

# Panther Pride Newsletter

## Winter 2024/2025

Take a look back at our  
**Winter highlights**  
and key moments  
in this edition of the  
MTPS Panther Pride  
newsletter!

### MTHS students perform Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory

High School highlights continued on page 7

@shoreclicksphotography



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Elementary School Gets Creative



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Middle School Step Team Inspires Audience

# Passing the Torch

Dear Parents:

This winter, our students and staff have achieved many accomplishments including the launch of the Reading Buddies program at Elementary #1, an exceptional performance by the Middle School Step Team, successful multicultural nights, historical seasons for both our wrestling team and girls basketball team, and much more. As we spring into this next season, I'm excited to watch how our students and schools will continue to flourish.

I'm also preparing to pass the torch to the district's next superintendent of schools, **Stephanie DeRose**. The district received applications from many outstanding candidates, and we diligently reviewed each one to confidently select an individual that will best lead our district on its next journey. Stephanie, who is currently Millville Public School's Grades 6-12 Assistant Superintendent, is a highly qualified educator who will be an asset to our schools.

We are committed to ensuring a smooth transition of leadership for our students, staff and school community, and I know everyone will give Stephanie the same warm welcome I received. I am grateful for the district, Board of Education and school community's continued support, and know the future superintendent will be as proud to be a Panther as I am.

Dr. David Salvo  
Superintendent of Schools



## Joelle's Guidance Corner

**Whether a freshman or a senior, most high school students have many questions regarding college.** How do I fill out college applications? How do I pay for my education? What are the advantages of dual credit opportunities?

To help guide families through the college navigation journey, Middle Township High School will host a **College Bootcamp from 6 to 7:30 p.m. on April 3 at the MLK Center, 207 W. Main St., Whitesboro.**

During the event, families can learn more about FASFA and financial aid, scholarships, NCAA Collegiate Athletic Eligibility, and information on Naviance – a website students and counselors use to search for colleges, match interests with majors, apply to colleges, and send transcripts. There will also

be presentations given by representatives from Stockton University and Atlantic Cape Community College. All high school families are invited to the bootcamp, and dinner will be provided by the NJ4S.

Other upcoming events for students include

**School Day SAT on April 29**, and a **Job Fair on May 7**. We look forward to seeing everyone!



Joelle Tenaglia, Director of Guidance





## Upcoming Events

**MAR. 18** – FAMILY FUN NIGHT AT ELEMENTARY #2

**MAR. 21** – GLOW RUN FUNDRAISERS AT ELEMENTARY #1 AND #2

**MAR. 28** – MIDDLE SCHOOL MUSICAL – 7 P.M. – PAC

**MAR. 29** – MIDDLE SCHOOL MUSICAL 2 – 7 P.M. – PAC

**APR. 3** – HIGH SCHOOL COLLEGE NIGHT (MLK)

**APR. 11** – ELEMENTARY #2 MUSICAL – 7 P.M. – PAC

**APR. 12** – ELEMENTARY #2 MUSICAL 2 – 7 P.M. PAC

**APR. 15** – MIDDLE SCHOOL NJHS INDUCTION – 6:30 P.M. – PAC

**APR. 17** – SPRING BREAK, ALL SCHOOLS EARLY DISMISSAL

**APR. 18-25** – SPRING BREAK, ALL SCHOOLS CLOSED

**APR. 28** – SCHOOLS REOPEN

**APR. 29** – HIGH SCHOOL SAT TESTING

**APR. 29** – HIGH SCHOOL BIBLE CLUB WORSHIP – 6:30 P.M. – PAC

**APR. 30** – BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING & PUBLIC HEARING – 8 P.M.

**APR. 30** – HIGH SCHOOL PANTHER CHOICE AWARDS – 6:30 P.M. – PAC

**MAY 1** – MIDDLE SCHOOL 8TH GRADE GROUP PHOTO

**MAY 3** – HIGH SCHOOL MILITARY BALL – 5:30 P.M. – CM AIRPORT

**MAY 5-9** – HIGH SCHOOL AP EXAMS

**MAY 8** – HIGH SCHOOL NNDCC AWARDS – 6:30 P.M. – PAC

**MAY 12** – MIDDLE SCHOOL SPRING CONCERT – 6:30 P.M. – PAC

**MAY 13** – ELEMENTARY #1 SECOND GRADE CONCERT – 10 A.M. – PAC

**MAY 14** – HIGH SCHOOL DANCE

SHOWCASE – 6:30 P.M. – PAC

**MAY 19** – DISTRICT GOLF TOURNAMENT – AVALON LINKS

**MAY 20** – HIGH SCHOOL MULTICULTURAL NIGHT – 6 P.M.

**MAY 21** – ELEMENTARY #2 SPRING CONCERT – 6:30 P.M. – PAC

**MAY 22** – BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING – 6 P.M.

**MAY 22** – HIGH SCHOOL BAND/CHOIR CONCERT – 6:30 P.M. – PAC

**MAY 23** – ALL SCHOOLS EARLY DISMISSAL

**MAY 26** – MEMORIAL DAY – ALL SCHOOLS CLOSED

**MAY 30** – MIDDLE SCHOOL/HIGH SCHOOL EARLY DISMISSAL

**MAY 30** – ELEMENTARY #2 LEAD GRADUATION – 9:45 A.M. – SM PAC

**MAY 30** – HIGH SCHOOL JR./SR. PROM – 7 P.M. – FLANDERS

## Middle Township High School Alum Wins Hell's Kitchen Season 23

Dennis Township's Kyle Timpson competed for and won the title of Gordon Ramsay's Hell's Kitchen: Head Chefs Only during Season 23 of the show. The season finale aired on Feb. 6, 2025. Timpson is a graduate of Middle Township High School, Cape May County Technical High School (shared time), and Atlantic Cape Community College.

Timpson, 30, has been working as an executive chef in Philadelphia but has also worked at some South Jersey local favorites like Beach Plum Farm in Cape May and Tony's Beef in Galloway Township. He took home a \$250,000 grand prize and the opportunity to become head chef of the Hell's Kitchen restaurant in Connecticut.



High School highlights continued on page 7



## Elementary #1 Introduces Reading Buddies Program

Middle Township Elementary #1 recently launched their latest initiative, Reading Buddies. Reading Buddies is a mentorship program where members of Middle Township High School's Future Educators of America Club read to select students at the elementary school.

Kindergarten through 2nd grade teachers choose students to participate in the new program, focusing on those who may need additional assistance in reading or could benefit from a positive relationship with an older student. For 30 minutes each week, the students read stories chosen out of their "book bins," which are selected based on each child's specific reading level.

Reading Buddies provides Future Educators of America members with the opportunity to gain experience working directly with elementary students. The high



school students meet their "buddies" in the elementary school's cafeteria each week. In the future, the district plans to incorporate games and long-term projects into the program – ideally, a creative project that can last over several weeks. This would give the elementary students a tangible item to remember their Reading Buddy and experience participating in the program.



## More Than 300 Attend Multicultural Night at Elementary #1

Cultural performances, delicious cuisine from around the world and engaging activities showcasing the rich and diverse heritages within the school community were just a few of the highlights at Elementary #1's second annual Multicultural Night. More than 300 guests attended the event, which took place on Feb. 27 at the school.

Twenty-two families participated by sharing their culture at the celebration - doubling the number from last year. Those who came to the event also had the opportunity to view the social studies projects completed by students from each class.

A special thank you to the Middle Township Dance/Step Team, Dan McNeil (The Bagpiper), Delaney Emmer (Irish dancing), the Multicultural Night Committee, and the Multicultural Night Committee Chairperson, Kelly Cox, whose tireless dedication ensured every detail was perfectly executed.







## Creativity Abounds Among Students at Elementary #2

Middle Township Elementary #2 students tapped into their artistic talents to create extraordinary projects this winter. Third through fifth grade students drew inspiration from their love for reading to make beautiful bookmarks for the school's annual Bookmark Contest. The contest, organized by school librarian Mrs. Moore, occurs during Read Across America week.

Middle school classes vote for the top three bookmarks in each grade, and then Elementary #2 students choose the final winner from the nine selected. The winner of the

contest will have his/her bookmark printed and given to every student in the school to enjoy. All students who place in the top three for each grade receive a ribbon.

Fifth grade students also got creative with their amazing Bottle Buddies projects. Each student researched a famous African American, learned the person's accomplishments and contributions, and used this information to construct the bottle buddies. The bottle buddies are on display in the mural area at the school.



## Elementary #2 Students Take Cultural Trip Around the World

Elementary #2 families took a trip around the world at the school's Multicultural Night on Jan. 14. The school community celebrated cultural heritages as families shared information, music, food, artifacts, dress and performances from countries including South Korea, India, Armenia, Vietnam, Palestine, Tunisia, Puerto Rico, Algeria, Romania, Ireland, Columbia and Mexico.

Thank you to Mr. Tridente and the Diversity Committee for organizing this event, staff members for creating crafts and reading stories at the celebration, and the families who shared presentations, special dishes and more this night. Thank you to the custodial staff for helping set-up and take-down the event.





## Step Team Inspires Positive Thinking During Annual Black History Month Performance



More than 100 students in grades 4-12 participated in the district's annual Black History Month event. The show featured the talented Step Team performers, but also shared an important lesson about Black History.

The theme of this year's show was "There is Power in Positive Thinking" to encourage and inspire hope among the students and the community.

The performance highlighted the many African American leaders who were able to make the impossible possible. The show took place on Jan. 31 and Feb. 1, and was organized by Christal Holmes, Andrea Reder and David Farrow. Students interested in joining the Dance/Step Team can sign-up in September at Elementary #2, the middle school and high school.

## United Young Generation Hosts Diversity Night Out at MTMS

On March 11, the United Young Generation hosted its third annual Diversity Night Out at Middle Township Middle School. The event, sponsored by Middle Township Education Association and the Concerned Citizens of Whitesboro Inc., featured a barbeque chicken dinner and entertainment.

Middle schooler Violet Potts and MTHS student Isamarie Cruz welcomed the guests, and the middle school Performing Arts class performed to a country western dance and a dance inspired by India. In addition, the dance/step team performed an African inspired dance, and the United Young Generation members performed a Puerto Rican and Brazilian inspired dance.

The winners of the Concerned Citizens of Whitesboro Inc. Black History Essay, Poetry, and Art contest were announced, and eighth grade students including Gabriel Charels and Levi Santiago performed with educator Damien Cwik. Guests received a unique animal-shaped chocolate bar and other parting gifts at the end of the night.

Diversity Night Out is the second part of a three-part intuitive called Diversity is Our Strength. Thank you to Mrs. Christal Holmes and Mr. David Farrow for bringing this event to fruition. Thank you to Dr. Salvo and the Middle and High Administrators, as well as Middle Township Education Association for paying for the dinner, the Concerned Citizens of Whitesboro



Inc for supplying the giveaways and Culinary Delights (CCI) for catering the event.

Upcoming United Young Generation occasions include a Water Safety presentation at Elementary #1 at 6pm on May 5, and a Juneteenth event which will be part three of the Diversity is Our Strength trilogy.







## High School Highlights

**FUTURE ENDEAVORS:** Congratulations to Dylan James who enlisted into the United States Marine Corps. Dylan's goal is to be a military police officer.



### NATIONAL SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER

**DAY:** On Feb. 15, MTHS honored Officer Runyon for National School Resource Officer Day. We appreciate all he does for the staff and students at the high school.



### MOCK TRIAL COUNTY CHAMPS:

The MTHS Mock Trial team became Cape May County Champions on Feb. 13. They advanced to South Jersey Regionals which were held on March 12.

**DUAL CREDIT OPPORTUNITIES:** On Jan. 30, Atlantic Cape Community College (Atlantic Cape) provided MTHS dual credit students the opportunity for on-site registration. Andrea Enders, manager of enrollment services at Atlantic Cape, assisted 73 MTHS students to complete their dual credit registrations. Two hundred students have taken advantage of the dual credit opportunities with Atlantic Cape as well as Stockton University this school year.

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AWARD:** Congratulations to Rachel Fuscaldo, who received the New Voters Civic Seal Award for completing a voter registration drive in 2024 and for excellence in civic engagement!



### MTPS PERFORMING

**ARTS:** On Feb. 28 and March 1, MTHS students performed the musical Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory for their peers, school staff, and the community. Many came to see the show, and we appreciate the community's support.

**VALENTINE'S DAY TREATS:** Ms. Lambert and her student ambassadors delivered personalized Valentine's Day Treats to every student and staff member in the high school during homeroom.



**BLOOD DRIVE SUCCESS:** On March 5, MTHS held its annual blood drive run by the school's Red Cross Club and overseen by Nurse Tammy. We are proud to see more than 110 signs. This year, we will be awarded \$1,000 to one of our Red Cross members for our participation in the blood drive.



### KICKSTARTING THE FUTURE AT THE COLLEGE FAIR:

Sixty universities and military representatives participated in our annual College Fair, which was held on March 10. We appreciate our students, staff, and parents for supporting this event.



## MTHS Coach and Alum receive Recognition for Outstanding Achievements

Middle Township High School Coach John Leahy has enjoyed many personal and professional highlights in his 39-year basketball career, but the latest achievements are legitimate milestones.

In his 21st season as a Panther, Leahy became the 13th South Jersey high school girls basketball coach to reach 400 career wins and the fourth in Cape Atlantic League history. The milestone came Jan. 9 in a 46-36 victory over Absegami High School. Junior Reagen Powell scored 13 points in the win and junior Abbey Cappelletti contributed 12.

Leahy, a 1990 MTHS graduate, was an All-State selection his senior year and scored over 2,000 points in his high school career. In the early 1990s, Leahy was a member of a Seton Hall University squad that won a pair of Big East regular-season and Big East Conference titles. Before graduating in



1994, his Pirates made the NCAA Tournament in three of his four seasons. Leahy played basketball professionally in Ireland, England, and Germany over a span of nine years, and played one season in Australia.

## Accomplished Alum

On Feb. 5, MTHS recognized a multisport athlete's accomplishments by retiring jersey numbers in three sports - lacrosse, soccer and basketball. Attacker Bridget Ruskey, class of 2017, is universally regarded as one of the best high school girls lacrosse players in New Jersey history. She holds the state record with 485 career goals, plus 136 assists. Most memorable were the six goals Ruskey scored to lead Panthers girls lacrosse to its first-ever South Jersey championship in 2017.

Ruskey's jersey three numbers, No. 21 in lacrosse, No. 12 in soccer and No. 5 in basketball, will be hung on a banner in the gymnasium. She scored 1,081 career points as a guard for the Panthers girls' basketball team. As a soccer midfielder, she led the team in scoring in her sophomore, junior and senior seasons, finishing with 41 career goals. In Ruskey's senior year, her three teams had a combined record of 53-13-2.

Ruskey racked up many accolades, including being named the Philadelphia Inquirer 2017 Girls High School Athlete of the Year and two-time Press of Atlantic City Athlete of the Year. After graduation, Ruskey went on to have a stellar lacrosse career with the LaSalle University Explorers, where she scored 121 career goals.





## 2024-2025 Winter Athletics Season Highlights

Middle Township High School's winter sports athletes had an amazing season filled with many accomplishments



**WRESTLING:** The wrestling team made history this season by earning its best record, 20 – 4, and capturing its first South Jersey Group 2 Championship with a win over rival Lower Cape May Regional on Feb. 13. Individually, eight wrestlers qualified for regions and three wrestlers advanced to state championships - the most in school history. At 190 pounds, senior Maximus Adelizzi finished top 12 in the state. Adelizzi, only the second Panthers wrestler to win a region championship, was also named the Most Outstanding Wrestler in Region 8. Max accrued 123 wins.



**GIRLS BASKETBALL:** The girls basketball team claimed its third consecutive South Jersey Group 2 championship on March 8. The three-peat champs won a decisive final in front of a near-capacity homecourt crowd. In addition, the girls won the Cape Atlantic League title for the first time since 2016.

**E-SPORTS:** The winter E-sports season wrapped on March 1 with the Overwatch and Over Cooked teams competing in the state tournament at Georgian Court University. The Overwatch team finished 5th in Group 2, while the Over Cooked team finished 3rd in Group 2. The E-sports team is now looking forward to a successful Spring season, which started March 4.

### BOYS AND GIRLS SWIM:

The girls and boys swim teams continued their trend of high levels of participation. The boys team ended the season with a narrow quarterfinal loss in the NJSIAA South Group C Playoffs to Cedar Creek. The girls ended the season with a 3rd place finish in the conference.

**BOWLING:** Our new junior varsity bowling team consisted of an enthusiastic squad of members who enjoyed its inaugural season and played more than a dozen matches. The team traveled far and wide this season, gaining valuable experience and preparing to become a varsity program next year.

**BOYS BASKETBALL:** The boys basketball had a fantastic season, advancing to the South Jersey Group 2 final for a third year. The boys finished with a 21 - 9 record and captured the Cape Atlantic League American Conference title for the second consecutive year. Jamir McNeil, who committed to Rider University, finished his career with 1,672 points, making him the fifth all-time Panthers scorer.





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