



Wood Road Times

Wood Road's School Newspaper

December 2016

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Feeling Generous

Bringing December's character trait to life

By Isabelle Sikoryak

Generosity filled the air this holiday season and students learned what generous means.

All students participated in Penny Harvest. The annual harvesting of pennies is a way for students to give whatever they can. The pennies are collected by Penny Harvest leaders. With a roundtable discussion, the students decide on local community to donate the pennies to. Ms. Smith's class collected the most pennies and was rewarded with a pizza party.

Wood Road also gave Thanksgiving baskets to families who can't afford Thanksgiving dinner. The baskets are part of a food drive put on by Wood Road. The food drive has been tak-



Students prepare Thanksgiving baskets for delivery.

ing place for six years.

"We have different families that we provide for and it gets bigger and bigger each year," said Coach Dayton, Wood Road Gym Coach.

Wood Road Student Council members help to organize each of the baskets before they are delivered. The entire school is involved in filling the baskets by donating a food item.

Another way to add to the baskets is by participating in the Annual Turkey Shoot. All students can take part in the event. A basket item is the ticket to play in the basketball-themed games. About 80 kids participated in this year's event.

"We usually give out 12 to 14 baskets," Dayton said. "Families

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Kindergarten celebrates 50 days

Mrs. Walz and Mrs. Srokowski's kindergartners celebrated the 50th day of school by dressing like the 1950's. It was all about bubble gum, root beer floats and small black and white televisions in these kindergarten classrooms on this day. The students danced, counted and learned all about the 1950's - 50 days smarter.

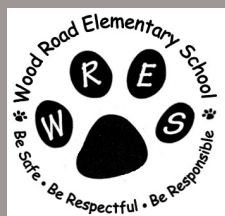
Wood Road Times

Reporters - Emily Bagan, Alisabeth Dreher, Natalia Guthrie, Ashley Hu, Emma Jones, Maddox Minarik, Isabelle Sikoryak

Editor - Mrs. Bianchi (dbianchi@bscsd.org)

Website: www.bscsd.org/Wood.cfm

Twitter: [@Wood_Road_Elem](https://twitter.com/Wood_Road_Elem)



Veterans Day at Wood Road

Students were in awe during a flag demonstration which took place during November's schoolwide assembly. The assembly covered November's character trait, citizenship, as well as honored veterans from the Wood Road family.



Holiday fun

Joy and cheer at Wood Road

By Emma Jones

Bells are ringing and lights are twinkling. It's time for dancing, singing, reading, creating and giving - it's the holidays at Wood Road.

The season began with Little Elf Lane, a PTA event where students have an opportunity to shop for their special people.

Wood Road staff made their annual appearance in the Ballston Spa village holiday parade.

On Dec. 9, Wood Road PTA held the annual Holiday Workshop. The event is a night for students to hang out with friends, have some pizza, make crafts for giving, and have a photo taken with Santa.

"I like how I get to make ornaments for my family and spend time with my friends," said Libby Barnes, a 5th grade student.

More than 15 crafts were available for students to make for gift giving.

First-grade students made some ornaments of their own at their ornament party and second-graders got creative at a craft party with parents.

The holidays wouldn't be the same without the annual visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus. On Thursday, Dec. 22, the couple visited Wood Road students throughout the school. Kids eyes stared in amazement as Santa visited each classroom and Mrs. Claus read stories in the library.

The day ended with a cheery sing-along where all students, in their pajamas, sang along as Mr. Bailey lead them in Christmas carols, Miss Soulia played the saxophone and Coach Dayton played the drums.



TOP LEFT: Second-graders, teachers and parents make crafts for the holiday.

TOP RIGHT: Kindergarten student gets ready to visit with Santa Claus.

BOTTOM LEFT: First-graders move from one classroom to the next at their ornament party.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Mrs. Clancy's kindergarten class celebrates the holiday with a party.

Time to vote

Students experience election process by voting for books

By Ashley Hu

Students had a chance to cast their vote in the voting booth on Election Day. The vote was for a book and part of this year's reading them, "Vote For Books."

Mrs. Williams, the school librarian, choose the theme because of it being an election year. She felt it was important for students to learn about the voting process.

"We chose to focus on books because kids know a lot about it, instead of focusing on the real election," Williams said.

Teachers squeezed some time into their schedules for students to go to the library and vote on the books. Fifth-graders made posters and videos for each book on the ballot. Students in grades kindergarten through fourth were given a chance to watch the videos before going to the library to vote. Once at the library, the students signed in, writing their initials next to their name. They took a ballot, went into a booth and wrote down the number of their favorite book. Then, they put their vote into a box hoping their favorite would win.

The teachers could vote, but their votes were not part of the election on Election Day.



Students register to vote before entering the voting booth on Tuesday, Nov. 8.

Their vote was part of a vote for Back to School in the beginning of the year. "First Day Jitters" was the winning book at that time. Parents also came to Wood Road's Open House in September and voted. The result of the parent vote was "Green Eggs and Ham" and the "Harry Potter" series.

"The ultimate goal is to promote reading for all the students and the staff," Mrs. Williams explained. "By changing the theme every year, we hope to get the students excited about it in many different ways."

Each classroom also has a chance to vote on their favorite books throughout the year. Outside each classroom is a erasable

sign where the class as a whole will display their favorite books. Williams believes the election was very successful.

"Almost every single student voted, and I think the fifth graders were pleased to be part of the process. I think they made all the books relatable for all students," Williams said proudly.

In the end, the winner of the Election Day vote was "Ellie's Story," making it Book of the Year.

Williams said the fourth graders would like the opportunity to put together a ballot, and she is considering doing something with nonfiction.

Principal no stranger

Mrs. Karas joins Wood Road ready to lead

By Maddox Minarik

Mrs. Karas walked into Wood Road on Tuesday, Sept. 6 ready to lead. As the building's new principal, Mrs. Karas came to the school no stranger having worked in the district for four years, most recently as the Coordinator of Common Core Standards.

"When the position for principal opened up, I had to take it," Karas said.

Karas spent a lot of time at Wood Road in her previous position and felt she knew how to make it even better.

The night before the first day of school Karas said she was feeling similar to what most kids feel like.

"I felt like a kid, I couldn't sleep," she said laughing.

Since then, Karas has gone straight to work on conquering many goals. Karas said she gets so many good ideas from the staff and the students and would love to make them all happen, but they won't all happen in one day. She said it is important to prioritize everyday and make a list.



Mrs. Karas having fun with students at Wood Road's annual sing along.

She has both short-term and long-term goals.

"One of my goals for the fourth and fifth grade students is for them to be good role models and good leaders for the school," she said.

She added that each day is different, but having taught in a classroom in Albany before coming to Ballston Spa, Karas knows how to relate to the teachers and students in the building. She tries to get into the classrooms as often as possible and is eager to

meet every student.

"One of my favorite parts of the day is visiting the classrooms and seeing the wonderful lessons going on at Wood Road," she said.

"It is really fun. I get to work closely with teachers and also get to know the students."

Karas lives in Latham with her family.

Hard work pays off

Robotics team advances to semifinals

By Natalia Guthrie

On Saturday, Dec. 3, the Wood Road Robotics team, Motors In Action, stood proudly holding their awards as cameras flashed and families and friends cheered. The recognition came after months of preparation.

In September, the team began meeting 4-7 hours a week. It's at this time that the team is presented with a challenge. The challenge involves a presentation about core values, a research project, and programming robots - all of which are to be presented at the competition.

"It's a huge time commitment," said Mrs. Lovett, one of the team's coaches, adding that the team has been successful each year because of the time and commitment put in by its team members.

Each day of the week the team works on a different part of the challenge. Tuesday's and Thursday's were usually the time to work on programming the robots. Dylan Waters, Jacob Hasselbacher, Aidan Maloney and Alaina Bottisti were presented with the challenge of programming a robot to find its way to a specific spot on the game table, pick up a plastic pig and bring it back to base without dropping it. After working on the chal-



ABOVE: Students create a brochure to advertise Beetopia for competition.



LEFT: Elijah Dowd and Amanda Duffey watch as their robot performs at the game table on competition day.

lenge for more than two weeks, they were faced with a problem.

"Our program got deleted and we had to restart, but it all paid off at the competition," said Alaina.

At the competition, the first two times the program worked well. The last time at the table they missed the pig by a half a centimeter. The team is

awarded points for what is accomplished each time at the table.

The team was faced with solving a program about animals for the research project. After much collaboration, the team decided to create a space for bees, because they felt bees were very important. The next

A book for you

Second graders create digital book recommendations

By Emily Bagan

Mr. Ferrone's second graders began a project this fall that combines writing and technology. Ferrone wanted the students to practice writing opinion pieces, and thought adding technology to the project would make it that much more fun.

"When I was a kid, I used to watch 'Reading Rainbow' on TV," Ferrone said. "I loved it. The way I chose books was by hearing other people recommend them."

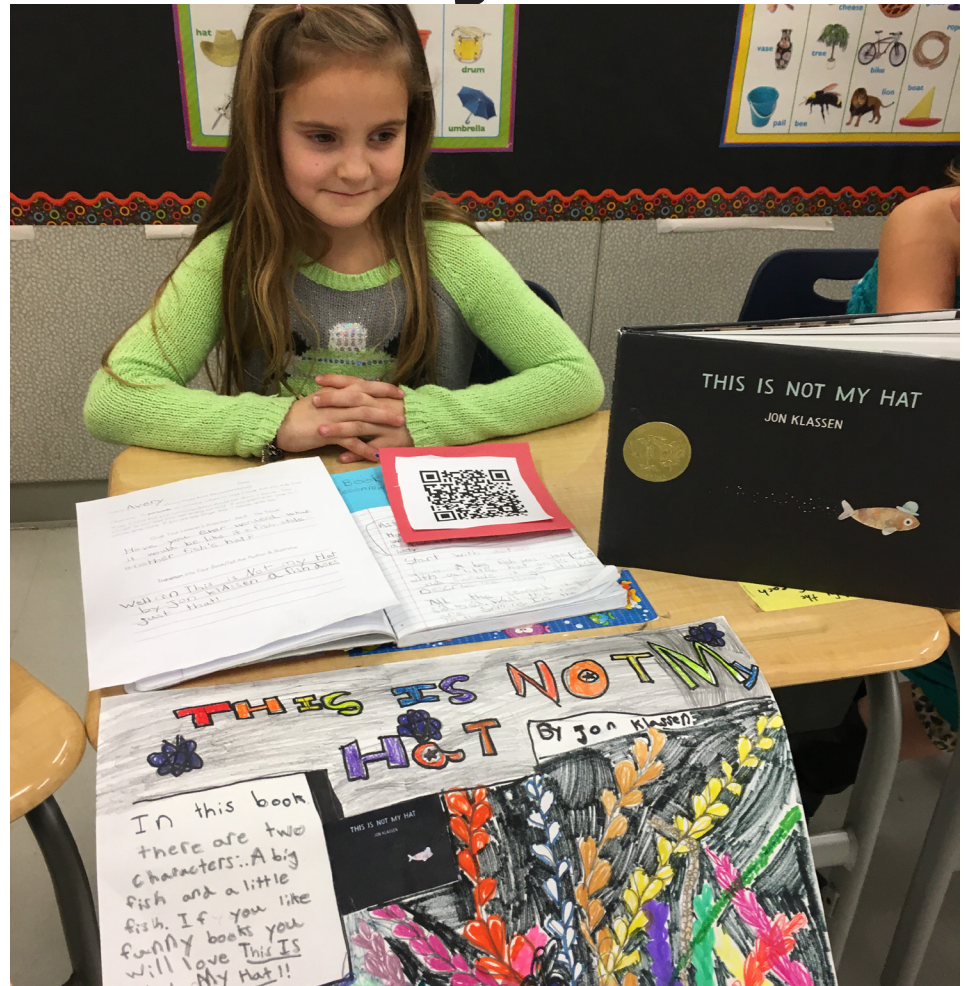
Remembering the show gave Ferrone the idea of having his student create book recommendations and presenting them on video. He began by showing the students old videos of "Reading Rainbow." Students then chose a favorite book that they felt they could persuade another person to read. Once the book was selected, out came the writer's notebooks. The first day was all about a "hook."

"They learned that they have to grab the reader's attention right at the beginning," Ferrone said.

From there, the students wrote convincing details of the story - without giving away too much.

Ferrone feels the project is helping to make the students better writers and is making them more comfortable speaking in front of one another.

"They are learning how to



Avery Swistak presents her book, "This Is Not My Hat," at Mr. Ferrone's Reading Rainbow presentation.

write introductions, conclusions, transitions, as well as how to speak loud, clear, and with expression," he said.

Once they finish their writing piece, the students practiced reading their scripts in front of the class with expression and emphasis. When ready, they spoke in front of the camera. The kids were very excited about the opportunity to be recorded.

"The kids are much happier when they know they're going to be on video," Ferrone said.

The students then created a poster for their book that included a QR code which can be scanned with a smartphone. Scanning the QR code brings up the students video.

"Parents can scan it with their phone, and their child's video will pop up on the screen," he said.

The project ended with a showcase of book recommendations on Friday, Dec. 9. Parents were invited to the school to see the projects, watch the videos and talk with the students.

New kids on the block

Three teachers make Wood Road home

By Alisabeth Dreher

Three teachers joined the Wood Road family this school year.

The kindergarten team welcomed Mrs. Srokowski. This is Srokowski's first year teaching. When she found out there was an opening, she knew she wanted to teach at Wood Road.

"I was so excited on the first day of school," she said. "Kindergarten is the first time some of them come to school, and I wanted to make sure they had a great year!"

Srokowski said that she loves coming to work everyday and seeing the kids and people at Wood Road.

"The best part of my day is when one of my students learns something new and they feel proud of themselves," she said.

Srokowski said that her fourth grade teacher was her inspiration.

"Mrs. Mower, my fourth grade teacher, had a kind and compassionate heart that passed on to her students," she said.

Srokowski said that nowadays it's the kids that inspire her.

"I am inspired everyday by my students," she said. "They inspire me to be the very best that I can be."

Mrs. Nickson completed the fifth grade team this year. A veteran to the district, Mrs. Nickson has taught for many years here



Mrs. Srokowski, pictured here with two of her students, joined Wood Road's kindergarten team this year as a first-year teacher.

in Ballston Spa. Before coming to Wood Road, Nickson was a third-grade teacher at Gordon Creek. Before that, she taught fifth grade. Nickson said she really loves being a fifth grade teacher and felt the opening at Wood Road would be a perfect fit.

"Fifth graders love to be leaders," she said. "I love that they always anticipate solutions to road bumps. I love guiding them as the leaders of the school."

Nickson said the first day at Wood Road brought excitement and nerves.

"This is how I feel every year - excited because this group of students is a new family and nervous because it's human nature," she said.

Nickson said that her main reason for wanting to be a teacher is to help children believe in themselves. Always learning and changing how she teaches, Nickson said she has very high expectations that she believes all students can achieve. Nickson said the year is flying by very quickly.

"Mostly it's because we are having fun and we are learning to-



LEFT: Mrs. Nickson, fifth-grade teacher, and two of her students prepare pennies collected from Penny Harvest.

ABOVE: Mrs. Cianfarani, Wood Road's new reading teacher, pictured with her daughter, Ella.

gether," she said. "I love to learn and explore new ideas."

Wood Road gained another reading teacher this year when Mrs. Cianfarani came to us from Gordon Creek.

"I decided to come to Wood Road because I always wanted to be a reading teacher, and there was a reading position that opened," she said.

Mrs. Cianfarani has been teaching in the Ballston Spa School District for ten years. She previously taught first and second grade. Cianfarani said she loves teaching in the classroom, but she really wanted to focus on reading - the area she loves the most.

"So far I really enjoy working in small groups with second and third graders each day and watching them grow as readers," she said. "I love helping children learn how to read and inspiring them to believe that they can read."

Robotics From Page 6

step was to create a skit about the project.

Ms. Ernst, another one of the team's coaches, said her favorite part about the project was watching and listening to all of the students throw out their ideas for the skit.

"I think the team was prepared for the competition, because we had so many returning members and experienced people," Elijah Dowd, a returning fifth grade team member, said.

There were five returning members and 16

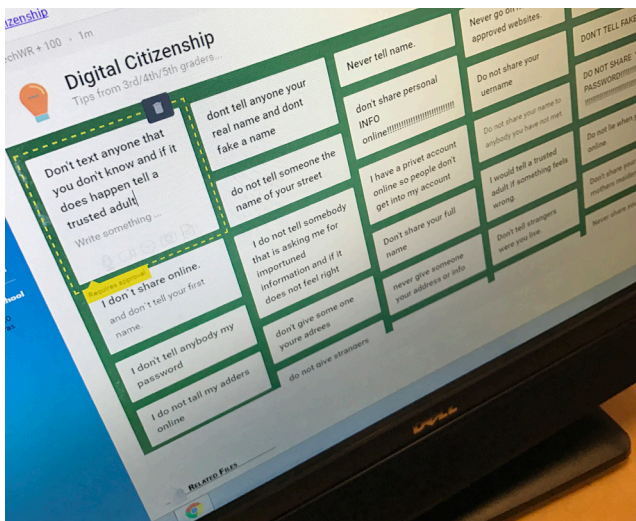
new members. Ten members competed at the competition. One of the team's alternates, fourth-grader, Evan Zalucky, had the opportunity to fill in as an alternate the day of competition after one competition member had to leave unexpectedly.

"Robotics is an awesome opportunity to problem solve, to learn how to program and to have fun," Lovett said.

Motors In Action won first place for Core Values and will compete at the semi-final tournament at NYSUT in February.



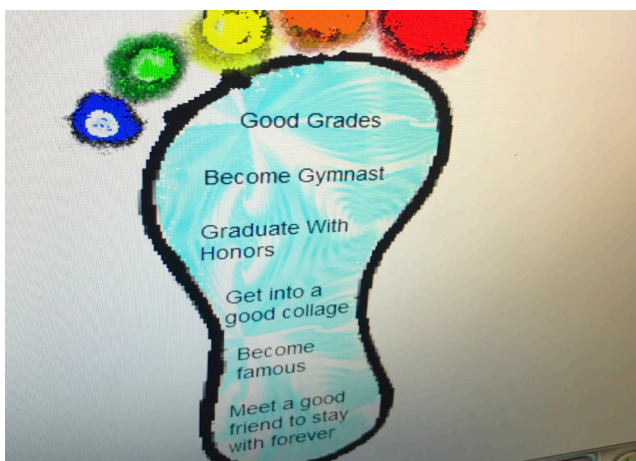
Responsible citizens



It's never too early to learn how to be a responsible digital citizen. This is exactly why every student at Wood Road spent time this fall learning about online safety.

With the help of NetSmartz and Common Sense Media, students learned the

importance of staying safe online. Fourth- and fifth-graders created their own digital footprints listing posts they hope to see in their digital footprint over the next ten years. Students also discussed ways to be safe online and used a digital board for collaborating ideas.





SCHOOL-WIDE DAY OF CODE

Students in all grades participated in an Hour of Code as part of Computer Science Education Week. The Hour of Code is a worldwide event with participation reaching tens of millions of students. The purpose of the event is to demystify code and show that anyone can learn the basics of coding. It also gives students the opportunity to learn computer science.

Each student engaged in a one-hour tutorial taking them through the basics of coding. Students in kindergarten, first and second were supported by students on the Lego robotics team.



VISIT FROM STORM TRACKER

First-graders had a very special visit from the News 10 Storm Tracker truck. News 10 weather reporter, Christina Erne, showed the students the truck and how the weather is reported.



CREATIVITY COVERS THE WALLS

The next time you are in Wood Road, take note of the artwork covering our hallways. Wood Road's art teacher, Ms. Busch, and the students are very proud of their work and love to show it off.

Generosity from Page 1

count on the baskets, and if I stop doing it people would miss it. It's like a tradition."

Dayton said he has been putting the Turkey Shoot together for many years. He originally got the idea from a friend in Colonie, but Dayton added the Thanksgiving basket idea to the event.

"It makes me feel wonderful, because I am giving to families that can't afford Thanksgiving dinner," Dayton said.

The leftover food goes to the food pantry in Ballston Spa.

The fifth graders ended the year with a digital assembly for December's character trait, Generosity. Fifth grade teacher, Ms. Tomlinson, said they believe it is very important to always pay it forward, be kind to others, and always give your time and think of other people.

Fifth-grade students brainstormed words about generosity and created word clouds which were hung throughout the school for the rest of the students to see. While brainstorming, the students learned that being generous doesn't need to require money, but can be just a few minutes of time.

Rather than a live assembly during what is typically a very busy time of year, the fifth-grade group decided to create a digital assembly for teachers to show in their classrooms. In the recording, students talked about ways to be generous. The fifth-grade team also collaborated with Penny Harvest to include possible charities to send the collected pennies to. Students were asked to vote on their favorite charity.



Scottie Day Fun

A well-deserved dance party was the main event at this year's first Scottie Day. All students who earned the day, had fun dancing away in the cafeteria to the Macarena, YMCA and more.



PENNY HARVEST SUCCESS

The collection of coins for local charities is complete. Wood Road raised more than \$1300 - almost double last year. Penny Harvest leaders will now research local non-profit organizations and decide which local charity can benefit from their collection.