



BEAR TRACKS



A NEWSLETTER OF THE SCRANTON SCHOOL FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING CHILDREN



Celebrating Our Kids

The Scranton School prides itself on being the place "Where Kids Come First". Every action throughout the school day by teachers, administrators, and staff is done with the students being the top priority. Watching students learn, grow, and succeed brings great joy to all are involved in the school as staff or community members. On March 26th, The Scranton School invited the school and northeastern Pennsylvania community to campus to enjoy "An Evening at The Scranton School: Celebrating Our Kids".

Continued to page 2.



Our *Vision*

It is the vision of
our school to be a
***Total Learning
Environment***

for our students.

The Scranton School for
Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Children is a special place
where...

- Our students achieve at the same levels as other children in our society
- Our students reach their highest potential in academics and citizenship.
- Our students achieve independence, high personal aspirations, and pride.

**The Scranton School for Deaf
and Hard of Hearing Children**

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Clarks Summit, Pa 18411
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www.thescrantonschool.org



Continued from front page.

Celebrating Our Kids

The evening began with cocktails and hors d'oeuvres in the school library. Attendees enjoyed a social hour chatting with each other, networking, and learning about the school in the beautiful library. Sticking with a progressive theme throughout the evening, dinner was served in the school's gymnasium. The gymnasium went through a 36-hour makeover that provided the perfect atmosphere for dinner stations. Finally, the large crowd moved towards the playroom to enjoy dessert in our expansive playroom located in the Weinberg Wing that overlooks the beautiful Sordoni Family Playground.

The highlight of the evening was the program portion which included a 5-minute video entitled "A Day in the Life at The Scranton School". Attendees were treated to what a typical day looks like at The Scranton School for students and staff. At the completion of the video, Don Rhoten made the exciting announcement to the community that The Scranton School is expanding again! This Spring and Summer the School will be renovating a wing of the current second floor: additional middle school classroom space, health classroom, communications classroom, and a career exploration center will all be part of this expansion! The conclusion of the program included the announcement that the William G. McGowan Charitable Trust has recently granted The Scranton School \$49,000 to help with the establishment of the Career Exploration Center. We deeply appreciate their partnership and generosity.

In 2014, we celebrated the first five years of The Scranton School. Don Rhoten reminded the attendees at that event that our work in Northeastern and Central Pennsylvania is not done. In 2015, we celebrated the future and followed through on Don's statement by announcing this expansion. The expansion will allow us to meet our motto of "Where Kids Come First" and provide the very best education for our students. ■





PSAD Event in Harrisburg Challenges Students to Use Their Imagination

Seventh and Eighth Grade students spent a day at the Patten offices in Harrisburg, attending the Pennsylvania Society for the Advancement of the Deaf (PSAD)'s "Imagine Your Future" youth conference.

The event featured several Deaf Professionals from private business, professional sports and government agencies. One of the keynote speakers was WPSD graduate and emeritus member of the Board of Trustees, Mr. Rodney Danco. Each of the speakers shared their life experiences and perspectives with students to help them see the potential that lies within each of them. Some speakers demonstrated products to assist students in reaching out to and partnering with others, while others provided samples from their businesses for students to examine and to stimulate ideas of what the students might one day create.

Former Gallaudet University football and basketball standout, Tony Tatum shared some of his experiences of growing up, attending college and having the opportunity to play professional Arena Football for the Cleveland Gladiators and the Utah Blaze. Tony challenged the students to be passionate as they pursue their dreams.

The students thoroughly enjoyed the day of lectures, interactive team building activities and the connection with new and old friends. Thank you to all of the terrific speakers and to PSAD for providing this outstanding opportunity and encouragement to our students. ■





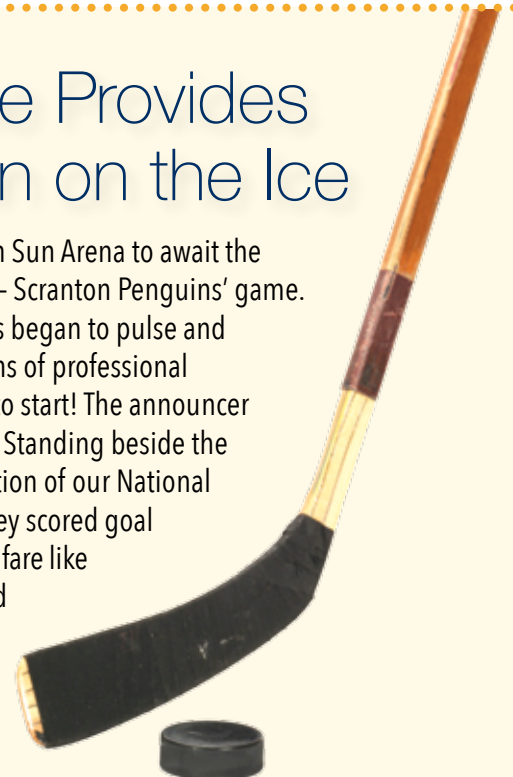
Battle of the Books

This year, for the first time ever, The Scranton School sent a team to the Battle of the Books sponsored by Gallaudet University. Our team of Sarah Gerhold, David Harclerode, and Roger Romiski read three books and prepared to answer questions about each book. There was a preliminary competition during which our team earned points for each question answered. The Scranton School team did well in the preliminary competition and made it to the playoffs! We are extremely proud to say that we are the first team ever to make the playoffs in the first year of competition.

In the playoffs, students answered questions as a group and then were judged individually on the answer to one question. Presenting extemporaneously can be quite difficult, but our team rose to the occasion and exceeded expectations! We are so proud of our students for taking on this challenge. We are looking forward to building on this success in the years ahead with Battle of the Books. ■

WBS Penguins Hockey Game Provides a Close-Up View of the Action on the Ice

Excitement was in the air as our students stepped out onto the ice at Mohegan Sun Arena to await the signal to begin their performance of the National Anthem at the Wilkes Barre – Scranton Penguins' game. The lights dimmed, then the fog machine filled the air overhead as laser lights began to pulse and flash in time with the music. Suddenly the ice was filled with the rushing forms of professional hockey players racing past us just inches away as they prepared for the game to start! The announcer introduced the starting lineups for each of the teams and then it was our turn. Standing beside the Pennsylvania State Police Color Guard, our students performed a terrific rendition of our National Anthem and then the game began. We cheered loudly for the Penguins as they scored goal after goal against the visiting team while we snacked on traditional game time fare like popcorn, nachos, hot dogs, and crab fries (a local delicacy). A fun time was had by all – and the memories of those players whizzing past us will NOT soon be forgotten! ■



After-School Activities

Warm Up the Winter Months

The months of December, January, February and March in Northeast Pennsylvania can surely provide some cold and dreary weather. However, the excitement of playing basketball games in the HUGE gymnasium at "The REC" (located on the campus of Summit University, just across the street from our own campus) or the rush of adrenalin as you carve your way down a snow-covered slope at Montage Mountain on your skis or snowboard are two great ways to warm up those chilly winter evenings.

Thanks once again to the terrific and very welcoming Coaches and Commissioners of the Abington Youth Basketball League, we had a very full schedule of games for our "Blue" and "Gold" squads. The energetic (and entertaining) admonitions and instructions of Coach Kitko were highly effective as every player saw significant improvements in their individual and team skills. Congratulations to all on an awesome season of improvements.

Throughout the frosty winter, our students also continued to receive incredible instruction and service from the awesome Snow School Staff at Montage Mountain. Thanks to the addition of a new ski club chaperone (Ms. Sarah Taylor) we were able to expand our winter snow-sport options to include snow boarding for the first time! Just like our skiers have done, Sarah and our snow boarders learned the basics of snow boarding and quickly progressed to more challenging terrain and more advanced skills. The rapid improvements of our students' snow-sport skills were a testament to the terrific teaching staff at Montage Mountain. ■



ASL Classes

The Scranton School is delighted to provide over 50 members local community, parents, and staff with American Sign Language (ASL) classes. The courses are held at our Scranton School campus every Wednesday night for six weeks each session. The students focus on learning basic vocabulary and are exposed to Deaf culture and history. For many of the students, the high light of this last session was the visit from Valentine Wojton. Val was able to answer some of the students' questions about his life and his involvement with the students at both WPSD and the Scranton School. At the end of class, Mr. Wojton performed an ABC story in ASL which was enjoyed by all!

We are very excited that this community outreach has been so well attended. Not only are the members of the community given the opportunity to learn ASL, but these courses also serve as a resource for our parents. Parents are able to learn how to better communicate with and best support their children. As a school, we are committed to continuing to offer our local community with the chance to learn about ASL and the Scranton School as well as to support the families of the children we serve. If you are interested in learning more about our ASL classes, please feel free to contact The Scranton School at (570) 585-1000. ■



Dorm Activities

Prepare Students for Life

Providing students with tools for independence and social skill development opportunities in a variety of settings are just two of the ways that the dorm maintains a homelike environment. This year our focus for these development activities has been the development of cooking and in-home hospitality skills.

To help us with our cooking skills, guest “chefs” have been joining us to teach us how to prepare a favorite meal and then stay and dine with us. Through this regularly scheduled activity, our students have been exposed to a broad range of culinary ideas and methods thanks to the wonderful volunteers who have been a part of this experience.

We learn and practice hospitality skills by preparing carefully for our mystery dinner guests’ arrival. We iron the tablecloths, set the table just right, and serve up dinner in style. While we dine on a special dinner, we take the time to get to know our guests by asking questions about them, their families, their careers, and their hobbies while we share some of the same kinds of information about ourselves. After dinner, dessert is served as we play table games with our guests to complete the evening’s festivities.

The smiles of students and guests during each of these activities demonstrates once again that preparing students for life can be a truly delicious experience! ■



Dr. Seuss' Birthday

Our students celebrated Dr. Seuss' Birthday with a wacky, whimsical and literary party. After a Seussical lunch, students met to enjoy "The Sneetches" read by Scranton Fire Chief Patrick DeSarno. At the end of the story, students chose to become a "Star Belly Sneetch" or a "Plain Belly Sneetch." Our "Sneetches" then completed Seussical activities like "Fox in Socks Game", making a "one fish, two fish" tank, Seussical cootie catchers and "Picture Me as the Lorax"

Students enjoyed meeting and talking with Chief DeSarno who gave each student a fun safety coloring book. Students in turn gave chief DeSarno a signed copy of "The Sneetches" as a thank you. All in all, it was a great way to celebrate a wonderful author and learn a little something along the way. ■



Career Mentors Inspire Career Aspirations

Our second annual Career Mentor Day focused on answering the question "What does it take to make it as an employee?" In order to help students see the broad range of perspectives involved in preparing for, getting, and keeping a job, three speakers were asked to share their experiences with the students.

Mr. Ed Ryan, Marketing Coordinator at the Northeast Pennsylvania Center for Independent Living (CIL), introduced our students to information about how to access the various types of support provided by the CIL to individuals as they pursue their career and life goals. Mr. Joseph Riolo, a Computer Scientist and the father of a former Scranton School alumnus, shared stories and information with students about his education and background and the fascinating types of projects that he works on at the Picatinny Arsenal for the Department of Defense.

Finally, Mr. Phil Medico, a Clarks Summit Resident and Sales Manager of Medico Industries, a Heavy Equipment manufacturer and Defense Contractor with the U.S. Department of Defense, provided students with a glimpse into the employers' view of what is desired in high quality employees.

Thank you to each of our speakers for sharing their career and experiences with us! Without a doubt you have inspired us to reach for our dreams and seek our own fulfilling and outstanding careers. ■



PSO Continues Active Year

Small in number, yet big on projects, The Scranton School for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children's Parent Staff Organization has had a very busy year... and it's not over.

From the Halloween party to get-togethers at a local YMCA to planning an Easter Egg Hunt, the PSO has proven that it does not take a lot of people to make something successful.

Families of students, as well as Choices for Children families have been gathering on a regular basis at the Greater Carbondale YMCA. At a very reasonable cost of \$10 per family, children and adults have enjoyed an afternoon of swimming, play time and pizza at the Y. Parents have enjoyed the opportunity to socialize with other SSDHHC families and plan to get together again in the fall.

The PSO is in the midst of a Gertrude Hawk candy fundraiser. Proceeds are used to sponsor PSO events, such as the Easter Egg Hunt and the purchase of Field Day t-shirts for students. The group will also have a special raffle at the school's annual Car Show in addition to donating a basket for the school's basket raffle. Once again, the PSO plans another fundraiser at Moe's, a local restaurant which donates a portion of its sales on a designated evening to the organization.

New members are always welcome and the cost of membership is \$10 per year per family. Meetings are held four times a year with the first meeting of the new school year set for Thursday, Oct. 1 at 10 AM. PSO officers are: Denise Locker, president; Nicole Miller, vice president; and Maureen Manzano, secretary. ■





PSO Easter Egg Hunt

Colored eggs, toys and prizes and a giant, floppy-eared rabbit walking the halls of the Scranton School for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children can only mean one thing. It was time for the PSO's annual Easter Egg Hunt and visit by the Easter Bunny.

Thanks once again to the generosity of parents and staff, elementary students and students from the Middle School Applied Studies class, along with Choices for Children families visited the playroom with a special mission. There, children sought out hundreds of colored eggs with hidden surprises, separated by PSO parents according to age. Each group also searched for a golden egg that garnered a special prize.

Choices for Children families made memories as their children met the Easter Bunny and had the opportunity to have a keepsake photograph taken with the Bunny.

While school students searched for eggs, the Easter Bunny, portrayed by student Russell Heath, visited classrooms with special prizes, including bubble wands and sidewalk chalk, guaranteeing hours of outdoor fun over the Spring Break.

Special thanks to the High School Applied Studies Class, lead by teacher Elrica Swank, who placed items inside the eggs days before the hunt. ■



Wintertime at the Hershey Preschool

It's been a long winter at the Hershey Preschool. We've learned about the various holidays: Presidents' Day, Valentine's Day, St Patrick's day, and birthdays. We also discussed various kinds of weather and season changes. One of our favorite activities has been making indoor snow out of various sensory materials. . On the rare warm days, we have made sure to include time for fresh air. Our preschool friends have joined us for SMARTboard activities as we studied transportation. They were impressed with our technology. We've enjoyed our visitors and look forward to more in the future. ■



Technology Plays a Key Role in WPSD Students' Visit to Scranton

There is nothing like some friendly competition and quality time together to build friendships and long-lasting relationships! This was precisely the goal as several Middle School students from WPSD made the trek to Scranton for some awesome academic and athletic interaction.



After our visitors had gotten a great night of sleep in the Scranton Dorm, the fun got started with "The Great Bridge Building Competition". The competition was suggested and organized by the Scranton School's Middle School Science teacher, Mr. Byron Almekinder. Students (and interested staff) were given a special bridge-building kit along with some very precise instructions about the rules for building the bridges. Then it was time to test the strength and efficiency of each bridge using some of the technology and tools from the Synergistic Science Lab. Some of the bridge engineers had opted to focus on specific architectural details while others honed in on sheer strength and functionality. Every budding engineer learned something to help them in their design and construction for next year – do you have what it takes to be a part of the fun?

After spending the day in classroom camaraderie, it was time to take to the basketball court for a spirited match-up between the Lions and the Bears. The Bears jumped out to an early lead as they took full advantage of their home court. The Lions refused to give in as they staged a big second-half rally to claw their way to within 4 points of the Bears with just minutes to play. The excitement grew with every passing second! Coaches cheered, twisted, waved, stomped their feet for attention and gestured wildly as they called plays and instructed their players. The players for both teams dribbled frantically, jumped high for rebounds, dived for loose balls and made some terrific shots as the clock wound down to the final moments of the game. As the final seconds elapsed, everyone truly was a winner. Players' faces shone with pride of knowing that they had played their very best. For the first time on our campus, parents, friends and loved ones were able to tune in to watch the whole game via the technology of live-streamed video on both school's websites – which might possibly have made this game, the best attended game in school history. ■



Hear and Now

This year's Bear Tracks will feature a 4-Part Series called "Hear and Now." Dr. Denise Prislupski will author the series that will focus on hearing loss in adults, children, and what types of technology are available for those with a hearing loss. This edition's article focuses on Cochlear Implant technology. Part 4 will focus on educational technology.

One of the more groundbreaking biomedical achievements in the last thirty years is the cochlear implant, an electronic device that provides a sense of sound to individuals who are profoundly deaf or severely hard-of-hearing. An implant does not result in "restored" hearing for the recipient, but does allow him or her to perceive sounds. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) first approved cochlear implant devices for adults in 1985 and for children in 1990. However, research with this device began in the 1950's.



In general, adults who have severe to profound hearing loss in both ears and have benefited only minimally from hearing aids may qualify as candidates for cochlear implantation. Children as young as 12 months of age who have severe to profound hearing loss in both ears and who demonstrate little progress in the development of auditory skills may also be considered candidates for some implant devices. It is very important that the implant recipient (and the family, in the case of a young child) have an understanding of cochlear implants and realistic expectations regarding the use of the device. More expensive than a hearing

aid, the total cost of a cochlear implant, including evaluation, surgery, device, and rehabilitation can cost as much as \$100,000. Fortunately, most insurance companies and Medicare provide benefits that cover the cost.

What is a cochlear implant? A cochlear implant is a surgically implanted device that helps overcome problems in the inner ear, or cochlea. The implant provides stimulation directly to the auditory nerve, bypassing damaged hair cells in the cochlea that prevent sound from reaching the nerve. Although sound quality from a cochlear implant is different than that experienced by a person with normal hearing, the cochlear implant provides users with the ability to sense sound that they couldn't hear otherwise. Improvements in the way the implant processes sound information are continuously being made to make the sound seem more natural.

What are the parts of a cochlear implant and how do they work? A cochlear implant has two main components: (1) an internal component that consists of a small electronic device that is surgically implanted under the skin behind the ear, connected to electrodes that are inserted inside the cochlea and (2) an external component, usually worn behind the ear that consists of a speech processor, microphone, and battery compartment. The microphone captures sound, allowing the speech processor to translate it into electrical signals. These signals or "codes" are transmitted across the skin via radio waves to the internal electronic stimulator. The internal stimulator then sends the signals to



Continued to page 12.



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Hear and Now

the implanted electrodes in the cochlea. The electrodes signals then stimulate the auditory nerve fibers to send information to the brain, where it is interpreted as meaningful sound.

What happens before the surgery? Once a person is referred to the cochlear implant center, more testing is done to determine whether the person is a suitable candidate. This testing usually includes audiologic testing, psychological testing, medical examination, and tests performed by the surgeon. The process often involves examination using X-rays and MRI (magnetic resonance imaging), as well as counseling. This is done to ensure that the candidate will benefit from a cochlear implant and will have the motivation to participate in the process. It is important that the individual understands what the implant will and will not do and also understands the commitment required for care and follow-up services. Once the decision is made to go ahead, the surgery is done. Sometimes it involves an overnight stay in the hospital, and sometimes it is done on an outpatient basis.

What happens after the surgery? About 4–6 weeks after surgery, the patient returns to the center to be fit with the external parts—the microphone and speech processor—and to activate and program (called mapping) the implant. This initial fitting process is completed over several days and may include additional visits over several months. The additional visits are needed for activating, adjusting, and programming the various electrodes that have been implanted. Also, as the person develops skill in using the implant, adjustments and reprogramming are required. Usually there are annual visits to the center for checkups once the final programming is made to the speech processor. Both children and adults receive extensive rehabilitation services from audiologists, speech-language pathologists, teachers, and counselors as they learn to listen, improve speech, use speech reading, and handle communication. They are taught how to use the implant and how to respond to the sounds they are receiving. For those who have heard before, sounds through the cochlear implant may seem unnatural at first. Those who have never heard before must be taught what the sounds are.

What can be expected from a cochlear implant? Most adult cochlear implant patients notice an immediate improvement in their communication skills. Children require time to benefit from their cochlear implant, as the brain needs to learn to correctly interpret the electrical sound input. While cochlear implants do not restore normal hearing, and benefits vary from one individual to another, 90 percent of adult cochlear implant patients are able to discriminate speech without the use of visual cues. There are many factors that contribute to the degree of benefit a user receives from a cochlear implant, including: how long a person has been deaf, the number of surviving auditory nerve fibers, a patient's motivation to learn to hear, and a family's motivation to provide the necessary training and follow up for the younger patient. The implant team will explain what you can reasonably expect. Before deciding whether an implant is working well, one needs to understand clearly how much time must be committed. Expectations should be realistic, and the doctor or surgeon will help you understand the level of success the implant can reasonably achieve for the adult or young patient.

Dr. Denise Prislupski Au.D. completed her undergraduate studies at Marywood University where she received her Bachelor of Science degree in Communication Disorders. She furthered her studies at Bloomsburg University where she received her Masters of Science degree in Audiology. She completed her post graduate studies at SALUS University formerly PCO in 2002. She practices at Audiology and Hearing Centers of NEPA and is the audiologist at The Scranton School for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Children. Dr. Prislupski was named a Top 25 woman in Business in Northeast Pennsylvania. ■



Outreach News

Camp Hill Outreach Center Updates:

The Outreach Center hosted a professional meet and greet with Guide By Your Side. We had over 40 attendees and it was a wonderful opportunity to share and learn about great resources in Central PA.

Toddler Group winter session was a success with seven families attending on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Each day the parents and children enjoy reading and signing a special book. New signs are reviewed and then everyone enjoys participating in a craft, a sensory play activity and a snack that relate back to the theme of the book. It's a great way to learn while socializing.



SPRING Outreach Activities

- 2/7 WPSD Reading Workshop
- 2/22 Annual Basketball Clinic in Harrisburg
- 3/12 Sam Sandler-Deaf Comedian - WPSD
- 3/20-21 Family Learning Weekend - WPSD
- 3/28 Reading Workshop - Camp Hill
- 3/29 Reading Workshop - Scranton
- 4/1-2 Larry Siegel Workshops in Erie and Johnstown
- 4/17 Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh Hearing Center Auxiliary Gala
- 4/18 Deaf Nation Expo in Pittsburgh
- 4/22 Legislative Breakfast in Harrisburg
- 4/24 WPSD Sporting Clay Shoot
- 5/1-2 Family Learning Weekend, Scranton
- 5/2 It's Your Perfect Pitch Softball Clinic - WPSD
- 5/4-6 Larry Siegel Workshops in Scranton, Allentown and Camp Hill
- 5/12 WPSD SignShine Performance Group at the State Capitol in Harrisburg
- 5/14 Hearing Screenings at the Senator Brewster Health Fair in Westmoreland County
- 5/16 Hearing Screenings in Hershey

Silent Town USA

Saturday, June 13, 2015
2:00 - 4:30 pm

WPSD/SSDHHC Outreach Center
3820 Hartzdale Drive Camp Hill, PA 17011

Come to Silent Town USA where the tables are turned. Learn how to do everyday errands in a community where you may not be understood. Learn about deaf culture, assistive technology, sign language and communication strategies.

This event is for ANYONE and EVERYONE.

Sign language skills are not required, but an open mind is required.

RSVP by June 10 to Jessica Marks at jmarks@wpsd.org.

Sponsored by:

The Programs of the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf and The Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

