Recognizing our Winter Athletic Teams!


Save the Date Saturday, March 7

Please join us for a fun-filled night
Dancing ~ Dinner ~ Live Band ~ Cash Bar ~ Live & Silent Auctions
Tickets are available in school offices ~ $50 per person
Students & Staff Learn About Native American Dance, Singing & Drumming

The Eagle Spirit Dancers recently performed for elementary students and staff. They performed Native American dances, explained and showcased traditional dress (regalia) and spoke about the importance of dancing, singing, and drumming for all humans.

Several third grade students from the former EJES Hoop Troop performed with Roberta Shalifoe, Theresa Chingwa and Wren Gotts. A Pow Wow Princess and a kindergarten student performed the Fancy Shawl Dance with them as well. Wren addressed the crowd in Anishinaabemowin, the predominant Native American language in northern Michigan.

Students from the EJMHS NACLA Association (Native American Culture, Language, Arts, and Academics) assisted with guest services and helped organize the Nawapo Lunch Bunch. Elementary students greeted guests in the Anishinaabemowin language as they entered the assembly.

Elementary Students Give Back to the Community

On the last afternoon before holiday break, fifth and sixth grade students participated in their annual Community Service project by donating their time to local businesses around East Jordan. Students decorated cookies to distribute to businesses around town, sang carols, organized and helped clean at Raven Hill and Crossroads Resale Shop. Giving back to the community is always a rewarding event for the students and staff and it helps them realize the importance of giving to others!

Elementary Learn to Ski Program

This year, over 100 students have participated in the East Jordan Learn to Ski & Snowboard club. The program is led by East Jordan Elementary teachers Dan Ziebarth and Margaux Rowley. It includes four weeks of ski and snowboard instruction. Students travel by bus to Boyne Mountain where they have a lesson in either skiing or snowboarding and then have an hour of free time on the slopes. This is a great opportunity for East Jordan students and families to get outside, have fun with friends and develop a love of skiing or snowboarding! A special thank you to all the parents and volunteers this year who have provided snacks and skied with the beginner groups!

We are EJ Proud!

Since January of 2019, the staff at EJPS has continued to create and maintain high behavior expectations for all students throughout the district. We have done this by being intentional in teaching specific expectations that display our EJ Proud mantra. We have maintained these positive behavior expectations and supports by teaching students expectations in different parts of the district. School-wide celebrations, acknowledgments, and rewards have also been provided when building-wide goals have been met.

As we continue to work on the next steps, we will offer additional support to students who need it through different research-based programs.
Voc-Tech Students Combine their Specialized Skills

The Automotive Technology and Welding Career Technical Education programs are working together to repair a 1967 Chevrolet C10 pickup this year as part of a combined project for the programs. The vehicle required almost every mechanical system to be repaired or updated, and the body needed lots of sheet metal work done as well as areas of custom fabrication. Students in the Automotive class have: Rebuilt the engine; Adam Skrocki and Austin Bay. Fabricated the exhaust; Chase Vincent, Patrick Boris and Ashton Hershey. Installed a disc brake conversion kit; Nolan Roehrig and Thomas Simpson. Installed new ball joints and new front coil springs; Tanner Peterson and Heath Hoffman. Installed new rear brakes; Wesley Giem and Tyler Gellis. Installed fuel tank; Lillii Armstrong, Jaden Booze and Logan Argetsinger. Installed new fuel lines; Caleb Boyer, Wyatt Thompson, Lee Nemecek and Ty Benedict. Students in the Welding Class have: Fabricated custom fuel tank straps and body sheet metal work; Lillii Armstrong. Installed new cab floor; Lillii Armstrong and Allen Porter. Pictured below and to the right are the students working with the Chevrolet.

Students and Staff Enjoy a Holiday Meal Together

Middle/High school students, staff and visitors enjoyed a holiday meal together in the gym. The meal which featured turkey, ham and all the trimmings was sponsored by local donors. Everyone enjoyed games, music and a dance performance by the student council. Mr. & Mrs. Claus were also there to greet students and help everyone enjoy the holiday. Thank you to the staff of volunteers and the Food Service Department for making this special event possible!

Middle & High School Artists of the Month

Kendel Saganek is featured with a painting of a meerkat in the desert using water color paint. She also likes to use clay, graphite and paint when making other art. She enjoys basketball, volleyball and softball. Her other interests include watching youtube, hanging out with friends, sketching and watching movies with her family. Kendel says, “My goals are that when I get older I want to still be in sports, and get good grades so I can get scholarships to college.”

Jayde Fazio is featured with a work of art that she created using Prismacolor pencils. Her favorite mediums are Prismacolor, charcoal, and clay. She also enjoys softball, music, longboarding, poetry, reading and playing Mario Kart with her friends. She is also a member of the Youth Advisory Committee. In the future, she would like to attend the Young Americans College and the Kendall College of Art and Design to major in graphic design or sculpture/functional art.

Register for the Young Americans Performing Arts Workshop at www.ejps.org or on the first day of the workshop. The workshop will take place from March 8-10, 2020 at the Middle/High School.

Thanks to a generous donor, the registration cost for East Jordan students will be $19.00 per student. Registration is open to 3rd-12th graders and no prior performing experience is necessary.

More details about the workshop can be found on The Young Americans’ website: www.youngamericans.org/us. If you would like to be a host family, please contact Kim Brown at 231-536-3131.

The final performance will be held on March 10 at 7:00 p.m. and is open to the community. Tickets will be available for purchase at the door.
This month, EJPS is proud to highlight Mr. John Cross as our Staff Spotlight. Mr. Cross teaches woodshop and computer aided design at East Jordan Middle High School. He is a fantastic career and technical education teacher who provides students with hands-on opportunities throughout their middle/high school careers.

Mr. Cross grew up in Frederic, Michigan and graduated from Grayling High School. He attended Central Michigan University to earn his Bachelor's Degree. He also has a Master’s Degree from Grand Valley State University. Mr. Cross had always enjoyed drafting and woodworking classes while he was in high school and knew a career involving these areas was in his future. The opportunity to teach drafting classes as a graduate assistant in college helped him realize his passion for teaching. He switched directions, moving from the Masters degree he was working on and began working towards his teacher certification. Upon graduating from Central Michigan University, Mr. Cross taught for three years in Houghton Lake. He is in his 20th year at East Jordan Public Schools.

Although Mr. Cross enjoys many aspects of his job, it is student relationships that often top his list. The interaction with students at the beginning and end of the period is a favorite part of his day. “You never know what is going to happen during that short time, but that’s when I find myself cracking up or having a great conversation with a student” says John. Students often describe him as, “strict but fun, supportive especially when he opens up lab after school for us to work, he is concerned about us, like a dad and he is funny and cool!”

As a Career Technical Education teacher, Mr. Cross is often involved with student competitions such as MITEC (Michigan Industrial & Technology Education Society). His students work throughout the school year to construct projects and then take them to be judged at state and local competitions. Spending time with students at these CTE competitions stands out as both memorable and motivating to Mr. Cross.

He is also the EJHS Quiz Bowl Team coach/advisor and accompanies students to compete multiple times throughout the year to test their knowledge against area peers.

When he is not working with the students of EJMH, Mr. Cross enjoys fishing, cross-country skiing, playing the piano and camping trips with his family.

Thank you Mr. Cross for being an integral part of the East Jordan Middle/High School family. Your passion and dedication to your students and East Jordan Middle/High School is evident and appreciated!

Alumni Spotlight

Lila Gee

We are proud to feature Lila Gee as our Alumni Spotlight feature this month. Lila graduated in 2010. Her higher education began while she was still in high school as she was dual enrolled at North Central Michigan College to study world religions and archaeology. After high school, she spent a year in India with Rotary International Youth Exchange. There she learned Hindi and Gujarati, studied traditional henna tattooing, Indian art history, regional cuisine/cooking, Hinduism, Buddhism and Bollywood dance.

When she returned to the US, she briefly studied baking and Chocolaterie at Baker College and then went on to receive her Bachelor of Arts from Oakland University where she earned a dual major in Anthropology and Archaeology and minored in Judaic Studies.

Lila also earned American Archaeological Field School certification at Fort Michilimackinac and has traveled to Israel multiple times to participate in archaeology digs at Biblical sites where she earned Israeli Field School Certification from Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She has a TESL (teaching English as a second language) certification and also earned a Graduate Certificate (which is the equivalent of a Master’s degree) in TESL from Oakland University. She has worked as the graduate assistant in the ESL/International student department at Oakland University. During this time, she started to earn her MA in Linguistics, but had to halt her education and resign from her assistantship position because she was diagnosed with severe endometriosis. She is currently studying for certification from the Endometriosis Association and plans to get involved in their outreach program, which strives to teach middle and high school students about endometriosis. “Endo is common, affecting about 1 in 10 women/girls and it is important for me to teach awareness to help others with this condition,” says Lila.

She is currently taking time to focus on her health while studying Mandarin and Chinese culture at Oakland University. She will resume working toward her MA in TESL at Arizona State University in August. She divides her time between China and the United States. In America, “I work as a private tutor and creative writing teacher, and during the summer I’m an adjunct professor at Changchun University of Science and Technology in Jilin Province, China.” I teach students about American culture and TOEFL prep (Test of English as a Foreign Language)."

Lila enjoys weight lifting, dancing and reading. Her husband, Nikoll Dedvukaj is from Albania, but they met at the Michigan Renaissance Festival. She has two adult step children, Kristal (24) and Nik (22) with whom she has a close relationship.

“High school was rough for me. I was a weird kid, overweight, socially awkward, low self-esteem and I was told that I would never get into college because of my ACT/SAT scores. I managed to do well in spite of this and part of my motivation for earning my degrees and certifications was to prove a point.” She loved art classes with Mrs. Tinney, where she was given creative freedom to express herself and she also excelled in AP history with Mrs. Richardson. “She was the first teacher who I felt truly believed in me and supported my ambitions.” Lila enjoyed theater and starred in minor roles in various plays and musicals for most of her high school career. “My time on stage helped me become more confident, which has been tremendously beneficial in my teaching career.” She also enjoyed writing classes with Mrs. Stangis, and creative writing class, where she published short stories and poetry.

“I want students to know that even if they struggle in school, don’t have a good support system and have people telling them that they will never rise above their circumstances that it is still possible to succeed. Right now, I am exactly the person I always wanted to be and I hope they can have that, too.”

At EJPS, we are so proud of the accomplishments of our alumni. Thanks to Lila for sharing her achievements with us.

If you would like to suggest someone for an upcoming Alumni spotlight, please send their contact information to: kbrown@ejps.org.