



# STEEL VALLEY NEWSLETTER

District News • Stories • Events

## June 2023

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With a shift of their tassels and a countdown from senior class president Gabrielle Matusky, the Steel Valley Class of 2023 launched their caps into the air and took a giant leap toward the next stage of their lives.

The Steel Valley School District celebrated its 52nd annual commencement on Wednesday, May 31 at the William V. Campbell Athletic Field in Munhall. The recurring theme from those who stepped to the podium in celebration of the Class of 2023 was an appreciation for the district's sense of community, the support and guidance from inspiring teachers, and a recognition of the perseverance this class needed through its four years of high school.

Salutatorian Chelsea Bulger reminded her classmates to remember that life is unpredictable and that things don't always go as planned. However, they should look back at their journey through high school with a sense of accomplishment.

"Every student within the Class of 2023 should be proud of how far they've come," she said. "Each one of you has accomplished something very special on your academic journey. Your hard work paid off."

Valedictorian Brenna Kern praised her classmates for maintaining their spirit through an unpredictable four years of high school.

"From bedbugs, power outages, broken air conditioners, and a literal pandemic,

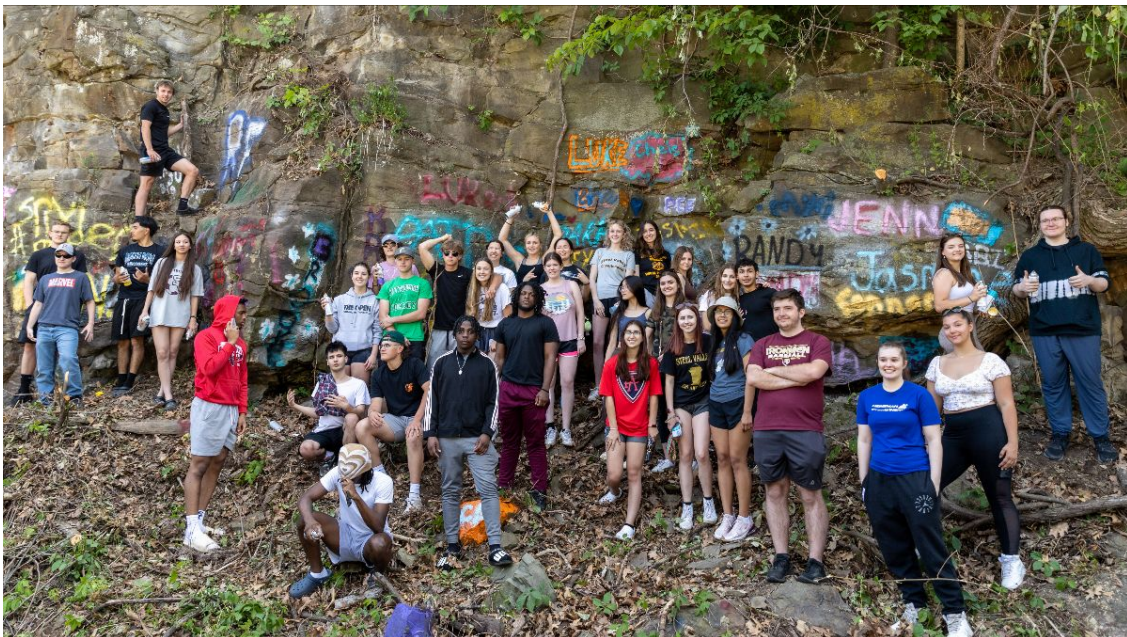


the Class of 2023 all persevered together," Kern said. "What I love about our class is that we strive to make memories. Even though we were online, hybrid and partially in-person learning, I think it's safe to say we made the most of our high school years together."

For more photos and details from the 2023 commencement ceremony, [check out the story and gallery on the website](#).



## STEEL VALLEY SPOTLIGHT



A new generation has added their names to Steel Valley's storied rock wall.

Members of the Class of 2023 painted their names on the rocks on West Run Road in Munhall on Wednesday, May 31 prior to commencement. Their names joined those of the Class of 2022, who added their names last year in a revival of a tradition that dates back decades.

Alumni recalled that seniors traditionally painted the wall as part of the festivities during homecoming week. For one reason or another, the tradition went dormant in the early 2000s until its recent revival. But as the students let fly with their spray paint, passing cars honked their horns and passers-by shouted congratulations to the seniors.

Though the tradition had gone quiet, it seems to have lived on in the memories of the Steel Valley community. [Learn more about the Class of 2023 adding their names by reading the story on the website.](#)



As Dr. Jean M. Vettel drove from her father's house to Steel Valley High School in late May, a wave of memories came flooding back.

She had been back to visit the area countless times following her graduation from Carnegie Mellon University in 2001, but now she was back specifically for a Steel Valley event. As the guest speaker for Steel Valley's Class of 2023 commencement ceremony, Dr. Vettel had her alma mater on her mind as she drove by the familiar houses in Munhall.

"It's the memories of different places that I used to go to, or people I used to hang out with that I haven't thought about, that were triggered by those places," she said. "That's the biggest emotion."

[Read more about the Steel Valley alumna's path from early enrollment at Carnegie Mellon to becoming a neuroscientist at the forefront of the Army's planning to combat future adversaries.](#)





Mother Nature tried her best, but a bit of rain didn't dampen the spirits at Steel Valley's first Community Day on May 20. Held on the Steel Valley High School campus near the Steel Valley Grows Garden, the event was designed to bring residents and organizations of all three boroughs together with district staff and students.

The idea for a Community Day originated in a discussion at one of the district's community meetings and plans came together rather quickly. The hope is take feedback from the event and begin the planning process early in the 2023-24 school year for the next event. [Check out the story on the website for more details and photos.](#)

### Barrett Elementary News



There is nothing quite like the feel-good vibes that come with the start of summer break. Barrett students had lots of fun sharing those feelings with their families and friends as part of the spring concert. "Music in the Valley" featured



performances from every grade, as well as the fourth grade beginner band. From the kindergarten students singing "Spread a Little Sunshine" to fourth graders having fun with "Throw and Catch," each class showed off their musical talents. [Check out more photos from the concert in the gallery.](#)

May also meant a bunch of special events and presentations. Kindergarten students are off to first grade and celebrated their promotion with their families. They truly have bloomed since first walking into the halls at Barrett Elementary in late August.

Barrett Elementary's annual Doris J. Hyde Merit Day celebration honors all of the students who have gone above and beyond in the classroom and in the halls. Students were recognized with Barrett Bear Awards, School Wide Positive Behavior Awards, making the honor roll, excelling in specific subjects, maintaining high attendance, participation in specific programs, and more.

Along with their friends at Park Elementary, Barrett's Girls on the Run program took part in the annual event at the Waterfront. For their community impact project, the team collected coins from parents and teachers. They donated \$150 to the Salvation Army as a thank you for the Love in a Backpack bags of food that the organization provided to students this year.





Fourth graders at Barrett and Park came together for some fun activities and bonding opportunities as part of the district's annual Step Up Day. The fourth graders had the opportunity to tour the school and learn a bit more about what to expect when they make the leap to being middle school students next year.

The bulk of the day was spent outside in the glorious sunshine. The students played kickball, worked as a unit to move a giant inflatable ball, teamed up in a variety of creative relay races, and more. They also spent some time talking about what they're going to miss about fourth grade and elementary school, as well as what they're looking forward to in middle school.

Members of the Middle School Student Government served as leaders and guides for the fourth graders. They answered questions and helped teachers and staff with several of the activities.

**Park Elementary News**





There was a lot of fun in the sun to be had during Park Elementary's spring concert. "Music in the Valley," a showcase of each grade's musical talents, took place on Wednesday, May 17. Under the direction of music teacher Ms. Kerry Melega, each grade had the opportunity to perform a selection of songs, all of which carried a happy, warm vibe to fit the end of the school year and the start of summer break.

From shaking the papaya down with first graders to singing "Mac and Cheese" with second graders to jamming along to the "Banana Boat Song," it was clear that everyone was ready for an afternoon at the beach or in the park with a picnic basket.

One of the many field trips in May was a trip to Triple B Farms for the second graders. Students learned about honey bees, pollination, and the life cycle of strawberry plants. They also made "beanie baby" necklaces with a bush bean, and each student received a strawberry plant and a honey stick.

Rick Gartska, better known to the kids as "Coach Rick," is a retired Bettis Atomic Power Laboratory chemist who lives in Munhall and volunteers his time conducting science investigations with Park Elementary 4th graders. Students participated in a wide range of investigations this year, including two forensic science investigations with the help of Sergeant Tichon, Park's School Resource Officer.

The first of these investigations focused on using blood analysis to solve crimes, and the second one focused on using fingerprints, footprints, and infrared ink to find the perpetrator (who in this scenario was a student in class). Coach Rick also planned a three-event mini-Olympiad that the students recently completed.





# **STEEL VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION**



Parents should bring proof of residency, immunization records and birth certificates for their children.

Enrollment packets will be available on site for parents to fill out.

Kindergarten staff will be present to meet with parents and new students.

## **Registration at Barrett Elementary and Park Elementary is ongoing!**

Stop by the elementary school offices or the district residency office to pick up your registration packet today.

### **Barrett Elementary**

221 East 12th Avenue  
Homestead, PA 15120

### **Park Elementary**

4102 Main Street  
Munhall, PA 15120

### **District Residency Office**

220 East Oliver Road  
Munhall, PA 15120



[steelvalleysd.org](http://steelvalleysd.org)

Middle School News



To celebrate their promotion to high school, the eighth graders were treated to a Farewell Tour Celebration courtesy of the middle school teachers, staff and volunteers. The students watched a special video that featured a look back at just how far they've come. Some of the baby and toddler photos had students diving under the seats to hide, but they were soon back on their feet for an incredible round of karaoke performances.

Eventually, everyone ventured outside into the beautiful weather, where they had the opportunity to enjoy some snacks and play some games, including a spirited kickball game and some impromptu volleyball.

With the help of parent volunteers and high school student volunteers, the middle school PBIS program and PTO put together a special tailgate for the middle school. The students munched on popcorn, snow cones, chips and other snacks, played yard games, took on an obstacle course, and played various sports. It was a perfect way for students - and staff - to celebrate the end of the year.

Madeleine L'Engel's "A Wrinkle in Time" won the Newberry Medal, Sequoyah Book Award, and Lewis Carroll Shelf Award when the book was first published in 1962. Since then, it has inspired two film adaptations and multiple stage adaptations. The Steel Valley Middle School Drama Club brought an adaptation by Morgan Gould to the stage from May 18 through May 20, with cast members taking on multiple roles.

The production featured Alex Wehrer and ZaKiyya Berts as Meg, Sunny Clark and Henry McCann as Charles Wallace, Logan Noblet and Peter Bos as Calvin, Andy Diep and Sofia Grzyb as Sir/Mrs. Whatsit, Ashley Bugler and Janine Clark as Mrs. Who, and Effie Seidling and Emma Downey as Mrs. Which.





The Ronald McDonald Care Mobile will be making a stop at Steel Valley High School from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on August 14 and it will be stopping by Barrett Elementary on June 12 and July 6.

The Care Mobile offers medical care to children throughout the Pittsburgh area and will be available for families in the Steel Valley community with this visit to the high school. The Care Mobile can provide immunizations, routine physical exams, diagnose and treat illnesses in children, adolescent and youth adult health care, referrals for specialty care, and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) form assistance.

All of the services are provided at no out-of-pocket cost to families. Anyone interested in stopping by the Care Mobile should make sure they arrive by 1:30 p.m. on one of the above dates in order to register in time. The Care Mobile is a collaboration between UPMC Children's Hospital and the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Pittsburgh and Morgantown. Anyone in need of more information before the visit can call 412-352-1059 or visit [www.chp.edu/our-services/mobile-medical-clinic](http://www.chp.edu/our-services/mobile-medical-clinic).

**High School News**



May brought a final concert performance from the Steel Valley vocal programs, with the middle school chorus and high school concert choir taking the stage. The night also featured the annual senior showcase, with performances by Kayla Bish, Brenna Kern, Madison Blasko, and then a duet by Blasko and Kern. The show also included an eighth grade spotlight that featured Kierra Sanders.

The evening ended with a performance of "The Call" from Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian that featured solos from Blasko, Kern and Shatyra Parker, as well as one from choir director Ms. Sharon Kampe. The Spring Vocal Program was Ms. Kampe's final show, as she is retiring at the end of the school year. [The students presented Ms. Kampe with a small token of their appreciation for all of her hard work and guidance.](#)

Elbachir Benboujema, Nate Yuhas, and Jasmin Harris were each recognized as Top of the Shop for the second semester by the Steel Center for Career and Technical Education. Benboujema studied automotive technology, Yuhas studied heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration, and Harris studied as a veterinary assistant.

Prior to commencement, the Class of 2023 participated in several senior traditions. On Friday, May 26, the seniors gathered for the annual senior breakfast, served by teachers, staff and volunteers. On Tuesday, May 30, they participated in the annual car parade through the district. The route took the parade up Main Street, down Cambria Street past Park Elementary, onto Laurel Hill Drive into West Homestead, onto 8th Avenue to West Street in Homestead, and back up the hill to the high school again. The senior car parade began in 2020 in response to the pandemic and has become a new tradition.





Stay up to date with what's happening on our social media accounts! The district has a Twitter account and Instagram account, as well as individual Facebook pages for each of our four schools. Click the respective icons at the bottom of the newsletter to make sure you're following us!



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