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STEEL VALLEY NEWSLETTER

District News • Stories • Events

February 2022



Steel Valley has always been home for Austin Riley. The 2016 graduate was born and raised in Munhall, and by the time he was in high school, he was active in numerous clubs and organizations. He was in four musicals and every fall play, served as the vice president of the National Honor Society and of Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD).

This year, Riley returned to his alma mater as a special education teacher. It is a fulfillment of a pledge he made during his senior year while applying for the Bill Campbell Scholarship. In his application, Riley wrote that he wanted to find a way to give back to his community.

“I just kept thinking Steel Valley is the place that I know I can make a difference,” Riley said. “I know I can make a change. I was always hoping something would open up and it did, so I’m here.”

To read more about Mr. Riley's return and his passion for teaching special education students, [please see the full story on the website.](#)



MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Steel Valley Families,

On February 24, Barrett Elementary will open its doors to the public for the return of the Interactive Living Museum celebrating Black History Month. The Steel Valley School District has had numerous activities and events to recognize Black History Month in the past, but the Special Events Committee at Barrett wanted to find a way to promote the diversity, heritage and culture of our district in an engaging, unique way. A few years ago, that passion emerged in the form of the Interactive Living Museum.

The purpose of the museum is to provide an authentic learning experience built as a spiral curriculum. This design means that as students interact with the museum each year, they build upon their previous knowledge and deepen their understanding of Black history. The museum utilizes the art of storytelling to engage students and makes for an experience that leaves a lasting impression.

The 2022 version of the museum will continue the interactive learning that our students experienced with past museums. Each grade level has the opportunity to create artifacts that are on display in the museum. COVID kept the museum closed last year, but in 2020, the kindergarten students celebrated Martin Luther King, Jr.; first graders highlighted sports and entertainment figures; second graders focused on African culture; third graders explored soul food and recipes; and fourth graders delved into the Underground Railroad. The museum utilizes the talents of older students and alumni, who help portray figures like Sojourner Truth, August Wilson, Muhammad Ali and more.

The museum has featured exhibits on African American military service, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, information from local organizations like the Best of the Batch Foundation, the Josh Gibson Foundation, Project Pittsburgh, the Harmony Club of Homestead, and more.

I encourage the Steel Valley community to come out on February 24 and experience this Interactive Living Museum for yourself. The program runs from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Barrett Elementary, and we will provide additional information about specific programming as the date comes closer. This is a rich, exceptional experience for our students, staff and the community. The Interactive Living Museum showcases the commitment of our educators, the power of storytelling, and the value of providing authentic learning experiences that create lasting memories for our children.

Sincerely,
Edward Wehrer
Superintendent
#SteelValleyStronger



The Pennsylvania General Assembly declared January as School Director Recognition Month and members of the Steel Valley administration took the opportunity to thank board directors Maya L. Adams, James E. Bulger, David J. Colasante, Meghan B. Fitzgerald, Robyn Guy, Cara L. Karstetter, William R. McLaughlin, Daniel M. Rojtas and Mary Yuhás for their dedication to the Steel Valley community. The board was honored during the January legislative meeting. The elementary buildings presented them with small tokens of appreciation, the middle school art club presented the directors with handmade plaques, and the high school student council served coffee and cake. For more details about School Director Recognition Month, [read the story here.](#)

During the December 9, 2021 school board meeting, Steel Valley superintendent Edward Wehrer made a presentation titled "Steel Valley Stronger." The presentation covers Mr. Wehrer's vision for the district for the next few years and includes several critical components, including a proposal that would have all Steel Valley elementary students learning together in a new building. [To view the presentation, click here.](#)

BARRETT ELEMENTARY NEWS



Black History Month is the focus at Barrett Elementary, as Barrett the host for two major events this February as part of the festivities.

Right as you receive this newsletter, Barrett students will have just completed their participation in a Black History Month assembly. The assembly was conducted in partnership with the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust and helped bring the concept of collaboration to life. The students were part of an interactive program that guided them to help, share, listen and to have courage, all while celebrating elements of African culture. On February 24, Barrett will host the return of the Interactive Living Museum. Each grade level will create artifacts for the museum and alumni will play the roles of important figures in the wax museum. Be on the lookout for more information about the Living Museum in the near future. With the date fast approaching, those interested in volunteering, donating, or otherwise looking to be involved should email organizer Jonette Bost at jbost@steelvalleysd.org.

On February 2, the first graders put together time capsules to celebrate the unique date of 2/22/22. They wrote down answers to personal questions about their favorite subjects or the names of their best friends. The time capsules will be opened in 11 years on 3/3/33, which happens to be during their senior year of high school.

Barrett kindergarten students celebrated the 100th day of school by dressing as if they were 100 years old. They also had a glow-in-the-dark "100 Days Brighter" celebration to mark the occasion.

Black Health And Wellness

Save The Date
Black History Month
Interactive Living Museum
Thursday, February 24, 2022
1:00 to 2:30 pm
Open to the Public - All Are Welcome!

Getting To The Heart Of Black History

The Greatest Wealth Is Health!

“When ‘I’ Becomes ‘We,’ Even ‘Illness’ Becomes ‘Wellness.’”

The Ronald McDonald Care Mobile will be making a stop at Barrett Elementary on Friday, February 11. 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 Barrett. 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 Monday, January 10 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.

The Steel Valley School District is hiring for several important positions! The district is in need of paraeducators and substitute teachers, as well as substitute secretaries, paraprofessionals, custodians, and cafeteria workers. A full list of openings [is available on the web site.](#)

PARK ELEMENTARY NEWS



Park Elementary has a new partnership with the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust to welcome visiting artists into the building over the next couple of years. The artists have received special training that enables them to use the arts to help bring content to life and make learning an engaging experience. The first graders at Park Elementary adopted a pilot program and are working with an artist who will stop by weekly to integrate the arts into science lessons related to balance and motion. Each grade level will have an opportunity to work with visiting artists over the next two years.

New recess equipment has arrived thanks to the work of the students on the Principal Advisory Council. Earlier this year, the council surveyed each classroom to find out what supplies were needed. The council was given a budget and was tasked with figuring out how to get each grade level the equipment that was requested. Balls, jump ropes and hula hoops are already being put to good use.

Park has a familiar face back in the building as a student teacher. Ms. Gabby Olson, a former building substitute teacher at Park, is working with the second grade students and Mrs. Tammy Law. Not only is Ms. Olson a former substitute teacher, but she is a Park and Steel Valley graduate. She is working on her master's degree in Early Childhood Education from Carlow University.



A new program is in place that welcomes back alumni for visits to the high school and middle school during lunch. The alumni will be interacting with current student in order to help provide motivation, inspiration and guidance. Recent alumni who have already returned to talk to the students include Todd Hill, Darnell Youngblood II and Kennedy Smith. They spoke with students about behavior, how to maintain academic success, the importance of goal-setting and more. Alumni interested in taking part in this program should reach out to Olando Dulin at odulin@steelvalleysd.org to make arrangements.

MIDDLE SCHOOL NEWS



Four boats constructed out of cardboard, carpet tubes and liquid nail took to the waters of the swimming pool in early January to see which vessel was best as part of the eighth grade STREAM Days Anything That Floats challenge. Team "Speeding To Victory" took the crown as the last boat floating. The trio of Kayden Cibula, Noah Cochenour and Paige Perhac lasted through all three races and stayed mostly dry while their three competitors all took on water.

The races were the finale to the eighth graders' work throughout December and January as they used various mathematical, scientific and engineering concepts to design and craft their vessels. Led by advisors Ms. Heather Clark, Mr. Michael Hofbauer, Mr. Steven Large, Mr. Ed Tozzi and volunteer Mr. Steve Vinay, the 16 eighth graders learned about effective boat design, water displacement, buoyancy, and some basic rowing techniques.

The arts were also on display throughout January, as the Middle School Concert Band performed as part of the 2022 Spring Instrumental Concert. The band has 57 students, the largest it has been in recent years, and the students enjoyed the opportunity to perform after their winter concert was postponed.

On January 27, 28 and 29, the Middle School Drama Club presented performances of "Stages in Times." The show was directed by Austin Riley and Christine Schott and provided students with a rich theatrical experience.



Students and staff rallied together to support board member Meghan Fitzgerald, her husband Jim, and their children with a spirited cornhole tournament on January 6. The #FitzStrong Toss For A Cause saw 25 teams compete for prizes and trophies to help support the Fitzgeralds as Jim battles a form of Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia.

The community is continuing to rally around the Fitzgeralds and their children. The Munhall Girls Softball Association is holding a Cash Bash at St. Elias Hall in Munhall on Saturday, Feb. 19 from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. All proceeds will benefit the Fitzgerald family and their fight against leukemia. More information is available on the Munhall Girls Softball Facebook page.

HIGH SCHOOL NEWS



Senior Ben Novotny will represent Steel Valley in the Pennsylvania Music Educators All-State Orchestra. Competition for these selections is always stiff, but Novotny was the highest scoring flute player in the ensemble, which ranks him as the top flautist in the state. Fellow senior Madisyn Faux also earned high honors this year, as she and Novotny were each selected to district band.

Faux, Novotny and the rest of the high school concert band performed in the 2022 Spring Instrumental Concert on January 11. The high school band performed "Christmas Crystals," "Here Comes Christmas," and "Celebrations for Christmas" alongside their friends in the seventh grade band. The concert replaced the postponed winter show that had been scheduled for December.

A lunchtime tutoring program is available for ninth grade students who need assistance making the transition to high school academics. A group of a dozen National Honor Society students is working with freshmen scholars on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays during the lunch period. Each day is devoted to either Math, English or Science/Social Studies. The purpose of the program is to help raise the bar and increase the success of all students. Any ninth grade student or parent interested in learning more should reach out to Mr. Olando Dulin at odulin@steelvalleysd.org.

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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