

around the VALLEY

FALL 2020



929 lakeshore drive
leesportPA 19533-8631

SCHUYLKILL VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

Meet our new staff members!

WELCOME



Miss Kelsey Amidon,
Elementary School
Long-Term Substitute
Counselor



Miss Kali Antalosky,
High School English
Teacher



Mr. Hunter Beane,
4th Grade Teacher



Miss Katelyn Faux,
4th Grade Long-Term
Substitute Teacher



Mrs. Kristi Harrison,
Elementary School
Speech Therapist



Miss Anna Neuhard,
Middle School World
Language Teacher



Mrs. Elizabeth
Oswald, LPN,
Middle School Nurse



Miss Lauren Yoder,
Middle School
Emotional Support
Teacher



Mrs. Kelli Zimmerman,
4th Grade Teacher

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Congratulations
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Staff

**SCHUYLKILL VALLEY
SCHOOL DISTRICT**929 Lakeshore Drive
Leesport PA 19533-8631**ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF****Mr. Michael T. Mitchell, Jr.**

Superintendent

Dr. Sarah Yoder

High School Principal

Mrs. Melissa Kelchner

Assistant High School Principal

Dr. Joshua Kuehner

Middle School Principal

TBD

Assistant Middle School Principal

Mrs. Courtney Maguire

Elementary School Principal

Mr. Jason Williams

Assistant Elementary School Principal

Mrs. Kate Costenbader

Supervisor of Special Education

Dr. Janet Heilman

Director of Pupil Services and Learning

Mr. Michael Billman

Director, Information Technology

Mrs. Changming Wang

Business Manager

Mr. Casey Blankenbiller

Director, Buildings & Grounds

Miss Stephanie L. Deibler

Athletic Director

Ms. Robin Brightbill

Director of Human Resources

Mrs. Diane Kaag

Food Service Director

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mr. G. Dane Miller, President

Mr. George H. Mertz III, Vice-President

Mrs. Linda R. Lash, Secretary

Mr. Paul L. Bendigo

Mr. Robert M. Dempsey

Mrs. Nicoleen M. Kleffel

Mr. David Moll

Mr. Kevin Raudenbush

Mr. Alfonso F. Rossi

BOARD MEETINGS

Committees generally meet the third Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. Board meetings are generally held the fourth Monday of the month at 7 p.m. in the high school's LeRoy K. Seip room. Instructions to attend the meetings via Zoom or by phone are posted on the district's website.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Administration	610-916-0957
High School	610-926-1706
Middle School	610-926-7111
Elementary School	610-926-4165

**superintendent's
MESSAGE**

October 21, 2020

Dear Schuylkill Valley Families,

I have received a number of inquiries this week from staff and community members regarding our school reopening plans. After careful consideration and data monitoring, we have decided to continue with our plan of returning students in grades 3–12 to full in-person, five days per week learning on November 2, joining our K–2 grade students, who have been utilizing the full in-person instructional delivery method since October 5.

I've attended meetings with members of the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH), Berks County School Superintendents, and superintendents from neighboring counties in recent weeks. There is an abundance of data to consider when making these decisions about reopening our school buildings but the most substantial data was regarding the number of cases traced back to being contracted in the school setting. As you may know from local news outlets and looking at social media, there have been a number of COVID-19 cases that have caused school districts to shut down a grade level, or building, or the entire district for a few days or even a week. However, to the best of my knowledge, not one case could be traced back to having been contracted in the school setting. This



emphasizes the diligence that school districts have exercised in the implementation and enforcement of comprehensive safety and cleaning protocols.

We will continue to monitor our situation and any recommendations from PDE, DOH, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the COVID-19 Contact Tracing Department. All mandates issued by these agencies and any other government agencies are and will be followed.

We thank all of you for your part in actively helping to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in our community. Please continue to reinforce the importance of wearing face coverings and hand washing with children in your household. Additionally, please continue to monitor children closely for COVID-19 symptoms and keep them at home if they are feeling unwell. According to the CDC, COVID-19 symptoms include but are not limited to: fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and/or diarrhea.

Sincerely,

Mr. Michael T. Mitchell, Jr.

Superintendent

Community Generosity



Pictured are, left to right:

Mr. Makoto Kizuka, middle school STEAM teacher,
Dr. Josh Kuehner, principal,
Mr. Murphy,
Mr. Michael Billman, director of information and technology, and
Mr. Howard Emerson, middle school STEAM teacher.

Mr. Joe Murphy, Senior Director of Operations at Ashley Furniture Industries, delivered a donation of \$20,215 in September, which was used to purchase Vex Robotics kits for the STEAM program at the middle school.

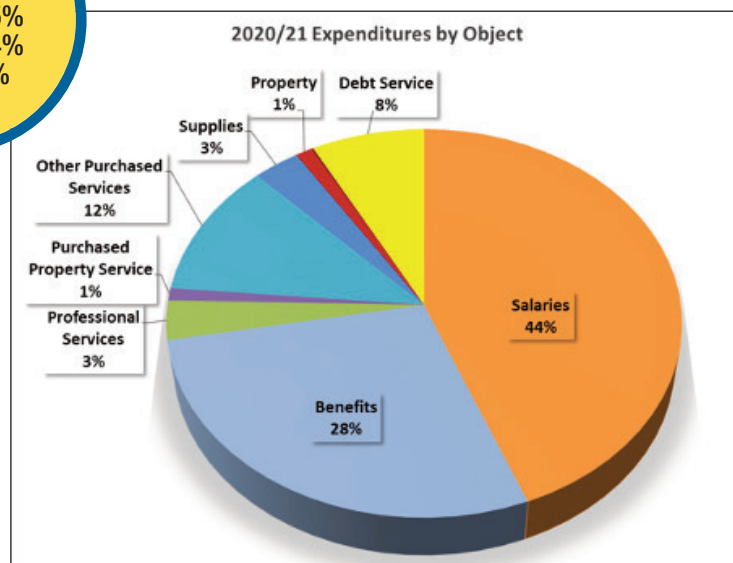
2020–2021 School District Budget

**SVSD
Revenue:**
 Local 75%
 State 24%
 Federal 1%

In June, the Schuylkill Valley Board of Directors unanimously approved a budget of \$40,858,644, without increasing taxes, for the 2020-2021 school year. The budget includes no curricular program cuts and 5% cuts for supplies. The cost drivers include contributions to the state teachers' retirement fund (PSERS) and increases in health insurance costs and salaries.

As a result of the distribution of state gaming funds through Act 1 of 2006, school property taxes were reduced by \$161.39 this year for all property owners who qualified as homesteads and/or farmsteads. The annual tax bill for a property assessed at \$100,000 remains at 27.82 mills, or \$2,782.

For more information on the school district's budget, please visit the Administration/Business Office page of our website at www.schuylkillvalley.org.



The 2020-2021 budget has total expenditures of \$40,858,644, which is an increase of \$365,313 or 0.9% over 2019-2020 expenditures.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

High School Chorus Goes Virtual



Studies have found that singing, especially with others, decreases feelings of depression and loneliness. Any kind of active engagement in music, such as playing an instrument or moving and dancing, can help relieve stress. Since the school closure in March, the Schuylkill Valley High School Chorus has been busy making music virtually to prepare

for upcoming concerts. Students learn their music online by listening and practicing their parts to pre-recorded tracks. They then record themselves and send the audio or video to **Mr. Scott Piergrossi**, chorus director, who compiles all of the files into a new “virtual performance.” You can view these by subscribing to the YouTube channel, **SVHSChorus1**.

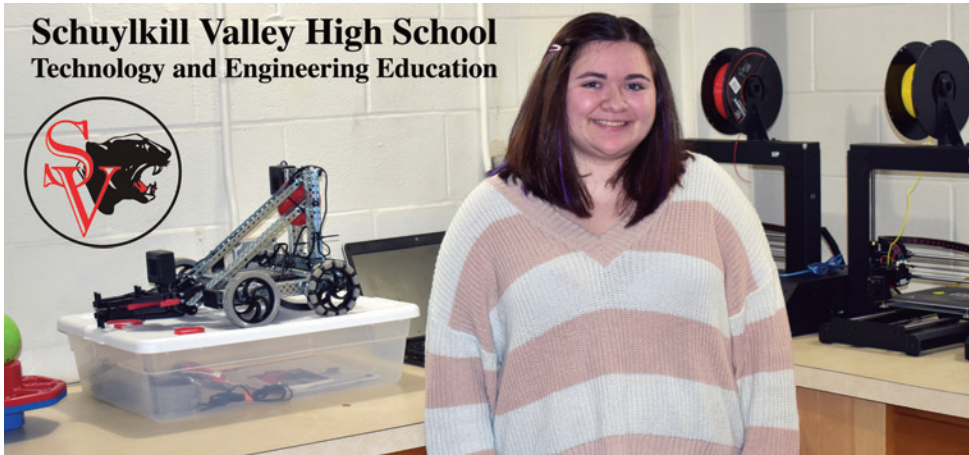
This year, in lieu of live performances that have been cancelled for health and safety reasons, the 140-member high school chorus will present a virtual holiday concert in December. The Drama Club will join in to perform short holiday-themed plays and monologues. Watch the district’s website for more information on the date and time of this festive event.



Going for the Gold

The high school’s chapter of the Pennsylvania Youth Education Association (PYEA) held its first Virtual Gold Out Day in September to bring awareness to Childhood Cancer Month and Four Diamonds. Students and staff were invited to take photos of themselves wearing gold or yellow and then tag the PYEA on Instagram. The PYEA executive committee chose the two runners-up – senior **Madison Houck** and sophomore **Michael Orth**, who each received For The Kids (FTK) swag bags – and senior **Aiden Gensure** as the winner. Aiden received a swag bag and a \$20 gift card to Starbucks. Special thanks to PYEA officers **Samantha Stewart**, **Addison Angstadt**, **Sarah Gilbert** and **Mrs. Lisa Chillot**, PYEA advisor, for their work on this event.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Schuylkill Valley High School
Technology and Engineering Education

Senior Abby Kunkle is an intern in the high school's Technology and Engineering Education Program.

Learning by Doing

Senior Abby Kunkle is proving that on-the-job training is a valuable part of a 21st century education. For the past two years, she has worked in the SVHS Internship program as an assistant in the tech lab, in graphic design and production printing, and assisting with design and set-up of prototyping and 3D printing areas, technology lab set-up and testing of equipment and applications. According to **Mr. Matthew Cullen**, Technology and Engineering Education Teacher, Abby has excelled in completing the requirements of the program by learning skills for post-secondary education and future employment, while providing

tremendous support for the Tech and Engineering Education Department.

The program is a collaboration between the high school's Business/Computer Department and Technology and Engineering Education Department. Students work in an unpaid position in a chosen field of study and receive high school credit for the experience. The interns are evaluated by a professional in their field under the supervision of **Mrs. Patricia Lacey**, Business, Computer, Information and Technology Instructor.

Abby's internship placement and experience demonstrate and reinforce the department's commitment to the instruction of the 4Cs of education –

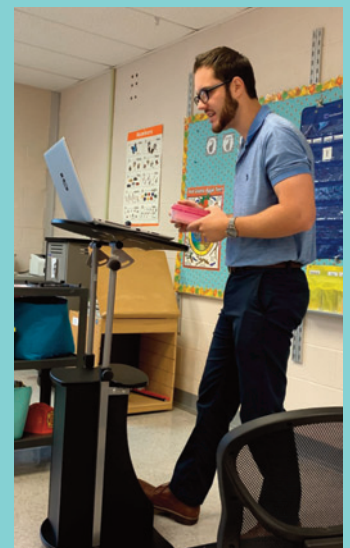
Communication, Collaboration, Creativity and Critical Thinking – and 21st century skills, which refer to a broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits and character traits that are critically important to success in today's world. Many internship opportunities are available at the high school, including working in the elementary and middle school remediation programs for students interested in teaching, serving as classroom, lab and studio assistants, and working with local community businesses. Registration for this course is limited and interested students are encouraged to meet with their guidance counselor to discuss.

Panthers Learning in a New Way



For the first several weeks of school, all of our students were learning through virtual platforms that brought their teachers and classmates into their homes and daycares each day. Our youngest panthers experienced this new type of instruction for the first time. **Mrs. Colleen Hodnik**, Kindergarten teacher, asked her students what they liked best about virtual learning. Their responses – “I like drawing pictures, playing bingo, talking to my teacher, seeing my friends, singing and dancing, mixing colors in milk, learning numbers, taking breaks, and making new friends!” – remind us that we really do learn most of what we need to know in kindergarten! Thank you to ALL of our teachers and staff for enthusiastically embracing new methods of delivering curriculum to our students!

Mrs. Colleen Hodnik,
Kindergarten teacher,
connecting with her
students virtually.



Mr. Micah Storms,
Kindergarten teacher,
teaching virtually.

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL 2020



Counselors



Milan Kosiba



Specialists

A virtually different beginning to the school year, our staff and students adapted and excelled!

Adolynn and
Brielle
Matthews

Speech Therapists



Reading Specialists



Colin Ruth

Middle School Students of the Month

The following middle school students were selected by teachers as September Students of the Month. These students demonstrated one or more of the following behavior criteria of Personal Responsibility, Respect, Integrity, Dedication, and/or Excellence.

Mackenzie Bachman
Neil Bitting
Izzy Burch
Blake Burdick
Asher Clery
Isabel Consugar
Esther Emerson
Amelia Falsone
Presleigh Finkbiner
Neven Fix
Kaitlyn Flowers
Morgan Gery
Heaven Goho
Savannah Golowski

Mackenna Holben
Blake Horst
Cole Kindoll
Logan Kunkle
Anthony Mendez
Bethanee Ramich
Katelyn Raymond
Chase Rose
Ember Smollar
Nya Solvino
Eric Swift
Stella Tercha
Brayden Wittich
Christian Yasin

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Writing for Change

Last spring, students in **Mrs. Amy Shuman's** fourth-grade class were given an assignment to write a persuasive article for a community newspaper. The goal was to teach students that activists who want to see a change or make a difference in the world often write persuasive articles to convince the community to join their cause. **Avery Kubacki**, 10, the daughter of **Seth and Sara Kubacki** of Ontelaunee Township, tackled the complex issue of pollution. Her article was recently featured in the *Northern Berks Patriot Item* weekly newspaper.

POLLUTION

By Avery Kubacki

Pollution is something you hear about almost every day. So many people don't realize the damage they are doing. Just a single piece of trash can harm the Earth, in fact, it does no matter what. You may think, I'm just a ten-year-old, I certainly don't have an opinion. That is very false. Even you might not understand me, or listen to me just because of my age. Here's my opinion on what we can do to help our beautiful planet.

First off, we can start by littering less. This is one of the most effective yet easiest things we can do to help stop pollution. Did you know that nine billion tons of trash is dumped into the ocean per year? Our sea life now has to pay for our mistakes. If that is not wrong, I don't know what is. If you want to help Earth easily, not littering is definitely the way for you!

Second, recycle things like cardboard and plastic. This is another simple way to help our Earth. Recycling everything you can is very important to help stop pollution. Only 9% out of each 8.3 billion metric tons of plastic is recycled. Instead of littering, recycle your items! Reuse them! Everything can have another purpose.

Lastly, pick up trash that you see anywhere, from the side of the road to your neighborhood park. This is a win-win option. On the one hand, you get to go outside. On the other hand, our planet gets cleaned up. Just a few hours of picking up any type of trash counts. Join me, just by doing one thing on this list. Let's fight for our planet together as one!



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Class of 2019 alumna **Mikayla Davis** was one of ten Penn State undergraduate students recently honored with Student Leader Scholarships, intended to encourage and empower the next generation of dairy producers. Supported by the Center for Dairy Excellence Foundation of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Dairywomen's Association, each scholarship recipient received \$3,000 to support their undergraduate studies in academic programs that support the dairy industry. Mikayla, who attends Penn State-Berks Campus, was selected for her leadership and academic excellence.

Rebecca Potts, class of 2010, was a contestant on the Netflix karaoke contest, "Sing On." Rebecca lives in central California and is a Certified Career Management Coach and Executive & Leadership Development Coach

who also teaches private acting lessons and is working on several creative projects. She has a new film coming out in 2021 and was cast as the lead character in another feature film just before the pandemic. She sings every day and has a YouTube channel where she posts her covers and original songs. Tune in to Episode 3 of Netflix's "Sing On" to see the results of her competition!



ALUMNI – If you know a former student who would like to receive emailed copies of the SV District newsletter, please send their email address to svdistrictnewsletter@gmail.com.



schuylkill valley
SCHOOL DISTRICT



congratulations on your **RETIREMENT**

Our best wishes to the following faculty and staff, who retired this year. Thank you for your dedication to the Schuylkill Valley School District. For everything you have given, we are truly grateful.

Miss Elaine A. Balthaser

Middle School Health Assistant Paraprofessional, 24 years

Mr. Scott G. Hagy

High School Special Education Paraprofessional, 18.57 years

Mr. Vernon J. Heffleger

Middle School Custodian, 12.49 years

Mrs. Patricia H. Kramer

High School English Teacher, 32.25 years

Dr. Cynthia S. Mierzejewski

Superintendent, 26.7 years

Mrs. Patricia A. Miller

Elementary School Library Paraprofessional, 24.38 years

Mrs. Joan M. Minnich

High School Food Service Employee, 16.58 years

Dr. Deborah M. Schmeck

Elementary and Middle School Gifted Teacher, 40.78 years

Mrs. Janet L. Scull

Elementary School Speech Therapist, 34.12 years

Mrs. Marsha J. Townsend

Fourth-grade Teacher, 20.81 years

FUTURE PLANS

Lucas Adams
Military Service

Jesulayomi Adejo
University of Miami

Colby Alvarado
Military Service

Luke Ammarell
Alvernia University

Rowan Angstadt
Washington and
Jefferson University

Dayana Arana
Workforce

Reiley Bagenstose
Temple University

Molly Ballou
Penn State Harrisburg

Nathan Batton
Workforce

Ava Bechtel
East Stroudsburg
University

Abigail Bentz
Undecided

**Jonathon
Bernet-Aponte**
RACC

Tessa Bewley
Kutztown University

Abby Birmingham
BCTC Adult Program

Ashley Birmingham
Delaware Valley
University

Connor Borkey
Penn State Berks

MacKenzie Bossler
Kutztown University

Cassidy Brown
York College of PA

Jennifer Brown
College

Stephanie Brumbach
Reading Hospital
School of Nursing

Brett Brunner
Military Service

Madison Calleja
College

Mikaela Caputo
Kutztown University

Desli Castaneda
RACC

Jasper Clay
Workforce

TJ Clive
Workforce

Kaleb Cock
Workforce

Julia Craft
Kutztown University

Na-Imah Crespo
undecided

Brock Dalton
Albright College

Nicole Danks
East Stroudsburg
University

Josiah Dennis
Workforce

Mason Denunzio
RACC

Logan Downey
University of
Southern Florida

Tessa Dracha
Northampton
Community College

Cody Eckenroth
York College of PA

Samuel Eddinger
Shippensburg
University

Elizabeth Fell
RACC

Carly Fogelman
Wilkes University

Kayla Forry
RACC

Jordan Francis
Thaddeus Stevens

Mason Gabel
LCCC

Aaron Geisinger
Workforce

Autumn George
Bloomsburg University

Sadie Goad
Kutztown University

Alexander Gonzalez
Workforce

Lisandro Gonzalez
RACC

Michael Hall
Penn State University

Graham Haupt
Penn State Berks

Courtney Henshaw
Workforce

Jovaun Hernandez
RACC

Emily Hoffert
Millersville University

Jacob Hoffman
Kutztown University

Lilyana Isenberg
Temple University

Victoria Jamison
Bloomsburg University

Trent Jamosky
Kutztown University

Kalista Jeter
Workforce

Evan Johns
Millersville University

Luke Jozwiak
College

Tommy Kalash
Penn State University

Emily Kale
Kutztown University

Joelle Kellenberger
Metro Beauty Academy

Abby Kenyon
RACC

Logan Knepp
Workforce

Michael Knowles
Alvernia University

Gabe Kolasa
Military Service

Gabe Koumaras
Kutztown University

Jack Krishock
Military Service

Antonia Kucera
College

Carlens Lapaix
East Stroudsburg
University

Zoe Limberiou
Workforce

Alex Lis
Berks Technical Institute

Nelitza Magana
Albright College

Nicholas Martini
Reading Hospital
School of Nursing

Alyssa Mask
Reading Hospital
School of Nursing

Mason McQuillen
Penn State Berks

Luke Mengel
Workforce

Alexander Milanek
Workforce

Gavin Miller
Workforce

Jaime Moyer
Penn State University

Kaydence Muller
Moravian College

Gavin Murray
Workforce

Gaetshelyne Najac
Undecided

Rachel Nawrocki
Penn State University

Samuel Palm
Military Service

Chloe Peters
California University of PA

Hannah Phillips
Messiah College

Brian Porter
Military Service

Abigail Rea
Lock Haven University

Danielle Readinger
Kutztown University

Skylar Renninger
Shippensburg University

Katlynn Rheine
Military Service

Marlee Rickert
George Washington
University

Gabrielle Rider
East Stroudsburg University

Cassidy Rittenhouse
Shippensburg University

Mark Rose
Workforce

Hope Rozycki
Arcadia University

Byron Searle
University of Delaware

Taylor Shekalus
West Virginia University

Erika Soto
Embry-Riddle
Aeronautical

Carson Stichter
RACC

Madison Stichter
Shippensburg University

Jenna Stoudt
University of Delaware

Savanna Stricker
Kutztown University

Julia Stricker
Kutztown University

Trevor Teprovich
Penn State Berks

Whitney Tomes
RACC

Elizabeth Valeriano
RACC

Jonathan Wails
College

Skylar Weddle
Bloomsburg University

Lillian Wiley
Military Service

Julia Winkler
Arcadia University

Austin Witinski
Penn State Berks

Alexandria Yeakle
RACC

Nathan Zehner
Military Service

Chris Zeiner
Workforce