

Hawk Happenings

Volume XXVIII Issue 24 May 1, 2024



Dr. Mextorf retires as Superintendent

LeeAnn Mills - 12

The job of a superintendent is to firstly, “improve learning for all kids” and secondly, “solve interesting problems” according to Dr. Richard Mextorf. After 40 years in education, 12 years as a music teacher, six years as a principal, and 22 total years as a superintendent, Dr. Mextorf plans to retire on June 30. The same day, he and his wife are welcoming another grandchild to the family. Nine of those 22 years, Dr. Mextorf spent with the Hamburg Area School District, and “to end here has been the blessing of [his] lifetime. Previously, he worked for seven years at Loyalsack, one and a half years at State Township, and four years at Grove City.



Dr. Mextorf was very happy in Grove City, even thinking he would retire there, but he lived so far away from his children and grandchildren. After hearing about the position open in Hamburg, he interviewed and swiftly took the job, now closer to his family. Upon retiring, that will be his priority, family and to make up for all the time he missed out on spending with them.

In his years as superintendent of Hamburg, he is “never off the clock,” and constantly thinking and working toward change. Change in schools is a long and hard process, but Dr. Mextorf has his mind set on giving kids choices and customizing the learning process. In his mind, “everybody has skills, gifts, interests, abilities” and they should all be explored. Students should improve what they are good at and become great, while students should also nourish their interests and allow them to become passions. He believes that students should feel comfortable in their environment, as well as teachers. This is one of the reasons the Hamburg Area High School has flexible seating with sofas, yoga balls, stools, and more. Dr. Mextorf looks at schools as not only a place for standard education to be tested but also a place for students to become amazing people, and learn respect, empathy, compassion, and responsibility.

Dr. Mextorf enjoys interacting with students. One of the things he loves about Hamburg is the fact that we host so many student events. Dr. Mextorf has performed on the guitar at the High School’s Java Jams and had students ask to perform with him before. Some students still call him the “magic milkman” due to the odd way he used to open their milk cartons in elementary school. These opportunities to interact and share memorable experiences with students are one of the many reasons Dr. Mextorf enjoys this job.

In addition to Dr. Mextorf making history at Hamburg by being superintendent, he has also done quite a bit for the music department. Mrs. Jackson recalls that he led a quartet called the “barbershop quartet from 2016 to 2019.” However, that is not all in the 2020-2021 school year, in a time of need, Dr. Mextorf stepped up and co-directed the musical Annie with Mrs. Jackson. The choir teacher Mrs. Jackson provides that “[Dr. Mextorf] is really really passionate about the arts.” In fact he even wrote a rationale called “Why We Need the Arts Now More than Ever.” A quote from this rationale is used in all of the Hamburg concert programs, as well as the mention that Dr. Mextorf is an Honorary Tri-M member with specialties in voice and trumpet.

Moving forward Dr. Richard Mextorf hopes that the Hamburg Area School District continues with the customization model of education and continues to improve the school lives of students. Dr. Mextorf truly loves his job, and just as he believes he is blessed to be ending it at HASD, I believe we are blessed to have had such a great superintendent stick with us for so long.

AP students spend a day at KU

Kaeli Cox - 11

On Friday, March 22, Mrs. Texter’s AP Language and Composition and Mrs. Palerino’s AP Literature classes were treated to a field trip to Kutztown University to listen to A. S. King, a successful and passionate author, speak about herself, her work, and her motivation.

Summer Bonser, junior, was one of the many students who were fortunate to attend the trip. She shared, “I thought the presenter was a fluent speaker, and I also enjoyed the free time we got to spend with friends after the presentation concluded.” A. S. King showed her advanced English skills in her moving and impactful speech. Summer also stated, “I learned that despite feeling like adults don’t always understand teenagers, A. S. King’s speech showed me that adults can understand the struggles of adolescence.” A. S. King emphasizes the stress and anxiety projected onto teenagers, and showed a sense of empathy and understanding to students. Finally Summer shared, “I enjoyed this trip and especially eating Chick-Fil-A with college friends.”



The trip was an enjoyable and memorable experience. My favorite part was having the freedom to explore Kutztown and eat where I wanted. I liked being able to imagine myself in a college setting and decide for myself what I wanted to do, it also felt more authentic being on a college campus. A. S. King taught me to push through hard times. Having come from an unfortunate family herself and having to celebrate her successes with little support from her family, King was independent. I am fortunate enough to have my family’s support through anything, but I learned that I need to focus on my own passions even if I do not have that advantage. I thought the trip was very beneficial and would be happy to attend another one.

AP Biology takes field trip to PSU

Hailey Quinn - 11

On March 21, Mrs. Farina and her AP Biology class took a field trip to Penn State University main campus. Mrs. Hoover and Mackenzie Hoover also attended. During the trip, the students attended several of the university’s research labs to learn more about opportunities in the science field. Mrs. Farina wants to show her students that there are more opportunities than just the medical field when it comes to science careers, particularly for women in science.

The first lab that the class visited was the X-ray Crystallography lab headed by Dr. Hemant Yennawar. While there, the students learned about how x-ray crystallography research is conducted, the instruments used to obtain data, and how resulting data can be applied to many areas of science. The students were able to view crystals that are used in x-ray crystallography, and they also performed a lab in which they were able to grow their own crystals. Morgan Riegel states, “My favorite part was being in the X-ray crystallography lab and attempting to grow crystals.”

The students then traveled to the Metabolomics lab, where they met Dr. Andrew D. Patterson and two of his graduate students, Erin Reilly and Ethan Morgan. Here the students toured two areas of the lab, the area where large instruments run to collect data, and the area where labs are being conducted. Both areas were helpful in showing the students what the typical day of a college research student in the field would be like. Mackenzie Hoover notes, “I personally enjoyed the Metabolomics Lab and seeing all of the technology that they use in their lab.”

Several of the students expressed that they were inspired by Erin Reilly, as she was a successful student and woman in science who was passionate about her work. She served as a positive example of how women can succeed and excel in a scientific career. Shelby Dougherty states, “I want to be her. She was very inspiring.”

The final lab that the group visited was the Food Mycology Lab, where they met Dr. Josephine Wee, Ashley Ohstrom, Dr. Nataliia Voloshchuk, and Jacob Simmons. Here the students performed a sensory testing lab, during which they tasted different foods with associated fungi and then viewed them under a microscope. This was a very interesting and fun experience for the students. It allowed them to learn more about a less mainstream science and the opportunities such a science offers.

After the tours, the students were allowed time to explore on and around campus. This was a beneficial experience for them, as it allowed them to experience bit of college life. Amelia Gassert comments, “I thought it was very helpful, because it gave me a taste of what college life would be like. It also helped me to know that I do not want to go to a college like Penn State, since it is almost too big of a school. I would rather attend a medium sized school.” The size of the school was helpful for Mackenzie Hoover as well who notes, “It allowed me to see what the atmosphere of a large college looks like to help me in my college decision making.”

Along with experiencing college life, the trip was also beneficial in helping the students understand what career paths they are interested in and the opportunities available to them. Mackenzie Hoover comments, “This trip was helpful to me because it allowed me to see what options are out there for a career in science.” The students were able to see first hand what was available for them to pursue. Shelby Dougherty expresses, “The trip helped me realize that I would not be able to work in a research lab all day. It was helpful for me to be able to cross possibilities off my list so I can have a more narrow understanding of what I might want to do in the future.” Contrastingly, Amelia Gassert states, “The trip directed me into knowing that I would like to work in a lab. It seemed interesting, and I could see myself pursuing something similar.”

Overall, the trip was a fantastic experience for the students. Mrs. Farina wanted her students to be able to learn that there is more to the scientific world than medicine and that women in science have many opportunities to be successful in the field. The trip aided the students in their career search along with their college search. They all feel that they benefited from the experience and were grateful for the opportunity to be able to learn more about the future of science.



Students share summer plans

Harley Davis - 11

Kids have been enjoying summer time because they hangout with their friends and normally take their vacations during the summer. They also get to sleep in. During the summer, kids say it feels like freedom. Summer break can be very good for kids’ mental health because they get to work on their social skills when they hangout with their friends. They also spend more time with their families and outside activities.

The summer time is a great time for kids and students to be outside all day and enjoy the nice warm weather. Payton Wyman has just started Hamburg Area High School and she is always talking about how nice the school is. Although she is very excited for the summer. She recently got her permit and will soon get her license. Payton loves going for rides in the car and listening to music. She eventually wants to do that with her friends and have fun this summer.

Payton loves the beach. She loves to swim, sun tan, and listen to music. It brings her so much peace and happiness. Payton adores the sunlight beating against her skin during the summer. She finds it relaxing.

Alex Sholley has recently gone virtual because his brother was already virtual and he would rather be at home than waking up at 7 AM for the bus. Alex likes to go swimming in the summer at the public pool with his friends. He loves going to the gym. Alex goes to the gym called Any-time Fitness in Hamburg and says that it is very clean. During school he cannot go to the gym as much as he wants to because of his online classes. Boxing and lifting weights are his favorite at the gym. Music is a big part of his life. He listens to “ Kay Flock x Notti Osama x Dthang x Cblu.”



Kaylum discusses German exchange student experience

Lilly Gibson - 9

On March 17, 2024, students and teachers from Germany visited the United States for two weeks and were hosted by HAHS families. One of the hosts was a 9th grader, Kaylum Riegel. Prior to meeting Helene, they were talking via WhatsApp. They had several conversations about what they would do in America and what his school day was like. The students and teachers arrived on March 17 and met their hosts on the same day. All were excited as it was an opportunity to meet people from a different country and learn about a new culture. Kaylum was very excited to meet his exchange student in person. He said that she was very nice and easy to talk to. They hit it off right away, sharing some of the same interests. One thing that both enjoyed was their love for memes. They would exchange means throughout the day and laugh at them. Another thing that they both enjoy is learning about different cultures and their customs. Both shared customs from their cultures, Kaylum said “It was cool to hear about the things they do differently in Germany compared to here.” During their stay, the students and teachers would go with their hosts and experience an American school day. One thing that really stuck out to Kaylum was the difference between German and American schools. The teaching styles were different, same with how they went about their days. Helene took note that the lunches were very different compared to back at home. Kaylum said that the whole experience was amazing. He really liked showing Helene around and talking about the United States and some of its locations. Kaylum said, “Me and my mother loved it. It was nice being able to learn about a new culture.” Both Kaylum and his mother loved her so much, they offered to fly her back out sometime in the future. On March 28, the students and teachers had to return home. Kaylum said the hardest part about the whole experience was saying goodbye to his new friend. He said that he would definitely do it again as it was fun and entertaining.

The uprising fashion for spring

Grace Cromyak - 11

Spring is not only about the blooming of flowers and the warmth of the sun; it is also a season of vibrant transformation in fashion. As the world awakens from the slumber of winter, so people’s desire to embrace fresh styles and trends. As a reflection on spring fashion, there are uprising fashion trends for spring, exploring how designers are infusing creativity, sustainability, and cultural influences into the fabric of this season’s wardrobe.

Fabrics that are experiencing considerable uprisings are linen and satin, mostly linen pants and satin tops. Linen fabrics are more breathable and lightweight, making them ideal for the transitional weather of spring. Satin exudes a luxurious sheen that adds an elegant touch to any outfit. “I would say satin is more the spring look that I would go for. However, I wear more linen, so it is nice to wear satin here and there,” stated senior Mackenzie Yale. From casual linen pants perfect for a day in the park to chic satin tops that effortlessly transition from day to night, these fabrics are redefining spring fashion with their versatility and timeless appeal.

Colors play a pivotal role in capturing the essence of the season’s renewal and vitality. When shopping for springtime wear, look for hues that evoke the blooming flora and clear skies of spring. Pastel shades such as soft blues, blush pinks, and delicate greens are perennial favorites, infusing outfits with a sense of freshness and femininity. These shades are not only trendy but also versatile, allowing others to mix and match them in various ways. Patterns for spring offer off of a spectrum of moods. Floral prints mirror the blossoming of flowers and beautiful colors. Whether it is soft daisies or lush botanical motifs, floral patterns add a romantic touch to any outfit. Stripes also make a strong statement for spring, offering a timeless yet contemporary aesthetic. They can vary from neutral seeming to bold and graphic lines. This pattern can be fit for any set style, whether it is casual or refined.

Shoes transition from the warm and sturdy boots of winter to lighter and breezier styles that perfect the season’s warmth and appreciation. Sneakers, a perennial favorite in fashion, continue to be favored and can be suitable for comfort and style; they can either be plain or have subtle patterns. As temperatures rise, sandals, another popular choice, become the go-to footwear for their comfort and style, giving others the confidence to step out in style this spring. Typically, the preferable color is tan or nude, or even embracing bold colors like a nice turquoise or coral for a bright and happy statement. Senior Mackenize Yale said, “I really like to wear sandals in the spring since I can wear nice and breezy dresses with them, as they are pretty comfortable.”

As the season emerges with its vibrant colors, playful patterns, and breezy footwear options, it is clear that it invites people to embrace a sense of renewal and joy in their fashion choices. From the eternal beauty of floral prints to the relaxed and subtle materials and patterns, spring offers endless possibilities for self-expression and style exploration.

Movie review - Pearl Harbor

Deja Wagner-Wakefield - 11

The romantic war drama film Pearl Harbor directed by Micheal Bay was based on the December 7, 1941 Japanese bombing of the US’s largest naval base. The movie was released to the box office on May 21, 2001 to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and May 25, 2001 to the rest of the United States. The starring actors consisted of Ben Affleck as Captain Rafe McCawley, Josh Hartnett as Captain Danny Walker, and Kate Beckinsale as Evelyn Johnson.

The movie was a visually extraordinary yet emotionally charged portrayal of the infamous attack on Pearl Harbor that catapulted the United States into World War II. The film offers a mix of historical drama and romance, focusing on the lives of two best friends, Rafe McCawley (played by Ben Affleck) and Danny Walker (played by Josh Hartnett), and their love interest, Evelyn Johnson (played by Kate Beckinsale). While the film received criticism for its historical inaccuracies and melodramatic storyline, it undeniably captures the intensity and devastation of the attack through its breathtaking special effects and gripping action sequences. Additionally, the performances of the cast, particularly Affleck, Hartnett, and Beckinsale, bring depth and humanity to the characters, making the audience empathize with their struggles and sacrifices amidst the chaos of war. Despite its flaws, Pearl Harbor remains a compelling and memorable film that pays tribute to the bravery and resilience of the individuals who lived through one of the darkest moments in American history. The movie’s heartfelt performances, combined with its powerful depiction of the events leading up to and following the attack, make it a must-watch for fans of war dramas and historical epics alike. While it may not adhere strictly to the facts, Pearl Harbor succeeds in capturing the spirit of the time and honoring the heroes who fought and died on that fateful day in December 1941.



Seniors Take on 6th Grade Camp

Sara Fitzgerald - 12

6th Grade Camp is an annual tradition for Hamburg’s brand-new middle schoolers. The students are brought to the Camp Conrad Weiser and experience many outdoor activities including archery, building shelters, etc. The campers stay in cabins with high school

counselors who are Junior and Senior student volunteers.

Cadence Jalbert, a senior counselor, loved getting to know each and every camper within her cabin. She enjoyed watching the campers interact with each other without the pressure of social media and the internet. The least fun part of the couple days was the on and off rain. Cadence wished that she could have spent more time with her campers, but at this age, they want freedom, so she gave them that. She enjoyed recalling her time at 6th grade camp and viewing how much it had changed in the past couple of years.

Hailey Quinn, a junior counselor, favorite part of camp was the line dancing activity. A professional line dancer was there and taught them different line dances. She enjoyed getting to know the kids in her cabin and hope she made a good impression as she remembers her 6th grade counselor. It was nostalgic to be in the same cabin she was in as a 6th grader but as a counselor, it was upsetting to have the furthest cabin away. She enjoyed her experience however she wished to be have given more instruction before the first day of camp. Instead she was thrown into camp and was expected to take care of the kids. One of her little brothers in the SMART program was in her night group so he asked to have his first s’more with Hailey, creating a nice moment. She hopes to go back once again next year.

Allergy season starts

Bella Kenyel - 9

Allergy season is when people start to get affected by the environment due to their immune system having an overreaction to a certain irritant in the environment. These irritants are: pollen (trees and grass), ragweed, and mold. These different irritants fluctuate at different rates during different months. The symptoms that people can experience during allergy season are: itchiness, watery eyes, a sore throat, and a stuffy or runny nose and they can be caused by a person not being used to an environment, genetics, and a change in a person’s immune system.

In Pennsylvania, the month that starts off allergy season is February, which introduces tree pollen into the air, and lasts until early May. These months are the worst for those who suffer with allergies because it has the highest concentration of pollen, which affects about 26% of adults and 19% of children. In the middle of May, grass pollen season starts. It then lasts until the middle of August. Like tree pollen season, grass pollen season is terrible for people who suffer with allergies; which affects 10% to 30% of both children and adults in the United States. During fall, ragweed pollen season starts. Ragweed is a plant that grows around both tropical and subtropical regions of both South and North America, mostly being prevalent in North America. Ragweed pollen allergies usually start in August and last until November, with higher concentrations happening in either at the start or middle of September.

Mold and fungi are both irritants that can last all year long, if given the proper conditions. The proper conditions for both fungi and mold to grow and last in are: wet surfaces, a humid environment, and a food source. These allergies are referred to as “perennial allergies,” which is a term to describe allergies that can last all year long. Two more allergies that are known as “perennial allergies” are: dust mites and pet hair. They most typically affect people who are inside of their houses more during winter.

Michael Long is one person in HAHS who is allergic to: trees, nuts, pollen, and dust. The symptoms that he experiences towards his allergies are: a runny, red nose, coughing, a swollen face, chapped lips, and itchy eyes. The only other person in Michael’s family that has allergies is his dad, who is allergic to some types of medicine. Even though Michael does experience some difficulties when dealing with allergies, he is relatively fine.

Mia “Mika” Owens is another person in HAHS who has minor pollen allergies. The only two symptoms that they experience are: a stuffy nose and a sore throat. The only other person in Mika’s family that has allergies is her mom, who might be allergic to pollen allergies. For Mika, their allergies make their life mildly annoying, unless they are sleeping. Then it is hard for them to breathe.

Carlee “Charlie” Cortes, who goes to Fleetwood Area High School, is allergic to: pollen and dust. The symptoms that Charlie experiences are: coughing in her sleep, wheezing, and getting a puffy and red face. The two other people that have allergies in her family are: her little brother and little sister. However, it is hard to tell if Charlie’s little sister has allergies due to the fact that she gets sick most of the time. Charlie’s allergies affect her life by her nose getting chapped due to her trying to blow it. Her breathing is getting better because she is taking her asthma medication regularly.

To learn more information about allergies, go to: wyndly.com, acaai.org, and yale-medicince.org.



Adviser: Mrs. Terri McCarthy-Wright; Editor in Chief: Hannah Kristiniak; Issue Layout Editor: Bethany Stuffle; Writers: Tia Adam, Koa Binder, Alaena Cox, Brielle Cox, Kaeli Cox, Grace Cromyak, Harley Davis, Sara Fitzgerald, Izzy Forte, Lilly Gibson, Elaina Hess, Bella Kenyel, Hannah Kristiniak, Morgan Lutz, LeeAnn Mills, Riley Mohn, Landon Poulios, Hailey Quinn, Madison Redding, Dakota Schneider, Chloe Stitzel, Bethany Stuffle, Deja Wagner-Wakefield; Hawk Happenings is a weekly publication created by the students in the Publications class at Hamburg Area High School. It is distributed free of charge throughout the Hamburg Area High School community. A PDF is available at <https://www.hasdhawks.org/domain/181> and an online version at www.hawkhappenings.org. The opinions in this newspaper represent those of the student writers and do not represent the opinions of the faculty, staff, administration, or school board of the Hamburg Area School District. HH is a member of the Pennsylvania School Press Association (PSPA), the National Scholastic Press Association (NSPA), and Quill and Scroll. If you have any questions or comments regarding anything that appears in its pages, or if you would like to sponsor our paper with a donation, please contact Terri McCarthy, Hawk Happenings, Hamburg Area High School, Windsor Street, Hamburg, PA, 19526. Our email address is termcc@hasdhawks.org and our phone number is 610-562-3861, x2327.