



HOMECOOKING

Budget-friendly meals for families
SEE PAGE 4

Elyria Board of Education
42101 Griswold Rd.
Elyria, OH 44035

*****ECRWSEDDM*****
Residential Customer
Elyria, Ohio 44035

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ELYRIA, OHIO
PERMIT NO. 257

THE ELYRIA SCHOOLS Pioneer



Press

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 2

Winter 2017

WWW.ELYRIASCHOOLS.ORG



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS

Brooke Dumonthier, 8, beams next to McKinley Kindergarten teacher Brandi Huffman. The two share a special bond. Huffman tutored Brooke, just 5 years old at the time, during her recovery from transplant surgery.

Colossal courage in pint-sized package

Amy Higgins
Communications director

To her classmates, she's a movie star. To her mom and dad, she's a blessing from above. To those who know her story, she's a superhero.

Meet Brooke Dumonthier.

For a girl whose earliest years were marked by plenty of medical unknowns,

CHECK IT OUT ONLINE

Go to Elyria Schools' Pioneer TV on YouTube to watch video of Brooke's light display.

the only mystery that remains these days is how the universe managed to fit so much character and courage into this

4-foot third-grader who has a smile that lights up the room.

These days, she's a standout student at McKinley Elementary.

"She's done so wonderful here," said Julie Dumonthier, Brooke's mom. "She's in the gifted and talented program now. She's really come a long way."

See **COURAGE**, 7



HEATHER DURDIL / ELYRIA SCHOOLS

The Elyria Schools Preschool program holds the highest rating in the state for preschool education, five stars on the 'Step up to Quality' scale.

Jumpstart your little pioneer's education

Amy Higgins
Communications director

Looking for a great place to have some indoor fun with your little one on a wintry Saturday?

Early Childhood Village at Elyria Schools is where you'll want to be Feb. 25, when the district kicks off its 2017 kindergarten and preschool registration program.

The event, which starts at 9 a.m. and ends at about 11:30 p.m., will feature an exciting array of activities for youngsters, including crafts, music, games and more. The event is geared toward small children, preschool to kindergarten age,

See **JUMPSTART**, 7



from the Elyria Schools!

November 8 was a great day for Elyria Schools and for our community as voters approved the bond issue to rebuild Elyria's preschool through eighth-grade facilities, and to replace our 90-year-old stadium.

My words can't sufficiently convey the meaning of this crucial issue to the students and staff of Elyria Schools.

My words can't express the impact of this monumental endeavor on the futures of our children and of our community for generations to come.

My words can't describe the happiness, satisfaction and genuine delight on the faces of children who learned they would be attending new schools — schools designed to give them all the tools and technology they need to prosper and grow in education.

My words can't. But their words can.

"Thank you for believing in us. You are the best. I am proud of you." Brea, student.

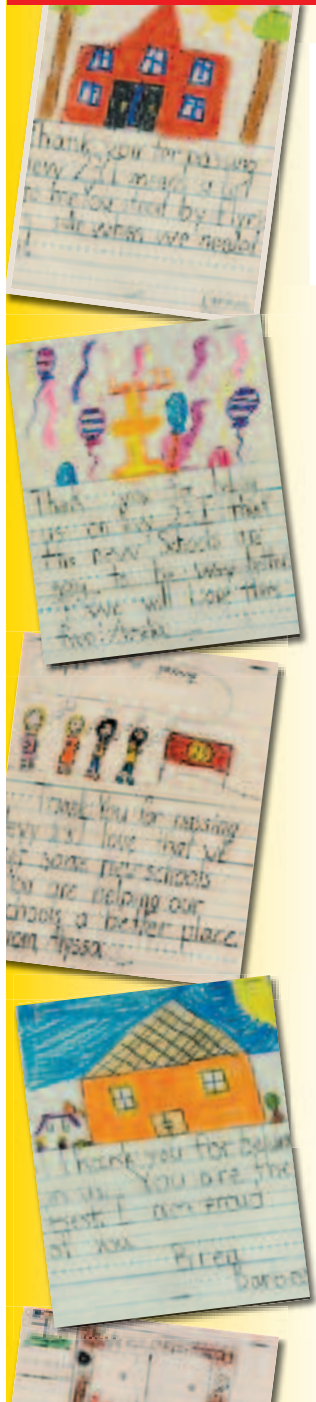
"Thank you for making new schools. And thank you for helping with everything. You are my hero." Lyric, student.

"Thank you for making us a new school. I like that you are making schools better. I like that Elyria is better." Konstince, student.

Children are honest. They're true. They're authentic. And in these letters they wrote to voters, their happiness, pride and excitement shines through.

As superintendent and as a resident, I couldn't be more proud of our students, staff and community. Thank you for the trust you've placed in us and for the future you've given Elyria students.

**Sincerely,
Dr. Thomas Jama
superintendent**



Bots earn high marks in 1st competition

Brian Kokai and Mike West
Elyria Schools

How many autonomous points can you score? What is the gear ratio of your drive train?

If you know the answer to either of these questions, then you probably know a thing or two about the realities of competitive robotics. If you don't know the answers, well, keep on reading!

This school year, Elyria High School has fielded its first-ever robotics competition team, which is now competing in tournaments throughout Ohio.

The team's first tournament, Dec. 16 at Kalahari, saw two EHS robots finish the qualifying rounds with ranks of No. 22 and No. 30 out of 78 teams. At the team's second tournament, on Jan. 21, the team had robots place third and seventh of 38 teams. This placed them in the championship round.

The team is composed of students in grades nine through twelve who are interested in designing, building, programming, and driving competitive robots.

The overall team is then divided into two to three smaller teams made up of three to five students. Elyria Schools uses the Vex Robotics EDR (www.vexrobotics.com) platform for parts and competes against other teams in the Vex-sanctioned game, dubbed "Starstruck."

CHECK IT OUT ONLINE

Go to Elyria Schools' Pioneer TV on YouTube to watch video of the robot competition.

The object of the game is to score more points with your alliance partner than the opponent's alliance by throwing and pushing stars and cubes across a fence. At the conclusion of the game your alliance receives bonus points for hanging your robot on a pole to end the game.

All of this happens on a 12-by-12-foot field. Each year the game changes dramatically, emphasizing teamwork to solve a new set of complicated problems.

Elementary, middle, high school and college teams compete at Vex tournaments held year-round at local, regional, state and national levels. The ultimate goal, of course, is to qualify for the Vex World Championships.

Team meetings are held once a week in the offseason after school.

During competition season, the team meets almost every day, often late into the night to finalize their programming, make last-minute mechanical adjustments and hone their driving skills in the robot arena.

Although STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) skills are empha-



BRIAN KOKAI / ELYRIA SCHOOLS

Two robots, designed, built and driven by Elyria High School students, earned high marks in robotics competitions held recently in Sandusky and Clearview.

sized, no prior engineering or computer programming experience is needed to join the team. Real-world, hands-on engineering experience is gained through participation in the robotics team. Other valuable skills are built as well, including teamwork, communication, problem solving and decision-making, allowing students to synthesize these skills and build something new.

Students learn all of the skills necessary during team meetings.

If designing, building or programming don't sound like your thing, the team still needs scouts, documentaries, video editors, cameramen, pit crew and equipment managers.

There is a job for everyone in competitive robotics — and there's still time to join!

If you're at EHS, email advisor

Mike West at westmichael@elyriaschools.org or drop by the Imagination Hub in Room 124 at the high school.

If you're in middle school grades seven or eight, you'll be able to participate as well beginning in the 2017-18 school year. Email Brian Kokai at kokaibrian@elyriaschools.org for more information.

CELEBRATING MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.



The annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Celebration in Elyria on Jan. 16 lauded students from the Elyria Schools for exemplary acts of kindness. Students who earned the 2017 MLK Acts of Kindness Award, at right, are, from left: Chase Jackson, 10, Crestwood; Braeden Ponczocha, 10, Windsor; Kylie Shull, 11, Westwood; Nicholas Smith, 12, Westwood; Jesaphine Lee, 17, EHS; Daniel Reynolds, 16, EHS. The celebration also featured readings from Dr. King's well-known speeches by students in the Elyria High School Theatre Repertory 2016-17 class, and taught by Pam Christian.



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS PHOTOS

SLOW-COOKED GOODNESS

Saving money and spending time with family — it doesn't get much more delicious than this

Amy Higgins

Communications director

Most weekends, a pristine stillness is about all you'd find inside the Elyria High School kitchen.

Saturdays and Sundays, the kitchen's stainless steel tables and refrigerators are always left polished and shining, awaiting the approach of Monday and another week of hustle and bustle.

But on one recent Saturday, the unmistakable smell of home-cooked meals seasoned the air. It wafted out into the high school's cafeteria, stirring up a potpourri of scrumptious smells.

In the kitchen, on a long, polished table, sat six crockpots neatly in a row.

Inside each one there was a mixture of piping-hot goodness.

In this one, chicken and wild rice soup. In that one, Hawaiian chicken. In another, chicken chili. Here, chicken fajitas. There, garlic chicken with red potatoes and green beans. Kielbasa and potatoes.

Meals to fill the belly, comfort the soul, and feed a family.

The best part of all: The ingredients won't break the bank.

"My daughter and I can make 10 meals, with chicken as the main ingredient, in two-and-a-half hours ... for \$52," said Patti Stiteler, administrative assistant at Elyria High School. "That's \$5.20 per crockpot meal, for a family of four — or just \$1.30 per person."

In an age when families are constantly looking for new ways to save money — especially on grocery bills that seem to get more expensive by the month — the crockpot emerges as a savory budget-saver.

Stiteler attests to the power of the crockpot.

"I started making freezer meals about one year ago," she said. "I not only needed to stretch my budget, but I wanted to be able to eat healthy meals that didn't contain a lot of preservatives, salt and chemicals found in processed food."



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS PHOTOS

ABOVE: The class had everybody rolling up their sleeves and digging in.

BELOW: Families enjoyed preparing and packaging their freezer-ready meals.

She figured out how to plan and prep her week's worth of meals in advance.

She purchases all the ingredients for that week's six or seven meals, and then she mixes them and packages them in six separate Ziploc bags.

Each day, she pulls out a new bag and tosses it into the crockpot. The result is good, wholesome slow-cooking.

It quickly became her go-to style, although the meals she has learned to prepare are versatile enough for baking, grilling or sautéing.

And at some point, her love of quality home cooking — and a desire to stay on budget — made her think about others just like her.

Working parents. Busy with life. Raising kids. Making a home. Limited resources.

"Coming home from work, having to decide what to make

for dinner, then cooking while making sure homework was done, getting things ready for the next day, etc." she said. "It isn't really the quality time I wanted to spend with my family."

After talking to others, she realized there was an interest out there in learning how to do this.

"But other than reading about it on your own or watching a video, there wasn't anywhere to actually learn the basic ways to start making freezer meals," she said.

She wanted to teach other families how to do her thrifty kitchen tricks.

And so a project was born.

She wrote a successful grant proposal to the Elyria Schools Endowment Board, which funded the assembly of freezer-meal starter kits for the first four families to participate in her pilot crockpot cooking class.

The kits include a crockpot,



colander, vegetable peeler and knife, measuring cups and spoons, a cutting mat, freezer bags and crockpot recipes.

The crockpot class, held on a recent Saturday morning in Elyria High's main kitchen, was a hot success.

Sodexo, the Elyria Schools

foodservice provider, donated the produce and pantry items for the meals.

Stiteler also teamed with Franklin Elementary Principal Lisa Licht, who invited local families to attend the class. Stiteler and Licht split the cost of meat for the meals, finding great deals

at places like Fligner's Market in Lorain, where buying in bulk saves money.

The four-hour class kicked off with instructions about proper handwashing and hairnets, followed by a tour of the workspace and a primer on the ins and outs of commercial kitchens.

Stiteler pre-planned the meals and had six samples fully cooked and bubbling in separate crockpots by the time families arrived. This gave each family the chance to sample the dishes so that they could season their own creations to their liking.

At the preparation table, each family got a list of recipes.

"We talked about how to select and where to find recipes, along with how to make lists of categorized ingredients and use that list to check off what they already have on hand — and to check the sales ads," Stiteler said. "We also showed the children how to calculate how much money they would need for the ingredients."

The families took their lists to two stations in the kitchen — the pantry station and spice station — and carefully selected the needed ingredients.

"The children, under the supervision of their parents, learned the proper technique for washing vegetables," Stiteler said.

Moms, dads and kids spent the next several hours peeling, chopping and cutting vegetables and chicken. Each family prepped five freezer-ready meals.

One of the big takeaways: There's much to be gained from a home-cooked meal. It's nutritionally rich food made to your liking and it comes with a deep sense of satisfaction.

Most important is the family

CHECK IT OUT ONLINE

Go to Elyria Schools' Pioneer TV on YouTube to watch video of the crockpot cooking class.

connection. It starts in the kitchen and extends to the dinner table.

"I grew up in Elyria in the 1960s, when many of the moms in the neighborhood were at home during the day," Stiteler said. "You would walk into any of their homes and the smells of what was baking just permeated the air. And then they would always give you a taste before sending you outside to play."

That's not something you can get in a restaurant.

"The quality family time working together is nice, not to mention the benefit of saving money," Stiteler said. "Plus, I am teaching my daughter a skill she can use throughout her life."

Absolutely anyone can do this, she said.

"We all grocery shop and need to eat, and most of us want to eat less-processed foods," Stiteler said.

This is achieved by cooking at home.

"The more I make the freezer meals, the less time it takes each prep session," she said. "I choose the recipes I want to make based on what is on sale."

"I'm not saying to eat a crockpot meal every night, but eat a variety of meals," she said. "I designate each night of the week as a different type of meal — crockpot, skillet, grilling, leftover night, etc."

"It's something that can and should be done as a family," she said.

Find Patti's recipes at www.elyriaschools.org.



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS

Children learned how to properly wash and prepare food items and how to safely work with kitchen utensils.

POINTERS FROM PATTI

- Anything you can buy premade in the store, you can make a healthier version at home.
- Keep a good supply of spices on hand. Spices greatly enhance the flavor of your meals. Once you have a good stock of spices, you can make your own mixes, similar to those you buy in little packets, like taco seasoning, for instance.
- Buy meat and produce on sale and learn how to properly freeze them until you're ready to use them. It will save you money!
- You don't have to use expensive cuts of meat, because the slow cooking will make even the toughest cut tender.
- To remove the air from zip lock freezer bags, leave one inch open and slowly submerge them in a sink full of water right up to the top; this forces the air out, eliminating the possibility of freezer burns.
- Almost any recipe can be made in the crockpot. The key is to cut the liquid in half because the crockpot produces enough through the cooking process.
- You don't have to have meat and potatoes every night. Some of Patti's favorite meals are grilled cheese with soup, and even pancakes and eggs for dinner.



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS

Stiteler's intentions with the class are to help families by showing them they can have hearty, healthy meals that are budget-friendly.

Students learning from service

Amy Higgins

Communications director

Many hands make light work.

No one knows this better than Susan Hennie, volunteer coordinator at Second Harvest Food Bank.

Second Harvest collects and distributes millions of pounds of food each year for local soup kitchens and food pantries. And they couldn't do it without the help of hundreds of volunteers, including the groups of Northwood Middle School students who have been helping Second Harvest for the past seven years.

Each month, students from Northwood's Daily Living program — a segment of the special education department — visit Second Harvest to help unpack, sort and repack boxes and backpacks destined for families in need.

Over the past decade, nearly 120 Northwood students have volunteered for the Second Harvest pro-

CHECK IT OUT ONLINE

Go to Elyria Schools' Pioneer TV on YouTube to watch video of Northwood students at Second Harvest.

gram, which helps the students learn valuable job skills.

"We're very proud to have them here," Hennie said. "We've gotten to know them like family."

One recent weekday, the students rushed about the Second Harvest warehouse, unloading crates full of canned goods.

"Normally we're in charge of packing all of the (food) backpacks that come to Elyria Schools, but we have a new job this week," said Dana Garcia, Northwood Middle School's intervention specialist. "We are taking items from a big container and packaging them into a box that has to weigh 30 pounds. So the kids have to tell me



MARTY YADON / ELYRIA SCHOOLS

Students from Northwood Middle School sort and pack goods at Second Harvest Food Bank.

when we're getting close to 30 pounds."

It was a formidable task, but the students tackled it with gusto. In the process, they learned valuable

skills — and a good deal about responsibility.

"We try to make each job level something they can do, and show them things they can do in the

future," Garcia said. "It exposes them to different jobs out in the community."

Beyond the practical and marketable skills they're building as volunteers, they're learning what it means to give back to the community.

"They get an appreciation of the work they're doing for other children and for other families that need food," Hennie said. "It's a benefit to us because they are our speakers. They go out and spread the word."

And there's no doubt whatsoever about the value they bring to the project.

"They are actually doing a job for us," Hennie said. "They are repacking product that is going on the shelves of soup kitchens everywhere. So it benefits both of us — the volunteers and Second Harvest."

Board business with member Jim Backs

Amy Higgins

Communications director

Pioneer Press caught up with school board member Jim Backs to chat about his life at home and on the board. Here's what he had to say.

Q: Mr. Backs, please tell our readers about you and your family, as well as your profession and your history in Elyria and with Elyria Schools.

I am married to Donna, an Ashland University graduate who teaches second grade at Prospect Elementary. She has worked with Elyria Schools for approximately 10 years, starting as a substitute teacher. We have two children, both schooled from kindergarten in Elyria Schools. Jared, now 26, graduated from EHS in 2008. He's an OSU graduate in civil engineering, now working in ODOT's Bridge Division in Columbus. Monica, now 22, graduated from EHS in 2013 with perfect attendance in her 13 years at Elyria Schools. She is a senior at OSU, seeking a degree in ecological engineering. I received my bachelor's from Purdue University in



Backs

1976 in manufacturing engineering technology. I relocated to Elyria and Ridge Tool Co. in 1981 to work as a manufacturing engineer. Donna and I married in 1986. In 2015 I retired from Ridge Tool after 33 years of service. I worked the last several years as director of the company's lean manufacturing initiatives. Both of my children participated in sports and marching band at Elyria Schools. Donna and I were active with the Pioneer Club and Band Boosters, holding board positions in both. When Evelyn France resigned from the Elyria Schools Board of Education in early 2015, I applied and was appointed to serve out her term, which ends Dec. 31, 2017.

Q: What inspired you to join the Elyria Schools Board of Education?

I decided to apply for Evelyn's remaining term on the board of education because I was, and still am, convinced that Issue 23 is vital to Elyria Schools, its students

and the community—and at a very attractive price. Being a member of the board of education has provided me with the opportunity to get directly involved.

Q: What have you found most intriguing about school business? Have you learned anything that surprised you?

I've learned that running a school district is every bit as complicated as running a business. The difference is the stockholders are your neighbors and acquaintances.

Q: In your opinion as a school board member, what are the most important issues facing public education?

Over-reliance on testing and the ever-expanding role of the schools into areas that have historically been the responsibility of the parents. Regardless of necessity, current funding often does not adequately provide for the resources needed to absorb all the additional responsibilities. Therefore, current staff resources become overly stretched at the risk of diminishing the overall performance of the organization.

Q: What are the most crucial issues facing the Elyria city school district?

Providing the necessary resources on an ongoing basis to each classroom, so that each student can reach his or her potential.

Q: What are you most proud of as a school board member?

I'm proud of the residents of Elyria Schools. They are very supportive and I'm very thankful for their trust. I'm also proud of the dedication of our Elyria Schools staff of administrators, educators and supporting functions. In the midst of all the requirements, rules, laws, budgets and random everyday occurrences, I believe at the end of the day that everyone, by and large, recognizes it is all about the kids.

Q: What does the future hold for Elyria Schools and this community, as it relates to educating children?

I believe we have an exciting future as we get about the business of rebuilding the rest of the district in a project that started with EHS. I believe this project will benefit our students, staff and

community in ways that will not be apparent for maybe years to come. My hope is this renewal serves as a catalyst for improving educational experiences for all our students through the re-dedication of parents, staff and students to the value of education and its importance to building good and productive citizens.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

The entire education process is a team effort. The goal in my mind is to support the interface that exists between educator and student as well as possible, so that the student builds skill and confidence to advance to higher levels of challenge and reward. Parents, administrators, support staff and the board of education are key in this effort. When trying to identify issues at Ridge, we would often ask, "What keeps you up at night?" I can now say that for me, it's the thought of not doing my best for the students as a member of the Elyria Schools Board of Education.

COURAGE

From 1

And she's forged lasting bonds along the way.

Just before she turned 2 years old, Brooke began to experience medical problems that landed her in the hospital. After a period of testing, doctors discovered she had a rare form of leukemia called JMML.

In 2013, when Brooke was about 5 years old, she had to undergo a bone marrow transplant.

"She was not able to come to school because of these health issues," Julie said. "But I wanted her to be ahead in her education."

Julie turned to Elyria Schools, where administrators connected her with Brandi Huffman, a kindergarten teacher at McKinley Elementary.

Throughout Brooke's kindergarten year, Huffman visited her at home twice a week, serving as a home instructor because Brooke's medical condition prohibited her from attending school.

Huffman's twice-a-week visits kept Brooke on pace with the curriculum.

End result: Brooke was primed and ready for first grade by the time doctors medically cleared her to show up for school the following year.

Brooke, now an 8-year-old in third grade, fondly recalls her kindergarten days at home — and her kindergarten teacher.

"She was funny," Brooke said of Mrs. Huffman. "We had fun. If we had time at the end of the day, we would play a game — usually board games."

For Julie, the home instruction



AMY HIGGINS / ELYRIA SCHOOLS

Brooke is poised and ready to light up the night at the 'Gift of Lights' outdoor light display in North Ridgeville. The mile-long holiday light display was a charity event for University Hospital's Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital. Brooke was the guest of honor at the event's opening night gala.

brought a much-needed normalcy to difficult times.

"It was heartbreaking," Julie said, her eyes welling with tears as she explained Brooke's struggle with leukemia.

The Dumonthiers connected with University Hospital, where Brooke underwent a bone marrow transplant and then a series of other procedures.

Today, she's a healthy little girl.

"She's now in the survivorship program, where she goes once a year for checkups and tests," Julie

said. "It's just amazing how far she has come."

The relationship Brooke established with Mrs. Huffman played a significant role in easing Brooke's entry into first grade, where she forged a bond with teacher Lisa Ward.

"The relationship she built with Mrs. Huffman, and knowing Mrs. Huffman was here — and the staff here — it was all really comforting to know she was going to be in such a great environment," Julie said.

Brooke's favorite part about school now: "I get to see my friends."

And her friends get to see her, too — even on television. Last holiday season, Brooke was chosen by University Hospital to flick on the lights at an enormous holiday display sponsored by the hospital system.

Elyria Schools featured her in a video of the event, and her teacher shared it in class.

"We watched it in the classroom and some of my friends

said, 'You're a movie star now!'" Brooke said.

She's developing plenty of talents outside of school, too.

She recently got a sewing machine and, with help from her grandma, she's learning to sew.

Her first project? For Valentine's Day, she sewed a gift and sent it to the young man in Poland who donated bone marrow for Brooke's transplant. The two have kept in touch by email ever since the transplant.

JUMPSTART

From 1

although toddlers and elementary students are welcome to attend with their families.

Educators have long known that children get their best start in education through preschool programs. And the Elyria Schools preschool program is the ideal place to start — it has earned the highest rating in the state, five stars in the "Step Up to Quality" check of early childhood education.

Early Childhood Village, 42101 Griswold Road, offers morning and afternoon sessions for students who are typically develop-

NEW! REGISTER ONLINE

Be sure to watch elyriaschools.org for updates on how to register your little one online for preschool or kindergarten. District planners are putting the finishing touches on the online registration program — so be sure to keep an eye out in the next few weeks!

ing and those with special needs. Tuition charges follow a sliding scale based on income, which means many families of 4-year-old children can qualify for free preschool.

Children ages 3 to 5 are eligible for the Elyria Schools preschool program. There are immediate openings for 4-year-olds in the afternoon program, 12:45 to 3:15 p.m. The program runs Monday through Friday.

Early Childhood Village offers a vibrant setting for young learners, with colorful classrooms, centers for play and exploration, educationally appropriate learning materials and the latest technology, all designed to capture student attention and nourish their natural curiosity and imagination.

Classes are taught by highly qualified teachers who specialize in early childhood education.

The teachers are trained extensively to meet the educational, social and emotional needs of preschoolers and kindergartners.

The preschoolers at Early Childhood Village become active learners through hands-on activities throughout the school day. They even venture out for field trips and outdoor exploration and play.

Transitioning to kindergarten is easier through preschool, as teachers at Elyria Schools work closely to ensure a smooth passage for students. Early Childhood Village also offers full-day kindergarten.

Elyria Schools, meanwhile, will begin phased construction

of all-new elementary and middle schools, as approved by voters in a bond issue on Nov. 8, 2016. A new central preschool is among the new sites to open. It will be located on Abbe Road, where Pioneer Soccer Field currently sits.

It's an exciting time to be a Pioneer at Elyria Schools.

Learn more about how to enroll your little learner in the Elyria Schools preschool program by calling Early Childhood Village at 284-8250 or visiting elyri-school.org. Parents also can stop by the central registration office at Elyria High School for more information.



The Herald

A supplement
to the
Pioneer Press

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2

ELYRIA HIGH SCHOOL, ELYRIA, OHIO

WINTER 2017

Inside the mind of a champion

EHS senior heavyweight wrestler Kevin Vough holds regional, state, national titles; his imposing stature belies calm approach to competition

Nathan Cruickshank
The Herald

Wrestling is like a retreat for Elyria High senior Kevin Vough. His passion for the sport allows him to clear his mind of all thoughts on the mat.

The retreats rarely last long, however. They end as soon as he dispatches his opponent, which often happens quickly.

The honors student isn't complaining. Preparing for a match allows him to gain a high level of concentration.

"A match honestly flies by," said Vough, who wrestles in the 285-pound weight class. "While it can go anywhere from 30 seconds to 10 minutes, it feels like it is over in

a blink of an eye. It's all a blur, honestly; Just a glimpse of flashes. I just let muscle memory do its work and focus on reacting."

He has certainly reacted quite well in competition. He placed third in the state as a freshman, then captured first place the following year in the USA Cadet Greco-Roman National Championships at North Dakota State University. Despite performing with a torn anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), he reached the state finals a year ago. Coach Erik Burnett said Vough "is working hard to get back to where he was before his knee injury."

Vough treats his body with respect in trying to maximize his wrestling potential. He rarely eats

junk food, preferring meat, vegetables, nuts, seeds and some oats.

Life in school extends far beyond wrestling for Vough. He has enjoyed his time at Elyria High, and said he really likes how a person can meet such a wide variety of people just by taking a few steps. He plans a simple life after college, at least until he pays off any debts and secures his place in the world.

Vough has little free time between school, work and sleep, though he does make room for drawing and playing video games. He calms down after matches by playing games on his phone or listening to music.

Given his record on the mat, whatever he chooses can probably be considered a victory tune.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LIFETOUCH

EHS senior Kevin Vough wrestles in the 285 lb. class and has many regional, state and national titles.

EHS wrestling team sets sights for state title

Julia Engle
The Herald

The wrestling program at Elyria High School is one of the best in the state. The first varsity red team traveled to Brecksville for the Brecksville Holiday Tournament. Two seniors took first at the two-day, nine-mat tournament: Jack (JT) Brown, 182 pounds, and heavyweight Kevin Vough, were Brecksville Holiday Tournament champions. To the surprise of many, a third person made the championship finals, Dylan Shawver, 113 pounds, and the only freshman in wrestling

program history to make it to the championship round in the Brecksville Holiday Tournament.

Six other wrestlers placed in the tourney including freshman Mick Burnett (106), sophomore Matt Zuckerman (120), junior Josh Breeding (126), freshman Drew Butera (152) and senior Cam King (195), bringing Elyria to first place overall with 188 team points.

"Our hard work paid off," said Sophomore Jimmy Schill (138). "We now know that we need to set the bar high and go win the state title." Red team has high

hopes for defeating rival St. Eds for the championship.

Mick Burnett said, "Coming into this (tournament) our team wasn't cohesive; we have had a lot of individual success. We all came through in some type of way, and I think that will help us this year and for our future"

White team took first place at the Brush Holiday dual meet. Helping Elyria win first place was freshman Bryce Allison, 106 pounds, and boasting a record of 17-4, and 5-0 in tournaments. Also wrestling for white team was senior Devontae (Sleepy) Bowens

at 132 pounds and a record of 12-6 for the season. Both Allison and Bowens were undefeated at the Brush Holiday Dual meet. With them were freshman Ben Doehr, 126 pounds, and sophomore Lewis Aguilar, 170 pounds.

As a team, Elyria was undefeated and beat JFK high school 55-12, Cleveland Heights 39-36, Glenville 36-24, Brunswick 36-22, and in the finals the team defeated Cleveland Central Catholic 39-35 in the championship round.

The team is gunning for the state title.

Coach Erik Burnett praised the team's success in recent meets and said the wrestlers are seeing the fruits of labor.

"Our program had a great weekend," Burnett said. "The wrestlers are starting to prove to themselves how good they can be."

The coaches hope the guys understand and see their potential. The coaches are also aware the wrestlers can do great things with their lives after they leave high school — many of the wrestlers will go on to wrestle in college.