skills are bettering over time and I have 'setting lights' to thank."

Senior Maddy Massey agreed: "I have learned the value of team work and dedication. I definitely love putting on a great show."

For senior Emily Briner, the PAC experience has been life-changing.

"It might sound a bit selfish, but what I love about being part of the PAC team is knowing things that others don't, and seeing things that others can't," Briner said. "With technical theatre, it's what you don't see that makes the show amazing."

"With the three amazing years behind me on the PAC team and only one short one to go, I've decided this is what I want to do for the rest of my life," Briner said. "I am going to major in theater technology and design in college and I am beyond excited. This is my passion and I am so proud to be on the PAC team."

GENERATIONS OF EDUCATION

Family's lineage is linked to Elyria Schools since 1800s

Amy Higgins

Communications director

There must have been something in the water at Elyria Schools. At least, that's what they say when something curious happens more than once.

That's sort of the scenario for the family of Jennifer (Susak) Maiden, 1994 graduate of Elyria West High School and now a teacher at Elyria High School.

"My husband and I met at Elyria West and so did both my parents and my in-laws," she explained. "I guess you could say we are a family of high-school sweethearts."

Even more intriguing is Maiden's family tree. Maiden is the sixth consecutive generation to graduate from Elyria Schools, and her family will see the seventh successive generation graduate this spring when her niece walks in Elyria High School's commencement on June 6.

The family's Elyria Pioneer lineage dates back to 1867 with Maiden's three-times great aunt Lucy Gregg Wilder.

It continues with Lucy's niece, Anna Gregg Wilder, who graduated from Elyria High School in 1890, followed by her son, Albert King, who finished school in 1912. Some years later, Albert's son, James A. King Sr., graduated from Elyria High School in 1943.

Three decades passed before James saw his own daughter, Janice King Susak, complete high school in 1973. Janice broke the Elyria High School tradition and sent her daughter, Jennifer Susak Maiden, to Elyria West High School, where Jennifer graduated as a Wolverine in 1994.

Four of the family's seven generations of Elyria Schools graduates are alive and well, and they spent some time reminiscing with the Pioneer Press.

"I was a student at Elyria High School during World War II, 1940 to 1943," said James A. King Sr.



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS

A seventh-generation Elyria Schools family, from left, Jennifer (Susak) Maiden, James King Sr., Janice (King) Susak and Alexis Susak.

"My favorite teacher was Mr. Wilfred Bowdler. He taught Engineering/Drawing. I made a 3-by-4-foot drawing that was posted above one of the blackboards in the engineering/drafting room and it hung there at least through the 1960s, if not longer. Ironically, it replaced the drawing done by my Uncle Bill, who graduated in 1930. The drawing was of all the different types of nuts and bolts, including threads, heads and anything else you could do to describe a bolt.

"One of my favorite memories is the 25-minute movies during lunch," King continued. "One movie took all week to watch in five separate, daily segments, and each day it cost one penny. We could buy two weeks' worth

of tickets for 11 cents and the extra penny was for the excise tax!"

After high school, King went on to serve in the Army Air Corp (now the Air Force) for two tours, one in World War II and another in Korea. He earned a college degree in aeronautical engineering from Embry-Riddle, Fla., and, after a long career, retired from NASA in 1988.

King offered simple but sound advice to today's students: "Study hard, pay attention and have a good time."

He seemed to pass those same values down to his daughter and granddaughters, who enjoyed high school for its rich curriculum and broad extracurricular opportunities.

King's daughter, Janice King Susak, is the owner of Elyria's sweet spot, Scoops & More Ice Cream Emporium.

"I believe it's important for students to learn everything they can from their teachers, never be afraid to ask questions, respect those around you and belong to school, don't just attend," Susak said. "You'll only get out of high school what you put into it."

Susak's daughter, Jennifer Susak Maiden, agrees.

"My fondest memories were of being in the band and involved in all the clubs and sports that Elyria's school system offered," she said. "And I'm so proud of our school district for keeping opportunities open to every student."

Maiden, now a health teacher at Elyria High School, said she was inspired by her own high school teachers who made her and her classmates work hard and think.

"The education I received in Elyria Schools helped me succeed in college, provide for my family and give back to my community," she said.

The youngest generation, Alexis Susak — a big fan of high school sports — said it's important to be involved in school.

"Elyria High School is a great school," Alexis said. "Getting involved in sports and clubs makes the years go fast, while looking great on college applications."

MCCLAINE

From 1

mentioned it," McClaine said. "I made her wait nine months to enlist. She was so mad at me."

The months sailed by and Vanessa held firm.

At commencement, EHS graduate turned U.S. Naval officer David Yonkings, class of 2009, attended the ceremony (read Yonkings story in October's Special Edition Pioneer Press).

"Vanessa talked to him afterward," McClaine said. "Seeing him there in his dress whites, it really cemented it for her. I think she thought she'd look pretty good in those dress whites, too."

"Dad, I really want to go into the Navy," she said.

So that was that.

"I told her I supported her 100 percent," McClaine said. "Once she decided that was what she was doing, she went to the gym three times a day. By the time she left for basics, she could lift more weight than me."

Always an athlete with a competitive spirit, McClaine was not surprised by his daughter's tenacity.

"Ness is an amazing person. She's always been kind of a loner, and self-sup-

portive. But I expect this experience to take the 'I' out of her team," he said. "I've never worried about her being safe or getting hurt in basics, but when I knew she was sad ... that was tough. The first six weeks of basics is all about building team. She overcame her dislike and started accepting the 100 percent team mentality."

And that's when Ness earned a new nickname.

October 26, 2013

Daddy!

Oh my gosh, I miss you so much! So, you would be so proud of me. We had live fire this week. I'm not sure if you knew this but the Navy is the only branch of the military that shoots live guns in training. Well, here's how it works — the scoring is based off 48 rounds at a distance of 3, 7 and 15 yards. You get like 3 seconds to fire 2 shots; 10 seconds to fire 8 shots, etc. The qualification scores are as follows:

180-203 Marksman

204-227 Sharpshooter

228-240 Expert

There is a slim to no chance that anyone gets expert. 240 is perfect.

Out of my division of 93 recruits, I got expert. I scored a 236! Like Dad, I've never been so happy at boot camp until then. I earned a medal and ribbon for my uniform. My division was SO supportive, even



PHOTO PROVIDED

Mark McClaine with his daughter, Vanessa, smile at her graduation from U.S. Navy boot camp. Vanessa is a 2013 graduate of Elyria High School.

the guys, because I did better than every single one of them. I've earned the nickname "Dead Shot." Ha ha, I honestly like it.

Dead Shot McClaine graduated Nov. 15 from Naval Station Great Lakes, home to the U.S. Navy's only boot camp. She intends to study avionics and has dreams

of becoming a pharmacist.

And what of Dead Shot's dad?

"Nine weeks without seeing your kids is tough. I missed her so much but I couldn't be more proud," he said. "I might just get a 'Dead Shot's Dad' T-shirt to wear at graduation!"

ELYRIA HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL SCHEDULES

BOYS VARSITY BASKETBALL

Dec. 13 – Valley Forge
Away, 7:30 p.m.

Dec. 17 – Keystone
Home, 7:30 p.m.

Dec. 21 – Hiland
Away, 7 p.m.
(Steve Smith Classic)

Dec. 27 – Lorain
Away, 6 p.m.
(Lorain County Holiday Classic)

Jan. 3 – North Royalton
Home, 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 4 – North Ridgeville
Home, 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 10 – Mayfield
Away, 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 17 – Normandy
Home, 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 18 – Elyria Catholic
Home, 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 21 – Oberlin
Away, 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 24 – Parma
Away, 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 28 – Vermilion
Away, 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 31 – Valley Forge
Home, 7:30 p.m.

Feb. 1 – Lakewood
Home, 7:30 p.m.

Feb. 7 – North Royalton
Away, 7:30 p.m.

Feb. 11 – Medina
Away, 7:30 p.m.

Feb. 14 – Mayfield
Home, 7:30 p.m.

Feb. 21 – Normandy
Away, 7:30 p.m.

GIRLS VARSITY BASKETBALL

Dec. 14 – Strongsville
Home, 7:30 p.m.

Dec. 16 – Avon Lake
Home, 7:30 p.m.

Dec. 18 – Shaker Heights
Away, 7:30 p.m.

Dec. 20 – Magnificat
Away, 4 p.m.

Dec. 22 – Twinsburg
Away, 2:45 p.m.

Dec. 27 – Comet Holiday Tournament
All Day

Jan. 4 – Mayfield
Home, 2:30 p.m.

Jan. 11 – Brunswick
Away, 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 13 – Midview
Away, 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 15 – North Ridgeville
Home, 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 18 – Medina
Away, 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 25 – North Royalton
Away, 2:30 p.m.

Feb. 1 – Strongsville
Away, 2:30 p.m.

Feb. 8 – Mayfield
Away, 2:30 p.m.

Feb. 12 – Brunswick
Home, 7:30 p.m.



Not-so-random acts of kindness

Elyria Schools celebrated a districtwide day of kindness in October in which students did good deeds for others. At right, Ely Elementary students pick up around the American Legion on Ohio Street. Below and at lower right, Franklin Elementary students share time with residents at neighboring Wesleyan Village.



HEATHER DURDIL / ELYRIA SCHOOLS PHOTOS

Cooking tips from Elyria Schools Food Service

Scott Teaman
Food service director

It's a fact of American living: Food goes hand in hand with the holidays.

All too often, food preparation can be intimidating, with even the more simple recipes stumping time-pressed cooks.

Here are a few simple steps to ensure your holiday dinner is a delight:

■ Make sure all meats are at room temperature before you roast or

fry them — it allows for even cooking and better crust on the meats.

■ When roasting meat, start off at a high temperature and lower it after 15 minutes. It will sear the skin and lock in the juice. Start at 450 degrees for 15 minutes and lower it to the desired temperature for the remainder of the cooking process.

■ Roast the birds upside-down. This allows the bird to self-baste and protects the breast meat from over-cooking.

■ Never stuff the bird with stuffing. Just bake it in its own pan. But if you must stuff, make sure it hits 165 degrees, or you're certain to have some unhappy eaters.

■ The proper temperature for poultry is 165 degrees.

■ Let the meat rest for a minimum of 20 minutes, covered with foil, before you cut it. This allows the juices to redistribute around the meat, ultimately making for a juicier meal.



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS

The Pioneer Press caught these gobblers seeking cover near an office building on Burns Road in Elyria just before Thanksgiving.