

THE MESSENGER



Superintendent's Message

To say that our 2021-22 school year was amazing doesn't begin to define it. This year was extraordinary in so many ways.

We returned to in-school learning last August with the theme, "Restart, Restore, Reconnect." The idea was to build a positive atmosphere in the school. As it turned out, it didn't take much to get our students excited about their return to MHS.

Of course we knew they'd enjoy reuniting with their classmates and friends, participating in plays, concerts, clubs and activities. But they showed a special drive to succeed. Their school spirit was strong and their commitment to excellence was outstanding.

We watched students excel in academics, music and sports. They got involved with the community, putting in hours upon hours of volunteer service work.

On this, the 60th anniversary of Mundelein High School, both students and staff showed us their best. For the fourth year in a row, MHS was ranked among the Best High Schools in the nation by U.S. News & World Report. The list of achievements and honors for our staff, students and organizations was endless.

In this newsletter, you'll read about honors presented to our alumni, teachers and former coaches as well as teams and organizations which achieved success above and beyond their goals.

To say we had a great year would be an understatement, just as it would be an understatement for me to say I'm proud of our students and staff.

Probably the most amazing part about our journey at MHS this year was how everyone, from our students, teachers and support staff came together for each other. We showed resilience. We showed understanding, patience and teamwork. We showed what it is to be a community.

We hope this issue of the Messenger gives you at least a taste of why we are so proud to be Mundelein Mustangs. We can't wait to get back and start up again in August.



Kevin Myers, PhD
Superintendent
Districts 75 / 120

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Mundelein High School's 60th Anniversary



Mundelein High School
1961 - 2021



Shining a light on mental health

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit and schools were closed, the transition to remote learning was difficult for most students. One day they were hanging out with friends at high school, the next day they were logging in to attend classes.

It was another transition when they returned to in-person learning for the start of the 2021-22 school year. While returning was a welcome change, it was yet another transition. Students had been isolated from homecoming dances, school musicals and graduations for nearly two years. They were learning how to socialize all over again.

The Student Services team at MHS knew many students were going to deal with anxiety, depression and mental health issues for the first time. They would need help navigating the range of emotions they faced in returning to their high school environment. Jessica Herrmann, MHS Director of Student Services, wasn't surprised.

"We're seeing similar patterns with other schools," she said. "Attendance is a big challenge. Some students are struggling to get back to being comfortable in social situations."

One of the keys was to make sure their return was positive, while still acknowledging the challenges students faced. MHS opened the school year with the theme,



Mental Health Wellness Strategies

- **Building positivity and togetherness with the theme: "Restart, Restore, Reconnect"**
- **Redefining the role of the mental health staff and making sure every student has access to help the staff.**
- **Creating monthly themes**
- **Educating students about psychology: what is anxiety, how to identify depression, learning coping skills**
- **Use mental health language more in order to decrease stigma and make it a common part of the students lexicon**

"Restart, Restore, Reconnect."

It was a welcome start, but Herrmann knew the support needed to be sustained throughout the school year. So her 25-person staff, which includes eight counselors, five social workers, three psychologists and three deans, created a year-long wellness program. The program included education videos, awareness campaigns and Wellness Weeks that would all be designed around a single purpose: to let students know their mental health is just as important as their academic success.

"We want them to understand that academic success and mental health are interconnected," Herrmann said. "If our only success was that students know that we care and are here for them, that's good."

In returning to school, the Student Services staff met to plan how to be proactive in helping students with their mental health. They planned monthly themes, educated students about anxiety and depression and used language that could decrease the stigma of mental health issues.

"We wanted to be proactive and to build that culture," Herrmann said. "Just get kids to talk about it."

Her expectations were tempered, but hopeful. Even if it took some time for students to engage in the videos during

Homecoming

Homecoming October 2021



class, at least they would be aware that adults at school were concerned about their mental health.

Members of the Student Services team wore matching t-shirts to build awareness and then sent out multiple pulse surveys to check in with students and invite them to access support resources. The goal was awareness. The result was that more kids turned to the Student Services offices for help on their own.

“We can tell there’s an impact because we see more students reaching out to their support teams in that week after a program,” Herrmann said.

Student Services also hosted a pair of Wellness Weeks - one after Thanksgiving break and another the last week of April. The idea was to have the students not only participate but help run the Wellness Weeks. Students respond much better when it’s coming from their peers. Herrmann enlisted students who came to the Student Services

Department with their own ideas. These kids recruited more students. Students from other activities also helped.

“ If our only success was that students know that we care and are here for them, that’s good.

Jessica Herrmann, MHS Director of Student Services

“Wellness is so much more than just mental health. It’s about building community, having support systems, etc. We’re hoping to teach strategies.”

If nothing else, the program has made students aware of the issues and the fact that there is help if they need it.

MHS to welcome new principal

The District 120 Board of Education named Alexandria Rios Taylor as the new principal of Mundelein High School. She will begin at MHS on July 1.

Taylor spent the last four years as an administrator at Glenbard High School District 87, first as a Dean of Students and Equity Coordinator at Glenbard West High School and the last two years as assistant principal of Glenbard East High School. She previously taught Spanish at Neuqua Valley High School in Naperville for 11 years.

“ I truly believe everyone is a genius when operating within their own skillset.

Alexandria Rios Taylor, incoming MHS principal

“We’re extremely excited to welcome her to our high school community,” said Kevin Myers, Superintendent of Districts 120 and 75. “We believe Alexandria has the right kinds of qualifications and experience that will help us continue along our path toward excellence. She’s exactly the kind of person we wanted to guide our students and staff at Mundelein High School.”

“I am both humbled and excited about this opportunity and I can’t wait to get started,” Taylor said. “I look forward to leading those in our Mundelein High School community to be their best.”

The opening in the principal’s office attracted national interest. A 40-member committee of administrators and staff considered 30 candidates and interviewed seven before narrowing it down to the top three. The interviewing teams were impressed with her approachable nature, her willingness to get involved in community, and her passion for education.

During her career at Glenbard high schools Taylor collaborated on the District 87 Equity and Inclusion Plan, coordinated an Equity Mentorship Program and was the primary administrative contact and advocate for the building equity team of about 100 students and staff.

Myers also expects Taylor to fit in well because of her background in communicating high expectations in working with students and staff, her dedication to community, and her humble nature.

Alexandria Rios Taylor

- Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Administration with Superintendent Endorsement, Aurora University, June 2022 (anticipated)
- Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Administration from Benedictine University, 2009
- Bachelor of Arts in Organizational Communication, North Central College, 2007
- Bachelor of Arts in Spanish Language and Literature, North Central College, 2007

Anthony Kroll promoted to Assistant Superintendent

Mundelein High School Principal Anthony Kroll will take on a new role as the Assistant Superintendent of Special Programs starting July 1. The District 120 Board of Education approved the new position on April 5.

Kroll has served MHS since 1993 in a number of capacities, from classroom teacher to dean, before being named principal in 2013. His experience and insight will serve him well in this new role, District 120 Superintendent Kevin Myers said.



“He is the type of leader we were hoping to find for this new position,” Myers said.

Kroll’s new responsibilities will be two-fold. He will oversee standardized testing, assess student performance data, and direct how that data will influence instructional decision-making. He will also lead the College and Career Readiness opportunities for students, coordinating with both internal staff and outside businesses and agencies to develop pathways to student success after graduation. In addition, Kroll will oversee the Applied Arts Department, the Adult Education program and support of the ASPIRE future teacher program.

“There is nothing I wish more than to use my talents to help provide opportunity for all of our students,” he said. “I am grateful to have served as principal and for the support I have received along the way.”

Achievements and Honors

IAEA names Pruc top art teacher

MHS art students would be happy to know they're being taught by one of the best teachers around. Actually, the very best art teacher in the state, according to the Illinois Art Education Association.



The IAEA named MHS teacher Jonathan Pruc the 2021 IAEA High School Art Educator of the Year. The group's awards and scholarship committee cited Pruc's professional performance, service and leadership as exemplary.

"Jonathan is an educator who thinks outside the box, looks at art and education through a critical lens and constantly works to connect and engage his students in their learning," according to a statement from the IAEA.

In 2021, due to the pandemic, he was instrumental in facilitating the creation of a virtual art exhibition experience. In the last four years, his students have been awarded more than \$4 million in scholarships through ArtConnectED.

Art students earn scholarships

Mundelein High School was represented by 11 exhibiting art students at the 2022 Illinois High School Art Exhibition (IHSAE) hosted by Art ConnectED in March.

The Northern Regional Exhibition, a "Best of the Best" show will feature more than 500 works of art across eight distinct categories. MHS students in this exhibition were: Holden Allsbury, photography; Natalie Catchot, painting; David Tatevosian, painting; Jaxson Wasseluk, design; and Talia Zavialov, drawing.

The Senior Scholarship Exhibition included 300 senior artworks and recognized scholarship offers on top of other prestigious awards. MHS students Sonia Jiminez Flores, Zoe Kondorusis, Sophia Petridis, Tyler Thomas, Natalie Wiersma and Quentin Wright represented MHS in this exhibition and have collectively been awarded \$1.42 million in scholarships.

The Early College Program Exhibition showcased about 100 underclassmen awarded life-changing scholarships to summer college experiences including MHS students Sarah Choi, Leila Bychowski and Eileen Jarrett.

Rodriguez receives ISBE award

Joanna Rodriguez, an administrative assistant at MHS, has been named as a recipient of the "Those Who Excel" award by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

A graduate of Mundelein High School and a first-generation student, Joanna is often the first face to greet many MHS students and parents. In addition to driving a bus for daily lunches during the COVID-19 pandemic, she serves food a couple times each month with the church and food bank. She is also involved in potlucks, holiday drives and other community outreach activities.



"Joanna is the voice for those who do not have a voice," said Jamie DiCarlo, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services.

MHS honors alumni

Mundelein High School recognized its 2021 Distinguished Alumni ceremony in the fall to honor alumni who have excelled in a chosen profession, community service, civic involvement and more.

"We are extremely proud of these honorees," said District 75 and 120 Superintendent Kevin Myers. "Each of them is a testament to what any student may choose to do with his or her Mundelein education."



The 2021 Distinguished Awards honorees (L-R): Larry Markus, Chad Vale, Rick Witt, Chris Wetteland, Max Petersen and (not pictured) Michael Gunther and Lawrence Maligaya.

Athletic Achievements and Honors

Two former MHS coaches inducted

Two former MHS coaches were inducted into halls of fame in their respective organizations.

Former Mustang Baseball Coach Todd Parola was inducted into the Illinois High School Baseball Coaches Association (IHSBCA) Hall of Fame while former MHS Football Coach Frank Giannamore (affectionately known as Coach G) was presented a plaque welcoming him into the 2021 Lake County High School Sports Hall of Fame.

Coach G began his teaching career at MHS after graduating from Northern Illinois University in 1961 and for more than 47 years, served as a teacher, guidance counselor, advisor and coach. He also coached wrestling and baseball at MHS. He was inducted into Illinois High School Football Coaches Hall of Fame in 2005 and into the Illinois Wrestling Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2015.



Frank Giannamore (left) receives his honor at halftime.



Coach G's awards and achievements go well beyond sports. He was very involved in school local and county activities and has been recognized over the years for his accomplishments.

In 23 years, Coach Parola won 603 games, six conference championships, 12 regional titles, four sectional titles, finishing second in state in 2016 and fourth in 2002. His teams won 30 games in a season seven times.



Todd Parola (left) is inducted into the IHSBCA Hall of Fame.

Coach Parola was named IHSBCA 4A Coach of the Year in 2001, 2002 and 2016. He also won Pioneer Press Coach of the year in 2001 and 2012. Parola stepped away from coaching in 2017 and continues to teach at MHS.

MHS senior athlete wins pair of community awards

Mundelein High School senior Miguel Hernandez was the first of nine high school football players from around the state this spring to be presented with the Chicago Bears Community High School All-Star Award. The award recognizes players who make a positive impact in their community and school. Winners are chosen because they exemplify service, leadership and character. Each winner receives a \$500 donation to a charity of their choice. Miguel selected the Center for Immigrant Progress.

In April, he also received the National Football Foundation Scholar-Athlete Award. This award recognizes excellence in the classroom, on the field, and in the community. The NFF Metro Chapter Board of Directors has chosen Miguel and 10 others for this award. This recognition includes a \$1,000 college tuition scholarship.

Miguel is a four-year honor roll student enrolled in AP college-level courses, a two-way starter (and captain) on the Mustangs football team, a two-year Academic All-Conference recipient, and the MHS representative of the 2021 North Suburban Conference Sportsmanship Award.



Athletic Achievements and Honors

MHS football program a finalist for national award

The MHS football program was one of three in Illinois to be chosen as a finalist in the inaugural National Football Foundation's (NFF) Academic Excellence Award.

The NFF announced the winner of its National High School Academic Excellence Award in February. While MHS did not win, it was listed among 62 finalists in 13 states. The initiative is designed to inspire and foster a culture of academic excellence on high school football teams throughout the nation.

In the application for the award, MHS Superintendent Kevin Myers spoke how the program helps students to grow and improve off the field as well as on the field.



"The Mundelein High School Football program is about developing the intellect, integrity and character of the players," Myers said. "Varsity Football Coach Vince DeFrancesco and his staff develop young men and women by setting clear expectations for their athletes."

DeFrancesco regularly emphasizes to his players, "you're a student first." If his student-athletes are not meeting the program's academic expectations they must seek out extra support and improved grades before returning to the field.

Besides meeting academic requirements, part of the expectation is that players are active in the community. Throughout the year, MHS team members volunteer in the community at various events.

Mustang highlights

- MHS junior Matthew Kisselburg qualified for the IHSA State Boys Golf Tournament and shot a 152 over two days in Bloomington to tie for 34th place.
- MHS junior Riley Routledge placed 26 in the 100 breaststroke at the IHSA state meet.
- MHS senior Omari Rhinehart was one of 18 players in the state named to the IHSFCA 7A All-State Football Team. He is the first MHS All-State football player since 2005.



The Boys' Varsity Soccer defeated Lake Zurich and Warren to claim the Regional Championship in October.

- The MHS Girls Basketball team was named to the IBCA All-State Academic Team (1st in Division 2).



Michael Romero, Aaron Anastos, Matt Willis, and Omar Fathallah for breaking the school record in the 400 free relay and posting the 6th fastest time in the state at the sectional meet.

- The MHS Varsity Dance team punched their ticket to state by placing 4th at the IHSA Sectionals. The Mustangs performed at the IHSA State finals.
- MHS junior Bryce Durlacher was named an all-state wrestler and finished 5th in state. Bryce, competing at the 113-pound weight class, finished with a record of 40-4. He was

- also named to the All-Conference and All-Area wrestling teams.
- The MHS Boys Swimming and Diving team finished in 4th place at the Stevenson sectional. The team had individuals and relays in 7 of 12 events at state.



The Mundelein High School Robotics Team 499S, also known as the Noisy Boys, traveled to Dallas in May to compete in the 2022 VEX Robotics World Championship. The team went undefeated at a regional performance, and was a finalist at the Illinois State VEX Robotics Competition Championship. The team's successes qualified it for the World Championship tournament.

Music Achievements and Honors

Band plays two rare performances

The MHS Band program was treated to a pair of rare performances this year, as the Honors Jazz Ensemble performed at the Midwest Clinic in December and the Honors Wind Ensemble played at the Illinois Music Education Conference in Peoria.

Both performances were based on auditions and in both cases, schools are only eligible once every five years. The Midwest Clinic was special since it is the first time an MHS ensemble has ever performed at the event.

The Honors Wind Ensemble was selected via recorded audition to represent Illinois Music Education Association District 7 at the IMEA Conference in Peoria.



Three Mundelein High School students achieved status as Illinois All-State Musicians this year. They are: Neil Martin, Lead Alto in the Honors All-State Jazz Band; Leila Moon, Clarinet in the Honors All-State Band; and Isabella Rodriguez, Trombone in the Honors All-State Band.

Those two performances capped a year which saw numerous winning performances by MHS musicians. At the Purdue University Jazz Festival, the MHS Jazz Orchestra received first place in the second band division. Rosa Bonilla received an outstanding soloist award for her baritone saxophone feature.

The MHS Jazz Combo received second place in the combo room and the Jazz Ensemble received first place in the Large High School Division. Neil Martin received an outstanding soloist award for his alto saxophone solos. The MHS Jazz Ensemble has now won first place in their division in every Purdue Jazz Festival since 2018.

The Honors Wind Ensemble was selected to perform at the 2022 University of Illinois SuperState Concert Band Festival. Selection for participation is competitive and based on blind evaluations of submitted performance recordings. The band performed at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts in Urbana on May 7.



The Jazz Ensemble was the first MHS group to ever perform at the Midwest Clinic in December.



The Marching Mustangs took second place in Class 5A at the University of Illinois Marching Championships in October.

Sturgeon wins music award

MHS Band Director Andy Sturgeon is one of six winners of the 2022 Chicagoland Outstanding Music Educator Awards.



The recognition program, which began in 1989, recognizes excellence in the field of music education in the Chicago area. To be selected, an educator is nominated by one of their peers and selected by a committee of previous winners.

Student Achievements and Honors

MHS newspaper, yearbook staffs win awards for 2020-21 publications

Mundelein High School's yearbook staff followed in the footsteps of its award-winning newspaper staff in February, receiving top honors in the Illinois Journalism Education Association (IJE) contest.

The award follows the second place International Award presented in the fall to last year's newspaper staff for Quill & Scroll's 2021 News Media Evaluation. The 2020-21 yearbook, "The Obelisk," earned awards in eight out of nine categories in the IJE Division 5 Yearbook Contest, taking second place in the category of "Overall General Excellence."

"The 2020-21 MHS newspaper, "The Mustang," was the only high school paper in the state to receive an



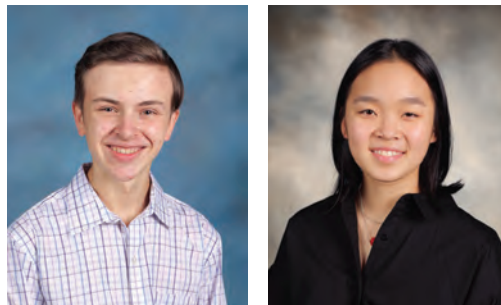
International Award from Quill & Scroll. The staff received an excellence rating for its general journalism practices and a rating of good in the categories of "Writing & Editing," "Visuals" and "Digital." This was the first year the MHS newspaper staff entered the contest for a comprehensive review of its online presence.

The yearbook staff received first places in the "Divider Pages," "Best Use of Photography" and the "Copy Writing" categories. Additionally, the yearbook staff received third place in "Sports Coverage" and "Coverage of the Year" categories. Finally, the yearbook staff took honorable mentions in the "Graphics" and "Theme Development" categories.

Two Mundelein High School students earn rare "perfect" AP scores

The College Board has announced that two Mundelein High School students earned perfect scores on its Advanced Placement (AP) Exam in spring 2021.

Hannah Cho, Class of '21, and Steffen Brown, Class of '22, were among a select number of students worldwide to earn every



point possible on the AP Exam in a particular subject. Hannah was one of 46 students to earn a perfect score in 3-D Art and Design. Steffen was one of 335 students to earn a perfect score in Computer Science Principles.

These extraordinary academic accomplishments are a direct reflection of the top-quality education being offered at Mundelein High School, the College Board stated. MHS Principal Anthony Kroll echoed that statement.

"This is not just a source of pride for these two

extraordinary students, but to our teaching staff and administrative team as well," said MHS Principal Anthony Kroll. "We're so happy that both Hannah and Steffen achieved this honor.

"These students were well-prepared and they put in a lot of hard work and effort to earn this distinction. They exemplify the potential for academic success of every student who walks through the doors of Mundelein High School."

Senior named STAMPS Scholar

MHS senior Kajal Patel, a recipient of a four-year Provost tuition scholarship at the University of Illinois, is one of six U of I students to earn the prestigious Stamps Scholarship.



As a stamps Scholar, Kajal will receive an additional \$10,000 per semester in a program offering mentorship and enrichment opportunities. Kajal was one of six chosen out of a field of 56 candidates for the Stamps Scholarship.



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