

THE PAWPRINT

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FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



As the 2025-2026 school year draws to a close, I want to extend my deepest appreciation to our students, families, staff, and community members. Your shared dedication, energy, and support are what truly made this another remarkable year of growth and achievement across Mifflin County.

In this edition of the PawPrint, we are proud to highlight just a few of the many impactful community service projects our students completed this year. This spring, students in our MCHS Tech Education classes lent their skills to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, assisting with the historic renovation of the U.S. Niagara, the Flagship of Pennsylvania. Additionally, MCHS

Engineering Design and Foundations of Art students teamed up with the Derry Township supervisors to design and contribute to the new 18-hole mini-golf course at Kish Park.

You will also find stories celebrating the MCHS Varsity Baseball team's sensational spring season, highlights from our elementary schools' recent field days, and a recap of the 5th-grade outdoor school adventures.

The Class of 2026 leaves behind a tremendous legacy, having earned numerous honors, awards, and accolades throughout their time in the Mifflin County School District. As they turn the page to their next chapter, we wish them nothing but fulfillment, happiness, and great success in all of their future endeavors.

Vanna Skanner



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PawPrint Staff from left to right:
Aaden Stevens, Maya Burke, Jenna Knepp, Lizzy Massie, and Ellie Hartzler

HUSKIES LEAVE THEIR MARK ON HISTORY

By A. Specht and Staff

The MCHS Tech Ed Department was invited to participate in a historic project in Erie, PA, with a local connection. Tyler Gum, a Lewistown Area High School graduate (2004) and current Western Division Chief for the PA Historical and Museum Commission, reached out to Mr. Aaron Specht and his class about assisting with part of the renovation of the U.S. Niagara, or Big Niagara, the Flagship of Pennsylvania.



From the Left: M Peters, T. Gum, J. Fate, B Aurand, B. Albert and A. Specht

Mifflin County's connection to the Big Niagara began more than 250 years ago with Daniel Dobbins. He was born in Lewistown in 1776 and rose to the rank of Captain in the U.S. Navy. He was crucial to the construction of not only the original Niagara, but also the construction of other ships that made up the Erie fleet that participated in the Battle of Lake Erie during the War of 1812. In honor of Dobbins' contributions, Dobbins Landing, the central pier on the prominent bayfront found in Lake Erie's famous Presque Isle Bay, was named for him.

The U.S. Niagara is undergoing an extensive capital project in Maine and will return to Pennsylvania this summer for the 250th Anniversary of our Nation's founding. The trailboards, or nameplates, of the ship were in desperate need of replacement. Who better to recreate the trailboards than the MCHS Tech Ed Department?

"This is where the maritime heritage of Lewistown (Daniel Dobbins) connects with contemporary historic preservation," said Gum. This important project connects our students to local history, historic trades and contemporary projects. Gum added, "Having a piece of Lewistown aboard the ship is very special; Dobbins would be proud of the students' work."



Mr. Specht and several Tech Ed students worked together to digitally recreate the boards. Then, utilizing equipment in the production lab, they fabricated the replacements to specifications that matched the original trailboards. After the pieces were built, students then took to sanding and painting. The Commission chose the trailboards' colors to match the original ship elements.

Mr. Specht said the experience was "exciting and fun to recreate something with so much history. While we used more modern techniques to create the new versions, it was fascinating to be able to look back and see the craftsmanship and skill required to make the originals. Those builders were truly artisans!"

The current Big Niagara is a contemporary reconstruction, having non-structural pieces of the original in her bow and wardroom. The students and the MCHS Tech Ed Department will join a short list of people who have personally played a role in ensuring the U.S. Niagara is preserved for this and future generations.

HUSKIES ON PAR

Mifflin County High School students from Mrs. ConnerMiller's 2D Engineering Design, 3D Engineering Design, and Engineering and Innovation classes and Mrs. Sutton's Foundations of Art classes collaborated with the Derry Township supervisors to contribute to the continuing history of Kish Park with the new 18-hole mini golf course.

Students took inspiration from the pages of Paul T. Fagley's book *Memories of Kishacoquillas Park* as well as the community sponsors for each hole.

Hole number 1, sponsored by the Burnham Fire Company, features a digitally designed firetruck created by Ethan Plank (class of '25) along with a digitally designed dalmatian designed by Madaline McKee (class of '26). Reina Ciota's (class of '25) bear sporting glasses, sponsored by Watson's Optical and Dr. Spriggle, will adorn hole number 8. Hole 14, sponsored by the Finkler/Goodwin family, will showcase the work of Konnor Kasko and Jayden Silks (class of '26). Their digitally designed and fabricated tent and tree serve as fun photo props for the golfers.

Students created their designs based upon the proposed theme, created digital artifacts and 3D models to illustrate their designs before fabricating the final products. "This project allowed students to utilize their skill set to create artifacts that will be showcased in their local community. It demonstrated to them the power of design and professional skill-sets and gave them a chance to put their academic skills to use!" said Mrs. ConnerMiller.





When students step onto the bus for the first day of kindergarten, graduation feels too distant to be a reality. But for the graduating class of 2026 and their families, the past twelve years passed too quickly, and now they are ready to build their futures beyond Mifflin County High School.



Family, friends, teachers, and classmates celebrated this milestone during Donald M. Chapman III Stadium's first commencement ceremony on Kish Bank Field on Friday, May 29. The pomp and circumstance of graduation is more than mere tradition, it marks the end of childhood and the beginning of possibility for the graduates. Class President Addison Fultz delivered the opening remarks while first honor graduate Mackenzie Peachey, salutatorian Reese Bennett, and valedictorian Ava Baker shared messages of encouragement and inspiration. Vice President of the school board Brent Erb represented the board members and offered advice to the graduates before they received their diplomas. The 327 students who received their diplomas as the sun set in



NEW BEGINNINGS

By Jailyn Dixon, Antonia Kunde and Staff Writers



front of the high school are pursuing many different paths. Higher education, whether a college or trade school, awaits 143 students this coming fall. Ten students from the graduating class have or are planning to enlist in military service, earning the admiration of all in attendance. The rest of the graduating class will take their place in the workforce and in the community that raised them. In addition to the main ceremony, on May 20, over 100 Mifflin County High School students graduated from the Mifflin County Academy of Science and Technology. Many students have already committed to positions in their chosen fields thanks to the training they received in the various specializations offered at the Academy while others will pursue further education in technical schools. As the graduates recessed and tossed their caps into the sunset in front of Mifflin County High School, it was clear that Mifflin County has a bright future.



OUTDOOR SCHOOL

By Jailyn Dixon, Marcella McKee and Staff Writer

For decades in the Mifflin County School District, Outdoor School has been a rite of passage for elementary students that generates an understanding of environmental science and memories for students and teachers alike. “I have been going to Outdoor School for almost 30 years. It continues to be one of the best experiences we can offer our students and, by far, one of the best parts of teaching 5th grade!” said Laura Stimely, a fifth-grade teacher at LIS.

Outdoor School is a four-day residential environmental education program run by Pennsylvania State University through Shaver’s Creek Environmental Center. It is designed to educate upper elementary students about the natural world through hands-on, outdoor experiences. “Outdoor School is different than a traditional field trip because they are away from home for three nights without any contact with family and no electronics. For some students, they struggle at first, but then realize how important it is to connect to others and nature,” explained Emily Walker, a fifth-grade teacher at IVEC.

Mya Lepley, a student in Ms. Yoder’s fifth-grade class at LIS enjoyed unplugging at Outdoor School. “It was different from regular school because you got to explore and you weren’t on screens. It was a nice refresher. You got to hang out with your friends like a big sleepover. I really loved it, and I really hope my siblings will get to enjoy it like I did.”

“Outdoor School promotes curiosity and creativity, builds appreciation for nature and the environment, and it helps different types of learners succeed through active learning,” explained Mrs. Christina Willard, a fifth-grade teacher at IVEC. “Every day there is something new for the students to experience. They’re learning, and they don’t even know it. They just know they are having fun. It creates a learning environment in which students are actively involved while creating meaningful lifelong memories.”

The experience of Outdoor School teaches students many important lessons. “I learned how you can take care of nature and keep animals safe,” said Alaric Drass, a fifth-grade student in Ms. Yoder’s class.



“I learned at Outdoor School that the outdoors can be really fun and pollution can come in many types,” explained Christopher Moyer, also of Ms. Yoder’s class.

“Students get to immerse themselves in nature, create strong bonds and relationships with others, learn more about the world in an authentic way, and create memories that will last a lifetime,” stated Miss Morgan, a fifth-grade teacher at LIS.

Beyond the science lessons, students engaged with each other in ways that technology often prevents. Students enjoyed staying in cabins with friends, singing around a campfire, and taking night walks. When asked about her favorite part of Outdoor School, Adalyn Stains from Mrs. Stimely’s class said, “Everything! I can’t say a part that I did not like, besides having to leave.”

Outdoor School is an educational experience that bonds Mifflin County students throughout the years. “Students may remember places they went on a field trip,” said Mrs. Stimely, “but the memories of Outdoor School are forever. My own children (24 and 21) still share memories of their time at Outdoor School.”



BUBBLEPALOOZA

By Lizzy Massie

Late spring in the elementary and intermediate schools means one thing: field day. These outdoor celebrations give students and teachers alike the chance to spend the day in the sun participating in well-organized and exciting games and activities. But Lewistown Intermediate School reimagines the traditional field day with their Bubblepalooza.

This year Bubblepalooza took place during the last week of school on May 26, and it was filled with fun activities and good food. Students in fourth and fifth grades participated in a rotation of activities that included a bounce house obstacle course, a foam party, a waterslide, playground activities, and water soakers. The intermediate school provided popcorn and cotton candy for all throughout the day. The weather for this year’s Bubblepalooza was very warm which made it perfect for water activities, and teachers and students alike had an enjoyable time.



HUSKIES MAKING HISTORY

By Aaden Stevens

For the first time in Mifflin County High School history, the Huskies won the title of solo Mid-Penn Commonwealth Champions, won the District VI Championship and played in the PIAA state playoffs. The Huskies finished the historic season with a record of 12-7



The Huskies' season started slowly with a 1-3 record, scoring only six runs in the first four games. "We had a major reflection team-meeting moment after the loss to Cedar Cliff, and how this point could make or break our season," explained head coach Ray Hoppel. "We were lacking energy, and needed to find something within ourselves that was going to pick us up."

Find it they did, collecting ten wins during the rest of their regular season and earning the District VI title. "The kids deserve it," Hoppel said. "They've worked hard all season. They have overcome adversity on many occasions and have come through with flying colors each time. It's not easy to win our league and they proved their resilience by doing that." The district title was another goal crossed off the team's list.

The Huskies earned their place in the PIAA state playoffs by defeating the McDowell Trojans, winning 11-1 in five innings. A six-run second inning sealed the Trojans' fate. Reese Christine hit a homerun, and after that, the hits just kept coming with Evan Strohecker, Jayden Smith, Karl Shirey, Chase Leister, and Joel Beamer all scoring for the Huskies.

The Huskies played well in the state tournament before a home crowd, but their season came to an end with a 2-1 loss to Butler. "I'm extremely proud of the boys and everything they accomplished this year," stated Hoppel. "They set goals for themselves early on and were able to cross most of those off their list. It took a super effort by a great Butler team to knock us out of the state playoffs. They definitely made their coaches, families, school, and community very proud."

The PawPrint would like to wish the eleven educators retiring at the end of this school year all the best as they explore new paths beyond the classroom. They will be missed by students and colleagues alike, but we know that their dedication, passion, and contributions to our school community will continue to inspire others.

Sharon Hugendubler – Speech Language Pathologist at LES

Brenda Ishler – 1st Grade Teacher at EDES

Natisha Maclay – Athletic Director at MCSD

Frank Miller – Federal Programs Coordinator and Principal at SMES

Kelly Parks – Visually Impaired and Deaf/Hard of Hearing Teacher at MCSD

D. Robert Reeder – Principal at EDES & LIS

Gayle Schifano – Speech Language Pathologist at SMES

Matthew Shoemaker – Mathematics Teacher at MCHS

Elaine Siddons – Kindergarten Teacher at LES

Matthew Torquato – Science Teacher at MCHS

Rita Weber – Business Education Teacher at MCJHS

Congratulations!



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