

The Comstock Communicator

COMSTOCK HIGH SCHOOL | COMPASS HIGH SCHOOL & ADULT EDUCATION | COMSTOCK MIDDLE SCHOOL | COMSTOCK ELEMENTARY | STEM ACADEMY | CELA



ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

From the Superintendent
page 2

Board Briefs
page 3

Special Education Millage Renewal FAQs
page 4

Community Auditorium Events
page 5

School News
pages 6-11

Spring Sports Schedules
page 13

Comstock Library News
page 14

MORE NEWS

*Turn over to read
Center Point*

A newsletter about the Comstock Community Center



From the Superintendent

Dear Comstock Community, Pandemic? Test positivity? COVID-19? Coronavirus? Safe Start metrics? Social distancing? Mask protocols? Contact tracing? The list goes on of the terms, topics, and concepts I never thought I'd have to learn about or even deal with as an educational leader or superintendent. No educational course or class I've ever taken discussed these issues.

However, unfortunately we've all become more familiar with these words over the past year and I've had to take a crash course in epidemiology to keep current with all of the varied and continual changes this illness has caused. What a year this has been!

However, at this point in the pandemic, I'm pleased that for the second semester, the Comstock Board of Education approved the option for students to resume face-to-face learning. The approval of this "return to learn" plan did not end a family's or student's preference for virtual learning, but instead gave the additional choice for families to move forward with in-person instruction if they so desired.

In a major step forward, over 90 percent of our district staff chose to be vaccinated against

COVID-19, receiving both shots through the Kalamazoo County Health and Services Department. This vaccination will help increase the sense of normalcy slowly returning to our school system.

During this phase of our district's response to the coronavirus pandemic, every member of our staff will continue to prioritize the health and safety of the students and educational community. Each building principal will continue to work collaboratively with staff to determine the maximum number of students that each classroom can accommodate keeping in mind and honoring social distancing at six feet. Importantly, administration, staff, and students will adhere to the spirit and intent of the district's COVID-19 Preparedness Response Plan (CPRP).

If you have questions about the particular protocols of your child's school, please contact the building principal for details and answers.

Stay safe. Stay Colt strong!

Sincerely,
Dr. Jeff Thoenes
Superintendent

Superintendent's Update

By Dr. Jeff Thoenes, Superintendent

Given the importance of the district's ongoing bond construction projects, I'd like to update our community on the progress we have made since September.

Comstock Elementary School

This past summer we broke ground at Comstock Elementary School and the long anticipated building-wide remodeling began. In November, we completed Phase 1 which included the full renovation of 10 classrooms on the second floor and the addition of critical office space for staff in that area. Phase 1 also included the conversion of a former locker room into a classroom, and the resurfacing of the parking lot and sidewalks.

Phase 2 was completed at the end of March.

This phase encompasses a total remodeling of the cafeteria, two classrooms, and the art room. In addition, the work includes the creation of new bathrooms that will serve both the cafeteria and gymnasium, as well as a new music room, faculty lounge, and multi-purpose room. The space covered by the combination of Phases 1 and 2 equals approximately half of the entire elementary school project.

When the bond-funded work is completed in January of 2022, all classroom spaces will be modernized and aligned with the needs of the children. Importantly, the building will be fully air conditioned allowing the district to offer educational and community programming during

Continued on next page



COMSTOCK PUBLIC SCHOOLS
A SCHOOL DISTRICT DEDICATED TO KIDS
www.comstockps.org

Dr. Jeff Thoenes
Superintendent

BOARD OF EDUCATION

- Pamela Dickinson, President
- Matthew Schreiner, Vice President
- Dori Scholly, Secretary
- Paul Lamphear, Treasurer
- Saralyn Brown, Trustee
- Karen Howes, Trustee
- Kayleen O'Donnell, Trustee
- Ashley LaVanWay, Appointed Recording Secretary
- Michelle Darnell, Appointed Treasurer

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Comstock Public Schools is to serve our community by supporting, inspiring, and challenging every person within the school district to reach his/her full potential through education.

VISION STATEMENT

The vision of Comstock Public Schools is to be an educational community where every person is empowered to reach his/her full potential.

QUESTIONS?

If you have questions concerning your schools, the answer is only a telephone call away:
269-250-8907

STORIES OR INFORMATION

The Comstock Communicator is published by Comstock Public Schools. Information may be sent to Dr. Jeff Thoenes at thoenesj@comstockps.org or by fax at 250-8908. It may also be e-mailed to Phyllis Rose at phyllisarose@aol.com.



@comstockPS

the summer. At that point, Comstock Elementary School will serve as a model for what a modern educational facility should offer its community.

Comstock Middle School

In late spring of 2020, we commenced with the bond-funded construction of the gymnasium on the north side of the building and the project is on schedule to be completed this April. The final stages include the installation of the wooden floor and bleachers as well as the metallic paneling along the upper portion of the outside surface. This paneling will give the facility an attractive, modern appearance, and increase the energy efficiency of the structure. When finished, the air-conditioned facility will have sufficient space to host both middle and high school events and will arguably be the finest middle school athletic facility in the county.

However, this summer the work will go on at CMS. Crews will install the metallic siding that matches the gymnasium along the north and west faces of the school. This will greatly enhance the “curb appeal” of the building. The summer work will also include remodeling three science rooms as well as five classrooms along the western side of the building facing 26th Street. In these rooms, we are installing new windows and carpeting and also making other improvements.

Finally, this summer we will be adding a parking lot in the front of the school which will be for staff and visitors. The bus loop will remain in place and our current lot will be for student drop off and pick up, and parent parking. This separation of the buses and cars will help ensure the safe and efficient arrival and departure of all Colts to and from school.

What Dr. Thoenes is reading:

The Conquering Tide: War in the Pacific Islands, 1942-44 (2015)
by Ian W. Toll

Comstock High School

Finally, at Comstock High School, the work to completely replace and upgrade the fire alarm system is done, and the system passed the inspection by our local fire marshal.

As always, thanks goes out to our community for the funding that made these projects possible, our Board for their support and vision, as well as our Facilities Crew led by Facilities Director Sean Gillette, and partners GMB Architects and Miller Davis Construction Management. Without the combined efforts and synergy of these groups, none of this would be possible.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me either via email, phone call, or personal visit. I can be reached at thoenesj@comstockps.org or 269-250-8906. If you happen to see me at a future school event or in the community, please take the time to say “hi” and allow me to introduce myself. I look forward to our conversation!

School Board Returns to In-person Meetings

The school board meetings which have been virtual for several months have returned to in-person meetings.

Check the district's website to find out where they will be meeting.

Board Briefs

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING (VIRTUAL)

January 11, 2021

- Elected the following officers:
 - President - Pam Dickinson
 - Vice-President - Matt Schreiner
 - Secretary - Dori Scholly
 - Treasurer - Paul Lamphear
- Appointed Ashley LaVanWay as recording secretary for the Board of Education.
- Appointed Michelle Darnell as the acting treasurer for Comstock Public Schools.
- Set meeting times for 2021.

REGULAR MEETING (VIRTUAL)

January 11, 2021

- Accepted the following resignations:
 - Sonya Hogan, second grade teacher
 - Alana Manusos, GSRP Teacher
- Approved hiring McKenzie Reilly, fourth grade teacher.
- Approved the Kalamazoo County Special Education Millage proposal.
- Reconfirmed the District's Extended Continuity of Learning Plan.
- Approved the USF eligible technology services bids.
- Nominated Pamela Dickinson as a Michigan Association of School Boards Region VI Board of Directors candidate.

REGULAR MEETING (VIRTUAL)

January 25, 2021

- Approved retirement of Wendy Shreve, Title I math teacher.
- Approved hiring Yesenia Guerrero, second grade

teacher; and Bethany Jones, GSRP teacher.

- Reconfirmed the district's Extended Continuity of Learning Plan (ECOLP) and will reconsider the instruction model at the February 8 board meeting.
- Approved the 2021 Bond Resolution which will authorize the issuance and sale of the third and final series of the original bond voted on in 2016. The original bond was approved for \$40,013,000 and this final series is for the remaining \$14,225,000.
- Superintendent Thoenes thanked the board and gave each one an embroidered polyester jacket.

REGULAR MEETING (VIRTUAL)

February 8, 2021

- Approved the retirement of Mark Peeters, technology director.
- Approved hiring Nichole Francomb, GSRP teacher.
- Reconfirmed the District's Continuity of Learning Plan (CEOLP) as presented with the exception of moving the start date to Monday, February 22, 2021.
- Due to the retirement of Mark Peeters, the Board approved transitioning the school's technology services to SW MiTech (KRESA).

REGULAR MEETING (VIRTUAL)

February 22, 2021

- Approved purchasing three buses (two regular buses and one special education bus)
- Approved the 2020-2021 Amendment to the General Appropriations of the district.
- Moved into closed session to discuss the Superintendent's contract.
- Approved a 3 percent salary increase for Superintendent Thoenes.

School Board Receives Gifts

During the recent Board Appreciation month, the Colt Cabinet presented board members with Comstock-themed gifts including a Colts School Board cap and a Comstock Public Schools jacket.



Karen Howes



Kayleen O'Donnell



Saralynn Brown



Paul Lamphear



Matt Schreiner



Pam Dickinson



Dori Scholly



Each board member received these gifts.

Nine Staff Members Participate in AASI

This year, nine staff members are participating in the Michigan Department of Education’s African American Student Initiative (AASI). Superintendent Thoenes attended the series last year and recommended that more staff take part in the program.

This program is in line with the district’s newly revised Strategic Plan to “promote a vision of equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice” for all.

The Michigan Department of Education’s efforts to support African American students began in 2015 with the creation of the African American Young Men of Promise Initiative (AAYMPI).

In 2017, the initiative expanded to include support for young Black men and women in Michigan schools through the African American Student Initiative (AASI). To date, the AASI is the only state-level initiative to reach classrooms and has engaged with over 1500 Michigan educators.

Participating in this initiative are Assistant Superintendent Jill Ansel; High School Principal, David Kirksey; Elementary Principal, Susan Caswell; Elementary Assistant Principal, Courtney Boyce; K-12 Virtual Academy Director, Pam Dudley; School Social Worker, Dr. Amy Vlieg; School Social Worker, Rida Jones; Middle school teacher, Michael Thiel; High school Counselor, Dare Coffee; and Elementary School Intervention Specialist, Travis Tennant.

KSO Digital Concert Hall Series

The Kalamazoo Symphony has been recording their Digital Concert Hall series at the Comstock Auditorium. No audiences have been allowed. New concerts premiere on the final Friday of each month from January through May, providing five months of engaging musical experiences as part of the symphony’s 100th anniversary season.

Each of the Final Fridays Digital Concert Hall performances will be streamed on its opening night and remain available for 30 days on

demand. This gives ticket holders flexibility to watch and re-watch concerts from the comfort of home at times that fit their schedules.

Go to their website: Kalamazoo Symphony Tickets and get tickets for the individual concerts.

It has been an honor to host the Symphony at Comstock Community Auditorium and to be the primary site for their concerts during this pandemic.

Community Auditorium Events

April:

2 - Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra Recording - Michael Brown; Concerto for Piano, Julian Kuerti, Conductor. Premiere: April 30 Tickets online: boxoffice.kalamazoosymphony.com/events

13 - West Michigan Homeschool Fine Arts Spring Band/Choir Concert: 7 p.m. (includes band, orchestra, choir) Tickets: \$3 at the door.

23-24 - Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra Recording - Peter and the Wolf Premiere: May 28. Tickets Online: boxoffice.kalamazoosymphony.com/events

25 - FOP #98 Country Music Concert: 7 p.m. Tickets at the door or call 381-3587. Limited seating at this time.

May:

7-8 HPA - Arts Academy - Show TBA. Limited tickets. Go to hpami.org for details. Tickets: 1-855-472-1472.

10-11 - Kalamazoo Christian High School Choir/band Recordings: No audience;

contact the school for the airing of the program.

12- STEM/CMS Choir Concert: 7 p.m. Free. Limited seating.

13 - Comstock High School Choir Concert - 7 p.m.

15-16 - Kalamazoo Ballet: *Beauty and the Beast*, 6 p.m. on May 15 and 2 p.m. on the May 16. Limited seating. Call the studio for tickets.

19 - Kalamazoo Christian Middle School Musical: Performances: 12:45; 7 p.m. - For ticket info: 544-2332. Possible taping; will have limited seating.

20 - STEM Music Program: 5:30 p.m. Free. Limited seating.

22 - Comstock Celebration of the Arts: Student Group Performances: 1-2 p.m. African Drumming, 3-5 p.m. Free.

25- Comstock Marching Band Awards: 6 p.m. in the Colt Center.

27 -The Montessori School Concert: 6 p.m. Free.

2020-21 Comstock Public Schools Calendar

March 26-April 2, 2021	Spring Break		No Students/ No Teachers
May 6, 2021	CHS Conferences	3:00-7:00	
May 13, 2021	Comstock Middle School Conferences	3:00-7:00	
May 31, 2021	Memorial Day		No Students/No Staff
June 4,7,8, 2021	Half Day Students K-12 (High School Exams)		Half Day Students and Teachers K-12
June 8, 2021	Last Day for Students/Records Day PM		Half Day Students AM/ Staff Records Day PM

Second First Day Brings About Changes

Monday, February 22, was unofficially the “second first day of school”. After many months of virtual-only instruction, the District opened its doors to an in-person hybrid model for students.

Under this program, students are subdivided into two groups - either “blue” or “white” in line with the school colors. The blue group attends

in-person on Monday and Tuesday and virtually Wednesday through Friday.

Meanwhile, the white group remains virtual Monday through Wednesday and attends in person on Thursday and Friday.

Dividing the students into these subgroups sends fewer students to school on any given day which allows for proper social distancing.

Former Superintendent Receives Excellence Award

Former Comstock superintendent, Dr. Sandy Standish, recently received the Diether Haenicke Promise of Excellence Award. This award was established in memory of Diether Haenicke, former president of Western Michigan University who died in 2009.

Established by the Communities in Schools Board, this award honors Haenicke’s contributions to Kalamazoo and his service and concern for children and young people.

Community in Schools Board President, Namia Sharma, presented the award to Dr. Standish at the thirteenth annual Champs Celebration.

Dr. Standish began her 32 year career in education as a teacher in the business department at Comstock High School, eventually becoming

superintendent of the district. When she retired from that position, she took on the role as the founding director of Kalamazoo County Ready 4s, better known as KCReady4s. For the next decade, she collaborated with community partners to build a system of high-quality pre-kindergarten programs accessible to all four-year-olds in Kalamazoo County.

The press release announcing Dr. Standish’s award noted: “With her usual grace, humor, and expertise, she has been a fearless advocate for early education, because Dr. Standish knows this: Children who receive high-quality early care and education do better in school and life. In that safe and consistent space, they learn basic skills, as well as social and emotional skills, all building blocks for future success.”

Comstock High School

Seniors Receive Awards, Scholarships

Seniors have begun receiving various awards and college scholarships. Recent award recipients are as follows:

- Sam Rabick has been named a finalist for both the National Merit Scholarship (NMS) and the US Presidential Scholars Program.

- Alex Kish has received the distinguished Heyl Scholarship at Kalamazoo College. This is a full tuition, room and board, and study-abroad scholarship.

- Shelby Alexander has been admitted to the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre and Dance on a full tuition HAIL Scholarship.

High School Names Colt Credit Winners

Colt Credit winners are selected by the staff for their participation, academic excellence, or academic improvement received a certificate and a McDonald’s gift card.

Recent winners are Cornondre Carter, Sophia Congdon, Avery Pratt, Caleigh Nichols, Abby Lopez, Jasaan Tyler, Evelyn Hulet, Brith-

any Ramirez, Damarion McCone, and Evan Springer.

February Colt Credit winners were Israel Patterson, Isaac Nzungla, Harleigh Martin, Elijah Cote, Hailey Brummer, Carter Payne, Logan Saokho, Jady Kaatz, Jada Cook, Thomas Warner, and JJ Camburn.

Ansel Nominated for National Award

Athletic Director Justin Ansel has been nominated for the Jim Teff Achievement Recognition for Professional Development, a national-level award sponsored by the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association.

Mr. Ansel was nominated for the award by the Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association in recognition of his efforts in developing and promoting online courses for athletic directors during the global pandemic.

STAR Staff Named at High School

Recent STAR teachers named by students at the high school are School Social Worker Rida Jones, Principal David Kirksey, and Spanish teacher Jordyn Dryden.



Loaves and Fishes Distributes Food to Comstock Families

Loaves and Fishes, a community organization whose mission is to feed the hungry, recently distributed food to Comstock families. Over 100 households with a total of 429 people received the food donations.

The event was coordinated by Todd Ide, middle school teacher. Assisting in the event were Ray Kuerth, volunteer coordinator, and Greta Faworski, resource development director from Loaves and Fishes.

Members of Western Michigan University’s Sigma Tau Gamma fraternity served as volunteers at the event.

Comstock High School

Students Make Valentine Treats

High School students in Steven Rand's class, Bennett Webb, Olivia Miskowski, and Shawn Cosby, made Valentine treats for their classmates and then delivered them to their homes.



Comstock Middle

CMS Principal Attends 'Rumbles'

Middle School Principal Mark Wilke recently attended a statewide meeting of middle school principals called "Middle School Rumbles." The purpose of the meeting was to gain insights into best practices and responses to the pandemic.

He collaborated with other middle school principals to gain insights on how to properly institute a hybrid model of learning.

"My colleagues shared successes, frustrations, and celebrations on this type of instructional programming," he said. "I am excited to bring some of what I learned to Comstock Middle School."

The meeting is a quarterly gathering of the Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals' Association (MEMSPA).

Compass High School

Family Donates U.S. Flag to Honor Father

The MacKenzie family recently donated an American flag to Compass High School to honor their father's birthday.

Donald E. MacKenzie would have been 98 in January but he passed away two years ago, according to his son, Jim MacKenzie, a Comstock alumnus.

Donald E. MacKenzie served in the Merchant Marine during World War II. The United States Merchant Marine was the supply line for Europe and was the main reason for the existence of German U-boats, said Jim, noting that his dad saw lots of action, including having one ship torpedoed and sunk.

"Dad grew up poor during the Depression and never got past the tenth grade," said Jim. "Yet, he was very well informed and placed a high value on education. Up until the end, he was proud of telling people that all of his children were teachers."

"He would get a big kick out of knowing his flag was flying in front of a school. It has just occurred to me that this might be especially true for a school like Compass because it offers even more proof that no matter what, we never give up on kids."

Comstock Elementary

CES Girls on the Run Adapts to Pandemic



The annual Girls on the Run program had to change the way it usually operates to accommodate the current pandemic restrictions. There will be two groups at Comstock Elementary this year - one virtual and one in person.

Both groups will get lessons on leadership and

empowerment and training for a 5K race. The 5K is usually held near WMU's campus, but this year it will be a virtual event.

While this has been challenging to coordinate, teachers and community members are making this popular program work for our students in 2021.

To learn more about the Girls on the Run program visit: www.girlsontherunkalamazoo.org.

CES Families Receive Holiday Meals

Northeastern Baptist Church provided holiday meals for ten families at Comstock Elementary School. The meals included canned goods, eggs, milk, and a ham or turkey.

The meals were delivered by Whitney Wilkins, CES parent liaison; Travis Tennant, intervention specialist; and Valerie McNutt, MDHHS Pathway to Potential support coach.

Comstock Elementary

Donors Choose CES Teachers

Several CES teachers have been using DonorsChoose, an American non-profit organization which allows people to donate directly to projects in public school classrooms. Teachers go to the group's website, www.donorschoose.org, and post projects they would like to have funded. Donors can then donate money to whatever projects they choose. When the project is fully funded, the agency purchases the materials and ships them directly to the teachers.

Sherria VanSparrentak, kindergarten teacher, used DonorsChoose for plant supplies, stress balls, and picture frames to paint end-of-the-year presents.

Emily Flegal had two projects funded this year

and Kate Appel has used DonorsChoose before, too. Several years ago, Ms. Appel used the charity to get book boxes for her students, boxes she still uses today. Three years ago she got flexible seating stools for her class which are still in use today. Last year, she got more flexible seating around the classroom.

"I believe all these projects were funded within 48 hours of me publishing them, too," she said.

This was Lori Johnson's first year using DonorsChoose. "It was so exciting," she said.

DonorsChoose is a great way to support teachers, classrooms, and projects that interest you from local to far away. For more information visit: www.donorschoose.org.



Mrs. Johnson's DonorsChoose items contributed to her students' virtual learning experiences.

CES Celebrates 100th Day of School



Kindergartner Emmett Wolf-Hetland shows his his 100th day Monster.

Although school was virtual on the 100th day, it didn't stop students and teachers from celebrating this yearly milestone.

Teachers still dressed up as centenarians and students did activities at home to be shared online. Mrs. Johnson's class counted by 10s to 100, sorted out 100 Froot Loops, ordered numbers by 10 to 100, traced 100, and danced to songs for 100 seconds.

Miss Buscher's class drew 100th day monsters and added 100 things to their bodies such as 10 eyes, 10 spots, and 10 legs. Grandma Laning and Grandma Richards came and were guest teachers in kindergarten.



Faith Rinehart from the Young 5's class counted out 100 Froot Loops.



Grandma Laning and Grandma Richards were guest teachers for the 100th day of school.



Elementary Students Get Free Valentine's Day Meals

When kindergarten teacher, Sherria VanSparrentak, heard that Texas Roadhouse was offering Valentine's Day meal vouchers for students if teachers signed up their classes, she immediately messaged the restaurant's marketer, Corey Greenhalgh-Milbeck. The result was that not only her students but the whole school received vouchers for Valentine's Day meals.

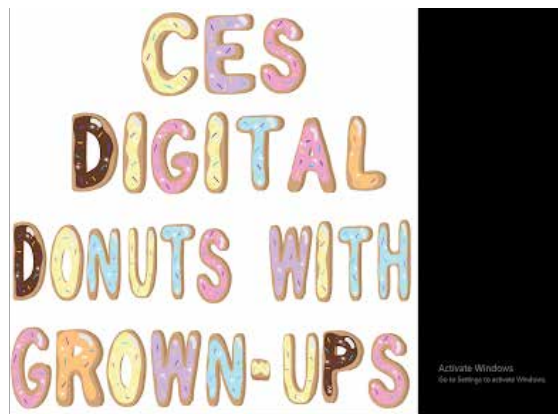
Thanks to Texas Roadhouse of Portage for their generosity and helping to make students' Valentine's Day special.

Comstock Elementary

Donuts with Grownups Goes Virtual

The annual Donuts With Grownups event at Comstock Elementary could not be held in person this year, so it went virtual.

To make it happen, teachers brainstormed ways to still make it an event. Students were assigned a virtual donut to decorate. James Brown, Behavior Team staff member, put all the donuts together in a video to share. Everyone was able to watch the video and enjoy it together virtually. While it was an unusual event, it was still an experience we “donut” want to forget.



Layla Rielker's digital donut.



Eve Lippincott's digital donut for Digital Donuts With Grownups Day.

STEM Academy

STEM Students Read ‘Clean Getaway’

Sixth graders in MacKenzie Skalski's English language arts classes at the STEM Academy are reading and discussing “Clean Getaway” by Nic Stone. This novel is the story of a Black boy, Scoob, and his White grandmother, G'Ma, who take a road trip in an RV.

Along the way, they visit places in the South associated with the Civil Rights movement. During the trip, Scoob learns about the “Green Book,” a guidebook African-American travelers used in the days of segregation so they could find restaurants and hotels that accommodated Black people.

Ms. Skalski chose this book to engage students

in rich discussions so that by the time they reach eighth grade, they'll be better prepared to discuss “To Kill a Mockingbird” by Harper Lee. This book is the story of Atticus Finch and his family as they are impacted by Atticus's decision to defend a Black man accused of a heinous crime. The story takes place in the 1930s in Alabama during the Great Depression and the age of segregation.

Prior to reading “Clean Getaway,” about half of the students indicated they were not excited about reading a novel, said Ms. Skalski. However, by the time they got to the halfway point, most said they were excited about the book.

“I like how the novel has a bunch of cliffhangers and suspense,” said DeVay Clark.

Kaitlyn Burza found the book to be “really interesting” while Xander Rudd said he “loved the book.”

For Ms. Skalski, the experience has also been a good one.

“I've been pleasantly surprised by some of the survey results and with the students' ability to empathize with the characters,” she said. “I sure hope the magic and impact of their experiences with the novel and activities last a lifetime.”

STEM Teacher Nominated for Honor

STEM Academy third grade teacher, Ann Swinehart, has been nominated for the American Legion Department of Michigan Teacher of the Year.

According to the Legion's website, nominations should be based on “the teacher's competence, community involvement, and school involvement in patriotism/Americanism/community service programs.”

Five teachers will receive the award which includes a \$500 grant for the teachers to use for an educational project of their choice. They will also receive a Recognition Plaque to be presented by the State Commander at the July 9, 2021, at the American Legion State Convention in Sault Ste. Marie.

Ms. Swinehart was nominated by Principal Chris Chopp.



STEM Academy

Science Teacher Nominated for National Award

STEM science teacher, Karyn Medendorp, has been nominated for the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST).

“I’m humbly honored for this award,” said Ms. Medendorp. “I honestly feel that any Comstock Public Schools teacher could be nominated as well.”

In what she does as a teacher, she feels the support of her principal and her co-workers.

“Any risk I take as an educator is because I work in a supportive district, under the guidance of a servant leader who trusts and supports me, amazing co-workers who challenge me to grow each and every day, and students whom I love like family,” she said.

She has been teaching for 23 years, the last seven in Comstock. Her interest in science dates back to middle school where she had excellent science teachers, she said. She also taught environmental education outdoors in Massachusetts, Maine, Colorado, and New Hampshire.

“I’ve always loved teaching hands-on science so when Comstock STEM Academy opened, I just knew that was the school for me,” she said.

She most enjoys watching students having fun while making mistakes and learning through various science activities.

“I miss teaching pre-Covid science more than words can express,” she said.

Ms. Medendorp was nominated for this award by her principal, Chris Chopp.

The PAEMST awards were established in 1983 and since then over 5,000 teachers have received the distinguished award. Each year, as many as 108 teachers may be recognized in this program.

Applications are sent first to the state level and then the state finalists are sent on to be considered for the national award.

Recipients of the award receive a certificate signed by the president; a trip to Washington, D.C. for recognition and professional development opportunities; and \$10,000 from the National Science Foundation.



Mrs. Medendorp with her eighth grade biomedical science class.



Above: (Left to Right) (Pre-pandemic) Sarah Mason, Alex Lennon, Dalton Deleon, Noelle Keene, Andrea Dickson and Justin Webster work together to plot data about kinetic and potential energy after conducting experiments.



Right: Isaac Gostlin and Omni McKinley in 2019 during the 2019 MLK National Day of Service made blankets for a nursing home. The MLK Day service event is organized by Mrs. Medendorp each year.

Comstock Early Learning Academy

CELA Pre-K Teachers Receive Gifts

Kalamazoo County Ready 4's teacher-mentor for the Comstock Early Learning Academy (CELA), Ruby Sledge, recently delivered appreciation gifts for the school's Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) pre-kindergarten teachers.

Principal Meadow Nuyen then delivered the gifts to teachers at their homes.

CELA's families and teachers are supported by KCR4s throughout the school year.



Ruby Sledge (right), KCR4s teacher-mentor, delivers appreciation gifts to Meadow Nuyen, principal of CELA.

CELA STEM Enrolling for 2021-2022

Enrollment for the STEM pre-kindergarten tuition class at Comstock Early Learning Academy (CELA) for the fall 2021-22 school year is now open for students who will be three or four years old by September 1, 2021.

Please contact Principal Meadow Nuyen at 269-250-8960 or nuyenm@comstockps.org if you have any questions or would like more information.



CELA Enrolling for GSRP

The Comstock Early Learning Academy (CELA) is now accepting applications for the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) for students who will be four years old by September 1, 2021.

Children who will be four years old by December 1, 2021, may also be eligible. Please call Principal Meadow Nuyen at 269-250-8960 or email at nuyenm@comstockps.org for more information!

CELA staff members look forward to working with your family for all of your pre-kindergarten needs.



CELA Receives Donations from Meijer

The Comstock Early Learning Academy recently received two donations from local Meijer stores to be used for school supplies and student gift cards.

The first donation of \$999 came from the Westnedge store and store director Kelly Porter.

The second donation of \$600 in gift cards came from the Gull Road Meijer and Karen Raymond, store director. In December, Principal Meadow Nuyen had submitted a request for \$400 so the final amount was a pleasant surprise for the staff.

The CELA teachers and staff appreciate Meijer's generous support of the school.

CELA Receives Coat Donations

The Comstock Early Learning Academy (CELA) recently received 15 boxes of new winter coats from Operation Warm. The coats were distributed to CELA students as needed.

Having received a message from Kimberly Marandola, program services coordinator for Operation Warm, Principal Meadow Nuyen applied for the program in October.

Operation Warm provides warmth, confidence and hope to children in need through the gift of brand-new winter coats.

In its 22 years of existence, Operation Warm has distributed 3.5 million new coats in over 1200 communities.

Find out more about the organization at www.operationwarm.org.

Administrators Assess CELA Needs

Superintendent Dr. Jeff Thoenes, Facilities Director Sean Gillette, and CELA Principal Meadow Nuyen recently assessed the needs of the CELA building, both inside and out, including the playground, parking lot, driveway, and storage garage.

From the walk-through, they developed a list of potential projects for improvement and renovations. Included on the list were roof repairs, exterior door replacements, new blinds in classrooms, carpeting in hallways and classrooms, and repainting the garage, staff lounge, and other common areas.

The projects could be funded through bond or sinking fund monies.

Preschoolers Learn About Space

Preschoolers in the Great Start Readiness Class at the Early Learning Academy traveled to space recently with help from the Kalamazoo AirZoo.

Students and staff learned all about the special suits astronauts wear and what astronauts do in space. Students made their own space helmets, rockets, and satellite towers and pretended to be astronauts.

KALAMAZOO RESA
FAQ
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Special Education Millage Renewal

On Tuesday, May 4, voters in the Kalamazoo RESA service area will be asked to vote on whether to renew a six-year, 1.5-mill property tax millage to help fund the costs of special education in our local schools.

■ **What is being proposed?**

This proposal asks whether to renew a six-year, 1.5-mill property tax millage that voters originally approved in 2015. If approved, the funds will be used by Kalamazoo RESA to reimburse public school districts (Climax-Scotts, Comstock, Galesburg-Augusta, Gull Lake, Kalamazoo, Parchment, Portage, Schoolcraft, and Vicksburg) and local public school academies for their mandated special education costs.

■ **Why is a special education millage renewal on the ballot?**

Local school districts are mandated by law to provide special education programs and services; however, the federal and state government do not adequately fund special education, placing the burden on local and intermediate school districts. Without additional millage funds, local school districts are forced to use general education funds to pay for special education programs and services.

■ **What is the impact to local districts if this millage is not renewed?**

Before this millage was originally passed in 2015, local school districts were paying approximately 36% of their unreimbursed special education costs out of their general education funds. Without this millage in place, local school districts would lose approximately \$12.5 million in special education funding, resulting in fewer dollars to support programs for all students.

■ **Is this a new millage?**

This is a renewal of the original six-year, 1.5-mill property tax millage that voters approved in May 2015. This is a request whether to renew this millage for another six years. If approved, taxpayers would continue paying the same millage rate they approved in 2015.

■ **How much would this renewal request cost the taxpayer?**

Since the special education millage is a renewal, it would not cause any increase in tax rates. Homeowners would pay based on the taxable value of their home, which is typically about half of the market value. A homeowner with a home with a taxable value of \$75,000 (approximate market value of \$150,000) pays \$112.50/year, which is \$9.38/month.

■ **Will there be a reduction in total KRESA millage rates since the bonds approved by voters in 2007 will be paid off in May, 2021?**

Yes, the 0.2750 debt millage currently being levied will be removed from KRESA millage rates since the bonds will be paid off in May, 2021, resulting in a savings to taxpayers.



Hazardous Weather Communications

With hazardous weather conditions just around the corner, Comstock Public Schools is encouraging all parents to talk with their children about the possibility of school closing due to bad weather. In the event that school must be closed early on any given day, please have a plan developed with your children so they arrive home safely.

Every effort is made to make a decision to close school by 5 a.m. and to notify the news media immediately. However, the district has no control over how quickly the information is disseminated by the media.

Below is a list of the multiple ways you can be notified of early closings, or school closings:

You may sign-up to follow Tweets at <https://twitter.com/ComstockPS> regarding school closings or go to our website at www.comstockps.org.

Make sure your Infinite Campus portal is current with correct contact information in order to receive ShoutPoint notification.

For the latest school closings, turn your radio or television to the following stations:

CALL LETTERS

98.5 FM, 96.5 FM (WNWN, WFAT)
100.9 FM (WQXC)
903 AM, 1400 AM (WBCK, WRCC)
106.5 FM, 590 AM, 1470 AM (WQLR, WKZO, WQSN)
107.7 FM, 103.3 FM (WRKR, WKFR)
TV 3 WWMT-TV
TV 8 WOOD-TV
TV 4 WOTV

COMSTOCK HIGH SCHOOL SPRING SPORTS SCHEDULES

NOTE: Due to the ever-changing nature of COVID regulations, these sports schedules are tentative. Under current MDDHS guidelines, spectators are not allowed at events. For up-to-date information, go to www.comstockps.org and click on "Athletics".

Boys Varsity Baseball

Tue 4/6	@ Parchment High School	4:00PM
Fri 4/9	Loy Norrix HS	4:00PM
Tue 4/13	@ Buchanan HS	4:15PM
Thu 4/15	Athens High School	4:00PM
Sat 4/17	@ Bridgman Round Robin w/Coloma	12:00PM
Tue 4/20	@ Niles High School	4:15PM
Thu 4/22	@ Quincy High School (Single Game)	4:15PM
Fri 4/23	@ Constantine High School	4:30PM
Mon 4/26	Galesburg-Augusta HS	4:00PM
Tue 4/27	@ South Haven High School	4:15PM
Fri 4/30	Benton Harbor High School	4:15PM
Sat 5/1	@ Bangor Invitational	TBA
Tue 5/4	Battle Creek Central HS	4:00PM
Thu 5/6	@ Climax-Scotts (One 7 Inning Game)	4:00PM
Tue 5/11	Brandywine High School	4:15PM
Tue 5/18	Berrien Springs HS	4:15PM
Thu 5/20	Union City High School	4:15PM
Tue 5/25	@ Allegan Public Schools	4:00PM
Thu 5/27	@ Mendon HS	4:30PM

Varsity Golf

Wed 4/14	BCS Comstock Jamboree - Eastern Hills	4:00PM
Fri 4/16	Comstock JV Golf Invite - Hickory Ridge	9:00AM
Mon 4/19	@ BCS S. Haven Jamboree - Hawkshead	4:00PM
Thu 4/22	@ Parchment Coaches & Kids Scramble	9:00AM
Wed 4/28	@ BCS Berrien Springs Jamboree - Brookwood	4:00PM
Thu 4/29	Allegan Public Schools (Eastern Hills)	3:00PM
Mon 5/3	@ BCS Buchanan & Niles Jamboree - Orchard Hills - 18 Holes	12:00PM
Thu 5/6	Three Rivers (Eastern Hills)	3:00PM
Tue 5/11	@ BCS Brandywine Jamboree - Plym Park	4:00PM
Thu 5/20	@ BCS Conference Meet - Hampshire	9:00AM

Girls Varsity Soccer

Tue 4/6	Schoolcraft High School	6:00PM
Wed 4/14	Berrien Springs HS	6:00PM
Mon 4/19	@ Niles High School	TBA
Wed 4/21	Covert Public Schools	6:00PM
Fri 4/23	@ Parchment High School	6:00PM
Mon 4/26	Brandywine High School	6:00PM
Wed 4/28	@ South Haven High School	TBA
Fri 4/30	Saugatuck High School	4:30PM
Mon 5/3	@ Lake Michigan Catholic HS	TBA
Wed 5/5	Buchanan HS	6:00PM
Thu 5/6	@ Hartford Public Schools	5:00PM
Mon 5/10	@ Bridgman Public Schools	TBA
Wed 5/12	@ New Buffalo High School	TBA
Thu 5/13	@ Cassopolis High School	5:00PM
Mon 5/17	@ Bronson JR/SR HS	6:00PM
Wed 5/19	Michigan Lutheran HS	6:00PM
Thu 5/20	Bangor Public Schools	6:00PM
Mon 5/24	@ Olivet High School	5:30PM



Girls Varsity Tennis

Tue 4/6	@ Kalamazoo Christian High School	4:00PM
Thu 4/8	Kalamazoo Central HS	4:00PM
Mon 4/12	@ Berrien Springs HS	4:30PM
Wedn 4/14	Brandywine High School	4:30PM
Fri 4/16	Hackett Catholic Prep	4:30PM
Mon 4/19	Buchanan HS	4:30PM
Wed 4/21	@ New Buffalo High School	4:30PM
Thu 4/22	@ Plainwell Schools	4:00PM
Mon 4/26	Lake Michigan Catholic HS	4:30PM
Wed 4/28	@ Niles High School	4:30PM
Fri 4/30	@ Hillsdale HS	4:30PM
Mon 5/3	South Haven High School	4:30PM
Wed 5/5	@ Galesburg-Augusta HS	4:00PM
Thu 5/6	Bronson JR/SR HS	4:30PM
Thu 5/13	@ BCS Conference Tournament at Berrien Springs	9:00AM

Girls Varsity Softball

Tue 4/6	@ Parchment High School	4:00PM
Fri 4/9	Loy Norrix HS	4:00PM
Tue 4/13	@ Buchanan HS	4:15PM
Thu 4/15	Athens High School	4:00PM
Tue 4/20	@ Niles High School	4:15PM
Thu 4/22	@ Quincy High School (Single Game)	4:15PM
Fri 4/23	@ Constantine High School	4:30PM
Mon 4/26	Galesburg-Augusta HS	4:00PM
Tue 4/27	@ South Haven High School	4:15PM
Fri 4/30	Benton Harbor High School	4:15PM
Tue 5/4	Battle Creek Central HS	4:00PM
Thu 5/6	@ Climax-Scotts Jr/Sr HS	4:00PM
Tue 5/11	Brandywine High School	4:15PM
Tue 5/18	Berrien Springs HS	4:15PM
Thu 5/20	Union City High School	4:15PM
Tue 5/25	@ Allegan Public Schools	4:00PM
Thu 5/27	@ Mendon HS	4:30PM

Boys and Girls Varsity Track

Wed 4/7	@ Kalamazoo Christian Meet	4:30PM
Tue 4/13	@ BCS Niles Dual	4:15PM
Fri 4/16	@ Gull Lake Invitational	2:00PM
Wed 4/21	BCS Comstock Dual vs South Haven	4:15PM
Fri 4/23	Comstock Invitational	4:00PM
Tue 4/27	@ BCS South Haven Dual vs Berrien	4:15PM
Fri 4/30	@ Schoolcraft Invitational	3:00PM
Wed 5/5	@ BCS Berrien Springs Meet vs Buchanan	4:15PM
Tue 5/11	BCS Comstock Dual vs Brandywine w/ BS & Buch	4:15PM
Mon 5/17	Comstock Invitational	4:00PM
Fri 5/21	@ MHSAA Regionals - 5-20 to 5-22	TBA
Wed 5/26	@ BCS Conference Meet at Niles	3:00PM

Comstock Township Library Events

The library building is now open! Our temporary hours are Monday - Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Please limit your visit to one hour. Curbside service is still available. Please call 269-345-0136 with questions or visit the library's website at www.comstocklibrary.org for details and updates on the library's Phased Reopening Plan.

Comstock Library is FINE FREE! The library does not charge fines for overdue materials, with the exception of mobile hotspots and Playaway Launchpads. Also, all outstanding overdue fines have been cleared. If you have long overdue library items, you can bring them back without penalty!

Visit our website for information on services and virtual events. Sign up for our eNewsletter so you can stay current with all the latest library news and events!

Adult Events

Adult Pop-up Craft! What is our pop-up craft? We provide the supplies, written instructions, and you bring your creativity. Pickups and signups begin the same week.

Week of April 5: Mason Jar Vase with Chalk Paint

Week of May 3: Tissue Paper on Canvas

Adult Pick-Up Crafts: Spring Hoop. Simply stated, this craft is complete with a silver hoop, wire, and floral embellishment. This adult take-home craft kit includes instructions and all materials. There will also be an instructional video posted on YouTube. Go to youtube.com and search for "Comstock Township Library". Registration is required for this free craft and begins April 19 on our website, comstocklibrary.org, "Events". You may also register by calling 345-0136. The number of participants is limited. Participants can pick up their craft the week of April 26.

Adult Pick-Up Crafts: Washi Tape Birdhouse. Paint and decorate a petite birdhouse with washi tape. This adult take-home craft kit includes instructions and all materials. There will also be an instructional video posted on YouTube. Go to youtube.com and search for "Comstock Township Library". Registration is required for this free craft and begins May 17 on our website,

comstocklibrary.org, "Events". You may also register by calling 345-0136. The number of participants is limited. Participants can pick up their craft the week of May 24.

Youth Events

Storytime on Facebook LIVE: Thursdays at 10:30 a.m. Join Ms. Liz and Ms. Sue every Thursday morning for a fun online storytime. You can watch our storytimes without a Facebook account. Just keep scrolling down the page until you see the LIVE video appear.

Please note: As the weather warms up, the library may be able to offer outdoor storytimes for small groups. Check our online calendar and Facebook page for more updates.

Monthly Youth Craft: Pick up a new take-home youth craft on the first of the month. Our May craft will include a Mother's Day Gift Making Kit.

Doll Hospital - Monday, April 5 - Saturday, April 10: All dolls and stuffed animals in the Comstock area are invited to our new doll clinic to get a checkup and receive their COVID-19 vaccine. It's like a real doctor's office. Please schedule an appointment on our online calendar. This is a self-directed toy clinic. There will be no actual COVID-19 vaccines available.

NEW Kids Biblio Boxes: Join our new book subscription service for kids. Now you can get your very own custom biblio box from the library - for free. Each box will be tailored by librarians based on your child's reading preferences. Boxes will include surprise library books along with candy, snacks, an activity or craft and other surprises and goodies. You keep everything but the library books. You will need a Comstock Library card to register as the surprise books will be checked out to you. This program is only available to children in kindergarten through fifth grade. Register on our online calendar using your child's name.

1,000 Books Before Kindergarten: Read a book (any book) with your newborn, infant, toddler, or preschool-aged child. The goal is to read 1,000 books before your little one starts kindergarten. With every completed sheet of 100 books, your children earn a free book of their choice so they can build their own at home library. Pick up a tracking

CLOSINGS

The library will be closed on Saturday, May 29, and Monday, May 31, in observance of Memorial Day.

sheet with our curbside pickup or print one from the youth page on our website.

NEW Storytime Kits: Recreate the magic of storytime with a take-home storytime kit. Some of our themes include: Dinosaurs, Transportation, Cats, Dogs, Construction, Colors, Owls, Farm, Jungle Animals, Bedtime and many more.

Candy Hop - Monday, March 29 - Saturday, April 3, during library hours: Drop by the library and participate in our spring candy hop. Help us welcome the spring season by "hopping" around to each of our three library desks and receive candy from staff members. Candy will be available during library open hours; no registration is necessary.

Monthly Teen DIY Project: Sixth through twelfth graders, pick up your monthly take-home projects on the first of the month. No registration is required, but we do ask that those picking up projects support the library by checking out of materials. Don't have a Comstock library card? Most patrons qualify for a free card. Follow us on Facebook at [ComstockTownshipLibrary](https://www.facebook.com/ComstockTownshipLibrary)

Follow us on Instagram: [comstocktownshiplibrary](https://www.instagram.com/comstocktownshiplibrary)

Visit our online calendar for more information regarding programs: comstocklibrary.evanced.info/signup



We have Homebound Library Services! Please call the library for information.



Wi-Fi is available in the library. You may also ask about checking out one of our mobile hotspots.



We have fax, photocopy, and scanning services available.



Download free audiobooks, ebooks, music, and video from home through our digital services, Hoopla and Overdrive (Libby). Go to <https://www.comstocklibrary.org/ebooks.asp> for a complete list of all our available digital materials.